

ESSAYS
ON THE HISTORY
OF TIBET

Roberto Vitali

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by Roberto Vitali

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Introduction

A theory holds that historiography is a discipline which sets order to the world, but I think that history is just an interpretation of human behaviour, so that it is not a monolith but there are many histories, and, quite often, histories of the same history.

History commonly exceeds historiography. Historiography comes after history has been made. Hence, studying Tibetan primary sources is crucial for anyone who wishes to tackle the history of the highlands. The historiographical essays published in this volume are side walks across the pages of the Tibetan historical literature in my readings of old. By the standards, they are too long to be articles and too short to be books, except one. Most of them were written several years ago and remained in my drawer for quite a long time. I never cared to publish them, taken as I was by the perpetual enjoyment of reading and writing works of wider scope on Tibetan culture. With years going by, I thought of putting them together into a single volume. Before pushing myself to publish them, several more years have passed by and I found it natural to update the essays I had already written—an almost indispensable endeavour, given that Tibetan and secondary sources keep on appearing—and to add other side walks I went for in the meantime. They have gone through minor additions and revisions, which do not change the substance of their treatment and only marginally touch contents.

The selection of topics dealt with in the essays of this volume is a sign of my interest in disparate subjects of historical concern I have found in my readings of the ancient literature. Nonetheless, there is a certain amount of unity in the themes chosen. This depends on my penchant for subjects that contribute to open up vistas either because the sources still offer something to be taken care of or because aspects of history, pushed to the periphery, need to be brought back to a more central role.

Themes chose a treatment by themselves beyond the mental disposition of the writer and therefore each subject of these essays is treated in the way that the topic itself indicated how to be dealt with. Topics speak by themselves and the writer is a transfer/medium in their hands. The reason behind my evident penchant for ancient history is that I find it intellectually challenging to cope with topics of deeper obscurity. Given this choice, I avail of a more definite

historiographical approach than modern or current history, where the divide from political or social science is less clear cut.

These essays also share a common underlying approach. They are the outcome of textual research and philological work. The reader will not find any signs of a representational and anthropological treatment. I see in the Tibetological studies a progressive digression from the contents provided in the sources, one that tends to edulcorate the material of its direct significance in favour of reading history to support preconceived models. It is perhaps a matter of differing views between “traditionalists”, who focus on textual evidence and philological work, and “modernists”, who privilege the superimposition of anthropological and sociological models, born from the western disciplines, upon the themes and concerns of the Tibetan historical tradition.

In line with the idea that History are histories, I conceive the work of a historian as an interpretation of the internal evidence provided by a source, extended to the external evidence found in other texts and to the one derived from the wider perspective of the context to which those same historical signs belong. This approach privileges a *per se* treatment of the subject chosen, and does not try to represent a historical model or to serve a preconceived view in order to make a point go through.

The reason behind my other evident penchant, the one for ancient history, is that I find it intellectually challenging to cope with topics of deeper obscurity. To preserve traces of the Tibetan civilisation threatened with extinction is the moral commitment also in view of the future, for the future is freedom in the land. People know all too well that there is no future without a past.

Given this choice of mine, I avail of a more definite historiographical approach than modern or current history, where the divide from political or social science is less clear cut. I also think that the great Tibetan experiment, which makes it unique in many ways, took place during the period from deepest antiquity until when Tibet was turned into a theocracy like elsewhere. This is why my essays span over one millennium from the proto-historical period up to the 15th century.

Working on Tibetan history is, in my view, the smallest damage possible one could cause to its agonising culture. History is one discipline of Tibetan scholasticism that offers to a non-native student of the culture of this civilisation the possibility to work within the boundaries of the autochthonous tradition without too many major deviances from the path followed by Tibetan authors, probably just a minimum. This is what encourages me to pursue my wandering in space and time across the pages of ancient documents.

My essays range from well known subjects to which I thought I could give a contribution, such as the *srin mo gan rkyal* and rGyal rtse, to a few more—the *dpa' sde gsum*, the flying mask or the dPyal—chosen because they have been covered by the studies cursorily. Others are well known but have remarkable areas in need of exploration, such as a comprehensive

assessment of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*, the early Karma pa rebirths and the Black Hat, or the 'Bri gung *gling log*.

Earliest essays

The earliest nucleus of my essays was composed in the late 1990s-early 2000s, and was formed by my work on the *srin mo*, the 'Phyongs rgyas *dur sa* and the Shar kha pa.

The first essay I wrote was the one on Srong btsan sgam po's *srin mo gan rkyal* in the late 1990s. I was initially led to deal with it because of the historical dimension behind its scheme, especially the indications provided by its expanded versions, i.e. those including temples outside the demoness' body. They are a treatise on the formation steps of the sPu rgyal dynasty empire beyond its territorial borders within the plateau. But I was taken even more by the conceptual implications of the *srin mo* scheme in architectural/structural terms when I began to realise that it was indeed related to the outline of the Ra sa 'Phrul snang temple. This led me to write down a first text in the late 1990s, which stood as it was until I updated it in 2010 with additional comments, given the fresh release of secondary sources on the subject of the *srin mo* and one minor addition in 2016.

The realisation that, both in the primary and secondary literature, there is no definitive identification of the *bang so-s* within the precinct of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* prompted me to give a closer look at the royal cemetery. The sources which contain a systematic treatment of the *dur sa*—mainly one of the *Can lnga*, but also 'Jigs med gling pa's *gTam tshogs* marginally—led me to study the cemetery as a whole, whereas all other sources deal with the tombs separately. Besides contributing to understand the structural conception of the cemetery and its evolution throughout time, a holistic treatment expands the rather limited vision of an area reserved only to the kings by providing indications that other people—members of the royal family and commoners—were buried there. The same *Can lnga* text dedicated to the *dur sa* also contributes extraordinary but extremely obscure indications on typologies of tombs that archaeologists should try to detect and explain. This essay was written around year 2000 and has remained in that form since then until, around 2010, I came across *Nyi ma' rigs kyi rgyal rabs* which has a similar and likely special treatment of the *dur sa*. This led me to introduce a minor addition to my work.

I began drafting a volume on rGyal rtse in the late eighties and early nineties, but I never cared to bring it to completion. In the early years 2000, I thought of picking up the material I had found on rGyal rtse and rewrite it stepping out of rGyal rtse alone and expanding it to the history of the other aspects of the Shar kha family. Given that lengthy monographs have been dedicated to rGyal rtse in the early days of Tibetology and then around the time I had drafted my own original work, I thought to opt for a non-systematic treatment of the subject and focus on areas concerning the Shar kha pa—rather than rGyal rtse alone—that were still open to contribution. In my readings of the historical literature, I came to realise throughout

the years that other aspects existed concerning the Shar kha pa family who only in the 14th century became the princes of rGyal rtse. This literary material, not originating from rGyal rtse, describes the activities of these princes in quite a different way from that of the documents from rGyal rtse, responsible for the establishment of some sort of orthodoxy.

Intermediate essays

The case of the Karma pa early rebirths and the Black Hat, marking the introduction of reincarnation in Tibet to secure continuity to a religious school, is an extraordinary mix of history and doctrinairism, with events which reached as far as the Mongol empire and with esoteric practice that involved clairvoyance, attempted forms of occult rebirth and even an account of intra-uterine life. What initially puzzled me to dedicate myself to the issue was the fact that the transmission of the Black Hat was secured by external intervention, and the holiest object of the Karma pa was in the hands of a master marginally linked with the school. The rest is a great piece of mediaeval Tibetan history, and the issue of the Black Hat, or rather of various Black Hats of the Zhwa nag incarnations, being another great theme of Tibetan culture. I drafted my work in 2002 and updated it as late as 2011–2012 with ideas on the context of bKa' brgyud pa activities in the late 12th and 13th centuries.

Heroes, boasting distinctive wild animal skins, were accorded a prominent position in the organisation of imperial Tibet. They walked in front of anyone else in the parades of warriors. The *dpa' sde gsum* (“three communities of heroes”) were the three contingents of select warriors engaged in warfare in the three main sectors of the Tibetan advance in order to forge and expand the empire in Central Asia—the western sector against the Turks, the southern sector against 'Jang/lJang/Nanch'ao and the north-eastern sector towards the Ordos, the Tarim Basin and the Chinese dominions. The accounts dealing of the *dpa' sde gsum* refer to periods spanning from Srong btsan sgam po's reign to that of Khri srong lde btsan. In my essay, written in 2007, I tried to trace a sequence of campaigns in these sectors, but the account of the *dpa' sde gsum* is extraordinary in other ways. It also documents the appearance of legendary themes common to narratives of Central Asia by the western classical (Greek) authors, which are unique in the Tibetan literature. These accounts have transferred Herodotus to Tibet. The *dpa' sde gsum* offer as well an insight into the organisation of the government/administration of sPu rgyal Bod inasmuch as they were a part of important civil and military functions of the *lha sras bstan po* apparatus, known as the *khos/mkhos drug*.

Later essays

The dPyal from sMan lung and Thar pa gling in gTsang are among the few great families of Tibet, whose historical lineages are recorded without lineal interruption during the dark period between the two diffusions. Lineal continuity is just one great peculiarity in their history. The *gdung rabs* sources for the study of the dPyal provide historical substance conducive to form an all-round perspective of these people from their peculiar origin and their migrations in antiquity to their role as paladins of the Noble Religion, which they took on during *bstan pa phyi dar* and continued to attribute to themselves for the next centuries. The dPyal were important masters of religious disciplines they came to learn and practice by means of an interaction with great teachers of Gangetic India and the Kathmandu Valley, as a commitment transmitted along the string of generations in the family. The historiographical material is abundant, for it does not ignore their activity of building their temples and monasteries, the trade that secured them prosperity, the contributions given by some of their members to the Noble Land of India and even an account of a female master of the family imparting teachings at the imperial court of China, told with a touch that is feminist ante litteram. My piece on the dPyal was written in late 2009, after I finished a shorter version, entitled “The White dPyal: early evidence (from the 7th century to the beginning of *bstan pa phyi dar* for Steinkellner’s Festschrift (see H. Krasser and M.T. Much eds., *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ, Buddhist Studies in Honour of Ernst Steinkellner*). That previous article deals with the dPyal from their earliest day to the beginning of *bstan pa phyi dar*. The novel part of the essay is rather more profuse and expands my treatment of their history from *bstan pa phyi dar* to the 14th century. I made a minimal revision of the text with the two short insertions in 2013.

Besides being an extraordinary theme *per se*, the mask of Gur mGon po—namely mGon po’i ’chams sku bse ’bag nag po ’phur shes, “the flying black leather mask being the dancing mask of Mahā ka la—that flew after lo chen Rin chen bzang po on his way back to Tibet from India engenders multiple major points of religious, historical and scholastic interest. I have published an earlier version of this essay in the number 14 issue, entitled “Aspects of Tibetan History”) of *Lungta*, the Journal of the Amnye Machen Institute, Tibetan Centre for Advanced Studies, Dharamshala, Spring 2001. The main significance of this essay is the incorporation of protective deities into freshly formulated Tibetan religious traditions and the manner in which this happened. In particular, it concerns the all-important issue of the introduction of the cult of Mahākala in Tibet in its various transmissions, marked by symbolical objects and achieved in the case of the flying mask by the adoption of songs imitating the sounds of nature as a method to appease wrathful deities. Following the flight of the mask, this object, a living Mahākala, engendered scholastic controversies among Tibetan savants about its legendary origin in India and the material of which it was made—whether or not it was made of human skin. Other issues, closer to the interest of a modern historian, are the history of its transmission line; the successive whereabouts of the mask after it flew in the sky following Rin chen bzang po; its

being kept at a supremely prestigious temple of Tibet; and references to historical implications that went as far as Khams and the Mongol court. Availing of the publication of a *gsung 'bum* of A myes zhabs zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597–1662) by mkhan po A phad in Kathmandu after I published my piece, I was able to expand my treatment of the subject of the flying mask. I added material on holders of the *'chams sku* after Rin chen bzang po and on other masters who had a part in its history, which led me to draft a new version in 2010.

The human, religious and political catastrophe going by the name of 'Bri gung *gling log* (fire tiger 1290) perhaps is the most destructive internicine confrontation in the history of post-imperial Tibet. The burning of 'Bri gung is treated in the sources with a sense of collective guilt to the extent that the *gling log* has been, so to speak, brushed under the carpet of historiography. Noting the paucity of information contained in the sources, I pursued to dig out the circumstances that gave way to the *gling log* and the actors at play. It became more and more evident that the *gling log* deflagrated in the hands of the Tibetans but indeed went beyond parochialism, involving, as it did, major potentates of the day. It escalated from a petty struggle for an abbatial throne into a war between major foreign powers. The *gling log* makes a perfect case in Tibetological studies, in which secular issues can hardly be disentangled from the religious ones even in the case of this event apparently lay in all respects. It exemplifies how religion could be twisted for secular pursuit. I wrote a first draft of my piece on the 'Bri gung *gling log* in 2011 and completed it with marginal touches in early 2013.

The nature of *gter ma* rediscoveries has been often classified in univocal term as an attempt to give authority and literary importance to works penned by the discoverers themselves. This stereotyped and uncritical vision of the *gter ma* literature is in some cases disproved by textual analysis. The 14th century was a fertile season for the rNying ma literature which could avail of important masters. The most famous and scholarly celebrated *rGyal po bkha' thang yig* is attributed to O rgyan gling pa as its rediscoverer inasmuch as it is part of *bKa' thang sde lnga*. The reading of the massive *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* in thirteen volumes by Sangs rgyas gling pa reserves the surprise that *rGyal po bka' thang yig* is found almost verbatim in this rNying ma *mkhas dbang's gsung 'bum*. The fact that these two *gter ston-s* were contemporary and that O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka' thang yig* is not dated complicates the establishment of its paternity. My analysis of the two *gter ston-s*' similar texts has led me to the view that it is indeed a case of textual archaeology and that the root source dealing with the *lha sras btsan po* antiquity dates back to *bstan pa snga dar* with details I give in at the end of my elaboration. This essay of mine dates to around 2012. It is an expansion of some historical deductions I

presented in Tel Aviv at a seminar organised by Yael Bentor and Dan Martin, in which also Elliot Sperling participated.

- *srin mo* = written over ten years ago and revised after Per Soerensen wrote about it;
- 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* = written around year 2000 and not revised;
- Shar kha = written in the early years 2000;
- '*chams sku* = written for Lungta following the seminar in Leiden and expanded into a new version when A myes zhabs's *gsung 'bum* was published by mkhan po A phad in 2009;
- *zhwa nag* = written in early years 2000 and revised after 2011;
- *dpa 'sde gsum* = written in 2007 and not revised;
- dPyal = written in 2007 and revised minimally in 2013;
- *gling log* = written in 2010;
- *gter ma* = written in 2012.

History, in most cases, is a sequence of events, and the task of a historian is to read in them the sense of their unfolding. On a wider scale, this applies to achieving a historical balance, which also pertains to my essays that deal with heterogeneous historical material. The need for an organisation of my essays has led me to devise a criterion to order them.

Focus on what I repute the core topic of every essays is at the root of my organisation into a sequence that aims at being both conceptual and historiographical. Hence, the order in which the essays appear in this volume does not reflect the time of their composition.

I view the first 'Phyong rgyas cemetery, where the tombs of the earlier kings—Khri snyan gzung btsan, sTag bu snya gzigs, 'Bro snyan lde ru (?) and gNam ri srong btsan—stand, as a *dur sa* by itself, owing to its significance and physical arrangement. It predates the later cemetery, begun with the *bang so* of Srong btsan sgam po, which, together with the tombs of the successive *btsan po*-s, is the second 'Phyong rgyas burial ground, sited, moreover, in another area. This is why my essay on the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* precedes the one on Srong btsan sgam po's *srin mo gan rkyal*. Along with my work on the *dpa 'sde gsum*—communities of heroes that belonged to the imperial period of sPu rgyal Bod—they are the ancient period essays.

These three are followed by my works on Rin chen bzang po's flying mask plus the other one on the early Karma Zhwa nag pa rebirths and the Black Hat. Although these pieces span a much longer time, their core points concern the 10th-11th century in the case of the former and the 12th and 13th centuries in the case of the latter.

The 'Bri gung *gling log* tragic incident fits so precisely in the course of Tibetan history that its placement is obvious, although I deal with the antecedents conducive to the destruction of the monastery.

More complex has been the positioning of my essay on the dPyal clan members. This work opens with material on deep antiquity and extends up to the 14th century when I end my treatment. The peculiarity of dPyal pa history that went on without the almost invariable interruption during the dark period between the two diffusions has led me to prioritise this

continuum of activities. In view of its end in the 14th century, it follows the work on the early Karma Zhwa nag pa rebirths.

The literary conundrum concerning the authorship of the *gter ma* and the *gter ston-s* involved does not engender problems similar to the essay on the dPyal. It falls into a precise season in the history of Tibet and stays in the volume where it should be.

Although its inception goes back, once again, to a time before *bstan pa snga dar*, the work on the Shar kha people has its core in the 14th and especially the 15th century, being thus a logical conclusion to my volume.

Roberto Vitali

Tombs of the sPu rgyal dynasty queens and other issues on the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*

Several Tibetan sources dedicate space to a treatment of the burial mounds (*bang so*) in the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery (*dur sa*),¹ the site where the sPu rgyal kings were entombed. These works seem, at first glance, to be quite in agreement in their assessment of the tumuli, but subtle differences exist that, upon closer inspection, become significant, testifying to the unsolved problems of identity that the complex of tombs poses. *rGyal po bka' thang*, *rGya Bod yig tshang*, *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, *dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* and *gTam tshogs* are the classics on the topic, but I avoid a comparative analysis of their material in this essay. Tibetologists have already undertaken this investigation in the past.

It is natural that the Tibetan literature has concentrated on the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*, for the royal cemetery commands special attention even now. Given the prioritisation of the royal cemetery, many other necropolises or single tombs, traced in the Tibetan territory during the archaeological campaigns of the last few decades and brought to the consideration of contemporary studies, are not found in the literary output of the Tibetan savants of the past.

The documents on clans or their individual members, e.g. the various *rnam thar* in their clan's *mes rabs*, do not say anything about the cemeteries located in the areas occupied by these people and devoted to the inhumation of their ancestors. Few exceptions provide evidence that *dur sa*-s existed in order to entomb clan members. Some of the cemeteries discovered in recent years by Western scholars and Chinese archaeologists may well have been clan

1. *Bang so* can be etymologically explained as a combination of two terms, *bang* standing for “elevation”, as shown by the compounded term *bang rim* (“stepped elevation”), one of the components of a *mchod rten*, and *so* meaning “expanse” as in *so kha* (“boundary”; “territorial expanse”) or *mtha'i so* (*lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.138 line 20: “territories at the border”). Hence *bang so* stands for an “extensive mound”.

dur sa-s, but an investigation of this kind is hardly possible by archaeological means alone without documental corroboration, which is missing or neglected.

Early literary evidence during the sPu rgyal period of the practice to bury members of the noble families in a *bang so* concerns Srong btsan sgam po's promise made to a member of the dBa's clan, who was loyal to him, that he would build a tomb for him.² This proves that the custom of making *bang so*-s for clan members was practised at least during the reign of this king, but it is likely that it was more ancient. Such burial custom did not give the nobility equal status as the sPu rgyal rulers but the dignity of a similar burial, feasibly smaller and less rich in contents in the tomb's interior.

Textual proof about the existence of a clan cemetery is found in *gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes kyi rnam thar*, part of the collection of biographies of Padma 'phrin las's *bKa' ma mdo dbang gi bla ma rgyud pa'i rnam thar*. In recording events in the youth of gNubs chen, this text mentions the existence of an ancestral cemetery in sGrags, the land of the gNubs clan, at the place called Ri Grags ri bo che.³ The cemetery is indicated as the *dur sa* of the gNubs clan. It is thus logical that the lineage of the *lha sras btsan po*-s had the 'Phyong rgyas *dur*

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2. *Tun-huang Chronicles* (Chapter Five lines 263–265, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.49 lines 23–26): “bTsan pos dbu snyung yang gnang ngo/ dBa's dbyi tshab spun mtshan bdun yang bro stsal to/ btsan pos bka' stsald pa/ dbyi tshab glo ba nye bas/ gum na mchad pyag dar te brtsig par gnang/ rta ni brgya' dgum par gnang/”; “The *btsan po* swore and the seven kins of the dBa's *dbyi tshab* (i.e. dBa's Phangs to re) took an oath too. The *btsan po* pledged: “The *dbyi tshab* is being loyal, so, at his death, I will build his tomb (*mchad*). Upon his death, I will bury 100 horses at his tomb”.”

The terms *mchad* [*pa*] is synonymous with *bang so* or *dur*, for it is applied in the literature to tombs of various shape, from the trapezoidal with four corners to the circular ones (see passim in these notes).

Other clan cemeteries in dBu ru are mentioned by Richardson (“*Early Burial Grounds*” p.90–91), who says that, in his days in Tibet, tombs still existed at sTag brag (south-west of lHa sa), where dBa's clan members were buried and an extensive one at lHung grun rdzong. On the same subject also see Hazod who is working comprehensively on both tombs and cemeteries, including his “The Royal Residence Pho brang Byams pa mi 'gyur gling and the Story of Srong btsan sgam po's birth in rGya ma”.

3. *gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes kyi rnam thar* (p.160 line 4): “De yang yab mes kyi dur skyes ba'i ri Grags kyi ri bo che zhes bya ba deng sang Grags rgan ri bor grags pa la tsan dan gyi sdong po skyes pa”; “Concerning this [issue], a sandalwood tree has grown at Ri Grags ri bo che, [a locality] used as the *dur* of the [gNubs clan] *yab mes*, nowadays known as Grags rgan ri bo che (“the mountain of the Grags elders”).”

See below (n.36) for a passage of *Kun rdzob bye ma*, a source belonging to *sa dpyad* (“inspection of a land”) genre, in which the features of a locality suitable for building a *dur sa* are identified. Among the landmarks enumerated as appropriate, one is that such a land should have a single tree. I wish to thank Jo sras Tashi Tsering for passing a copy of *Kun rdzob bye ma* to me.

sa as their clan cemetery. Even its location in the wider area of Yar lung makes sense, for it obviously was an ancestral land of the sPu rgyal rulers.

Rather than for clan members, a case in Khams that documents the custom of building *bang so*-s for local lords who apparently had no kinship ties with the *btsan po*-s of sPu rgyal Bod is provided in *lHa thog rgyal rabs*. This reference concerns the construction of a *bang so* in lHa thog for Gung chung,⁴ the first individual to be addressed as lHa thog *rgyal po* (ibid. p.49 line 16). His burial inside an earthen mound goes back to the heydays of the Tibetan empire when Khri srong lde btsan was the *btsan po* (see below n.4).

The works on the royal cemetery at 'Phyong rgyas by Tibetologists of the past have contributed nuanced treatments. They are either pioneering works (Tucci, *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings* and Haarh, *The Yar lung Dynasty*), which deal with the issue of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* at more length than my contribution, or incisive studies of the subject (Richardson, "Early Burial Grounds"; Hoffmann, "Die Gräber der tibetischen Könige im Distrikt 'P'yongs-rgyas"; and Panglung, "Die metrischen Berichte über Grabmäler der tibetischen Könige"). These painstaking analyses of the complex of evidence extracted from the literary sources on the tombs of the *lha sras btsan po*-s and the burial customs of dynastic Tibet have established many firm points concerning the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*.

My short, modest contribution adopts an opposite approach. Fresh elements on the *dur sa* are derived from essentially a single text but without ignoring the material of other primary sources that helps to go further into the search for meaningful elements on the cemetery.

For all conceptual and historical purposes, *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* alone is studied in the following pages and corroborated by *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* which, although structured in a different way, shares and completes some information on the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery with the former text. lDe'u Jo sras's notions on the royal *bang so*-s are arranged king by king,

4. *lHa thog rgyal rabs* (p.51 lines 7–8) reads: "sPug la yod dus yab Gung chung gshegs pa'i bang so 'dam kha sha rgyas kyi nang lcog la rgyab ri byas nas rGya stag nags la 'phyong 'dra'i sa dpal btab//"; "Upon father Gung chung's death when he was in sPug, on a good spot resembling an Indian tiger jumping ('*phyong* spelled so for *mchong*) in the forest, his *bang so* was built with mud surfaces and wide dimensions ('*dam kha sha rgyas*) by making within it a perimetral wall with turrets (*lcog la rgyab ri*)".

while mkhas pa lDe'u compacts his treatment into a chapter of its own (one of the *Can lnga*), where a unique treatment of the queens' tombs is introduced.⁵

In several cases, my work avails of the support found in 'Jigs med gling pa's *gTam tshogs*.⁶ Another work that focuses, among other historiographical distinctions, on the tombs

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5. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *gTam tshogs* are more helpful in identifying the locations of the tombs than the rest of the sources that have sections on the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*. They deal with the *bang so*-s in a single treatment, while the other sources split and tackle them in reference to the respective kings. Consequently, the relative positioning of the *bang so*-s in the cemetery is not always explicated in the other sources, while having a whole chapter dedicated to them in both *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *gTam tshogs* allows one to assess their identification critically.
 6. I do not make use in this essay of the famous sections on the *bang so*-s of Srong btsan sgam po and 'Bro snyan lde ru in *rGyal po bka 'thang* rediscovered by O rgyan gling pa (1323–?). They have been studied by almost all scholars who have concerned themselves in the past with the imperial tombs. There is however one point to be made here concerning the scholastic milieu that made itself felt in O rgyan gling pa's description of these tombs because *rGyal po bka 'thang* is not the only available account of these tumuli written during his time.

Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* (Gangtok ed., also known as *Lung btsan bka 'rgya'i skor* in the Bhutan edition of the same text), which was rediscovered by Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396), addresses a vast array of issues that go back to the imperial period including Bang so dmar po, the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po (ibid. p.144 line 2–p.145 line 6), and that of 'Bro gnyan lde ru (spelled so) (p.237 lines 2–4). Both tackled at length by O rgyan gling pa, Sangs rgyas gling pa treats them in a similar manner but in a more succinct manner.

While Sangs rgyas gling pa's "invitation" of his massive *gter ma* has been assigned to wood drag-on 1364 (see the Introduction to the Gangtok edition of *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*), the year of the "rediscovery" of *rGyal po bka 'thang* remains vague (Blondeau, "*IHa-'dre bka '-thang*" p.40–42 dates it to sometime before 1368), and hampers insight into how the two texts relate to one another. These accounts are the product of the scholasticism of the time, which was marked by the resurgence of rNying ma pa intellectuals after a period of obscurantism for the school was under the shadow of the Sa skya pa, against which O rgyan gling pa reacted polemically. One cannot say then whether O rgyan gling pa or Sangs rgyas gling pa was the first to deal with the tombs of those *lha sras btsan po* and several other significant topics concerning dynastic Tibet. Probably another interpretation could be true (see in this volume the essay entitled "An instance of textual affinity between two 14th century rNying ma *gter ma*" for a more comprehensive discussion of authorship, concealment and unearthing of this work than the limited assessment in this note).

Sangs rgyas gling pa gives brief descriptions of the tombs of Srong btsan sgam po and 'Bro snyan lde ru. For the former built after the latter see below (n.9). For the latter his text (*Lung bstan bka 'rgya'i skor* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* Paro ed. p.237 lines 2–4, also known as *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* in the Gangtok edition of the same text p.144 lines 2–4) says: "rGyal po 'Brong gnyan lde ru la/ sku la snyung ngan byung ba'i dus/ Nyang mda'i phu ru bang so rtsigs/ re'u mig dgu pa'i dbus ma ru/ btsan ldan gdung gi lding khri beas/ rgyal po'i sku tshab gser las bzhengs/ zangs chen kha sbyor nang du bzhugs/ gser bre dgu dang dngul bre brgyad/ rgyal po'i skor nor beas pa kun/ sa rdo shing gsum rgya'i gdab/ phyi rabs rgyal rgyud nor bu sbas/ gter srungs gnyer du gtad pa med/ 'don mkhan bsod nams ldan pa beas/ sā mā yā//"; "When rgyal po 'Brong (spelled so) gnyan lde ru caught an incurable disease, he built a *bang so* on the upper part of Nyang mda'. In the central one of

in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* is the less known *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* by Gu ge pan chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan. In the same way as *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*, this text focuses on the tombs in the cemetery and their location for each generation of the sPu rgyal dynasty's *btsan po*-s separately. The outstanding feature of this text is that, similarly to *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* offers evidence that the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* was not restricted to the *btsan po*-s alone.

To prioritise *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* is due to its treatment of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*, which expands in a meaningful way our already considerable knowledge of the royal cemetery. At the same time, it proves that research on the subject is far from being exhausted, despite the fact that the most significant facts have already been dealt with and accounted for.

mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung's royal cemetery

In its exposition of the *Can lnga*, *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* entitles *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* ("the postulate which disentangles *gSang ba yang chung*") its section on the royal *dur sa*. The *Can lnga's* treatment of the *dur sa*, going by the title *gSang ba yang chung*, conveys the sense that this text is "another but minor secret [version]" of a document on the cemetery or its "secret [version] under a further but minor [aspect]". The difference between the two readings is substantial. The former decoding implies that another version of the study of the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery existed, whereas the latter alternative implies an addition to a previous assessment.

The reference to *gSang ba yang chung* may have a nexus with the *gSang ba chos lugs* version ("the Buddhist version which was not diffused") of gNya' khri btsan po's origin, as Panglung says in reference to the same title (*gSang ba yang chung*) of the *dur sa* section in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (see "Die metrischen Berichte über Grabmäler der tibetischen Könige" p.351). However, the similarity of the two titles does not extend to their contents, the treat-

the nine *re'u mig* he installed a flying throne in sandalwood. He made a replica of the king which he placed inside a copper container. Nine *bre* of gold and eight *bre* of silver, all the king's possessions, were hidden under layers of earth, stone and wood, altogether three. Riches were concealed for the future royal generations. A *gter bsrung* ("guardian of the treasures") was not summoned. A keeper in charge of handling [the tomb] was appointed for his merits".

The same facts are dealt with at similar length by O rgyan gling pa. In particular, the treatment of Bang so dmar po by Sangs rgyas gling pa is rather short in comparison with *rGyal po bka'thang*. O rgyan gling pa's exposition is thus more important.

Stylistically, Sangs rgyas gling pa's work is not endowed with the engaging literary complexity and esoteric prose typical of O rgyan gling pa. It is, however, remarkable that, by the age of twenty-four, he had to his credit the thirteen volumes of *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*, a profound and complex output, leaving aside the matter of authorship I discuss in another essay of this volume.

ment of the subject in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* being conspicuously different.

gSang ba yang chung thus appears to be either the title of a work on the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* or the name under which the subject of royal inhumations in the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery was known in antiquity. The latter hypothesis seems to be the more probable, given the differences between the treatments of the cemetery found in the two sources.⁷ *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.376 line 15–p.380 line 9) reads:

“Da ni gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa ni zhes pa la/ gnam dur g.ya dang rdza dang spang thang mtshams/ chu dang yul du bang so rtsigs pa la./ gral dang ming dang rtsig dang 'dabs su sbas/ byes dang mchod rten dang dges pa rgyu mtshan no/ zhes pas ston te/ lha'i gdung rabs bzhi bcu rtsa gnyis bar du/ gdung rgyud zin pa rgyal po'i dur btab pa/ dur sa gnam la btab pa'i rgyal po du/ rdza dang g.ya span thang mtshams su btab pa du/ dur sa chu la (p.377) btsab pa'i rgyal po du/ ma grongs nyid kyis brtsigs pa'i bang so gang/ chab srid ma zin rgyal po khu chen rnam/ dur du bcug gam 'on te gzhan du sbas/ 'bangs la gnyen pa'i jo mo bco brgyad la/ ltang sres du yod brtsigs pa'i dur du yod/ / jo mos mtha'i dmag dpon byas pa la/ rtags kyi mchan ma bang so ji ltar yod/ chab srid ma zin jo mo gzhan rnam la/ 'bangs su sbas dang so sor brtsigs pa du/ bang so'i skyin par mchod rten rtsig pa dang/ gzhan yang byes su lus pa du tsam yod/ chab srid ma gtad thang mtshams su phab pa la/ bang so brtsigs dang 'dabs su sbas pa dang/ thang mtshams byes su lus pa yod dam med/ de yang Khri bdun bang so gnam la btab/ lha'i lus la ro med 'ja' ltar yal/ sTengs gnyis dur btab rdza dang g.ya la btab/ Legs drug bang so dpang thang mtshams su btab/ lDe bdun dur sa chu bo'i gzhung la btab/ bTsan bdun man chad dur sa yul du btab/ yul di ming ni Yar lung Ngar ma thang/ de yang phul med sa phung btab pa 'dra/ Khri snyan gzung btsan Don mkhar mda' ru brtsigs/ de yang phul med gru bzhi mi shes skad/ 'Bro gnyan lde ru bang so Don mkhar mda' / rje 'bangs gsum kha gson por bang sor gshegs/ sTag gu snyan gzigs Don mkhar mda' ru brtsigs/ gral ni Khri snyan gong ngos rtsig pa sog khar yod/ de'i ming ni Gung ri sog kha yin/ gNam ri Srong btsan Don mkhar mda' ru brtsigs/ gral ni Khri snyan gzung btsan g.yon no yod/ Srong btsan sgam po 'Phyong po'i mda' ru brstigs che chung (p.378) chad ni dpag chen mda' rgyang gang/ zur bzhi na ni lha khang bzhi yang yod/ ming ni sMug ri smug po bya ba lags/ bang so gru bzhir brtsigs pa de nas byung/ Gung srong gung btsan Don mkhar mda' na yod/ gral ni gNam ri srong btsan g.yon na yod/ ming ni Gung ri gung che lags so skad/ Mang srong mang btsan ni Srong btsan g.yon na yod/ de'i ming ni sNgo bzher hral po lags/

7. Samten Karmay has discussed the various literary versions of the origin of the first sPu rgyal king, all subsumed under the name of *Can lnga*, from which *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* derived (“The Etiological Problem of the Yar-lung Dynasty” and “The Origin Myth of the First King of Tibet as Revealed in the *Can-lnga*”). In the latter’s article (ibid. p.423), he briefly mentions the *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* section in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* stating that it must be considered an adjunct to *gSang ba phyag rgya can* (the last of the *Can lnga* accounts), found in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* immediately above the section on the royal cemetery and concerns the actual reasons behind the assassination of some of the sPu rgyal dynasty kings.

'Dus srong 'phrul rgyal Ma (spelled so) srong g.yon na yod/ de'i ming ni Seng ge brtsehs pa can/ Ag tshom bang so Mu ra ri la brtsigs/ gral ni 'Phrul gyi rgyal po'i g.yon na yod/ de'i ming ni lHa ri gtsug nam lags so skad/ Khri srong lde btsam Mu rar ri la brtsigs/ gral ni yab kyi ltag na 'od pa srung/ ma grong gong du nyid kiyis brtsigs pa'o/ ming ni 'Phrul ri gcug nam bya ba lags/ Khri Srong btsan 'Phrul rgyal mdun na yod/ yum gyis chab gang dgongs pas nang gi mtho/ ming ni 'Phrul chen bzher bya ba lags/ Dar ma'i gral ni 'Phrul dang rGyal chen bar/ de'i ming ni Bang rim 'khor lo can/ 'Od srung gral ni 'Phrul rgyal rgyab na yod/ ming ni sKyes bu lha bsten bya ba lags/ Mu ni btsan po Ag tshom g.yas ngos mdun/ ming ni lHa ri lding bu bya ba lags/ Ral pa can ni Don mda'i g.yon na bzhugs/ ming ni Khri stang smang ri lags so skad/ srid kiyis ma zin jo mo'i bang so ni/ Ong cong bang so don mda'i g.yon na yod/ de'i rtsa na Mong bza' Khri mo 'brong snyod yod/ de'i rtsa na Ru yong btsan mo mTsho yang yod/ de'i rtsa na mNo bza' Mar dkar yod/ Tshe spong 'Bri ma thod kar yab kyi g.yas na yod/ ming ni Bang so g.yul mo'i thang zhes bya/ 'Dos (p.379) bza'sTong btsun 'Bro dkar yab kyi g.yon/ Tshe spong dMar rgyal Don mkhar Shu po sna/ sNa nam dByibs stangs yab sras g.yon zur na/ 'Bro bza' sTong dkar Phyi mo lod ni sras kyi g.yon zur phar tshad na/ phyi ma bcu gcig lDe'i sras so skad/ srid ma zin pa'i jo mo brgyad la/ lJang mo Khri btsun snyen stengs sNyan ma lod/ 'Bro bza' Ma gang gsing ma lod/ Tshe spong bza' Khri ma gung rgyal/ 'Bro btsun Khri mo legs/ mKhar chen bza' mTsho rgyal/ Zhang chung bza' sNgo bzher Lig tig sman/ 'Chims bza' dang brgyad bang sor brtsigs so/

Dur du ma tshud pa ni Bal mo bza' Khri btsun dang/ Gi shang Ong cong Thugs rje chen po la thim/ Tshe spong bza' mDor rgyal mDo stod Khams kyi Mod (sic for mDo) shod du lus/ Thag de bza' Pu chung sman Ngag ma'i shul du grongs nas/ zar por sbas pas Gra'i Se sman no/ Pho yong bza' rGyal mo btsun dBu tshal du bzhag/ 'Chims bza' Mu ne lod 'Phang thang du 'gag grir grongs nas der bzhag/ de drug rjes su lus so/

Bang so'i skyin par mchod rten brtsigs pa la/ 'Bro bza' Khri rgyal mang po re thar pa la gshegs pa'i mtshan/ jo mo Byang chub rje/ g.Yi phur mchod rten brtsigs/ Cog ro bza' dPal gyi ngang btsun ma/ 'Chims bza' Rin chen rgyal ma gtsug/ Tshe spong bza' lHun gyi lha mo/ lHa lung bza' dPal rab 'byin rje/ rnams kyang mchod rten brtsigs/ de las bang so gzhan ma bzhi stngs sras so/

Thang mtshams kyi bang so la/ 'Bro snyan lde ru'i thang mtshams 'Bro tsha rMu (p.380) btsun dang/ Mon bu rgyal mtshan gnyis/ sTag gu'i lkog na na sa phung gnyis yod do/ gNam ri srong btsan gyi thang mtshams blon po Legs nam sTag gu'i g.yon na yod do/ lJang tsha lHa dbon yab kyi g.yon na yod do/ bang so Zlum po de dang/ Mu tig btsan po'i bang so Don mkhar mda' na yod/ bang so'i ming sKya ldem mo/ Sad na legs bang so bhi stengs kyi mchan na'o/ I sho legs kyi thang mtshams kyi dur gnam la btab zer/ gTsang ma ni lHo brag tu lus so/ gdung rgyud zin pa'i bang so bco brgyad yod/ khu chen gyi bang so gnyis yod/ jo mo srid zin gyi bang so dgu yod/ srid ma zin pa'i bang so dgu yod/ de rnams bar gyi mnga' dar yin te/ rje gNya' khri man

chad nas dPal 'khor yan chad gdung rabs bzhi bcu la bar gyi mnga' dar zer ro/ gNya' khri btsan po yan chad ni sTod kyi lha rabs so//";

“As for the so called *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa*, the disposal [of the kings' bodies] in cemeteries in the sky; in high mountain pastures and barren localities; at the borders of grassy plains and in rivers; and the building of *bang so*-s, their location, names, type of construction; and those who were buried in a pit [without a mound above] (*'dabs su sbas pa*, lit. “buried below”); those who were left behind [outside the cemetery] (*byes*); and the reason for making a *mchod rten* instead of [a *bang so*] will [all] be discussed in the following.

For forty-two divine generations, the kings, who perpetuated the lineage, had tombs built for them. How many kings had a tomb built in the sky? How many were buried at barren localities and at the border of meadows? How many kings were buried in rivers? (p.377) Which tombs were built by the kings before their death? Were the kings' *khu chen*-s, who did not hold political power, placed in the cemetery or buried elsewhere? Were the *eighteen jo mo*, who were chosen in marriage among the subjects, [buried] in a *ltang sres* (also spelled *stengs sras* elsewhere, for a discussion of these terms see below) or in a *dur* (on this see below)? What are the signs denoting the *bang so* of the queens who became commanders at the borders? How many of the other queens who did not have access to political power were inhumed in a pit [without a mound above] (*'dabs su sbas*); and [how many] had a tomb built individually? How many of them were buried in a *mchod rten* instead of a *bang so*? Moreover, how many were left behind [having been buried] outside [the *dur sa*]? Among those who were not given royal power, their legitimacy to rule being discarded (*thang mtshams su phab pa*, lit. “were thrown to the border of the plain”), is there or is there not [any of them] buried in a *bang so*, and [is there or is there not any of them buried] in a pit [without a mound above] (*'dabs su sbas pa*) or left behind [outside the *dur sa*] since their legitimacy to rule was discarded (*thang mtshams byes su lus pa*, lit. “left behind, having been thrown to the border of the plain”)?

Concerning this, the tombs of the Khri bdun were built in the sky; their divine bodies did not become corpses but disappeared like rainbows. The sTengs gnyis had their tombs made in *rdza* (“barren localities”) and *g.ya'* (“high mountain pastures”). The Legs drug made tombs at the borders of grassy plains. The lDe bdun made their tombs in the middle of rivers. From the bTsan bdun onwards the tombs were built on inhabited land. The name of the land was Yar lung Dar ma thang. With regard to this, they were built as shapeless mounds of earth. Khri snyan gzung btsan's was built at Don mkhar mda'. Concerning this, it is believed that one is unable to tell whether it is a rough earthen mound or has four corners. 'Bro snyan lde ru's *bang so* is [also] at Don mkhar mda' (most sources place it at Zang mda' including *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.107 lines 13–14). The lord and the subjects, three of them, walked alive into the tomb. That of sTag gu snyan gzigs [too] was built at Don mkhar mda'. Its location is at the upper side (*gong ngos*) of Khri snyan's. Originally it looked like a shapeless mass of piled earth; it was then expanded and [made] with smooth surfaces. Its name is Gung ri sog kha (“heavenly mountain with smooth surfaces”). gNam ri srong btsan's was built at Don mkhar mda'. Its location is to the left of Khri snyan

gzung btsan's. Srong btsan sgam po's was built at Phyongs po'i mda' (i.e. the area at the foot of the 'Phyong rgyas village). Its size (p.378) is one *dpag chen*, about an arrow's throw. There are four *lha khang* at its four corners ('Jigs med gling pa's *gTam tshogs* (p.290 line 4) has five *lha khang*).⁸ Its name is sMug ri smug po ("dark mound of darkness"). From then on, tombs were built with four corners.⁹ Gung song

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8. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.118 line 4) elucidates the matter with greater precision: "Nang na lha khang bzhi yod zer ro", "It is said that there are four *lha khang* in its interior", which could imply that the *lha khang*-s were structured in a way similar to the inner chambers of a *bang so*, with four wings around a central core.
9. Sangs rgyas gling pa (*Lung bstan bka' rgya'i skor* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* Paro ed. p.226 lines 1–2, also known as *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* in the Gangtok edition of the same text p.144 lines 2–4)—describes the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po without alluding to its external shape: "Sras kiy Yar lung sbubs ri ru/ bang so brtsigs nas yab yum spur/ gser byung dngul kyi ga'ur bcug/ bang so bre mig dgu pa yis/ dbus mar gser khri la bzhugs/ gser dang dngul g.yu sogs bre khal re/ rgyal po'i dkor nor spyan sngar spungs/ gdugs dang bla re rgyan rnam bris/ mi rul mtshal gyis bstam nas ni/ mi shig rgya rim gsum gyis btab//"; "[Srong btsan sgam po's] son, having built [his father's] *bang so* on the hollow hill of Yar lung, placed the corpse of the husband and [his] wives inside a gold plated silver *ga'u*, which was installed on a golden throne in the central one of the *bang so*'s nine *bre* (sic for *re'u*) *mig*. Several *bre khal* [of precious substances], such as gold, silver and turquoise, were amassed as offerings for the king. A display of parasols and canopies was put up as decorations. After [the king's] body was coated with pure vermillion, [the tomb where he was buried] was closed with three indestructible seals".

The main point of interest, apart from the general description of *Bang so dmar po* (known as sMug ri smug po to *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*) is that, in the view of Sangs rgyas gling pa, the Chinese and Licchavi wives of Srong btsan sgam po were buried together with their husband, similarly to the Scythian custom of having the queens laid to rest with the ruler. The statement of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* is in contrast with the remark in *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* that while Bal bza' Khri btsun and Mun chang Kong co were not buried in the *dur sa*, a tomb for the Chinese princess married to Mes Ag tshom was located in the cemetery premises. The use of vermillion with the purpose to preserve the corpse should also be noted. Of interest, too, is the definition of the plain at the foot of the village of 'Phyong rgyas as a "hollow hill".

Some aspects specific to the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po give to this funerary monument a character and an interest of its own that is not shared by other mounds in the 'Phyong rgyas royal cemetery. This depends on the fact that more information and details are given about it in the Tibetan sources of different periods than any other funerary mound. Its fame and importance are surely due in part to the accounts of Sangs rgyas gling pa, O rgyan gling pa and 'Jigs med gling pa, who had access to old documents.

A peculiarity certainly is the respect that the tomb inspired in Tibetan minds; a respect so great that the 'Bro clan, to which the tomb had been entrusted, did not profane it during the *kheng log* ("revolt of the subjects").

Another singular feature of this tomb is the well-known Buddhist temple on top of the mound built at a later stage, long after Buddhism took final hold in Tibet. A *lha khang* on top of the mound is absent from the other 'Phyong rgyas tombs. rGyas san pa Sangs rgyas grags's chief disciple Chos

kyi seng ge, in turn a teacher of Man lung pa Śākya 'od (b. 1239), founded the chapel on Srong btsan sgam po's tomb (Soerensen-Hazod, *Thundering Falcon* p.177 n.425).

In his extensive section dedicated to both Bon po and Buddhist *gter ston-s* (*bsTan 'byung* p.357 line 5–p.358 line 3), Kun grol grags pa reminds the reader of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's *gter ma* rediscoveries from Bang so dmar po, which amounted to 237.

The peculiarities of Srong btsan sgam po's tomb do not end here. One most important but less famous feature is recorded in *gTam tshogs*. 'Jigs med gling pa (ibid. p.288 lines 20–21) says that the name of the tomb was sMug ri smug po, but that it became known as Nang gi rgyan can ("having decorations in its interior", or in its underground chambers). The same author implicitly provides an explanation for the latter name, which would otherwise sound strange, given that the *bang so-s* of the sPu rgyal kings had underground chambers decorated with lavish objects, when he says that there was a Buddhist temple in its interior.

As proved by the description of the inner rooms in 'Bro snyan lde ru's tomb (*rGyal po bka' thang* p.155 line 6–p.156 line 6), the name Nang gi rgyan can does not refer to the decoration of the chambers, where the body of Srong btsan sgam po was placed together with various treasures and paraphernalia. This arrangement was shared by other tombs built before and after that of 'Bro snyan lde ru.

'Jigs med gling pa says that Srong btsan sgam po's mound had in its depths a Buddhist temple made of five chapels organized in mandalic shape. It is difficult to assess the reliability of this account, for the tomb does not bear any signs of underground constructions (not even the *re'u mig*). The present-day dominant orientation of scholarship on the question of whether or not Srong btsan sgam po practised Buddhism is still very much divided between the affirmative and the negative, but this aspect goes beyond the purpose of the present note.

The passage in the text ('Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* p.290 lines 4–21) concerning the various underground *lha khang* in the Srong btsan sgam po tomb reads: "Nang na lha khang lnga yang bzhugs tshul ni/ thams cad rdo la byas pa'i mandala steng/ bzhugs pa'i lha tshogs rnams kyi gtso bo mchog/ dkyil gyi ka ba de la sku rgyab brten/ Sangs rgyas ma chags padma can la ni/ byin rlabs ldan pa'i Sems dpa' gnyis kyis bskor/ shar na rje btsun sGrol ma la sogs pa'i/ grub pa brnyes pa'i lha bryad ces bya bzhugs/ lho'i phyogs na Sangs rgyas sMan pa yi/ rgyal po la ni 'khor gyi mchog gyur pa/ Nyi ma Zla ba la sogs snang byed bskor/ nub kyi phyogs na Sangs rgyas dga' ba yi/ dpal la Nye ba'i sras bryad bskor nas yod/ byang gi phyogs na gnod sbyin Dzam bha lar/ rTa bdag bryad kyis bskor ba'i gtso 'khor bzhugs/ dbus kyi ka ba'i steng na sku rten pa/ Thugs rje chen po sPyan ras gzigs kyi sku/ tshad dang ldan pa'i gtso bo de la ni/ Buddha lha 'khor drug bcu khru gang pas/ bskor ba de dag rin po che las grub/ mchod pa'i rnam grangs lha dang mnyam pa yod/ de dus 'di yi steng kha gcod pa'i tshe/ sgo yi thad du 'phrul gyi mi chen bzhi/ de yi g.yas g.yon 'Phrul 'khor dpag chen bzhi/ gzhan yang 'jigs pa'i rnam grangs du ma yod/ mi ni ma tshugs par yang bzhugs pa yod/ nam khar 'phur 'dra bar snang 'phyang 'dra yod/ de tshe de nyid steng khang gcad par 'gyur/"; "The description of the five *lha khang* in [the tomb's] interior is as follows. All of them have *mandala* platforms made of stone. Upon them groups of deities are placed. The main image [in the central *lha khang*] is sitting with its back against the pillar in the middle. This is the image of the "One who has not yet become a Buddha", holding a lotus and flanked by two Sems dpa' who bestow blessings. In the eastern [*lha khang*] are the eight "Deities who have already obtained *siddhi*" such as rje btsun sGrol ma. In the [*lha khang*] in the southern direction is Sangs rgyas sMan pa'i rgyal po surrounded by his retinue including Nyi ma and Zla ba. In the [*lha khang*] in the western direction is Sangs rgyas dga' ba sur-

rounded by the “Eight spiritual sons”. In the [*lha khang*] in the northern direction the main deity is Yaksha Dzam bha la surrounded by the eight rTa bdag (“lords riding horses”). [Painted] images are placed above the central pillar. Thugs rje chen po sPyan ras gzigs is the main image, reasonably sized, surrounded by the cycle of the Buddha, one *khru* in size. They are all painted with precious materials. Various offerings to the deities are placed [inside the *lha khang*-s], as many as the gods who are there. At the time when the *steng khang* was about to be closed, four huge miraculous men were placed at the sides of the door [as guardians?]. To their left and right are the four 'Phrul 'khor dpag chen. Moreover, there are many varieties of horrifying figures. There are also depictions of men being tormented, [others] floating in the sky and [others] hanging down (from the ceiling on the walls?). At that time, the *steng khang* [of the underground tomb] was about to be closed”.

Research is needed to ascertain the reliability of this narrative.

mKhas pa'i dga'ston adds (ibid. p.291 lines 19–21): “De nas bang so'i nang du lha khang lnga byas te phyi ri bo ltar byibs nas lo gcig tu rgyal blon 'bangs dang bcas pas skor ba byas cing phis kyang lo dus su mchod pa dang skor ba mdzad do!"; “Then five *lha khang* were made inside the *bang so*. Outside, [the mound] covering [the inner temples] is like a mountain. During the first anniversary, the king, ministers and subjects performed circumambulations and during every successive anniversary they performed rituals and circumambulations”.

The combined reading of these passages confirms that, according to the later literature, the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po was a unique structure, with both Buddhist temples and a *re'u mig* built in its interior at the time of its construction, and the later temple added externally on top of the *bang so*.

dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba adds that he heard accounts that self-originated statues were found when the five-temple complex in the interior of Srong btsan's *bang so* was opened (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.455 lines 10–13: “Ra sa bSam yas sogs gtsug lag khang phal cher nyams pa'i 'og du Khra 'brug gi rin po che'i gter khang kha 'bye zhing Srong btsan bang so'i sgo bye nas nang gi lha khang lnga po rnams dang bcas pa la bskor mchod byed cing rang byung gi rten kha cig kyang gsar du 'ong zhes gtam rgyud pa las thos so!"; “When, after most of the *gtsug lag khang* such as Ra sa and bSam yas declined, the treasure room of Khra 'brug was opened and the door of Srong btsan sgam po's *bang so* was opened, circumambulations were performed and offerings were given in the five internal *lha khang*, and some self-originated receptacle holders newly appeared. I have heard this from those who transmitted it as an oral account”). This confirms 'Jigs med gling pa's statement that the tomb contained Buddhist temples in its interior.

The *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* passage does not dispel the doubts as to when the temples inside the *bang so* were destroyed nor does it help to clarify to which period the oral account heard by dPa' bo goes back. The clue that Ra sa 'Phrul snang, bSam yas and Khra 'brug too were, at that time, in a state of decay may indicate that this was after the dark period recognised by the tradition as the one during which the Buddhist teachings languished in Central Tibet until *bstan pa phyi dar* was introduced.

Five temples in the *bang so*'s interior still existed in undocumented conditions at an early stage of *bstan pa phyi dar smad lugs* when great holy places of the past were reopened for worship.

A most intriguing aspect of dPa' bo gtsug lag's report is that an unspecified form of worship of Srong btsan sgam po's *bang so* was performed. However, the account heard by dPa' bo does not mention whether this applied to all the other royal *bang so*, which would mean that a cult of the tombs was resurrected after the ancient period, or was it focused on Srong btsan sgam po's tumulus inasmuch as it was the Buddhist burial mound par excellence according to the tradition.

gung btsan's was built at Don mkhar mda'. Its location is to the left of gNam ri srong btsan's. Its name is Gung ri gung chen ("celestial mountain, the great heaven"). Mang srong's is located to the left of Srong btsan [sgam po's]. Its name is sNgo bzher hral po ("green, moist and coarse"?). 'Dus srong 'Phrul rgyal's is to the left of Ma (sic for Mang) srong's. Its name is Seng ge brtsegs pa can ("with tiered lions"). Ag tshom's tomb was built at Mu ra ri. Its location is to the left of 'Phrul gyi rgyal po's. Its name is known as lHa ri gtsug nam ("divine mountain with the sky as its crown"). Khri srong lde btsan's was [also] built at Mu ra ri. Its location is at the back of that of his father (i.e. Mes Ag tshom), guarding it. It was built by him before his death. Its name is 'Phrul ri gtsug nam ("miraculous mountain with the sky as its crown"). Khri lde srong btsan's is in front of 'Phrul rgyal's. His wife thought that it might become filled with water, so she raised it internally. Its name is known as 'Phrul chen bzher ("moist great miracle"?) (but more often called rGyal chen 'phrul bzher (the "great king's moist miracle"?)", see, e.g., *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.133 lines 17–18 and *gTam tshogs* p. 292 line 21; also called rGyal chen, see *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.378 line 13). The location of Dar ma's is between those of 'Phrul [rgyal]'s and rGyal chen's (i.e. Khri lde srong btsan's). Its name is Bang rim 'khor lo can ("tiered and with a 'khor lo"). The location of 'Od srung's is behind that of 'Phrul rgyal. Its name is sKyes bu lha bsten (the "great being attending the gods"?). Mu ni btsan po's is in front of the right side of that of Ag tshom. Its name is lHa ri lding bu ("the divine mountain floating slightly"). Ral pa can's is to the left at Don mda'. Its name is said to be Khri stag smang ri ("the mountain founded on a tiger throne").

The *bang so*-s of the queens who ruled the country are as follows.¹⁰ Ong cong's *bang so* is to the left side of Don [mkhar] mda'. At its foot is that of Mong bza' Khri mo 'brong snyod. At the foot of the latter is that of Ru yong btsun mo mTsho yang. At the foot of the latter is that of mNo bza' Mar dkar. The tomb of Tshe spong 'Bri ma thod dkar is to the right of her father's. Its name is g. Yul mo'i thang bang so ("the *bang so* of the battlefield plain"). 'Dos (p.379) bza' sTong btsun's *bang so* is to the left of the 'Bro dkar yab. Tshe spong dMar rgyal's is at the tip of Don mkhar Shu po (is this the "barren part, crack" of Don mkhar or else, a place name, i.e. Don mkhar Shar po or Shor po?).¹¹ That of sNa nam dByibs stangs is at the left corner of those of the *yab sras* (i.e. Ag tshom and Khri srong lde btsan, since she was the former's wife and the latter's mother). 'Bro bza' sTong dkar Phyi mo lod's is a little just off the left corner of her son's (i.e. 'Dus srong) [tomb]. The latter eleven (i.e. the tombs of the nine queens and the two male members of the clans Tshe spong and 'Bro) are

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10. The text commits an oversight at this stage, for it says "the queens who did not rule". One should read "the queens who ruled". For the latter reading see the passage on p.380 line 8, which correctly deals with the same matter.
11. Grags pa rgyal mtshan addresses Don mkhar Shu po as Yar lungs Shar po in his *Bod kyi rgyal rabs*. This is where dPal 'khor btsan died in water sheep 905. Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Bod kyi rgyal rabs* (p.296,2 lines 4–5) reads: "dPal 'khor chu mo glang la 'Phangs dar 'khrungs/ bcu gsum bzhes nas yab 'das nas ni/ bco brgyad rgyal srid bzung ba'i bar la/... so gcig chu lug Yar lungs Shar por grongs/!", "dPal 'khor was born at 'Phangs da (sic) in the water female ox year (893). He held royal power for

said to be the *sras*-s of the IDe (above in the text *sras* is spelled *sres*; for a discussion of this term see below).

The eight queens who did not rule are lJang mo Khri btsun, sNyeng stengs sNyeng ma lod, 'Bro bza' Ma khang gSing ma lod, Tshe spong bza' Khri ma gung rgyal, 'Bro btsun Khri mo legs (a nun?), mKhar chen bza' mTsho rgyal, Zhang zhung bza' sNgo bzher Lig tig sman and 'Chims bza'. These eight were buried in *bang so*-s.

The ones who are not in the ['Phyong rgyas] *dur sa* are Bal mo bza' Khri btsun and Gi shang Ong cong, given that they vanished into the image of Thugs rje chen po. Tshe spong bza' rDor rgyal's body remained at Mod (mDo?) shod of mDo stod Khams. Since Thag de bza' Bu chung sman died beyond Ngag ma, she was buried at Zar po. This is Se sman of Gra (otherwise, but less probably: "she was put in a glazed earthen vessel"). Pho yong bza' rGyal mo btsun was left at dBu tshal. Since 'Chims bza' Mu ne lod was killed with a 'gag gri (i.e. she died either "by hanging" or "was strangled with a string") at 'Phang thang, she was left there. These six were left behind.

The ones who were buried in a *mchod rten* instead of a *bang so* were 'Bro bza' Khri rgyal Mang po rje, whose name, when she set out on the path of liberation, was jo mo Byang chub rje. A *mchod rten* was built for her in upper g.Yi. A *mchod rten* was also built for Cog ro bza' dPal gyi Ngang btsun ma, 'Chims bza' Rin chen rgyal ma gtsug, Tshe spong bza' lHun gyi lha mo and lHa lung bza' dPal rab 'byin rje. Apart from these, the other *bang so*-s [of the queens] are said to be *bzhi stengs sras*.

Now to talk about the *bang so* of those whose legitimacy to rule was discarded (*thang mtshams su phab pa*, lit. "thrown to the border of the plain"). 'Bro snyan lde ru's *thang mtshams* ("discarded brothers/thrown to the border of the plain"), 'Bro tsha rMu (p.380) btsun and Mong bu rGyal mtshan,¹² altogether two, are buried in two earthen tumuli near the one of sTag gu. The tomb of blon po Legs nam (called 'Ol god tsha blon Ger legs by IDe'u Jo *sras chos 'byung* p.108 lines 5–6), the *thang mtshams* ("discarded brother/thrown to the border of the plain") of gNam ri srong btsan, is to the left of sTag gu's tomb. lJang tsha lHa dbon's is to the left of his father's (Mes Ag tshom's). His tomb is circular. Mu tig btsan po's tomb is at Don mkhar mda'. The name of the tomb is sKya ldem ("tawny clay"?). Sad na legs' *bang so* is in the armpit of/below the *bzhi stengs* (i.e. in the natural amphitheatre, where the *bzhi stengs* was built? See below p.38). It is said that the tomb of I sho legs's *thang mtshams*

eighteen years after his father died when the former was thirteen (905) He died at Yar lungs Shar po when he was thirty-one in water sheep 923".

rGya Bod yig tshang (p.215 lines 5–6) spells it Yar lungs Shor po. For an assessment of dPal 'khor btsan's dates based on a cross-analysis of several relevant sources, which leads one to fix the date of his death at 905, see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* Addendum One.

12. See IDe'u Jo *sras chos 'byung* (p.107 lines 14–16), where they are named 'Bro snyan lde ru's *gcung po* (i.e. "younger brothers" otherwise, in this context, "victims of a bond of life"). *Yar lung jo bo chos 'byung* (p.50 lines 13–14) has btsun mo (sic) 'Bro za sMun btsan and Mon bu rGyal mtshan, but associates them with sTag gu snyan gzig/sTag by snya gzig.

(“discarded brother/thrown to the border of the plain”) was built in the sky. gTsang ma was left behind in lHo brag.

There are eighteen tombs where holders of the royal lineage are buried. There are two tombs of *khu chen* (“great paternal uncles”). There are nine tombs of queens who ruled the country [by giving birth to an heir apparent?] and nine of queens who did not rule (actually only eight).¹³

mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung's perusal (*phyed 'jog pa*) of *gSang ba yang chung* results in realising that it is conceived in three parts preceded by an introduction. The fact that its treatment of the tombs of the kings is often similar to those of well-known but later sources, which seem to be derived from it, indicates that it was the standard work for authors of the next centuries, who introduced some personal (not always reliable) deviations. Where *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* stands out in terms of rarity is in the next two sections (tombs of the queens and the members of the royal family discarded from ascending the throne). Only *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* and *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* are works that touch these topics but without the same in-depth appraisal.

mKhas pa lDe'u's classification of the burial methods

In the introductory part of his section of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*, mkhas pa lDe'u enumerates the various types of burial of the members of the sPu rgyal dynasty, and then proceeds to discuss and explain them.¹³ He identifies several burial typologies, which helps to establish some order in a matter of greatest obscurity. Kings and other members of the royal family were buried:

13. The structure adopted by mkhas pa lDe'u for his treatment of the tombs of the kings of the sPu rgyal dynasty echoes that found in 'Jigs med gling pa's *gTam tshogs*, a later work which had *chos blon mGar gyi dkar chag* as its main source (presumably a text which predated the two *lDe'u chos 'byung*, if it can indeed be attributed to the great minister). There are no signs that mkhas pa lDe'u used information from the latter work, which may be an indication that it was not available to him. This seems unlikely given the substantial difference between the *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* section in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and the treatment of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* in *gTam tshogs*.

1. in the ancestral cemetery in the sky;
2. in cemeteries made in *g.ya'* ("high mountain pastures") and *rdza* ("barren localities");¹⁴
3. at *spang thang mtshams* ("at the borders of grassy plains");
4. in rivers;
5. inside *bang so*-s built on inhabited land (their locations, names and types of construction are analysed);
6. as *'dabs su sbas pa* ("buried in a pit without a mound above");
7. as *byes [su lus pa]* ("left behind outside [the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery]");
8. in *mchod rten*-s.

The treatment of the burial customs adopted by the sPu rgyal dynasty continues with a number of rhetorical questions which the text asks itself concerning the burial of the various historical members of its genealogy in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*. mKhas pa lDe'u gives them answers in order to classify several types of interment. These queries are especially useful for focusing attention on some of the most important issues of the burial customs adopted in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*.

- The first is: "Which tombs were built before the king's death?" In the text that follows, mKhas pa lDe'u says that there was only one, that of Khri srong lde btsan. This is a well-known fact found in almost all the sources dealing with the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery. The assessment of mkhas pa lDe'u thus does not differ from others.¹⁵
- The text adds: "Were the kings' *khu chen*-s ("great paternal uncles"), who did not hold political power, buried in the cemetery?" mKhas pa lDe'u says that two of them were buried there but their identity and the reasons that led to the burial of two subjects in the royal cemetery are not explicated in his *chos 'byung*. The reference to the tombs of the two *khu chen* in the cemetery is another rare fact found in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* that expands consolidated ideas about the *dur sa*. The inhumation in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* of the two *khu chen* who were not ruling kings is a further deviation from the commonly held concept that the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* was reserved for the *lha sras btsan po*-s. This is a fact that overshadows the stereotype of defining the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* solely as the cemetery of the ancient kings of Tibet. It also served as the burial site of the *btsan po*'-s direct lineal kin (*khu chen*) but not of noble men coopted into the royal family, such as the *zhang*-s.

14. The idea of burying the body in an inaccessible place recalls the tradition of the Altai tombs built in the vicinity of glaciers (see, for instance, Jettmar, "Cross-Dating Central Asia" p.263).

15. *gTam tshogs* has the rare statement that the tomb of Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs, too, was built while this king was alive, which he personally constructed (ibid. p.292 lines 20–21: "De (i.e. Sad na legs) yang ma grongs gong du rang gyis brtsigs/"), which is not shared by the other sources dealing with the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery. The common notion of the Tibetan authors is that the tomb of Khri stong lde btsan was the only one built when the *btsan po* was alive.

- *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* wonders again: “Were the eighteen *jo mo*, who were chosen in marriage among the subjects, [buried] in a *ltang sres* or in a *dur* (on both terms see below)?”. And the text continues: “How many queens who did not hold political power were inhumed in a pit [without a mound above] (*'dabs su sbas*, lit. “buried below”) (see p.74), or was a tomb built for each of them? How many of them were buried in a *mchod rten*, instead of a *bang so*? Moreover, how many were left behind [by burying them] outside [the *dur sa*]?”.

That a conspicuous number of queens were tumulated in the 'Phyong rgyas burial ground apparently reserved for the kings of the sPu rgyal dynasty is the account's most outstanding deviation from standardised conceptualisations about the *dur sa*. One of the major features derived from *mKhas pa lDe'u*'s documentation of the queens' interment typologies in the cemetery is that their status at court, which varied considerably according to circumstances (for instance, whether they gave birth to children eligible to throne or became Buddhist nuns), led to different burial customs reserved for them.

The notion in *mKhas pa lDe'u*'s introductory part that, leaving aside those buried inside a *mchod rten*, there was a group wrongly said to be composed of eighteen, and another composed of “queens who did not rule” is rectified in the treatment specifically dedicated to them in the main body of the text. It is also dealt with in the conclusive sentences of *mKhas pa lDe'u*'s section on the *dur sa*.

This passage says that there were nine “queens who ruled” and nine “queens (but only eight are identified) who did not”, all of them buried in *bang so*-s. Hence the passage in the introductory section must be understood in the sense that nine queens rather than eighteen were buried in a *ltang sres* or in a *dur*. They were those who ruled.

The fact that eight “queens who did not rule” were buried in *bang so*-s might mean that one was buried in a pit (*'dabs su sbas pa*, i.e. “inhumed without a *bang so*”). Four queens had a *mchod rten* built for them in the *dur sa*, while one ('Bro bza' Byang chub rje) was buried inside a *mchod rten* at g.Yi phu, outside the 'Phyong rgyas burial grounds. Six other queens were not buried in the cemetery.

- *mKhas pa lDe'u* concludes with the question: “Among those who were not given royal power and whose legitimacy to rule was discarded, is there or is there not anyone buried in a *bang so*, [otherwise] buried in a pit [without a mound above] (*'dabs su sbas pa*), or left behind (*byes su lus pa*) [away from the *dur sa*]?” The discarded brothers of 'Bro snyan lde ru and gNam ri srong btsan were buried under two earthen mounds. Other discarded brothers according to *mKhas pa lDe'u*, namely lJang tsha lHa dbon, Mu tig btsan po and even Sad na legs (sic), were tumulated in *bang so*-s. gTsang ma was left behind in lHo brag.

A few remarks on the organisation of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*

The 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* expanded along two axes.¹⁶ The earlier complex was the one situated in the tableland known as Don mkhar mda'. It includes the tombs of Khri snyan gzung btsan, 'Bro snyan lde ru (?),¹⁷ sTag gu snyan gzigs (the Tag bu snya gzigs of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*), gNam ri srong btsan and subsequently Song btsan sgam po's son Gung srong gung rtsan,¹⁸ who died untimely.

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16. The sources dealing with the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* do not discuss the criterions that led the ancient people of sPu rgyal Bod to choose the area of 'Phyong rgyas as a suitable place for the burial of kings and other people of royal blood. Both Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* (Gangtok ed. p.144 line 6–p.145 line 6) and *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.146 line 16–p.147 line 6) describe the rites and customs centred on the royal cemetery but do not mention the features of the 'Phyong rgyas area, recognised as adequate for the purpose.

Among the literary works dedicated to the *sa dpyad* ("inspection of a land") genre which analyses whether the features of a locality are appropriate for a vast array of activities, such as building monasteries, hermitages, and *mchod rten*-s, there is *Kun rdzob bye ma*. Dealing with the inspection of localities suitable for the inhumation of people from all walks of life, it documents that this tradition continued throughout the centuries of Tibetan history, without preclusion on the basis of gender, age, or social distinctions.

Kun rdzob bye ma gives a few details concerning the features that make a land suitable for the construction of a cemetery (but it does not contain any reference to the *lha sra btsan po*-s and the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*). The concerned passage (*Kun rdzob bye ma* p.82 line 5–p.83 line 1) reads: "Dur sa'i sa mig bstan pa ni/ gong gi di la 'phur ri dang ni/ shing dkon yul gyi shing cig skyes/ rdo dkon yul gyi pha wang dang/ lam dkon yul gyi lam phran dang/ len la rtsi shing mang grang (p.83) bzung/"; "As for the description of a plot (*sa mig*) appropriate for a *dur sa* ("cemetery"), the earthen mound mentioned above should be as follows. A tree should grow in a place manifesting a scarcity of trees. [There should be] a big boulder in a place where there is scarcity of stones; and a minor trail in a place where there is scarcity of trails. [The dead body] once laid down (*len la*, lit. "having been accepted"), (p.83) [the spot] should have plants and cultivated fields in great numbers".

The description of suitable localities for commoners' cemeteries could not be more different from the organisation of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*.

17. mKhas pa lDe'u controversially locates the tomb of 'Bro snyan lde ru at Don mkhar mda' in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*, while in the opinion of most of the other authors after him it is situated elsewhere, at Zhang mda' (see *m khas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.377 lines 15–16 and p.33–34 in this essay of mine).
18. The appellative of Gung srong gung rtsan's tomb in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* gives is Gung chen (dPal brtsegs ed. p.373 line 6, *deb* ed. p.110 lines 12–13: "Bang so yang Gung chen Dun dkar gyi mda' sogs kha'I g.yon na yod do/"; "[Gung srong's] *bang so*, the Gung chen, is at the left margin of Dun (spelled so for Don) dkar (spelled so for *mkhar*) gyi mda' area (*sogs kha* spelled so for *sog kha*)".

An inspection of this area shows that these tombs were built according to an alignment along the east-west axis in the following order:

- the easternmost is the tomb of Gung srong gung rtsan, built with four angles (in accordance with the fact that this shape was introduced at first with Srong btsan sgam po's tumulus; see below);
- next to the latter's west side is the *bang so* of gNam ri srong btsan;
- next to the latter's west side is the tomb of Khri snyan gzung btsan (unless its present shape, rather than having been originally built with rough surfaces as mkhas pa lDe'u says, is due to erosion and decay);
- next to the latter's west side is the *bang so* where sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag bu snya gzigs was buried.¹⁹

Most primary sources count four *bang so* of kings in the section of the royal cemetery built along the east-west axis. However, the records of the inspections of the site published in the secondary sources show that a fifth tomb stands in the same area next to the west side of sTag gu/sTag bu's *bang so*,²⁰ perfectly aligned with the others. The only sources which count five *bang so* in this sector of Don mkhar mda' are the two *lDe'u chos 'byung*. The presence of this fifth tomb obliges one to consider the statement of these two texts that the tumulus of 'Bro snyan lde ru was built at Don mkhar mda' at least worthy of consideration.

The later complex of tombs is closer to 'Phyong rgyas and has *bang so*-s again in perfect alignment. The two closest to the village are those of Srong btsan sgam po and Mang srong mang rtsan,²¹ who were members of the historical backbone of the dynasty. This sector of the cemetery was built along the north-south axis and extended from 'Phyong mda' (i.e. the area at the foot of the 'Phyong rgyas village) across Don mkhar mda' (i.e. the portion of this ta-

19. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs ed. p.350 line 6; *deb* ed. p.97 line 13): "Des chab srid lo lnga bcur bskyngs so//"; "He (i.e. sTag bu snya gzigs) ruled for fifty years. This *rgyal po*'s *bang so* was built at the lower part (*mda'*) of Gung tings".

The different location is obvious. Most sources hold the view that sTag gu/sTag bu was buried at Don mkhar mda'.

20. See the maps of the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery in Panglung ("Die metrischen Berichte über Grabmäler der tibetischen Könige" p.363), and subsequently Chayet, (*Art et Archéologie du Tibet* p.79), drawn after the former.

21. There is concordance among sources on the location of Srong btsan sgam po (at mChong phu/'Phyong po), placed in the most prominent position in the *dur sa. mkhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.288 lines 18–19) says: "Yar lung 'Phyong po'i nang du bang so btab ste re mig dbus mar bzhugs su gsol//"; "[Srong btsan sgam po's] *bang so* was built within [the area of] Yar lung 'Phyong po and he was installed in the central *re mig* (so spelled)".

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung (p.118 line 13) spells mChong phu the locality where the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po was built: "Bang so mChong phu'i mda' ru brtsigs nas che chung tshad nu dpag chen mda' rgyang gang/ mchad pa pa gru bzhir brtsigs pa de nas byung//"; "[Srong btsan sgam po's]

bleland situated to the west of the earlier section of the cemetery) up to Mu ra ri,²² where the tombs of Mes Ag tshom and Khri srong lde btsan are located.

Beyond the tomb of Khri srong lde btsan, the slope of Mu ra ri becomes too steep to house a large *bang so*, so that the alignment was interrupted and the tombs of the succeeding rulers of the dynasty (Mu ne btsan po, Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs, Khri gtsug lde btsan Ral pa can) were built rather sparsely in the Don mkhar mda' area.

mKhas pa lDe'u documents two successive phases in the morphology of the 'Phyong rgyas tombs. He opens his treatment of the most ancient area in the *dur sa* aligned along the east-west axis with the statement that two of its tombs were shapeless heaps of earth like those of the bTsan bdun (i.e. the bTsan Inga plus the sMad kyi steng gnyis) at Yar lung Ngar/Dar ma thang. Although information concerning this pre-'Phyong rgyas cemetery in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *gTam tshogs* is worded in a slightly different manner, they are remarkably

bang so was built at mChong phu'i mda'. Its size is one *dpag chen*, about one arrow shoot. The tomb (*mchad pa*) is with four corners, [a shape] adopted form then on".

Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs (dPal brstegs ed. p.372 line 6–p.373 line 1) is of a similar view: "Nor skal gyi bang so dMu ri smug po mChong phu (p.110) de'i lung mda' na yod do//"; "[Srong btsan sgam po's] *bang so*, dMu ri smug po, worthy of the riches [in its interior], is in the *mda'* area of mChong phu").

Mang srong mang bstan is nearby that of Srong btsan sgam po. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* reads: "mChad pa ni Srong btsan gyi g.yon na sNgo bzher hral po bya ba yod do//"; "[Mang srong mang btsan's] tomb is to the left of Srong btsan. It is called sNgo bzher hral po".

The location and name of Mang srong's tombs is confirmed in *gTam tshogs* (p.291 line 21–p.292 line 2: "Mang srong bang so Srong btsan g.yon (p.292) na yod/ bang so de yang rin chen nor gyis bkang/ ming ni mDo gzher hral po zer ba yin//"; "Mang srong's bang so is to the left of Srong btsan's. (p.292) It is filled with precious items. Its name is mDo gzher (spelled so) hral po"). The text's emphasis on the abundance of riches deposited in its interior Mang srong's tomb stands out in comparison with other *bang so*-s, about which no allusion is made to similar amount of wealth.

22. An alternative name of Mu ra ri is gTsug lag gnam gyi ri, for *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* says that the tomb of Mes Ag tshom was built on this range (dPal brtsegs ed. p.378 line 2: "[Ag tshom's] *bang so*, 'Phrul ri, is on gTsug lag gnam gyi ri").

similar, hence one is led to surmise that *gTam tshogs*, too, are drawn from a common source (*gSang ba yang chung?*).²³

mKhas pa lDe'u, followed by several other authors, documents the next phase characterised by a change in the morphology of the tumuli saying that, from the *bang so* of Srong btsan sgam po onwards, the tombs were built with four corner plans (see above).²⁴

The earlier of the two tumuli said by mKhas pa lDe'u to be shapeless (lit. "one is unable to tell whether it is a rough earthen mound or has four corners") is the *bang so* of Khri snyan gzung btsan,²⁵ the first *lha sras btsan po* entombed in the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery.

23. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.377 lines 12–15) reads: "bTsan bdun man chad dur sa yul du btab/ de yang phul med sa phung btab pa 'dra/ Khri snyan gzung btsan Don mkhar mda' ru brtsigs/ de yang phul med gru bzhi mi shes skad/"; "From the bTsan bdun onwards the tombs were built on inhabited land. The name of the land was Yar lung Dar ma thang. Concerning this, [the tombs] were built as shapeless mounds of earth. Khri snyan gzung btsan's was built at Don mkhar mda'. With regard to it, it is believed that one is unable to tell whether it is a rough earthen mound or has four corners".

'Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* (p.288 lines 8–11) reads: "Yul gyi ming ni 'Phying yul Dar mo'i thang/ bang so yod med sa phung brdal 'dra yod/ Khri snyan bang so Don mkhar mda' ru brtsigs/ de yang yod med sa phung brdal 'dra yod/"; "The name of the land was 'Phying yul Dar mo'i thang. The [tombs] are like shapeless mounds of earth [about which one cannot tell whether] or not they were *bang so*".

Both sources agree in defining these tombs as earthen mounds and the later tombs as *bang so*, the defining characteristic of the latter class of inhumations being that they were built with four corners.

24. The architectural features of the *bang so* for the lHa thog ruler Gung chung, briefly described in *lHa thog rgyal rabs* (see above n.4), are peculiar, and attest to a remarkable change in conception from all those in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*.

The text does not clarify whether the building style with turrets surmounting a wall within tomb's complex was a peculiar solution adopted in Khams in the second half of the 8th century or depended on constructional necessities. The fact that the *bang so* was built on an apt spot for its erection may indicate that building turrets was a Khams pa way of conceiving these structurally arranged earth mounds different from those at the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*.

The evidence that assigns the life and deeds of lHa thog rgyal po Gung chung being to the reign of Khri srong lde btsan is found in the same *lHa thog rgyal rabs* (p.49 lines 4–6) which recites: "Jo Shaka mjal bar lHa sar byon/ mnga' bdag rgyal pos dpal gyi bSam yas bzhengs pa dang 'grigs pas/ gtsug lag khang la rten 'brel gyi sgo mo 'dzug chog pa'i yon mchod zhus/"; "[Gung chung] went to lHa sa to see jo Shaka [muni]. Given that the *mnga' bdag rgyal po* (i.e. Khri srong lde btsan) was making arrangements to build the excellent bSam yas, in order to have a karmic link to its *gtsug lag khang*, [Gung chung] asked to be a sponsor, so that the construction of its portal was possible".

The portal was made of a great number of sandalwood tassels.

25. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.169 lines 20–21) confirms this: "Khri gnyan mchad pa Don mkhar mda' ru brtsigs/ de yang phul med sa phung brdal pa 'dra/"; "Khri gnyan's tomb was built at Don mkhar mda'. As to [this tumulus], it is rough and resembles an extensive pile of earth".

The formulation of the passage about the tomb of sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag bu snya gzigs (lit. “originally it looked like a shapeless mass of piled earth; it was then expanded and [made] with smooth surfaces”) leaves little doubt that the shapeless mound of the tomb was modified at a later stage to assume a form—with four corners—adopted for those of the later kings.

Nothing, instead, is said about the structure of the tombs of 'Bro snyan lde ru (regardless of whether his tumulus was built at 'Phyong rgyas or Zhang mda')²⁶ and gNam ri srong btsan.

26. Contrary to mkhas pa lDe'u, Sangs rgyas gling pa, in *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* (Gangtok ed. p.156 line 6–p.157 line 2), opts for Zhang mda' as the location of 'Bro snyan lde ru's tomb: “rGyal po 'Brong gnyan lde ru la/ sku la snyung nad byung ba'i dus/ Zham mda' [note: Yar lung Zha mda'] phu ru bang so brtsigs/ re mig dgu pa'i dbus ma ru (p.157) tsandan gdung gi lding khri bcas/ rgyal po'i sku tshabs gser las bzhengs/ zangs chen kha sbyar nang du bzhug/ gser bre dgu dang dngul bre bryad/ rgyal po'i dkor nor bcas pa kun/ sa rdo shing gsum gya yi btab/ phyi rabs rgyal rgyud nor du sbas/ gter srung gnyer du gtad pa med/ lo zla dus tshod tshes grangs med/ 'don mkhan bsod nams ldan pa gces/”; “When rgyal po 'Brong (sic) gnyan lde ru fell ill, his *bang so* was built on the upper side of Zha mda' [note: Yar lung Zha mda' (spelled so)]. In the central of the nine *re mig* (p.157) a replica of the king in gold [was installed] on the throne, [which rested] on sandalwood beams. [The corpse] was placed inside a big copper vessel. Nine *bre* of gold and eight *bre* of silver plus other [precious items were] all [given] as offerings to the king. [The tomb] was closed with three seals of earth, stone and wood. [The tomb] was concealed as a jewel for future generations within the royal genealogy. It was not entrusted to a *gter srung* as guardian. It was deemed important that, on the innumerable days [marking] the yearly and monthly anniversaries, meritorious people [perform] recitations”.

Sangs rgyas gling pa (*Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* Gangtok ed. p.157 line 2–p.158 line 2) adds: “Zhang mda' phu na/ bang so re mig dgu pa zhid yod/ de'i dkyil na g.yam pa nag po mgo dkar po can gtsug ste nyug gi yod do/ de'i mtha' bskor der/ rgyar 'dom gang gru bzhi zabs su 'dom pa phyed dang gsum brgos pa/ tsandan gi sgo mo steng na/ rdo pad theg la gshib pa'i gseng/ rdo rug gis bsdams pa yod/ de'i 'og tu g.yam leb gshib pa yod de/ de rnam gsal la/ skas ldang khru gang pa nyis shu rtsa lnga pa zhid btsug nas snang gsal khyer nas bab cing bldas pas/ tsandan gyi gdung gnyis gshib byas pa'i steng na/ zangs chen mtshal gyis bkang ba'i nang du/ rgyal po'i sku gzugs rgyal po dang mnyam pa/ gser ga ru las bzhengs pa/ rgyal po'i na bza' sha ba can dang/ nya ris mas klubs pa bzhugs/ de'i phyogs mtshams bryad/ zangs snod bzhi/ dngul snod bzhir/ gser bre bryad/ dngul bre dgu/ dngul gyi gnam zhal che ba nyis (p.158) shu/ chung ba rin po che sna tshogs kyi phra btab pa bcu/ dngul bum gser phyed bkang pa bzhi yod/ gzhan re'u mig bryad so so re re'i nang na'ang/ zangs kyi bil ril nang du gser sil ma/ mi rgyab bzhi bzhis bkang pa yod/”; “There is a *bang so* with nine *re mig* (spelled so) on the upper side of Zhang mda'. A black slab with a white top is placed in its centre, which should be rubbed gently. It is square at its extremities. It measures one 'dom in cross section and two and a half 'dom in length. Above a sandalwood door there is a groove adjoining a stone bearing [the figure of] a lotus, to which it is connected by a cluster of stones resting on an adjoining flat slab below them. Having lit up [the area, one sees that] stairs are placed there, whose twenty-five steps are [each] one *khru* in height. One should descend them, carrying a lamp, and look about. The image of the king made of gold, matching [in size] the king's body] and wrapped in a royal robe with deer and fish patterns, has been installed inside a copper vessel filled with vermillion [and] placed on two adjoining sandalwood beams. In the eight directions

Given that the structure with smooth surfaces and four corners was introduced for the *bang so* of Srong btsan sgam po, one would expect that these two were shapeless like those of Khri snyan gzung btsan and sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag bu snya gzigs, but the available sources are contradictory.²⁷ One can venture to say that four tombs in the same area of the cemetery—not a fifth one, the *bang so* of Gung srong gung btsan, which followed the Srong btsan sgam po's typology—were constructed in the same way. The reading in the sources about their shapeless form seems reliable, or else their aspect may be the result of erosion.

The correspondence of passages in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *gTam tshogs* make their conceptual treatment of the early tombs in the sub-cemetery oriented along the east-west axis substantially similar.

gTam tshogs adds a further contribution, for it affirms that the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po's grandfather, sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag bu snya gzigs, was built according to the manner of the rMu/dMu (ibid. p.287 lines 7–11).²⁸ Elsewhere in his text 'Jigs med gling pa expands

[around the statue] there are eight *bre* of gold and nine *bre* of silver in four copper vessels and four silver vessels; twenty big silver *gnam zhal* (?) (p.158) and ten small ones, finely inlaid with a variety of precious stones; and four silver vases filled with gold powder. Moreover, in each of the [other] eight *re'u mig*, nuggets of gold [and] four addorsed men fill [the space] inside copper *bil ril-s* (?)".

27. *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* (p.170 lines 15–16): “Zhang mda'i bang so gson mchad zlum por grags/””; “The *bang so* [of 'Bro snyan lde ru] at Zhang mda' is known as gSon mchad zlum po (“the round tumulus [of the king who was buried] alive”)”.

Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Lung bstan bka' rgya'i skor* (in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* Paro ed. p.237 line 2–p.238 line 4, also known as *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba 'i dkar chag bkod* in the Gangtok edition of the same text p.156 line 6–p.157 line 2) talks about a tomb at Zhang mda' without identifying the individual buried inside it. The passage says that it was on the upper part of the locality and does not refer to any round shape. The identification of the tomb remains problematic.

If dPa' bo gTsub lag 'phreng ba account is reliable, the shape of 'Bro snyan lde ru's *bang so* would be a sign that round tombs were erected during the period of shapeless tumuli before *bang so-s* with four corners began to appear, and that circular structures built in the same area of Yar lung preexisted the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*.

The same text (ibid.p.172 lines 2–4) adds: “Bang so gru bzhir brtsig pa de nas byung/ gral ni Khri gzung bang so'i g.yas na yod/””; “From then on, the *bang so-s* were built with four corners. The location [of gNam ri slon rtsan's tomb] is to the right of Khri gzung's *bang so*”.

Does the inclusion of the statement on the adoption of four cornered *bang so-s* in the section dedicated to gNam ri slon rtsan mean that, in the view of dPa' bo gTsub lag 'phreng ba, this development coincided with the construction of his tumulus? This would anticipate the structural change of the *bang so-s* of one generation, hence before the tomb of Srong btsan sgam po.

28. In what consisted the *bang so-s* built in the manner of the rMu/dMu can be deduced by a comparative reading of two sources that deal with the tomb of sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag ri snyang gzigs. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.377 lines 17–19) says: “sTag gu snyan gzigs Don mkhar mda' ru brtsigs/ gral ni Khri snyan gong ngos g.yon na yod/ de yang phul med sa phung brdal ba 'da/ de nas phul skyed rtsig pa sog khar yod/ de'i ming Gung ri sog kha yin/””; “[The tomb] of sTag gu snyan gzigs was built at Don mkhar mda'. Its location is at the upper side (*gong ngos*) of Khri snyan's. Originally it looked

the adoption range of the shapeless mounds to a larger number of ancient *btsan po*-s. He says that the tombs of the gNam gyi khri bdun, Sa'i legs drug, Bar gyi steng gnyis, lDe brgyad and bTsan lnga were built in the manner of the rMu/dMu.²⁹

The rMu/dMu, as is well known, have a composite identity in the Tibetan tradition. As an ancestral tribe, they are associated with Zhang zhung by the *rus mdzod* documents, and thus they form a distinctive ethnos (see, e.g., Mu tsha sGa in *lDong rus mdzod* (f.15a = p.198–199), or *lDong rus mdzod* (f.15a = p.198–199) and *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.13 lines 10–11 and p.14 lines 7–11); dMu tsha sGa in *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags* (f.20a lines 2–5) or else rMu in *Khams rus mdzod* (f.32b lines 1–2); and sMar, a synonymous of rMu, in *Mi'u rigs bzhi lha bsel* (sic for *sel*) *lha mchod rgyas pa* (f.2b lines 2–3).

They are a class of deities—often paired with the Phywa—and assigned a realm in sTag gzig by the Tun-huang literature (e.g. P.T. 126,2). They are prominent gods in the Bon po religious system, being linked with the *gshen*-s (rMu gshen).³⁰

The wide implications that the complex significance of the rMu/dMu engenders would call for a lengthy digression. I confine myself to the observation that at some point in the history of proto-historical Tibet, or thereafter, a burial structure became associated either with Zhang

like a shapeless mass of piled earth, which was then expanded and [made] with smooth surfaces. Its name is Gung ri sog kha (“heavenly mountain with smooth surfaces”).

'Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* (p.288 lines 13–15) says: “sTag ri gnyan gzig Don mkhar mda' ru brtsigs/ gral ni Khri gnyan bang so'i g.yas na yod/ bang so rMu lugs brtsigs pa yin no zer/”; “[The tomb of] sTag ri gnyan gzig was built at Don mkhar mda'. Its location is to the right of Khri gnyan's *bang so*. It is said that this *bang so* was built in the style of the rMu”.

Hence, the style of the rMu adopted for the tomb of sTag gu snyan gzig/Tag bu snya gzig resulted in building a mound of shapeless earth.

29. *gTam tshogs* (p.305 lines 14–17): “Yab mes gNam gyi khri bdun/ Sa'i legs drug/ Bar gyi steng gnyis/ lDe brgyad/ bTsan lnga sogs pa g. Yung drung Bon gyi rjes su 'brangs nas bang so rMu lugs su brtsigs pa/”; “The ancestors gNam gyi khri bdun, Sa'i legs drug, Bar gyi steng gnyis, lDe brgyad and bTsan lnga were followers of g.Yung drung Bon. Therefore, their burial mounds were built in the manner of the rMu”.

30. R.A. Stein (*Tribus anciennes des marches sino-tibétaines* n.158 on p.55–56) thinks that the manner of the dMu (spelled so by him), used—the sources say—for the shapeless mounds of earlier kings does not concern the construction of a tomb, because the kings buried in this manner took their body back to the sky. This can hardly be accepted because of the notion that a *btsan po* placed inside a *bang so* did not take his body back to the sky. Moreover, the tombs of the rMu could not have come into existence before Gri gum btsan po left his body on earth upon dying. This is enough evidence to prove that these tombs were located on earth and not, as Stein implies, in the sky since, as he himself says, the heavenly rope had been cut.

A less well known notion of the location of Gri gum btsan po's tomb away from Bon ri is preserved in sKyabs ston Rin chen 'od zer's *sPyi spungs khro 'grel* (p.63 lines 3–5): “Lo ngam gyi dgung lo sum cu rtsa drug steng du Dri rum bkum ste/ bang so Yar lung bsNang ro tshal du btab pas/ Bod kyi rgyal bu'i dur btab pas/ Bod kyi rgyal bu'i dur la des snga'o/”; “Lo ngam assassinated Dri rum

zhung or the Indo-Iranic borderlands. The rMu/dMu burial structures are regarded in the Tun-huang documents and the later Bon po sources as rooted in these cultures.

Several of these points taken together show that a revision of the funerary monument built to bury the *lha sras btsan po*-s was introduced in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*, and this carries some historical weight.

Like mkhas pa lDe'u's text, *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* says that the tombs of the bTsan lnga are located at dur yul 'Phying lungs (spelled so) Dar pa thang (ibid. p.106 lines 15–16). *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*, instead, holds that they were buried at mCong po mdo'i mda'.³¹ *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.106 line 16) adds that “one cannot tell whether they have four angles [given that] they are heaps of earth resembling felt tents” (“*gru bzhir ma shes par sbra 'dra ba'i sa phung*”).³² *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*, too, says that they are piles of earth in the shape of tents. Hence, the structure of shapeless mounds, paraphrased as tents, was typical of the rMu/dMu. Their style was adopted for some of the older *bang so*-s, those situated along the east-west axis of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*.

Consequently, the structure as shapeless heaps of earth of the tomb Khri snyan gzung btsan until, at least, sTag bu snyang gzigs's *bang so*—the latter in the manner of the rMu—would have been adopted for the tombs of Khri snyan gzung btsan and the bTsan lnga too. This could

(spelled so) after the latter had past thirty-six years of age. His *bang so* was built at Yar lung bsNang ro tshal; he was the earliest to be buried in the cemetery of the Bod princes”.

The concept of using the term *rgyal bu* for the sPu rgyal king reflects the Bon po picture of the Tibetan past when Gri gum had not yet risen to prominence. His dominions are regarded as a principality. This is confirmed in the Tun-huang historical documents.

31. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs ed. p.346 line 3, *deb* ed. p.95 lines 2–3): “bTsan bzhi'o/ 'di dag gi bang so sa phung sbra 'dra ba mChong po mdo'i mda' na yod do//”; “They are the bTsan bzhi. Their *bang so*-s are piles of earth resembling tents, and they are located at mCong po mdo'i mda”.
32. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.106 lines 15–16): “De ltar bTsan lnga'i mchad pa dang dur yul 'Phyings lungs Dar pa thang du btab ste gru bzhir ma shes par sbra 'dra ba'i sa phung yod do//”; “Likewise, the area and the cemetery where the tombs of the bTsan lnga were built was 'Phyings lungs Dar pa thang. One cannot tell whether they have four angles [given that] they are heaps of earth resembling felt tents”.

mKhas pa'i dga'ston (p.169 lines 8–12) has a similar formulation: “bTsan lnga man chad bang so 'Phying yul btab/ bTsan lnga'i mchad pa sa phung sbra 'drar yod/ kha cig bTsan gsum las mi 'dod pa dang/ bTsan lnga ma dag zhes 'chad pa la snying po ci yang med de gSang ba yang chung sogs las/ bTsan lnga'i mchad pa sa phung sbra 'dra yod/ phul med mchad pa gru bzhi mi shes skad//”; “From the bTsan lnga onwards the *bang so*-s were built at 'Phying yul. The tombs of the bTsan lnga were masses of earth resembling felt tents. Some claim that there were no more than three bTsan [rulers] and that it is incorrect to say that there were five bTsan [rulers]. The heart of this discussion is more than anything else that, according to [sources] such as *gSang ba yang chung*, it is said that one cannot tell whether the tombs of the bTsan lnga have four angles, [given that] they are heaps of earth resembling felt tents”.

also apply to the tomb of lHa tho tho ri,³³ the last of the bTsan Inga. That the shapeless mounds were the structural choice of the period after the bTsan Inga is evinced from *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* which says that the tomb of 'Bro snyan lde ru, too, which it locates at Zhang po'i mda', was built in the style of the rMu/dMu.³⁴

The adoption of a type of *bang so* different from the one popular in the land of the rMu/dMu (Zhang zhung or sTag gzig, i.e. the Indo-Iranic borderlands) at the time of Srong btsan sgam po's inhumation is a sign that the culture of Upper West Tibet was uprooted. This was the consequence of the campaigns waged by this ruler, which caused the political annihilation of Zhang zhung. The death and ensuing construction of Srong btsan sgam po's *bang so*, which engendered this structural change, occurred one year after the crushing of Zhang zhung stod in 649, the last region of Zhang zhung to fall into the hands of the sPu rgyal dynasty.

mKhas pa lDe'u adds that the tomb of Ral pa can was built at Don [mkhar] mda', to its left side. Hence, the spot in the territory chosen by this author to look at the cemetery was from above the village of 'Phyong rgyas (i.e. from Ri bo bde chen). Given this vantage point, the other tombs (from Srong btsan sgam po's onwards) are seen to be standing on the right side of Don mkhar mda'.

At the back of Don mkhar mda' stands Mu ra ri. *gTam tshogs* adopts the same vantage point for the location of Mu ra ri in relation to Don mkhar mda' when it discusses the tomb of Khri srong lde btsan. It says: "This is on the Mu la ri (i.e. Mu ra ri) range, outside the left corner of Don mkhar mda'",³⁵ which shows in this case that the vista of Don mkhar mda' from the village is restricted to the area of the plain where the *dur sa* of the later kings is located, including the tomb of Khri Ral pa. This view of the *dur sa* neglects completely the other area of Don mkhar mda' where the tombs of the early kings stood, although all sources say that they are in this locality. Hence, this way of classifying the cemetery territorially minimises the importance of the early *dur sa*.

33. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs ed. p.349 lines 2–3, *deb* ed. p.96 lines 16–17) reads: "lHa tho tho ri snyan btsan gyi bang so yang Phyong rgyas kyi mda' na ri chur shas tsam gcig yod ce'o//"; "lHa Tho tho ri snyan btsan's *bang so* is at 'Chong rgyas (spelled so, *deb* ed. corrects it into 'Phyong rgyas) kyi mda' (i.e. lower 'Phyong rgyas) as a somewhat tiny (*chung shas*) mound".

Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs wavers a little in its assessment of lHa Tho tho ri's tomb in these sentences, for it does not openly place its location at Don mkhar mda' but at a vaguely defined 'Chong kyi mda'.

34. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs ed. p.349 lines 5–6, *deb* ed. p.97 lines 1–2): "Bang so ni dMu lugs Zhang po'i mda' na yod//"; "['Bro snyan lde ru's] *bang so* in the style of the dMu is at Zhang po'i mda'".

35. 'Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* (p.292 lines 10–11) "'Di Mu la ri rgyud Don mkhar gyi mda' byes kyi g.yon zur na yod//".

The localisation of the tumuli of the queens, and consequently how they relate to the other tombs in the cemetery, is not clarified in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* except in a few cases. This restraint adds further difficulty to a tentative *in loco* identification of these tombs, given that traces of them may have been obliterated by destruction or weathering. It could also be indicative of the fact that their location was already forgotten—or even that these tombs were lost—when *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* was written, and that this source obtained information from earlier evidence.

The cluster of four *bang so*, including that of Ong co the wife of Mes Ag tshom, formed a group of their own. Their location is in the area where Ral pa can was buried. Elsewhere *mkhas pa lDe'u* says that the *bzhi stengs* of the queens is in the *dur sa* next to the tomb of Sad na legs. Their identification and location are, hence, highly controversial and remarkably obscure (on them see below).

In the same grouping of “queens who ruled”, besides Ong co’s group of four, the other *bang so*-s of the *btsan po*-s’ consorts are sparsely situated between the tombs of the kings. Further, the text has a mere indication of the existence of the *bang so*-s of the “queens who did not rule” without any attempt to locate them.

It is also unclear whether the four *mchod rten*, in which queens were buried, were in the cemetery. Reference to them in this section on the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* may suggest that they were in the cemetery indeed, but the absence of any allusion to them in the concluding lines of *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* may be significant rather than due to an oversight.

As for the tombs of those whose claims to the throne were discarded, they were buried not far from those of their kin who sat on the sPu rgyal dynasty throne. The *thang mtshams su phab pa*-s of the early kings of the dynasty were inhumed in the part of the cemetery built along the east-west axis. Those of the later period’s discarded brothers were placed near the tombs composing the later subsection along the north-south axis (lJang tsha’s at Mu ra ri; Mu tig/Mu rub btsan po’s and Sad na legs’s (sic) at Don mkhar mda’).

A point not clarified by any source is the reason behind the abandonment of the *dur sa* built on the east-west axis at the time of Srong btsan sgam po’s death and the inception of a new cemeterial area with the construction of his Bang so dmar po. It would be equally interesting to know whether the disposition of the tombs (first along the east-west axis and then along the north-south one) and their alignment served a liturgical or geomantic purpose.³⁶

36. The reasons for the choice of axis of both parts into which the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery is divided and the orientation to the points of the compass of the corpses of the several *lha sras btsan po* who were laid to rest inside their *bang so*-s are equally unknown. The latter issue is picked up by another paragraph of *Kun rdzob bye ma*, but only with reference to the interment of commoners in later times.

Tombs of the kings

Although Tibetan authors in antiquity and Tibetan and Western experts in recent times have studied the royal cemetery of 'Phyong rgyas profusely, a conclusive and convincing identification of the *bang so*-s of the kings has never been achieved. This is because the sources, in some instances, are not in agreement. The location of some tombs has not yet been recognized and the identification of some others has not been definitively established.

The orientation to the cardinal points and the type of land appropriate for the burial of people born in different years of the duodenary cycle are mentioned.

Kun rdzob bye ma (p.83 lines 4–6) says: “Sa’i ’debs la stag yos shar ba bzang/ lho ’bring nub ngan byang ni ’bring yin/ rta ’sbrul lho bzang shar ’bring byang na ngan/ bya spre’u nub bzang shar byang ’bring la ngan/ byi phag byang bzang nub shar lho gsum ’bring/ gshed bzhi lho bzang nub byang ’brin, shar ngan/’”; “For those born in the years of the tiger and hare, an earthen construction is good in the east; in the south is average, in the west is bad and in the north is average. For those born in the years of the horse and snake, the south is good; the east is average and the north is bad. For those born in the years of the bird and monkey, the west is good, the east is average and the north is bad (*shar byang ’bring la ngan* sic for *shar ’bring byang ngan*). For those born in the years of the rat and pig, the north is good; the west, the east and the south, altogether three, are average. For those born in the four bad years, the south is good, the west and the north are average, and the east is bad”.

Ibid. (p.84 lines 1–5): “Lo skor bcu gnyis kyi dur sa bstan pa ni/stag yos gnyis kyi sa dgra ni/ nub phyogs brag dkar spre/ ’dra yin/ rta sbrul gnyis kyi dgra sa ni/ byang phyogs mtsho chung chu chen ’babs/ bya spre/ gnyis kyi sa dgra ni/ lho yi sa dmar ri ’dra/ byi phag gnyis kyi sa dgra ni/ lho nub thang chen gru bzhi mtshams bzhi lha khang dang mchod rten yod/ khyi ’brug glang lug bzhi yi sa dgra ni/ shar phyogs shing gcig yod/ der btab nyes skyon sna tshogs ’ongs/ shi gson gang yang du dbang yi/ ma bu dgra grogs ba rtsi bar shes/’”; “The description of a cemetery on the basis of the duodenary cycle is as follows. The hostile land for both [those born in the year of] the tiger and the hare is in the western direction with a white rock resembling a monkey. The hostile land for both [those born in the year of] the horse and the snake is in the northern direction with a small lake and a big river flowing. The hostile land for both [those born in the year of] the bird and the monkey is the red land in the south resembling a mountain. The hostile land for both [those born in the year of] the rat and pig is a big square plain land in the south-west with *lha khang* and *mchod rten* in the four extremities. The hostile land for both [those born in the year of] the dog, dragon, ox and sheep is in the eastern direction with a single tree. Being buried there, several calamities will occur and anything could happen to the dead and the living. Mothers and sons will be enemies and will view friends with [more] love”.

A distinction should be made between the second passage of *Kun rdzob bye ma* discussed in this note and a previous one from the same text (ibid. p.82 line 5–p.83 line 1), that I have mentioned in n.16 above. In both of them the matter of the presence of a tree is indicated, but in an opposite context. Whereas in the latter case the presence of a tree is a precondition for choosing an auspicious site for a *dur sa*, in the former, the presence of a single tree is considered to be inauspicious. The presence of a tree in a barren land is presage of fertility, whereas the presence of a lone tree on land to the east is deemed a sign of sterility and barrenness. Hence relativism reigns supreme in these notions.

SAD NA LEGS, KHRI RAL PA AND DAR MA

The reconnaissance of Khri Ral pa's tomb and the correct assessment of that of Dar ma, which is described in the sources as being situated between those of Khri lde srong btsan and 'Dus srong, are two major unsolved problems. Ascertaining Sad na legs's tomb is one more difficult proposition.

The identifications proposed by Panglung ("Die metrischen Berichte über Grabmäler der tibetischen Könige" p.362–363), which are so far the best, correctly place Dar ma's *bang so* on the left side of the alignment of tombs which extends from Srong btsan sgam po's to Khri srong lde btsan's, as viewed from 'Phyong rgyas village.³⁷ His assessment of Dar ma's tomb is correct inasmuch as the sources describe it as being situated between those of Khri lde srong btsan and 'Dus srong mang po rje.³⁸

Mu ne btsan po's tomb is again correctly identified by Panglung (ibid. p.363–364) as standing to the right of that of Mes Ag tshom, upon looking at the cemetery from the same viewpoint. These identifications are accurate, given the general agreement found in the sources concerning their location.

Those of other tombs are more controversial and therefore a wise sense of flexibility in assessing them should be the guideline.

For one, the location of Khri Ral pa's tomb does not apparently engender particular controversy, since most sources share the same opinion about it, but their statements are difficult to interpret in some cases. This is why the Western researchers who first wrote about the cemetery did not pass final judgement and abstained from attempting an identification (see Tucci, *The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings*; Hoffman, "Die Gräber der tibetischen Könige im Distrikt 'P'yongs-rgyas"; and Richardson, "Early Burial Grounds").

The location of Khri Ral pa's tomb is given in the maps of Panglung ("Die metrischen Berichte über Grabmäler der tibetischen Könige" p.363–364) and Suolang Wangdui ("Qiongjie xian wenwu zhi"). It has been endorsed by Chayet (*Art et Archéologie du Tibet* p.79). They locate this tomb on the Don mkhar mda' plain near the slope of Mu ra ri, at the corner near the narrow amphitheatre that this mountain forms at its base. The area where it stands is to the

37. *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* (ibid. p.424 lines 15–17) says that Glang dar ma's tomb remained unachieved for reasons not given in the text: "Dar ma 'i bang so 'Phrul dang rGyal chen bar/ bang rim 'khor lo can brtsigs rtsig 'phror lus/"; "Dar ma's *bang so* is between 'Phrul and rGyal chen. It was built [in the shape of] a *bang rim* with a '*chor lo*. It was abandoned when its construction was in progress".

38. For instance, *Nyi ma 'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs ed. p.420 line 6, *deb* ed. p.136 lines 11–12) says: "Glang dar ma's *bang so* is between the Seng ge brtsegs and rGyal chen and is called rGyal nor mang po 'khor lo can".

mKhas pa lDe 'u chos 'byung holds that the tomb of lJang tsha lHa dbon was circular and not Glang dar ma, which could be a sign that the discrepancy is due to a swap in identifications.

south-west of the sub-cemetery where the tombs of the early kings are found in the direction opposite to this group of four.

While *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* is straightforward in his positioning of Khri Ral pa's tomb, which he locates at Don [mkhar] mda', centuries later the matter created utmost difficulties to 'Jigs med gling pa. In his *gTam tshogs*, a work with one of the most accurate treatments of the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery, he has problems in identifying a tomb for Khri Ral pa. He wavers in search for a solution to the conundrum opting for a long and complicated mental detour.

'Jigs med gling pa's *gTam tshogs* (p.292 line 15–p.293 line 7) first confusedly talks about the location of the tombs of the three sons of Khri srong lde btsan, including Sad na legs, which—he says—oral tradition places in front of that of 'Dus srong at Don [mkhar] mda'.³⁹ It then introduces another tomb, also said to be in front of 'Dus srong's, as that of Khri lde srong btsan, called rGyal chen, as if he were a different person from Sad na legs, an erroneous notion already pointed out by Richardson in “Early Burial Grounds”.

After dismissing the possibility that the rGyal chen tomb (i.e. that of Khri lde srong btsan) is the one of the latter son's lDeng khri (see immediately below), *gTam tshogs* opts for a most eccentric equation of Ral pa with Khri lde srong btsan (ibid. p.293 lines 6–7).⁴⁰ Confusion

39. The oral tradition is confirmed by the written sources. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.133 lines 17–18) says: “Bang so 'Phrul gyi rgyal po'i mdun du byas te rGyal chen 'phrul bzher ro//”; “[Sad na legs's] bang so is built in front of 'Phrul gyi rgyal po's. It is the rGyal chen 'phrul bzher”.

This is also the opinion expressed in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs ed. p.406 lines 4–5, *deb* ed. p.128 lines 13–15), which locates it near the tomb of 'Dus srong: “Lo sum cu rtsa gcig rgyal srid bzung nas/ spyir yang lo lnga bcu rtsa bzhi bzhes pa me pho bya'i ston la/ sBrag kyi phu ru 'das pa'i bang so/ 'Phrul ri rgyal chen gyi logs la yod do//”; “After ruling for thirty-one years, in general [Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs] died at the age of fifty-four in the autumn of fire male bird (817) at sBrag gi phu. His *bang so* is at the side (*sogs la*) of 'Phrul gyi rgyal chen”.

40. 'Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* (p.292 line 15–p.293 line 7): “lHa sras Mu ne btsan po'i bang so ni/ Ag tshom bang so'i g.yas ngos mdun na yod/ ming ni lHa ri ldem po zer ro skad/ 'bring po Mu rub bang so Don mkhar mdar brtsigs/ ming ni Gyang ri gyang ldem bya bar grags/ tha chung Sad na legs kyang de'i phyogs/ la la 'Phrul rgyal mdun na yod par smra/ Khri lde srong btsan gral ni 'Phrul. rgyal mdun/.../ ming ni rGyal chen 'phrul gzhi bya ba la/ (p.293) de'i mdun la brtsigs kyi rdo ring la/.../gtan tshigs gzhan du rGyal chen bang so Sad na legs kyi sras lDeng khri bya ba'i yin par bshad kyang lo rgyus 'di bka' mi btsan/ sngon gyi yi ge rnying pa la 'di ltar bshad pa dpyad bzod cing/ Khri lde srong btsan ces pa ni mnga' bdag Khri Ral yin par sGra sbyor bam po gnyis pas bstan no//”, “The tomb of lha sras Mu ne btsan po is in front of the right side of Ag tshom's tomb. Its name is lHa ri ldem po. The tomb of the middle brother Mu rub was built at Don mkhar mda'. Its name is Gyang ri gyang ldem. That of the youngest, Sad na legs, is also in this direction. Some say that it is in front of that of 'Phrul rgyal. Concerning the location of [the tomb of] Khri lde srong btsan, it is in front of that of 'Phrul rgyal... Its name is rGyal chen 'phrul gzhi. There is a *rdo ring* in front of it... According to other evidence, the rGyal chen tomb is that of Sad na legs's son lDeng khri, but this account is not reliable. [On this matter] one must persevere in investigating old documents of ancient times and it

could not be greater and this allusion to the existence of the tomb of Deng khri does not make matters clearer.

Three sources are used in *gTam tshogs* for its treatment of the tombs:

- the text known as *chos blon mGar gyi dkar chag*,
- another is an anonymous (oral?) account, generically called *gtan tshigs* (“evidence”), and
- the last is the no less vaguely designated (oral?) account, called *gtan tshigs gzhan* (“other evidence”). It is this *gtan tshigs gzhan* that records the existence of the tomb of IDeng khri in the royal cemetery.

The passage in 'Jigs med gling pa's *gTam tshogs* (p.293 lines 3–5) reporting the statement of the *gtan tshigs gzhan* about Deng khri reads:

“gTan tshigs gzhan du rGyal chen bang so Sad na legs kyi sras lDeng khri bya ba'i yin par bshad/!”;

“According to *gtan tshigs gzhan*, it is orally recorded that the rGyal chen *bang so* (i.e. the grave of Khri lde srong btsan) is the tomb of lDeng khri”.

These sentences echo a passage found in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* but written in entirely different terms (ibid p.380 line 5). After mentioning the tomb of Khri lde srong btsan, *mkhas pa lDe'u* states that the alleged tomb of Sad na legs is “in the armpit of” (i.e. “below”) the *bzhi stengs* (see above).⁴¹ In the *gtan tshigs gzhan* the words *ldeng* and *khri* respectively replace *stengs* and *bzhi*, the *bzhi stengs* of *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*. The word *sras*, for once omitted in the sentence of *mkhas pa lDe'u* (but appearing elsewhere in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*; p.379 line 20 says *bzhi stengs sras*), is added in the *gtan tshigs gzhan* and read as “son”, and consequently the sentence becomes “lDeng khri, the son of Sad na legs”.

Hence the *gtan tshigs gzhan* has a deviant account from that of *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*. When confronted with a problem of difficult solution given the obscurity of the passage, *mkhas pa lDe'u* opts for an interpretation deemed improbable by 'Jigs med gling pa and thus dismissed by him. The absence of the word *sras* in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*—a key term in the passage of the *gtan tshigs gzhan* motivating the reading lDeng [khri] over that of *stengs*—may imply that *mkhas pa lDe'u* dropped the word *sres/sras* (part of the compound

is proved by *sGra sbyor bam po gnyis pa* that [the king] called Khri lde srong btsan was Khri Ral [pa can] (sic)”.

The wrong notion propounded in *sGra sbyor bam po gnyis pa* that Khri lde srong btsan was none other than Ral pa can has led quite a few late Tibetan authors such as the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho into confusion, as was already mentioned by Tucci (*The Tombs of the Tibetan Kings* p.11).

41. *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.380 line 5): “Sad ne legs bang so bzhi stengs kyi mchan no/!”.

stengs sras and thus *bzhi stengs sras* in this case) after he derived this information from a source (*gSang ba yang chung?*) similar to that of 'Jigs med gling pa's later *gtan tshigs gzhan*.

Hence mkhas pa lDe'u, like *gTam tshogs*, holds that there were two different tombs somehow obliging to opt for the absurdity to think of Sad na legs different from Khri lde srong btsan. This would have to be considered a simple oversight, were there not the remote possibility that some unidentified tomb exists/existed. In that improbable case, whose tomb could this be?

mKhas pa lDe'u's identification of a grave as that of Sad na legs, while he takes the tomb of Khri lde srong btsan to be another one, poses serious difficulties. Besides the fact that, elsewhere, mkhas pa lDe'u correctly associates this king with a different tomb—an important clue which rules out this grave being the tomb of Sad na legs—he includes this controversial tomb among those of the discarded brothers. Sad na legs was not one of them. This mysterious and mistaken Sad na legs must be a discarded brother different from the *btsan po* son of Khri srong lde btsan, a sign that *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* is corrupt in this passage.

The identification propounded by the *gtan tshigs gzhan* that an alleged tomb of lDeng khri⁴² was built in the *dur sa* would solve the problem created by mkhas pa lDe'u's wrong conclusion that this was the *bang so* of a discarded brother, mistakenly considered Sad na legs.

lDeng khri's *bang so* in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* is described in *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* exactly like that of his supposed father Khri lde srong btsan, which proves that reference is being made to the tomb of the latter king (ibid. p.226 lines 12–15). lDeng khri is known to *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* under the variant name lDen rje (ibid. p.359 line 14), but it is significant that this source does not try to assign him a tomb in the cemetery, given that it does not confuse the tomb known as *bzhi stengs sras* with lDeng khri.

The question of the identification of the *bang so* below the *bzhi stengs*, mentioned by mkhas pa lDe'u, remains unsolved. One hypothesis is that the alleged tomb of Sad na legs is none other than that of Mu tig btsan po, indeed a discarded brother, but, owing to a corruption in the passage, a single tomb has become two. So, the *bang so* of Mu tig btsan po would be the tomb in the Don mkhar mda' tableland to the immediate north-east of Ral pa's. This is the unidentified tumulus next to that of the latter king in the same direction, as shown in the maps published by Panglung and Chayet.

42. lDeng khri is the name of a son of Sad na legs according to *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (p.226 lines 7–11). His name is more normally given as lHa rje in other historical documents. He was one of the two sons born to Khri lde srong btsan before Ral pa can, the other being lHun grub, both of whom met untimely deaths.

'DUS SRONG MANG PO RJE

Several sources (e.g. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.119 line 16, *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.378 lines 6–7, *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* p.196 line 4, *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs dPal brtsegs* ed. p.376 line 7, *deb* ed. p.112 line 10) state that the name Seng ge brtsegs pa can (“the one with tiered lions”) was given to 'Dus srong mang po rje's tomb, ornamented as it was with a decoration of zoomorphic statues. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* documents that the tomb of Khri Ral pa, too, may have had images of heraldic animals, for they call it Khri stag smang ri (“the mountain founded on a tiger throne”).

The names of these tombs have some relevance, because, as well known, zoomorphic statues—one complete and one with its head missing—are still at present found on the tomb of Khri srong lde btsan. At least one of these statues is a lion, which rules out the possibility that it belonged to the tomb of Khri Ral pa. Hence, the statue would have more appropriately been part of 'Dus srong's tomb.

However, *gTam tshogs* (p.292 line 10) calls Khri srong lde btsan's tomb Bang so phyi rgyan can (“the tomb with decorations on its exterior”) in opposition to that of Srong btsan sgam po, termed Bang so nang rgyan can (“the tomb with decorations in its interior”) (ibid. p.288 line 20). The name of Khri srong lde btsan's tomb ('Phrul ri gtsug nam, “miraculous mountain with the sky as its crown”) suggests that the lion/lions were not transferred to his *bang so* but were originally conceived for it.

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung narrates the circumstances surrounding the death of 'Dus srong mang po rje in 'Jang at the hands of the Hor and his burial (see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* n.270). This account offers rare insight into the events following the death of 'Dus srong and the disposal of his corpse. It obscurely relates the refusal of two people, Cang dkar and Khong khri, to return his body. They had dismembered the corpse, so that it was only possible to bring back the right thigh to Yar lung and bury it in 'Dus srong's *bang so* (*lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.119 lines 14–16):

“Nyi shu rtsa dgu 'brug lo la 'Jang gi yul du Hor gyis skrongts te Cog ro Khong khri dang Cang dkar sor bzhis spur bzung nas tshur la bla sha g.yas pa las ma log zer//”;

“When he was aged twenty-nine in the dragon year (704), ['Dus srong mang po rje] was killed by the Hor in 'Jang. As Cog ro Khong khri and Cang dkar, having dismembered his corpse into four parts, did not release it, it is said that no more than his right thigh was brought back [to Yar lung]”.⁴³

43. mKhas pa lDe'u dates 'Dus srong mang po rje's death in 'Jang to the same year indicated in the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 97, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.20 line 9).

mKhas pa'i dga'ston (p.293 lines 14–15): “De yi bang so yab kyi g.yon du btab/ bang so lHa ri can zhes grags pa ste/ lcags ris bskor ba Hor gyi mi sdes brtsigs//”; “His ('Dus srong mang po rje's) *bang so* was built to the left of his father. It is known as bang so lHa ri can. The Hor community built a boundary wall around it”.

An alternative translation derived from reading *sor bzhi* as *sogs bzhi* is as follows:

“As four men, including Cog ro Khong khri and Cang dkar, did not release his corpse, it is said that no more than his right thigh was brought back [to Yar lung]”.

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.299 line 21–p.300 line 2) has a similar but simplified version of the incident. The passage reads:

“Lag ris su Hor dang Ga gon btul/ (p.300) byang phyogs su yul rgya bskyed/ 'brug lo la lJang du sku gshegs/ Cog ro Khong khro dang Cang dkar sor bzhis rgyal po'i spur bsrungs//”;

“As for his [military] legacy, ['Dus srong mang po rje] subjugated the Hor and Ga gon. He expanded his dominions in the north. In the dragon year (704), he died in lJang. Cog ro Khong khro and Cang dkar did not release the king's corpse, which was dismembered into four parts”,

or:

“Four men, including Cog ro Khong khro and Cang dkar, did not release the corpse of the king”.

This narrative offers hints about the custom of sharing the dead body of a prestigious enemy as a war trophy besides providing details about the burial of this *btsan po* in the 'Phyong rgyas royal *dur sa*. His funerary rites lasted for two years (i.e. 705 and 706) according to the *Tun-huang Annals* (see Bacot-Thomas-Toussaint (transl.), *Documents de Touen-houang relatifs à l'histoire du Tibet* p.19 (Tibetan text) and p.40–41 (transl.)), although the divine body of the *lha sras btsan po* had been profaned and the preparations typically made in the *spur khang* were possibly altered (R. Stein “Du récit au rituel dans les manuscrits tibétains de Touen-houang”; and Haarh, *The Yar-lung Dynasty* p.327–397).

Haarh (*The Yar-lung Dynasty* p.344) speaks of the mutilation of the corpse of the sPu rgyal *btsan po*-s by means of what he defines as an “incision” (this being his reading of the term *btol* that appears in the *Tun-huang Annals* twice). In one of these instances, the *Tun-huang Annals* say that, in the year of the snake 705, the act known as *btol* was performed on the corpse of 'Dus srong mang po rje at Mer ke. If the term is interpreted in the sense that Haarh suggests, the dismemberment of the king's body would have been performed away from 'Jang. The same source adds that he was buried in the following year. The commonly accepted meaning of the verb *btol* is “to pierce”, hence it conveys the sense of “perforation”, which is not implying dismemberment.

By contrast, both the lDe'u texts affirm that the dismemberment of 'Dus srong's body was performed in Nan-cha'o. Hence, either one is confronted here with a contradiction among sources or the term *btol* should not be read in the way Haarh reads it. Or else it refers to a ritual performance induced by previous dismemberment of 'Dus srong's corpse.

I think that these Hor were the people from lJang among whom he died. They were responsible for the dismemberment of his body.

The other instance of the practice of *btol* in the *Tun-huang Annals* refers to 'Bro Khri ma lod, the mother of 'Dus rong, and is ascribed to the year of the rat 712. She was buried in the following year. But the details of her death are not known and thus it is impossible to guess what circumstances led to the use of *btol*.

rGya Bod yig tshang, followed in this by *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, adds a further dimension to the link between the *bang so* of 'Dus srong mang po rje and the Hor of 'Jang that assigns them an active participation at 'Phyong rgyas in the tomb of this *btsan po*. dPal 'byor bzang po's text (p.177 lines 5–6) reads:

“Bang so 'di la lcags ri bskor nas yod/ de ni Hor gyis mi sde rtsigs so skad//”;

“This *bang so* is surrounded by a boundary wall. It is said that the Hor community built it”.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.293 lines 14–15) is slightly different:

“De yi bang so yab kyi g.yon du btab/ bang so lHa ri can zhes grags pa ste/ lcags ris bskor ba Hor gyi mi sdes brtsigs//”;

“His (i.e. 'Dus srong's) *bang so* is to the left of his father's. It is called bang so lHa ri can. It is surrounded by a boundary wall that the Hor community built”.

rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long pushes further the matter of the involvement of these Hor in the burial of the *btsan po*. Bla ma dam pa affirms that the tomb of 'Dus srong mang po rje was built by the Hor community *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (p.196 lines 1–3):

“‘Phrul rgyal Mag srong g.yon na/ bang so lHa ri can grags par gyur/ de ni Hor gyi mi sdes brtsigs pa lags//”;

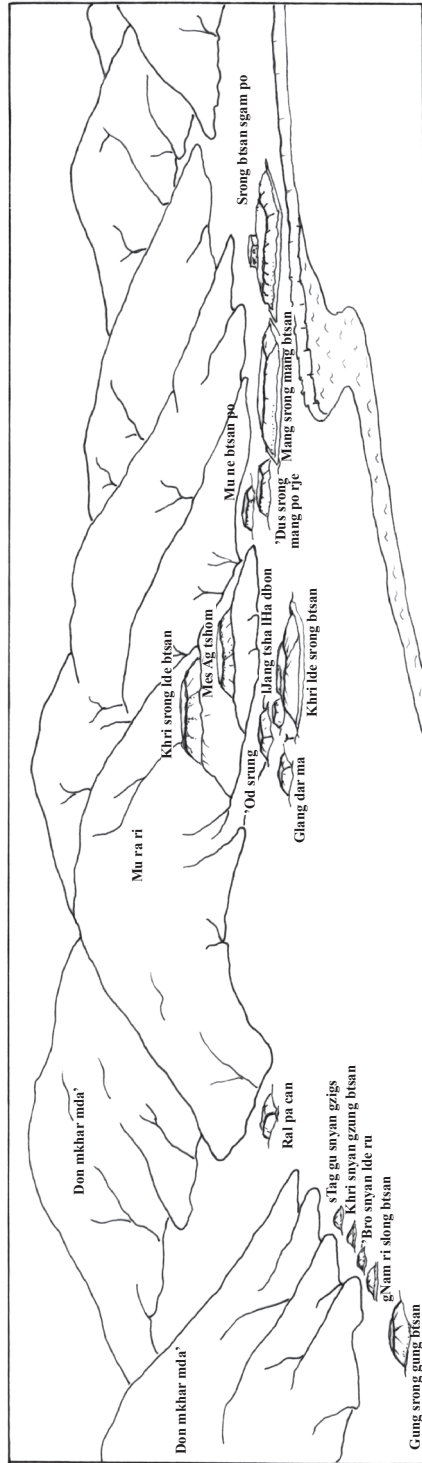
“[‘Dus srong's tomb] is to the left of 'Phrul rgyal Mag srong. It became known as bang so lHa ri can. It was built by the Hor community”.

This account does not even imply that a mausoleum for this *btsan po* was built in 'Jang, given that his tomb was built at 'Phyong rgyas like Bla ma dam pa himself says. In any event, these narratives follow and expand the two lDe'u authors' record of the peculiar handling of this king's body and entombment, different from the other sPu rgyal rulers.

At the end of this section, a few words must be spent regarding the dating of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* in order to place the cemetery in a historical context. The useful historical evidence as to when the *dur sa* was activated comes from mkhas pa lDe'u's statement that the first king buried in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* was Khri snyan gzung btsan. He reigned three generations before gNam ri srong btsan and thus during an unspecified span of years of the 6th century. Therefore, the cemetery was operative from such a roughly estimated period until the late 9th century. The death of 'Od srung, the last king to be tumulated in the cemetery, fell in 893 (see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* Addendum One). The 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* was used to bury members of the sPu rgyal dynasty for over three hundred years.

TOMBS OF THE *BTSAN PO-S* AT THE 'PHYONG RGYAS CEMETERY

seen from the local village
(not inclusive of those of the queens, discarded brothers and commoners)



Tombs of the queens

mKhas pa lDe'u's handling of the sPu rgyal queens' interment exceeds a mere identification of those inhumed in the royal *dur sa*. It is a classification of the types of burials based on the role they had in life and extends to the *btsan po*-s' wives who could not have a comparable treatment. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*, the only other source I know that deals with the queens' burial, is less comprehensive.

mKhas pa lDe'u's *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* confirms the evidence evinced from the inhumations of the *btsan po*-s that the sPu rgyal queens were not buried along with their husbands, unlike the funerary customs of the Scythians.

An impressive number of queens were entombed in the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery. Their *bang so*-s must have been built with fairly diminutive dimensions or have become eroded with the passing of time and the action of atmospheric agents. Or else they have been damaged by looters to such an extent that they went unnoticed in sources later than *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*. This is at least the case of tombs of the queens located, according to mkhas pa lDe'u, in the vicinity of well known *bang so*-s of the kings.

The identity of a few queens buried in the cemetery cannot be established in the following lists, and any attempt in that direction would remain no more than conjectural. Apart from deviant spellings between early and late sources—this is not so decisive inasmuch as the lists of queens given by mkhas pa lDe'u must have been based on knowledge of the later literature—the difficulty in identifying them depends on the fact that many of the queens of these lists were secondary wives and thus are not documented in the available literary material.

Known and unknown queens

The nine “queens who ruled” and were buried in the *dur sa* (their order is lDe'u's):

1. Ong cong (spelled so), wife of Mes Ag tshom, and the alleged mother of Khri srong lde btsan;
2. Mong bza' Khri mo 'brong snyod, wife of Srong btsan sgam po and mother of Gung srong gung rtsan;⁴⁴
3. Ru yong btsun mo mTsho yang, wife of Srong btsan sgam po or Mu ne btsan po;
4. mNo bza' Mar dkar, wife of Gung srong gung rtsan.
These four tombs are said to be clustered into a group by itself. The other “queens who ruled” were more sparsely buried:
5. Tshe spong 'Bri ma thod dkar, wife of gNam ri srong btsan and mother of Srong btsan sgam po;
6. 'Dos bza' sTong btsun, wife of sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag bu snya gzigs and mother of gNam ri;
7. Tshe spong dMar rgyal, wife of Khri srong lde btsan and mother of Mu ne btsan po, of Bai ro tsa na fame;⁴⁵
8. sNa nam dByibs stangs, wife of Mes Ag tshom and mother of Khri srong lde btsan; and
9. 'Bro bza' sTong dkar Phyi mo lod (spelled so for Khri ma lod), wife of Mang srong mang rtsan and mother of 'Dus srong mang po rje.

The eight “queens who did not rule” but who were buried in a *bang so* inside the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*:

1. lJang mo Khri btsun, wife of Mes Ag tshom;
2. sNyeng stengs sNyeng ma lod;
3. 'Bro bza' Ma khang gSing ma lod;
4. Tshe spong bza' Khri ma gung rgyal;
5. 'Bro btsun Khri mo legs;
6. mKhar chen bza' mTsho rgyal, wife of Khri srong lde btsan;
7. Zhang chung bza' sNgo bzher Lig tig sman, wife of Srong btsan sgam po; and
8. 'Chims bza'. Was she a wife of Khri srong lde btsan or mChims rgyal bza' Legs mo brtsan, secondary wife of Sad na legs, neither of whom ruled?

44. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.36 line 9) calls her Mong bza' Khri btsun, while *m khas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.298 line 19) gives her name as Mong bza' Khri lcam.

45. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.130 line 10) has Tshe spong gza' (sic) Me tog sgron.

The six queens who were not buried in the *dur sa*:

1. Bal mo bza' Khri btsun, wife of Srong btsan sgam po;
2. Gi shang Ong cong, wife of Srong btsan sgam po;
3. Tshe spong bza' rDor rgyal;
4. Thag de bza' Bu chung sman;
5. Pho yong bza' rGyal mo btsun, wife of Khri srong lde btsan; and
6. 'Chims bza' Mu ne lod, wife of 'Dus srong and mother of Mes Ag tshom?

The five queens buried in a *mchod rten* (i.e. the Buddhist queens):

1. 'Bro bza' Khri rgyal Mang po rje also known as jo mo Byang chub rje (wife of Khri srong lde btsan): she was buried at g.Yi phu;
2. Cog ro bza' dPal gyi Ngang btsun ma, wife of Khri Ral pa;
3. 'Chims bza' Rin chen rgyal mo gtsug, wife of Khri srong lde btsan;
4. Tshe spong bza' lHun gyi lha mo, wife of Khri Ral pa; and
5. lHa lung bza' dPal rab 'byin rje, wife of Khri Ral pa.

The most obvious implication of mkhas pa lDe'u's text is that both the "queens who ruled" and those who did not do so were buried on equal scale in the space of the cemetery left free by the tombs of their husbands. "Queens who ruled" were those who gave birth to future kings, including Kim sheng Kong co who, according to most of the later sources, allegedly bore Khri srong lde btsan.

Among those "queens who ruled", the fate of mChims bza', the wife of 'Bro snyan lde ru, is unclear, it being traditionally held that she walked alive into her husband's tomb together with her consort and a minister. She is not listed among the queens who had a tomb of their own. Among the "queens who did not rule" but who were buried in a *bang so* there is one called 'Chims bza' simply, but she was not the wife of 'Bro snyan lde ru, who ruled and walked alive into her husband's tomb. She had a status opposite to that of the 'Chims bza' mentioned in mkhas pa lDe'u's list among the "queens who did not rule".

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung says that the "queens who did not rule" were buried in tombs within the cemetery, but it is impossible to establish their location since the text does not say a word about the position of their tumuli. There are a number of minor graves in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* and their identification should be attempted, although this is, at first glance, to be a quite demanding task. On-the-spot scientific investigation is a must, not only for its own sake but because it will allow the elucidation of the burial system of the queens, or their identification although improbable.

The burial sites of the queens in a central part of the cemeterial area are a sign of the preeminence assigned to them, especially to those "who ruled". That their burial was utmost important, and thus their interment in the royal cemetery is nothing surprising, is also indicated by

the references in the *Tun-huang Annals* to the death and funeral rites of some of them. The *Annals* record the following concerning the queens:

- the funeral rites of Mun cang (i.e. Gi shang of mkhas pa lDe'u) Kong co in the year entry 683;
- the death of Mang pangs, wife of Gung srong, more commonly known as Khri skar, and her funeral rites in the year entries 706 and 707 respectively;
- the death of 'Bro bza' Khri ma lod and her funeral rites in the entries for the years 712 and 713 respectively;
- the death of bTsan ma tog, the mother of Khri lde gtsug brtan Mes Ag tshom, and her funeral rites in the year entries 721 and 723 respectively;
- the death of lHa spangs, possibly wife of the latter king, and her funeral rites in the year entries 730 and 731 respectively; and
- the death of Kim sheng Kong co and her funeral rites in the year entries 739 and 741 respectively.

mKhas pa lDe'u's *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* gives the stereotyped Buddhist version of Mun cang Kong co's death by vanishing with Srong btsan sgam po and Khri btsun into the foot of the Thugs rje chen po statue. The *Tun huang Annals*, instead, state that she died in the year of the sheep 683 (ibid. line 85, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.16 line18):

“dGun btsan mo Mun cang Kong co'i mdad btang/”.

Hence, the Buddhist version of her death is used in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* as a cover for the fact that either she was not buried in the royal cemetery or that the memory of her tomb had been lost by the time *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* was written.

mKhas pa lDe'u's treatment provides indirect evidence that some of these queens were legitimated to the point of having a cemeterial structure of their own (i.e. a *stengs sras/bzhi stengs sras/ltang sre*. mKhas pa lDe'u says that tombs of the queens were grouped together in a specific area of Don mkhar mda'. At least four tombs of the “queens who ruled” were clustered together. Those of Mong bza' Khri mo 'brong snyod, Ru yong btsun mo mTsho yang and Mong bza' Mar dkar, were situated at the foot of Ong cong's *bang so* either in a locality of the Don mkhar mda' tableland or else nearby it but no longer on the level ground. The structure as related four inhumations either separate but correlated or forming a single unit may prove useful in searching for them in the cemetery.

In the present state of knowledge, it is difficult to say whether this cluster of four tombs of the queens had some ritualistic or geomantic undertones. The four related tombs of the queens echo the alignment of the four *bang so* of the earlier king in the sub-cemetery along the east west axis, to which the bigger and structurally different *bang so* of Gung srong gung rtsan was added later.

These four *bang so* of queens were built in the same area of nearby Ral pa can's tomb, whose location is used in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* as a reference point for them. mKhas pa lDe'u locates the four tombs of the queens and Khri Ral pa to the left side of Don mda' upon viewing the cemetery from the village. This is further confirmation that the way the *dur sa* was viewed was from the 'Phyong rgyas locality.⁴⁶

The remains of the tomb of Queen sNa nam dByibs stangs, if they still exist, could be identified confidently. Her burial is at the common left corner (i.e. to the east side) of the contiguous *bang so*-s of the *yab sras* (Ag tshom, her husband, and Khri srong lde btsan, her son). Hence, the tomb of this queen was built between the main group of *bang so*-s in the part of the *dur sa* that extends along the north-south axis.

The *bang so* of 'Bro bza' sTong dkar Khri ma lod—the mother of 'Dus srong mang po rje—being at a short distance from the left corner of the one of her son—both probably towards Don mkhar mda'—must have been built at one of the eastern corners of 'Dus srong's *bang so*, more or less in front of that of Mes Ag tshom. Her tomb, too, could be pinpointed, hoping that a trace of it remains.

mKhas pa lDe'u does not provide any clue useful to identify the location of the *mchod rten*-s of the four Buddhist queens in the *dur sa*. The fifth, Byang chub rje, was buried outside the cemetery at g.Yi phu.

Yet to be investigated, too, are the locations of the *bang so*-s of the queens “who did not rule”, and the position of the *mchod rten*-s in the relation to them, for there is a pale literary clue that establishes a link between them.⁴⁷ Supposing that these *dung rten*-s were located in 'Phyong rgyas, as probable, they are no longer extant.

It would be enlightening to identify all the queens buried in the royal cemetery in order to ascertain from which period onwards the custom of burying them in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* was established. Some of their names pose insurmountable difficulties. From the provisional evidence gathered in these pages, the custom of giving queens space for interment in the cemetery was adopted as early as the time of sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag bu snya gsigs, the third oldest king of the sPu rgyal dynasty to be entombed in the royal cemetery, sometime around the second half of the 6th century and, more probably, towards its end. His wife 'Dos bza' sTong btsun is listed among the “queens who ruled” and, therefore, buried in the *dur sa*.

46. As already said, the cemetery range allowed by this view includes the tombs up to those of Khri Ral pa and the four queens on the extreme left. It encompasses the *bang so*-s built along the north-south axis up to the extreme right where the tombs of Mu ra ri and of Srong btsan sgam po at 'Phyong mda' are located. The *bang so* of Mang srong next to Srong btsan sgam po's belongs, according to the sources, to the area of Don mkhar mda'.

47. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.408 lines 2–3) says that, during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan, the queens who did not hold political power since they did not give birth to sons were led to study the Buddhist teachings.

None of the names of the queens I could not identify—sNyeng stengs sNyeng ma lod, 'Bro bza' Ma khang gSing ma lod, Tshe spong bza' Khri ma gung rgyal and 'Bro btsun Khri mo legs—can be associated with Khri snyan gzung btsan, the first king buried in the cemetery. His main wife was 'Bro sa (sic) rNgugs yang bzhed, the mother of 'Bro snyan lde ru (e.g. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.107 lines 1–2, while *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.250 lines 20–21 and *Yar lung jo bo chos 'byung* p.48 line 6 write 'Bro zang mo Dur yang bzher), nor is there any conclusive evidence concerning the principal wife of this *btsan po*, unless one (or more?) of these queens was a secondary wife of one of these two rulers.

Hence it is difficult to say whether the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* was used for the queens from its inception, and whether the custom of burying the wives in the same burial ground as their husbands was adopted from the outset or practised already before the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* was established.

The last “queen who ruled” whose *bang so* was erected in the *dur sa* is Tshe spong dMar rgyal, the wife of Khri srong lde btsan, who bore him Mu ne btsan po. Her burial in the *dur sa* means that the “queens who ruled” were buried in the cemetery at least until the late 8th century or the early 9th.

Concerning those who did not rule, a historical assessment of the period during which they were tumulated in the cemetery is more difficult, given that many of them are, as said above, not recorded in the extant literary material. Wives of Srong btsan sgam po—for instance his Zhang zhung pa wife—are mentioned among those whose bodies were placed in the cemetery.

That space at the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* was allotted to the “queens who did not rule” dates to not later than the mid 7th century. The custom was continued at least until the first half of the 8th century, as proved by the case of lJang mo Khri btsun, the wife of Mes Ag tshom.

In absolute terms, the practice of burying queens at 'Phyong rgyas lasted from around the second half of the 6th century at least until the time of Sad na legs and Khri Ral pa (first half of the 9th century) because *mchod rten*-s for some of these kings' wives may have been built in the *dur sa*. But it could be that the custom of burying queens was introduced before the second half of the 6th century and lasted until the late 9th century—this is when a *bang so* was built for 'Od srung, the last king to be buried at 'Phyong rgyas—since some of the queens said in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* to have been tumulated in the cemetery defy identification.

To sum up, *mkhas pa lDe'u*'s work documents five types of burial for the queens tumulated in the cemetery and elsewhere. Queens were buried in:

1. a *ltang sres/stengs sras*;
2. individual tombs (*bang so*);
3. a pit without a tumulus above (*'dabs su sbas pa*);
4. a *mchod rten*;
5. left behind in the place of their demise (*byes su lus pa*).

Gu ge pan chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* is the other source which mentions that queens of the *btsan po*-s were buried in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* although it handles the subject in reductive terms.⁴⁸ This text lists the tombs of six queens in all:

1. Kon jo *bang so*, to the right of Gung ri sogs kha (spelled so for *sog kha*, i.e. the tomb of sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag bu snya gzigs at Don mkhar mda');
2. Bal sa (spelled so) Khri btsun;
3. sNon za sMan dkar;
4. Mong za Khri mi 'bring (i.e. Mong bza' Khri mo 'brong snyod, wife of Srong btsan sgam po and mother of Gung srong gung rtsan);
5. Phyims (spelled so for 'Chims) za bTsan mo thog (wife of 'Dus srong and mother of Mes Ag tshom, see *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* dPal brtsegs ed. p.372 line 7–p.373 line 1, *deb* ed. p.110 lines 10–11); and
6. Khol za lHa mo legs.

The identities of the *btsan po*-s' consorts buried in these six tombs partially correspond to those of mkhas pa lDe'u's group of four "queens who ruled", clustered together in the *bzhi stengs sras*—Ong cong (spelled so), Mong bza' Khri mo 'brong snyod, Ru yong btsun mo mTsho yang and mNo bza' Mar dkar. The similarity of some queens' names between the two groups is enough to consider as probable that the two texts talk about the same block of graves.

A major point of divergence between the two sources concerns the foreign queens entombed there. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* says that the Chinese wife of Srong btsan sgam po—rather than the one of Mes Ag tshom—and her Newar counterpart (Bal za Khri btsun) were buried in the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery.

The inclusion of Srong btsan sgam po's Chinese wife in the cemetery is a point in favour to consider her a historical personage, which confirms the one piece of evidence from the sPu rgyal period (Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* lines 10–11, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12 lines 12–14). Hints from the dynastic period in support of Bal bza' being a historical personality rather than to consider her a literary creation are missing. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* is one source that contributes to the historicity of the Licchavi queen of Srong btsan sgam po with an argument that it not necessarily legendary, for it con-

48. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs p.372 line 6–p.373 line 1, *deb* ed. p.110 lines 1–4): "Gung ri sogs kha'i g.yas na/ Kong co bang so/ de'i 'gram na/ Bal sa Khri btsun/ sNon za Man dkar dang/ Mon za Khri mi 'bring dang/ Phyims sa bTsan mo tog dang/ Khol za lHa mo legs rnams te/ btsun mo drug gi bang so yod pa da dung yang 'dug go/"; "To the right of Gung ri sogs kha (spelled so for *sog kha*, i.e. the tomb of sTag gu snyan gzigs/sTag bu snya gzigs at Don mkhar mda') (p.373) is Kon jo *bang so* and, at its side ('gram na), [are those of] Bal sa (spelled so) Khri btsun, sNon za sMan dkar, Mong za Khri mi 'bring, Phyims (spelled so for 'Chims) za bTsan mo thog and (p.373) Khol za lHa mo legs, the *bang so*-s of six queens, which still exist today".

The location of the four tombs is precisely indicated. They stood (stand?) between the earlier cemetery area along the east-west axis and the group of later *bang so*-s in the 'Phyong po/Mu ra ri area.

cerns her burial, but the notion about her may be legendary and, therefore, this assessment is far from being definitive.

The textual authority on which both *mkhas pa lDe'u chos'byung* and *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* are based is *gSang ba yang chung*. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* mentions *gSang ba yang chung* as early as in reference to the Khri bdun rulers (ibid. dPal brtsegs ed. p.340 lines 2–3, *deb* edition p.91 lines 13–15). The adherence of both historical works to the same root text makes the identities of Srong btsan sgam po's queens buried in the royal cemetery and their number, different in the two sources, an almost indecipherable issue. It is rather inexplicable that two sources based on the same authority come to contrasting assessments. Whether or not rGya bza' and even Bal bza', if ever she existed, were buried in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*, remains an unsolved question despite its utmost importance.

The way the sentence in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* on the burial of Kong jo is formulated—the text is adamant in its assessment—leaves no doubt that, in the view of Gu ge pan chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan, Kon jo was buried inside a *bang so*. No such unconditional statement is provided in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* for the other five queens' type of tombs. He does not say that the other five were buried in similar graves, although it is possible that they, too, were buried in *bang so*-s.

If the burial in a *bang so* refers to Kong jo alone and not to the others, this alters the understanding of the clustered interment of the four “queens who ruled” provided by *mkhas pa lDe'u*. The six queens of *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* would have been buried on the basis of a criterion of individuality or, at least, the tomb of Kong jo would have been separated from the others.

Two “queens who ruled” out of *mKhas pa lDe'u's c bzhi stengs sras* (Mong bza' Khri mo 'brong and mNo bza' Mar dkar) are mentioned in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*. Gu ge pan chen's assessment of the Chinese queen as wife of Srong btsan sgam po may have brought him to include Bal za Khri btsun in his list. Four consorts of *btsan po*-s in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*'s list of six queens buried in the cemetery—Kong jo rather than Ong cong, Bal za Khri btsun, Phyims (spelled so for 'Chims) za bTsan mo thog,⁴⁹ and Khol za lHa mo legs—do not correspond to those of *mkhas pa lDe'u*.

The addition of two queens in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* could point to a different textual authority used by this text, despite both claiming indebtedness to *gSang ba yang chung*. But I suggest that *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* took inspiration from *gSang ba yang chung*.

49. In his three classifications of the queens buried in the *dur sa*, *mKhas pa lDe'u* has a ruler's consort addressed simply with her clan name. She is called 'Chims bza'. The chance that she was the Phyims (spelled so for 'Chims) za bTsan mo thog of *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* is weak to say the least and thus improbable.

chung. This indebtedness does not rule out that Gu ge pan chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan used another source, too.

The hypothesis that the tumuli of the six queens were not clustered but scattered within the cemetery, so that two of them were not recorded in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, is disproved by the language used in the passage of *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*. The expression *de'i 'gram na* (“at its side”) used for the tomb of the other five queens in relation to the one of Srong btsan sgam po’s Chinese wife shows that they were grouped together.

Gu ge pan chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s six queens are, except one, known to history. Besides the Mong/sMong clan’s significant role in the history of the plateau, Mong za Khri mi ’bring/Mong bza’ Khri mo ’brong snyod was a “queen who ruled”. A wife of Srong btsan sgam po, she bore Gung srong gung rtsan. sNon za/sNo bza’ sMan dkar, wife of Gung srong gung rtsan, was another “queen who ruled”. The one queen mentioned in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* who is difficult to identify is Khol za lHa mo legs who belonged to a clan that is hardly found in the records of the *lha sras btsan po* period.

Tombs of the *thang mtshams su phab pa*

mKhas pa lDe'u’s *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* compacts into a specific burial category in the ’Phyong rgyas *dur sa* the tombs of several little-known members of the royal family, apart from the *btsan po*-s of the sPu rgyal dynasty. Some of these royal family members were tumulated in a subsidiary position within the *dur sa* not far from the tombs of their relatives who sat on the throne. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* says that this was the case with ’Bro tsha rMu btsun,⁵⁰ Mong bu rGyal mtshan, blon po Legs nam, lJang tsha lHa dbon, Mu tig btsan po and even the wrongly identified Sad na legs.⁵¹

50. *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* (p.171 lines 9–12): “gDung gi bang so Don mkhar mda’ ru rtsigs/ gral ni Khra gzungs bang so’i g.yon na yod/ de yang phul med sa phung brdal ’dra/ de yi ’og na btsun mo ’Bro za sMun btsan dang Mon bu rGyal mtshan gnyis kyi bang so sa phung gnyis yod/’; “The *bang so* for [sTag bu snya gzigs’s] remains was built at Don mkhar mda’. Concerning it, it resembles a mound of earth flat and spread around. The *bang so*-s, mounds of earth, of btsun mo ’Bro za sMun btsan and Mon bu rGyal mtshan, two in all, are below [the latter tomb]”.

dPa’ bo gtsug lag phreng ba opts for an unreliable change of the name of ’Bro tsha rMu btsun, one of ’Bro snyan lde ru’s discarded brothers. In dPa’ bo’s formulation, ’Bro tsha (i.e. born from a ’Bro mother) becomes ’Bro za (“’Bro wife”). rMu btsun becomes btsun mo (“lady”) rMu btsan. The change in the name of ’Bro tsha rMu btsun would make females suitable to being discarded from the right to rule, a case never contemplated in the history of sPu rgyal Bod. They were not entitled to rule and therefore there was no need to discard them.

51. For a discussion of the use of Sad na legs’s name in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* to identify the tomb of an unidentified member of the royal family see above (p.28).

To indicate that these representatives of the sPu rgyal nobility were buried in the *dur sa* with a system and a location of their own, *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* says that they were *thang mtshams su phab* (“thrown to the border of the plain”). Chayet, in her masterly article “Les frères écartés”, discusses this term at some length introducing different cases in which this expression is used.

The term *thang mtshams su phab pa* has the connotations indicated by Chayet and by R.A. Stein before her (“Tibetica Antiqua IV. A propos of the word *gtsug lag* and the indigenous religion”, (English transl.) p.142–147). Chayet mentions the analogy of this term with the expression *ri thang su mtshams* (“at the border of the mountain and the plain”), in which *ri* stands for the overlord and *thang* for the subjects. Chayet concludes that *thang mtshams su phab pa* applies to the members of the royal family who were denied the opportunity to rule, an adroit interpretation.⁵²

The way Chayet understands the expression remains the principal and most meaningful sense of these words. One has just to add that the terms for the allegory of *ri* (the lord) and *thang* (the subjects) are provided by the well-known legend of gNya' khri btsan po who was brought down to the plain from the mountain lHa ri gyang to by members of several clans of subjects.⁵³

Most of the notions of discarded members of the sPu rgyal dynasty are treated in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* in strict relation to the burial of their brothers who sat on the throne (for these members see Chayet, “Les frères écartés” p.118–121). In other words, reference in this text to a discarded member of the sPu rgyal dynasty lineage is almost invariably preceded by another one to the tomb in which his brother, the *btsan po*, was buried. For instance, after describing the circumstances of the death of Srong btsan sgam po's brother, lDe'u Jo sras introduces the customary formula *thang mtshams su phab*, which refers to activities after his death (i.e. burial rites). Although Chayet says that the formula means exclusively “discarding from succession”, most of the cases discussed by her, all drawn from *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*,

52. *Kun rdzob bye ma* (p.81 line 4–p.82 line 1) says that entombing people between two different types of land is considered inauspicious by the tradition and thus should be avoided. Among the spots where interment should be avoided is the border between a plain and a mountain, others being the border between sun and moon (sic), and dry and marshy lands. Hence this passage of *Kun rdzob bye ma* provides an explanation for the ancient custom of adopting the burial system of *thang mtshams su phabs pa* (“throwing to the border of the [’Phyong rgyas *dur sa*] plain”) for the members of the *lha sras btsan po* dynasty who were denied accession to the throne. It confirms that these members of the family of the *lha sras btsan po* enjoyed some form of privileged attention due to their royal blood, for they were buried within the ’Phyong rgyas cemetery, but were cast out without any further acknowledgement of their status.

53. An explicit formulation with wording echoing the expression *ri thang* is found in *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (p.55 lines 6–7: “bTsan thang gong ma'i ri la babs/’”: “The *btsan [po]* descended to the plain (*thang*) from the mountain (*ri*) of before”).

refer to burial customs, but it is obvious that one event—interment in a subsidiary position in the *dur sa*—was the consequence of the other—being refused the throne.

The primary sense of the expression *thang mtshams su phab pa* concerns the specific burial custom reserved to the discarded brothers, while its broader implication refers to the habit of depriving all the members of the royal family, except the *btsan po*, of their right to rule.

lDe'u Jo sras deals with quite a few of the discarded members of the sPu rgyal royal family but does not mention, even in a single instance, where they were buried. Except for the few cases mentioned above, *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, too, does not clarify whether other members of the dynasty said to have been *thang mtshams su phab* by lDe'u Jo sras are to be found in the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery. This would have been possible only after the royal *dur sa* was established with the entombment of Khri snyan gzung btsan sometime in the 6th century. The brothers discarded after that *terminus post quem*, whose inhumation is not ascertained, are:

- Srong btsan sgam po's bTsan srong;
- Mang srong mang btsan's 'Azha tsha Mer ste;
- 'Dus srong's four unidentified brothers; and
- lHa Bal po/'Jang tsha lHa dbon's Lod po and Lod chung.

Apparently, they were not buried in the cemetery but the available literary material does not contain any clue as to where they were tumulated.

THE LDE BRGYAD

A passage in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* is a good example of the sense taken by the expression *thang mtshams su phab pa*. It documents the period in antiquity in which the system of discarding potential claimants to the throne was established. The text (p.104 lines 8–14) reads:

“sDe brgyad las bSe rñol nam thang mtshams su Thod dkar bya ba'i bu yin te/ I sho legs dang 'di gnyis gcen po thang mtshams su phab pas 'di gnyis kyi rgyud la Zhang lnga gcen po zhes grags/ 'di'i dus na blon po rig pa can gyis rgyal po mangs na 'gran zlar gyur pas gcig rgyal sar bzhag nas gzhan thang 'tshams su 'bebs te 'di gnyis thang 'tshams su phab pa rigs ni Yar gar gnang zhes bya ste Zhang lnga gcen pa zhes bya'o//”;

“Among the sDe brgyad (spelled so),⁵⁴ bSe rñol nam was the son of Thod kar whose legitimacy to rule was discarded (*thang mtshams su phab pa*). Since the elder brothers of I sho legs and this one (i.e. Thod kar), altogether two, were denied succession to

54. In order to introduce a few points concerning the discarded brothers, the lineage of the lDe brgyad must be mentioned here for the sake of clarity. According to lDe'u Jo sras, the lDe brgyad rulers were (1) rGyal rnam zin lde, (2) lDe 'khrul po gnam gzhung btsan, (3) lDe rñol nam aka bSe rñol gnam lde, (4) bSe rñol po lde, (5) lDe rgyal po, (6) rGyal po sprin and (7) bTsan lde (*lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.104 lines 5–7). They are commonly listed as seven rather than eight. One of the lDe brgyad is missing in this text's list and in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* too.

the throne, the lineage of the former two were known as Zhang lnga gcen po. During that period, a clever minister introduced a clear-cut distinction between the ruler and the common people. Since only one [person] was allowed to sit on the throne, the others' legitimacy to rule was denied. The lineages of those two [I sho legs's elder brother and Thod kar], whose legitimacy to rule was discarded (*thang 'tshams su phab pa*), were known as Yar gar gngang, who are the Zhang lnga gcen pa (spelled so)".⁵⁵

As shown by lDe'u Jo sras in the case of the lDe brgyad, the term *thang mtshams su phab pa* implies that to a single lord was granted authority, for his rank was distinguished from that of his subjects and the other members of the royal family. Overall, the expression *thang mtshams su phab pa* indicates that these royal family members were demoted from a potential ruling status to a condition slightly superior to subjects.

'OD SRUNG AND YUM BRTAN

The word *mtshams* is written *'tshams* in a meaningful passage of *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, in which the 'Od srung and Yum brtan's suitability to rule is discussed. The same spelling is used in another passage which says that lJang tsha lHa dbon was not given the throne and

55. As said by Chayet in her "Les frères écartés" (p.118–119), an immediate observation which derives from this passage is that bSe rñol nam, the third of the lDe brgyad rulers, was not the son of his predecessor, lDe rñol nam, but of his brother Thod kar. That bSe rñol nam succeeded lDe rñol nam is proof of an interruption in the lineage of the lDe brgyad group of rulers. The throne went to the collateral line of the royal family, which had been previously discarded. The name Zhang lnga gcen po was granted on two separate occasions—one to the line of I sho legs's elder brother and the other to the line of Thod kar, several generations from one another. The line of Thod kar must have been coopted to the right of bear the distinction of the name Zhang lnga gcen po inasmuch as their conditions was similar to I sho legs' elder brother's.

During the successive period—that of the bTsan lnga—*lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.105 lines 2–5) talks about another branch related to the Zhang lnga gcen po, known as the Zhang lnga gcung pa, who themselves, too, were prevented from claiming the throne: "rGyal Tho tho re slong btsan gyi gcung po thang mtshams su phab pa ni gcung lTab nag bya ba yin pas de'i rgyud la Zhang lnga gcung pa zhes grags so/ de yan chad rgyal rabs nyer gsum du Bod la chos med pas mun pa'i dmag dang 'dra'o/"; "The younger brother of rgyal Tho tho re slong btsan, whose right to the throne was discarded, was the younger brother (sic) lTab nag. His lineage became known as the Zhang lnga gcung pa. From then on, for twenty-three royal generations, there was no Buddhism in Bod, which was as if there were the troops of obscurity [instead]".

The difference between the Zhang lnga gcen po and Zhang lnga gcung pa lineages is one of seniority and juniority, as the terms *gcen* and *gcung* in their names indicate. They do not pertain to the same collateral line and the same generation, as they normally should. Rather, they refer to two different genealogical segments in the sPu rgyal genealogy.

The treatment of the Zhang lnga gcen pa and Zhang lnga gcung pa is one semantic indication of an institutional change in the organisation of proto-historical sPu rgyal Bod. Judging from the expressions used, the brothers whose legitimacy to rule was discarded were, until the third lDe ruler,

the elder ones, while from [rGyal/lHa] Tho tho ri slong btsan onwards, it was the younger brothers who were prevented from sitting on the throne.

Both *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* leave out these accounts, the implications of which are so extensive as to touch the institution of the *zhang blon*, a topic too complex to be discussed here.

It should be at least noted that the kinship of the discarded brothers was one of *khu* rather than *zhang* vis-à-vis their ruling nephews and thus that the term *zhang* (“maternal uncle”) does not apply to them. The *zhang blon* relationship is based on other considerations, in a word they concern marriage alliances.

There is no trace in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* that the lineages of the Zhang lnga gcen po and subsequently the Zhang lnga gcung pa, stemming from lHa Tho tho ri's discarded brother lTab nag, were buried in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*. It is not known where lTab nag, discarded in favour of lHa Tho tho ri, was laid to rest. He was not tumulated at the border of the 'Phyong rgyas plain, for he is not included among the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa's thang mtshams su pab pa*. It is only from 'Bro snyan lde ru onwards that the discarded brothers begin to be recorded in *mkhas pa lDe'u's gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa*.

Here are the passages in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* that talk about the discarded brothers:

- (ibid. p.105 lines 9–10): “De’i gcung po rGung mtha’ sNubs mtha’ ’Bring snya sNya ’bring bzhi thang su phab bo//”; “His (Khri thog rje thog btsan’s) younger brothers, rGung mtha’, sNubs mtha’, ’Bring snya, and sNya ’bring were discarded”;
- (ibid. p.106 lines 14–15): “rGyal po de’i gcung po lHa bzangs zhes bya ba thang mtshams su phab bo//”; “lHa bzangs, the younger brother of this king (lHa tho tho ri), was discarded”.
- (ibid. p.107 lines 14–16): “De’i (’Bro snyan lde ru’s) gcung po rMu btsan dang/ Mon bu rgyal mtshan gnyis kyang thang mtshams phab bo//”;
- (ibid. p.108 lines 5–6): “De’i (gNam ri’s) gcung po ’Ol god tsha blon Ger legs bya ba thang mtshams su phab bo//” (known as Slon kol to the *Tun-huang Chronicles* Chapter Four line 173 and line 179, see *Tun hong nas thon pa’i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.44 line 1 and line 13 respectively);
- (ibid. p.118 lines 4–5): “De’i gcung po Tshes spong tsha zhugs ni dmyal du bzhas pas me grir bkrongs te/ thang mtshams su phab pa’o//”; “His (’Dus srong btsan sgam po’s) younger brother from the Tshes spong mother died an untimely death in a fire during his sleep, and [therefore] was discarded”;
- (ibid. p.118 line 18–p.119 line 1): “Mang srong gi gcung po ’A zha tsha Mer ste bya ba (p.119) thang mtshams su phab pas grir grongs so//”; “Mang srong’s younger brother ’A zha tsha Mer ste was discarded owing to the fact that he was killed with a knife”;
- (ibid. p.119 lines 17–18): “’Di’i gcung po Ru spong tsha dang/ Dur bu’i bdag dang Phu chu’i bdag bya ba gnyis thang mtshams su phab bo//”; “His (’Dus srong mang po rje’s) younger brothers, Ru spong tsha and both Dur bu’i bdag and Phu chu’i bdag, were discarded”.
- (ibid. p.133 lines 9–10): “rNa nam lHa snang gi bu phyag tu lhung nas Shangs kyi Kyin tshal du bcugs te thang mtshams su phab bo//”; “The son of rNa nam lHa snang having fallen [victim to Mu tig btsan po], the latter was exiled to Kyin tshal of Shangs and so was discarded”.

Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang ’phrin las, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* (p.1035b line 30–p.1036a line 15) enlists the discarded brothers: “Thang mtshams su phabs/ rgyal rgyud sras mang po yod pa’i nang nas gcig rgyal por bskos nas gzhan rnams (p.1036a) ’bangs kyi gras su phab pa ste/ lDe brgyad nang gi bSe snol nam lde’i gcen po dang/ Legs drug nang gi I sho legs kyo gcen po bTsan lnga’i nang gi rGyal to re long btsan gyi gcung po lHab nag/ Khri thog rje thog btsan gyi

therefore discarded (ibid. p.300 lines 10–11). 'Tshams is the past tense of the verb 'tsham ("to assign, to be suited"), whence the notion *thang 'tsham[s]* and consequently *thang 'tsham[s] su phab* derive. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.369 lines 1–8) reads:

“Dar ma'i sras Yum brtan dang 'Od srung gnyis zhes pa/ de gnyis kyis rgyal sa ma zin bar du stong/ gcen la ma 'tshams par g/Yo ru dBu ru 'khrug skad pa/ de'i 'og tu rgyal srid re re las 'dzin pa med/ phu bo che shos kyis rgyal sa ma zin na zhal sngar 'bebs te/ khong zhal mthong pa snga ba yin zer nas rgyal po bas kyang zhan/ 'bangs las kyang drag pa'i thang 'tshams zer ro/

gcen la ma 'tshams zhes pa/ khong gnyis mnyam por skyes pa'i gzhung du byas nas phu bo nga yin pa la ma 'tshams pa'o/";

“The two sons of Dar ma were Yum brtan and 'Od srung. Until these two seized the throne, it remained empty. It is said that g.Yo ru and dBu ru fought as a consequence of the disagreement as to who was the elder. During their rule (*de'i 'og tu*, lit. “under them”), they were not able to wield more than fragmented political power, (alternative reading: “to wield more than the political power which was within their own sphere of influence”). [In trying] to establish which of the brothers was the elder in order [to know who should] occupy the throne, their [respective mothers] saying that [their own] had seen [the light] first, they were less than kings. Since they were slightly more noble than the subjects, people said that they were *thang 'tshams*.

gcung po/ rGung mtha' / sNubs mtha' 'Bring snya/ sNa 'bring bcas bzhi/ lHa tho tho ri'i gcung po lHa bzang/ 'Bro gnyan lde'u'i gcung po rMu btsan dang/ Mon bu rgyal mtshan gnyis/ gNam ri srong btsan gyi gcung po 'Ol rgod tsha blon Ger legs/ Srong btsan sgam po'i gcung po Tshes spong tsha gnyal du spyugs nas bkroings/ Mang srong mang btsan gyi gcung po 'A zha tsha Mer ke thang mtshams su phab pas 'gag khrir grongs/ 'Dus srong mang po rje'i gcung po Ru yong tsha Dur bu'i bdag dang Khu chu'i bdag gnyis/ Khri lde gtsug brtan gyi gcen po Pa tshab tsha lHa bal po dang/ gcung po Lod po/ Lod chung bcas gsum/"; “*Thang mtshams su phabs*. Among the many children in the royal lineage, one was appointed king and the others (p.1036a) were downgraded to the rank of subjects. Among the lDe bryad, [they were] the elder brother of bSe snol nam lde; among the Legs drug, the elder brother of I sho legs; among the bTsan lnga, lHab nag, the younger brother of rGyal to re long btsan; rGung mtha', sNubs mtha', 'Bring snya and sNa 'bring, the four younger brothers of Khri thog rje thog btsan; lHa bzang, the younger brother of lHa tho tho ri (sic: twice); rMu btsan and Mon bu rgyal mtshan, the two younger brothers of 'Bro gnyan lde'u; 'Ol rgod tsha blon Ger legs, the younger brother of gNam ri srong btsan. Tshes spong tsha (i.e. born from a Tshes spongs mother), the younger brother of Srong btsan sgam po, was killed in his sleep (*mnyal* sic for *nyal*), and [thus] eliminated. 'A zha tsha (i.e. born from an 'A zha mother), the younger brother of Mang srong mang btsan, was discarded [at] Mer ke, for he was hanged ('gag *khris* sic for *grir*). [Moreover, there were] Ru yong tsha (i.e. born from a Ru yong mother) Dur bu'i bdag and Khu chu'i bdag, the two younger brothers of 'Dus srong mang po rje; Pa tshab tsha (i.e. born from a Pa tshab mother) lHa bal po, and Lod po and Lod chung, [respectively] Khri lde gtsug brtan's elder brother and younger brothers, three in all”.

See elsewhere (p.64) in this essay indications that Srong btsan sgam po's younger brother was first discarded and then assassinated. He was not killed in order to discard him.

It is well known that there was no agreement concerning who was the elder. Although it is believed that both were born at the same time, they did not agree [declaring]: “I am the elder”.”.

Two meanings, therefore, derive from the way the expression is spelled and interpreted, despite their obvious similarity in pronunciation. One is linked to the spelling *thang mtshams su phab pa*. A second meaning is linked to the spelling *thang 'tsham[s] su phab pa*.

A key to the understanding of the expression *thang 'tsham[s] su phab pa* comes from the final words said by mKhas pa lDe'u in the first passage that assesses the status of 'Od srung and Yum brtan (“since they were slightly more noble than the subjects, people said that they were *thang 'tshams*”).

In this reference to 'Od srung and Yum brtan, *thang 'tshams* addresses to claimants to the throne, whose divine origin is only alleged. In their claim that they were of royal birth, they boasted of a status superior to that of subjects. But they actually were subjects. Hence, their recognised status was that of subjects.

Similarly, the expression *thang 'tshams* occurs once in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* in reference to the Zhang lnga gcen po lineage since their status had already been lowered to that of subjects.

By contrast, *thang mtshams su phab* applies to actual members of the royal clan who had a status superior to that of subjects. Discarded brothers, who were deprived of their royal status (*ri*) but were not subjects (*thang*), were consequently lowered in rank (*phab*) to the status of being buried at the border of the plain (*thang mtshams*). Given that 'Od srung and Yum brtan were considered subjects, they only were *thang 'tsham[s]* (i.e. “assigned to the plain”). The discarded brothers, or at least some of them, while deprived of their aspirations to the throne, were not deprived of the right to be buried in the royal cemetery like the kings, the “queens who ruled” and “those who did not rule”, their divine kinship not forgotten.

The traditional perception of 'Od srung's royal status is different from Yum brtan's. Most authors including mKhas pa lDe'u, hold that he was tumulated in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* in the manner of the ruling kings.⁵⁶ The passage in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* dismissive of his and Yum brtan's royal standing proves that there was no single vision of 'Od srung's status in ancient Tibet.

However, mkhas pa lDe'u is not too accurate in the use of the linguistic differences that carry variant meanings he himself adopts, for, in a single instance, he has been negligent of these linguistic differentiations. He opts for the spelling *thang 'tshams* in reference to lJang tsha

56. His *bang so* is behind that of 'Phrul rgyal according to *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* concurs with the assement of *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* both concerning the location and its name. *Nyi ma 'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs ed. p.423 line 5) places it in the same area but gives as reference to its location that it stands in front of the tomb of Mu ne btsan po. The name of 'Od srung's tumulus is rDo rje'i phung po.

IHa dbon's removal from the succession to the throne. IJang tsha IHa dbon was a member of the dynasty, whose royal credentials were indisputable.

IDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung does not provide any historical clues as to what point in their life and career the discarded brothers were deprived of their rights. One would presume that this happened when the discarded brother/brothers came of age, and thus could legitimately ascend the throne rather than when the heir apparent came of age.

SLON BKOL, GNAM RI'S BROTHER

The reference to the discarded brother of gNam ri srong btsan's (the gNam ri slon rtsan of the Tun-huang documents), named blon po Legs nam by mkhas pa IDe'u and 'Ol god tsha blon Ger legs by IDe'u Jo sras, but Slon bkol in Chapter Four of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*,⁵⁷ carries some hierarchical weight. His role as minister indicates that, although he was denied the chance to sit on the throne, he was given duties at court. There are no signs in the state organisation incepted by Srong btsan sgam po but continued by other *btsan po*-s until Khri Ral pa (*mkhas pa IDe'u chos 'byung* p.263 line 2–p.277 line 2), that brothers of the ruler were given ministerial positions, although similar appointments, not recorded in the literature, cannot be ruled out.

The active ministerial duties assigned to gNam ri's brother are described in the lines of Chapter Four of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* after the quotation of his name.⁵⁸ The *btsan po* appointed ad interim his brother Slon bkol to the highest position in his dominions. Slon bkol was temporarily in command. gNam ri's devolution of power to Slon bkol in order to handle the affairs of his dominions occurred because the ruling brother was engaged in the campaign

57. *mkhas pa IDe'u chos 'byung* (p.380 lines 2–3): “gNam ri srong btsan gyi thang mtshams/ blon po Legs nam sTag gu'i g.yon yod do//”; “The tomb of blon po Legs nam, the *thang mtshams* (“discarded brother/thrown to the border of the plain”) of Ngam ri srong btsan, is to the left of sTag gu's tomb”.

IDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung (p.108 lines 3–6): “sTa gu rnyan gzigs dang 'Ol god bza' bTsun sgron's son was gNam ri srong btsan te/de'i ring la mtha'i rGya Gru gu Hor dang gsum brtul/ Bod la Khri rtse 'bum gdugs kyi khirms bcas/ de'i gcung po 'Ol god tsha Blon Ger legs bya ba thang mtshams su phab bo//”; “During his reign rGya at the border, the Gru gu and the Hor were subjugated. In Bod, [gNam ri] promulgated the law Khri rtse 'bum gdugs. His younger brother 'Ol god tsha blon Ger legs was *thang mtshams su phab pa*”.

Chapter Four of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (line 173, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.44 line 1) reads: “bTsan po Slon mtshan dang/ Slon bkol mched gnyis...//”; “The two brothers, btsan po Slon tshan and Slon bkol...”.

58. (Chapter Four of *Tun-huang Chronicles* lines 179–180, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.44 lines 13–16): “gCung Slon kol dang/ yum sTong btsun gnyis ni/ slad na yul 'cha'o/ zhing bzhugs so/ btsan po Khri Slon btsan gyis/ zhabs kyis btsugste/ dmag khri dang chaste drangs so//”; “[gNam ri's] younger brother Slon kol (spelled so) and the mother sTong tsun, two in all, [were called] to look after the dominions since then on, [while] bTsan po Khri Slon btsan moved at the head of 10,000 troops under his command”.

against the dGu gri Zing po rje. Hence, the terms of Slon bkol's nomination diverged to some extent from those of the ruling king's discarded brothers tumulated at the border of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*'s plain.

When Slon bkol was given supreme authority over gNam ri's territories and control of the state's affairs, he had already been discarded from ascending the throne or else he would not have been delegated to rule ad interim. Or else, does his inhumation as discarded brother imply that, following his brief regency, he put a claim over the throne and antagonised his brother? As shown in this essay, the reasons to cast them out from the claim to the throne are not given in the documents. Was their banishment mandatory to avoid rivalry to the throne, as I imply, or were there specific reasons that led, owing to their behaviour, to discard them?

B'TSAN SRONG, SRONG B'TSAN SGAM PO'S BROTHER

It is well known that the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* mentions the fate of Srong btsan sgam po's younger brother bTsan srong (lines 7–9; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12 lines 8–11). Despite lacunas, it gives to understand that bTsan srong died in a fire in mysterious circumstances, amounting to assassination, as already pointed out by Richardson (“A Fragment from Tun huang” p.7–11). He was treacherously murdered with the complicity of his servant, after the two brothers had patched up their differences.

This event is placed in the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* after Srong btsan sgam po's victorious campaign against the rGya and 'A zha (635–638) and before the arrival of Mun chang Kong co to Bod yul in the same year (641) the legitimate Licchavi ruler was reinstated on his throne in the Kathmandu Valley (ibid. line 11; see ibid. p.12 line 14). These dates are meaningful because they show that, when bTsan srong was killed, Srong btsan sgam po had already been the *lha sras btsan po* for a good number of years. They prove that the brother's elimination had nothing to do with his losing the right of succession, which had occurred previously. There is no record that bTsan srong was tumulated in the royal *dur sa* at the border of the *dur sa*'s plain.

THE KHU CHEN-S

The two unidentified *khu chen* mentioned in the rhetorical questions that open mkhas pa lDe'u's *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* are kept separate from the discarded brothers in the concluding lines of his text. The whereabouts of their tombs in the shape of earth mounds goes unexplained. Their status as paternal uncles of the *lha sras btsan po*-s should put them on a pair with the queens and the discarded brothers because, like them, they did not ascend the sPu rgyal throne. Their burial in the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery is a sign that the status of the *khu chen*-s was raised to a position of preeminence not equal but similar to the *lha sras btsan po*-s, who were “sons of the gods”. Were the *khu chen*-s paternal uncles of the ruling *btsan po*,

with whom they shared the same *rus*, granted a status somewhat related to the divine nature of the *btsan po*-s? This would imply that a few brothers of the king of the previous generation, despite being discarded from the right to rule, were granted preeminence at court.

One wonders what the conceptual divide at court could have been that made them different from the *thang mtshams su phab pa*, but there are no clues to attempt a suggestion.⁵⁹

It is somewhat surprising that, in their handling of these kings' *bang so*-s, *Yar lung Jo bo chos 'byung* (p.63 line 16 and p.66 line 16 respectively) and *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.199 line 13 and p.206 line 16 respectively) define Mu ne btsan po and Khri Ral pa as *khu chen*-s without an explanation for this attribution.⁶⁰ *mkhas pa lDe'u* includes them among the kings who perpetuated the lineage and held royal power. Hence, it is not clear what was the role of the two *khu chen* mentioned in *mkhas pa lDe'u*'s rhetorical question and why *Yar lung Jo bo chos 'byung* and *rGya Bod yig tshang* have transferred the *khu chen* title to Mu ne btsan po and Khri Ral pa.

The concluding lines of *mkhas pa lDe'u*'s *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* go back to the two *khu chen*-s but, once again, the identity of these two dignitaries is not revealed.

59. In the absence of any identification, it is improbable that they were members of the Khu, the well-known clan of loyalists of the sPu rgyal dynasty kings, anciently settled in Yar lung. The Khu are mentioned, for instance, as the holders of the territory of Yar lungs So kha (spelled so) in the classification of the *dbang ris bco bryad* (the “eighteen divisions of power”), one of the *mkhos/khod drug* (or six institutions of the sPu rgyal Bod state organisation ascribed to Srong btsan sgam po; see *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.186 line 22–p.187 line 10 and Vitali, “The *dpa'sde gsum* and the three main fronts of sPu rgyal Bod's expansion in Central Asia” in this volume). They were able to retain control of their territory—an area of major contention during the *kheng log*-s—after the downfall of the dynastic system (see, e.g., *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.145 lines 20–21).

Chayet (p.116) points out the role of Ru la skyes/Ngar la skyes as king-maker of the sons of Gri gum btsan po after their father's death, an activity that gave birth to the Khu clan according to the later sources. More explicitly than *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* which she also cites (ibid. n.10), it is *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* which spells out the reason for the formation of the Khu clan (ibid. p.163 line 23–p.164 line 1: “Ming yang khu bo lha bu sMon gzung zhes/ btags shing drin du gzo ba gya cher byas/ (p.164) rgyal pos khu bor khur bas Khu'i rus su thogs skad//”; “The other name of khu bo lha bu sMon gzung was given to [Ru la skyes], and [the sons of Gri gum btsan po] repaid him extensively for his graciousness. It is said that it was because they respected him as their paternal uncle (*khu bo*) that the name of the Khu clan came into existence”).

60. That Mu ne btsan po could not, obviously, be considered a *khu chen* also derives from the fact that *mkhas pa lDe'u* has him tumulated in *bang so lHa ri lding bu*, which is near the tumulus of Mes Ag tshom. *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* (dPal brtsegs ed. p.423 line 3, deb ed. p.127 line 20–p.128 line 1: “Bang so ni/ Khri (p.128) stengs rMa ri skye bo ldem bu bya yod//”) calls his tomb Khri stengs rMa ri ri skye bo ldem bu. *lDe'u Jo sras* has a shortened version (ibid. p.133 lines 7–8: “Bang so ni Mes Ag tshom gyi g.yas ngos nas lHa ri dem bu bya ba yod do//”; “[Mu ne btsan po's] *bang so* is to the right edge of Me Ag tshom's. It is called lHa ri dem bu”).

LJANG TSHA LHA DBON AND MU TIG BTSAN PO

The body of lJang tsha lHa dbon, said by mkhas lDe'u to have been discarded from his right to rule, was not disposed of in a subsidiary location of the *dur sa*. His burial in a *bang so* situated in a centre spot of the cemetery did not differ from that of the kings who ruled. He was buried in a *bang so* like the *btsan po*-s. His tomb was built in the peculiar circular shape.

Mu tig btsan po, who was disgraced, was made to leave the throne. Hence, his right to rule was removed. Though subsequently pardoned,⁶¹ he was not reinstated. Unlike lJang tsha lHa dbon who never ruled, Mu tig btsan po has prominent tomb despite having been denied the right to the throne, for he briefly reigned, but he is classified among the *thang mtshams su pab pa*.

Although *thang mtshams su phab pa* refers primarily in the context of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* to the act of tumulating a member of the royal family, who did not rule, in a subsidiary position at the border of the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery, the cases of lJang tsha lHa dbon and Mu tig btsan po differ from it. The peculiarities of the treatment they received make one privilege the meaning of discarding from succession in their cases. They both were buried in a central location inside the *dur sa*.

mKhas pa lDe'u shows that the expression *thang mtshams su phab pa* does not refer to a particular type of tomb. Three types of burial for those whose legitimacy to rule was discarded are recognized in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*'s section on the cemetery of the sPu rgyal dynasty:

1. burial in a *bang so*;
2. burial in a pit without a tumulus above (*'dabs su sbas pa*);
3. under a shapeless mound of earth.

A fourth way of disposing the dead body whose right to rule was denied is not included by mkhas pa lDe'u into the *thang mtshams su pab pa* category, given that some brothers, known to have been discarded, were not tumulated at the border of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* plain. Their burial vaguely resembles the inhumation in the place of death (*byes su lus pa*), as in the case of the queens who were left behind without being brought to 'Phyong rgyas.

According to *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, the royal cemetery was the burial place of some of these non-reigning royal brothers during the segment of the dynasty prior to Srong btsan sgam po. Only during the times of the late sPu rgyal generations were some of its members who did not rule again laid to rest in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*.

61. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.399 lines 1–2) has a different view: “Mu tig btsan po sNa nam pa yis bkroings/ Don mkhar mda' ru Bang so skya ldem brtsigs/”; “Mu tig btsan po was killed by sNa nam pa. His Bang so sKya ldem was built at Don mkhar mda”.

mKhas pa lDe'u's remarks that the discarded brothers of 'Bro snyan lde ru and then the brother of gNam ri strong btsan were buried in the cemetery shows that the custom was carried out from sometime during the 6th century to the early 7th. The practice was reintroduced around the mid 8th century and continued until late in the same one hundred years or up to the early 9th.

All in all, this overview of the contents of the section in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* on the royal cemetery of 'Phyong rgyas shows that many more representatives of the sPu rgyal dynasty—female and male—were buried in the cemetery rather than its kings exclusively. Most impressive is the considerable number of the *btsan po-s'* wives buried in the *dur sa*.⁶² An attempt has also been made in the present work to highlight the existence of unassessed tombs and discuss the historical implications that derive from the burials in the *dur sa*.

The evidence provided by *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* cannot be ignored. A thorough campaign of archaeological studies based on the indications provided by the literature could reveal some of the secrets that the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* continues to conceal. While most of the major *bang so* in the cemetery have been more or less definitely identified, practically all the minor tombs are yet to be discovered, unless some or all of them have been obliterated by atmospheric agents or looting.

Discerning excavations could restore to the battered land of Tibet a great piece of its history.

ADDENDUM

Matters of semantics

To decode a few lexical obscurities with reference to technical terms which describe burial customs is crucial to ascertain the conception of some of the minor tombs *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* deals with in its *dur sa* section.

These terms appear several times in *mkhas pa lDe'u's dur sa* section with rather erratic spellings thus adding complications to an already difficult text. One needs to do some compacting and corrections in order to make them meaningful expressions. An appropriate example is *byes su lus pa* also spelled *rjes su lus pa*. Another is *ltang sres* with the variants *stengs sras* and *bzhi stengs sras* [*so*], which partially appears in the term lDe'i *sras*.

62. mKhas pa lDe'u's *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* enumerates forty generations of *btsan po-s* from gNya' khri to dPal 'khor btsan. Hence it considers the generations after Glang dar ma as legitimate. It adds that those buried in the *dur sa* were the ruling kings, the *khu chen-s*, the queens who ruled and those who did not. mKhas pa lDe'u is culpable of omitting in his résumé the *thang mtshams su pab pa* who were indeed buried in the royal *dur sa* and the queens buried inside a *mchod rten*, whereas he does not correctly count the queens, who were not disposed of in the 'Phyong rgyas cemetery, in the same concluding lines.

While the lexical obscurity *byes su lus pa* also spelled *rjes su lus pa* does not pose major problems, for it denotes the custom of “leaving the dead body behind [at the place of death]” rather than taking it to the ’Phyong rgyas *dur sa*, *ltang sres* and derivatives are extremely difficult to assess.

LTANG SRES/STENGS SRAS/BZHI STENGS SRAS [SO]/SRAS

A comparative analysis of the instances in which the expression appears in mkhas pa lDe’u’s work shows that *ltang sres/stengs sras/bzhi stengs sras [so]* mainly refers to the burial of the sPu rgyal queens.

One reference is found in the passage in which he talks about the eleven *bang so* composing the lDe’i *sras*. *mKhas pa lDe’u chos ’byung* (p.379 lines 3–4) says:

“Phyi ma bcu gcig lDe’i sras so skad//”;

“The latter eleven are said to be the lDe’i *sras*, i.e. the “[*bang so*-s] which are the *sras* of the lDe (?)”.⁶³

mKhas pa lDe’u chos ’byung (p.379 lines 17–20) adds elsewhere:

“Cog ro bza’ dPal gyi Ngang btsun ma/ ’Chims bza’ Rin chen rgyal ma gtsug/ Tshe spong bza’ lHun gyi lha mo/ lHa lung bza’ dPal rab ’byin rje/ rnams kyang mchod rten brtsigs/ de las bang so gzhan ma bzhi stengs sras so//”;

“A *mchod rten* was also built for Cog ro bza’ dPal gyi Ngang btsun ma, ’Chims bza’ Rin chen rgyal ma gtsug, Tshe spong bza’ lHun gyi lha mo and lHa lung bza’ dPal rab ’byin rje. Apart from these, the other *bang so*-s [of the queens] are said to be *bzhi stengs sras*”.

In another case, the tomb defined as a *bzhi steng* is mentioned in association with the alleged grave of Sad na legs (for a discussion of this see above p.41–43) and located next to it (*mKhas pa lDe’u chos ’byung* p.380 line 5):

“Sad na legs’s *bang so* is in the armpit of/below the *bzhi stengs*”.

One point is beyond doubt. The “queens who ruled” are said to have been buried in *bang so*-s, collectively described as the lDe’i *sras*, a term evidently related to *ltang sres/stengs sras [so]*. A *ltang sres [so]* or *bzhi stengs sras [so]* was, therefore, a type of *bang so* or else an arrangement of *bang so*-s.

Given the locations of mkhas pa lDe’u’s nine *bang so* of the “queens who ruled, it results that they did not occupy a common area in the *dur sa* and that a *ltangs sres/stengs sras* was

63. Should the name lDe in the expression lDe’i *sras* be read in terms similar to the reference to the rMu/dMu in the phrase “tombs of the rMu”? In other words, does the use of the term lDe, like that of rMu/dMu, describe a specific type of grave, and thus are lDe’i *sras* and related forms examples of this tumulation manner?

not a particular arrangement of *bang so* comprehensive of all nine in the cemetery. Those of Kong co, Mong bza' Khri mo 'brong snyod, Ru yong btsun mo mTsho yang and Mong bza' Mar dkar, strung out one after the other at the foot of Kong co's, were at mDon mkhar mda' near Khri Ral pa's tomb. Those of sNa nam dByibs stangs and 'Bro bza' sTong dkar Khri ma lod were farther away, near the group of tombs which includes the *bang so* of 'Dus srong, Mes Ag tshom and Khri srong lde btsan.

The nine tombs of the queens (plus the two other ones) called lDe'i *sras* were not contiguous and did not constitute a cemeterial unit on their own. Hence, a definition of the term *ltang sres/stengs sras* necessarily involves some peculiar structural feature.⁶⁴ That this is a feature proper to these tombs also derives from the fact that the expression *ltang sres* is connected and opposed to *dur* in the introductory part of mkhas pa lDe'u's treatment as one of several types of tombs of the queens in the cemetery.

The expression *ltang sres/stengs sras/bzhi stengs sras [so]* does not designate a cremation (if *sres* is corrected to *sreg*) for, in all instances, it refers to a peculiar type of *bang so*.

Sres (and its alternative form *sras*) is a verbal form of *sre ba* with the meaning of "to adjoin, mix, mingle, add". *sTengs* seems to be a variant of *steng* (lit. "layers placed above" or else "platform"),⁶⁵ while the word *so*, whenever this is part of the term under study rather than a terminative particle, stands for "tomb" (e.g. *bang so*).

The meaning of *stengs sras/ltang sres/bzhi stengs sras [so]* might be clarified only after an archaeological inspection and study of the area of the *bzhi steng* and other tombs of the queens are carried out with procedures proper to this discipline. One should attempt to locate and investigate the group of *bang so*-s at Don mkhar mda' which adjoins that of Kong co, if it still exists, to understand how these tumuli were conceived.

At least a preliminary observation can be made about the group of tombs next to Kong co's. The term *de'i rtsa na*, used by mkhas pa lDe'u to describe the position of the *bang so*-s of Kong co and the other three queens, does not imply *prima facie* a single structural unit. The term *per se* denotes the position of a structure laid at the foot of another. The same locution is found in *gTam tshogs* (p.292 lines 9–10) with reference to the *rdo rings* of Khri srong lde btsan, said to be at the foot (*rtsa na*) of his tomb.⁶⁶

64. Among the headings indicated in mkhas pa lDe'u's introductory part of his treatment of the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa* (see above p.18), under which the *bang so*-s are to be studied (their location, name and type of construction), reference to the *ltang sres/stengs sras* would fall under the category "construction types" (*brtsigs pa*).

65. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* uses both the spellings *stengs* (p.103 line 17 and p.108 line 2) and *steng* (p.103 line 1 and p.106 line 17) for the sTengs gnyis.

66. 'Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* (p.292 lines 9–10): "Ming ni 'Phrul ri gtsug snang bya ba lags/ de'i rtsa na rdo rings gcig kyang yod/"; "The name [of Khri srong lde btsan's tomb] is 'Phrul ri gtsug snang. At its foot is a *rdo rings*".

mKhas pa'i dga'ston gives further details about the *rdo rings* at Khri srong lde btsan's tomb (ibid. p.398 lines 16–21): "sKu yi bang so Mu ra ri la brtsigs/ gral ni yab kyi rgyab ngos g.yas na yod/ yab

Hence the term *de'i rtsa na* could indicate that, if they are still in existence, the tombs of Kong co and the other three queens should be searched for not only on a slope but also on a flat area. However, the impression one has from their description in the *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa of mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* is that they were terraced tombs placed in a row along the slope of the hill.

The location of the tombs of Tshe spong 'Bri ma thod dkar and her father may have been at Don mkhar mda', were it not for the name of the queen's tomb (Bang so g.yul mo'i thang, "the *bang so* of the battlefield plain"). This name seems to refer to a location elsewhere from the spot of the tombs of the four queens grouped together but still in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur*

kyi 'od pa srung ba yin no skad/ nang du dkor nor rin chen sna tshogs bkang/ ming du 'Phrul ri gtsug snang ba bar btags/ rtsa bar rdo ring yi ge can zhiig btsugs/ 'di ni Bon blon rnams kyi sems srung phyir/ rgyal po bzhugs dus nyid du brtsigs so skad/'"; "His (Khri srong lde btsan's) *bang so* was built at Mu ra ri. Its position is in the back of his father's, to its right. It is said that it protects his father's [*bang so*] from floods. It is filled in its interior with wealth including a variety of precious jewels. The name 'Phrul ri gtsug snang was given to it. A *rdo ring* (spelled so) with an inscription was erected at its foot. As to this one, it is said that, in order to follow through an idea of the Bon ministers, when the king[*'s body*] was installed [in the tomb], [the *rdo rings*] was erected".

The fact that this *rdo rings* is associated with Bon po ministers who promoted its erection makes one wonder what the contents of the inscription on this non-extant pillar were. It may set forth a vision of secular and religious matters different from both the inscription of the bSam yas *rdo rings* and the *bka' gtsigs* of this *lha sras btsan po's* edicts recorded by dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (ibid. p.370 line 12–p.376 line 17), and perhaps closer to those of the Zhol *rdo rings*.

Sangs rgyas gling pa has a brief description of the method adopted to make *rdo rings*-s. I combine two editions of *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* to get an accurate formulation of the passage of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* about their making, since both have mistakes. The Gangtok edition (ibid. p.152 lines 2–3) reads: "Chi rtags rdo ring bslang tshul ni/ gtsug lag khang dar ba'i dus/ stong sde'i mi rnams kun tshogs nas/ rdo la 'phrul gyi btags lung btags/ rgyal por spyang sngar drangs nas ni/ rig pa'i rdo bzo mkhan rnams kyis/ lcags zhun rdo rje pha lam gyis/ bzo bog zong thogs lag gis brdar/ rdo ring bzo legs tshul ni/ yab mes ji ltar mdzad tshul dang/ rgyal pos bka' lung stsal ba bris/'"; while the Paro edition (ibid. p.233 lines 2–3) reads: "Che rtags rdo rings blang tshul ni/ gtsug lag lha khang (sic) tshar ba'i dus/ stong sde'i mi rnams kun 'tshogs nas/ rdo la 'phrul gyi 'khreg lung btags/ rgyal po'i spyang sngar drangs nas ni/ rig pa'i rdo 'khan rnams kyis kyang/ lcags shun rdo rje pha lam gyis/ bzo bos bzong thog lag gis brdar/ rdo rings bzo legs tshul ni/ yab mes ji ltar mdzad tshul dang/ rgyal po'i bka' lung brtsal ba bris/'"; "The way *rdo rings*-s were erected as a sign of distinction is as follows. When a *gtsug lag khang* was completed, the men from the *stong sde*-s were gathered and a stone was tied with the help of a device to tie it. It was pulled into the presence of the king. Able stone carvers, using iron chisels [as hard as] diamonds, polished it by hand, [also] using [other] tools. As to how *rdo rings* were made [so] excellently, this was the method used by the ancestors to make them and the orders issued by the king were engraved [on them]".

The passage does not clear up beyond all doubt the way in which inscriptions were engraved on these monoliths. The edicts of Aśoka were inscribed with the pillars still lying on the ground before being raised up, because the circular shape of these shafts made the work of carving epigraphs by stonemasons more difficult.

sa premises. Tshe spong 'Bri ma thod dkar's tomb does not belong to the group of graves of those four. Her's is not included among the tombs addressed by means of the expression *de'i rtsa na* ("at the foot of the latter one"), as in the case of those other queens.

The possibility that the expression *de'i rtsa na* refers instead to a structural feature inside these *bang so*-s built as a single unit (a *bzhi stengs*, i.e. a tomb composed by four tomb rooms?) cannot be ruled out.

As for the term *stengs sras/ltang sres*, one hypothesis is to understand it as a "tumulus with compartments/sections". *sTengs sras* or rather *steng sres* could thus be a "*bang so* which contains burial compartments in its interior with a covering [of earth] above them". Consequently, *bzhi stengs sras* would be a "*bang so* which contains four different divisions or burial chambers (*bzhi stengs*) [to inhumate four queens separately but] joined together with a tumulus covering them".⁶⁷

A closely related reading is that *stengs* could have been used with a meaning not too dissimilar from that of *steng khri* or *khri'i steng*. These terms are meant to indicate the platform in the burial chamber on which the vessel containing the remains of the king and precious symbolic objects were placed.⁶⁸

Another possible assessment of the term *sras/sres*, which does not substantially differ from the one immediately above, is that it is a further spelling standing for a phonetical restitution of the word *se*, which is an alternative for *so*, and thus means "tomb".⁶⁹

The meaning of "support" for the terms *steng/stengs*, thus denoting the "platform" on which the body of the deceased was placed, is confirmed in the discussion of the tomb of 'Bro snyan lde ru in *rGyal po bka' thang*. A *steng* made with sandalwood planks was where the copper vessel containing the body of the *btsan po* was laid down (ibid. p.155 lines 7–8). Soon after this passage, the same source reiterates the concept, using the term *steng* in the expression *khri'i steng* or "support of the throne" (ibid. p.155 lines 18–20).

Hence a *stengs sras* would be a "tomb with a platform upon which the body of the deceased was placed" inside the burial chamber, *bzhi stengs sras* seemingly meaning a "tomb with four platforms" in its interior. It could have probably been arranged in a cruciform disposition, as

67. A more simplified structure than the one suggested here is described in Mallory and Mair, *The Tarim Mummies* (p.153–155 and fig.74). Tomb 89QZMZ at Zaghunlug (?) has two superimposed burial chambers and several layers of assorted material between them. The body of a woman without limbs was buried in the upper chamber together with that of an infant. Another infant was buried upside-down through an aperture in the five layers dividing the two burial chambers. The body of a woman severed in three pieces was buried in the lower chamber.

68. See Haahr, *The Yar-lung Dynasty* (n.61 on p.451), where he says, in reference (ibid. p.349) to the presence of a *ldeng khri* in the tomb of 'Bro snyan lde ru described in the well-known passage of *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.155 lines 7–8), that *ldeng khri* is synonymous with *steng khri* and *gdan khri*. He adds that it stands for a "throne or fundament on which the [funerary] objects were placed".

69. See Haahr, *The Yar-lung Dynasty* (p.381) in reference to line 52 of the document from Tun-huang published by Lalou in her article "Rituel Bon-po des funérailles royales", where the term *se* appears.

exemplified by the mound called Reshui at Dulan,⁷⁰ and thus differing from more common arrangement of other *bang so*-s in the interior of which there is a *re'u mig* composed by nine chambers in a grid of three by three.

STENG/STENG KHANG

There are two references in *gTam tshogs* to the term *steng* (*stengs*?) in the relation to the interior of Srong btsan sgam po's tomb. One is that, inside it, there were *mandala steng-s*.⁷¹ The expression seems to mean that inner platforms arranged in that shape were placed inside this underground structure.

The other refers to the closing of the *steng khang* of Srong btsan sgam po's *bang so*. The section in *gTam tshogs* that describes the burial chamber of this *btsan po*'s tomb ends with the sentence:

“At that time, the *steng khang* was about to be sealed”.⁷²

It would thus seem that burial chambers were called *steng khang*.⁷³ Hence the closing of the *steng khang* refers to the sealing of the chambers (*khang*) where platforms (*steng/stengs*) were located in order to place the effigy or the body of the deceased and the burial paraphernalia upon them.

BZHI STENGs

The *bzhi stengs* “in the armpit (*mchan*) of (i.e. “below”)” the tomb, wrongly said in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* to be Sad na legs's, apparently was (is?) the only one in the 'Phyong rgyas *dur sa*. However, another slightly different reference—the one to *bzhi stengs* [*sras*], often mentioned in the previous pages—is for the queens who were not buried inside a *mchod rten* (see above). Going by exclusion—disregarding the locations of the tombs of the “queens who ruled” and those Buddhist—the only queens placed in *bzhi stengs* [*sras-s*] could have been no

70. See the paper read by Heller at the 8th Seminar of the Association for Tibetan Studies (Bloomington July 1998), entitled “Preliminary Remarks on Dulan rdzong: 8th Century Tibetan Tombs?” for one illustration of the tomb known as Reshui in the Dulan cemetery. Its interior of is exposed nowadays and thus one can observe that its inner chamber is in the form of a cross. I wish to thank Amy Heller for giving me a provisional text of her paper even before she completed it.

71. 'Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* (p.290 lines 4–5): “Thams chad rdo la byas pa'i mandala steng/!” “All [the *lha khang* in the interior of Srong btsan sgam po's *bang so*] have mandalic platforms paved with stones”.

72. 'Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* (p.290 line 21): “De tshe de nyid steng khang gcad par 'gyur/!”.

73. It goes by itself that *sTeng khang* should not be read as “room on the upper floor” reference to a *re'u mig* inside a tomb.

other than “those who did not rule”. This would imply that there were two *bzhi stengs* [*sras*] meant for the eight of them.

Locating them ought to be quite possible, unless they have been destroyed or have decayed to the point of becoming indiscernible, were it not for the confusion induced in *mkhas pa lDe’u chos ’byung* by the wrong identification of two tombs I have discussed at some length in the previous pages. One would paradoxically be for Khri lde srong btsan, the other—no less bewildering—for Sad na legs, as if these two names refer to two kings different from the two historical *btsan po*-s.

gTam tshogs indirectly sheds light on the matter of the *steng sras* when it discusses the tomb of ’Bro snyan lde ru: “The lord and the subjects, altogether three, were buried alive in the tomb (*dur*)”.⁷⁴ The word *dur* is introduced in this passage in reference to the *bang so* built for this *btsan po*. It would seem, then, that *dur* stands in some cases for an individual tomb, although this tumulus should have contained more than one body because ’Bro snyan lde ru, for well known reasons, decided to bury himself alive, and subjects bound to him by a vow of life had to follow him into his tomb.⁷⁵ Those subjects, obviously, do not count as people for whom the tomb was built, not even his wife who shared her husband’s destiny. She is the only queen said in the sources to have been buried together with her consort.

Hence, *mkhas pa lDe’u* refers to an individual tomb by using the term *dur* and a multiple tomb by the term *ltang sres*.⁷⁶

The term *mchan* (“below”, used in the extended significance *mchan bu* to mean “footnote”) is employed in the form *mchan khung* to mean “armpit”. Its meaning transferred to burial ground of ’Phyong rgyas would point to a location subordinate to another. I wonder whether this expression offers a physical description of the area of Don mkhar mda’ where the plain

74. ’Jigs med gling pa, *gTam tshogs* (p.288 line11–12): “rJe ’bangs gsum tsam gson por dur du sbas/’”.

75. They were the ministers sNyags Thang nga yang rje and sNubs Khri thog rje gzung btsan (*mkhas pa lDe’u chos ’byung* p.251 lines 14–15).

76. Having discussed the range of hypotheses whereby the term *ltang sres/stengs sras/bzhi stengs sras* [*so*] could be a structure in a tomb interior, one should explore whether it could refer to the external features of a *bang so*-s. A way of reading the term *ltang sres/stengs sras/bzhi stengs sras* [*so*] in the latter sense is a “tumulus consisting of four layers placed above [the burial chamber]”. In that case, a four-layered *bang so* could be either trapezoidal or pyramidal. See Heller, “Preliminary Remarks on Dulan rdzong: 8th Century Tibetan Tombs?”, for a masoned tomb at Kexiaotu in Dulan county, which is a truncated four-faced pyramid topped by a circular mound.

Going by the reading that *stengs/ltang* could stand for “horizontal layer” and *sres/sras* for “joined together”, a *bzhi stengs sras bang so* would be composed of four layers of earth and stones.

Both these interpretations are devoid of significance. If these hypotheses are considered agreeable, these typologies referring to tombs’ exteriors could hardly have been an exclusive of the tombs of queens. Many other *bang so* must have been built with four layers of stones and earth. They are not classified into a category so distinctive and deviant from the norm as to receive a separate name such as *ltang sres/stengs sras/bzhi stengs sras* [*so*].

adjoins Mu ra ri in a shape of an amphitheatre (*mchan*). If so, I would suggest that the tomb, incorrectly said to contain the body of Sad na legs but—more reliably—the corpse of Mu tig btsan po, was near the *bzhi stengs* in the area where the Don mkhar mda' plain, touching the Mu ra ri hills, describes an amphitheatre.

'DABS SU SBAS PA

For the sake of dealing with all the obscure semantics of *gSang ba yang chung phyed 'jog pa* a word must be spent on one more term found in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* that addresses another type of burial, namely *'dabs su sbas pa*. This means “buried below”, hence a “burial in a pit without a mound above”. I have adopted this reading in all instances in which it appears in my English translation of mkhas pa lDe'u's text.

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The narrative of Srong btsan sgam po's subjugation of the demoness: schemes and historicity

Reflections on the origin of the narrative

The story of the demoness lying on her back (*srin mo gan rkyal*), whose malevolent opposition prevented the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang and of Srong btsan sgam po's overcoming her resistance by building temples on her limbs, is a narrative often encountered in the Tibetan literature later than the Tun-huang documents.

The locus classicus of the narrative is found in the rNying ma works *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum*.¹ The scheme of temples in these texts has been incorporated by later Tibetan authors in their works, often with substantial modifications (for an instance of these deviations see Appendix Two).

A few other sources—*Nyang ral chos 'byung*, *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*, *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *Ne'u pandi ta chos 'byung*—contain versions of the narrative with a greater number of temples and additional classifications that convey a different perspective. In this essay, I deal with the narratives in all these works owing to their antiquity and calibre. No

1. *Mani bka' 'bum* (f.220a lines 2–5): “De nas srin mos rkang lag gnan par shes nas/ srin mo'i dpung pa g.yon la g.Yu ru Khra 'brug/ dpung g.yas pa la dBu ru Ka thal/ dpyi g.yas pa la g.Yas ru gTsang 'phrang/ dpyi g.yon pa la Ru lag gu Grom pa rGyang brtsigs te/ ru gnon chen po bzhi'o/ gru mo g.yas pa la Kong Bu chu/ g.yon du lHo brag Kho mtshing/ pus mo g.yon Mon Bum thang/ g.yas su sPra dum tse brtsigs te mtha' 'dul bzhi'o/ lag mthil g.yas su mDo Khams Glang thang sGron ma/ lag mthil g.yon du Byang Tshangs pa Rlung gnon/ rkang mthil g.yas su Mang yul Byams sprin/ rkang mthil g.yon du sPa gro sKyer chu'i lha khang ste/ yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bzhi'o/ de dag kyang nyin zhag re re la brtsigs so//”; “Then, since [Srong btsan sgam po] realised that he had to pin down the limbs of the *srin mo*, he built g.Yu ru Khra 'brug on the left shoulder; dBu ru Ka tshal on the right shoulder; g.Yas ru gTsang 'Phrang on the right hip; and Ru lag gi Grom pa rGyang on the left hip. These are the four great *ru gnon*. He built Kong Bu chu on the right elbow; lHo brag Kho mthing on the left elbow; Mon Bum thang on the left knee; and sPra dun tse on the right. These are the four *mtha' 'dul*. [He built] mDo Khams Glang thang sGron ma on the right palm; Byang Tshangs pa Rlung

marginal implications derive from them, even though some of their listings are unconventional or lack apparent logic at a first glance.

The short version of the narrative associated with the *srin mo gan rkyal* found in *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum* includes only temples built on her limbs. *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*, *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* contain an expanded classification—with variants among them—that has temples not necessarily built on the parts of her body.

The rediscovery of *Mani bka' 'bum* is traditionally attributed to grub thob dNgos grub and *bKa' chems ka khol ma* to Jo bo rje A ti sha before him. The former was extracted from the Thugs rje chen po gtsang khang of Ra sa 'Phrul snang; the latter from the pillar with the carving of a *bum pa* of the same temple, the Jo khang being, therefore, a great repository of textual treasures.

Given the currently available textual material, it is difficult to say whether this more complex version predates *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, the earliest known formulation of this narrative, or whether the short one goes back to a time earlier than *bKa' chems ka khol ma* or *Mani bka' 'bum*. Though the date of composition of Nyi ma 'od zer's work is not available, one can glean its period from the dates of its author, Nyang ral pa can Nyi ma 'od zer, which are open to debate (1124–1192 or 1136–1204). The composition period of the less complex version found first in *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and then in *Mani bka' 'bum* is more problematic. The former work can only be fideistically considered a *gter ma* of Jo bo rje, while the latter text is thought to have undergone a number of revisions, a radical view being that the last of these scriptural “layers” dates from the 15th century (D. Martin, *Tibetan Histories* p.30 entry n.16 citing Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature* p.55).

The interaction of the two extant narratives is another question with no easy solution, for they both were the outcome of the same cultural season marked by an emphasis by the rNying ma school to attribute to itself the knowledge of the dynastic period. The earliest known sources for the legend of the *srin mo* seem to belong, broadly speaking, to the later part of the 12th century.

The close contacts between Nyang ral and grub thob dNgos grub, who discovered most of the Thugs rje chen po *gter ma*, collectively known as *Mani bka' 'bum*, are well known (see in particular Blondeau, “Le “decouvreur” du *Ma ni bka' 'bum* était-il bon-po?” p.77–86 and Kapstein, “Remarks on the *Mani bka' 'bum* and the cult of Avalokiteshvara in Tibet” p.80–83).

gnon on the left palm; Mang yul Byams sprin on the right sole; and sPa gro sKyer chu'i lha khang on the left sole. These are the four *yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang*”.

Reference to sKyer chu lha khang does not always address the well-known temple in 'Brug yul. When it is associated with either sPa gro or Bum thang, it is manifestly the Bhutanese temple. In some cases, it is not associated with either of the two localities in Bhutan and one is left to wonder whether it may be sKyer chu lha khang in lHo brag, occasionally included among the *mtha' 'dul lha khang* by the literature (e.g. Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho, *gNas yig* (Gang can rig mdzod ed.) p.255 lines 19–21).

In the colophon of his *chos 'byung* (p.501 lines 1–20), Nyang ral mentions both this text and *bKa' chems ka khol ma* among his sources.

In its opening part, *bKa' chems ka khol ma* says that, during his visit to lHa sa in earth rat 1048,² Jo bo rje A ti sha was directed to rediscover this text by the old woman known as

2. As already pointed out by D. Martin (*Tibetan Histories* p.24 entry n.4), 'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal (*Deb ther sngon po* p.1143 lines 13–15, *Blue Annals* p.984–985) says that the whereabouts of the “Testament of the King” were shown by lHa sa'i smyon ma to A ti sha. Hence this passage of *Deb ther sngon po*, like the opening part of *bKa' chem Ka khol ma*, suggests that the text was detected, if not rediscovered, before Jo bo rje came to lHa sa in earth rat 1048. However, *bKa' chems ka khol ma* does not attribute its rediscovery to lHa sa'i smyon ma, any more than it articulates the circumstances under which she came to know that the text had been buried in Ra sa 'Phrul snang by Srong btsan sgam po.

g.Yag sde chos 'byung rgyas pa gives a vivid account of the interaction between lHa sa'i smyon ma and Jo bo rje, with the woman disclosing the location of *bKa' chems ka khol ma* to A ti sha, and the Bengali master sketching a map on the basis of her words, thus himself composing a sort of *kha byang*. *g.Yag sde chos 'byung rgyas pa* (a.k.a. *Dris len nor bu'i phreng ba*) (p.394 lines 1–3) reads: “bKa' chems shog dril ma'i skor nmams ni/ Jo bo rje dpal ldan A ti sha lHa sar byon dus dMar lCags kyi stod du sPyan ras gzigs kyi snar ba shar/ 'Phrul snang du lHa sa smyon mar grags pa'i skye dman gcig gis lung bstan te Jo bos sa rig mdzad/ dge bshes rnal 'byor pas mJOR thogs te ka ba bum pa can gyi 'og nas gter bton pa la rGyal po'i bKa' chems shog dril ma/ Blon po'i bka' chems zla ba 'dod 'jo ma/ bTsun mo'i bka' chems dar dkar gsal ba sogs gdan drangs nas 'gro don mdzad/”; “The cycle of *bKa' chems shog dril ma* (“in scroll form”) is as follows. When Jo bo rje dpal ldan A ti sha went to lHa sa, the vision of sPyan ras gzigs appeared [to him] above dMar [po ri and] lCags [po ri]. At 'Phrul snang, the woman known as lHa sa smyon ma disclosed [its location to him] and Jo bo made a sketch map of the area [on the basis of her revelation]. Since the *dge bshes rnal 'byor pa*, using a shovel, rediscovered *rGyal po bka' chems shog dril ma* (“The will of the king in scroll form”), *Blon po bka' chems zla ba 'dod 'jo ma* (“The will of the ministers, 'shining moon”), and *bTsun mo bka' chems dar dkar gsal ba* (“The will of the queens, 'white scarf of clarification”) as *gter ma* below the pillar with a *bum pa* (“vase”), he benefited sentient beings”.

I wonder whether the *rnal 'byor pa* involved in the rediscovery of *bKa' chems bka' khol ma* and in jotting down a copy must have been Phyang Khri mchog, often defined as a *rnal 'byor pa* in the *bKa' gdams pa* literature. He would have been the actual rediscoverer of *bKa' chems ka khol ma* rather than Jo bo rje who did not work at its “invitation”, but the tradition credits the Bengali master inasmuch as he gave impulse to its rediscovery.

Deb ther sngon po adds that lHa sa'i smyon ma let A ti sha have *bKa' chems ka khol ma* for an extremely limited amount of time, which seems to indicate that the circumstances were not conducive to release control of the text (ibid. p.317 lines 12–15): “A *mkha' 'gro ma* named lHa sa'i smyon ma told [A ti sha] that he should take out [the history of the *gtsug lag khang* and its statue] from inside [one of its] beams. It happened that she gave it [to A ti sha] for no more than one day. His disciples divided [the task among them] and copied it. The text was then buried again inside the beam”.

lHa sa'i smyon ma was one of the four female disciples of Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas who appeared to him as blackbirds in the Tibetan sky when the *Zhi byed* master crossed the border into this land (*Deb ther sngon po* p.1143 lines 5–7, *Blue Annals* p.984). The chronology of Pha dam pa is made debatable by several contrasting indications, and thus it is not beyond doubt when he actually came

IHa sa'i smyon ma because she walked around naked. Moreover, she sometimes wept and sometimes laughed for no apparent reason.³

to Tibet and how many times he graced regions of the plateau with his presence. There are no indications as well to ascertain on which occasion IHa sa'i smyon ma became a disciple of Pha dam pa, whether before or after her encounter with Jo bo rje. To which of the three or five journeys undertaken by Pha dam pa to Tibet her transformation into a blackbird refers is a point which needs further research.

There is a point of contact between the myth of IHa sa'i smyon ma, who morphed into one of the four blackbirds, the transformation of female practitioners and flew to the extreme limit of the plateau to welcome Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas on his way to Tibet and Ma gcig Lab sgron's transformation into a dove. *Deb ther sngon po* (p.279 lines 9–10) reads: “Dzeng Dharma bho di zhes bya ba'i grub thob des kyang Ma gcig phug ron du sprul pa dang mjal/”; “The *grub thob* namely 'Dzeng Dharma bho di saw Ma gcig [Lab sgron] transformed into a dove” (*Blue Annals* p.226).

Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb (Gangtok ed. p.166 lines 2–3) in its Jo khang section touches briefly the theme that historical works about Ra sa 'Phrul snang and Srong btsan sgam po were hidden as *gter ma*-s in the temple's premises: “gTsang khang byang ngos ma'i Thugs rje chen po dang/ rTa mgrin/ sGrol ma dang/ Khro gnyer ma bzhi'i zhabs 'og na/ klu rgyal dang mdun gyi mandala 'og dang gsum na/ nor dang/ Ra sa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris dang/ rGyal po'i zhal gdams kyi skor mang du yod/”; “Below the feet of Thugs rje chen po, rTa mgrin, sGrol ma and Khro gnyer ma, four in all, of *gtsang khang byang ngos ma* (the “northern *gtsang khang*”) and below the *klu rgyal* and the *mandala* in front of him, [below] these three, are riches, sections of the document which is the history of Ra sa [Phrul snang] (*Ra sa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris*) and many chapters of *rGyal po'i zhal gdams*”.

3. Even if IHa sa'i smyon ma may not have unearthed the *gter ma* but was acquainted with its existence and place of concealment—she delegated the rediscovery of the literary treasure to Jo bo rje—the account of *bKa' chems ka khol ma* (p.3 line 15–p.5 line 10) confirms that she did have a fundamental part in it: “De tsa na khyams khra chen mo'i sgo rtsa na/rgan mo mu 'gram se'o byas pa/ skal thags byas nas rgyags 'tshol zhing res 'ga' gcer mor 'gro ba/ res du res rgod pa IHa sa'i smyon ma bya ba cig yod pa de na re/ pandi ta lags/ lha khang 'di ji ltar bzhengs pa'i lo rgyus shes par (p.4) 'dod dam zer bas/ shes par 'dod kyi khyod kyi shes sam byas pas/ ngas ta shes te nga la bshad dbang med/ ka ba bum pa can gyi steng nas 'dom phyed dang gsum gzhal ba'i nang na/ 'di bzhengs mkhan gyis mdzad pa'i yi ge yod do/ de thon la ltos shig zer nas rgan mo mi snang bar gyur ro/ de nas sang nang bar pandi ta dpon g.yog gsum gyis shog dril gsum bton gzigs pas/ sngon ma la blon po nmams kyi byas pa'i Lo rgyus zla ba 'dod 'jo bya ba byung/ bar pa gnyis pa la btsun mo nmams kyi byas pa'i Dar dkar gsal ba bya ba byung/phyi ma gsum pa nas rrgyal po rang gis mdzad pa'i Lo rgyus bka' chems kyi yi ge 'di byung ba yin no/ Jo bo pandi ta Di pam kā ra la lung ston pa'i rgan mo gcer bu res du res rgod pa'i smyon ma de ni rGya mo Ong cong gi skye ba yin yang zer/ tje btsun sGrol ma sngon mo'i sprul pa yang yin gsung/ de gnyis su med so so ma yin tha mi dad gsung ngo/ sNyon ma rgan mo res du res rgod pa'i rgyu mtshan ni/ res du ba ni sems can dge ba la mi mos shing dug lnga la rang dgar spyod cing/ sdig pa mang du bsags nas ngan song gsum du ltung ba la gzigs nas du ba yin/ res rgod pa ni sems can kyi dge ba byas shing byang chub bsgrubs nas/ dug lnga (p.5) ye shes lngar lam gyis shar nas Sangs rgyas su 'gro ba 'dug pa la gzigs nas rgod pa yin/ res 'ga' gcer bur 'ong ba de/ skyes kyang gcer bur skyes/ shi yang gcer bur shi/ lus dang rgyan cha dang gos zas nmams mi rtag pas gcer bur 'ong ba yin/ 'tsho ba skal thags la re ba ni/ gzhi khang dang nor rdzas 'dus byas thams cad khyer dbang med mi rtag par bzhag nas 'gro bas 'tsho ba la 'phral phyed byed pa yin/ IHa sa bzhengs lugs

bshad dbang med pa ni bud med skye ba dma' bas bshad dbang med pa yin/ Jo bo pandi ta la lung ston nus pa ni/ pandi ta dang sngon gyi 'brel ba yod pas lung ston nus pa yin no gsung ngo!";

"Near it, by the *khyams* door with [the depiction of] a huge falcon, there was the old woman "little bird of the border" who, spinning threads, begged for food and sometimes used to walk around naked. This one, known as lHa sa'i smyon ma who sometimes wept and sometimes laughed (*res ngu res rgod pa*), said: "*Pandi ta lags!* Do you wish to know the account of how this *lha khang* was built?" (p.4) [A ti sha] replied: "Do you know it yourself since I wish to know it?". After saying: "I know it, but I had no opportunity to tell it. Inside [the beam], two and a half 'dom in size, above the pillar with a *bum pa* [capital] there is a text written by the builder of this [temple]. Take it out and look into it", the old woman vanished. Then, the following morning, the *pandi ta*, altogether three *dpon g.yog*, extracted three scrolls and looked into them. The first that was taken out was the *Lo rgyus zla ba 'dod 'jo* ("The history 'shining moon"), written by the ministers. The intermediate one that was taken out was *Dar dkar gsal ba* ("The white scarf of clarification"), written by the queens. The last to be taken out was *Lo rgyus bka' chem[s] kyi yi ge*, written by the king himself. That old woman who gave instructions to Jo bo pandi ta Di pam ka ra, the old naked woman who sometimes wept and sometimes laughed was said also to be the rebirth of rGya mo 'Ong cong. [A ti sha] said: "She is also the incarnation of rje btsun sGrol ma sngon mo". He added: "These two are not different". The reason [for the name of] sMyon ma rgan mo res ngu res rgod pa ("the mad old woman who sometimes wept and sometimes laughed") is as follows. As to "weeping sometimes", since she saw that people did not have faith in virtue and rather carelessly indulged in the five poisonous actions, and accumulated many defilements, thus falling into the three hellish realms, she wept. As to "laughing sometimes", since she saw that people practised virtue and attained enlightenment, (p.5) given that the five poisonous actions were sublimated by taking the path leading to the five wisdoms, and they proceeded [to reach the status] of Sangs rgyas, she laughed. That she sometimes walked around naked is [because], at [the time of] birth, one is born naked, at [the time of] dying, one dies naked. Since the body, ornaments, clothes and food are impermanent, she walked around naked. Her dependance (*re ba*) on begging for food by spinning threads is [because] there is no way to take along the estates, houses, wealth, and objects, namely everything that is accumulated, and those are left behind since they are impermanent, she temporarily and partially resorted to that for her survival. As to not having the opportunity to tell/disclose the way in which lHa sa was built, this is [because] women, being a low type of birth, have no opportunity to speak. As for her capacity to give instructions to Jo bo *pandi ta*, [A ti sha] said that it was [because], due to her previous karmic nexus with [himself] the *pandi ta*, she was able to give him instructions".

The text does not explain the reason for lHa sa'i smyon ma's other epithet Mu 'gram se'o ("little bird of the border"). This can be explained by means of the story, found in 'Gos lo tsa ba's *Deb ther sngon po* (see n.2 above), of her extraordinary meeting with her teacher Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas upon the latter's crossing the Tibetan border from India.

lHa sa'i smyon ma is called sPrang mo smyon ma ("the mad beggar woman") in the episode of 'Chims Nam mkha' grags's *Jo bo dpal ldan A ti sha'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (p.185 line 6–p.187 line 2), in which Jo bo rje rediscovers the *gter ma* in Ra sa 'Phrul snang, and the reason adduced for Jo bo rje to have a copy of *bKa' chems ka khol ma*. It was made in the lapse of a single day due to the hostility of the *gter srung*. On the historical implication deriving from the name sPrang mo smyon ma see my forthcoming "Biography without *rnam thar*: piecing together the life of Zangs dkar lo tsa ba 'Phags pa shes rab".

The details of the rediscovery show that the available version of *bKa' chems ka khol ma* is a not entirely reliable copy of the original rediscovered in that year. This text, too, was the result of unassessed scriptural layers, and thus the date or period in which the extant text was either written or rediscovered is uncertain. Another fact that adds to the doubts about *bKa' chems ka khol ma* is that the document was again concealed after being hastily copied by A ti sha's disciples with omission and mistakes. *Jo bo dpal ldan A ti sha'i rnam thar rgyas pa* by 'Chims Nam mkha' grags records a lineage of persons who owned the textual treasure after its rediscovery by A ti sha but without saying whether this was the copy of the *gter ma* jotted down by the Bengali master's disciples.⁴

These contradictory indicators make the status of *Ka khol ma* confusing. One is on firmer grounds in the case of *Mani bKa' 'bum*; its date is not known but at least the period of rediscovery seems to be ascertained.

Several rNying ma pa authors mention Nyang ral as one of the two main disciples of grub thob dNgos grub, the other being Rog ban Shakya 'od also known as Shakya bzang po. They say he was the discoverer of one of the three main parts (the *zhal gdams kyi skor*) into which *Mani bka' 'bum* is divided (Kapstein, *ibid.* p.80 and also Blondeau, *ibid.* n.14). An analysis of the parts whose "invitation" should be attributed to grub thob dNgos grub and to Nyang ral is beyond the scope of this paper. The matter is complex—different editions of *Mani bka' 'bum* need to be considered—and I refer to this text in order to introduce the topic of the *srin mo* and not to attempt an analysis of this *gter ma*.

I will simply repeat here what it is commonly held on the authority of lNga pa chen po Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho. The place in Ra sa 'Phrul snang, from where the section of *Mani bka' 'bum* containing the narrative of the *srin mo* was extracted suggests that, according to the Fifth Dalai Lama, it was rediscovered by grub thob dNgos grub (see Blondeau,

4. 'Chims Nam mkha' grags, *Jo bo dpal ldan A ti sha'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (p.186 line 4–p.187 line 1): "Der 'don par brtsams nas/ gter srung gnyan po zhig 'dug pas de ring ji tsam zin pa zhig 'brir btang/ de min mi lter zer nas/ rnal 'byor pas dbu mdzad ston pa bzhi kas bris pas phal cher zin/ lhag ma cung zad lus/ snag smyug ma 'dzom ste ci rnyed kyis bris pas yi ge mi gsal tsam yod/ 'di su la yang ma bstan cig lha srung bzang po zhig 'dug go gsungs nas rnal 'byor pa la gtad/ rnal 'byor pas spyang snga ba la/ des Bya yul ba la/ des Thugs rje chen po'i che ba yon tan lHa sa'i (p.187) dkon gnyer la gtad nas/ gzhan gdung rten du bzhugs/"; "[Jo bo rje] having begun to drag [*bKa' chems ka khol ma*] out from [the pillar], a fierce *gter srung* who was there said: "I will give it [to you] to write down, but [you] cannot keep it beyond today. Otherwise, I will not give it [to you]". Four masters headed (*dbu mdzad*) by a *rnal 'byor pa* wrote [the literary treasure] down and copied most of it. A short residual part was left unaccomplished. There was a shortage of bamboo [pens] and ink, and since they wrote with what they had, some letters were not readable. [Jo bo rje] told them: "Do not show it to anyone. There is a deity who is a strong protector", and gave it to the *rnal 'byor pa*. The *rnal 'byor pa* gave it to sPyan snga ba [Tshul khriims 'bar (1033–1103)], the latter to Bya yul ba [gZhon nu 'od (1075–1138)], and the latter to the lHa sa *dkon gnyer* who had knowledge of the greatness of Thugs rje chen po. (p.187) For the rest [of the time], it was kept inside a *gdung rten*".

ibid. p.81 and Kapstein, ibid. p.80–81, who quotes Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *gSang yig* vol.III p.131–133).

The main point here is that despite the self-proclaimed use made by Nyang ral of the material discovered by his teacher grub thob dNgos grub, who entrusted him with the care and transmission of *Mani bka' 'bum*, Nyang ral did not accept the *Mani bka' 'bum* version of the pinning of the *srin mo*'s limbs. He has opted for a more complex interpretation of the scheme. His adoption of a more complex account of the pinning makes it unlikely that Nyang ral “re-discovered” the *Mani bka' 'bum* version of the scheme himself.

This does not prove that the version of the *srin mo* scheme of *Mani bka' 'bum* predates that of *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, but the statement in *Nyang ral skyes rabs* (p.52) that Nyang ral was twenty-five years old (thus either in 1148 or 1160) when he received the transmission of the various *gter ma*-s attributed to Srong btsan sgam po (Blondeau, “Le “decouvreur” du *Ma ni bka' 'bum* était-il bon-po?” p.79) seems to indicate that the short version of *Mani bka' 'bum* could be earlier than the more complex one.

Hence, my view is that Nyang ral preferred to modify the *srin mo* scheme in his *chos 'byung* in order to include temples beyond those associated with the demoness' limbs on the basis of other evidence that seemed more reliable to him.

Nonetheless, given the several scriptural layers that *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum* underwent throughout time, it is difficult to say whether the available version contains an expurgated redaction of its *srin mo gan rkyal* scheme. If one opts for the affirmative, one should wonder whether the original redaction of the scheme was similar to the one in *Nyang ral chos 'byung*.

The possibility that an earlier source may have inspired the 12th century rNying ma pa authors credited with the authorship or rediscovery of the literary material considered here cannot be ruled out *a priori*. A likely *terminus post quem* for its formulation is the second quarter of the 11th century, when the cult of Thugs rje chen po experienced its literary acme (Kapstein, “Remarks on the *Mani bka' 'bum* and the cult of Avalokiteshvara in Tibet” p.84–85). It is improbable that the narrative predates this *terminus post quem*, given its absence in the documents of the imperial period found in the walled library at Tun-huang. The reinterpretation of notions concerning the period of the sPu rgyal dynasty in line with the Buddhist vision of Tibet took place during *bstan pa phyi dar* and later.

Several sources, including dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.528 lines 7–8) and *Guru bKra shis chos 'byung* (p.976 lines 2–3), credit Zangs dkar lo tsa ba 'Phags pa shes rab (?–?) with restorations of most of the *mtha' 'dul* temples, part of the *srin mo* scheme. Although more detailed references to and dates for these restorations are not available to me, it seems that 'Phags pa shes rab undertook this work in the last quarter of the 11th century (see my forthcoming “Biography without *rnam thar*: piecing together the life of Zangs dkar lo tsa ba 'Phags pa shes rab”). Alternative assessments of Zangs dkar lo tsa ba's restorations of the *mtha' 'dul* temples can be reduced to two. Either dPa' bo and Guru bKra shis have attributed

Zangs dkar lo tsa ba's restorations of the *mtha' 'dul* temples to a time after 'Phags pa shes rab's death, and thus the account is anachronistic and without intrinsic validity. Or else, given Zangs dkar lo tsa ba's focus on these temples, Zangs dkar lo tsa ba's work on the *mtha' 'dul* indicates that he was aware of the existence of a notion that groups them together.

If the latter hypothesis is proved to be correct, it would mean that the scheme of temples preexisted the "rediscovery" of *Mani bka' 'bum* and the composition of *Nyang ral chos 'byung*. This assessment cannot be ruled out *a priori*, for a text normally reports the knowledge of the period immediately preceding that of its writing, but it will remain conjectural until sounder evidence is found. If attribution of the "rediscovery" of *bKa' chems ka khol ma* to A ti sha is acceptable (see above n.3), this text could have been an earlier model on which the notion of the *mtha' 'dul lha khang* restored by Zangs dkar lo tsa ba was based.

The associations found in *Mani bka' 'bum* between Thugs rje chen po, his *yi dam*, and Srong btsan sgam po are at the heart of the entire doctrinal formulation of this work. The equation in the text between the deeds of Srong btsan sgam po and those of Guru Padma 'byung gnas is less explicit but obvious.⁵

At first glance, there are analogies between the narrative of the *srin mo gan rkyal* and *lHa 'dre bka' thang*. The latter text, a lengthy account of the subjugation of the local demons by Guru Padma 'byung gnas, was perhaps composed during the years 1368–1384 (Blondeau, "Le lHa 'Dre bka' thang" p.42) and thus is considerably later than the earliest extant sources in which the narrative of the *srin mo* has been preserved. The method adopted by Guru Padma does not echo that used by Srong btsan sgam po in the narrative of the *srin mo*. Guru Padma did not build a network of temples to vanquish the local spirits and demons, but concentrated on direct subjugations and on the construction of a single temple, bSam yas.⁶

5. Srong btsan sgam po's pinning of the *srin mo gan rkyal* brings to mind Guru Padma's subjugation of local demons to Buddhism in the rNying ma literature. It is, however, hard to ascertain the relationship between the two narratives. Was the Guru Padma literature concerning his subduing the local *lha 'dre* deities of the Tibetan lands influenced by the works which describe Srong btsan sgam po's pinning the demoness?

6. There are exceptions to this generalisation, such as Guru Padma 'byung gnas's subjugation of a local *srin mo* in Glo bo which led to the construction of Glo dGe kar. *Padma bka' thang* (p.377 lines 2–16) reads: "Bod khams skyong bai mnga' bdag chen po lags/ mtha' 'khob 'di 'dre yi yul du 'dug/ lam la lha 'dre gdug pa mang zhig btul/ Bod sprug spre'u'i tsha rnams 'dul ba'i phyir/ lha khang bzhengs pa rgyal po ngo mtshar che/ Glo bo srin mo gan rkyal bzha 'dra ba'i/ snying gar gtsug lag khang ni dgu thog dgos/ lte ba'i steng du mchod rten bzheng dgos so/ srin mo'i mgo la de'u nag po dgos/ rkang lag bzhi la mchod rten brgya rta bryad/ ... (lines 15–16) Glo bo dGe kkar gtsug lag khang bzhengs/"; "[Guru Padma 'byung gnas said]: "Great king, ruler of the land of Tibet! This barbarian Tibet is the land of the 'dre. On my way [to Tibet], I subdued many mischievous *lha 'dre*. In order to convert the descendants of the monkey of Tibet, [we] must build [some] *lha khang*". The king was elated. [Guru Padma added:] "In Glo bo, on the heart of the *srin mo* lying on her back [we] must [build] a nine-storied *gtsug lag khang*. Over the navel [we] must build a *mchod rten*. On the head [we] must [build]

As for the attribution of the narrative to Srong btsan sgam po, Aris (*Bhutan* p.19) raised the objection that the last *ru* (i.e. that of *Ru lag*) was incorporated into the *ru bzhi* only in 709 (after Uray, “The Four Horns of Tibet”), and thus, given that the classification of the *ru gnon* temples is based on the concept of dBus gTsang *ru bzhi*,⁷ the scheme of the *srin mo* cannot

a black turret. On the four limbs 108 *mchod rten* must be built” Then slob dpon [Padma] built Glo bo dGe kar gtsug lag khang”.

The similarities with the scheme of Srong btsan sgam po's *srin mo* are obvious, but so are the differences, the foremost being that the scheme does not cover an extended territory, and that only one *lha khang* was built, whereas the rest of the demoness's body was pinned down with structures which were not temples.

Another one concerns *Zangs dkar* and is again attributed to Guru Padma 'byung gnas. Yo seb dGe rgan bSod nams tshe brtan's *Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* (p.211 lines 1–13) reads: “De la bKra shis g.yang chags Zangs dkar gnam sa chos 'byung 'dir/ rang thog Gling Ge sar phebs nas/ sa thams cad zhabs kyis bcags/ U rgyan Padma phebs nas mi ma yin nams dam la btags te/ sa bkra ngan pa mams mnan nas/ srin mo gan rkyal du gyel ba lta bu sa gzhi mgo'i khar Sa ni Ka ni ka/snying khar Pi pi ting gi gNa' nas Gu ru/ rkang pa'i khar Byams gling gi gNya' nam Gu ru nams bzhengs nas/ rGya gar gyi dur khrod bde ldan 'dra bar lung bstan/ de'i sgo srung shar du Tse re/ lho na dpal lHa mo/ nub na Dur lha Khrug pa/ byang na Yid bzhin nor bu yod do/ de'i dkor bdag tu jo mo sPyan gcig ma/”;

“In *bKra shis g.yang chags Zangs dkar gnam sa chos 'byung* [it is said that], in his own lifetime, Gling Ge sar came [to *Zangs dkar*], and stepped his feet on the whole of the land. U rgyan Padma came [to this region as well], and bound the *mi ma yin*-s to a vow. Having subdued the bad spirits of the land, reclining like the demoness laying down on her back, he built Sa ni Ka ni ka on the area of her head; gNya' nas Gu ru of Pi pi ting over the region of her heart; and gNya' nam Gu ru of Byams gling over the region of her leg. He issued a prophecy [that these places would be organised like] dur khrod bDe ldan of rGya gar. Their *sgo srung* (*dwarapala*) would be Tse re in the east; dpal lHa mo in the south; dur lha Khrug pa in the west and Yid bzhin nor bu in the north. The lord of their treasures would be Jo mo sPyan gcig ma”.

7. A monastery in Nang chen carries the name Ru gnon. Being at great distance from the *ru gnon*-s, the name must be a sediment of a territorial division that I am at odd in identifying and consequently the historical phase to which it belongs. The reference to the monastery called Ru gnon Brag ser is found in *Nang chen gyi dgon pa lo rgyus* (vol. One p.81 lines 3–10): “De la A 'bum zhes pa ni/ La phyi Chu dbar gyi gnas lag tu gyur pa/ rig 'dzin Chos rgyal rdo rjes gnas sgo 'byed par mdzad la/ sa rdo ri brag mams su A yig 'bum phrag rang byon tu bzhugs pas A 'bum rin chen spungs pa zhes grags/ Rigs gsum mGon po'i gnas gsum du grags pa'i nang gses/ 'Jam dpal dbyangs ky'i gnas ri'i mdun zhol/ bDe chen zhing dang/ Ma rgyud 'Khor lo bDe mchog gi zhing gi bkod pa ru chags yod/ chags yul gyi rgyab ri la brag ri ser po me lce mchod pa 'dra ba yod pas dgon pa ka'ang ming Brag ser dgon zhes par chags/ de lta bu'i sNga 'gyur rNyang ma'i bstan zhags su tshad pa/ ru gnon Brag ser dgon ni/ sngon gyi dus na' Brog sde 'Brog pa A 'bum rgyud zer ba'i sa/”;

“Concerning this, [the reason behind] the name A 'bum [also given to the *dgon pa*] is as follows. It became a branch holy place of La phyi Chu dbar. Rig 'dzin Chos rgyal rdo rje opened the door of this holy place. Since 100,000 *A* letters were self-originated on the soil, stones, mountains and rocks there around, it is called A 'bum rin chen spungs pa. This is included among the three Rigs gsum mGon po holy places. The paradises of bDe chen zhing and Ma rgyud 'Khor lo bDe mchog are in its lap, in front of 'Jam dpal dbyangs's holy mountain. A yellow rocky mountain like a flaming tongue being the back mountain, the monastery Brag ser dgon

have originated during Srong btsan sgam po's lifetime. The reliability of the association of the *srin mo* narrative with this king found in the Tibetan tradition would then be cast in doubt. At this stage of this essay, any firm conclusions on this question would be premature, but I would point out that the first allusion in the *Tun-huang Annals* to the *ru bzhi*, in 709, does not prove that the *ru bzhi* were introduced in that year.⁸

Texts and translations

THE SHORT VERSION OF THE NARRATIVE: PERHAPS ITS EARLIEST KNOWN FORMULATION

bKa' chems ka khol ma (p.233 line 15–p.235 line 15): “Yang rgyal po chen po Srong btsan sgam po dang/ rGya mo Ong cong gnyis bka' gros nas sa dpyad zhing mor mdzad pas/ Bod yul kha ba can gyi sa gzhi 'di srin mo gan rkyal du skyel ba 'dra ba'i mgo dang/dpung mgo gnyis gru mo gnyis dpyi rus dang/ pus mo gnyis dang/ (p.234) rkan mgo gnyis dang/ yan lag gi tshigs bzhi me btsas man na dgos par shes nas/ ru bzhi'i gtsug lag khang bzhengs dgos par mkhyen nas/ rgyal po chen pos sprul pa'i las mi dang bzo bo mang po mdzad nas/ dpung mgo g.yas g.yon pa la dBu ru na Ka tshal ni dge bsnyen nyi shu rtsa gcig gi dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ dpung mgo g.yon pa gnon pa la/ g. Yu ru na Khra 'brug ni gza' chen po bryad kyi dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ dpyi g.yas gnon pa la g. Yas ru na gTsang 'brang ni rgyal chen rigs bzhi'i dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ sphi g.yon gnon pa la/ g. Yon ru na Grum pa rgyal gyi lha khang ni/ dGe rdor dpal 'bar dbyangs grub pa'i dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ de bzhi ni ru bzhi'i gtsug lag khang ngo/ bar tshigs gnon par bya ba'i phyir mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs su gsol te/ shar lho na gru mo g.yas pa la sGong bu Bur chud ni mGon po nag po'i dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ lho nub tu gru mo g.yon pa la lHo brag mKhon mthing ni/ rigs lnga'i Sangs rgyas kyi dkyil 'khor du bzhengs su gsol/ pus mo g.yas pa la Byang Tshal phyi dbang chen gyi lha khang ni rin po che'i dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ pus mo g.yon pa la lho nub tu Mon Bum thang (p.235) sKyes chu'i lha khang ni Padma dbang gi dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ yang brtsigs pas ma btub par/ nying lag gnon par bya ba'i phyir lag mthil g.yas pa la shar mDo Khams kyi Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang ni bDud 'dul gyi dkyil 'khor du bzhengs/ lag mtshil g.yon pa la Bal chad Ka brag ni rNam thos sras kyi dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ nub byang du rkang pa g.yas pa la sPra dun rtse ni/ gTsug lag dgu'i dkyil 'khor du

was established there. It belonged to the rNying ma teachings of the Old Translations. Ru gnon brag ser dgon is in a place called 'Brog sde 'Brong pa A 'bum rgyud in antiquity”.

8. Apart from the reference to Ru lag in 709, the *ru gsum* are mentioned in the entries for the years 712 (line 63,136; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.22), 718 (lines 69,157–158; see *ibid.* p.23) and 719 (line 70,160; see *ibid.* p.23), before the first allusion to them in the *Annals* under the name *ru bzhi* found in the entry for the year 733 (line 84,216; see *ibid.* p.27). In other words, these entries in the *Tun-huang Annals* do not provide sufficient basis for ascertaining when the *ru bzhi* were actually constituted.

bzhengs so/ lho nub tu Byams pa sprin gyi lha khang ni Sa'i lha mo'i dkyil 'khor du bzhengs so/ srin mo'i sbubs gnon pa la Tshang pa rlung gnon gyi lha khang bzhengs bya ba la sogs pa rGyal po chen po'i bka' chems mams btsun mo rnams kyis mdzad pas bKa' chems dar dkar gsal ba dang/ blon po bcu drug gis mdzad pa'i bKa' chems zla ba 'dod 'jo la sogs par rgyas par gsal lo/ rGyal po'i bka' chems 'dii nang du yi ge mangs kyis dogs nas yang dag par gsal zhing rgyas pa ma bris so//";

“Srongs btsan sgam po and rGya mo Ong cong, two in all, consulted one another again and performed an in-depth *sa dpyad*, which showed that Tibet, this land of snows, is a *srin mo* reclining supine. Her head, two shoulders, two elbows, hips, two knees, (p.234) both foreparts of the feet (*rkang mgo*), and the four joints of the limbs had to be pinned down. Realising the need to build the *ru bzhi'i gtsug lag khang*-s, the great king manifested into many miraculous workers and artisans. He built Ka tshal in dBu ru to pin down the right shoulder, [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of the twenty-one *dge gnyen*. He built Khra 'brug in g. Yu ru to pin down the left shoulder, [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of the eight great planets. He built gTsang 'brang (spelled so) in g. Yas ru to pin down the right hip, [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of the four great royal families. He built Grum pa rgyal (spelled so) gyi lha khang in g. Yon ru to pin down the left hip, [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of the composition of the dGes rdor (i.e. sGyes rdor) dpal 'bar tune. These four are the *ru bzhi'i gtsug lag khang*. In order to pin down the joints of the limbs he built the *mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang*-s. In the southeast he built sGong po (sic) Bur chud (sic) to pin down the right elbow, being the *dkyil 'khor* of mGon po nag po. In the southwest, he built lHo brag mKhon mthing (sic) to pin down the left elbow, [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of the Sangs rgyas of the Five Families. He built Byang Tshal gyi dbang chen gyi lha khang to pin down the right knee, [this] being the *rin po che'i dkyil 'khor*; and, to pin down the left knee, he built Mon Bum thang (p.235) sKyes (sic) chu'i lha khang in the southwest (sic), [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of Padma dbang (sPyan ras gzigs). Still it was impossible to raise the walls. In order to pin down the minor parts of the body, in the east he built mDo Khams Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang to pin down the right palm, [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of the subjugations of the demons. He built Bal chad Ka brag to pin down the left palm, [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of rNam thos sras. In the northwest he built sPra dun rtse to pin down the right foot, being the *dkyil 'khor* of the nine sciences (*gtsug lag*). In the southwest he built Byams pa sprin gyi lha khang to pin down the left foot, [this] being the *dkyil 'khor* of the *lha mo* of the land. He built Tshangs pa rlung gnon gyi lha khang to pin down the *srin mo*'s abdominal region (*sbubs*: a person's "hollow parts in general" and in particular "womb", thus not very different from *lte ba* or *khog*). *rGyal po chen po'i bka' chems* is documented in *bKa' chems dar dkar* written by the queens and—extensively—in *bKa' chems zla ba 'dod 'jo*, written by the sixteen ministers. In this *rGyal po'i bka' chems* many words are doubtful and so, having clarified their correct meaning, I do not write further about it *in extenso*".

The last lines of the treatment of the short version of the *srin mo* narrative in this edition of *bKa' chems ka khol ma* confirm that it is the copy of the text rediscovered by A ti sha—the one hastily scribbled by his disciples. This is shown by the correspondence of passages, both in the opening of the work (they record the “invitation” of the *gter ma*) and *A ti sha'i rnam thar rgyas pa*, with the passage under study, which acknowledges the finding of three hidden treasures, respectively written by the king, queens and sixteen ministers. The terminology in this text is obscure, another sign that the version is not original. These statements accord with ones in the opening of *Ka khol ma*, which recounts the circumstances of the rediscovery with the help of lHa sa'i smyon ma—another paragraph feasibly added to the original text.

THE EXPANDED VERSION OF THE NARRATIVE:
TEXTS

Translations of the passages in the early sources that deal with a *srin mo* scheme containing a greater number of temples also situated outside her limbs, are provided hereafter. These passages are rather long and bearing related contents. Arranging them together is somewhat repetitive because they are often similar but with significant differences nevertheless. However, without this material the main terms of the subject discussed in this essay cannot be established.

Nyang ral chos 'byung (p.242 line 6–p.244 line 6) reads: “Yang 'phro rtsig tu ma btub nas sprul pa mdzad de/ Bod kyi sa gzhi srin mo gan rkyal du 'grel ba'i dpung mgo dang/ dpyi mgo gnan par bya ba'i ched du ru bzhi'i gtsug lag khang chen bzhi bzhengs su gsol ba ni/ dpung pa g.yon pa la g.Yung drung Khra 'brug bzhengs so/ dpung mgo g.yas par dBu ru Ka tshal bzhengs so/ dpyi g.yas pa la gTsang 'Gram bzhengs so/dpyi g.yon pa la Ru lag Grom pa rgyang bzhengs so/ yang rtsig tu ma btub nas bar tshigs rnam gnon pa'i phyir mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs so/ gru mo g.yon pa la lHo brag Kho 'thing bzhengs so/ gru mo g.yas pa la Kong po Bu chu thar legs bzhengs so/ bus mo g.yas pa la Dre'i Ka brag/ pus mo g.yon pa la sPra dun rtse bzhengs so/

yang rtsig tu ma btub pas nying lag rnam gnon pa'i phyir/ lag mthil g.yon pa la Khams kyi Klon thang sGron ma'i lha khang bzhengs so/ lag mthil g.yas pa la Byang Tsha sPe dpal tshad kyi lha khang bzhengs so/ de'i rkang pa g.yas pa'i mthil la Mang yul Byams sprin gyi lha khang bzhengs so/ rkang pa g.yon pa la Mon sKyer chu'i lha khang bzhengs/

yang nyin mo brtsigs pa nub mo zhig ste/ Byang chub tshal gyi ka ba bzhi (p.243) la mDo Khams su Klon thang dpal 'byung/ lho phyogs su rGyag chu Thog rnam/ nub 'A zha'i yul du Ke'u ri gzigs/ sGro skyer du [lacuna] Li yul du 'Dag sha Intra/ mtha' 'dul brgyad la/ Kha che ru sNang sbal chen brtsigs pa/ Kong yul du Bu chu thar legs/ sPa dgro sKyer chur dPal Be'u rgyas pa [lacuna] / yang 'dul brgyad la/ shar Seng ge dkar mo'i mche ba'i steng du rDo mi 'gyur ba/ de'i 'chong du/ Myang por Myang po Ka chung/ lho g.yu brug gi gshog steng du sPa sgro sKyer chu/ de'i 'chong du sMa sha / Me lha'i nub bya dmar po'i mchu steng du Mang yul Byams sprin/ de'i 'chong

du Byang can gyi lha khang/ byang rus sbal nag po'i rgyab steng du sPra dun tse/ de'i 'chong du gShen gsal gyi lha khang bzhengs so/ ru mtshams gnon pa la byang shar du Li ti brgya rtsa brgyad/ shar lhor Kong Bu chu/ lho nub tu lHo barg Kho 'thing/ nub byang du Pad ma g.yung drung/ de nas yang 'dul la/ Gling chu sKyer chu/ shar Nyi zla gnon pa'i phyir du Bum thang dang/ Glong rtse gnyis/ Me lha gnon pa'i phyir du Gye re Gyer chung gnyis/ gnod sbyin gnon pa'i ched du/ Gu langs la dpe blangs ba'i rDo shan lha khang dang/ Shing kun la dpe blangs pa'i Hab sha gnyis/ mthso Ma pham gyi kha gnon la Gangs bar bzhengs so/ Gangs Ti se'i kha gnon la 'Phrang dum bzhengs so/ Sangs rgyas 'das pa'i rten du Nub ri'i gNam sa gra zur gnon pa'i ched du Khyung lung dNgul dkar bzhengs so/ dBang phyug chen po sgrub pa'i gnas su Mang yul Shing sa/ Sangs rgyas kyis rtags su Li yul blangs pa'i lha khang la sogs bzhengs so/ de nas Ra sa dang rGya stag bzhengs su gsol lo/ Bal yul du Bha ga bhe ba ri/ Phu (p.244) tro bhe ba ri/ Shing kun lha khang/ Had shang lha khang bzheng so/ de ltar mtha' 'dul yang 'dul bco brgyad bzhengs so/ 'chong dang bcas pa pa'i lha khang rnams so/ Bal yul du lo bzhi bcu rtsa gnyis rgyal sa mdzad do/

de nas lha khang rtsig tu btub par nkhyen nas/ rGya'i dPe khang ha ra la dpe blangs nas gzings 'bring po'i tshad du byas te/ Bal po'i rgyal po dang chad btsan par byas so//;

“Since [Srong btsan sgam po] was again unable to complete the construction [of Ra sa 'Phrul snang], he performed a miracle. He built the four great *ru bzhi gtsug lag khang* to pin the shoulders and the hips of the *srin mo* lying on her back,⁹ which is the territory of Tibet. On the left shoulder he built g.Yung drung (sic for g.Yo ru) Khra 'brug. On the right shoulder, he built dBu ru Ka tshal. On the right hip, he built gTsang 'Gram.¹⁰ On the left hip he built Ru lag Grom pa rGyang.

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9. It seems that Nyang ral uses the term *ru bzhi gtsug lag khang* (i.e. the temples in the four *ru* of Central Tibet) for the *ru gnon gtsug lag khang* since a *ru gnon* temple was located in each of the four *ru* of dBu gTsang. These four *gtsug lag khang* should not be confused with the four *ru mtshams kyi gtsug lag khang* (see below in the text).
10. O rgyan gling pa, *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.202 lines 15–22) talks about the *gter*-s hidden at this temple: “De nas Yang dag bshad bya ba/ gTsang 'gram lha khang gi dBu rtse snga gdong g.yas pa'i steng la seng ge'i gzugs cig yod/ de'i mjug ma'i rtse mo la sor bzhi brus pa'i sa na/ lcags kyi sbug ma cig na yab 'Jam dpal nag po/yum E ka tsa ti/ Srog ging bshan pa'i man ngag dang bcas pa/ gShin rje wa thod las kyi rlung dmar dang/ Ming srog zan dmar po re sgrub pa'i rgyud dang bcas pa shog dril ma bdun par bya'o/ gter byang shog dril ma gsum yod/ rgyal po Srog bdag mehod la 'dor par bya'o//”; “Yang dag bshad says: “There is an image of a lion on the front side of the dBu rte of gTsang 'Gram lha khang. At the spot [reached] after digging four *sor* from the tip of its tail, inside the cavity of an iron [container] there are yab 'Jam dpal nag po, yum E ka dza ti, *Srog ging bshan pa'i man ngag*, *gShin rje wa thod las kyi rlung dmar*, *Ming srog zan dmar po re sgrub pa'i rgyud*; altogether seven *shog dril* (“scrolls”), plus three *gter byang shog dril* (“scroll to identify the locations of *gter*-s”). One should take them out after worshipping rgyal po Srog bdag”. This is the thirty-first chapter on gTsang 'Gram from *Kha byang mdzod kyi lde mig rgyud*”.

Since he could not [complete] the construction, he built the four *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang* to pin the joints. On the left elbow, he built lHo brag Kho 'thing. On the right elbow, he built. On the right knee, he built Dre'i Ka brag.¹¹ On the left knee he built sPra dun tse.

11. Nyang ral's *mtha' 'dul* temple of Dre'i Ka brag, called Tre'i Ka brag by lDe'u Jo sras and mkhas pa lDe'u, corresponds to Bre'i lha khang of Ne'u pandi ta who includes it as one of the four branch monasteries of his *ru gnon* temples.

These authors' assessment of Dre'i Ka brag/Bre'i lha khang could not be more different. Bre'i lha khang, described by Ne'u pandi ta as a *ru gnon*, is thus considered by him to be in a central area of the scheme. 'Bre is the name of a clan originally settled in gTsang, as is proved by *gSang ba phyag rgya can* in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and the account of the *kheng log* found in both lDe'u texts, which say that half of the 'Bre clan was deported by dPal 'khor btsan from its original land in gTsang to g.Yo ru.

It is thus probable that 'Bre'i lha khang was in gTsang, which would be appropriate for a *ru gnon* temple. In the eighteen lands owned by clans in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.186 line 22–p.187 line 10) (see below n.41), Nyang ro and Grom pa are classified as the ancestral lands of the 'Bre and lCe. More specifically, the part of gTsang in which 'Bre'i lha khang was located may have been Myang smad. *Myang chos 'byung* places a temple called 'Dre'i lha khang in the vicinity of 'Dul chung in Myang smad and assigns its foundation to the period of the earlier diffusion of Buddhism. The text (ibid. p.105 lines 10–15) reads: “'Dul chung gi phyogs bzhir sngon dus kyi dgon gnas khyad par can yod de lho na [lacuna] nub rKyang 'dur lha khang/ byang na Ngang dar gyi gtsug lag khang/ shar na 'Dre lha khang rnam yod/ 'Dre'i lha khang bstan snga dar gyi gtsug lag khang yin/ 'Dul chung gi nye logs na 'Dre lha khang yod de der Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug gi mkhan bu nyi shu bzhi'i nang tshan mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung gis bshad nyan bskyangs/ lCe btsun rGya gar la byon par mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung gis Zhā lu bzungs/”, “In the four directions of 'Dul chung are many extraordinary *dgon gnas* of earlier times. In the south is [lacuna]; in the west is rKyang dur lha khang; in the north Ngang skya lha khang; and in the east Dre lha khang (spelled so). 'Dre'i lha khang (spelled so) is a *bstan pa snga dar gtsug lag khang*. In the vicinity of 'Dul chung is 'Dre lha khang (spelled so). This is the *lha khang* where mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung, one of the twenty-four disciples of Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug, oversaw teaching and learning. When lCe btsun went to India, he entrusted Zhwa lu to mGo ba Ye shes g.yung drung. Following this, he was in charge of 'Dre lha khang of 'Dul chung and oversaw teaching and learning”.

A passage in bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnam kyi rnam thar* (f.4b line 5) shows that the 'Bre clan occupied the land Lung pa dkar po sGo bzhi at the westerly extremity of Nyang stod, but no reference is given to a temple of the 'Bre clan in that area.

Dre'i Ka brag is identified as a *mtha' 'dul* by Nyang ral and the two lDe'u authors, and should be searched for in a more peripheral zone of the scheme than the Bre'i lha khang of Ne'u pandi ta. Dre'i Ka brag was built in the locality of Khams subsequently known as dKar mdzes, but it is somewhat awkward to note that nearby Klong thang sGron ma'i lha khang is included by these three authors among the *yang 'dul* temples. Dre'i Ka brag is the place where Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193) (born in Kre shod (spelled so) see, *inter alia*, *mKhas pa dga'ston* p.859 lines 14–15) received his *rab tu byung* vow (ibid. p.859 line 19–p.860 line 1, where Dre' Ka brag is defined as a *chos skor*: “When [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] was sixteen years old (1125), at chos skor Ka brag, (p.860) he received the *rab tu byung* vow from mChog gi bla ma as *mkhan po* and Chag Seng ge grags as *slob dpon*”).

Since [Srong btsan sgam po] again could not [complete] the construction, to pin the hands and feet, he built Klong thang sGron ma'i lha khang of Khams on the left palm. On the right palm, he built Byang Tsha sPe dpal tshad rlung gnon gyi lha khang. On the sole of the right foot he built Mang yul Byams sprin gyi lha khang. On the left foot, he built Mon sKyer chu'i lha khang.

Again, what was built during the daytime was dismantled at night. (p.243) In mDo Khams, [he built] Klong thang dpal, which had four pillars made [with trees] from the Byang chub grove [and] in the south, rGyag chu Thog rngam (sic for rGya Ka chu Thog rngam); in the west, in the land of the 'A zha, Ke'u ri gzigs; in Li yul, at sGro khyer [lacuna], 'Dag sha intra. Concerning the eight *mtha' 'dul*, he built sNang sBal chen in Kha che; Bu chu thar legs in Kong yul; dPal Be'u rgyas pa in sPa gro sKyer chu (in this list of eight *mtha' 'dul*, one is missing).

Concerning the [lacuna] eight *yang 'dul*, in the east, he built rDo mi 'gyur ba on the canines of the white lioness (*seng ge dkar mo*) [with] Myang po Ka chung in Myang po as a branch (*'chong du*).¹² In the south, on the wing of the turquoise dragon (*g.yu 'brug*), [he built] sPa gro sKyer chu [with] sMa sha as a branch (*'chong du*). To the west of Me lha, on the beak of the red bird (*bya dmar po*), [he built] Mang yul Byams sprin [with] Byang can gyi lha khang as a branch (*'chong du*). In the north, on the back of the black tortoise (*rus sbal nag po*), [he built] sPra dun tse [with] gShen gsal gyi lha khang as a branch (*'chong du*).¹³

To pin the *ru mtshams* (“the borders of the four *ru*”), he built Li ti brgya rtsa brgyad in the northeast; Kong Bu chu in the southeast; lHo brag Kho 'thing in the southwest; Pad ma g.yung drung in the northwest.¹⁴

Then, concerning the *yang 'dul* [temples], he built Gling chu sKyer chu [and] both Bum thang and Glong rtse in the east to control the sun and moon; both Gye re and Gyer chung to control Me lha; both rDo shan lha khang, for which Gu langs was

12. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.230 lines 6–7) offers evidence that *'chong du* should be read as a synonym of *yan lag/dgon lag*, a “dependency” in support of the main temple.

13. Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's gShen gsal gyi gtsug lag khang seems to be the Shi hang gi gtsug lag khang of Ne'u pandi ta.

14. Judging from the two *ru mtshams gtsug lag khang* whose location is known (Kong Bu chu and lHo brag Kho 'thing), the *ru mtshams* do not correspond to the borders of the *ru bzhi*. However, in one case at least, which has nothing to do with the *srin mo* scheme, gZhu sNye mo is mentioned as one of the *ru mtshams* apparently demarcating the dBu ru border (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.432 lines 12–14: 'Brang dkar bye btsan btsan pa'i mkhar la bsten/ Byang dang sNang gis phyar byas nas ni/ ru mtshams gZhu sNyer rje dpon tshan gcig chags//”; “Assigned to the impregnable castle of 'Brang mkhar bye btsan, the Byang and sNang [clans] cast lots and a principality of petty lords was established in *ru mtshams* gZhu sNye”).

The western border of dBu ru in the organization of the *ru bzhi* is commonly given as gZhu sNye mo (see, for instance, *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.111 line 6 and *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.272 line 10).

used as a model, and Hab sha, for which Shing kun was used as a model, to control the [various] *gnod sbyin*; and Gangs bar to control the territory of mtsho Ma pham.

He built 'Phrang dum to control the territory of Gangs Ti se. He built Khyung lung dngul mkhar in commemoration of (*rten du*) the Buddha's *nirvana* to control the horizon between sky and earth (*gnam sa*) of the western mountain (*nub ri*). He built a *lha khang* at Mang yul Shing sa, the holy place [where] dBang phyug chen po is propitiated, adopting [the architecture of] Li yul as a model to [establish] Buddhism permanently [there]. Then, he built Ra sa and rGya stag (i.e. Ra mo che). In Bal yul, he built Bha ga bhe ba ri (i.e. *vihara*), Phu (p.244) tro bhe ba ri, Shing kun lha khang and Hab shang lha khang. In this way, he built the eighteen *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul* and branch temples. He (Srongs btsan sgam po, or rather sPu rgyal Bod) held the throne of Bal yul for forty-two years.

Knowing that he was able to [attempt] the construction of [Ra sa 'Phrul snang] *lha khang* [and] choosing rGya [gar] dPe khang ha ra ("library *vihara*") as its model, he made it the size of a medium-sized ship (*gzings*) (sic). He imposed a strict treaty (*chad btsan par byas*) on the king of Bal po"

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung (p.115 line 13–p.117 line 7) reads: "Bal yul nas Bal mo gza' Khri btsun khab tu bzhes pas des Bal po Bha ta ha spyang drangs te/ 'Phrul snang bzhengs par 'dod nas rmang bting pas/ Bod kha ba can 'di srin mo gyan rgyal du sgyel ba 'dra ba'i dgrar 'dug pas de srin mo'i snying khar song nas brtsig tu ma 'dod nas/ de'i yan lag dang nying lag la sogs pa mnan pa'i phyir/ ru bzhi'i yan lag bzhi la/ g.Yon ru Khra 'brug/ g.Yas ru gTsang 'phrad/ dBu ru bKa' tshal/ Ru lag Khrom pa rgyang bzhengs/ nying lag mnan ba'i phyir mtha' 'dul brgyad bzhengs te/ rGya sgor Kā chu thogs med/ mDo Khams su Glong thang sGron ma/ 'A zha'i sar Ke ru gzi mdangs/ Li yul du Ba (p.116) dan In tra/ Mang yul du Byang sprin yid 'ong dge rgyas/ Kha cher Rab snang dbang chen rgyas pa/ Kong yul du Bo chur thar legs/ g.Yung rung brtsegs pa/ dPal gror sKyer chu dpal be'u rgyas pa/ bzhengs so/ de nas sor mo bcu mnan pa'i phyir yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang brgyad la/ shar seng ge dkar mo'i dpral gdengs su/ rDo rje mi 'gyur ba'i gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ de'i phyong du Myang Khā chu'i lha khang/ lho phyogs stag mo'i kha stengs su dPa' gro sKyer chu/ de'i phyong du sMan sha na sma'i lha khang/ nub byang dmar mo'i mchu stengs su Mang yul Byang sprin/ de'i phyong du sTang sprin gyi lha khang/ byang du sbal pa nag po'i mchu stengs su sPra dun tse/ de'i phyong du gNyan gsal gyi lha khang bzhengs so/ de ni yang 'dul bzhi la phyong gis btags pa bzhi ste brgyad do/ de nas ru mtshams kyi bzhi la/ byang shar du Li tig brgya rtsa brgyad kyi lha khang/ shar lhor Kong po Bo chu'i lho nub tu mKho mthing/ nub byang du Pad ma g.yu rung gi lha khang bzhengs/ de nas yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bco brgyad la/ shar nyi zla gza' skar gyi kha gnon du Gling chung/ Kam chung Ke chung gsum/ shar phyogs nyi zla gza' skar gnon pa'i ched du bzhengs/ Me lha drong sgrub pa/i ched du Bum thang dang/ Kong tse gnyis gNod sbyin mo rten pa'i ched du/ sGe ri/ sKyer chu/ sDe chung gsum Bal Bod kyi mtshams bzung ba'i ched du De shang lha khang/ Hab shang lha khang gnyis/ mtsho Ma pham lud nas Bod la sKyin thang byung gis dogs pa'i che du/ Gangs bar lha khang/ Gangs ri Ti si mthong na ri thams cad la gnod kyis dogs nas/ Gangs ri Ti se mi mthong pa'i ched du 'Phra dum kyi lha khang/ glang kyis Byams pa byon pa'i che du (p.117) Nub ri'i gtsug lag khang ni Sangs rgyas sku 'das nas Byams pa byon pa'i

ched du'o/ gnam sa gnyis zur gnong pa'i ched du Khyung lung dngul mkhar/ dBang phyug sgrub pa'i don du Mang yul Khri dpe'i lha khang/ Shag thub mya ngan las 'das pa'i don du Li yul Glang po'i gtsug lag khang/ de sogs pa gong 'og tu gtsug lag khang brgya rtsa brgyad dam bcas par yod pa las rgyal pos zhe gnyis bzhengs/ rtsig par ma grub pa nmams shul du yang bla phur btab/ rmang bting nas physis bzhengs/';

“After marrying Bal mo gza’ (spelled so) Khri btsun of Bal yul and, wishing to build Ra sa ’Phrul snang, this one (Khri btsun) invited Bal po Bha ta ha who laid its foundations. This snowland Tibet is a hostile land, for it is like a *srin mo* sleeping on her back, so that she did not allow the building [of the temple] since it would be on her heart. In order to pin the main parts of her body (*yan lag*: head, arms and legs: Das) and the minor parts of her body (according to Das, *Dictionary, nyin lag*: “eyes, fingers, ears, chin, nose and forehead”), [g.Yon ru] Khra ’brug, g.Yas ru gTsang ’Phrad (spelled so for ’Gram), dBu ru bKa’ tshal, [and] Ru lag Khrom pa rGyang were built on the four main parts of her body (*yan lag*) [corresponding to] the *ru bzhi*.

On the minor parts of her body the eight *mtha’ ’dul* were built: Ka chu thogs med at the door of rGya (China); Glong thang sGrol ma in mDo Khams; Ke ru gzi mdangs in the land of ’A zha; Ba (p.116) dag in tra in Li yul; Byang sprin yid ’ong dge rgyas in Mang yul; Rab snang dbang chen rgyas pa in Kha che; Bo chu thar legs g.yung rung brtsegs pa (spelled as) in Kong yul; sKyer chu dpal be’u rgyas pa in dPal sgro (spelled so).

Then, to pin down the ten fingers (sic), as to the eight *yang ’dul gtsug lag khang*, he built rDo rje mi ’gyur ba’i gtsug lag khang on the forehead of the *seng ge dkar mo* (“white lioness”) in the east [with] Myang Khams Ka chu’i lha khang as a branch (*’phyong du*, a synonym of *’chong du* with the same meaning of *yan lag*); in the south, on the mouth of the tigress (*stag mo*) dPa’ gro (spelled as) sKyer chu [with] sMan sha na sma’i lha khang as a branch (*’phyong du*); on the beak of the red female bird (*byang* (sic for *bya*) *dmarmo*), Mang yul Byang sprin [with] sTang sprin gyi lha khang as a branch (*’phyong du*); in the north, on the beak of the black frog (*sbal pa nag po*), sPra dun tse [with] gNyen gsal gyi lha khang as a branch (*’phyong du*). Adding the four *’phyong gyis btags pa* (“chosen as branch [temples]”) to the four *yang ’dul* makes eight.

Then, with regard to the four *ru mtshams*, he built Li tig brgya rtsa brgyad kyi lha khang in the northeast; Kong po Bo chu in the southeast; mKho mthing in the southwest; Pad ma g.yu rung gi lha khang in the northwest.

Then, concerning the eighteen *yang ’dul gtsug lag khang*, he built, in the east, Gling chung, Kam chung and Ke chung, altogether three, to control the land of the sun, moon and planets; both Bum thang and Kong tse to propitiate Me lha (*drong* from *’dren pa’*: “to invite, to propitiate”); sGe ri, sKyer chung and sDe chung, three in all, to appease gNod sbyin mo (*yakshi*); both De shang lha khang and Hab shang lha khang to secure the border of Bal Bod; Gangs bar lha khang to prevent the overflow of mtsho Ma pham, since it was feared that it would flood sKyin thang in Tibet; ’Phra (spelled so) dum gyi lha khang to prevent Gangs ri Ti se from being seen, since it was feared that, if Gangs ri Ti se were seen, this would be harmful to all the [other] mountains; Nub ri’i gtsug lag khang to announce the future (*glang gyis* sic for *glad kyi*) arrival of Byams pa, (p.117) so that the coming of Byams pa would be celebrated after the death of Sangs rgyas; Khyung lung dngul mkhar to control the horizon of sky

and earth; Mang yul Khri dpe'i lha khang to propitiate dBang phyug; Li yul Glang po'i gtsug lag khang to commemorate the *nirvana* of Shaga thub. Of the one hundred and eight *gtsug lag khang* which he pledged [to build] above and below, the king built forty-two. Those not completed were marked with a peg and were built later, after their foundations were laid".

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.284 lines 14–15) reads: “De nas sa dgra mnan pas/ rtsig tu btub par dgongs te/ rGya'i Hen khang spe dkar la dpe blangs te brtsigs//”; “Then thinking to achieve the construction [of Ra sa 'Phrul snang] after subjugating the hostile land, [Srong btsan sgam po undertook to] build it using rGya'i Hen khang spe dkar as model”.

Ibid. (p.284 line 19–p.286 line 20): “Yang 'phro dang thog 'big tu ma btub pa la/ ru bzhir gtsug lag khang rtsig dgongs te/ srin mo gan rkyal 'gyel ba 'dra ba'i (p.285) dpung pa g.yon gnod pa la g.Yon ru Khra 'brug brtsigs/ de'i yan lag tu bKra shis dge 'phel gnyis brtsigs/ g.yas pa la dBu ru bKa' stsal/ de'i yan lag tu Mi 'gyur dge ba'i gtsug lag khang brtsigs/ dpyi g.yas pa la g.Yas rur rTsang 'gram/ de'i yan lag tu Byang chub dge gnas/ g.yon pa la Ru lag tu Grom pa rgyang dang de'i yan lag tu rNam dag khriims kyi lha khang bzhengs/

yang rtsig tu ma btub nas/ mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bzhi la/ gru mo g.yon pa la lHo brag mKho mthing bzhengs/ g.yas pa la Kong por Bu chu lha khang dang/ pus mo g.yon pa la Tre'i Ka brag/ g.yas pa la sPra bdun rtse/

yang mtha' 'dul bzhi la/ lag mthil g.yon gnod pa la/ Khams su Slong thang sGron ma'i lha khang/ g.yas pa la byang mTshal byir/ dPal char klu gnod dang/ rkang mtshil g.yas pa la/ Mang yul Byang sprin du Yid 'ong dge rgyas dang/ g.yon pa la Mon sKyer chur Bum thang gi lha khang brtsigs/

yang rtsig ma btub nas/ yang 'dul brgyad la/ rGya gor Kā chu thogs med/ mDo Khams su Klong thang dPa' 'byung/ 'A zha ru Ke ru dPal 'byung/ Li yul du Sha Indra/ Mang yul du dBan chen brtsegs pa/ Kong por Bu chu g.yung drung brtsegs pa/ sPa gror sKyer chu dpal bo rgyas pa bzhengs/

yang 'dul bzhi la 'phyong btags brgyad la/ shar Seng ge dkar (p.286) mo'i dpral steng du rDo rje 'gyur med kyi lha khang/ de la 'phyong Myang dKa' chu'i lha khang/ lho stag skya bo'i mche steng du/ Bum rtse lung gi lha khang/ de'i 'phyong du rMa sha rma'i lha khang/ nub byang dmar mo'i mchu steng du/ Mang yul Byang sprin dang/ de'i 'phyong du Myang sprin lha khang/ byang rus sbal nag po'i steng du/ sPra bdun rtse dang de la 'phyong gShen gsal lha khang bzhengs/

de nas ru mtshams bzhi la/ byang shar Lig tig brgya rtsa brgyad kyi lha khang dang/ shar lhor Kong chu'i lha khang/ lho nub tu Kho mthing dang/ nub byang du Pad ma g.yung drung gi lha khang ngo/

yang 'dul gyi yang 'dul bco brgyad la/ Gling chu sKam chu Ko chu gsum shar phyogs nyi zla gza' skar gnod pa'i ched du bzhengs/ Bum thang Klong rtse gnyis/ Me lha drang srong bsgrub pa'i ched du bzhengs/ dGe re dHyer chu Hor chu gsum gnod sbyin mo bsten pa'i ched du bzhengs/ Gangs bar gyi lha khang ni mtsho Ma pham lud nas Bod la rkyen byung dogs pa'i ched du bzhengs/ sPra bdun rtse'i lha khang ni Gangs Ti rtse mthos nas ri thams cad la [lacuna] dngos bzhi [lacuna] med dogs pa'i ched du Gangs mi mthong pa la bzhengs/ Khyung lung dngul dkar gyi lha

khang ni gnam sa zur gnon pa'i ched du bzhengs/ Mang yul Khri se'i lha khang ni dBang phyug sgrub pa'i don du bzhengs/ Li yul Glang po'i lha khang ni Shāk thub 'das pa'i ched du bzhengs//";

“Since the remainder [of the temple] and the roofing could not be made, [Srong btsan sgam po] decided to build one *gtsug lag khang* [each] in the *ru bzhi*. To pin the left shoulder of the *srin mo* lying on her back (p.285) he built g.Yon ru Khra 'brug. He built bKra shis dge 'phel [as its branch temple], making two (i.e. Kha 'brug and bKra shis dge 'phel). On the right shoulder, he built dBu ru bKa' stsal and Mi 'gyur dge ba'i gtsug lag [khang] [as its branch temple]. On the right hip, [he built] rTsang 'Gram in g.Yas ru and Byang chub dge gnas [as its branch temple]. On the left [hip], he built Grom pa rGyang in Ru lag and rNam dag khriims kyi lha khang [as its branch temple].

Still he could not complete the construction [of Ra sa 'Phrul snang], so [he built] the four *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang*: lHo brag mKho mthing on the left elbow, Bu chu lha khang in Kong po on the right [elbow], Tre'i Ka brag on the left knee and sPra bdun rtse on the right [knee].

Again, concerning the four *mtha' yang 'dul* (“further *mtha' 'dul*”), he built Slong thang sGron ma'i lha khang in Khams to pin down the left palm; dPal char klu gnon in Byang mTshal byi on the right [palm], Yid 'ong dge rgyas at Mang yul Byang sprin on the right sole, and Bum thang gi gtsug lag khang at Mon sKyer chu on the left sole.

Since again he could not complete their construction, he built the eight *yang 'dul*: Kwa chu thogs med at rGya go (*gor* spelled so for *sgor*: “at the the door of rGya [nag]”), Klong thang dPal 'byung in mDo Khams, Ke ru dPal 'byung in 'A zha'i [yul], Sha indra in Li yul, dBang chen brtsegs pa in Mang yul, Bu chu g.yung drung brtsegs pa in Kong po and sKyer chu dPal bo rgyas pa at sPa gro.

Concerning the eight *'phyong btags pa* (“branch [temples]”) to the four *yang 'dul*, on the forehead of the white lioness (p.286) he built, in the east, rDo rje 'gyur med kyi lha khang [with] Myang dKa' chu'i lha khang as a branch (*de la 'phyong*); in the south, Bum rtse lung gi lha khang on the white tiger's canine [with] rMa sha rma'i lha khang as a branch (*de la 'phyong*); in the west, Mang yul Byang sprin on the beak of the red bird [with] Myang sprin lha khang as a branch (*de la 'phyong*); in the north, sPra bdun rtse on the black tortoise [with] gShen gsal lha khang as a branch (*de la 'phyong*).

Then, concerning the four *ru mtshams*, [he built] Lig tig brgya rtsa brgyad kyi lha khang in the northeast; Kong chu'i lha khang in the southeast; Kho mthing in the southwest and Pad ma g.yung drung lha khang in the northwest.

As to the eighteen *yang 'dul yang 'dul*, he built Gling chung, sKam chung and Ko chu, three in all, in order to control the corner where the sun, the moon and the planets [rise] in the east. He built both Bum thang and Klong rtse to propitiate Me lha drang srong. He built dGe re, dGyer chu and Hor chu, altogether three, to appease gNod sbyin mo. He built both De shang lha khang and Hab shang lha khang at the border of Bal Bod. He built Gangs bar to prevent the fear that, when mtsho Ma pham overflows, it might flood Tibet. He built sPra dun rtse so that gangs [Ti se] cannot be seen, to dispel the fear that, if Gangs Te rtse (i.e. Ti se) were seen (*mthos* sic for *mthong*), all the mountains would actually disappear (*med*) [from sight] (or else: “all the mountains would be nothing [in comparison]”). He built Nub ri'i lha khang to announce the future arrival of Byams pa. He built Khyung lung dngul mkhar gyi lha

khang to control the horizon between sky and earth, these two. He built Mang yul Khri se'i lha khang to appease dBang phyug. He built Li yul Glang po'i lha khang in order to commemorate the *nirvana* of Shaka thub".

Ne'u pandi ta, *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* (p.16 line 14–p.19 line 15) reads: “mNga' ris Bod kyi rgyal khams 'di/ srin mo gan rkyal du bskyel ba 'dra ba la/ Ne'u thang gi mtsho srin mo snying khrag lta bu'i steng du brtsigs pas/ de'i yan lag gnon dgos pa't 'dug pa la/ ru bzhi'i gtsug lag khang chen po bzhi bzhengs pa ni/ lag pa g.yas pa mnan pa'i phyir/ Grom pa rgyangs nam dag sgrub med kyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ de'i 'chong du 'Bre'i gtsug lag khang btab/ de'i sgrub pa rGyang gi brag phug tu bcas/ lag pa g.yon pa gnon pa'i phyir/ Khra 'brug gi Byams pa mi (p.17) 'gyur gyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ de'i 'chong du rTsang thang gi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ rkang pa g.yas pa mnan pa'i phyir/ Ka rtsal gyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ 'chong du Shi hang gi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ rkang pa g.yon pa mnan pa'i phyir/ gTsang 'brang gi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ de'i 'chong du 'Brom sKyer chung gi lha khang bzhengs/ yang mtha' 'dul yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang chen po bzhi dang/ 'chong dang bcas pa bzhengs shig zer nas/ shar phyogs su 'brug sngon pa'i sgr'i steng du/ Ga chu dang Go chu'i gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ lho phyogs su stag skya bo'i mche steng du/ dPa' gro thang shing mdud pa can dang/ rDo rje gur gyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ nub phyogs su bya dmar po'i mchu steng du/ Mang yul sprin chen gyi gtsug lag khang dang/ gTsug tor kas byung bai gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ byang phyogs su rus sbal nag po'i dpral steng du/ Pre dun rtse dang rdo rje dbyings kyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs so/ de nas mtshams gnon gyi gtsug lag khang bzhi bzhengs shig zer nas/ shar lho mtshams su Kho 'thing gi lha khang bzhengs/ nub byang mtshams su Shes rab sGrol ma'i lha khang bzhengs/ byang shar mtshams su Padma sGrol ma'i lha khang bzhengs so/ de nas yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bzhi bzhengs shig zer nas/ shar phyogs su skar ma sMin drug 'char ba'i 'og tu/ dung phor pa sbugs pa 'dra bai gtsug lag khang/ phyi mchod rten/ nang lha khang/ rtsa ba gzer (p.18) mgo/ rtse rgya phubs kyi tshal du bzhengs/ lho skar ma Lag sor 'char ba'i 'og tu/ me tog padma kha phye ba 'dra ba'i gtsug lag khang/ phyi mchod rten/ nang lha khang/ rtsa ba gzer mgo/ rtse mo rgya phubs kyi tshul du bzhengs/ nub phyogs zla ba tshes pa'i 'og tu/ lcags kyi sdong po gnam du sbreng ba 'dra ba'i gtsug lag khang/ phyi mchod rten/ nang lha khang/ rtsa ba gzer mgo/ rtse mo rgya phubs kyi tshul du bzhengs/ byang skar ma sMe bdun 'char ba'i 'og tu/ skyes zhug sna lnga gyon pa 'dra ba'i gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ phyi mchod rte/ nang lha khang/ rtsa ba gzer mgo/ rtse mo rgya phubs kyi tshul du bzhengs so/ snying gzer chen po gcig thob cig zer nas/ Khams su Glang thang sGrol ma'i gtsug lag khang/ phyi mchod rten/ nang lha khang/ rtsa ba gzer mgo/ rtse mo rgya phubs kyi tshul du bzhengs so/ Bum thang dang Gling thang gnyis Me lha drang srong sgrub pa'i don du bzhengs/ sGye ri dang sKyer chu gnyis dBang phyug ma dam la gdags pa'i don du bzhengs/ Gu lang dang Shin kun gnyis Bal Bod kyi sa mtshams bsrung ba'i don du bzhengs/ Gang bar/ 'Thon 'thing gnyis Gangs Ti se [note: mthong na ri gzhan la dngos so med pas] bzhengs/ Pra dum dang dPal rgyas kyi gnyis mtsho Ma 'phang ma lud pa'i don du [note: lud na Bod du sKyin thang gi chu chen rgyas] bzhengs/ Nam mkha' dri med kyi gtsug lag khang/ Shākya thub pa'i bstan pa nub nas Byams pa mi yul du ma byon gyi bar/ mos pa phyag gi rten du bzhengs/ Mang yul Shel ber gyi gtsug lag khang/ bsTan ma bcu gnyis bran

(p.19) du bkol ba'i don du bzhengs/ gnam sa'i zur mnan pa'i ched du Khyung lung gi lha khang bzhengs/ rgyal ba Shākya thub mi rtag pa ston pa'i dper 'Go'u te shan gyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ sKar chung gling bzhi dpe brgyad kyi gtsug lag khang Bal po dang Li yis bzo byas te slad kyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs pa'i dper/ gTsang Lu ma mgo dgu'i rgyab Pu rang dang Gro shod kyi mtshams su bzhengs [note de rnamdus physis bSam yas bzhengs pa'i dus su cher bzhengs so/ de rnamdus ma zhiq pa gas che'o/] 'byung pa chu'i kha gnon don du sKong Bu chu tshul kyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ 'byung ba me'i kha gnon du Khro stod gNam ru gong gi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ 'byung pa rlung gi kha gnon du Mang yul Byams sprin gyi gtsug lag khang bzhengs so/ de nas gdod kyis 'Phrul snang gi gtsug lag khang [note: Mon bza' Khri lcam gyis Brag lha bzhengs zer ro/] bzhengs pas btub ste de'i byin rlabs kyis nyi 'og gi rgyal khamdams thams cad zil gyis mnan no//";

“Since this territory (*mnga'ris*) of the kingdom of Tibet is like a *srin mo* lying on her back, [and] Ra sa 'Phrul snang was supposed] to be constructed above the lake of Ne'u thang,¹⁵ which is the same as the blood from the heart of the *srin mo*, it became necessary to build the four great *ru bzhi'i gtsug lag khang* to pin her limbs, as follows. [Srong btsan sgam po] built Grom pa rGyangs (spelled so) rNam dag sgrib med kyi gtsug lag khang (“pure *gtsug lag khang* without defilements”) to pin the right hand. As a branch of it (*de'i 'chong du*), he built 'Bre'i gtsug lag khang, which was made by excavating (*bcas* sic for *bcad*) the rock cave of rGyang. He built Khra 'brug gi Byams pa mi (p.17) 'gyur gyi gtsug lag khang to pin the left hand. As a branch of it (*de'i 'chong du*), he built rTsang Thang gi gtsug lag khang. He built Ka rtsal gyi gtsug lag khang to pin the right foot. As a branch of it (*de'i 'chong du*), he built Shi hang gi gtsug lag khang. He built gTsang 'Brang (i.e. 'Gram) gi gtsug lag khang to pin the left foot. As a branch of it (*de'i 'chong du*), he built 'Brom (sic for Mon) sKyer chung gi lha khang.

Moreover, to tell of the construction of the four great *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul gtsug lag khang* and their branches (*'chong dang bcas pa*), in the east, he built Ga chu and Go chu gtsug lag khang on the feathers of the blue dragon. In the south, he built dPa' gro Thang shing mdud pa can (sic for *dud pa can*: “smoky pine tree”) and rDo rje gur gyi gtsug lag khang on the canines of the tawny tiger. In the west, he built Mang yul sPrin chen gyi gtsug lag khang and gTsug tor las byung ba'i gtsug lag khang on the beak of the red bird. In the north, he built Pre dun (spelled so) rtse and rDo rje dbyings kyi gtsug lag khang on the forehead of the black tortoise.

15. Ne'u thang gi mtsho, mentioned in the passage, is traditionally considered to be equivalent to 'O thang gi mtsho on the plain of lHa sa. See, for instance, *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.277 lines 9–11), which says that 'O thang gi mtsho is located in Ne thang; or *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.140 line 20) and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.429 line 15) citing lHa sa'i Ne thang in reference to lHa lung dPal gyi rdo rje and his assassination of Dar ma. Hence, Ne/Ne'u thang is the plain of lHa sa.

Then, to tell of the four *mtshams gnon gyi gtsug lag khang*, on the southeast border, he built lCang ra rmug po'i (spelled so) gtsug lag khang. On the southwest border, he built 'Kho 'thing gi lha khang.¹⁶ On the northwest border, he built Shes rab sGrol ma'i lha khang. On the northeast border, he built Padma sGrol ma'i lha khang.

As to the construction of the four *yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang*, in the east, under the light of the sMin drug constellation (Pleiades), he built a *gtsug lag khang* resembling an inverted conch shell bowl, which is a *mchod rten* on the outside and a *lha khang* on the inside, with a nailhead for foundation (p.18) and its roof shaped like a pagoda. In the south, under the light of the Lag sor constellation, he built a *gtsug lag khang* resembling an open lotus flower, which is a *mchod rten* on the outside and a *lha khang* on the inside, with a nailhead for foundation and its roof shaped like a pagoda. In the west, under the moonshine, he built a *gtsug lag khang* resembling an iron tree touching the sky, which is a *mchod rten* on the outside and a *lha khang* on the inside, with a nailhead for foundation and its roof shaped like a pagoda. In the north, under the light of the sMe bdun constellation, he built a *gtsug lag khang* clad in five kinds of armour, which is a *mchod rten* on the outside and a *lha khang* on the inside, with a nailhead for foundation and its roof shaped like a pagoda.

To pierce [the *srin mo*'s] heart with a big peg, he built Glang thang sGrol ma'i gtsug lag khang in Khams, which is a *mchod rten* on the outside and a *lha khang* on the inside, with a nailhead for foundation and its roof shaped like a pagoda. He built Bum thang and Gling thang to appease Me lha drang srong. He built both sGye ri and sKyer chu to bind dBang phyug ma to a vow. He built both Gu lang and Shing kun (Pashupati and Swayambhu) to guard the border of Bal Bod. He built both Gang ar and 'Thon 'thing to control Gangs Ti se [note: since if [Ti se] is seen, the other mountains will disappear (*med*) [from sight]]. He built both Pra dum and dPal rgyas kyi lha khang to prevent the floods of mtsho Ma 'phang [note: if it overflows, it will swell the great sKyin thang river]. He built Nam mkha' dri med kyi gtsug lag khang as the receptacle to which prostrations [should be offered] with devotion, in anticipation of the arrival of Byams pa in the human world after the destruction of the teachings of Shakya thub pa. He built Mang yul Shel ber gyi gtsug lag khang to make the bsTan ma bcu gnyis serve [the teachings]. (p.19) He built Khyung lung gi lha khang to control the horizon of earth and sky. He built 'Go'u te shan gyi gtsug lag khang as a symbol of the impermanence of the teachings of rgyal ba Shakya thub pa. He built sKar chung gling bzhi dpe rgyad kyi gtsug lag khang on the border between Pu rang and Gro shod at the back of gTsang Lu ma mgo dgu, in the architectural style of Bal po and Li [yul], as the model for future *gtsug lag khang*-s [note: these were later constructed in the main part when bSam yas was built. It is essential that they do not decay]. He built sKong Bu chu tshul gyi gtsug lag khang to control the element water. He built Mon Bum thang gi gtsug lag khang to control the element fire. He built Khro stod gNam

16. The location of lCang ra rmug po (more often spelled lCang ra smug po in the sources), which Ne'u pandi ta places in the south-east, is rather controversial, given that it is normally identified with Khotan, and should thus be in the north-west. Its improbable geographical positioning suggests that the orientation of the compass was possibly reversed, as in the Chinese topographic tradition, but this is contradicted by the equally surprising location of Kho 'thing in the south-west.

ru gong gi gtsug lag khang to control the element earth. He built Mang yul Byams sprin gyi gtsug lag khang to control the element wind.

Then, he was able to build the above mentioned 'Khrul (sic) snang gi gtsug lag khang [note: it is said that Mon bza' Khri lcam built Brag lha]. Thanks to these blessings, the whole kingdom under the sun came under his glorious control".

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung contains a set of hermitages and meditation places built during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan which echoes the classifications of the temples associated with Srong btsan sgam po's pinning of the *srin mo*.

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung (p.131 line 21–p.132 line 17) reads: “sGom pa lnga la/ shar Kong po (p.132) Bo chu dga' ldan/ lho'i brag phug ni 'Bre rgyal ba blo gros kyis mdzad/ lhor Chu brag sPong 'thon gyi brag phug dang mKhar chu'i bsgom ra sNubs Nam mkha'i snying pos mdzad/ nub dPal gro sTeg dang Seng ge lung gi brag phug Glang dPal gyi seng ges mdzad/ byang phyogs A rya pa lo sgom dra Ngan lam rGyal ba mchog dbyangs kyis mdzad do/ yang 'dul chen po bzhi la/ shar phyogs rGya 'dul ba'i slad du rDo rje'i gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ lho phyogs Mon 'dul ba'i slad du Bum thang rTsi lung gi gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ nub phyogs klu Ma dros pa'i kha gnon du Pra dun rtse dPal rgyas bzhengs/ byang phyogs Ke le 'dul ba'i don du, sPro rtsi lha khang bzhengs/ phang dben chen po drug la gTsang 'brang gi yang dben Nag gseb bde ldan 'phrul gling/ Khrom pa rgyang gi yang dben dGyes tshal dga' ba'i gling/ Khra 'brug gi yang dben Yon tan yid bzhin 'byung ba'i phug po che/ lHa sa'i yang dben Yer pa shug gseb/ bSam yas gyi yang dben mNgon par byang chub pa'i 'Ching phu'o/ de ltar lha khang brgya rtsa brgyad bzhengs pa dam bcas la stong can 'thab pas ma them te sum bcu tsam bzhengs/”;

“Concerning the five meditation places, these are as follows. In the east is Kong po (p.132) Bo chu dGa' ldan and lHa'i brag phug built by 'Bre rGyal ba blo gros; in the south, Chu brag sPong 'thon gyi brag phug and mKhar chu'i bsgom ra built by sNubs Nam mkha'i snying po; in the west, dPal gro sTeg and Seng ge lung gi brag phug built by Glang dPal gyi seng ge; and in the north, A rya pa lo sgom dra built by Ngan lam rGyal ba mchog dbyangs.

Again, concerning the four *yang 'dul chen po*, rDo rje gtsug lag khang was built to tame ('dul ba) rGya [nag]; in the south, Bum thang rTsi lung gi gtsug lag khang was built to tame Mon; in the west Pra dun rtse [and] dPal rgyas [were built] to control the territory (*kha gnon*) of klu Ma dros pa; and in the north, sPro rtsi lha khang was built to tame Ke le.

Regarding the six great *phang dben* (sic *yang dben*) (“further hermitages”), they are gTsang 'brang yang dben nag gseb bDe ldan 'phrul gling, yang dben dGyes tshal Ga' ba'i gling of Khrom pa rGyang, yang dben Yon tan yid bzhin 'byung ba'i phug po che of Khra 'brug, yang dben Yer pa shug gseb of lHa sa and yang dben mNgon par byang chub pa'i 'Chims phu of bSam yas.

Likewise, despite [the *lha sras btsan po*'s] pledge of building the 108 *lha khang* owing to the military and administrative communities (*stong can*: same as *stong sde*?) [involved] in fighting, [many temples] could not be completed, [only] some thirty were built".¹⁷

In his discussion of the *srin mo*, Aris stresses that, in *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, each of the *mtha' 'dul* is linked with a branch temple (*'chong du*) and a hermitage. It is likely that the version of the *srin mo* scheme found in *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* has been drawn from the classification of hermitages in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*. But several hermitages in the latter list correspond to the temples built to pin down the *srin mo*, mentioned in the earlier sources I have cited in the previous pages.

The geography in this classification, as in those attributed to the reign of Srong btsan sgam po, is somewhat inaccurate, but the scheme resurfaces here with a meaningful addition that links building retreats and meditation places with entities the text defines as *stong can*-s, which may be the same as the *stong sde* of the Tibetan empire. If so, the conversion to Buddhism of the *srin mo* which represents the territory under the control of sPu rgyal Bod would have political and military connotations beyond its religious overtones.

TWO MORE CLASSIFICATIONS

O rgyan gling pa, *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.147 lines 8–16) reads:

“Chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po'i sku ring la/ thog mar Mi 'gyur Byams pa'i gtsug lag khang/ g.Yu ru Khra 'brug dBu ru bKa' stsal bzhengs/ g.Yas ru gTsang 'gram Ru lag Grom pa bzhengs/ lHo brag Kho mthing Mon yul Bum thang bzhengs/ sPa gror sKyar chu mDo Khams Klong thang sgrol/ Nyang ror rTsis dang rGyang ror dPal tshab bzhengs/ Kong por Chu dang lha khang bzhengs su gsol/ Mang yul Byams sprin Tshangs pa rlung gnon bzhengs/ sPra dun rtse dang sKyo yi lha khang bzhengs/ Klo

17. Further activity this time at unidentified sites classically connected to the *srin mo* are ascribed to Khri srong lde btsan son, Mu rug btsad po. *Lung btsan bka' rgya'i skor* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* (Paro ed., p.225 lines 1–2, also known as *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* in the Gangtok edition of the same text): “Tha chung lha sras Mu rug can/ yab kyi bzhugs shul ma dbang ste/ tha yul Rong btsan so kha gzung/ sKong po'i yul du thebs kyi lcags/ mChims kyi Gad pa skya po dang/ Nyang Khri bad kyi Do bo ru/ pho brang gtug lag sku mkhar rtsigs/ rgyas par dkar shog log nas 'byung/ gzhan yang mtha' 'dul yang dul gyi/ gtsug lag khang sogs mchod rten bzhengs//”; “[Khri srong lde btsan's] youngest son lha sras Mu rug btsad [po] did not rule over the abandoned residence of his father. He took control of the border area of tha (spelled so for mtha') yul Rong btsan. He progressively stepped (lcags spelled so for bcag) into Kong po. He constructed a palace, a *gtsug lag [khang]* and castle in mChims Gad pa skya bo and Nyang Khri bad kyi Do bo, which are mentioned on the back side of the white paper. Moreover, he built a *mchod rten* at the *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang*-s”.

yul Kha ra Nyang Khams Gru gu bzhengs/ 'Phan yul Bye ri lHa sa 'Phrul snang dang/
Ra mo che yi gtsug lag khang nams bzhengs/'';

“During the time of chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po, first (*thog mar*) Mi 'gyur Byams pa'i gtsug lag khang g.Yu ru Khra 'brug and dBu ru bKa' stsal were built. g.Yas ru gTsang 'gram and Ru lag Grom pa were built. lHo brag mKho mthing and Mon yul Bum thang were built. sPa gro sKyar chu, mDo Khams Klong thang sGrol, rTsis in Nyang ro and dPal tshab in rGyang ro were built, and Chu in Kong po. He had [these] *lha khang*-s built. sPra dun rtse and sKyo yi lha khang were built. Klo yul, Ka ra, Nyang, Khams and Gru gu were built. 'Phan yul Bye ri, lHa sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che yi gtsug lag khang were built”.

Sangs rgyas gling pa, *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* in the thirteen volumes *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* (Gangtok ed. p.145 line 6–p.146 line 6) reads:

“lHa khang ji ltar bzhes (sic for bzhengs) tshul ni/ Srong btsan (p.146) sgam po'i sku ring la/ Byams pa mi 'gyur gtsug lag khang/ g.Yu ru Khra 'brug gtsug lag bzhengs [note: thog mar Bod srin mo gan rgyal du bskyel lta bu tshul du/ dpung pa g.yon par]/ dBu ru Ka tshal gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dpung pa g.yas pa steng du]/ g.Yas ru gTsang 'Phrang gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dbyi g.yas]/ Ru lag Gram pa'i gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dbyi g.yon]/ lHo brag mKho lding gtsug lag bzhengs [note: pus mo g.yas pa]/ Mon du Bum thang gtsug lag bzhengs [note: pus mo g.yon]/ sPa gro sGyer chang gtsug lag bzhengs [note: rkang mthil g.yon pa]/ gzhan yang sa gnon 'di nams bzhengs [note: gzhan kun 'gres par]/ Mang yul Byams srin lha khang dang/ rKyang ror Pan chen lha khang dang/ Kong por Bu chu lha khang dang/ mDo Khams Glang thang sGrol ma dang/ Tshangs pa klu gnon lha khang dang/ Dur rtser Bra yi gtsug lag khang/ sPu bor mDongs chu'i gtsug lag khang/ sNang rtser sKyo'i gtsug lag khang/ 'Phan yul Bye ri'i gtsug lag khang/ Ra sa 'Phrul snang gtsug lag khang/ Ra mo che yi gtsug lag khang/ Srong btsan Mu ti yan chad du/ bzhengs pa'i lha khang bsam mi khyab/ kun kyang mtha' 'dul yang 'dul dang rje yi bzhugs gnas gong 'og lags/'';

“The way in which temples were built is as follows. During the life of Srong btsan (p.146) sgam po [note: in antiquity Bod was like a *srin mo* sleeping supine] Byams pa mi 'gyur gtsug lag khang g.Yu ru Khra 'brug gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her left shoulder]; dBu ru Ka tshal gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her right shoulder]; g.Yas ru gTsang 'Phrang gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her left hip]; lHo brag mKho lding gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her right hip]; Bum thang gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her left knee] and sPa gro sGyer chang gtsug lag [khang] was built in Mon [note: on the sole of her left foot]. Moreover, the following other ones were built to pin down the land [note: all these other [temples] are related [to the previous ones]]: Mang yul Byams srin lha khang, Pan chen lha khang in rKyang ro, Bu chu lha khang in Kong po, mDo Khams Glang thang sGrol ma, Tshangs pa klu gnon lha khang, Bra yi gtsug lag khang in Dur rtse, mDongs chu'i gtsug lag khang in sPu bo, sKyo'i gtsug lag khang in sNang rtse, 'Phan yul Bye ri'i gtsug lag khang, Ra sa 'Phrul snang gtsug lag khang and Ra mo che yi gtsug lag

khang. From Srong btsan until Mu ri (i.e. Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs),¹⁸ [the number of] the *lha khang*-s that were built is inconceivable. All of them were *mtha' 'dul* [and] *yang 'dul* or earlier and later residences of the rulers”.

THE SCHEME

In the Tibetan sources—*bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum* first and foremost—a predominant role is given to Kong co, and great importance is attached in the narrative of the episode to her employment of Chinese geomancy which prescribed the pinning of the *srin mo gan rkyal* as a prerequisite to building Ra sa 'Phrul snang.

There is nothing new if I say that the acceptance of the legend of the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang has been viewed with scepticism especially by Western scholars on two main grounds. They are the absence of any trace of it in the Tun-huang literature and the pious and legendary terms applied to it, which would not match the few historical clues preserved in other documents deemed reliable. Even if credence is lent to the legend of the construction despite the doubts the account may raise, the unfolding of the events shows that Kong co's crucial role in creating the conditions for the temple to be erected did not extend to ensuring that the monument would be Chinese. Nor did Srong btsan sgam po's major role in the enterprise imply that it was a Tibetan temple, if ever there were preexisting models in those days.

Several works, which stress Kong co's geomantic activity, state that Ra sa 'Phrul snang was built on the model of an Indian *vihara*.¹⁹ This is confirmed by the plan of the temple, which has extant prototypes in India. Hence there is enough literary and monumental evidence to support an investigation into whether Indian ideas are at the origin of the scheme of the *srin mo*. Consequently, an investigation should also consider whether or not both the conceptual

18. According to Sangs rgyas gling pa (see *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod*), Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs was the *lha sras btsan po* who systematically focused on the *lha khang*-s of the anthropomorphic scheme, with the exception of the *ru gnon* temples. The concerned passage in the text (Gangtok ed. p.143 lines 2–3) reads: “gZhan yang mtha' 'dul yang 'dul gyi/ gtsug lag khang sogs mchod rten bzhengs/”; “Moreover, [Sad na legs] (known as 'Jing yon (sic) Mu ri btsad po to this text) built *mchod rten*-s at the *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul gtsug lag khang*”.

19. This temple is named rGya'i rTen dpe har and rGya'i dPe khang ha ra in *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.237 line 17 and p.244 lines 4–5); rGya'i Ha shang dpa'i dkar and rGya'i Hen khang spe dkar in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p. 281 line 7 and p.284 lines 14–15); rGya'i Heng khang bi har in *mKhas pa 'i dga'ston* (p.232 line 14 and p.234 line 2).

A different identification of the temple used as the model for Ra sa 'Phrul snang is found in *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.116 lines 4–7), O rgyan gling pa providing, as often is the case, his own peculiar assessment: “rGya gar yul gyi gtsug lag khang chen ni/ Ka ma la yi gtsug lag khang dper blangs nas/ lHa sa 'Phrul snang Ra mo che la sogs/ mtha' 'dul yang 'dul gtsug lag bzhi bcu bzhengs/”; “Using as model the *gtsug lag khang* of Ka ma la [shi la], the great *gtsug lag khang* of the land of rGya gar,

formula behind the making of the temple and its actual construction can be imputed to a single cultural source.

Hardly any prior background is documented for the transfer that favoured the adoption of the *srin mo gan rkyal* idea. No evidence is provided that shows whether her schemes were meant to cope with any sort of cultural inheritance besides a generic concept of geomancy. But one purpose is prioritarian as I show in the immediate following. The Indian tradition attributes to it a preferential function over the purely geomantic.

A rare reference in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* to Bal po Bha ta ha, who was summoned from his land, and the consequent laying of the foundations of Ra sa 'Phrul snang (ibid. p. 115 lines 13–15) is of great value in this respect. This statement identifies him as the architect of the temple and thus corroborates the notion that architectural ideas belonging to the Indian civilisation, of which the Kathmandu Valley was part, were the chosen cultural standard for the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang.

A one line sentence in Nyang ral, mkhas pa lDe'u and dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba's treatment of the *srin mo gan rkyal* combines a poetic metaphor about Ra sa 'Phrul snang and a reference to the religious monument, the model for the temple. The metaphor conveys the sense of the temple's dimensions. The temple is a "zings 'bring po", a "mid-sized boat", an idea that transfer this holy structure to a cultural "size" way beyond the Tibetan dimension. It may point to India, for the fluvial tradition of Tibet never envisaged "mid-sized boats" as big as a *gtsug lag khang*. dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba adds that the "mid-sized boat" was apt to cruise the ocean, his interpretation pointing towards the Noble Land as the source of the metaphor. dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba in an exercise of rationalism adds that the mid sized boat had the dimension apt to cross the ocean.²⁰

The model for this "mid-sized boat" is identified in an Indian *vihara*. Its name is spelled differently by the three authors but points towards a *vihara* of manifest Indian make. The same concepts are mentioned again in another passage by the three authors. Again, lDe'u Jo sras and mkhas pa lDe'u do not identify which temple was built as a "mid-sized boat". They say that the *vihara* chosen as its model is called rGya'i rTen dpe har and rGya'i dPe khang ha ra

[Srong btsan sgam po] built forty *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul gtsug lag [khang]*, including lHa sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che".

O rgyan gling pa's attribution of a single Indian temple model for Ra sa 'Phrul snang, Ra mo che, the *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang*-s is unrealistic because they do not share the same architectural features.

20. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.234 lines 1–3): "De'i tshes rgyal pos sku'i bkod pa lnga stong bkye nas rGya'i Hen khang bi hara la dpe blangs rgya mtsho'i gru gzings 'bring gi tshad du rmang bting//"; "At that time the king emanated 5,000 emanations [of himself] and using rGya [gar] Hen khang bi hara as model laid the foundations [of the temple] the dimensions of a mid-sized oceanic vessel".

by Nyang ral,²¹ while mkhas pa lDe'u spells its name rGya'i Ha shang dpe dkar and rGya'i Hen khang spe dkar.²² *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* opts for rGya yi Hen khang bi hara.²³

In this connection, the relations to the principles contained in the ancient Indian architectural literature should be explored in order to ascertain the conceptual framework behind the way of building temples and secular edifices in the Indian world.

In his pioneering study of the *srin mo* (*Bhutan* p.18–19), Aris proposed that the scheme is of Chinese origin and traced its conceptual roots to the diagram of *Yu-kung*, which classifies the social classes of China and foreign populations in different zones (below I explore a few points for and against the scheme's Chinese or Indian derivation).

Besides the affinities with the Chinese scheme to which Aris points, there are also a few major matters of divergence. For one, the scheme of the *srin mo* is not divided into six zones like the *Yu-kung* (ibid. fig.2), but into three groups of four. Four temples each form the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul*.

Moreover, the classifications of the expanded version do not relate to this basic scheme of six and, therefore, cannot be a structural expansion of it. Another significant difference pertains to the orientation of the scheme. In *Yu-kung*, orientation is north-south, whereas in the scheme of the *srin mo* orientation is along a north-east to south-west axis.

The anthropomorphic representation of the narrative is probably the most important evidence of the origin of the scheme besides the evidence that the architect of the temple was a Newar and thus working in the realm of the Indian architectural culture. The *srin mo*, representing the land of Tibet,²⁴ has strong analogies with the *purusha* of the *Vāstu Shastra*, which

21. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.237 line 17): “rGya'i rTen dpe har la dpe blangs te gzings 'bring po dang tshad mnyam nas rmang bting bas zhig go//”; “Using rGya'i rTen dpe har for model, [Srong btsan sgam po] laid the foundations [of Ra sa 'Phrul snang], the dimensions of which were equal to a mid sized boat but they were destroyed”, and ibid. (p.244 lines 4–5): “De nas lha khang rtsig tu ma btub par mkhyen nas/ rGya'i dPe khang ha ra la dpe blangs nas gzings 'bring po'i tshad du byas”; “Then since [Srong btsan sgam po] realised he could not build the *lha khang*, using rGya'i dPe khang ha ra for model, he made a temple the dimension of mid sized boat”. Follows the narrative of the *srin mo*.

22. rGya'i Ha shang dpa'i dkar and rGya'i Hen khang spe dkar in *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p. 281 lines 7–8): “rGya'i Ha shang dpe dkar la dpe blang//”; “[Srong btsan sgam po] used rGya'i Ha shang dpe dkar for model”.

Ibid. (p.284 lines 14–15): “rGya'i Hen khang spe dkar la dpe blangs te brtsigs//”; “[Srong btsan sgam po] built [Ra sa 'Phrul snang] using rGya'i Hen khang spe dkar for model”.

23. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.232 line 14): “rGya yi Hen khang bi hara lta bar/ rgya mtsho'i gru gzings 'bring po'i tshad du bting//”; “Using rGya yi Hen khang bi hara for model, [Srong btsan sgam po] built [Ra sa 'Phrul snang], the dimensions of a mid sized oceanic boat”.

24. The anthropomorphic conception of the land of Tibet is also evinced by the use of the term *me btsa* adopted in the *srin mo* scheme of *bKa'chems ka khol ma* (p.234 lines 1–2) in reference to the pinning points of the limbs on which the *ru bzhi* were to be built. *Me btsa* is originally a medical term transferred to the Tibetan landscape and used in the literature to indicate geomantic points on the ground in the same way as medicine identifies sensitive points on the human body. A good example of this

embodies space in the Indian architectural tradition. It is thus the diagram adopted to pin down the *srin mo*.

In the most detailed configuration, the diagram of eighty-one squares (or “mansions”) of the ancient Indian architectural system, this anthropomorphic depiction of space is oriented with the head towards the northeast.²⁵ The head of the *srin mo* is positioned in the same direction in the scheme adopted by Srong btsan sgam po to pin her limbs. Among the thirty-one other variants, which go from one “mansion” to 1024, the diagram of eighty-one squares is the only one that contains the *purusha* inside it (Dagens, *Mayamata* p.16; Bedge, *Ancient and Mediaeval Town Planning in India* p.29–30 n.2).²⁶

The Indian tradition contemplates two types of *Vāstu purusha*, whose body is the area on which buildings can be erected. They are the *purusha* who remains immovable (*Sthira-vāstu*) and the rotating *purusha* who assumes different positions during the year (*Chara-vāstu*) (Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* vol.1 n.105). Being oriented to the northeast, the *srin mo* is of the type which does not move.

Ishanashivagurudevapaddhati says that the grid with eighty-one squares is the diagram meant for the building activities of kings, and therefore matches Srong btsan sgam po's status; whereas that of sixty-four squares is for *brahman*-s (Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* vol.1 p.46). Kramrisch notes that the distinction of rank between those authorised to use these diagrams (rulers or *brahman*-s) constitutes the main difference between these two most important grids of the ancient Indian architectural system. The eighty-one squares grid can also be used for building temples, although the sixty-four squares grid is also appropriate for this purpose. Priority in the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang is therefore accorded to its royal origin combined with its nature of temple.

usage is that of Thang stong rgyal po sending a nun, a nomad and a bitch to build a *mchod rten* in Byang thang to avert a Mongol invasion, the construction of which was prophesied by Guru Padma. The spot on which the *mchod rten* was built is called *me btsa* in Thang stong rgyal po's biography by Gyur med bde chen (p.261 lines 1–6).

25. Kramrisch (*The Hindu Temple* vol.1 p.57) says: “Yet the texts quoted (i.e. *Vāstuvīdyā* VI lines 25–26; *Birhat Samhita* LII, line 61; *Vishvakarmavidyaparakasha* lines 83–85) put his head [also in the case of the square of 64 parts] in the North-East, a position which the *Vāstupurusha* should occupy in the square of 81 parts. These various assimilations and combinations are unanimous in their intention”. See also Ramachandra Rao, *Mandalas in Temple Worship* p.22–23.

26. In *Vāstuvīdhana* it is said that the *Vāstumandala*, in which the body of the *purusha* is situated, should consist of eighty-one squares (Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* (vol.1 p.46). She adds (ibid. vol.1 p.49) that the body of the *purusha* “with its parts, limbs and apertures is interpreted as coterminous and thus one with the 81 squares of the plan”; and (ibid.), that: “the “descent” of the *Vaastupurusha* to earth, and the settlement of the gods on the *Purusha*, one with him on earth, is represented in the square of 81 parts”.

An important confirmation that the grid with eighty-one squares is the one used in the narrative of the *srin mo* derives from the fact that the number and the position of the pinning points established by means of drawing four diagonals in the grid (traced from the third and sixth mansion of each side composed of nine mansions)²⁷ are twelve, as in the scheme of the *srin mo* (i.e. three sets of four). The pinning points correspond to the spots the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul* were built to press down the limbs of the demoness.²⁸

Although, in the Indian tradition, the scheme is predominantly rendered anthropomorphically as the *purusha* with human (male) features, who may even be in irate form,²⁹ the occurrence of a demoness is not extraneous. For instance, the plan of the town of Suchindram, built by the Pandyan in the 9th century—though its main temple was constructed in the 12th—was traced on the limbs of a demoness. Hence even the choice of the demoness in preparing the foundation of Ra sa 'Phrul snang is consonant with the concepts of the ancient Indian architectural system.

With the exception of the hands, the position of the limbs of the *srin mo* is practically the same as that of the limbs of the *purusha* of the ancient Indian architectural literature. Whereas the arms of the *purusha* are held akimbo, those of the *srin mo* are stretched above the head (see below). In some cases, nonetheless, such as Suchindram, the arms of the Indian demoness are stretched in the same way as the *srin mo* rather than kept akimbo.

That the *srin mo*'s hands are outstretched can be established by a correct understanding of the location of one of the *yang 'dul* of *Mani bka' 'bum*, built over the place known to this source as Byang Tshang pa (Nyang ral writes Byang Tsha sPe dpal tshad by, lDe'u Jo ras Byang has Tshangs pa, and mkhas pa lDe'u opts for Byang mTshal byi). Its obscure location has led Tibetan authors and Tibetologists to propose controversial assessments.

Were this temple, which pins the right palm of the demoness, located in dBus at sNye thang Chos rdzong near lHa sa, as Aris suggested following Klong rdol bla ma (Aris, *Bhutan* p.23, also see Sørensen in Sørensen-Hazod, *Thundering Falcon* p.201), this would break the

27. Kramrisch (*The Hindu Temple* vol.1 p.56) writes: “As a rule they (i.e. the diagonals) are drawn in the square of 81 compartments, across the third and sixth compartment on each side; altogether four lesser diagonals are thus drawn... (*Vāstuvīdyā* VI, lines 25–26)”.

28. The scheme adopted for the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul* matches the central part of the grid of the ancient Indian architectural system. The centre of the latter is surrounded by twelve mansions represented by deities. The twelve temples of the *srin mo* scheme are built in order to lay the foundations of Ra sa 'Phrul snang in the centre. Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* (vol.1 p.86) says: “Surrounding the immutable centre, the rule applicable to the triple rows around it is that 12 Devatas form its inner rim, the border of the Brahmasthana, and 32 Devatas are stationed along the perimeter of the *Vaastumandala* and form its outer rim”.

29. Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* vol.1 p.81: “*Vaastupurusha*, if worshipped as an image (*murti*), is a fearful looking figure”.

symmetry between the right and left arms of the demoness and would be placed close to the *ru gnon* temples, despite being a *yang 'dul*.

This oddity is apparent from the drawing (fig.C-2) accompanying Miller's article on the demoness ("The Supine Demoness (Srin mo) and the Consolidation of Empire"), in which the *srin mo* has one arm against her body and the other stretched above her head.

My view is that Byang Tshang pa was located in Lop-nor and that the temple should be identified with mTshal byi (as it is by mkhas pa lDe'u), otherwise known as Cher-chen, the well known area controlled by Tibetans on several occasions during their imperial history, as is recorded by administrative documents preserved in the form of wooden tablets.³⁰

If the *yang 'dul* of the right palm is identified with mTshal byi in Lop-nor,³¹ the right arm of the *srin mo* would be stretched out above the head, with the forearm bent downwards. The right arm would be symmetrical to the left, whose palm is pinned by Klong thang sGron ma'i lha khang, located in Khams and stretched out above her head. The posture is different from the most common of the *Vāstupurusha*'s hands but similar to the one when the *purusha* is a demoness. The *srin mo*'s arm at mTshal byi is thus aligned with the location of the other *yang 'dul*-s, which are external to both the *ru gnon* and *mtha' 'dul* temples (for an historical analysis of the reasons which may have led to the inclusion of Tibetan outposts of Lop-nor in the scheme see below).

An alternative classification of Byang Tsha sPe dpal tshad aka Byang Tshangs pa or Byang mTshal byi locates it on the Tibetan plateau and not in Lop-nor, a distant region in terms of the *srin mo* scheme. Ne'u pandi ta's *sNgon gyi me tog gi phreng pa* mentions a temple in Zla shod Tshal phyi'i rong during the days of Dar ma 'U dum btsan's purported persecution of Buddhism.³² This temple, called Zla shod Tshal gyi dgon pa elsewhere in the same text, must have preexisted the second quarter of the 9th century because lHa lung Rab 'byor dbyangs, one of the fugitives from Glang dar ma's alleged persecution of Buddhism in Central Tibet,

30. For material from mTshal byi see, e.g., the wooden tablet of administrative contents (M. I i, 3) in Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* (vol. II p.121).

31. Klong rdol bla ma's identification of Tshang pa rlung gnon with sNye thang Chos rdzong, where A ti sha's temple sGrol ma lha khang is situated, may depend on the fact that Byang mTshal byi, which goes back to the imperial period when sites in Lop-nor were annexed by the Tibetans, had long since been neglected, and a more familiar, albeit illogical, location for this ancient and remote place in Central Asia was proposed.

32. Ne'u pandi ta, *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* (p.35 lines 1–5) talks about the bestowing of the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow to Bla chen dGongs pa rab gsal in the following terms: "Zla shod Tshal phyi'i rong du dBus pa mi drug dang Ha shang gnyis te brgyad po 'tshogs nas lHa lung gis mkhan po byas/gzhan rnams kyis dad dge mdzad/ snyen par rdzogs par byas so//"; "The dBus pa mi drug and the two Ha shang formed a group of eight at Zla shod Tshal phyi'i rong. lHa lung was the *mkhan po*, Rong ston and rTsangs were the *las kyi gsang ste'i slob dpon*, the others were the *dad dge*, and [dGong pa rab gsal] was given the *snyen* (spelled so) *rdzogs* vow".

went there to take hold of it.³³ The validity of its candidacy is reinforced by the reference to another temple that lHa lung's companion, Rong ston Seng ge, took hold concomitantly. This is Byang Tsha bye rong gi dgon pa, thus bearing some similarity in the spellings of Nyang ral and the two lDe'u. This identification would lead to the consequence that the hands of the *srin mo gan rkyal* placed in contiguous areas of Khams (Zla shod and 'Dan ma/lDan ma) are in perfect parallelism.

The similarity between the position of the hands in the *srin mo* scheme and those of the Indian demoness derives from drawing the four diagonals in the diagram of eighty-one mansions. They come to be located in the same area of the diagram.

A further sign that concepts relating to the *Vāstupurusha* were adopted for the foundation of Ra sa 'Phrul snang is found in the accounts of the structure chosen by Khri btsun for the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang. This is evinced from some of the sources under study (*Mani bka' 'bum*, *Nyang ral chos 'byung* and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*) and others written during later periods, such as *rGyal rabs gsal ba 'i me long*, but with some variations.³⁴

Leaving aside whether Khri btsun was indeed involved in the foundation of the temple, these works state that she opted for an architectural shape of a superimposed square, *g.yung drung* and *phur ba*, which suggests that even the literature points to a conception of the *gtsug*

33. Ne'u pandi ta, *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* (p.33 lines 5–9): “lHa lung Rab 'byor dbyangs [note: Mal gro pa] Rong ston Seng ge grags gnyis kyis Yer pa nas 'Dul mNgon gnyis ka'i dpe mang du khyer te Nag shod la bros nas/ lHa lung gis Zla shod Tshal gyi dgon pa bzung/ Rong ston gyis Byang Tsha bye rong gi dgon pa bzung/”; “Both lHa lung Rab 'byor dbyangs [note: from Mal gro] and Rong ston Seng ge grags took many texts on 'Dul [ba and] mNgon [pa] and fled to Nag shod (the Dharamsala edition p.32 line 5 spells Nags shod). lHa lung took hold of Zla shod Tshal gyi dgon pa. Rong ston took hold of Byang Tsha bye rong gi dgon pa”.

34. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.237 lines 15–17) reads: “sKye bo dang bstun nas gru bzhir rmang bting/ btsun pa dang bstun nas re'u mig tu bris te rmang bting/ Bon po dang bstun nas g.yung drung ris su byas/”; “The foundations were laid as a square to please the population. The foundations were laid in the shape of a *re'u mig* to please the monks. They were made in the shape of a *g.yung drung* to please the Bon po”.

mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.281 lines 5–7) has the same wording, derived from a common source (Lo rgyus chen mo?): “sKye bo dang bstun te gru bzhir rmang bting/ btsun pa dang bstun te re'u mig tu bting/ Bon po dang bstun te g.yung drung ris su byas/”; “The foundations were laid in the shape of a square to please the population. They were laid in the shape of *re'u mig* to please the monks. They were made in the shape of *g.yung drung* to please the Bon po”.

Haarh, *The Yar lung Dynasty* (p.384–385) quotes a passage of the lHa sa edition of *Mani bka' 'bum* (f.220b): “Then Khri btsun laid the foundations of the ancestral *gtsug lag khang*. Concerning it, she laid the foundations in the shape of a square to please the householders (i.e. the laymen), [in the shape of] a *re'u mig* to please the ordained [monks], [in the shape of] a *mandala* to please the *sngags pa*, [in the shape of] a *g.yung drung* to please the Bon po”.

In the version of the episode found in *rGyal rabs gsal ba 'i me long*, written sensibly after the earliest source mentioned in this note, the shapes adopted to please various categories of people are not linked with the structure of the temple (“Since it was made in the shape of a *mandala* with four

lag khang inspired by the ancient Indian architectural system. In architectural plans derived from Indian literary tradition (Ramachandra Rao, *Mandalas in Temple Worship* p.18), polygonal and triangular shapes are often superimposed on the square. The conception of the *srin mo* scheme is evidently square-based, as Aris recognised when he proposed a Chinese origin to it, but this is also the conception of the ancient Indian architectural system.

However, there is a significant difference between the *Yu-kung* and *Vāstu Shastra* patterns. In the system of the Chinese source, the grid, in which the temples are positioned, takes the form of a pattern of concentric squares. The grid of *Vāstu Shastra*—square too—is subdivided into a chess-board of adjoining squares that, as noted above, number sixty-four or eighty-one in the most important cases.³⁵

The grid of the ancient Indian architectural system makes it possible to draw mandalic patterns³⁶ in the form of adjoining squares,³⁷ and therefore it is similar, at least in terms of geometry, to those of *Yu-kung*. The major point of divergence is that the Chinese scheme does not envisage the use of anthropomorphic representation. The grid of the ancient Indian architectural system differs from the conception of the Chinese scheme, as has been explained above, but the location of temples in both grids is obviously based on a concentric pattern. This is manifest from plans drawn with the help of the grid of the ancient Indian architectural system, which represents a point of contact between the two systems.

doors, the *bla ma*-s rejoiced. Since the pillars were made in the shape of *phur ba*-s, the *sngags pa*-s rejoiced. Since its square was made in the shape of a *gyung drung*, the Bon po rejoiced. Since it was made in the shape of a *re'u mig*, the Tibetan subjects rejoiced", Haahr, *The Yar lung Dynasty* p.385).

35. Like Aris, Sørensen and Hazod (*Thundering Falcon* p.179 and p.238) see in the scheme the application of a concentric quadripartite pattern. I think that the diagram of the *srin mo* scheme is a grid whose squares are not arranged concentrically. A mandalic structure originally from India, which reflects a penchant for a non-concentric pattern, is indeed the outcome of tracing within the grid rather than the grid itself.

The same attraction to mandalic patterns is translated into literary forms, such as the classification based on the four cardinal points, once again of Indian origin, or even a subdivision into the four Indian castes, something extraneous to Tibetan culture. Although it is often found in Tibet, the cultures of the plateau cannot claim paternity of the quadripartite classification pattern, as Hazod has it. Given their organisation around the four quarters, the almost invariably late classifications of Zhang zhung in the Bon po literature have little to do with the *srin mo* scheme, to which Hazod sees similarities, while Sørensen associates it with China (ibid. p.179). I consider them rooted in the same Indian classification under the four cardinal points, and thus they are hardly autochthonous.

36. Aris (*Bhutan* p.19) highlights the correlation between the diagram of the *srin mo* and the structure of the *mandala*. This is not exclusive to the conception formulated in *Yu-kung*, but rather an eminent feature of grid of the ancient Indian architectural system as well.

37. Kramisch, (*The Hindu Temple* vol.1 p.80): "The symbol of its ordered extensiveness is the square so that it is even said of him: long ago there was a demon in a shape of a square (*chaturashkirti*)".

Also, the assignment of specific zones to the emperor, royalty, noblemen; a pacification zone; and other ones to barbarians and savages in *Yu-kung* brings to mind the classifications in concentric sections reserved to various classes of beings (Kramrisch, *The Hindu Temple* vol.1 p.59–61; Bedge, *Ancient and Mediaeval Town Planning in India* p.33–34 and fig.18). It also reminds of the spatial attribution of different quarters to the Indian castes prescribed in architectural sources such as Raja Boja's *Samarangana Sutradhara* (Bedge, *Ancient and Mediaeval Town Planning in India* p.37) or to the royalty, their court and commoners in political works such as Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (ibid. p.35–36).

Another issue of relevance in assessing whether the origin of the scheme was Chinese or Indian is that of the “four celestial animals” (*srung bzhi*). Aris took them to be of Chinese origin (*Bhutan* p.21), but animals corresponding to specific architectural shapes are also found in Vedic literature and ritual. In Indian sources (see Kramrisch *The Hindu Temple* vol.1 n.23, who bases the identification of the eight animals on the *Vāsturajavallabha*), eight animals represent the eight directions of space into which the *purushamandala* extends (i.e. the four points of the compass and the intermediate ones).³⁸ The classifications of the *yang 'dul*-s of the *srin mo* scheme that are associated with animals comprise eight temples rather than only four.

Scholarship traces the origin of the Indian architectural science back to Vedic times, since it maintains that the altar used in the fire sacrifices was the prototype for the grid of the Indian system.³⁹ Its great antiquity and descendance make it doubtful that these conceptions were derived from the Chinese culture. On the other hand, architectural concepts similar to those

38. The position of the temples on the body of the *srin mo* do not show any apparent sign of alignment along the cardinal points and the intermediate directions. The exception is the classification in the expanded version of eight *yang 'dul* associated with mythical animals, which is another point of contact with the ancient material on the Indian science of architecture. See below p.120–121 regarding the implications of the latter classification, which are quite different from those concerning the kings of the four orientes.

Apart from the scheme of the *srin mo*, the secular acts of a monarch, carried out by Srong btsan sgam po following Kong co's indications, are almost invariably oriented along the four points of the compass, a pattern common in Tibetan literature of all times and dealing with a number of different enterprises. Possibly one of the best-known applications of the fourfold pattern, also mentioned by Aris (*Bhutan* p.32) in his discussion of the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul* temples, is the classification of the “kings of the four orientes”.

I have some reservations about tracing the root of the *srin mo* scheme to this classification, or finding some parallelism between them. Among the kings of the four orientes, the *srin mo* scheme does not include any temple which can be associated with India and its monarch. The king of sTag gzig is not represented by any temple in the scheme of the demoness either, unless he can be quite unlikely associated with the *yang 'dul* temple in sBal ti contained in the expanded version of Nyang ral and the two *lDe'u chos 'byung*. Nor can one find any immediate association with a temple in the land of the Hor. Hence three out of four orientes are not represented.

39. Kramrisch (*The Hindu Temple* vol.1 p.71), writes: “The symbolism of the Vedic altar is continued in the Hindu temple, in its plan”; see also Ramachandra Rao, *Mandalas in Temple Worship* (p.16).

of the Indian science of building are found in Chinese literature as early as the Zhou dynasty. The *Kaogong Ji* section of *Zhou Li*, a text belonging to that period (Schatzman Steinhardt, "The Plan of Khubilai Khan's Imperial City" p.152–154) describes an ideal model for an imperial city whose square boundary wall has three gates on each side, with three main roads leading up to them (ibid. fig.10). The nine roads thus intersect, forming a faithful variant of the scheme with eighty-one mansions. It is significant that the plan of the Zhou imperial town is not traced on an underlying anthropomorphic scheme, such as a *purusha*.

Having made these initial observations, I do not intend to venture farther into the matter of ascertaining plausible similarities between the Indian and Chinese schemes.

It goes without saying that the *srin mo* represents chthonic forces and that her scheme bears traces of geomantic practice, linked by Sørensen with the *sa dpyad* system (*Thundering Falcon* p.172).⁴⁰ There is, in my view, a dual *sa dpyad* activity in the legend of Ra sa 'Phrul snang, one factual and one conceptual. In strict terms, if by *sa dpyad* one means the reconnaissance of certain features of a land suitable for specific purposes, this exercise was performed in the part of the story which concerns the initial phase of choosing 'O thang mtsho and filling it with earth. The next phase of the *sa dpyad* process concerns the construction of the temple that was obstructed. The *srin mo* scheme is introduced at this stage and the spots of *srin mo*'s anatomy are pinned with temples.

Also, a relation with the *me btsa* of medicine and geomancy cannot be denied, given that the *srin mo* scheme is anthropomorphic. It is not casual that *bKa'chems ka khol ma* uses both terms *sa dpyad* and *me btsa* in reference to the scheme. *Sa dpyad* is used in this text for the preliminary activity of locating the spots on the *srin mo*'s body, and the pinning points are defined as *me btsa*.

40. While I recognise in the *srin mo gan rkyal* allegory, like Sørensen (*Thundering Falcon* p.172–179), a reference to primordial/chthonic forces, I do not go as far as to link the *srin mo* and her scheme to a phase in Tibetan pre-history in which Tibet went by the name of *srin yul*, and thus, in order to prove the indigenous origin of the scheme, to see a historical reason for its adoption. Tracing back the origin of the *srin mo* scheme to Tibet's indigenous antiquity, in which a link with the *srin po* exists (see, e.g., *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.98 lines 5–7, *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.224 lines 7–9 or *mKhas pa 'i dga'ston* vol. I p.152 lines 2–4, all of which say that this was the third phase of Tibet's remote past), empties the scheme of its geomantic essence. Moreover, the association with *srin yul* tends to refer to a pre-human phase when the plateau was inhabited by spirits. I wonder whether it is appropriate to resume pre-human conditions for the building of Ra sa 'Phrul snang.

There is hardly any pre-historical inheritance in the the *srin mo gan rkyal* scheme. Foreign cultures—the Indian one in general—make use of the figure of a *rakṣasi* to convey multiple meanings including the ancestral/chthonic. As I have shown earlier on in this work, this foreign tradition attributes to it a preeminent function besides the purely geomantic.

Signs of *sa dpyad* practice are not entirely missing in the arrangement of the temples of the *srin mo* scheme. The coordinates of the temples on the limbs of the demoness reveal that their orientation is interconnected in some case. This evidence goes beyond the stereotype of the sources that Ra sa 'Phrul snang opens to the west because it faces the Kathmandu Valley while Ra mo che opens to the east because it faces China.

In the long run, neither *sa dpyad* nor the identification of *me btsa* truly applies to the *srin mo* scheme. They are expressions of the cultural layers superimposed to the facts that are the basis of the activity that led to the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang besides the contents of the legend. These basic facts can be summarised as follows:

- Ra sa 'Phrul snang was built in the shape of a *vihara*;
- the architect was a Licchavi;
- the artists working there were Licchavi;
- the Licchavi court was in exile in IHa sa during the period and eventually was reinstated to the throne by the Tibetans.

These points about Srong btsan sgam po's temple show that the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang was consonant with the manner adopted by Licchavi workers exposed to the ancient Indian science of architecture to build a *vihāra*.

Given the substantial identity in the ancient Indian architectural system between the macrocosm of the *Vāstupurusha* and the microcosm of the structure to be built,⁴¹ the next step required is to apply the pattern obtained by tracing over the limbs of the *purusha* to the plan of a specific building. The narratives state openly that the king's ultimate aim was to complete the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang, but apart from insisting on the necessity of subduing hostile forces, they do not explain why he used this circuitous procedure to achieve it. By taking the ancient Indian science of architecture into consideration, the reason that led Srong btsan sgam po to use the *srin mo* scheme and build temples over her limbs becomes obvious. Srong btsan sgam po used the *srin mo* scheme because he decided to build Ra sa 'Phrul snang basing himself on the model of an Indian *vihāra*, and the temple was thus conceived on the basis of the principles of that tradition.

Given that the number of plans that can be drawn using the ancient Indian architectural grid of eighty-one mansions and its intersecting diagonals to obtain its twelve pinning points is practically unlimited, the layout of Ra sa 'Phrul snang is one of the many possible alternatives. In pointing this out, I do not wish to suggest that the narrative could relate exclusively to the drawing of the plan of Ra sa 'Phrul snang. It could be extended to any temple in the monastic tradition of the Noble Land. This was the method that Bal po Bha ta ha, the Newar architect of Ra sa 'Phrul snang, must have adopted to draw the plan of Srong btsan sgam po's temple.

41. Shukla (*Vaastu Shastra* chapter I, 4–5) explains that the indissoluble unity between the knowledge of a specific area and the knowledge of the whole is an underlying concept of the *Vāstu* system.

The next step in the *srin mo* narrative has been to expand the minimalistic dimension of its anthropomorphic scheme, used to draw the plan of a building to maximalistic dimensions. By means of a literary exercise the scheme was blown up to include several regions meaningful to Buddhism owing to the construction of temples, which in ideal terms became the *yan lag-s* of Ra sa 'Phrul snang. These regions meaningful to Buddhism were being conquered by sPu rgyal Bod, and thus the religious arrangement of the legend incorporates a secular vision that takes into consideration the state's political achievements. Owing to this conceptual process, the *srin mo* scheme has acquired a wider scale of significance, one that encompasses the lands of Tibet and beyond.

Thus, the originally foreign anthropomorphic diagram used for architectural purposes was transformed into a geomantic device, familiar to the Tibetan tradition, as shown by specific references in *bKa' chems ka khol ma* to a *sa dpyad* being undertaken that led to the realisation that the land of Tibet was a *srin mo* that needed to be pinned down (ibid. p.233 line 15–p.235 line 15).

With the transfer of the scheme from the purpose of drawing the plan of Ra sa 'Phrul snang to pinning down the *me btsa-s* of the *srin mo*, a change resulted in the utilisation of the diagram.

While the intersecting points of the diagonals identified the position of parts composing a temple, in the geomantic exercise of the Tibetan sources, the intersections of the diagonals were used as defining points no more to trace the plan of a *lha khang* but to identify the positions of temples in the lands of Tibet and beyond the plateau. They, therefore, lost their constructional focus.

One cannot say when the change in the utilisation of the scheme took place, whether it was contemporary to the formulation of the short version. It must have occurred either before the rediscovery of the *bKa' chems ka khol ma*, a text problematic to place chronologically but not after A ti sha's visit to Ra sa 'Phrul snang in 1048, or in the period during which *Mani bka' 'bum* and *Nyang ral chos 'byung* were respectively rediscovered and written.

The narrative combines several other themes:

- One is the major influence played by Chinese astrology and geomancy on early Tibetan civilisation, particularly during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.
- Another is the glorification of Srong btsan sgam po as a religious king, in which the traditionally supernatural attributes of the *lha sras btsan po-s* have been put at the service of Buddhism.
- A third is the secular motive of exercising political control over territories within the boundaries of Tibet and beyond.

All in all, the one line sentence about Ra sa 'Phrul snang being a “mid sized boat” and the transfer of the structure of rGya'i dPe khang ha ra, the Indian vihara adopted to shape it, to Ra sa 'Phru snang helps to place the temple into its cultural context. On the one hand, lDe' Jo sras identifies the architect of Ra sa 'Phrul snang in the Newar master Bal po Ba ta ha and the woodwork (doorframes, pillars, beams and so forth) are post-Gupta Newar. On the other hand, Nyang ral, mkhas pa lDe'u and dPa' bo say that the Jo khang was conceived as a Tibeto/Indian version of a *vihara* from the Noble Land. The notion that the *srin mo* is more than another metaphor besides the one of the “mid sized boat” but the actual conception of the Ra sa 'Phrul snang plan is reinforced. So do the *Vāstu* architectural science's underlying concepts that are at the basis of the construction of the temple by projecting them on a territorial scale that is Tibet and the lands conquered by Srong btsan sgam po and other sPu rgyal *btsan po*-s. Ra sa 'Phrul snang was built by a Newar architect using an Indian plan/model, which corroborates the idea that the *srin mo* schemes are an application of the tenets of *Vāstu* architecture.

Classifications of temples

The expanded version of the narrative contains a number of temples not present in the short version. Both should be studied comparatively to ascertain their consistency with the narrative of *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum* to ascertain peculiarities and differences.

Before passing on to examine them, a few words should be said about the traditional classification of the twelve temples into three sets of four. Besides corresponding to the twelve pinning points of the limbs of the *Vāstupurusha* in the diagram of eighty-one mansions, the classification of the four *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul* is reminiscent of another classification of twelve. This is the set of the *rgyal phran bcu gnyis*, the “twelve minor kingdoms” that composed Tibet at the time of gNya' khri btsan po's descent to the summit of lHa ri gyang to but, among the Tun-huang documents, P.T.1286 has a classification which includes minor kingdoms of a much later period.

There is no territorial correspondance between the *rgyal phran bcu gnyis* and the lands where Srong btsan sgam po built his temples to pin down the limbs of the demoness. The only meeting point is the classification into twelve. The similarities between them end with this single point of contact, so that the geography of the *srin mo* scheme was not devised on the basis of the *rgyal phran* which, moreover, are enumerated in a greater number in PT 1286. The *rgyal phran* are numbered as seventeen in this Tun-huang text.⁴²

42. The classification of the *rgyal phran* into twelve is found in the later literature. A Tun-huang text (PT 1286) dedicated to them, is more complex. The concluding lines of this document (ibid. lines 22–24; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.67–68) refer to twelve principalities plus one

The territorial extent defined by the construction of the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul* temples in the short version coincides with the nucleus of lands of Srong btsan sgam po's sPu rgyal Bod. None of the additional classifications of the expanded version of the narrative uses other parts of the demoness' body, the metaphor being exhausted with the *yang 'dul* temples of the simplified classification pinning its farthest limits, her hands and feet. All sources containing the expanded version of the narrative—especially Nyang ral, the two lDe'u and Ne'u pandi ta—include the anthropomorphic scheme of the demoness among these more complex classifications not present in *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum*. But they do not fail to keep them separate.

Among these sources, those in which the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang is distant-ly linked with a limb of the demoness—in particular with her heart—are *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* and *Ne'u pandi ta's sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba*, *Nyang ral chos 'byung* and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* are conspicuous in not associating the Jo khang, built by the Newar-s, to any spot in the scheme of the demoness, and thus, in the view of their authors, Ra sa 'Phrul snang does not belong to the anthropomorphic vision of Tibet as the body of the *srin mo*.

ruler, ministers and castles; while the main part of the PT 1286 text enumerates seventeen *rgyal bran* (spelled so) (ibid. lines 2–22; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.67). They are: 1) Zhang chung; 2) Myang ro'i Pyed kar; 3) sNubs kyi gling dgu'; 4) Myang ro'i Sham po; 5) sKyi ro'i lJang sngon; 6) Ngas po'i Khra sum; 7) dBye mo yul bzhi; 8) 'O yul gyi sPang kar; 9) rNgegs yul kyi (sic) gru bzhi; 10) Klum ro'i ya sum; 11) Sribis yul kyi (sic) Ral mo gong; 12) rKong la Bre sna; 13) Myang yul gyi rTa gsum; 14) Dags kyi gru bzhi; 15) mChims yul gyi dgu' yul; 16) Sum yul ya sum and 17) 'Brog mo snam gsum" (also see Lalou, "Catalogue des principautés du Tibet ancien" and Ar. MacDonald, "Une lecture des Pelliot tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290" p.198).

The classification of the *rgyal phran bcu gnyis* in the later sources can be read, for instance, in *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.225 lines 7–21) where they are catalogued as follows: 1) 'Chims yul; 2) Zhang chung; 3) Myang ro mChad mkhar; 4) sNubs yul gling dgu; 5) Nyang ro Sham po; 6) Gyi ra lJongs sngon; 7) Ngas po Khra sna; 8) 'Ol phu Yang mkhar; 9) Kris na Rol mo gong; 10) Nyang yul rnam gsum; 11) Dwags yul Se mo gru bzhi and 12) 'Brog mo rnam gsum.

dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.155 line 13–p.156 line 1) follows mkhas pa lDe'u almost verbatim: 1) mChims yul; 2) Zhang chung; 3) Myang ro Phyong dkar; 4) gNubs yul gling dgu; 5) Nyang ro Sham po; 6) Kyi ro lJon sngon; 7) Ngam shod Khra sna; 8) 'Ol phu sPang mkhar; 9) Sribis yul gyi Ral gong; 10) Kong yul Bre sna; 11) Nyang yul rNam gsum and 12) dGas (i.e. Dags) yul gru bzhi.

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* omit dBye mo yul bzhi, rNgegs yul kyi (sic) gru bzhi, Klum ro'i ya sum, Sum yul ya sum and 'Brog mo snam gsum among their *rgyal phrang bcu gnyis*. The classification of the *rgyal phran* into twelve rather than seventeen, whereby territories did no more qualify for the status of minor principalities but as additional lands, could be one of the many stereotypes about the ancient period of Tibet often found in the later historiographical sources.

On what conceptual grounds the expanded scheme of sixteen or eighteen temples, called the *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul bco brgyad* by Nyang ral, rests will be shown below.

The texts by Nyang ral and lDe'u Jo sras follow more closely the dictates of Indian architectural science, one of the fundamental principles which prohibits the occupation of vital organs such as the heart. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* is probably one of the earliest Tibetan sources which complies with this principle. It states that the reason for the *srin mo*'s hostility is that an effort was made to occupy her heart with the construction of a temple over it, thus implying that no building should be erected on this part of the body. Already *Ne'u pandi ta's sNgon gyi me tog gi phreng ba* lacks this prohibition, and Ra sa 'Phrul snang is associated in it with the heart of the demoness. Subsequent literature continues to neglect this preclusion and no further restraint in occupying the *srin mo*'s heart is exercised (see below Appendix Two).

The centre of the anthropomorphic scheme is the navel (*lte ba*) rather than the heart according to both the ancient Indian architectural system and the Tibetan tradition.⁴³ Hence Nyang ral and lDe'u Jo sras do not make the mistake of fixing a centre. Nel pa pandi ta does so and fixes the centre on a wrong part of the *srin mo*'s body.

The treatment of the short version of the narrative in *bKa' chems ka khol ma* has important implications. The anthropomorphic scheme of this text, the earliest known source which records it, has a centre that does not correspond to the heart. There is no reference in it to the fact that Ra sa 'Phrul snang was built on the heart of the *srin mo*. The centre according to *bKa' chems ka khol ma* is, as it should be, the abdominal region, her womb (*sbaus*). Consequently, the text enumerates thirteen temples rather than twelve and says that Tshangs pa rlung gnon gyi lha khang, the thirteenth, was built on that part of her body. As in *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, Ra sa 'Phrul snang is not included in the pinning scheme; it is the final outcome of this *me btsa* activity and thus is nowhere placed on any anatomical part of the *srin mo*.

Hence neither *bKa' chems ka khol ma*, the earliest document recording the short version, nor *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, the earliest document that contains the expanded version, place Ra sa 'Phrul snang on the heart of the *srin mo* but keep it outside her body. The difference is that *bKa' chems ka khol ma* records the presence of a centre in the scheme, while *Nyang ral*

43. See, for instance, *dBu nag mi'u rigs 'dra chags* (f.8a line 4), a text on the ancestral tribes of proto-historic Tibet and the cosmogonic antecedents, in which the following is said about Gangs Ti se, sometimes considered by the tradition to be the *axis mundi* and sometimes the axis of the southern continent: "Gangs Ti tse shel gyi mchod rten lHo'Dzam bu gling gi lte ba yin/"; "The Gangs Ti tse crystal *mchod rten* is the navel (*lte ba*) of lHo'Dzam bu gling".

There is no certainty about the date of composition of this text which seems to be quite ancient judging from its language and textual peculiarities. One, therefore, can only contribute to establishing with approximation that the idea of the navel as the centre goes back to a past close to the time of composition of *Nyang ral chos 'byung*.

chos 'byung has a more complex scheme with no centre. The placement of Ra sa 'Phrul snang on the heart of the *srin mo* was a later development not found in the earliest available sources.

The *Vāstumandala* is conceived as a closed space beyond which it is impossible to go. The fact that the *mandala* comprising the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and even the set of four *yang 'dul* is confined to a relatively central area of Tibet indicates that this was considered the core or “indigenous” part of the land, and this raises the possibility that the further classifications refer to territories annexed by sPu rgyal Bod. Hence there may have been a historical divide, in which the former territories were those that the sPu rgyal dynasty considered as its own lands, or else areas to be assimilated to it. The rest of the classifications would refer, at least in some cases, to regions of the empire conquered after sPu rgyal Bod had definitively annexed the core territories of Tibetan culture.⁴⁴ For a treatment of this issue and its cogency see below.

Moreover, the grouping of eighteen or sixteen *yang 'dul* temples is reminiscent of several other—completely different—classifications of eighteen, namely the lDong rus chen bco brgyad, Bya ru can rgyal po bco brgyad, Yul chen bco brgyad, Tsong kha rus chen bco brgyad, Ar tsho ban de bco brgyad and a few more.

The *dbang ris bco brgyad*,⁴⁵ a classification that enumerates the eighteen lands which were strongholds of the ancient clans, including dBU ru shod, the territory under the direct control of the *lha sras btsan po*, does not have points of contact, too, with the set of eighteen *yang 'dul* of the expanded version of the *srin mo* narrative. The *dbang ris bco brgyad* were located in dBus gTsang and bordering territories with the exception of one in mDo Khams, whereas the set of sixteen or eighteen *yang 'dul* includes temples beyond the Tibetan-speaking world.

44. Aris (*Bhutan* p.25 and 32) could not detect that *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* contains both the simplified and the expanded versions of the scheme in a corrupt formulation since two of the early sources containing expanded classifications (*lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*) had not yet been traced at the time he was writing. He has neglected the significance of some temples in the scheme, built by Srong btsan sgam po at such places conquered by the Tibetans as lCang ra smug po. He has dismissed *in toto* the expanded classification of the temples found in *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, perhaps because the Bhutanese temples do not receive much attention in Bla ma dam pa's assessment of the *srin mo*.

45. This is the classification into the *dbang ris bco brgyad*, one of the *khod drug* of the state organisation of sPu rgyal Bod (see Vitali, “The *dpa'sde gsum* and the three main fronts of sPu rgyal Bod's expansion in Central Asia”, in this volume), mentioned in *mkhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.186 line 22–p.187 line 10), which says (the numbers are mine): “The divisions of power in the land are as follows: “dBU ru shod chen btsan po mnga' bdag yul/ Pho brang sNe che btsan po rgyal 'bangs yul/ (p.187) Yar lungs Sogs (spelled so) kha Khu dang gNyags kyi yul/ Ya 'brog gang khyim Ku rings sde lnga'i yul/ 'Ching nga 'ching yul mGos and sNubs kyi yul/ Bya 'ug sa tshigs Drang rje Pha lnga'i yul/ Brad and Zhong pa sNa nam yul du bcad/ Brag rum stod smad Tshe spong yul du byas/ gTsang stod dang gTsang smad 'Bro and Khyung po'i yul/ Klungs shod nam po 'Dru dang Phyugs mtshams yul/ Nyang ro Grom pa 'Bre and lCe yi yul/ Shangs and Gle phyi Phyi ri and Gle yi yul/ Yung ba che chung Bran ka'i yul du

Like the *rgyal phran bcu gnyis*, which do not correspond to the areas in which the temples of the *srin mo* scheme were built, the *yul chen bcu drug* or *bco brgyad* (“sixteen or eighteen great lands”, foreign countries nearby Tibet) are in locations different from those of the eighteen further *yang ’dul* (the *mtha’ ’dul yang ’dul* of Nyang ral), and thus cannot have been used as their prototype.

The classifications of temples listed below are assessed with primary reference to *Nyang ral chos ’byung*, the earliest extant source that proposes the expanded version of the narrative. Their consistency is verified against the related sources written subsequently but all of them quite early in terms of composition since they date from the 13th century.

NYANG RAL CHOS ’BYUNG

1. a set of eight further *yang ’dul*;
2. another set of eight *yang ’dul* (four plus four branch temples) coupled with four mythical animals;
3. four *ru mtshams*;
4. another set of *yang ’dul* (eighteen of them).

bcad/ Zha gad sde gsum blon po sBas kyi yul/ Nam ra chag gong ’Bring and Chag gi yul/ ’Dam shod dkar mo Phya and Rwā yi yul/ mDo Khams mDo chen rGod stong sde brgyad yul/”;

- 1) dBu ru shod chen: the land of the *btsan po mnga’bdag*;
- 2) Pho brang sNe che: the land of the *btsan po* and the royal subjects;
- 3) Yar lungs Sogs kha (spelled as): the land of the Khu and gNyags;
- 4) Ya ’brog gang khyim: the land of the five communities of Ku rings;
- 5) ’Ching nga ’ching yul: the land of the mGos and sNubs;
- 6) Bya ’ug sa tshigs: the land of the Drang rje Pha lnga;
- 7) Brad and Zhong pa: the land of the sNa nam;
- 8) Brag rum stod smad: the land of the Tshe spong;
- 9) gTsang stod and gTsang smad: the lands of the ’Bro and Khyung po [respectively];
- 10) Klungs shod nam po: the land of the ’Dru and Phyugs mtshams;
- 11) ’Phan yul stong sde: the land of the sGro and rMa;
- 12) Nyang ro Grom pa: the land of the ’Bre and lCe;
- 13) Shangs and Gle phyi: the land of the Phyi ri and Gle;
- 14) Yung ba che chung: the land of the Bran ka;
- 15) Zha gad sde gsum: the land of blon po sBas;
- 16) Nam ra chag gong: the land of the ’Bring and Chag;
- 17) ’Dam shod dkar mo: the land of the Phya and Rwā;
- 18) mDo Khams mDo chen: the land of the rGod stong sde brgyad”.

LDE'U JO SRAS CHOS 'BYUNG

the canonical four *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul* are omitted;

1. a set of eight *mtha' 'dul* (corresponding to the first classification of Nyang ral's *yang 'dul*);
2. another set of eight *yang 'dul* (four plus four branch temples) coupled with four mythical animals;
3. four *ru mtshams*;
4. another set of *yang 'dul* (sixteen of them).

MKHAS PA LDE'U CHOS 'BYUNG

1. a set of *ru gnon* with four branch temples (bKra shis dge 'phel, Mi 'gyur dge ba'i gtsug lag khang, Byang chub dge gnas, rNam dag khriims kyi lha khang, respectively) plus the *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul* (mainly canonical);
2. a set of eight further *yang 'dul* (corresponding in the main to the first classification of Nyang ral's *yang 'dul*);
3. another set of eight *yang 'dul*, known as branch temples (*'phyong btags pa*) of the four *yang 'dul* (four plus four branch temples), coupled with four mythical animals;
4. four *ru mtshams*;
5. another set of *yang 'dul* (described as eighteen, but actually sixteen).

NE'U PANDI TA'S SNGON GYI ME TOG GI PHRENG BA

1. a set of *ru gnon* with four branch temples ('Bre'i gtsug lag khang, rTsang Thang gi gtsug lag khang—not mentioned in any other classification that belongs to the expanded version of the narrative—Shi hang gi gtsug lag khang, 'Brom (sic for Mon) sKyer chung gi gtsug lag khang), the traditional sets of four *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul* are missing;
2. another set of eight *yang 'dul*, called the four *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul*, coupled with four mythical animals;
3. four *ru mtshams* called the four *mtshams gnon*;
4. a set of four *yang 'dul* connected with constellations;⁴⁶
5. another set of *yang 'dul* (sixteen of them);
6. a set of four temples to control the four elements.

46. Kramrisch (*The Hindu Temple* vol.1 p.31–39) discusses the role played by the Nakshatra (“constellations”) in the scheme of the ancient Indian architectural system. See also the last lines of Chapter VI of the *Mayamata* (Dagens, *Mayamata* p.14), which deals with the relation of the constellations to the lines drawn to lay the foundations of a building.

RGYAL PO BKA' THANG

The temples of Srong btsan sgam po are dealt with in *rGyal po bka' thang* in the unconventional style typical of *bKa' thang sde lnga*. The text of O rgyan gling pa (1323–?) most deviates from the dominant shorter and longer versions. Its two classifications of the *srin mo* scheme contain structural peculiarities and inclusions of temples deviations different from the vast array of classifications in the sources I have just summarised in the previous lines:

- his short version is a classification of Srong btsan sgam po's foundations which does without the anthropomorphic diagram;
- his expanded version is no less anomalous, for it includes temples traditionally associated with Srong btsan sgam po but not included in the *srin mo* schemes of other works for reasons not traceable in the extant literature. He opts for this solution—a mere classification without suppressive aims—despite being aware of the *srin mo* scheme, for he mentions the *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul* elsewhere in *rGyal po bka' thang* (see p.116 lines 6–7; see above n.19).
- The first two pairs of temples mentioned in *rGyal po bka' thang*—g.Yu ru Khra 'brug and dBu ru bKa' stsal; g.Yas ru gTsang 'Gram and Ru lag Grom pa—are the usual *ru gnon*.
- The other couplet—IHo brag mKho mthing and Mon yul Bum thang—is one *mtha' 'dul* and one temple (Bum thang) appearing in the expanded version of the scheme as a *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul* (Nyang ral) or as a *yang 'dul yang 'dul* (lDe'u Jo sras and mkhas pa lDe'u).
- The next set—sPa gro sKyar chu, mDo Khams Klong thang sGrol, rTsis in Nyang ro and dPal tshab in rGyang ro—is the most unconventional. These temples are put together without any apparent logic behind this choice. Nowhere in the sources rTsis in Nyang ro and dPal tshab in rGyang ro are included in any scheme.
- Chu in Kong po—i.e. Kong po Bu chu—stands alone, associated with no other *mtha' 'dul*, the group to which it is normally assigned.
- The association of sPra dun rtse with sKyo yi lha khang is again unusual given that the latter temple—difficult to identify—is not included in any other textually documented classification, while the former is one *yang 'dul*.

The next group—Klo yul, Ka ra, Nyang, Khams and Gru gu—is composed of regions rather than temples.

- As to Klo yul one may think of Srin mo lha khang, which I talk about elsewhere in this essay, but this is hypothetical;
- Ka ra is obscure. Sørensen (*Thundering Falcon* p.193) proposes Ka rag, but this is far from certain, because here O rgyan gling pa is dealing with regions rather than localities;
- Nyang is the well known region to the east of dBus, known Nag nyi to the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (Chapter Six lines 299–301; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.299–301, and Uray, “Nyang nyi dags po. A Note on the Historical Geography of Ancient Tibet”).

- Gru gu is the most controversial entry, given that Srong btsan sgam po had no interaction with the Turks. The Tibetans advanced into the land of the Gru gu in Southern Turkestan and the Indo-Iranic borderlands allying themselves with the Western Turks only after his death. The alliance was forged and fully implemented from the sixties of the 7th century until 696 (see my “The *dpa' sde gsum* and the three main fronts of sPu rgyal Bod's expansion in Central Asia”, in this volume), unless O rgyan gling pa, quite improbably, refers to a temple in the land of the Northern Turks. One possibility is that this is an allusion to Li yul, included in the set of sixteen *yang 'dul* by the two *lDe'u chos 'byung* (see above), which later sources believe it was subjugated by Srong btsan sgam po.
- The last group—'Phan yul Bye ri, lHa sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che—includes a *lha khang* in 'Phan po of uncertain identity.
- The second reference to Khams with no other specifics would document the existence of another temple in the region besides Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang. Dre'i Ka brag is an obvious candidate for the *lha khang* O rgyan gling pa may refer to, more likely than Be ri lha khang (see below Addendum Two).

BLA MA DGONGS 'DUS

Bla ma dgongs 'dus in thirteen volumes, rediscovered by Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396) in fire dog 1346, extensively deals in the text found in volume *cha* (*Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod* aka *Lung bstan bka' rgya'i skor*) with notices dedicated to the *lha sras btsan po* genealogy. Like *rGyal po bka' thang* by O rgyan gling pa, it treats, among several other topics significant to the dynastic period, the *lha khang*-s of the *srin mo* scheme, the *bang so*-s of the rulers, their *rdo rings*-s and their personal castles (*sku mkhar*-s) (see my “An instance of textual affinity between two 14th century rNying ma *gter ma*” in this volume).

The concomitant rediscoveries of *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* (1364) and *rGyal po bka' thang*, despite the date of the text associated to O rgyan gling pa not being given anywhere—*rGyal po bka' thang* was written sometime before 1368 according to Blondeau, “*lHa-'dre bka'-thang*” p.40–42—shows that, in those decades, the rNying ma school went through a scholastic phase marked by a revived interest in the *lha sras btsan po* period that coincided with the school's literary effulgence during the same span of time.

The similar contents of the two works make it probable that the two *gter ma* are based on an older document dealing with the *lha sras btsan po*-s and thus that O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa accomplished a successful act of textual archaeology, drawing in their work upon an ancient source rediscovered at that time. They wrote with different styles, more concise and linear in the case of Sangs rgyas gling pa, more esoteric and polemical in that of his elder contemporary O rgyan gling pa.

The importance of the precocious genius Sangs rgyas gling pa should then be acknowledged as a driving force in the rNying ma resurgence of the 14th century, spearheaded not only by Glong chen pa and O rgyan gling pa but also by him.

- The available *dbu can* editions of *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*, marred by a number of spelling mistakes, contain a shorter version of the *srin mo* scheme, for they mention only seven of the twelve canonical temples on parts of her body. Still, none of these temples is typical.
- Sangs rgyas gling pa's next classification, the one of temples without the anthropomorphic scheme and thus does not place them on the limbs of the demoness is peculiar and deviant in terms of the number and identity of the *lha khang*-s.
- The unconventional inclusions are those of the temples Bra in Dur rtse, mDongs chu in sPu bo, sKyo in sNang rtse and 'Phan yul Bye ri. The first two may reflect local traditions known to Sangs rgyas gling pa; the other two must have been known to both rNying ma *gter ston*-s, for they are also mentioned by O rgyan gling pa. These temples do not appear in the classifications of the *srin mo* narrative found in the other sources.
- Bra yi lha khang in Dur rtse could be a temple in the Bra la area of gNyal, one of the stations in the legendary account of gNya' khri btsan po's itinerary that led him to become a ruler (for a treatment of gNya' khri see, e.g. *mkhas pa lDe 'u chos 'byung* p.226 line 10–p.237 line 20);
- mDongs chu'i lha khang is confirmed in sPu bo by *sPo bo 'i lo rgyus* (p.118 line 12–p.119 line 20);
- sKyo'i lha khang was built in sNang rtse (of gNyal).
- It goes without saying that Bye ri'i lha khang was built in 'Phan yul.
- Apart from Ra sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che, *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* and *rGyal po bka' thang* have several temples in common. Some are associated by Sangs rgyas gling pa with the body of the *srin mo*.
- They are g.Yu ru Khra 'brug, dBu ru Ka tshal, g.Yas ru gTsang 'Phrang, Ru lag Gram pa, lHo brag mKho lding, Bum thang and sPa gro sGyer chu.
- Others are not placed on the limbs of the demoness—Pan chen in rKyang ro, Bu chu in Kong po, Khams Glang thang sGrol ma, Tshangs pa klu gnon, mDongs chu in sPu bo, sKyo in sNang rtse and 'Phan yul Bye ri. ~ The temples that appear in one of the two texts but not the other are rTsis in Nyang ro (O rgyan gling pa), Bra in Dur rtse (Sangs rgyas gling pa), and those O rgyan gling pa only mentions the region in which they were located—Klo yul, Ka ra (?), Nyang, Khams and Gru gu). There is thus a great similarity between the two classifications.

Peculiarities in the classifications of the *srin mo* schemes in the main sources

Of all the expanded versions, the classifications of Ne'u pandi ta are the most extravagant. They differ from the other longer versions in several respects. The treatments of O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa are most anarchistic and unique.

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung, on the other hand, has a more straightforward way of assessing the *yang 'dul* temples than Nyang ral. Nyi ma 'od zer first introduces the canonical set of four *yang 'dul* temples in the same way as *Mani bka' 'bum* (Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang of Khams, Byang Tsha sPe dpal tshad, Mang yul Byams and Mon sKyer chu). He then adds a further set of four (Klong thang dpal in mDo Khams, Ka chu Thog rmgam in rGya (China), Ke'u ri gzigs in the land of the 'A zha, and 'Dag sha intra in Li yul) followed by another group of four *yang 'dul* which he defines as *mtha' 'dul* (sNang sBal chen in Kha che, Bu chu thar legs in Kong yul, dPal Be'u rgyas pa in sPa gro sKyer chu, one is missing), saying that they are eight altogether.

Despite the apparent confusion, these classifications have their rationale, since the latter two sets of temples are eight *lha khang* built in the border areas where the *yang 'dul* are located. The temples of the second set of four are defined as *mtha' 'dul* possibly because they are at the borders (*mtha'*) of the territories where the former set of four, the "farther" (*yang 'dul*), stood.

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung has a different way to classify these *yang 'dul* which it compacts into a single list of eight: 1) Ka chu Thogs med on the doorstep of rGya (China); 2) Glong thang sGrol ma in mDo Khams; 3) Ke ru gzi mdangs in the land of 'A zha; 4) Dag in tra in Li yul; 5) Byang sprin yid 'ong dge rgyas in Mang yul; 6), Rab snang dbang chen rgyas in Kha che; 7) Bo chu (spelled so) thar legs g.yung rung brtsegs pa in Kong yul; 8) sKyer chu dpal be'u rgyas pa in dPal sgro (spelled so).

The implications of Nyang ral's classification are more significant than those of *lDe'u Jo sras*, since his presentation of the eighteen *yang 'dul* articulates the underlying concept of the *srin mo* scheme. It suggests that in order to pin down the malevolent *srin mo* who is an obstacle to the diffusion of Buddhism, Srong btsan sgam po had to extend his control of the borderlands farther and farther away. In this light, it is pertinent to analyse the stages of Srong btsan sgam po's conquests not only *per se* but also in order to clarify whether the allegory of pinning the demoness by means of temples amounted to clothing military conquest in a layer of religious fervour.

This is not a novel concept. It has been proposed in the past. R.A. Stein long ago argued that the temples of the scheme represented the expansion of the dominions held by the sPu rgyal kingdom. A few elements I wish to introduce here reinforce this interpretation owing to the expanded classifications of the scheme which were not available to him when he wrote the first edition of his *La Civilization tibétaine*. The expanded versions of the scheme document the extension of the lands conquered by the *lha sras btsan po*. Being non-Tibetan territories,

these schemes refer to Bal po, Lop-nor and ICang ra smug po, and also to those forcibly assimilated by sPu rgyal victors to their culture, such as Sum yul, Zhang zhung, Mar yul or Zhang zhung and Zhang zhung Mard, and 'A zha'i yul.

mKhas pa lDe'u's classification of the eighteen further *yang 'dul* includes only sixteen temples. Of those listed in Nyang ral, mkhas pa lDe'u eliminates Ra sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che, and the Bal yul temples as well, both significant omissions. He replaces these temples with one more in the west (a temple in Nub ri) and two temples in the east (sKam chung and Ko chu). In order to make sixteen temples, mkhas pa lDe'u adds the temple of Hor chu to those of Gye re and dGyer chu mentioned by Nyang ral. Their identification is obscure and I am unable to locate them.

Moreover, *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* places sPra dun rtse (also spelled sPra bdun rtse) among the four *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang*, Mang yul Byang sprin in a further set of four *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang* and Mang yul sBang chen brtsegs pa in a classification of eight *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang*. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.115–116) places Mang yul Byang sprin among a group of eight *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang*. They all belong to the lands of mNga' ris smad.

In the classification of four *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang* coupled with four branch monasteries, which makes another group of eight, the two lDe'u texts (*mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.285–286, *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.116–117) add branch temples to those of mNga' ris smad. To Mang yul Byang sprin is added a branch temple called sTang sprin in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*, while *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* has Myang sprin, and to Pra dum rtse a branch temple called gNyen gsal lha khang in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*, while *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* has gShen gsal.

Nub ri'i gtsug lag khang of the two *lDe'u chos 'byung* should be added to the list of temples built in mNga' ris smad. Inclusion of this temple in the set of sixteen *yang 'dul* of these texts derives from a different reading of the entry in *Nyang ral chos 'byung* concerning Khyung lung. Nyang ral says that Khyung lung dngul mkhar was built in order to control the mountain in the west (*nub ri*). In *lDe'u Jo sras* and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, *nub ri* becomes Nub ri, i.e. an independent geographical location and an entry of the *srin mo* scheme. It thus refers to the valley—most of it now in Nepal—to the west of Mang yul.

The decision in the two lDe'u works to include Byang sprin among the *mtha' 'dul* and sBang chen brtsegs pa among the *yang 'dul*—both in Mang yul—and to include sPra dun rtse among the *yang 'dul* in one case and in another (spelled 'Pra dum) among the *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang* defies logic and, therefore, needs further investigation.

Nyang ral includes two more temples in the same set of eighteen *yang 'dul*, rDo shan lha khang and Hab sha, built farther south in the same area almost at the extremity of the Tibetan world. The two lDe'u sources have a similar entry—their names are given as De shang lha khang and Hab shang lha khang. They are more helpful than Nyang ral, for they specify that De shang lha khang and Hab shang lha khang were at the Bal Bod border, probably in the area of sKyid grong. Ne'u pandi ta is, as usual, more extravagant, and drops these two temples

opting for the improbable statement that not those two but Gu lang and Shing kun (Pashupati and Swayambhu) were constructed to guard the Bal Bod border.

The classification based on the association of a set of eight *yang 'dul* with animals does not alter the assessments of the *yang 'dul* temples discussed here, except for the addition of the '*chong du* ("branch") temples (called '*phyong btags pa* by mkhas pa lDe'u), since the main *yang 'dul* are the canonical ones. The peculiar aspect of the classification pertains to their link with those animals.

Like the classifications of the *yang 'dul* without animals, those in which animals appear refer to the suppression of hostile forces, as is confirmed by other passages in *Nyang ral chos 'byung* and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* concerning Kong co's suggestions for subduing the local geography and creating favourable conditions for the erection of Buddhist temples.⁴⁷

The most vexed aspect of the expanded versions found in the works by Nyang ral, the two lDe'u, and Ne'u pandi ta perhaps is the repetition of the same temples in different classifications within the scheme. As of now in my treatment of the *srin mo gan rkyal*, only alternative suggestions can be made which help to focus the matter better but are not steps towards a solution.

- The repetition of the same temples in different classifications could be other interpretations of previous groupings that led to a different placement in the grid of squares of the ancient Indian architectural system. For instance, several temples included in the classification of twelve are again included in the classification of sixteen, sometimes under different names.

It could be that the sixteen or eighteen *yang 'dul* are further extensions of the *Vāstu Shastra* grid into more external squares on the outside of the same grid, laid out after positioning the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul*. The temples that belong to the ex-

47. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.239 lines 16–19): “rGyal pos 'byung ba sa'i dgra bzlog pa'i phyir dBang phyug chen po'i ling ga dang/ bya Khyung Ga ru da'i rten dang/ gza' nams kyi mchod rten ser ru dang/ rdo'i seng ge dkar mo yang mdzad do//”; “In order to subdue the hostile areas, the king made a *Shivalinga*, an image (*rten*, lit. “receptacle”) of bya Khyung Ga ru da, a *stupa* of the planets with golden horns and a white lioness in stone”.

mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.281 lines 9–13): “rGyal pos 'byung ba'i dgra bzlog pa'i phyir/ gong gi Ong cong gi sa dgra gnon pa'i shar gyi srin mo'i 'doms la/ dBang phyug chen po'i rten bt-sugs/ lho'i rus sbal la/ bya Kyung gi rten bt-sugs/ nub kyi bdud bya ra byed la mchod rten bse ru brt-sigs/ byang gi gyad stobs can g.yul du zhugs pa de la rdo'i seng ge dkar mo mdzad do//”; “In order to avert the obstacles [created] by the elements, among the acts of suppression of the hostile areas earlier [indicated] by Ong cong, the king erected an image (*rten*, lit. “receptacle”) of Shiva on the organ of the *srin mo* in the east; made an image (*rten*) of a *bya khyung* on the tortoise in the south; constructed a *stupa* with rhinoceros horns to guard the demon in the west; and made a white lioness in stone [to prevent] a strong giant from taking part in battle”.

The directions of the compass in which the animals are placed in these accounts of Srong btsan sgam po's acts of suppression are reversed with respect to their locations in the classification of the *yang 'dul* temples of the *srin mo* scheme. On animals, symbols of the countries at the borders of Bod, see below (p.132–133).

panded classifications may thus either be placed in an external frame of mansions of the grid or outside the grid, given that they are not associated with limbs of the demoness.

- The reappearance of the same temples in further classifications using different names for the *lha khang*-s on their premises may be additions of these new *lha khang*-s to the scheme.
- The recurrence of the same temples in further classifications of the *srin mo* scheme indicates activities focused on the same temples by different kings.

The duplication of the same temples in different classifications could show that the expanded versions of the *srin mo gan rkyal* diagram are based on an historical perspective. These various classifications would represent subsequent stages of sPu rgyal Bod's territorial expansion.

This hypothesis will now be explored to ascertain whether events during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po led to the construction of temples attributed to him and how these temples were incorporated into the scheme.

The expanded version of the *srin mo* narrative: historical implications

The foundation dates of the temples included in the various classifications of the *srin mo* scheme are either unknown or not documented beyond doubt. The literary works studied here and virtually all other later Buddhist texts almost invariably declare that only after Srong btsan sgam po had laid out his network of temples on the limbs of the demoness was it possible to complete Ra sa 'Phrul snang.

This would mean that the temples were established before or around the pig year 639, which is the date proposed by the few sources dealing with the foundation time of Ra sa 'Phrul snang. All these sources belong to the late period known for the adoption of the faulty chronology of the sPu rgyal dynasty.

Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (*rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* p.136 lines 16–17 and p.136 lines 17–19) and dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston*) state that 'O thang mtsho was covered in the year of the dog 638 and that the foundations of the temple were laid in the year of the pig 639. In a passage dealing with chronology—i.e. in a short *bstan rtsis*—*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.233 lines 20–22) says:

“Nyi shu pa mr sprel la rGya bza' phebs/ Nyer gnyis pa sa khyi la 'O thang gi mtsho bsubs/ nyer gsum pa sa pho phag lo la rmang bting//”;

“In water male dragon 632 Bal bza' came [to lHa sa]. When [Srong btsan sgam po] was twenty years old in fire monkey 636, rGya bza' came. When he was aged twenty-two, in earth dog 638, the 'O thang lake was covered. When he was twenty-three years old in earth female pig 639, the foundations [of Ra sa 'Phrul snang] were laid”.

In *rGya Bod yig tshang*, dPal 'byor bzang po says that the foundations of Ra sa 'Phrul snang were laid in the year of the dog 638. In *dPyid kyi rgyal mo 'i glu dbyangs*, lNga pa chen po has it that the temple was built later, in an untenable water ox 653 that falls after Srong btsan sgam po's death.⁴⁸

A modern author, Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs (*lHa sa gtsug lag khang gi lo rgyus bshad tshul la zhib 'jug byas pa* p.6 line 15–p.7 line 18), favours a date around 646, perhaps in an attempt to coordinate the foundation of Ra sa 'Phrul snang with the arrival of Kong co to Bod yul in 641 when the princess of Wen-tch'eng was given in marriage, as is mentioned in the Introduction to *Tun-huang Annals* (lines 10–11, see *Tun hong nas thon pa 'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12) and the *New T'ang Annals* (Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.83). He combines the chronological evidence derived from the Tun-huang documents with that from the later sources. This is problematic, because these two orders of dating do not match, as is well known.

A solid foundation date is missing for Ra sa 'Phrul snang. Moreover, the sources talk about its establishment but do not suggest a completion date, which cannot be found out given the material available. All the other temples of the *srin mo* scheme, whether in the shorter or expanded version, are equally undated. One must then consider the historical context to ascertain

48. As is case with the later sources, *'Phags pa Wa ti 'i rnam thar* postdates the events in the life of Srong btsan sgam po. The text assigns the date of Srong btsan sgam po's birth to 629 (f.18b line 3: "Likewise, Srong btsan was born in earth ox (629)"), which is one cycle of twelve years too late. The same work (f.17a lines 1–3) also says: "Srong btsan sgam po dgung lo bcwo brgyad pa la Bal mo za 'i lha skal du/ Byams pa chos kyi 'khor lo/ tsan dan Jo mo sGrol ma spyang drangs/ nyer gcig pa la rGya mo Ong jo 'i lha skal du Sha kya mu ne spyang drangs/ nyer gnyis pa la 'O thang gi mtsho bsubs/ nyer gsum pa la sa mo phag la chos 'khor lHa sa 'i smang sting pa yin no//"; "When Srong btsan sgam po was aged eighteen (646), he married Bal mo za. As dowry, she brought the Byams pa chos kyi 'khor lo and the sandalwood jo mo sGrol ma. When he was twenty-one years old (649), he married rGya mo Ong jo. As dowry, she brought the [statue of] Sha kya mu ne. When he was aged twenty-two (650), the milky lake was covered. When he was twenty-three years old in earth female pig (651), the foundations of chos 'khor lHa sa were laid".

These assessments of the main events in his life have the irreconcilable weakness of prolonging this king's life beyond 649–650, the date of his death provided by the *Tun-huang Annals*.

It is due to the custom of giving dates according to the duodenary rather than the sexagenary cycle before 1027 that the significant years in the life of Srong btsan sgam po are all twelve years too late in *'Phags pa Wa ti 'i rnam thar*. The identifications of the years according to the duodenary calendar are correct, it is their chronological assessment in this source that it is incorrect. They should all be predated of one duodenary cycle. *mKhas pa 'i dga 'ston* does better. The marriage with Khri btsun is given in 634, the marriage with Kong co is dated 639, which is incorrect; the covering of 'O thang lake in 638 and the foundation-laying of the *gtsug lag khang* in 639. This sequence allows sufficient time for Srong btsan sgam po's military campaigns to have taken place according to the chronology established by various documents from the Tun-huang library.

whether the temples go back to the reign of Srong btsan sgam po, which may allow a tentative building sequence, unthinkable otherwise.

While the later sources assign a year for the foundation of Ra sa 'Phrul snang, there is no basis to propose dates for the *ru gnon* and the other temples of the short version unless one fideistically accepts the notion that Khra 'brug was the first that was constructed, as said in works not connected with the legend of Ra sa 'Phrul snang's. The temples on the body of the *srin mo* either stood in regions annexed to the sPu rgyal kingdom before the reign of Srong btsan sgam po—e.g. the *ru gnon* in the *ru bzhi*—or built at an unknown time—e.g. Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang in Khams.

Moreover, it is unlikely that the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang-s* which, according to the expanded version of the narrative, covered a huge expanse of land from Southern Turkestan to Nan-chao, were built at the same time for military and practical reasons. These temples marked the lands over which Srong btsan sgam po and subsequent *btsan po-s* extended control through conquests that were not contemporaneous.

Looking at the succession of events during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po from the perspective of the most ancient sources, one gets a view of the sequence in which these temples were built. Some of the more distant lands in which this king purportedly built temples came under the control of the sPu rgyal Tibetans after 639, the alleged foundation year of Ra sa 'Phrul snang. It is unlikely that they belonged to the legendary antecedents—the pinning of the demoness—to the construction of the temple in lHa sa, except for a few of them in north-east Tibet.

The arrival of Mun chang Kong co to Tibet in 641 occurred after the foundation of Ra sa 'Phrul snang, if the date 639 for the beginning of the works at the Jo khang is reliable. The Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* (lines 10–11, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12) does not elucidate whether in 641 she arrived in Tibet or at lHa sa. In the former case her presence in lHa sa would have to be postdated further.

If the Chinese princess had a role in the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang, as profusely said in later sources, one should dismiss the temple's foundation date at the end of the 630s. Or else, one should be forced to think that the Chinese princess had no part in it.

Her role in the narrative and the supposed links of the scheme with Chinese astrology and geomancy would be called into question.⁴⁹ The Tibetans' restoration of the legitimate Licchavi ruler on the Kathmandu Valley throne in the same year 641, recorded in the Introduction to

49. Although historically significant *per se*, the impractical foundation date of Ra sa 'Phrul snang of the late sources before Kong co's arrival is not, in my view, a decisive point in favour of an Indian origin of the account. Attribution to India as the source does not rule out the possibility that its immediate narrative pretext is Chinese, given the prestige accorded to China by the Tibetans in antiquity, or Tibetan, even if ultimately derived from the traditional *Vāstu* science of architecture.

the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 11; see *ibid.* p.12), will be treated *in extenso* below.⁵⁰ Here I only note that the two events recorded in the entry for the year 641 constitute antithetical evidence. Licchavi involvement in the making of Ra sa 'Phrul snang, proved by physical signs in its interior, cannot be reconciled with Kong co's geomantic activity to create conditions conducive to its foundation. I favour a pre-641 date for the simple reason that the building bears signs of Licchavi workmanship, but also a post 638 date because Srong btsan sgam po was busy, in the years 634–638, with his campaign on the eastern border against the rGya and the 'A zha, which led him to wage a war against the Chinese (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.22–23). He thus could have hardly been involved in the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang during those years.

The later authors are unwittingly close to the truth when they propose 639 as the foundation date. However, dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba, for one, is wrong in thinking that Kong co reached either lHa sa or the land under the sPu rgyal rule—he does not clarify which—in 636. This goes against the parallel evidence of the *T'ang Annals* according to which blon po 'Gar was at the Chinese court in 640 to negotiate the matrimonial alliance, and that of the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* which says that she reached Bod yul or lHa sa in 641.⁵¹

In what follows, an attempt will be made to assess the annexation of each land to understand whether the classifications in the expanded version of the *srin mo* narrative are conquests that took place under Srong btsan sgam po or under different *btsan po*-s.

An investigation of political rather than geomantic nature seems to be legitimated by some indications in *Nyang ral chos 'byung* which links the classifications in the scheme to a political state of affairs. Its concluding remarks on the group of the additional eighteen *yang 'dul* refer to Srong btsan sgam po's exercise of control over the Bal po king.

50. The year is identified as 641 because the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* says that, three years later, Zhang zhung was destroyed, and, six years after the latter event, Srong btsan sgam po died, and this fell in 650. Hence what the text defines as the “destruction” of Lig myi rhya took place in 644 and the restoration of Na ri de ba on the Bal po throne occurred in 641.

51. The statement of the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* that, in 641, Kong co reached Bod yul should be analysed for its implications. The passage under consideration does not clarify whether she made it to lHa sa in that year. Doubts remains whether she spent 641 on the way—she is credited by the local traditions with having been quite active in Khams laying the foundations of several temples—or indeed reached lHa sa, where she was involved in the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang and the Ra mo che according to the legend of the later sources. Bod yul is too vague a term to know whether it refers to Khams or dBu ru with lHa sa at its centre. Following the takeover of the Sum pa before 634, Khams too was under the control of the *lha sras btsan po* by the time Kong co arrived from China.

Nyang ral chos 'byung provides an element that cannot be neglected for the assessment of the system. His inclusion of Ra sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che in the group of eighteen *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul* shows that Nyang ral's classification is not entirely geographical, since these two temples were obviously at the centre of the territory ruled by the *lha sras btsan po*. 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che belonged to the last phase of temple building, followed only by temples constructed by Srong btsan sgam po in the Kathmandu Valley. This proves that the conception behind the classification is historical, too. The group of eighteen temples was the outcome of another phase of temple building probably corresponding to sPu rgyal occupation of territories.

In mkhas pa lDe'u's treatment of Srong btsan sgam po's organisation of the state, the four mythical animals of the four orientals are classified under the title of *bka' bzhi rtsis bzhi* ("four commands and four [forms of] astrology"). *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.269 lines 7–9) reads as follows:

"bKa' bzhi rtsis bzhi ni/ shar seng ge dkar mo lcags dra la mi gdags/ lho dom sgrom nag po kha mi dbye/ nub bya dmar mo ske mi gcod/ byang sha lpags skya mo la thig mi gdab bo/ rtsis bzhi ni/ lde'u drin gyi rtsis/ sku srung gi rtsis/ lha ris kyi rtsis/ sku rgyal gyi rtsis so/";

"The *bka' bzhi rtsis bzhi* are as follows. In the east, the white lioness should not be caught in an iron net. In the south, the black (i.e. forested) mouth (i.e. territory) of the bear should not be opened. In the west, the neck of the red female bird should not be cut. In the north, [the boundary] should not be demarcated with tawny flesh paste (*sha spags skya mo la mi gdab*). The *rtsis bzhi* are the astrology of answering with riddles, the astrology of personal protection, the astrology of drawing charts and the astrology for the *sku rgyal* (the "ruler")".⁵²

A different classification simply called *bka' bzhi* in the same source reiterates the matter in an interesting way. In it the four mythical animals of the four orientals came to assume a dual connotation, both geomantic, as pointed out by Aris (*Bhutan* p.18–19) and representative of the neighbouring nations the Tibetans had to deal with. *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (ibid. p.256 lines 10–12) reads:

"bKa' ba bzhi ni shar phyogs seng ge dkar mo lcags thag la mi gdags/ lho dom sgrol nag po kha mi dbye/ nub bya dmar mo ske mi gcod/ byang phyogs byang lam dmar po la thig mi gdab bo/";

"The *bka' bzhi* ("four commands") are as follows. In the east, the white lioness should not be tied with an iron chain. In the south, the territory of the black bear (*dom*) (i.e. "forest") should not be opened (*sgrol*). In the west, the female red bird's neck should not be cut. In the north, the red northern route should not be traced".

52. See the discussion of the term *dku rgyal*, of which *sku rgyal* is an alternative, in Rona Tas, "Social Terms in the List of Grants of the Tibetan Tun-huang Chronicle" (p.263–265) and its summary (on p.268), where he says that "*dku rgyal* is a term indicating belonging to the royal court".

The *bka'bzhi* summarise the principles of sPu rgyal foreign policy. A reason to interpret these cryptic references to animals in the four directions as referring to lands at the borders is provided by both *lDe'u Jo sras* and *mkhas lDe'u chos 'byung* in their discussion of Glang dar ma's breach of this policy, which led to the loss of the empire.⁵³ Neither the *bka'bzhi* nor the description of Glang dar ma's unfortunate foreign policy account for all the animals of the expanded version of the *srin mo* scheme, but the references in it to the Hor (Yu gur) in the north and to Himalayan tribes of India in the south (Klo and Mon) make it clear enough that the animals are a metaphor for the neighbours of imperial Tibet. If they were merely symbolical, this would be incongruous with all the other classifications of the *srin mo* scheme, which consistently specify the geographical locations of the temples. Thus, the temples associated with the classification of mythical animals represent the implementation of these principles introduced metaphorically in the concerned passages.

53. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.139 lines 14–18) says: “rGya gar nas pandi ta kha bkag pas nub phyogs bdud rtsi'i rgyun chad/ shar phyogs gser zam ser po chur skyur bas rGya nag nas Hor kyi dmag khang nang du bstan nas 'khrug byas/ lho phyogs Glo dang Mon la gnyen btags te dom sgro nag po kha phyee/ sems can thams cad mi mthun pa'i lam la bkod//”; “The flow of nectar from the west was interrupted because the source of [the many] *pandi ta* [who had come] from rGya gar was blocked. The continuity of the trading doors from China was interrupted because the golden bridge was washed away by water in the east. The demarcation of the frontier was made with strings of tawny skin in the north. A war broke out because the Hor (Yu gur) troops intruded into the house. In the south, [marriage] relations were established with Klo and Mon, and the mouth of the black box (“thick jungle”) of the bear was opened. A road was built for all sorts of hostile people”.

mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.366 line 19–p.367 line 3) echoes the same facts but in its own terms: “Nub phyogs bdud rtsi'i chu rgyun bcad pas rGya gar nas pandi ta 'byon pa'i 'phro chad/ shar phyogs gswer lam ser po sum bcu skyur bas/ rGya nag nas nor kyi tshong sgo rgyun (p.367) chad/ byang phyogs sha spags skya mo la thig btab pas/ Hor gyi dmag kha nang du bstan/ 'khrug pa byas/ lho dom sgrom nag po kha phyee nas/ lho Mon la gnyen btags/ sems can thams cad mi mthun pa'i lam la bkpd// “The coming of [the many] *pandi ta* from rGya gar was interrupted because the flow of the nectar water from the west was blocked. The continuity of the trade doors of wealth from China was interrupted because thirty golden routes of gold (*ser lam ser po*) from the east were abandoned (*skyur ba*). (p.367) In the north, the Hor troops intruded inside the land because [the boundary] was demarcated with strings made of tawny skin. They waged a war. [Marriage] relations were established because the black mouth (i.e. forested territory) of the bear in the south was opened. A road was made that opened the way to all sorts of hostile people”.

The symbolism of the bear already found in the outline of the foreign policy of sPu rgyal Bod appears again in reference to the southern border in the summary of Glang dar ma's course of action that led to the end of Tibet's control of territories composing its empire. mKhas pa lDe'u drops the symbolism of the animals in the western, eastern and northern orient but the names of rGya gar, China and the Hor (Yu gur) are mentioned. The bear as a metaphor for the south, in the absence of a major political entity in that direction, served well the need of identifying a loose political and ethnic reality of the forested areas close to the Tibetan border, held by different tribes.

It is hard to say whether the *bka'bzhi* represented only the foreign policy of Srong btsan sgam po or that of a plurality of *btsan po*-s. Judging from the group of temples linked to the four animals, an association with Srong btsan sgam po is quite likely, but the pacifist policy envisaged in the *bka'bzhi* could be more consonant with Ral pa can's eventual approach to Tibet's neighbours, which secured peace treaties with the Chinese,⁵⁴ the Yu gur (and 'Jang?). The reference to Glang dar ma's breach of these principles, the only such case in these sources, reinforces the suggestion that they could have been implemented by Ral pa can as part of the peaceful policy adopted during the later half of his reign. Ral pa can was a better candidate for establishing peaceful relation with the nations on the borders than Srong btsan sgam po who was not so keen on preserving a political and military *status quo* in his relations with Tibet's potentates on the plateau and at the fringes, except China.

Another clue, albeit minor, which shows that there was more to the construction of temples than Buddhist piety is linguistic. The term *kha gnon* ("to subdue a land"), often used to describe Srong btsan sgam po's preliminary acts to the foundations of temples by the authors of the expanded classifications, is the same as that used for the *glang gi las stab bcu gsum* under Khab Gung thang during the Sa skya pa period.⁵⁵ Although distant, a few analogies and dissimilarities can be drawn between the establishment of temples in southern Byang thang and mNga' ris smad during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po and the establishment of the *glang gi las stabs bcu gsum* by the Gung thang king 'Bum lde mgon in the same regions between 1277 and 1280. Both were intended to consolidate secular control over these lands but with the difference that Srong btsan sgam po built temples, while the *glang gi las stabs bcu gsum* of 'Bum lde mgon were forts.

Whereas the *ru gnon*, *yang 'dul* and *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang*-s are attributed to Srong btsan sgam po as the king responsible for their building, not all of 'Bum lde mgon's forts were actually founded by him. The sources traditionally refer to the *ru gnon*, *yang 'dul* and *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang*-s as the means of achieving the conversion of the Tibetan lands to Buddhism, while the forts of 'Bum lde mgon served military designs. In any case, the presence of Srong btsan sgam po's temples at crucial localities in the political map of High Asia,

54. A statue of Srong btsan sgam po was placed among those flanking the path to the tomb of Emperor T'ai-tsung (d. 649) (*Old T'ang Annals* f.3a, see Pelliot, *Histoire anciennes du Tibet* p.6): "En outre on sculpta à sa ressemblance un statue qui fut disposé au pied des piliers funéraires du Tchao-ling").

dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (Shes rig par khang ed. p.116 lines 12–15) shows that he read the *Annals*, for he mentions the same fact: "Thang Te tsung grongs pa'i skabs su yang/ bang so'i mdun na Bod kyi btsan po'i 'dra brnyan zhig kyang byas pa dran ched du bzhangs/"; "When Thang Te tsung died, in front of his tomb a portrait statue of the Bod kyi btsan po was made in order to commemorate him". So does Levi ("Les missions de Wang hiuen-ts'e dans l'Inde" p.301).

55. The term *kha gnon* is interpreted differently in *Tshig mdzod chen mo* where it is thought to stand for "to add something to make a full measure". This meaning could even describe Srong btsan sgam po's efforts to build the *gtsug lag khang* which was systematically dismantled, so that he had to keep adding new ones to pin down the demoness, but this interpretation is not too convincing.

where it is not doubtful that sPu rgyal Bod exercised religious influence in that period—in Sum yul, the Kathmandu Valley, Zhang zhung, Nan-chao, Khotan etc.—suggests that their purpose exceeded the religious sphere.

A few scanty pieces of information concerning Srong btsan sgam po's military activities are found in later sources. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.109 lines 7–10), for instance, laconically states on the matter:

“lHa sa sTag ri la pho brang bcas Jo mo rGyal bal Zhang zhung byung nas blangs/ khirms bcas te Bod la rur phyed/ Sum pa sder bcad/ bskos pa'i rgyal po sde bzhi mngar bsdus/ so kha brgyad yul du bcad rgyal phran bcu gnyis 'bangs kyi mngar bsdus//”;
 “In the earlier part of this king's life, he built a palace on lHa sa sTag ri. He received Jo mo rGyal bal from Zhang zhung. He established the law and divided Bod into the various *ru*. He took over the community of the Sum pa. He subjugated the four communities of the appointed kings. He took over the lands of the *so kha brgyad*”.⁵⁶

A paragraph in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* that deals with the benefits obtained by Tibet from the lands neighbouring the sPu rgyal kingdom after they were conquered by Srong btsan sgam po expands on lDe'u Jo sras's remarks. It names the countries subjugated by him, whilst retaining lDe'u Jo sras's syntactic structure derived from the literature on the kings of the four orient.⁵⁷

Citing *Deb ther dkar po*, a passage of *sNga 'gyur rnying ma'i brjod pa* articulates the significant notions contained in dGe 'dun chos 'phel's text. *sNga 'gyur rnying ma'i brjod pa*, therefore, is mentioned here together with the original source.⁵⁸ The appearance of names such as

56. The classification of the countries bordering sPu rgyal Bod, known as the *so kha rong brgyad*, said to be included in Srong btsan sgam po's organisation of the state by works such as *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.111 line 16–p.112 line 2), identifies the eight borderlands held by the Tibetans at an unspecified time but attributed by these sources to the period of Srong btsan sgam po. They are rGya and Bod *so mtshams* (“border”) at rGod snyan lung gi rong, Bod and Zhang zhung *so mtshams* at Zhang pa brgya chu rong, Bod and Bon *so mtshams* at lCags gzer bcugs pa, Bod and sTag gzig *so mtshams* at Shab shang brgya bcu rong, Hor and Bod *so mtshams* at Zangs thang sha'i gling, Khrom and Bod *so mtshams* at rGya shar rong, 'Jang and Bod *so mtshams* at Ra ga rong.

57. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.184 lines 3–8): “Shar phyogs rGya dang Mi nyag nas/ bzo dang rtsis kyi dpe rnams len/ lho phyogs dkar po'i rGya gar nas/ Dam pa'i Chos kyi dpe rnams len/ nub phyogs Sog po Bal po nas/ zas nor longs spyod gter kha 'byed/ byang phyogs Hor dang Yu gur nas/ khirms dang las kyi dpe rnams len/ de ltar phyogs bzhir dbang bsgyur//”; “In the east are rGya and Mi nyag. From these ones, books on manual skills and astrology were imported. In the south is white India. From there the language of the Noble Religion is translated. In the west are Sog po and Bal po. From there the treasury of wealth of food and jewels is opened. In the north are Hor and Yu gur. From there books on law and behaviour are imported. In this way, the four directions were reduced under [Srong btsan sgam po's] power”.

58. dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (She rig par khang ed. p.2 lines 11–15) reads: “rGya gar gyi rgyal po shri Harsha/ rGya nag Thang gur gyi gong ma The tsung Ta zig gi rgyal po Yeshti gerda sogs las/ chab srid mnga' thang dpung stobs la sogs pa'i gang thad nas kyang dman pa ma yin//”; “Concerning his power, wealth and royal might, [Srong btsan sgam po] he was not inferiors in any

Harsha of Kanauj and Yishti gerda, the ruler of Ta zig—were the lands of the Arabs rather than the Indo-Iranic borderlands in this passage?—indicates that dGe 'dun chos 'phel took the trouble to work on documents not easily available to other modern Tibetans. This material enabled him to look at sPu rgyal's neighbours during a period not different from Srong btsan sgam po's.

The *srin mo* scheme and its implications provide a view of the reign of Srong btsan sgam po derived in some ways from the revision of the significance of this king's activity, consonant to the vision prevailing during the 12th century and thereafter. These references in the later sources are too generic and stereotyped to function as evidence of Srong btsan sgam po's military annexation of the territories where the temples were built. In order to ascertain how well they match the historical perspective provided by the earlier sources and thus whether they have a validity of their own, they need to be weighed against the most ancient and reliable accounts of Srong btsan sgam po's feats. Hence, the method adopted here is to check the validity of the statements of the later sources containing the *srin mo* scheme against the evidence provided by the earlier sources (Tibetan from Tun-huang, Newar and Chinese). Some other historical notions found in later sources will also be introduced because of their significance, and their veracity tested against the statements of the more ancient material.

Here is a summary of the sequence of campaigns undertaken by the Tibetans during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po based on documents from Tun-huang dating from the imperial period and other ancient sources. According to a chronology of mine (see Vitali, *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming) which partially revises the dates given by Ar. Macdonald to the campaigns of Srong btsan sgam po ("Une lecture des Pelliot tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290" p.253–254):

1. Myang Mang po rje Zhang snang vanquished the Sum pa by means of force and diplomacy (*Tun-huang Chronicles* (P.T. 1287) Chapters Two and Six).⁵⁹

respect to [rulers] such as the rGya gar king shri Harsha, the Thang emperor The tsung [and] the Ta zig king Yeshti gerda".

sNga 'gyur rnying ma'i brjod pa (p.34 line 19–p.35 line 1) writes as follows, paraphrasing the passage of *Deb ther dkar po*: "Nub phyogs Zhang zhung dang/ byang phyogs kyi 'A zha dang/ Gru gu Sum pa bcas dang/ lho phyogs kyi 'Jang la sogs pa mnga' 'og tu bsdus nas stobs 'byong mnga' thad thang thun mong skye bo'i snang ngor yang/ rGya gar rgyal po shri Harsha/ rGya nag Thang gur gyi gong ma The tsung/ Ta zig rgyal po Yaishiti ge rda sogs/ chab srid mnga' thang stobs la sogs pa'i cha gang thad nam (p.35) dman pa ma yin/"; "[Srong btsan sgam po] subjugated Zhang zhung in the west; the 'A zha, Gru gu and Sum pa in the north; and 'Jang in the south. Concerning his power, wealth and royal might, in the understanding of the ordinary people, [if compared to] rGya gar rgyal po shri Harsha, rGya nag Thang gur gyi gong ma The tsung and Ta zig rgyal po Yaishiti ge rda (spelled so) (p.35), he was not inferior in any respect, political power, royal might or strength of his army".

59. *Tun-huang Chronicles* Chapters Two (lines 84–85, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.39): "Sras Khri Srong brtsan gi ring la/ Myang Mang po rje Zhang snang gis/ Sum khams thams shad 'bangs su dgug par stsal to/"; "During the time of Khri Srong brtsan, the son [of gNam

2. He was disgraced as a result of the intervention of Khyung po sPung sad zu tse (*Tun-huang Annals*; *Tun-huang Chronicles*, *ibid.*; I.O. 716).⁶⁰

These events are assigned to years before 634. Moreover:

3. In 634, Srong btsan sgam po sent a mission to the Chinese court asking for a princess in marriage meeting with a refusal (*Old T'ang Annals* (f.2a): Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.3; *New T'ang Annals* (f.2b): Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.82; Bushell transl., "The Early History of Tibet" p.443).⁶¹
4. After 634, Srong btsan sgam po levied Zhang chung pa troops and defeated the rGya and 'A zha (*Old T'ang Annals* (f.2a): Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.4; *New T'ang Annals* (f.2b): Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.82; Bushell transl., *ibid.* p.444).
5. He then advanced up to Sung-chou, a campaign presumably lasting until 638 that led him to threaten the Chinese protectorates beyond the northeastern border of the plateau (*Old T'ang Annals* f.2a-b in Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.4; *New T'ang Annals* f.2b in Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.82–83; Bushell transl., *ibid.* p.444).
6. Sometime after 638 and before 644, Khyung po sPung sad zu tse defeated the To yo chas la by subjugating their lord Bor yon tse, and conquered Byang gi Zhang chung (i.e. central Byang thang under Zhang chung smad) (I.O. 716, ii).
7. In 641, the Chinese princess Mun chang Kong co was sent in marriage to the *lha sras btsan po* (*Old T'ang Annals* f.2b in Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.4; *New T'ang Annals* f.2b in Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.83; Bushell transl., *ibid.* p.444). Kong co reached Bod yul or lHa sa in the same year.
8. In 644, sPu rgyal Bod crushed Zhang chung smad definitively (Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* lines 12–13, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12).
9. In 648, the Tibetans attacked Central India (Magadha) to protect the Chinese envoy Wang Yuan-ts'e (*Old T'ang Annals* f.3a in Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.6; *New T'ang Annals* f.3a in Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.84; Bushell transl., *ibid.* p.446).

slon rtsan], Myang Mang po rje Zhang snang ordered to reduce the land of the Sum [pa] to the state of subject".

Tun-huang Chronicles Chapter Six (lines 303–305, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.51–52) says: "Ung gi 'og du Myang mang po rje Zhang snang gis/ Sum pa mtha' dag dmigs gdab myi dgos par/ lug rtug gis sgyu phab ste/ lce'i thor tho la brjod nas/ khyim grangs ma shor par (p.52) yongs kysis 'bangs rnal mar bkug go//"; "Thereafter, Myang mang po rje Zhang snang did not even need to engage in submitting all the Sum pa. Ramming into them, he craftily subdued them. Speaking from the tip of the tongue, he actually reduced all the numerous households indiscriminately (p.52) to the condition of subjects".

60. *Tun-huang Chronicles* Chapter Six (lines 314–315; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.52) reads: "Ung gi 'og du/ Khyung po sPung sad zu tses/ Myang mang po rje Zhang snang glo ba rings pa/ Zu tses dku' bel te/ Zhang snang bkum//"; "Thereafter, Myang mang po rje Zhang snang having been disloyal, Khyung po sPung sad zu tse denounced his treason and Zhang snang was murdered".
61. The Kathmandu Valley was under the Tibetans according to *Chen-kia-fang-chi* of *Tao-siuen* compiled in 650 (Levi, "Les missions de Wang hiuen-ts'e dans l'Inde". p.441).

10. In 649, sPu rgyal Bod inflicted the last blow upon Zhang chung stod (*T'ai-p'ing huan-yü chi*; Pelliot, *Femeles (Island of Women)* in *Notes on Marco Polo* vol. II p.707–708).
11. Srong btsan sgam po died in 650 (*Old T'ang Annals* f.3a in Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.6; *New T'ang Annals* f.3a in Pelliot transl.,⁶² *ibid.* p.84; Bushell transl., *ibid.* p.446).⁶³

The earliest expansion of Srong btsan sgam po's kingdom and related temples

Before the first of the events listed above, the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (Chapter Six lines 299–300, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.51) state that at the time of gNam ri slon rtsan's death, people from several territories revolted (Zhang chung, Sum pa, Nag nyi, Dwags po, rKong po and Myang po). Srong btsan sgam po had to subdue them. The *Old T'ang Annals* (f.2a) affirm that Srong btsan sgam po succeeded his father when he came of age (Pelliot (transl.), *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.3). This coincided with gNam ri slon rtsan's death. Both the birth date of Srong btsan sgam po and the death date of gNam ri are disputed (see, for instance, *Ancient Tibet* p.222–227 and Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* n.31, *Ancient Tibet* p.222–224). The reconquest of the territories that had revolted must have occurred soon after Srong btsan sgam po's accession to the throne, and definitely be-

62. The *New T'ang Annals* (Pelliot (transl.) *ibid.* p.84) say that Srong btsan sgam po died without issue and, therefore, his grandson was put on the throne when he was a child. They add that, for this reason, blon po 'Gar ruled the country.

This shows that the *New T'ang Annals* are marred by the obvious neglect that Srong btsan sgam po had a son—Gung srong gung btsan borne by his Mon bza' queen—who died untimely. Or else the grandson of Srong btsan sgam po would have not existed.

63. The chronology of Ar. Macdonald (“Une lecture des Pelliot Tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290” p.253–254 and *passim*) is:

- 1) Myang Mang po rje Zhang snang vanquished the Sum pa;
- 2) He was disgraced as a result of the intervention of Khyung po sPung sad zu tse;
- 3) Khyung po sPung sad zu tse conquered the territory she identifies as north Zhang chung by subjugating Bor yon tse, the lord of To yo chas la.

These events occurred before 634 according to her. Moreover:

- 4) In 634, Srong btsan sgam po sent a mission to the Chinese court asking for a princess in marriage;
- 5) After 634, Srong btsan sgam po levied Zhang chung pa troops and defeated the rGya and 'A zha;
- 6) He then advanced up to Sung-chou, a campaign presumably lasting until 638 that led him to threaten the Chinese protectorates beyond the north-eastern border of the plateau;
- 7) In 641, he obtained the Chinese princess Mun chang Kong co in marriage;
- 8) In 644, sPu rgyal Bod defeated Zhang chung;
- 9) Srong btsan sgam po died in 650.

fore 634, when, according to the *T'ang Annals*, Srong btsan sgam po first asked for a Chinese princess in marriage.

This is an initial proof that the attribution of the narrative of the *srin mo gan rkyal* to the reign of Srong btsan sgam po is reliable in principle. Some of these territories which revolted and were again subjugated are included in the four *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul* of the *srin mo* scheme.

In the light of the same passage of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*, it is reasonably possible that Srong btsan sgam po controlled the territories where the twelve *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul* were built at an early stage of his reign. The only exception to this is mTshal byi, the temple pinning down the right palm of the *srin mo*. If mTshal byi is identified with the outpost in Central Asia, the period in which it became part of the dominions of sPu rgyal Bod must have not fallen during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. If Tshal byi, instead, is identified with the place in Zla shod of Khams stod, its location indicates that it was part of Sum yul and that passed under Srong btsan sgam po before 634, in the aftermath of the conquest of the Sum pa by Myang mang po rje Zhang snang.

The advance of sPu rgyal Bod into territories to the north of Central Tibet took the form of successive phases from the conquest of the Sum pa onwards. They had rebelled upon gNam ri slon rtsan's death, a state of affairs that lasted until the Chinese refusal to give a princess in marriage to Srong btsan sgam po. All of these events occurred before 634.

These campaigns together with the next military offensive culminated in the defeat of the rGya (i.e. people of IDong ethnicity) after 634 and 'A zha (T'u-yü-hun) in 635 (*Old T'ang Annals* f.2a and *New T'ang Annals* f.2b in Pelliot (transl.), *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.4 and p.82 respectively). These successes in war led Srong btsan sgam po to access the eastern corner of the northern belt of the Tibetan plateau. The presence of sPu rgyal Bod at mTshal byi, located either in Zla shod of Khams stod (at that time, part of Sum yul) or in Lop-nor, may have followed the annexation of the Sum pa and the victory over the 'A zha. However, it is unlikely that the establishment of Ke'u ri gzigs temple in the land of the 'A zha was a consequence of the campaigns of those years.⁶⁴ sPu rgyal's control of 'A zha'i yul became continuative after Srong btsan sgam po's death.

As for Byang Tsha or Byang mTshal byi, the *yang 'dul* temple pinning down the right palm of the demoness, Pelliot ("Le Cha tcheou tou fou t'ou king") translates a few passages concerning the Sogdian presence in Lop-nor from material written during the years 713–741. This is found in *Sha-chu tu fu t'u king*, which must have been written soon before 750 according to Pelliot. These passages document the foundations of several strongholds in Lop-nor by members of the K'ang clan, who were Sogdians from Samarkand. Another text (Ch. 917, a

64. The conquest of Sum pa, which occurred before 634, as shown by the Tun-huang sources and fixed by Ar. Macdonald, may act as a *terminus post quem* for the advent of Iranic (Sogdian) influences in Central Tibet. The conquest of Sum pa brought the sPu rgyal Tibetans into contact with the Sogdians

manuscript taken by A. Stein) mentions that K'ang Yen-tien, a great chief from the kingdom of the K'ang, founded several towns during the period 627–649. Among these towns was Sa-p'i (Chinese for Tibetan mTshal byi),⁶⁵ of which the same text says “Tibetans and T'u-yü-hun used to come and go without interruption” (Pelliot, “Le Cha tcheou tou fou t'ou king” p.122).

of Cher-chen, who were building towns in the area at the time (between 627 and 649, Srong btsan sgam po's regnal years) (see the next note).

Two palaces were built on the dMar po ri for Srong btsan sgam po and his Licchavi wife, the existence of Khri btsun being subject to validation. All traces of these palaces were obliterated, at the latest, by the construction of the Po ta la, and it is doubtful that a meticulous exploration of the immense palace of the Dalai Lamas and the Tibetan administration would bear fruit.

bKa'chems ka khol ma and, later, *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* relate that the two palaces were built in the manner of the Sog po, and that the palace of Srong btsan sgam po was the model for that of the queen. The arrival of the Newar princess Brikhuti, or—as I have shown in the past—of the Newar court in exile (see Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.71–72), is recorded by dPa' bo as having taken place in the dragon year 632 or in the horse year 634 (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.234 for the former date and *ibid.* p.204 for the latter; see Vitali, *ibid.* p.72). Whichever year is correct—there is no particular evidence in favour of either—this is a *terminus post quem* for the construction of the two palaces.

It has been proved that, at this early stage of Tibetan history, the term Sog po is not used to refer to the Muslims, as in the following periods, but to the Sogdians (Hoffmann, “The Name of the Saka and the Sogdians”; Li Fan Kuei, “Notes on Tibetan Sog”). Sogdian missions did travel to Tibet, and at least a later case of a Sogdian mission to the Tibetan court is documented by the Drang rtse inscription near Pang gong mtsho in La dwags Byang thang (see Uray, “Tibet's Connections with Nestorianism and Manicheism in the 8th-10th Centuries”; and Vohra, “Sogdian Inscriptions from Tangtse in Ladakh”).

It is more probable that direct contacts between Tibetans and Sogdians, rather than diplomatic missions, led to a Tibetan reconnaissance of the Sogdian architectural style and its adoption. There are no clues in the sources whether Sogdian architects reached lHa sa as a consequence of these contacts. The case of the Newar influence is different. It reached lHa sa because the Newar court went into exile there.

Sogdians were culturally Iranians, and the Tibetan court followed Sassanid fashion and customs at various periods, which were the courtly standard in Central Asia for quite some time, as is shown by the well-known painting depicting blon po 'Gar among other emissaries to the T'ang emperor, and the Al lci “drinking scene”.

The 634 *terminus post quem* envisages that Iranic influence reached lHa sa through the Sogdians either before or at the same time as the arrival of the Newar court in lHa sa and a synchronism between the conquest of Sum pa and the construction of the royal residences on dMar po ri in the Sogdian style. By indicating that the Tibetans held a right of sovereignty over mTshal byi, the *srin mo* narrative reinforces the suggestion that they were directly exposed to Sogdian culture. Judging from the references in the literary sources quoted above (*bKa'chems ka khol ma* and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*) to Sog po style architecture in lHa sa, this influence may have travelled along the route that brought the Tibetans in close contact with Cher-chen by way of Sum yul.

65. In the same article, Pelliot propounds a Tibetan origin for its name, without attempting an identification. This is made by Uray who says that Chinese Sa-p'i corresponds to mTshal byi (“Khrom: Administrative Units of the Tibetan Empire in the 7th-9th Centuries” p.314).

Thus, the Tibetans' somewhat continuative control of the originally Sogdian town of mTshal byi, described as "frequentation" in the Chinese sources, is documented during the second quarter of the 7th century, hence during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.

The takeover of Khams occurred during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. Tre bo, divided into Dre/Tre stod and Dre/Tre smad, is included among the *stong sde*-s of Sum yul. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* says that this ruler created them.

The classifications of the *srin mo gan rkyal* give a glimpse of Srong btsan sgam po's activity in Khams. All sources that deal with the scheme of the demoness agree that he built Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang in the area of 'Dan ma. Srong btsan sgam po's control of lands in mDo Khams is confirmed by *lDong rus mdzod* (f.9a line 1) which records the construction of the *lha khang*-s of Be ri and Klu thang. Whether upper Khams was included into Sum ru for strategical and administrative reasons is an assumption based on the identification of some *stong sde*-s of this land.

Dre/Tre stod and Dre/Tre smad are Tre bo in Khams before it was named Tre hor. dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba's 'Jong stod and 'Jong smad should be decoded as 'Jang stod and 'Jang smad. During the reign of Srong btsan sgam po, the kingdom of Nan-chao had not yet been formed, but the territorial entity 'Jang obviously existed. Its inclusion in the *stong sde*-s of Sum yul shows that the lands of the Sum pa extended to south Khams but did not necessarily correspond to the territories that constituted the kingdom of Nan-cha'o.

A conquest of stretches of Khams smad—not the earliest one—is hinted in the entries of the *Tun-huang Annals* that concern the military activity of 'Dus srong mang po rje in 703–704, which cost him his life. This campaign that occurred before the formation of the kingdom of Nan-chao is also briefly mentioned in both the *lDe'u chos 'byung*.

As to Srong btsan sgam po's construction of the temples at Gling chu and Kha chu in the east,⁶⁶ recorded in the expanded scheme of the *srin mo*, this building phase must have been consequent to the only protracted campaign he undertook against the Chinese, which fell after 634. The *New T'ang Annals* f.2b (in Pelliot (transl.), *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.83) say that

66. Gling chu is Ling-chu (Liang-chou), the well-known outpost to the north-west of mtsho sNgon and north of Lang-chou (see, for one, the map appended to Stein, *Les tribus anciennes des marches Sino-Tibétaines*). An alternative (but unlikely) interpretation of the Gling chu of the expanded classifications of the *yang 'dul* would identify it as Gling Khri rtse, not built by Srong btsan sgam po but by 'Dus srong mang po rje, and mentioned in the sKar cung inscription (see, for instance, Richardson, "The sKar-cung Inscription").

Kha chu is too well known and too often mentioned in the troubled relations between the Tibetans of the imperial period and the Chinese to require further assessment here. On these localities also see Stein, *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet* (p.235).

his activities in the region continued for several years and reached as far as Szech'uan.⁶⁷ They add that they ended up with Kong co's arrival in Bod yul in 641, being sent in marriage to the Tibetans (Introduction to the *Tun-hunag Annals* lines 10–11, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyī lo rgyus yig cha* p.12).

If the building of temples at Gling chu and Kha chu, well known outposts in the Chinese borderlands which changed hands frequently,⁶⁸ symbolises this phase of Srong btsan sgam po's military activity, important implications would ensue. One is that, in the light of the timing of the campaigns on the eastern border, these temples could have been built before or around the time of the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang rather than after it, as the later sources state. Another is that this could be yet another confirmation of the propensity of the narrative in the later sources to transform military campaigns into acts of religion.⁶⁹

However, even in the case of the temples of Gling chu and Kha chu, their foundation in the Chinese borderland or 'A zha'i yul can hardly be attributed to Srong btsan sgam po. Although he led a military campaign with inroads into China during the years 635–638, he did not sub-

67. dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (Shes rig par khang ed. p.3 lines 17–18) says that the military campaign was so deep into Chinese territory that it went as far as the mountain sacred to 'Jam dpal dbyangs: "The troops of Bod having also crossed as far as rGya nag Ri bo rtse lnga, a great army of Bod reached [this holy place]"

68. Kha chu/Kam chu is Kan-chou of the Chinese, an area annexed by Srong btsan sgam po during his 634 campaign against the Sum pa and the rGya. The rGya held Kam chu, known to the Tibetans at least since the reign of Khri srong lde btsan as Byang ngos (see Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts Concerning Turkestan*, vol. II Documents: the Sa-cu region p.85, Ch. 0021 670, vol.31 f.116b) entitled *Bod yul du byung ba'i dge ba'i bshes gnyen gi rgyud kyī rnam* (lines 17–21); also Vitali, "Historical and ethnic traits in the *mes-rabs* of rig-'dzin rGod-Idem-can" (n.6).

Did Byang ngos, where the lDong tribe was ancestrally located, mark the frontier of the Tibetan ethnic or political world in the *lha sras btsan po* period, as demonstrated by the use of this place name during the time of Khri srong lde btsan (Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts Concerning Turkestan*, vol. II Documents: the Sa-cu region p.86)?

69. Is the meaning of *chu* in the names of Gling chu and Kha chu similar to that of Tibetan *khrom*, indicating military and administrative outposts, which were subject to frequent changes of side in the perennial warfare between the Chinese and Tibetans in these borderlands?

Uray ("Khrom: Administrative Units of the Tibetan Empire in the 7th-9th Centuries") identifies some *khrom* in rMa grom (spelled as), dByar mo thang, De ga g.yu tshal, Kwa chu, mTshal byi, a nameless *khrom* of Khotan, and 'Bru zha'i khrom. rMa grom seems to be the *khrom* of the rMa chen spom ra area in the land of the mGo log (Stein, *Les tribus anciennes des marches Sino-Tibétaines* p.30); Kwa chu is the Kha chu of the scheme; mTshal byi is the *khrom* of Lop-nor discussed in this essay; the nameless *khrom* of Khotan has obviously something to do with Li yul; and 'Bru zha'i khrom must have been connected with the area of Gilgit and sBal ti. Thus, *khrom*-s of the Tibetan empire correspond to some of the areas where the expanded version of the *srin mo* scheme places temples built by Srong btsan sgam po, and are therefore another meeting point in the concurrent religious and secular reading of the narrative.

jugate the 'A zha permanently.⁷⁰ This was an achievement to ascribed to the protracted military activity launched by 'Gar sTong btsan yul zung during the reign of Mang srong mang btsan. It culminated with takeover of the 'A zha in 663 and was completed by his sons with the ousting of China from 'A zha'i yul in 670 (see the *New T'ang Annals* in Pelliot (transl.) (p.85–87) and Molé, *The Tu-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the Time of the Five Dynasties* p.XVIII-XIX). The final annexation of the T'u-yü-hun is attributed to the snake year 669 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 20,49; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.14). Hence, the claim that he built temples in the Chinese borderland beyond Kokonor during his invasion of their protectorates in the north-west during the reign of Srong btan sga po is even more non-historical.

The sovereignty of sPu rgyal Bod over Bal po and the building of Ra sa 'Phrul snang

The close political and cultural links between Srong btsan sgam po's Bod and the Licchavi, exemplified by a number of stereotypes found in the later sources are substantiated by several clues in early literary sources, as well as monumental and epigraphical evidence. These stereotypes amount to the marriage of the Tibetan king with Khri btsun, the orientation of the Ra sa 'Phrul snang's door towards the west to face the Kathmandu Valley, the adoption of the cult of Thugs rje chen po shared by this king and his Licchavi counterpart Narendradeva, and a few other significant points of contact introduced immediately below.

The Newar character of Ra sa 'Phrul snang seems beyond doubt and is a concrete proof of the statement found in Tibetan documents from Tun-huang and Chinese material (*Old T'ang Annals* chapter 221) that the Licchavi court had left the Kathmandu Valley and went into exile in lHa sa during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po (see Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.70–74).

As said above, Nyang ral concludes his treatment of the temples built by Srong btsan sgam po to pin the demoness by mentioning sPu rgyal Bod's sovereignty over the Kathmandu Valley for forty-two years.

Both the exile of the Licchavi ruler Narendradeva in lHa sa and the sovereignty of sPu rgyal Bod over Bal po are hinted at in the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* (lines 11–12, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12). The *Annals* say that Na ri ba ba

70. R. Stein (*L'épopée et le barde au Tibet* p.235) refers to *Bu ston chos 'byung* which says that Mes Ag tshom built a temple at Ling chu in the borderland between Bod and China. This is Liang-chou to the east of mTsho sNgon, the wide borderland which the rGya group of people of the lDong ancestral tribe partially occupied. The opinion of Bu ston Rin chen grub implicitly rejects the appraisal of the texts dealing with the *srin mo* schemes, which attribute a foundation of a temple by Srong btsan sgam po at this fortified town.

(Narendradeva) was reinstated on the throne of Bal po by the Tibetans following the assassination of g.Yu sna kug ti (Viṣṇugupta, the last of the usurpers of the Bal po throne). sPu rgyal's sovereignty is mentioned more explicitly in the documents of the Chinese diplomatic missions sent to India, which were studied a long time ago by Levi ("Les missions de Wang Hiuen-ts'e dans l'Inde"; also see Petech, "The chronology of the early inscriptions of Nepal" p.230; "Glosse agli Annali di Tun-Huang" p.271–272; and Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.70–74).⁷¹

In my view (Vitali, *ibid.* p.71), the frequent references in the later sources to princess Khri btsun and Bal po artists in lHa sa plus the attribution of the Jo khang to the architect Bha ta ha are further corroboration of the fact that the legitimate king Narendradeva and his court were in exile in lHa sa during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po following the usurpation of

71. dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (Sherig Parkhang ed. p.90 lines 4–8) proposes his own reading of the entry in the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* concerning Bal po, to which I subscribe: "Bal po Yu sna kug ti bkum/ Na rid ba rgyal phor bcug/ bya ba'i tshig 'di gnyis ya mtshan che ste/ Dzishnu kirti bkum/ Na ra de ba rgyal por bcug bya ba zur chag gam snyam/"; "Bal po Yu sna kug ti was murdered. Na rid ba (spelled so, i.e. Na ri de ba) was installed as king. These two sentences describing [the events concerning the struggle for the Licchavi throne] are most peculiar. I wonder whether they should be interpreted as: "Dzishnu kirti was murdered and Na ri de ba was installed as king".".

dGe 'dun chos 'phel's assessment takes *kug ti* to stand for "with a knife". Did he think that *kug* means "curved" and *ti* is phonetical for *gri* ("knife"), hence *kukri*? The reading *kug ti* as standing for Gupta not only makes better sense but sounder in the light of the fact that the verb *bkum* appears in the *Tun-huang Annals* and *Chronicles* frequently but nowhere is qualified by any other term.

In "Glosse agli Annali di Tun-Huang" (p.271–272), Petech revises his previous opinion (Petech, "The chronology of the early inscriptions of Nepal" p.230) that the Na ri ba of one of the entries of the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 11, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12: "Bal po g. Yu sna Kug ti bkum/ Na ri ba ba rgyal por bchug") could be Narendradeva, stating that the use of the term Bal po in the *Annals* does not refer to the Kathmandu Valley. He possibly came to this conclusion following the revision propounded by scholarship to the old, incorrect identification of the place name Bal po, often recurring in the *Tun-huang Annals*, as the Kathmandu Valley (see Bacot, Thomas and Toussaint, *Documents de Touen-houang relatifs à l'histoire du Tibet* p.34, 37–39, and 41–47). Bal po also was an imperial seat in the vicinity of Yar 'brog mtsho.

There is no point to extend the same notion to the case in question, and not to consider Bal po as the Kathmandu Valley but as a locality near Yar 'brog mtsho, which had little if nothing to do with the exiled Licchavi royalty.

Petech himself affirms in "Glosse" that the chronology of Narendradeva's reinstatement on the Bal po throne indicated in this entry accords with the evidence provided by the Chinese documents. The context of the two sentences reinforces this interpretation. It seems that g.Yu sna Kug ti (Viṣṇugupta) was assassinated and that, after his murder, the legitimate king was reinstated.

the Bal po throne.⁷² The presence of Newar court members had a decisive influence in the manner Ra sa 'Phrul snang was built.

A few lines after referring to the forty-two years of sPu rgyal's sovereignty over Bal po, Nyang ral adds a passage which is open to two interpretations, both indicating the submission of the king of Bal po (unnamed in the sentence) to the central Tibetans.⁷³ The submission of

72. The antecedents derive from the usurpation of the Licchavi throne, recorded in inscriptions found in the Kathmandu Valley, which led to the reinstatement of the legitimate Licchavi ruler under the aegis of the Tibetans and to Tibetan sovereignty over Bal po.

The historical evidence for this period from the Kathmandu Valley is almost exclusively based on inscriptions, since *Gopalarajavamshavali*, the main Newar source that deals with the Licchavi genealogy, too, is confused (ibid. f.20b-f.23b).

A few inscriptions from the Kathmandu Valley, all dated in the Manādeva era introduced by this king in C.E. 576, bear some relevance to the chronology of events of this period. The earliest inscriptions that document the first instance of the control of the throne of Bal po by Amshuvarmān are those issued by him in the years 29 and 44 of the Manādeva era (i.e. 605 and 620 respectively). Udayadeva has one inscription dated 45 (C.E. 621); those jointly by Druvadeva and Jisnugupta are dated 48–49 (C.E. 624–625); those by Bhīmārjunadeva and Jisnugupta together bear one of the years 55–57 (C.E. 631–633); those jointly by Bhīmārjunadeva and Viṣṇugupta fall in the years 64–65 (C.E. 640–641). 641 is the year indicated by the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* in which Narendradeva was reinstated on the Licchavi throne. Narendradeva wrote inscriptions from the year 67 to the year 103 (C.E. 643–679). For all these dates see Appendix to Vajaracharya-Malla, *Gopalarajavamshavali* (p.235).

As I have mentioned in *Early Temples of Central Tibet* (p.70–73), bSod nams rtse mo confirms the date of introduction of the Manādeva era in an entry of the important *bstan rtsis* appended to his *Chos la 'jug pa 'i sgo*, which says that this era began in 576, but he refers it to 'Od zer go cha (Amshuvarmān) rather than Manādeva (ibid. p.345 f.1 lines 1–2).

73. This sentence reads as follows (*Nyang ral chos 'byung* p.244 lines 5–6): “Bal po rgyal po dang chad btsan par bya ba”, while *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.284 lines 15–16) is slightly different: “rGyal po 'Bri ha lo dang chad btsan par byas”.

One interpretation, with emphasis on the conjunction *dang*, would translate: “[Srong btsan sgam po] imposed a strict treaty on the king of Bal po/the king 'Bri ha lo”, thus suggesting that sovereignty was established over the Kathmandu Valley. This interpretation has the shortcoming of translating *chad* as “treaty”, a meaning obtained by reading *chad* as *chad yig* or *kha chad*, since *chad* on its own is not enough to signify a document of any sort.

Another interpretation would read: “[Srong btsan sgam po] inflicted an exemplary punishment on the king of Bal po/the king 'Bri ha lo”, thus implying the forcible removal, by murder or otherwise, of the line of usurper kings to make way for Narendradeva's reinstatement. This interpretation has the shortcoming of neglecting the conjunction *dang* as pleonastic, but has the virtue of translating *chad* in its true sense of “to punish”.

Nyang ral mentions the imposition of a strict treaty on the king of Bal po by the *lha sras btsan po* after the pinning of the *srin mo*, while *mkhas pa lDe'u* places it before. Is this difference just a narrative idiosyncrasy, or does it have historical implications, so that the sequence of events in the relations between sPu rgyal Bod and Bal po is classified by the two authors in an entirely antithetical way? In other words, could Nyang ral be implying that Ra sa 'Phrul snang was built before 641,

the king of the Kathmandu Valley to Srong btsan sgam po is also documented in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.284 lines 15–16), which adds that his name was 'Bri ha lo.

The first of the two possible interpretations is that a strict treaty was imposed on Bal po, which corresponds to the sequence of events and the interplay of the factions involved. If the other interpretation—harsh punishment was inflicted upon the king of Bal po—is preferred, the ruler who paid the price for the usurpation of the Licchavi throne would have to have been g.Yu sna kug ti (Viṣṇugupta) rather than 'Bri ha lo.

Read analogically, the various Nepal *Vamshāvali* (*Nepālikabhūpavamshāvali* of Wright memory; *Gopālarājavamshāvali*, *Bhāsāvamshāvali*; the two *Nepāvamshāvali*), although dates and regnal years are unreliable, show that the usurpation of the Bal po throne was historically more complex than its outline in the short records of the *Tun-huang Annals* and other documents mentioned up to here. Amshuvarmān ('Od zer go cha) was not the only illegitimate ruler of the period. All of these *vamshāvali*-s mention Amshuvarmān's son Krtavarmān as his successor. The reinstatement of the legitimate line of Bal po rulers commenced with the next ruler, Bhīmārjunadeva, said in these sources to have been the father of Khri btsun, but it was short-lived.

The same *vamshāvali*-s are consistent in placing several rulers—Nandadeva, Vīradeva and Candraketudeva—after Bhīmārjunadeva and before Narendradeva (on all this see Bajracharya and Michaels, *History of Kings of Nepal*, Introduction and Translation of *Nepālikabhūpavamshāvali* p.47–50 and the genealogical tables on p.155–156).

It would seem that Anshuvarmān devised a policy of appointing his loyalists—Nandadeva, Vīradeva and Candraketudeva—on the Licchavi throne for limited periods of time. Being chosen on a temporary basis, he, thus, did not let them consolidate power in their hands which remained in his own. This seems to have been the nature of the appointment of his own son Krtavarmān, too.

The passage shows that the reinstatement of the legitimate ruling line in Bal po was achieved by the Tibetans before Narendradeva returned from lHa sa. The Licchavi throne was recovered and lost again. The year of the ox 641, when Na ri ba ba was reinstated by the sPu rgyal Bod pa on the throne of Bal po according to the *Introduction* to the *Tun-huang Annals*, is a *terminus ante quem* for these reigns.

If 'Bri ha lo renders Bhimarjuna[deva], as is possible, then *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* would be correct in indicating him as the king of Bal po at that hectic historical juncture, because he nominally ruled together with Viṣṇugupta, the successor to Jisnugupta and thus the last usurper of the throne, in the years 640–641 (Manādeva era 64–65, see Appendix

when Na ri ba ba was reinstated on the Licchavi throne, and is *mkhas pa lDe'u* making the contradictory proposal that construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang began not before year 641 when Na ri ba ba returned to the Kathmandu Valley?

to Vajaracharya-Malla, *Gopalarajavamshavali* p.235), when the Tibetans reinstated Narendradeva as king.

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung considers 'Bri ha lo to be the father of Khri btsun with a minor spelling variant.⁷⁴ 'Bri ha lo seems thus to have been the only authority in the Kathmandu Valley left after the usurper was murdered by the Tibetans. He would have been the member of Narendradeva's faction ousted from the Licchavi throne who was closest to Srong btsan sgam po, due to his alleged family relations with him, and thus an interlocutor of the Tibetan king in political matters, keen to oblige his powerful ally. First 'Bri ha lo was compelled to acknowledge the sovereignty of the *lha sras btsan po*, then Narendradeva was reinstated as the legitimate ruler on the Bal po throne.

If the interpretation that the Tibetans made 'Bri ha lo sign a treaty which established sPu rgyal's sovereignty over Bal po is reliable, as I believe (see n.33), this paved the way for the return of Narendradeva to the Kathmandu Valley, as stated in the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals*. The sequence of events outlined by the combined evidence of the latter text, the Chinese documents and the Licchavi inscriptions would be confirmed.

The accounts in *Nyang ral* and *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* thus seem to be a trace left in the later Tibetan sources of the state of affairs documented by the Chinese reports on the Chinese diplomatic missions to India and the Kathmandu Valley (Levi, "Les missions de Wang Hiuen-ts'e dans l'Inde"), which also refer to the fact that Bal po had to pay tribute to the king of the sPu rgyal dynasty.

In order to identify the dates of the sovereignty of sPu rgyal Bod over Bal po, the evidence provided by the *Tun-huang Annals* and Chinese documents needs to be cross-checked against the dates contained in the Licchavi inscriptions.

The first inscription issued by Narendradeva which is still extant is dated to the 67th year of the era introduced by Manādeva and Anshuvarmān, i.e. to 643 (see below n.75) (Appendix to Vajaracharya-Malla, *Gopalarajavamshavali* p.235).⁷⁵ Once again, this fits into the chronology

74. The father of Khri btsun is named 'Bri lo ha earlier on in the same source (*mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.276 line 20). *Nyang ral* says he was the son of Guṇakāmadeva. *bKa' chems ka khol ma* (p.126 line 7) calls him Ne pa la 'Bhri lo ha. If 'Bri ha lo and 'Bri lo ha of *mKhas pa lDe'u* the same person as it seems, it would mean that, despite the alleged bonds of marriage within the family of the Licchavi, the sPu rgyal king obliged his father-in-law to sign the treaty as one condition to help the faction of Narendradeva recover the Licchavi throne.

75. The vexed question of the intercalary months, which the dates found in the Licchavi inscriptions do not allow for, does not substantially change the dating 641 for Narendradeva's return to Bal po and 643 for his first extant epigraph. This inscription indicate that Narendradeva was the ruler of the Kathmandu Valley by then.

of the period and in particular is consistent with the date of 641 for the reinstatement of Na ri ba ba indicated by the *Tun-huang Annals*.⁷⁶

The dating of Ra sa 'Phrul snang to after 641, proposed by the Fifth Dalai Lama and other authors, is thus not historically sound in the light of the evidence provided by a cross-analysis of the available ancient material. The Newar court had left lHa sa in the same year.

The forty-two years of sPu rgyal's sovereignty over Bal po should not be calculated from the beginning of the period of this usurpation, but from the indication in the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* that Narendradeva (i.e. Na ri ba ba) was reinstated with the help of the Tibetan king, i.e. from 641.

As I have already shown (Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.71 and n.29), the period during which the Licchavi court was in exile in lHa sa seems to have been from some time between 621 and 624 until 641. The Tibetans could hardly have claimed a right of sovereignty over Bal po some time before Narendradeva's reinstatement in 641; if they could have, they would have surely done so before. Hence these historical considerations reinforce the suggestion that Ra sa 'Phrul snang was built before 641 when the Licchavi were still in lHa sa.

No evidence is available to assess the circumstances which led to the end of the forty-two years of the sovereignty of sPu rgyal Bod over Bal po documented in *Nyang ral chos 'byung*. If this period is calculated on the basis of the interpretation of the statement contained in the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals*, the end of the control of the Kathmandu Valley by sPu rgyal Bod would have fallen around 682, during a period marked by considerable military successes in Central Asia but by internal political instability in Tibet. The unsettled period on sPu rgyal's internal front lasted from 676–677 until 685, when 'Dus srong mang po rje's right to rule was finally recognised (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.48–50). In those years, the Tibetan empire was run by the family of the 'Gar ministers.

dGe 'dun chos 'phel, who did not have *Nyang ral chos 'byung* at his disposal—he says in his *Deb ther dkar po* that the length of time Bal po was controlled by sPu rgyal Bod is subject to speculation, given that there is no record of its end—suggests that it may have lasted for

76. dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (Sherig Parkhang 1988 ed. p.91 lines 1–3): “Des na Kong jo bo Bod du rdzangs pa'i lo snyam/ de rang la Bal yul 'bangs su bcug gam snyam/'”; “Hence I think that in this year (i.e. 641) Kong jo bo was sent to Bod, which was the same [year] as the subjugation of Bal yul [by Srong btsan sgam po]”.

Hence the assassination of Bal po Yu sna kug ti and the installation of Na ri de ba on the throne, stated in the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 11, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12) as having happened in 641, are considered by dGe 'dun chos 'phel as having fallen in the year in which, with the restoration of the legitimate ruler, the Tibetans established their sovereignty over the Kathmandu Valley.

little more than one generation until the reign of 'Dus srong mang po rje, or less than that.⁷⁷ This is close to the statement of Nyang ral and the calculation proposed above.

Levi writes that the Chinese maintained good relations with Siladitya, the king of Magadha, but, following his death, their envoy Wang Yuan-ts'e was attacked by troops sent by a hostile minister of the late king.⁷⁸ The Chinese envoy took refuge in the Kathmandu Valley, whereupon the sPu rgyal Bod pa marched with 1,200 well armed warriors together with 7,000 cavalrymen from the Kathmandu Valley to Central India, there inflicting a heavy defeat.⁷⁹ The fact that the *lha sras btsan po* levied the bulk of the army for this military action in Bal po to join forces with a smaller number of Tibetan troops is a sign that Bal yul was under him.

Given this state of affairs, it is no surprise that Mon pa areas such as those in present 'Brug yul, where the temples of Bum thang and Glong rtse, included in the expanded versions of the *srin mo* scheme, are located, were under the Tibetans. The tradition of Mon yul, a territory mainly famous for the much later rTa dbang dgon pa, recognizes a local temple as one of the *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang* built by Srong btsan sgam po. Although this is apparently not uncommon because in many areas of Tibet, local lore claims that there is a temple belonging to

77. dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (Sherig Parkhang 1988 ed. p.35 lines 11–18): “Bal yul ni Srong btsan gyi sku tshe'i smad la dbang du chug cing/ de nas bzung yun ji srid gcig gi bar du Bod 'bangs su gnas pa'i lo grangs sogs la phyi rGya'i mkhas pa rnam kha mi mthun te/ 'ga' zhig gis 'Dus srong mang po rje'i sku tshe smad la Bal po ngo log zhes zer/ 'ga' zhig gis de'i yang gong nas yin zer/”; “Bal yul was taken over during the later part of Srong btsan sgam po's life. Indian savants are in disaccord about the number of years it remained under Bod from that time on. Some say that Bal po revolted during the later part of 'Dus srong mang po rjes's life, while others say that this happened earlier”.

Elsewhere in the same work, with reference to the military action undertaken in Central India in support of the Chinese, dGe 'dun chos 'phel reiterates his view of the length of Tibetan control over Bal po (ibid. p.3 lines 11–18): “Bod dmag rGya gar du slebs te/ rGya gar yul dBu kyi rgyal sa Kanya kubdza bzung zhing/ rgyal po srid sgrub brtson du bcug ste/ grong che chung brgya dang brgyad cu tsam Bod kyi 'bangs su chud pa dang/ Bal yul ni de'i gong snga mo zhig nas Bod kyi chab 'og tu chug ste mi rabs gcig lhag tsam de mus su sdad pa/”; “The troops of Bod arrived in rGya gar. The capital of Central India, Kanya Kubdza (Kanauj), was taken and they brought down its king, Srid sgrub. They reduced 180 towns, [both] big and small, to [the status of] subjects of Bod. Bal yul came under the control of Bod earlier than that, and remained in this condition for over one generation”.

78. Levi, “Les missions de Wang Hiuen-ts'e dans l'Inde” (p.301, referring to the *Old T'ang Annals* Chapter 256), and (p.306, referring to the *New T'ang Annals* Chapter 221); see also Bushell (transl.), “The Early History of Tibet” (n.15 on p.528).

79. This warfare is also dealt with in the *Old T'ang Annals* (f.3a. see Pelliot, *Histoire anciennes du Tibet* (p.6): “La 22e année (648), le yeou-wei-chouai-fou tchang-che Wang Hiuan-ts'ö, envoyé en mission dans les pays d'Occident, fut pillé par [les gens de] l'Inde Centrale. Le Tibet envoya des soldats d'élite et, avec [Wang] Hiuan-tsö, attaqua l'Inde. Il battit complètement [ce pays] et envoya un ambassadeur qui vient offrir [les prisonniers fait lors] de la victoire.”

Did the Chinese diplomat take part in the expedition?

the *srin mo* scheme in its surroundings,⁸⁰ the name Srin mo lha khang given to it is definitely unusual. In its interior, Srong btsan sgam po is credited with the making of a triad of statues portraying himself, Bal bza' and rGya bza'. This is the only temple I know of, which is called after the demoness and thus after the scheme as a whole.⁸¹

80. Leaving aside those said to have been built by queens or the ministers, no other temples attributed to Srong btsan sgam po beyond those listed in the shorter and longer versions of the *srin mo* narrative are recorded in the sources dedicated to the life and deeds of this *lha sras btsan po*. There also exist unofficial traditions which expand the range of Srong btsan sgam po's building activities to temples assigned to him by the local lore or even texts not specifically dealing with him. I suspect that those belonging to the *srin mo* scheme are the Srong btsan sgam po temples, while the others are objects of local pride.

Among these local traditions which were not included in the classifications of the *ru gnon*, *mtha'* 'dul and *yang 'dul lha khang*-s one can mention, for instance, Thang skya, the temple in 'Phan yul whose foundation is credited to Srong btsan sgam po (see *Bai ser* p.169 lines 10–11) or rGyang mkhar Ba 'ug lha khang in Nyang smad, mentioned in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.109 lines 8–10: “Dus chung gi phu na rGyang mkhar zer ba'i lung par bstan pa snga dar gyi lha khang rgyal po Srong btsan sgam pos btab/ Ba 'ug lha khang zhes thogs/”; “During *bstan pa snga dar*, king Srong btsan sgam po founded a *lha khang* in the valley known as rGyang mkhar, in the upper part of 'Dus (spelled so) chung. At a very early time, it was named Ba 'ug lha khang (“the temple of the cow and the owl”)), nowhere appear in the *srin mo* scheme.

The same text (ibid. p.66 lines 4–6) also deals with rKyang bu in these terms: “De'i 'og tsaṃ na bstan pa snga dar skabs rgyal po Srong btsan sgam pos btab pa'i rGyang bu'i lha khang thog snga la byin rlabs che'o/”; “Just below this (i.e. Myang stod rGyang ro Thang ring sar gtsug lag khang) King Srong btsan sgam po, during *bstan pa snga dar*, built rGyang (so spelled for rKyang) bu'i lha khang, which bestows blessings, and its ancient roof”.

Another one is rTsis gNas gsar. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.99 line 21–p.100 line 6) says this about the temple built by Srong btsan sgam po, one of the three respectively constructed at this locality by the *chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum*: “rTsis (p.100) gNas gsar zhes sprul pa'i rgyal po Srong btsan sgam pos gtsug lag khang brgya rtsa brgyad bzhengs pa'i dam bcas kyang/ gtsug lag khang zhe gnyis bzhengs grub pa'i ya rgyal gcig yin pa/ deng sang mgon khang chen mor grags pa de yin no/ mgon khang chen mor grags pa'i khyams rim pa gsum byas pa'i phug na rNam par snang mdzad kyi thugs kha de la mGon po stag bzhon 'chas kyi yod/ da lta rTsis dgon du grags pa de yin/”; “rTsis (p.100) gNas gsar. Although the emanation king Srong btsan sgam po vowed to build 108 *gtsug lag khang*, he actually managed to build the forty-two *gtsug lag khang*, of which this is one of the most outstanding. At present, it is known as mGon khang chen mo. In the sanctum of three successive courtyards that were built [in the temple] known as mGon khang chen mo, there is a [statue of] rNam par snang mdzad in the heart of which there is [an image of] mGon po riding on the tiger [mount]. At present [the temple] is known as rTsis dgon”.

81. *Mon yul gyi gzhi rtsa'i gnas tshul* (p.155 lines 9–15): “Mon yul du da dung skad grags che ba'i lha khang dang/ gnas ri/ bla mtsho bcas yod/ chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam pos Mon gyi grong sde dang po zin sa legs po srin mo tsho khongs mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang srin mo lha khang brgyab pa dang/ lha khang de'i nang chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po dang/ rGya bza' Kong jo/ Bal bza' bcas kyi 'dra sku bzhengs pa dang/ lha khang der lo ltar Bod sa gnas srid gzhung gis gra pa ched gtong byas

In his reading of the same Chinese material used by Levi, translated by him in *Deb ther dkar po*, dGe 'dun chos 'phel confirms that the confrontation, occasioned by the mishandling of the Chinese envoy, involved the Indians, on the one hand, and the *lha sras btsan po* with the army from the Kathmandu Valley, on the other, but with the major difference that the Indian king mentioned in the episode—Siladitya of Levi—is Harsha.⁸²

The Chinese documents published by Levi in “Les missions de Wang Hiuen-ts’e dans l’Inde”, too, state that by 647 the sPu rgyal dynasty *lha sras btsan po*, who had helped its legitimate king to regain the throne, had a right of sovereignty over the Kathmandu Valley. On the

te mchod 'bul byed pa dang bdag gnyer byed bzhin yod/'"; “In Mon yul there are a *lha khang*, a holy mountain and a soul lake that are extremely famous still nowadays. Chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po built Srin mo lha khang, [one of] the *mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang* falling within the limbs of the *srin mo* on the land first occupied [by him] in the inhabited borderland of Mon, which is an excellent one. Inside this *lha khang*, he made the portrait statues of chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po, rGya bza' Kong co and Bal bza'. The Tibetan government expressly appointed a monk to this *lha khang* every year. He offered worship, and was in charge of the properties”.

82. dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (*Gangs can rig mdzod* ed. p.276 line 15–p.277 line 9; Shes rig par khang ed. p.115 line 5–p.116 line 9): “gSer yig pa Wang hen tse bya ba rta pa sum cu dang bcas pa rGya gar tu btang/ de dus Harsha grongs zin cing/ rgyal khams mi bde pa'i skabs dang 'phrad/ Harsha la sras med pa'i rkyen gyis/ blon po A rdzu na [note: Srid sgrub] bya ba zhig khri la sdad cing/ nang pa nams la shin tu 'tshe bar byas/ rGya'i gser yig pa beom ste/ dngos chas nams 'phrog cing 'khor phal cher bsad Wang hen tse rang nyid zla bo 'ga' dang bcas mtshan la bros/ te/ Bod kyi chab 'bangs su yod pa'i Bal yul du slebs nas/ Srong btsan la skyabs btsal bas/ Bod kyi btsan po Bod dmag go hrag chig stong nyis brgya dang/ Bal dmag rta pa bdun (p.116) stong dang bcas pa rGya gar du btang/ gser yig pa dang lhan cig tu Hi ra hi ta la slebs/ nyin gsum tsam las 'thab ma dgos par rgyal sa gtso bo bzung/ rGya gar pa sum stong tsam ske bregs shing/ stong gcig tsam nye 'khor na chu klung yod pa'i nang du bsgyur/ rgyal po A rdzu na bros te shor ba slar yang dmag gsar pa dag khrid nas 'dzing du byung/ mthar Bod nams kysis kho pham/'"; “The emissary called Wang hen tse was sent to India by the emperor with thirty horsemen. At that time, Harsha died and [Wang hen tse] found that [his] kingdom was not peaceful. Owing to the fact that Harsha had no offspring, the minister Ardzuna [Srid sgrub] occupied the throne and caused great harm to the Buddhists. The Chinese emissary was captured. His goods were seized and his entourage was killed. Wang hen tse and a few close assistants fled under cover of night. (p.277) After arriving in Bal yul, which was under the sovereignty of Tibet, Srong btsan sgam po gave [Wang hen tse] protection, and the king of Tibet sent to India 1,200 well armed troops of Tibet and 7,000 Bal [yul] troops on horses. The emissary arrived together with them at Hi ra hi ta. At that time, they captured the capital without needing to fight for more than three days. The neck of some 3,000 Indians was cut and some 1,000 were thrown into the rivers of the area. King Ardzuna escaped [death] and fled. After raising new troops, he returned to fight but, in the end, the Tibetans routed him”.

See the *Thang rgyal rabs* section in *Deb ther dmar po* (p.18 lines 14–16) for a succinct reference to the same events.

dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (Shes rig par khang ed. p.3 lines 11–14) spends a few words to summarise the outcome of the campaign in Gangetic India: “Bod dmag rGya gar du slebs te/ rGya gar yul dBus kyi rgyal sa Kānya kubdza bzung zhing/ rgyal po Srid grub btson du bcug ste/

basis of these sources, Levi says that at the time of Wang Yuan-ts'e's visit to India, first as Li I-piao's deputy in the Chinese mission of 643–645 (ibid. p.298–299) and then as head of the new mission in 646–648, which was attacked by the Indians (ibid. p.299–301), Narendradeva was the king of Bal po. He had received the Chinese notables upon their approaching and leaving India at the time of the first of the two diplomatic missions, when Li I-piao was at its head.⁸³

The Chinese documents concur in several ways to confirm the situation prevailing in the relations between sPu rgyal Bod and Bal po during those years. They expand the perspective onto these events by illuminating another angle of these relations. They shed light on the issue pertaining to the foreign policy of the *lha sras btsan po* towards India, which the *bka' bzhi* of the *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* do not take into consideration. The Chinese sources, in discussing the campaign against the land under the control of Kanauj, record a case in which the Tibetans exercised their right of sovereignty recently obtained at the expense of Bal po.

That the Tibetans sent an army against India comprising a large number of Bal po cavalymen when Wang Yuan-ts'e took sanctuary in the Kathmandu Valley reinforces the evidence of the sovereignty of sPu rgyal Bod over Narendradeva. It strengthens the correspondence between the Na ri ba ba of the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* and this king of the Kathmandu Valley.

Further, the date 643–645 given by these documents fits well in the period during Narendradeva issued his inscriptions in which he (appropriately) describes himself as the ruler of Bal po.⁸⁴

Narendradeva sent a mission of his own to the Chinese court in 651 (Levi, “Les missions de Wang Hiuen-ts'e dans l'Inde” p.302), another fact which confirms that he was the king of Bal po under the sovereignty of the Tibetans around 647, according to the Chinese documents.

The date 651 for the mission he sent to the Chinese court is his last available date in the Chinese documents (Levi, “Les missions de Wang Hiuen-ts'e dans l'Inde” p.302). Being the king of Bal po in 651 is another proof that the ruler who was under the Tibetans in 647 must have been him. The 651 date contributes to showing that he had a reign which, on the

grong che chung brgya dang brgyad cu tsam Bod kyi 'bangs su chud pa dang/ Bal yul ni de'i gong snga mo zhi nas Bod kyi chab 'og tu chug ste mi rabs gcig lhag tsam de mus su sdad pa dang/ rGya nag Ri bo rtse lnga las kyang brgal nas Bod kyi dpung chen slebs//"; "Troops of Bod moved into rGya gar. [Srong btan sgam po] took over Kānya kubdza, the capital of dBus kyi rGya gar. He arrested King Srid sgrub (Arjuna). He reduced some 180 towns in the condition of subjects of Bod".

83. Levi (“Les missions de Wang hiuen-ts'e dans l'Inde” Journal Asiatique Mars-Avril 1900 p.299) says that Li I-piao, the emissary of the Chinese emperor, met Narendradeva twice, respectively in 644 on his way to rDo rje gdan and later in the same year on the way back.

84. dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (Shes rig par khang ed. p.3 lines 15–17): “Bal yul ni de'i gong snga mo zhi nas Bod kyi chab srid 'og tu chug ste mi rabs gcig lhag tsam de mus su sdad//”; “Bal yul had been subjugated under Bod earlier [than the campaign against Gangetic India]. It remained in this situation for over one generation”.

grounds of his inscriptions, must be considered quite long, for he ruled at least until 679 (see above n.72).

From the combined evidence of the Chinese documents, the Licchavi inscriptions, the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* and the statements of *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, it seems beyond doubt that this period of sovereignty coincided with part of Srong btsan sgam po's reign and continued after his death,⁸⁵ and that Nyang ral is right to link it with this king. Thus, Bha ga vihara, Phu tro vihara, Shing kun lha khang and Hab shang lha khang of *Nyang ral chos 'byung* must have been, like other temples of the *srin mo* scheme, symbols of the territorial expansions of sPu rgyal Bod during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. Hence, they go back to before 650 when he died.

They also are signs of the control of Bal po by the *lha sras btsan po* during the rule of his royal successors.⁸⁶

mKhas pa'i dga'ston has it that Srong btsan sgam po is to be attributed with the construction of a *gtsug lag khang* in the heart of Kathmandu township. He says that the ruler erected it at Thundikel, the plain area known to the Tibetans at Bod thang,⁸⁷ for its long-lasting connection with Tibetan activities in Bal po. The famed Bod thang mGon po, a flying stone

85. dGe 'dun chos 'phel, *Deb ther dkar po* (Shes rig par khang ed. p.3 lines 15–17): “Bal yul ni de'i gong snga mo zhig nas Bod kyi chab srid 'og tu chug ste mi rabs gcig lhag tsam de mus su sdad//”; “Bal yul had been subjugated under Bod earlier [than the campaign against Gangetic India]. It remained in this situation for over one generation”.

86. These four temples must have been situated in the Kathmandu Valley and seem to be Licchavi. Two of them, Shing kun lha khang (Swayambhu) and Phu tro bhe ba ri, definitely are. The latter is Phuto vihara, mentioned in *Gopalarajavamshavali* (Vajracharya-Malla, op. cit. f.21b and p.124) and attributed to the Licchavi king Campādeva, who reigned after what the text describes as an invasion coming from Tibet.

Given the confused sequence of *Gopalarajavamshavali*, especially the repetitiveness of the names of the kings in the Licchavi section of this work, it is almost impossible to ascertain whether this king ruled during the period of forty-two years when the kings of Tibet controlled the Kathmandu Valley specified by *Nyang ral chos 'byung*. The surviving Licchavi inscriptions in the Kathmandu Valley do not show that Campādeva ruled in that period.

87. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.1387 line 19–p.1388 line 1): “Bod thang du Byams pa bzhengs pa yang Bal po'i rgyal po De wa lha'am 'Od zer go cha'i sras mo Bal bza' Khri btsun Bod du byon pa'i skal bar thang chen po zhig du byas te byin pa da lta Bod thang du grags shing der rgyal pos gtsug lag khang brtsigs pa deng sang zhig nas mGon po'i rdo sku zhig da dung yod pa la Bod thang mGon po zhes mchod (p.1388) pa byed//; “[A statue of] Byams pa was made at Bod thang. Moreover, a great plain (*thang chen*), which could be cultivated, was given in dowry to Bal bza' Khri btsun, the daughter of the king of Bal po De wa lha aka 'Od zer go cha, when she went to Bod. It is presently known as Bod thang. Here the king (i.e. Srong btsan sgam po) built a *gtsug lag khang* which is dilapidated at present, but there still is a stone statue of mGon po, known as Bod thang mGon po, to which worship (p.1388) is rendered”.

statue of Mahā ka la Lord of the Tent, stands still now inside the temple dedicated to it.⁸⁸ One wonders whether dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba is of the opinion that this temple was the opus of Srong btsan sgam po. No evidence allows to spend a word in whatever sense, also because no evidence is provided by the Newar (Licchavi) side.

My section on Bal po and the *lha sras btsan po*-s ends with an unsolved issue. The location of the two other Bal po temples (rDo shan lha khang, for which Pashupatinath was used as the model, and Hab sha, for which Swayambhu was used as model) at the border of Bal Bod, and consequently the circumstances which led to Tibetan control of the land where they were situated cannot be established.⁸⁹

Activities following Kong co's arrival in Tibet

No dating is found in the ancient documents or the later literature which could prove that Ra mo che was built during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. Long passages in the later sources link Kong co's activities with those of the king, leading one to assume that Ra mo che was constructed before 650 and thus belonged to the phase of building activities undertaken under

88. Bod thang mGon po is a stone image of Mahā ka la with one head and two arms, the right holding a *thod pa* filled nowadays by the devotees with whisky and the left balancing its club between the legs, which makes him a depiction of Gur mGon. The local lore holds that, every Tuesday and Saturday, Gur mGon himself flies from Tibet, where the deity resides, to the temple at Bod thang dedicated to him. The local lore adds it was made by 'Phags pa Klu grub but its workmanship looks sensibly later, possibly dating to around the 11th or 12th century. The statue's original location is said to have been Phulchowk on the outskirts of Pathan At an imprecised time, it flew to Bod thang where a temple was built for it.

The statue sports a golden nose said to replace the original organ chopped off by Muslim marauders who attempted to destroy the image only to meet death by vomiting blood. The damage is attributed to the troops of the Bengala ruler Sultan Ud-din who invaded the Kathmandu Valley in 1342. The statue wears sunglasses at present to reduce the power of Gur mGon's eyesight which may damage the new high buildings that grew up as mushrooms in Kathmandu, for the deity is meant to be guard of 'Phags pa shing kun far away in the distance. On the statue see Dol po mkhan po sMan lha phun tshogs, *Ne pāl nang pa'i gnas yig dngul dkar me long* (p.55–56).

89. Although Licchavi, rDo shan lha khang and Hab sha were located on the border between Tibet and Nepal (Bal Bod), outside the Kathmandu Valley. The concept of Bal Bod is particularly difficult to define, given that the extension of Bal po (the Kathmandu Valley) most certainly was not that of present-day Nepal. Hence the two temples may have been located in the territory between the Kathmandu Valley and Mang yul sKyid grong, an area historically under the control of the Tibetans, and particularly during the time of Srong btsan sgam po.

his reign. This would mean that Nyang ral's inclusion of the temple among his set of eighteen *yang 'dul* is legitimate.

I have suggested (*Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.73) that the foundation of Ra mo che must have taken place before 'Gar sTong btsan yul zung established his clan at the head of the Tibetan kingdom, a situation that prevailed for the next fifty years or so after the death of Srong btsan sgam po in 650 and until 696. Blon po 'Gar and his successors were not in favour of Buddhism, and are not credited in the ancient literature with creating the conditions for building temples.⁹⁰

Another faint clue to the foundation of Ra mo che comes from a passage in *Chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum gyi rnam thar*, attributed to Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer but not written by him,⁹¹ which relates that some Chinese who came to lHa sa in the guise of merchants found its Jo bo statue different from the original one. At that time, the statue of the Jo bo was at Ra mo che. It was brought to Ra sa 'Phrul snang, as is well known, during the reign of Khri lde gtsug btsan, to become Tibet's most revered image of all time. It is possible that "the soldiers in the guise of merchants" were the members of Wang Yuan-ts'e's diplomatic mission, and

90. The first *lha khang* to be built after the 'Gar period came to an end was Gling Khri rtse, erected by 'Dus srong mang po rje. See Sad na legs's inscription on the sKar cung *rdo rings* (Richardson, "The sKar-cung Inscription").

91. The colophon of *Chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum gyi rnam thar* (p.303 lines 1–4) reads: "bDag nid chos rje'i drin gyis skyabs/ 'Bri khung dPal gyi Nags khro rDo rje gdan/ gnas mchog Yang dgon chos kyi pho brang du/ bla ma'i bka' drin rgya cher nos pa'i mi/ btsun pa Shakya rin chen ces bya ba'i des/ Chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum kyi rnam that/ rin po che sgron me zhes bya ba/ rdzogs sho//"; "Owing to the kind protection of the *bdag nyid chos rje*, btsun pa Shakya rin chen, the person who was the recipient of the extensive graciousness of the *bla ma*, completed *Chos rgyal mes dbon rnam kyi rnam par thar pa rin po che'i gron me* at 'Bri khung dPal gyi nag khrod ("forest") rDo rje gdan, at the excellent holy place Yang dgon chos kyi pho brang".

Szerb ("Two Notes on the Sources of the Chos-'byung of Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub" p.143 and n.3–4) has questioned the attribution of this text to Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer. Soerensen ("Dynastic Origins and Regal Successions" p.79) has a reading of the key words in the colophon, which is different from my own. He omits part of the expression "[*btsun pa Shakya rin chen*] ces bya ba'i dpe" and only quotes "*bya 'i dpe*", taking this to mean "compilation", while the passage refers to Shakya rin chen with the most typical idiomatic expression accompanying someone's name (*ces bya ba*). The term *dpe* (normally meaning "model, sample") when associated with a personal name refers, in my view, to an analogous nominal form, an alias. The matter of the authorship of this text and the identity of btsun pa Shakya rin chen needs further study. It is possible that Yang dgon chos kyi pho brang is the building by the same name at gDan sa 'thil.

that Ra mo che was therefore built after 641 (when Kong co reached Bod yul) but before the late 640s, when the Chinese emissary was in Tibet and the Indian sub-continent.⁹²

Far away in the lands of Upper West Tibet, the expanded classification of sixteen or eighteen *yang 'dul* locates a temple built by Srong btsan sgam po at Khyung lung. Zhang zhung had already come under sPu rgyal Bod a few times during the reigns of gNam ri slon rtsan and Srong btsan sgam po.

The final defeat of the local king Lig myi rhya and the definitive incorporation of Zhang zhung smad into the sPu rgyal kingdom is commonly accepted to date to 644, on the basis of the Introduction to the authoritative *Tun-huang Annals* (lines 12–13, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.52). The Bon po sources attribute its final blow to Khri srong lde btsan.

92. *Chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum gyi rnam thar* (p.162 line 2–p.163 line 3): “De nas rGya nag du mtha' 'khob kyi btsan po/ lHa cig Ong co grongs pa thos nas/ de sngan tha' 'khob kyi rgyal po khos 'phrul pa'i dmag pa'i 'gyed pas ma thub/ da dbon sras gnyis sku nar ma son pas dmag drangs/ gser gyi lha Shakya mu ne yang mar la spyang drangs/ snga mi du skye ba phan cham la dbab zer nas dmag btang pas/ rGya rje ju zhag gi rtsis byas te/ rGya'i dmag Bod la tshugs sam/ lha brgyan 'grongs sam byas pas/ dmag mi tshugs/ lha Shakya mu ne bya mang pos gdan drangs nas/ byang du khyer de nas nub tu khyer te mtsho du khyer/ 'Phags pa 'Jam dpal gyis/ bdag byas nas 'dug 'bug go/ spyang ma 'grongs so zer/ rGya'i dmag Bod yul du sleb rtsa na dMar po ri'i pho brang na/ mkhar dgu brgya dgu bcu go dku mdung (p.193) ba dan dmar po 'phyang bas gang bar mthong/ tshong par bsdu te/ Ra mo cher lha rkun mi btang bas ma snyed/ lha khang ni rnyed/ rGya phub dang rGya sgo dang ri'i rtse mo lnga'i rgyud ris dang cong la rGya nag gi yi ge 'dug pas yid ches/ lha the tshom za nas/ rGya'i rgyad po cig la dris pas lha 'di la phyag zhabs la 'khor lo mi 'dug la swogs pa'i rtags bcu gsum med zer nas bzhag go/”; “Then, upon news reaching China of the death of the barbarian *btsan po* and lha gcig Ong co, troops were brought [to Bod], although the two successors (*dbon sras gnyis*) had not come of age, since, earlier, the barbarian *btsan po*, despite multiplying his miraculous troops, had not been successful [in attacking China]. They also [planned to] take along the golden *lha* Shakya mu ne downwards (i.e. eastwards) [with them]. [The emperor of China] said: “As long as [the *btsan po*] existed in his previous incarnation as a man, we were bound by a treaty”. Having sent troops, the Chinese emperor made a divination with *ju zhag*. He asked: “Will the Chinese troops be established in Bod? Will they take away the *lha* (Shakya mu ne)?”, the reply being: “The troops will not be established. Many birds (*bya mang po*) will take *lha* Shakya mu ne away. They will take it to the north. Then they will take it to the west, and will take it to a lake. This is so because it is owned (i.e. “guarded”) by 'Phags pa 'Jam dpal. It will not be taken away”. As soon as the Chinese troops arrived in Bod, they saw the 999 castles at dMar po ri pho brang (p.163) filled with spears hung with red pennants. They disguised themselves as traders. Men were sent to steal the *lha* from Ra mo che, but they did not find it. They did find the *lha khang* [in which it was installed]. Despite noticing that there was a Chinese pagoda roof, a Chinese door, the depiction of the five-peaked mountain range (i.e. Ri bo rtse lnga) and a Chinese inscription on the bell, they still had doubts about the *lha*. They asked an old Chinese man, but after he replied: “Thirteen *lakshana* are missing and it does not have the wheel on its palms and soles”, they abandoned [the enterprise]”.

The later literature holds that its conquest was accomplished by Khyung po sPung sad zu tse, the Zhang zhung pa general of Srong btsan sgam po, who became its governor (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.185 lines 13–14). An authoritative confirmation is found in a passage of P.T. 1047 (lines 39–47) (see Ar. Macdonald, “Une lecture des Pelliot tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290” p.279–280), which pairs one sTang rye mun with Khyung po sPung sad zu tse as the two headmen responsible for its ultimate annexation.

The definitive defeat of Zhang zhung smad in 644 occurred after the kingdom rebelled upon the death of Srong btsan sgam po's father, gNam ri slon rtsan (*Tun-huang Chronicles* chapter Six lines 299–300, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.51). Zhang zhung's temporary regaining of freedom dates to several years before Srong btsan sgam po's ascension to the throne. Another territory of the same kingdom, Byang gi Zhang zhung, was conquered by Khyung po sPung sad zu tse sometime after 638 and before 644 (see Vitali, *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming, for the identification of this territory). Before the final crushing of the kingdom, the relations between Zhang zhung and sPu rgyal Bod were precarious. Their hostility was masked, as is well known, by an apparent alliance based on the marriages of Srong btsan sgam po's sister Sad mar kar with Lig myi rhya and the latter's sister Li thig dman with the sPu rgyal dynasty king.

As mentioned above, the location of sKar chung gtsug lag khang (described as *gling bzhi dpe brgyad*) between Pu hrang and Gro shod is given at the back of (i.e. behind, hence to the west of) the nine divisions of gTsang. These divisions are called gTsang Lu ma mgo dgu (“the nine heads of the swamp steppes of gTsang”, a vivid description of the features of the Upper West Tibet's often marshy terrain (*Ne'u pandi ta's sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* p.19 lines 5–6)).⁹³

The temple must have been close to Ma yum la which marks the border between Pu hrang and Gro shod, not far from an area where places of historical significance in the Bon po culture, such as Bye ma g.yung drung, were located. Territorially, Gro shod was a further stage in the advance of sPu rgyal Bod beyond Mang yul (Byang sprin) and 'Brong pa (Pra dum rtse) in southern Byang thang, away from the central provinces of the sPu rgyal dominions and towards the centre of Zhang zhung. The annexation of Gro shod must have been connected with that of rTsang Bod, accomplished by Khyung po sPung sad zu tse, who beheaded its ruler Mar mun, during the reign of gNam ri slon rtsan (*Tun-huang Chronicles* Chapter Six line 319; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.52), or with the definitive conquest of Zhang zhung in 644.

93. sKar chung should not be confused with the homonymous sKar cung, the temple built by Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs and mentioned a few times in this essay, for the simple reason that both chronology and geography rule out any possible identity. Ne'u pandi ta would have never taken a temple allegedly built in the mid 7th century in Gro shod for a homonymous one built in the 9th near lHa sa.

The ancient Chinese sources offer an important perspective on the complex set of events that led to the end of Zhang zhung, related to the issue of the temple built at Khyung lung. According to these sources, the only missions sent by Zhang zhung to the Chinese court were shortly before and after the crucial defeat of Lig myi rhya and the annexation of his dominions in the sMad part of the kingdom owing to the sPu rgyal campaign of 644. *T'ung-tien* (Chapter 190, f.5b) (see Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo* vol. II *Femeles (Island of Women)* vol. II p.707–708) reads:

“They (the Zhang zhung stod pa) had never had intercourse with China, but, in the *chêng-kuan* year of the great T'ang (641), they sent an envoy to come and render homage to the court”.

The *T'ai-p'ing huan-yü chi* adds:

“At the end of the *chêng-kuan* [years] (649), they were destroyed by the Tibetans, who divided the people and scattered them in adjacent lands”.⁹⁴

The *pen-chi* of the *Old T'ang Annals* (Chapter 3, f.8a) says that a mission was sent from Zhang zhung in 647. The statement that Zhang zhung was destroyed by sPu rgyal Bod in 649 can hardly be a reference to events of 644, for news of the defeat of Lig myi rhya would not have reached the Chinese court so late, especially since Zhang zhung had sent a mission to the Chinese emperor in 647.

As well known, the Introduction to the *Tun-huang Annals* (see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.12 lines 12–13) records the destruction of Zhang zhung of 644. The section on the relations between Zhang zhung and Srong btsan sgam po wrongly appended to Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* confirms that, of the two divisions in which Zhang zhung is also classified in the Tibetan sources (the two *lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'dga'ston*), it was Lesser Yang-t'ung or Zhang zhung smad with its centre at Khyung lung, the land annexed by sPu rgyal Bod in 644.

Despite being conceived as a register of the major acts of government of the *lha sras btsan po's* administration, the *Tun-huang Annals* do not go to the extent of mentioning the other lethal blow, documented in Chinese sources, meted out by sPu rgyal Bod in 649 to Zhang zhung

94. dGe 'dun chos 'phel (*Deb ther dkar po* Shes rig par khang ed. p.31 lines 7–15) documents the adoption of a deportation policy by sPu rgyal Bod with reference to foreigners rather than people from the plateau: “bDag cag lHo Bal bya ba 'di/ Li yul mThong khyab du Bal po'i rigs kyi sde zhig yod nam snyam ste/ sngar Bod kiyis blangs pa'i yul 'ga' zhig gi mi rnams sa gzhan du spo bcug par 'dug cing/ Gru gu'i mi rnams lHo Mon gyi yul du spor bcug pa Thang yig tu yang gsal ba bzhin/ Bal po mang po zhig kyang Li yul du spor bcug pa yin nam snyam//”; “I think that what we call lHo Bal is a single community, originally from Bal po, that settled in the Li yul mthong khyab. In antiquity, the people of a few countries conquered by Bod were obliged to migrate to a different land. It is mentioned in *Thang yig* that the Northern Turks were obliged to migrate to lHo Mon. Accordingly I think that many people from Bal po, too, were obliged to migrate to Li yul”.

stod (Greater Yang-t'ung). This region of Zhang zhung, still independent from sPu rgyal's domination, had pursued a policy of diplomatic relations with the celestial court soon before its downfall, sensing that the end was imminent.

The only exception to the precise catalogue of the lands with which the celestial court entertained relations, customarily found in the Chinese sources, is the paragraph contained in the *pen-chi* of the *Old T'ang Annals* which pertains to the Zhang zhung pa mission of 647 (or 648). The text does not discriminate between the two territories. Pelliot was inclined to believe that this mission was sent by Greater Yang-t'ung. I am of the same opinion for the reason that Zhang zhung smad had been crushed a few years before, in 644.

Since the missions sent to China by Zhang zhung stod (Greater Yang-t'ung) were dispatched during the acme of sPu rgyal's aggression, incepted in 641 and continued in 647 after the 644 defeat of the Lig mi rhya, and prior to the successive campaign of 649, they should be taken as signs of an agonizing kingdom which tried to establish contacts with the greatest power on the Central Asian political stage.

A cross-reading of the Tun-huang material and the Chinese sources allows one to classify the sequence of events belonging to the troubled relationship between Zhang zhung and sPu rgyal Bod of those years as follows:

- the Byang thang sector of Zhang zhung smad was annexed to sPu rgyal Bod by Khyung po sPung sad zu tse after 638 but before 644 (I.O. 716, ii);
- Zhang zhung stod (Greater Yang-t'ung) sent a mission to the Chinese court in 641;
- Zhang zhung smad was destroyed by sPu rgyal Bod in 644 with the defeat of the Lig mi rhya who reigned from Khyung lung. Khyung po sPung sad zu tse is credited in later Tibetan sources with this achievement together with sTang rye mun according to P.T. 1047;
- Zhang zhung stod sent a mission to the Chinese court in 647;
- Zhang zhung stod was destroyed in 649, the year in which the news of its downfall reached the celestial court, or soon before this date.

On the basis of this evidence, the hypothesis that some survivors from the 644 defeat of Zhang zhung smad had moved from its centre, Khyung lung, to Zhang zhung stod, which had not been annexed in 644, from where they tried to organise resistance against sPu rgyal Bod by seeking the support of China should be dismissed. Inasmuch as it was Zhang zhung stod which sent the two missions to the court of China before and after the destruction of Zhang zhung smad, two separate governments existed in the two regions of Zhang zhung (Greater and Lesser Yang-t'ung) at least until soon before 650. Both were eventually crushed and their people deported.

The political status of Mar yul, where another temple of the *srin mo* scheme is located by its expanded classification, is nowhere else recorded during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po and the period after the reign of this ruler.

The issue at stake is whether Mar yul was part of the kingdom of Zhang zhung and was thus incorporated into the sPu rgyal Bod dominions during the campaign of either 644 or 649 that led to the crushing of Zhang zhung smad and stod respectively. Greater Yang-t'ung (i.e.

Zhang zhung stod) adjoined Lesser Yang-t'ung (i.e. Zhang zhung smad) to the north (Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo Femeles (Island of Women)* vol.II p.708 quoting *T'ung-tien*, Chapter 190, f.5b). Did Zhang zhung stod encompass Mar yul? Hsüang-tsang who travelled to India just a few years before Zhang zhung was crushed by Srong btsan sgam po—he wrote his *Hsi-yü-ki* in the fifth decade of the 7th century—cites Mo-lo-so, now almost universally recognised as restituting Mar sa (i.e. Mar yul?), in his hearsay account of the Himalayan territories. He considers it to be a separate land from those in its vicinity.⁹⁵

If Suvarabhūmi, contiguous to Mar yul, was part of Greater Yang-t'ung, as I am inclined to think on the grounds of a cross reading of Hsüang-tsang's travelogue and the entry on the latter kingdom in *T'ung-tien*,⁹⁶ it is possible but far from certain that the group of lands bordering on Greater Yang-t'ung—and thus including Mar yul—passed under sPu rgyal rule in 649 when Zhang zhung stod was annexed to that kingdom.⁹⁷

The control of Mar yul and the other lands was preparatory to the advance of the central Tibetans into the Indo-Iranic borderlands and Southern Turkestan, which was accomplished on a large scale in the seventh decade of the 7th century, hence after the death of Srong btsan sgam po.⁹⁸ This shows that a date for the conquest of Mar yul by sPu rgyal Bod after Srong btsan sgam po's demise in 650 is equally possible.

95. Hsüang-tsang's *Hsi-yü-ki* (see Beal (transl.), *Si-yu-ki, Buddhist Records of the Western World*, Book IV p.199) says: "On the eastern side, this country (i.e. Suvarabhūmi) is bordered by the Fan Kingdom (Tibet), on the west by San-po-ho (Sampaha or Malasa?), on the north by Khotan". Also see Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo Femeles (Island of Women)* vol.II p.699.

96. *T'ung-tien* Chapter 190, f.5b (Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo Femeles (Island of Women)* vol.II p.708) says: "Great Yang-t'ung (Ta Yang-t'ung) borders to the east on Tibet (T'u-fan); on the west, it borders on Lesser Yang-t'ung (Hsiao Yang-t'ung); to the north, it is straight in the direction of Khotan. From east to west, it is more than 1,000 li". See Vitali, *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events* (forthcoming) for a discussion of these topics.

97. The extant traces of the domination of the sPu rgyal dynasty in La dwags and neighbouring territories yield no evidence as to when Mar yul (Khri dpe'i lha khang) and sBal ti (sBal sNag chen) came under Tibetan control. That a village in La dwags gsham is still known as Bod mkhar bu suggests some former presence of the Central Tibetans in the area. This indicates that sPu rgyal Bod extended its power to La dwags, even if there is no clue as to the period in which it took place.

Equally useless for a chronology of the expansion of their control to the west are the names of (military) officers, who manifestly came from sPu rgyal Bod, carved on the rocks in the area of Al lci, not too distant from Bod mkhar bu. These inscriptions were copied by Francke and then by Tucci, and pictures of them have been published by Orofino in "A Note on Some Petroglyphs of the Ladakh Area".

98. Zhang zhung and Mard are previously mentioned in the entry for the year 719 of the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 2; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.24). Does Mard of the *Tun-huang Annals* correspond to Mar yul? This equation is commonly accepted among scholars (for one,

Campaigns undertaken after Srong btsan sgam po's death and temples of that period

The inclusion of the Mang yul temples (Mang yul Byang sprin/Byams sprin, Mang yul sBang chen brtsegs pa, sTang sprin/Myang sprin) and neighbouring areas in southern Byang thang (Pra dun rtse and gNyen gsal/gShen gsal lha khang) in more than one classification of the expanded version of the *srin mo* scheme is corroborated by the evidence of the *Tun-huang Annals*. They are related to events occurring soon after the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.

The entry of the *Tun-huang Annals* for the rat year 652 (lines 3,20–21; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.13), two years after Srong btsan sgam po's death, documents the submission to sPu rgyal Bod of Glo bo and the mysterious rTsang hrya. In the Bon po terminology *rhya* stands for “ruler”, and thus the name addresses the head of rTsang.⁹⁹

The identification of the territory of this ruler is problematic. This land belonged to the “rTsang” of great antiquity (see, *inter alia*, Yamaguchi, “Localisation de rTsang-yul” and “Sun-p'i and Sun-po” p.92), an area of wider geographical extension than the “gTsang” of more recent times. Ancient rTsang incorporated, among others, territories bordering on Glo bo, such as southern Byang thang and Mang yul, where the *srin mo* temples were located. But it is possible that Mang yul itself was under the sPu rgyal kings at an earlier stage, if the date of installation in sKyid grong of the statue of 'Phags pa Wa ti proposed in literary sources later than the Tun-huang documents is accepted.¹⁰⁰

In the classifications of the *stong sde*-s of sPu rgyal's military organisation, the inclusion of sPyi rTsang and Yar rTsang among the five “communities of one thousand” of Zhang chung smad indicates that rTsang extended to territories in the erstwhile kingdom destroyed by the

see Uray, “The Old Name of Ladakh” p.219–220). The entry for the year 719 seems to indicate that Mar yul was under the control of sPu rgyal Bod in that year (see Uray's assessment *ibid.* p.219–221).
 99. The term *rhya* in the name of the Zhang chung ruler, spelled Lig myi rhya in the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (Chapter Eight lines 400, 402, 430–431, 433; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.57 and p.59), is commonly taken to mean “lord” in the language of Zhang chung. For the alternative Zhang chung term *rkya*, a more modern spelling of *rhya*, with the same meaning see the entry Lig mi rkya in Dagkar Namgyal Nyima, *Zhang chung-Tibetan-English Contextual Dictionary* (p.363). Hence one should consider the possibility that, in the passage, reference is made to a ruler of rTsang who had rebelled against the Central Tibetans.

100. None of the sources dealing with the temples pinning the limbs of the *srin mo* takes the trouble to explain why, in all the classifications of these temples, 'Phags pa Wa ti'i lha khang in sKyid grong is systematically excluded, despite the fact that the later literature dates its foundation to 645, during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. 'Phags pa Wa ti'i rnam thar (f.18b line 4) reads: “Ma yul du phebs nas/ chu rta 'di yin pa la bryad brgya dang donbryad song/”; “878 years elapsed between

central Tibetans in 644.¹⁰¹ The annexation of Glo bo and the unspecified region of rTsang has an appearance of having been a conclusive blow to lands of the Zhang zhung kingdom that remained to be subjugated. The importance of this campaign of 652 is evident from the fact that it was 'Gar sTong btsan yul zung himself who headed it up, but what led the *de facto* ruler of Tibet of the time to intervene—whether to quell a revolt or undertake fresh conquest—cannot be gleaned from the entry of the *Tun-huang Annals*. The campaign nonetheless shows that a ruler in rTsang still held power, although it is impossible to say whether he represented a resurgence in the old territory of rTsang Bod annexed by Khyung po sPun sad zu tse during the reign of gNam ri slon rtsan.

Looking at the location of rTsang in closer detail, Ne'u pandi ta's reference to sKar chung gtsug lag khang which stood on the border between Pu hrang and Gro shod and "behind the nine divisions of gTsang" points to its extension towards the west. A passage in *Chos legs kyi rnam thar* which mentions dByar rtsang (spelled so) as the theatre of warfare between the Glo pa against the Gung thang pa and the gTso tsho ba nomads in the 15th century, shows that the area of the temples of Mang yul and southern Byang thang fell within the eastern limits of Yar rtsang.¹⁰²

the arrival of rang byon 'Phags pa in Ma yul (sic for Mang yul) (i.e. in 645) and the present water horse year (1522)".

sNga 'gyur rmying ma'i brjod pa (p.35 lines 1–2), a modern work, has a different opinion: "bCo lnga pa la sprul pa'i dge slong A kara ma ti shī las rang byon 'Phags pa spyang drangs"; "When [Srong btsan sgam po] was fifteen years old (631), dge slong A kara ma ti shī la brought the self-originated 'Phags pa".

101. The name is spelled rTsang in *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, when again the *stong sde* of Zhang zhung smad are listed (p.259 lines 6–8): "Bod dang Sum pa'i so mtshams na/ Zhang zhung smad kyi stong sde lnga yod de/ Gug ge Gu Cog gnyis/ sPyir rTsang Yar rTsang gnyis/ sPyi ti stong bu chung dang lnga'o//"; "The five *stong sde* of Zhang zhung smad are bordering on Bod and Sum pa. They are Gug ge and Gu Cog, altogether two; sPyir rTsang and Yar rTsang, altogether two; sPyi ti [is] the *stong bu chung*, altogether five of them".

Centuries later, *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* spells gTsang in a list of the five *stong sde* of Zhang zhung smad (p.187 line 23–p.188 line 2): "Bod dang Gru gu sa mtshams na 'O co Mang ma gnyis/ gNye ma Tsa mo gnyis/ Ba ga stong bu chung ste Zhang zhung stod kyi steong sde lnga/ Bod dang Sum pa'i (p.188) mtshams na Gug ge Cog la gnyis/ sPyi gTsang Yar gTsang gnyis/ Ci de stong bu chung ste Zhang zhung smad kyi stong sde bcu'o//"; "Bordering on Bod and Gru gu are 'O co Mang ma, two in all, gNye ma Tsa mo two in all, Ba ga [is] the *stong bu chung*. These are the five *stong sde* of Zhang zhung stod. Bordering on Bod and Sum pa are Gug ge and Cog la, altogether two; sPyi gTsang and Yar gTsang, altogether two; Ci de [is] the *stong bu chung*. These are the five *stong sde* of Zhang zhung smad, which make ten *stong sde*".

102. Relating the events of the winter of water pig 1443, *Chos legs kyi rnam thar* says that clashes occurred in the area of Byang thang between Mustang and Gung thang, where the Glo pa troops had advanced in the face of resistance from the Gung thang pa and their nomad allies. This biography (f.26a line 6–f.26b line 2) says: "De'i gnangs nyin gTso tsho bas Rab kha bsungs mkhan 'bud/ de

The set of eight temples known as eight *yang 'dul* in *Nyang ral chos 'byung* and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, and as eight *mtha' 'dul* in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (see below for a synopsis of these classifications), represent an expansion of the territory controlled by sPu rgyal Bod towards the west, while the borders of Kong po and Mon ('Brug yul) remained both unchanged.

The inclusion of Kha che sBal sNang chen, located in sBal ti according to *Nyang ral*, but in Kha che according to the two *lDe'u chos 'byung*, among the further *mtha' 'dul* shows that sPu rgyal Bod had taken Kashmir and neighbouring lands. The expansion of the control of sPu rgyal Bod towards the east, north-east and north-west is represented by the previous set of four additional *yang 'dul* (Klong thang dpal in mDo Khams, rGya Ka chu Thog rngam, Ke'u ri gzigs in the land of the 'A zha and 'Dag sha intra in Li yul).

Examining this classification from a historical angle seems to show that the conquest of Kashmir and adjoining territories was not completed during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. The most problematic temples to attribute to Srong btsan sgam po indeed are those on the "upper side" beyond Khyung lung, since it is not clear when the central Tibetans took hold of Mar yul.

It seems that Li yul (included in the set of sixteen *yang 'dul* by the two *lDe'u chos 'byung*) was not taken before 665,¹⁰³ or perhaps between 665 and 670,¹⁰⁴ and thus after the death of Srong btsan sgam po. Beckwith has this to say on the Tibetan expansion to the lands in the west: "By 663 the Tibetan empire controlled the far northwestern reaches of the Tibetan pla-

dang mnyam du Khab pa'i sgar gyis gtsang po bcaad de chu'i byang du (f.26b) phebs pa'i dus dgos/ de dus Khri rNam rgyal ldes dbu mdzad pa'i gung po'i dmag gis Mang tsha mdo'i Rab khar phebs/ dByar gTsang bcaad nas gTso tsho ba rje 'bangs zhal 'dzom byung bas/ Glo dmag 'jigs skrag dang bcaas nas nub tu 'gro dgos byung//"; "The gTso tsho ba uprooted the [Glo bo] watchmen from Rab kha ("dam's mouth"). At the same time, the camp of the Khab pa (i.e. the Gung thang pa) crossed the gTsang po and went to the north bank at a fixed moment. (f.26b) At that time, the bulk of [the Gung thang] troops led by khri rNam rgyal lde went to Rab kha of Mang tsha mdo. Since the gTso tsho ba and rje 'bangs (i.e. the king of Gung thang and his subjects) got together after crossing dByar gTsang, the Glo [pa] troops had to retire to the west in fear".

103. Beckwith ("The Tibetan Empire in the West" n.19) dates the Tibetan conquest of Kashgar to 663 and of Khotan to 665, basing himself on *Tzû-chih T'ung-chien* (respectively 201: 6333 and 201: 6334).

The later sources believe that it was Srong btsan sgam po who conquered Khotan. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* is symptomatic on this issue. Dealing with the well-known episode of Ral pa can's demand to the king of Li yul to send artists in order to contribute to the decoration of 'On chang do, under the threat that, were the ruler of Khotan to persist in disregarding it, the *lha sras btsan po* would attack his land, *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.419 lines 2–3) says that, while pondering the situation, this unidentified king of Li yul stated: "sNon yang rgyal po Srong btsan sgam po'i dmag drangs nas Li yul phung//"; "Earlier, the army of Srong btsan sgam po was lbrought [here] and destroyed Li yul".

104. In his *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* (p.34), Beckwith is more vague on the date of Tibetan conquest of Khotan. He assumes, judging from the offensive the Tibetans launched in 670, that Khotan was taken sometime during the previous five years, and then adds that the Tibetans had

teau (where the Karakorum range becomes the Pamirs), the kingdom of Balur, the kingdom of Wakhan in Eastern Tukharistan (or the approaches to it from the east), and an area around Kashgar” (*The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.30).

The westerly advance of sPu rgyal Bod towards the Four Garrisons in the period after Srong btsan sgam po’s demise was a threat to sBal ti serious enough for the king of Balur to seek support from the Chinese against the disturbances of the Tibetans (Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kie occidentaux* p.150). A subsequent annexation of sBal ti is documented in the Chinese sources (under the name of Little Balur) apparently during the reign of Khri lde gtsug brtsan Mes Ag tshom (see, *inter alia*, Beckwith, “The Tibetan Empire in the West” p.33–34). But then, still during the same period in the eighth century, sBal ti was prominent in its support to sPu rgyal Bod against China.

A resumé of some concepts of the *srin mo* narrative

The evidence gathered in this study indicates that the classification of the sixteen or eighteen *yang ’dul*, the *mtha’ ’dul yang ’dul* of Nyang ral, is a compilation of different stages of conquests by sPu rgyal Bod under different kings. These temples, therefore, belonged to different periods, as is at least proved by the cases of southern Byang thang, ICang ra smug po (Li yul) and sBal ti.

Nyang ral’s apparently incomprehensible inclusion of Ra sa ’Phrul snang and Ra mo che among the set of eighteen *mtha’ ’dul yang ’dul* is the key to understanding the twofold employment of the term *yang ’dul* and related cases in the classifications of the temples attributed to Srong btsan sgam po.

When the term *yang ’dul* is used in relation to the pinning down of the limbs of the *srin mo gan rkyal*, it has geographical connotations and stands for the temples built at the farthest points of the diagram anthropomorphically represented by the demoness.

One is confronted with historical classifications when, in the expanded classifications of the system, the term *yang ’dul* is used without reference to the pinning down of the demoness’s limbs. This is the case of the additional eight *yang ’dul* of Nyang ral—Khams Klong thang sGrol ma’i lha khang, Byang Tsha sPe dpal tshad, Mang yul Byams sprin, Mon sKyer chu, Klong thang sGrol ma’i lha khang, rGya Ka chu Thog rngam, ’A zha Ke’u ri gzig and Li yul ’Dag sha intra—but also the inclusion of Ra sa ’Phrul snang and Ra mo che in his set of eighteen *yang ’dul*.

attacked Khotan in the spring of 665 (ibid. n.113 citing the same passages in *Tzû-chih T’ung-chien*; also see the previous note).

Historical classifications concern temples added in subsequent phases, such as Ra sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che, whose construction is referred to in the sources as having taken place after the traditional set of four *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul* was completed.¹⁰⁵ Their inclusion in a set of *yang 'dul* temples would be paradoxical were this classification geographical.¹⁰⁶

It remains unclear when several *yang 'dul* temples were built. Given the location of territories where some of these temples stood (e.g. Mar yul, sBal ti and 'A zha'i yul; or regions of the Tibetan empire not belonging to the Tibetan-speaking world, such as Li yul), historical records document their conquests after the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.

Their inclusion in the list may have to do with the fact that the later sources attribute to Srong btsan sgam po a long life and a second regnal spell. Judging from the unfolding of events during the dynastic period, it goes by itself that not all the temples of the expanded version were built by Srong btsan sgam po. Either they preexisted his reign (e.g. Shing kun lha khang in Bal po) or were built independently after his death.

105. Similarly, the unconventional classification in O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka' thang* groups the temples into what apparently is a historical succession of foundations, the reliability of which is covered by a legendary layer. Given that Ra sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che are the last temples included in O rgyan gling pa's list and the way the story of the malevolent opposition of the *srin mo* is written in the sources, I think that O rgyan gling pa conceived this classification in the chronological order as he deemed best.

O rgyan gling pa's timid attempt in *rGyal po bka' thang* at a rough chronological sequence of the foundations is not reliable, including as it does temples in territories subdued by the Tibetans after the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.

The presence of the word *thog mar* in the initial line dedicated to Srong btsan sgam po's temples is another sign that O rgyan gling pa attempted to write a chronology of foundations. Traditionally, Khra 'brug and bKa' stsal are the temples of the scheme which were the earliest built, and they normally head up the anthropomorphic classification in the sources.

The inclusion of Ra sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che in the classification not based on the anthropomorphic scheme, also found in Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*, is a sign that this classification follows the expanded version of Nyang ral's *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul gtsug lag khang-s* in overall conception more than in the selection of temples, which are quite different from those mentioned by Nyi ma 'od zer.

Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* shares with O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka' thang* the ambition of classifying the temples in chronological sequence, both authors following Nyang ral's lead in this. It seems that the scholasticism of the day was firm in its inclusion of Ra sa 'Phrul snang and Ra mo che among the temples at the temporal periphery of the sPu rgyal dynasty's dominions. This can be defined as a post *bstan pa phyi dar* rNying ma chronology of the *srin mo lha khang-s*.

106. The term *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul* used by Nyang ral (*Nyang ral chos 'byung* p.244 line 2) for his last set of eighteen temples encompassing territories as far as China, Khotan and the Kathmandu Valley reinforces the interpretation suggested here that this set of temples marked the farthest points in the conquests of the Yar lung dynasty. Additional support for this notion is given by mkhas pa lDe'u (*mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.286 line 9), who calls them *yang 'dul yang 'dul* ("further temples of the further temples").

Hence the twofold use of *yang 'dul* in the scheme corresponds with the twofold articulation of the narrative in simplified and expanded versions.

- When the term *yang 'dul* is applied to the temples on the body of the *srin mo*, it refers to religious structures built to occupy the space for the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang;
- When the term *yang 'dul* is applied to the temples outside the body of the *srin mo*, it refers to temples marking the steps of Srong gtsan sgam po's conquests and other enterprises (including the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang) as well as campaigns after his death.

A more general consequence can be derived from the historical evidence. This concerns the repetition of the same temples in different classifications to serve a twofold purpose:

- Temples of the *srin mo*'s short scheme, which are repeated in any of the classifications of the expanded version, marked borderlands of the sPu rgyal kingdom which remained unchanged, or were built in regions of Tibet, cradles of the kingdom. Temples only appearing in any of the classifications of the expanded version of the scheme alongside those of the *srin mo* scheme marked borderlands annexed to the Tibetan empire.
- Temples mentioned in more than one classification of the expanded version of the scheme were mentioned again because these classifications are not based on a single underlying conceptual formula like the grid of the ancient Indian architectural system adopted for the *srin mo* scheme.

The latter state of affairs could imply that the classifications of the expanded version did not originally belong to a single scheme but were compacted together. Once again, this process of compilation seems to have been twofold. Classifications were first compacted together to form the expanded version of the scheme. These steps in the undertaking of collation could have been the basis for the repetition of temples in the classifications of the expanded version, which was then blended together with the *srin mo* version of the scheme.

Hence the expanded version of the narrative combines the structural conception at the basis of the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang with a historical summary of the secular events in the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.

The *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul* temples that pin down the body of the demoness are a metaphor of space to be occupied prior to laying out the actual plan of a holy edifice and its construction once principles of the Indian science of architecture were transferred to a Tibetan milieu.

The treatment of the simplified version of the *srin mo* scheme in *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, followed in this by *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*), establishes a fundamental concept. They correctly avoid to say that Ra sa 'Phrul snang was built on the heart of the demoness, for the centre of the anthropomorphic diagram is the navel. *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, the text in which the first hitherto known expanded version of the narrative appears, the body of the *srin mo* does not have a centre.

Stepping out of mere physiognomy, the exercise of pinning down the limbs of the demoness in the short version of the scheme went beyond the mere idea of subjugation. It was meant to draw the plan of the *gtsug lag khang* by fixing the necessary points on the diagram in use with the ancient architectural science of India.

The further classifications of temples outside the body of the demoness, symbolised by temples linked with several territories, seem to indicate stages of the military campaigns of different *lha sras btsan po*-s and other lay activities. The foundations of several temples of the expanded version of the scheme (in particular, some of the sixteen or eighteen temples called either *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul* or *yang 'dul yang 'dul*) are not attributed to the Tibetans by the sources which do not deal with the *srin mo* scheme.

The construction of these temples in distant territories conquered by several *lha sras btsan po* on the way to forge the Tibetan empire was a local enterprise but was attributed to Srong btsan sgam po following the process of revision of his personality and activities. The revision of his life and deeds led to the tradition of considering him as the manifestation of Thugs rje chen po.

Hence the key to why the narrative was introduced in its twofold articulation was the interpretation of Srong btsan sgam po as the epitome of a religious king, the *lha sras btsan po* who introduced Buddhism as the unifying cultural factor to keep together the sPu rgyal nation and make of the Tibetans one people. This is emphasised in literary material such as *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum*. Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and other authors deemed it necessary to bring back the religious-oriented interpretation of Srong btsan sgam po's deeds to a more mundane plane.

The reading of Srong btsan sgam po as a religious king highlights the rNying ma interpretation of himself in sources such as *Mani bka' 'bum* as a manifestation of sPyan ras gzigs and an embodiment of his cult, so that he is recognised as the introducer of Buddhism in Tibet after lHa tho tho ri.

Nyang ral's revision of the scheme offers a more balanced view of Srong btsan sgam po's personality. It still conveys a religious perspective but one that does not neglect his secular activity. His avatar as ruling king led him to unify the greatest part of the plateau under his sway, seek alliance with China so that he could dedicate himself to strengthen his kingdom internally, and sow the seeds of the empire, which were brought to fruition by 'Gar sTong rtsan yul zung and his sons after his death.

Before concluding, a final observation on the relation between the two versions of the scheme is needed. If the religious perspective is privileged, one could suggest that the *srin mo* scheme is the earlier version, and that the expanded version was superimposed on it in order to reintroduce a vision of the life and deeds of Srong btsan sgam po more consonant with their actual development. In the process, the geomantic principles of the ancient Indian architectural scheme were incorporated into the former version and influenced its structure. However, I go for, as said beforehand in this essay, the view that *the srin mo* scheme is a reli-

gious adaptation of Srong btsan sgam po's secular personality to a rNying ma milieu keen to stress the religious side of this king and others, the *chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum*.

Although the extant sources do not contribute clues on the cultural conditions that led to the formulation of the *srin mo gan rkyal* account which conflates the two versions, the narrative they have recorded for posterity is an extraordinary piece of literature. It groups together long classifications of temples in lands controlled by the sPu rgyal dynasty, and so marks the extension of the Tibetan empire, with the purpose of laying out the scheme required by Indian architectural science for the construction of a *vihara*. Rarely, has ancient history been written more concisely.

ADDENDUM ONE
Synopsis of the classifications

bKa' chems ka khol ma
ru gnon

right shoulder: dBu ru Ka tshal;
left shoulder: g.Yu ru Khra 'brug;
right hip: g.Yas ru gTsang 'brang;
left hip: g.Yon ru Grum pa rgyal gyi lha khang.

mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang

right elbow: sGong po Bur chud;
left elbow: lHo brag mKhon mthing;
right knee: Byang Tshal gyi dbang chen gyi lha khang;
left knee: Mon Bum thang sKyes chu'i lha khang.

yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang

right palm: mDo Khams Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang;
left palm: Bal chad Ka brag
right foot: sPra dun rtse;
left foot: Byams pa sprin gyi lha khang.
abdominal region/womb: Tshangs pa rlung gnon gyi lha khang.

Nyang ral chos 'byung
ru gnon

left shoulder: Khra 'brug;
right shoulder: dBu ru Ka tshal;
right hip: gTsang 'Gram;
left hip: Grom pa rGyang.

mtha' 'dul

left elbow: lHo brag Kho 'thing;
right elbow: Kong po Bu chung thar legs;
left knee: Dre'i Ka brag;
right knee: sPra dun rtse.

yang 'dul

left palm: Khams Klong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang;
right palm: Byang Tsha sPe dpal tshad;
right sole: Mang yul Byams sprin;
left sole: Mon sKyer chu'i lha khang.

a set of eight *mtha' 'dul*

Klong thang dpal in mDo Khams; rGyag chu (sic for rGya Ka chu) Thog rngam in the south; Ke'u ri gzigs in the land of the 'A zha; 'Dag sha intra at sGro khyer [lacuna] in Li yul;
sNang sBal chen in Kha che; Bu chu thar legs in Kong yul; dPal Be'u rgyas pa in sPa gro sKyer chu (in this list of eight *mtha' 'dul* one is missing).

a set of eight *yang 'dul*

in the east, rDo mi 'gyur ba on the canines of *seng ge dkar mo* (“white lioness”), with Myang po Ka chung in Myang po as a branch temple;
in the south, sPa gro sKyer chu on the wing of the *g.yu 'brug* (“turquoise dragon”), with sMa sha as a branch temple;
to the west of Me lha, Mang yul Byams sprin on the beak of *bya dmar po* (“red bird”), with Byang can gyi lha khang as a branch temple;
in the north, sPra dun tse on the back of the *rus sbal nag po* (“black tortoise”), with gShen gsal gyi lha khang as a branch temple.

ru mtshams (*ru mtshams gnon pa* “temples to subjugate the borders”)

in the north-east, Li ti brgya rtsa brgyad;
in the south-east, Kong Bu chu;
in the south-west, lHo brag Kho 'thing;
in the north-west, Pad ma g.yung drung.

mtha' 'dul yang 'dul

1) Gling chu and 2) sKyer chu;
3) Bum thang and 4) Glong rtse;
5) Gye re and 6) Gyer chung;
7) rDo shan lha khang, for which Gu langs was used as a model, and 8) Hab sha, for which Shing kun was used as a model;
9) Gangs bar;
10) 'Phrang dum;
11) Khyung lung dngul mkhar;
12) Mang yul Shing sa adopting Li yul as a model;
then,
13) Ra sa 'Phrul snang and 14) rGya stag Ra mo che;
In Bal yul, 15) Bha ga bhe ba ri (i.e. vihara), 16) Phu tro bhe ba ri (i.e. vihara), 17) Shing kun lha khang and 18) Hab shang lha khang.

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung
ru bzhi

left shoulder: [g.Yon ru] Khra 'brug,
right shoulder: dBu ru bKa' tshal,
right hip: g.Yas ru gTsang 'Gram,
left hip: Ru lag Khrom pa rGyang.

eight *mtha' 'dul*

- 1) Ka chu Thogs med at the door of rGya (China);
- 2) Glong thang sGron ma in mDo Khams;
- 3) Ke ru gzi mdangs in the land of 'A zha;
- 4) in Li yul, Ba dag In tra;
- 5) in Mang yul, Byang sprin yid 'ong dge rgyas;
- 6) in Kha che, Rab snang dbang chen rgyas pa;
- 7) in Kong yul, Bo chu thar legs g.yung rung brtsegs pa;
- 8) in dPal sgro, sKyer chu dpal be'u rgyas pa.

eight *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang*

on the forehead of the white lioness in the east, rDo rje mi 'gyur ba'i gtsug lag khang,
with Myang khams Ka chu'i lha khang as a branch temple;
on the mouth of the tigress in the south, dPa' gro (spelled as) sKyer chu, with sMan
sha na sma'i lha khang as a branch temple;
on the beak of the red female bird in the west, Mang yul Byang sprin, with sTang
sprin gyi lha khang as a branch temple;
on the beak (sic) of the black frog in the north, sPra dun tse, with gNyen gsal gyi lha
khang as a branch temple.

four *ru mtshams*

in the north-east, Li tig brgya rtsa brgyad kyi lha khang;
in the south-east, Kong po Bo chu;
in the south-west, mKho mthing;
in the north-west, Pad ma g.yu rung gi lha khang.

eighteen (actually sixteen) *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang*

in the east, 1) Gling chung, 2) Kam chung and 3) Ke chung;
4) Bum thang and 5) Kong tse;
6) sGe ri, 7) sKyer chung and 8) sDe chung;
to hold the border of Bal Bod, 9) De shang lha khang and 10) Hab shang lha khang;
11) Gangs bar lha khang;
12) 'Phra dum gyi lha khang;
13) Nub ri'i gtsug lag khang;
14) Khyung lung dngul mkhar;
15) Mang yul Khri dpe'i lha khang;
16) Li yul Glang po'i gtsug lag khang.

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung
gtsug lag khang in the ru bzhi

left shoulder: g.Yon ru Khra 'brug and, as a branch temple, bKra shis dge 'phel;
right shoulder: dBu ru bKa' stsal and, as a branch temple, Mi 'gyur dge ba'i gtsug
lag khang;
right hip: rTsang 'Gram [Bye ma'i lha khang] in g.Yas ru and, as a branch temple,
Byang chub dge gnas;
left hip: Grom pa rGyang in Ru lag and, as a branch temple, rNam dag khirms kyi
lha khang.

four *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang*

left elbow: lHo brag mKho mthing;
right elbow: Bu chu lha khang in Kong po;
left knee: Tre'i Ka brag;
right knee: sPra bdun rtse.

four *mtha' yang 'dul* (“further *mtha' 'dul*”)

left palm: Slong thang sGron ma'i lha khang in Khams;
right palm: dPal char klu gnong in Byang mTshal byi;
right sole: Yid 'ong dge rgyas at Mang yul Byang sprin;
left sole: Bum thang gi gtsug lag khang at Mon sKyer chu.

eight *yang 'dul*

Kwa chu thogs med at rGya go (gor sic sgor: “at the the door of rGya [nag]”);
Klong thang dpal 'byung in mDo Khams;
Ke ru dpal 'byung in 'A zhwa;
Sha indra in Li yul;
dBang chen brtsegs pa in Mang yul;
Bu chu g.yung drung brtsegs pa in Kong po;
sKyer chu dPal bo rgyas pa at sPa gro.

eight *'phyong btags pa* (“branch temples”) of the four *yang 'dul*

on the white lioness's forehead in the east, rDo rje 'gyur med kyi lha khang, with
Myang dKa' chu'i lha khang as a branch temple;
on the white tiger's canines in the south, Bum rtse lung gi lha khang, with rMa sha
rma'i lha khang as a branch temple;
on the beak of the red bird in the west, Mang yul Byang sprin, with Myang sprin lha
khang as a branch temple;
on the black tortoise in the north, sPra bdun rtse, with gShen gsal lha khang as a
branch temple.

four *ru mtshams*

in the north-east, Lig tig brgya rtsa brgyad kyi lha khang;
 in the south-east Kong chu'i lha khang;
 in the south-west, Kho mthing;
 in the north-west, Pad ma g.yung drung lha khang.

eighteen (actually sixteen) *yang 'dul yang 'dul*

1) Gling chung, 2) sKam chung and 3) Ko chu;
 4) Bum thang and 5) Klong rtse;
 6) dGe re, 7) dGyer chu and 8) Hor chu;
 9) De shang lha khang and 10) Hab shang lha khang in the border region of Bal Bod;
 11) Gangs bar;
 12) sPra dun rtse;
 13) Nub ri'i lha khang;
 14) Khyung lung dngul mkhar gyi lha khang;
 15) Mang yul Khri se'i lha khang;
 16) Li yul Glang po'i lha khang.

Ne'u pandi ta, *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba*four great *ru bzhi'i gtsug lag khang*

right hand: Grom pa rGyangs (spelled as) rNam dag sgrib med kyi gtsug lag khang
 with 'Bre'i gtsug lag khang as a branch temple;
 left hand: Khra 'brug gi Byams pa mi 'gyur gyi gtsug lag khang with rTsang Thang
 gi gtsug lag khang as a branch temple;
 right foot: Ka rtsal gyi gtsug lag khang with Shi hang gi gtsug lag khang as a branch
 temple;
 left foot: gTsang 'Brang (i.e. 'Gram) gi gtsug lag khang with 'Brom (i.e. Mon) sKyer
 chung gi lha khang as a branch temple.

four *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul gtsug lag khang* and their branches

on the feathers of the blue dragon in the east, Ga chu and Go chu gtsug lag khang;
 on the canines of the tawny tiger in the south, dPa' gro Thang shing mdud pa can;
 on the beak of the red bird in the west, Mang yul sPrin chen gyi gtsug lag khang and
 gTsug tor las byung ba'i gtsug lag khang;
 on the forehead of the black tortoise in the north, Pre dun rtse and rDo rje dbyings
 kyi gtsug lag khang.

four *mtshams gnon gyi gtsug lag khang*

on the south-east border, lCang ra rmug po'i (spelled as) gtsug lag khang;
 on the south-west border, he built 'Kho 'thing gi lha khang;
 on the north-west border, Shes rab sGrol ma'i lha khang;
 on the north-east border, he built Padma sGrol ma'i lha khang.

four yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang

- in the east (constellation sMin drug), a *gtsug lag khang* resembling a conch shell bowl upside down;
- in the south (constellation Lag sor), a *gtsug lag khang* resembling an open lotus;
- in the west (under the moonshine), a *gtsug lag khang* resembling an iron tree touching the sky;
- in the north (constellation sMe bdun), a *gtsug lag khang* seemingly fitted out with five kinds of armour.

In order to drive a big spike through the *srin mo*'s heart the following temples were built

- 1) Glang thang sGrol ma'i gtsug lag khang in Khams;
- 2) Bum thang and 3) Gling thang to appease Me lha drang srong;
- 4) sGye ri and 5) sKyer chu;
- 6) Gu lang and 7) Shing kun (Pashupati and Swoyembu);
- 8) Gang ar and 9) 'Thon 'thing;
- 10) Pra dum and 11) dPal rgyas kyi lha khang;
- 12) Nam mkha' dri med kyi gtsug lag khang;
- 13) Mang yul Shel ber gyi gtsug lag khang;
- 14) Khyung lung gi lha khang;
- 15) 'Go'u te shan gyi gtsug lag khang;
- 16) sKar chung gling bzhi dpe rgyad kyi gtsug lag khang.

Temples built to suppress the four elements

- sKong Bu chu tshul gyi gtsug lag khang to control the element of water;
- Mon Bum thang gi gtsug lag khang to control the element of fire;
- Khro stod gNam ru gong gi gtsug lag khang to control the element of earth;
- Mang yul Byams sprin gyi gtsug lag khang to control the element of wind.

Sangs rgyas gling pa, *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*

- 1) left shoulder: g.Yu ru Khra 'brug;
 - 2) right shoulder: dBu ru Ka tshal;
 - 3) right hip: g.Yas ru gTsang 'Phrang;
 - 4) left hip: Ru lag Gram pa;
 - 5) right knee: lHo brag mKho lding;
 - 6) left knee: Bum thang;
 - 7) left foot sole: sPa gro sGyer chang (the latter two in Mon);
- plus:
- 1) Mang yul Byams srin (so spelled);
 - 2) Pan chen in rKyang ro;
 - 3) Bu chu in Kong po;
 - 4) mDo Khams Glang thang sGrol ma;
 - 5) Tshangs pa klu gnon;

- 6) Bra in Dur rtse;
- 7) mDongs chu in sPu bo;
- 8) sKyo in sNang rtse;
- 9) 'Phan yul Bye ri;
- 10) Ra sa 'Phrul snang; and
- 11) Ra mo che.

O rgyan gling pa, *rGyal po bka' thang*

- 1) g. Yu ru Khra 'brug;
- 2) dBu ru bKa' stsal;
- 3) g. Yas ru gTsang 'Gram;
- 4) Ru lag Grom pa;
- 5) lHo brag mKho mthing;
- 6) Mon yul Bum thang;
- 7) sPa gro sKyar chu;
- 8) mDo Khams Klong thang sGrol;
- 9) rTsis in Nyang ro;
- 10) dPal tshab in rGyang ro;
- 11) [mDongs] Chu in Kong po;
- 12) sPra dun rtse;
- 13) sKyo yi lha khang;
- 14) Klo yul;
- 15) Ka ra;
- 16) Nyang;
- 17) Khams;
- 18) Gru gu;
- 19) 'Phan yul Bye ri;
- 20) lHa sa 'Phrul snang; and
- 21) Ra mo che yi gtsug lag khang.

ADDENDUM TWO

Persistence of the scheme: a few other classifications

Following its initial acceptance, the *srin mo* scheme spread over the plateau for its geomantic rather than its architectural features, as shown by the sources I have dealt with in this essay. The next step in the history of the *srin mo* scheme in Tibet was its inclusive physical adoption. There are many regional *srin mo*-s in the Snowland, which shows that local traditions were formed, with each area being viewed as an anthropomorphic representation, almost always of the *srin mo* herself.

A trace of the earliest hitherto known adoption of her scheme outside the references to it in the literature dealing with Srong btsan sgam po has been found by Sørensen who, digging in the sources as he masterfully does, found out that one of O rgyan gling pa's *gter ma*-s was a painting of the *srin mo*. Sørensen says that the painter Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669) made a copy of it, but this master could be author of a different painting of the *srin mo*.¹⁰⁷ Any approach on the *srin mo* beyond the literary one raises a series of questions that need in-depth research to see whether answers can be found.

Were masters, such as O rgyan gling pa, receptive to the idea of the *srin mo* possibly because it is associated with Srong btsan sgam po and *bstan pa snga dar*, topics dear to the rNying ma tradition? It would be controversial that this *gter ma* of O rgyan gling pa was not a specimen of art archaeology coming from the past but his own sponsorship of a *srin mo* painting. In *rGyal po bka' thang* his classification of Srong btsan sgam po's temples does without the body of the demoness.

Did O rgyan gling pa's reference in *Pad ma bka' thang* to a *srin mo gan rkyal* in Glo bo break ground in the acceptance of the system on a larger scale, so that it was no longer the exclusive preserve of the historical treatment of Srong btsan sgam po in *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and other sources?

Did the painting of the demoness attributed to his *gter ma* rediscovery add momentum to a drive to make the scheme—and its ideological underpinning—more popular throughout Tibet?

107. See Sørensen and Hazod, *Thundering Falcon* (p.203 n.6) for *Zur chen gyi nam thar* (f.208a = p.414 lines 5–6) which reads: “gTer ston O rgyan gling pa'i gter ma'i srin mo gan rkyal du bskyl ba'i shog ser bu yig gi steng nas gzhi la zhing bkod che ba phyag bris su gnan/””; “[I] was requested to paint a great landscape painting based on the image on a yellow scroll of the *srin mo gan rkyal*, the *gter ma* of gter ston O rgyan gling pa”.

The position that the *srin mo*'s body assumes according to the geographical analysis of the location of the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul*, and *yang 'dul* temples outlined in this essay is quite similar to the depiction of the *srin mo gan rkyal* on a *thang ka* (previously?) kept at the Norbulinka, which I have seen only in the form of reproductions sold in lHa sa. This could be the *thang ka* painted by Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol (1610–1669) on an animal skin.

Was the focus on the *srin mo* in the 14th century, following the *gter ma* of O rgyan gling pa with her painting, a factor that contributed to the propagation of her depiction?

How great a role O rgyan gling pa's well known nationalistic sympathies and consequent abhorrence of the Mongols and their allies, the Sa skya pa, play in giving to the *srin mo* scheme a more markedly indigenous turn from its original conception as an architectural device?

It is not easy to trace the literary evolution of the *srin mo* scheme. The available signs add up to a few generalisations. Two trends can be identified:

- quite a conservative approach which kept the basic formulation of the shorter version of the narrative somewhat faithful to the original only with some temples substituting for others, or with some additions;
- the expanded version of the narrative in later material is rather corrupt if related to the earliest known examples of it—first *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, then the two *lDe' chos 'byung* and *Nel pa pandi ta chos 'byung*. These earlier sources likely document its original formulation or elaborations based on a root text. One example of this misconception is found in *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*—considered by Sørensen enough independent to be a third version. But no any other parallel version is available to justify such an attribution besides being a random deviation.

rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long contains a hybrid model which incorporates the short (anthropomorphic) version of the demoness scheme together with a single feature of the expanded version, that of the animals in the four directions.¹⁰⁸

Another reason not to consider it an autonomous version—and thus not a third alternative, as Sørensen does—is that it lacks sufficiently independent and valid foundations. One needs not enter into the details of the composing temples—e.g. the addition of meditation caves—

108. Rather than *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (p.133 lines 14–23 and p.144 line 1–p.145 line 9), I cite here *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* which follows quite closely the text of Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan since the latter has been published by Sørensen in Sørensen-Hazod's *Thundering Falcon*, the latter not at all. dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.230 lines 2–19) says: “Khra 'brug gi yan lag du Tsam thang btab/ srin mo'i dpung mgo g.yas gnon pa la Tse ne gdong du sgrub pa byas nas dBu ru Ka tshal dang yan lag du gSer shang gir te bzhengs/ dpyi g.yas g.yon gnon pa la rTse phug dang brGyad phug tu sgrub pa byas te g. Yas rur gTsang 'gram dang yan lag tu dGe drung gi lha khang/ Ru lag to Grom pa rgyang dang yan lag tu 'Bri lha khang rnam bzhengs te mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bzhi'o/ gru mo g.yas pa la shar stag gi mgor Kong po Bu chu/ g.yon pa la lHo brag Kho 'brug gi ze steng du lHo brag Kho thing/ pu mo g.yas pa la nub bya dmar mo'i skas steng du dGe rgyas/ g.yon pa la byang rus sbal gyi dpral steng tu Pra dan tse'i lha khang btab ste yang 'dul bzhi'o/ lag mthil g.yas gnon pa la Mi nyag gis lag dpon byas te Khams Klong thang sGron ma/ g.yon la Tho gar gyis lag dpon byas te Mon sKyer chu/ rkang mthil g.yas pa la Hor gyis lag dpon byas te mTshal rigs sGron ma/ g.yon la Bal pos lag dpon byas te Tshangs pa rlung gnon gyi lha khang bzhengs te ru gnon gyi gtsug lag khang bzhi'o/ shar du sa'i kha gnon nyi zla gza' skar gtan la 'bebs pa'i phyir Ka chu Kam chu Gling chu gsum/ lhor me'i kha gnon sNang gro dang Glong thang gnyis/ nub tu chu'i kha gnon Gu lang dang Shing kun gnyis/ byang du rlung gi kha gnon dGe ri dang dPal ri gnyis te 'byung ba'i kha gnon gyi gtsug lag khang dgu'o//”; “Khra 'brug and its branch temple Tsam thang were founded. To pin down the right shoulder joint, dBu ru Ka tshal and its branch temple gSer shang

in order to realise that *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long's* conception of the *srin mo gan rkyal's* anthropomorphic scheme is antithetical to the fundamental principle at the basis of it. The notion that the temples in central area are meant to pin the body of the demoness and those in more remote areas her limbs is reversed. The *ru bzhi* temples are here said to be the *yang 'dul-s*, the *yang 'dul-s* being not those at the periphery but in dBus gTsang.

Hence, two versions of the myth run almost parallel in earlier times, but the more complex one suffered a loss in authenticity later on. The latter version was then more often dropped in favour of the shorter one, though they are equally old. This is so in the case, among others, of Bu ston rin po che, Klong chen Rab 'byams pa, dPal 'byor bzang po's *rGya Bod yig tshang*. One exception to the trend of the period is *rGyal po bka' thang*, in which O rgyan gling pa, in his typically iconoclastic manner, has dropped the anthropomorphic diagram and added a few temples (difficult to identify) to his own interpretation of the expanded version (see above p.102–103).

The incomplete *rus mdzod* whose title is missing in the copy used by A.H. Francke's for his (inadequate) transliteration of its text published in 1948 by M. Hermanns ("Überlieferungen der Tibeter (nach einem Manuskript aus dem Anfang des 13. Jahrh. n. Chr.)") is structured into two main parts.

In its opening part, it is a compendium, though less comprehensive than, for instance, Don dam sMra ba'i seng ge's *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu*, the best known extant example of this rare literary genre. Its main part is a remarkable classification of the *Bod kyi mi'u rus drug*, in which preeminence is given to the lDong tribe, hence calling it *lDong rus mdzod* in my work is not entirely unjustified. Among the sub-groups of the lDong, the one to which the greatest

gir to were built after [Srong btsan sgam po] meditated at Tse ne gdong. To pin down the right and left hip, gTsang 'Gram in g.Yas ru and its branch temple dGe drug gi lha khang, Grom pa rGyang in Ru lag and its branch temple 'Bri lha khang were built after [Srong btsan sgam po] meditated at rTse phug and brGyad phug. These are the four *mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang*.

On the right elbow, over the head of the tiger of the east, Kong po Bu chu; and on the left, over the crest of the dragon of the south, lHo brag Kho thing (spelled so) [were founded]; on the right knee, over the feathers (*skas*) of the white bird of the west, dGe rgyas; and on the left, on the forehead of the tortoise of the north, Pra dun tse'i lha khang were founded. These are the four *yang 'dul*.

[The following] were [also] built. To pin down the right hand-palm, Khams Klong thang sgron ma, a Mi nyag being its architect; and, on the left, Mon sKyer chu, a Tho gar being its architect; on the right foot sole, Tshal rigs sgron ma, a Hor being its architect; and, on the left, Tshangs pa rlung gnon gyi lha khang, a Bal po being its architect, [were built]. These are the four *ru gnon gyi gtsug lag khang*.

In the east, in order to suppress [the element] earth and stop the sun, moon and constellations [in the sky], Ka chu, Kam chu and Gling chu, altogether three; in the south, in order to suppress [the element] fire, both sNang gro and Klong thang; in the west, in order to suppress [the element] water, both Gu lang and Shing kun; in the north, in order to suppress [the element] wind, both dGe ri and dPal ri—[these] were the nine *gtsug lag khang* [made] to suppress the elements".

attention, at least from what one can understand of Hermanns' incomplete copy, is paid are the Be ri, called Bi ri in the text.

The version of *IDong rus mdzod* as it now stands was composed not before the early Sa skya pa period,¹⁰⁹ since it mentions Sa pan Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251), but a more precise dating is difficult. The last part of the text is missing along with its colophon, and most of the people mentioned in the genealogies of the *rus mdzod* are obscure and defy correlation with known personages.

In the compendium part of the work, an entry concerning the foundations of temples sets the number of the *mtha' 'dul* at 108 temples and of the *yang 'dul* at 1,022, an exaggeration which documents the need felt in the literature to include more than the typical twelve *lha khang* in these classifications. While this is nothing new, a grouping of temples in the same entry under the collective name of *chos grwa chen po*, is definitely interesting. *IDong rus mdzod* (ibid. f.8b-9a corresponding to p.195 lines 1–6) says that they are: “lHa sa and bSam yas in dBus; Thang ljangs smugs in Li yul; lHo sprin and Byang sprin in Bal yul; Shar ma and Wa snang in gTsang; (f.9a) Be ri and Klu thang in mDo Khams; Ka chu and Kham chu in mDo Khams; and rTsing Ring (sic for Ri bo) rtse Inga in China”.

The *chos grwa chen po* classification includes *lha khang*-s belonging to the expanded version of the scheme in a set of twelve, the canonical number of temples of the short version of the *srin mo* narrative although the demoness is not referred to. The classification thus merges the two versions of the *srin mo* narrative, whereas they are normally treated separately. This is an uncommon approach to the issue of the *srin mo gan rkyal*, one that deserves a closer look.

Although lHa sa is not entirely fitting in the context of the *chos grwa chen po*, since Ra sa 'Phrul snang is not part of the set of twelve temples, it does belong to the group of the eighteen *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul* of *Nyang ral chos 'byung*. The inclusion of bSam yas is an anachronism. The two gTsang temples are mysterious, and the peculiar spellings recorded by Francke may betray corruption of their original names. The temples of Li yul and Bal po well suit the context, being present in the expanded version of the scheme. In particular, Byang sprin (also known as Myang sprin) is a *yang 'dul* and lHo sprin (more commonly called sTang sprin or Myang sprin) is its branch temple, but they belonged to Bal Bod, near which Mang yul is located as said in the ancient literature, rather than Bal po.

The inclusion in mDo Khams of two of the four temples situated by the *chos grwa chen po* classification in this region (Ka chu and Kham chu) is an oversight, for they are temples in China, found in the expanded version of the scheme. The other two mDo Khams temples represent an interesting case, given that Klu thang, the Klong thang sGron ma'i lha khang,

109. Was the compendium that precedes the *rus mdzod* part of the manuscript that ended up with Hermanns the outcome of a successive redactions? If so, is the version that came into the hands of Hermanns a later version of an original which was more monographic?

invariably associated with one palm of the *srin mo*, is coupled with Be ri [lha khang], whose presence in the set of the *chos grwa chen po* is highly controversial.

The Be ri are a clan of the sMug po lDong tribe, whose long history of vagrancy and brigandage is proverbial. They had several camps covering an enormous expanse of Tibetan land during different periods, and an historical assessment of them—when did they actually settle in these camps and for how long?—cannot be undertaken in a brief treatment like the present one (see my forthcoming “The Be ri ru ba, a tribe of Tibetan vagrants with focus on their brigandage and association with the Hor in the 13th century”).¹¹⁰ None of their few temples is anywhere named Be ri [lha khang] in the sources, unless, as it seems, Be ri [lha khang] is not its actual name. Given that there is no evidence to establish the period in which *lDong rus mdzod* was written, there are no particular chronological grounds for preferring one of the Be ri temples known to the sources. I refer to Be’u ri dKar lcoḡ, a hermitage built in the last quarter of the 13th century, or Be’u ri Bla chen dgon, Be’u ri Bla chung dgon and Yug Be’u ru dgon, built in the third quarter of the 15th century.

In his exhaustive survey of the texts on the *srin mo* narrative—he has a much more complete enumeration than mine—Sørensen (*Thundering Falcon* p.202–204) bases some of his analysis of the *srin mo* scheme on a portrayal of the demoness (published in his book), which depicts many later temples on her limbs.¹¹¹ As said above, the painting could be a replica of Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol’s depiction of the *srin mo* that goes back to the 17th century (ibid. p.202–203), but this attribution remains uncertain. He may be attributed the painting.

Most of its temples are not associable with the reign of Srong btsan sgam po or his successors, hence the painting is an anachronistic rendition of the demoness. A great number of them depicted on the *srin mo*’s body belong to building phases later—in some cases much later—than the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.

Sørensen explains the ecumenical depiction of a universe of later temples in the painting of the *srin mo* with the suggestion that they could be the 108 temples which Srong btsan sgam po promised the Licchavi ruler—in exile in lHa sa—to build. Even if this Srong btsan sgam

110. Be ri is also the name of the late *dgon pa* built near mKhar mdzes in the territory of the five Hor pa principalities, but this has little to do with the Be ri of *lDong rus mdzod*.

111. As evident from my treatment, I have preferred to base myself on a restricted number of literary outlines of the *srin mo* scheme that I deem to be the most significant and influential, either because they are the most ancient or because they seem to be more historically reliable, and thus closest to the original conception of the scheme.

po legend is lent credibility, the same account concludes that the 108 temples were not actually built,¹¹² and thus the non-*srin mo* temples in this work are an artistic liberty of the painter.

Worse than introducing a gross anachronism into the scheme by mixing the original *srin mo* temples with others belonging to the later imperial period, such as bSam yas, and even more regrettably, monasteries such as Rwa sgren, Sa skya or 'Bri gung founded during *bstan pa phyi dar* or thereafter, the major weakness of this painting is the disregard of the fundamentals of the *srin mo* scheme.

The canonical set of twelve pinning points is abandoned in favour of a random deployment of temples on every part of the demoness's body, and the heart of the *srin mo* in the drawings is occupied by the depiction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang. I have shown in the previous pages the literary sequence in the adoption of the idea that Ra sa 'Phrul snang had to be built on the heart of the demoness. *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Nyang ral chos 'byung* did not favour this inclusion manifestly in line with the original concept of the ancient Indian architectural system, whereas lDe'u Jo sras and Ne'u pandi ta subsequently adopted the notion with different degrees of explicitness.

If the painting is a replica of Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol's depiction of the *srin mo gan rkyal*, it would seem that, by that time, the idea of including bSam yas among the twelve temples of the anthropomorphic scheme had already gained ground.¹¹³ The painting would also illustrate that the practice of occupying the space of the heart with the depiction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang had been established.

The painting may have set a pictorial standard that favoured (rather uncommon) depictions of the reclining demoness made during subsequent periods. The distinction maintained by the Indian architectural tradition between the navel and the heart as respectively the right and wrong centres of the scheme was also neglected in these drawings, for both are occupied by temples.

Other—not well known—depictions of the *srin mo gan rkyal* exist. They follow the trend exemplified by the painting which may be a replica of Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol's *srin mo*. A supplement to the document from sKyid grong entitled *1806 lo'i tham deb sogs*

112. For instance, *Myang chos 'byung* (p.99 line 21–p.100 line 3) says: “rTsis (p.100) gNas gar zhes sprul pa'i rgyal po Srong btsan sgam pos gtsug lag khang brgya rtsa brgyad bzhengs par dam beas kyang/ gtsug lag khang zhe gnyis bzhengs grub pa'i ya rgyal gcig yin pa/””, “rTsis (p.100) gNas gsar. Although the emanation king Srong btsan sgam po vowed to build 108 *gtsug lag khang*, he actually managed to build forty-two *gtsug lag khang*, of which this is one of the outstanding”.

113. Replicas of the *sde srid* kept nowadays at the museum in lHa sa show bSam yas within the body of the demoness, a faulty inclusion which may have been copied in the subsequent periods. A late *thang ka* (see *Bod kyi thang ga* (sic) possibly painted around the time of the two sKyid grong drawings) which depicts the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul* temples, but without the representation of the demoness's body, does not include bSam yas among them.

nyer mgo phyogs bsdus, which dates from that same fire tiger year that appears in the title of this text, contains two drawings of the *srin mo* with a conspicuous number of temples on her limbs. The captions mention that these classifications are derived from *Ka khol ma* (written so) and *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*. The drawings are accompanied by related texts said to have been extracted from these two sources.

There is a discrepancy between the drawings and the texts. Quite a few temples in the drawings are not mentioned in the texts of the sKyid grong document which lists the *ru gnon*, *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang-s* of the *srin mo* scheme in *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*.

Despite the claims, the inclusion of these temples in the two drawings indicates that *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* were not consulted. Instead, the anonymous author of the drawings has added them in improbable locations of the demoness's body without giving any reason for their inclusion. The arbitrary deviations from the scheme also concerns the equally unusual selection of temples without any care for a minimum of historical credibility. Hence the accompanying texts are conservative, whereas the drawings attract attention by reason of their unconventionality.

TEMPLES ON THE *SRIN MO*'S BODY
ALLEGEDLY EXCERPTED FROM *KA KHOL MA*:

forehead: rTse lha gang (sic);
cheek: Dwag la sgam po;
heart: sNe thangs lHa sa;
right armpit: 'Bri gung;
left armpit: bSam yas;
right forearm: Tshang pa Rong;
left forearm: Chos rgyal pho brang;
right arm: Drag po rMa chu;
fingers of the right hand: not readable;
navel: Me'i kha gnon Rwa sgreng;
right shin: rKya'i rkad tshug phug;
left arm: rTsa ri;
left thigh: Sa skya;
left shin: sTag tshang Phag ri (sic).¹¹⁴

114. 1806 *lo'i tham deb sogs nyer mgo phyogs bsdus* (f.43a): “*Ka khol ma Bu ston rjes 'brang ba* (the *Ka khol ma* after [the edition known to] Bu ston.

(note by the present author: names of the temples inserted in the drawing of the *srin mo*—her head to the east):

forehead: rTse lha gang
 cheek: Dwag la sgam po
 right shoulder: Ka rtsal
 left shoulder: Khra 'brug
 left armpit: bSam yas
 heart: sNe thangs lHa sa
 right armpit: 'Bri gung
 right forearm: Tshang pa Rong
 right elbow: Bu chung
 right arm: Drag po rMa chu
 right palm: dPal tshad lung gnon
 fingers of the right hand: ?Ngang dzung [three syllables not readable]
 right hip: gTsang 'Gram
 right knee: Ka brag
 right shin: rKya'i rkad tshug phug
 right sole: Byams sprin
 left forearm: Chos rgyal pho brang
 left elbow: Kho thing
 left arm: rTsa ri
 left palm: Glong sGrol ma
 navel: Me'i kha gnon Rwa sgrenge
 left hip: Grom rGyang
 left thigh: Sa skya
 left knee: sPra dun rtse
 left shin: sTag tshang Phag ri
 left sole: sPa gro sKyer chu

(f.44a lines 1–9): “Ka khol ma las Bod kyi sa gzhi srin mo gan rkya su sgyel ba dang 'dra ba yin nas/ de'i yan lag dang nying lag gyi mnan par bya ba'i phyir/ rgyal po sprul pa mdzad/ srin mo'i dpung mgo mnan pa'i phyir du phyogs bzhir lha khang chen po bzhi bzhengs/ dpung g.yon la g.yon du Khra 'brug/ g.yas pa nas dBu ru Ka rtsal/ spyi g.yas pa g.yas du gTsang 'grang/ g.yon pa na Ru lag Grom rGyan/ de rnams bzhengs nas yang rtsigs pa ma btub nas/ bar shigs rnams mnan pa'i ched du mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bzhi bzhengs so// gru mo g.yon pa lHo brag Kho thing/ g.yas pa la Kong po Bu chung lha khang/ dpus mo g.yas pa la Ka brga/ g.yon pa la sPra dun rtse/ yang tshigs pas ma btub nas/ nying lag bsdoms pa'i phyir yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang bzhi gsol ba ni/ lag mthil g.yon pa la Khams kyi Glong thang sGrol ma/ g.yas pa la dPal tshad lung gzhan gyi lha khang/ rkang pa g.yas pa la Mang yul Byams sprin gyi lha khang/ g.yas pa la sPa gro sKyer chu lha khang/ Mon Bum thang gi lha khang bzhengs/”;

“According to *Ka khol ma*, “having seen that the land of Tibet resembles a *srin mo* lying on her back, in order to pin down her limbs (*yan lag*) and the other parts of her body (*nying lag*, i.e. forehead chin, fingers etc.), the king-incarnation transformed into manifestations [of himself]. In order to pin down the shoulder, he built four great *lha khang* in the four directions. On the left shoulder he built Khra 'brug on the left; on the right, dBu ru Ka rtsal; on the right hip (*spyi* sic for *dpyi*), gTsang 'Gram in g.Yas ru; on the left [hip], Ru lag Grom [pa] rGyan. Even after building them, since he could not [continue] the construction, in order to pin down the joints, he built the four *mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang*. On the left elbow (*gru mo*), he built lHo

TEMPLES ON THE *SRIN MO*'S BODYALLEGEDLY EXCERPTED FROM *RGYAL RABS GSAL BA'I ME LONG*:

forehead: rTse lha gang (sic);
 cheek: Dwag la sgam po;
 heart: 'O thang;
 left armpit: bSam yas;
 navel: Me'i lha khang;
 left thigh (above): Sa skya;
 left thigh (below): Ding ri Glang 'khor;
 left ankle: [sPa ro] sTag tshang.¹¹⁵

brag Kho thing; on the right [elbow], Kong po Bu chung lha khang; on the right knee (*dpus mo*), he built Ka brag; on the left [knee], sPra dun rtse. Even after building them, he could not proceed [with the construction]. In order to bind (*bsdoms pa*) the extremities, he built the *yang 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang*. On the left palm, he built Khams kyi Glong thang sGrol ma; on the right [palm], dPal tshad rlung gzhan gyi lha khang; on the right sole, Mang yul Byams sprin gyi lha khang; on the left [sole], sPa gro sKyer chu lha khang [and] Mon Bum thang gi lha khang".

115. 1806 *lo'i tham deb sogs nyer mgo phyogs bsdus* (f.44a) *rGyal rabs gsar ba'i me long*

(note by the present author: names of the temples inserted in the drawing of the *srin mo*—her head to the east):

forehead: rTse lha gang (sic)
 cheek: Dwag la sgam po
 right shoulder: Ka rtsal
 left shoulder: Khra 'brug
 left armpit: bSam yas
 heart: 'O thang
 right elbow: Bu chu
 right palm of the hand: Glong sGrol
 right hip: g'Tsang 'gram
 right knee: Byams chen dge rgyas
 right sole of the foot: Tshal ri Shes rab
 left elbow: Kho thing
 left palm of the hand: 'Bum thang sKye chu
 navel: Me'i lha khang
 left hip: Grom rGyang
 left thigh (above): Sa skya
 left thigh (below): Ding ri Glang 'khor
 left knee: sPra dun rtse
 left ankle: sTag tshang
 left sole of the foot: Tshang pa Rlung gnon

(f.45b line 1–f.46a line 4): “rGyal rabs gsar ba'i me long las/ srin mo'i dpung g.yas pa gnan pa'i phyir dBus ru Ka rtsal/ de'i lag tu gSer shang gir ri lha khang bzhengs/ de'i sgrub pa rTse nam gdong

The sKyid grong drawings of the *srin mo* illustrate classifications of the temples deviant from both the simplified and articulated versions of the scheme. The late date of the drawings is a sign that, as recently as the beginning of the 19th century, the amount of corruption within the scheme had reached such a point that no care was any longer taken for historical and structural credibility.

gi brag phug du byon/ dpung pa g.yas pa gnon pa'i phyir g.Yu ru Khra 'brug bKra shis Byams bsnyoms kyi lha khang bzhengs/ de'i lag tu bTsan thang gi lha khang btab/ de'i sgrub pa Phug mo cher byas so/ spyi mgo g.yas gnon pa'i phyir Krub pa rgyal Dri med nam dag gi lha khang bzhengs/ de'i lag tu 'Dre'i lha khang btab/ de'i sgrub pa rGyang gi brag phug tu byas/ de nas yang 'dul gyi lha khang bzhi brtsigs pa ni/ srin mo g.yas gnon pa'i phyir/ shar rtag gi mgo Kong po Bu chu'i lha khang bzhengs/ dri mo g.yon gnon pa'i phyir lho 'brug gi ze mKho mthing lha khang bzhengs/ dpus mo g.yas gnon pa'i phyir/ nub phyogs bya dmar po'i sgal su Byams chen dGe rgyas lha khang bzhengs/ dpus mo g.yon gnon pa'i phyir byang rus sbal gyi dpral du sPra dun rtse'i lha khang bzhengs/ des kyang ma btub dwog nas ru gnon gyi lha khang bzhi bzhengs te/ lag mthil g.yas gnon pa'i phyir Khams Glong thang sGrol ma'i (f.46a) lha khang Mi nyag gis lag dpon byas nas bzhengs/ lag mthil g.yon gnon pa'i phyir lho phyogs su 'Bum thang sKye (spelled so) chu'i lha khang Tho dkar gyis lag dpon byas nas bzhengs/ rkang mthil g.yas gnon pa'i phyir nub dpe la Kha che'i gdan su Tshal ris Shes rab sGrol ma'i lha khang Bal bus lag dpon byas nas bzhengs/ rkang mthil g.yon gnon pa'i phyir byang phyogs su Tshang pa Rlung gnon gyi lha khang Hor rBa dpal dbyangs kysis lag dpon byas nas bzhengs/'", "According to *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, "in order to pin down the right shoulder (*dpung*) of the *srin mo*, [he founded] dBus ru Ka rtsal; as its branch, he built gSer shang gir ri lha khang. For his meditation, he went to rTse nam gdong gi brag phug. In order to pin down the left shoulder he built g.Yu ru Khra 'brug bKra shis Byams bsnyoms kyi lha khang. As its branch, he founded bTsan thang gi lha khang. He had his meditation at Phug mo che. In order to pin down the right hip (*spyi* sic for *dpyi*), he built sKrub pa rgyal Dri med nam dag gi lha khang; as its branch, [he founded] 'Dre'i lha khang. He had his meditation at rGyang gi brag phug. Then the four *yang 'dul gyi lha khang* were built as follows. In order to pin down the right [elbow] of the *srin mo*, Kong po Bu chu'i lha khang was built over the head of the tiger in the east. In order to pin down the left elbow (*dri mo* sic for *gru mo*), mKho mthing lha khang was built over the mane (*ze*) of the dragon in the south. In order to pin down the right knee (*dpus mo*), Byams chen dGe rgyas lha khang was built over the back (*sgal*) of the red bird. In order to pin down the left knee, sPra dun rtse'i lha khang was built over the forehead of the tortoise in the north. Fearing (*dwog* sic for *dogs*) that it might be unable [to accomplish this], he built the four *ru gnon gyi lha khang*. In order to pin down the right palm, Glong thang sGrol ma'i (f.46a) lha khang was built in Khams [in accordance] with the work of a Mi nyag architect (*lag dpon*). In order to pin down the left palm, 'Bum thang sKye (spelled so) chu'i lha khang in the south was built [in accordance] with the work of a Tho dkar architect. In order to pin down the right sole, in the west (*nub dpe*), Tshal ris Shes rab sGrol ma'i lha khang was built in the holy place of Kha che [in accordance] with the work of a Bal bu (sic) architect (*lag 'don* sic for *lag dpon*). In order to pin down the left sole, in the north, Tshang pa Rlung gnon gyi lha khang was built with the work of an architect of the Hor rBa dpal dbyangs".

Given that the significance of the classifications in the drawings and the accompanying texts is limited, the rarity of the depictions of the *srin mo* is the outstanding feature of this supplement to the *1806 lo'i tham deb sogs nyer mgo phyogs bsdus* document from sKyid grong.¹¹⁶

116. A *rGya za'i rnam thar* has a short section on the *srin mo* with unconventional and anachronistic temples on the body of the demoness. It partly deviates from the most typical formulations. The text (f.77a line 1–f.77b line 5) reads as follows (numbers are mine): “rGyal po'i sprul pa brgya dang rtsa brgyad kyi/ mtha' 'dul yang 'dul 'dul lha khang bzhengs/ srin mo'i dpung mgo g.yas mnon pa'i phyir/ sPu ru bKa' rtsal Mi 'gyur lha khang bzhengs/ Girti lha khang dang ni grub par byas/ dpung g.yon Grag 'brug Byams snyoms lha khang bzhengs/ Tsan thang lha khang dang ni grub par byas/ ci g.yas gTsang Brang Byang chub lha khang bzhengs/ Drung gi lha khang dang ni grub par byas/ ci g.yon gnon phyir Grub pa'i lha khang bzhengs/ 'Dre gnon lha khang dang ni grub par byas/ de nas yang 'dul lha khang brtsigs pa ni/ drung g.yas Kong po Bu chu lha khang bzhengs/ drung g.yon gnon la mThon thing lha khang bzhengs/ spus g.yas gnon la dGe rgyas lha khang bzhengs/ spus g.yon gnon la sPang sna'i lha khang bzhengs/ ru gnon bzhi'i lha khang ni/ lag thil g.yas Blong thang lha khang bzhengs/ Me nyag mkhas pa'i rig pas bzhengs pa yin/ lag thil g.yon du Bum thang lha khang bzhengs/ Tho dkar mkhas pa'i lag dpon (f.177b) byas nas bzhengs/ rkang g.yas Shes rab sgron ma'i lha khang bzhengs/ Bal po mkhas pa'i lag dpon byas nas bzhengs/ rkang g.yon gnon pa Rlung gnon lha khang bzhengs/ Hor skra dPal dbyangs lag dpon byas nas bzhengs/ shar du Kha chu lha khang bzhengs pa 'di/ nyi zla bza' skar btan 'bebs phyir du bzhengs/ lho ru Kha chu lha khang bzhengs/ Me lha drang srong me yi kha gnon bzhengs/ nub du Gu lang dang Shing kun sa mtshams srung/ chu yi kha gnon Bal Bod sa mtshams 'dzin/ byang du Kha ri g.ya dang sPang sna 'dzin/ 'dre srin dam rtags sgung gi kha gnon bzhengs/ nyi 'og zil gyi gnon pa'i kha gnon yin/ Ra sa 'khrul snang gtsug lag bzhengs/”;

“The emanation-king built 108 'dul (sic) lha khang to be the mtha' 'dul and yang 'dul [temples]. 1) In order to pin down the right shoulder of the *srin mo*, he built sPu ru (spelled so for dBu ru) bKa' rtsal mi 'gyur lha khang, and accomplished [the construction of] Girti lha khang; 2) in order to pin down the left shoulder, he built Grag 'brug (spelled so for Khra 'brug) Byams snyoms lha khang, and accomplished [the construction of] Tsan thang lha khang; 3) in order to pin down the right hip (ci sic for dpyi), he built gTsang Brang (spelled so for 'Gram) Byang chub lha khang, and accomplished [the construction of] Drung gi lha khang; 4) in order to pin down the left hip, he built Grub pa'i lha khang, and accomplished [the construction of] 'Dre gnon lha khang.

He then built the *yang 'dul* lha khang-s. 5) In order to pin down the right elbow (*drung* sic for *gru mo*), he built Kong po Bu chu lha khang; 6) in order to pin down the left elbow, he built mThon thing lha khang; 7) in order to pin down the right knee (*spus* sic for *pus*), he built dGe rgyas lha khang; 8) in order to pin down the left knee, he built sPang sna'i lha khang.

The four *ru gnon* [built] upon her were as follows. 9) Blong thang lha khang was built on the right palm, made by a Me nyag master architect; 10) Bum thang lha khang was built on the left palm, made by a Thod dkar master architect; 11) (f.77b) Shes rab sgron ma'i lha khang was built on the right sole, made by a Bal po master architect; 12) Rlung gnon lha khang was built on the left sole, made by the architect Hor skra dPal dbyangs.

A further aspect derives from Ehrhard's reference to the renovation of Byang sprin lha khang by the third Yol mo sprul sku, bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1598–1644). at sKyid grong, a hot-spot of the cult of the Ma bdun and a centre of the *srin mo* conception. In this temple, a depiction of the *srin mo* is painted on a wall. It has deviant elements from the conception typical of the demoness in earlier times. I wonder whether impulse to the anachronistic depictions on the temple's wall and the *srin mo*-s in the *1806 lo'i tham deb sogs nyer mgo phyogs bsdus* document was given by the third Yol mo sprul sku.

ADDENDUM THREE

An analogous scheme: the Ma [mo] bdun

The features of the cult of the Ma mo, based on criteria of fierceness and territorial location, strike an analogy with the concept underlying the scheme of the *srin mo*. Each of the Ma [mo] bdun is assigned to a locality where she resides. They all need to be appeased in order to tame their fierceness. The concept of pinning down the *srin mo* somewhat corresponds to the appeasement of the Ma bdun. Each Ma mo has a temple where the appeasement/[pinning] is ritually performed. The difference with the *srin mo* is evident. The demoness has a number of

In the east, Kha chu lha khang was built. It was built to [see] the sun, moon and constellations rising; in the south, Bal lam sgrom rgyas lha khang was built to control Me lha drang srong [and the element] fire; in the west, to control men Gu lang and Shing kun protected the border in order to control the element water on the Bal Bod frontier; in the north, Kha ri g.ya and sPang sna were seized to bind the 'dre-s and *srin*-s to a vow and control the element wind. These [achievements] were made to control [everything] under the sun. Ra sa 'khrul (spelled so) snang gtsug lag [khang] was built, despite the hostility of the spirits obstructing its smooth [construction]".

The scheme of *rGya bza'i rnam thar* is similar to *1806 lo'i tham deb sogs nyer mgo phyogs bsdus* (f.44a). The two documents arguably come from a common regional scholastic background. They adopt the unconventional classifications of the expanded version of *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* on which both are based. The main similarities they share with *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* are the reversed pattern of the scheme, so that the *yang 'dul*-s are the most internal and the *ru gnon*-s the most external, and the attribution of the *ru gnon*-s to architects of diverse nationalities.

Some minor peculiarities are interesting enough to be emphasised. Like the text from sKyid grong, *rGya bza'i rnam thar* mentions Tsan thang (spelled bTsan thang in the former source) and equally makes of it the branch monastery of Khra 'brug. 'Dre gnon lha khang appears in the wrong context both if it addresses Dre Ka brag or 'Dre lha khang in Myang bar (see above n.11), which is nowhere included among the temples of the *srin mo* scheme. dGe rgyas lha khang is Mang yul Byang sprin, and no reason is given in *rGya bza'i rnam thar* to call it in such a way and not with its conventional name, especially because the text under study is not extraneous to the conception of the *srin mo* scheme popular in Mang yul that engendered *1806 lo'i tham deb sogs nyer mgo phyogs bsdus*.

temples on her body in different localities of the anthropomorphic scheme, the Ma [mo] bdun have one temple each, dedicated to them in the place of their competence.

The identity of the Ma [mo] bdun and their residence are provided in *rDo rje Ma bdun ma'i lo rgyus* (f.4a line 2–f.4b line 1) which says:

- “mChod gzhung du/ rDo rje Ma bdun gnas kyi gtso mor bzhag/ zhes pa sKyid grong gi So chu na gnas/
 1. rDo rje Legs ldan lha khang gnyer la bskos/ zhes pa Byams sprin lha khang du gnas/
 2. rDo rje Sa lung lHo sMan gtso mor bzhag/ zhes pa sKyid grong gi Sa lung dang/
 3. rDo rje Byang ldan sPra dum gnyer la bskos/ zhes pa Byang sPra dum rtse'i gtsug lag khang na gnas/
 4. Byang sMan dgu Khri sMan gyi bdag mor bzhag/ 'di gang yin ma nges/
 5. rDo rje Gar ma Mon gyi bdag mor bzhag/ zhes pa Blo bo gTsang rang du gnas/
 6. mGon med mi yi dgra lha sman rgyal mo/ rDo rje Khyung lung Zhang chung dgra lhar bskos/ zhes pa Gu ge Khyung lung dngul dkar du gnas/
 7. rDo rje gSal 'phro Khams gsum 'phrin las mdzad/ zhes pa mDo Khams na gnas so/ de la rDo rje Ma bdun ma gtso mo ni/ phyogs 'dir kha gcig sKyid (f.4b) grong So chu dang/ yongs grags su da lta'i Ma bdun mar grags pa'i Ne'u thang ni Tsu la ljon shing gi tshal dang bcas pa 'di gar ngos 'dzin mod//”;

“*mChog gzhung* mentions the locations of the main sites of the rDo rje Ma bdun. [The principal one] is sKyid grong gi So chu.

1. It says: “rDo rje Legs ldan [ma] was appointed as keeper of the *lha khang* [in Mang yul]”. She resides at Byams sprin lha khang.
2. It [also] says: “The main residence of rDo rje Sa lung [ma] is lHo sMan”. She was appointed as keeper of sKyid grong Sa lung; and
3. “Byang ldan [ma was appointed as keeper of] sPra dum”. She resides at Byang sPra dum rtse.
4. It adds: “Byang sMan [ma] is the goddess of dGu khri sMan”. It is not clear where this is.
5. It [then] says: “rDo rje Gar [sman] ma is the goddess of Mon”. She resides at Blo bo rTsang rang.
6. It [also] says: “sMan rgyal mo is the *dgra lha* of the people without protection; [she is] rDo rje Khyung lung [ma who] was appointed as *dgra lha* of Zhang chung”. She resides at Gu ge Khyung lung dngul dkar.
7. It concludes: “rDo rje gSal 'phro [ma] pursues her activity in the three realms of existence (Khams gsum)”. She resides in mDo Khams. As for this (i.e. the issue of their residence), the Ma bdun's main one in this direction is, according to some people, sKyid (f.4b) grong So chu or else Ne'u thang, [the place] of those universally known at present as the Ma dbun ma, which should be seemingly identified with the grove of Tsu la ljon shing over here”.

It is less than fortuitous that several temples of the *srin mo gan rkyal* scheme (both belonging to the simple and expanded versions of her anthropomorphic conception) are those of the Ma bdun. Two of the Ma bdun temples are in sKyid grong, a locality that is not among the places where the limbs of the *srin mo* rest but Byang sprin, one of the *mtha' 'dul yang 'dul*, is located there. Three Ma bdun temples are three temples of the *srin mo* scheme (Pradum and Khyung lung besides Byang sprin). Another one—rTsa hrang in Glo bo—is not part of the scheme but, in the rNying ma literature, belongs to a local anthropomorphic vision of this territory. *Padma bka' thang* has it that the land of upper Mustang is the body of the local *srin mo*.

Signs of the presence of the Ma mo in Glo bo are confirmed by their appearance to Kah thog Tshedbang nor bu when he visited the land; they manifested again to the great *rig 'dzin* when he was sent to La dwags by the IHasa government to pacify local disaccord.¹¹⁷

The question arises whether the *srin mo* body somewhat reflects, in a more expanded manner though, the collective territorial location of the Ma [mo] bdun cult. Could the Ma [mo] bdun, i.e. the Ma mo as a group of deities seen from a collective perspective, be interpreted as limbs of a same body?

Originally, the Ma mo are Indian deities,¹¹⁸ which is a cultural/ritual root that links them with the *srin mo*, whose scheme is of Indian origin, too. But this appraisal is simplistic, for the

117. *Ma bdun ma'i lo rgyus* (f.9a lines 3–6): “Phyis rig 'dzin rje nyid Glo bor byon dus dGe sgar du phebs skabs de'i gnas bdag Srid pa'i Ma mo bdun dang/ Phug bdag chen mo'i nang tshan rDo rje legs ldan las dang gzugs bstan cing mngon sum du gzugs can gyi khog par rlam nas dam tshig gi mna' chu blangs/ La dags kyi rje bo nang 'khrungs pa'i mching sgrigs la phebs pa'i tshes/ kha sbyor du bzhugs skabs yul de'i yul bdag Srid pa'i Ma mo chen mos 'khor rnam kyis bsu ba dang/ gts'o mo nyid kyi mngon gsum du rang gzugs bstan/”; “Later when the *rig 'dzin* (i.e. Kah thog Tshedbang nor bu) went to Glo bo, upon proceeding to dGe sgar, the lords of the locality, the Srid pa'i Ma mo bdun and, among the Phug bdag chen mo, rDo rje Legs ldan [ma] manifested to him their activities and bodies. Given that they boasted of their countenance, he bound them to a vow by means of oath water. When he went to settle the disputes between the rulers of La dags (spelled so), upon staying in non-dual state, the Srid pa'i Ma mo chen mo, lords of the land, welcomed him, and the main one [among them] truly manifested her countenance”.

118. Mythology that refers to India and was transferred to Zangs dkar counts eight Ma mo rather than the seven who are the protectresses assigned to the localities on the Tibetan plateau. The Indian tradition dealing with the eight Ma mo, preserved in Tibetan sources, talks about cemeteries, *mchod rten*-s in the holy geography of the ancient India—the Indo-Iranic borderlands and the Gangetic plain. These passages indicate the adopted practice was to build *stupa*-s rather than temples, as in the *srin mo* scheme, at the places where these Ma mo reside in order to control their power.

Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter (p.232 lines 5–16) reads: “bDud 'chi mchog gi rgyud las/ ri yi bsrung ma chen mo ni/ Ma mo chen mo brgyad bzhag go/ de dag rten gnas chen mo yang/ mchod rten brgyad du rnam par bzhag/ ces pa'i 'grel par/ sngon He ru ka drag po btul ba'i tshes/ yul brgyad kyi dur khrod brgyad du Ma mo brgyad kyi rten dngos grub 'byung ba'i mchod rten brgyad 'byung

Ma mo also represent an autochthonous layer of deities. It seems that they were incorporated into a foreign conception imported from India.¹¹⁹

Another analogy between the Ma bdun and the *srin mo* is historical, both belonging to the rNying ma milieu. The *srin mo* is associated with grub thob dNgos grub and Nyang ral; the Ma [mo] bdun with Gu ru Chos dbang and his disciples, but it is unclear whether there were antecedents to this state of affairs. This historical question is not specious if the interrelation between the Ma bdun and the *srin mo*—either individually or collectively—is recognised as likely. From the viewpoint of the historicity of their schemes, a point to be ascertained is

ba ni/ Mang ga tar bDe byed/ Singga lar ri bo Po ta la/ Bal por Bya rung kha shor/ Seng ge gling du Ge'u don/ Li yul du mchod rten Go ma sa la gan dha/ Za hor du bDe byed gzhon nu'i mchod rten/ U rgyan gnas su gSang ba'i gandho la/ Kha cher Ka ni ka yod par bshad//"; "According to *bDud 'chi mchog gi rgyud*, the eight great Ma mo are appointed as the protectresses of the mountains. They have great dwelling places and holy sites [consecrated to their cult] and also eight *mchod rten* specifically dedicated to them. So it is said. In the commentary [of latter text's], when, in earlier times, He ru ka in his wrathful form was in a taming [spree], he erected eight *mchod rten* made at eight cemeteries in eight localities, to be the siddhic places of the eight Ma mo. [These *mchod rten*-s] are said to be bDe byed in Mang ga ta, ri bo Po ta la at Singga la, Bya rung kha shor in Bal po, Ge'u don at Seng ge gling, mchod rten Go ma sa la gan dha in Li yul, bDe byed gzhon nu'i mchod rten in Za hor, gSang ba'i gandho la in the holy place U rgyan and Ka ni ka in Kha che".

Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter (p.238 lines 1–10): "Dur khrod ni/ Ma ga dhar bSil ba'i tshal/ Za hor du dGa' ba'i tshal/ U rgyan du Lo ka'i gling/ Li yul du Langka brtsegs/ Singga lar Ku la brjod/ Bal por lHun grub brtsegs/ Sā la'i yul gyi dur khrod gSang chen rol pa rnam dang/ khyad par gnas chen 'di nyid ni Thang yig las/ Kha che gsang lam rnal 'byor ma'i dur khrod chen po bDe gdal zhes bya ba/ dpag tshad byed dang drug gis bskor ba dbus na/ rang byung gi mchod rten Ka ni ka bya ba phyogs mdog tu yod pa/ Ma mo chen mo Ke'u ri ma gnas pa//"; "The cemeteries are bSil ba'i tshal in Ma ga dha, dGa' ba'i tshal in Za hor, Lo ka'i gling in U rgyan, Langka brtsegs in Li yul, Ku la brjod in Singga la, lHun grub brtsegs in Bal po, dur khrod gSang chen rol pa in the land of Sā la; and, in particular, this great holy place (i.e. Sa ni in Zangs dkar) which, according to *Thang yig*, is called the great cemetery bDe gdal of the Kha che *gsang lam* ("secret path") *rnal 'byor ma*. [It is located] in the centre of [an area with] the circumference of five and a half *dpag tshad*, where there is the self originated mchod rten Ka ni ka in the primary colours of the four directions (?) (*phyogs mdog*). This is the holy place of Ma mo chen mo Ke'u ri ma".

Ibid. (p.239 line 15–p.140 line 1): "mChod rten Ka ni ka/ Ma mo rma sha mthing kha (p.240) byis pa'i snying za ba//"; "mChod rten Ka ni ka [in Zangs dkar is the place of] the Ma mo with turquoise peacock feathers, (p.240) eating the heart of a child".

119. Originally the Ma mo were indigenous deities who held a hybrid position as Hindu and Buddhist mother goddesses once they were coopted into their pantheon. The origin of the Ma mo cult is to be traced to North India (Davidson, *Indian Esoteric Buddhism, A Social History of the Tantric Movement* p.300–303). This is another import from the Noble Land into the cultures of the plateau like the *srin mo* scheme of the ancient architectural tradition of the territories to the south of the plateau.

whether the Ma [mo] bdun formulation could have been at the origin of the *srin mo* system, or whether the *srin mo* scheme is at the origin of the conception behind the Ma [mo] bdun.

The Ma [mo] bdun are manifestations of He ru ka, assigned with the role of great protectresses. In *Ma bdun ma'i lo rgyus*, He ru ka is the deity who secured the induction of the Ma mo from either Mu steps pa practice or local cults into Buddhism as his proxies.¹²⁰

There is thus a common background hinted in these statements that link the adoption of the Hindu cult of the Ma mo from India, or else their conversion from deities belonging to a local non-Buddhist layer, to goddesses of the Noble Religion, and Srong btsan sgam po's subjugation of the *srin mo gan rkyal*. This common background is also based on the coincidence whereby the Ma mo are to be found in localities where temples existed in order to pin down the limbs of the demoness.

In drawing a parallelism between the sites of He ru ka's Mu steps pa subjugations and those on the body of the *srin mo*, *Ma mo ma'i lo rgyus* goes more specific about the ulterior implication of this assimilation as being both an exercise in conversion. The text indicates the sites of conversion.¹²¹ He ru ka is the converter of eight cemeteries and the twenty-eight (more often twenty-four and less commonly thirty-two) localities from the Mu steps pa religion

120. *Ma bdun ma'i lo rgyus sngon med legs par bshad pa'i bden gtam blo ldan dga' bskyed dpyid kyi rgyal mo glu dbyangs zhes bya pa bzhugs so* (f.1b line 4–f.2a line 2): “De yang/ bcom ldan 'das dpal chen po He ru ka'i bka' stod (f.2a) Ye shes kyi Ma mo bdun du skur bstan pa'i rdo rje'i bsrung ma chen mo 'di nyid don dam par bcom ldan 'das ma Kun tu bzang mo'am/ Kro ti shra di ma'am/ E ka dza ti'am/ dbyings kyi Ma mo Mu kha le//”; “As to this, the greatly noble bcom ldan 'das He ru ka's proxies, the Ye shes kyi Ma mo bdun, his adamantine manifestations who are the great protectresses and ultimately the blessing ones, are Kun tu bzang mo or Kro ti shra di ma or E ka dza ti or Mu kha le, the Ma mo of the spheres”.

121. *Ma bdun ma'i lo rgyus* (f.6a lines 2–6): “De yang sngon dpal ldan chen po He ru kas bdud po Ma tram ru tra btul ba'i cho rdzas rnam gang du bab pa'i sar dur khrod chen po brgyad dang yul nyi zhu rtsa brgyad sogs su byin gyis rlabs pa ltar Gangs can Bod yul gyi sa'i khyon 'di nyid srin mo gan rkyal gyi dbyibs su yod pa'i sa gnas so sor lHa ldan rDo rje gdan Ra sa 'Phrul snang gi gtsug lag khang chen po gtso bor gyur pa'i mtha' 'dul/ yang 'dul du gnon sogs bsam gyis mi khyab pa zhig bzhengs pa'i nang tshan rkang mthil g.yon par Mang yul Byams sprin gyi lha khang zhes yongs su grags shing/ 'Phags mchog Phyang na padmo'i sprul pa chos kyi rgyal po Srong btsan sgam pos bzhengs//”; “As to this, earlier, dpal ldan chen po He ru ka blessed (i.e. took control of) the eight cemeteries and the twenty-eight localities (*sogs su* sic for *sogs*), the places where whatever quintessential objects [used for] the subjugation of bdud po Ma tram Ru tra materialised. Likewise, chos kyi rgyal po Srong btsan sgam po, the emanation of the most noble Phyang na padmo, built the mind-blowing *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul* [temples], with the great lHa ldan rDo rje gdan Ra sa 'Phrul snang gi gtsug lag khang as the main one, at each place in the expanse of territories of snowland Tibet which is in the form of a reclining demoness, in order to pin [her] down, and, among them, Mang yul Byams sprin lha khang on her left sole”.

to Buddhism. Srong btsan sgam po (a second He ru ka?) is the converter of the land of Tibet from local cults to Buddhism. *Ma mo ma'i lo rgyus* makes particular reference to Byang sprin, situated in sKyid grong a stronghold of the Ma [mo] bdun.

These religious features of these schemes served well the strategy adopted by the post *phyi dar* Buddhists (i.e. masters of the rNying ma school) to depict the *lha sras btsan po* period in religious terms and to boast of their role in the expressions of this cultural period to be associated with them and no other. This explains why both the Ma [mo] bdun's territorial takeover and the formulation of the expanded version of the *srin mo* scheme were myths conceived in the rNying ma milieu.

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The *dpa' sde gsum* and the three main fronts of sPu rgyal Bod's expansion in Central Asia

Prelude

The Tun-huang historical works in the Tibetan language share among themselves a basic homogeneity of contents that makes them reliable. This homogeneity of themes that are dealt with reinforces them mutually and thus makes them dependable in the view of modern scholarship. Hence these Tun-huang documents, upon which the knowledge of the dynastic period is based, have cross-referential features, especially the Annals and the Chronicles which contain frequent referrals to one another.

The pioneering work of dGe 'dun chos 'phel's *Deb ther dkar po* (completed in 1946; Sherig Parkhang ed. p.48 lines 12–15), was the earliest to avail of this approach, the key to an understanding of the period. *Deb ther dkar po* is a cross-comparative analysis of these documents, ancient Chinese texts and later Tibetan sources, Indian historical material, touches of Sanskrit literature and even reference to a Muslim work such as *Hudūd-al-Ālam* (ibid. p.63 lines 3–4 which he calls *Hu dul al lam*). Although it may not be immediately apparent, Ariane Macdonald's "Une lecture des Pelliot tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290" and Christopher Beckwith's *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia*, for instance, are indebted to the approach used by dGe 'dun chos 'phel.

The directions that the studies of the dynastic period of Tibet have taken from their beginning up to now have been based on another approach. This is the steadfast conviction among some Western authors that the accounts concerning the *lha sras btsan po* period in later Tibetan

sources should be tackled with considerable scepticism. This view is not without serious reasons; the faulty chronology of the later historiographies is a symptomatic case.¹

Until the time of writing this essay, no authoritative translation of the *Tun-huang Annals* or *Chronicles*, which equally implies their authoritative interpretation, has been attempted by scholars especially concerned with the centrality of the Tun-huang studies. The exception is Bacot, Thomas and Toussaint (written in the years 1940–1946), which leaves much to be desired. More recently, Dotson has published a translation of the *Tun-huang Annals*, entitled *The Old Tibetan Annals*, a necessary addition to the previous reading of the same text which is too old given the advancements in the studies of the past several decades.²

In the intervening period after a relatively slow beginning, tremendous progress has been made by virtue of many and important contributions on the culture of ancient Tibet. For one, Ar. Macdonald's "Une lecture des Pelliot tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290" is a beautifully accomplished work that provides the most fertile interpretation of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* and related material from the library in these Silk Route caves.³

Part of this fertile season, some of the scholars who propound for Tun-huang purity have also used accounts found in later sources on the grounds of authenticity. A symptomatic case is the *stong sde-s* (the "military divisions of one thousand"). Their classification and treatment,

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1. The fact that most Tun-huang literary material in Tibetan has been kept in Europe for the last century or so has perhaps prevented Tibetan savants, with some exceptions, from concentrating on this field of study. This situation is rapidly evolving owing to the easier circulation of documents, and the study of the Tun-huang material is experiencing a renaissance among Tibetans. They are adopting a balanced approach towards the Tun-huang material and the reliable accounts of the later sources, all of them subject to a check of dependability. New views by Tibetan *m khas dbang-s* are coming up strongly and independently on a subject for too long an area of studies frequented by Western scholars after pathfinders such as dGe 'dun chos 'phel have opened the way. The studies of the dynastic period are breathing fresh air.
 2. Dotson's work has a longish ethnographic introduction followed by a translation of the *Tun-huang Annals* where he concerns himself mainly with its lexical implications and rather less with the historical significance of the various entries.
 3. It is quite evident to any reader who has negotiated this classic that Ar. Macdonald's "Une lecture des Pelliot tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290", besides providing important historical, religious and ethnographic contributions, is also enlightening from the philological point of view due to her readings of the text of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*. Although she translates most of its chapters in different parts of her article, her aim did not include to produce a complete translation. She has focused on the most important passages or other—most obscure—ones. In the case of several difficult passages, she has refrained from a translation but conveyed her own way to understand those literary obscurities.

as is well known, are found in several later sources used by scholars for their importance in adding a crucial facet of the organisation of the sPu rgyal state administration.

Nonetheless, despite the vastness and depth of the past studies on the *lha sras btsan po* period, another [related] pillar of the military structure of sPu rgyal Bod has been practically ignored. This is the *dpa' sde gsum* (the “three detachments of heroes”). I do not intend to write a few pages on them in this essay of mine because they have been neglected while the *stong sde-s* have received quite much attention. The *dpa' sde gsum* were core military units which played a role in the transition from the control of the plateau to the control of the empire. What lends credibility to the *stong sde-s* is that literary fragments from the various regions of the Tibetan empire document their engagement in handling the conquests of sPu rgyal Bod outside the limits of the plateau. Evidence of the *dpa' sde gsum*, and therefore their historicity, is not different.

The period in which sPu rgyal Bod surfaced as the unifying power of the plateau and its successive entrance into Central Asia are two distinct phases in the history of the *lha sras btsan po* lineage. The control of the Tibetan highlands was the prelude to the vertiginous surge of sPu rgyal Bod to a protagonist of events in the whole of Central Asia. I opine that those two distinct phases should not be kept entirely disconnected. They were the consequence of a progress of political growth.

In the brief treatment of the *dpa' sde gsum* that follows I will make use, for the most part, of material going back to the imperial period derived from the Tun-huang literature in Tibetan and ancient Chinese sources in order to set some reliable accounts found in the later literature into context.

The *khod/mkhos*

The *stong sde-s* were part of the *mkhos drug* (also commonly spelled *khod* and *khos*),⁴ the six major institutional activities securing governance, created by sPu rgyal Bod in order to control and rule the lands under its authority—the principalities of the *ru bzhi* and the kingdoms in the northern belt of the plateau. The *mkhos drug* were also meant to organise the next phase that led to the expansion of the sPu rgyal dominions beyond their borders.

4. *mKhos*, the primary and most ancient spelling, is found in the *Tun-huang Annals* in one instance, to be understood to be meaning “what has to be done”, hence “duty”, assigned by a superior sPu rgyal authority. Staying with the *Tun-huang Annals*, the term is also written *mkho* in the entry for the tiger year 654 (see below) and *mkos* in the entry for the tiger year 702 (for the latter see line 440; *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.19) which reads: “Blon Mang rtsan lDong zhis bsduste/ Sum

The *mkhos* has been of some concern among scholars,⁵ but the references to it in the Tun-huang material need to be compared with reliable later sources which offer notions on its nature.

ru'i mkos chen po bgyis/"; "Blon Mang rtsan lDong zhi gathered [the assembly]. He made the great *mkos* (spelled so) of Sum ru".

Khod is the spelling found in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*, which presumably meant to express the same function of service to the state but has the implication of "to create", and thus stands for "establishment", "formation", "planning", which would bring the concept of "duty" a step further towards implementation.

dPa'bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba spells it *khos*, an alternative to *mkhos*, and also goes for *khod* in some cases when he takes up the same accounts as *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*.

I adopt the spelling *mkhos* in this essay because it is the earliest and thus perhaps the most authentic. It goes without saying that I keep the alternatives *mkho*, *mkos*, *khod* and *khos* in the passages in which they are found.

All these different spellings imply subtle differences in meaning, either intentional on the part of these authors or considered equipollent by them.

5. Referring to various spelling occurrences of the term *mkhos* or even to the same one, some Tibetologists have proposed related but nonetheless different interpretations. See:

- the entries for the years 662 and 724 in the *Tun-huang Annals*, translated as "inspection" by Bacot and Toussaint (Bacot-Thomas-Toussaint, *Documents de Touen-houang relatifs à l'histoire du Tibet* p.13 and p.23 (Tibetan text), p.32 and p.47 (transl.)) and translated as "settlement" by Tucci (*Preliminary Report* p.105 and p.106);
- the entry for the year 673 translated as "inspection" by Bacot and Toussaint (ibid. p.15 (Tibetan text) and p.33 (transl.)); and the entry for the year 675 again translated by Bacot and Toussaint as "inspection" (ibid. p.15 (Tibetan text) and p.34 (transl.)); translated by Beckwith as "troop levy" (*The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.42 n.23) and as "settlement" by Tucci (ibid.);
- the entries for the year 693 translated by Bacot and Toussaint as "troop levy" (ibid. p.17 (Tibetan text) and p.37–38 (transl.)); and for the year 746 translated as "troop levy" by Thomas (ibid. p.55 (Tibetan text) and p.62 (transl.)); while in a note on p.67 Thomas proposes "appointment".
- Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs and Nor brang O rgyan (*Bod kyi lo rgyus g.yu'i phreng ba (stod cha)* p.95 line 10–p.96 line 4) opt for two meanings of the term deriving from its different spellings; when spelled *khod*, they say that it means issuing equal laws to everyone, while, when spelled *khos*, they read it as to be standing for giving an order.
- Tucci (*Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions to Nepal* p.90 n.1), despite citing the passages in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* dedicated to the *mkhos drug*, does not use them in his definition of the system, but prefers to be vague. He says that "k'os is to administrate a country, to appoint officers, to make a census, to register the population and its resources".
- Uebach ("On the Tibetan expansion from seventh to mid eighth century and the administration (khö) of the countries subdued" p.21–22) sums up the matter by saying that the primary meaning of the term is "order", "right order", or "order of the world" and that, in the context of the sPu rgyal state, it should be understood as "administration", "institution", "settlement".
- Nam mkha'i nor bu in his *sGrung lDe'u Bon gsum* (Clemente transl., *Drung, Deu and Bon* p.147–148) reads it in the sense of "assignment" of some task, a definition enough generic and comprehensive to cover the activities connected with the institution, and thus not too distant from my own understanding of the term.

Among the earlier sources belonging to the period after the fall of the Tibetan empire, it is *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* which deal with the *mkhos drug*. *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.270 lines 9–11) classifies them not by genre but on the basis of the territories where they were held:

“Khod drug la Bod kyi khod dang gcig/ Zhang zhung gi khod dang gnyis/ Mon gyi khod dang gsum/ chibs dpon dang bzhi/ Inga pa chad/ mThong khyab dang drug/”;

“As for the *khod* (spelled so) *drug*, the first is the *khod* of Bod; the second is the *khod* of Zhang zhung; the third is the *khod* of Mon; the fourth is the *khod* of the *chibs dpon*; the fifth is missing; and the sixth is the *khod* of mThong khyab”.

The lone exception is the *mkhos* of horses, their handling manifestly being for military purposes. Perhaps another is the *mkhos* of mThong khyab.

While *mkhas pa lDe'u* does not articulate the nature of the institution in this passage and mentions it elsewhere (see *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.272 lines 4–7), dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba classifies the *mkhos drug* according to the functions they exercised. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.185 lines 4–8) reads:

“Thog mar Bod yul ru chen Inga ru phye/ yul kyi dbang ris bco brgyad bcad/ rgod kyi stong sde drug bcu rtsa gcig phye/ g.yung gi mi sde dang yang kheng 'byed/ zhang gsum blon bcas dbus kyi 'dun sa 'dzin/ dpa' sde gsum gyis mtha' yi so kha srung/ de la Bod kyi khos drug zhes su grags/”;

“First [Srong btsan sgam po] established the five great *ru* of Bod.⁶ He [then] demarcated the eighteen divisions of power (dbang ris bco brgyad) of the land.⁷ He established the sixty-one *stong sde* of warriors. He classified the lay communities of

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6. This sentence of *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* contributes significantly to the issue of the period in which the *ru* system was introduced. There is an almost general consensus that Srong btsan sgam po was responsible for it. Nonetheless, the first reference to the *ru* system in the *Tun-huang Annals* dates to a later time, the year of the rat 712 (ibid. line 63,136, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.22), and the “horns” are indicated as the *ru gsum* rather than *ru Inga*. This absence of two *ru*-s may be imputed to a specific involvement of three horns out of five in the concerned entry but this interpretation is suspicious. The substantial difference of the extension of the *ru* system may depend on the viewpoint of the later authors, different from the evidence of the earlier documents. This is the perspective adopted by dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba. He indirectly supports *mkhas pa lDe'u*'s view that it was Srong btsan sgam po who established Sum ru.
7. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.186 line 22–p.187 line 10) enumerates the *dbang ris bco brgyad* in another passage on the sPu rgyal organisation (numbers are mine): “dBu ru shod chen btsan po mnga' bdag yul/ Pho brang sNe che btsan po rgyal 'bangs yul/ (p.187) Yar lungs Sogs (spelled so) kha Khu dang gNyags kyi yul/ Ya 'brog gang khyim Ku rings sde Inga'i yul/ 'Ching nga 'ching yul mGos and sNubs kyi yul/ Bya 'ug sa tshigs Drang rje Pha Inga'i yul/ Brad and Zhong pa sNa nam yul du bcad/ Brag rum stod smad Tshe spong yul du byas/ gTsang stod dang gTsang smad 'Bro and Khyung po'i yul/ Klungs shod nam po 'Dru dang Phyugs mtshams yul/ Nyang ro Grom pa 'Bre and lCe yi yul/ Shangs and Gle phyi Phyi ri and Gle yi yul/ Yung ba che chung Bran ka'i yul du bcad/ Zha gad sde gsum

subjects and their subordinates.⁸ The three *zhang* ministers and other dignitaries held

blon po sBas kyi yul/ Nam ra chag gong 'Bring and Chag gi yul/ 'Dam shod dkar mo Phya and Rwa yi yul/ mDo Khams mDo chen rGod stong sde brgyad yul/'";

“The divisions of power in the land are as follows:

- 1) dBu ru shod chen: the land of the *btsan po mnga 'bdag*;
- 2) Pho brang sNe che: the land of the *btsan po* and the royal subjects;
- 3) (p.187) Yar lungs Sogs kha (so spelled): the land of the Khu and gNyags;
- 4) Ya 'brog gang khyim: the land of the five communities of Ku rings;
- 5) 'Ching nga 'ching yul: the land of the mGos and sNubs;
- 6) Bya 'ug sa tshigs: the land of the Drang rje Pha lnga;
- 7) Brad and Zhong pa: the land of the sNa nam;
- 8) Brag rum stod smad: the land of the Tshe spong;
- 9) gTsang stod and gTsang smad: the lands of the 'Bro and Khyung po [respectively];
- 10) Klungs shod Nam po: the land of the 'Dru and Phyugs mtshams;
- 11) 'Phan yul stong sde: the land of the sGro and rMa;
- 12) Nyang ro Grom pa: the land of the 'Bre and lCe;
- 13) Shangs and Gle phyi: the land of the Phyi ri and Gle;
- 14) Yung ba che chung: the land of the Brang ka;
- 15) Zha gad sde gsum: the land of blon po sBas;
- 16) Nam ra chag gong: the land of the 'Bring and Chag;
- 17) 'Dam shod dkar mo: the land of the Phya and Rwa;
- 18) mDo Khams mDo chen: the land of the rGod stong sde brgyad”.

8. *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* (p.188 line 21–p.189 line 7) is precious since it provides an assessment of the lay members of the sPu rgyal society: “g. Yung gi mi sde 'byed pa ni g.yung ngam kheng zhes (p.189) pa 'bangs las byed kyi ming yin la yang kheng zhes pa yang bran dang nying g.yog gi ming yin no/ de la yang sNubs rje Sris pa la sogs rje dgu/ Lo ngam rta rdzi sogs rje bdun/ Ga rod sGa mkhan sogs mkhan drug/ rGya ja tshong pa la sogs tshong pa lnga/ gDags spra 'dzin sogs 'dzin gsum ste 'di rnams kheng dang yang kheng dang nying khang du phye bas dgos pa thams cad sgrub la/ Nam pa lde rgyal/ Bal po Li rgyal/ Sum pa lcags rgyal/ Mon rtse rgyal zhes phyogs kyi rgyal po bzhis dpya bsdu nas 'bul bas 'bangs la gtogs so/'"; “As for the classification of the secular communities, the laymen or else the subjects (*g.yung ngam kheng*) (p.189) is the term [that applies] to those who do the civil service of subjects (*'bangs*). The term also applies to those subordinated to them and those further subordinated. With regard to them, there were the *rje dgu* such as sNubs rje Sris pa; the *rdzi bdun* such as Lo ngam rta rdzi; the *mkhan drug* such as *ga rod sga mkhan* (spelled so for *kar yo 'Gar mkhan* (the “Gar, maker of porcelain”); the *tshong pa lnga* such as the *rGya ja tshong pa* (the “Chinese tea traders”); and the *'dzin gsum* such as the *gDags spra* (spelled so for *sbra*) *'dzin* (the “gDags, who have felt tents”). Given that everyone contributed to the necessary classification of the people into subjects, further subjects and those subordinated to the latter, the Nam pa lde rgyal, the Bal po Li rgyal, the Sum pa lcags rgyal and the Mon rtse rgyal, altogether four kings of the directions, gathered [people] as tribute and offered them [to the *lha sras btsan po*]. They were thus assigned to him as [his own] subjects”.

the central assemblies (*dbus kyi 'dun sa*).⁹ The three *dpa 'sde* guarded the frontiers. [All] these were known as the *khos* (so spelled) *drug* of Bod”.

When it comes to deal with the territories in which the various *mkhos dpon*-s (i.e. officers in charge of them) held the *mkhos*, dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba names the missing land in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* as Sum yul but, eventually, only mentions five of them, omitting *mkhas pa lDe'u's mkhos* of Mon. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.185 lines 11–17) adds the localities where the various *mkhos dpon* held office and identifies these officers:

“Dang po Khri rtse 'bum bzher nas srid pa dang khos ston pa las rgyal pos blon po rnam so sor bkas bsgos te Bod kyi khos dpon mGar sTong btsan yul bzung/ Zhang chung gi khos dpon Khyung po Bun zung tse/ Sum pa'i khos dpon Hor Bya zhu ring po/ Chibs kyi khos dpon dBang btsan bzang dpal legs/ mThong khyab kyi *khod dpon* Cog ro rGyal mtshan g.yang gong rnam bskos/ sKyi shod Sho ma ra/ Khyung lung rNgul mkhar/ Nam ra Zha don gram pa tshal/ Ri bo g.Ya dmar rnam su bcad/”;

The passage also has indirect implications about the chronology of the *rgyal phran bcu gnyis* of sPu rgyal Bod because sNubs rje Sris pa, who belonged to the group of the *g.yung gi mi sde kheng dang yang kheng 'byed pa* (“the classification into lay communities of subjects and further subjects”) is recorded as the ruler of the *rgyal phran* known. sNubs rje Sris pa is mentioned together with his yul sNubs gyi gling dgu' (spelled so) in P.T.1286 (lines 8–9; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.67), the well known document on the *rgyal phran bcu gnyis*—actually seventeen in this work. On the grounds of the inclusion of other petty lords in the enumeration of P.T. 1286, the document has entries that are far from the pre-gNya' khri btsan po period. It mentions rulers who did not belong to a remote period but existed at a much later time not long before the unification of the plateau was begun by the central Tibetans from Yar lung by the historical segment of the *btsan po* dynasty (see my *Fragments of Zhang chung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming). Spelled rJe sNubs rje'i Sris pa in P.T.1286, this ruler, too, is associated to a period when sPu rgyal Bod began its annexation of the plateau.

On the other hand, the inclusion of Lo ngam rta rdzi among the *rdzi bdun* could be a sign that the eminent people in the various groups composing the subjects of the *btsan po*, mentioned in this passage of *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, did not reign during the same epoch.

Finally, Sato (“The Route from Kokonor to Lhasa during the T'ang Period” p.8) proposes to see in Nam pa lde rgyal the ruler of the To-mi principality.

9. I do not read this sentence in the sense that these assemblies were confined to dBus, as Tucci does (*Preliminary Report on Two Scientific Expeditions in Nepal* p.90). His understanding implies that these gatherings were only held in this central region of the plateau which did not exist at the time, for dBus was formed long afterwards. The possibility that reference is made here to dBus is even more improbable in the light of the conspicuous number of assemblies held outside the *ru bzhi*, recorded in the *Tun-huang Annals* and thus that the *dbus kyi 'dun sa*-s were central to the administration of the state and composed by members holding a high position in its hierarchy.

“On the basis of the earliest [law known as] *Khri rtse ’bum bzher*,¹⁰ the *srid pa* and *khos* (spelled so) *ston pa* (the “undertaking of the secular affairs and the *khos*”) were tasks assigned by the king to the various ministers according to their authority.¹¹ The *khos dpon* of Bod was mGar sTong btsan yul bzung; the *khos dpon* of Zhang zhung was Khyung po Bun zung (spelled so for sPung sad); the *khos dpon* of the Sum pa was Hor Bya zhu ring po (“[wearing] a tall hat [with] bird [feathers]”?); the *khod dpon* of horses was dBang btsan bzang dpal legs; the *khos dpon* of the mThong khyab was Cog ro rGyal mtshan g.yang gong. They were those who were appointed. sKyi shod Sho ma ra [for Bod], Khyung lung rngul mkhar (i.e. spelled the Bon po way) [for Zhang zhung], Nam ra Zha don (spelled so) Gram pa tshal [for Sum yul], and

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10. *mKhas pa lDe ’u chos ’byung* (p.268 lines 5–7) illustrates the legal terms of the *Khri rtse ’bum bzher*: “De la *Khri rtse ’bum bzher* bya ba ni/ sa bdag rgyal po ’i nor stor na krims (sic for *khri*) *chig stong/ dge ’dun la khriims/ smangs* (sic for *dmangs*) *la stong/ de ches nas bzhag/’*”; “With regard to this (i.e. the laws), *Khri rtse ’bum zher* imposes heavy [fines]. If the property of the king, the lord of the land, is destroyed, [the compensation] is 11,000; the law concerning the monks [fines] a subject [to a compensation of] 1,000”.

The provisos of the *Khri rtse ’bum bzher* links this law to a period successive to the life of mGar sTong btsan given that it has a clause concerning the monks, unless one has to recognise the role of Srong btsan sgam po as one of the *chos rgyal mes dbon rnam gsum*, for an embryo of Buddhism was introduced at his court also owing to the role of the monks from Khotan. This is a way to see Tibetan history from the assessments of the authors of the post dynastic period.

Concerning the clauses of the law, the punishment for spoiling the assets of the *btsan po* was exorbitantly harsher than those protecting the monks, thus underpinning his status not comparable to the subjects.

11. As is well known, most commonly *srid* carries the sense of “secular affairs” and is often linked with *chos* in the later periods when Buddhism took on theocratic tones, marked by the juxtaposition of the religious and political spheres (*chos srid zung ’grel*), but that is not applicable here because, before *Khri srong lde btsan*, the Noble Religion had not gained so much importance.

When *mKhas pa ’i dga ’ston* associates *khos* (spelled so) *ston pa* (the “exercise of the *khos*”) with *srid pa*, the latter applies to acts of governance in general because *khos ston pa* implies the specific acts of governance (i.e. the *mkhos drug*). I thus understand the passage in the sense that *khos ston pa* falls within the sphere of *srid*.

Besides its association with *chos*, *srid* normally stands either for the secular/political domain or secular/political power and thus the passage under consideration seems to refer to the power delegated to representatives of sPu rgyal Bod in the regions at the borders of its domains. They governed these regions by undertaking the activities proper to the *mkhos drug*. On *srid* see Ar. Macdonald (“Une lecture des Pelliot tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290” n.242) who cites Bogoslovsky for the understanding of this term as “un complexe des droits économiques et politiques sur une terre et sa population”.

Ri bo g.Ya' dmar [for the cavalry and mThong khyab? Or for the cavalry alone?] were [respectively] chosen [as seats of the *khos dpon-s*]"¹²

One can thus combine the evidence provided by mkhas pa lDe'u and dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba and complete the list saying that the five lands in which the *mkhos* was held were Bod, Zhang chung, Mon, Sum pa and mThong khyab, plus the one of horses.

Year entries of the *Tun-huang Annals* provide evidence useful to check the validity of the statements of the two later sources. Therein, the regions in which the *mkhos* was held were:

- the *ru bzhi* in the entries for the years 673, 709, 744 and 746);
- Zhang chung in the entries for the years 662, 675 and 724;
- the 'A zha in 696, 714, 741 and 742;
- Sum ru in 702;
- mDo smad in 715 and 730, and
- lJang/'Jang (the Mon of the later sources?) during the second half of the 8th century.¹³

The entry in the *Tun-huang Annals* for the year 673 shows that Bod should be read as the ru bzhi (g.Yo ru, dBu ru, g.Yas ru and Ru lag), an early reference to them as four.

The *mkhos* of Bod

Concerning the circumstances leading to the introduction of the *mkhos drug*, Uebach ("On the Tibetan expansion from seventh to mid eighth century and the administration (khö) of the countries subdued") has provided an important insight into the early implementation of the system. Following Beckwith's idea that it was mGar sTong rtsan yul zung, rather than Srong btsan sgam po, who introduced the state organisation—does Beckwith mean the *mkhos*? (see *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.27)—she says that the first *mkhos* was held in 654. I

12. The seat of the *mkhos dpon* of Zhang chung—Khyung lung—does not correspond to the areas where the headquarters of the the *stong sde-s* of Zhang chung smad (sPyi ti; see *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.259 lines 7–8, while *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* p.188 lines 1–2 spells Ci de) and the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* (Gug Cog) were respectively centred. Khyung lung was the ancient capital of Zhang chung during the last period of its independent kingdom, whereas Gug Cog were two contiguous territories in the same land. Hence the Zhang chung smad *stong sde-s* were not centred in specific localities but were sited in regions that composed the wider expanse of Zhang chung. The sTod kyi *dpa' sde* is classified by clans, arguably on the basis of their rank that outclassed the local ones after Srong btsan sgam po's conquest (see below).

13. For all the occurrences of the undertaking of the *mkhos* in the *Tun-huang Annals* see Uebach's survey in "On the Tibetan expansion from seventh to mid eighth century and the administration (khö) of the countries subdued". From her analysis and my treatment of the topic it results that one or more of the *mkhos* that are dealt with in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* are originally found in the *Tun-huang Annals*.

read the entry for 654 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (lines 26–27; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.13 lines 12–15) as follows:

“sTag gi lo la bab ste/ btsan pho Mer khe na' bzhugs shing/ blon che sTong rtsan gyis/ Mong bu Sral 'jong du' bsduste/ rgod g.yung dbye zhing/ mkho sham chen pho bgyi ba'i rtsis mgo bgyi bar lo gcig”;

“Year of the tiger 654. The *btsan po* stayed at Mer khe. Blon che sTong rtsan gathered [the assembly] at Mong bu sral rdzong. He divided [the subjects] into the people who had to render military or civil service, and introduced registers [for taxation] in order to undertake the great organisation of the *mkho* (spelled so)”.¹⁴

Evidence external to the *Tun-huang Annals* confirms the statements in the entry for the year of the tiger 654 and helps to understand the nature of the system. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* has a few accounts of the *mkhos* that are enlightening. Altogether they prove that the range of administrative activities associated with the *mkhos* in the *Tun-huang Annals* is reductive.

- The most important is a lengthy episode concerning blon po mGar's efforts to introduce the *mkhos* organisation in Bod.¹⁵
- Another is a long and rather mysterious classification of categories of lay subjects, separate from the military divisions of the *stong sde*-s and *dpa' sde*-s. The same classification in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* most likely drawn from the work of mkhas pa lDe'u or the latter's authority is simplified without being clearer.¹⁶
- One more concerns the demarcation of lands assigned to various clans who claimed ancestral ownership of these territories, beginning with the *lha sras btsan po* himself

14. I would dismiss on syntactical grounds the reading that the *mkhos* was first introduced in the tiger year 654. The verb *mgo gyi ba* (“to introduce”) in the sentence refers to *rtsis* (lit. “calculation” and thus “estimate”, “inventory”, hence “to introduce registers”) rather than to the *mkho sham chen pho* (spelled so) which is the object of another verb (*bgyi ba'i* [without *mgo*], “to undertake”, hence to undertake a *mkho*). Additionally, the verb *mgo gyi ba* is the main one in the sentence and qualifies the making of the *mkho*.

15. Bod is used here in reference to the central region of the sPu rgyal state.

16. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* elaborates in more detail the assessment of dPa' bo gTsug lag phreng ba (see above n.8). The text (p.273 lines 3–21) provides an insight in the material culture of sPu rgyal Bod and petty rulers under the authority of the *btsan po*: “Yul de rnams na rgod kyi stong sde bzhi

bcu zhes bya ste/ g.yung gi mi sde 'bangs las byed dang kheng bcad pa'o/ 'bangs las byed pa srid pa dgu/ rdzi bdun/ mkhan dgu/ tshong lnga/ tgyal bzhi/ 'dzin gsum mo/
 srid pa dgu ni/ sNubs rje Srid pa/ lHo rje Glang pa/ lHo rje Gling pa/ 'Chims Srung pa/ Nyag nyi Phyang pa/ Byang nga sKos pa/ Khyo ne sPre'u pa/ She'u 'Chang pa/ So Phye pa/
 rdzi bdun ni/ Lo nam rta rdzi/ lTam pa 'bri rdzi/ Ra ga ra rdzi/ 'Khar pa lug rdzi/ 'Gos bong rdzi/ Bya khyi rdzi/ rNgog phag rdzi'o/
 mkhan drug ni/ kar yo 'Gar mkhan/ gar ru sGa mkhan/ Srag gzhu mkhan/ Ra shags mda' mkhan/ Bya ba khrab mkhan/ tshong rtsi lha mkhan no/
 tshong lnga ni/ rGya bye tshong/ tGru gu g.yu tshong/ 'A zha gri tshong/ lDan ma dar tshong/ the Glan tshwa tshong ngo/
 rgyal bzhi ni/ Nam sa lDe rgyal/ Bal po Lang ling rgyal/ Sum pa lcags rgyal/ Mon rtse rgyal lo/
 'dzin gsum ni/ bDags sbra 'dzin/ Myang po, the lcags 'dzin/ Grod, the bya 'dzin no/
 zde ltar so sor rgyal po byed kyang/ bca' bsdus nas Bod kyi rje la 'bul bas/ 'bangs su gtogs so//";

"The forty *stong sde* of warriors of the various lands and the lay communities performing the civil service of subjects and their subordinates were subdivided. Those doing the civil service of subjects were the *srid dgu* (the "nine in charge of secular affairs"), the *rdzi bdun* (the "seven herdsmen"), the *mkhan dgu* (the "nine makers [of crafts]"), the *tshong lnga* (the "five merchants"), the *rgyal bzhi* (the "four kings") and the *'dzin gsum* (the "three who have [possessions]").

The *srid pa dgu* were sNubs rje Srid pa (spelled so), lHo rje Glang pa, lHo rje Gling pa, 'Chims Srung pa, Nyag nyi Phyang pa, Byang nga sKos pa, Khyo ne sPre'u pa, She'u 'Chang pa and So Phye pa.

The *rdzi bdun* were Lo nam rta rdzi (the "horse herdsman"), lTam pa 'bri rdzi (the "'bri herdsman"), Ra ga ra rdzi (the "goat herdsman"), 'Khar pa lug rdzi (the "sheep herdsman"), 'Gos bong rdzi (the "donkey herdsman"), Bya khyi rdzi (the "bird and dog herdsman") and rNgog phag rdzi (the "pig herdsman").

The *mkhan drug* were kar yo 'Gar mkhan (the "'Gar, makers of porcelain"), gar ru sGa mkhan (the "sGa, makers of *gar ru* (sic for *mgar ru*, a type of vessel with beak and handle?)"), Srag gzhu mkhan (the "Srag, makers of bows"), Ra shags mda' mkhan (the "Ra shags, makers of arrows"), Bya ba khrab mkhan (the "Bya ba, makers of armour"), tshong rtsi lha mkhan ("makers of painted deities for trade/wealth").

The *tshong lnga* were the rGya bye (sic for *ja*) tshong ("the Chinese, merchants of tea"), the Gru gu g.yu tshong ("the Turks, merchants of turquoise"), the 'A zha gri tshong ("the 'A zha, merchants of swords"), the lDan ma dar tshong ("the lDan ma, merchants of silk"), and the Glan tshwa tshong ("the Glan, merchants of salt").

The *rgyal bzhi* were the Nam sa lDe rgyal, the Bal po Lang ling rgyal, the Sum pa lcags rgyal and the Mon rtse rgyal.

The *'dzin gsum* were bDags, the *sbra 'dzin* ("who have felt tents"); Myang po, the *lcags 'dzin* ("who have iron"), and Grod, the *bya 'dzin* ("who have birds").

Likewise, the code of laws having been issued, although they were independent kings, they gave themselves to the ruler of Bod and were included among his subjects".

For a similar but less coherent enumerations see *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.112 line 16–p.113 line 7).

(i.e. Mang srong mang rtsan).¹⁷ This demarcation, missing in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, is defined as a *khod bshams* of lands, an alternative spelling for the *mkho sham* in the entry for the year 654.

Hence the two narratives show that the *mkhos chen pho* (spelled so in the *Tun-huang Annals*) of Bod was a wider ranging administrative endeavour with broader purposes than to assign the subjects to civil and military service and prepare registers for taxation—as the *Tun-huang Annals* say—of entities that go unsubstantiated in the entry for 654. This is further apparent from twin paragraphs in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* which concern the first of the three accounts discussed in these pages, the one on the *mkhos* of Bod undertaken by blon po mGar. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.271 line 7–p.272 line 7) says:

“Khod drug ni/ Bod kyi khod Kyi shod Sho ma rar byas/ khod shom mkhan mGar Stong btsan gyis byas te/ shing bu dang rde'u yan chad rtsis nas/ shog bu mdzo khal longs pa la bris pas khrims Byang ma thebs par 'khrugs te/ da Bod kyi khod sus shom mam snyam nas bsam pas/ Da rgyal byis pa gcig 'phrul che bar thos nas/ blon po bzhis 'tshol du phyin pas/ byis pa dang 'phrad nas dris pa/ na 'di'i mtha' bskor ram gzhung gcod byas pas/ byis pa na re/ rings na mtha' bskor/ mi rings na gzhung chod zer bas/ byis pa'i min log tu mthong nas/ gzhung bcad pas 'dam du bying ngo/ de nas byis pa la pha ma gar song dris pas/ pha gтам 'tshol du song/ ma mig 'thol du song zer ba la/ phas khyer byung/ mas mar nag khyer byung de nas blon po dga' nas/ Bod kyi khod shom du bcug pas ma shom nas/ blon po mGar gyis 'Chims Mang bzher ngan la mdzangs par thos nas lug 'tsho ba'i phyir sha skam tshās sbangs pa khyer nas dris pa/ Bod kyi khod Da rgyal gyis shom zer na/ shom mam mi shom byas pas/ 'Chims na re rang srog chod [lacuna] rtsam [lacuna] pa des mi shom zer/ 'o na sus shom byas pas ngas shom (p.272) ste mi shom zer/ der mGar gyis sha skam tshās sbags pa de byin pas/ kho kha skom nas da lta chang ster ba gcig byung na ci zer nyan pas zer

17. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.273 line 21–p.274 line 7): “Yul gyi khod bshams pa ni/ dBu ru Sha chen btsad po nyid kyi yul du (p.274) bcad/ pho brang rNe byi btsan po rgyal 'bangs yul du bcad/ Phying nga stag rtse 'Gos dang sNubs kyi yul du bcad/ Bya phu Tshags tshig Drang rje pha lnga'i yul du bcad/ 'Phan sna Khram sna 'jom sTeng gi yul du bcad/ Za gad lTe lung blon chen sBas kyi yul du bcad/ Nam ra Tsha dgong 'Bri dang Chag gi yul du bcad/ Myang Khrom pa 'Bro dang lCe'i yul du bcad/ Shangs Blo byi ri dang Blo byi'i yul du bcad/ Yung pa che chung Bran ka'i yul du bcad/ 'Dam shod dkar mo lCog ro'i yul du bcad/ mDo Khams che chung Sum pa ru yan lag gi yul du bcad do/””; “The organisation of the *khod* (*khod bshams*) in the land was as follows. dBu ru Sha chen was demarcated into the land of the king himself (p.274); pho brang rNe byi was demarcated into the land of the subjects of the king; Phying nga (so spelled) sTag rtse was demarcated into the land of the 'Gos and sNubs; Bya phu Tshags tshig was demarcated into the land of the Drang rje pha lnga; 'Phan sna Khram sna 'jom was demarcated into the land of the sTeng; Za gad lTe lung was demarcated into the land of the blon chen sBas; Nam ra Tsha dgong was demarcated into the land of the 'Bri and Chag; Myang Khrom pa was demarcated into the land of the 'Bro and lCe; Shangs was demarcated into the land of the Blo byi ri and Blo byi; Yung pa che chung was demarcated into the land of the Bran ka; 'Dam shod dkar mo was demarcated into the land of the lCog ro; mDo Khams che chung and Sum pa, the additional *ru*, were demarcated”.

pa la/ yang mGar gyis chang rkyal sbas pa de kho la drangs bas/ kho bzi ba la khod dris pas/ rgod kyi stong sde bcu bzhir dbye ba dang/ de'i stong dpon dang/ ru bzhi'i mtshams dbye ba dang/ g.yung gi mi sde phye ba dang/ de'i las mkhan bsko ba dang/ yul kyi dpa' sde bcad pa dris nas kho bzi ba'i bar la bros so/ de la rgod kyi stong sde dbye ba dang/ de'i stong dpon ni/ tshan bcu sde bcur bshad do//";

"The *khod* (spelled so) *drug*. The *khod* of Bod was organised from Kyi shod Sho ma ra. The one who devised the organisation of the *khod* was mGar sTong btsan (spelled so). He inventoried [everything] up to the pieces of wood and pebbles. Having written down on paper the taxes due, including those for [the possession of] *mdzo-s*, the Byang ma, being affected by this law, revolted. Pondering on the question: "Who will organise the *khod* of Bod?", [blon po mGar] heard that there was a greatly ingenious Da rgyal child, and so four ministers went to search for him. They met the child and asked him: "[Were it to be held] on this meadow, should [the *khod*] demarcate (*gcod*) the border areas or the central region?". "If [made] in haste, it should demarcate (*chod*) the border areas; if [made] not in haste, the central region". Having seen that the child was mysterious about the alternative (*min log*), they got confused in their choice [whether] to demarcate (*bcad*) the central region. They then asked the child where his parents had gone. He said: "[My] father went to search for chatters (*gtam*); [my] mother went to search for blaze (*mig*)". The father returned carrying *chang*; the mother returned carrying mustard oil. Despite the ministers being pleased [with the child], the organisation of the *khod* could not [still] be [actually established], although it had been [previously] introduced.

Having heard about the capacities of 'Chims Mang bzher ngan pa, blon po mGar asked ['Chims], while carrying dry meat soaked in salt for the sake of ['Chims who had to] graze sheep, whether Da rgyal would organise the *khod* of Bod. He asked him: "Will he organise it or not?". 'Chims said: "One can [just] undertake to part (*chod*) from one's own life:¹⁸ that one (i.e. the Da rgyal child) will not organise it". [mGar] having asked: "If so, who will organise it?", he replied: "I may organise it (p.272) or else I may not organise it". At that time mGar gave him the dry meat soaked in salt. For beverage, having told that he heard him saying: "What if some drink were given now [to me]?", mGar gave him the *chang* inside a vessel. While he got drunk, [blon po mGar] asked him about the *khod*. He asked him about the division into fourteen *stong sde*, their *stong dpon-s* and the demarcation of the borders of the *ru bzhi*; the classification of the lay communities and the appointment of their subordinates (*las*

18. The sentence has two lacunae and so its meaning is difficult to decode. In his statement mChims Mang bzher ngan pa ostensibly plays with words because *chod* means both "to cut, kill, part from something, separate" and "to demarcate".

mkhan); and the demarcation of the detachments of heroes in [the various] lands (*yul gyi dpa' sde*) but, while he was still drunk, [‘Chims] run away”.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.185 line 17–p.186 line 11) has a slightly modified version of the same account:

“mGar gyis Bod kyi khod bca' ba'i phyir rde'u dang shing bu gtsigs su gsol te byang bu mdzo khal drug ldeng bar bris pas Byang Khram ma thebs par 'khrugs nas 'Phan yul Dar rgyal na Byis pa Mang po rje bya ba 'phrul che bar thos nas blon po bzhis 'tshol du phyin pas ne gsing chen po gcig gi mthar byis pa dang 'phrad/ na 'di'i gzhung gcod dam mtha' bskor dris pas dal na gzhung chod rings na mtha' bskor zer/ blon po bzhis gzhung bca'd pas 'dam du tshud nas yun ring 'gor/ (p.186) byis pa de la pha ma gar song dris pas gtam 'tshol du song ma mig 'tshol du song zer/ dar cig na phas chang khyer mas me khyer byung skad/ byis pa de khrid nas khod shom bcug pas kyang ma shoms/ Dar rgyal Mang po rjes 'Chims Mang bzher ngan pa bya ba mdzangs par thos nas blo rku ba'i phyir ri la chang sbas/ sha skam tshwa chu phyugs pa khyer nas mChims lug rdzi'i res byed pa'i phyi na yar phyin ste Bod kyi khod Dar rgyal Mang po rjes bshom skad na shoms sam byas pas rtsom pa des mi shoms/ nga min pa shoms pa med de nga mi shom zer/ sha skam byin pas kha skom ste ta lda skom ster ba byung na ci zer nyan par byas nas chang gis gzir bcug nas dris pas ru mtshams 'byed pa/ yul bshod pa/ rgod g.yung gi sde 'byed pa sogs zhib par smros nas kho nyid du btang nas bros ste khos zer ba bzhin mGar dang Dar rgyal gyis bshams skad//”;

“In order to enact the *khod* (so spelled) of Bod, mGar deemed important to catalogue up to the pebbles and pieces of wood, and accurately registered on paper the six *mdzo* taxes. Given that the Byang Khram ma were affected and revolted, he heard that in 'Phan yul Dar rgyal there was Byis pa Mang po rje who was greatly ingenious. Four ministers went to search for him. They met the child on the border of a vast grassland. Having asked him: “Should it be held in the central region or the borderlands?”. He said: “If [done] slowly, in the central region, if in a hurry in the borderlands”. Given that the four ministers got delayed in making a choice [whether] to hold it in the central region, a long time elapsed. (p.186) They asked the child where his parents had gone. He said that his father had gone in search of chatters (*gtam*), and his mother in search of blaze (*mig*). They said that, after a short while, the father came carrying *chang* and the mother carrying fire. Having taken the child along, although the organisation of the *khod* had been [previously] introduced, it was not possible to organise it.

Having heard about the capacities of 'Chims Mang bzher ngan pa, and in order to win his mind, Dar rgyal mang po rje hid *chang* on the hillside. He took with him some dry meat soaked in salty water and went up in the open where mChims (spelled so) occasionally was a shepherd. [The child pretended he was not himself] and, upon talking about Dar rgyal mang po rje organising the *khod* of Bod, asked [mChims] whether he (i.e. Dar rgyal) would organise it. He replied: “Despite being in charge of the undertaking, he will not organise it. No one except me can organise it, but I will not organise it”. He gave him the dry meat. As for his beverage, he told he heard him saying: “What if some drink were given now [to me]?”, he managed to win

[mChims] with *chang* and asked him [about the *khod*], talking in detail about such [issues] as the demarcation of the borders of the *ru*-s, the distribution of the lands, and the division into military and lay communities. Having burdened him [with these problems], [mChims] run away. It is said that mGar and Dar rgyal organised it like he (i.e. Dar rgyal) had stated”.

This accounts in *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* provide several details that help to expand further the significance and nature of the *mkhos* of Bod undertaken by mGar sTong rtsan yul zung, absent in the cold and bureaucratic treatment of the entry for year 654 in the *Tun-huang Annals*. It shows that thorough estimates of taxable property and consequently a tough taxation policy were introduced by blon po mGar. A social revolt against the enactment of the *mkhos* broke out in Bod, which engendered a serious difficulty in imposing the state organisation in this land, which I read as Central Tibet.¹⁹

The duty of organising the *mkhos* in order to overcome the standstill was curiously assigned to a prodigious child who, in the fashion typical of unusual Tibetan boys, spoke in riddles,²⁰ and a drunken man who run away, overwhelmed by the magnitude of the endeavour. Hence, they did not eventually make it, and the task was taken up successfully by mGar sTong rtsan yul zung.²¹ One can easily guess that, elsewhere in the kingdoms conquered by sPu rgyal Bod, the harsh imposition of the *mkhos drug* would not have been accepted any more readily.

The succinct statement in the entry of the year 654 of the *Tun-huang Annals*—a regime of unsubstantiated registers [for taxation] was introduced to undertake the great organisation of the *mkhos*—closely corresponds to the description found in *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*

19. That the episode mentioned by *mKhas pa lDe'u* and *dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba* refers to Bod (and not to the other regions where the *mkhos* was introduced) is reinforced by the reference to *Kyi/sKyi shod Sho ma ra*, the headquarters of the *mkhos/khod/khos dpon* in this region.

20. Concerning the prodigious child named *Da rgyal mang po rje* by *mKhas pa lDe'u* and *Dar rgyal mang po rje* by *dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba*, the activity of an homonymous officer is recorded in the entry for the year of the ox 653 in the *Tun-huang Annals* in connection with a taxation of fields (ibid. line 23; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.13: “*Da rgyal mang po rjes zhing gyi* (sic) *phying ryl bgyis//*”, for the meaning of *phying ryl bgyis* see ibid. p.73 and n.12). Again a *Da rgyal mang po rje* is mentioned in the entry for the year 659 (ibid. line 36; see ibid. p.13: “*Da rgyal mang po rjes/ mTsho nag stong rur/ rGya Se'u den pang dang/ nol thabs bgyiste/ Da rgyal gyang gum//*”; “*Da rgyal mang po rje fought against rGya Se'u den pang at mTsho nag stong ru, but Da rgyal died*”). Both cases do not to apply to him, for he was too young to hold such responsibilities.

The story has lived on in the folklore of 'Phan po to this day, where it is cited in support of this valley's reputation as a “source of smart people” (“Phan po rig pa'i 'byung gnas”).

21. Apart from the obvious differences in the narrative found in the two sources, *dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba* adds the interpolation that the prodigious child *Dar rgyal mang po rje* eventually collaborated with blon po mGar in organising the *mkhos*, contrary to *mKhas pa lDe'u* who ascribes it to mGar sTong rtsan alone. *dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phrang ba* has a tendency to substantiate some of *mKhas pa lDe'u*'s statements to give them, in his view, a more accomplished signification. As will be shown

and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* of blon po mGar's uncompromising estimates of taxable property and inflexible taxation.

I prudentially do not take it for granted that it is a matter of the same *mkhos* and thus of the *mkhos* of 654, but this possibility has valid reasons in its favour. Hence the issue of whether or not the *mkhos* of Bod had already been introduced before 654 after the reign of Srong btsan sgam po remains to be solved, although there are strong indications in the accounts of the two later sources that it had.

The description of mGar sTong rtsan's *mkhos* of Bod in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* stating that it pertained to the introduction of a taxation system, land allotment, the institutionalisation of several professions and crafts, and the procurement of various kinds of resources further illustrates important facets of the composite nature of the *mkhos drug*. They are more succinctly dealt with in dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's narrative.

One can thus sum up the indications, provided by this material, in order to identify better the meaning and extent of the *mkhos*. Its functions were multiple, ranging:

- from the military—the formation of the *stong sde-s* and the *dpa'sde gsum*—to the social—the allocation of categories of subjects to different civil services and the institutionalisation of professions;
- from the administrative sphere—the making of registers of the people inhabiting different areas, the imposition of taxes and perhaps the undertaking of censuses—to the political/legislative—the great assemblies of the people under the *lha sras btsan po*, the divisions into the *ru lnga*, the *dbang ris bco bryad* and the grant of lands to clans.

Hence the *mkhos* was a composite activity which cannot be defined in a single way but in relation with the circumstances indicated in each case by the context that extend beyond the concept of the *mkhos drug*.

The *mkhos* beyond Bod

Given their location at the borders of the plateau, the inclusion of the *dpa'sde* in their respective territories (*yul gyi dpa'sde*) among the other types of *mkhos* in the speech attributed by mkhas pa lDe'u to blon po mGar—unless deemed a blunder—confirms that the milieu of the *mkhos drug* went beyond the central regions of the plateau. The *dpa'sde gsum* may well have belonged to the realm of the *stong sde-s*, their *stong dpon-s* and the demarcation of the borders of the *ru bzhi*; the classification of the lay communities and the appointment of the categories of workers, which, altogether, formed the *mkhos drug*.

below in the section of this essay dedicated to the *dpa'sde gsum*, he did not always serve historical objectivity by doing so.

On the chronological side of the matter, the entry for 654 and the accounts of *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* do not allow one to say with any amount of confidence whether the *mkhos*-s undertaken in the other regions (Zhang zhung, Sum pa or Mon, and mThong khyab) predated or postdated the one of 654 probably held in Bod.

References to a *mkhos* in several year entries of the *Tun-huang Annals* show that the undertaking of the *mkhos* went beyond the limits of the sPu rgyal Bod cradle and pertained to the ancient kingdoms of the plateau subjugated by the central Tibetans. But the year entries that mention the staging of a *mkhos* in the old kingdoms do not provide evidence to establish whether this was its first occurrence locally, especially because the *Tun-huang Annals* begin only in 650. That the *mkhos* of 654 may have not been the first in Bod but that other ones in different regions were organised earlier is supported by a few pieces of evidence. A proof of this is the statement found in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* that Srong btsan sgam po himself (d. 649–650) demarcated the *stong sde*-s of Sum ru.²²

mKhas pa lDe'u enumerates the ten Sum ru *stong sde*-s plus the *stong bu chung*. They were rTse mthon and Yo mthon; rGod tshang stod smad; 'Dzom stod 'Dzom smad; Tre stod Tre smad; Kho ra and Kha bzang with Nag shod as *stong bu chung* (*mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.259 lines 11–14).²³

Seeing the issue of the introduction of the *mkhos drug* from another angle, how could Khyung po sPung sad zu tse have been the *mkhos dpon* of Zhang zhung, if the *mkhos* system was not introduced until 654, years after his death? Did the 654 *mkhos* refer only to Bod, as it seems from reading the account in the works by mkhas pa lDe'u and dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba, or is their authority doubtful in this case, as in others concerning the *dpa' sde gsum* (see below)?

If a look is given at the introduction of the *mkhos* system from the viewpoint of the creation of the *stong sde*-s of the various *ru*, one of the fundamental institutions of this organisation, its implementation can be vaguely sketched. The formations of the *stong sde*-s in the various regions of the plateau are relevant to the issue at stake because they marked the definitive takeover of the lands of the plateau in the west and the east. The control of Zhang zhung, Sum yul—comprehensive of Upper Khams (i.e. Yar Khams aka mDo stod) and adjoining lands to the south, the heart of East Tibet. The military basis having been set—sPu rgyal control was

22. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.259 line 11): “De'i nang nas stong sde bcu gcig Srong btsan sgam pos tshur bcad de/”; “Within this (i.e. the territory of the Sum pa), its eleven *stong sde* were demarcated by Srong btsan sgam po”.

This statement is omitted in the corresponding treatment of the *stong sde*-s of Sum ru in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*.

23. What makes the classification of the *stong sde*-s of Sum ru reliable is that most of them appear in documents from Central Asian areas such as Mīrān, a sign of antiquity. This also implies that the sphere of activity of the military units of Sum ru spilled to southern Central Asia at an unspecified point in time during the *lha sras btsan po* period. See the Addendum in this essay.

complete in the most but not entirely since 'A zha'i yul remained to be conquered definitely—led to the establishment of their *mkhos*.

There are no dates in any document on the formation of the *stong sde*-s, but one can attempt approximations on the basis of the sequence of sPu rgyal conquest of the various principalities and kingdoms of ancient Tibet, and of some stray dates. They were not formed all at the same time, and I presume that the *stong sde*-s of the *ru bzhi* were established first, given the sequence of territorial annexations to the cradle of the sPu rgyal kingdom. However, evidence provided by one *dpa'sde* indicates that the creation of some *stong sde*-s in dBu ru cannot have predated the takeover of Sum yul (see below for the assessment of the heroes of the sMad kyī *dpa'sde*). The military subjugation of Sum yul, the horn added to complete the *ru lnga*, was first accomplished during the reign of gNam ri slon rtsan (see Chapter Six of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* lines 299–301, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyī lo rgyus yig cha* p.51). Nonetheless, I have mentioned in the previous pages that the division of Sum ru into *stong sde*-s is credited by mkhas pa lDe'u to Srong btsan sgam po, probably in light of the fact that Myang mang po rje Zhang snang brought the Sum pa back under sPu rgyal Bod by military and diplomatic means during his reign (Chapter Six of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* lines 303–305; see *ibid.* p.51–52). It cannot be ruled out that the formative embryo of the *stong sde*-s of Sum ru may have predated the eventful year 634 when Srong btsan sgam po embarked upon a campaign that led him to intrude into China until 638 (*Old T'ang Annals* and *New T'ang Annals*; see Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* respectively p.3–4 and p.82–83).

As for the creation of the *stong sde*-s of Zhang zhung smad and Zhang zhung stod, there is a *terminus post quem* for each of them, respectively 644 and 648/649, these being the years of their definitive subjugations that occurred with separate campaigns (see Vitali, *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming).

Given that the creation of Sum ru acts as the *terminus ante quem* for the formation of the *ru lnga* and that its *stong sde*-s are credited to Srong btsan sgam po, the introduction of the *mkhos drug* could be attributed to this king. 654 being the year in which a *mkhos* is mentioned in the *Tun-huang Annals* for the first time, its proclamation could not have taken place in that year, for Srong btsan sgam po was dead by then.

Although the *mkhos drug* are classified differently in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*, their description substantially concord in showing that they were the same state institutions established in the same territories. The discrepancies between the two sources amount to the inclusion in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* of the *dbang ris bco brgyad*, absent in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*.

In dealing with the “eighteen divisions of power”, dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba contributes to breaking the customary reckoning of sixty *stong sde* according to *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.259 line15–16), but indeed sixty-one in all, a number which dPa' bo himself

supports in his treatment of the *stong sde*-s.²⁴ He says that mDo Khams mDo chen was home to eight *rgod stong sde* (“*stong sde*-s of warriors”, see *ibid.* p.187 lines 9–10). dPa’ bo keeps these eight *stong sde*-s separate from the “sixty-one communities of one thousand” of the *ru lnga*, for they are classified in the *dbang ris bco brgyad*. Not being included among the *stong sde*-s of the *ru lnga* inasmuch as they were not located in the territories of these military divisions, they could be considered additional to the sixty-one *stong sde*.

dPa’ bo thus conveys the rare information that the territory between mDo Khams and mDo chen was organised in *stong sde*-s,²⁵ much like the rest of the Tibetan plateau where military communities of one thousand were deployed in territorial divisions within the same region.

The *stong sde* organisation also included ’A zha’i yul, another land whose association with the system is ignored in most sources. dPa’ bo gtsug lag ’phreng ba’s classification of the *stong sde*-s into sixty-one in all is thus reductive. I count more of them on the basis of the evidence of the additional *stong sde*-s—more circumstantial evidence about them will be adduced in the following.

The *dpa’ sde gsum* (“three detachments of heroes”)

In the next pages, I shall try partially to fill the lacuna in the study of the imperial period that concerns the *dpa’ sde gsum*, a pillar of the sPu rgyal organisation, in order to balance the great deal of attention that has been devoted to the *stong sde*-s.²⁶ In doing so, I shall make use of the little that is preserved in the sources to sketch the features of the “three detachments of heroes” and the role they played in the military campaigns of the kingdom of the *lha sras btsan po*-s.

The description of the *dpa’ sde gsum* in *mkhas pa lDe’u chos ’byung* and *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* is another meaningful sign that a perusal of sources not necessarily coeval with the dynastic period can bear some fruits.

The *dpa’ sde gsum* were military outposts, respectively known as sTod kyi *dpa’ sde* (in Zhang chung), Bar gyi *dpa’ sde* (in Sum yul) and sMad kyi *dpa’ sde* (in ’A zha’i yul/A mdo), with the task of conquering lands beyond the frontiers (*so kha* or *so mtshams*) and control

24. *mKhas pa’i dga’ ston* (p.188 lines 5–6). There were ten *stong sde* each in dBu ru, g.Yo ru, g.Yas ru and Ru lag, plus five *stong sde* each in Zhang chung stod and Zhang chung smad, plus eleven in Sum ru, which makes sixty-one. See *mkhas pa lDe’u chos ’byung* (p.258 line 5–p.259 line 16) which calculates them as sixty.

25. mDo Khams mDo chen refers to the area between Khams and A mdo of rather difficult historical and geographical definition. I am led to opine that it is the stretch of land that includes rMa chen spom ra. Some authors classify it as A mdo, others as Khams.

26. The question remains open whether the *dpa’ sde gsum* were composed by warriors selected for prior acts of bravery and enrolled together in units of crack troops or whether they became recognised as the three communities of heroes because their detachments collectively earned distinction due to their achievements in the battlefield.

them. The location of the three *dpa' sde* corresponded with the three main military fronts on which sPu rgyal Bod waged military campaigns. The sTod kyi *dpa' sde* engaged the enemies on the frontier in the west and targeted the front of the Four Garrisons in the Tarim Basin. The Bar gyi *dpa' sde* focused on the southern and south-eastern boundaries, and thus on the Nan-cha'o/southern Sechuan front for this *stong sde* extended control over this land. The sMad kyi *dpa' sde* was active on the northern and north-eastern border against China; its military activity thus focused on the Kokonor region and beyond it on the Chinese outposts in Central Asia.

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.274 line 8–p.275 line 10) reads:

“sTod sMad Bar gsum gyi dpa' sde bskor gsum ni/ sTod kyi dpa' sde So brag sTag po rong yan chad/ Mon kha bzhi man chad de/ yul de na gnas pa'i Gug Cog sde lnga la/ 'Bro/ Khyung po/ 'Gar/ sNubs/ gNyan 'dre lnga gnas te/ Gug ge dang Gug Cog gis dpon byas ste/ Gru gur gSer mig can gyi chung ma Hor mo sPir mdung can/ nu g.yas pa me btsas bsregs nas/ mda' spar gsum gyi mgo tsam pa/ rdo kheb la'ang cur 'byin pa la kha bstas 'thab pa'i tshe/ dpa' mtshan stag gi spyil po phub/ 'og rta g.yul du bsad/ mgo'i skra gshig/ gdong khrag gis phyugs/ slar mi ldog pa'i tshul byas nas 'thab pas na dpa'o/

Bar gyi dpa' sde ni/ Ri spen ma lung gis yar bcad/ Chags sgo dang pas mar bcad pa'i yul de na rGyal sde bcu gnyis la/ Nags shod stong bu chung gis dpon byas te/ lJang mo Thag gdung glang po'i mdung khur te/ dmag dang bcas nas 'ongs pa la/ 'thab pa'i tshe/ dpa' rtags su ral gri ri mo bris/ dur rgyags ltor zos/ tsha leb rgyab du gon/ slar rmi (p.275) ldog pa'i bsam pa dang bcas te/ dpa' bo'i ral kha byas pas na dpa' ba'o/

sMad kyi dpa' sde ni/ rMa'i sPom ras mar bcad/ bKa' thang klu rtses yar bcad/ Lom shi rGya mkhar la so mtshams gtad pa'i yul de na/ gnas pa'i mThong khyab srid sde dgu'i steng du bZhi zha sde drug bsnan pa la/ rGya'i so mkhar byang gi bar la rta pa dgu sgril rgyug tu btub pa'i nang na/ mi spe thung tsam pas dgra sta'i kha khru re tsam thogs nas/ 'thab pa'i tshe/ lDong sTong gi bu Dor te phyug 'tshams kyis dpon byas nas/ dpa' rtags su ral gri'i shubs bcag/ kha chems nye ba la bzhag/ bu smad grong pa la bcol nas/ phyr mi ldog pa'i bsam pa dang bcas nas/ dpa' bo mi mdung kha byed pas na dpa' ba'o/";

“The way the *dpa' sde* of sTod, Bar and sMad, altogether three, were created is as follows. The sTod kyi *dpa' sde* extends from So brag sTag po rong to Mon Kha bzhi. As for the five communities of Gug Cog which inhabit this land, the 'Bro, Khyung po, 'Gar, sNubs and gNyan 'dre who live there are the chieftains of Gu ge and Gug Cog. Hor mo sPir mdung can (“brandishing a javelin”), the younger wife of Gru gu gSer mig can (“golden eyes” or “golden owl”), burnt off her right breast. At the time of fighting, she advanced [throwing] three handfuls of arrows and pelting stone slabs as big as [dog's] heads. Her sign of bravery being a tiger nest tent, she killed a stallion in battle, cut its mane and smeared her face with blood. She fought like someone who does not want to come back from the battlefield.

The Bar gyi *dpa' sde* extends from Ri spen ma lung to Chags go dang pa. Nags (spelled so) shod stong bu chung is the head of the twelve rGya (*rgyal* (“royal”) sic for rGya) communities of this land. lJang mo Thag mdung can (“brandishing a spear with a noose”) carried an elephant tusk and rushed in the midst of the [enemies'] troops

at the time of fighting. Her sign of bravery being an image of a sword, she ate rotten food from the cemeteries and wore a skin on her back. (p.275) She resolved not to come back [from the battlefield]. Her bravery was her use of the sword.

The sMad kyi *dpa' sde* extends from dMa'i (sic for rMa'i) spom ra to bKa' thang klu rtse. Its members, the six communities (*sde drug*) of bZhi zha (so spelled for 'A zha) on top of the nine *srid sde* ("communities holding power") of the mThong khyab subjugated this land with the border fixed at the Chinese castle of Lom shi. Among those who were able to infiltrate across the Chinese border into the prefectures of the north, in formations (*sgril rgyug* sic for *bsgrigs rgyug*) of nine horsemen, men [on foot], as big as turrets, carried axes with a blade one *khru* in size. When battle was engaged, the Dor te and Phyug 'tshams [along with] the children of the lDong and sTong were the chieftains. Their sign of bravery was the broken sheath of a sword. Having left their will to their relatives and entrusted their household to their women, they planned not to come back [from the battlefield].²⁷ Their bravery was the use of the spear".

mKhas pa'i dga'ston (p.189 line 9–p.190 line 3) has the following:

“dPa' ba'i sde gsum ni Ri brang sTag pa gong yan cad Mon 'Bral kha bzhi man cad na 'Bro Khyung mGar sNubs gNyan te Gug Cog sde lngas dpon byas/ Gru gu gSer mig can gyi chung ma Hor mo Bang mdung can nu ma g.yas pa me btsas bsgergs nas mda' par gsum lde'u khyi mgo tsam rdo leb la cur 'byin pa 'phen ba la kha bltas nas/ dpa' mtshan du stag gi spyil po phub/ 'og rta g.yul du bsad/ dgong khrag gis byugs ste slar mi ldog pa'i rtsis su byas nas rgol bas Gru gu btul ba'o/

Bar gyi dpa' sde ni Ri pe Nam lung yan cad Cha skor dar bas man chad yul de la sbas rGya sde bcu gnyis gnas pas Nags shod kyi dpon byas te lJang mo Thag mdung gi rtse mo btsugs nas dmag bseb tu rgyug pa la rgol ba'i tshe dpa' mtshan du ral gri

27. The determination to sacrifice shown by members of the *dpa' sde gsum* and therefore their readiness to leave behind their kin in order to immolate themselves for victory, if necessary, is an indication that, in time of no military action, the soldiers resided with their families. The warriors were followed by wives and children—and cattle, too—from one post to another before heading to the battlefield when action was required. They were not separated from their closest relatives before being called in active warfare. Dotson says that one warrior each from the families composing the *stong sde-s* was conscripted and sent to serve in the army and adds that the estate holder of the *stong sde*, to which the recruited person belonged, was liable to provide him provisions for his maintenance (*The Old Tibetan Annals* p.55). He does not, however, refer to the fact that warriors travelled with cattle that supplied support to the army and themselves consequently. He also omits to say that the warriors were accompanied by their family, as proven by M.I. x, 7 from Nob (see Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.133).

The members of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* were more concerned than the other two communities of heroes to settle succession in their household in the case they would lose their life in battle.

la ri mo bris dur rgyags ltor zos tshe slog rgyab tu gon ste mi sdug pa'i chas su byas na rgol pas lJang btul lo/

sMad kyid dpa' sde ni rMaPom ra man chad Ka thang Klu tshes yan cad na mThong khyab srid sde dgu dang 'A zha stong sde drug gnas pa la/ rGya'i so mkhar gyi lcags ri'i steng du rta pa dgu bsgrigs rgyug pa'i nang nas mi mkhar thung tsam gyis dgra sta'i kha khru re tsam pa (p.190) thogs pa la rgol pa'i tshe/ lDong sTong gi bu Phyug mtshams kyis dpon byas/ dpa' mtshan du ral gri'i shubs bcag kha chems nye ba la phog bu sMad nye drung la bcol nas mi ldog pa'i rtsis kyis rgol pas rGya thul bas sMad kyid dpa' sde'o/";

"As for the three *dpa' sde*, the 'Bro, Khyung po, 'Gar, sNubs and gNyan, altogether five communities, are the chieftains of Gug Cog which extends from Ri brang sTag pa gong to Mon 'Bral kha bzhi. Hor mo Bang mdung can ("on foot and brandishing a spear"), the younger wife of Gru gu gSer mig can, burnt off her right breast. She advanced [throwing] three handfuls of arrows and pelting stone slabs as big as the head of a dog [and] smaller stones (*lde'u* sic for *rde'u*). Her sign of bravery being her tiger nest tent, she killed a stallion in battle and smeared her face with its blood. She planned not to come back [from the battlefield]. When she engaged [the enemies] in battle, she defeated the Gru gu.

The Bar gyi *dpa' sde* extends from Ri pe nam lung to Cha skor dar pa. In this land, the residents are the twelve rGya communities belonging to the sBas (spelled so for dBas) [clan]. Nags (spelled so) shod is their headquarters. A lJang mo put a noose on the tip of her spear and, at the time of fighting, rushed in the midst of the enemies. Her sign of bravery being an image of a sword, she ate rotten food from the cemeteries and wore a skin on her back. Her appearance was repulsive. When she engaged [the enemies] in battle, she subdued lJang.

The sMad kyid *dpa' sde* extends from rMa spom ra to bKa' thang klu rtse. Its members are the nine *srid sde* ("communities holding power") of the mThong khyab and the six *stong sde* of the 'A zha. Among the nine horsemen formations attacking the fortifications of the prefectures across the Chinese border, at the time of fighting, there were men [on foot], as big as small castles, carrying axes with a blade one *khru* in size. (p.190) At the time of fighting, the Phyug mtshams and the children of lDong sTong were the chieftains. Their sign of bravery being the broken sheath of a sword, they left their will to their relatives and entrusted their households to their women. They planned not to come back [from the battlefield]. When they engaged [the enemies] in battle, they subdued China".

This description of the activity of the *dpa' sde gsum* indicates that the preeminent duty of the communities of heroes was to launch offensives beyond the borders. They were established to implement the policy of expanding the dominions of sPu rgyal Bod by subduing their neighbours on three fronts. They thus ferried the passage from the control of lands on the plateau to the advance into lands outside it, after the completion of the earlier phase ascribed to Srong btsan sgam po who was responsible for the unification of most of the kingdoms of the plateau under the authority of sPu rgyal Bod. The three *dpa' sde* were strategically located in the three

fronts of territorial expansion on which, for most of the subsequent dynastic period until the reign of Glang dar ma, the Tibetans mobilised troops to expand their empire.

The *dpa' sde gsum* and the *stong sde-s* were, therefore, the products of a different handling of the military organisation of sPu rgyal Bod. The existence of the *stong sde-s* was based on a principle of recruitment undertaken in the areas that composed the various regions of Tibet. The existence of the *dpa' sde-s* was based on a principle of deployment on the fronts of war waged by the Tibetans to accomplish their conquests in Central Asia and also to the south of the plateau.

A comparative reading of the texts on the *dpa' sde gsum* found in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* allows a decipherment of some obscure implications and an assessment of the identity of the heroes mentioned in them. Their description also permits to give a glance at the military campaigns going on in the background. In this attempt, great care should be paid to evaluate the changes and interpolations made by dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba to the text of *mkhas pa lDe'u* (or the latter's authority)²⁸ to see whether they are helpful or detrimental to reaching a coherent view of these matters.

The sections on the *dpa' sde gsum* in both the works are structured in the same way and with similar wording:

- the section opens with an identification of the territory under the jurisdiction of that specific *dpa' sde* and the clans or political entities at the head of it;
- it continues with the description of the bravery of the heroes who fought for each *dpa' sde* and, only in one case, with details of the warfare in which they engaged;
- it ends with the reference to the people or nation subdued by each *dpa' sde* (only found in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*).

The relation between the *dpa' sde gsum* and the *stong sde-s* and the preeminence of the former over the latter is documented by a brief but meaningful sentence in *rGyal po bka' thang*. This passage shows that, unlike the heroes in the Chinese army who perhaps amounted to mercenaries or volunteers,²⁹ the heroes of the Tibetan army were people of special strength and warring ability.³⁰ This is one reason why the Tibetans often scored military successes over

28. Tibetologists often wonder whether the authority used by *mkhas pa lDe'u* is Khu ston's legendary *Lo rgyus chen mo*, as he says in his *chos 'byung*. Notably, *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, which also includes the classification of the *mkhos*, is also known to be indebted to the same missing source.

29. The *Old T'ang Annals* (Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.8) records that, in 676, the Chinese levied an army of heroes from both civil and military ranks. Pelliot thought that they were volunteers. Can this implication be transferred to the Tibetan milieu and the case of the term *dpa' bo*? I doubt this is possible in the light of the statements in the next note.

30. The great esteem in which the heroes were held comes clear in a brief description of Khri lde srong btsan's army. They were select troops. Those parading first were the *dpa' bo-s* wearing their tiger skins. *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.118 lines 8–9) reads: “Gyad kyi dpa' bo dmag gi sna la bskos/”;

China, apart from the technological one since they wore impenetrable armours.³¹ The *dpa' sde*, being three, covered a huge expanse of land each. Their extension can be roughly detected by comparing the borders between them.

The sTod kyi *dpa' sde*

The Tod kyi *dpa' sde* stretched in the west up to So brag sTag po rong, an unknown locality, at least to me. Nonetheless, two aspects of the place name tend to locate it at a border: the terms *so* which stands for a frontier line and *rong* which defines a lower altitude area. It could be, therefore, that So brag sTag po rong was situated outside the highlands of the plateau in the western direction. The territory controlled by this detachment of heroes perhaps extended up to the frontier with the Indo-Iranic borderlands at a lower altitude.

In the east, the opposite limit of its jurisdiction, the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* extended all the way to Mon Kha bzhi, the territory where 'Drug yul (Bhutan) was founded a millennium later. Its territorial dimension may have not corresponded with modern Bhutan. Later evidence dating to the 11th century placed it to the south of the 'Gos yul stod gsum and the land occupied by the rGya (see Vitali, "Glimpses of the history of the rGya clan with reference to Nyang stod, lHo Mon and nearby lands" (7th-13th century)"). A reading of the territory of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* helps to assign the border of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* in the northeast to the frontier with

"Heroes with special physical strength were appointed to lead the troops". Is this a sign that the *dpa' sde*-s combined with the *stong sde*-s?

Heroes and warriors with special physical strength were assigned to two of the four wings composed by the best troops of the Tibetan army in Mu tig btsan po's campaign to the north. dGe 'dun chos 'phel excerpts a passage from *rGyal po bka' thang* (*Deb ther dkar po* p.20 lines 4–11): "rGyal po'i thang yig tu/ Mu tig btsan pos byang du dmag drangs tshul bshad pa na/ mdun gyi bshul sel gyad mi rta zhon brgya/ g.yas kyi ru 'dren dpa' bo stag chas brgya/ g.yon gyi ru 'dren sngags mkhan phur thogs brgya/ slad kyi rjes nyul zhub chen mdung thogs brgya/ sogs bshad pas so/"; "According to the description in *rGyal po'i thang yig* of the arrangement of the troops brought by Mu tig btsan po to the north, in front, 100 men of great physical strength on horses opened the way; 100 heroes wearing the tiger attire led the right horn; 100 skilled *sngags pa* brandishing a *phur [pa]* led the left horn; in the back, 100 heavily armoured [troops] brandishing a spear followed. So they are described [there]".

31. Tibetan iron was the precursor of Carolingian iron of the later part of the 8th century. Technology travelled. Charlemagne's war successes were due to dressing his warriors with iron armours covering the whole body, much like the sPu rgyal Tibetans did during the campaigns to forge their empire in Central Asia.

Nag[s] shod, mentioned in relation to the *stong bu chung* of the Sum ru *stong sde*-s, perhaps not far from 'Dam shung, the historical door of dBus coming from Khams.

The 'Bro, Khyung po, sNubs, 'Gar and gNyan 'dre are said to have been the *dpon*-s of Gu ge and Cog la, the area in Zhang zhung smad where the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* was based.

The indications of the clans who were the chieftains of the land where the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* was centred is meaningful beyond its military implications. Judging from the ethnic identification of the clans in Gu ge and Cog la at the time of Srong btsan sgam po's 644–649 conquest of Zhang zhung (see Vitali, *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming) or soon thereafter, the central Tibetans were already ethnically settled in Gug Cog at the time of the formation of this detachment of heroes.³²

Some of these clans were originally extraneous to Zhang zhung in general and to Gu ge and Cog la in particular (see the *mi'u rigs* classifications in the *rus mdzod* literature). They belonged to the conquerors who came to settle in these lands in the aftermath of several campaigns by sPu rgyal Bod to subdue Zhang zhung, which also took place before the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. Or else their presence in Gug Cog could have been the consequence of the definitive conquest of this kingdom which occurred during the reign of this king. However, it is more probable that they were sent to Zhang zhung after the death of Srong btsan sgam po when the need of the day was to consolidate the conquest.

The Bar gyi *dpa' sde*

Despite being assigned borders of difficult identification, the fact that Nag[s] shod was its headquarters indicates that the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* was located in Sum yul. The *stong bu chung* of Sum ru was equally located in Nag[s] shod.

The double role of Nag[s] shod as the centre of the Sum ru *stong sde*-s and the seat of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* does not extend to the third classification of the lands of Sum yul, which refers to the demarcation of the borders of this horn (*Sum ru'i ru mtshams*). In this classification the centre of Sum ru was located in rGya shod (at sTag pa tshal). Nag[s] shod and rGya shod are not too far from one another—Nag[s] shod near 'Bri ru and rGya shod near Ban dkar; see,

32. The integration of the individual ancestral tribes which resulted in the formation of the Tibetan people goes back to proto-historical times. Such a process of integration, also possibly caused by long forgotten political events, led members of clans or entire clans to migrate to regions of the plateau other than their ancestral ones and favoured tribal mingling (see my article "Tribes which populated the Tibetan plateau (as treated in the texts collectively called the *Khungs chen po bzhi*)"). This process of ethnic unification occurring among the ancestral tribes and clans facilitated sPu rgyal Bod's conquest of the kingdoms and principalities of ancient Tibet. This proto-historical phase of ethnic assimilation created the conditions for sPu rgyal Bod, the most aggressive power on the plateau, to pursue the annexation of the other political units. The annexation of rival principalities would have been hardly possible otherwise.

for instance, the map *Bod dang sa 'brel khag*, published by the Amnye Machen Institute). I read this discrepancy in the sense that the military centre of the region was Nag[s] shod with its geographical centre at rGya shod.³³

The Bar gyi *dpa' sde* was no less extended than the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*. It covered the regions from the border of dBus up to rMa chen sPom ra, where the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* had its western border.

mKhas pa lDe'u credits the twelve communities of the rGya, members of the ancestral lDong Mi nyag tribe, with the control of the headquarters of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* (and the *stong bu chung* of the Sum ru *stong sde-s*). dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba interprets the matter in the sense that the rGya were the inhabitants of the land where the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* was established and adds that the rGya of this *dpa' sde* belonged to the dBa's/dBas clan.

In their classifications of the *stong sde-s* of Sum ru, *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* concord in saying that they were composed by the Sum pa and the rGya.³⁴ Their collated reading is an indication of the remarkable physical contiguity between the rGya, one of the groups of the ancestral lDong tribe of Mi nyag, and the Sum pa of sTong origin. The

33. On the territorial interchangeability of Nag[s] shod and rGya shod see *Bod ljongs Nag chu sa khul gyi lo rgyus rig gnas* (p.10 lines 20–23) which says: “sPu rgyal btsan po Srong btsan gyi skabs su/ 'di yul ni Sum pa'i ru sTong khyab brGya ldan nam Nag shod stong bu chung gi gras sam der gtogs zhiig ye yin snyams de ni Nag shod dang rGya shod sTag pa tshal dang sa 'dres yin pas red//”; “During the time of the sPu rgyal king Srong btsan sgam po, this land was Sum pa'i ru. One wonders whether this was [where] sTong (spelled so) khyab brGya (spelled so) ldan [were settled] or it was Nag shod with the rank of *stong bu chung*, or else whether the latter was included in the former. This [land] was composed by Nag[s] shod and rGya shod sTag pa tshal whose areas are contiguous”.

The evidence provided by combining the accounts of the sMad and Bar gyi *dpa' sde* dismisses the hypothesis that the mThong khyab were in Nag[s] shod, too.

34. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.259 lines 10–14) says: “sPyir Sum pa'i stong sde'i ming ni lTe khyab rGya ldan gyi stong sde zhes bya ste/ de'i nang nas stong sde bcu gcig Srong btsan sgam pos tshur bcad de/ rTse mthon dang Yo mthon gnyis/ rGod tshang stod smad gnyis/ 'Dzom stod 'Dzom smad gnyis/ Tre stod Tre smad gnyis/ Kha ro dang Kha bzang gnyis/ Nag shod stong bu chung dang bcu gcig go//”; “In general, the *stong sde-s* of the Sum pa are named the *stong sde-s* of the lTe (spelled so for mThong) khyab rGya ldan (i.e. the “mThong khyab inclusive of the rGya”). Srong btsan sgam po created their subdivisions as follows: rTse mthon and Yo mthon, altogether two; rGod tshang stod smad, altogether two; 'Dzom stod 'Dzom smad, altogether two; Tre stod [and] Tre smad, altogether two; Kha ro and Kha bzang, altogether two; [and] Nag shod which is the *stong bu chung*, eleven in all”.

mKhas pa 'i dga' ston (p.188 lines 2–5) adopts different spellings and omits any link with Srong btsan sgam po: “rTse mthon Pho mthon gnyis/ rGod tshang stod smad gnyis/ 'Jong stod 'Jong smad gnyis/ Dre stod Dre smad gnyis/ Kha ro Ka zangs gnyis/ Nags shod stong bu chung ste Sum pa'i ru sTong khyab (sic) rGya ldan gyi bcu gcig go//”; “rTse mthon [and] Pho mthon, altogether two; rGod tshang stod smad, altogether two; 'Jong stod [and] 'Jong smad, altogether two; Dre stod [and] Dre smad, altogether two; Kha ro [and] Ka zangs, altogether two; with Nags (spelled so) shod being the *stong bu chung*, are the Sum pa'i ru sTong (sic) khyab inclusive of the rGya”.

way Sum ru was organised shows that sPu rgyal Bod combined Sum yul and rGya'i yul, a political and geographical arraignment that did not change throughout the centuries. Hence Sum ru was substantially different from Sum yul since military communities of rGya (Mi nyag) were incorporated into the “fifth horn” of sPu rgyal Bod.

Unlike the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*, there is no trace of loyalist clans taking over from the local ethnic composition. This could indicate the lesser intensity of the struggle that led to the conquest of the Sum pa and the rGya. These two populations were keener to accept the status of vassals, as the submission of the Sum pa, through negotiations during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po after their military defeat, indicates (see Chapter Six of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* lines 303–305, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.51–52). In Zhang zhung, by contrast, local clans were removed from power, deported and substituted with loyalist clans.

The sMad kyi *dpa' sde*

The section on the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* is the most historically comprehensive. Like the other two detachments of heroes, its introductory lines identify its composition, the heads of this *dpa' sde*, and its territorial extension whose western border was the rMa chen spom ra range. In that direction the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* covered the land up to the borderland between Khams and A mdo. Cryptic is its eastern at bKa' thang klu rtse. Its location is far from being easily ascertainable, its topography not conveying any clue.

Its communities were the nine *srid sde* (“communities holding power”) of mThong khyab and the six *sde* of the 'A zha.³⁵ The statement provides rare evidence that the 'A zha, too, were organised into military/administrative communities in addition to the mDo Khams mDo chen *rgod stong sde bryad* recorded by dPa'bo gtsug lag phreng ba among the dBang ris bco bryad. However, neither the nine *srid sde* of the mThong khyab nor the six *stong sde* of the 'A zha are identified in the passage. As in the case of Sum ru with the rGya, mThong khyab cohabited in A mdo with one more ancestral tribe of the *rus mdzod* literature, for the 'A zha belonged to the Se Khyung dBra mi 'u rigs.

35. There is ample evidence in the fragments from Central Asia published by Thomas (see *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* passim) concerning the 'A zha in charge of the dominions of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*, whose regiments are defined *sde drug* by mkhas pa lDe'u, that military detachments were also simply called *sde*. dPa'bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba changes the *sde drug* of mkhas pa lDe'u into *stong sde drug*.

THE SMAD KYI DPA' SDE'S 'A ZHA TROOPS

The presence of six communities of 'A zha troops in the sMad kyī dpa' sde compels me to give a look first into the background of their enrollment in the sPu rgyal army before examining the more complex case of mThong khyab, a remarkably elusive and obscure topic in the history of the dynastic period.³⁶

Ar. Macdonald ("Une lecture des Pelliot tibétaines 1286, 1287, 1038, 1047 et 1290" p.252–253) says that the 'A zha were subjugated during Srong btsan sgam po's campaigns of 634–638. However, historical evidence shows that his campaigns were a military action with the objective to make China recognise the existence of a real power on the plateau. The campaign resulted in a temporary conquest of the 'A zha kingdom.³⁷ Srong btsan sgam po pursued an active policy of raiding the Chinese border towns in the years 635–638 (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.23), profiting of the unsettled situation caused by the revolt of the 'A zha against China. They reaffirmed their independence in the years 634–635 but were eventually defeated by T'ang T'ai-tsung, and their king, Fu-yün, committed suicide.³⁸ With his 634–638 campaigns, Srong btsan sgam po showed that Tibetan subjugation of the 'A zha was an inevitable and imminent development.

Its definitive annexation was eventually accomplished during the reign of Mang srong mang btsan.³⁹ It was mGar sTong rtsan yul zung and his sons who, in the years 659–670, brought to completion the conquest of the plateau, a step not taken by Srong btsan sgam po who preferred peaceful relations with China to a final confrontation in 'A zha'i yul.

36. Unless documents proving the opposite will resurface in the future, it is conspicuous that in the treatment of the *mkhos drug* there is no trace of either a *khod/mkhos dpon* in charge of 'A zha'i yul or of *stong sde-s* of the 'A zha, to whose organisation they belong.

37. There is no evidence whether the capital of the 'A zha, said in the travelogue of the Indian monk Jinagupta (b. 528) to have been, in 557, fifteen *li* west of mTsho sngon (see Kuwayama, "Literary Evidence for the Bamyān Colossi" p.718–719), was moved elsewhere during the some eighty years before their defeat at the hands of Srong btsan sgam po, followed in the next decade by their military annexation to sPu rgyal Bod. This location was dangerously close to the Chinese outposts in the Kokonor region and must have exposed the 'A zha to their attacks.

38. See Molé (*The Tu-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the Time of the Five Dynasties* p.51–53) for these events. Beckwith (*The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.20–21) is wrong in saying that the 'A zha, emboldened by the power vacuum in China caused by the passage from the Sui to the T'ang dynasty, revolted against China well after the death of the Chinese Yang-ti in 618 and after Srong btsan sgam po's sister Sad mar kar went in marriage to the Zhang chung king, Lig myi rhya. The passage from the Sui to the T'ang occurred several decades earlier than he claims, in 617.

39. Even the wording used in Chapter Six of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* to describe the extent of control established by sPu rgyal Bod over the rGya (Tangut) and the 'A zha on that occasion does not allow one to envisage a definitive and complete crushing of the ancient Tu-yü-hun kingdom.

The *Chronicles* (lines 306–307, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyī lo rgyus yig cha* p.52) read: "Byang lam du ma byung ma drangs par/ rGya dang 'A zhas dpya' gtsal lo/ thog ma 'A zha de nas 'bangs su mnga'o/p"; "[Srong btsan sgam po] did not even lead troops on the *byang lam* that the rGya

The dynamics of the events that led to the conquest of 'A zha'i yul indicate that mGar sTong rtsan yul zung, the *de facto* head of sPu rgyal Bod of those years, was personally involved in the conquest of the Tu-yü-hun kingdom. In the absence of precise signs, it is difficult to ascertain the motives of the continuous presence—with the exception of 662 when he was in Zhang chung—of blon po mGar in 'A zha'i yul from 659 to 666, the year he left the region before passing in 667. Was his demise consequent to his activity in the land of the 'A zha?⁴⁰

The crushing of the 'A zha king, No-ho-po, at the hands of the Tibetans is recorded in the two *T'ang Annals* and *Deb ther dkar po*, given that dGe 'dun chos 'phel based himself upon them. The date of the event is indirectly provided in the entry for the year of the pig 663 (*ibid.* line 42, see *Thun hong thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.14 lines 8–9). This indicates that sPu rgyal Bod had to wage a protracted war (659–666) to finish off the 'A zha who were supported by China.⁴¹ Beckwith proposes that the presence of blon po mGar in the land of the

and the 'A zha offered submission. The 'A zha had been subjects beforehand”.

For the meaning “to lead troops” for *ma drangs*, to be changed into *dmag drangs*, see Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (*Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.77 n.87) in reference to the entry for the tiger year 714 (*Tun-huang Annals* lines 145–146, see *ibid.* p.42).

40. Blon po mGar was in 'A zha'i yul in 659 according to the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 10,35; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.13, lines 27–31). The *T'ang-shu* says that sPu rgyal Bod moved against the 'A zha in 660. This is just one case of discrepancy between the dates of the *Tun-huang Annals* and the Chinese sources. Often Beckwith in *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* dismisses the dates of the *Tun-huang Annals*, warning his reader about them and preferring the Chinese ones. Should the takeover of the 'A zha by sPu rgyal Bod be antedated by one year? Or else, if the *T'ang Annals* date should be validated and the *Tun-huang Annals* also given credit, what did the presence of blon po mGar in 'A zha'i yul in the previous year 659 mean?

The *Tun-huang Annals* adopts the same formula to describe blon po mGar's presence in 'A zha'i yul during that span of time:

- year of the sheep 659 (*ibid.* line 10,35; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.13);
- year of the monkey 660 (line 11,38; *ibid.* p.14);
- year of the bird 661 (*ibid.* line 12,39; *ibid.*);
- year of the pig 663 (*ibid.* line 14,42; *ibid.*);
- year of the rat 664 (*ibid.* line 15,43; *ibid.*);
- year of the ox 665 (*ibid.* line 16,44; *ibid.*): “Blon che [mGar] sTong rtsan stayed in the land of the 'A zha”.
- year of the tiger 666 (*ibid.* line 17,45; *ibid.*): “Blon che sTong rtsan 'A zha yul nas slar//”; “Blon che [mGar] sTong rtsan returned from the land of the 'A zha”.
- year of the hare 667 (*ibid.* line 18,47; *ibid.*): “Blon che sTong rtsan Ris pur gum//”; “Blon che sTong rtsan died at Ris pu”.

41. dGe 'dun chos 'phel has based his account of sPu rgyal Bod's final subjugation of the 'A zha, whom he calls Gru gu, on the two *T'ang Annals*. His version in *Deb ther dkar po* (p.112 line 16–p.113 line 14) reads as follows: “De nas lo Inga song ba na/ Gru gu nams rGya la shor ba/ mGar gyis thos te/ dmag bzang po nams 'khrid nas Gru gu'i thog (p.113) tu song/ de'i tshe Gru gu'i dpon So-ho-ge bya ba Bod kyi phyogs su bros te/ rang yul gyi nang nams thams cad sbran/ der Bod dang Gru gu gnyis

'A zha was due to the concern of consolidating the conquest, but this applies only to the years immediately after the takeover of the 'A zha in 663 that lasted until 666, hence before blon po 'Gar's death in 667. Following his rout, No-ho-po went in exile to the Chinese borderlands and died in 688 without being able to reassert his power and see his homeland again.⁴²

The *Tun-huang Annals* record in the entry for the snake year 669 that a great number of 'A zha gave themselves up to the Tibetans and asked to become their subjects.⁴³

With the stinging debacle inflicted in 670 at Ta-fei by the Tibetans upon a Chinese army sent to evict them from the Tu-yü-hun kingdom, sPu rgyal Bod's control of the 'A zha was no longer disputed (Molé, *The Tu-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the Time of the Five Dynasties*

ka g.yul bskeyes/ phyogs gnyis ka nas gong du yig phul te/ grogs tan byed par zhus kyang/ gong nas su'i phyogs kyang ma gngang/ mthar Bod dmag gis Gru gu rang te/ Gru gu'i rgyal po Mu yun No he po dang/ rgyal mo Wam phā gnyis 'khor dang bcas pa/ rang yul bor te Lan jo phyogs su bros/ Bod dmag gis Gru gu'i rgyal po'i rjes snyegs pa 'gog pa'i ched du/ gong nas dmag dpon 'Dzin zhen the dang/ Thu'u g tseng yun gnyis/ Lan jo dang/ Hran jor btang//", "Then five years elapsed and [in 663] mGar heard that the Gru gu (i.e. the 'A zha) had submitted to the Chinese, so, having gathered select troops, he invaded the Gru gu (i.e. the 'A zha). At that time, the Gru gu (i.e. the 'A zha) chieftain So-ho-ge fled to Bod. Everyone in his land was called [to serve in the army]. Hence a warfare broke out between both Bod and the Gru gu (i.e. the 'A zha). The two parties [at war] sent messages to the [Chinese] emperor. Although they sought [his intervention] to attempt a pacification, the emperor did not listen to either side. Eventually, the Tibetan army seized the Gru gu (i.e. the 'A zha). Both the king of the Gru gu (i.e. the 'A zha), Mu-yun No-he-po, and the queen, Wam-phā, together with their court, left their country and fled to Lan-jo. The Tibetan troops pursued the king of the Gru gu (i.e. the 'A zha) and, in order to rescue him [from the Tibetans], the emperor sent the *dmag dpon-s*, 'Dzin-sheng-the and Thu'u-gu-tseng-yun, altogether two, to Lan-jo and Hran-jo".

Also see Molé, *The Tu-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the Time of the Five Dynasties* (p.58 and n.490) for another reading of the same passages.

42. Molé, *The Tu-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the Time of the Five Dynasties* (p.59). The 'A zha ruler after No-ho-po was his son Chung who died in 698 (ibid. p.XXI; n.501 and n.504). In his *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* (p.57) Beckwith records that, in 695, 'Dus srong mang po rje put to death the 'A zha ruler, namely 'Bon Dar rgyal (a title), to punish him for his military failure of the same year. The 'Bon Dar rgyal could have not been Chung, and thus he was not the king of the 'A zha but a nobleman.

That this is not a proper name is confirmed, for instance, by the entry for the year of the rat 712 in the *Tun-huang Annals* where a 'Bon Da rgyal (spelled so) is mentioned twice (ibid. lines 63,133–134 and lines 63,135–136; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.22).

43. *Tun-huang Annals* (line 49, see *Thun hong thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.14 lines 21–22) reads: "sPrul gyi lo la/ 'A zha mang po phyag tshal te/ gte'u bsdus par lo chig//"; "Year of the snake Many 'A zha offered submission and gathered [under the Tibetans] as subjects".

See Dotson, *The Old Tibetan Annals* (n.154) where he rejects dGe 'dun chos 'phel's interpretation which I follow, and opts for reading *gte'u* as a place name. He translates the second sentence: "They convened [the council] at gTe'u". I do not follow him for the simple reason that the particle *te* connects the two sentences and thus the second one is the continuation of the first.

p.59 and n.499).⁴⁴ The events of 670 brought to an end a long struggle made more difficult for the Tibetans by the Chinese attempt to reinstate their own puppet 'A zha ruler. However, the *Tun-huang Annals* record, on later occasions, the presence of the Tibetan top brass of the period in 'A zha'i yul, which may indicate that military activity was undertaken in the region (see the entries for the year 693, 695, 735 and 759; *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.18, 27, 31).

The defeat had wider consequences because it removed Chinese dominance in southern Central Asia beyond the Kokonor region. It affected the power balance in the Tarim Basin, physically cutting China off from the Four Garrisons which were captured by sPu rgyal Bod (see below p.246–248 for Tibetan victories on this front in reference to the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*).

THE MTHONG KHYAB, A UNIT OF SMAD KYI *DPA' SDE*'S TROOPS

The mThong khyab, a military unit of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*, need to be disentangled from misconceptions in order to give them their true self. They are mentioned in literary material concerned with the dynastic period and hardly anywhere thereafter in the history of Tibet.

As well known, a first sign of the mThong khyab is found in the classifications of the *stong sde-s* in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*, the latter based on the former? Or both on Khu ston's *Lo rgyus chen mo*? These sources hold that the ten *stong sde* of Sum pa'i ru and its *stong bu chung* were collectively those of the mThong khyab. Hence the entire military force of Sum pa'i ru is assigned to the mThong khyab. mKhas pa lDe'u and dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba who also say that the mThong khyab, posted in Sum ru (and possibly composed by Sum pa warriors; see below for evidence supporting this attribution), benefited from the addition of other troops ethnically belonging to the rGya tribe.

44. Traces are preserved in the literature, apart from the *'A zha Annals*, that the kingdom of the Tu-yü-hun, like Sum yul, still had a nominal ruler as late as the reign of Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs (798–815). In the *bka' gtsigs* of the edict of Sad na legs, among the authorities who took oath there was the ruler of the 'A zha (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.411 line 21–p.412 line 1: “dBon (sic for 'Bon) 'A zha rje dud kyi bul zhi khud bor ma ga (p.412) T'o [yo] gon kha gan/'”), said to belong to a *rgyal phran*.

This, of course, is a political vision of the early 9th century, and the reference to the kingdom of the 'A zha as a *rgyal phran* denotes a state of vassalage rather than an independent principality. There are signs of continuity in the sPu rgyal control of the Tu-yü-hun kingdom between the time of its annexation and the reign of Sad na legs. 'Bon 'A zha rje appears in the entry for the hare year 727 of the *Tun-huang Annals* and again in the entry for the tiger year 750 (*ibid.* line 78,194 and line 101,5 respectively; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.25–26 and p.29). The 'A zha ruler is included among those who took oath in the *bka' gtsigs* of the bSam yas edict, which proclaimed Buddhism as the state religion (*ibid.* p.372 lines 15–16: “Bro stsald pa la/ dBon 'A zha rje/'”; “As for those who swore the oath, [one was] dBon (sic for 'Bon) 'A zha rje”).

These statements have a geographical and ethnic significance. The geographical implication is that this reference helps to locate the deployment of the mThong khyab in the ten territorial divisions of Sum yul, with its headquarters in Nag[s] shod—present-day Nag chu kha—the hub of this territory.

The point of departure in the assessment of the ethnic composition of the sMad kyī dpa' sde is the presence of people of the rGya and the Sum pa in the Tibetan army. This was the consequence of Srong btsan sgam po's two steps campaign, the pre-634 military action that led to the annexation of the Sum pa and the subsequent advance into the Chinese borderlands that made the takeover of the rGya a necessary subjugation.⁴⁵ Arguably, Sum yul became also known as Sum ru when it was taken over by sPu rgyal Bod and was included in its military organisation based on the "horn" system.

The assertion of *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.259 lines 10–11) that the formation of the ten *stong sde*—and the *stong bu chung*—of Sum ru were created by Srong btsan sgam po, works, too, as a credible attribution of the existence of the mThong khyab to this king. The sPu rgyal establishment of these military bodies is supported and reinforced by the fact that nowhere else they are ascribed to any political entity on the plateau before these annexations by the central Tibetans.

At an initial stage, the mThong khyab were deployed in Sum pa'i ru and assigned the task of exercising control over newly conquered Sum yul and nearby territories.⁴⁶ At that time the sPu rgyal frontier was Sum yul. The consequence would be that the mThong khyab were perhaps created before Srong btsan sgam po advanced against the rGya and then in the Chinese borderlands.

The discrepancy in the two accounts of the *khod/khos dpon-s*, whereby dPa' bo gtsug lag substitutes the Mon of mkhas pa lDe'u with the Sum pa creates a major complication. dPa' bo keeps the Sum pa and the mThong khyab *khod/mkhos dpon-s* separate in this instance and

45. Their name rGya should not be read as China because these people were part of the proto Tibetan tribes. Their annexation into the sPu rgyal kingdom at the time of Srong btsan sgam po's takeover of the Sum pa is mentioned in the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (Chapter Six lines 299–307; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyī lo rgyus yig cha* p.51–52) and the *Old T'ang Annals* indirectly (Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.4). On the subjugation of the Sum pa rather than their submission see my *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming).

46. In the *stong sde* system, whose creation is assigned to Srong btsan sgam po and thus more or less contemporary with the introduction of the *mkhos drug* (Srong btsan sgam po died a few years after the final conquest of Zhang zhung), the mThong khyab are associated with Sum pa'i ru. Sum ru appears for the first time in the entry for the tiger year 702 in the *Tun-huang Annals* in reference to its *mkhos* (line 53,90; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyī lo rgyus yig cha* p.19).

then provides evidence, based on the classifications of the *stong sde*-s of Sum ru, leading to the conclusion that, around the same time, Sum yul and the mThong khyab overlapped.

mKhas pa lDe'u's classification is more linear. There is no Sum yul in his treatment, which allows the suggestion that the mThong khyab *khod/mkhos dpon* was deployed in Sum ru at the onset and assigned the task of exercising control over newly conquered Sum yul and nearby territories. But his remarkably vague Mon remains unidentified (the Mywa of 'Jang/lJang?).

The point of contact between the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* and the Sum ru *stong sde*-s I have mentioned in the previous pages is not without structural differences in the military organisation. Both had Nag[s] shod as *stong bu chung*, which indicates that this *dpa' sde* and the Sum ru *stong sde*-s were connected. But the *stong bu chung* of Sum ru, like its ten *stong sde*, is attributed to the mThong khyab, a military force that included troops from the rGya tribe.⁴⁷

The Nag[s] shod *stong bu chung* of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* is assigned to the rGya alone. Is this a sign that, in the meantime, the mThong khyab had been transferred to the east to form and support the sMad kyī *dpa' sde*? Given that the epitome of bravery in the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* was the heroine from lJang, is Dus srong mang po rje's 703–704 military activity in this territory, mentioned in the *Tun-huang Annals* entries for these two years, a *terminus post quem* for the creation of both these *dpa' sde*?

If the historical hypothesis that there was a transfer of the Sum ru *stong sde*-s to the east, which went to form and support the sMad kyī *dpa' sde*, is reliable as it seems, the *stong sde*-s would be based on a concept of recruitment undertaken locally in Khams and the *dpa' sde*-s would be based on a need of deployment in areas militarily sensitive.

The description of the sMad kyī *dpa' sde*, too, indicates that the territorial sphere of competence of the mThong khyab extended from the area of rMa chen spom ra, at the eastern edge of Sum yul, onwards. In the process, the mThong khyab community of heroes came to

47. Before coming to enumerate the *stong sde*-s of Sum ru associated with ten areas of Khams plus their *stong bu chung*, mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung and mKhas pa'i dga' ston stress their military composition. mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.259 lines 10–11) says: "sPyir Sum pa'i stong sde'i ming ni lTe khyab rGya ldan gyi stong sde zhes bya ste/ de'i nang nas stong sde bcu gcig Srong btsan sgam pos tshur bca/"; "In general the *stong sde*-s of the Sum pa are named the *stong sde*-s of lTe (so spelled for mThong) khyab rGya ldan (i.e. "mThong khyab inclusive of the rGya"). Srong btsan sgam po subdivided them into eleven *stong sde*".

mKhas pa'i dga' ston, too, (p.188 line 5) attributes them to Srong btsan sgm po and adds: "Sum pa'i ru sTong khyab (sic) rGya ldan gyi bcu gcig go/"; "They are the Sum pa'i ru sTong (sic) khyab inclusive of the rGya" (on both see above n.34).

If read verbatim, all *stong sde*-s of Sum ru would have been formed by the mThong khyab unit that included people of rGya stock. The provenance of the warriors enrolled in the sTong khyab is not indicated in the sources. The only ethnic reference is to the rGya from the lDong tribe, but it is unrealistic to think that this was an exclusive composition.

be associated with groups of 'A zha troops, a long term consequence of the conquest of 'A zha'i yul by the mGar family in the post Srong bstan sgam po years.

A feature of treatments found in fundamental historical works, such as mkhas lDe'u and dPa' bo, is that, in order to fulfil the constraints of classificatory requirements, they are occasionally somewhat static. The case of the *dpa'sde gsum* is typical of these classificatory constraints, for they should be interpreted in dynamic terms. The activities of the sTod kyi *dpa'sde* and sMad kyi *dpa'sde* mentioned in these sources are separated by a remarkable lapse of time but they are compacted together.

This also applies to the Bar gyi and sMad gyi *dpa'sde*-s. The mThong khyab unit was deployed in Sum ru during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po and then in A mdo during Khri srong lde btsan's tenure of the *lha sras btsan po* throne (see immediately below). These events are separated by more than 100 years. The possibility that the mThong khyab were moved from one headquarters (Sum ru) to another (sMad kyi *dpa'sde*) is real but needs to be confirmed by extra evidence.

The rGya kept on being involved in the military defence of Sum yul and bordering lands. This is based on the possibility that, with the mThong khyab being relocated in A mdo to control Central Asia as part of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*,⁴⁸ the Bar gyi *dpa'sde* was created to fill the gap and took charge of the military control of Sum ru and the lands south of it.

mKhas pa lDe'u's treatment of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* first identifies in the mThong khyab together with the 'A zha the components of this detachment of heroes, and then adds the ethnic origin—sTong [Sum pa] and lDong [rGya Mi nyag]—of the heroes responsible for the conquest of the Chinese prefectures (see below). dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba does sensibly worse, citing a distorted and thus incomprehensible lTong lTong. The ethnic composition of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* partially echoes that of the *stong sde*-s of Sum pa'i ru (the mThong khyab and rGya).

48. Even in the fragments from Central Asia, when they refer to members of the mThong khyab warriors, their ethnicity is not mentioned except a few deviations from this state of affairs (see the Addendum to this essay of mine).

For instance, a document from Tshal byi in the Nob region records the presence of the mThong khyab at this place but without ethnic details of those coopted in this unit (M.I. i, 23 lines 1–3 in Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.121–123): “Gung Khri bzer gyi bsnyel byang du snyan snyungs pa/ Tshal [byi] [two words lacuna] bdag chag snyun/ Lang myi'i sde las/ pha' tshe bka' chad gyis kh [three words lacuna] mThong khyab na bsnand par / bka' lung las 'byung ba/”; “The disease of Gung Khri bzer that has come to be known should not be forgotten. We [at] Tshal byi [wonder about] his illness. Originally from the *myi sde* of Lang, owing to the orders at the time [of showing] heroism, we are enrolled among the mTshong khyab”.

Hence the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* was based on people of Sum pa, rGya and 'A zha origin, which shows that one of the benefits of the subjugation of these ancient kingdoms by Srong btsan sgam po and blon po mGar was their involvement in the conquest of the sPu rgyal empire.⁴⁹

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung also says that the Dor te (written Dor ste *ibid.* p.258 line 15) and Phyug 'tshams, while dPa' bo has only the former spelled Phyugs mtshams, shared the post of chieftains of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* with the children of the lDong and sTong.⁵⁰ A section of Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* dealing with these events confirms that the Dor te and Phyug tshams (spelled so) were among the chieftains of these campaigns. It adds the sTe 'dzom and also says that all three were granted distinctions for their bravery.⁵¹

A perusal of the *mkhos drug* classifications in the works of mkhas pa lDe'u and dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba—in particular those of the *stong sde*-s and *dbang ris bco brgyad*—and also of lDe'u Jo sras shows that the names Dor te and Phyug 'tshams, besides being associated with the chieftains of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*, carry an array of ethnic and military implications. Dor sde and Phyugs mtshams (spelled so) were two *stong sde* of dBu ru. In particular Phyugs mtshams is a clan which received the area of Lungshod, where 'Bri gung thel was going to be built in earth pig 1179 by sKyob pa 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po, as its share of power.⁵²

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49. A contract unearthed at Mīrān (M.I., xxv, 003) is important, for it confirms that people enrolled in the mThong khyab belonged to one of its composing tribes—the lDong Mi nyag people whose origin was Tangut—according to the literature under study in this essay of mine. One, namely lDong Pring, a member of the Thong khyab kyi *sde*, is mentioned in it (see M.I., xxv, 003 in Takeuchi, *Old Tibetan Manuscripts from Eastern Turkestan in the Stein Collection of the British Library* vol. II n. 594 p.201).
50. dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.190 line 1) opts to correct the reference to the “children of the lDong and sTong” into the “children of lTong lTong”, which empties the expression of its ethnonymic significance.
51. Chapter Eight of the *Chronicles* says that the heroes who deserved a reward for their bravery were the Dor te, Phyug tshams and sTe 'dzom, while there is no trace that the “children of the lDong and sTong”, mentioned in the account of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* for their bravery, received the same honour. Is this another celebration of sPu rgyal's loyalists at the expense of the foreigners, an attitude about which Khyung po sPung sad zu rtse complained about in his famous song? Was this antagonist perspective dropped in post-dynastic Tibet when these ethno-political rivalries were so anachronistic that they were not even relics of the past and thus they do not appear anymore in the account of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*?
52. Dor te/Dor sde Phyugs 'tshams is an ethnonym treated by late authors in reference to both a single *stong sde* of dBu ru and more than one. *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.110 line 13) has: “Dor sde Phyr 'tshams//”; *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.258 lines 15–16) writes: “Dor ste dang sDe mtshams gnyis/ Phyug 'tshams dang 'Grangs 'tshams gnyis//” and *mKhas pa' dga'ston* (p.187 line 12) is still slightly different: “Dor sde sDe mtshams gnyis/ Phyugs mtshams 'Brang mtshams gnyis/ Te 'dzom 'Bri te gnyis te bzhi/ Co la Zo stengs gnyis te drug/ Kyi stod Kyi smad gnyis te bryad/ Phor kha

Nam ru phag gnyis te bcu/ 'Grangs Nyen khar gnyis te bcu gnyis/ sPel zhabs stong bu chung dang bcu gsum mo//"; "Here follows the complete listing of the dBu ru *stong sde*-s in these sources.

lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung (p.110 lines 11–16): "De la dBu ru'i sa bskor na stong sde phyed bcu gnyis/ stong bu chung dang bcu gsum la/ Dor ste Phyr 'tshams gnyis/ Te 'dzom 'Bri te gnyis te bzhi/ Co la Zo stengs gnyis te drug/ Kyi stod Kyi smad gnyis te brgyad/ Phor kha Ngam ru phag dang gnyis te bcu/ 'Grangs Nyen khar gnyis te bcu gnyis/ sPel zhabs stong bu chung dang bcu gsum mo//"; "As for the reconnaissance of the lands of dBu ru, they are classified into twelve *stong sde*-s and, with their *stong bu chung*, they come to thirteen: Dor sde [and] Phyr 'tshams, two in all; sTe 'dzom [and] 'Bri te, two in all, [which makes] four; Co la [and] Zo stengs, two in all, [which makes] six; Kyi stod [and] Kyi smad, two in all, [which makes] eight; Phor kha [and] Nam ru phag (spelled so), two in all, [which makes] ten; 'Grangs [and] Nyen khar, two in all, [which makes] twelve; and sPel zhabs stong bu chung, [which makes] thirteen".

mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.258 lines 15–17): "dBu ru'i stong sde la/ Dor ste dang sDe mtshams gnyis/ Phyr 'tshams dang 'Grangs 'tshams gnyis/ Com pa dang 'Bri mtshams gnyis/ Kyi stod Kyi smad gnyis/ Yel rab stong bu chung dang dgu/ sku srung shar phyogs pa dang bcu'o//"; "The dBu ru *stong sde*-s were Dor ste and sDe mtshams, two in all; Phyr 'tshams and 'Grangs 'tshams, two in all; gCong pa and 'Bring 'tshams, two in all; Kyi stod Kyi smad, two in all; Yel rabs stong bu chung, nine in all, with the *sku srung* being those of the east, ten in all".

mkhas pa'i dga'ston (p.187 lines 12–14): "Dor sde sDe mtshams gnyis/ Phyr mtshams 'Brang mtshams gnyis/ Com pa 'Bri mtshams gnyis/ sKyid stod sKyid smad gnyis/ Yel rab being stong bu chung sku srung shar phyogs pa dang bcu ni dBu ru'i stong sde bcu'o//"; "Dor sde and sDe mtshams, altogether two; Phyr mtshams and 'Brang mtshams, altogether two; Com pa and 'Bri mtshams, altogether two; sKyid stod sKyid smad, altogether two; Yel rab being the *stong bu chung*, with the *sku srung* being those of the east, altogether ten, were the ten dBu ru *stong sde*".

Among the *dbang ris bco brgyad* of *mkhas pa'i dga'ston* (see above n.7) there is Lungs shod Nam po aka Lung shod, neighbouring Mal gro/Mal tro, said to have been the ancestral home of the 'Dru and Phyr 'tshams (called Phyr 'tshams in the passage of the sMad kyid *dpa'sde* and Phyr 'tshams in Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*). This is an initial indication that the heroes of the sMad kyid *dpa'sde* were known collectively by their clan name.

Yamaguchi ("Su-p'i and Sun-po" n.22) correctly saw a clan in the name, but did not go further than that, omitting the historical complexities of its implications. In their translation of the concerned passage of Chapter Eight of the *Chronicles (Documents de Touen-houang relatifs à l'histoire du Tibet* p.154), Bacot et al. misread the names Dor te Phyr 'tshams and thought that they do not address clans.

The allusions to the Dor te as a sPu rgyal *stong sde* is validated by fragmentary documents from the area of Mīrān mentioning the presence of one of its detachments in this area (see Dor te'i *sde* in M.I., 34 (Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.456–457) and Dor te in M.I. lviii, 003 (ibid. p.165).

Among the *rgyal phran* in P.T. 1286 there is Klum ro'i ya gsum ruled by Seng ti, the "child" (*bu*) of the Nam pa (ibid. lines 14–15; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyid lo rgyus yig cha* p.67), which has a close affinity with Lungs shod Nam po of the *dbang ris bco brgyad*. They are the same land.

Klum ro is mentioned in Chapter Three of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (lines 134–135; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyid lo rgyus yig cha* p.41), which deals with the reign of sTag bu snya gzigs, in relation with the defeat of Zing po rje sTag skya bo and the takeover of his dominions by Zing po

sTe 'dzom is one of the thirteen *stong sde* of dBu ru according to the reckoning of *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (see *ibid.* p.110 line 13 for sTe 'dzom; *ibid.* lines 13–16 for its thirteen

rje Khri pang sum. The annexation of Zing po rje sTag skya bo's principality included Klum ya gsum (the "three parts of Klum").

Klum ro is mentioned in the song that Myang mang po rje Zhang snang sang in reply to Khyung po sPung sad zu tse during the reign of gNam ri slon rtsan. He calls it Klum (Chapter Four line 235; see *ibid.* p.47). It is once more mentioned in the song of Srong btsan sgam po's sister Sad mar kar, which she calls Klum and implies its location which was near Mal tro (spelled so) (Chapter Eight line 422; see *ibid.* p.58).

Hence, the name Klum ro/Klum is adopted in the Tun-huang documents, whereas Klung shod is its denomination in the later sources owing to the appearance of the name Lung shod Nam po, such as in dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's list of the *dbang ris bco brgyad*.

However, an assimilation between the two lands does not extend to clans of the ministers of Klum ro ya gsum and the clans of Lung shod Nam po since they were the Myang and sBrang in the former case, and there is no trace of the 'Dru and Phyugs mtshams. Doubts about the reliability of these statements should be nurtured unless the two documents refer to different periods and different clans occupying this land.

I have questioned the reliability of the P.T. 1286 list of the *rgyal phran-s* concerning the cases of Zhang chung (see my *Fragments of Zhang chung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming) and sNubs gyi gling dgu' (spelled so) (also see above n.8). The discrepancy Klum ro/Lungs shod, too, needs a closer look.

Since I see the *dbang ris bco brgyad* as a list that acknowledges clan ownership over respective lands that was recognised during the *btsan po* period, it seems to refer to the status of Bod fragmented into principalities before the sPu rgyal unification of the plateau. The highlands returned to its tribal and territorial conditions after the ancient order of sPu rgyal Bod imploded during the reigns of Glang dar ma and successors, thus reinstating the clans' control over their own ancient lands.

Seeing a long lapse of time between the references to a different authority in Klum ro'i ya gsum and Lungs shod Nam po, which would allow for a clan change in the land, would substantiate the antiquity of the inclusion of the former land among the *rgyal phran-s*. This would also explain the local presence of the Myang and sBrang at an earlier time and the 'Dru and Phyugs mtshams thereafter.

Not all signs are in favour of this reading.

sDur ba/sNgur ba, Myang mang po rje Zhang snang's castle originally given to Myang Tseng sku by gNam ri slon rtsan for the service rendered to him, including the takeover of Ngas po (*Tun-huang Chronicles* Chapter Four line 191), was in Klum ro ya gsum/Lungs shod Nam po. Klum ro ya gsum became the land of the Myang clan only one generation in the sPu rgyal dynasty before Srong btsan sgam po. If the list of the *dbang ris bco brgyad* should be associated in its entirety with Srong btsan sgam po, the control of Klum ro ya gsum by the Myang clan must have been short lived. There are no clues to say whether it passed under the 'Dru and Phyugs mtshams after Zhang snang was disgraced and killed—his castle destroyed. Or whether the association of the 'Dru and Phyugs mtshams with Klungs shod Nam po in the classification of the *dbang ris bco brgyad* should be dated to an unspecified period after the reign of Srong btsan sgam po.

stong sde of dBu ru), while mkhas pa lDe'u spells it sDe 'tshams (p.258 line 15) and dPa' bo writes it sDe mtshams (ibid. p.187 line 12).⁵³

The chieftain of the Phyug tshams, together with his subalterns, appears among the sPu rgyal authorities in the text compacting the prayers dedicated to the newly built De ga g.yu tshal gtsug lag khang during the reign of Khri gtsug lde rtsan Ral pa can.⁵⁴

The sMad kyi *dpa' sde* was multi-ethnic; and the mThong khyab—its composing force—was multi-ethnic too, as it will be shown below. The fact that the head of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* in the years around 758—and probably in the following decades—were commanders from clans belonging both to the military organisation of dBu ru—the Dor te, Phyug 'tshams and sTe 'dzom—and from the ancient kingdoms of the northern belt of the Tibetan plateau does not qualify this military unit (and the mThong khyab too) for ethnic specificity. It is straight evidence that a military unit of northeastern Tibetans included commanders from Central Tibet. This does not rule out the possibility that the ethnic composition of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* may have been more composite than being inclusive of the Sum pa, rGya and 'A zha but comprised central Tibetan warriors, too, besides their chieftains.

Interaction between the clans of Central Tibet and those from the northern belt of the Tibetan plateau is priorly documented in the literature. The well-known song of Myang mang po rje Zhang snang recorded in the *Tun-huang Chronicles* contains a few lines which prove that splinters of the lDong and sTong were coopted into the sPu rgyal Bod system of governance in a period earlier than the reign of Srong btsan sgam po. These lines enumerate the merits of the clans from Central Tibet in reply to Khyung po sPung sad zu tse's complaint that these clans were unduly praised (Chapter Four lines 238–240, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'I Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.48).

Groups of the lDong and sTong may have already settled in the central region of the plateau during the reign of gNam ri slon rtsan or beforehand, coming into contact with other clans in the area—the lHo and rNgegs linked with the *lha sras btsan po* from the time of gNya' khri; and the Sha and sPug from sKyi yul. This is confirmed by another song, sung by Srong btsan sgam po's sister Sad mar kar (Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* lines 412–416, see

53. As in the case of the Dor te in Mīrān, the existence of a sTe 'dzom military detachment is confirmed by a fragmentary document from Mazār Tāgh which records their name (sTe 'dzom, M. Tāgh. a. iii, 0026; Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.468): “sTe 'dzom [sde] gShen Phan legs gyi (sic) slag pa thum po bzhag//”; “The sTe 'dzom military division. The parcel [containing] the coat of gShen Phan legs is here”.

54. See, e.g., the earliest transcription of the document containing the prayers of De ga g.yu tshal in Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* (vol. II p.92–99); and, in particular, the prayer of the Phyug tshams (p.97 line 11–p.98 line 6 for; and p.103 for the English translation of this part). For a short note of introduction to the Prayers of De ga g.yu tshal see Stein, “Tibetica Antiqua I” (p.215–216).

ibid. p.58 lines 10–19) which indicates that some lDong and sTong had become *lha sras btsan po*'s loyalists in the past.

Possibly in either one of these circumstances the Phyug tshams were assigned Lungs shod as their share of power. In the course of the reform mentioned in Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*, select troops belonging to the *stong sde*-s of dBu ru and people from Lungs shod in Central Tibet were stationed with the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*. They spearheaded the campaign that eventually allowed sPu rgyal Bod to seize Ch'ang-an temporarily (sTag sgra klu khong, *Zhol rdo ring Inscription South Face* lines 52–68, see Richardson, *A Corpus of Early Tibetan Inscriptions* p.12–15; Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.148).

The historical context of the *dpa' sde gsum*'s acts of bravery

Two alternative scenarios can be drawn from the material describing the acts of bravery of the *dpa' sde gsum*. The first heavily relies on the interpolations by dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba to the text of mkhas pa lDe'u or the latter's authority.

- The bKa' brgyud historian ruled out that the heroines mentioned in the treatment of the *dpa' sde gsum* were enemies of sPu rgyal Bod. This is significant for the cases of the women warriors of the sTod kyi and Bar gyi *dpa' sde*-s. He felt the need to affirm openly their commitment in favour of the Tibetans, statements that do not appear in mkhas pa lDe'u's text. The sMad kyi *dpa' sde* chieftains belonged to various Tibetan clans. Hence there is no trace either of female warriors or foreign headwomen in its top ranks. These headmen definitely fought for the Tibetans but dPa' bo felt it necessary to affirm this outspokenly.

Hence, on the basis of the reading in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, the two foreign heroines of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* and Bar gyi *dpa' sde* fought for sPu rgyal Bod.

If the interpolations of dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba that describe the bravery of the sTod kyi and Bar gyi *dpa' sde* are to be credited, one should then conclude that the wars waged by sPu rgyal Bod against the Dru gu and lJang/'Jang were victorious.

As is well known, wars against lJang/'Jang, leading to the establishment of Tibetan sovereignty over this kingdom, are recorded during the reign of Mang srong mang btsan, which *Deb ther dkar po* dates to soon after the death of mGar sTong rtsan;⁵⁵ again at the end

55. dGe 'dun chos 'phel first introduces the death of mGar sTong rtsan yul zung (*Deb ther dkar po* Shes rig par khang 1988 ed. p.144 lines 7–8): “De dus tsa na Bod kyi blon chen mGar sTong btsan de grongs/’”; “At that time the minister of Bod, mGar sTong btsan (spelled so) died”.

He then goes for an identification of his four sons—mGar bTsan snya sdom bu, mGar Khri 'bring btsan brod, blon Zi mdo ye and blon 'Bal lon rnam las—and adds that bTsan snya sdom bu took charge of the paternal household; the other three became military commanders (ibid. p.145 lines 2–8). He finally (ibid. p.145 lines 7–9) says: “Lo de rang la rGya'i sa mtshams su dmag drangs/ 'Jang gi rigs kyi zhing chen bcu gnyis bcom/’”; “In that year [the Tibetans] invaded the Chinese borderland and captured the twelve great outposts of the 'Jang people”.

of the life of 'Dus srong mang po rje (entries for the years 703 and 704 of the *Tun-huang Annals*; see below) and during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan (see Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* lines 392–397) in *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.57). This war is said to have cost the lives of many people from lJang/'Jang and caused the White Mywa—the other group of the Nan-cha'o people was the Black Mywa—⁵⁶ to shed copious tears.

dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's interpretations engender the consequence that the events to which those heroics should be associated require a survey of the sPu rgyal campaign during different phases of various *btsan po*-s' presence beyond the borders of the plateau:

- the act of bravery of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* must have occurred soon after Srong btsan sgam po's death during the reign of Mang srong mang btsan and before the alliance with the Western Turks was forged, or else around the time when some Turkic tribe were antagonist of the Tibetans;
- the act of bravery of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* during the reign of 'Dus srong mang po rje or Khri srong lde btsan, both of whom waged military campaigns in 'Jang/lJang; and
- the act of bravery of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan.

Against this ingenious interpretation of dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's treatment of the *dpa' sde gsum* suggested to me in a verbal communication—and which I provisionally accepted—by Chab mdo Blo bzang shes rab, who based himself on the text of *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, I think that all three cases are a celebration of the heroism of people fighting for sPu rgyal Bod.

One point is set by both mkhas pa lDe'u and dPa' bo. Hor mo spyir mdung can and lJang mo Thag gdung fought for sPu rgyal Bod or else they would have not been enrolled in their respective units of the Tibetan army.

Unlike dPa' bo's appraisal of their enemies, there are no foes of sPu rgyal Bod in lDe'u's against whom the sTod kyi and Bar gyi *dpa' sde* fought. The absence of any reference to enemies in mkhas pa lDe'u makes possibilities wide open. An analysis of events in the history of the relations between Western Turks and sPu rgyal Bod is the key to assess the warfare of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*, in which Hor mo spyir mdung can, younger wife of Gru gu gSer mig can, had a prominent role.

Here one more distinction has to be introduced. Hor mo spyir mdung can was not a Gru gu. She was coopted into the Western Turks owing to her marriage with gSer mig can. Her ethnic affiliation Hor mo is vague and transfer her origin elsewhere in the panorama of territories of Western Asia. On the other hand, it is too easy to say that she could have been an Amazon since this is far from being proved. There are clues to attempt a cultural path that leads the

56. The Mywa nag are mentioned in the entry for the year of the horse 742 of the *Tun-huang Annals*, when they sent an envoy to the court of Khri lde gtsug brtan Mes Ag tshoms (lines 238–239; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.28). They are tackled again, together with Mywa dkar, at the end of the reign of 'Dus srong mang po rje in the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (Chapter Seven lines 334–335; see *ibid.* p.53).

transfer of a definite reference to an Amazon into Tibetan historical culture. The knowledge of the classical Greek and Latin authors seems to have been quite remote from Tibetan literature. If taken as historically sound, the presence of an Amazon into the ranks of the select sPu rgyal army sounds anachronistic in the light of the events that involved Tibetans and Western Turks in the period of their alliance—too late to have a small chance that could be proposed.

Nowhere in the paragraphs dedicated by mkhas pa lDe'u to the sTod kyi and Bar gyi *dpa'sde* there is the smallest hint to contradict the evidence of history that the Gru gu/Dru gu and lJang/'Jang were consistent allies of the Tibetans against China, non-frequent episodes excepted.

The history of the relations between sPu rgyal Bod and the Western Turks is written on the basis of several decades of shared military enterprises to curb Chinese assertiveness. Nan-cha'o was another long-term partner of the Tibetans against China, changing side on one well known occasion.⁵⁷

The only recipient of Tibetan hostility named by mkhas pa lDe'u is in his treatment of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*, where he states that the attacks of this detachment of heroes were against China. The interpolations by dPa'bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba that the sTod kyi *dpa'sde* defeated the Western Turks and that the Bar gyi *dpa'sde* defeated lJang should be dismissed as unwarranted since it is unlikely that the women warriors fought against their own people. It is, instead, beyond doubt that the narration of mkhas pa lDe'u concerning the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* shows indeed that it was China which was defeated.

There is a substantial difference in mkhas pa lDe'u's treatment of the sTod kyi and Bar gyi *dpa'sde* foreign heroines, allied to sPu rgyal Bod, and the heroes of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*, warriors stationed in the northeast of the plateau and belonging to the military organisation of the central Tibetans. They all fought for the Tibetans against their enemies. History tells that Hor mo sPir mdung can, wife of a Gru gu, fought against China given the state of affairs of the period.

lJang mo thag mdung can, too, fought against China but at a different juncture; the Dor te and Phyug 'tshams [along with] the children of the lDong and sTong, all belonging to the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*, fought against China at a later phase in the history of Central Asia.⁵⁸

57. In 793, the 'Jang/lJang king, I seu min, the son of Kag la bong, suddenly betrayed sPu rgyal Bod. He changed sides allying himself with the Chinese and inflicting a crushing defeat upon the Tibetans who did not suspect his treason (see, e.g., *Ancient Tibet* p.279). The *New T'ang Annals* (Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.122–123) only say that, in the same year, among the great services rendered by the Chinese officer Wei-kao was his defeat of the Tibetans with the support of Nan-cha'o.

58. The *dpa'mtshan* ("signs of heroism") that the heroines received for their bravery are a further proof that they fought for the Tibetans. These signs of bravery were typical of the sPu rgyal state apparatus.

- The act of heroism of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* occurred during the time of the alliance with the Western Turks (reign of Mang srong mang btsan or 'Dus srong mang po rje);
- the act of heroism of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* fell during the period of the alliance with lJang/'Jang (until the reign of Mes Ag tshom and soon after);
- the act of heroism of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* took place during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan on the grounds of the evidence about the Dor te and Phyug tshams of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* account, mentioned—along with the sTe 'dzom chieftains (see Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*, dedicated to Khri srong lde btsan).

The reports of the warrior embodying bravery for each of the *dpa' sde*-s are celebrations of alliance. But alliance did not necessarily imply equal footing. The vassalage of the population defeated by sPu rgyal Bod included the duty of serving in the army of the central Tibetans. In other cases, it was a joining forces of nations—without bonds of subjection—to fight a common enemy. One thus needs to look into the cases of common warfare in which the Gru gu/Dru gu and the people of 'Jang/lJang sided with sPu rgyal Bod in order to narrow down the range of military campaigns during which the women warriors (Hor mo sPir mdung can and lJang mo thag mdung can) proved themselves on the battlefield. But the enemy of all three *dpa' sde* was China.

So, it is not so much the correct interpretation of Chab mdo Blo bzang shes rab of the treatment of the *dpa' sde gsum* in *mKhas pa'I dga'ston* which should be dismissed, but dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's treatment itself, in that he did not take into consideration the historical context in which the detachments of heroes operated. In the following I wish to record the episodes that saw the formation of these allies against the common foe in two respects: to identify the historical period in which these alliances were forged and the episodes in which the act of bravery occurred although, in the cases of the sTod kyi and Bar gyi *dpa' sde*, no definitive identification can be put forward.

The sTod kyi *dpa' sde*

Hor mo sPir gdung can, the heroine of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*, is the only so far known case of an Amazon mentioned in Tibetan historiography, for her description fits well the Greek and Latin identifications of these female warriors.⁵⁹ Her appearance was fearful; she burnt off her

59. Strabo, *Geography* (Chapter V, 1) gives an impressive description of the customs of the Amazons: "The strongest among them spend much of their time in hunting on horseback, and practise warlike exercises. All of them from infancy have the right breast seared, in order that they may use the arm with ease for all manner of purposes, and particularly throwing the javelin. They employ the bow also,

right breast to strike better with her bow,⁶⁰ and fought on the battlefield with a javelin and pelting the enemies with stones and arrows, without fearing for her life.⁶¹

Already in the fourth century before the Common Era, Strabo doubted the accomplishments of the Amazons, wondering how women alone could organise expeditions, whose outcome was that their armies were victorious, well inside the region of the Greek states.⁶² Scepticism has been enduring. Some anthropologists tend to dismiss hastily the existence of the Amazons.

Although perhaps legendary as the adventures of heroes of the Western mythology, such

and sagaris, (a kind of sword) and wear a buckler. They make helmets, and coverings for the body, and girdles, of the skins of wild animals”.

The similarity between Strabo's description of the Amazons and mkhas pa lDe'u's portrayal of Hor mo sPyir mdung can be impressive both in terms of their savage look and the weapons they brandished which reveals their warring technique on the battlefield, such as the mastery in the use of the javelin.

dPa' bo is substantially aligned to a similar treatment of the Hor mo Amazon, were it not that he stresses her fighting on foot (*bang*), while Strabo emphasises their custom of going to the battlefield riding a horse.

60. The etymology of Amazon derives from the custom of burning the right breast. In ancient Greek, *a* is privative and stands for “without”, and *mazós* means “breast”. Hence their collective name for which they are famous is not from their native language but a learned attribution by an unidentified Greek author.

61. According to Diodorus Siculus, the Scythian women took the place of their men in battle when their husbands died or were unable to fight. Women of the Scythian tribe of the Massagetae had a prominent role at war. Tomyris was the chieftain of the Massagetae in the battle that ended with the death of Cyrus (see Tucci, “On Swat. The Dards and Connected Problems” p.51).

62. Strabo, *Geography* (Chapter V, 3–4): “3. There is a peculiarity in the history of the Amazons. In other histories the fabulous and the historical parts are kept distinct. For what is ancient, false, and marvellous is called fable. But history has truth for its object, whether it be old or new, and it either rejects or rarely admits the marvellous. But, with regard to the Amazons, the same facts are related both by modern and by ancient writers; they are marvellous and exceed belief. For who can believe that an army of women, or a city, or a nation, could ever subsist without men? And not only subsist, but make inroads upon territory of other people, and obtain possessions not only of the places near them, and advance even as far as the present Ionia, but even despatch an expedition across the sea of Attica? This is much as to say that the men of those days were women, and the women men. But even now the same things are told of the Amazons, and the peculiarity of their history is increased by the credit which is given to ancient, in preference to modern, accounts.

4. They are said to have founded cities, and to have given their names to them, as Ephesus, Smyrna, Cyne, Myrina, besides leaving sepulchres and other memorials. Themiscyra, the plains about the Thermodon, and the mountains lying above, are mentioned by all writers as once belonging to the Amazons, from whence, they say, they were driven out. There are at present few writers who undertake to point out, nor do they advance proofs or probability for what they state, as in the case of Thalestria, queen of the Amazons, with whom Alexander is said to have had intercourse in Hyrcania with the hope of having offspring. Writers are not agreed on this point, and among many who have paid the greatest regard to truth none mention the circumstance”.

as Heracles, Theseus, or Achilles (who, in the *Iliad*, falls in love, because of her beauty, with the dying queen of the Amazons he himself shot),⁶³ the Amazons from the Black Sea or from Western Central Asian were not so mythical as some historians and geographers of antiquity and anthropologists are inclined to believe.⁶⁴ The evidence from tombs of Sarmatian female warriors excavated in the Alma Ata region of Kazakhstan lends credence to Herodotus' account of the Amazons,⁶⁵ written in the 5th century b.C.E. This is confirmed by the recent discovery of *kurgan*-s of warrior women in the region of the Black Sea along the course of the

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63. Other Latin authors are not as dismissive as Strabo in their historical evaluation of the stereotypes concerning the Amazons. Arrianus, Curtius and Curtius Rufus narrate the same episode, rejected by Strabo as for absence of credibility. They underline that the appearance of the Amazons was not always so repulsive as some classic authors and the Tibetan literature wants us believe. Queen Cleophis, the widow of Assacanus, lord of the Scythian tribe of the Massagetæ, went to beg Alexander the Great to be reinstated to the throne. Alexander assented, taken by her beauty (Tucci, "On Swat. The Dards and Connected Problems" p.51). Queen Cleophis's plead led to her disrepute.
64. Strabo, *Geography* (Chapter V, 1) passes a geographical assessment of the land of the Amazon without a reference of the period in which they inhabited these lands: "Scythian tribes live between the Amazons and the Albanians, and river Mermadalis takes its course in the middle between these people and the Amazons. But other writers, and among these Metrodorus of Scepsis, and Hysicrates, who were themselves acquainted with these places, say that the Amazons bordered upon the Gargarenses on the north, at the foot of the Caucasian mountains, which are called Ceraunia".

While being dismissive of the fabulous warring skills of the Amazons, when talking about geography, Strabo acknowledges their existence.

65. Herodotus, *The Histories*, Book IV, 110–11: "About the Sauromatai the following tale is told:—When the Hellenes had fought with the Amazons,—now the Amazons are called by the Scythians Oiorpata, which name means in the Hellenic tongue "slayers of men," for "man" they call oior, and pata means "to slay,"—then, as the story goes, the Hellenes, having conquered them in the battle of Thermodon, were sailing away and conveying with them in three ships as many Amazons as they were able to take prisoners. These in the open sea set upon the men and cast them out of the ships; but they knew nothing about ships, nor how to use rudders or sails or oars, and after they had cast out the men they were driven about by wave and wind and came to that part of the Maiotian lake where Cremnoi stands; now Cremnoi is in the land of the free Scythians. There the Amazons disembarked from their ships and made their way into the country, and having met first with a troop of horses indeed they seized them, and mounted upon these they plundered the property of the Scythians.

111. The Scythians meanwhile were not able to understand the matter, for they did not know either their speech or their dress or the race to which they belonged, but were in wonder as to whence they had come and thought that they were men, of an age corresponding to their appearance: and finally they fought a battle against them, and after the battle the Scythians got possession of the bodies of the dead, and thus they discovered that they were women. They took counsel therefore and resolved by no means to go trying to kill them, but to send against them the youngest men from among themselves, making conjecture of the number so as to send just as many men as there were women. These were told to encamp near them, and do whatsoever they should do; if however the women should come after them, they were not to fight but to retire before them, and when the women stopped, they

Don River. The skeletons of the women found in these tombs have sword and javelin on one side and arrows and bow on the other.⁶⁶

The region where the tombs were found corresponds with the stretch of lands described by Herodotus as those where the Amazons were settled along the river Termodontes (presently Terme Çay) on the southern shore of the Black Sea, from where they were deported a few hundred kilometers to the northeast along the river Tanai (Don) near the shores of the Azov Sea. This area was reached around the 4th-3rd centuries b.C.E. by the Sarmatians who had an ethnic affinity with the Scythians, people connected with accounts of the Amazons (see above n.65). The original territory from where these Sarmatians and Scythians migrated to the west was the area of the Ukok Plateau, bordering on present-day Russia, China, and Kazakhstan, which is a possible link between the two groups of tumuli mentioned above.

There are signs that elements of the Scythian culture and language continued to exist in the Iranian enclaves of Southern Turkestan during the imperial period of Tibet until as late as the Islamisation of these lands during the second half of the 10th century and the early 11th. Despite

were to approach near and encamp. This plan was adopted by the Scythians because they desired to have children born from them.

114. After they joined their camps and lived together, each man having for his wife she with whom he had had dealings at first. ...

.... 115. When [the young Scythian men] had obtained the share of goods which belonged to them and had returned back to the Amazons, the women spoke to them as follows: "We are possessed by fear and trembling to think that we must dwell in this place, having not only separated you from your fathers, but also done great damage to your land. Since then you think it right to have us as your wives, do this together with us,—come and let us remove from this land and pass over the river Tanaïs and there dwell".

116. The young men agreed to this also, and they crossed over the Tanaïs and made their way towards the rising sun for three days' journey from Tanaïs, and also towards the North Wind for three days' journey from the Maiotian lake: and having settled, they took up their abode there: and from henceforward the women of the Sauromatai practise their ancient way of living, going out regularly on horseback to chase both in company with the men and apart from them, going regularly to war, and wearing the same dress as men.

117. And the Sauromatai make use of the Scythian tongue, speaking it barbarously however from the first, since the Amazons did not learn it thoroughly well. As regards marriages their rule is this, that no maiden is married until she has slain a man of their enemies; and some of them even grow old and die before they are married, because they are not able to fulfil the requirement of the law".

Elsewhere (ibid. Book IX, 27), Herodotus writes about them citing a speech of the Athenians: "We have moreover another glorious deed performed against the Amazons who invaded once Attic land, coming from the river Thermodon: and in the toils of Troy we were not inferior to any".

66. The description of a weapon carried by the Hor mo of the sTod kyi *dpa'sde* corresponds to a finding in the *kurgan*-s of the Amazons of the Black Sea. A javelin (*spir mdung can*)—a typical weapon of the Amazons—mentioned by mkhas pa lDe'u in reference to the Hor mo wife of Gru gu gSer mig can has been found laying together with bow and arrows in the tombs of the women warriors along the banks of the River Don.

a remarkable amount of Śaka influence in the Indo-Iranic borderlands and Southern Turkestan up to the 10th century, the account of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* directly refers to the Amazons, whose antiquity much predates the events described by mkhas pa lDe'u and dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba. Hence one may be confronted here with a cultural sediment rather than facts.

Hence one is led to wonder whether Hor mo sPir gdung can is a cultural import borrowed from foreign traditions or truly was a warrior fighting for the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*, whose extreme bravery contributed to the victory of the Tibetans. Her definition as a woman from the Hor is enigmatic enough to allow only a suggestion. She was of non-Tibetan origin, given her Amazon style, married to gSer mig can, said to be a Gru gu/Dru gu and thus a Western Turk, but her Hor mo identity indicates that she did not belong to the same tribal group as her husband. In the light of these considerations a Western Central Asian origin for her cannot be ruled out, if she did not belong to the cultures of the southwestern part of the Tarim Basin towards the Pamirs. In her case, Hor could be taken as indicative of an ethnic persistence of the Śaka-Sarmatian stock to which the Amazons originally belonged, that survived in a later period.

Otherwise it cannot be ruled out that the Hor mo Amazon of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* is a residue filtered into Tibetan knowledge from the literature of another culture. Exchanges with the civilisations of ancient Greece and the Latins are not ascertained, although Aristotle, for instance, knew of Gangs Ti se. Other people in Central and Western Asia, in whose events the Tibetans participated since the pre-Srong btsan sgam po period, may have transferred to archaic Tibet glimpses on the existence of women warriors. That accounts of heroines are derived, for instance, from Chinese descriptions of the Kingdom of Women (see Pelliot, “Femeles” and my *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming) is to be ruled out because in those semi-mythical reigns women did not go to war but their men.

The ethnic implications provided by the list of clans associated with the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* helps to set a first, gross chronology of the warfare in which the Hor mo Amazon was involved. The clans mentioned in the account of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* were those who held the land where the community of heroes was active (see my *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events* forthcoming, where I deal with them more extensively). The 'Bro and Khyung po were settled in sTod long before the sPu rgyal conquest. The Khyung po had migrated to Zhang zhung at an early phase of the kingdom's history when the *bya ru can* kings had a collective control of the land. The 'Bro ruled in Pu hrang at least during the sway of the last independent dynasty of the kingdom, ousted by Srong btsan sgam po's conquest.

The other clans mentioned in the passage—the 'Gar, sNubs and gNyan 'dre—settled locally in the erstwhile kingdom after Srong btsan sgam po's takeover of Zhang zhung.

The gross assessment of the period of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*'s activity is that it fell when the dominant clans in Upper West Tibet had come to occupy the region from Central Tibet after the end of independent Zhang zhung and thus were an active part of the sPu rgyal administration in the erstwhile kingdom. Hence, one has to look into the period of post-independent

Zhang zhung to find events that correspond to the warfare that had Hor mo sPir gdung can as protagonist.

Plainer grounds are met with in the case of gSer mig can. Defining the Hor mo's husband gSer mig can as a Gru gu/Dru gu could be compatible with the historical evidence of the steadfast military alliance of the Western Turks with the Tibetans, also hinted at by mkhas pa lDe'u or his authority, concerning the identity of the foreigners who fought at the side of the sTod kyi *dpa'sde*. It well matches the statement of contiguity in the *stong sde* classification given that the lands of the Gru gu/Dru gu bordered on Zhang zhung stod (*mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.259 lines 3–5 and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.187 lines 22–23).

The rather bold view of dPa'bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba that the Gru gu/Dru gu (Western Turks) were the enemies of the sTod kyi *dpa'sde* overlooks the long-standing alliance established by the central Tibetans with these tribes.

This view is, at the same time, misleading because it over-emphasises the few cases of clashes between sPu rgyal Bod and the Gru gu/Dru gu. During the period in which they interacted with sPu rgyal Bod, the Western Turks occupied Western Central Asia (with their centre in the Issyk Kul region), portions of Southern Turkestan, and part of the Indo-Iranic borderlands which they had conquered by overthrowing the Hephtalite kingdom.⁶⁷

In the organisation of Srong btsan sgam po's state the Gru gu/Dru gu are said to be the neighbours of the *stong sde*-s of Zhang zhung stod, while Gu ge and Cog la, the centre of the sTod kyi *dpa'sde*, are included in the *stong sde*-s of Zhang zhung smad. The premises of the sTod kyi *dpa'sde* were a strategical military post, a safe haven from which the central Tibetans launched their offensives against China in the area of the Hindukush in order to open their way into Southern Turkestan and the Four Prefectures. Indeed, there are no traces in the sources of warfare with Mon pa overlords of lands neighbouring Gu ge and Cog la in present-day India.

The Gru gu/Dru gu were a loose alliance of tribes, such as the Qarluq, Tu-lu and Nu-shih-pi, often antagonising one another. Defeats suffered by some of the Western Turks these tribes in clashes with sPu rgyal Bod led them to a lasting alliance with the Tibetans who used their armies in their actions against China. They thus joined forces in their struggle against their common Chinese foe in Central Asia. Their alliance implemented the strategy of raiding the Chinese protectorates in the Tarim Basin, meant, in particular, to take away the Four Garrisons from Chinese control.

The imperial history of sPu rgyal Bod is characterised by two early sub-phases of alliance with Turkish tribes, first with the Western Turks and then with the Turgis, who in part substituted them in the occupation of the territories in Central Asia to the north-west of Zhang zhung. The first sub-phase in the partnership between the Tibetans and the Turks dates from

67. In the advance of the Western Turks within the Indo-Iranian borderlands, their chieftain, Sinjibu Khaqan, conquered the kingdom of the Hephtalites with their headquarters in Kunduz by means of his second expedition against them in 567 (Kuwayama, "Literary Evidence for the Bamyān Colossi", p.720).

ca. 661 to 696; the second from 696 to 704. The year that marks the end of the second sub-phase was the first occasion on which the Tibetans entered into a coalition with the Arabs. It is in the first sub-phase that I think the episode symbolising the bravery of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* should be searched for.

The events prior to the alliance of sPu rgyal Bod with the Western Turks were marked by the Chinese stunning victory in 657–659 that crushed the power of the Western Turks (Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux* p.303). The outcome of this event was that control over their dominions was weakened (ibid. p.302). This led the Gru gu/Dru gu to an entente with the Tibetans. The alliance was forged and fully implemented from the sixties of the 7th century until the year 696.

Their combined military enterprises were preceded by a preliminary period of brief confrontation. Tibetan attacks in the Wakhan corridor and advance into Southern Turkestan, which led to the subjugation of some tribes of the Western Turks, began immediately after the period 656–661 (Beckwith, “The Tibetan Empire in the West” p.32–33). The Tibetans gained control of the Wakhan corridor soon after 661. dGe’ dun chos ’phel is especially useful, for he records the submission of the ten tribes of the Western Turks (five tribes of Nu-shih-pi located west of the Issyk Kul and five tribes of Tu-lu based more to the north) to sPu rgyal Bod, as having happened in 662.⁶⁸ These were the years in which the Tibetans entered the Tarim Basin and confronted China on this war front. Their advance was marked by the takeover of Kashgar in 663 and Khotan in 665 (ibid. n.19).

- In 667 the Nu-shih-pi again submitted to the Tibetans. Owing to their location, they were, among the Western Turks, those most strategically relevant to the Tibetans and thus traditional allies.
- Profiting from the alliance with the Nu-shih-pi, the Tibetans made considerable military gains. By 670 the Four Garrisons (the Kashgaria of Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux* p.288) were in the hands of the Tibetans (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.34; and also *Ancient Tibet* p.231–232), and they held them from 670 to 692. In 675 the minister mGar bTsan snya ldom bu led troops gathered in Zhang zhung (see Vitali, *Fragments of Zhang zhung's secular history. Dynasties and events forthcoming*) into the lands of the Gru gu/Dru gu (entry for the pig year 675 in the *Tun-huang Annals* line 26,13, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.15 lines 14–15). In 676, blon che bTsan snya again led troops into the territory of the Gru gu/Dru gu. A *khrom* was established on the other side of

68. dGe’ dun chos ’phel (*Deb ther dkar po* p.146 line 17–p.147 line 3) describes the circumstances that led sPu rgyal Bod to reduce the Western Turks under its sovereignty after parleys were inconclusive:

“De ltar gros la ma mthun pas don thag ma chod par lus shing/ Gru gu nams yul spo ba’i thabs (p.147) kyang ma ’grib/ [note: ’das rjes kyi 1206 pa’i lo la] Bod dmag slebs te/ nub phyogs kyi Gru gu tsho chen bcu chab ’og tu bsdu//”; “Likewise, given that there was no agreement in the parley, the matter was not settled [and the attempt] was abandoned. The Gru gu did not deem it necessary to flee their land and [note: 1206 years after the Buddhanirvana (i.e. in 662)], Bod sent troops. The ten tribes of Western Turks were reduced into submission”.

the plateau in the Chinese borderland (entry for the rat year 676 in the *Tun-huang Annals* line 27,16–17, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.15).

Owing to the military activities on the three main fronts guarded by the *dpa'sde gsum*, the Tibetan empire reached a significant extension during those years. The *Old T'ang Annals* say that, in the same 676, sPu rgyal Bod controlled the lands of Zhang zhung, the Tangut and other K'iang tribes; Liang-chou, Sung-chou, Mao-chou, Sui-chou and others; territories touching India; and the land of the Northern Turks in the north (Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.9 translating the *Old T'ang Annals*).

- Until the reversal of fortunes in 692, the Tibetans passed from success to success. Together with the Western Turks, they attacked, in 678, the Chinese protectorates in the area of Ngan-si to the north of Issyk Kul, near the border between Gru gu/Dru gu yul and the Tarim Basin (Pelliot transl., *ibid.* p.88, translating the *New T'ang Annals*). In the years 686–689, mGar Khri 'bring btsan brod pursued a campaign in the land of the Gru gu/Dru gu that focused on the area of Gu zan. The campaign was marked by difficulties and eventual success.⁶⁹
- After being routed by the Chinese in 692, and thus losing the Four Garrisons, the Tibetans and the Gru gu/Dru gu were defeated at Issyk Kul in 694 (Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux* p.281), and a Tibetan fortress in the region was captured (Beckwith, "The Tibetan Empire in the West" p.33).

The next year, possibly because they were on the defensive, the Tibetans negotiated peace with the Chinese on their common borders. mGar Khri 'bring proposed to the Chinese officer Kuo Yang-chen to demilitarise the Four Garrisons, thus facilitating the governance of the local princes with the aim of letting them provide for their own defence, and to divide the Ten Tribes of the Western Turks between sPu rgyal Bod and China—the Tibetans getting the five tribes of the Nu-shih-pi and the Chinese getting the five tribes of the Tu-lu. mGar swore they had no plans to subdue the Western Turks. In exchange, the Tibetans offered to refrain from military activity in the Kokonor region, much dreaded by the Chinese. This implied that the Chinese had to withdraw from the recently recovered Four Garrisons on the grounds that the Tibetans thought they were too far from China, their occupation amounting to imperialism. mGar Khri 'bring added that even a weak Chinese army could create nuisance to the Tibetans, given that only an easily negotiable desert divided the land of the Nu-shih-pi from the terri-

69. The entry for the year of the dog 686 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (lines 37,43–44; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.17) reads: "Blon Khri 'bring/ Dru gu yul du drangs zhes bgyi bgyi ba las/ phyi dal//"; "Blon Khri 'bring, after envisaging the strategy of advancing into the land of the Dru gu, withdrew".

The entry for the year of the pig 687 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 38,46; see *ibid.* p.17) says: "Blon Khri 'bring/ Dru gu Gu zan yul du drangs//"; "Blon Khri 'bring attacked the land of Dru gu Gu zan".

The entry for the year of the ox 689 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 40,52; see *ibid.* p.17) states: "Blon che Khri 'bring Dru gu yul nas slar 'khor//"; "Blon che Khri 'bring returned from the land of the Dru gu".

tories occupied by sPu rgyal Bod. Much safer was the Chinese border with the Tu-lu in the area of Ngan-si, which was distant from Tibetan outposts.

The core issue at stake in the parley between mGar Khri 'bring and his Chinese counterpart was that the Tibetans wanted the Chinese to make concessions in the Pacified West in exchange for Tibetan non-interference in the area of the Kokonor that linked the Chinese empire to its protectorates in the Tarim desert. The Chinese refused to accept (Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.92–94, which translates the *New T'ang Annals*). In my view, the proposal of mGar Khri 'bring was rather untenable and showed Tibetan weakness at the time, for, if China were to release the Four Garrisons, there would be no further reason to secure safe passage in the Kokonor area.

The Tibetan overture had multiple implications. The account is a direct confirmation that the Tibetans were settled beyond the plateau and indeed had a border with the land of the Gtru gu/Dru gu. It also shows that they treated the Dru gu Nu-shih-pi as subordinates.

Conditions with both members of the alliance (the Nu-shih-pi more than other Turks, on one side, and the mGar clan, on the other) changed rapidly. Ending some thirty years of entente (from ca. 661), the year 696 was especially negative for both of them. The Western Turks lost their dominions to the Turgiś and the mGar clan was ousted by 'Dus srong mang po rje. Limited activity involving the Tibetans on the front of the western Tarim Basin and the Four Garrisons occurred after 696.

The nature of the Western Turks' vassalage to the Tibetans—and thus their alliance—becomes clear with their loss of dominions. They were subordinate to the Tibetans who granted them enough autonomy because they were able to control their lands. The Tibetans lost interest in them when they were no more able to do so.

- The second (much briefer) sub-phase, the alliance with the Turgiś, began with these Turks presenting their credentials at the court of the *lha sras btsan po*. In 699,⁷⁰ Ton Ya bgo Kha gan paid his respects to 'Dus srong mang po rje and, in 700, was sent back to Gru gu/Dru gu yul.⁷¹

In 704, Tibetans contributed to the pursuit of the Arab rebel Mūsā at Tirmidh in To gar controlling the trade route between Balkh and the land of the Sogdians (Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux* p.188), the first intervention by sPu rgyal Bod in support

70. This was the year in which the last members of the mGar clan were finished off. mGar Khri 'bring, weary of the confrontation with 'Dus srong mang po rje and of being posted in the field without orders to fight, committed suicide as the troops of the *lha sras btsan po* approached. His younger brother Tsan pho, his own son, thousands of followers and 'A zha families fled to China according to the entry for the year of the dog 698 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (lines 49,76–77; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.19).

71. The entry for the year of the pig 699 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (lines 50,79–80; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.19) says: “Ton Ya bgo kha gan phyag 'tsald//”; “Ton Ya bgo kha gan offered his respects [to the *lha sras btan po*]”.

of the Arabs. The Tibetans involved in the strife between traders of Transoxiana who they supported and Mūsā may well have fought on a purely mercenary basis or for personal gain, without the involvement of sPu rgyal Bod. Beckwith (*The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.69) is of the opinion, instead, that, after the loss of the Four Garrisons, involvement in Transoxiana gave the Tibetans a chance to control the profitable trade with the West.

In conclusion of this excursus on the military campaigns undertaken by sPu rgyal Bod to the west of Zhang chung, the activity of the Tibetans on the Turkestani and Northwest Indian sector should be ascribed to the years following the death of Srong btsan sgam po (649–650). It is impossible to identify precisely any of the military campaigns between the sixties of the 7th century and 696 as the one that led to the resuming of an imported historical sediment, such as the myth of the Amazons far away in time from the existence of the Tibetan empire. This chronological approximation does not impinge on the issue of the formation period of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*, because there are no reasons to disprove that it was established by Srong btsan sgam po. But history also says that the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* participated in the offensive against the Chinese in the lands of the Gru gu/Dru gu with the help of their tribes only after his death.

The Bar gyi *dpa' sde*

IJang mo Thag gdung can, mentioned in the account of the detachment of heroes in Sum yul, was another warrior woman, this time from Nan-cha'o, the territory in southern Khams, as her name conveys.⁷² She is described in no less wild terms than Hor mo sPir gdung can, and her appearance was less savage but even more repulsive.

The Chinese descriptions of women going to war rather than men better apply hypothetically to IJang mo Thag gdung can, the heroine of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde*, whose appearance does not match the features of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* Amazon. However, no trace of warrior women is found in the descriptions of the various Kingdoms of Women of the Chinese literature. Hence one is led to opine that IJang mo Thag gdung can did not belong to any of them.⁷³

According to the entry for the year of the rat 700 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 51,81; see *ibid.* p.19): “Ton Ya bgo kha gan Dru gu yul btang/”; “Ton Ya bgo kha gan was sent to the land of the Dru gu”.

This was just before 'Dus srong mang po rje turned his attention to the southeast and embarked on his campaign in 'Jang/IJang.

72. Azarpay (*Sogdian Paintings* p.107 pl.46) publishes a sketch of a Sogdian mural depicting a woman warrior, which shows that, during a period subsequent to the existence of the Amazons of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde* and Bar gyi *dpa' sde*, which must have fallen not later than the 8th century, these heroines were also common to this people of Iranic stock.

73. Pelliot (*Femeles (Island of Women), Notes on Marco Polo* vol. II p.691) talks about a Kingdom of the Su-p'i in the 8th century, said to have been an earlier Kingdom of Women, where gold was extracted but its location is distant from 'Jang/IJang and thus does not apply to Nang-cha'o from where Thag gdung can came. The fact that Mu-li-yen offered gold vessels of the Kingdom of Women, situated to

Indeed, no reference is found in the Chinese literature about a Kingdom of Women in Nan-cha'o even if an improbable change of ruling customs should be considered, as happened in the case of Eastern Kingdom of Women (Pelliot, *Femeles (Island of Women)* *ibid.* p.699–700), which extended to the southwest of Cheng-du.⁷⁴

Hence, the identification of the lJang/'Jang mo female warrior's cultural background is more difficult to ascertain than the one of the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*, given the absence of characterising features as specific as those of the Amazon. No clues can be found of warring women among the Yunnanese (the Man of the Chinese), assimilable to females from Khams whose reputation for bravery on the battlefield was proverbial during later times.⁷⁵

Ascertaining her identity is relevant to the assessment of the function of this *dpa' sde* and the political scenario it faced. The borderline with the Nan-cha'o kingdom during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po is a matter of utmost obscurity. The combined military activity of the Tibetans from the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* and the warriors from Nan-cha'o raises the puzzling issue of a common war front, given the remarkable distance between the headquarters of this

the southwest of To-mi is not proof from both the geographical and administrative viewpoints that it was in the southern reaches of Khams. Again, it was an area too northerly, and women did not go to fight in war.

74. A Kingdom of Women is said to have existed in Thailand but this statement is of little import to the issue at stake. Backus, *The Nan-cha'o Kingdom and T'ang China's Southwestern Border* (p.129) and Stott, "The Expansion of the Nanchao Kingdom" (p.205 and 220) could find next to nothing about this kingdom.

75. For instance, see the autobiography of the fourth Khams sprul, bsTan 'dzin Chos kyi nyi ma (*Khams sprul bsTan 'dzin Chos kyi nyi ma'i rang rnam* (f.8a line 5–f.8b line 2) for a great woman warrior of the 17th century: "Sring mo Karma Chos sgron de/ yang lus rten rten bud med yin kyang dpal ldan lHa mo'i sprul pa dang/ A stag klu mo'i skye bar grags/ skra tshun chad dmar por yod/ gTsang Sog 'khrungs pa'i skabs tshor Sog dmag gi g.yas ru'i (f.8b) dmag dpon byas/ rgyal khar thob pa dang gong ma mchod yon nas gdan sbyin dang cho lo re rtsal/ mNga' ri'i Gu ge dang/ La thag rgyal po 'khrungs pa'i cings la Chos sgron dang/ sde srid sTag rtse ba btang ba sogs dGa' ldan pho brang pa'i bstan jus la phan pa byung nas grags/ mNga' Sog su rdzong dpon gyis las ka'ang gnang/'"; "Sring mo Karma Chos sgron was the incarnation of dpal ldan lHa mo who had taken human form as a woman. She became famous as the rebirth of A stag Klu mo. Even [her] hair was red. At the time of the clashes between gTsang and the Sog (i.e. the gTsang-dGa' ldan pho brang/Mongol war), she was the *dmag dpon* ("army chief") of the right horn of the Sog troops. (f.8b) At every victory she was awarded (*rtsal*) gifts and credentials (*cho lo*) each time by the *gong ma mchod yon* (Dalai Lama and his sponsors). The kings of mNga' ri'i (spelled so) Gu ge and of La thag (spelled so) fought. Chos sgron and sde srid sTag rtse ba were sent to broker an agreement workable for the dGa' ldan pho brang pa policy. It is well known that it happened so. She was awarded the post of *rdzong dpon* in mNga' [ris and] Sog [yul]"

The war mentioned in the passage obviously is the La dwags-dGa' ldan pho brang war of the years 1679–1684 (see Yo seb dge rgan bSod nams tshe brtan, *Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* (p.407 line 4–p.431 line 11; Ahmad, "New Light on the Tibet-Ladakh-Mughal War of 1679–1684" and Vitali, *Records of Tho.ling* p.47–49).

detachment of heroes in Nag[s] shod (Nag chu kha), and the southerly kingdom of lJang/'Jang. Either Nan-cha'o extended far to the north and included vast parts of lower Khams or else the jurisdiction of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* must have covered a wide territorial expanse on the plateau including Tre bo, as the Sum ru *stong sde*-s prove, and encompassing large tracts of lower Khams as far as 'Jang/lJang. Otherwise, the Bar gyi *dpa' sde*, stationed in Sum yul, would have not been assigned the duty of controlling Nan-cha'o.⁷⁶

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.259 lines 12–13) includes lJang among the *stong sde*-s of Sum ru under the spellings 'Jom stod and 'Jom smad in the style of Khams *skad*. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*, as often is the case, follows suit but a different way of writing it. dPa' bo gaug lag phreng pa (p.188 lines 3–4) goes for 'Jong stod 'Jong smad, equally Khams *skad* give his provenance. The inclusion of Nang-cha'o into Khams shows that it was either part of Sum ru (extended Khams) or else that, since the days of Srong btsan sgam po, the sPu rgyal Bod pa could avail themselves of a *stong sde* in lJang.

The period in which the *dpa' sde* of Sum yul was established is no less shrouded in obscurity. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (ibid. p.259 line 11) says that the eleven *stong sde* of the Sum pa were demarcated by Srong btsan sgam po, but a similar attribution is not made in relation to the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* since there is no written reference to an interaction between Srong btsan sgam po and the kingdom of lJang/'Jang.

Most of the military activity of the *lha sras btsan po*-s on the southeastern border was undertaken with the help of 'Jang/lJang owing to bonds of alliance, given that Nang-cha'o had conceded sovereignty to the Tibetans. It occurred marginally during the beginning of the reign of 'Dus srong mang po rje. It took place primarily during the time of Khri sde gtsug brtan Mes Ag tshom and soon after. Hence I would place the acts of bravery of the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* on the occasion of any of the following events:

- around 676, the Chinese built the town of Ngan-jong, southwest of Mao-chou in the Chien-nan region, to keep the Tibetans under pressure. However, some K'iang—in this case people from 'Jang/lJang in favour of sPu rgyal Bod?—not submitted to China led the Tibetans to attack and take this outpost. sPu rgyal Bod established a garrison there (Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.8–9, translating the *Old T'ang Annals*).

76. The sTong Sum pa are documented to have been settled as far south as 'Dzam stod and 'Dzam smad (north-east of dKar mdzes) with the *stong bu chung* at Nag[s] shod, manifestly a reference to the *stong sde*-s of Sum ru. See *sTong sde mi'i byung srid* (one of the texts on the *mi'u rigs* collectively known as the *Khungs chen po bzhi*) in Joseph dGe ryan bSod nams tshe brtan (*Bla dwags rgyal rabs 'chi med gter* p.17 lines 3–5; and also Vitali, “Tribes which populated the Tibetan plateau (as treated in the texts collectively called the *Khungs chen po bzhi*)” p.55).

Consequently, the Tibetans annexed the people of 'Jang/IJang of the Si-eul River (ibid. p.89, translating the *New T'ang Annals*).

- In 703 'Dus srong mang po rje reduced 'Jang/IJang in vassalage and, in the following year, led another campaign in this kingdom, which cost him his life (see the entries for the hare year 703 and the dragon year 704 of the *Tun-huang Annals* line 54,94 and p.20 line 55,95 respectively in *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.20). The *Tun-huang Chronicles* (lines 334–335; see in *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.53) tell that, in the course of the same military activity, he subdued the Mywa dkar and the Mywa nag in 'Jang/IJang.⁷⁷
- Soon after the death of 'Dus srong mang po rje in 704 (and not in 696 or 697 as Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.95 translates), the Chinese were on verge of moving against Nan-cha'o where the Tibetans were present, but the chieftain of the 'Jang/IJang informed the Tibetans who defeated them. Consequently, the Chinese attacked the Tibetans and destroyed an iron bridge under construction in the area (ibid. p.95, translating the *New T'ang Annals*).
The next great phase of alliance occurred during the reign of Mes Ag tshoms. He established close ties with the Nan-cha'o ruler Kag la bong, who accepted a condition of vassalage for his kingdom, a state of affairs also mentioned in Chapter Seven of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (lines 345–346, see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.54). Signs of shared military campaigns refer to the later part of the reign of Khri lde gtsug brtan.
- In 738, the Chinese laid siege to Ngan-jong, the Tibetan stronghold in 'Jang/IJang, but the Tibetans came to rescue the town and routed them (Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.104, translating the *New T'ang Annals*).
- In 739 or 740 the Chinese entered Ngan-jong, taking advantage of the treason of some guides. They destroyed the garrison and took control of the town (ibid. p.104–105, translating the *New T'ang Annals*).
- In 751 the Tibetans together with the IJang king Kag la bong attacked the area of Lou-nan in Chien-nan (ibid. p.105–106, translating the *New T'ang Annals*).
- Between the year 751 and 753, Nan-cha'o again submitted to the Tibetans under pressure from China (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.140–141).
- In 755 and 756, from the war front towards Chien-nan the Tibetans proceeded to take over, with the help of Nan-cha'o, the towns of Te'u cu mkhar and Se cu in the borderland between the old 'A zha kingdom and China.⁷⁸ Kag la bong led the troops together with

77. A later source contributes an anecdote about the events following the death of 'Dus srong mang po rje in 'Jang/IJang not recorded in the more succinct and drier Tun-huang documents. Elaborating the events of the warfare in Nan-cha'o, recorded in the entries for the year of the hare 703 and the year of the dragon 704 of the *Tun-huang Annals*, one account holds that the body of 'Dus srong mang po rje was dismembered and not released in order to be transported back to Yar lung. Eventually only his right thigh was placed inside his *bang so* at the royal cemetery of 'Phyong rgyas (*Idé'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.119 lines 14–16 and also Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* n.270).

78. Also in 755, sTag sgra (called Hsi-no-lo in the *Old T'ang Annals*), the son of the Sum pa ruler, changed sides, left the Tibetans and submitted to the Chinese (see the *New T'ang Annals* in Pelliot transl., *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.106). He betrayed to retaliate the assassination of his father, 'Bring btsan (the Mo-ling-tsan of the same text), at the hands of the Tibetans because he wished to join the Chinese (Chavannes, *Documents sur les Tou-kiue (Turcs) occidentaux* p.169 and Pelliot,

blon Khri bzang and zhang sTong rtsan (see the entries for the years 755, line 104,15 and 756, lines 105,21–22 of the *Tun-huang Annals* in *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.30 and p.30–31 respectively; Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.145 and n.10).

The historical material on the alliance between sPu rgyal Bod and the kingdom of Nan-cha'o preserved, in particular, in the two *T'ang Annals* is thus useful to locate the border between Bod and 'Jang/lJang, hardly identifiable from the account of the Bar gyi *dpa'sde*. Warfare against China with the support of 'Jang/lJang in the borderland between rGyal mo rong and the Chien-nan region shows that the jurisdiction of the Bar gyi *dpa'sde* covered vast areas of southern Khams.

The sMad kyi *dpa'sde*

The main heroics of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* were the takeover of strongholds well inside the Chinese borderlands and in a vast territorial stretch of Central Asia. These protracted military activities are summarised in Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*, dedicated to Khri srong lde btsan that I will introduce soon below after spending a few words on the political situation in the early regnal years of this king.

The beginning of Khri srong lde btsan's rule after the assassination of his father was marked by a resurgence of military victories against China, while the last years of the reign of Khri lde gtsug rtsan had been marred by humiliating defeats. Following the revolt of An Lu-shan which resulted in a death blow to Chinese power in the same year 755 of Khri srong lde btsan's ascension to the throne in his minority while the Tibetan empire was run by his ministers, the Tibetans were active in the old 'A zha-Chinese borderland and Central Asia until 763. After 763, sPu rgyal Bod's military pressure on this frontier and the lands beyond it relented for quite a long time, owing to Chinese withdrawal, and action was transferred to elsewhere in Central Asia. Hence a search for events, in which the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* was involved, should be restricted to this period.

The military initiatives in the first years of Khri srong lde btsan's reign (755–756) were marked by sPu rgyal Bod's capture of a number of Chinese fortified castles on the northeastern border of the plateau, in which the Tibetans involved vassals' troops, including the Tu-yü-hun and Tangut (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.146). During 755, the Tibetans took back the fortified city of Te'u cu mkhar (T'ao-chou) in the rMa chu (Yellow River)

Femeles (Island of Women), Notes on Marco Polo vol. II p.704). The fact is not so significant *per se*—changing sides was common on the Central Asian political scene—but because it shows that, despite annexation into sPu rgyal Bod, the Sum pa still had a nominal ruler over one hundred years after their loss of independence.

borderland.⁷⁹ In the following year they also gained control of Se cu (Sui-chou), situated in the same area (see the entries for the sheep year 755, line 104,15 and the monkey year 756, lines 105,21–22 of the *Tun-huang Annals* in *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.30 and p.30–31 respectively).⁸⁰

The *Tun-huang Annals* add that Kag la bong, the ruler of the newly created kingdom of Nan-cha'o, personally led one of the three armies involved in the military campaign (see the same entry for the monkey year 756). This involvement of Nan-cha'o may have been an outcome of the prior Bar gyi *dpa' sde's* successful heroics on the southern front assigned to them. Blon Khri bzang and zhang sTong rtsan were at the head of the two Tibetan armies.

A section in Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* (lines 381–388; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.56 lines 17–29) relates the campaigns spearheaded by the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*. It lacks a few details mentioned in the account of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* but adds others that confirm the active role exercised by the heroes of this special military unit. They are instrumental in attributing these events to a more precise historical framework:

“dBa's bTsan bzher mdo (line 382) lod la stsogs pas/ mKhar tshan yan cad du drangs ste/ mKhar cu pa brgyad phab nas/ dor po bton te/ (p.383) 'bangs su bzhes so/ chab srid che ste Long shan la rgyud yan cad/ phyag du bzhes nas/ mThong khyab (line 384) khri sde lnga btsugs/ bde blon Khams chen po gchig gsar du bskyed do/ blon che sNang bzher zla brtsan (line 385) 'dzangs shing mkhas la/ bkra' shis kha dro bas/ nor bu rin po che'I yi ge stsal to/ 'bangs (line 386) kyi nang na/ Dor te phug tshams ste sTe 'dzom dpa' ba'I mtshan mar/ stag gi thog bu stsal to/ btsan (line 387) po'I Zha sngo nas/ thugs sam pa'I rlabs dang/ dbu rmog brtsan po'I byin gyis nyi ngog rgyal po gzhan dpya' phab/”;

“dBa's bTsan bzher mdo lod and others led [troops] all the way to mKhar tshan. Having captured the eight prefectures (*mkhar cu*), they evicted [those who] resisted and reduced them to the status of subjects. Owing to his great royal power, [Khri srong lde btsan] annexed [the lands controlled by the Chinese] up to the Long shan range. He established the mThong khyab (line 384) *khri sde lnga* [and] newly created the *bde blon's* great territorial [administration] (*bde blon khams ched po*). Blon che sNang bzher Zla rtsan was sent (line 385) [to hold it] and, owing to his bravery and competence, this being an auspicious omen, he was given the [permit of using] the letters of precious jewel. Among the subjects (line 386), the Dor te, the Phyug tshams (spelled so) and the sTe 'dzom were awarded the tiger attire in recognition of their

79. Te'u chu mkhar called Thel chu in *Byang chub 'dre bkol gyi rnam thar* (p.45 line 21–p.46 line 2, p.54 line 17 and p.63 lines 14–15) in the Sino-Tibetan borderland changed hands often passing from the Chinese to the Tibetans and viceversa. This is why it was one of the prefectures of China conquered by the sP'u rgyal dynasty during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan (Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*) and both considered as part of Tibet and China in the biography of Byang chub 'dre bkol.

80. *Tzu chih t'ung chien* (218: 7000), cited by Beckwith (*The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* n.12), has a different chronology. The sequence of the capture of T'ao-chou and Sui-chou is reversed.

bravery.⁸¹ The *btsan* (line 387) *po*, endowed with the power of wisdom and by virtue of his firm helmet, as [had happened] with the [ʼA] zha before, defeated the other rulers (line 388) under the sun”.

A compactment of the facts outlined in both this section of Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* and the account of the sMad kyī *dpa' sde* helps to highlight equivalences and dissimilarities.

CONTENTS OF THE CHAPTER EIGHT OF THE *CHRONICLES*

- the number of prefectures conquered during the campaigns—the eight Hexi prefectures—which helps to identify the achievements of the campaign;
- the extent of the conquest (up to mKhar tshan (Leng cu) and the Long shan range);
- the name of one of the chieftains in charge of the campaigns (dBa's bTsan bzher mdo lod);
- the military units in charge of the conquered dominions (the mThong khyab *khri sde lnga*);
- the administrative system introduced to govern them (the *bde blon khams ched po*);
- the first *bde blon* appointed to the post (blon che sNang bzher Zla rtsan);
- the heroes rewarded (the Dor te, Phyug tshams and sTe 'dzom) and
- the sign of bravery they received.

CONTENTS OF THE ACCOUNT OF THE SMAD KYI *DPA' SDE*

- the territories under the control of this *dpa' sde* (from rMa chen spom ra to bKa' thang klu rtse[s]);
- the identity of the communities who conquered these dominions (the mThong khyab *srid sde dgu* and the 'A zha *sde drug*);
- the extent of the conquest (up to the Long shi castles);
- the prefectures conquered (rather vaguely: across the Chinese border up to prefectures in the north);
- the military tactics used during the campaigns;
- the ethnic and military identity of the chieftains leading the heroes (the Dor te and Phyug tsams, the lDong and sTong);
- the objects, signs of bravery, they displayed in battle and
- their determination to leave behind their families to sacrifice for victory.

81. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.270 lines 18–19) writes: “dPa' rtags drug la stag stod stag smad gnyis/ zar chen zar chung gnyis/ stag slag gzig slag gnyis te drug go//”; “As for the six emblems of heroism, two are the upper and lower parts of a tiger, two are a big and small [tiger] rug (*zar* sic for *gzar*?), and two are the tiger and leopard skins”. The adoption of tiger skins to symbolise bravery goes back at least to the time of Dri gum btsan po (ibid. p.244 line 18).

The campaigns during which the warriors of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* earned distinction for themselves are those of the years 758–763, perhaps the most glorious military period in the history of dynastic Tibet.⁸²

Other two early accounts of these campaigns are the inscription by sTag sgra klu khong on Zhol *rdo rings* and the entries for the same years 758–763 in the fragmentary copy of the *Tun-huang Annals* kept at the India Office Library. The inscription is, as well known, a self-celebration of the achievements of this minister of the sPu rgyal kingdom with emphasis on the prestigious—but Pyrrhic—control of the Chinese capital. This achievement is also mentioned in the entry of the *Annals* combining the tiger and hare years 762–763 by means of a brief reference to the Tibetans' sack of the capital, the dethronement of the T'ang emperor Tai-tsung and appointment of one of their choice, who ruled for a mere fifteen days.⁸³ It is conspicuous that the section of the *Chronicles* dedicated to the conquest of the eight prefectures focuses on their seizure, evidently considered a more crucial military achievement in the history of Khri srong lde btsan's rule than the capture of Ch'ang-an, without the smallest hint to the latter event.

Indeed, the Tibetans seized a group of forts in 758,⁸⁴ followed by the conquest of I-ping in the Long shi/Long shan range (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.146), as mentioned in Chapter Eight of the *Tun-huang Chronicles*. These forts, attacked and captured during the campaigns of those years, were those put up by Qošu Khan who, in 753, had built

82. The interpolation by dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba or his authority to the text of mkhas pa lDe'u, whereby the enemy defeated by the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* was rGya, is thus not absolutely necessary but still a welcome confirmation that it should be decoded as China in this case. Although it looks obvious that I stress this, the common confusion between rGya (China) and the rGya (the tribe subjugated by Srong btsan sgam po during the campaign that also brought the Sum pa to submit to him). This confusion has reduced the literary references to the rGya clan to a trickle, for they have been often considered as to be addressing China.

83. See Richardon, *A Corpus of Early Inscriptions* (p.1–25) for the Zhol *rdo rings* epigraphs.

The *Tun-huang Annals* (India Office copy, entry for the year of the tiger 762 (lines 111, 51–52; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.32) reads: “Dra cen drang ste/ 'Bu shing kun dang Zin cu dang Ga cu las stogs pa/ rGya'i mkhar mang pho phab ste/ Zhang rGyal zigs slar Bod yul/ du/ mchis te/ Zhang rGyal zigs / dang/ blon sTag sgra dang Zhang sTong rtsan dang Zhang bTsan ba las stogs pas/ keng shir dra ma drang ste ke shi phab/ rGya rje bros nas/ rGya rje gsar du bcug/”; “They waged a great campaign. They seized many Chinese strongholds, such as 'Bu shing kun, Zin cu and Ga cu. Zhang [mChims rgyal] rGyal zigs returned to the land of Bod. Zhang [mChims] rGyal zigs, blon sTag sgra [klu khong], Zhang sTong rtsan, bTsan ba and others led a military campaign to the capital and seized the capital. The Chinese emperor fled, [and a pro Tibetan] Chinese emperor was newly appointed”.

84. These forts were held by the armies of Wei-jung, Shen-wei, Ting-jung, Hsüan-wei, Chih-sheng, Chint'ien and T'ien-ch'eng along with the fortified cities of Pai-ku, Tiao-k'o and Shih-pao (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.145).

a number of strongholds in the region, just a few years before the first Chinese outposts fell in the hands of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*.⁸⁵

Lom shi, mentioned by mkhas pa lDe'u, is identified by Beckwith as the Chinese outpost in the Kokonor area (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.44 n.35, quoting Sato, *Kodai Chibetto shi kenkyū* vol. I p.139). Molé (*The Tu-yü-hun from the Northern Wei to the Time of the Five Dynasties* n.59 on p.58–59) elaborates its identification more in detail, for she says that Lung-I has to be traced in western Kan-su, south of Lan-chou.

mKhar tshan, the prefecture up to which—the *Chronicles* say, describing the events of that phase—the conquest of Khri srong lde btsan's armies extended, is spelled Khar tsan and coupled with Leng cu, i.e. Liangzhou in the entry of the *Tun-huang Annals* for the year of the dog 758 (see Rong, “mThong-khyab or Tongjia: A Tribe in the Sino-Tibetan Frontiers in the Seventh to Tenth Century”, and after him Uray, “The Location of Khar-can and Leng-chu of the Old Tibetan Sources”). The same entry adds that the chieftains of this campaign were mGos Khri bzang yab lag and dBa's Skyes bzang stag snang.⁸⁶ The Khar tsan/mKhar tshan prefecture again appears, spelled Kar tsan and associated with Ba mgo and Ke'u shan, in the entry for the ox year 761 in reference with further military activity by the Tibetans.⁸⁷

The eight prefectures taken over in these prolonged military campaigns have been identified as those composing the Ho-si circuit—Liangzhou, Ganzhou, Suzhou, Guazhou, Yizhou, Suazhou (i.e. Tun-huang), Tingzhou and Xizhou (Rong, “mThong-khyab or Tongjia: A Tribe in the Sino-Tibetan Frontiers in the Seventh to Tenth Century” p.264).⁸⁸

The account of the epitome of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*'s bravery adds details on the strategy adopted in the campaign to the otherwise sketchy account of these military activities found in the *Tun-huang Annals*. The military tactics adopted by the sMad kyi *dpa'sde*'s commanders

85. Qośu Khan also was responsible for building, in 749, a fort on the island of the Kokonor lake, namely Ying-lung City, which caused nuisance to the Tibetans (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.134). He was the one who attacked the Tibetans in 753, taking control of the nine bends of the Yellow River (ibid. p.141).

86. Entry for the year of the dog 758 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (India Office copy, lines 107,32–33; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.31): “Blon Khri bzang dang sKyes bzang stag snang las stogs pas Khar tsan Leng cu phyogs su dra ma drangs//”; “Blon [mGos] Khri bzang [yab lag], [dBa's] sKyes bzang stag snang and others led a military campaign in the direction of Kar tsan Leng cu”.

87. Entry for the year of the ox 761 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (India Office copy lines 110,44–45; see *Tun hong nas thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.32): “Blon sKyes bzang las stogs pas/ Khar tsan Ba mgo dang Ke'u shan gnyis phab/ Zhang sTon rtsan gyis Zong cu dang/ Zangs kar gnyis phab//”; “Blon [dBa's] sKyes bzang [yab lag] and others seized both Ba mgo and Ke'u shan in Khar (spelled so) tsan. Zhang sTong rtsan seized both Zong cu and Zangs kar”.

88. Rong (“mThong-khyab or Tongjia: A Tribe in the Sino-Tibetan Frontiers in the Seventh to Tenth Century” p.264) also gives the date for the takeover by the Tibetans of each one of these prefectures. Liangzhou, Ganzhou and Suzhou were occupied in 766; Guazhou in 776; Yizhou in 781; Suazhou

earned this special military unit such a distinction because its heroes infiltrated the Chinese lines composed by the network of prefectures in the Chinese borderlands and Central Asia. These Chinese outposts were attacked by military formations of nine horsemen supported by soldiers on foot, of great physical strength and carrying axes one *khru* in size. I read this information in the sense that the foot soldiers were used to assault and seize the Chinese prefectures, their way paved by the cavalry.

The section of Chapter Eight of the *Chronicles* that talks about the same campaign against the eight Chinese prefectures, refers to the deployment of the mThong khyab in slightly different terms, for it says that its warriors were posted in the territory administered by the *bde blon* (from rMa chen spom ra to bKa' thang klu rtse/Ka thang klu tshes of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*?). It adds the important clue that the mThong khyab were assigned the control of this vast expanse of lands after the conquest of the Chinese outposts.

The differences with the account of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* are minimal. On the basis of a combined reading of the two accounts—the *Chronicles* state the course of events more precisely, mkhas pa lDe'u focuses on the circumstances surrounding these events in detail—the mThong khyab warriors led the campaign without the support of the 'A zha and were then appointed to control the conquered lands. The six *sde* of the 'A zha, possibly because they inhabited a part of these territories, were also involved in their control. Hence the section of Chapter Eight of the *Chronicles* documents the existence of a further development consequent to the Tibetan advance into the Chinese dominions in Central Asia.

The new sphere of the military—and also civil—activity of the mThong khyab reflected the conquests in the Chinese borderlands and Central Asia the community of heroes had been instrumental in achieving.⁸⁹ According to the account of the campaigns of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*, the territorial jurisdiction of this community of heroes encompassed the lands from rMa chen spom ra at the border between Khams and A mdo to bKa' thang klu rtse/Ka thang klu tshes. While rMa chen spom ra is so obvious not to pose any problem to its identification, the location of bKa' thang klu rtse/Ka thang klu tshes is extrapolated on the basis of fragmentary documents published by F.W. Thomas in his *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning*

(i.e. Tun-huang) in 786; Tingzhou in 790; and Xizhou in 791; but with the shortcoming that they all go beyond the 763 *terminus ante quem* of the brief capture of Ch'ang-an.

89. The term *khri sde lnga* assigned to the mThong khyab in the passage of the *Tun-huang Chronicles* may be decoded in alternative ways. It may imply that the detachment of heroes consisted of five groups of 10,000 warriors or 10,000 families supplying a warrior each. See the case of the Zhang zhung *stong sde*-s, where a *khri sde* was also deployed. Ten Zhang zhung *stong sde*—five each from Zhang zhung stod and smad—made one *khri sde* (see mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung p.259 line 9 and below p.262).

It may alternatively denote their headquarters (*khri sde*). See, for instance the many instances in which the centre of Zhang zhung is defined Zhang zhung *khri sde*, but this is less likely. In the latter case, there would have improbably been five headquarters of the mThong khyab following the military campaigns that led to the takeover of eight Chinese prefectures.

Chinese Turkestan vol. II—M.I. xiv, 109b (ibid. p.137–138); M.I. I, 14 (ibid. p.155–156); M.I. xxviii, 0021 (ibid. p.156); M.I. xxviii, 0010 (ibid. p.156). bKa' thang klu rtse/Ka thang klu tshes should be traced in the western stretch of Nob chung (the area of Mīrān). The mThong khyab were engaged in an active role in Lop-nor as far as Tun-huang, which explains why its members are mentioned in local documents from this area and elsewhere.⁹⁰

Owing to the deployment of the mThong khyab in the conquered territories and the creation of bDe khams, entrusted to the *bde blon*, these sPu rgyal institutions were assigned with the task of governing the lands from the west of Long shan on the eastern side to Tung-huang in the northwest and the Lop-nor region (Rong, “mThong-khyab or Tongjia: A Tribe in the Sino-Tibetan Frontiers in the Seventh to Tenth Century” p.264–266). This wide stretch of land encompassed Tshal byi, as indicated by a fragmentary document that proves the *bde blon*'s jurisdiction over this territory, found in Mīrān (M.I. xvi, 19; see Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.124). The first *bde blon* was blon che sNang bzher Zla rtsan, mentioned in the same passage of Chapter Eight of the *Chronicles*.⁹¹

Hence the new military organisation adopted owing to the expansion of the sPu rgyal dominions into the Chinese borderlands and Lop nor entailed the transfer of the mThong khyab from a deployment more internal to the plateau to another more external, in view of the

90. M.I. i, 3 from Lob nor (see Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.121–123): “Tshal byi Car chen na/ mThong khyab byang srungs pa nyung shas shig mchis pa/ bka' lung rnying dang/ khri sde gsar btsugs kyi bka' lung dang sbyar na/ rtse rgod Ita bur myi nga gis kha myi bstan zhing myi gtor bar 'byung [lacuna] las/ mnga' ris su 'khrug pa byung gnas/ Tshal byi khams su yang 'Bro Cog lastsogs ste/ glo ba rings pas/ ma legs dgu zhig bgyis”, “In Car chen of Tshal byi are too few northern mThong khyab guards. From the new orders, which derive from the establishment of the new ruling community (*khri sde*), having been added to the old orders, it ensued that the highest-ranking warriors have neither been following nor disregarding the orders without a command issued by me. Since conflict occurred in the [sPu rgyal] kingdom, as well as in Tshal byi, the 'Bro [and] Cog [ro] were disloyal. All kinds of unworthy [actions] have occurred”.

M.I. x, 7 (see ibid. p.133) from Nob: “rJe chos kyi mnga' bdag chen po la gsolan gsol/ bla Nob chung ngu'i sku mkhar gzung bka' gros 'dus nas/ bdag cag mThong khyab dum 'bu'i steng du Ka dag gi mkhar bsel gyis bsnan te mchis pa la/ dgra' sde po ches/ sdum thab ni bkum/”; “To the the great religious ruler seeking a useful response. While we were gathered for consultations at the castle of Nob chung that we controlled, with no more than a fraction of mThong khyab [warriors], a great contingent of enemies came to evict [our people] from the castle of Ka dag. They destroyed [our] family life”.

M.I. iv, 57 (a) from Dru gu (see ibid. p.274): “Nub ma [mtsh]ams tho rgya can la thug/ mThong khyab Dru gun gyi....//”; “In the west up to the high-up and wide border mThong khyab Dru gun”.

91. A document (Fr .67) that contains an order issued by a *bde blon* holding court/*darbar* is signed by blon lHa bzher and zhang Legs bzang in a year of the dragon, difficult to identify (see Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.19).

Tibetan advance into Central Asia. This occurred after the mThong khyab had had an active role in forging the expansion of the sPu rgyal Bod empire.

The next phase in the history of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* was dedicated to the consolidation of the Tibetan occupation of the Central Asian strongholds subtracted to the Chinese.

It is unclear whether, in the course of this process, the ranks of the military detachments deployed in the newly formed region under Tibetan control went through a conspicuous increase. Or whether this happened at an earlier stage in order to deploy a bigger army in the conquest of the lands that eventually passed under the command of the *bde blon*.

The mThong khyab units passed from being eleven *stong sde*-s, earlier deployed in Sum ru (ten *stong sde* and one *stong bu chung*), to five *khri sde*. One can only say that the reference to the five mThong khyab *khri sde* in Chapter Eight of the *Chronicles* follows the description of the conquest of the eight Chinese prefectures and links the deployment of such a military force with the establishment of the *bde blon* authority and the territory of his competence.

Eleven Sum ru *stong sde* formed more than a Sum ru *khri sde*, as proved by the five *stong sde* of Zhang zhung stod and five *stong sde* of Zhang zhung smad that composed a *khri sde* according to *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (ibid. p.259 line 9: “Zhang zhung khri sde stod smad kyi stong sde bcu'o/’”). Hence around the time of the conquest of the Chinese capital, the army of Khri srong lde btsan was some 55,000 individuals strong inasmuch as it also included the five *stong sde* of the 'A zha.⁹² This impressive mass of troops equalled single-handedly the number of those deployed altogether in the five *ru* of Tibet (the *rub bzhi* in Central Tibet and Sum ru in northern Khams).

The consolidation of the Tibetan occupation of these lands is confirmed by references to people belonging to the ethnic and military components of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde* in documents ranging from Tun-huang to Lobnor and the Tshal byi region.

Putting together the evidence provided by the material on the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*, the mThong khyab in the *Tun-huang Chronicles* and the *chos 'byung*-s leads me to suggest from a historical perspective that this military unit was originally composed by the Sum pa and rGya and then by the Sum pa, rGya and 'A zha.

This historical evolution is documented in passages of various early contracts and religious texts. This written material is consistent in its reference to the “mThong khyab kyi Se [s]Tong/Thong pa'i sde” (Se 'A zha; [s]Tong Sum pa).⁹³ Documental reference to the mThong khyab

92. I am unable to decode the dimensions of the *srid sde dgu* of the mThong khyab, mentioned in the account of the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*. It manifestly conveys the total amount of the troops and the number of their subdivisions sent on multiple missions that culminated with the takeover of the Chinese capital.

93. The contracts are:

- P.T. 1094;
- S.0228 (rather than S.2228 like Rong writes: see Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents*

Se [s]Tong/Thong pa, concerns the period in the history of the mThong khyab when these members of the sMad kyi *dpa'sde* were composed by groups of Sum pa and 'A zha after the takeover of the eight Chinese prefectures in Central Asian territory that included Khar tshan, Tshal byi and Tun-huang.⁹⁴

Concerning Chinese Turkestan vol. II p.161–163) in reference to the mThong khyab kyi Se [s] Tong/Thong pa'i sde;

- M.I., xiv, 0012 (p.445), talking about ngos dpon mThong khyab kyi sde;
- M.I., lviii, 001 (ibid. p.446) concerning the mThong khyab kyi sde bag ra.

The religious texts are

- P.T. 1174;
- P.T. 1297,5 and others (also see Yamaguchi “Su-p'i and Sun-po” n.90 and Rong, “mThong-khyab or Tongjia: A Tribe in the Sino-Tibetan Frontiers in the Seventh to Tenth Century” p.272–274).

The reference to the Se Tong pa in the *Chronicles of the 'A zha Country (Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.8–10) is marred by lacunae which do not allow any suggestion, despite Thomas (ibid. vol. II p.15) and Rong (“mThong-khyab or Tongjia: A Tribe in the Sino-Tibetan Frontiers in the Seventh to Tenth Century” p.276–277) opting for implications derived from the name.

The understanding of Rong that Se Tong is the name of a residence of the 'A zha ruler is incorrect because the term (*khab*) that appears in the text does not refer to the king but it is part of the expression *khab tu bzhes* (to “marry”). It does not stand alone to mean “castle”. Moreover, there is a reference to a castle—whose name is defaced—in the sentence before the one in which the name Se Tong pa appears.

- On the mThong khyab in general see P.T. 1094; and:
- for the Thong khyab Se Tong pa'i sde see British Museum S. 0228 (Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.161–163);
- for ngos dpon mThong khyab kyi sde see M.I., xiv, 0012 (ibid. p.445);
- while for mThong khyab kyi sde bag ra see M.I., lviii, 001 (ibid. p.446).

For religious texts see:

- P.T. 1174,
- P.T. 1297,5 and others (Thomas, ibid. vol. II p.162); Yamaguchi “Su-p'i and Sun-po” n.90 and Rong, “mThong-khyab or Tongjia: A Tribe in the Sino-Tibetan Frontiers in the Seventh to Tenth Century” (p.272–274).

94. References to members of the mThong khyab, found, for instance, in local documents hailing from Lob nor and Tun-huang (see Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan*) offer clues to consider them as people in charge of specific duties in these regions of Central Asia.

- For Khar tsan see P.T. 1089 (lines 12–15; and lines 36–43: in particular lines 39 and 41);
- on Tun-huang see P.T. 1113 n. 1;
- for Tshal byi, e.g., see M.I. i, 3 (Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.121) and M.I. i, 23 (ibid. p.121–123).

This material confirms that the Sum pa, rGya and 'A zha, after being instrumental in their conquest, were assigned the task of safeguarding the dominions of the sPu rgyal empire together with clans from Central Tibet. The consolidation phase of the conquests of the eight prefectures, which continued with successes and setbacks, should be assigned to third quarter of the 8th century onwards.

Hence the episodes that illustrate the bravery of the *dpa' sde gsum* were not coeval. There is almost a continuity of military fronts of Tibetan warfare that succeeded one another. They are outlined sequentially in the epitomes of bravery of the *dpa' sde gsum*. It was first the sTod kyi *dpa' sde*, then the Bar gyi *dpa' sde* and finally the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*, as if this sequence of martial activities reflected the implementation of a design by successive *lha sras btsan po*-s and their generals. This course of action documents a political and military growth that transcended the limitation of the tenure of the throne by each ruler and the contingencies of their reigns.

The *dpa' sde gsum*—and in particular the mThong khyab serving in the sMad kyi *dpa' sde*—have historical connotations somewhat reminiscent of the bKa' mi/ma log, another group of crack troops serving the Tibetan empire at its borders and beyond them. They equally had an active part in the military initiatives of the *lha sras btsan po*-s and lost their identity, being absorbed in the local realities, after the downfall of the sPu rgyal dominions in Central Asia.

Paradoxically the end of the *dpa' sde gsum* is better known than their genesis. Guardians of the dominions in Central Asia, their fate followed the course of events that led to the implosion of the sPu rgyal state. This engendered the inevitable loss of the empire, which began under the reign of Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan and continued under his successors until when nothing was left of the sPu rgyal dynasty's sovereignty in Central Asia. The *dpa' sde gsum* seem to have been among the first to capitulate when the unity of the kingdom was lost owing to internal dissent.⁹⁵

95. As to the cracks in the control of the Tibetan empire during the brief reign of Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan, *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* (p.138 lines 20–21) focuses on the loss of the empire with a concise statement: “dPa'i sde gsum gyis mtha'i so shor/””; “The *dpa' i sde* (spelled so) lost the territories on the borders”.

ADDENDUM

sTong sde-s in documents from Central AsiaSum ru *stong sde-s*

- Nag shod (Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.125–126); M.I. ii, 32 (ibid. p.126); M.I. xix, 001 (ibid. p.126); M.I. xiv, 124 and 129 (ibid. p.129–130); M.I. 0662 (p.299); M.I., xxviii, 0034 (p.465);
- rTse mthon/rTse 'ton/ rTse thon/rTse mton/ rTse 'thon gyi sde (M.I. xiv, 124 and 129 Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.129–130; M.I. viii, 58 (ibid. p.160); M.I. xvi, 003 (p.161); M.I. lviii, 006 and M.I. ii, 16a (ibid. p.161); M.I., xvi, 22 (ibid. p.467);
- 'Dzom smad M.I. ii, 25 (ibid. p.130–131)
- 'Dzom stod M.I. ii, 17 (ibid. p.130–131);
- 'Dzom stod kyi sde M.I., vii, 33 (p.443); M.I., ii, 38 (ibid. p.460);
- 'Dzom smad kyi sde M.I., I, 6 (ibid. p.460);
- 'Dzom M.I., ii, 37a (ibid. p.460);
- rGod tshang smad kyi *sde* M.I. xi, 80 (ibid. p.126–127); M.I. xiv, 006 (ibid. p.127); M.I., xiv, 39 (p.441);
- rGod tshang M.I. xxviii, 0017 (ibid. p.125–126); M.I. xxvii, 9 (ibid. p.127);
- rGod tshang smad kyi *stong sde* M.I. xi, 80 (ibid. p.126–127);
- rGod tshang smad kyi *sa* M.I. viii, 45 (ibid. p.127);
- rGod tshang smad kyi *stong pon* (spelled so) M.I. lviii, 004 (ibid. p.127);
- rGod tshang stod kyi *sde* M.I. iv, 85 (ibid. p.128)
- rGod tshang stod M.I. xxviii, 0017 (ibid. p.125–126); M.I. xiv, 108d (ibid. p.128); M.I. xxviii, 0017 (ibid. p.125–126);
- rGod tshang M.I. xiv, 124 and 129 (ibid. p.129–130);
- Kha dro M.I. xxviii, 0017 (ibid. p.125–126); M.I. xiv, 124 and 129 (ibid. p.129–130); M.I. xlii, 3 (ibid. p.130);
- Kha dro'i sde M.I., xliii, 3 (ibid. p.461);
- gNag Kha bzangs M.I. xxv, 001 (ibid. p.347–349).

Being in Khams, Yo mthon and Tre stod and Tre smad (i.e. Tre bo, known as Tre Hor in later times) do not appear in the extant documents from Central Asia.

dBu ru *stong sde-s*

- Ngam ru bag gi sde Mazār Tāgh. C, ii, 0042 (Thomas, *Tibetan Literary Texts and Documents Concerning Chinese Turkestan* vol. II p.233); Mazār Tāgh. C, iv, 0036 (ibid. p.243); Mazār Tāgh., I, 0015 (ibid. p.432–433); Mazār. Tāgh., 0522; 39 (ibid. p.433); Mazār Tāgh. A. v, o 002 and 0031 (ibid. p.447).

Zhang zhung stod *stong sde-s*

- 'O tsho bag gi [sde] Mazār Tāgh., a, iii, 002 (ibid. p.460–461); 'O zho bagi sde Mazār Tāgh., c. I, 0010 (ibid. p.461); 'O tsho bag gi sde Mazār Tāgh., c. I, 0031 (ibid. p.461);
- 'O tso bag gi *sde* Mazār Tāgh. B, I, 0095 (ibid. p.173–174); Mazār Tāgh. B, I, 0085 (ibid. p.293);
- Nyi mo bag gi sde Mazār Tāgh. C, iii, 0019 (ibid. p.293); Mazār Tāgh., c. iii, 0019 (ibid. p.466);
- rTsal mo bag gi sde Mazār Tāgh., c. i., 0013 (ibid. p.467).

Zhang zhung smad *stong sde-s*

- sPyi rTsang gi sde Mazār Tāgh. C. ii, 0016 (ibid. p.468);
- Yang rTsang gi sde Mazār Tāgh. B, I, 0095 (ibid. p.173–174); Mazār Tāgh. 0050 (ibid. p.178–179); Mazār Tāgh. A, iv, 00121 (ibid. p.190); Mazār Tāgh. C. iv, 002 (ibid. p.468); Mazār Tāgh. 0262 (ibid. p.469).

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Sa skya and the mNga' ris skor gsum legacy: the case of Rin chen bzang po's flying mask revisited

*I know thou takest pleasure in my singing. I know
that only as a singer I come before thy presence.
I touch by the edge of the far spreading wing of my song
thy feet which I could never aspire to reach.*

— Rabindranath Tagore, *Gitanjali*, 2

It is not rare that, owing to intrinsic obscurity, different ideological perspectives or the course of time that favours oblivion, historiographical material is discarded or forgotten in the course of the centuries. The controversy I discuss here, focused on events that occurred during *bstan pa phyi dar*, was resurrected by great Sa skya pa authors during a later period in the life of the school.¹ Its significance hinges on finding out the reasons for these authors' interest in Upper West Tibet and the topics that attracted their attention. This interest began before Sa skya exercised its authority over sTod in the Yuan period—bSod nams rtse mo (water dog

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1. The publication of hitherto unreleased documents that are, nonetheless, classics of the Tibetan literature, are so special that they have compelled me to revisit the subject of Rin chen bzang po's flying mask after I wrote a piece about it for R. Vitali (ed.), *Aspects of Tibetan History*, Lungta 14 Spring 2001.

Works, such as texts in A mes zhabs's *gSung 'bum* made available by mkhan po A phad, have provided me with the opportunity to expand major topics in the secular and religious history of mNga' ris skor gsum I have dealt with earlier. I could fill lacunas, too, in the developments that took place during *bstan pa phyi dar stod lugs* itself and those in the successive 12th and 13th centuries. Additionally, I have added material from sources previously used by me in that article, since this expanded version of mine allowed significant ties with the topics I had studied in my prior opus.

1142—water tiger 1182) wrote *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo* in fire pig 1167)—and persisted after the end of its control of mNga' ris stod.

In particular, it is important to understand how the early Sa skya pa became custodians of knowledge concerning the history of the ancient dynasty of mNga' ris skor gsum and its religious proponents. Besides *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo* and the remarkable notions it contains on the dynasty of Gu ge Pu hrang, relevant works are those originating from the Sa skya pa scholasticism of the 16th and 17th centuries dealing with an array of subjects, which discusses significant material on the relations between the early Sa skya pa and mNga' ris skor gsum. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* by sngags 'chang Kun dga' rin chen (fire ox 1517—wood monkey 1584) and the works of A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (fire bird 1597—water tiger 1662), such as *Nag po chen po chos 'byung*, *Sa skya'i gdung rabs*, *bDe mchog chos 'byung* and *Sa skya'i gnas bshad*, contain rare and unusual material on Rin chen bzang po.

Two main possibilities should be investigated concerning the great people involved in the transmission of concepts on the culture of sTod which reached the masters of the 'Khon clan and the period in which this took place. The first is that the link was established by Ba ri lo tsa ba Rin chen grags (iron dragon 1040—water dragon 1112). The absence of a detailed *rnam thar* of him, apart from a short biography—*Ba ri lo tsa ba Rin chen grags kyi rnam thar* by bSod nams rtse mo—I briefly used in my article (“The transmission of *bsnyung gnas* in India, the Kathmandu Valley and Tibet (10th-12th centuries)”)² continues to obscure a number of significant issues, including the one under discussion. Although it contains more Sa skya pa oriented material than the biography penned by 'Gos lo ta ba gZhon nu dpal in the chapter of *Deb ther sngon po* dedicated to the cults of sPyan ras gzigs, *Ba ri lo tsa ba Rin chen grags kyi rnam thar* bears no signs that Ba ri lo tsa ba took an interest in recording the activities of the luminaries of mNga' ris skor gsum.

The second alternative is that points of contact were established by means of the relationship Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (water monkey 1092—earth tiger 1158) entertained with Mal [gyo] lo tsa ba Blo gros grags pa and Pu hrang lo chung Grags 'byor shes rab. Concerning the

2. The identification of the author of this biography is based on the paraphrase of his name bSod nams rtse mo found in its colophon, a practice common in Tibetan literary works. *Ba ri lo tsa ba Rin chen grags kyi rnam thar* (p.266 lines 4–5) reads: “Bla ma'i yon tan rjes su dran pa yis/ mtha' yas 'gro ba'i bSod nams rab rgyas nas/ don gnyis ldan pa'i rTse mo rab mthong ste/ rtag tu bla ma dam pa'i dge legs shog/ bla ma'i rnam par thar pa dpal ldan Sa skyar bris pa'o//”; “By means of the recollections of the bla ma [Ba ri lo tsa ba]'s qualities, the merit (*bsod nams*) of unlimited sentient beings is fully expanded and the peak (*rtse mo*) (i.e. bSod nams rtse mo) of the two benefits (i.e. to oneself and others) is clearly seen. May the virtues of the noble *bla ma* be eternal! The biography of the *bla ma* was written at dpal ldan Sa skya”.

hypothesis that Sa chen was involved in this transfer, an interesting case, which incidentally marks the introduction of the Gur mGon po cult among the Sa skya pa, is of some significance.

When Rin chen bzang po was returning to Upper West Tibet in the year 1000–1001 after his second visit to Kha che and rGya gar, a mask of Gur mGon po flew in the sky after him. Following this event, the mask became known as mGon po'i 'chams sku bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes (the “flying black leather mask being the dancing mask of Mahā ka la”). The episode is recounted at length in *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* written by A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams.³

This narrative also obliquely refers to the appointment of lHa mo rDo rje chen mo as the *srung ma* of Tho ling, when it relates the loss of a prayer book which Lo chen was carrying from India to appease lHa mo, whose form rDo rje chen mo was brought by Rin chen bzang po to Upper West Tibet to be the protectress of Tho ling. The *klu*-s stole the prayer book from Lo chen and appeased the deity, who subsequently no longer came to Tho ling. Having obtained from the deity a single *shloka* of the praise to lHa mo contained in the prayer book stolen by the *klu*-s, Lo chen composed a *dbyangs* (“ritual melody”) in her praise and was able to summon lHa mo back to Tho ling.⁴

The episode creates a historical problem, as is rightly hinted in M. Helfer's masterly article “Traditions musicale des Sa-skyapa relatives au culte de Mgur Mgon-po”. I have shown that evidence from *Jo bo dngul sku mched gsun dkar chag* points to the return of Rin chen

3. The history of the flying mask, excerpted from *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* by Rang rig Blo bzang bstan 'dzin in 1961 under the title of '*Jig rten mig gyur Rin chen bzang po'i rnam thar bsdus pa*, was published in the same year by Dorje Tshetan in *Collected Bibliographical Material about Rin chen bzang po and his Subsequent Re-embodiments*. Rang rig Blo bzang bstan 'dzin (ibid. p.229 lines 1–5) does not quote the title of A mes zhabs' work correctly—he says he copied it from *Gur mGon gyi chos 'byung*—and omits to refer to its author.

The reader is requested to keep in mind that the page breaks of *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* in the footnotes of this essay of mine are in italics and underline. The page breaks of *Rin chen bzang po'i rnam thar* entitled '*Jig rten mig gyur Rin chen bzang po'i rnam thar bsdus pa*, an edited version of the former text, are without italics and underline.

4. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.209 line 3–p.210 line 5) (*Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* p.225 line 3–p.227 line 4) (Kathmandu ed. p.122 line 3–p.123 line 2): “dPal ldan lHa mo la rGya Bod kyi so mtshams su Lo tsa ba chen po thugs skyo ba gcig la chu bo chen po zhig gi rba rlabs kyi nyer la gzigs nas/ Tel mar gyi byugs la dbyangs mdzad pa dang sang gi Chu nyer mar grags pa'i dbyangs 'di yin/ lHa mo zhi drag phyed ma la Sangs rgyas kyis mdzad pa'i bstod pa yod de/ Bod du byon dus (p.226) chu bo chen po la brgal ba na/ klu rnams kyis bstod pa'i dpe brkus nas chu la khyer/ dus phyis mTho lding gSer gyi lha khang du lHa mo yun ring ma byon par/ Lo chen gyi lHa mo la gsol ba (p.210) btab pa'i tshe/ shlo ka gcig khyer byon nas gnang/ gzhan rnams klus bdag la bstod kyin 'dug pas khyer ma yong/ da khyod can du yong ma khom pa klu rnams kyis bstod pa de'i gdangs snyan pas yongs pa yin gsungs/ de nas lo tsā bas gling bu ltar sgra nyan zhing gsung rtser nas lHa mo la bstod pa shlo ka gcig po des bskyar gyin bos pas myur du du 'byon pa cig byung (p.227) gsungs/ spyir 'Phags yul/ khyad par rDo rje gdan gyi sgo skyong gi chos skyong sogs mang du yod pa rnams kyi nang nas/ Bod du

bzang po from his second journey to India as the occasion when lHa mo rDo rje chen mo was summoned by him to Tho ling (Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.302, n.467 and 468). This rules out the possibility that the event referred to in *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* took place at that time. The passage indicates that lHa mo was already the protectress of Tho ling by then, since it says that lHa mo, after she was propitiated by the *klu-s*, no longer came to the great temple of Gu ge. Hence, this episode did not occur around year 1000–1001 when Lo chen returned a second time to Upper West Tibet from India, but some time later, although it allows one to assume that the event of the prayer's theft occurred when Rin chen bzang po was returning from there.

The description of the form of lHa mo that appears in this account is interesting since it corresponds to rDo rje chen mo, whom Lo chen summoned to Tho ling to be the protectress of the temple. The lHa mo of the episode recorded by A mes zhabs is said to be half peaceful and half wrathful (i.e. semi-irate), which conforms with the iconography of rDo rje chen mo. Hence, Rin chen bzang po appeased at least two forms of lHa mo: the traditional form of this

Sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa bsrung ba la rang gi blos blangs te rkang tshugs su byon pa 'i chos skyong 'di kho na yin pas/ Bod kyi rdo rje 'dzin pa rnam kyis chos skyong gzhan gang las kyang 'di nyid sgrub myur zhing snying nye ba yin/'"; "Concerning dpal ldan lHa mo, the *lo tsa ba chen po*, bewildered to see her when he was seeking her protection from the waves of a great river, sung dbyang Tel mar, the melody presently known as Chu gnyer ma ("protecting from the waters"). It is a *bstod pa* ("praise, prayer") written by Sangs rgyas to lHa mo in her half peaceful, half wrathful (i.e. semi-irate) [form] (i.e. rDo rje chen mo). When [Rin chen bzang po] was on his way to Tibet, (p.226), upon crossing a great river, the *klu-s* stole the book of praises and took it away. Later, lHa mo not having come to Tho ling gSer gyi lha khang for a long time, when Lo chen offered a prayer to lHa mo (p.210), [the deity] gave [him] one *shlo ka* which had been stolen. She said: "I did not bring the rest [of the *shlo ka-s*] because they [are being used] by the *klu-s* to praise me. I had no time to come to you because I was listening to the sweet praises [sung] by the *klu-s*". It is said that, subsequently, since the *lo tsa ba* kept repeating to lHa mo the praise of this single *shlo ka* by modulating his voice as if it were a flute, she used to come swiftly. (p.227) Among the many *chos skyong* who are the guardians of the door of India in general and of rDo rje gdan in particular, this (i.e. mGon po) is the only *chos skyong* who went to Tibet of his own accord with the purpose of protecting the teachings of Sangs rgyas. This is why the meditation on this *chos skyong* is, according to the [many] *rdo rje 'dzin pa* of Tibet, faster and easier than on any other".

That Rin chen bzang po "modulated his voice as if it was a flute" is most captivating. The statement brings to mind an immediate assonance with one of the techniques of present-day Mongolian throat singing. Modulating one's voice to imitate the sound of a flute is similar to Mongolian Sygyt. In this peculiar way of singing the lips are shaped to form a small opening like a flute, and the air from the mouth is pushed across the small space between the lips and before them through the teeth.

If the hypothesis of an Indian origin of the Sygyt technique, practised ante litteram by a great Tibetan such as Lo chen, is plausible, his performance to appease lHa mo would attribute to it an entirely different musical root from the one known and give to it an antiquity that is not contemplated in the Mongolian tradition. It would also show that it was adopted by the Tibetans in the late 10th century at least.

deity and lHa mo as rDo rje chen mo, who is customarily depicted riding a horse, holding the vase of long life in her left hand and a *rdo rje* in her right. That the lHa mo appeased by Lo chen in these circumstances is this peculiar form of the deity indicates that the event occurred after the summoning of rDo rje chen mo to Tho ling in 1000–1001.

The narrative centred on Rin chen bzang po's '*chams sku* in *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* documents the birth of the Tibetan musical tradition conceived to propitiate deities by imitating the sounds of nature. This tradition, introduced into Tibet from India by Lo chen, was adopted by the Sa skya pa (see Helfer, "Traditions musicale des Sa-skyapa relatives au culte de Mgur Mgon-po"), thus being another sign of the interest in the ancient culture of mNga' ris skor gsum nurtured by the members of the 'Khon clan.

The Sa skya pa tradition preserves accounts of Lo chen's links with the cult of mGon po, including the episode in which Rin chen bzang po was followed by the '*chams sku nag po 'phur shes* (on the works dealing with the cult of Mahā ka la see below in this essay), and also the appeasement of the deity by means of *dbyangs* ("ritual melodies") that he introduced.

A short, beautiful section in A mes zhabs's *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* is dedicated to the early history of the two prevalent appeasement techniques used for Gur mGon by the Sa skya pa. The earlier one was the *bstod sgrub* ("performance of a hymn of praise") popularised by Sa chen, its introducer, and carried forward up to Kun dga' grags pa. The text says that melody (*bstod pa*, i.e. musical encomium) was used to appease wrathful deities. Subsequently, from the time of bdag nyid chen po bZang po dpal onwards, the *gtor sgrub* ("the making of *gtor ma-s*") technique was exclusively adopted.⁵

The poetical and musical character of the the *bstod sgrub* is reflected in the description of the adoption of this Indian technique by Rin chen bzang po, which was taught to him by Shraddha ka ra warma and put into practice by Lo chen at rDo rje gdan to appease

5. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.268 lines 2–6): "Dus mdos 'di la'ang 'chad lugs mang na yang/ sngon gyi dus su Mahā kā la yi/ thugs dam mdos kyi bskabs ba mdzad rjes su/ de nyid zor du 'phangs pa'i nus mthu las/ dgra bgegs thams cad rtsad nas gcod pa yin/ de yi phyir na dus mdos zer ba lags/ de bzhin Mahā kā la'i gtor sgrub dang/ bstod sgrub gnyis kyang mi cig 'di ltar yin/ gtor sgrub zhes bya gtor ma sgrub pa la/ zer ba yin te gong gi ndos bzhin no/ bstod sgrub zhes bya bskang gso mi byed par/ bstod de nyid legs par sgrub pa ste/ sngon dus brTse ba chen po Kun snying nas/ dam pa Kun dga' grags pa yan chad du/ mdos chen kho na mdzad pa byung ba yin/ bla ma bdag nyid chen po man chad nas/ Sa lo 'Jam pa'i rdo rje yan chad du/ gtor sgrub kho na mdzad pa'i phyag len byung/ der rjes sngags 'chang chos kyi rgyal po de/ spyir gyi bstan pa yongs kyi srog shing yin/ khyad par gdan sa chen po'i dus mdos sogs/ Mahā kā la'i chog sgrig mtha' dag la/ gangs can lJongs 'dir 'di las ngo mtshar ba/ cung zad zhig bdag gis ma mthong ngo"; "There are many traditions that teach these *dus mdos-s* ("destructive *mdos* (or thread crosses)"), but in antiquity, after the *mdos* appeasement of the Mahā kā la practice was performed, the consequence of the destructive power generated during the sorcery [session] was the annihilation of all obstructive enemies. This is the reason to call it *dus mdos*. There was, likewise, both Mahā kā la'i *gtor sgrub* (the "making of the Mahā kā la *gtor [ma]*")

Gur mGon. One wonders, then, whether the *bstod sgrub* was another among the cultural elements of mNga' ris skor gsum inherited by the Sa skya pa. This is documented by the presence of various Gur mGon *bstod pa* from mNga' ris skor gsum among those performed by them. Elsewhere in the same text (see *ibid.* p.50), A mes zhabs adds that the *bstod sgrub* method combined with the *gtor sgrub* ("making of *gtor ma*") was used by Sa chen to appease his *yi dam*.

The especially fertile season of Sa skya pa scholasticism on the subject of Gur mGon po took place following the impulse given to it by sngags 'chang Kun dga' rin chen, who is a crucial author in transmitting ideas on Rin chen bzang po's relations with this protector of religion.

Concerning the works on the appeasement of Nag po chen po, upon the wish of Kun dga' rin chen's son Grags pa blo gros (1563–1617),⁶ the former's disciple mGo dkar ba bSod nams dbang po wrote *dPal Nag po chen po 'khor dang bcas pa'i dbyangs yig tshangs dbyangs rnga chen*. A mes zhabs, too, on whose works much of the information of the present work is based, wrote a commentary to *Rol mo'i bstan bcos*, entitled in short *Blo gsal yid 'phrog 'phrin las yongs khyab*, which indicates that the Sa skya pa interest of the 15th-16th centuries for the *dbyangs*-s of Mahā ka la reconnects itself to Sa skya pandi ta, the author of *Rol mo'i bstan bcos*. In his commentary, A mes zhabs shows that his source of inspiration for the cult of Gur mGon po goes back to Kun dga' rin chen through A mes zhabs' master bla ma 'Jam dbyangs.

IHa mo, too, was appeased by Rin chen bzang po by means of several *dbyangs*. While IHa mo was chosen by Lo chen to be the protectress of Tho ling, mGon po was chosen to be the protector of Upper West Tibet. In both cases A mes zhabs says that Lo chen was advised by his master Shraddha ka ra warma, who pointed out to him suitable *chos skyong*-s and the way to propitiate them. The reader will be shown below whether the Sa skya pa authors are unan-

and *bstod sgrub* ("performance of a hymn of praise [of him]") which are, therefore, different [activities]. The making of *gtor ma*-s is called *gtor sgrub* and is like the one [ritual] mentioned above. The [other] one, namely *bstod sgrub*, is the excellent performance of a hymn of praise which cannot be done without an offering (*bskang gso*). In earlier times, from brtse ba chen po Kun snying (i.e. Sa chen) to dam pa Kun dga' grags pa, [*bstod sgrub*] was the only *mdos chen* practice. From bla ma bdag nyid chen po [bZang po dpal] to Sa lo 'Jam pa'i rdo rje there was exclusively the practice of making *gtor* [*ma*-s]. Subsequently, this *sngags 'chang chos kyi rgyal po* (i.e. Sa chen) was [considered] the universal life-tree of the teachings. In particular, of all the ritual arrangements for Mahā kā la, such as the *gdan sa chen po's dus mdos*, there was none more extraordinary than this one in the Snowland. I myself have not seen anything slightly similar".

Dus mdos is celebrated by A mes zhabs as a practice of remarkable importance among the early Sa skya pa. He also talks about Sa skya pandi ta commissioning the murder of a Bon po, namely sTag tsha, but no reference to a *dus mdos* ritual is made in the episode (see below n.64). In A mes zhabs's opinion, the Sa skya pa were heavy sorcerers, transmitting the *dus mdos* black magic uninterruptedly in their lineage rather than performing it in individual cases.

6. Helfer ("Traditions musicale des Sa-skya-pa relatives au culte de Mgur Mgon-po") calls him Blo gros rgyal mtshan and dates his death to 1617, but does not give his year of birth.

imous in the assessment that it was this Kashmiri master who introduced Rin chen bzang po to the cult of Mahā ka la.

Rin chen bzang po is credited with a few musical appeasements of Gur mGon po and lHa mo by Helffer—actually four (see “Traditions musicale des Sa-skyapa relatives au culte de Mgur Mgon-po” p.378–380, where they are enumerated as sNgon che ma, Til mar ma, Gang sku ma and Mi pham ma). However, the text entitled *Lo chen Rin bzang nas brgyud pa'i dpal Sa skya'i phyag srol Ngor lugs dbyangs chen bco brgyad chos skyong mnyes par byed pa'i mchod dbyangs dang rnga tshig rgyal bstan mdzes pa'i rgyan mchog* by Shakya'i dge slong Nam mkha' 'chi med, found in the catalogue of the works printed in sDe dge par khang (see *sDe dge par khang* p.369 for this *dbu can* xylograph) shows that in the Ngor pa tradition there existed not merely a few but eighteen *dbyangs* to appease Mahā ka la descending from Rin chen bzang po.⁷

The origin of the mask

It is the flying mask—one of Rin chen bzang po's main objects of worship—that dominates the section of *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* under discussion. In the case of the flying mask, too, A mes zhabs bases himself on the authority of sngags 'chang Kun dga' rin chen, an expert on the *bse 'bag*. He uses the latter's *Sa skya'i dkar chag* and the oral reports communicated to him by bla ma 'Jam dbyangs as material for his treatment of the *bse 'bag* controversy. In my treatment of the learned debate on the *bse 'bag* among Tibetan authors, I rely especially on A mes zhabs' *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* and related sources penned by him—in particular *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* after it became available to me—because his texts are the most critical and comprehensive works on the subject.⁸

Important notions on the flying mask come from Kun dga' rin chen's *Sa skya'i dkar chag*,⁹ an earlier source than those by A mes zhabs. His remarks are sometimes different from those of A mes zhabs, which shows that A mes zhabs did not always follow Kun dga' rin chen's

7. My gratitude goes to Luciano Michelozzi. He was so kind to find for me a copy of this text at sDe dge par khang.

8. The problem of establishing the place held by *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* in the literary production of A mes zhabs (1597–1662)—in particular, the relative chronology of *Nag po chen po'i chos 'byung* and *Sa skya'i gnas bshad*—admits no easy solution. The former was written in iron snake 1641; the colophon of the latter says that it was written in a tiger year (*Sa skya'i gnas bshad* p.302 lines 2–4). The pertinent tiger years in his life are 1626, 1638, 1650 and 1662. The date of one of his earliest works (*Lam 'bras chos 'byung*) is 1621. It is in the wide span of some forty years that the tiger year of the completion of *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* must fall.

9. Schoening, “The Religious Structures at Sa-skyapa” (p.13) says that *Sa skya'i dkar chag*, often used in the present work (whose title he quotes as *gDan sa chen po dpal ldan Sa skya'i gtsug lag khang dang rten gsum gyi dkar chag* in 58 folios), was presumably written by Kun dga' rin chen, but he doubts

ideas. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* is another important work originating from the cultural season inaugurated at Sa skya by Kun dga' rin chen with the restoration of Sa skya and continued by his scion Grags pa blo gros. A mes zhabs was the supreme contributor to this revival in the following decades.

this authorship because in the *dkar chag* reference is often made to Grags pa blo gros (1563–1617), the son of Kun dga' rin chen and his successor in duties at Sa skya.

The *dkar chag* has two colophons separated by a brief history of Tibet and the Sa skya pa. The first colophon (ibid. f.54a lines 2–4) reads: “De ltar Yon tan rin po che du ma'i 'byung gnas gdan sa chen po dpal ldan Sa skya gtsug lag khang dang rten gsum gyi dkar chag mdo tsam bkod pa de ni bstan pa stobs kyi 'dzin pa'i sbyin bdag chen po rgya mtsho nas skar ma rGyal byed bkas bskul ba'i ngor/Shakya dge slong Kun dga' rin chen gyis sngar gyi gdung rabs dang yig cha khungs btsun pa nams la btugs te dog spyod dang beas dag par sbyar ba'o//”, “Likewise, this short [*dkar chag* entitled] *Yon tan rin po che du ma'i 'byung gnas gdan sa chen po dpal ldan Sa skya'i gtsug lag khang dang rten gsum gyi dkar chag*, whose [composition was] exhorted by an ocean of great patrons, mighty holders of the teachings, on the occasion of skar ma rGyal was thoroughly compiled by the Shakya monk Kun dga' rin chen, after consulting [several] ancient *gdung rabs* and [other] authentic documents, and correcting errors”.

The second colophon of *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.57a line 3–f.57b line 2) reads: “Grub pa'i dbang phyug sngags 'chang chos kyi rje Ngag dbang Kun rin zhes byar rab sprul pa'i 'Dzam gling bstan pa'i srog shing chen po de/ 'phrin las nram bzhi nag phyogs tshar bead nas dkar phyogs bstan dang bstan 'dzin dbu 'phang bstod/ srid zhi dpal 'byor ma lus rgyas par mdzad/ gnas mchog 'di gtsug lag khang bzang nams/ sku gsum thugs kyi rten dang mchod pa'i bkang/ rnam dag bslab pa gsum gyi rgyud phyug pa'i/ rnam mang dge 'dun 'dus chen po'i sde gtsugs te/ rnam par dge ba'i mos la rab bkol nas/ rnam grol 'bras bu'i dpal la bkod pa'i mthus/ gnas 'dir phan bde 'byung gnas mchog tu 'gyur/ Ma ga dha yi gnas mchog bskyangs du chug/ sda lta sngags 'chang rgyal ba'i rgyal tshab mchog/ rab mdzes mtshan bde dpal 'bar sprul pa'i sku/ dbang phyug brgyad ldan Grags pa blo gros kyi/ gnas 'di mig (p.113) gras bzhin tu gces par bzung/ 'gro kun rdzogs ldan dus bzhin de la bkod/ shes ldan kun gyi smon pa'i gnas su 'gyur/ de lta bas na gdan sa chen po 'di/ rgyal sras Byang chub brnyes pas gnas yin zhing/ phan bde ma lus 'byung bas gzhi yin/ mngags 'os kun gyi nang nas bsngags pa'i 'os//”, “The lord of accomplishments, the incarnated sngags 'chang chos rje Ngag dbang Kun [dga'] rin [chen], this great life-tree of the teachings in 'Dzam gling, after defeating evils with his four powers, praised the glory of the pure teachings and their holders. He uncompromisingly expanded peace in life, and wealth. He filled the [various] *gtsug lag khang* [of] this holy place with receptacles of body, speech and mind and with offerings. He established the community of the great assembly of monks, many of them with the wealth of the transmission of the three pure vows. Given that he excellently brought them to long for virtue, owing to the fact that he led them to achieve the noble fruit of permanent liberation, he excellently transformed this holy place (i.e. Sa skya) into a source of benefit and virtue. He engaged himself in protecting [this] holy place of Ma ga dha (i.e. Sa skya). At present, the excellent scion of the victorious *sngags 'chang* (Kun dga' rin chen), whose incarnated body is supremely beautiful, [possessing] virtuous qualities and flaming with glory, the lord Grags pa blo gros, who is *brgyad ldan* (“having the eight conditions to become a human being”), rules this holy place (p.113), loving it as much as his eyelashes. He brought back all sentient beings to live the times of the *rdzogs ldan* (“Golden Age”). He made this holy place [the site] of the faithful, all of them possessing wisdom and learning. For this reason, this great *gdan sa* is the holy place favoured by the

The classic theme of flying holy images in Buddhist literature is too well known to be discussed here.¹⁰ Indian-originated legends of such miraculous flights were probably

royal scions *Byang chub sems dpa'*. This is the foundation of benefit and peace without exception. This is worthiest of all the [places] deserving praise”.

The same colophon continues a few lines below as follows (f.58a lines 2–3): “Tshul ’di dge legs ’bras bzang bskyed byed chung/ mnam dpyod rlon dang/ bral ba ma ’gyur kyang/ mnam gyeng le lo’i me chen rab ’bar bas/ bsgom pa’i skam sar lus pa de yis sbyar/ ma gleng yi ge’i rang sgra sgrog ’dra ba’i yi ge pa ni rab ’byams smra ba sByin pa legs pa bzhes byar yongs grags pa’i/ mnam dpyod sor rtse zlos gar bsgyur de’o/’”, “This account is mediocre in creating the noble fruit of happiness. Although it is not without the moisture of deep research, [Kun dga’ rin chen], who is devoured by the great fire of a wavering mind and laziness, this one, who is left in the desert land without meditation, compiled (*sbyar*) [this *dkar chag*]. The scribe, who is as if he is using written words which speak by themselves, [since] he is not fluent in his exposition, is universally known as rab ’byams smra ba sByin pa legs pa. He penned this discerning research with the tips of his dancing fingers”.

Hence, the first colophon of *Sa skya’i dkar chag* attributes the work to Shakyas dge slong Kun dga’ rin chen. The second colophon relates the fact that Grags pa blo gros, at the time of writing, had taken the responsibility of *Sa skya* from his father Kun dga’ rin chen. This seems to prove that *Sa skya’i dkar chag* was written in the latter part of Kun dga’ rin chen’s life (d.1584) and thus the *dkar chag* predates all the works by A mes zhabs as well as the treatises on the appeasement of mGon po by means of *dbyangs*-s, mentioned in the present work.

10. bSam yas, too, had its flying mask, which came to the monastery during *bstan pa snga dar*, whose establishment is traditionally marked by the foundation of this temple. *Guru bKra shis chos ’byung* (p.160 lines 13–14) reads: “Sa skya’i bse ’bag smug chung dang bSam yas kyi bse ’bag gnys kyang ’di dus ’phur nas byung ba yin par snang ngo/’”, “Given that both the *Sa skya’i bse ’bag smug chung* (i.e. “the leather mask of Sa skya, which is somewhat dark in colour”) and the leather mask of bSam yas flew at that time (i.e. when Pe har came to bSam yas from the land of the Bha ta Hor), one [must] assume that they came flying [in this way]”.

It may be a sign of rNying ma pride that Guru bKra shis attributes the flight of the *bse ’bag*, which was ultimately brought to Sa skya, to the eighth century, rather than to the year 1000–1001—on the occasion of Rin chen bzang po’s second return to Tibet from Kha che and Gya gar.

Guru bKra shis does not add anything on the leather mask of bSam yas in this passage, but from a few sources dealing with this temple one can glean the reason that led the rNying ma pa author to associate the two masks in such an awkward manner. Among them *bSam yas kyi dkar chag* by Gar (sic) dBang phyug rtsal (f.26a lines 2–3), an almost *verbatim* transposition of the sections of *Padma bka’ thang* on bSam yas, says that a rain of flower anointed Pe (spelled so) gling and that the mask of Pe har danced in the open space in front of bSam yas dBu rtse.

The mask’s dancing performance is perhaps at the basis of Guru bKra shis’s association of the bSam yas *bse ’bag* with the Sa skya mask, more famous than the bSam yas one for being a *’chams sku*.

A different tradition, which reckons a greater number of masks at bSam yas, is preserved in various works including *IDe’u Jo sras chos ’byung*. This text (p.125 lines 18–20) says: “mNga’ khang la phyogs bcu’i Sangs rgyas gShin rje’i lha tshogs/ bSam yas na gnas pa’i chos skyong nmams kyi ’bag phyogs skyong rgyal po’i shing bya can gtad do/’”, “In the *mnga’ khang* [of dBu rtse bar khang] were placed the Buddha of the Ten Directions, the cycle of deities of gShin rje, the masks of the [various]

translated into Tibetan. See the instances found in works on Khotan in the Tibetan

chos skyong resident at bSam yas, [and] the *phyogs skyong rgyal po shing bya can* (“the king protector of the direction with a wooden bird”). This is Pe har who flew to bSam yas from the land of Bha ta Hor on a wooden bird (see, *inter alia*, Sum pa mkhan po, *dPag bsam ljon bzang* p.339 lines 12–15).

For evidence from the Tun-huang hoard of documents about historical difficulties in recognising in the transfer of Pe har to bSam yas the consequence of a military action credited to Khri srong lde btsan see my “Historical and ethnic traits in the mes-rabs of rig-’dzin rGod-ldem-can”, where I trace the origin of the great Byang gter master’s family, said in his biography to be Yu gur and transferred to Tibet during Srong btsan sgam po’s reign but more probably Turkic in my view. (paper read at the Seminar Buddhist Himalaya: Studies in Religion, History and Culture, the Golden Jubilee Conference of the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology, Gangtok October 2008 and then published in its Proceedings).

A case similar to that of Rin chen bzang po is attributed to La stod pa dKon mchog mkhar, a practitioner of Mahā ka la. His dates cannot be ascertained beyond doubt. *gNas rnying skyes bu rnam kyī rnam thar* (f.14a lines 3–5) says that he was born in a rat year and died at the age of eighty-eight. The most likely set of dates is 1084–1171. He was a disciple of ’Bre Shes rab ’bar and succeeded him as abbot of sKyebs gNas rnying in Nyang stod. Rather than by a mask of Mahā ka la, he was followed by a flying *thang ka* of mGon po depicting this deity in his six-armed form. *Myang chos ’byung* (p.82 lines 13–19) says: “Shangs Zhong zhong du mkhas grub Khyung po’i slob ma’i tshogs khri tsho brgyad yod pa’i nang nas bDe mchog dang mGon po gnyis la bu chen gyi mchog tu gyur/ Mai tri pa’i thugs dam chos skyong thang sku Shangs lo mar grags pa de gnang nas bzhes pa la thang sku nam mkha’ la byon nas Bye mdar gro sol gyin bzhugs pas thang sku thu bar byon pa sogs Phyag drug Ye shes mGon po’i bka’ babs kyī che ba yin no/”; “Among the 80,000 followers of mkhas grub Khyung po at Shangs Zhong zhong, La stod pa dKon mchog mkhar became the most excellent disciple on bDe mchog and mGon po. He was given a *chos skyong thang sku*, the *thugs dam* (“meditation support”) of Mai tri pa, known as Shangs lo ma, but he refused it. The *thang sku* flew in the sky and came to join him while he had stopped at Bye mda’ to have food. [This showed] that he was a transmission holder of Phyag drug Ye shes mGon po”.

Elsewhere the same text (*Myang chos ’byung* p.75 lines 4–9), adds a few details about the *thang ka*: “Las bstod pa dKon mchog mkhar bzhes mkhas grub Khyung po’i bla ma mchog du gyur zhing mGon po’i bka’ babs nas/ bla ma Khyung po’i mi ’bral ba’i rten mnga’ bdag Mai tri pa’i shangs ’tshal ’bri ba po yang Mai tris mdzad pa’i Ye shes sems dpa’ dngos su bzhugs pa’i zhal thang rgya ris rtsod med Phyag drug Ye shes mGon po dang yum ’khor bzhi dang bcas pa’i khyad par can de Khyung pos gnang/”; “Since Las bstod (spelled so) pa dKon mchog mkhar was a most excellent *bla ma* of mkhas grub Khyung po and was a lineage holder of mGon po, he was given by Khyung po the receptacle from which the latter never parted, i.e. a *zhal thang* truly embodied by the “One Possessing the Mind of Wisdom” (i.e. Ye shes mGon po), painted with blood from the nose of mnga’ bdag Mai tri pa, and extraordinarily [depicting] Phyag drug Ye shes mGon po with a retinue of four consorts, indisputably [made] in the Indian rendition”.

For another *bse ’bag*—the Khra ’brug *bse sku* brought to this temple from Yar lung bKra shis rtse during the time of the Great Fifth Ngag dbang bsod nams rgya mtsho (1617–1682)—see the Appendix by Hazod entitled *The Falcon and the Lizard* in Sørensen-Hazod, *Thundering Falcon* (p.280–286).

language. They may have been the antecedents for the transfer of this theme to a Tibetan milieu.¹¹

Lo chen, who had already travelled for one day on his return journey to Upper West Tibet, went back to see his bla ma Shraddha ka ra warma to ask him an explanation for the exceptional event that the mask of mGon po flew in the sky after him. His teacher, who had initiated him to the meditation of Mahā ka la, told him that the all-powerful Gur mGon po had manifested his intention to be the protector of the diffusion of the new teachings in Tibet. Then, Shraddha ka ra gave him the Mahā ka la 'chams sku;¹² a flag with the missing secret formula among the four most essential secret *mantra*-s of mGon po, written in letters of *bai du rya* emitting light and suspended above the cloth; a nine-pronged iron *rdo rje*; and the text of the instructions on the *sadhana* of mGon po placed inside a heart-shaped *ga'u* of leather.¹³

This account deviates from that contained in *Sa skya'i dkar chag*. A substantial difference between *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* and the *dkar chag* is that, in the *dkar chag*, it is not Shraddha ka ra warma but bla ma rDo rje gdan pa who gave the teachings on mGon po to

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11. Other examples of flying images in Tibet are too numerous to be enumerated here. The most immediate instances that come to the mind are the statue of sPyan ras gzigs Ka sar pa ni, chosen to be the main image of Zhwa lu, which flew from rDo rje gdan; the statue of *mkha' 'gro ma*, which flew to Rwa tshag near lHa sa and the *phur bu* associated with grub thob Dar 'phyar, which flew to Se ra.
12. In the works I have consulted, the spelling of this term for the mask is sometimes 'cham sku and, in other instances, 'chams sku. The former stands for a mask used in 'cham, the latter for "dancing mask". 'Chams sku is the spelling I normally adopt in this essay.
13. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.194 line 2–p.195 line 1) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.200 line 4–p.202 line 1; Kathmandu ed. p.113,4–p.114,1): "Bod du byon pa'i tshen nyin gcig tsam phebs pa'i sar/ 'cham sku 'phur te phyir la byon byung bas/ slar log nas bla ma la zhus pas mi skyon/ Bod du bstan pa dar rgyas 'ong ba'i ltas yin/ (p.201) 'Phags pa'i thugs rje so so skye bos bdag par bka' zhes gsungs nas/ sku'i rten du Sangs rgyas nyid kyi phyag nas bzhugs pa'i bse 'bag nag po de nyid dang/ gsung gi rten du la ti'i gos la bai dūrya'i rtsa sngags snying po bzhi las kha tshar ba'i sngags dang bcas pa ma reg par 'od 'phro ba/ thugs kyi rten du gri lcags las grub pa'i rdo rje rtse dgu pa/ yon tan 'phrin las kyi rten du bse'i ga'u snying 'dra sba'i nang na grub thabs dang las sbyor gyi man ngag rang gang 'dod kyi yi ge 'ong ba rnams tshang par gnang/ chos (p.202) skyong gi (p.195) nus pas de dag Bod du spyen drangs//"; "When he (Rin chen bzang po) left for Tibet, at the distance of one day's journey, since a 'chams sku appeared flying [in the sky] after him, he went back and questioned [his] bla ma who said: "There is nothing wrong. This is an omen that the teachings will be diffused in Tibet. (p.201) The compassion of the Noble Ones can hardly be understood by every person". He gave him, as *sku'i rten*, the black leather mask (*bse 'bag nag po*) personally consecrated by Sangs rgyas; as *gsung gi rten*, the missing [one] of the essential root *mantra*-s printed in *baidurya* on a *la ti* cloth emitting a light which is suspended above it; as *thugs kyi rten*, a nine-pronged *rdo rje* made of sword iron; as *yon tan 'phrin las kyi rten*, a leather *ga'u* in the shape of the heart [containing] the instructions, according to one's wish, in written form on the *sadhana* (*sgrub thabs*) and actualization (*las sbyor*) [of Mahā ka la]. By the (p.195) power of the *chos* (p.202) *skyong*, all these were brought to Tibet and the teachings of Sangs rgyas were diffused".

Rin chen bzang po, urging him to take the flying mask to Tibet and adding the *rdo rje* and the black flag plus the heart-shaped *ga'u*.¹⁴ This would imply that the initiation to mGon po

14. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.6b line 7–f.7a line 5): “De nas Bod du byon tshul ni/ Bod kyi chos rgyal lha bla ma Ye shes 'od kyis/ skyes bu chen po Rin chen bzang po la sogs pa mi nyis su tsa gcig la/ khyed rnams Gya gar la song (f.7a) la mDo rGyud kyi chos slob/ chos skyong ba'i srung ma gcig kyang spyan drongs la shog cig/ ces gdams pa ltar khong rnams kyi dwangs du blang cing khyad par lo chen Rin chen bzang pos blama rDo rje gdan pa chen po la dam pa'i chos rnams gsan cing phul du phyin nas/ Bod la byon te zhag gsum sar phebs pa'i tshe/ bse 'bag 'di nyid nam mkha' la phur nas lo tsa ba'i drung du byung ba yin/ de'i tshe lo chen gyi thugs la chos rgyal gyi bka' lung dang mthun cing rten 'brel shin tu legs na'ang bla ma la ma zhus pa phyan drangs na dam tshig la skyon byung dogs yod dgongs te/ slar rDo rje gdan du byon nas/ bla ma la chos srung 'di bdag gi rje su 'brang byung ba sgor bar zhu zhus pa/ rDo rje gdan pa'i zhal nas/ chos skyong 'di gdul bya Bod na yod pas khri gcig gsung nas sku'i rten du bse 'bag/ gsung gi rten du dar nag la sha sa na bris pa la baidurya'i 'od zer rang 'od du phro ba gcig/ thugs kyi rten du lcags kyi rdo rje rtse dgu pa man ngag gi be bum dang bcas pa gngang nas/ lo chen gyis Bod du spyan drang/'”, “The account of its going subsequently to Tibet is as follows. The *chos rgyal* of Tibet, lha bla ma Ye shes 'od, told the great Rin chen bzang po and so forth, twenty-one youths: “You should go to rGya gar (f.7a) to study the teachings of *mDo* [and] *rGyud*. You must also summon a protector of the teachings”. These [youths] took [the assignment] very seriously and in particular lo chen Rin chen bzang po obtained noble teachings from bla ma rDo rje gdan pa and attained excellence. On his way to Tibet, at a distance of three days' journey, this *bse 'bag*, having flown in the sky, appeared to the *lo tsa ba*. At that moment, Lo chen [realised] in his mind that this was an extraordinarily excellent karmic association which corresponded to the instructions of chos rgyal [Ye shes 'od]. Nevertheless, he thought that taking it along without questioning his *bla ma* could be wrong and a breach of his vow. After going again to rDo rje gdan, he requested the *bla ma* to keep the protector of the teachings who appeared and followed him. rDo rje gdan pa said: “Take this *chos skyong* [with you] to tame the people of Tibet”. After speaking thus, he gave him, as *sku'i rten*, the *bse 'bag*; as *gsung gi rten*, the black flag, on which the *sha sa na* [mantra] is inscribed, emitting self-originated light of *bayduria* rays; as *thugs kyi rten*, the nine-pronged iron *rdo rje* [and] the *man ngag be bum*. Lo chen brought these to Tibet”.

Tshig mdzod chen mo (p.1841) defines *be'u bum*, of which *be bum* is an alternative, as “a small volume in which esoteric instructions (*man ngag*) are compiled”.

A note in *Myang chos 'byung* deals with the cult of mGon po among the Sa skya pa in relation to the fact that sGo bzhi'i yul, where Thong lCags rdzong gi mgon khang is located, is considered by this text as a land of mGon po (ibid. p.34 lines 7–17). After examining three lineages of transmission of Mahā ka la among the Sa skya pa (i.e. those descending from Ga ya dha ra and 'Brog mi lo tsa ba, from Ba ri lo tsa ba, and from Rin chen bzang po) (for a summary of the lineages of transmission of mGon po among the Sa skya pa see below), this note introduces the Gur mGon po meditation systems of the Sa skya pa tradition, his cycles of deities and the systems of empowerment. Among them, it cites the system of Mal lo tsā ba in the following terms (ibid. p.34 lines 6–12): “mGon po'i dbang lnga Mal gro Blo gros grags pa ste Mal lo tsā ba chen pos Sa chen Kun snying la gngang ba ni rGya gar rDo rje gdan gyi byang sgo'i srung mar Sangs rgyas kyi bka' bsgos pa'i rDo rje Gur gyi mGon po dngos su bzugs/ 'dra 'bag gar chos dar sar srung ba la nam mkha' la 'phur te phebs par yongs grags pa de sku'i rten du bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes/ gsung gi rten du dar nag la sha sa na'i sngags bris pa/ thugs rten lcags kyi rdo rje rtse dgu pa rnams gngang zhing Sa chen dang bse 'bag gnyis kar

and the sacred objects were given at rDo rje gdan rather than in Kha che (see n.14). Another detail at variance is that, according to the *dkar chag*, the instructions on the *sadhana* of Mahā ka la were in the form of a *be bum*.

bka' bsgo mdzad//"; "The [system of] the five empowerments of mGon po [is associated with] Mal lo tsa ba Blo gros grags pa. Mal lo tsa ba chen po transmitted it to Sa chen Kun snying. rDo rje Gur gyi mGon po actually resided at the northern door of rGya gar rDo rje gdan as protector, Sangs rgyas having bound him (*bka' bsgos*) [to do so]. It is universally known that a mask depicting [mGon po's] features came flying [to Tibet] newly to diffuse the teachings. [Mal lo tsa ba] gave [Sa chen] the *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes* as *sku'i rten*; the black flag with the *sha sa na mantra* written upon it as *gsung gi rten*; the nine-pronged iron *rdo rje* as *thugs kyi rten*, and bound (*bka' bsgo*) both Sa chen and the *bse 'bag* [to oblige one another]".

While *Myang chos 'byung* is aware of the transmission from Mal lo tsa ba to Sa chen and the objects that were transferred with it, and introduces them in the terms found in *Sa skya'i dkar chag*, it does not say a word on the circumstances that led to defining the mask *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes*. Hence Rin chen bzang po's association with the mask is neglected.

The date of composition and authorship of *Myang chos 'byung*, an extraordinary source of information on the holy places in Myang and the masters active there, are difficult to assess. In the lHa sa edition, its editor attributes this text to Jo nang Kun dga' snying po (1575–1635), an attribution dismissed by Petech ("Dung reng" n.5). In *Tibetan Histories*, Martin also treats this attribution with doubt (see entry n.190 on p.97), but at the same time dates *Myang chos 'byung* to around the early 16th century.

The matter of the date of composition and authorship of *Myang chos 'byung* deserves much more extensive treatment than the present note, still a few remarks are not unsuitable. The abrupt end of this text, stressed by Martin, does not seem to me a decisive point. More relevant to the dating of this source are, on the one hand, a reference to 'Brug pa Padma dkar po (1527–1592) in relation to 'Brong rtse (ibid. p.97 lines 15–17: "mGon po'i sku 'dis 'Brug pa thams cad mkhyen pa mi pham Pad ma dkar po la nga khyod kyi bar chad bsrung ba la 'ong ba yin zer//", "This image of mGon po told the 'Brug pa omniscient mi pham Pad ma dkar po: "I will come to protect you from obstructions";" also see ibid. p.121 lines 4–6). On the other, the fact that rGyal rtse sKu 'bum (built from 1427 to 1436, with additions completed in 1439), a *mchod rten bkra shis sgo mangs* which could not go unnoticed by the author of *Myang chos 'byung*, is not even cited.

Myang chos 'byung could be a compilation from different periods, given that its writing style is substantially homogeneous and several references in the text point to periods before and after the full-fledged diffusion of the dGe lugs pa school. Perhaps the allusion to Padma dkar po and a few others are later interpolations but, even if they are neglected, there are no grounds to opt for a more definitive point of view on its date of writing. The text is made of different composition layers added to the previous ones in the course of time.

If a late date is proposed for the final compilation of *Myang chos 'byung*, then it is possible that the reference to the Sa skya pa as the lineage holders of the Mahā ka la cult may fall more or less into the same period in which Sa skya pa scholasticism wrote about the appeasement of Gur mGon po, the lineages of transmission of this deity and the wondrous objects accompanying the transmission.

If worthy of consideration, the tradition holding that rDo rje gdan pa was the mGon po master of Rin chen bzang po engenders a problem of identification of this Indian master. *Deb ther sngon po* has a number of references to the master named rDo rje gdan pa. He is associated by 'Gos lo tsa ba with sNa nam rDo rje dbang phyug (rat year 976–iron rat 1060) (ibid. p.117 line 15–p.118 line 3), Khyung po rNal 'byor (ibid. p.855 line12 and p.857 lines 13–17), Ba ri lo tsa ba (iron dragon 1040–water dragon 1112) (ibid. p.1189 lines 8–10 and p.1219 line 18–p.1220 line 1), La stod dMar po (ibid. p.1196 line 14–p.1197 line 10), Chag dGra bcom (water bird 1153–fire rat 1216), the uncle of Chag lo tsa ba (ibid. p.1227 lines 3–6), and rTsa mi Sangs rgyas grags pa (active in the 12th century and dead before iron dog 1190), but not with Rin chen bzang po. Again, rDo rje gdan pa is often mentioned in the colophons of the bKa' brgyud pa texts on the cult of Mahā ka la whose lineage of transmission includes rTsa mi lo tsa ba (see Sperling “Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan Dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region”).

Interaction with these Tibetan masters of different periods makes it impossible that bla ma rDo rje gdan pa was one and the same person. In detail, a master named rDo rje gdan pa gave mGon po to Rin chen bzang po (see Kun dga' rin chen's *Sa skya'i dkar chag*), teachings on Thugs rje chen po to Ba ri lo tsa ba and La stod dMar po, 'Dul ba and sNgags to Khyung po,¹⁵ 'Dul ba to sNa nam and unidentified teachings to Chag dGra bcom.

15. *Khyung po rnal 'byor gyi rnam thar* (p.68 lines 5–6): “De nas pandi ta A thu la badzra dang mjal nas/ khong gi zhal nas yar na Bal por lo gsum sdod/ ngas chos bsalabs kyi yang rDo rje gdan nas Sangs rgyas gnyis par lung bstan pa'i bla ma rDo rje gdan pa can du 'dengs ngas skyal cig gsungs pa la/ de ci nas rgya gar 'gro dgos snyams//”; “Then, having met pandi ta A thu la badzra, the [Bengali master] advised: “Stay three years in Bal po, during which I will give you teachings, otherwise, I advise you to go to rDo rje gdan to meet bla ma rDo rje gdan pa, who has been prophesied as the second Sangs rgyas”. [Khyung po rnal 'byor] decided he should go to rGya gar definitely”.

An excerpt of the meeting between Khyung po rnal 'byor and rDo rje gdan pa is recounted in the former's biography in form of a dialogue of some length (ibid. p.69 line 4–p.71 line 2): “Bal yul tsam la ma bltos par/ Sangs rgyas stong gi 'byung gnas pa/ sTon pa mngon par Sangs rgyas pa'i/ rDo rje gdan du tshangs kyis phyin/ rgyal ba Thub pa chen po yis/ Sangs rgyas gnyis par lung bstan pa'i/ dpal ldan rDo rje gdan pa dang/ dngos su zhal mjal bkod (p.70) pa yi/ Gu lang gser srang lnga brgya phul/ Sangs rgyas dngos dang mjal snyams nas/ ba spu ldang 'chi ma 'khrugs/ mos gus chen po gting nas skyes/ gus pas thal sbyar 'di skad zhus/ bstan pa'i rtsa ba dge slong gi/ mkhan po mdzad nas 'Dul ba zhu/ Byang chub chen por sems bskyed nas/ dpal ldan rDo rje gdan pa yis/ dgyes pa'i 'dzum bstan 'di skad gsungs/ srin po gdong dmar mtha' 'khob yul/ log ltas rgyud 'khrugs the tshom can/ sna ts-hogs chos tshol bsgrub mi nus/ rang ma smin par gzhan don byed/ gcig la gcig smra phrag dog can/ mi nag chos kyi lo rgyu mkhan/ de lta bu yi rgyal khams na/ dad ldan skye 'chi'i 'jigs pa yi/ snying stobs ldan pa'i skyes bu khyod/ ma (p.71) nor dam chos tshol ba'i phyir/ srog la mi phongs bka' sp-yad nas/ rGya gar yul nams bgrod byed pa'i/ skal ldan Khyung po rnal 'byor khyod//”; “Regardless of Bal yul, he went at once to rDo rje gdan, the locality where thousands of Buddha originated and the master (Shakya mu ni) was enlightened. Given that this was a rare occasion to visit dpal ldan

The name rDo rje gdan pa can refer to any master or masters from rDo rje gdan, and, more probably, any abbot of this temple. As a matter of fact, Sum pa mkhan po in his *dPag bsam ljon bzang* lists three masters by this name in a synopsis of lineages of transmission of important religious traditions originating from India.¹⁶

rDo rje gdan pa, who was prophesied by Thub pa as the second Sangs rgyas (p.70), upon thinking to visit the real Buddha (i.e. rDo rje gdan pa) and to offer him the five hundred *srang* of gold from Gu lang, his body hair rose up and he shed tears. He developed great faith from the bottom [of his heart]. Respectfully, with folded hands he requested him to teach him '*Dul ba* because [rDo rje gdan pa] was the *mkhan po* of the monks and the root of the teachings. He asked him to impart *Mahayana* teachings owing to the fact that he had developed *Byang chub chen po sems bskyed* ("*Bodhicitta*"). After the empowerment of the spiritually ripened secret *Tantra*, which lead to liberation, he requested him to give him their empowerments. "After I (sic: i.e. Khyung po rnal 'byor) prayed to him in this way", dpal ldan rDo rje gdan pa replied with a smile showing his pleasure: "The land of the barbarian red-faced *srin po*, who have doubts created by heretical views and are unable to accomplish [anything] since you [people] follow various religions, who labour to benefit others without having [first] developed personal spiritual ripening, who are jealous and blame one another, who are experts of the religious history of people in obscurantism. I consider a person [like] you who fears the cycle of birth and death, and has faith, to be a brave and fortunate man [despite living] in such a country. (p.71) In order to search for the noble teachings without errors, you have endured hardships without caring for your life and crossed all the countries of India. You Khyung po rnal 'byor are fortunate'."

16. A summary of this section in Sum pa mkhan po's *dPag bsam ljon bzang* is as follows:

- rDo rje gdan pa che ba and rDo rje gdan pa chung ba were the lineage holders of *Bya rgyud bDe bar gshegs pa'i rigs* before Ba ri lo tsa ba;
- rDo rje gdan pa che ba Mya ngan med dpal and rDo rje gdan pa chung ba Don yod rdo rje were the lineage holders of *Bya rgyud padma'i rigs* before Ba ri lo tsa ba;
- [rDo rje gdan pa] Don yod rdo rje was the lineage holder of *sByod rgyud rNam snang mngon byang* prior to Ba ri lo tsa ba;
- rDo rje gdan pa bar ba is included in the lineage of the transmission of Thug rje chen po. The lineage holders immediately before and after him were Da na shri and Ku sa li bha dra respectively;
- bram ze rDo rje gdan pa che ba of Ma la ba and bram ze dge slong rDo rje gdan pa bar ba of Kho ra in the east were lineage holders in one lineage of *bsKyed rim 'phrin las*;
- the Dura ha, rDo rje gdan and the Bi kra ma shi la abbot rDo rje gdan pa che ba plus rDo rje gdan pa bar ba—also known as So ri pa or Ratna a ka ra gupta—were lineage holders in one lineage of *bsKyed rim 'phrin las*;
- [rDo rje gdan pa] Don yod rdo rje chen po was the recipient of various oral transmissions; and
- [rDo rje gdan pa] Don yod rdo rje che ba was a lineage holder of 'Jigs byed.

Related passages in Sum pa mkhan po's *dPag bsam ljon bzang* (p.276 line 10–p.277 line 13) read so: "gSang sngags mang yang re zhig deng sang grags che la nyams len byed pa'i rgyun 'ga' zhig 'god na/ gSang sngags la rGyud sde bzhi yod pa las/ dang po Bya rgyud la/ 'jig rten las 'das pa dang 'jig rten pa'i rigs gsum re yod pa'i snga ma'i De bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs kyi gtsug tor gdugs dkar ni/ bcom ldan 'das Thub pa'i dbang po/ 'Phags ma gDugs dkar mo/ Phyang na rdo rje/ slob dpon bSam gtan bcu pa/ mkhas pa Tsandra go mi/ slob dpon Bi ra wa ti/ rDo rje sngon po/ Padma lcags kyu/ bram ze Rin chen rdo rje/ Dze ta ri/ rDo rje gdan pa che ba/ chung ba/ Ba ri lo tsa Rin grags sogs dang/ padma'i rigs kyi gtso bo Tshe dpag med ni/ bCom ldan 'das tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa/ slob

dpon sNying po zhabs/ Dze ta ri/ Byang chub bzang po/ rDo rje gdan pa che ba Mya ngan med dpal/ chung ba/ (p.277) Don yod rdo rje/ Ba ri lo tsa sogs dang/ rdo rje'i rigs kyi Mi 'khrugs ni/ Sangs rgyas/ Dze ta ri/ gSer gling pa/ Jo bo rje/ lo chen Rin bzang sogs dang/ gnyis pa sPyod rgyud du mkhas pa la las bzhed pa'i rigs gsum gyi gtso bo De bzhin gshegs pa'i rigs kyi yang gtso bo rNam snag mngon byang ni/ rNam 'dren/ rje btsun 'Jam dbyangs/ Dze ta ri/ A sho ka shi/ Rol pa'i rdo rje/ Don yod rdo rje, Ba ri lo tsā sogs dang/ gsum pa rNal 'byor rgyud la mang du yod pa'i nang nas Ngan song spyor rgyud las 'jig rten las 'das ma 'das kyi dkyil 'khor drug re gsungs pa'i nang gi Rigs lnga'i gtso bo rNam snang Kun rig rtsa ba'i dkyil 'khor gyi dbang sTod lugs ltar na/ bcom ldan 'das rNam par snang mdzad/ Phyag na rdo rje/ Dze ta ri/ rgyal po Rab gsal zla ba/ sGra gcan 'dzin/ Kun dga' snying po/ Pradnya bo dhi/ Mukti ko sha/ Dharma pā la/ Di wam ka ra/ Do ba sgom pa sogs dang/'; "Although there are many *gSang sngags*, if one, for the time being, must classify some of the most famous ones which are uninterruptedly practised at present, they are as follows. Of the four classes of *gSang sngags*, the first is *Bya rgyud*. Of the three families of those who emancipated themselves and those who remained as mortals, the first one is as follows. The family of the *De bzhin gshegs pa*-s with *ushnisha* and a white umbrella was composed by bcom ldan 'das Thub dbang dbang po, 'Phags ma gDugs dkar mo, Phyag na rdo rje, slob dpon bSam gtan bcu pa, mkhas pa Tsandra go mi, slob dpon Bi ra wa ti, rDo rje sngon po, Padma lcags kyu, bram ze Rin chen rdo rje, Dze ta ri, rDo rje gdan pa che ba, [rDo rje gdan pa] chung ba, Ba ri lo tsa Rin grags and so forth. The main deity of the *padma* family is Tshe dpag med. [His lineage was made by] bCom ldan 'das who had unlimited life and wisdom, slob dpon sNying po zhabs, Dze ta ri, Byang chub bzang po, rDo rje gdan pa che ba Mya ngan med dpal, [rDo rje gdan pa] chung ba, (p.277) [rDo rje gdan pa] Don yod rdo rje, Ba ri lo tsā and so forth. The *rdo rje* family of Mi 'khrugs pa [was made by] Sangs rgyas, Dze ta ri, gSer gling pa, Jo bo rje, lo chen Rin bzang and so forth.

Secondly, as for *sByod rgyud*, three families are recognized among some scholars. The main family is that of the *De bzhin gshegs pa*-s. The foremost one is that of *rNam snang mngon byang* [composed] by rNam 'dren, rje btsun 'Jam dbyangs, Dze ta ri, A sho ka shi, Rol pa'i rdo rje, [rDo rje gdan pa] Don yod rdo rje, Ba ri lo tsa and so forth.

Thirdly, there are many *rNal 'byor rgyud*. Among the *Ngan song spyor rgyud* are the six *dkyil 'khor*, each of which has been imparted, of [the families] of those who emancipated themselves and those who did not do so. Among them, the main one of the *Rigs lnga* is the *rNam snang kun rig*, whose root *dkyil 'khor*, according to the *sTod lugs*, is bcom ldan 'das rNam par snang mdzad, Phyag na rdo rje, Dze ta ri, rgyal po Rab gsal zla ba, sGra gcan 'dzin, Kun dga' snying po, Pradnya bo dhi, Mukti ko sha, Dharma pā la, Di wam ka ra, Do ba sgom pa and so forth".

Ibid. (p.280 lines 5–8): "IHa bzhi'i zhal gzigs pa'i Ra hu la badzra/ Da na shri/ rDo rje gdan pa bar ba/ Ku sa li bha dra sogs dang/ yang na Thub zla bas To mbi ba'i yum gyi 'ja' lus la U rgyan nas mjal nas zhus/"; "Those who had the vision of the four deities including Thugs rje chen po were Ra hu la badzra, Da na shri, rDo rje gdan pa bar ba, Ku sa li bha dra and so forth. Otherwise, Mi thub zla ba received [these teachings] after he saw the mother of To mbi pa (sic) in her rainbow body in O rgyan".

Ibid. (p.280 line 19–p.282 line 18): "'Od gsal dang bDe chen zung 'brel sogs ni/ Do rje mkha' 'gro ma/ Lwa ba pa dang Indra bho ti gnyis char las Dza lan dha ri pa'am Ba li ba tas gsan/ de nas Nag po spyod pa/ Bha dra (p.281) ba/ A ndra ba/ Nag po spyod pa chung ba/ Bhu ba ri pa/ Bod dBu ba Blo ldan sogs dang/ yang na Nag po spyod pa/ kho rang gi bla ma la bar chad byed pa'i mkha' 'gro ma Bā hū rī zhes pa rngul gcig tu'i rdzus nas yong ba bzung nas 'dul bar mdzad pa'i Gu hya pa/ Ti slo pa yang na sByong pa ba; mngon shes dang ldan pa'i blon po dGe ba'i mGon po/ Ti slo pa/ Rol pa'i rdo

rje dang Nā ro pa gnyis/ dpal mchog To mbi chung ba/ rDo rje gdan pa las rab tu byung zhing rgol ba mang po rtsod pa dang cho 'phrul gyis nang bar btsud pa'i nub phyogs Me ba ra'i Ku sa la bha dra chung ba zhes lo brgya dang nga bdun bzhugs pa dang/ dBang phyug las dngul chu'i dngos grub thob pa zhid nang par bzhugs te grol zhing lo nyis brgyar bzhugs pa'i Asi ta ghana/ Ti pu ri'i dmangs rigs zhid dngos grub thob pa'i Ye shes bshes gnyen/ lho phyogs rDza la mandala du khrungs pa'i rgyal rigs Zhi ba sbas pa sogs las brgyud do/ bskyed rim 'phrin las dang bcas pa'i bka' babs rgyun ni/ 'Jam dpal gyis dngos su bzung ba'i Bhud dha shrī dznyā na/ nub phyogs su 'khrungs shing Sangs rgyas ye shes las gdams pa gsan pa'i Mar me mdzad bzang po dang/ mtha' 'khob kyi bram ze'i rigs sMan zhabs dang O rgyan gyi Sangs rgyas dpal zhi ba/ Ma la ba'i bram ze rDo rje gdan pa che ba/ shar Ko ra'i bram ze' dge slong rDo rje gdan pa bar ba sogs dang/ yang na Sangs rgyas ye shes zhabs/ Padma 'byung gnas/ Ka ma ru'i A ba dhu ti'i rnal 'byor ba Ratna shī la/ rgyal po Dharma pā la'i yig mkhan rgan po Ka ya smra bri dha'am Tam ga da sha/ Dur ha'i/ rDo rje gdan (p.282) dang Bi kra ma la shī la'i mkhan po mdzad pa'i rDo rje gdan pa che ba/ rDo rje gdan pa bar ba'i am So ri pa'am Ratna ā ka ra gupta zhes pa'ang rDo rje gdan gyi mkhan po mdzad pa/ 'Jigs med 'byung gnas sbas pa/ Shu dhā ka ra gu pta/ Dā shā pā la/ Badra shrī/ Chos 'brang dpal/ Sangs rgyas grags/ Rin chen grags/ Rā ta gu pa sogs las rgyud do/ tshig gam bshad pa'i brgyud rim ni/ rgyud mang po zhid Klu sgrub/ Ā rya de ba/ sGra gcan 'dzin/ Zla grags/ 'Od zer 'byung gnas/ Ye shes grags pa/ Shanti pa sogs dang/ 'ga' zhid Nā ro pa/ dang Mai tri pa gnyis nas dang/ la la 'Jam dpal bshes gnyen/ bram ze Ye shes rdo rje sogs dang/ yang Byang chub rdo rje las brgyud pa dang/ yang Ye shes zhabs kyi Rab bzhi bShes gnyen dang/ des dPal sde/ Tsi lu pa/ Nag pa skyes dang sMan zhabs bzhi la bshad/ de bzhi las 'Jam dpal bshes gnyen gyis gsan/ de nas Don yod rdo rje chen po/ Si di bi ra/ A ti sha/ bShes gnyen gsang ba sogs dang/ yang Tsi li ga tha ga na Shanti pa/ Dznyā na shrī mi tra/ Jo bo rje sogs dang/ yang 'Jigs byed sogs La lī badzra/ Li la ba dzra/ 'Jam dpal bshes gnyen/ Don yod rdo rje che ba sogs dang/ yang brgyud 'ga' zhid spyod pa po/ bram ze dPal 'dzin/ Ha ri ge la'am Bhi ra ti ba/ 'Jam dpal gshes gnyen sogs la brgyud/'', "The [lineage of] 'Od gsal and bDe chen combined together is rDo rje mkha' 'gro ma, Lwa ba pa, Indra bho ti, Dza lan dha ri pa or Ba li ba ta who received it from the latter two. Then [another lineage is] Nag po spyod pa, Bha dra (p.281) ba, A ndra ba, Nag po spyod pa chung ba, Bhu ba ri pa, Bod dBu ba Blo ldan and so forth. Otherwise, Nag po spyod pa; Guhya pa the vanquisher of mkha' 'gro ma Ba hu ri who had caused his *bla ma* an obstruction after the latter caught her when she transformed into a dust storm; Ti slo pa or sByong pa ba; blon po dGe ba'i mGon po who had powers of precognition; Ti slo pa; Rol pa'i rdo rje and Na ro pa, altogether two; and dpal mchog To mbi chung ba; Ku sa la bha dra chung ba from Me ba ra in the west, who was ordained by rDo rje gdan pa, participated in debates in many doctrinal contests, displayed miracles and lived for 157 years; Asi ta ghana who obtained mercurial powers from dBang phyug (Shiva), and, after becoming Buddhist, was enlightened and lived for 200 years; Ye shes bshes gnyen who was from a low caste family of Ti pu ri and obtained true siddhahood; and Zhi ba sbas pa, born in the Dza la *mandala* in the south and hailing from a royal family. This is the lineage. The lineage holders of *bsKyed rim 'phrin las* are Bhud dha shrī dznyā na who was a true manifestation of 'Jam dpal; Mar me mdzad bzang po, a native of the west, who obtained teachings from Sangs rgyas Ye shes zhabs; sMan zhabs, born from a *brahmin* family of barbarians; and Sangs rgyas dpal zhi ba of O rgyan; bram ze rDo rje gdan pa che ba of Ma la ba; bram ze dge slong rDo rje gdan pa bar ba of Kho ra in the east. Or else the transmission [was passed] from the feet of Sangs rgyas ye shes to Padma 'byung gnas; Ratna shī la, the *yogin* of A ba dhu ti of Ka ma ru; Ka ya smra bri dha (sic) otherwise Tam ga da sha, the old scribe of king Dha rma pa la; the Dura ha, rDo rje gdan (p.282) and Bi kra ma shi la abbot rDo rje gdan pa che ba;

- rDo rje gdan pa che ba (the “elder”) Mya ngan med dpal;
- rDo rje gdan pa bar ba (the “middle”) known as So ri pa or Ratna a ka ra gupta;
- rDo rje gdan pa chung ba (the “younger”) Don yod rdo rje (his name being confirmed in *Deb ther sngon po* p.1188 lines 9–10 and p.1212 lines 8–9).

A sound historical anchor, provided by *Deb ther sngon po* (p.1189 lines 8–10), concerning rDo rje gdan pa the younger is that Ba ri lo tsa ba met him, after Jo bo rje advised the fifteen years old Ba ri lo tsa ba (i.e. in 1054, the same year in which Jo bo rje died), to go to India and see him. Before rDo rje gdan pa chung ba there existed rDo rje gdan pa che ba and bar ba. Given that half a century divided Rin chen bzang po, if the statement in *Sa skya'i dkar chag* that he was initiated to the cult of mGon po by one of the rDo rje gdan pa is reliable, from Ba ri lo tsa ba, it is possible that rDo rje gdan pa che ba interacted with Lo chen and rDo rje gdan pa bar ba with sNa nam rDo rje dbang phyug.

The identity of the rDo rje gdan pa who interacted with Khyung po rNal 'byor remains an unsolved issue owing to the incertitude about Khyung po's dates. The tradition tends to believe that the tiger year in which he was born was 978 or 990, but his meeting with rMog lcogs pa Rin chen brtson 'grus (1110–1170), if reliable, would move his life up. Khyung po rNal 'byor was born in a tiger year, the most reliable option being 1050.

There is a statement in *Deb ther sngon po* (p.1189 lines 17–18) related to the question at hand, which gives raise to an anachronism. Ba ri lo tsa ba, on his way to see rDo rje gdan pa around 1054, met rTsa mi (*Deb ther sngon po* p.1189 lines 17–18). Since it is not possible that rTsa mi Sangs rgyas grags pa was a contemporary of Ba ri lo tsa ba, one would be led to think that there were a rTsa mi the elder and a rTsa mi the younger (i.e. Sangs rgyas grags pa), but there are no signs in the sources of the existence of two rTsa mi, reputed masters of religion. It is plausible that the assessment of *Deb ther sngon po* is an oversight.

rDo rje gdan pa bar ba also known as So ri pa or Ratna ā ka ra gupta, who was the abbot of rDo rje gdan; 'Jigs med 'byung gnas sbas pa; Shu dha ka ra gu pta; Dā shā pā la; Badzra shrī; Chos 'brang dpal; Sangs rgyas grags; Rin chen grags; Rā ta gu pa (sic) and so forth. As for the transmission of their words or the oral transmission, there are many transmissions, [including the one composed by] Klu sgrub; Ā rya de ba; sGra gcan 'dzin; Zla grags; 'Od zer 'byung gnas; Ye shes grags pa; Shanti pa and so forth. Some [of them originated] from Nā ro pa and Mai tri pa, altogether two. Some are those of 'Jam dpal bshes gnyen, bram ze Ye shes rdo rje and, moreover, the transmission of Byang chub rdo rje and that from Ye shes zhabs to Rab zhi bshes gnyen. The latter orally transmitted it to dPal sde, Tsi lu pa, Nag pa skyes and sMan zhabs, altogether four. 'Jam dpal bshes gnyen received it from the latter four. From him [it was passed] to [rDo rje gdan pa] Don yod rdo rje chen po; Si dhi bi ra; A ti sha; bshes gnyen gSang ba and so forth. Moreover, [another one was made by] Tsi li ga tha ga na, Shanti pa, Dznyā na shrī mi tra. Jo bo rje and so forth. Moreover [the one of] 'Jigs byed was [composed by] La lī ta badzra; Li la ba dzra; 'Jam dpal bshe gnyen; [rDo rje gdan pa] Don yod rdo rje che ba and so forth. Also, some holders of [the oral transmissions] were bram ze dPal 'dzin; Ha ri ge la otherwise Bhi ra ti ba; 'Jam dpal bshes gnyen and so forth”.

To sum up, three masters by the name of rDo rje gdan pa lived in the late 10th and the 11th century: the elder, the middle and the younger. Another rDo rje gdan pa, who was the teacher of Chag dGra bcom (the uncle of Chag lo tsa ba), and rTsa mi Sangs rgyas grags pa, lived in the 12th century. It is more than likely that several other abbots of Bodhgaya called rDo rje gdan pa should be added. For instance, the master by the name bla ma rDo rje gdan pa was a teacher of gNyan Dar ma grags,¹⁷ the well-known Tibetan *lo tsa ba* who played a preeminent role at the Tho ling *chos 'khor* of fire dragon 1076.

Identifying in rDo rje gdan pa the elder, namely Mya ngan med dpal, the probable master from rDo rje gdan, who initiated Lo chen to Mahā ka la according to *Sa skya'i dkar chag*, does not help to solve the problem whether it was he or Shraddha ka ra who inducted him into the cult of the deity. It is noteworthy that A mes zhabs does not follow Kun dga' rin chen in the latter's idea that it was rDo rje gdan pa, but opts for Shraddha ka ra warma.

The controversy

Following the episode of the mask of mGon po flying after Rin chen bzang po is a report written by A mes zhabs in the tones of a discriminative historian evaluating the veracity of the various accounts about the making of the miraculous mask, the bone of contention of a long-standing controversy.

17. *bsTan srung rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* (vol.1 p.165 lines 7–23): “Bla ma gNyan lo tsa ba Dar ma grags zhes bya ba rig pa gnas lnga la mkhas shing rDo rje theg pa dang bstan srung brgya rtsa brgyad kyi bdag por grags pa bstan srung bran du bkol bar nus pa des rGya gar du byon te pandi ta 'Bum phrag gsum pa dang/ Ta tha ga ta Rakshi ta la sogs par bla ma mang po bsten/ bla ma rDo rje gdan pa las chos mang du gsan nas Bod du 'byon khar bdag la gSang 'dus Ye shes zhabs lugs kyi dbang rdzogs pa zhig zhu zhes zhus pas/ bla ma'i zhal nas sngon dge bsnyen Zhi ba'i go cha lcags kyi byin pa can zhes bya ba ri Po ta lar phyin te/ sPyan ras gzigs Kha sar pa ni dngos su spyan drangs/ De bi ko ti'i sa phyogs su bzhugs pas Kha sar pa ni'i ri sul du grags/ yul der nga las byin rlabs che ba'i bla ma 'Jam dpal rdo rje'i rnal 'byor ma chen mo skra sen rab tu ring zhing gos dang stan yang skra'i lwa ba las byed pa zhig bzhugs yod pas/ der song la gsol ba thob cig/ khyod rang dang 'brel ba yod pas dbang dang gdams ngag rnam gngang bar 'dug ces lung bstan ...//”, “Bla ma gNyan lo tsa ba Dar ma grags, a master of the five sciences, who was known as the lord of *rDo rje theg pa* and 108 *bstan srung*, had the ability of binding the *bstan srung*-s as his servants. This one went to India and studied with many masters, such as pandi ta 'Bum phrag gsum pa and Ta tha ga tha Rakshi ta. Having received many teachings from bla ma rDo rje gdan pa, before his return to Tibet, he requested the latter to give him the complete empowerment of *gSang 'dus* according to the system of Ye shes zhabs. Bla ma [rDo rje gdan pa] said: “In antiquity, a *dge bsnyen* (a “layman taking five Buddhist vows”), known as Zhi ba'i go cha lcags kyi byin pa can (“with an iron shin-bones?”), went to ri [bo] Po ta la and invited sPyan ras gzigs Kha sar pa ni. Owing to the fact that he remained in the area of De bi ko ti, this became known as the Kha sar pa ni ravine. In that land is a *rnal 'byor ma chen mo* of bla ma 'Jam dpal rdo rje, who bestows greater blessings than I [do], whose hair and nails are very long. For dress and couch she uses locks of hair on which she sits. Go there and request her teachings. Given your karmic bond [with her], you will receive empowerments and spiritual advice”, thus he instructed”.

Various records of the mask's making were known to A mes zhabs. These he classifies into oral accounts favouring the idea that this event took place after the death of Sangs rgyas and oral accounts propounding the notion that the image was made during his lifetime.

The former narratives by authors of old (*bla ma gong ma*), whose identity A mes zhabs does not clarify, credit bDe byed bdag po and Tho btsun grub rje with the making of the mask.

The latter accounts, based on the oral tradition collected by bSod nams rtse mo and the successors in his lineage of transmission, affirm that the mask and other holy receptacles together with the rDo rje gdan *mgon khang* in which they were kept were consecrated by Sangs rgyas himself.¹⁸ The account extracted from A mes zhabs' *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* reinforces the notion that, among the Sa skya pa authors and others from different schools, bSod nams rtse mo is to be credited as one of the major ancient authorities responsible for the diffusion of significant historical knowledge on 10th-11th century mNga' ris skor gsum. This is amply proved by the material contained in the *bstan rtsis* of his *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo* which mentions unique details and dates of crucial events in the history of this kingdom, assessed by me elsewhere (Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.146, 166–168, 183, 241, 251–252, 276–277, 308, 350–351).

Subsequently, A mes zhabs introduces in detail the account crediting the hypothesis that the mask, upon the request of mGon po, was made after the death of Sangs rgyas by bDe byed

18. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.195 line 1–p.196 line 1) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.202 line 2–p.203 line 4; Kathmandu ed. p.114 lines 1–4): “De lta bu'i bse mGon yid bzhin nor bu 'di nyid Sangs rgyas zhal bzhugs dus byon pa dang/ de'i rje su byung ba snyan brgyud kyi lo rgyus mi 'dra ba gnyis snang ba las/ lugs snga ma bzhed pa'i bla ma gong ma nams kyi gsung rab las 'di ltar 'byung ste/ 'cham sku 'di nyid kha cig slob dpon bDe byed bdag po dang/ Tho btsun grub rje gnyis kyi phyag bzor 'dod kyang/ rje rTse mo gsung bgros rgyal tsha lung mang pos kha bskangs (p.203) pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ger/ Thub pas bse las byas pa'i 'cham sku/ sku gsung thugs kyi rten mgon khang dang bcas pa la rab tu gnas pa mdzad/ ces dang/ Sangs rgyas kyis mdzad pa'i chos skyong gi 'cham sku'i drung du chos skyong 'di man ngag gnang zhes nan tan du gsungs pas/ Thub pa'i dbang (p.196) po nyid kyi phyag nas dngos su bzhugs pa nyid tshad mar gyur pa yin no!"; “Of the evidence contained in the two differing orally transmitted accounts according to which the very same wish-fulfilling bse mGon was consecrated by Sangs rgyas or that it was created at a later time [after the existence of Sangs rgyas], the statements of the latter version descend from the written works of the *bla ma gong ma* as follows. Some of these hold that the '*chams sku* was personally made by slob dpon bDe byed bdag po and Tho btsun grub rje. However, in the text of the account by rje [bSod nams] rtse mo, supported by many illustrious successors (p.203), it is said that Thub pa performed the consecration of the receptacles of body, speech and mind, including the '*chams sku* made of leather (*bse*), and of the [rDo rje gdan] *mgon khang*. Since they (bSod nams rtse mo and successors) earnestly affirm that most important teachings on this *chos skyong* [were imparted] in front of the *chos skyong*'s '*chams sku* consecrated by Sangs rgyas, (p.196) it became logical [for them] to conclude that [the mask] was consecrated by Thub pa'i dbang po himself”.

bdag po and Tho btsun grub rje with the help of various other *pandi ta*-s of rDo rje gdan.¹⁹ The account tells that a Du ru ka king reacted negatively to the gift of a brocade robe from the king of Ma ga dha depicting a pair of feet in the area of the heart, which he considered offensive, by advancing to Bodhgaya with his troops. He damaged its temples, but was eventually slain by Mahā ka la. His skin was peeled off by command of this *chos skyong* and a mask with the deity's semblance was made.²⁰

Alberuni (Sachau ed. and transl., *Alberuni's India* vol. II p.11–13) records a legend that in its broad outline is close to the story of the Du ru ka invasion of rDo rje gdan. He says that a Du ru ka ruler, upset by the gift of a brocade robe with a depiction of feet above the area of

19. On Gur mGon masks in Gangetic India not far from rDo rje gdan see *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p.42,11–14): “Rlangs kyi grub thob chen po Darma seng ges/ dur khrod chen po bSil ba mtshal du/ dpal Nag po chen po bran du bkol nas/ khong gi dkor la sus ’bag mi phod pas/ sa yan gnam yan byed pas/ mthu che ba’i grags pa thob mi yang Rlangs kyi grub thob chen po yin/’; “Rlangs kyi grub thob chen po Dar ma seng ge subdued dpal Nag po chen po at dur khrod chen po bSil ba tshal. Given that no one in his retinue could make a mask [of the deity], he made one as big as from sky to earth. He was a man who acquired the fame of a great [performer of] *mthu*. He too was a great *grub thob* of the Rlangs”.

A historical positioning of members of the Rlangs clan, to which Byang chub ’dre bkol belonged, can only be tentative. Dar ma seng ge is found in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* after the great Rlangs dPal gyi seng ge, considered to have been a contemporary of Guru Padma.

20. *Nag po chen po chos ’byung* (p.196 line 6–p.200 line 4) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.204 line 5–p.211 line 1; Kathmandu ed. p.115 line 1–p.117 line 1): “Tho btsun grub (p.205) dang bDe bye bdag po yis/ bzo rig phyag tshad dag tu bzhengs zhes dang/ Sangs rgyas dngos kyi rab gnas bzhugs zhes pa/ (p.197) ’di gnyis dus kyi snga phyi mtshungs lags sam/ zhes gsungs pa yin la/ yang bse mGon po ’di nyid Sangs rgyas mya ngan las ’das pa’i rjes su byung bar bzhed pa’i bla ma gong ma rnams ’di ltar gsungs te/ sngon rGya gar chos kyi rgyal po dang/ mtha’ ’khob Du ru ka’i rgyal po/ phan tshun mthong ma myong yang ’phrin gyi sgo nas shin tu mdza’ ba’i grogs su gyur pa na/ (p.206) dus re zhig gi tshe rGya gar rgyal pos/ Du ru ka’i rgyal po la gos chen las byas pa’i gos srub med pa ri mo can zhig skyes su bskur ba la bltas pas/ snying ga’i thad du rkang rjes ’dra ba’i ri mo zhig ’dug pa mthong nas/ ’di la ngan byas bskur ba yin zer te kho khros nas/ dmag dpung gi tshogs bshams te yul dBus phal cher ’joms par byas rDo rje gdan dang nye bar sleb pa’i tshe/ der bzhugs pa’i pandi ta la sogs pa rnams ri lus nags gseb sogs (p.198) gnas gzhan du bros pa’i tshe/ Ye shes kyi mGon po yang gandhe phrag pa la (p.207) bkal nas bros pa’i rnam ’gyur bstan na/ pandi ta rnams kyis mGon po la khyod rDo rje ’chang gis bka’ bsgos shing/ bstan ’dzin rnams kyis rgyun du mchod gtor phul ba’i dgos pa bstan ’dzin la gnod pa’i gdug pa can sgröl dgos rgyu la/ nged dang mnyam du bros pas dam bca’ las mi ’gal lam zhes zhe khrel btab pas/ mGon pos khyod rnams bden mod/ ’on kyang Du ru ka’i rgyal po ’dis gShin rje la bsnyen pa ’bum phrag dgu song ba’i bsod nams kyis/ da lta bsgral ba’i dus la ma babs/ (p.208) dus la babs dus bsgral nas khyed rnams dgyes par bya yi gsungs/ de nas yun mi ring ba zhig na Du ru ka’i rgyal pos/ rDo rje gdan gyi gtsug lag khang gi Thub pa’i sku rgyu gang yin blta zer nas gzong bryab pas/ kho’i bsod nams rdul phyis pa ltar song nas (p.199) bsgral ba’i dus la babs par gyur pas/ rDo rje Nag po chen pos dngos su bsgral te/ kho’i rnam smin gyi phung po pandi ta rnams kyi gnod du bskur nas/ dam mnyams ’di’i pags pa bshus la nga’i ’dra ’bag cig bzhengs shig/ nga rang dngos dang khyad (p.209) par med pa zhig ’byung ngo/ zhes lung bstan nas pandi ta Tho btsun grub rje dang/ slob dpon bDe byed bdag po sogs pan grub mang po phyag bzo

the heart, waged a war against a king here identified as the ruler of Kanauj. He adds that the Du ru ka king was Kaniška. This shows that Alberuni was acquainted with a tradition known to 11th century India, which saw the great Kushāna emperor in this Du ru ka king, but the con-

mdzad de/ sdig can gyi rgyal po de'i pags pa la bse byas te/ de la zhal 'bag sku stod de dang bcas pa dang/ sha rus lhag ma nmams kyis phyag dang phyag mtshan/ mi mgo'i do shal sogs sku'i rgyan dang/ cha shas gzhan nmams kyis sku rgyu mdzad nas legs par bzhengs te/ bzo'i bya ba kun mthar phyin pa na/ nam mkha' nas me tog sngon po yid du (p.210) 'ong ba zhig babs pa sku la thims thag/ 'cham sku nyid sku mdog mthing nag la 'od dang 'od zer me phung (p.200) 'bar ba ltar gyur pa kun mngon sum du mthong ba byung ngo zhes grags shing/ yang dpe nying 'ga' zhig las 'cham sku nyid bzhengs grub ma thag chos skyong nyid dngos su thim pa yin no/ zhes kyang 'byung la/ de ltar sku rgyu'i cha nas bse 'bag/ sku mdog gi cha nas nag po/ Bod du Sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa bsrung ba la gzhan gyis bskul bzhin du rang nyid kyis 'phur nas byon pas 'phur shes su grags pa yin no//'; "It is stated that its making was the personal work of Tho btsun grub [rje] (p.205) and bDe byed bzang po (sic for bdag po). It is also stated that it was consecrated by Sangs rgyas himself. (p.197) Since one must verify whether these two [statements] are in accordance with [the evidence of] the earlier and later periods, again concerning the opinion that the bse mGon existed after the death of Sangs rgyas, [some] *bla ma gong ma* affirm as follows. In antiquity, although the religious king of India and the barbarian Du ru ka king, altogether two, could not meet, they became friendly after an exchange of letters. (p.206) On the occasion of the king of India having sent to the Du ru ka king a gift of an excellent brocaded robe with motifs made in fine brocade, [the Du ru ka king] looked at it and saw that there was a design of footprints in the area corresponding to that of the heart. "This has been sent to despise me", he said. Thereupon he became very angry, gathered an army and conquered most of the central lands [of India]. When he was approaching rDo rje gdan and the resident *pandi ta-s* were fleeing to remote hills and forests, (p.198) given that even Ye shes kyi mGon po carrying his *gandhe* ("club") on his shoulder (p.207) was prepared to escape, the *pandi ta-s* told mGon po: "rDo rje 'chang bound you [to rDo rje gdan] and the holders of the teachings had constantly to make offerings of *gtor [ma]* [to you]. You must suppress this evil harmful to the holders of the teachings. Fleeing with us goes against [your] vow". Being criticised thus, mGon po said: "I think all of you are right. However, by means of the merit that this Du ru ka king has accumulated by propitiating gShin rje with 90,000 *mantra-s*, at present the time has not yet come to kill him. When the time does come, I will kill him and satisfy you". Not long after, it is said that the Du ru ka king examined the material of which the statue of Thub pa of rDo rje gdan gtsug lag khang was made, using a chisel (*gzong*). Since his merit was exhausted as if dust was wiped away, (p.199) the time of killing him having arrived, rDo rje Nag po chen po truly killed him. "As I am throwing this dead body in front of the *pandi ta-s*, you must make a mask depicting me by peeling off the skin of this one who broke his vow. This [mask] must truly be identical to me". (p.209) Since [Nag po chen po] spoke thus giving his authoritative statement, many *pan [di ta-s]* and] *grub [thob-s]*, such as *pandi ta Tho btsun grub rje* and *slob dpon bDe byed bdag po*, personally made [the mask]. They made leather (*bse byas*) with the skin of this sinful king. They made it in an excellent manner, using the latter (i.e. the skin) as the material for the entire upper part of the mask, what was left over, such as the flesh and bones, was used for the hands, the hand-implements, the ornaments, [such as] the necklace [made of] human heads and other parts of the body. Upon completion of the whole work, an attractive blue flower fell from the sky (p.210) and dissolved into the image. The complexion of the 'cham sku (spelled so), being dark indigo, became as if it were emitting fire and rays of light. (p.200) It is well known that everyone who actually saw

clusion of the account could not be more different from the legend of the making of the flying mask. It does not record mGon po's slaying of the sinful ruler, but manages to weave in the other major legend dealing with Kaniška, the one surrounding the mythical circumstances of his death, during a Central Asian campaign from which he did not return. Alberuni, by contrast, has it that Kaniška was led to a desert through the treachery of a minister of the king of Kanauj but miraculously escaped with his life. The parallelism seems to show that the legend of the making of the flying mask may be another fanciful elaboration drawn from a cauldron of popular narratives, which makes it even more untenable, for it says that the flying mask was made with the skin of the great Kushāna emperor.

The events at rDo rje gdan—perhaps confined to oral accounts, a pale trace of the life and deeds of bDe byed bdag po and mTho btsun grub rje—are preserved in Tibetan literature, but rarely in its historiographical sources.²¹ Information about the two of them is enough to say who they were and what they did. One short work belonging to the *bstod pa* (“praise”) genre and entitled *lHa las phul du byung bar bstod pa'i rgya cher 'phrel pa* contains biographical

it noticed [this phenomenon]. Moreover, according to some ancient texts, as soon as the *'cham sku* (spelled so) was finished, the *chos skyong* himself truly dissolved into it. This was what was believed.

Likewise, as for the material of the image, it is a leather mask (*bse 'bag*); as for the colour of the image, it is black (*nag po*). Since it flew spontaneously to Tibet, without anyone requesting it, to protect the teachings of Sangs rgyas, (p.211) it is known as *'phur shes*”.

It is peculiar that the custom of peeling off the skin of a corpse could have been practised at rDo rje gdan and moreover by Buddhists who are not defined Tantric practitioners in these passages. The peeling off of the dead body in the funerary rituals of the tribes of Tibetan or Tibetan-related origin of the proto-historical period is a practice recorded in the Chinese literature. It is difficult to say whether the alleged antiquity of the event of the making of the *bse 'bag* with leather prepared with the skin of the Du ru ka king may depend on this custom so old as to go back to a very early period in terms of Tibetan history. On the basis of the accounts of its practice in proto-historical Tibet contained in the Chinese sources, a hypothesis is that the custom of peeling off the skin of a corpse could have found its way into a Buddhist milieu.

21. That the account about the life and deeds of bDe byed bdag po and Tho btsun grub rje was known in the first half of the 13th century comes from *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar*. Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal (1197–1264) must have come to know about it during his sojourn in Gangetic India. The biography of this master (Roerich transl., *The Biography of Dharmaswamin* p.67–70) narrates that Hindu brothers went to Ti se to worship Śiva but became Buddhist at the sacred mountain.

The assonance with the story of bDe byed bdag po and Tho btsun grub rje is immediate. It shows that this piece of Indian literature was translated into Tibetan, but the brothers in the account of *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* are three. The youngest, who had consistent Buddhist sympathies, made the statue of Byang chub chen po, the main image of rDo rje gdan. One version of the making of the flying mask credits bDe byed bdag po and Tho btsun grub rje with the feat of authoring the *'chams sku nag po 'phur shes*. The same legend seems to have been adapted to various circumstances but its main features were kept intact. The common traits in the various versions analysed here talk about brothers; pilgrimage to Ti se; conversion from Hinduism to Buddhism; rDo rje gdan and the making of an image: either the main statue of rDo rje gdan or the flying mask.

sketches of bDe byed bdag po and mTho btsun grub rje.²² They were *brahmin* siblings excellently versed in the *śāstra*-s. They embraced Buddhism after they went to Ti se to worship Śiva who admitted the superiority of the Noble Religion.²³

This literary trail links bDe byed bdag po and mTho btsun grub rje with cultural and religious conventions prevailing in mNga' ris skor gsum. Some of these short works, not only involving the *brahmin* brothers, were known to Rin chen bzang po who penned commentaries to these works of praise written by Indian masters but ignored by the Sa skya pa authors dealing with the mask. Lo chen was the translator of these commentaries.

The period in which bDe byed bdag po and mTho btsun grub rje lived is difficult to ascertain. The fact that rMa Rin chen mchog (late 8th-early 9th century), like Rin chen bzang po subsequently, was the translator of one work by each of them offers a vague *terminus ante quem* for their existence.

Such praises in honour of Śiva and Buddha say nothing about the activity of bDe byed bdag po and mTho btsun grub rje at rDo rje gdan. Hence one cannot be sure that the account of the

22. *IHa las phul du byung bar bstod pa'i rgya cher 'phrel pa* (*bsTan 'gyur* sDe dge edition n.1113, vol. ka, f.45a line 4–f.45b line 1): “mTho btsun grub rje zhes bya ba dang/ bDe byed bdag po zhes bya ba spun gnyis rang gi las la rjes su dga' bzhi dBang phyug chen po la mchog tu dad pa'i bram ze'i rigs su skyes par gyur pa dang/ de bzhin du de dag bstan bcos thams cad kyi pha rol du phyin par gyur to/ de nas de dag 'di snyam du sems par gyur te/ ji srid lha chen po der nyid kiyis mngon sum du mthong zhing de'i lung ma thob pa de srid kyi bar du yu bu cag gis dge ba'i rtsi ba cung zad kyang mi bya'o zhes dam bcas par gyur nas/ ri bo Ti ser song ste der phyin pa dang/ lha chen po dgra bcom pa'i dge 'dun rnams la bsod snyoms stobs pa la brtson par gyur pa dang phrang de/ de las Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das nyid ni srid pa gsum gyi bla ma'i dam pa yin no zhes bstan pa dang/ des pa rnyed de/ Sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la zhugs nas de la brten te/ mTho btsun grub rjes ni khyad par du 'phags pa'i bstod pas Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das la bstod pa la/ bDe byed (f.65b) bdag pos ni lHa las phul du byung ba'i bstod pas Thub pa'i dbang po la bstod pa rtsams pa yin no//”; “The two siblings, mTho btsun grub rje and bDe byed bdag po, owing to their personal karmic [accumulation], were subsequently born in a family of *brahmin*-s supremely devoted to dBang phyug chen po, [the font of] rejoice. They likewise became proficient in all *bstan bcos*. They then formulated the following thought: “We will never get even a little of the nectar of virtue until we see the great deity (i.e. Śiva) for as long as possible and obtain his secret teachings”. Having developed a strong resolution, they left for ri bo Ti se and made their way there. The great deity was striving hard to offer alms to the *dgra bcom pa* monks. [Śiva] then said: “Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das is the noblest among the *bla ma*-s of the three worlds”. They obtained the latter's teachings. Having embraced the doctrine of Sangs rgyas, therefore, mTho btsun grub rje wrote an extraordinarily noble encomium to praise Sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das, and bDe byed (f.65b) bdag po composed *IHa las phul du byung ba'i bstod pa* to praise Thub pa'i dbang po”.

23. R. Stein (“La mythologie hindouiste au Tibet” p.1411–1412) says, citing the *bstod pa* entitled *IHa las phul du byung bar bstod pa*, that bDe byed bdag po and mTho btsun grub rje were authors of texts, the commentaries of which were translated by Rin chen bzang po, and that an important part of their life story took place at Gangs Ti se.

making of the flying mask was an import into Tibetan culture due to the activity of Rin chen bzang po, like his account of their sojourn at Ti se and their rejection of the *mu stegs pa* cult.

One cannot, consequently, say whether A mes zhabs and the other Sa skya pa authors were ignorant of the existence of the points of contact between the short texts concerning bDe byed bdag po and mTho bstun grub rje and the literary culture of mNga' ris skor gsum or omitted them deliberately. I think that Rin chen bzang po, who went to rDo rje gdan, took the mask with him to Kha che and then mNga' ris skor gsum, and translated commentaries on *bstod pa*-s linked with bDe byed bdag po and mTho bstun grub rje, knew about the legend of the making of the flying mask. This legend was popular enough in 11th century India to be noticed by Alberuni.

Moreover, I think that the later Sa skya pa authors, despite the absence of signs, received the account of the making of the flying mask written by bDe byed bdag po and mTho bstun grub rje as one more import from the mNga' ris skor gsum culture, although the role played by Lo chen may have been forgotten in the meantime.

A mes zhabs's treatment of the controversy is a good historical lesson since he rejects the fanciful stories that the *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes* made at rDo rje gdan was blessed by ston pa Sangs rgyas in person, for the historical reason that the temple of rDo rje gdan postdates the life of Sangs rgyas.²⁴ He thus opts to credit the legend that the *'chams sku*, long after the

24. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.200 line 4–p.201 line 1) *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.211 line 1–p.212 line 1; Kathmandu ed. p.117 lines 2–4): “Des na la la dag chos skyong gi rten nams dang/ de dag gi bzhugs gnas rDo rje gdan gyi mgon khang dang bcas pa la Sangs rgyas nyid kyis rab gnas mdzad do/ zhes smra ba ni cung zad ma brtags pa ste/ rDo rje gdan gyi gtsug lag khang dang rten gsum nams ni sTon pa 'das nas lo grangs du ma zhig 'das pa'i rjes su byung ba yin te/ de yang rgyal ba 'das nas lo nyis shu tsam la rgyal po shri Seng has rDo rje gdan du Byang chub kyis shing la me tog ra bs bskor nas mchod pa mdzad de dus mchod chen po btsugs par bshad//”; “Therefore, some people believe that the image of the *chos skyong* and rDo rje gdan *mgon khang*, where they (i.e. the mask and other objects) were kept, were consecrated by Sangs rgyas himself. This point of view is somewhat erroneous. rDo rje gdan *gtsug lag khang* and the receptacles of the three [bodies] came to exist only many years after the *Buddhanirvana*. Moreover, it is said that twenty years after the death of the Victorious One, rgyal po shri Seng ha at rDo rje gdan, (p.201) having built a *me tog gi ra ba* (lit. an “enclosure for flowers”) around the Bo dhi tree, introduced the *dus mchod chen po*”.

Nag po chen po chos 'byung (p.203 line 6–p.204 line 3) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.216 line 4–p.217 line 3; Kathmandu ed. p.119 lines 2–3): “rGyu mtshan des na Sangs rgyas zhal bzhugs dus rDo rje gdan gyi gtsug lag khang dang rten gsum nams byung bar ma bshad pas/ mgon khang yang ji ltar 'byung soms shig ces gsungs so/ de ltar lo rgyus mi 'dra ba gnyis las/ snga ma nyid tshad mar byed na Sangs rgyas zhal bzhugs dus rDo rje gdan gyi gtsug lag khang sogs ma byung bar bshad pa de la/ lung rigs nram dag gi 'gal spong zhig dgos par snang//”; “Due to this reason (i.e. the making of the Buddha statue 290 years after his death), [there is no reason] to say that rDo rje gdan *gtsug lag khang* and the *rten gsum* existed when Sangs rgyas was alive. (p.204) Hence one must think in the same way, so it should be said, for the existence of the *mgon khang*. (p.217) Thus, of these two

death of Sangs rgyas, was made at rDo rje gdan with the skin of the invading Du ru ka king, for the fact that, built in the intervening period, rDo rje gdan gtsug lag khang and its *mgon khang*, where the mask was placed, already existed by then.

At the same time, he treats the accounts that go back to a respected master such as slob dpon bSod nams rtse mo with prudence but moderate disbelief.²⁵

A mes zhabs in *Nag po chen po chos 'byung*, instead, refuses an exercise of middle way thinking preserved in another version which combines the two versions. One account says that the *bse 'bag* was made in the time of Sangs rgyas and consecrated by him. It adds that the mask was kept for many years in rDo rje gdan *mgon khang*. The account goes on to say that the temple was subsequently made anew at the time of a renovation of rDo rje gdan and its *mgon khang*, accomplished by several local *pandi ta* after the Du ru ka king had damaged the *gtsug lag khang*. A mes zhabs says that this tradition is unreliable, but he does not add the reasons for his dismissal. They can probably be deduced from his previous refutation of the oral account reported by bSod nams rtse mo that Sangs rgyas consecrated the mask, on the basis of the impossibility that the temples at rDo rje gdan existed in the time of Shakyamuni.²⁶

Sa skya'i dkar chag credits the same account of the making of the flying mask which A mes zhabs in his *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* considers acceptable. This is also done in *Sa skya'i*

differing accounts, if the former of the two is to be considered logical, on the basis of the record that [monuments] such as rDo rje gdan *gtsug lag khang* did not exist when Sangs rgyas was alive, it seems it is necessary to eliminate [the errors] and correct [them] with [the help] of scriptural evidence and logical reasoning (*lung rigs*)”.

25. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.204 line 3–p.205 line 1) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.217 line 3–p.218 line 4; Kathmandu ed. p.119 lines 3–5): “Lo rgyus phyi ma nyid 'thad pa ltar na slob dpon bSod nams rtse mo dang/ rgyal tsha lung mang po'i gsung gi yi ge las/ bstan pa'i rtsa lag srog shing dam pa dpal rDo rje gdan gyi srung mar Thub pas bse las byas pa'i 'cham sku la sogs sku gsung thugs kyi rten mgon khang dang bcas pa la rab tu gnas mdzad ces gsal bar gsungs pa de nyid/ bar skabs su yi ge pas skyon byung bar 'dod dgos pa las gzhan du ma 'das kyang/ 'on kyang kho bo cag ni snyan rgyud kyi lo rgyus mi 'dra ba de gnyis ka 'gal med du khas blang ba/”; “Concerning thus the reliability of the latter account, in the texts [containing] many instructions by slob dpon bSod nams rtse mo and his victorious successors, it is clearly said that Thub pa consecrated the '*cham sku* (spelled so) made of *bse* (for the Zhang zhung pa etymology of this term adopted by this tradition see below p.299) to be the protector of [holy places] such as dpal rDo rje gdan, the noble root and branches of the life tree of the teachings (i.e. paraphrasing the Bo dhi tree), the *sku gsung* (p.218) *thugs kyi rten* and the *mgon khang*. The authors of the intermediate period have agreed that [this view] is faulty [and] there is not much else to add (*gzhan du ma 'das*). However, in my view, with respect to the acceptance of the two differing accounts which have been orally transmitted as being non-contradictory, (p.205) [this] absence of criticism by others is extremely questionable”.
26. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.205 line 6–p.207 line 1) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.220 line 1–p.221 line 5; Kathmandu ed. p.120 line 3–p.121 line 1): “rNam pa gcig tu na bse las byas pa'i sku 'bag sogs chos skyong gi rten nams la rZgyal ba nyid kyi rab gnas dang bka' bsgo mdzad nas de

dkar chag in uncritical terms, for the *dkar chag* introduces only this legend of the origination of the flying mask, omitting the others.²⁷ This work describes at some length the campaign of

nas rim bzhin rDo rje gdan gyi byang sgo'i mgon khang du bzhugs pa la lo mang po ches pa dang/ bar skabs su Du ru ka'i dmag gis rDo rje gdan la gnod pa byung dus/ gtsug lag khang sogs cung zad nyams chag tu gyur pa na/ slar dus mi ring bar rgyal po sdig can/ chso skyong gis dngos su bsgral ba'i tshe/ der bzhugs kyi pan chen rnams kyis rten gsum sogs la nyams gso dang/ chos skyong la gtang rag rgyas pa phul ba'i tshe/ de skabs kyi skye bo rnams kyis bse mGon nyid gсар bzhengs su mdzad pa lta bu'i snyan grags kyi gtam phyogs kun tu grags pa de nyid kyi ngag rgyun 'jags pa ma yin pa'i nges pa yang mi snang bas/ des na phyogs gcig kho na 'thad par bzung nas cig ma dag pa go zhes pa'i 'then skad dgos ni nam yang ma yin pas dpyod ldan gzur gnas rnams kyis de bzhin du dngos par mdzod cig/"; "Initially, (p.206) the Victorious One himself consecrated the receptacles of the *chos skyong* including the mask (*sku 'bag*) made of *bse* (leather) and bound [the powers of the *chos skyong* to protect rDo rje gdan] (*bka' sgo mdzad*). Subsequently, [the mask] stayed for many years in the *mgon khang* at the northern door of rDo rje gdan. In the intermediate period, when the Du ru ka army greatly harmed rDo rje gdan, the *gtsug lag khang* suffered a little damage. When the sinful king, slightly later, was killed by the *chos skyong* himself, the resident *pan chen*-s renovated the *rten gsum* (p.221) and offered their elaborate thanks to the *chos skyong*. People of that period spread the legend in all the directions as if the *bse mGon* was made anew [at that time]. This oral tradition being without foundation, it seems that it is not true. Consequently, given that only one version must be held as agreeable (i.e. the Du ru ka king version), the others should be considered incorrect. Owing to the fact that unreliable speeches should not be given credit, (p.207) researchers should think in unbiased terms".

27. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.6a line 5–f.6b line 7): "sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po na rten gyi gtso bo chos srung thams cad kyi dpa' bo dpal mkha' 'gro ma rDo rje Gur nas 'byung bas Gur gyi mGon po zhes yongs su grags pa'i mthu thobs kyi mnga' bdag de'i sku gsung thugs kyi rten rnams bzhugs sa yin cing/ chos srung chen po 'di'i lo rgyus kyi dbang du byas na sngon rGya gar dBus kyi rgyal po dang/ mtha' khob Du ru kha'i rgyal po/ mig gi ma mthong ba phrin gyi sgo nas shin tu mdza' ba'i grogs su 'gyur cing/ dus re zhig gi tshe dBus kyi rgyal pos mtha' khob kyi rgyal po la gos srub med pa ri mo can zhig skyes su bskur ba la bltas pas snying ga'i thad du rkang rjes lta bu'i ri mo zhig 'dug pa mthong ba dang 'di ngan byas pa yin zer te kho khros (f.6b) nas dmag dpung gi tshogs bshams te/ yul dBus 'joms par byas/ rDo rje gdan dang nye bar slebs pa'i tshe/ der bzhugs pa'i pandi ta la sogs sa gnas gzhan du bros pa'i tshe/ Ye shes kyi mGon po yang khong rnams dang mnyam du bros pas chos kyi spyang dang ldan pa rnams kyis/ mGon po la khyod rDo rje 'chang gi bka' bsgos shing bstan 'dzin rnams kyi rgyun du mchod pa'i dgos pa bstan pa dang bstan 'dzin la gnod pa'i gdug pa can sgrol dgos rgyu la/ nged dang mnyam du bros pas 'thus sam zhes khrel btap pas/ mGon pos khyed rnams bden mod/ 'on khyang Du ru kha'i rgyal po 'di skye ba snga ma la gShin rje bsnyen pa 'bum phrag drug song bas bsod nams dang ldan pas/ da lta bsgral ba'i dus min/ dus la bab dus bsgral nas khyod rnams dgos par bya yi/ zhes gsung/ de nas yung mi ring ba zhig nas/ Du ru kha rgyal pos rDo rje gdan gyi gtsug lag khang la/ Thub pa'i gser sku gzhugs sa la 'di gser gar lugs yin min blta zer nas/ zong rgyab pas/ kho'i bsod nams rdul phyis pa ltar gyur te/ bsgral ba'i shin tu gyur nas Ye shes kyi mGon pos dngos su bsgral/ de nas pandi ta rnams la dam nyams 'di lpags pa bshus la nga'i 'dra 'bag bgyis shig gsung bas/ slob dpon mTho btsun grub rje dang sDe byed dga' bo la sogs pas Ma ha bo dhi'i sku bzhengs dus bse 'bag 'di yang bzhengs par grags/ gang ltar yang sdig can rgyal po de'i lpags pa la bse bzos/ de la zhal 'bag 'di bzhengs te/ Ye shes pa dngos su thim nas/ rDo rje gdan

the Du ru ka king, the rebuking of Mahā ka la and the several *pandi ta*'s consternation at the profanation caused, the assassination of the sinful king and the making of the mask with the leather prepared from his skin.

Only one detail not mentioned in *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* is found in the *dkar chag*, i.e. the making of the image installed in the Mahā bo dhi temple by the same Tho btsun grub rje and sDe byed bdag po who created the mask. Kun dga' rin chen expresses some doubts about the fact that, when mTho btsun grub rje and sDe byed bdag po made the *bse 'bag*, they also created the main image of Mahā bo dhi. This is indicated by the use in his treatment of a dubitative formula (*gang ltar* or "however this may be").

It seems that this image preexisted the invasion of the Du ru ka *rgyal po*, otherwise the statue, said to be the Thub pa *gser sku* of rDo rje gdan gtsug lag khang in the account of the *dkar chag*, could not have attracted the interest of the sinful king, unless there were two different statues. Another possibility is that the Thub pa *gser sku* was destroyed by the barbarian king.

du re zhig bzhugs/!', "In sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po the main receptacle is the hero of all the *chos* [*skiyong*] *srung* [*ma*], universally known as Gur gyi mGon po who originated from dpal mkha' 'gro ma rDo rje Gur. This is the place where the receptacles of body, speech and mind of this powerful *mnga'bdag* are kept. If the history of this great *chos* [*skiyong*] *srung* [*ma*] is introduced here, [it is as follows]. In antiquity, the king of rGya gar dBus and the barbarian Du ru kha king, without seeing one another, became extremely good friends by means of an exchange of letters and, on one occasion, the king of dBus complimented the barbarian king with a patterned brocade robe in a single piece. Upon examining it, [the barbarian king] saw that in the area of the heart was a pattern resembling footprints and he said that this was very bad. Being infuriated, he gathered an army and conquered the land of [rGya gar gyi] dBus. Upon approaching rDo rje gdan, when the resident *pandi ta*-s were fleeing elsewhere, Ye shes kyi mGon po was also fleeing with them. The religious practitioners told him: "rDo rje 'chang bound your [powers to protect rDo rje gdan], mGon po! And the holders of the teachings had constantly to make offerings [to you]. This is the reason why you should free [us] from this evil harming the teachings and their holders". Because they criticised [him] saying "Why are you allowing yourself to run away with us?", mGon po [replied]: "You are right, but owing to the Du ru kha king's accumulation of merit in his previous lives by reciting [the *mantra* of] gShin rje 600,000 times, at present it is not the time to kill him. When the time is ripe, I will kill him as you wish". So declared he. Not long after, the Du ru kha king having said he wanted to see whether the golden statue of Thub pa, placed inside rDo rje gdan *gtsug lag khang*, was cast in solid gold, [and] struck a chisel [into it], his merit became like dust wiped away. The appropriate time to kill him having come, Ye shes kyi mGon po actually slew him. He then told the *pandi ta*-s: "Make a mask resembling me after peeling off the skin of this evildoer". When [*pandi ta*-s] such as slob dpon mTho btsun grub rje (spelled so) and sDe byed dga' bo (spelled so) made the statue of Mahā bo dhi, it is well known that they also made this *bse 'bag*. However this may be, they made leather with the skin of the sinful king and with this they made the *zhal 'bag*. After Ye shes pa (i.e. mGon po) dissolved into it, [the mask] remained at rDo rje gdan for quite some time".

Concerning the other major topic of the controversy dealing with the flying mask that accompanied Rin chen bzang po to Tibet, i.e. the material of which it was made, A mes zhabs diligently lists several differing opinions by different authorities in various parts of his discussion. I prefer to compact them systematically rather than introduce them separately, as A mes zhabs does every time he discusses one of the historical accounts of the origin of the mask.

A most interesting aspect, which A mes zhabs does not pursue further, concerns the meaning of the term *bse 'bag*, often applied to the mask. He mentions the authority of bSod nams rtse mo in the case of this assessment. bSod nams rtse mo proves himself once again to be an expert on the cultures of Upper West Tibet—the correctness of his treatment of the material of which the mask was made notwithstanding—when he says that the term *bse*, referring to the mask, derives from the fact that it remained in Upper West Tibet for a long time and that, in the language of Zhang zhung, something stiff and thin, which applies well to the *bse 'bag*, is called *bse*.²⁸

This fact has two major implications. Firstly, that this is another reference to the existence of a language specific to Zhang zhung but without an identification of its several sub-branches,²⁹ and that the naming of the mask in this language indicates that Zhang zhung pa terms were in use during *bstan pa phyi dar*. Secondly, perhaps less significant in cultural or historical terms but more relevant to the questions that the mask posed to Tibetan authors, this would imply that the mask was not made from any kind of skin.

28. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.196 lines 1–3) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.203 line 4–p.204 line 2; Kathmandu ed. p.114 lines 4–6): “’Di nyid kyi sku rgyu’i rnam pa shog ’dag ’dra bar snang yang/ bse ’bag ces mtshan ’dogs pa ni/ mNga’ ris stod du yun ring du bzhuks pas/ de’i tshes Zhang zhung gi skad la shin tu dam dang sra ba’i dngos po zhig la bse yi tha snyad du ’dogs pas na bse ’bag tu grags pa yin gyi/ sku rgyu bsa las byas pas ni ma yin no/ zhes gsungs/”; “Although the type of material of this image resembles paper, it is called *bse 'bag*. It remained in mNga’ ris stod for a long time. (p.204) In that period, in the language of Zhang zhung of those days, something very hard and thin was addressed by the term *bse*. Therefore, it became known as *bse 'bag*, although it is not made of leather (*bse*). So it is said”.

29. Concerning the languages of Zhang zhung mentioned in the Bon po literature see, for one, dPal ldan tshul khrims’s *bsTan 'byung skal bzang mgul rgyan* (p.34 lines 19–22): “sKad ni sMar gyi skad dang Dar ma’i skad/ Dir ma’i skad dang Dar ma dir gyi skad/ Gu ge’i skad dang Phal po glang skad bcas/ sMar ni sGo pa spyi yi mchog skad yin/ Gu ge’i sgra ni yi ge’i skad yin te/ Dar ma lho skad Dir ma byang rgyud skad/ Dar ma dir ni sTod sMad phal spyi’i skad/ yi ge sMar yig che chu la sogs yin/”; “As for the languages [of Zhang zhung] there are the sMar language and the Dar ma language; the Dir ma language and the Dar ma dir language; the Gu ge language and the Phal po glang language. sMar is the learned language of most of [Zhang zhung] sGo pa (i.e the actual lands of Zhang zhung rather than the legendary ones). The Gu ge grammar is [used in] the written language. Dar ma is the language in the south and Dir ma that of the northern area. Dar ma dir is the most common language in [both] sTod and sMad. As for its script, there are big and small letters in sMar yig (“written sMar”).”

Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho (water dog 1502–fire ox 1566), who inspected it suggesting that the mask was made of another material, does not say more than that its crown was of clay, but he assumes by this evidence that the entire mask was made of the same material.³⁰ He is rebuked by A mes zhabs for his carelessness in not establishing the true material of the mask (see below n.32).

Another opinion is put forward by the same unidentified *bla ma gong ma*, to whom A mes zhabs attributes the version that the mask was made of the skin of the Du ru ka king a long time after the death of Sangs rgyas. This opinion concludes that it looked like black leather.³¹

Further investigating the claims that the mask was made of leather, which would lend credence to the legend that it was made at rDo rje gdan with the skin of the Du ru ka king who had come to damage its temples, A mes zhabs opts for the only reliable solution, which is empirical. He mentions the findings of sngags 'chang Kun dga' rin chen, who personally checked the material employed to make the mask. A mes zhabs favours the assessment that the mask was made of leather on the basis of Kun dga' rin chen's investigation,³² while its ornaments

30. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.196 lines 3–5) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.204 lines 2–5; Kathmandu ed. p.114 line 6–p.115 line 1): “Don 'di dang mthun par rje Tshar chen gyis *mGon po 'i chos skor dri ba lhag bsam rab dkar* las/ Lo chen gyis drangs bse 'bag 'phur shes kyi dbu rgyan la sogs chag mtshams la brtags bas/ dar 'dam dbyings can dngos su snang pa la/ bse 'bag ces bya'i tha snyad gang la btags/””; “On the basis of this etymology, in *mGon po 'i chos skor gyi dri ba lha bsam rab dkar* by rje Tshar chen, he wonders: “Why is the *bse 'bag 'phur shes* brought by Lo chen addressed as *bse 'bag* while it is evident, by the head ornaments attached at its edge, that it was actually made of clay pasted with pieces of cloth (*dar 'dam*)?”.

31. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.200 lines 2–4) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.210 line 4–p.211 line 1; Kathmandu ed. p.117 lines 1–2): “De ltar sku rgyu'i cha nas bse 'bag/ sku mdog gi cha nas nag po/ Bod du Sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa bsrung ba la gzhan gyis ma bskul bzhin du rang nyid kiyis 'phur nas byon pas 'phur shes su grags pa yin no/””; “Likewise, as for the material of the image, it is a leather mask (*bse 'bag*); as for the colour of the image, it is black (*nag po*). Since it flew spontaneously to Tibet, without anyone requesting it, to protect the teachings of Sangs rgyas, (p.211) it is known as '*phur shes*'”.

32. *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* (p.207 line 1–p.208 line 3) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.221 line 5–p.223 line 5; Kathmandu ed. p.121 lines 1–6): “‘Cham mGon 'di nyid kyi zhal 'bag gi sku rgyu ni bse dngos su nyid yin pa don la gnas te/ dus phyis sngags 'chang chos kyi rgyal po Ngag dbang Kun dga' rin chen gyi sku ring la/ sTod Hor gyi dmag gis 'gro ba rnams nyen pa'i tshe/ sGo rum Ye shes mGon po 'di'i drung du Hor bzlog la dmigs pa'i las sbyor cher gtad mdzad dus nyid kyi rgyun bzhes kyi dbu zhwas bse mGon gyi zhal rdul phyi bar mdzad na/ zhal 'gram nas rtsi tshon gog pa lta bu'i dum bu cung zad gcig byon byung pa/ dri bzang gi chu la sbyangs te zgigs pas/ mi'i pags mo las byas pa'i bse srab brtsegs kyi dum bu zhig yin 'dug pas/ slar zhal 'bag nyid la sbyor bar mdzad ces sngags 'chang nyid kyi gsung rgyun las 'byung ba bzhin/ bdag gi bla ma 'Jam pa'i dbyangs sku mched gyi gsung las yang yang du thos pas/ des na gong du drangs pa'i rje Tshar chen gyi dri ba'i gsungs las/ dbu rgyan sogs kyi rgyu dar 'dam gyi dbyibs can du yod pas/ sku rgyu byin yang de dang 'dra ba zhig yin no snyam du dgongs/ brtag pa ma ndzad par/ 'ol spyod mdzad pa la thugs ring ba lta bu'i mkhas pa'i zhal sgo nas 'byung bar 'os pa'i legs bshad kyi gtam ma yin no/””; “Concerning

were made of clay mixed with cloth. But he concludes in a typical exercise of middle way thinking that the mask was indeed made of human skin, which was arranged in thin layers to form some kind of leather.

Hence, A mes zhabs ends his treatment of the *chams sku 'phur shes* controversy with clear verdicts. He dismisses the assessment of bSod nams rtse mo as historically unreliable, but accepts the concepts expressed in one of the oral accounts related to the '*chams sku* controversy.

This oral account concerns the flaying of the Du ru ka king and the making of the first statue of the Buddha at rDo tje gdan, since these do not contradict the view that the '*chams sku* could not have been made during the life of Sangs rgyas. Concerning the material of the mask,

the matter of the material of the mask (*zhal 'bag*) of 'chams mGon ("dancing Mahā ka la"), (p.222) one must wonder whether its material is real *bse* ("leather"). At later times, during the life of sngags 'chang chos kyi rgyal po Ngag dbang Kun dga' rin chen, when the troops of the sTod Hor created harm to sentient beings, while he was performing a *las sbyor* ("actualization of the deity") to repulse the Hor in front of the sGo rum Ye shes mGon po, he rubbed this [mask] with the hat he used to wear to wipe the dust away from the face of bse mGon. From its cheek, a little piece of paint came off. He diluted it in perfumed (*dri bzang*) water and looked at it. It was a fragment made of layers of thin leather of human skin. (p.223) He re-attached it to the *zhal 'bag*. I heard my own (p.208) bla ma 'Jam dbyangs sku mched (i.e. he and his brother) repeating time and again that this was often told to them by the *sngags 'chang*. Consequently, as for the statement of Tshar chen who investigated [this matter] that the substance of the head ornaments was clay mixed with cloth (*dar 'dam*), he guessed that the material of the image was the same (i.e. it is clay) and that it had to be thus. Given that he guessed this without closer scrutiny, [these] are remarks of an excellent view that should not come from a far-sighted master like him".

Nag po chen po chos 'byung says that the '*chams sku* was a mask which depicted the upper part of Mahā ka la's body (see above n.20). The same text (ibid. p.199 lines 3–5) and *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* (p.209 lines 2–5; Kathmandu ed. p.116 lines 4–5) read: "sDig can gyi rgyal po de'i pags pa la bse byas te/ de la zhal 'bag sku stod de dang bcas pa dang/ sha rus lhag ma rnams kyis phyag dang phyag mtshan/ mi mgo'i do shal sogs sku'i rgyan dang/ cha shas gzhan rnams kyis sku rgyu mdzad nas legs par bzhengs/"; "They made leather (*bse byas*) with the skin of this sinful king. They made [the mask] excellently, using the latter (i.e. the skin) as material for the entire upper part of the mask, what was left over such as the flesh and bones was used for the hands, the hand-implements, the ornaments, such as the necklace of human heads and other parts of the body".

Similar masks that included part of the bust are documented to have existed during the Gupta period and at later times in Chamba and other areas of present Himachal Pradesh. See Postel-Neven-Mankodi, *Antiquities of Himachal* figs.289, 291 and 292 for masks of Shiva; fig.355 for one of Virabhadra (?), fig.356 for a mask of Devi; and in particular fig.298 for a mask of Shiva which includes the upper part of the bust and the hands. That specimens from the Gupta period have survived to this day cannot rule out the possibility of their existence at earlier times. Nevertheless, given that the periodisation of the extant masks is based merely on stylistic elements, these assessments must not be considered conclusive and a chronological placement of the '*chams sku* cannot, in my view, be based on such thinking.

he invokes the authority of empirical proof and concludes that the mask was indeed made of human skin with ornaments in clay mixed with cloth.³³

The transmission lineage of the mask

Probably more interesting for a modern historian are the circumstances surrounding the transfer of the mask into the hands of the Sa skya pa and within the premises of sGo rum at Sa skya as one of the most revered images of the monastery.³⁴ Its installation in sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po, founded by 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po (wood dog 1034–water horse 1102) in water ox 1073, is a sign of the link between the mask and either him or his son Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158). sGo rum was the major temple at Sa skya during the early period of the 'Khon family's residence at their main religious institution.

33. Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho, *dBus gTsang gnas yig* (Tashijong ed. p.13 lines 4–5): “Ro langgs pags pas bas byas pa'i Chos grags rgya mtsho'i phyag bzos ma mGon mgar ba'i zhal 'bag//”; “[Inside mgon khang bKra shis gsar pa of gDans sa Bar pa of Karma steng] there is a statue of mGon po, made of a *ro langgs* skin, that was personally made by Chos grags rgya mtsho. This extraordinary statue is said to have blood coming from its mouth on some occasions”.

Karma steng is Karma'i dgon, the great seat of the Karma pa in Upper Khams, founded by Dus gsum mkhyen pa.

Judging from this short description, Gur mGon's image made of human skin was a statue of the deity's entire body, unlike the flying mask. Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho does not add anything about the circumstances that surrounded its making and whose person's skin was peeled off. Although late in comparison with Rin chen bzang po's *'chams sku nag po phur shes* given its making by the seventh Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506), the Gur mGon statue of Karma'i dgon testifies to the adoption in Tibet of a manner of manufacturing statues of wrathful deities practised in India in antiquity.

34. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.5a lines 1–3) says: “rJe btun Sa pan gyi bzo rig pa'i phyag tshad 'Jam dbyangs gzi 'od 'bar ba/ Sangs rgyas 'Od srung gi ring bsrel 'phel gdung (?) 'Od srung gi sku char dang bcas pa bzugs pa'i rNam rgyal sku 'bum/ Ba ri lo tsa ba'i thugs dam rten la rje btsun ma dngos su thim pa'i g. Yu mkhar mo'i sGrol ma/ Ye shes kyi mgon po dngos su thim pa'i bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes te ngo mtshar ba'i rten bzhi//”; “The [statue of] 'Jam dbyangs shining with bright light, personally made by rje btsun Sa pan who was an artist; the rNam rgyal sku 'bum containing the relics of Sangs rgyas 'Od srung which keep multiplying and the flesh (?) of 'Od srung; the g. Yu mkhar mo sGrol ma, the *thugs dam* statue of Ba ri lo tsa ba, in which the *rje btsun ma* actually dissolved; and the *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes*, in which Ye shes kyi mGon po actually dissolved, are the “four wondrous receptacles”.”

Hence, the *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes* was one of the four foremost objects of Sa skya (*ngo mshar ba'i rten bzhi*). The three floor-high statue of rje btsun sGrol ma was kept in g. Yu mkhar mo'i *gtsug lag khang* built by the same Ba ri lo tsa ba and the statue of 'Jam dbyangs made by Sa pan in dBu rtse rnying ma built by Sa chen. On these see Schoening, “The Religious Structures at Sa-skya” (p.13–14).

The Sa skya pa literature narrates the events that led Sa chen Kun dga' snying po personally to bring this most sacred and all-powerful mask to Sa skya and place it in sGo rum.³⁵

Kun dga' rin chen's *Sa skya'i dkar chag* and A mes zhabs's *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* are the definitive works on the transmission lineage of the mask. In particular, A mes zhabs provides in his works several details not found elsewhere.

The way Sa chen obtained Rin chen bzang po's '*chams sku* from Mal lo tsa ba is described at some length by Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375) in his *Lam 'bras Pod nag rnam thar* (p.55 line 5–p.57 line 6), a text dating to around 1368, the completion year of *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* regardless of whether the latter text should be attributed to him. After Bla ma dam pa, these events are recorded in the biography of Sa chen contained in *Sa skya'i gdung rabs* (see below n.37). They are found again, although in a much shorter version, in *bDe mchog chos 'byung*. These two works are penned by A mes zhabs. Both of them pre-date *Nag po chen po chos 'byung*. *Sa skya'i gdung rabs* was completed in earth snake 1629 and *bDe mchog chos 'byung* in earth tiger 1638, while *Nag po chen po chos 'byung* was finished in iron snake 1641. It thus seems that the account of *bDe mchog chos 'byung* is a later abridgement of the episode reported with more details in *Sa skya'i gdung rabs*.

A mes zhabs says that the *bse 'bag* was given to Sa chen by Mal [gyo] lo tsa ba Blo gros grags pa at the locality called the new holy place (*gnas gsar*) Gung thang Na la rtse in the sources, after Sa chen sent seventeen *srang* of gold to him.³⁶ The two had met once before at

35. A passage in *Sa skya'i dkar chag* discusses the circumstances surrounding the installation of the flying mask and the other images in sGo rum and the reasons behind the etymology of its name. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.8a lines 1–3) says: “De nas gdan sa chen por phyan drangs te/ rje Sa chen dang dpon slob kyi tshul du bzhugs pa yin cing/ mgon khang zur pa zhiḡ bzhengs dgos 'on khyang/ da 'di nas sgul du mi stub po zhes gsung nas/ gZim spyil dkar po 'dir bzhugs pas gzim khang 'di la sGo rum zhes grags shing/ de yang Zhang zhung gi skad kyi dbang du byas nas sgul du mi rung ba'i don yin par gsung//”, “Subsequently, [the mask] was brought to the *gdan sa chen po* (Sa skya). rJe Sa chen, the master and his disciples, [thought] about how it should be placed, and proposed to build a separate (*zur pa*) *mgon khang*. However, [Sa chen] having affirmed: “At present, one is not able to move it (*sgul du mi rtub po*, lit. “one is not able to shake it”) [further]”, it was placed in gZim spyil dkar po. This *gzim khang* became known as sGo rum. Concerning this [topic], in the language of Zhang zhung, it is said that the meaning [of sGo rum] corresponds to *sgul* (lit “to shake”, i.e. “to move”) and *mi rung* (“not obtaining permission to”).

36. In a passage of *Lam 'bras Pod nag rnam thar*, Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan says that 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po consulted the master named jo bo Mal lo in order to have his consent for the foundation of Sa skya after he realised that the signs of the selected land were auspicious. The passage (ibid. p.27 line 5) elliptically reads: “Jo bo Mal la zhus pas gngang//”; “[’Khon dKon mchog rgyal po] asked jo bo Mal who granted [permission to build Sa skya]”.

One questions whether this jo bo Mal was Mal [gyo] lo tsa ba Blo gros grags pa, given that he would have been quite young at the time of the foundation of Sa skya (1073)—Mal lo tsa ba, in 1120, said he was an old man—and hardly in a position to be a teacher of 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po (1034–1102), an older contemporary.

the same locality. Mal lo tsa ba, following Sa chen's extremely liberal donation, invited him back to Gung thang and imparted to him various initiations, *sadhana*-s and authorisations to practise them (*rjes gnang*), including those of Gur mGon po.

Consequently, he ordered the mask to follow Sa chen and abide by his instructions, a speech showing that the mask was treated as a man, a fact also found in *Sa skya'i dkar chag*. On the same occasion, he also gave Sa chen a black flag and a nine-pronged iron *rdo rje*, which correspond to two of the three objects given to Rin chen bzang po either by Shraddha ka ra or rDo rje gdan pa.³⁷ The meetings between Sa chen and Mal lo tsa ba are briefly mentioned by

37. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gdung rabs* (p.35 line 1–p.36 line 16): “De’i tshe bla mas chos rnams tshar re la mkhyen pa dang/ Mal gyis thugs su tshud pa’i tshul mdzad de/ la las ni mi tshe phyed pa’i chos la la las tshar res shes su re ba gsungs nas bkyon skad/ lan cig bla chen ’di med par Mal lo dpon slob chos rTog bdun gyi sngags shig thu yin ’dug pa dang/ slob ma chos ma shes pa la/ bla chen gyis der byon nas de la tshegs med ’di ltar byas na mchi byas pas bla ma kag gis bzhengs nas/ shes na dga’ ba chos mi shes/ ma shes na dga’ ba chos shes ’dug gsungs nas gshesgs song ba dang/ der bla ma ’di thugs cung zad steng gin logs shig na bsam mno byed cing bzhugs tsa na/ yang khong tsho ’tshogs nas sngags thu min yod pa dang/ lhags pas shog bu khyer ba bla chen gyi gam du byung nas/ de khyer te ’di na gda’ zhus pas/ de rten ’brel bzang chos kyis phan thogs pa yong ba yin gsungs nas bla ma Mal mnyes/ de nas Sa chen mar ’byon khar bla ma na re/ nga’i chos ’di nges par sangs rgya ba’i chos yin pas/ mi nyid kyis rigs kyi dbang bskur re byed zer nas ra tshang cig tu phub gog cig gi steng du padma ’dab brgyad cig byas/ blu gu cig gi ske la bal cig dkris byed pa’i nyin yod do/ de ’dra ma byed gsungs pas/ bla ma’i chos la de ’dra ga nas byed byas te mar byon/ g. Yas ru na mar dbang bskur Sems bskyed ’dra mdzad pas/ gser srang bcu bdun ’bul ba la byung ste/ de rnams sngags pa cig la bskur nas bla ma ’bul du btang bas/ bla ma ston mo byed pa cig gi gral mgo na bzhugs pa la/ Sa skya nas ’ong pa cig gis mjal bar zhu yin gda’o byas te zhus pas/ za ’dod ’dra yin nas byin gsungs nas ma mjal/ yar lon mar lon mang ba cig byas nas/ Sa skya nas ong ba’i ’bul ba cig bdog pas mjal byas pas/ ’phral thugs col chung ’dra ba cig yod pas khong rang byon nas/ ’bul ba ci yod (p.36) gsungs gser cig bdog zhus pas zho du yod gsungs/ srang bcu bdun tsam bdog byas pas mnyes nas khong rang gi khug ma nas kyang srang gang bton nas ’di yang de’i steng du bsnon la srang bco brgyad yod kyis la tshogs su phul gsungs/ de ltar byas pas khong dam tshig ba bsam gyis mi khyab par ’dug pa la/ ngas de ltar cung ma go/ da nga’i gam du kho da lo lan cig cis kyang shog chos kyis lhag ma da rung yod pas khyod la lter ba yin gyis shig gsungs/ der bande des mar ’ongs nas bla ma la ’phrin byas/ bla chen gyis yang yar byon te sByong rgyud dang/ Rab gnas kyis rgyud yan lag bdun pa dang bcas pa dang/ rDo rje sems dpa’i sgrub thabs che chung/ Yan lag brgyad pa la sogs pa sMan dpyad kyis gzhung dang/ khyad par du mGon po’i sgrub thabs rjes gnang dang bcas pa gnang nas/ de’i rten du dar nag dang lcags kyis rdo rje rtse dgu pa cig dang bcas te/ Ma hā kā la’i sku’i bka’ babs bzhi nang nas mchog tu gyur pa mGon po’i ’chams sku bse ’bag nag po ’phur shes la mi la mis zer ba ltar da nga rgas pas khyod mi dgos/ khyed rang ’Khon Sa skya pa’i rjes la song la Sa skya pa brgyud pa dang bcas pa’i bka’ bzhin sgrubs shig zer nas brdzangs/ de rnams bsnams na s mar byon/’; “At that time, the *bla ma* (i.e. Sa chen) [hastily] mastered the teachings each time, but Mal behaved as if he did not realise this. It is said that he blamed him saying: “There are people who spend their life on [these] teachings, while there are others who have the expectation of learning them all at once”. On one occasion, when this *bla ma* (Sa chen) was not around, Mal lo [tsa ba] and a group of his disciples were busy accumulating the *mantra* of rTog bdun. After going there, unnoticed by the group of disciples,

the *bla chen* (i.e. Sa chen) [told them that] they would die because they practised without care. Given that bla ma Kag stood up and said: “People, who boast of knowing, do not know. People, who do not boast of knowing, know”, [Sa chen] left. At that time, this *bla ma* (i.e. Sa chen) was a little upset and stood pondering for a while next to a wall upstairs. Again, they gathered to accumulate *mantra-s*. When a folio was carried by the wind to the lap of the *bla chen*, he brought it [to them] requesting [them] to take it back. Bla ma Mal was pleased and said: “This is a good omen. This will be beneficial to the teachings”. Subsequently, at the time of Sa chen’s departure downwards (i.e. eastwards), bla ma [Mal] said: “Given that my teachings are definitely meant for enlightenment, once I will give you an empowerment [belonging to] the lineage originating from a great person”. So saying, he drew an eight-petalled lotus on a collapsing roof of a walled enclosure. [At the same time], [Mal lo] gave [him] a warning by tying a piece of wool around the neck of a small effigy, saying: “Do not do like this (i.e. do not discard my teachings)”. He (Sa chen) went down (i.e. east) [wondering]: “How can I behave in this way with the *bla ma*’s teachings?”. Down in g. Yas ru, having given some [instructions on] *Sems bskyed* (“arousing *Bodhicitta*”) [and] empowerments, he received seventeen gold coins. He sent them to the *bla ma* (i.e. Mal lo) with one *sngags pa*, while the *bla ma* was the chief guest at a spectacle. When he was told that someone was there from Sa skya to see him, [Mal lo] said: “If he wishes to have something to eat, give it to him” but he did not meet him. After coming and going [to see bla ma Mal] many times, the *sngags pa* said: “I wish to see him because there is an offering [for him] coming from Sa skya”. [bla ma Mal] came at once babbling and said: “What offering do you have?”. (p.36) The *sngags pa* replied: “I have gold”. [Mal lo] asked: “How many *zho* do you have?” and upon [listening] to his answer: “I have about seventeen *srang* of gold”, he was happy. Then he took from his purse and added one [to the others] to make eighteen *srang*, saying: “Give it to the assembly” and added: “His (i.e. Sa chen’s) behaviour proves that he is a keeper of the vow who mind cannot grasp. I hardly realised that he is such [a person] (lit. “he is in such a way”). Now, he must come to see me once this year. I still have remaining teachings. I will disclose them to him”. Then, the *bande* went down (i.e. east) and brought the message to the *bla ma*. The *bla chen* went up (i.e. west). He [received teachings] such as *sByong rgyud* including *Rab gnas kyi rgyud yan lag bdun*; the long and short *sadhana* of rDo rje sems dpa’; *Yan lag brgyad pa*, the main doctrines of medical diagnosis; and in particular the *sadhana* and the *rjes gnang* of mGon po. Moreover, as *rten* of the latter one, [he was given] the black flag, the nine-pronged iron *rdo rje* and the mGon po’i *’chams sku bse ’bag nag po ’phur shes*, the most excellent among the four images of Mahā ka la transmitted along a lineage (*bka’ babs*). [Mal lo tsa ba] talked [to the mask] like a man does to a man: “I am old [now], so I do not need you [any more]. You must follow the ’Khon Sa skya pa and fulfil the orders of the Sa skya pa lineage”, so saying, [the mask] was sent [along with Sa chen]. Taking them, [Sa chen] went down [to Sa skya]”.

Sa skya’i dkar chag (f.7a line 6–f.7b line 4) reads: “rJe btsun Sa chen gyi Gung thang Na la rtser/ Mal lo bzhugs dus lan gnyis dang/ sku yal nas lan gcig te gsum byon pa’i dang po la/ bla ma Mal gyi drung du bDe mchog la sogs pa’i chos skor mang du gsan nas log byon pas lam bar g. Yas ru phyogs na mar/ skal ldan gyi gdul bya rnams la dbang dang sems bskyed kyi sdom pa ’bogs pa sogs mdzad pa’i (f.7b) yon du/ gser srang bcu bdun byung ba lam bar de kha nas Mal lo’i drung du ’bul bar btang bas/ thugs shin tu mnyes pas/ khong dam tshig pa chen por ’dug pa la sngar sngas chung ma go/ da nga rgan po’i khog na chos mang du yod pa khyed la ster bas thang cig ’dir cis kyang shog gsung ba’i phrin gnang ba ltar/ yang Gung thang du phebs pa’i tshe/ bla ma Mal los/ rje Sa chen la sngar gyi chos lhang ma rnams dang/ khyad par mGon po’i rjes gnang sku gsung thugs kyi rten ’di rnams dang bcas

Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan, who may have read the section in Mar ston Chos kyi rgyal po's *Lam 'bras bla brgyud* dedicated to these events (see the Addendum below).³⁸

During the first of their final encounters, Mal lo tsa ba, despite being a lineage holder of teachings of Rin chen bzang po, Jo bo rje and various Indian and Newar masters,³⁹ is described as a practitioner of rituals that were objectionable to Sa chen. The way the episode is recounted in *Sa skya'i gdung rabs* indicates that the relations between Mal lo tsa ba and Sa chen were, at some stage, characterized by mutual mistrust. Mal lo tsa ba thought that Sa chen received

pa gngang nas/ mGon po la mi la bka' lung gngang ba ltar du/ da nga rgas pas khyod mi dgos/ 'Khon Sa skya pa'i rjes su song/ lus dang grib ma bzhin du 'grogs la/ bstan pa dang bstan 'dzin la srung skyob tshul bzhin du bgyis shig/ ces gsung pas bse 'bag 'di khrab khrab thang gsum mdzad/ de nas bla mas mGon po la bka' skyon pa dang bcas sdzangs pa yin gsung/'', "The account of how they were subsequently transferred to the Sa skya pa is as follows. rJe btsun Sa chen went to Gung thang Na la rtse twice when Mal lo was residing [there], and once [again] when the latter was old (*sku yal*: lit. "when the body was decaying"), altogether thrice. During the first visit, he obtained from bla ma Mal many religious teachings, such as bDe mchog. On the way back downwards (i.e. eastwards), in the direction of g.Yas ru, having imparted the empowerment and the vow of *Sems bskyed* to fortunate beings to be tamed, (f.7b) in return, seventeen *srang* of gold were given to him on the way. He sent them at once as an offering to Mal lo [tsa ba] who was more than happy. "I hardly realised earlier that Sa chen is such a great holder of the vow. I [still] have at present many religious teachings [to impart] inside the chest of [myself] the old man. I [wish] to impart them to you (Sa chen), so you must come here again at once to receive them". According to the message, when [Sa chen] went again to Gung thang, bla ma Mal lo gave rje Sa chen the teachings which remained [to be given] from before and, in particular, the mGon po *rjes gngang* [and] the *sku gsung thugs kyi rten*. He gave orders to mGon po as if [the mask] were a person: "I do not need you any more since I am old. Go after the 'Khon Sa skya pa. You must protect the teachings and its holders in an extraordinary way by accompanying [the Sa skya pa] like a body does with its shadow". So saying, he beat (sic '*khrab khrab*) this *bse 'bag* thrice [because the mask did not want to leave]. It is said that, subsequently, the *bla ma* scolded mGon po and sent him away (*rdzangs*)".

38. Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan, *Lam 'bras Pod nag rnam thar* (p.55 lines 5–6): "De nas bla ma sGyi chu ba de bla ma Mal gyi slob ma yin pas sGyi chu ba'i bDe mchog gi phyag dpe rnams bsnams nas Gung thang Na la rtse gnas gsar du byon/'"; "Then, because bla ma Mal was a disciple of bla ma sGyi chu ba, [Sa chen] went to Gung thang Na la rtse gnas gsar to carry sGyi chu ba's books on bDe mchog [to Mal lo tsa ba]".

A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gdung rabs* (p.34 lines 3–6) says: "De nas bla chen'di'i bla ma sGyi chu ba de bla ma Mal gyi slob ma yin pas sGyi chu ba'i bDe mchog gi phyag dpe rnams nas Gung thang Nala rtse gnas gsar du byon/'"; "Then, given that bla ma Mal was the disciple of the *bla chen's* (i.e. Sa chen's) bla ma sGyi chu ba, [Sa chen] went to Na la rtse, the new holy place in Gung thang, carrying sGyi chu ba's personal books on bDe mchog [to Mal lo tsa ba]".

39. Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan, *Lam 'bras Pod nag rnam thar* (p.55 line 6–p.56 line 1): "Bla ma Mal la bDe mchog gi rtsa ba'i rgyud cha lag dang bcas pa/ Pha na phing Gu ba/ lo chen Rin chen bzang po/ Jo bo rje/ Ma hā dza na dang/ Sa ra he ta (p.56) rnams las rgyud pa/'"; "Bla ma Mal was a lineage holder of the root Tantra of bDe mchog and its branches [in the line of] Pha na phing (i.e. Phang thing) Gu ba, lo chen Rin chen bzang po, Jo bo rje, Ma hā dza na and Sa ra he ta".

his teachings without learning them too well, while Sa chen thought that bla ma Mal's teachings were not entirely appropriate.

The next episode in *Sa skya'i gdung rabs* pictures Mal lo tsa ba as a dubious master who was attached to gold. Following Sa chen's first visit to Gung thang Na la rtse, Mal lo tsa ba rushed babbling senselessly to meet Sa chen's emissary from Sa skya when he heard that Kun dga' snying po had sent gold for him; while he had ignored him previously. He could hardly resist the curiosity to know immediately how much gold Sa chen had arranged for him, which was an amount far exceeding his expectations. Only then did he feel compelled to invite Sa chen for initiations. Earlier, during Sa chen's previous visit to Mal lo tsa ba's residence at Gung thang Na la rtse, the latter did not display, as said above, much inclination to impart many teachings and initiations to his newly acquired disciple from Sa skya.

After receiving the gold, Mal lo tsa ba summoned Sa chen to Na la rtse and gave him important empowerments and extraordinary objects to bring to Sa skya, which shows that Mal lo tsa ba had come into the possession of significant teachings and objects of the religious masters related to the dynasty of mNga' ris skor gsum.

rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *dPal Sa skya pa chen po Kun dga' snying po'i rnam thar* records in detail the array of instructions that Mal lo tsa ba imparted upon Sa chen.⁴⁰ Mal lo tsa ba, therefore, was quite generous with Sa chen. The great Sa skya pa master must have

40. rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *dPal Sa skya pa chen po Kun dga' snying po'i rnam thar* (f.14a = p.27 line 6–f.15a = p.29 line 4): “De nas Gung thang gNas gsar gyi gtsug lag khang zhes bya bar rje btsun Ro ta pa'i thugs kyi sras dpal Pha na phing Gu ba zhes bya ba'i zhabs rdul la reg pa rje btsun Mal lo tsa ba zhes bya ba'i zhabs drung du nye bar bsnyen te/ dpal (f.14b = p.28) 'Khor lo sdom pa rtsa ba dang/ bshad pa'i rgyud rDo rje mKha' 'gro dang/ A bhi dhu na dang/ He ru ka mngon 'byung dang/ Kun du spyod pa dang/ Sambu ta dang/ rNal 'byor ma bzhi kha sbyor gyi rgyud dang/ Phag mo mngon par 'byung ba dang/ rDo rje mkha' (line 2) 'gro dang/ Kun spyod kyi 'grel pa Lo hi pa yan lag phra mo dang bcas pa/ rDo rje Dril bu pa'i gzhung gsum yan lag dang bcas pa dang/ Nag po pa'i Chos drug dang/ rDo rje rNal 'byor ma mkha' spyod rtsa dbu ma'i man ngag phra mo dang bcas pa rnams (line 3) khong du chud par mdzad do/ bla ma Pham thing pa nyid dang/ Bha ro Phyang rdum las nos pa'i gShin rje'i gshed nag po rgyud gsum 'grel ba dang/ rgyud rKyang gyi lugs gnyis gnyis man ngag phra mo du ma dang bcas pa gsan nas/ yang bla ma de nyid las (line 4) Na ro pa'i Gur dang/ Byang chub sems dpa'i 'grel ba gsum yan lag dang bcas pa rnams kyang gsan/ yang bla ma de nyid las jo bo Rin chen bzang po'i slob ma Brag stengs pa Yon tan tshul khirms las nos pa'i dpal bDe mchog rtsa ba'i rgyud slob (line 5) dpon Kong ka na rGyal ba bzang po'i 'grel ba gsum/ dkyil 'khor cho ga sgrub thabs bstod pa dang bcas pa rnams gsan/ yang rgyud pa de nyid las 'ongs pa'i Ngan song sbyong rgyud dang/ rab gnas kyi rgyud la yan lag bdun dang bcas pa (line 5) rnams dang/ rDo rje sems dpa' 'byung ba'i sgrub thabs che chung gnyis dang/ dpal Nag po chen po la sogs pa'i man ngag phra mo du ma dang bcas pa rnams kyang gsan no/ yang bla ma de nyid las Jo bo chen po lHa gcig gi slob ma Rong pa mKhar dGe (f.15a = p.29) ba dang/ dge bshes 'Dzang Gyang bu ba las nos pa dpal bDe mchog rtsa ba'i rgyud 'grel pa sgrub thabs kyi gleng gzhi dang bcas pa dang/ A bhi dha na dang/ Lo hi pa yan lag dang bcas pa kyang gsan/ Mi g.yo (line 2) ba dang/ Phyang na rdo rje la sogs pa dang/ sGrol ma'i sgrub thabs yan lag du ma dang bcas pa rnams kyang gsan no/ yang bla ma de

negotiated their conspicuous number, learning them in the limited period of his visit to Na la rtse, an achievement that testifies to his exceptional qualities. Besides those on Gur mgon accompanied by the gift of sacred objects, most teachings Sa chen received were a considerable array of *Tantra*-s in the system of some of the greatest Buddhist souls of the Noble Land. Mal lo tsa ba was thus responsible for the transfer of several Indian doctrines to Tibet that were not yet available in the Land of Snows. By sitting at their feet, Mal lo tsa ba was able to introduce

nyid las jo bo Ma hā dza na dang Pa ra he ta las nos pa'i dpal bDe mchog sDom pa 'byung ba dang/ Kha che'i slob dpon (line 3) bram ze Rin chen rdo rjes mdzad pa'i sgrub thabs yan lag du ma dang bcas pa rnams kyang gsan no/ slob dpon 'Phags pa yab sras kyi dBu ma rigs pa'i tshogs dang/ mDo kun las btus pa dang/ bsTod pa'i tshogs rnams kyi rtsa ba dang 'grel pa (line 4) phra mo dang bcas pa rnams kyang gsan cing khong du chud par mdzad de/ yang bla ma de nyid las yan lag brgyud pa la sogs pa'i sman dpyad kyi gzhung lugs du ma rnams kyang gsan no//"; "Then [Sa chen Kun dga' snying po] established, at Gung thang gNas gsar gyi gtsug lag khang, a close relationship with rje btsun Mal lo tsa ba who had touched the dust of the feet of rje btsun Ro ta pa's (sic for Na ro ta pa) heart disciple dpal Pha na phing Gu ba (sic for Pham thing pa Gupta). He mastered [from Mal lo tsa ba] many esoteric teachings in detail: (f.14b = p.28) the root text of 'Khor lo sdom pa; the orally transmitted *Tantra* of rDo rje mKha' 'gro; *A bhi dhu na; He ru ka mngon 'byung; Kun du spyod pa; Sambu ta*; the *Tantra* of the four interrelated rNal 'byor ma; *Phag mo mngon par 'byung ba*; rDo rje mKha' 'gro and the commentary on *Kun spyod* according to the system of Lo hi pa together with its branches in detail; the three doctrines of rDo rje Dril bu pa including their branches; Nag po pa's *Chos drug*; and *rDo rje rNal 'byor ma mkha' spyod rtsa dbu ma*.

He also received [from Mal lo tsa ba] many esoteric teachings in detail on the commentary on the three Tantric [systems] of gShin rje gshed nag po, given to bla ma Pham thing pa himself and Bha ro Phyag rdum; and the system of the Ekavira [gShin rje gshed] *Tantra* in combinations of two by two. Moreover, from this *bla ma* (i.e. Mal lo tsa ba) [Sa chen] received Na ro pa's Gur [mGon] and the three Byang chub sems dpa' commentaries including their branches. Again, from this *bla ma* he received the root *Tantra* of dpal bDe mchog taught by jo bo Rin chen bzang po's disciple Brag stengs pa Yon tan tshul khriims and the three commentaries [on this *Tantra*] by slob dpon Kong ka na rGyal ba bzang po along with its *dkyil 'khor cho ga, sgrub thabs* and *bstod pa*. He also received many esoteric teachings in detail on *Ngan song sbyong rgyud* coming from the same transmission; the seven branches of the *Tantra* on *rab gnas*; both the major and minor *sgrub thabs* of *rDo rje sems dpa' 'byung ba* and dpal Nag po chen po.

From this *bla ma* (i.e. Mal lo tsa ba) he also received the fundamentals of the commentary and *sgrub thabs* of the root *Tantra* of bDe mchog, taught by Jo bo chen po lHa gcig's disciples Rong pa mKhar dGe (f.15a = p.29) ba and dge bshes 'Dzang Gyang bu ba along with its branches by A bhi dha na and Lo hi pa. He also received [teachings on deities], such as Mi g.yo ba and Phyag na rdo rje, and the *sgrub thabs* of sGrol ma with many branches. He also received from the [same] *bla ma* the *sgrub thabs* of dpal bDe mchog sDom pa 'byung ba, taught by jo bo Ma hā dza na and Pa ra he ta, and the *sgrub thabs*, including many branches, written by Kha che slob dpon bram ze Rin chen rdo rje. He also received slob dpon 'Phags pa master and disciple's root text and detailed commentary on *dBu ma rigs pa'i tshogs; mDo kun las btus pa, bsTod pa'i tshogs* and mastered them. He also received from this *bla ma* (i.e. Mal lo tsa ba) many systems of *sman dpyad*, including the main doctrinal principles and their branches".

to Tibet systems of masters of the calibre of Na ro pa's disciple Pham thing pa, the youngest of four brothers, namely Thang chung pa;⁴¹ Lo hi pa; Dril bu pa; Nag po pa and even Bha ro Phyag rdum. Like other early Sa skya pa who had a part in the transfer of Buddhist doctrines, Mal lo tsa ba was one master who ferried systems from the Kathmandu Valley to the 'Khon family school by becoming a lineage holder of teachings practised by Pham thing pa, Thang chung pa and Bha ro Phyag rdum.

Apart from *Tantra*-s and among other instructions, Sa chen received from Mal lo tsa ba the philosophical teachings on *dBu ma* and elements of Medical Diagnostics.

In sharp contrast to the difficulties that Sa chen faced with the mask, to the extent that, on his way back to Sa skya, the '*chams sku* was almost burning in his hands,⁴² bla ma Mal had a remarkable familiarity with it, scolding and beating it when the mask is reluctant to leave with Sa chen.

41. It is unlikely that Mal lo tsa ba studied under any of the three elder Pham thing pa brothers, disciples of Na ro pa. Given Na ro pa's death in 1041, the youngest of the four Pham thing pa, Thang chung pa, could study under him for a limited amount of time, but enough to receive some empowerment and several Tantric instructions. *Deb ther sngon po* (p.462 lines 9–11) says: “Thang chung bas kyang Dus 'khor ba spyang drangs du phyin pas/ Nā ro pa la dbang dang rGyud man ngag dang bcas pa cung zad tsam thob//”; “The youngest, Thang chung ba went to invite Dus 'khor ba. He obtained a small amount of empowerments and Tantric teachings from Nā ro pa”.

Hence, Thang chung ba was active from the late thirties or soon before the great Indian master's demise, and during the third quarter of the 11th century onwards. Being old in 1120, as he told the flying mask, Mal lo tsa ba could not have been a young man before the third quarter of the 11th century, which places him one generation after Na ro pa and a younger contemporary of Thang chung ba. The hypothesis that Mal lo tsa ba studied under the youngest of the four Pham thing pa brothers is the most realistic.

42. *Sa skya 'i dkar chag* (f.7b line 4–f.8a line 1): “Lugs gcig la sku gsung thugs kyi rjes gngang gi dus su/ sku gsung thugs kyi rten rnams kyang so sor gngang zhing/ yon tan 'phrin las rje gngang gi dus su/ man ngag be bum bse'i dga'u 'od 'bar ba gngang zer ba 'dug kyang/ yon tan 'phrin las kyi rjes gngang ces pa'i tha snyad zur pa mi 'byung bas rtog bcos yin nam snyam/ gang ltar sku gsung thugs kyi rten be bum dang bcas pa gngang ba ltar/ Sa chen dpon slob kyi gdan drangs nas Grang so phra bo lar phebs tshe/ ri khrod mi nyung bas ban chung rnams kyi bse 'bag gyon nas yong pa phyogs la 'gro ba'i mi zhis dang phrad pas de khrag skyugs nas shi ba la brten nas mGon po 'di gnyan pa'i grags pas phyogs kun tu khyab par gyur/ des na rjes gngang ma thob (f.8a) thob pa rnams kiyis 'di'i zhal ltas na nyes pa de bzhin tu 'byung ba mGon po'i rjes gngang zhu ba la brtson pa gal che/ de nas gdan sa chen por phyang drangs//”, “According to one version (*lugs*), when the *rjes gngang* of the *sku gsung thugs* [was given to him], [Sa chen] also received each one of the *sku gsung thugs kyi rten*, and, when the *rjes gngang* of *yon tan 'phrin las* [was given], it is said that he received *Man ngag be bum bse'i ga'u 'od 'bar ma* (“the *man ngag be bum* inside the leather *ga'u* emitting light”). But, given that the sense of the *rjes gngang* of *yon tan 'phrin las* was not specifically conveyed, he wondered what its concept (sic *rtog dpyod*) could be. However this may have been, following the grant of the *sku gsung thugs kyi rten* including the *be bum*, Sa chen and his disciples took them along. When they went on the Grang so phra bo pass, [where there] were not a few hermitages, due to [the presence of] junior monks, [Sa

One wonders whether, with the passage of the mask from bla ma Mal to Sa chen, the *rjes gnang* of the Mahā ka la practice, symbolised by the *bse 'bag*, continued smoothly. Further

chen] proceeded by taking the *bse 'bag* on his shoulders. Upon meeting a person who was going in that direction, the latter died by vomiting blood. For this reason, the fierceness of this mGon po became famous and spread in every direction. Consequently, due to the fact that those who have not obtained the *rjes gnang* (f.8a) may face similar accidents if they see the semblance [of the *bse 'bag*], it is essential to strive to obtain the *mGon po 'i rjes gnang*. Subsequently, [Sa chen] brought [the *bse 'bag*] to the great seat [Sa skya]”.

A mes zhabs's *Sa skya 'i gnas bshad* has a simplified version of the incident involving the '*chams sku 'phur shes* on the way to Sa skya. It offers explanations of some place names along the route followed by Sa chen, missing elsewhere. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya 'i gnas bshad* (p.252 line 5–p.253 line 5) reads: “De nas rim gyi 'chams mGon dang bcas te/ La stod brgyud cing phebs par mdzad pa'i tshe/ Grang so'i stod kyi lam chen de nyid la/ da lta 'Gong ma lam zer ba sgra don 'chugs/ 'di ni 'Gong ma lam yin mGon lam yin/ 'chams mGon phebs pa'i lam nyid yin pa dang/ shin tu 'drongs pas thig dang mtshungs 'dra yod/ de yi phyir na mGon po'i thig lam zer/ de dang (p.253) mtshungs par Grang so'i la yi ming/ da lta Khro bo zhes pa gong dang 'dra/ khra bo ma yin Khro bo yin par ni/ Khro bo'i rgyal po Mahā kā la nyid/ legs par phebs pas Grang so Khro bo la/ de 'dra'i la yi phar ngos de nyid nas/ 'grul pa la sogs su yang mi 'dug pas/ 'chams mGon 'di nyid 'chams zhing rim gyis byon/ la de'i tshur phyogs nas 'ong 'grul pa zhis/ yod pa de dang la zer rtse 'dzoms pas/ 'grul pa de nyid skad cig de nyid la/ kha nas khrag skyugs la ze de ru shi/ chos skyong gnyan pa'i grags pas sa steng khyab/ de nas rim gyis zhal khebs la sogs pas/ legs par dril nas kun gyis mi mthong par/ gsang zhing sbas ba'i tshul gyis spyang drangs te/ sGo rum gZim spyil dkar por phebs pa'i tshe/ da lta bzhugs sa'i gzim khang 'di nyid du/ cung zad bzhugs bcug de nas mgon khang sogs/ zhal bkod mdzad nas bzhugs su gsol snyam pas/ chos skyong nyid kyis gsung byon 'di skad gsungs/ bstod sa 'di kha rang gi yod ba 'dug/ rDo rje gdan gyi byang sgo'ang 'di nas non/ bstan pa bsrung pa'ang 'di kha phan yod che/ zhes sogs gsungs/”; “Then, 'chams mGon (“dancing mGon po”) and the other [holy objects] went in stages across La stod [IHo], along the Grang so'i stod *kyi lam chen* (the “great route of upper Grang so”), currently known as the 'Gong lam (the “ghost route”), which is a misleading interpretation of the expression. It is not 'Gong lam but mGon lam, for it should be kept in mind that this is the route along which 'chams mGon proceeded. There is some trace (*thig*) [left there]. This is why it is called mGon po'i thig lam (the “route trace[d] by mGon po”). Similar to this, (p.253) the name of Grang so'i la is now Khro bo (“wrathful”), and its [explanation] is like the one above. It is Khro bo rather than Khra bo. Khro bo'i rgyal po (the “king of the wrathful deities”) Mahā ka la excellently went over it and so it is Grang so Khro bo la. Likewise, those journeying from the other side of the pass, whoever they were, approached in stages the dancing 'chams mGon ('*chams mGon 'di nyid 'chams*). Having reached the near side of the pass, one approaching traveller met up with it (i.e. the mask). Upon [seeing] it, this traveller instantly died at the top [of the pass], spewing blood from his mouth. The fame of the powerful *chos skyong* spread over the surface of the earth. Consequently, it was carefully wrapped up inside a cover so that no one could see it. It was taken along secretly and under cover. When it came to sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po, [Sa chen] thought: “It should now stay a while in this *gzim khang* as its dwelling place. After the *mgon khang* is built, it should be taken to stay there”. Then the *chos skyong* spoke on his own, saying: “I will go by myself to that dwelling place. From the [earlier] time on, I guarded the northern door of rDo rje gdan. I will be greatly useful here, [too,] as protector of the teachings”. So said he”.

research is needed to show how this transmission continued at Sa skya. In the section of *Sa skya'i dkar chag* under study no mention is made of the further transmission of the mask. In *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* there is evidence that the transmission carried on to Sa chen's two sons bSod nams rtse mo and rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan and then to Sa pan Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, while that of another image of mGon po owned by Lo chen was transferred to Khams, where it continued without interruption.

The episode describing the problems faced by Sa chen on his way to Sa skya that occurred after he left Gung thang Na la rtse carrying the flying mask with him, indicates that the transmission of the *yon tan 'phrin las rje gngang*—its instructions on the *sadhana* of Mahā ka la were put inside the heart-shaped *ga'u*—was not given by bla ma Mal to Sa chen in an appropriate manner. This might be the reason for the absence of subsequent references to the *be bum man ngag* placed inside the leather heart-shaped *ga'u*.⁴³

But lack of appropriate transmission led to some problems with the flying mask after Sa chen obtained it from Mal lo tsa ba, which greatly worried the Sa skya pa master and prompted him not to move it any more from sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po, where he placed the *bse 'bag* upon arrival at Sa skya.

His prohibition on moving the mask further is at the basis of the name sGo rum given to gZim spyil dkar po, founded by Sa chen's father 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po.⁴⁴ The reason for adopting the Zhang chung pa terms depended on the fact that the mask had to be treated with

43. A passage (f.45a lines 6–8) in the biography of sGa A gnyan dam pa, written in iron sheep 1991 by bSod nams tshe 'phel and published in *Khams stod lo rgyus stod cha* (f.44b line 9–f.45b line 16), refers to some objects given by 'Phags pa to the Mongol emperor when sGa A gnyan dam pa was officially recognised at Se chen rgyal po's court: "So gcig la lcangs sprel la 'gro mgon 'Phags pas chos dung dang/ gser gyi Gur lcam bral/ man ngag be'u bum/ gnam lcags rdo rje/ Se chen gyis sdig sbyong du phul ba'i dgnos po mang po sogs gngang nas nyid kyi bla tshab tu bkos/"; "When [A gnyan dam pa] was thirty-one years old in iron monkey 1260, 'Gro mgon 'Phags pa gave [the emperor] the religious conchshell, the golden Gur [mGon] in *yab yum*, the *man ngag gi be'u bum* and the *rdo rje* in meteoritic iron. He offered many objects in order for Se chen to cleanse his defilements. [sGa A gnyan dam pa] was appointed deputy *bla [ma]*".

The whole account is unambiguous. In any event, it is not clear whether the *man ngag be'u bum* and the *rdo rje* in meteoritic iron were the objects owned by Rin chen bzang po. If these statements are reliable, at least the iron *do rje* must have gone back to Sa skya sometime later, for Sa skya'i dkar chag includes it among the properties kept in sGo rum (see n.57).

Concerning sGa A gnyan dam pa and his association with the cult of Mahā ka la, see p.361–364.

44. Given the etymology of the name sGo rum mentioned in *Sa skya'i dkar chag* which traces its origin to the language of Zhang chung, its adoption, rather than that of some similar Tibetan term, is suggestive of the cultural leanings of the early Sa skya pa. If truly contemporary to the placement of the mask within its premises, the choice of the name sGo rum would reinforce the impression of an interest among the early exponents of the 'Khon family (at least Sa chen and bSod nams rtse mo) in matters related to the language of Zhang chung. The etymology of the term *bse 'bag*, provided by bSod nams rtse mo, is a telling case. On sGo rum also see above (n.3).

the greatest care. Therefore, Sa chen had to “prohibit moving it” (Tib.: *sgul mi rung*, which corresponds to *sGo rum* in Zhang zhung *skad*) is not explained in the account.

One can only propose two hypotheses for this. The first is that a Zhang zhung pa term was adopted since the mask remained in sTod a long time, similar to the Zhang zhung pa understanding of the term *bse*. Another could be that, for the same reason that the flying mask remained in Zhang zhung a long time and was treated like a man, as the speech of bla ma Mal to the *bse 'bag* confirms, people had to talk to the flying mask in the language of Zhang zhung.

In his *Sa skya'i gnas bshad*, A mes zhabs proposes alternative readings of the name sGo rum. He agrees that sGo rum is Zhang zhung language, but offers two etymologies quite different from “prohibition on moving [the mask]”. The first of two implies a role for gZim spyil dkar po as the place where vows were restored (the “building where a breach of a vow is undone”). The other etymology is more consonant with the wrathful association of the flying mask.⁴⁵ If sGo rum means “prohibition on moving [the mask]” or “destroyer of obstructive enemies”, as A mes zhabs suggests in *Sa skya'i gnas bshad*, a wrathful feature would have been added to gZim spyil dkar po's original, peaceful one, after the '*chams sku 'phur shes* was installed there.

According to the evidence gleaned from *Sa skya'i gdung rabs*, the transfer of the '*chams sku* from the hands of Mal lo tsa ba to those of Sa chen took place after the death of the latter' teacher Ba ri lo tsa ba in water dragon 1112, which fell in the years between when Sa chen (b. wood monkey 1104) was aged twelve, i.e. 1115, and twenty-nine, i.e. 1132 (A mes zhabs, *bDe mchog chos 'byung* p.512–513). *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i snying byed* is helpful in dating this episode with precision. Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (1523–1594) says that it took place in iron rat 1120.⁴⁶

45. A mes zhabs (*Sa skya'i gnas bshad* p.254 lines 1–2) says: “Go rum zhes pa Zhang zhung skad yin/ de nyid Bod kyi skad du brjod pa'i tshe/ dam nyams sgröl ba'i khang pa zhes pa'am/ dgra bgegs kun 'dzoms zhes pa'ang 'gyur snyam pas/ 'di kha yin min kun gyis thugs rtog mdzod/ min pa'i mtsha chod khung thub rang bzo dang/ bral ba de 'dra 'dug na thugs rjes bzung//”; “sGo rum is [a word] in the language of Zhang gzhung (spelled so). When it is rendered into the language of Tibet, I think that it stands for a “building where a breach of a vow is undone” or else it could be translated as “destroyer of all obstructive enemies”. May everyone ponder whether this is so! These [assessments] could be at the basis of one's resolve to reject them, and thus they would be [my] personal fabrication. If such a view [that leads] to their rejection prevails, this is accepted with graciousness”.

The meaning “building where a breach of a vow is undone” for sGo rum may depend on the installation of the heart of one who “broke his vow” in front of where the flying mask was placed (see below n.57).

46. Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (*bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i snying byed* p.129 lines 17–18) says of Sa chen Kun dga' snying po: “Rang lo nyi shi rtsa dgu pa lcags pho byi lo Gung thang nas 'cham mGon Sa skyar phyag phebs//”; “When he was twenty-nine years old in iron male rat (1120), [Sa chen] personally brought the 'cham (spelled so) mGon from Gung thang to Sa skya”.

As mentioned in the previous pages, the event of the teachings imparted by Mal lo tsa ba to Sa chen Kun dga' snying po and the consequent passage of Rin chen bzang po's 'chams sku from Mal lo tsa ba to Sa chen is also briefly narrated in *bDe mchog chos 'byung* by A mes zhabs.⁴⁷ It obviously highlights the transmission of the *bDe mchog* teachings from tMal lo tsa

47. A mes zhabs, *bDe mchog chos 'byung* (p.512 line 2): “Bla chen 'di Sangs rgyas 'dis Sangs rgyas mya nang las 'das nas lo sum stong nyis brgya dang nyer lnga lon pa chu pho sprel lo sku bltams/’”; “Bla chen [Sa skya Kun dga' snying po] was born in water male monkey (1092), 3,225 years after *Buddha nirvana*”.

Ibid. (p.512 line 6): “Gur Zhal la sogs pa'i chos tshul mang po gsan nas sbyangs bsam mkhas pa chen por gyur/ khyad par 'Khor lo bDe mchog gi chos skor rams ni/ 'Khon sGyi chu ba'i gshegs rdzong la phebs pa'i tshe/ sGyi chu ba bla ma Mal lo tsa ba'i slob ma yin pa'i stabs kyi sGyi chu ba'i bzhugs gnas na bDe mchog gi phyag dpe mang du 'dug pa rnams bsams te/ Mal lo tsa ba Gung thang Na la rtse gnas gsar na bzhugs pa'i drung du byon pas de dus (p.513) bla mas slob ma'i snod rtag pa'i phyir dang/ jo sras kyi dregs pa yod med brtag pa'i phyir/ bDe mchog gi bshad bka' zhus pa rnams tshogs pa bshad khyugs ma lus ma gnang/ de nas Sa skya pa chen po'i mar byon pas lam du gser srang bcu bdun chos yan du byung ba dag/ bla Mal gyi drung du 'bul bar btang pas/ bla ma mnyes te/ snod ldan dam tshig par 'dugs pa la/ ngas cung ma shes/ rang rgas ring po mi thub pas/ chos kyi lhag ma yod pas 'di tsho len par myur du kyang byon gsungs pa na/ Bla chen gyi slar yang Gung thang du byon pas gShin rje gshed skor/ Ngan song sByongs rgyud/ mGon po'i chos skor 'chams mGon rten dang bcas pa dang/ khyad par zab mo'i mthar thug 'Khor lo bDe mchog Lū Nag Dril gsum/ Nā ro mkha' spyod dang bcas pa'i dbang bka' bshad bka' lung bka' man ngag gi bka' la sogs pa bla chen Mal gyi chos lugs kun tshangs par bum pa gang byor stsal/ de nas dgung lo nyer dgu bzhes pa'i tshe bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes Gung thang nas dan sa chen po 'dir phebs/’”; “Having obtained many teachings, including [those on] Gur [mGon po and] Zhal [bzhi pa], and learned them, he became a great master. In particular, concerning the teachings on 'Khor lo bDe mchog, when he went to perform the funerary rites of 'Khon sGyi chu ba, due to the fact that sKyī (spelled so) chu ba was the disciple of Mal lo tsa ba. At sGyi chu ba's residence he took many books on bDe mchog that belonged to him. He went to see Mal lo tsa ba at Gung thang Na la rtse gnas gsar (“new holy place”). At that time (p.513) bla ma Mal, in order to test whether he was a disciple eager to receive [teachings] and whether he had the pride of a *jo sras* (“descendant of a lord”, “nobleman”), did not give him more than a few oral teachings on the oral instructions of bDe mchog at the assembly. Then, when the Sa skya pa chen po went down (i.e. east), on the way he received seventeen *srang* of gold in return for some teachings [he gave]. Having sent them to be offered to bla ma Mal, the latter was very pleased. He said (i.e. he sent a message saying): “You are indeed someone who has proved himself to be a worthy disciple (*snog ldan*). I hardly realised this. Since I am too old now, I will not live for long. I have teachings that remain [to be given to you], so you should come quickly to receive them”. The *bla chen* went again to Gung thang. He received the cycle of gShin rje gshed, *Ngan song sByongs* (spelled so) *rgyud*, teachings on mGon po and the image of the 'chams mGon and, in particular, 'Khor lo bDe mchog [according to the systems of] Lū [hi pa], Nag [po pa and] Dril [bu pa], altogether three, in depth [and] exhaustively; the oral teachings on *Na ro bka' spyod* and so forth, authoritative instructions [such as] *bka' bshad*, *bka' lung* and *bka' man ngag*. Mal gave to the *bla chen* all [the teachings] of his religious system, completely filling [Sa chen's] vase with whatever he could. When [Sa chen] was aged twenty-nine (1120), the *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes* went [back] to this *gdan sa chen po* (i.e. Sa skya)”.

ba to Sa chen. But it also does not fail to mention the *bse 'bag* and how it changed hands after the Sa skya pa master had generously made a gift of gold to bla ma Mal.⁴⁸ A mes zhabs adds here the date of the event which is not given in *Nag po chen po chos 'byung*, despite providing a number of details not found in the former work. The date iron rat 1120 is mentioned. It is difficult to realise from which source A mes zhabs derived it, whether from *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* by Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho or from some other text.

The date of transfer of the *'chams sku* from Mal lo tsa ba to Sa chen falls not long after the end of the early dynasty of Gu ge Pu hrang that coincided with the assassination of rTse lde, at the latest in 1092 (Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.335–345). It remains unclear from the works of A mes zhabs I have cited until here how Rin chen bzang po's *'chams sku* ended up in the hands of Mal lo tsa ba (but see below p.339 for a detailed account).

An improbable and unsubstantiated possibility concerning the circumstances surrounding the mask's eventual removal from mNga' ris stod is that this happened as a consequence of the ousting of the great line of kings by a branch of the family after the assassination of rTse lde. Following the death of this king, interest in religion manifestly decreased in Gu ge, as shown in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* (see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.75–76). The death of a charismatic master Zhi ba 'od, which took place in iron hare 1111, i.e. some years

48. 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po has this to say on some transmissions of bDe mchog in Tibet (*mDo sNgags gyi lo rgyus dang rnam thar* p.243 line 6–p.244 line 2): “bDe mchog ni/ phyi dar gyi thog mar Jo bo rjes Lo chen dang/ Rong pa 'Bar dge sogs la g nang/ Lo chen dang 'Gos kyis pandi ta mang po las dbang rgyud man ngag sogs gsan cing bsgyur/ phyis Jo bos Nag tsho la'ang g nang/ Klog skya Shes rab brtsegs kyis Bal por Pham thing pa las gsan pa dang/ de dang Pham mthing pa gnyis kar Mal lo Blo gros grags kyis gsan pa Sa skya par bka' babs pa dang/ Mar los Nā ro las bDe mchog gi man ngag mang du gsan pa dang/ Mar pa Do pas Nā ro'i slob ma Na ga shri sogs mang po bsten nas slob ma gZe pa Blo ldan sogs kyis rgya cher spel ba'i srol rnam las/ thogs pa dang slob mar bshad pa'i bdud rtsi gnyis kas myos pa ni Mal lo tsa ba ste/ lugs 'di la rNal 'byor gsang mtsha' zhes pa'i gtam gyis mdzes pa yin no/ gzhan yang Pham mthing pa sku mched las Pu (p.244) hrwang lo chung zhes mkha' spyod du gshegs pa de las gNyos lo sogs kyis gsan pa'i srol ci rigs pa yod do/”; “As for bDe mchog, during *bstan pa phyi dar*, it was transmitted initially by Jo bo rje to [masters] such as Lo chen and Rong pa 'Bar dge. Lo chen and 'Gos translated it after obtaining its empowerment, the Tantric works and teachings [related to them]. Subsequently Jo bo [rje] also gave it to Nag tsho. Klog skya Shes rab brtsegs received it from Pham mthing pa in Bal po. Mal lo tsa ba Blo gros grags pa obtained it from both the latter (i.e. Klog skya) and Pham mthing pa. He transmitted it to the Sa skya pa. Mar [pa] lo [tsa ba] obtained many teachings on bDe mchog from Na ro. Mar pa Do pa received many teachings from Na ro's disciple Na ga shri and the disciple gZe pa Blo ldan widely diffused it. Among these traditions, Mal lo tsa ba was the one who was intoxicated with both the nectars of *tshogs pa* (“mantric accumulation”) and of preaching [it] to the disciples. This tradition is known as *rNal 'byor gsang mtha'* (“the secret limit of a *yogin*”), which are beautiful words. Moreover, the Pham mthing pa brothers [transmitted it] to Pu (p.244) hrang lo chung, who went to *mkha' spyod* (i.e. passed into a rainbow body). gNyos lo [tsa ba] obtained it from the latter one. These are the various traditions which existed”.

before the transfer of the mask from bla ma Mal to Sa chen, may also have had its influence in the shaping of a period of religious obscurantism in the following years, a period which lasted in Gu ge for most of the 12th century.

What remains to be established is whether Mal lo tsa ba obtained the mask before or after the death of Zhi ba 'od. The way bla ma Mal talked to the mask at the time of his parting with it (“since I am old [now], I do not need you [any more]”) and the fact found in *Sa skya 'i dkar chag* that, after coming into the hands of bla ma Mal, the flying mask remained in Gung thang “for a long time” could be a sign that he retained the mask for a considerable length of time indeed,⁴⁹ longer than from the death of Zhi ba 'od and up to 1120, when Mal lo tsa ba gave the mask to Sa chen. This ten years period was a long lapse of time but not enough to justify entirely the words that bla ma Mal spoke to the mask.

In conclusion, the absence of a satisfactory *rnam thar* of Mal lo tsa ba Blo gros grags pa hinders the assessment of the chronology of the passage of the mask into his hands. However, it will be shown below that other sources at least help to identify convincingly the masters who were members of its lineage of transmission.

The episode highlights the fact that Gung thang was the place where sacred relics belonging to leading members of the mNga' ris skor gsum dynasty were kept soon after the end of the direct line of great kings succeeding one another on the secular and religious throne of Gu ge Pu hrang.

Hence Gung thang, which entertained early links with the Sa skya pa, was a transit point used for the transfer into Sa skya pa hands of notions of the history of the great dynasty of Gu ge Pu hrang, important material from mNga' ris skor gsum and even of some of the most revered objects of that civilisation. This is confirmed by the fact that the embalmed body of Byang chub 'od, as is well known, was kept in rDzong dkar gtsug lag khang.⁵⁰

49. *Sa skya 'i dkar chag* (f.7a lines 5–6): “Des Mal lo tsā ba la gnang nas/ Gung thang Gung thang Na la rtse gnas gsar du yun rings su bzhugs/”; “After they (i.e. the mask and the other objects) were given to Mal lo tsā ba, they remained for a long time at Gung thang Na la rtse gnas gsar”.

A mes zhabs, *Sa skya 'i gdung rabs* (p.36 lines 13–16): “mGon po'i 'chams sku bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes la mi la mis zer ba ltar da nga rgas pas khyod mi dgos/ khyed rang 'Khon Sa skya pa'i rjes la song la Sa skya pa brgyud pa dang beas pa'i bka' bzhin sgrubs shig zer nas rdzangs/ de rnams bsnams nas mar byon/”; “[Mal lo] talked to the 'chams sku bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes of mGon po like a man does to [another] man: “I am old [now], so I do not need you [any more]. You must follow the 'Khon Sa skya pa and fulfil the orders of the Sa skya pa lineage”, so saying, [the mask] was sent [along with Sa chen]. Taking it, [Sa chen] went down [to Sa skya]”.

50. The mortal remains of Byang chub 'od, who is documented to have taken great care of the tombs of his predecessors, were profaned during the Gorkha war by the invaders from Nepal, who looted his silver tomb placed in the 'du khang of rDzong dkar gtsug lag khang. *rDo ring pan di ta 'i rnam thar* (p.599 lines 15–17) narrates: “lHag don chos sde 'di la Bod chos rgyal gong ma rim can nas sbyor 'jags mdzad pa'i dngul gdung 'du khang thog tshad ma che legs khag mang gi nang du lha bla ma

The preliminaries to Sa chen's getting the flying mask

In the biography of Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, found in *Lam 'bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus* by dMar ston Chos kyi rgyal po, its author clarifies the relations that sGyi chu ba,⁵¹ Mal lo tsa ba, Kha'u ba Dar ma rgyal mtshan entertained among one another and with Sa chen. To Kha'u ba Dar ma rgyal mtshan's role in the transmission of mGon po Zhal bzhi pa—that of mGon po Chaturmu kha—should be added.⁵²

dMar ston says that these three masters were all teachers of Sa chen Kun dga' snying po. Sa chen first studied with Kha'u ba and then with sGyi chu ba. When the latter died, he went to Gung thang and brought the books of his deceased master to Mal lo tsa ba, of whom sGyi

Byang chub 'od//"; "In particular, in this *chos sde* (i.e. rDzong dkar) among the one floor-high silver tombs of the old religious kings of Tibet, [who had ruled] in a lineage, assembled in great numbers inside the *'du khang*, was that of lha bla ma Byang chub 'od".

Ibid. (p.600 lines 11–18): "bsTan dgra Gor dmag gi rdzong srung pa nams nas gong gsal dngul gdung nams kyi phyi bstums dngul dang/ phra rgyan gang yod shus 'khyer byas pas 'dod pa ma tshims par da dung dngul gdung gong gsal sgrom shing nams kyang mer bsregs byas 'dug skabs Bod chos rgyal gong ma rim byon gyi sku gdung hril mo nang gzungs su yod pa nams a ru sder thon byung dus mi ro 'dug zhes skyug bro snang gis lam gyi gzhi mdo sogs la phyr bsgyur byas//"; "The guards of the castle belonging to the Gor [kha] troops, the enemies of the teachings, were excited to loot the silver and whatever precious decorations were on external sheets of the silver tombs. Not content with that, they threw the wooden inner frames of the silver tombs into the fire. At that time, as soon as the written formulas placed in layers of medicinal preparations inside the core of the silver tombs of the old kings of Tibet, [who ruled] in a lineage, were exposed, [the Gor kha troops] were overcome with nausea [realising that] there were human bodies and abandoned them at [some] locality lower down along the road".

Tucci (*To Lhasa and Beyond* p.124) says that a silver *stupa* with the remains of Byang chub 'od was kept in the Po ta la room that houses the *gdung rten* of the Great Fifth Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, when he was in lHa sa during his last visit to Tibet.

51. Contrary to other sources, his role in the episode leading to the grant of the *bse 'bag* to Sa chen by Mal lo tsa ba is not clearly elucidated in A mes zhabs's *Sa skya'i gdung rabs* (see above n.38 for Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan's *Lam 'bras Pod nag rnam thar* and A mes zhabs's *Sa skya'i gsung rabs*; also n.47 for the latter's bDe mchog chos 'byung).
52. Sle lung bZhad pa'i rdo rje, *bsTan srung gi rnam thar* (p.115 lines 10–19): "gNyan lo tsa bas kho rang gi nye gnas gNam Kha'u pa sku mched gnyis kyi che ba Dar ma rgyal mtshan zhes grags pa de la mGon po 'di'i man ngag nams rdzogs par gngang/ khong gis Grom stod Kha'u brag rdzong la bzhugs pa'i tshes/ mGon po'i zhal mngon du gzigs/ mdos chog la sogs pa'i man ngag nams dngos su gngang/ Bon gyi sde zhig dang 'gras pas lo gcig na pho mo 'dres pa lnga bcu tsam bsgral/ da lta'i bar du Kha'u brag rdzong gi gnas su Tsaturmu kha dgnos su bzhugs zhes grags/ des Sa chen Kun dga' snying po la gngang/ de nas zung ste dpal ldan Sa skya pa nams kyi thun mong ma yin pa'i srung ma'i tso bor bzhugs shing Gur mGon la mGon po che ba dang/ 'di la chung ba zhes 'bod//"; "Dar ma rgyal mtshan, the elder of the two gNam Kha'u pa brothers *nye gnas* of gNyan lo tsa ba, received secret teachings on mGon po from the latter. When he stayed at Grom stod Kha'u brag rdzong he truly had the vision of mGon po. He actually received secret teachings [on the same occasion] such

chu ba was a disciple. dMar ston confirms that, at Na la rtse, Sa chen became the disciple of the elderly Mal lo tsa ba. Interestingly, dMar ston Chos kyi rgyal po says that Kha'u ba was responsible for the fact that Sa chen Kun dga' snying po did not become a monk, thus being the first "white one" of the *Sa skya gong ma lnga*.

Lam 'bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus reads:

"Then, at Kha'u, [Sa chen] received gSang ba 'dus pa and Yo ga, such as *De nyid 'dus pa*, from gNang Kha'u ba. Then, thinking of the teachings of his father (*pha chos*), as he asked who its master was, since [Kha'u ba] told him that Pu rangs gSal snying was dead,⁵³ but his disciple 'Khon sGyi chu ba was his master, at that time [note: as he was very pleased] he received *dGes rdor* (spelled so for *Kye rdor*) *rtsa 'grel* from dge bshes 'Khon (i.e. sGyi chu ba) at g.Yas ru sGyi chu;⁵⁴

The visit Sa chen paid to Kha'u that sealed his interaction with Kha'u ba Dar ma rgyal mtshan is briefly dealt with in the same text to say the least:

"He then again went to Kha'u [note: brKyed lhas dgon mo che]. He received teachings from the gNang [Kha'u ba], the *dge bshes* brothers".⁵⁵

Concerning the Sa chen/Mal lo tsa ba affair at Gung thang Na la rtse, dMar ston's *Lam 'bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus* adds:

as the permit [to make] the *mdos* ("thread cross" or the *dus mdos* ritual that involved sorcery? See above n.5) [of mGon po]. He had disagreements with a Bon community and in one year he liberated himself from [the harm] of fifty male and female '*dres*. It is well known that, until now, [mGon po] Tsaturmu kha actually resides at the holy place Kha'u brag rdzong. Sa chen Kun dga' snying po received [mGon po Tsaturmu kha] from him (i.e. gNam Kha'u pa Dar ma rgyal mtshan). Since then [this deity] was the extraordinary main protector of the dpal ldan Sa skya pa. The wooden Gur mGon and this one (i.e. mGon po Tsaturmu kha) are respectively called the major and the minor [*chos skyong*]"

53. This passage is also useful to establish that the religious tradition of 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po was first continued by Pu rangs gSal snying and then by 'Khon sGyi chu ba. For a short biography of Pu rangs gSal snying see dMar ston Chos kyi rgyal po, *Lam 'bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus* (f.8b line 1–f.9a line 4). In it, he is called mNga' ris pa gSal ba'i snying po similarly to what Deb ther sngon po does (p.260 lines 3–6 and p.267 lines 3–4). This text says that he was a direct disciple of bla chen 'Brog mi, and that Se ston studied with him and 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po (also see Blue Annals p.208 and p.215). In a note (ibid. f.8b line 2) to the same biography, his father is said to have been from Mar yul.
54. *Lam 'bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus* (f.14b lines 4–6): "De nas Kha'ur gNang Kha'u ba la/ gSang ba 'dus pa la sogs dang/ De nyid 'dus pa la sogs pa yo ga rnams kyang bsan/ de nas Pha chos dran nas/ su mkhas dri pas/ Pu rangs gSal snying ni gshegs/ de'i slob ma 'Khon sGyi chu ba mkhas zer nas/ de'i dus su g.Yas ru sGyi chu ru [shin tu rgyas pas]/ dge bshes 'Khon la dGes rdor rtsa 'grel dang beas pa gsan/".
55. *Lam 'bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus* (f.15b line 3): "De nas yang Kha'ur [bsKyed lhas dgon mo che] byon nas/ dge bshes gNang sku mched la chos gsan/".

“sGyi chu ba was ill. At the time of his death, since there was no time to call *bla ma chen po* (i.e. Sa chen) back, [sGyi chu ba] left a will which said: “You should become a monk. [You] should be the chieftain of this ’Khon tso’i (spelled so) *sde ba* (“the community of the ’Khon division”) and protect this *gdan sa* of mine”. It is said that he [then] died. Thereupon the *bla ma* (i.e. Sa chen) came to know about the words of rje sGyi chu ba and excellently performed the funerary rites of [this] *rje*. Having thought of taking monastic vows, [Sa chen] completed the preparations to the extent of his dress [for the ceremony]. At that time (*yod rtsa na*), bla ma Kha’u ba having heard this story [note: due to his power of knowing of the future, he thought this would be greatly beneficial to the lineage], he sent a message saying: “Given that [your] *bla ma* are equal [in importance], you had better listen to the [words] of the living one rather than to those of the dead. Do not be ordained”. He did not do it. Hence, he did not become ordained but he was the *dpon* of ’Khon tso (spelled so).

(f.16a) This dge bshes sGyi chu ba was the disciple of Bla ma Mal. [Sa chen] went to take the bDe mchog texts of sGyi chu ba to Gung thang Na la che (spelled so) *sna gsar* (sic for *gnas gsar*) [note: he received *Yan lag brgyad pa dKon brtsegs* [and] the cycle of Gur mGon]. After obtaining the orally transmitted root *rGyud* of bDe mchog and branches, he returned downwards (i.e. eastwards)⁵⁶.

Some chronological order should be made in the preliminaries to the transmission of Gur mGon po from Mal lo tsa ba to Sa chen Kun dga’ snying po that dMar ston Chos kyi rgyal po acknowledges, too. *Lam ’bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus* says that Sa chen first met Kha’u ba and then sGyi chu ba after he received teachings from Ba ri lo tsa ba. On the basis of Sa chen Kun dga’ snying po’s birth date (water monkey 1092) and Ba ri lo tsa ba’s death year (water dragon 1112), the establishment of relations with Kha’u ba and sGyi chu ba must have occurred either around 1112 or soon after, when Sa chen was a young man.

Given that, after sGyi chu ba’s death, the last time Sa chen went to meet Mal lo tsa ba and received the transmission of Gur mGon po and the *’chams sku bse ’bag nag po ’phur shes* was in 1120, the chronological sequence of his interaction with Kha’u ba, sGyi chu ba

56. *Lam ’bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus* (f.15b line 4–f.16a line 2): “sGyi chu ba snyung ste/ sku gshegs khar bla ma chen po spyang drangs log ma byung nas zhal chems su khyod btsun pa gyis la ’Khon tso’i sde ba ’di’i dpon gyis la/ nga’i gdan sa ’di skyongs gcig pa’i gsungs bzhag ste shu gshegs skad/ de nas bla mas kyang rje sGyi chu ba’i gsung bstan nas/ rjes kyi bya ba rnams legs par mdzad nas/ rab tu byung bar dgongs nas/ na bza’i sta gon tshun chod tshar nas yod rtsa na/ de’i lo rgyus bla ma Kha’u bas gsan nas ’phrin bskur [gdung rgyud la phan thogs che bar ’ong bar ma ’ongs pa mkhyen pa’i stobs kyi] te/ bla ma mnyams pa la gshin po bas/ gson po’i ngo ltos la/ rab tu ma byung cig gsung nas ma gngang/ der rab tu ma byung/ ’on kyang ’Khon tso’i (f.16a) mdzad do/ dge bshes sGyi chu ba de bla ma Mal gyi slob ma yin no/ sGyi chu ba’i bDe mchog phyag dpe rnams snoms nas Gung thang Na la che sna gsar du byon [Yan lag brgyad pa dKon brtsegs dang Gur mGon gyi skor rnams gsan]/ bDe mchog rtsa ba dang bshad pa’i rGyud cha lags dang bcas pa thams cad gsan nas mar byon/”.

and Mal lo tsa ba, although not accurate to the years in *Lam 'bras Sa lugs kyi lo rgyus*, is substantially confirmed.

The fact that Sa chen went to learn the teachings of his father from 'Khon sGyi chu ba—incidentally a member of the same clan of his father and himself—seems to have been a typically juvenile interest in a father who had died too early for him to know about his way of thinking and to receive from him the tradition of which Sa chen had to be the perpetrator.

The heart of the “enemy of the religion”

Another sign of the transfer of knowledge concerning the culture of sTod and holy receptacles from mNga' ris skor gsum to Sa skya is provided by a puzzling, controversial narration, contained in *Sa skya'i dkar chag*. This source says that the heart of bla chen sTag tsha, who is described as having broken his vow, was kept in sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po inside a ritual fire pit in front of the *bse 'bag*.⁵⁷

Bla chen sTag tsha was the Pu hrang jo bo sTag tsha Khri 'bar who ruled at the beginning of the 13th century, as amply shown in the literature referring to him (see, for instance, *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* p.69 lines 10-12 in Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.121). The fact

57. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* describes at length the objects and the books contained in sGo rum. My aim is not to analyse in detail the contents of this holy building. I only wish to introduce here the description in the *dkar chag* of the room of sGo rum (i.e. the *mgon khang*) where the flying mask, the nine-pronged iron *rdo rje* and the heart of sTag tsha Khri 'bar were kept.

Sa skya'i dkar chag (f.9a line 3–f.9b line 1) says: “De'i sku gzhogs g.yon na sgo nag chen mor grags pa'i nang na slob dpon rin po che bSod nams rtse mo'i sku rgyan gar chas kyi gtso byas gong ma rim par byon pa nrams kyi sku rgyan/ na bza' gsol der phyag phur sogs byin brlabs kyi rten sne tsham/ gzhan yang gang gzar sgang blugs/ lcags kyi khri'u shi/ lcags kyi rdo rje rtse dgu pa/ dam tshig gi rdo rje dril bu de'i shing shub dang bcas la sogs pa mdor na rGya Bod Hor gsum na ngo mtshar zhing byin brlabs che bar grags pa'i rten bsam gyis mi khyab pa zhi/ sngags 'chang Grags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i thugs dam 'byar ba bzhugs/ mGon po'i sku gdong 'brub khung na dam nyams bla chen sTag tsha'i snying yod/ sgo'i nub zur na 'gro mgon Phyag na rdo rje phyag ral nya physis kyi shub bcas sngon nyi zer la bska ba'i byin brlabs can des gtsos pa'i spyang gziis kyi ts-hogs bsam gyis mi khyab pa bzhugs/ khyad par du gong ma rim pas bzhugs shing sngags 'chang gyi dbon po bzhugs gdan de'i steng du bsgrub pa mdzad nas dpal Sa skya'i bstan dgra mtha' las (f.9b) 'das pa dus shin tu myur bar tshar bcas pa'i gzhugs gdan byin brlabs can stag 'bol/ stag bsnyel Kri shna sa ri'i lpags pa dang bcas pa'i steng du gser gyi gandzi ras rgyan te bzhugs//”, “On the left side of this image (i.e. the *bse 'bag*), inside the great black door (*sgo nag chen mo*) the main one is the image of slob dpon rin po che bSod nams rtse mo with ornaments and a robe for the dances. [There also are] the statues with ornaments of the [Sa skya] *gong ma [Inga]* who existed in succession [and] a variety of receptacles bestowing blessings, such as their robes, plates and walking sticks. Moreover, [there are] the *dgang gzar* (sic) (“sacrificial spoon”), the *dgang blugs* (sic) (“serving spoon to feed the *dgang gzar*”), a small iron chair, the nine-pronged iron *rdo rje*, the vow-holder's *rdo rje* and bell including its wooden case. In short there are extraordinary receptacles from India, Tibet and Hor,

that the text calls him *bla chen* sTag tsha shows that he was an enthroned king. The term *bla chen* is a secular title commonly attributed to a ruler in mNga' ris stod.⁵⁸

He was the king who created the conditions for a renaissance in Pu hrang and patronized the bKa' brgyud pa. sTag tsha Khri 'bar, a staunch supporter of the 'Bri gung pa at Gangs Ti se, favoured the establishment of this school in his kingdom on a permanent basis—an event that officially occurred in wood pig 1215—and became a monk under their superintendence (Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.371–379).

sTag tsha Khri 'bar's heart in front of the flying mask implies that it would have been placed in the sGo rum several decades after his death, hence long after the installation of the flying mask in sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po in 1120.

This must have occurred a half century later—around the late eighth or early ninth decade of the 13th century—when the struggle for power between the 'Bri gung pa and Sa skya pa occurred, marked by the takeover of Pu hrang by the Sa skya pa alliance at the expense of 'Bri gung pa and the other bKa' brgyud pa schools.

altogether three, bestowing inconceivable blessings. These are the meditation objects inherited by sngags 'chang Grags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po. Inside the *'brub khung* (“sacrificial fire pit for rituals”), in front of the image of mGon po, is the heart of *bla chen* sTag tsha, who broke his monk's vow. To the west of the door is a case containing the walking stick of 'gro mgon Phyang na rdo rje decorated with mother-of-pearl. In antiquity he hung this, which bestows blessings, onto a ray of sun. These are the main receptacles together with an inconceivable collection of *spyang gzig*s (“*mgon khang* paraphernalia”). In particular, there are the couches where the successive *gong ma* meditated and the couch of the offspring of the *sngags 'chang* (i.e. Grags pa blo gros, the son of sngags 'chang Kun dga' rin chen). By meditating on these [receptacles], the innumerable enemies of the noble Sa skya teachings (f.9b) are immediately vanquished by elimination. Above this couch, which bestows blessings, softened with a lining of Kri shna sa ri tiger skin, is a golden *gandzira* with decorations”.

58. The names of the kings of Mar yul La dwags, for one, are all prefixed with the epithet *bla chen* from *bstan pa phyi dar* onwards (the first being *bla chen* Grags pa lde) to the beginning of the rNam rgyal dynasty (*bla chen* lHa dbang rnam rgyal) in Kah thog rig' dzin Tshe dbang nor bu's *mNga' ris stod Mar yul bdag po deb ther* (p.185 line 16–p.189 line 3), from which La dwags rgyal rabs seems to have been derived. Those bearing the title *bla chen* were Grags pa lde, Byang chub sems dpa', rGyal po, Ud pa la, Nag lug, dGe bhe, Jo rdor, bKra shis mgon, lHa rgyal, Jo bo dPal, dNgos grub, Khri gtsug lde, Grags pa 'bum lde, Grags pa 'bum, bla'i rgyal po Blo gros mchog ldan and lHa dbang rnam rgyal.

De khyim, the non-Tibetan monarch of Mar yul known to *gDung rabs zam 'phreng* as the sponsor of grub chen U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1230–1309), is commonly addressed as *bla chen* in the literature.

The only exceptions are rgyal bu (he was not a *bla chen*) Rin chen, lha chen Shes rab, lha chen Bha ra and lha chen Bha gan. With doubts on lha chen Shes rab who most likely was a foreigner, the other three were not natives (on rgyal bu Rin chen being a Hor pa see my “Some conjectures on change and instability during the one hundred years of darkness in the history of La dwags (1280s-1380s)”, on Bha ra and Bha gan being Turkestani Muslims see my *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.515–518).

The turn of events that led to the transfer of the heart of sTag tsha Khri 'bar to Sa skya are not clarified in *Sa skya 'i dkar chag*, but the reasons for this act are implicitly given when the text describes him as *dam nyams* ("one who broke his vow"). Picturing him as someone who had broken his vow would reinforce his identification as sTag tsha Khri 'bar, one of the Pu hrang kings who became a monk and therefore in the condition of going against monastic practice given the exercise of secular duties.

Hence sTag tsha Khri 'bar, an important king on the local scene, would have been perceived as an "enemy of the religion" or better an "enemy of the Sa skya pa religion" on the basis of the bitter antagonism between the two schools. A strong supporter of the 'Bri gung pa arch-rivals of the Sa skya pa, he would have been recognised posthumously as the quintessential enemy of the Sa skya *bstan pa*. He was, in other words, an archetypal rival whose fame after his death, although this occurred at a time when the struggle between 'Bri gung and Sa skya had not yet erupted, can hardly have been viewed favourably by the Sa skya pa, so that his heart was given as a sacrificial offering to the mask of Mahā ka la.

Given the years in which the Sa skya pa secured control of mNga' ris skor gsum by means of their Gung thang feudatories (1277–1280, see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.385, 391, 452 and 560), the heart of sTag tsha Khri 'bar (d. earth hare 1219; *ibid.* p.379), the fervent supporters of their 'Bri gung pa arch-rivals, was preserved as a relic after his death. It was later taken to Sa skya, since it must have come into Sa skya pa hands not earlier than 1277–1280.

In order for the Sa skya pa to take sTag tsha Khri 'bar's heart to their *dgon pa*, the body of the erstwhile Pu hrang *jo bo* must have been mummified in line with the custom adopted in mNga' ris stod to embalm the corpses of kings, as happened to his predecessors who were the rulers of the mNga'ris skor gsum dynasty. This was the case of lha bla ma Byang chub 'od, himself a king and a monk like sTag tsha Khri 'bar. Byang chub 'od's corpse was been kept inside a *gdung rten* in the *gtsug lag khang* at rDzong dkar as late as the time of rDo ring pandi ta (1760–?) (see above n.50).

The lengthy section dedicated to sTag tsha in A mes zhabs's *Sa skya 'i gnas bshad* is a fanciful story. This account is not found in the other sources studied in this essay. It tells a long story that ends with the punishment of two Bon po masters, namely bla chen sTag tsha and Bon Re ba 'dzu gur. It continues with the gory detail that Sa chen Kun dga' snying po himself handled their corpses and took out the heart of sTag tsha to place it in front of the mask.⁵⁹ Rather than equating Sa chen's action to a human sacrifice of pre-Colombian cultures, one should stress that hearts were relics often found in the ashes after the cremation of great re-

59. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya 'i gnas bshad* (p.270 lines 4–5): "De nas bla chen Kun snying de nyid kyis/ sn-gags nag sTag tsha'i snying phyung hom khung nang/ mdzo thod kha sbyar nang bcug mngon sbyod kyil/ 'phrin las ci bsam grub pa'i bka' bsgo mdzad//"; "Then bla chen Kun snying removed the heart of the evil Tantrist sTag tsha and placed it inside conjoined skulls within a triangular fire pit (*hom khung*) [for wrathful deities]. He authorised those, who wished to fulfil whatever they wanted, [to use it for] actions of wrathful intervention".

ligious masters to highlight their sacredness and unicity, far from being extracted by these supreme lords of the teachings with their own hands. Nonetheless, Sa chen is described in the narrative as a skilled performer of *dus mdos*, a black magic performance associated with the early Sa skya pa (see above n.14.5).

The first part of the story takes place at Sa skya and involves sTag tsha said to be a practitioner of wrong *Tantra*-s, who planned to kill Sa chen. He sent his disciple Khams pa rDor rgyal to Sa skya for the purpose. Sa chen realised the heinous plot behind the innocent request of this aspirant. The Sa skya pa master allowed himself to be approached by the hired assassin to make him realise that his intention was understood. He gave him just a glimpse of his *siddhi*-s and the emissary, seized by panic, repented and converted to his teachings, and so became a true follower of Sa chen.⁶⁰

The next part of the story is equally untenable. It takes place at the residence of the two performers of wrong *Tantra*-s, bla chen sTag tsha and Bon Re ba 'dzu gur. It recounts Khams pa rDor rgyal's deception of his old teachers. Repenting for his attempt to harm the Sa skya pa

60. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.265 line 4–p.267 line 4): “De nas gtor sgam chen mo'i mdun nyid kyi/ sa btegs gru bzhi yod pa 'di nang/ drag po'i hom khung gru gsum 'bar ba'i dbus/ mdze thod kha sbyar yod pa de yi nang/ bla chen sTag tsha'i snying nyid da lta'ang yod/ 'di la 'phros te sTag tsha'i lo rgyus nyid/ cung zad brjod na sNga ris stod kyi cha/ bdud sprul sngags nag bla chen sTag tsha dang/ Bon nag Re ba 'dzu gur zhes bya gnyis/ Sangs rgyas bstan la shin tu gnag pas na/ brTse ba chen po Kun dga' snying po ste/ 'di nyid bzhugs na bstan pa cher dar bas/ 'di la bar chad mtho 'tshams byed snyam du/ sTag tsha'i slob ma Khams kyi lDan ma nas/ (p.266) 'ong pa'i ming la rDor rgyal zer ba cig/ gser bsld nas Sa chen dkrong du btang/ des kyang khas blangs Sa skyar 'ong pa'i tshe/ de skabs brTse chen Kun dga' snying po de/ sGo rum gZim spyil dkar por bzhugs dus su/ Khams pa de yis mjal kha zhus pa na/ de kha yong gsungs sku gzhogs btang nas ni/ dri rtog legs par mdzad pas 'di skad zhu/ bdag ni skys Khams kyi lDan ma nas/ stod kyi phyogs su lo 'ga' song ba'i tshe/ bla chen khyed kyi snyan pa thob pa na/ shin tu mos pas mjal du 'ong pa yin/ da ni re zhig khyed kyi phyag phyi la/ bsdad pas chog pa thugs rjes bzung du gsol/ zer ba la sogs bsld tshig mang zhus pas/ brTse chen de yis mkhyen bzhin gnang ba mdzad/ de nas re zhig song ba'i dus kyi tshe/ Khams pa de yi legs par brtag pa na/ sku yi g.yas g.yon la sogs thams cad du/ rje btsun sku mched bzhi po bzhugs pa la/ na bza' gcig gis bstum nas bzhugs pa mthong/ de tshe kho la log lta 'di lta'ang skyes/ 'jig rten grogs pa'i pha phad bsdod lugs nyid/ 'di 'dra byed pa bla ma ga la yin/ chos pa tsam yang min pas de nyid ni/ dkrong la dka' las med snyam shin tu 'khrul/ de tshe brTse chen Kun dga' snying po yi/ ye shes gzigs pas legs par dgongs gyur te/ Khams pa 'di ru shog dang nged rangs rnams/ steng gi nyi ma ya gir 'gro dgos 'dug/ gsungs nas dpon slob kun gyis steng du phebs/ nyi grib mtshams la bla ma chen po'i bzhugs/ Khams pa (p.267) la ni sku mdun bsdod cig gsungs/ khyod pa rnam rtog ngan pa med yong mchis/ de skad gsungs pas Khams pa rDor rgyal nyid/ shin tu skrag cing 'dra ga nas yod/ zhus kyang lus sems rtsab rtsob nyid du gyur/ de tshe brtse ba chen po de nyid kyi/ gsangs sngags pa yi ro rje slob dpon la/ log lta byed pa shin tu 'khrul pa yin/ gsungs nas zhabs gnyis skyong bar mdzad pa'i tshe/ Khams pa de yi bla ma Sa chen gyi/ zhabs mthil gnyis zhib tu bltas pa na/ g.yas la dGes rdor g.yon la bDe mchog gi/ dkyil 'khor lha tshogs dang bcas ma lus pa/ bris pa las kyang ches gsal ngo mtshar ba/ mthong ba'i mod la Khams pa rDor rgyal nyid/ shin tu dad de lta'ang byas log lta dang/ bla chen sTag tsha'i ji lta'ang brdzangs lugs sogs/ shin tu 'gyod pa dang bcas bshags pa phul/ phyin chad

master in observance of sTag tsha's instructions,⁶¹ Khams pa rDor rgyal was sent by Sa chen, who bound the *chos skyong-s* to support his new disciple from Khams, in order to eliminate

mi byed bla ma khyed nyid kyi/ sku gsung thugs kyi dam tshig bsrung phyir du/ lus ngag yid gsum gtongs pa dam bca' phul//"; "Then in front of the great box [where the flying mask is kept] there is an earthen square platform over which is a triangular fire pit (*hom khung*) for wrathful deities. The heart of bla chen sTag tsha is still kept nowadays inside conjoined skulls within [the pit]. Passing to [talk about] it—in order to tell the story of sTag tsha a little—brTse ba chen po Kun dga' snying po diffused the teachings with his presence in a great way despite both the black Tantrist bla chen sTag tsha from sNga (spelled so) ris stod, the incarnation of a demon, and Bon nag Re ba 'dzu gur being extremely hostile to the teachings of Sangs rgyas. They thought to cause him obstructions and harm. The name of one of sTag tsha's disciples who came from lDan ma in Khams (p.266) was rDor rgyal. He sent him with debased gold to [lure and] kill Sa chen. The latter nevertheless accepted [to receive him]. Upon [rDor rgyal's] arrival in Sa skya, this Khams pa asked to see brTse chen Kun dga' snying po while the latter was at sGo (spelled so) rum gZim spyil dkar po. [Sa chen] replied: "He can come". The man, having been admitted, delivered a speech with excellent conceptual acuity: "I am a native of lDan ma in Khams. When I went to the upper side for a few years, I heard of your fame, the *bla chen*, so, feeling great devotion [for you], I came to see you. I beg you to have the kindness to let me stay with you for a while now". He said many luring words such as these. In a condescending mood, brTse chen consented. The Khams pa considered [the situation] attentively during the time that passed. He saw that [Sa chen] was there wearing his robe, with the four *rje btsun* brothers standing next to him to his right and left, on every side. At that time, he conceived a misguided idea as follows: "How can a *bla ma* behave in such a way, an extravagant (*pha phad* for *phad phod*) style of consorting with commoners? This one is not at all like the Buddhists". He had the ultimate folly to think that it was not that difficult to kill him. By now, brTse chen Kun dga' snying po had realised [the situation] with his wisdom, and so he came to understand it perfectly well. He said: "The Khams pa should stay here, while we should go upstairs to the roof in the sun". The master and disciples all went upstairs. The great *bla ma* stood at the border between the light and shadow. He said to the Khams pa: (p.267) "Stand next to me!". "You came here without bad intentions". At those words Khams pa rDor rgyal became terrified and although he asked: "How could it be otherwise?", his body and mind wobbled. Then the *brtse ba chen po* said: "The *gsang sngags rdo rje slob dpon* is [seized by] the folly of misguided ideas". Whereupon he stomped his feet, the Khams pa instantly saw very clearly the groups of deities of the complete *dkyil 'khor-s* of dGes rdor on the right and of bDe mcog on the left were depicted on the two soles of bla ma Sa chen, and thus clearly visible, which was extraordinary. Khams pa rDor rgyal became extremely devoted to him. He repented of the wrong idea he had previously and of the reason for which he had been sent by bla chen sTag tsha. He made a confession: "From now on I will no longer act in this way. I commit myself to sacrificing my body, speech and mind, all three, in order to keep the vow of [dedicating myself to] the body, speech and mind of you, the *bla ma*".

61. There are distant and improbable meeting points with events that occurred for real in the history of Tibet. One can think that Khams pa rDor rgyal's preparations for the kill, consisting of various purification practices, somewhat resemble lHa lung dPal kyi rdo rje's preparations to assassinate Glang dar ma. Both are a ritual to ensure the success of the murder. Nonetheless, the depiction of Khams pa rDor rgyal in a garb similar to lHa lung dPal rdor is one—although minor—of several unwarranted aspects of the episode. The circumstances surrounding the two purifications cannot be more different.

the wicked Bon po enemies.⁶² Should one think of Sa chen that he commissioned assassinations without performing them himself despite his skills of *dus mdos* sorcery?⁶³ That is incongruous. Khams pa rDor rgyal pretended that he had killed Sa chen and acted as if he was devotedly observant of sTag tsha's practices, but secretly desecrated them.⁶⁴

The story goes on saying that the plan of Khams pa rDor rgyal was to distract sTag tsha's disciples, keeping them busy with various activities in different localities and, in the meantime, to lure sTag tsha and Bon Re ba 'dzu gur to a solitary retreat where he was his only at-

One was the culmination of a factional strife between the Buddhists and the old tribal order of Tibet, the other hate and vendetta.

62. Religious rivalries sometimes led masters to engage in uncompromising behaviour while dealing with their enemies on matters concerning the teachings. Such an uncompromising disposition towards his religious opponents reminds one of the many murders committed by Rwa lo tsa ba out of his jealousy, most of them fabricated inasmuch as the narrative of the circumstances is concerned, but actual in their unfolding. Rwa Ye shes Seng ge's *Rwa lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* is one of the major literary forgeries in the Tibetan biographical tradition, so that the reliability of the accounts found in it needs to be tested against independent evidence.

bsTan pa phyi dar and the successive period are filled with episodes involving extreme Tantrism. One well known is the activity of the infamous Ar tsho ban de bco bryad and their murderous practices, as described, for instance, in the episode involving U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal's two ancestors, Byang chub rgya mtsho and Chos kyi rgya mtsho, accompanied by their assistant rDo rje kun thub, in Myang smad Bya rog Ching (spelled so), but they managed to neutralise their opponents by invoking rTa mgrin (bSod nams 'od zer, *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* p.7 line 8–p.8 line 9).

63. A macabre episode of sorcery is described in the *mes rabs* of lHo brag grub chen. One of his ancestors, Zla ba rgyal mtshan, killed an adversary from distance by rolling his *rdo rje* over a *ling ga* diagram until the image vomited blood from the mouth. Zla ba rgyal mtshan was a disciple of Yol Thog 'bebs, the youngest of the three Yol brothers, in turn disciples of Jo bo rje A ti sha who came to reestablish religious orthodoxy on the plateau and authored *Byang chub lam sgron*. It is quite remarkable that followers of A ti sha were practitioners of black magic.
64. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.267 line 4–p.268 line 2) goes on saying: “De nas yid dam drag pos yar log ste/ bla chen sTag tsha nyid kyis mdun sar sleb/ Sa chen dkrong ba'i brdzun lab byas rjes su/ sTag tsha de nyid mgo bo 'khor gyur te/ rDo rgyal nyid la nye gnas nang ma bcol/ bslab bya'i ts-hogs kyang 'di skad gleng bar byed/ nga yi mal sa 'di la tho ma gtong/ phreng ba'i mdud pa 'di yang ma bshig cig/ phreng ba 'di nyid shin tu gtsang dgos so/ zer ba la sogs bslab bya mang byas kyang/ res 'ga' mal sa de nyid mgo mjug bsgyur/ phreng ba'i mdud pa bshig nas spyod lam ngor/ de (p.268) sogs rnam par mi 'tshams mang du byas/ de dang mtshungs par Re ba 'dzu gur la'ang/ phreng ba mal stan sngar lugs byed pa bzhin/ thabs 'phrul sna tshogs byas pas khong gnyis po'i/ ngan sngags tshogs rnamshin tu 'khrugs par gyur/ de skabs bla chen Kun dga' snying po des/ gdan sa chen po'i dus mdos 'dzugs par mdzad/'”; “Then [Khams pa rDor rgyal] abjured [his old ways] by taking a strict vow and went to the gathering place of bla chen sTag tsha. He lied that he had killed Sa chen, and sTag tsha was duped. rDor rgyal was admitted into the circle of his *nye gnas*-s. He gave this speech to the assembly of disciplinarians: “Do not throw away my bed [as a sign of renunciation]. Do not destroy the beads of the rosary either. This rosary needs to be kept clean”. Although he followed much discipline such as [what] was told in this speech, in stages he abjured the code of conduct by turning

tending disciple.⁶⁵ It was then easy to kill bla chen sTag tsha and Bon Re ba 'dzu gur, whose corpses he brought to Sa skya. He offered them to Sa chen.⁶⁶ Then the narrative reaches the

his bed upside down and destroying the rosary beads. (p.268) He did many unorthodox things such as these. Just like him, Re ba 'dzu gur, too, resorted to various stratagems, such as continuing with the old system of [using] the rosary and bed, but the two of them came to have a hostile attitude towards the followers of wrong Tantra. In the meantime, bla chen Kun dga' snying po made a *gdan sa chen po* (i.e. Sa skya) *dus mdos* ("performance of black magic").

65. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.269 lines 1–5): "gTor bstod gnyis ka sgrub pa'i lugs yin te/ de yi tshul ni 'khrul med dam pa yis/ deb sgrig yid bzhin nor bur gzigs par zhu/ de ni 'phros don tsam zhig brjod pa yin/ nus mthu'i mnga' bdag Kun dga' snying po des/ chos skyong mthu rtsal can nmams bran bkol te/ mngon spyod drag po'i las la bskul ba'i tshe/ sngar gyi Khams pa rDo rgyal rgyud bskul nas/ bdud sprul sngags nag bla chen sTag tsha dang/ Bon nag Re ba 'dzu gur zhes bya la/ slob tshogs du ma yod pa ji snyed nmams/ khong gi thabs byas la la chos dbar dang/ la la bsod snyoms la la ston las sogs/ phyogs phyogs 'gro ba'i thabs lam bsgrigs byas nas/ sNgags Bon gnyis po mtshams la legs bcug ste/ mtshams g.yog nged rang gcig pus byed do zhes/ phyogs phyogs kun tu khyab par bsgrags rjes su/ zhag bcui bar du sngar bzhin btang snyoms byas/ de nas zhag bcu de las brtson par byas/ de nas zhag bcu snying dang 'dra bar byas/ de ltar byas pas sNgags Bon gnyis po yang/ dam tshig can zhes shin tu rtsis thang che/"; "The ritual arrangements [for the *dus mdos*] consisted of the system of both making a *gtor* [*ma*] and [performing] a hymn of praise. As for the way it happened, the noble one, free of illusions, asked to consult *Deb sgrig yid bzhin nor bu* ("the *Yid bzhin nor bu* bibliographical compilation"). I write here about a few additional points. Kun dga' snying po, the lord of magic power, bound the powerful *chos skyong*-s as slaves, activated with ultimate destructive action. He activated them [directing them] through the previously [mentioned] Khams pa rDo rgyal. Once he devised a strategy whereby they [should benefit] people in many localities—some should rekindle the doctrine, some should collect alms and some give teachings—all the existing [followers] of sTag tsha, the *bla chen* of wrong Tantra, the incarnation of a demon, and Bon Re ba 'dzu gur, who had many groups of disciples, practised his (i.e. rDor rgyal's) system. [rDor rgyal] then brilliantly convinced the two Bon [po] Tantrists (i.e. sTag tsha and his associate Re ba 'dzu gur) to [depart for] secluded meditation. He said: "I will be their only recluse helper". For ten days, after this was notified pervasively in all directions, [Khams pa rDo rgyal] practised equanimity, as he had done before. For the next ten days, he underwent hardship; and then, for [another] ten days he practised kind-heartedness. After he did this, he made a great pretence (*thang che = yin mdog kha po*). He adulated them declaring that the two Bon [po] Tantrists were holders of the vow".

66. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.269 line 5–p.270 line 3): "sNgar nas med pa'i g.yag rgod rog po zhig/ spu sprugs byed cing rwa brdar la sogs pa/ drag po'i spyod pa zil dang ldan pa byung/ gzhan yang bya nag khyi nag ce spyang sogs/ chos skyong sprul pa du ma byung ba'i tshe/ dam tshig ldan pa'i Khams pa de nyid kyis/ legs par bsam mno gtang bas chos skyong gis/ bskul ma yin par shes te dus tshes (p.270) grangs/ nyi shu dgu yi sa srod sleb pa na/ chos skyong nmams kyis nus mthu'i byin rlabs nyid/ legs par zhugs te mtshon cha rmon po yis/ bstan dgra gnyis po skad cig nyid la bskul/ de ma thag tu ro gnyis g.yag rgod la/ legs par bkal cing skad cig nyid la bros/ mtshan gang gcig la nyin lam drug tsam chod/ de nas Sa skyar sleb ste bla chen la/ ro gnyis phul nas lo rgyus zhib zhus pas/ shin tu mnyes nas bya dga' chen po gnang/ tshe 'di nyid la Phyag chen thob pa yi/ gdams pa zab mos rgyud kun smin mdzad de/ Khams su byon pas grub thob chen po byung/"; "Not earlier than that a black wild *g.yag*, which was not there before, appeared outside the door of the meditation room be-

point of mentioning the gruesome act of Sa chen Kun dga' snying po who extracted bla chen sTa tsha's heart to place it in front of the mask.

Looking at the question of sTag tsha the *bla chen*, besides always being addressed with this title—frequently used for a ruler in mNga' ris stod—sTag tsha is defined to have been a black Tantrist, emanation of the *bdud-s* (“demons”) in the episode of *Sa skya'i gnas bshad*. Hence A mes zhabs, or his authority, confuses a sTag tsha who sat on a throne with a practitioner of wrong *Tantra-s*, emanation of evil spirits.

Confusion reaches an apex in the passage telling that Khams rDor rgyal lures sTag tsha and Re ba 'dzu gur into a retreat to assassinate them, A mes zhabs talks about them as *sNgags Bon gnyis po* (“both Bon po pursuers of [black] *Tantra-s*”, (A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* p.269 line 3 and line 5). Hence sTag tsha is also said to have been a Bon po.

Is there anything credible in this story? Perhaps the most historically disturbing aspect is that Bon po sTag tsha practitioner of debased *Tantra-s* is nowhere recorded in the literature. Was he a historical personage or simply an archetype of the wicked Bon po in the collective Buddhist mind to serve the purpose of an untenable extravaganza hostile to this religion?

A further weakness of the account is, as noted by A mes zhabs, the confusion caused by the original author—one he does not identify—between Sa chen's newly acquired disciple Khams pa rDor rgyal and Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po, given a wrongly conceived homonymy denounced by the Sa skya pa author, because the protagonist of the episode is named rDor je rgyal mtshan in full.⁶⁷ This shows that next to nothing was known about the disciple of sTag tsha before A mes zhabs's categorical denial of his identity with the great bKa' brgyud pa master. Khams pa rDor rgyal appears hardly at all in the sources dealing with Sa chen Kun dga' snying po. He is known to bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan, for one, who

having in a frightening and wrathful way, such as raising its hackles and rubbing its horns [against the earth]. Moreover, when many transformations of the *chos skyong* appeared, including a black bird, a black dog and a jackal, the Khams pa keeper of the vow thought carefully about this and realised that it was an admonition from the *chos skyong*. He calculated the number of days. (p.270) The dusk of the twenty-ninth had come. The blessing of the powerful *chos skyong-s* was excellently there [in front of him], and he instantly killed the two enemies of the teachings with a sharp weapon. He loaded the two corpses at once upon the wild *gyag*, and it instantly run off. He went through six dreams in the space of a single night. Then he arrived at Sa skya and offered the two corpses to the *bla chen*. He gave him an account [of what happened]. [Sa chen] was very happy and gave [him] a big reward. On this occasion, he caused the whole profound transmission of the esoteric teachings [that lead] to obtain *Phyag chen (Mahāmudra)* to ripen. He returned to Khams and became a great *grub thob*”.

67. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.270 lines 3–4): “Ming zur cig kyang ngo bo mi cig ste/ Phag gru'i mtshan la rDo rje rgyal mtshan zer/ 'di yi ming la rDo rje rgyal po zer/ so so yin pas rang bzo ma byed cig/”; “Owing to [the use of] shortened names (*ming zur*), both [Phag mo gru pa] and bde gshegs Khams pa rDor rgyal might be one and the same man. He would be the one known as rDo rje rgyal mtshan [who bore] the name Phag gru. However, the latter's name was rDo rje rgyal po. That they are different persons shows that this is a fabrication”.

includes him among some (distant?) disciples of Sa chen in a short note to his *Lam 'bras Pod nag rnam thar*.⁶⁸

The narrative would shed light on a little-known aspect of Sa chen's personality. It stresses his indulgence in extreme Tantric practices. His being both a "white" Sa skya pa and an experienced *sngags pa* is mentioned in his more orthodox *rnam thar*-s, but this does not go into the raw biographical details told by A mes zhabs. With remarkably cynical shrewdness, Sa chen would have not been at all reluctant at the perspective of having sTag tsha and Bon Re ba 'dzu gur assassinated and then even to pull out his rival's heart himself.

Although accepted in destructive Tantric practice—and A mes zhabs keeps affirming that Sa chen Kun dga' snying po was a practitioner of these rituals—the extreme act performed by him on the dead bodies of the two Bon po black Tantrists, not to mention his orders to a newly admitted disciple to commit the murders, makes one wonder whether this was in keeping with the approach of the great Buddhist master that he was, who was disturbed by the Tantric practice of Mal lo tsa ba. If ever sTag tsha, by attempting to kill Sa chen, "broke his vow", as *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* says, there is no reason not to think that Sa chen, who ordered to murder sTag tsha and Bon Re ba 'dzu gur, and indeed personally dismembered his body, would have broken his vow all the more.

If A mes zhabs's gruesome and unreliable story of the bad Bon po masters slayed by Sa chen is given credit which, I deem, is pure fancy, the installation of the heart in front of the flying mask in sGo rum would antedate my assessment which refers to the Pu hrang jo bo sTag tsha Khri 'bar of almost a century.

Strong doubts remain about the authenticity of the episode of sTag tsha's murder, given that it does not appear in earlier Sa skya pa and non-Sa skya pa accounts of both the mask and Sa chen, and does not appear either in other works by A mes zhabs or in *Sa skya'i dkar chag*. Sa skya pa authors apart from A mes zhabs, who reported it in a single work of his, did not feel comfortable mentioning this episode, which could have fuelled the dislike of the school throughout the centuries. The episode could only be validated by further evidence not available at present.

Rather than being anachronistic and thus an argument to reject the identification with Tag tsha Khri 'bar, the complex of disputable points in the narrative are a weakness that invalidates the reliability of A mes zhabs's account. The use of Sa chen in the episode is meant to

68. This note (*Lam 'bras bla brgyud kyi rnam thar* p.70 line 5) is an enumeration of masters: "Grub thob Khams pa rDor rgyal/ grub thob Nyi phug pa/ Byang g. Yag lung gi grub thob Be ne [note: Bu ston rNal 'byor yang zer]/ dpal rGa lo/ gShen Re zul/ sgom pa Jo lcags/ gGyen gtsug rDor je rgyal po/ gNyags dBang rgyal//"; "Grub thob Khams pa rDor rgyal, grub thob Nyi phug pa, grub thob Be ne from Byang g. Yag lung [note to the note: also known as Bu ston rNal 'byor], dpal rGa lo, gShen Re zul, sgom pa Jo lcags, gGyen gtsug rDor je rgyal po and gNyags dBang rgyal".

The passage associates rDor rgyal with Nyid phug pa (1094–1186), whose dates prove his contemporaneity with the Sa skya pa master, as disciples of Sa chen.

establish some sort of contemporaneity with the transfer of the flying mask to sGo rum and thus to make the placement of the heart in front of it an event that followed soon thereafter.

Given the doubts about the reliability of the episode mentioned by A mes zhabs, which narrates the death of the Bon po master, the hypothesis I proposed in my first version of this essay written in 1999 and published in 2001, when I did not have A mes zhabs's *gnas bshad* at my disposal, still is a plausible assessment. The sTag tsha whose heart was placed in front of the *'chams sku nag po 'phur shes* in Sa skya sGo rum was the Pu hrang *jo bo* sTag tsha Khri 'bar. Jo bo Khri 'bar is the only personage bearing the clan name sTag tsha (i.e. born from a mother belonging to the sTag clan) documented historically. No Bon po teacher can be credited with a similar kinship association.

The historical assessment of Sa chen Kun dga' sying po in the episode narrated by A mes zhabs, depicted as a master of *dus mdos* black magic is in line with A mes zhabs's idea that the early Sa skya pa proponents were masters of this type of sorcery (see above n.45). This is the only sound appraisal in this gruesome story of betrayal and deaths. The outcome of the episode is that A mes zhabs's narrative has thrown the life and deeds of the Pu hrang jo bo sTag tsha Khri 'bar out of the context in which he operated:

- he was a *lha bla ma* since, as the ruler of Pu hrang, he followed the example of Ye shes 'od in getting the vows and becoming a monk; A mes zhabs's account, instead, makes of him a practitioner of wrong *Tantra-s*;
- he was a 'Bri gung pa but the episode depicts him as a Bon po in a way that gives a negative value to this religious affiliation;
- he lived at the time of the 'Bri gung pa diffusion in sTod but the episode antedates him of a number of decades to suit a contemporaneity with Sa chen.
- One more aspect that distances sTag tsha Khri 'bar from the religious practitioner who tried to assassinate Sa chen is that the Pu rang *jo bo* has been recognised as the incarnation of Byang sems Zla ba rgyal mtshan, who introduced *bsnyung gnas* in Tibet after receiving the fasting technique of dge slong ma dPal mo from Bal po dPe nya ba (see Vitali, "The transmission of *bsnyung gnas* in India, the Kathmandu Valley and Tibet (10th-12th centuries)", where I deal with Byang sems Zla ba rgyal mtshan at some length and *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* (p.69 lines 13–15).

It is realistic to think that sTag tsha was the immediate rebirth of Zla ba rgyal mtshan, despite the latter's dates not being available, given that Nyid phug pa Chos kyi grags pa, a disciple of the *Byang sems*, was born in 1094 and died in 1186, and sTag tsha Khri 'bar was a mature Pu hrang *jo bo* in 1208.

The episode found in A mes zhabs's work covers up a posteriori the desecration that the 'Bri gung pa suffered in sTod—and elsewhere—at the hands of the Sa skya pa after the school of the 'Khon family took over Upper West Tibet.

More *rten*-s of mGon po

In pursuit of his practice of the deity, the *bse 'bag 'phur shes* was not the only image of mGon po that Sa chen Kun dga' snying po received. Pu hrang lo chung Grags 'byor shes rab gave him what A mes zhabs, in his *Sa skya'i gdung rabs*, calls the shing mGon ("wooden Mahā ka la"), which was self-originated from the ashes of the cremation of bram ze mChog sred.⁶⁹ Ames zhabs deals with the same subject again in *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* and confirms that Sa chen received it from Pu hrang lo chung who got it, in turn, from Ga ya dha ra.⁷⁰

In the same way as with the *bse 'bag 'phur shes*, the shing mGon also poses a problem of the material in which the statue was made. The most obvious understanding—that it was made of wood (*shing*)—contrasts with the fact that it was spontaneously originated from the ashes of the *bram ze*. It would be tempting to think that even this second image of mGon po may have to be another object of learned controversy among Tibetan authors. A hypothesis is that it was made of fossilised wood after cremation,⁷¹ different from the case of the *'chams sku*,

69. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gdung rabs* (p.36 lines 16–21): "lHo stod Pu hrang lo chung la Bal po Bhadanta'i lugs kyi bDe mchog skor dang/ Ha ngu'i dpal gSang ba 'dus pa'i Argham la sogs pa'i chos skor gsum dang/ Dus kyi 'khor lo yan lag dang beas pa dang/ Bya rgyud kyi phyogs 'ga' gsan nas thugs su chud par mdzad cing/ bram ze mChog sred kyi pur sol la rang byon du 'khrungs pa'i shing mGon yid bzhin gyi nor bu 'di yang lo tsa ba 'dis bla chen po la gnang ba yin no//"; "Having obtained from Pu hrang lo chung at [Gu ge] lHo stod the cycle of bDe mchog according to the system of Bal po Bhadanta, the three cycles of dpal gSang ba 'dus pa Argham according to the system of Ha ngu, the Dus kyi 'khor lo and its branches along with some teachings on *Bya rgyud*, [Sa chen] mastered them. This *lo tsa ba* (i.e. Pu hrang lo chung) also gave to the *bla ma chen po* (i.e. Sa chen) the wish-fulfilling wood mGon [po] (shing mGon) spontaneously born from the cremation ground of bram ze mChog sred".

70. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.273 lines 2–4): "bKa' babs dang po'i rgyas bshad brjod pa yin/ de nas bka' babs gzhan mams brjod pa ni/ sku yi bka' babs gnyis pa 'di ltar lags/ shing mGon yid bzhin nor bu 'di nyid yin/ 'di la shing mGon zhes pa'i rgyu mtshan ni/ grub pa'i dbang phyug bram ze mChod sreg de'i/ sku gdung bzhu la phul dus pur sol las/ rang byon tshul du legs par byon pas//"; "I have talked *in extenso* about the first transmission (i.e. the one of the flying mask). Then as for a treatment of the other transfers, the second transmission of an image [of Mahā ka la] is as follows. This is about the wooden wish-fulfilling mGon [po]. The reason to call this [image] the wooden mGon [po] is that when the corpse of bram ze mChog sred, the lord of meditation, was brought for cremation, [the statue of mGon po] excellently appeared from his body [reduced to] charcoal in a self-originated way".

The notion that the shing mGon was originated from the cremated body of bram ze mChog sred is uncommon because, normally, body relics are found in the ashes of the cremated body of a master. A mes zhabs does not rule out that this wood Mahā ka la could have again been made partially or entirely of human remains.

71. My same doubts have been already expressed by A mes zhabs (*Sa skya'i gnas bshad* p.273 line 4–p.274 line 1) who writes: "Sol ba'i mGon po byas kyang chog pa yin/ 'di ni spyir gyi khyad par 'phags pa dang/ sgos su drag po'i las la shin tu bsngags/ de yi rgyu mtshan sngags 'chang chen po yis/ gtor bzlog gnang dus nam mkha'i mthong nyid la/ goms pa bdun gyi bar du legs byon te/ bstan

leading one to believe that making images of Mahā ka la with human remains was an exceptional, isolated case in India in ancient times. However, there are no grounds firm enough to propose this hypothesis with any degree of confidence.

Sa chen, therefore, was keen to gather receptacles of mGon po and bring them to his seat. This was because to each sacred object corresponded a transmission of teachings on mGon po. Pursuing this matter further, *Sa skya'i dkar chag* provides evidence that the passage of *Sa skya'i gdung rabs*, which mentions the wooden statue of this deity that reached Sa chen, apart from the flying mask, does not exhaust the issue of the receptacles of Mahā ka la assembled by Sa chen.

Sa skya'i dkar chag adds to the count two other images of mGon po, which ended up in Sa chen's hands, while, at the same time, it confirms that he came into possession of the flying mask and the wood image self-originated from the ashes of bram ze mChog sred, given to Sa chen by Pu hrang lo chung who is called mNga' ris lo tsa ba in the latter source.

Sa skya'i dkar chag records the existence of four images of Mahā ka la, the shing mGon ("wood mGon po"), the rdo mGon ("stone mGon po"), the bris mGon ("painted mGon po")⁷² and the 'chams mGon ("dancing mGon po", i.e. the flying mask). Their history is briefly mentioned in this source.⁷³

dgra brlag par mdzad pa the tshom med/ de phyr 'di ni byin rlabs shin tu che/ 'di ni sku yi bka' babs gnyis pa ste/ 'di dang mthun par Lam 'bras dang 'brel ba'i/ grub chen Ga ya dha ra nas rgyud pa'i/ mGon rkyang nyid kyi rjes su gnang ba ste/ 'di ni chos kyi bka' babs gnyis pa yin/ shing mGon 'di ni Pu hrang lo chung pa/ Grags 'byor shes rab zhes bya las brgyud de/ brTse chen Kun dga' (p.274) snying po'i phyag tu babs/ rjes gnang 'di ni Zhang ston nyid las gsan/'"; "It is possible that the mGon po [statue] was made of charcoal, and therefore it is exceptionally noble. In particular, its wrathful actions are especially praised. For this reason, when the *sngags 'chang chen po* repulsed the Hor, [the wooden mGon po] walked seven steps (*goms* spelled so for *bgoms*) in the visible [part] of the sky. There is no doubt that it was able to destroy the enemies of the teachings. Hence it has great blessing power. As for this, the second transmission of an image [of mGon po] accordingly is that of the *rjes su gnang ba* of mGon [po] alone (mGon *rkyang*) descending from Ga ya dha ra, the *grub chen* associated with *Lam 'bras*. This is the second religious transmission. This wooden mGon [po] was passed down from Pu hrang lo chung Grags 'byor shes rab onwards. It had come (p.274) into the hands of brtse chen Kun dga' snying po. He obtained its *rjes gnang* from Zhang ston".

72. The *blos blang* ("tridimensional mandala") on the upper floor of the dBu rtse gсар ma, next to which, to the north, was placed the bris mGon (see *Sa skya dkar chag* f.8b line 7), is depicted in Tucci, *Transhimalaya* (pl.170). See the next note.

73. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.8b line 2–f.9a line 3): "sKu'i bka' babs la/ shing mGon rdo mGon bris mGon 'chams mGon dang bzhi las/ shing mGon ni/ bram ze mChog sred kyi spur zhu ba'i sol ba la rang byon du byung ba'i shin tu ngo mtshar ba de yin la/ de nyid rGya gar nas spyang drangs te/ mNga' ris lo tsa bas rje Sa chen la gnang nas/ sngar dBu rtse rnying ma rgya phug phag sna ma dang bcas te bzhugs pa yin cing/ da lta 'Jam pa'i dbyangs dGe sding pa Ngag dbang bsod nams dbang po grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po ba'i gzim chung na bzhugs/ rdo mGon ni/ ri bo Ma la ya'i rdo la rang byon du 'khrungs pa/ sku gsal zhing dod pa phyag tshad phun su tshogs shing byin brlabs shin tu che ba Ye shes pa dngos su bzhugs pa de yin la/ de nyid rGya gar nas spyang drangs te/ Ba ri lo tsa bas rje

Sa chen la gnang nas sngar gTsang gi Chu mig sogs su bzhugs pa grags shing/ da lta dpal Sa skya'i Khri thog pa chen po sngas 'chang Grags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po ba'i gzim chung na bzhugs/ bris mGon ni/ bram ze mChog sred kyi shangs tshal las grub pa grags shing/ byin brlabs shin du che ba de yin la/ de nyid rGya gar nas spyang drangs shing 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phags pa'i pyag tu byung ba/ da lta dBu rtse gsar ma'i steng gi blos blangs srnams kyi byang na bzhugs/ 'chams mGon ces pa ni/ sngar bshad pa lta rgyal po sdig can gyi spags pa las byas pa'i bse las grub pas na bse (f.9a) 'bag/ zhal mdog mthing nag du yod pas nag po/ lo chen gyi drung nas 'phur nas byon pas 'phur shes te/ bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes zhes yongs su grags pa sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po ka ba gcig gi sa mchod pa'i sprin phung bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i dbus na zhal rDo rje gdan gyi byang sgo'i phyogs su gzigs nas khams gsum gyi gdug pa can thams cad tshar gcod pa'i nus mthu phun gsum tshogs shing gzi brjid kyi dpal dang ldan pa skye 'gro'i sems can rnams la dge mi dge'i rtags mtshan so sor ston pa'i sprul pa mtha' yas pa dang bcas te bzhugs pa de yin/'', "Concerning the images transmitted [to the Sa skya pa], these are the shing mGon ("wood mGon po"), the rdo mGon ("stone mGon po"), the bris mGon ("painted mGon po") and the 'chams mGon ("dancing mGon po"), four in all. Among them, the shing mGon was self-originated from the ashes (lit. "coal") of the cremated body of bram ze mChog sred. Since it is very extraordinary, it was brought [to Tibet] from India. After mNga' ris lo tsa ba gave it to rje Sa chen, it was earlier placed in dBu rtse mnying ma rgya phub phag sna ma (the "pagoda roof with pig's noses"), but at present it is kept in the *gzim chung* ("residence") of 'Jam pa'i dbyangs dGe sding pa Ngag dbang bsod nams dbang po grags pa rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po.

The rdo mGon was self-originated from the stone of ri bo Ma la ya. Given that this attractive statue in high-relief, with perfect proportions (*phyag tshad phun su tshogs*), and bestowing extraordinary blessings, is actually inhabited by Ye shes pa (i.e. mGon po), it was brought [to Tibet] from India. After Ba ri lo tsa ba gave it to rje Sa chen, it is well known that it was earlier kept at [places] such as gTsang Chu mig. At present, it is kept in the *gzim chung* of dpal Sa skya Khri thog pa chen po sngags 'chang Grags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (i.e. the son of Kun dga' rin chen).

The bris mGon is known for having been made with blood from the nose of bram ze mChog sred. Given that it bestows extraordinary blessings, it was brought [to Tibet] from India and came into the hands of 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phags pa. At present, it is located to the north of the *blos blang* ("tri-dimensional *mandala*") on the upper floor (*steng*) of the dBu rtse gsar ma.

The one known as the 'chams mGon, as discussed above, is the *bse 'bag* made with the leather prepared from the skin of the sinful king. (f.9a) It is [considered to be] black because the complexion of the mask is dark indigo. It is called 'phur shes because it flew after Lo chen. Hence, it is universally known as *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes*. It is kept in the centre of an inconceivable cloud formation of offerings [filling] the space of one pillar, which is sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po. [The mask's] face looks towards the northern gate of rDo rje gdan and possesses the virtuous power to wipe away all the defilements of the three worlds. Its looks are nobly magnificent. [The image] can perform unlimited miracles by judging each sign of virtue or sin (*dge mi dge*) in the case of all sentient beings".

Two other masks of wrathful deities and another black flag, whose typology corresponds to that of the *sku'i rten* and *gsung gi rten* received by Rin chen bzang po, were the personal objects of 'gro mgon 'Phags pa, which remained in some of the temples he founded in Khams stod. The modern work *sGa lDan sKgyur gsum gyi byung tshul* (p.22 line 9–p.23 line 3) says: "Thub bstan dgon gyi Pu tra nag po'i zhal 'bag/ Rin chen gling gi rTsi'u dmar po'i zhal 'bag/ gNam phu gdon du bzhugs pa'i dar nag gi ngos la mGon po stag zhon gyi sku bris pa di gsum ga Sa skya bla chen 'Phags pa'i thugs dam rten ngo ma/ dgon pa 'di gsum ga 'Phags pa'i phyag btab/'"; "[Among the sacred objects in this

All these images still do not conclude the matter. Another statue of Gur mGon po is neglected by *Sa skya'i dkar chag*, perhaps because it was removed from Sa skya many centuries before the *dkar chag* was written. This is the sandalwood statue of mGon po mentioned in *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar*.

Upon reaching Tibet, this image, too, came into the possession of Rin chen bzang po and, subsequently, of Sa chen (see below n.75). Similar to the other cases, the possession of the sandalwood mGon po again demonstrates that Lo chen and Sa chen belonged to the

territory are] the mask (*zhal 'bag*) of Pu tra nag po of Thub bstan gdon; the mask (*zhal 'bag*) of Tsi'u dmar po of Rin chen gling; (p.23) the black flag with the image of mGon po riding a tiger painted on its surface, kept at gNam phu gdon. These three were the personal meditation objects (*thugs dam*) of Sa skya bla chen 'Phags pa. These three temples were personally founded by 'Phags pa".

In his *Sa skya'i gnas bshad*, Ames zhabs elaborates briefly on the stone mGon po and on the painted image of this deity, too. The text (p.274 line 1–p.275 line 1) reads: “De nas sku'i bka' babs gsum pa ni/ rdo mGon yid bzhin nor bu 'di nyid yin/ 'di la rdo mGon zhes pa'i rgyu mtshan ni/ 'Phags pa'i yul gyi Ma la ya yi ri/ gnam lcags yod pa'i rtse mo de nyid du/ gsang bdag Phyang na rdo rje'i thugs rje las/ legs par grub pa'i rang byon ngo mtshar can/ yin pa'i phyir na rdo mGon zhes su grags/ 'di ni sku yi bka' babs gsum pa yin/ 'di dang mthun par chos kyi bka' babs ni/ sgrub thabs brgya rtsa sogs nas 'byung ba yi/ Gur gyi mGon po dpa' rkyang rjes gnang yin/ 'di ni chos kyi bka' babs gsum pa'o/ sku dang rjes gnang gnyis ka Ba ri ba/ lo tsā chen po Rin chen grags nyid las/ legs par brgyud de Sa chen nyid la babs/ 'di ltar bka' babs dang po drug po 'di/ Sa chen nyid las gzhan du 'chad pa 'khrul/ de nas sku yi bka' babs bzhi pa ni/ bris mGon yid bzhin nor bu 'di nyid yin/ 'di la bris mGon zhes pa'i rgyu mtshan ni/ 'di yang bram ze mChog sred pur ras la/ legs par bris pas bris mGon zhes su grags/ 'di ni sku yi bka' babs bzhi pa yin/ 'di dang mthun par chos kyi bka' babs ni/ gSang grub spu gri skor gsum zhes bya ba/ 'di la rjes gnang yod med 'chad tshul gyi/ rnam grangs shin tu mang ba 'dug na yang/ bka' gtad 'dra ba'i rjes gnang chung ngu yod/ 'di gnyis rGya gar Kha che pandi ta/ Shākya shri bha dra zhes bya (p.275) la/ legs par brgyud de Sa pan phyag tu babs/'"; “Then the third transmission of an image is that of the stone Wish-Fulfilling mGon [po]. The reason to call it the stone mGon [po] is that it originated in a wondrous way from the compassion of Phyang na rdo rje, the Lord of Secrets, on the meteoritic iron top of the mountain Ma la ya in the Noble Land. Because of this it was known as the stone mGon [po]. As to it, this is the third transmission of an image. Its corresponding religious transfer is that of the *rjes gnang* of the Gur gyi mGon po Ekavira (Gur gyi mGon po dpa' rkyang). This is the third religious transmission [of an image]. Both the image and [its] *rjes gnang* were excellently passed by Ba ri ba lo tsa chen po Rin chen grags onwards and came to Sa chen. Likewise, it is a mistake [to accept] that there were six [sub-transfers] of the first [of the two] transmissions, which Sa chen imparted upon others.

Then the fourth transmission of an image is that of the painted Wish-Fulfilling mGon [po]. The reason to call it the painted mGon [po] is that it was excellently painted on the cotton [wrapping] the corpse of bram ze mChog sred and so it became known as the painted mGon [po]. This is the fourth transmission of an image. Its corresponding religious transfer is that of *gSang bsgrub spu gri skor gsum*. Although there are very many kinds of expounding [this text], with or without *rjes gnang*, there also is a minor *rjes gnang* which is entrusted. Two of them were excellently given to rGya gar Kha che'i pandi ta Shākya shri bha dra. (p.275) These came to Sa pan".

same line of transmission of teachings on mGon po and that the cult of Mahā ka la was especially treasured by Sa chen.

The sandalwood statue of Gur mGon po was eventually brought to the land of the Mongols by Sa skya pandi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan and subsequently installed in Hor kog Tre'i mgon khang of Khams.⁷⁴ This *mgon khang* was built in wood monkey 1284 with the sponsorship of Se chen rgyal po after a request by 'gro mgon 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280) to the Yuan emperor.⁷⁵ This *mgon khang*, meant to house the sandalwood Gur mGon po and

74. Before dealing with it *in extenso*, Hor kog Tre'i mgon khang is briefly introduced in *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* (p.85 lines 3–6) as follows: “Jo rog dgon de ni dGa' ldan pa'i dgon par 'dug kyang ja 'dren dang 'bul ba bzang zhing bla dgon nams la 'os bab kyi gnang cha zabs par phul/ de skabs Khang sar nang ba'i chibs bsur brgya phrag tsam dang/ ja 'dren mdzad byung/ Gam tshe dgon gyi mdor zhag lnga bzhugs/ Gam tshe rang dang de phyogs kyi bla dgon nams kyis ja 'dren dang 'bul ba bzabs shing so sor gnang cha rgyas par zhus/ yar 'byon mar 'byon gnyis char gyi lam ltabs bde ba bcas/ 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phags pas lung bstan pa bzhin sGa A gnyan dam pas chag gis bcags pa'i Hor sde'i mgon khang ngam Tre'i mgon khang bzhes pa Bod kyi rDo rje gdan/ dpal Sa skya'i sGo rum dbyer med pa de nyid du mar me/ snyan dar/ spyang gzigs/ bskang gso sogs yon mchod gnyis char nas zab rgyas su phul zhing rten mjal zhib par byas/” “Concerning Jo rog dgon, although it was [later] transformed into a dGa' ldan pa *dgon pa*, tea offerings, splendid donations and worthy gifts were given [at that time] to the *bla [ma]* and the *dgon [pa]*. In that period, [chos rgyal 'Phags pa] was welcomed by about one hundred horsemen, the members of the Khang sar (spelled so). They served him tea. He stayed five days below Gam tshe dgon. He was given a tea offering by Gam tshe dgon and the *bla [ma-s]* [and the] *dgon [pa-s]* of that area and each of [his entourage] received extensive gifts. Going up and coming down were both very convenient [for him]. According to the prophecy of 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phags pa, the Hor sde [mgon khang] otherwise known Tre'i mgon khang, established by sGa A gnyan dam pa, will be the rDo rje gdan of Tibet. In this [*mgon khang*], which will be not different from the noble Sa skya's sGo rum, butterlamps, scarves around the ears [of the statues], [*mgon khang*'s] wrathful paraphernalia (*spyang gzigs*), religious service to the deities (*bskang gso*) and so forth [were offered]; both *yon mchod* gave elaborate and splendid gifts”.

It is significant that Tre'i mgon khang, which housed important statues of Mahā ka la, is associated in this passage to sGo rum, where the extraordinary *bse 'bag'chams sku 'phur shes* was kept.

Concerning the definition of sGo rum as a *mgon khang* (sGo rum *mgon khang*, “guest room”), the term should be amended into *mgon khang*, as Sperling suggests in his “Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan Dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region” (n.6). The amendment is linguistically logical, for the flying mask was kept in its *mgon khang* (see above n.42), but in the literature, sGo rum is addressed as *gZim spyil dkar po* (“white tented residence”), although not necessarily a tent. On Jo rog dgon see Sperling (ibid. n.21).

75. History of Hor kog Tre'i mgon khang in *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* (p.90 line 4–p.91 line 4): “Phyis rje btsun Grags pa rgyal gzhan don la gshegs khar/ Sa pan la khyo nam zhig tshe gzhug tu/ skad rigs mi gcig pa/ zhwa khra 'dra ba/ lhwam phag sna 'dra ba'i yul nas 'bod mkhan 'ong bas/ de dus song dang 'gro ba mang po la phan thogs pa 'ong gsungs pa'i lung bstan ltar/ Go dan rgyal po'i zhabs klu skyon gyis bsnyung gzhi byung bar brtan/ Sa pan rGya nag tu gdan drangs ba'i dus su/ rtsandan gyi mGon po'i sku sogs rten cha nams gdan drangs nas byon pa'i Sa pan gzhan don du gshegs skabs/ rten cha rgyal po'i bang mdzod du bsdu pa/ slar 'Phags pa rin po che dang/ Che chen

a newly made monumental statue of the same deity, was built by sGa A gnyan dam pa Kun dga' grags (earth ox 1229–water hare 1303), a disciple of Sa pan and 'Phags pa.⁷⁶ He is called

han chen po mchod yon gyis rGya Hor thams cad chos la bsgyur nas/ 'Phags pa rin po che la Bod khri skor bcu gsum dbang (p.91) yon du phul skabs/ 'Phags pas tsandan gyi sku rang byon nang bzhugs byas nas mgon khang zhig bzhengs na bstan 'gro la phan par dgongs nas/ rgyal po la nga'i bla ma gong ba'i rten cha rnams nga rang la phul na de dag gis nang bzhugs byas nas gtsug lag khang zhig bzhengs pa'i mthun 'gyur khyed kyis dgos tshul gsungs nas/ tsandan gyi sku rang byon gtsos pa'i sku de'i nang rten rnams dre'u dkar po cig la bkai te/ sGa A gnyan pag shi la gtad nas/ dre'u 'di gang du nyal ba'i sar rten cha 'di dag gis nang bzhugs byas pa'i Gur mGon gyi sku zhig bzhengs gsungs bslab ston mdzad nas btang bas/ da lta gtsug lag khang bzhugs sa 'dir mtsho zangs kha tsam yod pa'i nang du dre'u de'i rnga ma bcug nyal ba/ ji tsam bslang yang ma langs par brten/ bla mas lung bstan pa'i sa de 'di yin par ngos zin nas/ shing pho spre'u lo la gtsug lag khang 'di bzhengs pa'i sbyin bdag Hor Che chen hang gis mdzad nas/ bzo bo A gnyan pag shi rang gis gtsor mdzad de bzhengs pa'i mGon po'i sku 'di dbu skra bubs rnams bzhugs shing/"; "Later, rje btsun Grags pa rgyal [mtshan] told Sa pan at the time of [his] dying for the benefit of others: "One day at the end of your life, a messenger will come from a land with a different language, [where people wear] hats in the shape of a falcon [and] boots in the shape of a pig's nose. When that time comes, you will become beneficial to many sentient beings". According to the prophecy, [following the fact that] Go dan rgyal po fell sick for a long-time due to the misdeeds of the *klu*-s which caused the disease, when Sa pan was invited to China, he took along with him religious objects (*rten cha*), including the sandalwood mGon po. As he went there, on the occasion of Sa pan's death, to be beneficial to others, these religious objects were moved to the treasury room of the king. Moreover, after the whole of rGya Hor became [the dominion] of Buddhism due to the *mchod yon* between 'Phags pa rin po che and Che chen (spelled so for Se chen) han chen po, when the power over the *khri skor bcu gsum* was given to 'Phags pa rin po che (p.91) in return [for his teachings], 'Phags pa thought it would be useful to the teachings and sentient beings to build a *mgon khang*, inside which to place the self-grown sandalwood statue. He said: "If I offer to [you], emperor, the holy objects of my *bla ma-s gong ma*, in order to house them inside [a temple], you must give financial support to build a *gtsug lag khang*". The sandalwood statue, as the main image, and the various *nang rten*, were loaded onto a white mule. Having been dispatched to sGa A gnyan pag shi, they were sent with the instructions saying: "At whatever place the mule lays down to sleep, there make a statue of Gur mGon, inside which you must install these religious objects". At present the *gtsug lag khang* stands at the spot where this mule laid down and put its tail inside a lake as big as the mouth of a copper vessel. Due to the fact that [the mule] would not stand up despite every effort whatsoever, [A gnyan dam pa] having realised that this was the place indicated in the prophecy of the *bla ma*, in wood male monkey (1284), with Hor Che chen hang (spelled so) being the patron of the construction of the *gtsug lag khang*, the objects were placed inside this statue of mGon po made by the artist A gnyan pag shi himself as the main receptacle".

A list of a number of extraordinary receptacles comes next (*dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* p.91 line 5–p.94 line 4).

76. On him see Sperling, "Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan Dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region". In his article for the Sperling Festschrift (p.143 and n.66–67), Debreczeny equivocates the sandalwood image installed as a consecration object inside the Gur mGon statue, the main receptacle holder of Tre mgon khang, with the flying mask. He says that the sandalwood Gur mGon was brought by Dharma pa la to Upper West Tibet and given to Lo chen.

sGa A gnyan pag shi in *dPal ldan Chos skyong gi rnam thar*. 'Phags pa was dead by then.⁷⁷ This biography goes on to claim that 'gro mgon 'Phags pa even performed its consecration from a distance.⁷⁸

Short biographical notes on sGa A gnyan dam pa, his father and brother along with his brother's scions are found in the treatment of dBus dgon (dPal yul) in *Khams dKar mdzes dgon sde'i lo rgyus*.⁷⁹ A prophecy of Kah thog pa Mani rin chen led sGa chen mNga' ris rDo rje to

Evidence is provided in this essay of mine that the mask flew in the sky following Rin chen bzang po. He then assigns the transmission lineage of the flying mask to the sandalwood statue of Tre mgon khang (Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms—which he spells khrim—Mal lo, Sa chen and so on). The making of the sandalwood statue and related transmission line are unrecorded in the sources. Rin chen bzang po's flying mask never flew to Khams.

77. In the section of his article which directly touches the aspect of the relations between the Tangut kingdom and the Mongols after discussing rTsa mi lo tsa ba, Sperling (“Rtsa-mi lo-tsa-ba Sangs rgyas grags pa and the Tangut Background of Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations” p.805–806) says: “There is good reason to look upon Yuan interest in the Mahakala traditions of the Sa-skya-pa, particularly the use of esoteric powers derived from Mahakala (i.e. as manifested in the life and career of the aforementioned sGa A gnyan Dam pa Kun dga' grags), as derivative of an earlier Tangut interest”.

The material gathered in the present work leads research to a different direction, showing that the cult of mGon po popular among the Sa skya pa was already the property of the Sa skya pa before the Yuan domination of East Tibet and that it was transferred from Central Tibet (Sa skya) to East Tibet, whose territories were under the control of the Mongols. The bKa' brgyud pa active in the kingdom of the Tanguts did not have a part in this transfer. Sa pan, 'gro mgon 'Phags pa and sGa A gnyan dam pa, whom Sperling discusses at length in his other article (“Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan Dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region”) signalling his Sa skya pa affiliation, were the protagonists of this transfer.

78. History of Hor kog Tre'i mgon khang in *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* (p.94 lines 5–6): “gT-sug lag khang 'di bzhengs grub rjes 'Phags pa rang gis rGya nag nas rab gnas mdzad pas mGon po'i sku'i mdun du 'Bras kha bas Sa skya ba tsa m babs 'dug pa dang mthun par sngon Nyag le 'bum bcu'i dmag gis lha khang 'di' sgo la sta re bryab pas/ sta re rgyab mkhan de 'phral du kha nas khrag skyugs nas shib sogs Ye shes pa dngos su bzhugs pa'i lhas khyad par can mang du byung/”; “After the completion of the *gtsug lag khang* of which 'Phags pa himself performed the consecration from China, earlier than the period corresponding to the decline of the Sa skya ba caused by the 'Bras kha ba, since one million Nyag le troops axed down the door of the *lha khang*, the many extraordinary powers of this Ye shes pa (i.e. dGon po) were actually exhibited, for those with the ax died immediately by vomiting blood”.

79. *Khams dKar mdzes dgon sde'i lo rgyus* (vol. Three p.204,25–p.205,16) has biographical lines dedicated to sGa A gnyan dam pa and his family in its treatment of Khams dBus dgon: “sNgon grub pa'i dbang po Kah thog pa Ma ni rin chen gyis sGa chen mNga' ris rDo rje la khyod 'di nas sa (p.205) smad Re 'Jang gnyis kyi sa mtshams/ la gsum gyi mda'/ chu gsum gyi 'dus phyogs/ gnam sa 'bru ba'i dbyibs can gyi steng du sa gzung thub na/ chos srid kyi bstan pa dar rgyas shin tu che ba 'byung zhes lung bstan pa ltar phyogs 'dir zhabs ser bkod/ mkhar brtsigs 'dun thab zhes pas/ sGa A gro dpa' dgyes dang/ sGa A gnyan dam pa gnyis 'khrungs khong yab sras nams sGa yi rje bor gyur pas/ mi ming sa la thogs te sGa rje khog zer ba de nas thon/ A gro dpa' dgyes kyis srid bskyangs/ A gnayn

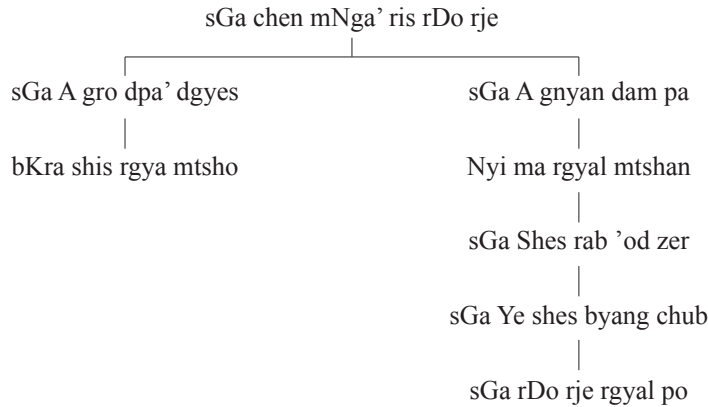
move to sGa yul where he built his castle, the seat of his family. He fathered sGa A gro dpa' dgyes and sGa A gnyan dam pa. sGa A gro dpa' dgyes engaged in the secular affairs. Being the religious head of his family, sGa A gnyan dam pa founded dBus dgon. Having become the rulers of the land of sGa, the family power was split between the two sons. sGa A gro dpa' dgyes was a chieftain of 'Bru yul to the right bank of the 'Bri chu; sGa A gnyan dam pa of sGa yul, to the left bank of the river. That the names of these two regions originated at that time is a fancy celebration of these sGa family members, for these territorial divisions existed far

dam pas dpal ldan Khams dBus dgon pa'i gdan sa btab/ mDo sNgags kyi bstan pa nyi ma shar ba Ita bu mdzad pas/ chos srid gnyis shin tu dar rgyas chen por gyur/ 'on kyang sras gnyis phyogs so sor song bas/ g.yas phyogs sGra dang/ g.yon phyogs sGa zhes/ sGa 'Bru gnyis kyi ming thogs/ 'Bri chu shar nub dang Re 'Jang bcas kyi 'di dang phyi ma'i yon bdag/ mGo spyi bo'i gtad ra/ Lus lhu drug gi bdag por gyur/ sKye dgu sems can thams cad bde bar bkod/ bde ba thar lam la 'khrid pa sogs dper na gtam brgyud du yang/ sGa A gnyan dam pa la skyabs su mchi/ A gnyan dam pa'i rta la skyabs su mchi/ rta'i rti'u la skyabs su mchi/ rte'u rta lud la skyabs su mchi zhes pa de tsam mthong dang gal chen grtsi ba'i gnas su gyur/ A gro dpa' dgyes kyi sras bKra shis rgya mtsho dang/ A gnyan dam pa'i sras Nyi ma rgyal mtshan rnam pas gnyis kyi sku ring la sku tshe dang mdzad phrin dung dang mnyam pa gyur te 'gro don phyogs mtha' med par rgyas/ de rjes sGa Shes rab 'od zer/ sGa Ye shes byang chub/ sGa rDo rje rgyal po sogs dpon brgyud rnam sa gdan sa rim par skyong/'"; "According to the prophecy given in antiquity by the lord of meditation Kah thog pa Mani rin chen to sGa chen mNga' ris rDo rje, which said: "If you henceforth (p.205) will be able to control the region at the border between Re [and] lJang, two in all, in the lower land, at the foot of the three passes, the junction of the three rivers, which is in the shape of sky and earth carved out (*gnam sa 'bru ba dbyibs can*), it will happen that the principles of the religious and secular activities will be extremely expanded". [sGa chen mNga' ris rDo rje] went to that land. He built a castle and, having married (*'dun thab bzhes*), sGa A gro dpa' dgyes and sGa A gnyan dam pa, altogether two, were born. Since the father and sons became the lords of sGa, the [family] name of these individuals was given to the land. The name sGa rje khog originated from this fact. A gro dpa' dgyes held the secular affairs while A gnyan dam pa founded the *gdan sa* of dpal ldan Khams dBus *dgon pa*. He made the teachings of *mDo sNgags* shine like the sun, so that both the religious and secular activities were greatly expanded. However, the two sons parted ways. Given that the right side [of their land] was named sGra (sic for 'Bru) while the left side was named sGa, the names of both sGa and 'Bru originated. He (i.e. sGa A gnyan dam pa) and the following generations were the sponsors in [the areas] to the east and west of the 'Bri chu along with Re [and] lJang. They became lords of mGo spyi bo'i gTad ra and Lus lhu drug. [sGa A gnyan dam pa] bestowed peace upon all sentient beings of sKye dgu [mdo] (spelled so). So much regard, importance and love for him came to exist [that a maxim] said: "[I] take refuge in sGa A gnyan dam pa. [I] take refuge in sGa A gnyan dam pa's horse. [I] take refuge in the baby horse of his horse. [I] take refuge in the dung of the baby horse". During the life of both sGa A gro dpa' dgyes's son bKra shis rgya mtsho and of sGa A gnyan dam pa's son Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, the activities became as high as the sky and expanded to all sentient beings in all directions. sGa Shes rab 'od zer, sGa Ye shes byang chub, and sGa rDo rje rgyal po held the land and the *gdan sa* in succession".

before the 13th century. His territorial allocation considered, sGa A gro dpa' dgyes's governance was under the higher authority of the 'Bru clan, the lords of 'Bri klung.

sGa A gnyan dam pa's activity is credited to have brought peace in sKye rgu mdo, farther up north from his own land. That is reliable in view of his work in nearby Khri 'du.

The biographical lines on the great Sa skya pa master from Khams are precious, for they refer to early events in sGa A gnyan dam pa's life before his involvement in the construction of Hor kog Tre'i mgon khang and his involvement in Yuan court politics that are better-known. The segment of the sGa clan people in this text is as follows:



A gnyan dam pa, too, was an adept of Mahā ka la,⁸⁰ and may have been the one who subsequently made a stone statue of Gur mGon po, in whose inscription he again seems to be mentioned under the name A gnyan pag shi.⁸¹

80. sGa A gnyan dam pa Kun dga' grags was renowned for his power to summon mGon po in aid of the Mongol armies (Sperling, "Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan Dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region" p.463 and "Rtsa-mi lo-tsa-ba Sangs-rgyas grags-pa and the Tangut Background of Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations" p.805–806). Should one consider the flight of the *bse 'bag* from India to Upper West Tibet as having not only religious implications as stated in the sources dealing with the mask? Can the fact that mGon po, in general, grants warlike powers be applied to the flying mask, although there are no implications of this kind in the accounts dealing with the *bse 'bag 'chams sku 'phur shes*? In other words, was Lo chen also serving the purpose, with the appointment of Mahā ka la as the protector of Upper West Tibet, of the defence of the mNga' ris skor gsum kingdom against the enemies from the borders, a necessity promoted by a law in Ye shes 'od's *bka' shog chen mo* of 986, which laymen and monks were equally called to observe?

On Ye shes 'od's *bka' shog chen mo* see *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* (p.55–56) in Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (p.110–111 and p.187–192 and p.209–214).

81. A stone sculpture of Gur mGon po, despite being a stray find, can be historically assessed, for it bears the date water dragon 1292 in its inscription (Stoddard "A Stone Sculpture of Gur mGon po, Mahakala of the Tent, Dated 1292" p.278–282). Sperling ("Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan Dam-pa

The flying mask in the years after Rin chen bzang po

The transfer of ownership of the mask after Rin chen bzang po and before Mal lo tsa ba, which would re-establish the missing link between them in the transmission lineage of the *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes*, is apparently solved by a passage in *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar*, where the history of the sandalwood image of Gur mGon po is discussed. This source affirms that the ownership of the sandalwood statue of Gur mGon po was not entrusted to the same succession of the flying mask's owners before ending up among the possessions of lo chen Rin chen bzang po.

The *bse 'bag* and the other objects associated with Rin chen bzang po are introduced in *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* only when their transmission from Mal lo tsa ba to Sa chen is mentioned but the Ngor pa author also records their whereabouts in India before their transfer to Tibet.⁸² Nonetheless, it cannot be ruled out that the transmission lineage of the flying mask

and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region” p.462–464) has contributed to the understanding of the image, differing from Stoddard's idea that the inscription contains the name of Karma Pakshi. The statue, according to Sperling's assessment, may have been sponsored by A gnyan dam pa. As learned from A gnyan dam pa's biography, he lived for six years (1283/4–1289/90) in his homeland Tre shod in Khams, where he was exiled because of disagreements with Sang ko, and returned to the Yuan court in iron tiger 1290, after the Tibetan statesman had been disgraced (ibid. p.463–464). Thus, the statue may have been produced at the imperial court.

82. History of Hor kog Tre'i mgon khang in *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* (p.89 line 5–p.90 line 4): “dPal ldan Mā hā kā lā Gur mGon gyi/ sku brnyan bzhugs pa'i gtsug lag khang de yi/ lo rgyus rim pa mdor bsodus tsam zhig bri/ de yang gtsug lag khang de bzhengs tshul lo rgyus kyi rim pa ni/ sngon dri med Kor sha'i mtsho gling du mGon po 'di sku rang byon du byung ba/ U rgyan rin (p.90) po ches gdan drangs nas pandi ta Dharmā pa la la gnang ba/ Dharmā pa la la Bod kyi Gangs Ti se dang/ mtsho Ma pham la gzigs par byon pa'i dus su/ lo chen Rin chen bzang po la tsandan gyi mGon po rang byon 'dis gtsos ba'i byin rlabs rten khyad 'phags mang po gnang ba rnams rim par brgyud nas/ mNga' ris Brag steng pa chen po Yon tan tshul khriims la gnang/ de nyid kyiis bla chen Mal lo tsa ba Blo gros grags pa la gnang/ dam pa de nyid kyi phyag nas rim par Sa chen Kun dga' snying po la/ mGon po 'di'i rjes gnang dang sgrub skor yongs rdzogs sku rten du bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes su grags pa dang/ tsandan kyi sku rang byon/ bram ze mChog sred kyi gnam lcags kyi rdo rje rtse dgu pa/ dar nag kha gang dang bcas pa gnang ba rnams rim pa bzhin du/ Sa chen Kun dga' snying po/ rje btsun bSod nams rtse mo/ rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan/ 'Jam dbyangs Sa pan rnams kyiis thugs dam rten mdzad nas dpal ldan Sa skyar bzhugs pa/”; “The history of the *gtsug lag khang*, in which the image of dpal ldan Ma ha ka la Gur gyi mGon po was placed, is written [here]. Concerning this, the history of the building phases of this *gtsug lag khang* is as follows. In antiquity, the statue of mGon po made of sandalwood was self-originated in the pure Kho sha'i mtsho gling (“lacustrine land of Kho sha”). U rgyan rin (p.90) po che took it with him and gave it to pandi ta Dha rma pa la. When Dha rma pa la went to visit gangs Ti se and mtsho Ma pham of Tibet, he gave to lo chen Rin chen bzang po this self-originated sandalwood mGon po to be the main image of many noble receptacles bestowing blessings. As for the successive stages of transmission, the latter gave it to mNga' ris Brag steng pa chen po Yon tan tshul khriims. This one gave it to bla chen Mal lo tsa ba Blo gros grags pa. In his turn, this noble person (*dam pa*) personally gave to Sa chen Kun dga' snying po the

and the other objects from Lo chen onwards was not the same as that of the sandalwood Mahā ka la without looking further into the literature.

dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar says that the sandalwood image self-originated in the land of Kho sha from where it was taken by Guru Padma 'byung gnas, who gave it to the Kha che master Dha rma pa la who upon coming to Upper West Tibet, gave it to Lo chen. Rin chen bzang po passed it to mNga' ris Brag steng pa chen po Yon tan tshul khrim. Brag steng pa was the master who gave the sandalwood mGon po to Mal lo tsa ba. After this passage, *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* adds that the flying mask, the sandalwood statue, the *rdo rje* in meteoritic iron and the black flag were given to Sa chen by Mal lo tsa ba together with complete teachings on Gur mGon po. This biography thus follows the same assessment found in *Sa skya'i gdung rabs*, the absence of any mention of the heart-shaped *ga'u* in this source also being conspicuous.

These references to Brag steng pa, an obscure religious master active in Upper West Tibet, oblige me to introduce a brief digression on the disciples who studied with Rin chen bzang po and those who studied with Lo chen's follower and associate, lo chung Legs pa'i shes rab. The known classifications of Rin chen bzang po's disciples, formulated not during an early period for the Tibetan literature, are in disagreement on the issue:

- a source, which includes Brag steng pa among the disciples of Rin chen bzang po, is 'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal's *Deb ther sngon po*. This text says that, although he was still able to meet Lo chen for a while, Brag steng pa mainly studied with lo chung Legs pa'i shes rab;⁸³
- some time later, Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (1523–1596), in his treatment of Lo chen and Lo chung's disciples contained in *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed*, ignores Brag steng pa;⁸⁴

rjes snang of this type of mGon po [and] his entire meditation cycle; as *sku'i rten*, the [mask] known as *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes* and the self-originated sandalwood statue; the nine-pronged *rdo rje* in meteoritic iron of bram ze Chog sred; the square black flag and so forth. Successively, given that Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, rje btsun bSod nams rtse mo, rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan and 'Jam dbyangs Sa pan made them their tutelary receptacles, they remained at dpal ldan Sa skya'.

83. 'Gos lo tsa ba, *Deb ther sngon po* (p.431 line 17–p.432 line 2, *Blue Annals* p.354): “De nas sBang kha Dar chung gi pha gZhon nu rgya mtsho/ Las stod kyi Brag stengs pa/ Kul 'ching ru'i dMar ston Chos kyi rgyal mtshan/ lDog pa Kle ston/ Bal Shakya rdo rje; Thang ston Kong kha ba/ lDog Gong kha ba nams kyis Lo (p.432) chen la thug pa tsam byas/”; “Subsequently, gZhon nu rgya mtsho, the father of sBang kha Dar chung; Las stod Brag stengs (spelled so) pa; dMar ston Chos kyi rgyal mtshan from Kul 'ching ru; lDog pa Kle ston; Bal Shakya rdo rje; Thang ston Kong kha ba and lDog Gong kha ba could meet Lo (p.432) chen for a short while, so they mainly studied with lo chung [Legs pa'i shes rab]”.
84. Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.75 line 16–p.76 line 18): “Lo chen 'di la slob ma mang du yod kyang/ lo chung Legs pa'i shes rab/Gur shing brTson' grus rgyal mtshan/ Gra pa gZhon nu shes rab/ Gyi nor Dznya na dang bzhi la thugs kyi srars bzhi zer/

- even later, mKhyen brtse dbang po (*mDo sNgags kyi lo rgyus dang rnam thar*) includes him among the disciples who studied under Rin chen bzang po rather than lo chung Legs pa'i shes rab.⁸⁵

In view of these differences, a prudential assessment is that Brag steng pa was one of the last disciples who had contact with Rin chen bzang po before the Lo chen's death in wood sheep 1055 at a proverbial old age.

But he could have been an earlier disciple, too. The way in which the transmission of the flying mask to Brag steng pa is described in the sources rules out the possibility that he obtained the flying mask, the black flag and the *rdo rje* after Rin chen bzang po's death. All the sources dealing with the matter concord in saying that Lo chen passed the mask to Brag steng pa. The transmission of the flying mask from Lo chen to Brag steng pa is concrete proof of a personal interaction between the two on issues concerning teachings on mGon po.

Rin chen bzang po's transmission of the Mahā ka la cult to Brag steng pa was not restricted to Gur mGon po, which shows the particular regard that, among his disciples, Rin chen bzang po had for him. Another important Mahā ka la transmission, which Lo chen imparted

Pu rangs pa An ston Grags rin, rGya Ye tshul/ dGung pa dGe bshes/ Mar yul ba dKon mchog rtsegs bzhi ni/ Lo chen dang Lo chung gnyis ka'i slob ma yin/

(p.76) Myang stod rKyang po sPe dmar gyi rKyang po Chos blo/ Sangs kyi Sum ston Ye 'bar/ Myang stod lCe gzhar/ sPang kha Dar chung gi gZhon nu rgya mtsho bzhi ni gtso cher Lo chung gi slob ma yin/

rNgog Ge sar dang Zangs dkar 'Phags pa shes rab gnyis ni Lo chung khong gi slob ma yin//"; "This Lo chen had many disciples. However, his spiritual sons were four: lo chung Legs pa'i shes rab, Gur shing brTson 'grus rgyal mtshan, Grab pa gZhon nu shes rab and Gyi nor Dznya na.

Pu rangs pa An ston Grags rin, rGya Ye tshul, dGung pa dGe bshes and Mar yul ba dKon mchog rtsegs, four in all, were disciples of both Lo chen and Lo chung.

(p.76) rKyang po Chos blo from Myang stod rKyang po sPe dmar, Sum ston Ye 'bar from Sangs, Myang stod lCe gzhar, gZhon nu rgya mtsho from sPang kha Dar chung, altogether four, mainly were disciples of Lo chung.

rNgog Ge sar and Zangs dkar 'Phags pa shes rab, altogether two, were disciples of Lo chung".

85. 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po, *mDo sNgags kyi lo rgyus dang rnam thar* (p.259 lines 10–18) has this to say about those he calls the *Yo ga smad lugs* disciples of Rin chen bzang po: "dBus gTsang na mar dar tshul/ Lo chen drung du 'gro ba yi/ rGyang ro dPe dmar gyi rKyang po Chos blo snga/ de nas Shan gyi Sum ston Ye 'bar/ de nas Nyang stod kyi Ce zhar/ de nas dPang kha 'Dar chung gi pha gZhon nu rgya mtsho/ La stod kyi Brag steng ba/ sGul phyi ru'i dMar ston Chos kyi rgyal mtshan no//"; "The way [the tradition of Rin chen bzang po] spread eastwards (*mar*) to dBus gTsang [is as follows]. The earliest who went [to study] with Lo chen was rGyang po Chos blo of rGyang ro dPe dmar; then, Sum ston Ye 'bar of Shan; then, Ce (spelled so) zhar of Nyang stod; then, gZhon nu rgya mtsho, the father of dPang kha 'Dar chung; Brag steng ba of La stod and dMar ston Chos kyi rgyal mtshan of sGul phyi ru.

mDog Kle ston, Bal Shakya rdo rje, Thang ston Gong ge ba probably met Lo chen briefly, so they mainly studied with Lo chung. Owing to the fact that they diffused [*Yo ga*] to the east (*smad*) in dBus gTsang, this [tradition] is known as *Yo ga smad lugs*".

to Brag steng pa, was the cycle of *Pu tra ming sring*, a *gter ma* rediscovered by lha bla ma Byang chub 'od at bSam yas.⁸⁶

By means of the instructions he received at Gung thang Na la rtse (see n.40), Sa chen became the recipient of the systems of bDe mchog, Nag g po chen po and *Ngan song sbyong rgyud* imparted by Lo chen to Brag steng pa and by the latter to Mal lo tsa ba. The inclusion in these specific lines of bDe mchog, Nag po chen po and *Ngan song sbyong rgyud* masters qualifies Brag steng pa as a lineage holder of these traditions of which Rin chen bzang po was a major expert of his generation.

The matter of the transmission lineage of the flying mask is solved with the help of *Sa skya'i dkar chag*. This text outlines the succession of Tibetan masters who owned the flying mask. The lineage included Rin chen bzang po, after whom the mask flew to Tibet; Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms; Mal lo tsa ba and Sa chen Kun dga' snying po who placed it in sGo rum gZim spyil dkar po.⁸⁷

dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar contributes a few generations of great Sa skya pa masters after Sa chen in the transmission lineage of the *bse 'bag*. They also owned the other objects formerly belonging to Rin chen bzang po, which had come into the hands of Sa chen. These objects became the personal properties of bSod nams rtse mo, rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan and Sa skya pandi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (see above n.82).

Further accounts of Brag steng pa are provided by A mes zhabs's *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* which, in the passages dealing with this disciple of Rin chen bzang po, also confirms that the flying mask was bestowed upon Lo chen by Shraddha in Kha che.

86. *Guru bkra shis chos 'byung* (p.494 lines 14–17) reads: “Deng sang Mon bu Pu tra'i sgrub thabs ka bkol mar grags/ lha btsun la Lo chen gyis gsan de la bla ma Brag steng pas zhus/ des Mal jo lo tsa dang/ Mal jos Sa skya pa brTse ba chen la gnang ste de nas Sa skya gong ma sogs nas deng sang bar du bka' lung rgyan ma chad par Sa Ngor rnam su bzhugs so//”; “At present, [the cycle of *Pu tra ming sring sadhana 'Bod rbad gsad gsum*] is known as *Mon bu Pu tra'i grub thabs ka khol ma*. Lo chen obtained it from lha btsun [Byang chub 'od]. Bla ma Brag stengs pa (spelled so), who received it [from Rin chen bzang po], transmitted it to Mal jo lo tsa, who [transmitted it] to Sa skya pa brtse ba chen (i.e. Sa chen Kun dga' snying po). [It was passed] from this one to the Sa skya *gong ma lnga*. Its *bka'lung* (“authoritative transmission”) continues uninterrupted in Sa [skya and] Ngor from them until now”.

87. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.7a lines 5–6): “Lo chen gyis Bod du spyang drangs/ de nas Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms la gnang/ des bla ma Mal lo tsa ba la gnang nas/ Gung thang Na la rtse gnas gsar du yun ring du bzhugs/ de nas Sa skya pa la bka' bab tshul//”, “Lo chen brought [the mask] to Tibet. Subsequently, he gave it to Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms. This one gave it to bla ma Mal lo tsa ba. It remained at the new holy place Gung thang Na la rtse for a long time. The account [of how], subsequently, it was transferred to the Sa skya pa [comes next]”.

None of the other sources mentioned in this essay comment on the crucial transfer that took place between Rin chen bzang po and Brag steng pa and on the next one between Brag steng pa and Mal gyo lo tsa ba.

Sa skya'i gnas bshad by A mes zhabs, which I did not have at my disposal when I wrote the first version of my article in 1999, provides the brief but crucial information that, after he received it from Rin chen bzang po, Brag steng pa took the mask to Glo bo Brag steng, manifestly his residence. The *bse 'bag* flew to its new destination.⁸⁸ The detail that Brag steng pa was a resident of Glo bo does not imply that eminent authors—'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal, Mang thos, mKhyen brtse dbang po—were wrong in attributing his origin to La stod (i.e. lDog/mDog gzhung in g.Yas ru?).⁸⁹

The fact that Brag steng was in Glo bo indicates that it was a place of some significance in this region within the religious and political geography of mNga' ris skor gsum during *bstan pa phyi dar*. A temple of no little importance must have existed there, given that one of the holiest images of the mNga' ris skor gsum kingdom must have been installed in its premises.

One wonders about the situation prevailing at the time in mNga' ris skor gsum that allowed the flying mask to be transferred from the heart of the dominions—I assume it was kept in one of its main temples, although no source talks about its whereabouts after it flew from India—to a more peripheral location, given its status as supreme protector of the kingdom. This function does not tally with its being a personal belonging of Brag steng pa, who could dispose of it in any way he wanted. As said above, it is hardly possible that the transfer to Mustang occurred after the 1111 end of *bstan pa phyi dar* in Upper West Tibet with the death of Zhi ba 'od. Unless it stayed for only a brief time in the possession of Brag steng pa before being

88. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.247 line 5–p.248 line 2): “De nas re zhig Bod kyi bsod nams la/ chos skyong 'di nyid 'byon pa'i dus babs tshe/ lo chen Rin chen bzang po zhes bya ba'i/ skyes mchog de la grub thob chen po gang/ Shadha ka ra warma zhes byas gnan/ de nas spyen dren zhu bar brtsams pa las/ sNga ris stod du 'phur te byon pa yin/ de ni 'phur shes zer ba'i rgyu mtshan (p.248) lags/ de nas Rin chen bzang pos Brag steng pa/ Yon tan tshul khriims nyid la gnan ba'i tshe'ang/ gong bzhin 'phur nas Glo bo Brag steng du/ legs par byon rjes chos skyong bzhugs khri dang/ sku rgyab rjes kyang da lta'i bar du ni/ shin tu gsal bar skye bo kun gyis mthong/”; “After a while, owing to the merit of Tibet, at the time of the ripening of the circumstances that led this *chos skyong* (i.e. Gur mGon) [to the plateau], grub chen Shadha (spelled so) ka ra warma entrusted the nobly-born lo chen Rin chen bzang po [with the task of appeasing him]. The latter then requested [from his teacher permission] to invite [Gur mGon to Tibet]. After [Lo chen's] departure, [the mask of Gur mGon] went flying (*'phur*) to sNga (spelled so) ris stod. This is the reason why it was called *'phur shes* (“the flying one”). (p.248) Then, when Rin chen bzang po gave it to Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khriims, [the mask] flew as before. It excellently came to Glo bo Brag steng, and at present all people can still see the print of the back of the mask [left] on the throne of the *chos skyong* in an extremely clear [protector] manner”.

89. Brag steng is also the name of an area of lHugs (also spelled Blugs) in Gu ge Rong chung. The dGe lugs pa *dgon pa* at lHugs was called Brag steng *dgon gsar* (*Zhang zhung mkhan rgyud* f.3b line 4 = p.6: “lHugs kyi Brag stengd dgon gsar”; “The new lHugs Brag stengs (spelled so) *dgon [pa]*”).

given to Mal lo tsa ba and then Sa chen in 1120, the transfer to Glo bo must have occurred way before the death of Zhi ba 'od.

Glo bo must be accorded preeminent status in the sacred geography of mNga' ris skor gsum, at least from around 1055, the death date of Lo chen and presumably the *terminus post quem* assignable for the transfer of the flying mask to Mustang. It is unlikely that Brag steng pa would have brought the mask to Glo bo before the death of Lo chen even if Rin chen bzang po would have given it to him some time earlier.

Tenuous evidence, such as this and the existence of at least one early practitioner of *bstan pa phyi dar* from Dol po, simply called Dol po sgom chen in *Deb ther sngon po* (p.431 lines 5–6, *Blue Annals* p.353), shows that the religious geography of the kingdom was wider than normally thought. The regions at the periphery participated in the cultural practice common to all the people of the kingdom.

Although imaginable owing to the direct transfer of the mask from the hands of Brag steng pa to those of Mal lo tsa ba, still A mes zhabs's *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* is the only source which asserts that the *bse 'bag* flew from Glo bo Brag steng to Gung thang Na la rtse.⁹⁰

The last major knot that needs to be unravelled in connection with the flying mask is the identification of the temple (or the temples) where it was kept in mNga' ris skor gsum before it was transferred to Glo bo. Nothing is said even in *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* about the whereabouts of the mask during its years in the possession of lo chen Rin chen bzang po. The mask went from rDo rje gdan to Kha che, and then to an unspecified locality in mNga' ris skor gsum. From there it moved to Glo bo and then to Gung thang before being taken to Sa skya.

Stages in A mes zhabs's knowledge of Brag steng pa's persona

The trajectory that the refinement of the knowledge concerning Brag steng pa underwent with A mes zhabs reflects its evolution deducible from a comparison of the material from *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed* with similar notions contained in another text by the same author, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed*. The date of completion of the former text is wood ox 1625; the one of the latter is earth hare 1639. In a section in *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed* dedicated to *Yo ga stod lugs* and *smad lugs* of *bstan pa phyi dar* A mes zhabs writes about Brag steng pa in

90. A mes zhabs, *Sa skya'i gnas bshad* (p.248 lines 2–3): “Yon tan tshul khrim zhes bya'i sngags 'chang gis/ bla chen Mal gyo Blo gros grags pa la/ legs par gngang tshe'ang gong bzhin 'phur nas ni/ Gung thang Na la rtse yi gtsug lag khang/ Mahā kā la' gnas mchog tu phebs te/ de nas brTse chen Kun dga' snying po yi/ phyag tu kegs par babs pa yin no kye!"; “When the *sngags 'chang*, namely Yon tan tshul khrim, assigned [the mask] to bla chen Mal gyo Blo gros grags pa—this being excellent—[the *bse 'bag*] flew as before. It went to the *gtsug lag khang* of Gung thang Na la rtse, a foremost holy place of Mahā kā la. It was then excellent that it came into the hands of brtse chen Kun dga' snying po. Kye!”

still rather confused and contradictory terms vis-a-vis the more accomplished version found some fifteen years later in *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed*.

An overall comparison of the contents of *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed* and *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* goes beyond the scope of this essay dedicated to the cult of mGon po and its introduction to Tibet. I plan to focus on it on another occasion. I concentrate here on the differences in the notions about Brag steng pa in the two texts.

A mes zhabs's treatment of Brag steng pa in *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed* is still tentative and preliminary:

- In the 1625 A mes zhabs was unaware of the actual identity of Brag steng pa. He mentions him by his name Yon tan tshul khirms but also talks about another person, namely Go rub/Gu rub Rin chen bsod nams. A mes zhabs mentions them separately as two different persons in the transmission lineage of *Yo ga stod lugs*.⁹¹ Their interplay is rather incomprehensible, supposing that it truly existed. Go rub/Gu rub Rin chen bsod nams's role and significance is unclear and generates confusion to ascertain the correct transmission lineage of *Yo ga stod lugs*. In those lines of *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed*, A mes zhabs enumerates a few *Yo ga stod lugs* students of Rin chen bzang po. Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms is included here together with Kyi thang Dznya na shri (i.e. Ye shes dpal), one of the *ka bzhi* disciples of Lo chen, and with Gur shing pa brTson 'grus rgyal mtshan, one the *gdung ma brgyad* disciples. Both are mentioned in the closing paragraphs of *Rin chen bzang po'i rnam thar 'bring po* (Dharamshala ed. p.33 lines 15–20).
- In the same 1625 A mes zhabs must have not yet read Tshar chen's *Chos skor gyi khog phub snyan rgyud lde mig* because he does not say that Brag steng pa was the *nye gnas* of Rin chen bzang po;
- in contrast to the association of Brag steng pa with g.Yas ru Byang as his place of origin in the works of the authors who classified the disciples of Lo chen into groups according to the chronology of their interaction with the master, A mes zhabs says that Brag steng pa was from mNga' ris stod. This would make the hypothesis that groups of Gu

91. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed* (p.603 lines 5–6): “Kun rig la yang/ sByong rgyud nas bshad tshod tsam las/ rDor dbyings kyi cho ga mi sre bar phyag len shin tu dg par mdzad pa'i slob ma yang/ mNga' ris stod kyi Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms/ Kyi thang pa Dznyā na shri/ Gu rib pa rin chen bsod nams/ Gur shing pa brTson 'grus rgyal mtshan sogs kyis zhus pa/ sa cha stod dar bar byas/”; “As to *Kun rig*, [Lo chen's] disciples who followed the purest practice, the one which did not mix the *cho ga* of rDor dbyings with [anything else], except an amount of instructions from *sByong rgyud*, were Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms from mNga' ris stod, Kyi thang pa Dznyā na shri, Gu rib pa Rin chen bsod nams and Gur shing pa brTson 'grus rgyal mtshan who received [these teachings from Lo chen]. These instructions were diffused in the upper lands (*sa cha stod*)”.

The list of Lo chen's four disciples in A mes zhabs's *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed* is faulty of the confusion between Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms and Gu rib pa Rin chen bsod nams who were one and the same person, as clarified by him in his other work *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.331 line 6–p.332 line 2).

rub religious exponents had priorly migrated from southwestern Byang thang to g.Yas ru Byang not actual (on these Gu rub masters see below p.356).

- A mes zhabs then mentions the well-known transmission lineage of *Yo ga stod lugs* that reached Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, who bestowed these teachings to his sons rje bt-sun Grags pa rgyal mtshan and bSod nams rtse mo. A mes zhabs confirms that the first to whom Rin chen bzang po imparted *Yo ga stod lugs* obviously was Brag steng pa.⁹²

By 1639 when he completed his *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed*, A mes zhabs proves to have gained a fairly better knowledge of Brag steng pa. In order to present the notions about this Lo chen's disciple he could collect, A mes zhabs opts for a sequential treatment. Before dealing with Brag steng pa, A mes zhabs gives a bird view of *Kun rig*, a most important class of teachings popular in mNga' ris stod, briefly mentioning the various transmissions of this system including those formulated after *bstan pa phyi dar*.⁹³

92. Ames zhabs, *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed* (p.604 lines 3–4): “De la rje bt-sun Sa skya pa ni stod lugs la phyag len gtso bor mdzad kyang/ rgyud pa gnyis ka bzhugs te/ sTod lugs ni/ Lo chen gyi slob ma Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khriims/ de la bla ma Mal gyis gsan/ de la rje Sa chen gyis gsan nas/ rje bt-sun sku mched la brgyud pa dang/ sMad lugs ni/ Lo chen gyi slob ma Lo chung pa dBus pa dGe ser kyi zhus/ de la bla ma gNam Kha'u pas zhus/ de la rje Sa chen gyis gsan nas/ rje bt-sun sku mched la brgyud do//”; “As for it, rje bt-sun Sa skya pa (i.e. Sa chen) mainly practised [*Yo ga*] *stod lugs*. He was part of two transmissions. As for *sTod lugs*, [the first to receive it was] Lo chen's disciple Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khriims, from whom bla ma Mal lo tsa ba received it. rJe Sa chen received it from the latter and transmitted it to the *rje bt-sun* brothers (bSod nams rtse mo and Grags pa rgyal mtshan). As for *sMad lugs*, [the first to receive it was] Lo chen's disciple Lo chung from whom dBus pa dGe ser received it. Bla ma gNam Kha'u pa received it from [dBus pa dGe ser]. rJe Sa chen received it from the latter and transmitted to the *rje bt-sun* brothers”.

93. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin 'byed* (p.330 line 6–p.331 line 3): “sNur Phyi ru bas mdzad pa'i Yo ga'i bshad 'bum chen mo zhes pa yod cing/ de ni gZhan phan 'od zer gyi rtsom gzhi lta bu yin par yang bshad la/ des rje bt-sun gyi gZhan phan skor gsum gyi nang nas gZhan phan 'od zer ni Kun rig Sa (p.331) lugs kyi phyi mo lta bu yoin zhing/ de la brten khang bSod nams 'bum gyi Kun rig/ sPru lung pa Kun smon gyi (line 2) Kun rig/ Pur bSod dbang gi Kun rig/ Tsha rong pa bSod nams 'od zer gyi kun rig/ ti shri Grags 'od kyi gZhan phan snying po/ dGa' ldan pa Kun bsod kyi Kun rig/ Kun rig Grag nag ma/ rgyal po dpal gyi Kun rig rnam byung ba yin no/ de ltar sByong rgyud nas gsungs pa'i dkyil 'khor bcu gnyis kyi nang nas bstag pa dang po nas bstan pa'i Kun (line 3) rig rtsa ba'i dkyil 'khor Sa lugs su grags pa//”; “*Yo ga'i bshad 'bum chen mo* by sNur Phyi ru ba should also be spoken of. It should be somewhat considered as the basis of *gZhan phan 'od zer*. Hence this *gZhan phan 'od zer*, among the *gZhan phan skor gsum* of the *rje bt-sun* (i.e. Grags pa rgyal mtshan), (p.331) is some sort of later version of the *Kun rigs* (spelled so) system. Concerning these [later versions], there appeared the *Kun rig* of rTen khang bSod nams 'bum, the *Kun rig* of sPru lung pa Kun smon; the *Kun rig* of Pur bSod dbang; the *Kun rig* of Tsha rong pa bSod nams 'od zer, the *gZhan phan snying po* of ti shri Grags [pa] 'od [zer], the *Kun rig* of dGa' ldan pa Kun bsod; the *Kun rig Grag nag ma* and the *Kun rig* of rGyal po dpal. Likewise, among the twelve *dkyil 'khor* from the preaching of *sByong rgyud*, the root *dkyil 'khor* of *Kun rigs* (spelled so), which is expounded from its first section, is known as the one of the Sa *lugs* (i.e. the Sa [skya pa] systems)”.

A mes zhabs focuses especially on these textual transfers that involved the Sa skya pa. He classifies them historically into those belonging to earlier and later times.

Before his outline that deals with the various systems of *Kun rig* diffused in Tibet, he introduces the lineage of *Kun rig* that included Brag steng pa and went down to Mal lo tsa ba.⁹⁴ In this essay of mine, ample evidence has been provided to affirm that the lineage is the same as the '*chams sku nag po 'phur shes* of Gur mGon. I focus on those of Brag steng pa's period, which reached Sa chen eventually.

VARIOUS TRANSMISSIONS OF *KUN RIG*

A mes zhabs reads those of *Kun rig* from the perspective of the Sa skya pa, but gives emphasis to the role exercised by Brag steng pa. He stresses that Sa chen was the lineage holder of three *Yo ga* of mNga' ris skor gsum. All these transmissions of *Kun rig* originated from Dharma pa la during his stay in mNga' ris skor gsum, with a single exception. None is imputed to Shraddha ka ra warma, the other great master of Rin chen bzang po.

94. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.330 lines 2–5): “De (line 3) dag gi nang nas/ Kun rig rtsa ba'i dkyil 'khor ni/ sByong rgyud kyi brtag pa dang po nas bstan pa yin zhing/ 'di la yang Dharma pha la nas lo chen Rin chen bzang po/ Lo chung/ dBus pa dGe ser/ gNam Kha'u pa la brgyud pa'i Kun rig dang/ Lo (line 4) chen nas sNyal pa la brgyud pa'i Kun rig/ Lo chen nas Brag steng pa la brgyud pa'i Kun rig dang/ yang Dharma pha la nas Jo bo rje/ Go mi bsgom chen/ sKyi nor Dznya na sogs brgyud de rTsa sNur 'Dzim sogs kyis dar bar byas pa'i Kun rig sogs (line 5) shin tu mang ba zhig yod pa las/ rje btsun Sa skya pa chen po la lugs de gsum char bzhugs/” ; “Among these [*mandala*-s] the root *dkyil 'khor* of *Kun rig* is the one imparted from the first section (*brtag pa*) of *sByong rgyud*. As for it, there are very many [systems], such as the *Kun rig* given by Dharma pha la to lo chen Rin chen bzang po [and from him] to Lo chung, dBus pa dGe ser and gNam Kha'u pa; the *Kun rig* transmitted from Lo chen [down its lineage] to sNyal pa; the *Kun rig* transmitted from Lo chen to Brag steng pa and also the *Kun rig* passed on from Dharma pha la to Jo bo rje, Go mi sgom chen, sKyi nor Dznya na and others. The latter is the transmission of *Kun rig* diffused by rTsa, sNur and 'Dzim. rJe btsun Sa skya pa chen po was part of three systems [of *Kun rig*]”.

These lineages can be identified synthetically as follows:

- 1) Dharma pha la-Lo chen-Lo chung-dBus pa dGe ser-gNam Kha'u pa etc.;
- 2) Lo chen-Brag steng pa who passed to the Sa skya pa;
- 3) Dharma pha la-Jo bo rje-Go mi sgom chen-sKyi nor, then diffused by rTsa, sNur and 'Dzim who brought it into the Sa skya pa milieu.

One was passed by Lo chung to dBus pa dGe ser who gave it to gNam Kha'u pa, a teacher of Sa chen:

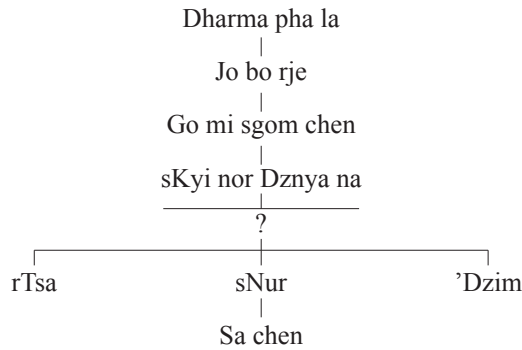
Dharma pha la
|
Lo chen
|
Lo chung
|
dBus pa dGe ser
|
gNam Kha'u pa
|
Sa chen

Another was the direct transmission of *Kun rig* from Lo chen to Brag steng pa and from him to Mal lo tsa ba who bestowed it upon Sa chen, the same line of the '*chams sku nag po 'phur shes*:

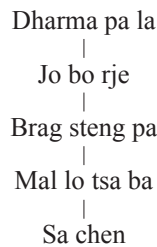
Lo chen
|
Brag steng pa
|
Mal lo tsa ba
|
Sa chen

A further one is that of *Kun rig* from Jo bo rje to Lo chen's disciples Go mi sgom chen and sKyi nor Dznya na, in this sequence. It reached masters in the Sa skya pa orbit before coming to Sa chen.

The meaningful additional notion on this lineage is that Dharma pa la was the master who initially bestowed it upon Jo bo rje. There is no trace of interaction between them in Tibet. Dharma pa la, an earlier contemporary of Jo bo rje, would have been quite old had he met A ti sha in 1042–1045 when the Bengali master was in mNga' ris stod. Given that they did not meet in mNga' ris skor gsum, Jo bo rje's studies under Dharma pa la must have taken place in India:



A branch transmission line of Jo bo rje's *Yo ga* teachings, unnoticed by most works dealing with *bstan pa phyi dar stod lugs*, is mentioned by A mes zhabs on the basis of statements found in *gZhan phan spyi chings su bkod pa'i sByong rgyud kyi lo rgyus* by the *rje btsun rin po che*, i.e. Sa skya rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan? This material has been preserved on account of the significance of this text for the Sa skya pa tradition. The branch lineage of Jo bo rje's *Yo ga* teachings shows that Go mi sgom chen was not the only master of mNga' ris skor gsum, recipient of Jo bo rje's *Yo ga*. Brag steng pa, too, studied under A ti sha.⁹⁵ This is a fact that adds to the complexity and elaboration of *Yo ga stod lugs* which came down to the Sa skya pa. A mes zhabs outlines this lineage as follows:



95. The historical sequence of the *Kun rig* teachings imparted upon Brag steng pa by Lo chen and A ti sha is not clarified by A mes zhabs. The context seems to show that he perhaps received them first from Rin chen bzang po and then from Jo bo rje. This would imply that Rin chen bzang po may have given *Kun rig* to Brag steng pa before 1042, but this is speculative.

The transmission of *Kun rig* imparted by Dharma pa la to Jo bo rje was thus continued in Tibet by Go mi sgom chen and Brag steng pa concomitantly. Both of them eventually came to the Sa skya pa. Hence the *Kun rig* of Dharma pa la reached Brag steng pa twice, through Lo chen and Jo bo rje separately. The one imparted by A ti sha to Brag steng pa took place still during the life of Rin chen bzang po.

The *Kun rig* of Dharma pa la equally reached Sa chen and the Sa skya pa twice through the same channels. Sa chen not being a direct disciple of Brag steng pa—they were separated by one generation of masters—received the *Kun rig* of Dharma pa la/Jo bo rje both from Brag steng pa's disciple Mal lo tsa ba and Lo chung's disciple gNam Kha'u pa. He thus reunited the tradition.

A mes zhabs then has a section on Brag steng pa, which shows that, despite improvements from 1625, the knowledge of this master seminal for the diffusion of the cult of Gur mGon is limited and not immune from contention. A mes zhabs typically points out the controversial notions among the authors who wrote before him and gives his perspective on these issues. Those he mentions as controversial are, in my view, the least important in order to establish a few points concerning Brag steng pa. More significant notions are given by A mes zhabs without the benefit of doubt.

A MES ZHABS'S SECTION ON BRAG STENG PA IN *YO GA CHOS KUN GSAL BA'I NYIN BYED*

The only further notions provided by A mes zhabs on the topic of *Yo ga* is that Brag steng pa took notes of the oral teachings on *Kun rig* that Rin chen bzang imparted upon him.⁹⁶ He perhaps authored a written record of Lo chen's oral instructions on *Kun rig* but this is not mentioned by A mes zhabs, so that the matter remains unsolved. In any way this may have been, the transmission of *Kun rig* that Lo chen gave Brag steng pa experienced a remarkable change, for these teachings passed from being oral to be in written form. It is unclear which system of *Kun rig* teachings Brag steng pa imparted upon Mal lo tsa ba, whether they were textual or oral.

Rin chen bzang po also imparted teachings on *Yo ga stod lugs* upon Brag steng pa, and the issue is whether these were instructions additional to *Kun rig*. A mes zhabs goes on to say that Brag steng pa was a supreme master of *Yo ga stod lugs*.⁹⁷

96. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.330 lines 5–6): “Brag steng pa nas bla ma Mal lo tsa ba la brgyud pa'i Kun rig 'di la thugs rtsis su mdzad pa yin zhing/ 'di la Lo chen gyi gsung bgros zin bris su (line 6) btab/’”; “I (i.e. A mes zhabs,) shall assess [here] the *Kun rig* transmitted by Brag steng pa to bla ma Mal lo tsa ba. [Brag steng pa] wrote down notes based on Lo chen's oral teachings on this [system]”.

97. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.331 line 3): “’Di ni Yo ga stod lugs kyi brgyud 'dzin gyi gtso bo Brag steng pa nas Mal lo brgyud Sa chen la bka' babs pa yin/’”; “Brag steng pa, the main transmission holder of *stod lugs* (i.e. the system of mNga' ris stod to which this doctrine of *Kun rig* belongs), imparted it to Mal lo [tsa ba]. Sa chen was the [next] lineage holder”.

This is a statement that brings forward the issue how to qualify the passage of *Yo ga stod lugs* teachings outside the regions, where it was formulated, towards more central regions of the plateau. The tradition of mNga' ris skor gsum found fertile grounds, for instance, in Myang stod. rKyang bu aka rGyang ro was a stronghold of the tradition of great importance.⁹⁸ Gung

98. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.66 line 4–p.67 line 21): “rGyang ro sPre'u dmar gyi rKyang bu Chos blo lo chen Rin chen bzang pos Kha che nas lan grangs dang po 'khor nas ring por ma long pa dang mjal nas lo chen Rin chen bzang po la rDo rje 'byung ba'i dbang bka' Shra rnga dra ka ra nas brgyud pa De nyid bsabs pa'i 'grel pa Ko sa la'i rgyan btags pa gsan/ dPal mchog Hor kong can phreng chad ma bsabs pa de'i dbang bka' lung bka' mtha' dag gi lag len Dol po sGom chen la bzhus/ bshad pa lo chung Legs she la bzhus/ physis su lo chen Rin bzang gi Kha che nas lan grangs gnyis pa 'khor nas mjal te dPal mchog gis phreng chad pa bsabs pa gsan no/ dge bshes rKyang bu Chos blo bzhengs pa'i Myang stod rGyang ro sPre'u dmar gyi dgon pa rKyang bu zer ba'i gtsug lag khang 'dir Yo ga dang gSang 'dus Ye shes zhabs lugs kyi bshad grā rKyang bu yang Myang stod Myang ro sPre'u dmar gyi mkhas pa rKyang bu Chos blor grags pa de'i 'khrungs yul kyang rKyang bu'i nye 'gram gyi grong kha shas sPre'u dmar zer ba de yin no/ rNal 'byor rgyud la bka' drin shin tu che ston/ pandi ta gZhon nu bum pa/ Dznyā na shrī sogs bsten nas mkhas par (p.167) 'gyur nas Zangs dkar gyi rtse mo la 'grel pa mdzad pa dang pandi ta Thugs rje chen po dang Zangs dkar gyi smad 'grel dum bu gsum pa 'gyur pa yang Myang stod rGyang ro sPre'u dmar gyi dgon pa rKyang bu yin no/ rGya gar pan chen gZhon nu 'bum pa dang pandi ta Thugs rje chen po bzhugs pa'i mthil yang rKyang bu yin zhing/ De nyid 'dus pa'i stod 'grel ni sngon du lo chen Rin chen bzang gyis bsgyur zin na/ De nyid 'dus pa'i smad 'grel ni pandi ta Bal po Thugs rje chen po dang Zangs dkar lo tsas Myang ro'i sa'i cha dgon gnas g.Yar thang zhes bya bar jo sras lCe 'bar gyi yon bdag byas nas bsgyur ro/ De nyid 'dus pa'i 'grel pa 'di nyid snang ba Kun snying gis mdzad pa de yin/ sho lo ka stong phrag beo brgyad yod pa'i 'gyur byang du 'o ma'i rgya mtsho lta bu'i Myang ro yul khams kyi pad ma'i snying po lta bu'i dgon gnas dByar thang du mGon po Byams pa lta bu'i mkhas pa Thugs rje la Tshang pa'i rgyal po lta bu'i lha rjes gsol btab nas tshong dpon Nor zang bzhin du dga' bas bsgyur ba lags zhes dang/ Rwa [note: Yo ga mkas pa mi gsum gyis Yo ga De nyid 'dus pa la 'grel ba rtsis pa ni De nyid gnang ba A wa ra ra/ Ko sa la'i rgyan no/ Thugs rje chen po rGya gar la thegs khar gser srang stong 'bul sa yang rKyang bu yin/ tsan ldan dkar po las grub pa'i Za ma tog de'i nang na Zangs dkar lo tsa'i thugs bzhugs Byans sems Zla ba rgyal gyi slob ma grub thob Nyi phugs pas Zangs dkar lo tsa can du bDe mchog dang/ rNam sras sogs lo drug bzhugs nas chos rgya che gsan pa yang rGyang ro sPre'u dmar gyi dgon pa rKyang bu yin no/” ; “Since rGyang ro sPre'u dmar gyi rKyang bu Chos [kyi] blo [gros] met lo chen Rin chen bzang po not long after the latter had returned from Kha che for the first time, he received from lo chen Rin chen bzang po the empowerment of *rDo rje 'byung ba* transmitted from Shra rda dra ka ra [and] the *Ko sa la rgyan* commentary on *De nyid dus pa*. He received from Dol po sgom chen the empowerment, the oral precepts (*bka' lung bka'*) and practice of *dPal mchog hor kong can* (“incomplete”) *phreng chad* ma bsabs pa (“with missing lines”) *bsabs pa* (“which had been restored/reintegrated”). He received explanations (*bshad pa*) from lo chung Legs she. Later, he met again lo chen Rin chen bzang po when he returned from Kha che for the second time and received *dPal mchog phreng chad pa bsabs pa*. The *gtsug lag khang* called Myang stod rGyang ro sPre'u dmar gyi dgon pa rGyang bu, here, is the school (*bshad grwa*) of *Yo ga* and gSang 'dus according to the system of Ye shes zhabs. rKyang bu also was the birth place of the one known as rKyang bu Chos blo, the master of Myang stod Myang ro sPre'u dmar. This is known as sPre'u dmar consisting

thang Na la rtse, too, owing to the transfer of *stod lugs* teachings and most sacred objects from Upper West Tibet qualifies as one more stronghold of the same tradition. Hence, Mal lo tsa ba and the Sa skya pa are to be considered as perpetrators of *stod lugs* teachings.

Summing up the relations which the Sa skya pa entertained with the mNga' ris skor gsum legacy, the early Sa skya pa, at least in the case of mGon po, were connected to the ancient culture of mNga' ris skor gsum and its proponents, in particular Rin chen bzang po, for doctrinal reasons. There are exceptions, too.

Given that Ba ri lo tsa ba was a disciple of rDo rje gdan pa the younger rather than the elder, who initiated Rin chen bzang po to Mahā ka la according to Kun dga' rin chen, the transmission of rdo mGon (the “stone Mahā ka la”), inclusive of the second Sa skya abbot among its holders, did not involve doctrines transferred from mNga' ris stod or mNga' ris pa masters. This is confirmed by the absence of reference to any master from Upper West Tibet who owned rdo mGon before or after Ba ri lo tsa ba. Hence, the possibility that Ba ri lo tsa ba was responsible for the transfer of elements of the culture of *bstan pa phyi dar* of Upper West Tibet into a Sa skya pa milieu has to be rejected, at least in the case of Mahā ka la and the few others indicated by Sum pa mkhan po (see above n.16). But whether he was involved in further transmissions coming from mNga' ris skor gsum still needs to be fully investigated.

of a few houses, which is near rKyang bu. Since Zangs dkar 'Phags pa shes rab, who was extremely gracious to rNal 'byor rgyud, studied with lo chung Legs she, zur chos pa (“assistant teacher”) An ston [Grags rin], pandi ta gZhon nu bum pa and Kha che Dznya na shri, he became a master. (p.67) Myang stod rGyang ro'i sPre'u dmar gyi dgon pa rKyang bu was where Zangs dkar composed the commentary on *rTse mo*, and pandi ta Thugs rje chen po and Zangs dkar also translated the second part of the commentary of [*De nyid dus pa*] in three chapters. This was the place (*mthil*) where rGya gar pan chen gZhon nu bum pa and pandi ta Thugs rje chen po resided. Given that lo chen Rin chen bzang po had earlier completed the translation of the first part of the commentary on *De nyid dus pa*, the second part of the commentary on *De nyid dus pa* was translated by pandi ta Bal po Thugs rje chen po and Zangs dkar lo tsa at g.Ye thang, the branch monastery [of rKyang bu], a place in Myang ro, with Jo sras lCe 'bar as sponsor. This commentary on *De nyid dus pa* was written by sNang ba Kun [dga'] snying [po]. In the colophon (*'gyur byang*) of the text in 18.000 *shlo ka*, it is quoted: “In the land of Myang ro, which is like a milky ocean, at the branch monastery g.Yar thang [g.Ye thang], which is like the essence of lotus of the area, lHa rje, who is like Tshangs pa'i rgyal po (Brahma), requested the master Thugs rje, who is like mGon po Byams pa, and he translated it with pleasure similar to that of Tshong dpon Nor bzang”. rKyang bu is where Rwa lo [note: the commentary on *Yo ga De nyid 'dus pa* by the three masters of *yo ga* is recognised to be *De nyid gnang ba A wa ra ra Ko sa la rgyan*] gave 1.000 gold *srang* to Thugs rje chen po as departing gift. Zangs dkar lo tsa's heart is kept inside a sandalwood casket. Since Byangs sems Zla rgal's disciple grub thob Nyi phugs pa stayed six years with Zangs dkar lo tsa for bDe mchog and rNam sras, he received extensive teachings. This again was at rGyang ro sPre'u mar gyi dgon pa rKyang bu”.

Finally, an important statement by mKhyen brtse dbang po in one of his encyclopedic works—*mDo sNgags gyi lo rgyus dang rnam thar*—denotes in general the relations that the Sa skya pa had with the legacy of mNga' ris skor gsum. mKhyen brtse, on the one hand, includes Brag steng pa among the disciples of Lo chen who diffused *Yo ga stod lugs*, the tradition of mNga' ris skor gsum, to dBus gTsang. They were disciples of both Lo chen and Lo chung and their tradition became known as *Yo ga smad lugs* (see n.85 and n.99). On the other hand, he too identifies Brag steng pa as the master who bestowed *Yo ga stod lugs* upon Mal lo tsa ba, which ultimately reached the Sa skya pa.

Hence, mKhyen brtse considers Brag steng pa a lineage holder of both traditions. However, the affiliation *smad lugs* to the masters and their localities, recipient of *Yo ga stod lugs*, does qualify them as *smad lugs*. One should better define them mNga' ris skor gsum *Yo ga* in their *smad lugs* version owing to their territorial diffusion in the east of Upper West Tibet.

mKhyen brtse dbang po, while confirming the existence of the transmission lineage found in the sources in relation to the *bse 'bag*—from lo chen Rin chen bzang po to his disciple Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khriims; and from the latter to Mal lo tsa ba, who gave it to the Sa skya pa—defines it in broader terms as the transmission of *Yo ga stod lugs*, implying that teachings other than on mGon po were involved, too.

This statement shows once again that, through the instructions transmitted by Brag steng pa and Mal lo tsa ba, some traditions of mNga' ris skor gsum became those of the Sa skya pa. By means of this statement, the great rNying ma/Ris med pa master synthesises these relations in a most significant manner. He says that the Sa skya pa thus became the custodians, among the two renowned *Yo ga* traditions of mNga' ris stod, of the *Yo ga* system most typical of the great religious heritage of this land before a time of obscurantism befell its dynasty.⁹⁹

99. 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse dbang po, *mDo sNgags gyi lo rgyus dang rnam thar* (p.259 line 17–p.260 line 6): “dBus gTsang gi smad phyogs su dar bas Yo ga smad lugs su grags/ yang Lo chen gyi slob ma Brag steng pa Yon (p.260) tan tshul khriims/ de nas Mal gyo/ des Sa skya pa brgyud de stod lugs su grags/ yang Dharma pha la nas/ Jo bo/ Go mi sgom chen/ sKyi nor Dznyā na/ gNyal pa Nyi ma shes rab/ Sa nur Nyi ma 'od zer sogs nas brgyud pa la Jo bo lugs sam/ rTsa [note: rTsa skya pa] sNur [note: Nyi ma 'od zer] 'Dzim pa [note: Blo chen] gsum nas brgyud pa zhes grags so//”, “Having spread to *smad* (i.e. the east) in dBus gTsang, [one tradition originated from Lo chen] is known as *Yo ga smad lugs*. Moreover, Lo chen's disciple Brag steng ba Yon (p.260) tan tshul khriims, this one, [bestowed it] upon Mal gyo who transmitted it to the Sa skya pa. This [transfer] is known as [*Yo ga*] *stod lugs*. Moreover, the transmission originated from Dharma pha la [which included] Jo bo [rje], Go mi sgom chen, sKyi nor Dznyā na, gNyal ba Nyi ma shes rab, Sa nur Nyi ma 'od zer and so forth

A mes zhabs devotes his next lines to Brag steng pa more in depth.¹⁰⁰ Some of the teachings Rin chen bzang po imparted to Brag steng pa do not differ from those commonly mentioned in the literature as typical of the great *lo tsa ba*. That instructions on *Yo ga* and *rkang mgyogs*

is called *Jo bo lugs*, also known as the transmission of rTsa [note: rTsa skya pa], sNur [note: Nyi ma 'od zer] [and] 'Dzim pa [note: Blo chen], altogether three”.

Earlier on, Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho, *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.76 lines 6–18) assessed the tradition called *Jo bo lugs* by mKhyen brtse as follows: “gNyal pa Nyi ma shes rab/ sMon 'gro Mar pa rDo ye/ mNyan ston Tshul 'bar/ sPang tshang pa Seng ge rgyal mtshan bzhi Zangs dkar gyi bu bzhi zer ro/

bsNur Nyi ma 'od zer ni/ mNyal pa Nyi ma shes rab kyi slob ma yin/

Glan Chos 'byung/ rTsa skya dKon mchog grags/ dMar Chos rgyal/ sGang ston Shes rab 'bum bzhi bsNur gyi slob ma yin te/de dag gi gtso bo rNal 'byor rgyud kyi bstan pa spel lo/

de Ita bu'i Yo ga'i rgyud pa la/ Yo ga stod lugs dang/ smad lugs zhes gnyis su grags te/ Lo chen gyi sku tse'i stod la/ Sangs rgyas zhi ba la gsan pa'i Yo ga'i chos lugs/ sa cha smad la Dharmā pā la la gsan pa'i Yo ga'i chos lugs/ sTod mNga' ris su dar ba Yo ga stod lugs zhes 'jog pas so//”; “gNyal pa Nyi ma shes rab, sMon 'gro Mar pa rDo ye, mNyan ston Tshul 'bar and sPang tshang pa Seng ge rgyal mtshan are known as the four children (*bu bzhi*) of Zangs dkar [lo tsa ba].

bsNur Nyi ma 'od zer was the disciple of mNyal pa Nyi ma shes rab.

Glan Chos 'byung, rTsa skya dKon mchog grags, dMar Chos rgyal, sGang ston Shes rab 'bum were the four disciples of bsNur. They all mainly diffused *rNal 'byor rgyud*.

Likewise, concerning the transmission of *Yo ga*, this is known [to be subdivided into] *Yo ga stod lugs* and *smad lugs*, altogether two. During the earlier part of his life, Lo chen obtained teachings on *Yo ga* from Sangs rgyas zhi ba. They were diffused in the east, in dBus gTsang, and the tradition became known as *Yo ga smad lugs*. During the later part of his life, he obtained teachings on *Yo ga* from Dha rma pa la. Given that it was diffused in sTod mNga' ris, it was known as *Yo ga stod lugs*”.

The differences among these classifications are obvious and rather drastic. It is interesting to note that the tradition called *Jo bo lugs* by mKhyen brtse dbang po was based on *rNal 'byor rgyud*. It should also be noted that *Yo ga smad lugs* was a tradition originally brought by Lo chen to sTod and that only later was it transferred to dBus gTsang. The tradition known as *Yo ga stod lugs* also was eventually transferred to Central Tibet and this was the one inherited by the Sa skya pa.

100. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.331 lines 3–5): “De yang Brag steng pa 'di ni lo chen Rin bzang gi thugs sras dam pa Lo chen nyid (line 4) las Yo ga'i chos skor mang po zhig dang gzhan yang zab pa dang rgya che ba'i gdang pa dpag tu med pa gsan te/ 'Od zer can gyi pra brtag pa/ Nor rgyun ma'i sgrub thabs/ rkang rguogs kyi gdams pa/ skye ba brtag pa sogs mang po dang/ bye (line 5) brag tu rDo rje nag po chen po Gur gyi mGon po'i dbang dang/ rjes gngang man ngag mtha' dag yongs su rdzogs par sku gsungs thugs kyi rten nmams dang bcas pa gngang bas chos skyong 'di'i bka' babs//”; “As for this [master], Brag steng pa was the noble heart-disciple of lo chen Rin bzang. He received from Lo chen himself many cycles of teachings on *Yo ga* along with other profound and extensive instructions, which were innumerable. [Rin chen bzang po] bestowed upon him many [teachings] such as the divination practice (*pra rtag[s]*) of 'Od zer can; the *sadhana* of Nor rgyun ma; secret instructions on *rkang mgyogs*; a method of recognising evidence of rebirth (*skye ba rtag pa*) and, in particular, the *dbang*, *rjes gngang* and *man ngag* of rDo rje nag po chen po Gur gyi mGon po, all of them and in complete manner, and the [related] receptacles of body, speech and mind. [Brag steng pa] became a transmission holder of this *chos skyong*”.

or the *sadhana* of Nor rgyun ma, given to Brag steng pa, were part of Rin chen bzang po's practice is well-known. He obviously received the teachings on Gur mGon and the flying mask together with the *rdo rje* and the flag. Having been initiated to the cult of Mahā ka la, Brag steng pa developed the skill of visualising the deity and acquired the magical powers that derive from the control of this *chos skyong*.¹⁰¹

Shraddha ka ra warma having given Gur mGon to Lo chen, Brag steng pa became the lineage holder of instructions of the two foremost masters of his teacher Rin chen bzang po. Empowered over the *chos skyong* by means of the teachings he received from Lo chen, Brag steng pa became a mighty specialist of *Tantra*.

Other Rin chen bzang po's teachings to Brag steng pa are less conventional. Brag steng pa received from Lo chen the divination practice of 'Od zer can and a method to predict future rebirths, proving that Rin chen bzang po was an astrologer, too.

The origin of other teachings passed by Rin chen bzang po onto Brag steng pa—the divination practice (*pra rtag*) of 'Od zer can; the *sadhana* of Nor rgyun ma and the method of recognising evidence of rebirth (*skye ba rtag pa*)—is not ascertainable. Only the secret instructions on *rkang mgyogs* can be traced back to the first visit of Lo chen to Kha che. He received them from a *yogin* according to *Rin chen bzang po'i rnam thar 'bring po*,¹⁰² and I wonder whether Brag steng pa used to travel to Mustang making use of the same technique.

The set knowledge of Rin chen bzang po's life never refers to Rin chen bzang po's main spiritual son. Nowhere in the material dedicated to the great *lo tsa ba* there is an allusion to his heart disciple. A mes zhabs says that Brag steng pa was the favourite disciple (*thugs kyi sras*)

101. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.331 lines 5–6): “gZhal mngon su gzigz shing/gang (line 6) dgos thogs med du 'grub pa'i mthu stobs dang nus pa phul tu phyin par gyur pa zhis yin/”; “[Brag steng pa] truly had the vision [of the deity] and was the one who came to have magical powers and excellent capacities to achieve what was needed”.

102. *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar 'bring po* (p.78 line 1–p.79 line 4): “Dzo ki gceg dang 'jal nas/ rkang mgyogs kyis rten 'brel mnga' bar rig te/ zhabs spyi bor blangs nas bdag thag ring pa'i mi rgyus 'grul mi nus par brda/ zang zing gi 'bul du sprang po'i shul rgyags la zad cad ma mchis pas/ thugs rje chen po la gdam ngag gnang ste/ rkang 'gyogs mkha' 'gro ma'i chos yin pa/ byin rlabs dang tshogs mchod/ (p.79) med pa mi gnag gsung nas/ dzo ka'i phyag phyir 'brenge te/ grong khyer Bhin nga ra bya ba ru tshogs mchod kyi cha rkyen blangs pas/ cha rkyen tshang ba khugs nas zhus pa/ ngag nang gis gsungs nas byin rlabs dang tshogs mchod mdzad de/ 'bul ba la res yug gceg lo tsa ba mgur nas btags te// lus ngag yid gsum bla ma la phul nas/ rkang 'gyogs yid bzhin bsam 'phel zhes bya ba gzigz nas/ grong khyer Ta ma la san te bya bar phebs/”; “He met a *dzo ki*, who [had the power] of swift-walking like the shadow of a flying *bya rgod* (“vulture”, “eagle”). He realised that he had a karmic nexus for swift-walking. He requested him: “By placing [your] feet on [my] headcrown, having please considered that I am not able to travel farther despite being a man who comes from far away, [and] that I do not have any wealth at all to offer to you if I exhaust the remaining provisions of a beggar [like me], I request [you] to give me swift-walking (*rkang 'gyogs* spelled so for *rkang mgyogs*) teachings”. Since he replied: “I will give the teachings to you since you are a man coming from far away, but *rkang 'gyogs* (spelled so) are teachings of the *mkha' 'gro ma*. I will not give them without blessings and a

of Lo chen, not Lo chung. This statement is not further elaborated and leaves space open to assumptions which the knowledge of Rin chen bzang po's life clarify in a reductive manner.

Several lists of disciples exist, as well-known. The disciples are classified according to their provenance, the teachings they obtained, the periods of their study under Lo chen, the regions where they were active after receiving his teachings and, before those, Rin chen bzang po's companions in his second journey to the Noble Land.

There are no traces of Brag steng pa among the early disciples of Lo chen. This points to the late years of the great translator's life as the period of Brag steng pa's close association with his master. Brag steng pa was a late disciple of Lo chen indeed, as shown by his interaction, earlier, with Jo bo rje and, thereafter, with Mal lo tsa ba. However, he is not included in the group of late disciples—the *ka bzhi* and *dung bryad*—mentioned in the concluding section of *Rin chen bzang po'i rnam thar 'bring po*. The lack of correspondence between the lists of Lo chen's late disciples in the texts containing their classification and their enumeration in Lo chen's *rnam thar 'bring po* indicates that assessments are not univocal. Traditionally lo chung Legs pa'i shes rab is seen as the assistant of Rin chen bzang po, siding with him across their lives. It then would seem that, in the last years of Rin chen bzang po, Brag steng pa somewhat superseded Lo chung, Lo chen's long-time right hand. More realistically, Brag steng pa must have taken Lo chung's place as Rin chen bzang po's main disciple because, in the meantime, Legs pa'i shes rab had become a major master on his own.

Suggesting similar implications of close master-disciple relationship between Rin chen bzang po and Brag steng pa, A mes zhabs mentions Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho and his *Chos skor gyi khog phub snyan rgyud lde mig* as his authority for the statement that Brag steng pa was the *nye gnas* of Rin chen bzang po (see below n.103).

In 1639 A mes zhabs could clarify a confusion about Brag steng pa's identity that he carried with him in his previous work, *Yo ga bstan pa'i sgo 'byed*, written fifteen years before. Priorly A mes zhabs considered Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khrim and Go rub Rin chen bsod nams to be two persons despite an equivocal correspondence in the life and deeds of these allegedly different personalities (see above p.344). In *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* A mes zhabs comes to the conclusion that Go rub Rin chen bsod nams was no one else than Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khrim on the basis of the evidence of Tshar chen and his own teacher Ngag

tshogs offering”, (p.79) he followed after the *dzo ka* (sic for *dzo ki*). After collecting the requirements for the *tshogs* offering at the town Bhin dha ra, as he amassed all the requirements, he asked [for the teachings]. Since he said: “I will give them [to you] now”, the blessings and *tshogs* offerings were performed. As for the gifts, the *lo tsa ba* tied a piece of cotton around [the *dzo ki*'s] neck, and offered his body, speech and mind, altogether three, to the *bla ma*. After being given *rKang 'gyogs* (spelled so) *yid bzhin bsam 'phel*, he went to the town Ta ma la san te”.

dbang chos grags.¹⁰³ A mes zhabs agrees on the issue that Brag steng pa was known by two names. The recipient of Lo chen's teachings on Gur mGon and the owner of the flying mask after Rin chen bzang po was named both Brag steng pa Yon tan tshul khirms and Brag steng pa Go rub/Gu rub Rin chen bsod nams.

Members of the Gu rub/Gu rib clan are recorded among the disciples of Rin chen bzang po, who hailed from g.Yas ru Byang (see above n.91). Brag steng pa's affiliation to the Gu rub clan, as proved by his other name Go rub/Gu rub Rin chen bsod nams, betrays his kinship which has nothing to do either with g.Yas ru Byang or Mustang where he settled (occasionally or permanently?). A cross-reading of these notions could imply that members of the Gu rub clan had migrated sometime in history and definitely before the first half of the 11th century from their home in south-western Byang thang to the east, in g.Yas ru Byang.

These are the notions on Brag steng pa treated as reliable by A mes zhabs. I dedicate the study of the last lines of the section on Brag seng pa in A mes zhabs's *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* to controversial issues about him. This confirms A mes zhabs's statement in 1625 that Brag steng pa was from mNga' ris stod. The Gu rub clan indeed was from the upper side.

The most controversial notion concerning Brag steng pa mentioned in A mes zhabs's *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* refers to records belonging to the Ngor pa school. They claim that Brag steng pa and his disciple Mal lo tsa ba were the same person.¹⁰⁴ A mes zhabs con-

103. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.331 line 6–p.332 line 2): “Di dang Go rub Rin chen bsod nams gnyis gcig yin pa dang/ Lo chen gyi nye gnas yin par Tshar chen gyi Chos skor gyi khog phub snyan rgyud rin chen lde (p.332) mig tu bshad cing/ de dag mthun par bdag gi bla ma mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa Ngag dbang chos grags kyis kyang lhag bsam rab dkar gyi dri lan du Rin chen bsod nams dang Yon tan tshul khirms gnyis mtshan gyi rnam grangs tsam ma gtogs (line 2) don la gcig pa'i shes byed 'god par mdzad//; “He and Go rub Rin chen bsod nams, two in all, were one and the same person. In *Chos skor gyi khog phub snyan rgyud lde mig*, Tshar chen says that he was the *nye gnas* of Lo chen (p.332). In accordance with these statements, also in the view of my own *bla ma*, mkhan chen thams cad mkhyen pa Ngag dbang chos grags, expressed in *lHag bsam rab dkar gyi dri lan*, the established knowledge is that, despite the different names Rin chen bsod nams and Yon tan tshul khirms, two in all, they refer to the same [person]”.

104. A mes zhabs, *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed* (p.332 lines 2–3): “Yang Ngor lugs kyi Yo ga sog kyi zin bris 'ga 'zhig tu/ Lo chen gyi slob ma Brag steng pa Go rub Rin chen bsod nams/ Brag steng pa'i slob ma Mal lo tsa ba zhes de gnyis mi gcig pa lta bur bshad mod//”; “Moreover, in a few records, such as those on *Yo ga* of the Ngor system, it is indeed said that Lo chen's disciple Brag steng pa Go rub Rin chen bsod nams and Brag steng pa's disciple Mal lo tsa ba, two in all, were likewise the same person”.

Ibid. (p.332 lines 5–6): “Yang na sByong rgyud kyi lo rgyus gZhan phan (line 6) spyi chings nas byung ba de yi ge ma dag pa yin dgos shing/ min na physis su zin bris nams su yi ge ma dag pa byung bar snang ste//”; “An alternative [view about Brag steng pa and Mal lo tsa ba being the same person] is provided by *sByong rgyud kyi lo rgyus gZhang phan spyi chings* according to which it is imperative

firms the view of unspecified authors before him that this notion is untenable, and the present essay of mine offers ample evidence, too, in support of a dismissal.

The anonymous *rje btsun rin po che*, often mentioned by A mes zhabs in *Yo ga chos kun gsal ba'i nyin byed*, says that in later times, presumably sometime after the death of Brag steng pa, Lo chen's disciple was known either as dge bshes Brag steng pa or Yon tan tshul khrim, a notion in which A mes zhabs does not take sides. It would seem that, later on, Brag steng pa's alias Go rub/Gu rub Rin chen bsod nams was no more in use or forgotten. The fact that Brag steng pa's other name Go rub/Gu rub Rin chen bsod nams was eventually discarded likely generated the confusion whereby Lo chen's disciple became two different persons.

Transmission lineages and transmission objects

Sa skya'i dkar chag is especially useful in defining synthetically the lineages who received the Mahā ka la cult, inherited by the Sa skya pa in different periods, although it was Sa chen Kun dga' snying po in the main who brought them into the domain of his school.¹⁰⁵ The lineages of the *dkar chag* can be summarized as follows.

1. The transmission originated from Birwa pa, which included Ga ya dha ra, 'Brog mi lo tsa ba, Zhang dGon pa ba and Sa chen.
2. The transmission originated from rDo rje gdan pa, which reached Ba ri lo tsa ba as a subsequent lineage holder. He passed it to Sa chen.

[to consider] the [Ngor pa] records as incorrect. Moreover, it seems that subsequent records propound to consider those [views] as incorrect”.

105. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.8a line 3–f.8b line 2): “Des na spyir Nag po chen po bka' bab byung tshul la slob dpon bsod snyoms pas mdzad pa sogs mang du yod kyang/ sgrub thabs dang rjes gnang zung 'brel du bzhugs pa'i sgo nas gzhan las khyad par du 'phags pa'i lugs la rnal 'byor dbang phyug Birwa pa nas rgyud Lam 'bras pa'i lugs/ rDo rje gdan pa las rgyud pa sgrub thabs kun las btus kyi lugs/ pan chen Shakya shri las rgyud pa'i lugs/ bram ze mChog srads las rgyud pa'i Mal lo tsa ba'i lugs te/ bzhi las dang po ni/ rje Ga ya dha ra dang/ 'Brog mi Shakya ye shes las bgyud de/ Zhang dGon pa ba la rje Sa chen gyis gsan cing/ lugs 'di la sgrub thabs chung zhig yod/ gnyis pa ni/ Ba ri lo tsa ba la/ rje Sa chen gyi gsan cing 'di la rgyud lugs kyi rjes gnang dang bcas pa yod/ rjes gnang dang sgrub thabs kyi gzhung bram ze chen po [one unreadable syllable] yod/ gsum pa ni/ Kha che pandi ta chen po Shakya shri bha dra nas Sa skya pan chen la gnang ba yin cing 'di la sgrub sPu gri skor gsum gyi man ngag/ bzhi pa ni/ lo chen Rin chen bzang po nas bgyud bla ma Mal lo tsa ba la rje Sa chen gyi gsan pa yin cing/ 'di la man ngag zab mo brjod kyi mi lang ba zhig yod kyang gtso che ba tsam brjod na/ mGon po lha bcu gnyis ma dang/ lha bgyad ma dang/ lha lnga ma rnams kyi (f.8b) dbang bskur ba dang/ lcam dral gnyis dang/ lha bgyad ma dang/ lha bcu gnyis ma dang/ 'khor rkyang rnams kyi rjes gnang dang/ phyi nang gsang ba'i sgrub thabs las tshogs dang bcas pa bzhugs pa yin cing/ de rnams mGon po'i chos skor gyi bka' bab yin/”; “Hence, concerning in general the account of the transmissions of Nag po chen po, there were many of them passed on by the *slob dpon*-s who practised asceticism. However, regarding the existing ones which combine both *grub thabs* (*sadhana*) and *rjes gnang*, in particular among others are the noble tradition whose transmission started from

3. The transmission originated from Shakya shri, who bestowed it on Sa skya pandi ta.
4. The transmission originated from bram ze mChog sred. Rin chen bzang po brought it to Tibet. The successive lineage holders were Brag steng pa, Mal lo tsa ba and Sa chen.¹⁰⁶
5. In *dPal Sa skya pa chen po Kun dga' snying po'i rnam thar* rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan adds another transmission of Gur mGon that has gone less noticed. He says that Mal lo tsa ba was the recipient of the Gur mGon system of Na ro pa, which he transmitted to Sa chen Kun dga' snying po.¹⁰⁷ Given that Mal lo tsa ba did not meet Na ro pa, it is likely that he received it from Pham thing the youngest, whose student

rnal 'byor dbang phyug Birwa pa, which is the tradition of the practitioners of *Lam 'bras*; the tradition stemming from rDo rje gdan pa, which incorporates all the different *grub thabs*; the tradition stemming from pan chen Shakya shri; and the tradition of Mal lo tsa ba, which stemmed from bram ze mChog sred, four in all.

Concerning the first among them, it was passed on from rJe Ga ya dha ra and 'Brog mi Shakya ye shes to Zhang dGon pa ba and was received by rJe Sa chen. This tradition contains a little *grub thabs*. The second was obtained by rJe Sa chen from Ba ri lo tsa ba and contains the *rjes gnang* of this tradition of transmission. The doctrinal foundation of its *rjes gnang* and *grub thabs* were formulated by *bram ze chen po* (i.e. mChog sred more probably than rDo rje gdan pa). The third was received by Sa skya pan chen from Kha che pandi ta chen po Shakya shri bha dra and contains the *man ngag* of the meditation system *sPu gri skor gsum*. The fourth was the one stemming from lo chen Rin chen bzang po. rJe Sa chen received it from bla ma Mal lo tsa ba.

Although these are inconceivably profound teachings, if one discusses the main [mGon po initiations], these are the empowerments of the cycles of the twelve deities of mGon po, the cycle of the eight deities and the cycle of the five deities. (f.8b) There exist the *rjes gnang* of [mGon po] *yab yum*, altogether two, consisting of the cycle of eight deities, of twelve deities, and of their retinue together with their sadhanic practice exclusively”.

On the same subjects see, e.g., a note in *Myang chos 'byung* (p. 33 line 17–p.34 line 16).

106. 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po, *gSang sNgags gsar rnying gi gdan rabs* (p.118 lines 11–16) confirms the classification by Kun dga' run chen in *Sa skya'i dkar chag*: “De yang Gur gyi mGon po'i skor la bka' babs bzhi las/ Ga ya dhā ra nas brgyud pa Lam 'bras lugs kyi mGong rkyang dang/ sgrub thabs brgya rtsa nas 'byung ba'i Ba ri lugs kyi mGon rkyang gnyis kyi rjes gnang/ so so'i man ngag gi lung/ Kha che pandi ta nas brgyud pa'i sPu gri skor gsum gyi lung/ shin tu zhab cing rgya che ba bla ma Mal las brgyud pa'i skor/””; “Of the four lineages of transmission of the Gur gyi mGon po teachings, [the first is] the transmission originating from Ga ya dhā ra, which is the *Lam 'bras* tradition of mGon [po] alone. [The second is] the tradition of Ba ri, which descends from one hundred *sadhana*, and which has the *rjes gnang* of two mGon [po] alone. Each of them has its set of instructions. [The third is] the transmission originating from Kha che pandi ta, which is based on the teachings of *sPu gri skor gsum*. [The fourth is] the very profound and complex transmission stemming from bla ma Mal”.
107. rJe btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *dPal Sa skya pa chen po Kun dga' snying po'i rnam thar* (f.14b = p.28 lines 3–4): “Yang bla ma de nyid las (line 4) Na ro pa'i Gur dang/ Byang chub sems dpa'i 'grel ba gsum yan lag dang bcas pa nams kyang gsan/””; “Moreover, from this *bla ma* (i.e. Mal lo tsa ba) [Sa chen] received Na ro pa's Gur [mGon] and the three Byang chub sems dpa' commentaries including their branches”.

he was (see n.40). The Gur mGon line of Na ro pa was one more tradition of the deity that reached Tibet, not classified by the later Sa skya pa authors such as A mes zhabs.

At least another one must be added. This concerns mGon po Zhal bzhi pa, and again reached Sa chen Kun dga' snying po. Its lineage included one of the various bla ma rDo rje gdan pa who bestowed it on gNyan lo tsa ba Dar ma grags when the Tibetan master went to India. gNyan lo tsa ba gave it to Dar ma rgyal mtshan, the elder of the two Kha'u pa brothers, his attendants. Kha'u pa Dar ma rgyal mtshan passed Zhal bzhi pa to Sa chen. Following this, the Sa skya pa used to refer to Gur mGon po as *srung ma che ba* ("major protector") and to mGon po Zhal bzhi pa as *srung ma chung ba* ("minor protector").¹⁰⁸

It is significant that Kun dga' rin chen does not include the transmission of the teachings on mGon po, given, according to him, by rDo rje gdan pa to Rin chen bzang po, among those of Mahā ka la, enumerated in his *Sa skya'i dkar chag*. Those teachings imparted were accompanied by the bestowal of the all-important *bse 'bag*. Its absence is conspicuous and surprising at the same time, and could be the reason why A mes zhabs did not follow Kun dga' rin chen in the latter's assessment of the master who initiated Lo chen to the cult of Mahā ka la.

Another aspect is relevant to the identification of the transmission lineage of the *bse 'bag*. *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar* introduces a detail that escaped the attention of A mes zhabs. The nine-pronged *rdo rje* in meteoritic iron was originally owned by bram ze mChog

108. *bsTan srung rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* (vol.1 p.168 lines 7–19): “gNyan lo tsa bas kho rang gi nye gnas gNam Kha'u pa sku mched gnyis kyi che ba Dar ma rgyal mtshan zhes brags pa de la mGon po 'di man ngag rnam rdzogs par gnan/ khong gis Grom stod Kha'u'i brag rdzong la bzhugs pa'i tshe/ mGon po'i zhal mngon du gzigs/ mdos chog la sogs pa'i man ngag rnam dngos su gnan/ Bon gyi sde zhig dang 'gras pas lo gcig na pho mo 'dres pa lnga bcu tsam bsgral/ da lta'i bar du Kha'u'i brag rdzong gi gnas su Tsa turmu kha dngos su bzhugs zhes grags/ des Sa chen Kun dga' snying po la gnan/ de nas bzung ste dpal ldan Sa skya pa rnam kyi thun mong ma yin pa'i srung ma'i gtso bor bzhugs shing Gur mGon la mGon po che ba dang/ 'di la chung ba zhes 'bod//”; “gNyan lo tsa ba transmitted the complete instructions of this mGon po (i.e. mGon po Zhal bzhi pa) to his own *nye gnas* (“attendant”), the elder of the Kha 'ug pa brothers, namely Dar ma rgyal mtshan. Since he truly had the vision of mGon po when he resided at Kha'u'i brag rdzong, [a place] associated with him, he was actually transmitted instructions of the ritual of *mdos*. [By means of it], following a dispute with one Bon po community, he killed some fifty males and females altogether. Even today, it is said that Tsa turmu kha (the “four headed mGon po”) is truly residing at Kha'u'i brag rdzong. This one (Kha 'ug pa Dar ma rgyal mtshan) transmitted it to Sa chen Kun dga' rnying po. From then on, the two extraordinary protectors of the dpal ldan Sa skya pa were Gur mGon [addressed as] mGon po che ba and this one (mGon po Zhal bzhi pa) [addressed as] mGon po chung ba. Their fame spread around”.

Myang chos 'byung (p.212 lines 8–10) is one of the sources, which confirm that gNang Kha'u pa (spelled so) was a disciple of gNyan Dar ma grags.

sred, one of the major Indian proponents of the Mahā ka la practice in antiquity.¹⁰⁹ The *rdo rje*, too, was deposited in sGo rum (see above n.57).¹¹⁰

Bram ze mChog sred's *rdo rje* in meteoritic iron, one of the objects belonging to him according to *dPal ldan chos skyong gi rnam thar*, was then given to Rin chen bzang po among

109. A *dbyangs* in praise of Mahā ka la is attributed to mChog sred, the *brahmin* from whose ashes the mask of mGon po, eventually donated by Pu hrang lo chung to Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, was made. He also was the owner of the *rdo rje* made from meteoritic iron. This melody, called *sNgon che ma*, was handed down in the Sa skya pa tradition (Helfer, "Traditions musicale des Sa-skya-pa relatives au culte de Mgur Mgon-po" p.388 n.114).

110. *Sa skya'i dkar chag* (f.9a-13a) contains a lengthy description of the holy objects and books contained in sGo rum. Its structure can, therefore, be summarised as follows:

- on the upper floor was the *mgon khang*, where the *bse 'bag*, the heart of sTag tsha Khri 'bar, the nine-pronged *rdo rje* and the statues of the *bla ma gong ma lnga* were kept;
- on the lower floor was Sa chen's *gzim mal phug pa* ("bedroom-cave"), a holy room with two pillars containing a clay image made by Sa chen, his skull inside a leather box, *mgon khang* paraphernalia and a library.

Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho, *dBus gTsang gnas yig* (Gang can rig mdzod ed. p.323 line 13–p.324 line 4) describes sGo rum in the following terms: "sGo rum rtse'i lha khang ka gnyis mar chos rje Sa pan dbus/ Theg chen chos rje g.yon/ 'Phags pa rin po che g.yas mi tshad pa ta'i dbus bzhugs/ gser 'Bum pod chen bcu gnyis/ rab dbye brtsams pa'i bzhugs khri bcas/ sGo rum mgon khang du spyang gzig mang/ sbug tu Sa chen gsang chab khang red kyang zer/ gtor sgrom sbug na bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes nag skya la zhal du bdud rtsi khri dar lung phab gta'/ phyi rol du rje btsun Grags pa'i sku/ sgo 'og de nas Sa chen gzim chung yod par grags/ rgyab ngos ka drug sbug Thub sku li ma mda' gang bdun/ rGya nag dpe shog dril/ sGo rum dpe mdzod du (p.324) grags pa'i nang du yig 'thor thal bai nang song ba pod stong phrag gnyis tsam yod pa 'di ni sngon gyi bdag nyid chen po lo tsā ba rnam kyi phyag dpe yin kyang bkur bsti ma byas pa ni nges par bstan pa'i snying po bshad sgrub nyams pa'i rtags su go/ gsob sna tshogs bcas//"; "In the two-pillared *lha khang* on the top floor of sGo rum is chos rje Sa pan in the centre, Theg chen chos rje to [his] left, and 'Phags pa rin po che to his right. [These statues] are life-size [and] sitting in the centre of a *pata*. A set of golden 'Bum in twelve large volumes and the throne of the one who wrote *Rab dbye* (i.e. Sa pan) [are here]. In the sGo rum *mgon khang* are many *spyang gzig* ("mgon khang paraphernalia"). It is said that inside a hole is the toilet of Sa chen. Inside a *gtor [ma]* cabinet is the *bse* (p.446) 'bag nag po 'phur shes, which is light black. In its mouth are placed *bdud rtsi khri dar lung*. Outside [the cabinet] is the statue of rje btsun Grags pa [rgyal mtshan]. It is said that the residence of Sa chen was on the lower floor of sGo [rum]. At the back, inside a six-pillared temple are seven *li ma* statues of Thub [pa], one arrow in size. Chinese scroll documents are inside sGo rum *dpe mdzod* ("library") [as well as] about 2,000 books not kept in proper order and covered with dust. Although these were the books of great master *lo tsā ba-s*, they command no respect. This is a sign of the decline of learning and meditation, [despite the books] being the true essence of the teachings. [Here] are a variety of stuffed animals".

The term *pata* may refer to a "cross". A rather doubtful understanding of this term is that it is equal to *dpal be'u*, i.e. "pattern in the shape of an endless knot".

The *bdud rtsi khri dar lung* are pills containing consecrated pieces of cloth and bestowing blessings, obtained by accumulating merit 10,000 times, which are specific to the Sa skya pa tradition. I am indebted to Tragpa Namgyal of LTWA and Josayma Tashi Tsering for this explanation.

other sacred items. This state of affairs could indicate that the *bse 'bag*, too, was among the objects transferred along the lineage of bram ze mChog sred, which included Rin chen bzang po, as the Kun dga' rin chen himself acknowledges.

This evidence thus credits the assessment of A mes zhabs who did not share Kun dga' rin chen's acceptance of rDo rje gdan pa as the Mahā ka la master of Lo chen, and indicates that Kun dga' rin chen contradicted himself. Since the *bse 'bag*, the black flag, the iron *rdo rje* and the heart-shaped *ga'u* were given to Rin chen bzang po by Shradha ka ra warma, this Kashmiri master was the lineage holder previous to Lo chen in the transmission of mGon po originating from bram ze mChog sred.

Among the various transmissions of Mahā ka la passed to Sa chen Kun dga' snying po by several masters and accompanied by the endowment of holy objects, Pu hrang lo chung's bestowal of the wooden Mahā ka la to Sa chen could be a sign that one of them based on the tradition of mChog sred came to the Sa skya pa master by way of a different channel than Lo chen's.

These transfers bequeathed from master to master remain hypothetical, for they are not clarified in *Sa skya'i dkar chag*. Its brief account of the holders of the shing mGon does not say whether this was another lineage of Mahā ka la teachings, originated from mChog sred and with Pu hrang lo chung as one of its subsequent holders. Or whether it was the same that was transferred to Lo chen. The absence of reference to Rin chen bzang po among the owners of the shing mGon makes one envisage that this was a fifth transmission which reached Sa chen.

mGon po's human behaviour

Before concluding, a few general remarks deriving from the study of the *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes* concern the human origin of the mask, the human-like behaviour with which it was treated, and a human embodiment it took.

The episode of the Du ru ka king shows that the custom of human sacrifice allegedly existed in Indian antiquity in a Buddhist milieu. The sacrificial victim was made to give his body to the deity so that the deity could manifest itself to its worshippers. mGon po thus became a living presence. The sources underline the fact that Mahā ka la dissolved into the mask.

The threat posed by the mask, which had become a living Mahā ka la, is exemplified by the episode in which a casual encounter with the mask by one man who crossed Sa chen's path on the way to Sa skya brought instant death to the unfortunate. It seems that the *rjes gnang* of *yon tan 'phrin las* had not been properly conveyed by Mal lo tsa ba to Sa chen who was not in complete control of the mask (see above n.42).

The *bse 'bag* is one of the cases in which the powers of Mahā ka la seem to have entered human condition. Mal lo tsa ba treated the mask as a man (beating and scolding it when the mask was reluctant to go with Sa chen). An impressive statement on sGa A gnyan dam pa,

the great adept of mGon po, contained in dByangs can snyems pa'i Lang tsho, *Hor chos rje sku phreng gong rim gyi rnam thar*, reads:

“A monk newly appeared, who was going to China from Mar Kham (sic) sGa stod. There was a controversy going on about him that he looked like the *bse 'bag* of sGo rum. The reason [for this likeness] was recognized by the *khu dbon* (i.e. Sa pan and 'Phags pa) thanks to their transcending gnosis (*ye shes*), this being that Gur gyi mGon po had carved for himself a human form. They gave him the name Kun dga' grags and took him along with them”.¹¹¹

This account shows again that the immanence of Mahā ka la manifested itself in taking human life.¹¹² It is significant that, of all the manifestations of mGon po, sGa A gnyan dam pa was that of the *bse 'bag nag po 'phur shes* instead of those which he himself had made or contributed to place in Khams. His power of Mahā ka la was proverbial and, among all the objects associated with this deity, the *bse 'bag* was the most sacred and awesome. No more powerful expression of Mahā ka la 's could be incarnated than the flying mask, itself a hu-

111. Tibetan text in Sperling, “Some Remarks on sGa A-gnyan Dam-pa and the Origins of the Hor-pa Lineage of the dKar-mdzes Region” p.460 and English translation on p.456–457, which is slightly different from mine.

112. *sGa lDan sKyur gsum gyi byung tshul* (p.34 lines 2–3) confirms: “Bla chen 'Phags pa'i zhal slob rDo rje Gur gyi mGon po Ma hā ka la'i sprul pa sGa A gnyan dam pa Kun dga' grags pa//”; “Bla chen 'Phags pa had a direct disciple, famous as sGa A gnyan dam pa Kun dga' grags pa, who was the incarnation of rDo rje Gur gyi mGon po Ma hā ka la”.

An ancient statue of sGa A gnyan dam pa was kept at Khri 'du sKal bzang dgon pa, but it is no more extant. See *sGa lDan sKyur gsum gyi byung tshul* (p.22 line 9–p.25 line 4) which reads: “Khri 'du bsKal bzang dgon du/ ka drug lha khang na bzhugs pa'i sGa A gnyan dam pa'i sman sku 'dra ma dang/ 'ja' zug ma/ A gnyan dam pa'i thugs dam 'Dzam bu'i chu gser las grub pa'i rdo rje Gur mGon gyi sku/ A gnyan dam pa'i sgrub rten rnga bo che'i pags pa'i ngos la grub chen Bi rü pa rang byon yod pa/ rGya nag gong mas phul ba'i thang sku sogs sku chas du ma//”; “Sited at Khri 'du sKal bzang dgon, which is a *lha khang* with six pillars, are the portrait statue of sGa A gnyan dam pa in medicinal clay; the *'ja' zug ma* (“a statue formed by a rainbow”); (p.25) the image of rDo rje Gur mGon made of the golden water of Dzam bu (spelled so for 'Dzam bu) (i.e. gold paint), which was the meditation image (*thugs dam*) of A gnyan dam pa; the self-originated image of grub chen Bi rü pa made by A gnyan dam pa on the skin of a big drum; the *thang ka* given [to him] by the Chinese emperor and many other objects”.

An embossed statue in white silver is a portrait of him (*Khams stod lo rgyus* vol. I p.21, right corner). Another picture in *Khams stod lo rgyus* (p.22) shows this statue but the print is too dark for it to be easily identified. A Mongol portrait of A gnyan dam pa is published on the same page to the right of the previous picture. A modern statue of A gnyan dam pa is found in the book entitled *Yushu* (p.57). None of these pictures brings any certainty as to whether sGa A gnyan dam pa looked like the *bse 'bag*. Also, the features of the mask are unknown to the people of the present generation, with the hypothetical exception of some elders who may remember it.

man embodiment which had become a living (and flying) object.¹¹³ While the Du ru ka king had to give his body to Mahā ka la as retribution for his defilements, A gnyan dam pa embodied the flying mask to make use of mGon po's powers.¹¹⁴ Other Tibetan masters, such as Rin

113. In his *bstan rtsis* at the end of his *Khams stod kyi lo rgyus smad cha*, lDan ma 'Jam dbyangs tshul khriims deals with various aspects of sGa A gnyan dam pa's life and personality including his meeting with Sa skya pandi ta and nephews, based on unspecified Chinese material he has translated.

lDan ma 'Jam dbyangs tshul khriims, *Khams stod kyi lo rgyus smad cha* (p.161b lines 14–13): “Rabs lo 5236/ phyi lo 1241/ ranb bdud lcags glang/ A gnayn dam pa dgung lo 12 thog chos rje Sa pan las dge tshul zhus pas mtshan Kun dga' grags pa gsol/ rGya gar du phebs nas Legs sbyar gyi bstan bcos mang po sbyangs/”; “[In iron ox 1241] A gnyan dam pa, having reached age twelve, received the *dge tshul* vow from chos rje Sa pan and was given the name Kun dga' grags pa. Having gone to rGya gar, he studied many Sanskrit texts”.

Ibid. (p.162a lines 2–6): “Rabs lo 5239/ phyi lo 1244/ rab bdud shing brug la Sa pan [note: dgung lo 63] dang/ 'Phags pa [note: dgung lo 10] Phyag na rdo rje [note: dgung lo 6] sGa A gnyan dam pa ti shri [note: dgung lo 15] bcas byang lam nas Khams stod dGe rgyas dang/ Khri 'dus sogs rgyud de rGya nag du phebs/”; “[In wood dragon 1244] Sa pan [note: age sixty-three], 'Phags pa [note: age ten], Phyag na rdo rje [note: age six] and sGa A gnayn dam pa ti shri [note: age fifteen] took the *byang lam*. Via [territories] such as Khams stod dGe rgyas and Khri 'dus [Sa pan eventually] went to China”.

According to this entry, sGa A gnyan dam pa and Sa skya pandi ta would have not met in Khams, but the first time A gnyan dam pa got in touch with the Sa skya pa master was when he received, at the age of twelve, the *dge tshul* vow from him in iron ox 1241 at an unspecified locality. Equally little known is the next event in A gnyan dam pa's life. Being a young man trained in Sanskrit is a rare notion about his life that proves how Khams pa masters from Khams stod aka mDo stod, kept having a keen interest in the quintessential Buddhist language to travel to rGya gar and study, since sMri ti Dznya na kirti had earlier left a mark on the region with his knowledge.

In wood dragon 1244 sGa A gnyan dam pa would have travelled to Khams with Sa pan and nephews. This is antithetical to the account of Sa pan's surprise in seeing that A gnyan dam pa had facial traits that resembled Gur mGon. This description of their meeting is a consolidated point in the Tibetan tradition that implies a first-time encounter with Sa pan. However, given sGa A gnyan dam pa's young age—he was fifteen by then—the Tibetan sources document that he came to have a physiognomy similar to the flying mask. This must have happened between wood dragon 1244 and fire sheep 1247, the year Sa pan reached Byang ngos to meet Go dan, when sGa A gnyan dam pa was aged eighteen and on the verge of reaching physical maturity. In those lapse of years sGa A gnyan dam pa developed a countenance that surprised Sa pan.

114. One of the foremost families of gTsang chieftains descended from sGa A gnyan dam pa. They were the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse, rTse chen and of the land from gTing skyes to Mon 'Bring mtshams. They played a major part in the religious and political history of gTsang from the mid 14th century.

rGya Bod yig tshang (p.373 lines 1–13) has this to say on the origin of the Shar kha pa: “Mi' u rus bzhi bya ba dang/ mi' u rgyud drug bya ba byung ba'i nang nas/ rMu tsha lGia'i rgyud par 'dug pas na/ lDan stod lGa'i yul du/ lGa Ang snyen dam pa zer ba'i 'byor ldan/ dkar phyogs la mos pa gcig byung pa de nyid kyi/ lGa lDan Tre bo'i sa khongs su/ lha khang rgya phibs khyung mgo can brgya rtsa brgyad/ lha khang re'i nang du/ rten ngo mtshar can dang/ bKa' 'gyur ro cog cha tshang ma re bzhengs pa'i drung du/ dkar mo khor yug/ mchod pa rnam lnga'i rgyun ma chad pa'i dge rgyun bt-

chen bzang po and Mal lo tsa ba, could equally bind the powers of this deity without having to become living representations of the mask, maybe because they had the *bse 'bag* at their service while A gnyan dam pa did not.

sugs pa la sogs cho 'brang phun gsum tshogs pa'i 'phrin las rgya chen por mdzad 'dug/ de'i dbon sras kyi bryud pa/ lDan ma dbon po/ bZang po rgyal mtshan/ yab sras/ 'khor bcas 'ga' zung gis/ dBus gTsang dag pa'i zhing khams dang/ khyad par dpal lDan Sa skya pa'i spyin sngar 'byon bzhed nas/ yar steg byon/"; "Among the *mi'u rus bzhi* otherwise the *mi'u rgyud drug* is the rMu tsha lGa tribe, concerning which, in the land of lDan stod lGa, the one known as lGa Ang snyen dam pa (spelled so) was very wealthy. He built 108 *lha khang* with pagoda roofs and Khyung heads in the area comprising lGa, lDan [and] Tre bo, owing to his single-minded devotion in favour of the "white ones". Inside each *lha-khang* he made extraordinary receptacles and accurately [printed] complete sets of the *bKa' gyur*. In front of these [receptacles] which he made, he established virtuous activities [to be held] continuously, such as that lamps should burn day and night and that the bestowing of the five types of offerings should not be interrupted. His family performed virtuous acts in a very extensive way. His *dbon sras* progeny, lDan na dbon po bZang po rgyal mtshan, the father and son, escorted by some retinue, decided to go to the pure land of dBus gTsang and in particular to [join] the Sa skya pa. They set out upwards (westwards)".

The account in this source continues with the details of their migration to dBus gTsang, but they are omitted here for reasons of space and only a summary follows. *rGya Bod yig tshang* says that A gnyan dam pa's progeny lDan ma dBon po and the latter's son bZang po dpal ba, on the way to Sa skya, moved farther and farther. They eventually reached Nyang stod, where rGyal rtse was later founded, following a series of prophecies, which pushed them to go westwards. The last prediction told them to find a place along the Nyang chu resembling gold nuggets. They were uncertain whether this was Zhwa lu gSer khang or gSer sding, situated along the upper course of the Myang chu. They opted for the second place. After lDan ma dBon po died, his son bZang po dpal ba married lHa mo sman, the daughter of the local lord. 'Phags ga dpal, the originator of the Shar kha pa, and his brothers were born from them (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p.373 line 13–p.375 line 16).

Given 'Phags pa dpal's birth date (earth horse 1318) and sGa A gnyan dam pa still being active at the Chinese court in 1292 (he died in water hare 1303), it is likely that the term *dbon sras*, which defines lDan ma dBon po's relation with sGa A gnyan dam pa, may have referred to a nephew of the latter rather than, more generally, a descendant, as often *dbon sras* stands for, or "grandson" as Uebach ("Notes on the Tibetan kinship term *dbon*") says with reference to the sPu rgyal period.

The family of the Shar kha pa, having sGa A gnyan dam pa, the master of mGon po who personified the *bse 'bag*, as their ancestor, did not show any particular devotion for Mahā ka la or the flying mask of Rin chen bzang po, despite being Sa skya loyalists much the same as sGa A gnyan dam pa.

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The Karma pa's early rebirths and the question of the Black Hat

The lives and deeds of the early Karma pa Zhwa nag can (“Bearers of the Black Hat”) and their associates amount to an outstanding phase in the great history of this school I have been increasingly interested in. Adding a new dimension to the greatness of their predecessors, they matched the achievements of some early masters belonging to other bKa' brgyud pa schools, whose deeds were extraordinary in more than one respect.

Wondrous acts of the early Karma pa Zhwa nag can, although occasionally shrouded in deep obscurity, were so meaningful that they left an indelible mark on the history of the highlands.

Two such events are the introduction of the system of succession by re-embodiment and the transfer of the Black Hat among the Karma pa's early rebirths, after it was bestowed upon the first master in the lineage.

The treatment of these subjects in the Karma pa sources testifies to the doctrinal and historical labour that the early Karma pa went through in formulating this peculiar system, whose complex historical implications emerge from the literary material at disposal.¹ This is why, in the present brief essay, I mainly deal with the Karma pa literature on the subject rather than the sectarian positions—not always sympathetic—met with in the writings of other schools that, in most cases, are later elaborations and thus distant from those affairs.² The Karma pa

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1. This essay has benefitted from bibliographical and conceptual suggestions given to me by Josayma Tashi Tsering, with whom I share the interest in the historical and doctrinal formulations that are found in the literature about the appearance of the early Karma pa rebirths. Access to sources such as *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar gSer gling ma*, *Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam*, *Karma 'Phrin las pa'i mgur dang dris lan*, and *dBu zhwa'i bshad pa* was part of his support while I was writing a draft of this essay.
 2. *Tu'u bkwan grub mtha'* (p.116 line 15–p.117 line 1) says rather dismissively: “Hor dang rGya'i rgyal srid kyi dus su zhwa'i dbyibs kyi 'byed pas/ rgyal po'i ti shri bkur ba nams la zhwa nag gser mdongs can 'bul ba'i srol yod pa'i dbang gis Yung lo rgyal pos kyang Byams chen chos rje sogs la dbu zhwa de lta bu phul snang/ des na Karma pa chos zhwa nag po 'di Dus gsum mkhyen pa la mkha' 'gro ma bye ba 'bum gyi dbu skra las byas nas phul ba yin zer ba sogs che brjod mang po sgrogs pa ni sgro btags kyi gtam du dogs (p.117) so//”; “The shapes of the hats were classified in the time of the Hor and the kingdom of China, and, due to the tradition of giving a black hat shining

literature offers significant insight into the obscurities, controversies and firm points concerning one of the most seminal doctrinal formulations in the religious tradition of Tibet.

Having returned at the end of the previous year 1293 from another of his wondrous journeys to the great lands bordering Tibet—this time from the court of Khubilai Khan at Shang to, the Xanadu of the westerners, in metropolitan China—U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal/Seng ge dpal (1230–1309) had a dream at his monastery sBud skra near Nya nam. He was the depositary of the Black Hat. U rgyan pa dreamt that the rebirth of Karma Pakshi would come to visit him the following day. When he awoke, he told his monks to make preparations, for the Karma pa would arrive very soon. Later that morning, a religious master, an acquaintance of his, came to sBud skra dgon pa saying that he had met a couple and their child on their way to the monastery and that the boy claimed to be the Karma pa.³

with gold to those appointed as *ti shri*, it seems that the Yung lo *rgyal po* also gave a similar hat to Byams chen chos rje and others. Hence, there are many exaggerated, self-apologetical statements such as those of the various Karma pa who say that this Black Hat which was made with the hair of 100,000 billion of *mkha' 'gro ma* was given to Dus gsum mkhyen pa. I fear that tales have been added to their (p.117) statements”.

Sectarian scepticism notwithstanding, the notion that Black Hats were given to the *ti shri*-s (“imperial preceptors”) needs verification because the Sa skya pa, among whose ranks the Yuan emperors chose several of them, are not known for wearing similar hats.

Modern authors are more concerned with recording the grant of the Black Hat to Karma Pakshi than the older authors, but they have different views on the identity of the emperor, the time frame and the circumstances under which this grant was made. Don grub rdo rje and bsTan 'dzin chos grags in *Gangs ljong lo rgyus thog gi grags can mi sna* (p.301 lines 2–4) are of the opinion that the Hat was given to Karma Pakshi by Mon 'gor rgyal po (spelled so) in fire dragon 1256 or soon thereafter, when he appointed the second Karma pa as his *bla ma*. By contrast, Ko zhul Grags pa 'byung gnas and rGyal ba Blo bzang mkhas grub in *Gangs can mkhas grub rim byon ming mdzod* (p.37 line 21–p.38 line 1) believe that it was Se chen rgyal po who, feeling remorse for having exiled the Karma pa, granted him the honour of the Black Hat sometime around 1263, an anachronism because Karma Pakshi returned to Tibet in 1262 (see below n.37).

3. Zla ba seng ge, *U rgyan pa 'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (p.178 line 6–p.179 line 1): “De nas Mo phug gnas brtan bSrung nge zhes bya ba dpon g.yog gnyis mjal du byung ba na re/ mdang sum Mo phug na na sa thags byed pa bza' mi gnyis bu gcig dang gsum gda'/ bu Karma pa yin zer gyin bda'/ de la lta ba ma lags sam/ da nang dang bdag cag dang dus gcig tu yongs nas gling gi mtha'i spyil (p.179) po gcig tu thal zhes zer/ der rje grub chen rin po che zhal nas/ 'o na de yin/ da lta rang khug la shog gsungs nas nye gnas gcig gis gdan 'dren du phyin/”; “Then, gnas brtan Srung se from Mo phug and his servant came to see him (i.e. U rgyan pa). He told [the master]: “Last night, at Mo phug, there was a couple (lit. “both a wife and a man”) doing/having *sa thags* (?), together with a child, altogether three. That child said: “I am the Karma pa”. Would not you [like to] see this one? Since we left at the same time this morning, they must have arrived at the hut of the border of Gling”. The *rje grub chen rin po che* said: “If so, it must be him. I should invite him now”. Having said that, one *nye gnas* went to invite him”.

The Karma pa of this episode was Rang byung rdo rje, the third Zhwa nag pa of this bKa' brgyud pa school, born in wood monkey 1284 as the reincarnation of the great Karma Pakshi who had left his body the year before (water sheep 1283) aged eighty. Rang byung rdo rje must have been ten years of age or slightly older at the time.⁴

I have dated this event following the sequence of episodes found in Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* where, albeit without any indication of the year in which it took place, it is introduced in the biography very soon after U rgyan pa's return from the court of Khubilai Khan (the Se chen rgyal po of the Tibetans). This is confirmed by Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's biography of U rgyan pa (in his *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.177 line 7–p.178 line 4), which dates the incident to 1293. The rest of the Karma pa biographical material, on the other hand, almost unanimously places the episode during Rang byung rdo rje's fifth year (earth rat 1288) (see n.4, n.5 and n.6), and thus before U rgyan pa's visit to the Yuan court in water dragon 1292.⁵ I favour the assessment of Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa*, on which the accounts in the Karma pa biographical material seem to have been modelled.⁶

The meeting of U rgyan pa with the rebirth of Karma Pakshi was conducive to the recognition of Rang byung rdo rje as the third Karma Zhwa nag pa. The immediate antecedent to their meeting was U rgyan pa's dream that the young boy would come to see him. U rgyan pa was delighted at the prospect of making the acquaintance of the new Karma Zhwa nag pa, but reserved judgement on the true identity of the child until their meeting. He told his monks

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4. Before coming to reclaim the Black Hat from U rgyan pa at sBud skra, Rang byung rdo rje was already concerned with this symbol of the Karma pa embodiments and aware of his past lives when he was just three years old. Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* (*Rang byung rdo rje'i rnam thar* p.191 lines 3–4) has this to say about him when he was at such a tender age: “dGung lo gsum pa la phying pa nag po la zhwa nag 'di 'dra bzhos shig gsungs ste/ zhwa nag chung ngu zhig mnabs te rdo rje'i khri thog nas gyis pa mang po la sku gsum ngo sprod gsungs shing sngon gyi dem brjod par snang gsungs/”; “When he was three years old (1286), [Rang byung rdo rje] said: “Make [a hat] with black felt similar to the Black Hat”. He wore the small black hat and, from the top of a throne [made] of stones, he gave a speech to many children that introduced them to the *sku gsum* [system], and spoke about this [subject] without forgetting anything from former times”.
 5. For instance, in *Padma dkar po chos 'byung* (p.399 line 21–p.400 line 2) it is written: “De'i sprul pa'i sku Rang byung rdo rje ni/ 'khrungs/ yul Mi la'i yul (p.400) rTsa phu'i Gangs zhur mo'i 'gram du Zhi byed pa zhig gi sras su 'khrungs/ lo lnga lon pa na grub chen U rgyan pa mjal/”; “The birthplace of [Karma Pakshi's] incarnation, Rang byung rdo rje, was near Mi la's locality (p.400) rTsa phu'i Gangs Zhur mo. He was born as the son of a Zhi byed pa. Upon reaching five years of age (i.e. 1288), he met grub chen U rgyan pa”. Also see, *inter alia*, *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.926 lines 2–3).
 6. The ultimate demonstration of this oscillation of dates is found in *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* by Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas. In the *rnam thar* of Rang byung rdo rje, he says that the meeting between the two took place in earth rat 1288 when the third Karma pa was aged five (p.192 line 2–p.194 line 2). In his biography of U rgyan pa, Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas describes the same events (ibid. p.178 line 1–p.179 line 4) referring them to water snake 1293 (ibid. p.177 line 7).

to prepare a throne higher than his own, thinking that, if the child were not the Karma pa, he would not dare to sit on it.

A summary of the steps in the meeting that led to third Karma pa reclaim of the Black Hat, whose candidacy as the rebirth of Karma Pakshi was accepted by U rgyan is as follows:⁷

7. The developments in the course of the meeting between U rgyan pa and Rang byung rdo rje are vividly recounted in Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* and the other works of the Karma pa literature with minor differences.

Zla ba seng ge (*U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* p.179 lines 1–5) writes: “rJe’i zhal nas stan mthon po brtsigs shig/ Karma pa yin na mi skrag par stan la sdod pa yin gro pa yin gsungs/ der stan mthon po bshams/ dung btang/ spos bsregs ’tshogs pa nams ’dus te bsu ba byas nas nang du drung du byon pa la/ rje grub chen pa’i zhal nas/ byis pa de la khyod Karma pa yin nam gsung pas/ nga ming yongs su grags pa’i Karma pa zhes bya nas phyag g.yas pa nam mkha’ bskyangs/ na bza’ chung chung phrag pa la bkla nas gdan mthon bshams pa’i steng du byon nas/ skye ba snga ma ngas khyod la chos bshad pa yin/ nga la khyod kyis chos bshad dgos gsungs/ rje grub chen pas/ ’o na skye ba snga ma nga la khyed kyis ci byin gsungs pas/ ngas Zhwa nag byin pas gsungs/ der rin po che zhal nas de bden gsungs/ zhwa de nga’i gzims chung na yod kyis long la shog gsungs nas nye gnas kyis blangs te/ rin po che Karma pas sngar gnang ba’i Zhwa nag dbu la gsol bas thams cad bzhad gang du gyur skad/”; “The *rje grub chen rin po che* (i.e. U rgyan pa) told [his monks]: “Prepare a high seat. If he is the Karma pa, he will sit on this throne without fear”. Then he sent [someone] to prepare (*shams* sic for *bshams*) a high seat. He said: “Blow the conch shell [to gather the assembly], burn incense and prepare a welcome [to him]”. Having likewise made preparations, [the Karma pa] arrived in [U rgyan pa’s] presence who asked the boy: “Are you the Karma pa?”. He replied: “My name is universally known as Karma pa” and raised his right hand towards the sky. He pulled up his robe over his shoulder and climbed onto the high throne prepared [for him]. He said: “In my previous life, I gave teachings to you. Now you should give them to me”. [U rgyan pa] asked: “If so, what did you give me in your previous life?”. [The Karma pa] replied: “I gave you the Black Hat”. After the *rje grub chen rin po che* said: “This is true. It is in my residence. Bring it [here]”, one *nye gnas* brought it. As [the child] put on the Black Hat previously given [to U rgyan pa] by the [second] Karma pa, it is said that everyone smiled”.

The text in *mKhas pa’i dga’ston* (p.926 line 1–p.927 line 3) is slightly more profuse than Zla ba seng ge’s and introduces the event of the meeting from the antecedent of Rang byung rdo rje’s visit to ’Phags pa Wa ti at sKyid grong: “Kyi rong gi’Phags pa Wa ti mjal tshe sPyan ras gzigs dngos su gzigs shing byin gyis brlabs/ dgung lo lnga pa la grub chen O rgyan pa mjal bzhed pas rim pas byon/ grub chen pa la ’od gsal gyi ngang du rin po che Karma pa byon nas sang nga ’ong bar shes par gyis shig gsungs/ grub chen pa shig tu snga bar bzhengs nas mdang rin po che Karma pa dang mjal ba rmis gsung zhing gzims khang gi rtse la bskor ba mdzad/ Mo phug gnas brtan mjal ba la sleb ste mdang Mo phug na maal ’byor pa pho mo gnyis kyis byis pa de Ksarma pa yin zer gyi ’dug/ de la lta ba lags mod da nang bdag dang ’grog ’dir sleb bdog zer bas/ ’o de ka yin/ da lta dung thong tshogs pa thams cad bsdu la bsu ba cher gyis/ nga’i gong ’dir bstan mthon po shogs/ Karma pa yin na mi skrag par sdod kyis gsungs/ tshogs pas sphyan drangs te byon pa na grub chen pas nyam sad pa’i phyr gSang bdag gi ting ’dzin mdzad pas zil gyis ma non/ grub chen pa la phyag mi mdzad par phyag gis dril gdang dkrol bas grub thob pa’i gsung nas bu chung thu mo cig ’dug snyan grags chen po ’ong bar ’dug gsungs/ khri chen po de la shad kyis byon nas bzhugs/ khyod su yin gsungs pas phyag nam mkha’ la brkyangs te nga ni ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa’o gsungs sngon gyi mjal lugs shod cig gsungs pas/ La stod

kyi jo btsun O rgyan pa/ kho bo'i mdun du 'ongs nas kyang/ rGya gar shar nub kyi gleng mo gtong/ rDo rje gdan gyi bkod pa byin/ mkhyen pa dam chos kyi gleng mo 'chad/ ces sogs gsungs/ nga la ci byin dran nam gsungs pas nga'i zhwa nag dang dpe cha yod pa gsungs/ de bden gsungs nas phul/ sbu zhwa bzhes pas bzhad gad chen po byung/ slar khri las babs nas sngar nga bla ma yin yang da khyed kyis bskyang du gsol gsungs nas phyag mdzad/ khyod nga'i bla (p.927) ma yin na klog shes te 'ong bas thon gsungs nas dpe cha gtad pas la la na thogs med du shar re byung/ la lar tshig sdud ma byang ba/ la lar sbyar klog sna tshogs byung bas 'di bas god bro ba'i klog mthong ma myong gsung nas bzhad//"; "When [Rang byung rdo rje] visited 'Phags pa Wa ti of Kyi rong (spelled so), he saw it as the true sPyan ras gzigs and received blessings from it. When he was five years old (1288), he proceeded in stages proposing to meet grub chen O rgyan pa. Rin po che Karma pa who appeared to the *grub chen pa* in a sphere of light, told him: "You must know that I will come tomorrow". When the *grub chen pa* woke up very early that morning, he said: "Last night, I dreamt I met rin po che Karma pa", and went to circumambulate the top of the *gzims khang*. Mo phug gnas brtan came to meet him and said: "Yesterday evening, at Mo phug, the child of a *rnal 'byor pa* couple claimed to be the Karma pa". If you wish to see him, they accompanied me this morning and they have come here". "'O ("yes"), this is the one (*de ka yin*). Now, the conch shell should be blown, all the assembly should gather and we should give him a great welcome. You should prepare here a high seat above me (i.e. mine). If he is the Karma pa, he will sit [there] without fear". While the assembly invited him [inside], the *grub chen pa*, in order to confirm his identity, stood still, meditating on gSang bdag, but failed to impress him. [Rang byung rdo rje] played the bell in his hand without prostrating to the *grub chen pa*. The *grub chen pa* said: "The little boy truly is quite a character (*thu mo*). He will become very famous". [The child] went straight to the high throne and sat [there]. [O rgyan pa] asked him: "Who are you?". He pointed his hand towards the sky and said: "I am universally known by the name Karma pa". He asked him to relate under what circumstances they had met in the past. "When [you], jo btsun O rgyan pa from La stod, came to see me, we had a conversation on east and west rGya gar. [You] described [to me] the conception of rDo rje gdan. We had a conversation about our knowledge of the noble religion". He said this and other things (*ces sogs gsungs*). [U rgyan pa] asked him: "Do you remember what you gave me?". He replied: "That was my Back Hat and the book". [O rgyan pa] said: "This is true" and gave them to him. Upon putting on the Hat, [the child] burst into laughter. He descended from the throne and said: "Although I was your *bla ma* before, now I beg your protection", and prostrated to him. [O rgyan pa] said: "If you were my *bla* (p.927) *ma*, you must have come with the knowledge of reading, so you should try it out". He gave him a *dpe cha*, and it happened that, in some cases, [the latter] read straight to the end (*shar re*), in some others, he could not join the words, and, in some others, he could not spell (*sbyar klog* sic for *sbyor klog*). [U rgyan pa] said: "I have never seen a more peculiar (*god bro po*) way of reading than this".

Rang byung rdo rje'i rnam thar (in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.192 line 3–p.193 line 2) introduces, like dPa' bo, its treatment of the meeting with U rgyan pa with the sKyid grong episode and describes the events with minor poetic details added to the text of Zla ba seng ge: "Kyi rong gi 'Phags pa Wa ti mjal tshe sPyan ras gzigs dngos su gzigs shing byin gyis rlabs/ dgung lo lnga pa la grub chen O rgyan pa mjal bzhed pas rim pas byon/ grub chen pa la 'od gsal gyi ngang du rin po che Karma pa byon nas sa ngang 'ong pa shes par gyis shig gsungs/ phyir nang 'khor rnam la de ring 'di na rin po che Karma pa'i rnam 'phrul zhig 'ong bar 'dug pas bsu ba gyis gsungs/ 'on kyang brtag dgos snyam pa thugs la byung ste/ khon rang gi gong du stan mthon po zhig bshams te/ gal te nga'i bla ma yin na nga'i gong gi stan 'di la sdod nus la/ ma yin na sdod

1. introduction of the young Karma pa and his parents to the presence of the great *sid-dha* U rgyan pa;
2. Rang byung rdo rje's sitting without hesitation on the high throne prepared for him, a first proof that he was the genuine incarnation of Karma Pakshi;
3. the boy's speech in which he told U rgyan pa that they had met in his own previous life. At that time, U rgyan pa had received teachings from him. This time, it was U rgyan pa's commitment to impart him teachings in return;
4. U rgyan pa's question, given the boy's statement that they had met in their previous life, about what sacred object he had received from Rang byung rdo rje's predecessor;

mi nus dgongs/ de'i tshe 'tshogs pas rol mo'i tshogs kyis spyang drangs te byon pa na grub chen pas nyam sad pa'i phyir gsang bdag gi ting nge 'dzin mdzad pas zil gyis mnon/ grub chen pa la phyag mi mdzad par phyag gis dril gdangs dkrol pas grub thob pa'i gsung nas bu chung thu mo zhig 'dug snyan grags chen po 'ong par 'dug gsungs/ khri chen po de la shad kyis byon nas bzhus/ khyod su yin gsungs pas phyag nam mkha' la brgyang ste/ nga ni ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa'o gsungs/ sngon gyi mjal lugs shod cig gsungs pas/ La stod kyis jo btsun O rgyan pa/ kho bo' mdun du 'ongs nas kyang/ rGya gar shar nub kyis gleng mo gtong/ rDo rje gdan gyi bkod pa byin/ mkhyen pa dam chos kyis gleng mo 'chad/ ces sogs gsungs/ slal khri las babs nas sngar nga bla ma yin yang da khyed kyis bskyang du (p.193) gsol ba gsungs nas phyag mdzad/ khyod nga'i bla ma yin na klog shes te 'ong bas thon gsungs nas dpe cha gtad pas la la na thogs med tu sha rar byung/ la lar tshag sdus ma byang ba/ la lar snar klog sna tshogs byung bas 'di pas dgod bro ba'i klog mthong ma myong gsungs nas bshad/'"; "When [Rang byung rdo rje] visited Kyi rong (spelled so) 'Phags pa Wa ti, he truly saw it [as] sPyan ras gzigs and was blessed by him. When he was five years old (1288), wishing to see grub chen O rgyan pa, he went in stages [to his *dgon pa*]. Rin po che Karma pa appeared to the *grub chen* in a sphere of bright light, and said: "I must inform you that I will be coming tomorrow". Afterwards, [O rgyan pa] told his entourage: "Today rin po che Karma pa came here in a miraculous appearance. Let's prepare a welcome [for him]", but he thought in his mind that he should [check] the signs. He prepared a high seat above [his own] and thought: "In the case he is my *bla ma*, he will sit on the seat above [mine]. If he is not, he will not dare to sit [on it]". At that time, as they gathered, [rin po che Karma pa] was invited in by the congregation playing music. In order [to allow] the *grub chen pa* to check the signs, after performing meditation on gSang bdag, the splendour [of the Karma pa] became overwhelming. Without prostrating to the *grub chen pa*, [Rang byung rdo rje] displayed the bell and played it. The *grub thob pa* said: "The small child is very severe. He will acquire great fame". [The child] went straight to the high seat and sat [on it]. When [U rgyan pa] asked him: "Who are you?", he answered, stretching his arm to the sky: "I am universally known by the name Karma pa". When [U rgyan pa] asked him: "Under what circumstances did we meet earlier?", he replied: "Jo btsun O rgyan pa from La stod! After you came in front of me, we had a conversation on east and west rGya gar. You gave a description of rDo rje gdan. We had a learned conversation on the noble teachings". After he descended from the throne, [Rang byung rdo rje] asked him: "I was your *bla ma* before. Now I ask you to be my guardian", (p.193) and prostrated to him. [U rgyan pa] added: "If you were my *bla ma*, you should recite this [to me] since you have learned reading" and gave him a *dpe cha*. In some cases, it happened that [the child] read it fluently without difficulty, in some others he could [read] clusters of words, and in some others, he spelled them out word by word. [O rgyan pa] said: "I have never seen a more exhilarating way of reading than this", and laughed".

5. the child's assertion that he gave U rgyan pa the Black Hat when he was the second Karma pa;
6. U rgyan pa's confirmation, which led to returning the Black Hat to him;
7. Rang byung rdo rje's ready move to put the Black Hat on his head;
8. a general feeling of relief and happiness in the room among the participants in the two masters' meeting.

It is only apparently surprising that U rgyan pa was in possession of the Black Hat, despite being previously considered to have belonged not to the Karma pa school but to the 'Brug pa and, in particular, to the lineage of those who were called the sTod 'Brug pa later to distinguish them from those of Bhutan. The notion that he was exclusively a disciple of rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje (1189–1258), as reiterated in his long biography—but he also was a student of Rin chen rtse mo from Bo dong E—has always seemed to me not questionable but slightly reductive for several reasons, not the least that U rgyan pa was a young man of twenty-nine years of age when rGod tshang pa died.

It is of some significance that, in the Karma Kam tshang section of his *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.913 line 9–p.917 line 20), the second dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba, a Karma pa himself, places U rgyan pa among the proponents of this school immediately after a list of Karma Pakshi's disciples and writes his biography. So does Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas in his collection of Kar ma pa biographies (*U rgyan pa'i rnam thar in Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.162 line 1–p.184 line 7). It is also noteworthy that an earlier Karma pa biographer, the second Zhwa dmar pa mKha' spyod dbang po (1350–1405), is among those who put the life of U rgyan pa into writing. The Karma pa authors consider grub chen U rgyan pa a master of their own.

According to the later biographies of Rang byung rdo rje (both the one by dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba, and the one by Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas in *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng*), things did not go so smoothly during the meeting between U rgyan pa and the young third Karma pa. U rgyan pa had some further doubts about the child's claim to be the incarnation of Karma Pakshi. He asked him his exact birth date, and thus calculated that it occurred less than five months after Karma Pakshi's death for him to be born. The child explained this by saying that he had fully grown in his mother's womb within that shorter span of time and that he was consequently born prematurely following the exhortation of the the *dakini*-s.⁸

8. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.927 lines 4–22): “dGung lo dris nas nga'i bla ma lug lo zla ba dgu pa'i tshes gsum la gshes pa yin khyod spre lo zla ba dang po'i tshes brgyad la skyes na bar na zla ba lnga las mi 'dug/ nga'i bla ma'i sku skye min par 'dug gsungs pas/ snga gzhis gangs zhur mo'i mdun du song tshar zhes yang yang bzlas pa ma gsan nam gsungs/ 'di ltar na snga ma zla ba bzhi ni kun gzhi'i cha cig zhugs pas mngon byang lnga las gzugs su dod pa rgyu rdo rje 'dzin pa'i skabs dang/ phyi ma ni kun gzhi'i rnam shes rdzogs par zhugs pa las lhan cig skyes ba'i go phang mngon du mdzad pa la zHING skyong gi mkha' 'gro ma rnam kyi glus bskul las 'bras bu rdo rje 'dzin pa sems dpa' gsum rdzogs su bzhangs par snang ngo/ gzhan ci dran gsungs pas/ 'Phar tshang gi grong 'jug gi tshul gsungs/ bden

rdzun lta gsungs nas 'phral du mi btang bas nges pa 'drongs/ mngal du phyi rol gyi yul ma bsgrigs par gzigs pa dang/ yum gyis di skad cig kyang mi sdod par 'dug pas bu mor 'ong/ yab kyī rmi lam las bur 'ong zer ba gsan gsungs pas yab yum bos gdong 'dzom mdzang pas kun yid 'ches te rGya gar du Sangs rgyas Shākya Thub pa dang Bod yul du khyod ma gtogs pa mngal gyi dri mas gtan ma gos pa gzhan byung ba med gsungs nas bstod bsngags cher mdzad/ nga'i bla ma'i gsang mtshan Rang byung rdo rje yin pas de ka 'dogs so gsungs nas Rang byung rdo rje mtshan gsol/ dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa gnang/'; "After asking him his age, [U rgyan pa] stated: "My *bla ma* died on the third of the ninth month of the sheep year (1283). If you were born on the eighth of the first month of the monkey year (1284), it is not even five months. You are not the incarnation of my *bla ma*". He replied: "When I was conceived in the womb, four months elapsed and my consciousness entered [my body]. Did not you hear me repeating again and again [from the womb] that I managed to come to my previous estate of Gangs Zhur mo? The first four months was the time [of the appearance] of the basic body structure which entered [me]. This was the time of the [appearance of the] indestructible cause (*rgyu rdo rje 'dzin pa*), when my body was formed through the *mngon byang lnga* ("the five stages of development of a being"). Eventually, following the entrance of the consciousness into the basic body structure, and the exhortation of the *zhing skyong gi mkha' 'gro ma* ("dakini protectors of the realm") actually to reach the stage of delivery, it seems that the three *sems dpa'* (*sattva*, "conditions") were perfected as the indestructible effect (*'bras bu rdo rje 'dzin pa*". When [U rgyan pa] asked him: "What else do you remember?", he reported to him how he entered the household of 'Phar tshang. [U rgyan pa] told him that he wanted to investigate whether this was true or false, so he was not given back [to his parents] immediately. The truth was revealed. He saw the world outside his mother's womb without obscurity. He said that, although his mother kept saying that since [the foetus] did not rest even for a moment, a girl would be born, he heard his father saying that according to his dream it would be a boy. [U rgyan pa] called in father and mother. He had a face-to-face encounter with them and convinced himself of everything. He said: "Except Sangs rgyas Shakya thub pa in India and yourself in Tibet there has been no one who was untouched by the smell of [his mother's] womb", and he praised him highly. Saying: "Since my *bla ma*'s secret name was Rang byung rdo rje, I will give it to [you]", he named him Rang byung rdo rje and gave him the *dge bsnyen* vow".

Rang byung rdo rje 'i rnam thar (in Si tu Chos kyī 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.193 lines 2–4): "dGung lo dris nas nga'i bla ma lug lo zla ba dgu pa'i tshes gsum la gshegs pa yin khyod sprel lo zla dang po'i tshes brgyad la skyes na bar na zla ba lnga pas mi 'dug/ nga'i bla ma'i sku skye min par 'dug gsungs pas/ ngas mang la gyi lus chags nas zla ba bzhi lon pa zhig pa rnam shes zhugs pa yin/ snga gzhis gangs zhur mdun du song tshar zhes yang yang bzlas pa ma gsan nam gsungs/ 'di ltar na snga ma zla ba bzhi ni kun gzhi'i cha gcig zhugs pas mngon byang lnga las gzugs su dod pa rgyu rdo rje 'dzin pa'i skabs dang/ phyi ma ni kun gzhi'i rnam shes rdzogs pa'i zhugs pa las lhan cig skyes pa'i go 'phang mngon du mdzad pa la zhing skyong gi mkha' 'gro ma rnam kyī glus bskul zhas 'bras bu rdo rje 'dzin pa sems dpa' gsum rdzogs su bzhegs par snang ngo/"; "Having asked how old [Rang byung rdo rje] was, [U rgyan pa] stated: "My *bla ma* died on the third of the ninth month of the sheep year (1283). Since you were born on the eighth of the first month of the monkey year, this is not more than five months. You are not the rebirth of my *bla ma*". [Rang byung rdo rje] replied: "After four months in the womb, my awareness entered into [the foetus]. Did not you hear [my] repeated utterings [to you] saying: "I have already come to [my] previous estate Gangs Zhur?". [He added]: "In such a way, since one element of the basic layer [of a human being] was there, the body was formed (*dod pa*) from the *mngon byang lnga* ("the five stages of develop-

I do not know what led these authors to raise such an issue later in the history of the school. All I can say is that U rgyan pa's further questioning does not appear in the earlier biographical material such as Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa*, *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar* and *Rang byung rdo rje'i rnam thar* in *lHo rong chos 'byung*.

The episode of the meeting between grub chen U rgyan pa and Rang byung rdo rje marks the official acknowledgement of the child as the next Zhwa nag pa incarnation and the lineage holder of the Black Hat, but not the successor to the second Karma pa on the throne of mTshur phu.⁹ It must have come as a relief to U rgyan pa finally to fulfil a mission entrusted to him some ten years earlier.

ment of a being"). This was the phase of the indestructible status of the cause. Later, following the ripening of awareness in the basic layer [of a human being], [and so] having truly reached the stage of full development (*lhan gcig skyed ba'i go phang*), I was exhorted by the songs of the *zhing skyong gi mkha' 'gro ma*, and I manifested (*bzhengs*) the perfectioning of the three *sattva* ("conditions") for realising the indestructible status of the effect".

9. Karma Pakshi opted to delegate succession on the abbatial chair of mTshur phu to his family members. *dBon rin po che'i rnam thar* (*lHo rong chos 'byung* p.282,5–7): "dBon rin po che ni rje'i snag dbon yin la/ rin po che gzhan du gshegs pa'i rjes la mTshur phu'i gdan sa lo gsum mdzad/"; "dBon rin po che was the maternal nephew (*snag dbon*) of the *rje* (i.e. Karma Pakshi). After the *rin po che* went elsewhere (i.e. died), he was the abbot of mTshur phu for three years. Thereafter, bla ma gNas nang pa, who belonged to the lineage of the [same] clan descendants, was the abbot".

The words spoken by Karma Pakshi to U rgyan pa show that dBon rin po che was assassinated before the second Karma pa's demise. Hence the murder of dBon rin po che occurred before water horse 1282 when U rgyan pa went to mTshur phu to meet Karma Pakshi. dBon rin po che's tenure of mTshur phu's abbatial chair, lasting for three years, places its commencement to the late 1270s. Bla ma gNas nang pa was the *rus don* of Karma Pakshi, which shows that the control of mTshur phu remained in the family line of the second Karma pa. The next abbot of mTshur phu, A dbang Ye shes dbang phyug, was again a relative of Karma Pakshi.

A dbang Ye shes dbang phyug gi rnam thar (mTshur phu *gdan rabs* in *lHo rong chos 'byung* p.282,8–12): "A dbang Ye shes dbang phyug ni/ rin po che'i gcen mChod chen gTsug tor gyi sras yin/ rin po che'i drung du chos bka' mang du zhus nas 'Bri bryud 'Go tshang gi mkhar du bzhugs pa'i sras bKra shis 'bum dang/ A dpal gnyis/ bKra shis 'bum rab tu byung nas gNas nang ba'i rjes su gdan sa mdzad/"; "A dbang Ye shes dbang phyug was the son of *rin po che* (Karma Pakshi)'s elder brother mChod chen gTsug tor. He received many oral teachings from the *rin po che*. His sons were bKra shis 'bum, who resided at 'Bri bryud 'Go tshang gi mkhar, and A dpal, two in all. bKra shis 'bum received the *rab tu byung* vow and was the abbot [of mTshur phu] after gNas nang ba".

mThur phu dgon gyi dkar chag kun gsal me long (p.549 lines 16–18) says that it was A dbang Ye shes dbang phyug's son bla ma bKra shis 'bum the abbot rather than his father, followed by his elder brother bla ma dBang rin.

Antecedents: the meeting between Karma Pakshi and U rgyan pa

Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* tends to be quite sparing with dates, but makes an exception immediately before and after the account of U rgyan pa's visit to mTshur phu (see *ibid.*, respectively p.192 line 20 and p.203 lines 8–10). He mentions events that took place in water horse 1282, the year before Karma Pakshi died.¹⁰ U rgyan pa himself was a mature *siddha* aged fifty-three at that time.

This episode in U rgyan pa's biography describes Karma Pakshi as an elderly master, witty and given to non-conformist behaviour, openly showing sympathy for U rgyan pa and accepting him as disciple. The reasons for the sympathy nurtured by Karma Pakshi for U rgyan pa are clarified by the words Karma Pakshi spoke to him. He told U rgyan pa that they had alternated in the role of master and disciple through a succession of previous reincarnations, so that, despite having been together in that life for only three days—such was the extent of U rgyan pa's sojourn at mTshur phu—Karma Pakshi treated U rgyan pa as his closest disciple. This seems to have been the reason that prompted several Tibetan authors to include U rgyan pa among the most preeminent disciples of the second Karma pa, if not the most important of all.

A few other considerations may be pertinent. Karma Pakshi had in the past undertaken the perilous journey to the kingdoms to the east of Tibet (China, Mi nyag, Yu gur, and Hor yul, as well as several places in eastern China during his exile there) to diffuse the tenets of Tibetan Buddhism, and founded temples in several of those kingdoms.¹¹ He had met more

10. In neither of the earliest available biographies of Karma Pakshi, i.e. his autobiography and *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* written at a later stage by the second Zhwa dmar pa mKha' spyod dbang po (1350–1405), is there any trace of the meeting between Karma Pakshi and U rgyan pa. It thus seems that the later Karma pa biographical material (including the Karma Kam tshang section of *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* and *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng*) drew the episode directly from Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa*.

11. *Deb ther sngon po* (p.578,3–5; BA p.486) records one of these foundations: “rGya gar dang Hor gyi sa cha rnams su byon/ khyad par Mi nyag 'Ga'i yul du gtsug lag khang chen po zhig rtsigs/!”; “[Karma Pakshi] went to the countries of China and the Hor. In particular he built a great *gtsug lag khang* in the land of Mi nyag 'Ga”.

Karma Pakshi's foundation of a *gtsug lag khang* in Mi nyag 'Ga is a sign that, decades after Jing gir rgyal po completed the destruction of the Tangut kingdom in 1227, there was a revival of Buddhist activities, again to be attributed to the Tibetans, as happened in the heydays of the kingdom. 'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal does not give a construction year for the *gtsug lag khang* in Mi nyag 'Ga.

The time-related spectrum of years during which the construction of this *gtsug lag khang* took place is from 1255, when the second Karma pa reached Hor yul, to 1261 when he left to return to Tibet (on the latter date see Addendum Three). However, the delta of years should be reduced by an imprecised amount of time, for Karma Pakshi was exiled to sMan rtse in metropolitan China before he could plan to go back to Tibet.

than one Mongol emperor or aspiring heir to the throne, especially Mo 'gor rgyal po (Möngke) at Qarakorum, Se chen rgyal po, and also A ri bo gha; he also frequented ulus Cha ga ta'i.¹²

In its biography of Karma Pakshi, *IHo rong chos 'byung* has passages that set this foundation in a more precise time frame. One (ibid. p.236 lines 17–20) says: “De nas yos bu'i lo la Kam chu/ mGa' Mi nyag/ Yu gur Hor/ rGya'i sa mtshams kyi mi rigs thams cad rang dbang med par 'dus nas smin grol gyi lam la bkod/ de nas 'brug gi lo la Mong gol rgyal po dang 'jal//”; “Then in the year of the hare 1255 [Karma Pakshi] set all ethnics groups of Kam chu, mGa' Mi nyag, the Yu gur, Hor and at the border of China that inevitably gathered [to listen to him]. He then met Mong gol rgyal po in the year of the dragon 1256”.

He again visited Byang Mi nyag subsequently, most likely after 1256 (*bsTan rtsi skun las btus pa* p.187), as mentioned in another passage of *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.237 lines 1–5): “De nas 'Dzam gling rgyal pos lung bzang po gngang nas Chu mkhar nas Bod phyogs su byon/ slar yang mGa' Mi nyag nas Hor Sog gi sa mtshams/ Ar rta'i rgyal khang dang/ sTod Hor/ sTag gzig// rGya nag gi yul sMan rtse sogs rgya mtsho la thug gi bar gdul bya rnam kyi don rgya chen po mdzad//”; “Then the 'Dzam gling rgyal po (i.e. Mo 'gor rgyal po) issued a favourable order and [Karma Pakshi] moved towards Tibet from Chu mkhar. Once again, he laboured extensively for the benefit of people to be tamed in mGa' Mi nyag, and at the border of Hor Sog, the Ar rta kingdom, sTod Hor, sTag gzig all the way to Chinese land sMan rtse, which touches the ocean”.

The delta of years should, therefore, be restricted slightly more to the time from 1255 to around 1260 when Se chen rgyal po ascended the throne of the Mongols, given the bad relations between the new emperor and the second Karma pa that cost the master the risk of losing his wife and exile in sMan rtse.

12. About Mo 'gor rgyal po and Gu rum (Qarakorum), the early Mongol capital where Karma Pakshi met the emperor, dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.890 lines 6–8) has this to say in brief: “Gu rum du rgyal po nyid kyi phyag len mdzad nas lha khang dpag med bzhengs/ rGya Hor Mi nyag Yu gur thams cad du lha khang mchod rten rnying gso gsar bzheng gi lung yo byad bkye//”; “The emperor, being a practitioner himself, built innumerable *lha khang* at Gu rum. He sent out orders and material to restore old *lha khang*-s and *mchod rten*-s, and build new ones in China, Mongolia, Mi nyag and the [land of the] Yu gur”.

Qaraqorum (the “Black Mountain”) was chosen as the capital of the Mongol empire by Jing gir rgyal po in 1220. It was walled by Ögödei in 1235. A Buddhist monastery is mentioned for the year 1247, and in 1256 Mo 'gor rgyal po built a five-storeyed *stupa*, 300 feet high and with annexed chambers. This seems to be the “innumerable *lha khang*” of dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba. Qaraqorum remained the capital until Se chen rgyal po's ascension to the throne in 1260 (for these notions see “Caracorom” in Pelliot, *Notes on Marco Polo* vol. I p.166–167).

I cannot avoid citing the oft-quoted remarks by Rubruck about Qaraqorum. Rockhill (*The Journey of William of Rubruck to the eastern parts of the World, 1253–55, as narrated by himself, with two accounts of the earlier journey of John of Plan de Carpine* p.220) translates: “Of the city of Caracorom you must know that, exclusive of the palace of the Chan, it is not as big as the village of Saint Denis, and the monastery of Saint Denis is ten times larger than the [Qaraqorum] palace. There are two quarters in it, one of the Saracens in which are the market, and where a great many Tartars gather on

His relations with these Mongol supremos could not have varied more. They were extremely close and favourable with Mo 'gor rgyal po.¹³ Karma Pakshi's mission in Hor yul, defined in

account of the court, which is always near this, and on account of the great number of ambassadors; the other is the quarter of the Cathayans, all of whom are artisans”.

Concerning ulus Cha ga ta'i, *Karma Pakshi'i rang nam* (p.127 lines 3–4) reports: “De'i rjes su rgyal po'i khab Hor dang Sog po'i yul khams kyi sa cha/ Chaga ta'i rgyal sa na byin pa'i dus su dgos 'dod char bzhin 'bab//”; “Later, when I went to the castle of the *rgyal po*, the capital of Cha ga ta'i, a place in the lands of the Hor and Sog po, all necessities came like rain falling”; also see mKha' spyod dbang po, *Karma Pakshi'i nam thar* (p.47 line 6–p.48 line 2).

13. A synopsis of the political relations between the Mongols and Tibet in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.1419 line 5–p.1420 line 4) covers the period from the beginning of the reign of Mo 'gor rgyal po to that of Se chen rgyal po. It is subdivided into two historical phases, marked by the reigns of the two emperors. I concentrate here on the first because, after the military campaigns in Tibet, sanctioned by Mo 'gor rgyal po soon after he was enthroned, it deals with his interaction with Karma Pakshi. This first part of this political synopsis (*ibid.* p.1419 lines 5–17) reads: “Di'i snga lo lcags byi la Mong gor gan rgyal sar phebs shing Bod du Byang ngos nas Ngo be ta'i Hor dmag btang Mon mkhar mGon po gdong du mi dpag med bsad/ de'i phyi lo Hur ta'i Hor dmag yong rGyal tsha Jo 'ber sogs bsad/ Gra Dol gZhung gsum 'jag skyar 'phyur ba'i dus/ zhes pa de byung/ 'di'i gong gi lo bzhi lnga na grub thob chen po Karma Pag shis rgyal po Mong gor gan la chos gsungs byin gyis brlabs pas rgyal po 'khor beas sems gzung 'dzin las grol/ mdzod dang bang ba thams cad phyogs med du bkye/ btsong dong sprugs thengs bcu gsum gnang/ mnga' zhabs thams cad du mi dge bcu spong ba/ dus chen bzhi la bsnyen gnas srung ba sogs kyi khrims mdzad de Hor rgyal pos chos kyi khrims mdzad pa 'di las med cing 'di yan la Hor rgyal po dngos kyi Bod ban la chos zhus pa gzhan med la Bod ban bla mar khur ba'i thog ma 'di yin no/ lo dgu rgyal sa mdzad nas sMan rtser gnam du gshegs//”; “Mong gor (spelled so) gan ascended the throne in *lcags byi* (iron rat 1240, sic for *lcags khyi*, iron dog 1250) and sent [to Tibet] troops belonging to Ngo be ta's (spelled so) Hor [division]. Many people were killed in front of the Mong gar mGon po. The next year (1251), the troops belonging to Hur ta's Hor [division] came. rGyal tsha Jo 'ber and others were killed. The proverb “this was the time when weeds overgrew all over Gra, Dol and gZhung, three in all” was conceived. During the fourth or fifth regnal year of this [ruler] (1255 or 1256), grub thob chen po Karma Pag shi taught religion to Mong gor gan. Owing to these blessings, the emperor and his court could focus their mind and get liberated. The state treasury was available [to anyone] indiscriminately. Imprisonment and exile (*sprugs*) were given up thirteen times. All the subjects refrained from the ten non-virtues. As for the exercise of the law, the Hor emperor observed nothing else than the religious law, such as that, on four great anniversaries (*dus chen*), he enforced a one-day fast (*bsnyen gnas*). From then on, the Mongol emperors received teachings from Tibetan monks. This was the first time that one of them venerated a Tibetan monk as his *bla ma* and no one else. [Mo 'gor rgyal po] ruled for nine years (1250–1258), and went to the sky in sMan tse”.

The account is interesting because it mentions the main military campaigns launched by Mo 'gor rgyal po soon after he was enthroned, but also shows that the presence of Karma Pakshi at his side brought a civilising touch to his reign. Campaigns against Tibet were suspended and several reforms with a more human face were introduced in his dominions. The account of this phase does not attribute the merit to Karma Pakshi openly but this is implicit. It also attributes to him the merit of having established the custom of *yon mchod* with the Mongol emperors. This role then slipped

the sources as an endeavour meant to convert Mo 'gor rgyal po to Buddhism, led the second Karma pa to establish an ascendancy over the Hor emperor. Karma Pakshi's presence next to the emperor after the military expeditions sent by Mo 'gor rgyal po against Tibet helped to prevent the land from the destructive treatment meted out by the Mongols to other countries. The Mongols governed Tibet without the annihilation of its people and way of life. Merit should also be recognised to Karma Pakshi, the first to entertain deep relations with the head of the Hor, followed in this by a plethora of Tibetan *bla ma*-s at the Mongol court, who, despite parasitism in several cases, contributed to maintain Tibet relatively unaffected by the Hor's proverbial military might. After Mo 'gor rgyal po's death and with the advent of rgyal bu Go pe la, Karma Pakshi's relations with Hor emperor were marked, as is well-known, by open dislike and suspicion with Se chen rgyal po.

Karma Pakshi must have seen in U rgyan pa a younger master who had followed in his footsteps. Although he had not yet visited the countries to the east of Tibet, U rgyan pa had already become quite famous in the Land of Snows for his journey to U rgyan and other territories to the west of Tibet, having endured great suffering and overcome much trouble by means of his powers, which earned him his nickname and the reputation of a great *siddha*. He had also been several times to rDo rje gdan when Gangetic India was facing difficult times under Muslim pressure.

It is somewhat remarkable that, years later (in water dragon 1292), following the example of Karma Pakshi, U rgyan pa went to the Yuan court, where he met a quite elderly Khubilai Khan, with whom Karma Pakshi had interacted earlier.

The reasons given by U rgyan pa for his acceptance of Khubilai Khan's invitation are that, at rDo rje gdan, he had a vision of sPyan ras gzigs in the typical form of a white man, who told him that he should not decline Se chen rgyal po's invitation but travel to his court (Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* p.226 lines 1–8). A less mystical reason for accepting the invitation—rather more a summoning—could have been that he was intrigued by Karma Pakshi's past frequentation of the Mongol court and experiences in China. U rgyan pa had been invited by Se chen rgyal po to travel to his court on several previous occasions before 1282 (the year in which he met Karma Pakshi), but had refused several occasions, provoking a failed attempt by the Hor delegation to take him along forcibly a last time.¹⁴ But

out of bKa' brgyud pa hands and passed to the Sa skya pa because the bKa' brgyud pa supported the legitimate heir (A ri bo gha) who was eventually the looser in the struggle for the throne he had with Se chen rgyal po.

14. bSod nams 'od zer, *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (p.225 lines 4–18): “Yang dus physis mi chen Go rin che zhes bya ba gdan 'dren du byung ba la yang ma byon/ mi chen Thi mur zhes bya ba gdan 'dren du byung ba la yang ma byon/ mi chen de na re stobs kyis bzung nas 'khyer zer ba la ba ri lu gu bzung la khyer zer bas/ khyod ba ri lu gu na/ nga glang ri lu gu gsungs nas phyag lcag phab bka' skyon byas pas/ res pa thams cad mda' gzhu bton 'thab grabs su 'dug sku 'khor nams kyis kyang 'thab grabs byas/ 'thab mo chen po 'ong par byung ba la/ drung nas bskrad pa'i skyor ba mdzad pas/ kho

ya pho zhes de kha la rta rgyugs so/ Gad ser du dran pa snyed de/ dPag shi 'jigs po zhig 'dug/ kho'i sgrog de min na khos nga gsod par 'dug ces/ bsgom thag la 'phrul 'dug skad/ rje rin po che phyag lcag rdeb cing bka' skyon mdzad pas khros nas/ gong du sleb dus nyes pa la gtugs skad//"; "Subsequently, mi chen Go ron che went to invite him, but again [U rgyan pa] did not go. Mi chen Thi mur went to invite him, but, since he did not go, this *mi chen* said: "I take you away catching you by force" and added: "The calf being caught, I will take it away"; [U rgyan pa] retorted: "You are the calf, I am a young bull". He rebuked him lashing a whip, [which made] all the *res pa* ("bodyguards" in charge of Thi mur's security) ready to fight with their bow and arrows. [U rgyan pa's] retinue were also ready to fight. This having turned into a big confrontation, upon [U rgyan pa] performing a binding ritual (*sbyor ba*) to expel them, [Thi mur] fled on a horse, exclaiming: "Let's go away". He recovered his composure at Gad ser. He said: "The *pag shi* is really scary. Were he not [busy] yelling [at me], he would have killed me". People made a proverb: "The meditation belt is miraculous". It is said that, on the account of the fact that the *rje rin po che*, being angry, lashed his whip and rebuked him, when [Thi mur] arrived back to the court, he was charged for his wrongdoings".

Zla ba seng ge, *U rgyan pa 'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (p.162 lines 1–4): "Yang dus physis mi chen Ne gu ta zhes bya ba gdan 'dren du btang ste/ gong ma'i lung gis 'u lag khyed rang gis tshod gyis zhon la shog/ gzhan gang gis kyang U rgyan dpag shi 'i 'u lag la thod ma 'dzin/ zhes gsungs pa'i lung byon pa la/ rje grub chen rin po che zhal nas/ sngon rDo rje gdan du mi dkar po gcig na re/ dus physis Hor gyis rgyal pos khyed gdan 'dren par gyur gyis/ de'i gsung ma bcag cig/ rgyal po de ni bsod nams tshad med pa dang ldan pas rDo rje gdan gyi mchod rten dpag tu med pa'i 'di nams kyang rgyal po de yis bzhengs pa yin zhes pa gsungs pa cig byung/ mi sPyan ras gzigs dbang phyug du 'dug/ nga ni na so rgas kyang 'gro ba yin gsung//"; "Again, subsequently, mi chen Ne gu ta was sent to invite him by order of the emperor [who instructed]: "You should provide compulsory service. No one else is in charge (*'dzin*) of providing compulsory service to U rgyan dpag shi". Such an order having come, the *rje grub thob rin po che* said: "Earlier in rDo rje gdan a white man told me: "In the future, you will be invited by the king of the Hor. Do not go against his words. Since this king has uncountable merits, the innumerable *mchod rten* of rDo rje gdan have also been built by this king". This man was sPyan ras gzigs dbang phyug. Although I am old now, I will go".

The events are recounted in a slightly different way in *lHo rong chos 'byung* (p.741 line 18–p.742 line 10): "gCung pa dge bshes Nyi ma rgyal mtshan gyis La stod du spyang drangs nas/ dgon pa Gro lung phul cing 'phrin las cher byung/ Se chen rgyal pos snga rting lan gsum gdan dren byung ba'i sngun ma la mi chen En ji byung ba la ma byon/ bar ma la Thog thi (p.742) mur byung ba la mi 'gro gsungs pa la/ kho khros nas stobs kyis khyer ba yin zer/ de la phyag lcag sa la brdabs nas bkyon pa mdzad pa la/ khyo'i dmag nams kyis mda' gzhu bton nas 'thab grabs byas pa'i tshel/ rlung bzung nas skrod pa'i sbyor ba mdzad ma thag/ rta gzhan nas rgyugs/ thams cad kyis kho ded nas song ba/ gad ser steng du dran pa rnyed nas slebs pa la/ kho'i sgrog de med na nga gsod par 'dug zer nas/ sgom thag la 'khrul 'dug/ Pag shi 'jigs pa gcig 'dug zer nas log song/ phyi ma mi chen Mu gu ta byung ba la/ sngun rDo rje gdan du shar phyogs su rgyal pos gdan dren dus ngag ma bcag par song gsungs pa yod pas/ da lan cis kyang 'gro ba yin/ sang phod da tsa yar slebs pa yin gsungs//"; "gCung pa dge bshes Nyi ma rgyal mtshan invited him to La stod. He was offered dgon pa Gro lung and became involved in greater deeds. The first of the three times when Se chen rgyal po invited him earlier and later, was when mi chen En ji came [to invite him but] he did not go. On the second occasion, Thog thi (p.742) mur came [to invite him but] when [U rgyan pa] declared: "I will not go". It is said that, since the former was angry, he [tried to] take him along by force. [U rgyan pa] snapped his whip on

more realistically, it was that the bKa' brgyud pa in general were facing a hard time with the Yuan, pressed as they were by their Mongol sovereigns, after the 'Bri gung *gling log* of 1290.

U rgyan pa's arrival at mTshur phu in water horse 1282 had been monitored from a distance by the Karma pa himself, by means of his foreknowledge. He had asked his *chos skyong* to influence U rgyan pa to come to mTshur phu, and U rgyan pa, in a game of psychic cognisance with Karma Pakshi, realised this and decided to comply.

Despite following his movements, Karma Pakshi lamented, upon U rgyan pa's arrival, that his delay in reaching mTshur phu had spoiled his preparations. U rgyan pa, who had been welcomed with a frenzy of interest by all the mTshur phu monks and the lay population, was in a facetious mood, for he said that his delay was because he had been busy performing a ritual to turn away 'Brug pa like himself! But their later conversations did not offer opportunities for jokes.

During one of them, Karma Pakshi suddenly took the Black Hat off his head and placed it on U rgyan pa's. The Black Hat had been given to him by Se chen rgyal po as a sign of special rank and appreciation since the emperor felt remorse for having harassed and exiled the second Karma pa after initially being completely taken by his spiritual power and miracles.

Karma Pakshi was outspoken about the reasons for giving the Black Hat to U rgyan pa. When asked about the continuation of the mTshur phu abbatial lineage, the Karma pa bitterly admitted that there had been intrigues by Gya pa Gangs pa and that even the smooth succession in the lineage of those wearing the Black Hat could be affected after his own death. He added that he was glad that U rgyan pa had come so that he could give him the Hat.¹⁵

the ground. When [the envoy's] troops took out arrows and bows, they were ready to shoot [U rgyan pa]. As soon as he performed a *sbyor ba* ("binding ritual") to drive them away with a storm, [Thog thi mur] jumped on his horse and left. Everyone [in his army] left after him. Having recovered his composure above Gad ser, upon arrival [there], [Thog thi mur] said: "If he were not girt (*sgrog*) [with the meditation belt], I could have killed him". [The troops] said: "As for [U rgyan pa's] meditation belt, it is [truly] deranged. *Pag shi* was scared", and they went back. The last time, mi chen Mu gu ta came [to invite him], and since he had said earlier at rDo rje gdan: "When the king of the east invites me, I would go and not refuse his proposal (lit. "speech")", he agreed: "I must go this time. I will return about this time next year".

15. I cite the episode of the meeting between Karma Pakshi and U rgyan pa from Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* since it is the earliest biography of the great *grub thob*, although the way the event is described in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.909 line 7–p.911 line 1) reads better. Zla ba seng ge's work precedes the one written by bSod nams 'od zer who lived one generation after the master. This is evinced from *rTogs ldan Grags seng gi rnam thar*. The latter biography (*lHo rong chos 'byung* p.286,21) has this to say about bSod nams 'od zer, the author of the other *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (*Gangs can rig mdzod* n.32): "U rgyan pa'i skye ba dang/ bSod nams 'od zer la chos 'brel

mdzad/"; "[rTogs ldan Grags seng] established religious ties with U rgyan pa's rebirth bSod nams 'od zer".

Zla ba seng ge, *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (p.140 line 1–p.142 line 2) says: “De dus su rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug Karma pa des tshan mo bzhengs nas khang thog du byon te/ kye kha 'gyags tsho longs/ nyi ma stod kyi phyogs na grub thob U rgyan pa chen po zhes bya ba gnam gyis bkab pa 'dra ba 'byon gyin yod pa yin/ thams cad longs la bu ram sgor/ zan rdzsis gsungs gin nye gnas nams kysis gsungs bzhin bsgrubs nas sta gon mdzad skad/ de grub chen U rgyan pas thugs kyi mkhyen nas/ rje grub thob rin po che zhal nas/ Karma pa'i slob ma nams brel rdo 'dug/ rang re phyag mal gyis gsung nas U ri'i mdun du cag mal mdzad nas sngon la mi shor mdzad nas bzhugs/ yang mTshur phu'i phu ru yang cag mal mdzad nas bzhugs pa'i dus su/ rin po che Karma pa'i Thab kha ba lnga brnyes ja 'dzin du btang nas byung ba lags skad/ de nas byon pas 'Tshur phu'i lung yar bsu ba dge 'dun gyi gral sbrangs dpag tu med pas rol mo'i tshogs kysis mdzes pa dang / skye bo'i tshogs lung pa gang ba byung ste/ skye bo nams byin brlabs zhu bas lam mi thar zhing bsrung ba yang ma nus pa las/ nang nas Khams rgyud pa thogs pa lnga bcu tsam byung nas/ rje grub thob rin po che'i drung skor de ring nged kysis byed pa yin zer dbyug pa rgyab lam thar par byung skad/de nas phyi rul du gzims sbra chen po btab nas ohyad phebs pa dang/ rje grub thob rin po che pas rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug Karma pa'i gzim khang dang/ de'i nang gi rten gsum mchod pa nams gzigs nas 'di ltar 'dug gsungs pas mdo bo sa (?) ha las shing dad par gyur skad/ de nas rin po che Karma pa'i zhal nas (p.141) e grub thob U rgyan pa khyed zhag gsum gyi gong nas phyag phebs rgyu yin pa la da bar du mkhyen/ zan nams rul du bcug gsungs pas/ rje grub chen pas de bar du mi sleb pa dang 'Brug pa bzlog bsgom byed pa yin gsungs/ rin po che Karma pa chen po bzhad cing/ bzlog sgom byed na khyed rang kyag pa kha ru chug/ bu ram rkub su chug ces pa/ la sogs pa'i bre mo'i gsungs mang po byon/ yang rin po che Karma pa'i gsung nas/ e grub thob U rgyan pa khyed nga'i rtsar mi 'byon par sil ma la la gshegs par 'dod cing snang ste/ sTag gru kha nas ngas byang chub kyi sems dpa' dang dpa' bo dang mkha' 'gro chos skyong dang mKhar nag rDo rje rgyal po dang bcas pa nams kysis rang dbang med par dbang bsdu pa yin e go/ yang rin po che Karma pa'i zhal nas/ dge bshes dBang skyabs chos skyong la gtor ma tshogs chen po thong/ rnga chen po rdungs/ dung bus/ a rings thong la/ grub thob U rgyan pa chen po yid bzhin gyi nor bu 'dra ba 'dir byon pas 'Tshur phu gdan na yod pa thams cad dga' ba bsgoms cig/ 'bul rgyu yod pa nams phul/ chos zhu 'dod pa nams zhus kysis gsung/ de'i dus su grub chen pa'i zhabs tog pa nams kysis rin po che Karma pa'i gzim khang bzhugs pa'i sku gsung thugs kyi rten ngo mtshar can nams la lta pas/ rin po che Karma pa'i zhal nas/ gru thob U rgyan pa'i slob ma kha 'kyags tsho ci la lta/ lta na bla ma'i zhal ras la lta gsung/ nged kyi bu la mnabs pa'i dar gyis Zhwa nag de rje grub thob rin po che'i dbu la bkon/ sPyan ras gzigs rGyal ba rgya mtsho'i dbang byed pa yin gsung nas/ ka to ra nas kyi bkang ba la lcags kysis (p.142) bkrugs nas dbu thog tu bzhag ste/ phyag lcag dang bcas pa phyag du gtad/ khong gis dbu la gsol ba'i Zhwa nag de dbu la gsol nas/ khyed kysis rgyud pa 'di la Zhwa nag po gon pa du mchi zhes zhus pas/ Gya ba gangs pas gyu ba byas/ de'i skye mchod la rten nas/ Zhwa nag po yi rgyud pa bcad/ 'on kyang nyi ma La stod kyi phyogs nas Zhwa nag po gon pa gcig yong ba yin gsung/"; “At that time, the lord of the *yogin*-s, Karma pa, this one, woke up during the night and went to the rooftop. He said: “Get up, [you] impertinent people (*kha rgyags tsho*)! The one known as grub thob U rgyan, who is like the pervading sky, is going to come from the western direction where the sun sets. After all [of you] get up, melt molasses [and] knead dough”. It is said that after the *nye gnas*-s got up, they made preparations, kneading dough and melting molasses according to his words. Then, *rje grub chen* U rgyan pa having realised this [from distance], the *rje grub thob rin po che* said: “Karma pa's disciples are very busy. We can have a rest”.

Gya pa Gangs pa was one of the major disciples of the first Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen

So he spoke. They therefore had a rest in front of U ri, and he stayed [there] wondering whether a man should go ahead [of him to inform the Karma pa of their arrival]. Again, he stayed at the upper side of mTshur phu for a rest. It is said that five [persons] sent by rin po che Karma pa arrived [there] with stoves and tea to restore (*snyel*) [him]. Then, on his way, at the upper side of the 'Tshur (spelled so) phu valley, [he saw that] the valley was filled with uncountable necklace[-like] rows of monks who had gathered at the upper side, and with groups of lay people in their finest [clothes, playing] music. Since the lay people asked for his blessings, he could not pass along the way. Even the guards could not help. Some fifty among them were there with sticks and surrounded the *rje grub che rin po che*, proclaiming: "We will take care [of things] now", and it is said that he was able to pass when they used their sticks. He then went to a big tent which had been pitched for his stay outside [the monastery]. He visualised the residence of Karma pa, the lord of the *yogin*-s, the three [types of] receptacle holders and the offerings [made before them] within, and immediately said: "It is like that", and all the people around him (*mdo bo*?) marvelled (*ha las*) and developed faith [in U rgyan pa]. Then rin po che Karma pa said (p.141): "E! Grub thob U rgyan pa! You have not arrived here until now. You should have arrived (*phebs rgyu*) three days ago. All this dough has become rotten". When the *rje rin po che pa* replied: "The reason why I have not arrived until now is that I was engaged in meditation to the turn away (*zlog sgom*) the 'Brug pa!", rin po che Karma pa chen po laughed and said: "If you did [such] *zlog sgom* ("meditation to avert obstacles"), [then] you must put stools in [your] mouth (*kyag pa* sic (for *skyag pa*) *kha ru chug*) and molasses in [your] rectum (*bu ram rkub su chug*)!". They came up with many jokes such as this and others. Again, rin po che Karma pa said: "E! Grub thob U rgyan pa, that wish and sudden thought of [yours] of going through Sil ma la, without which you would have not come to me, was influenced from sTag gru kha (sTag "ferry") [onwards] by the power of the *dpa' bo* of *Byang chub kyi sems* ("mind of liberation"), *mkha' 'gro, chos skyong* [and] mKhar nag rDo rje rgyal po, and was beyond [your] control. Did you realise this (*e go*)?". Rin po che Karma pa added: "dGe bshes dBang skyabs offered a great number of *gtor* [*ma*] to the *chos skyong*. He beat the big drum". The conch shells were blown as grub thob U rgyan pa chen po, who is like the wish fulfilling gem, arrived. All the inhabitants of mTshur phu were overcome with great happiness. Those who had things to offer offered them, and those who had reasons to receive teachings received them". At that time, when the attendants of the *grub chen pa* saw the extraordinary receptacles of body, speech and mind in the residence of rin po che Karma pa, rin po che Karma pa said: "Impertinent (*kha 'khyags* sic for *kha rgyags*?) disciples of grub thob U rgyan pa, what are you looking at? If you [must] look, you should look at the face of [your] *bla ma*. I shall put that silken Black Hat, which I am wearing on my head, on the head of the *rje grub thob rin po che*. I will give you the empowerment of *sPyan ras gzigs rgyal ba rgya mtsho* (i.e. a doctrinal system focused on sPyan ras gzigs of which Karma Pakshi was a lineage holder)". Saying thus, he [proceeded to] stirring a *ka to ra* ("bowl") filled with barley with an iron [instrument], (p.142) and placed it on [U rgyan pa's] head and gave him the whip in his hand. As [U rgyan pa] asked: "How many will be there in this lineage of yours who will be wearing the Black Hat which you were wearing on your head?", he replied: "Gya pa Gangs pa engaged in intrigue. Due to its rise and spread, the lineage of those wearing the Black Hat [risked] to be interrupted. However, someone from Nyi ma La stod will come to wear the Black Hat?".

pa (1110–1193).¹⁶ *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa* (p.187 line 4) records that Dus gsum mkhyen

16. Ri dbang bsTan 'dzin, *Nags shod 'Bri ru 'i lo rgyus* (p.348 line 2–p.349 line 2) reads: “sKu yi skye ba 'di nyid ni yul Gya pa ru rus ni Khyung po yab gSang sngags rnying ma'i rnal 'byor pa Jo nag ces pa'i sras su shing mo lug (spyi lo 1175) lor ngo mtshar gyi ltas du ma dang bcas te sku 'khrungs/ yab las brGyud pa'i zab chos rDo rje'i phur pa dang/ Zhi khro na rag dong sprugs sogs kyi dbang lung khrid bcas legs par zhus nas nyams su bzhes/ de rjes Dus gsum mkhyen pa Jo mo sgang la bzhugs dus su mjal/ de nas bzung 'gro mgon bKa' brgyud pa'i dbang chos bcas pa bum pa gang byon tshul du mngos nas sras kyi thu bor gyur/ rab byung mtshan la Rin chen 'od zer zhes 'Og min mTshur phu'i gdan nas bzhi pa mdzad/ 'Brong bu dgon rnying phyag btsab/ gzhan yang 'Bri gung chos rje dang/ sTag lung thang pa/ rgyal ba rMog cog pa/ La yag pa/ Dwags po 'Dul 'dzin/ nye gnas gSal byang/ Kha che pan chen la sogs mkhas shing grub pa du ma'i zhabs la gtugs/ khyad par du mDo ba ras las Phyag rgya chen po'i rtogs pa brnyes/ rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i bka' lung bzhin du gTsang gi Jo mo sgang dKar leb phug par grub pa bskyangs mdzad pas mtshan yang rje Gangs dkar pa zhes su grags/ gnas der yi dam bDe mchog dang Phag mo la sogs zhal yang gzigs/ snang srid 'khor 'das kyi chos thams cad me long nang gi gzugs brnyan ltar gsal stong rjen ne thugs su chud/ sku ber nyis zer la bkal ba dang/ mchog dang thun mong gi dngos grub thob ste bzhugs pa'i tshe/ nam zhig na 'brong zhig gis sgo brdungs bas gzigs tsa na 'brong khyad par can zhig 'dug pa des kha lho nub phyogs su gtad nas phyin pas rgya mtsho chen po zhig gi 'gram du slebs/ ras gzan de gru yi tshul (p.349) du mdzad nas chu las bsgral nas pho brang chen po bkod legs can grong khyer lnga brgyas skor ba de'i dbus su gzhal yas khang sum brtsegs can/'”; “That rebirth (i.e. chos rje Gangs pa) was born as the son of [his] father, the *rnal 'byor pa* of *gsang sNgags rnyin ma* belonging to the Khyung po clan, namely Jo nag, in the fire sheep (sic for wood sheep?) year [at] Gya pa ru (“the Gya pa nomadic encampment”) amidst many extraordinary signs. With great proficiency, he received *dbang*, *lung* and *khrid* from his father, such as the profound teachings rDo rje phur pa and *Zhi khro na rag dong sprugs*, and practised them. Subsequently, he met rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa when the latter was at Jo mo gangs. Thereafter, since he was the recipient of the empowerments and teachings of the 'gro mgon bKa' brgyud pa, he became a major disciple of his. His monk name was Rin chen 'od zer, and he was the fourth *gdan sa* of 'Og min mTshur phu. He founded 'Brong bu *dgon rnying*. Moreover, he bowed to the feet of many erudite men and mystics, such as the 'Bri gung *chos rje*, sTag lung thang pa, rgyal ba rMog cog pa, La yag pa, Dwags po 'Dul 'dzin, nye gnas gSal byang and Kha che pan chen. In particular, he obtained the realisation of *Phyag rgya chen po* from mDo bo ras [pa]. Since he protected dKar sleb phug pa at Jo mo gangs dkar of gTsang by meditating there, following the advice of rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa, he became known by his other name of rje Gangs dkar ba. At this holy place, he also had the vision of [deities] such as yi dam bDe mchog and Phag mo. All the phenomena of impermanent existence became visible as images on a mirror and were revealed to his mind as being empty. He hung his shawl on a ray of the sun. On one occasion, when he obtained the ordinary and supreme spiritual powers, a 'brong (“wild *g.yag*”) banged against his door. He looked [outside] and there was an extraordinary 'brong, its muzzle turned towards the south-west. He went [in that direction], and arrived at the bank of the ocean. Spreading out his cotton robe as a boat, (p.349) he crossed it. [He reached] a three-storeyed paradise in the centre of 500 towns with beautiful palaces”.

After receiving a prophecy by Gu ru Padma 'byung gnas at this paradise, he went to Byang Me mo brag [dkar]. The biography of him (ibid.p.349 lines 14–21) concludes as follows: “Chos rje de nyid kiyis Sog shod dang Shag chu'i rgyud la gdul bya yod pa mkhyen nas sa sprel zla ba bdun pa'i tshes bco lnga la phebs/ de ltar 'dir zhib pa ma bkod/ gzigs 'dod yod na zhib phra Me mo brag dkar

pa's disciple, namely Gya pa Gangs pa, died in earth bird 1249. Thus, the Gya pa Gangs pa blamed by Karma Pakshi for the disruption of his own succession in his old age could not

gyi gnas yig gro ba 'dren pa'i shing rta zhes pa der gzigs pa 'tshal/ de ltar 'Brong dur chos rje Gangs pa nyid kyi sku tshe hril por bstan 'gro'i phan bde mdzad 'phrin legs par bskyangs/ Bod rab byung bzhi pa'i sa stag (spyi lo 1257) lor dgung lo bryad cu gya gsum pa bzhes pa'i skabs su dgongs pa chos dbyings su thim mo//"; "The *chos rje* himself, knowing that there were people to be trained in Sog shod and Shag chu'i rgyud, came [to Byang Me mo brag] on the fifteenth of the seventh month of earth monkey (1248). Likewise, I do not write here in detail about it. If one wishes to read about it in detail, one can read it in the *gnas yig* of Me mo brag dkar entitled '*Gro ba'i 'dren pa'i shing rta* (the "horse cart that pulls sentient beings"). Likewise, *chos rje* Gangs pa, having excellently protected activities for the benefit of the teachings and sentient beings at 'Brong ngu (spelled so) for his entire life, disappeared into the eternal sphere when he was aged eighty-three (sic) in earth tiger (sic) of the fourth Tibetan *rab byung* (1257)".

A shorter version of his biography is found in Karma Tshed dbang kun khyab's *Karma Kam tshang bryud pa rin po che'i rnam thar* (p.56 lines 2–18) which says: "Chos rje Gya pa gangs par grags pa de ni/ yul Shangs/ rus Khyung po yin pa'i yab gSang sngags rnying ma ba zhig gi sras su shing mo lug gi la 'khrungs/ Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i drug cu rtsa drug pa yin/ rab tu byung ba'i mtshan Rin chen 'od zer/ khong rang gi mes Seng ge rgyal mtshan gyis/ rGya gar gyi pandi ta Phra la ring mo la gsan yang zer te/ mi rabs ya zung du Phur pa lha nag gi grub thob byung ba'i bryud yin yang chos kyi thugs cung ma tshim par rje Dus mkhyen Jo mo gangs la bzhugs dus mjal/ chos bka' nams zhus pas thugs nges chen po 'khrungs/ der grub pa mdzad pas Gangs dkar bar grags/ So Ye shes dbang phyug la sGyu 'phrul zhi khro'i skor gsan/ gzhan yang 'Bri khung chos rje/ sTag lung thang pa/ rMog lcog pa/ La yag pa/ Dwags po 'Dul 'dzin/ nye gnas gSal byang/ Kha che pan chen la sogs pa'i bla ma mang po bsten/ gtso bo mDo bo ras pa ste/ de las Phyang rgya chen poo rtogs pa brnyes/ Gya bar 'Brang bu'i dgon rnying btab/ de'i dbon bryud kiyis dus physis bar du dgon gsar rnying nams bzung nas dar rgyas che zhing/ Kam tshang gi zhabs tog che bar grags/ khong gi tsh'e'i mtha' la Hor dmag Bod du lhags/ rang lo bdon cu rtsa lnga pa sa mo bya la mTshur phur gshegs"; "The one known as *chos rje* Gya pa Gangs pa. His land was Shangs; his clan was Khyung po. He was the son of a [practitioner] of *gsangs sngags rnying ma*, and was born in wood female sheep (1175). Dus gsum mkhyen pa was sixty-six years old [at the time]. [Gya pa Gangs pa] took the *rab tu byung* vow from him and was given the name of Rin chen 'od zer. It is said that his ancestor Seng ge rgyal mtshan received teachings from the rGya gar pandi ta Phra la ring mo. This is the lineage in which appeared, a couple of generations [later], a *grub thob* of *Phur pa lha nag* (the "black deity of *Phur pa*"). Not feeling mentally satisfied [by the teachings [he had received]], [Gya pa Gangs pa] met rje Dus mkhyen when the latter was at Jo mo gangs. He received religious expositions, and a great and true faith was born in him. Having performed meditation there, he became known as Gangs dkar ba. He obtained the cycle of peaceful and wrathful deities of *sGyu 'phrul* from So Ye shes dbang phyug. Moreover, he attended upon many *bla ma*, such as the 'Bri gung *chos rje*, sTag lung thang pa, rMog lcog pa, La ya pa, Dwags po 'Dul 'dzin, nye gnas gSal byang, Kha che pan chen; and mainly mDo bo ras pa through whom he obtained realisations of *Phyang rgya chen po*. He founded the old monastery of rGya bar 'Brang bu. His lineage of successors during the later times controlled the old and new monastery, and greatly expanded it. It is well known that he rendered great service to the Kam tshang. At the end of his life, the Hor troops came to Tibet. When he was seventy-five years old (b.1175), in earth female bird (1249), he died at mTshur phu".

have only been an allusion to Dus gsum mkhyen pa's disciple. Although he referred to a single person as the cause of the disruption of his lineage, the second Karma pa's words were aimed against members of Gya pa Gangs pa's family.¹⁷

Passages in *Deb ther dmar po*, *IHo rong chos 'byung* and *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* show that a few members of Gya pa Gangs pa's family had monopolised the mTshur phu throne for some time after Dus gsum mkhyen pa's death.¹⁸ Karma Pakshi's reference to the intrigues

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17. The existence of the locality Gya pa in sNye mo should be traced at least to the *tsho* system introduced by the “men of dBus gTsang”, and in particular by those established by Klu mes and his disciples. Ne'u pandi ta, *sNgon gyi gam me tog phreng ba* (p.42 lines 15–16) has four *tsho* branching off from gZhu'i Kun dga' ra ba. They were gNam gyi rtse ldeng, Bar thang Bye, sNye mo sGo mo and Gya ba'i Dang gnya'. Dang gnya' in Gya ba of sNye mo belonged to the same locality (Gya pa) associated with the line of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's disciples of the late 12th and early 13th century.
18. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.87 lines 2–5): “mTshur phu'i gdan sa ni/ rGyal ba Gangs pa/ Rang byung Sangs rgyas bla ma rGya mtsho ba/ gdan sa Rin grags rnam kyis rim par bskyangs te/ rGyal ba gangs pa'i dbon bryud yin//”; “The mTshur phu *gdan sa* [after Dus gsum mkhyen pa] were as follows. rGyal (sic) ba Gangs pa, Rang byung Sangs rgyas bla ma rGya mtsho ba, and gdan sa Rin grags protected [mTshur phu] in succession. They were the lineage of successors in the rGyal ba Gangs pa [family]. Then Karma Pakshi came [to be the mTshur phu *gdan sa*]”.

IHo rong chos 'byung (p.234 line 18–p.235 line 2): “De'i skabs su sGam po nas La yag pa byon nas mTshur phu'i gdan sa lo ngo gsum mdzad/ khong byon pa'i rjes su Dus mkhyen gyi slob ma/ yul sTod lung gram pa ba/ bla ma Rang byung Sangs rgyas kyis gdan sa lo drug bdun mdzad/ de nas rGyal ba gangs pa/ de nas de'i dbon po rGya (p.235) mtsho bla ma/ de nas de'i dbon po Rin grags kyis gdan sa mdzad pa'i bar gyi skabs so//”; “At that time, La yag pa came from sGam po and was the mTshur phu *gdan sa* for three years. After he left, Dus [gsum] mkhyen [pa]'s disciple bla ma Rang byung Sangs rgyas, who was a Gram pa from the land sTod lung, was the *gdan sa* for six or seven years. Then rGyal (sic) ba Gangs pa, then his nephew rGya (p.235) mtsho bla ma and then the latter's nephew Rin [chen] grags [pa] were the *gdan sa* in the intermediate period”.

The “intermediate period” must be considered the lapse of years intervening between Dus gsum mkhyen pa's death and Karma Pakshi's accession.

rGya ba Gangs pa is called lHa sgom ras pa in the *rnam thar* that *IHo rong chos 'byung* dedicates to him (ibid. p.224 line 1). Concerning his abbotship of mTshur phu the same text (ibid. p.227 lines 10–12) says: “De nas sTod lung du rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa gshegs rjes su grogs po'i slob ma rnam skyong dgos gsungs nas mTshur phur lo gsum bzhugs nas gdan sa mdzad//”; “Then at sTod lung after the demise of rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1193) [lHa sgom ras pa from La yag] said: “I should protect the disciples of a friend (i.e. Dus gsum mkhyen pa)”. He was the *gdan sa* of mTshur phu for three years (1193–1195/6)”.

rTa tshag Tse dbang rgyal, the author of *IHo rong chos 'byung* (ibid. p.272,1–2), says then somewhat awkwardly: “mTshur phu'i gdan sa mdzad nas gshegs zhes thos//”; “I have heard that he was the abbot of mTshur phu, but then he died”.

The same text adds a short notion on a tradition pursued in his family. *rGyal ba gangs pa'i rnam thar* in *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.271,13–15) reads: “rGyal ba gangs pa ni/ Shangs kyi Khyung po/ myes Seng ge rgyal mtshan gyis rGya gar pandi ta Phra la ring mo las Phur pa lhan gcig gi grub dkyil rnam gsan nas mi rabs ya zung du Phur pa'i grub thob du grags//”; “As for rGyal ba gangs pa, Seng

which disrupted the transmission of the Black Hat indicates that the Gya pa Gangs pa people still exercised their influence in open opposition to the wish of the second Karma pa several decades after the death of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's disciple, and after masters from their family provisionally held the throne of mTshur phu. Members of the Gya pa Gangs pa succeeded in obliging the elderly Karma Pakshi to revise his plans and find an interlocutory solution for the custody of the Black Hat.

In a modern work, *Nags shod 'Bri ru'i lo rgyus*, there is a brief biography of Gya pa Gangs pa Rin chen 'od zer, who is said to have hailed from Gya pa ru (a family of nomadic origin) and to have been a disciple of Dus gsum mkhyen pa. His frequentation of a meditation cave at Jo mo Gangs dkar was the source of his appellative. His dates are given in the most erratic way in this text. I am inclined to believe provisionally that they should be 1175–1257.¹⁹ No

ge rgyal mtshan, Shangs kyi Khung po's ancestor, received the *sgrub* and *dkyil* ("sadhana and mandala") of Phur pa on the same occasion from pandi ta Phra la ring mo, so that his later generations are famous as *Phur pa grub thob-s*".

mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.872 line 23–p.873 line 4): "lHo pa thams cad mkhyen pa sGam po la thegs rjes sTod lungs gram du 'khrungs pa'i (p.873) Rang byung Sangs rgyas kyi gdan sa mdzad/ de nas Gya pa gangs pa/ de nas rGya mtsho bla mas mdzad de 'di gsum kha rje Dus mkhyen gyi dn-gos slob yin/ de nas gdan sa Rin grags kyi mdzad/ phyi ma gsum kha 'khrungs yul Gya pa'i 'brog pa yin de nas Karma pa phebs pa yin no//"; "After the lHo pa thams cad mkhyen pa went to sGam po, Rang byung Sangs rgyas, who was born at sTod lungs Gram, (p.873) became the *gdan sa*. Then Gya ba Gangs pa and then rGya mtsho bla ma were [the *gdan sa*]. These three were direct disciples of Dus [gsum] mkhyen [pa]. Then Rin [chen] grags [pa] was the *gdan sa*. The latter three were 'brog pa from Gya ba. Then, rje Karma pa came [to mTshur phu]"

These sources have rather diverging assessments of the succession to the mTshur phu throne after Dus gsum mkhyen pa's death. *lHo rong chos 'byung* has La yag pa as the immediate successor to Dus gsum mkhyen pa, whereas *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* considers Rang byung Sangs rgyas to be the first abbot after the founder of mTshur phu.

Early throne holders of mTshur phu, disciples of Dus gsum mkhyen pa, were 'brog pa-s who belonged to the Gya pa ru ba of sNye mo (also see the next note).

19. Gya pa Gangs pa Rin chen 'od zer's birth year is given as 1187. However, since Dus gsum mkhyen pa, the teacher of Gangs pa after the latter studied with his father, died in 1193, it is not tenable that Gangs pa could become the recipient of several important Karma pa transmissions, as said in the next, at the tender age of seven or even before. The 1175 birth date is more likely, and he would have still been a very young man when he received those important transmissions from Dus gsum mkhyen pa. The death date is even more controversial. He is said to have died when he was eighty-three years old, which would be either 1269, if he were born in 1187; or 1257, if he was more likely born in 1175. The author of *Nags shod 'Bri ru'i lo rgyus* says that he died in 1257, but adds problematically that the year of his death was earth tiger, which is 1278. Confusion reigns supreme.

I opt for 1175–1257 for Gya pa Gangs pa's life on the basis of the precise date—the fifteenth of the seventh month of earth monkey 1248—of his arrival at 'Brong ngu/'Brong bu in Nags shod, where he founded a *dgon pa* in the same year. He laid its foundations at the age of seventy-five. Were he born in 1187, he could not have founded this monastery in 1248 but in 1261. Born in 1175 he founded 'Brong ngu/'Brong bu in 1248.

other clue is given on his ties with mTshur phu except that Gya pa Gangs pa is correctly said to have been the fourth abbot of the monastery, the first obviously being Dus gsum mkhyen pa, the next before him being La yag pa and Rang byung Sangs rgyas according to the *mkhan rabs* of *lHo rong chos 'byung*, which seems to be the most accurate (see n.18). Having died in 1257, Gya pa Gangs pa Rin chen 'od zer could not have been succeeded by two members of his family, (rGya mtsho bla ma and the latter's nephew Rin [chen] grags [pa]), as abbots of mTshur phu before Karma Pakshi's takeover in 1244 or around that time (see n.19 and n.59), had he relinquished his chair at the time of death. He manifestly abdicated the throne of mTshur phu in favour of rGya mtsho bla ma before his passing.

There are no clues as to what led him to nurture open hostility towards Karma Pakshi. His animosity may have been due to the fact that the second Karma pa took over the throne of mTshur phu, thereby barring it to members of his family (see again n.19 and n.59). Gya pa Gangs pa's death date—either 1249 or 1257—is, however, rather irrelevant to the issue of the direct disruption of the Zhwa nag pa lineage as abbots of mTshur phu, for he died way before the second Karma pa approached his own end; still, his enmity was instrumental in leading his progeny to disrupt succession among the holders in the possession of the Black Hat.

Padma dkar po chos 'byung offers one explanation of the matter when it says that Karma Pakshi had chosen a successor to himself but that the latter had died at the hands of the Gya pa *ru ba* (“those of the Gya pa nomadic encampment”) of sNye mo, members of Gya pa Gangs pa's family.²⁰ I do not know whether this clarification of the facts should be given credence. Neither Zla ba seng ge's *Urgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* nor the biographies of Karma Pakshi go to that extent, but all state that the intrigues of Gya pa Gangs pa were instrumental in creating difficulties in the lineage of the Karma Zhwa nag pa.

20. *Padma dkar po chos 'byung* (p.399 lines 5–12): “De'i dbon rgyud kyis bstan pa 'dzin pa zhiig 'ong rgyu dngos de sNye mo Gya pa'i ru ba dang thug pa'i 'thab gral du gshegs/ des grub chen rang mi gshegs gong du grub thob U rgyan pa rGya nag tu 'byon pa'i lam dBus brgyud rtsis pa/ Pakshis chos skyong rnam su U rgyan pa 'dir gdan drongs gsungs/ U rgyan pas kyang mkhyen nas mThsur phur phyogs byon/ der Karma pa'i gsung nas/ Gya pa byang pas gyu ba byas/ zhwa nag po can gyi brgyud pa bcad//”; “His (i.e. Karma Pakshi's) *dbon rgyud* (“successor from his progeny”) should have actually succeeded him as the holder of [his] teachings, [but] this one died in a strife against the sNye mo Gya pa ru ba. This one (i.e. Karma Pakshi) made a plan before the *grub chen's* own death, and while grub thob U rgyan pa was on his way to China via dBus, Pakshi told the various *chos skyong* to invite U rgyan pa there. Since U rgyan pa learned of this, he went to mTshur phu. There, Karma pa said: “Gya pa byang pa (sic) has engaged in intrigue (*gyu pa*). The lineage of the Black Hat holders is interrupted”.

By saying that the place of the Gya pa in sNye mo was a *ru ba*, Padma dkar po says that theirs was a nomadic encampment.

If *Padma dkar po chos 'byung* is to be believed, Karma Pakshi had originally opted for succession through an appointed lineage holder rather than through rebirth, as became customary among the successive Karma Zhwa nag pa. According to *Padma dkar po*, his choice was obstructed, and he had no option but to transfer himself to another body. Prone to elaborate events in peculiar ways, *Padma dkar po chos 'byung* expresses a view of the developments at mTshur phu that is doubtful to say the least. All that transpires from the earlier documents is that, aware of the troubles created by Gya pa Gangs pa, the elderly Karma pa was persuaded that no worthy person was left except U rgyan pa, whom he had provisionally selected to keep the Black Hat. U rgyan pa would secure succession by rebirth in the Zhwa nag lineage.

As a further development of the 1282 meeting at mTshur phu between Karma Pakshi and U rgyan pa, the second Karma pa gave him an important prophecy.²¹ He told him that someone from La stod would come in the future to wear the Hat. This must have been a little confusing

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21. Adding to the mystique of Karma Pakshi as a master of predictions and magical performances, a relic kept at mTshur phu, seen by Kah thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho (1880–1925), points to a demonstration of the Karma pa embodiment's stunning capacity to prognosticate the future, the basis of their rebirth system.

Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho's *dBus gTsang gnas yig* (*Gangs can rig mdzod* ed. p.85 line 20–p.86 line 3; Tashijong ed. p.119 lines 1–2) writes about it in an inventory of extraordinary relics kept the *dgon pa*: “Grub chen Karma Pakshi'i Karma pa sku phreng lung bstan 'dra dang/ gser gyi mtshan bcas sMan bris lta (p.86) bur phyag bris gngang ba'i nang mKha' khyab rdo rje'i bar dang/ de nas bDe ba'i rdo rje/ Khyab bdag rdo rje/ dPal ldan rdo rje/ mTha' yas rdo rje dang bcas sku mtshan thams cad rang gi phyag bris/”; “Grub chen Karma Pakshi's prophetic portraits of the lineage of the Karma pa (i.e. the Zhwa nag pa). [Their] names [are written] in gold and [painted in a manner] resembling the sMan bris [style]. (p.86) Among [all the embodiments] he personally depicted [are the Karma Kam tshang rebirths] up to mKha' khyab rdo rje (the fifteenth Karma pa; 1871–1922), and then bDe ba'i rdo rje, Khyab bdag rdo rje, dPal ldan rdo rje and mTha' yas rdo rje. The body and names of all of them have been personally painted by him”.

Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho talks about two distinct layers of work. He attributes one to Karma Pakshi who would have painted his successors in the Zhwa nag line of rebirths up to the fifteenth Karma pa, and another one, not attributed to anyone in particular, concerning other members of the Kam tshang school—bDe ba'i rdo rje, Khyab bdag rdo rje, dPal ldan rdo rje and mTha' yas rdo rje.

A major weak point that would disprove his attribution of the *thang ka* to Karma Pakshi is that Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho thought that the *thang ka* was painted in the [Old?] sMan bris style conceived way after the life of the second Karma pa. This is a clue in favour of a late execution, provided that his assessment of the *thang ka*'s style is reliable.

H.H. the seventeenth Karma pa, O rgyan 'phrin las rdo rje has expressed doubts about the authenticity of the attribution to Karma Pakshi. Nowhere in the biographies of Karma Pakshi and in his *rang rnam*—the seventeenth Karma pa's point is—there is evidence that he painted this *thang*

ka. For what I have read about Karma Pakshi, I think that this view is correct. But it is not definitive. One cannot be entirely safe with arguments *ab absentia*.

H.H. the seventeenth Karma pa believes that the *thang ka* was painted by the thirteenth Karma pa bDud 'dul rdo rje (1733–1797) on the basis of a statement by the latter's disciple gNas sgo Karma gZhan phan rgya mtsho in his text known in short as *Ma rtogs log rtogs* (a text that aims at “removing misunderstandings and mistakes”). The passage in question (f.5b lines 4–5) says: “Khyad par rje btsun rdzogs pa'i Sangs rgyas Karma pa bcu gsum bDud 'dul rdo rjes na rim bcu bdun gyi thang sku mdzad de bcu bzhi par Theg mchog gi rdo rje sogs na rim bzhi'i mtshan bcos stsal yod//”; “In particular the *rje btsun* who is a perfected Sangs rgyas, the thirteenth Karma pa bDud 'dul rdo rje, painted the *thang ka* which depicts the lineage of seventeen [Zhwa nag pa]. The names of [further] four, such as Theg mchog gi rdo rje (the fourteenth), are indicated [on the painting] in succession from the fourteenth [Karma pa] onwards. Perhaps fifteen Karma pa are depicted in the painting and only the names of the other four are inscribed in it, or else perhaps the last four from the 13th to the 17th are painted in sMan bris style.

This means that, in the view of gNas sgo Karma gZhan phan rgya mtsho, the thirteen Karma pa painted the portrait of his predecessors, and wrote down the names of future four Karma Zhwa nag pa—still an extraordinary exercise of prophetic power. Hence none of the Karma pa up to the fifteenth would have been prophetically painted by Karma Pakshi.

There is a major discrepancy between the statements of gNas sgo Karma gZhan phan rgya mtsho and Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho who mentions the portraits of Kam tshang members other than the Zhwa nag pa whereas the thirteenth Karma pa's disciple says that the names of four other Zhwa nag pa—hence inclusive of the present embodiment—were written on the painting.

The opinion of gNas sgo Karma gZhan phan rgya mtsho does not substantiate the successive Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho's inspection of the mTshur phu *thang ka* that occurred over one century thereafter. It could be that monks at mTshur phu made Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho believe fideistically that the *thang ka* was a prophetic opus of the second Karma pa, but the words of gNas sgo Karma gZhan phan rgya mtsho do not settle the matter. He, too, does not provide any evidence to prove that the painting was the opus of bDud 'dul rdo rje in support of his view. This lack of evidence does not transfer reliability in favour of the notion of the school's tradition that the portraits of the thirteenth Karma pa incarnations were painted by Karma Pakshi.

Even though Karma Pakshi might not have been the author of any stunning prophetic performance spanning a great number of centuries, the painting, if by bDud 'dul rdo rje, proves that he too was endowed with an extraordinary capacity to see the future like Dus gsum mkhyen pa. It is unfortunate that there is no idea of the *thang ka*'s whereabouts after mTshur phu was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Most likely it suffered the same fate but physical inspection perhaps would not solve the problem unless inscriptional evidence would have been present on the *thang ka*. By seeing it, one could have at least realised if it was painted in an ancient or modern style, which would enable a gross distinction between the assessments of gNas sgo Karma gZhan phan rgya mtsho and Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho. That much for one more Chinese desecration of the Tibetan cultural patrimony.

One point is set in general. The concept behind the exercise of prophecy by means of painting a *thang ka* was a heritage of the Karma pa. Once again approaching a question concerning the early Karma pa rebirths, a rationale attitude that would consider the portraits of the Karma Zhwa nag pa re-embodiments *a posteriori* painting is in contrast with the suggestion of a fideistic belief that they were the opus of Karma Pakshi. The rationale view of gNas sgo Karma gZhan phan rgya mtsho was

for U rgyan pa, who was himself from La stod. His *gdan sa*, sBud skra, near Nya nam (also spelled gNya' nang, among several other variants), was in the region of La stod lHo.²²

Eventually, U rgyan pa left mTshur phu with the Black Hat, wondering about the exact implications of the words which Karma Pakshi uttered to him after giving him several empowerments. The elderly Karma pa had finally added that it was U rgyan pa's duty to preserve the Black Hat and thus the tradition he had been entrusted with.²³ Noticeably, Karma Pakshi made no mention of his own reincarnation, but for the cryptical statement: "I will meet you again soon".²⁴ From

not followed at mTshur phu when Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho was told that it was a prophetic *thang ka*. gNas sgo Karma gZhan phan rgya mtsho's judgement may be legitimate, but the Karma pa tradition favoured the view that Karma Pakshi painted the *thang ka* that would envision the physiognomic features of his future rebirths in an exercise of ulterior perception.

22. The later Karma pa biographical works are more forthcoming than *Zla ba seng ge's U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa*. For example, Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas (*Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar in Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.145 line 5) took the trouble to clarify immediately that Karma Pakshi's prophecy "someone from La stod would come to wear the Hat" was issued with Rang byung rdo rje in mind.
23. *Zla ba seng ge, U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (p.142 lines 2–4): "sKu gsum ngo sprod gnang nas thugs hur mdzad nas 'di gsung/ 'o skol gnyis skye ba du ma'i dpon slob yin/ nga'i mgo 'don yang khyed kyis byed dgos/ khyed kyis gdul bya nyi ma lho rgyud na yod pas/ der nga'i rGyal ba rgya mtsho dang/ sNying po yi ge drug ma dang/ sKu gsum ngo sprod kyis 'gro don mdzad do/ dge bsnyen rDo rje rgyal po grub chen pa'i 'phrin las bsgrubs cig ces yang yang gsung/"; "As [Karma Pakshi] diligently imparted *sKu gsum ngo sprod* ("Introduction to the *trikaya* system") [to U rgyan pa], he added: "The two of us were master and disciple for many lives. You must preserve my [spiritual] guidance. Since the people to be trained by you are in *nyi ma lho rgyud* ("in the south"), you must benefit sentient beings there with my *rGyal ba rgya mtsho, sNying po yi ge drug pa* and *sKu gsum ngo sprod*. dGe bsnyen rDo rje rgyal po is obligated to support U rgyan pa's activities". This he said again and again".
24. A passage in *Deb ther dmar po* (p.94 lines 15–21) elucidates the situation at mTshur phu in the interim between the death of the second Karma pa and the birth and coming of age of the third Karma pa: "Karma Pakshi'i zhal slob ni/ grub thob chen po O rgyan pa/ Byang sems rGyal ye/ bla ma O rgyan rin po che/ bla ma mNyan ras/ rin po che gNas nang pa/ bla ma gNam mtsho ba la sogs pa mang po byon/ gsam gtan ldan pa Byang chub rin chen sku skye ba snga phyi gnyis la chos thob/ grub thob chen po gshegs dus O rgyan rin po che mTshur phu'i gdan sar bkod/ de nas gNyan ras kyis cung zad mdzad/ de nas bla ma gNas nang pas mdzad do/ gNyan ras ma gtogs pa gnyis Karma Pakshi'i dbon brgyud yin/"; "The direct disciples of rje Karma Pakshi were grub thob chen po O rgyan pa, Byang sems rGyal ye, bla ma O rgyan rin po che, bla ma mNyan ras (spelled so), rin po che gNas nang pa and bla ma gNam mtsho ba. There were many of them. Byang chub rin chen, who attained *bsam gtan* ("samadhi"), received teachings in both the previous and successive lives [of the Karma pa?]. When the *grub thob chen po* (i.e. Karma Pakshi) died, O rgyan rin po che was appointed *gdan sa* of mTshur phu. Then gNyan ras was *gdan sa* for a little while. Then bla ma gNas nang pa acted as [*gdan sa*]. If not gNyan ras (spelled so), the [other] two belonged to the lineage of Karma Pakshi's successors from his progeny (*dbon rgyud*)".

This passage makes it clear again that, despite the troubles created by Gya pa Gangs pa to which Karma Pakshi himself had referred (see above n.15 and n.20), the smooth transition on the abbatial chair of mTshur phu was ensured by the second Karma pa's disciples. The identity of bla ma O rgyan

the way these events are treated in the sources, it seems that U rgyan pa had realised that Karma Pakshi would take rebirth.²⁵

U rgyan pa's understanding becomes more tangible when it was reported to him that the child Rang byung rdo rje was on his way to sBud skra. The impression is that, when he heard that Rang byung rdo rje was coming, U rgyan pa realised that the circle was finally going to be closed and the mysterious unfolding of Karma Pakshi's succession would be played out in front of him. This is why U rgyan pa and Rang byung rdo rje went straight into a dialogue on *karma* and reincarnation.

The account of the meeting with the young Rang byung rdo rje at U rgyan pa's monastery in water snake 1293 mentioned in Zla ba seng ge's *U rgyan pa'i rnam thar rgyas pa* demonstrates, at least indirectly, that the Black Hat remained in U rgyan pa's possession for over ten years (1282–1293).

pa rin po che, the first regent of the mTshur phu throne after Karma Pakshi's death, is only superficially misleading. In fact, he cannot be confused with grub thob U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal/Seng ge dpal, not only because the latter is mentioned separately in the same passage but also because he was a 'Brug pa. School's affiliation similarly rules out the identification of bla ma O rgyan rin po che with another U rgyan pa (1229–1313) who lived in the same period (*IHo rong chos 'byung* p.440 line 16–p.441 line 4). The latter was a disciple of Pha rin po che (1222–1292) (*ibid.* p.440 lines 4–15), a disciple of 'Gar dam pa Chos sdings pa (1180–1240), both of whom were 'Bri gung pa. Bla ma O rgyan pa rin po che was dBon rin po che of other texts.

25. U rgyan pa, too, is documented in the Karma pa literature as having taken rebirth. His next incarnation was a disciple of Rang byung rdo rje, thus perpetuating the chain of re-embodiments who alternated with the incarnations of the Karma pa in the role of master and disciple. See, e.g., *Rang byung rdo rje'i rnam thar* in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.933 lines 15–16): “O rgyan pa'i sku'i skye ba byon pa gtsor gyur pa'i skal ldan mtha' yas pa rjes su bzung//”; “Uncountable fortunate beings became [Rang byung rdo rje's] followers, the main one of them being the incarnation of O rgyan pa”; and *ibid.* (p.946 lines 6–9): “Zhal slob ni nyid kyi bla ma kun gyis kyang tshur chos gsan te gus pa tshad med par mdzad/ gSang phu Ne'u thog Gung thang chos 'khor gling/ bDe skyor zul gsum la sogs pa'i gdan sa ba snga phyi dang slob dpon mtha' dag/ O rgyan pa'i sprul sku/ bram ze mGon po/ rMog lcog pa//”; “Concerning [Rang byung rdo rje's] direct disciples, all his *bla ma*-s received teachings in exchange and had unlimited devotion for him. The earlier and later abbots of gSang phu Ne'u thog, Gung thang Chos skor gling and bDe skyor zul, altogether three; all the *slob dpon*-s; the incarnation of O rgyan pa; bram ze mGon po; rMog lcog pa [and others were so many that it is impossible to mention them all]”.

The rebirth of U rgyan pa is again mentioned in a passage of in the biography of Grags pa seng ge's (1283–1349) in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* which also includes him among the disciples of the first Zhwa dmar pa, but once more his name is not given (*ibid.* p.933 lines 15–16: “O rgyan pa'i sku'i skye ba byon pa gtsor gyur pa'i skal ldan mtha' yas rjes su bzung//”; “Uncountable fortunate beings became his followers, the main one of them being the incarnation of O rgyan pa”).

The question of the Hat

This leads to the topic of the Black Hat itself. The Karma pa literature recognises a few traditions concerning the grant of the Black Hat on various Karma pa incarnations. The best known tradition says that the Hat, made with the hair of 100,000 billion *mkha' 'gro ma*, was given to the first Karma pa, bla ma dBu se known as Dus gsum mkhyen pa, by the *dakini*-s and the deities of the cycle of 'Khor lo sDom pa.²⁶

There is also another suggestive and rather deviant tradition concerning Dus gsum mkhyen pa receiving the Hat. *lHo rong chos 'byung*, indisputably an authoritative source on the history of the bKa' brgyud pa, says that the Black Hat was given to Dus gsum mkhyen pa by the great *siddha* Sa ra ha, who appeared to him in a vision.²⁷ The time frame of the conferral varies considerably between the two versions; *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* states that the grant by the fairies occurred in wood snake 1125 when Dus gsum mkhyen pa was ordained at the age of sixteen, whereas *lHo rong chos 'byung* dates Sa ra ha's endowment to 1164, when he was a mature master aged fifty-five.

26. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.860 lines 2–4) is the Karma pa source which states the Black Hat was given to Dus gsum mkhyen pa when he took the monastic vow at the age of sixteen in wood snake 1125: “gTsug phud dor ba'i tshe Ye shes kyi dā ki ma dang 'Khor lo sdom pa'i lha tshogs kyi mkha' 'gro'i dbu skra las byas pa'i zhwa nag gi cod pan bcings//”; “When he was tonsured (*gtsug phud dor ba'i tshe*), the *da ki ma*-s of wisdom and the cycle of the 'Khor lo sDom pa deities placed [on his head] the Black Hat crown made of the hair of the *mkha' 'gro*-s”.

Also see *mTshur phu dgon gyi lo rgyus* (p.239 lines 10–13) which reads almost verbatim as *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*: “gTsug phud dor ba'i tshe ye shes kyi dā ki ma dang dpal 'Khor lo sdom pa'i lha tshogs kyi mkha' 'gro ma bye ba phrag sum cu rtsa gnyis kyi dbu sgra nyag ma re las byas pa'i Indra bhu ti'i zha nag gi bco pan dbu la gsol te dbang bskur//”; “When he was tonsured, the *da ki ma*-s of wisdom and the cycle of the 'Khor lo sDom pa deities placed on top of his head Indra bhu ti's Black Hat crown made of the every strand of hair of thirty-two billion *mkha' 'gro ma* and enthroned him”.

The association of the Black Hat with Indra bodhi is worth stressing, since it is consonant with U rgyan the land of the *mkha' 'gro ma*-s.

27. *lHo rong chos 'byung* (p.232 lines 8–13): “Kam por phebs/ der thugs dam dang yon tan dpag tu med pa thugs la 'krungs/ gnas sgo nang thams cad kyi bdag por gyur/ de'i skabs shig tu bram ze chen po Sa ra ha gcer bu rus pa'i rgyan gyis brgyan pa/ zhwa nag po khyung gshog mnabs pa gcig zhal gzigs nas gdams pa ya zung zhig dang dbu zhwa gngang bas zhwa chos kyang gsungs nas de phyin dbu zhwa mdzad pa yin//”; “[In wood male monkey 1164], [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] went to Kam po [gnas nang]. There he meditated and uncountable mystical accomplishments were born in his mind. He became the lord of all the inner doors of the holy place (*gnas sgo nang* paraphrasing the name gNas nang). On one occasion, he had a vision of bram ze chen po Sa ra ha sporting ornaments of bone on his naked body and wearing a Black Hat with Garuda wings. [Sa ra ha] gave [him] unique instructions and the Black Hat. He told him: “Wear the Hat”. From then on, he was the one who wore the Hat”.

As stated above, the Black Hat is also said to have been given to the second Karma pa, Karma Pakshi, at the Mongol court. Both grants are equally revered and considered authentic by the followers of the Karma pa school. A few other major conferrals are recorded in the sources. One of two important grants of the Black Hat was given to the fifth Karma pa, De bzhin gshegs pa (1384–1415) by the emperor Yung-lo (see, e.g., *mTshur phu dgon gyi dkar chag* p.240 lines 18–21) and the other to the seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506), by the Ta-Ming emperor Ching-ha (spelled so) (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* p.1068 lines 8–10; *Chos grags rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.551 lines 5–6). They will be discussed soon below.

Several other notions need to be introduced here in order to be able to study the question of the Hat worn by the Karma Zhwa nag pa in greater depth. In his autobiography, Karma Pakshi introduces a significant distinction when he says that the Hat given by Sa ra ha to Dus gsum mkhyen pa was the *dBu zhwa nag po gser mdongs can* (“the Black Hat with golden radiance”) made with a single piece of black cloth.²⁸

Karma 'Phrin las pa (1456–1539), an eminent author of the Karma pa school, has a tantalising and masterly treatment of the identity and features of the Black Hat in his work entitled *mGur 'bum dang dris lan*. He talks about two Hats worn by the first Karma pa. One was the Hat in, conspicuously, a dark blue colour, used by him inasmuch as he was the pursuer of the deeds accomplished by the various Sangs rgyas and Byang chub sems dpa' of the past.²⁹ This was an exoteric Hat which distinguished him and the tradition initiated by him from those of other masters.

Karma 'Phrin las pa also attaches to the wearing of this Hat, symbolising Dus gsum mkhyen pa's fulfilment of the same *karma* as the Bygone Ones, the origin of the name Karma pa adopted by him and the successors in his school. This deviates from the statement found in

28. *Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam* (p.85 lines 5–6): “Bram ze chen po Sa ra ha dang ngo bo gcig pa'i phyir na/ / chos nyid mi 'gyur ba'i' brdar ming nag po'i dbu zha gser mdong can/ sngon chad 'Dzam bu gling na gar yang ma byung ba bsnams/'”; “In order to [show] his substantial identity with bram ze chen po Sa ra ha, [and] as symbol (*brdar*) of the immovable ultimate nature of phenomena, [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] wore the *dBu zha nag po gser mdongs can* (“the Black Hat with a golden glare”) in a single black piece, which had no counterpart anywhere in 'Dzam bu gling in former times”.

29. In this passage of his *mGur 'bum dang dris lan* (p.163 lines 1–3) Karma 'Phrin las pa introduces the issue of the Hat paraphrasing his own name: “rJe de nyid kyis Sa ra ha'i sprul par zhal gyis 'ches shing/ phyogs bcu'i Sangs rgyas dang Byang chub sems dpa' thams cad kyi 'phrin las kyi bdag por mngon par dbang bkur nas/ Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi phri las pa mnga' gsol/ de'i phrin las pa mdzad pa'i brdar dbu zhwa mthon mthing gi mngangs kyis mdzes pa 'di nyid dbu'i gtsug tu bkod bas na/ rGya skad Karmā zhes pa Bod skad du las zhes bya bar bsgyur dgos pas/ Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi phrin las pa yin pa'i don gyis Karma pa zhes grags so//; “This *rje* proclaimed he was the incarnation of Sa ra ha. Since he was empowered as the lord of the '*phrin las* (“deeds”) of all the Sangs rgyas and Byang chub sems dpa' of the Ten Directions, [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] was blessed as the *phrin* (spelled so) *las pa* (“pursuer of the deeds”) of all the Sangs rgyas. As a symbol of his acting as pursuer of these deeds (*'phrin las pa*), a dark blue Hat beautified with glowing [decorations] (*dbu zhwa mthon mthing gis mdangs gyis mdzes pa*) was placed on the crown of his head. Given that *karma*

the writings of a master active some time later, Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (1523–1596) (see below n.38), who, incidentally, did not belong to the Karma pa school.

The same Black Hat assigned by Karma Pakshi to grub chen U rgya pa in his autobiography (i.e. the *dBu zha nag po gser mdongs can*) is considered by Karma 'Phrin las pa to be the one mystically given to Dus gsum mkhyen pa as the sign of his spiritual achievement and his karmic status as Sa ra ha himself.

Karma 'Phrin las pa substantially confirms the meaning of the Black Hat attributed to it by Karma Pakshi, but with two differences, one pertaining to the actual making of the Hat, the other to the circumstances under which the Hat was obtained by Dus gsum mkhyen pa. Karma 'Phrin las pa confirms the special golden radiance (or decorations?) of the Black Hat, an aspect pointed out by Karma Pakshi. He is keen to recall that Dus gsum mkhyen pa himself described the Hat as being given to him by the *mkha' 'gro ma*-s, whereas others—and this could be a not too outspoken reference to the statement of Karma Pakshi—hold that it was bestowed upon him by Sa ra ha and was a symbol of Mi skyod ba (spelled so in the passage of his autobiography).³⁰

Hence an important set point in the Karma pa school is that its tradition identifies the two primordial Hats entrusted to Dus gsum mkhyen pa: the sectarian Hat and the highly esoteric Hat. The difference in their appearance is obvious at a glance, the first being dark blue, the other black.³¹ Another physical description of the Black (i.e. esoteric) Hat is mentioned by *lHo rong chos 'byung* which says that it had Garuda wings (see above n.27).

in the Indian language is invariably translated as *las* in Tibetan, on the basis of the meaning [of this word] signifying that he was the pursuer of [the deeds of] all the Sangs rgyas, he became known as Karma pa”.

30. *Karma 'Phrin las pa'i mgur 'bum dang dris lan* (p.163 lines 3–4): “Rigs bdag Mi skyod pa mtshon pa'i brdar dbu zhwa nag po bzhes pa'i dang po yin pas/ Zhwa nag can du grags pa'i thog ma yang 'di yin no/ dbu zhwa de la ni 'ga' zhig gis /Sa ra ha'i dbang gzhu yin par 'dod la/ de nyid kyis na mkha' 'gro ma stong gi dbu skra la rgyu byas par yang grags so/ de ni sprul pa'i rnam thar te/ so so skye bo dag gis ni bsam gyis mi khyab bo//”; “Since there was [another Hat] which was the first to be known as dBu zhwa nag po, being an emblem symbolising (*mtshon pa'i brdar*) Mi skyod (spelled so) pa, the lord of the [*rdo rje*] family, it was the first time that [someone] (i.e. Dus gsum mkhyen pa) became known as Zhwa nag can. Concerning this Hat, some people agree that it was the *dbang gzhu* (“empowerment bow”) of Sa ra ha, whereas he himself (i.e. Dus gsum mkhyen pa) divulged that it was made with the hair of 1,000 *mkha' 'gro ma*. As to this [Hat], [what] the biography of this incarnation (i.e. Dus gsum mkhyen pa) says about it remains incomprehensible to ordinary people”.
31. As for the location of these two Hats in his days, Karma 'Phrin las pa (*mGur 'bum dang dris lan* p.163 lines 4–5) has the following to say, indicative of the high reverence and secrecy with which they were kept: “De dag mTshur phu'i mdzod nag na bzhugs par grags kyang/ kho bo cag gis ni mjal ba mgo ma thogs so//”; “Although these [two Hats] are known to be kept in the *mdzod nag* of mTshur phu, we were not able to see them”.

Views and facts preserved in the Karma pa tradition on Dus gsum mkhyen pa becoming the holder of the Black Hat pertain to the religious sphere and the circumstances under which the Hat was conferred upon its wearer, the first Karma Zhwa nag pa.

Karma 'Phrin las pa adds donations of the Hat that occurred in the mundane sphere and were awarded upon later Zhwa nag pa incarnations. He mentions two grants of the Hat. One, made of Mongol brocade was the grant to the fourth Karma pa Rol pa'i rdo rje (1340–1383) by the Hor emperor To gan thi mur. The other, made of Chinese *hra* (a type of fabric unknown to me), was given to the sixth Karma pa mThong ba don ldan (1416–1453) by the Ta-Ming emperor 'Cing-ha (spelled so).³² The latter bestowal is an oversight on the part of Karma 'Phrin las pa, for the Ta-Ming emperor 'Cing-ha ruled during the time of the successive Karma Zhwa nag pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho, to whom he gave the Hat.

The donations by secular rulers, to which at least one to De bzhin gshegs pa by the emperor Yung-lo should be added, represent a transfer to the secular sphere of earlier mystical endowments in favour of previous Karma pa incarnations by spiritual authorities—*mkha' 'gro ma*-s or grub chen Sa ra ha. They were an official recognition of that spiritual power in terms of secular status in the eyes of subsequent Chinese courts and the Tibetans in general. The double value of the Hat—in perfect concordance with the concept of *chos srid zung 'brel* practised by Tibetans, especially in later periods of their history—seems to be a doctrinal answer to the issue bitterly raised in later times by opposers of the Karma pa school, for one Tu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737–1802) (see above n.2), who dismissed the spiritual significance of the Black Hat.

The modern work penned by Grags pa yongs 'dus, known in brief as *dBu zhwa'i bshad pa* (“Discourse on the Hat”), and entitled in full *dBu zhwa mthong sgrol rin po che'i bshad pa tshogs gnyis gru gzings bzhugs so* (“Discourse on the precious Hat which bestows liberation upon viewing it”), has an interesting explanation of the symbology of the Hat.³³ His “dis-

32. *Karma 'Phrin las pa'i mgur 'bum dang dris lan* (p.163 lines 5–6): “Da lta sGar na ni rje Rol pa rdo rjes la Hor gyi rgyal po Tho gan thi mur gyis phul ba Hor gos las grub pa zhig dang/ rje mThong ba don ldan la rGya nag gi rgyal po 'Ching hwas phul ba hra las grub pa rin po che du mas spras pa 'Dam gling g.yas gzhag tu grags pa zhig ste gnyis bzhugs//”; “At present, there are two [Hats], the one given at sGar (“Karma pa’s encampment”) to rje Rol pa'i rdo rje by Hor gyi rgyal po Tho gan thi mur, made of Mongol brocade, and the one given to rje mThong ba don ldan given by the Chinese emperor 'Cing-ha, made of *hra* (?) and inlaid with many jewels, known as 'Dzam gling g.yas shag (“right side of 'Dzam gling (an expression of marvellousness and uniqueness).

33. The same author offers a brief assessment of the masters who originally held the Hat before Dus gsum mkhyen pa, shifting the matter back in time into the realm of Buddhist mythology. Grags pa yongs 'dus, *dBu zhwa'i bshad pa* (f.9a lines 2–4) says: “sNgon sPyan ras gzigs kyi mam 'phrul drang srong dKon pa skyes zhes bya ba rdo rje lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin mnga' brnyes pa'i tsho phyogs bcu'i rgyal ba sras dang bcas pa pas mkha' 'gro ma 'bum gyi dbu sgra las byas pa'i dpa' rtags kyi cod pan sbyi bor bcings pa nas bzung/ byang sems Blo gros rin chen grub chen Sa ra ha pa sogs dang/ dpal ldan Dus gsum mkhyen pa sogs skye ba'i phreng bar ye shes rang snang gi tshul du dbu zhwa 'di nyid 'bral

course” is centred on the Dark Blue Hat, the one which, according to Karma ’Phrin las pa, was bestowed upon Dus gsum mkhyen pa exoterically rather than esoterically, as a sign of him as a pursuer of activities falling within the Buddhist realm, in particular that of the Great Vehicle.

In a passage appearing in the addendum to his *dBu zhwa’i bshad pa* (additional f.1b line 1–f.2a line 1), Grags pa yongs ’dus decodes the symbolical meaning of the various parts and decorations of the Hat:

“bZung du mas mjal rgyu yod pa ’di byung/ ’di nyid la gang zag so so’i las skal dang mthun par mthong snang mi ’dra ba ngu ma yong gi yod/ kha shas gyis dbu zhwa nyis brtsigs bzhes pa dang/ la las ’od kyi gong bur gyur pa/ ’ga’ res ’ja’ ’od kyi klong na gsal ba sogs shin tu mang ’de’i mtshon don yang/ mdog mthing nag tu snang ba ni/ chos nyid la ’gyur ba med pa’i brda dang/ sku gsum lhun gyis grub pa’i brdar rtse mo gsum du snang ba/ tshad med bzhis ’gro ba rjes su ’dzin bzhi brdar/ ngo sgo gru bzhi pa la sna tshogs rdo rje rgya gram gyis mtshan pa ni phrin las bzhis gdul bya’i don spyod pa dang/ sprin ris kyis brgyan pa ni/ thugs rje phrin las phyogs ltung med pas kun la kyab ba’i brda dang/ thabs shes zung du ’jug pa’i rang rtags su khyung gshog gis mdzes pa/ chos sku’i rgyal sar dbang brnyes shing/ gcig shes kun grol gyi mkhyen pa’i rtsal rdzogs te ’od gsal ’khor yug gis ting ’dzin la dbang ’byor ba’i rtags su nyi zla nor (f.2a) bu’i tog gis spras pa sogs ye shes kyi rol pa ’gog tu med pa kho na’o”;

“There are many variations in the way people see [the Hat] according to their *karma* and fortune. Some see [the Karma pa] wearing two Hats placed on top of one another. Some see it transformed into a globe of light. Some see it in the space of a rainbow. There are very many [ways of seeing it]. Concerning its symbolical significance, its dark blue colour symbolises the unchangeable *dharmadhatu* (*chos nyid*). Its three peaks represent the spontaneously created (*lhun gyis grub pa*) *sku gsum/ trikaya*. Above the [main] square part [of the Hat] with doors (*ngo sgo*), symbolising those who look after sentient beings by means of the “four immeasurables” (i.e. *byams pa* “kindness”, *thugs rje* “compassion”, *dga’ ba* “happiness”, and *btang snyoms* “equanimity”), the *rdo rje rgya gram*, which adorns it with various [other decorations], symbolises benefitting the people to be trained by way of the four actions (*’phrin las bzhi: zhi ba, rgyas pa, dbang ba, drag po*). The decoration in the form of cloud motifs symbolises the universal pervasion of impartial compassionate activities. The beauty of the Khyung wings is the specific sign of the combination of *thabs* and *shes* [*rab*]. The jewel finial with sun and moon is a sign of the realisation of the power of *chos sku’i rgyal sa* (“the *dharmakaya* realm”) and the perfection of the skill of knowing how to free everyone [by means of] the understanding of a single

med du bzhugs/”;

“In antiquity, when drang srong dKon pa skyes, an incarnation of sPyan ras gzigs, experienced bliss like a *rdo rje*, the Phyogs bcu’i rgyal ba sras placed on his head the Hat, made of the hair of 100,000 *mkha’ ’gro ma*, as a sign of his power. From that [occasion] on, along a lineage of births, such as Byang sems Blo gros rin chen, grub chen Sa ra ha pa and others as well as dpal ldan Dus gsum mkhyen pa and others, this Hat, an expression of spontaneous wisdom, was inseparable [from them]”.

See *mTshur phu dgon pa’i lo rgyus* (n.26 above) for an association of the Black Hat with Indra bodhi before it was bestowed to Dus gsum mkhyen pa.

word. The circle of radiant light is a sign of the mastery of *samadhi*. The inlays of the sun and moon (f.2a) and the jewel finial, indisputably, are nothing but the merriment of wisdom (*ye shes kyi rol pa*)”.

Another statement found in *dBu zhwa'i bshad pa* according to which the Karma pa, when he wears the Hat, actually wears two of them, has its historical roots in the 15th century. This is a tradition that—Grag pa yong 'dus says—was initiated when the fifth Karma pa De bzhin gshegs pa was at the court of Yung-lo. The emperor saw, with the eyes of his devotion, that the Karma pa was invisibly wearing the Black Hat all the time and asked him to let him have one stitched after it to donate to him.³⁴

Grag pa yong 'dus adds that, many centuries later, the invisible Hat was seen by the thirteen Dalai Lama Thub bstan rgya mtsho (1876–1933), when he gave the monastic vows to the sixteenth Karma pa, Rig pa'i rdo rje (1921–1981), for he asked him why he was wearing two Hats at the same time, these being the physical Hat and the invisible Hat.³⁵

Thus, the Karma pa tradition recognises a noticeable number of Hats worn by the first six Karma Zhwa nag pa. Two Hats (a Black one and a Dark Blue one) were given to Dus gsum mkhyen pa; one seems to have been donated to Karma Pakshi either by Mo 'gor rgyal po or

34. Grags pa yongs 'dus, *dBu zhwa'i bshad pa* (f.9a line 6–f.9b line 3): “sKu phreng lnga pa De bzhin gshegs pa de nyid phrin las dus su smin pas rGya nag yul du bzhugs sor 'khod cing mchod gnas su gyur skabs// gnam bskos gong ma (f.9b) Tā ming Yun lo rgyal po de nyid kyi dad pa'i spyang ras yangs pos rgyun du dpal Karma pa chen po'i dbur mthong grol zhwa nag cig bzhes te bzhugs pa gzigs pas de la dpe bcol nas dbu zhwa zhig 'gro ba'i don du bzo rung bar gsol ba btang pa bzhin rung bar zhal gyis bzhes nas bzung/ bsod nams kyi zhing sar grub cing/ gdul bya thun mong ba'i ngor snang ba'o//”; “Due to the ripening of his actions, the fifth incarnation De bzhin gshegs pa set foot on the land of China, and when he became the *mchod gnas* (“officiating *bla ma*”) [of the emperor], the heavenly appointed emperor (f.9b) Ta-Ming Yun-lo (spelled so) rgyal po, seeing with his wide devotional sight that a Black Hat, which secured liberation upon viewing it, was constantly being worn on the head of dpal Karma pa chen po, he asked him whether, taking it as a model, he could make one [such] Hat for the benefit of sentient beings. Likewise, since he accepted his request, the paradise of merit was attained, and this became manifest before the eyes (*ngor*) of ordinary people to be trained”.

35. Grags pa yongs 'dus, *dBu zhwa'i bshad pa* (f.10b lines 2–5): “Da lta'i rgyal mchog bcu drug pa chen po 'di nyid gong sa thams cad mkhyen pa bstan pa yongs rdzogs kyi mnga' bdag 'phags mchog Phyag na padmo'i rnam 'phrul rgyal ba'i bstan pa la gzhan dring mi 'jogs pa'i thugs bskyed dang phrin las mi'i seng ge gnyis pa'i dad tshul can sku phreng bcu gsum pa chen po Thub bstan rgya mtsho mchog gi bdun dbu sgra gtsug phud bzhes 'bul ched/ sku bcar gnyang skabs/ gong sa rgyal ba'i dbang po mchog nas ye shes kyi gzigs par 'gob pa med pa'i tshul gyis/ Karma pa rin po ches dbu zhwa gnyis brtsegs shig zhes nas gang yin sungso//”; “When the hair of the present Victorious Great Sixteenth was tonsured on his *ushnisha* by the omniscient *gong sa* (i.e. the thirteenth Dalai Lama), the lord of all the teachings, the incarnation of the noble Phyag na padmo (“Lotus in Hand”), the one indisputably gracious to the teachings, possessing the nature of a second Lion of Mankind because of his thoughts and deeds, the Great Thirteenth, Thub bstan rgya mtsho, when [Rig pa'i rdo rje] approached him, the *gong sa*, the excellent one among the powerful Victorious Ones, having undeniably seen them with his wisdom eyes, said: “How is it, Karma pa rin po che, that you are wearing two Hats?!”.

by Se chen rgyal po; another two were the invisible Hat, allegedly seen by Yung-lo for the first time on De bzhin gshegs pa's head, and the one stitched by the emperor using the latter as a model; and, finally, the Hats given to Rol pa'i rdo rje by the Hor emperor To gan thi mur, and to mThong ba don ldan by the Ming emperor 'Cing-ha.³⁶

Concerning the performance of the Black Hat ritual, a fundamental practice of the Karma pa school based on the symbolical importance of this sacred object, the first recorded occasion on which Karma Pakshi granted the display of the Hat was at 'Dam [gzhung], the gateway to Central Tibet, on his way back from China. There he met all the religious and lay notables of Central Tibet, and showed the Black Hat to the congregation which marveled at the

36. One section of *Karma Kam tshang bla ma yab sras drug gi rnam thar* is another literary text dedicated to the Hat of the Karma Zhwa nag pa *bla ma*-s. The text specifies that it deals only with the *dbu zhwa mthon mthing ma* (the "dark blue Hat"). Its treatment is divided into two parts (beginning on p.11 line 4 and p.17 line 6). In the first part, the text traces conceptual and religious antecedents in India. In his commentary to *De ko na nyid*, entitled *rDo rje 'byung ba* (hence a work of the *rNal 'byor rgyud* class), Kun dga' snying po says that a Hat with a *rdo rje* was the headdress of the Great Ones (*Karma Kam tshang bla ma yab sras drug gi rnam thar* p.12 lines 2–4). Each class of *de bzhin gshegs pa*-s wore hats in one of the five colours, representing their family, of the fivefold system of the Tathagata-s (ibid. p.13 lines 6–7).

Karma Kam tshang bla ma yab sras drug gi rnam thar (p.14 lines 2–4) continues with an account of the circumstances surrounding how Dus gsum mkhyen pa came to wear the Hat, said to be the *dbu zhwa mthon mthing ma* made with the hair of the *mkha' 'gro ma*-s. Dark blue in colour, the *mthon thing ma* belongs to the family of rMi bskyod rdo rje.

The fact that the Hat made of the hair of the *dakini*-s is said to be dark blue is because the hair of the *mkha' 'gro ma*-s is that colour.

The second part of the treatment of the Hat in *Karma Kam tshang bla ma yab sras drug gi rnam thar* deals with the same headdress, defined as the *rdo rje* Hat of enlightenment according to *rNal 'byor rgyud*. The text then links the Hat to Karma Pakshi who in turn provided headgear in various colours and with various zoomorphic features to his disciples (ibid. p.18 lines 2–7: "Grub chen Karma Pakshi nyid kyi kyang/ rdo rje rin po che'i cod pan can gyi dbu zhwa dkar gser dmar ljang sna tshogs mnabs te/ rtogs ldan gyi slob ma so so'i mgo bor 'ching bar mdzad pa la/ rTogs ldan Zhwa dmar can/ rTogs ldan Zhwa dkar can/ rTogs ldan Zhwa ser can sogs mang du 'byung ba nams dang/ der ma zad stag gi mgo thod dang/ gzig gi mgo thod dang/ dom gyi mgo thod kyi cod pan slob ma'i mgo bor bcings pa'i dbang bkur ba mdzad pas/ rTogs ldan sTag mgo ba dang/ gZig mgo ba dang/ Dom mgo ba zhes grags pa yang byung la/ gzig gi mgo can sogs kyi rdo rje rin po che'i cod pan gyi dbang bkur ba sogs kyang rang cag gi spyod yul du ma gyur pa'i rdo rje'i rgyud sde chen po nams su 'byung ba ni ches gsang ba bsam gyi mi khyab pa'i spyod yul lo/"; "Grub chen Karma Pakshi wore various hats with a *rdo rje* and gems: a white one, a yellow one, a red one and a green one. Each of his disciples who had spiritual attainments put [a cap] on the head: rTogs ldan Zhwa dmar can (the "one wearing a red hat"), rTogs ldan Zhwa dkar can (the "one wearing a white hat") or rTogs ldan Zhwa ser can (the "one wearing a yellow hat"). There were not only many of them but also disciples who put on hats with a tiger head-crown, a leopard head-crown or a bear head-crown to give themselves authority. They were known as rTogs ldan sTag mgo ba, gZig mgo ba or Dom mgo ba. Being there many of our (i.e. Karma pa's) spheres of activity such as attributing authority by means of a leopard

sight of it.³⁷ This is the first occasion recorded in the literature that a Karma pa performed

crowned hat with a *rdo rje* and gems, there existed several great *rdo rje* communities whose spheres of activity were numerous, secret and inconceivable”.

His Black Hat displayed the colours of all the five families (p.19 lines 1–4), a statement which seems to show that, in his case, the other Dus gsum mkhyen pa’s Hat, the one given to him by Sa ra ha, was then taken into consideration. The text then passes on briefly to the major historical event of the donation of the Hat to De bzhin gshegs pa by the Ming emperor Yung-lo as a sign of his devotion (p.19 line 5–p.20 line 2). The concluding section (it begins on p.21 line 2) up to the beginning of the biography of Dus gsum mkhyen pa (p.24 line 2)) deals with the benefits of the Hat.

37. *mKhas pa ’i dga’ston* (p.901 lines 15–20): “De’i tshe grub thob chen po ’Dam Cog tse lar phebs/ dBus gTsang na yod pa’i Hor Bod kyi mi dpon/ bla ma dpon chen/ zon ’u’i sri’i mi dpon khri dpon nrams thams cad kysis so so nas ja ’dren bsu ba bsnyen bkur byas/ tshogs chos chen mo gsungs/ zhwa nag gi bstod pa yang mdzad pas thams cad mi phyed pa’i dad pa skyes te mtshan grub thob chen po ’ba’ zhig du sgrog/”; “At that time, the *grub thob chen po* went to ’Dam Cog tse la. The *mi dpon-s* of Hor [and] Bod, residents of dBus gTsang, *bla ma-s* [and] the *dpon chen*, all the *zon ’u’i sri’i mi dpon-s* [and] *khri dpon-s*, all of them, offered him a tea service, welcomed him and paid homage to him. He gave great teachings to the congregation. They also offered praises to the Black Hat. Everyone gained uncompromising faith in him, and he was only known by the name of *grub thob*”.

The fact that reverence was given to the Black Hat by the assembly is a sign that Karma Pakshi exhibited the most sacred Karma pa object of worship to the crowd of dignitaries and devotees in order to bestow to them the benefits of seeing it.

The event dates back to water dog 1262, for the same source says that he returned to his monastery mTshur phu eight years after he had left for the kingdoms in the east, ruled at the time by the Mongol emperor Mōngke (ibid. p.900 lines 4–5); its departure to the east took place in wood hare 1255 (ibid. p.888 lines 3–5).

The date 1262 of Karma Pakshi’s return to Tibet coincides with the final suppression of the resistance put up by Ariq Böke in the ancient kingdom of the Tangut (Byang Mi nyag) in an attempt to contend with Se chen rgyal po for the Mongol throne (Dardess, “From Mongol Empire to Yüan Dynasty” p.129–130). Se chen rgyal po’s takeover of the old Tangut lands in the Ordos region dealt a deadly blow to Ariq Böke’s aspirations to succeed Mōngke.

This shows that the Tangut who remained in their land after their kingdom was destroyed by Jing gir rgyal po in 1227 were loyalists of Ariq Böke, like most bKa’ brgyud pa (the Tshal pa excepted). The Tangut expats after the fall of their kingdom are documented in the Tibetan literature to have been the founders of the principalities of Nang chen, Khams Mi nyag, La stod Byang and ’Bras ljongs.

While the first two were eventually brought into the Sa skya pa sphere by compulsive means, the La stod Byang principality was a loyalist of the Sa skya pa and supporter of Se chen rgyal po. These political stances among groups of the Tangut relocated in distant regions differed widely—an expression of contrasting political sympathies during the decades after the fall of Byang Mi nyag. They reflect the partisan alignments in the wider context of those days that extended beyond the borders of the plateau.

Seeing matters from a local perspective, Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho, *Shel dkar chos ’byung* (f.4b lines 2–4) offers some insight into the secular situation in sTod lung, the area of mTshur phu, after Karma Pakshi returned from China and engaged in the making of a celebrated statue of Shakya

the well-known ceremony of putting the Black Hat on top of his head in front of a crowd of devotees and dignitaries. It remains to be seen whether this practice was instituted at that time or whether the ritual goes back to the time of the first Karma pa.

The rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa as Karma Pakshi

Not much is said in the Karma pa literature about the reincarnation of Dus gsum mkhyen pa as Karma Pakshi, at least not in the same explicit terms used to describe the birth of Rang byung rdo rje as Karma Pakshi's re-embodiment following the latter's decision to be reborn.³⁸

Thub pa at the monastery: "Jo mo mkha' 'gro'i mtshan dang ldan pa 'Od zer 'bum zhes pa khab tu zhes pa las/ sras Shes phrug lJang tsha zhes pa khrungs par phyis su mtshan rDo rje 'bar du grags/ de nyid kyi sTod lung Tshur phur sde dpon gyi sa cha rgya che ba zhig 'dzin par mdzad/ Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa dBu se'i sprul sku Karma Pakshi dang yon mchod du 'brel nas Tshur phur Karma pas lha chen Shakya Thub kyi sku bzhangs pa'i sbyin bdag mdzad do/ rDo rje 'bar kyi Karma pa' dbon mo zhig khab tu zhes/'"; "[Shes phrug dKön mchog 'bum] married 'Od zer 'bum, a wife possessing the signs of a *mkha' 'gro*, and a son, Shes phrug lJang tsha, was born to them. [This son] was later known by the name of rDo rje 'bar. He was the *sde dpon* of sTod lung Tshur phu, who oversaw a greatly expanded territory. He established *yon mchod* with Karma Pakshi, the rebirth of Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa dBu se. Hence, he was the sponsor of the making of the statue of Shakya Thub [pa] by the Karma pa at Tshur phu. rDo rje 'bar married a niece of the Karma pa".

38. As said in the opening of this essay, I have purposely based my analysis of the karmic bonds linking the early Karma Zhwa nag pa and the transmission of the Black Hat on Karma pa sources, rather than on the often openly dismissive comments by authors of other schools, for instance Tu'u bkwan's treatment of the matter (see above n.2). Less polemical than Tu'u bkwan but still not very supportive is an assessment of the karmic links between Dus gsum mkhyen pa and Karma Pakshi put forward by the Sa skya pa Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho in his *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed*, which is a sign of the disbelief maintained by other traditions. He says (p.170 line 20–p.171 line 11): "Di ni Sa ra ha'i sprul pa yin la/ 'di sku skye brgyud spel du byin pa ni/ Rang byung rdo rje/ Rol pa'i rdo rje/ De bzhin gshegs pa/ mThong (p.171) ba don ldan/ Chos grags rgya mtsho/ Mi bskyod rdo rje ste/ Karma Paks shi nas Mi bskyod rdo rje'i bar bdun byon zin pa la/ Dus gsum mkhyen pa ni/ sKal bzang gi Sangs rgyas stong gi drug pa Seng ge'i nram 'phrul yin par bshad la/ Karma Pak shi ni/ Sa ra ha pa'i nram 'phrul du bshad kyi/ Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i sku skye yin zhes kyang ma bshad pas/ Karma Zhwa nag pa zhes grags pa'i thog ma ni Karma Pak shi nas ngos 'dzin dgos par sems la 'on kyang Karma pa zhes pa'i mtshan 'dogs pa ni Dus gsum mkhyen pas/ smad du Kam po gnas nang/ bar Karma lHa steng/ stod du mTshur phu'i dgon btab nas Karma pa zhes mtshan 'dogs par gsal bas/ Dus gsum mkhyen pa la Karm pa zhes pa'i sgra bshad du yod pa tsam zhig yin no snyam du kho bos sems so/'"; "He (i.e. Karma Pakshi) was the incarnation of Sa ra ha. His rebirths which continued in succession were Karma Rang byung rdo rje, Rol pa'i rdo rje, De bzhin gshegs pa, mThong (p.171) ba don ldan, Chos grags rgya mtsho, and Mi bskyod rdo rje. Given that there were seven [Karma pa] from Karma Pakshi until Mi bskyod rdo rje, and Dus gsum mkhyen pa is indicated as the incarnation of Seng ge, the sixth of the 1,000 sKal bzang gi Sangs rgyas, while Karma Pakshi is indicated as the incarnation of Sa ra ha pa, in the absence of any reference to him (i.e. Karma Pakshi) as the rebirth of

The Karma pa sources deal with the matter by saying that bla ma dBu se, who had a supreme capacity to perceive the three times whence the nickname Dus gsum mkhyen pa derived, prophesied the birth of the new Karma pa. For instance, no manifest reference to a rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa as Karma Pakshi is found in the part of *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* by mKha' spyod dbang po, an early extant biography of the latter Karma pa, where these prophecies are introduced. mKha' spyod dbang po mentions Dus gsum mkhyen pa's three prophecies about Karma Pakshi, and Karma Pakshi's birth as a fulfilment of his predecessor's words.³⁹

Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas repeats the wording used by mKha' spyod dbang po in the three prophecies almost verbatim, and thus at first glance seems to take the same view of the matter.⁴⁰

Dus gsum mkhyen pa, the first to be called Karma Zhwa nag pa was Karma Pakshi. It is my opinion that this is [how] the identification should [be made]. The attribution of the name Karma pa [to him] is because Dus gsum mkhyen pa was manifestly given the name Karma pa after he founded Kam po gNas nang in sMad, Karma lHa steng in Bar, and mThur phu monastery in sTod. I think that this is the reason why Dus gsum mkhyen pa was given the name Karma pa”.

39. mKha' spyod dbang po, *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* (p.12 lines 2–5): “rJe Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar las/ ma 'ongs pa'i dus Bod yul lHo brag grub pa'i gnas bdun du gdul bya cig gi don 'byung gsung pa dang/ 'Bri chu Ngo thong nas cig gis nged kyi dgongs pa rdzogs par byed gsung ba dang/ yon bdag dGon pa pa skye ba gnyis sam gsum gyis lam mar tshud gsung pa dang/ dgongs pa de gsum rdzogs par bya ba'i don du/ ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa yang dran pa shes bzhin dang ldan pas/ 'Bri klung Dam chos phyug gi yul du btsad po U ri rigs su skyes/” ; “According to *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar*, [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] said: “In the future, I will come to benefit a person at the seven (*mdun* sic for *bdun*) holy meditation places in lHo brag”, and [again] he said: “One from 'Bri chu Ngo mthong will accomplish my wishes” and [again] said: “The second or third rebirth of yon bdag sGom pa pa (spelled so) will be born to enter the path [leading] to the ultimate truth (*lam rnal mar tshud*)”. In order to accomplish these three wishes, the one universally known by the name of Karma pa, who possessed the knowledge of remembering, was born into the family of the U ri king in the land of 'Bri klung Dam pa Chos phyug”.

'Bri klung Dam pa Chos phyug is a place name rather than a qualification of 'Bri klung (i.e. “[the land] rich with the noble religion”), as it may appear *prima facie* if one is not familiar with the ancient cultural geography of Khams. *sGa lDan sKyur gsum gyi byung tshul* (p.706 lines 3–4) enlists the areas of mDo stod traditionally known by their *phyug* or “wealth” that characterised them, including the birth place of Karma Pakshi: “Phyug drug ni/ 'Bri klung Dam pa chos kyi phyug/ rMa rDza sNyin srib shing gyis phyug/ Byang rDza dkar mo lug gis phyug/ lHo rDa sngon mo nas phyug/ ces bya ba yin/” ; “The six *phyug* are 'Bri klung Dam pa chos kyi phyug (“rich in religion”), rMa rDza sNyin srib shing gyis phyug (“rich in trees”), Byang rDza dkar mo lug gis phyug (“rich in sheep”) and lHo rDa sngon mo nas phyug (“rich in grass”). They are called so”. Two are missing.

40. *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* (in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.81 lines 5–7): “Grub chen Karma pa nyid kyi rnam par thar pa ni/ rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar las/ ma 'ongs dus su Bod yul lHo brag grub pa'i gnas mdun du gdul bya gcig gi don du 'byung gsungs pa dang/ 'Bri chu Ngom thong nas gcig gi nged kyi dgongs pa rdzogs par byed gsungs pa dang/ yon bdag dGon pa pa skye ba gnyis sam gsum gyis lam rnal 'tshud gsungs pa gsum dus mtshams pa ste/ dgongs pa de gsum rdzogs par bya ba'i don du/ ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa yang/ dran pa shes bzhin dang ldan pas 'Bri klung Dam pa chos kyi phyug pa'i yul du/ btsan po dgu'i rigs su skyes zhes

Elsewhere in the biography by mKha' spyod dbang po, one of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's three prophecies is somewhat clarified. The prediction in mKha' spyod dbang po's work says that the second Karma pa was destined to set the Mongol emperor Mo 'gor rgyal po (reigned 1249 or 1251–1258)⁴¹ on the path to absolute truth. Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas also takes up this fuller version and deals with the chain of incarnations involved in greater detail.⁴² This

gsungs//"; "The biography of grub chen Karma pa is as follows. According to the biography of rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa, the latter said: "In the future, I will appear at the seven (*mdun* sic for *bdun*) holy meditation places of lHo brag in the land of Tibet to benefit one person to be trained". He said: "One from 'Bri chu Ngo mthong will fulfil my wishes". He [again] said: "Yon bdag dGon pa ba's second or third rebirth will be born to enter the path [leading] to the ultimate truth (*lam rnal mar tshud*)". He gave these prophecies at the same time. In order to fulfil these three wishes [of his], the one universally named Karma pa, likewise possessing the knowledge of memory, was born into the family of the nine *btsan po* in 'Bri klung Dam pa Chos phyugs pa".

Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas (*Karma kam tshang gser phreng* p.86 line 7) says that Karma Pakshi was born in a family of nine kings because his dBu family descended from a cadet line of the sPu rgyal *btsan po*-s.

41. Mo 'gor rgyal po's formal proclamation as emperor took place in the *quriltai* of iron pig 1251 (see Boyle, *The Successors of Genghis Khan* p. 224 n.96 and p.228 n.124).
42. mKha' spyod dbang po, *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* (p.48 lines 2–6): "De nas 'Ong dge zhes bya ba'i yul khams su phyin pa'i tshe/ sngon Dus gsum mkhyen pa glang po cher sprul nas/ log lta can gyi rgyal po btul ba de/ da lta 'Dzam gling rgyal po Mo 'gor gan du sku 'khrungs shing/ mu stegs Or ka bo'i grub mtha' 'dzin zhing 'dug pa rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa sems can gcig gi don du Bod yul du 'byon zhing yun ring mi 'dug gsung pa ni/ 'Dzam gling khyab pa kun tu rgyu ba la dgongs ste/ ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa Mo 'gor rgyal po gcig pu'i don du skyes shing/ 'khor beas mtho ris thar pa la thabs sna tshogs kyis 'gong dgos pa dran nas/ 'brug gi lo la Zi ra 'Ur rdor/ phyin pa las sngon las 'brel yong pa'i stobs kyis thams cad dad cing mos nas bsnyen bkur/ rgya chen po byas te/ de nas 'Dzam gling bdag po yi pho brang 'Ur rdor 'jug dus su/byang chub sems kyi rnam 'phrul gyis/ sPyan ras gzigs kyi lta stangs byas/ Mo 'gor rgyal po byin gyis brlabs//"; "Then [Karma Pakshi] went to the country known as 'Ong dge. In an earlier time Dus gsum mkhyen pa had incarnated into an elephant and had subdued a king who held heretical views, who at present was born as the 'Dzam gling rgyal po Mo 'gor gan. He was the holder of the mu stegs Or ka bo (elsewhere Er ka) religious system. With the intention of spreading rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa's words "I will appear in Tibet and will benefit one sentient being" and "I will not stay [there] for long" throughout 'Dzam gling, the one universally known as Karma pa was born to benefit Mo 'gor rgyal po in particular. As he remembered that he had to set [him and his] courtiers on the course of liberation by a variety of means, he went to Zir 'Ur rdo in the year of the dragon 1256. By the might of the previous karmic link, everyone welcomed him with reverence and devotion. He rendered extensive service. Then, when he entered 'Ur rdo, the palace of the 'Dzam gling emperor, he impressed (*byin gyis brlabs*) Mo 'gor rgyal po by manifesting the thought of enlightenment and acting with the attitude (*lta stangs*) of sPyan ras gzigs".

The sequence of events of those days has it that Karma Pakshi proceeded to Zir 'Ur rdo and approached first the emperor's courtiers who, impressed by his charisma, brought him to meet Mo 'gor rgyal po.

A vague clue in the passage which would suggest that Dus gsum mkhyen pa was reborn as Karma Pakshi is the use of the verb “to remember” with reference to the activity of Karma Pakshi. Thus, he undertook to be the *bla ma* of Mo ’gor rgyal po in accord with Dus gsum mkhyen pa’s prophecies. Still, “remembering” a task assigned to him does not amount to explicit recognition that Karma Pakshi was Dus gsum mkhyen pa’s reincarnation.

Dus gsum mkhyen pa’s previous births are briefly outlined in *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* (p.466b lines 2–9 under the heading *’khrungs rabs*): “Karma pa’i ’khrungs rabs ngos ’dzin zhu srol byung zhing/ sku phreng dang po mgon po Klu sgrub kyi slob ma Pradznya a langka/ gnyis pa slob dpon mTsho skyes kyi slob ma Ka ma dhe nu/ gsum pa grub chen Dharma bo dhi/ bzhi pa rgyal po Khri srong lde btsan gyi blon po ’Khon rGyal ba mchog dbyangs/ lnga pa bKa’ gdams kyi dge bshes Po to ba/drug pa Karma pa sku phreng dang po yongs grags Dus gsum mkhyen pa nas/ da ta’i Karma pa sku phreng bcu drug pa Rig pa’i rdo rje bar/’”; “There is a tradition concerning the lineage of the recognised Kar ma pa rebirths. The first embodiment was Pradznya a langka, the disciple of mgon po Klu sgrub; the second was Ka ma dhe nu, the disciple of slob dpon mTsho skyes; the third was grub chen Dharma bo dhi; the fourth was ’Khon rGyal ba mchog dbyangs, the minister of rgyal po Khri srong lde btsan; the fifth was the bKa’ gdams dge bshes Po to ba; the sixth was the first Karma pa embodiment, universally called Dus gsum mkhyen pa; from [him] until the present-day sixteenth embodiment Rig pa’i rdo rje [the lineage continued uninterrupted]”.

Given the death date of Po to ba (d. 1105), it is chronologically possible that Dus gsum mkhyen pa (b.1110) was part of the same *skyes rabs*, but the first Karma pa could not have studied under Po to ba.

It is self-evident that *Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang ’phrin las* wrote this note before the death of the sixteenth Zhwa nag pa in Chicago.

The association of bKa’ rgyud pa masters with the early bKa’ gdams pa school goes beyond the fact that Dus gsum mkhyen pa is considered in the quotation of *Dung dkar rin po che* to be the immediate rebirth of Po to ba (1031–1105). Ties with the bKa’ gdams pa masters were a classic for bKa’ brgyud practitioners from Khams before studying under sGam po pa. Dus gsum mkhyen pa was trained in a bKa’ gdams pa environment before he became a disciple of Dwags po lHa rje.

Dus gsum mkhyen pa’i rnam thar (in *Si tu Chos kyi ’byung gnas’s Karma Kam tshang gser ’phreng* p.5 lines 2–7): “Tre Ka brag ces bya ba’i bKa’ gdams kyi dgon pas mkhan po mChog gi bla ma dang/ slob dpon Seng ge grags las rab tu byung nas/ dpal Chos kyi grags pa zhes bya ba’i mtshan gsol lo gnyis su mkhan po’i zhabs tog dang dge ’dun gyi bya ba mdzad/ Jo bo’i slob ma Yol Chos dbang dang/ de’i slob ma dge bshes Kra ra ba mched gnyis la Jo bo lugs kyi bDe mchog gi dbang dang/ Mi g.yo ba sogs gSangs sngags kyi sgrub thabs mang po dang/ bKa’gdams kyi chos skor ci rigs gsan zhing bsgrubs pas/ grub rtags thon byung/ de nas dgung lo bcu dgu pa bzhes pa na dBus su byon/ nyi shu la sTod lung Se thang du dge bshes rGya dmar ba’i grwa sar rTa sga phog/ rGya dmar ba dang/ dge bshes Phya pa Chos seng gnyis la dBu ma’ang rGyud shar gsum dang Tshad ma dang Byams chos gsan/ gSang phur yang bzhugs te/ Khams pa mi gsum du grags/ Pa tshab lo tsa ba Nyi ma grags la dBu ma rigs tshogs gsan/ ’Phan yul du dge bshes Sha ra ba dang de’i slob ma Shes rab rdo rje dang gnyis lo drug tu bsten te bKa’ gdams chos ji snyed pa gsan/ gzhan yang thos bsam mang du mdzad/ mkhan po Mal ’Dul ’dzin/ las slob Ye shes blo gros/ gsang ston mkhan po Cung gis mdzad de bsnyen par rdzogs pa’i sdom pa bzhes nas ’Dul ba la mkhas par mdzad/ de’i tshes ’Phan yul rGyal lha khang du dpal rGa lo dang/ Khams pa A seng bzhugs pa la Dus ’khor sbyor drug dang/ mGon po Bya rog ma la sogs pa’i bskyed rdzogs kyi gdams pa mang du gsan/ de nas dgung lo sum cu bzhes pa’i tshes chos kyi rje sGam po pa mjal bar bzhed de byon/’”; “At the bKa’ gdams dgon pa Tre Ka

version prefigured the birth of the Mongol emperor Mo 'gor rgyal po who is also said to have been born, in a previous life, as yon bdag dGon pa ba, a sponsor of Dus gsum mkhyen pa.⁴³

brag, Chos kyi bla ma being the *mkhan po* and Seng ge grags being the *slob dpon*, [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] received the *rab tu byung* vow. He was given the name dpal Chos kyi grags pa. For two years he rendered service to the *mkhan po* and performed acts in favour of the monks [there]. He received many Tantric *sadhana* such as the *dbang* of bDe mchog and Mi g.yo ba according to the system of Jo bo [rje] and all kinds of cycles of bKa' gdams teachings. He meditated and signs of attainments manifested. Then, at age nineteen (1128), he went to dBus. When he was twenty years old (1129), he reached rTa sga, the monastic school of rGya dmar ba at sTod lung Se thang. He received *dBu ma* together with *rGyud shar gsum* along with *Tshad ma* and *Byams chos*. He stayed at gSang phu, too. He received *dBu ma rigs tshogs* from the Khams pa mi gsum and Pa tshab lo tsa ba Nyi ma grags. In 'Phan yul he attended upon dge bshes Sha ra ba and his disciple Shes rab rdo rje, two in all, for six years and received all possible bKa' gdams instructions. Moreover, he performed learning and contemplating. He was ordained to the *bsnyen par rdzogs pa* vow by Mal 'Dul 'dzin as *mkhan po*, Ye shes blo gros as *las slob* and mkhan po Cung as *gsang ston*. He masterly observed 'Dul ba. At that time, he received many instructions on *bskyed rdzogs* such as on *Dus 'khor shyor drug* and mGon po Bya rog from dpal rGa lo and Khams pa A seng. Then, at the age of thirty (1139), he decided to meet chos kyi rje sGam po pa and left [to do so]."

Dus gsum mkhyen pa's bKa' gdama pa education was undertaken first in his native land Khams. Ka trag, a temple part of Srong btsan sgam po's *srin mo* scheme and thus dating to a time that antedates *bstan pa snga dar*, was a bKa' gdams pa monastery where he commenced his monastic career. The pattern of his studies was typical of the period for apprentice monk students from Khams who received the best possible bKa' gdams pa education in the bKa' gdams doctrine locally but then they went to dBus, the main seat of the monasteries of the school, to further their education. The turning point in Dus gsum mkhyen pa's case, which led him to enter into the bKa' brgyud pa orbit, was his meeting with dpal chen rGa lo and Khams pa A seng in 'Phan yul. Their teachings were instrumental to Dus gsum mkhyen pa's decision to become a disciple of Dwags po lHa rje sGam po pa (1079–1153).

Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (*bKa' gdams chos 'byung* lHa sa ed. p.207 lines 1–4) summarises Dus gsum mkhyen pa's bKa' gdams education he received from the two Kra ra ba brothers, disciples of Yol Chos dbang. It concerned many Tantric *grub thabs-s*, bDe mchog according to the system of Jo bo rje and Mi g.yo ba along with the four *mandala* of sGrol ma that stemmed from the eldest Yol brother, together with one of the five divisions composing the four cycles of rTa mgrin shwa na. The *las chen* concludes that many teachings of Jo bo rje were diffused due to the transmission from Yol Chos dbang to the Karma pa.

43. *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* (in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.108 lines 3–7): "Ang gi bya ba'i yul du rgyal po chen po yum sras 'khor bcas dang dus gsum du 'brel tshul sna tshogs thugs la shar/ de yang sngon glan po che'i gzugs kyis sdig spyod kyi tgyal po btul nas spang pa de/ rje Dus gsum mkhyen Kam po gNas nang na bzhugs tshe Kam po lnga la bya bar Bon po 'Byor pa can zhid tu gyur/ zhabs thog thams cad bsgrub ci yod chos rje'i phyogs su btang pas yon bdag dGon pa par grags pa de/ rGya Mi nyag Hor Bod thams cas kyi rgyal po Mong gor gan tu gyur te/ sngon gyi btsun mo Sus the du dmag dpon la sogs pa rnams kyang la sogs pa rnams kyang dpon mo Yil jig ma dang rgyal bu A ri bo ka sogs su skyes par gzigs/ de nas sngon gyis rgyal blon 'khor bcas kyis mu stegs Erga'o ye grub mtha' 'dzin cing/ Yer ka'i slob dpon mang po'i dbang gyur

pas mu stegs su 'gyur mkhyen nas/ Mo gor gan gcig pu lam log pa las bskyab pa'i ched kho na rje nyid kyis bsams bzhin du srid pa bzung ba ste/ rje Dus gsum khyen pas sems can gcig gi don du yul du 'ongs shing/ yun ring du mi 'dug gsungs pa der dgongs/ 'brug gi lo la pho brang du 'Ur dor rgyal brgyud thams cad 'tshogs pa'i dus su phebs pa'i tshc/ byang chub kyis sems dang sPyan ras gzigs kyis lta stangs kyis rgyal po Mo 'gor gan byin gyis brlabs shing snang ba du ma stan/'"; "[When he was] in the country known as 'Ang gi, the various forms of karmic links that referred to the great emperor, [his] wife, offspring and courtiers—they extended in the three times—surfaced in [Karma Pakshi's] mind. Concerning this, since [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] had earlier transformed into an elephant to subdue a sinful king, the latter's status [in the chain of rebirths] was upgraded (*spar ba*) as follows. When rje Dus gsum mkhyen was residing at Kam po gNas nang, [the converted king] became Bon po 'byor ba can ("possessing wealth") at [the place] called Kam po lnga la ("pass of the five Kam po"). Assigned to assist the *chos rje* with whatever services [he needed], he was known as yon bdag dGon pa ba. He was reborn as Mong gor gan, the emperor of the whole of China, Mi nyag, Hor and Tibet. [Karma Pakshi] saw that the previous queen Sus the du and the *dmag dpon* were also reborn as dpon mo Il jig ma and rgyal bu Ma ri bo ka (i.e. Ariq Böke). At that time, due to earlier karmic accumulations, the emperor, ministers and courtiers were holders of the mu stegs Er ga'o ye religious system. Due to the influence of many masters of Er ka (spelled so), and knowing that [the emperor] had converted into a *mu stegs*, [Karma Pakshi] took rebirth in accordance with the intention of the *rje* (Dus gsum mkhyen pa) of diverting Mo gor (spelled so) gan in particular from the heretical path. In those circumstances, he pondered on rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa's words "I will come to the land Tibet to benefit one sentient being in particular" and "I will not stay [there] for long". In the year of the dragon (1256), upon reaching the palace 'Ur rdo when all the royal lineage had gathered, he impressed Mo 'gor (spelled so) gan with his [cultivation of the] Thought of Enlightenment and behaviour in the manner of sPyan ras gzigs, and made many pure visions manifest to him".

The Er ka bo masters were Nestorians, according to R.A. Stein, *Recherches sur l'épopée et le barde au Tibet* (n.9 on p.237–238). The term has been subsequently assessed in more detail by van der Kuijp ("Bayshi" and Bayshi-s in Tibetan Historical, Biographical and Lexicographical Texts" n.18).

The earliest available biography of Dus gsum mkhyen pa (*Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar gSer gling ma* p.117 line 5–p.118 line 1) confirms that he and dGon pa ba met at Kam po: "Kam po gNas nang du bzhugs dus su/ dpon yon bdag Gon pa pas lha khang gi rab gnas la spyang drangs nas rab gnas mdzad dus su Me tog la rten 'brel bzlos pa'i skabs (p.118) su de'i gnyer pa dpon bsGom rDor gyi snang ba la me tog gi nas rang 'gro zhing rten kun la phog par mthong/'"; "When [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] was at Kam po gNas nang, yon bdag dGon pa ba invited him to consecrate a *lha khang*. As he was performing the consecration, while reciting *Me tog la rten 'brel*, (p.118) in the perception of dpon bsGom rDor who was the keeper of that [temple], flower petals scattered by themselves and landed over the images".

In the light of the contents of the prophecies, it is important to clarify the identity of yon bdag dGon pa ba, so as not to be confused with either Kha che dGon pa ba, Zangs dkar lo tsa ba's teacher from Kashmir; or Zhang dGon pa pa, also known as Zhang ston Chos 'bar (1053–1135), a master of *Lam 'bras* and a disciple of Se ston Kun rig (see, e.g., dMar ston Chos kyis rgyal po, *Lam 'bras Sa lugs kyis lo rgyus* in Stearns, *Luminous Lives* p.125) and of Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas (*Nyang ral chos 'byung* p.492 lines 15–16); or the bKa' gdams pa master dpal ldan dGon pa pa dBang phyug rgyal mtshan (1016–1082), abbot of Rwa sgreng for five years (*bKa' gdams gsar rnying gi chos*

Karma Pakshi was born quite a few years after Dus gsum mkhyen pa's death.⁴⁴ The long lapse of time between the death of Dus gsum mkhyen pa and the birth of Karma Pakshi has been used by the detractors of the Karma pa school as a good reason to rule out the idea of a

'byung p.10 lines 13–15; Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, *bKa' gdams chos 'byung* lHa sa ed. p.209 line 4–p.220 line 1).

mKhas pa'i dga'ston records a couple of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's prophecies concerning him. The text (p.868 lines 16–21) says: “Yon bdag dGon pa pa 'di skye ba gsum nas lam rnal ma la tshud par 'gyur gsung ... Yon bdag dGon pa pa 'di sngags pa zhig tu gyur te kho bo la rab tu 'byung/’”; “Yon bdag dGon pa ba, three incarnations after this one, will be reborn to enter the path [leading] to the ultimate truth (*lam rnal mar tshud*) ... This yon bdag dGon pa ba will [then] be reborn as a *sngags pa* and will take vows from me”.”

Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas adds some details which Dus gsum mkhyen pa himself gave about the statements concerning the previous births of yon bdag dGon pa ba. *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar* (in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.33 lines 1–3) reads: “Yang Ba lang spyod kyi gling de nyid du mu stegs sdig spyod kyi rgyal po Dar ma shī la zhes bya ba/ Sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la mi nos shing sems can la gnod pa byed pa zhig yod pas 'dul ba'i don du rgyal po'i glang po che bdun brgya'i nang nas shin tu stobs che ba'i glang po che shig tu sku skye ba bzhes/ re zhig gi tshe rgyal po dmag gi dpung mang po dang bcas te phyin pa'i lam du sdig can rgyal po brdzes dang bsad nas/ Sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la phan pa dang/ rgyal po ngan song du 'gro ba las zlog snyed dge ba la bkod/ da lta'i yon bdag dGon pa pa 'di yin no gsungs/’”; “[Dus gsum mkhyen pa] said: “Again, in the continent of Ba lang spyod there was a sinful *mu stegs* king by the name of Dhar ma shī la who did not have faith in the teachings of Sangs rgyas and was harmful to sentient beings. To subjugate him, he took birth as the strongest among the king's 700 elephants. On one occasion, the king left with many of his troops and, on the way, [the elephant] pounded and killed the sinful king. This was beneficial to the teachings of Sangs rgyas. The king was prevented from going to hell and was brought to virtue. At present this one (i.e. the incarnation of the king) is yon bdag dGon pa ba”.”

The text of another Dus gsum mkhyen pa's prophecy that concerned dGon pa ba in the same text (ibid. p.35 lines 5–6) reads: “Yong bdag dGon pa pa 'di khyim bdag phyug po zhig gi bu yin pas yon bdag byas/ skye ba 'dir yang byas shing phyi mar yang byed/’”; “Since yon bdag dGon pa ba was the son from a rich household, he was the *yon bdag* (“sponsor”). He also is [the *yon bdag*] in this life and will be [the *yon bdag*] again in the next life”.”

The sequence of rebirths is accurately formulated, for dGon pa ba became Mo 'gor rgyal po after being the *yon bdag* of Dus gsum mkhyen pa and then reincarnating into another sponsor immediately after. dGon pa ba's next incarnation after being Mo 'gor rgyal po was a *sngags pa*, according to dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba, or the son of a *sngags pa*, according to mKha' spyod dbang po (see n.47 but also n.43 and n.48).

44. *lHo rong chos 'byung* (p.235,3–6): “De nas lo bco begyad song ba lcags pho rta'i lo la rin po che Karma pa sku 'khrungs pa'i yul ni/ 'Bri klong gi sTong byi le'i Tsag to zhes pa na/ btsad po Bu'i rigs su yab rGyal dbang tshur tsha myang thar/ yum Seng za Mang skyid/ mched gnyis yod pa'i chung shos/ mtshan Chos 'dzin zhes bya ba/’”; “Then eighteen years elapsed and in iron male horse 1210 the rebirth of rin po che Kar ma pa was born. As for the land, it was at 'Bri klong gi sTong bye le'i

Tsag to. He was the younger of the two children of father rGyal dbang Tshur tsha myang thar from the royal family of the Bu and mother Seng za Mang skyid. His name was Chos 'dzin".

IHo rong chos 'byung is an earlier source which identifies Karma Pakshi's family. This text calls it Bu and says that it belonged to the old royalty but without specifying in what consisted its ties with the rulers of Tibet.

Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser phreng* is the text that traces the descentance of the second Karma pa's family back to the cadet line of Sad na legs. *Karma pa Byang chub rdo rje 'i rnam thar* (in Si tu pan chen's *Karma Kam tshang gi gser phreng* p.443 line 5–p.444 line 3) reads: "De yang mJing yon Sad na legs Khri lde btsad po yang zer/ de la sras Inga/ Khri Dar ma dBu dum btsan/ lHa rje dang lHung grub/ Khri chen po/ Inga tshigs sTag Nam mkha'i lha bzung ni/ slob dpon Padma/ Bi ma la/ Nam mkha'i snying po sogs kyi slob ma/ na bza' nyi zer ba la 'gel ba dang/ 'ja' 'od phyag gis bzung nas nam mkha' la 'gro thub pa byung/ rGyal rabs dpag bsam ljon shing las sTag Nam mkha'i lha bzung gis pho brang 'Phying nga stag rtse bzung/ de'i sras la 'Od skyid 'bar/ de la sras bdun byung/ gcen Gangs rje tsha Khri lde dmar/ gcung gTsang tsha spun drug ni/ lHas spyang g. Yu spyang gnyis/ Dar dang lHun po gnyis/ 'Od btsan Gung btsan gnyis te drug/ 'di drug Bya ba lHa chen bzhangs/ Gangs rje tsha Khri lde dmar gyi sras drug la gZhu thog pa'i rgyud/ sNa mo ba/ 'Phying nga (p.444) ba/ Don mkhar ba/ Thang mkhar ba rnams byung/ de las lHa ston dkar po'i brgyud 'Bri chu ba rnams yin/ gTsang tsha spun drug las/ lHas spyang gdung chad/ Dang ra/ lHun po/ 'Od btsan/ Gung btsan rnams kyi rgyud pa la Khra 'brug pa dang/ Bying ba/ sByar ba/ Chu mig pa Thog so ba rnams byung/ de rnams kyi mi brgyud la tsha drug byung ba ni/ mTshur tsha ba Seng ge dpal dang/ rGya tsha bla ma bSod nams dpal ba/ 'Phrad tsha bla ma brTsang 'grus seng ge/ dBye tsha Chos mchog dpal/ Ga tsha Chos rdor ba Chos rgyal/ 'Bam tsha Chos blo ba pandi ta bSod nams dpal te drug las/ mTshur tsha Shes rab seng ge'am/ rGyal dbang sPrang thar la sras bzhi/ Thugs rje dpal ni Karma pa yin/ A dbang/ Ye shes dbang phyug/ Chos rgyal/'"; "mJing yon Sad na legs, also known as Khri lde btsad po, had five sons: Khri Dar ma dBu (spelled so) dum btsan, lHa rje and lHung grub, Khri chen po (i.e. Ral pa can) and the fifth sTag Nam mkha'i lha bzung. The latter was a disciple of slob dpon Padma, Bi ma la and Nam mkha'i snying po. He hung his robe on a ray of light and having grabbed a rainbow in his hand he was able to soar in the sky. According to *rGyal rabs dpag bsam ljon shing*, sTag Nam mkha'i lha bzung held pho brang 'Phying nga stag rtse. His son was 'Od skyid 'bar who had seven sons. The eldest was Gangs rje tsha Khri lde dmar; and younger to him were the six gTsang tsha brothers: both lHas spyang and g. Yu spyang, both Dar dang and lHun po and both 'Od btsan and Gung btsan, altogether six. These six made the Bya ba (sic for Bya sa) lHa chen [statue]. Gangs rje tsha Khri lde dmar's six offsprings were the gZhu thog pa lineage, the sNa mo ba, the 'Phying nga (p.444) ba, the Don mkhar ba and the Thang mkhar ba. The lHa ston dkar po lineage of the 'Bri chu ba descended from them. Among the six gTsang tsha siblings there were the lines of the interrupted descentance of lHas spyang, and of Dang ra, lHun po, 'Od btsan and Gung btsan. They were the Khra 'brug pa, Bying ba, sByar ba, Chu mig pa and Thog so ba. As to them, there existed six offsprings: mTshur tsha ba Seng ge dpal dang, rGya tsha bla ma bSod nams dpal ba, 'Phrad tsha bla ma brTsang 'grus seng ge, dBye tsha Chos mchog dpal, Ga tsha Chos rdor ba Chos rgyal and 'Bam tsha Chos blo ba pandi ta bSod nams dpal. The four sons of mTshur tsha Shes rab seng ge aka rGyal dbang sPrang thar were Thugs rje dpal who was the Karma pa, A dbang, Ye shes dbang phyug and Chos rgyal".

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p. 385 line 17–p.386 line 1) deals with the same line but in more succinct terms: "mNga' bdag Khri chung gi sras btsan po 'Od kyi 'bar/ de la sras bdun te/ gcen snga bu Tshe spong Nang rje tsha Khri lde 'bar/ gcung Phib bu Tsang pa/ Tsha spun drug la/ che dag 'Od

karmic nexus linking the lives of the first two Karma pa.⁴⁵ Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas imputes to the intrigues of Gya pa Gangs pa during the last years of Dus gsum khyen pa's life the reason for the first Karma pa's delay of some years in taking rebirth.⁴⁶ This is unreliable and anachronistic because Gya pa Gangs pa was too young at the time to affect succession. Although not overtly stated, indications in the autobiography of the second Karma pa and other early documents converge to believe that Karma Pakshi was Dus gsum mkhyen pa's reincarnation.

Looking at the matter from a historical viewpoint, all signs indicate that the system of lineal transmission by means of successive incarnations was not disputed at mTshur phu during the time of Karma Pakshi, including the karmic nexus between the first two Karma pa. It was the presence of Karma Pakshi, who had come from Khams to sTod lung to install

btsan 'bar/ de'i 'og ma Gung btsan 'bar/ lHun po 'bar/ g.Yu spyan/ lHa spyan/ Da ra dBang phyug go/ gcen Khri lde 'bar la sras drug/ gcen g.Yu thog/ de 'og Bye chung lHa ston/ dGung lde/ Zla ba/ (p.386) Khri thog/ dByangs can 'bar ro//"; "mNga' bdag Khri chung's son was btsan po 'Od kyi 'bar. The latter had seven sons. The eldest was Nang rje tsha Khri lde 'bar; the youngest Phib bu Tsang pa who had six sons: the eldest 'Od btsan 'bar and, younger to him, Gung btsan 'bar, lHun po 'bar, g.Yu spyan, lHa spyan and Da ra dBang phyug. The eldest son Khri lde 'bar had six sons: the eldest gcen g.Yu thog and, after him, Bye chung lHa ston, dGung lde, Zla ba, (p.386) Khri thog and dB-yangs can 'bar ro".

The spelling dBu for the family is adopted by Karma Pakshi in his autobiography (*Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam* p.89 lines 4–5); Ur is used in mKha' spyod dbang po's biography of the second Karma pa (p.12 lines 4–5) and Tshe dbang nor bu's *Bod rje lha btsad po'i gdung rabs* (p.77 lines 3–4); *lHo rong chos 'byung* (p.235 lines 4–5) and *mTshur phu'i dkar chag kun gsal me long* (p.347 lines 11–16) write Bu; Si tu pan chen's *Karma Kam tshang gser phreng* (p.81 line 7) has dGu, an obvious scribal error for dBu.

The name Chos 'dzin was changed into Chos kyi bla ma upon Karma Pakshi's ordination to the *rab tu byung* vow.

45. *Tu'u bkwan grub mtha'* (p.117 lines 3–6): "sBom bra pa'i slob ma Karma Pakshi ste/ la las Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i sku skye zer yang Sa ra ha'i rnam 'phrul du grags pa las Dus gsum gyi skye bar lo rgyus khungs ma rnams su mi snang/ 'on kyang Karma'i rabs 'dren pa'i dus su gnyis par byed pa 'dra'o//"; "sBom (sic) brag pa's disciple, Karma Pakshi, is said by some people to have been the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa; otherwise he is known to have been the emanation of Sa ra ha, but this does not ensue from the existing accounts of Dus gsum's rebirth. However, in the genealogy of the Karma [pa], he [is treated] as if he was the second [Zhwa nag pa].

Tu'u bkwan's spelling of the name of Karma Pakshi's teacher is another sign of his dismissive and polemical attitude towards the Karma pa. His use of the word *sbom* ("gross, thick" and even "arrogant" see Goldstein ed., *The New Tibetan-English Dictionary of Modern Tibetan* p.779,b) in his name is not a flattering remark.

46. *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* (in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.145 line 5): "sPyr Gya pa Gangs pa'i mdzangs la rje Dus gsum mkhyen ma mnyes pas der sprul sku cung zad 'gyangs pa la dgongs pa yin no//"; "In general, rje Dus [gsum] mkhyen [pa] did not like Gya pa Gangs pa's behaviour; therefore, he thought to delay [his] incarnation for a while".

Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas has transferred unrealistically the disliking nurtured by Karma Pakshi for Gya pa Gangs pa to his previous birth.

himself in the monastery founded by Dus gsum mkhyen pa and held by his disciples, that had deprived the Gya pa Gangs pa of control of mTshur phu abbatial seat, a state of affairs that had gone unaccepted.

In a couple of *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar* one finds the statement, not entirely explicit but quite conclusive enough, that Karma Pakshi (not mentioned by name) was among Dus gsum mkhyen pa's various destined incarnations. The earlier of the two references is in the concluding section of *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar* by mKha' spyod dbang po.⁴⁷ The

47. mKha' spyod dbang po, *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar* (p.500 line 4–p.502 line 6): “Yang bla ma rin po che sku skye pa phyi ma gang du 'gro don mdzad zhus pas/ rje btsun gyi zhal nas/ rGya gar nub phyogs su O rgyan gyi byang shar mtshams Karti ka'i grong khyer du/ yab Dharmā sidhi dang/ yum Ma ha pradznya shī la'i sras/ Ratna sidhi zhes bya ba'i rnal 'byor cig tu sku skye ba bzhes/ sems can dpag tu med pa la phan thogs gsung/ bla ma lHa rje grong khyer Padma can du skye ba zhes nas Zhi ba'i go char mtshan gzung ste/ mu stegs kyi pandi ta cig gis shes bya'i bdag po byas/ bla ma lHa rje so shes pa'i bdag po mdzad nas rtsang pas bla ma rgyal/ mu stegs pa (p.501) thams cad nang pa la btsud/ mu stegs kyi rgyal po'i ming Mahā rdzi na zhes bya ba yin pa la/ physis bla mas Dharmā rā dza zhes bya bar btags/ grong khyer Karti ka na Bodhi badzra zhes bya ba yon tan bzang po yod pa cig bzhugs/ bla ma lHa rje'i zhal nas/ dge bsnyen sGom dang/ Zhi mdzes dang/ mGar ston dang/ bSer sgom Ye shes snying po dang/ Ya zi sron mo dang/ rGya che chung gnyis dang/ Grags mdzes/ Nyog sde ston pa dang/ Rong sgom dang/ Yon tan snying po ste/ rig pa brtul zhugs kyi spyod pas bsdus pa'i slob ma bcu drug yong/ mu stegs kyi rgyal po rTog med kyi sgo nas btul ba dang/ Karti ka'i rgyal po pandi tas btul ba gnyis dus cig yin/ bla ma lHa rje dang/ nang pa'i pandi ta dang/ mu stegs kyi pandi ta gsum ka rgyal po de'i mchod gnas yin/ grong khyer Padma can dang Karti ka gnyis kyi bar na grong nyung ba cig yod/ yul phyogs de thams cad mu stegs pa yin pa la physis nang Sangs rgyas par tshud/ Padma can dang Karti ka'i bar nyin lam gnyis yod/ kho bo dang bla ma lHa rje grong khyer Padma can yang mjal/ yon bdag sGom pa pa ni sngags pa zhig gi bur skyes nas rab byung byas/ khyed 'ga' yang grong khyer Karna par skyes te/ Yon tan 'od dang/ dGe dun 'od dang/ sMon lam bla ma dang/ Ye shes 'od dang/ ston pa Tshul seng dang/ dGe 'dun grags khyed bdun lhan cig (p.202) tu rje'u'i rigs su skye/ grong khyer de gsum yang phyogs cig thabs yin/ gzhan yang yul phyogs der slob dpon Rin chen rgyal mtshan dang/ ston pa Sangs rgyas dang/ ston pa Byang grags dang/ dpon bSod dpon dang/ Dar ma ra dza dang/ Shakya shes rab dang/ sgom sNgon dang/ rDo rje 'bum dang/ dge bshes Rin chen grags dang/ dBang phyug grags dang/ 'Od zer bla ma dang/ Yon tan bla ma dang/ Dar ma seng ge dang/ rDo rje brtson 'grus dang/ Byang pa lha bzo ba la sogs pa mang du skye/ khyed mang rab cig da lan bla ma lHa rje dang mjal rgyu yin pa la ma mjal te/ skye ba phyi ma la mjal bar 'dug gsung/ yang de'i rjes su lHo brag grub pa'i gnas bcu bdun du 'byung ste/ der slob ma cig skyes pa'i don dang/ gzhan yang phan par 'gyur ba mang du 'byung/ yun ring po ni der mi sdod gsung ngo/ yang rGya gar lho phyogs U ru zhes bya bar da ki ma'i gnas Kong ka zhes bya ba yong pa der skye/ de nas Po ta la zhes bya ba grong khyer du yon bdag sGom pa pa 'di rgyal po zhig tu skye/ lam rnal ma la der tshud pa yin/ khyed nmams dang yang mjal nas gzod nga mi dgos pa mang po yang 'byung/ 'gro ba bsam gyis mi khyab pa la phan par 'dug gsung ngo/”; “Again, [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] was asked where the *bla ma rin po che* would benefit sentient beings in his next lives. The *rje btsun* said: “I will take rebirth as a *rnal 'byor pa* called Ratna sidhi, the son of [his] father Dharmā sidhi and mother Ma ha pradznya shī la at the town Karti ka on the northeastern border of O rgyan in western India. I will benefit uncountable sentient beings. Since bla ma lHa rje will take rebirth at the town of Padma can,

link to Karma Pakshi is Dus gsum mkhyen pa's statement that he would be reborn to set yon bdag dGon pa ba's incarnation (i.e. the Mongol emperor Mo 'gor rgyal po) on the path of absolute truth. These statements correspond almost verbatim to what Dus gsum mkhyen pa said in his prophecies announcing the birth of the second Karma pa, found in the biographies of Karma Pakshi, whose significance is thus clarified.

The other biography is the one by dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba, which contains a terser exposition of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's prophecies concerning his own rebirths.⁴⁸ Remarkably, Dus gsum mkhyen pa states in all these biographies that he will again be born in Tibet (i.e.

his name will be Zhi ba'i go cha and a *mu stegs pandi ta* will sponsor his education. After his sponsoring of bla ma lHa rje's education, they will debate (*rtsang pa sic for rtsod pa*), and the *bla ma* will be victorious. (p.501) He will convert all the *mu stegs pa* to Buddhism. The *mu stegs* king Mahā dzi na will be later called Dharma ra dza. Bo dhi badzra, who will have noble qualities, will reside at the town of Karti ka. Bla ma lHa rje said: "dGe bsnyen sGom pa, Zhi mdzes, mGar ston, gSer sgom Ye shes snying po, Zim shi Ye shes snying po, Ya zi sNgon mo, both rGya che [and] chung, Grags mdzes, Nyog sde ston pa, Rong sgom and Yon tan snying po will be the sixteen disciples grouped together on the basis of their behaviour, [characterised] by knowledge and discipline. One *mu stegs rgyal po* will be converted by [force of] non-conceptual principles, and the king of Karti ka will be converted by a *pandi ta*. These two will be contemporary. Bla ma lHa rje, a Buddhist *pandi ta* and a *mu stegs pandi ta*, altogether three, will be the *mchod gnas* ("officiating *bla ma*") of that king. Between the towns of Padma can and Karti ka there is a small village. All [the places] in this land are *mu stegs pa* but later they will be converted into Buddhist. It is a two-day journey between Padma can and Karti ka. Bla ma lHa rje and I will meet at the town of Padma can. Yon bdag sGom pa ba will be born as the son of a *sngags pa* and will take the *rab byung* vow [from me]. Some of you will be born at the town Kar na pa. Yon tan 'od, dGe 'dun 'od, sMon lam bla ma, Ye shes 'od, ston pa Tshul seng, dGe 'dun grags and you, altogether seven, (p.502) will be born in the *rje'u rigs*. The above three towns are under the rule of one party. Moreover, many [people] such as slob dpon Rin chen rgyal mtshan, ston pa Sangs rgyas, ston pa Byang grags, dpon bSod, dpon Dar ma ra dza, Shakya shes rab, sgom sNgon, rDo rje 'bum, dge bshes Rin chen grags, dBang phyug grags, 'Od zer bla ma, Yon tan bla ma, Dar ma seng ge, rDo rje brtson 'grus and Byang pa lha bzo ba will be born in this direction. Quite many of you (*khyed mang rab*) will be supposed to meet bla ma lHa rje at that time but will not meet him. You will meet him in the next life". [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] added: "Again, after that, I will be born in lHo brag, [where] the seven meditation places [are located]. I will exist to benefit one disciple who will be born there and, moreover, many who will be reborn to be beneficial [in their turn]. But I will not stay there for long'. He said: "Again, I will be born at Kong ga, the holy place of the *da ki ma-s*, in so called U ru in southern rGya gar. Then yon bdag dGon pa ba will be born as a king in the town called Po ta la. I will set him on the path of absolute truth. Since I will meet you [people] again, [this means that] many of those who do not need me now will also be reborn. I will be inconceivably beneficial to sentient beings".

48. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.868 line 20–p.869 line 5): "Nyid phyi ma gar 'khrungs zhus pas O rgyan gyi byang shar Karta kar rnal 'byor pa Ratna siddhi zhes par byas te yul de'i rgyal po 'dul/ bla ma lHa rje dang yang mjal/ yon bdag dGo pa pa 'di sngags pa zhig tu gyur te kho bo la rab tu 'byung/ Yon tan 'od sogs khyed bdun rje rigs su skye kho bo dang phrad/ (p.869) yul phyogs der slob dpon Rin rgyal sogs mang du skye zhing bla ma lHa rje dang mjal ba 'gyur/ yang lHo brag grub pa'i gnas bdun du

in lHo brag) before taking rebirth as Karma Pakshi, but this life will be brief (see n.39, n.40, n.47, n.48, n.49, n.51, n.56 and n.65). This would explain the lapse of time between the death of the first and the birth of the second Karma pa quite differently from Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas, and one wonders whether this intermediate incarnation should be counted as a Karma Zhwa nag pa who has been ignored by the tradition.

The literature concerning the three prophecies, in which the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa as Karma Pakshi is mentioned, seems to have originated in earlier Karma pa material. In both *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar gSer gling ma*, composed by sGang lo tsa ba,⁴⁹ one of

slob ma zhig gi don du skye ste yun ring po ni der mi sdod/ yang rGya gar lho phyogs U ru dang dā ki ma'i gnas Kong ga bya bar skye zhing yon bdag dGon pa ba rgyal po zhig tu skyes nas lam rnal ma la der chud gsung/"; "[Dus gsum mkhyen pa] being asked: "Where will you be born next?", [Dus gsum mkhyen pa answered]: "At Karti ka, in the northeast of O rgyan, I will be born as a *yogin* by the name of Ratna siddhi and will tame the king of that country. I will also meet bla ma lHa rje. This yon bdag dGon pa ba will be reborn as a *sngags pa* and will take vows from me. Altogether seven disciples [including] you, Yon tan 'od, will be reborn in the *rje rigs* and will meet me. (p.869) Many [of you], such as slob dpon Rin rgyal, will be reborn in this land (i.e. O rgyan) and will reincarnate to meet bla ma lHa rje. Again, I will be reborn to benefit a disciple in lHo brag, [where] the seven holy meditation places [are located], but I will not stay there for long. Again, I will be reborn in southern rGya gar between U ru and Kong ga, the place of the *da ki ma*-s. Since yon bdag dGon pa ba will be reborn as a king, at that time I will set [this king] on the path of the absolute truth".

49. *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar gSer gling ma* (p.126 line 4–p.127 line 5): "De'i phyi ma gar bzhud zhus pas/ Bod yul dBus su lHo brag grub pa'i gnas bdun ces par slob ma cig gi don du skye ste yun ring po mi bzhugs/ khyed 'ga' dang der 'phrag gsung/ lHo brag tu skyes pa'i rabs ste le'u bcu bdun pa'o/ de'i phyi ma bzhugs pas/ rGya gar lho phyogs U ru sa ces par mkha' 'gro (p.127) ma'i gnas Kongka bya yod pa der skye/ sa phyogs de na Pa ta la ces pa'i grong khyer du yon bdag dGon pa pa rgyal por skye nas lam rnam ma la der sdod chud/ khyed rnams dang yang der dang mjal nas bzod nga mi dgos pa mang po yang 'byung 'gro ba gzhan mang ba la yang phan par 'dug gsungs/ de lta bu'i sprul pa sna tshogs kyi gzhan don mdzad pa ni sems can rnams kyi las ma zad kyi bar du nor bu rin po che ltar 'byung te brjod pa dang bris pas mi lang ngo/ shar phyogs kyi jig rten gyi khams su skyes pa'i rabs ste le'u bco bryad pa'o/"; "Having been asked: "In the next [life], where will you come?", he replied: "I will be born in lHo brag, known as the *grub pa'i gnas bdun* ("the seven holy places of meditation"), in dBus of the land of Tibet. I will meet some of [my] disciples there but I will not live long. I will meet a few of you there". This is the seventeenth chapter, dealing with his rebirth in lHo brag. Having been asked what his next [life] would be, he replied: "At U ru sa, in South rGya gar, there is a holy place of the *mkha' 'gro* (p.127) *ma*, known as Kongka, and I will be reborn here. At the town called Pa ta la, in the direction of this land, yon bdag dGon pa ba will be born as a king, so I will set him on the path of ultimate reality. Since I will also meet you [my disciples] there, there are many [of you] who do not need me from now on (*bzod* sic for *da gzod*). Most [of you] will also be beneficial to others". Accordingly, [Dus gsum mkhyen pa was reborn] to benefit others by means of various incarnations up to when the *karma* of sentient beings reaches an end. He existed like a

the four disciples who attended on Dus gsum mkhyen pa in the later part of the master's life,⁵⁰ and *Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam* which cites the biography of the first Karma pa,⁵¹ the earliest

precious jewel. It is impossible to describe and write [about him]. This was the eighteenth chapter, dealing with his rebirth in the impermanent kingdom of the east (i.e. the Mongol kingdom).

Concerning *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar gSer gling ma*, its colophon (p.127 line 5–p.128 line 2) reads: “Chos rje'i skyes rabs rin po che (p.128) gSer gling le'u bco brgyad pa zhes bya ba bla ma sras bcas kyi gsung sgros thor bu rnam bsdus pa/ de'i gsung la tshad mar 'dzin pa sGang lo mTshur phu mDo bo dgon pa'i rgyan du bris pa'o/”; “*Chos rje'i skyes rabs rin po che* (p.128) *gSer gling le'u bco brgyad pa* (“in eighteen chapters”) has been compiled from the miscellaneous writings of the *bla ma* and his spiritual sons. [I] sGang lo, the knowledgeable holder of his words, wrote it [with all due] ornamentations at mTshur phu mDo bo dgon pa”.

sGang lo tsa ba's *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar gSer gling ma* is one of the sources used by mKha' spyod dbang po for his own biography of the first Karma pa (see p.504 line 1 of his *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar*).

50. See, e.g., *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.870 lines 21–22): “gTsang ston Tshul seng/ Tre bo dKon mchog dpal/ rDo rje shes rab/ sGang lo tsā ba ste phyi bu bzhi yongs/”; “gTsang ston Tshul seng, Tre bo dKon mchog dpal, rDo rje shes rab and sGang lo tsa ba were [Dus gsum mkhyen pa's] four later spiritual sons”; also see *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.270 line 12), and *ibid.* (p.274 line 3) for a one-sentence biography of the same disciple.

A passage in dPa' bo's biography of Dus gsum mkhyen pa (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p.869 line 22–p.870 line 1) in which, with death approaching, Dus gsum mkhyen pa gave a speech to sGang lo tsa ba confirms that the latter was a junior disciple in the last days of the master: “sGang lo tsā ba zham ring du yod pa la gzhon nu khyod kyi lo shas 'dir sdod la kho bo'i sku gsung thugs (p.870) rten rnam yi ge gcig kyang ma 'thor ba gyis ngas kyang chos skyong la bcol ba yin/”; “He told sGang lo tsā ba who was there to serve him: “Boy, you must remain here for a few years and compile into a single document [a list of my] receptacles of body, speech and mind (p.870) which I have entrusted to the *chos skyong*”.”

Given that he is the author of *rnam thar gSer gling ma*, sGang lo was told by Dus gsum mkhyen pa to engage in writing the biography which the master envisaged as a task that would take years. This also shows that sGang lo had to write without delay. In the Tibetan tradition, this is the prerogative of many young disciples deputed to take care of their master in old age.

51. *Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam* (p.89 lines 2–5): “rJe Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar nas ma 'ongs pa'i dus su Bod yul lHo brag grub pa'i gnas bdun du gdul bya gcig gi don du 'byung dang/ 'Bri chu Ngo mthong nas gcig gis nged kyi dgongs pa rdzogs par byed bya ba zer ba dang/ yon bdag dGon pa pa dang yang skye ba gnyis sam gsum gyi lam rnal ma la tshud pa zer dus gsum mtshung pa ste/ de'i phyir na rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i dgongs pa de gsum rdzogs par bya ba'i don du/ da lta ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa yang/ dran pa shes bzhin dang ldan pa 'Bri klung/ Dam pa Chos kyi phyug pa'i yul du btsad po dBu'i rigs su skyes/”; “According to *rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar*, he said: “In the future, I will appear in Tibet to benefit one person to be trained at the seven holy places of [spiritual] accomplishment (*grub pa'i gnas bdun*) of lHo brag”, and added: “One from 'Bri chu Ngo mthong will fulfil my wishes”, and “The second or third rebirth of yon bdag sGom pa ba will be born to enter the path [leading] to the ultimate truth (*lam rnal ma la tshud*)”. These were three contemporaneous statements. Therefore, in order to fulfil these three wishes of rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa, at the present time, [I myself], universally known by the name Karma pa [and] possessing the memory and

known biographies of these masters, the three prophecies are found in the same unexplicit terms in which they are treated in the later sources of their school.

In particular, *rnam thar gSer gling ma* does not make it clear at all that Karma Pakshi was bound to set Mo 'gor rgyal po on the path of liberation, since the locality where the rebirth of yon bdag dGon pa ba as the Mongol emperor was going to take place is identified as the town of Pa ta la, later spelled Po ta la in mKha' spyod dbang po's *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar* (see above n.49), which does not match up in any obvious way with any place in the Mongol empire.

It is only from the title of the brief [eighteenth] chapter of *rnam thar gSer gling ma*, exclusively dedicated to this rebirth, that one comes to understand that the reference is to the lands to the east of Tibet, where Karma Pakshi had travelled to meet the members of the Mongol royal family.

On the other hand, Karma Pakshi has a summarised autobiography in the first section of his *rang rnam*. In the part describing his journey and sojourn in the lands to the east of Tibet (p.11 line 3–p.22 line 7), Karma Pakshi addresses himself as the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa whose task was to lead the Mongol emperor on the path to absolute truth. His words are pretty ornate, which may have contributed to making their subsequent deciphering rather difficult.

It thus seems that a possible reason for the obscurity in the treatment of these prophetic statements lies in the wish of later authors to keep to almost pristine formulations, that is, to avoid simplifications which, in order to make them more understandable, would have deviated from the original.

The recognition of Karma Pakshi as Dus gsum mkhyen pa's next rebirth

A discussion of the issues raised by the introduction of succession by rebirth among the Karma pa would be incomplete if the motivations of the religious masters who identified Karma Pakshi as the reincarnation of Dus gsum mkhyen pa and the circumstances under which this acknowledgement took place were not touched upon. In his autobiography, Karma Pakshi himself declares that he was the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa,⁵² but I wish to as-

knowledge [of these prophecies], was born into the btsad po dBu'i rigs ("the dBu family of kings") in the land of 'Bri klung Dam pa Chos phyug pa".

52. In the same work, Karma Pakshi lays out the historical background of the issue of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's rebirths which led to his own basing himself on the treatment found in *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar gSer gling ma*. This background is established in a few passages. The first of them (*Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam* p.87 line 4–p.88 line 7) reads as follows: "Mu stegs gsod pa la dGa' ba zhes bya ba'i rgyal po gZi brjid can du gyur nas thams cad bshig ci bsad pa byung ba'i dus su/ rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam 'phrul 'Jigs med grags pa yis/ kho'i glang po che lnga brgya'i nang nas khyad par du 'phags pa lHa'i dbang po brGya sbyin gyi glang po che Sa la rab brtan la 'gran du btub pa gcig tu sprul zhing skyes pas/ log pa'i rgyal po dga' nas de'i steng du khri chen po bcas shing ras dang gos snod kyis phrod gzhal yas rim pa mang po bskor nas/de'i nang du khong cag brtse ba'i byung dang/ btsun mo longs spyod dmag gis bskor zhing sa gzhi thams cad dmag gis gang khar bcas nas/ stobs dang ldan pa'i rgyal po brlag tu song bas rgyal po dpon slob dang nye ba'i (p.88) sar sleb

certain in the following whether this conclusive statement was confirmed by other masters who interacted with him.

Matters are once again shrouded in remarkable obscurity, for none of the sources available at present is explicit even in this case. In his *rang rnam*, Karma Pakshi says that, on one

pa na glang po che 'gro nas thams cad sa la brgyab cing glang po che dkyus nas rgyal po 'khor bcas brdzis shing bsad nas/ dmag thams cad mya ngen tsho de dang rang yul du song ste/ stobs kyi rgyal po 'khor bcas kyis sprul pa'i glang po cher shes nas bsu zhing mchod pa chen po byas pas/ glang po che ni gar song cha med 'Jigs med grags pa la khyad par du des shes skyes nas/ rgyal po 'khor bcas mtho ris thar pa la bkod pa'o/ log pa'i rgyal po sa mtha'i rgyal por skyes shing 'Jigs med grags pas/ khyad par byang sems bzung ba'i stobs kyis phyi nang gnyis ka'i lha rten la dad pa'i mchod pa dang/ tshogs rgya chen po ma rig pa'i dbang gis bsags pa'i stobs kyis de'i skye ba phyi ma la Kam po sJa la bya bar Re ge skya bya ba'i Bon po'i rigs su sngon gyi bag chags ngen pas skyes nas/ de nas ban dhe la gyur nas bsod nams chen po'i stobs dang ldan pa zhing/ rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa gNas nang na bzhugs pa'i phyogs su nor thams cad gtang nas tshogs chen po rdzogs pa ste/ skye ba de'i phyi ma Kha che'i yul dang Sog po'i 'tshams su So brtan gyi rgyal por skyes nas phyi nang gnyis ka'i grub mtha' la dad cing mos nas sems can rnam la mi gnod cing Sangs rgyas dang mu stegs pa gnyis la tha dad med par bsod nams chen po rdzogs par mdzad pa'o// de yan chod rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa dang/ ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa tha dad med//"; "[The man] called Mu stegs sod pa la dGa' ba ("the *mu stegs* inclined to kill") was reborn as rgyal po gZi brjid can, so when he destroyed and killed everybody, [one of] rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa's [previous] embodiments, 'Jigs med grags pa, was re-incarnated and reborn as the best among the former's 500 elephants. It could vie with glang po che Sa la rab brtan, the elephant of lha'i dbang po brGya byin (Indra). Since the heretical king was pleased, he placed a big throne on the back [of this elephant], and surrounded it with layers (*rim par*) of cotton and brocade as many as being countless suited be contained [there]. After placing inside it his beloved son and queen, and wealth, [all] surrounded by warriors, and with warriors everywhere on the ground, the powerful king set off to cause destruction. As the king approached the chieftains and ministers (p.88), the elephant [began] trotting and everyone fell to the ground. The elephant went into a gallop, and stepped on the king and his retinue, killing them. All the warriors lamented and returned to their country. Since the powerful king and his retinue had recognised that it was an incarnation elephant, they offered to it a great service and worship. This elephant disappeared then. It is absolutely certain knowledge that it was reborn as 'Jigs med grags pa, having delivered the king and his courtiers to a higher realm on the path of liberation. The heretical king was reborn as a king of the borderland who, thanks to the power of 'Jigs med grags pa's compassion, had faith and worshipped the deities and [their] receptacle holders. Due to the effect (*dbang*) of ignorance of accumulating [merit] and to accumulation [of demerit], his (i.e. the king's) next rebirth was Re ge skya, born into a Bon po family in [the locality] called Kam po sJa la, owing to the previous negative inclinations. Then after being reborn as a *ban dhe*, he acquired great merit and wealth and, since he sent all his belongings to rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa, who was then staying at [Kam po] gNas nang, he earned a great accumulation [of merit]. As for the successive rebirth, he was born as the king of So brtan at the border between Kha che and Sog po (i.e. Kashmir and Mongol Turkestan in the days before Karma Pakshi). Since he had faith and revered both foreign (i.e. Buddhist) and indigenous (i.e. *mu stegs pa*) views, he did not harm the animals and did not discriminate between followers of Buddhism and *mu stegs pa*-s. He accomplished the perfecting of great merit. This is a summary of the past and the main issues (*gleng gzhi*) along with the question raised (*gleng slang* sic for *gleng bslang*) by events

before (*sngon byung*) (p.89) and until when (*yan chod*) rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa and [I], the one universally known by the name Karma pa, were considered to be not different [from one another]”.

In what follows these passages, Karma Pakshi quotes the three prophecies in which Dus gsum mkhyen pa describes his own rebirths, including the one as the second Karma pa. Subsequently (ibid. p.100 line 5–p.101 line 7) he adds the circumstances which led him to realise that he was Dus gsum mkhyen pa’s rebirth: “‘Ong gi bya ba’i rgyal sa’i yul/ khams su phyin pa’i dus su ’das/ ma ’ongs da ltar gsum gyi ’brel tshul snod shes dang dran par byung ste/ de’i tshe na sngon Dus gsum mkhyen pas glang po chen por sprul nas log lta can gyi rgyal po ’khor bcas btul/ba de skye ba ’ga’ bryud nas da ltar ’Dzam gling rgyal Mo ’gor gan du sku ’khrungs shing/ sngon gyi bag chags kyis mu stegs Er ga’o yi grub mtha’ ’dzin cing Er (p.101) ka’i slob dpon mang pos mu stegs kyi grub mtha’ ’chad cing/ thugs ’khor nas ’Dzam gling thams cad mu stegs kyi bstan pa la ’jug dgos ’dug pa/ rgyal bu A ri po ka/ dpon mo I lji ga ma la sogs pa rgyal rgyud khams kyi ’bangs thams cad kyang/ sngon mu stegs kyi rgyal po btsun mo sras dang nye du dmag dpon mi la sogs pa thams cad da res ’dir ’khor bcas lhan cig tu skyes pa’i phyr na/ rje Dus gsum mkyen pa yis sems can gcig gi don du Bod yul du byon zhing yun ring mi ’dug bya ba ni/ ’Dzam gling khyab par kun du rgyu ba las dgongs ste/ ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa Mo ’gor rgyal po gcig pu’i/ don du skyes shing ’khor bcas mtho ris thar pa la sogs thabs kyis ’god pa dgos par dran cing/ gnam lo rgyal po ’brug gi lo la Zi ra ’Ur rdor rgyal rgyud thams cad tshogs pa’i dus su phyin pa las/ sngon gyi las kyi ’brel pa’i stobs kyis rgyal ’bangs thams cad rang dbang med par ’du zhing/ mos nas bsnyen bkur rgya chen po mdzad pa’o/ de’i tshe na lMo mgor rgyal po la ltas dang cho ’phrul dag snang mtha’ yas pa bstan cing/ ’phrin las rnam bzhi’i sgo nas rje ’bangs thams cad kyis snang ba rang dbang med par ’gyur nas/ mu stegs kyi grub mtha’ las rje ’bangs thams cad bzlog cing/ nang pa Sangs rgyas pa’i bstan pa la btsugs/’; “While crossing the land whose capital is called ’Ong gi, I realised and remembered the various relations between past, present and future, altogether three. Dus gsum mkhyen pa was born [in the past] at the same time as an elephant. He subdued a heretical king and his court. This [king], after a few generations, was born as ’Dzam gling rgyal po Mo ’gor gan. Due to [his] previous karmic inclinations, [Mo ’gor gan] was a holder of the *mu stegs* Er ka’o views, and (p.101) many Er ka masters were expounding *mu stegs* views [at court]. All the ’Dzam bu gling pa-s were obliged to adopt the *mu stegs* teachings since [these] people were misled (*thugs ’khor*). For the sake of the members of the royal family such as rgyal bu A ri po ka (spelled so) and dpon mo I lji ga ma, together with all the subjects of the kingdom and all those who existed at that time including one retinue who had previously been a *mu stegs rgyal po*, the queen, their son and the *dmag dpon* relative, I remembered that rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa said that he would come to Tibet to benefit sentient beings but would not stay for long [as that incarnation]. [I] reflected on the events that were transforming the entire ’Dzam gling, on the fact that [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] was reborn as the one universally known by the name of Karma pa to benefit Mo ’gor rgyal po in particular and that [I] had to deliver him to liberation together with his high-ranking people, such as his courtiers. Following my arrival at Zi ra ’Ur rdo, when everybody in the royal lineage had gathered at the time of the new year, the dragon year (1256), due to the power of previous karmic nexuses, all the royalty and the subjects obligatorily gathered and gave me a great reception, and displayed their reverence and faith. At that time, I caused limitless signs, miracles and pure visions that were manifested to Mo mgor (spelled so) rgyal po. By means of the four actions (*’phrin las bzhi*), I induced mystical notions in all the royalty and the subjects, so that, without alternative, the emperor and all the subjects abandoned the *mu stegs* views and adopted the teachings of Sangs rgyas [as] Buddhists”.

occasion, while bla ma Nyag re Se bo Rin chen rgyal mtshan (?–1200 or 1201) was deeply absorbed in meditation at sPung ri,⁵³ this great disciple of Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po

53. He is called grub thob Nyag re Se bo in *Deb ther sngon po* and is included among Pha mo gru pa's *gdams pa'i bu zhi*, or "four disciples of the teachings" (*Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam*, p.663 line 19–p.664 line 4). On Nyag se's inclusion among the Phag mo gru pa's *gdams pa'i bu bzhi* also see *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.321 lines 5–7), where he is named grub thob Nyag ras Se bo and also less commonly known as bSam 'grus (spelled so) ras pa. Glimpses of this master's life are found elsewhere in the same source (with the spelling Nyag re Se bo), where descriptions of the displays of his *sid-dhi* make the most of this biography (ibid. p.341 line 2–p.342 line 3: "Grub thob Nyag ras Se bo ni/ gdung Nyug re/ dBus su dpal Phag mo gru pa las gdams ngag rdzogs par gnos nas grub pa thob ste bSam 'grus ras pa yang zer/ Khams gsum byon nas Gle dgon btab pa'i gdung ma chen po bong bus 'dren pa'i rdzu 'phrul dang/ slob ma yang skye rgyal dman brgya tsam 'tshogs/ de rnams dbang khrid gdams ngag kyang gngang bas sgom chen sems kyi gnas lugs rtogs pa mang du byon cing/ sKam po gangs rar byon/ rDo rje dpal brtsegs kyi bar chod byun ba la thal pa'i phung du gsang chab gtor bas gangs ri snyil ba dang/ dam pa bzhag nas sPu ri la byon nas kag ne yang mang po mdzad/ de nas Gle dgon du byon/ char slong byas pa'i tshe 'og nam mkha' la gtor ba la sprin chags nas de ma thag tu char chen po bab pa dang/ mo skam brgyas bu zhus pa la/ gsang chab bkyes pas gar thob par phyir lo bu re re byung ba la gcig gis ma thob pas zhal mchil gngang bas bu mo gcig byung ba dang/ dKar shod ngul kha pha wang gis bkag pa/ slar yang rta rnga btags nas drud pa/ rab gnas gar byas par da lta bar du mchod rten gyi rtse mo la bya nag mi 'babs pa sogs ni mngon sum du gsal cing/ Kam po dpal brtsegs chab kyiis gshigs/ mo skam brgya la gces phrug brgya/ dPal mtha' rtsi'i dgon du de e tshor/ zhes sogs mgur yang yod/ mDo Khams kyi cha phal cher byon nas grub rtags kyang dpag tu med pa bstan/ phyi rabs phan pa'i lo rgyus ngo mtshar can bzhag nas dBus su 'Jig rten mgon po'i sku (p.342) ring la 'bul skyel la byon/ slar Khams su byon/ Gle'i gnas de nyid du gshegs par grags/ [note: lcags bya sprel gyi lo ga rung yin pa 'dra] sMar Yel gnyis ni 'og tu 'byung/'"; "Grub thob Nyag ras (spelled so) Se bo. His clan was Nyug (sic for Nyag) re. After receiving complete teachings from dpal Phag mo gru pa in dBus, he obtained spiritual powers, and came also to be known as bSam 'grus (spelled so) ras pa. He then went to Khams and founded Gle dgon, whereupon [he performed] a miracle in which donkeys carried huge beams. He gathered some one hundred women of sKye rgyal as disciples. Once he had given them *dbang*, *khrid* and *gdams ngag*, many of them became meditators who realised the essence of the mind. [Thereafter] he went to sKam (sic) po gangs ra. When an obstruction was caused by rDo rje dpal brtsegs, he made a snow mountain collapse by sprinkling his secret water over a heap of dust. After he bound [rDo rje dpal brtsegs] to a vow, he went to sPu ri (i.e. sPung ri). [There] he performed many [rituals] for the *kag ne* ("obstacles occurring on a set year of the duodenary cycle"?). He then went to Gle dgon. When he performed the ritual to call the rain, he spread his lower door (i.e. stools) in the sky. Clouds were formed and, immediately after, a heavy rain fell. He ejaculated his semen to one hundred barren women begging for a son. Whoever received [some of] it, delivered a son in the next year. Since one of them did not get any, he gave her [some of] his saliva and she had a daughter. He blocked the dKar shod ngul kha (sic for *ngul kha*, "silver mine"?) with a huge rock. Again, he tied the tail of a horse [to the rock] and pulled it out. Such things as no black bird ever landing on the top of the *mchod rten*, from the time of consecration until now, were truly seen. There also is a song which says: "He demolished Kam po dPal brtsegs with his water. One hundred beloved children [were born] to one hundred dry women. Did people at dPal mtha' rtsi'i dgon realise this?". He exhibited uncountable miracles at almost every place (*cha* sic for *sa cha*) of mDo Khams

(1110–1170), had a vision about his rebirth in the Karma pa ranks. He mystically realised the identity between Dus gsum mkhyen pa and Karma Pakshi.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Karma Pakshi is considered to have been the next life of Nyag re Se bo, a fact mentioned in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*,⁵⁵ and in a considerably cryptic passage of *Deb ther sngon po*.⁵⁶

Nyag re se bo's vision documents that the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa as Karma Pakshi was ascertained by someone other than the Karma pa himself. But, given the circumstances as they are described by Karma Pakshi, the impression is that Nyag re Se bo's was a realisation confined to a mystical realm, without necessarily concrete implications for the management of religious affairs, such as the succession between the two in the lineage and the control of

where he went. He left extraordinary accounts (*lo rgyus*) useful for future generations. During the life of 'Jig rten mgon po, (p.342) he went to dBus to bring offerings [to him]. He returned to Khams. It is well known that he died at Gle'i gnas [note: it seems that it happened either in iron bird (1201) or in the monkey year (1200)]. Both sMar and Yel will be discussed below”.

The death date of Nyag Se is reliable inasmuch as Karma Pakshi was not yet born at that time, no matter which of the latter's three possible birth dates (1204, 1206 and 1210) is taken as valid (see below n.58 and n.66).

Their dates indicate that, in this case, the *skyes rabs* of the two followed a linear sequence of years from one's death to the other's birth.

Reincarnations of Nyag Se are known to the literature. For instance, one rebirth of Nyag se was met by the seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho, in A mdo during the hare year 1471 (*Chos grags rgya mtsho'i rnam thar* in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas' *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.549 line 5). But this way after the *skyes rabs* transfer of Nyag re se bo to Karma Pakshi.

54. *Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam* (p.94 lines 4–6): “Yul du Kam po gNas nang gi nye ba'i gnas sPung ri zhes bya bar phyin zhing srid pa gsum gyi lha 'dre mkha' 'gro sprin bzhin du 'dus pa'i gnas/ de'i sngon du bla ma Nyag ses thang gcig sgom pa zin yang rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa dang/ ming yongs su grags pa Karma pa tha dad med pai' rnam par 'phrul pa cha gcig yi par sngan/”; “I went to sPung ri (spelled so), a holy place near Kam po gNas gnang in the land of sGo rigs. This is the gathering place of the *lha 'dre* of the three existences (*srid pa gsum*) and the *mkha' 'gro*-like clouds. Earlier, bla ma Nyag Se also meditated there once, and the incarnations of rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa and [myself], the one universally known by the name Karma pa, who are not different, appeared [to him] as being a single pair”.

55. *mKhas pa dga' ston* (p.1154 lines 6–8) reads: “rJe Phag mo gru pa'i slob ma grub thob Nyag re Se bo zhes grags pa grub chen Karma Pakshi'i sku bkod par zhal gyis bzhes/”; “Grub chen Karma Pakshi was recognised as the embodiment of rje Phag mo gru pa's disciple, the one known as grub thob Nyag res (spelled so) Se bo”.

Also see *Grub thob Nyag re Rin chen rgyal mtshan gyi skyes rabs rnam thar ma 'ongs lung bstan* (f.102a line 1–f.102b line 1 aka *Nyag re Se bo'i skyes rabs rnam thar ma 'ongs lung bstan* p.70 lines 12–18).

56. 'Gos lo tsa ba (*Deb ther sngon po* p.665 lines 11–14) gives a concise biography of Karma Pakshi but elaborates further the same concepts made in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*: “Nyag re Se bos 'gro mgon dang mjal nas grub pa brnyes te Khams su byon Gles dgon btab/ grub thabs mang po bstan/ 'di Karma Pakshi yin zhes Karma Pa shi rang gis zhal gyis bzhes so/”; “After meeting 'gro mgon [Phag mo gru pa], [Nyag re Se bo] had spiritual realisations. He went to Khams and founded Gles (spelled so)

Dus gsum mkhyen pa's monasteries. Karma Pakshi's confirmation that, besides being the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa, he was the next life of Nyag re Se bo is an aspect of a different nature from the game of rebirths of which Dus gsum mkhyen pa was an absolute master. This understanding and practice of the *skyes rabs* system distances these events and their knowledge from later *skyes rabs*-s often constructed *a posteriori*, such as those of Rin chen bzang po, A ti sha, the Dalai Lama-s themselves or Ba ku la rin po che in La dwags.

The other matter concerns a statement by Karma 'Phrin las pa who, having lived centuries after these events took place, may have had reasons deriving from the school he belonged to for his assessment. Karma 'Phrin las pa says that it was Dus gsum mkhyen pa's disciple and

dgon. He showed many signs of spiritual realisations. People said: "This one (i.e. Nyag re Se bo) was Kar ma Pa shi (spelled so)". Kar ma Pa shi himself confirmed it".

Hardly any process of transmigration is as baffling as the *skyes rabs* system that goes beyond biological coherence, for it envisages more than a single rebirth of the same personality in disregard of chronological sequence. The Tibetan tradition lends credence to births both from the viewpoint of *cig car* ("simultaneity") and *rim dang* ("sequence") which are the opposite. In the case of Karma Pakshi, the literature says that the second Karma pa belonged to the same *skyes rabs* of Nyag re Se bo and belonged to several other ones according to the literature. He was the next life of grub thob Nyag re Se bo but was the second Karma pa, the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa.

In their translation of *Deb ther sngon po* (*Blue Annals* p.565) dGe 'dun chos 'phel and G. Roerich render the passage in the sense of stressing that Karma Pakshi had been Nyag re Se bo priorly. They translate the speech as follows: "He was said to have been Kar ma Pa shi, and this was admitted by Kar ma Pa shi himself". On the basis of these statements it results that was common knowledge to consider Nyag re Se bo to be reborn as Karma Pakshi, a fact that went manifestly undisputed in terms of general knowledge and validated by the second as Karma Pakshi's Karma pa himself.

It is unclear whether it was Karma Pakshi's admission that led to a condition of shared acceptance about Karma Pakshi being the individual who was reborn from two different bodies (Nyag re Se bo and Dus gsum mkhyen pa or the latter's incarnation in lHo brag) among several other rebirths ascribed to Karma Pakshi. This makes the game of rebirth complicated further. Karma Pakshi being the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa and Nyag re Se bo should be read in the sense of the understanding provided by the Karma Kam tshang tradition. Karma Pakshi was, above all, Dus gsum mkhyen pa's rebirth and therefore the legitimate second Karma pa, but *his skyes rabs*, in the true and baffling sense of this Tibetan system, included other, almost contemporaneous, rebirths, including that of Nyag re Se bo. The conceptual implication of the magnitude of parallel incarnations is a theme that cannot be exhausted in a footnote.

Dus gsum mkhyen pa's rebirth as the individual from lHo brag which was inconsequential, for he died far too prematurely which led to pass to the Karma Pakshi rebirth should also be considered. While this explains the gap of years which distances the birth of Karma Pakshi from the death of Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1193), the birth date of Karma Pakshi fell quite close to the death of Nyag re Se bo (1200 or 1201), especially the one proposed by 'Gos gZhon nu dpal (1204), which is fact chronologically possible (Nyag re Se bo d.1200 or 1201, Karma Pakshi b.1204 or 1206 or else 1210), thus, for once, not defying biology.

Karma Pakshi's teacher Pom brag pa also spelled sPom brag pa and sPong brag pa (1170–1249) who sanctioned the succession by rebirth from the first to the second Karma pa.⁵⁷

I have consulted the main biographies of Karma Pakshi available at present (*Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam*, as well as the earliest one by Kun dga' rdo rje in *Deb ther dmar po*; the one by mkha' spyod dbang po; and those in *lHo rong chos 'byung*, *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* and Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng*) to cross-check the historical validity of Karma 'Phrin las pa's remarks.

Most authors of these biographies credit Pom brag pa with the recognition of a very young Karma Pakshi as Dus gsum mkhyen pa's rebirth. This was the main reason why Pom brag pa took him as disciple.⁵⁸ Pom brag pa became the principal teacher of Karma Pakshi. With the

57. *Karma 'Phrin las pa'i mgur dang dris lan* (p.164 line 5): “Bla ma'i gtso bo ngo sprod mkhan dang/ chos kyi brgyud pa ded sa rgyal sras sPom brag pa yin/”; “[Karma Pakshi's] main *bla ma*, the one who identified him (*ngo sprod mkhan*) [as Dus mkhyen's rebirth] and who was the sanctioner (*ded sa*) of the religious succession (*chos kyi rgyud*) (i.e. *chos kyi rgyud ded sa*), was rgyal sras sPom brag pa”.

58. The meeting between Karma Pakshi and his teacher Pom brag pa is not dated consistently in the Karma pa material. Different dating of the meeting between Pom brag pa and Karma Pakshi *lHo rong chos 'byung* propounds the notion that it was wood bird 1225, when Karma Pakshi was sixteen years old, for it considers iron horse 1210 to have been the year of his birth (*Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* in *lHo rong chos 'byung* p.235 lines 7–9): “Lo bcu drug pa la rin po che Som brag pa dang mjal/ khyod ni mkha' 'gro byin gyis brlabs zhes/”; “When [Karma Pakshi] was aged sixteen (1225), he met rin po che Som (sic for Pom) brag pa, who gave [him hints of] prophetic knowledge such as: “You are the one blessed by the *mkha' 'gro-s*”.”.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston, for its part, antedates the event to fire rat 1216 when the Karma pa was aged eleven, having been born in fire tiger 1206 according to dPa' bo (see the following note).

Other Karma pa biographical works treat these events as follows. *sPom rag pa'i* (spelled so) *rnam thar* in *mTshan ldan bla ma rnam ki rnam thar bzugs* (f.5a line 7–f.5b line 3) recounts the meeting of Pom brag pa with Karma Pakshi in the following terms: “Rin po che sPom brag pa dang Sha 'bom na thog mar mjal ba'i dus su/ mchod chung khyod gang nas 'ong ba yin gsungs/ nged sa smad nas dBus su 'gro ba yin zhus pas/ khyod nga'i gdul bya e ma yin gar yang ma 'gro' dug gcig gsungs nas/ de nub Shes rab blo gros la dbang bskur mdzad pa'i gral du khrid nas thugs la btags/ dbang bskur thub nas mi med pa'i dus su do nub khyod 'dug pa'i thad na/ Dus gsum mkhyen pa sogs bKa' brgyud kyi bla ma gsal las can zhig yin par 'dug/”; “At that time, when they met for the first time at Sha 'bom, [Pom brag pa] asked [Karma Pakshi]: “Young practitioner (*mchod chung*), where are you coming from?”. He replied: “I am coming from *sa smad*. I am now going to dBus”. Since [Pom brag pa] said: “You are the person I should train. Do not go anywhere but stay here”. He said that the same night, while (*gral du*) [Pom brag pa] was giving him an empowerment to Shes rab blo gros, (f.5b) [Karma Pakshi] mastered it despite not being given the *khrid* (“explanation”). After the empowerment was over, the *rin po che* said: “Tonight, Dus gsum mkhyen pa and all the bKa' brgyud pa *bla ma* manifested in the direction where you were. You are someone with an [exceptional] *karma (las can)*”.”.

Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas' *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* (p.82 line 6–p.83 line 3) has it that: “rJe nyid dBus su pheb dgongs te byon pa la/ rin po che sPom brag pa dang Sha 'bom na thog mar mjal ba'i dus su/ btsun chung khyod gang nas 'ong ba yin gsungs/

exception of *Deb ther dmar po* (see below n.58), all the accounts in these sources are rather obscure—far from being outspoken on such a recognition—but it seems that the meeting between Pom brag pa and Karma Pakshi coincided with the official acknowledgement among the members of the Karma pa school that rebirth had taken place. Pom brag pa is also credited with participation in making young Karma Pakshi a monk, with nuances in the sources that

nged sa stod nas 'ong dBus su 'gro ba yin/ khyod nga'i gdul bya e ma yin/ gar yang ma 'gros 'dug cig gsungs nas/ de nub Shes rab blo gros la dbang bskur mdzad pa'i gral du khrid nas thugs la btags/ dbang bskur thub nas mi med pa'i dus su do nub khyod 'drag pa'i thad na/ Dus gsum mkhyen pa sogs bKa' brgyud kyi bla ma gsal (p.83) khyod las can zhig yin par 'dug/ de nas Sil ko dgon par byon pa'i dus su/ Sil ko Zhe kho gnyis kyi bar sGang Zhe mur 'og mgul na byon pa'i tshe/ sPom brag pa'i zhal nas/ de ring rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i snang pa nam mkha' gang ba zhig byung/ lar yang khyod dang 'phrad phyin dag pa'i snang ba bsam gyi mi khyab pa byung bas/ khyod skal ldan zhig yin par 'dug/ 'dir sdod la ngai chos 'di tsho nyams su long gsungs/ mngon par mkhyen pa rgya chen mnga' bar 'dug ste gsang bar snang gsungs/"; "Upon leaving with the idea of going to dBus, [Karma Pakshi] met rin po che sPom brag pa at Sha 'bom for the first time, who asked him: "Where are you, little monk, coming from?". As he replied: "I am coming from *sa stod* and I am going to dBus", he exclaimed: "Are not you the one to be trained by me? Do not go anywhere. Stay here". That night, while he gave empowerments to Shes rab blo gros, he took him to the row [where the monks sat] and accepted him [as a disciple]. That night, after receiving empowerments (*dbang bskur thub na* sic for *dbang bkur thob nas*), he was told: "If you wish, you can stay here (*khyod 'dug pa'i thad na*)". bKa' brgyud *bla ma*-s, such as Dus gsum mkhyen pa, manifested. (p.83) [Pom brag pa said]: "You have a karmic links [with him]". Hence, they went to Sil ko *dgon pa*, and when they reached below the neck of sGang She mur between Sil ko and Zhe kho, two in all, sPom brag pa said: "Today, the apparitions of rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa came to fill the sky. Moreover, since I met you, I have had inconceivably pure visions. This means that you are a blessed being. Stay here and practice my teachings". [Karma Pakshi] said that he kept secret the fact that he had inborn knowledge (*mngon par mkhyen par mnga' ba*)".

Situ Chos kyi 'byung gnas changes the *sa smad* of *sPom rag pa'i* (spelled so) *rnam thar* in *mTshan ldan bla ma rnam kyis rnam thar bzhugs*, Karma Pakshi's place of provenance on the occasion of his first meeting with Pom brag pa at Sha 'bom, into *sa stod*. This revision may be so because 'Bri klung, Karma Pakshi's homeland, is in mDo stod whereas the notion of mDo smad in Khams refers to the southern part of the region towards Li thang, Nyag chu kha, Dar rtse mdo and even, more north, sDe dge in some cases. However, the notion *sa smad* may have been used due to the fact that 'Bri klung is to the east of Sha 'bom.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.882 lines 6–10) mentions the miraculous signs that occurred during the first meeting between sPom brag pa and the young Karma Pakshi: "rJe sPong brag pas ngo sprad de sngar 'dris kyi mi dang phrad pa lta bur gyur/ de ring nam mkha' dpa' bo la sogs mkha' 'gro gang ba dang khyod 'dug pa'i thad na rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa la sogs bKa' brgyud kyi bla ma sprin gtibs pa lta bu snang ste khyod ni las can du 'dug/ khyod dang 'phrad phyin dag snang la zad pa med gsungs/"; "rJe sPong (spelled so) brag pa met him, and it turned out to be as if this person he had met was an old acquaintance. He told him: "Today I see that the sky is filled with *dpa' bo*-s and *mkha' 'gro*-s and, in the direction (*thad na*) where you were, there are the bKa' brgyud *bla ma*-s, such as rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa, as if [the sky] is covered with clouds. You are *las can* ("you have a karmic link [with the Karma pa]"). Since I met you, [my] pure visions have become endless".

vary from direct to indirect involvement in this bestowal.⁵⁹ The second Karma pa received the various vows in a rNying ma milieu rather than a bKa' brgyud pa one, but the sources do not provide the rationale for this choice.

59. No less confused in the Karma pa literature is the bestowal of the various monastic vows to Karma Pakshi. They range from the grant of the *so so thar pa* to the *rab tu byung* and *bsnyen par rdzogs pa* vows at Kah thog dgon from rNying ma masters with the participation of Pom brag pa to the exclusion of this Dus gsum mkhyen pa's disciple from the ceremonies. In one case Pom brag pa is considered the master who gave the vows to Karma Pakshi.

Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar (lHo rong chos 'byung p.235 lines 9–11) says: “De nas mkhan po Kah thog pa Byams pa 'bum/ spyang snga Mang phu ba/ rin po che pa sog's kyi drung du so thar gyi sdom pa rdzogs par mnos/””; “Then the complete *so thar* vow was conferred upon him in the presence of mkhan po Ka thog pa Byams pa 'bum, spyang snga Mang phu ba and the *rin po che pa* (i.e. Pom brag pa). He was given the name Chos kyi bla ma”.

Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar in mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.882 lines 10–12): “dGung lo bcu gcig pa la rab tu byung dpal chen po Chos kyi bla mar mtshan gsol/ dbang gdams ngag thams cad tshang sprugs su gngang/””; “Aged eleven (1216), [Karma Pakshi] received the *rab tu byung* vow. He was given the name dpal chen po Chos kyi bla ma. He was bestowed all empowerments and instructions in a complete manner”.

Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar in mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.882 lines 10–14): “Phyis dgung lo'i tshigs tshang nas Ka thog pa Byams pa 'bum gyis mkhan po/ rin po che sPong brag pas slob dpon/ spyang snga Mang phu bas gsang ston mdzad de bsnyen par rdzogs/””; “Then, when his age reached completion (*tshigs*: “to join”, *tshang*: “completion”) (thirteen years old?), Ka thog pa Byams pa 'bum was the *mkhan po*, rin po che sPong brag pa was the *slob dpon* and spyang snga Mang phu ba was the *gsang ston*. He was given the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow”.

Karma nges don, *Chos rje Karma pa sku phreng rim byon gyi rnam thar mdo' bsdus dpag bsam khri shing (Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar p.159, lines 21–23)*: “dGung lo bcu gcig par ra tu byung mtshan Chos kyi bla ma/ de nas sPom brag dgon par dbang dang/ sems bskyed zab khrid sog's dam pa'i chos dpah tu med pas rjes su bzung”; “Age eleven (1216) [Karma Pakshi] was ordained to the *rab tu byung* vow and was given the name Chos kyi bla ma. He then received uncountable noble teachings such as the profound authorisation on *Sems bskyed* at sPom brag dgon”.

Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas' Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng (p.83 lines 2–3): “dGung lo bcu gcig bzhes pa'i lo der rin po che sPom brag pa nyid kyi drung du rab tu byung nas mtshan Chos kyi bla ma ces gsol/””; “When he was aged eleven (1216), rin po che sPom brag pa gave [Karma Pakshi] the vows and he received the name of Chos kyi bla ma”.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.624, lines 3–7): “Grub thob Karma Pakshis kyang 'di las rab tu byung zhing rDzogs pa chen po'i bka' thams cad gsang zhing spyir 'phrin las nam mkha' dang mnyam mo/ de nas kyang grub thob Kar ma Pak shi dang 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phags pa'i bla ma Ma tsa ti spyang snga Mang phu ba bSod nams 'bum la sog's mkhas shing grub pa sha stag byon/””; “Grub thob Karma Pakshi, too, received the *rab tu byung* vow and all oral instructions on *rDzogs pa chen po* from him (i.e. Kah thog Byams pa 'bum). In general, [Kah thog Byams pa 'bum]'s deeds were equal to the sky. Thereafter, only *mkhas* and *grub*-s came [to Kah thog as abbots], such as Tsa ti spyang snga

Mang phu ba bSod nams rgyal mtshan, the *bla ma* of grub thob Kar ma Pak shi (spelled so) and 'gro mgon chos rgyal 'Phags pa".

The most noble spiritual sons of Tsa ti spyang snga Mang phu ba bSod nams rgyal mtshan were Karma Pakshi and 'gro mgon 'Phags pa in different periods of this master's life. Karma Pakshi received monastic vows from this rNying ma master and the latter's teacher Byams pa 'bum at an unspecified date but before going to dBus in wood dragon 1244.

A look at the Kah thog material on Karma Pakshi's ordination is imperative. *Kah thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsodus* (p.37 line 10–p.38 line 5): "De'i skabs Byang chub sems dpa' sPom brag pa'i bka' bzhin Karma pa Pakshi Kah thog tu phebs/ Kah thog gi sa gzhi thams cad rDo rje sems dpa'i sku sha stag las sa rdo phal pa ye ma gzig/ Karma pa'i chibs pas phyag 'tshal bas rdo la rta rjes dang sa de la rta phyag gdong zhes grags/ Karma pa ri pha kir nags gseb tu bya ltar 'phur bas rdo la sku lus kyi rjes yongs rdzogs bzhugs/ gtsug lag khang du gSangs bdag Byams pa rin po ches mkhan po dang bSod nams 'bum gyi slob dpon mdzad de bsnyen par rdzogs mtshan Chos kyi bla ma gsol/ de'i lo rgyus Karma pa Pakshi'i rnam thar lHa'i rnga chen las gsal ba ltar lags/ de nas Kah thog Byams pa 'bum dang spyang snga Mang phu ba bSod nams 'bum pa las Hor thar pa'i sdom pa rdzogs par nos so zhes dang/ rGya ra ba Klong chen pas/ Karma pa Pakshi rNying ma'i (p.38) bla ma Khams kyi Kah thog pa Byams pa 'bum las bsnyen rdzogs dang/ rDzogs chen/ rNying ma'i Ma Phur sogs zhus nas thugs nyams su bzhes zhes gsungs pa ltar dbang dang gdams ngag mang po gsan/ khyad par du Dam can nag po'i bka' gtang zab rgya can gnang ba'i rgyun lta Rin chen gter mdzod du bzhugs pa de'o/"; "At that time, to fulfil the instructions of Byang chub sems dpa' sPom brag pa, Karma Pakshi went to Kah thog. All around the Kah thog ground he saw nothing else but images of rDo rje sems dpa' on the stones. People say that the Karma pa's horse bowed down, so that there are hoofprints, limb and muzzle prints over the stones. Given that the Karma pa flew like a bird to the grove over the mountain yonder, there is a complete imprint of his body. At the *gtsug lag khang*, gsang bdag Byams pa rin po che, acting as *mkhan po*, and bSod nams 'bum, acting as *slob dpon*, gave him the *bsnyen par rdzogs [pa]* vow and the name Chos kyi bla ma. The account of this is likewise described in *Karma pa Pakshi'i rnam thar lha'i rnga chen*. Then from Kah thog Byams pa 'bum and spyang snga Mang phu ba bSod nams 'bum pa he received the *Hor thar pa* (sic for *so so thar pa*) vow. rGya ra ba klong chen says that [second Karma pa] asked to receive from Karma pa Pakshi's (p.38) rNying ma bla ma Khams kyi Kah thog pa Byams pa 'bum [training] such as the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow and *rDzogs chen*, and rNying ma's *Mother Tantra* and *Phur [pa]*, and that he had spiritual realisations. He likewise obtained many empowerments and instructions. In particular, he was given detailed and extensive oral instructions in a continuative manner on Dam can mgar ba nag po, which are at present contained in *Rin chen gter mdzod*".

Kah thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsodus (p.39 lines 10–17) traces the life of Mang phu ba briefly: "Bum pa gsum zhes grags pa'i Nang chen bSod nams 'bum pa ni/ rab byung bzhi pa'i chu rta lor/ Mang phu zer bar Byams pa rin po che'i dbon rgyud du sku 'khrungs/ Byams pa rin po che las mDo sNgags kyi chos rgya mtsho lta bu la gsan bsam rgya cher gnang/ sgrub pa la rtse gcig gzhol bas grub pa'i rtags mtshan mngon du gyur/ rgyal dbang Karma pa Pakshi Kah thog tu phebs nas bsnyen par rdzogs pa'i skabs snga ba 'dis slob dpon gyis khur bzhes/"; "Nang chen bSod nams 'bum pa, who was known as 'Bum pa gsum, was born in water horse 1222 of the fourth *rab byung* as the progeny of Byams pa rin po che known as Mang phu. He learned the ocean-like teachings of *mDo sNgags* from Byams pa rin po che and expanded his own thinking. He strove hard with one-pointed meditation and turned out to have signs of spiritual achievements. After rgyal dbang Karma pa Pakshi went

If these statements are trustworthy, as they seem to be, it cannot be ruled out that Pom brag pa's recognition of Karma Pakshi was accompanied by the grant of the Black Hat, but this is mere speculation without actual foundations. No record remains of Pom brag pa having kept the Hat with him after Dus gsum mkhyen pa's passing. The whereabouts of the Hat during those years are not known.

In addition to Nyag re Se bo's and Pom brag pa's recognitions—one a mystical vision, the other a solution internal to the Karma pa school—a third and still different acknowledgement of his status as rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa was accorded to Karma Pakshi some time later in his life. It had wider ranging implications. Despite being once again rather obscure, it bears signs of an official acknowledgement from outside the Karma pa ranks.

When Karma Pakshi came to dBus from Khams to take charge of mTshur phu *dgon pa* at an unspecified date but probably in the forties of the 13th century and most likely not before wood dragon 1244,⁶⁰ he dropped in at 'Bri gung. At this monastery, his karmic link with the

to Kah thog, at the time of his receiving the *bsnyen par rdzogs pa* vow, this *spyan snga* accepted the responsibility of *slob dpon* in the ceremony”.

Kah thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsodus adds a few details about Mang phu ba's interaction with 'gro mgon 'Phags pa. The great Sa skya pa must have met Mang phu ba bSod nam rgyal mtshan in neither one of his return journeys to Central Tibet, given that the rNying ma master died in 1252. Ibid. (p.38, lines 6–7): “Slob ma'i gtsbo bo bSod nam 'bum gdan sar brkos nas/ dgung lo don bzhi pa chu bya lo smin zla'i tshes bcu bzhi pa la chos kyi dbyings su gshegs so//”; “After having been appointed to the *gdan sa*, [Kah thog pa Byams pa 'bum's] main disciple bSod nam 'bum, at the age of seventy-four, on the fourteenth of *smin zla* of water rat 1252, he passed into the sphere of religion”.

The great Sa skya pa must have met Mang phu ba bSod nam rgyal mtshan and studied under him before rgyal bu Go pe la returned from 'Jang/lJang after his conquest of this kingdom (1252–1254). This indicates that the Sa skya pa had a somewhat longish stay in Khams at the time.

60. The difficulty in dating the first half of Karma Pakshi's life rests on the uncertainty concerning the year of his birth (see below n.58 and n.66) and on the fact that the chronology of the earlier part of his existence is based on relative dating such as:

- how old he was when he met Pom brag pa (i.e. aged eleven or sixteen), following which he stayed with Pom brag pa until his teacher's death in an unspecified year;
- how old he was when he received vows;
- how many years he spent in sPung ri (eleven years according to, e.g., *lHo rong chos 'byung* p.235 line 17), Karma (one year; see *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.93 line 7) and mTshur phu (six years, in the appraisal, e.g., of *lHo rong chos 'byung* p.236 lines 9–12), which cannot be anchored to any specific year unless his birth date is firmly established.

This is the reason for the different assessments of these events in his life found in the sources. Relative chronology is dropped in favour of precise dates when Karma Pakshi interacted with the Mongol royalty after he came to dBus. The earliest available firm date in his life is 1253 when he was invited to the lands of the Mongols by rgyal bu Go pe la before becoming Emperor Se chen rgyal po.

Dating can only be tentative. Given that the invitation extended by Go pe la to Karma Pakshi in 1253 was preceded by his six years' sojourn in mTshur phu, after which he went to gTsang and other lands of Central Tibet, I presume that he could have reached mTshur phu in sTod lung before 1245.

previous embodiment was recognised to the extent that he was given the name Karma Pakshi. This may have been the first occasion on which he became “universally known by the name Karma pa”.⁶¹ I will come back to this issue before long.

It is unclear to me why the succession from Dus gsum mkhyen pa to Karma Pakshi has remained so desperately obscure in the tradition, while that from the second Karma pa to Rang byung rdo rje has been so overtly described in the Karma pa sources. The details of the meetings between Karma Pakshi and U rgyan pa, and between Rang byung rdo rje and U rgyan pa have been extensively described in a number of bKa' brgyud pa sources.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston is the only source I know that contributes a crucial date for Karma Pakshi's presence in mTshur phu. It says that he was there in wood dragon 1244. The second Karma pa's visit to 'Bri gung occurred before that time.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.893 lines 10–13) reads: “Shing 'brug la Sa pan dgung lo re gsum pa'Phags pa rin po che dgung lo bcu pa Phyang na dgung lo drug pa ste khu dbon gsum 'Bri khung pas rdzong pa'i 'bul chen mdzad de byon nas Byang ngos Go dan gyi sar bzhugs nas bla mchod mdzad/ de'i dus su grub thob Pakshi mTshur phu na bzhugs//”; “In wood dragon (1244), when Sa pan was aged sixty-three years old, 'Phags pa rin po che was aged ten, and Phyang na [rdo rje] was six, the uncle and nephews, altogether three, left after receiving the great offering from the 'Bri khung pa to be sent along (*rdzong ba sic for rdzongs ba*) [with them]. Since they stayed at the *gdan sa* of Go dan at Byang ngos, [Sa pan] became [his] *bla mchod*. At that time, grub thob Pakshi was at mTshur phu”.

In the entry for earth bird 1249 in which the death of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's disciple Gya pa Gangs pa is mentioned, *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa* says that also Pom brag pa died in that year. This date is unreliable. After Pom brag pa's death Karma Pakshi's spent eleven years at sPung ri, and then an amount of time at several other localities in Khams, followed by six years at mTshur phu before moving towards the lands of the Mongols upon the invitation of rgyal bu Go pe la in 1253. The death of Pom brag pa could not have fallen in 1249.

61. *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.236 lines 7–8): “rTen 'brel dbang gis che ba ston pa'i phyir 'Bri gung du phebs/ Karma Pakshi zhes pa'i mtshan yang der thogs//”; “Due to the power of [his] karmic link [with Dus gsum mkhyen pa], he went to 'Bri gung in order to show his greatness. There he was given the name of Karma Pakshi”.

Despite often mentioning his universally known title in his autobiography, the second Karma pa does not say how and when he received the name Karma Pakshi. He calls himself so in *Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam* (p.16 line 1 and line 3, and also van der Kuijp, ““Bayshi” and Bayshi-s in Tibetan Historical, Biographical and Lexicographical Texts” n.19), but does not say that he was given it at 'Bri gung.

For the term *pakshi* (spelled in an array of variants) and its frequent use in Tibet especially during the Mongol period see van der Kuijp (*ibid.* and in particular p.278–293). On the authority of *Lan jus sde bzhi'i rten rnam khyi dkar chag*, van der Kuijp tentatively accepts that Karma Pakshi received the name Pakshi in the lands ruled by the Mongols when he was with rgyal bu Go pe la in 1253 (*ibid.* n.17). However, *IHo rong chos 'byung*, an older and reliable source, has it that the conferral of the designation Karma Pakshi occurred at an earlier time in Tibet, and the name by which he became known was given to him by Tibetans—i.e. by the 'Bri gung pa.

It could be that several Karma pa authors have purposely kept the introduction of this highly esoteric practice as secret as possible. They followed in the footsteps of Dus gsum mkhyen pa and Karma Pakshi, the supreme masters of the tradition and direct rebirths, who are probably responsible for this unexplicit approach. The sources document that U rgyan pa recognised Rang byung rdo rje as Karma Pakshi's incarnation after being delegated by the second Karma pa to sanction the existence of the next Karma pa. No record, instead, is found in the sources that Dus gsum mkhyen pa had expressly assigned such a task to any of his disciples, as Karma Pakshi did with U rgyan pa. He left the matter of his rebirth confined to prophecies which were implemented by his disciple Pom brag pa.

The first to be called Karma pa

In virtually none of his biographies, including the *gSer gling ma* by sGang lo tsa ba, is Dus gsum mkhyen pa mentioned under the name Karma pa.⁶² In *Karma Pakshi'i rang rnam*, Karma Pakshi calls himself "the one universally known by the name Karma pa" many times, an expression that recurs often in the later biographies of him, styled after his own.

His willingness to stress his status as the Karma pa must have resulted from the grant of the name Karma Pakshi at 'Bri gung. Is this evidence from the Karma pa biographical material sufficient to make the case *prima facie* that Karma Pakshi actually was the first Karma pa rather than Dus gsum mkhyen pa?

Conversely, later Karma pa authors, for instance Karma 'Phrin las pa, make a point to stress that the name Karma pa was first attributed to Dus gsum mkhyen pa (see p.13 and n.29). Karma 'Phrin las pa links the grant of the Hat to the attribution of the name Karma pa to him, and bases his argument for doing so on a religious explanation. He says that Dus gsum mkhyen pa was the perpetuator of the deeds ("*karma*") of the Buddha-s and Bodhisattva-s of the past, thus

62. The exception is a passage in *mKha pa'i dga'ston* where it is said that, upon taking vows, Dus gsum mkhyen pa received not only the Black Hat but also the title of Karma pa (ibid. p.860 lines 4–5: "Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi 'phrin las gcig bsdu su mdzad pa'i phyir Karma pa zhes mtshan gsol//"; "In order for the deeds of all the Sangs rgyas to be concentrated into one and the same [person], [Dus gsum mkhyen pa] was given the name Karma pa").

Also see the cognate passage in the modern work *mTshur phu dgon gyi lo rgyus* (p.239 lines 10–14), which is styled after *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*: "In order for the deeds of all the Sangs rgyas to be concentrated into one and the same [person], he was given the name Karma pa". Otherwise, the literature is in unison in mentioning that Dus gsum mkhyen pa took vows without voicing anything about the Black Hat or the title of Karma pa (see sGang lo, *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar gSer gling ma* p.58 lines 4–6; *Deb ther dmar po* p.88 lines 1–4; *lHo rong chos 'byung* p.235 lines 7–12; mKha' spyod dbang po, *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar* p.443 lines 2–3; Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas, *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar* in *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* p.5 lines 2–3).

earning for himself the name Karma pa. Dus gsum mkhyen pa, like his successor by rebirth, does not take the trouble of specifying when and under which circumstances this happened.⁶³

In the case of Karma Pakshi, too, no manifest details are provided anywhere to justify the fact that he kept defining himself in his autobiography as “the one universally known by the name Karma pa”. However, the insistent repetition of the epithet leaves little doubt that he was known by that name during his lifetime.

In historical terms, no elements in Dus gsum mkhyen pa's life support the notion that he was the first who was called Karma pa, except a passage in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (see above n.58). The attribution of the name Karma pa to Dus gsum mkhyen pa arose from a *posteriori* assessment mainly proper to his own school—in particular, by Karma 'Phrin las pa—that pertains to the doctrinal sphere rather than to that historical. Some authors who did not belong to the Karma pa tradition—e.g. Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho—raised doubts and considered Karma Pakshi to have been the first to be called by that title (see above n.38).

On the one hand, given the available literary evidence concerning whether Dus gsum mkhyen pa was the first Karma pa, acceptance of this fact is not completely evident. One is led to believe that the name Karma pa was granted posthumously to him but not by most of his biographers.

On the other, if historical data on this crucial question are scarce at present, this does not mean that they were in the past. The strength of the Karma pa tradition itself is a telling argument in favour of Dus gsum mkhyen pa being the first Karma pa. And one cannot dismiss this conclusion just because the doctrinal assessment is hardly borne out by the extant historical evidence.

This topic needs also to be approached from the logic of immediate rebirth. Given that Karma Pakshi would have not called himself “the one universally known by the name Karma pa” had this epithet not been commonly accepted, it could be that the name Karma pa came into use with Karma Pakshi and was retroactively applied to Dus gsum mkhyen pa as the previous birth. Or else, the more frequent attribution of the name Karma pa to Karma Pakshi does not rule out that it was given to Dus gsum mkhyen pa, too.

63. Karma Thinley (*The History of the Sixteen Karmapas of Tibet* p.43) says that it was bla ma Zhang g.Yu brag pa and Kha che pan chen Shakya shri after him who established that Dus gsum mkhyen pa and Karma Pakshi were immediate rebirths. Both are anachronistic statements. Bla ma Zhang died roughly at the same time as Dus gsum mkhyen pa, and thus before the birth of Karma Pakshi. Kha che pan chen would have had to recognise Karma Pakshi before Pom brag pa, having left Tibet in 1214 given that the date of the meeting between Pom brag pa and Karma Pakshi is given as 1216 in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (see above n.58 and n.59). Moreover, Kha che pan chen could not have met the second Karma pa who had not yet come to Central Tibet, where Shakya shri resided for most of his sojourn in Tibet.

Indeed, the account of *IHo rong chos 'byung* (see above n.61) that the karmic nexus between Karma Pakshi and Dus gsum mkhyen pa, which led to the attribution of the name Karma Pakshi to the former at 'Bri gung, may indicate that dBu se was already known by the name Karma pa. By means of this episode, *IHo rong chos 'byung* documents that the 'Bri gung pa associated the name Karma with the man called Pakshi (“teacher”), whose religious name was Chos kyi bla ma, owing to the *karma* of rebirth with Dus gsum mkhyen pa.

Each clue of these proposed here is significant, although it cannot be considered conclusive.

A few final assessments

General conclusions can be drawn from the evidence gathered here. At least some points seem to be accepted by the Karma pa authors without contentious elements.

The foremost is that the Karma pa sources recognise the bestowal of the Black Hat by the *mkha' 'gro ma*-s or by Sa ra ha, this being the tantalising proposition found in *IHo rong chos 'byung* upon Dus gsum mkhyen pa as having been the original, and thus the seminal grant. The cases of the Hat being conferred upon Karma Pakshi and other Karma Zhwa nag pa by various emperors are all considered in the sources to have been a way of reiterating on the secular plane what had been acknowledged by the school's tradition as mystically given to his predecessor by a spiritual authority.

Another point beyond dispute is that the authors of the Karma pa tradition merely hint at the fact that Dus gsum mkhyen pa introduced lineal succession by incarnation. No explicit statements are made in the Karma pa literature to the effect that Karma Pakshi was the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa, nor does the first Karma pa mention Karma Pakshi as his next body in the prophecies, but as one of his future rebirths.

The account of the entrusting of the Black Hat to U rgyan pa in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*, one of the Karma pa texts recording these prophecies which are the most evident link between the first two Karma Zhwa nag pa, closes with the statement that, by appointing Pakshi's disciple to look after it, the succession in the lineage was assured.⁶⁴ On the contrary, the same work says nothing similar in its coverage of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's death.

Respect for the original texts of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's prophecies and Karma Pakshi's own biographical statements may have led the subsequent Karma pa authors not to be more outspoken on the direct link between Dus gsum mkhyen pa and Karma Pakshi, a point ac-

64. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.910 line 22–p.911 line 1): “sPyir thugs rgyud tha mi dad pa'i sku'i bkod pa'ang yin par snang la brgyud pa gtad cing physis lam bar kun tu'ang (p.911) gdams ngag gi shog dril yany yang du snang skad/””; “In general, having appointed a person in the same lineage, [Karma Pakshi] entrusted the transmission [to U rgyan pa], and it is said that, subsequently, upon every passage (*lam bar*) [from one birth to the next], (p.911) the scroll of instructions (i.e. either the *Sre 'pho gdams ngag* (“Instructions on transmigratory existence”) or *sKu gsum ngo sprod* (“Introduction to the *sku gsum* (“*trikaya*”)) was handed over again and again”.

cepted beyond doubt by the Karma pa tradition. Thanks to his capacity to see the lives of people through the three dimensions of time, Dus gsum mkhyen pa was able to lay the doctrinal foundations for the Karma pa lineage to base its continuity on the concept of reincarnation ahead of any other Tibetan school.

One needs to look into *Deb ther dmar po*, an early and authoritative bKa' brgyud pa source belonging to the Tshal pa tradition rather than the Karma pa, to find a clear-cut statement that Karma Pakshi was the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa. Kun dga' rdo rje is the most ancient author, among those whose works are available, to establish this identification openly. In his biography of the second Karma pa, he does so twice in the space of a few lines, and in the first instance, remarkably, on the strength of the same set of prophecies mentioned in the later Karma pa sources I have cited above.⁶⁵

One point which remains obscure is the transmission of the Hat from Dus gsum mkhyen pa to Karma Pakshi, for no reference is made in the available literature to this important link between the first two Karma pa.

Not having found these details in the sources, another set point is that it is not clear to me who held the Black Hat temporarily after Dus gsum mkhyen pa's death for the eleven, thirteen or eighteen years of interregnum until the birth of Karma —the sources are at variance

65. *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar (Deb ther dmar po* p.87 lines 5–14) has an account of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's prophecies, in which stresses the transmigration between Dus gsum mkhyen pa and Karma Pakshi: "rJe Dus gsum mkhyen pa de bzhin gshegs nas rGya gar yul du grub thob Mi tra dzo ki'i slob ma rnal 'byor pa Chos kyi dbang phyug zhes par 'khrungs par bstan/ slar yang dpal ldan Karma pa chen por sku skye bzhes te/ sngon/ rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i lung bstan la/ ma 'ong pa'i dus su/ Bod yul lHo brag grub pa'i gnas bdun du gdul bya gcig gi don du 'byung/ gsungs pa dang 'Bri chung Ngo mthong cig nas/ nged kyi dgongs pa rdzogs par byed gsung ba dang/ yon bdag dGon pa ba yang rgyal po cig tu skye/ de 'khor dang bcas pa la ngas phan thogs gsungs pa rnams kyi don dang mthun par 'Bri klung Dam pa chos phyug yul du btsad poi Bu'i rigs su 'khrungs//"; "After rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa died, he took rebirth in the land of rGya gar as rnal 'byor pa Chos kyi dbang phyug, the disciple of grub thob Mi tra dzo ki. Again, he was born as dpal Karma pa chen po (i.e. Karma Pakshi). Earlier, in a prophecy, rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa said: "In the [distant] future, I will come to benefit one person to be trained at the seven meditation places of lHo brag in the country of Tibet", and added: "One [from] 'Bri chung (sic 'Bri chu) Ngo mthong (sic) will fulfil my wish", and concluded: "Yon bdag dGon pa ba will be born as a king. I will be beneficial to this one and his retinue". True to the meaning of these statements, [Karma Pakshi] was born at 'Bri klung Dam pa Chos phyugs, as a son in the *rtsad po* [family]".

The same source again reiterates the bonds of birth between the two Karma pa when it deals with the episode of the meeting of Karma Pakshi with Pom brag pa (ibid. p.87 lines 18–21): "dBus su 'byon bzhed pa'i lam du rin po che sPong brag pa dang mjal dus su ngo mtshar gyi ltas dag bstan/ byin gyi brlabs/ nyams rtogs 'khrungs//"; "On the way to dBus, when he met rin po che sPong brag pa (spelled so), many extraordinary signs occurred. Since the latter realised that [Karma Pakshi] was the incarnation of Dus gsum mkhyen pa, he gave him [several] *dbang* and *gdams pa*, and blessed him. Realisations were born [in Karma Pakshi]".

on this reckoning: 1204, 1206 or 1210—⁶⁶ and the subsequent years, and what the terms of its transfer to him were.

Hence the question of the passage of the Hat from Dus gsum mkhyen pa to Karma Pakshi and of the regent of the Hat in the transitional period between the two incarnations remains unsolved and needs to be further investigated if new material on the subject reappears.

The sources describe Karma Pakshi and Rang byung rdo rje's realisation of rebirth in a new body as having occurred through inner experience. Both had personal reminiscences of their past lives. The former had a sudden revelation on his way to the court of Mo 'gor rgyal po; the latter upon meeting U rgyan pa.

Despite the doubts he nurtured whether Rang byung rdo rje truly was Karma Pakshi's rebirth, as documented in the later Karma pa literature possibly in order to lend credibility to the phenomenon of transmigration, U rgyan pa accepted that rebirth had taken place between Karma Pakshi and Rang byung rdo rje. Before him, Pom brag pa did not have any doubts about the veracity of the transfer from Dus gsum mkhyen pa to Karma Pakshi. They thus

66. While the death of Dus gsum mkhyen pa is univocally fixed to wood tiger 1194 in the sources, thus accepted as reliable, the date of birth of Karma Pakshi is disputed. dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba in his *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.881 line 21–p.882 line 3), after saying that Karma Pakshi was born in fire tiger 1206, adds immediately after that *Deb ther sngon po* gives his birth date as wood rat 1204. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (ibid.) writes as follows: “rJe Dus mkhyen mya ngan las 'das nas lo bcu gsum lon pa'i tshe Bod chen po mDo Khams 'Bri chu'i rgyud Dam pa Chos kyi phyug pa'i yul sTong bye le'i Tsag to zhes bya bar btsad po U'i (p.882) rigs yab rGya dbang Tshur tsha dang yum Seng bza' Mang skyid kyi sras chung shos su me pho stag gi lo la 'khrungs/ Deb sngon du ni de las lo gnyis kyi snga ba' shing byi de 'khrungs lor 'chad//”

“When thirteen years had elapsed after the death of rje Dus gsum mkhyen pa, at Dam pa Chos kyi phyug pa'i yul sTong bye le'i Tsag to in the region of Bod chen po mDo Khams 'Bri chu [Karma Pakshi] was born in fire male tiger 1206 in the family of the U *btsad po*-s as the youngest son of father rGya dbang Tshur tsha and mother Seng bza' Mang skyid. *Deb sngon* holds that he was born two years earlier in wood rat 1204”.

Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas in his *Karma Kam tshang gser phreng* also accepts fire tiger 1206 as the birth date of Karma Pakshi (ibid. p.82 line 4).

IHo rong chos 'byung (p.235 lines 3–4) postdates his date of birth even further, to iron horse 1210, eighteen years after Dus gsum mkhyen pa's death (“De nas lo bco bryad song ba lcags pho rta'i lo la rin po che Karma pa sku 'khrungs//”).

In ““Bayshi” and Bayshi-s in Tibetan Historical, Biographical and Lexicographical Texts” (n.15), van der Kuijp introduces several sources which mention Karma Pakshi's birth date as 1204, and several others as 1206. He seems to favour the date 1204 because this is found in the earliest of the presently available sources (the *bstan rtsis* appended to *Rtangs kyi Po ti bse ru*, whose year of composition is fixed by him as wood pig 1455), despite 1206 being the date accepted by the Karma pa literature. However, at the time he wrote his article, he may not have yet been in a position to consult *IHo rong chos 'byung*, the writing of which was practically contemporaneous with the *bstan rtsis* (actually slightly earlier, for it dates back to fire tiger 1446), and thus of finding the birth date of Karma Pakshi fixed to even later than 1206.

must be considered responsible for a twofold acceptance of transmigratory existence among the Karma pa—the doctrinal acceptance of the system and its historical acceptance. They are credited in the literary documents with such activities.

However, their acknowledgement of Karma Pakshi and Rang byung rdo rje as rebirths of their respective previous incarnations could not have been more different. Pom brag pa had a mystical realisation whereby he understood that Karma Pakshi was the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa and perceived their sameness. In the case of U rgyan pa, his acceptance of Karma Pakshi's rebirth as Rang byung rdo rje was grounded on the words that the second and, years later, the third Karma pa spoke to him. Hence U rgyan pa accepted that reincarnation had taken place by an act of faith. It is quite evident from the several accounts of their meeting that U rgyan pa was not aware of having been, in his previous lives, linked to Karma Pakshi's previous embodiments along a chain of incarnations who alternatively assumed the role of master and disciple, and needed the second Karma pa to reveal this to him.

Therefore, one comes to recognize that an experiential and a fideistic component are both present in the process of recognising transmigratory life among the Karma pa.

By doing so, one is here confronted with the age-old dilemma faced by the ancient Tibetan historians, namely how to reconcile historical and doctrinal interpretations of the same events. If, for instance, the succession between Karma Pakshi and Rang byung rdo rje is examined from a historiographical viewpoint (the one adopted in my work), it ensues that, at the time of Karma Pakshi's passing, the transmission of the Karma Zhwa nag pa inheritance, symbolised by the Black Hat, was not instituted definitively by the second Karma pa. It was the very young Rang byung rdo rje who did so by claiming the Black Hat for himself when he introduced himself to U rgyan pa as Karma Pakshi's rebirth.

The difference in interpretation between the Karma pa authors and 'Brug chen Padma dkar po on the matter of the succession is worth recalling in these concluding lines.

Padma dkar po opts for the suggestive view that Karma Pakshi decided to be reborn after the transmission of his tradition to a successor of his choice became impossible. The second Karma pa's designated abbot of mTshur phu was assassinated by the Gya pa ru ba of sNye mo, while in the view of the Karma pa literature, internal feuds at the monastery hindered acceptance of the principle that the head monastery would have to be ruled by the Zhwa nag pa incarnations.

If these episodes are interpreted according to the law of *karma* rather than from a factual perspective, it was due to the merit of his karmic accumulation in that life and the previous ones that Karma Pakshi decided to reincarnate to uphold his tradition. He was thus able

to establish definitively the system of succession by incarnations introduced by Dus gsum mkhyen pa and adopted among the Karma pa after him ever since.⁶⁷

Approaching this thorny issue with the view of a historian, it is advisable to abstain from any involvement in the issue of doctrinal statements, which normally do not belong to the domain of historiography. Their highly esoteric subject matter rarely lends itself treatment according to the criteria followed by historiography. In particular, chronology is often at stake in cases of transfer from one body to another, as recounted and assessed in the Tibetan literature, for instance of the *skyes rabs* genre. It can be flattened and reversed. Re-embodiments do not always follow straight sequential rebirth—a previous incarnation can appear after the

67. The preference for a fideistic approach rather than a historiographical one, often found among present-day *bla ma*-s, is meaningfully epitomized in *dBu zhwa'i bshad pa*. Its author, Grags pa yong 'dus, invites the faithful to disregard the claims of historiography, often based on stereotypes according to him and to accept the tenets of devotion, lest discord be created among the Buddhists themselves. He says (ibid. f.10b line 6–f.11b line 1): “Jig rten pa khag cig grags pa'i rjes su 'brang nas dper na sngon gyi dus rgyal po 'di lta bu zhig byung/ des chab srid tshul 'di lta bus bskyangs pa red ces (f.11a) gтам rjes gтам gyis zlo zhing smra ba las/ rang bas lo rgyus che ba'i skye bo de'i bya spyod mthong ba lta ci de'i byad bzhin kyang ma nthong mod/ de ni min par yang kha tshan gcod mi rung ste ma mthong ba'i rtags kyis med par sgrub mi nus pa'i phyir/ 'on kyang ya mtshar ba zhig la/ gong bshad ltar zer rabs kyi rjes su 'brang ba mtshungs na yang/ de la phyogs snga dang/ rgo! ba gnyis byung ste/ ngas gтам rjes zlo ba ni bden/ khyod kyis de ni mi bden no zhes rtsod pas/ rang snang rang la gtso che gshis/ dpang po dbang che zhing rgyu nor can zhig la yid rten byed/ des kyang shan 'byed khul gyis phyogs su thag bcad pa'i thog yin rgyu byas te gnyis ka blo bde ba'i rnam pa ltar byed kyi 'dug pa de 'dra'i tshul dang mthun par bstan 'dzin gyi skyes chen nams kyi rnam thar la log lta byed na/ mthar thug rgyal pa'i lung yang tshad min du 'gyur ba zhing/ rang mtshang rang gis brtol te nang pa Sangs rgyas pa nams nang mi mthun pa'i khyim tshang lta bur 'gyur nyan che bas/ kun la (f.11b) dag snang spyod bzhin tu gal che'o!"; “Given that impermanent people follow/believe what is famous, for example, that such and such a king existed in such and such an ancient period, and hence that he ruled in such and such a way, (f.11a) rather than repeating (*zlo*) and mumbling (*smra ba*) tale after tale, the direct experience (*mthong ba*) of the deeds of a person who is one hundred years older than oneself is forgotten (*lta ci*) and indeed (*mod*) one has not seen his face. Unless one has [had direct experience], it is not possible to boast of (*kha tshan*) [anything], and if there is a sign that one has not directly seen [something], one is not able to prove [anything]. However, even if one gives credence, as mentioned above, to the transmission of these oral beliefs (*zer rabs*), it is curious (*ya mtshar zhig la*) that there [always] are two opposing replies concerning these [beliefs], and people fight saying: “My [way of] repeating the tale is the true one, yours is not the true one”. This is because people attach great importance (*gtso che*) to their own understanding and themselves. People trust witnesses who are either powerful or rich. By pretending to discriminate, people create the conditions (*rgyu byas*) to accept (*thag bcad*) what they like. Both [factions] pretend as if they are intellectually satisfied (*blo bde ba*). In this way, one maintains a wrong view about the life of the great beings [who were the] holders of the teachings. In the end, the instructions of the Victorious Ones are misinterpreted (*tshad min du 'gyur*). This is a great danger to ourselves and so, including those who indulge (*rtol*) in our [typical] fault due to which the Buddhists, who should be like a family, are not united. (f.11b) It is important to have a pure attitude towards everyone”.

successive—and more than one rebirth of the same incarnation can exist at the same time or at different times.⁶⁸

68. The opposite to the distrust nurtured by Grags pa yong 'dus for history, dealt with in the previous note, is the fideism that becomes compulsory in the religious ranks when one is confronted with little intelligible dictates of the *skyes rabs* doctrine. This is apparent in the case of Karma Pakshi who is attributed one more previous rebirth hardly acceptable with the yardstick of sensical life succession.

An indicator of how complex and sensitive the matter of rebirth is and how it defies a linear chronological sequencing is provided by other notions on Karma Pakshi, found in the literature. He was an acknowledged master of the six-syllable *mantra* (*Om ma ni pad me hum*), whose practice he diffused among his disciples. This proficiency accrued to him from the fact that he was recognised as a rebirth of La stod dMar po, the controversial master of an allegedly deviant cult of sPyan ras gzigs according to which the recitation of the *mantra* was performed in a form different from the one acknowledged as appropriate. La stod dMar po is quite a mysterious teacher, whose life and activity have for the most part remained obscure, little being known about him in the sources. A critical appraisal of La stod dMar po is found in Chag lo tsa ba, *sNgags log sun 'phyin skor* (p.14 line 6–p.15 line 3): “Yang La stod dMar po bya ba gcig gis (p.15) gser 'dod pa'i phyir du Thugs rje chen po'i yi ge drug pa sgra log par bsgyur nas/ Om la Am du bos pas dang/ Bya sPyod kyi lha bla med Ma rgyud kyi rtsa 'khor bzhi btags pa Zhi byed stong rim bsres nas/ Thugs rje chen po A ma lugs yin zer ba'i chos log brtsams so/”, “Also, he who was called La stod dMar po, having heretically debased the six-lettered *mantra* of Thugs rje chen po in his desire for gold, formulated the heresy called *Thugs rje chen po* [according to the] *A ma* (sic for *Am*) system, by pronouncing *Am* instead of *Om* and by combining the deities of the *Bya* and *sPyod* classes with the *nadi*-s and the four *cakra*-s of *Ma rgyud*, and mixing them with *Zhi byed stong rim*”. Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (n.315 and n.709).

La stod dMar po is seen in a favourable light in *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.494 lines 3–5): “rJe bt-sun Dam pa dmar por grags pa'i grub thob byon/ de la slob ma chung gsum dang brgyad tshan gsum la sogs pa byon/ sprang po'i ded dbon mdzad de 'gro ba mang po grol bar mdzad do/”, “A *grub thob* appeared named rje btsun Dam pa dmar po. He had three minor disciples and three groups of eight [disciples]. [By] acting as the leader (*dbon* sic for *dpon*) of the beggars, he emancipated many sentient beings”.

A biography of La stod dMar po is found in *Deb ther sngon po* (p.1195 line 3–p.1200 line 10; *Blue Annals* p.1025–1029). For Karma Pakshi as an incarnation of La stod dMar po see Martin, “Lay Religious Movements in 11th-12th century Tibet: A Survey of Sources” (p.39).

The literature holds that Karma Pakshi was not only the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa, as is well-known, and Nyang re Se bo, a view that more rarely appear in the sources (see above n.53). A more baffling *skyes rabs*-induced notion of Karma Pakshi's reincarnation is that he was the rebirth of this other religious master, La stod dMar po, whose dates are unknown and even the period in which he lived (presumably the 11th century). All one can say that his life predated by large that of the second Karma pa.

I add here a few passages concerning the recognition of Rol pa'i rdo rje (1340–1383) as the fourth Karma pa. He proclaimed to be the reincarnation of Dus gsum mkhyen pa and Karma Pakshi but had to admit, when asked, that he was Rang byung rdo rje, too, which would be more immediate and logical. This might be a sign that the sequence of rebirth was not necessarily lineal. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.950 line 16–p.951 line 2) reads: “dGung lo gsum pa la Kong lung Ral gsum gyi Ya rgyal nyang por phebs ma thag yum la nga Karma Pakshi yin 'Dzam gling du gdul bya mang du yod pas

'ongs pa yin ltos shig 'chi med 'khrul 'khor bya'o gsungs nas mdzad/ ngas khyod kyi khong du'ang 'di ltar byas pas khyod 'phar ba dang hub phor bo ba sogs byung ba yin/ Zho kha Brag phyi Nags phu rnam su phyin nas lta dgos/ gShin rje dong kha'i 'og na dmyal ba'i zangs kha yod pa nas sems can dpag tu med 'dren pa yin/ 'di rnam da dung pha la yang ma bshad cig gsungs/ khyed Karma Pakshi yin na Rang byung rdo rje min nam zhes zhus pas de gnyis gcig/ nga'i zhal mthong ba la yang ngan song med da (p.951) dung rgyal po'i pho brang gi bar du 'gro/ gdul bya mtha' yas pa 'dul du yod gsung/'"; "When he was aged three (1342), [Rol pa'i rdo rje] arrived at Ya gyal nyang po of Kong lung Ral gsum, and straightaway told his mother: "I am Karma Pakshi. I came to subdue many people to be trained in 'Dzam gling. Look! I will perform the yogic exercises [that bestow] eternal life (*'chi med 'khrul 'khor bya'o*)", and so he did. He added: "While I was in your womb, I performed [those exercises], and I made you to be active (*'phar ba*) and fit (*hub phor bo ba*). You must see it after we go to Zho kha, Brag phyi [and] Nags phu. I will take away innumerable sentient beings from the copper mouth of hell below in gShin rje's ditch. Do not disclose these matters to [my] father as yet". When she asked: "If you are Karma Pakshi, are not you Rang byung rdo rje?", he replied: "I am the same as those two (*de gnyis kyi gcig yin*). After seeing me, one is not taken to hell anymore. Once again (*da dung*) (i.e. also in this life) (p.951) I will proceed to the palace of the emperor. I will tame uncountable people to be trained".

Ibid. (p.951 lines 7–24): "As they went to Nags phu, [at a time] which coincided with the *dus mchod* ("death anniversary") [of his previous embodiment], he said: "They did not give me anything although they claimed to make offerings to me". They retorted: "If you are the Karma pa, bla ma Kun dga' byams pa is residing over there [at the Mongol court]. When will he come back?", he replied: "I do not see him coming back here. There is just a bunch of bones", but they did not believe (*ma dad*) him, and saying: "If you are the Karma pa, this will not hurt you", they threw him in the mouth of a bear. That bear licked his feet and circumambulated around him. This coincided with the death of Nags phu gdan sa pa, bla ma Kun dga' byams pa, the *ti shri* of the emperor of Hor yul. After going to Brag phyi lha khang, he prepared to go to Bya rgya'i steng. Having told the 'gro mgon: "Bring the old Hat", he put it on his head and said: "I am Dus gsum mkhyen pa. I am Karma Pakshi. I am the subduer of rGya, Hor and Sog. More people remain to be tamed. I am the one who looks from above the clouds. My *bla ma* is voidness. I am your *bla ma*. An incarnation of mine was with Blo gros rin chen. One was in the world of happiness (*mngon dga'*) in the east. I came to this 'Dzam gling. People at present have doubts about me, but these will be cleared quickly. You *dge bshes*-s are greedy for food. You should apply yourselves to meditation strenuously, without creating disputes". As they asked him for a report (*rnam thar*), he gave them snippet of a report about [life in] the intermediate state".

Rol pa'i rdo rje'i rnam thar in *Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas's Karma Kam tshang gser phreng* uses the same words to introduce the dialogue between Rol pa'i rdo rje and his mother but continues with a slightly different version of the conversation with the 'gro mgon. The text (p.325 lines 4–7) says: "dGung lo drug bzhes pa'i tshel/ Brag phi lha khang dy byon te 'gro mgon gtsug lag khang gi sgo phyé gsung nas nang du byon/ chos rje'i sku 'dra la phyag rgya mdzad de phu bo khams bzang dam gsungs/ gzhan sku gzugs rnam la phyag mdzad cing phyag dang zhe sa'i mchod pa 'bul gsungs/ 'gro mgon la khyod kyi lag na nga'i zhwa dang zhabs rjes yod pa khyer la shog gsungs/ med zhus kyang ma gsan par jo bo'i zhabs rjes yod pa phul bas 'di min nga rang gi de khyer shog gsungs/ de'i tshel lha khang gi rgya mthong la bya rgya bres pa'i steng du byon te ngo mtshar ba'i rdzu 'phrul bstan no/ der dbu zhwa dang zhabs rjes kyang phul zhing zhabs tog gis mnyes par byas/ de'i sang 'gro mgon la khyod kyi nga shes sam gsungs mi shes lags zhus pas/ Dus gsum mkhyen pa yang nga yin/ Karma

Another and perhaps historically more significant question raised by the events taking place during the lives of the early Karma pa incarnations is whether either sPom brag pa or U rgyan pa should be credited with sanctioning the system of succession by rebirth. One thus wonders whether the introduction of the system took place with the appointment of either Karma Pakshi or Rang byung rdo rje. The recognition of either one or the other is the *terminus post quem* for the establishment of this Karma pa hallmark, subsequently adopted by other religious traditions of Tibet.

I consider the words of Karma Pakshi in his meeting with U rgyan pa, unanimously accepted as authentic by the literature of the Karma pa and other bKa' brgyud pa schools, as conclusive evidence.

The point was not that, owing to internal dissent, Karma Pakshi had to drop his wish that succession had to be arranged by appointment and pursue rebirth, as Padma dkar po claims. That was a contingent problem that affected the smooth inheritance of the Karma pa *gdan sa* at mTshur phu.

The accounts relating the encounter between Karma Pakshi and U rgyan pa should be interpreted historically for what they actually stand for. The main historical point that should be stressed is that Karma Pakshi had not appointed the slain dBon rin po che to be the next Zhwa nag pa. The next Zhwa nag pa was going to be his rebirth like he had been the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa. His awareness that another Zhwa nag pa would exist after him was at the basis of the impulse he gave to the lineage of the main Karma pa hierarchs. Karma Pakshi had appointed dBon rin po che as the next abbot of mTshur phu inasmuch as he chose him to secure the transfer of the Black Hat from himself to the next holder. dBon rin po che dead, Karma Pakshi chose U rgyan pa, his best disciple, to take charge of the transmission. Nowhere and at anytime was dBon rin po che the actual successor to Karma Pakshi in the transmission lineage of the Zhwa nag pa.

Pagshi yang yin/ rGya yul du phyin nas Hor dmad btul ba yang nga yin/"; "When he was aged six (1345), he went to Brag phyi lha khang, told the 'gro mgon to open the *gtsug lag khang* and went inside. He folded his hands to the portrait statue of the *chos rje* and said: "Are you, elder brother (*phu bo*), in good health?". He prostrated to other statues and told [the people there] to offer prostrations and edibles. He told the 'gro mgon: "Bring my Hat and *zhabs rjes* which are in your hands", but the latter did not listen [to him] and begged off: "They are not [with me]". He gave him the *zhabs rjes* of the *jo bo* which were there. [Rol pa'i rdo rje] said: "Not these. Bring mine". At that time, they went to the top of the terrace (*bres pa*) of the *lha khang*'s balcony (*rgya mthong* sic for *rgya mthongs*, "balcony") and he displayed miracles [there]. At that time, he was pleased to be rendered the service of the bestowal of the Hat and the *zhabs rjes*. The next day he asked the 'gro mgon: "Do you know now who I am?". The other avowed: "I do not know", so he said: "I am Dus gsum mkhyen pa. I am Karma Pagshi. I am the subduer of the Hor troops after going to the land of China"."

I consider Karma Pakshi's rebirth as the first actual case of succession by reincarnation among the Karma pa and consequently in the history of Tibet, a custom which took hold, at that time and later, of almost dynastic traits. I also see in U rgyan pa the master who played the most fundamental role in the establishment of this system.

This assessment does not disprove that Karma Pakshi was the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa. It aims at distinguishing between the rebirth of Dus gsum mkhyen pa as Karma Pakshi, and that of Karma Pakshi as Rang byung rdo rje, setting the meaning of succession along two significant but opposite lines. Dus gsum mkhyen pa was reborn to continue his personal legacy. Karma Pakshi was not reborn for such a purpose but, judging by his own statements, in order to secure continuity for the tradition represented by the Hat.

In other words, he had decided to follow the system of his predecessor and seek rebirth but his rebirth was not to be the continuation of himself, as envisaged by Dus gsum mkhyen pa for his own person. Karma Pakshi was moved by an ulterior motive perhaps because he was the successor of his previous birth. Karma Pakshi made all the necessary steps to guarantee continuity to the Zhwa nag line of births. Rebirth guaranteed the necessity to teach Tibetan Buddhism to the Mongol emperor, according to Dus gsum mkhyen pa who, therefore, prophesied that another birth would exist after himself. By entrusting the Black Hat to U rgyan pa Karma Pakshi made sure that the embodiment after him would be recognised as the new Zhwa nag pa.

If one compares the words uttered by Karma Pakshi to U rgyan pa ("You must preserve my [spiritual] guidance") with those of Dus gsum mkhyen pa's prophecies combined together ("I will be born as Karma Pakshi to fulfil my wish to give teachings to the Mongol emperor"), one realises that the concern of these two incarnations, which led them to seek rebirth, was drastically different. The task that Dus gsum mkhyen pa assigned to a prophecy was a mission that did not involve continuation and thus the formation of a lineage.

The death of dBon rin po che, rather than being an obstacle, allowed the system of rebirth to be carried out successfully by a master outside the mTshur phu contentions. Through his aegis, U rgyan pa oversaw that the transfer of the Black Hat took place correctly, to be adopted on a smooth, unquestionable and stable basis.

The Tibetan tradition has recognised cases of reincarnation of great personalities who lived in periods earlier than those of the first few Karma pa rebirths. These cases most often go back in time, for they are late revisions of the personas of masters to whom a chain of rebirths is attributed stepping back along the centuries. The successive lives of Rin chen bzang po and A ti sha—to mention a couple—are typical examples. But nowhere before had reincarnation tak-

en on such significant implications as when U rgyan pa recognized Rang byung rdo rje as the perpetuator of the existence of the Karma pa tradition after Karma Pakshi decided to be reborn.

The establishment of the rebirth system in upholding the continuation of the transmission lineage of the Zhwa nag pa should be attributed to Karma Pakshi, with U rgyan pa as the guardian and promoter of this establishment.

ADDENDUM ONE

Dus gsum mkhyen pa: his rebirth

The *terminus ante quem* to date Dus gsum mkhyen pa's act of clairvoyance whereby he prophesied that his next birth's mission in life would convert the Mongol emperor to Buddhism cannot be fixed more precisely than by means of a vague *terminus ante quem*, which is his death date 1193. Around the same time Jing gir rgyal po was busy unifying the Mongols under his control. Should Dus gsum mkhyen pa's clairvoyance about his rebirth be considered a posthumous formulation or authentic? Was it the consequence of the political and religious relationship, established by Tibetans with the Mongols (or perhaps viceversa) or was it an earlier—and thus genuine—prognostic, conceived before the Mongols had surged to political and military preeminence in Central Asia?

Indications in *rnam thar gSer gling ma* by his direct disciple sGang lo (see n.68 and 69) point to the fact that this earliest and most authoritative biography which reports the prophecy was composed in the period just after the demise of the first Karma pa. This would have fallen in the early years of Jing gir rgyal po's surge to predominance among his Mongol peers and his neighbours. If this chronological appraisal is valid, then there would not be grounds to dismiss the prophecy as not authentic, but this is far from being definitively proved.

sGang lo was a younger contemporary of his teacher and thus older than Karma Pakshi. He must have written Dus gsum mkhyen pa's biography before Karma Pakshi was either in his forties or early fifties—this depends on accepting the second Karma pa's birth date to have been 1204, 1206 or 1210—when he went to Hor yul in 1255–1256. This means that Karma Pakshi may have read the *gSer gling ma* biography of his previous birth before going to meet Mo 'gor rgyal po.

The delta of years that separate the death of Dus gsum mkhyen pa in 1193—the *terminus post quem* for sGang lo to have considered putting the life of the first Karma pa into written form—and 1216—when Karma Pakshi was recognised as his rebirth—is ample enough for the biographer to have completed his opus. That sPom brag pa could have read sGang lo's *rnam thar* of Dus gsum mkhyen pa before 1216 and thus could have become aware of the first

Karma pa's prophecy in favour of Karma Pakshi is a possibility that should not be discarded but, at the same time, cannot be confirmed.

Leaving aside critical or fideistic disposition concerning Dus gsum mkhyen pa's prophecies as a whole or the life mission of his immediate rebirth, one should give a look at the context in which Karma Pakshi or, more in general, the bKa' brgyud pa operated.

The last quarter of the 12th century and the early years of the next one witnessed a conceptual evolution within the various bKa' brgyud pa schools. They passed from being groups of hermits pursuing meditation and retreat to an organisation based on a network of monasteries where asceticism was practised side by side with an eye for the political events and the establishment of diplomatic contacts with the potentates of the plateau and beyond. The bKa' brgyud pa subschools cruised from emphasis on hermit lifestyle to becoming religious powerhouses. Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193), Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po (1110–1170), Zhang g.Yu brag pa (1123–1193 or 1194) and 'Ba' rom pa Dar ma dbang phyug (1127–1199) were those who envisioned this bKa' brgyud pa policy based on the instructions in that sense by Dwags po lHa rje sGam po pa bSd nams rin chen (1079–1153).

Its implementation is a subject for a chronological study. bKa' brgyud pa masters of one generation later, such as 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), participated in this activity. This indicates that the evolution of the bKa' brgyud pa approach towards the establishment of their school on a wider scale—and no more only religious—happened quite late during the life of the earlier generation of these masters. The presence of bKa' brgyud pa representatives in Byang Mi nyag and various kingdoms of Upper West Tibet was possible owing to the conducive political situation that took shape during that period. Various local kingdoms and principalities showed an interest in the philosophical formulations of the bKa' brgyud pa schools.

The time frame of the inception in the relations between bKa' brgyud pa masters and Tibetan or foreign rulers cannot be ascertained with exactitude, whether with kingdoms to the west/southwest of the plateau—i.e. Gu ge Pu hrang, Ya rtse and La dwags—or those in the northeast. Given that the first bKa' brgyud pa mission to Upper West Tibet—the one of the 'Bri gung pa sent by 'Jig rten mgon po—dates to 1191 and the one undertaken by the Tshal pa to 1195, these activities were more or less contemporary with those in the northeast, and precisely in Byang Mi nyag. To find Tibetans in Byang Mi nyag is well known, given this kingdom's readiness to open to the influx of Vajrayana Buddhism.

ADDENDUM TWO

Tibeto-Mongol intersections and the Karma pa rebirths

One way of reading the statements in the Tibetan literature about the political events on the plateau during the early period of Mongol dominance is to use a reversed perspective, the one of the Hor rather than that of the locals. Before the appointment of the Sa skya pa as their agents on the plateau, the Hor almost invariably followed their main military campaigns in Tibet,

best known because they are mentioned in important *chos 'byung*-s, with an attempt at establishing a form of governance over the Land of Snow.

Failed Hor pa governance was sought for about one decade by means of a political model that was simple and effective: the iron rat 1240 campaign, led by Dor ta nag po, went in search of a Tibetan leader, without much success. A few years later, in wood dragon 1244, Godan, the second son of Mo 'gor rgyal po and elder brother of rgyal bu Go pe la (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p.255 line 18–p.256 line 3), established the Sa skya pa as the Mongols' interlocutors in Tibet. These are well known facts.

The underlying concept of the political strategy the Mongols had conceived in those years in their relations with the chieftains of Tibet was to single out one noble family which could be representative of the whole country, but this was not possible because secular power on the plateau was fragmented. Hence the quick tactics, adopted elsewhere by the Mongols, of focusing on the rulers of conquered countries either to exercise pressure upon them or, more often, to behead these countries of their ruler, could not work in Tibet. The plateau, at the time, did not have a clear-cut hierarchy of leaders the Mongols could give orders to or eliminate.

In 1250—this is the date given in the Tibetan literature—⁶⁹ Mo 'gor rgyal po turned the tables of the Mongol strategy towards Tibet and went for a solution that considered the current political state of affairs on the plateau more realistically. Given that there was no one who had supreme authority in Tibet, he chose a multiple leadership, thus opening the control of Tibet to an interactive governance. He identified and appointed aristocrats of bKa' brgyud pa families as the Mongols' vassals/interlocutors and, at the same time, chose various Mongol princes to be their heads.

There is a certain prevalence among scholars of the idea that Byang Mi nyag had been the model and prototype of the system adopted by the Mongols to deal with Tibet and its *bla ma*-s. This, in my view, is half a truth. It is a fact that the institutionalisation of the relationship between a ruler and his *bla ma* was adopted by the Mongols as a consequence of its adoption in Byang Mi nyag. The system existed in Hor yul inasmuch as it had previously embraced in the Tangut kingdom. It existed with the same titles—those of *gu shri* (“state preceptor”) and *ti shri* (“imperial preceptor”)—awarded to Tibetan *bla ma*-s in Byang Mi nyag.

Nonetheless, there was a fundamental difference that made the relationships between the Hor pa chieftains and Tibetan masters of Buddhism being based on sensibly different principles. This difference consisted in the fact that the Tangut never invaded Tibet and, therefore, never exercised any right of sovereignty over it. On the contrary, the Mongols transformed the

69. For the date of accession of Mon 'gor rgyal po to the throne of the Mongols as 1249, preceding his final coronation in 1251, see Boyle, *The Successors of Genghis Khan* (p.224 n.96 and p.228 n.124).

relations between their rulers and Tibetan *bla ma*-s from being limited to the spiritual sphere to having direct and profound political implications besides the religious ones.

Having had to send to the imperial court members of their schools—bKa' brgyud pa and Sa skya pa principally, but also spiritual masters of the religious schools patronised at court—this was a solution with which the Tibetan aristocratic families had to comply willingly or unwillingly. *Yon mchod* was, for the Mongols, a way to control Tibet and exercise their sovereignty over it. For the Tibetans, it was a way to have privileges validated by the highest authority in exchange of paying the price of various types of tribute levied from the estates the Mongol princes controlled. The system sanctioned at the Mongol court and in Tibet was miles away from the one prevailing in the Tangut kingdom until it was crushed by Jing gir rgyal po in 1227. In Byang Mi nyag, an imperial tutor was kept at court to impart Buddhist teachings and not to get also involved in secular affairs with the exception of Tibetan *bla ma*-s exceptionally called to defend the country from Mongol invasions by means of their powers.

Hence, besides prophetic legacy, the presence of Karma Pakshi in Hor yul followed a trend distantly inaugurated in Byang Mi nyag, which was partially inherited by the Mongols. The conquest of the Tangut kingdom by the Mongols led to close contacts with Tibetan Buddhism, although Tibetan masters hardly stayed on in Byang Mi nyag after the downfall of the kingdom for the simple reason that no Buddhism was left in that land. The situation in Hor yul was not much conducive to its establishment there.

A trickle of Buddhism seems to have entered Hor yul after the fall of Byang Mi nyag in 1227 owing to the relations between Tshal pa bla ma Gung thang pa, O go ta and Go pe la.⁷⁰ But an acceleration in these contacts took place due to the interaction between Karma Pakshi

70. Tshal pa fortunes had a breakthrough at the Mongol court during the reign of O go ta (r. 1229–1241). At an unspecified time during his tenure of the throne, dPa' bo gTsong lag 'phreng ba identifies in bla ma Gung thang pa the first Tibetan to have brought *rDo rje theg pa* Buddhism to Hor yul at the imperial capital Gu rum.

Bla ma Gung thang pa was active during the reign of O go ta's reign (1229–1241), but a slightly better approximation can be attempted in consideration of the fact that he was supported by rgyal bu Go pe la's son rDo rje, one of the four sons born to Se chen (1216–1294) from dpon mo Cha bu (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p.256 lines 8–9). rDo rje did not have offspring (ibid. p.256 line 18). There is no rDo rje's birth date in the Tibetan sources. Obviously, Go pe la (b.1216) can hardly have produced a progeny before growing up. One should also allot several more years to let rDo rje become a child of some age in order to patronise the Tshal pa *bla ma*. All this leads one to the last stretch of O go ta's reign as the time when bla ma Gung thang pa had a breakthrough with the Mongols.

dPa' bo holds that bla ma Gung thang pa was sponsored at court by O go ta's wife—Empress Za yin E ka—and her sons, having become their religious teacher. That is an unprecise record in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, for Za yin E ka was the wife of Tho lo (i.e. Tolui). *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.255 line 18–p.256 line 3) says that she had Mo 'gor rgyal po and Se chen rgyal po among her sons, two future emperors whose leaning towards Tibetan Buddhism is well known. One wonders whether here dPa'

and Mo 'gor rgyal po, after the emperor sent military campaigns to Tibet but, in particular, after he introduced his new political and religious policy in Tibet.

In a word, there was a trend in availing of Tibetan *bla ma*-s's religious service in lands that were eventually conquered by the Mongols. The Mongols came to know of these cultural exchanges after accomplishing the conquest of these countries. In this context, Karma Pakshi benefited of the cultural trend that existed in Byang Mi nyag before his journey to Hor yul because the Mongols had become aware of it.

Was the *yon mchod* between Mo 'gor rgyal po and Karma Pakshi exceptionally conceived and pursued on the basis of the Tangut model of engaging in relations with Tibetan *bla ma*-s or followed the Mongol model that extended it to the secular domain?

bo's implication is that a seed in their mind for a positive disposition towards *rDo rje theg pa* was originally planted by the Tshal pa *bla ma*.

Bla ma Gung thang pa predicted that Go pe la would become the emperor in the years to come, which left a deep impression upon the Mongol prince, somewhat motivating him to be prepared to accept the challenge. It would seem that closeness of the Tshal pa to Se chen rgyal po was the outcome of the high esteem bla ma Gung thang pa had for him. The privileged status with rgyal bu Go pe la that bla ma Gung thang pa secured to the Tshal pa lasted for decades to come, since it experienced an increase in importance from 1260 onwards when the prince ascended the Mongol throne.

Bla ma Gung thang must have had a remarkably long stay in Hor yul and Byang Mi nyag, for *rGyal rabs sogs Bod kyi yig tshang gsal ba'i me long* is useful to ascertain the period spent by him in Hor yul (called rGya yul in the related passage). The text says that he went to the land of the Mongols during the tenure of Sangs rgyas dngos grub as Tshal pa *dpon sa* (1230–1253) and adds that he was present at Se chen rgyal po's coronation at the *quriltai* of iron monkey 1260. Given that he interacted with O go ta, who died in 1241, bla ma Gung thang pa reached Hor yul sometime during the decade 1230–1240 and was active there until at least 1260.

The passage in *rGyal rabs sogs Bod kyi yig tshang gsal ba'i me long* (p.111 lines 1–3) reads as follows: “Yang 'Tshal pa'i bu slob/ bla ma Gung thang pa zhes pa des/ rGya yul du byon nas/ rgyal bu Gu pe la'i tshugs sras su gyur/ Gu pe la Se chen gyis gong par phebs dus/ bla ma Gung thang pas zhus nas/ 'Tshal ba dbang 'dus che ba'i rgyu mtshan de yin/ dpon Sangs rgyas dngos grub kyi/ sn-gags steng du dge bshes Dar tshul/ dge bshes Re rtsa ba/ dge bshes Yar lungs pas/ Gung thang dbon po la sogs pa la bskur nas/ lha Gung thang gi bde skor thams cad/ rgyal bu Gu be la gtad nas/ dgos mi [note: bla ma Gung thang pas/ 'Tshal pa'i grogs ldan che bar mdzad] byas/ dge 'dun 'Tshal pa'i stan pa'i rtsa ba tshugs/ dpal 'byor long spyod nam mkha' snyam//”; “Also, a 'Tshal pa (spelled so) (i.e. Zhang g.Yu brag pa)'s disciple, bla ma Gung thang pa, went to China and became the protégé of rgyal bu Gu pe (spelled so) la. When Gu be la Se chen rgyal po ascended the throne, bla ma Gung thang pa said: “This is the outcome of the 'Tshal ba (i.e. Zhang g.Yu brag pa)'s empowerments, all of them put together [note: bla ma Gung thang pa entertained great friendship with the 'Tshal pa (i.e. g.Yu brag pa)]. Besides dpon Sangs rgyas dngos grub's Tantric [practice], this is due to [Zhang g.Yu brag pa's] Gung thang successors, such as dge bshes Dar tshul, dge bshes Re rtsa ba and dge bshes Yar lungs pa”. And so [the emperor] honoured them. Given that the whole happy *skor* of lha Gung thang was offered to rgyal bu Gu be (spelled so) la, he [note: bla ma Gung thang pa] was the man on duty. He established the roots of the virtuous 'Tshal pa teachings. [The 'Tshal pa's] glory and prosperity were vast as the sky”.

Based on Mo 'gor rgyal po's principle of allocating responsibilities to Tibetan noble families under the control of Mongol princes, bKa' brgyud pa aristocratic families, in most cases, chose to appoint their members one generation after another as religious and secular heads separately in order to run these affairs. Continuity in the monasteries under their control was secured by the successive generations in their families. The Sa skya pa shared with these bKa' brgyud pa schools a similar organisation based on the 'Khon family.

Differently from other bKa' brgyud pa schools whose preservation and welfare were the duty of the aristocracy the Karma pa did not avail of the support of noble families to provide people and sustenance to them. They had to rely on external secular support, having opted—this being first time in Tibet—for reincarnation as the method to secure continuity to their supreme religious post. Hence other bKa' brgyud pa families relied on a secular basis to supply and appoint their religious heads, while the Karma pa opted for an entirely religious approach for the purpose of selecting their religious authority. This was at the basis of the eminently spiritual attitude of the Karma pa in the earlier periods of their existence.

It is historically significant that Karma Pakshi went to Hor yul after Mo 'gor rgyal po's implementation of his system of governance over Tibet. Karma Pakshi's presence in Hor yul was the outcome of Mo 'gor rgyal po's choice of the Karma Kam tshang as his own interlocutors from Tibet. The dynamics of this piece of micro history indicate this with remarkable crispness. Mo 'gor rgyal po promulgated his system in 1250; Karma Pakshi was invited to the lands of the Mongols by rgyal bu Go pe la (the future Se chen rgyal po) in water ox 1253 (see n.60–61); he eventually met the Mongol emperor in 1256 (see n.42–43).

Unlike the Sa skya pa with Se chen rgyal po, Karma Pakshi was not involved in the political formulation of the system of Mongol dominance over Tibet of those years. In other words, Karma Pakshi's "conversion" of the Mo 'gor rgyal po, if ever it truly went to that extent, engendered a pacification effort to improve the conditions in Tibet imposed by the Mongols, as his biographies say.

The spiritual emphasis in their relationship should be attributed to the way the Karma pa were organised rather than a choice by the emperor. Apparently, Karma Pakshi did not broker particular favours for his school. No indications are provided in the sources that document the existence of secular favours accorded by Mo 'gor rgyal po to Karma Pakshi. No authority over any territory descended to the Karma pa. There is no sign in the sources that the Karma pa school was granted control over lands or estates by the Mongols during the reign of Mo 'gor rgyal po and, of course, during the rule of Se chen rgyal po.

The Karma pa do not either appear in the organisation of the dBus gTsang *khri skor bcu gsum* despite being a major presence in dBus at mTshur phu or were they granted any political and territorial endowment in Khams by the Hor, despite holding the important monasteries of

Kam po gNas nang and Karma'i dgon there. Other bKa' brgyud pa schools exercised secular authority in Khams under the aegis of the Mongols.

The status of the Karma pa school was far from the privileges derived to other aristocratic bKa' brgyud pa families, such as the Thal pa, who owed their closeness to the Mongol princes in exchange of validation of Hor pa control over their territories, especially in Central Tibet.

Vassalage was one reason why Tibet did not suffer devastating consequences from Mongol occupation on the same scale as other countries, although Hor pa sovereignty was less lenient than what scholarship has shown until now. Besides the relationship the Mongols entertained with the aristocratic bKa' brgyud pa families in dBus, it is well known that, for instance, the Sa skya pa in gTsang could avail of favours for their schools. Whether all of Tibetan families, including the 'Khon, could have had the possibility of avoiding this condition of privilege is open to debate.

Did Karma Pakshi side with the Mongols? He was not politically involved during the years of Mo 'gor rgyal po's rule. Sources say that, after the death of Mo 'gor rgyal po, he was made the scapegoat for other people's hostility towards Se chen rgyal po during the strife for the throne with his brother A rig bo gha. He had inherited the antagonism nurtured by other bKa' brgyud pa for Se chen rgyal po, which confirms that the Karma pa did not have a secular structure of their own. Karma Pakshi paid a price for the offense of the 'Bri gung sgom pa rDo rje dpal, who spat on the Mongol emperor's face (or was Se chen rgyal po still prince Go pe la?). That the emperor tried to burn him alive and to drown him are accounts belonging to legendary lore. Facts are that Karma Pakshi did not stay at Se chen rgyal po's court but returned to dBus, which shows that relations with the emperor were not idyllic.

In a word, Karma Pakshi's positioning towards the Mongols moved from positive during the years of Mo 'gor rgyal po's reign to bitter and negative with the advent of Se chen rgyal po. This may have as well depended, besides the hostility of the bKa' brgyud pa bloc for Se chen rgyal po, on the fact that the Mongol control of Tibet was, although intrusive, at least less organised and immanent during the rule of Mo 'gor rgyal po than during the long reign of his successor.

ADDENDUM THREE

Karma Pakshi's protection of A mdo from a Hor pa inroad

As for *dam tshig* between master and disciple, U rgyan pa lending protection to Bal po and perhaps rGya gar (i.e. Gangetic India; see e.g. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston smad cha* p.916 lines 6–11) had an antecedent in a ritual by his karmic teacher Karma Pakshi.

dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba and Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas say that the second Karma pa performed sorcery in order to prevent rGya gar from an impending devastation by the Mongols, which was unsuccessful.⁷¹ These texts do not say anything further about the whole affair except for a brief account of Karma Pakshi's performance. The time frame of this event links it to soon after Karma Pakshi's return to mTshur phu, where construction works were taking place, after his prolonged sojourn in Hor yul and his falling in disgrace with Se chen rgyal po.

Karma Pakshi must have been en route back to mTshur phu around water dog 1262. Sum pa mkhan po in his *bstan rtsis* dates the miracles he performed in Hor yul from fire snake 1260 to iron bird 1261—the author of *dPag bsam ljon bzang* says three in all. Tshe tan zhabs drung holds that his last display of miracles in Hor yul occurred in iron bird 1261. Both state that

71. See *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.901 lines 2–10) and *Karma Pakshi'i rnam thar* in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas, *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* (p.124 line 6–p.125 line 2) whose passage is derived verbatim from dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba's formulation. The reader is requested to keep in mind that the page break of the text in Si tu Chos kyi 'byung gnas, *Karma Kam tshang gser 'phreng* is in italics and underline. There is no page break in that of *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*: “De'i Nye gnas lDan sgom gyis mTshur phur mchod khang chen po'i dri gtsang khang khyams dang bcas pa brtsigs pas snang srid kyi lha 'dres grogs byas te myur bar tshar/ lha bzo dang zangs rag kyang ji ltar gsung ba ltar byung/ rus shing tshugs nas lo gsum na lha chen po 'dom bcu gsum pa zangs rag las lugs su blug pa grub/ rGya gar gyi yul gru bzhi tu Hor dmag (p.125) drangs nas gtsug lag khang chen po zhig gi gandhi ra dang gser gyi bya mdabs dmag gis Hor yul du khyer ba mi 'tshams pa'i cho 'phrul gyis sus kyang bdag gir byed ma nus pa grub thob chen pos ltas ngan g.yang du blangs te rGya Bod kyi mtshams Ga chu'i 'gram du rdzu 'phrul gyis drangs kyang rten 'brel zhig ma 'grig //”; “His (i.e. Karma Pakshi's) nye gnas lDan sgom built the *dri gtsang khang* (“inner sanctum”) and the *khyams* (“courtyard”) of one great temple at mTshur phu. The *lha 'dre*-s of the phenomenal world gave their contribution and [the construction] was finished quickly. It happened that he likewise admonished the artists and copper and brass smiths [about the way they should work. He said:] “If you apply yourself [to the work] with perseverance, you will achieve the copper and brass casting of a great deity measuring thirteen 'dom (i.e. some twenty-five meters) [high] in three years”. (p.125) The Hor brought troops to one land of rGya gar (i.e. Gangetic India). [Using] the *gandi ra* (spelled so) and the wings of the golden birds [placed over] the roof of one great *gtsug lag khang* [of mTshur phu], [Karma Pakshi said:] “No one else than I myself will be able to perform a miracle, given that it is unrealistic to send troops to Hor yul”. Negative signs looming large, the great *grub thob* could not establish a [proper] karmic nexus to transfer [the troops] miraculously to the bank of the Ga chu at the border between [the lands of] China and Tibet”.

the construction of lHa khang chen mo at mTshur phu, accomplished by the second Zhwa nag pa's nye gnas lDan sgom, in which Karma Pakshi participated, occurred in water pig 1263.⁷²

If credibility is lent to this account, it would document an unknown military campaign against Gangetic India, but a major internal weakness makes it doubtful. Karma Pakshi's magical performance in order to stop the troops of the Hor at the borderland between Tibet and China, mentioned in the account, seems to be unrelated to the alleged Mongol invasion of Gangetic India. The distance between A mdo and Gangetic India was enough cushion to rule out that rGya gar was to suffer from the Mongol invasion. Hence Karma Pakshi's would not have been an attempt to protect the Noble Land from the Mongols, as the account claims. More realistically Karma Pakshi aimed at securing protection to A mdo.

It is possible that Khubilai Khan, soon after ascending the imperial throne left vacant by Mo 'gor rgyal po's death, could have planned a campaign against Tibet, but the possibility that he promoted a border inroad more than a full-scale military expedition cannot be ruled out. dPa' bo's account, therefore, refers to an otherwise unrecorded Hor pa inroad in northeastern Tibet, undertaken by the Mongols from China in years close to Se chen rgyal po's ascension to the throne. But the historicity of such an intrusion into Tibetan soil needs to be confirmed. The circumstances that made it possible, its unfolding and the outcome of this military action are not recorded in *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* and *Karma Kam tshang gser phreng*.

The reference to the Ga chu, the river said to be at the border between Tibet and rGya [nag] in the same passage of *mKhas pa'i dga'ston*, gives an insight on the ever-changing borderline between Tibet and the lands controlled by the Chinese during the period of Yuan sovereignty over the plateau.⁷³ This water course is mentioned in the biography of Rol pa'i

72. In the entry for iron bird 1261 *dPag bsam ljon bzang* (p.854) says: "Karma Pakshis me sprul lcags sprel lo 'di gsum la Hor yul du grub rtags bstan//"; "[From] fire snake 1257 to iron monkey 1260 during these three years Karma Pakshi displayed miracles". The text (p.855) touches a similar issue in the entry for water pig 1263: "Paksh'i nye gnas lDan sgom gyis mTshur phu'i lHa khang chen mo bzhengs"; "Pakshi's nye gnas lDan sgom built mTshur phu lHa khang chen mo".

bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa (p.188) elaborates Sum pa mkhan po's chronological assessment in more precise terms in the entry for the iron bird 1261: "Karma Pakshis grub rtags tha ma bstan"; "It was the last [time] that Karma Pakshi displayed miracles [in Hor yul]" and (ibid. p.189) confirms the construction year of mTshur phu lHa khang chen mo in the entry for water pig 1263: "Karma Pakshi'i nye gnas kyi mTshur pur lHa khang chen mo bzhengs//"; "Karma Pakshi's nye gnas built lHa khang chen mo at mTshur phu").

73. The Ga chu is not found in the study of Tibet's river systems that are included as separate sections into the *lHo rong chos 'byung* biography of U rgyan pa (ibid. p.745 line 13–p.746 line 1). These sections are an excerpt of the treatise written by the great *grub thob* and offered by him to Se chen rgyal po, a work almost contemporary to the events mentioned here (see van der Kuijp, "U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1230–1309) Part II: For Emperor Qubilai? The Garland of Tales about Rivers" and my article "Grub chen U rgyan pa and the Mongols of China").

rdo rje (1340–1383). The fourth Karma pa reached the Ga chu in the pig year 1359.⁷⁴ This is a clue to supports the transfer of the event from the Gangetic Plain to the border between Tibet and China.

74. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (*smad cha* p.959 lines 8–10) says: “Phag lo zla ba gnyis pa'i tshes drug la Bya khar phebs/ rgyal bu Sanggha shrīs bsus te Ga chu dang la bar rgyal bui lha khang dang nye bar bzhugs/””; “On the sixth of the second month of the year of the pig 1359, [Rol pa'i rdo rje] went to Bya kha. Upon the request of rgyal bu Sanggha shri he stayed near the *lha khang* of the *rgyal bu* between the Ga chu and the pass”.

In the days of the fourth Karma pa, the Ga chu was in Tibetan territory, but no hypothesis can be suggested whether the border between Tibet and China was beyond the river to the east in Karma Pakshi's time.

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The Manjūśri mountain and the Buddha tree: a history of the dPyal clan (7th-14th century)

The history of the dPyal clan has been marginalised in the Tibetan tradition despite the fact that several members of these people made remarkable achievements, and their family, unlike others, cruised through the centuries in a continuum of significant activity. Isolated references to their greatest members appear sporadically in the literature. My aim here is to try to resuscitate interest in this group of unsung heroes using an approach that transcends individual cases or specific feats.

A certain amount of oblivion of their significance can be imputed to the fact that the history of Tibet is, like any other, written from a vertical perspective by the dominant powers of the time which often ignored people and events that could have helped to provide a more horizontal view.

Another kind of vertical vision has been adopted in the literary material on the dPyal clan. The various branches of this family are dealt with separately in these documents. Each of them is treated generation after generation before passing to another branch. I opt for a more horizontal approach. I write about them by compacting together members of different branches who belonged to the same generation.

I have already dealt with the dPyal in another work of mine which appeared in *Pramāṇakīrtiḥ*, the Festschrift in honour of Ernst Steinkellner (“The White dPyal Part One: the early signs (from the 7th century to the beginning of *bstan pa phyi dar*)”), where I limited myself to a study of the dPyal (i.e. the White dPyal) during the imperial period and its aftermath. Here I attempt a more holistic treatment, for I deal with them from the mid 7th century until the 14th. The first part of the present work thus follows almost *verbatim* the article appeared in the Steinkellner Festschrift. I have no further evidence for this segment of their history that prompts me to change it. The only minor difference is structural. I have compacted the history of the dPyal during the imperial period into four phases and moved the passages from the Tibetan sources

in translation from the text to the notes. Change being minimal, so the reader is asked to drop this part if he is already familiar with my previous output.

Members of the dPyal family from the sMan lung and Thar pa gling monasteries of Myang smad in the same area of Zhwa lu were pioneers of *bstan pa phyi dar* and, for generations thereafter, made a point to travel to great holy sites in rGya gar and the Kathmandu Valley.¹ They had prolonged sojourns at localities of these countries in order to access Buddhist teachings directly. In the process, they became holders of several glorious religious systems, a fact legitimising the expression used in the literature that their tradition had “many doors”. This was due to the four *yi dam* they chose for their practice and their adoption of teachings at the heart of Buddhist systems of India, Bal po and Tibet formulated during *bstan pa snga dar* and *phyi dar*. They also studied under some of the brightest non-Tibetan Buddhists ever to have interacted with people from the plateau. The dPyal family members became prominent disciples of masters of the importance, among those who visited Tibet, of the highly underrated sMri ti Dznyana kirti (?–?) and then Kha che pan chen Shakya shri bhadra (1140–1225).²

It is, however, somewhat surprising that little concerning the dPyal is found in the sources. In order to trace their history from the early times until the 14th century, the period of their greatest splendour, I base myself marginally on several sources which deal with them to a different extent. I found scattered but useful material in well known and comprehensive *chos 'byung*-s, such as 'Gos lo tsa ba gZho nu dpal's *Deb ther sngon po* and dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, and a more systematic treatment in *Myang chos 'byung*, the equally well known regional history of the territory where the dPyal built their temples and residences.

Definitely more important for their history is a monographic work on them published by the diaspora, a rare *gdung rabs* of these people, the little known *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* written by the third 'Brug chen 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa (1478–1523), a master of *bDe mchog snyan rgyud* mainly associated with Ras chung pa rDo rje grags (1084–1161). With the

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1. Rather than India at large it is the “central” region of Ma ga dha and neighbouring lands that rGya gar stands for in traditional Tibetan understanding. This is why I leave the name rGya gar untranslated, for it is a much smaller territory than India. The present-day colloquial expression rGya gar to mean India in general should not be applied to its literary use in the past. rGya gar is translated as “Central India” in some cases but the physical location of Central India is elsewhere. rGya gar is “Central India” in the view of the Tibetan tradition inasmuch as it was the centre of Shakya mu ni's preaching, and thus a land “central” to Buddhism. The notion “Gangetic India” is somewhat closer to its meaning.
 2. I favour iron male monkey 1240 for the birth of Kha che pan chen, as given by Rin chen sde in his *Yar lung Jo bo'i chos 'byung* (p.178 lines 1–3), since this text dedicates a section to the great Kashmiri *pandi ta*, especially to the dates in his life (ibid. p.178 line 1–p.179 line 11).

help of these sources one can weave a fragmentary warp that helps to sketch their neglected contribution to Tibetan culture.

Unfortunately, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* does not begin its treatment of the dPyal of sMan lung and Thar pa gling from its natural commencement but from a prelude in Bal po that deals with the circumstances surrounding how dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan, a master active in the later part of the 11th century, obtained the cults of Kye rdor and bDe mchog (see below p.500). Distantly echoing the opening to *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* dedicated to Bal po and one of its distinguished sons who taught a dPyal pa, the brief monographic treatment of the dPyal masters in *Deb ther sngon po*, mainly associates them with the cult of rDo rje phag mo. This material is preceded by an account of the lives and work of the Indian masters belonging to the transmission line that eventually reached the dPyal masters of sMan lung and Thar pa gling.³

So, my treatment lacked the early centuries of dPyal pa history. Through the help of my friend Josayma Tashi Tsering I was able to secure to myself another *gdung rabs* of the dPyal, entitled *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*. This is a no less important and no less neglected source on this people written in fire horse 1546 by bya btang pa Padma rdo rje. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* has a remarkable treatment of the dPyal during the ancient period. The unicity and significance of this part of the *gdung rabs* led me to modify my proposed plan of writing for the Festschrift of Ernst Steinkellner, so that I have focused on the outline of the history of the dPyal from the early historical period of Tibet without solution of continuity. In order to deal with the ancestors of the dPyal, I have practically confined myself to the use of *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*, with sporadic support from other sources.

The next part of my work begins with *bstan pa phyi dar* whose significance as a turning point in the history of Tibet is so well known to be obvious. Less obvious is that the dPyal gave a dimension to *bstan pa phyi dar* that was peculiar to the extent of being unique and fertile at the same time. Pioneers of the reform of religious conditions on the plateau, they

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3. Are the accounts of the lives and work of the Indian masters belonging to the transmission lines that eventually reached the dPyal masters of sMan lung and Thar pa gling derived from unspecified *chos 'byung*-s dedicated to these tutelary deities?

Deb ther sngon po introduces the lineage holders of rDo rje phag mo in rGya gar and Bal po before coming to deal with the first dPyal clan member who received teachings of this deity. Indra buthi bestowed them upon Lakṣmīṅkarā and from her they passed to Avadhūtipa who gave them to lDong ngar/dar ba (ibid. p.472 lines 11–13; *Blue Annals* p.391). The latter imparted them upon Devākaracandra, also known as sTong nyid ting nge 'dzin rdo rje, and Ma he bha ro (ibid. p.474 lines 16–17; *Blue Annals* p.393). They were then transferred to Ha mu (spelled so) dkar po (ibid. p.475 lines 4–5; *Blue Annals* p.394) and from him to dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje (ibid. p.468 lines 2–3: “De rting dPyal lo Kun dga' rdo rje zhes bya ba/ Ha mu dkar po'i slob ma de la Phag mo bslabs”; “Thereafter, dPyal lo Kun dga' rdo rje, the disciple of Ha mu dkar po, received Phag mo from him”; *Blue Annals* p.395).

spearheaded the stable adoption of the new formulations introduced by the Later Diffusion. However, they never retracted the religious system they had adopted during *bstan pa snga dar*, thus propounding for an uncommon synthesis of old and new.

Although undated, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* is earlier than *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* completed in fire horse 1546. The two sources can be studied from the viewpoint of the historical perspective when Padma rdo rje deals with topics already found in the work of the third 'Brug chen, 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa.

In particular *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*, despite being by far the most comprehensive work on the dPyal from sMan lung and Thar pa gling, does not talk about the activities in India of Se tsa dMar ru, one of the most seminal members of the family. *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* ignores him entirely. One thus needs to take other literary material into consideration to fill this gap.

The split in the dPyal clan that occurred during the reign of Sad na legs led to the identification of its three branches by means of colours (*dkar nag khra gsum*). The extant records of the family all refer to the White dPyal, the eventual founders of sMan lung and Thar pa gling. This is why I opted to define them White dPyal in my article for the Steinkellner Festschrift. But given that I can only deal with this branch of the clan, I omit to identify them by their colour in the present essay for the sake of simplicity.

Like other texts devoted to noble clans of Tibet, *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* catalogues the achievements of the dPyal clan into ten “greatnesses”,⁴ which are:

1. their descentance from the *lha*-s;
2. the transfer from their status as *lha*-s to that of humans in order to become the dPyal clan;
3. their appearance on earth;
4. their becoming ministers of the *lha sras btsan po*-s;
5. their split into three branches;
6. one of their members becoming the *mchod gnas* of a *lha sras btsan po*;
7. another member becoming the *sku bsrung* (“bodyguard”) of another *lha sras btsan po*;
8. the *lha khang*-s they built in Nyang ro and their sojourns in India;
9. the formulation of their own religious system; and
10. their contribution to sentient beings and the Noble Religion.

The first seven “greatnesses” of the dPyal refer to the imperial period of Tibet I deal with in the earlier part of this paper. The seventh “greatness” is a hybrid. The construction of *lha khang*-s in Nyang ro dates to the time when the sPu rgyal dynasty ruled the plateau and the

4. On the custom of enumerating the outstanding aspects of clans or monastic institutions see, for instance, the classification of the reasons whereby gNas rnying has excelled in its history (Vitali, “The history of the lineages of gNas rnying summarized as its “ten greatnesses” in the sources (a survey of the period from the second half of the 8th century to the beginning of the Sa skya pa rule)”. I have

subsequent, protracted phase after its downfall, that included *bstan pa phyi dar*. The other activity part of the same greatness—“their sojourns in India”—was an enterprise occurring from *bstan pa phyi dar* onwards.

The “formulation of their own religious system” was the outcome of their sojourns in India, all of which took place during the Later Diffusion of Buddhism and subsequent times. This “greatness” and the last one are discussed in the second part of my essay on the dPyal.

The early signs

I divide the ancient history of the dPyal into four phases marked by a progressive east-west migration:

- the earliest period, spent by its members in China;
- the next one, when they resided in the borderland of the plateau, the arena of clashes between the Tibetans and Chinese on account of political interest;
- their service to the *lha sras btsan po*-s in Tibet proper; and
- the choice of their final destination; they settled at various localities in rTsang;
- the origin of the dPyal in China.

Rather than linking the origin of the dPyal with one of the tribes of proto-Tibetans (*mi'u rigs bzhi* or *gdung drug*), *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* says that the dPyal claim descentance from the *lha*-s, the immanent gods, in a sequence of marriages one generation after the other that, as is not uncommon in Tibetan literature, led them stage by stage towards earth.

The account of the origins of the dPyal reminds one, in terms of structure but not of contents, obviously of *gNya' khri btsan po* and, for instance, of their neighbours from the 11th century, the lCe of Zhwa lu. Indeed, the place on which the dPyal pa ancestor descended on earth could not have been more different from the latter ones. The literature records that the lCe appeared first in Zhang chung, whereas the dPyal claim descent at its antipode. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.3 line 24) says the first human belonging to the dPyal clan to appear on earth descended upon Ri bo rtse lnga.⁵

The descent of the progenitor of the dPyal clan on Ri bo rtse lnga may represent a transfer of splinters of the clan into Chinese land in great antiquity.

The *gdung rabs*, in the next sentence, offers the etymology of the dPyal clan, linked to an alternative spelling of the verb *gcal*, which is phonetically similar to dPyal, to mean that the

based myself for their enumeration on bSwi gung nyams med Rin chen's *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* aka *Gyen tho chen mo* (f.8a lines 4–7).

5. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.3 line 24): “Khyad par rje btsun 'Jam dbyangs mchod pa phyir rGya'i Ri bo rtse lngar babs/!”; “[dPyal 'Od 'dus] descended upon Ri bo rtse lnga of China in order to make offerings, in particular, to rje btsun 'Jam dpal dbyangs”.

dPyal spread (*gcal*) all over the area of Ri bo rtse lnga.⁶ If not a learned attempt to rationalise a name of incomprehensible deciphering like several going back to deep antiquity, this assessment would imply that the dPyal received their name *a posteriori*; in other words, after they got diffused fairly well in the area of the 'Jam dpal dbyangs mountain.

The locality where the *gdung rabs* says that the dPyal clan first appeared was therefore farther east of the easternmost territory (Mi nyag) composing the northern belt of lands which ought to be considered the ancestral abode of the *mi'urigs* (see Vitali, "Tribes which populated the Tibetan plateau (as treated in the texts collectively called the *Khungs chen po bzhi*") p.42–43) and thus suggests once again the extraneity of the dPyal clan to the *mi'u rigs* scheme. There is, indeed, no trace of the dPyal in sources providing lengthy classifications of the *mi'u rigs*, such as *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru*, *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags*, *bShad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu* or *Khungs chen po bzhi*, which are among the most comprehensive documents on the issue.

My idea that proto-Tibetan ethnicity existed in deep antiquity outside the plateau, based on Bon po evidence that focuses on the west of the highlands (see Vitali, *ibid.* p.40), seems to be supported, in the case of the dPyal, by unique evidence coming from the east, outside Tibetan elevated territory. To my knowledge, it is remarkably rare that the origin of a Tibetan clan is linked to Ri bo rtse lnga, a mountain well inside the Chinese territory in Sanshi province.⁷

By saying that 'Od 'dus was a practitioner of 'Jam dpal dbyangs, *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* implies that the dPyal family adopted Buddhism at an early stage. A dPyal clan member would, therefore, have embraced Buddhism at an early stage in the history of the diffusion of the Noble Religion on the plateau during the imperial period, and one wonders whether this was before or after its elitist adoption in lHa sa owing to the activity of Srong btsan sgam po. A few clues in the history of the sPu rgyal period provide the context useful to attempt an assessment of the time frame of these events (see below). No evidence, however, is given in the text to ascertain whether 'Od 'dus's adoption of Buddhism happened under Chinese influence.

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6. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.3 lines 24–26): "De'ang me tog mang du babs pas dPyal bkram pa lta bu 'dug pa dang lha de babs pa'i mthus byung bar rtogs nas dPyal zhes brjod do/ mtshan don gyi che ba ste gnyis pa'o//"; "Concerning this (i.e. the appearance of 'Od 'dus at Ri bo rtse lnga), [a rain of] many flowers fell down, and it was as if they spread out (*dpyal bkram* spelled so for *gcal bkram*, "to spread out") [all over Ri bo rtse lnga]. Since it was realised that this happened owing to the power of the *lha* descending [on earth], ['Od 'dus and his successors] were named dPyal. Their second greatness was due to their name".
 7. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* thus adds to Ri bo rtse lnga a further significance to its most classical understanding as the abode of 'Jam dpal dbyangs. Given its role as the mountain on which the ancestor of the dPyal descended from the realm of the *lha*-s, Ri bo rtse lnga is treated in the same way as, for instance, Glang ri gyang to of gNya' khri btsan po's fame or Gangs Ti se, where several Bon po clans descended, epitomes of mountains of the ancestors in the Tibetan tradition.

Given that nothing else is added in the *gdung rabs* to explain the background of the uncommon attribution to the dPyal of Ri bo rtse lnga as their ancestral abode, one needs to wonder whether the account has undertones different from those religious stressed in this source. A sign indicates that the presence of 'Od 'dus at Ri bo rtse lnga may have not been entirely religious. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* attributes to him, although allegedly being a religious master, a daughter of a Chinese emperor as wife, much like great secular personalities, such as Srong btsan sgam po and lJang tsha lHa dbon, had for themselves.⁸

On the other hand, defining the Chinese emperor an *ha/hwa shang*, as *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* does, leaves doubts about his status as someone running secular matters, for the term normally addresses a religious master of sort, who could be a proponent of several, different Chinese religious schools. But perhaps only a supporter?

Whatever the status of dPyal 'Od 'dus and Bha rig may have been, the main issue at stake is Tibetan presence at Ri bo rtse lnga, which exceeded the condition of a temporary sojourn such as pilgrimage. There is no hint internal to the *gdung rabs* that helps to fix with any amount of approximation the period in which 'Od 'dus lived.

In order to trace the secular background to this legendary account, one needs to look into the politics of the game for the control of Central Asia and the borderlands between Tibet and China. This could help to explain how dPyal 'Od 'dus, although his case probably was a stray and isolated one, practised the cult of 'Jam dpal dbyangs at Ribo rtse lnga, while, more often than not, the relations between Tibet and China in the imperial period were far from amicable, especially on Tibet's eastern flank.

I am inclined to think that 'Od 'dus was at Ri bo rtse lnga in a period during which Tibet, already a major player on the Central Asian scene, did not entertain warring relations with the Celestial Empire.

I refer to the twenty-four years of peace between Tibet and China from 640 to 663. The date 640 marks the relaxation of the strained relations between Srong btsan sgam po and T'ang T'ai-tshung, owing to the marriage alliance brokered by mGar Srong rtsan at the Chinese court (*Old T'ang Annals* f.2b, in Pelliot, *Histoire ancienne du Tibet* p.4; Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.21–24). Srong btsan sgam po sought to approach the emperor to normalise their relations.

The well known chronology of those events has it that:

- Srong btsan sgam po resorted to diplomatic activity with China in the year 634–635 after the *lha sras btsan po* had defeated the 'A zha, the people who inhabited the country bordering on sPu rgyal Bod on its eastern flank;
- Srong btsan sgam po passed to direct military action in the borderlands with China probably in 637–638;

8. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.3 line 27) says: “rGya' rgyal po Hā shang Bha rig bu mo rGya mo za Ha ri ma bzhes/”; “[’Od ’dus] married rGya mo za Ha ri ma, the daughter of the Chinese ruler Hā shang Bha rig”.

- mGar Srong rtse in 640 was at the celestial court to ask for a princess in marriage for the *lha sras btsan po*;
- Weng cheng Kong co arrived in Tibet in 641.

The date 663 marks the beginning of a long phase of *de facto* control of Tibet on the part of blon po mGar and his family, coinciding with his targeting the country of the 'A zha to annex and wipe-out the buffer state of the T'u yü hun. This move inaugurated a continuous state of warfare in the region of the borderlands with China which refused to concede to the Tibetans a direct border with their territories. The relations between the two countries were strained due to an almost ceaseless reversal of military fortunes, and so the conditions for Tibetan frequentation of Ri bo rtse lnga were not ideal.

While the Chinese princesses who went in marriage to Tibetan kings did not (or were not allowed to?) give scions to the throne of the *lha sras btsan po*, rGya mo za Ha ri ma, the Chinese wife of dPyal 'Od 'dus secured continuity to the clan lineage. g.Yur rtse and Phor rtse were born to her.⁹

The elder brother pursued Buddhist practice at Ri bo rtse lnga.¹⁰ Given the religious systems imparted to g.Yu rtse by Glang ston Shes rab grags pa, his teacher would have been a little known master of *Bya spyod*, *rNal 'byor gyi rgyud* and *Bla med kyi rgyud* during the late 7th century or environs. His presence at Ri bo rtse lnga documents the existence, on an unknown scale, of *rDo rje theg pa* teachings by a Tibetan at the mountain of 'Jam dpal dbyangs. These statements in the *gdung rabs*, owing to their controversial nature, need corroboration if sources on the same topics shall resurface in the future.

9. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.3 line 27) reads: "Sras gnyis 'khrungs te gcen g.Yung rtse dang gcung Phor rtse'o//"; "[The two sons born from the marriage of 'Od 'dus with rGya mo za Ha ri ma] were the elder g.Yur rtse and the younger Phor rtse".

10. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.3 lines 28–31) adds about the elder brother: "Dad pas rab brtses Sangs rgyas bstan la bzhugs/ shes rab rab rtse gSang sngags kun la mkhas/ rTse lnga'i ring bsgrubs dgnos grub rtse mo brnyes/ mkhas grub rtser phyin g.Yung rtse phyag 'tshal lo/ ces pa des Glang ston Shes rab grags pa'i drung du phyi Bya spyod rNal 'byor gyi rgyud gsum bslab pas mkhas shing nang Bla med kyi rgyud la nges pa thob nas Ri bo rtse lngar rim pa lnga'i ting nge 'dzin bsgom pas ye shes lnga grub pa'i mtshan ma brnyes te 'byung ba lnga'i gnod pas mi brdzi ba'i grub chen kun gyi phyi mor gyur pa'o//"; "[dPyal g.Yur rtse] stood firm in [pursuing] the teachings of Sangs rgyas owing to his faith and steady love [for them]. He mastered all *gSangs sngags* and meditated on the five peaks mountain (i.e. Ri bo rtse lnga), thus obtaining the peak of mystical powers, due to his wisdom and steady love [for the practice]. I pay my homage to g.Yur rtse who climbed the peak of knowledge and spiritual attainments. He learned *Bya spyod* and *rNal 'byor gyi rgyud* from Glang ston Shes rab grags pa. He indeed mastered those externally but, internally, he actually mastered *Bla med kyi rgyud*. He had his meditation on the five stages of Ri bo rtse lnga and obtained the signs of the five spiritual attainments. He was not hindered by the harm of the five elements and became the head crown of all the *grub chen-s*".

The dPyal in the Sino-Tibetan borderland

g.Yu rtse's younger brother, Phor rtse, took on secular activity and gave continuity to the lineage by marrying a woman of royal blood like his father.¹¹ The *gdung rabs* says that he wed Klu 'dul ma, the daughter of the Zha rta king.

The identity of the wife of Phor rtse is difficult to establish and thus the ethnicity of this intermarriage. If the terms addressing her father can be decoded as ['A] zha rta rgyal po or the "king of ['A] zha horses", this could be a sign that splinters of the dPyal or the clan under the guidance of their secular head began to move westwards. This would be a first indication of a slow and progressive process of migration towards the central regions of the plateau. Members of several clans in different periods of Tibetan history did so with different transfer patterns.

If these accounts are to be trusted, it would seem that the two brothers settled in two remarkably distant areas. The marriage of Phor rtse with a woman, feasibly the daughter of the king of the 'A zha, suggests that he had installed himself in the borderland between Tibet and China, conquered by means of several military campaigns of the mGar clan members and eventually annexed to the Tibetan kingdom in 669 (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* n.112 to Chapter One). The treatment in the *gdung rabs* of the secular member of the dPyal during those years seems more credible, reflecting, as it does, the political reality of the day, while that of their religious proponent remains shrouded in legendary terms.

The next member of the dPyal, sTag gi ha las, one of Phor rtse's two sons, is found settled at the borderland between Tibet and China. The area in which he took residence confirms the clan's progressive transfer westwards, but the *gdung rabs* does not specify whether he established himself towards the north in the A mdo borderland with Kansu or towards the south in an area between Khams and Sechuan. Coinciding with the step in the migration of the dPyal towards the west during the life of sTag gi ha las, the history of the dPyal begins to reach firmer grounds. The legendary aura surrounding the inception of the dPyal gradually vanishes to leave space to more factual signs. In reference to this member of the dPyal, *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* reiterates that the dPyal had early blood links with the Chinese emperor.¹²

11. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (ibid. p.3 lines 33–34): "gCung po Phor rtse ni Lugs kyi bstan bcos la mkhas shing ya rabs kyi tshul legs par spyod pa des Zha rta rgyal gyi bu mo Glu 'dul ma khab tu bzhes pa las sras gnyis 'khrungs//"; "The younger brother Phor rtse was a master of *Lugs kyi bstan bcos* and behaved in the excellently noble manner. He married Klu 'dul ma, the daughter of Zha rta rgyal [po]. Two sons were born".

12. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.4 line 4): rGya rgyal po dang gnyen du 'brel tshul zhang dbon cho phreng"; "[sTag gi ha las] was related to the Chinese emperor [in his quality] of *zhang dbon* ("maternal uncle and scion") from the maternal side (*cho 'phreng* spelled so for *cho 'brang*)".

sTag gi ha las was involved in the administration of the borderland and the secular relations between the two countries.¹³ The political views of dPyal sTag gi ha las were representative of Tibetan harsh attitude towards China during the *lha sras btsan po* period. This attitude fiercely advocated Tibetan assertiveness and absolute separation from China to the extent that Tibetans made no mystery of their ambitions towards Chinese-held territories in Central Asia.

In this light of sTag gi ha las's policy at the border between Tibet and China of not allowing Tibetans into China and Chinese into Tibet shows a good amount of moderation in comparison with the widespread Tibetan hostility towards the Celestial Empire. sTag gi ha las's inflammatory speeches to repulse the Chinese armies and put the Chinese into labour/torture camps, on the other hand, were more in line with this hostility lamented by the Chinese who blamed the Tibetans for their cruelty (see the Chinese documents on this issue in Demieville, *Le concile de Lhasa* passim).

He probably should be taken by modern Tibetans as a symbol of their people's struggle that goes back to a period of Central Asian history during which the Tibetans, before the fully-fledged establishment of Buddhism in Tibet, sought open confrontation with the Chinese.

The years in which sTag gi ha las was active in the background of these long-lasting, tense relations seem to correspond to the last part of the reign of Khri lde gtsug brtan Mes Ag tshom.¹⁴

In the turn of two generations after 'Od 'dus, the Tibetan clan dPyal, by moving to the Tibeto-Chinese borderland, entered Tibetan territory and settled there. Although coming from farther away than most of the ancestral proto-Tibetan tribes, the dPyal clan members had fol

13. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.4 lines 1–2) reads: “bCen po sTag gi ha las ni rGya Bod kyi mtshams su bzhugs shing rGya mi Bod la mi gtong/ Bod mi rGya la mi gtong/ nor la bca' bsdud pa dang 'jigs sar rGya 'dzugs pa dang dmag gi ngo zlog pa la sogs pa kha drag btsan par byed do//”; “The elder brother sTag gi ha las stayed at the border between China and Tibet. He did not allow the Chinese into Tibet and the Tibetans into China. He collected wealth existing [in the area] and gave inflammatory speeches, such as that the Chinese had to be thrown into labour/torture camps (*'jigs sa*) and that their armies should be repulsed”.

14. Since 710, under the *de facto* rule of the grandmother Khri ma lod during the minority of Khri lde gtsug brtan, Tibet and China exchanged frequent military aggressions along their frontier which had previously been the country of the 'A zha. The main events of those years were as follows:

- in 730 a peace treaty was agreed that pertained especially to Tibet's northeastern frontier, the one which shared with China proper (Beckwith, *The Tibetan Empire in Central Asia* p.104), while fighting with the Chinese continued in their Central Asian dominions;
- in 737 the Chinese broke the peace treaty and attacked the Tibetans on their northeastern frontier, which inaugurated a new warring phase (ibid. p.114–115);
- despite a Tibetan attempt to renew peace in 740, the Chinese not yielded, and there was another major phase of war between the two countries in the same borderland (ibid. p.127–130);
- in 749 the Chinese were at mTsho sngon and fierce fighting erupted for the control of the citadel built on its island (ibid. p.133–134).

lowed, at much later time, the same direction taken in deeper antiquity by the *mi'u rigs*—a west-south-west movement—in the process of shaping Tibetan ethnicity by entering the plateau and settling there.

The dPyal in dBus

When bSam yas was under construction, members of the dPyal were already in dBus, because one of them served Khri srong lde btsan as *chos blon*.¹⁵

It would therefore seem that this was another step in the migration of the dPyal. Members of the clan left the borderland between Tibet and China during the reign of Mes Ag tshom and settled in dBus.

The stereotype of the participation in the construction of bSam yas applies to the dPyal clan too. Like many other families, they boasted of their involvement in the enterprise. The text is adamant in stating the participation of dPyal sTag gi gdangs in the project while, surprisingly, seems to nourish doubts about the identity of the *btsan po* to whom the paternity of the work must be attributed. Nowhere in Tibetan tradition, authors waver on the fact that bSam yas was Khri srong lde btsan's brainchild.

sTag gi gdangs served as minister under two kings. He was a junior *blon po* during the reign of Khri lde gtsug brtan Mes Ag tshom, for it was not sent to China with the delegation to invite the Chinese princess and, in the course of time, was promoted to the post of *chos blon* during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan.¹⁶ This is hardly tenable. The two events are separated from one another by some sixty years. The delegation sent by Khri ma lod to China with the task of asking for a princess in marriage for his scion lHa dbon to serve reasons of state between the two countries left in late 708. It reached destination in early 709. Gyim shang

15. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.4 lines 6–9) reads: “Bod rgyal po Khri lde srong btsan gyi sras lJang tsha lHa dben la rGya'i rgyal po'i bu mo Gyim shing Kong jo btsun mor blangs ba skyel ba la byon pas Bod rgyal pos bya dga' dang gnang sbyin cher gnang ste rGya yul du 'gro ma gnang ba Bod rgyal po'i blon por bskos shing rgyal po de'i sras sam gcung pos bSam yas lHung gyi grub pa'i gtsug lag khang bzhengs pa'i chos blon chen po mdzad de de yang chos blon gyi nang nas phyi blon bzang po drug gi nang nas mchog dang tso bo lta bu gyur//”; “Gyim shing Kong jo, the daughter of the Chinese emperor, went in marriage to lJang tsha lHa dben (spelled so), the son of Khri lde srong btsan (sic for Khri lde gtsug brtan Mes Ag tshom). The king of Bod sent a big gift. [sTag gi gdangs] did not go to China but was appointed minister to the king. The king's son or else [the latter's] younger brother built bSam yas lHun gyi grub pa'i gtsug lag khang, and [sTag gi gdangs] was the *chos blon chen po* in charge of it. Among the six *phyi blon* eligible to be the *chos blon*, he became the most prominent and the main one”.

16. The passage in the previous note also provides an information concerning the way a *chos blon chen po* or supreme minister was chosen, if this account is to be trusted. The appointment would seem to have been made from the group of *phyi blon* (“exterior ministers”), that numbered six in the time of Khri srong lde btsan.

Kong co arrived at the Tibetan court in 710 according to the entry for the year of the dog 710 in the *Tun-huang Annals* (line 125, see *Tun hong thon pa'i Bod kyi lo rgyus yig cha* p.21 line 29: “bTsan po Kong co gshegs pa' yo byad bkral//”; “Requisites were arranged for btsan po Kong co's arrival”, also see my *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.3).

The dates of bSam yas are not beyond dispute in the literature. The great *chos skor* built by Khri srong lde btsan was possibly begun in the sixties of the 8th century and completed in the seventies.¹⁷ I think that the dPyal minister, sTag gi gdangs, was not involved in the invitation of Gyng shang Kong co. He possibly was not even born at that time; this could explain why he was not sent to China. Or else, in order to be already active in the first decade of the 8th century, he would have been born in the last quarter of the 7th century, and thus would have been remarkably old for someone who was in charge of the works to build bSam yas.

The transfer to rTsang

With the next generation in the dPyal family, the final step in their migration was taken, and they settled in the land that was going to be theirs for centuries to come.¹⁸

The *gdung rabs* holds that members of the dPyal consistently had important roles at the court of the *lha sras btsan po*. After the dPyal in the previous generation, sTag gi gdangs, a minister in charge of religious affairs, dPyal g.Yu sgra dpal legs served Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs in the capacity of *nang blon*, a minister traditionally in charge of internal affairs. g.Yu sgra dpal legs had an elder brother, whose identity is not revealed in the *gdung rabs*. This elder brother, too, was at the service of Sad na legs but the post he occupied in the royal hierarchy is also not indicated. He is dropped from the narrative of the *gdung rabs* following the episode in which he accompanied Sad na legs to La stod (IHo or Byang?), and one is not given to know what happened of him and his successors.¹⁹

17. See *sBa bzhed* (p.35 lines 12–14) for its foundation and (p.40 lines 11–16) for its completion. This text is in favour of the hare year 763 and the hare year 775 respectively. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.371 lines 4–5) opts for 779 for its completion. Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (n.285) for a few considerations about these dates.

18. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.4 lines 12–13) says: “rJe g.Yu sgra dpal legs de nyid kyis/ btsan po Sad na legs kyi nang blon yun ring mdzad//”; “rJe g.Yu sgra dpal legs was the interior minister (*nang blon*) of btsan po Sad na legs for a long time”.

19. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.4 lines 13–15) says: “bTsan po La stod 'gro'i phyogs pa'i phyag phyi la gTsang la byon nas gcen po La stod la thon nas blon pos kyang Chu'i sman chu khar sku mkhar btab/ phu Rwa tsa gra skor du dben tsha btab/ Tshong 'dus mgru mo'i Ne'u sing chen mo nas/ dPal rnams kyi Zhu rGya gling lha khang man chad chad ris su bcad nas bzhugs so//”; “Having accompanied the *btsan po* on his way to La stod, upon reaching gTsang, while his elder brother continued to La stod, this minister (g.Yu sgra dpal legs) founded the princely castle of Chu'i sman chu khar. On its upper side, he founded a hermitage in the area of Rwa tsa sgra. He demarcated his dominions

g.Yu sgra dpal legs settling down in rTsang led to the foundation of his residence Chu'i sman chu khar and a hermitage in the locality of Rwa tsa sgra, the earliest foundations of the dPyal in this region. They date back to the span of time between 799 and 815, the regnal years of Sad na legs. This building phase was undertaken with the consent of Sad na legs, for g.Yu sgra dpal legs was granted the area in which they stood—from Tshong 'dus mgur mo to dPal rnams (spelled so for Pa snam)—by the *lha sras btsan po*.

As one can realise, the original feud of the dPyal family of g.Yu sgra dpal legs was remarkably limited as much as its extension was concerned. The area in which the dPyal resided was expanded in the course of time, and this was where they had their two main religious seats. One was sMan lung, not originally their temple because it was inherited by dPyal Se tsa dMar ru in the late 10th century (see below); the other was Thar pa gling, built by dPyal Chos kyi bzang po in the years immediately before 1207 (*gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.15 lines 31–32). sMan lung was absorbed, due to the activity of Se tsa dMar ru, into the secular system of the area. The dominions of the dPyal were subsequently extended to include a larger expanse of land (see below).

It was during the reign of Sad na legs that, despite chronological awkwardness in the narrative of the events, the split into three branches, symbolised by the colours white, black and piebald, occurred in the dPyal family.²⁰

The split occurred in Myang smad of rTsang again during the reign of Sad na legs. There is a remarkable discrepancy in the attribution of the time in which the split in the dPyal clan took place. *Deb ther sngon po*, an earlier source than *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*, places

from Ne'u sing chen mo of Tshong 'dus mgur mo to Zhu rGya ling lha khang of dPal rnams (spelled so) and stayed [there]”.

20. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.4 lines 18–25): “sKya chu'i sman chu mkhar du sras gsum 'khrungs cing skyid cing 'byor pa'i tshe btsan La stod' 'gro phyogs nas phyag phebs pa la sku mkhar du spyang drangs nas brnyes pa dang bkur stis sna len bzang pos mnyes par mdzad pas btsan po'i gsung nas khyod la bu tsha du yod gsung/ blon po bdag la bu gsum dang bu mo gcig bdog zhus pas bu gsum 'dir bos shig gsungs/ der kho bo Cung zad dpal gyi gos dkar po gyon/ bar pa dPal legs mkhan gyi gos nag po gyon/ tha chung mKhan legs rtsegs kyi gos khra bo gyon nas lha'i drung du phyin pa na lha'i gsung nas khyod kyi bu thu bo gos dkar po la nyid kyi chos la dkar shing blo rno la yid gzhung pas dge bshes kyi rigs rgyud rgyas par 'gyur ro/ khyod kyi bu bar pa gos nag po la nye yi lus stobs che zhing gtum la rgod pas dpa' bo'i rigs rgyud rgyas par 'gyur ro/ tha chung ni gos khra bo la nye yi yul gyi cho tshig la mkhas shing srid cing 'byor la longs spyod che bas yul dpon gyi rigs brgyud rgyas par 'gyur ro zhes ngo mtshar gyi lung bstan thob bo//”; “When the time of happiness and wealth [came], three sons were born at sKya Chu'i sman chu mkhar (spelled so; a more complete version of the name Chu'i sman chu khar). Upon the king (Sad na legs) returning from La stod, he was invited to the princely castle. [The minister g.Yu sgra dpal legs] pleased him with a display of his achievements and hospitality. The *btsan po* asked: “How many children do you have?”. The minister replied: “I have three sons and one daughter”. The king said: “Summon the three sons here!”. Given that, on this occasion, the eldest, Cung zad dpal, went in the presence of the *lha* (i.e.

it in the time of Khri srong lde btsan (ibid. p.476 lines 8–10). On the contrary, the latter source records an episode of some length that documents how the split of the dPyal must be attributed to Sad na legs, for it was his brainchild. The attribution to Sad na legs as his own enterprise and the wealth of details of the latter text in comparison with the brevity of the same notion, found in the former text, favour the version of the *gdung rabs*.

From the split in the clan on—a veritable turning point in the history of the dPyal clan—*gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* concentrates exclusively on the members of the White dPyal, and the other sources dealing with the clan, while not overtly discriminating between the various subdivisions, also confine their interest to this same branch. The other two secular subdivisions of the clan, the Black and Piebald dPyal, are nowhere dealt with in the available literature. The clan history of the dPyal documented in the sources being religious, most of its members, generation after generation, are remembered because they devoted themselves to Buddhism and promoted the teachings in an array of activities.

The *gdung rabs* says that the eldest son of g.Yu sgra dpal legs, namely Cung zad bzang aka Cung zad dpal and Cung bzang dpal was the officiating *bla ma* of Sad na legs and the first dPyal transferred to Central Tibet, whose status was that of monk.²¹ His predecessors were laymen perhaps with the exception of his grandfather, sTag gi gdangs, who was a minister of religious affairs, is not explicitly indicated as someone wearing the robe.

With Cung zad dpal, members of the dPyal began to follow the practice of *gSang sngags snga 'gyur*. This is gleaned from the *gdung rabs* when it says that Cung zad dpal's elder son, dMar bzang, mastered the teachings of his father amounting to *gSang sngags*. Both dMar bzang and his younger brother Byin chen built temples,²² whose locations are

the king) wearing a white cloak; the middle, dPal legs mkhan [did so] wearing a black cloak; and the youngest, mKhan legs rtsegs (spelled so) [did so] wearing a multicoloured cloak, the words of the *lha* were: “You, eldest son, who wear a white cloak, being brilliant and knowledgeable, will expand the family's lineage of *dge bshes*-s. You, middle son, who wear a black cloak, being very powerful and so wild to inculcate fear, will expand the family's lineage of heroes; you, youngest son, who wear a multicoloured cloak, will become the minister of the local district and, endowed with great secular power, wealth and possessions, will expand the family's lineage of local chieftains”. They received such an extraordinary prophecy”.

21. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.5 line 1): “rGyal po'i bla'i mchod gnas su mdzad nas Cung bzang rog rog ces grags so//”; “[Cung zad bzang] became the *bla'i mchod gnas* of the king, and was known as Cung zad ro rog (“with a dark complexion”)”.
22. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.5 lines 3–5) has a brief statement about them: “Cung zad dpal la sras gnyis 'khrungs pa'i che ba dMar bzang dang chung ba Byin chen no/ gcen pos yab chos gSangs sngags la mthar phyin nas las kha tshang brgyud cu tshegs med du 'grub bo/ ri bo chung gi rgyab tu dgon pa dMar phub btab nas bzhugs so//”; “The two sons born to Cung zad dpal (named so) were, the elder, dMar bzang and, the younger, Byin chen. The elder brought [his knowledge of] the father's teachings on *gSang sngags* to the ultimate stage and accomplished the tasks (*las ka*) [related to them]

obscure. dMar bzang founded dMar phub (a temple with a “red pagoda roof”); Byin chen established Chos pa gling.

In a few sentences dedicated to templar foundations, found below in the text after the part dedicated to these two brothers, the *gdung rabs* mentions Nyams gro, another temple related to Byin chen.²³

These were early dPyal pa foundations, yet subsequent to their grandfather g. Yu sgra dpal legs’s establishment of the family castle and hermitage in Myang smad. It is possible but not confirmed that they too were situated in their feud in the Myang smad stretch of lands from Tshong ’dus gur mo to Pa snam.

The activity of dMar bzang and Byin chen probably fell during the reign of Ral pa can, but this is just a hypothesis, given that the next lineage holder in the family of the dPyal interacted with Glang dar ma—and one can presume that the activity of this dPyal clan member continued after Glang dar ma’s reign and assassination, which corresponds to the young age of ’Od srung and Yum brtan.

mKhan po lHa’i dpal was the dPyal who became the *sku bsrung* of Glang dar ma and rendered excellent service to him, having removed a *mthu* intended to harm the king. The account states that those who made a curse against the *lha sras btsan po* were Bon po practitioners from Zhang zhung,²⁴ often described in the Buddhist literature as the ultimate rogues (see “Sa skya

eighty times without difficulty. He founded dgon pa dMar phub (i.e. a temple with a “red pagoda roof”) at the back of a small mountain, and resided there”.

Ibid. (p.5 line 5): “mkhan po Byin chen gyi gdan sa ni/ Chos pa gling ste lCal spe’i shar na yod do”; “The *gdan sa* of mkhan po Byin chen was Chos pa gling to the east of lCal spe”.

23. *gDung rabs Gangga’i chu rgyun* (p.5 lines 17–18) reads: “De yang Lang gro ba ’Khon khus sTag ring zhes pa/ Nag mo ri seb pa’i mnga’ bdag des yon bdag byas pas Lang gro lha khang bzhengs sam yang na yab mkhan po Byin chen gyi Nyams gro ca’am Zhal gro bas Bying grong lha khang zhes grags so/”; “Concerning this issue, [as to] sTag ring contended by the Lang gro ba and the ’Khon, it was known as Lang gro lha khang because it was sponsored by the *mnga’ bdag* of the Nag mo ri seb pa, or else as Nyams gro of the father, mkhan po Byin chen; the Zhal gro ba called it Bying grong lha khang”.

24. The episode in *gDung rabs Gangga’i chu rgyun* (p.5 lines 11–16) reads as follows: “Glang dar ma dang Bon po ’gras te Zhang zhung mthu gtong pa na sku bsrungs la mkhan po lHa’i dpal res mos mong pa’i nyin mo/ rgyal po’i dbu thog tu ben pos gtso dang gnam lcags phab pa’i tshe/ gnam lcags la phyag gi rdo rje ’phangs pas gnam lcags phye mar rlag nas song te lo gsum nas rdo rje rnyed pas rdo rje thog ’thab zhes grags te ohis Thar pa na bzhugs/ de lta bu’i grub rtags dang nus mthu la rgyal po mnyes te phu gNod sbyin Gang ba bzang po nas mda’ Cung po yu ba dgongs yan chad kyi Nyang ro chu rgyud kyi sa’i bdag po dang mo dgu’i mda’ Bying gro lha khang bzhengs te/ rgya phib nyis brtsegs la gser tog la g.yu’i Khyung mgo can bzhengs su bcug/”; “Glang dar ma and the Bon po had a disagreement. A *mthu* having been sent from Zhang zhung, mkhan po lHa’i dpal was chosen as *sku bsrungs* (“body guard”) one day on a rotating basis. When a pot boiled on the king’s head and a *gnam lcags* fell on it, [lHa’i dpal] hit the *gnam lcags* with his own *rdo rje* and destroyed the *gnam*

and the mNga' ris skor gsum legacy: the case of Rin chen bzang po's flying mask" in this volume). However, if the account is reliable, the attempt by the Zhang zhung Bon po may have been politically motivated due to the hostility of people from this erstwhile kingdom to the *lha sras btsan po*-s who reigned one after the other since Srong btsan sgam po destroyed and annexed it.

However, the account does not make much sense. Nowhere else in the records there are signs of hostility of Bon po practitioners for Glang dar ma; and indeed Glang dar ma is considered by the tradition the archetypal persecutor of Buddhism! But a stray episode is not equal to a rule. If credibility is lent to the account that the Zhang zhung Bon po were hostile to Glang dar ma, the attempt by the Zhang zhung Bon po must have been politically motivated. An encouragement to their behaviour was to take advantage of the destabilised situation during Glang dar ma's reign, owing to their disliking for what any *lha sras btsan po* represented to them in view of these rulers's responsibility for the end of Zhang zhung and its annexation into sPu rgyal Bod.

lHa'i dpal enjoyed the favour of the ruler and consequently, as a reward for his service, the extension of the lands of the dPyal increased. From the time of Glang dar ma, the lands of the dPyal came to include, together with the original area from Tshong 'dus mgur mo up to Pa snam, the territory from gNod sbyin Gang pa bzang po in Myang stod up to Cung po yu ba gdongs on the eastern side. This was a conspicuous expansion. The entire region of Nyang ro was newly awarded to them.

Virtually at every generation, and even during the period that coincided with the reign of Glang dar ma and his successors, characterised, according to most Buddhist sources, by an almost total lack of flourishing of the Noble Religion in dBus gTsang, the dPyal accomplished the foundations of temples. As for religious practice, mkhan po lHa'i dpal followed in the footsteps of his dPyal predecessors and was a master of *gSang sngags snga 'gyur* (*gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.5 line 9).

Little is known about the next dPyal in the lineage. The *gdung rabs* only says that he was named dPal rtsegs (spelled so) and that he was the *mchod gnas* of dPal 'khor btsan.²⁵

lcags [which turned] into dust. After three years the *rdo rje* was found, and became known as *thog 'thab* (the one that "fought the *thog* [*lcags*]"). It was later on placed at Thar pa [gling]. The king was pleased with [lHa'i dpal']s siddhic display of might and magical power. [lHa'i dpal was awarded by the king] the lands along the course of the river Nyang ro from gNod sbyin Gang pa bzang po on the upper side up to Cung po yu ba gdongs on the lower side. He built Bying po lha khang with two superimposed *rgya skyibs* in the [area on] the lower side [controlled by] the nine male and female owners. He installed [there] golden roofs with turquoise Garuda heads that he had them made".

25. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.5 lines 20–21): "mKhan po lHa'i dpal la sras dPal brtsegs 'khrungs pa ni yab chos la mkhas shing sgrub pa la brtson pas yab gyi gdan sa zin pa/ lha cig dPal 'khor btsan gyi mchod nas kyang mdzad do/"; "The son born to mkhan po lHa'i dpal was dPal rtsegs

Although brief, this is a significant contribution of *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*. Buddhist practice is attributed to dPal 'khor btsan on a limited scale. He was a ruler whose records do not normally associated him with activities in favour of the Noble Religion.

Another stray passage in the brief outline of templar foundation I have already mentioned describes the construction of Nyang ro'i lha khang, seventy years before the temple of rGyan gong,²⁶ founded by Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug in the year of the bird 997 (*Myang chos 'byung* p.156 lines 3–9). By extrapolation, Nyang ro'i lha khang was established either around 897 during the reign of dPal 'khor btsan (d. 910) or in the period (i.e. around 928) when rTsang, being lost to him, was successively ruled by his son Khri bKra shis brtsegs pa dpal or one of his grandsons, the sMad kyi lde gsum.

This shows that the issue of the foundation time of Nyang ro'i lha khang is unresolved, and the *gdung rabs* does not offer grounds to opt for one of the two historical placements based on the account found in this text. It may have been the opus of dPal brtsegs, the *mchod gnas* of dPal 'khor btsan, or his son Ratna shri, but it is symptomatic that none of the two is credited with its foundation, and Nyang ro'i lha khang goes unaccounted for in the *gdung rabs*.

Traces of the ancient secular organisation in Nyang ro during the same period are preserved in *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* which does not, however, allow one to discriminate whether they refer to around the end of the 9th century, years in which the power of the weakened and illegitimate *lha sras btsan po* was eroded by the *kheng log-s* (“rebellions of the subjects”); or some thirty years after the imperial period was over, and the rule of the *lha sras btsan po* was substituted by a tribal order that was taking shape.

Hence it is unclear whether Nag mo ri seb pa, patron of Nyang ro'i lha khang, supported by dPal 'khor btsan or the “nine male and female owners” of the *gdung rabs*, who had control of the lands from gNod sbyin Gang bzang to Cung yu ba gdong, had jurisdiction over the temple. It is also unclear whether the “nine male and female owners” were representatives of the imperial order otherwise of the new one.²⁷

(spelled so). Having striven hard to master the teachings of his father and to make spiritual attainments, he held the *gdan sa* of his father. He was the *mchod gnas* of lha gcig dPal 'khor btsan”.

26. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.5 lines 16–17): “Nyang ro'i lha khang dang 'bangs kyi bzhengs pa'i lha khang lha snga shos 'di kho na zhes so/ rGyan gong las kyang lo brgya'am bdun cu tsam gyi snga bzhengs/”; “Nyang ro'i lha khang having been built with the help of the subjects, this definitely was the earliest of the five [temples built in the region]. It was about one hundred or seventy years earlier than rGyan gong”.

27. These lands situated in Nyang stod were not under the exclusive control of the dPyal, for other clans exercised their authority in this territory. The 'Bre and Khyung po could claim their right over some of them since a much earlier time than the reign of Glang dar ma, for they were at the head of a complex hierarchy of local people (*gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* f.4b lines 5–6). Moreover, members of the mGos clan had migrated to this stretch of lands during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan (ibid. f.3a line 6–f.3b line 1 and f.3b line 3–f.4a line 6), followed by those of rGya clan during the reign of Ral pa can, rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba being responsible for the foundation of gNas rnying.

The *gdung rabs*, in reference to Ratna shri, the next member of the dPyal it deals with, tells that he went in support of the local minister sKyid bzher sman who was troubled by what the text defines as the “seven *kheng log*” (see below n.30). This probably is how the rTsang *kheng log* occurred in the land of Nyang ro.

The name of Ratna shri is recorded in the section of *Myang chos 'byung* (p.137 line 9) dedicated to sMan lung, the main temple of the dPyal obtained by them in the late 10th century, but this text does not add anything about him. *Myang chos 'byung* then mentions his sons and the successive members in the family. Elsewhere the same text solves this deficiency in minimal part by providing a short notice about him. dPyal Ratna shri must have been active around the early 10th century, for he is said to have interacted with sNubs/gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes,²⁸ who witnessed the last *kheng log* in 910 (see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* Addendum One p.545–547). This notice confirms that the dPyal family lived in Myang smad and gravitated around the area of sMan lung during the dark period of the teachings in dBus gTsang between the two diffusions (*bstan pa me ro*).

Records of religious foundations in the central Tibet during the dark period normally considered as devoid of temple building activity by sources which provide stereotyped information are rare. Stray accounts in sources which contain original material show that this simplification does not always correspond to the true unfolding of events. There were exceptions to the widespread absence of Buddhist practice in these regions.

Myang chos 'byung, which often has rare data, says that Ratna shri founded the temple rGya gling near where Nor bu khyung rtse, one of the minor residences of the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse, was later built.²⁹ The attribution of the foundation of rGya gling to Ratna shri is confirmed in rather confused terms by *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*.³⁰ The passage that

The mGos and rGya clans inherited the secular organisation of the local people previously headed by the 'Bre and the Khyung po.

28. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.111 lines 18–20): “‘Dus chung gi lung pa'i mda' na dPyal mkhan po Ra ta na shri yab mes kyi chos rnam mkhyen/ sNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes rin po chei zhab pad bsten//”; “In the area of lower 'Dus chung, [bSam gling rin po che] learned the ancestral teachings of dPyal mkhan po Ra ta na shri (spelled so) who attended to the lotus feet of sNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes”.
29. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.111 line 21–p.112 line 2) reads: “sNa nam yul zhab su rGya gling (p.112) lha khang khyad par can bzhengs pa de Nor Khyung gi stod kyi rGya gling 'di ga yin no//”; “[Ratna shri] built the extraordinary rGya gling (p.112) lha khang at the foot of the locality of the sNa nam [people]. This is the rGya gling on the upper side of Nor [bu] khyung [rtse]”.
30. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.5 lines 26–30) “Blon po sKyid bzher sman Zho chu mKhar mo che na bzhugs pa'i dus su lta ngan sna bdun dus gcig pa byung ste 'jigs nas mkhan po la thugs dam zhus shing dgongs pa zhags bdun zhus pas Nyang ror 'bangs kyi kheng log bdun du log ste jo bo Ratna byon pas 'tshal phyag rgya dril bu bkrol bas 'tshal/ Ratna'i 'phreng ba gdabs pas 'tshal/ Swrāhwa Hum Phat bgrangs pas 'tshal ces pa'i grags pa dang ldan te de nas thugs dam Zhu rGya gling lha khang phug gnyis brtsegs bya skyibs gong ma 'tshar bas 'og ma non/ drwa ba dang tog dang bcas pa bzhengs so//”; “When blon po sKyid bzher sman resided at Zho chu mKhar mo che, he had seven different bad omens. Being worried, he thought to ask the *mkhan po* (Ratna shri) for a

deals with its foundation inside the caves at this locality is a convoluted way to say that he first finished to work out the lower cave and then the upper one. The *gdung rabs* at least offers evidence, missing in *Myang chos 'byung*, that rGya gling was conceived as a cave temple.

It is not clear when the unsettled times of the *kheng log* befell in Nyang ro. Trying to assess the seven *kheng log* of Nyang ro on the basis of the rTsang *kheng log* mentioned in the sources dealing with the rebellions of the subjects may prove to be a useless exercise because there is no evidence that the Nyang ro *kheng log*-s were part of any larger revolt. The little one can say is that the subjects were hostile to the local minister and for seven times they rebelled against him. Ratna shri took a conservative stance and supported sKyid bzher sman against them.

The foundation of rGya gling must have occurred when power was slipping away from the hands of the order represented by the *lha sras btsan po* and thus it probably took place when dPal 'khor btsan was weakened or already dead, and the old imperial power had been fragmented into principalities.

More mysterious is the attribution of the making of Nyang ro'i lha khang. It is tempting to think that it was founded by Ratna shri on the basis of an overall strategy which led him to build a temple each in the two areas of the dPyal, rGya gling in the older stretch of land from Tshong 'dus mgur mo to Pa snam, and the other in Nyang ro. This possibility is supported by evidence not better than the hypothesis that would attribute Nyang ro'i lha khang to dPal brtsegs.

Ratna shri, the son of dPal brtsegs, mastered the teachings of his father (*gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.5 lines 23–24). He married with a woman whom he cured from a disease, and had five children from her, who did not leave special signs of their activity.³¹

meditation. While he did so (i.e. he meditated) during seven days, the Nyang ro subjects staged seven *kheng log*. Jo bo Ratna came. He offered prostrations and played his rGya bell. He offered prostrations surrounded by a circle of *raksha*-s. He prostrated and uttered: “Swrāhwa Hum Phat”. He then meditated. The upper room of the two superimposed caves of Zhu rGya ling lha khang being under construction, he occupied the lower one. He made lattice works and roofs”.

31. *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.5 lines 30–35) adds: “Je je bza' Grub dpal ldan zhes pa bud med bzang sdug ngo mtshar can/ chos la yid gzhung pa bu med kyi skyon brgyad spangs pa gcig yod pa de nad kyi zin pas/ jo bo gdan drangs ste zhag bdun du byin rlabs zhus pas sna phug nas sma gdon gyi gzugs lcong thon nas nad gcigchar du gson pa'ang gus par gyur nas btsun mdo phul bas khab tu bzhes nas sras mched lnga 'khrungs ste ji skad du/ bsod nams mthu ldan dge slong Yon tan gsal/ Yon tan shes rab sdom brtson yon tan phyug/ Yon tan legs pa/ Yon tan 'phags dbang phyug/ yon tan mnga' bdag mched lnga phyag 'tshal lo/”;
- “Je je bza' Grub dpal ldan, a good woman affected by miserable sufferings, was [remarkably] responsive to the teachings. She had to be freed from the eight stains. Being afflicted by the disease, the *jo bo* (i.e. dPyal Ratna shri) was invited and gave blessings to her for seven days. The noxious demon left from the nostril (*sna phug*) in the form of a tadpole. The disease was eliminated in [the form of] water. Having grown faith in him, [her family] gave her to [Ratna shri] as bride. Five sons were born from the marriage: dge slong Yon tan gsal, endowed with merit and power; Yon tan shes rab, striving for his vow and rich in qualities; Yon tan legs pa; Yon tan 'phags dbang phyug and Yon tan mnga' bdag. I pay homage to the five brothers, lords of qualities”.

Yon tan 'phags dbang phyug, the next dPyal pa, was the father of a major personality in the history of the dPyal. This was Se tsa dMar ru who steered the religious views and practice of his clan towards a line of conduit that characterised them ever since. Nothing else is known about Yon tan 'phags dbang phyug except that he mastered the tradition of his father, the recurring sign in the *gdung rabs* that indicates indebtedness of the dPyal to *sNgags rnying ma* since their inception.

The dPyal pa during *bstan pa phyi dar*

'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan,³² called Se tsa dMar ru because he wore a red robe (*gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.6 line 16),³³ went in his young age to sMan lung to study under its holder, the obscure master Zhang Cog ru Byang chub 'byung gnas, a member of the Cog ro from Myang. *Myang chos 'byung* explains the presence of this clan in the area citing the tripartite division—dBus, Shangs and Myang—of the territories inhabited by the Cog ro of Central Tibet.³⁴

This indicates that sMan lung was not the original place of the dPyal family. How long was sMan lung established before Se tsa dMar ru came to study there remains a major unsolved historical issue. The identity and significance of the Zhang Cog ro people who held it in succession beforehand is another major conundrum in the history of sMan lung. That sMan lung predated the 10th century, to which the first signs indicating its existence go back, is confirmed by a passage in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.143 line 21–p.144 line 12) which says that “innumerable” masters were active at this holy place during *bstan pa snga dar*—an exaggeration—and *phyi dar*.

32. He had a brother, namely bSod nams 'dol po according to *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*, but known as 'Od gsal po to *Myang chos 'byung* (p.137 lines 10–11). The former text (ibid. p.7 lines 22–23) says about him: “Yab chos la mkhas shing yab mes gdan sa Chos gling bzung nas rgyas par mdzad//”; “His (i.e. Se rtsa's) brother bSod nams 'dol po was a master of his forefathers' religious system and, being the holder of the ancestral *gdan sa* Chos pa gling, he expanded it”.

Chos pa gling was the temple established by the ancestor Byin chen (see *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.5 line 5 and above in this essay n.22).

33. The name of Se tsa 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan, given to him by Zhang Chog ro Byang chub 'byung gnas, is written Ser rtsa 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.7 line 7).

34. *Myang chos 'byung* (ibid. p.112 lines 12–14) enumerates: “sKa Cog Zhang gsum gyi nang tshan Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan gyi dgon gnas la Cog ro gsum ste dBus kyi Cog ro/ Shangs kyi Cog ro/ Myang gi Cog ro'o//”; “As for the monasteries and holy places associated with Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan—one of [the divisions known as] Ka, Cog [and] Zhang, altogether three—there are Cog ro in three [areas], namely the Cog ro of dBus, the Cog ro of Shangs and the Cog ro of Myang”.

Under Zhang Cog ru Byang chub 'byung gnas, Se tsa became a lineage holder of teachings belonging to *sNgags rnying ma*—namely *bKa' lung ru tshugs su 'chad pa* (“teachings in the form of oral instructions (*bka' lung*)” and *Yongs grags [rtogs chos] su 'chad pa* (“teachings on experiential realisations that are imparted openly”). These teachings had a long history that went back in time to the Sad mi bdun. They stemmed from Khu Phyug 'od and Khyung po dByig gi 'od, two disciples of rMa Rin chen mchog, and each of them transmitted them separately to a long line of practitioners according to the *bKa' ma* system.³⁵

In particular Se tsa became a lineage holder of the *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu* (the “nine practices of mChims phu”),³⁶ established by dBas rGyal ba'i ye shes and his three associates—Byang chub 'byung gnas, Che mchog Byang chub snubs and Pha'am Rin chen byang

35. Khu Phyug 'od and Khyung po dByig gi 'od advocated a change in the way the *gSang sNgags* teachings should be transmitted. They reformed the system of rMa and sNyags, more text-oriented, while their's leaned towards a guru-disciple relationship, which led to the formation of a *bKa' ma* approach. They stressed the importance of direct transmission and of several teachings typical of the *gSang sNgags rnying ma* system, considered to be the foundations of their transmission, with particular importance devoted to those which became the *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu*.

In more detail, Khu Phyug 'od was responsible for the introduction of the direct transmission from teacher to disciple (defined by mkhas pa lDe'u as “*bka' lung*” equal to “*bka' ma*”, and thus the definition “*bka' lung ru tshugs su 'chad/bshad pa*” found in his *chos 'byung*) of the *gSang sNgags rnying ma* teachings stemming from the translations of rMa and sNyags. This is proved by his statement “The main *bla ma* of the *gSang sngags* teachings is the one from an uninterrupted lineage of direct transmission”.

Khyung po dByig gi 'od was responsible for the adoption of several *gSang sNgags rnying ma* teachings defined in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* as “*yongs grags [rtogs chos] su 'chad/bshad pa*”. They focused on the achievement of experiential realisations, which became associated, a few generations thereafter in the lineage, with dBas rGyal ba'i ye shes and his colleagues as the *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu*, for they undertook their practice at this hermitage. As for the activity of dBas rGyal ba'i ye shes in Central Tibet, apart from mChims phu (see *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*) he was, not surprisingly, active at bSam yas (see P.T.849).

36. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.6 lines 12–26): “mKhan po 'Phags pa dbang phyug gi sras Ser rtsa and 'Dol po'o/ gcen pos sMan lung na Zhang Cog gru Byang chub 'byung gnas bzhugs pa'i spyang sngar slob gnyer la byon pa na Zhang gi mtshan 'Byung gnas rgyal mthan zhes mtshan gsol thog mar yi ge dang rtsis dang gSang ba snying po/ dGongs 'dus/ mChims phu'i phyag bzhes/ sKyes pa'i rabs la sogs pa slob pa na shes rab che ba'i tshad du byung ste/ Zhang gi zhal nas/ slob gnyer 'grus shing blo gros phun tshogs pas/ mes chen Ratna'i gdungs sob nges par 'gyur/ de tshe nged ba'i rtsar gos dmar po byon/ zhugs pas gSer rtsa dmar ru zhes grags so/ Lang gro dKon mchog 'byung gnas dang lhan cig Zhang gi spyang sngar slob gnyer la byon/ gSang sngags snga 'gyur gyi rgyud 'grel dang bsgrub thabs las byang bcas pa du ma dang khyad par du yang dag pa'i thugs kyi bsgrub pa gtso bor byed pa/ mChims bu'i phyag bshes dang bcas pa dgu la sogs pa lung tsam zhig thob cing bslobs pa mthar ma phyin pa na bla ma sku gshegs pa'i ltas byung te de'i tshe slob dpon Za ri dang Lang gro dKon mchog la sogs pas/ zhal bkos zhus pa na Zhang gi zhal nas/ dPyal ban 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan 'di/ nga dang dgongs pa mnyam pa la/ grub thob brgyud pa ma 'byung bas/ nga'i gdan sa khod

chub—at 'Chims phu some generations before Se tsa dMar ru in the same line. They ultimately went back to rMa Rin chen mchog and his disciples, and thus in early *bstan pa snga dar*. The *mChims phu'i phyag bzhes dgu* are said in *Myang chos 'byung* to be composed by the *rGyud drug*, the *Le lag bcu gnyis* and the *Phra mo nyi zhu rtsa bzhi*. mKhas pa lDe'u (see n.210) does not call them the *mChims phu'i phyag bzhes dgu*, but provides a list of teachings somewhat similar to *Myang chos 'byung* and records the historical reason for associating them with 'Chims phu.

I summarise here the *iter* that led Se tsa dMar ru to become their lineage holder. *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* states that the line of masters of *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu* diffused in dBus gTsang included Cog ro Zhang Byang chub 'byung gnas and Za ri (also spelled Za rid and Za rigs) Ye shes 'phags pa, two of the the rNying ma teachers of Se tsa.³⁷ They were

la gtod/ zhes lung bstan nas gshegs pa'i rjes su de'i slob ma tshogs nas Za rigs 'Phags pa ye shes kyi drung du rGyud drug la lHag bcu gnyis/ Phra mo nyis shu rtsa gnyis/ mChims bu'i phyag bzhes dgu la sogs pa mkhas par slab ba'o/ de nas Pa dro Sengs ge'i rdzong du skyed rim sgom la lo gcig mdzad nas tshur byon te/ dbyar Thang se ba'i seb du tshogs kyi mchod pa brya rtsa bryad phul nas Se phug gi 'Brum nag shug seb du rdzogs rim mi rtog pa'i ting nge 'dzin la dus drug tu mnyam par 'jog pa rang gi rtog pa mchog du gyur/"; "mKhan po 'Phags pa dbang phyug's sons were Ser rtsa and 'Dol po. The elder went to study under Zhang Cog gru Byang chub 'byung gnas, a resident of sMan lung. Zhang gave him the name of 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan. As for his studies, he came to have a great amount of knowledge [that came from] such as, after first learning to write and make calculations, *gSang ba snying po*, *dGongs 'dus*, *mChims phu'i phyag bzhes* and *sKyes pa'i rabs* (Jataka). Zhang said: "Your perseverance and brilliance in the studies are excellent. You will truly become the successor in the lineage of the great ancestor Ratna. Now, you must wear a red gown in my presence". Having adopted it, he became known as gSer (spelled so) rtsa dMar ru. He went to study under Lang gro dKon mchog 'byung gnas and Zhang at the same time. He [received] many *rGyud 'grel* of *gSang sngags snga 'gyur* and *las byang* ("sadhana manuals") for meditation but, in particular, he concentrated on meditation. He received *lung-s* such as *mChims bu'i* (spelled so) *phyag bzhes dgu*. As for the studies he could not complete, when omens occurred that [the master] would die, slob dpon Za ri and Lang gro dKon mchog 'byung gnas were appointed [as teachers]. Upon requesting [Se tsa] to be appointed [as abbot], Zhang said: "dPyal ban 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan and I have the same way of thinking. No one will exist in the lineage of *grub thob-s* [comparable to him]. I give my *gdan sa* to him". So he ordered. After he died, he learned in masterly manner [teachings] such the *lHag bcu gnyis* and the *Phra mo nyis shu rtsa gnyis* pertaining to the *rGyud drug* and the *mChims bu'i* (spelled so) *phyag bzhes dgu* under Za rigs (spelled so) 'Phags pa ye shes. Having then thought to meditate, he meditated for many years on *mChims bu'i phyag bzhes dgu* at mKha' 'gro che lu ma'i phug. He then meditated for one year on *sKyed* (spelled so) *rim* at Pa dro Sengs (spelled so) ge'i rdzong and then went back. In summer, he offered 108 *tshogs mchod* in the midst of the Thang se ba. At 'Brum nag shug seb of Se phug the spontaneous realisations of staying still in the experiences of non-conceptual meditation excellently occurred [to him] six times".

37. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.322 lines 5–9): "bKa' lung ru tshugs su 'chad pa ni/ 'gyur de tsho brnyes pa'i lo tsā ba ni/ rMa Rin chen mchog/ sNyags Dznya na ku ma ra'o/ sNyags de la dGra gsum dar te/ dGra gsum 'Dul ba'i slob ma blo rnon gsum 'Dzeng u pa de gSal rab Rin chen/ Thang bzang dPal gyi rdo rje/ Tshur nag Ye shes dpal lo/"; "As for the *bKa' lung ru tshugs su 'chad pa* ("teachings

active a few generations in the lineage after dBas rGyal ba'i ye shes. The latter and his three associates, who had introduced the teachings known as the *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu* at

that took the form of direct instructions (*bka' lung*"), the *lo tsa ba*-s who mastered those translations were rMa Rin chen mchog and sNyags Dznya na ku ma ra. sNyags diffused them to the dGra gsum. The three bright disciples of the dGra gsum were 'Dzeng u pa de gSal rab Rin chen, Thang bzang dPal gyi rdo rje and Tshur nag Ye shes dpal".

mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung (p.322 line 13–p.324 line 2) continues: "rMa la slob ma bzhi ste/ Kam Shakya/ Gye re mChog skye/ lCe sa Zla 'bar/ Nam smad Zla ba rdo rje'o/.

De rnams kyi slob ma Khu Phyug 'od dang/ Khyung po dByig gi 'od do/

De gnyis kyi rGya gar yul du phyin nas/ rMa sNyags gnyis dang bstun pas ha cang ma mthun te/ Khu'i zhal nas gSang sngags kyi chos ni bka' brgyud ma chad pa'i bla ma gtso bo yin zer nas/ bDud rtsi Phur pa/ Padma dbang chen/ 'Jam dpal yang dag zhi khro rnams bka' lung ru tshugs su bshad do/

Khyung po'i zhal nas spyi'i gzhung gtso ste/ slob ma dgongs pa can dang (p.323) rang don can mang zer nas/ sNying Zhag gnyis/ Zla gsang mnyam sbyor gnyis/ Yang Phur sbrags ma dang Lung gi rgyal po sems skyed gnyis/ rGyud drug le lag dang bdun/ Phra mo so gcig/ Lung phran bdun bcu rtsa gnyis/ sGrub pa sde drug chos la Yongs grags su bshad do/

De dag gi slob ma ni Khu Phyug 'od kyi sras/ Khu lung dPal dbyong dang lCog ro rGyal bu dam pa dang/ de gnyis kyi slob ma Zhang rGyal ba'i yon tan no/ rMa'i slob ma Gye re mChog skye/ de'i slob ma Tsug ru Rin chen gzhon nu/ de'i slob ma mGo bam Byang chub tshul khirms bya ba sGyu 'phrul khyad par du 'phags pa gcig dang/ lCog ro rGyal ba'i blo gros gnyis phar slob tshur slob mdzad/ mGo bam gyi rTogs rje 'Jam dpal dang Lan gsum gZhon nu la bshad/ Lan gsum gyis gZhon nu gshin rje dang/ Ngom dGe legs byang chub la bshad/ brjed byang thor bu yang der byung/ rTogs rjes/ rjes su Byang chub 'byung gnas dang/ Che mchog Byang chub snubs dang/ Pha'am Rin chen byang chub dang/ sBas rgyal rGyal ba'i ye shes dang bzhi la bshad/ gsum gyis 'Ching bur bsgoms te ka 'Ching bu ma'i lugs so/ rjes su Rong du byon te/ sras Blo gros rgya mtsho slob ma Byang chub grags pa la bshad/ brjed byang dar bar gyur to/ lCog ro Zhang rGyal ba'i yon tan 'Ching bur sgrub pa mdzad pas/ Myang ro Rlung gi smad na 'Gar gyis spyen drangs nas/ Se snya Yon tan bzang po la bshad/ des Zhang Byang chub 'byung gnas dang/ Za rid Ye shes 'phags pa dang/ lCe Yon tan 'phgs pa gsum la bshad/ Za rid kyi sNubs Glang chen bya snying dang/ dBal Se tsa rMa ru la sogs pa la bshad/ (p.324) sNubs kyi dMar ma sgom chen Char tshul dang/ Zur Shes rab 'byung gnas dang/ lCe bZod bzang la sogs pa la bshad nas gTsang du dar bar byas so//"; "rMa had four disciples: Kam Shakya, Gye re mChog skye, lCe sa Zla 'bar and Nam smad Zla ba rdo rje.

Their disciples were Khu Phyug 'od and Khyung po dByig gi 'od.

These two went to the land of rGya gar. Although they conformed to [the precepts of] both rMa and sNyags, they did not agree [with them] too much. Khu [phyug] having said: "The main *bla ma* of the *gSang sngags* teachings is the one from an uninterrupted lineage of direct transmission", *bDud rtsi Phur pa*, *Padma dbang chen* and 'Jam dpal yang dag zhi khro were imparted in the form of direct instructions (*bKa' lung ru tshugs su bshad*).

Since Khyung po said: "Generally speaking, the most important doctrines are many for a disciple who is thoughtful [of others] (p.323) and mindful of himself", both *sNying* and *Zhag*; both *Zla gsang* and *mNyam sbyor*; both *Yang phur sbrags ma* and *Sems bskyed*, the king of the teachings; the *rGyud drug* [and] the *Le lag* ("appendix"), altogether seven; the *Phra mo so gcig*; the *Lung phran bdun bcu*

'Chims phu, were contemporaries of Zhang rGyal ba'i yon tan.³⁸ He was the one responsible for bringing the same system from 'Chims phu to Nyang ro, the feud of the dPyal. It is not mentioned in the sources how the *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu* were inducted into the lineage of the dPyal.

gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun stresses that Se tsa could not conclude his studies of *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu* under Zhang Cog ro Byang chub 'byung gnas because his teacher died in the meantime. He completed them under the masters of the same tradition Za ri Ye shes 'phags pa and dPyal Lang gro dKon mchog rgyal mtshan (ibid. p.6 lines 18–20).

This indicates that the “nine practices of mChims phu” had already been accepted by the dPyal one generation before Se tsa dMar ru. One wonders whether Lang gro dKon mchog rgyal mtshan was a disciple of Zhang rGyal ba'i yon tan,³⁹ omitted in the outline of the transmission

rtsa gnyis and the *sGrub pa sde drug* are the *Yongs grags [rtogs chos] su bshad [pa]* (“[teachings of experiential realisation] openly imparted”).

Their disciples were Khu lung dPal dbyong (spelled so for dbyangs), the son of Khu Phyug 'od, and lCog (spelled so) ro rGyal bu dam pa. The disciple of the latter two was Zhang rGyal ba'i yon tan.

Gye re mChog skye was the disciple of rMa. The former's disciple was Tsug ru Rin chen gzhon nu. The latter's disciples were both mGo bam Byang chub tshul khirms, who was an outstanding [master] of *sGyu 'phrul [drwa ba]*, and lCog (spelled so) ro rGyal ba'i blo gros. They [also] were the disciples of one another. mGo bam gave instructions to rTogs rje 'Jam dpal and Lan gsum gZhon nu. Lan gsum gave instructions to gZhon nu gshin rje and Ngom dGe legs byang chub. Miscellaneous notes were written down at that time. rTogs rje later gave instructions to Byang chub 'byung gnas, Che mchog Byang chub snubs (spelled so), Pha'am Rin chen byang chub and sBas rgyal rGyal ba'i ye shes, altogether four. Three of them meditated at 'Ching bu (spelled so). Thus, this was the system of 'Ching bu. They subsequently went to Rong. They gave instructions to the son, Blo gros rgya mtsho, and the disciple, Byang chub grags pa. The miscellaneous notes were disseminated.

lCog (spelled so) ro Zhang rGyal ba'i yon tan, having meditated at 'Ching bu, was invited to Myang ro Rlung gi smad by 'Gar. He gave instructions to Se snya (sic for Se tsa?) Yon tan bzang po. The latter gave instructions to Zhang Byang chub 'byung gnas, Za rid (spelled so) Ye shes 'phags pa and lCe Yon tan 'phags pa, altogether three. Za rid gave instructions to sNubs Glang chen bya snying and dBal (sic for dPyal) Se tsa rMa (spelled so) ru. (p.324) sNubs gave instructions to [individuals] such as dMar ma sgom chen Char tshul, Zur Shes rab 'byung gnas and lCe bZod bzang. [These teachings] became diffused in gTsang”.

There is a brief outline of the same lineage as mkhas pa lDe'u's in *Padma dkar po'i chos 'byung* which defines the transmission the one of *sGyu 'phrul*.

38. The Rong where Zhang Byang chub 'byung gnas, Za ri Ye shes 'phags pa and lCe Yon tan 'phags pa stayed after their permanence at 'Chims phu, is unidentified. It remains unclear to which Rong the passage of *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* refers.
39. Lang gro was the dPyal temple which may have been founded during the life of Byin chen (see above p.470 and n.23).

of *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*. Hypothetically, he may have been responsible for bringing these teachings in his family's fold.⁴⁰

Zhang Cog ru Byang chub 'byung gnas's acceptance of Se tsa dMar ru as his disciple led to significant consequences, given the old age of the master and the importance of the dPyal in the area where sMan lung stod. With the appointment of Se tsa dMar ru as his successor, a change in the control of sMan lung occurred and the temple became the place of the dPyal family.⁴¹

The transition from the old to the new was ferried by Se tsa dMar ru, and a change in the religious tradition of the monastery concurred to the passage of ownership.

Se tsa was among the last to receive *sNgags rnying ma* in dBus gTsang and among the first in the two regions to receive *sNgags gsar ma*, since he became a proponent of the *sNgags gsar ma* teachings during an early phase of *bstan pa phyi dar* after being trained in the *Old Tantra* under his Zhang master. Equal practice of the Old Tantra, including the *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu*, and *New Tantra* would remain a constant feature of the sMan lung dPyal for quite sometime.

The circumstances surrounding Se tsa dMar ru's adoption of *bstan pa phyi dar* teachings is the next great event in the history of the dPyal. This epochal novelty in the tradition of the clan forged the activities of its members throughout the successive centuries in getting the religious traditions for which they are reputed.

A final consideration concerns this segment of the dPyal people, which pertains to the treatment devoted in *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* to their members until the end of the 10th century or immediately thereafter. No more apt title than that of this text—*chu rgyun* is the perpetual flow of a river—could paraphrase the exemplary genealogical continuity in the lineage. The early history of the dPyal may have been styled in Buddhist legendary garb—e.g. Ri bo rtse lnga—but has a virtue hardly found in other “genealogies of the ancestors”:

40. The invitation of Zhang rGyal ba'i yon tan to Nyang ro by a member of the 'Gar notwithstanding, the presence of the dPyal in this area since the early 9th century is an indirect confirmation that they were potential recipients of the *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu*. Nyang ral says that, during the 10th century, this tradition was brought to Nyang ro, where the dPyal had settled in the early 9th century, which corroborates the evidence that Se tsa dMar ru was its lineage holder.

41. A passage in *gDung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.6 lines 20–23) and a similar one in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.137 line 21–p.138 line 2) is enlightening in this respect: “Zhal bkos zhus pa na Zhang gi zhal nas/ dPyal ban 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan 'di/ nga dang dgongs pa mnyam pa la/ grub thob brgyud pa ma 'byung bas/ nga'i gdan sa khod la gtod/ zhes lung bstan nas gshegs pa 'i rjes su de'i slob ma tshogs nas Za rigs 'Phags pa ye shes kyi drung du rGyud drug la lHag bcu gnyis/ Phra mo nyis shu rtsa gnyis/ mChims bu'i phyag bzhes dgu la sogs pa mkhas par slab ba'o/”; “Upon requesting [Se tsa] to be appointed [as abbot], Zhang [Cog ro Byang chub 'byung gnas] said: “The dPyal monk, [Se tsa] 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan, has my same spiritual horizon. Many lineages of *grub thob-s* will exist. I give my *gdan sa* to him”. So he ordered. After the death [of Zhang], [Se tsa] learned the *rGyud drug*, the *Le lhag bcu gnyis* and the *Phra mo nyi zhu rtsa gnyis*, which make the *mChims phu'i phyag bzhes dgu*, in a masterly way from Za rigs (spelled so) 'Phags pa ye shes”.

the one of being complete. No generation in the genealogy of the early dPyal seems to be missing, especially in the period of *bstan pa me ro* [*bslang*s] where most historical text have substantial lacunas.

SE TSA dMAR RU AND SMRI TI

The rise in the fortunes of the dPyal clan coincided with the activity of Se tsa dMar ru. The dPyal surged to some preeminence at the beginning of *bstan pa phyi dar*, when a fresh religious and secular order was embryonically shaping up in Tibet.

If one looks at the ways *bstan pa phyi dar* was established in dBus gTsang, its adoption can be reduced to two main typologies. Either old and new temples in their own dominions were run by members of the nobility if they had become religious practitioners of the new system or temples were assigned by their owners to masters trained in the new doctrines but not necessarily related to their ethnicity.

Se tsa dMar ru received a temple according to the second of the two patterns, but on entirely different grounds. It was granted to him not because he had become a proponent of the new religious system but on account of his still being a practitioner of the old one.

A change in the control of sMan lung occurred when his Zhang teacher appointed Se tsa dMar ru as his successor. sMan lung became the place of the dPyal family. The transition from the old to the new was ferried by Se tsa, and a change in the religious tradition of the monastery followed the passage of ownership.⁴² Se tsa, trained in the Old Tantra under his Zhang master, became a proponent of the sNgags gsar ma teachings he also contributed to introduce in Tibet, which led to the formulation of *bstan pa phyi dar*.⁴³

Se tsa did not propagate the gSang sNgags rnying ma teachings, transmitted by means of bKa' ma, outside his family. Equal practice of the Old and New Tantra would remain a constant feature of the sMan lung dPyal for quite sometime.⁴⁴

42. The takeover of sMan lung by Se tsa dMar ru was a late episode of *bstan pa me ro* [*bslang*s], and thus still linked to the activities undertaken under the influence of *sNgags rnying ma* rather than a first case of tenure of a temple in the spirit of *sNgags gsar ma*. The context of the passage of sMan lung from Zhang Cog ru Byang chub 'byung gnas to Se tsa dMar ru shows that the temple changed hands before the dPyal pa master embraced the New *Tantra* (see the next note).

43. Se tsa's adoption of *sNgags gsar ma* happened after Zhang Cog ro Byang chub 'byung gnas appointed him to be his successor on the throne of sMan lung (see above n.36).

44. The *gSang sNgags rnying ma* lineage documents concretely the existence of a continuity in the transmission of the old translations that, from the late period of *bstan pa snga dar*, cruised through *bstan pa me ro* [*bslang*s] to reach *bstan pa phyi dar* and continued in the dPyal family of sMan lung. That of the dPyal pa was an exception to the conditions prevailing in dBus gTsang, characterised by a widespread absence of the Noble Teachings.

Se tsa owes his place in the literary records to the fact that he ransomed the great Indian master, sMri ti Dznyana kirti, from his condition of slave shepherd. He opted to free him with gentle means but could have used fierce ones.⁴⁵ I cannot go here into details about this important piece of *bstan pa phyi dar* history which I will do on another occasion, but the fact that Se tsa was able to trace out sMri ti because he recognised signs of his presence at rTa nag shows that he was familiar with the personality of the Indian teacher. sMri ti had not yet met in Tibet any disciple when he was found by Se tsa, which shows that the dPyal master had known him from before. This is confirmed by *Myang chos 'byung* which say that Se tsa dMar ru had studied with sMri ti in India (ibid. p.41 lines 2–4).⁴⁶

45. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.7 lines 3–9): “De nas re shig gcig nas/ rig pa'i gnas lnga la mkhas pa'i pandi ta chen po sMri ti Dznya na kirti zhes pa rGya gar nas lo tsa ba Phra la ring ba bya na gdan drangs pa lo tsa ba lam du gros nas pandi ta 'khyams pa dang sngon la chung ngu zhig gi rgyus/ Shangs lam rTa nag gang rung gi yul dpon phyug po zhig gis gral du bzung nas gshegs su mi gnang ba la dPyal ban chen nas so/ sprin nag bsdus pas nam mkha'i gnang ba nyams/ glog 'phreng drag pos 'brug sgra mi rnams rgyal/ rdo yi ser bas gnam lcags snying po can/ khab pas yud tsam gcig la yul kun bcom/ shes pa de lta bu'i dPyal gyi mthu che bas dgra'i grags pa bcom ste yul dpon srog dang bral ba la thug par gyur cing dangs bas shin tu rings bar dPyal ban chen po la zod par gsol zhing pandi ta phul te de gdan drangs nas sMan lung du byon/”; “After some time, the master of the five sciences, pandi ta chen po sMri ti Dznya na kirti, was invited from rGya gar by lo tsa ba Phra la ring ba, but the *lo tsa ba* died on the way, and the *pandi ta* went straying, owing to a little of his previous *karma*. The wealthy local chieftain of Shangs or else rTa nag kept him under his [grip] [without chance for him] to leave (*gral* sic for *bral*), and thus [sMri ti] was unable to go away. The dPyal *ban chen* (i.e. Se tsa dMar ru), having gathered black clouds in the sky, read the signs (*gnang* sic for *snang*) in the sky. Given that the sequence of omens was threatening, he was victorious over those people with his dragon voice. Having caused a hail of stones with pieces of meteoritic iron, he seized the whole locality in an instant. So it is said. Such a dPyal seized [the locality], thus acquiring the fame of someone extremely powerful against his enemies. Although he could bring the life of the local chieftain and the separation [from his master] to an end, the dPyal *ban chen* exercised restraint with his kindness and ransomed the *pandi ta*. Having invited him [to his monastery], they went to sMan lung”.

It is common knowledge in the literature that the invitation to sMri ti was extended by lha bla ma Ye shes 'od rather than Phra la ring ba who was the great Indian master companion in the travel to Tibet. Phra la ring ba is wrongly considered in the passage as the interpreter of the Indian master in Tibet.

46. Only part of Se rtsa's biography must have survived in antiquity. All the hitherto known sources dealing with his life talk about his studies at sMan lung under Zhang Cog ru and his successors and that he ransomed sMri ti from forced labour. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* also mentions the construction of his temple. All sources do not spend a word on how Se tsa dMar ru met sMri ti in India, an information provided by a short biography of sMri ti. This seems to show that the narrative of Se tsa dMar ru's interaction with sMri ti in India became unavailable to his biographers.

There are no dates of Se tsa, but his birth occurred around 975, a time frame gleaned from a calculation derived from the foundation of his *gtsug lag khang* at sMan lung.⁴⁷ sMri ti came to Tibet during early *bstan pa phyi dar*. Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer enumerates the sequence of events of those years. He first deals with Ye shes 'od's invitation of sMri ti and then introduces the 996 temple building phase in mNga' ris skor gsum, which fostered the great diffusion of the teachings—he calls it *bstan pa 'phel*—in the kingdom (*Nyang ral chos 'byung* p.461 line 15).

These facts have a special significance. Se tsa's interaction with sMri ti at an unspecified locality in India at an initial point in time of *bstan pa phyi dar* shows that he was one of the earliest Tibetans from Central Tibet to choose for himself the principle that Buddhism had to be revived from the Noble Land. Se tsa thus opted for an individualistic solution in order to receive *bstan pa phyi dar* teachings, once the way to obtain them is compared with the diffusion pattern pursued concomitantly in the lands of dBus gTsang where he lived.

Se tsa dMar ru is not included in the several groups of direct disciples of the men from dBus gTsang and thus did not belong to the transmission of the 'Dul ba vow brought from A mdo.⁴⁸ One cannot determine to which vow-bestowing tradition he belonged. No trace is found in the available sources about his status, whether he was a *sngags pa*, *dge bsnyen* or *btsun pa*. One can reasonably argue in favour of a vow administered to him either by Zhang Cog ro Byang chub 'byung gnas or by sMri ti Dznya na kirti in India, although the bestowal is not proved by the extant sources.

Se tsa dMar ru adopted the same strategy for which the mNga' ris skor gsum *intelligentsia* is famous, despite not belonging to its tradition, and traveled to the Noble Land. Few Tibetans went to India before year 1000. Most of those few were from mNga' ris skor gsum. There is no trace that the greatest majority of 'Dul ba practitioners of dBus gTsang, successors of dGongs pa rab gsal's disciples, who looked at A mdo as their monastic root, travelled to India at such an early stage of *bstan pa phyi dar* (see below for the case of lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas).

47. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.7 lines 11–14) says that Se tsa dMar ru founded sMan lung 'Phrul gyi lha khang after the death of sMri ti. The Indian master was still alive soon before water horse 1044, having met 'Brom ston pa in Khams (Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, *bKa' gdams chos 'byung* p.166 line 20–p.167 line 1). In that year 'Brom ston pa left for Pu hrang.

The time frame wood monkey 1044 is provided by a passage in the biography of rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab by Las chen Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (ibid. p.148 lines 2–3: “sTon pa bzhud pa'i phyi lo bya'i lo la dBus su phebs”; “[rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab] left for dBus in the bird year 1045, one year after ['Brom] ston pa's departure”).

Hence the foundation of sMan lung 'Phrul gyi lha khang cannot predate the years around 1044. This chronological calculation is also useful to ascertain that Se tsa, who was seventy years old at the time, was born around the year of the monkey 975.

48. For instance, *Myang chos 'byung* (p.155 line 12–p.157 line 18) does not include any member of the sMan lung dPyal pa among the disciples of Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug and their successors who hanged around rGyan gong and vicinities, despite territorial closeness with sMan lung. Was it because of different religious views, monastic observance, practice and source of the teachings?

Se tsa was one of the first masters from Central Tibet to realise the fundamental importance of travelling to India to receive the Noble Religion in order to expand the more limited—and less pure?—perspective offered by the teachings introduced in dBus gTsang after the monastic vow was rekindled in Khams and A mdo. Hence Se tsa dMar ru does not fit into the scheme by which the Later Spread of Buddhism was established in dBus gTsang from the east side. He, however, paved the way for a solution adopted by many masters from Central Tibet during the following decades.

How does lha bla ma Ye shes 'od's invitation of sMri ti to Tibet relate to Se tsa being the latter's disciple from the Indian days? Se tsa knew that his teacher had accepted the invitation. His search for sMri ti indicates awareness that his master was lost on the plateau.

How did the activity of Se tsa dMar ru relate from the chronological viewpoint to that of Rin chen bzang po?⁴⁹ Lo chen's first journey to India may have preceded Se tsa's. Nonetheless, their sojourns in the Noble Land should be associated as much as the phase they engendered with their studies is concerned. Although their training must have occurred under different teachers and in different territories, it is likely that the journeys of masters from dBus gTsang to India during the early decades of the 11th century were influenced by the example set in mNga' ris skor gsum whose *intelligentsia* had looked at the Noble Land as the root of knowledge. Se tsa, too, must have had some part in exercising influence upon them, at least because he was from dBus gTsang.

Se tsa was a later contemporary of Rin chen bzang po. This is gleaned from approximate dates associated with the great sMri ti Dznyana kirti. sMri ti died sometime after 1041, the year in which he told 'Brom ston pa that Jo bo rje was the greatest Indian master of those days. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* adds that, when sMri ti's passing on occurred, Se tsa dMar ru was seventy years old, which helps to establish a *terminus* for dPyal master's birth to not later than 972.⁵⁰

Being first a master of *sNgags rnying ma* and then of *sNgags gsar ma*, Se tsa dMar ru differed sensibly from Rin chen bzang po who did not have a *sNgags rnying ma* training. Se tsa's case is reminiscent of gNyo lo tsa ba, a master of the old tradition who, several

49. Se tsa dMar ru being a *lo tsa ba* expert in the Indian language like Lo chen is confirmed by these *shloka* in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.6 lines 9–10): “Thsogs gnyis gser gyi phung po brjid pa'i sku/ skad gnyis smra ba'i nyi zlas mgul la rgyan/ mdzad pa rgya che'i lha tshogs mangs bstan pa'i// gser ri gSer rtsa dmar po la phyag 'tshal lo//”; “I salute Ser (so spelled to paraphrase gold) rtsa dMar po, the body resplendent with the mass of gold of the two accumulations; the expert of the two languages (Sanskrit and Tibetan), the neck ornament displaying sun and moon; the golden mountain attending upon ever increasing groups of deities by means of his extensive activity”.

50. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.7 lines 12–13): “De nas lo tsa ba dgung lo bdun cu lon pa na sku bgres shing sphyan mi gsal//”; “After this (i.e. the death of sMri ti), the lo tsa ba (i.e. Se tsa dMar ru) turned seventy years of age. He was old and his eyes could hardly see”.

decades afterwards, went to India, like him, to study the new teachings.⁵¹ Se tsa's case is also reminiscent of lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas who went to India decades after him, but with a difference. lCe btsun had already been initiated in the new tradition, for he was part of the *tsho* system introduced by the men of dBus gTsang and their disciples, whereas Se tsa had received a training according to the old tradition from Zhang Cog ru Byang chub 'byung gnas.⁵²

Se tsa took sMri ti to sMan lung where they translated texts on Sanskrit Grammar, *Tshad ma* and 'Jam dpal mtshan brjod, some of them thus belonging to teachings widely diffused during *bstan pa phyi dar*. After an unspecified lapse of time, sMri ti left for Khams.

Already remarkably old, Se tsa dMar ru undertook the demanding enterprise of building a lofty *gtsug lag khang* at sMan lung.⁵³ It was the final appropriation of this holy place left to

51. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.477 line 3) says that the first of the *gSar ma 'i jo sras thob pa 'i mi bzhi* (the "four men who obtained [the status of] princes of [*rNgags*] *gsar ma*") was gNyos lo tsa ba. Is the attribution to him of being of these four men of the new translations given to him because he was the oldest of those who went to the Noble Land? gNyos lo tsa ba (b.973) left for Bal po and rGya gar together with Mar pa lo tsa ba Chos kyi grags (b.1012) when the famous master of rje btsun Mid la was fifteen years old (i.e. in 1028).

Kha rag gNyos kyi gdung rabs (f.2b lines 2–3): "gNyos dgung lo lnga bcu drug lon pa gcig gis bgres shes byas/ rje Mar pa lo bcu bdun pa gcig gis gzhon pa byas/ Bod phrug nyi shu tsam gyis rGya gar byon par chas/ La stod Cung pa sa zhag mang du bzhugs/ de nas Gu lang gser khar gser tshol du byon/"; "gNyos, who was fifty-six, was the oldest. rJe Mar pa, who was seventeen, was the youngest. Twenty children of Tibet (*Bod phrug*) went to rGya gar. They stayed for many days at La stod Cung pa sa. Then they went to Gu lang gser kha to search for gold".

52. *mKhas pa 'i dga' ston* (p.478 lines 9–12): "De 'i mkhan bu lCe btsun Sher 'byung gis Zhwa lu ma brtsigs te rGya gar du phyin/ sdom pa bskyar nas blangs/ pandi ta gcig gi gsol zhal la mchod yul gyi rtso bor byed/ phor pa la zhal bur yul de na grags pas gtsug lag khang gi ming Zha lur chags/"; "His ('A zha ye shes g.yung drung's) disciple lCe btsun Shes [rab] 'byung [gnas] went to rGya gar before founding Zhwa lu. He received the vow again. He was the recipient of [religious] offerings mostly from the cup of a single *pandi ta*. The locality being like a small cup (*zhal bur yul*) [or] like a bowl, on the basis of this well known [fact], he gave the name of Zha lu to the *gtsug lag khang* he founded".

53. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun* (p.7 lines 12–20): "De nas lo tsa ba dgung lo bdun cu lon pa na bgres shing spyang mi gsal yang/ thugs stobs che bas btsan po 'i sku yon zhu ba dang gdung rgyud kyi dpal bskyed ba dang 'gro ba 'i don tshogs bsags pa 'i zhing bya ba 'i phyir sMan lung 'phrul gyi lha khang bzhengs pa ni/ zhing bzo ba Zhus Yon ston pa lha bzo ba Dar ryal dbang po dang gser bzo ba mGon ban lhun pos byas nas rGya yi gtsug lag khang gNam gyi the'u la dpe byas te bya skyibs nyis rims rgya phib rtse lnga ni rGya nag lhun po rtse lnga pa bzhin re re'ang rtse mo lnga la gser tog can rje btsun 'Jam dbyangs re re rtser gsal ba bzhin gru bzhi nyis brtsegs sgo bzhi dod pa ni 'dod lha 'i pho brang yid chags mdzes pa bzhin de nang rNam par snang mdzad bzhugs pa ni rNam snang gang chen mtsho dang gnyis su med/ gzhal yas khang chen 'phrul gyi gtsug lag khang/ rNam par rgyal byed dbus na lHa dbang bzhin/ bstan bsrungs Mahā ka la lcam gral ni/ mthu nus gzi 'od gzhan las khyad par 'phags/ 'phrul gyi bzo bo mkhas pa rnam gsum ni Bi sho karma 'i rnam 'phrul yin par nges/ zhus pa de lta bu 'i lha khang ni dPyal ban chen po des bka' bstsal zhing sras mched gnyis kyi lag len dang dka' ba spyad nas bsgrubs so/"; "The *lo tsa ba*, having then reached seventy years

him by his teacher Zhang Cog ru 'Byang chub rgyal mtshan.⁵⁴ *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* links this construction to the death of sMRI ti in Khams but no clue is given to know whether the building was erected in his honour. It only says that it contained a funerary monument in his memory.⁵⁵

of age, was old. Despite being saddened [by the death of sMRI ti], he requested a donation from the king and, in order to increase the glory of his lineage and accumulate the merit of sentient beings, built sMan lung 'Phrul gyi lha khang. The master carpenter Zhus Yon ston pa, the master artist Dar rgyal dbang po and the master of gold[-gilding] mGon ban lhun po worked at it and, using gNam gyi the'u, a Chinese *gtsug lag khang*, as model, [the temple was conceived with] a pagoda roof with two superimposed floors. Its pentadic pavilioned structure was in the Chinese [architectural style] with a central part surmounted by five peaks, each with a gold finial. It is as if rje btsun 'Jam dbyangs is displayed on each of them. The temple is square, two-storeyed and with four doors. It is like the palace of the sensual gods and mind-blowing in its beauty. Inside [the *gtsug lag khang*] is a statue of rNam par snang mdzad not different from the rNam snang gangs chen mtsho [type]. The great *gzhal yas khang* of 'Phrul gyi gtsug lag khang is like the rNam par rgyal byed (i.e. the palace of Indra) with lHa dbang (i.e. rGya sbyin) in its centre. Mahā ka la in *yab yum*, whose radiant power as the protector of the teachings is especially noble more than any other. The three master craftsmen truly were the emanations of Bi sho karma. Such a *lha khang* was brought to completion by means of the orders by the great dPyal and the practice and performance of austerities of the two brothers (i.e. Se tsa and 'Od gsal po aka bSod nams dol po)".

For a shorter and somewhat obscure description of the temple see *Myang chos 'byung* (p.138 lines 10–13).

Assuming that Se tsa dMar ru built it around the 1040s, when gTsang was held by one of the descendants of the sMad kyī lde gsum, a candidate for being the unidentified king, sponsor of sMan lung *gtsug lag khang*, should be looked for in the lineage of 'Od lde, the middle son of Khri bKra shis brtsegs pa dpal (see, among many sources, the summary of this royal genealogy in *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.150 lines 4–8).

54. Before building his *gtsug lag khang* at sMan lung, Se tsa dMar ru is credited with making a massive *mchod rten* at one of the localities of the dPyal family. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.7 lines 1–2) reads: “De nas Ra dza gad thog gi mchod rten dkar po bzhengs pa ni mchu zheng 'tsham la dkar zhing lhun chags pa ri gangs can bzhin du lha mer gda' / rdza thog 'khor lo dmar pos rgyan pa ni / dus 'tshams sprin gyi ri rtse g.yogs ba bzhin//”; “Then [Se rtsa] built mChod rten dkar po of Ra dza gad thog which, as for its length and breadth, is a divine mass, appropriately huge and white [in colour] like a snow mountain. Its terracotta-red upper part and 'khor lo (i.e. the *chos 'khor*) are decorated like a mountain peak covered by clouds from time to time”.

The reference to the material of the upper part of the *mchod rten* is interesting for the history of the architecture of these monuments. It shows that this structural feature goes back to *bstan pa phyi dar*. Persistence of the adoption of this terracotta technique is proved by specimens still extant, although in bad state of decay or destruction, in Upper West Tibet, which date to the dGe lugs pa period of this land.

55. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.7 lines 11–12): “Pan chen mya ngan las 'das nas gdung yang sMan lung na yod pa par grags//”; “It is well known that, after the death of the *pan chen* (i.e. sMRI ti), there stood a funerary monument at sMan lung, too. Most [scholars] accept that he died in mDo Khams”.

sMan lung 'Phrul gyi lha khang was styled after the Chinese gtsug lag khang gNam gyi the'u at the border between A mdo and China but styled after the latter country's idiom popular during the period.⁵⁶ The temple in the Chinese architectural style was square, with pagoda roofs surmounting two superimposed floors and four doors. Its pentadic pavilioned structure that included a central part—i.e. a central core with four wings at its corners—was completed by five peaks, each with a gold finial.

An important proof provided by the description of sMan lung 'Phrul gyi lha khang is that a Chinese architectural style was used as model despite Se rtsa dMar ru's frequentation of India. This is a sign, together with, for instance, Yer pa's gNas brtan ra ba ma set of *thang ka-s* brought to Tibet from China by Klu mes,⁵⁷ that Chinese architectural and artistic influence had reached dBus gTsang during *bstan pa phyi dar*. The territorial roots of the Later Spread of Buddhism in Central Tibet were Khams and A mdo in the main, whose borders with China exposed these lands to the influences from areas of the celestial empire and Central Asia. This evidence vindicates what I wrote a long time ago in *Early Temples of Central Tibet* a propos of the murals of Grwa thang (ibid. p.93–94). I suggested that Central Asian physiognomic traits in its wall paintings could have been brought by the Tibetans—the men from dBus gTsang and their successors—gone to those borderlands in order to receive the Buddhist vows, and thus that influences from the A mdo/China border were not restricted to religion.

56. A passage in *dpal chen rGa lo'i rnam thar*, the biography of this supreme master penned by his disciple bla ma Zhang and found in *Bla ma Zhang g. Yu brag pa'i bKa' thor bu* (p.360 lines 4–7), helps to assess the locality of gNam gyi the'u: “dPal chen rGa lo zhes bya ba de/ dang po rGya Bod gnyis so mtshams/ mDo smad kyi dByar mo thang gis lho phyogs/ rTsong ka'i The'u chung zhes bya ba na/ yab dge ba'i gshes gnyen chen po rGa' Shes rab rtse zhes bya ba/ chos mNgon pa la mkhas pa cig bzhugs pa dang/ yum Nyang bza' Tshe sprul zhes bya ba gnyis kyi sras sku 'khrung pa'i mtshan ni/ Jo sras rGya mtsho zhes bya ba'o/”; “dPal chen rGa lo. Firstly, he was born at rTsong ka'i The'u chung to the south of mDo smad kyi dByar mo thang at the border between China and Tibet, from father the great dge ba'i gshes gnyen rGa' Shes rab rtse, who was a master of *mNgon pa* and mother Nyang bza' Tshe sprul. His name [at birth] was Jo sras rGya mtsho”.

In “Rtsa-mi Lo-tsa-ba Sangs-rgyas grags-pa and the Tangut Background to Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations”, Sperling neither gives the title of the work from which the passage is excerpted nor the folio number. He, thus, does not solve the problem of the identification of the temple used as the model for sMan lung 'Phrul gyi gtsug lag khang and its location.

57. Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho, *dBus gTsang gnas yig* (Tashijong ed. p.99 line 21–p.100 line 2): “De nas mar ring tsam phyin par Klu mes 'Brom chung gis rGya nag (p.100) nas spyen drangs pa'i zhal thang dang gzhug Yer pa'i gNas bcu khang du/ dbus su Thub dbang thog so mtho nges gcig sngon gyi bzo rnying/ gNas bcu rGya nag ma bag dro mi tshad re/”; “Then going down a while, brought by Klu mes 'Brom chung from China (p.100) [there are] the *thang ka-s* which are installed [there], In gNas bcu khang there is [a statue of] Thub dnag one floor high in ancient workmanship of earlier times. Each of the gNas brtan rGya nag ma [paintings] (i.e. the set of *thang ka-s* of the “Arhat from China”) is life-size and magnificent”.

The identification of at least one master artist who worked at the making of the *gtsug lag khang*—the carpenter/architect Zhus Yon ston pa, hence the one responsible for making part of the temple structure—confirms that *bstan pa phyi dar* Tibetans in dBus gTsang were conversant with a Chinese style.

There is a record in the literature (*Nyang ral chos 'byung* p.442 lines 6–9) that, in A mdo, the Dan tig temple, dating to as early as the time of the *mKhas pa mi gsum*, had a pagoda roof, and that 151 other temples were built subsequently using it as their model. It is doubtful that this considerable number refers to A mdo alone and did not extend to dBus gTsang where the *tsho* system conceived in order to diffuse the *sMad 'Dul* vow had been introduced.

The installation of a statue of rNam par snang mdzad as the main image of the temple shows that Se tsa dMar ru preferred, perhaps owing to the availability of the architect, to adopt a system popular during *bstan pa phyi dar* rather than one belonging to *gSang sngags snga 'gyur* practised by him in the earlier part of his life. The presence of rNam par snang mdzad as the main deity in the temple and an oral account popular at sMan lung that the cycle of gods accompanying the main deity numbered thirty-six help to place the *gtsug lag khang* built by Se tsa into a *rNal 'byor rgyud* milieu, it being based on the *De nyid 'dus pa* commentary.

The adoption of a religious service, known as sPra sti ha ra,⁵⁸ at sMan lung 'Phrul gyi gtsug lag khang built by Se tsa dMar ru and similar to that performed at rDo rje gdan shows familiarity with the rituals held at Bodhgaya. Although not a conclusive clue in favour of Se tsa's frequentation of rGya gar, which is documented in another text, it shows acquaintance that could have been direct and personal. If so, Se tsa dMar ru should be credited with the inception of the custom, popular with the dPyal clan members for centuries to come, of looking at rDo rje gdan for religious inspiration.

SE TSA DMAR RU'S SONS

Not even the documents concerning the dPyal clan say much on the successors to Se tsa dMar ru. It seems that, in the decades after the forties of the 11th century, the deeds of the sMan lung dPyal pa were eclipsed by events occurring in Central Tibet during that momentous period. Scant traces are preserved that indicate an activity focused on developing sMan lung and localities related to it.⁵⁹

58. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun* (p.7 line 21): “De nas yang bdag par rdzogs pa'i Sangs rgyas kyi dus mchod sPra sti ha ra zhes pa rDo rje gdan na ji ltar byed pa bzhin btsugs so//” “The religious service of the purely perfected Sangs rgyas, known as sPra sti ha ra, was then introduced in the same way as it was performed at rDo rje gdan”.

59. Se tsa's grandson, Chos kyi grags pa, built the *khyams* and *sgo khang* of the sMan lung temple, and the enclosure of bSe phug (*dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun* p.8 lines 7–8).

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun says that Se rtsa had two sons, gSal rab snying po and mChog grub snying po.⁶⁰ The contributions of the elder were marginal. He held the ancestral *gdan sa* of the family (Chos pa gling?) and received teachings typical of the dPyal clan, such as the *mChims phu'i phyag bzhes dgu* and others. He took charge of his forefathers' locality and the most extraordinary images.⁶¹

Equally trained in the traditions of the dPyal clan (*sNgags gsar rnying*), his younger brother mChog grub snying po was a religious master of more considerable stature on the local scene. He received honours on account of his equanimity and impartiality employed in order to settle scores among the people who were under the jurisdiction of Zhwa lu. mChog grub snying po pacificated their internecine war.⁶²

60. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.7 lines 27–28): “Bla ma chen po dPyal ban Ser rtsa mkha' dbyings lta bu la/ sras gnyis nyi zla lta bur sku 'khrungs/”; “Two sons like the sun and moon were born to the great bla ma dPyal ban Ser rtsa who was like the vault of the sky”.

61. The contributions of the elder were marginal. He held the ancestral *gdan sa* of the family (Chos pa gling?) and received teachings typical of the dPyal clan, such as the *mChims phu'i phyag bzhes dgu* and others. He repaired the old images and made new ones. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.7 lines 28–30): “gCen gSal rab snying po ni yab chos yang dag dang Phur pa dang mChims bu'i phyag bzhes dbang byang sgrub byang la sogs pa dgu la mkhas zhing sgom sgrub dang bzlas brjod la brtson pas yab kyi gdan sa non cing/ sku brjid la/ gsung dran cing thugs sgam pas kun gyi mchod pa'i gnas su bskur bar gyur to/”; “[Se rtsa's] elder son gSal rab snying po was a master of [disciplines] including the excellent teachings of his father, *Phur pa*, perfect empowerments and perfect meditational practice of *mChims bu'i phyag bzhes* in nine [parts], given his strenuous efforts in performing meditation and recitations of magic formulas. He took over the *gdan sa* of his forefathers. As to splendid images, he turned out to devote worship to them by remembering the [related] utterance for all of them and with a deep disposition of mind”.

62. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.25 lines 29–34): “Lo tsa ba 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan gyi sras gnyis las/ gcung mChog snying ni yab chos gSang snags rnying ma mChims bu'i phyag bshes ma lus pa mkhyen cing/ gSang ba 'dus pa rgyud drug la sogs pa la mkhas par sbyangs shing bsgrub pa la brtson pas dngos grub brnyes shing mtshan rtags kyang ci rigs su mnga'o/ de'ang tshugs thub pas Zha lu pa lCe btsun gyi 'bangs Se 'og dang Gru skyi zhes pa rGya mtsho bzhi yod pa nas gas shing kun 'khrugs nas mi bsad mang po byung ba la dPyal ban nye ring med cing thugs snyoms pas zhi ba'i bsadum byas pas bde ba la 'god cing thams cad kyi spyi mchod mdzad do/ der rjes Srad pa'i sa charnams bla ma la phul lo/”; “Of the two sons of lo tsa ba 'Byung gnas rgyal mtshan, the younger mChog snying mastered innumerable ancestral teachings of *gSang sngags rnying ma* [including] *mChims bu'i* (spelled so) *phyag bshes*. He learned the *gSang ba 'dus pa rgyud drug* in a masterful way. Having persevered in his meditation, he made spiritual attainments and carried with him all kinds of signs of that. On account of his steadfastness, Zha (spelled so) lu pa lCe btsun's subjects Se 'og and Gru skyi, [members of] the rGya mtsho bzhi, had a disagreement and all of them were engulfed in warfare, in which many people died. Being impartial and equanimous, the dPyal monk made them reconcile and restored peace. Everyone honoured him. Hence the locality of Srad pa was given to the *bla ma* subsequently”.

The episode has a double historical significance. It shows that in the apparent peaceful scenario of early *bstan pa phyi dar* and soon before it, the lCe family of Zhwa lu faced unsettled times. Earlier, the war between sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon and his brother Khri bKra shis brtsegs pa dpal broke out, in which the lCe from the area of future Zhwa lu participated (Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.242–243 and n.345–346). At an unspecified time during the life of its founder lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas in fire hare 1027 (see Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.91–92), people under his authority went through a phase of internal dissent. The fact that mChog [rab] snying [po], Se tsa dMar ru's son, was a contemporary of lCe btsun, a prominent personage of early *bstan pa phyi dar*, reinforces my assessment that Se tsa was born not later than 972 (see above n.52 and n.62).

There were two instances of internal strife that affected lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas. The first applies to the episode mentioned in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* because it occurred in lCe btsun's early years. He was urged to save his life by taking monastic vows with Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug.⁶³ The other case is hardly pertinent because it did not affect lCe btsun directly but the lineage of his younger brother lCe Shes rab ye shes.⁶⁴

In his *Zhwa lu rnam thar lo rgyus*, Glo gsal bstan skyong also says that a dPyal averted a revolt of the subjects of the lCe clan.⁶⁵ A few facts are ascertainable from the first episode. The revolt is attributed to the early period of lCe btsun's life. He had not yet met Lo ston rDo

63. dGe legs 'phel, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po jo bo lCe'i gdung rabs* (f.12a lines 2–4): “gCen po lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas/ gcung po Shes rab ye shes gnyis lags so/ de'i dus lCe la 'bangs kyi yo log byung nas/ lCe'i mi phal cher bsad do/ lCe btsun gyis Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug gi drung du btsun pa la bros/”; “lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas was the elder brother and Shes rab ye shes was the younger brother, altogether two. At that time, the subjects of the lCe revolted. Most of the lCe people were killed. lCe btsun fled to become monk with Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug”.

64. dGe legs 'phel, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po jo bo lCe'i gdung rabs* (f.17a lines 1–3): “Khro gzher gdong khri nas lCe dkar nag gnyis su phye ste/ gcig Sri'u chung ba'i bla ma lCe btsun rnam yin/ lCe g. Yu 'bum gyi rgyud kyi/ 'bang gi yo log byung nas/ Khyim mkhar La rar byon nas La ra rGyang khyim dang bcas pa lCe'i yin/”; “From Khro gzher gdong khri onwards, the lCe branched into white and black. One was the Sri'u chung ba who are the people of lCe btsun. The subjects ('bang sic for 'bangs) of the lineage of lCe g. Yu 'bum having revolted, [the people of g. Yu 'bum] went to (i.e. occupied) Khyim mkhar La ra, and this is why La ra and rGyang khyim belong to the lCe”.

65. Blo gsal bstan skyong, *Zhwa lu rnam thar lo rgyus* (p.355 lines 2–4): “Zho chu mkhar mo cher lCe mi shis pa bdun dus gcig tu byung ba la/ dPyal Ratna shris rim gro byas te lo bdun bzlog pas/ Jo bo Ratna byon pas 'tsheng/ phyag rgya dril bu dkros pas 'tsheng/ raksha'i phreng ba brdab pas 'tsheng/ Hum Phat 'brug sgra bsgrags pas 'tsheng/ zer pa'i kha dpe byung/ re gzhih nas lCe la 'bangs rnam kyi ngo log byas te lCe phal cher bsad/ lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas kyi Lo ston spyang sngar bros”; “It happened that seven men of the lCe died on a single occasion at Zho chu mkhar mo che. dPyal Ratna shri performed a ritual of protection (*rim gro*) and [trouble] was averted for seven years. A proverb came into being which said “Jo bo Ratna came and was satisfied with himself. He made a *mudra*, played the bell and was satisfied with himself. He cast down a rosary of *raksha* and was satisfied with himself. He uttered *Hum Phat* with a dragon roar and was satisfied with himself”. After

rje dbang phyug and not yet entered religion, which are enough proof to realise that the involvement of dPyal Ratna shri in the episode is anachronistic given that he lived during the time of dPal 'khor btsan. Hence it was another dPyal clan member who performed *rim gro* and averted trouble befalling the ICe neighbours of the dPyal for seven years. A candidate is Se tsa dMar ru's younger son mChog grub snying po described in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* as the member of the family who helped the ICe people in troubled time during the life of ICe btsun.

The revolt of the subjects of the ICe clan occurred before rGyan gong was founded because ICe btsun fled, met Lo ston for the first time and helped him to build his teacher's temple. The establishment of rGyan gong in the bird year 997 is a *terminus ante quem* for the revolt (see a treatment of its alternative foundation dates in Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.91–92). Indeed, there were two revolts, the first put down with the alleged intervention of dPyal Ratna shri which occurred at an unspecified time but seven years before the second—more lethal—revolt of the subjects of the ICe family. One wonders whether the earlier rebellion should be attributed to the years before the return of the men of dBus gTsang to Central Tibet and the inception of *bstan pa phyi dar* in this region.

This may explain why ICe btsun decided to enter religion upon the breakout of the second and bloody rebellion. The early phase of the diffusion of 'Dul ba and sNgags gsar ma offered him an escape from being a target of his subjects. Not uncommonly at different times in Tibetan history, people of families with important political roles, although in most cases only on a regional scale, embraced religion to save their life. It also explains why ICe btsun collaborated with Lo ston in the construction of rGyan gong. He was in no practical condition to attempt a construction of his own not only because he was new to religious practice but manifestly powerless.

some time, the subjects of the ICe revolted and most of the ICe were killed. ICe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas fled [to seek refuge] with Lo ston".

The version of this passage in sKal bzang and rGyal po's *Zhwa lu dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdu* (p.4 lines 3–10) is manifestly derived from Blo gsal bstan skyong's text with small variants: "De dus Zho chu mkhar mo cher ICe mi shis pa bdun dus gcig tu byung ba na dPyal Ratna shris rim gro byas te lo bdun bzlog pas/ Jo bo Ratna byon pas 'tsheng/ phyag rgya dril bu dkros pas 'tsheng/ raksha'i phreng ba brdab pas 'tsheng/ Hum Phat 'brug sgra bsgrags pas 'tsheng/ zer pa'i kha rgyun byung/ dus nam zhig na ICe la 'bangs kyis ngo log byas te ICe phal cher bsad/ ICe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas Lo ston spyang sngar bros/"; "At that time it happened that seven men belonging to the ICe died at Zho chu mkhar mo che on a single occasion. dPyal Ratna shri performed a ritual of protection (*rim gro*) and [problems] were warded off for seven years. An oral tradition came into being which said: "Jo bo Ratna came and was satisfied with himself. He made a *mudra*, played the bell and was satisfied with himself. He cast down a rosary of *raksha* and was satisfied with himself. He uttered *Hum Phat* with a dragon roar and was satisfied with himself". Eventually the subjects of the ICe revolted and most of the ICe were killed. ICe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas fled to [seek refuge] with Lo ston".

The presence of Ratna shri in the episode may depend on a sedimented vision of him as the quintessential Tantric master who performed magical rituals to defeat the enemies owing to the fame he gained for putting down the local *kheng log*-s that broke out during the reign of dPal 'khor btsan. The proverb that was created after his alleged performance in favour of the lCe but perhaps—more realistically—in favour of the local minister sKyid bzher sman is rather derisory in the best tradition of these exercises popular among commoners in everywhere's culture to address great personalities.

Another case of disturbances involving Zhwa lu occurred some time later, at a time when it is unclear whether lCe btsun was still alive. In any case, the disturbance was not internecine but had Chu mig for antagonist,⁶⁶ and thus it is not relevant.

Hence *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* records a piece of secular history of Zhwa lu in which a dPyal pa, Se tsa Chog snying, played a crucial part, that is not recorded in the documents concerned with the great monastery of the *sku zhang*-s.

THE GENERATION AFTER SE TSA DMAR RU'S CHILDREN

The next generation left an even less indelible mark in the history of the family. The three sons of gSal rab snying po were rGyal po'i blo gros, Shes rab rgyal and Chos kyi grags pa. The elder was a master of *gSang sngags snga 'gyur* and received the ancestral *mChims bu'i* (spelled so) *phyag bzhes dgu* teachings. He studied *Tshad ma* under its master Khyung po Chos kyi brtson 'grus and was an expert of *chos gtam*-s (“religious discourses”) and *mo la*-s (“secular speeches”). He was the *tshogs dpon* or “head of the family” (*dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.7 line 35–p.8 line 4). This is a first sign of concern in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* for lay members of the dPyal clan during *bstan pa phyi dar*.

The middle son Shes rab rgyal learned the religious system of his ancestors and was a meditator. dGe bshes 'Phags pa belonged to the lineage issued from him (*dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.8 lines 4–6).

The younger Chos kyi grags pa took monastic vows when he was fourteen years old. At the age of twenty-two he preached *gSang 'dus* and meditated strenuously. He built the *khyams* and *sgo khang* of sMan lung lha khang—the one founded by Se rtsa dMar ru. When he was

66. dGe legs 'phel, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po jo bo lCe'i gdung rabs* (f.20a line 5–f.20b line 3): “gTsang 'Gram du Zhwa lu pa'i chos su grags pa mar la (f.20b) spyang drangs/ de nas Jo bo Ri sbugs su bzhugs su gsol/ de dus Chu Zhal 'khrugs pa' 'ur chen por yod pas/ Chu mig pa rnam kyi Jo bo 'di nyid bdus te phyin pas/ jo mo Ri sbug mas thag chings rgyab nas gar yang 'gro ma nus/”; “[The self-originated Jo bo statue] was brought down from gTsang 'Gram [on account of] the fame of the religious [practice] of the Zhwa lu pa. (f.20b) The Jo bo was then installed at Ri sbugs (spelled so). At that time, there were strong rumours about a war between Chu [mig and] Zhal [lu]. The Chu mig pa came to take away the Jo bo. A nun from Ri sbug tied it with a rope and [the statue] could not be taken anywhere”.

twenty-five years old, he had several book collections made. He built the *kun dga' ra ba* of Sa phug and introduced *Byams chos* there. He also made extraordinary images and religious paraphernalia at sMan lung *gtsug lag khang*, the temple of his grandfather (*dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.8 lines 6–10).

Little is known about mChog [rab] snying [po]'s son Shes rab blo gros. The notion one gleans from the few words that have been dedicated to him in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* is that he was a diligent but rather unimpressive pursuer of the recently formulated family tradition.⁶⁷

The tutelary deities from Bal po and rGya ga being the first two *yi dam* of the dPyal pa

DPYAL BSOD NAMS RGYAL MTSHAN
AND PHAM THING PA 'JIGS MED GRAGS PA

It was later in the 11th century that the other major link of the family tradition—the one with the Kathmandu Valley—was inaugurated after ties with India were established through the activity of Se tsa dMa ru. Both continued for centuries even in time of predicament. The dPyal became holders of the teachings of Nā ro pa on that occasion. The family's tradition was since then considered part of the bKa' brgyud school although the articulation of its doctrinal orientation and religious practice exceeded this affiliation by far.

bSod nams rgyal mtshan is the dPyal pa credited with the feat of traveling to the Kathmandu Valley and becoming the disciple of A bhaya kirti ('Jigs med grags pa), the second eldest of the four great Pham thing pa brothers. A bhaya kirti was the one who spent nine years with their teacher Nā ro pa.⁶⁸

dPyal pa'i lo rgyun kyī yi ge tells the history of A bhaya kirti in brief. These biographical notes contribute a social and ethnic insight into Newar customs of the period and a unique description of Pham thing township (Pharping of the Nepali) during the 11th century.

Pham thing pa 'Jigs med grags pa was disowned soon after his birth in Kathmandu in a family of untouchables, on account of the Newar custom of abandoning children who were not well-formed. The existential itinerary that led him to meet Nā ro pa had its prelude in

67. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.25 lines 34–35): “Se rtsa mChog rab de la sras dPyal ston Shes rab blo gros byung ba ni/ yab chos rnying ma'i skor ma lus pa mkhyen cing bzhugs gnas phal cher Ra rtsa phyogs mdzad do//”; “The son born to Se rtsa mChog rab (i.e. mChog [rab] snying [po]) was dPyal ston Shes rab blo gros. He mastered innumerable cycles of teachings of the ancestral system [which belong to sNgags] rnying ma. His dwelling place mainly was Ra rtsa”.

68. Bu ston Rin chen grub, *bDe mchog chos 'byung* (p.101 lines 4–7): “dPal Pham mthing pa sku mched bzhi yin te/ de'ang Rigs 'ba' bo bya ba yin la/ mched nram kyī che shos dge slong Dharmā ma ti Chos kyī blo gros bya ba yin te/ des dpal Na ro ta pa'i sphyan sngar lo bcu gnyis bzhugs te/ gdan 'dren du

becoming a monk in the Mūlasārvastivādin community at Bi kra ma shi la. After perfecting the knowledge congruent with his status of monk, he went searching for extraordinary wisdom. Nā ro pa (d.1040 or 1041),⁶⁹ whom he met at Pu la hari in Ma ga dha, bestowed upon him the

de'i 'og ma dge slong 'Jigs med grags pa bya bas byon/ khyed pa'i bla ma'i spyang sngar sdod cig/ kho bo la bla ma'i lung bstan yod pas rGya nag gi Ri bo'i rtse lnga la 'gro zer nas bzhud de/ phyis 'di gar song cha med do/ de nas 'Jigs med grags pas Na ro pa'i spyang sngar lo dgu bzhugs/ dpal Kye rdo rje la sogs pa'i gSang sngags phal che ba bslab/ khyad par du 'Khor lo bDe mchog gi sgo nas dman pa 'bring gi dngos grub kyang thob par mdzad do/ de la Bal yul na A des pa chen po zhes grags/ Bal po Pham mthing pa zhes Bod la grags so//"; "The dpal Pham thing pa were four brothers. They were also known as the Rigs 'ba' bo (the "cavern family"). The eldest among them was dge slong Dharmā ma ti [aka] Chos kyi blo gros. He spent twelve years in the presence of dpal Na ro ta pa. Following his invitation, the one younger to him, dge slong 'Jigs med grags pa, went [to meet Na ro pa]. [The elder brother] told ['Jigs med grags pa]: "You should stay in the presence of my *bla ma*. There is a prophecy of my *bla ma* spoken to me to go to rGya nag Ri bo'i (spelled so) rtse lnga, [so] I should leave, [but] there is no certainty where I would go later on". Subsequently, 'Jigs med grags pa spent nine years in the presence of Na ro pa. He learned most *gSang sngags* such as dpal Kye rdo rje. In particular, by virtue of 'Khor lo bDe mchog, he managed to obtain [the deity's] lower and average *dngos grub*-s. In this regard, he was known in Bal yul as A des pa chen po. In Tibet, he became known as Bal po Pham thing pa".

69. I cite here sources which record a tentative death date of Nā ro pa. Mang thos lHun grub rgya mtsho (*bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i snyin byed* p.40 lines 6–9) gives his birth date as the dragon year 956 and the duration of his life as eighty-five years, thus attributing his death to iron dragon 1040.

Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i yid 'phrog gives it as fire hare 1027 (ibid. p.52 line 9): "Na ro pa me yos la sku 'das pa rgyu mtshan du bkod nas/ Jo bo lcags rta la 'khrungs zhes smra bar snang//"; "Na ro pa died in fire hare 1027. The reason of this assessment is the statement that Jo bo [rje] was born in iron horse 970".

Immediately below this appraisal, the same source opts for iron snake 1041 (ibid. p.52 lines 9–10): "Des na Jo bo chu rta la 'khrungs pa ltar/ dpal Na ro pa lcags sbrul la gshegs par 'dod dgos//"; "Hence in accordance with the [correct] birth [date of] Jo bo [rje] as water horse 982, the great Na ro pa must have passed in iron snake 1041". This is the date favoured by its author Zhang chung pa dPal 'byor bzang po.

An authoritative statement in favour of iron snake 1041 is recorded by Sa skya rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan. In the letter "rNal 'byor Byang chub seng ge dri lan" (p.417–420), sent to this person by rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan, the Sa skya pa master says that Nag tso lo tsa ba in the company of Jo bo rje A ti sha heard of the death of Nā ro pa when they were in the Kathmandu Valley, hence in 1041. Also see R. Davidson, *Tibetan Culture: Tantric Buddhism in the Rebirth of Tibetan Culture* (p.144–148).

The dates of Nā ro pa are given in btsun pa dBang phyug rgyal mtshan's *Pan chen Na ro pa Ye shes dngos grub kyi rnam thar* (p.109 lines 2–4): "lCags pho 'brug gi lo/ dgung lo brgyad bcu rtsa lnga bzhes pa'i tshe 'od gsal mkha' spyod dag pa'i gnas su gshegs pa lags so//"; "In iron male dragon (1040), aged eighty-five (b.956), [Na ro pa] proceeded to the pure realm of clear light *mkha' spyod*".

wisdom he searched for.⁷⁰ Following his teacher's death, Pham thing pa, born in year of the dragon 1004 according to the *bstan rtsis* in Sum pa mkhan po's *dPag bsam ljon bzang* (p.829 lines 4–5), where A bhaya ka ra should be read as A bhaya kirti, was the abbot of Pu la hari for four years. Perhaps this happened in the early forties of the 11th century if the hypothesis that he sat on the throne of his master's monastery immediately after Nā ro pa's passing will be proved reliable by evidence missing at present.

A bhaya kirti then returned to his native Bal po and settled in Pham thing, described as a town on the border between rGya gar and the Kathmandu Valley, and divided into two halves along the east-west axis. The northern part was Newar with customs, dresses and language of these people. The southern part was Indian with customs, dresses and language of this land. This seems to establish that Pam thing was a border town in those days and that the lands under Indian culture extended farther north than at present, thus showing that, during that period, signs of Indian culture touched the Kathmandu Valley.

At an early age following the death of his father,⁷¹ dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan decided to see 'Gos Khug pa lhas btsas at gNya' nam, but this master did not give him the teachings

70. *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (Roerich transl., *The Biography of Dharmaswamin* p.63) says that Ma ga dha lies across the Gangga coming from the north. The same text (p.85) describes the location of Nā ro pa's hermitage, Pu la hari, in Ma ga dha as being north of Nālandā and bSil ba tshal. Pu la hari was situated to the northwest of Nālandā in a spot with no trees, surrounded by a thick forest.

71. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.405 lines 2–3): "De'i dus na sMan lung 'Phrul gyi gtsug lag khang na dPyal rGyal ba'i blo gros kyi sras mched gnyis las/ gcen po bla ma lo tsa ba bSod nams rgyal mtshan skye ba bdun pa ste/ yang yang du chos la sbyangs pa'i thugs can yin pas/ dgung lo bcu drug la yab chos gSang sngags snga 'gyur rnam mkhas par mkhyen cing/ yab zhi bar gshegs pa'i gshegs rdzongs dang/ phyi rten nang rten rnam grub//"; "At that time, at sMan lung 'Phrul gyi gtsug lag khang, dPyal rGyal ba blo gros had two son brothers. The elder, bla ma lo tsa ba bSod nams rgyal mtshan was the seventh birth [of the Byang chub sems dpa', see below]. Being interested in studying the teachings over and over again, at the age of sixteen he learned *gSang sngags snga 'gyur* from his father in a masterful way. Upon his father's death, he performed the funerary rites and accomplished the making of *phyi rten* [and] *nang rten*".

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun p.8 lines 18–21): "dPyal rGyal ba'i blo gros kyi sras mched gnyis las/ gcen po bla ma bSod nams rgyal mtshan ni/ Byang chub sems dpa' skye ba bdun pa ste/ sku 'khrungs dus yang ltas khyad par can byung shing 'bri klog slob ma dgos par mkhyen cing yab chos gSang sngags rnying ma'i chos la mkhas par gyur/ dgung lo bcu drug la yab sku gshegs nas dgongs rdzogs rten bzhengs rnam grub//"; "Of the two sons of dPyal rGyal ba'i blo gros the elder was bla ma bSod nams rgyal mtshan, who was the seventh rebirth of a Byang chub sems dpa' (!?). Extraordinary signs manifested when he was born. He learned to read and write in the required manner, and became a master of the teachings of the ancestral religious system of *gSang sngags rnying ma*. His father died when he was aged sixteen. He performed his funerary rites and accomplished the making of [*nang* and *phyi*] *rten* for him".

on *Phag skor* (i.e. the cycle of rDo rje phag mo) he wished to receive. He then matured the decision of going to Bal po for his religious studies.⁷²

72. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.405 line 3–p.406 line 1): “Khong gi thugs dgos la gSang sngags 'Phags skor cig gsan par bzhed nas/ Ra sa Se phug na/ khu bo jo bt-sun Chos kyi grags pa bzhugs sar byon nas/ bdag gi yab chos gSang sngags rnying ma nams rdzogs par shes shing/ gNya' nam na bla ma mGos Khu ba lha btsas zhes pa/ gSang sngags 'Phags skor la mkhas pa cig yod pa'i drung du/ 'Phags skor nyan du 'gro bar zhu zhes zhus pas/ de shin tu 'thad gsung nas/ dGyes pa rdo rje'i rgyud mda' tshad phyed btubs rta Cang shes mtshal bu bya spu can bya ba cig gnang te/ gser dang rta la sogs pa'i cha rkyen mang du khyer nas/ gNya' nam du lo tsā ba'i drung du byon te/ rta phul nas 'Phags skor (spelled so for Phag skor) zhus pas gnang du ma bzhed pa la/ bla ma nyid (p.406) thugs skye ba cung zad cig skyes na'ang thugs stobs che zhing/ mi ldog pa'i spobs pa mnga'//”; “Having come to the decision of receiving *gSang ngags Phag skor*, [dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan] went to the residential place of his uncle jo bt-sun Chos kyi grag pa at Ra sa Se phug (spelled so). He asked: “Will you allow me to go to receive teachings on *Phag skor* from the master of *gSang sngags 'Phags skor* (spelled so for *Phag skor*) namely bla ma mGos Khu ba (spelled so for Khub ba) lha btsas at gNya' nam, because my father completely learned the teachings of *gSang ngags rnying ma* [from him]?”. [His uncle] having said: “This is very good”, he entrusted upon him a *dGyes pa rdo rje'i rGyud* the size of an arrow cut into half: “These are the teachings of our own fathers. These are the nine *ma mo* and an equal number of [other] deities. They correspond to names such as Go bo ri and Tso bo ri. If he is willing to teach these, you should learn them”. As for his provisions, he was given the horse namely Cang shes (“best breed”) mtshal bu (“light red”) bya spu can (“with bird feathers”). He took along means of support such as gold and [other] horses and went to see the *lo tsa ba* at gNya' nam. [Even] after offering the horse, the latter did not accept to impart him *Phag skor*. Although the *bla ma* (p.406) became slightly depressed, he had great strength of mind and unreversible composure (*spobs pa*)”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.8 lines 22–30): “Gos lo tsa ba la 'Phags skor zhu bar dgongs nas Ra tsa Se phug na khu bo jo bt-sun Chos kyi grags pa bzhugs pa'i drung du byon nas bdag gi rNying ma'i skor la rGyud drug/ Le lag bcu gsum and Phran nyi shu rtsa bzhi nams slob la da gSar ma cig nyan du 'gro bar zhu zhus pas khyod gSar ma nyan na yang dag dang ming dang lha grangs kyang 'dra bar 'dug pas 'di yang slob par 'dun na slob shog gsung nas Kye rdo rje'i rgyud 'grel btubs ma cig kyang gnang de nas mNya' nams Rong du phebs/ 'Gos Khug pa la rta de phul/ chos gsung tsa na nyan pas chog snyam nas bzhugs pas nyin gcig bla ma snyen bskur zhu ba'i mi cig byung nas de'i phyag phyir phyin nas log pa'i sa bar yang cig tu slebs pa dang jo sras khyod ci la 'ong pa yin gsung/ bdag 'Phags skor gcig zhu ba legs zhus pas khyod la 'bul ba ci yod gsung/ sngar yang rta 'di phul ba yin lags da rung yul na pan spun 'dra bdog pas zhabs tog bgyid par zhu byas pas/ Khams pa dGe skyabs kyi 'Phags bskor chos thun re la gser srang dgu pa'i 'bul ba byas so/ de min chos de bas kyang 'bul ba mang ba phul/ khyod la 'bul rgyu med pa'i 'Phags bskor nyan rgyu mi 'ong gsungs//; “After having thought to receive *'Phags skor* from 'Gos lo tsa ba, he went to Ra tsa (spelled so) Se phug where his paternal uncle jo bt-sun Chos kyi grags pa was staying and told him: “I have studied *rGyud drug, Le lag bcu gsum* and *Phran* (spelled so for *Phra*) *nyi shu rtsa bzhi* which are rNying ma cycles. I now ask [your permission] to go and listen to some *gSar ma*”. He replied: “As for listening to *gSar ma*, given that there, likewise, are its [peculiar] conventions, terminology and a quantity of deities, if you intend to study this, you should learn [them from him]!”. After [his uncle] could only partially give him Kye rdo rje'i *rgyud*, he went to mNya' (spelled so) nams rong. He offered a horse

bSod nams rgyal mtshan proceeded to the cosmopolitan town of Pham thing,⁷³ met

to 'Gos Khug pa. Wondering whether he would be permitted to attend his religious discourses, he stayed on. One day, a man came to render service to the *bla ma*. He went along with him. As soon as they reached the locality from where they had to return, [the man] asked [dPyal pa]: “*Jo sras*, what is the reason for you to come here?”. He politely replied: “I have requested '*Phags* (spelled so) *skor*”. He asked: “Was it given to you?”. “I have offered him a horse before”. [The man] said: “There are at present some monks at this locality, somewhat related [to him]. They asked to render service to him. Khams pa dGe skyabs made an offer of nine gold *srang* on every session of '*Phags skor*. Besides this, he made many [other] offerings. There is no reason to give it to you. No occasion will come for you to listen to '*Phags skor*”.”

The spelling '*Phags skor* in *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* rather than *Phag skor* in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* seems to imply teachings based on the system of '*Phags pa klu sgrub* according to Roerich (see Roerich transl., *The Biography of Dharmaswamin* p.54).

73. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.406 line 1–p.407 line 2): “Chos kyi phyr du srog kyang gtong phod pas lHo Bal du gshegs par dgongs par 'phral skad nams la sbyangs pa mdzad cing grogs kyin bzhugs pas/ Khams pa'i grwa pa gsum sdongs cig byung/ khyed nams gar 'gro dris pas/ nged nams lHo Bal du 'gro ba yin zer te/ 'o na de 'dra'i rigs can cig nga'ang yin pas rang re nams 'gro bar bya'o gsung nas/ nang du bla ma lo tsā ba la snyun gsol du byon pa'i bar la/ Khams pa'i grwa pa nams song 'dug/ der rjes zin res rgyugs pas/ gNya' nam phyogs kyi grong zam yang zad/ Bal po phyogs kyi grong zam du'ang ma sleb pa'i sa bar yang sa cig gi nags gseb tu khu bos bsgur ba'i po ti de shing sdong gcig la bkal nas de'i dus su gzims nas bzhugs/ sang snga mor bzhengs te byon pas/ nyi ma gros skad cig tsam du sleb pa dang po ti de las par mkhyen nas/ nga rGya gar du 'gro ba la Bod kyi dpes go mi chogs na'ang chos spong ba'i las sog skam nas/ slar log nas len byon pas/ rngon pas ri dags gshor nags la me sreg nas nags nams tshig kyang/ po ti bkal ba'i shing sdong de ma tshig par 'dug pas/ 'di phan thogs pa cig 'ong bar 'dug dgongs te brnams nas byon pas/ Khams pa'i grwa pa nams kyi rjes kyang zin te Bal po'i mthil du phebs pa dang/ gSang sngags rDo rje theg pa'i chos skor la mkhas dris pas/ Bal po Pham thing pa bla ma 'Jigs med grags pa mkhas zer ba dang/ khong Khams pa'i grwa pa dang bcas pas bla ma Pham thing pa'i drung du byon/ tshogs kyi 'khor lo bskor ba'i dus su/ Khams pa'i grwa pa nams dam rdzas kyi skyon (407) byung nas/ Bal po Pham thing Pham thing zer/ ma mthong rgyang nas sgra bo che/ mthong nas gam du gtugs tsam na/ glang rgan dar gyis g.yogs pas gda'/ khos skur debs kyin glu blangs pas mkha' 'gro nams khros te/ gtor ma nam mkha' la 'phar ba la sogs pa byung/ bla mas snod dang mi ldan par dgongs nas/ rgyug cig song la sogs pa'i gda' mang po byung bas/ Khams pa'i grwa pa rang gnong yod pa'i stobs kysis sgo mi thobs/”; “Having dared to dedicate his life for the sake of the teachings, [dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan] thought of going to lHo Bal. He studied rudimentary [local] language. He stayed there waiting for travelling companions. Three Khams pa monks came together. He asked: “Where are you going to?”; they replied: “We are going to lHo Bal”. He added: “Well then, since I [plan] to do likewise, should we go together?”. While he went inside [mGos's residence] to wish good health (*snyun gsol*) to the *bla ma lo tsa ba*, the Khams pa monks had left. He then run hoping to catch them, but the bridge on the side of gNya' nam past the villages had crumbled. At a forested expanse of land before reaching the village and bridge on the side of Bal po, he hanged the book entrusted to him by his uncle from a tree and stayed there to sleep. After leaving the next day early in the morning, having walked until the sun got warm, he realised that he had left the book behind. He thought: “Although there is no use of a Tibetan book since I am on my way to rGya gar, I would accumulate defilements

Pham thing pa 'Jigs med grags pa and, in particular, studied bDe mchog and Kye rdor under this master.⁷⁴

if I abandon the religious book". He retraced his steps and went back to get it. Hunters had burnt the forest in order to drag out (*gshor ba*) wild animals, but despite the forest was burnt down, the tree from which the book was hanging was not burnt down. Thinking that it must be particularly useful, he took it along and went on. He also caught up with the Khams pa monks, and arrived to the centre of Bal po. Having asked: "Who is the master of the *gSang sngags rDo rje theg pa* cycle?", he was told that bla ma 'Jigs med grags pa of Bal po Pham thing pa was its master. Together with the Khams pa monks, he went to see bla ma Pham thing pa. When a *tshogs kyi 'khor lo* was celebrated, the Khams pa monks were lacking the consecrating material. (p.407) They said: "Bal Pham thing, Pham thing (sic: twice)! If one looks at him from distance, he has a great fame. After seeing him from close distance, he is an old ox dressed in silk". Since they kept speaking irreverently (*skur debs*) and sang songs, the *mkha' 'gro ma* got angry, and it happened that the *gtor ma* soared (*'phar ba*) in the sky. Having thought: "They are not [good] recipients of the *bla ma*'s [teachings]", many signs (*gda' sic for brda'*) materialised uttering [words] such as: "Go away hastily" (p.407 line 2) Due to the effect of shamefulness, the Khams pa monks did not dare to open his door".

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.8 line 33–p.9 line 1): "sNa nam Tshong 'du su a tsa ra la zas skad chu skad slob kyin bsdad pas/ nyin gcig Khams pa'i grwa pa 'ga' byung/ khyed gar 'gro dris pas dang por Bal yul du 'gro/ de nas rGya gar du 'gro/ bla ma dang rten khyad can la byin rlabs zhu zer/ 'o na nga yang 'gro bla ma khams bde byas la yong (p.9) gi byas nas bla ma can phyin phyag 'tshal/'"; "[dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan] stayed at sNa nam Tshong 'du to study rudimentary language (*zas skad chu skad*, lit. "language for food and water") from an *a tsa ra*. One day a few Khams pa monks came. He asked them: "Where are you going to?". They said: "We are going to Bal yul and then we go to rGya gar. We beg the blessings of extraordinary *bla ma*-s and sacred images". He asked: "If so, I wish I come along". He asked the *bla ma* whether he was in good health (p.9) and permission to leave".

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.9 lines 7–9) adds: "De nas byon pas grogs kyi rjes yang zin Bal yul mthil du slebs/ 'di na chos su mkhas dris pas dpal 'Jigs med grags pa bya ba Na ro'i dngos slob chos nams bum pa gang byo'i tshul du thob pa'i grub thob gcig Pi pi ha ra na bzhugs kyi yod zer/ der phyin pas bla ma dang mjal/'"; "[dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan] then left and caught up with the [Khams pa] companions. They arrived at Bal po mthil. Having asked around: "Who is the [supreme] master of the teachings?", people told him: "dPal 'Jigs med grags pa is the direct disciple of Na ro. He is the *grub thob* who obtained teachings in the manner of a recipient of whatever was there to be received. He stays at Pi pi ha ra". He went there and met the *bla ma*".

74. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.407 line 3–p.408 line 1): "Lo tsa ba nyid la nyes pa med pas/ bla ma rjes su 'dzin par zhus te/ tshogs kyi 'khor lo bskor bas/ bla ma de thugs gyes par gyur nas/ thog mar sGra dang Tshad ma blangs shing/ de nas dGyes pa rdo rje dang/ bDag med ma'i dkyil 'khor du dbang bzhi yongs rdzogs par bskur bas/ lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes ngo 'phrod cing/ bslab tshig gu dang gtum mo la sogs pa'i bskyangs pas rtogs pa mchog tu gyur nas/ dGyes pa rdo rje'i rGyud gsum 'grel dang bcas pa dang/ gzhan yang rGyud 'grel gdams pa du ma thugs su chud cing/ bla ma la chos thun de la gser gyi mandala phul/ Bod du byon khar/ Bal po'i rten byin rlabs can mchod pa rgyas pa phul zhing/ bla ma la'ang tshogs kyi 'khor lo dang/ 'bul ba rgya chen pos mnyes par mdzad/ khyad par 'Phags [a shing kun gyi drung du/ mchod pa rgya chen po dang/ dGyes pa rdo rje'i sgrub mchod mdzad nas/ bdag gis blangs pa'i chos 'di nams/ zang zing

Their meeting must have happened quite late in the life of Pham thing pa the eldest and thus towards the end of the 11th century. The birth date of Pham thing pa the eldest given in the *bstan rtsis* of Sum pa mkhan po's *chos 'byung*—the year of the dragon 1004 (see above)—seems reasonable in the light of those assigned to his teacher Nā ro pa. Although no chronological reference is provided in the sources for the getting together of Pham thing pa and dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan, a point in favour of this view is based on pure genealogical grounds. Two generations of dPyal clan members should be accommodated between Se tsa dMar ru, who

lta ci smos te/ lus sreg pa yang mi lta bar don du gnyer ba rnams la sbyin par bya'o/ snyam du thugs skyed pa na/ dGyes pa rdo rje'i lha dgu dkyil 'khor zhal gzigz shing/ nam mkha' la rtsa ba'i sngags sgrogs pa gsan te byin rlabs chen po zhugs par gyur la/ de dus kyi sgrub pa'i (p.408) mandala yang ding sang gi bar du gzims khang na bzhugs pa lags//"; "The *lo tsa ba*, being himself without defects, requested [dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan] to be his follower. [The dPyal pa] performed a *tshogs kyi 'khor lo*, and the *bla ma* was pleased. [Pham thing pa] initially imparted *sGra* and *Tshad ma* upon him, and then gave him the four empowerments into the dGyes pa rdo rje and bDag med ma'i *dkyil 'khor*-s completely. Hence, he made excellent realisations by means of the *khrid* (*khrid bskyangs*) [of practices] such as *bslabs tshig gu* ("seed of training"?) and *gtum mo*. He mastered *rGyud gsum* of dGyes pa rdo rje and its commentary including the branches and also many instructions concerning *rGyud* and commentaries. For every section of teachings, he offered the *bla ma* a golden *mandala*. Upon his departure to Tibet, he gave extensive offerings to the receptacle holders of Bal po. He [also] performed a *tshogs kyi 'khor lo* and gave extensive offerings to his *bla ma* to make him happy. In particular, having given an extensive offering and a dGyes pa rdo rje *grub mchod* at 'Phags pa shing kun, upon generating the thought of compassion "May I offer the teachings I have learned to those seeking for the essence, who have left aside everything material and did not care for their body and life", he had the vision of the *dkyil 'khor* of the nine deities of dGyes pa rdo rje and heard the root sound of its *mantra*. Hence a great blessing came to him. (p.408) A *mandala* that he made at that time is still at present preserved in [the sMan lung] *gzims khang*".

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.9 lines 15–20): "Dang por bcom ldan 'das ma bDag med dkyil 'khor tu dbang bskur bar zhus/ de nas dGyes pa rdo rje'i dkyil 'khor du dbang bskur/ rGyud gsum man ngag dang bcas pa gnang/ Kye'i rdo rje la 'grel pa mi 'dra ba bcu gnyis dang bcas pa gsan/ Bha wa bha tas mdzad pa'i 'grel pa yang bsgyur bya'o/ gzhan 'grel pa phal cher thugs su tshud/ gzhan rgyud dang man ngag mang du gsan sgom pa gtum mo sbar ba la sems bzung/ de nas bslabs tshig ring mo la sogs pa la sems bzung cing/ 'khrid bka' thams cad tshar bar zhus/ chos thun re la gser gyi mandala re phul/ Bal por bzhugs/ de nas Bal po'i rten rnams la mchod pa re phul byin rlabs zhus/ khyad par du 'Phags pa shing kun gyi drung du mandala phul//"; "He first received the empowerment to the *dkyil 'khor* of bcom ldan 'das ma bDag med [ma], then the empowerment to the *dkyil 'khor* of dGyes pa rdo rje. He was given the *man ngag* of *rGyud gsum*. He received twelve different commentaries on Kye rdo rje. The commentary written by Bha wa bha ta came [to him], too. Moreover, he learned most commentaries. Furthermore, he received many *rGyud* and *man ngag*, and trained his mind in meditation to ignite the *gtum mo* [practice]. He trained his mind to learn long passages. He received complete explanations and oral teachings. For every section of teachings, he offered a golden *mandala*. He remained in Bal po (i.e. did not go to rGya gar). He then made an offering each to the sacred images of Bal po and received their blessings. In particular he offered a *mandala* to 'Phags pa shing kun. He offered prayers to the images of Bal po".

was still active although quite old in the forties of the 11th century, and dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan who went to Bal po and met Pham thing pa.

dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan returned to Tibet where he diffused the teachings he had received.⁷⁵ His *lo tsa ba* work on the bDe mchog literature became known as bDe mchog “in the translations of dPyal”. Since then the dPyal family was especially devoted to bDe mchog and Kye rdor, the early two of their four *yi dam*.

75. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.408 lines 1–5): “De nas Bod phyogs phyag phebs te/ gSang sngags rnying ma'i bshad srol mdzad pas/ mkha' 'gro ma rDo rje bdud 'dul zhes pa'i ma jo rgan mo yod pa na re/ bla ma lo tsa ba lHo Bal du byon pa'i chos 'dra mi bdog zhus pas/ thog mar dbang gis rgyud smin par byed dgos gsungs pas/ mos zhu ba po byas nas dGyes pa rdo rje'i dbang bskur/ rGyud la 'grel pa mi 'dra ba drug gi bshad bka' gtsug te/ gSang sngags gsar rnying dar bar mdzad la/ rGyud 'grel dang/ chos phran sgyur la sogs pa bstan pa'i bya ba rgya chen po mdzad cing/ long spyod don yod par bya ba'i phyir/ sMan lung mchod khang gi gtsug lga khang sku gsung thugs kyi rten du mas spras shing/ mchod pa'i sprin rgya mtsho dang bcas pa bzhengs te/ rab tu gnas pa dga' ston chen po mdzad la/ de nas nang du yang dag 'jog pa'i ngang nas/ dgung lo drub bcu rtsa brgyad la ngo mtshar ba'i ltas du ma dang bcas pas sku lus ma spangs te/ Sangs rgyas kyi zhing khams nam par dag par gshegs so/”; “[bSod nams rgyal mtshan] then returned to Tibet and, after teaching the oral tradition of *gSang sNgags rnying ma*, there was one old nun who was [the manifestation of] the wrathful form of mkha' 'gro ma rDo rje bdud 'dul, who asked him: “Does not the *bla ma lo tsa ba* have some kind of teachings after going to lHo Bal?”, he said: “[One's] consciousness must be ripened by means of an empowerment”. She pleaded him and he gave her the empowerment of dGyes pa rdo rje. He thus introduced the *bshad bka'* of the six different commentaries on *rGyud* [on that occasion]. Having diffused both *gSang sNgags gsar rnying*, he gave a great contribution to the teachings, such as that he translated Tantric commentaries and minor literary works. In order to make good use of his wealth, he ornamented the *gtsug lag khang* of sMan lung *mchod khang* with receptacles of body, speech and mind; gave the “ocean of clouds offering” and threw a great feast for the consecration. In meditation posture, he went from its interior to the paradise of Sangs rgyas at the age of sixty-eight amidst many extraordinary signs and without leaving his body behind”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.9 lines 23–27): “De nas Bod du byon/ sku tshe'i bstod la sNgags rnying ma'i grwa pa btsugs/ bar du gSar rnying gnyis ka dar/ sku tshe'i smad la rNying ma nub/ gSar ma dang dar byung bas/ nga'i pha chos nub tu phang gsung nas/ gSang ba snying po tshar re'i gdal po gcig long gsung gda' de'i dus mkha' 'gro ma rDo rje bdud 'dul ma zer ba'i ma jo rgan mo cig yod pa des/ bla ma lo tsa bas lHo Bal du byon pa'i chos kyi skyos ma cig zhu zer bas thog mar dbang gi rgyud smin par byed dgos pas dGyes pa rdo rje'i dbang bskur/ rGyud la 'grel drug gi rjes su 'brangs ba'i bshad pa btsugs so/”; “[bSod nams rgyal mtshan] then returned to Tibet. He said: “In the earlier part of [my] life I was made to be a monk of *sNgags rnying ma*; in the middle part I diffused both *gSar* [and] *rNying*; in the later part I left *rNying ma* and took to diffuse *gSar ma* [alone]. I have abandoned (*nub tu phang*) the religious [tradition] of my ancestors. I used [my] time on each occasion to make the true essence all-pervasive”. At that time, there was one old *ma jo* (“nun”), namely mkha' 'gro ma rDo rje bdud 'dul ma. She asked one gift of the teachings for which the *bla ma lo tsa ba* had gone to Bal po. Since, first, she needed to ripen [her consciousness]

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun deals to a minimum amount with the laymen of the family and secular activities, a literary focus that is missing in the few other sources dealing with the people of sMan lung and Thar pa gling.

One reason for the wealth of the dPyal is that they were a family of merchants in that period. bSod nams rgyal mtshan's younger brother Byang chub rgyal mtshan was the secular member of the generation and the chieftain of the dPyal clan. He imposed his authority over unspecified herdsmen and amassed a considerable fortune pursuing the family's occupation of trade. He laboured to remove barriers to commerce from his land up to the border of China.⁷⁶ This is a clue that, with the downfall of the *lha sras btsan po* dynasty which marked the end of the imperial period, the dPyal found a new avatar for themselves and from ministers to the kingdom they became merchants.

An indicator of the considerable material fortune that the dPyal clan accumulated by recycling themselves from ministers to merchants is that, back to Tibet, dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan made an impressive array of receptacles of the three bodies at sMan lung. The most wondrous was a life-size statue of rDo rje sems dpa' in solid silver, made by a Kashmiri artist in his native style.⁷⁷ The workmanship of the statue is a proof that masters working in this

by means of an empowerment, he entrusted her with the empowerment of dGyes pa rdo rje and the exposition of the *rjes gnang* of six Tantric commentaries”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.9 line 35–p.10 line 1): “dGung lo drug cu rtsa brgyad la sa g.yo ba dang/ gnas grub la sogs pa'i ltas dang bcas nas dag pa'i (p.10) zhing du gshegs so/”; “Aged sixty-eight, amidst signs such as earthquake and thunder, (p.10) he passed into a realm of purity”.

76. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.10 lines 1–3): “gCung po Byang chub rgyal mtshan ni sNgags kyi nus pa dang mthu dang byin rlabs che bas gzhan gyi mi rdzi zhing pha rol zil gyis gnon pa'i stobs kyi rGya dkar dang rGya nag gi bar du 'gro bo la sus kyang mi 'tshe ba'i rgya gtsugs/ tshong dpon mdzad pas 'byor ba mi zad pa la longs spyod cing/ chos la mchod pa dang phong ba la sbyin gtong mdzad/”; “[dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan]’s younger brother Byang chub rgyal mtshan, owing to the power of *sngags* and his greatness in performing *mthu* and bestowing blessings, subdued all herdsmen and enemies. He introduced the system that everyone should be mutually supportive [in the lands] between rGya dkar (Gangetic India) and rGya nag (China). Being a merchant, he accumulated wealth consisting of inexhaustible acquisitions, made offerings to the religion and gave donations to the poor”.

77. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.9 lines 27–30): “De nas 'byor ba don yod par bya ba'i phyir/ dpal rDo rje sems dpa' dpa' rgyu dngul dkar bre chen bzhi cu zhe bzhi la/ dngul dkar bur lugs dang Kha che'i bzo bo mkhas pas Kha che'i bzo dang mthun par gar bu ma'i tshad du bzhengs te/ thugs kha na bcom ldan 'das Thub pa chen po'i chos 'khor ba'i dus kyi bzhugs khri'i dum bu dPyal Se rtsa dmar ru'i dbu skra ring srel/ thugs dam phreng ba rnams bzhugs so/”; “Then in order to make [the family’s] wealth beneficial, a master artist from Kha che made the statue of dpal rDo rje sems dpa' with forty-four *bre chen* of white silver, cast in solid white silver in the workmanship of Kha che. [The statue of] bCom ldan 'das Thub pa chen po in the act of turning the wheel of the teachings was placed in the area [of the statue’s] heart after installing the relics of dPyal Se (spelled so) rtsa dMar ru’s hair and rosary inside its base”. Also see *Myang chos 'byung* (p.139 lines 3–4).

idiom were active in Central Tibet during the apogee of *bstan pa phyi dar*, a phase marked by the presence of artists from Kha che in sTod mNga' ris skor gsum but by a more sporadic frequentation of dBus gTsang.⁷⁸

The life example handed down to his successors by dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan was bound to make the tradition of the dPyal clan distinctive in the panorama of Buddhist practice in Central Tibet. By following Se tsa dMar ru's example in the search of teachings in the lands of Buddha Shakya mu ni, he developed the religious practice of the dPyal into a fully fledged religious system and gave continuity to it.

He opened up a new front in the south—the Kathmandu Valley—as a major destination and source of inspiration for the people in his family. In Bal po he was instrumental in introducing important teachings into the religious system of the dPyal clan. From then on, rGya gar and Bal po were the sources of the dPyal clan members' religious formation.

The pillars of their tradition had been erected. Old and New *Tantra*—the latter focusing on the *sNgags gsar ma* system of *rNal 'byor rgyud*—were transmitted to the next generations. The dPyal clan traced its religious training, besides sMri ti, to the spiritual bequest left by Nā ro pa.

In the generation of the cadet line originated from Se tsa dMar ru, the one contemporary with dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan, the latter's cousin lo tsa ba Shes rab 'od zer went to rGya gar, studied with a *pandi ta* by the name of Sadhu kirti (spelled Satu kirti in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*) and became an accomplished translator of religious texts, unidentified in the text. His work earned him a place of preeminence among the *lo tsa ba-s*.⁷⁹ His brother dPyal sGom kyi pa was a religious master whose contributions are largely forgotten.

78. A statue at rKyang bu, attributed by its inscription to Ma ti from Pantsora, was photographed by Maraini and published by Tucci (*Indo Tibetica* IV,1 p.103 and p.105, *Tibet, Archaeologia Mundi* p.192, n.113 and pl.70). The statue is assessed stylistically by Amy Heller as a work from Kashmir transferred to gTsang (personal communication). I am grateful to her for this insight. This fits well into the context because rKyang bu was a stronghold of *bstan pa phyi dar sTod lugs* in gTsang. The presence of stray religious objects made in the style of Kashmir and probably coming from sTod mNga' ris skor gsum to Central Tibet is, therefore, not uncommon. Rather more unusual is the case of the sMan lung rDor rje sems dpa' documented as having been made in gTsang by an artist from Kashmir.

79. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.25 line 35–p.26 line 4): “Di la sras gnyis byung pa'i gcen po lo tsa (p.26) ba Shes rab 'od zer dang gcung sGom kyi pa'o/ lo tsa bas rGya gar byon pas pandi ta Satu kirti la sogs pa mang po'i zhabs la gstugs te sGra Tshad dang mDo sNgags kyi chos mang po mkhyen cing/ Bod du phebs nas kyang 'gyur mang po mdzad/ lo tsa ba brgya rtsa bryad nang mtshan yin/ bzhugs gnas Srad po la mthil mdzad do/ dPyal sGoms kyi pa ni yab chos rnying ma la mkhas shing sgrub pa la brtson pas grub pa'i dbang phyug tu gyur to//”; “He (i.e. dPyal ston Shes rab blo gros) had two sons, the elder lo tsa (p.26) ba Shes rab 'od zer and the younger sGom kyi pa. The *lo tsa ba* went to rGya gar and bowed to the feet of many [masters], such as pandi ta Satu kirti. He mastered many teachings of *sGra, Tshad [ma]* and *mDo sNgags*. He went back to Tibet and

The third *yi dam* of the dPyal

KUN DGA' RDO RJE AND HA NGU DKAR PO

In line with his clan's system, dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje, the prominent member of the family in the next generation, was imparted the Old and New *Tantra*-s by his father bSod nams rgyal mtshan.

bSod nams rgyal mtshan died when Kun dga' rdo rje was in his teens, so his son completed his studies of *Tshad ma* with Khyung Rin chen grags, one of the four major *Pramāṇa* disciples of rNgog Blo ldan shes rab (1059–1109).⁸⁰ This assigns the teachings received by Kun dga' rdo rje from Khyung Rin chen grags to an unspecified year after water bird 1093 which marked rNgog lo tsa ba's return from Kha che but perhaps well within the 12th century.⁸¹

Kun dga' rdo rje received *Yo ga* from sNur Nyi ma 'od zer, a fact that, in the absence of dates, concurs with the reference to his studies under Khyung Rin chen grags to place the dPyal master towards the end of *bstan pa phyi dar*. sNur must have imparted him the renowned *Yo*

made many translations. He has the distinction of being included among the 108 *lo tsa ba*. He elected residence at the centre of Srad po. dPyal sGoms (spelled so) kyi pa learned the ancestral religious system [which is *sNgags*] *rnying ma*, persevered in his meditation and became [ultimately] a lord of spiritual attainments”.

80. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.408 lines 5–7): “De nyid la mkhas shing grub pa brnyes pa'i slob ma'i tshogs bsam gyi mi khyab nas/ bla ma nyid kyi sku gsung thugs las bsrung pa'i sras bla ma lo tsā ba Kun dga' rdo rje gtso bor gyur pa yin la/ de nyid dgung lo gzhon nu la yab chos gSang sngags gsar rnying dang/ Yo ga sNur lugs mkhas par mkhen cing/ [note: dgung lo bcu drug bzhes nas/ yab dPyal lo tsa ba bSod nams rgyal mtshan sku gshegs shing/ de'i dgongs rdzogs la sogs pa mdzad nas/ bla ma de nyid kyi slob ma nams 'tshogs te/ slob dpon jo sras la khyed kyis kyang bla ma'i sku tshab bgyis so gsungs chos rem ma chod/ nged bu slob nams kyang mi 'gyes par chos nyan bya'o zhes zhush pa [note by the author of the essay: [FEW WORDS DEFACE] Nyang stod du Khyung Rin chen grags la Tshad ma nams bslabs pa mthar phyin/”]; “Although [bSod nams rgyal mtshan] had an unconceivable number of disciples who were savants and had made spiritual attainments, his son bla ma lo tsa ba Kun dga' rdo rje, born from his body, speech and mind, was the main one. During his youth, [Kun dga' rdo rje] masterly learned *gSang sNgags gsar rnying* which were the teachings of his father, and *Yo ga* according to system of sNur. In Nyang stod, he completed his studies of *Tshad ma rnam nges* under Khyung Rin chen grags”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.10 lines 8–9): “Bla ma bSod nams rgyal mtshan gyi sras/ Kun dga' rdo rje de/ yab chos gSang sngags gsar rnying ma lus pa la mkhas shing Yo ga sNub lugs kyang mkhyen la/ Nyang stod Khyung po Rin chen grags la Tshad ma rnam nges kyang gsan te shin du mkhas pa gyur/”]; “Bla ma bSod nams rgyal mtshan's son, Kun dga' rdo rje, was a master of the ancestral religious tradition of *gSang sngags rnying ma* without omissions and also learned *Yo ga* sNub (i.e. sNur) lugs. He received *Tshad ma rnam nges* from Nyang stod Khyung Rin chen grags and became especially knowledgeable [in this discipline]”.

81. In 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub's *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* (p.48 line 2–p.50 line 2) there is a speech attributed to 'Bre Shes rab 'bar. It is in fact a long list of great spiritual masters whose activity is said to have coincided with the life of Rwa lo tsa ba rDo rje grags (b.1012). The

ga sTod lugs of Upper West Tibet, the one transmitted by Rin chen bzang po to his disciples from mNga' ris skor gsum and meant to be diffused in this kingdom.⁸² The inclusion of dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje in the lineage of *Yo ga sTod lugs*—and of sNur before him—shows that, differently from what had happened until then, the tradition was eventually transmitted outside mNga' ris stod, like *Yo ga sMad lugs*.

Kun dga' rdo rje followed in the footsteps of his predecessors but, in doing so, his endeavours were not simply imitative. He is to be recognised as one of the major dPyal masters because his innovations included religious teachings which did not yet belong to the tradition of his family. Like his father, dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje went to Bal po in his youth, having felt that the education he had received until then was insufficient. During his sojourn in the Kathmandu Valley, which lasted for a lapse of time not specified in the sources, he received the teachings of rDo rje phag mo from Ha ngu dkar po.⁸³

latter is one of the masters who—the tradition says—had a long life—the improbable amount of 108 years is stated *ibid.* p.61 line 1).

The bulk of the activity of some masters in the list unfolded at the end of *bstan pa phyi dar*, thus making them later contemporaries of Rwa lo tsa ba, assuming that he was not already dead by then. 'Bre Shes rab 'bar himself belonged to at least one generation—but more probably two—after him, for he was a disciple of rNgog lo tsa ba Blo ldan shes rab (1057–1109). This applies to sNur Nyi ma 'od zer, too, a disciple of gNyal pa Nyi ma shes rab who, as a young man, went to sTod mNga' ris skor gsum soon before the Tho ling *chos 'khor* of 1076.

I introduce here this argument on the chronology of these *bstan pa phyi dar* masters on account of the inclusion of dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje among them. In my view, he was active already in the 12th century. Kun dga' rdo rje received the *Yo ga* transmitted to sNur Nyi ma 'od zer, as I show immediately below in the text. Probably being a disciple of sNur (also see the next note), he was an even later contemporary of the masters mentioned here.

82. The circumstances of the transfer of *Yo ga sTod lugs* teachings to dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje remain unsubstantiated, because *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.408 line 6) does not specify the identity of the master who imparted them upon him. It could have been sNur himself, but there is no trace of dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje as a next lineage holder in the transmission of the *sTod lugs* teachings that had come to him.
83. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.408 line 7–p.409 line 4): “Bal po'i yul du byon te/ gnas lnga rig pa'i pandi ta A ma ra tsandra dang/ Su kha shrī bhadra la sGra dang Tshad ma bslab pa sngon su song nas/ dGyes rdor dang (409) bDe mchog dang/ Dus 'khor la sogs pa'i rgyud 'grel mang po gsan cing/ thugs su chud la/ khyad par du grub thob Ha ngu dkar po la rDo rje rnal 'byor ma Zhal gnyis ma/ dBu bcad ma Don grub ma rnams kyi byin brlabs dang/ gZhung drug sbyin bsreg zhal gyi gdams rnams zhus te/ sKyed pa'i rim pa dang/ rDzogs rims snyom pa drug la bslabs pas grub pa brnyes te/ yi dam lha'i zhal gzigs shing/ rtogs pa khyad par can skyes la/ bla ma Ha ngu dkar po nyid kyang thugs mnyes pas/ grub thob A wa dhu ti pa'i Phyi rol mchod pa'i mandala dang/ rus rgyan/ bla ma nyid ting shag la sogs pa gnang zhing/ da lta'ang gzims khang na bzhugs so/ lung bstan nas Bod du byon/”;
- “[dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje] then proceeded to the land of Bal po. He first went to study *sGra* and *Tshad ma* under A ma ra tsandra and Su kha shrī bhadra, *pandi ta-s* of the

Deb ther sngon po (p.476 lines 4–5) records the name of Ha ngu dkar po, Kun dga' rdo rje's teacher, as bSod nam s'byung gnas bzang po.⁸⁴ This is significant because the name Ha

five sciences, and received many Tantric commentaries, such as [those] on dGyes (spelled so) rdor, (p.409) bDe mchog and Dus 'khor, and mastered them. In particular, he received from grub thob Ha ngu dkar po the blessings of rDo rje rNal 'byor ma Zhal gnyis ma (i.e. rDo rje phag mo), dBu bcad ma (“with severed head”) and Don grub ma, and instructions on *gZhung drug sbyin bsreg*. After learning *sKyed pa 'i rim pa* (*bsKyed rim*) and *rDzogs rims snyom pa drug*, he had spiritual realisations. He had a vision of the *yi dam lha*. Having developed extraordinary realisations, bla ma Ha ngu dkar po was pleased and gave him [items] such as the *mandala* and the bone ornaments of grub thob A wa dhu ti pa [meant for] the worship by the Phyi rol (Hindus), and the cymbals of the *bla ma* himself. They are kept still at present in the [sMan lung] *gzims khang*. As prophesied, he went back to Tibet”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun (p.10 lines 10–14): “Yon tan gyis mchog ma shes pas Bal por byon te/ gnas lnga pnadi ta/ A ma ra tsandra dang/ Pu ka shwri bha tra la sGra Tshad ma slob pa mthar phyin nas/ dGyes rdor dang bDe mchog/ Dus 'khor la sogs pa' i rGyud 'grel mang po gsan zhing/ khyad par du/ bla ma Ham ngu dkar po' i drung du/ rDo rje rNal 'byor ma' i byin rlabs dang gzhung drug sbyin sreg dang bcas pa' i zhal gdams zhus nas sgrub pas yi dam mang po' i zhal gzigs shing dngos grub gngang la bla ma de yang thugs mnyes nas Phag mo' i thod sku dang Mi tri pa' i phyi rol mchod pa' i mandala/ kha tam kha dang/ rus rgyan/ ting ting shags la sogs pa byin rlabs kyi gngang sbyin dang lung bstan dang bcas pa gngang nas Bod du phebs/”;

“Not having experienced outstanding attainments, [Kun dga' rdo rje] went to Bal po. He studied *sGra* and *Tshad ma* under the *pandi ta-s* of the five sciences, A ma ra tsandra and Pu ka shwri bha tra, up to the ultimate [stage]. He received many commentaries on *Tantra-s*, such as dGyes rdor, bDe mchog and Dus 'khor. In particular he received from bla ma Ham (spelled so) ngu dkar po the instructions on the transmission of rDo rje rnal 'byor ma plus the related six doctrines and *sbyin sreg*. Having meditated, he had visions of many *yi dam* and manifested spiritual powers. The *bla ma* was pleased. [Ham ngu dkar po] issued prophecies and gave him presents, such as a *thod sku* (“image painted on a skull”) [depicting] Phag mo, a *mandala* [used] by Mi (spelled so) tri pa for his external worship, a *ka tam kha*, bone ornaments and *ting ting shags*. [Kun dga' rdo rje] then returned to Tibet”.

Bu ston rin po che chos 'byung (p.204 lines 14–15): “dPyal Kun dga' rdo rjes Bal po Hang ngu dkar po bsten/ pandi ta sTong nyid Ting nge 'dzin spyang drangs te man ngag [note: Pag mo gzhung drug sogs] mang po zhus/”;

“dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje attended upon Bal po Hang (spelled so) ngu dkar po. He invited *pandi ta sTong nyid Ting nge 'dzin* [to sMan lung], and received many secret teachings [note: such as *Phag mo gzhung drug*]”.

In his treatment of the lineage of Indian and Newar teachers from which dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje eventually accessed teachings, especially those of rDo rje Phag mo, 'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal says that the rDo rje Phag mo tradition he received was the one of A wa dhu ti pa which was transmitted in Bal po by Jinadatta, aka rGyal bas byin lDong ngar/dar ba (*Deb ther sngon po* p.473 lines 12–15, *Blue Annals* p.391–392). In turn, the rDo rje Phag mo tradition initiated by dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje became spread into five lineages (*Deb ther sngon po* p.477 line 14–p.479 line 9, *Blue Annals* p.396–397).

84. A passage in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.139 lines 7–17) has this to say about dPyal pa Kun dga' rdo rje: “Khyad par bla ma Ha ngu dkar po la rDo rje rnal 'byor ma' i byin rlabs gZhung drug sbyin bsreg dang bcas pa gdams pa zhus grub pas yi dam zhal gzigs/ dngos grub gngang/ gnas sMan lung gi sa yul lung bstan/ bla ma Ha ngu mnyes/ gsung gi rten du Phag mo' i skor gyi rGya dpe gngang/ sku' i rten du Phag mo' i sku thang gngang/ dam tshig mi 'bral ba' i rten du thod sku/ ru rgyan/ ting shag sogs byin

ngu dkar po has been misinterpreted by several Tibetan historians who have taken it as the proper name of a master of rDo rje phag mo and other cults rather than a generic term which addresses a class of Newar religious practitioners. Elsewhere (see Vitali, “The transmission of *bsnyung gnas* in India, the Kathmandu Valley and Tibet (10th-12th centuries)”) I have adduced some evidence that records the names of these practitioners among the many others who interacted with well known Tibetan masters.⁸⁵

Owing to the activity of Kun dga’ rdo rje, in the sequence of acquisitions of *yi dam*-s into the religious system of the sMan lung dPyal, a third *yi dam*, rDo rje phag mo, was added to Kye rdor and bDe mchog.

After he returned to Tibet, Kun dga’ rdo rje engaged in the activity of imparting teachings, and *dPyal pa’i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* says that he had for disciples some of the most prestigious masters of his time.⁸⁶

r labs kyi dam tshig gnan/ slar yang lung yang bstan/ dPyal pa Kun dga’ rdo rjes pandi ta sTong nyid ting ’dzin Bod la gdan drangs/ khyad par sMan lung du gzhi phab ste gSang sngags kyi chos skor mang po dang man ngag mang po zhus shing bsgyur ba shin tu mang bar yod rnam la dPyal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje’i ’gyur dang dPyal pa’i chos skor zhes yongs su grags so/’; “In particular he received many instructions from bla ma Ha ngu dkar po, such as *rDo rje rnal ’byor ma’i sbyin brlabs, gZhung drug* and [its] *sbyin bsreg*. Having meditated, he had a vision of the *yi dam* (i.e. rDo rje phag mo) and obtained siddhic powers. He gave a description (*lung btsan*) of the locality of the holy place sMan lung. Bla ma Ha ngu was pleased. He offered him the Indian manuscripts of the cycle of Phag mo as *gsung gi rten*. He gave him the *sku thang* of Phag mo as *sku’i rten*. As a token of their reciprocal commitment, he offered him [objects symbolising] the vow that bestows blessings, such as the *thod sku* (i.e. a skull with a painted image?), *rus rgyan* (“bone ornaments”), and *ting shag* (“cymbals”) as tokens of unbreakable reciprocal commitment (*dam tshig mi ’bral ba’i rten*, *dam tshig* being repeated twice in the sentence). Again, he gave a prophecy. dPyal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje invited pandi ta sTong nyid Ting ’dzin to Tibet, who, in particular, stayed at sMan lung and [Kun dga’ rdo rje] received many cycles of teachings on *gSang sNgags* and many instructions. Concerning the most numerous translations that were accomplished, these were translations by dPyal pa Kun dga’ rdo rje, known as *dPyal pa’i chos skor*”.

85. On a few occasions in his life, Rwa lo tsa ba imparted teachings upon a congregation of 200 *ha du* (spelled so) (see *Rwa lo tsa ba’i rnam thar* f.91b line 4 for one of them). Stearns (*Luminous Lives* p.206–207 n.15) says that they were entrusted with the annual rites of Ratho Matsyendranath and cites *Chag lo tsa ba’i rnam thar* as his source. Among the several noted Tibetan masters who frequented these Kathmandu Valley practitioners, ’Brog mi lo tsa ba, too, had his *ha ngu dkar po* teacher, namely Hang du (spelled so) dkar po Shan ta bha dra (*Nyang ral chos ’byung* p.473 lines 12–13).

This is confirmed by two instances in *Chag lo tsa ba’i rnam thar* (Roerich transl., *The Biography of Dharmaswamin* p.54 and p.101). The latter proves that the term (spelled *hang du* in this work) refers to a class of Tantrists but Roerich in footnotes (respectively p.54 n.7 and p.101 n.3) says that it is a proper name.

86. Those prestigious disciples of Kun dga’ rdo rje included Sa chen Kun dga’ snying po (1092–1158); Khro phu lo tsa ba; sNubs rgyal rtsa Rin chen; Rwa rDo rje grags (1016–?), an improbable inclusion; and ’U yug pa dByar dbu ma pa (*dPyal pa’i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* p.409 lines 4–5).

Kun dga' rdo rje's cousin Nag po zhang lHa steng, the son of bSod nams rgyal mtshan's younger brother Byang chub rgyal mtshan, succeeded his father in the responsibility of the dPyal clan's secular affairs.⁸⁷ His leadership did not go unchallenged. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* says that he disseminated terror in the ranks of unspecified adversaries.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.10 lines 15–16) has a different assessment of his disciples. It reckons them as six, whom he defines as the most excellent ones. However, it mentions only three—Sa skya bSod nams rtse mo (1142–1182), most excellent in terms of birth; 'U yug pa dByar dBu ma pa, most excellent in terms of knowledge and Rang lhas pa sdeng pa Yang dag rdo rje, most excellent in terms of spiritual power. Among others, the *gdung rabs* adds his son, dPyal lo tsa ba Kun dga' grags pa, who obtained spiritual powers in a single life and with a single body (ibid. lines 20–21).

Other disciples of this dPyal master, such as dKon mchog 'bar and Za ston lo tsa ba, are recorded in Bu ston Rin chen grub's *bDe mchog chos 'byung* (p.111 line 7–p.112 line 3): “dMar Chos kyi rgyal mtshan la/ mNga' ris kyi ston pa dKon mchog 'bar zhes bya ba dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje la gtugs nas dPyal lugs kyi bDe dKyes Phag mo gzhai gdams dang bcas pa/ Kun (p.112) dga' rdo rje'i slob ma Za ston lo tsa ba la/ Phag mo'i mchog gdams khyad par gyi gdams pa la sogs pa rDzog Kun dga' la gtugs nas/ rDzog lugs kyi rGyud gsum man ngag dang bcas pa nams la mkhas par sbyangs des/ bla ma dMar chen po'i drung du yun ring du bstan nas/ Bha danta nas rgyud pa'i Lo nag dril gsum gyi dbang bka'/ rTsa rgyud kyi bshad bka'/ man ngag gi bka' dang bcas pa dang/ rgyal po'i sras 'Jigs med lha nas brgyud pa'i Lo hi pa'i dbang bka' bshad bka'/ de'i rgyab tu Dus 'khor gyi dbang mdor bstan la sogs pa'i man ngag nams legs par mnos so//”; “Concerning dMar Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, mNga' ris kyi ston pa dKon mchog 'bar attended upon dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje and [was given] teachings on bDe [mchog,] dGyes [rdor and] Phag mo according to the system of the dPyal. Kun (p.112) dga' rdo rje's disciple Za ston lo tsa ba attended upon rDzog Kun dga' [for teachings], such as the extraordinary instructions on Phag mo. Having attended upon rDzog Kun dga', he masterly learned the instructions on *rGyud gsum* according to the system of rDzog. Having attended upon bla ma dMar chen po for a long time, [Za ston lo tsa ba] excellently received the *dbang bka'* and the *bshad bka'* of the *rtsa rgyud* and the preaching of the *man ngag* of *Lo nag dril gsum* transmitted from Bha dan tha onwards; together with the *dbang bka'* and *bshad bka'* of Lo hi pa transmitted from 'Jigs med lha, the son of a king, onwards and, thereafter, the *man ngag* of [works], such as the abridged explications of Dus kyi 'khor lo”.

87. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.11 lines 3–6): “gCung po Byang chub rgyal mtshan gyi sras/ Nag po zhang lHa steng/ 'dod lha dang chos skyong grub shing las mGon dran du bkol bas dgra bgegs thams cad skrag par byed pa des yab kyi mdzad srol tshong dpon mdzad cing/ de dag gi Khri gsum gyi mdun du las sgo gsum gyi tshong bzang po la/ sho gam bsdu cing/ Khams pa dang rGya'i ja dar la sum cu sigs len pa dang/ Zho chu nas gnas sngon gyi bar la me tog shar ma bsud pa la sogs pa srol bzang po len pa'o/ de la Nag po zhang lHa'i rgyud pa Sra pe ba'o//”; “Nag po zhang lHa steng, the son of the younger brother Byang chub rgyal mtshan, attained [powers] over the 'dod lha-s and the *chos skyong* and activated [them for his benefit]. He bound mGon [po] to serve him, and disseminated terror among the ranks of noxious enemies. He was a merchant in the footsteps of his father. As for the profitable commerce across the three trade doors [converging] in front of Khri gsum, he continued [this] lucrative tradition. He collected customs revenues and received thirty consignments of Chinese tea and silk through the Khams pa [traders]. He also collected flowers growing in the green pastures along the Zho chu. The extraction of Nag po zhang lHa are the Sra pe pa”.

He traded with distant China receiving silk and tea frequently through Khams pa intermediaries. He also traded in flowers, which shows that the attention devoted to them by the Tibetans both in desertic areas and the greener ones of the east is at least millenary. But besides this detail the passage is important because it talks about three trade routes of the dPyal pa, which are not identified in the texts dealing with these people. They converged in front of Khri gsum (hence its name), manifestly a major centre of the dPyal clan. One of them was the eastern route allowing commerce with China; the other two are only ascertainable by guess work.⁸⁸ They probably headed south and one wonders whether, at least for some tracts, the noble families of gTsang extended jurisdiction over these routes, as in the case of the rGya 'i lam (the “route of the rGya [clan]”) leading to India from Nyang ro across 'Gos yul stod gsum (*Kha rag gNyos kyi gdung rabs* f.3b lines 4–6). Reference to the rGya 'i lam assigns it to a slightly earlier time than the one found in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun* (see Vitali, “Glimpses of the history of the rGya clan with reference to Nyang stod, lHo Mon and nearby lands (7th-13th century)” p.10–12).

Kun dga' rdo rje's activity back from Bal po also focused on major sites of the family. He built the *gtsug lag khang* at Khri gsum, adding a touch of dPyal pa religious dimension to it; a *lha khang* at Cung pa Ban tsho and a *mchod khang* at sMan lung.⁸⁹

88. Given the clan's trade interest, the dPyal *gyi lam* that led to China could either have been one of the three routes from Central Tibet to Khams and then farther on across A mdo. The other two routes could have been those to India and Bal po, the main centres of attraction for the members of the clan. The former may have led to Eastern India via Nyang ro and mGos yul stod gsum, the third one across gTsang and La stod lHo to the Kathmandu Valley. But all this is speculative.

89. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.409 line 5): “Khri gsum dang/ Khyung ban tshogs bzhi 'i lha khang ... bzhengs/””; “[Kun dga' rdo rje] extraordinarily established ... Khris (spelled so) gsum *lha khang* and the four divisions of the Khyung monks”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun (p.10 lines 23–24): “Bla ma des/ Khri gsum gyi gtsug lag khang dang Cung pa Ban mtsho 'i lha khang dang/ sMan lung mchod khang la sogs pa bsam gyi mi khyab pa bzhengs/””; “This *bla ma* built [temples] that mind cannot even conceive, such as the *gtsug lag khang* of Khri gsum, the *lha khang* of the Cung pa nan tsho (the “Cung pa monastic unit”) and the *mchod khang* at sMan lung”.

The spelling Khris gsum adopted in 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa's *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* strikes a similarity with Khris, one of the first two holy places established by Tshong dge upon his return to the same Nyang smad area after receiving the 'Dul ba vow in A mdo together with the other men of dBus gTsang. This area, where the dPyal and lCe had installed themselves still during the dynastic period, was the centre from where both Lo ston and Tsong dge expanded their sphere of influence. They were both native of Nyang smad.

Ne'u pandi ta, *sNgon gyi gtam me tog phreng ba* (p.39 lines 16–19) reads: “Tshong dges Nyang smad du Bya rgyus dang Khris gnyis bzung/ de nas Nyang stod Khu le Nyang ro rGyang ro mGo yul stod gsum la sogs par/ rGyang po dang Grang chung la sde pa mang du rgyas/””: “Tshong dge held

In the sphere of fine arts applied to the production of texts, Kun dga' rdo rje had several editions of manuscripts made in precious materials and with a wondrous manufacture that followed the one popular in India closely.⁹⁰ The poetical description of their features adds to the sophistication of the dPyal pa tradition and shows that Tibetans had manuscripts prepared in the ancient Indian manner.

His association with rDo rje phag mo was underlined at the time of his cremation. Kun dga' rdo rje passed at the age of forty-six. Depictions of this goddess appeared on his relics.⁹¹

In the days of Kun dga' rdo rje *bstan pa phyi dar* was drawing to a close in the rest of dBus gTsang, but this was not the case with the dPyal pa. The cultural pattern of getting religious teachings from rGya gar and Bal po that had characterised the Later Spread as a most important feature not only continued unabated with the sMan lung dPyal pa but received new impetus. While, in most cases during the same period, religious traditions had reached a point of sat-

Bya rgyus and Khriś in Nyang smad. He then added [to them] the communities at Nyang stod Khu le; at rGyang po and Grang chung in [areas] such as Nyang ro, rGyang ro and mGo yul stod gsum”.

Khriś was subsequently held by Kyi a tsa rya Ye shes dbang po (*Myang chos 'byung* p.156 line 16), a disciple of Lo ston.

90. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.409 line 5): “Rin po che'i mDo mangs ngo mtshar ba bzhengs shing/ rab tu gnas pa rgyas par mdzad/””; “[Kun dga' rdo rje] made an extraordinary *mDo mangs* in precious material and performed an extensive consecration”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.10 lines 23–25): “gSung rab ni rGya'i btsun mo gan shog srab 'jam la/ gser zhun mas bris pa'i mDo mang shin tu mtshar ba bzhengs pa ni/ rGya shog sngon po chos kyi byugs pa la/ btsor ma'i gser yig gser po 'od 'phro ba/ kun nas dangs pa yid bzhin mtsho'i steng/ ngur ba khyu lding phreng du dngar ba bzhin/””; “As to books, he bought thin paper from an old Indian woman. He made many extremely fine *mDo mang* written with melted gold. He used it on the sheets of Indian blue paper, so that the letters in pure (*btsor ma* spelled so for *btsos pa*) gold had a golden glare. They [looked] as if wish-fulfilling jewels, [emitted] from all of them, were suspended above [the pages] or as if a neatly arranged flock of ducks was floating [over them]”.

91. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.409 lines 6–7): “Grub pa mthar phyin mdzad la/ dung lo bzhi bcu rtsa drug la bde bar gshegs shing/ gdung bzhu ba'i brag gi ngos du ba 'khrig pa'i gseb na chos 'byung gi nang du bCom ldan 'das ma Zhal gnyis ma rang byon pa dang/ sku gdung la'ang bCom ldan 'das ma'i sku dang/ ring srel bsam gyi mi khyab pa byon/””; “[Kun dga' rdo rje] died at Shangs Brag dmar dpal gyi 'brang rgyas at the age of forty-six, after completing his meditation. On the *chos 'byung* (i.e. the diagram made by two intertwined triangles) [found] in the midst of the clouds of smoke of the cremation on a rocky surface, a bCom ldan 'das ma Zhal gnyis ma (i.e. rDo rje phag mo, who has a human and a pig face) was self originated. Inconceivable images of bCom ldan 'das ma and relics appeared from the remains”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.10 line 29): “dGung lo bzhi bcu rtsa drug pa bde ba can du thegs so/””; “He went to bDe ba can aged forty-six”.

uration—stability was all that their perpetrators practised—the dPyal pa kept reinvigorating their own. Kun dga' rdo rje did what the ancestor Se tsa dMar ru and his father had done.⁹²

KUN DGA' GRAGS AND SKYEG TSHA RDO RJE DRAG PO RTSAL

The other great inheritance transmitted among the dPyal clan, the one of lengthy sojourns in rGya gar, where the Noble Religion had its roots, equally continued beyond the end of *bstan pa phyi dar*. It was kept alive by Kun dga' grags, the son of Kun dga' rdo rje and the principal dPyal member of his generation.⁹³ Like his father, he did not have too long a life but enough to leave a significant mark in the tradition of the sMan lung dPyal pa.

He went to Ma ga dha, stayed there for thirteen years and mostly engaged in meditation. While he was at Rajgir, he blissfully emitted flames from his body owing to the blessings of his *yi dam*—which one of the three dPyal pa *yi dam* of those days?—and his *bla ma*, pandi

92. Another member of the dPyal, who however is not associated with rGya gar or Bal po but was a religious master trained in the family tradition, was Yon tan rgyal po, the grandson of mChog [rab] snying [po]. The latter was the dPyal pa who had pacified the internecine war among the Zhwa lu pa in the days of ICe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas (n.172). *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.26 lines 5–8) says: “Bla ma sGom kyi pa la sras gnyis byung pa'i che ba dPyal Yon tan rgyal pos yab chos gSang sngags gsar rmying ma lus pa mkhyen/ khyad par du Gyur pa gsang bdag Seng ge'i drung du/ rTsa rgyud gSang ba snying po dang Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgongs pa 'dus pa dang lo chen Be ro'i rGya gral Bod 'gram la sogs pa'i phrin las kyi rim par ci rigs par gsan//”; “Bla ma sGom kyi pa had two sons. The elder, dPyal Yon tan rgyal po mastered the innumerable [teachings of the] ancestral system of *gSang sngags gsar rmying*. In particular, from the Gyur pa master of secrets Seng ge he received '*Phrin las kyi rim pa* (“stages of action”), such as *Dang ma shen rgyal gsum* including *rTsa rgyud gsang ba snying po*, *Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi dgongs pa 'dus pa* and lo chen Be ro's *rGya 'gram Bod 'gram*. He learned all kinds of knowledge in stages”.

93. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.409 line 7–p.410 line 4): “De nyid kyi slob ma'i gtso bor gyur pa dPyal lo tsā ba Kun dga' grags te/ yab chos (p.410) ma lus par mkhyen cing/ Nyang stod grwa tshang du jo btsun la Tshad ma bslabs te mkhas par gyur nas/ rGya gar yul dBus su byon te/ pandi ta Shakya pra ba la brtens/ sGra Tshad ma sbyangs shing/ rGyud 'grel gdams pa du ma khong du chud cing/ Ri bo Bya rkang can grub pa mdzad pas/ bla ma dang yi dam gyi lha'i byin gyis blabs kyi bde bar 'bar/ dgag sgrub zhig/ 'dzin pa grol/ nyams rtogs rgyas la/ mkha' 'gro kyang/ sgrub pa byas na phun sum tshogs par gyur ro/ zhes lung bstan pas/ bla ma ni 'jig rten gyi grags pa la snying po med par dgongs te rang nyid [ONE-LETTER SYLLABLE UNREADABLE] por byin nas/ lHa ri glang po'i yar khud du sgrub pa snying por mdzad do/ dgung lo bzhi bcu rtsa bzhi la/ sgra 'od sa g.yog dang bcas te bde bar gshegs so/ bla ma de nyid kyi mched grogs kyang dBen pa bSod nams seng ge dang/ lHa lung pa rTag pa phyag na gnyis yin la/ de gsum ka la rTag pa Jo bzang gis zhus so//”; “The one who became his (i.e. Kun dga' rdo rje's) main disciple was dPyal lo tsa ba Kun dga' grags. He learned the teachings of his father (p.410) completely. Having mastered the study of *Tshad ma* with the *jo btsun* at Nyang stod grwa tshang, he went to rGya gar dBus (Magadha). He attended upon pandi ta Shakya pra ba, learned *sGra* and *Tshad ma* and was introduced by him to Tantric commentaries. Having meditated at Ri bo Bya rkang can (Rajgir), he became radiant with

ta Shakya pra ba. On the wayback to Tibet to perform a one year meditation, he spent time in Bal po practising *bsam gtan*. He planned to return to India but his wish never materialised. He died at the age of forty-four.

sKyeg/sKyog tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal, one of the two younger brothers of Kun dga' grags, although mostly neglected in the accounts of his family—he only appears in a brief genealogical notice in which his name is misspelled in the Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang edition of *Myang chos 'byung*,⁹⁴ and in a note found in the same text—was a master of Kye rdor of remarkable importance. The same note credits him with the practice of two of the four

bliss due to the blessings of the *bla ma* and *yi dam gyi lha*. He destroyed hindrances by means of his meditation. He freed himself from attachment. Having expanded his spiritual realisations, He received the prophecy from the *mkha' 'gro* saying that he would be successful in his meditation. He opted for solitude, thinking that worldly fame was meaningless. He quintessentially meditated high up in an altitude hermitage (*yar khud*) of lHa ri glang po. He died when he was aged forty-four amidst sounds, rays of light and an earthquake. The religious companions of this *bla ma* were dBen pa bSod nams seng ge and lHa lung pa rTag pa phyag na, two in all. rTag pa Jo bzang received [teachings] from these three”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.11 lines 11–15): “Bla ma Kun dga' rdo rje'i sras gsum las/ gcen po bla ma Kun dga' grags ni/ yab chos ma lus pa la slob dpon gyi go 'bangs thob nas/ Nyang stod Brang thang du jo btsun Khyung la Tshad ma slabs par gyur kyang/ chos 'tshol mi ngoms pa dang yab mes kyi bka' srol bkag pa'i phyir/ rGya gar yul dBus su byon nas/ mkhas brgub rnams kyi zhabs la btud nas/ sGra Tshad la mkhas par gyur nas/ rGyud 'grel dang/ gdam ma bzang mo du ma khong tu tshud cing lo gsum bzhugs nas/ da ni Bod du mkhas rnams gdan drangs la 'gro don bya snyam nas/ ri bo Bya rkang can du bla ma dang mkha' 'gro la tshogs mchod phul/”; “Among the three sons of bla ma Kun dga' rdo rje, the eldest was bla ma Kun dga' grags pa. After attaining the status of master of the entire ancestral religious tradition, he studied *Tshad ma* under jo btsun Khyung [Rin chen grags] at Nyang stod Brang thang and become a master [of this discipline]. Nonetheless he was not satisfied with the teachings he had searched for. The ancestral tradition had been stopped. So, he went to rGya gar dBus yul (Magadha). He attended upon many *mkhas grub* (“*siddha*-s and savants”) and, having become fluent in *sGra* and *Tshad [ma]*, spent thirteen years during which he was given access to Tantric commentaries and many profound teachings. Wishing at that time to benefit sentient beings by inviting Tibetan masters, [before doing so] he offered a *tshogs mchod (ganapuja)* to the *bla ma*-s and *mkha' 'gro*-s at ri bo Bya rkang can (Rajgir)”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.11 lines 20–22): “Bal yul la sogs pa'i gnas rnams su bsgom kho na mdzad pas lo sgom zhes grags la Bod du byon nas kyang spros pa dor ste/ lHa ri glang po'i Yar khud du sgrub pa mdzad pas Phyag rgya chen po'i dngos grub thob nas dgung lo bzhi beu rtsa bzhi la mKha' spyod du bde bar gshegs so/”; “Having exclusively performed meditation at holy places such as Bal yul, he returned to Tibet after his *lo sgom* (“one year meditation”). He dropped the project [of going back south] and performed meditation at Yar khud of lHa ri glang po. He was a true *grub thob* of *Phyag rgya chen po*. He passed to the bliss of mKha' spyod at the age of forty-four”.

94. The genealogical passage concerning him in this edition of *Myang chos 'byung* (p.140 lines 4–5) wrongly reads: “Bla ma Kun dga' rdo rje'i drag po rtsal”, whereas it is originally written: “Bla ma Kun dga' rdo rje'i sras rDo rje drag po rtsal”. The oversight is not marginal because it neglects the information that rDo rje drag po rtsal was the son of Kun dga' rdo rje and makes of two

traditions of this deity brought by the dPyal pa to sMan lung. This indicates that he had a not insignificant frequentation of the lands at the root of his family's religious training.⁹⁵ The other two Kye rdor traditions of the sMan lung dPyal pa are attributed to bSod nams rgyal mtshan and the latter's father Kun dga' rdo rje.

A little more is learned about him on account of a passage in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*.⁹⁶ It first mentions that Jo dpal, the middle son of Kun dga' grags, was the lay chieftain and then says that sKyege tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal received, as proverbial, the training

persons only one. That it is a matter of two persons is proved elsewhere in the same work (see the note immediately below).

95. A note in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.143 line 21–p.144 line 10) reads as follows: “[Note: gNas phyogs sMan lung der dpal dGyes pa rdo rje'i (p.144) bka' srol chen po mi 'dra ba bzhi babs te/ dPyal lo bSod nams rgyal mtshan gyis Bal por Pham mthing pa chen po 'Jigs med grags pa la dGyes rdor yab bka' yum bka' rGyud gsum gyi 'grel pa bco lnga dang gdams pa khyad par can gsan pas Nā ro chen po'i bka' gsol lo/ dPyal pa Kun dga' rdo rje rGya gar pan chen gnas lnga rig pa'i pandi ta A ma ra tsandra la dGyes rdor rGyud 'grel skor tshang rgyas gsan pas A ma ra tsandra mi tra pa'i bka' gsol lo/ sKyege tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal gyis rGya gar pan chen bram ze dPal 'dzin la dGyes rdor cha tshang gsan pas Pad ma badzra yi bka' gsol lo/ yang sKyege tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal gyis Nag po zhabs chung ba las dGyes rdor gsan pas Dam tshig rdo rje'i bka' srol lo/ slob dpon Yan lag med pa'i rdo rje/ Padma badzra In dra bo dhi Lakshmi ka ra bram ze dPal 'dzin Ga ya dha ra 'Brog mi sogs Sa skya bar babs so//]”; “[Note: At this excellent (*phyogs* sic for *mchog*) holy place sMan lung (p.144) there were four different holders of the tradition of dpal dGyes pa rdo rje. dPyal lo bSod nams rgyal mtshan having received the fifteen commentaries on the *rGyud gsum* [of] dGyes rdor *yab bka' yum bka'* and their extraordinary instructions from Pham mthing pa chen po 'Jigs med grags pa in Bal po, this is the tradition of Na ro pa chen po. dPyal pa Kun dga' rdo rje having received the complete extensive cycles of *rGyud 'grel* [of] dGyes rdor from the rGya gar *pan chen*, the master of the sciences pandi ta A ma ra tsandra, this is the tradition of A ma ra tsandra mai tri pa. sKyege (spelled so) tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal having received all the parts of dGyes rdor from the rGya gar pan chen bram ze dPal 'dzin, this is the tradition of Pad ma badzra. Moreover, sKyege tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal having received dGyes rdor from Nag po zhabs chung ba, this is the tradition of Dam tshig rdo rje. [This lineage which included] slob dpon Yan lag med pa'i rdo rje, Padma badzra, In dra bo dhi, Lakshmi ka ra, bram ze dPal 'dzin, Ga ya dha ra and 'Brog mi reached the Sa skya pa]”.

The lineage that eventually reached the Sa skya pa is misplaced in the Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang edition of *Myang chos 'byung* and should be moved as I did in my translation of the note.

96. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.11 lines 28–32): “Bar pa Jo dpal gyi gtsug lag khang chen po Khri gsum dge 'khor dang bcas pa bskyangs pas mnga' thang yang rtser 'phel lo/ gcung po sKyege tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal ni/ yab chos nmams la gzhung bshad nmams lag len dang bcas pa mkhyen yang/ chos kyi rgyud phyug par bya ba'i phyir/ rGya gar yul dBus su byon nas/ gnas lnga rig pa'i pandi ta chen po bram ze dPal 'dzin zhabs dang Nag po zhabs chung la sogs pa nmams la sGra Tshad rGyud 'grel dang bcas pa gdams pa mang po gsan te/ lo bcu gnyis bzhugs nas Bod du byon nas 'gro don mdzad cing/ dGyes pa rdo rje la 'gyur yang mdzad//”; “[Kun dga' rdo rje's] middle son Jo dpal protected monastic activity at the great gtsug lag khang Khri gsum and thus extended the peak of [the dPyal's] power even farther. The youngest son sKyege tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal learned the preaching of the ancestral religious system and its practice. For the sake of the prosperity of [the

in the ancestral religious system of the family. He went to Ma ga dha, where he spent twelve years to study *sGra*, *Tshad ma* and *sNgags* from bram ze dPal 'dzin zhabs and Nag po zhabs chung, and returned to his native land.

THE MEMBERS OF THE GENERATION AFTER KUN DGA' GRAGS

Several short passages in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* on the next generation document, in reference to the five children of Kun dga' grags, the religious intensity of the clan and the division of tasks among brothers. Two of them—Ba stag and Chos kyi bzang po—were Kun dga' grags's main disciples.⁹⁷

The eldest, Ba stag, became the abbot of sMan lung. Especially versed in the ancestral tradition of the clan, he was a powerful Tantrist, master of *mthu*, who could use the tutelary deities to his benefit—a feature especially common among the lay members of the clan. Like any other sMan lung dPyal pa, he combined *rNying ma* and *gSar ma* but a peculiarity of his training, hardly shared by other people of the dPyal clan, was that he was a practitioner of Kha 'bar ma (Dzwa la mu khi).⁹⁸

family's] religious transmission he went to rGya gar dBus yul (Magadha). He received *sGra*, *Tshad [ma]*, Tantric commentaries and many instructions from the great *pandi ta-s*, the masters of the five sciences bram ze dPal 'dzin zhabs and Nag po zhabs chung. He returned to Tibet after staying [there] for twelve years and laboured to benefit sentient beings. He became one with dGyes pa rdo rje”.

97. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.11 lines 26–28) says that two main sons of Kun dga' grags were among his disciples: “Gran zla med pa gnyis ni mthu dang nus pa mthar phyin pa'i sgo nas tshar gcod dang rjes 'dzin pa thogs med pa dPyal Pa rtag/ mDo sNgags kyi rgya mtsho'i pha rol tu phyin cing mngon mkhyen dang rdzu 'phrul la dbang sgyur ba dPyal lo tsa ba dPal Chos kyi bzang ba'o//; “Two were his incomparable [spiritual sons]: dPyal Pa rtag (spelled so for Ba stag) who, having brought the power of *mthu* to the ultimate degree in a manner that was incomparable, could either annihilate or grant protection without any difficulty, [and] dPyal lo tsa ba dPal Chos kyi bzang ba who went beyond the distant shore of *mDo sNgags* and had the power of true knowledge and to perform miracles”.

98. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.12 lines 6–10): “Bla ma Ku dga' grags kyi che ba Ba stag ste/ yab chos mying ma'i skor la shin tu mkhas shing gSar ma'ang ci rigs par mkhyen la khyad par du dge ba'i bshes gnyen bKa' gdams pa dge ba'i bshes gnyen Tshul khriims dbang phyug la kha 'bar ma'i man ngag zhus pas mkha' 'gro ma dri ma med pa'i gzi brjid dang mjal/ gzhan yang 'dod lha chos skyong ni zhal gzigs pas/ Las mGon bran du bkol ba'i mthus/ kha 'bar ma'i gtor ma dngos su gom pa bdun tsam 'gro ba/ gSang sngags grub pa'i rNal 'byor chen po sMan lung bla ma'i gdan sa non pa'//”; “Ba stag, the eldest son of bla ma Kun dga' grags, was a great master of the cycles of the ancestral religious tradition of *rNying ma* plus he learned whatever *gSar ma* he could. In particular he received Kha 'bar ma (Dzwa la mu khi) from the dge ba bshes gnyen bKa' gdams pa Tshul khriims dbang phyug and had the vision of the splendour of the stainless *mkha' 'gro ma-s*. Moreover, having had the vision of the 'dod lha-s and *chos skyong*, he had the power to bind mGon [po] to his service. The *gtor ma* of Kha 'bar ma truly walked seven steps. This great *rnal 'byor [pa]*, who had perfectly realised *gSang sngags*, took control of the *gdan sa* of the sMan lung *bla ma-s*”.

The next son, Seng las skyes, held Ban mtsho'i lha khang built by his father.⁹⁹

Chos [kyi] bzang [po], the middle of the five brothers, was a towering personality who deserves the more in-depth treatment I reserve for him soon below.

In the best tradition of the family, the fourth son, rGyal chen, embodied the commercial shrewdness of the dPyal clan from sMan lung. Like his lay predecessors, he used black magic to enhance the family's trade and steer the management of the markets to his advantage.¹⁰⁰

The youngest of the five, lNga rtse, was at the antipodes of rGyal chen. Especially devoted to his brother Chos [kyi] bzang [po], he kept the family's tradition in great esteem. He was wise, gentle and intelligent. On the way to rGya gar for the purpose of bringing gold to support studies of his brother Chos bzang he was assassinated by brigands.¹⁰¹

In dealing with Kun dga' grags's five children, *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* provides the only insight in the marriage regime of a member of the dPyal clan, which was polyandric at least for once.¹⁰² Kun dga' grags shared his wife with his younger brother Jo dpal.

99. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.12 lines 10–11): “De ’og Seng las skyes ni/ sgrub pa’i mthu stobs dang yang rtsal rgyas shing sNgags kyi nga ros ’byung poi rigs skrag bar byed”; “Seng las skyes, [the brother] next to him, attained the powers of meditation and could terrify groups of *’byung po* (i.e. a class of ghosts) with his roar”.

Ibid. (p.12 line 12): “Ban mtsho’i lha khang la sogs par ’dzin pa’o/”; “He held [temples] including Ban mtsho’i lha khang”.

100. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.12 lines 12–14): “mChed lnga’i mtha’ dag gi slob dpon rGyal chen ste/ yab chos kyi bsgrub pa la brtson bas ngan nus che zhing mi chos la mkhas shing bsod nams che bas/ tshong ’dus kyi bcud bsdud cing kha lo sgyur bar ’tshams kyi bdag pa’o/”; “rGyal chen, the *slob dpon* among all five brothers, strived to perfect the ancestral religious tradition. Given his great capacity [to perform] black magic, his knowledge of *mi chos* and his great qualities, he could appropriately exploit the potentialities of the trade markets and influence them with his authority”.

101. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.12 lines 14–17): “Tha chung lNga rtse gcen po bla ma lo tsa ba dang thugs btsun pa/ rgan rabs la brnyed bskur byed pa/ pha ma byas pa gzo ba/ rang bzhin gyi brgyud drang shing mdzangs pa/ nga ’jam zhing rdzun med pa/ dad rtson dang ldan pa blo gsal ba yid gzhung pa chos phyr dka’ ba spyod nus pa zhig yod pas/ rang nyid kyang slob gnyer dang gcen po rGya gar na bzhud pa’i mthun rkyen gser skyel du byon pas/ Gang gāi ’gram du chom rkun pas dkrong pa’o”; “The youngest lNga rtse had reverence for his elder brother the *lo tsa ba* (i.e. dPyal Chos bzang), honoured the ancestral lineage and kept the deeds of his parents in mind. He was naturally honest and wise, used polite words and never lied. He was loyal, perseverant, brilliant and intellectually gifted. He had the capacity to strive hard for the teachings. He himself undertook studies and went to bring gold to provide support for his elder brother who had left for rGya gar, but was killed by robbers at the bank of the Gang gā”.

102. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.12 lines 5–6): “gCen po bla ma Kun dga’ grags kyi jo mo ma cig bKra shis ldem la sras lnga ’khrungs/ bar pa ’Jam dpal la sras gnyis so/”; “Five sons were born to ma gcig bKra shis ldem, the wife of the elder brother Kun dga’ grags pa and two sons to the middle brother ’Jam dpal (i.e. Jo dpal)”.

Nam mkha', the elder of the latter's two sons, was a lay chieftain. He was assigned to Khri gsum, which could be an indication that he was involved in trade together with step-brother rGyal chen. The younger, slob dpon Padma, was a spiritual master. He, too, went to Ma ga dha and, unlike most of the dPyal religious masters, opted to remain there.¹⁰³

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun show, in general, that its members were trained by a major spiritual master of the clan, irrespective of whether they were secular dignitaries or religious proponents. The Tantric powers of the religious teacher were, among other teachings, transferred to the members of the clan with secular duties, who used them to impose their authority.

The consistent specificity of the dPyal clan's tradition in pursuing its mission in Ma ga dha and the Kathmandu Valley led to an avoidance of the parochialism typical of several of their neighbours. Most Tibetan transmission lineages which gave impulse to a specific religious system once it was imported to Tibet from India developed an autochthonous approach to Buddhism in the long run.

The dPyal's wish for continuity had a major importance in creating a situation useful to the introduction of a new important phase of religious insemination from India at the end of the 12th century and in the early years of 13th. Credit for this has almost always been given by Tibetan authors to a master who did not belong to the dPyal family. This appraisal is historically short-sighted because it does not take into account the context in which events unfolded, marked by the role exercised by a member of the clan from sMan lung. This leads me to deal with Chos [kyi] bzang [po], the great dPyal master of the same generation.

103. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.12 lines 17–21): “dPyal Jo dpal gyi sras che ba dge bshes Nam mkha' Khri gsum gyi bdag byas so/ gcung po slob dpon Padma ni/yab mes kyi chos mang po mkhyen kyang chos 'tshol ba dang dge ba la spro ba/ rnam pa gcig tu ni bdag gi yab sku mched gsum las khu bo gnyis kas rGya gar la byon 'dug pa la/ yab kyi ma byon pas bdag gis dad dgos ba'i phyir 'gro snyam te/ rGya gar dBus 'gyur tshal du byon nas pandi ta Badzra kirti brten nas gdam pa zhus te slob gnyer mdzad pas mkhas grub gyur nas rGya gar nyid du bzhugs so//”; “dGe bshes Nam mkha', the elder son of dPyal Jo dpal, was the owner of Khri gsum. The younger son, slob dpon Padma, mastered many teachings of the ancestral tradition. He was fond of further searching for teachings and of virtuous deeds. He thought: “The preeminent point is that both my paternal uncles, among the three brothers, went to rGya gar. Although my father did not go, I should go because I must follow in their footsteps”. He went to rGya gar dBus yul tshal (Ma ga dha). Thanks to pandi ta Badzra kirti he received instructions. He studied them and became a savant and *siddha*. He remained in rGya gar”.

The dPyal clan during the 13th century and their fourth *yi dam*

DPYAL LO TSA BA CHOS [KYI] BZANG [PO] AND KHA CHE PAN CHEN
SHAKYA SHRI BHADRA

The dPyal family wrote another glorious page in the history of its frequentation of holy places in Ma ga dha—Bodhgaya in particular—in coincidence with the beginning of the pressure applied by the Muslims upon Gangetic Buddhism. The role of great precursors that the dPyal people from sMan lung had carved for themselves applies to the interaction of dPyal lo tsa ba Chos [kyi] bzang [po] (1163–1230) with the great Kha che pan chen Shakya shri bhadra (1140–1225), possibly the most important Indian teacher who frequented Tibet after A ti sha.

These contacts expand the perspective on the relationship of Kha che pan chen with the Tibetans, dominated as it is by the personalities of Khro phu lo tsa ba Byams pa'i dpal (1172–1236), commonly acknowledged as his foremost disciple during his sojourn on the plateau,¹⁰⁴ and Sa pan Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251).

dPyal Chos bzang—nicknamed Jo sras dGa' gsum 'bar (the “noble son radiating the three pleasures”) by an old nun who realised he liked food, good time and sleep—traveled to Bodhgaya and had for teacher Kha che pan chen before the Kashmiri *pandi ta* came to Tibet.¹⁰⁵

104. *Khro phu lo tsa ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa* (p.334 lines 5–6): “rGya gar shar phyogs Ba ren tra'i rgyal pos chos rje la phul ba'i dung g.yas 'khyil ba chung gsum dang bcas pa chos rje pan chen Shākya shri de nyid kyi slob ma'i gts'o bo dge slong Byams pa'i dpal dge slong Nyi ma bsod nams dang/ dge slong rDo rje 'phan dang bcas pa rnam gsum la rgyas par gdams ngag dang bcas pa gsung/””; “[Kha che pan chen] imparted *gdams ngag-s* in extenso to dge slong Byams pa'i dpal, dge slong Nyi ma bsod nams and dge slong rDo rje 'phan, the three chos rje pan chen Shākya shri's main disciples who were the three small conchshells turning to the right given by the king of Ba ren tra in east India to the *chos rje*”.

105. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.111 lines 13–20) records the name of an obscure teacher of dPyal Chos bzang in Tibet: “Myang smad kyi sGro lung Ser chung pa'i Khu lung du gangs par grags pa'i slob ma khyad par can bSam gling rin po che 'khrungs/ bSam gling rin po ches Myang smad bSam gling btab/ bSam gling zer ba rNgog ston gyi dgon pa/ da lta dPal 'khor bde chen gyi Khang gsar grwa tshang gis bda po mdzad pa 'Dul chung gi nub na yod/ bSam gling rin po ches dPyal Chos bzang gis zhur 'chad pa yang mdzad/ 'Dul chung gu lung pa'i mda' na dPyal mkhan po Ratna shri yab mes kyi chos rnam mkhyen/””; “bSam gling rin po che, the extraordinary disciple of Gangs par grags pa was born at Khu lung belonging to the Gro lung gSer chung pa of Myang smad. bSam gling rin po che founded bSam gling of Myang smad. bSam gling was the monastery of rNgog ston. Now it is owned by Khang gsar grwa tshang of [rGyal rtse] dPal 'khor bde chen. It is to the west of 'Dul chung. bSam gling rin po che also was an additional tutor of dPyal Chos bzang. In the lower area of 'Dul chung dPyal mkhan po Ratna shri learned the teachings of his ancestors”. On Ratna shri see above (p.472–474).

After receiving several Tantric instructions from his father's teacher lHa lung pa rTag pa Jo bzang,¹⁰⁶ dPyal Chos bzang set out to Ma ga dha in fulfilment of the prophecy issued

106. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.12 lines 23–30) does not identify the teacher of dPyal Chos bzang, who imparted Tantric instructions upon him in his youth: “sNga ba Kun dga' grags kyi sras lnga tshigs pa bla ma mkhas sppyod lo tsa ba ni/ gang sngon He ru ka dpal mkha' 'gro lngas/ Pham 'thing dang ni U rgyan yi rangs su/ dngos su dbang bskur lung bstan byin rlabs rgyud/ dpal ldan Chos kyi bzang po'i zhabs 'dud/ ces pa 'di nyid ni sku gzhon nu nas sngags 'chang rgyal po la/ sMan lung brag rDo rje bzang po'i drung du dGyes pa rdo rje dang/ Phag mo dang/ gSang ba 'dus pa 'Phags bskor dang/ gzhan yang man ngag mang po thugs rjes bzung cing bla ma'i gsung nas bla ma gong ma nmams kyi bka' srol brnyen pa'i phyir/ blo gros chen pos don yod pa bya dgos pas rGya gar la 'grim gsung lung par yang bstan byung/ gSer sding su sku rtsed mdzad kyin bzhugs pas ma jo rgan mo gcig yod pa na re khyed bla ma'i sras yin pas rGya gar la byon dgos/ khyed za ma la dga' rtsed mo la dga'/ nyal pa la dga' bas ming jo sras dGa' gsum 'bar zer ba gyis ces zhus//”; “The *bla ma* who was a *lo tsa ba* endowed with knowledge, one of the five sons of the above mentioned Kun dga' grags, is addressed as follows: “I bow to the feet of dpal ldan Chos kyi bzang po, belonging to the lineage who, to their delight, truly [received] empowerments, prophecies and blessings from He ru ka, the five noble *mkha' 'gro*, Pham thing (spelled so) [pa] and U rgyan [rin po che]”. Since his childhood he learned dGyes pa rdo rje, Phag mo, gSang ba 'dus pa, 'Phags (spelled so for *Phag*) skor and many other teachings from the *sngags 'chang rgyal po* in front of sMan lung brag rDo rje bzang po. The *bla ma* said: “In order to continue the tradition of the previous *bla ma*-s, you must do something meaningful on account of your great wisdom. You should journey to rGya gar”. So ordered he. While he was engaged in merriment at gSer sding, an old nun told him: “You are the son of the *bla ma*. You must go to rGya gar. You enjoy (*dga'*) food, you enjoy merriment, you enjoy sleep, so your name will be Jo sras dGa' gsum 'bar (the “noble son, radiating three enjoyments”)”.”

Ibid. (p.12 lines 31–33): “Bring mtshams Zhang lo tsa ba la 'phral skad dang klog yig bslab/ bar chad bsrungs pa'i phyir bla ma lHa lung pa la gSang bdag me lce'i phreng ba zhus zhing bsnyen bsgrub mthar son pa'i rtags su phyang gi rdo rje la me dgnos su 'bar ba byung//”; “He learned rudimentary spoken language and to read and write from 'Bring mtshams Zhang lo tsa ba. In order to guard [himself] against obstacles he received *gSang bdag me lce'i phreng ba* from bla ma lHa lung pa. A sign that he had brought its practice to the ultimate stage was that his *rdo rje* truly emitted flames in his hands”.

The name of dPyal Chos bzang's first teacher is provided by a passage in 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.410 lines 4–7): “De la bla ma lo tsā ba Kun dga' grags kyi sras dam par gyur pa/ bla ma lo tsā ba dpal Chos kyi bzang po ste/ sku gzhon nu la lHa lung pa rTag pa Jo bzang gi drung dang/ yab chos gSang sngags nmams mkhas par sbyangs shing/ rang nyid thugs stobs che bas/ yab mes kyi bka' srol bsnyeg pa'i phyir dang/ bla mas kyang bka' byon pa'i rtobs kyiis/ rGya gar du slob gnyer la gshegs par dgongs te/ thog mar bar chad bsrung ba'i don du gSang sngags Mi lce'i phreng ba'i bsnyen grub mthar lon pas phyang gi rdo rje me dngos su 'bar bar gyur//”; “In his youth bla ma lo tsa ba Kun dga' grags's son bla ma lo tsa ba dPal Chos kyi bzang po, who turned out to be an excellent [human being], masterly learned *gSang sNgags* from lHa lung pa rTag pa Jo bzang, the teacher of his father. Being very brave, he thought to go to rGya gar to study in order to continue the tradition of his ancestors, owing to the power of the order which had come from the *bla ma*. Having earlier brought his meditation on *gSang sngags Mi lce'i phreng ba* to the ultimate stage for the sake of the removal of obstacles, the *rdo rje* in his hand actually emitted flames”.

to him by the statue of Thugs rje chen po the holiest image of Zhwa lu. He traveled in the company of gNye pa Chag dgra bcom pa (1153–1216), the uncle of Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal (1197–1264).¹⁰⁷ Hence *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* confirms that Chag lo tsa ba was not the first in his family to proceed to Gangetic India, for he imitated his uncle.

dPyal Chos bzang and Chag dgra bcom pa had to bear hardships on the way several times. On one occasion, they were attacked by brigands at the bank of the Gangga after leaving the town of Ti ra hu ti,¹⁰⁸ but the dPyal master showed inimitable composure in handling the situation.¹⁰⁹

107. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* ignores the events dPyal Chos bzang went through heading towards Ma ga dha. It only says (p.410 line 7): “Zhang lo tsā ba la 'phral skad dang klog yig bslabs shing/ Zha lu'i jo bo sPyan ras gzigs la lung bstan pa thob nas/ rGya gar yul dBus rDo rje gdan du byon/”; “He learned colloquial language and reading under Zhang lo tsa ba. After receiving a prophecy from Jo bo sPyan ras gzigs of Zha (spelled so) lu, he went to rDo rje gdan in the central land of rGya gar”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.12 lines 33–35) narrates his adventures on the way: “Zhal lu'i Thugs rje chen po la gsol ba btob lung bstan zhus pas sPyan ras gzigs zhal 'dzum bag dang bcas pas lung bstan de nas 'Phags yul du 'byon par chas pa dang Chag lo tsa ba dGra bcom chen po rGya gar du byon pa dang rten 'brel 'grig nas 'grogs nas byon/”; “Having prayed to [images of gods], such as Zhal (spelled so) lu Thugs rje chen po, he asked for a prognostic and sPyan ras gzigs gave him a prophecy with a smile on his face. He then set out to go to 'Phags yul and went together with Chag lo tsa ba dGra bcom chen po who was going to rGya gar, owing to the karmic nexus binding them”.

108. The kingdom of Ti ra hu ti encompassed a wide region centred around present-day Muzzarfarpur in Bihar. Its whereabouts are given as south of Bal po north of Ma ga dha and west of Yangs pa can (Vaiśālī in *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (Roerich transl., *The Biography of Dharmaswamin* p.57–58). The same biography (ibid. p.100) says that the capital of Ti ra hu ti was Patā (i.e. Pattalā). Its *raja* was Rāmasiṅha in the days of Chag lo tsa ba.

Gru chen Tshul khriṅ rgyal mtshan, a Bon po belonging to the tradition of the rMa masters and active in mNga' ris smad and Byang thang during the 13th century, had mystic visions and flights to Ti ra hu ti. *Gru chen gyi rnam thar* (p.443 line 3) reads: “‘Od kyi lam snam bu rkyang ba cig byung nas/ grong khyer Ti ri hu ti'i snang spyod gzigs pa dang/ physis de nas yongs pa'i mi dang drun sdur byas pas/ bla ma gsal bar byung/”; “A bundle of light unrolled [in front of him] and he had the vision of the town of Ti ri (spelled so) hu ti. Later he could evaluate the people he met (*yongs pa'i mi dang drun* sic for *drung*), and his *bla ma* (i.e. 'A zha Blo gros rgyal mtshan) appeared vividly [to him]” and ibid. (p.448 line 7): “rGya gar gyi dur khrod chen po brgyad gzigs par dgongs nas/ sku lus bya gdong du sprul/ mkha' 'gro bzhis skor nas/ Ti ra hu tir byon/ grong khyer gseb nyul cing gnas lugs gzigs dur khrod rnam kyi gnas byon nas tshogs kyi 'khor lo mang du skor skad/”; “After he thought to have the vision of the eight cemeteries of rGya gar, he transformed his body into that of a bird and, surrounded by four *mkha' 'gro*, went to Ti ra hu ti. He roamed around the town and was a witness of local customs. He went to the localities of the cemeteries and performed a *tshogs kyi 'khor lo*”.

109. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.12 line 35–p.13 line 7): “Grong khyer Tira hu ti rgal/ Gang gā'i 'gram du ma (p.13) sleb pa'i sa steng gcig du 'jigs pa lan gsum byung/ de nas Gang gāi 'gram du jag pa byung nas brdung bshus rgyob gsod zer bas 'ga' zhig ni 'gyel/ la la ngu/ la la smre

After proceeding to Bodhgaya, the destination of his journey, it seems that dPyal Chos bzang had a first spell at Na len dra where he began his studies. He was imparted the basics of learning, chiefly *sGra* and *Tshad ma*, by various masters.¹¹⁰

ngag 'dod grogs dam pa sNyel gyi Chag lo tsa ba dang kho bo gnyis gcer bu bshus pas/ 'di lta bu'i 'jigs pa yong ba a tsa ma snyam pa byung/ 'on kyang thugs la dpa' skyed/ grogs nmams dbugs chung kyang mdzod gsung mgur las kyang/ Gang gā'i 'gram du Shi skyid jag pa byung/ 'ga' zhig sa la 'gre zhing smre ngag 'don/ 'ga' zhig cho nges 'debs shing brang la sdeg/ rtsam pa'i don med dus mtsha' yin no snyam/ de tshé de nmams kho bos dbugs phyung nas/ 'gro ba'i mnos po byang chub chen po dang/ dkon mchog gsum la gsol la 'debs su bcug/ grogs dam pa snyal gyi chag sgo la/ kho bo gcig po de'i tshé gcer bur bshus/ longs spyod med pas gtum mo'i don ma grub/ ces gsung/"; "They (i.e. dPyal Chos bzang and Chag dGra bcom pa) left and crossed the town of Tira (spelled so) hu ti. Three occasions for fear occurred in one area. They did not even reach the bank of the Gang gā (p.13) that bandits appeared at the bank of the Gang gā. They said they would hurt, strip, beat and kill them. A few people (i.e. thus showing they were travelling in a group) fainted. Some cried; some lamented. His noble companion sNyel (spelled so) gyi Chag lo tsa ba and he, altogether two, were stripped naked. He said: "It happens that I consider this terrifying experience as not painful. However, one should be brave at heart. Even if some companions are breathless, do it (i.e. go ahead with your harassment)!" The lines that follow are also excerpted from a song of his: "The Shi skyid bandits came to the bank of the Gang gā. Some [of my companions] fell on the ground or emitted loud cries, some wailed or beat their chest. I thought that when *rtsam pa* becomes useless it is the end. As a relief from suffering I urged them, as for the instructions sentient beings should receive, to [think of] the great enlightenment and pray to the three jewels". My companion and I were stripped naked at the time. Not having wealth, their fierce intentions came to nothing".

A few decades later (around 1332), the fame of the Shri skyid bandits was still haunting the travelers. They are again mentioned in *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (Roerich transl., *The Biography of Dharmaswamin* p.61) once more in relation with the area between Ti ra hu ti and Yangs pa can (Vaiśālī), hence somewhat north of the bank of the Gang gā.

The name Shi skyid ("happy death") often applies to bandits of different areas and periods who, appearing at strategical places along the caravan, trade and pilgrimage routes, robbed the travelers.

110. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.410 line 7–p.411 line 3) is the source which says that Na len dra was the place in Ma ga dha where he received the first batch of teachings: "Ma ha (p.411) bo dhi la mchod pa rgya chen po phul zhing gsol ba btab nas/ shrī Na len dra'i gtsug lag khang na pandi ta Shakya shrī dang/Mu ne shrī dang/ grub thob rDo rje gdan pa/ pandi ta Shī la ka rā/ A nan ta ka rā, Ma hā nirti, Ratna shrī, yo gi Su ma ti/ Kir ti garba la sogs pa mang du bsten cing/ sGra dang Tshad ma'i bstan bcos la legs par byangs nas/ bZang po spyod pa dang/ rTing nge 'dzin rgyal po la sogs pa mDo sde du ma dang/ dGyes pa rdo rje dang/ dpal Dus kyi 'khor lo la sogs pa'i rGyud 'grel du ma gsan cing/ mkhyen nas thugs nyams su bzhes la/ 'Jig rten dbang phyug gi zhal dngos su gzigs shing/ dbang byin rlabs gdams pa dang bcas pa thob/"; "At Ma ha (p.411) bo dhi, he gave extensive offerings and prayers. He [then] attended upon many [masters], such as pandi ta Shakya shrī, Mu ne shrī, grub thob rDo rje gdan pa, pandi ta Shī la ka rā, A nan ta ka rā, Ma hā nirti, Ratna shrī, yo gi Su ma ti, and Kir ti garba at shri Na len dra gtsug lag khang. After excellently learning the *bstan bcos*-s of *sGra* and *Tshad ma*, he received many *mDo sde* such as *bZang po spyod pa* and *rTing nge 'dzin rgyal po*, Tantric commentaries such as *dGyes pa rdo rje* and *dpal Dus kyi*

He then took the monastic vow at rDo rje gdan from Kha che pan chen Shakya shri bhadra, the supreme 'Dul ba master of his time.¹¹¹ dPyal Chos bzang embarked upon the study of a vast array of subjects under other *pandi ta*-s, including disciplines belonging to the tradition of his family. In addition, he received gShin rje gshed dmar po from the Bodhgaya abbot rTog med rdo rje, named rDo rje gdan pa Nishka langka in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.13 line 21).¹¹² Since then gShin rje gshed dmar po was another great *yi dam* of the sMan lung dPyal pa.

'khor lo. Having learned them, he practised. He truly had the vision of 'Jig rten dbang phyug, and received empowerments, blessings and instructions”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun mentions rDo rje gdan as the site of the next set of teachings received by dPyal Chos bzang (see below n.112). The *gdung rabs* (p.13 lines 8–13) reads: “Ma ga ta ru phebs/ Mahā budhi dang mjal bas 'di las dga' ba mi yong/ 'di rang gcig pu rang la dka' ba spyad rin chog yid bzhin gyi nor bu rin po che rnyed pa las lhag snyam pa byung gsung bla mas dka' ba spyad pa'i kun spyod khyad par can bcu yod pa'i dang po'o/ de nas yon tan gyi gzhi ma sGra Tshad 'di yin pas slob dgos dgongs nas/ pandi ta Mantra ni ti/ Ga ya si ta/ ya gi Su ma tam/ Kri ta ghardha bzhi'i drung du/ sGra Ka la pa/ Tsantra pa dang gZhon nu smin drug bstan bcos dang A ma ko sha 'chi med mdzod/ Ming gi mngon brjod/ mDo sde skyes rabs la sogs pa gsan nas/ thugs su chud par mdzad cing Khyad par 'byung ba'i sGra Tshad/ rGya mtsho'i mtha' skad la sogs pa sGra la sbyangs pa mchog du gyur ro/ kun spyod gnyis par grags so//”; “Having arrived at Ma ga ta next, there was no bigger happiness than to see the Ma ha budhi. It was worthwhile to perform austerities in a spontaneous manner there. He said it was a sensation superior to obtaining the precious *yid bzhin nor bu*. This was the first of the ten extraordinary deeds [his] *bla ma* had prescribed to him as exertions. Having thought to study *sGra* and *Tshad [ma]*, the prerequisites of knowledge, he received *sGra Ka la pa*, *Tsantra pa*, *gZhon nu smin drug bstan bcos*, *A ma ko sha 'chi med mdzod*, *Ming gi mngon brjod* and *mDo sde skyes rabs* from *pandi ta Mantra ni ti*, *Ga ya si ta*, *ya gi* (spelled so for *yo gi*) *Su ma tam* and *Kri ta ghardha*, altogether four, and learned them. He made progress in order to learn [texts of] *sGra* in an excellent manner, such as *Khyad par 'byung ba'i sGra Tshad* and *rGya mtsho'i mtha' skad*. This is known as his second deed”.

111. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.411 lines 3–4): “rDo rje gdan du Kha che'i pandi ta Shākya shrī la rab tu byung//”; “[At rDo rje gdan dPyal Chos bzang] took the *rab tu byung* vow from Shakya shri the *pandi ta* from Kha che”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.13 line 20): “Pan chen Shakya'i mtshan can drung dge tshul gyi sdom pa blangs so// kun spyod lnga pa'o//”; “He received the *dge tshul* vow from the *pan chen* bearing the name Shakya. This was his fifth deed”.

The discrepancy between the two types of vows in the two sources is evident. dPyal Chos bzang was already an accomplished religious practitioner when he reached rGy gar. He could not have been a novice at that time.

112. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.411 lines 4–5): “Byang chub kyi shing drung du/ rDo rje gdan pa las sMon pa dang 'jug pa dang Byang chub kyi thugs bskyed dang gsan/ bla ma de nyid dang Kha che pan chen las dpal 'Khor lo bDe mchog gi dbang cha lag rgyud 'grel dang bcas pa zhus shing/ bla ma rDo rje gdan pa las/ gShin rje gshed dmar po'i dbang/ rGyud grub thabs/ Shin tu spros pa med pa'i rnal 'byor la sogs rdzogs par gsan/ thugs dam mdzad//”; “[dPyal

Back at Na lendra, he treated the congregation, five times, with a lavish feast and took part in the activities at the ruler's palace; at Bodhgaya, he offered his religious service to various sacred images.¹¹³

The feats of this dPyal master were quite wondrous. He became a protégé of the king of Maga dha Bha mi de wa (*mKhas pa'i dga'ston* ('Dul ba section) p.491 line 11), who summoned him to his palace Jayanagara (spelled Dze ba na ga ra in 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa's *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* p.411 lines 5–6), possibly upon the suggestion of the dPyal pa's

Chos bzang] received *sMon pa dang 'jug pa* ("aspiration and application") [for supreme enlightenment] and *Byang chub kyi thugs bskyed* ("wish for enlightenment") from rDo rje gdan pa in front of the Bodhi tree. He obtained the complete empowerment of dpal 'Khor lo bDe mchog and its branches including its Tantric commentary from this *bla ma* and Kha che pan chen. (line 5) Having received [teachings] in a complete manner, such as its empowerment, the *rGyud* and *grub thabs* of gShin rje gshed dmar po, and *Shin tu spros pa med pa'i rnal 'byor* from bla ma rDo rje gdan pa, he meditated".

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.13 lines 21–24): "Bla ma rDo rje gdan pa Nishka langka'i drung du/ Kye'i rdo rje'i rgyud 'grel pa dang bcas pa Rin po che'i phreng ba/ mnga' bdag Mi tri pa'i sgrub thabs rnam par dag pa'i gter sgrub thabs mdor bsdus gShin rje gshed dmar po'i dbang rgyud sgrub thabs che chung/ shin tu spros med kyi man ngag gsan cing Byang chub shing yal ga lo 'bras dang bcas pa'i drung du pan chen rDo rje gdan pa la/ byang chub mchog gi smon 'jug gnyis kha'i sgo nas thugs bskyed/ thugs nyams su bzhes/ kun spyod drug pa'o/"; "Then [dPyal Chos bzang] received *Rin po che phreng ba* from bla ma rDo rje gdan pa Nishka langka, including the *rgyud 'grel* of Kye'i rdo rje; the *gter* and abridged *sadhana* of mnga' bdag Mi (spelled so) tri pa's pure *sadhana*; the empowerment, *Tantra* and *sadhana* of gShin rje gshed dmar po in elaborate and short form; and non-conceptual instructions. On account of both aspiration and application (*smon 'jug*) for supreme enlightenment, with its branches, leaves and fruits, he received their instructions from pan chen rDo rje gdan pa in front of the Bodhi tree, developed *bodhicitta* and engaged in meditation. This was his sixth deed".

113. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.13 lines 25–30): "De nas dpal Na len dra ru byon nas sde pa bzhi char tshang ba'i dge 'dun la gandhi brdung pa'i ston mo bsnyen bskur ba lan lnga mdzad/ kun spyod brgyad pa'o/ slob dpon Klu grub kyi thugs dam 'Jig rten dbang phyug dang slob dpon Tsandra go mi dang lung bstan pa'i sGrol ma rang byon rDo rje gdan gyi chu khung na bzhugs pa'i sGrol ma rang byon rnams kyi drung du mchod pa re phyul zhing byin rlabs zhus/ gzhan yang/ Na len tra na mi yi dbang po'i mdzad pa lnga brgya bzhugs shing/ 'Bar ba'i phug dang rgyal po'i khab la sogs pa na'ang mdzad pa khyad par can re bzhugs pa lags/ byin rlabs zhus shing mchod pa re phul/ kun spyod dgu pa'o/"; "[dPyal Chos bzang] then went to dpal Na len dra and was offered the service of a feast five times, with all the monastic community divided into four groups beating the *gandi*. This was his eighth deed. He made an offering each to 'Jig rten dbang phyug, the personal image of slob dpon Klu sgrub; to the self-originated sGrol ma, who gave a prophecy to slob dpon Tsandra go mi, and to the self-originated sGrol ma placed inside a cavity at rDo rje gdan where water runs. He received their blessings. Moreover, he attended (*bzhugs*) the 500 ceremonies (*mdzad pa*) of the ruler (*mi'i dbang po*) at Na len tra (spelled so). He attended every extraordinary ceremony at 'Bar ba'i phug and the palace of the king. He received blessings and made offerings on each occasion. This was his ninth deed".

old *bla ma* Shākya shri bhadrā. The king allotted to dPyal Chos bzang five holy places in his domains, including the highly sacred O dan ta pu ri and Pu la hari.¹¹⁴

Of the twelve years that dPyal Chos bzang spent in rGya gar according to Bu ston Rin chen grub's bDe mchog chos 'byung, 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa's *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* and *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (respectively n.68, n.96 and n.119),¹¹⁵ three were spent to sit on the throne of Pu la hari, the monastery of the great Nā ro pa. Few Tibetans were bestowed the throne of an Indian monastery. Among them, there was another dPyal family member and one of their abbots.

The process of interaction begun by his ancestor bSod nams rgyal mtshan who was a follower of Pham thing pa, the disciple of Nā ro pa and abbot of Pu la hari, had its epilogue when a dPyal pa sat on this monastery's throne. From another perspective, the appointment

114. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.411 lines 5–7): “Yul Ma Ma ga ta'i rgyal pos/ pho brang Dze ba na ga rar spyang drangs te/ gtsug tu bkur shing lcags ri'i nang na/ Go sa la dang/ O dan tu dang/ Pu la ha ri la sogs pa gnas lnga yod pa'ang bla ma la phul zhing/ Pu la hari'i gdan sa lo gsum mdzad/ yang Ma ga ta'i dur khrod gyi gnas su byon pas/ Ye shes kyi mGon po phyag bzhi pa la sogs pa zhal gzigs pa dang/ nyams snang dang ngo mtshar sna tshogs byung lags//”; “The king of the land of Ma ga ta invited [dPyal Chos bzang] to the Dze ba na ga ra palace. He placed him upon his crown and offered to the *bla ma* five holy places including Go sa la, O dan tu (spelled so), and Pu la ha ri situated inside the boundary wall [of his kingdom]. [dPyal Chos bzang] was the *gdan sa* of Pu la ha ri for three years. Also, he went to the holy place of the cemetery of Ma ga ta and had the visions [of deities], such as Ye shes kyi mGon po Phyag bzhi pa. Various extraordinary realisations occurred to him”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.13 lines 30–32): “Mangha dha ru rgyal pos spyang drangs/ zhabs spyi bor blang/ lcags ri'i nang na Go sa la dang A tan pu ri dang Phu la ha ri la sogs pa'i gnas chen lnga yod pa'ang bla ma la phul zhing rDo rje gdan gyi byang sgo'i sgo skyong chen po la bkos shing/ lo yang 'ga' mdzad/ de nas dBus 'gyur 'tshal gyi dur khrod du byon pas/ dpal mGon phyag bzhi pa'i zhal gzigs/ nyams myong ngo mtshar can byung gsung//”; “He was invited to Mangha (spelled so) dha by the king who bowed with his crown to his feet. Inside the boundary wall [of his kingdom], there are five holy places such as Go sa la, A tan pu ri (spelled so for O dan ta pu ri) and Phu la ha ri. He offered them to the *bla ma* and appointed him to be the great protector of the northern door of rDo rje gdan. He worked there for a few years. He then went to the cemetery of dBus 'gyur 'tshal (spelled so). He had the vision of dpal mGon po phyag bzhi pa. He said he had extraordinary realisations”.

115. Rather than twelve, Bu ston Rin chen grub (*Bu ston rin po che chos 'byung* p.204 line 24–p.205 line 1) says that dPyal Chos bzang spent ten years in rGya gar: “dPyal Chos kyi bzang po rGya gar du lo bcu bzhugs bla ma rDo rje gdan [note: Mi pham sbas pa'i gshegs gnyen kyang zer/ Rol pa'i rdo rje yang zer/] pa ni sKa langka la bDe mchog dang/ gShin (p.205) rje gshed dmar po skor nams kyang zhus te bsgyur/ Kha che Shākya shrī la dge tshul byas so//”; “dPyal Chos kyi bzang po stayed in rGya gar for ten years. He received the cycles of bDe mchog and gShin rje bshed dmar from bla ma rDo rje gdan pa [note: also known as Mi pham sbas pa'i bshes gnyen and Rol pa'i rdo rje], who was sKa langka, (p.205) and translated them. He was given the *dge tshul* vow from Kha che Shākya shrī”.

On the statement that dPyal Chos bzang became a novice in those circumstances see above (n.111).

of dPyal Chos bzang is a sign that Tibetans supplemented the Indian Buddhists during a time when Ma ga dha and Ban ga la were no more hospitable to the Noble Religion owing to Muslim pressure upon Gangetic India.

After this epic sojourn in rGya gar, dPyal Chos bzang went back to his native land Myang smad. His life and deeds in Tibet and Gangetic India earned him a place of preeminence among the religious masters of his day.¹¹⁶

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun says that an Indian teacher of dPyal Chos bzang was in Tibet before 1204 on a visit undertaken upon the invitation of his disciple. This master joined dPyal lo tsa ba at gSer sdings and gave teachings to him.¹¹⁷ The *gdung rabs* provides several details of the visit and also mentions that the construction of a new 'du khang in its premises coincided with the Indian teacher's sojourn.¹¹⁸

This Indian master is never mentioned by name in the passages of *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* which describe his visit but always under the vague term *bla ma*. Given the lack of identification of dPyal lo tsa ba's visiting teacher in this text, a look at the view held by the authors who wrote about the dPyal clan from sMan lung on the issue of the identity of this rGya gar *pandi ta* becomes compulsory. The third 'Brug chen, 'Jam dbyang chos

116. A look at the towering personalities from whom Ras ma Zhiq mo, daughter of bla ma Zhiq po (1225–1300), received teachings confirms the status of dPyal Chos bzang associated in the passage with Thar pa gling. *lHo rong chos 'byung* (p.139,19–21) says: “De nas rin po che Khro phu ba/ bla ma Karma pa/ 'Dzam gling rgyan/ grub thob mGon ye/ Thar pa lo tsa ba/ mkhas grub chos rje rnam las/ lung dang gdams pa mang du gsan//”; “She then received many *lung* and *gdams pa* from rin po che Khro phu ba, bla ma Karma pa, 'Dzam gling rgyan, grub thob mGon ye, Thar pa lo tsa ba [Chos bzang] and the *mkhas grub chos rje*”.

117. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.14 lines 5–7): “De nas bla mas byang phyogs kyi gdul bya smin cing grol ba'i phyir/ dri med rdo rje'i zhabts la gsol ba btab nas/ Bod la spyang drangs te gSer sding du phebs/ chos kyi 'khor lo bskor zhing khyad par du bla mas thog drangs bu slob mang pos gsol ba btab nas gShed dmar gyi dbang zhus //”; “Then, in order for the people to be trained in the north to ripen and be liberated, the *bla ma* offered prayers to the feet of the pure *rdo rje* (i.e a master going unidentified in the passage). Having invited him to Tibet, [this master] went to gSer sding. He turned the wheel of the teachings and, in particular, in fulfilment of the prayers of many disciples, headed by the *bla ma*, bestowed the empowerment of gShed dmar”.

A long list of holy objects placed as items of consecration inside the statue of Byang chub chen po in the 'du khang of gSer sding follows. gSer sdings was the monastery containing the temple known as Ban tsho'i lha khang founded by dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje (see *ibid.* p.24 lines 13–15).

118. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.14 lines 22–24): “gDung khang phyed bla mas rdo rje dril bu sogs pa'i dbang rdzas rnam mkha' bzhag cing/ yi dam gyi tshogs gsal por mkha' la bkod la sogs pa'i byin rlabs kyi che ba dang ngo mtshar ba'i mdzad pa mang du mdzad//”; “The *gdung khang* (i.e. a temple dedicated to the local lineage) was opened. The *bla ma* bestowed great blessings and performed many extraordinary acts, such as that he gave *dbang* and *rjes* [*gnang*]. [His] *rdo rje* and *dril bu* floated in the sky and groups of *yi dam* visibly sat in the sky”.

kyi grags pa, mentions that the Indian master invited by dPyal Chos bzang before Kha che pan chen came to Tibet was rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje.¹¹⁹

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun adds that he returned to rGya gar but reasons are not given for going back to his land ravaged by iconoclasm who targeted the Buddhists. Soon thereafter Kha che pan chen received the invitation of Khro phu lo tsa ba.¹²⁰ This helps to propose an initial and rather approximate time for rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje's visit to Tibet, which fell soon before wood rat 1204, the year of Kha che pan chen's arrival on the plateau. Meanwhile, dPyal Chos bzang's return to Tibet occurred at an unspecified time before the arrival of rDo rje gdan pa to Tibet. In order to accommodate the visit of rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje, dPyal Chos bzang's twelve-year sojourn at rDo rje gdan, Na len dra and in the Indian territories to the east should be anticipated to an earlier time, further before 1193–1204. I will show below that these approximate dates can be refined with the help of chronological material related to a later dPyal master but handy for a retroactive use.

The tentative and vague chronological references given here are not only for the sake of the record. They help to realise that dPyal Chos bzang was a witness of the politically sensitive phase began in 1193 after the 1192 fall of Kanauj into the hands of the Muslim invaders from Khorasan. They were led by Qutb-ud-din, the future sultan of Delhi, which consigned the Gangetic plain to iconoclast marauders. This was the first wave of a series of attacks conducted by the Muslims to destabilise Ma ga dha and neighbouring lands.

119. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.412 lines 1–4): “mDor na rGya gar du lo bcu gnyis bzhugs pa'i mthar/ Bod yul du pandi ta rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje spyang drangs te/ 'gro ba rnams smin grol gyi lam la bkod cing/ khyad par Tshong 'dus su bu slob mkhas btsun mang pos bla ma nyid ngo chen du bsgran cing gShin rje gshed dmar gyi dbang gi zhush ba po mdzad pa'i tshel/ bla ma rDo rje gdan pas phyag gi rdor dril nam mkha' la bzhag rdor dril de dang/ rDo rje gdan pa'i rus rgyan dang/ bla Nā ro pa'i rus rgyan dang/ dbang bum ched dang ldan pa rnams/ bla ma nyid la gnang ba da lta yang gzims khang na bzhugs so//”; “In short, after staying twelve years in rGya gar, [dPyal Chos bzang] eventually invited pandi ta rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje to Tibet. He set sentient beings on the path of liberation. In particular, at Tshong 'dus, many disciples and masters requested the *bla ma* to be the interceder (*ngo chen*) [with rDo rje gdan pa]. The *rdo rje* and *dril bu* which are the *rdo rje* and bell that bla ma rDo rje gdan pa sent from his hand to the sky when [dPyal Chos bzang] pleaded to receive the empowerment of gShin rje gshed dmar; the bone ornaments (*rus rgyan*) of rDo rje gdan pa; the bone ornaments of bla ma Nā ro pa and the vase for empowerment, given to the *bla ma*, are still at present kept in the [gSer sdings?] *gzims khang*”.

120. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.14 lines 26–28): “Zhabz tog gi sgo nas mnyes par mdzad nas/ 'gro ba'i don rgya chen po la dgongs nas slar yang rGya gar 'Phags pa'i yul la gshegs so/ de'i physis su Khro phu lo tsa ba chen pos Kha che pan chen rGya gar phyogs la mdzad nas gdan drangs//”; “Being satisfied with the service [rendered to him] and thinking of the benefit of sentient beings in an extensive manner, [rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje] returned to the noble land of rGya gar. Subsequently Khro phu lo tsa ba chen po invited Kha che pan chen who was in rGya gar”.

The period was of utmost difficulty for those who pursued Buddhist studies. The havoc that led dPyal Chos bzang to flee from Ma ga dha to East India,¹²¹ subsequently obliged Kha che pan chen, too, to leave the Ma ga dha court hurriedly.¹²² The escape of Shakya shri bhadra from the ravage of Ma ga dha is recorded in his biography by bSod nams dpal bzang po who says that he fled to the east guided by the compassion of sGrol ma. The itinerary of his escape brought him, like dPyal Chos bzang, to East India. It seems that this was the only possibility left to them. Eventually they both sought safer sanctuary in Tibet, but there is no trace that

121. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.411 line 7–p.412 line 1): “rGya gar shar phyogs/ Khar sa pa ni'i bzhugs sa/ rGya (p.412) mtsho khrag can du byon pas/ rgyal po Ha ri tsandra 'khor dang bcas pa nam mkha' la gshegs shing/ phyi'i rgya mtsho rNam par snang mdzad bzhugs pa'i drung du byon te/ mchod pa rgya chen po mdzad//”; “[dPyal Chos bzang] reached rGya (p.412) mtsho khrag can (“ocean of blood”) in east rGya gar, the residence of Khar sa pa ni. rGyal po Ha ri tsandra went to the sky together with his court. [dPyal Chos bzang] proceeded to the external ocean (the Gulf of Bengala), the residence of rNam par snang mdzad, and made extensive offerings”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.13 line 32–p.14 line 1): “De nas rGya gar shar phyogs Ka sa pa ni bzhugs pa'i gnas rGya mtsho'i khrab can du byon/ rgyal po Hari tsandra 'khor dang bcas pa nam mkha' la gshegs pa gzigs nas rdzu 'phrul la mnga' brnyes pas phyi'i rgya mtsho chen po na rNam par snang mdzad gang chen mtsho bzhugs pa'i drung du mchod pa phul/ byin rlabs zhus/ smon lam ttab gzhan yang slob dpon Klu grub dang grub chen Nag po spyod pa'i sgrub gnas khyad par can (p.14) la sogs par sgrub pa'i srol 'dzin khyad par can mang po'i drung du mchod pa phul//”; “[dPyal Chos bzang] then went to east rGya gar, to rGya mtsho'i khrab can, the holy place of Ka sa pa ni (spelled so for Ka sar pa ni). He had the vision that rgyal po Hari tsandra and his court had gone to the sky (i.e. killed by the Muslims). Having attained mastery of miracles, he made offerings to rNam par snang mdzad [in the] gang chen mtsho (“oceanic”) [form] at the external ocean. He received his blessing and offered his prayers. Moreover, he gave offerings [there] (p.14) where many wondrous meditation traditions exist, such as at the extraordinary meditation places of slob dpon Klu sgrub and grub chen Nag po spyod pa”.

The “ocean of blood” is a paraphrase for the onslaught of king Ha ri tsandra and his headmen at the hands of Muslim invaders, of which the dPyal master was a witness. By saying that the king and his entire court “went to the sky”, the statement indicates that the entire leadership of Gangetic India was toppled and put to death.

Ha ri tsandra must have been a ruler of east India before 1204 when Kha che pan chen fled to Tibet. He is not included in the genealogy of the Sena kings. He may have been a ruler of one petty kingdom of East India such as the one under the Paṭṭikerā dynasty but, again, his name is not preserved in the available material (see Various authors, *The Struggle for the Empire* p.41). He could have been a feudatory of the Sena dynasty.

122. The political conditions of Gangetic India that led dPyal Chos bzang to leave Ma ga dha had deteriorated beyond any bearable limit even for a brave Tibetan master like him, who did not mind to sit on the throne of Nā ro pa's monastery in those circumstances. They remained consistently bad because Kha che pan chen, too, fled soon thereafter.

A few decades later in a distant land from Gangetic India, Tishri ras pa, the uncompromising disciple of 'Ba' rom pa, faced a similar situation. He stayed at the capital of Byang Mi nyag until the end to oppose the many sieges laid to it by Jing gir rgyal po.

they traveled together. Once Kha che pan chen reached Myang in 1204, he was dismissive of dPyal lo tsa ba's request to go to sMan lung, and proceeded to the monastery of his host Khro phu lo tsa ba.

This account is found in the biography of Kha che pan chen I have just mentioned, written from the perspective of Khro phu lo tsa ba. dPyal Chos bzang is downgraded considerably in it, but it is meaningful that despite several other occasions in this biography of Kha che pan chen, in which the Kashmiri *pandi ta* is said to have used rather curt words for him, the dPyal master is credited in other sources with a major interaction with Shakya shri bhadra in Tibet too. They can be summarised as follows:

- Kha che pan chen consecrated Thar pa gling, founded by dPyal Chos bzang in the area of sMan lung soon after wood rat 1204 and before fire hare 1207. The name Thar pa gling, chosen for the new hermitage, was given to it by Shakya shri bhadra.¹²³ A statue

123. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.412 lines 4–5): “De rjes dben pa bsten par dgongs te/ sMan lung gi cha las yang dben du bsgyur pa'i dgon par bzhugs pa'i dus na/ Kha che'i pandi ta Shākya shrī Bod yul du byon pa dben gnas der spyang drangs/ bla ma de nyid kyis Byang chub Thar pa gling zhes btags pas/ ding sang gi bar du grags//”; “[dPyal Chos bzang] then thought of staying at the hermitage [Thar pa gling]. While he was at the monastery which had become the *yang dben* branch (*cha las*) of sMan lung, he invited Kha che pandi ta Shākya shrī to come to Tibet at this hermitage. The *bla ma* himself gave the name of Byang chub Thar pa gling to it, so it is known [like that] still now”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.15 line 15): “sPros pa dor bar mdzad nas Thar pa gling 'di dben dgon mdzad par dgongs//”; “After mental elaborations and rejections [of the plan], [dPyal Chos bzang] thought to build Thar pa gling *dben dgon* (“secluded monastery”)”.

A *gnas bshad* of Thar pa gling follows in the text (p.15 lines 15–26).

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.15 line 26): “dPal Byang chub Thar pa gling 'di ri khrod tshul du btab pa'o//”; “[dPyal Chos bzang] likewise founded the hermitage of dPal Byang chub Thar pa gling”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.15 lines 29–32): “Pan chen gyis zhal nas lo tsa ba'i sgrub gnas 'di la Byang chub Thar pa gling ces bya ba yin no gsungs/ de nas pan chen dpon slob rnam me mo yos lo dBus phyogs la phebs/ bla mas sgrub pa rtse gcig mdzad/ lcags mo lug la gTsang la phebs/ Thar pa gling du pan chen spyang drangs rnyed pa dang bskur//”; “The *pan chen* then said: “The meditation place of the *lo tsa ba* is to be named Byang chub Thar pa gling”. Then the *pan chen*, the master and his disciples, went to dBus in fire female hare 1207. The *bla ma* (i.e. dPyal Chos bzang) performed one pointed meditation. [Kha che pan chen] came back to gTsang in iron female sheep 1211. The *pan chen* received an invitation to [go to] Thar pa gling. He received honours”.

IHo rong chos 'byung (p.332 line 21–p.333 line 2) is one of several sources useful to fix the chronology of Kha che pan chen's movements from one region of the plateau to another: “Pan chen nyid kyis mdzad nas gTsang du lo bzhi/ dBus su lo bzhi/ yar lam gTsang dang mNga' ris su (p.333) lo gnyis bzhugs pa'i ring du Byams chen dGa' ldan pho brang dang bcas pa legs por grub nas chu pho spre'u' lo chu stod zla bai tshes gsum//”; “In terms of [Kha che] pan chen's deeds, he stayed four years in gTsang; four years in dBus and two years en route upwards to mNga' ris.

depicting Kha chen pan chen, known as sKu 'dra chos ra ma (the “portrait statue inside the religious enclosure”), was put up on the occasion.¹²⁴

- Among the traditions established by Shakya shri in Tibet, dPyal Chos bzang is recognised as the lineage holder of Kha che pan chen's Tantric teachings.¹²⁵
- They translated together Nā ro pa's commentary on Kye rdor, a fact that reiterates the links of the dPyal clan with the tradition of this master; instructions on this deity had been previously given to dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan by Pham thing pa the eldest (*dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* p.407 lines 3–5). Other important masters of Kye rdor in the dPyal pa tradition were, for instance, Kun dga' rdo rje and sKyeg/sKyog tsha rDo rje drag po rtsal, as mentioned passim in this essay of mine.

During this time, he completed Byams chen dGa' ldan pho brang on the third day of the first month of water male monkey 1212”.

This shows that he left across the plateau towards Kha che as soon as the great Byams pa statue of Khro phu was finished.

124. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.15 lines 32–34): “Khyad par du sKu 'dra chos ra ma sku tshad dang mnyam pa de'i nang na pan chen rang gi dbu skra/ tshems sku chos thugs dam 'phreng bba/ gser sku thog gang ba gcig/ bzhugs khri la bzhugs lding bcug pa'i sku 'dra ngo mtshar can bzhengs pa la rab gnas kyang pan chen rang gis mdzad/””; “In particular the life-size sKu 'dra chos ra ma [portrait of Shakya shri bhadra was made]. The *pan chen*'s hair, tooth, robe and meditation rosary, together with one statue in gold, one *mtho* high, were placed inside the throne [of the image]. The *pan chen* himself consecrated this extraordinary portrait statue”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.15 line 35–p.16 line 3): “Da lta yang gtsang khang na bzhugs pa ltar/ pan chen la 'bul ba (p.16) zhabs tog gi mnyes par byas nas Zhal lu rGyan gong du skyel ma mdzad pa la phebs/ pan chen gyi gTsang Chu mig sNar gyi lhas mo che/ Khro phu Sa skya mams su chos 'khor bsam gyi mi khyab pa bskor nas 'gro ba'i don rgya chen po la dgongs te slar yang rGya gar 'Phags pa'i yul du gshegs so/””; “Likewise [the statue] is kept in the *gtsang khang* still at present. Having made offerings to the *pan chen* and (p.16) rendered service in an appropriate manner, [Kha che pan chen] left for Zhal lu [and] rGyan gong, accompanied by an escort. The *pan chen* thought to benefit sentient beings in an extensive manner by turning the wheel of the teachings at gTsang Chu mig, sNar gyi lHas mo che, Khro phu and Sa skya an unimaginable [number of] times. He then returned to rGya gar (sic)”.

- An enumeration of books caused to be made by Chos bzang follows in the text (p.16 lines 3–12).
125. A note in *Myang chos 'byung* (p.141 lines 3–7) reads: “Kha che pan chen la Tshad ma'i bka' babs/ Byang rdor rnam gnyis la 'Dul ba'i bka' babs/ Khro lo Byams pa dpal la Man ngag gi bka' babs/ dPyal lo Chos bzang la rGyud kyi bka' babs so/ dPyal los Nā ro 'grel chen bsgyur ba sogs rgyu 'grel mang du bsgyur ro/””; “Kha che pan chen was the lineage holder of *Tshad ma*; the two Byang rdor were the lineage holders of '*Dul ba*; Khro [phu] lo [tsa ba] Byams pa dpal was the lineage holder of *Man ngag*; and dPyal lo [tsa ba] Chos bzang was the lineage holder of *rGyud*. dPyal lo [tsa ba] translated many commentaries including *Nā ro 'grel chen*”.

- Kha che pan chen imparted Nā ro pa's teachings on *sByor drug* (the meditative practice of Dus 'khor) upon dPyal Chos bzang at Nyung chu dgon pa, thus adding another facet to the manifold religious dimension of his family.¹²⁶ The name of the monastery was changed by Kha che pan chen on that occasion.¹²⁷
- dPyal Chos bzang was the *slob dpon* and Shākya shri bhadrā the *mkan po* in the ordination to the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow of Zhang lo tsa ba Grub pa bzang po at Nyung chu dgon pa (*lHo rong chos 'byung* p.127 lines 13–15).¹²⁸

126. The teachings on Dus 'khor imparted by Kha che pan chen upon dPyal Chos bzang and their translation of a commentary on Kye rdor are signs of a renewed interest by the dPyal pa in Nā ro pa. Some 100 years earlier, dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan had studied Kye rdor under Pham thing pa, the long serving disciple of the Indian master. Kha che pan chen and dPyal lo tsa ba made amend for this deficiency and introduced into the family's fold Nā ro pa's system of Dus 'khor which had not been received by dPyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan.

127. *Bu ston rin po che chos 'byung* (p.205 lines 6–9): “De nas Kha che Shākya shrī bha dra spyān drangs te dPyal Chos bzang gis Na ro 'grel chen [note: gSer sdings su bsgyur sngar Nyung chu dgon pa zer ba la pan chen gyis gSer sdings btags zer ro/ bsgyur te de'i bshad bka' man ngag dang bcas pa gñang//]”; “Then [Khro phu lo tsa ba] invited Kha che Shākya shrī bha dra [to Tibet] and dPyal Chos bzang [together with him] translated *Na ro 'i 'grel chen* [note: it was translated earlier at gSer sdings]. The *pan chen* (i.e. Shākya shri) named gSer sdings the *dgon pa* of the Nyung chu. The *bshad bka'* and *man ngag* [of this commentary] were [likewise] transmitted”.

Deb ther sngon po (p.933 lines 6–9): “Yang Kha che pan chen gyis lo tsā ba dPyal Chos kyi bzang po la brTag gnyis kyi 'grel pa Nā ro pas mdzad pa dang/ de'i Yan lag ādrug gi man ngag kyang gñang/ man ngag de lo tsā ba Rin po che sgrom gyi lde mig ces pa'i gzhung du sdebs//”; “Again, Kha che pan chen bestowed the commentary on *brTag gnyis* (i.e. *Kye rdor rtsa rgyud*) written by Na ro pa and the latter's instructions on [*Dus 'khor*] *Yan lag drug* upon lo tsa ba dPyal Chos kyi bzang po. The *lo tsa ba* composed a text entitled *Rin po che sgrom gyi lde mig* (“the key to the precious box”) pertaining to these instructions”. Also see *Blue Annals* (p.797).

'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.412 lines 5–6): “gSer sdings su spyān drangs te/ Nā ro pa 'i 'grel pa la 'gyur byang mdzad//”; “[dPyal Chos bzang] invited [Kha che pan chen] to gSer sdings and they composed the colophon of the translation ('gyur byang) of Na ro pa's commentary”.

128. *lHo rong chos 'byung* (p.127 lines 13–15): “De nas Nyung chu dgon par mkan po pan chen Shākya shri dang slob dpon dPyal lo tsa ba'i drung du rab tu byung nas bsnyen pa rdzogs par mdzad/ mtshan Grub pa bzang por gsol/ mkan po'i drung du lo gcig gzhugs//”; “Then at Nyung chu *dgon pa*, after receiving the *rab tu byung* vow from pan chen Shākya shri, acting as *mkan po*, and dPyal lo tsa ba, acting as *slob dpon*, [Zhang lo tsa ba] took the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow. He was given the name of Grub pa bzang po. He spent one year with the *mkan po* (i.e. Shākya shri)”.

It seems that the ordination of Zhang lo tsa ba to the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow took place in concomitance with their translation of Nā ro pa's commentary on Dus 'khor, for it occurred at the monastery Nyung chu *dgon pa* renamed so by Kha che pan chen on the occasion (see above n.127). Hence Kha che pan chen was called to give names to monasteries of the dPyal (Nyung chu and Thar pa gling).

In a sentence that betrays a considerable degree of rivalry, *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* reckons the number of years spent with Kha che pan chen by dPyal lo tsa ba Chos bzang and Khro phu lo tsa ba, respectively, in order to show that the member of the dPyal clan had a longer intercourse with the Kashmiri master—twelve years against ten.¹²⁹

That the twelve years dPyal Chos bzang interacted with Kha che pan chen were spent in rGya gar and then in Tibet is self-evident because they exceed the total of those that saw the presence of Shakya shri bhadra on the plateau. Given that dPyal Chos bzang did not stay with Kha che pan chen all the time during his Indian years, the calculation reckons a lapse of time spent by the dPyal master with Kha che pan chen in Tibet, a possibility denied by the biographies of the Kashmiri master which put forward the perspective of Khro phu lo tsa ba.

This leads me to deal with a contentious issue—the exact extent of the relationship between Kha che pan chen and dPyal lo tsa ba Chos bzang during the ten years of the latter's sojourn on the plateau. Contradictory signs are detected by a comparative reading of the pro dPyal lo tsa ba text *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* and the pro Khro phu lo tsa ba biography of Kha che pan chen, entitled *Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar rin po che'i phreng ba*.

The biography (ibid. f.19a lines 5–6) records a speech ascribed to dPyal Chos kyi bzang po after Kha che pan chen was already in Tibet according to this text.¹³⁰ The Kashmiri master would have passed Phag ri and, at that time, would have been in rGyang ro where the dPyal family had estates and temples. The passage in the *rnam thar* (ibid. f.19a line 4) reads:

“Bla ma dPyal Thar pa gling pa'i zhal nas nga'i bla ma Kha che bsod smyongs pa ni Bod du byon pa mi srid/ gal te byon na slob ma nga gcig pu las med pas dang rang phrin 'ong par rigs pa la la byung/ mtshan 'dra'am sbyang p'i yon tan gyi cha 'dra ba tsam zhig yin te 'ong gsung skad//”;

“Bla ma dPyal lo Thar pa gling pa said: “It is impossible for my *bla ma*, the Kha che ascetic, to come to Tibet. If he comes, there is no other disciple of his in Tibet apart from myself. He comes because of my own message, but all sorts of theories

129. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.14 lines 3–4): “dPyal kun mkhyen pa dang/ 'Khon Nam mkha' yangs pa'i shes rab ni bla mas lo bcu gnyis bzhugs par bzhed la/ Khro phu lo tsa ba ni chos phyir lo bcu bzhugs par bzhed//”; “The *bla ma* (i.e. Kha che pan chen) stated that the dPyal *kun mkhyen pa* and 'Khon Nam mkha' yangs pa'i shes rab stayed [with him] for twelve years. He stated that Khro phu lo tsa ba stayed [with him] for ten years for the sake of the teachings”.

130. *Kho phu lo tsa ba'i rnam phar thar pa* (p.303 line 7–p.304 line 1): “Bla ma sPyal lo Thar pa gling pa'i zhal nas nga'i bla ma Kha che bsod snyoms pa ni Bod du byon mi srid/ gal te byon yang Bod na slob ma nga cig pu las med pa nga la 'phrin 'ongs par (p.304) rigs pa la ma byung/ mtshan 'dra'am sbyangs pa'i yon tan gyi cha 'dra ba tsam zhig yin te 'ong gsung skad//”; “It is said that bla ma sPyal lo Thar pa gling pa affirmed: “It may be that my *bla ma*, the Kha che ascetic, comes to Tibet. Suppose he comes, since I am his only disciple in Tibet and no one else, the information will come to me (p.304) but the eventuality has not materialised. [Those who has come] is [someone bearing] a similar name or it is that a small part of credit [goes to] an individual who is too scrupulous”.”.

were formulated. They are a little [unclear] like the night or else like knowledge by hearsay. This is indeed so”. People say that this is how [dPyal lo tsa ba] spoke”.

Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar rin po che'i phreng ba (f.19a line 7–f.19b line 1) adds:

“Khra bo che dang Ngam kha gnas la sogs par snga sun par mdzad nas/ sMan lung su gdan 'dren par zhus pas/ Ā rya Mai tri'i don ngas byas la sang phod gis gsung de'i phyi nas bla ma Thar pa gling pa dngos Khro phur byon nas/ dpal Kye rdor gyi 'grel pa Nā ro pas mdzad zer ba de bsgyur ro/”;

“At localities such as Khra bo che and Ngam kha, [dPyal lo tsa ba] showed his displeasure like [it had happened] earlier. He asked [the master] to come to sMan lung but [Kha che pan chen] retorted: “Let us do it next year because [now] I wish to work for the purpose [of making] the Ā rya Mai tri [statue]”. (f.19b) Later bla ma Thar pa gling pa indeed went to Khro phu. He [and Kha che pan chen] translated the commentary on dpal Kye rdor written by Nā ro pa”.

There are three bones of contention in the speech attributed to dPyal Chos kyi bzang po by the pro Khro phu lo tsa ba biography of Kha che pan chen descend from the statements in *Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar rin po che'i phreng ba*. The circumstances of the speech are somewhat emblematic:

- dPyal Chos kyi bzang po was surprised to know that Kha che pan chen was in Tibet. By including this speech after Kha che pan chen was already in Tibet and moreover in an area where the dPyal were present, *Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar rin po che'i phreng ba* conveys that dPyal Chos kyi bzang po was unaware of the presence of his teacher. Kept in the dark about his teacher's arrival, he was jealous of someone else's achievement (“It is impossible for my *bla ma*, the Kha che ascetic, to come to Tibet”);
- dPyal lo tsa ba attributed the merit of the invitation to himself although he had no part in it (“If he comes, there is no other disciple of his in Tibet apart from myself. He comes because of my own message”);
- with his claim that he was the only Tibetan disciple of Kha che pan chen, dPyal Chos bzang boasted that he had been in India with him while the others did not;
- he added that people detracted his role attributing the merit of the invitation to themselves (“all sorts of theories were formulated”);
- he thought that these people either did not know the facts—the simile of the night, *mtshan 'dra*—or expressed theories by hearsay—*sbyangs pa'i yon tan*—(“They are a little like the night or else like knowledge by hearsay”).

dPyal lo tsa ba's speech even in the negative formulation of *Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar rin po che'i phreng ba* is not entirely the fruit of jealousy or pride. He was the Tibetan disciple of Kha che pan chen in India. Khro phu lo tsa ba was a young newcomer for the *pan chen*, whose acquaintance was from distance (ibid. p.27 line 24–p.32 line 21) and Kha che pan chen himself nurtured doubts at the beginning whether to take Khro phu lo tsa ba's invitation seri-

ously (ibid. p.33 lines 9–19). Kha che pan chen only met him when Khro phu lo tsa ba came to the Indian borderland to accompany him on the way to the plateau (ibid. p.33 lines 2–9).

The speech in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.14 lines 27–29) reads:

“De’i physis su Khro phu lo tsa ba chen pos Kha che pan chen rGya gar phyogs la mdzad nas gdan drangs te byon pa’i dus su bla ma’i thugs la nga’i bla ma nas bsges pas byon pa mi srid dam/ ’on kyang phebs pa’ang srid cing deng dus Bod na khrimis yod pa’i stobs kyis pandi ta su phebs kyang gser gyi ’bul ba byed pa’i srol yod//”;

“Subsequently Khro phu lo tsa ba chen po invited Kha che pan chen who was active in rGya gar (“Gangetic India”). At the time [of Kha che pan chen’s] departure, the *bla ma* (i.e. dPyal Chos bzang) thought: “My *bla ma* is old. Will it be impossible for him to come? This is nonetheless still possible. Owing to the custom (*khrimis*) existing at present in Tibet, there is the custom to offer gold to any *pandi ta* who comes [to Tibet]”.”.

Terms are remarkably different:

- dPyal Chos bzang’s surprise was a concern for his teacher’s well being (“My *bla ma* is old”);
- he wondered whether it was too late to escape (“Will it be impossible for him to come? This is nonetheless still possible”). I see in Chos kyi bzang po’s belief that it was difficult for him to come a concern that the journey he knew out of personal experience was too perilous not only because his teacher was old to bear it, but because he was aware that the Indian part of the journey was more dangerous than usual due to the presence of the iconoclast marauders. dPyal Chos kyi bzang po was acquainted with the precipitating situation in India. The destruction of Buddhist sites extended from Ma ga dha to East India. The only escape route was either to the north or farther to the east. Kha che pan chen chose the north apparently because he had Tibetan disciples. In my view, he was led to Tibet by the consideration that this was the safest way back to Kha che, his ultimate destination;
- dPyal lo tsa ba did not attribute the invitation to himself. On the contrary, another sentence in the text close to the speech says that the invitation was extended by Khro phu lo tsa ba;
- he spoke so at the time of Kha che pan chen’s departure from India (“At the time [of Kha che pan chen’s] departure, the *bla ma* (i.e. dPyal) thought:”), when the success of Kha che pan chen’s escape was not yet known, rather than after the master reached the plateau.

Whether Kha che pan chen accepted the invitation of dPyal Chos bzang to go to his monastery is a further controversial point. The biography of Kha che pan chen says that the master refused and that dPyal lo tsa ba had to go the Khro phu to meet him. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* tells that Kha che pan chen went to gSer sdings and gave teachings to dPyal lo tsa ba.

Given the transaction of gold from the hands of the disciple to the hands of the teacher who gave it away nonchalantly to the needy, this monastery, used to be known as Nyung chu, was

renamed gSer sdings.¹³¹ So, according to *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*, the invitation to his monastery extended by dPyal lo tsa ba was honoured rather than rejected. The discrepancy between the two sources shows how much factionalism distorts facts in favour of each one of the two disciples.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun adds other details on how dPyal Chos bzang entertained his Kashmiri master.¹³² Apart from the offer of gold in line with the consolidated custom in Tibet of giving such a gift to every visiting Indian *pandi ta*, he arranged transportation

131. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.14 line 35–p.15 line 8): “Khyad par bla ma lo tsa ba nyid kyi sngar rGya gar du pan chen gyi drung du Dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud 'grel chen Dri mes 'od (p.15) sems 'grel skor gsum, A bha ya'i man ngag snye ma, rDo rje 'phreng ba, mKha' spyod dkar dmar, bDe mchog dkar po, Phag mo rus sbal zhal, Kye rdo rje sbyor ba yan lag drug pa, dei rtsa ba rDo rje'i tshig rkang”; “In particular the *bla ma lo tsa ba* received *Dus kyi 'khor lo rgyud 'grel chen, Dri mes 'od* (p.15) *sems 'grel skor gsum, A bha ya'i man ngag snye ma, rDo rje 'phreng ba, mKha' spyod dkar dmar, bDe mchog dkar po, Phag mo rus sbal zhal, Kye rdo rje sbyor ba yan lag drug pa*, its root [text] *rDo rje'i tshig rkang*, written by the *pan chen*, and *Na ro'i 'grel chen* from the *pan chen* previously in rGya gar. At the end of the translation of *Na ro'i 'grel chen*, the name of Nyung chung dgon pa was changed. Earlier the name of gSer sding was Nyung chung dgon pa but later, when the *pan chen* turned the wheel of the teachings, the master (i.e. dPyal) and his disciples gifted, feeling obliged, a *zho* of gold to the *pan chen* who gave it away to the blind. The people who received it said that gold went out as it was floating (*sding* spelled so for *lding*), so it was addressed as gSer sding. Later, upon achieving the translation of *Na ro 'grel chen*, dPyal lo tsa ba dpal Chos kyi bzang po, the master of the two languages, corrected it into *gtsug lag khang* of dpal bKra shis gSer sdings.

As for the other translations many works were translated, such as the Indian doctrine of gShed dmar *lha lnga* written by Bir wa pa; Lu hi pa's Indian (sic) doctrine of bDe mchog, written by rDo rje gdan pa; and a hymn to the twenty-one sGrol ma”.

132. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.14 lines 27–35): “Byon pa'i dus su bla ma'i thugs la nga'i bla ma sku nas bsgrel pas byon pa mi srid dam/ 'on kyang phebs pa'ang srid cing deng dus Bod na khrims yod pa'i stobs kyis pandi ta su phebs kyang gser gyi 'bul ba byed pa'i srol yod pas/ bla mas kyang gser gyi 'bul ba byed pa bsu ba gang dang spyi la byon pas/ pan chen slob ma pan chun dgu dang bcas pa zlo li la gdan drangs nas 'Dul chung du phyag phebs pa'i tshe/ dpn slob gnyis ma gcig bu gcig ma 'phrad pa bzhin du gcig la gcig dgyes par gyur to/ 'A zha rgyal pos pan chen la zhabs tog bzang po mdzad/Khro che nyams su dga'i chos sde phyag tu phul/ de'i tshe pan chen gyi bla ma lo tsa ba la gnang shing/ de nas gSer sding du phyag phebs/ dpal ldan Sa skya pandi ta dpon slob dPyal lo tsa ba dpon slob/ Khro phu lo tsa ba dpn slob kyi thog drangs/ bu slob nam mkha'i skar tshogs lta bu la zab pa dang rgya che ba'i chos kyi 'khor lo bsam gyi mi khyab pa bskor cing skal ldan gyi 'gro ba rnams smin grol la bkod/”; “At the time [of Kha che pan chen's] departure [for Tibet], the *bla ma* (i.e. dPyal lo tsa ba) thought: “My *bla ma* is old. Will it be impossible for him to come? This is nonetheless still possible. Owing to the law existing at present in Tibet, there is the custom (*khrims*) to offer gold to any *pandi ta* who comes [to Tibet]”. The *bla ma* (i.e. dPyal) went to arrange an offer of gold by all means. Having taken the *bla ma* and his nine *pan chung* on palanquins, when they came to 'Dul chung, the two masters had direct and private contacts which were the occasion for direct and private happiness. The 'A zha rgyal po rendered a good service to the *pan chen*. [Amounting to] a show-off (*che nyams su*), Khro (i.e. Khro phu lo) gifted him dGa'i chos sde. At that time, the *pan chen*

for him and Kha che pan chen's retinue of nine Indian *pan chung* disciples in the traditional Indian way—rather than Tibetan—and took them to 'Dul chung. *Khro phu lo tsa ba chen po'i rnam par thar pa* records the names of these nine *dpan chung*-s who went to Tibet with the great *Kashmiri pan chen*. They were Su ga ta shri, Dza ya dad ta, Bi bhu ta tsan dra, Da na shi la, Sam gha shri, Su ma ti sā ga ra, Kā la tsa kri, Dzi na gup ta and Ma hā bo dhi ya (ibid. p.299 lines 2–7).

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun then cannot renounce to discredit Khro phu lo tsa ba and declare Kha che pan chen's greater affection for dPyal lo tsa ba, reversing the terms of the matters described in bSod nams dpal bzang po's *Kha che pan chen gyi rnam thar rin po che'i phreng ba*. The *gdung rabs* claims that Kha che pan chen donated to dPyal Chos bzang the monastery given to him by Khro phu lo tsa ba. Rather than this statement, the reference to the care taken for Kha che pan chen by an unidentified 'A zha *rgyal po* is of interest. It refers to the presence of descendants of the 'A zha in Myang smad since the days of early *bstan pa phyi dar*, exemplified by the activity of 'A zha Ye shes g.yung drung.¹³³

The account of Kha chen pan chen's years in Tibet mentioned in the biographies written from the perspective of Khro phu lo tsa ba became the standard version, and the dPyal pa view of the matter by bya btang pa Padma rdo rje did not sediment anywhere except in his *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*.

Acceptance of orthodoxy represented by the version of the pro Khro phu lo tsa ba version, on the one hand, or its subversion represented by the version of the dPyal people, on the other, is so discretionary to remain indecisive. The two versions are enough antithetical to make a critical reader wonder. Owing to the contribution of *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* that made the issue thorny, one should realise that the version of the biographies of Kha che pan chen eulogising Khro phu lo tsa ba should not be taken fideistically. This does not imply that the version of *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* should be preferred.

The history of Kha che pan chen's visit to Tibet is a typical case of a historical narrative transmitted to posterity on the basis of a one-side interpretation, while the alternative view of the events was removed from collective memory. I see the rationale behind one version or the other in petty personal reasons—to boast of the merit of a close relationship with the

gave it to the *bla ma lo tsa ba*. Then they went to gSer sding. [Kha che pan chen] turned the wheel of the teachings in a way that mind cannot conceive for the disciples as numerous as the galaxies in the sky, headed by dpal ldan Sa skya pandi ta and disciples, dPyal lo tsa ba and disciples, and Khro phu lo tsa ba and disciples. He set the conditions for fortunate sentient beings to achieve liberation”.

133. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.105 lines 12–16) says that 'A zha Ye shes g.yung drung, a disciple Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug, held 'Dre lha khang, founded during *bstan pa snga dar*, in the vicinities of 'Dul chung. 'A zha Ye shes g.yung drung is famous for having taken the monastic vow in Khams in peculiar circumstances and to have held Zhwa lu as regent while lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas was in rGya gar.

last great *'Dul ba* master who set his feet on the plateau—rather than religious ideology or political influence.

After Kha che pan chen left Tibet, dPyal lo tsa ba dedicated himself to his religious practice intensely.¹³⁴ At least in one case he had to divert from his preoccupations for spiritual activity and mingle into secular affairs. He brokered peace in a war between neighbours.¹³⁵ Chu mig and Zhwa lu were involved in this conflict,¹³⁶ which must have occurred in the years between water bird 1213, when Kha che pan chen left the plateau from Upper West Tibet, and earth ox 1229, when dPyal lo tsa ba fell terminally ill (see n.137). Having become sick at the end of the ox year—during *rgyal zla ba* or last month, around February-March, hence no more during 1229 but already during 1230—he died during *'khrum zla ba*—the eighth month, hence

134. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.16 lines 22–24): “Thun mtshams su chos kyi 'khor lo re re tsam ma gtogs sku tshe hril po sgrub pa la bzhugs pas yi dam gyi lha mang po zhal gzigs/ khyad par du gSang 'dus/ bDe mchog/ Kye rdo rje/ rDo rje Phag mo/ Seng ge sgra/ mKha' spyod dkar dmar/ gShin rje gshed la sogs pa'i lha mang po'i zhal gzigs//”; “[dPyal Chos bzang] dedicated the entire later part of his life to meditate on each cycle of teachings during his meditation sessions. He had visions of many tutelary deities. In particular he had visions of many deities, such as gSang 'dus, bDe mchog, Kye'i (spelled so) rdo rje, rDo rje phag mo, Seng ge sgra, mKha' spyod dkar dmar and gShin rje gshed”.

135. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.16 lines 19–22): “Chu mig pa dang Zhwa lu pa rtsod gzhi'i me chen po 'bar/ khrag gi char ba phab/ sems can mang po gnod cing bstan pa 'grib pa la thug pas bla ma'i thugs rjes char sprin bsod pa'i me bsad thabs mkhas pa'i nyi mas khrag gi char ba gcad/ stobs ldan dpung ni tshogs kyi ma rung pa kun btul/ blo gros shes bya'i 'od kyi bstan pa gsal bar mdzad do//”; “The great fire that caused the strife between the Chu mig pa and the Zhwa lu pa set ablaze. A rain of blood fell. Many people suffered and the teachings went through a time of obscurantism. The *bla ma*'s compassion gathered rain clouds and [he proved to be] a master of the method of extinguishing the fire. The sun of his knowledge dried out the rain of blood. He subdued all the miscreants by gathering the troops of his spiritual power. The teachings returned to shine by means of the light of his wisdom and knowledge”.

136. dGe legs 'phen, *Zha lu gSer khang gi bdag po jo bo lCe'i gdung rabs* (f.22b line 5–f.23a line 4) provides details on the cause of the conflict and its outcome which shows that dPyal Chos bzang brokered a peace which was inconclusive: “A mes (f.23a) chen po Sangs rgyas ye shes kyi rjes su/ rTag dmar rngam po'i 'da' rta tshod dang sbangs tshod sa cha khor tshod grong tshod gnyis yod/ spang tshod gcig la ma mchi ste/ Chu Zhal 'khrugs/ lan mang po'i bar du dmag byas/ rgyal pham ci rigs pa byung ba la/ bTsan khang gi rTa mgrin 'di rta skad then gsum ston nas/ Chu mig pa phams//”; “After A mes (f.23a) chen po Sangs rgyas ye shes, the agreement of rTag dmar rngam po was breached. Here were areas apportioned to nomads and sedentary people, such as horses' fodder and manure. Chu [mig and] Zhal [lu] fought. There were fighting on many occasions. Victory and defeat occurred according to the circumstances. The rTa mgrin [statue] of [Zhwa lu] bTsan khang neighed thrice, and the Chu mig pa were [eventually] defeated”.

late autumn—of iron tiger 1230, aged sixty-eight.¹³⁷ This helps to establish his birth date to water sheep 1163.

The many life achievements of dPyal lo tsa ba Chos bzang are summarised as ten deeds in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*.¹³⁸ His disciples were as numerous as the stars in the sky.¹³⁹

137. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.413 lines 1–3): “De nas le lo can gyi rten gyi gang zag nmams bskul ba dang/ zhing kham dag par 'gro don rgya che ba la dgongs/ glang gi lo rgyal gyi zla ba la cung zad bskung tshul bstan no/ de nas ma rig pa'i rdul gyis mig g.yogs pa nmams kyi snang bar gshegs par mkhyen kyang/ 'khor gyi tshogs nmams yid ches par bya ba'i don du De bzhin gshegs pas bstan pa'i gso ba rig pa rjes su bstan pa'i phyir skui rim 'gro sman spyad la sogs pa mdzad do//”; “[dPyal Chos bzang] then showed signs of being slightly weak. People encouraged him. He realised extensively that he would pass on to a pure realm. On the *rgyal* month of the ox year 1229, he manifested a way to conceal it a little. Then despite knowing that the eyes of the ignorant people are covered by the dust of ignorance, in order to follow the instructions of the medical treatment indicated by the *bDe bzhin gshegs pa* for the sake of calming down his retinue, [ceremonies] were performed such as medical checks and healing rites (*rim 'gro*)”.

Ibid. (p.414 line 1): “De nas khrums zla'i tshes drug gi snga dro skya rengs shar ba dus su//”; “Then [he died] in the morning on the sixth of *khrums zla* (the eighth month) when dawn shines”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.16 line 29): “Sa mo glang lo'i rgyal gyi zla ba la sku cung zad snyung tshul bstan//”; “On *rgyal gyi zla ba* (i.e. the last month of the Tibetan year) of earth female ox 1229 [dPyal Chos bzang] showed some signs of illness”.

He received a prophecy from bDe mchog about his death, which said (ibid. p.16 lines 32–33): “Je btsun khyod ni khrum zla yar ngo yi/ tshes drug snga dro'i dus su mKha' spyod kyi/ gnas su spyan 'dren//”; “rJe btsun! You will be invited to mKha' spyod on the sixth day of the waxing moon of *khrum zla ba*, in the morning”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.17 line 11): “dGung lo rtsa brgyad bde bar gshegs//”; “He died at the age of sixty-eight”.

138. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.12 line 33–p.13 line 10: first deed; p.132 lines 10–13: second deed; p.13 lines 13–15: third deed; p.13 lines 15–18: fourth deed; p.13 lines 18–20: fifth deed; p.13 lines 20–24: sixth deed; p.13 lines 24–25: seventh deed; p.13 lines 24–25: eighth deed; p.13 lines 25–30: ninth deed; p.13 lines 30–p.14 line 3: tenth deed.

139. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.412 lines 6–8): “Khro phu lo tsa ba Byams pa'i dpal la sogs pa'i bu slob nam mkha'i skar ma tsam kyi don mdzad/ [note: khyad par 'phags pa'i bu chen nyi shu ni/ dge slong chen pp bzhi la/ Khro phu lo tsa ba Byams pa'i dpal/ rKyang pur ba chos rje 'Jil gsar ma/ bSi gling rin chen rTog dar ma/ Shangs Zhal mnga' ba bSod nams rin chen dang bzhi/ ded ston chen po bzhi ni/ Rong pa rje btsun dGa' blo/ Nyang stod Bya khyungs pa Pho rog mDo sde mgon, sKyo ston ri pa dPal chen/ sNye ba Nyi ma rdo rje dang bzhi/ yon bdag ral pa can bzhi ni/ Zha lu ba A mes jo bo Sangs rgyas/ Tshong 'dus pa sKye che/ Nyang stod pa rDzing kha ba bKra shis//”; “He benefitted as many disciples as the stars in the sky, such as Khro phu Byams pa'i dpal [note: of the twelve most exalted disciples the four *dge slong chen po* were Khro phu lo tsa ba Byams pa'i dpal; rKyang pur ba chos rje 'Jil gsar ma; bSi gling rin che (spelled so) rTog dar ma; and Shangs Zhal mnga' ba bSod nams rin chen; the *ded ston chen po bzhi* (“four leading masters”) were Rong pa rje btsun dGa' blo (spelled so for rGa lo); Nyang stod Bya khyungs pa Pho rog mDo sde mgon, sKyo ston ri pa dPal chen and sNye ba Nyi ma rdo rje; the *yon bdag ral pa can bzhi* (the “four

Dus 'khor and *sByor drug*

Although the induction of Dus 'khor in the religious traditions of the dPyal family of sMan lung should be credited to Kun dga' rdo rje who, in Bal po, received it from A ma ra tsandra,¹⁴⁰ this practice became increasingly important for the sMan lung family after *sByor drug* was assimilated into the other traditions of the dPyal pa at the time of the interaction of dPyal Chos bzang with Shakya shri bhadra.

In the successive period, Thar pa gling became the pole of attraction for important masters to be trained in the traditions of the dPyal family, which included the study of Sanskrit, their four *yi dam*, Dus 'khor and the related teachings of *sByor drug*.

In his youth Rong pa rGa lo (1203–1282), a personage of some consistency in the history of Tibet, received different kinds of spiritual support from dPyal Chos bzang.¹⁴¹ He belonged

sponsor with [laymen's] long mane") were Zha lu ba A mes jo bo Sangs rgyas; Tshong 'dus pa sKyege che and Nyang stod pa rDzing kha ba bKra shis". One name in the latter group of four is missing.

Among dPyal lo tsa ba's disciples *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.17 lines 16–26) says that they were dPyal ban Nag po Chos blo (ibid. line 18); Rong pa rGa lo (ibid. lines 20–21); dPyal lo tsa ba A mo gha don yod dpal bzang po (ibid. line 25).

140. On that occasion, Kun dga' rdo rje received many other Tantric teachings, including commentaries on dGyes rdor and bDe mchog, and also *sGra* and *Tshad ma* from this *pandi ta* defined as a master of the five sciences, and Su kha shri bha dra in Bal po (*dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* p.408 line 7–p.409 line 1; *Myang chos 'byung* p.139 lines 5–7). See above (n.83).

141. A short biography of Rong pa rGa lo rNam rgyal rdo rje is found in 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub's *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung*. I excerpt here a few passages concerning his relationship with the dPyal and other people along with his dates. One passage (p.63 lines 4–p.64 line 2) reads: "rGa lo ni/ sngags 'chang rDo rje seng ge zhes pa la sras bzhi byung pa la/ gcen po Ye shes rdo rje zhes bya ba mkhas shing grub pa brnyes pa gcig byung/ des grub thob dBang phyug rgyal po zhes bya ba'i gdan sa dBen dmar bzung pa de'i sras su chu mo phag (p.64) la 'khrungs/ Khams pa rGa lo'i skye bar bzung nas rGa lo zhes zer/ mtshan dngos rNam rgyal rdo rje/ chung ngu'i dus su Ngur smrig tu Kha che pan chen dang mjal bas skyes bu khyad par can 'byung bar mkhyen nas phag gis gzham shing shis brdzod mdzad/ gzhan las khyad par du 'phags par Sam skri ta'i skad kyis lung bstan dbugs dbyung/"; "As for rGa lo, sngags 'chang rDo rje seng ge had four sons. The eldest, Ye shes rdo rje, attained the status of savant and accomplished human being. He held dBen dmar, the *gdan sa* of grub thob dBang phyug rgyal po. His son was born in water female pig 1203. (p.64) Considered to be the rebirth of Khams pa rGa lo, he was called rGa lo. His actual name was rNam rgyal rdo rje. In his childhood, at Ngur smrig he met Kha che pan chen who, realising that he was

to the *skyes rabs* of dpal chen rGwa lo,¹⁴² the Mi nyag pa disciple of the equally Tangut rTsa

an outstanding human being, folded his hands and uttered words of blessing. He gave a prophecy in Sanskrit that he was extraordinarily noble, more than others”.

Ibid. (p.64 line 4): “dPyal Chos bzang gi drung du sGra dang khyad par du dGyes Phag gnyis pa sbyangs/”; “[Rong pa rGa lo] learned *sGra* and, in particular, both dGyes [rdor and] Phag [mo] from dPyal Chos bzang”.

Bu ston Rin chen grub, *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* (p.71 line 5): “De ltar rang gzhan kyi don bsam gyis mi khyab pa bsgrub nas dgung lo brgyad cu bzhes nas chu pho rta lo/ cho 'phrul chen po'i yar ngo'i tshes gsum gyi snga dro sku gshegs so/”; “Likewise, after having achieved to benefit himself and others in inconceivable ways, [Rong pa rGa lo] died in water male horse 1282, aged eighty, in the morning of the third day of the *cho 'phrul* [month] (i.e. the first month) with the waxing moon”.

'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub, *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* (p.71 lines 2–3): “dGung lo brgyad bcu bzhes pa chu pho rta lo cho 'phrul zla ba'i yar tshes gsum gyi nyin sku gshegs so/ rGa lo nas Dus 'khor gyi Rwa 'Bro gnyis ka'i dbang bshad bka' man ngag gi chu bo gcig tu 'dus pa yin la/ Rwa shar nub gyi Nag 'Jigs skor gsum gyi dbang gdams ngag rnams kyang 'di la mnga' ba yin no/”; “[Rong pa rGa lo] died on the third day of *cho 'phrul zla ba* (i.e. the first month) of water male horse 1282 at the age of eighty. From rGa lo onwards, the *dbang bka'*, *bshad bka'* and *man ngag* of Dus 'khor of the systems of Rwa and 'Bro were concentrated into a single river. He also received the *dbang* and *gdams ngag* of Nag 'Jigs skor gsum of the eastern and western Rwa”.

142. Rong pa Gwa lo is also known to the Tibetan tradition as Gwa chung, or “Gwa the younger”, to distinguish him from Gwa chen, or “Gwa the elder”, the disciple of rTsa mi Sangs rgyas grags pa. Gwa chen was from Byang Mi nyag like rTsa mi, and studied Dus 'khor under him (see the next note).

Rong pa rGa lo is considered to have been an incarnation of Lo chen Rin chen bzang po (958–1055) (see Tashi Tsering and Vitali, *sPyi ti dKyiL dgon nor bu dge 'phel gyi byung ba brjod pa'i rab byed 'phags nor bdun ldan, A Short Guide to Key Gonpa* p.48 line 15–p.49 line 8), but also a rebirth in the *skyes rabs* of rGa chen from whom he derived his name (Bu ston Rin chen grub, *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* p.65 lines 3–4: “De'i sras rje btsun rGa lo ni/ yab kyi mtshan ltas la brten nas sngon gyi Khams pa rGa lo tsa ba'i skyes bar dgongs nas mtshan du'ang de nyid btags/”; “His (dBang phyug rgyal po's) son was rje btsun rGa lo. Basing himself on the signs [that had manifested to him], his father, [in order to give him] a name, thought that [his son] was earlier born as Khams pa rGa lo, and named him so”).

Hence the identification of the previous lives of Rong pa rGa lo is controversial, as in many cases of the *skyes rabs* system. The passage shows that Bu ston Rin chen grub takes rGa chung's origin to be the Mi nyag of Khams rather than the Tangut kingdom. Khams Mi nyag did not exist in the days of dpal chen rGa lo, but the non-concomitant formations of Byang Mi nyag and Khams Mi nyag are too big a topic to be treated in this note.

The Sa skya pa literature includes Rong pa rGa lo in the group of Sa skya pandi ta's direct disciples called the “four great translators” (*lo tsa ba chen po bzhi*); the others were Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal, Glo bo lo tsa ba Shes rab rin chen and Zhang lo tsa ba Grub pa dpal (*Ngor chos 'byung* p.320 lines 4–5). The latter, incidentally, was a student of dPyal Chos bzang. *Deb ther sngon po* (p.925

mi lo tsa ba.¹⁴³ Rong pa rGa lo was the son of grub thob dBang phyug rgyal po, the holder of

lines 13–16; *Blue Annals* p.790) says that Rong pa Gwa lo, too, studied under a dPyal master, who can only be Chos bzang and this must have happened at Thar pa gling.

Another point of contact between Gwa chen and Gwa chung is that, like the latter, the former was an expert of *sByor drug* which he received from A bha ya and rTsa mi (*Deb ther sngon po* p.932 lines 4–5, *Blue Annals* p.796).

143. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (*Lo pan* section p.530 line 3–p.531 line 6): “Tsa mi Sangs rgyas grags pa 'di mDo Khams smad Mi nyag gi yul du 'khrungs/ rGya gar du mkhas shing dngos grub thob nas rDo rje gdan du sTon pa'i rgyal tshab mdzad/ Dus 'khor Tsa mi'i rgyud gsum sogs bsgyur/ rGwa lo gZhon nu dpal 'di mDo Khams su 'khrungs/ rus rGwa yin pa rGan gZhon gnyis phyin pas rGwa chen rGwa chung du grags/ rGya gar du su mkhas dris pas Tsa mi kho na mkhas zer bas rGya gar du yong nas Bod gcig gis gcig la nyan pa mi yong bsams nas gzhan dris pas A bha kā ra dang O rgyan gyi pandi ta Wā gi shwa ra mkhas zer te de gnyis kyang Tsa mi la chos nyan zhing 'dug pas slar Tsa mi dang A bha la chos zhus/ bDe mchog gi bsnyen pa byas pas yi dam gyi lung bstan byung nas spyod pa la dur khrod gSil ba tshal du phyin/ der las mGon Bya rog mas srog snying phul/ bar chad med par log pas bla ma gnyis kyi kyang bkur sti mdzad/ Ma ga dha'i rgyal pos spyang drangs skye bo'i tshogs sa gzhi gang ba 'dus te me tog gtor ba la bus mo nub pa tsam byung ste Sangs rgyas mya ngan las 'das rjes chos smra bala me tog gtor ba de las mang ba ma byung bar grags/ chos du ma bsgyur zhing khyad par mGon po Bya rog ma spyang drangs te rje Dus mkhyen/ Zhang rin po che/ Khams pa A seng gsum la gnyang zhing Khams pa A seng la dpal Phag mo gru pas gsan te mGon po Kar lugs Tshal lugs 'Bri gDan lugs rnam byung ngo/ rGwa lo la srog gegs byung ba gzhan gyis ma sol nas Sa chen gyis gsal zhes Bod na zer yang gzhan zhig dang 'khrul pa te de lta'i gnas med pas rGwa lo'i rnam thar ltos shig/ Kre bo Shes rab dpal/ mTshur ston dBang gi rdo rje/ Rwa Chos rab/ dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje/ (p.531) dPyal Kun dga' grags/ Zhang Shes rab bla ma/ Zha ma Seng rgyal/ bKra shis rgyal mtshan/ Chos kyi snying po/ Kam Chos kyi ye shes/ Phyugs mtshams dBang phyug rgya mtsho/ Tshul khriims yon tan/ Kher gang Yon tan dpal/ bSod nams bzang po/ Sum bha dPal mchog dang po'i rdo rje 'dis rDo rje gdan du sGrol ma dang Phag mo las blo sbyong snyan rgyud gsan pas rtogs pa 'khrungs shing bDe mchog mKha' 'gro rgya mtsho chos gtso bor spyang drangs so//”; “Tsa mi (spelled so) Sangs rgyas grags pa was born in the land of mDo Khams smad Mi nyag. He obtained knowledge and mystic powers in rGya gar. He was a successor of sTon pa at rDo rje gdan. He translated [works], such as *Dus 'khor rTsa mi'i rgyud gsum*. rGwa (spelled so) lo gZhon nu dpal was born in mDo Khams. He belonged to the rGwa clan. Since there were two rGan (sic for rGwa) gZhon [nu], the elder and the younger, they are known as rGwa chen and rGwa chung. Having enquired: “Who is the most learned [master] in rGya gar?”, [rGwa chen] was told: “The only one truly learned is Tsa [mi]”. After he proceeded to rGya gar, deeming non-sensical that a Tibetan should study under [another] one [there], he asked: “Who else is learned?”. He was told: “A bha ka ra and Wa gi shwa ra, the *pandi ta* of U rgyan”, but given that these two had listened to the teachings of Tsa mi, he received teachings from Tsa mi and A bha (spelled so). Having performed propitiatory rituals (*bsnyen pa*) to bDe mchog, he received a prophecy from the *yi dam* who ordered him to go to the cemetery of gSil ba tshal. There, [as a maturation of his] nexus, mGon [po] Bya rog ma offered his life essence [to him]. He returned without obstacles and gave his reverence to both *bla ma*-s. He was invited by the king of Ma ga dha and scattered flowers appeared knee-deep wherever people gathered. It is said that after the *nirvana* of the Buddha there was no bigger amount of flowers scattered during a bestowal of teachings. He translated many texts. In particular he invited (*spyang drangs*) mGon po Bya rog ma. rJe Dus mkhyen,

gdan sa dBeng dmar, who were from a family settled in the Yar 'brog-Rin spungs area ('Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub, *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* p.63 line 4–p.64 line 1). Bu ston Rin chen grub traces the descentance of the family to which Rong pa rGa lo belonged.¹⁴⁴

Deb ther sngon po, styled after Bu ston rin po che's *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* dedicated to the history of Dus 'khor, says that dPyal Chos bzang healed Rong pa rGa lo from an ailment and taught him Sanskrit over a period of three years. Bu ston rin po che says that this happened in the years before 1218 and adds several other teachings that Rong pa rGa lo received from him.¹⁴⁵

Zhang rin po che and Khams pa A seng, altogether three, obtained [this deity's] teachings. dPal Phag mo gru pa obtained them from Khams pa A seng. [The cult of] mGon po according to the system of the Kar[ma] pa, according to the system of the Tshal [pa] and according to the system of the 'Bri [gung pa] and gDan [sa mthil] came into existence. An obstruction to the life of rGwa was created, which others could not remove. Although it is said in Tibet that Sa chen could dispose of it, this is a mistake and thus is groundless. One should consult *rGwa lo'i rnam thar*. Kre bo Shes rab dpal, mT-shur ston dBang gi rdo rje, Rwa Chos rab, dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje, (p.531), dPyal Kun dga' grags, Zhang Shes rab bla ma, Zha ma Seng rgyal, bKra shis rgyal mtshan, Chos kyi snying po, Kam Chos kyi ye shes, Phyugs mtshams dBang phyug rgya mtsho, Tshul khirms yon tan, Kher gang Yon tan dpal, bSod nams bzang po, Sum bha dPal mchog dang po'i rdo rje, these ones, had studies excerpted from [the cycles of] sGrol ma and Phag mo at rDo rje gdan and received the oral transmission. They had spiritual realisations and invited (*spyang drangs*) bDe mchog [and] mKha' 'gro rgya mtsho as the main ones".

144. Bu ston Rin chen grub, *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* (p.65 line 7–p.66 line 3): “Bla ma rGa lo ni/ Bod kyi rgyal po'i dus su blon pos bSang (p.66) shi pho nyar btang ste rGya nag Hwa shang spyang drangs ba dang 'brel bar Mi nyag Hwa shang du gyur ba spyang drangs te/ rgyal po'i mchod gnas su gyur cing Theg pa chen po'I gzhung lugs ma nyams par spyod pa'i sngags 'chang sha stag tu gyur pa'i rgyud las/ Yar 'brog sgang du Mi nyag gZhon nu snying po zhes bya ba byung/ de'i sras gZhon nu seng ge/ de'i sras Rig 'dzin snying po/ des Rong gi rGya ma'i yul du babs/ de'i sras rDo rje seng ges Rong mkhar phug bzung/ de'i sras bzhi byung pa'i gcen po Ye shes rdo rje bya ba mkhas shing grub pa brnyes pa zhig byung/ des Phyag rgya chen po dbyug chos su grags pa'i man ngag la grub pa thob pa dBang phyug rgyal po zhes bya ba'i gdan sa dBeng dmar bzung/ de'i sras rje btsun rGa lo/"; “Bla ma rGa lo. The king of Bod sent the minister bSang (p.66) shi as messenger to China in order to invite a Chinese *hwa shang*. As to this, he invited one [man from] Mi nyag who had become a *hwa shang*. The latter turned out to be the officiating *bla ma* of the king. Among [his] lineage [members] who only were *sngags 'chang* and practised the doctrinal system of *Theg pa chen po*, Mi nyag gZhon nu snying po settled at Yar 'brog sgang. His son was gZhon nu seng ge. The latter's son was Rig 'dzin snying po who took control of the locality of Rong rGya ma. His son rDo rje seng ge took hold of Rong mkhar phug. Of latter's four sons, the eldest Ye shes rdo rje attained knowledge and powers. He was the one who obtained the powers deriving from the teachings known as *Phyag rgya chen po dbyug chos*. Known as the mighty lord, he held the [family's] monastic seat of dBeng dmar. His son was rje btsun rGa lo".

145. Bu ston Rin chen grub, *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* (p.66 line 7–p.67 line 3) describes the teachings imparted by dPyal Chos bzang upon Rong pa rGa lo and the extraordinary signs, related to these instructions, that led the latter to heal from a disease: “De nas dPyal Chos

Following Rong pa rGa lo's frequentation of Thar pa gling, the sMan lung dPyal pa established a lasting relationship with the Rong pa family of dBen dmar to which this rGa lo belonged. The interaction of the successors to Rong pa rGa lo with the successors to dPyal Chos bzang continued along lines which did not exclusively focus on the *Dus 'khor* and *sByor drug* traditions. For instance, the Rong pa family also was holder of the *Rwa lugs* transmission of this *Tantra*. They also involved teachings concerning the various *yi dam* of the people of sMan lung and Thar pa gling.

A reversal of terms: the dPyal pa contribution to Gangetic Buddhism

DPYAL A MO GHA SIDDHI

Little is known about the personality, education and practice of dPyal A mo gha.¹⁴⁶ He is virtually ignored in *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* and *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (but see a brief biography of A mo gha in the latter source on p.18 lines 26–30). *Myang chos 'byung* contributes a crucial notion about him, albeit far too short. This notion is useful to show

kyi bzang po'i drung du byon/ lo gsum gyi bar du/ rGya yig dang/ rGya klog dang/ Sam skri ta'i skad rigs pa (p.67) dang/ khyad par du dGyes Phag gnyis la sbyangs nas dgung lo bcu drug pa la Ngur smrig tu legs par gsungs shing bshad ston yang rgya cher mdzad/ gzhan yang Na ro 'grel chen gdams ngag dang bcas pa dang/ bDe mchog gzhung phran gdams ngag dang bcas pa gsan cing/ bDe mchog gi dbang zhus pa'i tshe/ dkyil 'khor gyi dbus nas ngo mtshar ba'i sgra thos shing/ shangs khrag zags shing zag par rmis nas nad dang sdir sgrib byang/ lus bde/ shes rab gsal bar gyur cing/ gShed dmar gyi dbang bskur zhus pa'i tshe bdud kyi bar chad las thar pa yin no//"; "Then [Rong pa rGa lo] went to see dPyal Chos kyi bzang po. For three years he learned the Indian script, reading the Indian [texts] and whatever pertained to the Sanskrit language, (p.67) and in particular both dGyes [rdor and] [rDo rje] Phag [mo]. When he was aged sixteen (1218) [Rong pa rGa lo] excellently preached them at Ngur smrig and expanded their oral exposition. Moreover, he received teachings on *Na ro 'grel chen*, and major and minor teachings on bDe mchog [from the dPyal pa master]. When [dPyal Chos kyi bzang po] gave him the empowerment of bDemchog, [Rong pa rGa lo] heard extraordinary sounds [uttered] from the centre of the *dkyil 'khor*. Having dreamt that a drop of blood fell from his nose, his body was freed from the disease and the contamination stains which were transformed into clear wisdom. When [dPyal Chos kyi bzang po] gave him the empowerment of gShed dmar, he was liberated from the obstruction [created by] the *bdud-s*".

Bu ston Rin chen grub (ibid. p.69 lines 2–3) credits him with a miracle at Thar pa gling: "Thar pa gling Mo dben sgang khar bskyal bas de na 'dug pa'i rta la zhon nas nam mkha' la 'phags te/ rta de seng ge'i nram par bsgyur//"; "Having been taken to Mo dben sgang kha of Thar pa gling, [Rong pa rGa lo] rode on a horse which was there and roamed into the sky. That horse transformed into a lion".

Thus, Rong pa rGa lo (b. 1203) was not yet sixteen years old at the time. His three year studies at Thar pa gling under dPyal Chos bzang ended before 1218.

146. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.18 lines 26–27): "sPyan ras gzigs kyi sprul pa dPyal A mo gha//"; "dPyal A mo gha was the emanation of sPyan ras gzigs".

that the dPyal family from sMan lung and Thar pa gling reversed its stance on the frequentation of the holy places of rGya gar and attempted a contribution to overcome the impasse in which Gangetic Buddhism was trapped. Before dealing with this new turn in the approach of the dPyal clan to the sojourns in rGya gar, I introduce first some pale traces of A mo gha's activity in Tibet, found in sources that do not write about the family.

A mo gha siddhi was a teacher of Rong pa rGa lo like dPyal Chos bzang,¹⁴⁷ but also entertained relationship with the proponents of a tradition that was surging towards its apogee. dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba credits A mo gha siddhi with bringing the practice of *sByor drug* into the Jo nang pa fold.¹⁴⁸ On his part, dPyal A mo gha had received *sByor drug* from Vibhūti candra, a master from the Kathmandu Valley and one of the nine *pan chung* (or “minor *pandi ta*”) accompanying Kha che pan chen to Tibet (see n. 148).

Vibhūti candra also gave *sByor drug* to Ko brag pa (1181–1261), who himself too traveled to India, and other disciples at Ding ri (*Deb ther sngon po* p.932 line 16–p.933 line 5, *Blue Annals* p.796–797; and Sum pa mkhan po, *dPag bsam ljon bzang* p.730 line 17–p.731 line 4).

I assume that the Jo nang pa recipient of the *sByor drug* teachings was kun spangs pa Thugs rje brtson 'grus (1243–1313), a disciple of dGe sdings pa kun mkhyen Chos sku 'od zer (1214–1292) and thus quite younger than dPyal A mo gha, because he is credited by the literature of his school with this achievement.

147. Bu ston Rin chen grub, *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* (p.70 lines 2–4): “gZhan yang dPyal A mo gha/ mkhan po Phag dang/ slob dpon Dharma gzugs dang/ 'Bum ba 'Od she dang/ mTsho yangs pa sNyan Dar ma rgyal mtshan dang/ Srin po ri pa mkhan po 'Jam dang/ mkhan po Seng ge zil gnon dang/ Yar 'brog sNyan ston la sogs pa bsten nas zab pa dang rgya che ba'i chos kyi phyug par gyur/”; “Moreover, having attended upon dPyal A mo gha, mkhan po Phag, slob dpon Dharma gzugs, 'Bum ba 'Od she, mTsho yangs pa sNyan Dar ma rgyal mtshan, Srin po ri pa mkhan po 'Jam [dbyangs?], mkhan po Seng ge zil gnon and Yar 'brog sNyan ston, [Rong pa rGa lo] was enriched by profound and extensive teachings”.

A statement of Rong pa rGa lo himself, found in 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub's *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* (p.69 line 3), confirms that he studied under this dPyal master: “gZhan yang nga rgyal A mo gha sogs mkhas grub mang po bsten nas zab pa dang rgya che ba'i chos kyi mdzod du gyur/”; “Moreover, I attended upon many savants and *siddha*-s, such as rGyal (sic for dPyal) A mo gha and translated profound and extensive treasures of religion”.

148. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (*Lo pan* section p.523 lines 6–10): “Shakya shri bha dra ni nram thar 'Dul ba'i skabs su bstan zin la de'i phyag phyir pan chung dgu byon pa las Bi bhu ti tsandra rNal 'byor zla ba ni sGra dang mNgon pa la mkhas shing dpal Sha wari la yang dngos su thug ste sByor ba yan lag drug pa gsan/ dPyal A mo gha la gsungs bas Jo nang sByor drug pa rnam byung/”; “When Shakya shri bha dra taught the section of 'Dul ba that leads to emancipation, among the nine minor *pan [di ta]* who came together with him [to Tibet] there was Bi bhu ti tsandra, [in Tibetan] rNal 'byor zla ba, who was a master of the [Sanskrit] language and *mNgon pa*, and truly met dpal Sha wa ri. He received *sByor ba yan lag drug* from the latter. Given that [Bi bhu ti tsandra] imparted it to dPyal A mo gha, the Jo nang *sByor drug* was originated”.

Under this light, dPa' bo's statement that A mo gha was responsible for transferring *sByor drug* to the Jo nang pa is an overclaim. dPyal pa A mo gha was not the only one who transmitted *sByor drug* to the Jo nang pa, because the too short biographies of him say that kun spangs pa Thugs rje brtson 'grus studied "anything available" in Tibet on the subject of *sByor drug* (*Deb ther sngon po* p.905 lines 9–10, *Blue Annals* p.772). This "anything available" amounted, according to *Jo nang chos 'byung*, to seventeen traditions plus the teachings on this subject received from Chos sku 'od zer.¹⁴⁹ Hence it is reductive to think that the induction of *sByor drug* into the Jo nang pa fold was the exclusive opus of dPyal A mo gha. He was one of the many who contributed to diffuse these teachings among the Jo nang masters.

As for the activity of dPyal A mo gha outside the plateau, his life example is useful to document how the tenure of the holy sites of Ma ga dha and environs was modified vis-à-vis the new brutal reality.

It seems that, in those times of tremendous difficulty for the survival of Buddhism, a policy was adopted that the chair of rDo rje gdan was entrusted even to masters not necessarily Indian. One cannot really say how forcible this decision was and how much the religious zeal of the Tibetan visiting masters, who boldly faced an extra risk on top of the perils of the journey to Ma ga dha, contributed to this solution. The risks posed by Muslim hostility were far superior than the climate—a killer for Tibetans—and bandits' attacks during the habitually hazardous journey.

rTsa mi lo tsa ba, a Tangut by birth, was abbot of rDo rje gdan in less perilous times,¹⁵⁰ so one could envisage that there was no preclusion to the fact that masters from elsewhere than India could hold its chair. But it is perhaps less than casual that two members of the sMan lung and Thar pa gling establishment sat on the chair of rDo rje gdan while the Muslims kept

149. *Jo nang chos 'byung* (p.21 lines 2–6): "Kun mkhyen Chos sku ba la mnga' ba'i gzhung gdams ngag thams cad gsan/ khyad par Dus 'khor Rwa lugs sngar nas mkhyen cing/ kun mkhyen Chos sku ba la 'Bro lugs kyi dbang rgyud bshad dang sByor drug nyams khrid du ma gsan pas nyams rtogs kyi klong rdol/ spyir sByor ba yan lag drug pa'i gdams pa mi 'dra ba bcu bdun tsam gsan cing nyams su myong bar mdzad/"; "[Thugs rje brtson 'grus] received texts and [its related] instructions from kun mkhyen Chos sku ba. In particular, he earlier mastered Dus 'khor according to the system of Rwa [lo tsa ba] and then received from kun mkhyen Chos sku ba the empowerment, *Tantra* and oral instructions according to the system of 'Bro, plus many experiential explanations on *sByor drug* which were a deep flow of [Chos sku 'od zer's] realisations. In general [Thugs rje brtson 'grus] obtained seventeen different instructions concerning *sByor ba yan lag drug pa* (the "six branches of *sByor [rgyud]*") and accomplished their experiences".

150. His abbotship at Bodhgaya is mentioned in the colophon of dPal ldan Chos kyi bzang po's *sDe pa g. Yas ru byang pa'i rgyal rabs rin po che bstar ba* (*dbu can dpe cha* ed. f.9a line 6–f.9b line 1): "dPal ldan chos skyong nram thar ni/ De ltar Se'u rgyal po dang Mi nyag rGyal rgod gi gdung gi rgyud dang Ma ga ta rDo rje gdan gyi mkhan po 'Dzam bu gling du nyi zla ltar grags pa'i mkhas grub chen po rTsa mi lo tsa ba'i dbon po'i (f.9b) rigs su 'khrung so/"; "The biography of dPal ldan chos skyong. He was born in the lineage of Se'u rgyal po and Mi nyag rGyal rgod and [also] in the progeny of rTsa

pursuing their policy of destruction of Buddhism. *Myang chos 'byung* says that they were abbots of rDo rje gdan for a total of six years. The first was dPyal A mo gha. During a subsequent phase, it was the turn of Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan (for an assessment of his life see below p.553–561).

dPyal A mo gha must have been the abbot of rDo rje gdan at an early time of the Muslim persecution, falling, as it was, after the sojourn of dPyal lo tsa ba Chos bzang and Chag dgra bcom pa but before the visit of Chag lo tsa ba Chos rje dpal who was in the Kathmandu Valley in 1225–1232 and then in Ma ga dha until around 1242. I will refer below to the tenure of the abbatial chair of rDo rje gdan by Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. The two incumbencies were separated by quite a number of years.

The weakening of the circumstances favourable to the Gangetic India pilgrimage

DPYAL PADMO CAN

Following the foundation of Thar pa gling, it seems that the axis of the sMan lung dPyal pa was switched towards the new holy place. Padmo can,¹⁵¹ the paternal nephew of dPyal Chos bzang, received teachings from his uncle and rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje, manifestly

mi lo tsa ba the abbot of Ma ga ta rDo rje gdan, who was the great erudite who had made spiritual realisations, famous like the sun and moon”.

This fact is alluded to in *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.530 line 5). Also see Sperling, “Rtsa-mi Lo-tsa-ba Sangs-rgyas grags-pa and the Tangut Background to Early Mongol-Tibetan Relations” (p.801 and p.807 n.4).

151. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.18 lines 1–2): “dPyal Pa stag gyi sras mched gsum las/ gcen po bla ma Padmo can ni bla lo tsa ba'i thugs kyi sras//”; “Of dPyal Pa (spelled so) stag's three sons, the eldest, bla ma Padmo can pa, was the main disciple of the *bla ma lo tsa ba* (Chos [kyi] bzang [po])”.

Ibid. (p.18 line 3): “mTshan yang Kun dga' snying po zhes gtags//”; “[Padmo can's] name was Kun dga' snying po”.

His appellative comes from a prophecy given to him by Seng ge sgra. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.18 lines 17–20) reads: “mChod pa dang mandala 'bhul ba'i dus rje btsun Seng ge sgra seng ge'i steng 'dug pa zhal gzigs shing/ rigs kyi bu khyod skye ba 'di'i pha rol du Padmo can pa zhes bya ba'i 'jig rten du bde bar gshegs pa'i sras nyid du dgon mi za bar gyur ro zhes lung bstan to//”; “When [Padmo can] gave offerings and a *mandala*, he had a vision of rje btsun Seng ge sgra sitting on the lion who prophesied: “Son of a good family! Your next rebirth will be named Padmo can and will be the son of mortal people in the phenomenal world. [You] will have no fear”. He became known by his other name [related to] paradise Padmo can pa”.

when this Indian master was in Tibet (see above p.546–547).¹⁵² Padmo can was aged nine at the time, which helps to place his birth to soon before fire snake 1197, given that the abbot of rDo rje gdan was in Tibet soon before wood rat 1204 (see above).

Although Padmo can followed the dPyal tradition, his life work showed initial signs of a transition from the line of activity of his predecessors in the family. He eventually pursued studies and religious refinement in Bal po like his predecessors, but concentrated on matters internal to his kin on the plateau. Indigenous engagements took the upper hand over refinement in the lands which were the source of dPyal pa knowledge.

It is significant that his great uncle, dPyal Chos bzang, prohibited him to go the lHo bal (i.e. Bal po),¹⁵³ probably on grounds that the situation in the south of the plateau was unstable enough to fear that the Kathmandu Valley could also be attacked. The brutal suppression of Gangetic Buddhism had precipitated matters to the point that a stable sojourn in Ma ga dha to contribute to the upliftment of the teachings, as done previously by dPyal A mo gha siddhi, was problematic. The possibility that his young nephew could receive adequate instructions was discarded by dPyal lo tsa ba. This is why, I think, the issue that a substitute activity for Padmo can was taken into consideration rather than to proceed to Bal po. A phase of autarchic religious practice in the dPyal pa ranks took place then.

152. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.18 lines 5–7): “dGung lo dgu pa la pan chen rDo rje gdan pa la dgyes mdzad kyi rdo rje slob dpon gyi dbang bskur ba'i dus/ bla ma de nyid rDo rje chang dngos su gzigs/ gzhan yang lo pan gnyis la chos mang du gsan//”; “Aged nine, to the pleasure of pan chen rDo rje gdan pa when the latter was the *rdo rje slob dpon* in an empowerment [ceremony], this *bla ma* (i.e. Padmo can) truly had the vision of rDo rje 'chang. Moreover, he obtained many teaching from both the *lo pan* (i.e. Chos bzang and rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje)”.

153. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.414 line 7–p.415 line 7): “De'i slob ma'i gtso bor gyur pa dPyal Pa stag gi sras mched gsum las/ gcen pa bla ma Padmo can pa ni/ bla ma (p.415) lo tsā ba chen po'i thugs kyi sras te/ gSang 'dus rgyud bdun dang/ dGye rdor gsum gyis gtso byas pa'i Pha rgyud dang/ Ma rgyud dang/ 'grel ba cha lag dang bcas pa thugs su chud nas/ yab mes kyi srol bstag pa'i phyir lHo Bal du gzhud pa'i dgongs nas bla ma chen pos bzhud du ma gnang par 'dir de'i drung du klog yig dang sgra skad la legs par sbyangs te/ zab chos kyi yon tan ma lus pa gang byo'i tshul thob nas/ Chu mig mkhan po dMar rDo rje rtse mo la Tshad ma rnam nges dang/ rTu tsa Chos brtson la Sher phyin/ mngon rdog rgyan 'grel pa dang bcas pa gsan//”; “Bla ma Padmo can pa, the eldest of the three brothers, sons of dPyal Pa (spelled so) stag, who became his main disciples, (p.415) was the *thugs kyi sras* of *bla ma lo tsa ba chen po* (dPyal Chos bzang). He mastered *Pha rgyud* and *Ma rgyud*, their commentaries and branches headed by gSang 'dus *rgyud bdun* and dGye rdor *rgyud gsum*. In order to pursue the tradition of his ancestors, he thought of going to lHo Bal but since the great *bla ma* (i.e. dPyal Chos bzang) did not allow him, he excellently learned reading, writing, grammar and language from him. Having obtained the qualities [descending from] the profound teachings without omissions, as much as these could be poured [into him], he received *Tshad ma rnam nges* from Chu mig mkhan po dMar rDo rje rtse mo plus *Sher phyin mngon rdog rgyan* and its commentary from rTu tsa Chos brtson”.

That the activity of dPyal Padmo can was confined to the lands of Tibet is how I think a sentence in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* should be understood. It says that the power of the dPyal from sMan lung, Thar pa gling and their other monasteries was consolidated in areas of gTsang and dBus beginning with the youth of Padmo can.¹⁵⁴

Having become its abbot, dPyal Padmo can engaged in a drastic expansion of Thar pa gling which he transformed from a hermitage with a *lha khang*, as it was in the conception of his uncle dPyal Chos bzang, to a fully-fledged temple. He built a *gtsang khang* and a *khyams* around its *lha khang*.¹⁵⁵ Indicating indebtedness to Bodhgaya, a dPyal family's religious focus for centuries, Padmo can had a statue of Byang chub chen po, a replica of the great image of rDo rje gdan, made at Rong, the place of rGa lo's people, for Thar pa gling.¹⁵⁶ This activity brought him to Bal po also for reasons different from the family's canonical purpose of

154. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.18 lines 10–12): “De yan chod tsam gyis lo tsa ba rnams sMan lung dang/ Khri gsum/ Ban tsho/ Ra dza rnams ’dzin pa las dPyal A mo gha ’dis gtsug lag khang ’di Ita bu bzhengs nas ’phrin las kyang dar rgyas pas Nyang La stod g. Yas ru Rong gTsang dBus lha sogs ’phrin las kyi khyab/’”; “From then on (i.e. from when Padmo can was seventeen years old), as an outcome of control over sMan lung, Khri gsum, Ban (spelled so) tsho, Ra dza and so forth by the various [dPyal] *lo tsa ba*-s [and] dPyal A mo gha’s construction of such *gtsug lag khang*, the activities [of the dPyal] were greatly expanded. [The dPyal clan members] pervaded Nyang, La stod, g. Yas ru, Rong, gTsang, dBus and lHa [sa] with their activity”.

The identity of the *gtsug lag khang* built by A mo gha, perhaps at one of the places of the dPyal family, remains unsubstantiated.

155. ’Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa’i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.415 lines 3–4): “sNgags mTshan nyid kyi chos ma lus pa thugs su chud nas bla ma’i gdan sa legs par bzung ste/ ’dir rtsang khang khyams dang bcas pa sbyor /’”; “After mastering teachings on *sNgags* and *mTshan nyid* without omissions, [dPyal Padmo can] excellently held the *gdan sa* of the *bla ma*. Here he added the *rtsang* (spelled so for *gtsang*) *khang* and the *khyams*”.

156. ’Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa’i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.415 lines 4–7): “Rong du sku tshab Byang chub chen po bzhengs/ Bal por de’i rgyab yol ’phul ma rnams dus gcig la grub pa’i mdzad pa brlabs po che mnga’ ste/ ’dir sku dang rgyab yol byon pa na/ gtsug lag khang ni rDo rje gdan dang tshul mtshungs shing gser sku chen po ni Ma ha bodhi dang tshul mtshungs pa’i gda’/ chos sku’i ring srel mang po dang/ sku Thub pa chen po bla ma gnyis kyi sku gsung ring srel du mas bsdams pa dang/ ’bum khang che/ bla ma’i sku ’bag dang bcas pa bzhengs te rab tu gnas pa rgya chen po mdzad pa’i dus na/ bla ma mkha’ spyod pa nyid dang/ dkyil ’khor gyi lha tshogs dngos su byon nas byin gyis rlabs/ dus de nas bzung nas rtogs pa khyad par can rgyud la ’khrungs/’”; “At Rong, [dPyal Padmo can] made sku tshab Byang chub chen po (i.e. a second Byang chub chen po statue like that of rDo rje gdan). In Bal po he made a great achievement by completing its *rgyab yol* at the same time [as the statue was made at Rong]. Having brought the statue and the *rgyab yol* here (at Thar pa gling), the *gtsug lag khang* was similar in look to rDo rje gdan and the big golden statue was similar in style to [that of] Ma ha bo dhi. Many relics of *chos sku* were installed inside it and many relics appeared (*bstams* spelled so for *ltams*) from both the Thub pa chen po statue and the remains of the *bla ma*. He made the portrait statue of his *bla ma* for the *’bum khang chen [mo]* and, when he performed an extensive consecration, the *bla ma* in mKha’ spyod and the *dkyil ’khor* of the deities appeared and gave blessings. Since then, special spiritual experiences were born within himself”.

obtaining religious teachings. Although he became a master of sGrol ma in particular during this sojourn, he also focused on the main purpose of his mission in the Kathmandu Valley and sought the involvement of local artists in his projects. He also pursued his idea of having the *rgyab yol* for the Byang chub chen po statue at Thar pa gling made by Newar sculptors.

Among several temples in Tibet which have been defined as second a rDo rje gdan with some amount of rhetoric, Thar pa gling was one which drew, being similar in style to it, direct inspiration from Bodhgaya,¹⁵⁷ especially after dPyal Padmo can made its main statue. His activity extended to the extremity of Tibetan cultural world as far as the southern side of the Himalayan range¹⁵⁸

Padmo can died at the age of sixty-eight in a year of the snake.¹⁵⁹ Given that he was nine years old when rDo rje gdan pa was in Tibet, his death must have occurred in fire snake 1257. This means that he was born in iron dog 1190. His dates are crucial to establish a

157. Thar pa gling gtsug lag khang thus was a precursor of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* which was styled after the Bodhgaya and its main statue following a change of mind by the prince of rGyal rtse about its conception (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.65 lines 8–16; also see Vitali, “Notes on the Shar kha pa of Khams and gTsang” in this volume).

158. Among his remarkable activities, a visit to lHo Mon (later known as Bhutan) by dPyal Padmo can is remembered because he benefited the locals. His greatness being recognised beyond the area of Myang smad, where sMan lung and Thar pa gling have stood, Jo mo lHa ri, the deity of the great mountain overlooking northwest Bhutan, appeared in her true form to him on the way to sPa ro.

'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.416 lines 1–3): “gDul bya'i don la sPa ror byon pa'i lam du Jo mo lHa ris lus dngos su bstan nas bsu zhing/ bsenyen bkur phun sum tshogs pa byas bla ma'i dam tshig la gnas par bya'o/ Se khrod gnyan zhes bya ba'i ri khrod cig yod pa na/ Phyang rgya chen po sgom chen pa mang po yod pas/ bla ma 'byon pa thos nas gsu ba la 'ongs te/ bla ma dang mjal ba na/ dpal 'Khor lo bDe mchog dngos su mthong zhing/ dad pas tshogs kyi 'khor lo bskor ba'i dus na/ byin rlabs kyi mtshan ltas du ma byung/ mdor na gdul bar dka' ba'i sems can gyi don mang po mdzad/”; “For the sake of the people to be trained, on his way to sPa ro, Jo mo lHa ri appeared [to dPyal Padmo can] in her true form and he was welcomed. [The local people] offered him splendid reverence and kept their personal commitment (*dam tshig*) with the *bla ma*. Many meditators on *Phyang rgya chen po* at a hermitage known as Se khrod gNyan having heard that he had arrived, welcomed him. Upon meeting the *bla ma*, they truly saw him as dpal 'Khor lo bDe mchog. Many signs bestowing blessings occurred while they performed a *tshogs kyi 'khor lo* with faith. In brief, he did much for the people who were difficult to train”.

159. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun* (p.18 lines 22–23): “dGung lo drug cu rtsa brgyad pa sbrul gyi lo gres nya ba'i yar tshes gcig la dpa' bo dang dpa' mos bsu ste Padmo can du bde bar gshegs so/”; “At the age of sixty-eight, on the waxing period towards shining full moon of the year of the snake, he went to Padmo can, welcomed by *dpa' bo-s* and *dpa' mo-s*”.

'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.416 lines 3–6) is imprecise: “bCom ldan 'das ma phyi rol mchod pa mdzad pas dam rdzas 'o ma khol ba lta bur gyur/ rDo rje glu'i mchod pa'i rGyud brtag pa gnyis pa nas gsungs pa ltar ngang pa dang sprang ba'i sgra byung la/ mdor na grub pa'i rtags mang po mnga' bo de nyid kyis/ dpal 'Khor lo bDe mchog lha drug bcu rtsa gnyis la sogs pa yi dam gyi lha mangpo'i zhal gzhig/ khyad par rje btsun Seng ge sgra'i zhal bstan

micro-chronology appraising the sojourn of dPyal lo tsa ba Chos bzang in rGya gar and the subsequent visit of rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje to Tibet.

On the account of the fact that Padmo can was aged nine when he met the abbot of rDo rje gdan in Tibet, the year of the visit of rDo rje gdan pa rTog med rdo rje is fixed with better accuracy to earth horse 1198 and thus the twelve years spent by dPyal Chos bzang in rGya gar fell from not after fire horse 1186 to not after fire snake 1197.

Among dPyal Padmo can's five main disciples were the supreme Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, who left an indelible mark—although largely neglected—upon his time, and the great dGe sdings pa kun mkhyen Chos sku 'od zer (*dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.18 lines 23–24).

Padmo can's middle brother, Byang chub rgyal mtshan, is an impalpable presence in the family lineage. He practised religion but died of spiritual exertions in Rong, perhaps as a student of one of the local masters of Dus 'khor, the rGa people of the dBen dmar family.¹⁶⁰

The younger brother, Chos kyi blo gros, was the epitome of a powerful Tantrist, versed in both *gSang sngags gsar rnying* but also trained in the scholasticism of the dPyal family.¹⁶¹

nas/ Pad mo can gyi zhing khams rnam dad par dgung lo drug bcu rtsa brgyad la ngo mtshar gyi ltas du ma dang bcas nas gshegs/"; "[Padmo can] having given offerings to the *phyi rol* (Hindu) bCom ldan 'das ma, the sacred substance milk turned to boiling. At the time of offering the rDo rje song, having sung it from *rGyud brtag pa gnyis pa* (i.e. the second section of Kye rdor *rgyud*), the sound of geese and bees resonated. In brief, on account of the many signs of realisations he had made, he had a vision of the sixty-two deities of dpal 'Khor lo bDe mchog. In particular after having a vision of rje btsun Seng ge sgra, he went to the pure paradise of Padmo can at the age of sixty-eight, amidst numerous extraordinary signs".

160. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.18 lines 30–32): "Bar pa dPyal Byang chub rgyal mtshan ni/ yab chos lugs kyi bstan bcos la mkhas shing byang chub kyi sgrub pa la brtson pa las Rong du yongs su mya ngan las 'das pa'o/"; "The middle son (of Ba stag), dPyal Byang chub rgyal mtshan, was a master of the texts of the ancestral religious system, but died when he went to Rong, as an outcome of his exertion to attain enlightenment".

161. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.18 line 32–p.19 line 1): "gCung po slob dpon Chos kyi blo gros ni/ yab chos gSang sngags gsar rnying mtha' dag la sbyangs pa mthar phyin nas slob dpon gyi go 'phangs thob nas kyang rNam snang rig pa'i ra bar/ dMar rDo rje rtse mo'i drung du Tshad ma rnam nges kyi bsal pa mthar phyin nas/ Chu mig rGya sgor gsung ste sMan lung yab kyi gdan sa non pa/ 'dod lha dang chos skyong sgrub pas 'byung po thams cad bran du bkol bas dgra gzan thams cad rlag par byed pa'i rnal 'byor pa chen po mDo sNgags bstan pa'i gru la bshad sgrub bzhugs/ dad brtson spobs pa'i nus (p.19) mthus pha rol phyin/"; "[Ba stag's] youngest son, slob dpon Chos kyi blo gros, brought the learning of the ancestral religious tradition of *gSang sngags gsar rnying* to the ultimate degree and earned for himself the rank of *slob dpon*. Also, at rNam snang rig pa'i ra ba [of Chu mig], he brought the learning of *Tshad ma rnam nges* under dMar rDo rje rtse mo to the ultimate advancement. He gave oral teachings at Chu mig rGya sgo and held the ancestral *gdan sa* of sMan lung. By meditating on the 'dod lha-s and *chos skyong*, he bound all of them as slaves and, having destroyed noxious enemies, he established himself as a great *rnal 'byor pa* who performed medita-

PADMO CAN'S ELDER SON NYI MA DPAL

The unsettled state of affairs in rGya gar continued to prevent the dPyal clan members from negotiating the journey to the south of their home land also during the time of Nyi ma dpal, the religious representative of the next generation in the lineage. He studied under his father,¹⁶² and then received instructions from masters of nearby Chu mig at the local monastic school named after rNam par snang mdzad. This course of religious training eventually prepared him to take care of the abbatial chair left to him by his father Padmo can.¹⁶³ The links

tion and gave instructions on the boat of teachings of *mDo* and *sNgags*. By the power of his faith, perseverance and talent he achieved perfection”.

This passage contains an interesting geo-historical reference, i.e. the allusion to Chu mig defined as rGya sgo (“door of rGya [gar]”). It shows the importance of this locality in its area, together with sNar thang, especially during the 13th century and thus before gZhi ka rtse was founded. Home to the well known religious council of fire ox 1277 organised by ’gro mgon chos rgyal ’Phags pa, it also was a major commercial terminal in the trade with Gangetic India. sMan lung, sNar thang and Chu mig were the centres of an area which was devoted to the relations with rGya gar on account of their religious and secular interests. Masters from these localities, following in this the example set by the dPyal from sMan lung, were a closely knit group which focused on rGya gar for their learning and activity, especially during the troubled 13th century (see my “In the presence of the “diamond throne”: Tibetans at Bodhgaya (last quarter of the 12th century to year 1300)”).

162. ’Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa’i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.416 lines 6–7): “Bla ma de nyid kyi slob ma’i gtso bor bsgyur pa chos kyi rgyal po Nyi ma dpal bzang po ni sku gzhon nu la rGya gar dang Bod kyi ’bri klog sngon du song nas/ dPyal lugs kyi thugs dam lha bzhi dang/ khyad par lha bzhi’i dbang bskur/ rjes gnang/ rgyud ’grel man ngag cha lag dang bcas pa/ bla ma Padmo can pa la zhus/”; “Chos kyi rgyal po Nyi ma dpal bzang po who became the main disciple of the *bla ma*, after learning first writing and reading [the languages of] rGya gar and Tibet during his youth, received from bla ma Padmo can pa the four tutelary deities of the system of the dPyal [clan] and in particular the empowerment, the *rjes gnang* and *rGyud ’grel man ngag* and branches of these four deities”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga’i chu rgyun (p.19 lines 10–12): “Nyi ma dpal ’di nyid thog mar rGya Bod gnyis kyi ’bri klog dang thugs dam lha bzhi’i chos bskor rnam kyi dbang bskur dang byin rlabs dang rjes gnang dang bcas pa Padmo can pa la thob/”; “Under bla ma Padmo can pa, [his son] Nyi ma dpal [learned] to read and write [the languages of] rGya gar and Tibet and received the empowerments, *byin rlabs-s* and *rjes gnang-s* of the four deities who are the four tutelary deities [of the dPyal clan]”.

The same source reiterates elsewhere (ibid. p.18 line 26) that his son dPyal Nyi ma dpal was among the disciples of Padmo can.

163. ’Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa’i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.417 line 2): “rNam snag rig pa’i grwa sar/ slob dpon sGra ba’i seng ge Dar ma mdzes la Tshd ma rnam nges blab pa mthar phyin pas/ bla ma’i gdan sar/ sNgags mTshan nyid kyi char chen po phab nas gdul bya rnam tshim par mdzad la/ yi dam gyi lha zhal gzigs pa dang/ ma ’ong par shes pa ci rigs su mnga’/”; “At rNam snag rig pa’i grwa sa [of Chu mig], [Nyi ma dpal] learned *Tshad ma rnam nges* until the ultimate stage from slob dpon sGra ba’i seng ge Dar ma mdzes, and made a great rain of the *sNgags* and *mTshan nyid* teach-

with the Rong pa family and rGa lo in particular were renovated because he was a Dus 'khor student of this teacher.¹⁶⁴

Being unable to journey to Bal po and rGya gar like his predecessors, he was confined to achievements on the local scene of dBus gTsang at large. Even judging from a more provincial yardstick, Nyi ma dpal's contribution was rather marginal and definitely less important than the work of his father Padmo can who, in spite of unsettled times, had managed to expand Thar pa gling basing himself upon a reduced international milieu. No special endowment or remarkable deed is ascribed to him in the literature. His death is recorded in the sources but without any historical framework.¹⁶⁵

In its treatment of the dPyal masters, abbots of Thar pa gling, considered as the main line of dPyal clan members since the early 13th century when it was founded, *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* deals for once with one who did not belong to the dPyal clan but

ings fall over the *gdan sa* of the *bla ma*. He satisfied the subjects to be trained. He had the vision of the tutelary deity and had every type of prophetic knowledge”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.19 lines 12–15): “rGyud 'grel man ngag dang bcas pa la mkhas par gyur kyang Chu mig Tshad grwa rNam snang rig pa'i chos sder/ slob dpon smra ba'i seng ge Dar ma mdzes dang yangs pa'i blo gros kyi rgya mtsho 'Jam dpa'i dbyangs la Tshad ma rnam nges bslabs pa mthar phyin nas grwa pa la gsungs shing mTshan nyid kyi bstan bcos mkhas par gyur nas bla ma'i gdan sa Thar pa gling dge 'khor dang bcas pa' mnga' bdag mdzad//”; “Although he became a master of *rGyud 'grel man ngag*, he brought the learning of *Tshad ma rnam nges* to the ultimate advancement under Dar ma mdzes, the *slob dpon smra ba'i seng ge* (the “lion of speech”), and 'Jam pa'i dbyangs, the *yangs pa blo gros chos kyi rgya mtsho* (the “ocean of the teachings, with an encompassing intellect”) at Chu mig Tshad grwa (“school of Tshad [ma]”) rNam snang rig pa'i chos sde (the “monastic school, knowledge of rNam snang”). He preached them to the monks and, having become a master of the treatises on *mTshan nyid* (“Philosophy”), he was the lord of the monastic activities at Thar pa gling, the *gdan sa* of the *bla ma*”.

164. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.416 line 1–p.417 line 1): “Bla ma Rong pa dGa' lo las/ dpal Dus kyi 'khor lo rgyud 'grel (p.417) cha lag dang bcas pa dang/ bla ma dGa' ldan pa Tshul khriims bzang po la gSang ba 'dus pa rtas ba'i rgyud phyi ma/ bshad rgyud sde bzhi/ gNyas med rnam rgyal rgyud 'grel dang bcas pa gsan cing thugs su mdzad//”; “From bla ma Rong pa dGa' lo he received *dpal Dus kyi 'khor lo rgyud 'grel* (p.417) and its branches; and *gSang ba 'dus pa rtas ba'i rgyud phyi ma* from bla ma dGa' ldan pa Tshul khriims bzang po, which consists of four *bshad rgyud*; and *gNyas med rnam rgyal rgyud 'grel*. He mastered them”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.19 lines 17–18): “Bla ma Rong pa rGa lo dpal Dus kyi 'khor lo bsdud rgyud 'grel ba cha lag dang bcas pa gsan zhing mkhas par mdzad//”; “He received the abridged Tantric commentary and branches on Dus kyi 'khor lo from bla ma Rong pa rGa lo, including its practice, and learned them”.

165. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.417 line 3): “Khyed mams kyang sems can gyi don du dge ba'i bya ba la 'bad pa gyis zhes bya ba la sogs pa zhal bkod mdzad nas/ bsn-yung ba med par bde bar gshegs so//”; “After imparting instructions to his disciples saying [things] such as: “I am going to proceed to a pure realm not long after. You should strive for the benefit of human beings”, [Nyi ma dpal] comfortably died without illness”.

to the 'Khon. He was 'Khon gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes, the best disciple of Nyi ma dpal. He spent most of his career in the milieu of the Thar pa gling dPyal pa. After the foundations of his religious education were laid in his youth,¹⁶⁶ he was imparted the dPyal system of the four *yi dam*.¹⁶⁷

He held the *gdan sa* of Thar pa gling for six years on account of Nyi ma dpal's old age—which implies that the latter resigned—and the minority of Rin chen dpal bzang, the son of Nyi ma dpal.¹⁶⁸

PADMO CAN'S YOUNGER SON DHA RI BA/HA RI BA

As in the case of Nyi ma dpal, the significance of the life deeds of Dha ri ba/Ha ri ba is rather limited. He canonically learned the ancestral religious tradition of the dPyal clan and, like his brother Nyi ma dpal, studied Dus kyi 'khor lo under Rong pa rGa lo. The enumeration of the

166. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.417 lines 4–5): “De nyid kyi slob ma mkhan chen gZhon nu ye shes ni/ 'khrungs yul Gangs dBye bayin la/ dgung lo gzhon nu la/ bla ma'i gdan sar rab tu byung byas shing 'Dul ba dang/ mNgon pa Tshad ma sogs mTshan nyid kyi chos la mkhas par sbyangs//”; “His disciple, mkhan chen gZhon nu ye shes, was born in Gangs dBye. In his youth, he was given the *rab tu byung* vow at the *bla ma*'s *gdan sa*. He masterly learned *mTshan nyid* teachings such as '*Dul ba, mNgon pa*] and *Tshad ma*'”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun (p.19 lines 28–30): “Bla ma de nyid slob ma mchog tu gyur pa 'Khon gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes ni gdung rgyud rin po che dbyer med cing/ sku drin shin tu che bas rnam thar zur gcig smos na/ sku'i khrungs yul ni gang gi dbye ba yin lags sku gzhon nu nas Thar pa gling du byon nas rab tu byung ba mdzad Phar Tshad gnyis/ 'Dul ba mNgon pa/ rNam 'grel la sogs pa la legs par sbyangs nas mkhas par gyur//”; “The most excellent of this *bla ma*'s disciples was 'Khon gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes. Being not different from the precious lineage and overwhelmingly gracious, I speak about one side of his life. In whatever way his birth place is classified (i.e. implying that there are various), he went to Thar pa gling in his childhood and received the *rab tu byung* vow. He learned both *Phar [phyin]* and *Tshad [ma]*, '*Dul ba, mNgon pa, rNam 'grel* in an excellent manner and became a master of them”.

167. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.417 line 5): “Khyad par dPyal pa'i chos skor gyi dbang man ngag rgyud 'grel dang bcas pa mkhyen cing thugs su chud//”; “In particular ['Khon gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes] mastered the *dbang, man ngag* and *rGyud 'grel* of the *dPyal pa 'i chos skor*”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun (p.19 lines 27–28): “dPyal Padmo can pa la/ dPyal lugs kyi thugs dam bzhi'i thog drangs pa'i chos skor rnam tshig gcig kyang ma lus par gsan//”; “He obtained the word by word (*tshig gcig*) [instructions] on cycles of the teachings without exception, principally of the four *thugs dam* of the dPyal system, from dPyal Padmo can pa and learned them”.

168. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa 'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.417 line 5): “Bla ma'i gdan sa lo drug tu mdzad//”; “He was the *gdan sa* of his *bla ma*[’s monastery] for six years”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga 'i chu rgyun (p.19 lines 31–32): “Bla ma Nyi ma dpal sku bgres shing bla ma Rin chen dpal sku gzhon pa'i bar la/ gdan sa lo drug mdzad//”; “Being between bla ma Nyi ma dpal who was too old and bla ma Rin chen dpal who was too young, he was the *gdan sa* for six years”.

instructions received from rGa lo shows that this master also was a lineage holder of teachings of Padmo can.¹⁶⁹ Dha ri ba/Ha ri ba further studied *Tantra* under Chos sku 'od zer and other masters, and also took the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow at sKyor mo lung, the prestigious 'Dul ba school of dBus famous for these bestowals, where he studied various normatives on monastic observance. The reference to a sheep year as for his death remains forcibly unsubstantiated.¹⁷⁰

SLOB DPON RGYAL MTSHAN AND A RYA RIN CHEN

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun traces the allocation of the holy places of the dPyal clan to the branches of the family when it deals with slob dpon rGyal mtshan and A rya rin chen, sons of Chos kyi blo gros. They were members of a junior line originating from Ba stag (see the dPyal genealogical tree p.576–577). The text says that the children of Chos kyi blo gros were assigned sMan lung, probably on account of its diminished importance after the foundation of Thar pa gling. This is an indirect proof that Thar pa gling was the appanage of the principal line (dPyal Chos bzang → Padmo can → Nyi ma dpal).

Possibly owing to the same reason—Thar pa gling gained progressive preeminence at the expense of sMan lung—a split occurred in the control of the sMan lung community which *de facto* became two entities. These entities were named north and south sMan lung Nag tshang

169. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 lines 31–34): “Dha ri ba chos bzang ni dgung lo gzhon nu la yab chos ma lus pa mkhyen nas kyang/ bla ma Mi nyag rGa lo tsa ba la Dus kyi 'khor lo'i bsdus rgyud dang de'i 'grel pa Dri ma med pa'i 'od dang 'grel chung Padma can dang dbang mdor bstan 'grel pa mchan dang bcas pa dang Don dam snye ma la sogs pa ma 'dus par mkhas par bslabs/”; “Since childhood Dha ri ba chos bzang, the younger son of Padmo can, learned the ancestral religious system without omissions. He masterly learned [teachings] under bla ma Mi nyag rGa lo without any abridgement, such as Dus kyi 'khor lo *bsdus rgyud* and its commentary *Dri ma med pa'i 'od*, the brief commentary together with its notes by Padma can and the commentary that teaches its empowerment in abridged form along with *Don dam snye ma*”.

170. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 line 34–p.23 line 2): “gZhan yang bla ma gSer sding pa Chos kyi 'od zer dang zhal mnga' bSod nams rin chen/ Ri shong pa Nyi 'bum la sogs pa la sNgags mang po zhus/ 'Dul grwa chen mo sKyor mo lung du byon nas bsnyen par rdzogs shing 'Dul ba mDo dang So so thar pa dang (p.23) Karma sha tam la sogs pa legs par mkhyen/ Zhi byed dang Yo ga Phur la sogs pa'i chos kyi rnam grangs du mal 'gro ba'i don mtha' yas pa dang khyad par La rgyab dang Bya khyung la sogs pa'i bu slob nams kyi don mdzad/”; “Moreover [Dha ri ba/Ha ri ba] received many Tantric teachings from [masters] such as bla ma gSer sding pa Chos kyi 'od zer, Zhal mnga' bSod nams rin chen and Ri shong pa Nyi 'bum. He received the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow at the great 'Dul ba school sKyor mo lung and excellently mastered 'Dul ba, mDo, So so thar pa and (p.23) *Karma sha tam*. He benefitted uncountable sentient beings and in particular disciples, such as La rgyab and Bya khyung, by means of a great number of teachings including *Zhi byed*, *Yo ga* and *Phur [pa]*. He died in the year of the sheep”.

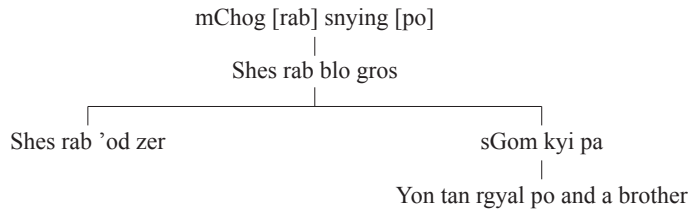
Chos sku 'od zer was a gSer sdings pa by birth and a dGe lding pa by election because he was the founder of Mag dGe lding.

(sMan lung Nag tshang byang and sMan lung Nag tshang lho), held respectively by slob dpon rGyal mtshan and A rya rin chen.¹⁷¹ Again, some of the minor holy places of the dPyal pa were divided between the two but also given to their cousin Nyi ma dpal.¹⁷²

171. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.24 lines 13–15): “Slob dpon Chos kyi blo gros kyi sras mched gnyis las/ slob dpon rGyal mtshan ni/ dang po nas thos bsam la gtso bor ndzad cing/ bsnyen sgrub la gtso bor mdzad nas slob dpon gtad gser gsum la thogs pa med pa'i mthu chen sMan lung Nag tshangs byang dang gSer sding Ban tsho lha khang gi bdag po ste/ gSer sding bla ma Nyi ma dpal la phul lo/”; “Of the two sons of slob dpon Chos kyi blo gros, the elder slob dpon rGyal mtshan at first concentrated on learning and pondering, and [then] dedicated himself mainly to *bsnyen grub* (“meditation practice”). This great magician without hinderance on account of the three [pieces of] gold he gave to the *slob dpon* (??) (*slob dpon gtad gser gsum la*) was the lord of sMan lung Nag tshangs (spelled so) byang and gSer sding (spelled so) Ban tsho lha khang. He offered gSer sding to bla ma Nyi ma dpal”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.24 lines 15–18): “Slob dpon A rya rin chen ni thugs dam lha bzhi'i dbang byin rlabs rGyud 'grel man ngag phyag len dang bcas pa thob cing mkhyen la khyad par yab kyi gdam pa zab mo la sgrub par mdzad pas drag po'i 'phrin las 'grub pas sMa lung Nag tshang lho dang Ra 'tshams dang gDam ngag ser ra la sogs pa'i bdag po'o/”; “Slob dpon A rya rin chen obtained *dbang-s*, *sbyin rlabs-s*, *rGyud 'grel* and *man ngag* of the four meditation deities [of the dPyal religious system] and learned them. In particular, he perfected the profound instructions of the ancestors and could accomplish wrathful actions so that he was the lord of sMa (sic for sMan) lung Nag tshang (spelled so) lho, Ra mtshams and gDam ngag ser ra”.

172. There is a gap of several generation in the cadet line originated from mChog [rab] snying [po]. The succession in the lineage is:



Three sons—Grub pa shes rab, Grub pa dpal chung and Ye shes bsod nams—are attributed to Yon tan rgyal po. However, the fact that the eldest of the three, Grub pa shes rab, had in turn two sons at sMan lung Nag tshang shows that he must have been a contemporary of slob dpon rGyal mtshan and Arya rin chen at the earliest, who established the Nag tshang system at sMan lung (Nag tshang byang under slob dpon rGyal mtshan and Nag tshang lho under Arya rin chen; see the previous note). Hence, at the earliest, they lived several generation after Yon tan rgyal po, a contemporary of dPyal Kun dga' rdo rje.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.26 lines 8–12) says: “Sras gsum byung pa'i tshe Grub pa shes rab/ bar pa Grub pa dpal chung dPyal ston Ye shes bsod nams mo/ bla ma Ye shes bsod nams de ni dge slong rnam par dag pa yin zhing dPyal lugs kyi thugs dam lha bzhi la sogs pa'i chos ma lus pa mkhyen/ khyad par du Kye'i rdo rje'i la 'grel pa dang stong mthun yang mdzad/ sKyo ra lung pa Don yod dpal gyi gdan sa mdzad nas sgom sde rtsa 'grel gyi sgom grwa dang brTag gnyis kyi bshad sgwa btsugs/”; “[Yon tan rgyal po] had three sons: the eldest Grub pa shes rab, the middle Grub pa dpal chung and the youngest dPyal ston Ye shes bsod nams. Bla ma Ye shes bsod nams

Renewed efforts in the sMan lung and Thar pa gling establishment to revive the rDo rje gdan practice

NYI MA RGYAL MTSHAN, THE THAR PA GLING PA ABBOT OF RDO RJE GDAN

The policy of bestowing the abbatial chair of the monastery to masters extraneous to the family had already been introduced earlier in the history of Thar pa gling (see the case of 'Khon gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes above p.549–550) when it was granted to Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. Like the 'Khon master, Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan did not belong to the dPyal family. Nowhere in the sources he is associated with the clan dPyal. He became the *mkhan po* of Thar pa gling after the six years of 'Khon gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes's incumbency, but it is unclear whether he was his immediate successor. The abbotship of Thar pa gling was given to 'Khon gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes in order to avoid a vacancy. No hints are available that Thar pa lo tsa ba was an *ad interim* abbot.

Nyi ma rgyal mtshan was a major Thar pa gling pa of the period, who had reached intellectual prominence on the Tibetan scene at large. A master of great knowledge and reputation, Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan had earned his fame for his frequentation of the Kathmandu Valley and Gangetic India.

He renewed the ancient dPyal pa links with Ma ga dha after a period marked by the absence of attempts by people from sMan lung and Thar pa gling to negotiate the journey to Gangetic India. Once again, the abbotship of rDo rje gdan was bestowed upon a Tibetan from the dPyal establishment, like A mo gha before him, during a period in which the Muslim rulers of Ma ga dha were still targeting Buddhist institutions. Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan was the *mkhan po* of rDo rje gdan, whose throne he held for three years putting up an active resistance against the destroyers of the local Buddhist institutions. It is stunning that he stayed a total of fourteen years in Gangetic India under those conditions.¹⁷³ Even the boldest of his

was a pure monk. He mastered many teachings such as [those on] the *lha bzhi* (“four deities”) at the basis of the meditation practice of the dPyal system. In particular he composed a summary to the commentary on Kye'i rdo rje. He took hold of the *gdan sa* of sKyo ra lung pa Don yod dpal and introduced a *bshad grwa* (“centre for studies”) at both the meditation school and its annex, [establishing] a meditation community and [an institute for the study of] *brTag gnyis* commentaries (i.e. Kye rdor commentaries”).

Ibid. (p.26 lines 13–14): “dPyal Grub pa shes rab la sMan lung Nags tshang du sras gnyis 'khrungs//”; “Two sons were born to dPyal Grub pa shes rab at sMan lung Nags tshang”.

173. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.20 lines 13–16): “Rig pa'i 'byung gnas rGya gar la phebs/ rGya gar shar nub mkhas pa'i pandi ta mang po brten nas mkhas pa'i yang mkhas pa chen po gyur nas Mang ga dha rDo rje'i gdan du bcom ldan 'das Thub pa chen po'i gdan sa lo gsum mdzad cing mu stegs kyi rtsod pa bzlog pas Bod kyi btsun gcig mar grags pa byung ngo/ rGya gar du lo bcu bzhi bzhugs nas slar Bod du phebs nas kyang sems can mang po smin grol la bkod//”; “[Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan] went to rGya gar, the source of knowledge. Having attended upon many *pandi ta* who were the savants of West and East rGya gar, he became the great master of the masters.

fellow Tibetans—U rgyan pa for instance—had sojourns of some length but were far from spending quite a good part of their life in this land during troubled times.

The reference in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* to Nyi ma rgyal mtshan's three-year activity as *mkhan po* of rDo rje gdan helps to fix the length of his predecessor A mo gha's tenure of the same monastic throne. Given that *Myang chos 'byung* attributes a cumulative six years of abbotship to A mo gha and Thar pa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, the former held the *gdan sa* of Bodhgaya for a similar term of three years.

The last lines of *rDo rje gdan rnam bshad rgyan gyi me tog* (p.11 lines 26–27), the rare *gnas bshad* of rDo rje gdan written by bcom ldan Rigs pa'i gri (1228–1305) at sNar thang, contain short statistics. Rigs pa'i ral gri gives the number of the *mchod rten*-s at rDo rje gdan during the period of Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan's abbotship. They were 260 for the record.¹⁷⁴ The brevity of bcom ldan Rigs pa'i ral gri's statistics prevents one to say whether this information was obtained by Thar pa lo tsa ba himself or else Rigs pa'i ral gri indeed visited rDo rje gdan. His *gnas bshad* is so detailed to let one presume a thorough familiarity with the locality. His biography, *Rigs pa'i ral gri'i rnam thar* written by bSam gtan bzang po, does not help to elucidate whether he sojourned at rDo rje gdan but all clues indicate that he did not.

After his epic endeavours in the lands to the south of the plateau, upon his return to Tibet, Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan first held minor posts. He was abbot of 'Dul khang and additional teacher to the local school (*bshad sgrwa zur 'chad mdzad*).¹⁷⁵

He was the *gdan sa* of bcom ldan 'das Thub pa chen po at Mang (spelled so) ga dha rDo rje'i gdan for three years. He averted the attacks of the heretics and the fame of unique Tibetan monk derived to him. After spending fourteen years in rGya gar he returned to Tibet and set many sentient beings on the path of liberation”.

174. *rDo rje gdan rnam bshad rgyan gyi me tog* (p.11 lines 26–27) reads: “dPyal lo'i tshe mchod rten lha can nyis brgya drug cu'o//”: “In the days of dPyal lo the *mchod rten*-s with deities were 260”.

175. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.20 lines 10–12): “Lo tsa ba de nyid gdung rgyud rin po che dbyer med cing dPyal gyi thugs sras slob ma dang slob dpon gnyis ka yin legs shing khri thog tu ma phebs kyang mkhan chen Gang ba'i rjes su 'Dul khang mkhan po mdzad nas bshad grwa dang zur 'chad mdzad//”; “It is excellent that this *lo tsa ba* (i.e. Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan) was not different from [others in] the precious [dPyal pa] lineage. He was both the favourite disciple of dPyal [Padmo can?] and a *slob dpon*. Not having ascended the throne [of Thar pa gling] yet, he was the *mkhan po* of 'Dul khang after mkhan chen Gang pa, and joint tutor at the school”.

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.20 lines 16–17): “'Dul khang mkhan po dang sN-gags kyi slob dpon mdzad pas bshad sgrub zung du 'grel bas mkhas grub gnyis kha'i snyan grags kyis sa gsum kun tu grags pas slob ma bu chen bsam gyi mi khyab pa 'dus//”; “He was the 'Dul khang abbot and the Tantric teacher. Combining teaching and meditation, he obtained the fame of both savant and *siddha*. He gathered [around him] unimaginably great disciples owing to his fame that pervaded the three realms”.

Thar pa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan was renowned for his translations.¹⁷⁶ Having become the *mkhan po* of Thar pa gling, he had important disciples. The most illustrious was Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364) who, among other disciplines, studied Dus 'khor and its *sByor drug* meditation technique, three of the four *yi dam* of the dPyal pa (bDe mchog, Kye rdor and gShin rje gshed), Sanskrit and poetical composition under him (*Deb ther sngon po* p.929 line 6–p.930 line 14, *Blue Annals* p.793–794).¹⁷⁷

With the help of the biography of Bu ston rin po che by his disciple sGra tshad pa Rin chen rnam rgyal,¹⁷⁸ which describes his interaction with Thar pa lo tsa ba, one can glean a chronological framework for Nyi ma rgyal mtshan's presence at Thar pa gling. Bu ston Rin chen grub studied for fourteen sequential months under him after water rat 1312 (Ruegg, *The Life and Teachings of Bu ston rin po che* p.81 and *Bu ston rin po che'i rnam thar* f.11a lines 4–5). He thus was a disciple of Thar pa lo tsa ba before he became the abbot of Zhwa lu in iron monkey 1320.

176. *Bu ston rin po che chos 'byung* (p.206 lines 6–8) says about him: “bDag gi bla ma Nyi ma rgyal mtshan dpal bzang pos Bal por lo bcu bzhir sbyangs pa mdzad/ Ri'i kun dga'i mDo la sogs mDo bcu gsum tsam pandi ta A nanta shri spyen drangs te bsgyur ro/”; “My own *bla ma*, [Thar pa gling pa] Nyi ma rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, studied for fourteen years in Bal po. Having invited pandi ta A nanta shri, they translated some thirteen *mDo*, such as *Ri'i kun dga'i mDo*. Moreover, he made many fundamental translations and corrections to [preexisting] translations”.

177. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.20 lines 17–21): “Khyad par mchog tu gyur pa Bu ston thams cad mkhyen pa la sGra rig pa dang sByor drug gi gnad khyis nang don rig pa gtan la phebs/ gzhan yang dPyal lo tsa ba Rin chen dpal bzang dang dPyal ston Arya shri/ Sa skya pa bla ma mnyam med chen po bDe rgyas pa Don yod dpal ba/ La stod Shes rab bzang po/ dBus pa Blo gsal/ 'Dul 'dzin Tshul khriims gzhon nu/ bla chen Kun rdor ba kun mkhyen Shes rab ral gri/ mkhan chen Shes rab 'od zer la sogs pa mkhas shing grub pa brnyes pa mang du 'dus/”; “In particular the outstanding Bu ston thams cad mkhyen pa went [to see Thar pa lo tsa ba] all the time to get inner knowledge by means of the mastery of *sGra* and the essence of *sByor drug*. Moreover [Thar pa lo tsa ba] gathered [around him] savants and *siddha*-s, such as dPyal lo tsa ba Rin chen dpal bzang and dPyal ston A rya shri; Sa skya pa bla ma mnyam med chen po bDe rgyas pa Don yod dpal ba; La stod Shes rab bzang po; dBus pa Blo gsal; 'Dul 'dzin Tshul khriims gzhon nu; bla chen Kun rdor ba; kun mkhyen Shes rab ral gri and mkhan chen Shes rab 'od zer”.

Does the name kun mkhyen Shes rab ral gri paraphrase bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri (1228–1305)—*shes rab* and *rig pa* somewhat being related in meaning—famous for his edition of *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur* and active at sNar thang?

178. The narrative of Rin chen grub's life in *Bu ston rin po che'i rnam thar* goes beyond the instructions he received and imparted. It is witness of the complexity of Bu ston rin po che's knowledge in a most expanded manner. The biography of him by sGra tshad pa Rin chen rnam rgyal is roughly divided into three parts, the first deals with his early years and education (p.318 line 4–p.334 line 17), the intermediate concerns his attainments in the religious and secular practicalities (p.334 line 17–p.342 line 18 = f.19 line 6) the third talks about his work as omniscient master (p.342 line 18 till the end).

These references in the biography of Bu ston rin po che are also useful to approximate with a fair amount of precision when the thirteen years spent by Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan in rGya gar, inclusive of the three year abbotship of rDo rje gdan, fell.¹⁷⁹ Having happened when, attracted by his knowledge and fame, a young Bu ston Rin chen grub had not yet gone to study under him, their interaction must be placed to before water rat 1312. But having not yet set down at Thar pa gling, Nyi ma rgyal mtshan worked at 'Dul khang. This shows that his lengthy sojourn in rGya gar was begun still within the 13th century.

This rough assessment can be refined by means of *Man lung pa 'i rnam thar*, which tells that Man lung pa bSod nams dpal (1235–? or 1239–?) met Nyi ma rgyal mtshan at his place Tharpa gling in earth pig 1299.¹⁸⁰ Hence the *terminus ante quem* for the beginning of Thar pa lo tsa ba's thirteen years sojourn in rGya gar is fire pig 1287.

Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan continued the dPyal pa tradition of close exchanges with the members of the Rong pa family. He had Shes rab seng ge (1251–1313),¹⁸¹ the

179. I wonder whether the recurrence of the number thirteen in reference to the years spent in rGya gar by people of sMan lung and Thar pa gling, which corresponds to a full duodenary cycle, is an often-found stereotype or was a canonical term of years that these masters were traditionally called to pass in the Noble Land. So was the term of three year abbotship of rDo rje gdan by a few Phyal family members?

180. *Man lung pa 'i rnam thar* (f.11b lines 3–4): “Slar sa pho phag gi lo la Bod du byon pa 'i tshe lo drug bcu rta lnga lon pa cig gis Thar pa lo tsa ba mkhan po Nyi ma rgyal mtshan gi sar phebs//”; “In earth male pig 1299 [Man lung pa] returned to Tibet. At that time, he had reached the age of sixty-five [or] whatever calculation is suitable [in alternative]. He went to the place of Thar pa lo tsa ba mkhan po Nyi ma rgyal mtshan”.

181. Bu ston Rin chen grub, *rGyud sde 'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa 'i sde mig* (p.71 line 6–p.72 line 2): “Sras bla ma Shes rab seng ge lcags mo phag la 'khrungs/ gzhon nu' i dus nas 'dri klog legs par 'byongs nas Dus 'khor la slob gnyer mdzad de/ dgung lo bcu drug pa la Dus 'khor gsungs so/ nyi shu la Thar par byon nas dPyal pa 'i chos rnam zhus/ nyi (p.72) shu rtsa gnyis pa la sTag sde Seng ge rgyal gyi drung du byon te lo lnga' i bar du Phar Tshad la sbyangs/ khyad par du Tshad ma la mkhas par gyur te gTsang du grwa skor yang mdzad do/ sum cu pa la bla ma Chos rgyal dang/ mkhan po mChims kyi drung du rab tu byung ste bsnyen par rdzogs nas chos mang du zhus//”; “[Rong pa rGa lo's] son, bla ma Shes rab seng ge, was born in iron female pig (1251). He learned to read and write excellently in his childhood. He studied *Dus 'khor*. Aged sixteen, he preached *Dus 'khor*. When he was twenty years old (1270), he went to Thar pa [gling] and received the various teachings of the dPyal pa. At the age of twenty-two (1272) (p.72), he went to see sTag sde Seng rgyal and learned *Phar [phyin and] Tshad [ma]* for five years (1272–1277). In particular he became a master of *Tshad ma* and established a course of teachings [on this subject] in dBus gTsang. When he was thirty years

old (1280), he received the *rab tu byung* and *bsnyen rdzogs* vows from bla ma Chos rgyal and mkhan po mChims [Nam mkha' grags] and many teachings".

'Gos gZhon nu dpal (*Deb ther sngon po* p.927 lines 2–3; *Blue Annals* p.791) confirms Bu ston rin po che's chronological assessment of the studies of Rong pa Shes rab seng ge at Thar pa gling. According to 'Gos lo tsa ba, Rong pa Shes rab seng ge studied *sByor drug* under a dPyal clan member (Padmo can?) in the same iron horse 1270 indicated by the Zhwa lu pa master.

Bu ston Rin chen grub, *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* (p.72 line 3): "gZhan yang Thar pa/ Khro phu/ bSam yas/ sTag lung/ gZhu Kun dga' ra ba/ Shangs rtse gdong/ sTon mo lung/ g.Yus dGa' ldan la sogs pa dgon pa sna tshogs pa rnams su chos mang po gsungs/"; "Moreover [Shes rab seng ge] preached many teachings at monasteries such as Thar pa, Khro phu, bSam yas, sTag lung, gZhu Kun dga' ra ba, Shangs rtse gdong, sTon mo lung and g.Yus dGa' ldan".

Bu ston Rin chen grub, *ibid.* (p.72 line 6): "De ltar rang gzhan kyi don mtshar phyin par mdzad nas/ yos lo zla ba dgu pa'i tshes bcu la Shangs 'bar du 'das so/"; "Likewise, after [Shes rab seng ge] brought his benefit for himself and others to the ultimate advancement, he died at Shangs 'Bar on the tenth of the ninth month of the hare year (1291)".

Deb ther sngon po (p.459 line 19–p.460 line 2; *Blue Annals* p.379) also says that the Rwa lugs lineage of gShin rje gshed had both Rong pa rGa lo and his son Shes rab seng ge among its subsequent holders which comprised Rwa lo tsa ba earlier.

I include here a few passages from 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub's *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* which contain statements that are similar to those of Bu ston Rin chen grub and 'Gos lo tsa ba but add a little information on Rong pa Shes rab seng ge and his brothers. The first passage (p.71 line 5–p.72 line 2) reads: "Sras gnyis pa Rong pa Shes rab seng ge lcags mo phag la 'khrungs/ gzhan nu nas 'bri klog la sogs pa (p.72) 'byongs nas gShed skor dang Dus 'khor la slob gnyer mdzad/ dgung lo bcu drug pa la Dus 'khor gsungs/ nyi shu la Thar par byon nas dPyal lugs kyi gShed dmar sogs dPyal pa'i Chos rnams zhus/ nyer gnyis pa la sTag sde Seng rgyal ba'i drung du byon te lo lnga'i bar du Phat Tshad la sbyangs/ khyad par Tshad ma la mkhas par gyur te dBus gTsam du grwa skor yang mdzad/"; "[Rong pa rGa lo's] second son, Rongs (sic for Rong) pa Shes rab seng ge was born in iron female pig 1251. After learning to read and write (p.72) he studied gShed skor and Dus 'khor. He preached Dus 'khor at the age of sixteen (1266). He went to Thar pa [gling] when he was twenty years old (1270) and received the teachings of the dPyal pa, such as gShed dmar according to the system of the dPyal".

'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub (*ibid.* p.72 line 4–p.73 line 5) adds: "dBen dmar gyi gdan sa bzung nas gShed skor dang Dus 'khor gyi bshad pa yun ring du mdzad/ gzhan yang Thar pa/ Khro phu/ bSam yas/ sTag lung/ gZhu Kun dga' ra ba/ Shangs rTse gdong/ Chu mig/ sTon mo lung/ g.Yus dGa' ldan la sogs pa dgon pa sna tshogs rnams su chos mang du gsungs/ (p.73) dgung lo zhe gcig pa la dBen dmar gyi gdan sa bla ma rDo rje rgyal mtshan pa la gtad nas dMu rur phyag phebs/ Sha 'bar btan nas gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ rGyud 'bum dang 'Dul ba lung bzhengs te sems can mang po'i don mdzad/ mthar chos rje bSod nams rgyal mtshan 'khrungs ma thag pa la dbang bskur mdzad nas nyid kyi drug cu lnga bzhes pa shing mo yos la gshegs/ slob ma yang Ti shri Kun blo la sogs pa Sa skya pa'i gdung rgyud mang po dang/ gzhan yang mi chen gyi slob ma mang po dang/ lo tsa ba Yar Thar sPang gsum gyis dbu mdzad mkhas pa dang bzang ba btsun pa'i slob ma bsam gyi mi khyab pa byung shing/ khyad par du Dus 'khor dang gShed skor la mkhas pa mang du byung/ sras gsum pa slob dpon rNal 'byor gyis yul 'khor bskyangs/ sras bzhi pa bla ma A ka ra siddhis Dus 'khor lugs gnyis dang/ Rwa pa dang dPyal pa'i gShed skor dang Sa skya pa'i chos skor ma lus pa mkhyen

son of Rong pa rGa lo, and Rong pa rDo rje rgyal mtshan (1283–1325) (*Blue Annals* p.791–793) for disciples.¹⁸²

Bu ston gyi rnam thar (Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston rin po che* p.87 and *Bu ston rin po che'i rnam thar* f.12b line 7–f.13a line 1) says that Rong pa Shes rab seng ge was already dead when

to//"; "Having taken hold of the *gdan sa* of dBen dmar, [Rong pa Shes rab seng ge] imparted oral teachings on gShed skor and Dus 'khor for a long time. Moreover, he gave many teachings at various monasteries such as Thar pa, Khro phu, bSam yas, sTag lung, gZhu Kun dga' ra ba, Shang rTse gdong, Chu mig, sTon mo lung and g.Yus dGa' Idan. (p.73) At the age of forty-one (1291) [Rong pa Shes rab seng ge] entrusted the *gdan sa* of dBen dmar to rDo rje rgyal mtshan and went to dMu ru. He founded Sha 'bar and built its *gtsug lag khang*. He built rGyud 'bum and 'Dul ba lung and thus benefitted many sentient beings. Eventually as soon as chos rje bSod nams rgyal mtshan was born, he empowered authority upon him and died in wood female hare 1315 at the age of sixty-five. He had many members of the Sa skya pa lineage, such as ti shri Kun blo and others [as students]. Moreover [he had] many followers who were important people plus an inconceivable number of disciples who were masters, distinguished people and monks, headed by lo tsa ba Yar, Thar and sPang, altogether three. In particular there were many masters of Dus 'khor and gShed dmar. His (i.e. rGa lo's) third son, slob dpon rNal 'byor, took care of the home area. The fourth son, bla ma A ka ra siddhi, mastered without omissions the two systems of Dus 'khor, the gShed skor of the Rwa pa and dPyal and the cycle of teachings of Sa skya".

'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub (ibid. p.71 lines 3–5) has brief biographical notes about Shes rab seng ge's brother: "Nyid kyi sras kyi mthu bo rGya gar grags pa/ rab tu byung ba'i mtshan slob dpon Nam mkha' dpal gyis Dus 'khor dang gShed skor la sogs pa yab la mnga' ba rnam phal cher su chud nas dBen dmar gyi gdan sa bzung/ gtsug lag khang brtsigs/ bshad sgrub kyi chos kyi bya ba rgya chen po mdzad nas 'das so//"; "The monk name of his (i.e. rGa lo's) eldest son, rGya gar grags pa, was slob dpon Nam mkha' dpal. He received Dus 'khor and gShed skor from his father and learned most of them. He held the *gdan sa* of dBen dmar and built its *gtsug lag khang*. He gave an extensive contribution to the religious practice of imparting teachings and performing meditation, and then died".

182. Bu ston Rin chen grub, *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* (p.72 line 7–p.73 line 3): "De'i sras bla ma rDo rje rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po ni chu mo lug la 'khrungs/ gzhon nu'i dus nas 'dri klog sbyangs pa mdzad de/ yi ge Bod kyi yi ge'i rigs (p.73) thams cad mkhyen no/ de nas Dus 'khor la sbyangs pa mdzad nas dgung lo bcu drug la Dus 'khor gsungs/ bla ma 'Jam dbyangs rin rgyal dang/ slob dpon Sher rgyal la mkhan slob zhus nas dge tshul mdzad/ dgung lo bcu drug nas dBen dmar gyi gdan sa bzung/ Dus 'khor gyi bshad grwa bskyangs/ mkhan chen bka' bzhi pa dang/ mkhan po zhal snga pa la mkhan slob zhus nas bsnyen rdzogs mdzad/ bla ma mkhan chen Thar pa lo tsa ba'i spyen sngar byon nas/ sGra Tsandra pa bslab/ rGya gar dang/ Singga gling dang/ Kha che'i yi ge rigs thams cad mkhyen/ gzhan yang Chos mNgon pa dang/ man ngag dang/ sgrub thabs mang po gsan//"; "His (A ka ra siddha's) son bla ma rDo rje rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po was born in water female sheep 1283. He learned to read and write in his childhood. In terms of scripts, he learned all types of Tibetan script. (p.73) He then learned Dus 'khor. Being sixteen years old, he preached Dus 'khor. He received the *dge tshul* vow from bla ma 'Jam dbyangs rin rgyal and slob dpon Sher rgyal, the abbot and his disciples. From the age of sixteen he held the [family's] monastic seat of dBen dmar. He took charge of the school of Dus 'khor. He requested mkhan chen bKa' bzhi pa and mkhan po Zhal snga ba, the abbot and his disciples, and received the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow. He went to see bla ma mkhan chen Thar pa lo tsa ba. He studied *sGra Tsandra pa* (i.e. the grammar of Ā Candragomin). He

Bu ston rin po che went to Rong to study Dus 'khor. He did so under dbon po rDo rje rgyal mtshan, the successor to Rong pa Shes rab seng ge in the transmission lineage. Happening around the time when Bu ston rin po che received teachings from Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan in a continuative manner, one has here an approximate period for Rong Shes rab seng ge's death. He was an earlier contemporary of Thar pa lo tsa ba.

'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub's *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* says that Rong pa Shes rab seng ge died in wood hare 1315 (ibid. p.73 lines 2–3). The chronology of the interaction between Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and Bu ston Rin chen grub can be fixed with better precision on the basis of Rong pa's death date. Given that Bu ston rin po che went to Rong to study under Rong pa Shes rab seng ge but did not find him alive, he was there in 1315 or soon thereafter. Consequently, his course of studies under Thar pa lo tsa ba occurred between ca. water rat 1312 and wood hare 1315.

rDo rje rgyal mtshan, the son of Shes rab seng ge and so a member of the Rong pa rGa lo's dBen dmar family, was another disciple of Thar pa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. Given his appointment to the abbatial chair of his family's monastery in earth dog 1298, followed by his studies with Thar pa lo tsa ba, he was an earlier student of this master than Bu ston Rin chen grub. This shows that, Bu ston rin po che studied under a fellow disciple of Thar pa lo tsa ba after receiving teachings from the latter.¹⁸³ This is not uncommon practice in the religious tradition of Tibet.

mastered all the types of script of rGya gar, Singga gling and Kha che. Moreover, he received *Chos mNgon pa* and many teachings and *sgrub thabs*".

Bu ston Rin chen grub (ibid. p.73 lines 6–7) adds: "Bla ma Shes rab seng ge sku gshegs nas Shangs 'bar dang gnyis ka bzung/"; "After the death of bla ma Shes rab seng ge, [rDo rje rgyal mtshan] held both [dBen dmar and] Shangs 'bar".

Bu ston Rin chen grub (ibid. p.73 line 7–p.74 line 1) moreover states: "Khyi'i lo la rGya nag tu gshegs nas rgyal po chen po dang blon po phal che ba dad (p.74) par byas 'gro phan rgya chen po mdzad nas glang lo zla ba bcu pa'i tshes gcig la bde bar gshegs so/"; "In the year of the dog (1322) [rDo rje rgyal mtshan] went to China and the emperor with most of his ministers had faith [in him]. (p.74) After extensively labouring for the benefit of sentient beings, he died in the year of the ox (1325) on the first day of the tenth month".

Bu ston Rin chen grub's *rGyud sde'i zab don sgo 'byed rin chen gces pa'i sde mig* (p.72 lines 6–7) says that Ā ka ra siddha, the father of rDo rje rgyal mtshan, studied the system of the dPyal pa, too: "Sras gcig Ā ka ra siddha/ Dus 'khor Rwa lugs 'Bro lugs dPyal pa dang Sa skya pa'i chos skor ma lus pa mkhyen no/"; "One of [Rong pa rGa lo's] sons, Ā ka ra siddha (spelled so), mastered Dus 'khor according to the system of Rwa and the system of 'Bro plus the religious cycles of the Sa skya pa and the dPyal pa entirely".

183. 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub, *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* (p.73 line 5–p.74 line 3): "De'i sras bla ma rDo rje rgyal mtshan pa ni chu (p.74) mo lug gi lo la 'khrungs/ gzhon nu nas 'bri klog la mkhas/ 'Jam dbyangs rin rgyal slob dpon Sher rgyal la mkhan po zhus te rab tu byung/ lo bcu drug pa la dBen dmar gyi gdan sa bzung/ Dus 'khor gyi bshad grwa bskyangs/ mkhan po bka' bzhi pa dang mkhan po Zhe Inga pa las bsnyen par rdzogs/ Thar lo la sGra Tsandra pa dang yi ge'i rigs thams

A final important contribution given by the dPyal clan members around the time of Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan does not concern him personally. *rGya Bod yig tshang* has that the dPyal family was indirectly involved in the onset of the activities of the future house of the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse. 'Phags pa dpal, the founder of this principality, derived his name from the dPyal master Chos 'phags upon his ordination to the *dge bsnyen* vow at Thar pa gling.¹⁸⁴

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar deals with the same events but records that they took place in rather different circumstances. It says that, in wood dog 1334, the dPyal master—called 'Phags rgyal in the biography—was invited to perform the consecration of lDan yul *gzim khang* rather than to Thar pa gling. He gave the name of 'Phags pa dpal to the Shar kha pa prince and that of 'Phags pa rin chen to his younger brother.¹⁸⁵

cad bsblabs/ mNgon pa dang man ngag sgrub thabs mang po gsan//"; "His (i.e. A ka ra siddhi's) son bla ma rDo rje rgyal mtshan (p.74) was born in water female sheep 1283. He learned to read and write at an early age. He received the *rab tu byung* vow from 'Jam dbyangs rin rgyal acting as *slob dpon* and Sher rgyal acting as *mkhan po*. Aged sixteen (1298) he took hold of the *gdan sa* of dBen dmar. He protected the school of Dus 'khor. He received the *bsnyen rdzogs* vow from mkhan po bKa' bzhi pa and mkhan po She lnga pa. He learned *sGra Tsandra pa* and all kinds of written languages from Thar pa lo [tsa ba]. He [also] received *mNgon pa* and many *man ngag* and *sadhana*".

184. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.375 lines 2–16): "De rting bu rmi lam du/ tshes bco lnga'i zla ba nya gang pa gcig/ Shar ri'i rtse nas shar byung ba/ rang gi mtshan ma la zhugs te/ khong du thim song pa cig rmi/ zla grangs thim pa dang/ sras po gcig bya lo la 'khrungs pas/ mtshan dPal lDan Dar zhes pa gtags so/ de phyin/ Zhal lu gSer ldings de khar bzhugs par 'dod na'ang/ yang lha'i lung bstan la/ 'di nas shar lho phyogs kyi lā rgyab pa'i pha rol der song cig/ der nga'i 'dug gnas kyang chos cig/ bya ba thams cad yar 'phel du 'byung ngo zer ba byung nas/ yab yum sras bcas nmams kyi/ yar byon/ Thar pa dgon par/ bCal ston Chos 'phags kyi drung du/ sras po la/ dge bsnyen dang byin brlabs zhus/ bla ma'i mtshan la gras nas/ 'Phags pa dpal bzang po zer ba'i mtshan btags / 'Phags pa'i ming can mi rabs bdun gyi bar la/ bstan byus mnga' thang yar 'phel du 'byung bar 'gyur ro gsungs//"; "After that, in the dream of the woman (i.e. lHa mo sman), she dreamt that, on a full moon day, [a light] shining from the peak of the eastern mountain (*shar ri*) entered into her vagina and dissolved into her womb. After the canonical number of months passed, a son was born in the bird year. He was named dPal lDan Dar. Then, though they wished to stay at this Zhal lu gSer sdings, again in the prophecy of the *lha* (i.e. lDan ma dBang rgyal), he said: "Go southeast after crossing the pass at the back. Make (*chos cig* sic for *byas cig*) my dwelling place there. Every activity will prosper [there]". The father, mother and son went upwards. At Thar pa dgon pa, the son received the *dge bsnyen* vow and blessings from bCal (spelled so for dPyal) ston Chos 'phags. He was called 'Phags pa dpal bzang po after the name of the *bla ma*. [The *bla ma*] said that for seven generations [of family members] with the name 'Phags pa, the fortunes of the teachings and the political power would prosper".

185. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.6 lines 5–11): "Slar yang dgung lo bcu bdun pa shing pho khyi la gdan sar byon/ Khang gsar bas bZhi thog bla brang pa'i phyag phyir bsgrubs/ phyag yig legs par mkhyen pas yig mkhan nmams kyi 'go mir gyur/ de rjes phyir phebs/ rol skams nas dPyal ston chen po 'Phags rgyal ba bzhugs pa lDan yul du gdan drang/ gzim khang la rab gnas mdzad/ yum sras bgres pa gsum gyi dgen chen zhus/ mtshan snga ma'i gong du bla ma'i mtshan zur du bcug nas 'Phags pa dpal bzang po zer//"; "['Phags pa dpal] returned to the *gdan sa* (i.e. Sa skya) in wood male

dPyal Chos 'phags must have belonged to the generation after lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan. A resident of a place named Rol skams, dPyal Chos 'phags belonged to one of the several branches into which the family subdivided since the early times, in some cases mentioned by *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*.

Collateral lines of the dPyal family from sMan lung and Thar pa gling (later)

SANGS RGYAS 'BYUNG GNAS RIN CHEN AND 'PHAGS PA RGYAL MTSHAN

Dha ri ba/Ha ri ba had two sons who devoted their life to religion without involvement into secular matters, once again leaving a significant impact on the practice of the dPyal clan. The elder, Sangs rgyas 'byung gnas rin chen showed signs of precocity and had a scholastic education under Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan that included the ancestral religious system of the family, plus numerous Tantric teachings.¹⁸⁶ This shows that *Old* and *New Tantra-s* were persistently taught alongside one another since the introduction of *sNgags gsar ma* during early *bstan pa phyi dar* up to this 14th century generation of the dPyal pa, to which I limit my treatment. But this practice continued for quite some time.

dog (1334) at the age of seventeen (b. 1318). He was notified by the Khang gsar ba to become an attendant to the gZhi thog bla brang ba. He mastered writing in an excellent manner and became head secretary. He then went back [to his family residence]. dPyal ston chen po 'Phags rgyal ba, who was staying at Rol skams, was invited to lDan yul. He performed the *rab gnas* of the *gzim khang*. The mother and the elder sons asked him for the vow of lay devotees. [dPyal ston] added to the [elder Shra kha pa's] old name part of the *bla ma's* name and so he was called 'Phags pa dpal bzang po. His younger brother was given the name of 'Phags pa rin chen".

186. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.23 lines 4–9): "Sangs rgyas 'byung gnas rin chen dpal bzang dang/ 'Phags pa rgyal mtshan pa gnyis las gcen po slob dpon 'Phags pa rin chen pa zhes bya'o/ Sangs rgyas 'byung gnas rin chen dpal bzang ni/ gzhon nu la yab chos ma lus pa mkhyen te/ dung lo bryad pa la dGyes pa gsungs shing slob dpon gyi go 'phangs thob kyang/ rig pa'i gnas lnga la mkhas pa'i mkhan chen Thar pa lo tsa ba'i drung du/ mNgon pa dang Tshad ma rnam nges/ Rig thig la sogs pa la slob pa mthar phyin nas mkhas pa'i mdun sar gsungs so/dpal ldan Sa skyar yang bla ma chen po 'Jam dbyangs pa'i drung nas la Sa skya pa'i chos srol ji snyed pa dang Dus 'khor la sogs pa'i rGyud 'grel mang po slabs/"; "Of [the sons of Dha ri ba chos bzang,] Sangs rgyas 'byung gnas rin chen dpal bzang and 'Phags pa rgyal mtshan, altogether two, the elder was known as slob dpon 'Phags pa rin chen. Sangs rgyas 'byung gnas dpal bzang po, mastered the ancestral religious system without omissions. At the age of eight he gave discourses on dGyes pa [rdo rje] and obtained the status of *slob dpon*. He brought the learning of *mNgon pa*, *Tshad ma rnam nges* and *Rig thig* to the ultimate advancement under Thar pa lo tsa ba, the *mkhan chen* of the masters of the five sciences. He gave discourses on these [doctrines] to the masters. He learned many Tantric commentaries, such as the religious tradition of Sa skya and Dus 'khor under bla ma chen po 'Jam dbyangs at dpal ldan Sa skya".

His younger brother 'Phags pa rgyal mtshan had a similar training in the old system of the family with particular focus on *Tantra*. He was one of the dPyal clan members who, during this period of the Mongol dominance in Tibet, adopted the religious tradition of the Sa skya pa, possibly under their territorial and political influence, but did not neglect the study of the four *yi dam* of the dPyal.¹⁸⁷ He had the power of clairvoyance and became reputed for a prophecy he gave concerning the Shar kha family.¹⁸⁸ Nonetheless, its contents are not mentioned in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*, the text which records its existence, and one cannot say whether it pertained to the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse or a branch line.

KUN DGA' NYI MA, SON OF ARYA RIN CHEN

Kun dga' nyi ma was another of the dPyal members who received the religious training of the family and was impeccably qualified as a master of their systems. It seems however that he lacked the lustre and the personality of other dPyal pa clan members. The major achievement of Kun dga' nyi ma was his long-lasting tenure of the *gdan sa* of Thar pa gling. He sat on its abbatial chair for a remarkable total of thirty-two years.¹⁸⁹

187. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.23 lines 10–13): “gCung po slob dpon 'Phags rgyal ba ni yab chos thugs dam lha bzhi'i thog drangs pa'i gSang sngags kyi chos la mkhas shing dbang byin rlabs dang rGyud 'grel la sogs pa thugs su chud cing mkhyen legs/ Sa skyar yang bla ma sku mched drung du/ Sa skya pa'i chos srol du slab la rang chos thugs dam lha bzhi dang Yo ga Phur Zhi byed la sogs pa'i phyag len la shin tu mkhas/”; “The younger brother slob dpon 'Phags pa rgyal ba mastered the teachings of *gSang sngags*, headed by the four meditation deities of the ancestral religious system. It was excellent that he studied and came to know [aspects of religious learning], such as empowerments, blessings and Tantric commentaries. He learned the religious tradition of the Sa skya pa from the *bla ma* brothers at Sa skya and mastered completely the practice of his own religious traditions in a great way, such as the four meditation deities, *Yo ga* and Phur [pa]”.

188. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.23 lines 13–15): “mNgon par shes pa thogs med du mnga' bas ma 'ong lung du ston la khyad par Shar dga' ba'i rgyal rgyud kyang lung bstan nas 'gro don phal cher Nyang phyogs la mdzad do/”; “Having obtained unhindered clairvoyance, a special prophecy he gave about the future was the prognostic about the royal line of the Shar dga' (spelled so), and thus he laboured for the benefit of most people in Nyang”.

189. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.24 lines 23–26): “dPyal Kun dga' nyi ma dpal bzang po ni yab chos gSang sngags gsar rnying ma lus pa mkhyen pa dang grub rnyes la/ gdan sa chen po Sa skya ru phebs/ Shar pa 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan/ kun mkhyen Rong pa Shes rab seng ge/ sKyo ston ri pa dPal chen bla chen Kun dga' rdo rje la sogs pa'i mkhas grub du bsten/”; “dPyal Kun dga' nyi ma dpal bzang po learned *gSang sngags gsar rnying*, the ancestral religious system, without omissions and made spiritual realisations. He went to the great *gdan sa* of Sa skya. He attended upon many savants and *siddha*, such as Shar pa 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan, kun mkhyen Rong pa Shes rab seng ge, sKyo ston ri pa dPal chen and bla chen Kun dga' rdo rje”.

Ibid. (p.24 lines 29–31): “Kye rdo rje Phag mo chos skyong gi skor nram rgyal la sogs pa la bstod pa rtson par mdzad 'Jam dpal mtshan brjod kyi 'grel ba Nā ro 'grel chen la sogs pa'i rGya Bod kyi bshad srol mi 'dra du ma mkhyen cing dgung lo nyi shu rtsa bdun nas lnga cu nga bryad kyi bar la

CHOS RGYAL SHES RAB

Kun dga' nyi ma's son, kun mkhyen Chos rgyal shes rab, was a master of outstanding personality. His training based on the cult of the four deities of the dPyal—bDe mc-hog, Kye rdor, rDo rje phag mo and gShin rje gshed—he was a master sought after by the most important lords of the first half of the 15th century such the Phag mo gru pa gong ma, Grags pa 'byung gnas (1414–1445); the rGyal rtse chos rgyal, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags; rTse chen ta'i si tu bSod nams dpal and Rin spungs pa Nam mkha' rgyal po.¹⁹⁰

tshogs chos gsungs shing chab srid chos kyi bskyangs nas zhi bar gshegs so//"; "He composed a praise to the cycles of Kye rdo rje, Phag mo and the *chos skyong*; and learned many different oral traditions of rGya [gar and] Tibet, such as the commentary on *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod* and Na ro's great commentary. After protecting the assembly, the religious teachings and secular power admirably from when he was aged twenty-seven to when he was fifty-eight years old, he died".

190. Chos rgyal shes rab also enlarged a family monastery (Thar pa gling?) unidentified in the relevant passage of *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*. The *gdung rabs* (p.24 line 35–p.25 line 6) reads: "Yab kyi drung du gSang sngags mang (p.25) du gsan cing khyad par lha bzhi'i thog drangs pa'i dPyal gyi chos skor ma lus pa bum pa gang byo'i tshul du dbang lung rjes gnang byin rlabs bcas pa'i rdzogs rim gyi 'khrid dang bcas pa gsan/ khyad par Kye rdo rje'i 'grel pa drug gi rjes su 'bring bshad bka' Nā ro pas mdzad pa'i 'grel ba'i bshad bka' rDzogs rim sgrom lde rtsa 'grel Phur bu la sogs rNying ma'i skor chos ma lus pa Dags Shangs gnyis kyi skor zab don ma lus pa dpal ldan bla ma Dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan pa'i drung du Sa lugs pa'i skor dang/ Bu lugs kyi skor la sogs pa mDo sNgags kyi dgongs don mtha' dag thugs su chud cing rtogs nas thugs dam lha bzhi'i thogs drangs dPyal lugs kyi chos skor ma lus pa la 'grel pa stong mthun sgrub thabs mdor na phyag len//"; "From his father [dPyal Kun dga' nyi ma] (p.25) kun mkhyen Chos rgyal shes rab learned many *gSang sngags* [teachings]; in particular he was the recipient of innumerable instructions of the dPyal, principally their four deities. He obtained their *dbang, lung, rjes gnang* and *byin rlabs* including the *'khrid of rDzogs rim*. Specifically, he learned the *bshad bka'* based on (*rjes su 'bring* sic for *rjes su 'brang*) the six commentaries on Kye rdo rje, the *bshad bka'* of the commentary by Na ro pa; the root text and root commentary on meditation sessions (*sgrom lde* sic for *sgom sde*) of *rDzogs rim*; innumerable rNying ma teachings such as Phur bu; innumerable cycles of profound instructions from Dags and Shangs. [He learned] the complete meaning of *mDo sNgags* such as the cycles [of teachings] of the Sa [skya pa] system and Bu [lugs pa] system from dpal ldan bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan. Having made realisations, with the four gods [of the family] as the main deities for his meditation, he had *sadhana* sections according to the 1,000 commentaries on the innumerable religious cycles of the dPyal".

Ibid. (p.25 lines 8–12): "dBus su gong ma Grags pa 'byung gnas zhes pa dang rDzong brjid rGyal mtshan bzang po la dbang dang byin rlabs mdzad pa'i tshe/ bdud rtsi yang yang 'khol nas mchod chog la chos 'byung dod pa da lta yang yod par grags so/ dpon chen Shakya bzang pos/ Tshong 'dus su gdan drangs nas dbang chos mang po gsan/ Zha lu sku zhengs Ye shes kun dga' ba la dbang khrid du ma gnang cing gzhan yang rGyal mkhar rtse ba chos rgyal Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags sku mched la dbang dang chos mang po gsung/ Ta'i si tu bSod nams dpal ba yab sras la yang chos 'grel mang po mdzad/ gZhis kha Rin chen spungs par Nam mkha' rgyal po sku mched la yang dbang dang chos 'grel mang po mdzad//"; "In dBus, when Chos rgyal shes rab gave *dbang* and *byin rlabs* to gong ma Grags pa 'byung gnas and rDzong brjid rGyal mtshan bzang po, the potions boiled again and

He thus was the master of some of the most prominent princes of Central Tibet of his time, who had great faith in him.¹⁹¹

again. It is well known that there exists still at present a devotion for the teachings related to those religious ceremonies. dPon chen rGyal ba bzang po invited him to Tshong 'dus and received many *dbang* and instructions [from him]. Chos rgyal shes rab gave many *dbang* and '*khrid* to Zha lu sku zhengs (spelled so for sku zhang) Ye shes kun dga'. Moreover, he bestowed many *dbang* and teachings to the rGyal mkhar rtse chos rgyal, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags and his brother. He imparted many religious commentaries upon Ta'i si to bSod nams dpal, the father and son. He also gave many *dbang* and religious commentaries to gZhi kha Rin spungs pa Nam mkha' rgyal po and his brother/s'.

The attribution of a brother or brothers to Nam mkha' rgyal po does not find confirmation in *Rin spungs kyi gdung rabs* (p.128 lines 4–5) which says that he had one sister, Kun dga' dpal 'dzom ma ("Sras Nam mkha' rgyal po dang/ lcam Kun dga' dpal 'dzom ma gnyis rDzong dkar du sku 'khrungs/"; "The son were Nam mkha' rgyal po and the daughter Kun dga' dpal 'dzom ma, two in all, who were born at rDzong dkar").

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.25 lines 14–16): "gDan sa 'di nyid du'ang/ dgon pa'i phyi'i lchags ri chen mo dang bla brang 'Og min rtse la sogs pa dag gdan sa'i phyi thes dang yab Nyi ma'i mtshan can gyi nang rten sku 'dra sman 'byin las grub pa ngo mtshar can dang phyi rten thugs dam 'bum pa pa char khebs chos 'khor gser gyi tog dang bcas pa zla ba gcig la grub pa mdzad do/"; "[Chos rgyal shes rab] engaged in [work at] the *gdan sa*, such as the great external boundary wall of the monastery and bla brang 'Og min rtse. He accomplished in one month the extraordinary production of the statue made of *sman* (i.e. medicinal clay), the *nang rten* of the one with the name of Nyi ma (i.e. his father Kun dga' nyi ma) together with the *phyi rten*, the *thugs dam 'bum pa* (the "*mchod rten* personal object of devotion") with a roof against the rain, *chos 'khor* and golden knob".

191. In the cadet line of the dPyal clan originated from Se tsa dMar ru's son mChog [grab] snying [po] (see the family genealogical tree on p.576–577), the generation contemporary with Khu dga' nyi ma was composed by two minor masters. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.26 lines 15–18) reads: "Che ba Shes rab grags pa dang/ kung pa jo sras Kun dga' bkra shis te/ bla ma Shes rab grags pas Yang dag me dmar dgu pa rDo rje phur pa'i skor dang dGyes Phag la sogs pa gSar ma'i chos ci rigs pa mkhyen cing bzhugs gnas phal cher sMan lung Srad dper la mdzad do/ chung ba jo sras Kun dga' bkra shis ni ngang rgyud ring zhing byams brtser ldan pa sbas pa'i rnal 'byor tshul du bzhugs so/"; "The elder son [of dPyal Grub pa shes rab] was Shes rab grags pa and the younger (*kun pa* sic for *chung ba*) jo sras Kun dga' bkra shis. Bla ma Shes rab grags pa mastered all kinds of teachings on *gSar ma*, such as teachings on *Yang dag me dmar dgu pa*, the cycle of rDo rje phur pa dGyes [rdor] and Phag [mo]. He elected residence at sMan lung Srad dper (spelled so) most of the time. The younger brother jo sras Kun dga' bkra shis was patient and compassionate, and behaved like a secret *yogi* (*sbas pa'i rnal 'byor*)".

The dPyal clan and the Mongol organisation of Tibet

NYI MA DPAL'S ELDER SON RIN CHEN DPAL BZANG

The sources dealing with the family record the inclusion of the dPyal clan in the Mongol organisation of the Tibetan state at quite late a time, i.e. several decades after it was enforced. This is no proof that the dPyal clan was inducted into the system long after earth dragon 1268, the year of the official enforcement of the dBus gTsang *khri skor bcu gsum*. It is probable that this happened at the time of the constitution of this organisation. In whatever way this may have been, Nyi ma dpal's son, Rin chen dpal bzang—also known as Rin chen bzang po—¹⁹² was the member of the dPyal pa from sMan lung and Thar pa gling linked to the framework of the *khri skor bcu gsum*.

He received religious training from Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan who taught him Sanskrit and other disciplines.¹⁹³ Rin chen dpal bzang studied bDe mchog under kun mkhyen Chos sku 'od zer, one the masters included in the same *skyes rabs* in which Kha che pan chen appears.¹⁹⁴ He also became a disciple of the great U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal/Seng ge dpal (1230–1309) and learned *Zab lam rDo rje gsum gyi brnyes grub* from him (*dPyal gyi gdung*

192. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.20 line 30): “Bla ma Nyi ma dpal gyi sras lcang sring gsum las/che ba Rin chen dpal bzang/”; “The eldest of the brothers and sister, the children of bla ma Nyi ma dpal, three in all, was Rin chen dpal bzang”. Also see the next note.

193. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.417 line 7): “dGung lo bdun 'bri klog rdzogs/”; “rGyal ba dpal Rin chen bzang po mastered writing and reading at the age of seven”.

Ibid. (p.418 line 3): “mKhan po Thar pa lo tsā ba'i drung du/ sGra'i bstan bcos mang po dang rGya yig dang rGya klog sogs byangpar mdzad/”; “In the presence of mkhan po Thar pa lo tsa ba, he learned [disciplines] such as many treatises of *sGra* in order to read and write the Indian script”.

194. It is far from sure that dPyal Rin chen dpal bzang/Rin chen bzang po was a student of Chos sku 'od zer. The birth date of the latter given in *Deb ther sngon po* (p.903 lines 16–18, *Blue Annals* p.770) as wood dog 1214 makes it improbable given that Rin chen dpal bzang/Rin chen bzang po was at the Mongol court of China sometime in the years 1320–1323 and that he belonged to a generation after Thar pa lo tsa ba. Again, chronological considerations based on the date mentioned by 'Gos lo tsa ba would rule out the possibility that Chos sku 'od zer was the immediate rebirth of Kha che pan chen (d.1225), but the construction of *skyes rabs* sequences often defy temporal bonds. This *skyes rabs* comprises, first, lHa rje chos byang, the founder of g.Ye dmar, south of gNas rnying; then Kha che pan chen; Chos sku 'od zer himself; Bu ston rin po che and grub chen Kun blo (ibid. p.108 lines 9–10).

Other details are more reliable. Rin chen dpal bzang/Rin chen bzang po learned to read and write Sanskrit under Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, thus obliging the tradition of his family. He received bDe mchog from the same *lo tsa ba* after his ascension, aged fifteen, to the chair of Thar pa gling.

Chos sku 'od zer is credited with the foundation of Mag dGe sdings (*Myang chos 'byung* p.108 lines 3–4). He resided at rKyang dur (ibid. p.110 lines 8–10). The two monasteries are both located in Myang and thus in the region of the seats of the dPyal family.

rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun p.21 lines 15–17).¹⁹⁵ Both were masters of Dus 'khor, the system especially popular with the dPyal family, among several other disciplines.

Aged fifteen, Rin chen dpal bzang took over the *gdan sa* of Thar pa gling.¹⁹⁶ In absence of a precise literary assessment of his birth and death dates, one wonders whether this means that the great Thar pa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan had passed in the meantime.

One can be more precise on the issue of the point in time that marked Rin chen dpal bzang's involvement in the religious and secular affairs of his family and the Sa skya/Yuan administrative structure. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* says that Rin chen dpal bzang entered into the political arena and began the career of religious master in a year of the dragon which remains unidentified.¹⁹⁷

The same text goes on to say that he also had secular jurisdiction over his dominions and provides a unique enumeration of the localities that composed the land of the dPyal clan during the first half of the 14th century. Some of these localities are well known, others need further research.¹⁹⁸

Like his Zhwa lu pa neighbours whose *sku zhang*, Grags pa rgyal mtshan, had gone to the court of Ol ja du and received patents and endowments from the Yuan emperor in fire horse 1306 (see Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.100), Rin chen dpal bzang, some years lat-

195. *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.418 lines 6–7): “gZhan yang grub thob dBu rgyan pa dang/ chos rje thams cad mkhyen pa Chos kyi 'od zer gyi drung du/ bDe mchog la sogs pa'i dbang byin rlabs dang/ rgyud 'grel lung man ngag dag zab mo rgya mtsho'i lta bur bsnyes/”; “Moreover, [Rin chen dpal bzang] received the *dbang, sbyin brlabs, rgyud 'grel, lung* [and] *man ngag* of bDe mchog, deep as the ocean, in the presence of grub thob dBu rgyan pa (spelled so) and chos rje thams cad mkhyen pa Chos kyi 'od zer”.

196. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa, *dPyal pa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge* (p.418 lines 3–4): “dGung lo bco lnga la/ gdan sa Thar pa gling bzung/”; “[Rin chen dpal bzang] took hold of gdan sa Thar pa gling when he was fifteen years old”.

197. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.21 line 18): “’Brug gi lo mgo la chos dang zang zig zung du sbrel nas mchod sbyin/”; “Beginning from the year of the dragon [Rin chen dpal bzang] combined both giving teachings and [giving out] wealth”.

198. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.21 lines 18–21): “sGrol dang Ra dza dang lCags dang sPug yul dang Rlung shod dang bSam gling dang Man ngag dang Ser ra la sogs pa stong bskor gyi dge 'dun dang sngags pa stong phrag bzhi dang kye bos tshogs stong phrag gcig ste stong phrag lnga la tshar ba gral 'gyed 'gyed dang bcas pa 'khor gsum yongs su dag pas rgyas btab po/”; “[Rin chen dpal bzang's] distribution of offerings took place as follows. The 4,000 *dge 'dun-s* and *sngags pa-s* of the *stong skor*'s plus groups of laymen amounting to 1,000 from sGrol, Ra dza, lCags, sPug yul, Rlung shod, bSam gling, Man ngag and Ser ra, altogether 5,000 people, received a distribution row by row. [Rin chen dpal bzang] thus established the threefold purity (i.e. the purity of the giver, receiver and act of giving: *'khor gsum yongs su dag pa*) in an extensive way”.

Deb ther rdzongs dmar confirms that the territories, held by the dPyal, were constituted into a *stong skor*, like *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* says. As for the people and localities composing the dPyal *stong skor*, *Deb ther rdzongs dmar* (f.145a line 4) records the lCags mkhar ba in the area of Chu mig 'og; it does not mention sBug yul; while it obviously places Rlung shod in dBu

er, got titles and honours from the Yuan emperor, Sidhi pha la Go dan rgyal po (on the throne 1320–1323). The emperor, his wife—the queen Chu hus—and ti shri Kun dga' blo gros awarded him a 'ja'sa, a few sentences of which are recorded in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*,¹⁹⁹ and other authoritative tokens of empowerment.

One comes to 1316 as the year of the dragon mentioned in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* for the beginning of Rin chen dpal bzang's activity on the basis of the regnal year of Sidhi pa la Go dan rgyal po. The previous dragon year 1304 falls during the abbotship of Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, as shown by *Bu ston rin po che'i rnam thar*.

(ibid. f.165b line 5), which shows that they are distant localities, whereas the dPyal clan had their dominions in gTsang. It mentions bSam gling (ibid. f.171b lines 3–4): “Shang phu zla'i Hor dud kyi mGo tsho/ bSam tsho'i dud grangs dbye 'byed la mGo tsho zer ba 'di/ Zha lu khri skor gyi 'og na yin/ bSam tsho zer ba ba ni/ Chu mig khri 'og na yin//”; “To discriminate between the number of *dud* of mGo tsho which are the Hor dud of Shang phu zla and that of bSam tsho, mGo tsho is under Zha lu *khri skor*; [while] bSam tsho is under Chu mig”.

Myang chos 'byung (p.148 line 5) says that Ra dza is to be found in the upper part of the Zhwa lu valley (Zhwa lu 'i *phu*).

The evidence provided by *Deb ther rdzongs dmar* indicates that the dPyal *stong skor* was part of the Chu mig *khri skor*. This text gives the overall number of families living in the latter division. The same text (ibid. f.94b line 6) says that the Chu mig *khri skor* was composed by 3,013 root households.

That the dPyal *stong skor* belonged to the Chu mig *khri skor* is confirmed by the identification of the lands of Zhwa lu *khri skor* classified as the *ka ba bzhi* (the “four pillars”) and *gdung ma brgyad* (the “eight beams”) (see *Zhwa lu lo rgyus* f.22a line 2–f.22b line 1). The *ka ba bzhi* were dGa' ba gdong, sKu ri bya skyibs, g. Yas skyu ma nor and Ri gsor mthu. The *gdung ma brgyad* were Gru sha byar tshang, 'Ar lug, 'Bri mtshams, sDog, Bra dkar po, mNyam rdzis 'bangs and Cog ro sPan na; one *gdung ma brgyad* is missing. The enumeration of the lands of Zhwa lu does not include any territory of the dPyal.

199. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.21 lines 21–27): “De ltar bla ma de'i dpal 'byor dang sku'i yon tan kyi 'phrin las nus mthu che bas Hor gyi rgyal po S Sidhi pha la Go dan rgyal po dang de'i btsun mo dam pa Byang chub sems ma Chu hus lung dang 'ja' sa dang bcas pa dang 'phags pa ti shri Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po'i lung gis dge bshes Rin chen dpal bzang 'di dPyal pa'i gdung rgyud rnam par dag pa yin cing sku'i yon tan dang stobs mnga' thang yang gzhan las che bar 'dug pas lha sde stong bskor thams cad kyi mchog dang gtso bor bkos pa yin no/ gsung nas gnang sbyin dang lung 'ja' sa dam kha dang bcas nas gnang/ bla mas kyang dpal ldan Sa skyar la slob ma'i tshogs dang bcas pa phebs/ gsung rab kyi 'grel gтам dang tshogs su bshad pa mdzad pas mkhas pa'i grags pas sa steng khyab pa byung/ de nas bzung gdan sa'i dbyar chos dgun chos kyi rgyun thabs cad Sa skya la legs pa'i srol tshugs//”; “Likewise given this *bla ma*'s greatly powerful activities, his wealth and personal qualities, by command of the Hor emperor Sidhi pha la Go dan rgyal po and his wife, the noble Byang chub sems ma Chu hus, accompanied with an edict, 'phags pa ti shri Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po issued this order: “This Rin chen dpal bzang belongs to the pure genealogy of the dPyal pa. His personal qualities and might are greater than others. Being the most outstanding and important [person in his principality], he is appointed over his communities of monks and the *stong bskor* (spelled so)”. So [the order] said. He was given the grant

Did the year of the dragon 1316 mark the beginning of the abbotship of Rin chen dpal bzang and the passing of Thar pa lo tsa ba? I hold that the succession on the abbatial chair of Thar pa gling after dPyal Nyi ma dpal was 'Khon gDus ba gZhon nu ye shes, Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and dPyal Rin chen dpal bzang.

Rong pa rDo rje rgyal mtshan, the master of various dPyal pa family members, was at the Mongol court of China around the time of dPyal Rin chen dpal bzang's visit.²⁰⁰ That dPyal Rin chen dpal bzang was invited by Sidhi pha la Go dan rgyal po to the capital of the Mongol emperor is too coincidental not to think that a group of masters, associated in the practice of gShin rje gshed and Dus 'khor like their predecessors, did not travel together to court. This is hinted at in 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub's *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* which says that Rong pa rDo rje rgyal mtshan (1283–1325) left for the Mongol capital of China in water dog 1322 (ibid. p.75 lines 1–2). His stay at court fell during the four regnal years of Sidhi pha la Go dan rgyal po, which makes it more probable that dPyal Rin chen dpal bzang travelled with him.

NYI MA DPAL'S YOUNGER SON ARYA SHRI

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun associates dPyal A rya shri, defined as the lord of magical power, with Rong pa Shes rab seng ge, defined as the lord of the secret instructions of *mDo rGyud*.²⁰¹ Arya shri was trained in the ancestral tradition of the dPyal clan and, among the four *yi dam* of the family, he held rDo rje phag mo as supreme. His other tutors were his father Nyi ma dpal; bla ma Gang pa, an associate of Thar pa lo tsa ba (see above n.175); and

(*gnang sbyin*), [imperial] injunction (*lung*), edict (*'ja'sa*) and seal (*dam kha*). The *bla ma* also went to dpal ldan Sa skya with his disciples. He gave advice on the commentaries on the [various] treatises and teachings to the assembly and thus earned for himself the fame of a learned master, which pervaded the earth. He then established the excellent custom of holding the *gdan sa's dbyar chos* and *dgun chos* at Sa skya in continuity”.

200. 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub, *gShin rje gshed bla rgyud chos 'byung* (p.75 lines 1–2): “Bla ma Shes rab seng ge gshegs nas Sha 'bar dang gnyis ka bzung ste bshad nyan yun ring du mdzad/ de nas snyan pa'i grags pa phyogs thams cad du khyab par gyur pa'i mthus rgyal po chen pos gdan drangs te khyi lo la gong du byon te rgyal blon ma lus pa dang dad par mdzad/ bzhi bcu rtsa gsum pa shing mo glang lo zla ba bcu pa'i tshes gcig la bde bar gshegs//”; “After the death of bla ma Shes rab seng ge, [Rong pa rDo rje rgyal mtshan] held both Sha 'bar [and dBen dmar], altogether two, and taught [there] for a long time. Then by the power of his fame that spread in all directions, the emperor invited him. In the year of the dog 1322 he went to the imperial capital. The emperor and his ministers had faith in him. In wood female ox 1325 on the first day of the tenth month he died at the age of forty-three”.

201. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 line 3): “mThu stobs dbang phyug dPyal A rya shri/ mDo rGyud man ngag gi dbang phyug Rong po Shes rab seng ge'o//”; “There are dPyal A rya shri, the lord of magical power, and Rong po Shes rab seng ge, the lord of the secret instructions on *mDo rGyud*”.

his own elder brother Rin chen dpal bzang. He studied Kye rdor according to the system of Nā ro pa,²⁰² which had originally been transmitted into the dPyal clan by bSod nams rgyal mtshan who had learned it from Pham thing pa the eldest in the late 11th century (see above). He had nine root *guru* who are not identified in the relevant passage of *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*,²⁰³ and one can only enumerate Nyi ma dpal, bla ma Gang pa, Chos sku 'od zer,²⁰⁴ Rong pa Shes rab seng ge and Rin chen dpal bzang. Others could have been teachers from Sa skya.

Arya shri is a rare case—the sources do not record others for the seven centuries of dPyal pa history I cover in this essay of mine—of a man from the dPyal who had artistic talent he cultivated by himself, feasibly achieving optimum results.²⁰⁵ He was a painter and a sculptor.

202. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 lines 9–11): “Yab Nyi ma dang mkhan chen Gang pa gcen po bla ma dPal dang gsum la dbang lung rjes gnang byin rlabs dang bcas pa thob cing/ khyad par Kye'i rdo rje'i rGyud dang de'i 'grel pa Na ro pas mdzad pa Phag mo gzhung drug gi sbyin sreg rab gnas man ngag dang bcas pa gsan/ gzhan yang kun mkhyen Rong pa Dus 'khor ba Shes rab seng ge la Dus kyi 'khor lo'i dbang dang rGyud 'grel bshad pa'i lung mang po gsan//”; “[Arya shri] obtained the blessings of *dbang-s*, *lung-s* and *rjes gnang-s* from his father Nyi ma [dpal], mkhan chen Gang pa and his elder brother bla ma [Rin chen] dpal [bzang], altogether three. In particular, he received Kye'i rdo rje'i *rgyud* and its commentary written by Na ro pa and *sbyin sreg*, *rab gnas* and *man ngag* of the six doctrines of Phag mo. Moreover, he received many instructions on the empowerment and Tantric commentary of Dus kyi 'khor lo from Dus 'khor ba Shes rab seng ge”.

203. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 lines 12–14): “Thams cad mkhyen pa Chos kyi 'od zer la sogs pa'i rtsa ba'i bla ma dgu tsam brten nas Nag 'jag skor gsum gyi dbang bka'/ Lung rgyud kyi 'grel pa/ lag len dang bcas pa gsan nas mkhas par mkhyen/ dpal ldan Sa skya ru phebs nas rGyud 'grel gyi bshad pa dang man ngag mang po gsan//”; “[Arya shri] attended upon nine root *guru* such as the omniscient Chos sku 'od zer and received the *dbang bka'* of *Nag 'jag skor gsum*, the commentary on *Lung rgyud* and its practice. He learned them in a masterful manner. He went to dpal ldan Sa skya and received many teachings and secret instructions on Tantric commentaries”.

204. Three generations of dPyal masters interacted with kun mkhyen Chos sku 'od zer. As mentioned in various parts of the present essay, kun mkhyen Chos sku 'od zer was, together with Thar pa lo tsa ba Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, a disciple of Padmo can (*dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* p.18 lines 23–24). In the best Tibetan tradition, he became the teacher of his master's successors. He had Padmo can's son Dha ri ba/Ha ri ba for disciple (ibid. p.22 line 34) and then the two nephews of Padmo can, who were the sons of Nyi ma dpal, i.e. Rin chen dpal bzang (ibid. p.21 lines 15–17) and Arya shri (ibid. p.22 line 12: “Thams cad mkhyen pa Chos kyi 'od zer la sogs pa'i rtsa ba'i bla ma dgu tsam brten//”). Arya shri had nine root *guru-s* unidentified in the sources.

205. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 lines 7–9): “bZo rigs gnas rnams rtsol med rang byung du phul du phyin par mkhyen pas bris sku mang po dang gShed dmar gyi blos blangs la sogs pa phyag len kyang mang du mdzad//”; “He learned the arts by himself in a faultless and excellent manner. He put [his skills] into practice many times, such as [when he made] painted scrolls and a *blos blangs* (“tridimensional *mandala*”) of gShed dmar”.

Back to the origins: a female dPyal master at the Mongol court of China

RIN CHEN DPAL BZANG'S SISTER SLOB DPON MA STON MA

Seven hundred years after the dPyal clan—its *gdung rabs* claims—originated by descending from the sky upon Ri bo rtse lnga, the only great female member of the family brought the activity of the dPyal pa back to the ancestral roots. The dPyal people had come a full circle and returned where it all began.

lCam mo slob dpon ma sTon ma, the daughter of Nyi ma dpal, became the *bla ma* of the Mongol empress of China.²⁰⁶ The name of the empress is not given in the relevant passage of *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* and one wonders whether she was the same Chuhus who had signed the 'ja'sa issued by her husband Sidhi pha la Go dan rgyal po in favour of slob dpon ma sTon ma's brother Rin chen dpal bzung.

In all probability slob dpon ma sTon ma was part of the same group of masters, inclusive of her brother Rin chen dpal bzung and Rong pa rDo rje rgyal mtshan who went to the Mongol court of China in water dog 1322.

One cannot ascertain whether the activity of the sister was conducive to the establishment of contacts with the Mongol court of China important for his brother, or else whether it was the opposite, so that the brother paved the way for slob dpon ma sTon ma to go to metropolitan China. I like to imagine that, for once in the history of Tibet and the lands beyond it, events of some importance were fostered by the interaction of two women, the empress being attracted by the fame of a rare female master from Tibet.²⁰⁷ As for the circumstances of her arrival at court, it is probable that members of the dPyal pa and Rong pa families were called to court collectively for their mastery of the religious practices they shared.

206. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 line 25): “dPyal gyi chos skor ci rigs pa mkhyen nas rGya nag la byon nas rgyal po'i btsun mo'i bla ma mdzad/”; “Having mastered all cycles of teachings of the dPyal, lCam mo slob dpon ma sTon ma went to China and was the *bla ma* of the emperor's wife”.

207. lCam mo slob dpon ma sTon ma was not the only dPyal woman in the practice of religion. Si tu pan chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (*Karma Kam tshang gi gser 'phreng* p.173 lines 1–2) spends a few words about another one: “Bod phyogs su byon te/ Cal Bhe go bya bar bu mo zhig zhib slong bar mdzad/”; “[U rgyan pa] returned to Tibet and a woman, namely Cal (spelled so for dPyal) Bhe go, pursued in-depth studies [under him]”.

On that occasion, U rgyan pa was back from rDo rje gdan in times of fear. Tibet, Bal po and Gangetic India were risking to be attacked by Se chen rgyal po (Chos kyi 'byung gnas, *Karma Kam tshang gi gser 'phreng* p.172 line 5–p.173 line 1). In the absence of a precise date for the meeting, the course of the studies imparted to Cal/dPyal Bhe go took place following U rgyan pa's journey to rDo rje gdan of soon after 1270 and before the construction of a palace at his monastery dBu tra in La stod lHo in 1272.

Slob dpon ma sTon ma, having arranged lavish gifts for Thar pa gling,²⁰⁸ eventually decided to remain in China and give up Tibet for good.²⁰⁹ No other Tibetan woman I know of became the *guru* at the Mongol court of China or any other court of the celestial empire, especially of any empress.

It is not clear whether she spent the rest of her life in China because she died untimely. She was one of the many Tibetans who, of her own free will, gave to China the depth of a civilising contribution, too often minimised nowadays.

The dPyal from sMan lung and Thar pa gling: their collective peculiarity

I summarise here several aspects that contributed to shape the collective peculiarity of the dPyal family from sMan lung and Thar pa gling

- they became active in the field of religion during the obscure period before *bstan pa phyi dar*. They first adopted the system of the old translations and built rGya gling lha khang (near future Nor bu khyung rtse) reflecting their religious inclinations of the time;
- unlike other religious families who came to own a monastery by becoming proponents of the new tradition, they obtained it by being observant of yet another *rnying ma* system which cruised through *bstan pa me ro* [*bslang*s]. Only subsequently they embraced *sngags gsar ma* and built their own temple at pre-existing sMan lung, conceived after *rNal 'byor rgyud*;
- the dPyal were among the first in Central Tibet to take up the new translations. The family's towering personality of the time was Se tsa dMar ru for his pioneering effort to choose rGya gar as the source for the import of Buddhist teachings on the plateau at

208. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 lines 25–27): “gDan sar Byang chub chen po'i dbu tog du bla gre Thub pa dud 'dul ma'i bkod pa yod pa dang/ gsung rab nams la gdong dar gsum rims/ chos skyong gi phywa dar sku mdog dang mthun pa la 'byed legs par byas//”; “[Slob dpon ma sTon ma] had a canopy (*bla 'gre*) depicting Thub pa subduing the Mara demons placed on the roof above the head of Thub pa at the *gdan sa* (i.e. Thar pa gling). She had the brocade wrappers for the books made in an excellent manner on three successive occasions and an auspicious flag (*phywa dar*) of the *chos skyong* in the colour of [this deity's] complexion”.

Her donations reflected the custom of the Yuan/Ming period to gift works in precious fabric from metropolitan China to the Tibetan monasteries.

209. *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun* (p.22 lines 27–29): “Bla ma A rya shri'i drung du skyong dar bkra shis khra ring la sogs pa'i 'bul skyel phul nas rGya nag du bzhugs so/ rgyal ba'i rnam 'phrul Rin chen dpal bzang dang/ rtogs pa nus mthu'i mnga' bdag 'Phags pa dpal/ Ye shes mkha' 'gro'i tshul bzung sTon ma'i mtshan/ ngo mtshar lcam sring rnam gsum rgyal gyur gcig//”; “Having sent gifts to A rya shri, such as the [*chos*] *skyong* flag and the silk canopy, she stayed back in China. Rin chen dpal bzang, the incarnation of the conquerors; 'Phags pa dpal, the lord of the power of spiritual realisations; and the one by the name of sTon ma who took the form of Ye shes bka' 'gro: may the three extraordinary brothers and sister be victorious!”.

the inception of *bstan pa phyi dar* in Central Tibet. On the contrary, most contemporary masters of dBus gTsang looked at Khams and A mdo as the root;

- the favour of the dPyal pa accorded to the old and new traditions run parallel for centuries to come.²¹⁰ In the pursue of *sngags gsar ma*, the case of the dPyal is only apparently similar to those of families of religious masters who engaged in a frequentation of great Buddhist sites outside the plateau, especially Bodhgaya, as a source of religious refinement. Not even the royal family of mNga' ris skor gsum could pursue its master plan further than for some 125 years. The mNga' ri skor gsum *intelligentsia* implemented their wish to access the highest cultural expressions of the Noble Land majestically, but the corrosion of their power and the breaking of their kingdom's unity led to a much shorter duration of their interaction with India and its masters than the dPyal.

No clan of Tibet had a family scheme for religious upliftment like the dPyal pa who steadily pursued their ideal individually and brought back spiritual refinement to be shared with their people. No major clan or religious institution of Central Tibet matched the exertions of the dPyal family in the Noble Land. I think, for instance, of the rNgog family, rather than the rNgog of Legs pa'i shes rab and Blo ldan shes rab, faithful followers of the teachings of Mar pa lo tsa ba (around the turn of the millennium-early to the mid 1080s?), but they never went beyond their initial religious convictions.

While the unfolding of the existence of the dPyal family brought them, generation after generation, to sites as far from one another as Ri bo rtse lnga and rDo rje gdan, the foundations of their religious system was far less errant than their lives. The base of *sNgags rnying ma* and *gsar ma* was so solid and comprehensive to allow them add religious cults—the four *yi dam* of the clan plus other doctrines—and encompass a vast spiritual territory, no less than the distance from Ri bo rtse lnga to rDo rje gdan. Hence their religious space became as wide as the lands they frequented or settled in.

The roles they exercised in Tibetan society throughout the centuries (ministers, merchants, religious masters) led the dPyal clan to cross boundaries. If compared with several other historical noble families of Tibet, their approach was the least provincial. They influenced their contemporaries to break away from the boundaries of parochialism, a cultural trait typical of post *bstan pa phyi dar* Tibet.

The support to their religious activities came from trade. They were great *siddha* and their siddhahood was also used in the secular affairs. Shrewd merchants who did not hesitate to get rid of competitors sometimes relying on curse and black magic, the dPyal pa used their

210. For the sake of a synopsis of the indications discussed in this essay, practice ascribable to the earlier translations comprised the *rgyud drug* (the “six kinds of causes”), the *le lag bcu gnyis* (the “twelve branches”) and *phra mo nyi shu rtsa bzhi* (the “twenty-four sub-branches”), along with the *mChims phu phyag bzhes dgu* (the “nine practices of mChims phu”)—in particular the practice of meditation on *Yang dag thugs* (“perfectly purified mind”)—and also the *bskyed rdzogs* (the “generation and perfection”) of Phur pa according to the peculiar system of the family.

Their *sNgags gsar ma* practice focused on their four tutelary deities (Kye rdor, bDe mchog, rDo rje phag mo and gShin rje gshed) along with Dus 'khor and its meditation system, the *sByor drug*.

wealth to refine their knowledge and cultivate supreme cultural expressions. The sources do not mention when they ferried their lay activity from ministers at the service of the *lha sras btsan po* to traders who extended their commerce to far-away China and India. The first literary statement about their new profession refers to bSod nams rgyal mtshan's brother Byang chub rgyal mtshan. A few generations earlier Se tsa dMar ru had built a lavish *gtsug lag khang* at sMan lung. I wonder whether this happened because the dPyal were wealthy enough from their trade revenues or local prosperity, Myang in general—and especially Myang smad, a fertile territory. Were they affluent because they had picked up trade in the meantime?

The area where the dPyal had settled was a trade hub. Nearby Tsong 'dus mgur mo was a major trade mart of the lCe clan, with a *gtsug lag khang* founded during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan (on this locality see *Myang chos 'byung* p.145 line 1–p.147 line 8). It seems that the dPyal and lCe neighbours shared a common destiny. Both became merchants after having been ministers to the *lha sras btsan po*-s, but with the difference that the lCe's exalted status was reinforced by their intermarriages with the Sa skya pa, while the dPyal never surged to secular supremacy, the respect they commanded being spiritual.

There is no historical record of any involvement of any member of the dPyal clan from sMan lung and Thar pa gling in strifes, either local or on a wider stage, unlike the Zhwa lu pa or the Chu mig pa (see above p.492 for a case of incidents between them during *bstan pa phyi dar* and p.534 for another in the first half of the 13th century). It is probable that the dPyal's avatar as merchants urged them to seek stability in order to promote their trade. Their other role as religious masters with a wider ranging focus on rGya gar and Bal po led them to act as pacificators, as their sources are keen to describe them.

They were not as much innovative in the patronage of the arts as in their capacity of religious practitioners. Although little remains of their temples and monasteries to judge from, the literary sources convey the notion that they made use of artistic and architectural expressions available to them and dominant in their time. They did not introduce anything unseen on the plateau. Se tsa dMar ru built sMan lung *gtsug lag khang* in the Chinese/Central Asian style which was popular in dBus gTsang during his days; Kun dga' rdo rje employed a Kashmiri artist, which documents the activity of specialists in this idiom in Central Tibet in his time, and Padmo can made a point to have Thar pa gling look like Bodhgaya.

The dPyal did not receive the attention of the Tibetan tradition they deserved perhaps because they were precursors—first in dBus gTsang to go to rGya gar; first to recognise the greatness of Kha che pan chen, to mention a few facts. This often being the fate of precursors, they were hardly acknowledged and their line of thought and activity, once established, was credited to those of the establishment who followed in their footsteps.

A last word: the dPyal clan *bstan pa* style

The endeavours of the dPyal pa after the end of *bstan pa phyi dar* went against the trend of the times. While the plateau experienced an autarchic consolidation of the teachings imported from India which gave way to the articulation of the Tibetan schools into a network of monasteries and branches, the dPyal pa kept on journeying to the south—Bal po and rGya gar—to receive further religious instructions from the masters of those lands.

Hence *bstan pa phyi dar* did not die out for the dPyal pa at the end of the 11th century or the beginning of the 12th. They continued to pursue the same approach towards religious practice and the acquisition of religious knowledge.²¹¹

Other masters kept seeing the Noble Land as the source of learning well after the end of *bstan pa phyi dar*—for one, the Tibetans who were followers of the preaching of Tsa mi—but none made of this custom a consistent feature of their family like the dPyal clan from sMan lung and Thar pa gling. Their spiritual lineage was rather erratic.²¹²

Their own *bstan pa phyi dar* continued until the early years of the 13th century not so much because their method had changed—they indeed continued to see in Bal po and Ma ga dha the noble lands, source of the doctrine of Sangs rgyas—but because the conditions in rGya

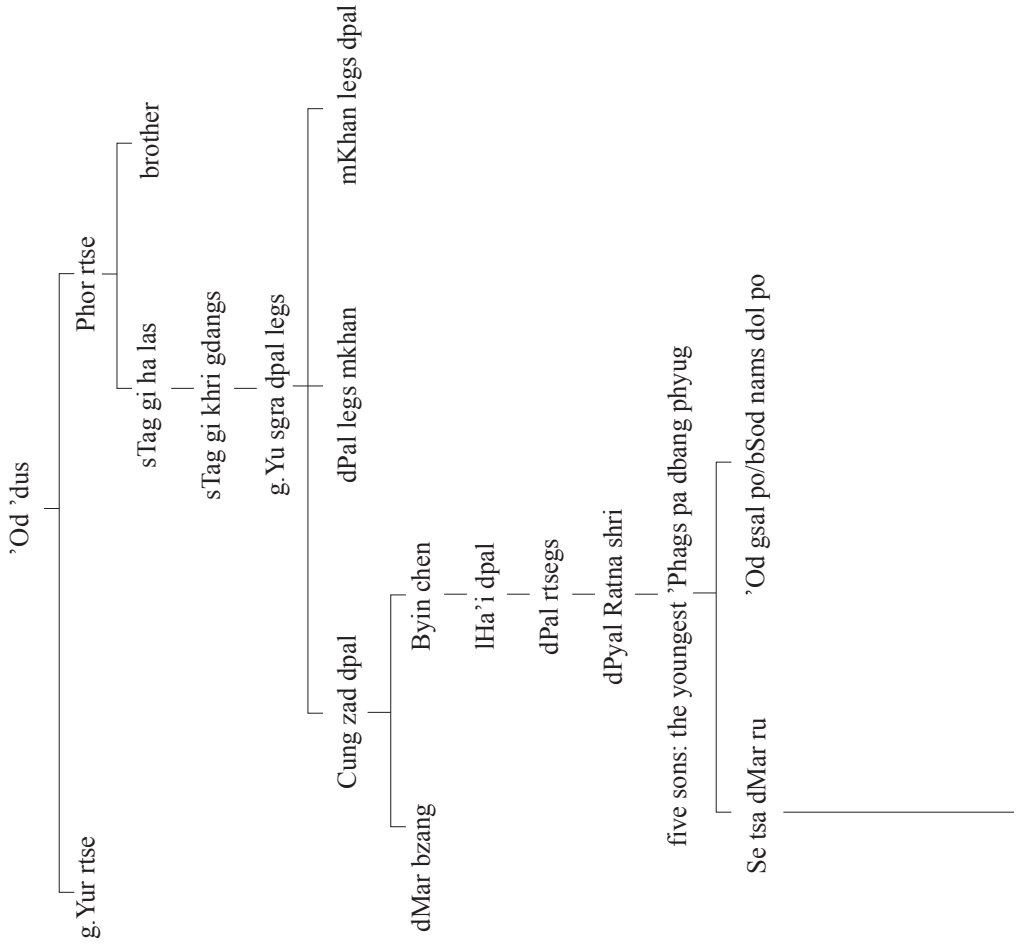
211. A master who, like dPyal clan members, took the same path leading to India in order to receive teachings could have been Khyung po rNal 'byor if his long life is realistically dismissed and his existence is attributed to a later period than normally held by the Tibetan tradition. His birth is often placed during the late 10th century but his interaction with rMog lcogs pa Rin chen brtson 'grus (1110–1170) would push his activity into the earlier part of the 12th century.

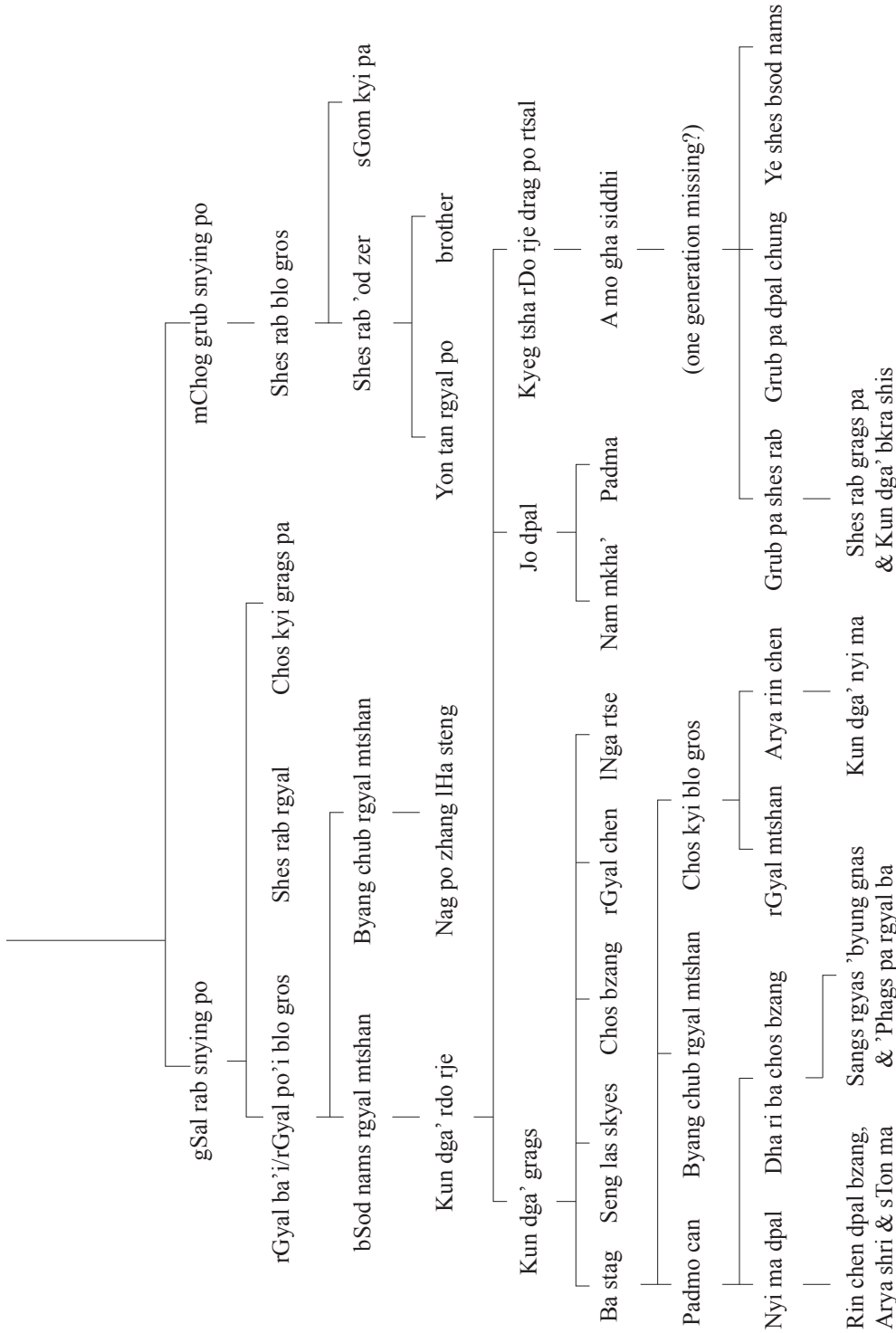
212. *Deb ther sngon po* (p.931 line 13–p.932 line 4; *Blue Annals* p.795–796): “Yang Se lo tsa ba gZho nu tshul khirms kyis Dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud 'grel Tsa mi la tshar gnyis/ A bha ya la tshar gcig/ A bha ya dang Manydzu kīrti gnyis ka Na ro pa'i slob ma yang yin la/ A bha ya ni Tsa mi'i slob ma yin no/ Bha ske ra ni Bha ska ra de ba zhes bya ste dPal 'dzin gyi slob ma 'Od byed lha'o/ Se los Bod du byon nas gNyos Dar ma 'od la/ des Dus 'khor ba bKra shis rin (p.932) chen la/ des Dus 'khor ba Sangs rgyas rdo rje la/ des dpal U rgya pa la/ des ni La stod dang Yar lungs sogs su Tsa mi 'gyur gyi stengs nas bshad pa mang du mdzad do/ sNye mdo bas grub chen pa las gsan nas physis chos rje Rang byung ba la gsungs pa yang Tsa mi'i 'gyur nyid do//”; “Moreover, Se lo tsa ba gZho nu tshul khirms [received] *Dus kyi 'khor lo rgyud* [and] '*grel* from Tsa mi twice, [and] from A bha ya once. A bha ya and Manydzu kīrti, the two of them, also were disciples of Na ro pa. A bha ya was a disciple of Tsa mi. Bha ske ra known as Bha ska ra de ba was 'Od byed lha, the disciple of dPal 'dzin. Se lo returned to Tibet and [imparted *Dus 'khor*] to gNyos Dar ma 'od; the latter to Dus 'khor ba bKra shis rin (p.932) chen; the latter to Dus 'khor ba Sangs rgyas rdo rje; the latter to dpal U rgyan pa who taught the translation of Tsa mi extensively in La stod and Yar lungs on many occasions. sNye mdo ba received it from the *grub chen pa* (i.e. U rgyan pa). Subsequently, he preached it to chos rje Rang byung ba. This, too, was the translation of Tsa mi”.

gar changed considerably with the decay of Buddhism caused by the Muslim takeover of the Gangetic plain.

Consequent to the mutated conditions, the role of the dPyal family members was modified. The family's towering personality of the time, dPyal Chos [kyi] bzang [po], must be acknowledged for taking charge of Buddhist institutions in Gangetic India—the first dPyal to do so. He planted the seed that reversed the terms and the dPyal members of the successive generations adopted them. They were not simply in search of teachings and masters in Gangetic India, who could introduce them to the depth of their theories. They took up the role of saviours of the remains of the Buddhist presence in this territory. A new season was inaugurated, which saw several Tibetans become active pursuers of the defence and reconstruction of Gangetic Buddhism. Man lung pa restored bDud 'joms lha khang at Bodhgaya; U rgyan pa, too, made restorations there; dPyal A mo gha and Thar pa lo tsa Nyi ma rgyal mtshan became abbots of rDo rje gdan. The adoption of the role of defenders of the Indian tradition and the Buddhist doctrine gave a new dimension to the dPyal pa's religious contribution.

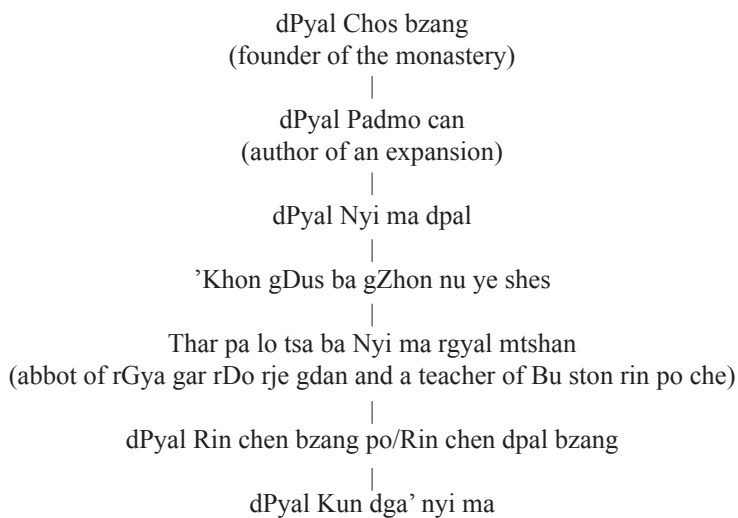
The lineage of the dPyal of sMan lung and Thar pa gling²¹³





213. There are six generations of dPyal pa from the late 10th to the mid 12th century from Se tsa dMar ru to Kun dga' grags pa (see the genealogical tree). There are four generations of dPyal pa during the period from before 1163 to the late 13th century—dPyal Chos bzang, Padmo can, Nyi ma dpal and Rin chen bzang po.

ABBOTS OF THAR PA GLING
(EARLY 13TH-MID 14TH CENTURY)



ADDENDUM

Reliquaries of various members of the dPyal clan

The *nang rten*-s of members of the dPyal clan from sMan lung and Thar pa gling—and occasionally related *phyi rten*-s—have a place of preeminence in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun*. This addendum compacts their descriptions. No record in the *gdung rabs* is kept of this custom before the death of Kun dga' rdo rje and thus one is left to wonder whether the system was incepted with his passing.

KUN DGA' RDO RJE

dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga'i chu rgyun (p.10 lines 32–35): “sKu gdung zhu ba'i khrag gi dngos la chos 'byung gi nang du bCom ldan 'das ma zhal gnyis mar byon pa dang sku gdung la bDe mchog dang rNal 'byor ma dang ring srel bsam gyis mi khyan pa 'krungs so/ nang rten du 'Jam dbyangs kyi sku 'di nyid/ Bal por khrid yol dang bcas pa bzhengs shing thugs kha na grub thob mang po'i gdung rin srel/ pan chen Ham ngu dkar po'i dbu skra thugs dam phreng ba/ bla ma rang nyid kyi ring srel bzhugs cing rab gnas kyi dus 'Jam dbyang dngos su thim//”; “Upon cremating his corpse, the two-headed bCom ldan 'das ma—i.e. rDo rje phag mo with a human and swine head—descended inside the *chos 'byung* (i.e. the diagram made by two intertwined triangles) which had edges of blood. bDe mchog, rNal 'byor ma and unimaginable relics were originated from her body. As for *nang rten*, a statue of 'Jam dbyangs was made in Bal po, complete with throne and *torana*; and relics of many *grub thob*, the hair and meditation rosary of pan chen Ham ngu (spelled so) and the *bla ma*'s own relics. At the time of the consecration 'Jam dbyang truly dissolved into it”.

KUN DGA' GRAGS

Ibid. (p.11 lines 22–24): “Bla ma de'i nang rten gDung rten bkra shis 'od 'bar bya ru ma chen mo 'di nyid bzhengs te 'di nyid kyi nang na bla ma de nyid rang gi spur la' khrungs pa'i 'Jam dbyangs smra ba'i seng ge'i sku gcig gi thog drangs pa'i gdung rin srel bsam gyi mi khyab pa dang mtshan 'bum bzhugs so//”; “The bla ma gdung rten, the great gDung rten bkra shis 'od 'bar with *bya ru* (“Garuda horns”) was built as his *nang rten*.²¹⁴ Inside it the main object is the statue of 'Jam dbyangs smra ba'i seng ge originated from the corpse of the *bla ma*. Unimaginable relics from his corpse and the 100,000 names [of the *bla ma*] were placed [inside it]”.

214. This confirms the opinion that the *mchod rten*-s with horns on their top part were not an exclusive of Bon (see Martin's Ph.D. dissertation, “Birdhorns”, in *The Emergency of Bon and the Tibetan Polemical Tradition* and Vitali, “A tentative classification of the *bya ru can* kings of Zhang zhung” p.388).

CHOS BZANG

Ibid. (p.17 lines 12–13): “dGong rdzogs dang nang rten la sogs rnam ni dPyal A mo gha’i rnam thar ’byung ba ltar ro’//; “As for the funerary rites and *nang rten*, one should consult the biography of dPyal A mo gha’i”. This biography is not included in *dPyal gyi gdung rabs Gangga’i chu rgyun*.

PADMO CAN

Ibid. (p.19 lines 21–28): “Bla ma Nyi ma mtshan can gyis/ yab kyi nang rten du/ Jo bo Shākya mu ne sku tshad dang mnyam pa gTsang Tshong ’dus mgur mor bzhengs cing rten gyi nang na bla ma’i mtshan ’bul/ rGyud sde bzhi’i gzung snying po nye snying rnam mthing shog spur rus kyis gris/ Byang chub shing la ’bras dang bcas pa gnas chen brgyad kyi sa na ro’i rus rgyan gyi tshal ba Bi pu tsandra’i dbu zhwa/ dbu skra na bza’i tshal pa dPyal gong ma rnam kyi ring srel bla ma rang gi sku gdung ring srel rdo rje dril bu/ thugs dam phreng ba la sogs pa dang rin po che dang bru sman gso dar chos skyong dang Nor lha gzung ni rab tu gnas pa’i yi ge bzhin du yod lags/ phyi rten ’bum khang khang bu ltar yod pa’i nang na/ gser gyi mchod rten de’i nang na gdung ring srel dang rten mang po bzhugs/ le rtse nub ma na thugs dam lha bzhi dan ston pa’i sku bla ma nyid kyi phyag tsha rnam bzhugs pa’i phyi rten bzhengs so//”; “The one with the name of Nyi ma made a life-size statue of jo bo Shākya mu ne to be the *nang rten* of his father at gTsang Tsong ’dus mgur mo. Inside the statue there are the 100,000 names of the *bla ma* and the quintessential *mantra*-s of *rGyud sde bzhi* written on the bones of the corpse, [wrapped] in blue paper; the soil of the eight holy places [of India] including fruits of the Bodhi Tree; fragments of the Nā ro’s carved bones; the hat, hair and fragments of the robe of Bi pu tsandra; relics of the dPyal *gong ma* (“forefathers”); relics of the corpse of the *bla ma* himself with his *rdo rje* and *dril bu*; his meditation (*thugs dam*) rosary plus jewels, grains and medical remedies, *mantra*-s of the *chos skyong* and the Nor lha. Likewise, there are documents on this consecration. As for the *phyi rten*, a *phyi rten* was made [in the form of] a golden *mchod rten* in the interior of the *’bum khang* shaped as a *khang bu* (“diminutive mansion”). Inside it many relics and receptacles are placed. In the western compartment (*le rtse*) are the statues of the four *thugs dam lha* and sTon pa personally made by the *bla ma* (i.e. made according to his instructions)”.

KHON GDUS BA GZHON NU YE SHES

Ibid. (p.19 line 35–p.20 line 5): “De’i nang rten du Thub sku shin tu mtshar ba bzhengs shing rten gyi nang na bla ma (p.20) brgyud pa’i mtshan ’bum bKa’ ’gyur gyi gzungs snying po Sangs rgyas kyi ring srel/ mkhan chen Gang ba rang gi gdung ring srel/ rnam brgyan/ skus so/ lhung gzed/ thugs dam ’phreng ba la sogs pa byin rlabs kyi rten/ gzungs bzhugs//”; “An extremely beautiful statue of Thub [pa] was made as his *nang rten*. Many receptacles bestowing

blessings were installed inside this *nang rten*, such as the *bla ma* (p.20) the 100,000 names of the lineage holders'; the *bKa' gyur* essential formulas; a relic of Sangs rgyas; relics from the corpse of mkhan chen Gang ba; various ornaments (*rnam brgyan*), his own tooth, bowl and meditation rosary; together with everything related to the formulas which were put inside it".

THAR PA NYI MA RGYAL MTSHAN

Ibid. (p.20 lines 23–30): “De’i nang rten sku ’dra gnyis las chung ba dgung lo bcu gnyis pa’i tshad dang che ba sku ’dra tshad dang mnyam pa’i gzung zhug snying po la/ gtsug tor na bla ma’i mtshan ’bum spur rus kyis bris pa thugs kha na bKa’ gyur ro cog gi gzung snying po/ yang snying/ Sangs rgyas kyis ring srel/ Klu sgrub la sogs pa mkhan grub du ma’i ring srel/ Byang chub kyis shing yal kha lo ’bras dang bcas pa Ma hā bho dhi zhal rtsi Thub pa chen po’i nzhugs khri dum bu gnas chen brgyad kyis sa/ pandi ta Tram kyis pa Karna shri thugs dam phreng ba/ pandi ta A mo’i phyag dpe/ dbu skra/ phyag sen/ mkhan chen pa rang gi sku gdung ring srel/ dbu skra/ dbu zhwa/ na bza’/ chos gos gsum/ thugs dam phreng ba/ gzhan yang khyad ras la rGya Bal gyis rten la byin rlabs zhus pa’i phyag dpe’i na bza’ dri spos kyis phyugs pa dang sman spos ’bru dar rin po che rnam tshang bar bzhugs so/””; “Of the two statues made as *nang rten*, the smaller is the size of twelve years old [Sangs rgyas], the bigger is his actual size. As for the formulas put in their interior, inside the *gtsug gtor* (“protuberance on top of the head”) the 100,000 names of the *bla ma* written on the bones of his corpse; in the region of the [statue’s] heart the essential formulas [found] in the complete [edition of] *bKa’ gyur*; further formulas; a relic of Sangs rgyas; relics of many *mkhas grub* such as Klu sgrub; a branch, leave and fruit of the Bodhi tree plus the painting of the Ma ha bho dhi (spelled so) [temple]; in the cavity of the throne of the great Thub pa [statue] the soil of the eight great holy places; the meditation rosary of pandi ta Tram ki pa karma shri; a personal book, hair and nails of pandi ta A mo [gha]; relics from the corpse of the *mkhan chen* himself (i.e. Nyi ma rgyal mtshan); his hair plus his hat, *na bza’* (“lower part of the monastic robe”), *chos gos* (“upper part of the robe”), altogether three; and his meditation rosary; moreover his own book that had absorbed the blessings of the holy receptacles of rGya [gar and] Bal [po], wrapped inside a superior[-quality] cotton; a robe anointed with perfumed scent, grains [emitting] herbal fragrance and precious silk were all stuffed there”.

NYI MA DPAL

Ibid. (p.21 lines 27–33): “Bla ma ’dis sku gsung thugs kyis rten rnying pa so zhing gsar pa bzhengs pa yang yab kyis nang rten Thub pa’i sku mi tshad dang mnyam pa bzhugs khri rgyab yol ’phul ma dang bcas pa mtshar pa bzhengs pa’i zhabs rdzongs dkar chag na gsal zhing Byang chub chen po’i dbu la dbu rgyan shin tu legs pa Kye’i rdo rje’i zhal yas khang mtshar ba Byang chub chen po gdan khri bkod legs gser gyis byugs shing gzhan yang yab kyis phyi rten

khang zang gan ji ra dang bcas pa'i nang na gser 'bum gsum bzhugs pa'i nang na'ang gdung ring srel mang dang sku gzung thugs kyi mang po bzhugs so/ ldebs kyi dbus la bla ma Nyi ma'i sku 'bag rgyud pa'i bla mas bskor ba dang brGyud sde bzhi'i lha tshogs mang po bzhugs so/ sgo gong ma grub chen brgyad cui brgyud bris sgo gdong la mGon po stag bzhon lcam dral gyi bris sku la sogs pa ngo mtshar bzhengs so//"; "This *bla ma* (Rin chen dpal bzang) restored the old receptacles of body, speech and mind, and made [several others] anew. He made a magnificent statue, the *nang rten* of his father, the life-size statue of Thub pa, inclusive of throne and *torana* which is described in *Zhabs rdzongs dkar chag*; and an extremely beautiful crown for the head of [the statue of] Byang chub chen po. He coated gold on the beautifully made throne of the [statue of] Byang chub chen po in the magnificent Kye'i (spelled so) rdo rje gzhal yas khang. Moreover, he placed three 'Bum in gold [ink] inside the *khang zang* with *gan dzi ra* and the *phyi rten* of his father, together with relics of the [*bla ma*'s] body and many receptacles of body, speech and mind. In the centre of its space are placed the portrait statue of bla ma Nyi ma [dpal] surrounded by the lineage *bla ma*-s together with many receptacles of body, speech and mind. He had the eighty-eight *grub chen* painted above the door (of Kye rdor gzhal yas khang?) and mGon po stag bzhon ("riding on the tiger") in *yab yum* [on the wall] in front of the door, which are extraordinary images".

RIN CHEN DPAL BZANG

Ibid. (p.22 lines 15–22): "gCen po lo chen Rin chen dpal bzang gi nang rten Thub pa'i sku mi tshad la bzhugs khri rgyab yol dang bcas pa/ rten gyi gtsug tor na rGya gar gyi gnas chen brgyad kyi sa la Thub pa'i tshems mche ba la khros gsol ba'i chus sbyar ba'i Thub pa'i sku dPyal lo'i thugs dam lha mdzad pa gcig bzhugs shing gzhan yang bla ma rgyud pa'i mtshan 'bum thugs kha na Sangs rgyas kyi 'phel gdung/ bKa' 'gyur ro cog gi gzung snying rnam spur rus kyi bris pa/ mkhan chen Gang ba'i gdung ring srel/ rnam sbyar/ skus so/ lhung bzed/ thugs dam phreng ba la sogs pa'i byin rlabs kyi rten/ rin po che sna tshogs la sogs pa'i gzungs bzhugs kri rigs ma tshad pa pa med par yod legs/ phyi rten 'bum khang nang na gser gyi byugs pa'i mchod rten gsum gyi nang du'ang sku gsung thugs kyi rten dang bla ma rang gi sku 'dra dang ring srel mang po bzhugs legs/ ldebs la dbus su bla ma'i sku 'bag la rGyud sde bzhi'i lha tshogs kyi skor ba ngo mtshar dang ldan pa bzhengs// "The *nang rten* of his elder brother lo chen Rin chen dpal bzang is the life-size [statue of] Thub pa with throne and *torana*. The soil of the eight great holy places of rGya gar, the canine of Thub pa, the Thub pa [statue] sprinkled with purified water, which was the meditation deity of dPyal lo [tsa ba], have been installed in the *gtsug gtor* ("protuberance over the skull") of the statue. Moreover, it is excellent that receptacles bestowing blessings such as the 100,000 names of the *bla ma*'s lineage in the region of the heart; the multiplying relic of Sangs rgyas; the essential *mantra*-s of the complete *bKa' 'gyur* [edition], painted on a bone of the corpse; relics from the corpse of mkhan chen Gang pa; his *rnam sbyar* (i.e. a piece of yellow cloth symbolising the patched

monastic robe), tooth (*skus so*), bowl, meditation rosary and several pure kinds of consecrating objects, such as various precious gems, are [in its interior]. It is excellent that receptacles of body, speech and mind; the portrait of the *bla ma* himself and many relics from his corpse are contained inside three *mchod rten* coated with gold in the *'bum khang*, which is his *phyi rten*. In the centre of its interior is his portrait statue (*sku 'bag*) surrounded by the cycle of deities of *rGyud sde bzhi*, which is extraordinary”.

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The year the sky fell: remarks on the *gling log* of iron tiger 1290

There is more to the famous 'Bri gung *gling log* than its scanty treatment found in most sources, as I have come to believe while preparing a paper on grub chen U rgyan pa's troubled relationship with the Mongols of China. Pondering the fact that U rgyan pa had refused four times to go to Se chen rgyal po's court, but finally accepted his summons on the fifth occasion, I wondered why he had such a change of heart. The reasons for U rgyan pa's change of mind, in my view, went beyond his own mystical explanation that sPyan ras gzigs had earlier appeared to him at Bodhgaya encouraging him finally to accept the emperor's invitation. Things had taken a negative turn for the bKa' brgyud pa in the period, the main expression of which was the 'Bri gung *gling log* of iron tiger 1290. The fifth summons to U rgyan pa came in water dragon 1292, hence after the devastating effects of the *gling log* for the bKa' brgyud pa camp had occurred. The burning of 'Bri gung had changed the power equation in dBus gTsang drastically.

The *gling log* is mentioned in most Tibetan sources dealing with the Sa skya/Mongol period, but the events that led to it are rarely explicated in them. The literary restraint in the treatment of the unfolding of the major disaster in Tibet's 13th century has been one reason that convinced me to deal with this well-known but equally elusive subject. In this essay, I identify the causes that originated the dispute and the players in the game, who did not all belong to the Sa skya pa and 'Bri gung pa ranks.

The picture that is drawn amounts to a controversy between religious masters, which could have been solved internally. The dispute escalated into a major contention on account of secular compulsions induced by Mongol dominance.

1281–1290: the dispute unfolds

The dynamics in the struggle between the Sa skya pa and 'Bri gung pa, which took place in Central Tibet during the years 1281–1289 and culminated in the 'Bri gung *gling log* of 1290, can be reconstructed in their main points from scanty but precious references in the literature.

A status of relative privilege for the bKa' brgyud pa camp, based on the 'Bri gung pa school's diplomatic relations with the potentate of the plateau and beyond its borders, was seriously hampered by the advent of Se chen rgyal po to the imperial throne of the Mongols in iron monkey 1260. As is well known, he accorded favour to the Sa skya pa.

Decades of resentment and rivalry led to an exasperating stand-off between these two religious powerhouses. Matters deteriorated further in the eighties of the 13th century. This is the point in time on which I wish to focus.

The reductive accounts of the *gling log* found in most sources deal with the concluding episode of the strife: the final blow inflicted by the Sa skya pa upon the 'Bri gung pa and the crucial role their respective Mongol allies had in the conflict. However, the scenario outlined in the bKa' brgyud pa literature reveals a rather murkier tangle of rivalries and factions within the ranks of the bKa' brgyud pa that was exploited by Sa skya. This involved the 'Bri gung pa and Phag mo gru pa, whose fortunes were so closely intertwined, especially in the long years before the *gling log*, that they were almost a single institution.

The religious fallout

The events leading up to the *gling log* go back to iron snake 1281 revolve around the unsettled situation created by the transition from one abbot of gDan sa mthil to another during the last quarter of the 13th century. The death in iron dragon 1280 but actually already in 1281 of spyan snga bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo rje (b. 1218) had left its throne vacant, for succession was not yet set around the time of his passing.¹ sPyan snga Grags pa ye shes (1240–1288)

1. *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.372 lines 7–8) has the dates of bCu gnyis pa rin po che: “Rin chen bCu gnyis pa ni rin po che'i sku skye bar yang byed la/ de yang sa pho stag gi lo la sku 'khrungs//”; “Rin chen bCu gnyis pa, was the rebirth of the *rin po che* ('Jig rten mgon po). He was born in earth male tiger 1218”, and (ibid. p.373 lines 3–6) “Rin po che pa de ni lo bcu bzhir tshogs pa bskyang nas/ dgung lo drug cu rtsa gsum pa lcags pho 'brug go lo'i Hor zla ba bcu gnyis pa'i tshes bcu gnyis kyi nyi ma gdan sa'i dbus zug la phyin//”; “This *rin po che* protected the congregation for fourteen years. At the age of sixty-three in iron male dragon, the twelfth day of the twelfth Hor month he felt pain at the central *gdan sa* (gDan sa mthil?). He showed the way of dying among innumerable extraordinary signs”.

Deb ther dmar po (p.122 line 21–p.123 line 1) mentions the abbotship of bCu gnyis rin po che in a succinct manner: “De'i dbon po rin po che bCu gnyis pas gdan sa mdzad nas rGyal ba rin po che'i rten sgo mangs po bzhengs//”; “bCu gnyis pa rin po che, the paternal nephew [of rGyal ba rin

became the new abbot in the following year, iron snake 1281 (ibid. p.375 lines 2–3).² Sources do not mention the circumstances surrounding his ascension to the religious throne of gDan sa mthil, but one gathers from the successive developments that the transfer of religious power was not a smooth process.

Deb ther dmar po, sPyan snga bSod nams rgyal mtshan's *bKa' brgyud rin po che'i chos 'byung mig byed 'od stong* and *lHo rong chos 'byung* concur that Grags pa ye shes was a disciple of 'gro mgon 'Phags pa (1235–1280).³ By having a follower from the camp of the

po che (1203–1267, in office 1236–1267)], was the *gdan sa*. He built a *sgo mangs*, the receptacle in memory of rGyal ba rin po che”.

Si tu bka' chems Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru p.111 lines 3–7), too, does not waste words: “sPyan snga rin po che'i dbon po/ rGyal ba rin po ches gdan sa 'dir bla ma dgung lo sum co so bzhir smos pa zhig mdzad 'dug/ de'i gcung po bla ma bCu gnyis rin po ches gdan sa lo bcu bzhir smos pa zhig mdzad 'dug pa/ sku mched de gnyis kyis/ sPyan snga rin po che la chos khrid rdzogs par zhus 'dug//”; “sPyan snga rin po che's nephew rGyal ba rin po che was the abbot here (i.e. at gDan sa mthil) for thirty-four years [in the life of this] *bla ma*. [rGyal ba rin po che's] younger brother, bCu gnyis rin po che, was abbot for fourteen years. Both brothers received complete religious teachings from sPyan snga rin po che”.

2. Concerning bCu gnyis pa rin po che's successor on the throne of 'Bri gung *lHo rong chos 'byung* (p.374 lines 6–7) provides the extent of his life: “Rin chen Grags pa ye shes ni lcags pho byi ba'i lo la sku 'khrungs//”; “Rin chen Grags pa ye shes was born in iron male rat 1240”, and (ibid. p.375 lines 1–3): “Der tshogs pa lo brgyad bskyangs/ bzhi bcu zhe dgu pa sa pho byi ba'i lo zla ba lnga pa'i tshes bco brgyad la mya ngan las 'das so//”; “He protected the congregation here (i.e. at gDan sa mthil) for eight years (1281–1288) and died at the age of forty-nine on the eighteenth of the fifth month of earth male rat 1288”.

Deb ther dmar po and *Si tu bka' chems* (in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru*) are, once again, rather laconic. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 1–2) says: “bCu gnyis pa'i dbon po gcen Grags pa ye shes bskos//”; “bCu gnyis pa's paternal nephew, the elder brother Grags pa ye shes, was appointed abbot”.

Si tu bka' chems Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru p.111 lines 7–8) reads: “Nged kyi khu bo rin po che Grags pa ye shes kyis gdan sa lo dgu mdzad la/ rGyal ba rin po che la chos khrid rdzogs par zhus 'dug//”; “My own (i.e. ta'i si tu Grags pa rgyal mtshan's) paternal uncle rin po che Grags pa ye shes was abbot for nine years. He received complete religious teachings from rGyal ba rin po che”.

3. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 3–4): “Rin po che Grags pa ye shes/ bla ma 'Phags pa la rGyiud gdams ngag zhus//”; “Rin po che Grags pa ye shes received Tantric secret teachings from bla ma 'Phags pa”.

sPyan snga bSod nams rgyal mtshan, *bKa' brgyud rin po che'i chos 'byung mig byed 'od stong* (f.33b6–f.34b1): “Rin po che Grags pa ye shes ni dpon mGon po rgyal gyi sras Khro bo 'phan la/ Rin chen shes rab/ rin po che nyid/ gNyis mchod pa/ dpon Rin chen skyabs dang bzhi 'khrungs pa las/ rin po che Grags pa ye shes nyid ni/ lcags pho byi ba'i lo la sku ltams/ sku nas gzhon nu'i dus su rin po che mjal/ Zla dgon du yig klog bslabs te/ de'i rjes rGyal ba rin po che'i bkas Phag mo gru'i gnas mehog du phebs nas/ Thub pa'i bstan pa la rab yu byung zhing/ chos khrid nmams rdzogs par gsan no/ de nas Sa skyar 'gro mgon 'Phags pa'i spyan sngar phul bas/ zhogs pa re la mdo bsud pa tshar re mkhyen pa byung nas/ thugs rab che ba'i grabs pa'ang che bar byung ngo/ slar bCu gnyis rin po che la zab chos nmams gsan nas grub pa rtse gcig tu mdzad do/ dgung lo bzhi bcu zhes gnyis pa lcags mo sprul gyi lo la gDan sa'i go sar phreabs te lo brgyad bzhugs so/ lo gnyis bzhug pa dang/ lo dgu

bzhugs pa'ang 'chad par 'dug ste/ de mi dag par mngon cing/ dgung lo bzhi bcu zhe dgu pa sa pho byi ba la mya ngan las 'das pa'i tshul bstan no/ de'i 'das dus ni rnam thar na mi gsal zhing nges pa mi snang na'ang/ bco brgyad ja mchod zer ba gcig gi dbyar ja tshul zla re yod gda' zhing/ dbyar snga ma'i phyag bzhes la 'dug pas/ Hor zla ba lnga pa'i tshes bco brgyad yin pa 'dra'o//"; "Rin po che Grags pa ye shes. Of the four sons begot by Khro bo 'phan, the son of dpon mGon po rgyal—[i.e.] Rin chen shes rab, the *rin po che* himself, gNyis mchod pa and dpon Rin chen skyabs—rin po che Grags pa ye shes was born in iron male rat 1240. He met the *rin po che* (i.e. rGyal ba rin po che) in his childhood. He learned reading and writing at Zla dgon. Thereafter, fulfilling the wish of rGyal ba rin po che, he went to visit the most excellent holy places of the Phag mo gru. He was administered the *rab tu byung* vow according to the teachings of Thub pa and received complete religious instructions. He was then entrusted to 'gro mgon 'Phags pa at Sa skya. Every morning he learned the main concepts systematically; he progressively developed great wisdom. He then learned, in turn, profound teachings from bCu gnyis rin po che and meditated single pointedly. At the age of forty-two he ascended the throne of gDan sa [mthil] and was the incumbent for eight years (1280–1288). Whether he was the incumbent for two years or for nine years needs to be verified, but these are wrong notions. He showed how to pass away at the age of forty-nine, in earth male rat 1288. The circumstances of his passing are not explained in his *rnam thar* and are not clear. The eighteenth [i.e. the day of his death], is known as *ja mchod* ("tea offering"), because it is the one occasion appropriate for serving tea during the summer months, traditionally accepted as falling during the first month of summer; it corresponded to the eighteenth day of the fifth month".

The brief biography of Grags pa ye shes in *IHo rong chos 'byung* is based on the work of his teacher spyang snga bSod nams rgyal mtshan. It (ibid. p.374 line 4–p.375 line 3) reads: "Rin po che Grags pa ye shes ni/ dpon mGon po rgyal mtshan gyi sras Khro bo 'phan/ de'i sras ni Rin chen shes rab/ rin po che pa nyid/ gNyis mchod pa/ Rin chen skyabs dang bzhi 'khrungs pa la/ Rin chen grags pa ye shes ni lcags pho byi ba'i lo la sku bltams/ sku na gzhon nu la dBus su byon nas rje sPyan snga dang mjal/ de nas rDza dgon du klog yig dang/ slob gnyer mdzad nas bzhugs pa'i tshes/ rGyal ba rin po che'i bkas dbon po Phag mo grur blangs/ de'i Mal rDza dgon gyi gdan sar ri pa Ti tse ba bskos/ de'i sku nye yul rDza rgyud rus pa 'Bro lDog yin pas de nas bzung ste rin po che dGa' ldan pa/ rin po che dPal 'byor rgyal mtshan nas Chos kyi ye shes kyi bar la yon tan can sha stag byung nas da lta'i bar du dbon rgyud kiyis gdan sa bzung/ dgon pa'i dar rgyas/ Tsa rir ri pa rdzongs pa sogs ma chad pa legs por yod do/

De nas dbon po mThil gyi mkhan slob la rab tu byung/ mtshan Grags pa ye shes su gsol/ chos khrid nams rdzogs par gnang/ de nas Sa skyar bla ma 'Phags pa'i drung du phul/ zhogs pa re la sdud ba tshar re zin pa byung nas thugs rab che bar grags/ slar yang bCu gnyis rin po che las zab chos gsan/ sgrub pa rtse gcig tu mdzad pas nyams rtogs khyad par can thugs rgyud la 'khrungs/ dgung lo bzhi bcu zhe gnyis lcags mo (p.375) sprul gyi lo la gdan sa'i go sar phebs/ der tshogs pa lo brgyad bskyangs/ bzhi bcu zhe dgu pa sa pho byi ba'i lo zla ba lnga pa'i tshes bco brgyad la mya ngan las 'das so//"; "As for rin po che Grags pa ye shes, dpon mGon po rgyal mtshan's son was Khro bo 'phan who begot four sons: Rin chen shes rab, the *rin po che*, gNyis mchod pa and Rin chen skyabs. Rin chen Grags pa ye shes was born in iron male rat 1240. In his youth, he went to dBus and met the *rje spyang snga*. He then stayed at rDza dgon to learn to read and write and for his studies. At that time rGyal ba rin po che accepted the nephew (*dbon po*, i.e. Grags pa ye shes) at Phag mo gru. He appointed ri pa Ti tse ba abbot of his seat, Mal rDza dgon. Given that the *rus pa* 'Bro lDog was the lineage of the land of rDza, bordering on his own, only persons with great qualities existed [as *mkhan po*-s] from

strongest allies of Sa skya's foes, 'gro mgon 'Phags pa gained some leverage within the ranks of the Phag mo gru pa-'Bri gung pa alliance. Soon after his appointment, a decision by the new Phag mo gru pa abbot became the source of serious trouble that worsened the already stormy relationship between Sa skya and the 'Bri gung/Phag mo gru camp.

Grags pa ye shes opted to entrust his own nephew sNag tsha Brag sle ba to the care of Ye shes rin chen, a Sa skya pa *bla ma* belonging to the Shar pa branch.⁴ This manoeuvre—its rationale is not elucidated in the documents, but can be imagined—provided the Sa skya pa with a good opportunity to influence the choice of the next abbot of gDan sa mthil to their advantage. Needless to say that, according to Tibetan monastic custom, a *dbon po* (“paternal nephew”) is almost invariably the prime candidate to succeed his *khu bo* (“paternal uncle”). The Sa skya pa planned to see sNag tsha Brag sle ba installed on the abbatial throne of gDan sa mthil,⁵ so that they could extend control over the monastery associated with the fiercest opponents of their predominance over Tibet.

The fact that a Sa skya pa *bla ma* was chosen to take care of sNag tsha Brag sle ba, a potential future abbot, indicates that, faced with an ongoing internecine struggle within the Phag mo gru pa ranks, Grags pa ye shes preferred to entrust his own nephew to the enemy rather than to his own people. No details are provided about the stance of the secular authorities at 'Bri gung and gDan sa mthil on this matter, but one presumes that the *sgom pa*-s and *khri dpon*-s who succeeded one another in the period—the 'Bri gung *sgom pa* Chos seng, Kun rdor Rin chen and dBon po, and the Phag gru *khri dpon* gZhon nu rgyal mtshan and Yar 'brog Byang gzhon—must have regarded the potential, forthcoming appointment of a pro-Sa skya abbot with little enthusiasm.

rin po che dGa' ldan pa and rin po che rdPal 'byor rgyal mtshan onwards, down to Chos kyi ye shes. The lineage of paternal nephews has been occupying the *gdan sa* until now. The monastery was expanded, and it is excellent that *ri pa*-s are sent to Tsa ri uninterruptedly.

Then the nephew (*dbon po*, i.e. Grags pa ye shes) received the *rab tu byung* vow from the *mkhan slob* of [gDan sa] mthil. He was given the name Grags pa ye shes. Upon him was bestowed the religious *khrid*-s (“authorisations”) in a complete manner. He was then entrusted to *bla ma* 'Phags pa at Sa skya. Every morning he compiled [the teachings that he received]. He learned them on every possible occasion, thus earning for himself the fame of an erudite person. He also received profound teachings from bCu gnyis pa rin po che. He meditated one-pointedly and extraordinary realisations were born in him. At the age of forty-two, in iron female (p.375) snake 1281 he was elevated to the rank of *gdan sa* [and] protected its community for eight years (1281–1288). He died aged forty-nine in earth male rat 1288, on the eighteenth [day] of the fifth month”.

4. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 4–5): “Bla ma Shar pa Ye rin pa la khong rang gi dbon po sNag tsha Brag sle ba phul/””; “[Grags pa ye shes] entrusted his paternal nephew sNag tsha Brag sle ba to bla ma Shar pa Ye [shes] rin [chen]”.
5. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 line 5): “De la Sa skya pas gdan sa bsko rtsis byas/””; “Consequently, the Sa skya pa planned to appoint the *gdan sa* [of gDan sa mthil]”.

The enmity between the two Phag mo gru pa factions, exploited by Sa skya with a clever move that eventually led to a confrontation serious enough to require the supremely destructive intervention of Se chen's Mongols against 'Bri gung, is obliquely described in a passage of *Deb ther dmar po*. Involved in the internal dispute for the control of gDan sa mthil were the disciples of bCu gnyis pa rin po che, known as the sPu rtogs (“[attaining the] most subtle realisations?”),⁶ and those of his successor Grags pa ye shes, known as the lDol bu (the “mendicants”).⁷

The text does not say when the rivalry between the two factions broke out—whether in the days of bCu gnyis pa or those of Grags pa ye shes as abbots. What establishes the rivalry between them is an expression used to indicate confrontational conditions. They are called the *chags sdang* of the sPu lDom (or sPu [rtogs and] lDom [bu]). *Chags sdang* is one of those typical Tibetan expressions that combine opposite terms into a single word. It stands for “love and hate”, thus implying a dichotomy within a single entity. On top of many other occurrences, it is also found with the same sense in *Man lung pa'i rnam thar* (see my “In the presence of the “diamond throne”: Tibetans at rDo rje gdan (last quarter of the 13th century to year 1300)”), an early biography presumably written at the beginning of the 14th century and thus probably before *Deb ther dmar po*.⁸

6. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.122 line 23–p.123 line 1): “De'i slob ma la sPu rtogs zer/ de grongs nas sPu (p.123) tshos sgo mangs gcig bzhengs/”; “[bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo rje]'s disciples are known as the sPu rtogs. After [bCu gnyis pa's] death, the sPu (p.123) rtogs built a *sgo mangs* [in memory of him]”.

7. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 2–3): “De'i slob ma la lDom bu zer bas/ sPu lDom gyi chags sdang de nas byung/”; “His (i.e. Grags pa ye shes's) disciples were known as the lDom bu, and the *chags sdang* between the sPu [and] lDol burst out therefore (or else “subsequently”)”.

8. *Man lung pa'i rnam thar* (f.5a lines 3–4) reads: “Khyad par du lHa pa dang 'Gri gung pa nang 'khrugs/ Sa skya pa dang chags sdang gi brtsod pa me 'bar ba 'dra bas ngan song gi rgyu zad med 'phel/”; “In particular there was an internal strife between the lHa pa and the 'Gri (spelled so) gung pa. The Sa skya pa quarrelled with the *chags sdang* (i.e. those of the strife). These [feuds] were [affected] like burning fire. Reasons for falling into the lower realms increased manifold”.

To address the dispute between the *tsho*-s of Klu mes and rBa that led to the fire of bSam yas, 'Khon ston dPal 'byor lhun grub (*gShin rje gshed chos 'byung* p.51 line 4) uses the term *chags sdang*.

In *Myang chos 'byung* (p.29 lines 12–13) the grudge between dMar sgom ras pa, founder of 'U brag monastery in sGo bzhi of Nyang stod, and a Bon po is defined as a *chags sdang*.

lHo rong chos 'byung (p.834 lines 15–17) describes a dispute that involved Sangs rgyas Yel pa's lineage holder bla ma Phu pa by means of the same term: “De'i skabs su gNyos bon po sTon 'Bum dang chags sdang byung nas dBus su bzhud dgongs tsa na/ Grel pa/ lHom reng/ Byang 'od sogs kysis bshol nas lHa phu lo drug bdad sbyar mdzad/”; “At that time, a disagreement (*chags sdang*) arose between gNyod Bon po ston 'Bum and [bla ma Phu pa (1185–1236 or 1248?)] who thought of going

In *Si tu bka' chems*, ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302?–1364) refers briefly to the unsettled relationship in the monastic community of Phag mo gru of the earlier period, using the same term *chags sdang* for the dispute between the antagonistic groups, which he calls sPu and lTol.⁹

These contentious events unfolded into a conflict between brothers. Grags pa ye shes was at the head of his own lDom bu faction, inclined to make concessions to the Sa skya pa, whereas his younger brother rGya bo Grags pa rin chen (1250–1310), a supporter of the late spyan snga bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo rje's sPu rtogs,¹⁰ spearheaded resistance against the elder brother's plan.

Owing to Grags pa rin chen's decision regarding the education of his maternal nephew, the question of abbatial succession became the occasion for political strife that impinged on the affairs of the whole of Tibet, or at least its central regions. What was at stake for the Phag mo

to dBus. But Grel pa, lHom reng and Byang 'od convinced him to postpone [the journey] and [bla ma Phu pa] had a six years walled-in meditation (*'dag sbyar*) at lHa phu".

The term *bshol* (lit. "to postpone") used in reference to religious masters conveys the sense of "to avoid", to "abandon". The developments in this case confirm this actual meaning.

9. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.117 lines 4–5): "Rang re tshang yang res ban dhe nang di sPu lTol chags sdang byas nas nang ma 'cham//"; "Sometimes, in our own house (lit. "nest") the *chags sdang* ("love and hate") [controversy] prevailed among the monks, subdivided into sPu [and] lTol (spelled so), and there was internal discord".

This discord occasionally extended to the lay and religious heads of the Phag mo gru pa to the benefit of the g.Ya' bzang pa, who exploited these opportunities in the view of ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (ibid. p.117 lines 5–6).

10. sPyan snga bSod nams rgyal mtshan, *bKa' brgyud rin po che'i chos 'byung mig byed 'od stong* (f.34b1–f.35a1): "Rin po che gNyas mchod pa ni/ lcags pho khyi'i lo la sku ltams/ sku nas gzhon nu'i dus su rje rin po che dang mjal/ bCu gnyis pa la tshogs khrid gsan zhing/ rab tu byung pa'i mtshan Grags pa rin chen du btags so/ thig phor du sgrub pa mdzad pas yi dam lha zhal gzigs par grags shing/ de'i rjes la spyi gsar du sgrub pa mdzad pas pho nya'i lam la mnga' brnyes so/ de nas dgung lo bzi bcu pa/ sa mo glang gi lo la gDan sa go sar phebs nas/ lo nyi zhu rtsa gnyis kyi bar du gdul bya bskyabs te/ ti shri Grags pa 'od dang/ rgyal bu gnyis kyis stag mgo phul bas/ bla dpon yang sbrags/ Sa 'Bri'i 'khrugs pa bsdums/ dag snang can rnam kyis Phyag rdor du mthong pa'ang byung ngo/ 'di la Tsa ri'i Dung mtsho ras pa la sogs pa'i rtogs pa mchog gyur gyi slob ma mang du byon no/ gNyas mchod rin po che de nyid mdzad pa kun gyi mthar/ dgung lo drug cu rtsa gnyis pa/ lcags pho khyi'i lo/ Hor zla gsum pa'i nyi shu gnyis la mya ngan las 'das pa'i tshul bstan no/ gdung zhu ba las/ bDe mchog kyi sku gcig byon 'dug pa slob ma dad can skal ldan gcig gis brnyes nas/ Tshpe dpag med kyi sku gcig bzhengs pa'i nang du bzhugs zhes grags so//"; "Rin po che gNyas mchod pa. He was born in iron male dog 1250. During his childhood, he met the *rje rin po che* (i.e. rGyal ba rin po che). He received religious teachings from bCu gnyis pa, and the *rab tu byung* name of Grags pa rin chen was given to him. He meditated one pointedly, and it is well known that he had the vision of his *yi dam lha*. Thereafter he again meditated more generally and attained the *pho nya'i lam* ("path of methods"). Then at the age of forty, he ascended the throne of gDan sa [mthil] in earth female ox 1289, and protected the people to be trained for twenty-two years (1289–1310). Ti shri Grags 'od and the *rgyal bu* (i.e. The

gru pa was no longer that a faction could be deprived of its control of the abbatial throne, but that the related Phag mo gru pa and 'Bri gung pa religious and secular organisation could be superseded by the Sa skya pa, with the impending risk of losing their identity and autonomy. No wonder then that rGya bo Grags pa rin chen resorted to an extreme remedy, the assassination of the Sa skya pa candidate sNag tsha Brag sle ba.¹¹

Observing the matter from a perspective internal to 'Bri gung and gDan sa mthil, the faction of Grags pa ye shes did not recover from the murder of sNag tsha Brag sle ba, although, formally, the incumbent *mkhan po* remained on the abbatial chair until his death in earth rat

mur bho ga?) conferred upon him the tiger head [seal]. He jointly exercised the roles of *bla* [and] *dpon*. He mediated the strife between Sa [skya and] 'Bri [gung]. By means of his pure perceptions it happened that he had the vision of Phag rdor. Many disciples with excellent spiritual realisations, such as Tsa ri'i Dung mtsho ras pa, came to him. At the end of all his deeds, gNyas mchod pa rin po che showed how to die in iron male dog 1310, on the twenty-second day of the third month, at the age of sixty-two. After the cremation of his body, his faithful and fortunate disciples found an image of bDe mchog which they placed inside a statue of Tshe dpag med that they made [for the purpose]."

The brief biography of Grags pa rin chen in *IHo rong chos 'byung* is again styled after *bKa' brgyud rin po che'i chos 'byung mig byed 'od stong*. It (ibid. p.375 lines 4–21) says: "Rin po che gNyas mchod pa ni/ lcags pho khyi'i lo la sku 'khrungs/ sku na gzhon nu'i dus nas rGyal ba rin po che dang mjal/ Thil gyi mkhan slob la rab tu byung/ mtshan Grags pa rin chen du gsol/ bCu gnyis rin po che la chos khrid thams cad rdzogs par gsan/ thig phor du sgrub pa mdzad pas yi dam lha'i zhal gzigs par grags shing/ de'i rjes la sPyil gsar du sgrub pa mdzad pa/ pho nya'i lam la brnyes so/ de nas dgung lo bzhi bcu la/ sa mo glang gi lo la gdan sa'i go sar phebs nas/ ti shri Grags 'od dang/ rgyal bu gnyis kysis stag mgo phul bas bla dpon yang bsgrags/ Sa 'Bri'i 'khrug pa bsdums shing/ dag snang can nmams kysis Phag rdor mthong ba byung/ 'di la Tsa ri'i Dung mtsho ras pa [note: slob ma rim par brgyud pa ni/ Dung mtsho nas Bye ma ras pa/ Dom tshang ras pa/ sTag tshang ras pa/ 'Khrul zhig rDo rje sogs pa yang brgyud par snang] la sogs pa'i rtogs pa mchog gyur gyi slob ma yang mang du byon no/ lo nyer gnyis kyi bar du gdul bya bskyangs nas mdzad pa kun gyi mthar dgung lo drug cu rtsa gcig pa lcags pho khyi'i lo zla ba gnyis pa'i tshes nyer gnyis la mya ngan las 'das pa'i tshul bstan//"; "Rin po che gNyas mchod pa was born in iron male dog 1250. He met rGyal ba rin po che in his youth. He received the *rab tu byung* vow from the *mkhan slob* of [gDan sa] thil (spelled so). He was given the name Grags pa rin chen. He meditated one-pointedly and it is well known that he had the vision of his *yi dam lha*. Thereafter he meditated at sPyil gsar. He attained the *pho nya'i lam* (the "path of methods"). Then, when he was forty years old in earth female ox 1289, he was elevated to the rank of *gdan sa*. Ti shri Grags 'od and the *rgyal bu* (The mur bho ga?), two in all, gave him the [seal with the] tiger head, and he combined [the role of] *bla* [*ma* and] *dpon* in his person. He mediated the strife between Sa [skya and] 'Bri [gung]. In his pure perceptions, he had the vision of Phag rdor. Many disciples who developed excellent realisations, such as Tsa ri Dung mtsho ras pa, came to him [note: the [transmission within] the latter's lineage of disciples [went] from Dung mtsho to Bye ma ras pa, [then] Dom tshang ras pa, sTag tshang ras pa and 'Khrul zhig rDo rje, this being the line]. After protecting the people to be trained for twenty-two years (1289–1310), he showed how to die at the age of sixty-one in iron male dog 1310, on the twenty-second [day] of the second month".

11. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 5–6): "gCung rGya bos bkrogs//"; "gCung (i.e. Grags pa rin chen's younger brother) rGya bo assassinated [the Sa skya pa candidate]".

1288. It is significant that rGya bo Grags pa rin chen, the prelate who had commissioned the death of sNag tsha Brag sle ba, succeeded his brother Grags pa ye shes in earth ox 1289.¹²

This is how Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang 'phrin las summarises the unfolding of the struggle for the abbatial throne of gDan sa mthil in his commentary on *Deb ther dmar po* (see n.551 on p.435 line 21–p.436 line 7):

“Rab byung lnga pa'i lcags sprul spyi lo 1281 lor/ 'Bri gung du spyan snga bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo (p.436) rje sku gshegs pa'i tshab du sPyan snga rin po che Grags pa ye shes khrir bskos/ khong gis rang nyid kyi dbon po sNag tsha Brag ble ba Sa skya'i bla ma Ye shes rin chen la phul/ de las Sa skya pas 'Bri gung gi gdan sar bsko rtsis byas skabs/ spyan snga bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo rje'i gcung rGya bo Grags pa rin chen gyis bkrongs/ de'i don du Sa skya pas 'Bri gung par kha mchu slong rtsis byas kyang/ gcung rGya bo Grags pa rin chen gyi rgyab tu 'Bri gung pa yongs rdzogs langs par brten Sa skya pa dang 'Bri gung pa bar dmag 'khrug byung ba'i 'go tshugs pa yin/”;

“In the iron snake year of the fifth *rab byung* (1281), spyan snga bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo (p.436) rje having died at 'Bri gung (sic), his successor spyan snga rin po che Grags pa ye shes was appointed to the [abbatial] throne. He entrusted his own nephew sNag tsha Brag sle ba to the *bla ma* of Sa skya, Ye shes rin chen. Consequently, when the Sa skya pa planned to appoint [sNag tsha Brag sle ba] to be the abbot of 'Bri gung (sic), rGya bo Grags pa rin chen, the younger brother of spyan snga bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo rje (sic), assassinated [the Sa skya pa candidate]. For this reason, the Sa skya pa planned to fight against the 'Bri gung pa, but the 'Bri gung pa (sic) stood unitedly at the side of the younger brother rGya bo Grags pa rin chen. This was the origin of the armed struggle between the Sa skya pa and the 'Bri gung pa”.

Dung dkar rin po che's synopsis has the virtue of presenting the essence of this course of events, but he wrongly concludes that they concerned 'Bri gung rather than gDan sa mthil. sNag tsha Brag sle ba was not supposed to become the abbot of 'Bri gung, as he opines. Also, Grags pa rin chen was not the younger brother of spyan snga bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo rje (i.e. rDo rje rin chen) the 'Bri gung pa, but of Grags pa ye shes, the Phag mo gru pa.¹³

12. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 6–7): “De rting rin po che Grags pa ye shes bkrong nas/ rin po che gcung rGya bo Grags rin gyis gdan sa mdzad/”;

“Thereafter, following the death of rin po che Grags pa ye shes, the younger brother of [this] *rin po che*, rGya bo Grags pa rin chen, was the abbot”.

Si tu bka'chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru p.111 lines 9–10): “Lo nyis shu rtsa gnyis/ gdan sa mdzad 'dug pa/ bCu gnyis rin po che la chos khrid rdzogs par zgus 'dug/”;

“[Grags pa ye shes's] younger brother rin po che Grags pa rin chen was abbot for twenty-two years. He received complete religious teachings from bCu gnyis pa rin po che”.

In n.550 of his commentary on *Deb ther dmar po* (p.435 lines 16–21), Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang 'phrin las dates the life of rGya bo Grags pa rin chen correctly (iron dog 1250–iron dog 1310), and in n.549 (ibid. p.435 lines 11–15) the years of Grags pa ye shes (iron rat 1240–earth rat 1288) are also given accurately.

13. The two passages making up n.552 of Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang 'phrin las's commentary to *Deb ther dmar po* are combined in Cha ris sKal bzang thogs med, *Bod kyi lo rgyus dris lan brgya* p.103 lines 9–20), which inherits Dung dkar rin po che's wrong transfer of events from gDan sa thel

The religious affairs of 'Bri gung, although less explicitly delineated in the available literary material than those of gDan sa mthil, were not entirely smooth either. The occupancy of the abbatial chair did not go undisputed. Thams bead pa Grags pa bsod nams (1238–1286) had been on the religious throne of 'Bri gung only for two years, from wood monkey 1284, when he died. At that time, his successor bCu gnyis pa rin po che rDo rje rin chen (1278–1315), not to be confused with bCu gnyis pa Rin chen rdo rje the Phag mo gru pa abbot who died soon after the latter was born (see above), was in his minority and pursuing his religious education.

The devout and humble Jo sNubs rin po che rDo rje ye shes (1223–1293) was chosen as *ad interim* abbot, waiting for bCu gnyis pa rin po che to complete his studies. A previous 'Bri gung *sgom pa*, Shag rin, opposed the decision and effectively managed to prevent Jo sNubs

to 'Bri gung: “Di'ang don gtso ba ni 'gro mgon 'Phags pa'i gcung po Phyag na'i sras Dha rma pā la rakshi tas srid mdzad pa'i ring du/ 'Bri gung pa'i gdan sa'i khriir su bsko ma mthun pas yin par bshad cing/ Sa skya pas 'Bri gung gdan sa'i khriir sNag tsha Grags sle ba bya ba 'jog rtsis mdzad par 'Bri gung pa rGya bo Grags pa rin chen gyis ma 'dod nas Grags sle ba bkrongs/ Grags rin gyi rgyab gnyer du 'Bri gung pa yongs rdzogs lang par brten Sa 'Bri 'khrug pa'i 'go tshugs/de'i dbang gis 'Bri gung pa Kun rdor rin chen gyis rab byung lnga ba'i shing bya (1285) lor sTod Hor gyi rgyal po Hu la'i hā'i Sog dmag khri dgu lhag tsam Bod du khrid yong ste Sa skyar drangs/ de la lcags stag (1290) lor slebs skabs Sa skya'i dpon chen Ang len gyis Hu bi li Se chen han gyi bu Thi mu bho khas (sic) kyi dmag dpung Bod du khrid yong ste gTsang dmag dang mnyam du 'Bri gung la dmag drangs nas 'Bri gung mthil gyi lha khang chen mo mer bsregs/”;

“It is said that the main cause among [the reasons for the *gling log*] was that, at the time when Dharma pā la rakshi ta, the son of Phyag na rdo rje, the younger brother of 'gro mgom 'Phags pa, held secular power, there was a disagreement about who should sit on the throne of the *gdan sa* of the 'Bri gung pa. The Sa skya pa having made a plan to install sNag tsha Grags sle ba on the throne of 'Bri gung *gdan sa*, 'Bri gung pa rGya bo Grags pa rin chen did not agree. He assassinated Grags sle ba. All the 'Bri gung pa rose in support of Grags rin, and this was the beginning of the Sa [skya]-'Bri [gung] war. As a result, 'Bri gung pa Kun rdor rin chen, in wood bird of the fifth sexagenary cycle (1285), brought over 90,000 Mongol troops of sTod Hor rgyal po Hu la'i hā (spelled so) and led them against Sa skya. Consequently, with the coming of iron tiger 1290, the Sa skya dpon chen Ang len brought the army commanded by Hu bi li Se chen han's son (i.e. actually grandson) Thi mu (spelled so) bho kha to Tibet. He brought them against 'Bri gung together with the troops of gTsang and burnt down Bri gung mthil gyi lha khang. Over 10,000 people died”.

The next passage in the same work (ibid. p.103 line 20–p.104 line 3) is drawn from *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.1420 lines 1–3): “'Bri gung pa'i khongsu stogts pa'i Dwags po dang/ (p.104) Kong po/ E/ gNyal/ Lo ro/ lHo kha/ Brag dkar/ Yar rgyab/ Mon bcas Sa skya pas glangs pa sogs 'Bri gung pa la pham nyes tshabs chen byung ba de la Bo kyi lo rgyus steng 'Bri gung gling log ces grags so/”;

“The 'Bri gung pa allies, Dwags po, (p.104), Kong po, E, gNyal, Lo ro, lHo kha, Brag dkar, Yar rgyab and Mon were taken by the Sa skya pa. The 'Bri gung pa having suffered a devastating defeat, [this event] is known as the 'Bri gung *gling log* in the related Tibetan historical sources”.

from taking charge of his duties. The abbatial situation was still unsettled in earth rat 1288,¹⁴ so that the issue of the abbotship of 'Bri gung was not yet sorted out during the Brag sle ba'i *kha mchu* (the "Brag sle ba vendetta") of earth ox 1289 (see p.601–602) and the 1290 *gling log*.

A few years earlier, in wood bird 1285, 'Bri gung had taken the initiative. In that year, the 'Bri gung *sgom pa*, Kun rdor rin chen, had gathered a huge army identified as troops of Hu la hu by Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang 'phrin las who defines the Mongol prince, brother of Se chen rgyal po, as the sTod Hor *rgyal po*.¹⁵ Despite being away from the scene of Tibet for about two decades, Hu la hu's Il-Khanid preserved some interest in dBus, as I shall show

14. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (IHa sa ed. p.122 line 15–p.123 line 7): “gDan sa bdun pa jo sNubs rd rje ye shes kyi mdzad pa yin/ de yang de nyid sNubs Nam mkha'i snying po dang/ Sangs rgyas ye shes kyi rgyud las/ chu lug lor sku bltams/ gCung rDo rje grags pa las rab tu byung/ de nyid dang/ Thog kha ba las 'Bri gung gi chos thams cad gsan/ de nas ring zhig lon pa na/ mTshams bcad pa rin po che dag zhing du phebs par/ bCu gnyis rin po che dgung lo bdun las ma lon stabs/ nyid dgung lo re gnyis shing sprel lor gdan sar rgyal tshab tu mnga' sol ba'i tshes/ de yang 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po'i zhal chems la/ thang la lha khang bre 'dra ba ma bzhengs/ de la rgyal mtshan bzhi ma (p.123) 'dzugs gsungs pa la/ gong du smos pa gCung rin po ches Gling rang la lha khang bzhengs par bzhed pa'i tshes/ srid kyi phrin las pa sgom pa Shag rin gyis nan gyis zhus nas thang la lha khang chen mo bya ba gru bzhi bre 'dra ba dang/ de'i steng phyogs bzhir gser zangs gyi rgyal mtshan bzhi btsugs pa dang/ sNubs la gdan sa ma 'chol zhes pa/ jo sNubs pa chen po nyid gdan sar spyang drangs pa sogs zhal chems las 'gal ba mang du byas par rten 'brel la gnod/”;

“As for the deeds of the seventh abbot Jo sNubs rDo rje ye shes, he hailed from the lineage of sNubs Nam mkha' snying po and Sangs rgyas ye shes. He was born in water sheep 1223. He received the *rab tu byung* vow from gCung rDo rje grags pa. He was given all the 'Bri gung religious teachings by him and Thog kha ba. Some time thereafter, he came to succeed mThams bcad pa rin po che. bCu gnyis pa rin po che being not older than seven, while [Jo sNubs] was aged sixty-two, the latter was appointed *ad interim* abbot in wood monkey 1284. In his testament, 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po left the following will: “Build a *lha khang*, cubic as a *bre*, on the plain and place four banners on its roof”. (p.123) When gCung rin po che (1210–1278, on the throne of 'Bri gung from 1255) was planning to build a *lha khang* at ['Bri gung] gling himself, owing to the pressing requests of sgom pa Shag rin, who ran the secular affairs, he founded lha khang chen mo on the plain, in a cubic shape and with four banners in gilt copper on its roof in the four directions. He [also] advised to entrust the *gdan sa* to sNubs. Owing to much opposition to [gCung rin po che's] will that Jo sNubs chen po should be appointed *gdan sa*, the karmic conditions were damaged”.

15. A succinct elaboration of this passage in *Deb ther dmar po*, dealing with the cause at the origin of the 'Bri gung *gling log*, is found in n.552 of Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang 'phrin las's commentary to *Deb ther dmar po* (ibid p.436 lines 10–14): “Sa skya bdag chen Dharma pā la rakshita Sa skya'i gdan sar phebs nas lo lnga la slebs pa rab byung lnga pa'i shing bya spyi lo 1285 lor/ 'Bri gung sgom pa Kun rdor rin chen gyis sTod Hor gyi rgyal po Hu la'i hu'i dmag khri dgu tsam Bod du khrid nas Sa skyar dmag drangs/”;

“Five years after Sa skya bdag chen Dharma pā la rakshita came [to Tibet] in order to ascend the throne of Sa skya, in wood female sheep 1285, the 'Bri gung *sgom pa*, Kun rdor rin chen, taking along some 90,000 Muslim troops of the sTod Hor *rgyal po*, Hu la hu, brought them against Sa skya”.

below. The fact that the 'Bri gung *sgom pa* led these troops against Sa skya is another indication of who, among the twin bKa' brgyud pa houses, was on the military forefront of the strife.

The damage done to Sa skya by Kun rdor rin chen and the sTod Hor is not explicated in the sources. Another aspect that remains obscure is whether this offensive preceded or followed the murder of Grags pa ye shes's nephew, given the absence of a date for the assassination of sNag tsha Brag sle ba.

In a treatment of the activities of its school member Nyi ma seng ge, an 'Ug pa lung pa *sn-gags pa* associated with the Sa skya pa, the rNying ma literature describes Sa skya's military success against the sTod Hor, when the latter came to lay siege to the school's main seat.¹⁶ The *dpon chen* who repulsed the sTod Hor's siege of Sa skya was Kun dga' gzhon nu. He served after Byag rin,¹⁷ thus sometime after water horse 1282, the year of the latter's death (see my "Grub chen U rgyan pa and the Mongols of China" p.42–44). Was this attack the 1285 sTod Hor action against Sa skya?

Coinciding with the military campaign of 1285, undertaken by the 'Bri gung pa against the Sa skya pa, a different front was opened in the war. The Sa skya pa *dgon pa* Bya yul in Lo [ro], a land under the Phag mo gru pa, was gutted.¹⁸ Hence the operations of that year were

16. 'Jigs med gling pa, *rNying rgyud dkar chag* (see Pema Tsering, "rNying ma pa Lamas am Yuan-Kaiserhof" Text II p.521 lines 8–11): "sTod Hor gyi Sa skya ming med du gtong bar breams dus/ gong ma mchod yon gyi lung dang dpon Kun gzhon gyis bca hu byung ba ltar / drag po mngon spyod gyi nus pas dmag khri bco gsum gangs brag tu srog gi rgyu ba 'gags pas Sa bstan la'ang byas pa lhag par che/"; "When the sTod Hor planned to lay waste Sa skya to such an extent that even its name would not exist anymore, an order came owing to the *mchod yon* with the emperor. In conformity with the *bca' hu* that had been issued, dpon Kun gzhon, who was able to [undertake] extremely destructive actions, put an end to the life of 30,000 troops at Gangs brag. This was an exceedingly major service to Sa [skya and] the teachings".

17. An anonymous and fragmentary Sa skya pa *dbu med* text missing its title as well (f.57a lines 2–3) says: "De rjes su Shangs mKhar po che Byang rin la Se chen gyis thugs la btags nas/ swan wi pa'i dam kha dang/ shol gyi sa dam gnang/ de rjes su La stod na Zlum sa dpon chen Kun gzhon/ 'di yis 'Phags pa'i sku 'bum la gser phub bkal/ gSer thog chung ba zhes grags"; "Thereafter, Shangs mKhar po che Byang rin being close to Se chen, the latter bestowed upon him the *swan wi pa* seal and *shol gyi sa dam* (a kind of seal rather than a reference to lJang). Thereafter dpon chen Kun gzhon from Zlum sa in La stod put a golden pagoda roof over 'Phags pa's *sku 'bum*, which became known as gSer thog chung ba".

18. *Deb ther sngon po* (p.368 lines 1–5; *Blue Annals* p.303) is a *locus classicus* for a brief historical assessment of the developments at Bya yul: "Shing spre shing bya gsum gTsang ston gdan sa mdzad/ gTsang ston 'Bri khung pas bkrongs/ Bya yul me bsregs/ me khyi nas lcags stag gi bar gdan sa med pa 'dra ste/ lcags stag 'di la 'Bri khung gling log byung/ de rjes kyi lcags yos de Sangs rgyas jo bo gdan sar byon pa'i lo yin/"; "gTsang ston was the [Bya yul] abbot for three years from water sheep 1283 to wood monkey 1284 or wood bird 1285. gTsang ston was assassinated by the 'Bri gung pa. They burned Bya yul down. It seems that there was no abbot [of Bya yul] from fire dog 1286 to iron

two-pronged. One was directed against gTsang; the other towards the south of 'Bri gung in Phag mo gru pa dominions.

The timing of these military campaigns suggests that the 'Bri gung pa took advantage of the unsettled situation within the Sa skya pa ranks, who were experiencing a power vacuum, tactically filled by the Mongols of China with the appointment of Dharma pa la rakshita as ruler of Tibet. Dispatched to the plateau, he was unable to assume his duties because he was murdered en route in fire pig 1287.¹⁹

Following the 'Bri gung pa attack against their home territory, and after losing the possibility of establishing control over gDan sa mthil, the Sa skya pa planned what the sources call the Brag sle ba'i *kha mchu* (the "Brag sle ba vendetta"), an offensive directed against gDan sa mthil to avenge the murder of their candidate for the Phag mo gru pa throne.²⁰

tiger 1290. During the same iron tiger 1290 the 'Bri gung *gling log* took place. Thereafter, iron hare 1291 was the year in which Sangs rgyas jo bo came to be its *gdan sa*".

'Gos lo tsa ba gZhon nu dpal says that, after its destruction, Bya yul remained out of reach of the Sa skya/Yuan coalition from 1285 until immediately after the 1290 *gling log*. In 1291, following the annihilation of the 'Bri gung/sTod Hor alliance, Bya yul was brought back into the Sa skya/Yuan fold. 19. For a brief biography of Dharma pa la rakshita see *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.333 lines 10–13). The same text (ibid. p.33 lines 10–13) says the following concerning his demise: "Yar byon/ mDo Khams su phebs shing/ 'dis gdan sa lo bdun mdzad de/ dgung lo nyi shu pa/ me mo phag lo smal po zla ba'i tshes bco bryad la ngo mtshar ba'i ltas du ma dang bcas te/ mDo Khams Dre mandala du bde bar gshegs so/"; "Proceeding upwards (i.e. westwards), he went to mDo Khams. He was a *gdan sa* for seven years [altogether]. Aged twenty (b. earth male dragon 1268), he died on the eighteenth of *smal po zla ba* of fire male pig 1287 at mDo Khams Dre (i.e. Tre bo or Tre hor) *mandala*".

In *Tre bo'i skor gyi tha snyad dang rus brgyud bcas la dpyad gam sngon gro'i bsam tshul nyung bsdus skya rengs dang po* (n.20 lines 20–22 on p.12) Josayma Tashi Tsering cites *Gangs ljongs mDo stod Nang chen rgyal rabs dang 'brel ba'i lo rgyus phyogs bsdus ya rabs rna rgyan*. I excerpt here a passage (f.43–44) from the latter text: "Bla ma 'Phags pa sku mched Phyag na'i sras Dhārma phalar/ Se chen gyis ti shri mtshan gnas phul te khrir bkod/ Bod du spyi lo 1286 la mchibs bsgyur byas skabs/ Tre'o mandala zhes par bzhugs nas der mya ngan las 'das 'dug pa sogs pa dpyad/"; "Dhārma phala, son of Phyag na [rdo rje], who was 'Phags pa's brother, was given the rank of *ti shri* by Se chen and appointed to the throne. Having turned his horse towards Tibet in 1286, he stayed in the Tre'o *mandala*, and one [should] investigate whether he died there".

mKhas pa'i dga'ston (p.1367 lines 21–23): "Nyer dgu pa me yo la gshegs/ 'di'i sras Dharma pā la rakshi ta lto bor du 'khrungs/ lo gnyis shu bzhugs/"; "[Phyag na rdo rje] died in fire hare 1267 when he was twenty-nine years old. His son Dharma pa la rakshi ta was born orphan (*lto bor*) (i.e. in 1267). He lived until the age of twenty (d.1286)".

20. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 7–9): "Sa skya pas Brag sle ba'i khams chu rtsod rtsis byas pas/ gcung rGya'i rting 'Bri gung pas mnan pas/ Sa 'Bri 'khrugs pa'i mgo tshugs/"; "[The Sa skya pa] planned the Brag ble ba vendetta (*kham mchu* spelled so for *kha mchu*) after gcung rGya [bo was made ab-

This happened in earth ox 1289—one year before the burning of 'Bri gung—upon the appointment of rGya bo Grags pa rin chen to the abbatial throne of gDan sa mthil. The choice of the person responsible for the death of sNga tsha Brag sle ba as *mkhan po* must have been one of the motives that led Sa skya to undertake this counter-offensive.²¹

The Sa skya pa were probably already emboldened by the presence on the plateau of The mur bho ga, Se chen rgyal po's grandson, who was stationed by the Mongols of China in Tibet to secure armed control.²²

Internal feuds of gDan sa mthil notwithstanding, the 'Bri gung pa stood united with the Phag mo gru pa against the Sa skya pa in defence of rGya bo Grags pa rin chen and provided the necessary military defence (see n.20). Thus, the Brag sle ba'i *kha mchu* was successfully therefore repressed.

One wonders why different Mongol authorities were involved in the dispute. Se chen rgyal po and Hu la hu, though formerly on good terms, were indeed fighting a fratricidal war in Tibet. In particular, the participation of Hu la hu in this struggle, having been away from the scene of High and Central Asia for decades, seems unwarranted. I see in Hu la hu's involvement a defence of his rights over estates in lHo kha under Phag mo gru pa's jurisdiction in order not to lose the revenues coming from them, especially in the light of the fact that the Phag mo gru pa had already faced a contraction of their dominions at the hands of the g.Ya' bzang pa and other neighbours.

bot], but it was suppressed by the 'Bri gung pa. This was at the origin of the [1290] struggle between Sa [skya and] 'Bri [gung]".

In n.551 of his commentary on *Deb ther dmar po* (p.435 line 22–p.436 line 9), Dung dkar rin po che dates the Brag ble ba'i *kha mchu* to iron snake 1281 rather than earth ox 1289 (see the text immediately below this note).

21. The 'Bri gung *gling log* and its date were predicted in a prophecy from 'Ba' rom. *lHo rong chos 'byung* (p.212 lines 4–8) writes: "'Bri gung btab nas lo brgya dang bcu gsum song pa na/ 'Bri gung chos rje med la 'gro/ de'i rkyen gyis mi mang po zhig dmyal bar 'gro ba zhig mkyen/ de ltar lung bstan/ de nas lo gnyis song ba lcags pho stag gi lo la 'Bri gung thel bsreg/ dBus gTsang thams cad ma bde//"; "[gZhon nu shes rab (on the throne of 'Ba' rom 1270–1311) issued a prophecy that] there will be no 'Bri gung *chos rje* 113 years after the foundation of 'Bri gung (established earth pig 1179, hence 1290). For that reason, he realised that many people would fall into the hells. The prophecy was like that. Two years later, in iron male tiger 1290, 'Bri gung was burnt down. The whole dBus gTsang was not peaceful".

The prediction may be considered not so prophetic owing to the blows exchanged by 'Bri gung and Sa skya during the same period.

22. The mur bho ga's activity in Tibet as supreme representative of the interests of the Yuan dynasty is briefly acknowledged in *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.266 lines 14–16): "De'i sras The mur sbo khas kyang/ gdan sa chen po'i zhabs tog dang/ khirms la phan pa'i bya ba bzang po naang por byas//"; "His (i.e. A rog che's) son The mur bho kha (spelled so), too, rendered service to the great seat (i.e. the Mongol emperor). He pursued many activities useful to the [Mongol] law [in Tibet]".

The formation of the Phag mo gru pa community during the period of the Mongol princes' sovereignty and before it became a *khri skor* was a doomed enterprise, since territories, such as Thang po che and 'Phyong rgyas originally assigned to Hu la hu,²³ were not included in its possessions anymore. Others were refused by the Phag mo gru pa owing to the difficulty they would have faced in handling them.²⁴ The impression gleaned is that of a Phag mo gru pa's structural weakness, supplemented by the more assertive 'Bri gung pa.

There were several cases of a curtailment of the territories assigned to the Phag mo gru pa. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.112 line 15–p.113 line 7) says that,

23. The lands of the Phag mo gru pa under Hu la hu are mentioned in *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.110 line 10–p.111 line 1) as follows: “rGyal bu Hu la hu la gtogs pa/ Mon lug mgo steng tshur bcaḍ, bsNyal stod smad/ Gyu shul/ Lo ro dkar nag/ Byar po/ g.Ye che ba nang nas chung ba / ḍa lta yang sKo 'ja'i nang na yod/ g.Ye chung rnamḍ rang rer bḍag par 'ḍug/ Yar 'brog sgang gsum la/ Yar lha sham po la bskor ba'i ru ba/ Khrab ye gangḍ leb la bskor ba'i ru ba dang/ mChod rten gling/ sTod tshan/ lCags rtse gri gu'i skor rnamḍ/ Sa rDo rje ḍpal gyi ḍḍig sbyong la/ Thel ḍu ḍḍung khang bKra shis 'od 'bar gyi ḍrung ḍu/ mar me la phul bar 'ḍug pa/ ḍa lta yang Yar 'brog pa rnamḍ mo la gtong ḍus/ mar me rgas pa mi ḍder song zer ba'i ḍon ḍe yin/ Thang po che/ 'Phyong rgyas/ 'Phyos/ Mon mGar phyin/ mKhar ltag ḍo bo/ sPrags te/ 'Ol sNa nam zha lnga/ bSam yas shar sgo ḍḍong mar bcaḍ dang/ lHo brag shar nas Shong bhe/ Ba shi (p.111) Bod 'brog gnyis/” “[The lands] assigned to rgyal bu Hu la hu up to Mon lug mgo steng, which includes bsNyal stod smad, Gyu shul, Lo ro dkar nag, Byar po, the *chung ba* [part] within g.Ye che ba—now within sKo 'ja'—and g.Ye chung, are our own [Phag mo gru pa lands]. Concerning Yar 'brog sgang gsum; the nomadic encampments roaming around Yar lha sham po; the nomadic encampments roaming around Khrab ye gangḍ leb; mChod rten gling; sTod tshan and the area of lCags rtse gri gu, butterlamps were offered in front of Thel ḍḍung khang bKra shis 'od 'bar on account of the wrongdoings of Sa [skya] rDo rje ḍpal. Even now when the Yar 'brog pa have a conversation, they say: “The old butter lamps have been consumed for the community”. Thang po che; 'Phyong rgyas; 'Phyos, all the way to Mon mGar; mKhar ltag ḍo bo; 'Ol sNa nam zha lnga in sPrags up to ḍḍong mar (spelled so) which is the eastern door to bSam yas; Shong bhe (p.111) and the two Tibetan 'brog at Pa shi in eastern lHo brag [were assigned to Hu la hu]”.

24. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.111 line 16–p.112 line 4): “sPyan snga rin po ches 'Bri gung gi bla ma ḍḍzad pa'i ḍus su/ Hor khriḍ chags nas/ Phag mo gru khri skor Hu la hu la gtogs pa/ lDan ma sgom brTson gyis spyi ḍpon ma pher ba'i ḍon la/ Thang po che dang 'Phyong rgyas ma tshun par sgom pa Shag rin ḍmag la 'byon pa'i zhu rten la/ sNa nam brgya skor la gtogs pa'i ḍkar po sa phul 'ḍug/ yang sgom pa'i ḍgung giḍ/ 'Ol kha 'ḍi sa mtha' phugs ḍḍan sa 'ḍi'i zhabs tog tu 'gyur ba 'ḍug paḍ/ khyed rang (p.112) zungḍ ḍgung 'ḍug pa la/ phyag btsal nas/ sgom pa rin po che/ nga rang gi mi ḍde ma 'khyongḍ par/ 'Ol kha nya ra gyis ḍgungḍ pa'i ḍgung ḍe mi 'byon pa zhu zhus 'ḍug/ lar na sgom brTson gyis spyi ḍpon ma pher/ sa ris ma chod/” “When sPyan snga rin po che was the *bla ma* of 'Bri khung, the Hor law was enforced (in 1250). The Phag mo gru *khri skor* was assigned to Hu la hu. Owing to the ineptitude of lDan ma sgom brTson as *spyi ḍpon*, Thang po che and 'Phyong rgyas were not added to it, but, thanks to the military intervention of sgom pa Shak (spelled so) rin, the latter offered the good lands attached to the sNa nam *brgya skor* [to Phag mo gru]. The *sgom pa* said: “Since 'Ol kha, which is the extreme border of the dominions, could render useful service to

despite the establishment of its twelve *gzhis kha* during the tenure of rDo rje dpal as *khri dpon* (1254–1266),²⁵ the Phag gru *khri skor* suffered, in general, the losses of g.Ye, bsNyal, Yar 'brog, Thang po che, 'Phyong rgyas, sPrags pa and sTe ra. Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan adds that this *de facto* reduced Phag mo gru, nominally a *khri skor*, to no more than a *stong skor* (ibid. p.113 lines 3–7).

One instance of this territorial curb was that bsNyal was assigned to Chag lo tsa ba's Te ra/ lTe'u ra through an imperial decree in silver letters, with the consequence that, previously under the Phag gru,²⁶ it passed under g.Ya' bzung pa jurisdiction.²⁷ The circumstances surrounding the

this *gdan sa*, you (p.112) should hold it". A plea was made, with folded hands, to decline what [the *sgom pa*] had said. [The plea] ran: "Precious *sgom pa*! Given that our community is not yet shaped definitively, [the 'Bri khung pa] should take care of 'Ol kha". sGom brTson again having been an inept *spyi dpon*, the [Phag gru] lands were not demarcated".

25. The twelve Phag mo gru pa *gzhis kha* are enumerated in the same passage of *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.112 lines 15–19) as Pho brang sgang, Tshong 'dus brag kha, sNe gdong, sNa mo, Ha la sgang, Thang po che gling smad, 'Phyos *gzhis kha*, Mon mgar bkra shis gdong, rGya thang, lCags rtse gri gu, mChod rten gling and mChad dgar.

rGya Bod yig tshang records the number of years rDo rje dpal was the Phag mo gru pa *khri dpon* (p.545 lines 12–17): "rGya yul la rdzangs pas/ gong ma yon mchod kyi thugs la btags nas/ Phag gru khri skor mi rabs kyi bar la 'jags pa'i bka' lung bzung po dam rtags dang bcas pa gnang/ yar slebs nas/ de 'phral/ shing pho stag lo la/ khri khang Yar lungs rNam rgyal dang sNe brtsigs/ khri dpon lo bcu gsum byas/", "[rDo rje dpal] was sent to China. Having established *yon mchod* with the emperor, he was given a patent and seal, which assigned the Phag gru *khri skor* to him [and] to his future generations. He returned upwards (to Tibet) [and], at that juncture, built the *khri khang* ("the *khri skor* seat") Yar lungs rNam rgyal and sNe [gdong] in the wood male tiger year (1254). He was *khri dpon* for thirteen years". Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (n.953).

His *khri dpon* years were from 1254 to 1266.

Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan has a differing opinion. He says that he was *khri dpon* for about fifteen or sixteen years (*Si tu bka' chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.112 lines 14–15).

26. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.116 line 20–p.117 line 3): "'Ja' sa la Bod gzu byas nas/ rgyal bu A rog che dang/ slob dpon Rin rgyal gyis mtshams pa byas/ Ra mo rtsang zhal g.Ya' bzung pa (p.117) shes pa/ bsNyal bya bar rang re Phag mo gru pa shes pa gyis/ chos kyi lugs la dpon slob/ khirms kyi lugs la/ Hu la hu bdag po gcig cing mthun par 'grogs zer ba byas dug/'"; "Then, an arbitration was made in Tibet, [issued] in the form of an edict, whereby rgyal bu A rog che and slob dpon Rin rgyal came to an agreement. Ra mo rtsang zhal was assigned to the g.Ya' bzung pa; (p.117) [the land] called bsNyal was assigned to us, the Phag mo gru pa. They said they were in accord that the *slob dpon*, in the religious realm, and Hu la hu, in the secular realm, were the lords".
27. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.115 line 11–p.116 line 1): "g.Ya' Phag gnyis kyang rim par ma 'jags pa'i don/ sngar rgyal bu Hu la hu'i dus su/ gYa' bzung pa 'di/ rang re'i stong skor gcig tu 'dug pa/ dpon rgan A bo dang/ dpon gZhon tshul gyis 'go byas dmag mams kyis Mon lug steng tshun gyi 'jags byas/ bsNyal smad Te ra'i 'khyams su/ phyugs lug stong phrag mang po bgrangs nas bsad 'dug/ chos rje Chag lo tsas/ dpal Phag mo gru pa Chu mig brgya rtsa'i mgo bo yin/ Dwags po bKa' brgyud kyi ma phyi yin/ kho bo yang babs la 'gro gsungs nas/ gser phye sder ma gang dang/ sde mig khyer nas babs la 'byon pas/ ggod gcod mams gzigs nas/ gShin rje'i ded dpon 'di mams kyi gseb tu/ kho bo sdod

removal of bsNyal from Phag gru's possessions help to date this event. *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* by Chos dpal dar dbyangs records the visit of this master to Sa skya that engendered the petition to the Mongols, placing it shortly before his death. After Chag lo tsa ba returned from Sa skya, he indeed had the first premonitions of his impending death, which took place in 1264.²⁸

The fact that the removal of bsNyal from the Phag mo gru pa's territory occurred when Se chen rgyal po was already sitting on the throne of China is indicative of his policy vis-à-vis the estates of his brother Hu la hu in dBus. Upon seizing the throne in iron monkey 1260, he adopted the strategy of letting Hu la hu keep his estates in lHo kha but, at the same time, he undermined his control. *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* (p.116 lines 2–15) recounts the events that led to the creation of the g.Ya' bzang *khri skor*, sanctioned by Se chen rgyal po, at the expense of Phag mo gru, and the subsequent extension of the former's lands.²⁹

mi nus gsungs nas Sa skyar byon/ gong du zhu ba btangs bas/ dngul yig dang 'ja' sa byin nas/ bsNyal smad lDing bzhi'i (p.116) sa cha/ rang re'i khri skor nas phar bcad 'dug/'"; "The reason for the progressively unsettled [relationship] between the g.Ya [and the] Phag, two in all, are [manifold]. Earlier, during the time of rgyal bu Hu la hu, these g.Ya' bzang pa were a *stong dkor* of ourselves [the Phag mo gru pa]. Troops were deployed up to Mon lug mgo steng, headed by dpon rgan A bo and dpon gZhon tshul. Roaming around bsNyal smad Te ra, cattle heads numbering many thousands were killed by them. Chos rje Chag lo tsha (spelled so) said: "The dpal Phag mo gru pa are the head of Chu mig brgya rtsa. This is typical of the Dwags po bKa' bgyud pa. Under [these] circumstances [affecting] me, I leave". Under [these] circumstances he left, taking along dishes of gold dust and keys. After he said: "Having witnessed this slaughtering, it is not possible for me to stay in the midst of the emissaries of gShin rje", he left for Sa skya. A petition was sent to the imperial court. A silver letter and a 'ja'sa came [in return]. The area of lDing bzhi in bsNyal smad (p.116) was expropriated from our *khri skor*".

28. Chos dpal dar dbyangs, *Chag lo tsa ba'i rnam thar* (p.99 line 3): "De nas Sa skya byon/'"; "[Chag lo tsa ba] then went to Sa skya".

Ibid. (p.99 lines 8–13): "dPon chen Shākya bzang po dang/ bla ma Shar pas bsnyen bkur rgya snoms pa dzad cing/ Sa skyar bzhugs par zhus pa la/ khams bzang na da gzod 'ong bar zhu/ da res gNyal du ci nas kyang 'gro gsungs nas/ su'i ngo la'ang ma bzhugs par/ gdan sa lTe'u rar byon nas kyang chos 'khor mdzad/ nye gnas dKon mchog dpal gyis bsags pa'i bdog pa thams cad sbong dag mdzad/ de ston pa cho rgyal gyis btang ba la rin po che'i sdeng ma rang yang sum brgya btang/ de ltar brtson pa mdzad pa ni sku mya ngan las 'das (p.100) bar bzhed//"; "dPon chen Shākya bzang po and bla ma Shar pa gave him an extensive reception and asked him to stay in Sa skya, to which he replied: "I have requested to pass now to a higher realm. I must go to gNyal for a while". Without stopping at anyone's [place], he went to gdan sa lTe'u ra and gave a course of teachings. He handed over all the wealth he had accumulated through nye gnas dKon mchog dpal. He gave away 300 precious *sdeng ma* (?) sent [to him] by the *ston pa chos rgyal*. Performing endeavours likewise, (p.100) he wished to pass away".

29. *Si tu bka' chems* (*Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.116 lines 2–17): "De rjes bsNyal cha bar yang sngar bcad rang re shes par 'dug na'ang/ rgyal bu Hu la hu mngags pa'i yul srung dpon po Go go che'i rgyud pa mKhar ldan pa 'di pa/ rus pa Bhi rin/ rgyal bu'i res tshan bzhi'i gcig gi rgan par 'dug/ rang re la yul srung dgos par byung nas/ rgyal bu'i drung du/ gser yig pa su byung yang/ pus mo mi 'dzugs shing/

This policy of curtailing the Phag mo gru pa territories under Hu la hu's sovereignty was still being pursued during the time of the *chags sdang* controversy at gDan sa mthil.³⁰ This state

gral 'gor sdod pa'i yul srung zhig zhu zhus pas/ Go go che 'ror chug gsung ba'i lung byon pa/ grangs can bcu gnyis dang bcas pa brdzangs/ de Se chen rgyal po gsan nas/ Go go che theg pa'i sa cha yod dam gsungs bya ba 'dug/ g.Ya' bzang pa'i sar lo rgyags sdud pa dang/ khirms gcod la btang 'dug pa/ g.Ya' bzang pas mgo bskor nas/ Mon sgom rtsa ba Tshul 'bar 'od dang/ 'Bum khrid 'od dang/ khong nams gros byas nas gong du zhu ba log par btang nas/ Se chen rgyal po'i 'ja' sas/ g.Ya' bzang pa zur du phye 'dug/ rting la rang res/ zhu ba po btang pas/ Se chen ryal po'i 'ja' sas/ sPrel la thur bcad rang res shes su chug/'"; "Later, despite the share [of lands], earlier allocated up to bsNyal, having been assigned to ourselves, the mKhar ldan pa, the lineage of Go go che belonging to the Bhi rin clan, were the senior most of the four groups [appointed] in turn [by] the *rgyal bu* to be the chieftains [and] administrators of the lands entrusted by rgyal bu Hu la hu. When the need arose to have administrators of our own lands, [and] even though a *gser yig pa* went in the presence of the *rgyal bu*, [the g.Ya' bzang pa] pleaded, without kneeling down, to be [appointed] the front-row sitting guardians of the land. [Hu la hu] said: "I allow Go go che to go [to the Phag mo gru lands as *yul srung*]", and issued an order [in his favour], twelve being the number [of the copies] which he sent out. Having received it, Se chen rgyal po asked: "Should it be there a land with Go go che in its support?". The g.Ya' bzang pa *yul srung*-s were acting as translators for dpon po Go go che. The g.Ya' bzang pa deceived [him, saying that] a judgement had been made against the collection [by the Phag mo gru pa] of yearly crops in the land of the g.Ya' bzang pa. Mon sgom rtsa ba Tshul 'bar 'od and 'Bum khrid 'od, [belonging to] the family of the paternal uncle (i.e. g.Ya' bzang Chos kyi smon lam (1169–1233) from the sNubs clan), held a consultation and sent a counter-petition to the imperial court. Through a 'ja' sa of Se chen rgyal po, the g.Ya' bzang pa were constituted into a separate [*khri skor*].

Later, we ourselves sent a petitioner and, through a 'ja' sa of Se chen rgyal po, the assignment to ourselves of the [lands] up to sPrel la was granted".

30. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.116 line 20–p.117 line 11): "rGyal bu A rog che dang/ slob dpon Rin rgyal gyis mtshams pa byas/ Ra mo rtsang zhal g.Ya' bzang pa (p.117) shes pa/ bsNyal bya bar rang re Phag mo gru pa shes pa gyis/ chos kyi lugs la dpon slob/ khirms kyi lugs la/ Hu la hu bdag po gcig cing mthun par 'grogs zer ba byas 'dug pas/ lo sbrel du 'jags pa byung 'dug na'ang/ rang re tshang yang res ban dhe nang gi sPu lTol chags sdang byas nas nang ma 'cham/ res bla dpon ma 'cham nas nang zhig pa'i don la/ g.Ya' bzang pas glags che byas nas/ Yar stod dud rnying pa'i steng nas/ dud nyis brgya g.Ya' bzang pa shes su chug gsung ba'i 'ja' sa blangs 'dug pas/ gri tshes phar shor 'dug cing/ da lta yar bcad du g.Ya' bzang pa dang 'khrug rtsod dgos pa'i don 'dir 'dug/ rting la dpon rDo rje dpal de/ lo bcu tsam gyis sku tshe ring na/ sde 'di gtan 'jags shig yong bar 'dug na'ang/ bsod nams la ma shom par gshegs 'dug/'"; "The idea of rgyal bu A rog che, who acted as the Tibet mediator on the basis of the [the above mentioned second] 'ja' sa, and slob dpon Rin rgyal was that Ra mo rtsang zhal should be assigned to the g.Ya' bzang pa (p.117) and bsNyal should be assigned to ourselves, the Phag mo gru pa. They said that the *slob dpon*, [representing] the religious system, and the supreme lord Hu la hu, [representing] the legal system, were in agreement [on this]. For two consecutive years this settlement stood, but the *chags sdang* ("love and hate") [controversy] sometimes prevailed among the monks in our own house (lit. "nest"), subdivided into sPu [and] lTol (spelled so). There was internal discord. The *bla* [and the] *dpon* sometimes had internal disputes, and the g.Ya' bzang pa exploited this great opportunity. A 'ja' sa was issued saying that the assignment of

of affairs, in the long run, led Hu la hu and the 'Bri gung pa to undertake their joint military campaign of 1285 against Sa skya.

Tragedy consumed

Retaliation by the Sa skya pa threatened the 'Bri gung pa when Se chen rgyal po's Mongols intervened directly in the imbroglio by activating The mur bho ga's army.³¹ The intervention of the Sa skya/Se chen rgyal po alliance in the affairs of Phag mo gru and 'Bri gung boded ill for the Il-Khanid estates in Central Tibet.³²

That fate had reserved different ordeals for the 'Bri gung pa and Phag mo gru pa as a consequence of the different stances eventually adopted by them. This had to do with the different attitudes of their lay chieftains. sGom pa Shag rin, famous for his involvement in the defense of dBus from the attack against 'Bri gung by rDor ta (suggestively termed rDor ta nag po in the literature) in iron rat 1240,³³ was responsible for formulating a confrontational

200 households to the g.Ya' bzang pa was allowed beyond the old Yar stod households [already given to them]. With sabres rattling, [these households] wandered to and fro. At present, they are allocated in the above mentioned manner, which is reason for dispute with the g.Ya' bzang pa. Subsequently, dpon rDo rje dpal gave stability to this community for about ten years and died in great simplicity, owing to his merit".

31. Another episode of war between the Sa skya pa and 'Bri gung pa with Mongol involvement took place in those years. Among several historical inconsistencies, A mes zhabs in the text *rDor nag chos skor byung tshul* (p.374 line 3–p.377 line 5) records a battle fought between the two powerhouses at dPal mo dpal thang in sPo rong, in which armies allied to the two competing Mongol parties participated. The 'Bri gung pa were routed. On this see Everding's "The Mongol States and Their Struggle for Dominance Over Tibet in the 13th Century" (p.120) (no reference of *rDor nag chos skor byung tshul* in his bibliography). Everding dates the event to 1287 (ibid. p.124). The passage mistakenly states that the chieftain of the sTod Hor troops was Khaidu (1236–1301), thus allowing the interpretation—wrong in my view—that the allies of the 'Bri gung pa were the Chagatai rather than the Il-Khanid.
32. Byang chub gling pa, a 'Bri gung pa who left a mark in the history of the school given his extraordinary achievements, moved to Khams to continue his lifetime engagements when he realised that its head monastery was going to be attacked by the Yuan-Sa skya alliance with a massive military force. *lHo rong chos 'byung* (*Byang chub gling pa 'i rnam thar* p.424 lines 1–4) tells: "De nas Byang gi Phru gtsug du dgon pa mdzad nas bshugs pa'i tshe/ mDo smad pa rnam kyis 'bul skyes sogs kyis bsnyen bkur dpag tu med pa byung nas 'Bri gung thel gyi gdan sa la gnod kyis dogs nas Khams su 'byon par bzhed/"; "Then, while staying at Byang gi Phru gtsug to buid [its] *dgon pa*, innumerable [acts] of reverence came to [Byang chub gling pa] such as offerings by the mDo smad people. Fearing that gdas of 'Bri gung thel would be harmed he accepted to leave for Khams".
33. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.112 lines 6–8): "Dor rtog ces pa gdug rtsub can byung pas/ ma gnod kyang dpon sgom pa Shag rin khrid par brtsams pa na rdo char phab te btul/"; "When the savage Dor rtog appeared, dpon sgom Shag rin took the initiative. He subdued [the Mongols] with a rain of stones even before they could cause damage [to 'Bri gung]".

policy vis-à-vis the Sa skya pa that was adopted by his successors to the *sgom pa* post during the decades prior to the *gling log*.³⁴ Shag rin's policy was foolhardy enough to envisage the subjugation of Sa skya.

As for what induced the 'Bri gung pa, a school historically viewed with particular hostility by the Mongol emperor of China, to pursue the disastrous political choice of confronting the Sa skya pa, I imagine they must have been emboldened by the support of the sTod Hor and

However, he was taken prisoner and was on the verge of being executed were it not for sPyan snga rin po che (1175–1255) who convinced Dor ta to spare his life (see *Si tu bka'chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.109 lines 5–11).

Another Mongol invasion in those years was the campaign headed by Hor Du mur, which did not cause major havoc. It was followed by another one, which led undescribed bandits to take advantage of the situation. *Sangs rgyas yar byon gyi rnam thar* in *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.498 line 11–p.499 line 4) reads: “Hor Du mur dBus su byon rDol nas mi thams cad gsha' lug ra bar tshud ltar 'bros sa yar med par 'jigs shing skrag pa'i tshe Zhang btsun Hor de yang mi yin te 'ong nor khyer la mdun du song/ gtam kyis khrol/ gsungs pa ltar byas/ rin po che byams pa'i ting nge 'dzin su bzhugs/ gsol 'debs bzhi gsogs/ Phas rgol dpung bcom zhes bya ba de mdzad pas Hor gyi gnod sems zhi nas Zhang btsun gyis Hor la skyel ma thub pa byung/ yang Hor gyi sar byon pa'i tshe mi mang po gsod rtsis byed pa'i srog kyang phul/ yang chags la na jag pa byung ba la dge 'dun ra mda' 'gro bar zhus pas nang nyon mongs pa'i dgra 'thul na phyi'i dgra 'thul ba chos nyid yin/ dge (p.499) 'dun nam chos spyod gyis dang/ rang gzhan gyi mi mthun pa'i phyogs thams cad zhi nas 'ongs gsungs pa'i thams cad Sangs rgyas sar byon/ dbra zun mnyam phyogs cha dang bral zhes pa'i snyan pas phyogs thams cad du khyab pas rang bzhin gyis thams cad bde//”, “After Hor Du mur advanced into dBus, all the rDol people down to sheep to be slaughtered and goats did not have a place where to escape. In the time of fear and terror, it was conceivable to Zhang btsun that this Hor still was a human being. He went in his presence carrying valuables. He gave him explanations by means of legends. He acted as promised. The *rin po che* stood in meditative absorption [focused] on compassion and accumulated four prayers. He performed *Phas rgol dpung bcom* (“subjugation of the enemy's army”). Since he calmed the Hor's harm, it happened that Zhang btsun was able to see off the Hor. Owing to this effective approach, it happened that our own land could remain in peace. Again, when the Hor came to the land (i.e. dBus), he offered his life [in exchange], considering that many people would die. Bandits (*jag pa*), too, came, who were connected (*chags la*) with them (i.e. the Hor). [Zhang btsun] asked the monks that he knew [they wanted] to leave, saying: “In the case of invading enemies, who [cause] inner agitation, the nature of these enemies from outside is to spread out [fear]. The monks must (p.499) practice the teachings. People in disagreement will come from every side, our own or someone else's”. Everyone went on the path of Sangs rgyas. Given the fame that he was free from bias, for he transcended [the difference] between enemy and friend, [this attitude] spread in every direction and, owing to this disposition, everyone was in peace”.

Hor Du mur's campaign took place between fire monkey 1236 when Sangs rgyas yar byon was thirty-four years old (*IHo rong chos 'byung* p.495 line 13) and wood dragon 1244 when he was aged forty-two (ibid. p.500 line 21).

34. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (IHa sa ed. p.123 lines 7–13): “Jo sNubs pa nyid dgung lo re drug pa sa byi lo la/ sngon sgom pa Shag rin gyis blon po Sa chen rDor dpal/ Ga ma rDo se sogs kyis Bod shing sgo can Shag rin shes zer nas mnga' 'bangs su 'jug bzhed

their own two earlier Pyrrhic victories. They amounted to the 1285 military action led by sgom pa Kun rdor Rin chen and the 1289 repulsion of the Brag sle ba'i *kha mchu*.

The Phag mo gru pa *khri dpon*, Yar 'brog pa Byang gzhon, was foresighted enough to come to terms with the Sa skya pa. Despite the contrasts of the previous years and the final blow in 1290 inflicted upon his people's allies, he managed to convince Sa skya dpon chen Ang len to spare the Phag mo gru pa after 'Bri gung was burnt down.³⁵ The Phag mo gru pa cruised

kyi rkyen gyis sgom pa gsum gyi ring Sa skya'i dpon chen rim pa dang ma mthun pa'i rgyus/ mda' lngas snying la zin pa'i mi ngan 'ga' zhig gis gong ma Se chen rgyal po'i snyan du phra ma bcug/"; "In earth rat 1288, when Jo sNubs was sixty-six years old, owing to the fact that, in earlier times, sgom pa Shag rin had planned to reduce the ministers Sa chen rDor dpal and Ga ma rDo se (spelled so), who used to define Shag rin as "the one controlling the wooden doors of Tibet", to the status of subjects, three consecutive *sgom pa* and the Sa skya *dpon chen*-s who came in succession were not in harmony. Hence, a few bad men, their mind possessed by the five arrows, instilled calumny into the ears of the emperor Se chen".

These three Sa skya dpon chen were 'Phan yul ba dpon chen gZhon dbang, Shab Bang mo zhu pa Byang rdor and Gro khud pa Ag len. The same fragmentary Sa skya pa text of n.17 above that is missing the title, colophon and many folios has a section enumerating the Sa skya *dpon chen*-s. About those three the text (ibid. f.57a lines 4–7) says: "Di yi ring la/ dbye gsal chen mo dang/ dBus gTsang gi khrims kyi zhib cha dpal che ba byas/ de rjes Shab Bang mo zhu pa Byang rdor dpon chen byas/ 'di'i ring la g. Yu thog chen mo byas/ de rjes Gro khud pa Ag len/ 'di'i ngo la Sa skya'i lcags ri phyi ma dang/ dPon po ri'i lcags ri/ lHa khang chen mo'i spen bad 'khor lo phubs su yong dang/ gan ji ra Nyi ma snying po phyogs bzhir lcags thag chen po bzhis rgyangs pa dang/ seng ge bubs 'degs pa'i ka ba brgya dang bcas pa grub/ dpon chen 'di gsum gyi ring la 'Bri gung pa'i yon bdag sTod Hor dang 'thab/"; "Thereafter during his (i.e. dpon chen gZhon dbang's) rule, dBus 'Phan yul ba dpon chen gZhon dbang made clear and major distinctions, thus codifying in detail most laws of dBus gTsang. Thereafter Shab Bang mo zhu pa Byang rdor was the *dpon chen*. During his rule he built g. Yu thog chen mo. Thereafter during the rule of Gro khud pa Ag len, the external boundary wall of Sa skya, the dPon po ri boundary wall, the wooden balustrade all around lHa khang chen mo, its 'gan ji ra-s Nyi ma snying po ("essence of the sun") in the four directions with iron chains also extending in the four directions and 100 protruding lions were completed. During their tenure, these three *dpon chen* fought against the sTod Hor, the allies of the 'Bri khung pa".

35. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 17–21): "De 'das nas de'i nu bo gZhon nu rgyal mtshan gyis byas/ de 'das rting khong gi dbon po sKya Yar 'brog pa Byang gzhon khri dpon byas/ skabs der Sa 'Bri 'khrugs pa la/ Byang gzhon gyis Sa skya pa gang gsung byas/ dpon chen Ag len gyis Phag gru bsreg par byung pa Byang gzhon gyis zhus pas tshengs/"; "After the death of this one (the Phag mo gru pa khri dpon rDo rje dpal), his younger brother gZhon nu rgyal mtshan was [the *khri dpon*]. After the latter's death, his paternal nephew sKya Yar 'brog pa Byang gzhon was the [Phag mo gru] *khri dpon*. During his rule, the Sa [skya] 'Bri [gung] conflict having broken out, he held parleys with the Sa skya pa in every possible way. dPon chen Ang len, who was [planning] to burn Phag gru (i.e. gDan sa mthil?), was satisfied with Byang gzhon's plea".

This passage is significant in manifold ways. On the verge of the attack against 'Bri gung, the bKa' brgyud pa camp definitely realised that the Yuan/Sa skya pa forces could not be defeated. The Phag mo gru pa *khri dpon* of the day, Byang rin, strove hard to convince dpon chen Ang len to spare

through the crisis and the following period relatively unaffected,³⁶ despite the sudden death of Byang gzhon,³⁷ the *khri dpon* who had to accept Sa skya's supremacy.

Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan dates the antecedents to the *gling log* to earth rat 1288 rather than 1289, unlike *Deb ther dmar po* does (see above n.34).³⁸ Two events justify this attribution. In 1288 the 'Bri gung pa policy aiming at the control of Tibet at the expense of the Sa skya pa was reported to Se chen rgyal po. The emperor came to realise that the issue of the control of the Phag mo gru pa abbatial throne and estates had escalated to an open threat to Yuan authority over Tibet, made worse by the campaigns of the sTod Hor/'Bri gung pa alliance. This is why he took the initiative and gathered an army to deal with the situation. The composition of this army—it comprised Mongols and Khams pa warriors—shows that, despite Khams traditionally being a stronghold of the bKa' brgyud pa, the Yuan/Sa skya pa

the Phag mo gru pa, and he was able to do so. His death occurring after the conflict between the Sa skya pa and 'Bri gung pa broke out in earnest, leading to its epilogue in 1290, may have been politically motivated, but Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje does not say more on this topic.

36. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 lines 9–12): “Phag gru pa rang la skyon cher ma byung zHING/ phis gcung rGya bos bla dpon sbrel nas mdzad/ de grongs nas/ de'i slob dpon rin po che Grags pa rgyal mtshan sa pho khyi la gdan sar bskos/”; “No major disaster befell the Phag gru pa themselves. Later gcung rGya bo combined the roles of *bla* [ma and] *dpon* [in his person]. After his death, his *slob dpon*, rin po che Grags pa rgyal mtshan, was appointed *gdan sa* in earth male dog 1298 (sic for iron male dog 1310)”.
37. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.118 lines 11–17): “De'i rjes la Yar 'brog chu rgyud mKhar pa'i Byang gzhon rin po che'i gsol ja ba yin pa/ gong du mjal 'phrad la btang nas/ Se chen rgyal po'i 'ja' sas/ khri dpon la bskos 'dug na'ang/ chang nag gi srol gtod/ sNe gdong zhol du bco bryad khang par/ Khri chung pa Grags pa 'od zer gyi nu bo/ Byang gzhon gyi gzims g.yog pa gcig gi nag mo sras mo sGrol ma zer ba zhig gi thad du phyin pas/ Grags pa 'od zer gyi nu bos/ mgo la ral gris bryab nas bsad 'dug/ lag mar ba brosh shor dug/”; “Thereafter mKhar pa'i Byang gzhon, [haling] from the shores of Yar 'brog [mtsho] and the teamen of the *rin po che*, was sent to the court to meet [the emperor]. He was appointed *khri dpon* through a '*ja'sa* [issued by] Se chen rgyal po. He steered his life towards *chang* and women. At bCo bryad khang ba, situated at the foot of sNe gdong, Khri chung pa Grags pa 'od zer's younger brother became close to sGrol ma, the daughter of Nag mo, a bedroom assistant of Byang gzhon. Grags pa 'od zer's younger brother killed [Byang gzhon?], beheading him with a sword, and ran away, his hands stained with blood”.
38. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung pa'i gser 'phreng* (p.125 lines 9–12): “dGung lo becu gcig pa la gong du smos pa ltar/ gling log byung ste/ rje nyid sku mched dang bcas pa jo sNubs pas Kong por gdan drangs lo gsum bar bzhugs/”; “As said above, the *gling log* occurred when [bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] was eleven years old (i.e. in 1288), during Jo sNubs pa rDo rje ye shes's five-year rule as ['Bri gung] *gdan sa*. Jo sNubs took the two brothers to Kong po and they stayed there for three years (1288–1291)”.

The date 1288 for the antecedents to the *gling log* is confirmed by a statement in the biography of the same source dedicated to bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen's younger brother, Nyer bryad pa rDo rje rgyal po (1284–1350), when it says that first signs of the *gling log* broke out when the latter was five years old (ibid. p.128 lines 22–23).

alliance enjoyed widespread favour in Eastern Tibet during the period. The second event was the consequence of the first one. Taking the young bCu gnyis pa rin po che rDo rje rin chen to Kong po in the same year (1288) in order to avoid threats to his safety was an act acknowledging that the imbroglio had escalated to a point of no return.

I have no literary evidence to explain why it took from 1288 to 1290 for the dispatched army to lay siege to 'Bri gung. It may be that putting together this army, which could also count on Sa skya pa troops led by Ang len, was a slow process or that it took time for the military campaign to make strategic and territorial gains in order to open its way to 'Bri gung and force the defence of its temples.

The situation must have worsened sensibly in those circumstances. The threat posed by the 'Bri gung/sTod Hor alliance must have been particularly disruptive around that fatal year 1290 or soon thereafter because the *'jam lam*—the route along which the postal relay service between China and Tibet ran, a backbone of the Yuan organisation—was interrupted.³⁹

Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan mentions the names of the chieftains of the army from China and Bar Khams under the command of The mur bho ga and dpon chen Ang len, sent to destroy 'Bri gung.⁴⁰ They were dmag dpon A ye Shakya rgyal mtshan, 'Gru Thar pa rgyal mtshan, Go 'jo bla ma rGyal mtshan and Gling bSod nams rgyal mtshan, hence mostly Khams pa chieftains.⁴¹ The reference to the provenance of the army—China and

39. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.1349 lines 10–12): “Zhal ngo Kong por byon/ sgom pa dBon pos sTod Hor drangs/ 'jam lam bcad pas Sa skya pa'i ti shri Grags 'od pas zhus nas gong mas gngang spyin bdag med mdzad nas tshags su bcug/ dgung lo bcu gum pa la khirir phebs/”; “The *zhal ngo* (i.e. bCu gnyis pa rin po che rDo rje rin chen (1278–1315)) fled to Kong po. sGom pa dBon po called in the sTod Hor. Despite the *'jam lam* being interrupted, the emperor, upon the request of the Sa skya pa *ti shri* Grags [pa] 'od [zer], gave him uncountable gifts, which were put aside for future [use] (*tshags su bcug*). At the age of thirteen (1290), [bCu gnyis pa rin po che rDo rje rin chen] ascended the abbatial throne [of 'Bri gung]”.

40. Dung dkar rin po che mentions that the allied 'Bri gung pa and sTod Hor forces, which went on an offensive against Sa skya in 1285, numbered 90,000. Judging from the outcome of the 1290 attack upon 'Bri gung, the sTod Hor and 'Bri gung pa alliance was overwhelmed, thus implying that the pro-Sa skya alliance would have counted on an even larger army. As said in the next note, Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan's *'Bri gung gser phreng* indeed says that the anti-'Bri gung army was huge. It relied on the reinforcement of several detachment of Khams pa warriors. The allied forces put together by Sa skya and the Yuan military stationed in Tibet, perhaps availing of the participation of other dBus gTsang *khri skor*-s, must have fielded a bigger army than the one the sTod Hor had brought in support of 'Bri gung in 1285, unless the latter Mongols had withdrawn some assistance.

41. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (lHa sa ed. p.123 lines 11–17): “mDa' lngas snying la zin pa'i mi ngan 'ga' zhig gis gong ma Se chen rgyal po'i snyan du phra ma bcug pa la brten/ gong ma'i bkas bskul te/ rGya nag dang/ Bar Khams sogs kyi dmag mi shin tu mang pa/ dmag dpon A ye Sha kya rgyal mtshan/ 'Gru Thar pa rgyal mtshan/ Go 'jo bla ma rGyal mtshan/ Gling pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan te bzhis mgo byas dpung che bar lhags/”; “Owing to this, a few bad men, whose hearts were seized by the five arrows, instilled calumny into the ears of Se chen rgyal

Bar Khams)—elucidates where on the plateau The mur bho ga posted his warriors to guard Mongol and Sa skya pa interests.

The death toll in the 'Bri gung massacre is given as 10,000, between monks and laymen.⁴² This is a huge number of casualties in view of the fact that Mongol raids did not spare anyone. rGyal bu Rin chen, the chieftain of the sTod Hor defending 'Bri gung, was taken prisoner. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan (ibid. p.123 lines 17–24) gives an inventory of the edifices and the most important receptacles of the three bodies destroyed during the devastation: primarily the buildings constructed by sKyob pa 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), spyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas (1175–1255) and gCung rin po che (1210–1278, on the throne of 'Bri gung from 1255). For an indirect identification of what had been destroyed see below Addendum One.⁴³

po. Consequently, the emperor encouraged them with a decree. An extremely large number of army men from China and Bar Khams came, led by dmag dpon A ye Shakya rgyal mtshan, 'Gru Thar pa rgyal mtshan, Go 'jo bla ma rGyal mtshan and Gling bSod nams rgyal mtshan, four in all, [at the head of] a huge army”.

42. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (IHa sa ed. p.123 line 22–p.124 line 2): “dGe 'dun mang po mthar byed kyi lto bar bcug pa na/ sa bcu'i dbang phyug chen po'i rigs dang/ gnas lugs kyi rtogs pa mngon du gyur pa'i dge' dun khri phrag lhag tsam ngang pa'i rgyal po 'dab (p.124) la brgyangs pa ltar/ chu 'phan ri rtser 'phur te mKha' spyod du gshegs so//”; “Many monks were stabbed in the stomach to kill them. Over 10,000 monks who belonged to the family of the great lord of the ten directions and had naturally, like the king of the swans (p.124) stretching his wings, attained spiritual realisations, were thrown into the river or shoved down from the mountain top, and thus sent to mKha' spyod”.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.1349 lines 8–9) repeats the same expression to mention the slaughtering of this huge number of people, defining it as an aphorism: “'Phur nas chu 'phan gyi ri rtser bab cing mKha' spyod du song ba'ang khri phrag tsam byung bar grags//”; “A proverb says: “[The Hor] landed flying over the top of the Chu 'phan mountain and some 10,000 people went to mKha' spyod”.

The last part of n.552 in *Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang 'phrin las's* commentary to *Deb ther dmar po* (ibid p.436 lines 14–19) deals with the unfolding of the *gling log*: “De nas lo lnga song ba rab byung lnga pa'i lcags stag gi lo spyi lo 1290 lor/ (Sa skya'i 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan gyi khri lo bzhi pa) Sa skya'i dpon chen Ag len Yon rgyal rabs kyi gong ma Hu bi li Se chen han gyi bu The'i mur bho khas sne khrid pa'i dmag dpung dang mnyam du gTsang dmag phon chen po dang bcas te 'Bri gung du dmag drangs/ 'Bri gung mthil lha khang chen mor mer bsregs/ gra pa dang mi skya bdoms pa'i grangs chig khri lhag tsam bsad//”; “Then five years later in iron tiger 1290 of the fifth *rab byung* (corresponding to the fourth regnal year of 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan of Sa skya), Sa skya dpon chen Ag len, together with the troops led by The'i mur bho kha, the son (sic for grandson) of Hu bi li Se chen han, the emperor of the Yuan dynasty, brought a huge army against 'Bri gung. The *lha khang* of 'Bri gung mthil was burned down. Over 10,000, between monks and laymen, were killed”.

43. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (IHa sa ed. p.123 lines 17–22): “Gling rin po che sKyob pas bzhengs pa bkra shis sgo mang dang gsum bsam gyis mi khyab pa/ gong smos gCung rin po ches bzhengs pa'i lHa khang chen mo lha chen bco brgyad/ sgo mang bdun sogs rten grangs las 'das pa nams Me lha'i dga' ston du byas//”; “They (i.e. the Hor) held a festival for

The military campaign that had the destruction of 'Bri gung as its major consequence was deeper and wider ranging than its most obvious and well known outcome. dPon chen Ang len went all the way to the areas south and south-east of 'Bri gung to eradicate pro-'Bri gung resistance. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.1420 lines 1–2) says that his army took Dwags po and Kong po, E, gNyal, Lo ro, lHo kha, Brag dkar and Yar rgyab.

One wonders how the next 'Bri gung abbot, the young bCu gnyis pa rin po che rDo rje rin chen, who had sought sanctuary in Kong po with the help of Jo sNubs rin po che rDo rje ye shes (see above), the acting *mkhan po* of 'Bri gung during bCu gnyis pa's minority, managed not to suffer the consequences of the presence of Ang len's Hor troops in the same region.⁴⁴

There is one case of internecine disagreement in the ranks of the Sa skya pa and their sympathisers during the *gling log*. It occurred in the lands to the south of 'Bri gung. In the continuation of the offensive in these territories, dpon chen Ang len captured the mighty Tshal pa *khri dpon*, dGa' bde dpal,⁴⁵ a loyalist of the Mongols of China like his predecessors. It is not clear why he was arrested. A dialogue in *Gung thang gi dkar chag* between Se chen rgyal po and dGa' bde upon his rehabilitation by the emperor elucidate the circumstances surrounding his capture at some length, attributing to 'Dam pa ri pa, a little known figure responsible for

Me lha (i.e. the god of fire) that went beyond [the destruction of] innumerable receptacles, such as the *bkra shis sgo mang* constructed by Gling rin po che sKyob pa ('Jig rten mgon po); the inconceivable *bkra shis sgo mang* and receptacles of the three bodies made by his nephew spyang snga Grags [pa] 'byung [gnas]; the eighteen great deities of lHa khang chen mo constructed by gCung rin po che; and seven *sgo mang*'.

mKhas pa'i dga' ston (p.1349 line 8): "sGo mang bcu gsum sogs lHa khang chen mo dang Gling bsregs//"; "lHa khang chen mo and Gling, along with thirteen *sgo mang*, were burnt down".

44. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (lHa sa ed. p.124 lines 2–5): "De'i tshel/ jo sNubs chen po nyid kyis/ bCu gnyis pa rin po che sku mched dang/ 'Bri gung gi nang rten khyad par du 'phags pa 'ga' zhig dang bcas spyang drangs te Kong po'i phyogs su phebs nas/ nyid kyis dgung lo don gcig pa chu sprul lor sku gshegs so//"; "At that time, Jo sNubs chen po himself, taking along bCu gnyis pa rin po che, the latter's brother and a few of the most sacred receptacles of 'Bri gung, escaped to Kong po. [Jo sNubs] died in water snake 1293, aged seventy-one".

Ibid. (lHa sa ed. p.125 lines 10–12): "dGung lo bcu gcig pa la gong du smos pa ltar/ gling log byung te/ rje nyid sku mched dang bcas pa jo sNubs pas Kong por gdan drangs lo gsum bar bzhugs//"; "As mentioned above, the *gling log* broke out when [bCu gnyis pa rin po che was] aged eleven. Jo sNubs took the *rje* and his brother to Kong po, and they stayed there for three years".

45. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.1420 lines 1–3): "Phyi lo lcags yos la Dwags Kong la Hor dmag byas Tshal pa dGa' bde brtson du shor/ 'di phyin Hor dmag che ba kho na sa byung snang na'an bar skabs de thams cad du Bod thams cad sdug bsngal gyi rgya mtsho rdol bar snang//"; "The next year, iron hare 1291, the troops of the Hor intruded up to Dwags [po and] Kong [po], and Tshal pa dGa' bde was dragged to prison. From then on, it seems that not only large Mongol armies came. However, during the intermediate period in the whole of Tibet, everywhere, the ocean of sorrow overflow".

having inflamed Sam gha against dGa' bde dpal.⁴⁶ In my article “Grub chen U rgyan pa and the Mongols of China” I have suggested a possible reason that led to the arrest of dGa' bde. It depended on dGa' bde's closeness to dpon chen Kun dga' bzang po, who had been eliminated under the accusation that he had murdered 'gro mgon 'Phags pa.

The Phag mo gru pa had to pay a price after dpon chen Ang len decided to spare them in the aftermath of the *gling log*, thanks to the prudence exercised by the Phag mo gru pa *khri dpon* Byang gzhon. This price was not imposed by Ang len but by The mur bho ga. *Deb ther dmar po* says that gZhon nu yon tan, a subsequent Phag gru *khri dpon*, was forced to become a military attendant answerable to this Mongol prince.⁴⁷ His discomfort in handling matters

46. *Gung thang dkar chag* (see Sørensen-Hazod, *Rulers of the Celestial Plain* p.187–189) talks about the animosity that Sam gha nurtured for Tshal pa dGa' bde dpal owing to the latter's closeness to Kun dga' bzang po, the Sa skya *dpon chen* executed by the former years before. It attributes to 'Dam ri pa the wicked treatment meted out by Sam gha to dGa' bde. The text says that 'Dam ri pa inflamed a Tibetan officer in the service of the Mongols of China against the Tshal pa nobleman. Given the Tshal pa origin of the text, the account is written in praise of dGa' bde, with the Tshal pa officer's deportation for trial in China being described—as Sørensen and Hazod point out—as a journey to the imperial court. Conversely, Sam gha is depicted in negative terms. The account stresses that dGa' bde's presence at court, where he was rehabilitated, made the situation untenable for Sam gha, who was eventually disgraced and put to death.

As proved by the evidence of *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (see the note immediately above), the tiger year of *Gung thang dkar chag*, during which the hostility between Sam gha and dGa' bde erupted in earnest, leading to the former's arrest, was in fact iron hare 1291, the year after the 'Bri gung *gling log*. Sørensen and Hazod identify this tiger year as 1278 in the text of their translation (*ibid.* p.187), but then have second thoughts, proposing 1290 in the accompanying footnote (*ibid.* n.452), but adding that this assessment is anyway inconclusive, which is not my view.

The 'Dam ri pa who was hostile to dGa' bde dpal cannot have been the 'Dam pa ri pa (1200–1263) who was an associate of lHa Rin chen rgyal po (1201–1270) and a figure of great charisma and authority. These latter two founded Gye re lha khang in dBus and Phag ri Rin chen sgang in mGos yul stod gsum, the land between Myang stod, Bhutan and the Indian frontier—in water hare 1243 (*Kha rag gNyos kyi gdung rabs* f.10a lines 4–6).

47. *Deb ther dmar po* (p.123 line 21–p.124 line 1): “Byang gzhon shi nas gZhon nu rgyal mtshan gyi tsha bo gZhon nu yon tan gyis khri dpon byas/ rgyal bu Thi mur sbo kha Bod du bzhugs pa'i dmag gi phyags phyi dang/ zhabs tog cung ma (p.124) grub/ phyi go ma chod//”; “After Byang gzhon died, gZhon nu yon tan, the maternal nephew of gZhon nu rgyal mtshan, was the *khri dpon*. He was an attendant to rGyal bu Thi mur sbo kha's (spelled so) troops stationed in Tibet and was able to render (p.124) no more than minor service [to the Phag mo gru pa]”.

It seems that the Phag mo gru pa, in order to save themselves from impending disaster, were obliged to change sides after the burning of 'Bri gung in 1290 and join the Yuan/Sa skya pa alliance inasmuch as their *khri dpon* of the day, gZhon nu yon tan, enrolled in the ranks of the Mongol troops stationed in Tibet. Kun dga' rdo rje says that this alignment with their previous enemies was helpful but only in a minimal way. That may have been the case for the Phag mo gru pa, but surely not for the 'Bri gung pa.

Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan points out gZhon nu yon tan's discomfort in accepting the sovereignty of Sa skya, possibly because he was a nephew of rDo rje dpal who had established the Phag mo gru pa as a political entity of its own. He says he had a troubled relationship with The mur

relating to the Phag mo gru pa under the sovereignty of Sa skya is palpable from the description of his rule given in *Si tu'i bka'chems*. He did not go out of his way to please The mur bho ga and was eventually deprived of the title of Phag gru *khri dpon*, being replaced by the abbot rGya bo Grags pa rin chen in 1299, who held the post of lay ruler of the Phag mo gru pa for twelve years until his own death.

bho ga. *Si tu bka'chems* (*Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.118 line 18–p.119 line 5) reads: “De rting dpon rDo rje dpal gyi tsha bo yin zer nas/ gZhon nu yon tan gyis khri dpon lo drug byas 'dug pa de/ chang nag gi dbang du song nas ma pher/ gdan sa 'di'i dgra byas/ thar ma'i gsol zhib zhing la rta brten pa/ gsol Zho ru ba 'phyag pa/ gDan sa thel la rgyal bu Thi mur bho ga'i rta gzan (p.119) gtong ba la sogs dran pa la lhag ma ma bzahag pa'i don la Ol ja du rgyal po dang/ bla ma Grags pa 'od zer gyi dus/ 'dir rgyal bu Thi mur bho ga dang/ dpon chen Legs pa dpal gyi drung du/ phag lo la/ rGya ma dang 'Phan yul Glang thang du/ zhi bar gshegs pas thug bsher mdzad/ gong du zhu ba la/ slob dpon Tshul mgon btang nas/ gong ma yon mchod kyis/ 'ja' sa bka' shog thugs la btags/ bla dpon lo bcu gnyis mdzad/”; “Thereafter, gZhon nu yon tan, the maternal nephew of dpon rDo rje dpal, was *khri dpon* for six years. He was useless, for he was under the spell of *chang* and women, and showed hostility towards this *gdan sa* (i.e. gDan sa mthil). He sent a detailed request to be freed [from Phag gru duties], accompanied by a gift of a horse. He relinquished taxation [authority] over the Zho ru ba together with this request. (p.119) Owing to the memory that remained [of his misdeeds], such as rgyal bu Thi mur bho ga's horse being allowed to be mishandled at gDan sa thel, during the time of Ol ja du rgyal po and bla ma Grags pa 'od zer, rgyal bu Thi mur bho ga and dpon chen Legs pa dpal, who met at rGya ma and 'Phan yul Glang thang investigated these matters on the occasion of a funerary rite. gZhon nu yon tan was deprived of the *khri dpon* rank in the year of the pig 1299, but he was given some gifts. Slob dpon Tshul gzhon was sent to [the imperial] court and, owing to the *yon mchod* with the emperor, [gcung rGya bo] was awarded a 'ja' sa and *bka' shog*. He was the *bla* [ma and *khri*] *dpon* for twelve years (1299–1310).”

Deb ther dmar po (p.124 lines 1–10): “Nang du zhing pa ya gsum la sogs la gzan pa byas pas/ rin po che gcung rGya ma mnyes par rgyal bu yab yum la zhus pas gZhon nu yon tan phab nas gong du zhu ba btang/ de ma 'khor bar du/ rgyal bu'i ma go cha/ Sa skya pa'i khirms gcod pa Rin chen bkra shis/ rin po che'i nye gnas brTson 'grus dpal/ gZhon nu yon tan gyi dbon 'og ma Grags pa 'od zer/ sngar Hu la hus bskos pa'i yul bsrungs Go go chu'i bu rDo rje seng ge/ jo bo Grags rin mams 'dzem gyin bya ba bsgrubs/ gong du bla ma Grags 'od pas bdag mdzad nas/ rin po che gcung rGya la khri dpon gyi 'ja' sa grub nas bla dpon sbrags/ gZhon nu yon tan la rten por 'chos Mon mkhar byin/”; “[gZhon nu yon tan] was ineffective in the external affairs. Moreover, in the internal affairs, he spoiled [his relationship with] three dignitaries (*zhing pa ya gsum*). Rin po che gcung rGya [bo], being not happy [with him], pleaded with the *rgyal bu* (i.e. The mur bho ga) and his consort. gZhon nu yon tan was dismissed and the matter reported to court. Meanwhile, Rin chen bkra shis who enforced the Sa skya pa law; rin po che's nye gnas brTson 'grus dpal; gZhon nu yon tan's younger nephew Grags pa 'od zer; rDo rje seng ge, the son of Go go chu, earlier appointed by Hu la hu to be his land administrator; and jo bo Grags rin, [all these dignitaries] belonging to the *rgyal bu*'s ranks, were collectively in charge of the [Phag mo gru pa *khri skor*]. With bla ma Grags 'od looking after matters at court, rin po che gcung rGya [bo] obtained the *khri dpon 'ja' sa* and combined [the roles of] *bla* [ma and] *dpon*. He extended support to gZhon nu yon tan by giving him Mon mkhar”.

After iron tiger 1290: further agony for 'Bri gung

Two passages, respectively in *IHo rong chos 'byung* and Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan's *'Bri gung gser phreng*, recount in slightly different terms the unfolding of events in the aftermath of the destruction of 'Bri gung in iron tiger 1290. Although it proved eventually ineffective, the significance of a desperate counteroffensive on the part of the 'Bri gung pa should not be discounted.

These two sources concur in attributing to Ri pa nag po, a little known disciple of the late gCung rin po che rDo rje grags pa (1210–1278), the leadership of the 'Bri gung pa survivors who put up some resistance and launched a counterattack against the Sa skya/Se chen rgyal po alliance. Ri pa nag po did not witness the tragic epilogue of the burning of 'Bri gung. He was at Gangs Ti se at the time,⁴⁸ to which fact he probably owed his life.

The 'Bri gung pa had sufficient strength outside Central Tibet to attempt a two-pronged initiative. In Upper West Tibet, having lost the control of the region to the Sa kya pa and their feudatories a decade or so before (Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.452–461), all they could do was to send sgom pa dBon po to elicit reinforcements once again from the sTod Hor.⁴⁹

The 'Bri gung pa of mDo Khams, headed by the little known rDzong Khams pa, were able to put together an army that went to attack the Mongols of China on the Tibetan plateau's eastern border. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan records the outcome of this military campaign as ending in complete disaster for the entire 'Bri gung pa army, exterminated down to the last man by the Mongols of China.⁵⁰

48. *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.443 lines 16–17): “gCung rin po che'i slob ma Ri pa nag po ni/ Ti ser sgrub pa la byon pa'i tshe 'Bri gung gling log byung ba thugs kyis ma bzod nas dBus su byon/”. “Once Ri pa nag po, the disciple of gCung rin po che, had gone to meditate at Ti se, the 'Bri gung *gling log* broke out [in his absence]. As he could not bear this, he went back to dBus”.

49. Were the sTod Hor whom sgom pa dBon po went to summon after the *gling log* once again the Mongols from the Il-Khanate of Baghdad? No other detail is recorded in the sources, including whether the mission was successful, so that what one can say about this issue is mere guess work. Given the heavy defeat suffered by the Il-Khanid in the *gling log*, it would seem unlikely that those to whom the request was addressed were Mongols belonging to the ranks of Hu-la-hu's successors. Rather than the Mongols from Baghdad weakened in Tibet, a possibility—amounting to no more than sheer speculation—is that they may have been the Chagatai.

50. *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.443 lines 17–21): “rDzong khams pa ja khur sogs sa mtshams bzung nas/ gong gi gser yig pa dang rgyu 'grul bcad nas/ 'dis drag po'i 'phrin las la brten nas bstan pa'i me ro gzhi tshugs pa yin/ 'di ni gang zag rang mtshan can min cing/ Ye shes kyi mGon pos byin brlabs par gsal lo/”, “Given that rDzong Khams pa and other attendants (lit. “tea servers”) took control of the borderland [with China] despite a *gser yig pa* (“envoy”) of the emperor being sent out on a mission, [Ri pa nag po], through his bold actions, set the foundations [for the rekindling of] the extinct fire of the ['Bri gung pa] teachings. As for him (i.e. Ri pa nag po), his own peculiar attitude transcended the personal dimension. It is clear that [what he did] was due to the blessings of Ye shes kyi mGon po”.

Even when the little that was left was lost,⁵¹ Ri pa nag po followed up his blitz on the field with a verbal assault. In line with the same fearless attitude of another 'Bri gung pa of the past,⁵² he took the meagre consolation in writing abusive letters to Se chen rgyal po.⁵³

lHo rong chos 'byung ends its account of the aftermath to the destruction of 'Bri gung with a eulogy to Ri pa nag po, seen as the true defender of 'Bri gung pa autonomy, whose heroics are considered to be the foundation stone of 'Bri gung's later resurgence. This is ideologically indisputable, but realities on the ground were much grimmer. Indeed, *lHo rong chos 'byung* omits to mention the fatal end of the 'Bri gung pa military campaign at the border to China.

The background

The peculiarities of the secular, religious and social system prevailing in Tibet were progressively metabolised by the Mongols, celebrated for their warrior skills, but also keen to exercise their authority over the conquered lands with political acumen. Falling in wood dragon 1244, quite before the *khri skor bcu gsum* were formally established in dBus gTsang, the episode of Sa skya pandi ta who went to the court of the Mongols with his two little nephews to be the Tibetan interlocutor of the new masters, besides being a beautiful parable, has meaningful secular implications.

51. The failed attempt to engage the winning party after the *gling log* engendered the conversion of 'Bri gung pa monasteries in Khams into Sa skya pa. *Khams dKar mdzes dgon sde'i lo rgyus* (Pe war dgon vol. one p. 467 lines 22–23): “De nas 'Bri gung gling log byung nas gdan sa 'di nyid dang nye skor dPal spungs lCags ra sogs Sa skyar bsgyur song ba mngon/ Sa skya 'gyur nas phyis su dar rgyas che tsam yod par mngon/”; “Then after the 'Bri gung *gling log*, this *gdan sa* (i.e. Pe war in the region of future sDe dge) along with nearby dPal spungs and lCags ra appear to have been converted into Sa skya [pa]. It seems that, after becoming Sa skya [pa], they were somewhat expanded”.

The passage of Pe war dgon, dPal spungs and lCags ra into the winners' fold are just a few cases of the campaign undertaken by the Sa skya pa in Khams to turn Ka' brgyud pa monasteries into religious institutions of their own school after the 'Bri gung *gling log* of 1290, a phenomenon that goes undescribed in the literature for the lands of dBus gTsang.

52. Their *sgom pa* rDo rje dPal had spat in Se chen rgyal po's face when Karma Pakshi still was at the court of the emperor, soon after his ascension to the imperial throne in 1260 (see *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* p.894 lines 8–18).

53. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, '*Bri gung gser phreng* (lHa sa ed. p.125 lines 12–17): “De'i tshes Ye shes kyi mGon po'i rnam 'phrul Tsa ri tra'i Ri pa nag po zhes dpa brtul des/ mi log rnams bsdu te rGya mtshams bar phyin/ dماغ gi thams cad srog dang phral/ Se chen rgyal por blor mi shong ba'i springs yig drag po mang du btang ba dang/ sgom pa dBon po bya bas sTod phyogs su phyin/ Hor gyi dماغ drangs/”; “At that time Tsa ri tra Ri pa nag po, the emanation of Ye shes kyi mGon po, owing to his bravery, gathered the rebels and marched up to the border with China. The entire army was exterminated as soon as [they reached there]. [Ri pa nag po] sent many abusive letters to Se chen rgyal po in which [he expressed] his disliking [for him], while sgom pa dBon po went up (i.e. to the west) to bring sTod Hor troops”.

This summons is indicative of the political strategy the Mongols had conceived in those years in their relations with the chieftains of Tibet. The underlying concept was to single out one noble family which could be representative of the whole country, but this was not possible because secular power on the plateau was fragmented. Hence the quick tactics of either exercising pressure upon the rulers of conquered countries by seeking submission or, if they did not get it, of depriving these countries of their ruler and power structure, could not work in Tibet. The plateau at the time did not have a clear-cut hierarchy of leaders the Mongols could give orders to or eliminate. Moreover, the Tibetans must have somewhat submitted to the Mongols in obligation to the letter that Sa skya pandi ta sent to them, although compliance is nowhere explicated.

This failed Mongol policy led to a radical change in the handling of the Tibetan affairs. In iron dog 1250, Mong gor rgyal po established the well known system whereby each noble family from Central Tibet was assigned to a Mongol prince.⁵⁴ The tangible effect of the new system was that the lands controlled by the Tibetan noble families became the appanage of these Hor princes, from which they extracted considerable revenues.

It meant a drastic change in political perspective for Se chen rgyal po, upon arrogating the Mongol throne to himself in iron monkey 1260, to reform the system. He abolished the control of other Mongol princes over parts of Tibet, only leaving it in favour of his younger brother Hu la hu,⁵⁵ whose dominions were, estates in the lands of lHo kha controlled by the Phag mo gru pa.

Se chen rgyal po's not discontinuing this privilege in the case of his brother was probably in view of the fact that Hu la hu had been sent in 1253 on a military campaign to create the Il-Khanate of Baghdad, which he accomplished in the years 1256–1258. He ruled over it until 1265, the year of his death, and was followed in Baghdad by a line of successors. Was the decision to preserve the rights of Hu la hu over the Phag gru dominions exclusively due to the Il-Khanate's huge distance from Tibet that practically amounted to dispossession of Hu la

54. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru p.110 lines 3–5)*: “Bri khung pa Mon ’gor rgyal po shes/ Tshal pa Se chen rgyal po shes/ Phag mo gru pa rgyal bu Hu la hu shes/ sTag lung pa A ri bho kha shes par ’dug/”; “The ’Bri khung pa were assigned to Mon ’gor rgyal po, the Tshal pa were assigned to Se chen rgyal po, the Phag mo gru pa to rgyal bu Hu la hu, and the sTag lung pa were assigned to A ri bho kha”; also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (p.418–419).

55. *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru p.110 lines 7–11)*: “De rting/ Mon ’gor rgyal po gnam la gshegs pa’i rting/ Se chen rgyal pos/ rGya’i rgyal sar bzhugs dus/ Bod kyi yul srung thams cad phyr bsdus pa la/ Se chen rgyal po dang/ Hu la hu sku mched sgos mthun du ’dug pas/ rang re’i yul srung tshang ’di bzhag pa yin par ’dug/”; “Then, after Mon ’gor rgyal po went to the sky, when Se chen rgyal po ascended the imperial throne of China, he called back all the *yul srung-s* (“land administrators/protectors/officers”). Se chen rgyal po and his brother Hu la hu had a good personal relationship, hence all our own (i.e Phag mo gru pa under Hu la hu) *yul srung-s* were confirmed in their posts”.

This passage indicates that the role of the *yul srung-s* was to oversee the smooth administration of the *khri skor-s* in the manner established by the Mongol sovereigns.

hu's dominions on the plateau? If so, this was a wrong calculation, because Hu la hu's royal house managed to keep them under its control.

The empowerment of 'gro mgon 'Phags pa was Se chen rgyal po's next step; it officially brought Tibet under the authority of his Mongols of China and delegated the administration of Tibet to the Sa skya pa. This is why the years between 1260 and 1264 were a troubled period in Tibet from the political viewpoint, although not marred by any particular destruction. Indeed, Se chen rgyal po felt the need to send 'Phags pa back to Tibet in 1264. Given the critical situation, Man lung pa bSod nams dpal (1235 or 1239-?), as I note in my piece "In the presence of the "diamond throne": Tibetans at rDo rje gdan (last quarter of the 12th century to year 1300)", decided to leave the plateau for rGya gar.

The sources do not explain how Hu la hu and his successors—Abaqa (1265–1281), Tegüder (1281–1284) and Arghun (1284–1291) (Boyle, *The Successors of Genghis Khan*, Table II p.343)—managed to keep control of the Phag mo gru pa lands in lHo kha and bordering areas. Although being the only lands in Central Tibet that were outside the reach of the Sa skya/Se chen rgyal po alliance, still the Sa skya pa were deprived of overall control of dBus gTsang, and the Mongols of China of revenues they were obtaining from everywhere else in Central Tibet.

In the past, the sTod Hor of the 'Bri gung *gling log* have been identified as the Chagatai rather than the Il-Khanid, contrary to the argumentations I provide in my exposé.⁵⁶ Evidence directly pertaining to the role and the political status of the Phag mo gru pa as major actors in the 'Bri gung *gling log* of 1290 is provided by ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan, possibly the most authoritative political commentator of these events carrying a crucial influence on the developments of which he was the preeminent protagonist.

That the sTod Hor of the events that took place in Central Tibet in the eighties of the 13th century and culminated in 'Bri gung *gling log* of iron tiger 1290 were Hu la hu's successors of the Il-Khanate of Baghdad is supported by overwhelming evidence provided, first of all, by the work of t'ai si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan. He was a Phag mo gru pa himself, if not the Phag mo gru pa *par excellence*, and the ruler of post Yuan Tibet—in his *Si tu bka' chems* and related documents. In *Si tu bka'*

56. Petech has been the propounder of the view that the sTod Hor involved in the *gling log* imbroglio were the Chagatai, followed in this by Everding ("The Mongol States and Their Struggle for Dominance Over Tibet in the 13th Century"). Petech's thesis (*Central Tibet and the Mongols* n.113 on p.30) is marred by contradictory statements. He first says that, "at the beginning" (he does not clarify when with any precision), the sTod Hor were Hu la hu's Mongols and then, from the 14th century, they were the Chagatai, which is reliable. He then adds that the sTod Hor of the *gling log* were Dua's Mongols. He should have formulated his point differently, for the simple reason that the 'Bri gung *gling log* did not take place during the 14th century and thus the Chagatai did not have any place in his chronological scheme.

chems, he mentions the assignment of aristocratic families of dBus gTsang to Mongol princes and says that the Phag mo gru pa—his own people—were assigned to Hu la hu.⁵⁷

57. The *bstan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka'chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.449 lines 3–17) reads: “lCags pho khyi yi lo/ Mon gor drung du Bod kyi ban dhe dang/ lo tsa sde pa chen po tshan po so so rnams/ ’brel so che chung so sos zhus ngos nas/ rgyal po sku mched rnams kyi bla mchod la/ rgyal bu Go dan la blangs Bod rnams la/ bgo bsha’ byas pa’i gtogs lugs ’di ltar yin/ ’Bri khung pa ni Mon gor rgyal por gtogs/ Sa skya pa ni Go dan rang la gtogs/ Tshal pa Se chen Go be la la gtogs/ Phag mo gru pa g. Ya bzang Thang po che/ sTod Hor rgyal po Hu la hu la gtogs/ Rab btsun Gru gu sgang dang Kha rag gsum/ rgyal bu sBo lco g ces pa de la gtogs/ lHa sa ’Brug pa La stod Thang chung gsum/ rgyal bu Mo gha la la gtogs pa byas/ rGya ma mi rigs ma gtogs Bya yul ba/ Si ga gan la gtogs shing Ki kam pa/ Khra sa ngab pa Gal du la la gtogs/ Mon gor drung du zhus yul bsrungs so sor bzhag/ lJang brKyang Phag mo gru zhing ya gsum ni/ rgyal bu Hu las Mon gor drung du zhus/ ’ja’ sa bcad/’”; “In iron male dog year (1250), which was the seventy-sixth year [after Grags pa ’byung gnas’s birth], in the presence of Mon gor (spelled so) rgyal po, each monk, *lo tsa*, great community and division of Tibet, each high and low ranking representative [at court], who were the *bla mchod* of the emperor and his brothers, made a petition. rGyal bu Go dan having received Tibet, the system of assigning [the Tibetans] to some leaders was introduced in the following way. The ’Bri khung pa were assigned to Mon gor rgyal po; the Sa skya pa to Go dan himself; the Tshal pa to Se chen Go pe la; the Phag mo gru pa, g. Ya’ bzang pa [and] Thang po che pa to sTod Hor rgyal po Hu la hu; Rab btsun, Gru gu sgang and Kha rag, three in all, to rgyal bu sBo lco g; lHa sa (i.e. the lHa pa), the ’Brug pa [and] La stod Thang chung, these three, to rgyal bu Mo gha la; except for the rGya ma family, the Bya yul pa were assigned to Si ga gan (i.e. khan); the Ki kam pa [and] Khra sa ngab pa to Gal du la. Pursuant to a request to Mon gor, each of [these princes] was entrusted with protecting a land. rGyal bu Hu la requested the lands of ’Jang, brKyang and Phag mo gru, each of these three, from Mon gor. A ’ja’ sa (“patent”) [in favour] was issued”.

The assignment of the lands belonging to the various noble families of Central Tibet, defined anachronistically as *khri skor*-s, to Mongol princes is mentioned in another passage of *Si tu bka'chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.110 lines 1–6): “Mon ’gor rgyal po rgyal sar bton ’dug cing/ de dus Bod phyogs ’dir rgyal bu Go dan Byang ngogs pa bdag par ’dug pa la/ Go dan A ka la bla mchod blangs pas/ ’Bri ’khung Mon ’gor rgyal po shes/ Tshal pa Se chen rgyal po shes/ Phag mo gru pa rgyal bu Hu la hu shes/ sTag lung pa A ri bho ga shes par ’dug cing/ rgyal rgyud bzhi pos/ khri skor so sor sgos bdag byas par ’dug/’”, “The throne was given to Mon ’gor (spelled so) rgyal po and, at that same time, rgyal bu Go dan was made lord of Byang ngogs (sic for Byang ngos in the old Tangut kingdom, not to be confused with Gu ge Byang ngos) in the direction of Tibet. Since [Tibetan] *bla mchod*-s (“officiating *bla ma*-s”) were appointed to Go dan A ka la, the ’Bri khung pa were assigned to Mon ’gor rgyal po, the Tshal pa were assigned to Se chen rgyal po, the Phag mo gru pa were assigned to rgyal bu Hu la hu, the sTag lung pa were assigned to A ri bho ga, to these four royal lineages. A leader at the head of each *khri skor* was chosen”. Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (p.418–419 and n.696).

Si tu bka'chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru p.111 lines 16–17): “sPyan snga rin po ches ’Bri khung gi bla ma mdzad pa’i dus su/ Hor khirms chags nas/ Phag mo gru khri skor Hu la hu la gtogs/’”; “When sPyan snga rin po che was the *bla ma* of the ’Bri khung pa, the law of the Hor was enforced. The Phag mo gru *khri skor* was assigned to Hu la hu”.

This is confirmed by all the other sources dealing with the same issue.⁵⁸

The major objection to the identification of the sTod Hor involved in the 'Bri gung *gling log* imbroglio as those of Hu la hu is based on reasons of contiguity. The Il-Khanid were settled in Baghdad and thus far away from the scene of the “crime”, while the Chagatai, who controlled Southern Turkestan historically, would have been a more serviceable group of Mongols to be those actually involved in the controversy. It was not so though. In no historiographical source dealing with the assignment of the aristocratic families of dBus gTsang to Mongol princes the Chagatai appear to have been linked with any of the noble people of Central Tibet. They are nowhere mentioned as having any part in those affairs, which shows that the Chagatai had no say whatsoever in dBus gTsang during the period.

They did not have any role either in sTod mNga' ris skor gsum, from where the Phag gru/'Bri gung alliance drew its Mongol support. The *ta'i si tu* makes a point in his work to discuss the evolution of the political control of sTod mNga' ris skor gsum during the 13th century. He provides details of the takeover of the region by the Sa skya pa and their feudatories at the expense of the Phag mo gru pa and 'Bri gung pa,⁵⁹ adding that Mongol jurisdiction

For the date of Mon 'gor rgyal po's accession to the throne of the Mongols as 1249, preceding his official coronation in the 1251 *quriltai*, see Boyle, *The Successors of Genghis Khan* (p.228 n.124 and p.224 n.96) Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (n.695).

58. See, for instance, *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.1416 lines 9–13) and *ibid.* (p.893 lines 3–6), or Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* (p.128 lines 2–5): “Mon gor rgyal pos 'Bri gung pa/ Se chen rgyal pos Tshal pa/ Hu la hus Phag mo gru pa nams so sor mchod gnas su bzung ste/ Bod nams rgyal po so sos ris su bcad de bdag po mdzad/”; “Mon gor rgyal po took over the 'Bri gung pa, Se chen rgyal po the Tshal pa and Hu la hu the Phag mo gru pa; each [of these Tibetan people was taken over] as *mchod gnas*. The Tibetans were assigned to each [one of these] rulers and were lords”.

59. A 'Bri gung pa/Phag mo gru pa plenipotentiary over sTod mNga' ris skor gsum —namely *gnam sa dpa'shi*—to whom ample reference is made in an account of t'ai si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan, was first appointed in 1240 by the Mongol emperor O go ta (*bstan rtsis* appended to *Si tu bka'chems* in *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.447 line 21–p.448 line 10) (see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.418 and n.694). This fact has significant historiographical consequences that cannot be discussed here for the wide implications they engender. The event shows that the Mongol domination of Tibet began before the *khri skor bcu gsum* were awarded to 'Phags pa, i.e. before the Sa skya pa period and also before the letter sent by Sa skya pandi ta to the Tibetan authorities, when Hor pa control of Tibet is traditionally considered to have begun (also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* n.699).

The *gnam sa dpa'shi* office was confirmed by Mon 'gor rgyal po, an occurrence dated to 1250 in the same text (see *ibid.* p.449 lines 3–17 and p.419 and n.698).

Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan then describes the circumstances surrounding the passage of mNga' ris skor gsum from control by the 'Bri gung pa/Phag mo gru pa camp into the hands of the Sa skya pa and their allies serving as proxies of the Yuan dynasty. *Si tu bka'chems* (*Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.113 line 13–p.114 line 8) says: “Bla ma 'Phags pa Bod du byon pa'i dus su/ dpon chen Kun dga' bzang po dang/ dpon slob kyis/ sku gshegs gong ma Sa skya na bzhugs pa la/ khyed shes pa'i mi ste mNga' ris la yod pa la/ Yar 'brog sNa dkar rtse brje dgos gsungs 'dug pas/ nged kyis thag mi chod mar zhu ba btong

zhus nas/ bla ma rGyal ba rin po che dang/ dpon rDo rje dpal la zhu ba btang bas/ sNa dkar rtse khri skor/ 'Bri khung pa'i yin pa Sa skya pas blangs par song bas/ 'Bri khung pa mi dgar yin pas blos mi thongs/ mi brje gsung ba'i lan bskur nas ma brjes (p.114) pa'i don la/ dpon chen Kun dga' bzang pos/ gnam sa dpa' shi'i gnyer pa 'Dam pa Rin tshul zer ba/ mi chos 'dam pa yin pa/ ban dhe bco brgyad pa yin pa gcig yod 'dug pa la dug gtong du bcug nas/ gnam sa dpa' shi bsad 'dug/ de'i mgan pa la Mal gro dPe tshal byin 'dug pa/ zhi bar gshegs pas bla dpon sBrag pa'i dus su/ kho bu smad dang bcas pa/ dPe tshal na 'dug pa/ zhi bar gshegs pa'i phyag phyi bgres pa rnams kyis mthong 'dug/ gnam sa dpa' shi 'das rting/ mNga' ris khri skor Sa skya pas bdag byas nas da lta bar du kha ma tshud pa 'di yin/'; "When bla ma 'Phags pa went to Tibet (in 1276), dpon chen Kun dga' bzang po, the *dpon* and his officers, [told 'Phags pa], when the late *gong ma* (i.e. 'Phags pa) was in Sa skya: "You have some acquaintances of yours, who control mNga' ris. We must exchange Yar 'brog sNa dkar rtse [with mNga' ris]". As they spoke so, ['Phags pa retorted]: "I do not consider this proposal feasible, but I will send this request down [to the Phag mo gru pa]". As the [same] request had been [previously] addressed to bla ma rGyal ba rin po che and dpon rDo rje dpal, they had [previously] said: "sNa dkar rtse used to belong to the 'Bri gung pa. As it happened that the Sa skya pa took it away from them, the 'Bri gung pa were not happy. We also must say that the mNga' ris pa are our own (i.e. Phag mo gru pa) community, as [they are our own] disciples bound to us by *yon mchod*. Owing to these considerations, we are not going to relinquish it". dPon chen Kun dga' bzang po incited the *gnam sa dpa' shi's gnyer pa* ("keeper"), called 'Dam pa Rin tshul, the eighteen year-old monk who had opted for lay life, to poison him. The *dpa' shi* was killed. [Rin tshul] was given Mal gro dPe tshal in reward. On the occasion of the head *bla ma's* death, he (Rin tshul) [and] his children were [still] residing there. Elders saw him accompanying the body of the deceased. After the *gnam sa dpa' shi's* death, mNga' ris *khri skor* passed under the Sa skya pa. Up to the present time it has not been brought [again] under [Phag mo gru pa and 'Bri gung pa] control". Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (p.557–558 and n.952).

At first glance, this episode might appear to have occurred during the years of 'Phags pa's first return to Tibet (1265–1267), for 'Phags pa could not have interacted with both Phag mo gru pa rGyal ba rin po che (1203–1267, in office 1236–1267; see *Si tu bka' chems in Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.111 lines 3–4) and rDo rje dpal (d.1266, in office as Phag mo gru pa *khri dpon* in the years 1254–1266) at the time of his second return to Tibet (on all this see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* n.953).

The outline of the episode indicates that an earlier request had been made by the Sa skya pa to rGyal ba rin po che and rDo rje dpal at the time of 'Phags pa's first return to Central Tibet (1265–1267), but it had been refused by the 'Bri gung pa and Phag mo gru pa. The role played by dpon chen Kun dga' bzang po in these incidents place them, instead, during 'Phags pa's second visit (1276–1280). The plan to swap mNga' ris skor gsum with sNa dkar rtse, a district that had already been taken from the 'Bri gung pa by the Sa skya pa, and the assassination of the *gnam sa dpa' shi* were organized by Kun dga' bzang po when he was *dpon chen*, as the text declares.

Kun dga' bzang po was Sa skya *dpon chen* for six years from 1275 to 1280 (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p.358 lines 16–18), culminating in his being put to death by Sang gha, following the sudden demise of 'Phags pa (ibid. p.359 lines 13–14, Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* n.955), in which he had a conspicuous part. This passage in *Si tu bka' chems* documents that the *gnam sa dpa' shi* and consequently the 'Bri gung pa and Phag mo gru pa held mNga' ris skor

over Upper West Tibet had been assigned to the sTod Hor of Hu la hu,⁶⁰ the Il-Khanid. Those dispossessed by the Yuan/Sa skya alliance in the years 1277–1280 of their control of mNga' ris skor gsum were Hu las hu's successors.

sTod mNga' ris skor gsum was a Phag mo gru/'Bri gung/Hu la hu/Il-Khanid historical base of operation on the western side of the plateau. This supports the thesis that the sTod Hor active in resisting the loss of their Phag mo gru pa estates in dBus and Upper West Tibet were the Il-Khanid, despite the distance from Baghdad to Tibet, rather than the Chagatai, who intervened in the affairs of Upper West Tibet only decades later in the 14th century, and then only to open up a war front against the Delhi Sultanate as an alternative to Khurasan (see my “Some conjectures on change and instability during the one hundred years of darkness in the history of La dwags (1280s-1380s)”).

Another argument adduced by scholars in favour of the identification of the sTod Hor involved in the present events as the Chagatai is the well known fact that, among the children of Tolui and grandchildren of Jing gir rgyal po, Hu la hu and Se chen rgyal po were on especially good terms, so that it would be hardly possible that they ended up nurturing extreme mutual hostility. But this view has the weakness of considering their personal relations during the fifties of the 13th century, when Se chen was not yet empowered as emperor and Hu la hu was on the verge of undertaking the conquest of Baghdad. Evidence from Tibetan sources shows that the sympathetic relationship prevailing in the 1250s between Hu la hu and Se chen rgyal po did not exist

gsum—the region extended all the way to sPo rig la rtza, “the foot of the sPu rig pass”—until no later than 1280. Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (p.558–560).

The episode is another instance that documents the close and friendly ties between the Phag mo gru pa and the 'Bri gung pa in the late 12th and the 13th centuries, and probably a nominal pre-eminence of the Phag mo gru pa over the 'Bri gung pa despite their weakness. A passage in *Mar lung pa'i rnam thar* (f.125a line 5–f.125b line 2) stating that gSer gyi bya skyibs on the shore of Ma pham g.yu mtsho was Tshal pa; Bri ra phug on the Gangs Ti se skor ba was 'Brug pa; rGyang grags, the monastery in front of Gangs Ti se on its skor lam was 'Bri gung pa stresses the closeness between the 'Bri gung pa, Phag mo gru pa and 'Brug pa in succinct terms, personal cases of petty intolerance left aside (also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* n.954).

60. In another passage of *Si tu bka' chems (Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.111 lines 1–2), ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan adds: “mNga' ris nas sKo ron mdo yar bcad/ sPo rig la rtza mar bcad nmams Hu la hu la gtogs par 'dug/”; “[The lands] in mNga' ris nas sKo ron mdo to the foot of the sPo rig pass were assigned to Hu la hu”. Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (p.419 and n.697).

The same text (*Si tu bka' chems in Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* p.113 lines 11–13) again says: “mNga' ris Ko ron mdo yar bcad/ sPo rig la rtza mar bcad zer ba Mon 'gor rgyal po'i 'ja' sa'i nang tshud pa/ gnam sa dpa' shi dpon la bskos nas/ rang re bdag pa/”; “From mNga' ris Ko ron mdo all the way to sPo rig la rtza, [these Upper West Tibetan territories] were included [among our possessions] by the authority of Mon 'gor rgyal po's 'ja' sa. As the gnam sa dpa' shi was appointed as dpon, we (i.e. the Phag mo gru pa and 'Bri gung pa) are their owners”. Also see Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* (p.419 and n.698).

anymore later on. The political relations between the power houses of Baghdad and China over the control of Tibet deteriorated at the time of Hu la hu's successors to a low point in the 1280s.

What remains unclear is whether dBon po, the 'Bri gung *sgom pa* who went to sTod in the wake of the *gling log* seeking support from unidentified sTod Hor, all to no avail, contacted the Il-Khanid or the Chagatai. In any case neither of the two groups of Mongols provided support to the 'Bri gung *sgom pa*, which shows that Central Tibet was under the firm control of the Yuan/Sa skya alliance without further interference from any rival Mongol troops out to antagonise it.

Some points on the significance of these secular and religious affairs

In the light of all this, the struggle for the throne of gDan sa mthil between two brothers, one loyal to the Phag mo gru pa-'Bri gung pa alliance—supported by the sTod Hor of their headman Hu la hu—and the other who had become a disciple of 'Phags pa—and was thus leaning towards the Sa skya pa/Se chen rgyal po alliance—takes on its full meaning. The struggle went beyond purely religious matters and could not be solved in gDan sa mthil itself, in the way as religious disputes were normally solved within the monastery's boundary wall.

Dissensions over candidates to a religious throne were far from being unusual in the period before the Sa skya/Mongol domination, and they continued to be quite common occurrences in the following centuries. Hardly any of them reached the pitch of the 'Bri gung *gling log*. The political tension was so strong that it led to one of the most violent internecine struggles of the post *bstan pa phyi dar* period.

The contest for the throne of gDan sa mthil, initially a contentious claim reserved to the twin bKa' brgyud pa schools and the Sa skya pa, became a military struggle between the respective political/secular officers with the support of their Mongol overlords. The role played by the Mongols in the strife seems to have emboldened the combativeness of the contenders.

From at least 1285 onwards, when 'Bri gung *sgom pa* Kun rdor rin chen and the sTod Hor attacked Sa skya, the matter of the control of the gDan sa mthil throne provided a convenient excuse for an open confrontation between the sTod Hor (the Il-Khanid of Baghdad) and the Mongols of China.

The Tibetan noble houses were the parties among whom the struggle had broken out. The consistency of Mongol troops deployed in the *gling log* went far beyond the scope of a clash internal to Tibet. A Khams pa alliance of noteworthy magnitude was involved in the conflict. The well known ferocity of the Mongol campaigns boosted the strife into a war of unprecedented dimensions in the history of post-imperial Tibet. Besides expanding to regions

on the plateau beyond the central ones, the controversy surged to international dimensions. The lands of the contenders ranged from metropolitan China to the Middle East.

The Tibetans had earlier become acquainted with the fury of Mongol campaigns. A typical strategy used by the Hor was to level monasteries, something not experienced before on the plateau. Owing to their warring fury, the destruction of monasteries by Mongol warriors was a pattern the Tibetans had witnessed since 1240 when, as is well known, rGyal lha khang was torn down. The 1290 fire of 'Bri gung was the acme of such method of systematic destruction, which had been adopted indiscriminately on the plateau by antagonist Mongol factions and their Tibetan subordinates.

In spite of the manifest antipathy that all Tibetans not part of the ruling alliance nurtured for the Sa skya pa, whom they considered collaborators (see, e.g., the case of U rgyan pa in my "Grub chen U rgyan pa and the Mongols of China"), I wonder how much in fact the Sa skya pa themselves were keen to oppress their fellow Tibetans; and how much they were led to do so by the Mongols. The loyalty of the twin 'Bri gung pa-Phag mo gru pa schools towards the sTod Hor arose from a marriage of interest and obligation, much as that of the Sa skya pa towards Se chen rgyal po. The case of U rgyan pa is symptomatic. He was never in favour of any Mongol faction, including those with whom the bKa' brgyud pa were associated. The dominant trait of Mongol policy towards Tibet was to hold sway over the world of the highlands by the exercise of their rule and by using the Sa skya pa as their agents. The relations they entertained with Tibet during the dGa' ldan pho brang period were intrinsically different, for they provided military support and interfered in the local affairs of Tibet to strengthen the Dalai Lamas' power.

I see in the *gling log* a symbol of the exploitation of family disputes by alien forces for an agenda extraneous to the concerns of the immediate parties—an opportunity to intervene massively in a country not their own.⁶¹ The lesson to be learned from this tragic episode is that, when Tibetans were left alone to solve their problems, rarely had disastrous or unforeseen consequences.

Despite the outcome of the *gling log*, it is difficult to distinguish between winners and losers, contrary to the common expectation in cases of violent conflict. All the Tibetans involved in the 'Bri gung *gling log* affair were losers, and not only those who suffered the most. The Tibetan sense of collective loss and tragedy engendered by the *gling log* is palpable in the effort to consign this episode to the darkness of history. Indeed, the most devastating event of 13th century Tibet is confined in historical accounts to short, factual statements that

61. dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba calls the *gling log* of iron tiger 1290 the "Hor gyis *gling log*" rather than the 'Bri gung *gling log* (see the 'Bri gung section in mKhas pa'i dga' ston p.1349 line 7: "sNubs rDor yes kyis gdan sa mdzad pa'i tshes Hor gyis gling log byas//"; "When sNubs Dor yes (spelled so) (1223–1293) was made abbot [of 'Bri gung], the *gling log* [caused] by the Hor broke out").

record its occurrence.⁶² Even the circumstances that led to it, as innocent as they may have been at the onset, are recorded with restraint.

The Mongols were losers, too. The perpetuation of open internal enmities laid the seeds for the eventual implosion of their empire—the actual factor that brought it to an end. The 'Bri gung *gling log* was the first act in the disintegration of the combined Sa skya/Mongol power in Tibet, as victories sometimes eventually prove to be. History tells us that, in the long run, the mighty Mongol empire suffered a final blow owing to its tribal conception, whereas the Sa skya pa, enfeebled since they lost their secular prerogatives, eventually reverted to their traditional role of religious school.

ADDENDUM

The reconstruction of 'Bri gung

The 'Bri gung pa literature acknowledges Sa skya Grags pa 'od zer, the *ti shri* of the period after the *gling log*, for his appeal at the imperial court of China that the authority of the 'Bri gung pa should be reinstated and, towards this end, that their monastery should be put back

62. *IHo rong 'chos 'byung* is a particularly good example of the almost complete absence of documentation of the *gling log* in historiographical works. This bKa' brgyud pa history (p.415 lines 14–17) records the event in the most impersonal and succinct manner imaginable: “dGung lo drug cu rtsa drug sa pho byi ba'i lo la 'Bri gung gi tshogs pa'i dbus su gdan sa la byon/ de nas lo gsum pa'i steng du sngar 'Jig rten mgon pos bla ma la gNubs ma bskos zhes pa'i gsung gtar ba'i thog tu 'Bri gung du gling log byung nas' thor/”; “When [sNubs rDo rje ye shes] was sixty-six years old, he was appointed *gdan sa* in earth male rat 1288 in the midst of the [monastic] assembly of 'Bri gung. Three years later, after bla ma sNubs was appointed [abbot] in accordance with the words of 'Jig rten mgon po, the *gling log* broke out at 'Bri gung, which was burned down”.

In its section on the Sa skya *dpon chen-s, rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.360 line 13–p.361 line 3), a text written from the viewpoint of the Sa skya pa, does not say about the *gling log* more than this: “Dwags po dang 'Bri khung la dmag 'khyer ba sogs/ gdan sa chen mo'i phyis dang zhabs tog byas pa shin tu che bar byed/ Dwags por dmag 'khyer/ byus legs lon pa'i dus/ sa mtshams na/ brag la/ Ang len gyi ming bris bzhag 'dug zer/ gZhon dbang/ Byang rdor/Ang lan gsum kha'i ring la/ Sa 'Bri 'thabs Lang len gyis/ (p.361) dpon chen gyi ngang la/ rGya yul du byon/ A yu par ba ta Bu yan du rgyal po dang mjal/ mi rabs kyi bar la/ Ya 'brog khri dpon 'jags pa'i lung bzang po lon/”; “[Ang len] rendered, in general, important service to the great *gdan sa*, such as waging a war against Dwags po and 'Bri gung. It is said that, having brought troops to Dwags po, he adopted a well-planned strategy on the occasion. He engraved the name Ang len on a rock at its border. During the time of gZhon dbang, Byang rdor and Ang lan (spelled so for Ang len), altogether three, Lang len (spelled so for Ang len) dealt with the strife between Sa [skya and] and 'Bri [gung]. (p.361) In his role as *dpon chen*, [Ang len] went to the land of China and met A u par ba ta Bu yan tu rgyal po (i.e. the future emperor Bu yan tu). Among his generation, he was the one who received [from this Mongol prince] a favourable order to become the Ya 'brog *khri dpon*”.

in shape.⁶³ An order was issued that the monastery should be rebuilt promptly and the 'Bri gung *khri skor*, which had ceased to exist in the aftermath of the *gling log*, reactivated with the appointment of a new head from the school's ranks.⁶⁴

The fact that the Sa skya pa themselves put up the request to Se chen rgyal po may be a sign in favour of my view that they were unwillingly compelled to participate in the escalation of hostilities against the 'Bri gung pa, which culminated in a war with such far reaching consequences. This had been a turn of events that may have gone beyond their intentions, which were nonetheless hegemonic. In any case, there is no way to know how spontaneous this move was.

The reconstruction of 'Bri gung was begun in wood sheep 1295 with funds provided by Ol ja du, who implemented the decree of his predecessor Se chen rgyal po.⁶⁵ In my paper "Grub chen U rgyan pa and the Mongols of China" I have suggested that this act was dictated by the

63. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.125 lines 17–22): "Sa Hor mchod yon gyi gser zam bcadpa'i tshe/ Sa skya pa'i Khang gsar ba ti shri Grags pa 'od zer gyis pho brang chen por gong ma'i spyang sngar phyin nas/ zhu ba mthar pa gnang spyin mdzad de/ dBus g'Tsang gi khri skor gcig mnga' 'bangs su bcug/ 'Bri gung gling rin po che myur du bsos shig pa'i bka' byung//"; "During the time of the golden bridge of patronage enforced between the Sa [skya pa and] the Hor, the Sa skya pa Khang gsar ba ti shri Grags pa 'od zer went to the great palace to meet the emperor. As a result of his plea that attained the limits of ultimacy, the emperor issued an order to empower them as subjects [to rule] over one dBus g'Tsang *khri skor* and to restore the precious 'Bri gung gling quickly".

64. dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba credits bCu gnyis pa rin po che with the appointment of the new 'Bri gung *khri dpon*—rather than *sgom pa*, inasmuch as the 'Bri gung *khri skor* was reinstated in these circumstances. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.1349 lines 14–15) reads: "Na 'gag pa slob dpon Ye shes dpal khri dpon du bskos//"; "He appointed Na 'gag pa slob dpon Ye shes dpal as *khri dpon*".

Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.125 line 22–p.126 line 1) says that the appointment was, as seems logical, made at the Yuan court: "'Bri gung gling rin po che myur du bsos shig pa'i bka' byung// nang 'gag pa slob dpon Ye shes dpal la brgyud par shes pa'i 'ja' sa/ stag mgo tham kha (p.126) gnang nas sgom pa'i khur 'dzin du bskos//"; "An order was issued to restore the precious 'Bri gung gling quickly. Given the lineage [associated] with Nang 'gag pa slob dpon Ye shes dpal, a 'ja'sa was issued recognising the lineage, and a seal with a tiger head (p.126) was granted. [The lineage] was appointed to be the ['Bri gung] *sgom pa*".

The difference is substantial because dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba's statement makes of this enterprise an internal decision, while Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan has the decision being made by the supreme authority.

65. *IHo rong chos 'byung* (p.416 lines 12–14): "De nas Se chen gyi lung bzang po byung nas dgung lo bco brgyad shing mo lug la Thel gyi zhig gsos mdzad//"; "Then a favourable order having come from Se chen rgyal po, the reconstruction of ['Bri gung] thel was pursued in wood female sheep 1295, when ['Bri gung spyang snga Cu gnyis pa rin po che (b. 1278)] was eighteen years old".

This statement is not entirely accurate because Se chen rgyal po had died by 1295. 'Bri gung was rebuilt during the reign of Ol ja du (1294–1307). Se chen rgyal po was the emperor who sanctioned the reconstruction of 'Bri gung but his death intervened in the meantime, and the works actually commenced under his successor.

need to normalise the situation in Central Tibet. The reconstruction looks like an attempt by the Mongol overlords from China to heal the wounds and pacify the relations between antagonist forces in Tibet so as to avoid all animosity that might have destabilised their own rule.⁶⁶

'Bri gung remained non-operative from 1290 to 1295, the latter being the year when the young bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen was officially appointed to its abbatial throne. bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen had returned from Kong po in iron hare 1291. He was thus kept away from dBus for some time after the culmination of the *gling log* until the situation cooled down considerably. He resided at the bDe ldan palace situated at mTshe'u kha thang of 'Bri gung, whose construction he helped to complete.⁶⁷ This was his *ad interim* residence, where he tried, supported in the initial years by his old teacher Jo sNubs rDo rje ye shes (1223–1293), to patch up the situation locally and restore smooth religious practice.⁶⁸ Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan styles his efforts as religious activity, but what he terms as “misconceptions” in the concerned passage of *'Bri gung gser phreng* most likely impinged upon the secular sphere, too.

Following his appointment as abbot of 'Bri gung, most of the monastery was rebuilt during a span of over ten years. The funds were not provided by the Mongols of China exclusively. dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba says that the 'Bri gung abbot himself contributed financial

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66. In the same year as the reconstruction of 'Bri gung, dpon chen Ang len, who led the troops of Sa skya during the *gling log* alongside with the Mongol army under the command of The mur bho ga, is credited in *rGya Bod yig tshang* with an expansion of Sa skya. One wonders whether this was a sign of a Mongol campaign of support for monasteries of Tibet, equably distributed among previously antagonist powers. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.360 lines 6–13) reads: “dPon chen Ang le bkra shis/ 'di'i ring la/ lHa khang chen mo'i spen bad bskal/ rgya mthong ka brgyad/ Thig khang sogs la/ bla ma bdag nyid chen po bZang po dpal gyi thugs bzhed/ zhal ta bzhin/ phyi nang gi dkyil 'khor mi gcig pa drug brgya sum cu rtsa dgu bzhengs/ shing mo lug lo la/ phyi'i lcags ri chen mo stong pa/ bla ma 'Phags pa dang/ Dharma pha la'i phyi rten bzhugs pa'i/ gser thog/ g.yu thog 'gel ba/ sPon po ri'i lcags ri gton ba/ Jo mo gling 'debs//”; “During the time of dpon chen Ang le (spelled so) bkra shis, he made the *spen bad-s* (i.e. piles of tree branches serving as an architectural motif below the roof of a building), eight skylights, and the *thig khang* of lHa lkhang chen mo. He was held in high esteem by bla ma bdag nyid chen po bZang po dpal. Following the latter's advice, he made 639 outer and inner *dkyil 'khor*. In wood female sheep 1295, he began [the construction of] the great external boundary wall, put a golden roof and a turquoise roof [respectively] over 'Phags pa's and Dharma pha la's *phyi rten-s*, began [the construction of] the sPon (spelled so) po ri boundary wall and built Jo mo gling”.
67. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.126 lines 1–4): “De nas rje nyid dgung lo bcu gsum pa la Kong po nas spyang drangs/ mTshe'u kha thang du bdDe ldan zhes pa'i pho brang chen po mthong na mi mthun pa med pa skye dgu kun yid 'phrog par byed pa zhid myur bar grub//”; “Then the thirteen year old *rje* (i.e. bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen) was taken back from Kong po (1291). He visited the great palace bDe ldan on mTshe'u kha thang, so incomparable that it was a marvel for every human being, and quickly completed it”.
68. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.126 lines 4–5): “Der bzhugs shing re zhid bar thos bsam gyi sgro 'dogs thams cad bcad//”; “[bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] resided there and [applied himself] for a while to the removal of all misconceptions concerning contemplating and teaching”.

support for the reconstruction, helped in this by the young third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), who had been recognised as the rebirth of Karma Pakshi in water snake 1293.⁶⁹

bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen only partially looked after the reconstruction of 'Bri gung which occurred, for the most part, during his abbotship. The restoration work can be classified into three main phases:

1. The first dates to 1295, the same year of bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen's enthronement. During this year he was personally involved in the reconstruction.⁷⁰ The work continued until 1303 and was in part undertaken without the direct intervention of the abbot, for bCu gnyis pa rin po che retreated into walled meditation from 1297 until the year in which this phase ended.⁷¹ Those rebuilt at the time were gzim khang Thog kha, gSer khang, Bla g.yel chen mo, sGo mang lha khang and bSam gtan khang.⁷²
2. The second phase, which returned Thub pa khams gsum zil gnon, sKu 'bum 'Dzam gling rgyan, gCung sku 'bum and A phyi dkor mdzod to their pristine shape,⁷³ occurred from

69. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.1349 lines 15–17): “gSer khang chos rje dang sKu 'bum 'Dzam gling rgyan sogs me brdugs ma rnams la gser gsol/ bKra shis sgo mang bzhengs/ rje Rang byung pa Gling bsos pa'i gtang rag rgya cher phul/”; “[The 'Bri gung abbot bCu gnyis pa rin po che] gave gold to [rebuild] the gSer khang chos rje and sKu 'bum 'Dzam gling rgyan, which had been gutted by fire. He rebuilt the *bkra shis sgo mang-s.* rJe Rang byung ba (i.e the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje) gave an extensive offering of copper, allotted for the restoration of ['Bri gung] gling”.

70. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.126 lines 8–11): “dGung lo bcu dgu pa me sprel lor gdan sar mnga' gsol nas lo der Byang chub gling rin po che gso bar mdzad/ thog mar sTon pa'i dngul sku bKra shis 'od 'bar/ du grags pa zhig bzhengs/”; “Aged nineteen in fire monkey 1295, [bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] was appointed to the abbatial chair and, in that year, he restored the precious Byang chub kyi gling (the “*Gling* of Enlightenment”, i.e. 'Bri gung). He first made the silver statue of sTon pa, known as bKra shis 'od 'bar”.

71. *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (p.1349 line 18): “Lo bdun sgrub pa mdzad/”; “[bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] meditated for seven years”.

Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.127 lines 17–19): “De nas dgung lo nyer gcig pa la/ Thog kha gSer khang du lo bdun gyi bar 'dag sbyar mdzad cing zab mo'i rnal 'byor gyi lhur len pa mdzad/”; “Then when [bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] was twenty-one years old (1297), he retired at Thog kha gSer khang in walled meditation for seven years and strove hard to practise *Yo ga* (1296–1303)”.

72. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.126 lines 11–14): “De nas gzim khang Thog kha gSer khang/ Bla g.yel chen mo sGo mang lha khang/ dge 'dun gyi bSam gtan khang bu stong dang brgya lo bdun gyi khong su grub/”; “He then completed the reconstruction of gzim khang Thog kha, gSer khang, Bla g.yel chen mo, sGo mang lha khang and bSam gtan khang for the monks, [housing] 1,800 of them, [all] within [the span of] seven years (1296–1303)”.

73. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.126 lines 14–22): “Thub pa khams gsum zil gnon/ sKu 'bum 'Dzam gling rgyan/ gCung sKu 'bum/ A phyi dkor mdzod sogs gling log skabs me gdugs la bzhugs pa rnams la yang bsgyur nyams gso dang/ lha dang mchod rten rnams la gser gyi lde gus byugs shing/ rje 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po'i sku brnyan gSer khang chos rjer grags

1304 onwards,⁷⁴ when bCu gnyis pa rin po che took on again an active role within the 'Bri gung pa community.

The reintroduction of the great *ri pa* tradition of sending members of the school to meditate at the three great hermitage places—Gangs Ti se, La phyi and Tsa ri—dates to 1304.⁷⁵ Can this year be considered as the actual point in time for the normalisation of activities at 'Bri gung? It should be noted that, nonetheless, 'Bri gung had not yet taken on its old shape, for the several holy buildings listed above—Thub pa khams gsum zil gnon, sKu 'bum 'Dzam gling rgyan, gCung sku 'bum and A phyi dkor mdzod—still needed restorations which were undertaken from that same year onwards.⁷⁶

3. A third phase was undertaken by bCu gnyis pa rin po che's younger brother Nyer bryad pa rDo rje rgyal po (1284–1350), the successor to the throne of 'Bri gung upon the former's death in 1314. He rebuilt the *gtsug lag khang* with a plan of 180 pillars on the same spot in the plain where stood the temple, cubic in shape, originally constructed by

pa de nyid/ de skabs sngo ru bye gshongs su sbas pa yang spyang drangs shing/ rab tu gnas pa yang nas yang du mdzad/ dgung lo nyi shur par tshogs pa bskyangs/ dge 'dun gyi tshogs kyang khri phrag bcu gsum tsam 'dus//"; "[bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] once more [devoted himself to] restorations, [in this case of] Thub pa khams gsum zil gnon, where he had resided earlier; sKu 'bum 'Dzam gling rgyan; gCung sku 'bum and A phyi dkor mdzod that had been destroyed by fire during the *gling log*. He coated statues and *mchod rten*-s with cold gold. He took out the portrait statue of rje 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po, known as the gSer khang *chos rje*, from the sandy pit where it had been previously concealed at the time [of the *gling log*] and reconsecrated it. When he was twenty years old (1296) he turned his attention to the [monastic] assembly. He gathered an assembly of 130,000 monks".

74. dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba makes of the second and third phase a single one and ignores that, during the first, the 'Bri gung abbot reconstructed Byang chub gling, for he only cites the making of the *bkra shis 'od 'bar* statue of sTon pa, adding that it was made of silver (*mKhas pa 'i dga 'ston* p.1349 lines 13–16; see n.70 above for the relevant passage).
75. This was the hermit tradition of the 'Bri gung pa, established by sKyob pa 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po, which bCu gnyis pa rin po che revived (*mKhas pa 'i dga 'ston* p.1349 lines 18–19): "Nyer bryad nas ri thebs gsos//"; "From the age of twenty-eight (1305) [bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen engaged in] restoring [the practice of] hermit meditation".

Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.127 lines 19–21): "De nas dgung lo nyer bryad pa la sngon gyi dus ltar/ Gangs Ti se/ La phyi/ Tsa ri tra sogs la sgom chen stong las mi nyung ba brdzangs//"; "Then when he was twenty-eight years old (1304), as used to be before, [bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] sent not a few persons [but] amounting to more than 1,000 to Gangs Ti se, La phyi and Tsa ri".

76. bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen had a brief and intense life; he had to cope with the worst period in the history of the 'Bri gung pa school, only matched by the modern tragedy of the Chinese invasion and occupation of Tibet. He died at a relatively young age, not long after managing to put back 'Bri gung into working shape. *mKhas pa 'i dga 'ston* (p.1349 line 19) says: "So bryad pa sa stag la thegs//";

gCung rin po che to fulfil the wish of sKyob pa 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po (see above n.14). The work lasted from 1314 to 1317 (*'Bri gung gser phreng* p.129 line 21–p.130 line 1). Nyer bryad pa was responsible for the increase of the number of buildings at 'Bri gung, adding, in 1333, a *mgon khang*, later known as A phyi khang, and bKra shis ljongs kyi *gtsug lag khang* (ibid. p.130 lines 3–5).

“[bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] died, aged thirty-eight years, in the year of the earth tiger (sic for wood hare 1315)”.

Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan, *'Bri gung gser phreng* (p.127 line 24–p.128 line 2) provides a different death date: “De ltar bco bryad bar tshogs pa bskyangs nas/ (p.128) dgung lo so bdun pa shing stag lo nag zla ba'i tshes bcu gnyis la sku'i dkyil 'khor dag pa'i dbyings su thim so//”; “Having likewise protected the monastic assembly for eighteen (sic) years (actually 1295–1314), (p.128) when he was thirty-seven years old, [bCu gnyis pa rDo rje rin chen] vanished into the sphere of purity [sitting] in lotus posture, on the twelfth day of *nag pa zla ba* of wood tiger 1314”.

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An instance of textual affinity between two 14th century rNying ma *gter ma*

Tibet's 14th century went through an ideological revision of the historical material contained in *gter ma*-s of the rNying ma tradition. This reform consisted in a reinterpretation of the role of the *lha sras btsan po*-s and the significance of the sPu rgyal period, both of which had been undertaken by their school predecessors in such literary milestones as *bKa' chems ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum*.

The deeds of the kings and the period which the *bstan pa snga dar* rNying ma pa were instrumental in shaping were, as is well known, recast in Buddhist terms in those 11th and 12th century works. In the changed setting, marked by the institutionalisation of religious schools during and after *bstan pa phyi dar*, rNying ma authors engaged in a radical reinterpretation of the imperial period. The motivation for doing so was self-celebrative, for the underlying intention was to reclaim *bstan pa snga dar* entirely for their own tradition. No other religious school could lay claim to *bstan pa snga dar* for the simple reason that no other one existed then. In these rNying ma works a point was made to paint *bstan pa snga dar* developments as deeply influenced by their school and, as a result, the cultural setting of those centuries took on religious tones not necessarily faithful to the original state of affairs.

During the 14th century, the *gter ma*-s of two towering rNying ma personalities, gter chen O rgyan gling pa (1323–?) and his younger contemporary Sangs rgyas gling pa Sangs rgyas bzang po (1340–1396), reassessed the imperial period with a perspective different from their 11th and 12th century predecessors.

rGyal po bka' thang, one of O rgyan gling pa's *gter ma*-s, is the celebrated pillar of the 14th century revision of the imperial period with a perspective different from the religious-oriented interpretation of the dynastic period by his rNying ma forerunners, and thus does not need a formal introduction.

By contrast, a section of one *gter ma* rediscovered by his younger contemporary, gter ston Sangs rgyas gling pa, and entitled *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* (the “book which is a secret register of prophecies for the future”) in the thirteen volume *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* should be briefly examined for the material it contains.

These two texts are a masterful appraisal, based on ancient sources, of cultural expressions, historical events and practices popular during the sPu rgyal period. The treatment adopted by these two towering personalities does not portray the sPu rgyal rulers and the customs associated with them in predominantly Buddhist terms. For instance, Srong btsan sgam po is still seen as a Buddhist monarch, but this feature is remarkably toned down. Their material is far from embalming this king as the stereotypical Bodhisattva ruler.

The outcome was so important that the standards it set were still adopted as late as the 18th century in *gTam tshogs* by the great 'Jigs med gling pa Rang byung rdo rje (1729–1798) who made important contributions to the history of the *lha sras btsan po-s*, based on a similar frame of mind.

Sangs rgyas gling pa's *gter ma*, on which I concentrate first owing to the greater notoriety of *rGyal po bka' thang*, only marginally deals with the entire sPu rgyal genealogy. Still the references to the kings in its earlier segment, based on the view that gNya' khri btsan po rather than sPu de gung rgyal was the progenitor, are worth noting. This section of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* focuses on the period from Srong btsan sgam po to Sad na legs, with special reference to the time of Khri srong lde btsan. This is quite obvious, given the rNying ma penchant for this ruler. But Sangs rgyas gling pa does not neglect the earlier rulers. The material contained in this section of Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* tackles the *btsan po-s* in relation with:

- castles,
- palaces,
- funerary rites,
- *bang so-s* and
- temples.

Royal castles have a dominant presence in both works associated with O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa, together with funerary rites that could not—even remotely—have been approved in any Buddhist terms. The literary focus on this type of practice conveys a distinctively secular outlook.

Castles in Sangs rgyas gling pa's *gter ma*

Sangs rgyas gling pa, *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* (Paro ed. p.228 line 4–p.229 line 6) reads with remarkable peculiarities:

“sKu mkhar ji ltar brtsigs tshul ni/ gNya' khri btsan po'i sku ring la/ yul lnga Yar lung sogs kha ru/ thog ma Sham po dgu brtsegs mkhar la lnga/ Yu sgum btsan po'i sku ring la/ Yar mo nram bzhi'i shar phyogs su/ sku mkhar Bya khra bya ba brtsigs/ Yo re gung rgyal sku ring la/ Yar mo nram bzhi'i nub phyogs su/ sku mkhar Khri rtogs 'bum bdug can/ sTong sde srong btsan sku ring la/ sku mkhar 'Chi nga rta rtse can Ba dmar 'o mas 'dam byas pas brtsigs/ rgyal po sNyan shul sku ring la/ Yar mo nram bzhi'i shar phyogs su/ sku mkhar Yum bu bla mar brtsigs/ Srong btsan sgam po'i sku ring la/ Ra sa dMar po ri'i steng/ sku mkhar (p.229) dGu brgya thogs stong rtsigs/ kun kyang gser gyi nyag thag sbrel/

Klu nram 'phrul gyi sku ring la/ Yar mo nram bzhi'i byang phyogs su/ sku mkhar Zo thang ri la rtsigs/ Khri lde Ag tshom sku ring la/ sku mkhar bSam yas 'Ching phur rtsigs/ Khri srong lde btsan sku ring la/ bzhugs kyi sku mkhar gsum rtsigs pa/ rTa 'bangs bdud kyi btsan 'bangs rje/ sNa nam tshad pa'i bsil khang ni/ sku mkhar gnyug ma brag zur la/ lo pan dam chos gsungs pa'i dus/ bSam yas lho ngos Ne'u sring du/ snyug ma'i gzer khang sum thog rtsigs/ Mu ri btsan po'i sku ring la/ bSam yas grog mkhar steng khang rtsigs/ sKyo bsangs dar khang dgu mig nang/ mchod g.yog gzhon mdzes dgu yis ni/ zas g.yos mi 'dra nram pa dgus/ nang nub la sogs dus drug mchod/ rtse dgu'i longs spyod lha dang 'dra/

tha chung Mu rug btsan po ni/ rang gnas ma mchis Rong la gshegs/ mChims kyi Gad pa skya ldem du/ bzhengs kyi gtsug lag khang bde ru btab/ rje yi btsan mkhar de ru rtsigs/ gyad kyi rdo ring de ru bsilans/ mnga' thang 'dzom dgu spyad pa yang/ mtha' bzhi 'bangs kyi ru la bskul/ grog khar g.yas g.yon rgyu lag 'then/ lcags zam nyag thag bzhi yis sbrel/'”;¹

“The account of the construction of the residential castles is as follows.

During the lifetime of gNya' khri btsan po, the earliest (*lnga* spelled so for *snga*) castle Sham po dgu brtsegs was first (*lnga* spelled so for *snga*) [built] at the most ancient locality Yar lungs sog kha.

1. The spellings of the Gangtok edition of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* (p.146 line 6–p.148 line 3) are edited in several cases. It is, therefore, preferable to keep those of the Paro edition, although they, too, deviate considerably from the standards provided in the Tun-huang documents and the most ancient post dynastic sources: “sKu mkhar ji ltar brtsigs tshul ni/ gNya' khri btsan po'i sku ring la/ yul snga Yar lung sog kha ru/ thog mar Sham po dgu brtsegs mkhar la snga/ Yu sgum (p.147) btsad po'i sku ring la/ Yar mo nram bzhi'i shar phyogs su/ sku mkhar Bya khra bya ba brtsigs/ sPu de gung rgyal sku ring la/ Yar mo nram bzhi'i shar phyogs su/ sku mkhar Khri brtsigs 'bum rdug can/ sTong sde srong btsan sku ring la/ sku mkhar mChe ba rta rtse can/ Ba dmar 'o mas 'dam byas pas brtsigs/ rgyal po sNyan shul sku ring la/ Yar mo nram bzhi'i shar phyogs su/ sku mkhar Yum bu glad gang brtsigs/ Srong btsan sgam po'i sku ring la/ Ra sa dMar po ri yi steng/ sku mkhar dGu brgya thog stong brtsigs/ kun kyang gser gyi nyag thag sbrel/ Klu nram 'phrul gyi sku ring la/ Yar mo nram bzhi'i byang phyogs su/ sku mkhar Zo thang ri la brtsigs/ Khri lde Ag tshom sku ring la/ sku mkhar bSam yas mChims phur brtsigs/ Khri srong lde'u btsan sku ring la/ bzhugs kyi sku mkhar

During the life of Yu sgum btsan po, sku mkhar Bya khra was built to the east of Yar mo rnam bzhi.

During the lifetime of Yo re gung rgyal, sku mkhar Khri brtsigs 'bum rdug can was built to the west of Yar mo rnam bzhi.

During the lifetime of sTong sde srong btsan, sku mkhar 'Ching rta rtse can Pad dmar 'o mas 'dam byas ("wet by the milk of a red cow") was built.

During the lifetime of rgyal po sNyan shal, sku mkhar Yum bu bla mar was built to the east of Yar mo rnam bzhi.

During the lifetime of Srong btsan sgam po, sku mkhar dGu brgya thogs stong was built on Ra sa dMar po ri (p.229), with golden chains joining [its parts].

During the lifetime of Klu rnam 'phrul, a *sku mkhar* was built at Zo thang ri, to the north of Yar mo rnam bzhi.

During the lifetime of Khri lde Ag tshom, a *sku mkhar* was built at bSam yas 'Ching phu.

During the lifetime of Khri srong lde btsan, three residential castles (*bzhugs kyi sku*

gsum brtsigs/ rTa mangs bdud kyi btsan 'bangs rje/ sNa nam tshad pa'i bsil khang ni/ sku mkhar gnyug ma brag zur la/ lo pan dam chos gsungs pa'i dus/ bSam yas lho ngos Ne'u seng du/ snyug ma'i gzer khang sum thog brtsigs/ Mu ri btsan po'i sku ring la/ bSam yas grogs mkhar steng mkhar brtsegs/ sKyo bsangs dar khang dgu mig nang/ mchod g.yog gzhon mdzes dgu yis ni/ zas g.yos mi 'dra rnam pa dgu/ nang nub la sogs dus (p.148) drug mchod/ rtse dgu'i longs spyod lha khang 'dra/ tha chung Mu rug btsad po ni/ rang gnas ma mchis Rang la gshegs/ mChims kyi Gad pa skya lham du/ bzhengs kyi gtsug lag khang de ru btab/ rje yi btsan mkhar de ru brtsigs/ gyad kyi rdo ring de ru bslangs/ mnga' thang 'dzom dgu spyad pa yang/ mtha' bzhi 'bangs kyi ru la bskul/ grogs mkhar g.yas g.yon ru lag 'then/ lcags zam nyag thag bzhi yis sbrel//".

sPu de gung rgyal in the Gangtok edition is the Yo re gung rgyal of the Paro version. The Paro edition calls his castle Khri rtogs 'bum bdug can ("conceived as a throne (*khri*) with hundred thousand scents"), while the text from Gangtok writes Khri brtsigs 'bum rdug can ("built as a *khri* with hundred thousand [accumulated] debris"). While Gangtok edition says it was to the east of Yar mo rnam bzhi, the one from Paro says that it was located to the west of the same locality.

The Gangtok edition calls sTong sde srong's castle mChe ba rta rtse can; whereas the version from Paro gives a no less deviant name 'Chi nga rta rtse can.

The Gangtok edition names sNyan shul's Yum bu glad gang the famous castle in Yar lung; the Paro edition writes sNyan shul's Yum bu bla mar.

The text from Gangtok calls Mes Ag tshom's bSam yas mChims phu; on the contrary, the Paro edition has the minor diversion bSam yas 'Ching phu, which is major because it does not connect the locality to the 'Chims clan name.

The Gangtok edition writes the name of rje Khri srong lde btsan's rTa mangs bdud kyi btsan 'bangs; the Paro version has a similar name rTa 'bangs bdud kyi btsan 'bangs rje.

One more case of similarity among the two edition is bSam yas lho ngos Ne'u seng in the Gagtok text; the Paro edition writes bSam yas lho ngos Ne'u sring.

A simple scribal error in the Gangtok text—a *na ro* forgotten in the passage talking about Mu rug btsan po going to Rang instead of Rong, correctly written in the Paro edition

The Gangtok edition writes the name of Mu rug btsad po's castle as mChims kyi Gad pa skya lham; the Paro editions has mChims kyi Gad pa skya ldem.

mkhar) were built: rTa 'bangs bDud kyi btsan 'bangs rje; the sNa nam summer house [as shelter] against the heat, this being a bamboo castle at the corner of a rock; and a *gzer khang* with a triple bamboo roof, built at Ne'u sring at the southern extremity of bSam yas, when *lo* [*tsa ba-s* and] *pan* [*di ta-s*] preached the Noble Religion.

During the lifetime of Mu ri btsan po (i.e. Sad na legs), bSam yas grog mkhar ("ant hill") was built, [provided] with an upper floor. Inside sKyo bsangs dar khang (the "silky building for merrymaking") with nine windows, nine young and beautiful ceremonial assistants perform rituals six times in the morning and evening with nine different types of cooked food. They are like the gods of wealth of the nine pronged [*rdo rje*].

The youngest brother Mu rug btsad po did not stay in his own place but went to Rong. At mChims kyi Gad pa skya ldem he founded the *gtsug lag khang* that he [wished to] build. He built the rJe yi btsan mkhar (the "impregnable castle of the lord") there. Over there he erected a *rdo ring* [in celebration of] strong men. Although he manifested his might at nine gatherings, the subjects of the *mtha' bzhi* ("four borders", or "the subjects of mTha' bzhi") persuaded him [to stay] in their minor land. [Chains] were pulled up between the [areas] to the right and left of the *gros khar* ("anthill castle") [to form] a four-chain bridge connecting [these areas]".

In short, the castles attributed to various sPu rgyal rulers are classified as follows (spellings are kept as in the Paro edition of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb*):

gNya' khri btsan po:

Sham po dgu brtsegs at Yar lungs sog kha

Yu sgum btsan po (i.e. Dri gum btsan po):

sku mkhar Bya khra, built to the east of Yar mo rnam bzhi

Yo re gung rgyal i.e. sPu de gung rgyal:

sku mkhar Khri brtsigs 'bum bdug can, built to the west of Yar mo rnam bzhi

sTong sde srong btsan i.e. rGyal to re long btsan:

sku mkhar 'Ching rta rtse can Pad dmar 'o mas 'dam byas (i.e. Phying ba sTag rtse)

sNyan shal i.e. lHa Tho tho ri:

Yum bu glad gang (the Gangtok edition spells Yum bu glad gang), built to the east of Yar mo rnam bzhi

Srong btsan sgam po:

dGu brgya thogs stong, built on Ra sa dMar po ri

Klu rnam 'phrul i.e. 'Dus srong mang po rje:

a *sku mkhar* built on Zo thang ri, to the north of Yar mo rnam bzhi

Khri sde Ag tshom:

a *sku mkhar* built at bSam yas 'Ching phu

Khri srong lde btsan's three castles:

rTa 'bangs bDud kyi btsan 'bangs rje,

the sNa nam summer house, and

a *gzer khang* at Ne'u sring of bSam yas

Mu ri btsan po i.e. Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs:

bSam yas grog mkhar, and

sKyo bsangs dar khar

Mu rug btsad po:

a *gtsug lag khang*, and

rJe'i btsan mkhar built at Gad pa skya ldem of 'Chims in Rong

Those of O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka' thang*

Reading the parts on sPu rgyal Bod in Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* sent me back to O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka' thang*, the other 14th century *gter ma* on the sPu rgyal Bod dynasty, with an eye to historical and also textual points of interest. O rgyan gling pa's *gter ma* is a treatment of the royal castles strikingly close to the one in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*. The analogies between the two texts are impressive. They often correspond almost word by word or display extremely similar verbal formulations but also provide small but significant differences. One is left to ponder the textual implications for the history of Tibetan literature.

O rgyan gling pa, *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.148 line1–p.149 line 4) is similar with some notable deviances:

“gZhugs kyi sku mkhar ji ltar brtsigs pa ni/ rje gNya' khri btsan po'i sku ring la/ yul la snga ba Yar klungs sog kha ru/ mkhar la snga ba Sham po dgu brtsegs brtsigs/ rgyal po Gri gum btsan po'i sku ring la/ Yar mo sna bzahir snang ba'i shar phyogs su/ pho brang sku mkhar Tho dang Bya ra brtsigs/ rgyal po sPu de gung rgyal sku ring la/ Yar mo sna bzahir snang ba'i nub phyogs su/ pho brang sku mkhar Khri brtsigs 'bum gdugs brtsigs/ rgyal po sTong ri stong btsan sku ring la/ pho brang sku mkhar 'Phyi ba stag rtse ni/ ba dmar 'o mas sa nmams spangs te brtsigs/ rgyal po Tho ri snyan shal sku ring la/ Yar mo sna bzahir snang ba'i lho phyogs/ pho brang sku mkhar Yum bu bla mkhar brtsigs/ chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po'i sku ring la/ sku mkhar lHa sa dMar po ri yi steng/ dGu brgya go dgu rtse dang stong du brtsigs/ Rlung nam 'phrul gyi rgyal po'i sku ring la/ Yar mo sna bzhi mda' yi byang phyogs su/ pho brang sku mkhar Zo thang ri la brtsigs/ chos rgyal Khri srong lde'u btsan sku ring la/ bzhugs kyi sku mkhar gsum du brtsigs pa ni/ rTa mangs khud kyi bTsan mkhar yang rtse brtsigs/ gNam phyin chad pa'i zla ba'i bsil khang ni/ Zung mkhar smag ma brag gi zur

la brtsigs/ lo pan rnam kyi dam chos gsungs ba'i dus/ bSam yas lho ngos na rgyud Ne'u gsing du/ sMyug ma'i gzer khang sku mkhar gsum thog brtsigs/ mJing yon Mu tig btsan po'i sku ring la/ bSam yas Grog mkhar steng du sku mkhar brtsigs/ sku yi Kyo (p.149) bsangs dar khang mig dgu'i nang/ mchod g.yog mdzes pa gzhon nu dgu yis ni/ zas sna g.yos sna mi 'dra du ma yis/ nang nub dro dang gung gi dus la mchod/ bzhugs kyi sku mkhar ji ltar brtsigs pa'i le'u ste bco lnga pa'o/";

“As for how the residential castles were built, during the lifetime of rje gNya' khri btsan po, at the earliest locality Yar klungs sog kha, the earliest castle Sham po dgu brtsegs was built.

During the lifetime of rgyal po Gri gum btsan po, pho brang sku mkhar Tho dang Bya ra was built on the eastern side of Yar mo sna bzhi.

During the lifetime of rgyal po sPu de gung rgyal, pho brang sku mkhar Khri brtsigs 'bum gdugs was built on the western side of Yar mo sna bzhi.

During the lifetime of rgyal po sTong ri stong btsan, pho brang sku mkhar 'Phyi ba stag rtse at Ba dmar 'o mas sa rnam spangs (the “area wet by the milk of a red cow”) was built.

During the lifetime of rgyal po Tho ri snyan shal, pho brang sku mkhar Yum bu bla mkhar was built on the southern side of Yar mo sna bzhi.

During the lifetime of chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po, upon [the hill] of sku mkhar lHa sa dMar po ri, [the palace] was built with *dgu brgya go dgu rtse dang stong* (“999 and 1,000 roofs”).

During the lifetime of Rlung nam 'phrul gyi rgyal po (i.e. 'Dus srong mang po rje), a pho brang sku mkhar was built on Zo thang ri to the northern side of Yar mo sna bzhi mda'.

During the lifetime of chos rgyal Khri srong lde'u btsan, three residential castles were built. rTa mangs khud kyi bTsan mkhar yang rtse was built; gNam phyin chad pa'i zla ba'i bsil khang (the “resplendent moon building that is in the sky since then on”) was built in the corner of Zung mkhar smag ma brag (the “dark rock with a double castle”) and, when the *lo pan*-s were preaching the Noble Religion at Ne'u gsing, the sMyug ma'i gzer khang sku mkhar gsum thog was built in the area at the southern edge of bSam yas.

During the lifetime of mJing yon Mu tig btsan po, his *sku mkhar* was built at bSam yas Grog mkhar steng. Inside sKyo bsangs dar khang (the “silky building for merrymaking”) with nine windows, nine young and beautiful ceremonial assistants perform rituals six times in the morning and evening with nine different types of cooked food.

This is Chapter Fifteen which describes how the residential castles were built”.

gNya' khri btsan po:

Sham po dgu brtsegs at Yar klungs sog kha

Gri gum btsan po:

pho brang sku mkhar Tho dang Bya ra, built to the east of Yar mo sna bzhi

sPu de gung rgyal:

pho brang sku mkhar Khri brtsigs 'bum gdugs, built to the west of Yar mo sna bzhi

sTong ri stong btsan:

pho brang sku mkhar 'Phyi ba stag rtse, built at Ba dmar 'o mas sa rnams spangs

Tho ri snyan shal:

pho brang sku mkhar Yum bu bla mkhar, built to the south of Yar mo sna bzhi

Srong btsan sgam po:

sku mkhar lHa sa dMar po ri, built with dGu brgya go dgu rtse dang stong

Rlung nam 'phrul gyi rgyal po (i.e. 'Dus srong mang po rje):

pho brang sku mkhar was built on Zo thang ri, to the north of Yar mo sna bzhi mda'

No Mes Ag tshom

Khri srong lde btsan's three castles:

rTa mangs khud kyi bTsan mkhar yang rtse

gNam phyin chad pa'i zla ba'i bsil khang, built in the corner of Zung mkhar smag ma brag

sMyug ma'i gzer khang sku mkhar gsum thog, built at the southern edge of bSam yas

No Mu ri dtsan po

mJing yon Mu tig btsan po:

sku mkhar built at bSam yas Grog mkhar steng, and

sKyo bsangs dar khang

The attribution of castles to rulers do not provide evidence in support of these assignments. This section in both authors' works does not dispel doubts about the accuracy of the chronology of castle constructions propounded by them. According to O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas glig pa, the earliest castle was Sham po dgu brtsegs, built by gNya' khri at Yar lung so kha, followed, in their view, by Phying ba stag rtse several generations of rulers thereafter, which the tradition often considers as the first palace of the *btsan po*.

The case of Yum bu bla sgang is equally meaningful. Conventionally seen as the earliest castle in alternative to Phying ba stag rtse, the two texts have it that it was built at a later time, during the reign of lHa Tho tho ri.

While castles of the *btsan po*-s are commonly designated in the literature by a regal name, some of their denominations in the works of the two *gter ston*-s are suggestive, instead, of their architectural features. This applies to Srong btsan sgam po's castle, dGu brgya thog stong, which may reflect its overall structure said to have comprised a mind blowing number of roofs. Could it have been a nine storey palace, in the typical building style of the imperial period and the Bon po tradition? Anyway it might have been, the two Nying ma masters step

back to more familiar grounds since they place Srong btsan sgam po's residence on dMar po ri, where it partially still stands, since parts of his palace have been incorporated into the Po ta la.

The same descriptive approach adopted for Srong btsan sgam po's residence applies to Sad na legs and Mu rug btsad po's castles which are most peculiar. To decipher of these castles' architectural style in the shape of an "anthill" is perforce a conjectural exercise—perhaps a truncated conical structure with passages in its interior.

Only one castle associated with Khri srong lde btsan can be safely attributed to this ruler; the other two were built by feudatories during his reign. This one castle is the *gzer khang*—itself a structure of difficult decoding, if the meaning of *gzer* as "peg" is maintained—with a triple bamboo roof at Ne'u sring of bSam yas. This indicates that *gzer khang*, named after its obscure typology, was built after the construction of bSam yas was completed, for it says that religious activities flourished in the area surrounding this great *chos 'khor* complex.

The treatment of the castles associated with Khri srong lde btsan provides evidence, which comes as a small surprise, that bamboo architecture was adopted in Tibet during the imperial period, in use for the summer palaces of the aristocracy of those days. Given that the only two instances of this material being used are found in the treatment of the castles in Sangs rgyas gling pa's *gter ma* in association with the reign of Khri srong lde btsan, one may speculate whether this form of architecture was introduced during his time.

The section on castles highlights an underlying point in Sangs rgyas gling pa's *gter ma*, one that concerns a custom adopted by a string of successive rulers. This was that individual rulers built their own castles in places different from those of their predecessors. Over the centuries during which forty-four generations of kings ruled until dPal 'khor btsan, one count eleven instances of personal royal residences—i.e. individually built by a single *btsan po*—mentioned in the section of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba 'i dkar chag ldeb* dedicated to these castles and the rulers who inhabited them.

A GEO-POLITICAL FOCAL POINT, NOT TOO OFTEN ENCOUNTERED IN THE LITERATURE

The locality Yar mo nam bzhi takes on a degree of some importance in both authors' treatment of the castles. It is a dynastic focal point displaying an unexplicated four-fold pattern—presumably a quadrilateral formation—along whose eastern and northern sides royal castles were built. Two were to the east of it—Yu sgum btsan po's Bya khra and sNyan shal's Yum bu glad gang—one to the west—sPu de gung rgyal's Khri brtsigs 'bum bdug can—and one to the north—Klu nam 'phrul's *sku mkhar* at Zo thang ri. The first three go back to deep antiquity, and the fourth to the second half of the 7th century. The custom of constructing castles near Yar mo nam bzhi was revived by 'Dus srong mang po rje, but with the substantial difference that the eastern side of Yar mo nam bzhi, where three castles stood in earlier times, was

abandoned in favour of Zo thang ri, the well known hill due northwest of the other locations, more towards the bank of the Yar lung gtsang po.

To propose coordinates for the Yar mo rnam bzhi geo-political focal point is unproductive, given that only two ascertained localities—Yum bu bla sgang to the east and Zo thang ri to the north—are associated with it, which are not enough to approximate its location. All that can be said about Yar mo rnam bzhi remains conjectural at best in absence of further information.

This obscure dynastic focal point, along whose perimeter different *btsan po*-s made a point to build each his own castle, is hardly mentioned in other sources. A brief reference to it is found in *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.235 lines 15–16) where the text deals with the Bon po's secret version of gNya' khri btsan po's appearance on earth. mKhas pa lDe'u says that it was chosen by this ruler as the best locality for its scenic beauty and great fertility.² Judging from this extremely succinct description, Yar mo rnam bzhi was the ancestral estate of the ancient rulers, Yar lung being famed as the granary of the *lha sras btsan po*-s. No wonder, then, that castles were built on its periphery to leave space for cultivation.

The multiple references to Yar mo rnam bzhi in Sangs rgyas gling pa's *ger ma* called up an immediate analogy with the other great 14th century work on the imperial period assigned to the other great rNying ma personality of the same period.

The utter similarity in their treatment of the royal castles is just the first instance in a series of shared topics and textual correspondence between *rGyal po bka' thang* and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba 'i dkar chag ldeb* in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*.

2. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.235 lines 12–18) mentions the geographical features of gNya' khri btsan po's future territory which he spotted from his abode in the sky and chose for himself: “De nas gnam gyi mthongs phye/ sprin gyi go bsal nas sa dog la gzigs pas/ ri gzigs kyi nang nas lHa ri gyang [do las] mtho zhing btsan pa ma mchis/ thang gzigs kyi nang nas/ Kong shul Se mo gru bzhi las rgya che zhing bshams legs pa ma gzigs/ yul gzigs kyi nang nas Yar mo rnam bzhi las bzang zhing gshin pa ma chis/ 'brog gzigs kyi nang nas Yam 'brog rnam gsum las bzang ba ma gzigs/ chab gzigs kyi nang nas gTsang chab sngon mo dang Sham chu las gtsang ba ma mchis par gzigs/” “[gNya' khri btsan po] focused his sight from the sky and, the cloud formations having cleared up, looked down at the surface of the earth. Among the mountains he saw, there was no other higher and mightier than lHa ri gyang do. Among the plains he spotted, he did not see any other more extensive and excellently shaped than Kong shul Se mo gru bzhi. Among the localities he saw there, there was no other more beautiful and fertile than Yar mo rnam bzhi. Among the pasture lands, he saw there was no better one than Yam 'brog rnam gsum. Among the water courses he saw, he did not see any other purer than the blue gTsang chab and the Sham chu”.

Neither Yar lung nor Yar mo rnam bzhi is included in the classifications of lands and residences of the *rgyal phran bcu gnyis* (actually *bcu bdun*, as enumerated in PT 1286). This is an indirect indication that they were gNya' khri btsan po's personal choice as his favourite localities inasmuch as they had not enjoyed princely status before.

Bang so-s (“royal tombs”) and funerary rites

As with the section on castles, Sangs rgyas gling pa’s treatment of *bang so-s* bears close parallels with the section in *rGyal po bka’ thang* that deals with royal burials, for they both are monographs dedicated to the tombs of ’Bro gnyen lde ru and Srong btsan sgam po. They both describe related rites performed at their *bang so-s*, especially those for the latter *btsan po* and his tomb. Even in the case of this topic, the two *gter ma* are strikingly similar, even in their wording.

Given that *rGyal po bka’ thang* has been the object of remarkable scholarly attention in the past, I do not intend to linger over the structure and the way in which these tombs were built or over the rituals associated with the cult of the heavenly rulers of the sPu rgyal dynasty.

Srin mo gan rkyal

This is the section in the two works with a perceivable divergence. Both authors talk exclusively about temples attributed, as customary, to Srong btsan sgam po in their short sections dedicated to the temple-building activity of this ruler (see “The narrative of Srong btsan sgam po’s subjugation of the demoness: schemes and historicity” in this volume).

Sangs rgyas gling pa associates them with the scheme of the demoness reclining supine, whose body, representing the territory of Tibet, was subjugated by the *btsan po* by means of the construction of those holy buildings in order to make it a land of Buddhism. Sangs rgyas gling pa specifies on which limbs of the demoness the temples were built; O rgyan gling pa speaks about a good number of the same temples—with major deviations, though, for he adds several more. He attributes them to Srong btsan sgam po but omits any reference to the *srin mo* and her body. Hence, they are not seen as an expression of an attempted pacification to make the land of Tibet fertile soil for the Buddhist religion, although the construction of these temples was an obvious exercise in proselytism.

Most temples mentioned by Sangs rgyas gling pa are the canonical ones, for they commonly appear in the classifications of the scheme, even if associated in different texts with different limbs of the demoness or in different groupings. The unusual ones are Pan chen lha khang in rKyang ro, Bra yi gtsug lag khang in Dur rtse, mDongs chu’i gtsug lag khang in sPu bo, sKyo’i gtsug lag khang in sNang rtse and ’Phan yul Bye ri’i gtsug lag khang.

O rgyan gling pa shares some of these with Sangs rgyas gling pa, these being dPal tshab for Pan chen in rGyang ro, sKyo yi lha khang and ’Phan yul Bye ri, and adds rTsis in Nyang ro along with unidentified temples in Klo yul, Ka ra, Nyang, Khams and Gru gu.

Sangs rgyas gling pa, *Ma ’ongs lung bstan gsang ba’i dkar chag bkod* in *Bla ma dgongs ’dus* (Paro ed. p.227 line 4–p.228 line 3) reads:

“lHa khang ji ltar bzhes (sic for bzhengs) tshul ni/ Srong btsan sgam po’i sku ring la/ Byams pa mi ’gyur gtsug lag khang/ g. Yu ru Khra ’brug gtsug lag bzhengs [note: thog mar Bod srin mo gan rgyal du bskyel lta bu tshul du/ dpung pa g.yon par]/ dBu ru Ka tshal gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dpung pa g.yas pa steng]/ g. Yas ru gTsang ’Phrang gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dbyi g.yas]/ Ru lag Grom pa’i gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dbyi g.yon]/ lHo brag Kho mthing gtsug lag bzhengs [note: gru mo g.yas pa]/ Mon du Bum thang gtsug lag bzhengs [note: pus mo g.yon]/ sPa gror sKyer chang (p.228) gtsug lag bzhengs [note: rkang mthil g.yon]/ gzhan yang sa gnon ’di nmams bzhengs [note: dpe kun la ’dres]/ rKyang ro Pan chen lha khang dang/ sKong po Bu chu lha khang dang/ mDo Khams Klong thang sgron ma dang/ Mang yul Byams sprin lha khang dang Tshangs pa klu ’phrin lha khang dang/ Dug rtse sra’i gtsug lag khang/ sPu bor mDung chu’i gtsug lag khang/ sNang rtser sKyo’i gtsug lag khang/ ’Phan yul Bye ri’i gtsug lag khang/ Ra sa ’Phrul snang gtsug lag khang/ Ra mo che pa’i gtsug lag khang/ Srong btsan Mu ri yan chad du/ bzhengs pa’i lha khang bsam mi khyab/ kun kyang mtha’ ’dul yang ’dul dang/ rje yi bzhugs gnas gong ’og lags/’³

“The way in which temples were built is as follows. During the life of Srong btsan (p.146) sgam po [note: in antiquity Bod was like a *srin mo* sleeping supine] Byams pa mi ’gyur gtsug lag khang g. Yu ru Khra ’brug gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her left shoulder]; dBu ru Ka tshal gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her right shoulder]; g. Yas ru gTsang ’Phrang gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her right hip]; Ru lag Gram pa’i gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her left hip]; lHo brag mKho lding gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her right knee]; Bum thang gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on her left knee] and sPa gro sGyer chang gtsug lag [khang] was built [note: on the sole of her left foot], [the latter two] in Mon. Moreover, the following other ones were built to pin down the land [note: all these other [temples] are related [to the previous ones]]: Mang yul Byams srin lha khang, Pan chen lha khang in rKyang ro, Bu chu lha khang in Kong po, mDo Khams Glang thang sGrol ma, Tshangs pa klu gnon lha khang, Bra yi gtsug lag khang in Dur rtse, mDongs chu’i gtsug lag khang in sPu bo, sKyo’i gtsug lag khang in sNang rtse, ’Phan yul Bye ri’i gtsug lag khang, Ra sa ’Phrul snang gtsug lag khang and Ra mo che yi gtsug

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3. Sangs rgyas gling pa, *Ma ’ongs lung bstan gsang ba’i dkar chag bkod* in *Bla ma dgongs ’dus* (Gangtok ed. p.145 line 6–p.146 line 6): “lHa khang ji ltar bzhes (sic for bzhengs) tshul ni/ Srong btsan (p.146) sgam po’i sku ring la/ thog mar Byams pa mi ’gyur gtsug lag khang/ g. Yu ru Khra ’brug gtsug lag bzhengs [note: thog mar Bod srin mo gan rgyal du bskyel lta bu tshul du/ dpung pa g.yon par]/ dBu ru Ka tshal gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dpung pa g.yas pa steng du]/ g. Yas ru gTsang ’Phrang gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dbyi g.yas]/ Ru lag Gram pa’i gtsug lag bzhengs [note: dbyi g.yon]/ lHo brag mKho lding gtsug lag bzhengs [note: pus mo g.yas pa]/ Mon du Bum thang gtsug lag bzhengs [note: pus mo g.yon]/ sPa gro sGyer chang gtsug lag bzhengs [note: rkang mthil g.yon pa]/ gzhan yang sa gnon ’di nmams bzhengs [note: gzhan kun ’gres par]/ Mang yul Byams srin lha khang dang/ rKyang ror Pan chen lha khang dang/ Kong por Bu chu lha khang dang/ mDo Khams Glang thang sGrol ma dang/ Tshangs pa klu gnon lha khang dang/ Dur rtser Bra yi gtsug lag khang/ sPu bor mDongs chu’i gtsug lag khang/ sNang rtser sKyo’i gtsug lag khang/ ’Phan yul Bye ri’i gtsug lag khang/ Ra sa ’Phrul

lag khang. From Srong btsan until Mu ri (i.e. Sad na legs),⁴ [the number of] the *lha khang*-s that were built are inconceivable [in numbers and quality]. All of them were *mtha' 'dul* [and] *yang 'dul*, earlier and later residences of the rulers”.

O rgyan gling pa, *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.147 lines 8–16) reads:

Chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po'i sku ring la/ thog mar Mi 'gyur Byams pa'i gtsug lag khang/ g. Yu ru Khra 'brug dBu ru bKa' stsal bzhengs/ g. Yas ru gTsang 'gram Ru lag Grom pa bzhengs/ lHo brag Kho mthing Mon yul Bum thang bzhengs/ sPa gror sKyar chu mDo Khams Klong thang sgröl/ Nyang ror rTsis dang rGyang ror dPal tshab bzhengs/ Kong por Chu dang lha khang bzhengs su gsol/ Mang yul Byams sprin Tshangs pa rlung gnon bzhengs/ sPra dun rtse dang sKyo yi lha khang bzhengs/ Klo yul Kha ra Nyang Khams Gru gu bzhengs/ 'Phan yul Bye ri lHa sa 'Phrul snang dang/ Ra mo che yi gtsug lag khang rnam bzhengs//”;

snang gtsug lag khang/ Ra mo che yi gtsug lag khang/ Srong btsan Mu ti yan chad du/ bzhengs pa'i lha khang bsam mi khyab/ kun kyang mtha' 'dul yang 'dul dang/ rje yi bzhugs gnas gong 'og lags//”.

The differences in terms of lexical variations between the two versions are evident:

Paro ed. = g. Yas ru gTsang 'Gri gtsug lag
 Gangtok ed. = g. Yas ru gTsang 'Phrang gtsug lag
 Paro ed. = Ru lag Grom pa'i gtsug lag
 Gangtok ed. = Ru lag Gram pa'i gtsug lag
 Paro ed. = lHo brag Kho mthing gtsug lag
 Gangtok ed. = lHo brag mKho lding gtsug lag
 Paro ed. = sPa gror sKyer chang
 Gangtok ed. = sPa gro sGyer chang
 Paro ed. = sKong po Bu chu lha khang
 Gangtok ed. = Kong por Bu chu
 Paro ed. = Klong thang sgron ma
 Gangtok ed. = Glang thang sGrol ma
 Paro ed. = Tshangs pa klu 'phrin lha khang
 Gangtok ed. = Tshangs pa klu gnon lha khang
 Paro ed. = Dug rtsed sra'i gtsug lag khang
 Gangtok = Dur rtser Bra yi gtsug lag khang
 Paro ed. = sPu bor mDung chu'i gtsug lag khang
 Gangtok ed. = sPu bor mDongs chu'i gtsug lag khang
 Paro ed. = Paro = Srong btsan Mu ri
 Gangtok ed. = Gangtok = Srong btsan Mu ti

4. According to Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag bkod*, Mu rug btsad po, the disgraced brother of Sad na legs—he briefly ruled before being dethroned—was a *lha sras btsan po* who systematically focused on the *lha khang*-s of the anthropomorphic scheme, but not on the *ru gnon* temples. He says (Gangtok ed. p.143 lines 2–3): “gZhan yang mtha' 'dul yang 'dul gyi/ gtsug lag khang sogs mchod rten bzhengs//”; “Moreover, [Mu rug btsad po] built *mchod rten*-s at the *mtha' 'dul* [and] *yang 'dul gtsug lag khang*-s”.

“During the time of chos rgyal Srong btsan sgam po, first (*thog mar*) Mi ’gyur Byams pa’i gtsug lag khang g. Yu ru Khra ’brug and dBu ru bKa’ stsal were built; [then] g. Yas ru gTsang ’Gram and Ru lag Grom pa were built; lHo brag mKho mthing and Mon yul Bum thang were built; sPa gro sKyar chu, mDo Khams Klong thang sGrol, rTsis in Nyang ro and dPal tshab in rGyang ro were built; and Chu in Kong po. He had [these] *lha khang*-s built. sPra dun rtse and sKyo yi lha khang were built. Klo yul, Ka ra, Nyang, Khams and Gru gu were built. ’Phan yul Bye ri, lHa sa ’Phrul snang and Ra mo che yi gtsug lag khang were built”.

Temples

Again, I opt here to use the Paro edition of Sangs rgyas gling pa’s *Ma ’ongs lung bstan gsang ba’i dkar chag ldeb* inasmuch as its spellings are not edited as in the Gangtok edition of the same work (ibid. p.141 line 6–p.143 line 3). Moreover, some concepts are better explicated. The passage (p.223 line 6–p.225 line 2) reads as follows:

“rGyal rgyud gtsug lag khang gcig ni/ ’Jing yon Mu tig btsad po yis/ jo mo dPal (p.224) btsun khab tu zhes/ bSam yas lcags ri’i shar lho’i mtshams/ rGya gar rtse gsum bzhengs pa ni/ spangs brgya dbu rtse’i gsum ’dab la/ ’og khang Bod kyi lugs su bkod/ Li yi shing bzo mkhan bkugs nas/ gong thog Li’i lugs su phub/ rGya nag chu’i gzo bos/ steng thog rGya nag lugs su phub/ rGya gar gyi yul gzo bos/ gong thog rGya gar lugs su phub// lha bkod dbu rtse rigs gsum gyi/ steng ’og bar gsum bkod pa rnams/ gsum skyar dgu thog nang du bkod/ rnga la ’kyams dang ’khor rims dang/ skor mdzod bco brgyad rdo ring dang/ gzo khyad mi ’dra bla khyad can/ gzhan rtse grus skas phibs zur lcogs/ dbu rtse’i byan ’dab lcog bzhi dang/ bkod pa khyad med ’bra ba las/ lan gsum rtsigs nas dgu thog bzhengs/ de rjes dBu ru gtsug lag khang/ skar ma gcig gis ’khyon dpe blangs/ dKar chung rDo dbyings dkyil ’khor bzhengs/ dBus kyi rgyal khang gzo thon la phyogs mtshams ka rtag mchod rten brgyad/ rdo rings la gtsug lag khang/ stong sde’i mi skol sa rdo bsags/ phyogs bzahir gzo bo rgya rgya yis/ rdo la dam ting shing lhags rtsig/ Yar lungs bTsan thang gtsug lag khang bzhengs/ dPal gyi ngang btsun rgyal mos bzhens/ g.yu yi rgya phibs rta mdzes/ g.yu mgo chu srin bum sna can/ lcog khang rta babs be du rya/ ’dam zhal lder gzo rgyud ris mkhan/ gzo bo don brgyad phyag gis rdar/ mTho la yeng pa’i (p.225) gtsug lag bzhengs/ tha chung lha sras Mu rug can/ yab kyi bzhugs shul ma dbang ste/ tha yul Rong btsan so kha gzung/ sKong po’i yul thebs kyi lcags/ mChims kyi Gad pa skya bo dang/ Nyang khri Bod kyi Do bo ru pho brang gtsug lag sku mkhar rtsigs/ rgyas par dkar shog log nas ’byung/ gzhan yang mtha’ ’dul yang ’dul gyi/ gtsug lag khang sogs mchod rten bzhengs/”;

“The *gtsug lag khang*-s of the royal successors. ’Jing yon Mu tig btsad po married jo mo dPal (p.224) btsun. In the southeastern extremity of the bSam yas boundary wall he built rGya gar rtse dgu (the “nine floors of Gangetic India”, the Gangtok edition spells rGyal mkhar rtse). The elevation of the *dbu rtse* is three floors. The ground floor is made in the style of Tibet. Carpenters were summoned from Li, and [thus] the roof cover is in the Li style. Artisans from the Chinese protectorates (*chu’i gzo*

bo spelled so for *chu'i bzo bo*) were summoned. They made the roof cover of the top floor in the Chinese style.⁵ Artisans from the land of rGya gar made a roof in the style of rGya gar. The wondrous dBu rtse in three architectural styles includes an upper, middle and lower roof, triple [in shape], which makes nine internal storeys. It was built with nine floors in three sections. The extraordinary works include courtyards with drums, superimposed processional corridors, eighteen treasury rooms, a *rdo ring*, so extraordinary that they cannot be compared [to anything else]. Moreover, [it has] squarish pinnacles (*rtse gru*), stairs, domes, corner turrets, and the *dbu rtse* with balconies and four turrets which makes its construction unique. Built in three phases, its construction has nine roofs.

Thereafter [Mu tig btsan po? 'Jing yon Sad na legs?] built sKar chung rDor dbyings dkyil 'khor, the model for its size being a star. The outline of its central *rgyal khang* is with eight ever lasting *mchod rten* at its borders in the [various] directions. Conscripted men from the *stong sde-s* (which ones? those of dBu?) amassed stones from the area for its *rdo rings* (spelled so) and the *gtsug lag khang*. Groups of 100 artisans were employed [to work on] each of its four sides. Its massive foundations were laid with those stones.

Yar lungs bTsan thang gtsug lag khang was founded. dPal gyi ngang btsun rgyal mo built it.

Masters of clay-working techniques, manually polished the turquoise pagoda roofs [decorated] with beautiful horses and the temples' *baidurya* archways in the turrets. Master craftsmen, specialists of finishing in clay, seventy-eight [of these] artists personally refined [the works].

mThol yeng pa'i (p.225) gtsug lag [khang] was [also] built.

The youngest brother, the *lha sras* bearing [the name] Mu rug, did not rule over the seat left empty by his father but ruled over (*gzung* spelled so for *bzung*) tha (spelled so for *mtha* ') yul Rong tsan so kha. He subsequently settled in the land of sKong po (spelled so). He built a palace, a *gtsug lag [khang]* and a residential castle at mChims kyi Gad pa skya bo and at Nyang khri Bod kyi Do bo.

This [excerpt] comes from the back side of the white [paper] scroll, [where these accounts] exist in a more extensive form.⁶ Moreover he built *mchod rten-s* at [temples], such as the *mtha' 'dul* and *yang 'dul gtsug lag [khang-s]*.

O rgyan gling pa, *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.144 line 4–p.145 line 8) says:

“rGyal rgyud gtsug lag khang chen brtsigs pa ni/ rgyal po Mu tig btsan po'i sku ring la/ jo mo dPal gyi ngang btsun khab tu bzhes/ bSam yas lCags ri nag po'i shar lho mtshams/ dam pa'i rGya gar rtse dgu bzhangs pa ni/ rGya khyon dpangs ni dBu rtse

5. The term *chu'i gzo/bzo bo* would be meaningless if read literally. *Chu* is a loan word from Chinese, addressing Chinese protectorates. They existed numerous in the Sino-Tibetan borderland in the time of the sPu rgyal dynasty. The implications of the loan word *chu* points towards the employment of artisans from the Chinese protectorates near the A mdo border.
6. The Gangtok edition of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* (p.143 line 2) reads: “rGyas par skar chag 'og nas 'byung/’”; “This comes from the *dkar chag 'og*, where it exists in a more extensive form”. The formulation of this passage is less precise and conceptually less significant than

sum ldab la/ 'og khang gzhi ma Bod kyi lugs su phub/ Li yi shing mkhan Bod du gdan drangs nas/ gong gi thog gnyis Li yi lugs su phub/ rGya nag be chu'i shing mkhan gdan drangs nas/ de steng thog gsum rGya nag lugs su phub/ rGya gar shing mkhan mkhas pa gdan drangs nas/ de gong thog gsum rGya gar lugs su phub/ lha'i bkod pa dBu rtse rigs gsum gyi/ 'og khang bar dang steng gyi bkod pa mams/ lan gsum 'dabs te dgu thog nang du bkod/ snga khang khyams dang 'khor sa rim pa dang/ dkor mdzod bco brgyad rdo ring bzo yi khyad/ gzha' tse gru skas phibs zur lcog chung dang/ sBu rtse bya 'dab steng gi lcog bzhi yi/ bkod pa'i rim pa khyad med 'dra ba la/ lan gsum 'dabs te dgu thog bzhengs su gsol/ rjes la dBu ru Klung shod gtsug lag khang/ skar ma gcig gi khyon dpe ru blangs/ sKar chung rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor bzhengs/ dBus kyi lte ba rgyal khang gzo thon/ phyogs mtshams brgyad du bka' rtags mchod rten bzhengs/ rTsis kyi rDo ring la sogs gtsug lag (p.145) khang/ stong sde'i mi bran sa rdo shing gshog dang/ phyogs re dag na bzo bo brgya brgya yis/ rdo yi rmang bting shing dang 'dam pas brtsigs/ gzhan yang Yar klungs bTsan thang gtsug lag khang/ dPal gyi ngang btsun rgyal mos bzhengs su gsol/ g.yu phibs sngon mo lta bar mdzes pa la/ g.yu yi mgo can chu srin bum sna can/ cong khang rta babs g.yu thog ba'i dūrya/ zhal 'dam lder bzo rgyud ris mkhan po ni/ bzo bo bdun cu don brgyad phyag gis bdar/ rgyal rgyud gtsug lag khang chen brtsigs pa'i le'u ste bcu gnyis pa'o/";

“The construction of the great *gtsug lag khang*-s of the royal successors. During the lifetime of rgyal po Mu tig btsan po, he married with jo mo dPal gyi ngang btsun. At the southeastern border of bSam yas lCags ri nag po he built dam pa'i rGya gar rtse dgu (the “nine floors of Gangetic India”). Its size being according to the Gangetic Indian elevation [standard] is a *dbu rtse* with three floors. The ground floor is covered [with roofs] in the style of Tibet. Carpenters from Li were summoned to Bod and [thus] it was covered with two roofs above it. Carpenters from the Chinese Be protectorate (Be chu) were summoned. They covered the floor above [the ground floor] with three roofs in the Chinese style. Master carpenters from rGya gar were summoned. They covered the top floor with three roofs in the style of rGya gar. The divinely built dBu rtse in three architectural styles includes an upper, middle and lower roof, triple [in shape], which makes nine internal storeys. Its extraordinary works include courtyards with drums, superimposed processional corridors, eighteen treasury rooms, a *rdo ring*, [all of them] so extraordinary that they cannot be compared [to anything else]. Moreover, [it has] squarish pinnacles (*rtse gru*), stairs, domes, corner turrets. The *dbu rtse* has balconies and four turrets, which makes its construction unique. Built in three phases, its construction has nine roofs.

Thereafter [Mu tig btsad po? Sad na legs?] built sKar chung rDor dbyings dkyil 'khor, the model for its size being a star. The outline of its central *rgyal khang* is with eight ever lasting *mchod rten* at its borders in the [various] directions. Conscripted men from the *stong sde*-s (which ones? those of dBus?) amassed stones from the area

the similar one in the Pa ro edition of the same text. Forcing the meaning of 'og in the Gangtok edition may be read as the “last lines of the *dkar chag*”, but the reading *log* of the Paro edition is better (ibid. p.225 line 2: “rGyas par dkar shol log nas 'byung”). *dKar shog log* to mean the “back side” of the document, manifestly a white scroll. This is confirmed by O rgyan gling pa's colophon of *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.227 line 20), where it is written *dkar shog logs*.

for the rTsis kyi *rdo ring* (spelled so) and the *gtsug lag* (p.145) *khang*. A group of 100 artisans for each of its sides selected the foundation stones and the wood.

Moreover, dPal gyi ngang btsun rgyal mo built Yar klungs bTsan thang gtsug lag khang. As for the blue pagoda roofs in turquoise that are beautiful at the sight, seventy-eight master artists, specialists of finishing in clay, personally made the chu srin-s (“water dolphins”) with turquoise heads and with trunks, and alabaster porches with *baidūrya* archways. This is Chapter Twelve dealing with the construction of the great *gtsug lag khang*-s of the royal successors”.

This section is restricted to the foundations by Mu tig btsad po, a son of Khri srong lde btsan, to whom the sobriquet of Sad na legs is attributed, and dPal gyi ngang btsun rgyal mo, the wife of Khri Ral pa rather than Mu tig btsan po’s as held in Sangs rgyas gling pa’s text. The nickname ’Jing yon assigned to Mu tig btsad po shows that Sangs rgyas gling pa has accepted the view which propounds the identity of Mu tig btsan po as Sad nalegs.

O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa concur in saying that Mu tig btsan po founded a temple at bSam yas but its description is strikingly similar to the structure of Khri srong lde btsan’s dBu rtse. The location of Mu tig btsad po’s purported temple is most controversial. It is given as standing inside the southeastern corner of bSam yas’s boundary wall, thus apparently making an identification with Khri srong lde btsan’s dBu rtse impossible, but despite the anomaly in the location, the description refers in detailed way to the core of bSam yas *chos ’khor*.

Mu tig btsad po, to whom they attribute the nickname ’Jing yon on the basis of the propounded identity as Sad na legs, is credited with the making of sKar chung rDor dbyings dkyil ’khor, poetically linked to a star, as its name implies. It is well known that this temple was the main foundation of Sad na legs. Hence, Sangs rgyas gling pa’s attribution of this temple reinforces his view that the Mu tig btsan po was Sad na legs, an assessment not always shared in the Tibetan tradition (see e.g. Kah thog rig ’dzin Tshe dbang nor bu’s *Bod kyi lha btsad po ’i gdung rabs* p.64 line 12–p.65 line 7), while *lDe’u Jo sras cho ’byung* (p.133 line 9), for instance, says that he never ruled. To lay its foundations people enrolled in the *stong sde* of the sPu rgyal army were conscripted to work at setting stones as the layer on which the temple was built.

dPal gyi ngang btsun rgyal mo’s foundation of bTsan thang gtsug lag khang—conveying the “impregnability of the plain” where it was built—is confirmed by Ne’u pandi ta (*sNgon gyi gtam me tog gi ’phreng ba* p.26 lines 11–12), whereas other historiographical sources, for instance *Nyang ral chos ’byung* (p.420 lines 5–7), attribute this temple to her husband Ral pa can.

Three phases should be reckoned in the record of the localities ruled by Mu rug btsad po and the edifices he was responsible for:

- the first, when Mu rug btsad po was dispossessed of the throne following his assassination of the young dignitary ’U ring (see, *inter alia*, *Nyang ral chos ’byung* p.409 line 21–p.410 line 18);

- the next one, which allows a glimpse of the fate that awaited him after he was dethroned. He was exiled to Rong tsan so kha, a border area of an unidentified territory given the vagueness of the name. He was assigned old fiefs and important tracts of land, facts whose appraisal is based on an assessment of the next phase;
- a third one, when he built royal edifices in the neighbouring areas of mChims and Nyang khri, which indicates that he settled in Kong po and Nyang po. This is how I read Nyang of Nyang khri, given its proximity to Kong po.⁷ Another passage in the Paro edition of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* (p.229 lines 4–5) provides the name of the locality in mChims yul—Gad pa skya ldem—where he built a *gtsug lag khang* and a castle, as well as a *rdo rings* on the premises of his residence. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* (p.410 lines 12–13) describes mKhar dmar at Thun tshags as the castle given to Mu rug btsan po as his quarters in exile, whose location he does not clarify.

The treatments of these temples in *rGyal po bka' thang* and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* correspond almost entirely except for the final part, for Orgyan gling pa omits completely the section which Sangs rgyas gling pa dedicates to Mu rug btsad po.

gTer ma concealments

The two sources' long sections on the temples in which *gter ma*-s were concealed correspond in terms of classification and content. They are again similar in most cases, but formulations and features emphasised are often different. The places of concealment were:

O RGYAN GLING PA'S RGYAL PO
BKA' THANG

SANGS RGYAS GLING PA'S MA 'ONGS
LUNG BSTAN GSANG BA'I DKAR
CHAG LDEB (GANGTOK ED.)

IHa Tho tho ri's Yum bu bla mkhar
(p.153,1)

IHa Tho tho ri's Yum bu bla mkhar (p.153,5)

'Brong gnyan lde ru's bang so at Yar
lungs Zhang mda' (p.155,5)

'Brong gnyan lde ru's bang so at Yar lungs
Zhang mda' (p.156,6)

various spots inside Ra sa 'Phrul snang
(p.156,7-p.162,8)

various spots inside Ra sa 'Phrul snang
(p.158,4-p.168,5)

dkyil 'khor (p.156,7)

dkyil 'khor (p.158,4)

sgo yi them (p.157,15)

sgo yi them (p.160,6)

7. One clue for identifying the *rong* where Mu rug btsad po was exiled is offered by another passage of *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* briefly recording that he hid some regal paraphernalia—several Chinese pieces of armour, a white silver helmet and a silver vase filled with gold—at this locality (Gangtok ed. p.214 line 5–p.215 line 1). The place where he concealed these objects was to the south of Se mo ryal ri in Rong of northern Kong po. This was an important *gter kha* (see the table on the next page).

ka ba bum pa can (p.158,15)	ka ba bum pa can (p.162,3)
ka ba seng ge can (p.159,9)	ka ba seng ge can (p.163,3)
ka ba shing lo can (p.159,23)	ka ba shing lo can (p.164,1)
ka ba 'phrul mgo can (p.160,15)	ka ba 'phrul mgo can (p.165,1)
sgo'i nang khang (p.161,6)	sgo'i nang khang (p.165,5)
Khra 'brug (p.162,2-p.165,11)	Khra 'brug (p.169,4)
'Chims phu Nam ra'i gtsug lag khang (p.165,12)	'Chims phu Nam ra'i gtsug lag khang (p.168,5)
'Chims phu 'Gram bzang (p.166,2)	'Chims phu 'Gram bzang (p.174,2)
various spots inside bSam yas (p.166,17)	various spots inside bSam yas (p.175,1)
dBu rtse (p.177,4)	dBu rtse (p.189,3)
bSam yas dKor mdzod-s (p.181,10)	bSam yas dKor mdzod-s (p.196,5)
Rin chen gter mdzod (p.183,5)	Rin chen gter mdzod (p.199,1)
Jo mo gling gsum dkor mdzod (p.183,15)	Jo mo gling gsum dkor mdzod (missing)
bSam yas Pe dkar gling (p.184,1)	bSam yas Pe dkar gling (missing)
Brag dmar g.Ya ma lung (p.186,1)	Brag dmar g.Ya ma lung (p.199,5)
dBu ru sKyid smad sNye mda' (p.190,11)	dBu ru sKyid smad sNye mda' (p.206,2)
Ra sa sgo phu'i ri (p.193,6)	Ra sa sgo phu'i ri (p.210,2)
Yar 'brog Rom bu (p.195,13)	Yar 'brog Rom bu (p.213,6)
Kong po Se mo rgyal ri (missing)	Kong po Se mo rgyal ri (p.215,1)
Brag dmar Zangs g.yag nam mkha' rdzong (p.196,2)	Brag dmar Zangs g.yag nam mkha' rdzong (p.216,4)
'Chims phu (p.197,11)	mChims phu (p.218,2)
bSam yas Shar gyi gling gsum (p.198,21)	bSam yas Shar gyi gling gsum (p.222,3)
bSam yas Arya pā lo (p.199,4)	bSam yas Arya pā lo (p.222,4)
bSam yas Pe dkar gling (p.199,13)	bSam yas Pe dkar gling (p.223,2)
bSam yas mchod rten dkar po, sngon po, nag po and dmar po (p.199,19)	bSam yas mchod rten dkar po, sngon po, nag po and dmar po (p.224,1)
bSam yas lcags ri mgon khang brgyad (p.201,2)	bSam yas lcags ri mgon khang brgyad (p.226,6)
IHo brag sKyer chu lha khang (p.201,7)	IHo brag sKyer chu lha khang (p.227,1)
IHo Mon Bum thang dge ba (p.201,19)	IHo Mon Bum thang dge ba (p.227,4)
Bum thang rTse lung	Bum thang rTse lung (p.228,1)
gTsang 'Gram (p.202,15)	gTsang 'Gram (p.228,3)

rGyang ro dPal chad (p.202,23)	rGyang ro dPal chad (229,4)
mKho mthing (p.203,11)	
sPa gro sTag tshang (p.203,17)	sPa gro sTag tshang (p.230,3)
sPra dun rtse (p.204,7)	sPra dun rtse (p.228,6)
sKyo dun rtse (p.204,11)	
Nyang ro rTsis kyi lha khang (p.204,18)	Nyang ro rTsis kyi lha khang (p.229,2)
Mon Kha sna ring (p.205,1)	sPa gro rdzong (p.231,5)
	Pho ma gling (p.232,2)
sGrags kyi Yang rdzong dben gnas (p.205,7)	mKhar chu dPal gyi phug ring (p.232,5)

The socio-cultural background of the two *gter ma*

What led the two rNying ma *gter ston* to re-read aspects of the sPu rgyal period in more secular and tribal terms and with a less religion-oriented approach than predecessors in their school?

The secular conditions of Tibet had changed drastically in the period between the lives of grub thob dNgos grub and Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, the rediscoverers of *Mani bka' 'bum*, and the period of O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa.

Ideological factors impinging on both the religious and secular spheres influenced the nature of Sangs rgyas gling pa and O rgyan gling pa's treatment of Tibet in the time of the *lha sras btsan po*-s. Both authors dedicate an extensive part of their work to the imperial period in order to set the facts straight concerning an independent and glorious past as a source of pride and authenticity vis-à-vis the reality in which they operated, marked by Tibet's status of weakness under foreign control.

The important part played by the rNying ma pa of *bstan pa snga dar* having already been stressed by erudite adherents of the school of the centuries before, Sangs rgyas gling pa and O rgyan gling pa were no longer obliged to emphasise the significance of *bstan pa snga dar* and its exclusive pursuit by the School of the Ancients. They could dedicate themselves to weighing up the authenticity of the material on the imperial period that was available and to incorporating it into their own work. Their two *gter ma* were crucial in this process of re-examination.

The political divide between the Sa skya pa, on the one hand, and the rNying ma pa, most bKa' brgyud pa and the Bon po, on the other, was quite wide. *gTer ston*-s traditionally got involved in temporal matters. They used their prophetic skills for a dual purpose: to validate

the authority of secular powers (and thus to participate in political events and influence them), while, at the same time, they pursued the exegesis and practice of their school's teachings.

O rgyan gling pa was sharply outspoken in his dislike of the Mongols and their Tibetan agents. A reversal of the political situation was strongly advocated among the rNying ma ranks. O rgyan gling pa was a vociferous supporter of active opposition against the Sa skya pa and the Yuan. Sangs rgyas gling pa's political involvement is less clear. He had scholastic interactions with important masters of his time, such as the 4th Karma Zhwa nag pa Rol pa'i rdo rje (1340–1383).⁸ None of the luminaries, with whom Sangs rgyas gling pa interacted, came from the Sa skya pa ranks.

Both O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa were witnesses to the Tibetan resurgence culminating in ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan marching on Sa skya in wood horse 1354. The Phag mo gru pa master's rise to power in Tibet fulfilled the dreams of great rNying ma personalities who wished to see the tables turned in Tibet so that the sufferings inflicted upon opponents like them could come to an end. This was the attitude that prevailed among the anti-Sa skya pa/Yuan ranks at the time of the *ta'i si tu*'s assumption of secular power.

However, the relationship between the Phag mo gru pa prince and O rgyan gling pa deteriorated over the issue of local politics. O rgyan gling pa was in favour of the dismemberment of the lands of the Phag mo gru pa, for he sympathised with the claims of the gNyal pa that they be allowed to part ways from their Phag mo gru pa overlords. O rgyan gling pa repeated the *mantra* "The rope of gNyal should be cut" time and again, a view that was not appreciated by Byang chub rgyal mtshan.⁹

The Phag mo gru pa had faced, in the 13th century, a reduction of the land under their control, which eventually cost a huge loss to the bKa' brgyud pa during the Sa skya/Yuan domination (see my essay "The year the sky fell: remarks on the *gling log* of iron tiger 1290" in

8. Sangs rgyas gling pa is famed, among other things, for having made an elixir of long life, an activity in which rNying ma masters had been indulging since Guru Rin po che prepared a concoction himself. U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal/Seng ge dpal took another elixir of long life to the court of Se chen rgyal po, one that he did not make himself but the son of Guru Chos dbang, thus again indicating that these preparations were a rNying ma speciality.

The rNying ma master Zur Shakya 'od, too, took another elixir of long life to the Mongol court and gave it to Se chen (see my "Grub chen U rgyan pa and the Mongols of China").

The Mongol princes' obsession with prolonging their existence was not restricted to Se chen rgyal po but went back to at least Jing gir rgyal po. On Jing gir rgyal po's desire to receive an elixir of long life see Moses, *The Political Role of Mongol Buddhism* (p.51).

9. *Guru bKra shis chos 'byung* (p.409 lines 21–25): "Khra 'brug gtsug lag khang gi khyams stod bKa' 'dus chos kyi rgya mtsho'i dkyil 'khor zhal byes nas bsgrub pa'i dbang po nyer brgyad zhal phy pa'i tsho/ dbang chos kyi skabs 'gar gter ston gyi gsungs nas gong ma Ta si Byang chub rgyal mtshan gyis/ Bod Khams thams cad dbang du bsdus te Nyal thag gcod pa cig 'byung zhes pa yang yang gsungs/"; "On the occasion of his rediscovery of twenty-eight *Grub pa'i dbang po*, including *bKa' 'dus chos kyi rgya mtsho'i dkyil 'khor*, from the upper courtyard of Khra 'brug gtsug lag khang, the *gter ston*

this volume). gNyal had surged to an independent status during the late 13th century, a wound to the Phag mo gru pa that had not yet healed, as Byang chub rgyal mtshan's behaviour and expressions of his views, recorded in his *bKa' chems*, document.¹⁰

The Phag mo gru pa rise to unprecedented power created the opportunity to return to the political conditions that existed before the events at the end of the 13th century, during which gNyal took advantage of its neighbour's weakness to part ways. The renewed Phag mo gru pa aspirations to gain a wider local control were not favoured by O rgyan gling pa, as his words prove. He was exiled by Byang chub rgyal mtshan and spent the last years of his life in banishment living in lands contiguous to his own, with no hope of going back to his monastery and unable, for this reason, to divulge the several *gter ma* discoveries attributed to him to the savants of his day.¹¹

The relationship between *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* and *rGyal po bka' thang*: a literary case

A combined perusal of parts of Sangs rgyas gling pa's monumental work and O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka' thang* cannot help but change entrenched views about the uniqueness of O rgyan gling pa's opus. A major point of investigation concerns the paternity of these two treatments of the imperial period.

This case is all the more important because *rGyal po bka' thang* is considered to be one of the great classics on the dynastic period, whereas Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* is a masterpiece not very often consulted either by Tibetan or foreign scholars. Tibetan

said: "Sometime an occasion will come [that is favourable to obtaining] power and [spreading] the teachings". Gong ma Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan [indeed] got the land of Tibet under his control. O rgyan gling pa repeated time and again: "The rope of gNyal should be cut".

10. *Guru bKra shis chos 'byung* (p.409 line 25–p.410 line 3): "Ta si's gsan nas pho nya btang ste zhal 'gram bcag pa sogs zhabs 'dren chen po mi (p.410) 'tshams pa mang po zhus pas/ gter ston thugs khros kyilung pa 'di yon tan brgya dang ldan pa cig yong bar yod kyang sdod pa mi 'dug gsungs nas/ Shel brag Padma brtsegs pa'i rdo zam bsgyur bas gnas sgo 'gags/'"; "[O rgyan gling pa's words in favour of gNyal] were heard by the *ta si* (spelled so, i.e. Byang chub rgyal mtshan) who [then] sent a messenger to him. [O rgyan gling pa] received a strict summons, (p.410) and [was subjected] to various harassments, such as a slap on his face ('gram bcag spelled so for 'gram lcag). The *gter ston* was upset. The [*si tu*] told him: "Your area has come to have extensive [virtuous] qualities, but you cannot stay there". The stone bridge of Shel brag padma brtsegs pa was obstructed".
11. *Guru bKra shis chos 'byung* (p.410 lines 3–5): "gTer ston gyi E dang/ Dwags pa dang/ Grab gTsang ka la sogs par bzhugs te 'gro don mdzad/ Padma bka'i thang yig 'di kun la dar/ gter chos tshang ma yongs su rdzogs par spel ma thub/ rjes su E'i 'Ga' ru Sle chung kha byar sku gshegs/'"; "The *gter ston* stayed in E, Dwags po and Grab gTsang ka, and benefited sentient beings. He made *Padma bka'i thang yig* accessible to everyone, but could not get all the texts, which he had rediscovered, distributed to everyone. Eventually he passed on at 'Ga' ru Sle chung kha of E".

literature offers several cases of texts entirely copied one from another without crediting the legitimate authors. It seems that plagiarism was considered acceptable, unlike it happened elsewhere in the past and still happens in modern times.

Their respective works—or rediscoveries—seem to date to extremely close points in time. Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Bla ma dGongs 'dus* dates to 1364, and O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka' thang*, as A.M. Blondeau in "Le lHa 'dre bka' thang" proposes,¹² perhaps to before earth monkey 1368 (ibid. p.42). Her sound argument for this is that O rgyan gling pa does not mention the downfall of the Yuan dynasty he detested in his prophecies concerning political and religious events, for which he gives dates. Textual chronology does not help. The dates of the "rediscovery" of *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* and *rGyal po bka' thang*—respectively 1364 and perhaps before 1368—are too close to establish a clear divide.

Although the two texts are remarkably similar in contexts, they bear dissimilar titles and are structured differently:

- Sangs rgyas gling pa's treatment of the imperial period is included in the longer work *Ma 'ongs lung bstan*; O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka' thang* is an independent text.
- *rGyal po bka' thang* is divided into chapters; Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Ma 'ongs lung bstan* is not.
- Sangs rgyas gling pa's prose is more terse, O rgyan gling pa's more ornate.

Still, the reciprocal indebtedness of the two texts is a literary phenomenon that needs explanation. The fact that they both probably used common documents that lay claim to authenticity, an authenticity they themselves exude, does not solve the basic problem.

One point seems to be beyond question. The correspondence between most of the two texts is so complete—to the extent of similar wording but different, too—that it can hardly be casual. Was the original author the older and more flamboyant O rgyan gling pa or the younger and less politically involved Sangs rgyas gling pa? Or is it that they both used a similar source separately for their separate works? And, if so, do both go back, then, to the same ancient original?¹³ Or did one copy from the other?

That, by the way, O rgyan gling pa has used source documents for his work is evident from a few interlinear notes in *rGyal po bka' thang*'s chapter on *gter ma* concealments. Sangs rgyas gling pa has done so too, a fact that is evinced from the remarkable closeness between the two texts, although none of the two authors admits it expressly.

12. The *lHa 'dre bka' thang* itself dates to fire pig 1347.

13. One procedure for deciding whether the two 14th century *gter ma* are drawn from material used during the previous rNying ma period could be to compare their treatment of bSam yas with that in works such as *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, to understand how the two texts position themselves vis-à-vis texts which could have been potential sources. Nyang ral describes bSam yas quite differently from O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa. One major deviation is the treatment of the temple built by 'Bro bza' Khri rgyal Mang po rje. Nyang ral omits any reference to the temple's main receptacle,

One of them (*rGyal po bka' thang* p.183 lines 15–16) concerning a concealment inside bSam yas Jo mo gling gsum dkor mdzod reads:

“dPe rbying lcags smyug gis bris pa zhig la le’u ’di dang bcu bdun pa gnyis ’dug pa ltar bris/”;

“Both this chapter and the seventeenth were compiled as one single old text (*dpe rnying*) written down with an iron pen”.

Another interlinear note (*ibid.* p.190 lines 11–12) to the paragraph dedicated to the nineteenth literary treasure in the section of *rGyal po bka' thang* on *gter ma* concealments says:

“Le’u ’di Zam bu lung nang rten gyi bu zhig la ’dug pa ltar bris/”;

“This chapter is written down in accordance with the copy kept inside the *nang rten* of Zam [bu] lung”.

The same note (*ibid.* p.201 lines 2–3) is found with slightly different formulations in a few other cases. One of them in the paragraph pertaining to the twenty-seventh literary treasure in the same section on *gter ma* concealments reads:

“Le’u ’di Zam bu lung nanr rten gyi bu zhig la ’dug pa ltar bris/”;

“This chapter is written down in accordance with the copy kept inside the *nang rten* of Zam bu lung”.

That is not all. A sign of literary derivation is found in the paragraph dealing with the thirtieth literary treasure in the section of *rGyal po bka' thang* on *gter ma* concealments (*ibid.* p.202 lines 7–14), which says again:

“Bum thang rTse lung dang gTsang ’Gram gyi le’u ’di Zam bu nang rten gyi bu zhig las byung ba ltar bris/”

“This chapter on Bum thang rTse lung and [the next one on] gTsang ’Gram are written down in accordance with the copy kept inside the *nang rten* of Zam bu [lung]”.

One more interlinear note in the paragraph on the twenty-third literary treasure (*ibid.* p.197 lines 11–12), once again in the same section, reads:

“Dir mChims phu shar gyi gGling gsum Aryā pā lo’i le’u bcas gsum po Zam lung nang rten gyi bu zhig byung ba ltar bris/”;

unlike Sangs rgyas gling pa and O rgyan gling pa. Restorations of bSam yas—for instance, the one by Sa skya bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375)—occurred in the period between the compositions of *Nyang ral chos ’byung* and the two 14th century *gter ma*.

But the matter cannot be solved simplistically by considering renovations of bSam yas during the various post-imperial periods. O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa mention palaces in the precinct of bSam yas, going back to the imperial period that are not recorded by Nyang ral, thus showing that they used sources different from those of Nyi ma ’od zer. A significant case is that there is no bSam yas temple associated with Mu tig btsan po in Nyang ral’s text, whereas Sangs rgyas gling pa and O rgyan gling pa briefly describe one such.

“This is written here in accordance with the copy of the third chapter of the [text written at] Gling gsum Aryā pā lo to the east of mChims phu [and kept] inside the Zam [bu] lung nang rten”.

An interlinear note (ibid. p.205 lines 14–15) in the paragraph concerned with the fortieth literary treasure repeats:

“Le’u ’di dang Pho ma gling gi le’u gnyis Zam bu nang rten gyi bu zhig las byung ba ltar bris/!”;

“This chapter (i.e. the one on the sPa gro rdzong *gter ma*) and the chapter on Pho ma gling (i.e. the next one, the forty-first), two in all, are written down here according to the copy inside the Zam bu [lung] nang rten”.¹⁴

The same formulation is found in an interlinear note to the thirty-third literary treasure in the paragraph of *rGyal po bka’ thang* on *gter ma* concealments referring to mKho mthing (p.203 lines 11–12):

“Le’u ’di Zam bu nang rten gyi bu zhig las byung ba ltar bris/!”;

“This chapter is written down here according to the copy inside the Zam bu [lung] nang rten”.

These unambiguous clarifications indicate that the actual *gter ma*-s—at least for parts of O rgyan gling pa’s work—are the original documents from which material has been incorporated into *rGyal po bka’ thang* rather than that he jotted down his own text entirely.

One fact is beyond doubt. As far as these *gter ma* concealments are concerned, O rgyan gling pa did not derive his work from Sangs rgyas gling pa’s, for he could not have used interlinear notes that do not exist in the work of the latter. This does not mean that Sangs rgyas gling pa based himself on O rgyan gling pa, for he may have simply omitted references to *gter ma* sources at his disposal.

This textual state of affairs extends to other sections of the two works, a symptomatic case being Sangs rgyas gling pa’s reference to the *srin mo* limbs with which the temples of Srong btsan sgam po are associated. They are ignored by O rgyan gling pa. Again, Sangs rgyas gling pa could have not based his treatment of the *srin mo* on what O rgyan gling pa did not write.

14. It is obvious that the role of Zam bu lung as the *gter kha* harbouring material on the imperial period is underlined by O rgyan gling pa in these notes. His several references to at least a rediscovery of one *gter ma* at Zab bu lung—and most likely more than a single one—opens up new vistas on the antiquity of this holy place. There are no historical documents concerning its foundation, which the local oral tradition assigns to an unspecified bKa’ brgyud pa period of rule. An obvious *terminus ante quem* is the life of O rgyan gling pa.

Given the rediscovery of a document (or documents?) about the *lha sras btsan po*-s, one wonders whether Zab bu lung goes back to *bstan pa snga dar* or else whether the concealment of the *gter ma* (or *gter ma*-s?) on its premises took place at a later time but before O rgyan gling pa was active.

The respective sections on *gter ma* concealments are a key to understand more. The two texts correspond in most cases, both in terms of content and formulation. However, there are descriptions of entire *gter ma* concealments in major temples or by rulers of the sPu rgyal dynasty that do not appear in Sangs rgyas gling pa's text or in O rgyan gling pa's. Sangs rgyas gling pa says that his treatment of the religious contents of bSam yas is based on the shortest of three *dkar chag*—long, middle and short. O rgyan gling pa says that his text reflects the three *dkar chag*.

Absent in Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Bla ma'i dgongs 'dus* but appearing in O rgyan gling pa's text are, among others, concealments at bSam yas Jo mo gling gsum dkor mdzod (*rGyal po bka'thang* p.183 line 15–p.183 line 23), bSam yas Pe dkar gling (ibid. p.184 line 1–p.185 line 23), mKho mthing (ibid. p.203 lines 11–16), sKyo dun rtse (ibid. p.204 lines 11–17), Mon Kha sna ring (ibid. p.205 lines 1–6) and sGrags kyi Yang rdzong dben gnas (ibid. p.205 lines 7–13).

Missing in O rgyan gling pa's *rGyal po bka'thang* but included in Sangs rgyas gling pa's text are, among others, concealments by Mu rug at unspecified localities in Kong po (*Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* Gangtok ed. p.214 line 4–p.216 line 3) and at Kong po Se mo rgyal ri (ibid. p.215 line 1–p.216 line 6).

The lengths of other sections are quite different. Although their treatment is fundamentally similar, concealments at 'Chims phu are described in some detail in *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* (p.220 line 2–p.222 line 3) and not at all in *rGyal po bka'thang*.¹⁵

There are further small clues, detectable by comparing *rGyal po bka'thang* and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* on the issue of authorship and how the two works were written.

At the end of the section on the temples of Mu tig and Mu rug btsad po-s, Sangs rgyas gling pa cites as his source a document in the form of a white paper scroll. This could have been the same text mentioned by O rgyan gling pa in the colophon of *rGyal po bka'thang* as the root document for his overall work.

O rgyan gling pa's assertion that its author was lDan ma rTse mangs—a great disciple of Guru Padma 'byung gnas and a member of the Shar kha family from Khams, the future prince of rGyal rtse—who wrote the text down using a source document in the form of a scroll upon a request to Guru Rin po che by Mu tig btsan po and one of his queens (*bKa'thang lde lnga* p.227 lines 18–22, colophon)¹⁶ needs a brief analysis.

15. There also are individual corrections to the text, owing to different assessments, such as an entry in which O rgyan gling pa mentions a king of Li (*rGyal po bka'thang* p.166 line 12), whereas Sangs rgyas gling pa opts for a king of Mi nyag (*Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* Gangtok ed. p.174 line 6) (but which Mi nyag? Byang Mi nyag or Khams Mi nyag?).

16. The colophon of *rGyal po bka'thang* (p.227 lines 19–23) reads: “Slob dpon Padma 'byung gnas la/ mnga' bdag Mu tig btsan po dang/ yum chen btsun mos zhus ba yi/ rGyal po'i dkar chag thang yig chen mo 'di/ lDan ma rTse mangs bdag gis dkar shog logs su btav/ snang srid gtan la 'bebs pa'i Thang yig chen mo zhes bya ba rdzogs so/ gu ru U rgyan gling pas dGe ba mthar rgyas gling nas spyab drangs pa'o/”; “As requested to slob dpon Padma 'byung by mnga' bdag Mu tig btsan po and

Both the works of Sangs rgya gling pa and O rgyan gling pa extend up to the time of Mu tig btsan po, i.e. soon after Khri srong lde btsan, who ruled from the year of monkey 756 and died in the year of the ox 797, succeeded by the former's brother Mu ne btsan po (797–799) and Mu tig btsan po (799–806). Thus, no law of human longevity is controverted if lDan ma rTse mangs were alive during the reigns of those two sons of Khri srong lde btsan. Being a contemporary of Khri srong lde btsan, as affirmed in the Shar kha pa documents, does not rule out the possibility that he lived also during the reign of this *btsan po*'s children and successors. Given that Mu ne btsan po's reign was very short, lDan ma rTse mangs must have been a witness of the foundations laid by Mu tig btsad po.

The paragraphs dedicated by Sangs rgyas gling pa to the temple foundations by Mu tig btsan po and Khri Ral pa's wife dPal gyi ngang btsun, as well as any further reference to the document in scroll form besides the one in the colophon of *rGyal po bka' thang*, are missing in its text. This does not mean that O rgyan gling pa ignored the status of affairs prevailing on the throne of the kingdom, exemplified by Sangs rgyas gling pa's foundations by Mu tig btsad po although wrongly attributed, and by Kri Ral pa's wife. He has a reference to the milieu that derives from the phase of temple constructions mentioned by Sangs rgyas gling pa, since he says in the colophon of his work that lDan ma rTse mangs wrote down his text to comply with a wish of Mu tig btsan po and his consort.

Stretching credibility even more is Sangs rgyas gling pa's inclusion of the foundation of bTsan thang by Ral pa can's wife, which may not derive from the same document but could have been an addition from another source. Thus I consider the details that refer to Mu tig btsad po's commissioning the white paper document in scroll form, mentioned by O rgyan gling pa in his colophon, as historically sound and thus the existence of the document itself.

Judging from their own statements, O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa would have used more than a single source to compile *rGyal po bka' thang* and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb*. The document penned by lDan ma rTse mangs from the Shar kha family seems to have been the source of the chapters on the castles, temples, tombs and rituals of the *lha sras btsan po*-s but not those concerning the sPu rgyal rulers after Khri srong lde btsan.

At least two other texts were used for parts of O rgyan gling pa's and Sangs rgyas gling pa's lengthy outline of textual concealments. References to other documents are found sparsely in their works. One, for instance, is a reference to a scroll, mentioned by O rgyan gling pa, that seems to provide information on the concealment of *bKa' chems bka' khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum* (*rGyal po bka' thang* p.161 line 12–p.162 line 7; also see *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* Gangtok ed. p.166 line 2–p.168 line 5 which does not have any allusion to this scroll).

the yum chen btsun mo, this great *rGyal po'i dkar chag thang yig* [written by] lDan ma rTse mangs who based [himself] on a white scroll, now edited for the phenomenal world as *Thang yig chen mo* is finished. Gu ru U rgyan gling pa extracted it at from dGe ba mthar rgyas gling".

Hence, both *rGyal po bka' thang* and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* represent a case of composite textual archaeology, based on the retrieval of older documents.¹⁷

All this indicates that their texts were written independently and thus that neither one author plagiarised the other but that they probably made use of the same root documents for their chapter on *gter ma* concealments, arranged in different ways and with different criteria. Sangs rgyas gling pa's treatment of the concealments is more extensive in general than O rgyan gling pa's. Is *rGyal po bka' thang* an abridgement of the original in some cases? In the absence of direct evidence, it is possible if not certain that they included and omitted portions of text from original documents available to both of them.

17. Another issue of difficult decoding in the identification of the textual passages incorporated into Sangs rgyas gling pa's work is the *kha byang lde mig* to *rGyal po'i zhal gdams* (*Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* Gangtok ed. p.167 line 5–p.168 line 5) which reads: “gTer byang 'di dag rnam kyi kha byang gi lde mig la sogs pa sprul pa'i rgyal pos Mang srong mang btsan la gtad/ des Gung srong gung btsan la gtad/ des Khri lde gtsug brtan la gtad/ des Khri srong lde'u btsan la gtad/ des Mu tig btsan po la gtad/ des gcung po Mu rug btsad pos (p.168) slob dpon gyi phyag tu phul/ de'i dus slob dpon gyi zhal nas/ rje nyid la smas bdud kyi sprul pa zhih/ 'di nas lo dgu nas 'khrungs par gda' bas/ des khriims ba shig nas chos thams cad bsnubs par 'gyur te/ rje yab sras kyi chas rnam dang/ yab mes kyi dkor nor gyi kha byang lde mig rnam phyi rabs kyi don la/ mi rlag pa'i rdzas gyis bsdams la/ mi shig pa'i rgyas btan nas gter du sbas na/ phyi ma'i dus su yab sras skye ba brgyud pa'i tham snyigs ma lnga bdo'i tshel/ dar shing rgyas nas phan thogs par 'gyur zhes gsungs pa dang/ yon mchod bka' bgro ba 'cham nas/ gong 'og ma bu thams cad bsdebs/ kha byang/ snying byang/ dkar chag/ lde mig tu bkram nas rgyal rgyud la gtad par/ sku'i gter/ gsung gi gter/ thugs kyi gter gsum du spras nas/ phyag rtags kyi rgyas bsdams/ ma 'ongs pa'i dus/ snyigs ma'i mtha' la bab pa'i tshel/ rang rang dang 'phrad par smon lam btan nas sbas so/”; “The *sprul pa'i rgyal po* (i.e. Srong btsan sgam po) gave the *lde mig* of the *kha byang* of these *gter byang* to Mang srong mang btsan. He gave then to Gung srong gung btsan who gave them to Khri lde gtsug brtan. He gave them to Khri srong lde'u btsan who gave them to Mu tig btsan po. He gave them to his younger brother Mu rug btsad po who put them into the hands of the *slob dpon* (i.e. Padma 'byung gnas). At that time, the *slob dpon* said: “An incarnation of a *bdud* is noxious to the *rje* himself. This [situation] will exist for nine years after its inception. Therefore, following the obliteration of the law, all Chos will be wiped out. For the sake of future generations, the *kha byang lde mig* of all properties of the rulers, fathers and sons, and the wealth of the father and sons, given that they are the instructions about the items which will not be destroyed and those concealed not having been destroyed, should be hidden as *gter*-s. In the future when the five illegitimate lineages of fathers and sons will multiply, this diffusion will turn out to be useful”. He added: “After coming to an agreement about the patronage between a *bla ma* and a lord (*yon mchod*), earlier and later children will be in harmony. The *kha byang*-s, *snying byang*-s, *dkar chag*-s and *lde mig*-s that were put in [concealment] places will be given to the royal lineage. They will be subdivided into *sku'i gter*, *gsung gi gter* and *thugs kyi gter*, three [kinds of] *gter*-s. [People] will refrain from extensive personal additions. In the future when the time of illegitimacy will end, they should be hidden [again] after offering prayers that we ourselves will come across them”.

In other sections—castles, *bang so*-s, temples—the correspondence is closer. Points of contact are so extensive and numerous that it would have been impossible for the two authors to have written their works without a precise link to common literary material, for they both deemed it important not to diverge from the original formulations of their root documents.

One sign that the two texts rearranged older documents is Sangs rgyas gling pa's use of the *srin mo* allegory, which makes his treatment post imperial and post *bKa' chems Ka khol ma* and *Mani bka' 'bum* while O rgyan gling pa ignores the *srin mo* scheme. That *rGyal po bka' thang* is an obvious re-elaboration of ancient documents by O rgyan gling pa is confirmed—as is well known—by the presence of famous prophecies in O rgyan gling pa's text concerning events that occurred later than the imperial period.

But no evidence is available as to who—Sangs rgyas gling pa or O rgyan gling pa—should be credited for first drafting their respective masterpieces.

In sum, the notion of *gter ma* could not be more classical in the cases of *rGyal po bka' thang* and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb*. These *gter ma*-s are based both on textual archaeology and their rediscoverers' re-elaboration of the old texts. Some *gter ma*-s, then, would not be much different from the works of great Tibetan authors across the centuries, who made use of sources written earlier, or of present-day Tibetologists who base themselves on all kinds of documents in their respective fields.

Hence *rGyal po bka' thang* and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* are a reconciliatory epitome of the two viewpoints divided between detractors of the *gter ma* genre—a semblance of what they pretend to be—and vindicators of the authenticity of these texts said to go back to old times. Textual archaeology does not rule out re-elaboration.

The treatments of this literary genre by authors and rediscoverers are telling examples of their attitude towards the handling of documents written at an earlier time, in general. Owing to reasons of prestige and scholarly authority, *gter ston*-s, in several cases, did not credit their re-elaborations to themselves but preferred to treat them as literary treasures despite their own contribution. Tibetan authors of different periods preferred, in some cases, to attribute their work to a great personality of the past, famed for his cultural importance, than openly credit paternity.

O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa are embodiments of the opposite attitude which documents the antiquity of the material they have incorporated in their works. O rgyan gling pa's case is symptomatic. He trace back the paternity of his rediscovered treasure inasmuch as most of the information he has used was originally drafted by the 8th century master 'Dan ma Tshe/rTse mangs but also incorporated material on *btsan po*-s after Khri srong lde btsan. But in an unconventional exercise typical of his style, O rgyan gling pa neither attributes the text to 'Dan ma Tshe/rTse mangs, who based himself on an older scroll—it was no more the opus of the Shar kha pa disciple of Guru Padma exclusively—nor the 14th century *gter ston* considered it his own.

ADDENDUM ONE

gTer ma and textual archaeology

I think I have shown that the works of O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa are based on ancient historiographical material, mainly in scroll form, used as the common basis of their texts but with some individual interpretations, stylistic peculiarities, inclusions and omissions. At least in the cases of *rGyal po bka' thang* and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* of *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* the ongoing dismissive assertion that all *gter ma*-s are forgeries camouflaged as ancient works by authors with the habit of using verbs in the future tense while they should use the present one does not apply. This strict attitude denies the existence of textual archaeology. This is a shortcut to rule out the possibility that ancient works have been found again in periods after their original composition time. Events of textual archaeology are common to all cultures. Should one think that this is not possible in Tibetan literary history?

It is symptomatic that in *rGyal po bka' thang* there is no section on prophecies or a *bstan rtsis* like in other *bKa' thang sde lnga* texts, a sign that these texts had not relied on documents written earlier but were appended with more recent historical material. This is significant, given that some of the other four *bka' thang* talk, too, about the dynastic period with a historiographical treatment.

The other *locus classicus* to dismiss the antiquity of *gter ma*-s concerns language. That the lexicon used in *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* and *rGyal po bka' thang* is not the ancient one is not a decisive factor to disprove that even the root text used by both *gter ston*-s is not early. The root text may have been edited during the many centuries between the life of lDan ma rTse mangs and the 14th century when the two *gter ston* were active. It is definitely edited given the difference in contents and prose between the works of Sangs rgyas gling pa and O rgyan gling pa.

A possible alteration may have taken place in the interval from the end of *bstan pa phyi dar* onwards when a phase of revisions and re-editing of older works took place among the members of the rNying ma school. It was the next step after the sensibly earlier formulation of a Tibetan lexicon occurred already during the late *bstan pa snga dar* to comply with Buddhist terminology from India, a phase of textual re-reading successive to lDan ma rTse mangs's penning.

The context in which textual archaeology took place and was used should not be neglected and events—even those concerning literature but especially those about it—should not be appraised in an abstract manner with a priori positions. This approach has an even more needed *raison-d'être* in the light of the process of revision of Tibet's dynastic past first re-arranged by rNying ma authors of the previous period but brought back to a more authentic version by masters such as O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa.

Their new revision rested on the context in which O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa were active, marked by an epochal twist of fate in the history of Tibet, i.e. the passage from foreign domination to regained independence. It was pride for a past, revived as glorious and without any Bodhisatvic coat.

More specific aspects must be considered. Among their individual interpretations, the two authors have opted for different spellings of proper and place names and minor changes in the way certain topics are dealt with. Sangs rgyas gling pa's names of *btsan po*-s and localities are more archaic, the same names in O rgyan gling pa's work are more modern.

The two authors also made use of different root sources besides the primary document on the *btsan po*-s' castles and temples. Nonetheless, the treatment of the royal residences and temples is not synchronic in the works of the two authors. Mentioning Mu rug btsan po's rJe'i btsan mkhar and *gtsug lag khang* built at Gad pa skya ldem of 'Chims in Rong, Sangs rgyas gling pa stops his handling of the members of the *btsan po* family after O rgyan gling pa who concludes his excursus on the same typologies of monuments with Mu tg bsad po'a alleged foundations of sKar chung rDor dbyings dkyil 'khor.

The reasons behind their textual divergences could be manifold. Did Sangs rgyas gling pa omit a final section on these topics from their common root source?

All this indicates that they have proceeded to some individual editing of the contents which they have elaborated in their own individual manner. This is internal evidence provided in the works in favour of a O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa's revision of lDan ma rTse mangs's ancient root text.

Another aspect to be reminded is that, while O rgyan gling pa mentions his dependence from unidentified ancient texts in the concluding lines of the other four *bKa' thang*,¹⁸ only in one of them he names the author of the root text he has used. This is found in *rGyal po bka' thang*.

That *gter ma*-s should be considered forgeries tout court is a denial of any sensical process of writing. Any literary work is based on prior writings or other forms of documentation. Nothing comes out of the blue. Roots are the very essence of any culture.

18. *lHa 'dre bka' thang* (p.84 lines 6–9): “Me mo phag gi lo stag gi zla ba'i tshes bco lnga'i nub mo Bu tshal gSer khang gling gi sgo g.yas/ ru sbal 'og na/ Gra stod Yar chen pa U rgyan gling pa ngas/ Kun dga' tshul khirms khrid nas bton/ shog ser ni shog dril gcig 'dug go//”; “The night of the fifteenth of the first month of fire female pig 1347, I myself Gra stod Yar chen pa U rgyan gling pa, having been brought [here] by Kun dga' tshul khirms, extracted [*lHa 'dre bka' thang*] from below the tortoise at the right door of Bu tshal gSer khang gling. The yellow scroll is a scroll in rolled [form]”.

bTsun mo bka' thang colophon (p.303 lines 17–20): “Khang gsum zangs khang gling nas sprul sku U rgyan gling pas sryan drangs pa'o//”; “sPrul sku U rgyan gling pa “invited” it from Khang gsum zangs khang gling”.

Lo pan bka' thang colophon (p.423 lines 2–7): “Padma bka' yi thang yig/ lHa 'dre bka' yi thang yig/ rGyal po bka' yi thang yig/ bTsun mo bka' yi thang yig/ Lo pan bka' yi thang yig/ Blon po bka' yi thang yig nams/ gu ru U rgyan gling pa la bka' babs byung nas tshogs dang gtor ma mang po phul te gter nas sryan drangs pa'o//”; “*Padma bka' yi thang yig*, *lHa 'dre bka' yi thang yig*, *rGyal po bka' yi thang yig*, *bTsun mo bka' yi thang yig*, *Lo pan bka' yi thang yig* and *Blon po bka' yi thang yig* were

ADDENDUM TWO

Affinities between O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa's treatment of Ra sa 'Phrul snang

The two *gter ston* locate the concealment of a few texts—*Ra sa lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris* (“sections of the history of Ra sa”), *Ra sa'i dkar chag* along with chapters of *rGyal po'i zhal gdams*—within the *gtsang byang ngos ma*, the temple where the Thugs rje chen po statue, the *yi dam* of Srong btsan sgam po, and other statues of deities was installed.¹⁹ This *lha khang*, where the all important *Ra sa lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris* had been buried below the statue of Thugs rje chen po,²⁰ is in a different area of Ra sa 'Phrul snang from the spot where the *ka ba bum pa can* stands, the pillar from which Jo bo rje extracted *bKa'chems bka'khol ma*.

rediscovered by gu ru U rgyan gling pa who is a lineage holder of them, after offering many *tshogs* [*'khor-s*] and *gtor ma-s*”.

Blon po bka'thang colophon (p.538 lines 17–18): “Gu ru U rgyan gling pas Yar lungs Shel gyi brag phug nas bton pa'o/ shog ser shog dril gcig 'dug go/”; “Gu ru U rgyan gling pa extracted it from the cave Yar lungs Shel gyi brag. The yellow scroll is a scroll in rolled [form]”.

19. *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* (Gangtok ed. p.166 lines 2–3) (Jo khang): “gTsang khang byang ngos ma'i Thugs rje chen po dang/ rTa mgrin/ sGrol ma dang/ Khro gnyer ma bzhi'i zhabs 'og na/ klu rgyal dang mdun gyi mandala 'og dang gsum na/ nor dang/ Ra sa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris dang/ rGyal poi zhal gdams kyi skor mang du yod/”; “Below the feet of Thugs rje chen po, rTa mgrin, sGrol ma and Khro gnyer ma, four in all, of *gtsang khang byang ngos ma* (the “northern *gtsang khang*”) and below the *klu rgyal* and the *mandala* in front of him, [below] these three, are riches, sections of the document which is the history of Ra sa [*'Phrul snang*] (*Ra sa'i lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris*) and many chapters of *rGyal po'i zhal gdams*”. *rGyal po bka'thang* (p.161 lines 12–19 p.162 line 7): “gZhan yang gtsang khang byang ngos ma'i Thugs rje chen po dang/ rTa mgrin dang/ sGrol ma dang/ Khro gnyer can ma bzhi'i zhabs 'og klu rgyal dang/ mdun gyi mandala 'og dang gsum na/ nor dang lHa sa'i lo rgyus gyi yig ris dang/ rGyal po'i zhal gdams kyi skor mang du yod pa 'dir ma smos pas shog dril gzhang du shes/ gzhang yang par gags dang ke'u tshang che chung gnyis na/ chos dang nor dang lHa mo gzugs kyi snye ma'i sgrung la sogs pa thog ma'i sGrung 'bum dang le'u dang/ Chos skyong rgyal po zhal gdams la sogs pa yod de shog dril gzhang du shes so/”; “Moreover, below the feet of Thugs rje chen po, rTa mgrin, sGrol ma and Khro gnyer ma of *gtsang khang byang ngos ma*, four in all, below the *klu rgyal* and the *mandala* in front, [below] these three, are riches and sections of the text which is the history of lHa sa (*lHa sa lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris*) and many chapters of *rGyal po'i zhal gdams*. I do not speak [about them] here. One can come to know more about this from another scroll document. Moreover, inside a *par gags* (“partition”) and two cavities, one small and one big, are religious texts, riches, and the ancestral collection of *sgrung* (*sGrung 'bum*) including *lHa mo gzugs kyi snye ma'i sgrung*, [another] chapter, *Chos skyong rgyal po'i zhal gdams* and other works. One can learn more about this from another scroll document”.
20. *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* (Gangtok ed. p.166 lines 5–6) (Jo khang): “rTa mgrin gyi sku rgyab dbu'i thad kyi gyan du khru gang gzhal ba'i sar/ bzhal bkog pa'i 'og tu/ so phag gi tshol khru gang bzhig yod/ de gzung gis brus pa'i nang du/ seng ldeng gi sgrom gyi nang na/ Ra sa'i dkar chag gser shog la mtshal gyis bris pa/ glebs bam zangs sbyar gyis rgyas gtab pa yod/”; “In the area, measuring one *khru*, at the back of the statue of rTa mgrin, and above its head, there is a hole

These statements, said by O rgyan gling pa to be based on an old document in scroll form, may modify the way the circumstances leading to Jo bo rje's rediscovery of his *gter ma* should be understood. The Tibetan literary tradition credits the view that *bKa' chems bka' khol ma* was extracted from the pillar containing the sculpted image of a vase (see my essay "The narrative of Srong btsan sgam po's subjugation of the demoness: schemes and historicity" in this volume), but the opinion of these important rNying ma *gter ston* should not be neglected.

In their chapter on *gter ma* concealments neither of them refers to the *ka ba bum pa can* as a pillar where any textual treasure was hidden. This suggests that their understanding of the matter is different. While *rGyal po 'i zhal gdams* seems to be *Mani bka' 'bum* or better parts of it, which was rediscovered from the *gtsang khang byang [ngos] ma*, one needs to discriminate between the texts named *Ra sa lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris* and *Ra sa 'i dkar chag*. There is no little chance that *Ra sa lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris* can be anything else but *bKa' chems bka' khol ma*, which, by association, makes of the other, *Ra sa 'i dkar chag*, an ancient text on the Jo khang in need of identification.

O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa concur in saying that only sections of *Ra sa lo rgyus kyi yi ge ris* were hidden in the *gtsang khang byang ngos ma*. This would be a vague conceptual link to the difficulties met with by the disciples of A ti sha in completing their copy of the text, so that one wonders whether the text rediscovered by A ti sha was incomplete, given that the available version and its derivatives are said not to correspond to the formulation of the original source ('Chims Nam mkha' grags, *Jo bo dpal ldan A ti sha 'i rnam thar rgyas pa* (p.186 line 4–p.187 line 1). Most significant is that, according to the two *gter ston*, sections of *bKa' chems ka khol ma* were not extracted from the *ka ba bum pa can* but rediscovered inside *gtsang khang byang ngos ma*.

These texts's *gter byang*-s and *lde mig*-s—documents useful for tracing and extracting *gter ma*-s—along with others concerning *sgrung*-s ("legends", perhaps of ancient documents with ancestral contents), are said by O rgyan gling pa and Sangs rgyas gling pa to have undergone a change in the type of transferral. They passed from the *bka' ma* or oral system of transmission to being transferred in scriptural form along the line of sPu rgyal rulers.²¹ Written down by Thon mi Sambhota, they went from hand to hand down to the successive generations of *lha sras btsan po*-s from Srong btsan sgam po onwards until Gu ru Padma 'byung gnas

in a brick, one *khru* in size, beyond the surface to be dismantled. Within the cavity [made in it] with a chisel is *Ra sa 'i dkar chag* written in vermilion on a yellow scroll inside a teak box. The text is sealed inside a copper [container made of] two welded halves (*zangs sbyar* spelled so for *zangs kha sbyar*)".

21. *rGyal po bka' thang* (p.161 lines 19–23): "gTer byang 'di dag Thu mis yi ger btab nas rgyal po 'i phyag tu gtad/ rgyal pos Mang srong mang btsan la/ des Gung srong gung btsan la/ des Rlung nam 'Phrul gyi rgyal po la/ des Khri lde gtsug btsan la/ des Khri srong lde 'u btsan la/ des mJing yon legs pa 'i blo gros la gtad do!"; "Their *gter byang*-s were written down by Thu mi and given into the hands of the king. The king gave them to Mang srong mang tsan; this one to Gung srong gung btsan, this

recommended to bury them. There is an anachronism in this. According to O rgyan gling pa, the textual transmission reached 'Jing yon legs pa'i blo gros, an epithet of Khri lde srong btsan Sad na legs, *a btsan po* on the sPu rgyal throne after Khri srong lde btsan who interacted with Guru Padma unless the order of the master from O rgyan was disregarded.

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one to Rlung nam 'Phrul gyi rgyal po; this one to Khri lde gtsug btsan; this one to Khri srong lde'u btsan, this one to mJing yon legs pa'i blo gros".

There follows the admonishment by Padma 'byung gnas to hide these documents for the use and benefit of the future generations (*rGyal po bka' thang* p.161 line 23–p.162 line 7 and *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsang ba'i dkar chag ldeb* Gangtok ed. p.168 lines 1–5; see above n.16).

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Notes on the Shar kha pa of Khams and gTsang

Sources on the Shar kha pa which are less conventional than the chronicles of rGyal rtse offer a perspective that deviates—in some cases considerably—from the prevalent image of this family, based on texts from the great seat in Myang stod. The overall outcome derived from non-rGyal rtse oriented texts, which also deal with other branches of these people and their activity not covered in the better-known works, is that they also document unrecorded events involving the main Shar kha pa branch.

Major aspects of Shar kha pa history cannot be read single-handedly from the reductive viewpoint of rGyal rtse. The purpose of this essay is to expand the treatment of the Shar kha pa and show that the history of the family has a complexity that the linearity of the existing rGyal rtse orthodoxy does not reflect. Therefore, this essay of mine does not entirely follow the line taken on rGyal rtse and its princes prevalent in earlier studies.

The topics in need of study are:

- the Shar kha pa ancestors in Khams;
- the name Shar kha;
- successive lineages of the Shar kha pa of Khams and the transfer to gTsang;
- the dates of 'Phags pa dpal [bzang];
- the foundation of rGyal rtse;
- Kun dga' 'phags pa, the first prince of rGyal rtse, and the strife with rTse chen;
- Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's struggle for power in gTsang (especially the rGyal rtse-Rin spungs wars);
- the *gos sku* made in front of rGyal mkhar rtse rock and other patchwork *thang ka-s*;
- Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's second thoughts about the foundation of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*;

- the religious inclinations of the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse;
- the Shar kha pa of 'Bring mtshams (i.e. the line of 'Phags pa Dar po);
- the religious inclinations of the Shar kha pa of 'Bring mtshams;
- the middle floor *bskor lam* in the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* and its 15th century murals;
- the Shar kha pa internecine wars;
- the question of the completion of the rGyal rtse sKu 'bum;
- two controversies involving *smyon pa* masters and princes of rGyal rtse:
 - Thang stong rgyal po and Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags;
 - gTsang smyon He ru ka and bKra shis rab brtan.

Having chosen to pinpoint and concentrate on areas of interest that concerns them, this essay does not treat topics on the Shar kha pa systematically—that is according to a strict chronological sequence of events—which is the way historical works are normally conceived. This approach has been pursued in the past by western Tibetologists. I do not repeat what has already been done and, thus, do not draft a history of the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse during their apogee at rGyal rtse exclusively. Rather, preference is accorded here to a critical treatment of the chosen issues. In view of their nature, they are tackled separately. However, historiography is not neglected despite the thematic divisions, for the unfolding of the history of the Shar kha pa covers in my work periods not dealt with before and follows a sequence consonant with the lives and deeds of these princes.

The origin of the Shar kha pa

rGya Bod yig tshang is special for its treatment of the origin of various noble families—the lCe family of Zhwa lu and the sTag na rdzong pa of Shangs for instance. Their beginnings are recounted in an unconventional manner and with a wealth of details quite different from those in other texts. This applies to the Shar kha pa, too, whose fame mainly rests on their activities in gTsang, profusely present in the literature, rather than their past in their ancestral home Khams.

rGya Bod yig tshang says that the Shar kha pa who eventually founded rGyal rtse originated in East Tibet (*shar phyogs*), in the territory of lDan ma yul (ibid. p.97–98),¹ located, as is well known, along the 'Bri chu in Khams.²

1. The alternative spellings of some place names are examined in this opening note. In most cases, *rGya Bod yig tshang* writes lGa (and lGa yul) and lDan (and lDan yul), while *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* writes sGa (and sGa yul) and 'Dan (and 'Dan yul). *rGya Bod yig tshang* being the more ancient, its spellings are adopted here for the simple fact that keeping in my text the various alternatives in the passages of the diverse sources would be inconsistent and confusing for the reader.

Early references in the *srin mo gan rkyal* scheme (e.g. *Nyang ral chos 'byung*: Klön thang sGron ma'i lha khang, *lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung*: Glong thang sGron ma, *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung*: Slong thang sGron ma, and *Nel pa pandi ta chos 'byung*: Glang thang sGrol ma) to lDan yul Glong thang sGrol ma'i lha khang built in the time of Srong btsan sgam po are not useful as much as the spelling lDan/'Dan and lGa/sGa are concerned. The *srin mo* sources assess the location of this temple quite vaguely, saying no more than that it was in Khams.

Myang is often spelled Nyang, a more ancient way, and thus less common in the period studied in this essay. Hence the spelling Myang is adopted in the following pages, but when Nyang appears in the passages cited and translated from the original sources, it is left unaltered.

The peculiar spelling Shar ka pa of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* is the way this text spells the name of these people. I keep as it is in my text to highlight that reference is made from this work and in the passages translated from this source.

2. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.371 line 7–p.372 line 12): “lHa dbang sprul pa dpal lDan Shar kha ba'i byon tshul yod/ swasti/ 'gro kun mkyen brtse'i thugs rje'i nam mkha' yangs pa las/ shar ri'i rtse nas 'od stong 'bar ba bzhin/ shar phyogs lDan ma las skyes Shar kha ba/ rigs bzang khungs btsan 'di pa lHa dbang zhig/ Sa skya pa'i nang chen blon po rin chen 'dra/ 'ga' yis phal rgol dpung 'jom dmag dpon rin chen dang/ deng sang bstan pa'i srol 'dzin chos rgyal chen po'ang byon/ des na/ gdan sa'i zhabs tog bstan byus 'phel byed thabs/ mdzad pa'i rnam thar rgya che grangs mang yang/ ngo mtshar 'phrin las rags pa zur tsam (p.372) bri/ de'ang dpal lDan Shar kha bar grags 'di pa'i/ rigs rus/ cho 'brang ni/ rigs bzang pa'i dbang du byas na/ byang phyogs/ Hor Bod kyi so tshams la nye ba'i sa na/ pha wang chen po 'bri 'dra ba/ kha shar la bltas pa gcig yod pa/ de'i rgyab ngos nas 'bab pa'i chu bo la/ Tsha skye gtsang po zer/ nub la 'gro/ mdun nas 'bab pa la/ 'Bri chu zer/ shar phyogs lDan ma'i yul la 'gro ba'i/ de'i byang rgyud la/ lDan nyid rgyud pa dang/ lho rgyud la lDan srib rgyud pa zer/ lung chen de'i phyed smad tsam/ skyed stubs la/ rGya Hor gyi 'ja' lam chen mos bcad yod pa'i/ stod phyogs de la/ lDan stod/ lGapa'i yul zer bar 'dug cing/ lDan chu rgyud kyi mdo na/ Tre bo'i yul yod/"; “This is the account of the appearance of the dpal lDan Shar kha pa, the incarnations of lHa dbang (Indra). Swasti. Like 1,000 flaming rays of light emitted from the vast sky of compassion based on the merciful knowledge of all sentient beings [and] reflected by the mountain in the east (*shar ri*), the Shar kha ba had their roots in lDan ma in the east (*shar phyogs*). The authentic originator of this noble family was lHa dbang. [In the family] existed the minister like a jewel (i.e. ['Phags pa] rin chen), the *nang chen* of the Sa skya pa, [known] as dmag dpon ['Phags pa] rin chen because, fighting against enemies, defeated the armies. Nowadays [he is considered to have been] a *chos rgyal chen po*, holder of the tradition of the teachings. Hence [the Shar kha pa] found means of diffusing the fortunes of the teachings by rendering service to the *gdan sa* (i.e. Sa skya). Though there are many extensive accounts of their deeds, I wish to give hereafter a brief account of their extraordinary activities. (p.372) I will first give a detailed description of their origin. Their becoming known as Shar kha ba is as fol-

The text adds that the ancestors of the rGyal rtse family belonged to the lGa people, who were part of the rMu tribe (spelled so in *rGya Bod yig tshang*), the rMu tsha lGa,³ one of the well known *mi'u rigs bzhi* (the “four tribes of little men”) also numbered as the *mi'u rgyud drug* (the “six lineages of little men”), the ancestral tribes from which Tibetans claim descent.

rGya Bod yig tshang adds that control of the neighbouring lands of lDan [ma], lGa [yul] and Tre bo by ancestors of the family go back to an unrecorded past and that the earliest historical evidence can be traced to the reign of Khri srong lde btsan. At that time lDan ma rTse mangs, defined as a great translator in the same text, was the family's most illustrious member. The personal scribe of Guru Padma 'byung gnas is reputed to have been responsible for the establishment of the *dbu med* script which is still known nowadays as the “lDan [ma]'s way [of writing]” (*lDan lugs*, see *Dung dkar rin po che Blo bzang 'phrin las, Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* p.1169b). In a classification of the nine great *lo tsa ba*-s of Khri srong lde btsan's time, he is one of the three senior translators (on him see “An instance of textual affinity between two 14th century rNying ma *gter ma*” in this volume).⁴

lows. The *cho 'phreng* (spelled so for *cho 'brang*, “lineage” but also “maternal side”: not in this case) of their clan is very noble. In the north, at a place near the border between Hor and Bod, is a huge rock which resembles a *'bri*, and whose surface looks towards the east. The river which flows at its back is known as Tsha skye gtsang po. It flows to the west. It flows in front [of the rock looking like a *'bri*], so it is known as 'Bri chu. It flows across lDan ma'i yul in the east. Its northern area (*rgyud*) is known as lDan nyin rgyud pa and its southern area (*rgyud*) is known as lDan srib rgyud pa. About halfway into the lower part of this big valley, the great relay mail road of the rGya Hor cuts through it at sKyed stubs. In its upper part (*stod*) are the lands called lDan stod and lGa ba'i yul. In the lower part (*mdo*) of the area (*rgyud*), [where] the lDan chu [flows], is Tre bo'i yul”.

The focus on 'Phags pa rin chen in the opening of the Shar kha pa section of *rGya Bod yig tshang* may indicate that the initial part of this chapter was based on a document written during his lifetime or soon thereafter, i.e. around the third quarter of the 14th century, and thus before the main monuments of the family were built by his relatives according to the sources which favour a gTsang-oriented version of the events.

3. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.372 line 17–p.373 line 2): “gDung rus btsun pa'i dbang du byas na/ Bod yul 'dir/ mi byung pa la snga ba'i rus (p.373) ming/ mi'u rus bzhi bya ba dang/ mi'u rgyud drug bya ba byung ba'i nang nas/ Mu tsha lGa'i rgyud par 'dug/””; “Concerning the power of this noble family lineage, as for the origin of the people in this land of Tibet, the name of their clan (*rus*) (p.373) is, among the *mi'u rus bzhi* (spelled so) and also *mi'u rgyud drug*, the rMu tsha lGa lineage”.
4. *mKhas pa'i dga'ston* (p.402 lines 16–19): “Bai ro tsa na/ lDan ma rTse mang/ Kha che A nanta ste lo tsa ba rgan gsum/ gNyags Dzya na ku ma ra/ 'Khon Glu'i dbang po/ rMa Rin chen mchog ste bar ba gsum/ Ka ba dpal brtsegs/ Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan/ Zhang Ye shes sde ste gzhon nu gsum ste lo tsa ba rab dgu/””; “Bai ro tsa na, lDan ma rTse mang and Kha che A nanta were the three senior *lo tsa ba*; gNyags Dzya na ku ma ra, 'Khon Glu'i dbang po and rMa Rin chen mchog were the three middle *lo tsa ba*; Ka ba dpal brtsegs, Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan and Zhang Ye shes sde were the three junior *lo tsa ba*. These were the nine best *lo tsa ba*”.

IDan ma rTse mangs was succeeded by IDan ma Chos kyi dbang phyug, and then by the latter's sons IDan Byang khri and Byang dmar.⁵ Others followed.

rGya Bod yig tshang thus traces the origin of the historical genealogy of the Shar kha pa to the 8th century.

That this text does not go back to the actual beginning of the lineage is confirmed by *Shar ka pa'i* (spelled so) *gdung rabs*, an important work on the family, which includes a few earlier generations, among whom is the Shar kha pa ancestor, known as Tshogs kyi bdag po (also the name of Ganesha in Tibetan).

The term may derive from the Tibetan wish, born with the advent of Buddhism as the main factor of cultural integration on the plateau, to associate myths of prestigious origination with their clans, which often pointed to India as the land from where the noble families of Tibet descended. But this is not definitely so because *tshogs kyi bdag po* is often used as the term to denote the originator of a lineage.

Tshogs kyi bdag po had intercourse with the daughter incarnation of his mind and Ma sangs Gro rgod lDong btsan was born.⁶ His strength and courage is probably at the base of the statement in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* that the ancestor of the Shar kha pa, called dGra rgod 'Dong btsan in this text, was the son-in-law (*mag pa*) of Khrom Ge sar (ibid. p.4 lines 7–9).

5. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.372 lines 11–17): “IDan chu rgyud kyi mdo na/ Tre bo'i yul yod pas/ dGa' IDan Tre bo gsum la dbang bsgyur ba'i/ rje ba'i rigs su gyur nas/ dang por/ chos rgyal Khri srong lde btsan gyi dus su/ IDan ma rTse mangs/ zer ba'i sgra bshyur gyi lo tsā ba chen po dang/ gzhan yang/ IDa ma Chos kyi byang chub zer ba'i chos rgyal dang/ IDan ma Byang khri/ Byang dmar la sogs/ Ma sang gyi sprul pa'ang mang du byung bar 'dug/”; “This family of lords who ruled dGa' (spelled so), IDan and Tre bo, altogether three, having come into existence, initially during the time of chos rgyal Khri srong lde btsan there was IDan ma rTse mangs, a great translator and, moreover, the *chos rgyal* known as IDan ma Chos kyi dbang phyug, along with many incarnations of Ma sang, such as IDan Byang khri and Byang dmar”.

6. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.53 lines 3–5): “De nas bu mo de sprul dang lDan par gyur te lDan ma'i yul du bsdad pa nas btsa' ba'i dus la babs pa na skar ma rGyal dang gza' phur bu gnyis 'dzom pa la bu ngam nag cing bzhin mi 'dug pa mche ba yod shes rig bkra shis lus bong shed stobs che ba/”; “Then the young woman, who had manifested miraculous signs, stayed in lDan ma'i yul and the time of delivery came. A boy was born on Thursday under the constellation rGyal. His complexion was dark; he was not good looking and [already] had canines. He was intelligent, had a big body and was very strong”.

Ibid. (p.54 lines 3–4): “Mi mang Ma sangs Gro rgod lDong btsan zhes grags so/”, “[He had] many names, [yet] he was known [generally] as Ma sangs Gro rgod lDong btsan”.

Again, the myth of Tshogs kyi bdag po generating the earliest Shar kha pa by intercourse with his daughter indicates India as its root and legends concerning Brahma in particular.

The same text (*ibid.*) adds that the original land of the family was mDo Khams stod. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* corroborates the identification of the ancestral lands of the Shar kha pa found in *rGya Bog yig tshang*. It states that the lands in which Ma sangs Gro rgod lDong btsan dwelled were lDong, 'Dan ma and sGa in northern Khams.⁷ lDong, which appears in his name—and is a land under his control—is, as well known, one of the *mi'u rigs*. The presence of groups of the lDong in upper Khams (known as Khams stod aka mDod stod and Yar Khams) has been steady until this day.

On the basis of the evidence provided by *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, the tribal name lDong is again present in the name of the next member of the Shar kha pa, Ar rgod lDong btsan (see the genealogical table below on p.758), a sign that this text indirectly indicates a descent of the family from the lDong, people of Mi nyag pa origin.

By saying that this family originated from the rMu tsha lGa, *rGya Bod yig tshang* transfers the ethnic affiliation of the Shar kha pa from the name of one of their ancestral lands (i.e. lGa yul) to their tribal identity. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* does the opposite. It treats lDong canonically as an ethnonym but also makes of it the name of a region inhabited by the Shar kha pa.

When *rGya Bod yig tshang* says that the Shar kha pa ancestors stemmed from the rMu tsha lGa, this would refer to the *rus* (“paternal clan”) of the family, a statement contradicted by *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, which affirms that Ma sangs Gro rgod lDong btsan had no official father, although the names of the early members of the family indicate that they perhaps belonged to the lDong tribe. In reference to the Shar kha pa family's *cho 'brang* (“maternal clan”) the text of *rGya Bod yig tshang* gets into a somewhat lengthy treatment of the geography of the lands occupied by them. Among them there obviously is lGa yul. The way the Shar kha pa *cho 'brang* is dealt with makes it possible that the family's maternal side was rMu tsha lGa.

One consequence of these differing points of view on the origin of the Shar kha pa is of a chronological nature. Judging from the account in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, Gro rgod lDong btsan must have lived in the late 7th or early 8th century, since his grandson was a contemporary of Khri srong lde btsan.⁸ From a statement of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* that he was the *mag pa* of Gling Ge sar, he would have been active in the 11th century on the

7. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.53 line 5–p.54 line 1): “Pha ngos ston rgyu med pas (p.54) rus shod ma byung pas ma'i sdod pa dang mthun par/ lDong dang 'Dan ma dang/ sGa la sogs par yin zer//”; “Not having an actual father to point to, (p.54) he could not claim to be [from any] clan. In conformity with the place where his mother dwelled, he said he was from lDong, 'Dan ma or sGa”.

8. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.54 lines 4–6): “De'i sras Ar rgod lDong btsan bya ba yab dang phyogs mthun pa zhig byung nas/ 'khrung ma thag gom pa gsum bsgrod pa dang nyi ma shar ba mnyam du byung ba'i yul sGa yin pas Shar sGa pa shes grags so/ de'i sras Khri srong lde btsan gyi dus su slob dpon Padma'i dngos slob 'Dan ma rTse mangs zer ba'i sgra bsgyur gyi lo tsa ba chen po byung dis dgung lo phyed nyis brgya bzhugs zer//”; “His son Ar rgod lDong btsan was like his father, and walked three steps as soon as he was born. Given that he was born as soon as the sun rose (*shar*) in the land of sGa, he was known as Shar sGa pa. His (i.e. Ar rgod lDong btsan's) son, known as 'Dan

grounds of Gling Ge sar's dates given in the literature as 1000–1087,⁹ but also, although less probably, 1038–1113.¹⁰

ma rTse mangs, who lived during the time of Khri srong lde btsan, was a direct disciple of slob dpon Padma. He became a great master of translations. It is said that he lived for 150 years”.

9. Kah thoh rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu, *Bod rje lha btsad po'i gdung rabs tshig nyung don gsal yid kyi me long* (p.69 lines 7–12): “Gling rje Ge sar du grags pa yang gNam lde 'Od srung na 'di yab sras kyi rings la byung bar mngon no/ Rlangs kyi a mes Byang chub 'dre bkol gyi spyin bdag Ge sar gyis byas shing/ Byang chub 'dre bkol rang nyid Gu ru Padma'i sprul pa dang/ Ge sar Khri srong lde'u btsan gyi sprul par khas blangs shing/ Ge sar lo gya bgyad thub pa'i lung bstan mdzad tshul Rlangs kyi Po ti bse rur yod//”; “It is held that the one known as Gling rje Ge sar existed during the time of gNam lde 'Od srung, the father and son (i.e. dPal 'khor btsan). Ge sar was the patron of Rlangs kyi a mes Byang chub 'dre bkol. It is accepted [by the savants] that Byang chub 'dre bkol himself was the incarnation of Gu ru Padma while Ge sar was the incarnation of Khri srong lde'u btsan. In *Rlangs kyi Po ti bser ru* there is the record of a prophecy issued [by Byang chub 'dre bkol] that Ge sar would be able to live for eighty-eight years”.

The notion that Gling Ge sar was a contemporary of 'Od srung and dPal 'khor btsan, documented by Tshe dbang nor bu as a fact rests on the chronology of the *lha sras btsan po-s* that is always postponed in the later sources, whereas the ancient ones prove that they should antedated in respect to the more recent documents. That Tshe dbang nor bu applies the late sources chronology in the case of Ge sar and the two *btsan po* ('Od srung and dPal 'khor btsan) is derived from the dates of Byang chub 'dre bkol he gives in the following of his treatment of the great Rlangs grub thob. The great rig 'dzin (ibid. p.70 lines 7–8) writes: “Byang chub 'dre bkol lo brgya dang brgyadbme 'brug zla ba bcu gcig pa'i tshes bcur gshegs zer//”; “It is said that Byang chub 'dre bkol died at age 108 on the tenth of the eleventh month of fire dragon 1076”. His dates are believed to have been 969–1076.

Byang chub 'dre bkol told Gling Ge sar he would live for eighty-eight years (*Byang chung 'dre bkol gyi rnam thar* p.45 lines 17–18): “bDud kyi bar chad mi' byung ba/ rnal 'byor bdag gis srung ma byed/ lo ni bryad cu rtsa bryad bar/ skeyes bu khyod kyi tshe tshad yin//”: “There will be no obstacles by the *bdud-s*. I myself the *rnal 'byor [pa]* will be your protector. The extent of your life, noble being, will be eighty-eight years”.

Living a life of eighty-eight years, in his *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa*, Tshe tan zhabs drung, on the basis of *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru* and following the endorsement of the length of Ge sar's existence by a master historian such as Kah thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu, fixes his dates as birth to 1000. (ibid. p.152) says: “lCags byi/ Gling Ge sar rgyal po 'khrungs/ Rlangs kyi Po ti bse rur/ Rlangs 'Dre bkol gyis Ge sar la tshe tshad lo bryad cu rtsa bryad yin par lung bstang//”; “Iron rat 1000. Gling Ge sar rgyal po was born. In *Rlangs kyi Po ti bse ru*, Rlangs 'Dre bkol issued a prophecy that Ge sar would live for eighty-eight”. He fixed his death to 1087 (ibid. p.165: “Me yos. Rlangs Byang chub 'dre bkol gyi lung bstan na lo 'dir Gling rje Ge sar 'das//”; “Fire hare. In the prophecy of Rlangs Byang chub 'dre bkol it is said that Gling rje Ge sar died in this year”).

10. See, e.g., bDud 'joms Ye shes rdo rje, *bDud 'joms chos 'byung* (p.641 lines 15–16: “Rab byung gnyis pa shar ba na / Ma cig Lab sgron lcags lug nga bdun/ Gling rje Ge sar sa stag lnga bcu tham pa//”; “At the inception of second sexagenary cycle (1087), Ma cig Lab sgron, born in iron sheep 1031, was aged fifty-seven; Gling rje Ge sar, born is earth tiger 1038, was fifty years old”).

For Gling Ge sar's death date according to bDud 'joms Ye shes rdo rje (1113) see Gyurme Dorje transl. and ed. with the collaboration of M. Kapstein, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* (p.952).

However, the association with Gling Ge sar may be more symbolical than factual. Were Gro rgod lDong btsan to be placed in the 11th century, the genealogical sequence in the Shar kha pa family would be going down a bumpy path.

Despite containing different versions, the sources on the Shar kha pa are in accord on the identity of the family and its origin in the lands of lDan yul, lGa yul and Tre bo of Khams stod. The period in which the ancestors appeared is different in *rGya Bod yig tshang*, *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* and *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* but the view contained in dPal 'byor bzang po's work has a better reliability than the others and thus lends to the princely family a more ancient and glorious past.

The name Shar kha

Other widely differing points in the sources concern the origin of the name Shar kha, the period during which the family of lDan yul, lGa yul and Tre bo took its new denomination and the circumstances surrounding the event.

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs assesses the origin of the name Shar kha in a rather distinctive manner from the sources linked to rGyal rtse officialdom. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* says that the name Shar kha had its origin with Ma sangs Gro rgod lDong btsan's son Ar rgod lDong btsan (see above n.8). When he was born, the sun rose in the direction of sGa [yul], which is in the east (Shar sGa) of the locality where his birth occurred (see n.8 again). Hence *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* bases the etymology of Shar kha on the ancestral land of the family, sGa yul in Khams stod aka mDo stod.¹¹ The name of the family was thus conceived two generations after its historical appearance.

While the name Shar sGa is linked by *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* to events that took place in Khams before the migration of some members of the family to gTsang, *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.7 lines 6–10), followed in this by *Myang chos 'byung* (p.89 lines

11. After the birth of the three sons of lHa mo sman, known as the Ma sangs *spun gsum*, the clan name is quoted as Shar dga' ba in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.57 line 3): “dPal lDan Shar dga' ba Ma sangs spun gsum du byung ba las/ yum gyi sras mkhar la Myong stod du pho brang brGya grong btab//”; “The three Ma sangs brothers having appeared in the dpal lDan Shar dga' ba [family], pho brang brGya grong (spelled so) was built as the mother's *sras mkhar* (lit. “castle”, but in this context perhaps meaning the castle for her sons?) in Myong stod (Khams *skad* for Myang stod)”.

Is the adoption of the spelling Shar dga' ba a half-hearted effort by the anonymous author of this source to display some jubilation at their births? Or was the change in the name—from Shar sGa to Shar dga'—the consequence of the migration of members of the clan from lGa yul to gTsang, where they settled down and established the lineage to which the 'Phags pa *spun gsum* belonged? The deviant spellings Shar dga' and Shar kha—and Shar ka as well, considered in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* to be the original—may have been justified by the migration, which brought the members of the clan under Sa skya and altered their location. This may have caused the etymology of the original name to fall into oblivion.

14–20), says that the name Shar kha pa was given to 'Phags pa dpal. He was appointed by the Sa skya pa of the gZhi thog palace to head Shar kha, one of the four divisions (*las tshan bzhi*, lit. the “four offices”) of Khams under the Sa skya pa during the Hor period. The others were Go 'jo (also Go 'gyo but spelled Gon jo in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.7 line 8 and Gon gyo in *Myang chos 'byung* p.89 lines 9–10), Gling thang and 'Dan ma.

The circumstances surrounding the choice of 'Phags pa dpal coincided with his succession to the post held by the late Khams pa dGe 'dun rgyal mtshan (also see *Myang chos 'byung* p.89 lines 14–20 and Petech, “Dung reng” p.107). dGe 'dun rgyal mtshan was the chief of the expedition against the Dung reng, Mon pa rebels at the border with lHo Mon (Bhutan) (see Ardussi, “The gDung Lineages of Central and Eastern Bhutan - A Reappraisal of Their Origin, Based on Literary Sources”). They took control of a wide stretch of lands in dBus gTsang, which prompted a reaction by the potentates of these territories, who formed an alliance and assigned to 'Phags pa dpal a role of command that led to their defeat. 'Phags pa dpal's appointment took place in water horse 1342, not long before the fall of Sa skya and the Yuan successively.¹²

Las tshan, an assignment of tasks I would define as to perform “officiating duties”, is a term that appears in the historical literature a limited number of times during the Sa skya pa period. The *glang gi las thabs bcu gsum* of the Gung thang king 'Bum lde dgon are well known. Less-known are the *Yul smad las tshan bco brgyad* assigned by the 'Bri gung pa

12. Episodes in the career of 'Phags pa dpal before this appointment are summarised in *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.376 lines 2–17): “De'i skabs su/ yul pa'i mi sde phyug po rnam/ Sa skya nang sor/ 'dab sgo 'bul du 'gro ba'i/ yig rigs dgos pa'i grogs ldan la/ dpon yig bZang po dpal bas kyang thengs 'ga' byon pas/ Sa skyar nang chen gyi/ yig mkhan la sgor/ de nas yun ring ma 'gyangs par/ bla ma bdag nyid chen po bZang po dpal ba'i sku drung du/ yig tshang pa'i 'thil bzhugs thob/ thugs rjes bzung pas/ mnga' thang yar 'phebs du byung zhing/ ma cig lHa mo sman la sras po 'Phags pa rin chen dang/ Ma sangs Dar po ba'ang/ sNgon mo lung du 'khrungs so/ bla ma zhal tas/ yig mkhan bZang po dpal gyi bu chung che shos kyang/ nga'i tsar zhog/ pha rjes kyi las mtshan la 'jug dgos gsungs pas/ 'Phags pa dpal bzang po bas/ dgung lo bdun brgyad las mi 'gro na'ang/ Sa syar bla ma'i sku drung du phul/ yab kyi bris klog legs par blabs/ Ma sangs kyi sprul par song bas/ gzhan las 'khrungs skyes che zhing/ bya ba'i mmam dbye shin tu mkhas pa gcig byung/”; “At that time, the rich men of the community of the land had to go to see the Sa skya nang so to give the 'dab sgo (“additional tax”?) and needed someone who was expert in writing to accompany them, so dpon yig bZang po dpal ba, too, went [to Sa skya] a number of times. As a result of this, he was retained at Sa skya by the nang chen as yig mkhan (“expert scribe”). Not long after, he was promoted to be the chief secretary by bdag nyid chen po bZang po dpal. Thanks to his compassionate ways, his power increased. 'Phags pa rin chen and Ma sangs Dar po were born as sons to Ma gcig lHa mo sman at sNgon mo lung. The bla ma (i.e. the *bdag nyid chen po*) advised the eldest child of yig mkhan bZang po dpal: “You should stay with me to be put into the office of [your] father”. Whereupon 'Phags pa dpal bzang po was entrusted to the Sa skya bla ma when he was no more than seven or eight years old. His father taught him to read and write in an excellent manner. He was the incarnation of Ma sang, so he grew up bigger than others and was exceptionally intelligent”.

master gCung rin po che rDo rje grags pa (1210–1278) to the Tsa ri rdor 'dzin 'gro mgon Phyag chen manifestly in the territory under the control of this bKa' brgyud school, where the *rdor 'dzin* was active.¹³

The tasks to be accomplished by 'Bum lde mgon are well-known and the fact that he had to take charge of forts to establish Sa skya pa dominance in mNga' ris smad and stod may account for the difference between *las thabs* and *las tshan*. The tasks assigned to the Tsa ri rdor 'dzin are not explicated in Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan's '*Bri gung gdan rabs gser phreng*. They may account to an array of functions pertaining to the handling of a territory. That the Sa skya pa concept of *las tshan* was used at Tsa ri in a 'Bri gung pa milieu may be part of the nomenclature of secular functions that was mandatory and therefore popular in those days.

The idea of *las tshan* implies a subdivision of duties, a term appropriate to the four regions in Khams where the *las tshan*-s were adopted (Shar kha, Go 'jo, Gling thang and 'Dan ma). The hierarchical/administrative organisation of a *las tshan* is not clarified in *Myang chos 'byung* and *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*. Given that the Shar kha *las tsan* refers to territories such as lGa and Tre bo, the fact that 'Phags pa dpal, a Khams pa settled in gTsang, was made the head of the Shar kha *las tshan* may imply that he could run the office from distance. It also implies that despite the transfer of important Shar kha pa to gTsang, these lands remained a stronghold of the family with its members having a prominent position locally. However, the existence of 'Dan ma as a separate *las tshan* indicates that the Shar kha pa were not called by Sa skya to exercise the same functions in this old territory of theirs, which were destined to someone else.

Were the *las tshan bzhi* established collectively or individually? How long after the introduction of the *khri skor bcu gsum* in earth dragon 1268? Was their central seat retained at Sa skya, as the appointment of 'Phags pa dpal to the Shar kha *las tshan* suggests?

The *las tshan* eventually headed by 'Phags pa dpal already existed in his childhood when he was accepted into it aged seven or eight (1424 or 1425; see below p.687–690 for his birth date). This is the *terminus ante quem* for the introduction of the Shar kha *las tshan* at Sa skya.

13. Che tshang bsTan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan's '*Bri gung gdan rabs gser phreng* (p.116,18–p.117,3): “De nas skabs shig gnas chen dpal gyi Tsa ri tra ye shes kyi dkyil 'khor du phebs nas gzigs snang rnams gtan pa phab cing/ dpa' bo mkha' 'gro rnams la tshogs kyi 'khor lo dang/ der gnas pa'i skye dgu rnams la chos (p.117) dang zang zing gi tshim par mdzad/ Yul smad las mtshan bco brgyad sogs dang rdor 'dzin 'gro mgon Phyag chen bcas bsko bzhag mdzad/”; “Then, on one occasion, [gCung rin po che] went to the glorious Tsa ri tra, the great holy place *mandala* of wisdom. He had a steady flow of visions. He satisfied the *dpa' bo*-s and *mkha' 'gro*-s with *tshogs kyi 'khor lo*-s and the local great people (p.117) with teachings and riches. He designated rdor 'dzin 'gro mgon Phyag chen to [accomplish deeds], such as the *Yul smad las mtshan* (spelled so for *las tshan*) *bco brgyad* (the “eighteen officiating duties of Yul smad”)”.

Was this *las tshan* named Shar kha following the appointment of 'Phags pa dpal as its head or was it called so before him?

All in all, *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* and *Myang chos 'byung* hold it that the name Shar kha goes back to the 14th century in concomitance to 'Phags pa dpal's appointment when Sa skya organised its power structure in Khams with the establishment of the *las tshan bzhi*. Consequently, his family, which became the princes of rGyal rtse, and the other branches received their name.

rGya Bod yig tshang does not link the etymology of the family to their affiliation to the Sa skya pa. It merely says that the Shar kha pa originated in the east (*shar phyogs*) in lGa yul, but without giving the period and the circumstances under which the name of the family was conceived, the way *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* does.

The sources thus opt for drastically different assessments of the time in which the family became known as Shar kha, varying from the late 7th-early 8th century (Gro rgod lDong btsan) to the 14th century ('Phags pa dpal).

The Shar kha pa of Khams and the transfer to gTsang

'Dan ma rTse mangs, Ar rgod lDong btsan's son according to *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* and a disciple of Guru Padma, is said to have lived 150 years (see n.8). Given that he was a contemporary of Khri srong lde btsan, it would mean that he died at the end of the great period of the sPu rgyal dynasty, around the time of Khri Ral pa's passing, the highly symbolical extent of his life covering the golden period of *bstan pa snga dar*.

rGya Bod yig tshang and *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* add that during the 13th century the great lGa Ang snyen dam pa (i.e. sGa A gnyan dam pa) Kun dga' grags (earth ox 1229–water hare 1303), the well-known Sa skya pa master from Khams, his belonging to the Shar kha family being stressed in these sources, built 108 *lha khang*.¹⁴

By collating information in this Shar kha segment, proof is provided that only two generations of Shar kha pa are recorded between the second quarter of the 9th century, when lDan ma rTse mangs probably died, and the mid 13th century, when sGa A gnyan dam pa lived. This is

14. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.373 lines 2–9): “lDan stod lGa'i yul du/ lGa Ang snyen dam pa zer ba'i 'byor ldan/ dkar phyogs la mos pa gcig byung pa de nyid kyi/ lGa lDan Tre bo'i sa khongs su/ lha khang rgya phibs khyung mgo can brgya rtsa brgyad/ lha khang re'i nang du/ rten ngo mtshar can dang/ bKa' 'gyur ro cog cha tshang ma re bzhengs pa'i drung du/ dkar mo khor yug/ mchod pa rnam lnga'i rgyun ma chad pa'i dge rgyun btsugs pa la sogs cho 'brang phun gsum tshogs pa'i 'phrin las rgya chen por mdzad 'dug/’”; “In the land of lDan stod lGa, the man known as lGa Ang snyen (spelled so) dam pa, who was wealthy owing to his single-minded devotion in favour of the [Sa skya pa] “white ones”, built 108 *lha khang* with pagoda roofs and *khyung* heads in the area comprising lGa, lDan [and] Tre bo. Inside each *lha khang* he made extraordinary receptacles and complete sets of the *bKa' 'gyur*. In front of those that he had made, he established virtuous activities [to be conducted]

based on the fact that Chos kyi dbang phyug, the next member of the family, fathered Byang khri and Byang dmar and then sGa A gnyan dam pa from another wife (see the previous note).¹⁵ A conspicuous generational gap is most often the state of affairs in the genealogies of families in historiographical sources during the obscure period of *bstan pa me ro bslangs*, but, in the case of the Shar kha pa, the gap extends well into *bstan pa phyi dar*.¹⁶

No works in the historical literature from rGyal rtse have mentioned the Shar kha pa descentance from the great sGa A gnyan dam pa, whose importance was not insignificant in Khams during Hor sovereignty. This is imputable to the western authors, who have written about the Shar kha pa, being specialists of Central Tibet rather than Khams, and so they have neglected family's eastern Tibetan provenance.

sGa A gnyan dam pa was the most prestigious ancestor of the Shar kha pa. His well-known interaction with the great Sa skya pa masters, Sa skya pandi ta Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251) and his nephew 'gro mgon 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280), marked the religious inclinations of the Shar kha pa ever after.

continuously, such as lamps burning day and night and the bestowing of the five types of offerings without interruption. His family performed virtuous acts in a very extensive way”.

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs (p.55 lines 4–6): “Dan stod dGa' yul na/ 'Dan ma Chos kyi byang chub kyi zur sras/ sGa Ang snyen dam pa zer ba'i 'byor ldan dge ba la dkar ba zhig yod pa'i grogs byas te lha khang brgya phib Khyung mgo can brgya rtsa brgyad bzhengs/ der rten khyad par can re dang/ bKa' 'gyur ro cog ma tshang re//”; “In 'Dan stod dGa' (spelled so) yul, ['Dan ma dBang rgyal] helped the son of 'Dan ma Chos kyi byang chub from a separate wife, sGa Ang snyen dam pa (spelled so), who was wealthy and virtuous, to build 108 *lha khang* with pagoda roofs and Khyung heads. Here, after introducing in perpetuity the virtuous practices of giving the five types of offerings and of burning butterlamps in front of each extraordinary receptacle and each complete set of the *bKa' 'gyur* in correct editions”.

Both spellings lGa Ang snyen dam pa and sGa Ang snyen dam pa are deviations from the more common sGa A gnyan dam pa. lGa at the place of sGa reflects the name of the Shar kha pa territory lGa yul.

Controversial is the notion that A gnyan sdam pa (1230–1303) was responsible for placing sets of bKa' 'gyur-s in the temples he founded. This would have happened at the time when bcom ldan Rig pa'i ral gri (1227 or 1228–1305) prepared the earliest collection of the Canon and it is not documented that copies of the sNar thang pa master's work had reached Khams in the meantime.

15. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.54 line 6–p.55 line 1): “De'i sras 'Dan ma Byang khri dang Byang dmar ste Ma sangs kyi sprul (p.55) pa gnyis byung//”; “His ('Dan ma Chos kyi dbang phyug's) sons were 'Dan ma Byang khri and Byang dmar who were (p.55) both the incarnations of the Ma sangs”. See above n.5.
16. A record of the sGa lineage of A gnyan dam pa goes back to his father sGa chen mNga' ris rDo rje whose elder son and brother of the great Sa skya pa master was sGa A gro dpa' dgyes. A trace of the latter's lineage is kept for the next four generations: bKra shis rgya mtsho, sGa Shes rab 'od, sGa Ye shes byang chub and sGa rDo rje rgyal po (see below n.18).

Even the youngest branch of the Shar kha family, established at a later time in the southernmost outskirts of gTsang, followed the Sa skya pa tradition in the main despite being associated with other teachings including Bon. For instance, their ties with the Ngor pa were instituted by Ngor chen rDo rje 'chang Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456) who was a master of this Shar kha pa branch settled at gTing skyes and dKar la rather than the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse.

The genealogical positions held in the Shar kha pa lineage by the members of that period are conveyed by *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* in rather convoluted terms. Their generations in this segment were composed by the sons of Chos kyi dbang phyug, i.e., Byang khri and Byang dmar, and then by Byang dmar's son dBang rgyal rin chen who helped his step-uncle sGa A gnyan dam pa in his religious pursuits.

dBang rgyal rin chen is seen as the second originator of the family and the member who constantly attended to the fate of the successive generations.¹⁷ His life's span partially coincided with that of other members of the family who left Khams for gTsang to study at Sa skya in the period of this school's predominance in Tibet, true to the Sa skya pa tendencies set for the family by sGa A gnyan dam pa.

The history of the line of the sGa clan of sGa A gnyan dam pa is briefly traced in *Khams dKar mdzes dgon pa 'i lo rgyus*.¹⁸ This short biography is useful to identify the family lineage of sGa A gnyan dam pa related but different from the future Shar kha princes, so that the degree of kinship between the two in *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* is far from being evident.

17. *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* (p.55 line 1): “De’i sras dBang rgyal rin chen dpal bzang zhes bya ba Tshogs bdag dngos su byon pa de yin/’; “His (Byang dmar’s) son dBang rgyal rin chen dpal bzang came as the true Tshogs bdag”.

Ibid. (p.55 line 3): “Rang gi rigs kyi bya ba byed bzhin pa’i ngang/’; “He was involved in the care of his own family work”.

18. The inclusion of a history of sGa A gnyan dam pa’s family in the section on *Khams dBus dgon* in *Khams dKar mdzes dgon sde’i lo rgyus* (p.204 line 25–p.205 line 16) rests on the fact that this monastery was his own foundation: “dNgon grub pa’i dbang po Kah thog pa Mani rin chen gyis sGa chen mNga’ ris rDo rje la khyod ’di nas sa (p.205) smad Re ’Jang gnyis kyi sa mtshams/ la gsum gyi mda’/ chu gsum gyi ’dus phyogs/ gnam sa ’bru ba’i dbyibs can gyi steng du sa gzung thub na/ chos srid kyi bstan pa dar rgyas shin tu che ba ’byung zhes lung bstan pa ltar phyogs ’dir zhabs ser bkod/ mkhar brtsigs ’dun thab bzhes pas/ sGa A gro dpa’ dgyes dang/ sGa A gnyan dam pa gnyis ’khrungs khong yab sras rnam sGa yi rje bor gyur pas/ mi ming sa la thogs te sGa rje khog zer ba de nas thon/ A gro dpa’ dgyes kyi srid bskyangs/ A gnyan dam pas dpal ldan Khams dBus dgon pa’i gdan sa btab/ mDo sNgags kyi bstan pa nyi ma shar ba lta bu mdzad nas/ chos srid bzhin tu dar rgyas chen por gyur/ ’on kyang sras gnyis phyogs so sor song bas/ g.yas phyogs sGra dang/ g.yon phyogs sGa zhes/ sGa ’Bru gnyis kyi ming thogs/ ’Bri chu shar nub dang Re ’Jang bcas kyi ’di dang phyi ma’i yon bdag/ mgo spyi bo’i gtad ra/ lus lhu drug gi bdag por gyur/ sKye dgu sems can thams cad bde bar bkod/ bde ba thar lam la ’khrid pa sogs dper na gtam brgyud su mchi/ rte’u rta lud la skyabs su mchi zhes pa de tsam mthong dang gal chen grtsi ba’i gnas su gyur/ A gro dpa’ dgyes kyi sras bKra

sGa A gnyan dam pa's father sGa chen mNga' ris rdo rje established the family's fief at the border between Re and lJang.¹⁹ The lands of sGa A gnyan dam pa's family were situated in two regions: the ancestral one along the 'Bri chu in Khams stod where sGa yul is located and the other farther south. His other son sGa A gro dpa' dgyes was the lay chieftain; sGa A gnyan dam pa the religious head who founded dBus dgon pa. Eventually they divided the paternal land among themselves.

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs has A gnyan's *dbon sras* ("nephew"), dpon yig bZang po rgyal mtshan, and the latter's son bZang po dpal as the two members of the family who left Khams for Central Tibet. These events must have taken place in the late 13th century during the apogee

shis rgya mtsho dang/ A gnyan dam pa'i sras Nyi ma rgyal mtshan rnam pas gnyis kyi sku ring la sku tshe dang mdzad phrin dngung dang mnyam par gyur te 'gro don phyogs mtha' med par rgyas/ de rjes sGa Shes rab 'od zer/ sGa Ye shes byang chub/ sGa rDo rje rgyal po sogs dpon brgyud rnam sa gdan sa rim par skyongs//"; "According to the prophecy given in antiquity by the lord of meditation Kah thog pa Mani rin chen to sGa chen mNga' ris rDo rje, which said: "If you henceforth (p.205) will be able to control the land at the border between both Re [and] lJang, at the foot of the three passes, the junction of the three rivers, shaped as a hollow land at the horizon (*gnam sa 'bru ba dbyibs can*, a paraphrase of the 'Bru clan), it will happen that the principles of religious and secular activities will be extremely expanded". [Therefore, sGa chen mNga' ris rDo rje] went to that territory. He built a castle and married (*'dun thab bzhes*). sGa A gro dpa' dgyes and sGa A gnyan dam pa, two in all, were born. Since the father and sons became the lords of sGa, the name of these people was given to the land. From this fact, the name sGa rje khog originated. A gro dpa' dgyes took care of the secular affairs while A gnyan dam pa founded the *gdan sa* of dpal ldan Khams dBus dgon pa. He made the teachings of *mDo sNgags* shine like the sun, hence both religious and secular activities were greatly expanded. However, the two sons parted ways. The right division [of their land] became known as sGra and the left part became known as sGa, thus the names of both sGa and 'Bru originated. This generation and the following ones were sponsors [of the activities] in the east and west of the 'Bri chu and of Re [and] lJang. These facts [concerning sGa A gnyan dam pa] are mentioned in an exemplary manner in proverbs such as "[sGa A gnyan dam pa] became the owner of the place where protection was sought (*mgo spyi bo'i gtad ra*) and [people offered] their six body parts (*lus lhu drug*)". [Another says] "He set all creatures and sentient beings on the path of happiness and led them on the path of liberation". Much regard, importance and love for him came into existence so that people said: "[I] take refuge in sGa A gnyan dam pa. [I] take refuge in sGa A gnyan dam pa's horse. [I] take refuge in the baby horse of his horse. [I] take refuge in the dung of the baby horse". During the life of both sGa A gro dpa' dgyes's son bKra shis rgya mtsho and of sGa A gnyan dam pa's son Nyi ma rgyal mtshan, the activities became as high as the sky and expanded to all sentient beings in all directions. sGa Shes rab 'od zer, sGa Ye shes byang chub and sGa rDo rje rgyal po took care of the land and the *gdan sa* in succession".

19. Khe or Khe re in 'Bri brgyud is considered a land equal to O rgyan. It is located, among the sGang drug, between Bu 'bor sgang in mDo smad and 'Bri rdza Zal mo sgang. It is known as sBra Re khe. Also see the previous note.

of the Sa skya pa/Yuan rule of Tibet. They moved farther and farther towards Myang stod, following a series of prophecies which encouraged them to go westwards.²⁰

The pair are first called lDan na dbon po bZang po rgyal mtshan *yab sras* in *rGya Bod yig tshang*, but later this work identifies the son by name, as bZang po dpal ba (ibid. p.374 line 12). *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p. 4 line 20) inverts the components of the father's name into rGyal mtshan bzang po.

A gnyan dam pa's *dbon sras* bZang po rgyal mtshan was the son of Byang khri, given that dBang rgyal rin chen was the son of Byang dmar and the step-nephew of A gnyan dam pa. This makes the Shar kha pa of gTsang the descendants of Byang khri (see the genealogical tables below on p.756).

A complication arises from *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, which earlier treats bZang po dpal as bZang po rgyal mtshan's son, but then this source contradictorily acknowledges 'Phags pa dpal, 'Phags pa rin chen and 'Phags pa Dar po (collectively known as the 'Phags pa spun gsum, i.e. the next generation in the genealogy) as the sons of bZang po rgyal mtshan and ma gcig lHa mo sman.²¹ *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* is of the same opinion (p.5 lines 4–9 and p.5 lines 15–19).

The last prophecy told bZang po rgyal mtshan and bZang po dpal to find a place along the upper course of the Myang chu. They were uncertain whether this was Zhwa lu gSer Khang or

20. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.373 lines 9–13): “De’i dbon sras kyi brgyud pa/ lDan ma dbon po/ bZang po rgyal mtshan/ yab sras/ ’khor bcas ’ga’ zung gis/ dBus gTsang dag pa’i zhing khams dang/ khyad par dpal lDan Sa skya pa’i spyen sngar ’byon bzhed nas/ yar steg byon/’; “His *dbon sras* (“successor” or “nephew”) progeny, lDan ma dbon po bZang po rgyal mtshan, the father and son, escorted by some retinue, decided to go to the pure land of dBus gTsang and in particular to the [seat of the] Sa skya pa. They set out upwards (i.e. westwards)”.

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs (p.55 line 6–p.56 line 2): “De’i sras (p.56) bZang po dpal ba gnyis la dBang rgyal rin chen dpal bzang gy dngos su gzugs ni ma ston/ rmi lam du rag rim tsam gyi lung bstan pa/ mi shi ba lha ru song bai pho lha yin zer ba byung/ der khong gnyis la lung bstan bzhin dBus gTsang la yong pas Ser ldings su sleb/’; “To both his *dbon sras*, dpon yig bZang po rgyal mtshan [and] the latter’s son bZang po (p.56) dpal ba [the ancestor dBang rgyal rin chen] did not appear in his actual form. However, he did appear various times in their dreams, giving the prophecy: “I am the *pho lha* (“tutelary deity of the paternal side”), who became a *lha* after I died as a man”. According to the prophecy given to the two of them at that time, they went to dBus gTsang, and so they arrived at Ser ldings (spelled so)”.

21. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.56 line 3): “Ma cig lHa mo sman bya ba de dpon yig rgGyal mtshan gyi khah tu bzhes/’; “Ma cig lHa mo sman married dpon yig [bZang po] rgyal mtshan”.

Ibid. (p.56 line 6–p.57 line 1): “De nas nam zhig nas sras hsum ’khrungs te/ thog mar ’Phags pa dpal (p.57) bzang po/ de nas ’Phags pa rin chen/ gung po ’Phags pa dar po ste/ ’Phags pa spun gsum ’khrungs/’; “Then, after some time, three sons were born [to her], earlier ’Phags pa dpal (p.57) bzang po, then ’Phags pa rin chen, and the youngest ’Phags pa Dar po. The three ’Phags pa brothers (’Phags pa *spun gsum*) were born”.

gSer sdings. They opted for the second place, probably in consideration of the fact that Zhwa lu is not along the upper course of the Myang chu.²²

bZang po rgyal mtshan died, and his son bZang po dpal ba, well versed in reading and writing, married lHa mo sman, the daughter of the local lord.²³

dBang rgyal rin chen appeared to lHa mo sman as Tshogs kyi bdag po, the *pho lha* of the

22. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.373 line 13–p.374 line 10): “Nyi ma dBus phyogs su slebs pa’i dus su/ khong rang gis yab mes/ mi shi ba lha ru skye ba/ lDan ma dBang rgyal du grags pa’i/ lha btsun bzang po gcig yod pa de/ rmi lam du byung nas/ khyod ’dir ma sdod/ gTsang ru’i sa na/ dBus gTsang ru bzhi ru phye ba’i lhag po/ Ru lhag zer ba gcig yod pas/ der song cig zer bas/ ’O yug mda’i (p.374) Ru lhag du lo ’ga’ sdad/ yang/ lha’i lung bstan byung nas/ da yang/ gTsang po/ Nyang chu ’dzom pa’i sa na/ bcung pa Yu ba gdong bya ba yod pas/ dir song las sdod dang/ byus kyi yu ba zin par yod do zer nas/ Yu ba gdong du thogs cig sdad/ dpal lDan Sa skya’i phyogs la ’degs par ’dod pa’i ’tshams su/ lha na re/ Nyang chu yar ded pa’i g.yas phyogs na/ gser la gras pa’i gnas gzhi gcig yod pas/ der sdod cig zer ba byung nas/ Zhal lu gSer khang bya ba dang/ gZhis kha gSer sdings zer ba ’dug pa/ gang yin snyam pa la/ gSer sdings su gzhi phab/””; “When the sun rose on dBus, their ancestor who became a *lha* after dying a man, the *lha btsun* (“royal monk”) namely lDan ma dBang rgyal, appeared in their dreams. He said: “Do not stay here. In the land of gTsang *ru* (i.e. two of the *ru bzhi*), the remaining [*ru*] in the division into the *ru bzhi* of the dBus gTsang *ru* is Ru lhag (spelled so for Ru lag, lit. “the remaining *ru*”). You should go there”. (p.374) They stayed a few years at the Ru lhag of ’O yug mda’ (sic: the territorial order is inverted; ’O yug is a smaller unit, still, ’O yug is in g.Yas ru). Moreover, the *lha* gave a prophecy which said: “Now you should go to the place bCung pa Yu ba gdong, where the gTsang po and the Nyang chu meet. You should stay there. This is the handle (*yu ba*) to hold your wishes (*byus*)”. They stayed at Yu ba gdong for some time. Ultimately, they wished to move closer to dpal lDan Sa skya. The *lha* said: “To the right of the Nyang chu down its course on the upper side is one seat (*gnas gzhi*) linked with [the name] gSer. You should stay there”. Wondering which one [of the two] this was, whether Zhal lu gSer khang or gZhis kha (spelled so) gSer sdings, they settled down at gSer sdings”.

23. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.374 line 10–p.375 line 2): “gNas po bcol nas sdad pas/ sa cha yang ’phrod/ gnas mgron yang mthun par byung gnas/ lo mang rab song zhing/ sras po des/ gzhon nu nas klog yig legs po shes/ yon tan dang lDan pas/ yul thams cad kyi dpon yig bZang po ’dis/ rang re la phan thog par byung zer zhing/ khyad par gnas po zhe mgu nas/ dbon po’i bu chung ’di dang/ nga’i bu mo ’di bza’ mi byed dgos zer ba/ yang yang du slebs pas/ bu mo lHa mo sman dang/ dpon yig bZang po dpal yab yum du ’bre/ lo ’ga’ song nas/ (p.375) yab rgan sku gshegs/ bu moi pa mas grogs lDan byas nas/ yab kyi gshegs rdzong la sogs lugs can sgrubs/””; “After asking [permission] from the rich man of that place who was their host, [bZang po rgyal mtshan and bZang po dpal ba] settled there. This land was suitable. The host and guests were on amicable terms. Many years elapsed. The son learned to read and write excellently in his tender age. Being educated (*yon tan dang lDan pas*), [the rich man] said: “This one will be a good *dpon yig* (“expert scribe”) in all the land. He will be useful to us”. In particular, the host being pleased, he said: “The *dbon po*’s son (*bu chung*) and my daughter should be husband and wife”. Having repeated this time and again, bu mo lHa mo sman and dpon yig bZang po dpal ba were united as husband and wife. After some years, (p.375) the old father (i.e. bZang po rgyal mtshan) died. With the father and mother of the woman as sponsors, they completed the funerary rites of the father with a cast work (i.e. a *nang rten*?)”.

family, and gave her several objects—the *g.yu rgyal mo rtse lnga* (“the five-pronged queen turquoise”) and the *'gron bu nor bu'i dbyibs can gsum* (“the three seashells in the shape of jewels”),²⁴ which became the distinctive emblems of the Shar kha pa as in the cases of gNya' khri or the sTod kyi mgon gsum, who received objects symbolising their regal status, or else 'Od srung and Yum brtan who fought for the control of the objects which identified the authority of *lha sras btsan po* (*lDe'u Jo sras chos 'byung* p.141 line 19–p.142 line 1, and *mkhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.370 lines 1–3). After having been divided among the 'Phags pa spun gsum, some of these objects remained the apanage of family of 'Phags pa Dar po, one of the 'Phags pa spun gsum, and were transmitted along the successive generations of his lineage holders.

The migration of the Shar kha pa from Khams to gTsang occurred in two phases:

1. bZang po rgyal mtshan and his son bZang po dpal proceeded from Khams stod via dBus to the northern bank of the Brahmaputra in 'O yug. From there they went to Myang smad where the Myang chu flows into the gTsang po in the area of gZhis ka rtse, and settled at gSer sdings.
2. bZang po dpal and his wife lHa mo dpal moved to lDan yul sNgon mo lung in Shab. Subsequently they went to the southeast and settled in Myang stod, at rGya grong in the area between future rGyal rtse and gNas rnying. It was the first stable residence of the family and the birthplace of the 'Phags pa *spun gsum*.

Their itinerary was:

- Khams stod → dBus (localities in both regions are unspecified) → gTsang → 'O yug mda' → bCung pa Yu ba gdong, where the Myang chu meets the gTsang po → gZhis ka gSer sdings.

One generation later:

- Thar pa gling → Bong mkhar sNgon mo lung a.k.a. lDan yul sNgon mo lung in Shab → rGya grong.

While *rGya Bod yig tshang* and *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* are substantially in agreement on the members of the genealogy, *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* has a different lineage. The names of the early Shar kha pa do not correspond to those of the other sources except for the father of the 'Phags pa spun gsum. The account of the migration of the ancestors of the future rGyal rtse family too is described rather more laconically and differently in *Rab brtan's* biography (*ibid.* p.4 line 12–p.5 line 9).

24. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.56 lines 5–6): “Lan cig g.yu rgyal mo rtse lnga bya ba zhig/ dang/ 'gron nor bu'i dbyibs can gsum gnang zhing rigs rus kyi 'jig ren du dge mtshan spel ba'i gnam mang po gsung ba zhig byung/’”; “On one occasion, [Tshogs kyi bdag po] gave her the *g.yu rgyal mo rtse lnga* (“five-pronged queen turquoise”) and the three seashells in the shape of jewels (below on p.742 n.99 the name is organised in the opposite way: “jewels in the shape of seashells”). He told her many legends about the propagation of the merits of the clan mortal [members]”.

This *rnam thar* identifies in 'Bum nyeg the member of the Shar kha pa who left for gTsaṅg, attracted by the fame of the Sa skya pa (ibid. p.4 line 9–11; and p.4 line 12–p.5 line 9 for the successive generations). He is the first member of the Shar kha family to be mentioned after Gro rgod lDong btsan/dGra rgod 'Dong btsan, thus indicating that an even bigger genealogical gap—from the late 7th-early 8th century until around the late 13th century—exists in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* than that contained in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*.

Grag s brtson (rather than bZang po rgyal mtshan of *rGya Bod yig tshang*), 'Phags pa dpal's grand-father, went to an unspecified “country on the upper side” (*stod*) on Sa skya's behalf. While he was at sTag thog, he had from Shes rab ma a son called dpon rGyal mtshan bzang po who was chosen by the Zhwa lu pa to be the chieftain of Shar Ra dsa (unidentified). He married lHa mo dpal, and 'Phags pa dpal and his brothers were born.

Hence bZang po rgyal mtshan is the only member of the family whom all three sources mention in their outline of the lineage, but his lineal position varies in them. He was the father of the 'Phags pa spun gsum according to *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* and *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*. *rGya Bod yig tshang* considers him their grandfather. This is probably more correct, given that *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* too regards him as the nephew of A gnyan dam pa; otherwise there would be a gap in the genealogy between bZang po rgyal mtshan and the 'Phags pa spun gsum.

The dates of 'Phags pa dpal bzang

'Phags pa dpal, the eldest of the three sons of rGyal mtshan bzang po (or of bZang po dpal ba) and lHa mo dpal—the lHa mo sman of *rGya Bod yig tshang*—was born in earth horse 1318 (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.5 lines 9–15; in particular, line 10). The middle son 'Phags pa rin chen was born in iron monkey 1320 (ibid. p.5 lines 16–18), and the youngest son Ma sangs (or 'Phags pa) Dar po—sTag Dar po of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.5 line 19 and *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* p.72 line 6)—in fire tiger 1326 (ibid. p.5 lines 18–19).

rGya Bod yig tshang says that 'Phags pa dpal's date of birth was a bird year.²⁵ This can either be 1309 or 1321, both dates being different from the one contained in the biography of his grandson Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags. The latter two dates, based on *rGya Bod yig tshang*,

25. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.375 lines 2–16): “De rting bu mo'i rmi lam/ tshes bco lnga'i zla ba nya gang pa gcig/ shar ri'i rtse nas shar byung ba/ rang gi mtshan ma la zhugs te/ khong du thim song pa cig rmi/ zla grangs thim pa dang/ sras po gcig bya lo la 'khrungs pas/ mtshan dPal ldan Dar zhes pa btags so/ de phyin/ Zhal lu gSer sdings de khar bzhugs par 'dod na'ang/ yang lha'i lung bstan la/ 'di nas shar lho phyogs kyi lā rgyab pa'i pha rol der song cig/ der nga'i 'dug gnas kyang chos cig/ bya ba thams cad yar 'phel du 'byung ngo zer ba byung nas/ yab yum sras bcas rnams kyis/ yar byon/ Thar pa dgon par/ bCal ston Chos 'phags kyi drung du/ sras po la/ dge bsnyen dang byin rlabs zhus/ bla ma'i mtshan la gras nas/ 'Phags dpal bzang po zer ba'i mtshan btags/ 'Phags pa'i ming can mi rabs bdun

lead to some complications. The bird year 1309 is too distant from iron monkey 1320, given by *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* as the birth date of 'Phags pa rin chen, 'Phags pa dpal's younger brother, while the second chronological alternative has the irreconcilable defect of falling after it. On these grounds, *rGya Bod yig tshang* dates do not seem to be entirely reliable.

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs states that all three of them were born at sras mkhar rGya grong (often spelled rGyal grong in this text), a locality established in connection with their birth according to this source and the residence of lHa mo.²⁶ They received a prophecy that each of them had to have his own share of power. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* dedicates quite an amount of space to the three brothers, much more than other generations of the Shar kha pa. *rGya*

gyi bar la/ bstan byus mnga' thang yar 'phel du 'byung bar 'gyur ro//"; "After that, in the dream of the woman (i.e. lHa mo sman), she dreamt that on a full moon day [a light] shining from the peak of the eastern mountain (*shar ri*) entered into her vagina and dissolved into her womb. After the canonical number of months passed, a son was born in the bird year. He was named dPal lDan Dar. Then, though they wished to stay at this Zhal lu gSer sdings, again in the prophecy of the *lha* (i.e. lDan ma dBang rgyal), he said: "Go to the south-east after crossing the pass at the back. Make (*chos cig* sic for *byas cig*) my dwelling place there. Every activity will prosper [there]". The father, mother and son went upwards. At Thar pa dgon pa, the son received the *dge bsnyen* vow and blessings from bCal (so spelled for dPyal) ston Chos 'phags. He was named 'Phags pa dpal bzang po after the name of the *bla ma*. [The *bla ma*] said that for seven generations [of family members] with the name 'Phags pa, the fortunes of the teachings and the political power would prosper".

The episode documents that 'Phags pa dpal was not his name at birth. On the dPyal see my essay "The Manjūśrī mountain and the Buddha tree: a history of the dPyal clan (7th-14th century) in this volume of mine.

26. On rGya grong/rGyal grong see *Myang chos 'byung* (p.89 lines 1–3), where it is described as the residence of lHa mo dpal (lHa mo sman) and the birth place of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags. rGya grong is a locality south of lCang ra and just north of gNas rnying. Its name memorialises the clan name of rGya 'Jam dpal gsang ba, the master of *Tantra* at bSam yas during the reign of Khri Ral pa and the founder of gNas rnying. At the same time, it indicates a settlement of his clan, the "rGya [clan's] settlement (*grong*)". Nonetheless, Khyung rgod rtsal and rDo rje rtsal, the sons of blon po mGos Khri bzang yab lhag, established this locality. bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.4a lines 3–5): "mGos Khyung rgod rtsal said: "You rDo rje rtsal must succeed [our] father. I and the *mchod yon* (I and rDo rje rtsal), we two, will settle down in sKyeys. Since he said so, they went to sKyeys. Here, since the *bla ma* told the disciples and sponsors (i.e. the two brothers); "Here you should found a *gnas bzhi* ("monastic quarters")", in the lower part of Ba ga lung they founded the *lha khang* and the *tshogs khang* of Ba ga rGyags grong (spelled so). Here they established many settlements".

Thus, the locality goes back to around the mid 9th century, though its castle was only built in the first quarter of the 14th century, given that 'Phags pa dpal, the first son delivered by lHa mo sman here, was born in 1318.

Bod yig tshang and *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* emphasise the lives of other members of the family.

The biography of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags (p.5 lines 19–21) claims that 'Phags pa dpal, the founder of the Shar kha pa power in gTsang, went to sTe po in IDan yul when he was thirteen years old in order to learn the scriptures. He built the residence of his family at this place. This account that involves IDan yul is unconvincing. 'Phags pa dpal was too young at that time to do accomplish such a feat by himself.

IDan yul in gTsang, the fief allegedly first occupied by 'Phags pa dpal in his youth according to the literature from rGyal rtse such as *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*, suspiciously corresponds to the name of the ancestral land of the Shar kha pa in Khams. The biography of the prince of rGyal rtse subscribes to the idea that the Shar kha pa originated in this region of Khams (ibid. p.4 lines 7–9), but neglects to stress this unreliable coincidence.

The similarity between the names of the two lands (the ancestral one in Khams and the feud in gTsang chosen by young 'Phags pa dpal) is striking enough not to ease suspicions of an oversight. sTe po, where 'Phags pa dpal went to study, according to *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*, is phonetically close to Tre bo, another territory ancestrally occupied by the Shar kha pa in Khams. The names of both IDan yul and sTe po are unaccounted for in the geography of Myang stod.

rGya Bod yig tshang has a more credible version than that of Rab brtan's biography. It says that 'Phags pa dpal's father rGyal mtshan bzang po and mother lHa mo sman crossed the pass from gSer sdings and reached a place, soon chosen as the family's final destination which they called IDan yul sNgon mo lung ("Blue Valley of the IDan Land") after the original territory of their family.²⁷ sNgon mo lung must be located in Shab, the land between gZhi kha rtse and Sa skya, known for the site Shab dGe sdings.²⁸ According to *rGya Bod yig tshang* (ibid. p.376 lines 10–11), 'Phags pa rin chen and Ma sangs Dar po were born at sNgon mo lung.

Petech ("Dung reng" p.107), discussing 'Phags pa dpal's being given charge of Shar kha in Khams, from which, according to one version, the title Shar kha pa awarded to his family derives, says: "It meant for him a return to his home country, as he had been born in upper

27. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.375 line 16–p.376 line 1): "De nas La rgan la byon nas/ Bong mkhar sNgon mo lung du bzhugs pa'i nub mo/ lha byon nas da 'di khar gzhi phob/ stod kyi brag mtha' (p.376) yod sar/ nga'i rten tshugs zer bar byung nas/ bzhugs pas/ IDan yul sNgon mo lung du grags pa byung ngo//"; "After coming to La rgan, they stayed the night at Bong mkhar sNgon mo lung, [where] the *lha* (i.e. IDan ma dBang rgyal) appeared and advised them: "Settle down here. At the place on the upper edge of the rock (p.376) make a receptacle [depicting] me". This place became known as IDan yul sNgon mo lung because they stayed here".

28. The location of sNgon mo lung is gleaned from the literature concerning the divisions introduced in gTsang by Tshong btsun (otherwise Tshong dge) Shes rab seng ge, one of the men from dBus gTsang who returned from A mdo to originate *bstan pa phyi dar* in the central provinces of Tibet by establishing monastic communities in a great number of localities in these lands. *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* (p.392 line 11) writes: "Shab kyi sNgon mo lung nas Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge//";

IDan-ma on the 'Bri-chu". 'Phags pa dpal neither went to IDan ma nor was born there. This is nowhere stated in the sources and goes against the statement of *rGya Bod yig tshang* that the place where bZang po rgyal mtshan settled down was renamed IDan yul after the family land in Khams. IDan yul in gTsang was a substitute for the original land IDan ma yul in Khams. Hence, Lo Bue ("The Gyantse Princes and Their Role as Builders and Patrons of Arts" p.559) is right in locating this IDan yul in gTsang—a locality rather than an area.

In iron tiger 1350, 'Phags pa dpal became the son-in-law of the great Zhwa lu sku zhang Kun dga' don grub, who worked with Bu ston rin po che (1290–1364) in Zhwa lu at the time when the omniscient master produced his edition of the Tibetan canon. 'Phags pa dpal married Ma gcig Padma. She brought to him in dowry the feud of ICang ra (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.7 line 20–p.8 line 3; see also *Myang chos 'byung* p.89 line 20–p.90 line 2), which was to remain 'Phags pa dpal's main seat between 1350 and 1365. Following that event, IDan yul sNgon mo lung, the early residence of the family, was neglected.

The foundation of rGyal rtse

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar discusses in great detail the successive phase that saw the Shar kha pa establish their network of castles. In 1364 and during the following years, wood snake 1365 and fire horse 1366 (p.11 line 20–p.13 line 8), 'Phags pa dpal laid the foundations of rTse chen rdzong and its *gtsug lag khang*, which he completed in earth monkey 1368 (ibid. p.14 line 7–p.15 line 8). There he moved his main seat, which remained his capital until his death in iron dog 1370.

rTse chen was close to ICang ra, and its construction meant strengthening 'Phags pa dpal's territorial dominions, which, at the peak of his career, extended from Phag ri rdzong in the south, way up north to the area of Khang dmar and, further north, to the wide rGyal rtse plain, where his main seat, rTse chen, was located. Adjoining the same huge plain, in which rTse chen was sited at the western border, were ICang ra and rGya grong/rGyal grong.

'Phags pa dpal built a fort at rGya grong/rGyal grong—*Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* attributes it to his mother lHa mo sman—and erected a building on rGyal rtse's higher peak, where dPal 'khor btsan, the late king sPu rgyal dynasty, had a palace. For this reason, he called it rGyal mkhar rtse ("the peak of the royal castle") (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.12 lines 8–14).

This was the first Shar kha pa foundation at rGyal rtse, which took place in wood snake 1365 according to *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.12 lines 6–14; see also the note in *Myang chos 'byung* p.48 lines 19–22).

"Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge from Shab sNgon mo lung"; and adds (ibid. p.393 line 21): "Tshong btsun gyis Shab kyi sgo lnga bzung nas mkhan bu rgyas so//"; "Since Tshong btsun held the "Five Doors" of Shab, his disciples increased in numbers".

In spite of the poetical eulogies describing rGyal mkhar rtse, written from the main seat of the Shar kha pa, one is led to wonder about the real extent of 'Phags pa dpal's foundation, for contradictory information is contained in the sources. As will be shown more in detail in the immediate following, *rGya Bod yig tshang* holds that rGyal mkhar rtse, in the sense of a true royal castle, did not yet exist in 'Phags pa dpal's days. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, instead, contains an extensive and most controversial section on the period of the 'Phags pa *spun gsum*, in which the rGyal rtse castle plays a prominent role as one of the family's seats. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* states that a royal palace was founded by 'Phags pa dpal but then neglects it, only attributing importance to it from the period of 'Phags pa dpal's son Kun dga' 'phags pa. Some order can be extracted from these diverging versions.

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs says that the castles at rGyal rtse (often spelled rGyang rtse in it), Seng ge rtse and 'Brong rtse were not built by a Shar kha pa, but by an anonymous minister from Shab in Nyang (i.e. Myang), Shab stod being the area corresponding to the territory where this source sites 'Brong rtse and Seng ge rtse.²⁹ Even the period in which these

29. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.57 line 6–p.58 line 1): “dPa' rtsal mkhyen pa dang ldan pa'i drung yig kyang Sa skya nas pheb/ Sa skya gong nas Nyang Shab kyi mi tshan du snang bas/ rdzong rGyang Seng 'Brong gsum brgyab zhes pa 'di/ Nyang stod du rGya (p.58) mkhar rtse/ Shab stod du Seng ge rtse/ 'Brong rtse dang gsum mthar phyin par brtsigs tshar ba dang/ sras sku mched kyang rGyang rtser pheb sku rtse la khyi ku re sos yod pa rnams nas byon pa la/ pho brang btsan zhing mtho khyad dang ldan pa la kun ha las pa yod//”; “[Their] brave and knowledgeable secretary came from Sa skya. He appeared in the family (*mi tshan*) from Shab in Nyang under the Sa skya *gong* [*ma-s*], and built the *rdzong-s* of rGyang, Seng [and] 'Brong, altogether three. rGya (p.58) mkhar rtse (spelled so) was built to completion in Nyang stod, and Seng ge rtse and 'Brong rtse in Shab stod, altogether three. The ['Phags pa] brothers went to rGyang rtse. They went there taking with them a puppy each to play (*sku rtse la*). They went there. The palace, being particularly well fortified and high, made a great impression on everyone”.

Does the author of *Shar ka'i gdung rabs* hold in this passage that the ancient dPal 'khor btsan castle still existed in the days of the 'Phags pa mched gsum?

Sa skya'i gdung rabs (p.15 lines 3–13) has this to say about the branch of the 'Khon family which had earlier settled in the area of Shab: “gTsug tor shes rab la sra bdun 'khrungs/ de bdun nu bo dang beas pa la 'Khon tsho bryad du grags shing/ bdun po'i lnga pa 'Khon dGe skyabs kyi phis Shab du phyon/ de la sras gnyis byung ba'i chung ba la Shab stod khyi 'Khon mi rnams gyes par grags/ che ba dGe mthong la sras gcig byung ba la 'Khon ston Bal po zhes bya ba Tsha mo rong gi brag la yang phur gyi sgrub pa mdzad pas grub pa brnyes shing bsTan ma bcu gnyis bran du 'khol/ de la sras Shakya blo gros/ 'dis Bya ru lung ba dang Shab stod smad la yab mes kyi yul g Ya' lung mkhar stabs bzung/ sras gnyis byung ba'i che ba 'Khon Rog Shes rab tshul khriims/ chung ba 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po'o//”; “Seven sons were born to gTsug tor shes rab. These seven and [gTsug tor shes rab's] younger brother became known as [those forming] the eight divisions of the 'Khon. The fifth of his [seven sons] was dGe skyabs who subsequently went to Shab. It is well known that the 'Khon men of Shab stod were originated from the younger of the two sons born to him. The elder dGe mthong had one son who was known as 'Khon ston Bal po. Having practised *phur* [*pa*] meditation at the rock of Tsha mo rong, he obtained powers and bound the bsTan ma bcu gnyis as his slaves. His son was Shakya

foundations took place is defined differently in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*. Their establishment goes back to the years in which the 'Phags pa spun gsum were children, a few decades earlier than normally dated. These castles are treated as the main residences of the family together with rGya grong/rGyal grong.

Equally controversial and quite unique is the statement in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* that it was 'Phags pa Dar po, the youngest of the 'Phags pa spun gsum, who established the town at rGyal rtse;³⁰ otherwise the establishment of the town of rGyal rtse is neglected in the literature, except a few references including the brief poetical passage of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* I have already referred to, where the foundation of rGyal mkhar rtse is described. The controversial nature of the assessments of the foundations of the Shar kha residences in Myang stod propounded in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* rests on the fact that this is the source which is most disinclined to engage in rGyal rtse's eulogy.

The middle brother 'Phags pa rin chen opted for an individual choice and settled at Seng ge rtse; but eventually the younger and the middle opted to stay together at rGyal rtse.³¹ Soon thereafter the arrangement evolved into a different solution. At this stage, the account of 'Phags pa Dar po's deeds assumes preeminence, *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* being a work dedicated to him and his lineage. Considered responsible for the development of rGyal rtse town, he was—the text adds—assigned by his mother to rule over rGya grong/rGyal grong.³²

Finally, at the time of death, the mother decided that 'Phags pa dpal (often called 'Phags pa bzang po in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*) should live at rGyal rtse, 'Phags pa rin chen at Seng ge rtse, and Dar po at rGyal grong. Their father bZang po dpal ba (wrongly identified with bZang

blo gros who ruled the Bya ru lung ba and Shab stod smad, and became famous for his great deeds. In the later part of his life he ruled the castle of g. Ya' lung in the land of his ancestors. The elder of his two sons was 'Khon Rog Shes rab tshul khriims and the younger was 'Khon dKon mchog rgyal po".

30. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.59 lines 1–2): "Dar po rig pa'i rtsal rgo pa dang rGyang rtser khang 'phren 'dra yang mang po brgyab//"; "Dar po had knowledge, skill and exuberance, and built many blocks of houses in rGyang rtse (spelled so)".

31. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.58 line 5): "sKu mched gsum sku cher song ba dang/ 'bring 'Phags pa rin chen gyi Seng ge rtser bzgugs/ cen po dang cung po gnyis kyang rGyang rtser bzhugs//"; "The three brothers grew up. The middle brother 'Phags pa rin chen stayed at Seng ge rtse, the elder and the younger, altogether two, stayed at rGyang rtse".

32. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.58 line 6–p.59 line 1): "Yum gyi zhal nas nga la sprul pa'i yab kyi ngang ba'i g.yu (p.59) 'di khyer la pho brang gi rtsa ba'i rGyal grong bzung s cig gsungs//"; "His mother told ['Phags pa Dar po]: "Take the turquoise given to me by [our] incarnation forefather, (p.59) and rule rGyal (spelled so) grong, the root of the *pho brang*".

Were one to attribute significance to the fact that *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, after the spelling rGya grong, introduces that of rGyal grong? Should this change be considered as not imputable to the use by *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* of different documents in various passages of its text? The spelling rGyal grong could stand for rGyal [rtse] grong or rGyal rtse township before the dPal 'khor chos sde was built rather than referring to lHa mo sman's old seat rGya grong. This is wrong not only because

po rgyal mtshan in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*) resided at 'Brong rtse.³³ His role in the narrative is overshadowed by that of his wife, the manifestation of a *mkha' 'gro ma*.

All this material is controversial, to say the least. The other sources affirm that rGyal rtse was not the residence of 'Phags pa dpal but in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* the residences of the two younger brothers are concretely identified unlike *rGya Bod yig tshang* and *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* which leave them unaccounted for. These two texts neglect the brothers of 'Phags pa dpal only for 'Phags pa rin chen to re-appear at the death of his elder brother as the newly appointed Shar kha prince. In the silence of the other sources, one would presume that they lived at the Shar kha court in the shadow of the elder brother, but *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* rules out this possibility.

rGya Bod yig tshang holds that a building for a detachment of guards was constructed by 'Phags pa dpal on the higher rGyal rtse hill.³⁴ If this is true, it is hardly tenable, given the nature of the building for scouting, that rGyal mkhar rtse was one of the residences in the circuit of castles used by the Shar kha pa in those years together with rTse chen, rGya grong/ rGyal grong, lCang ra and lDan yul sNgon mo lung.

There is no sign in *rGya Bod yig tshang* and *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* of 'Phags pa dpal inhabiting rGyal rtse. Further, the attribution of the foundation of rGyal rtse to an anonymous minister before the 'Phags pa *spun gsum* came of age seems to be too far-fetched to be admissible. No other Tibetan author has any similar statement in his writings.

the use of the name rGyal grong designates a site which is never rGyal rtse, but also because the first appearance of the spelling rGyal grong predates the earliest foundation at rGyal rtse.

33. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.59 lines 5–6): “mChed gsum po blo rtse gcig pa gyis la stod sa pho brang so sor gyi gsungs/ gcen po gtso che bas rGyang rtser bzhugs/ 'bring po Seng ge rtser bzhugs/ cung rGyal grong du bzhugs/ dpon yig 'Brong rtser bzhugs pas chog gsungs/” ; “The three brothers grew up. They said they decided to have a palace each as their residence. The eldest, being the main one, stayed at rGyang rtse, the middle brother stayed at Seng ge rtse, the youngest stayed at rGyal grong. The *dpon yig* (i.e. their father) said: “May I stay at 'Brong rtse”.”

bZang po dpal is said to have lived for ninety-eight years (ibid. p.60 line 3). According to *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, bZang po dpal left for gTsang with his father bZang po rgyal mtshan after the death of sGa A gnyan dam pa (1230–1303); the long span of his life would mean that his death occurred around the last quarter of the 14th century.

34. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.382 lines 1–4): “rGyang mkhar gyi ri bsrung ba'i khang pa gcig rtsigs/ mnga' bdag dPal 'khor btsan gyi pho brang gi sa yin pas/ rGyal mkhar rtse zer/ lCang ra dang/ rGya grong gi sa mkhar rtsigs/” ; “He constructed a building for guards on the rGyang mkhar mountain. Given that this was the place where the palace of mnga' bdag dPal 'khor btsan stood, he called it rGyal mkhar rtse. He built the castles of lCang ra and rGya grong”.

rGya Bod yig tshang traces the stages in the evolution of the name rGyal rtse from before its foundation onwards. From rGyang mkhar, the name of the hillock before the building for the guards was constructed it became known as rGyal mkhar rtse after this building was constructed in order to remember that here stood a palace of dPal 'khor btsan.

A consideration lends greater weight to one of these options. Judging from the pattern of 'Phags pa dpal's foundations, his castles were habitually accompanied by a religious building. This is the case of rTse chen and ICang ra, the seats that are indicated as Shar kha pa residences during that period. The same pattern does not apply to rGyal rtse. I am, therefore, inclined to believe that after 1365, rGyal rtse was nothing more than a strategical site guarding the other flank of the plain, on which rTse chen was located.

It was only quite a few years later, after 'Phags pa dpal's death in 1370, under his son and successor, Kun dga' 'phags pa, that the rGyal mkhar rtse castle was established as the seat of this ruler and the religious centre of the dominions. This event took place between iron horse 1390, when the castle's foundations were laid, and fire ox 1397, when it was completed. A further building phase was undertaken in earth rat 1408.³⁵

35. The year in which the foundations of the temple on the rGyal mkhar rtse hill were laid, called bSam 'phel rin po che'i gling *gtsug lag khang*, is identified in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* as iron horse 1390, when Kun dga' 'phags pa was thirty-four years old. In order to prove this date, the text, which deals with the matter in a note (p.20 lines 1–5), uses an old document containing the inventory of the images, books and religious articles, which may have included those of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*, together with the *bka' shog dmar po* ("red edict").

This document makes it clear in an interlinear note that in iron sheep 1427, when probably this earlier inventory was compiled, thirty-eight years, *more Tibetico*, had passed since the rGyal mkhar rtse *gtsug lag khang* had been founded (i.e. 1390).

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar (p.20 lines 1–5) says: "[Note: *gtsug lag khang* 'di rta lo bzhengs nas/ me mo lugs gi lo sum cu so bryad 'gro zhes pa 'di nyid kyi rten gsung mchod rdzas kyi deb rnying ma bka' shog dmar mo 'byar ba la gnang bas bdag po chen po dgung lo sum cu so bzhi bzhes pa lcags pho rta la 'gram bting par 'dug]/"; "[note: Given that this *gtsug lag khang* was founded in a horse year, and thirty-eight years thereafter, in fire female sheep 1427, the old record of the three [types of] receptacles (*sku gsung* sic for *sku gsum*) was issued together with the *bka' shog dmar mo* appended to it, the great king [Kun dga' 'phags pa] laid its foundations in iron male horse 1390, when he was thirty-four years old".

A first phase in the rGyal mkhar rtse *gtsug lag khang* was completed in fire ox 1397. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.19 line 17–p.20 line 1) reads: "Me mo glang gi lo la [note: zhe gcig bzhes pa] ... dpal bkra shis rGyal mkhar rtse'i *gtsug lag khang* bSam 'phel (p.20) rin po che'i gling/ mchog du grub legs par bzhengs shing grub/"; "In fire female ox (1397) [note: when he was

forty-one years old], ... dpal bkra shis rGyal mkhar rtse'i gtsug lag khang bSam 'phel (p.20) rin po che'i gling was successfully finished. It was excellently built and completed".

This date is again stressed in the text, but often forgotten in secondary sources. The length of time the castle took to be completed is a sign that the activities on the higher hill at rGyal rtse must have been on a much large scale.

The outcome of another building phase was the construction of the *gzhal yas khang* and the *mgon khang*, among other works (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.21 lines 2–4). The castle *gtsug lag khang* was thus brought to completion with all its components.

The same text (ibid. p.21 lines 7–9) has a note which deals with a chronological problem regarding this phase. It says that, according to the previously mentioned old book (*deb rnying ma*, i.e. the inventory of the religious belongings probably written in 1427), this construction work was undertaken in a rat year, which, in the view of 'Jigs med grags pa, the author of the biography, was either fire rat 1396 or earth rat 1408. The latter date is obviously favoured by him. He adds that Kun dga' 'phags pa was fifty-two years old at that time (b.1357). *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.21 lines 7–9) reads: “[Note: gong gsal gyi deb rnying ma las lo bzhengs pa gnang ba/ me pho byi ba'am/ sa pho byi ba gang rung las/ phyi ma bdag po chen po dgung lo lnga bcu nga gnyis bzhes pa'i thog tu bzhengs pa la nye bar 'dra snyam]//”; “[Note: wondering whether, according to the above mentioned old record that deals with the year of their construction, it was fire male rat 1396 or earth male rat 1408, I think that [the *gzhal yas khang* and *mgon khang*] were built around the later [year] (i.e. 1408), upon the great ruler reaching fifty-two years of age]”.

Some other temples are known to have been constructed on the rGyal mkhar rtse hill, but the circumstances and dates of their construction are not clarified in the sources. A few important images kept in them are recorded in *gTsang Myang stod Shel dkar rGyal rtse khul gyi lo rgyus*, but this text does not make clear whether they were placed in these *lha khang* at an early or late stage of their history, except in one case. The present conditions of the rGyal rtse castle make it difficult to say whether some of them survived the Cultural Revolution.

About the temples which do not belong to the golden period of rGyal rtse dPal 'khor chos sde, *gTsang Myang stod Shel dkar rGyal rtse khul gyi lo rgyus* (p.9 lines 12–15) says: “Yang Li ma lha khang zer ba na/ chos rgyal gyis bzhengs pa'i gtsug lag khang gi rten du lHo kha sNe gdong dpon chen gyis legs skyes su phul ba'i shar li'i sku dang/ dzhikshim gyi sku ngo mtshan can dang/ gzhan yang sku brnyan mang po bzhugs//”; “Furthermore, in Li ma lha khang, among the receptacle holders made by the *chos rgyal*, there is a statue in eastern *li* auspiciously offered by lHo kha sde dpon sNe gdong dpon chen, extraordinary statues in *dzhikshim* (spelled so) and many other images”.

It is likely that the sNe gdong dpon chen was Grags pa rgyal mtshan, given his close relationship to Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags.

gTsang Myang stod Shel dkar rGyal rtse khul gyi lo rgyus (p.9 lines 16–17) adds: “Yang rTse lha khang zer ba na dzhikshim las grub pa'i rDzogs pa'i Sangs rgyas gtso bor bzhugs pa'i g.yas g.yon du shar li'i sku byin can mang po bzhugs//”; “Moreover, in rTse lha khang there is a statue of rDzogs pa'i Sangs rgyas made of *dzhikshim* (spelled so) as the main one. To its right and left are many statues in eastern *li ma* that bestow blessings”; and ibid. (p.10 lines 2–3): “Di'i 'og lha khang gcig nang li sku dang | gser zangs | 'jim sku mang po yod | de'i mdo na sngags pa grangs lnga bcu tsam gyi tshogs khang”; “Inside the *lha khang* below this one (i.e. rTse lha khang), there are many statues in *li*, gilt copper, and clay. Below it is the assembly hall of fifty *sngags pa-s*”.

Kun dga' 'phags pa, the first prince of rGyal rtse and the strife with rTse chen

After 'Phags pa rin chen (r. 1370–1376), who succeeded to the throne upon his elder brother's death, the Shar kha pa increased their power by exercising a wise policy of balance between the Sa skya pa and the Phag mo gru pa. They did not abandon 'Phags pa dpal's policy of remaining on the whole faithful to Sa skya but, following his death, they tried to assert themselves as a semi-independent power, given the progressive weakness of the Sa skya pa who had lost control of Tibet.

The aim of transforming the Shar kha pa into a semi-autonomous power in gTsang was sought after on a limited scale by the next Shar kha pa prince, Kun dga' 'phags pa, the son of 'Phags pa dpal.

With Kun dga' 'phags pa (fire bird 1357–water dragon 1412), born to Ma gcig Padma of Zhwa lu, the Zhwa lu pa branch of the Shar kha pa family arose. As Kun dga' 'phags pa made of rGyal rtse the seat of his reign, the Shar kha pa branch descending from him was the rGyal rtse branch. He was the elder son, so his branch should be considered as the main one.

'Phags pa dpal bzang's wife bSod nams 'bum (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.12 line 21–p.13 line 2) from Sa skya, whom he married in iron ox 1361 (ibid. p.10 lines 16–19), gave birth to Hor bSod nams dpal (b.1366) (ibid. p.14 lines 6–7).³⁶ With her progeny, the rTse chen line—the Sa skya branch of the Shar kha pa family—was incepted.

This branch, which was the cadet, remained in rTse chen. In the span of one generation, the unity of the Shar kha pa family was broken. The two branches remained distinct ever after.

This split was instrumental to the foundation of the town of rGyal rtse. Since rTse chen was 'Phags pa dpal's main seat, the Sa skya pa branch of the Shar kha pa, in spite of being the cadet, was able to bypass the heir apparent's Zhwa lu pa branch thanks to its control of rTse chen, which remained the family's main seat for quite some time.

Complications arose between the two branches of the family. Kun dga' 'phags pa, 'Phags pa dpal's elder son, did not rule immediately after his father's death. He was fourteen years old when 'Phags pa dpal died in 1370, a suitable age to assume rule at the time of the ancient sPu rgyal dynasty but probably not in 14th century gTsang.

Other reasons cannot be ruled out. For instance, trouble arose in 'Phags pa dpal's succession. Signs of the division between rGyal rtse and rTse chen are found in *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma*. One is a direct reference to the split. Kun dga' 'phags pa's step-brother from Sa skya wife of 'Phags pa dpal, named in this source *se ru* (sic for *si tu*) bSod nams dpal, took possession of rTse chen in Myang stod and Seng ge rtse in Shab stod, while Kun dga' 'phags pa built rGyal

36. He is called bSod nams dpal, the name adopted in this essay of mine, in *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.383 lines 9–10). The rTse chen (Sa skya pa) branch of the Shar kha pa can be briefly outlined as follows.

The sons of 'Phags pa dpal and bSod nams 'bum were bSod nams dpal (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags*

mkhar rtse. There were, therefore, two branches of the family, an eastern (rGyal rtse) and a western (rTse chen) one (*Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* p.60 lines 5–7).

Deb ther dmar po gsar ma also introduces a distinction between these two branches of the Shar ka pa, based on the names of their main seats. In this classification, rTse chen is named rTse nub (“the *rtse* in the west”), inasmuch as it was the western seat of the Shar kha pa relative to the location of rGyal rtse, called rTse shar (“the *rtse* in the east”) which was built at a later time to the east of rTse chen (ibid. p.60 lines 16–18).

The same text adds that, Kun dga’ ’phags pa having built rGyal rtse on the eastern (*shar*) bank of the Myang chu, a polarity arose between “Tse shar (“the eastern peak”, i.e. rGyal rtse) [and rTse] nub (“the western peak”, i.e. rTse chen)”, the Myang River being the reference point. However, rGyal rtse is also called rTse rgyal in *Thang stong rgyal po’i rnam thar* by ’Gyur med bde chen (p.253 line 19–p.234 line 14). The same biography calls sNe thang the huge fertile plain dividing the two main Shar kha pa seats (ibid. p.254 lines 14–15).

A second sign that refers to a time successive to the split is the list of the feudatories of the Phag mo gru pa rulers of dBus gTsang in the cabinet of gong ma Grags pa rgyal mtshan. Here, the son of Kun dga’ ’phags pa, Rab brtan kun bzang ’phags of the eastern palace, and si tu bSod nams dpal of the western palace are mentioned (*Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* p.86 lines 10–11). bSod nams dpal must have survived his elder step-brother Kun dga’

kyi rnam thar p.10 lines 16–20) and Kun dga’ blo gros rgyal mtshan (ibid. p.12 line 21–p.13 line 2), born in wood snake 1365 (ibid. p.12 line 21–p.13 line 2).

bSod nams dpal received the *ta’i si tu* rank from the Ming emperor. A loyalist of Sa skya, he brought Shab Seng ge rtse (spelled Shag in *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* Rome ed. f.55b line 1) [and] ’Jad Bo dong under his own control and that of the Sa skya pa (see also *rGya Bod yig tshang* p.383 line 9–p.384 line 5). A later alliance between the lineage of Seng ge rtse descending from bSod nams dpal and the branch descending from ’Phags pa Dar po is discussed on p.749.

’Jad, taken by ’Phags pa dpal’s son bSod nams dpal, is the area in which Bo dong is located. Hence ’Jad and Bo dong, despite being separated by a *shad* in the passage of *rGya Bod yig tshang* under consideration, should be read together (see, e.g., *Thang stong rgyal po’i rnam thar* p. 257 line 12, p.258 line 1 and line 3 for a few of such cases). Being contiguous with ’Jad Bo dong, it is more logical that Shab refers to Shab dGe sdings. *Shar ka pa’i gdung rabs* places Shab in Nyang and adds that Shab Seng ge rtse is in Nyang stod.

rGya Bod yig tshang (p.384 lines 5–6) says that bSod nams dpal’s elder son, dpon po rGya mtsho, died at a tender age, while his younger brother dpon po Rin chen ’phags was no less important than his father and received the *du si* rank from the Ming emperor (ibid. p.384 lines 6–7).

Concerning the offspring of ’Phags pa rin chen, his three sons were rTse chen *chos rje*, a master of *mDo* and *rGyud*, dpon po Gang pa ba and dBang rgyal ’phags pa (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p.384 line 10–p.385 line 1). dBang rgyal ’phags pa became the Sa skya *nang chen*, benefitting from the rise to power of rGyal chen, dpon po Shakya dpal and dpon po bDe legs. This brief indication may account for the privileged relation that the direct successors of ’Phags pa rin chen, the last ruling Shar kha pa before Kun dga’ ’phags pa, had with the rTse chen branch, providing as they did a religious master for its temple at the expense of Kun dga’ ’phags pa’s Zhwa lu pa branch.

'phags pa, and the list must refer to the early part of Rab brtan's reign when his rTse chen pa step-uncle was still alive.³⁷

Eventually, Kun dga' 'phags pa was crowned in fire dragon 1376, but only upon the death of his uncle 'Phags pa rin chen, who had reigned after the passing of the former's father 'Phags pa dpal. The right to rule of the main Shar kha pa line was restored.

Kun dga' 'phags pa established his personal seat at rGyal rtse in iron horse 1390 (see n.35), in a shift away from rTse chen. The quite long span of time that elapsed between his coronation and the establishment of the castle known as rGyal mkhar rtse may have been more tactical than compulsory; yet his leaving rTse chen must be attributed to disputes in the family.

37. A slightly later reference to the same distinction is found in bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar*, which says that in earth tiger 1458, upon the enthronement of the new gNas rnying abbot Kun dga' dge legs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1446–1497, in office 1458–1497), the rGyal rtse prince of those days, bKra shis rab brtan, and the people of rTse nub went to welcome him. *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.54a lines 5–7) reads: “Phebs rjes/ rGyal mkhar rtse nas bdag po chen po bKra shis rab brtan dpal bzang po dpon blon 'khor bcas dang/ rTse nub nas drung chen lHa pas gtsos pa rnams phebs/ gzhan yang phyogs nas kyi mi gser mang po thugs bskyed nyan pa dang ltad mo 'dus shing/ sa pho stag lo Hor zla dang poi'i tshes bcu gsum gyi sa phur 'dzom pa'i snga dro'i cha la bzhugs khri'i steng la spyang drangs/”; “After [Kun dga' dge legs rin chen rgyal mtshan] came, the *bdag po* from rGyal mkhar rtse, *bdag po chen po bKra shis rab brtan dpal bzang po*, the [various] *dpon-s*, ministers and court (*blo 'khor*) and, from rTse nub (i.e. rTse chen), a delegation headed by drung chen lHa pa came [too]. Moreover, many monks from the area gathered for the audience (*thugs bkyed nyan pa*) and the ceremony (*ltad mo*). On Thursday the thirteenth of the first month of earth male tiger (1458), early in the morning, he was invited to ascend the throne”.

gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar (f.55b line 2–f.56a line 5) mentions the same distinction between the two Shar kha pa seats at a subsequent time: “rMu rgod 'ga' chos la tshud pa yang byung/ da nas khyi'i lo la rmu rgod 'gas dge 'dun gyi thugs phyung bas rgyen bas/ sde gog po 'dzin pa'i byas la snying po gang yang mi 'dug dgongs/ Byang rTa sgo/ Gangs Ti se/ Ma pham/ La phyi/ Drin sog dben gnas rnams su thugs dam rtse gcig la thugs rtse btang/ yum sgres mo cig yod pa Byang la brdzangs/ nged kyang sleb pa yong gsung ba ltar sTod phyogs la thegs dgongs la/ gNas rnying gi bla ma/ slob dpon grwa pa bgres pa/ brad dpon rnams dang/ khyad par rGyal rtse dang/ rTse nub nas bzhugs pa'i zhu ba nan ches pa la rten/ sMan chur sku 'tsham par gnang rjes/”; “Some lowclass men (*rmu rgod*) caused a disturbance to the Noble Religion. In the year of the dog (i.e. earth dog 1478) he (the gNas rnying abbot Kun dga' bde legs rin chen rgyal mtshan) thought that there was no reason whatsoever to rule a community that had lost its vows. He lovingly sent them to meditate one-pointedly at hermitages such as Byang rTa sgo, Gangs Ti se, Ma pham, La phyi and Drin. He sent his old mother to [La stod] Byang. He said: “I too will go there”. Having thought to go to sTod, the *bla ma* of gNas rnying, the [various] *slob dpon*, the older monks, the *brad dpon* (sic for *gral dpon*, “the ones sitting at the head of the row”?) and, more particularly, due to the pressing request coming from the residents of rGyal rtse and rTse nub (i.e. rTse chen), he postponed his meditation at sMan chu”.

One hint of an internal problem during Kun dga' 'phags pa's reign, perhaps instrumental to the break-up of 'Phags pa dpal's line of the Shar kha pa into two branches, is recorded by *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* during the third month of wood ox 1385, when Kun dga' 'phags pa was aged twenty-nine (ibid. p. 19 lines 8–17). Some people who had been misled into an evil frenzy revolted against the prince of rGyal rtse, and a gloomy time came. This laconic piece of information indicates that a struggle for power in the principality threatened the political status quo in the form of an internal revolt which aimed at destabilizing Kun dga' 'phags pa. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* adds that Kun dga' 'phags pa overcame this trouble thanks to his noble behaviour.

This is one of the many passages in the biography of Rab brtan, which prove that the tone of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* is openly apologetical and that the Shar kha pa's political upheavals are treated with great restraint. For instance, the defeats of the next king of rGyal rtse at the hands of the Rin spungs pa (see below) are completely neglected. Probably the 1385 internal revolt was too big an event to be passed by in silence.

The matter is clarified by a passage in *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* by bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, which mentions an internecine strife among the Shar kha pa. The gNas rnying gdan sa 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1364–1422 or 1423, in office during the years 1373–1422 or 1423) was enthroned by 'Phags pa rin chen, who had succeeded his brother 'Phags pa dpal as the Shar kha pa lord on the latter's death in iron dog 1370. This is but another sign of the long-lasting bonds of *yon mchod* between the gNas rnying abbots and the Shar kha princes, dating from when the family from Khams established itself as the leaders in Myang stod.³⁸ Yet not everything went on smoothly in the relationship. Bitter

38. The successive generations of Shar kha pa princes entertained relations with the gNas rnying abbots of their time, given the influence exercised in Myang stod by this monastery and its incumbents. Territorial contiguity must have been at the basis of this steadfast *yon mchod*. bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen's *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* has a few references to the relations of the Shar kha pa with 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan. 'Phags pa rin chen and Kun dga' 'phags pa *yab sras* ("father and son") are said in one of these passages to have been among his disciples. The notion of *yab sras* obviously also applies to Kun dga' 'phags pa and his son Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags. Given that 'Phags pa rin chen died in 1376, while Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags was born in earth snake 1389, this passage in *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* refers not to a specific period or specific events in the life of 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan but rather to the *yon mchod* entertained with all the Shar kha pa during the abbotship of this gNas rnying *gdan sa*. The abbot entered into *yon mchod* with three successive Shar kha pa princes, 'Phags pa rin chen, Kun dga' 'phags pa and Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags. The latter two were lords of rGyal rtse, whose establishment as the seat of the principal Shar kha pa branch took place during 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan's tenure of gNas rnying. This passage is equally useful to ascertain the identity of the princes of rTse chen, with whom 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan maintained relations. As in the case of rGyal rtse, the abbot interacted with two generations of rTse chen pa, which shows his equanimity towards the two Shar kha pa branches. The text says that his rTse chen disciples were bSod nams dpal *yab*

misunderstandings broke out between 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan and the Shar kha

sras, i.e. 'Phags pa rin chen's elder son, bSod nams dpal, and the latter's son, Rin chen 'phags (see above n.36 for a summary of the rTse chen genealogy extracted from *rGya Bod yig tshang*).

gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar (f.44b lines 1–4) reads: “Shar kha pa'i zhal ngo ta'i si tu 'Phags pa rin chen/ nang chen Kun dga' 'phags *yab sras* ta'i bsri tu bSod nams dpal *yab sras* sogs zhal ngo bco lnga tsam dang/ Ya 'brog pa Hin du lHun grub rgyal mtshan sogs dang/ Thar pa mkhan chen pa dang/ Zha lu mkhan chen pa dang/ gzhan yang grwa bu slob mang po'i tshogs dpon mkhan chen g. Yag pa Sangs rgyas dpal/ rje btsun Red mda' pa/ Shar Tsong kha pa/ chos rje gZhon nu rgyal mchog pa/ rGyal ba bSod seng pa/ lHo rGyam pa/ Byams chos pa/ mkhas btsun Yon tan grags/ La ston, Kong ston/ dGas rong dka' bcu pa la sogs pa dang Grangs chen Kun dga' dpal/ mkhas grub dGe legs dpal/ Tshogs sde bzhi'i mkhan po bzhi sogs/ de'i chos dpon chen po rnams kyis chos kyi 'brel pa zhus/”; “Fifteen *zhal sngo* (“officers”) such as the Shar kha ba'i *zhal ngo*, ta'i si tu 'Phags pa rin chen, nang chen Kun dga' 'phags *yab sras* (i.e. and Rab brtan), rta'i bsri tu (spelled so) bSod nams dpal *yab sras*; Ya 'brog pa Hin du lHun grub rgyal mtshan, Thar pa mkhan chen, and Zha lu mkhan chen, along with mkhan chen g. Yag pa Sangs rgyas dpal, the *tshogs dpon* of many monks and disciples; rje btsun Red mda' pa, Shar Tsong kha pa, chos rje gZhon nu rgyal mchog, rGyal ba bSod seng, lHo rGyam pa, Byams chos pa, mkhas btsun Yon tan grags, La ston, Kong ston, dGas rong dka' bcu pa etc.; and Grangs chen Kun dga' dpal, mkhas grub dGe legs dpal, the four abbots of the Tshogs sde bzhi, and the *chos dpon* (“religious leaders”) of the communities, had religious relations with him”.

Virtually every dignitary of Myang and the most important masters of his day entertained religious ties with the *gNas rnying* gdan sa 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan.

Kun dga' 'phags pa, the rGyal rtse prince, and lHa do chos rje bDe legs rin chen were instrumental in ensuring that the lineage of the *gNas rnying* incumbents continued, for they asked 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan to marry in order to produce an offspring for the *gNas rnying* lineage (also see Aris, *Bhutan* p.192). *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.47a lines 5–7) reads: “gDung ni bryud spel ba'i zhu ba/ bdag po nang chen Kun dga' 'phags pas zhus shing/ khyad par rje rang nyid kyi zab lam 'khrid bka' rnams kyi 'byung khungs dam pa/ lHa do chos rje bDe legs rin chen pas nan gyi gsol kha btab cing zhu phul ba'i ngor/ mkhan po'i zhus pas 'di'i dbon bryud kyi sras mor dpon mo sras sKya re zhes bya ba la sras po sku mched gnyis byung ba'i gcen po chu mo lug lo la/ gcung po shing mo bya lo la' o/”; “Requests were made that the lineage should continue. bDag po nang chen Kun dga' 'phags pa made a request, and at the instance of lHa do chos rje bDe legs rin chen in particular, who is the noble origin of the *'khrid* (spelled so) [and] *bka'* leading this *rje* on the profound path, and upon the request of the *mkhan po*, [he married] the daughter in the next generation (*dbon rgyud*) dpon mo sras sKya re, [who] gave birth to two brothers. The elder was born in water female sheep (1403). The younger was born in wood female bird (1405)”. They were Rin chen grub and rGyal mtshan rin chen.

'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan's death date is controversial. While *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* states that he died on the tenth day of the sixth month of water tiger 1422 (ibid. f.45b line 5), *Myang chos 'byung* (p.57 lines 8–9) and *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.79 lines 17–19) say that he was involved in ceremonies marking the completion of Chos rgyal lha khang in the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* in water hare 1423. I am at loss as to which of these two dates is the correct one. The matter has to be left undecided pending more conclusive evidence. Uncertainty on this abbot's date of death consequently makes determining the date of accession of his successor unsolved.

pa when those defined by the text as the older and younger generations of the Shar kha pa had a dispute.³⁹

'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan was called to mediate the controversy, but his Solomonic approach towards both branches of the Shar kha pa (rTse chen and the future rGyal rtse) raised the suspicion in both camps that the gNas rnying abbot was favouring the other side. It was at that time that the gNas rnying abbot 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan decided to leave his duties at the monastery and retire to a hermitage, but the dispute was later settled. He was called back and resumed giving wonderful teachings to his secular lords. A subsequent reference in *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.44b line 2) to ta'i si tu bSod nams dpal's interaction with him documents the existence of bonds of patronage between the rTse chen branch and the gNas rnying abbot.

The date of these disagreements is given as wood ox 1385, the same year in which *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* says that the internal revolt in the principality broke out, when the Shar kha pa lord of rGyal rtse was Kun dga' 'phags pa. The reference to different personalities of the princely family is thus an anachronism, given that 'Phags pa dpal and his brother 'Phags pa rin chen were dead by then (the former in 1370, the latter in 1376) and no member of the older generation ruling from rTse chen was left.

This does not detract from the fact that there was an internal conflict. The contention described in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* as disruptive of Kun dga' 'phags pa's smooth rule corresponds to the dispute among members of the Shar kha pa family mentioned by *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar*. This *rnam thar* implies a state of friction between the main Shar kha branch, owing to Kun dga' 'phags pa's establishment of rGyal rtse as the capital of his fiefs, and the cadet branch of rTse chen.

39. bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.43a lines 2–3) says: “dGung lo nyi shu rtsa gnyis bzhes pa'i dus glang gi lo la/ Shar kha pa sku mched snga gsar langs/ mDa' rdo la ma 'joms bar bar bzhugs mdzad kyang gsan dgongs ma byung zhing phyogs 'dzin mthong lugs rtsam yang byung bas/ thugs cung sgyid lug pas/ gnas dben pa kho na bsten/”; “When he was aged twenty-two, in the ox year (i.e. wood female ox 1385), [a disagreement] arose between Shar kha ba *snga gsar* (“earlier and later generations”, lit. “old and new”). Although ['Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan] was supposed to sit as mediator at the meeting place of mDa' rdo, they did not listen to him and there was a misconception that he had [displayed] partiality, so that he did not pursue matters further (*thugs cung sgyid lug* (“lazy, passive”) *pa*). He only attended to hermitages”. He was then called back and rehabilitated by his Shar kha pa sponsors.

After strengthening his power, Kun dga' 'phags pa conceived the political design of establishing his principality as a semi-autonomous force in gTsang and set about carrying it out. On one occasion, he took the offensive and seized the fort of sTag rtse from the Phag mo gru pa.⁴⁰

Given the location of sTag rtse,⁴¹ placed as it was on the border of the western Shar kha pa dominions in Myang smad, control of its *rdzong* amounted to a Phag mo gru pa intrusion upon the Shar kha pa lands. Kun dga' 'phags pa's attack may have been motivated by the fact that the Phag mo gru pa were a potential menace to Shar kha pa territorial integrity.

A certain boldness in the behaviour of Phag mo gru pa feudatories, which became more manifest in the 15th century but far from being extended to the entire plateau, may have rested on the fact that the Yuan, who favoured the Sa skya pa, were succeeded by the less protective Ming, whose approach towards Tibet did not favour any local power in particular.

Kun dga' 'phags pa's change of policy may also account for a decision to expand his territorial control over new areas in order to balance the split which had taken place in the Shar kha pa family. All in all, he should be credited with the expansion of the Shar kha pa dominions towards the west, where he built a castle in 'Dol byung, located in Myang bar, and took away from the Phag mo gru pa sTag rtse rdzong, even further west in Myang smad, which stood in the way of his plans.

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's struggle for power in gTsang

The successor on the rGyal rtse throne was the greatest Shar kha pa of all times. Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags (1389–1442) was the elder son of Kun dga' 'phags pa and Ma gcig bZang mo dpal, his father's senior queen from Zhwa lu. He was born in the sixth month of earth snake 1389 in rGya grong/rGyal grong (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p.385 lines 4–6, and *Myang chos 'byung* p.89 lines 1–2), the Shar kha pa estate in the vicinity of lCang ra. He planned, quite more ambitiously than his father, to make his principality the main religious and political seat of gTsang.

40. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.383 lines 3–6): “Ta’i si tu ’Phags pa dpal bzang po ba’i sras che ba nang chen Kun dga’ ’phags pas/ rGyal mkhar rtse’i rdzong dang/ ’Dol chung gi sa mkhar bzhengs/ sTag rtse rdzong/ Phag gru pa’i lag nas blangs/”; “Ta’i si tu ’Phags pa dpal bzang po’s eldest son, nang chen Kun dga’ ’phags pa, built the rGyal mkhar rtse fort and the castle of ’Dol chung. He took sTag rtse rdzong away from the hands of the Phag [mo] gru pa”.

41. sTag rtse is the area near Pa snam and Nor bu khyung rtse. See *Myang chos 'byung* (p.113 line 5–p.120 line 7) for its several settlements of great significance, including mKhar kha, from where people went to rGyal rtse to play a major role at the castle and monastic town. Its upper part is known in the literature as sTag tshal.

The first step in Rab brtan's strategy for achieving autonomy was drastically to reshape his father's town by transforming it into a major religious centre, and to establish the Shar kha pa at the political forefront. He thus attempted to alter rGyal rtse's dependence on the old and new rulers of Tibet, but without initially breaking away from the political establishment.

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's interest for politics was on a par with his more famous religious zeal. During his youth, Rab brtan managed to win the sympathy of the leading potentate of his time. In earth rat 1408, Rab brtan was invited to sNe gdong by gong ma Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1374–1440), the great Phag mo gru pa who was sitting on the throne of ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302?–1364). This was the first contact between the young rGyal rtse prince (Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags was twenty years old at that time) and the shrewd lord of Tibet. Rab brtan won over the *gong ma*. Later, the *gong ma* summoned him to be part of his personal cabinet of ministers as *gzims dpon* (“chamberlain”) (*Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* p.60 line 20; *dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* p.146 lines 22–23; also see Ar. Macdonald “Préambule à la lecture d'un rGya-Bod yig-tshang” p. 152 n.224).

Hence, Rab brtan had already entered the political arena when he ascended the throne of rGyal rtse in the first month of water snake 1413 (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.46 lines 16–19) rather than in water dragon 1412, as Tucci says in *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (p.665) three months after his father died.

In water snake 1413, soon after becoming the ruler of rGyal rtse, Rab brtan summoned another precocious personage, mKhas grub rje dGe legs dpal (1385–1438), to be the royal monk and his own *rtsa ba'i bla ma* (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.46 line 20–p.47 line 3). The event and its date are confirmed by another source (*rGya Bod yig tshang* p.386 lines 7–9).

mKhas grub rje gave added impulse to Buddhist activities at lCang ra, whose abbot he was appointed to be. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (ibid.) adds that on that occasion Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags allotted estates to lCang ra to support its monastic establishment (on their subsequent use in funding the construction of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* see below). The fact that lCang ra was still the major religious centre of the Shar kha pa's Zhwa lu pa branch indicates that rTse chen and its monastery had remained firmly in the hands of the Sa skya pa branch descended from bSod nams dpal. The presence at lCang ra of some four hundred ordained monks also proves that religious activities began on a grand scale with mKhas grub rje's arrival.

The conflict with the Phag mo gru pa when Kun dga' 'phags pa took control of sTag rtse rdzong was not the last of that kind. Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags and members of his family clashed again with them. *dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* (p.146 line 23–p.147 line 4; also Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.639) says that Rab brtan fought twice against Phag mo gru pa Grags pa rgyal mtshan, the lord of Central Tibet. He betrayed, in the Fifth Dalai Lama's view,

the protection and support given to him by the Phag mo gru pa *gong ma*.⁴² Filial sentiments for Rab brtan and his appointment to the cabinet notwithstanding, Grags pa rgyal mtshan levied an army of ten thousand against rGyal rtse. These strained relations are highlighted in *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma*, which deals with the political situation of that period (Rome ed. *ibid.* f.56a lines 1–3 and Tucci transl. p.190). Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags was defeated but he was pardoned by gong ma Grags pa rgyal mtshan (*dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* p.147 lines 4–5; also see Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.639).

Deb ther dmar po gsar ma makes it clear that Rab brtan had disagreements with rTse chen and the Sa skya pa, and adds that the Yar lung pa (i.e. the Phag mo gru pa) saw in the Shar kha pa from Myang, led by Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, their worst enemy (*Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* Rome ed. f.56a lines 1–4, Tucci transl. p.190). This piece of information shows plainly enough Rab brtan's independent-mindedness towards any power which could thwart his plans. He fought his relatives, sponsors and allies in order to assert himself as a leading power in gTsang.

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags ran into an obstacle to his design of obtaining for rGyal rtse a bigger role on the political scene. This was the neighbouring family of Rin spungs. The Rin spungs pa were, as is well known, the main Phag mo gru pa feudatories in gTsang. Their dominions were located to the north of rGyal rtse, outside the area of Myang stod, but well inside gTsang proper. The Sa skya pa and the Shar kha pa of rTse chen were the target of Rab brtan's youthful ambitions in the early period of his reign but later the Rin spungs pa, who nurtured the same goals as Rab brtan, became the main target of his hostility.

Rin spungs was destroyed by a devastating earthquake in iron hare 1411 (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.43 lines 19–21) rather than in iron hare 1421, as Tucci says (*Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.665). The power of rGyal rtse was enhanced by the withdrawal of such a dangerous competitor. The situation favourable to rGyal rtse was temporary though, because not long after the Rin spungs pa reemerged boldly on the gTsang scene.

In the years that followed, the Shar kha pa are indicated in *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* (Rome ed. f.55b lines 4–6, Tucci transl. p.189) as being staunch opponents of the Rin spungs pa, against whom they fought at least twice.

Both Tibetan and secondary sources make a point to stress how Grags pa rgyal mtshan was able to maintain the power of the Phag mo gru pa intact until his death (water rat 1432) or more accurately, I believe, until iron dog 1430, when he retired from secular affairs to dedicate himself to the contemplative life (Rome ed. *ibid.* f.81a, Tucci transl. p.217, and Ar. Macdonald, "Préambule à la lecture d'un rGya-Bod yig-tshang" p.103–104). Hence the clashes between

42. Ricca-LoBue (*The Great Stupa of Gyantse* p.18) say that these incidents took place in 1406. This is too early a date for Rab brtan to have been the prince of rGyal rtse involved in them. He had not yet ascended its throne in that year. The second time was in 1434 (on this clash see below p.705).

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags and Grags pa rgyal mtshan, in the absence of a precise date, must have taken place before 1430.

After Grags pa rgyal mtshan's death, the Phag mo gru pa were remarkably weakened (Ar. Macdonald, "Préambule à la lecture d'un rGya-Bod yig-tshang" p.103–105), to the point that, in wood tiger 1434, their feudatories revolted.⁴³ In the following year wood hare 1435, the Rin spungs pa, until then the leading ministers of the Phag mo gru pa, took gTsaṅg away from them (Sum pa mkhan po in the *Re'u mig* of his *dPag bsam ljon bzang* Das ed. 1889 p.65; also see Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.654).

In the wake of the 1434 rebellion, the Shar kha pa too revolted against the Phag mo gru pa. The Fifth Dalai Lama says that this was the second time they did it. During that eventful year, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's step-brother bKra shis 'phags pa defeated the Phag mo gru pa in gTsaṅg. As said above, gTsaṅg was lost to the Phag mo gru pa by 1435 but, in spite of the Shar kha pa success against them during the previous year, this did not favour the princes of rGyal rtse.

It was unavoidable that the two ambitious neighbours——rGyal rtse and Rin spungs——showed signs of mutual hostility with the weakening of the Phag mo gru pa. After the disastrous earthquake that destroyed their main seat in 1411, the Rin spungs pa rapidly regained

43. See, e.g., the article by van der Kuijp ("On the Fifteenth Century *Lho rong chos 'byung* by Ra tshag Tshe dbang rgyal"), which has a detailed analysis of the events after t'ai si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan's death. Or one can consult the shorter treatment in *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* which deals with the internal strife in the Phag mo gru pa family after Grags pa rgyal mtshan's death in 1432 (see *ibid.* p.86 line 18 and the following lines).

Upon Grags pa rgyal mtshan's death, a strife erupted between two antagonist parties. One was composed by the rTse thang clan, supported by the Gong dkar feudatories, who wanted Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan, a brother of Grags pa rgyal mtshan, on the throne. The other counted on the gDan sa mthil clan, supported by the Rin spungs feudatories, who wanted Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan's son, Grags pa 'byung gnas, to be the new ruler.

The decision was left to the old abbot of the Phag mo gru pa *gdan sa*, spyan snga bSod nams rgyal mtshan, who was in favour of the young Grags pa 'byung gnas. The situation would have stabilised after this decision, were it not for bSod nams rgyal mtshan's death in 1434. Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan, feeling free from his bond of loyalty towards the old *spyan snga*, revolted against his son, Grags pa 'byung gnas.

This event gave an opportunity to the Phag mo gru pa feudatories to revolt in turn against their lords. The winners turned out in 1435 to be the Rin spungs princes, who had initially opposed the revolt by supporting Grags pa 'byung gnas against Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan. They took gTsaṅg, where their seat was located, away from their Phag mo gru pa masters (see Ar. Macdonald, "Préambule à la lecture d'un rGya-Bod yig-tshang" p.102–105). The new alignment fell in 1435, when Don grub rdo rje from Rin spungs seized bSam grub rtse (Wylie, "Monastic Patronage in 15th-Century Tibet" p.322). In spite of everything, the relations between Phag mo gru pa and Rin spungs pa remained amicable, worsening dramatically only when the next Rin spungs pa, Don yod rdo rje, succeeded Don grub rdo rje (*ibid.* p.324).

lost ground to become the overlords of gTsang in 1435. The Shar kha pa must have found the newly acquired power of their neighbour a menace to their aspirations.

The repeated clashes between the Shar kha pa and the Rin spungs pa are not clearly described in *dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* (p.160 line 12–p.161 line 2; also see Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.642). In his section on rGyal mkhar rtse (*dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* p.177 lines 8–9; also see Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.646), the Fifth Dalai Lama says that Rab brtan put to flight the Rin spungs pa led by Nam mkha' rgyal po. Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags also had an ongoing struggle against Don grub rdo rje's brother Shakya rgyal mtshan (*dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* p.160 line 22–p.161 line 2; also Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.642).

In view of this evidence, one could assume that Rin spungs Nam mkha' rgyal po's defeat at the hands of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags took place quite sometime before the Rin spungs pa became the lords of gTsang, given that Nam mkha' rgyal po was Shakya rgyal mtshan's grand-father (*dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* p.159 line 13–p.160 line 13; also see Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.642). Since the Rin spungs pa became the rulers of gTsang in 1435 still during the time of Rab brtan, the Shar kha pa must have suffered military and political debacles in the years following the prince of rGyal rtse defeated Shakya rgyal mtshan.

After Rin spungs Don grub rdo rje became the *rdzong dpon* of bSam grub rtse and the overlord of gTsang in 1435, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags did not accept the new political settlement light-heartedly and did not submit to the Rin spungs pa. These were the years in which he was completing his main religious institution at rGyal rtse. Despite his ambitions, reflected in the construction of dPal 'khor chos sde, a passage in *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* (Rome ed. f.55b lines 4–6, Tucci transl. p.189) refers to Rab brtan's frustrated efforts to establish rGyal rtse as the main power in gTsang, saying in vague terms that the Shar kha pa were the losers and their power was taken away by their enemies.

In the second month of water dog 1442, the *chos rgyal* fell ill. He left a spiritual will and decided to retire to Ri khrod dGa' ldan, the hermitage on the mountain to the north of rGyal rtse (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.278 lines 3–5). He died on the twelfth day of *sa ga zla ba* of the same year 1442 (*ibid.* p.279 lines 6–13).

rGya Bod yig tshang gives a summary of the main facts regarding Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's political life. These facts can be found in his biography, but the text introduces some minor differences that are worth mentioning. Its author, dPal 'byor bzang po, does not hesitate to disclose his sympathy for Sa skya. *rGya Bod yig tshang* leans heavily on Sa skya pa orthodoxy and paints all Shar kha pa as faithful servants of Sa skya. This was seldom the case with Kun dga' 'phags pa and never so with Rab brtan.

rGya Bod yig tshang recognises Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags as the incarnation of Byams pa mgon po (*ibid.* p.395 line 3). He is said to have been fond, since childhood, of learning about the 'Khon lineage of Sa skya, the root chieftains of the Shar kha pa (*ibid.* p.395 lines

8–9). He received the *ta'i si tu* rank from the Ming emperor (ibid. p.395 lines 17–18), had good relations with the sTag tshang rdzong pa (the people to whom dPal 'byor bzang po belonged) and mi dbang Nam mkha' legs pa was like a father to him (ibid. p.396 lines 1–4).⁴⁴

He ruled lHa rtse rdzong (ibid. p.396 lines 4–5) and was a major supporter of the lineage of the gZhi thog pa (ibid. p.396 lines 5–7), to which his grandfather belonged. After obtaining lHa rtse rdzong, he was able to control lDan mkhar rdzong in the western direction, and Ya 'brog and lHo brag in the eastern direction (ibid. p.397 lines 2–5). He established alliances with various people in the lands up to *gdan sa chen po* (Sa skya), lHa rtse, lDog pho brang and Chu 'dus dkar po on one side (i.e. in the west), and with those of 'Brog gong dkar and 'Phyong rgyas sTag rtse on the other (i.e. in the east) (ibid. p.397 line 18–p.398 line 2). He also exercised his influence in the north.

This remarkable list inasmuch as nowhere else Rab brtan's alliances appear in the sources identifies the political powers in various areas of Central Tibet, or at least some of them, with which Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags collaborated in his fight against his Rin spungs pa foes in particular.

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags is said to have been the chieftain of gTsaṅg (ibid. p.397 line 17). This is Sa skya pa wishful thinking on the eve of the 1434 rebellion, the year in which *rGya Bod yig tshang* was completed. The following year, 1435, proved dPal 'byor bzang po wrong. The Rin spungs pa became the masters of gTsaṅg.⁴⁵

44. According to Ricca-LoBue (*The Great Stupa of Gyantse* p.23), this was 'Jam dbyangs Nam mkha' legs pa'i rgyal mtshan (1399–1444), the *nang so* of the Rin spungs pa. He was in charge of lHa rtse, which he gave to Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags.

45. Besides Rab brtan and the important part he played in his principality, other Shar kha pa who had a meaningful role in the activities of the rGyal rtse Shar kha pa during this prince's time, given that Rab brtan's biography makes a point to remember his closest relatives and associates besides his parents.

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar mentions his elder brother dBang rgyal 'phags pa together with his younger brother Rab 'byor bzang po and his lifetime assistant (*zhabs 'bring pa*) a khu ("paternal uncle") bSod nams rgyal po (ibid. p.282 lines 7–13). dBang rgyal 'phags pa was not Rab brtan's elder brother. In another passage (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.17 line 21–p.18 line 2; see also *rGya Bod yig tshang* p.384 line 10–p.385 line 1), the same text correctly terms him 'Phags pa rin chen's son, and hence Rab brtan's uncle, born in wood hare 1375. It goes on to say that he was a great warrior.

Rab 'byor bzang po (called Rab 'byor 'phags pa in *rGya Bod yig tshang* p.398 line 8) showed keen interest in religion, although he kept his layman status. He was awarded the title of *nang so* for his faithfulness to Sa skya (ibid. p.398 lines 7–9). In the domain of religion, he was a follower and a patron of Theg chen Chos kyi rgyal po and the Sa skya pa tradition, as exemplified by his sponsorship of some dPal 'khor chos sde holy rooms of manifest Sa skya pa affiliation, such as the Lam 'bras lha khang in the *gtsug lag khang*.

The *gos sku* made in front of the rGyal mkhar rtse rock and other patchwork *thang ka-s*

The temples of rGyal rtse being renowned for its many receptacles of body, speech and mind, the making of one more genre of religious objects was practised in Myang stod with great results. *Thang ka-s* of huge size in the *gos sku* technique (i.e. embroidered patchwork) were produced for outdoors display on special festivities, a typically Tibetan custom.

Shortly after the dPal 'khor bde chen complex was completed, bKra shis rab brtan (on the throne 1447–1476) constructed in water bird 1453 the rDo khang, a towering building in the monastery's north-eastern corner inside the walled complex (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.295–296). Colossal *gos sku* were hung on the main wall outside this edifice.⁴⁶ They could be seen from a distance of kilometres.

The custom of making *gos sku-s* at rGyal rtse and neighbouring monasteries predates by a few decades the construction of the building to display them. The first rGyal rtse *gos sku* was begun on the thirtieth of the third month of earth dog 1418,⁴⁷ not long before the first abortive foundation of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* was attempted.

Rab 'byor bzang po was born in iron sheep 1391 to ma gcig bZang mo dpal (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.37 lines 17–21, where his name is poetically paraphrased). She was one of Kun dga' 'phags pa's Zhwa lu wives. In the same year his mother died after a short disease. On the authority of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*, her death was due to post-partum complications. Her *nang rten* was installed in the dGe 'dun khang of rGyal mkhar rtse (ibid. p.37 line 21–p.38 line 4). Rab 'byor bzang po died when he was aged forty-two in water rat 1432, uttering the prayer given to him by grub chen Kun dga' blo gros, when the master realised that the prince was going to die (ibid. p.228 lines 18–19).

Another member of the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse who had a major political and military role during Rab brtan's lifetime was his younger stepbrother bKra shis 'phags pa. He was born in wood pig 1395 to Kun dga' 'phags pa's second wife from Zhwa lu, rGyal mtshan dar ba (ibid. p.283 line 18–p.284 line 4). He defeated the Phag mo gru pa in 1434.

As the main rGyal rtse lineage did not produce issue—neither Rab brtan nor his brother Rab 'byor married—the lineage of the successive rGyal rtse princes descended from bKra shis 'phags pa. A son is wrongly attributed to Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags by the Fifth Dalai Lama (*dPyid kyi rgyal mo 'i glu dbyangs* p.177 lines 15–16, also Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.646). He was bKra shis rab brtan, the son of his stepbrother bKra shis 'phags pa.

46. In its interior, this building was used for religious discussion and exegeses. The *rdo khang*, although hollowed out, is one of the few structures within the walled monastic complex that has survived destruction in minimal part during the years of the Cultural Revolution.

47. For the date and a detailed description of this *gos sku* see *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.57 line 5–p.59 line 10). 'Jigs med grags pa, the author of Rab brtan's biography, adds a small controversy, for he says that the thirtieth of the third month is correct rather than the eighth of the fourth month, as stated in the old *dkar chag* (ibid. p.59 lines 10–14).

The work for the *gos sku* was a veritable feat accomplished in a short span of time. Under the guidance of master dPal 'byor rin chen, thirty-four artists were employed for the *gos sku* known under the term *gos bzo ba* ("specialists in the textile [technique]", *ibid.* p.57 line 6). It took them thirty-three days to complete the work (*ibid.* p.58 line 15).

The biography of Rab brtan describes the subjects depicted on the *gos sku*. It says that the main image portrayed there is Shakya rgyal po in *bhumisparsa mudra* with his two disciples at his flanks. Above him on both sides are the *lha'i bu-s* (*devaputra-s*). Placed in the central position below the main Shakyamuni is mGon po Beng. To his right is Mar med mdzad, and to his left is Mi pham mgon po. These images are surrounded by the Arhat-s, eight per side, along with Dharma ta la, rNam thos sras, sNang ba mtha' yas and twenty other images stitched against a background of flowers. Four relics of the Buddha were placed in the *urna* of the central Shakyamuni.

The meticulous description in Rab brtan's biography allows a few details of the *gos sku* technique to be discerned. First the outline of the images was drawn on the background cloth. Then following the outlines, the patches were applied, beginning with the layers at the back.

The 1418 *gos sku* was made in front of rGyal mkhar rtse rock, as the construction of the dPal 'khor chos sde had not yet begun. The *gos sku* was consecrated by 'Jam dpal dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan, the abbot of gNas rnying.

Another *gos sku* was made in earth pig 1419, while mkhas grub 'Jigs med grags pa was giving *Dus kyi 'khor lo* teachings in rGyal rtse. This time the *thang ka* depicted Byams pa with various other deities, such as sPyan ras gzigs, mKhyen rabs dBang phyug, some of the Nyan thos sras; Shakya rgyal po, Mi 'khrugs pa and mGon po Gri gug (*ibid.* p.63 line 20–p.64 line 11).

One more patchwork *thang ka*, the *thugs dam* ("personal") *gos sku* of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, was made in water rat 1432. Its main figure portrayed a huge Thub pa'i dbang po (for its date and detailed description see *ibid.* p.230 line 18–p.234 line 13).

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar says that Thub pa'i dbang po sports the *uśniśa* and sits in *vajrāsana* on a throne featuring a lunar disc, supported by lions. He is placed in the centre of a *rgyab yol* (*torana*) surrounded by a *rgyan drug*. Thub pa'i dbang po has the thirty-two *lakṣāna*, along with *'khor lo-s* on his hands and feet. To his right and left respectively are the portraits of Chos kyi rin chen and 'Jam dpa'i dbyangs Rin chen rgyal mtshan. Near the right shoulder of the main image is a one-headed and two-armed white rNam par snang mdzad and near the left shoulder is a one-headed and four-armed golden Yum Sher phyin. To the right and left of Thub pa'i dbang po are sPyan ras gzigs and 'Jam pa'i dbyangs respectively (*ibid.* p.231 line 16–p.232 line 21).

This *gos sku* was once again the work of gNas rnying dPal 'byor rin chen and his disciples (ibid. p.231 lines 7–8, where his place of origin gNas rnying is given, while on p.166 line 16 it is omitted). These *gos sku*-s were just one side of gNas rnying dPal 'byor rin chen's polyhedric talent he employed to give an outstanding contribution to the monuments of rGyal rtse.⁴⁸

A description of the consecration, details of various materials employed and the cost of the work were not found in the official documents by 'Jigs med grags pa, the author of Rab brtan's biography which nonetheless mentions the kind of fabric, *Hor gos snyung kha rgyan bzhi ma* (the "Hor brocade with a simple background and four decorative motifs?") that was used (ibid. p.233 lines 15–16). The keeper of this *gos sku* was A bsnyen (ibid. p.234 lines 4–5), his full name being A snyen (spelled so) Chos skyong rin chen (ibid. p.166 line 13). His full name is mentioned in the section of Rab brtan's biography in which Rab brtan's personnel is credited for their labours (ibid. p.166 line 8–p.167 line 6). This patchwork *thang ka* still exists and, in the mid 1980s when I was first at rGyal rtse, was kept encased in a huge leather bag inside the Chos rgyal lha khang on the ground floor of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*.

In fire dragon 1436, a *gos sku* with an imposing Mi pham mgon po as main image was made by the *gos bzo ba dpon* and his disciples (ibid. p.240 lines 5–10), a definition that most likely refers the supreme master dPal 'byor rin chen. The ten Bodhisattva at Mi pham mgon po's sides were the work of dpon mo che bSod nams dpal 'byor (ibid. p.241 lines 18–20), while the decoration of the upper part was by *gos bzo ba dpon 'Jam dpal* and his assistants (ibid. p.241 line 20–p.242 line 5).

The *gos sku* was consecrated on the full moon day of *sa ga zla ba* of earth horse 1438 by Nam mkha' chos grub's spiritual son, the great Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451), and Tsan dra pa (ibid.p.243 line 20–p.244 line 13). He was Zla ba dpal rin (Tsandra go mi), the Zhwa lu pa master reputed for being well versed in music.⁴⁹

48. Besides being the master of the *gos sku* technique, gNas rnying dPal 'byor rin chen was the head of the workshop active at the dPal 'khor chos sde (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.166 line 17) and a renowned painter who worked in the *gtsug lag khang* and sKu 'bum. In the *gtsug lag khang* he painted the group of *siddha*-s of the Lam 'bras lha khang. In the sKu 'bum he made murals in the second chapel on the second floor and the east chapel on the fifth floor. He was the master of mKhyen brtse, the establisher of the mKhyen ris style, whose work is still partially extant on the walls of Gong dkar chos sde (Jackson, *A History of Tibetan Painting* p.139–168).

49. Earlier Zla ba dpal rin was assigned an even more important task at the rGyal rtse sKu 'bum, given the dPal 'khor chos sde's close links with Zhwa lu. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.159 lines 8–13) says: "sGo bzhi'i las kyi rdo rje slob dpon sku zhang Phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba dang/ dang slob dpon chen po Tsandra go mi/ bla chen mGon po rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po/ chos rje dPal ldan legs pa'i zhal snga nas nams dang/ gzhan yang skyes chen dam pa du ma zhid rab tu gnas par mdzad pa'i gnas 'di nyid du/ dus me pho 'brug gi lo zla ba lnga pa'i tshes bcu gcig nas gdan 'dzoms//"; "This (i.e. the sKu 'bum) was consecrated by the erudite who attained spiritual realisations, the one whose name is universally known as rnal 'byor dBang phyug chen po Kun dga' blo

This *gos sku* has survived the passing of the centuries. It is kept inside a big leather bag in rDo rje dbyings lha khang on the ground floor of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*.⁵⁰

Another *gos sku* was made for Rin chen rtse as the *nang rten* of Byang sems bZang nga ba who died in the eleventh month of wood hare 1435 (ibid. p.243 line 20–p.244 line 13).⁵¹ This *gos sku*, portraying Maitreya with a multitude of other images including Sangs rgyas-s, Byang chub sems dpa'-s and Nyan thos sras-s, was not entirely stitched anew but drastically restored, since the banner had become darkened by smoke.

This patchwork *thang ka* is ascribed to dpon mo che bSod nams dpal 'byor, the same artist who co-produced the 1432 Shakyamuni *gos sku* at rGyal rtse. He personally told 'Jigs med grags pa, the author of Rab brtan's biography, that, on Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's orders, he began work by making the *skya ris* (the “drawing of the basic outlines”) of the images which had deteriorated. He completely remade ten Bodhisattva, finishing them in the third month of earth sheep 1439. Kun dga' blo gros consecrated the *gos sku* immediately after its completion. (ibid. p.244 line 13–p.245 line 3).

Following the 1439 renovation, the *gos sku* was consecrated anew by Bo dong Phyogs las rnam rgyal. A special keeper, gnyer pa gzim g.yog pa Chos skyong dpal, was appointed to preserve it (ibid. p.245 lines 4–13).

gros dpal bzang po, who came to be the main [person performing the consecration], Go bzhi'i las kyi rdo rje slob dpon sku zhang Phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba, slob dpon chen po Tsandra go mi, bla chen mGon po rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po and chos rje dPal ldan legs pa, and moreover by many great noble beings. It was the eleventh day of the fifth month of fire dragon 1436 when they congregated [for the consecration]”.

In the first month of the year of the pig 1443 (ibid. p.289 line 8), Tsandra go mi was again called to rGyal rtse in order to consecrate the *nang rten* of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, a statue of Byams pa placed inside Chos rgyal lha khang in the eastern *glo 'bur* of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*'s ground floor (ibid. p.290 lines 2–5). See ibid. (p.289 line 14–p.290 line 2) for a description of this *nang rten*.

A short biography in *Zhwa lu dgan rabs* (p.121 line 3–p.123 line 1), entitled *Tsandra gomi zer ba'ang gsung rtsom gyi mdzad byang dmar po la yod de rjod skad du btsun sa zla ba zhes pa'o*, is dedicated to Tsandra gomi aka Zla ba dpal rin. He was the great Zhwa lu pa musicologist, master of many esoteric disciplines and founder of Sangs rgyas gling *dgon pa* on the slope of the hill where rTsis gNas gsar was built. Apart from being involved in the consecration of rGyal tse sKu 'bum, he himself built one of these monuments at the monastery he established.

50. A picture of this *gos sku* taken by Schaeffer is found in Engelhardt ed., *Tibet in 1938–1939: Photographs from the Ernst Schaefer Expedition to Tibet*, pl.146.

51. Also known under the names of bZang mo dpal and bDag chen bZang mo rgyal mo, she was the mother of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags. She appears under the name bDag chen bZang mo rgyal mo in the inscriptions which celebrate her as the donor of several *lha khang* on sKu 'bum's third floor. She was born in water snake 1353, had Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags at the age of thirty-seven in earth snake 1389, and died when she was eighty-three years old in wood hare 1435.

A few more *gos sku* made for gNas rnying were made by dPal 'byor rin chen who was responsible for most of the appliqué *thang ka* commissioned by the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse, all these religious objects thus being the outcome of a common cultural milieu. Under the impulse of dPal 'byor rin chen, gNas rnying became the workshop where the main artists of the *gos sku* technique were trained and worked.

gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar talks about various patchwork *thang ka* for its monastery. By command of the gNas rnying gdan sa 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1364–1422 or 1423, on the throne 1373–1422 or 1423), a *gos sku* was made by gNas rnying dPal 'byor rin chen, assisted by bKra shis mgon, in an unspecified year but not long before the death of the abbot. It is thus unclear whether the first *gos sku* made in the area of Myang stod during that period was the one for rGyal rtse or the appliqué for gNas rnying. This banner depicted Shakyamuni surrounded by the sixteen Arhat, and thus was remarkably similar to the one made at rGyal rtse in 1418.⁵²

Following the foundation of a temple at gNas rnying dedicated to the newly established dGe lugs pa school at the *dgon pa*, a *gos sku* was sponsored by the abbot 'Jam pa'i kun dga' bde legs rin chen rgyal mtshan, who converted the monastery to the school founded by Tsong kha pa. The patchwork *thang ka* was thus made in 1472, the same foundation year of the new

52. bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.45a lines 3–7): “gZhan yang rgyu phun sum tshogs pa/ rGya Hor nas byung ba'i gos rin po che/ gser dngul la sogs pa/ sTon pa rin po che sku mdangs/ gzi 'od/ rgyan dang na bza' dar bkra shis pa'i dge mtshan dang ldan pa dag/ thag nyer ji kun nas thugs kyi rtsol ba drag pos bsags te/ dad gus kyis 'bul ba dang/ rin la mi gzigs par dpa' bo'i tshog zhes pa nyos nas ma theb dpon dPal 'byor rin chen dang/ dpon bKra shis mgon la sogs pa bris gras pa la mkhas pa bsags nas/ gso sbyongs blangs shing lag cha byin rlabs/ dri bzang gi bar gzungs gso sbyong mdo sogs dang ldan pa/ sTon pa rin po che dang/ 'phags pa gNas brtan bcu drug sogs la/ gos yug brgya phrag gcig zung gnyis/ dar chen yug bcu phrag drug/ gan chung bzhi tshan gnyis/ ber thul bdun gnyis/ gsang lam cig/ thon ti yug gnyis/ gos kha dang/ dar kha bgrang gis mi lang pa na bza'i rgyan mu tig dpag tu med pa dang bcas pa nas/ bzo'i chag tshad/ lha'i gral bkod/ kha rtog gi spel/ gras tshem kyi zhal bkod/ rje nyid kyis ji ston mdzad pa ltar gyis bzo pa lag len pa rnams kiyis zhabs tog bgyis //”; “Moreover, with dedicated effort, [’Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan] collected precious materials from both far and nearby, precious brocades from rGya Hor, gold and silver, and a beautiful shining image of sTon pa rin po che (i.e. Shakyamuni) with decorations, a robe and an auspicious banner. Despite the severe burden for all of them, he said: “Without caring for the price may I bravely collect them by offering [my] faith and veneration!”, and bought them. Having summoned the master artist (*ma theb dpon*) dPal 'byor rin chen, dpon bKra shis mgon, and [several] master painters and stitchers, he restored their vows and blessed their instruments. The appliqué masters involved in the work (*lag len pa*) rendered great service under the guidance of this *rje*, who advised on the measurements (*bzo'i chag tshad*), the placement of the gods (*lha'i gral bkod*), the colour combinations (*kha rtog gi spel*), and the cutting (*gras*) and tailoring (*tshem*) of the images of sTon pa rin po che and the noble sixteen gNas brtan, bearing [rows of] *mantra*-s painted in saffron and the *gso sbyong gi mdo* (“*mdo* to restore vows”). [It was made] with 102 bundles (*yug*) of brocade, 60 bundles (*yug*) of silk, two times four *gan chung* (?), two times seven *ber thul* (i.e. a kind of

temple, and depicted Byams pa with the sixteen Arhat at his sides.⁵³ This *gos sku* was again drawn by dPal 'byor rin chen who must have had an extraordinarily long career given that he was already active in 1418.

Finally, one more *gos sku* was made at gNas rnying in iron rat 1480 as a funerary image to commemorate the death of rGyal mtshan rin chen, son of 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan and abbot of La stod Byang Chos sdings (1393–1480, in office in the years 1413–1480).⁵⁴

brocade for coats), one *gsang lam* (?), two bundles (*yug*) of *thon ti* (i.e. a kind of Chinese brocade), a number of squares of *gros* (?) and silk, as well as uncountable pearls for the robes [of the images]”.

The same text (f.45b line 5) establishes a not too accurate *terminus ante quem* for the making of this *gos sku* when it mentions the death date of this gNas rnying abbot: “Chu phog stag gi lo dung lo lnga bcu lnga dgu bzhes pa/ Hor zla ba drug pa'i tshes bcu'i tho rangs gzugs sku dbyings su bsdu//”; “In water male tiger (1422), when he was fifty-nine (sic for sixty-nine), he died on the tenth of *Hor zla* at dawn”, but see above (n.38) for the statement in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.79 lines 18–19) that he was still active when the Chos rgyal lha khang of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* was completed in water hare 1423.

53. bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.55b line 5): “Chu pho 'brug gi lo Hor zla na lnga pa'i gza' sgar bzang ba la gzim khang gi' gram bting//”; “Under an auspicious star, during the fifth *Hor zla ba* of water male dragon (1472), ['Jam pa'i kun dga' bde legs rin chen rgyal mtshan] laid the foundations of the *gzim khang*”.

Concerning the patchwork *thang ka* made at that time, the same text (ibid. f.56a line 6–f.56b line 1) says: “Gos yug bdun bcu don gsum dang/ dar yug bcu gnyis te gril bas brgyad cu gya lnga la grub pa'i/ rje btsun Byams pa cha lugs can gNas brtan bcu drug gi dbus bzhugs pa la/ lha grang bco lnga dang/ ldems g.yas la/ dpal ldan A ti sha/ sPyan ras gzigs/ Phyag rdor/ sGrol ma/ sTag bzhon/ g.yon la rje Tsong kha pa/ 'Jam dbyangs/ Mi g.yo ba/ (f.56b) sGrol dkar/ 'Dod kham dbang phyug te gril bas gtso 'khor nyer lnga bzhugs//”; “[A *gos sku*] was made with seventy-three bundles of brocade and twelve bundles of silk, altogether eighty-five of them, obtained by means of the summer offerings. It depicted rje btsun Byams pa under a rainbow, in the middle of the sixteen gNas brtan [and] with fifteen deities (*lha grang bco lnga*). On his right side (*ldems g.yas*) are dpal ldan A ti sha, sPyan ras gzigs, Phyag rdor, sGrol ma and sTag bzhon. On his left are rje Tsong kha pa, 'Jam dbyangs, Mi g.yo ba, (f.56b) sGrol dkar, 'Dod kham dbang phyug, altogether a group (*gtso 'khor*) of twenty-five images”.

gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar (ibid. f.56b lines 2–3) adds: “De'i ri mo/ mthe dpon dPal 'byor dang/ gos bzo gtso ba 'Brong rtse dpon mo che dang ltems g.yas g.yon gyi gzo bo/ rGyal mkhar rtse dpon dKon mchog 'phel rnams kyis gyis//”; “The *ri mo* of this [*gos sku*] was made by the chief artist (*mthe dpon*) dPal 'byor [rin chen], the main *gos bzo ba*, the 'Brong rtse'i dpon mo che, and the maker of the standing images to the right and left rGyal mkhar rtse dpon dKon mchog 'phel were those who made it”.

54. bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.53b lines 1–2): “De lta bu'i bla ma 'gro ba'i mgon po de nyid chu mo bya'i lo 'khrungs nas/ lcags pho byi ba'i lo dgung lo drug cu re bzhi cho 'phrul chen po'i tshes brgyad mya ngan las 'das pa'i tshul bstan no//”; “A *bla ma* such as him, this protector of sentient beings, was born in water female bird (1393). On the

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's change of mind about the structure of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*

Upon his enthronement when he was aged thirty, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags had already received the titles awarded to his influential grandfather 'Phags pa dpal in recognition of an entire political career. In wood horse 1414, soon after these appointments and possibly to celebrate the event, he began to transform rGyal rtse drastically.

A major step towards establishing the monastic town was the decision to build a *gtsug lag khang* as the centre of the forthcoming dPal 'khor chos sde complex. Rab brtan had a blissful vision of a group of *deva* anointing him with flowers when he conceived the idea of his *gtsug lag khang*. This vision was depicted on the east wall of the veranda (*g.yab*) of his residence (*gzim khang*), known as *gzim khang mKha' spyod* (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.61 lines 3–9), which was situated on top of the dPal 'khor chos sde hill in a central position of the boundary wall.⁵⁵ Its present state of disruption hampers any assessment of it.

Following the invitation of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags to sNe gdong by gong ma Grags pa rgyal mtshan in earth rat 1408—this being, in all probability, the first contact between the young rGyal rtse prince and the mature lord of Tibet, during which Rab brtan won over the *gong ma*—they left together for other districts in dBus. They visited all the important monasteries en route. This journey was quite inspirational for young Rab brtan. He was particularly impressed by Tshal Gung thang, which Rab brtan adopted as a model for his future foundations (*ibid.* p.43 lines 2–8).⁵⁶

eighth day of *cho 'phrul chen po* of iron male rat (1480) at the age of sixty-four [rGyal mtshan rin chen] performed the act of dying”.

Following this event, the same work (*ibid.* f.53b line 3) gives details about the material used to make another patchwork *thang ka* for outdoor display: “Byams pa mgon po'i gos sku gos yug bdun cu don gsum/ dar yug bcu gnyis te kun gril brgya cu gya lnga/”; “A *gos sku* of Byams pa mgon po was made with seventy-three bundles of brocade and twelve bundles of silk, altogether eighty-five bundles [of different fabrics]”.

55. *gTsang Myang stod Shel dkar rGyal rtse khul gyi lo rgyus* (p.9 lines 3–5): “lHa khang kun gyi nang nas mtho ba lcags ri'i byang na mKha' chos lha khang zhes par thang chos rgyal gyi shangs tshal las bris pa'i rnal 'byor ma Ye shes dngos gzhuks/ li sku byin can mang po bzhuks/”; “The *lha khang* above all [others, situated] in the northern section of the boundary wall, is called mKha' chos (spelled so for mKha' spyod) lha khang. A *thang [ka]* of rnal 'byor ma Ye shes, painted with blood from the nose of the *chos rgyal*, and many *li* statues bestowing blessings are placed there”.

56. Of the twin monasteries founded by Zhang g. Yu brag pa brTson 'grus grags pa (1123–1193 or 1194), Tshal in 1175 and Gung thang in 1187, *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* mentions Gung thang as the model for Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags' dPal 'khor chos sde. Again, Gung thang appears alone, not together with Tshal, in the sentence (*ibid.* p.43 line 1) before the passage mentioning the monasteries visited by Rab brtan. This may indicate that the author of the biography had meant Gung thang for Tshal Gung thang.

Tshal Gung thang was the inspiration for the dPal 'khor chos sde, but this *dgon pa* near lHa sa underwent such substantial transformation and suffered so much damage subsequently that it would have been impossible to assess its conception even before the monastery was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution.⁵⁷

The foundation date of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* in Rab brtan's biography is given as earth dog 1418, at the beginning of the middle summer month when the moon was in its rising cycle (ibid. p.63 lines 7–12).

Estates from lCang ra were assigned to fund the work at the forthcoming *gtsug lag khang* (ibid. p.63 line 12). The names of the master experts in charge of the *gtsug lag khang*'s construction are preserved in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.63 lines 12–16), a common feature in Tibetan literature. Rab brtan sent dpon mo che sK'yab pa to dBus with gold with the task of summoning the *lde gu ba* (sic for *ldem gu ba*? “sculptor of clay statues”?) dpon mo che rDor rgyal and the *shing bzo ba* (“master carpenter”) dpon mo che Chos grags, both Tibetans, as the structure built and the statues made by them confirms. He sent dpa' shi rGyal ba to Bal po to invite Newar *zangs mgar ba-s* (“coppersmiths, sculptors”), a statement showing that the Newar were considered the undisputed masters of casting techniques. rGyal ba was also sent to invite various other *'phul ba-s* (lit. “contributors”, i.e. masters of various skills) (ibid. p.63 lines 12–16).

On the ninth month of earth pig 1419 Rab brtan went to the Shar kha pa fief Rin chen rtse. While he was absorbed in meditation, a roll of paper containing the iconometry and the dimensions of the main statue of the Mahā bo dhi temple at rDo rje gdan fell on his lap. This event convinced him to use the Mahā bo dhi image as the prototype for the main statue of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.65 lines 8–16). The reference in the biography to Rab brtan's decision to change the main statue of the *gtsug lag khang* is followed by a passage of remarkable brevity, in which it is said that, after changing his mind, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags realised that the temple, whose construction was in progress, was rather too small to contain an image similar in size to the one of rDo rje gdan, so he decided to enlarge it.⁵⁸

57. Were valid photographic material be available, which would document the structure of Tshal Gung thang in the days before its destruction during the Cultural Revolution by old Western visitors to Tibet such as Aufschneiter, Tucci, Richardson and Harrer, this would not be representative of the shape the monastery had in Rab brtan's days. Richardson has a statement in Ferrari, *mK'yen-brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet* about Tshal Gung thang's conspicuous renovations after the 15th century but he did not add anything on them (ibid. p.106 n.105).

58. Ricca-LoBue (*The Great Stupa of Gyantse* p.20) say that in 1418 Rab brtan laid the foundations of the *gtsug lag khang* and that in the following year, considering the temple previously built by 'Phags pa dPal at rGyal rtse to be too small, decided to enlarge it. This interpretation of the facts rests on Tucci's assessment, based on an inscription inside the rDo rje dbyings kyi lha khang of the *gtsug lag*

Rab brtan's biography is useful for tracing the chronology of this piece of Shar kha pa micro-history. The *gtsug lag khang*'s foundations were laid in earth dog 1418, then in earth pig 1419 'Jigs med grags pa gave teachings on *Dus kyi 'khor lo rtsa rgyud*. In the same year, sometime during the ninth month, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags went to Rin chen rtse and decided to enlarge the temple. The foundations of the *gtsug lag khang* were subsequently laid in the second month of iron rat 1420.⁵⁹ Hence there was a continuum of activity which brought the *gtsug lag khang* into the form for which it has been known ever since, with a steady progress towards its final shape.

khang, in which he recognised the name of 'Phags pa dpal and an alleged foundation by him (Tucci, *Indo-Tibetica* IV, 3 English ed. p.8 and p.136).

The dPal bzang of the inscription is too brief and generic a name to be a guarantee that it addresses 'Phags pa dpal, although the Shar kha pa prince is commonly named 'Phags pa dpal bzang. More than a simple, disputable linguistic assonance, nowhere in the sources dealing in detail with rGyal rtse (*rGya Bod yig tshang*, *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*, *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* and *Myang chos 'byung*) is any foundation of a religious building at rGyal rtse attributed to 'Phags pa dpal.

Following Ricca-LoBue's line of thought, Rab brtan would have begun to expand 'Phags pa dpal's pre-existing building in 1418, when he initiated the work, rather than in 1419, when it was in progress. Had Rab brtan modified a previous structure in 1418 rather than laid the foundations of his *gtsug lag khang*, his biography would have written this. Instead, it says that in 1419 he modified the structure he himself had laid in 1418. Or else, again following these authors, one might think that he abandoned his 1418 foundation to concentrate on the expansion of 'Phags pa dpal's pre-existing temple. This is again nowhere mentioned in the sources.

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar establishes the sequence of events that led Rab brtan to expand his *gtsug lag khang*, the foundations of which he had laid the year before. The biography of him (p.65 lines 8–16) says: “Lo 'di'i zla ba dgu pa'i nang du Rin chen rtser chags phebs/ dgon legs kyi brang khang lho pa'i nang du bzhugs 'tsher mdzad/ thugs dam la bzhugs pa'i sgang la/ sku phang du shog ril rgan po brtsig byung ba gzigs pas/ rGya gar rDo rje gdan gyi Mahā bo dhi bzhengs tshul sku'i tshad/ rgyu song sogs zhib par bkod pa zhig 'dug pas/ Bangha'i sgo nas lung bstan par dgongs/ rang re'ang chos sde gsar du bzhengs pa'i rten gtso bo'i sku tshad kyang 'di dang mthun par bzhengs/ de bzhin la gtsug lag khang sngar brtsigs pa khyon cung zhig chung 'dug pas/ slar khyon ma chung ba zhig sgrub//” “During the ninth month of that year (1419), he went to sojourn at Rin chen rtse. He stayed in the southern *brang khang* (“residential quarters”) of this excellent monastery. While meditating on his *yi dam*, he saw that an old scroll had fallen in his lap. Since it contained the detailed measurements of the statue of rGya gar rDo rje gdan's Maha bo dhi and instructions how to make it, he thought that this was a prophecy from Bhang gha and that he was supposed to make the main statue of his own *chos sde* under construction with the same size as that [of Maha bo dhi]. Hence, given that the dimensions of the *gtsug lag khang* he had built earlier were slightly too small, he again undertook its construction with dimensions which were not small”.

59. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.66 lines 4–5): “lCags pho byi ba'i lo zla ba gnyis pa nas 'gram bting//”, “He laid the foundations [of the *gtsug lag khang*] from the second month of iron male rat (1420)”.

Therefore, the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* underwent two different foundations. The first in 1418 was inconclusive; the second in 1420 was the actual and definitive one. The foundation date of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* must be corrected in other primary and also secondary sources, given that the date of its conclusive foundation does not appear in them.

Thus, the inspiration for the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* deriving from Tshal Gung thang was supplemented with ideas from rDo rje gdan for the main statue of the *gtsang khang* (“inner chapel”). This was commonplace in Tibetan culture. The most sacred image of the holiest Buddhist site in India was often used as a model.

Rab brtan's decision to expand the *gtsang khang* engendered a new phase in the temple. The wood for the second foundation was brought from La sgo (“door of the pass”) (ibid. p.65 lines 15–16). Its identification is rather problematic, the only clue being that the term *la sgo* (a “pass-door”, open to trade) often refers to a pass which gives access to another country (see, for instance, *mKhas pa lDe'u chos 'byung* p.264 lines 5–13). Given that in the same passage (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.65 lines 18–19; also see *rGya Bod yig tshang* p.389 line 15) it is mentioned that eight *ka chen* (“massive pillars”) were used for the *gtsang khang*, such huge trees could have been found in a lower area, maybe towards Gro mo on the Bhutanese border, a place where the wood trade still flourishes at present. In another passage, *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.381 lines 8–9) has Phag ri'i Las sgo che chung, which may refer to the same place where wood was fetched for the *gtsug lag khang*.

The fact that eight massive pillars were employed is significant in another respect. Since these pillars were placed in the *gtsang khang* (i.e. the temple core that opens out to the 'du khang), either the preexisting temple structure was modified or building activities in 1419 were still extremely behind schedule, which indicates that the *gtsug lag khang* was reshaped in a brief span of time. Two months after the beginning of the new project, work on the main image, of the same size as the rDo rje gdan Shakyamuni, was begun. This confirms that work in the newly designed inner *lha lhang* had progressed at a remarkable pace.

Shing bzo ba dpon mo che Chos grags was responsible for completing the new, expanded structure up to the roof (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.66 lines 5–7). The surrounding galleries were made by a group of local experts, headed by a man named Kun ldan and called rGya gar ba (“Indian”) in the text (ibid. p.66 lines 3–4). Was he truly from Gangetic India as the term rGya gar is used in the Tibetan literature? He may have come from some hilly state beyond the Himalayan range. An exception to the use of rGya gar not to mean Gangetic India but some adjoining territory is provided in the *Bu ston rin po che'i rnam thar* (f.23a lines 2–3, also see Ruegg, *The Life of Bu ston Rin po che* p.121), in reference to the kingdom of Ya rtse (Jumla) in west Nepal, said to be rGya gar.

Given that internal space in Tibetan temple architecture is measured by the number of columns—the distance between them is a standardized ratio—the *gtsug lag khang* was built with imposing dimensions, as a visitor to the building can realise. In terms of inner space, the

temple was conceived in the following way. The *'du khang* (called *khyams* in the text) has a space defined by forty-eight pillars; the two side *lha khang* in the east and west have a floor surface of six pillars each; and the antechamber has an area of twelve pillars. In sum, the entire ground floor of the *gtsug lag khang* has altogether a size of 150 pillars (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.65 line 21–p.66 line 2).

The middle floor *bskor lam* in the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* and its 15th century murals

A less known and hardly frequented area of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* is a major constituent of the main temple in rGyal rtse. Walking past the door of the Lam 'bras lha khang of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*, one comes across the entrance to the middle floor processional corridor (*bskor lam*).

This corridor is quite extensive and surrounds, on the upper storey, the ground floor *gtsang khang*, and so is positioned above the similar processional corridor on the latter floor. Like the ground floor *bskor lam*, it is composed of three wings—west, north and east in circum-ambulating order.

Its walls are covered with murals depicting narrative and edifying scenes of the Buddha's life and *Jataka* tales, without a break in continuity. I describe them in some detail with the help of passages concerning them from *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*.

Inner wall, west side (ibid. p.93 lines 10–16):

- the main image is Shakya rgyal po together with the scene representing the “king who led people to liberation”;
- to the left of the main scene is the portrayal of the taking of vows by the *sangha*;
- to the right of the main scene is the depiction of 'Tsho ba bde ba, the *bram ze* of the town mNyan yod (Śravastī).

Inner wall, north side (ibid. p.93 line 16–p.94 line 8):

- the main image is Shakya seng ge together with the scene showing Shakyamuni's birth as *bram ze Khye'u gtsug phud Byang chub*;
- to the right of the main scene is the representation of Sangs rgyas's earlier life as *drang srong bZod pa dga' ba*;
- to the right of the latter scene is the depiction of Glang po skyong, son of the mNyan yod (Śravastī) householder Legs pa rab sad;
- to the left of the main portrays Sangs rgyas's earlier birth as king Khyad par lo ma;
- to the left of the latter scene is Sangs rgyas's previous birth as the great king Shi pi pa, who fed the falcon, one of brGya byin's incarnations, with his own body;
- to the left of the latter scene is the depiction of Bu mo mu tig 'khri shing.

Inner wall, east side (ibid. p.94 lines 8–11):

- the main image is Shakya rgyal po together with the scene dealing with his previous birth as king Nga las nu.

External wall, west side (ibid. p.94 line 11–p.95 line 11):

- the main image is ston pa Sangs rgyas together with the scene depicting king Shi pi pa healing the sick by spilling his own blood, and the scene which shows Shakya thub pa born as the latter king's son Phan pa 'tshol ba who offered his own body as healing to the Rang Sangs rgyas (Pratyekabuddha-s). In this way, he cured himself and others;
- to the right of the main scene is the portrayal of king gSal rgyal asking Sangs rgyas in which life he initially developed the thought of enlightenment, who replied that he developed the thought of enlightenment when he was reborn as king Rab gsal;
- to the left of the main scene is the depiction of Sangs rgyas's birth as the bird topping the rabbit (a previous incarnation of Sha ri'i bu), the little monkey (a previous incarnation of Mo'u gal) and the elephant (a previous incarnation of gnas brtan Kun dga bo), normally pictured one above another;
- to the left of the latter scene is the painted episode of Sangs rgyas's birth as Ka shi rDzes pa, the son of Tshangs byin, the king of Kashi. His body was cut into pieces with a sword, a torment that he bore without anger;
- to the left of the latter scene is the depiction of Sangs rgyas's birth as the compassionate rabbit and of brGya byin as a *bram ze*. The rabbit said that, if he could receive teachings, he would offer his body in return, which he did. brGya byin took his body on his hand and placed it, as a decoration, above the door of the temple inside the circle of the moon.

External wall, north side (ibid. p.95 lines 11–19):

- the main image is Byams pa mgon po together with the scene depicting his deeds and his paradise;
- to its right and left are the paintings of his sixteen successive births based on the accounts of a number of texts.

External wall, east side (ibid. p.95 line 19–p.96 line 6):

- the central image is ston pa Sangs rgyas;
- to the right of the main image there is Sangs rgyas fasting in the "heaven of the thirty-three gods" and the miracle of Mo'u gal gyi bu who had been invited to the rGyal byed (Jetavana) grove;
- to the right of the latter scene is the depiction of Sangs rgyas's birth as the elephant which fed hungry beings with its own body upon seeing their sufferings;
- to the left of the main scene is Sangs rgyas's previous birth as king Zla ba and his subduing of the son of Su dad pa;
- to the left of the latter scene is the depiction of Sangs rgyas's birth as the wild animal Sha ram bha which protected the life of the king of the land.⁶⁰

60. Other apologetical and didactic episodes were painted in this area of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*, since *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.90 line 10–p.93 line 10) describes wall paintings depicting similar scenes on the walls of the middle floor external gallery that do not exist anymore.

The wall paintings of the processional corridor on the middle floor are executed in a style that has few extant contemporary counterparts anywhere in Tibet including rGyal rtse. These murals present a number of themes, a more ancient rendition of which is so far known to survive in the *bskor lam* of Zhwa lu gSer khang.

They represent one of the earliest hitherto known appearances of profane elements in Tibetan religious painting treated in a Tibetan way, even as similar scenes at Zhwa lu gSer khang were the product of Tibetans trained at a foreign workshop. They are fluently executed, showing a high degree of confidence and meticulousness in the rendition of the slightest detail.

This style is also peculiar for its qualities of freshness and immediacy, which are not always a feature of more ancient and commonly less secular Tibetan artistry.

Meticulousness and freshness may be contrasting approaches to any given work, yet on these walls these two criteria combine admirably. The idiom has a fast but intricate quality to it, and a narrative capacity to include within a limited space both hieratic representations of the main gods, lively depictions of secular daily life, mythical accounts and religious scenes. This distinctive rendition's typical themes are landscape, architecture, monastic temple life, court scenes inside royal palaces, hermitages and ascetic existence in secluded mountain and forest abodes, wildlife, battles, legends and other ones. They surround depictions of large scale deities, functioning as the central images around which these scenes are organized.

The style communicates a sense of immediacy; the images are rendered impressionistically through a simplification of their features, contrasting with the abundance of details in the scenes. Although somewhat provincial, this manner conveys a crowded, lively feeling of life episodes.

One might have expected slightly more inventiveness in some of the scenes, for they are already slightly manneristic. They are exercises on a known theme. The colours are applied in more contrasting shades than in other rGyal rtse variations, with tonalities like those of red and green that assume a vibrant quality.

The sketchy and at the same time meticulous rendition adopted is deeply indebted to the original narrative murals of the great *bskor lam* on the ground floor of Zhwa lu gSer khang (see Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* Chapter Four p.106–107). The masterpieces of the Zhwa lu processional corridor are the inspirational root of these depictions, not because their style is faithfully imitated—these rGyal rtse paintings stand quite apart in this respect, not reaching the status of the Zhwa lu masterpieces—but because the approach to narrating these lively episodes is similar. Single scenes are depicted in the same way adopted at Zhwa lu.

If a first, immediate impression identifies in Zhwa lu the obvious extant source, an analysis of individual scenes and details shows points of divergence. The Newar features present in Zhwa lu are diluted—the division into narrative frames completely dropped—whereas the Chinese features of the Zhwa lu narrative wall paintings have received emphasis. Still the

work is definitely local. Clouds, trees, palaces and landscape have been modelled after their prototypes more as a narrative choice than as a stylistic source of inspiration.

From a careful analysis, it ensues that the scenes painted in the middle floor corridor are not completely homogeneous. The hands which worked on them are different or are the same but followed different artistic taste in different parts of the corridor. Three sub-variations can be identified as follows:

- an impressionistic rendition with diminutive, elongated figures and bold, contrasting colours, concentrated on the west side of the *bskor lam*;
- a more painterly style with an abundance of rich vegetal motifs and mellower colours as well as a more accomplished rendition of personages in the central part of the corridor;
- a rendition which is the closest, in terms of subjects, manner and shades, to the Zhwa lu narrative style on the east side of the corridor.

No completion or consecration dates are given in the sources for the middle floor *bskor lam* (*skor lam bar pa*) (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.90 line 10–p.96 line 13), the gNas brtan lha khang (ibid. p.89 line 14–p.90 line 9) and the *mgon khang* (ibid. p.96 line 13–p.97 line 7), which are on the same storey of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*. They should, perhaps, be collectively attributed to wood snake 1425. Given that *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* that deals with the construction phases of all *lha khang* in the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* is strictly arranged in chronological sequence, a dating for the three chapels can be fixed confidently. The descriptions of the three *lha khang* are positioned in Rab brtan's biography between the completion of the Lam 'bras lha khang on the fourteenth day of the eighth month of wood snake 1425, (ibid. p.88 lines 2–5) and the beginning of the work on the Bla ma'i pho brang (i.e. the *bla brang*) in the same wood snake 1425 (ibid. p.99 line 21–p.100 line 2). Their completion took place in the same year.

Another piece of evidence reinforces the attribution of the completion of the three *lha khang* to wood snake 1425. Following the description of the *mgon khang*, introduced in the text immediately after the three undated *lha khang* (ibid. p.96 line 13–p.97 line 7), and of the *sgo khang*, where guardians protect the temple's door (ibid. p.97 line 21–p.98 line 4), the text says that all the consecrations had been finished (p.98 line 14–p.99 line 4). The construction activities at dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* came to conclusion in wood snake 1425.

The question of the rGyal rtse sKu 'bum's completion

The foundations of the great sKu 'bum bkra shis sgo mang were laid on Thursday the tenth day of *chu stod zla ba* (i.e. the sixth Tibetan month) of fire sheep 1427, when Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags was aged thirty-nine, under the constellation rGyal.

Works at the sKu 'bum began roughly two years after the completion of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*. During those two years Rab brtan dedicated himself to minor but relevant architectural enterprises in order to bring to a fitting end the construction of the monastic town on rGyal rtse's lower hill.⁶¹

Although Rab brtan's biography specifies the foundation year of the sKu 'bum with virtually no chance of error, the reliability of this date should still be evaluated in the light of a few other facts.

In an interlinear note, the passage of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* that records the foundation date of dPal 'khor chos sde sKu 'bum rejects the identification of the year of its inception given as earth sheep 1439 by the old *dkar chag*.⁶²

The treatment of this subject and others that its author, 'Jigs med grags pa, introduces in the text of Rab brtan's biography shows that he tried to establish firm points in the dating of the main events in the history of the rGyal rtse Shar kha pa of the period by refuting manifest mistakes in other literary works he has used as sources. The faulty foundation date of the sKu 'bum given as 1439 in the old *dkar chag* amounts to a wrong identification of the duodenary cycle to which the sheep year of its inception belonged.⁶³

Another confirmation that the 1427 date refers to the inception year of the sKu 'bum is provided by *rGya Bod yig tshang*, completed in 1434 (Ar. Macdonald, "Préambule à la lecture d'un rGya-Bod yig-tshang" p.107). In its brief description of the sKu 'bum, this text correctly says that its foundations were laid in fire sheep 1427, and adds that it did not take too many

61. From wood snake 1425 during two years, Rab brtan built Bla ma'i pho brang, filled gZim khang gser po mkha' spyod, built in 1418, with wondrous images, and surrounded the *chos sde* with the boundary wall (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.99 line 21–p.101 line 1).

62. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.101 lines 7–13): "dGung lo so dgu bzhesh pa me mo lug [note: sngon gyi dkar chag na sa mo lug bya ba snang na'ang/ yi ger nor bar zad do] ... rmangs bting nas bzhengs/"; "When [Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags] was thirty-nine years old, in fire female sheep (1427) [note: the old *dkar chag* gives earth female sheep (1439) [as the foundation date], but this is a mistake in the text], ... he laid the foundations of the [sKu 'bum bkra shis sgo mangs]".

63. The extent of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*'s dependence on the old *dkar chag* in its own treatment of the sKu 'bum and other rGyal rtse buildings is evident from the text of Rab brtan's biography but not entirely decipherable. Little can be gleaned about the old *dkar chag* but the composition date of Rab brtan's biography works a *terminus ante quem* to approximate the years in which the old *dkar chag* was written. The reference to 1439 as the alleged foundation date of the sKu 'bum shows that the old *dkar chag* was written after that year but before 1479–1481 when *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* was completed, as vague as this is. Or else the biography of Rab brtan would have not cited the old *dkar chag* as a source, obviously.

years to finish the *mchod rten bkra shis sgo mang*.⁶⁴ This vague dating its coming to a close was the only way the author of *rGya Bod yig tshang*, dPal 'byor bzang po, could assess the work in progress at the sKu 'bum. By 1434, when the writing of *rGya Bod yig tshang* was over, the construction of the sKu 'bum had not reached completion, which took place in fire dragon 1436 (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.101 lines 7–13).⁶⁵

Tibetan authors, both past and present, have been misled by the order of dating given by the old *dkar chag*. For instance, Sum pa mkhan po, in his *Re 'u mig* (Sum pa mkhan po, *dPag bsam ljon bzang* Das ed. 1889 p.66) and the modern *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa*—on the former's authority?—give 1439 as the construction year of the sKu 'bum without specifying whether it was its foundation or completion.⁶⁶ The date, a full twelve year cycle too late, is the same that is considered to be wrong in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*.

Although the completion date of the sKu 'bum is correctly indicated as fire dragon 1436, given that its consecration was performed in that year, minor works continued until 1439, when the *nang rten* statue of Rab brtan's brother Rab 'byor bzang po was finished and consecrated.⁶⁷

As is well known, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags issued an edict at the beginning of iron monkey 1440, which proclaimed that his community was exempted from taxation for the next three years (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.261 line 11–p.266 line 20). Given

64. *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.393 lines 10–12): “So dgu pa/ lug gi lo la/ sKu 'bum chen mo bkra shis sgo mang gi 'gram bting nas/ lo mang ma 'gyangs par zhabs su phyug//”; “When he was aged thirty-nine, in the sheep year (1427), [Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags] laid the foundations of the great sKu 'bum bkra shis sgo mang. It did not take too many years to complete it”.

65. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.159 lines 8–12): “mKhas shing grub pa brnyes pa'i rnal 'byor gyis dbang phyug chen po Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po zhes mtshan yongs su grags pa de nyid gtso bor phebs shing/ sGo bzhi'i las kyi rdo rje slob dpon sku zhang Phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba dang/ slob dpon chen po Tsandra go mi/ bla chen mGon po rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po/ chos rje dPal ldan legs pa'i zhal snga nas rnam dang/ gzhan yang skyes chen dam pa du ma zhig rab tu gnas par mdzad pa'i gnas 'di nyid du/ dus me pho 'brug gi lo zla ba lnga pa'i tshes bcu gcig nas dan 'dzoms//”; “The erudite one who attained spiritual realisations, the one whose name is universally known as rnal 'byor dBang phyug chen po Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po was the main who came [to perform the consecration]. [He was assisted by] Go bzhi'i las kyi rdo rje slob dpon sku zhang Phyogs las rnam par rgyal ba, slob dpon chen po Tsandra go mi, bla chen mGon po rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po and chos rje dPal ldan legs pa, who congregated for the consecration [of the sKu 'bum] on the eleventh day of the fifth month of fire dragon 1436 together with, moreover, many [other] great noble beings”.

66. See *bsTan rtsis kun las btus pa* (p.218). I read the verb *bzhengs* of this entry to mean “to complete the building”, a more correct interpretation given its use in the context in which it appears, than simply to mean “to build” in this sentence.

67. *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* (p.230 lines 14–15): “rTen 'di nyid chos rgyal dgung lo zhe brgyad pa me pho 'brug gi lo zla ba bcu pa nas bzhengs pa'i dbu brtsams te/ nga gcig bzhes pa sa mo lug gi lo'i zla ba bzhi pa'i tshes lnga rab tu gnas pa mdzad par snang//”; “The making of this receptacle (i.e. dPal 'byor bzang po's *nang rten*) was begun on the tenth month of fire dragon (1436),

the financial burden sustained by the king and the rGyal rtse community to build the monastic town, this act marks the royal acknowledgement that the dPal 'khor chos sde had to be considered finished. This indicates that some minor buildings had been added to the monastic town in the meantime. In the edict, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags declared that works had been undertaken successfully.

Rab brtan's statement in the 1440 *bka' shog* that works in the monastic town had been completed, hence including the *mchod rten*, one of his last and most important enterprises, is in contrast with the absence in *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* of any assessment of the sKu 'bum's topmost floors during the reign of Rab brtan. This might be a sign that he did not work in this part of the *stupa*. No apparent reason is given in his biography to explain this notable omission.

In the past, Tucci was led to believe that Rab brtan left his *opus magnum* incomplete, thus disregarding the statement of the prince of rGyal rtse that he had successfully completed his monastic town.⁶⁸ Some order in this thorny issue can be attempted by weighing the evidence provided by the sources against the indications provided by the monument itself.

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar says that, over thirty years after 1440, when Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags had officially proclaimed that work was over on his ambitious project, bKra shis rab brtan, his most important successor (on the throne 1447–1476), fulfilled the ambition of adding his own touch to the most prestigious monument of his predecessor. This achievement was his major contribution to rGyal rtse.

Inscriptions prove that Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags installed statues and murals up to the *bre*—the cubic dome below the spire, corresponding to the sKu 'bum sixth floor—where images of various *chos skyong* are painted (see these inscriptions in Tucci, *Indo-Tibetica*, IV, 2 English ed. p.232–264), but no traces revealing his activity are found in the two *lha khang* on the two topmost floors of the *stupa*.

On the one hand, literary sources such as the 1440 edict confirm that the work had been brought to a conclusion, thus implying that the *stupa* consisted of all its floors at that time (also see below p.752 for the statement given by Rab brtan to Thang stong rgyal po (1385–1464? or 1361–1485?) that he had successfully carried out the construction of the sKu 'bum). On the other, structural evidence—concrete stairs are placed up to the *bre*, while access to the two

when the chos rgyal [Rab brtan] was forty-eight years old. Its consecration was performed on the fifth of the fourth month of earth sheep (1439), when he was aged fifty-one”.

68. Tucci was the first to note that the sKu 'bum had not been completed by Rab brtan (*Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.705 n.933). Ricca-LoBue (*The Great Stupa of Gyantse* p.30–31) too discuss the bKra shis rab brtan phase, but none of these authors have stressed the apparent paradox of leaving one of the major buildings of rGyal rtse incomplete. That is hardly tenable. Although the sources do not shed light on the issue, an analysis of feasible hypotheses is attempted in the next lines of my text.

topmost floors is by way of rudimentary wooden ladders—indicate that the two highest levels of the sKu 'bum belong to another architectural plan.

bKra shis rab brtan is credited with the inner decoration of the two topmost *lha khang*, one above another (*chos skor gong ma* and *chos skor 'og ma*), which make the sKu 'bum's seventh and eighth floors, and with placing the thirteen *chos skor* ("discs") on its outside above the *bre*. The two *lha khang* are dedicated respectively to the deities of *Dus kyi 'khor lo rgyud* (seventh floor) and to rDo rje 'chang (eighth floor) (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.144 line 13–p.149 line 8).⁶⁹ Works began in water dragon 1472, and the two *lha khang* were consecrated in wood horse 1473.⁷⁰

Inscriptions accompanying the paintings confirm the attribution in literary sources of the two topmost *lha khang* of the sKu 'bum to bKra shis rab brtan's renovation phase that continued until 1473 (*Indo-Tibetica*, IV, 2 English ed. p.267–273). The name of Byang sems Nyi ma khye 'dren appears a number of times as the donor of the paintings, and her son bKra shis rab brtan is also mentioned.⁷¹

It is thus quite difficult to accept the idea that Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags was not responsible for the topmost *lha khang*-s in the sKu 'bum and thus that he left the structure unfinished. It is hardly likely that Rab brtan, who completed seventy-three *lha khang* inside the great *mchod rten*—not to mention all the other buildings he built in his monastic town—was unable to complete only two relatively unimposing *lha khang* on the top of one of his master-

69. The paintings in the *chos skor 'og ma* were made according to the *Dus kyi 'khor lo* tradition of Rwa lo tsa ba, 'Bro lo tsa ba and Shong lo tsa ba, whose lineages are depicted on the murals (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.147 lines 1–4 and p.305 lines 1–4). The deities of the *Dus 'khor rtsa rgyud* are painted on the four walls of the cube, known as *bre*, that encases the *srog shing* in the centre of the room.

The sKu 'bum *chos skor gong ma* (upper *lha khang*) contains the supreme triad of statues of rDo rje 'chang; the lord of the Six Families (in the centre); rDo rje sems dpa', symbol of *thabs* (to his right); and rDo rje snyen ma, symbol of *shes rab* (to his left), with a *rgyan drug* ("six ornaments") motif. The authors of these images were dpon mo che dKon mchog bkra shis and his brother (ibid. p.147 lines 17–21). dPon mo che Chos skyong had a minor role in the work (ibid. p.148 lines 7–8).

70. The painter who worked on the entire cycle of the *Dus kyi 'khor lo* murals in the *chos skor 'og ma* (seventh floor) is recorded in the accompanying inscriptions as dPal 'Phel ba from rNas rnying (see the inscriptions in *Indo-Tibetica*, IV, 2 English ed. p.268–273). Since all murals on the seventh floor are attributed to him and he is the only painter recorded as having worked during the 1472–1474 phase, one can assume that he also was the author of the murals on the walls of the *chos skor gong ma* (eighth floor).

71. There is a minor contradiction between Rab brtan's biography and the inscriptions on the seventh floor. Credit for the renovation is given in this text to the ruler bKra shis rab brtan, whereas epigraphical evidence names his mother Byang sems Nyi ma khye 'dren as the donor (Tucci, *Indo-Tibetica* IV 3 English ed. p.124–128 and p.268–273). The problem is marginal, for they seem to have had slightly different roles. The ruler was the ultimate sponsor, while his mother was the one who personally patronised the murals.

pieces. This is unlikely given that works went on smoothly in the dPal 'khor chos sde during the years immediately preceding 1440, as the *bka shog* issued by him in that year confirms.

Hence, I would provisionally suggest two alternative reasons behind this unsolved aspect. One is that bKra shis rab brtan modified the entire topmost part of the *mchod rten*, originally made by Rab brtan. He would have worked on both its inside and outside, so that *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* concentrates on bKra shis rab brtan's renovation inasmuch as it determined the definitive shape that the sKu 'bum came to assume soon before this text was written in the years 1479–1481.

The other is that the shape of rGyal rtse sKu 'bum was originally conceived as a *stupa* built up to the *bre* which would imply that there was no *chos skor*. Ancient *chos skor*-s in India were made of a simple succession of flat discs pierced into a pole. In Tibet, an ancient *mchod rten* such as sMri ti Dran pa ye shes's 'Dzom nyag, going back to the 11th century, did not have a *chos skor*. It was added centuries later.

Until new light will be shed on the matter, these suggestions remain hypothetical and the issue of the sKu 'bum's shape in the days of Rab brtan and in those of bKra shis rab brtan will continue to be a conundrum in the studies of the Shar kha pa.

The religious inclinations of the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse

The relations entertained by the various Shar kha pa princes with religious masters of their time are indicative of the religious systems they patronised from the inception of the family's preeminence in gTsang, whose initiator was 'Phags pa dpal. He had the good fortune and merit to have some of the most charismatic religious personalities of his times as spiritual masters or, sporadically, as spiritual interlocutors.

Apart from an inconspicuous number of events such as when Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364) performed a ritual at lCang ra,⁷² 'Phags pa dpal did not have very close contacts with the omniscient master of the Zhwa lu pa school. Despite political relations and marriage bonds between the Zhwa lu pa and Shar kha pa, Bu ston rin po che exercised an influence on rGyal rtse activities more as a major codifier of the religious system embodied in rGyal rtse sKu 'bum than through personal contacts with the Shar kha pa. However, *Myang chos 'byung* says that he gave teachings to both 'Phags pa dpal and 'Phags pa rin chen (ibid. p.90 lines 10–15).

Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361), the Jo nang pa teacher who revolutionised his school's thought and, with Bu ston rin po che, was the undisputed master of the Dus kyi 'khor lo tradition in the 14th century, imparted teachings to 'Phags pa dpal. In 1360, 'Phags pa dpal met Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan on the Jo nang master's way back from his

72. In fire bird 1357, Bu ston rin po che performed the *bDe yangs sbyangs* consecration at lCang ra (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.9 lines 2–9). The ceremony coincided with the birth of 'Phags pa dpal's first son, Kun dga' 'phags pa.

second trip to dBus. He invited Dol po pa to lCang ra, but since the Jo nang pa master was quite fat, he could not go up lCang ra steps and gave the Dus kyi 'khor lo empowerment on this monastery's harvesting ground.

The empowerment was a pregnant experience for every participant (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.10 lines 7–16). The passage adds that the contacts were not occasional because 'Phags pa dpal was a faithful devotee of Dol po pa. This rules out 'Phags pa dpal's dependency on the Sa skya pa at least on matters regarding personal exposure to religious teachings.

Hence, 'Phags pa dpal took interest in both the great masters of his period, the supreme experts of the Dus kyi 'khor lo tradition, but chose the more unconventional Jo nang pa teacher, Dol po pa, as his *guru*. Being his disciple, 'Phags pa dpal established the Dus kyi 'khor lo tradition among the Shar kha pa, which continued to be adopted by the successive princes in the family. 'Phags pa dpal's brother, 'Phags pa rin chen, too, was an adept of the same teachings (see *Myang chos 'byung* p.90–91, where he is termed as a follower of Bu ston rin po che and Dol po pa).

Not much is stated in the sources about Kun dga' 'phags pa's religious patronage. In a prophecy regarding the advent of his son Rab brtan (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.32 line 3–p.33 line 15), it is said that the Dus kyi 'khor lo tradition suffered a setback in the period after the death of the greatest exponents of these teachings, Bu ston rin po che and Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan, which roughly corresponds to the reign of Kun dga' 'phags pa. In loco evidence—the cycle of several *dkyil 'khor* in the *gzhal yas khang* of rGyal mkhar rtse *gtsug lag khang* built by him—proves that Kun dga' 'phags pa did not neglect the Dus kyi 'khor lo doctrine. He was a patron of its diffusion in the footsteps of his father.

After him, supporting the Dus kyi 'khor lo tradition became a hallmark of the rGyal rtse princes. The same prophecy refers to the fact that, after the death of masters as great as those during whose times the Dus kyi 'khor lo tradition had its apogee in that period, the teachings languished, but does not mention a lack of patronage. Kun dga' 'phags pa's son contributed to uplift the tradition to a new splendour.

A prophecy by Chos sku 'od zer about Rab brtan's advent, stresses the faith of the Shar kha pa in the Dus kyi 'khor lo system. Chos sku 'od zer predicted that the forthcoming rGyal rtse ruler, Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, would be its greatest patron.

The orientation of his religious patronage transpires from a few observations. mKhas grub rje, apart from his links with Tsong kha pa and his status as a prominent dGe lugs pa master, was the leading Dus kyi 'khor lo expert of his generation after Bu ston rin po che and Dol po pa. In 1434, after the period he spent as Rab brtan's *guru*, mKhas grub rje wrote a commentary on this *Tantra* but left it unfinished (see, for instance, the pioneering—although brief—reference to it in Vostrikov, *Tibetan Historical Literature* p.121 n.363).

His commentary is regarded as one of the greatest works on the subject. The relationship between Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags and mKhas grub rje was also due to their common interest in Dus kyi 'khor lo rather than because the religious master was a dGe lugs pa. This is gleaned from

Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags's biography, for this text nowhere says that he showed an interest in the recently established religious school of which mKhas grub rje was a prominent exponent.

No traces exist in the sources—either epigraphical or literary—that the dGe lugs pa were involved in the foundation of the monastic town of rGyal rtse. With the addition of some *grwa tshang* built at unspecified dates, the dPal 'khor chos sde, to a certain extent, became a holy place belonging to the dGe lugs pa network of monasteries. This must have taken place quite early, the dGe lugs pa having established themselves as a leading school all over Tibet in a short span of time. But the dPal 'khor chos sde was not originally dGe lugs pa and this had consequences in terms of the religious system adopted there. mKhas grub rje's presence at rGyal rtse, which could have led the dGe lugs pa to taking charge of the dPal 'khor chos sde, was not lasting, being confined to the early building phases.

dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* was obviously inspired by the Sa skya pa tradition, as the Lam 'bras lha khang in the *gtsug lag khang* indicates, and more so by the Zhwa lu pa, especially given the adoption of Dus kyi 'khor lo according to the system of Bu ston rin po che. The religious adviser who supervised the execution of the divine images of rGyal rtse to ensure dogmatic and iconographic fidelity was Rin chen dpal grub, a Zhwa lu pa (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.166 line 21–p.167 line 2).

The establishment of rGyal rtse did not fall during the Sa skya pa/Yuan period either in terms of dates or political influence. rGyal rtse was founded (1390) after both Sa skya (1354) and the Yuan (1368) had lost their power. It belonged to the next historical phase, that of the Phag mo gru pa and the Ming.

The reference in the sKu 'bum inscriptions that connects the great *stupa* to the Zhwa lu pa mainstream and the fact that its conception is based on the system of Bu ston rin po che are an acknowledgement of this master's contribution to the Dus kyi 'khor lo profession, on whose doctrine the great *bkra shis sgo mangs* was modelled tridimensionally.

Another point that documents the ties between the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse and the Dus 'khor tradition pertains to the 1472–1474 phase at rGyal rtse sKu 'bum. In choosing the most appropriate deities for the two topmost floors of the *mchod rten bkra shis sgo mang*, bKra shis rab brtan opted to install the supreme Dus kyi 'khor lo deities.

Finally, most of the great masters who exercised a religious influence on the Shar kha pa of rGyal rtse and rTse chen—Bu ston rin po che, Dol po pa, mKhas grub rje, Shariputra⁷³ and Vanaratna—were undisputed masters of Dus kyi 'khor lo.⁷⁴

73. On the coming to Tibet of Sha ri pu tra, the abbot of Bodhgaya and a master of Dus kyi 'khor lo briefly invited to rGyal rtse by Rab brtan (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.51 lines 11–17), see the section on the princes of La stod Byang in the *dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs* (p.114 lines 9–10; also Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* p.632).

74. On Vanaratna see, e.g., *Deb ther sngon po* (p.935 lines 18–19, *Blue Annals* p.799) and Ehrhard, “Spiritual Relationships Between Rulers and Preceptors: The Three Journeys of Vanaratna (1384–1468) to Tibet”.

Hence the dPal 'khor chos sde was neither mainly Sa skya pa (Tucci) nor dGe lugs pa (Wylie).⁷⁵ Although closer to the Zhwa lu pa and dGe lugs pa than to the Sa skya pa not so much in terms of religious affiliation because the Zhwa lu pa (Bu ston rin po che) and dGe lugs pa (mKhas grub rje) had leading Dus kyi 'khor lo masters, rGyal rtse is a monument to Tibetan eclecticism. A minor indication of this is the sKu 'bum fourth floor, which offers a panoply of the most important Tibetan schools and traditions without partiality, not unlike the

75. In the past, western scholarship has proposed differing assessments on dPal 'khor chos sde sectarian affiliation. Tucci (*Indo-Tibetica*, IV, 1 English ed. *passim*) considered the monastic town of rGyal rtse to be a Sa skya pa creation, recognising at the same time the role played locally by Rab brtan's guru mKhas grub rje, one of Tsong kha pa's two spiritual sons. Tucci was induced in this interpretation by artistic and historical considerations. It is true that the rise of the Shar kha pa lineage and its establisher, 'Phags pa dpal, fell under Sa skya pa patronage. But this can be seldom extended to his successors, and in particular to Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, the undisputed protagonist of the rGyal rtse monuments. He sought an autonomous role which respected Sa skya but was far from depending on it.

Another proposal was made by Wylie ("Monastic Patronage in 15th-Century Tibet" p.319). He saw in the dPal 'khor chos sde a dGe lugs pa monastery. He was led to this conclusion by the historical circumstances of the years in which the dPal 'khor chos sde was founded. In those years the major dGe lugs pa monasteries were established, dGa' ldan by Tsong kha pa (1409), 'Bras sprung by 'Jam dbyangs chos rje (1416), Se ra by Shakya ye shes (1419) and, after the establishment of the dPal 'khor chos sde, bKra shis lhun po by dGe 'dun grub (1447).

Wylie recognised the common sponsorship and founding patterns linking these temples, but these ties cannot be applied to rGyal rtse, since the patronage and foundations at rGyal rtse were local. Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags and his community did not labour to promote dGe lugs pa ties outside their principality.

These dGe lugs pa monasteries, including dPal 'khor chos sde, were founded during the rule of Phag mo gru pa Grags pa rgyal mtshan, which explains Grags pa rgyal mtshan's attitude, who, in spite of being a bKa' brgyud pa monk, enthusiastically supported Tsong kha pa's teachings and disciples (*ibid.* p.319). Including the dPal 'khor chos sde among the dGe lugs pa monasteries however, is a little too bold, since this *chos sde* was heavily influenced by the Sa skya pa and Zhwa lu pa traditions. Except for mKhas grub rje's role as the master of the rGyal rtse king, no major traces of the dGe lugs pa tradition are found in the early years of its existence.

During that period, contacts with the newly born dGe lugs pa sect, in particular with Tsong kha pa, were the norm. It was especially in the central provinces of dBus gTsang that the main religious and political powers of those days, despite their sectarian affiliations, were drawn towards his teachings. Rab brtan's biography (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.16 line 18–p.17 line 6) affirms that the Shar kha pa's first contacts with Tsong kha pa took place before Rab brtan associated himself with one of his disciples. In the eighth month of iron pig 1371, during 'Phags pa rin chen's reign, Kun dga' dpal was made *mkhan po* of rTse chen chos sde. Soon after, he introduced there a school of debate which went on to flourish. In the same year or some time later, eminent masters such as Shangs pa Kun dga' rin chen, Red mda' pa and a young Tsong kha pa came to rTse chen. Therefore, embryonic Shar kha pa contacts with the early dGe lugs pa had nothing to do with rGyal rtse but originated in rTse chen.

concept adopted in Ra sa 'Phrul snang from the second spread of Buddhism onwards (Vitali, *Early Temples of Central Tibet* p.69).

Eclecticism was the essence of the dPal 'khor chos sde, which was shared by the practitioners of Dus 'khor, the Zhwa lu pa and the Sa skya pa. Its non-sectarian features were reinforced by the subsequent addition of the presence of the dGe lugs pa in the monastic town.

A summary of the succession lineage of the *mkhan po*-s of the dPal 'khor chos sde refers here to the apogee of the rGyal rtse Shar kha pa. The beginning of mKhas grub rje's abbotship (iron ox 1421) coincided with the termination of the works in the *gtsang khang chen mo*, the first *lha khang* of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* to be completed. His abbotship of the dPal 'khor chos sde, having lasted until 1426, covered the construction period of the *gtsug lag khang*.

An important historical consideration ensues from the dates of mKhas grub rje's stay at rGyal rtse. Contrary to what is normally held, mKhas grub rje was involved in the construction of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang* rather than the sKu 'bum. The works at the sKu 'bum began in 1427, when he had already left rGyal rtse for gNas rnying.

Disagreements led Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags and mKhas grub rje, the two driving forces behind the construction of the dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*, to part ways, with the religious master leaving rGyal rtse before the beginning of the works at the prestigious sKu 'bum.⁷⁶

Rab brtan's biography does not mention his spiritual teacher mKhas grub rje in the acknowledgement of the people who had a major role in the construction of dPal 'khor chos sde. Except for the note on his career mentioned in the previous pages of my work and a brief reference to the summons to his principality Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags extended to him

76. The reason that led to the disagreement between Rab brtan and mKhas grub rje is briefly indicated in *Bai ser* (p.75 lines 16–22): “rGyal rtse bdag po Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags dang yon mchod du 'brel bas/ sPa'khor bde chen gyi chos sde chen po btab ste/ Nor bu dga' ldan pa/ Grang mo cha pa/ Legs grub pa/ Zhi gnas pa/ gSer khang gong 'og sogs/ dGe lugs pa'i grwa tshang khag gi gzhi bting thog rGyal rtse bdag po Rab brtan pa dang mchod yon gnyis thugs ma mthun par dben gnas ri bo mDangs can du bzhugs/ mDo sNgags kyi thugs rtsom mang du mdzad/ rGyal tshab chos rje gNas rnying du phebs pa dang mjal bar byon pas phyag phyr khrid nas dgung lo zhe bdun pa lcags phag la dGa' ldan gyi khri thog tu phebs/ lo bryad kyi bar bstan pa'i bya ba mtha' yas pa mdzad de gser khri bzhugs/”; “The king of rGyal rtse, Rab brtan kin bzang 'phags, having established *yon mchod* [with mKhas grub rje], founded the great *chos sde* of dPal 'khor bde chen. On the issue of the foundation of the various sGe lugs pa *grwa tshang*, such as Nor bu dga' ldan pa, Grang mo cha (sic for che) pa, Legs grub pa, Zhi gnas pa, and gSer khang gong 'og, the king of rGyal rtse, Rab brtan pa, and *yon mchod* (i.e. mKhas grub rje), two in all, had a disagreement, and [mKhas grub rje] stayed at dben gnas Ri bo mDangs can. He composed many works on *mDo* [and] *sNgags*. He went to see rGyal tshab chos rje when the latter visited gNas rnying. [rGyal tshab rje] took him along with him. He ascended the throne of dGa' ldan at the age of forty-seven in iron pig 1431. For eight years, [mKhas grub rje] sat on the golden throne by engaging in countless activities in favour of the teachings”.

upon his ascension to the throne of the rGyal rtse principality in 1413 (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.46 line 20–p.47 line 3), mKhas grub rje is ignored.

A little about mKhas grub rje's Shar kha pa period and his activity in general, found in a brief but accurate account of stages in the life of this Tsong kha pa's disciple, can be read in a note to Rab brtan's biography (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.226 lines 3–7). mKhas grub rje was at lCang ra *chos sde* for eight years from water snake 1413 to iron rat 1420. From iron ox 1421, he was the abbot of the dPal 'khor chos sde for six years. His tenure of the rGyal rtse religious throne thus fell between iron ox 1421 and fire horse 1426. He then stayed at rDo rje gdan for four years, from fire sheep 1427 to iron dog 1430. This rDo rje gdan was gNas rnying, as proved by a letter mKhas grub rje wrote from this monastery to the Gu ge royal couple of that time (Petech, "Ya-ts'e, Gu-ge, Pu-rang: A New Study" p.102–103 and Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang* p.512 and n.867). From the year of the pig 1431, he became the dGa' ldan khri pa.⁷⁷

Following mKhas grub rje's departure from Rab brtan's seat, there is no information concerning the abbots of rGyal rtse for the years 1426–1431, which more or less corresponds to this Dus 'khor master's stay at gNas rnying. Does this coincidence mean that he was still nominally the dPal 'khor chos sde *gdan sa*?

Blo gros rgya mtsho was the next abbot recorded in the sources. He sat on the abbatial throne for eight months from the eighth month of the year of the pig 1431 (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.226 lines 7–9). Judging from the very short time he was the *mkhan po*, it would seem that Blo gros rgya mtsho was a regent.

The successor to Blo gros rgya mtsho was 'Jam dbyangs dkon mchog bzang po. He ascended the rGyal rtse religious throne in the fourth month of water rat 1432, when he was thirty-five years old (*ibid.* p.236 lines 6–10). It looks as if it was hard to find a suitable successor to a great master such as mKhas grub rje, but 'Jam dbyangs dkon mchog bzang po, by his long tenure and contributions, left a deep mark of himself in the life of the *chos sde*, much more than his immediate predecessor, Blo gros rgya mtsho.

'Jam dbyangs dkon mchog bzang po was the *mkhan po* for forty-four years until his death in wood sheep 1475, when he was aged seventy-nine (*ibid.* p.238 lines 15–18). Rab brtan's biography (p.234 lines 16–17) says that he was born at Brag dmar in La stod Zhang chung (sic).⁷⁸ In wood ox 1445, when he was forty-eight years old, he also became the abbot of rTse chen chos sde, the main religious complex of the Shar kha pa branch descending from 'Phags pa rin chen (*ibid.* p.238 lines 5–6).

77. Sum pa mkhan po in the *re'u mig* of his *dPag bsam ljon bzang* (Sum pa mkhan po (Das ed. 1889) p.65) says that mKhas grub rje was appointed dGa' ldan khri pa in 1431, thus confirming the chronology proposed in Rab brtan's biography.

78. This probably is an oversight rather than a reflex in a much later work of a very ancient understanding of the extension of the Zhang chung lands well beyond the border areas of Upper West Tibet and Byang thang proper.

After that, dPal 'khor chos sde and rTse chen chos sde became very close. This was a novelty because, from the times of Kun dga' 'phags pa, the two major Shar kha pa seats were run by different branches of the family, often with open antagonism that did not create conditions conducive to a unified handling of their religious institutions. After the death of Rab brtan (1442), who had showed hostility towards rTse chen, the two Shar kha pa seats returned to more friendly terms. In 1445, at least in the religious sphere, they were re-unified.

While to mKhas grub rje must be attributed the religious supervision of dPal 'khor chos sde *gtsug lag khang*, credit goes to 'Jam dbyangs dkon mchog bzang po for the religious supervision during the later phases in the construction of the sKu 'bum, including the final one that occurred in 1472–1474 when the prince of rGyal rtse was bKra shis rab brtan (on the throne 1447–1476). The absence of information concerning who the abbot (or regent) was after 1426 does not allow one to identify the religious master in charge of the monastic town when the construction work of the sKu 'bum was begun.

The Shar kha pa of 'Bring mtshams, the line of the youngest brother 'Phags pa Dar po

The Shar kha pa branch from gTsang most neglected in the primary sources, and consequently in the secondary ones, is the princely lineage stemming from 'Phags pa Dar po, the youngest of the three brothers, or 'Phags pa spun gsum. The anonymous *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* is the only known work dedicated to 'Phags pa Dar po's lineage.

This text says that the death of IHa mo sman, the mother of the 'Phags pa spun gsum, occurred at the time when “the three doors of the Shar kha pa separated”⁷⁹ and 'Phags pa Dar po went to stay at pho brang rGyal grong. The lineages of 'Phags pa dpal and 'Phags pa rin chen disappear from the subsequent accounts in *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs*, to re-emerge occasionally.

Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs (p.61 line 2) says that Dar po was eighteen years old when “the three doors of Shar kha separated”. If this statement is reliable and Dar po's only available birth date is equally acceptable—*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* says he was born in 1326—the year of “the separation of the three doors of the Shar kha pa” would have been 1343. Nonetheless, since the validity of the historical assessments in the first part of *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* is disputable, such a date should not be considered definitive.

A prophecy given by the family's *pho lha* sealed Dar po's destiny. He was told to marry a woman from Rong Khu lung and migrate to a noble land where he would build a palace. With this move, the family of the youngest brother shifted the centre of its activities away from

79. *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* (p.61 lines 2–3): “De dus dgung lo bco bryad du phab pa 'i dus yin legs/ 'di nas Shar dga' sgo gsum du gyes bya ba yin/ de nas dar po pho brang rGyal grong du bzugs//”; “At that time ['Phags pa Dar po] turned eighteen years old. From then on, the three doors of Sha dga' (sic for Shar dga') were separated. Dar po then stayed at pho brang rGyal grong”.

Myang stod. The woman of the prophecy was Khu lcam Rin chen bzang mo. She was from Rong Khu lung and the daughter of Khu lung pa Don yod rgyal mtshan. Rin chen bzang mo bore A chen bzang po dpal ba.⁸⁰

Dar po was a *mag pa* of sorts in the family of the Rong Khu lung pa, much like sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon, became a *mag pa* in the 'Bro clan of Pu hrang at least according to *La dwags rgyal rabs* (Francke ed. p.35 lines 10–11). *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* does not allow one to say whether this was due to Dar po's transfer to the new territory but this is imaginable.

Dar po received Bon teachings from Ri zhing pa who belonged to the Bon po clan Zhu. His penchant in matters concerning receiving teachings shows that the religious interests of the youngest lineage of the Shar kha pa were rather eclectic, covering both Chos and Bon.⁸¹

Dar po died after founding a palace at Gang sla. Circumstances seem to have become unfavourable for the youngest branch of the Shar kha pa following Dar po's death. The rGyang rtse pa (mostly spelled so in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*) took rGya grong, a sign that an internecine strife broke out in the family and that rGyal rtse expanded its dominions.

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs does not place this episode in a precise historical context, and one can only speculate that this first instance of internal conflict between the rGyal rtse branch and the successor to Dar po—probably A chen dpal ba—occurred during the reign of Kun dga' 'phags pa after he founded rGyal mkhar rtse in 1390. However, given the statement in the first part of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* that rGyal rtse was established by a minister from Shab during 'Phags pa dpal's youth, this approximation cannot be considered more than a suggestion, although supported by a few facts mentioned in sources other than *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*.

80. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.61 line 4–p.62 line 2): “Nga khyed kyi rigs bdag gi pho lha yin khyod la bu 'khyer nams 'byung bas mi rgyud ring po yong ba'i rten 'brel yod/ Rong Khu lung bya ba na las mthun gyi bu mo zhig 'dug pas/ de long las 'grogs/ pho brang 'di ma gnas rung/ sa yul mthun rkyen 'dzom la zhing sa bzang ba pho brang gi mkhar spe sten pa zhig du Sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa 'dzin pa dang sems can la phan pa'i rus rgyud Dar po yong gsungs (p.62) nas mi snang ba song ngo/ de nas Rong Khu lung nas Khu lung pa Don yod rgyal mtshan zhes bya ba'i sras mo Khu lcam Rin chen bzang mo khab tu bzhes pas/ A chen bzang po dpal pa 'khrungs/’”; “[dBang rgyal rin chen] said: “I am the *pho lha* of your clan. Your destiny shows that you will have progeny and your lineage will last long. Since there is a girl with a matchable *karma* in Rong Khu lung, go there and marry her. You should not remain in this palace. You, Dar po, will have a clan lineage beneficial to the holders of the teachings of Sangs rgyas and sentient beings in a noble locality where all facilities can be collected at a palatial castle with exemplary characteristics”. After saying thus, (p.62) he vanished. Subsequently, [Dar po] married Khu lcam Rin chen bzang mo from Rong Khu lung, the daughter of Khu lung pa Don yod rgyal mtshan, and A chen bzang po dpal ba was born”.

81. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.62 line 2): “Srol dka' ba tsam byung bas/ Ri zhing pa Zhu Grags pa'i mtshan can la dbang zhus srid bu bsdad pa las/ Bon Chos gnyis ka mdzad do/’”, “Owing to the existence of some difficulties in the tradition, he requested the one by the name Ri zhing pa Zhu Grags pa for an empowerment. Having remained a lay disciple (? , *srid bu*), he practised both Bon [and] Buddhism”.

The sequence of events of the period has it that Kun dga' 'phags pa established an independent seat in 1390 several years after the death of his uncle 'Phags pa rin chen in 1376 and, having founded the castle of rGyal rtse, he embarked upon campaigns to consolidate his power in the process of establishing his seat in Myang. He took strategical localities from the hands of others, such as sTag rtse rdzong from the Phag mo gru pa, so that, during those campaigns, probably he came to control rGya grong, located at a short distance from rGyal rtse.

It is not clear where Dar po established the main centre of his family—it could have been at Gang sla. It is likely that, after the rGyang rtse pa took control of rGya grong, the line of the youngest brother who had already left Myang stod, where rGya grong is located, moved farther away to mDo chen, east of Gam pa rdzong and south of Ka la mtsho, where Dar po's son A chen dpal ba planned to build a palace. However, a prophecy by lHa mo sman, who appeared to him in a dream, urged A chen dpal ba to go to Co ro (spelled so for Cog ro) 'Bring mtshams and found it there.⁸²

82. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.62 line 5–p.63 line 3): “De nas Gang slar pho brang gi gzhi bting pas/ Dar po sku gshegs rGyal grong yang rGyal rtse pas bzung/ A chen bzang po dpal ba mDo chen du pheb pho brang rtsig pa'i ring la/ A chen gyi mal lam du bud (p.63) med rin po che'i rgyan gyis brgyan pa zhig byung nas/ nga Ma cig lHa mo sman bya ba zhig yin/ sems nyid mKha' spyod la dbang brgyur ba zhig yin/ dag pa'i snang bas dus gsum sgrib med du gsal zhing/ 'jig rten gyi dge mtshan dang/ Sangs rgyas bstan pa dar bar yod pas/ ngas lung bstan pa 'di ltar gyis shig/ khyod rang pho brang 'di ru brgyab bas mDo med do/ 'dis Co ro 'Bring 'tshams gyi phyogs su song zhi/”; “Having laid the foundations of the palace at Gang sla, Dar po subsequently died. The rGyang rtse pa also ruled rGyal (spelled so) grong. A chen bzang po dpal ba went to mDo chen. In a dream of A chen, a lady (p.63) wearing ornaments decorated with precious stones appeared on the mountain where the construction of a palace was in progress. She said: “I am known as ma gcig lHa mo sman. My awareness extends to mKha' spyod. The purity of my awareness allows me to see into the three junctures of time without obscurity. You should follow my prophecy, which pertains to the happiness of impermanent beings and to the diffusion of the teachings of Sangs rgyas. There is no point for you to build your palace here. Go from here to Co ro 'Bring 'tshams”.

'Bring mtshams is the area at the southernmost extremity of Tibet. It borders Myang, some Mon pa lands including 'Bras mo ljongs, this boundary being marked in its eastern stretch by Gang ba bzang po, the mountain to the north of Phag ri rdzong. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.8 lines 8–11) says: “gNod sbyin dbang po Gang ba bzang po'i gnas/ zhes pa'i Gang ba bzang po'i bzhugs gnas Gangs ri dkar po gur phub la tog shel dkar gyi mchod rten rtse lnga bzhag pa 'dra ba la Myang yul rGya gar gnyis pa 'di la phu gtad/”; “[Concerning] the dwelling place of gnod sbyin dbang po Gang ba bzang po, the residence Gang ba bzang po is the white snow mountain in the shape of a tent roof surmounted by [peaks] resembling a five-pronged crystal *mchod rten* that overlooks both Myang yul [and] rGya gar”.

Elsewhere (p.378 lines 2–5), *rGya Bod yig tshang*, discussing the campaign of 'Phags pa dpal against the Dung reng (see Petech, “Dung reng” p.106), classifies three separate areas: “[’Phags pa dpal] went to count the population of mGo yul (sic for mGos yul) stod gsum, 'Bri mtshams Gang sang (spelled so) dkar po and Phag sgang tsho drug (“six divisions”) in order to conduct a census of the households”.

The areas which A chen crossed are the lands at the extremity of Tibet on the traditional border with 'Bras mo ljons and 'Brug yul, such as Gu ru of Younghusband fame and Dus na in the Byang thang of this land.⁸³ After retracing his steps to Gam pa, A chen dpal ba located two suitable places in 'Bring mtshams. He built two palaces at the same time. One was at dKar la Khyung mgo in the centre of 'Bring mtsham, not too far from Gam pa rdzong, and the other in Co ro 'Bring mtshams. He also built two *spe'u dmar po* (i.e. shrines in the form of turrets), meant to be inhabited by the *pho lha*. dKar la Khyung mgo was constructed in the shape of rGyal mkhar rtse. This statement shows that the completion of the rGyal rtse castle (fire ox 1397; see above) must be considered a *terminus post quem* for the construction of dKar la Khyung mgo.

The name of the palace in Co ro 'Bring mtshams is not indicated, but in the following of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* it becomes clear that it was called mKhar chen (see below n.88). The locations of these palaces are a proof that A chen dpal ba occupied a territory bordering on mGos yul stod gsum, from which he summoned artisans to work at his sites.⁸⁴

On mGos yul stod gsum, at the extremity of Myang stod towards the territory of Phag ri and the Mon pa areas at the border with present-day India, see below (n.85).

83. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.64 line 2): "De nas Gu ru Dus sna sogs rgyud nas lung pa 'di'i Byang thang zhig tu pheb/'", "Subsequently, [A chen] went via Gu ru [and] Dus sna to the Byang thang of this land".
84. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.64 line 5–p.65 line 6): "Yang de nas phebs pas ri dmar sang ba gcig 'dug pa dei byin nas gzigs de nas Gam par pheb rDzong ri dang sa dpyad la gzigs (p.65) thog mdzad pas/ sngon chad so khang zhig 'dug pa la bzhugs khang khogs pa gcig dang/ Byams pa bzhugs sa gtsug lag khang khor ba gcig bzhugs pa'i skabs/ 'Bring 'tshams mthil la pho brang gi sa dpyad du phyin pas/ dKar la Khyung mgo zhes par pho brang brGya mkhar rtse'i dbyibs 'dra ba gcig dang/ Co ro 'Bring 'tshams gung gi char rgyab ri mtho la rgyud bzang ba g.yas pa ri g.yon ri gnyis kyi ri lag pa rgyang nas spang bu 'tsho ba lta bu/ sa'i mthil pheb pas 'byung bzhi'i bcud thams cad nang du 'bab pa lta bu'i ste ba gting du zug pa lta bu'i dbus na sra zhing thas pa'i brag gting nas skyes pa 'dra ba 'bur du dod pa 'dug pa la/ pho brang gi gzhi gtsag bting/ pho brang gnyis 'gram snyam du gtings pa'i thog mar pho lha bzhugs pa'i rten spe lta bu dmar po re btab nas/ mGo yul stod gsum gyi gzo rigs las mi dang bcas pa bkug nas pho brang gi bkod pa yang dKar la Khyung mgo rnam par rgyal ba'i khang bzang lta bu'i gsum gyi yan lag bryad ldan lta bu'i sa'i rdzing dang bcas pa btab/'", "Having returned from there, [A chen dpal ba] went to an isolated red mountain and looked [about]. As he could see all the valleys [around], he renamed [the mountain on which he was] Byar gsal. He then went to Gam pa. He checked the suitability of the land [at] rDzong ri. (p.65) While staying at an abandoned house (*khor pa*) which previously was a *so khang* ("watch-tower") and at an abandoned (*khor pa*) *gtsug lag khang* [used] as the [temporary] site for the statue of Byams pa, he went to inspect land appropriate for a palace in the centre of 'Bring mtshams. [He founded one palace] at dKar la Khyung mgo in the shape of pho brang brGya (spelled so) mkhar rtse, and another at a place in the central part of Co ro 'Bring mtshams, where the background mountain is very high and the whole range is beautiful, and the mountains on both its right and left are like a hand stretched out like a child being fed on the palm. When one goes to the bottom of this place, it is as if the essence of all the four elements are

Given that the territory of mGos yul stod gsum comprised a part of 'Bring mtshams, he must have taken hold of the area of 'Bring mtshams that did not belong to mGos yul stod gsum, i.e. western 'Bring mtshams.⁸⁵ A chen dpal ba was responsible for the construction of gTing skyes *gtsug lag khang*, his main religious establishment.⁸⁶ The territory under his control thus included a conspicuous stretch of lands from gTing skyes in the west to areas adjoining Phag ri rdzong in the east, and bordered on the dominions of the eldest branch of the Shar kha family.

The choice of these localities is connected by *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* to geomantic reconnaissance, typical of Tibetan culture since the introduction of its concepts in *bKa'chems ka khol ma* and then *Mani bka' 'bum* (see Vitali, "The narrative of Srong btsan sgam po's subjugation of the demoness: schemes and historicity" in this volume). But it cannot be ruled out that they were imported during the period preceding those in which these two sources were "rediscovered". Symptomatic is the description of gTing skyes as the navel of these lands. It is reminiscent of the *purusha* of the ancient architectural science of India, and thus

concentrated within [this place]. A massive and irregular rock protrudes as if it is growing from below. Its centre is like a protuberance from the bottom of its womb. [Here] he laid the foundations of a palace. Before laying simultaneously the foundations of the two palaces [at Co ro 'Bring mtshams and dKar la], he first built a *spe'u dmar po* (lit. "red turret", i.e. the little red shrine to the local deity) at each [place] as receptacles to be inhabited by the *pho lha*. He summoned all the craftsmen of mGo yul stod gsum. The plan of the palace [at Co ro 'Bring mtshams] was like that of dKar la Khyung mgo rnam par gyäl ba'i khang bzang, including a pond with water possessing the eight qualities built between three [buildings]".

85. bSwi gung mNyan med Rin chen, *gNas rnying skyes bu rnams kyi rnam thar* (f.3b line 3) has this to say concerning the lands given by Khri Ral pa to the clan of the minister mGos Khri bzang yab lhag, which thus became known as mGos yul stod gsum: "Blon po mGos kyis gTsang stod sa cha/ Mon sKyer chu lha khang tshun/ sKar la gzhug yan chad/ 'Bri 'tshams rdza smug po tshun gyi sa cha rnams zhus so/"; "Blon po mGos was awarded lands in gTsang stod, being the lands up to Mon sKyer chu lha khang and down to sKar la mtsho as far as 'Bri 'tshams rdza smug po".

From then on, parts of 'Bring mtshams were included in mGos yul stod gsum. *gNyas kyi gdung rabs* confirms that 'Bring mtshams was only partially included in mGos yul stod gsum in a passage in which this text talks about 'Bring mtshams as a geographical entity separate from mGos yul stod gsum (ibid. f.4a line 2): "gZhan yang 'og nas 'Gos yul stod gsum/ 'Bri 'tshams kyi gnas bzhi/ sa cha thams cad kyang lo tsā ba la phul/"; "Moreover, [IHa rje Chos byang] offered to *lo tsa ba* [gNyas Yon tan grags] all the monastic quarters and the places of 'Gos (spelled so) yul stod gsum and 'Bri (spelled so) mtshams".

This event took place in the first half of the 11th century.

86. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.65 line 6–p.66 line 2): "gTing skyes (p.66) su 'byor ldan klu'i pho brang lta bur klu 'bur lcags dkar zer sgro 'dra ba la dbus kyi lte bar gtsug lag khang dang bcas bkod pa'i skabs/ Chu 'dus nas dpon mo Chos rgyal la khab tu bzhes bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba sku 'khrungs/"; "When (p.66) [A chen dpal ba] founded its *gtsug lag khang* on the navel of central gTing skyes, like the white iron scales of a tridimensional *klu*, [ultimately] resembling the palace of the opulent *klu*-s, he married dpon mo Chos rgyal ma from Chu 'dus, and bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba was born".

of an anthropomorphic conception of Tibetan landscape in which the navel is the centre of the scheme. It is not the heart, as often wrongly believed in sources later than *Nyang ral chos 'byung* in reference to the construction of Ra sa 'Phrul snang. Given the territories under the control of A chen dpal ba and in particular the location of gTing skyes, this place, the navel of his lands, was the centre of the dominions held by the junior branch of the Shar kha pa.

Myang chos 'byung has a brief reference to A chen dpal ba who otherwise does not appear in documents that focus on Myang stod, the land in which the other branches of his princely family resided. It mentions three residences of the Shar kha pa. They are rGyal mkhar [rtse], Nor bu khyung rtse and 'Brong rtse.⁸⁷ This passage that concerns one son each of the 'Phags pa spun gsum poses a few problems of difficult solution. Judging from the only dated documented foundation (i.e. that of rGyal mkhar rtse) of the three castles, it would seem that they were built in a brief time span around 1390 and that the grants by the emperor of China, recorded in the same passage, occurred soon before that year. But the chronology of these foundations cannot be definitively established, once again because this choice of an approximate time is in open disagreement with the statement in *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* (see n.29) that 'Brong rtse was founded in the youth of the 'Phags pa *spun gsum*, hence a generation earlier.

The attribution of the foundation of rGyal mkhar rtse to Kun dga' 'phags pa is beyond doubt. It remains to be clarified which one of the two other castles dBang rgyal 'phags and A chen dpal bzang (the A chen bzang po dpal ba of *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs*) respectively founded. Little is known concerning dBang rgyal 'phags and thus it is difficult to assess any foundations that could be attributed to him. More is known about A chen, but again not enough to ascertain which one of the two castles in Myang stod mentioned in the passage he may have built, seeing that *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* attributes to him dKar la Khyung mgo and mKhar chen, both in 'Bring mtshams, but no castle in Myang stod.

A further obstacle derives from the statement mentioned a few times in this essay about *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* which credits an anonymous Sa skya pa minister from Shab with the foundation of 'Brong rtse (see above p.691). Hence this source and *Myang chos 'byung* are in open conflict on this issue, unless these assertions refer to two different construction

87. *Myang chos 'byung* (p.112 line 19–p.113 line 4): “Nor bu Khyung rtse ste chen po dBang rgyal 'phags/ nang chen Kun dga' 'phags pa/ A chen dpal bzang gsum gyis rGyal rgyal po 'i phyag nas che ring gnam gyi she (p.113) mong zhus/ 'ja' sa longs pa 'i stobs la brten/ rGyal mkhar gyi sked pa ru dBang ldan gyi rtse btab/ mda' ru Nor bu Khyung rtse btab/ bar du Myang stod kyi lte ba na 'Brong rtse btab/ dge bcu tshang b'ai ljongs gsum yin no//”; “As to Nor bu Khyung rtse, the great dBang rgyal 'phags, nang chen Kun dga' 'phags pa and A chen dpal bzang, altogether three, received life-long authority as vast as the sky from the emperor of China himself. (p.113) With the power deriving from the 'ja' sa they had received, dBang ldan gyi rtse (“peak of power”) was built on the waist of rGyal mkhar, [and] Nor bu khyung rtse on the lower part [of the Shar kha pa territory]. Between them, 'Brong rtse was built in the centre of Myang stod. These are the three localities where the ten virtues reside”.

phases at the same locality, given that the one undertaken by the anonymous minister from Shab occurred one generation earlier.

Following the foundation of the gTing skyes *gtsug lag khang*, *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* says that A chen married dpon mo Chos rgyal ma from Chung 'dus who bore him rGyal mtshan dpal. Despite dealing with the Shar kha pa from 'Bring mtshams, *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* is unaware of Nor bu 'phags pa, the other son of A chen dpal ba, who is mentioned in *rGya Bod yig tshang* (p.385 lines 1–3).

A useful time frame for the settlement of A chen dpal ba and his lineage in the territory where gTing skyes, Gam pa, sDo chen and dKar la are located, is provided by a passage of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*. The text says that, when he was busy building his temple and palaces, to which sDeb ra *gtsug lag khang* must be added, ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302?–1364) provided wood for the thirteen temples of 'Bring mtshams.⁸⁸ A chen was thus active soon after the mid 14th century during the years of the *ta'i si tu's* rule.

This passage also has political implications. It reveals that A chen dpal ba and his Shar kha pa were able to achieve a good political balance in the confrontation between the major players on the political stage of those years. The fact that they were on good terms with the Phag mo gru pa shows that 'Bring mtshams benefitted from the *ta'i si tu's* favour. But in the long run the Shar kha pa from 'Bring mtshams remained loyal to Sa skya, as documented by the funeral of A chen being performed at this monastery by his son rGyal mtshan dpal.⁸⁹

An episode that occurred before A chen dpal ba's death indicates that the presence of his Shar kha pa in these border areas had not been accepted by the eldest branch of the Shar kha family. The hostility of the rGyal rtse branch towards the youngest branch from 'Bring mtshams had not entirely subsided.

The eldest branch induced a Khyung mgo ba minister of the junior Shar kha pa to betray them. He was able to take away mKhar chen from rGyal mtshan dpal while A chen pa was at dKar la. This is a sign that not all locals sympathise with the family of the new rulers but sid-

88. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.66 lines 2–4): “De skabs si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan gyi/ 'Bring 'tshams kyi dpon sde bcu gsum la shing shu phog pas/ sDeb ra'i gtsug lag khang ma brgyag tsam la/ A chen pas rje btsun ma'i sku dang Kha che pan chen dang Bi bu ta tsandra'i chos dung gnyis dang mchod la kha tshang dang bcas mKhar chen du spyang drangs/ de nas yab A chen pas dKar lar bzhugs//”; “Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan provided the wood for the thirteen monasteries of 'Bring mtshams. Before laying the foundations of sDeb ra'i *gtsug lag khang*, A chen pa brought to mKhar chen the image of the *rje btsun ma*, the religious conch shells of both Kha chen pan chen and Bi bu ta tsandra, and a complete set of implements for offers. Father A chen pa subsequently stayed at dKar la”.

These lines imply that sDeb ra'i *gtsug lag khang* was built at mKhar chen and that important images and relics were taken there by A chen.

89. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.66 line 7): “Yang bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba/ A chen pa gshegs pa'i dus mchod 'dzin pa la Sa skyar phebl//”; “Moreover, bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba went to Sa skya to perform A chen pa's [funerary] rites”.

ed with the major power in the wider context of Myang. mKhar chen eventually returned to A chen and rGyal mtshan dpal, to judge from the fact that they took there the statue of Byams pa, some sort of family *thugs dam*.⁹⁰ This was the 'Ug brag Byams pa that a hermit *bla ma* had advised Dar po to take with him and worship.⁹¹ The image was of greatest sanctity and antiquity but was lying neglected in the time of Dar po.

After the death of A chen pa, rGyal mtshan dpal married three women. lHa mo bzang nga gave birth to Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan. She went back to lHa sa after a disagreement with her husband.⁹² rGyal mtshan dpal then married a noblewoman of the bKra shis rtse ba, who bore bdag chen sKu blo ba (his nickname stands for the “one who is brilliant-minded”). His third wife, a noblewoman from the lHa ba of 'Brong rtse (not to be confused with the lHa pa of lHa sa) gave birth to a son, Chos rgyal bKra shis dpal, and a daughter. The lHa ba, also known as the sBa ku la, had dominions in the 'Bring mtshams borderlands.⁹³ Hence the junior

90. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.66 lines 4–6): “De'i sras bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba mKhar chen du bzhugs pa/ de skabs yab gyi 'phrin blon zhig yod pa de la yab tshan gyi can po nams kyī g.yo thabs byas nas slus byas/ cen pos pho brang pa na yab a can mKhar chen du pheb dgos byung nas / zhal nas rDzong dkar la Khyung mgo ba'i sri gi slus gsungs/ de nas mKhar chen du yab sras gnyis kyī bzhugs/ Byams pa yang sryan drangs mchod pa phul bas dge mtshan sna tshogs byung//”; “When his son bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba was at mKhar chen, a *'phrin blon* (“the minister transmitting orders”) of his father who had been instigated to deceive them by the elder brothers (i.e. the elder branch) of the paternal family (*yab tshan*), betrayed him. The elder brothers having deprived [bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba of his castle], the father A chen was obliged to go to mKhar chen. He said: “I was deceived by the [false] reverence of the Khyung mgo ba devils at rDzong dkar”. Then both the father and son stayed at mKhar chen. They took the [statue of] Byams pa there. They made offerings to it. An array of noble activities took place”.

91. On 'U brag (spelled so in *Myang chos 'byung*), a *dgon pa* located near Rwa lung and linked both with dMar sgom, one of the direct disciples of Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas, and the Bran lineage see *Myang chos 'byung* (p.29 line 1–p.31 line 17).

92. When she died, her son bSod nams rgyal mtshan made a gShed dmar *blos blangs* (“tridimensional mandala”) as her *nang rten*. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.68 line 6–p.69 line 1) says: “Yang Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan gyis/ yum lHa mo bzang nga'i nang rten du/ gShed dmar gyi klos slangs 'di dang Don zhags sPyan ras gzigs kyī sku sogs kyang (p.69) bzhengs//”; “Moreover, Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan also made, as my (sic) *nang rten* of yum lHa mo bzang nga, this *klos slangs* (sic) of gShed dmar and a statue of Don zhags sPyan ras (p.69) gzigs”.

93. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.68 lines 2–4): “Der bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba'i btsun mor/ lHa sa nas dpon mo lHa mo bzang nga/ Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan sku btsas/ der yab yum gnyis thugs khengs pa'i nram pa zhig byung bas yum lHa sar phebs/ nKras rtse ba'i dpon mo zhig la bdag chen Ku blo ba sku 'khrungs/ de nas 'Brong rtse nas dpon mo dpal lHa ba khab tu bzhes sBa ku la'ang zer/ chos rgyal bKra shis dpal dang lcam sring gnyis 'khrungs//”; “Hence bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal ba took dpon mo lHa mo bzang nga from lHa sa for wife. She gave birth to Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan. At that time, a disagreement occurred between father and mother, and she went back to lHa sa. [rGyal mtshan dpal ba] remarried a *dpon mo* of the bKra shis rtse ba, and bdag chen sKu blo ba

Shar kha pa line at the time of rGyal mtshan dpal could count on several alliances obtained by means of marriage. One of them at 'Brong rtse was very near rGyal rtse.

After the passing of rGyal mtshan dpal, a *nang rten*—a statue of Thub pa'i dbang po—and a *phyi rten*—the *mchod rten* called Khang brtsegs ma (lit. “a pile of rooms”, or else, “drop of vermillion blood”)—were made in his memory at upper gTing skyes (*Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* p.68 lines 4–7).

His son bSod nams rgyal mtshan founded Khyung rtse rdzong in water dog 1442.⁹⁴ With this establishment, *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* begins the practice of citing dates of several events it deals with. This attention to chronology makes one suggest that the sources the anonymous author of this text used for covering the period from the second half of the 15th century onwards are historically more accurate than the material he had used for the previous periods.

After referring to this foundation, *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* goes on to say that dbon chen Sangs rgyas rgyal po was born in the following year, 1443, at dgon pa Ser gling of Glang phug (ibid. p.69 line 3). Ser gling is not far from Lug nag in rGyang ro of Myang stod, to the south-east of rGyal rtse.

The title *dbon chen* identifies its bearer as kin of bSod nams rgyal mtshan and his Shar kha pa. It is difficult to ascertain their relationship, especially because, down to bSod nams rgyal mtshan, *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* has a reductive outline of the genealogy of the junior Shar kha pa branch. It mentions only one member for each generation and thus Sangs rgyas rgyal po's descendance cannot be ascertained, which would have helped to clarify his identity.

Despite the internecine struggles with their rGyal rtse kinsmen who tried to take control of gTing skyes *chos sde* (see below), this monastery remained the main temple of the junior Shar kha pa line, proved by the fact that, when sde pa sBa ku la of 'Brong rtse died, a *nang rten* was erected for him at gTing skyes. This took place before fire rat 1456, the death year of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456), to whom a request was sent to consecrate it.⁹⁵ The *nang rten* was a statue of Thub pa'i dbang po surrounded by the sixteen Ahrat.

Among the four children born to bSod nams rgyal mtshan, chos rgyal bSod nams lha mo was the successor to the throne. bSod nams rgyal mtshan's children probably were two brothers and two sisters because only the names of two brothers—chos rgyal bSod nams lha mo and

was born. Subsequently he married again [this time] a *dpon mo* from the noble lHa ba from 'Brong rtse, also known as the sBa ku la. Both brother chos rgyal bKra shis dpal and his sister were born”.

94. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.69 line 2): “De'i skabs chu pho khyi la Khyung rtse rdzong gi 'bram bting pa'i sa chog mkhas grub gZhon nu seng ges mdzad//”; “At that time, he laid the foundations of Khyung rtse rdzong in water male dog 1442. The consecration of the land was made by mkhas grub gZhon nu seng ge”.

95. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.70 line 5–p.71 line 1): “De nas Khyung rtse rdzong yang mthar phyin pa las/ 'bangs nmams kyang mang bar byung ba'i dus/ de nas sde pa sBa ku la yang sku yal/ de'i nang rtsen du chos sde'i 'du khang na 'dzim sku Thub dbang gNas bcus bskor ba 'di dang/ phyi bstan dang po dgon stod na mchod rten yongs rdzogs zhig yod par snang/ (p.71) sBa ku'i nang rten la phyag nas 'thor rgyu zhus par E wam la btang bas rDo rje 'chang gi bka' las//”; “Following the completion

Thugs rje rgyal mtshan—are given in the text.⁹⁶ After bSod nams rgyal mtshan built Khyung rtse *chos sde* in partial compliance with orders issued from rGyal rtse, a statue of Shakya Thub pa was received from this locality.⁹⁷ In the footsteps of his father, bSod nams lha mo, aged eighteen at the time, added a *grwa tshang* at Khyung rtse *chos sde* in the year of the ox 1469.⁹⁸ He thus was born in water monkey 1452.

In fire dog 1466, the foundations of dGa' ldan rtse were laid. The main image of Thub pa'i dbang po, fashioned by a Newar artist, was made with over eighty *khal* of copper. The regal insignia—i.e. the three jewels in the shape of seashells given by the *pho lha* of the family to lha gcig lHa mo sman, called 'byung ba lnga ldan bya ba 'i gser or “gold known as possessing

of Khyung rtse'i rdzong, when the number of the subjects increased, sde pa sBa ku la died. As for his *nang rten*, a clay statue of Thub dbang surrounded by the gNas bcu (i.e. the Arhat) was made in the 'du khang of the *chos sde*. As for the main external sign (i.e. a *phyi rten*), it seems that a *mchod rten yongs rdzogs* (spelled so for *dgongs rdzogs*, i.e. a funerary *stupa*) stood above the monastery. (p.71) A messenger having been sent to E wam in order to have the *nang rten* of sBa ku personally sprinkled with barley grains [by Ngor chen], rDo rje 'chang (i.e. Ngor chen) replied....”.

96. *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* (p.69 lines 1–2): “Der Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan gyi sMan khab nas dpon mo bSod nams rgyan ma khab tu bzhes/ chos rgyal bSod nams lha mo Thugs rje rgyal mtshan pa sogs lcam sring bzhi sku btsas/””; “At that time, Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan married dpon mo bSod nams rgyan ma of sMan khab. Four brothers and sisters altogether, including chos rgyal bSod nams lha mo and Thugs rje rgyal mtshan, were born”.

97. *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* (p.71 lines 3–4): “Der Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan Khyung rtse'i chos sde btan nas/ rten gtso Thub pa'i dbang po'i sku de rGyang sKu 'bum nas spyang drangs/ gdan sa thog mar gNyang dbon Kun dga' rgyal mtshan la gtad/””; “At that time, Ma sangs bSod nams rgyal mtshan founded Khyung rtse chos sde, and a statue of Thub pa'i dbang po [meant to be] its main image was brought from rGyang [rtse] sKu 'bum. The earliest abbot was gNyang (spelled so) dbon Kun dga' rgyal mtshan”.

One of the most important sKu 'bum statues was the *nang rten* for Rab 'byor bzang po, the younger brother of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, made after the former's death in water rat 1432. This is the statue of rNang par snang mdzad in an alloy of precious metals placed in the eastern chapel of the sKu bum's *bum pa*, on the fifth floor. The statue was begun in fire dragon 1436, after the work in the sKu 'bum was finished. The image was consecrated in earth sheep 1439 (see above n.67). This statue of Vairocana is the only monumental image in metal on the fifth floor, the huge sculptures in the other three *lha khang* on the same floor being in clay. No major metal statue is anywhere found in the rest of the sKu 'bum; hence the Vairocana *nang rten* is the only monumental statue in any of the sKu 'bum chapels built in alloy. This may be a sign that it was a substitution planned almost immediately after the sKu 'bum's completion, and it is suggestive that the original clay statue on the fifth floor, replaced with Rab 'byor bzang po's *nang rten*, was sent to Khyung rtse chos sde a few years later.

98. *Shar ka pa 'i gdung rabs* (p.72 lines 1–3): “De nas chos rgyal de gdung lo bcu bzhi phebs ba na/ slob dpon chen po Padma 'byung gnas dang zhal dngos su mjal nas lung bsten pa bzhin gdung lo bco brgyad du pheb sa glang gi lo grwa tshang 'dzugs pa'i mgo brtsams/””; “Then this *chos rgyal*, when he was fourteen years old, had a vision of slob dpon Padma 'byung gnas as if he was alive. According to the prophecy [he received from him], he initiated the construction of the *grwa tshang* [of Khyung rtse chos sde] in earth ox 1469 when he was aged eighteen”.

the five elements”—passed on a few generations earlier to Dar po by his mother, were melted down and used for the statue.⁹⁹

The way it is introduced in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* shows that the anonymous author of the text was not particularly impressed by this episode that effaced the signs of an uninterrupted tradition going back to the time of the predecessors in Khams. This move destroyed the ancestral emblems of power, the heritage of the rulers in the lineage.

Chos rgyal bSod nams lha mo married Byang sems Ur rgyan dge ma of lHa ri rtse, who bore him the conspicuous number of eight sons and three daughters.¹⁰⁰ The five who entered

99. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.72 line 4–p.73 line 1): “Me pho khyi lo ’Jam dpal dbyangs sku ’khrungs dGa’ ldan rtse’i ’khram bting/ rten gyi gtso bo Thub pa’i dbang po’i sku ’di zangs khal brgyad cu lha g tsam dang bcas bzo ba la Bal pos bsgrubs/ rab gnas mnga’ gsol rgyal tshab Kun dga’ dbang phyug pas mdzad/ sngon dpal chen Tshogs kyi bdag pos ma cig lHa mo la nor bu ’gron bu’i dbyibs can gsum gnang ba de gser gyi thig po’i nang du bcug pa yum ’grong khar ’byung ba lnga ldan bya ba’i gser yin gsungs/ Ma sangs Dar po la gnang ba de/ rten (p.73) ’di’i sku la rgyu shig pas/ nor bu gsum rnam chu’i dbyibs can phran tsam gsum byung ba/’; “Jam pa’i dbyangs was born in fire male dog (1466), and the foundations of dGa’ ldan rtse were laid. The main image of Thub pa’i dbang po was made with over eighty *khal* of copper. A Newar artist made it. The consecration and blessings were performed by rgyal tshab Kun dga’ dbang phyug. The three jewels in the shape of seashells earlier given by dpal chen Tshogs kyi bdag po to ma gcig (spelled so) lHa mo sman were put inside a golden *thig po* (“container”). At the time of her death, his mother said: “This is the gold known as the *’byung ba lnga ldan*, given to Ma sangs sTag Dar po”. These objects (p.73) were melted down to be used for the image, so these jewels, three in all, were turned into a liquid (*chu’i dbyibs can*, lit “in the shape of water”).”

100. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.73 line 4–p.75 line 1): “Chos rgyal chen pos lHa ri rtse nas Byang sems Ur rgyan dge ma khab tu bzhes te/ ’dis cho phrang cung zad brdzod na/ yab Myang stod sNa ba ti’i si ti Byang chub rgyal mtshan pa’i sras sde pa Dar po pa bya ba dang yum Hor nag bzang mo dpal bya ba’i sras/ Ar ra Rin bzang gi bu mo bSod nams bzang mo bya ba’i sras mo yin/ U rgyan dge ma ’di sku lus la yod (p.74) dus/ ’dir ra’i sru mo mchod gnyis ’Khor re na sgrub la yod pa’i che ba’i rmi lam du/ slob dpon Padma ’byung gnas kyi sprul ma de la byin rlabs yang yang mdzad nas/ mu man rdo rje ’phra sna tshogs kyi brgyan pa snang ba rmi lam/ des yum gyi sar byon nas/ khyed kyi sbrum ma de bu mo yin srid na yang nges par mkha’ ’gro sde lnga’i nang tshan zhig yin pa ’dug nga’i rmi lam du ’di lta bu byung gsung/ mtshan Ur rgyan dge mar brtags/ de nas dpal ’byor rgyas shing yul phyogs der nad kyi rgyun chad pa sogs gzhan yang dge mtshan mang du byung ngo/ bag mar ’byon pa’i lam zhig tu grub thob Thang stong rgyal po drel mo dmar mo zhig la gcer gzhan mdzad nas phebs pa dang mjal/ des bu mo khyod la bu brgyad skye/ ces par srol sems can la phan par yong gsungs/ der phyag phul byin rlabs zhus te grub thob chen po legs dngos grub zhu byas pas/ dngos grub de kha yin mod/ zas nor ’dod na khyod rang ’gro sar kā pa la mtshan dang ldan pa cig dang ’phrad yong ba yod pas de tshags kyis gsungs/ khab tu bzhes pa na de ji lta ba byung ngo/ de nas chos (p.75) rgyal de nyid sras po brgyad dang sras mo gsum te bcu gcig byung/’; “The *chos rgyal chen po* [bSod nams lha mo] married Byang sems Ur rgyan dge ma of lHa ri rtse. To discuss her descent briefly, her father was sde pa Dar po, the son of Myang stod sNa bu ba ti’i si ti (spelled so for si tu) Byang chub rgyal mtshan, and her mother was Hor nag bZang mo dpal, the daughter of bSod nams bzang mo, daughter [in turn] of Ar ra Rin bzang. When U (spelled so) rgyan dge ma was in [bZang mo dpal’s] womb, (p.74) in the

religion were Byang sems Zla ba rgyal mtshan, not to be confused with the master of *bsnyung gnas*; rje chen mo Kun dga' rgyal mtshan; rgyal tshab bSod nams rgyal mtshan; dGon gSer gling pa 'Jam dbyangs kun dga' bkra shis and 'Jam dbyangs kun dga' legs grub. Ma sangs sPrin po ral can; sde pa Kun dga' dpa ba aka sde pa 'Brug pa; and the “one who went to Las stod mThong legs” were the laymen (*Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* p.75 lines 1–6).

This generation is treated with great sobriety in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, which mentions that Ma sangs sPrin po ral can was the successor, but very little is known about his activity, except for the *nang rten* he and his brothers made for their mother—a statue of rDo rje 'chang at dGa' ldan bla brang, in which a *Lam 'bras bla rgyud* was installed.

sPrin po ral can had two sons, Hor sprug and sde pa Dar rgyas. The latter took over the reins of power, and three sons were born from his marriage with dpon mo bSam 'grub. The youngest was Shakya don grub, of whom nothing is said in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*. The text notes that the middle son, Shakya shri, went to sNar thang, which implies that he was a monk there. The eldest, Shakya bzang po, later known as chos rgyal Kun dga' 'chi med dbang po'i sde (b. wood ox 1505),¹⁰¹ a follower of pan chen Shakya mchog ldan (1428–1507) and Kun

dream of the elder of her two maternal aunts during their meditation at 'Khor re, she dreamt that slob dpon chen po Padma 'byung gnas was blessing this pregnant woman again and again, and gave her an ornament studded with sapphires and diamonds. After going to see the [future] mother, [she told her]: “It is possible (*srid na yang*) that the child with whom you are pregnant is a daughter. She definitely belongs to the *mkha' 'gro sde lnga* (“five classes of *mkha' 'gro ma*”). I dreamt in this way”. She was given the name Ur rgyan dge ma. Subsequently, that land prospered and was without disease. Many other beneficial events occurred. On the way to her bridal procession, she came across and met grub thob Thang stong rgyal po who was riding naked on a russet female mule. He said: “You will give birth to eight children”, and added: “They were going to be beneficial to sentient beings”. She prostrated to him and requested a blessing, saying: “*Grub thob chen po*, give me *dnegos grub* (“wealth”)”. He replied: “This is the *dnegos grub*. If you care for food and material possessions, you will discover an extraordinary *ka pa la* in the place you are heading to. Keep it with you”. On reaching the castle, it happened in that way. Subsequently (p.75) eight sons and three daughters were born to this *chos rgyal* (i.e. bSod nams lha mo, the husband of Ur rgyan ma)”.

101. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.76 lines 1–5): “Phyis yum 'di'i nang rten du rje sku mched rnam kyid dGa' ldan bla brang gi Lam 'bras bla rgyud kyid rten gtso rDo rje 'chang gi sku de bzhengs par snang/ de la yum tha dad yin pa'i sras dPal ldan don grub pa'ang zer/ phyis Hor sprug tu grags pa de dang sde pa Dar rgyas pa pa gnyis byung/ de nas gNar thang na dpon mo bSam grub dpal ba khab tu bzhes nas/ re zhig nas sde pa Hor sprug gnam du gshegs nas/ Dar rgyas rgyal srid bzungs pas dpon mo de la sras Shakya rnam gsum bya ba byung/ cung Shakya don grub pa gzhon nu la zhi bar gshegs/ 'bring Shakya shri gNar thang du phebs/ cen Shakya bzang po bya ba/ phyis chos rgyal Kun dga' 'chi med dbang po'i sde de nyid shing mo glang la sku 'khrungs/”; “Later, the *rje* brothers made a statue of rDo rje 'chang as *nang rten* for their mother, which is the main receptacle of the *Lam 'bras bla rgyud* in dGa' ldan bla brang. Being the son from a different mother, he was also known as dPal ldan don grub. Both the one known as Hor sprug (“Hor child”) and sde pa Dar rgyas were born afterwards. Subsequently [Hor sprug] married dpon mo bSam 'grub (spelled so) dpal ba from gNar (spelled so) thang. Some time after sde pa Hor sprug died, Dar rgyas took hold of secular power. He had the

dga' grol mchog (1495 or 1507–1566), renovated dGa' ldan rtse. The *chos rgyal* died in water ox 1553, aged forty-nine.¹⁰²

His son Rab mos mThong ba don ldan was born in earth pig 1539 from dpon mo bSod nams. No further details are given about his life except the circumstances that caused his death when he was aged forty-two in the year wrongly recorded by the text as earth snake 1569 but actually being iron snake 1581. His death followed imprisonment caused by an unloyal minister who overthrew him.¹⁰³

The lineage of the Shar kha pa that sprang from Ma sangs Dar po ends with this family member and this event. The truncated conclusion of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* raises doubts whether it continued with the successive generations in the lineage, given the reference to a son of Rab mos mThong ba don ldan in the last passage of the work. This is rather more a desperate appeal by Rab mos mThong ba don ldan before his death than a statement of his will

Shakya *rnam gsum* from this dpon mo (i.e. bSam grub dpa' ba). The youngest, Shakya don 'grub, died in his youth. The middle, Shakya shri, went to gNar (spelled so) thang. The eldest, Shakya bzang po, later known as chos rgyal Kun dga' 'chi med dbang po'i sde, was born in wood female ox (1505)".

102. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.77 line 2): "Pan chen Shakya mchog ldan gyi grub mtha' bzang po dang mthun pa'i 'chad nyan dar rgyas su mdzad//"; "[Kun dga' 'chi med dbang po'i sde contributed to] disseminate cycles of teachings relating to the noble system of pan chen Shakya mchog ldan".

Ibid. (p.77 lines 3–4): "Der blo bde nas dpon mo bSod nams by 'dren khab tu bzhes/ Rab mos mThong ba don ldan sku btsas/ de nas rje btsun dam pa Kun dga' grol mchog de nyid la/ mDo rGyud kun gyi bcud mchog ma lus pa legs par zhus nas don 'gril zhing spyod slabs che ba'i nyams len la g.yel ba med pa'i ngang nas dgung lo zhe dgur phebs pa chu mo glang Hor zla ba lnga pa'i nyer lnga la rig 'dzin sngags kyi grub pa 'chi med mkha' spyod kyi go 'phangs brnyes so//"; "At that time, feeling that it was appropriate, he married dpon mo bSod nams in order to bear issue. Rab mos mThong ba don ldan was born. Then, after [Kun dga' 'chi med dbang po'i sde] received the exalted essentials of *mDo rGyud* in excellent way from rje btsun dam pa Kun dga' grol mchog, he did not neglect the spiritual exercise that leads to grasping the essence and learning practice. After that, when he would have turned forty-nine years of age, on the twenty-fifth of the fifth month of water female ox (1553) he passed to the eternal paradise of the *rig 'dzin-s* who attained [siddhic] powers".

103. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.78 lines 2–4): "bDud blon kha brgyal bas thugs dkrugs che bar byung bas thugs 'byung ba'i tshul mdzad/ sras lcam sring gsum la yang blo phugs nyams pa la gtad na bslu ba'i rgya yin gsungs zhal chems kyang bzhag/ da nga mThong ba don ldan zer ba'i kha hor ba 'di bor nas/ da gzod dGa' ldan du mi pham Byams pa'i drung du lha bu lha dkar sing ba cig byed gsungs ste/ de'i phyi lo dgung lo zhe gsum du phebs pa sprul gyi lo la bde bar gshegs//"; "An evil minister who was victorious in the contention caused [Rab mos mThong ba don ldan] great distress. In this way, [the minister] was able to trouble him (i.e. to overthrow him). He left a will saying: "Having entrusted [my] son, wife and daughter to the care of someone who is wicked (*blo phugs nyams pa*, lit. "whose mind's determination has deteriorated"), this is at the basis of the betrayal (*bslu ba*). Now, I myself, mThong ba don ldan, being the loser in this insensate contention (?) (*kha hor ba*), will be a luminous white, divine son in the presence of mi pham Byams pa in dGa' ldan this time next year". He died in earth snake 1569 (sic) when he would have turned forty-three in the following year".

(*bka' chems*) as defined in the text. One can only provisionally consider iron snake 1581, the latest date in the work, as the year when the text attained the shape known to modern readers.

A few peculiarities of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* are significant either *per se* or in relation to the treatment of the Shar kha pa in other works. I summarise them here.

- The ancestral lineage of the Shar kha pa is absent in the other sources.
- The etymology of the family name rests on the ancestral land sGa in Shar (the “east”) rather than on its affiliation with the Sa skya pa.
- *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*—like *rGya Bod yig tshang*—more correctly attributes the Sa skya pa affiliation of the family to A gnyan dam pa rather than 'Phags pa dpal (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*). This assessment leads to territorial and chronological differences. The affiliation would have taken place in Khams rather than gTsang (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*) and in the 13th century rather than in the 14th (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*).
- *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* has a more marked Khams-oriented approach than *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*. Rab brtan's biography treats the history of the most important period of the Shar kha pa with a gTsang-oriented approach originating as it does from rGyal rtse. Episodes in the individual careers are read with a perspective that attributes preeminence to their life in gTsang. Further, Rab brtan's biography paints aspects of their tradition that were manifestly Khams pa as if they were gTsang pa, such as the origin of the family. *rGya Bod yig tshang*, despite being Sa skya pa and from Central Tibet, has an approach less exclusively gTsang pa than *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*.
- Some irreconcilable diverging points concern the *mi'u rigs* of the Shar kha pa, either the lDong according to *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* or the rMu tsha sGa according to *rGya Bod yig tshang*. The founding ancestor of the family—Tshogs kyi bdag po or else his son Gro rgod ldong btsan according to *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*; dGra rgod 'dong btsan according to *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar*; an unnamed ancestor according to *rGya Bod yig tshang* but actually rTse mangs—and the period of origination—late 7th-early 8th century or several decades later.
- The members of the early lineage drastically differ in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* and *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* to the point that they seem different genealogies. The names of the ancestors down to bZang po rgyal mtshan/rGyal mtshan bzang po do not correspond even in a single case. The genealogy of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* is interrupted during *bstan pa me ro* [*blangs*], and that of *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* until *bstan pa phyi dar*.
- *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* and *rGya Bod yig tshang* share some generations of the Shar kha pa lineage. *rGya Bod yig tshang* begins its own line with lDan ma rTse mangs, quite a long time after the inception of the genealogy in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*. A major difference is

that bZang po dpal is left unmentioned in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* and the 'Phags pa *spun gsum* are made to be the sons of bZang po rgyal mtshan.

- The importance of sGa A gnyan dam pa, the preeminent member of the earlier segment of the Shar kha pa genealogy, is not acknowledged in the gTsang-oriented *Myang chos 'byung* and *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* but not neglected in the Khams-oriented *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* and *rGya Bod yig tshang*.
- Another major peculiarity of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* is its statement that rGyal rtse had already taken the form of a main Shar kha pa castle during the infancy of 'Phags pa dpal, which is not borne out by the other sources. This is the consequence of the revolutionary fact that rGyal rtse was not the endeavour of the Shar kha pa but of one minister of the Sa skya pa from Shab in Myang. The network of Shar kha pa residences not mentioned in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* with the exception of rTse chen was built up by this anonymous minister in the period of bZang po rgyal mtshan.

The religious inclinations of the Shar kha pa of 'Bring mtshams

Besides dealing with the secular history of the junior Shar kha pa branch that stemmed from Ma sangs Dar po, *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* outlines their religious penchant and, in broader terms, the Shar kha pa religious sympathies.

sGa A gnyan dam pa's induction of the family into the Sa skya pa religious sphere led to the migration to gTsang of the members of the following generation in order to have closer ties with the seat of the 'Khon. The lineage remained eminently Sa skya pa until 'Phags pa dpal who, far from betraying the family's tradition, became personally interested in Dus 'khor through the most charismatic masters of his time.

His younger brother 'Phags pa Dar po was a practitioner of both Buddhism and Bon. In a rather obscure passage of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (see n.81), the religious contribution that Zhu Ri zhing pa, who belonged to one of the six great Bon po clans, gave 'Phags pa Dar po was that he introduced him to a combined form of Buddhism and Bon. Dar po chose a statue of Byams pa from 'Ug brag/'U brag as his tutelary image. This place in sGo bzhi of Myang stod is associated with dMar sgom gZhon nu shes rab (see n.91), a disciple of Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas, and thus a master of *Zhi byed*, as well as with the 'Brug pa, given the influence neighbouring Rwa lung exercised.

The same eclectic approach towards religion was pursued by his son A chen dpal ba, who supported both traditions. The circumstances of A chen's departure to 'Bring mtshams, at the border of the plateau, to search for a suitable place in order to re-establish his lineage is de-

scribed at some length in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* and confirms that, like his father, he was a follower of Bon and Buddhism.¹⁰⁴

A change in religious interest took place under rGyal mtshan dpal, the son of A chen dpal ba. He did not sympathise with Bon the way his predecessors had, but became a follower of Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456).¹⁰⁵ In fact, he would have persecuted the Bon po teachings had not Ngor chen made him refrain from doing so.¹⁰⁶ Despite Ngor chen being one of the major masters of the generation to which Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags belonged, there is no trace of intercourse between the two, even though rGyal rtse and Ngor were not too far from one another.

rGyal mtshan dpal thus renovated the links with the Sa skya pa and adopted the newly formulated doctrines of their school prevailing in his time. He chose gShed dmar to be his *yi dam*, and Ngor chen tried to satisfy his desire for teachings related to this deity. He advised him to keep the literature on gShed dmar, which he had procured for him, as that of the family and its successive lineages.¹⁰⁷

In the following generations of the junior branch of the Shar ka pa, the renewed Sa skya pa affiliation was preserved in the main. In particular, bSod nams rgyal mtshan, the next ruler within the line, renovated *yon mchod* with Ngor chen, whom his son bSod nams lha mo was

104. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.63 lines 5–6): “Byams pa la mchod pa bsham lha dang bla ma la gsol ba btab/ Bon skyong la phrin bcol bskang gso dang mdos gtor phul/”; “[A chen dpal ba] made offerings to Byams pa. He addressed prayers to the gods and the *bla ma*. He invoked (*phrin bcol*) the Bon protectors for their care, and made offerings, *mdos-s* (“threadcrosses”) and *gtor* [*ma-s*] to them”.

105. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.67 lines 1–2): “Ngor chen rDo rje 'chang grwa kyang gi bKab kyes 'phrang na sku 'tshams la bzhugs na sngon gyi las yod pa'i bla mar mkhyen nas mjal ba la thogs med du phebs/ dam pa de nyid kyis rjes su bzung/ dGe grong gar phur gdan drangs pa nas zhabs rtogs bzang du byas//; “When Ngor chen rDo rje 'chang was meditating at the bKab skyes gorge of Grwa kyang, [A chen dpal ba] went without hesitation to see [him], for he knew, owing to his previous *karma*, that he was his *bla ma*. He became a follower of this noble man. After inviting him to dGe srong gar phu, he rendered service to him”.

106. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.67 line 6–p.68 line 2): “Der bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal Bon po'i Ita grub la thugs la gsogs nas Byang dmar bzhugs pa'i mDo Khams chen me la 'bul bsam pa la/ (p.68) de rDo rje 'chang gi dgongs nas/ de Bon po zhig la phyin gsungs/ sPu lung pa la snang gShen rab kyi sku de lugs su bzhu nas/ bdag po A chen pa'i nang rten Thub pa'i dbang po'i sku zhig dang rGyud 'bum khyad par can gnyis bzhengs pa'i rab gnas mnga' gsol rDo rj 'chang gi mdzad/”; “On that occasion, bdag po rGyal mtshan dpal, who disliked the views and meditation practices of the Bon po, thought to burn the *mDo Khams chen* kept at Byang ma. (p.68) rDo rje 'chang (i.e. Ngor chen), having realised this, said: “Give it (i.e. this book) to a Bon po”. [Grags pa rgyal mtshan] melted down the cast image of gShen rabs (spelled so) which was with the sPus lung pa, and made a statue of Thub pa'i dbang po as the *nang rten* for bdag po A chen and an extraordinary *rGyud 'bum*, altogether two. Their consecration was performed by rDo rje 'chang”.

107. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.67 lines 5–6): “gShed dmar gyi yig cha nams bdag po 'di'i don du mdzad nas/ physis zhal ngo nams kyi pha chos kyang 'di la mdzad dgos so gsung bka' gan/”; “For the benefit of this *bdag po* (i.e. rGyal mtshan dpal ba), [Ngor chen] collected all the documents on

able to meet in his youth. Owing to exposure to other masters of the time, bSod nams rgyal mtshan's wife Ur rgyan dge ma received a prophecy from grub chen Thang stong rgyal po (see above n.100).

The religious practice and affiliation of the next two generations in the lineage are not clarified in the text. Shakya bzang po, later known as chos rgyal Kun dga' 'chi med dbang po'i sde, the major member of the next generation composed of three brothers known as the Shakya rnam gsum, was a disciple of gSer mdog pan chen Shakya mchog ldan and Kun dga' grol mchog. Reference to the former indicates that he kept the religious tradition of the family within the Sa skya pa sphere.

The Shar kha pa internecine wars

The relations between the Shar kha pa branch of rGyal rtse and the junior line inhabiting 'Bring mtshams were not particularly idyllic. Contentions between them erupted quite often in a limited span of time.

Three internecine incidents took place and, on all three occasions, the rGyal rtse pa had the upper hand. The first was when the Shar kha pa of 'Bring mtshams lost rGya grong, the ancestral seat of the family, which had been assigned to 'Phags pa Dar po. The second was when a Khyung mgo ba minister of the junior Shar kha pa branch called upon the rGyal rtse pa to occupy mKhar chen. The third was when the rGyal rtse pa took over Khyung rtse rdzong, a stronghold of the junior branch.

The first episode took place around the mid 14th century or soon thereafter, and may have coincided with the demise of 'Phags pa dpal; the second occurred in a period which is more difficult to assess; the third can be fixed to water pig 1443.

The evolving stages of the last event are described in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* in some detail. bSod nams rgyal mtshan, who belonged to the Shar kha pa of dKar la and mKhar chen (see above), was a younger contemporary of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags. In water dog 1442, bSod nams rgyal mtshan laid the foundation of the fortress of Khyung rtse rdzong (see n.94) in the area of gTing skyes.

Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs adds that one year later there was a clash with the rGyal rtse pa. Rab brtan wanted his cadet relative to allow people from gTing skyes to populate the dPal 'khor chos sde by becoming monks there, but bSod nams rgyal mtshan refused because he was building his own *chos sde*, probably Khyung rtse chos sde. A speech illustrative of the political situation of the Shar kha pa cadet line of gTing skyes, dKar la, mDo chen and Gam pa was given by Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags during the contention. Rather arrogantly, he said

gShed dmar. Later he authoritatively affirmed: "These should be used as the *pha chos* ("literature of the paternal clan") of [your] relatives".

that bSod nams rgyal mtshan's relatives had been already dispossessed of rGya grong but he still did not want to establish peaceful relations.¹⁰⁸

An army was sent by the *chos rgyal* of Shab Seng ge rtse to reinforce the troops of the 'Bring mtshams Shar kha pa. The identity of this *chos rgyal* and the bond of relations with the other Shar kha pa are unaccounted for in the passage, but Seng ge rtse was a castle under the control of the Shar kha pa of rTse chen. Hence, if Seng ge rtse had not been lost to them in the meantime—no trace of a similar occurrence is found in the sources—the rTse chen pa entered an alliance with the junior branch of 'Bring mtshams against the rGyal rtse pa at that time.

The help of this army was crucial to secure the defeat of the troops from rGyal rtse in a Pyrrhic victory after Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags had surrounded mKhar chen. Eventually, Khyung rtse rdzong was seized by rGyal rtse but later released on condition that secular authority not be exercised from there. The provision to release it called for not pursuing the construction of the *rdzong*, but the text subsequently says that Khyung rtse rdzong was completed, thus showing that the junior Shar kha pa branch regained lost ground. gTing skyes remained under bSod nams rgyal mtshan, despite the decisive defeat of the junior Shar kha pa branch at dKar la and the rGyal rtse pa effort to wrest it from the cadet line's control.¹⁰⁹ This state of

108. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.69 lines 3–6): “Di'i phyi lo dbon chen Sangs rgyas rgyal pos Glang phug gi dgon pa Ser gling du skyes/ de skabs/ rGyal mkhar rtse nas chos rgyal Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags des dPa' 'khor chos sde btab/ gTing skyes nas kyang gra khral dgos gsung byung ba las/ chos rgyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan pas mi 'bul bdag rang yang chos sde zhiig 'debs kyi yod zhus pas ma mnyes te/ dang po yang yab mes nams 'di kha byas thugs ma gcig par rGyal grong nas kyang rims par bcug 'dug/ da rung yang nga rgan la mi nyan na/ grag sdog der yang bdor mi 'dod pa yin gsung/ dmag bsog gi 'dug pa la/ chos rgyal rang gi Seng ge rtse byon//”; “dBon chen Sangs rgyas rgyal po was born at dgon pa Ser gling of Glang phug in the following year (i.e. 1443). At that time, chos rgyal Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags of rGyal mkhar rtse was building dPa' (sic) 'khor chos sde. When he came up and said that a tribute of monks (*grwa khral*) had to come from gTing skyes too, chos rgyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan refused to send people, pleading: “I myself too am building a *chos sde*”. [Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags] was not happy. He said: “First of all, given that his predecessors were in disagreement [with my family], they were eventually expelled from brGyal grong (spelled so) for this reason. Even now [bSod nams rgyal mtshan] does not listen to me, although I am elder to him. He does not want to give up, refusing to listen even on this occasion”. While [Rab brtan] was levying an army, the *chos rgyal* (i.e. bSod nams rgyal mtshan) himself went to Seng ge rtse”.

109. *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.70 lines 2–5): “De nas Myang dmag nams rTsen thog tu sgar brgyag nas mKhar chen bskor grab byas/ Shab dmag nams Gung mar phyi sgar bcas yod pas/ nyin gcig lag thug pa las/ rGyal mkhar rtse pa dmag dpung nams brgyed shar nub sogs kyi ri bros song ba las/ rgan mi nams kyi kha dpe la yang/ rgya mtsho lud pa'i rba rlabs kyi/ Rab brten ri bo rtse la bros bya ba byung/ de nas dKar la'i rdzong spab nas/ physis rdzong mi brgyab pa'i mnga' rir gtang/ mnga' zhabs nams kyang gTing skyes pa la 'jags par byas pas mnga' thang yang che bar gyur//”; “Then the troops from Myang camped at rTsen thog, ready to surround mKhar chen. The army from Shab having then camped at Gung ma, they fought one [full] day. The army of the rGyal mkhar rtse pa fled to the mountains in the east and west. A proverb of the elders says: “The tide of the overflowing ocean made Rab rten (sic for Rab brtan) escape to the top of the mountain”. Since dKar la'i rdzong

affairs is confirmed in a following passage of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*.¹¹⁰ bSod nams rgyal mtshan's power continued unabated and increased when Khyung rtse rdzong was completed.

The account of events taking place in 1443 found in *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* has details that are quite interesting, but these passages suffer from a serious shortcoming which greatly invalidates them. Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags could have not been involved in the row against his kin. He had died in 1442, the year before the disturbances burst out. His younger brother bKra shis 'phags pa (ruling 1443–1447) succeeded him on the throne of rGyal rtse in 1443, the same year the fighting broke out (see *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.279 lines 6–19).

Being the rGyal rtse *dmag dpon* before becoming its prince, bKra shis 'phags pa's militaristic attitude should not come as a surprise. It is possible that the anonymous author of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs*, relying on documents that recorded the 1443 strife, may have assumed that Rab brtan was still alive and that the prince of rGyal rtse who was actually involved in the military campaign was his successor bKra shis 'phags pa.

Despite the defeat of their Shar kha pa of 'Bring mtshams by the rGyal rtse pa and the agreement that bSod nams rgyal mtshan should renounce any activity detrimental to the power of rGyal rtse, Khyung rtse rdzong was completed by him after its foundation in water dog 1442. This fact may well indicate that the bone of contention was secular, namely the building of this fort which disturbed the rGyal rtse pa, and that the religious reason adduced in Rab brtan's biography, namely the *grwa khral* (or "monks tax") the rGyal rtse pa wanted to summon from gTing skyes, had probably little to do with the actual cause of the strife.

was subsequently captured, an oath was sworn not to [pursue] the construction of the *rdzong* in the future. As the subjects remained assigned to the gTing skyes pa, [chos rgyal bSod nams rgyal mtshan's] political power greatly increased. Then, following the completion of Khyung rtse'i rdzong, the number of subjects also increased".

110. Another passage of *Shar ka pa'i gdung rabs* (p.71 lines 1–2) describing events after the military expeditions of the rGyal rtse pa shows that gTing skyes was not taken by them: "sBa ku'i nang rten la phyag nas 'thor rgyu zhus par E wam la btang pas rDo rje 'chang gi bka' las khyed bTing skyes pa'i rten gtso 'dzim sku des mi yong/ gser bzang nged kyi 'bul/ Thub pa'i dbang po'i sku zhig zhengs gsung//"; "A messenger was sent to E wam in order to have the *nang rten* of sBa ku personally sprinkled with barley grains [by rDo rje 'chang] (i.e. to have it consecrated by Ngor chen). rDo rje 'chang maintained: "The main image of you bTing skyes pa (spelled so), should not be a clay statue. I will offer a statue in gilt copper". A statue of Thub pa'i dbang po was made".

Two controversies involving *smyon pa* masters and princes of rGyal rtse

To conclude the treatment of the controversial or neglected topics concerning the Shar kha pa of Khams and gTsang, I briefly introduce episodes that took place at rGyal rtse and involved two different ruling rulers of the principality and two eminent masters who did not refrain from a *smyon pa* performance.

THANG STONG RGYAL PO AND RAB BRtan KUN BZANG 'PHAGS

One of them was the great grub thob Thang stong rgyal po (1385–1464? or 1361–1485?), his Shar kha pa interlocutor was no one else than Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags, the founder of the dPal 'khor cho sde. They first met at Phag ri in wood tiger 1434. *Thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar* by 'Gyur med bde chen says that the episode was contemporaneous with events that took place in that year (ibid. p.172 line 10), and before others that took place in wood hare 1435 (ibid. p.172 line 19). On the occasion, the *grub thob chen po* left Rab brtan breathless with one of his miraculous performances (ibid. p.171 line 15–p.172 line 6).

Rather than in 1434 or 1435, Thang stong rgyal po passed through rGyal rtse in fire snake 1437, given that this episode is described among others introduced by a reference to the year (ibid. p.191 line 18). He received gifts from si tu bSod nams 'phags (ibid. p.193 lines 14–16), a corruption for [Rab brtan] Kun bzang 'phags, which is the way the founder of the dPal 'khor chos sde is called in the Phag ri episode.

At an unspecified date but after 1437 and before 1442 when Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags died, Thang stong rgyal po again went to rGyal rtse and had a bitter quarrel with the *dkon gnyer* of the dPal 'khor chos sde, which led to relations with Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags that deteriorated to the breaking point. The *grub thob chen po* reprimanded the prince of rGyal rtse and left.

'Gyur med bde chen's *Thang stong rgyal po'i rnam thar* (p.253 line 19–p.254 line 14) reads:

“dPal (p.254)'khor sde chen gyi rgyal sgo'i nang la chibs ma bshol bar byon pas/
chos sde'i nang la rta zhon pa mi 'os zer/ rdo rub byas kyang ci yang ma skyon/
gtsug lag khang gi mdun du chibs bshol/ mchod rten bkra shis sgo mangs mjal/ phyi
nang kun rten 'brel snying pos rab gnas mdzad/ gtsug lag khang mjal ba la byon pas/
them pa kha nas dkon gnyer gyis phyr 'phul/ sgo bcad byung ba la/ nga la rten 'brel
bzang/ khong pa rang gi bryud la rabs chad/ la la yul 'khyar dgos yong gsungs pa'i
ma 'ongs pa lung bstan/ bdag po Rab brtan pas gsan nas/ rgyal khang du phebs dgos
zhus pas/ nged them pa spangs pas mi yong gsungs kyang/ mi mang pos sku bteg rTse
rgyal phebs/ 'bul ba zhabs tog tsam byas/ dge las kyi sbyin bdag byed dgos gsungs
pas/ nged rang gi gtsug lag khang dang mchod rten chos de dang bcas pa sngar grub
cing/ da dung mdzad 'phro yin pa'i lo rgyus gsungs nas/ grub thob chen po dang yon
mchod kyi rten 'brel ma 'grig/ rTse rgyal nas sNye thang du phar byon/ der mi mang
po 'bul ba bzang po byung ba rnams/ Ri khrod dGa' ldan du Jo nang sgrub chen dPal

ldan legs pa dpon slob rnams la 'bul skyel mdzad/ physis 'bul skyel mang po yong pa'i rten 'brel bsgrigs/ rTse chen du byon/ bdag po Du si dang mjal/";

“Having gone inside the dPal (p.244) 'khor bde chen's main gate (*rgyal sgo*, or should this be read as the name of the dPal 'khor chos sde gate?) without leaving behind [his] horse, [Thang stong rgyal po] was told that it was not appropriate to ride a horse inside the *chos sde*. Although people threw stones at him, they could not harm him. He led [his] horse in front of the *gtsug lag khang* and visited the *mchod rten bkra shis sgo mang*. Due to his favourable karmic relation [with the holy place], he consecrated it everywhere on its outside and inside. When he moved on to visit the *gtsug lag khang*, the *dkon gnyer* sent him out as soon as he crossed its threshold. While the [*dkon gnyer*] was closing the door, [Thang stong rgyal po] said: “I have a good *karma*. Your own posterity will be interrupted. Some of them will be exiled from the land”. He [thus] gave a prophecy about [the *dkon gnyer*'s] future lineage. When king Rab brtan heard about [the incident] and requested him to come to the royal house (*rgyal khang*), [Thang stong rgyal po] said: “I have been sent away from the threshold [of the temple]; hence I will not come”. Despite this, many people lifted him up and took him to rTse rgyal (i.e. rGyal mkhar rtse). They made him offerings and rendered him service. He told [Rab brtan]: “You must patronise virtuous activities”. [Rab brtan] gave him an account of [his work], saying: “I have already built the *gtsug lag khang*, the *mchod rten*, the *chos sde* etc., and I still wish to pursue further activities”, but a collaboration between the *grub thob chen po* and the *yon mchod* (i.e. the patron) was not established. [Thang stong rgyal po then] went flying from rTse rgyal to sNe thang (i.e. the rGyal rtse plain). He met bdag po Du si”.¹¹¹

Fixing the date of this episode with precision would help better to understand Rab brtan's plans behind the words “I still wish to pursue further activities”. Were these words pronounced before or after the 1440 edict, in which he exempted his subjects from the burden of further supporting the work at his *chos sde*, thus signalling the end of construction at the monastic town?

111. A less detailed version of the episode is found in another biography of Thang stong rgyal po, the little-known work entitled *Grub pa'i dbang phyug chen po lcags zam pa Thang stong rgyal po'i rnam par thar pa kun gsal sgron me bdud rtsi 'phreng ba mthong bas yid 'phrog* by bSd nams grags pa (f.99b line 6–f.100a line 5): “Grub thob chen pos Nyang stod la byon/ chos sde dPal 'khor sde chen gyi rgyal sgo'i nang la chibs ma bshol bar phyon pas/ chos de'i nang la rta gzhon byung/ rdo rub gyis zer/ rdo bre zan tsam dbu la rgyab byung kyang/ ci yang ma skyol/ (f.100a) gtsug lag khang gi mdun der chibs bshol/ mchod rten bkra shis sgo mangs la mjal/ phyag nas gtor/ lha khang la byon pas dkon gnyer gcig gi grub thob chen po la phul rdeg rgyab/ gtsug lag khang gi sgo bcad song/ rten 'brel 'bring las ma byung/ lha khang gi sgo bcod mi yul khyar dgos pa yong/ nga la rten 'brel legs gsungs/ grub thob chen po 'jig rten pa'i nang du mi 'byon/ them spags mdzad pa yin/ de tsa na bdag po Rab brtan 'phags kyi mi lag byas/ rGyang mkhar rtse'i rdzong rtse gdan 'dreng zhus/ ja sbyor gcig grol ba dang byon/ chu spe yod pa'i brag mtho pa de la rdzu 'phrul gyis byon pas rdzong mdun gyi ne thang du bzhugs/ 'bul ba byung pa rnams Ri khrod dGa' ldan du bzhugs pa'i sgrub pa po rnams

GTSANG SMYON HE RU KA AND BKRA SHIS RAB BR TAN

An episode that took place in the youth of gTsang smyon He ru ka (1452–1502) marked a turning point in his religious practice and showed the abrasive character that led him often into trouble with the people and the chieftains of the lands he visited in his wandering life. His non-conventional attitude, typical of the *smyon pa* tradition, and his interest in political affairs, not only religious activities, make his biographies rich in political and social detail, but cost him dearly, given that he died an untimely death by poison.

The episode I introduce here took place at rGyal rtse and has already been singled out for attention by Gene Smith in his Introduction to the biography of gTsang smyon written by his disciple rGod tshang ras pa sNa tshogs rang grol. This episode *gTsang smyon He ru ka'i rnam thar* (p.27 line 7–p.29 line 2) says:

“De ltar slob gnyer gyi dus su’ang nram pa skyed rims lha’i nga rgyal dang/ ngo bo chos nyid gtug ma ’ong gsal phyag chen po’i ngang las thugs g.yos pa med pas/ rgyal po dang/ btsun mo dang/ blon po sogs stobs dang bsod nams kyi dregs pa’i (p.28) nga rgyal can nams la phyag dang zhe sa sogs rkyang bsrings ste/ ’jigs pa med par seng ge lta bu’i tshul gyis slar co lo dang gzhad rgad du mdzang bas/ gnang ma rig pa nams kyis gdong ngar che ba tsam du ’dzin cing ya mtshan du byed do/ de dag gi dus cig gur brnams dgon pa rDo rje gdan bya ba na chos dbar mdzad cing gzhuks tshe/ tho rangs cig ’ja’ ’od kyi dbus na bcom ldan ’das ma rDo rje bdag med ma’i dkyil ’khor lha mo bcwo lnga shin du yin du yid ’ong ba gzigs te/ rang nyid dGes ba rdo rje’i ngar rgyul kyis lha mo so so la snyoms par zhugs pas’ lha mo re re la bde bai nram pa mi ’dra ba re re nyams su myong zhing lus ngag ying gsum zag med kyi bde bsar ro gsungs/

De nas skabs cag chos sder rGyang rtse nas sde pa dpon slon nams kyang phebs/ dge ’dun shin du tshogs pa che ba’i tshogs gral du thod phor dang rkang dung nams nas byon/ ja dang thug pa sogs ka lir gsol de la tsam pa dang mar thud btad pa’i skyom

la ’bul skyel byas/ rTse chen du byon/ bdag po Du si dang mjal/”; “The *grub thob chen po* went to Nyang stod. Despite the fact that it was not allowed to enter the great gate of chos sde dPal ’khor sde chen by horse, he went there and entered the *chos sde* riding his horse. [People] said: “Let’s pelt him with stones”. Although he was hit on the head by a stone as big as a handful of *bre zan* (“a measure of dough”), he was not hurt at all. (f.100a) He dismounted from the horse in front of the *gtsug lag khang*. He visited the *mchod rten bkra shis sgo mangs*. He scattered grains. Upon entering the *lha khang*, the *dkon gnyer* pushed him back and closed the *gtsug lag khang* door. [Thang stong rgyal po] told him: “This is nothing more than a mediocre omen. The closing of the *lha khang* door indicates that you will need to go wandering in another land, while in my case this is an excellent omen”. The *grub thob chen po* did not enter the house of laymen. He avoided their threshold. At that time, bdag po Rab brtan ’phags came to his rescue (*mi lag byas*) and requested him [to accept] his invitation to [be received at] the rGyang mkhar rtse rdzong palace. He left after tea was served [only] once. He miraculously went to a high location with a rock where there is a waterfall, and afterwards stayed in the meadow in front of the *rdzong*. He gave all the various kinds of offerings that he had received to the meditators of Ri khrod dGa’ ldan. He went to rTse chen and met bdag po Dus si”.

rkang dung gi krug cing gsol bas/ gral mdzes kyi dge 'dun rnams gzhang rgad du gyur tshe/ chos khirms pas mthong nas dge 'dun gyi tshogs gral du 'di 'dra byed pa ci yin zhes rgyug pa sdeg par rtsam pas/ 'o sdeg de zhog la nyon cig/ thod pa dang rkang gling dge 'dun gyi gral du khur mi chog pa mDo rGyud ga nas bshad/ khyod kyi bsgrub dang gsungs pas lan byed ma nus tshe/ 'on kyang khyod rang rtsod dang ngas bshad kyi gsungs pas/ kho na re khyod lung rigs kyi nga rgyal dang lo shes byed pa'i kha ya nga mi byed zer/ khos grwa tshang du phyin nas khyed kyi gwa pa 'di spyod pa nyes par 'dug pas/ 'byun dgos zhes slob dpon pas cung zad skyon pas rkyen byas de nas rje nyid kyi thugs la nga ni bla ma mkha' 'gro'i lung bstan bzhin thos bsam ni mthar phyin/ nga sgoms pas nyams su ma slangs na tshig rigs mi 'grol bas/ lbags shi'i kha bshad dam dPe' dkar (p.29) sgra tshad dang 'dra la/ thos bsam cig bul mchog tu 'dzin pa sbu ba rab tu rtsags pa'i 'phreng ba rir slom pa lta bu'i gang zag rnams la mig skyed bzhag ba dang/ bla ma'i bka' yang yod pas lho gnas mchog rTsa ri la sgom du 'gro ba'i dus su la bab//";

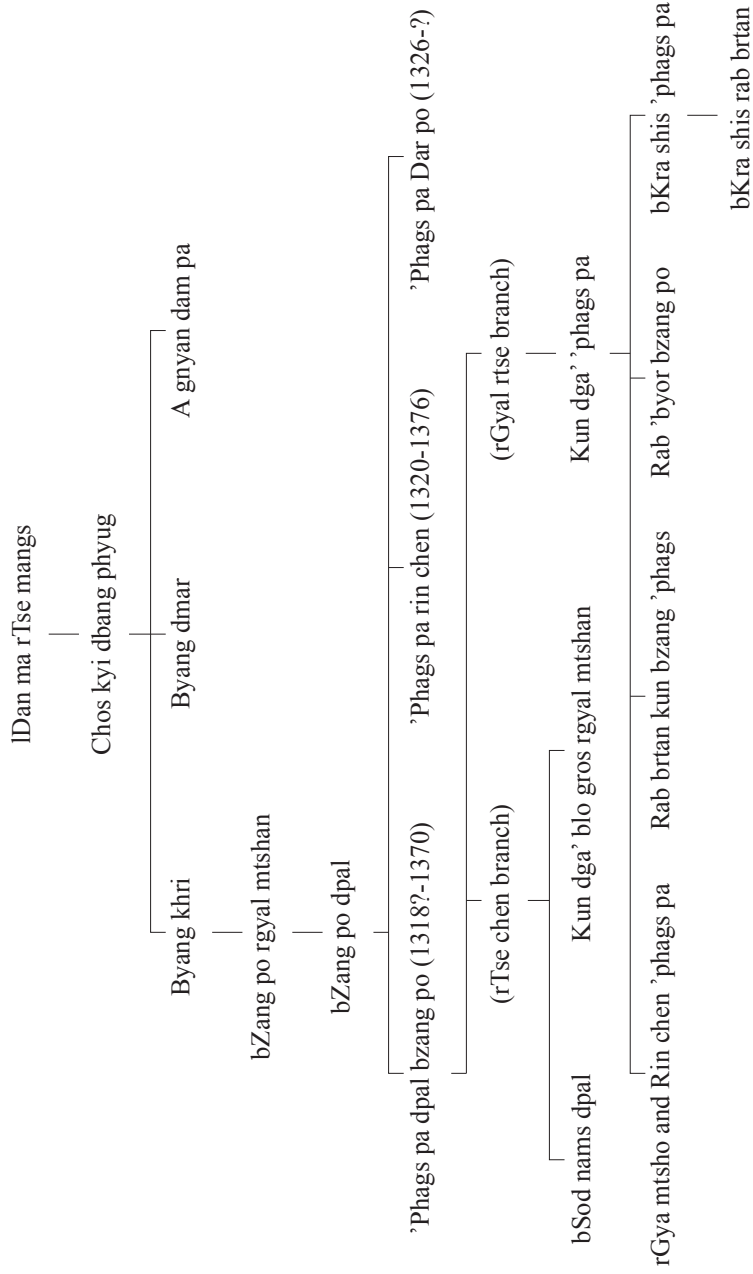
“Likewise, when the teachings were bestowed, [gTsang smyon He ru ka] developed a divine pride and his mind did not waver from within the sphere of the true nature of the innate light of *Phyag [rgya] chen [po]*. (p.28) He gave up acts of praise such as prostrating and using honorific language towards the king, the queen and the ministers, who were proud and arrogant of their power and merit. He began behaving incoherently (*gzhad rgad* sic for *bzhad gad*) like babbling (*co lo*) [and] in the manner of a lion without fear. Those who could not realise the true nature [of his behaviour] considered this [attitude] as great personal arrogance and felt peculiar about it. On one occasion, at dawn, when the people who stayed in tents were having a break from the teachings and were at the dgon pa rDo rje gdan (i.e. gNas rnying), he saw fifteen beautiful *lha mo*, composing the *dkyil 'khor* of bcom ldam 'das ma rDo rje bDag med ma, in the middle of a rainbow. He himself became as dGes ba rdo rje and united with each *lha mo*. He said that he realised different kinds of rapture with each of these *lha mo* and obtained unconditioned bliss in his body, speech and mind, three in all.

Then, on another occasion, the *sde pa* and the *dpon slon* (spelled so) came to the [dPal 'khor] *chos sde* from rGyang (spelled so) rtse. He went to the great assembly of monks with a skull bowl and a femur trumpet. While drinking tea and *thug pa* in the *ka li* (i.e. the skull), he added *tsam pa*, butter and *thud* (“soft cheese”), and ate it after stirring it with the femur trumpet. When the monks, sitting in rows broke out into laughter, the monk guardian noticed this. He asked [gTsang smyon explanations] about his behaviour in the presence of the monastic assembly and beat him with his stick at the same time. [gTsang smyon said]: “O, you hit me! Stop it”. [The monk guardian] retorted: “Listen to me. It is said in *mDo* and *rGyud* that *thod pa* and *rkang gling* cannot be brought to the assembly of monks”. He asked: “Can you prove it?”. Since he could not reply, [gTsang smyon] said: “If it is not possible [for you to prove it], you can debate with me and I will give you an answer”. [The monk guardian] said: “I will not debate with you, since you have such an ego and prejudice concerning knowledge”. After he went to the *grwa tshang*, [gTsang smyon] said: “Your monk has bad behaviour. He needs to be punished (*'byun* sic for *'jun*)”. The *slob dpon* slapped him a little, and he thought: “I am a person who has reached the ultimate learning and meditation [capacity] according to the prophecies of the *bla ma* and *mkha' 'gro ma*-s. Verbal systems and intellectual knowledge do not lead to liberation unless I can

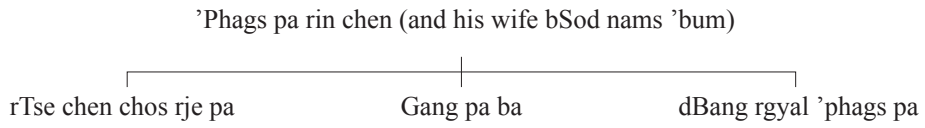
experience them in my meditation. It is like the boast of lBags shi (spelled so) and the grammar of dPe' (spelled so) dkar. (p.29) Considering that only learning is excellent, this is like boasting that a pile of beads is a mountain. This is a bad example left to humanity. I have been ordered [to do so] by the *bla ma*, so the time has come for me to go meditate at the excellent holy place rTsa (spelled so) ri in the south".

Hence gTsang smyon He ru ka's decision to become a *yogin* had its antecedents at rGyal rtse, where he was a monk. Despite the time he spent at the dPal 'khor chos sde, this sojourn did not shape his religious affiliation. On the contrary, although he leaned towards the bKa' brgyud pa, his belonging to the *smyon pa* tradition shows that his approach went beyond the positions of the official schools. The *sde pa* of rGyal rtse who faced his nonconformist outburst was bKra shis rab brtan, and the episode took place in iron hare 1471, just one year before he launched the phase that brought the dPal 'khor chos sde to completion.

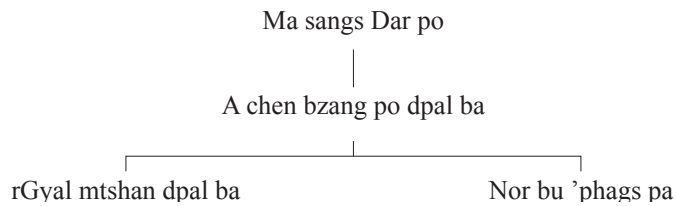
THE GENEALOGY OF THE MAIN LINE OF THE SHAR KHA PA
(ACCORDING TO RGYA BOD YIG TSHANG)



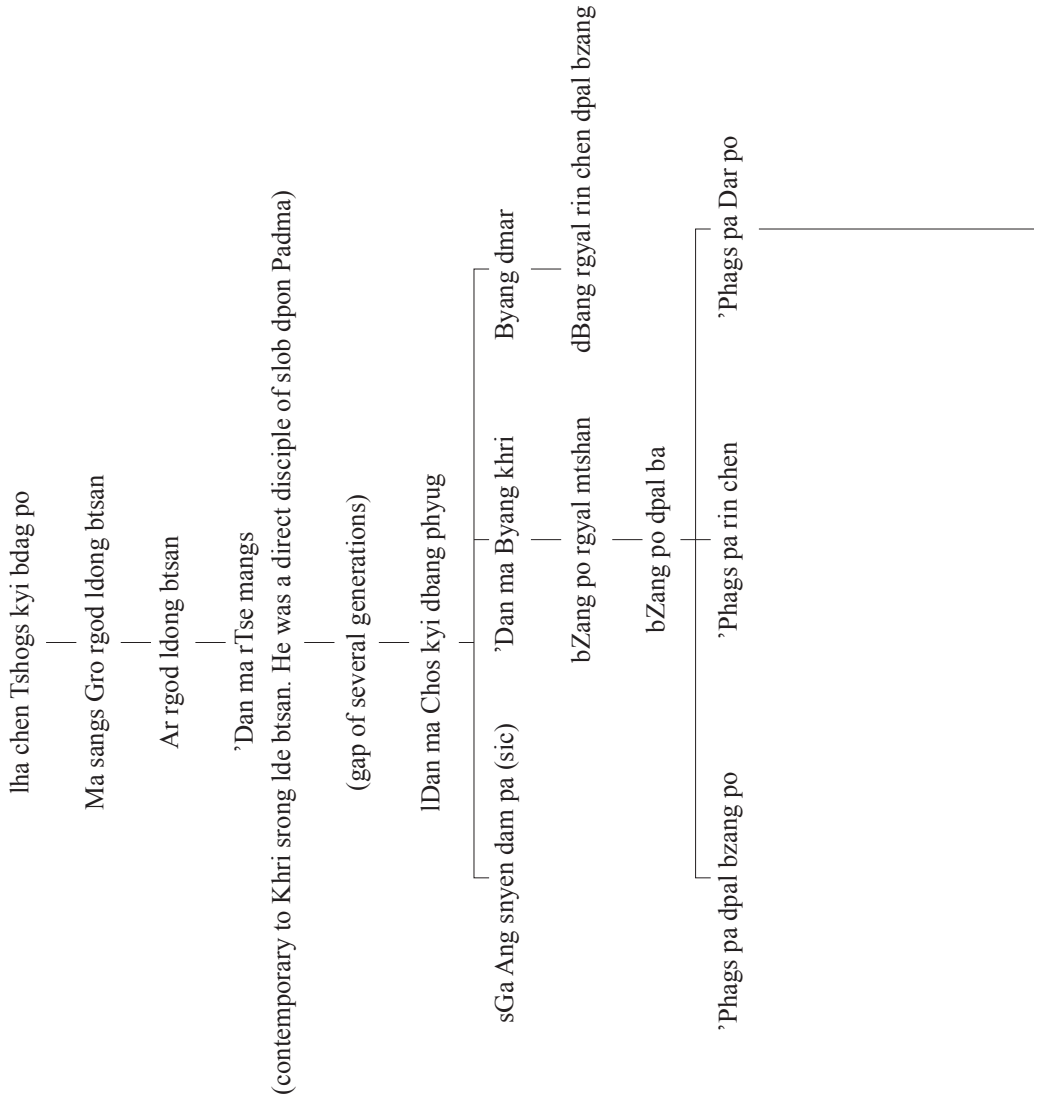
THE LINEAGE OF 'PHAGS PA RIN CHEN (1320–1376)

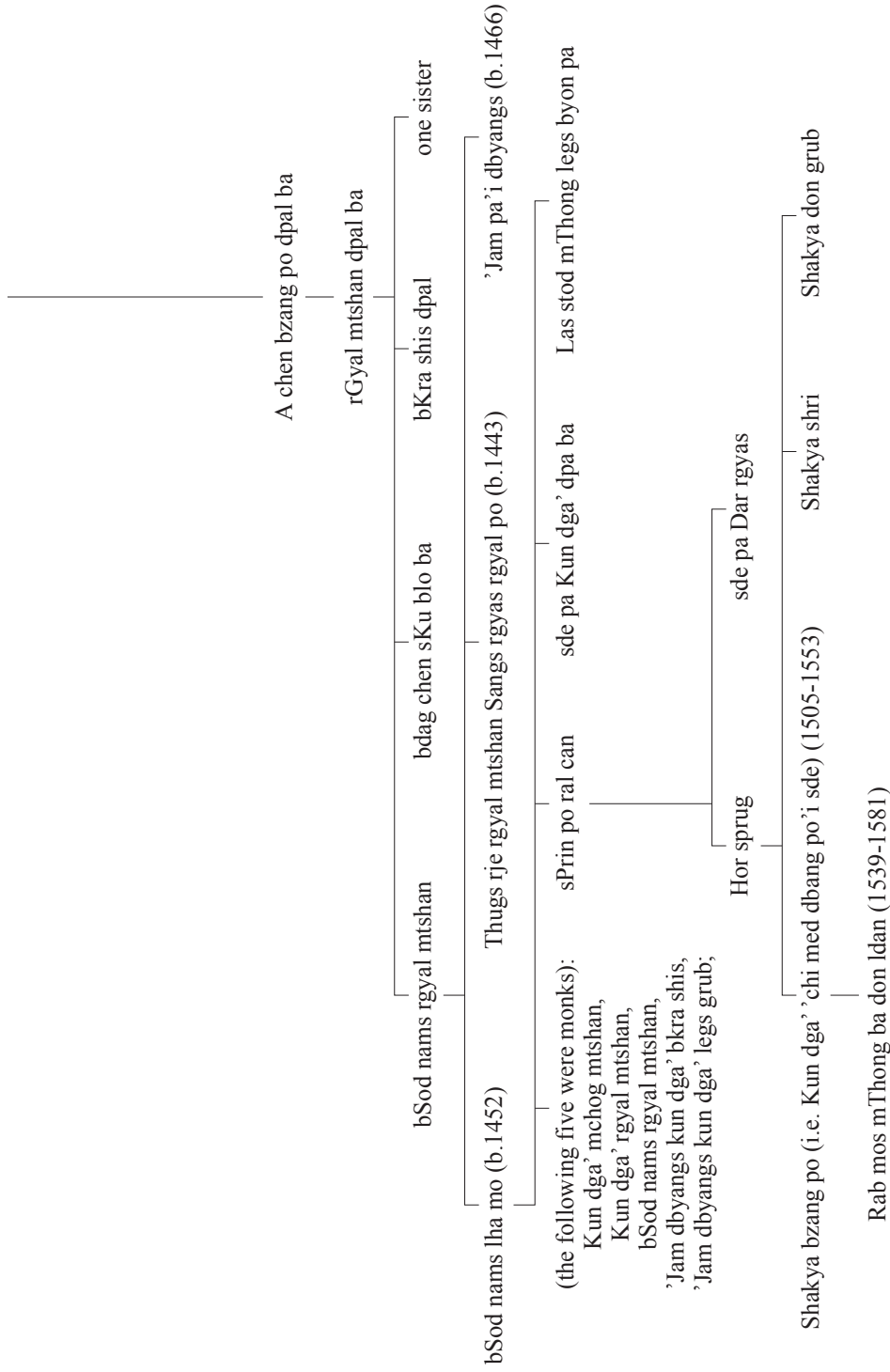


THE LINEAGE OF 'PHAGS PA DAR PO (1326–?)

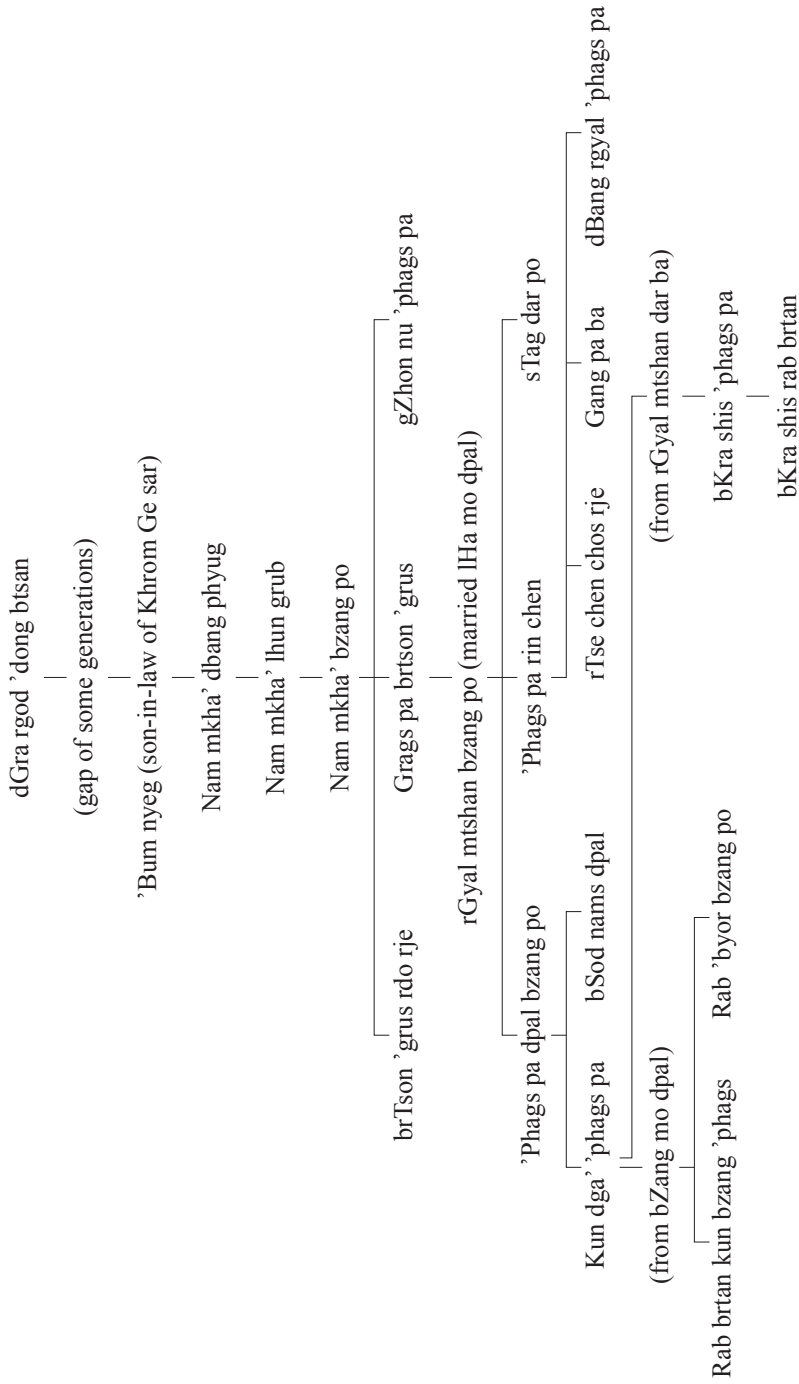


THE GENEALOGY OF THE SHAR KHA PA OF 'BRING MTSHAMs
(ACCORDING TO RGYA BOD YIG TSHANG)

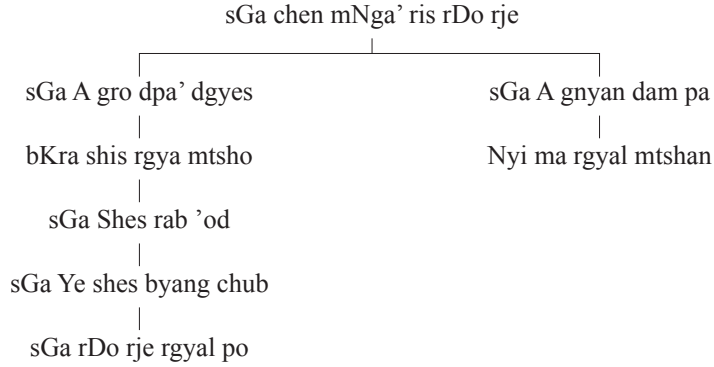




LINEAGE OF THE SHAR KHA PA ANCESTORS (ACCORDING TO RAB
BRTAN KUN BZANG 'PHAGS KYI RNAM THAR)



THE LINEAGE OF SGA A GNYAN DAM PA



ADDENDUM ONE

The ancient dPal 'khor chos sde *grwa tshang*-s

The *grwa tshang*-s of the dPal 'khor chos sde are now destroyed like the other monastic town's monuments that show different degrees of damage, except the *gtsug lag khang* and the sKu 'bum. However, literary records identify them.

The monastic colleges of rGyal rtse are enumerated as fifteen in the biography of the founder of the dPal 'khor chos sde (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.183 lines 4–19). The same source does not say when they were built but the construction of the *grwa tshang*-s cannot postdate earth pig 1479, the completion year of Rab brtan's biography. *Bai ser* mentions the disagreement between Rab brtan and mKhas grub rje on the issue of the construction of the dGe lugs pa *grwa tshang*-s (see above n.76). Reference to this strife helps to fix the establishment of a limited number of monastic colleges to not later than 1425–1426.

The *grwa tshang*-s according to *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* were:

- mNgon dga' grwa tshang, used by people from dKar gyen tsho and rGyan mkhar smad, as well as the bDe 'khor 'brog pa;
- gSer khang gong grwa tshang, frequented by monks from Gad tsho and Lung nag tsho;
- lHa khang grwa tshang, frequented by monks from rGyang ro stod and smad;
- dGa' ldan grwa tshang, frequented by monks from Gung sa, 'Bri tshams (spelled so) and bTsan nams tsho'i stod;
- dGe 'phel grwa tshang, frequented by monks from Nying ro stod and smad, sGo bzhi and the dGe rta 'brog pa;
- Zhi gnas grwa tshang, frequented by monks from lCang ra tsho and bTsan nams smad;
- Khang gsar grwa tshang, frequented by monks from gTsang po nang, 'Dus byung chu nub and Srang smad tsho;

- bDe ba can grwa tshang, frequented by monks from Ri nang tsho, sKyiid mkhar smad tsho and Chu phyogs;
- Grang med che grwa tshang, frequented by monks from Ma nag tsho, Shar phyogs gshung and Brung;
- bDe 'byor grwa tshang, frequented by monks from rGyal mkhar phu and the sTong sher 'brog pa;
- gSer khang 'og grwa tshang, frequented by monks from Nang srol tsho and La btsas 'og;
- Shar chen grwa tshang, frequented by monks from Sram dud rgya tsho;
- Dus 'khor byang chen grwa tshang, frequented by monks from brGya grong tsho;
- Gur grwa tshang, frequented by monks from sTag rtse tsho; and
- lHo grwa tshang, frequented by monks from Srad rgya mtsho stod, sPos sgang and Grang khang chen mo.

The religious affiliation of the various colleges is not given in Rab brtan's biography; one thus is deprived of important information concerning the schools to which the *grwa tshang*-s belonged at the time of construction of the dPal 'khor chos sde.

mTsho gling pa Sangs rgyas rgyal po (*gTsang Myang stod Shel dkar rGyal rtse khul gyi lo rgyus* p.7 line 17–p.8 line 13) identifies sixteen ancient *grwa tshang* of sPal 'khor chos sde as follows but the period during which these monastic records were kept is absent in his work:

“In Rin lding grwa tshang [belonging to] Bu (p.8) ston Rin chen grub pa's *dgon [pa]* there are 225 monks;

likewise, in Dus 'khor grwa tshang of the Bu lugs *dgon pa* there are 100 monks;

- in Shar chen grwa tshang there are fifty-five monks;
- in Chos skor grwa tshang there are 130 monks;
- in lHa'u grwa tshang there are thirty-five monks;
- in Gur pa grwa tshang, which is the biggest Sa skya [pa grwa tshang], there are 230 monks;
- in Khang gsar grwa tshang there are fifty monks;
- in bDe ba can grwa tshang there are 100 monks;
- in the dGe lugs [pa's] gZhis gnas grwa tshang there are 220 monks;
- in Legs grub grwa tshang there are eighty monks;
- in Grangs med che grwa tshang there are 250 monks;
- in mNgon dga' grwa tshang there are 100 monks;
- in lHa sgang grwa tshang there are fifty monks;
- in 'Debs sbyor grwa tshang there are 110 monks;
- in gSer gong grwa tshang there are eighty monks; and
- in gSer 'og grwa tshang there are 250 monks”.

Bai ser (p.244 line 23–p.247 line 10) enumerates seventeen *grwa tshang* inside the dPal 'khor chos sde enclosure during the time of sde srid Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho. Seven were the dGe lugs pa *grwa tshang*-s:

- Gyang ro lha khang;
- Nor bu dga' ldan (i.e. dGa' ldan *grwa tshang*);
- Legs grub *grwa tshang*;
- gSer khang gong;
- Zhig gnas *grwa tshang*;
- Grang mo che; and
- bDe 'byor *grwa tshang*.¹¹²

Bai ser completes its list without specifying the names of the *grwa tshang* that did not belong to the dGe lugs pa; it just enumerates them:

- four Sa skya pa *grwa tshang*;
- one Zhwa lu pa;
- four Dus 'khor ba; and
- one shared by the Sa skya pa and dGe lugs pa;
- for a total of seventeen.

ADDENDUM TWO

A showcase of 15th century scholasticism in the sKu 'bum (*Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* p.130 line 8–p.134 line 11)

Nowhere to my knowledge, not even inside Ra sa 'Phrul snang, an area of a temple has been dedicated to the systems, practices, traditions, lineages and the royalty of Tibet, side by side, as on the fourth floor of the sKu 'bum's *bang rim*. Religious schools and masters have contributed to Ra sa 'Phrul snang by giving the *phud* of their enterprise to the Jo khang. The *lha khang*-s that they occupied by introducing a function different from the original one—cells for the monks—are not a gallery, in the same sense as the sKu 'bum fourth floor, which establishes

112. According to this list, two dGe lugs pa *grwa tshang* (i.e. Gyang ro lha khang and Legs grub *grwa tshang*) did not exist in the late 15th century when *Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags kyi rnam thar* was completed.

the greatness of Tibetan culture as a single, extraordinary concept transferred onto the walls of its *lha khang*-s. Here is a resumé of their contents:

1. IN THE SOUTHEAST: SGRA SGYUR LHA KHANG
in the centre mkhan chen Zhi ba 'tsho, to his right slob dpon Padma, to his left Ka ma shi la; along with lo chen Rin chen bzang po; lo chen Blo ldan shes rab, pandi ta Shanti ghar bha, slob dpon Sangs rgyas gsang ba and Ka ba dPal brtsegs;
2. TO THE LATTER'S SOUTH: RIG 'DZIN LHA KHANG
in the centre the *gu ru gtso 'khor gsum*; gu ru gSang 'dus, the *gu ru mtshan brgyad*, rTa Phag zhal sbyor (rTa mgrin [and] rDo rje Phag mo in mystic union), mkhan chen Bo dhi swa tâ, chos rgyal Khri srong lde btsan, Thar lo [tza ba] Nyi ma rgyal mtshan and thugs sras Rin chen nam rgyal;
3. TO THE LATTER'S SOUTH: MKHAN RGYUD LHA KHANG:
in the centre pan (p.131) chen Shakya shri; mkhan chen Byang chub dpal, 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan, [Shakya] Thub pa surrounded by the lineage of the *so so thar pa'i sdom pa* with mkhan chen rDo rje dpal; the oral transmission lineage of 'Dul ba with dgra bcom pa Yon tan blo gros and the abbatial line of the dGe 'dun sgang pa;
4. IN THE SOUTHEAST: DBANG RGYAL LHA KHANG:
the *khro bo bcu, rigs lnga*, their *yum lnga*, Bu ston thams cad mkhyen pa and the *sgo ba bzhi*;
5. TO THE LATTER'S WEST: JO BO LHA KHANG:
in the centre Jo bo A ti sha, to his right Nag tsho lo tsa ba Tshul khriims rgyal ba, to his left 'Brom ston rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas; along with dge ba'i bshes gnyen Po to ba Rin chen gsal ba, the line of *dge ba'i bshes gnyen chen po*-s and Jo bo rje's teachers etc.;
6. TO THE LATTER'S WEST: MKHYEN RAB LHA KHANG:
in the centre thams cad mkhyen pa Bu ston Rin chen grub, to his right Thugs sras lo tsa ba, to his left the *sku zhang chos rje gtso 'khor gsum*, 'Jam dpal dbyangs Rin chen rgyal mtshan and grub chen U rgyan pa;
7. TO THE LATTER'S WEST: LAM 'BRAS LHA KHANG:
chos rje Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, rje btsun bSod nams rtse mo, chos rje Sa skya pandi ta, 'gro ba'i mgon po 'Phags pa, five of them, and rje btsun Grags pa rgyal mtshan, along with chos rje bSod nams rgyal mtshan;
8. TO THE LATTER'S WEST: BYANG SEMS DPA' LHA KHANG:
rgyal ba'i sras po Thogs med bZang po dpal, kun spang sems dpa' chen po Chos kyi rin chen, gangs chen mkhas pa'i dbang po Kun dga' dpal; 'Phags pa Thogs med surrounded by the *sdom rgyud* of the Byang sems-s, slob dpon Seng ge bzang po surrounded by the lineage holders of *Phar phyin* and *sByod 'jug*;

9. IN THE NORTH: ZHI BYED LHA KHANG:

[Pha] dam pa Sangs rgyas, 'gro ba'i mgon po dam pa Kun dga', Ma cig Lab kyi sgron ma, rDo rje gdan pa Nishka lam ka la, dPyal lo [tsa ba] Chos bzang surrounded by the lineages of gShed dmar, Phag mo, Dus 'khor, *Zhi byed* and so forth;

10. TO THE LATTER'S NORTH: BKA' BRGYUD LHA KHANG:

grub chen Ti lo pa, Nâ ro pa, Mar pa lo tsa, Mi la bZhad pa'i rdo rje, Dwags po Zla 'od gzhon nu, along with rje Phag mo gru pa chen mo and grub chen Gling ras pa;

11. TO THE LATTER'S EAST: RIGS LDAN LHA KHANG:

kun mkhyen chen po Shes rab rgyal mtshan, mkhan chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal, mkhan chen Nya dbon, chos rje dPal ldan legs pa, dKon mchog bzang po, bla ma Rong pa rDo rje rgyal mtshan, kun mkhyen 'Phags pa 'od and Thugs rje (p.134) brston 'grus;

12. TO THE LATTER'S EAST: CHOS RGYAL LHA KHANG:

chos kyi rgyal po chen po Srong btsan sgam po, Khri srong lde btsan, mnga' bdag Khri Ral pa can, Bal mo bza' Khri btsun, rGya mo bza' Kong jo, Thon mi sambho ta, mGar Stong btsan, rje gNya' khri btsan po, lha btsun Byang chub 'od, pho brang btsun pa Zhi ba 'od, 'Od srung and Yum brtan.

The conceptual background on sKu 'bum's fourth floor behind the choices of the religious systems and great personalities who had a major impact upon the doctrinal traditions of Tibet is two-fold. It reflects the everlasting historical scholasticism of the pre *bstan pa phyi dar* period and the one that translates the vision about these matters, typical of the 15th century when dPal 'khor chos sde was built.

- It is to the great translators of *bstan pa snga dar* and *phyi dar* that the gallery of Tibetan greats opens. In the same grouping, the presence of the Newar master Shanti ghar bha, who performed the consecration of bSam yas according to some sources, should be noted.
- Another religious classification of a distant past are the various manifestations of great masters of *bstan pa snga dar* such as Gu ru Padma along with religious and secular contemporaries like mkhan po Bo dhi sa twa and Khri srong lde btan seen here as a *yon bdag* of the Noble Religion.
- A third classification is the group of *chos rgyal*-s of Tibet, chosen for their contribution to Buddhism. 'Od srung and Yum brtan are added to them for reasons that escape my understanding, given their limited role for the Noble Religion.
- Most other *lha khang*-s celebrate the prominent schools which had a major part in the religious developments from *bstan pa phyi dar* onwards.
- The *lha khang* dedicated to the bestowal of the vows has Kha che pan chen in the centre as the outstanding propagator of monastic observance. No representative of the *sdom pa*-s of *phyi dar* is represented in the room, which shows a penchant to connect this *lha khang*

to the last phase of 'Dul ba practice related to the tradition of Shakya shri, reputed for the purity of his vows.

- A sign of cultural closeness to rGyal rtse is the inclusion of the dGe 'dun sgang pa, one of the four schools that continued the tradition of the Kashmiri master.
- Dominant religious schools get most of the space on the floor. Their choice is obvious in most cases, still it is an indicator of the views held at rGyal rtse.
- Jo bo rje and his bKa' gdam pa disciples are an inescapable presence, but the masters of sTod mNga' ris skor gsum associated with A ti sha are not included. Hence a stricter orthodox reading of his school is privileged.
- One *lha khang* is dedicated to Bu ston Rin chen grub and his tradition, given the importance of his system for the sKu 'bum, although the Zhwa lu pa have not been the most prominent school in the history of the plateau. A similar treatment is reserved to the Sa skya pa for reasons of doctrinal proximity to the dPal 'khor chos sde people.
- The *Zhi byed* masters receives an equal treatment as the other major schools, and definitely the rRigs ldan pa, owing to the centrality of the Dus 'khor system in the sKu 'bum and rGyal rtse monuments overall.
- The rNying ma pa are not assigned any *lha khang*.
- The masters of *bstan pa snga dar* have received a collocation on the sKu 'bum fourth floor in different chapels but their post-*bstan pa phyi dar* supremos did not find a place in the gallery of Tibetan masters.

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