

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

RNYING MA STUDIES: NARRATIVE AND HISTORY

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

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

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

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

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

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