

The Origins of the Padma gling pa Tradition in the Cloud Valley of Spiti

Namgyal Henry
(INALCO, Paris)

During the lifetime of *rig 'dzin* Padma gling pa (1450–1521), his tradition was mainly spread throughout the Himalayan regions corresponding to present-day Bhutan and Southern Tibet. After his death, the tradition continued to spread and develop, mainly thanks to three lineages of incarnations, *viz.*, the *Pad gling gsung sprul*, incarnations of Padma gling pa himself; the *Pad gling thugs sras*, incarnations stemming from Zla ba rgyal mtshan (1499–1586),¹ one of his sons and heart disciples; and the *sGang steng sprul sku*, incarnations of Padma gling pa's grandson, *rgyal sras* Padma phrin las (1564–1642).² The first two lineages of incarnations were based in Lha lung theg mchog rab rgyas gling in Southern Tibet (*Lho brag*),³ and gTam gzhing lhun grub chos gling in Bum thang,⁴ Bhutan. The sGang steng lineage was associated with the sGang steng monastery in Wangdi Potrang in Bhutan. These three mother monasteries and their branches were the main sites where the tradition was studied and practised.⁵

¹ Zla ba rgyal mtshan passed away in 1586, on the 17th day of the 9th month of the Metal Dog year of the 10th cycle. Henry 2016, Annex 3: 51-53.

² Even if these three lineages of incarnations had been clearly distinct for centuries, it appears that people in Bhutan have been speaking of Body (*sku*), Speech (*gsung*) and Mind (*thugs*) incarnations of Padma gling pa for a few decades. This type of classification, though very common, has nothing to do with Padma gling pa's tradition and is never found in older biographical sources such as the short biography of Padma gling pa and his subsequent incarnations, the *Pad gling 'khrungs rabs kyi rtogs brjod nyung gsal dad pa'i me tog* (ZTC DR1 vol. 14: 511-600) written by Kun bzang bstan pa'i nyi ma (1843–1891), the 8th *Pad gling gsung sprul*, and the complement to this work, the *Pad gling 'khrungs rabs rtogs brjod dad pa'i me tog gi kha skong mos pa'i ze'u 'bru* (ZTC DR1 vol. 14: 601-629), written by bDud 'joms rin po che, 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje (1903–1987). A brief discussion on this lineage classification issue can be found in my thesis (Henry 2016: 149-151).

³ Regarding this monastery and its branch (Ka tog si tu 1999: 241-253; Chos 'phel 2002: 135-137) and the relations between Bum thang and Southern Tibet, and this monastery and gTam gzhing in Bum thang *vide* Pommaret 2003.

⁴ Regarding this monastery *vide* Pommaret and Imaeda 1987.

⁵ Regarding the spread of Padma gling pa's *gter ma-s* *vide* Gayley 2007.

In 2003–2004, while I was studying at the sNga 'gyur bshad sgrub 'dod 'jo gling in Sundarjal, Nepal, some *sprul sku*-s and monks from Spiti and Kinnaur told me there were many Padma gling pa practitioners, including relatives of theirs, in certain villages in Kinnaur and in the Pin (*sPrin*) Valley of Spiti.⁶ I wondered where these lineages came from, who the teachers of the people who introduced the tradition in these valleys were, how much they had received of the Padma gling pa tradition, and when the tradition had been established in these places?

Even if he travelled a lot during his lifetime and went to Tibet twenty-four times, according to his autobiography, Padma gling pa never went to the Western Himalayas. He mainly transmitted his tradition in Bum thang and in Southern Tibet, gathering disciples from different areas there. The names of his main disciples are found at the end of his autobiography. Apart from a few disciples from mNga' ris,⁷ there were none who could have introduced this tradition in Spiti and Kinnaur. If Padma gling pa did not transmit his *gter ma* tradition in Spiti during his lifetime, perhaps one of his disciples or a later follower, a *sprul sku* or lineage holder, may have visited these areas and transmitted the tradition, however, there are few examples of dissemination of his *gter ma*-s in the Western Himalayas. A few decades after Padma gling pa's death, some of his *gter ma*-s, mainly the cycle(s) of Gu ru drag po,⁸ were spread in Dolpo. A few centuries later, some *gter ma*-s, chiefly the *Bla ma nor bu rgya mtsho*, were transmitted to 'Khrul zhig rin po che Ngag dbang tshe ring (1717–1794),⁹ a famous bKa' brgyud pa *bla ma* from Zangs dkar. There was no connection with Spiti in any of these sources.

A few months later, in 2004, I asked the present incarnation of *rgyal sras* Padma phrin las, the 9th *sGangs steng sprul sku* Kun bzang padma nam rgyal (b. 1955), if he had any information regarding the

⁶ I rarely came across the written form of the name of this valley in the Spiti manuscripts I found there. When it did occur, there were different spellings, but, since the spelling of many other Tibetan words was flawed or corrupted, rather than base myself on these for 'Pin', I would rather suggest the spelling *sPrin* as found in bDud 'joms rin po che's colophon of his arrangement of the *las byang* of the *Kun bzang dgongs 'dus* (DJSB vol. 6: 143–283). Local oral tradition has a few stories confirming that the name of the valley is Valley of Clouds.

⁷ PLRN: 497–498; 503–504. He also mentioned disciples from mNga' ris at the end of his life, in 1517 in op. cit.: 386; 391; 392; 394 and after his death op. cit.: 480–481; 492.

⁸ Among the *gter ma*-s discovered by Padma gling pa there are three cycles of Gu ru drag po and, in the four biographies, it's not always easy to identify which cycle(s) are being discussed. Snellgrove 2011: 97–99; 103–106; 112; 131; 140; 154; 199; 203; 210; 219; 222; 225–227; 250; 259; 261; 268; 270.

⁹ Ngag dbang tshe ring 1978; Henry 215–216. Special thanks to F. K. Ehrhard who kindly provided me with references for this religious figure and his biography.

dissemination of Padma gling pa's tradition in Spiti and Kinnaur. He mentioned that he was about to visit the families of some of his students in Kinnaur who are currently studying in his school (*bshad grwa*) in sGang steng.¹⁰ According to him the lineages of transmission in Kinnaur and Spiti were not linked to sGang steng but stemmed from Southern Tibet rather than from Bhutan.

The following year, in 2005, *Spyi ti sprul sku* g.Yo med rin po che (b. 1962),¹¹ confirmed to me the presence of a great number of Padma gling pa practitioners in the Pin Valley as well as the existence of some old Padma gling pa tradition manuscripts. In his opinion, the lineage could have come from Lha lung monastery in Southern Tibet. He recommended that I come to Spiti but I was not able to go for several years.

Eventually, in the summer of 2010, I went to Pin Valley. I searched for the manuscripts mentioned by *Spyi ti sprul sku*, but for few weeks I could not find them. In the meantime, I met with some *sprul sku-s*, monks and yogis (including the famous *bu chen-s*)¹² practising the tradition of the Bhutanese *gter ston*. Thanks to them, I was able to gather different elements of the oral tradition.

The Oral Tradition in the Valley

Three families in the Pin Valley hold collections of manuscripts and printed texts.¹³ The biggest and oldest collection belongs to the royal family of Pin Valley, the *No no-s* of Guling. Some of the oldest monks of the valley state that a predecessor of the *No no* family bought an entire shrine including the religious objects and texts from another family and that this collection would also include some of the original texts brought from Tibet by the yogis who established the Padma gling pa tradition in Spiti. Unfortunately, almost 70 percent of

¹⁰ Regarding Padma gling pa's tradition in Kinnaur *vide* Henry 281-312.

¹¹ *Spyi ti sprul sku*, g.Yo med rin po che, was recognized by bDud 'joms rin po che, 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje (1903–1987) as the incarnation of dGe slong rin po che, a disciple of Ye shes dpal ldan (dGe 'dun bsod nams 2013: 140-145; Henry 2016 Annex 3: 87-89). The latter was a disciple of Padma bde rgyal (a.k.a. Etaradza) a famous disciple of bDud 'joms gling pa, who, following a prophecy, set up in the Kailash area and spread the practice of the bDud 'joms khros ma (Henry 2016: 242-246).

¹² On the *bu chen-s* and their ritual, *vide* Roerich 1932; Dolfuss 2004; Sutherland 2011; Henry 2016: 198-212.

¹³ Although some families do have old manuscript, the biggest collections are found in the family of the *No no* of the village of Guling, the family of Thogs med phrin las (19th-20th century), the famous reformer of the ritual tradition in Tangti Ogma (*sTeng bsti 'og ma*), and the family of the great throne holder *me me* O rgyan tshe ring in the village of mKhar.

this collection has disappeared.¹⁴ Many of the texts were borrowed but never returned. Furthermore, a red box, the *yig sgam dmar po*, was stolen a few decades ago. According to the oldest monks, the box contained not only the family's official correspondence but also notes on family lineages and historical information regarding the religious history of the valley. The oldest documents on the religious history of the Pin Valley are thus now missing.

A few elements of oral tradition regarding the introduction of the Padma gling pa tradition into the Valley have survived this loss. Some are found in a *mol la (mol ba)*,¹⁵ the *Mol la rin chen phreng ba*,¹⁶ pronounced at the end of certain rituals. Others are only in the memory of the oldest monks. Most of this oral tradition has been recorded in a short text,¹⁷ written by *mkhan po* Tshe dbang rig 'dzin,¹⁸ and in a later one by *mkhan sprul* mTha' bral.¹⁹ Unfortunately, no one can say precisely when the tradition was established.

According to oral accounts, Byang chub bzang po, a religious figure from the village of Bar,²⁰ and already an accomplished practitioner,²¹ went to Tibet where he received the tradition. When he returned, he settled and established the gSer gling bde chen phug which is still visible near gSer gling village and not far from his

¹⁴ At first the collection filled three big boxes and a small red one. Now it fills only one large box.

¹⁵ In Spiti, the term used is *mol la* which would correspond to the Tibetan term *mol ba*. Regarding the usage of the *mol la-s* vide Jackson 1984; Tshe ring rgyal po 2012: 186-197; and particularly Jahoda (forthcoming) who has carried out a lot of research on *mol ba-s* in Spiti. (Jahoda, C. (forthcoming). "Imparting and (Re)Confirming Order to the World: Authoritative Speech Traditions and Socio-political Assemblies in Spiti, Upper Kinnaur, and Purang in the Past and Present", in *Authoritative Speech in the Himalayas*. Special issue of "Oral Traditions," vol. 30, edited by M. Lecomte-Tilouine and A. de Sales, pp. 319-344.

¹⁶ A few months after my first field research I had the opportunity to attend a presentation on the *mol la* given by Christian Jahoda in Paris. Thanks to him, I learnt that at least one other Spiti *mol la* goes by the same name. Here again, I would like to thank Jahoda for pointing out that *mol la* in Spiti mainly corresponded to the one reproduced in Tshe ring rgyal po 2012 and for providing me with the *mol la* section for my studies. I had witnessed only a few recitations of this *mol la* in the Cloud Valley and had never seen it in written form. I read the text carefully but could find no element of the history of the valley which led me to suspect that other local historical elements had been added in the valley itself. This was later confirmed by *Spyi ti sprul sku*.

¹⁷ Tshe dbang rig 'dzin n.d. reproduced in Henry 2016 Annex 1: 103-112.

¹⁸ He is the main teacher at the *bshad grwa* of the Kungri monastery.

¹⁹ 'Jigs med nram rgyal rdo rje 2014. His work is reproduced in Henry 2016 Annex 1: 114-119.

²⁰ The village this yogi originated from is known to the some of the oldest monks of the valley and to the present day *No no* family of Cloud Valley.

²¹ Henry 2016: 165.

birthplace.²² Tradition has it that, including himself, there was a group of thirteen happy *sngags pa-s* living there, practising and doing retreats. The hermitage remained in use by monks and *sngags pa-s* till the middle of the second half of the 20th century.²³

This group of practitioners was later given management of the *gtsug lag khang*,²⁴ the oldest temple in the Valley, which, as its name indicates, was the main temple there until the end of the 1980s.²⁵ Although most books on Spiti claim this old temple was founded by Padmasambhava, recent studies led by *mkhan po* Tshe dbang rig 'dzin and *Spyi ti sprul sku* place its foundation in the middle of the 14th century.²⁶

Again, according to oral tradition, when Byang chub bzang po and his fellow *sngags pa-s* obtained the control of this temple, they transformed it and installed statues, sacred texts and religious artefacts that they had brought from Tibet. It would have been around this time, in the 17th century, that the wall paintings were done. Around 1841, a Sikh force plundered the temple and set it on fire, damaging the murals to the point that they became virtually impossible to identify.²⁷ Now, thanks to French conservator Mélodie Bonnat, these paintings are slowly starting to be revealed. Their identification, which has been ongoing since 2010, will open up a part of the religious history of this small valley.²⁸

The List of Received Teachings

One day, *mkhan po* Tshe dbang rig 'dzin mentioned he had heard about the existence of the list of teachings received (*thob yig*) by Byang chub bzang po but had never found it.²⁹ Finding such a list would help to find who the teachers of this yogi were and what practices he received from them.

²² The hermitage is close to gSer gling village but also not far from Bar.

²³ The gSer gling hermitages are still visible on the left bank of the river near gSer gling village.

²⁴ On this temple, *vide* Henry 2016: 186-197.

²⁵ A map and views of this temple in the late 1970s can be seen in Khosla 1979: 96 map 23; 146; 147 and 148.

²⁶ These points will be explained in a further article on this temple.

²⁷ After the conquest of the Ladakh, the Sikhs annexed Kulu, and then, they sent a force to Spiti; *vide* Hutchison and Vogel 1933, vol. 2: 487.

²⁸ For more on the conservation work see Mélodie Bonnat's article in the present volume.

²⁹ Lists of received transmissions (hon.: *gsan yig*). On the different kinds of *thob yig-s* *vide* Henry 2016: 157, n. 507.

With the help of Ngag dbang tshe ring (b. 1982),³⁰ second son of the *No no* family of Guling, we tried to find the remnants of his family collection but, after a few days without any luck, his elder brother Padma rig 'dzin 'gya mtsho, the present *No no* of the valley, told us they could be in the Thugs rje chen po *lha khang*. After the destruction of the family building near the *gtsug lag khang*, it seems the remaining manuscripts were put in an iron box. We found the box under some statues in this temple dedicated to Padma gling pa's *gter ma*, *Thugs rje chen po mun sel sgron me*.³¹

The box, representing 30 percent of the family's original collection, contained many texts, mostly religious manuscripts. An enormous part of them were connected to the Padma gling pa tradition. I soon found a few texts that helped reveal a part of the origins of the tradition in the Pin Valley. I also found two volumes containing lists of received teachings, one belonging to Byang chub bzang po and another to someone called Padma bsam gtan. There was also a short text illustrating the yoga postures of the *Kun bzang dgongs 'dus* and a great number of the writings of the 3rd *Pad gling gsung sprul, kun mkhyen Tshul khriims rdo rje* (1598–1669). The manuscripts kept by the *No no* family of Guling offered clues to understanding the introduction of the tradition into the valley. With the help of *Spyi ti sprul sku* and *mkhan sprul mTha' bral* (b. 1970),³² I immediately started classifying the texts found in the iron box and making a catalogue of the different manuscripts. Other scholars such as *mkhan po Tshe dbang rig 'dzin* and monks such as *bla ma Byams pa dpal ldan*, who were also interested in these manuscripts, sometimes helped.³³

Who Were Their Teachers?

The *thob yig* volumes of Byang chub bzang po and Padma bsam gtan contain many different *thob yig*-s. Both practitioners received transmissions from the 3rd Padma gling pa, Tshul khriims rdo rje, who

³⁰ *No no btsun pa*, Ngag dbang tshe ring, entered Kungri monastery and studied at the *bshad grwa*. In 2012, he was enthroned by *Spyi ti sprul sku* as vajra master (*rdo rje slob dpon*) of the Monastery.

³¹ Ngag dbang tshe ring and I along with Padma rnam rgyal from the village of Bar and rNam rgyal from the village of rMud.

³² 'Jigs med rnam rgyal rdo rje also known as *mkhan sprul mTha' bral* was born in the village of rTsud (a.k.a. Upper Guling). Recognized by bDud 'joms rin po che as the incarnation of *bla ma mTha' bral* in 1974, he studied in Nepal and is now the main teacher at the *bshad grwa*, the sNga 'gyur bshad sgrub 'dod 'jo gling, founded in Sundarijal by mKhas btsun bzang po rin po che (1920–2009). He is one of the major *sprul sku*-s in the Pin Valley where he plays an important role when he is there. A short biography can be found in Henry 2016 Annex 3: 89-96.

³³ I would like to thank them all for their kind help.

was their main teacher. Byang chub bzang po, however, also received teachings from the grandson of Padma gling pa, *rgyal sras* Padma phrin las (1564–1642), the founder of sGang steng dgon pa, as well as from the 4th *Pad gling thugs sras*, bsTan 'dzin 'gyur med rdo rje (1641–c.1702).³⁴ All this contributes to establishing that our Spiti yogi lived in the 17th century.

Then, while working on the *thob yig*, and hoping to find further information, we decided to look carefully at the writings of the 3rd Padma gling pa. Specifically, in his autobiography *mkhan po* Tshe dbang rig 'dzin found mention of ascetics (*bya bral ba-s*) from Gar zha to whom he granted the Padma gling pa transmissions. Even if Gar zha refers to the Lahaul area, according to *mkhan po* Tshe dbang rig 'dzin this quote must be linked to our yogi from Spiti. I consequently based my further research on his theory. My further researches showed that *mkhan po* Tshe dbang rig 'dzin's intuition was accurate. I found other mentions of these ascetics from Gar zha in the manuscripts and compared the teachings received in the different *thob yig-s* and a few other manuscripts written by the 3rd Padma gling pa.

During the 17th century, some ascetics, such as the famous Rang rig ras pa and other religious figures, visited sacred places like Dril bu ri in the Gar zha area.³⁵ I suspected that Byang chub bzang po might have joined a group of ascetics from Gar zha and travelled to Southern Tibet where he met these great *sprul sku-s* of the Padma gling pa tradition. If he was one or the only ascetic from Spiti in a group of yogis from Gar zha, it might explain why there is no mention of Spiti in the 3rd Padma gling pa's autobiography. If Byang chub bzang po was the only one of these ascetics from the valley or, at any rate, the outstanding one in the group of ascetics who established gSer gling hermitage, this might explain why only his name has lasted down to the present.

What Byang chub bzang po and His Fellow Yogis Received from the Holders of the Padma gling pa's Tradition?

The Relationship with the First sGang steng sprul sku

Before receiving teachings from the 3rd Padma gling pa, Byang chub bzang po seems to have received some transmissions from Padma gling pa's grandson, Padma 'phrin las (1564–1642). In the latter's biography, written by the 3rd Padma gling pa, he says that in 1609,

³⁴ Regarding this date and the 5th *Pad gling thugs sras'* birthdate issue, *vide* Henry 2016, Annex 3 : 53-55.

³⁵ Ngawang Jinpa 2011.

"We and some zealous practitioners from Gar zha extensively received the heart drops of Padma gling pa and his previous [incarnations, Padma las 'brel rtsal and Klong chen pa]".³⁶

Three manuscripts may be linked to that transmission. (1) The second manuscript in Byang chub bzang po's volume is a short *thob yig* of the cycle of Rāhula (*Gza' bdud kyi sgrub skor*) discovered by Padma las 'brel rtsal.³⁷ In this *thob yig*, the receiver's name is not Byang chub bzang po but bKra shis tshe ring. Even though I first considered that the list belonged to someone else, further research in the *thob yig* concerning the Padma gling pa *gter ma*-s he received showed that in the very first transmission lineages he used the name bKra shis tshe ring but, in the lineages that followed, he used Byang chub bzang po. I thus conceived of the possibility that bKra shis tshe ring was a name he used as a youth while Byang chub bzang po was probably the religious name he used later.

Two other manuscripts in the collection suggest that, in his youth and perhaps along with his ascetic fellows, Byang chub bzang po was practicing *rtsa lung* and *rdzogs chen* according to the *Kun bzang dgongs pa kun 'dus*, one of the three *snying thig*-s revealed by Padma gling pa.³⁸ (2) The first manuscript is a *rtsa lung dpe'u ris* illustrating the 'khrul 'khor of this cycle. The manuscript's colophon asserts that it was corrected by Padma 'phrin las himself.³⁹ (3) The second is a *khrid yig*

³⁶ *bdag cag dang gar zha'i sgrub pa ba sogs don gnyer 'ga' la / pad gling snying tig gong 'og sogs kyi dbang lung mang po'i thang ma brdal / PL3NT: 12b* (Henry 2016 Annex 3: 167).

³⁷ PLRN: 26; Gu ru bkra shis 1990: 401.

³⁸ On this cycle *vide* Henry 2008: 49-110; Henry 2016: 136-141; ZTCDR1 vol. 4 and 15.

³⁹ This small manuscript in four folios offers a series of representations of each of the twenty-three chapters of the 'khrul 'khor of the *Kun bzang dgongs 'dus* cycle. In a later composition by the 5th *Pad gling thugs sras*, mChog grub dpal 'bar (1700/1701-1750) (Henry 2016 Annex 3: 54-58) and completed by the 6th *Pad gling gsung sprul*, Kun bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1763-1817) (Henry 2016 Annex 3: 33-36) six further chapters from another *tantra* are added to these twenty-three. Cf. Kun bzang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, *Kun bzang dgongs pa kun 'dus kyi gtum mo bde chen lam mchog gi gsal byed khrid yig zag med bde ba'i dga' ston*, in ZTCDR2 vol. 2 (*Wam*): 313-335. Even if there are manuscripts of this kind in Bhutan nowadays, this manuscript is the oldest representation I have ever seen. It is older than the representations of the *Kun bzang dgongs 'dus* cycle in the Klu khang which were painted few years later during the time of the 5th Dalai Lama, Blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682) Cf. BAKER 2000: 92-93. The palaeography of the manuscript is very close to that seen in the *thob yig*-s of Byang chub bzang po, but I am not able to certify that he is the manuscript's scribe of this *dpe'u ris*. *Vide* Anon., *Kun bzang dgongs pa kun 'dus las brtsa* (i.e. *rtsa*) *rlung gsang ba'i lde mi gi* (= *lde mig gi*) 'khrul 'khor gyi pe rigs (= *dpe'u ris*) *rnams*, fol. 4a, in Henry 2016, Annex 2: 201. Regarding the identification of the Klu khang wall paintings as illustrations of the *Kun bzang dgongs 'dus*'s cycle, Cf. Winkler Jacob 2002, "The *rdzogs chen* murals of the Klu khang in Lhasa", in *Religion and Secular Culture in Tibet*, Leiden: Brill, pp. 321-335.

concerning the *rdzogs chen* practices of the *Kun bzang dgongs 'dus* cycle,⁴⁰ composed by sNa tshog rang grol (15th–c. 1570),⁴¹ a direct disciple of Padma gling pa. This commentary is in Padma gling pa's collected works,⁴² but practitioners nowadays use another *khrid yig* written by gTer bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646–1714),⁴³ grandson of sNa tshogs rang grol's following incarnation, mDo sngags bstan 'dzin (1576–1628).⁴⁴ This text was composed at the request of the 4th Padma gling pa, Ngag dbang kun bzang rol pa'i rdo rje (1680–1723).⁴⁵ This *khrid yig* did therefore not exist at the time of Byang chub bzang po.

Links with the 3rd Padma gling pa

We lose track of Byang chub bzang po between 1609 and 1630. According to his lists it seems that, over a period starting from 1630 till the start of the 1660s and probably even as late as 1663,⁴⁶ Tshul khrim rdo rje granted him most of the transmissions he himself had received during his lifetime.⁴⁷ During this period Padma bsam gtan received various common transmissions along with him, particularly the complete tradition of Padma gling pa, Klong chen pa's writings and the *Seventeen Tantras* (*rgyud bcu bdun*).⁴⁸

⁴⁰ This manuscript was used along with those in the three collections mentioned earlier, by bDud 'joms rin po che during his compilation of the ZTCDR. One can still see orthographical corrections on them.

⁴¹ sNa tshogs rang grol's further incarnation, mDo snags bstan 'dzin, was twelve years old in 1582/1583 when he was enthroned by the second Padma gling pa, bsTan 'dzin grags pa (1536–1597) (Henry 2016 Annex 3: 7).

⁴² sNa tshogs rang grol, *Kun bzang dgongs pa kun 'dus kyi snying po don khrid gsal ba'i sgron me zhes man ngag nyams len snying po bsdus pa mkha' 'gro gsang tshig*, in ZTCDR1 vol. 15: 527–667.

⁴³ *Kun bzang dgongs pa kun 'dus kyi khrid yig snying po rab gsal*, in 'Gyur med rdo rje 1998, vol. 6: 274–308.

⁴⁴ *Kun bzang dgongs pa kun 'dus kyi khrid yig snying po rab gsal*, in 'Gyur med rdo rje 1998, vol. 6: 274–308.

⁴⁵ Henry 2016 Annex 3: 7.

⁴⁶ Henry 2016 Annex 3: 28–30.

⁴⁷ Byang chub bzang po received the *Byang gter* tradition from Tshul khrim rdo rje. According to his autobiography, this event took place in 1663. Another element suggests that he might have left in the years that followed since the manuscript of his autobiography kept in Spiti suddenly ends in the middle of the 1660's whereas the version found in Bhutan that Dorji Gyaltsen, who is working on Padma gling pa's tradition with Karma Phuntsho, communicated to me, is complete.

⁴⁸ It seems that they did not received it all since, for example, there is no mention of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* and various other transmission Tshul khrim rdo rje gave during his lifetime in their lists.

⁴⁹ An interesting version of the *Seventeen Tantras* kept in the *No no* collection was reproduced in Urgyan Dorji 1977.

The Padma gling pa Tradition

Tshul khirms rdo rje seems to have a great consideration for these ascetics from Gar zha to the extent that, in Padma phrin las's biography, Tshul khirms rdo rje speaks of them as "zealous" (*don gnyer ba*). In his autobiography in 1630, he says: "Again, back in Lho brag, like pouring the content of one vase into another,⁴⁹ I gave the empowerments (*dbang*) and reading authorisations (*lung*) of my own tradition⁵⁰ to some ascetics from Gar zha and so on".⁵¹ After a comparison with *gsan yig*-s of gTer bdag gling pa,⁵² and the 5th Dalai Lama (1617–1682),⁵³ it was clear that they did not receive less than these great religious figures of their time.⁵⁴

Byang chub bzang po and Padma bsam gtan kept a detailed list of the Padma gling pa tradition they received from him.⁵⁵ Their lists are so alike that not only the title⁵⁶ but also the spelling mistakes and abbreviations are similar. For a while I considered they had either copied their *thob yig*-s from a third person or that one of them might have served as a mother copy for the other, but my critical study of them has not clarified this point.⁵⁷

An examination of their *thob yig*-s reveals not only certain details of the various lineages converging on the 3rd Padma gling pa not found in later lists, but also offers an interesting glimpse of the Padma gling pa *gter ma* transmission at the time. It would appear that, at that stage, the lineage transmission of the two Tshe dpag med *gter ma*-s discovered by Padma gling pa kown as *Tshe khrid nor bu lam khyer* was not yet interrupted. The lineage of this cycle seems to have broken later on and the *gter ma* was then rediscovered by 'Jam dbyang mkhyen rtse dbang po (1820–1892) as 'close lineage' (*nye*

⁴⁹ In his autobiography Tshul khirms rdo rje uses this expression only for important religious figures.

⁵⁰ This refers to the Padma gling pa tradition.

⁵¹ *slar lho brag tu / gar zhag* [i.e. Gar zha] *gi bya bral ba sogs la rang lugs kyi bum pa gang byo'i dbang lung byas* / PL3NT: 13a (Henry 2016: Annex 3: 207).

⁵² *Thob yig rin chen 'byung gnas* in gTer bdag gling pa 1998, vol. 1: 1a-350a; vol. 2: 1a-321; vol. 3: 1a-42b.

⁵³ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgyal mtsho 1970–1971 and Ehrhard 2012.

⁵⁴ I first found mention of a *be'u bum* (regarding this type of text, Cuevas 2010) in the *gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama, which does not appear in the *thob yig*-s of the two ascetics. I would like to thank Dorji Gyaltsen who informed me that they had found a text by the same name in Bhutan, but also, according to him, that it contains mostly minor *gter ma*-s (*gter phran*). As the two yogis also received these teachings, it confirms the idea that they received the entire collection of Padma gling pa's *gter ma* or, at any rate, no less than what the Great Fifth had received.

⁵⁵ Some pages are missing from the Padma bsam gtan *thob yig*.

⁵⁶ *Rig 'dzin padma gling pa'i gter chos kyi thob yig smin grol rgya mtsho*.

⁵⁷ Henry 2016 Annex 4: 64-130.

brgyud).⁵⁸ At that time the transmission lineage of the reading authorizations (*lung*) of Padma gling pa's writings (*Pad gling bka' 'bum*) also still existed. In his own *gsan yig*, 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje mentions that by his time the lineage transmission had disappeared.⁵⁹

More interesting is that, many manuscripts in Padma bsam gtan's volume show that he was used to read and write the eleven types of *dākinī* letters (*mkha' 'gro brda yig*) used in the Padma gling pa tradition and that he was especially an expert of the *ze chung* alphabet.⁶⁰

The Other Transmissions Received by Byang chub bzang po and Padma bsam gtan

Byang chub bzang po and Padma bsam gtan seem to have been in contact with Tshul khrims rdo rje disciples such as Bon lung chos rje (17th c.).⁶¹ A third mention of the ascetics from Gar zha is in the first manuscript in Byang chub bzang po's volume, which contains a chant of realization⁶² that Tshul khrims rdo rje composed for them and Bon lung chos rje at Zab bu lung,⁶³ probably when he went there in 1631.⁶⁴

Together the yogis received the *Seventeen Tantras* (*rgyud bcu bdun*) as well as most of Klong chen pa's compilations and works including the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig*, the *Seven Treasuries* (*Mdzod bdun*), some of his commentaries gathered in the *Snying thig ya bzhi* such as the *Zab mo yang tig* and *Bla ma yang tig*. Since Tshul khrims rdo rje transmitted these texts a few times throughout his life, it's not easy to ascertain when he granted them—especially the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig* and *Seventeen Tantras*—to the two ascetics. Tshul khrims rdo rje's autobiography informs us that he received some of them such as the *Mdzod bdun* from Padma phrin las between 1618 and 1623.⁶⁵ Even if, in

⁵⁸ 'Jam dbyang mkhyen rtse dbang po passed that transmission to a disciple of the 8th Padma gling pa Nges don bstan pa'i nyi ma (1843–1891): the 8th rBa kha *sprul sku*, Rig 'dzin kham s gum yong grol (19th–20th c.) who later conferred it to other Padma gling pa's lineage holders (Henry 2016 Annex 3: 77–81).

⁵⁹ DJSB vol. 18: 136.

⁶⁰ Henry 2016: 167–170.

⁶¹ This religious figure seems to be Bon lung pa gar dbang tshul khrims rgyal mtshan, one of Tshul khrims rdo rje's disciples.

⁶² The three folios manuscript was the first in Byang chub bzang po's volume of *thob yig*. PL3NT: 3b (Henry 2016 Annex 3: 226–228).

⁶³ Zab bu lung is a rNying ma pa monastery in the rNam gling district, founded by *bla ma* Shākya bzang po (15th c.), a close disciple of Padma gling pa, who's name appears many times in PLRN, mainly when he travelled to Tibet.

⁶⁴ PL3NT: 14a (Henry 2016, Annex 3: 207).

⁶⁵ In his autobiography, he records receiving the transmission of the *Seventeen Tantras* from Padma 'phrin las in 1613 at sGang steng dgon pa but never mentions transmitting them.

1636, Tshul khrim rdo rje transmitted many *gter ma* cycles of the Padma gling pa tradition as well as other texts like the *Bla ma yang tig* in Southern Tibet,⁶⁶ the two ascetics could also have received these transmissions between 1636 and 1641 when he was invited by Phrin las lhun grub (1611–1662) to Byang chub gling on his way back from a pilgrimage to Lha sa and bSam yas.⁶⁷

Transmissions Received by Byang chub bzang po Alone

Byang chub bzang po's volume contains a few more lists, though some are damaged and incomplete. Due to their bad shape, I have not been able to explore and utilize them totally for the moment⁶⁸ and so will present just a few elements here.

Byang chub bzang po received many other *rdzogs chen* teachings, the *Dri med bzhags rgyud* and the means of achievement (*sgrub thabs*) for Vimalamitra. Since Tshul khrim rdo rje was practicing it for three months in 1631,⁶⁹ this transmission would have taken place only after that retreat.

In the longest *thob yig*, it is mentioned that Byang chub bzang po received a large part of the cycle of the Northern *gter ma*-s (*Byang gter*).⁷⁰ I first supposed he may have received it between 1631 and 1635 while Tshul khrim rdo rje was giving a large series of Southern and Northern *gter ma*-s (*Lho gter*; *Byang gter*) to his master and disciple gZhan phan rdo rje (1594–1654).⁷¹ This is chronologically feasible, but since this *thob yig* seems to follow a kind of chronology and also includes certain transmissions given by the 4th Pad gling thugs sras, bTan 'dzin 'gyur med rdo rje (1641–c. 1702), as well as various other transmissions mentioned in both the autobiography and the list, for the moment I would rather place this transmission in 1663.⁷²

A short section of this *thob yig*, also reproduced in another folio, indicates that Tshul khrim rdo rje transmitted the *Bka' thang gser phreng*, the biography of Padmasambhava revealed by Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396), and the *Five Dharmas of Maitreya* (*Byams chos sde lnga*) to Byang chub bzang po. According to Tshul khrim rdo rje's autobiography, this event might have taken place during the winter

⁶⁶ PL3NT: 17b.

⁶⁷ PL3NT: 18a.

⁶⁸ My ongoing research on these damaged documents will offer more information regarding Byang chub bzang po's religious training. It will probably help discover further dates of transmission.

⁶⁹ PL3NT: 13a.

⁷⁰ Some manuscript volumes of the *Byang gter* are still in the *No no* family collection.

⁷¹ PL3NT: 16a.

⁷² PL3NT: 25b.

of 1653–1654.⁷³

His Relation with the 4th Pad gling thugs sras

According to his *thob yig*-s, Byang chub bzang po received several transmissions from the 4th Pad gling thugs sras bsTan 'dzin 'gyur med rdo rje. As we lack biographical information regarding the transmission he gave, it's not possible to date them.⁷⁴ To Byang chub bzang po he transmitted the biography of Vairocana: *Bai ro'i 'dra 'bag*.⁷⁵ Gu ru chos dbang's *Eight Transmitted Precepts* (*Bka' brgyad gsang ba yongs rdzogs*), the *Guhyagarbatantra* (*Rgyud gsang ba snying po*) and two biographies of Gu ru rin po che, the *Padma bka' thang* revealed by O rgyan gling pa and the *O rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyi 'khrungs rabs sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung mun sel sgron me* revealed by Padma gling pa.⁷⁶

Conclusion

Thanks to the manuscripts of the *No no* family of Guling, the oral tradition and this preliminary study, we know that the tradition of Padma gling pa was established in the Pin Valley by a certain bkra shis tshe ring, born at the end of the 16th century, and who later became known by his religious name Byang chub bzang po. We also now know the identity of one of his fellow ascetics, Padma bsam gtan, who set up with him in the hermitage of gSer gling. Although both received the entire tradition of Padma gling pa, the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig* as well as Klong chen pa's writings from Tshul khriims rdo rje, Byang chub bzang po received many more transmissions from Padma 'phrin las from at least 1609. From 1630 to 1663, or even slightly later, he received most of what Tshul khriims rdo rje himself had received during his lifetime, mainly Southern (*Lho gter*) but also

⁷³ PL3NT: 25b.

⁷⁴ Even if Tshul khriims rdo rje does provide some information in his autobiography, there is no mention of the transmission given by bsTan 'dzin 'gyur med rdo rje. Some biographical information is also available *vide* Gu ru bkra shis 1990: 657-658; Henry 2016 Annex 3: 53-54.

⁷⁵ There are different versions of Vairocana's biography. A manuscript copy held by the *No no* family is currently being studied and compared with others by *bla ma* bsTan 'dzin bsam 'phel (b. 1961).

⁷⁶ This *bka' thang* raised some criticism from the dGe lugs pa-s because of certain prophecies it contains. On the polemic surrounding this *bka' thang* *vide* Blondeau 1987. The lineage of reading authorizations is very different from those for all other Padma gling pa *gter ma*-s. An interesting manuscript copy of this *bka' thang* is held by the *No no* family of Guling. The text was borrowed from the village of gSum rwa (in Upper Kinnaur) and reproduced by U rgyan rdo rje *in facsimile* together with the biography of Zla ba rgyal mtshan (Urgyan Dorji 1978).

various northern *gter ma-s* (*Byang gter*). During Byang chub bzang po's later years he also received a few transmissions from the 4th Padma gling thugs sras.

As it is not possible for the moment to date all these transmissions, it is also not easy to identify periods when he was in retreat and when he was in Spiti. Therefore, we cannot, precisely date the foundation of the gSer gling hermitage or the conversion of the *gtsug lag khang* but we can at least estimate that these events might have taken place between 1609 and 1663.

The wall paintings of the *gtsug lag khang* represent not only the *yi dam-s* of the Padma gling pa tradition but also many religious figures. Thanks to French conservator Mélodie Bonnat who has been leading the conservation program in this temple since 2012, these figures will soon be readable and, hopefully, we will be able us to identify them and learn more about this temple and the establishment of the Padma gling pa tradition in the Valley.

Abbreviations

DJSB: Collected works of bDud 'joms rin po che

PLRN: Padma gling pa's autobiography

PL3NT: biography of the 3rd Padma gling pa

ZTCDR1: Padma gling pa's collected works: *Zab gter chos mdzod rin po che*

ZTCDR2: Two additional volumes for the three-year retreat.

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