

## A History of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals

Stéphane Arguillère  
(Inalco – IFRAE)

*The present article is a slightly enriched English version of a paper originally published in French in 2018 under the title: "Histoire des manuels de pratique du dGongs pa zang thal," in the n° 43 (Etudes rDzogs chen – Volume 1) of the Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines (pp. 196-255).*

**I**n the course of the very long work that led to the publication (2016) of my French translation of the practice manual for the *dGongs pa zang thal* composed by *sPrul sku Tshul khrim bzang po* or *sPrul sku Tshul lo* (1884–1957),<sup>1</sup> I had the opportunity to ask myself many questions about the way in which was written this vast text, which is commonly (and justly, as we will see) considered the most substantial *khrid yig* of this cycle.

In the footnotes of *Le Manuel de la Transparution immédiate*, one finds not only the identification of most of the quoted or paraphrased texts (notably those of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, the seventeen *tantras* or the *Klong gsal*),<sup>2</sup> but also the explanation of what could be called the hidden structure of the text—the way in which the author uses *Klong chen pa* (1308–1364)'s great *mKha' 'gro yang tig* practice manual, the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*—never cited in the work itself—as a framework and as a link between all the elements of the *dGongs pa zang thal* which he combines, when the *khrid yigs* included in the *gter chos* are not sufficient for this purpose.

However, in *Le Manuel de la Transparution immédiate*, I have completely left aside one of the possible fields of interpretation: that of *sPrul sku Tshul lo's* relationship to the literature of practice manuals written between the time of *Rig 'dzin rGod ldem* and his own.

I confess that I have found in this literature very few answers to the perplexities that reading *Tshul lo's Khrid yig skal bzang re skong*—and the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself—had inspired in me over the years. But,

---

<sup>1</sup> Arguillère 2016: Tülku Tsullo, *Manuel de la transparution immédiate*, Cerf, Paris, Nov. 2016.

<sup>2</sup> The work had already been largely completed by Tulku Thondup, in an unpublished (2001) English translation: *Boundless Vision by Tulku Tsultrim Zangpo (Tulku Tsulo)—A Byangter Manual on Dzogchen Training. An Outline Commentary on the Boundless Vision of Universal Goodness*. However, Tulku Thondup has not noted the ubiquitous underground presence of *Klong chen pa's Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*.

as is often the case, the researcher, who does not find what he is looking for, finds instead many things he did not expect.

It is in any case a first sketch of the literary history of the *dGongs pa zang thal* that I want to propose in this article—a literary history, in the sense that I have been interested here in the transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal* only to the extent that it allows one to situate its *khrid yigs*, their authors and the relationships that link them to one another. In other words, I made only a quite superficial use of biographical sources and, given the abundance of material (of which I have tried to list the most important), it must be said that I am only laying down here the first steps in the history of the *dGongs pa zang thal* between its *invention* and the present day.

### The *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals

K. Turpeinen (2015: p. 161 *ff.*) has identified five manuals for the practice of the *dGongs pa zang thal*; I have taken them from her repertoire of “commentaries,” which also includes a list of exegetical texts on the famous “Samantabhadra prayer” of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Here they are, in the chronological order reconstructed here:

1. Śākya rgyal mtshan, *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed*;
2. bKra shis rgya mtsho, *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdu pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*;
3. Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol, *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam chen po*;
4. Kaḥ tog Tshe dbang nor bu, *rDzogs chen kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi khrid kyi 'chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo*;
5. sPrul sku Tshul khriims bzang po, *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi dgongs don phyogs gcig tu bkod pa khrid yig skal bzang re skongs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan*.

To this list, I have to add, to stick to what I found at this stage :

(a) The *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig chos dbyings lam bzang of Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol*, with its direct source:

(b) Padma phrin las' *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris*,<sup>3</sup> which proceeds:

<sup>3</sup> This is in fact the most complete practice manual of *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, even if presents itself as something else (as we will see).

- (c) From a text by Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol: the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun rab gsal*, which apparently depends in turn on the:
- (d) *Yang tig gces sgron gyi khrid yig* of 'Gyur med rdo rje (gTer bdag gling pa), which comments on:
- (e) A text from Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos*, the *Thugs sgrub snying po blang ba'i phyir yang tig gces pa'i sgron me smar khrid mngon sum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*.
6. There is also a very detailed commentary by *sPrul sku* Tshul lo on the *gZer lnga*, the *Byang gter sngon 'gro rin po che gnad kyi gzer lnga zhes bya ba tshig don legs par ston pa'i rin po che'i them skas kun bzang myur lam* (in the new edition of his complete works: vol. XI, pp. 219-365);
  7. And above all a commentary by the same author on the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, the *Rig 'dzin gter ston rnam gnyis kyi gter byon phag mo zab rgya'i dmigs khrid nyung ngur bkod pa gsang khrid gsal ba'i lde mig* (in the new edition of his complete works: vol. I, pp. 219-282).<sup>4</sup>

There are also instructions for practice in his commentary on the Samantabhadra prayer, the *Byang gter dgongs pa zang thal gyi rgyud chen las byung ba'i kun bzang smon lam gyi rnam bshad kun bzang nye lam 'od snang gsal ba'i sgron me* (in the new edition of his complete works: vol. I, pp. 283-282-328). But it would be the object of another article to study the history of the commentaries of *Kun bzang smon lam*. Rightly or wrongly, I have left aside this entire corpus—even more abundant in reality than it appears in the review given by K. Turpeinen.<sup>5</sup> There would be ample material to be exploited here, in addition to what has been learned in this article, for a literary history of the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

---

<sup>4</sup> The original (French) version of this paper was written before the large collection *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* (2015) became available to me. Still, the situation is not basically changed, except for new practice manuals about the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*. One could be surprised that I include this text in the range of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, while I am very reluctant to do so for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Actually, while the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* grew, with bsTan gnyis gling pa's revelations (see: Achard 2004), to the proportions of a wide, complete, autonomous cycle, its core is a section of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, and it can be regarded as its "inner yoga" (*rtsa rlung*) part of this rDzogs chen cycle. I intend to focus more on the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* later on, as it can be regarded as the most exemplary case of a "Byang gter cycle" revealed by an otherwise "non-Byang gter discoverer", which is extremely interesting to try and define the perimeter of what is Byang gter and what is not.

<sup>5</sup> See Karl Brunnhölz 2018: *A Lullaby to Awaken the Heart—The Aspiration Prayer of Samantabhadra and its Tibetan Commentaries*, which includes a study and translation of three of those commentaries, including that of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo.

### Methodological remarks

Generally speaking, it would be an excellent method, in order to achieve a true understanding of the history of Tibetan thought, to follow, over the centuries, commentaries on the same text. This is a project I already had in mind around 1995, rather about Tibetan scholastic philosophy; circumstances have prevented me from implementing it since then—but it is undertakings of this kind that I propose to mainly devote the time I still have available.

Indeed, nothing is more revealing of the evolution of a thought—especially when this thought has a strong inclination towards exegesis—than the progressive shifting of the interest from one point to another in the same text, or the way in which it is contextualised (put in relation to other corpora), etc.<sup>6</sup>

The present research is in line with both my previous work on the history of Tibetan (philosophical) thought and the field opened up by Jean-Luc Achard's work on the practice instructions of rDzogs chen, considered from a historical and philological point of view.<sup>7</sup>

It could be objected that the *khrid yig* literature on the *dGongs pa zang thal* would not be a good witness of the history of Tibetan thought, given the technical and specialised nature of the “rDzogs chen practice manual” genre. But this objection stems from both an ignorance of the subject and a misconception of cultural history.

Ignorance of the subject matter, because rDzogs chen manuals are not a poor genre or a more stereotyped one than any other: certainly is there a lot of repetition from one text to another; but, after all, the same is true in any other genre of Tibetan didactic prose (as in our medieval religious or philosophical literature, for that matter). Developments are always discreet, never openly claimed; but a slight change of interpretation on what appears to the lay reader as a point of detail can lead to a rather profound reorientation of a whole system.<sup>8</sup>

A misconception of cultural history, I said: one that would fancy the whole field of a people's intellectual production to be governed by great homogenous and one-sided movements, great *turning points in civilisation*, as if one were to be able to spot the same tendencies at work throughout the whole range of this field, from commentaries on the Madhyamaka to treatises on medicine or astrology, *via* tantric exegesis

<sup>6</sup> Gene Smith, in his day, had that in mind and it was in that spirit that in the late 1990s he sent me a DVD compiled by TBRC of Tibetan commentaries on the *Uttara-tantra-sāstra*.

<sup>7</sup> Achard 1992, 1995, 1999, to refer only to what had a direct influence on the early stages of my long work on *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's manual.

<sup>8</sup> On this idea and for a set of methodological considerations on how to study the history of thought in Tibet, see e.g. the afterword in Arguillère 2004.

and manuals of meditative practice.

I for one do not tend towards any great overly unifying synthesis—even if we should not exclude, as a matter of principle, in the name of an inopportune methodological nominalism, any possibility of this kind. All the more so since Tibet has been rich in polygraphs extending their activity to a good part of the diverse registers of Tibetan culture in the broadest sense. *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, for example, remains the same man whether he writes on Madhyamaka or on the *dGongs pa zang thal*: besides, the two spheres sometimes meet in him, notably in a very remarkable writing, the *Kun bzang dgongs rgyan*, of which I have said a few words elsewhere:<sup>9</sup> *sPrul sku* Tshul lo certainly conceived it as a sort of appendix to his writings on the *dGongs pa zang thal* (as its title indicates), even if, regarding its form, it is rather a sort of theoretical text of general scope, aiming at philosophically clarifying what happens during the “confrontation” or “pointing out” (*ngo sprod*) and afterwards when one “preserves Intelligence” (*rig pa skyong ba*), in terms of the becoming of the ordinary mind (*sems*) and its possible sublimation into Intelligence (*rig pa*). This text does not cite the literature of the *dGongs pa zang thal* or any other specific cycle of practice and does not seem to be paraphrasing it either.

Be it as it may, this small treaty will not be discussed in this article. Similarly, I will not study separately *sPrul sku* Tshul lo’s commentaries on the *gZer lnga* and on the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*—the former because it does not contribute much to what interests us (the evolution of the way of commenting on the *dGongs pa zang thal*), being simply a very thorough literal commentary on the “extraordinary preliminary practices” (*thun mong ma yin pa’i sngon ’gro*);<sup>10</sup> the second, because at this stage, I have not solved a thorny problem—namely: why are the practices corresponding to the first three of the five consecrations (*dbang*) of the *dGongs pa zang thal* never included as steps that should be inserted, say, between the “extraordinary preliminary practices” and the specific rDzogs chen preliminary practices?

### **The architecture of the rDzogs chen manuals and the absence of the tantric instructions**

This question is not gratuitous. In the autumn of 1992, in Nepal, I met the Lama of Maratika, Ngag dbang chos ’phel rgya mtsho (1922-

<sup>9</sup> Arguillère 2016: p. 479-482; see also index, p. 468, for other occurrences.

<sup>10</sup> It should be noted that calling this set of practices (from refuge to *guru-yoga*) “non-ordinary preliminary practices” seems to be a quite late usage, that is at least not yet fixed, e.g., even at the time of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669).

1996).<sup>11</sup> At the time of our first meeting, I had in my hand *sPrul sku Tshul lo's Khrid yig skal bzang re skong*, carefully packed in its *dpe ras*, because I was immersed in reading this manual that Chhimed Rigdzin Rinpoche ('Khor gdong gter sprul, 1922–2002) had introduced me to a few months earlier. The Lama of Maratika, whose curiosity had undoubtedly been piqued by this spectacle of a young Westerner respectfully carrying a Tibetan text, asked me what it was; when I replied that it was apparently the widest and most detailed of all the manuals for the practice of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, he immediately told me that this rDzogs chen cycle of the Northern Treasures had been his main practice during his long years of retreat in various hermitages; he took me in sympathy and so he told me in detail how he had practised all the stages of this system.

Unfortunately, I did not take notes at the time, but I distinctly remember the account he gave me of how he practised three systems that actually belong to the corpus of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. He explained to me that he had meditated on them between the “extraordinary preliminary practices” (the *gZer lnga*, in this case) and the specific rDzogs chen preliminary practices.

These three systems,<sup>12</sup> to name them in the order in which they appear in the corpus, are:

- The *Lung phag mo zab rgya* (whose texts can be found on pp. 413-654 of vol. I of the *dGongs pa zang thal* in A 'dzom 'brug pa's edition);
- The water *bcud len* detailed in particular on pp. 423-484 of vol. IV;
- The *gSang ba rmad du 'byung ba*, a *gCod* system, the texts of which can be found on pp. 515-625 of vol. IV.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> His biography can be found in Katia Buffetrille's book, *Pélerins, Lamas et visionnaires* (2000: p. 297-325).

<sup>12</sup> One could add the whole system of practice of the peaceful and wrathful deities known as *Rigs lnga'i sgrub pa* (with its 'outer', 'inner' and 'secret' forms), corresponding to the first of the four consecrations, all the elements of which are found in vol. I of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, pp. 331-411, just before the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* which corresponds to the second and third consecrations. But I do not remember Maratika Lama mentioning them when he summarized his successive involvement in all the elements of the *dGongs pa zang thal* path.

<sup>13</sup> Beyond the texts pertaining to the *dGongs pa zang thal* proper, and apart from the huge “appendix” to the *Lung phag mo zab rgya* revealed by bsTan gnyis gling pa, a certain amount of ritual literature and instruction manuals about these sub-cycles of the *dGongs pa zang thal* has been made available in vol. 3 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* (2015). I had no access to these when I wrote the original (French) version of this paper, but they should not be overlooked in order to draw out the thread of

I clearly remember how the Lama of Maratika told me that, in the *gCod* of the *gSang ba rmad byung* as his master<sup>14</sup> had him practise, between sessions, it was necessary to expose oneself almost naked to the bites of the mosquitoes that infested the place; he described to me how he would lie down on the ground and, when his body was completely covered with bites on one side, he had to turn around to present the other. He told me that he caught malaria on this occasion—but that the subsequent practice of *bcud len*, this sort of “alchemical fasting”,<sup>15</sup> had cured him of it.

Since such a custom existed among the Byang gter practitioners, how is it that the practice manuals do not bear the trace of it? Of these three stages of the practice, indeed, there is not even mention in *sPrul sku Tshul lo's khrid yig*, however detailed. And in his *khrid yig* of the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, conversely, there is no mention either of the way in which these internal *yoga* practices are to be inserted into the gradual path of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Was this the general practice of the *dGongs pa zang thal* masters, or is it the expression of a personal choice on the part of *sPrul sku Tshul lo*? I might as well say it straight away: I have not found the solution to this enigma anywhere in the set of practice manuals preserved, except for the constant custom of *not talking about* these meditations in the context of a *rDzogs chen khrid yig*.<sup>16</sup>

---

our investigation a little further. The colophons do not reveal anything very decisive, though, at first sight.

<sup>14</sup> *rDza sprul rin po che*, Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu (1867-1940); TBRC: P29036.

<sup>15</sup> In this case: Maratika Lama told me that he took only water for a fortnight, if I remember correctly.

<sup>16</sup> However, this is not an absolute rule in the general *rDzogs chen* tradition. Thus, for example—among many others—the *rDzogs chen snying thig mkha' khyab rang grol gyi lam rim gsang bdag dpa' bo rdo rje rig 'dzin chos kyi dbang po'i zhal lung*, a *khrid yid* composed by a certain Rig pa'i rdo rje for the *mKha' khyab rang grol (gter chos of Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul, 1816-1872)*, develops all kinds of internal *yoga* practices before presenting the instructions of *rDzogs chen* in the narrower sense. This manual could be made use of, given the highly homogeneous character of the highest *rDzogs chen* systems, as a guide or model if one were to analogically reconstruct the full sequence of the practice in the *dGongs pa zang thal*. The same structure can be found in Orgyan Tenzin and Dylan Esler (2015).—But, to go back to the other end of the history of the “visionary” *rDzogs chen*, one could already find this complete exclusion of Tantric-style instructions in the *Phyag khrid*, the practice manual for the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud* composed by the *bon po* master 'Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung (1242–1290?)—even though this ancient cycle was nevertheless linked to a deity (*Zhang zhung me ri*) which is the subject of all sorts of *sadhānas* of purely Tantric character. We are dealing here with the complex, almost contradictory (or, at the very least, dialectical) relationship between *rDzogs chen* and *rdzogs rim*, amply developed and theorized by Germano (1994).—In the case of *sPrul sku Tshul lo's* manual, it is all the more interesting when one remarks that he also composed two practice manuals for the *mKha' 'gro gsang mdzod* (TBRC: W1KG670), a cycle that belongs *gTer chen Nus ldan rdo rje's* revelations, in which, exactly as in the case of the *dGongs pa zang thal* and the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, he

On the other hand, as we shall see, many elements emerged from this survey as to how the masters of the posterity of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem envisaged the articulation of two corpora that are often confused as a single block: the *dGongs pa zang thal* proper, on the one hand—and the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, on the other hand. The latter was published by A 'dzom 'brug pa (1842–1924) as the fifth and last volume of the collection, as well as by *Chos rje Śā kya yar 'phel* (19<sup>th</sup> century). However, it will be seen that only one of all the practice manuals consulted actually articulates the two corpora: that of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The available editions of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, which do not predate the 19<sup>th</sup> century, do not bear witness with certainty to an older tradition—but perhaps rather to the influence of what may have been a *coup de force* by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol. The issue of the connection or complete non-connection of the two rDzogs chen cycles of the Northern Treasures is a very important question, which K. Turpeinen seems maybe too easily to take for granted in her otherwise very remarkable work on the *dGongs pa zang thal* (2015).

The corpus on which the present study is based will therefore be reduced, at least as far as detailed studies are concerned, to the following six texts (placed in presumed historical order of composition):

1. Śākya rgyal mtshan, *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed*;
2. bKra shis rgya mtsho, *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdu pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*;
3. Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol, *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam chen po*;
4. Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol, *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig chos dbyings lam bzang* with its sources mentioned above;
5. Kaḥ tog Tshe dbang nor bu, *rDzogs chen kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi khrid kyi 'chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo*;
6. sPrul sku Tshul khriṃs bzang po, *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi dgongs don phyogs gcig tu bkod pa khrid yig skal bzang re skongs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan*.

Among these six manuals, it is easy to discern two more or less unified families, which form historical, geographical and thematic blocks (by

---

also presents *separately*, in the first text, a set of practices ranging from the ordinary preliminaries to the Thod rgal visions and *bar do* instructions, on the one hand (*gSung 'bum*, vol. iv, p. 35-78), and, in the second text, the main *ḍākinī* practice of this cycle, on the other hand (p. 79-98).



the way they treat the corpus): on the one hand, the two practice manuals of the 16<sup>th</sup> century (or the first years of the 17<sup>th</sup>), from the Kaḥ thog tradition—Śākya rgyal mtshan and bKra shis rgya mtsho; on the other hand, the practice manuals of the 17–18<sup>th</sup> centuries, from the tradition of rDo rje brag (in a broad sense): Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, to which I add 'Gyur med rdo rje and Padma 'phrin las for the *Yang tig gces sgron*, then Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol and Tshe dbang nor bu. To tell the truth, the last two are not unrelated to Kaḥ thog; but we will see in what sense and why they belong to the tradition of central Tibet.

*sPrul sku* Tshul khrims bzang po's *khrid yig* of is quite different, although I will show that its author was familiar with both these earlier traditions. The result of the present research is, it must be said, rather disappointing as regards the fruits of the study of all these practice manuals in terms of explaining the particularities of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's; this line of research proved to be much less fruitful at this stage than the more structural one, which is favoured in the notes of *Le Manuel de la transmutation immédiate* (Arguillère 2016), where I showed the complex montage the author was engaged in, between the *khrid yigs* included in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter ma* and some texts by Klong chen rab 'byams (mostly the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*).

Indeed, it should be remembered that the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself contains several *khrid yigs*, which are or should be the main source of all subsequently composed practice manuals.

This is what *sPrul sku* Tshul lo says in the first pages of his manual:<sup>17</sup>

“On the basis of the *Fundamental Manual, Oral Transmission of the Great [Master] of Oḍḍiyāna about the Direct Perception of Reality*<sup>18</sup> and of the *Oral Transmission of the Exact Meaning*,<sup>19</sup> supplementing these two [texts with elements] taken, for example, from the *Great Oral Transmission of Vimalamitra*,<sup>20</sup> the *Three Nails*<sup>21</sup> and the *Oral Transmission of*

<sup>17</sup> Translation adapted from Arguillère (2016), p. 47 and notes.

<sup>18</sup> *rDzogs pa chen po yang gsang bla na med pa chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig, dGongs pa zang thal*, vol. II, pp. 353-392.

<sup>19</sup> *Yang dag don gyi snyan rgyud rin po che rtsa ba'i man ngag gnyis pa*, op. cit. vol. II, pp. 393-422. This text was used by *sPrul sku* Tshul lo notably for the confrontation (*ngo sprod*) and the instructions of the first system of Khregs chod (Arguillère 2016: p. 255-263), in which it is almost copied with very slight explanatory additions. Part of the developments on the intermediate *post-mortem* state (Arguillère 2016: pp. 361-419) are also drawn from it.

<sup>20</sup> *Bi ma mi tra'i snyan rgyud chen mo rgyal po la gdams pa yang gsang bla na na med pa'i rdzogs pa chen po'i 'grel pa ye shes rang gsal* or *Bi ma la'i snyan rgyud 'grel tig chen mo*, op. cit. vol. IV, pp. 183-401. This is the text translated by Malcolm Smith under the title: *Buddhahood in This Life - The Great Commentary by Vimalamitra* (Wisdom Publications, 2016).

<sup>21</sup> *Khrid yig gnad kyi gzer bu gsum pa Bi ma la mi tras mdzad pa*, op. cit. vol. II, pp. 335-

*Vairocana*,<sup>22</sup> I have synthesised them and I will give an explanation of the *Fundamental Manual*,<sup>23</sup> which condenses the elements [of the others].<sup>24</sup>

Let us add, since the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* is not fully outside the scope of the present study, that this cycle is largely a collection of instructions for gradual practice, in particular:

1. The *Ma rig mun sel sgron me snying po bcud bsdu lam gyi gnad khrid kyi rim pa* (pp. 189-200), especially pp. 195-199;
2. The *O rgyan Padmas mdzad pa'i zhal chems sgon ma rnam gsum* (p. 201-244), even though the numerous instructions it contains are not methodically arranged in a progressive way;
3. The *Gegs sel nor bu rin po che'i mdzod* (p. 261-320), which is a true manual of Khregs chod;
4. The *Zab mo gnad kyi them bcu* (pp. 321-401) also has this character.

The existence of these texts is undoubtedly one of the reasons why we have no practice manuals preserved for the earlier period—from the invention of the *gter chos* (winter 1366-1367) to the masters of Kaḥ thog in the 16<sup>th</sup> century—and it is also undoubtedly one of the reasons for the rather nebulous and syncretic character of the *khrid yigs* that the latter composed.

---

352.

<sup>22</sup> Cycle consisting of four texts: *Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i snyan rgyud dang po*, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 461-484; *Yang gsang... snyan rgyud bar ma*, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 485-536; *Yang gsang... phyi ma*, *op. cit.* vol. II, p. 537-577 and *Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i thugs brgyud zab mo*, *op. cit.* vol. II, pp. 579-602. It is the third of these texts that is most often quoted or paraphrased.

<sup>23</sup> The first of the texts just quoted. *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's mode of composition is explained in the introduction to Arguillère 2016; above all, the footnotes in the book make it possible to identify the elements that the author has combined, when he does not mention them himself (which he never does when it comes to sources foreign to the Northern Treasures).

<sup>24</sup> In fact, the author makes extensive use of other *dGongs pa zang thal* texts, which he combines with those he has just listed. In addition to the *Five Nails of the Precious Key Points* (or *gZer lnga*), of which the entire section on “extraordinary preliminary practices” is an explanatory paraphrase, we should mention in particular the *Text [that explains] of the Key Points, Secret Lamp* (*gNad yig gsang sgron, dGongs pa zang thal*, vol. III, pp. 141-162), central to the rDzogs chen specific preliminary practices (Arguillère 2016: pp. 185-226).

### The *dGongs pa zang thal* in Kaḥ tog

In the collection *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, the entire fifth volume is filled by three texts presented as relating to the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

We know from *Guru bkra shis' Chos 'byung* (p. 751) that it was a certain A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan who spread the *dGongs pa zang thal* in Kaḥ tog. What is more, there is a history of the transmission of this corpus, the *Kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal gyi lo rgyus rin chen phreng ba*, preserved in the collection of *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum* (vol. V, p. 1-89<sup>25</sup>), which is, in all probability, the work of the latter.

This text presents, as appropriate, a narrative relating to the early, semi-mythical (or, at least, otherworldly or metaphysical) stages of the transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal*—the *rgyal ba dgongs pas brgyud tshul* (pp. 5-17) and the *rig 'dzin brda' brgyud tshul* (pp. 17-53)—which are of no interest to historical research and do not anyway bring new elements to what is already clearly stated in the *gter chos*. In the third part (p. 53-89), I leave aside all that concerns the traditional links prior to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (p. 53-64, including the account of how the *gter chos* was hidden, etc.) as well as the life of rGod ldem himself up to the transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal* to his disciple *Kun sprangs Don yod rgyal mtshan* (p. 75). From this figure onwards, the line continues as follows:<sup>26</sup> *dBon po bSod nams mchog bzang* (p. 79), then *brTson 'grus bzang po* (p. 81)—who is none other than Thang stong rgyal po (1361 or 1385–1485, or 1509, or 1464?)<sup>27</sup>—of whom it is said (p. 82) that he also received the *dGongs pa zang thal* initiations directly from *Kun sprangs Don yod rgyal mtshan*. He passed them to *Byang sems Kun dga' nyi ma* from *Kyi mo* in *dBus* (15<sup>th</sup> century; TBRC: P10111).<sup>28</sup> In the text

<sup>25</sup> There is another edition of it in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 2, p. 957-1012. This text is not of great historical interest for what concerns us here, because it devotes very little development to what is subsequent to Thang stong rgyal po. – A careful scrutiny of the A 'dzom 'brug pa edition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* reveals some occurrences of A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan's pen name: 'Tra ye ka dus' or of one or another of its variants, as the author of explanatory notes, concluding paragraphs, ritual arrangements of certain texts.

<sup>26</sup> Another disciple of *Kun sprangs Don yod rgyal mtshan* in *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* p. 488: *gSang bdag bDe chen lhun grub*. "Teacher in an alternate transmission for the *byang gter* precepts stemming from Rig 'dzin rGod kyi ldem 'phru can and passing through Thang stong sgyal po" (BDRC P 10106). He obtains the complete rainbow body (*Guru bkra shis*, p. 488). He himself has a disciple called *Graggs pa'i mtshan can* (BDRC P10107), also a disciple of *bDe chen lhun grub* (himself a disciple of *rNam rgyal mgon po*) and master of Thang stong rgyal po.

<sup>27</sup> On this figure, see mainly Cyrus Stearns 2007: *King of the Empty Plain—The Tibetan Iron-Bridge Builder Tangtong Gyalpo*.

<sup>28</sup> He seems to have received every possible and imaginable tantric teaching (p. 84 ff.), including, from *rTogs ldan Ri phug pa* (unknown to TBRC), on the *Kun byed rgyal po* and *Ye shes gsang rdzogs*; then from *Nyang ston Rig pa'i 'byung gnas* on the

of A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, it is not perfectly clear who is the disciple of *Byang sems Kun dga' nyi ma* for the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

We are then helped by the presentations of the lineage in the two later authors of *Kaḥ tog*. Indeed, it is given in its entirety on p. 95-96 of Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual: *Kun spangs pa* Don yod rgyal mtshan, bSod nams mchog bzang, Thang stong rgyal po, *Byang sems Kun dga' nyi ma*, dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje, then Śā kya rgyal mtshan himself. This perfectly confirms what we find in A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan and we read the same thing in Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho (f° 2b-3a, in the second *khrid yig* of *Kaḥ tog* studied below). There is also a short lineage through Thang stong rgyal po, which is identical.<sup>29</sup>

Curiously, Śā kya rgyal mtshan as well as bKra shis rgya mtsho add a lineage of *man ngag gzhan*: Mar pa, etc., through Phag mo gru pa, through Rin chen gling pa, etc., but reaching them through the same dKon mchog rdo rje. We are indeed in a syncretic lineage, or at least tending towards a synthesis. We will soon understand the function of this addition of a lineage of transmissions clearly belonging to the bKa' brgyud pas' Mahāmudrā in this context. There is also a very short lineage which counts only the *rtsa ba'i bla ma* (p. 96).

### A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan

There are short biographies of these various figures in the *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan (p. 76 ff.). We learn that A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, a disciple of *Byang sems chos rje*, went to Shangs zams bu lung where he received the *dGongs pa zang thal* from *Byang sems Kun dga' nyi ma*, a disciple of Thang stong rgyal po—which is in perfect harmony with the indications found in *Guru bKra shis*.

In the *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* (p. 76), it is stated that A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan had a vision of Padmasambhava and

---

*Bi ma snying thig* and *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. He is otherwise unknown. His disciple Sangs rgyas brtson 'grus is dated to the same century by BDRC. He has a disciple, Padma sangs rgyas, which BDRC cannot date clearly between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries, who will himself have a disciple called Nyi zla sangs rgyas—which is not better dated. All of them are mentioned in the 5<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama's *gsan yig*.

<sup>29</sup> This means that Thang stong rgyal po had a personal "re-revelation" (*yang gter*) of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. It does not mean that he added anything to the original corpus, unlike bsTan gnyis gling pa for the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, but that he got, so as to say, a "supernatural permission" to teach it without having to be allowed by his human masters. It is to be feared that the reader will get lost in the ramifications and meanders of the *dGongs pa zang thal* lineages. Therefore, for ease of reference, a tree of these genealogies—reduced to branches that lead more or less to known practice manuals—is included at the end of this paper (p. 289).

then returned to rMugs sangs dgon where he remained in retreat. Then, when Drung lHa dbang rdo rje was serving as *gdan sa* of Kaḥ thog, he was appointed to the position of '*chad nyan mkhan po*. After which, "at the Byang seng cave of Kaḥ thog, he gave all the books of the *dGongs pa zang thal* to *Bya bral ba* Byang chub seng ge."<sup>30</sup> We also know (p. 77) that he travelled very often to central Tibet where he dif-fused the *mDo sgyu sems gsum*, i.e., all the tantric / rDzogs chen traditions of the rNying ma pas. He also received the entire cycle of *Kar gling zhi khro* which he transmitted to He pa Chos 'byung (TBRC: P2MS9533), from which the "tradition of He of the Peaceful and Wrathful deities" originates. He meditated in various places and his main disciple was Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje, who received from him the Mahāmudrā and the rDzogs chen in general, and more particularly the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Not much more is known about Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje, except that he stayed at Kaḥ thog for a long time and did long practice retreats.

The life of mGon po dbang rgyal (1845–1915) by his disciple and nephew *sPrul sku* Tshul lo (p. 21) tells us that, in his thirteenth year (i.e. in 1857), mGon po dbang rgyal received from one of his masters "a manual of instructions on the *dGongs pa zang thal*, composed by A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan" (*dGongs zang gi gnad khrid A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan gyis mdzad pa*). This text, if it existed, seems to have been lost; to the attention of researchers, let us only point out that in the colophon of the *Kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal gyi lo rgyus rin chen phreng ba*, appears an—already mentioned—curious pen name, "*Rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po'i rnal 'byor pa Tra ye ka dus*."<sup>31</sup> Let us

<sup>30</sup> Byang chub seng ge is given, in the linear presentations of the lineages from master to disciple, as the disciple of Śā kya rgyal mtshan, himself disciple of A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan.

<sup>31</sup> Tra ye ka dus might be a corruption, by an ignorant script, of what was, it seems, A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan's real pen name, which we find in what I suppose to have been its original form in a colophon of the A 'dzom 'brug pa prints of the *dGongs pa zang thal*: in vol. II (*hūm*), volume, one finds these verses, pp. 601-602, at the end of the *Yang gsang bai ro tsa na'i thugs rgyud zab mo* (pp. 579-602): *rgya gar mkhas pa śrī sing ha yis | | man ngag thugs rgyud bee ro'i snyan du brgyud | | bee ro'i khyad chos sems rig dbye ba 'di | | mthong thos tsam gyis rang grol 'gro ba'i chos | | kham pa'i ban 'khyams rnal 'byor bdag dang 'phrad | | sangs rgyas tshe 'dir 'grub pa e ma ho | | theg dgu'i yang rtse 'od gsal snying po'i don | | 'khrul grol 'khor 'das gang gis ma gos pa'i | | rgyu med rkyen bral ye nas sangs rgyas pa'i | | rang byung rig pa'i gnad mtshar 'di rig pas | | drin chen bla ma'i gdams ngag chud ma zos | | dal 'byor mi lus thob pa don dang ldan | | dge des 'gro drug sems can pha ma rnams | | rang grol rdzogs pa chen po'i don rtogs shog | zhes 'khrul zhig chen po tra ya dhwa dza'i gsung byin rlabs can de nyid kyi phyag dpe la bzhugs pas ma dpe ltar bris pa dge legs 'phel | | sarva maṅgalaṃ | |*—I also suppose that he is the author of these other verses placed as an appendix to another text of the same volume, the *Yang gsang bla na med pa rdzogs pa chen po rgyal thabs spyi blug gi dbang*, pp. 73-89, where one reads (pp. 88-89): *rang rig don gyi gnas lugs de rig na | | spyi blug rdzogs pa'i dbang yang de*

therefore be on the lookout for a rDzogs chen manual that might well appear under this odd name: it would undoubtedly be the work of A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan.<sup>32</sup>

Even if this would be unexpected on the part of such a well-informed and rigorous author as *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, it is not impossible that he has confused A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan either with Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan, or with the disciple of the latter's disciple, Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho, author of another *khrid yig* which will be discussed a little later.

Another information about A rdo dKon chog rgyal mtshan is that it seems he was a direct disciple of Padma gling pa (1450–1521): there is in the *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum* (vol. III, pp. 45-50) a small text entitled *Kun bzang dgons pa kun 'dus kyi dbu phyogs*, beginning with an homage to the lineage, where we find (p. 47), after Padma gling pa, directly "Tra ye ka tu," whom we know to be A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, and then directly the author's *rtsa ba'i bla ma*. The latter is identified as "*Kaḥ thog khrid chen bdun pa Bya bral ba bSod nams don 'grub*" (TBRC: P7966).

TBRC gives us this information about bSod nams don 'grub: "W20396 [p. 164] a scholar of the kaH thog tradition and student of drung tsho ba blo gros bzang po; this source mentions his *rdzogs*

---

*dus thob* | | *gdod ma'i kun tu bzang dang de dus mjal* | | *ye sangs rgyas kyi sangs rgyas de rig pas* | | *rtogs pa mngon gyur sangs rgyas zhes grags so* | | *'di nyid go nas chos 'di la* | | *dad gus rtse gcig byed pa'i rnal 'byor pa* | | *kham s kyi ban 'khyams dKon mchog rgyal mtshan yin* | | *zhes 'khrul zhig chen po'i gsung byin rlabs can rang sor bzhag pa'o* | | *sarva maṅgalaṃ* | |

<sup>32</sup> The correct form Tra ya dhwa dza is found also in a manuscript containing a lineage prayer of the *dGongs pa zang thal* (TBRC: W1KG23047). From this text (difficult to decipher because of the many abbreviations), we can reconstruct the following lineage (leaving aside the parts before rGod ldem): (1) rGod ldem; (2) Don yod rgyal mtshan; (3) bSod nams mchog bzang, (4) Thang stong rgyal po, (5) Kun dga' nyi ma, (6) 'Khrul zhig Tra ya dhwa dza, (7) Tra ya ba dzra (dKon mchog rdo rje), (8) *mKhas mchog* Śā kya'i mtshan can (Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan), (9) Byang chub seng ge; (10) bKra shis rgya mtsho (Bu 'bor ba -), (11) sTon pa seng ge, (12) *sPrul sku* Chos nyid rgya mtsho, (13) 'Khrul zhig sTon pa rgyal mtshan, (14) *Drin chen rtsa ba'i bla ma*. N° 11, 12 and 13 are mentioned in the *sMar pa bka' brgyud chos 'byung* (p. 238-239).—Now, this lineage is known to us thanks to a text by Tshe dbang nor bu, the *lHa rje mnyam med zla 'od gzhon nu'i bka' brgyud phyag chen gdams pa ji tsaṃ nod pa'i rtogs brjöd legs bshad rin chen 'byung khungs* (TBRC W1GS45274, vol. 2, p. 407), which seems to make dKon mchog rgyal mtshan a contemporary of Ratna gling pa (1403–1479), and then continues the lineage as we know it: dKon mchog rdo rje, Śā kya rgyal mtshan, Bo dhi sing ha, bKra shis rgya mtsho—and there we find an interesting note: *'di gter ston zhig pa'i chos bdag yin*. This is Zhig po gling pa (P640, 1524–1583). Unfortunately, bKra shis rgya mtsho is not named as one of his students on TBRC/BDRC, but this makes him more or less a contemporary of Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624, another student of Zhig po gling pa).—Then we find Chos nyid rgya mtsho, called Ba khyim Chos nyid rgya mtsho, then bsTan pa seng ge (\*sTon pa seng ge), Shes rab rgya mtsho, etc.

*chen khrid zab don snying po.*" This must be the *Man ngag zab don snying po'i khrid yig* (*Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. I, p. 351-539), at the end of which we read this note: *Drung tsho ba Blo gros bzang po'i slob ma sDong bya bral ba bsod noms don 'grub gsungs*. The front page has this subtitle: *sems sde khams lugs kyi sngon 'gro'i khrid yig sDong bya bral ba bSod noms don 'grub gsungs*.

It might be the case also that another text, the *rDzogs pa chen po man ngag zab don snying po mun sel dpal gyi sgron me*, preserved in vol. 2, p. 1-865 of the *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, is also a writing of his. Though the colophon is not absolutely explicit about the author, still, in a presentation of the lineage in the *guru-yoga* section of this enormous text, our *bSod noms don 'grub* appears indeed at the head of a *kha skong* (p. 430)—which seems to mean that he was later added by the successive generations of those who transmitted the text. He might then be the author of the text. We can also understand from that passage that *bSod noms don 'grub* was the master of a "*Nag tshal Hor po*," "Forest Hor po," so as to say, who might well be one of the figures of this *dGongs pa zang thal* lineage: *Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan*, which would then explain why, as we will see, it is said that *Rig 'dzin 'Jigs med gling pa* praised *Śā kya rgyal mtshan's* exposition of *Sems sde*: this would be this second text, the *Zab don snying po mun sel dpal gyi sgron me*, which actually has the same literary features (extremely prolix style, combination of various traditions, overabundance of quotations from often unusual and difficult to identify texts) as the oldest of the *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals, which we are about to investigate.

### **Rig 'dzin dKon mchog rdo rje (rDo pa bla ma)**

A *rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan* and his disciples are mentioned in the *sMar pa bka' brgyud kyi rnam thar phyogs sgrigs*,<sup>33</sup> which gives some details not found in *Guru bkra shis*. It reads (p. 234) that the disciple of A *rdo dKon mchog rgyal msthan*, *Rig 'dzin dKon mchog rdo rje* (also called here *rDo pa bla ma*), received from him "the *dGongs pa zang thal* of *Kun dga' rgyal msthan*," a curious formula which could designate either a lineage (but we have not found a *Kun dga' rgyal msthan* so far—would this be another name of *dKon mchog rgyal mtshan*?), or a practice manual which is now lost: here again, let us be alert, in case such a text resurfaces. It would be about a synthesis of *Mahāmudrā* and *rDzogs chen* (*phyag rdzogs zung 'jug*)—which is in fact a fair description of the manual composed by *Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan*.

<sup>33</sup> TBRC: W00EGS1017393.

### Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan

This figure is of particular interest to us because he is the author of the oldest preserved text that presents itself as a *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manual.

The *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* tells us little more about Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan (p. 77-78) than it does on his predecessors: he was not satisfied with the instructions he received until he obtained the *dGongs pa zang thal* from Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje; he divided his life, we are told, between contemplation and teaching and, 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan adds, he spread the *sGyu 'phrul* widely. Since his direct and indirect disciples are no easier to date, the fact remains that we are somewhere between the 15<sup>th</sup> century of Kun dga' nyi ma and the 17<sup>th</sup> century of Klong gsal snying po. Basically, Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan must be a contemporary of Zhig po gling pa (1524–1583), as we will see that they have at least one student in common—Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho. We must therefore be in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

In the *sMar pa bka' brgyud kyi rnam thar phyogs sgrigs*, Śā kya rgyal mtshan is called Hor so (rather than Hor po) Śā kya rgyal mtshan. The author of the biography insists, for this figure as for his predecessors, on his combined practice of Mahāmudrā and rDzogs chen.<sup>34</sup> We find here, in the same terms as in *Guru bKra shis*, the idea—already alluded to—that *Rig 'dzin 'Jigs med gling pa* praised his exposition of *Sems sde*.<sup>35</sup> But the only additional piece of information this biography brings us is that Śā kya rgyal mtshan remembered being, in his previous incarnation, dGe mang *mkhan po* Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, associated earlier in the same text with the *dGongs pa zang thal*. I have not been able to identify this figure—whose date of death would give a *terminus a quo* for the birth of Śā kya rgyal mtshan—nor to unravel this tangle of riddles.

Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan's text, although oversaturated with tex-

<sup>34</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 235: *Phyag rdzogs dbyer med nyams bzhes kyi rtogs pa mthar phyin mkhas shing grub pa brnyes* l. —One of the sources for these biographies and those compiled by *Guru bKra shis* is apparently the *Phyag rgya chen po snying po don gyi brgyud pa'i lo rgyus nyung ngur bsodus pa* contained in vol. III of *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum*, p. 75-130; the text is anonymous, but the last masters mentioned are Śā kya rgyal mtshan and Byang chub seng ge, which could point to Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho as author—but the style of this writing is hardly reminiscent of his *khrid yig* studied below.

<sup>35</sup> At this stage, I have not found the corresponding passage in 'Jigs med gling pa, but (which was not the case in the French version of this paper), I think I may have identified the alluded work of Śā kya rgyal mtshan (above, p. 247, in the paragraph about A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan).



tual references and statements attributed to all sorts of Tibetan masters, does not (it seems to me) contain any indication or clue that would allow us to date it more precisely (as would be a clear allusion to any 16<sup>th</sup> century figure). In any case, it is indeed the oldest of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals currently available.

### Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho

The *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* contains (p. 79) a small life of bKra shis rgya mtsho, where we learn that he received the *dGongs pa zang thal* from Śā kya rgyal mtshan himself; Byang chub seng ge, who is placed in between the two in the ordinary presentations of this lineage, must have been his slightly older contemporary and they appear to have been active at the same time. One element, however (p. 80) helps us to date these two figures: the visit of *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal (TBRC: 1550?–1603) to Kaḥ thog during the lifetime of bKra shis rgya mtsho. It is therefore possible to date *Don khrid lag len gsal ba* approximately at the very end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century or at the beginning of the 17<sup>th</sup>, and, with reservations, to place Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual in the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup>.

The same chronicle of Kaḥ thog confirms that bKra shis rgya mtsho is the author of a *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manual;<sup>36</sup> it adds that it would be found in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*—and, actually, the *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdus pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba*, which I shall study below, is found in vol. 90 of the sTod lung mTshur pu edition of the *gTer mdzod*, p. 1-96.

### Posterity

Moreover, thanks to *Guru* bKra shis, we can reconstruct the filiation of the *dGongs pa zang thal* in Kaḥ tog after these two authors,<sup>37</sup> but this is

<sup>36</sup> *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus*, p. 80: *Drung rDo rje 'od zer dus bKra shis rgya mtshos 'chad nyan mkhor (sic for mkhan por?) mdzad l Slob ma rnam la Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan gyi khrid yig la gzhi byas te Zangs thal gyi khrid rgyun dar spel gnang l Khong gis kyang Zangs thal gyi khrid yig gсар du mdzad pa da lta Rin gter du bzhugs pa de'o l*

<sup>37</sup> *Op. cit.* pp. 751-752: A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan [TBRC: P2359] (at the time of mGon po rdo rje [*gdan sa*] and Nam mkha' dpal ba [*chad nyan*, many writings of who, mostly about the *gSang ba snying po*, are found in the *rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*]); Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje (P2734? "At the time of Drung lHa dbang rdo rje [*gdan sa*]," P1370 ? ); Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan; *mTshungs med* Byang chub seng ge and Bu 'bor ba bKra shis rgya mtsho [at the time of *gdan sa* Drung rNam par dge ba'i mtshan]; disciples of bKra shis rgya mtsho: rMog tsha ba He pa chos 'byung [P2MS9533], rGyal thang ba bsTan pa seng ge, dPal mo Shes rab bzang po and rGyal rong ba [*gDan sa ba: Drung rTa mgrin*, in the time of *Bla ma Tshe mdo* and *Grub thob Ma la bla ma*]; then came sDo (sNgo ?) khang Sangs

of less interest to us, if not to understand one day how the Kaḥ tog tradition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* reached Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755), and then, much later, *sPrul sku* Tshul lo. mGon po dbang rgyal, the master of the latter, has indeed received this tradition from *rJe dbon* Byang chub rdo rje, a *sprul sku* of *gTer chen* bDud 'dul rdo rje.<sup>38</sup>

### The *dGongs pa zang thal* literature in Kaḥ tog (16<sup>th</sup> century)

Apart from the historiographical text by A rdo dkon mchog rgyal mtshan, what is preserved of this literature seems to be reduced to two manuals: that of Śā kya rgyal mtshan and that of bKra shis rgya mtsho.

#### The *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed* by Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan

It is a 297-page text, numbered from 91 to 387 in the consulted edition of the *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*. In this edition, which is the only accessible one, the text<sup>39</sup> has been quite corrupted by careless and ignorant copyists (the spelling is extremely defective and there are huge mistakes everywhere, such as “Lhun grub” instead of Klu grub for Nāgārjuna, to give just one characteristic example).

The attribution to Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan is certain (1) by the colophon of this text; (2) on the basis of a passage from the *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus* by 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan to which reference has already been made (p. 164); (3) because the fact is confirmed again in the *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* (p. 750-751).

As for the content of this text, it must be said that it is particularly disconcerting. While the author clearly claims to follow Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's heritage as far as rDzogs chen is concerned, in fact, the links with the *dGongs pa zang thal* are excessively loose. One only has to look at the index of quotations and in the index of names of persons, compiled below (p. 252 ff.), to see how Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan brews

---

rgyas rin chen and dPal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rgya mtsho ; the latter's disciple was Ba so dBang grags rgya mtsho, master of rGa rjes Chos skyong rgya mtsho [referred in BDRC without any information, except as master of Klong gsal snying po], whose disciple was Byang chub rgya mtsho who is none other than *gter ston* Klong gsal snying po (1625–1692; he is at Kaḥ tog in 1646 according to BDRC).

<sup>38</sup> If he is the most famous person of this name, his dates are 1615-1672 (cf. Jann Ronis 2006). Among his disciples, Klong gsal snying po (1625–1692) has a disciple named Byang chub rdo rje who, if he is indeed the *sprul sku* of the *gter chen*, should have been born in the years following 1672—which is obviously much too early to have been the master of mGon po dbang rgyal, born in 1845...

<sup>39</sup> See below (p. 289) for a summary tree of the lineages leading to the authors of the preserved *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals.

references. He is particularly keen to defend the thesis of the substantive unity of the *bKa' brgyud pas' Mahāmudrā* and the *rDzogs chen*. This syncretic inclination leads him not only to assimilate the *Madhyamaka* in its *spros bral* interpretation (that is to say, rather that of *Go rams pa* than that of *Tsong kha pa*), but also to lay down a common basis for all the traditions of spiritual practice in Tibet: we are already, in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, in an atmosphere that one might have thought typical of the 19<sup>th</sup> century *ris med* masters.

If it were permissible to risk a qualitative assessment in a research work, the *Man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed* cannot be described otherwise than as fairly talkative, diffuse and disjointed, though profoundly erudite. Some passages are very beautiful; the whole, however, has rather the character of a huge open-ended lecture on all sorts of themes, to which the *dGongs pa zang thal* does not even give a common frame of reference. In a word: it is *not* at all a manual of practice of this cycle of *rDzogs chen*, and even: it is not at all a *khrid yig*, because the instructions only appear in the form of often vague allusions.<sup>40</sup>

Very interesting originality: whereas *Klong chen rab 'byams* associates to the luminous *visions* of the *Thod rgal* only *auditions* (of the type of the *chos nyid rang sgra* referred to in the *bar do* texts), and this for precise reasons of “subtle physiology,” Śākyā rgyal mtshan, for his part, has abundant developments on experiences of the other three senses, which, according to him, would be of the same order.

About *Klong chen rab 'byams*, another interesting point is (as will be seen from the indexes below) the rather strong presence of this author in the *Zab don mngon sum gsal byed*—at least as strong as that of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. In the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, this contradicts rather head-on Katarina Turpeinen's thesis (2015) on the supposed oblivion of *Klong chen pa* after the 14<sup>th</sup> century,—an oblivion which would only have ended at the time of *Jigs med gling pa* (18<sup>th</sup> century), after an eclipse of several hundred years, during which the *dGongs pa zang thal*, nearly alone, would have taken centre stage.<sup>41</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Sometimes, on the contrary and paradoxically, the author gets extremely precise, when it is a point which apparently fascinates him, such as the body postures, which are described in much greater detail than what is the case in the *dGongs pa zang thal*. In short, he composes without any rules, except his fantasy. He is also very profuse when he describes the visions, the auditions, *etc.*, with which the practitioner may be confronted—with a kind of curious taste (if one can conjecture it from his insistence) for horrific visions.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Turpeinen (2015), p. 210: “In these days, Longchenpa is the single most known author of the pre-modern Nyingma tradition, and his impact to the Great Perfection tradition is unquestioned. Longchenpa's works are regarded in high esteem and studied widely in the Nyingma colleges (*bshad grwa*). His great influence is internalized in the tradition to the extent that many are unaware that Longchenpa's extensive popularity is a relatively recent development sparked by

In the index below, I have not bothered to restore the Sanskrit titles of the canonical or para-canonical texts, or even to identify them as much as it would have been possible (nor the characters quoted), as my purpose is only to show that the *Man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed* is in reality nothing less than a practice manual for the *dGongs pa zang thal*. On the other hand, I have corrected (as far as possible) the faulty spelling of the edition consulted. This list deserves interest because of the number of unknown texts it contains—but part of our impression of strangeness may also be due to the aberrant spellings.

I have put in bold, for different reasons of course, the *dGongs pa zang thal* texts (few) and the express references to Klong chen pa.

INDEX OF TEXTS CITED IN THE MAN NGAG ZAB DON MNGON SUM GSAL  
BYED BY HOR PO ŚĀ KYA RGYAL MTSHAN

<i>Kun byed</i> : 140.	<i>bKod pa dung bu'i rgyud</i> : 347 (2 cit.).
<i>Kye rdo rje</i> : 266, 353.	<i>bKra shis mdzes ldan</i> : 252.
<i>Klong drug pa</i> : 191, 314, 372, 373.	<i>sKal ba bzang po'i mdo</i> : 130.
<i>Klong yang(s) Śāk thub dgongs khrid</i> : 184.	<i>mKha' 'gro rgya mtsho'i rgyud</i> : 206, 207.
<i>Klong gsa l</i> : 104, 120, 121, 125, 126, 151, 154, 189, 200, 235, 236, 283, 284.	<i>dGe sdig bsdus pa'i sgron me</i> : 303, 314.
<i>dKon mchog ta la l'i md o</i> : 343.	<i>dGongs pa kun 'dus</i> : 338 (2 cit.). <sup>42</sup>
<i>dKon mchog brtsegs p a</i> : 115, 190.	<i>dGongs pa tshigs gsum pa'i rgyud</i> : 277, 280.
<i>bKa' [ma] mdo [dbang]</i> : 339.	<b><i>dGongs pa zang thal gyi</i></b>

---

the revelations of Jikmé Lingpa (1730–1798) received in visionary encounters from Longchenpa and the subsequent academic turn of the Nyingma tradition inspired by figures like Mipham (1846–1912). However, in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, Nyingma Dzokchen audience was not particularly inclined to academic study, but generally focused on ritual and contemplative practice, and the time was not ripe for the sophisticated philosophical treatises of Longchenpa to reach wide circulation.”—Such statements should be nuanced as the presence of Longchenpa is quite ubiquitous, especially in the biographies of lamas, when it comes to the topics of either the *gSang ba snying po* or the *rDzogs chen*. They can be accepted as useful exaggerations meant to correct a mistake in the opposite direction, but should not be taken at face value. What is true is that the *dGongs pa zang thal* was once very famous and widespread and then, around the 18<sup>th</sup> century, fell, if not into oblivion, surely to a more marginal position—while the traditions inspired by Klong chen pa grew much more central.

<sup>42</sup> This reference is of the utmost importance: it is the latest text that can be at least approximately dated, since it is a *gter ma* of Padma gling pa (1450–1521). But we already knew that, two generations earlier in this lineage, A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mshan was a direct disciple of Padma gling pa.

- rgyud**: 365 (2 cit. + “Zang thal”).
- mGur*: 205.
- rGya cher rol pa'i mdo*: 202.
- rGyal mtshan dam pa'i mdo*: 337.
- rGyud klong yangs*: 211.
- rGyud 'grel spar khab*: 187 (2 cit.), 238.
- rGyud don tig*: 337, 356.
- rGyud rdor phreng*: 203.
- rGyud bang mdzod*: 268, 346.
- rGyud bu chung gi rgyud 'grel*: 177.
- rGyud bla ma*: 105, 119, 226, 256.
- rGyun stug po bkod pa'i mdo*: 229.
- sGyu 'phrul gyi lam rnam bkod*: 149.
- sGyu 'phrul drwa ba*: 186, 189, 234.
- sGyu 'phrul lam rim*: 190, 193 (2 cit.).
- sGyu 'phrul rtsa rgyud*: 232.
- sGyu ma lam rim*: 192 (2 cit.), 193 (3 cit.), 216, 261.
- sGron ma bkod pa*: 197, 200.
- sGron ma snang byed*: 237, 266, 283.
- sGron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud*: 200.
- bsGrub pa bka' brgyad*: 355.
- mNgon rtogs rgyan*: 215, 375.
- mNgon pa kun btus*: 229.
- Chos dbyings bstod pa*: 221, 223, 231.
- Chos dbyings mdzod**: 343, 357, 358.
- Chos dbyings ye shes rin po che'i mdzod**:<sup>43</sup> 341 (3 cit.).
- Chi med rdo rje'i glu* (Saraha): 127, 128.
- Nyams sgron, dGa' rab rdo rje'i -*: 334.
- Nyi ma rab tu snang byed kyi mdo*: 197.
- bsNyan rgyud thig le mchog tu gsang ba*: 290, 291, 292 (3 cit.).
- sNyan rgyud bar pa*: 366.
- sNying gi me long*: 227.
- Ting nge 'dzin rgyal po'i mdo*: 336, 354.
- brTag gnyis*: 205, 207, 210, 214, 215, 232, 238, 239, 250, 253, 254.
- bsTan pa bu gcig gi rgyud*: 222, 277, 308, 313, 359.
- Thal 'gyur*: 197, 200, 372.
- Thig le kun (gsal?) gyi rgyud*: 311.
- Thig le rtsa ba'i rgyud*: 210.
- Thugs kyi me long*: 201.
- Thugs rgyud, Śrī Simha'i* : 365.
- Thugs rje chen po yang snying gi rgyud*: 249, 268.
- Thos grol, rJe btsun Pad 'byung -*: 249.
- mThar thug rin po che'i mdzod*:<sup>44</sup> 371.
- Da lta sangs rgyas mngon sum du bzhugs pa'i mdo*: 281.
- Dam pa rin po ches Po* (is one syllable missing?) *Ye shes la gdams pa'i zhi byed man ngag gi lam gzhung*: 271.
- Dam tshig rdo rje gsal bkra*: 184, 187, 226.
- Dus kyi 'khor lo'i rgyud*: 257, 367.
- De bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po'i mdo*: 106.
- Don tig 'gro ba kun sgröl*: 119,

<sup>43</sup> Probably Klong chen pa's *Chos dbyings mdzod*.

<sup>44</sup> Could it be a passage from the *Chos dbyings mdzod*?

145.  
*Don gsal me long*: 201.  
*Dri med 'od* ('*Grel chen -*): 198, 200, 365.  
*gDam ngag 'bogs pa'i mdo*: 339.  
*bDe mchog bstod 'grel*: 263.  
*mDo nyi ma rab tu snang ba*: 339.  
*mDo phal po che*: 202, 216-220, 242, 295-297, 348, 354.  
*'Das rjes*: 236.  
*'Dus pa chen po'i mdo*: 336.  
*mDo sde rgyan*: 261, 373.  
*mDo rnam rol*: 339.  
*mDo padma brtsegs pa*: 363.  
*rDo rje 'chang gi zhal chems*: 203, 319, 320.  
*rDo rje brtsegs pa'i rgyud*: 336.  
*rDo rje sems dpa'i man ngag gi rgyud*: 316, 333.  
*rDo rje sems dpa' zhal nas man ngag rgyud du gsung pa*: 326.  
*sDud pa*: 122, 209, 261.  
*Nam mkha' klong chen*: 368 (2 cit.).  
*Nam mkha' klong yangs kyi rgyud*: 275.  
*Nam mkha' che'i rgyud*: 269.  
*rNam snang mngon byang*: 352.  
*dPal ldan rgyud*: 226.  
*dPa' bar 'gro ba'i ting nge 'dzin (gyi mdo)*: 340.  
*sPyod 'jug*: 241.  
*sPyod pa bsdus pa'i sgron me*: 314, 343.  
*sPros pa gcad pa'i sgron me*: 315.  
*Phyag rgya chen po bsam gyis mi khyab pa ye shes kyi 'khor lo*: 138.  
*Phags pa blo gros mi zad pas bstan pa'i mdo*: 190, 223, 258.  
*Byang chub sems dpa' spyan ras gzigs kyis zhus pa'i mdo rnam grol*: 128.  
*Bhi ma'i snying bkod*: 254 ("Bhi ma" is the author's, or the copyist's, common spelling for Vimalamitra).  
*dBang rnam par dbye ba*: 169, 188.  
*Bum pa nyi khri*: 204 (3 citations), 205, 298.  
*'Bum dang Nyi khri*: 240, 249.  
*Ma Sangs rgyas rang chas chen po'i rgyud*: 313.  
*Mahāmāyā*: 196.  
*Me tog bkod pa'i mdo*: 363.  
*Mya ngan 'das mdo*: 203, 248, 370 (2 cit.).  
*gTsong gtor chen po'i mdo*: 198 (2 cit.), 242.  
*gTsong nag me 'bar gyi 'grel pa*: 303.  
*rTsa rgyud dbang mdor bstan*: 255.  
*Tshad ma rnam 'grel*: 213, 223.  
*mTshan brjod* ('*Jam dpal -*): 114, 255.  
*mTshan brjod kyi 'grel pa*: 255 (2 quotes).  
*rDzogs chen sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*: 126 (2 cit.), 127.  
*Zhal gdams snying gi sgron me, rDo rje bdud 'dul rtsal gyis—*: 311.  
*Zag med thig le'i man ngag*: 331.  
***Zang thal***: 365.  
***Zang thal gyi rgyud***: 105.  
***Zang thal man ngag gi rgyud***: 367.  
*Zangs yig can*: 232.

**Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin:**<sup>45</sup>  
189.

*Yi ge med pa'i rgyud:* 210, 222,  
227, 309-310.

**Yid bzhin mdzod:** 106.

*Yum:* 117 (2 cit.), 134, 197, 241  
(2 cit.), 337.

*Ye shes snang ba rgyan gyi mdo:*  
354.

*Rig pa bsdus pa'i sgron me:* 317.

*Rin chen spungs pa'i rgyud:* 248.

*Rin chen spungs pa'i mdo (sic):*  
340.

*Rin po che bkod pa'i rgyud:* 347.

*Lang kar gshegs pa'i mdo:* 106,  
228.

*Shes rab snying po:* 204, 366.

*Sa bon gyi rgyud:* 331.

*Sa ra ha'i brda' khrid:* 117.

*Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor:* 118,  
121.

*Seng ge rtsal rdzogs:* 104, 191,  
236, 314.

*Sems kyi ngo sprod gsang don rab  
gsal:* 276.

*Sems bskyed pa'i mdo:* 259.

**Sems nyid ngal bso** (sic for  
gso): 188, 222.

*Sras gcig sa bon gyi rgyud:* 121.

*gSang ba spyi rgyud:* 237 (2 cit.).

*gSang ba yongs rdzogs kyi rgyud:*  
355

*bSam gyis mi khyab ye shes 'khor  
lo:* 139.

*lHa rnams 'dus pa'i rgyud:* 361.

*lHa'i bu blo gros rab gnas kyi  
zhus pa'i mdo:* 139.

*lHun grub kyi sgo'i mdzod:* 206.

INDEX OF NAMES OF PERSONS<sup>46</sup> MENTIONED IN HOR PO ŚĀ KYA RGYAL  
MTSHAN'S MAN NGAG ZAB DON MNGON SUM GSAL BYED

Ku ku ri pa: 124.

Kun dga' nyi ma, *Byang sems:*  
95.

*Kun spangs pa* Don yod rgyal  
mtshan: see Don yod rgyal  
mtshan, *Kun spangs pa*.

Klong chen rab 'byams: 191.

dKon mchog rgyal mtshan: 95,  
96.

dKon mchog rdo rje, Rong po:  
95, 96.

Kha che ('i rgyal po) Rab  
snang: 345.

Khri srong lde'u btsan: 94.

Grag pa rgyal mtshan: 137.

dGa' rab rdo rje: 94, 334.

rGya ston pa, *bshes gnyen chen  
po:* 350.

sGam po pa (dwags po lha rje):  
95, 285.

sGeg pa'i rdo rje: 187, 226.

Ngag gi dbang phyug, *Slob  
dpon* : 258.

rNgu pa Chos kyi rdo rje: 96.

'Jam dpal bshes gnyen: 94, 333.

'Jig rten dbang phyug: 265.

Te lo pa: 95, 116, 130, 188, 227,  
254, 255.

rTag tu ngu: 221.

Thang stong rgyal po: 95.

Don yod rgyal mtshan, *Kun  
spangs pa:* 95.

<sup>45</sup> This is indeed the great manual of the *mKha' 'gro yang tig* composed by Klong chen pa, which *sPrul sku* Tshul lo will make such great use of in his own *khrid yig*.

<sup>46</sup> I did not distinguish between historical figures and "imaginary" or legendary figures.

*bDag nyid chen po* (?): 375.  
*rDo rje bdud 'dul rtsal*<sup>47</sup>: 235, 311.  
*rDo rje sems dpa'*: 166.  
*Nāgārjuna* (always referred to as "lHun grub"): 123, 221, 229, 266, 333, 350.  
*Nā ro pa*: 95, 214.  
*Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, dPal sa skya pa'i mkhas grub*: 290.  
*sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms*: 94.  
*Padmasambhava*: 94, 145, 264, 353, 364.  
*dPal dbyangs, Slob dpon*: 124.  
*sPyan nga ba, skye mchog*—(Rin chen ldan): 95.  
*Pha dam pa*: 270, 335 (*rJe btsun Dam pa*).  
*Phag mo gru pa (rDo rje rgyal po)*: 95, 129.  
*Phyar thub pa, Pha rtogs ldan gyi rgyal po*: 137.  
*Phyogs kyi glang po, Slob dpon*: 264.  
*Phyogs med byang sems chos rje*: 96.  
*Bi ma mi tra (Vimalamitra)*: 94, 105, 120, 268, 269, 318, 356.  
*Bai ro tsa na (Vairocana, translator)*: 94, 264.  
*Bla ma Mes*: 290.  
*Bla ma Zhang*: 134, 135-136.  
*Bla ma Shar pa, Kaḥ tog pa'i*: 230.  
*dBu rtse pa, rGyal sras*: 95.  
*Mar pa lo tsā ba*: 95, 129, 214, 216, 282.

*Mi la ras pa, rJe btsun*: 95, 272, 334 (3 cit.).  
*sMar pa Rin chen, Chos rje*: 95.  
*Zur mo ba, Chos rje*: 245, 269, 297.  
*Zla grags, Slob dpon (Candrakīrti)*: 139.  
*Od zer bla ma, mkhan chen*: 96.  
*Yang dgon pa*: 95, 273, 349, 350.  
*Ye shes rgyal mtshan*: 96.  
*Ye shes mtsho rgyal*: 94.  
*Rig 'dzin rGod ldem*: 94.  
*Rin chen gling pa*: 95.  
*La ba pa, Grub thob*: 215.  
*Śā kya rgyal mtshan (Hor po —, the author himself)*: 95, 387.  
*Śa ba ri pa*: 190.  
*Shang ston pa, Chos rje*: 230.  
*Śāntideva*: 123.  
*Shing mgo ras pa*: 96.  
*Śrī Simha*: 94, 365, 370.  
*Saraha*: 123, 127, 226, 232, 234, 238, 256, 257, 294 (*sNyan brgyud*, 2 cit.), 295, 336, 338.  
*Sangs rgyas gsang ba, Slob dpon*: 228.  
*Seng ge dbang phyug, lCe btsun*—: 316 (?), 320-324 (with a kind of obscure text title), 360 (*lHa rjes lCe btsun gyi man ngag*).  
*bSod nams mchog bzang*: 95.  
*A ba dhu ti pa, Grub thob*: 274, 300.

I renounce giving here a summary or *a fortiori* a complete paraphrase

<sup>47</sup> This might be the *gTer ston rDo rje bdud 'dul*, though little late maybe (1615-1672; cf. Jan Ronnis 2006).



of this very long text (nearly 300 p.): it is very unlikely that anyone has ever used it as a guide in the practice of the *dGongs pa zang thal*; far from clarifying the manuals found in the *gter chos*,<sup>48</sup> it is infinitely *less* precise and *less* concrete. It is also obvious, for anyone who reads both texts, that it has not served as a source of inspiration for *sPrul sku* Tshul lo either closely or remotely.

However, I draw the attention of scholars to the curious p. 376-387—a sort of long song of lament, which goes far beyond the proclamations of incompetence with which Tibetan authors like to conclude (or start) their works on subjects reputed to be profound. One has the feeling, from reading Śā kya rgyal mtshan, that he has come up against almost insurmountable obstacles and has been plunged into deep bitterness, of which the tiny biographies I have been able to consult so far do not give the slightest explanation.

In this text, apparently composed a bit by the pen (and which, it is true, is not well served by its edition in the *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*—disastrous, often forcing us to speculate on the meaning by correcting the copyist's deplorable spelling), one feels, to a degree that is not common among Tibetan authors, the expression of a somewhat capricious subjectivity, which lingers on what is dear to the author's heart, which dispatches what bothers him, which wants to share his sadness and above all his wonder. The *Zab don mngon sum gsal byed* would deserve in this respect a thorough study: if I spoke about it with a touch of impatience, it is because I found in it nothing that interested me in the context of a research on the history of the practice manuals and commentaries on the *dGongs pa zang thal*—a fact that is interesting as such: how could a text be regarded as a *khrid yig* of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, without containing *anything* that corresponds to its title?

**Bu 'bor bo bKra shis rgya mtsho's *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsduṣ pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba***

Shorter by half<sup>49</sup> than the text of Śā kya rgyal mtshan, this one obviously proceeds from the former, as we shall see, but altogether differs from it in its style. Its title is more honest: it is not exactly intended to be a *dGongs pa zang thal* manual; however, the lineages are presented in exactly the same terms as in Śā kya rgyal mtshan, that is to say that *all that it contains of rDzogs chen is placed, for any reason, under the authority of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and his posterity*. In this regard, perhaps the

<sup>48</sup> The difficulty for the practitioner with these manuals included in the *gter chos*, which I listed earlier, is not so much that they would be unclear (though some are extremely allusive), but that they do not form a coherent whole.

<sup>49</sup> 139 p. in the *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, numbered on the right p. 388 to 527-528; folios numbered on the left from 1 to 70.

most interesting point would be to determine why, at the time of its composition (the very end of the sixteenth century, or the very beginning of the seventeenth), the authority par excellence for the rDzogs chen, even when traditions from other streams were presented, could be Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. On this point, one should perhaps agree with K. Turpeinen: not in the sense of a real hegemony of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, but in the sense of a prestige superior to any other cycle or a kind of superior magisterium of its "discoverer".

The identity of the author of this manual is known by an annotation in the colophon (which, to the word *kho bo*, adds the name: bKra shis rgya mtsho<sup>50</sup>). However, in the presentation of the lineages at the beginning of the volume, we have (f° 2b), after bKra shis rgya mtsho, *rtsa ba'i bla ma*, which would suggest that the text could have been composed two generations later;<sup>51</sup> but the reader familiar with Tibetan texts naturally assumes that this must be one of those very frequent notations added for their own use to texts by the masters who transmit them and which later editors piously incorporate, as if they were corrections—thus giving rise to unfortunate anachronisms.

On reading it, it is clear that we are dealing with a text of the same tradition as the previous one, which is expressly claimed in the colophon, where, moreover, the author does not hide its eclectic character either.<sup>52</sup> At the same time, however, its synthetic character is not at all evident through the accumulation of references in all directions, as in *Śā kya rgyal mtshan*—but, on the contrary, in the total omission (quite exceptional in Tibetan religious texts of this kind) of *any* text title, even in the form of mere allusions. Only the lineage which bKra shis rgya mtsho claims to be following as regards rDzogs chen obliges us to relate this treatise to the *dGongs pa zang thal*; as far as the content is concerned, definitely, it is very much the shared legacy of the highest section of Dzogchen according to the traditional doxographies—and the few passages which would be found in a practically identical form in

<sup>50</sup> *Kho bos [bKra shis rgya mtshos] gud du phyungs nas bris pa la...* See below note n° 52 for the complete passage.

<sup>51</sup> If one were to take this clue seriously, one would have to go down two notches in the lineage tree to find the real author of this manual. Note that, among the possible candidates, we would then have an A rdo dKon mchog rdo rje, which could perhaps explain what seems to be a misunderstanding of sPrul sku Tshul lo in his *Life of mGon po dbang rgyal : dGongs zang gi gnad khrid A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan gyis mdzad pa* should then simply be corrected as: *dGongs zang gi gnad khrid A rdo dKon mchog rdo rjes mdzad pa*.

<sup>52</sup> F° 70a : *Zab mo snying thig chos so cog rnams las | | zab khrid mi 'dra rgya cher grangs mang yang | | zab gnad kun 'dus lag len 'di kho na | | zab zab yig tshogs mang pos dgos med snyan | | 'di ni mtshungs med Śā kya rgyal mtshan gyis | | Zab don mngon sum gsal byed man ngag las | | bla mas zhal bzhes lag khrid byes pa rnams | | kho bos [bKra shis rgya mtshos] gud du phyungs nas bris pa la | | don du mi 'byung nyes skyon gang yod rnams | | bla ma yab sras gnyis la bzod par gsol |*, etc.

Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos* are those which, in fact, are common to *all* the sNying thig literature. In short, as in *Sā kya rgyal mtshan*, the invocation of the Byang gter lineage seems to be there merely to *authorise* bKra shis rgya mtsho to speak of the rDzogs chen teachings belonging to the *whole* register of the sNying thig.

The *Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdus pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba* bears very well in this respect its name, the first part of which means: "a synthesis of all the key points of the profound quintessence:" it draws fully from the common treasure of the lineages that had merged at Kaḥ thog; it has this feature in common with Hor po *Sā kya rgyal mtshan's* text. But, unlike the latter, it really deserves the second part of its title—*don khrid lag len gsal ba*, "manual on the meaning [of this synthesis] which elucidates the practice:" while *Sā kya rgyal mtshan* evaded all the technical details, bKra shis rgya mtsho is very precise and concretely practical—except that *he never specifies anything to such an extent that his manual would be more in keeping with one tradition than another*.

One small detail, among many others, makes it possible to immediately recognise the degree of familiarity of the authors of manuals with the *dGongs pa zang thal* literature: the purification of the body (*lus sbyong*), generally prescribed in *Bi ma'i 'grel tig* (p. 338), is specified in another *dGongs pa zang thal* text, the *gNad yig gsang sgron* (p. 144):<sup>53</sup>

"Meditate in a colour corresponding to your [dominant] element:  
Rats, oxen and tigers meditate their bodies on the whiteness of the water;  
Hares, dragons and snakes meditate their bodies yellow [like] the earth;  
Horses, sheep and monkeys meditate their bodies red [like] fire;  
Birds, dogs and pigs meditate their bodies with the greenness of the air."<sup>54</sup>

This modification of the colour of the visualisation according to the year of birth is peculiar to the *dGongs pa zang thal*, and even specifically to the *Secret Lamp* only: it is unknown even to the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig* (p. 361). It is not found in the parallel passages of Klong chen pa: neither in the *dNgos gzhi 'od gsal snying po'i don khrid* (p. 7), nor

<sup>53</sup> See Arguillère (2016), p. 210.

<sup>54</sup> *Rang gi 'byung ba dang mthun pa'i kha dog tu bsgom ste ᳵ byi ba glang stag gsum chu'i lus dkar po bsgom ᳵ yos 'brug sbrul gsum sa'i lus ser po bsgom ᳵ rta lug spral gsum me'i lus dmar po bsgom ᳵ bya khyi phag gsum rhung gi lus ljang gu bsgom ᳵ*

in the *Khrid yig sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* (p. 243), nor in the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin* (p. 439). The first two prescribe that everyone should imagine their bodies to be blue in colour; the latter says nothing about this, nor does the *Theg mchog mdzod* (p. 204—but, anyway, the text is very allusive about these instructions for practice; it seems more concerned with justifying their authenticity by accumulating references from the *Seventeen Tantras*). In the *Yang tig nag po* system, the parallel exercise (which is not exactly identical, in fact) is done by imagining the vajra of different colours in succession or simultaneously (see *Khrid rim don gsal sgron me*, in vol. III of this cycle, p. 49).<sup>55</sup>

bKra shis rgya mtsho (f° 38a) does indeed present a visualisation of the *vajra* of the colour of the birth element, with the prescriptions specific to the *gNad yig gsang sgron*—a genuine sign of an in-depth personal knowledge of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. It is true that this author also mentions the possibility of a *vajra* of all five colours at the same time (as it seems to be the case in the *Yang ti nag po*) and indicates that the *vajra* could be three or five-pointed: once more, for his part, the main concern is to produce a synthetic, even syncretic manual.

The text is very well structured, as one can easily see from the analytical table I have put online at the following address: [2017/09/analytic-table-sa-bcad-of-bu-bor-bo-bkra-shis-rgya-mtsho-s-practice-manual-of-the-dgongs-pa-zang-thal.html](https://www.dhammadownload.com/2017/09/analytic-table-sa-bcad-of-bu-bor-bo-bkra-shis-rgya-mtsho-s-practice-manual-of-the-dgongs-pa-zang-thal.html). This is a pleasant difference from the *Man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed* of Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan. Although bKra shis rgya mtsho's text may be regarded, in a sense, as an abbreviation of his predecessor's work, one could only advise anyone wishing to study the older one to rely, as a basis and as a guide, on the more recent one, which is much more clearly framed. Śā kya rgyal mtshan's developments, often interesting but profuse and rather unbalanced, are best understood from bKra shis rgya mtsho's concise and neatly branched text; having it in mind as well as in the background, one would better grasp how to articulate the rhetorical proliferations of his spiritual forefather to one another.

Compared to the practice manuals found in the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself and the text of *sPrul sku Tshul lo*, these two manuals in the Kaḥ thog tradition are characterised, beyond their syncretic character in relation to the various branches of rDzogs chen, by their willingness to fully integrate the bKa' brgyud pas' Mahāmudrā, practically substituted for Khregs chod (it is clearer in bKra shis rgya mtsho, not because this tendency is actually more pronounced in him, but simply because his text is clearer). This reveals a profound difference in the order of practices, which, moreover, does not seem perfectly clear to me in ei-

<sup>55</sup> Paragraph taken from Arguillère (2016), p. 210, n. 3.

ther text: in short, it seems that the “Khregs chod-Mahāmudrā” is proposed *before* the specific preliminaries of rDzogs chen, and not *afterwards* as in *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, in accordance with the dominant tradition of his time. That is to say, it sorts of fills a space that, in texts as the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yid* (the text that *sPrul sku* Tshul lo calls the *Fundamental Manual, Khrid gzhung*) is devoted to the “search for the mind” (which does not get a separate development in *sPrul sku* Tshul lo’s manual, for it is clearly redundant with features both of the specific preliminary practices of rDzogs chen and of the Khregs chod).<sup>56</sup>

The insistence, truly obsessive under the pen of Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan, on the unity of meaning of Madhyamaka, Mahāmudrā and rDzogs chen clearly remains in bKra shis rgya mtsho also, albeit attenuated (and above all reduced to a few clear and firm formulas, while Śā kya rgyal mtshan extended without measure). In the same way, bKra shis rgya mtsho’s manual contains allusions to Zhi byed and gCod, but infinitely more condensed than Śā kya rgyal mtshan’s. All these elements will be totally absent in the masters of central Tibet and in *sPrul sku* Tshul lo.

Remarkable in our two authors are the developments on visionary practice in the dark (which is the exclusive subject of about 25 p. out of 140 in bKra shis rgya mtsho, not counting additional allusions and explanations elsewhere). This practice will simply never be mentioned in any of the manuals of the Central Tibetan tradition, nor in *sPrul sku* Tshul lo. Its considerable development here is no doubt related to the addition of *Yang ti nag po* to the *Khrid chen bcu gsum* of Kaḥ thog. It would obviously be interesting to carry out an investigation, parallel to the one we are dealing with here, into the history of the *Yang ti nag po* in Kaḥ thog.<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>56</sup> Alongside the desire to build a syncretic system integrating Mahāmudrā and rDzogs chen, typical of this Kaḥ thog tradition at the time under consideration, it may be that all the wavering found throughout the *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals on the question of Khregs chod stems from the fact that this practice is virtually absent, at least in its classical form and with its proper name, throughout the corpus (it is barely mentioned e.g. in the *Bi ma’i ’grel tig*—and even in that context, it seems, as a practice meant for a type of practitioners different from those who will engage in the visionary path). In sum, the Kaḥ thog manuals, on the one hand, make up for what must have come to be seen as a deficiency by injecting Mahāmudrā, while Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol, on the other hand, will draw from the other major cycle of rDzogs chen of the Byang gter, the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Only *sPrul sku* Tshul lo succeeds in constructing a system that mobilizes *only* texts from the *dGongs pa zang thal*, but he does not do so without an *exegetical ruse* that allows him to treat the practice of “blending the three spaces” as the true Khregs chod of the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

<sup>57</sup> The overall impression that emerges from these two manuals is that the different cycles of visionary rDzogs chen could be seen, at that time and in that milieu, as so

**The *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals in central Tibet  
(17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries)**

The texts grouped in this section present, for the most part, no difficulty in dating their authors: Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669), *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717), 'Gyur med rdo rje (gTer bdag gling pa, 1646–1714) or Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755)<sup>58</sup> are fairly well known; as for Kha'u dga' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol, if I am not mistaken about his identity, he is no more obscure than the previous ones, and for good reason.

**The *Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa'i bcud ka dag lhun grub kyi nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam* by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669)**

This short manual (28 p., numbered from 305 to 322), quite remarkable, is the work of Zur *chen*, or Zur *thams cad mkhyen pa*, Chos dbyings rang grol, a figure known to us from a long biography (452 p. in the edition consulted), the work of the fifth Dalai Lama. There are a number of others; here, I will be contented with the much shorter one that is found in the *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* (pp. 300–303).

To confine ourselves to the elements that interest us here, we read (p. 300) that Chos dbyings rang grol met the *Byang bdag Rig 'dzin* Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639) in his ninth year (1612) and that Ngag gi dbang po prophesied that he would be of great service to the Ancient tradition. His main practice in retreat (1619–1621?) seems to have been the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (*op. cit.*, p. 301), received from Ngag dbang ye shes grub (TBRC: P1076) around 1615.<sup>59</sup> He was one of the principal masters of the fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) and it was he who recognised Padma 'phrin las (1640–1718) as the *sprul sku* of *Rig 'dzin* Ngag gi dbang po. This very abbreviated biography tells us nothing of his interest in the *dGongs pa zang thal*; we find more, in this respect, in the

---

many facets of a single practical teaching, which could be reconstituted by combining them. This is a characteristic trait that disappears as early as with Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol in the seventeenth century, and is really the antithesis of the choices that *sPrul sku* Tshul lo will make in the twentieth century. This detail is certainly not devoid of meaning regarding the construction of the identity of the School, or Order, of the Northern Treasures.

<sup>58</sup> We will see later why this figure, who is also associated with Kaḥ thog, is placed here in the company of the masters of Central Tibet.

<sup>59</sup> *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 300. Note the curious formula: *mKha' 'gro snying thig bka' gter gnyis*. Perhaps the *bka'* aspect of *mKha' 'gro snying thig* is simply the *tantra* on which these teachings are based—the *Klong gsal*—which is not said to have been hidden and then rediscovered and is not included in the *gter chos* of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

short biographical notes of Padma 'phrin las' commentary on the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me*, studied a little further on. Chos dbyings rang grol was clearly the repository of an enormous amount of diverse traditions. A deepening of the present research should definitely explore the long *rnam thar* composed by Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho in order to see more clearly his precise relationship with the Byang gter in general and the *dGongs pa zang thal* in particular. In order to situate him in my tree of the *dGongs pa zang thal* lineages, I have settled—provisionally—on the indications (summarised below) of Padma phrin las' commentary on the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me*.

The colophon of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's *Nyams khrid* contains hardly any historically usable elements, apart from the fact that another hand (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho? Padma 'phrin las?) may have been involved in the final edition of the text, apparently based on "notes" by Chos dbyings rang grol.<sup>60</sup>

There is no doubt, in any case, that the subject of the text in question is the *dGongs pa zang thal*: Chos dbyings rang grol expressly states so (p. 306 sq.), with the peculiarity, already underlined (perhaps an innovation of this author), of considering the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* as dealing with the aspect of "primordial purity" (in other words: the Khregs chod), whereas the *dGongs pa zang thal* strictly speaking would have as its object the *lhun grub* aspect (i.e. the Thod rgal).<sup>61</sup>

Certainly, it is an idea that seems as natural as it is judicious, to complement the (scanty) texts of the *dGongs pa zang thal* on Khregs chod by the rich developments of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. However, it has to be said that this has generally not been the preferred approach in the secondary literature of the *dGongs pa zang thal* that we are studying here. Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's manual is an exception in this respect, and it is also original in many points of detail that

<sup>60</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 332: *rJe btsun bla ma dam pa Zur thams cad mkhyen pa | Chos dbyings rang grol gyi zin bris su mdzad pa'i phyag bris su yig char zhal bshus pa'o |*. These "notes" (*zin bris*) could have been (unlikely hypothesis) the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun rab gsal*, text evoked below. But the Tibetan formulation would rather mean that the printed edition is directly derived from an autograph manuscript, perhaps with some finishing work on the part of an editor.

<sup>61</sup> *...rGyud sde bco lnga'i dgongs don snyan rgyud drug gi nying khu Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal du bstan pa'i nges don rdzogs pa chen po'i khrid tshul zab mo gter las 'byung ba 'di nyid la gnyis te | Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyis gnas lugs kyi don gtan [307] | la 'bebs pa dang | lhun grub dGongs pa zang thal gyis thod rgal gyi rang rtsal rjen par ston pa gnyis te | ...* In this formula, the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* is well treated as a sort of section of a larger whole, including the *dGongs pa zang thal* (in the narrow sense), the whole being itself called "*dGongs pa zang thal*"—exactly as K. Turpeinen (2015) does: so when I object to her approach, it is not to say that it is wrong, but that this specific feature of Zur chen's manual (1) seems not to be originally there in the *gter ma* texts themselves and (2) has not been followed very systematically after him, but was rather abandoned by the posterity.

cannot be developed here. On the other hand, in comparison with the practice manuals from Kaḥ thog, it is much more in line with what can be found from Klong chen pa to sPrul sku Tshul lo in terms of the order of the practice.

The *Thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam* is quite purely concrete and practical. Like that of bKra shis rgya mtsho, this practice manual is very clear and well-structured—rather than nebulous and profuse like that of Śā kya rgyal mtshan. But, unlike bKra shis rgya mtsho, Zur Chos dbyings rang grol bases his argument, down to the last detail, on the *dGongs pa zang thal* literature (in the broadest sense—including, as has been said, the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*).

Thus, for example, in what is called “non-ordinary preliminary practices” (from the *ka dag* section), a series of three exercises is presented (p. 313 sq.) that have not been encountered so far—but will soon be found again—called respectively:

- a) *rDo rje dkar po la brten nas sems 'dzin pa*,
- b) *rDo rje mthing kha hūṃ yig dang bcas pas la sems 'dzin pa* and
- c) *Thig le dkar dmar la brten nas sems 'dzin pa*.

Now, these meditations directly come from a text of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, the *Ma rig mun sel sgron me snying po bcud bsdu lam gyi gnad khrid kyi rim pa*,<sup>62</sup> which is clearly the main source of this entire *ka dag* section of Chos dbyings rang grol's manual.

In the *lhun grub* part, Chos dbyings rang grol seems to be closely following the *Bi ma'i 'grel tig* (which he calls *Bi ma'i snyan (b)rgyud*, indeed one of his short titles),<sup>63</sup> rather than the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig* which sPrul sku Tshul lo will call “*khrid gzhung*,” “the main and authoritative instruction manual,” so as to say. We have no clue whence comes this shift in the appreciation of what should be regarded, in the original corpus, as the main basis for teaching the *dGongs pa zang thal* as a whole.<sup>64</sup>

K. Turpeinen, as has already been mentioned, often comes back to the idea that Klong chen pa's work had practically fallen into oblivion

<sup>62</sup> P. 195 sq: *mDun du khru bdun bcar ba'i sar ṣ rdo rje dkar po rtse lnga pa g.yas su 'khyil pa rang gzugs ṣ...*

<sup>63</sup> The large text translated by Malcolm Smith (2016).

<sup>64</sup> This *Bi ma'i 'grel tig* is more in line with what has become the dominant tradition in visionary rDzogs chen—notably in that it is one of the only texts in the *dGongs pa zang thal* that clearly mentions (and devotes a chapter to) the practice of Khregs chod. For the rest, if we stick to the letter, the *dGongs pa zang thal* is rather reminiscent of the system of the Bon pos' *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, where one goes directly from the rDzogs chen specific preliminary practices to the visionary practice of Thod rgal.



after the death of its author until 'Jigs med gling pa brought it back to the forefront. During these centuries of latency, she says, it was the *dGongs pa zang thal* that attracted all the attention. However, it would be possible to temper this opinion by making, as I sketch here for the *dGongs pa zang thal*, a history of the practice manuals of the two *sNyung thigs* composed between the 14<sup>th</sup> and the 17<sup>th</sup> centuries: we would see that what K. Turpeinen says probably applies, to some extent, to the most speculative or enigmatic works of Klong chen pa (and still: the quotations from the *Chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzdod* found in Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual should give us food for thought), but probably not to the instructions for the practice of the "quintessential" rDzogs chen. In any case, Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, is no less a reader of Klong chen pa than was Śā kya rgyal mtshan in the 16<sup>th</sup>: one can be persuaded by the last lines of the instructions on the fourth vision of Thod rgal in the *Nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam* (p. 311 sq.):

"The details are to be found in the *tantras* specific to this [tradition, that is, those included in the *gter chos* of rGod ldem], in the *Seventeen Tantras*, in the *Kun bzang klong gsal*, in the *six oral transmissions* and the *texts on the measures* [of the levels of attainment reached], nectar of the words of Dri med 'od zer, the spacious *yogin* of the Great Completeness."<sup>65</sup>

It should be noted here that the association of the *dGongs pa zang thal* with the *Klong gsal*, the fundamental *tantra* of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, is a constant, if not from the beginning, at least since the 16<sup>th</sup> century (13 quotations in Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual), continued<sup>66</sup> here by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol.

<sup>65</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 331-332: *Zhib par 'di'i sgos kyi rgyud sde rnams dang rgyud bcu bdun dang | Kun bzang klong gsal dang snyan rgyud drug dang rtag tshad kyi yi ge [332] rdzogs chen nam mkha' rnal 'byor Dri med 'od zer gyi gsung gi bdud rtsi las shes bya te | ...*

<sup>66</sup> This formula should not be taken as if Zur Chos dbyings rang grol had read Śā kya rgyal mtshan: we have no idea about that and there is no clue that he wrote in any sense in reaction to Śā kya rgyal mtshan's manual.—A text of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (pp. 508-514), the (anonymous) *g.Yung gi lo rgyus*, mentions Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, who appears to be giving a disciple (g.Yung ston pa rDo rje dpal (1284–1365)? this is chronologically difficult, if not impossible, or would oblige us to move Rig 'dzin rGod ldem a but backward in time) teachings supplementing the *mKha' 'gro snying tig*. The text is quite confusing and would require closer examination. But it somehow implies that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem would have been familiar with the *Klong gsal*, which is actually quoted, though only very few times, in the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

**The *Chos dbyings lam bzang* of Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol and the *Yang tig gces sgron* cycle**

1. The *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig Chos dbyings lam bzang* and Padma 'phrin las' *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris*

At this stage, it seems that only one practice manual for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* has reached us: it is the work of a Chos dbyings rang grol which should not be confused with Zur Chos dbyings rang grol. The author signs two names in the colophon: Chos dbyings rang grol and Padma las rab rdo rje rtsal; a note added by the publishers reads: *Kha'u dGa' ldan pa grub dbang Dhar ma'i mtshan yin 'dug*. The BDRC/TBRC site helps us to identify this character (P6867): “*rning ma* practitioner of the rDo rje brag tradition who held the hermitage of Kha'u dga' ldan in the Nyang area of gTsang” and for which it refers to the *dBus gtsang gi gnad yig* (p. 403) of Chos kyi rgya mtsho, Kaḥ thog si tu III (1880-1923/25). However, the *dBus gtsang gi gnad yig* contains absolutely nothing to date our Kha'u dga' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol more precisely.

The colophon of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* (p. 372) does, however, give us some useful information: the order to compose this manual was given to the author in a *shing khyi* year. The commissioner of this manual is also named: a certain Kun dga' bzang po. The colophon suggests that there already existed a manual going as far as the *guru yoga*, perhaps composed by this Kun dga' bzang po (the author's master?) and that the latter ordered our Chos dbyings rang grol to complete it.<sup>67</sup> The task was finished “the following wood-pig year” at dGa' ldan gsang sngags chos gling (the author's hermitage). He mentions his master again, this time under the name Kun bzang rgya mstho,<sup>68</sup> but it is probably the same person as Kun dga' bzang po / Kun bzang dbang po.

One thinks first of all of the Kun bzang dbang po which is mentioned on the BDRC/TBRC site (P10284) as one of the masters of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, “master in the transmission of the *Kun bzang thugs gter* of Byang chub gling pa dPal gyi rgyal mtshan; little else is known about this teacher”<sup>69</sup> and one would be tempted to conclude

<sup>67</sup> Op. cit. p. 372: ...*Kun dga' bzang po dang mjal te Ka dag khrid yig bla ma'i rnal 'byor yan legs par gnang ste* \ 'di man khyod kyis khrigs chags su grigs shig ces bgos bzhin du bka' stsal pa yid la brtan du bzung ste...

<sup>68</sup> *bKa' drin 'khor med rje btsun Kun bzang rgya mtsho'i thugs rje las rdzogs chen gyi man ngag la cha tsam rtog pa tsam...*

<sup>69</sup> There is certainly also a Kun dga' rgya mtsho in the branch of the *dGongs pa zang thal* lineages which leads to *sPrul sku* Tshul lo—but this is *Byang bdag* Padma 'phrin

that there is in fact only one Chos dbyings rang grol, which the tradition has mistakenly split into two figures (contrary to its general tendency to “lend to the rich,” to condense under the name of a single famous personage the works of minor and poorly identified authors), or, possibly, that our Chos dbyings rang grol is a slightly younger contemporary of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol.

However, this hypothesis does not hold, as the author refers, as one of his important sources, to the *Yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris* by Rig 'dzin Padma phrin las.

The *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris* is a text preserved in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (vol. XVIII, 86 pages numbered 133 to 218 in the edition of sTod lung, Tshur phu, BDRC/TBRC: W20578) as well as in the *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi chos skor* published by gNas chung Śā kya yar 'phel (vol. IV, pp. 7-108). Its author is very clearly the *Byang bdag* of that name (1640-1718).<sup>70</sup> Its content is given<sup>71</sup> by Padma 'phrin las as an essay on the oral teaching of “Zur chen rDo rje 'chang,” i.e., in context, Zur Chos dbyings rang grol. In fact, Padma 'phrin las' text is a very broad amplification of the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun rab gsal*, a writing of a Phrin las rab rgyas who is none other than Zur Chos dbyings rang grol. The author's name appears in the colophon (p. 131). The TBRC/BDRC file on Zur Chos dbyings rang grol also confirms that one of his names was indeed Phrin las rab rgyas, which further confirms the elements found in the *Thugs sgrub yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris gzhung don rab gsal* by Padma 'phrin las.

Once this filiation is discovered, it is immediately apparent that Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol's *Chos dbyings lam bzang* is, in several of its parts, a copy of Padma 'phrin las' *Yang tig gces sgron gyi zin bris*, a text which itself proceeds from the small text by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol—which makes it possible to clearly distinguish the two Chos dbyings rang grol(s) and helps to reconstruct the chronology.

## 2. Who is Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol?

In the colophon of the *Yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris* (p. 217),

---

las's own master. This Kun dga' rgya mtsho is moreover probably the one mentioned by Jann Ronis (2006: p. 173) as a master of *gTer ston bDud 'dul rdo rje* (1615-1673)—the latter likely being himself the “*gter ston bDud 'dul*” who appears at the end of another branch, roughly in the middle of the summary table (below p. 289).

<sup>70</sup> We also have it now in the 63-volume collection *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, among the complete writings of Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las (vol. 36-50). It is found in vol. 43, p. 1-81.

<sup>71</sup> P. 134 in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* edition, which I follow here for the references to this text.

Padma 'phrin las says he composed it in his seventy-second year, which would place us about 1712—*terminus a quo*, therefore, for the composition of Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol's *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig Chos dbyings lam bzang*. The colophon of the latter text mentions two years, *shing byi* and *shing phag*: at the earliest, 1754 and 1755. The *terminus ad quem* is the date of the death of Chos kyi rgya mtsho (Kaḥ thog si tu III), who mentions Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol in his history of the holy places of central Tibet—either 1923 or 1925. This leaves us, as the only other dating possibilities for the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*, nothing else, besides 1754-55, than 1814-1815 or 1874-1875.

*Rig 'dzin* Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755) includes among his many names Chos dbyings rang grol. Moreover, one of his numerous masters is a certain Kun bzang dbang po (P2871), of whom there is a brief *rnam thar* in Blo gros don yod's *Dus 'khor chos 'byung indra nī la'i phra tshom* (p. 503-504).<sup>72</sup> This short biography,<sup>73</sup> while placing Kun bzang dbang po mainly in the context of the transmission of the Jo nang pa system of Kalacakra, tells us that he was very well versed in the *rnying ma*<sup>74</sup> doctrines.

*Rig 'dzin* Tshe dbang nor bu is a perfect fit for the chronology: 1755 is the year of his death; the passage mentioning Kun bzang dbang po suggests that he appeared to him in a vision. Tshe dbang nor bu, although closely associated with Kaḥ thog, also spent a lot of time in Central Tibet and was very familiar with the traditions of rDo rje brag. The idea of composing a practice manual for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, which had lacked until then, and, what is more, of doing so with barely a reworking of a text of the highest authority—that of Padma 'phrin las—resembles his spirit both encyclopaedic and, in its own way, conservative.

In order to decide this question definitively, all that would be left to do is to plunge into the most developed biographies of Tshe dbang nor bu, to see if among his hermitages there is indeed one that could bear the name of Kha'u dGa' ldan.<sup>75</sup> But we already know that one of the hermitages of Tshe dbang nor bu in gTsang was called dGa' ldan mkha' spyod. Kha'u is of course a toponym:

“To the East of Sa skya there is the Kha'u lung valley. In this area are several settlements (*grong pa*) that are known as the Khab po

<sup>72</sup> TBRC: W00EGS1016994.

<sup>73</sup> Expressly inspired by Klong sprul Blo gro mtha' yas.

<sup>74</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 485: *Khyad par snga 'gyur bka' ma'i chos skor ma lus pa gsan bsam mthar phyin by mdzad* l.

<sup>75</sup> See, for a start, <http://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Rigdzin-Tsewang-Norbu/9372>.

che."<sup>76</sup>

The other clue that could be exploited is the—*gter ston?*— name that the author gives himself in the colophon: Padma las rab rdo rje rtsal. It should be checked whether Tshe dbang nor bu signed his revelations with this name.

In any case, a number of clues converge to attribute the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* to Tshe dbang nor bu. Admittedly, the lineage through which Tshe dbang nor bu received the *dGongs pa zang thal*, as it can be reconstructed from the '*Chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo* (supposed to be his *khrid yig* of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, which I study later), does not seem to pass through a Kun (dga') bzang (rgya mtsho) / dbang po. This is a subject of perplexity that will have to be explored further.

However, this lineage, apart from its first links, is practically identical to the one claimed by the author of *Chos dbyings lam bzang* in the context of *guru yoga* (p. 357; I mention only the links after rGod ldem): Nam mkha' grags pa, bDe legs rgyal mtshan, Se *ston* mGon po bzang po, Se *ston* Rin chen rgyal mtshan, mGon po zla ba, Nub dgon pa, Blo gros rgyal mtshan, Byam bzang, Śā kya rgya(l) mtshan, 'Brug sgra bzang po, Nam mkha' 'jigs med, Chos dbyings rang grol, lHa btsun Padma 'phrin las, rJe btsun Kun bzang rgya mtsho.

Here is, for comparison, the lineage of '*Chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo* (p. 523 ff.): rNam rgyal mgon po, bSod nams bzang po, Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, Chos kyi rin chen, Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, *Bya btang* Śā kya dpal bzang, Nub dgon pa Chos kyi rgyal mtshan, Blo gros rgyal mtshan, Byams pa bzang po, Śā kya rgyal mtshan, La stod pa 'Brug sgra bzang po, Theg mchog bsTan pa'i nyi ma, dBon 'Jigs bral Nam mkha', *Yongs 'dzin dam pa* Ratna bhadra, then Tshe dbang nor bu himself.

The penultimate one should be Kun bzang rin chen, identified on the TBRC site as P6990, which gives us one more suggestion for Kun bzang rgya mtsho / Kun bzang dbang po.<sup>77</sup> In any case, the problem of the identity of Kha'u dga' ldan pa Chos dbyings ran grol, the author of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*, is now practically solved.

<sup>76</sup> Gene Smith, *Among Tibetan Texts*, p. 298. The following passage can also be found in a short biography of Thang po che Kun dga' 'bum (<http://www.jonangfoundation.org/masters/tangpoche-kunga-bum>): "At the Sakya hermitage of Khau (kha'u) up the valley from Sakya monastery, he received many tantric transmissions from the master Yeshe Pal (Ye shes dpal, 1281–1365), such as the *Vajrapanjara Tantra* and the *Samputa Tantra* of the *Hevajra Tantra* cycle, the esoteric instructions of the protector Caturmukha (*zhal bzhi pa*), the *Six Dharmas of Niguma*, and the *Six Dharmas of Naropa*." The association with one of the founding masters of the *jo nang pa* current also suits Tshe dbang nor bu well.

<sup>77</sup> This would imply that P2871 and P6990 are the same person. Both were masters of Tshe dbang nor bu.

3. What is the *Yang tig gces sgron*?

Mentioning the *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris* (1712) by Padma 'phrin las and the small text of Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol on which it is based, I have not yet traced the source of these instructions linking the Khregs chod of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* to the (more tantric-style) practice of *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal*, the wrathful form of Padmasambhava most central in the Byang gter.

In his *Thugs sgrub yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris gzhung don rab gsal* (from now on: *gZhung don rab gsal*), Padma 'phrin las begins (p. 136 ff.) with a story of the transmission from which his text proceeds. He mentions the triple filiation of the Byang gter "by the son, by the disciple and by the wife" (*sras brgyud slob brgyud yum brgyud*) and he claims the first two.

Here is the detail of the first of the two lineages from rGod ldem, given on p. 136 sq.:

(1) rNam rgyal mgon po (TBRC : P10100),<sup>78</sup> (2) *Rig 'dzin* Sangs rgyas byams bzang (P10127), (3) *Se ston* Nyi ma bzang po (P8839),<sup>79</sup> (4) *Se ston* mGon po bzang po (P10120),<sup>80</sup> (5) *Se ston* Rin chen rgyal mtshan (P8343),<sup>81</sup> (6) *rGyal tshab* mGon po zla ba (P10130—we are now in the 15<sup>th</sup> century according to TBRC), (7) Nub dgon pa Byams pa chos rgyal mtshan (P6105),<sup>82</sup> after who there are four figures that we find in the line leading to *Rig 'dzin* Tshe dbang nor bu: (8) Blo gros rgyal mtshan (P2737), (9) *mKhan chen* Byams pa bzang po (P10098—of whom it is said (p. 139-140) that he was *rDzogs chen zang thal dang Lam 'bras kyi rnal 'byor pa mthar phyin pa* and that he was the abbot of Dam rin dGa' ldan byams pa gling), then (10) Kun bzang chos kyi nyi ma and (11) *Rig*

<sup>78</sup> About rNam rgyal mgon po's dates, see Jay H. Valentine (2017) and (2018). According to *Guru bKra shis* (p. 669), he is in his tenth year at the time of his father's death (supposedly 1408). He would therefore have been born around 1399. He had received the *dGongs pa zang thal* the year before rGod ldem's death, i.e. 1407. He married around 1416. He had no children. He is above all master of the *byang lcags mdzod nag po*; the master of *rDzogs chen* is rather *rDo rje dpal ba*. He died in his 25<sup>th</sup> year, around 1424 (all this calculation is clearly based on the commonly accepted, but not indisputable, dates for Rig 'dzin rGod ldem).

<sup>79</sup> The author of *Rig 'dzin* rGod ldem's *rnam thar*, TBRC W29603.

<sup>80</sup> Padma 'phrin las expressly mentions as an error the inversion, in the lineage, of Nyi ma bzang po and mGon po bzang po, according to the order found on TBRC/BDRC.

<sup>81</sup> He wrote commentary on the *rDo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*, found p. 7-22 of vol. LXXX of the *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa* of Kaḥ thog.

<sup>82</sup> One of the masters of *Byang bdag* bKra shis thob rgyal (1550?–1603) according to TBRC/BDRC. So we would have suddenly passed to the 16<sup>th</sup> century...

'dzin 'Brug sgra bzang po.<sup>83</sup> After this master, the lineage becomes specific again: his main disciple was (12) Nam mkha' 'jigs med (*IHa btsun* Nam mkha' 'jigs med—1587–1650; P1691), who transmitted it to (13) Rig 'dzin 'Phrin las lhun grub (P359: 1611-1662), who was also a disciple of *mKhas grub* mDo sngags bstan 'dzin (1576–1628: P648); “later... the fifth Great Omniscient Conqueror himself praised him.” His main disciple (p. 141) was (14) *gTer chen* 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646–1714), “who gave it to my master, (15) Zur rDo rje 'chang the Great, Chos dbyings rang grol” (1604–1669).<sup>84</sup> The sixteenth master is therefore Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717, rDo rje brag rig 'dzin IV).

We note that the link before Zur Chos dbyings rang grol is *gTer bdag gling pa*, although the latter is entirely of the same generation as Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las himself. Now, *gTer bdag gling pa* is the author of a very short text that may well be the source of the Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's “notes” (*zin bris*): the *Yang tig gces sgron gyi khrid rgyun* (*gSung 'bum*, vol. VI, pp. 621-626), which in turn refers to a much broader text (22 to 29 pp., depending of the editions) of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos*: the *Thugs sgrub snying po blang ba'i phyir yang tig gces pa'i sgron me smar khrid mngon sum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*.<sup>85</sup>

Neither Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter ma*, nor 'Gyur med rdo rje's text (which is a sort of brief analytical table) contains the slightest hint of a link to the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*.<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup> Once again, the familiarity with the work of Klong chen pa at the time of the full flowering of the *dGongs pa zang thal* can be noted, since it is said of this figure (p. 140): *Kun mkhyen chen po'i bstan bcos gSang 'grel phyogs bcu mun sel thugs la chud cing l*, etc. (p. 140). It is also said of him: *rDzogs chen zang thal gtso bor gyur pa bka' gter gyi zab chos mang du bzhugs pa rdzogs chen gyi 'chad nyan gtso bor mdzad pas Rong po rdzogs chen par grags*. 'Brug sgra bzang po requires further research; on this figure see e.g. *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, p. 727.

<sup>84</sup> It is surprising here to see 'Gyur med rdo rje (*gTer bdag gling pa*) teaching his master, who is almost forty years older than him. But Padma 'phrin las is quite clear and there is no ambiguity in the identification of the persons. A study of the biographies of the three protagonists—Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, *gTer bdag gling pa* and Rig 'dzin Padma phrin las—would be much needed and would no doubt help to clarify the situation.

<sup>85</sup> *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 7, p. 537-559.

<sup>86</sup> This should be inquired further. In my present perceptions of this question, it is much more likely to connect, as Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las does, the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* to the *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal* than to the *dGongs pa zang thal* (which only Zur Chos dbyings rang grol attempted). The *Thugs sgrub* original text focuses on the nature of the mind and speaks of it in terms that are very much in the same style, in the same register as the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, except for the initial focus on tantric practices—which are, incidentally, very simplified, very close to the so-called *sems 'dzin*, these tantric-type methods, but torn from the heavy ritual context of the *sādhana* and reduced to their simplest expression in order to produce directly the experiences that are their aims.—In the same style, there might well be, quite unexpectedly, narrow ties between the *dGongs pa zang thal* and another tantric cycle of the Northern Treasures: the *bKa' brgyad rang byung*

It is Zur Chos dbyings rang grol that (to the best of our knowledge) first expressly made the connection in his *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun rab gsal*. This very brief text (3 p. in vol. XVIII of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*) combines, in a continuous development, the *gZer lnga*, the instructions for visualizing rDo rje drag po rtsal and the practices of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Naturally, a good knowledge of the context is necessary to understand the very allusive formulas of the p. 129 of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's text.<sup>87</sup> The practices briefly alluded to here are those detailed in the *Ma rig mun sel sgron me* of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* (p. 195-199) and, a remarkable detail, it is exactly this material that Chos dbyings rang grol also extracted from *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* to make up the instructions of Khregs chod in his own *dGongs pa zang thal* manual.

This is the matrix of *Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las'* text, which will give its full development to Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's insight. Now, as has been said, the *Thugs sgrub yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris gzhung don rab gsal* of Padma 'phrin las is in turn—to put it mildly—the source of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*.

4. Comparison of Padma 'phrin las' *gZhung don rab bsal* (1712) and Tshe dbang nor bu's *Chos dbyings lam bzang* (1755)

Padma phrin las' work, as it is now clear, presents itself as a practice manual for *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal*, the main wrathful form of Padmasambhava in the Byang gter; however, in sum, from p. 169 onwards (so, in more than half of the text), Padma 'phrin las hardly comments on anything but rDzogs chen texts—mainly from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, although the *dGongs pa zang thal* is not absent. When one knows that the first 28 pages are mainly devoted to the *gZer lnga*, in other words, that there are only 9 pages devoted exclusively to the Tantric-style practice of *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal* as such, it is clear that it would have sufficed for the one I think is Tshe dbang nor bu to cut out these nine pages in order to compose his *Chos dbyings lam bzang*. To a certain extent, that is precisely what he did. Once this compositional principle is understood, the text by “Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol” becomes quite transparent, though of little interest in itself—except for the decision to endow the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* with an autonomous practice manual.

---

*rang shar*. But this point cannot be developed here, as it is never stressed in the context of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals, and because it feels somehow counter-intuitive and would require quite some development.

<sup>87</sup> *De bas ka dag sngon 'gro rdo rje dang | | hūṃ sngon thig le dkar dmar dmigs rim bskyang | | bar bar ngo bo bltas te shar grol btang | | de rjes khrid gzhung dngos gzhi la zhugs te | | mnyam bzhag gsal stong 'dzin med ngo bo skyong |*



The paradox is as follows: we are in the posterity of Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, who boldly inaugurated a genuine articulation of the two rDzogs chen cycles among Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's revelations—the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* and the *dGongs pa zang thal*—and here we are, about a century later, with the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* being treated separately, and this under the pen of an author—Tshe dbang nor bu, if it is him indeed—who probably is the one who has made the junction between the traditions of central Tibet and those of Kaḥ thog (where he was initially trained and where, as is well known, he worked a lot at the end of his life).

A detailed comparison of the two texts—Padma 'phrin las's work and its “plagiarism” by the one we assume to be Tshe dbang nor bu—would require too much space to be carried out in the context of this article, and would basically take us away from our theme—the history of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals—by devoting to the *Yang tig gces sgron gyi zin bris* as such even more developments than I have granted it. I will limit myself to a few remarks.

The few pages of Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las' text which are closely related to the practice of *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal* are, not surprisingly, deleted by Kha'u dGa' ldan pa; he also suppresses the introductory presentation of the lineage (this disadvantage for the historian is compensated by a presentation of his own lineage in the explanation of the *guru yoga* practice of the *gZer lnga*). In addition, he expands the chapters relating to the “four thoughts that turn the mind away from *saṃsāra*” or to the development of *bodhicitta*—unless the author of these modifications is Kun bzang rgya mtsho / dbang po, the master he claims to be following.<sup>88</sup> On the other hand, here is the most surprising point (and even, it must be said, the most disappointing): after the presentation of the three visualisations borrowed from<sup>89</sup> the *Ma rig mun sel sgron me*, Tshe dbang nor bu (?) is sloppy, as it were, at working

---

<sup>88</sup> Perhaps it is in this sense that one must understand the words attributed to the master Kun bzang dbang po in Kha'u dga' ldan pa's vision: the part that is clearly the work of the latter (the addition of the instructions taken from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* after the *guru yoga* of the *gZer lnga*) reveals many imperfections in the composition—not to say: a rather slovenly drafting. It would be paradoxical if the same author had devoted so much care to elegantly developing the first half of his work—the least important, since it is the least original in terms of its subject matter—to cap it off with such a disappointing ending. Let us add that several parts of the “ordinary preliminary practices” have a rather *sa skya pa* flavour: it would be easy to show what the presentation of the taking of refuge owes, in particular, to Sa skya paṇḍita's *Thub pa'i dgongs gsal*. I would not be surprised if these well-structured scholastic developments, written in a concise, clear and firm style, were from a different hand (that of a monk trained in the traditions of Sa skya?) than the end.

<sup>89</sup> Those that Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol had apparently been the first to extract from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* when he included them in his *khrid yig*.

out the end of his manual—he simply sticks two very long quotations end-to-end, the second of which is definitely borrowed from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, while the first does not seem to be there, but has a very similar style and content.

Paradoxically, therefore, the only real practice manual for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* preserved in the Byang gter tradition is... Padma 'phrin las' *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris*, which, between p. 170 of the edition cited and its last page (p. 218), arranges and comments almost exclusively on texts from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, despite occasional references to the *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal*. If Tshe dbang nor bu (?) had merely extracted the relevant passages from the *Yang tig gces sgron zin bris*, even without adding anything of his own, he would have had the material for a much more extensive manual, which would have been almost twice as long as the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*.

5. Reflections on the compositional imperfections of *Chos dbyings lam bzang*

Why didn't the author of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* complete what seems to have been his project?

The works of Tshe dbang nor bu, at least in the state in which they have come down to us, contain a number of unfinished texts;<sup>90</sup> without imputing to their author a rough-hewn temperament, one can at least suppose that the great man of action that he was did not always get the leisure to carry out his literary projects.

We remember also that the date we have concluded to be the that of the end of composition is 1755—precisely, that of Tshe dbang nor bu's death. He may have run out of time to finish his enterprise.

The honest textual tinkering admitted by "Kha'u dga' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol" in his *Chos dbyings lam bzang*—collage of a section on rDzogs chen to a pre-existing commentary on the preliminary practices—is clearly visible in his text: it is betrayed by an inconsistency between the announced plan and the one actually incorporated in the text. The point at which this incoherence materialises is most likely the point at which the author has taken over a previously existing text to complete it. Let us recall that, in the vision (?) which led him to compose the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*,<sup>91</sup> the author is told that there is already a manual of practice going as far as the *guru yoga*, and that he must

<sup>90</sup> This is notably the case of what is presented as his *dGongs pa zang thal* manual, the 'Chad thabs 'od kyi' khor lo, which I will study at the end of this chapter.

<sup>91</sup> Op. cit. p. 372: *Kun dga' bzang po dang mjal te Ka dag khrid yig bla ma'i rnal 'byor yan legs par gnang ste | 'di man khyod kyis khrigs chags su grigs shig ces bgos bzhin du bka' stsal pa yid la brtan du bzung ste...* (already quoted n. 67 above).

complete it in order to integrate the whole practice of *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*.

Precisely, here is the plan announced at the beginning (p. 335 of *Chos dbyings lam bzang*):

1. *sNgon 'gro*
  - 1.1. *Thun mong gi sngon 'gro*<sup>92</sup>
  - 1.2. *Thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro*
2. *dNgos gzhi*
3. *rjes*

One would therefore expect, quite naturally, at the end of the exposition of the *gZer lnga* (that is, precisely: at the end of the *guru yoga*), to encounter a “second,” announcing the *thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro* (which, here, consists of the following three practices, borrowed, *via* Padma 'phrin las and Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, from the *Ma rig mun sel sgron me* of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*). However, the author continues with a “sixth” (p. 361), a “seventh” (*id.*), an “eighth” (p. 362), before he considers his inconsequence (in the last line of p. 363) and proceeds to patch up the text, without any further concern for consistency with his plan announcement: *'Di yan gyi thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro lus ngag yid gsum lam du 'dzud pa zhes bya ba sa bcad gnyis pa'o*.

This compositional awkwardness therefore comes into play exactly at the seam that Tshe dbang nor bu (?) stitched in his text to conjoin the two parts of Padma 'phrin las' writing, once the development relating to *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal* had been removed.

However, it is difficult to explain his error, since Padma 'phrin las, his model, does not go astray, and one can read under his pen (p. 163): *gnyis pa thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro sems 'dzin la gsum te |*, with the subdivision into body, speech and mind that the author of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* makes up for quite awkwardly afterwards. But when we look more closely, we see that Padma 'phrin las does something quite different. He devotes the following pages first to the preliminary practice of the body, which itself comprises three parts, body, speech and mind: visualisation of *Guru rDo rje drag po rtsal*'s body (pp. 163-167), then what concerns his “speech” (pp. 167-168) before arriving at the mind (pp. 168 *ff.*).

Padma 'phrin las then leads us to a second, speech-related part (this is where one should not get lost in the highly mastered but complex plan of this work), presenting the “*maṇḍala of Speech*”—a whole series of visualisations of the syllable *hūṃ* which recall what is usually found

<sup>92</sup> In this context, this includes the *gZer lnga*, and not merely the “four thoughts that turn the mind away from the *saṃsāra*.”

in the specific *sNying thig* preliminaries under the heading of “purification of the speech” in the “purification of the triple portal”.<sup>93</sup> The practices presented by Tshe dbang nor bu (?) following the *gZer lnga* begin, in Padma ‘phrin las’ text, p. 170, and are placed under the title: *gsum pa thugs phyag mtshan la sems ‘dzin pa*. The latter marks the transition from the texts of *Thugs sgrub* to those of *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* (p. 172). The author takes the trouble to quote the title of the text from which he borrows the following quotation: *rDzogs chen ka dag gi khrid yig gter gzhung Ma rig mun sel sgron me’am | snying po bcud bsdu kyi gnad khrid las |*, etc.

The strangeness noted in the structuring of the Tshe dbang nor bu (?)’s text continues, moreover, for the chapters of what should be the main part (*dnegos gzhi*) and the conclusion (*rjes*), since until the end of *Chos dbyings lam bzang* there is only a “ninth” (pp. 363-364), a “tenth” (pp. 364-365) and an “eleventh” (pp. 365-373 [end]). There are further small structural defects of the same kind—annoying as they may be for the reader, they are full of interest, as clues, for the philologist.

Let us now look at the “main part” of the *Chos dbyings lam bzang*. Perhaps is it not useless to recall that the order of practices which is most familiar to us, because it dominates entirely in the present era, was not engraved in marble from the very beginning. What in retrospect may appear to us as some degree of disorder in the organisation of practices certainly still reigned, even at the—quite late—time we are dealing with. For example, in a text as late as the *rDzogs chen dgongs pa kun ‘dus* manual composed by ‘Gyur med rdo rje (gTer bdag gling pa), some of the specific preliminary practices of *rDzogs chen* are indeed implemented before *Khregs chod*—but others are done between the *Khregs chod* and the *Thod rgal*.<sup>94</sup>

However, as far as the *dGongs pa zang thal* is concerned, if we stick to the texts themselves, there is little ambiguity (except for the small details that gave *sPrul sku* Tshul lo so much trouble in writing his manual). Indeed, in what this author calls the *khrid gzhung*, the “source manual” or “main manual”—the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig*—the sequence is more or less clear (pp. 360-368): if, in terms of ordinary and non-ordinary preliminaries, the text (p. 360) says nothing about the *gZer lnga* and confines itself to a reminder of impermanence, then

<sup>93</sup> See, for example, for the proper form of these practices in the context of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, Arguillère (2016), pp. 212-219.

<sup>94</sup> Actually, the complete set of the “specific preliminary practices” (*ru shan*, etc.) that are nowadays implemented between the “uncommon preliminary practices” (refuge to *guru-yoga*) and the *Khregs chod* appears in the *dGongs pa zang thal* exclusively in contexts where it is immediately followed by the instructions for *Thod rgal*.

we move on to the rDzogs chen specific preliminaries (p. 360-367), followed by a main part (*dnegos gzhi*, from p. 367 onwards), comprising two sections: *chos nyid stong pa'i ngang nas chos dbyings 'gyur ba med pa'i don gyi lta ba* (p. 368-379), corresponding to Khregs chod (although the term does *not* appear at this point in the text<sup>95</sup>), and then *rang rig pa rang shar gyi dgongs pa ye shes mngon sum du gtan la dbab pa*, corresponding to Thod rgal (whose usual name also does not appear, though—p. 379-389).

Among the various authors studied so far, only Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol is exactly true to this order, as *sPrul sku* Tshul lo will be. But in Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol's practice manual, within this structure prescribed by the *khrid gzhung*, there was a beginning of an integration of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* practices, leading him to organise his material in this way:

1. *Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyis gnas lugs kyi don gtan* [307] | *la 'bebs pa*—p. 307
  - 1.1. *sNgon 'gro*
    - 1.1.1. *Thun mong* = *sNgon 'gro gzer lnga*
      - 1.1.1.1. *sKyabs 'gro*
      - 1.1.1.2. *Sems bskyed pa*—p. 309
      - 1.1.1.3. *Maṇḍala*
      - 1.1.1.4. *rDo rje sems dpa'i bsgom bzlas*
      - 1.1.1.5. *Bla ma'i rnal 'byor* [including the meditation on impermanence and on the sufferings of the *saṃsāra*]
    - 1.1.2. *Thun mong ma yin pa*—p. 312
      - 1.1.2.1. *rDo rje dkar po la brten nas sems 'dzin pa*—p. 313
      - 1.1.2.2. *rDo rje mthing kha hūṃ yig dang bcas pas la sems 'dzin pa*
      - 1.1.2.3. *Thig le dkar dmar la brten nas sems 'dzin pa*
  - 1.2. *dNegos gzhi byung gnas 'gro gsum gyi sems kyi gzhi rtsa gcod*—p. 314
  - 1.3. *rJes*—p. 316
2. *lHun grub dgongs pa zang thal gyis thod rgal gyi rang rtsal rjen par ston pa*, etc.

<sup>95</sup> The absence of the “classical” terms of Khregs chod and Thod rgal in this text is strangely reminiscent of the Bon pos' *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*, which seems to be comparatively ancient. In fact, it could also be said that this section which *sPrul sku* Tshul lo treats as one of the two Khregs chod systems in the *dGongs pa zang thal* rather corresponds to a “searching of the mind” that, in many texts, comes *before* the Khregs chod and is regarded as a mere preliminary introduction to it. Now, while editing the English version of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's manual, I think that it is the quasi-absence of the Khregs chod that is more characteristic of the *dGongs pa zang thal* than any special way to present it.

*Rig 'dzin* Tshe dbang nor bu (?), largely inspired by Padma 'phrin las, goes a little further, although without much development: the “main part” (of the Khregs chod) was, in Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, the examination of the origin, subsistence and destination (*byung gnas 'gro gsum*) of the mind.<sup>96</sup> Now, in the *Chos dbyings lam bzang* (but already in Padma 'phrin las) we see the vague suggestion of a meditation on the sky in the instruction called *dpe dang dpe'i don zab mos rlung nam mkha'i dbyings su bstim pa la sems 'dzin pa* (p. 364),<sup>97</sup> the ninth point of his (rather shaky) plan.

This meditation precedes the passage to the “search for the mind” (*sems tshol ba*, pp. 364-365), which consists in the examination of its origin, abiding (or “abode”) and destination.

After that, in his eleventh part (pp. 365-372), the author merely copies long passages from two *gter ma* texts. I have not yet identified the

<sup>96</sup> This is roughly in line with the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig*.

<sup>97</sup> I wonder if this sequence (putting end to end *meditation on the sky*—if that is what it is all about, the text is not absolutely clear—and *searching for the origin, sustenance and destination of the mind*) might not be the matrix of the strange organisation of the Khregs chod section in *sPrul sku Tshul lo's* manual. I have insisted elsewhere (Arguillère 2016: pp. 230-234) on the rather astonishing character of this section of the *Khrid yig skal bzang re skong*, which presents *two* systems of Khregs chod put side by side—the first based on the “stirring of the three spaces” (*nam mkha' gsum sprugs*) and the second including, in particular, the search for the provenance, subsistence and destination of the mind. I have indicated (2016: p. 231) the internal reasons that may have pushed *sPrul sku Tshul lo* in this direction—reasons that are both exegetical (an obscure passage from *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig*) and practical (linked to the rather elusive nature of the instructions about Khregs chod in this very text). But, for an author as rigorous and conservative as *sPrul sku Tshul lo*, a point of support of this kind among his predecessors may have contributed to his taking the step of this somewhat surprising innovation in view of the formal constraints he sets himself in the composition of his *dGongs pa zang thal* manual. — One could even go further and ask oneself, in view of what is found in the tradition of Kaḥ thog where the Khregs chod is frankly replaced by the *zhi gnas / lhag mthong* of the bKa' brgyud pa's Mahāmudrā, whether the sequence *nam mkha' gsum sprugs* / a more analytical search for the nature of the mind would not be an extension of it, but governed by the concern to strictly respect the framework of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, *stricto sensu*, (the only “first four volumes”, so without the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*). This is not pure speculation on my part: the motivation for this order—meditation on space and then the search for the origin, sustenance and destination of the mind—is, in fact, well explained by Padma 'phrin las (p. 178) by analogy with the practices of *zhi gnas* and *lhag mthong*: *De ltar thun mong dang thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro song rjes | dngos gzhi'i khrid rim pa sems chos nyid kyi dkyil 'khor ni | rTsa ba las | de rjes khrid gzhung dngos gzhi zhugs te | mnyam bzhaḡ gsal stong 'dzin med ngo bo skyong | zhes gsungs pa'i don spyir zhi gnas sngon du btang ba'i mthar sems 'tshol gyi (gyis?) gdar sha bcad de sgom thog nas lta ba 'tshol ba dang | thog mar sems 'tshol dang de nas zhi gnas su phab te | lta thog nas sgom pa 'tshol ba ste lugs gnyis las | 'dir snga ma ltar yin pas | dang po sgom thog nas lta ba 'tshol ba ni | ...* (Padma 'phrin las' treatise is, in all of its details, so rich, so interesting, so well-written, that one would like to quote it—and translate it—in full !)

first quotation (pp. 365-367),<sup>98</sup> but pp. 367-372 are borrowed from several chapters of the *Gegs sel nor bu rin po che'i mdzod* (p. 279, l. 6 - p. 286, l. 2 of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*).

**The *bKa' yang gsang bla na med pa rdzogs chen kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi khrid kyi 'chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo by Tshe dbang nor bu* (1698–1755)**

The attribution to Tshe dbang nor bu does not present the same difficulties for this short text: while it is not in the 4-volume *gsung 'bum* edited by the Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang (Darjeeling, 1973), it is found in the 6-volume edition<sup>99</sup> and finally in the 3-volume edition.<sup>101</sup>

This is unfortunately a mere fragment:<sup>102</sup> the text, far from filling the whole programme indicated by its title, abruptly stops at the end of the “extraordinary preliminary practices”—so much so that it does not even deal with rDzogs chen at all.

A first important remark, however: this text is not excessively similar to the previous one (one might have feared, in fact, that this fragment on the preliminary practices was in fact the one that “Kha'u dga ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol” had inherited from its master Kun bzang dbang po—but this is not the case, it is a significantly different text).

Indeed, in accordance with the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig* (*sPrul sku Tshul lo's “khrid gzhung”*), it begins with five points: examination of the qualities of the disciple, places, times, companions and equipment. However, these points are simply mentioned and not developed. It continues with a sixth point: the history of the transmission. Here again, the text is basically limited to a statement of principles, but, very interestingly, Tshe dbang nor bu names three masters from

<sup>98</sup> Apparently, Tshe dbang nor bu borrowed from Padma 'phrin las (who intertwined texts from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*) and passages from *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me smar khrid mngon sum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*, one of rGod ldem's *gter mas* whose style is extremely similar to that of *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Not having found the passage quoted by Tshe dbang nor bu in the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, I believe—this would be the ultimate sign of a certain lack of care in the composition of his manual—that he unknowingly took it from the *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal* by borrowing a passage from Padma 'phrin las without taking the trouble to verify its source. This research would now be made much easier than at the time when the French version of this paper was written, thanks to the complete edition of the *Thugs sgrub rdo rje drag po rtsal* as vol. 6-8 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.

<sup>99</sup> Damchoe Sangpo, Dalhousie, 1976-1977: vol. IV, 22 pages of a manuscript in *dbu med*, numbered 517-538, the first being the title page and the last being blank.

<sup>101</sup> Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, Beijing, 2006: vol. II, pp. 204-211. This is the edition I used.

<sup>102</sup> This might be the reason why it was not included in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.

whom he received the *dGongs pa zang thal*: *sPrul pa'i sku* Kun dga' bstan 'dzin, Nam mkha' chos rje of La stod dPal mo chos lding and *Yongs 'dzin dam pa* Ratnabhadrā of mNga' ris gung thang, at the cave called Ra la za 'od phug.<sup>103</sup>

He then restores the lineages through which this teaching came down to him. The first (the one that leads to Ratnabhadrā) is the one I have reconstructed below in the tree recapitulating the lineages that led to the various known practice manuals of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Here is another one: it is identical to the first one until *Sā kya rgyal mtshan*, then it goes to *Yol me* [Yol mo] *bsTan 'dzin nor bu* (1589–1644, BDRC P1690),<sup>104</sup> to *gCung Phyag rdor*, then to *sPrul sku* Kun dga' bstan 'dzin, from whom *Tshe dbang nor bu* received it.

The third one follows the first until *Kun dga' rgyal mtshan*, after who it passes to *sNgags 'chang gSang sngags rdo rje*, then to *rJe Sangs rgyas seng ge*, to *Blo gros rab gsal*, to *Thugs sras Ras chung rdo rje*, to *sNgags 'chang Nam mkha' gzi brjid*, to *Nam mkha' kun bzang*, to *Nam mkha' rdo rje*, then to *rDo rje 'dzin pa* *Nam mkha' chos rje* who passed it on to *Tshe dbang nor bu*.

He adds a fourth one, which we are more interested in, because we already know it: from *Rig 'dzin rGod ldem* to *bSod nams mchog bzang*, then to *Don yod rgyal mtshan*, *Thang stong rgyal po*, *Zab lung gter ston Kun dga' nyi ma*, *Ratnaketu*, *Ratnavajra*, *Bo dhe sing ha*, *bKra shis rgya mtsho*, *bsTan pa seng ge*, *Chos nyid rgya mtsho*, *Shes rab rgya mtsho*, *Klong gsal snying po*, *Khyab bdag 'khor lo'i mgon po* *Padma bde chen gling pa*, then *Tshe dbang nor bu*.

This is the lineage of *Kaḥ thog*, easy to recognise through the sanskritisation of the names: “*Ratnaketu*” is the *A rdo dKon mchod rgyal mtshan* who spread the *dGons pa zang thal* in *Kaḥ thog*; “*Ratnavajra*” is none other than *Rong po dKon mchog rdo rje*; *Tshe dbang nor bu* (or the copyist) forgets *Sā kya rgyal mtshan* and passes directly to a “*Bo dhe sing ha*” who is none other than *Byang chub seng ge*; after which we arrive to *bKra shis rgya mtsho* in whom we recognise the author of the second *khrid yig* studied above. In the following, we see a lineage starting from *bKra shis rgya mtsho*, whose first links we already knew from *Guru bKra shis*, but that *Tshe dbang nor bu* continues to *Klong gsal snying po* (P1686, 1625–1692) by another route than that indicated by *Guru bKra shis* and whose intermediate link is *Padma bde chen gling pa* (TBRC: P669; 1627 or 1663(!)–1713),<sup>105</sup> who is none other than *Padma mati*—most probably the author of the bulky practice manual for the *Yang ti nag po* preserved in the *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum*, the

<sup>103</sup> This Ratnabhadrā is surely *Kun bzang rin chen* (P6990).

<sup>104</sup> See Benjamin Bogin 2013 and 2014.

<sup>105</sup> See Gyurme Dorje 2007: <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Pema-Dechen-Lingpa/9297>.



*Zab lam don gsal me long* (it occupies the whole vol. VIII, p. 1-595<sup>106</sup>).

Another interesting feature of this fragment is that it clearly determines the function of the five consecrations (*dbang*) that characterize the *dGongs pa zang thal*, in contrast to the four consecration system that prevail everywhere in Klong chen pa's writings: the consecration of the vase is preparatory to the development phase (here, more specifically: the *Zhi khro* practices); the secret consecration is preparatory to *gtum mo*; the consecration of *shes rab ye shes* is preparatory to the path of the "messenger" (both correspond to the practices developed in the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*); finally, what is most original: the consecration of the word is preparatory to *Khregs chod*, while the fifth, the *rig pa'i rtsal dbang*, is preparatory to *Thod rgal*.<sup>107</sup> This is an explanation that we do not find in Klong chen pa, and for good reason—as in his system there is no such fifth consecration that would really be separated from the fourth.

In the following, Tshe dbang nor bu clearly combines the *Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig* (the text *sPrul sku* Tshul lo calls *khrid gzhung*) and the *gZer lnga*. Tshe dbang nor bu (or his editor) copies the *gZer lnga* text in its entirety up to the "nail" of impermanence, at which point he takes the floor again to briefly mention the *blo ldog rnam bzhi* and the importance of meditating on them assiduously. He then goes back to copying the *gZer lnga*, with just a few notes about the practice of *guru-yoga*, most of which refers to the *Bi ma'i snyan rgyud khrid yig gzer bu gsum pa*, a text that, in fact, presents a *guru-yoga* specific to the *dGongs pa zang thal*. This brings us back to the text of the *gZer lnga*, copied up to the end of the *guru-yoga*, and there the text ends abruptly, in fishtail, if one dares to say so, with a *dge'o*, probably added by the editors of this fragment.

There are no clues in the text as to whether it is an unfinished work or a preserved fragment of a work not found so far. The two available editions stop at exactly the same point; but it is very likely that the one I used (in *dbu can*) comes directly from the other (manuscript in *dbu med*). The non-existence or disappearance of this sequel, which would have made this text a true *khrid yig* of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, is a great pity—because the part we have gives the feeling of a real familiarity

<sup>106</sup> The *rnam thar* of mGon po dbang rgyal by *sPrul sku* Tshul lo tells us (p. 23) that mGon po dbang rgyal received the *Yang ti nag po* from his father, *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje of 'Khor gdong; the latter had received it in 1813 from *Bla ma* sKal bzang yon tan (cf. *Khor gdong gter chen 'gro phan gling pa gro log rtsal gyi rnam thar* by Ye shes don rtogs, p. 10). This surely implies that *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, besides his deep knowledge of Klong chen pa's tradition, was also not less versed in the *Black Quintessence* than his grandfather and his uncle were.

<sup>107</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 190: *bskyed rim gyi sngon 'gro bum dbang dang | gtum mo'i sngon 'gro gsang dbang | pho nya'i sngon 'gro sher dbang | Khregs chod kyi sngon 'gro tshig dbang | thod rgal gyi sngon 'gro rtsal dbang sogs...*

with the text and of the concern to give a manual that would conform to its letter, without the addition of foreign elements. That is all that can be said about it.

**The *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi dgongs don phyogs gcig tu bkod pa khrid yig skal bzang re skongs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan by sPrul sku Tshul lo* (1884–1957)**

Coming to the last link of the *catena aurea* of the *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals and, with it, arriving also at the end of this article, I have to conclude that the harvest was a little meagre. The first two *khrid yigs* (*Śā kya rgyal mtshan*, *bKra shis rgya mtsho*) are not really about the *dGongs pa zang thal* and the former is not even precisely a *khrid yig*. The *Chos dbyings lam bzang*, apart from the fact that it only deals with the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, is a rather badly made tinkering with a text by Padma 'phrin las, which is rather related to the *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal* (but the latter is nonetheless one of the richest encounters I have made in the course of this research). As for Tshe dbang nor bu's manual, it is unfortunately only a fragment of no consequence for our purpose, though not devoid of interest.

In short, in the vast span of time that separates the practice manuals included in the *gter chos* (mid-14<sup>th</sup> century) from the one that *sPrul sku Tshul lo* composed in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, only Zur Chos dbyings rang grol's *Thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam* stands out like an island in the middle of the (quite empty) ocean (if I dare divert, to make it say what it says without meaning to say it, the metaphor that is in its title).

Moreover, while *sPrul sku Tshul lo* was probably also heir to the tradition of Kaḥ thog, which his master mGon po dbang rgyal had received, as we have seen, still, the main lineage he claims is indeed that of central Tibet. The arrival of the Byang gter at 'Khor gdong monastery and its branches is much later than at Kaḥ thog. In fact, a short history of 'Khor gdong can be found in the life of mGon po dbang rgyal by *sPrul sku Tsul lo*, which mentions many generations of masters from the foundation by *Grub chen Sangs rgyas rdo rje* to the time of *Grub dbang Shes rab me 'bar* (1742–1814),<sup>108</sup> who first established the link with the Byang gter tradition: he received the initiations of the *dGongs pa zang thal* from the 5<sup>th</sup> *rDo rje brag rig 'dzin chen po*, *bsKal bzang Padma dbang phyug* (*rGod ldem v*, *aka Khams gsum zil gnon* or *rDo rje thogs med rtsal*—TBRC: P89; 1720–1771 according to the *Treasury of*

<sup>108</sup> These are the dates restored by the author of the *Byang gter chos 'byung*, p. 714. On *Khams sprul Shes rab me 'bar*, see my (2018) presentation on *The Treasury of Lives* (<https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Khamtrul-Sherab-Me-bar/13688>).

*Lives*; 1719–1770 according to the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*) in *Mi nyag ra ba lha sgang*.<sup>109</sup>

In his *rnam thar* of mGon po dbang rgyal, *sPrul sku* Tshul lo makes 'Khor gdong *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje, alias 'Gro phan gling pa gro lod rtsal (1802–1864, his maternal grandfather and the master of his uncle and master, mGon po dbang rgyal, 1845–1915), the direct disciple of this Shes rab me 'bar; we find the same thing in the *rnam thar* of the *gTer chen* composed by Ye shes don rtogs and, which is even more decisive, in his own *gSang ba'i rnam thar* (autobiographical).

However, in another of his writings, the *Byang gter bka' dbang spyi sbyor rung gi lo rgyus gsal ba'i me long* (f° 26b sq. of the xylographic edition in 8 vol.), here is how *sPrul sku* Tshul lo presents the lineage for the use of those who would have to accomplish the rituals of empowerment (*dbang*) of the *Byang gter*, including, of course, those of the *dGongs pa zang thal*: Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, rNam rgyal mgon po, *thugs sras rdo rje rnam gnyis*, *mtshan ldan bla ma rnam gnyis*, Sangs rgyas dpal bzang, Chos rgyal bsod nams, Śā kya bzang po, *sngags 'chang yab sras rnam gnyis*, Rig 'dzin sTobs ldan dpa' bo, Padma dbang rgyal, Kun bzang rgya mtsho, Padma 'phrin las, bsTan pa'i rgyal mtshan, Padma dbang phyug, Padma bshes gnyen, Khams gsum zil gnon, bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal, mDo sngags bstan 'dzin, Nus ldan 'gro phan gling pa, *gSang 'dzin dPa' bo* dgyes rab rtsal (another name of mGon po dbang rgyal), *drin chen bla ma* (in this case: himself).

Perhaps "bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal" is another name for *Grub dbang* Shes rab me 'bar. As for mDo sngags bstan 'dzin, one of this name is well known in this region and not without links to the masters of 'Khor gdong—the Dar thang *sprul sku*, disciple of Mi pham and mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (BCRT: B6169). But, as he was born in 1830 and died in 1892, he is rather of the generation of the disciples of *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje who was born in 1802<sup>110</sup> and who died in 1864 (*shing byi*), according to his *rnam thar*, or in 1867 according to the *Life of mGon po*

<sup>109</sup> He wrote a long autobiography, *IHa rigs kyi btsun pa bsKal bzang padma'i ming can rang nyid kyi rtogs par brjod pa* (TBRC: W30122) whose study might make it possible to date precisely this inaugural moment of the transmission of the *Byang gter* to 'Khor gdong—but, so far, I have not found any mention of this episode in it. As for *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje and his disciple mGon po dbang rgyal, their biographies show that each of them received the *dGongs pa zang thal* on numerous occasions, from various masters; they do not depend closely on a single tradition. On the other hand, the absolute preference of the 'Khor gdong masters for the *dGongs pa zang thal* among various similar comprehensive systems of rDzogs chen is beyond doubt—precisely because of their obvious desire to learn from all possible specialists in this system.

<sup>110</sup> There is a difficulty here, because the same *rnam thar* that gives 1802 as his birth year and has him die in 1864 "in his seventy-third year," which would rather put us back to 1792 for the year of his birth.

*dbang rgyal* (p. 41).

The Byang gter tradition still needed consolidation in 'Khor gdong in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, so that that, according to the same source (p. 26 f.), Nus ldan rdo rje sent mGon po dbang rgyal to rDo rje brag around 1863 (*chu phag lo*) to carefully check the conformity of the liturgical practices of 'Khor gdong with those of the Byang gter mother monastery. If really he passed away in 1864, this shows that this concern was crucial to him, so as to say, even at the doors of death.

In any case, *sPrul sku* Tsul lo depends mainly on the traditions of central Tibet for everything related to the *dGongs pa zang thal*. Certainly, his master mGon po dbang rgyal, as has been said, received in 1857 (*me sbrul*), from a certain *rJe dbon* Byang chub rdo rje, the transmission of what is called (probably by mistake) "the manual of the key points of the *dGongs pa zang thal* composed by A rdo dKon chog rgyal mtshan,"<sup>111</sup> and it is quite possible that he transmitted it to *sPrul sku* Tshul lo; but the latter has no claim to this tradition from Kaḥ thog and there is no trace of its specific features in his own manual.

All in all, it must be admitted: all this meticulous exploration of the history of the *dGongs pa zang thal* manuals has hardly shed any additional light on the most curious aspects of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's *khrid yig skal bzang re skongs rig 'dzin dgongs rgyan*.

One of the enigmas I came up against in my long study of this text was that of the identification of a certain *Las 'bras mun sel sgron me*, which is the subject of four very long quotations (Arguillère 2016: pp. 107, 108, 109, 110). It is finally accessible now: it is a very beautiful Byang gter text, included in the Avalokiteśvara cycle (*'Gro ba kun grol*), the *Las rgyu 'bras kyi dbye ba mun sel sgron me* (*Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. IV, pp. 237-278). It seems it was an initiative of *sPrul sku* Tshul lo to insert these little-known (?) passages from the revelations of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem in the chapter on the the infallibility of *karma* of the section on ordinary preliminary practices; there is no precedent for this, at least in the preserved practice manuals for the *dGongs pa zang thal* or the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*.

For the rest, I have shown in great detail in the notes of *Le Manuel de la transparation immédiate* how the author, in addition to combining all the *khrid yigs* included in the *gter chos*, used very abundantly (without ever naming it) Klong chen rab 'byams' *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*—so much so that it is no exaggeration to say that he had it constantly in front of him while composing all the parts of his *khrid yig*, at least from the rDzogs chen specific preliminaries until the end. On this point too, we find nothing equivalent—to this degree of systematicity—in any of

<sup>111</sup> *Life of mGon po dbang rgyal*, p. 21: *Ka dag gter gzhung dang | dGongs zang gi gnad khrid A rdo dKon mchog rgyal mtshan gyis mdzad pa ...*

his predecessors. The only thing that can be said is that the quotations from the *Klong gsal* (and thus the implicit connection with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*) appear from the oldest of the *khrid yigs* studied, as the above review of quotations from Hor po Śā kya rgyal mtshan suffices to show (13 quotations).

In relation to the beautiful manual composed by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol, that of *sPrul sku Tshul lo* is characterised by his (unexplained) refusal to integrate any materials from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Overall, the work of *sPrul sku Tshul lo* could be characterised as *purist*: as far as possible, he endeavours to produce as many passages from the *dGongs pa zang thal* as possible and to explain them either by paraphrasing them as little as possible<sup>112</sup> or by glossing them with other texts from the same corpus.

An examination of the *index nominum* of *Le Manuel de la transpuration immédiate* (Arguillère 2016: pp. 463-475) quickly verifies that *sPrul sku Tshul lo* does not cite *any* Tibetan author as<sup>113</sup> an author (he mentions only a few in passing,<sup>114</sup> just as examples of great men who were not spared by impermanence). In this, he emulates Klong chen rab 'byams twice: once by copying him abundantly, and a second time by omitting his name along with that of all the other Tibetans—which is a compositional habit of the master of Gangs ri thod dkar, that no doubt has the sense of showing that one depends only on the best and most reliable sources—on what the Tibetans would call *gzhung*, fundamental texts with canonical or para-canonical status. As Klong chen pa, *sPrul sku Tshul lo* directly<sup>115</sup> quotes, in addition to Rig 'dzin rGod

<sup>112</sup> To such an extent that one is surprised in places by the heaviness of his style or the obscurity of his purpose (this is the case in particular in what I have called the “second system of Khregs chod”—Arguillère 2016: pp. 232-234 for general reflections, and p. 265-285 for the annotated translation), whereas *sPrul sku Tshul lo* is, otherwise, if maybe not the most elegant and fluid prose writer, at least an extremely clear, firm and penetrating mind, expressing his thoughts in a very concise and precise style. When one realises that his mode of composition, in the *khrid yig*, is resolutely that of a *patchwork* of texts with a minimum of added paraphrase, one is less surprised by the rather stringy character of certain paragraphs. I also think that his purpose in quoting is not always to corroborate or clarify the point he is making—but also to *elucidate the quoted texts themselves* by putting them in a context that explains their meaning. The reader who does not see this aspect of the matter may feel in places that his *khrid yig* is heavily redundant and gets bogged down in points that it has already explained sufficiently.

<sup>113</sup> In fact, there are a good number of Tibetan authors in my index—but these are almost all merely those I quote in the notes and notices.

<sup>114</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 100.

<sup>115</sup> To be even more precise, there are *no* genuine *direct and explicit* quotations of *anything* besides the *Byang gter* in general and mostly the *dGongs pa zang thal* only: all the quotations of *tantras*, etc., are borrowed from either the *dGongs pa zang thal* or (without saying) of Klong chen pa's *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*, and there is no evidence at all (and even many hints of the contrary) that the author may have

Idem's *gter chos*, only texts enjoying such status, at least among the *rNying ma pas* (whose tantric canon is, as is well known, broader than that of the other branches of Tibetan Buddhism).

Apart from the concern to elucidate the *dGongs pa zang thal* as much as possible by itself, or thanks to the *Seventeen Tantras* and the *Klong gsal*, we can suppose that it is the influence of Klong chen pa's *khrid yigs*, and notably of the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*, that led *sPrul sku Tshul lo* to evacuate the material borrowed by Zur Chos dbyings rang grol from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Indeed, these three additional *sems 'dzin* have hardly any counterpart in comparable texts by Klong chen pa (and, to be fair, they are not mentioned either in the *dGongs pa zang thal*). Nevertheless, this implies a strong decision, which is the opposite of the line of interpretation favoured, for example, by K. Turpeinen: *sPrul sku Tshul lo* chose to regard the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* as completely alien to the *dGongs pa zang thal*,—as another system that should not be combined with it.<sup>116</sup> So far, we do not know whether there were debates within the Northern Treasures tradition on this question; but in the context of the discoveries of *Zang zang lha brag*, while the *dGongs pa zang thal* was found, it is said, in the central "treasury" (*mdzod*), the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* belonged to the eastern, "conch-white treasury". They are basically completely independent cycles and it is the editors that have made the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* a "fifth volume of the *dGongs pa zang thal*"—surely with no other idea than that of gathering the *rDzogs chen* sections of the Northern Treasures.

To sum up, in order to achieve an authentically philological understanding of *sPrul sku Tshul lo's* work, it is the path (an ahistorical one, after all) that I had favoured in the footnotes of the *Manuel de la transposition immédiate* that proves to be the most fruitful: to look at the work of *sPrul sku Tshul lo* as a skilful and scholarly combination of extracts from texts, almost all of which (as far as *rDzogs chen* is concerned) belong either to the *dGongs pa zang thal* itself, or to what is considered to be the basis of uninterrupted oral tradition (*bka' ma*) common to all the teachings of this level (the *Seventeen Tantras* and the *Klong gsal*). With regard to the latter, all are quoted *indirectly*: either (notably as regards the *Seventeen Tantras*) they are quoted from the

---

checked on any edition of the "original texts" that he quotes. I do not have the feeling that he made use of any edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* or the *Seventeen Tantras* while he was writing his manual.

<sup>116</sup> Apart from the *gZer lnga*, of course, but it seems that, from a quite early date (that I would not be able to specify more, though), they were regarded as the common set of "extraordinary preliminary practice" for the whole *Byang gter* and not only for the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*, to which they originally belong.

texts of the *dGongs pa zang thal* themselves, from which they are borrowed; or (in the case of all that is related to the *Klong gsal*) they are given exactly as they are found in the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*.

In other words: if we consider only the composition of the *khrid yig*, apart from the transmission of practice instructions, there is no significant *literary mediation* between the *gter chos* of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and *sPrul sku* Tshul lo. Unlike many Tibetan authors, he does not rewrite a predecessor, apart from the very abundant borrowings from *Klong chen pa*, which are directly due to him (but that is another matter: this does not detract from the originality of his work as a *dGongs pa zang thal* manual, especially since these borrowings are extremely masterful and never lead him to follow *Klong chen pa* in ways that would not match with the specific *dGongs pa zang thal* system—his manual cannot in any sense be labelled a syncretic construction, as those we have found in the *Kaḥ tog* traditions: it is quite the opposite).

Even if *sPrul sku* Tshul lo does not expressly state this judgement, his attitude of returning to the very text of the *dGongs pa zang thal* at the same time as his exclusion of all foreign material (except the *Klong gsal*, if it can so called) implies the project of putting back in the saddle a system which has fallen into some degree of disuse, on its own foundations and in a form which does not subordinate it to any foreign authority—*rang gzhung*.<sup>118</sup>

It is difficult for me, however, as regards the *Klong gsal*, to decide between two hermeneutical hypotheses: do the numerous quotations from this *tantra*—all borrowed from *Klong chen pa*—express a desire to hybridise the teaching of the *dGongs pa zang thal* with those of *mKha' 'gro snying thig* / *mKha' 'gro yang tig*? Or does the omission of this author's very name rather express the intention to use all these teachings derived from the *Klong gsal* only in a purely instrumental, ancillary way, in the service of the *dGongs pa zang thal*? It is true that *sPrul sku* Tshul lo merely follows the general tendency of his predecessors by amplifying it to the extreme—but precisely because he acts in this way *in opposition to the bias he systematically manifests elsewhere*, it is a subject of perplexity.

To conclude where we started, let us also ask ourselves, if *sPrul sku* Tshul lo wanted to emancipate himself from the model and the tutelage of the dominant currents, why he did not follow *Zur Chos dbyings rang grol* rather than *Klong chen pa*—by integrating materials borrowed from the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. Or, as well, why he did not compose a manual integrating the instructions corresponding to

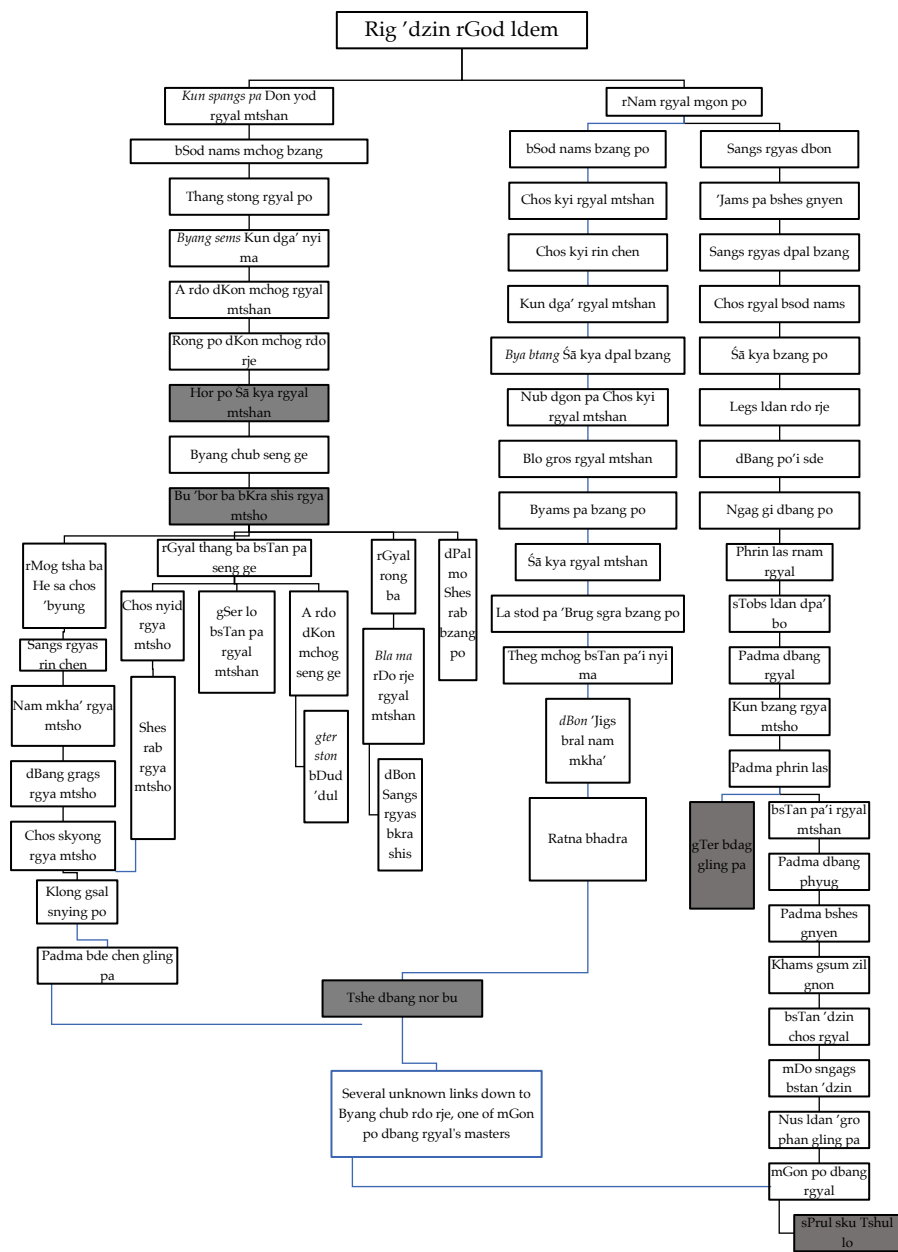
---

<sup>118</sup> This attitude, moreover, is in keeping with the oldest spirit of *rDzogs chen* understood as a *rang gzhung*: based on its own scriptural foundations, which should not be mixed with any foreign element.

the first three consecrations (*dbang*) of the *dGongs pa zang thal*: why, for example, when there is, in his work, a very well-made *khrid yig* for the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, did he not insert its content between the “extraordinary preliminary practices” (the *gZer lnga*) and the rDzogs chen specific preliminaries? He would thus have distanced himself from the model provided by the *khrid yigs* written by Klong chen pa for the two *sNying thigs* (and in particular from the *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin* of which he is so fond), and from Klong chen pa's own way of glossing *aside* the elements of internal *yoga* of the tantric type found in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. But, if he had favoured this type of presentation, conforming to the real practice of certain followers of the *dGongs pa zang thal* (as we have seen by the example of Maratika Lama), he would have come closer, after all, for example, to Klong chen pa's great commentary on the *gSang ba snying po*, the *Phyogs bcu'i mun sel*. In this text, in fact, the four visions of Thod rgal are presented at the top of a vast tantric edifice including all sorts of internal *yoga* practices. This coincides well with K. Turpeinen's representation of the *dGongs pa zang thal* and the reasons she attributes to its success (without perhaps seeing enough that it is not extremely different, in this respect, from, for example, *mKha' 'gro snying thig*). Perhaps Tshul lo feared that, if he had done so, he might have strayed too far from the general idea of his contemporaries about what a rDzogs chen practice manual should be; perhaps he thought that, if he had gone in that direction, it would have sent to lower rDzogs chen to the level of the “subordinate vehicles,” and in particular the two classes of *tantra* which, in the *rnying ma* doxographies, are immediately below it?



**Appendix: Shaft of the *dGongs pa zang thal* transmission lines resulting in preserved *khrid yigs***



## Bibliography

DGONGS PA ZANG THAL

Complete editions of the *dGongs pa zang thal* :

(1) The reference of the texts in this *corpus* is given below and in the body of the article according to the following edition, which reproduces the xylograph of A 'dzom 'brug pa :

*Byang gter dgongs pa zang thal*, t. 1-5, Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod Series, vol. 64, Leh (Ladakh), 1973.

Two main other really different editions are available:

(2) The edition of *Chos rje Śā kya yar 'phel*, of which there are two separate reproductions:

- a. *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor*. "Reproduced from a tracing of a complete set of prints from the gNas chung blocks carved through the efforts of *Chos rje Shakya yar 'phel*," Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod, vol. 93-96. Leh (Ladakh), 1979 [without the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*].
- b. *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor: a cycle of rdzogs chen practice of the Rning ma pa Atiyoga*. "Reproduced from a tracing of a complete set of prints from the gNas chung blocks carved through the efforts of *Chos rje Shakya yar 'phel*," t. 1-5, Thub bstan rdo rje brag e wam lcog sgar, Shimla, 2000 [avec le *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*].

(3) *sNga gyur byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* (TBRC: W2PD17457; 2015). The *dGongs pa zang thal* can be found in vol. 1-2 and the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* in part of vol. 3. This collection is referred to here and in the body of the article as *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.

Texts of the *dGongs pa zang thal* cited in particular (references given in edition (1) above):

*Khrid yig gnad kyi gzer bu gsum pa Bi ma la mi tras mdzad pa*: vol. II, p. 335-352

*Gegs sel nor bu rin po che'i mdzod*: vol. V, p. 261-320.

*sNgon 'gro rin po che gnad kyi gzer lnga*: vol. V, pp. 3-31.

*bCud len khyad par can bcud rtsi'i phreng ba*: vol. IV, pp. 485-513.

*Chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig: rDzogs pa chen po yang gsang bla na med pa chos nyid mngon sum gyi khrid yig*: vol. II, pp. 353-392.

*sNyan brgyud rin po che'i lung byang ye shes thugs kyi lde mig*: vol. I, pp. 27-36.

*gNad yig gsang sgron*: vol. III, pp. 141-162.

*Bi ma'i 'grel tig: Bi ma la'i snyan rgyud 'grel tig chen mo, or Bi ma la'i snyan rgyud chen mo rgyal po la gdams pa yang gsang bla na na med pa rdzogs pa chen po'i 'grel pa ye shes rang gsal, vol. IV, pp. 183-401.*

*Ma rig mun sel sgron me bsdus lam gyi gnad khrid kyi rim pa: vol. V, p. 189-200.*

*Zab mo gnad kyi them bcu: vol. V, pp. 321-401.*

*Yang dag don gyi snyan rgyud: Yang dag don gyi snyan rgyud rin po che rtsa ba'i man ngag gnyis pa: vol. II, pp. 393-422.*

*Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i snyan brgyud dang po: vol. II, pp. 461-484.*

*Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i snyan brgyud bar ma: vol. II, pp. 485-536.*

*Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i snyan brgyud phyi ma, vol. II, pp. 537-577.*

*Yang gsang bla na med pa Bai ro tsa na'i thugs rgyud zab mo, vol. II, pp. 579-602.*

*Lung phag mo zab rgya: generic title of eight or nine texts found in the last third of the first volume of *dGongs pa zang thal* (vol. I, pp. 413-654). [This cycle was supplemented by the further revelations of bsTan gnyis gling pa, see at this name.]*

*gSang ba rmad byung: set of 5 texts in vol. IV, pp. 515-589.*

*O rgyan Padmas mdzad pa'i zhal chems sgron ma rnam gsum: vol. V, pp. 20-244.*

#### DGONGS PA ZANG THAL MANUALS

*bKra shis rgya mtsho, Bu 'bor ba -, Zab mo snying thig gi gnad thams cad bsdus pa'i don khrid lag len gsal ba, in Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum, vol. V, pp. 388-527 [on this collection, see "other Tibetan sources" below].*

*Kha'u dGa' ldan pa Chos dbyings rang grol, Ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi khrid yig chos dbyings lam bzang, in sNga gyur byang gter phyogs bsgrigs, vol. III, pp. 341-381.*

*Chos dbyings rang grol, Zur -, Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams su bgrod pa'i nye lam chen po, two editions :*

(1) in *dGongs pa zang thal*, appears at the very end of the two printings of the *gNas chung* (Sākya yar 'phel<sup>119</sup>) edition, n<sup>o</sup> wo, vol. IV, pp. 419-451;

(2) in *sNga gyur byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. III, pp. 313-340.

<sup>119</sup> This name has occurred a few times in the present paper as an editor of Byang gter literature. We barely knew anything more than that until Chr. Bell's book *The Dalai Lama and the Nechung Oracle* (2021: Oxford University Press) which contains quite some information about this figure and even (p. 187) a photograph of a his portrait (from a mural in the assembly hall of the Nechung Monastery in Lhasa).

Tshul lo (Tshul khrim bzang po), *sPrul sku* -, 4 separate editions :

- (1) *Kun bzañ dgoñs pa zañg thal gyi dgoñs don phyogs gcig tu bkod pa skal bzañ re skoñ rig 'dzin dgoñs rgyan*—"A Detailed Introduction to the Practice of the *dGoñs pa zañ thal*, by Tshul-khri bzang-po;" "published by T. 'Jam-dbyaṅ and Printed at Photo Offset Printers, Ballimaran, Delhi," Leh, 1977 (*dbu med*; Chhimed Rigdzin Lama's edition);
- (2) in the Tibetan xylographic edition of the Works in 8 volumes, accessible on BDRC, without bibliographical indications (W1PD26779): vol. I, f° 1-148 ;
- (3) *dGongs Pa Zang Thal - Boundless Vision by Tulku Tsultrim Zangpo (Tulku Tsulo) - A Byangter Manual on Dzogchen Training. An Outline Commentary on the Boundless Vision of Universal Goodness*, Wandel Verlag, Berlin, 2012 (to be distinguished from its English translation, below under the entry "Thondup, Tulku -" in "Other Western Language Sources;")
- (4) Tibetan edition of the Works of *sPrul sku* Tshulo in Western format, 16 volumes, without publisher's name, place and date (ref. TBRC: W3PD247): vol. I, pp. 1-217.

Tshul lo, *sPrul sku* -, *Byang gter sngon 'gro rin po che gnad kyi gzer lnga zhes bya ba tshig don legs par ston pa'i rin po che'i them skas kun bzang myur lam*, 8 vol. edition. vol. IV, f° 1-91; edition in 16 vol.: vol. XI, p. 219-365. Śā kya rgyal mtshan, Hor po, *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi man ngag zab don mngon sum gsal byed*, in *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. V, pp. 91-387.

#### HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL TEXTS

Karma rdo rje (ed.), *sMar pa bka' brgyud kyi rnam thar phyogs sgrigs*, Si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa, Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Khreng tu'u, 2006 (TBRC: W00EGS1017393).

bKra shis rgya mtsho, Bu 'bor ba -, *Phyag rgya chen po snying po don gyi brgyud pa'i lo rgyus nyung ngur bsdu pa*, *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. III, pp. 75-130.

dKon mchog rgyal mtshan, A rdo - (*alias* "Tra ye ka du(s)", "Tra ye ka tu", "Tra ya dhwa dza"), *Kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal gyi lo rgyus rin chen phreng pa*:

- (1) in the collection of *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum* (see in this respect in "other Tibetan sources"): vol. V, pp. 1-89;<sup>120</sup>

<sup>120</sup> This is a "hacked" copy of Tarthang Tulku's edition of the *dGongs pa zang thal* in one volume. This was a very handsome edition on thin paper, presented in an elegant cardboard box, of which I did not give the reference in bibliography because it does not appear anywhere, and I do not have access to it anymore: C. R. Lama borrowed my copy of it from me in 1996 and I never saw it again. It contained as

(2) in the *Byang gter phyogs sgrigs*: vol. I, pp. 271-291.

bsKal bzang Padma dbang phyug, *Rig 'dzin chen po*—(alias Khams gsum zil gnon or rDo rje thogs med rtsal), *lHa rigs kyi btsun pa bsKal bzang padma'i ming can rang nyid kyi rtogs par brjod pa*:

(1) Pema Choden, Leh, Ladakh, 1973 (TBRC: W30122).

(2) in the *Byang gter phyogs sgrigs*: vol. LI, pp. 1-814.

Guru bkra shis, *Chos 'byung: bsTan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho*, mTsho sngon mi rigs par khang / Krung go'i bod kyi shes rigs dpe skrun khang, 1990 and 1998. Chos kyi rgya mtsho (Kaḥ thog si tu III), *dBus gtsang gi gnad yig*, Si kron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Chengdu, 2001 (TBRC: W27524).

'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan, *rGyal ba Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor 'dus*, Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, Chengdu, 1996 (TBRC: W20396).

Nyi ma bzang po, *Se ston* - (alias Sūryabhadra), *sPrul sku Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 'phru can gyi rnam thar gsal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer*:

(1) Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, Paro, Bhutan, 1985.

(2) in the *Byang gter phyogs sgrigs*: vol. LIX, pp. 1-75.

Tshul lo, *sPrul sku -*, the text quoted in the article under the title : *Life of mGon po dbang rgyal* is the *Dus gsum kun mkhyen Padma'i rgyal tshab gsang 'dzin dPa' bo dgyes rab rdo rje rtsal lam mGon po dbang gi rgyal po'i sde'i rnam thar gyi bkod pa ngo mtshar dad pa'i 'khri shing*:

in the 8-volume *gSungs 'bum*: vol. IV, pp. 1-141;

in the 16-volume *gSungs 'bum in*: vol. VIII, pp. 1-110.

#### OTHER TIBETAN SOURCES

*Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. I-XIII, Kaḥ tog dgon pa, Kaḥ tog, 2004 (?). (TBRC: W30199)

Klong chen rab 'byams, *Khrid yig sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*: in *Dri med 'od zer, gSung 'bum* (23 vols.), vol. XI, pp. 158-194; Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, "Mes po'i shul bzhag," Beijing, 2009.

Klong chen rab 'byams, *dNgos gzhi 'od gsal snying po'i don khrid*: in *Dri med 'od zer, gSung 'bum*, vol. ix, pp. 216-240.

Klong chen rab 'byams, *Theg mchog rin po che'i mdzod*: in *Dri med 'od zer, gSung 'bum*, vol. XVII-XVIII.

Klong chen rab 'byams, *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin*: in *Dri med 'od zer, gSung 'bum*, vol. VII, pp. 215-542.

Klong chen rab 'byams, *gSang snying 'grel pa phyogs bcu'i mun sel*: in *Dri med 'od zer, gSung 'bum*, vol. XXIII, pp. 79-591.

Gyur med rdo rje (gTer bdag glin pa), *Yang tig gces sgron gyi khrid*

---

an appendix several ancillary texts of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, but, as I recall, nothing to which we have no other access.

*rgyun*, in *gSung 'bum* (16 vols., D. G. Khochhen Tulku, Dehra Dun, 1998; TBRC W22096), vol. VI, pp. 621-626.

rGod ldem, Rig 'dzin—(*gter ston*), *Thugs sgrub rDo rje drag po rtsal sNga 'gyur byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. VI-VIII. In this edition, the *Thugs sgrub snying po blang ba'i phyir yang tig gces pa'i sgron me smar khrid mngon sum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*, the starting point for all the developments around *yang tig gces pa'i sgron me* that have occupied me in this article, is in vol. VII, pp. 549-571.

Another edition of the same text: in *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi chos skor*, *gNas chung* edition *Sā kya yar 'phel* (4 vols., Bari Longsal Lama, Gangtok, Sikkim, 1980): vol. III, pp. 257-286.

rGod ldem, Rig 'dzin - (*gter ston*), *Las rgyu 'bras kyi dbye ba mun sel sgron me*: in *Byang gter phyogs grigs*, vol. IV, pp. 237-278.

Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (Dalai Lama V), *Zur thams cad mkhyen pa Chos dbyings rang grol gyi rnam thar theg mchog bstan pa'i shing rta*, Kunsang Topgyal and Mani Dorji, Thimpu, 1979 (TBRC: W2CZ6608).

Chos dbyings rang grol (is this one of the two masters of this name we have met in this article?), *Khrid rim don gsal sgron me*, in *Yang tig nag po* (vol. I-III, Damchoe Sangpo, Dalhousie, 1979): vol. III, pp. 46-111.

Chos dbyings rang grol, Zur -, *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me'i khrid kyi rtsa tshig gsung rgyun snying po rab gsal*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. XVIII, p. 134-136.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul (compiler), *Rin chen gter mdzod*: vol. I-CXI, Ngodrup and Sherap Drimay, Paro (Bhutan), 1976-1980. All references given in this article to texts in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* refer to this edition.

Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul, *Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul gyi gter chos skor*, *The Collected Revelations of Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul*, 5 vol. without any indication of place or date of publication on TBRC ("blockprint;" W23695).

Padma gling pa, *Kun bzang dgongs pa kun 'dus*: in *Rig 'dzin padma gling pa'i zab gter chos mdzod*, Kunzang Tobgyay, Thimpu, 21 vol., 1975-76: vol. IV.

Padma bde chen gling pa: see Padma mati.

Padma mati, *Zab lam don gsal me long*, in *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. VIII, pp. 1-595.

Padma 'phrin las, *Thugs sgrub yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris gzhung don rab gsal*, three editions :

(1) in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. XVIII, pp. 133-218;

(2) in *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi chos skor* in the *gNas chung* edition *Sā kya yar 'phel* (4 vols., Bari Longsal Lama, Gangtok, Sikkim, 1980): vol. IV, pp. 7-108.

- (3) in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*: vol. XLIII, pp. 1-81, followed by its abridged version, the *yang thig gces sgron gyi khrid yig bsdus pa*, pp. 83-92.

Phrin las rab rgyas: see Chos dbyings rang grol, Zur –.

Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung, *Phyag khrid*: see below Achard 2008.

Tshul lo, *sPrul sku -*, *Byang gter dgongs pa zang thal gyi rgyud chen las byung ba'i kun bzang smon lam gyi rnam bshad kun bzang nye lam 'od snang gsal ba'i sgron me* :

- (1) 8-vol. edition: vol. I, end of volume, f° 1-28;
- (2) 16-vol. edition: vol. I, pp. 283-328.

Tshul lo, *sPrul sku -*, *Byang gter bka' dbang spyi sbyor rung gi lo rgyus gsal ba'i me long* :

- (1) 8-vol. edition: vol. VIII, pp. 415-484 of the pdf, with an appendix extending to p. 525.
- (2) 16-vol. edition: vol. III, pp. 279-294.
- (3) in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*: vol. LVI, pp. 373-443.

Tshul lo, *sPrul sku -*, *Rig 'dzin gter ston rnam gnyis kyi gter byon phag mo zab rgya'i dmigs khrid nyung ngur bkod pa gsang khrid gsal ba'i lde mig* :

- (1) 8-vol. edition: vol. I, f° 1-42;
- (2) 16-vol. edition: vol. I, pp. 219-281;
- (3) in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*: vol. LV, pp. 385-501.

Tshul lo, *sPrul sku -*, *'Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i lta ba dmar 'byin gsang khrid log rtog kun sel Kun bzang dgongs rgyan*:

- (1) 8-vol. edition: vol. II, f° 1-39;
- (2) 16-vol. edition: vol. V, pp. 287-355.

Tshe dbang nor bu, *Kaḥ tog rig 'dzin -*, three editions of his works:

- (1) *gSung 'bum* in 4 volumes, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, Darjeeling, 1973;
- (2) *gSung 'bum* in 6 volumes, Damchoe Sangpo, Dalhousie, 1976-1977;
- (3) *gSung 'bum* in 3 volumes, Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, Beijing, 2006.

Tshe dbang nor bu, *Kaḥ tog rig 'dzin -*, *rDzogs chen kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi khrid kyi 'chad thabs 'od kyi 'khor lo*:

- (A) in edition (2) above: vol. IV, 22 p. of a manuscript in *dbu med*, numbered 517-538, the first being the title page and the last being blank;
- (B) in edition (3) above: vol. II, pp. 204-211.

*Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me*: see : (a) rGod ldem, (b) 'Gyur med rdo rje; (c) Chos dbyings rang grol, Zur –; (d) Padma 'phrin las.

Ye shes don rtogs, *'Khor gdong gter chen 'gro phan gling pa gro log rtsal gyi rnam thar*, a 38-page text (numbered from 1 to 38) in one of the volumes (not having access to the whole collection, I do not know more)

of the 12-volume edition of *gTer chen Nus ldan rdo rje's gter chos*, recently published in 'Khor gdong. The text is dated 2011 in its colophon. *Rig pa'i rdo rje, rDzogs chen snying thig mkha' khyab rang grol gyi lam rim gsang bdag dpa' bo rdo rje rig 'dzin chos kyi dbang po'i zhal lung*, vol. V, p. 1-245 in *Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul, Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul gyi gter chos skor, The Collected Revelations of Nyag bla Padma bdud 'dul*, 5 vol., without any indication or a publication place or date on TBRC ("blockprint;" W23695).

Rin chen rgyal mtshan, *Se ston -, rDo rje sems dpa' sgyu 'phrul drwa ba rgyud kyi 'grel bshad dang sgrub thabs phra mo'i dkar chag gsal byed snang ba*, in *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa* of *Kaḥ thog* (120 vol. , ed. *Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs*, Chengdu, 1999), vol. LXXX, pp. 7-22.

Sā kya rgyal mtshan, *Hor po, or bSod nams don 'grub (Bya bral ba), rDzogs pa chen po man ngag zab don snying po mun sel dpal gyi sgron me*, preserved in *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. 2, p. 1-865.

bSod nams don 'grub (*Bya bral ba —, Kaḥ thog khrid chen bdun pa*), *Kun bzang dgons pa kun 'dus kyi dbu phyogs*, in *Kaḥ thog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. III, pp. 45-50.

bSod nams don 'grub (*Bya bral ba —, Kaḥ thog khrid chen bdun pa*), *Man ngag zab don snying po'i khrid yig*, in *Kaḥ tog khrid chen bcu gsum*, vol. 1, p. 351-539.

#### SOURCES IN WESTERN LANGUAGES

Achard 1992: Achard, Jean-Luc, *Le Pic des visions - études sur deux techniques contemplatives dans les traditions rnying-ma-pa et bon-po de la Grande Perfection*, unpublished D.E.A. thesis, É.PH.É., Paris, 1992.

Achard 1995: Achard, Jean-Luc, *Les Testaments de Vajradhara et des Porteurs-de-Science*, Les Deux Océans, Paris 1995.

Achard 1999: Achard, Jean-Luc, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret - Recherches philologiques et historiques sur l'origine de la Grande Perfection dans la tradition rNying ma pa*, Brepols, Turnhout, 1999.

Achard 2004: Achard, Jean-Luc, "BsTan gnyis gling pa (1480-1535) et la Revelation du Yang tig ye shes mthong grol," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, n°5, CNRS, Paris, April 2004.

Achard 2008: Achard, Jean-Luc, "Édition critique des instructions de Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung sur la pratique de la Claire-Lumière ('od gsal) selon le cycle du *Phyag khrid du Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*," *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, n° 23, CNRS, Paris, 2008.

Arguillère 2004: Mipham, *L'Opalescent joyau, Nor-bu Ke-ta-ka*, "Trésors du bouddhisme," Fayard, Paris, 2004.

Arguillère 2016: Tülku Tsullo, *Manuel de la transparution immédiate*, translation, presentation and notes by Stéphane Arguillère, Cerf, Paris, 2016.



- Arguillère 2018: Arguillère Stéphane, "Histoire des manuels de pratique du *dGongs pa zang thal*," *Revue d'Études Tibétaines*, n° 43 (Études *rDzogs chen* — Volume I), CNRS, Paris, 2018 (pp.196-255).
- Bogin 2013: Bogin, Benjamin, *The Illuminated Life of the Great Yolmowa*. Chicago: Serindia Publications.
- Bogin, 2014: "The Third Yolmo Tulku, Tendzin Norbu," *The Treasury of lives*: <https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Third-Yolmo-Tulku-Tendzin-Norbu/2997>
- Buffetrille, Katia, *Pilgrims, Lamas and visionaries. Oral and written sources on Tibetan pilgrimages*, Arbeitskreis für Tibetische und Buddhistische Studien Universität, "Wiener Studien zur Tibetologie und Buddhismuskunde," No. 46 Vienna, 2000.
- Germano, David, "Architecture and Absence in the Secret Tantric History of the Great Perfection (*rDzogs chen*)," *JIAS*, vol. 17, n° 2, 1994.
- Orgyan Tenzin (transl.) and Esler, D. (transl.) (2015): Dudjom Rinpoche, *The Bountiful Cow of Accomplishments—Directives for the Two Phases of the Profound Path of the Khandro Thugtig*, "edited by Lopon P. Ogyan Tenzin Rinpoche, translated by Dylan Esler," Khye'u-chung Lotsāpa Translations, 2015.
- Ronis, Jann, 2006: "bDud 'dul rdo rje (1615-1672) and the rNying ma Adaptation to the Era of the Fifth Dalai Lama," in Cuevas, B., et Shaeffer, K., *Power, Politics and the Reinvention of Tradition: Tibet in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*. PIATS 2003. Brill, Leiden, 2006.
- Smith, Gene, *Among Tibetan Texts, History and Literature of the Himalayan Plateau*, Wisdom Publications, Somerville, 2001.
- Thondup, Tulku -, *Boundless Vision by Tulku Tsultrim Zangpo (Tulku Tsulo) - A Byangter Manual on Dzogchen Training. An Outline Commentary on the Boundless Vision of Universal Goodness*, unpublished translation, 2001.
- Thondup, Tulku - and Boord, Martin, *The Five Nails - Commentary on the Northern Treasures Accumulation Practice by Tulku Tsultrim Zangpo (Tulku Tsulo)*, Wandel Verkag, Berlin, 2011.
- Turpeinen, Katarina, *Vision of Samantabhadra - The Dzokchen anthology of Rinzin Godem*, University of Virginia, Department of Religious Studies, 2015 (downloadable at: <http://libraprod.lib.virginia.edu/catalog/libra-oa:9022>)
- Valentine, Jay Holt, *The Lords of the Northern Treasures: The Development of the Tibetan Institution of Rule by Successive Incarnations*, unpublished PhD dissertation, Department of Religious Studies University of Virginia, août 2013: <http://www.aca->

[demia.edu/29576026/The Lords of the Northern Treasures The Development of the Tibetan Institution of Rule by Successive Incarnations](https://www.dharma.com/29576026/The-Lords-of-the-Northern-Treasures-The-Development-of-the-Tibetan-Institution-of-Rule-by-Successive-Incarnations)

Valentine 2015: Valentine, Jay Holt. 2015. "The Family and Legacy of the Early Northern Treasure Tradition." In *Journal of Global Buddhism*, v. 16, pp. 126-143.

<http://www.globalbuddhism.org/jgb/index.php/jgb/article/view/151/172>.

Valentine 2017: Valentine, Jay Holt, "Introduction to and Translation of *The Garland of Light: Lives of the Masters of the Northern Treasure Tradition*", *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, n°39, CNRS, Paris, April 2017.

Valentine 2018: Valentine, Jay Holt, "Namgyal Gonpo", *The Treasury of Lives*:

<https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Namgyel-Gonpo/1639>.

