

The Treasure Discoverer from Dwags-po: Two Texts on the Life of Chos-rje gling-pa (1682–1720)

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1. Introduction

In the historiographical literature of the rNying-ma-pa school, Chos-rje gling-pa is generally presented as the previous incarnation of 'Jigs-med gling-pa (1730–1798) as part of the impressive list of the so-called “Thirteen Incarnations of rGyal-sras lHa-rje” (*rgyal sras lha rje'i yang srid bcu gsum*), reaching back to mChog-grub rgyal-po, the son of Mu-tig btsan-po, and Sangs-rgyas bla-ma (b. ca. 1000), who is regarded as the first treasure discoverer in the tradition following the Precious Guru Padmasambhava. The relevant details of his religious career (he was also known as Rog-rje gling-pa, Chos-rje 'Dzam-gling rdo-rje or bDe-ba rdo-rje) including his teachers and main students have already been assessed, one conclusion being that he was born in the Dwags-po region in 1682, discovered various treasure cycles in the course of his life and supposedly died in his 43rd year, which would correspond to 1725.¹

Several of his treasure finds are contained in the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, compiled by 'Jam-mgon Blo-gros mtha'-yas (1833–1899). They are devoted to such cycles as the long-life practice *bDe gshegs rtsa gsum 'chi med dril sgrub*, the *Zab lam thugs kyi nor bu* (dealing with Padmasambhava in his wrathful form), the Avalokiteśvara practice *'Jig rten dbang phyug yid bzhin nor bu*, and evocations of Yangdag Heruka known as *Yang bdag bde chen snying po*. In light of such texts, Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa is seen to have been a prolific re-

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¹ See Dudjom Rinpoche 1991: I, p. 835 & II, p. 171 for Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa as an incarnation of Sangs-rgyas bla-ma and the list of the Thirteen Incarnations of rGyal-sras lHa-rje. For an overview of his teachers and students, both rNying-ma-pa and bKa'-brgyud-pa, and the problem of determining the correct year of death, see Goodman 1992, pp. 198–199, note 33.

vealer of Buddhist treasures. The colophons of the individual finds provide evidence of the sites where the various texts were discovered and the circumstances of their codification. In the case of the Avalokiteśvara practice, for example, it is known that it was “completed as a treasure” (*gter sgrub*) at a site known as a “Hidden Land” (*sbas yul*), the original find having taken place at the Bu-chu lha-khang in the Kong-po region.²

Further aspects of his life have been described in the context of the treasure discoverers of the rNying-ma-pa school who were attracted to the region of gNas Padma-bkod in south-eastern Tibet. It is known that he served from the years 1687 to 1706 (i.e. from his fifth to his twenty-fourth year) as the representative of Ras-chung phug, an influential monastery of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pa school in the Yar-klungs valley; subsequently he travelled to Tsa-ri, the famous Cakrasamvara pilgrimage site, and from there to Kong-po and sPo-bo, there discovering most of his numerous treasure works. It has been noted that in addition to the Bu-chu lha-khang in Kong-po revelations occurred in the mDung-chu'i lha-khang in sPo-bo, a further temple from the scheme ascribed to Srong-btsan sgam-po. Having been recognized as a “master of teachings” (*chos bdag*) of the treasures of sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje (1655–1707), he returned to Central Tibet once more before setting out on a journey to gNas Padma-bkod, where he passed away soon after his arrival.³

As by now two voluminous texts dealing with the life of Rig'-dzin Chos-rje gling-pa have become available, I will present in the following these new literary sources. Particular attention will be paid to the structure of these texts when they were written down and how they are related to each other. Additional attention will be paid to (auto)biographical writings contained in a recently surfaced xylograph edition of his collected writings.

² A description of the texts of the mentioned five cycles can be found in Schwieger (1990: 78–81 [Nos. 98–103], 179–180 [Nos. 264–266] & 302–307 [Nos. 476–481] and Schwieger 1995, pp. 335–336 [Nos. 933–934] & pp. 424–430 [Nos. 1053–1055]). For the location of the Bu-chu lha-khang in Kong-po, one of the *mtha'-dul* temples ascribed to the first Buddhist king Srong-btsan sgam-po, see Sørensen & Hazod 2005, p. 209).

³ For the activities of Rig'-dzin Chos-rje gling-pa as representative of Ras-chung phug in the Yar-klungs valley and as a treasurer discoverer attracted to the site of gNas Padma-bkod, see Ehrhard 2013a, pp. 354–355. With the help of one of his treasure finds it was possible to identify the mDung-chu'i lha-khang in sPo-bo as the *yang'-dul* temple known as Tshang-pa rlung-gnon; for the location of this temple in the mentioned scheme, see Sørensen & Hazod 2005, p. 209.

2. *The first text*

An incomplete manuscript consisting of the “sketches” or “notes” (*zin bris*) of Chos-rje gling-pa can be found in the collection *Bod kyi lo rgyus rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs* preserved in the library of ‘Bras-spungs monastery and published by the Peltsek Research Institute (Lhasa). It bears the title “A sequence of prepared sketches of the deceptive world of the Holy Madman of Dwags-po, the unreliable one: The trunk of a wish-fulfilling tree [producing] whatever manifests, the extended gibberish of a carefree soul of wide experience” (*gtad med dwags po smyon pa’i ‘di snang ‘khrul ‘khor rags bsdus zin bris su bstar ba’i rim pa gang shar ljon shing gi sdong po nyams yangs blo bde’i ‘chal gtam ring po*). This autobiography covers 283 folios and is indeed a long if incomplete narrative. Written in the Tibetan cursive script with sometimes obscure abbreviations, the text has been used in a modern history of the Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud-pa, which quotes the full title at the end of the biographical sketch of the so-called “Treasure Discoverer of Dwags-po” (*dwags po gter ston*), and in further sections it has served as an important literary source for the history of Dwags-lha sgam-po and various persons associated with the monastery.⁴

As an incomplete work, it has no colophon, and there are no introductory verses either. In structural terms, it can be divided into two sections, the first one presenting the “cycle of the birth stories” (*skyes rabs kyi skor*) and the second one the “cycle of the deeds of this life” (*skye ba ‘di’i byas tshul gyi skor*). The first one is a discussion of the previously mentioned Thirteen Incarnations of rGyal-sras lHa-rje, referring to prophecies from the *Padma bka’i thang yig* and from treasure texts including a certain *Gab pa mngon phyung rgyal sras zhu lan*; this section goes also into details of the different names of Rig-’dzin Chos-rje gling-pa.⁵

The second section covers the complete remainder of the text and begins with the “family lineage” (*rigs rus*). Here the author relies on a

⁴ This sketch of the life of Rig-’dzin Chos-rje gling-pa is contained in dKon-mchog rgya-mtsho: *Dwags po bka’ brgyud chos ‘byung*, pp. 641.6–643.15. Further references to the autobiography can be found in accounts of the lives of the Third sGam-po sPrul-sku bZang-po rdo-rje (1636–1700), Zhabs-drung Don-grub rab-brtan (b. 1680), Zhabs-drung Chos-kyi grags-pa (b. 1684), and lHun-grub Nges-don dbang-po (1674–1720); see *ibid.*, pp. 621.24–26, 629.14–15, 632.9–10 & 640.16. The two persons mentioned under the title Zhabs-drung (or Klu-mkhar Zhabs-drung) are an elder and younger brother of Rig-’dzin Chos-rje gling-pa.

⁵ For the first section of the text, see *rNam thar I*, fols. 1b/1–7a/6. It should be noted that its list of the thirteen incarnations differs from the one transmitted in the later historiographical literature of the rNying-ma-pa school; it includes, for example, Sog-bzlog-pa Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1552–1624) and refers to the latter’s writings when presenting the lives of the previous incarnations.

work with the short title *Baidūrya'i lhun po*, dealing with the lineage of the abbots of the prominent Dwags-lha sgam-po monastery and including a history of its succession lineage. Another version of this abbatial history, with the title *Baidūrya'i phreng ba*, is available, having been composed between the years 1620 and 1662 during the lifetimes of the Second sGam-po sPrul-sku 'Dzam-gling Nor-bu rgyan-pa (1589–1633) and his disciples. Chos-rje gling-pa, it turns out, was a member of this lineage, known as rNyi-ba, which supplied the throne-holders of Dwags-lha sgam-po and was regarded as comprising the successors of the patriarch and first abbot rJe sGam-po-pa bSod-nams rin-chen (1079–1153). Among the remote scions of the founder of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pa was one O-rgyan Rig-'dzin rdo-rje (17th cent.), who had his residence in Klu-mkhar. His son, rDo-rje grags-pa (1652–1698), was the father of Chos-rje gling-pa. These details are presented in a very concise form in the autobiography, the author giving only a short résumé of the life of his father, who had been a disciple of the Third sGam-po sPrul-sku bZang-po rdo-rje.⁶

The latter master also played an important role in Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa's life, for after his birth in the year 1682 it was this abbot of Dwags-lha sgam-po who identified the newborn child from Klu-mkhar as an incarnation of his grandfather O-rgyan Rig-'dzin rdo-rje. As at the same time Zhabs-drung 'Chi-med dbang-po (17th cent.), the resident teacher of Ras-chung phug in the Yar-klungs valley, had passed away, it was nevertheless decided—in consultation with the search committee from Ras-chung phug—that the boy was his re-embodiment. Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa thus became a member of an incarnation line going back to rGod-tshang ras-pa (1482–1559), a disciple of the illustrious gTsang-smyon Heruka (1452–1507). This decision was confirmed by the Seventh Zhwa-dmar-pa dPal-ldan Yeshe snying po (1631–1694) and received official recognition in the form of a document issued by the regent sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho (1653–1705). The invitation from Ras-chung phug was sent at

⁶ The introductory part of the second section can be found in *rNam thar I*, fols. 7a/6–8b/6, including the short note on his father. Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa states that he had written a biography of his father but had no access to it at the time he was composing his own life story. For the chronicle of the hierarchs of Dwags-lha sgam-po from the time of 'Dzam-gling Nor-bu rgyan-pa and his disciples, see Sørensen & Dölma 2007, pp. 45–50; the text with the short title *Baidūrya lhun po* seems to have been a sequel to this earlier work. Concerning biographical accounts of O-rgyan Rig-'dzin rdo-rje and his two sons Chos-nyid klong-gsal (1646–1673) and rDo-rje grags-pa, see dKon-mchog rgya-mtsho: *Dwags pa bka' brgyud chos 'byung*, pp. 624.7–627.27. Consult Akester (2016: 398) regarding the establishment of Klu-mkhar rdzong on the riverbank below the monastery of Dwags-lha sgam-po in the 16th century and its becoming the seat of the rNyi-ba lineage from then on.

the age of five years, i.e. in 1687. The text provides a detailed description of the enthronement ceremony, attended by the ordained and lay populations of the Yar-klungs valley. Already at this early age he received the first tantric empowerments and teachings, including the “Old [and] New Aural Transmissions” (*snyan brgyud gsar rnying*) according to the tradition of Ras-chung-pa rDo-rje grags-pa (1084–1161); this happened under a teacher called bKa'-brgyud bstan-pa'i sgron-me (d. 1690).⁷

Although it has no introductory verses and provides only general information in the section dealing with the family lineage, the text presents precise data, personal and otherwise, for the first years up to the enthronement at Ras-chung phug. It obviously relied on sketches or notes, as already mentioned in the title, which must have been kept on a regular base from an early age onwards.

3. *The early years in Ras-chung phug*

The first date in the text is given as a “dragon year” (*'brug lo*), i.e. 1688. The entire remaining part of this extensive text situates events in time by giving the zodiacal animal for the year, the lunar mansion for the month, and—in later sections—the “Mongolian month” (*hor zla*). There are no individual chapters, but it is possible to isolate three parts taking up a decade each so as to provide structure to the continuous flow of the narrative.

The first period covers the years 1688 to 1697 and can be described as that part of the text which presents the education of the young incarnation as a lineage-holder of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pa (and especially its Ras-chung snyan-brgyud) tradition. As already mentioned, his first teacher in this regard was bKa'-brgyud bstan-pa'i sgron-me, but these studies continued only for a period of 2½ years, up to when the master passed away in Ras-chung phug in 1690. The following year is marked by the ordination of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa as a Buddhist novice; the ceremony took place in the Jo-khang temple in Lha-sa and—as the text clearly states—was conduct-

⁷ For the birth of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa, his recognition as the rebirth of rGod-tshang ras-pa and the events up to the year 1687, see *rNam thar I*, fols. 8b/6–17a/6. bKa'-brgyud bstan-pa'i sgron-me, the incarnation of one mKhas-grub Chos-rgyal, was the second member of an incarnation line called the Ras-chung-phug sPrul-skus; see TBRC P10275. An important role in the confirmation of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa as a rebirth was played by one dPon-slob Don-ldan (17th cent.), another teacher in the tradition of the Aural Transmissions and a disciple of Zhabs-drung 'Chi-med dbang-po. Already before the description of the actual birth, a long passage deals with a statement of the master regarding the future benefit the child would bring to this particular teaching lineage; see *ibid.*, fols. 9b/2–16b/4.

ed in the interregal period between the Fifth Dalai Bla-ma Ngag-dbang Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho (1617–1682) and the Sixth Dalai Bla-ma Tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho (1683–1706); the person acting as *ācārya* on that occasion was dGe-slong 'Jam-dbyangs grags-pa, a personal attendant of the Great Fifth.

After his return to Ras-chung phug, another master of the Ras-chung snyan-brgyud tradition, Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (d. 1693), arrived from Byang-chub gling monastery in gTsang. The transmission of his teachings is given in extenso, and he himself is termed the “mentor” (*yongs 'dzin*) of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa.⁸

In the following year this teacher passed away in Byang-chub gling monastery in gTsang, the autobiography stating that both his reincarnation and that of bKa'-brgyud bstan-pa'i sgron-me were recognized as a pair of brothers who came from a Khri-smon family in the On valley, members of which had acted as donors to Ras-chung phug in previous times. The year 1694 mentions a spiritual retreat of the twelve-year-old Buddhist novice at a site called lHun-grub bde-chen, a former residence of Grub-mchog dbang-po (1563–1618), the second member of his own incarnation line. In that section, information is provided on the shifting bKa'-brgyud-pa and rNying-ma-pa affiliations at Ras-chung phug down to the time of his immediate predecessor, Zhabs-drung 'Chi-med dbang-po. After the retreat, philosophical studies were taken up under one dKa'-chen Ye-shes bzang-po, who had been a teacher at Dwags-lha sgam-po, while a second stay in Lha-sa provided the opportunity for an encounter with Rig-'dzin gTer-bdag gling-pa (1646–1714), the treasure discoverer from sMin-grol gling. A final event in the year 1695 concerns the young reincarnation of the teacher bKa'-brgyud bstan-pa'i sgron-me; this first meeting took place at the estate of Khri-smon in the On valley before Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa returned to Ras-chung phug, now referred to as a second rTsa-mchog [grong].⁹

⁸ The years 1688 to 1692 in Ras-chung phug and the ordination ceremony in Lha-sa can be found in *rNam thar I*, fols. 17a/6–24a/1. The teacher from the monastery of Byang-chub gling in gTsang was the reincarnation of one Shes-rab dpal-bzang, a disciple and relative of an individual called 'Phrin-las rgya-mtsho, who in turn was the reincarnation of rGod-phrug Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje, a direct disciple of gTsang-smyon Heruka. These details are learned from the autobiography of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa; see *ibid.*, fols. 20b/6–21a/2. Both rGod-phrug rin-po-che 'Phrin-las rgya-mtsho and his own “great-nephew” (*dbon chen*) bShad-sgrub (sic) dpal-bzang are known to have been teachers active also in Ras-chung phug; see Karma Blo-bzang: *mKhas grub chen po karma blo bzang gi rnam thar mchod sprin rgya mtsho*, pp. 476, 14–477.2.

⁹ For the years 1693 to 1695, the first retreat in lHun-grub bde-chen, the journey to Lha-sa and the return to Ras-chung phug, see *rNam thar I*, fols. 24a/1–29a/3. The description of the shifting religious affiliations during the times of rGod-tshang ras-chen and the following incarnations can be found *ibid.*, fols. 26b/2–27a/1;

The beginning of the year 1696 was spent again in spiritual retreat in lHun-grub bde-chen, but the death of his mother occasioned a return to Klu-mkhar. During the ensuing stay in Dwags-lha sgam-po he received further transmissions from the throne-holder bZang-po rdo-rje. His former teacher dPon-slob don-ldan arrived as well during that time, and prior to his return to Ras-chung phug a further encounter with Rig-'dzin gTer-bdag gling-pa is recorded in the autobiography; this latter meeting took place at the monastery of Khra-brug in the Yar-klungs valley.

The entry for the year 1697 begins with reflections on the studies undertaken up to his fifteenth year, while the arrival of one dPal-'byor rdo-rje from mDo-bo-che in mNga'-ris Gung-thang is recorded—described as a siddha well versed in the practice of the deity rTamgrin yang-gsang. A personal meeting with the Sixth Dalai Bla-ma Tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho, junior to him by one year, took place as well during this period; the latter had arrived at sNye-thang bKra-shis sgang during his initial journey from the Mon region to Central Tibet. Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa met him again later that same year at the Potala palace in Lha-sa, where further encounters with religious dignitaries, including Rig-'dzin gTer-bdag gling-pa, are mentioned. Back in Ras-chung phug a master called Sangs-rgyas bzang-po (17th/18th cent.) arrived from 'Bras-mo ljongs, modern-day Sikkim, where a branch monastery of the above-mentioned Byang-chub gling monastery was located. On that occasion the young incarnation from Ras-chung phug performed religious services using the ritual staff of gTsang-smyon Heruka thus fulfilling the duties expected of him. The remaining part of the entry for this year describes the last meeting with his teacher bZang-po rdo-rje, the Third sGam-po sprul-sku; it includes the statement that he received from the master the full transmission of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pa doctrine in the same way as 'Dzam-gling nor-bu rgyan-pa, the Second sGam-po sprul-sku, had given them to sGam-po bSod-nams rin-chen (1612–1649), who was a previous throne-holder of Dwags-lha sgam-po and the teacher of bZang-po rdo-rje. In a hermitage in the 'On valley, the vows of a Buddhist layman were also conferred upon the reincarnation of bKa'-

consult Ehrhard 2010, p. 146 for the affiliation of rGod-tshang ras-chen, according to himself, to teaching traditions of the rNying-ma-pa school. A biographical note on dKa'-chen Ye-shes bzang-po, a teacher from the Sa-skyapa monastery of gSer-mdog-can, can be found in the modern history of Dwags-lha sgam-po; see dKon-mchog rgya-mtsho: *Dwags po bka' brgyud chos 'byung*, pp. 640.20–641.5. The author quotes from the autobiography of Chos-rje gling-pa; see *rNam thar I*, fol. 28b/1–5.

brgyud bstan-pa'i sgron-me, the deceased now being referred to under the name Ngag-gi dbang-po.¹⁰

As can be seen from this section of the autobiography with its reflections and personal considerations, especially on the subject's role as an incarnation from Ras-chung phug and holder of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pa lineage, the text can be regarded as a reworking—or rewording—of the original sketches. The look back at this early period from a later perspective is an elaborate and historically rich account, written by an author engaged in literary production already in his teens.

4. Resident teacher and first treasures

If one brings the next decade in the life of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa into view, it can be divided into further activities at Ras-chung phug, a journey to Tsa-ri in the year 1705, and additional travels to the region of sPo-bo, where he stayed up to 1707 and his twenty-fifth year. This is also the period when he became strongly steeped in the treasure tradition of the rNying-ma-pa school, during which various revelations took place.

A first "entrustment" (*bka' babs*) of a treasure is recorded for the beginning of the year 1698 at the retreat site lHun-grub bde-chen, the former residence of Grub-mchog dbang-po. A vision of Padma-sambhava is related, followed by mention again of Chos-rje gling-pa's predecessor, one of whose disciples had been active in the region of sPo-bo. Through the reincarnation of the latter, one mKhas-grub dbang-po, a special connection had been established with the rulers of sPo-bo which resulted in the building of a hermitage called Brag-rtsa ri-khrod [Thub-bstan 'od-gsal gling], from which regular offerings were sent to Ras-chung phug from that time onwards. In the following year it is especially noted that Chos-rje gling-pa conferred upon Ngag-gi dbang-po, the Ras-chung phug sPrul-sku, the teach-

¹⁰ The entries for the years 1696–1697, including the meetings with bZang-po rdo-rje and the second journey to Lha-sa, are contained in *rNam thar I*, fols. 29a/3–34b/4. For the tradition associated with mDo-bo-che in Gung-thang and the transmission of the cycle known as *rTa mgrin yang gsang* or *Padma dbang chen yang gsang khros pa*, i.e. Avalokiteśvara in his wrathful form as Hayagriva, see Ehrhard 2008, pp. 65–66, note 13 & 114, note 15. It is noted in the autobiography that the monastery in 'Bras-mo lJongs had been founded by one Ras-rkyang Sangs-rgyas shes-rab, a disciple of the above-mentioned rGod-phrug Sangs-rgyas rdo-rje; see note 8. In the year 1699 a further delegation from this monastery paid a visit to Ras-chung phug. At that time the reincarnation of Ras-rkyang Sangs-rgyas shes-rab is called lCags-phug sku-skyes, and the name of the site, a "door" (*sgo*) to the hidden valley of 'Bras-mo lJongs, is given as sGer lCags-phug; see *rNam thar I*, fols. 41b/4–42a/2.

ings of the “Old [and] New Aural Transmissions”. At that time the first literary compositions are mentioned, including “some sketches of an autobiographical narrative up to my eighteenth year” (*rang lo bco brgyad phan gyi rtogs brjod zin bris ka gcig [=cig] bris*).

After a further journey to Lha-sa, where he met again the Sixth Dalai Bla-ma, and also sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho, a visit to Khra-brug and another encounter with Rig-'dzin gTer-bdag gling-pa are recorded in the autobiography. Further teachings for the young Ras-chung phug sPrul-sku are mentioned, along with the visit of another incarnation of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school at the end of this year. This latter was 'Phrin-las mchog-ldan ['Dri-med legs-pa'i blo-gros] (17th/18th cent.), regarded as the rebirth of Ras-rkyang Karma Chos-'phel from Brag-dkar rta-so in Mang-yul Gung-thang. At that time another vision of Padmasambhava occurred, this time in his aspect as rDo-rje khro-lod—later recorded in a written draft.¹¹

In the year 1700 the teachings for the “pair of reincarnations” (*sprul sku zung*) from the 'On valley continued, followed by a visit to sMin-grol gling and ensuing discussions with Rig-'dzin gTer-bdag gling-pa. Once he had returned to Ras-chung phug, one reads of visions of Padmasambhava of the sort which had already occurred at an early age; they become more intense from that year onwards, with indications of individual sites and how the treasures would be retrieved. At the beginning of 1701, at the age of nineteen, his first public teaching of the Mahāmudrā doctrine took place, after the performance of rituals for the teacher bZang-po rdo-rje, who had just passed away. In the following months he delivered this teaching in combination with the “Six Doctrines of Nāro[pa]” (*nā ro chos drug*) to a wider audience at Ras-chung phug; he also continued his studies, especially poetics, under one Yongs-'dzin Gung-thang-pa. In the fourth month of the same year an “autobiographical note” (*rnam thar gyi zin bris*) was written down describing an episode on the

¹¹ For the years 1698 to 1699, the teaching activities and the third visit to Lha-sa, see *rNam thar I*, fols. 34b/4–43a/3. According to modern historiographical literature, the building of the hermitage called Brag-rtsa ri-khrod was undertaken in later times, during the rule of Nyi-ma rgyal-po, an influential Kah-gnam sde-pa ruler of sPo-bo in the second half of the 18th century; see Schwieger 2002, pp. 222–223 and Lazcano 2005, pp. 48–49. A biographical sketch of 'Phrin-las mchog-ldan is contained in the monastic chronicle of Brag-dkar rta-so; see Chos-kyi dbang-phyug; *Grub pa'i gnas chen brag dkar rta so'i gnas dang gdan rabs bla ma brgyud pa'i lo rgyus*, pp. 566.4–570.2. This teacher was also a native of the Dwags-lha sgam-po region and had received his first religious name from the Third sGam-po sprul-sku bZang-po rdo-rje; the chronicle identifies him as one of the “masters of the teachings” (*chos bdag*) of the treasures of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa. A second visit to Ras-chung phug is recorded in the autobiography for the year 1704; see *rNam thar I*, fol. 67.2–3.

eighth day of Sa-ga zla-ba; at the beginning of the text the writer invokes his teachers Yon-tan rgya-mtsho and bKa'-brgyud bstan-pa'i sgron-me. The account is available in the print edition of the collected writings of Chos-rje gling-pa (see Appendix I, ka [5]).

During this same time, he also composed his first major writings, namely two biographies. These works bear full titles and treat the lives of his teacher Ngag-gi dbang-po from Byang-chub gling monastery in gTsang and an individual called Gar-dbang Chos-dbyings rnam-grol, obviously from the same monastery. At the end of the year his younger brother Chos-kyi grags-pa arrived from Dwags-lha sgam-po together with Chos-rje lHun-grub Nges-don dbang-po, a common half-brother who would play an important role as teacher and travel companion in later years.¹²

The next four years were spent mainly at Ras-chung phug, but also included some more extensive travels. It was at that time, at the beginning of his twenties, that he raised the first treasure texts. One such find is recorded for the year 1702, during a visit to the site of Yar-klungs Shel-brag, a famous site of the treasures of Padma-sambhava; it took place in a cave previously frequented by such persons as Rig-'dzin Kumārārādza (1266–1303) and lHa-btsun Kunbzang rnam-rgyal (1697–1653). This is followed by a vision at Ras-chung phug wherein he received “introductory lists” (*kha byang*) of four future treasure revelations, and another vision announcing an impending find in the region of Kong-po. At the beginning of the year 1703 Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa was at Dwags-lha sgam-po, where the reincarnation of his teacher bZang-po rdo-rje had been recognized as the Fourth sGam-po sPrul-sku; in an extensive description of a spiritual retreat conducted during that stay one finds various visions of Padmasambhava and the words of the master urging his disciple to benefit the Buddhist teachings and the Tibetan people by proceeding to the east, and in particular to such regions as Padma

¹² The years 1700 to 1701, mainly spent at Ras-chung phug, can found in *rNam thar I*, fols. 43a/3–50b/2. The teacher called Yongs-'dzin Gung-thang-pa urged his student to compose further writings and served for a total of 200 folios as scribe. See *ibid.*, fols. 51b/3–52a/2. The biographies of the two teachers from Byang-chub gling monastery bear the following titles: *mNyam med dpal ldan rdo rje 'chang yon tan rgya mtsho'i rtogs brjod ngo mtshar dam bu ra'i sgra dbyangs* and *Khyab bdag gar dbang chos dbyings rnam grol gyi rtogs brjod pa nyer bsdus thugs rje'i rol mtsho*. lHun-grub nges-don dbang-po had the same mother as Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa and was regarded as the reincarnation of Chos-nyid klong-gsal, concerning whom see note 6. A biographical sketch of lHun-grub nges-don dbang-po can be found in dKon-mchog rgya-mtsho: *Dwags po bka' brgyud chos 'byung*, pp. 634.19–640.19; he counted among his teachers the above-mentioned Gar-dbang Chos-dbyings rnam-grol, who especially focused on passing on the doctrine of the Aural Transmissions.

sBas-pa'i tshal (i.e. sPo-bo) and a "Great and Small Padma-bkod" (*padma bkod che chung*).

In Lha-sa, the Sixth Dalai Bla-ma Tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho was enthroned together with the new *sde-srid*, Ngag-dbang rin-chen (17th/18th cent.), the son of the former regent. The representative from Ras-chung phug was present during this ceremony, together with other dignitaries of the bKa'-brgyud-pa school. It was on that occasion that news reached him from Ras-chung phug that a delegation from Byang-chub gling monastery in gTsang had arrived at his monastery; a message had been delivered that a certain Rin-chen rgya-mtsho had raised a treasure containing a *lam yig* for Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa to travel to Tsā-ri in order to open "a door to the sacred site" (*gnas sgo*). During a following trip to bSam-yas and Yum-bu bla-mkhar he kept up his official duties relating to Ras-chung phug by writing missives, while also composing a further biography, a more extended version of the life of his predecessor Zhabs-drung 'Chi-med dbang-po. As a final event in this year, the autobiography mentions his ordination as a Buddhist monk. The ceremony was performed at Mal-gro Dag-po by a teacher of the dGe-lugs-pa school called Khri Rin-po-che Tshul-khrims dar-rgyas (17th/18th cent.); he received the ordination name Ngag-gi dbang-phyug Blo-bzang Chos-dbyings dpal-bzang. Returning to the region of 'On, he arranged initial tantric initiations for the young Ras-chung phug sPrul-sku Ngag-gi dbang-po.¹³

The year 1704 begins with further literary activities: the borrowing of various books from the monasteries of sMin-grol gling and Gong-dkar and composing ritual manuals for both the Old and New Schools. It is also stated in the autobiography that the private chambers of the young representative of Ras-chung phug contained a library of fifty volumes, headed by those of the Aural Transmissions. For a wider audience, he was teaching once again at Ras-chung phug the Six Doctrines of Nāro[pa], but in order to celebrate the fifth month of the "monkey year" (*spre lo*), commemorating the birth of

¹³ The two years from 1702 to 1703 that witnessed the raising of the first treasures, the stay at Dwags-lha sgam-po and the ordination are contained in *rNam thar I*, fols. 50b/2–65a/3. The Fourth sGam-po sPrul-sku, Kun-bzang Nges-don dbang-po (1702–1754), served as the twenty-fourth throne-holder of Dwags-lha sgam-po; see Sørensen & Dölma 2007, p. 50. The biography of Zhabs-drung 'Chi-med dbang-po bears the title *Blo gsal dad pa'i padma rgyas pa'i nyin byed*; it was based on a shorter account composed by dPon-slob don-ldan, the above-mentioned teacher of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa. For the later journeys of Chos-rje gling-pa to the hidden lands of gNas Padma-bkod in the years 1718 to 1720, see Ehrhard 2021, p. 168–175. The area where the hermitage of Brag-rtsa Ri-khrod was located is described as part of Padma sBas-pa'i tshal; see the colophon of the Chos-rje gling-pa treasure referred to in note 19.

Padmasambhava, he specifically transmitted the treasure cycle *Zhi khro nges don snying po* of Rig-'dzin 'Ja'-tshon snying-po (1585–1656). Among the religious dignitaries visiting Ras-chung phug valley, special mention is made of the recently installed sDe-srid Ngag-dbang rin-chen and the Sixth Dalai Bla-ma Tshangs-dbyangs rgya-mtsho, whose visits occurred on different occasions during travels through the Yar-klungs region. Another visitor who arrived from Lha-sa was the above-mentioned Rin-chen rgya-mtsho, from Byang-chub gling monastery in gTsang; the autobiography relates in detail the items he had discovered and provides an extensive account of their transmission, labelled the “entrustment of the treasure” (*gter gyi bka' babs*).

At the beginning of 1705 further visions of Padmasambhava occurred, and during a subsequent journey treasure scripts and introductory lists were discovered in the vicinity of the [s]Kar-chu[ng] lha-khang in the sKyid-chu valley. These finds are accompanied by personal reflections concerning whether it is possible for someone residing in a bKa'-brgyud-pa monastery to be a treasure discoverer of the rNying-ma-pa school. Further travels from Ras-chung phug included a visit to the monastery of bDe-chen chos-'khor in Gro-bo lung and the Sa-skya-pa institution of Gong-dkar chos-sde. The current political situation in Central Tibet is also referred to, including the rows between sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho and Lha-bzang Khan. After the return to Ras-chung phug, the invading troops of the Mongolian khan, who had assumed rule over Tibet that very year, are mentioned, along with the fact that after the violent death of sDe-srid Sangs-rgyas rgya-mtsho the mortuary rituals for him were performed on behalf of some dGe-lugs-pa monks from Lha-sa. The literary compositions Chos-rje gling-pa completed during that time included works on the Kriya Tantras and ritual manuals relating to the *Padma dbang chen yang gsang khros pa* cycle received earlier.¹⁴

Up to this point the duties of a resident teacher of Ras-chung phug and the transmission of teachings to Ngag-gi dbang-po, the Ras-

¹⁴ Concerning the events in the years 1704 to 1705, the further travels and the raising of treasure works, see *rNam thar I*, fols. 65a/3–81b/2. For the travels of the Sixth Dalai Bla-ma in the monkey year of 1704, including a visit to the treasure site of Zab-phu lung in gTsang, see Ehrhard 2015, pp. 140–141. Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa again visited this site during a journey to Central Tibet in the year 1716, another monkey year; see *rNam thar II*, fols. 293b/3–297/3, and Ehrhard 2021, pp. 164–166. He also began the composition of a “record of teachings received” (*thob yig*) at the end of 1704; see *rNam thar I*, fol. 70b/4–5: *khyad par du gyur pa'i ris med kyi dam pa'i chos tshul ji ltar thob pa'i thob yig spro ba bsrang byed sems brtsams*. The Mongolian troops who turned up at Ras-chung phug in 1705 had to be pacified with the gift of a statue of a protector deity, one fashioned by rGod-tshang Heruka, i.e. rGod-tshang ras-chen; see *ibid.*, fols. 78b/2–79a/1.

chung phug sPrul-sku, are regularly recorded in the autobiography. The latter's brother, rDo-rje dbang-po—otherwise known as Byang-gling-pa after his monastery in gTsang—is noted as a visitor to the Yar-klungs valley in the year 1705 in hopes of receiving teachings. Later historiographical literature states that from the treasurer discoverer Chos-rje gling-pa onwards the cycle of the instructions of the Aural Transmissions was kept alive at Byang-chub gling monastery.¹⁵

5. Composing the biography

The years 1706 to 1707 cover eighty-four folios of the autobiography and can be singled out as the most extensive part of the text. In a minute account, the journey to the sacred site of Tsā-ri and his prolonged stay in the domain of the Kaḥ-snam sde-pas, the rulers of sPo-bo, are described. His notes were again kept on a regular basis, even during the actual travelling or under other not entirely comfortable conditions. I will not reconstruct the individual steps of this fascinating journey and the ensuing stay in sPo-bo and Kong-po in a chronological order; instead, I will look at the beginning of the next decade, the years 1708 to 1717, where it becomes clear when the initial part of the biography was composed. Although not noted in the autobiography, it should be mentioned that an account of his life up to the twenty-fourth year (i.e. 1706) was also written by Chos-rje gling-pa before embarking on his trip to the east; it was composed in Ras-chung phug and is available in the print edition of the collected writings (see Appendix I, ka [2]).

The beginning of the year 1708 was spent in Dwags-lha sgam-po after the journey to the east, Chos-rje gling-pa remarking that he did not celebrate the upcoming Tibetan New Year due to a different calculation of this festival in the Kong-po region, where festivities had already taken place. It was Chos-rje gling-pa who performed the name-giving ceremony for the young sGam-po sPrul-sku. (The teacher lHun-grub Nges-don dbang-po, whom he refers to as rJe Bla-ma, was also present on that occasion.) Among the treasures he had revealed in the past two years, special mention is made of the *Zab lam*

¹⁵ The visit of Byang-gling-pa rDo-rje dbang-po to Ras-chung phug can be found in *rNam thar I*, fols. 76b/3–77a/4. For the statement concerning the continuity of the Aural Transmission teachings, along with the fact that the Seventh dPa'-bo gTsug-lag dga'-ba (d. 1781) received them later from rDo-rje dbang-po, see Chos-kyi dbang-phyug (as in note 11), p. 571.2-3: *gter ston chos rje gling pa nas gtsang byang chub gling pa mchog sprul rdo rje dbang po'i sku thog tu snyan brgyud kyi gdams skor yongs su rdzogs pa bzhugs la / phyis rje dpa'o rin po che gtsug lag dga' bas kyang byang gling pa las snyan brgyud yongs rdzogs gsan cing*. For the reincarnation lines at Ras-chung phug and Byang-chub gling and the teaching of the Aural Transmission at these sites see Sernesi (2021:236-242).

thugs kyi nor bu, whose find meant that the cycle was now complete (*gter sgrub*). Immediately afterwards preparations were made for the next journey to Kong-po and, in the same way as in 1706, the region of La-thog served as the entry point to south-eastern Tibet. LHun-grub Nges-don dbang-po served as a travel company to the area of sNyim-phu and on to O-rong, a region in Kong-po already visited during the first journey. A family of local benefactors belonging to the landed nobility had its residence at dGa'-chags, from which he travelled on to a sacred site known as gTsang-po mGo-dgu. Returning to O-rong and sGa-chags, Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa finally settled in at a site for his spiritual retreat called Nor-bu gling.¹⁶

During that time, he composed a further biography, this time of his teacher bZang-po rdo-rje, the Third sGam-po sPrul-sku; one Rwa-ston served as scribe. It seems that around the same time, when he was twenty-six, the project of rendering an account of his own life was initiated by Chos-rje gling-pa. The autobiography has the following short reference in this regard, mentioning the scribe who assisted in this endeavour:

From the retreat for my spiritual realization, I started to write scrolls containing the sketches of [my] [auto]biography, most of the initial section being set down by the monk Phan-bde.

There follows an invitation from the region of brTul, where he again conferred the complete empowerments of the *Zab lam thugs kyi nor bu* cycle upon the local population, after which the subject of composing the autobiography resurfaces. The author reflects on the nature of this kind of literature, his family's genealogy, and the status of his own incarnation line, this last being now traced back to its individual members in both India and Tibet.¹⁷

¹⁶ The extensive description of the years 1706 to 1707 can be found in *rNam thar I*, fols. 81b/2–165a/1. For the beginning of the second journey, see *ibid.*, fols. 165a/1–171b/2. During both stays at La-thog, Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa was supported by the Zur-mkhar family, just as Sha-ra Rab-'byams-pa Sangs-rgyas seng-ge (1427–1470), the teacher of gTsang-smyon Heruka, had been in previous times; see *ibid.*, fols. 89b/1–90a/2. Concerning the sacred site of gTsang-po mGo-dgu in Kong-po, which had initially been a favourite destination of rDzogs-chen-pa bSod-nams rin-chen (1491–1559), see Ehrhard 2013b, pp. 70–71, note 14. The Third sGam-po sPrul-sku bZang-po rdo-rje, too, had stayed there; see Guru bKra-shis: *bsTan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo chos kyi 'byung ba*, p. 731.23.

¹⁷ The initial phase of the composition of the autobiography and the following statements can be found in *rNam thar I*, fols. 171b/5–174a/2. The scribe of the biography of the Third sGam-po sPrul-sku was none other than Rwa-ston sTobs-ldan rdo-rje (17th/18th cent.), an important disciple of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa

I will come back later to this initial phase of the composition of the autobiography but will restrict myself now to the remaining events of the year 1708. Attention should be paid to tantric empowerments given to the dGa'-chags hosts, especially the "ruler brothers" (*mi dbang mched*), followed by the arrival of lHun-grub Nges-don dbang-po from Dwags-lha sgam-po and by the transmission of his own revelations—now called "New Treasures" (*gter gsar*)—to a wider audience. After an encounter with the Sixth 'Brug-chen Mi-pham dbang-po (1642–1717), who obtained sacramental substances from Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa, construction activities are described in some detail. These concerned the building of a private residence for the young treasure discoverer in O-rong. The place was called dPal Kun-tu bzang-po nags-khrod, a name reminiscent of the illustrious hermitage of the Dwags-po bKa-brgyud-pa forefathers in Central Tibet; for its consecration all the local donors of O-rong and dGa'-chags were present. An ensuing journey led to different places in Kong-po, including rTse-le[gs], where the monastery of rTse-le[gs] sNa-tshogs rang-grol (1605–1677) was located. The previously mentioned Bu-chu lha-khang and a treasure site of Rig-'dzin 'Ja'-tshon snying-po called Chos-mkhar were two other places visited during this trip. The final destination of this journey was dGa'-rwa sgang, where the reliquary shrine of sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje had recently been set up. Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa was a lineage-holder of the latter's treasures, having met the master during his first stay in the sPo-bo region. Now he was welcomed by one O-rgyan [bSam-gtan] dpal-'byor (17th/18th cent.), the former "steward" (*mgron gnyer*) of sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje, and up to the end of the year various rituals were performed for the community residing at the latter's monastery known as Byang-chub gling.¹⁸

The remaining years of the decade up to 1717 are not covered fully in the incomplete version of the autobiography, the text focusing on events from 1709 to 1714, years spent by Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa

and a treasure discoverer in his own right; see Goodman 1992, pp. 137 & 200–201, n. 38. For the quotation concerning the composition of the autobiography, see *rNam thar I*, fols. 171b/6–172a/1: *grub mtshams nas rnam thar zin bris kyi shog dril bri ba'i dbu tshugs shing stod cha phal cher dge slong phan bde btab*. At the end of this passage, it is noted that the work was written down especially for the monks of Ras-chung phug.

¹⁸ For the final events in the year 1708 and the journey to the monastery where sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje had passed away in the previous year, see *rNam thar I*, fols. 174a/6–187/2. The detailed description of the meeting with this treasure discoverer in the year 1706 can be found in *ibid.*, fols. 139a/2–144b/6. Concerning sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje, whose teachings were mainly confined to sPo-bo and who was supported by the Kaḥ-snam sde-pa rulers, see Ehrhard 2013a, p. 358, note 14.

in the regions of sPo-bo and Kong-po. At the beginning of the latter year the support of the rulers of dGa'-chags is highlighted once again, including details of the production of a golden bKa'-gyur manuscript in O-rong; among the persons responsible for this project were one rJe-drung Nam-mkha' rdo-rje and one mGon-po ye-shes. The final events in the text can be dated to the tenth day of the "monkey month" (*spre zla*)—the fifth month—of the year 1714, at which time an extensive ritual of the Avalokiteśvara cycle *'Jig rten dbang phyug yid bzhin nor bu* of the New Treasures was performed. The text breaks off with the statement that the circumstances were auspicious and would last as long as space endures.¹⁹

After the compilation of the written sketches in 1708 into a biographical narrative, Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa continued keeping regular notes, the incomplete text being the version that takes the reader, without any final editing, up to 1714.

6. *The second text*

A second work on the life of Chos-rje gling-pa can be found in the collection of the Buddhist Digital Resource Centre (BDRC); it covers 390 folios. The full title is "An extensive biography of Padma-[sambhava]'s representative, a Dharmarāja of great treasures, [he who is called] 'Dzam-gling rdo-rje: A creeping vine for the fortunate faithful" (*padma'i rgyal tshab gter chen chos kyi rgyal po'i 'dzam gling rdo rje'i rnam thar rgyas pa skal ldan dad pa'i khri shing*). Its main part is a verbatim reproduction of the sketches that go to make up the autobiography—with minor changes, mainly in the introduction to the text. It continues the narrative from the year 1714 onwards and presents events up to the ninth day of the ninth Tibetan month of the year 1717; this indicates that Chos-rje gling-pa's notes covered up to the end of this decade and were still available. Once again, I will not deal with the activities and travels described in the text so much as with the beginning of the work, to find out how it was transformed by the editors.

In contrast to the earlier version, there are introductory verses, and, significantly, a statement concerning the nature of autobiographical writing. The reason for such endeavours is articulated in the following words:

¹⁹ The year 1714 up to the tenth day of the fifth Tibetan month is treated in *rNam thar I*, fols. 278b/2–283a/5. The *'Jig rten dbang phyug yid bzhin nor bu* cycle was the treasure discovered by Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa in the Bu-chu lha-khang in Kong-po; see Schwieger 1995, p. 335 [No. 933]. Its completion as a treasure had taken place at Thub-bstan 'od-gsal gling, the above-mentioned hermitage also called Brag-rtsa ri-khrod; see note 11.

Regarding this, although there is the custom of calling [those] biographies secret [which are] proper [treatments] in the biographies of some individuals of how the visions they saw manifested, from the very beginning I noted down as [the actual content of] secrets what needed to be kept secret. These and the other things I set down [in the autobiography] at length. Afterwards, what mouths have, as it were, picked up [from others] and given the name “secret” to—these, too, I set down as models. Later those desiring a heart that sees will be able to see [not just the models but the actual secrets]; those not so desirous, although [the actual secrets] have been made public, will not have acquired the ear for [them]. So that’s how it is. As the saying goes:

In the south the signs of realization are [only] taught,
[but] in the north one cries [them] out, [having ac-
quired them] by one’s own effort.

Still, [feeling] as if I should [otherwise] not be returning dues or loans to those who appealed for them, I have plunged into setting down whatever I remembered.²⁰

This statement has been lifted from the autobiography and can be found in the latter work in the previously mentioned passage describing the compositional activity in the year 1708. The initial impetus for setting out to write such a work is described more elaborately in the second text, where also the title has been added:

From the retreat for my spiritual realization, [and] at the strong urging of the ruler-brothers of dGa-chags [to write down] a basic record [of my life] in order to arrange it anew into an autobiography, I prepared to begin to write scrolls of the sketches, [calling it] “Talk of the deceptive world: The trunk of a wish-fulfilling tree of whatever manifests”; most of the initial part was set down by the monk Phan-bde.

²⁰ See *rNam thar II*, fols. 2b/2–3a/1: *de la gang zag la la’i rnam thar du mthong snang byung tshul legs gsang ba’i rnam thar zhes byed srol ’dug rung / gsang dgos pa rnam ni ye gsang la bris kyang / dgos pa dang / gzhan dkyus su bkod pa phyin de khas ’thus ’dra zhing gsang ba zhes btags kyang dpe la bkod phyin lta snying ’dod pa tsho ni lta thub pa dang / mi ’dod pa tshe ni khrom bsgrigs byas kyang nyan mkhan ma byung ba de’i phyir de ltar dang / lar lho phyogs su grub rtags bstan no zhes / byang phyogs su rang gi ’bad nas sgrags / zhes pa’i dpe ltar ’gyur kyang bskul pa po yi g.yar khral mi bzlog pa bzhin du gang dran thol byung du bkod pa ni. Consult *rNam thar I*, fols. 172b/4–173a/2, for this passage and its variant readings.*

It is thus obvious that the donors from dGa'-chags were the driving force behind the composition of the autobiography and that this version served as the basis for the second text. The latter work can be regarded as a nearly identical copy: besides the changes to the introduction, only a small note concerning the genealogy of the family having been added at the beginning of the second section. In the process of copying the original version—assuming that our first text is this version—certain passages were also lost; up to now I have been able to locate one passage of ten folios missing in the second text.²¹

These autobiographical notes were also used for a biography of Chos-rje gling-pa composed shortly afterwards in 1709 by one of his disciples, who bears the name Tshe-dbang tshogs-gnyis dar-rgyas 'Jig-rten dga'-ba'i rgyan a.k.a. Rigs-'dus Tshe-dbang rtsal. It covers its subject's life up to his twenty-sixth year, being a full-fledged account up to the arrival in dGa'-chags. Like the second (extended) text of the autobiography, it was composed in the residence called g.Yu-'brug lha-rtse. In the print edition of the collected writings of Chos-rje gling-pa, it consists of eight chapters (see Appendix I, e).

The draft of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje was available up to the year 1717, when he returned from his final journey to Central Tibet to dPal Kuntu bzang-po nags-khrod, the above-mentioned hermitage in the domain of the rulers of dGa'-chags. This state of affairs is adverted to in the second text in the following words:

These have been up to now the stainless pronouncements of the Honourable One himself. We his followers produced (*phro lus pa*) the final parts of the [auto]biography, adding them on at the end, [and so] established them as seeds of a truthful basic record.

These words are partially repeated in the colophon of the text, which will be presented in Appendix II. According to this closing section, the full biography as contained in the second text was finalized in the year 1723 during the consecration of the reliquary shrine of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling, which was constructed—together with a similar shrine for sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje—during a period of nearly

²¹ For the extended version of the composition of the autobiography see *rNam thar II*, fol. 168a/1–3: *grub mtshams nas dga' chags sde pa sku mched nged kyis rnam thar gsar bsgrig gnang rgyu rtsa tho nan bskul gnang ba bzhin / nged rang gi (= gis) 'di snang gi 'khrul gtam gang shar ljon shing gi sdong po zin bris kyi shog dril bri ba'i dbu tshugs sham (= bshams) stod cha phal cher dge slong phan bdes phabs*. The minor additions to the genealogy can be found *ibid.*, fols. 8b/4–9a/5 & 10a/3–4. The missing passage of ten folios concerns travels in sPo-bo and Kong-po dating to the period from 1709 to 1710; see *rNam thar I*, fols. 211b/6–222a/2, for the full account and *rNam thar II*, fols. 205b/6–206a/1, for the lacuna.

one and a half years at the residence of the ruler of dGa'-chags. It was on that occasion that the ruler's son, Padma rab-rgyas rol-pa'i rtsal, was installed as the reincarnation of sTag-sham Nus-ldan ro-rje.²²

7. Conclusions

The second text treats events in the life of Chos-rje gling-pa, based on his own sketches, up to the year 1717. One can speculate that the routine of keeping regular records of the daily activities was interrupted by the Dsungar invasion, which began in the month of December of that very year. It resulted in the sacking and pillaging of monasteries along the gTsang-po River as far down as Dwags-lha sgam-po. It is known that in 1716 the treasure discoverer had undertaken a visit to the monastery and that he travelled also to gTsang on a pilgrimage to the above-mentioned site of Zab-phu lung. After the last teachings for the Fourth sGam-po sPrul-sku Kun-bzang Nges-don dbang-po, who had just been installed on the abbatial throne of Dwags-lha sgam-po, he returned once more to the Kong-po region, this time heading for the hidden lands of "Great and Small Padma-bkod" (*padma bkod che chung*). During this period of political instability and persecutions some residents of Lha-sa too, including the Jesuit Ippolito Desideri (1684–1733), were vacating the capital and seeking refuge in hidden sanctuaries.²³

A separate text has survived which treats the initial stages of the journey to Central Tibet in the year 1717; this detailed account is available in the print edition of the collected writings of Chos-rje gling-pa (see Appendix I, ka [1]).

²² The passage which separates the autobiography from its continuation can be found in *rNam thar II*, fol. 328a/1: 'di yan sku zhabs de nyid kyi bka' stsol dri ma med pa yin / 'jug (= mjug) mthud rnam thar smad cha'i skor mdzad 'phro lus pa rnam re rang rjes 'jug rtsa tho drang po'i sa bon du bkod pa ni. For the events surrounding the consecration of the reliquary shrine of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa and the recognition of the reincarnation of sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje according to the former's prophecies, see *ibid.* fols. 387b/1–390a/5.

²³ The final journey to Central Tibet and the opening of the hidden lands of gNas Padma-bkod have been summarized, based in part on the second text, in dKon-mchog rgya-mtsho: *Dwags po bka' brgyud chos 'byung*, pp. 642.1–643.6; a description of these journeys is given in Ehrhard 2021, pp. 164–175. On the persecutions of rNyings-ma-pa and bKa'-brgyud-pa monks during this period, see Pomplun 2006, pp. 37–39 and Pomplun 2011, pp. 114–119. As a witness to these events, Ippolito Desideri escaped from Lha-sa to the region of Dwags-po with the help of one "Luggar Lama". It has been suggested that this individual could be Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling; a more plausible candidate would be the latter's younger brother Chos-kyi grags-pa, also known as Klu-mkhar spyang-snga. Concerning the latter's assistance to 'Bri-gung monastery during these difficult times, see dKon-mchog rgya-mtsho: *Dwags po bka' brgyud chos 'byung*, pp. 633:17–23.

Even if the final part of the life of Chos-rje gling-pa is here passed over, it may be pointed out that it is possible to fix the date of his death—which in the historiographical literature is generally dated to after his entering gNas Padma-bkod. According to the detailed description in the second text the exact date can now be established as the beginning of 1720 when he had reached his 38th year.²⁴

The following comparisons can be made regarding the two texts on the life of Chos-rje gling-pa: From the first sketches of an autobiography, started at the age of seventeen, up to the beginning of the composition of a coherent narrative in his 26th year in 1708, the regular records of daily events provided the framework for the autobiography. This account included later reflections and personal considerations, for example on his role as an incarnation within the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pa school or his ambitions as a revealer of Padmasambhava's treasures. An early version of the autobiography must have circulated, one example being the manuscript containing events up to 1714. While the practice of keeping records eventually stopped in 1717, the remaining years in the life of Chos-rje gling-pa were documented by his disciples up to his death in 1720; three years later the complete biography was finalized at the time of the consecration of the reliquary shrine.

Appendix I

An extensive collection of rare manuscripts and block prints has been made available by the BDRC under the title "Collection of rare Nyingma texts from Kham, Tibet" (*kham khul nas 'tshol bsdu zhus pa'i dpe rnying dpe dkon*) [= W3PD982]. It consists of 76 volumes, volumes 42 and 43 of which contain a xylograph edition, printed in red ink, of a *gsung 'bum* collection relating to Chos-rje gling-pa. The first volume (marg. e) is a biography, composed in the year 1709, while the second volume consists of two books (marg. ka and kha) with various texts including autobiographical writings.

Vol. e

Thub dbang gnyis pa slob dpon padma ka ra'i rgyal tshab gter chen chos rje gling pa'i rtogs pa brjod pa rje btsun mchog gi zhal lung dad pa'i 'khri shing, 178 fols.

²⁴ For the years 1719 to 1720 in the biography see *rNam thar II*, fols. 348a/4–387b/1. The date of his passing is given as the 15th day of the first Tibetan month of the year 1720; see *ibid.*, fols. 375b/5–376a/5. The death of lHun-grub Nges-don dbang-po, who accompanied his half-brother during the journey to the hidden lands, occurred soon after, on the tenth day of the third month of the same year; see *ibid.*, fol. 379a/1.

Vol. ka

[1] *shing lug dbus gtsang phyogs su bskyod pa'i tshul gyi lam yig kun tu bzang po'i zlos gar*, 55 fols.

[2] *Śākya dge slong rdo rje 'dzin pa 'dzam gling rdo rje'i spyad pa dū ku li'i (= dū ku la'i) gos*, 43 fols.

[3] *gSang ba'i rnam thar*, 29 fols.

[4] *Mi mnyam pa'i bsod nams chen pos lugs zung gi mkhyen pas mngon par chub pa'i rigs ldan o rong gi mi dbang sgam po bsod nams dang dga' chags mi dbang sku mched gnyis la gsang ba'i lung byang stsal ba'i skor*, 9 fols.

[5] *bDag cag gi rnam 'dren dam pa rje btsun 'dzam gling rdo rje'i bar skabs kyi rnam thar sa bon*, 3 fols.

[6] *Rig 'dzin chos rje gling pa'i bka' rtsom 'thor bu rnams phyogs gcig tu bkod pa*, 27 fols.

[7] *gNas mchog rma kung lung gi lam yig mtsho byung dāki sgra ma'i glu dbyangs*, 13 fols.

[8] *sDom rgyun brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*, 1 fols.

[9] *Nā ro mkha' spyod kyi sgrub thabs mkha' spyod bde ldan gling du 'jug pa'i ngogs*, 4 fols.

[10] *Rigs dang dkyil 'khor kun gyi gtso bo khyab bdag rdo rje 'chang dbang po o rgyan chos rje gling pa'i gsung 'bum las dag snang 'thor bu'i skor dang lung bstan*, 28 fols.

[11] *Sangs rgyas gnyis pa pad 'byung chos rje gling pa'i gsung 'bum las / kun bzang phan bde dang ngag dbang thog (= thogs) med zung gi dris lan bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs la gzigs*, 37 fols.

[12] *Dug 'joms 'chi gsos bdud rtsi dga' ston*, 3 fols.

[13] *rGyal dbang padma kā ra'i (= padma ka ra'i) rgyal tshab rig 'dzin rdo rje 'chang dbang o rgyan chos rje gling pa'i gsung 'bum las / gsol 'debs kyi rim pa phyogs gcig tu bkod pa dad pa'i padmo kha 'byed byin rlabs 'od stong 'gro ba'i nyin byed dbang po*, 64 fols.

Vol. kha

- [1] *Phur ba drag sngags las phur pa byin rlabs*, 1 fol.
- [2] *Khyad par gdab kha drug*, 2 fols.
- [3] *Phur srung gi gsol mchod rgyun khyer*, 1 fol.
- [4] *bDud btsan klu gsum gyi gtor 'bul khyer bde*, 1 fol.
- [5] *dPal yang dag la brten pa'i bdud rtsi ril bu'i sgrub thabs rig 'dzin zhal lung*, 2 fols.
- [6] *Yang bdag (= dag) bde chen snying po'i bsnyen yig gsang lam brda mtshon*, 5 fols.
- [7] *dPal rdo rje gzhon nu'i bsnyen yig dngos grub mchog gi nye lam*, 6 fols.
- [8] *Tshe gcig byang chub sgrub pa'i gsang lam yang bdag bde chen snying po las chos thams cad kyi sngon 'gro thun mong ba*, 19 fols.
- [9] *dPal rdo rje gzhon nu'i smad las man ngag gi yi ge gsal bar byed pa khyab 'jug mtshon cha 'khor lo*, 14 fols.
- [10] *gTer gsar phyag rdzogs kyi sngon 'gro bzhi sbyor lhan thabs rnam mkhyen bgrod pa'i them skas*, 16 fols.
- [11] *Phur ba'i bsnyen rkyang bya tshul*, 2 fols.
- [12] *Phur ba'i bsnyen dmigs*, 2 fols.

Appendix II

The colophon of *Padma'i rgyal tshab gter chen chos kyi rgyal po 'dzam gling rdo rje'i rnam thar rgyas pa skal ldan dad pa'i khri shing*, fol. 390a/3–b/5; the work was composed in the year 1723.

[I]

zhes u rgyan chen po sangs rgyas gnyis pa padma ka ra'i rgyal tshabs (= tshab) 'gro 'dul chos rje gling pa padma gar dbang ye shes rol pa'i rtsal mtshan yongs su grags pa de nyid kyi rnam par thar pa dad pa'i khri shing pa'i rtsa tho sku zhabs de nyid kyi mdzad pa'i [zin bris] gang shar ljon shing gi sdong po'i mjug mthud smad cha'i skor 'di rnams / dam pa gang gi chos

srid kyi bka' babs 'dzin pa lha gnyer gyi btsun pa o rgyan bsam gtan dpal
 'byor gyis / gtso cher 'phags mchog rig 'dzin de nyid kyi rgyun gzigs phyag
 tho rnams la zhag yig rtsibs pa gzhi byas / re gnyis ma gtsang ba dang sbas
 gnas su phebs [pa skor sogs] pa 'gengs pos dgos [390b] rigs rnams rje drung
 nam mkha' rdo rje / ma yum sprul sku padma / mgon po ye shes / dad ldan
 mi yi dbang po lha dbang rnam rgyal / grub chen lho brag pa / dbu mdzad
 chos 'byung sogs dang bka' bgros shing khyad par 'jug brgyan tshig sbyor
 gang ci rig 'dzin nus ldan rdo rje'i dbon drung chos kyi khri bzhugs pa kun
 bzang nam mkha' rdo rjes mdzad de /

[II]

khong yul sngags spyod kyi zhing 'o shod gad pa skya ba dang mi ring bar /
 dga' bde'i dpal gyi mngon par 'char ba'i phrod pa yu (= g.yu) 'brug lha
 rtse'i gzim chung nyi 'od 'khyil bar zin bris su rang blo'i 'ol tshod du ma
 song ba'i drang po'i sa bon du bkod pa nor 'khrul mtshams tshe bla ma lha
 daki mkhyen ldan rnams kyi spyan sngar snyams nas bshad shing / bdag
 sogs gdul byar gyur pa'i mkha' khyab sems can thams cad dpal ldan bla ma
 mchog gi go 'phang rin po che thob pa'i rgyur gyur cig /

Translation of the colophon:

[I]

“The basic register [called] ‘A creeping vine for the faithful’, a biography of ‘Gro-’dul Chos-rje gling-pa Padma gar-dbang Ye-shes rol-pa’i rtsal (whose name is known everywhere), a representative of the Great One from Oḍḍiyāna, the Second Buddha Padmakara. The sections of the final part [of his life-story] [were] joined to the end of ‘The trunk of a wish-fulfilling tree [producing] whatever manifests’, [a work] created by the Honourable One himself. I used as a basis the framework of the daily records in the notebooks [composed by those individuals] who regularly saw this Vidyādhara, the best among the Noble Ones—above all, [those composed] by O-rgyan bSam-gtan dpal-’byor, the monk who was in charge of the temple [Byang-chub gling] [and] held the transmission of the teaching domain of the deceased.²⁵ [In addition,] a few incomplete notes [were consulted,] and the types [of oral information] necessary for filling in the sections on how [the master] proceeded to the hidden site [of gNas Padma-bkod], including [information gathered from] rje-drung Nam-mkha’ rdo-rje, Padma, the [treasure discoverer’s] consort (and an incarna-

²⁵ O-rgyan [bSam-gtan] dpal-’byor had been sTag-sham Nus-ldan rdo-rje’s steward and the person who welcomed Rig-’dzin Chos-rje gling-pa to his master’s monastery in the year 1708; see note 18.

tion), mGon-po ye-shes, the faithful ruler lHa-dbang rnam-rgyal, the Mahāsiddha lHo-brag-pa and the chant-leader Chos-'byung,²⁶ together with [more general] conversations. And whatever particular phrasing [was needed] to insert [into the text so as to] adorn [it] it was done by [me,] Kun-bzang Nam-mkha' rdo-rje, the nephew of Rig-'dzin [sTag-sham] Nus-ldan rdo-rje [and] the one [now] occupying his teaching throne.

[II]

It has been set down in the form of sketches. as the seed of a truthful basic record, where no assumptions of one's own mind have entered,—[set down] not far from Gad-pa skya-bo, in the lower part of O[-rong], a field for mantra practice in the land of Kong[-po], in a private chamber [called] 'Radiant Sunlight' of [the great assembly hall] gYu-'brug lha-rtse, [which is a place] conducive to the complete manifestation of the glory of joy and bliss.²⁷ Whenever error [and] illusion have met each other I imagined [myself] in the presence of [my] knowledgeable teacher, [personal] deity [and] Ḍākinī. and discussed [the work]. May this be the cause for all beings that need to be trained—I [and] others, [whose number] fills [the limits of] the sky—attaining the precious state of the highest teacher, the Glorious One!"

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²⁶ Among these persons, both rje-drung Nam-mkha' rdo-rje and mGon-po ye-shes are known to have been donors to the production of a golden manuscript bKa'-gyur produced in O-rong in the year 1714; see note 19. lHa-dbang rnam-rgyal (from the ruling family of dGa'-chags) urged Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa to compose one of his treasure texts from the *bDe gshegs rtsa gsum 'chi med dril sgrub* cycle; see Schwieger 1990, p. 79 [99]. Among the persons accompanying Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa to the hidden lands, the mentioned person named Mahāsiddha lHo-brag-pa played a particularly active role; see *rNam thar II*, fols. 342a/1 ff. & fols. 360a/2 ff., and Ehrhard 2021, pp. 171-175.

²⁷ The "great assembly hall" (*tshoms chen*) bearing the name g.Yu-'brug lha-rtse was located in the residence of the rulers of dGa'-chags. After a period of retreat at dPal Kun-tu bzang po nags-khrod, which lasted from 1712 to 1715, Chos-rje gling-pa had conducted an extensive *sGrub-chen* ritual at this residence, attended by the ruling family; see *rNam thar II*, fols. 265b/1-267b/1. It was at this residence that the reliquary shrine of Rig-'dzin Chos-rje gling-pa was produced with the support of the above-mentioned ruler lHa-dbang rnam-rgyal; see *ibid.*, fol. 386a/2-b/1.

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