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Transmission in the Mind Series

Origins and History of the Mind Series Manuals on Meditation

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on three texts of meditation practice that belong to the Mind Series (Sems sde) subdivision of the Great Perfection (Rdzogs chen) school of Tibetan Buddhism. The *Rnying ma bka' ma* collections and Kong sprul's *Gdams ngag mdzod* propose this group of texts as representative of the methods (*lugs*) of meditation of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde.

This thesis aims to trace the specific history of each of these three texts and to determine their role in the wider context of the Mind Series tradition.

In order to accomplish this, the three chapters examine textual references to these methods and compare them with the information provided in the texts themselves. Here, the analysis of the lineages of transmission assumes an important role in unfolding the narrative in which these methods were embedded, a narrative that is sometimes historical and sometimes constructed (and more frequently a mix of the two). Moreover, the study of the lineages has a twofold effect: it clarifies the identities of the authors of these methods which have up to now remained in a state of uncertainty and confusion in Western literature; and it justifies the choice of these three texts as prototypes of the *Rdzogs chen bka' ma sems sde*.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis explores the history of three texts of the Rdzogs chen Mind Series (*Slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag*, *Snyan brgyud rin po che'i khrid kyi man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid* and *Rdzogs chen sems sde'i khrid yig*) and of the meditation methods they contain (*Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs*). Several scholars studied the 'classics' of the Mind Series, such as the *Kun byed rgyal po*, the Eighteen Scriptures of the Mind Series, or the earlier prototypes of this tradition including the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*.¹ Much of this research focussed on the doctrinal tenets formulated within the boundaries of these works. My thesis examines a different genre of texts called *khrid yig* or instruction manual. It investigates the practical methods that developed out of the Sems sde classics. These texts responded to the exigency of transferring the Word of the Buddha into spiritual practice. They provided students with techniques to guide them through their daily meditation sessions. Yet, the *khrid yig* of the Mind Series are not the word of the Buddha in the strict sense, and hence allow for change and personal interpretation. Over time, historical and personal contingencies shaped the content of the *khrid yigs* well beyond what was deemed acceptable to the major works as, for example, the *Kun byed rgyal po* or the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*. Hence, the *khrid yigs* draw a more varied and complex picture of the history of Sems sde. They show an intricate network of relationships that formed and modelled the history and practices of its communities.

The thesis began as a study of the life and work of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. A ro was a pivotal figure in the second diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet. His most famous work, the *Theg pa chen po'i rnal 'byor*, is one of the earliest examples of the *lam rim* genre. Tibetan histories frequently report an episode in which Atiśa

¹ See for example, Neumaier-Dargyay, 1992; Namkhai Norbu and Clemente 2010; Valby, 2012; Liljenberg, 2012; Esler, 2012.

praises the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* as the finest Buddhist composition ever composed in Tibet. Although A ro's written production seems to have extended no further, several sources, within and outside the Rdzogs chen tradition, speak of a considerable number of meditation techniques connected to this master. At the end of the first year of my PhD, I learned of Katja Thiesen's unpublished Magisterarbeit on the life and work of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. This dissertation examines some of the texts and sources I had studied and translated, including A ro's biography and the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*. To avoid duplication of effort, I turned my attention to the method of meditation (*lugs*) that the tradition attributes to A ro.

I soon realised that although the titles of the Sems sde *lugs* are the same across the sources, Tibetan authors employ these titles to refer to different Sems sde traditions. All too often, modern studies too fail to identify these meditation methods in a consistent manner. The *Rnying ma bka' ma* collections and Kong sprul's *Gdams ngag mdzod* propose three meditation methods of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde: the *Slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag*, here also called *Khams lugs*; the *Snyan brgyud rin po che'i khrid yig man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid* or "*A ro lugs*" and the *Rdzogs chen sems sde'i khrid yig* or "*Nyang lugs*". The *A ro lugs* alludes to its association with A ro's instructions. The identity of the *Khams lugs* remains, at first, doubtful since sources often refer to A ro's instructions by this name. Matters are further complicated by the fact that the *A ro lugs*, *Khams lugs* and *Nyang lugs* do not feature in the main titles of the texts. They appear as interlinear notes inserted at a later stage. The introductions to the collections where they are reproduced rely on the colophons to identify the authors of these methods. Yet, if these texts are the written forms of old oral traditions, it is conceivable that the masters named in the colophons were not the authors but the compilers of these old oral traditions. Because of the uncertainty of the history, authorship and specific affiliation of these texts and meditation methods, I resolved to focus my attention on these issues.

In tracing the history of the *lugs*, one becomes aware that sources are not unanimous in their description of the *lugs*. The titles of the *lugs* of the Mind

Series have a much longer history than the methods they identify. Thus, while the signifier (the *lugs*), does not change across sources and time, the signified (the method) evolves. Over time, the labels of *Nyang lugs*, *Khams lugs* and partly also of *A ro lugs* have been applied to different Sems sde traditions. This rendered the task of identification much more difficult.

The earliest reference to the *lugs* of the Mind Series in our sources dates to the twelfth century. The *Khams lugs*, *Nyang lugs* and the meditation techniques of A ro Ye shes are all attested in these early records. In response, I set out to find clues that would confirm the association between the traditions of *A ro*, *Khams* and *Nyang* as well as the texts included in the *Rnying ma bka' ma* and the *Gdams ngag mdzod*. These traditions remained exclusively oral for a long period of time. This influenced both the outcome and the method of my research. It is impossible to juxtapose an unknown tradition with one that is known. Comparative data is unavailable. The doctrinal content of a text and the comparative study of its method of meditation with other similar methods is often an unreliable tool to supply background information. A text may incorporate or not incorporate certain features regardless of the period of its composition, and forgeries are not unheard of in the Buddhist world. I thus turned to the meta-data these texts provide: lineages and colophons.

In religious studies lineages and colophons cannot be taken at face value. They are artefacts made of an admixture of legend and historical information, where the former usually outstrips the latter. Yet, they hold the potential to provide valuable data if handled carefully. A lineage can tell us of the intention of the author. By formulating a new transmission an author can either create a completely new narrative or use blocks of an already established lineage. In the latter case, he proclaims his belonging to the tradition that created that transmission.² In this respect, lineages are to be interpreted as later constructions made to serve the author's purpose. Yet, not all lineage data can be discarded as fictitious. For example, an author, when formulating a lineage, usually tries to be

² In this sense, there is some overlap between “transmission” and “tradition”. Many traditions have their own specific transmissions. When an author copies a long section of his lineage from a preceding transmission, he aligns his text with the tradition.

consistent with known historical and biographical data in regard to chronology. Authors consulted written and oral material in order to find information about the lives of the masters whose names they used in their lineages. Therefore, in many cases, transmissions contain sequences of lineage-holders who truly entertained a teacher-student relationship. Even in sections of a lineage that contain legendary figures, authors seem to give some importance to the sequential order in which these super-human lineage-holders feature in the list.³ This thesis thus runs on two parallel lines. On the one hand, it tries to identify the reason why an author selected particular lineage-holders to form his lineage; in other words, his reasons behind his lineage construction. On the other, I examine whether the teacher-student relationship between the members of a lineage is verifiable through cross-references against other accounts.

Such lineage analysis reveals the specific doctrinal affiliations of the *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs*. Quotations and colophons help us to define further the tradition on which the texts are based. This investigation has two outcomes: first it establishes whether the names associated with these *lugs* – Nam mkha' rdo rje, Mkha' spyod pa and Sog bzlog pa – are authors or only redactors of these methods. Second, it provides useful data to check against the different accounts that sources offer for the terms *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs*. In other words, it allows us to determine whether the labels of *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs* were applied with justification.

Documented lineages also demonstrate that the Sems sde tradition was accepted, and circulated, among the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. It highlights the degree of enmeshment of the traditions and masters that formulated these meditation practices and the changing nature of their relationships.

All too often, Tibetan and Western scholars draw a picture of a static and short-lived Mind Series tradition. Tibetans, who wish to stress the authenticity of the

³ This was not always the case, but at times, as Davidson stated, the master-student relationship between an established master and one whose existence has been criticised by other traditions, might be useful to grant credibility to the latter. Moreover, the fact that the author of the *Bai ro 'dra 'bag*'s lineage felt the need to inform his audience that the order of his transmission was not fixed suggests that, in general, there should be an order in which the *vidyādhara*s are placed inside the lineage. On the first point see Chapter 2, p. 72.

Sems sde, tend to underplay any change in the tradition. Western scholars focus their studies on the main texts that, due to their status, can only partially show the development of the Mind Series after their redaction. This thesis aims to provide a wider and more comprehensive picture of the Mind Series: a picture that attests to the liveliness of this tradition and its ability to adapt to new purposes and times.

Chapter Outline:

Chapter One starts with a brief overview of the texts and their location. Its function is to show how the tradition categorises these texts and how the *khrid yig* differ from the canonical works of the Mind Series. The discussion then turns briefly to the concept of authorship. Since it is difficult to pinpoint the beginning of instructions that passed through so many people and were recorded at a much later stage, the concept of authorship needs to be narrowed down to be of any use. Since it is often impossible to ascertain, with precision, a redactor's contribution to the tradition he reported, I consider an author only a person who clearly considers himself to be one.⁴

Chapter Two focuses on the *Khams lugs*. It examines whether there is a connection between this *Khams lugs* and the instructions of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. The analysis of the lineage and the colophon reveals that the *Khams lugs* is in reality a text composed in the fourteenth century. Dpal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rdo rje is the author of this text and meditation method. He was a monk of Kaḥ thog monastery and the tradition he sought to represent was that of his monastery. The *Khams lugs*' lineage therefore represents the Kaḥ thog tradition.⁵ The lineage of the *Khams lugs*, however, is not exclusively Mind Series. It includes members who are known to belong to other branches of Rnying ma oral teachings. At the same time, it excludes the members of the Zur clan, of whom the Kaḥ thog tradition was heir. This chapter sets out to identify Nam mkha' rdo rje's governing principles in the creation of the *Khams lugs*' lineage. In the final

⁴ I am conscious that this is a discussable proposition, for a better explanation see Chapter 1, "Concept of Author in the *Khams, A ro* and *Nyang lugs*".

⁵ As we shall see throughout this thesis, there are several Sems sde traditions called *Khams lugs*.

section of chapter 2, I seek to date Dpal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rdo rje and chart the ways in which a *khrid yig* was created on the basis of the Sems sde classics. For this, I analyse the purpose to which Nam mkha' rdo rje put the quotations in his text.

Chapter Three scrutinises the tradition of A ro. It starts with the biography of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas and discusses his teachings as they are described in a handful of sources. Section 1 contains some overlap with Thiesen's Magisterarbeit, since she too translated A ro's biography and probed the outlines of his work. My contribution here lies in the interpretation of the sources. Section 2 investigates the lineages of the *A ro lugs* and *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*, the only other surviving text (besides the *A ro lugs*) that reports the instructions of A ro. It maps the extent of the diffusion of the teachings of the Mind Series. The lineages include members of the Bka' gdams, Sa skya, Bka' brgyud and, of course, the Rnying ma school. They confirm the fluent and often close relationships that prevailed among the schools in the centuries before the Dga' ldan pho brang rule. The redactor of the *A ro lugs*, the second Zhwa dmar pa Mkha' spyod dbang po (1350-1430), himself belonged to the Bka' brgyud school. Mkha' spyod dbang po wrote an abbreviated lineage of the *A ro lugs* in its colophon. Kong sprul, in the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, reported the full version of the *A ro lugs*'s transmission. An examination of this lineage demonstrates that the author was trying to formulate a mixed transmission made of Rdzogs chen's and Mahāmudra's lineage-holders. Kong sprul also reports a further lineage of the *A ro lugs*. This appears to consist of different pieces of earlier transmissions, but I could not find this lineage attested anywhere else. It is clear, however, that Kong sprul added this second lineage because he disliked the admixture put forward in the first transmission.

Dpal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rdo rje is the redactor of the second text in A ro's tradition – the *Rdzogs pa chen po a ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa*. We previously met him as the author of the *Khams lugs*. The transmission of his text reveals that by then the Sems sde lineages had begun to stabilize. This led eventually to the diffusion of stock-lineages. The whole of this transmission (except for a final few lineage-holders including Nam mkha' rdo rje

himself) is derived from the *Snying gi nyi ma*;⁶ A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas' name was simply added to it.

Chapter Four investigates the *Nyang lugs*. Its author is Sog bzlog pa. According to the colophon, the method he expounds in this text derives from Zhig po bdud rtsi (1149-1199). Sog bzlog pa is hence the author of the text as such, but not of the method it expounds. But Sog bzlog pa's intention in writing this text is not simply to put into writing the method of Zhig po bdud rtsi. He proposes to merge the traditions of Sems sde and Mahāmudrā. His text brings us to the period right before the ascendancy of Dga' ldan pho brang. The association between Rdzogs chen and Bka' brgyud pa is partly attributable to the strengthening of the political alliances between the two schools during this time of unrest. It also brings us closer to the first redactors of the *Rnying ma bka' ma*, that is, Gter bdag gling pa and Lo chen Dharma Śrī. The *Nyang lugs* does not include any line of transmission. Once again, it is Kong sprul who connects a lineage to this text. He draws this transmission from a "prayer to the lineage" text, again composed by Sog bzlog pa. According to some sources,⁷ the *Nyang lugs* is connected with the Zur family. Zhig po bdud rtsi is considered one of the main heirs to the Zur tradition. Sog bzlog pa's lineage is rooted in the Zur transmission. This might be the reason why Kong sprul associated this transmission with the *Nyang lugs*.

Each *lugs* expresses the historical and doctrinal affiliation of its redactor or author. But they also contain a second, equally important, layer. This is the narrative that connects the texts. It consists of the organizing visions of the redactors of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* and *Gdams ngag mdzod*. These collections do not merely seek to bring together a number of texts. They set out to preserve the remaining lineages of the oral Rnying ma tradition. This process led them, in some measure, to reconstruct what had been lost: they create a new picture with the few pieces of the puzzle that survived centuries of transmission. In my analysis I encounter traces of their efforts. These could, in future, become the

⁶ As Kapstein noticed, although the lineage proposed in the *Snying gi nyi ma* achieved great popularity, the text in itself is rarely quoted or referred to in any writings except in few Tibetan histories. Therefore, although the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* presents an almost identical lineage, it is very likely that it did not draw it directly from this text. Kapstein, 2008:284.

⁷ See for example, the *Blue Annals* (DNg, 98:2-3; Roerich, 1997:109-10) and Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung*. (Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:650-6).

pieces of a much wider puzzle charting the formation of the Rnying ma *bka' ma* collections.

List of Abbreviations

<i>KKTshGy</i>	<i>Sgrub brgyud karma kaM tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar</i>
<i>ChR</i>	<i>Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod bstan pa gsal ba</i>
<i>NyNy</i>	<i>Snying gi nyi ma</i>
<i>DNg</i>	<i>Deb ther sngon po</i>
<i>BDC</i>	<i>Bai ro 'dra 'bag chen mo</i>
<i>MNy</i>	<i>Me tog snying po</i>

CHAPTER ONE

Textual location of the Khams lugs, A ro lugs and Nyang lugs

This thesis focuses on the transmission lineages of three texts on meditation of the Rnying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism. We find these texts in the *Rnying ma bka' ma* collections (the collections of the oral teachings of the Rnying ma school) and in the *Gdams ngag mdzod* collection of Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899). In all these compendiums these three texts are classified without exception as oral (*bka' ma*) traditions of meditation (*lugs*) of the Mind Series (*Sems sde*) section of the Great Perfection (*Rdzogs chen*). Their titles inform us that they all belong to the *khrid yig* (guidebook for meditation) genre. Although several other *bka' ma* *Rdzogs chen* *Sems sde* meditation methods are available,⁸ the *Rnying ma bka' mas* and the *Gdams ngag mdzod* propose these three texts as representative of the whole class. Their main titles are: **a)** *Slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag* (the instructions that guide through signs of the Great Perfection Mind Series transmitted from master Dga' rab rdo rje); **b)** *Snyan brgyud rin po che'i khrid kyi man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid*; (The easy guidance of the heart of the expanse, the instructions of the precious oral lineage) **c)** *Rdzogs chen sems sde'i khrid yig* (the manual of instructions of the *Rdzogs chen* Mind Series). Each of them possesses an additional title. In the *Rnying ma Bka' ma* collections these titles are added as interlinear notes following the main titles. The *Gdams ngag mdzod* assigns a whole page to all text titles. Here, the additional titles feature underneath the main headings.⁹ These run: **a)** *Rdzogs pa*

⁸ Among the other collections that contain *Rdzogs chen* *Sems sde* manuals there is the *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor* (a compilation of texts used in the Kaḥ thog monastery) and volume 107 of the *Bka' ma shin tu Kaḥ thog*. All of these will be briefly discussed below.

⁹ In fact, there is no evidence that the names of *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs* featured next to the main titles of these texts before the redaction of the Oral Teachings of the Rnying ma school or of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*. As we shall see *Khams lugs* referred to a number of different teachings originating and/or diffused in Khams and not specifically to the *Dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid*. 'Jam dbyang rgyal mtshan in his recent history of the Kaḥ thog school, refers to Nam mkha' rdo rje's method only by means of its

chen po sems sde (Khams lugs);¹⁰ **b)** *Rdzogs pa chen po sems sde (A ro lugs)*¹¹ and **c)** *Rdzogs pa chen po sems sde (Nyang lugs)*.¹²

The redactors of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* and of the *Gdams ngag mdzod* classified these systems as 'oral' (*bka' ma*). This means that they considered these teachings to have been transmitted in linear succession from master to disciple, before they were written down. The annotated titles tell us the names of the oral tradition associated with these texts. It follows that the lineages they contained need to be connected with the long-standing oral transmissions of the *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs*.

The *Slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag* or *Khams lugs* constitutes the oral Rdzogs chen Sems sde meditation tradition as practised in Khams. This very same text features also in the *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor*, a collection of thirteen volumes that brings together the texts used by the monks of Kaḥ thog monastery.¹³ This redaction, however, is replete with spelling mistakes and wrong identifications of the quotations inside the texts.¹⁴

The oral tradition of A ro takes its name from the master A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. Two texts put forward this attribution: the *A ro lugs* and the *Rdzogs pa*

main title and not as *Khams lugs*. The title of *A ro lugs* also does not seem to have been at first associated with Mkha' spyod pa's text. Instead we find this text entitled "*A ro'i snyan brgyud rin po che'i khrid kyi man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid*" in the *thob yig* of Dpal Idan bzang po (1447-1507), a disciple of the Seventh Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho (See *Mon ban dpal Idan bzang po bdag gi thob yig thos pa rgya mtsho*, 1985. Thimpu: Dorji Namgyal, 106:1-2). In Chapter 4 we shall also see that Sog bzlog pa, the author of the *Khrid yig*, in referring to this text, never calls it *Nyang lugs*.

¹⁰ The *Khams lugs* is found inside the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 1:311-361, the *Bka' ma: The Redaction*, vol. 20: 161-246, the *Bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol. 17:435:518 and the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30: 435-518.

¹¹ The *A ro lugs* is found inside the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 1: 363-376; the *The Sung Kama: The Redaction*, vol. 20: 136-171, the *Bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol. 17: 412-435, and the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30: 412-435.

¹² The *Nyang lugs* is found inside the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 1: 275-300. The *Bka' ma: The Redaction*, vol. 20: 91-136; the *Bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol. 17: 371-412; and the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30: 371-412.

¹³ *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor*. Edited by 'Gyur med bstan pa nram rgyal (1886-1952) and 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan (1929). KaH thog: KaH thog dgon pa, 2004. The *Khams lugs* is found in vol. 1, pp. 541-629.

¹⁴ On the pride that some contemporary monks feel in not paying attention to grammar or spelling see Cabezón, 2001:235-236.

chen po a ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa (the stages of practice of the instructions of A ro's Great Perfection oral lineage) which is in the same collection of texts used in the Kaḥ thog monastery.¹⁵ As we shall examine in more detail below, the redactor of this second version of the A ro tradition is also the author of the *Khams lugs*. Chapter Three contains an analysis of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* lineage together with that of the *A ro lugs*.

The Nyang (*alias* 'Myang') tradition of meditation forms the basis of the third text, the *Sems sde'i khrid yig*. The name of this tradition, according to the master Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal (15th century), comes from the master Nyang Mchog rab gzhon nu (8th century?).¹⁶

The Editions

Five different editions of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* (collection of the oral teachings of the Rnying ma school) are available nowadays: the *Gsung rab Bka' ma* (*Sung Kama*, in fourteen volumes),¹⁷ the *Bka' ma rgyas pa* (in fifty-eight volumes),¹⁸ the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (in one-hundred and ten volumes),¹⁹ the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog) (in one-hundred and twenty volumes)²⁰ and the *Snga' 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (in one-hundred and thirty-three

¹⁵ This text is in vol. 1 pp. 631-649 of the *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor*.

¹⁶ Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal, (1991). *Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod bstan pa gsal bar byed pa'i nyi 'od*. Lhasa: Bod ljong bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang. 394: 11-12. The title of this text will be henceforth abbreviated as *Rgyal sras chos 'byung*. Ehrhard, Van der Kuijp and Martin have all demonstrated that this master cannot be identified with the famous Klong chen rab 'byams dri med 'od zer. On this point see chapter 3.

¹⁷ *Bka' ma: the redaction of Rdzogs-chen Rgyal-sras Gzhan-phan mtha'-yas, considerably enlarged and expanded*. (1969-71). In 14 vols. (7-20). Edited by Gter bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje, Smin gling Lo chen Dharma śrī, Gzhan phan mtha' yas, and Bsod nams stobs rgyal ka dzi. Gangtok: Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab.

¹⁸ *Rñin ma Bka' ma rgyas pa: a collection of teachings and initiations of the Rñin-ma-pa tradition passed through continuous and unbroken oral lineages from the ancient masters/ completely edited and restructured by H.H. Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che on the basis of the successive Smin-grol glin and Rdzogs-chen Rgyal-sras redactions*. (1982-1987). In 58 vols. Edited by Bdud 'joms rin po che. Kalingpong: Dupjung Lama.

¹⁹ *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*. (n.d.). In 110 vols. Edited by Mkhan po Mun sel and his disciples. Chengdu: Mkhan po Mun sel.

²⁰ *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog). (1999). In 120 vols. Edited by Mkhan po 'jam dbyangs under the inspiration of his teacher Kaḥ thog Mkhan po Mun sel. Chengdu: Kaḥ thog Mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs.

volumes).²¹ All of them include the *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs* with no substantial variations in contents or wording.²² Indeed, the volume that contains these three texts appears identical in the three editions of the *Bka' ma rgyas pa*, *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* and *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog).²³ The *Snga' 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* has been typed on computer, while the *Sung Kama* is handwritten in *dbu med*. We also find these texts in Kong sprul's *Gdams ngag mdzod*.²⁴

A comparison between the versions of the *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs* in the *Gdams ngag mdzod* and *Rnying ma bka' ma* collections does not show any great divergence. The few differences consist mainly of variations of grammatical particles (e.g. *gi* versus *gis* and so on). It is not clear which version preceded the other. In the introduction to the *Sung Kama*, Bsod nams stob rgyal kazi refers to some of the works of Kong sprul, such as the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, but not to the *Gdams ngag mdzod*. He states that the *Sung Kama* has been put together on the basis of earlier unpublished *Bka' ma* collections.²⁵ He attributes the earliest

²¹ *Snga' 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*. (2009). In 133 vols. Edited by students of Mkhan po Mun sel. Chengdu: Si khron dpe skrun tshong pa/si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.

²² The simple fact that several editors agreed on gathering these texts together under the same label of Rdzogs chen *bka' ma* Sems sde and of *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs* specifically, and proposed it again and again unmodified in the following editions is significant. It shows that the *Rnying ma* tradition, at least from the nineteenth century onwards (and probably even from the time of 'Gyur med rdo rje, 17th-18th cent.), concurred in considering these texts as the representative of the whole oral Mind Class.

²³ The *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog) includes all the fifty-eight volumes of the *Bka' ma rgyas pa*. They look exactly the same in the two editions with the only variation of the volume number. The *Bka' ma rgyas pa* in turn incorporates all the fourteen volumes of Bsod nams kazi's edition. The *Bka' ma rgyas pa* contains a short English introduction. This says that the *Bka' ma rgyas pa* is made of 41 volumes. It seems however that this introduction was written before the publication and maybe the other seventeen volumes had been added at a later stage. The volumes of Bsod nams kazi's edition are however fourteen and not thirteen as stated. It says: "Several years ago, Yapa Sonam Topgye published in the Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab series a reproduction of a set of dbu-med manuscripts of the Rnyiñ ma Bka' ma collection. This set had been calligraphed for 'Khrul-zig Rin-po-che on the basis of the texts with H. H. Bdud-'joms Ron-po-che. Since this publication begun over a decade ago, new volumes and single texts from this precious collection of the Rñiñ-ma-pa tradition have come to light. This is the first of a 20 volume reproduction of the Bka' ma collection, newly calligraphed and carefully edited. This will be perhaps followed by an addition of 21 volumes of Rgyab chos to the Bka' ma prepared at the order of His Holiness. The entire Bka' ma will thus be completed in 41 volumes". *Bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol.1 (first page).

²⁴ *Gdams ngag mdzod*. (1979-1981). In 18 vols. Compiled by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas. Paro: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey.

²⁵ These pieces of information are gathered from the English preface to this collection, which is found at the beginning of the first volume of the *Sung Kama*. The pages of the preface and that of the *dkar chags* that precede each volume are not numbered. It should also be noticed that the first

redaction of the collection to the *gter ston* Gter bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646-1714), the founder of the Smin grol ling monastery, and his younger brother, Smin gling lo chen Dharma Śrī (1654-1717/8).²⁶ He also includes them among the editors of the *Sung Kama*. In truth, the editors of this *Bka' ma* version span from the eighteenth century to the present. The list of editors runs thus: Gter bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646-1714), Smin gling Lo chen Dharma śrī (1654-1717/8), Rgyal sras gzhan phan mtha' yas (1800-1855), and Bsod nams stobs rgyal ka dzi (1925-2009). Their names alone furnish a short record of the history of Rnying ma *bka' ma* collections. Kong sprul does not refer to the *Rnying ma bka' ma* as the source of his first volume. He again refers to the work of Gter bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje and his brother.²⁷ This being so, it is more probable that they both drew from an earlier version of the *Rnying ma bka' ma*, put together by the founder of Smin grol gling and his brother, which was in circulation at the time of Kong sprul and Gzhan phan.²⁸

The *Rnying ma bka' ma* collections and the *Gdams ngag mdzod* do not organise the texts that form the section dedicated to the Mind Series in the same way. In the *Rnying ma bka' ma*, the *Nyang lugs*, *Khams lugs* and *A ro lugs* together with four other texts all appear in the *Rdzogs pa chen po'i sems sde'i rgyud lung gi rtsa ba gces pa btus pa rnams* "Choice extracts from Rdzogs chen Sems sde *tantra* and *āgama* root texts".

The texts this section includes are:

1. *Rdzogs pa chen po byang chub sems kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud kyi dum bu*

volume of the *Sung Kama* is not the first of the collection. The *Sung Kama* starts from volume seven and ends with volume twenty.

²⁶ *Sung Kama*, vol. 1, Preface. Both these masters were students of the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682). Their relationship with the Great Fifth, especially in regard to their views of the Snyang-Sog-Gong tradition of the Rdzogs chen school, is treated in the fourth chapter.

²⁷ Kong sprul however mentions only the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* on this occasion. See *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol.1, 1:5.

²⁸ More work is needed to shed light on this subject. It is indeed odd that Kong sprul does not refer to an earlier *Rnying ma bka' ma* if he drew from it the structure and texts of the first volume of his collection. The connection between Kong sprul's work, Bsod nams kazi's edition of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* and the work of the two Smin grol gling brothers remains somewhat unclear.

2. *Sems sde bco brgyad kyi dgongs (bcud) rig 'dzin (grub thob) rnams kyi rdo rje'i glur bzhengs pa*²⁹
3. *Rdzogs pa chen po sems sde spyi'i snying po'i bstan bcos byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun*
4. *Byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po'i don khrid chen gru bo*
5. *Rdzogs chen sems sde'i khrid yig Nyang lugs*
6. *Snyan brgyud rin po che khrid kyi man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid rdzogs pa chen po sems sde A ro lugs*
7. *Slob dpon Dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag rdzogs pa chen po sems sde Khams lugs.*

The *Gdams ngag mdzod* incorporates only the first two of the seven in this section. The others stand as independent texts, one after the other, with the exception of the *Rdo la gser zhun*, which is altogether absent.³⁰ Five other works are recorded in the Mind Series section of both collections on the top of these seven.³¹ However, since the *Sung Kama* batches these seven together, they would appear to be more closely related between each other than to the rest of the texts. I shall briefly introduce the seven here in order to provide a context for the study of the three *lugs* :

1. *Rdzogs pa chen po byang chub sems kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud kyi dum bu*

This text contains three chapters (five, thirty-five and thirty-seven) of the *Kun byed rgyal po*. The *Kun byed rgyal po* is a famous Rdzogs chen Sems sde text that has already received much scholarly (and non-scholarly) attention.³²

2. *Sems sde bco brgyad kyi dgongs (bcud) rig 'dzin (grub thob) rnams kyi rdo rje'i glur bzhengs pa*

²⁹ The parentheses here are not mine. I assume that the editors added the words in parenthesis for clarity's sake but the title of the text does not include these words. The *Bka' ma* collections that furnish a synopsis of the contents, integrate the words here in parenthesis into the title.

³⁰ This means, in practical terms, that each of the other texts has a title page of its own, while in the *Bka' ma* collections they follow one after the other. However, it might also imply that in Kong sprul's opinion these texts were less closely related to one another.

³¹ The arrangement changes according to the edition. I here take the *Sung Kama* as model.

³² See for example, Neumaier-Dargyay, 1992; Namkhai Norbu and Clemente 2010; Valby, 2012.

This is a short text of eight folios. This work, available in English translation (The Eighteen Songs of Realization),³³ has traditionally been ascribed to Mañjuśrīmitra. Each of the songs transmits the core meaning of one of the Eighteen Fundamental Scriptures of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde (*lung chen bco brgyad*).³⁴ The masters who chant these songs are all lineage-holders of the Mind Series.³⁵

3. *Rdzogs pa chen po sems sde spyi'i snying po'i bstan bcos byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun*

The third text, commonly called “*Rdo la gser zhun*” (Gold Refined from Ore), is also attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra.³⁶ It is included among the Eighteen Fundamental Scriptures, sometimes as incorporated among the Five Earlier Translations and sometimes among the Thirteen Later Translations. Liljenberg advanced the hypothesis that this text might be the earliest extant text of the Sems sde tradition.³⁷

4. *Byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po'i don khrid chen gru bo*

The *Byang chub kyi sems kun byed rgyal po'i don khri chen gru bo* is another short text of seven folios. Its author is the famous Rdzogs chen master Klong chen rab 'byams (1308-1364).³⁸ This text is an exegesis of the *Kun byed rgyal po*. Here, Klong chen pa explains the meaning of this work, succinctly developing its main themes.

The next three works are the *Nyang lugs*, *Khams lugs* and *A ro lugs*. Since they are the subject of this study I shall not summarise them here.

The *Rdzogs pa chen po a ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa*

³³ Mañjuśrīmitra, “The Eighteen Songs of Realization” trans. Pema Kunsang 2006: 53-74.

³⁴ The Eighteen Fundamental Scriptures of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde include the five Early Translations and the Thirteen Later translations. For a study of the thirteen later translations see Liljenberg, 2012.

³⁵ Liljenberg has devoted a section of her thesis to the analysis of this text. *Ibidem*, pp. 64-70.

³⁶ There is an English translation of this work in Namkhai Norbu and Kennard Lipman, 1987.

³⁷ Liljenberg, 1012: 43. Liljenberg reaches this conclusion through the comparison of the doctrinal development of each of the Five Earlier Translations and that of the *Rdo la gser zhun*.

³⁸ There is an English translation of this text in Lipman, Kennard and Merril, 2011.

The second text on A ro and his tradition, the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*, is located inside a recent collection of texts used by the monks of Kaḥ thog monastery. This is the *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor*. It consists of thirteen volumes and was edited by 'Gyur med bstan pa rnam rgyal (1886-1952) and 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan (1929). The *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* features in the first volume, together with the remaining seven texts and a *dkar chag* (table of contents). The *dkar chag*, which also provides a history of the methods of meditations discussed in the treatises, is entitled “The right path that accomplishes the unification of the condensed accounts of the history of the thirteen great [manuals of] instructions of Rgyal ba kaḥ thog pa”.³⁹ Rgyal ba kaḥ thog pa is the full name of Kaḥ thog monastery. The texts included in the first volume share two characteristics: they are all, like the *Khams*, the *A ro* and the *Nyang lugs, pra khrid* and they all belong to the Mind Series.⁴⁰

It is therefore important to explore the meaning of the terms *bka' ma*, *Sems sde*, and *pra khrid*.

The Bka' ma Sems sde Khrid yig/ Pra khrid/ Bde khrid

The term *bka' ma* designates the method through which these teachings were transmitted: orally; *Sems sde* reveals their doctrinal nature and *khrid yig, pra khrid* and *bde khrid* refer to their function. Much has been written about the two transmissions and the three series.⁴¹ I shall therefore only sketch their nature and scope in order to provide a framework for my study.

First I examine the couple *bka' ma/ gter ma*; second, I explain the classification of Rdzogs chen teachings in *Sems sde* (mind series), *Klong sde* (space series)

³⁹ “Rgyal ba kaḥ thog pa'i khrid chen bcu gsum gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus zung 'jug grub pa'i lam bzang.” *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor*, volume 1, page 1.

⁴⁰ These are: 1. *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba'i bshad pa rgyud don rin po che snang byed*. 2. *Nyams myong bdud rtsi thig pa*. 3. *Sems sde'i pra khrid kyi thun mong gi sngon 'gro'i zur bkol khrid bsgrigs*. 4. *Man ngag zab don snying po'i khrid yig*. 5. *Sems sde'i pra khrid bla ma chen po kaḥ thog pa'i man ngag*. 6. *A ro syan brgyud kyi rim pa*. 7. *Phyag rgya chen po thog bab kyi gdams pa rgya can*. 8. *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor* is the *Sems khrid yig bzhin nor bu*.

⁴¹ See for example, Karmay, [1988] 2007:206-215; Achard, 1999: 25-52; Kapstein, 1996; Germano, 1994 and 2005.

and Man ngag sde (secret instruction series); third, I define the term *khrid yig* and attempt an explanation of the terms *pra khrid* and *bde khrid* which we find respectively in the main titles of the *Khams* and *Nyang lugs*.

Two Methods of Transmission

The Rnying ma school puts forward two methods of transmission: the *bka' ma* and *gter ma*. The *bka' ma* is a standard system of transmission. It consists of the oral deliverance of a specific teaching or group of teachings from master to disciple. This transmission generates a sequel of lineage-holders that goes from the initiator of the tradition down to the last receiver. The Rdzogs chen pas distinguish their lines of transmission from those of all the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. The New Schools (*gsar ma*) legitimise their doctrines by placing Buddha Śakyamūni at the beginning of their lineages. The Rdzogs chen pas, in contrast, recognise Dga' rab rdo rje as the first to have received their teachings on earth.⁴² After Dga' rab rdo rje, standard transmissions usually set in, which vary according to the specific series of Rdzogs chen in question. In a Mind Series lineage, the classical transmission reaches Tibet through the translator Vairocana and proceeds to G.yu sgra snying po and Gnyags Jñānakumāra. Sometimes, together with Vairocana the texts include a second important translator, Vimalamitra. After them, a small group of people maintained the teachings through the period of political fragmentation and again spread widely from the beginning of the so-called late diffusion (late tenth beginning of the eleventh century) to the present day.

The *gter ma* (treasure) transmission is also known as "short transmission". The holder of this transmission does not receive the teachings from a teacher. He obtains them directly from their eight-century source. The *gter ma* is a hidden teaching, rediscovered in a period favourable to its diffusion. From the twelfth century onwards, the Rdzogs chen tradition placed the tantric practitioner from

⁴² Several scholars agreed to identify Oḍḍiyāna with the Swat valley in the north of Pakistan. See Tucci, 1971, vol. 2, pp. 369-418 and Davidson, 2002: 160. For a general discussion of all these sources on the topic see Martin, (October 27, 2009) Swat's Good Feng-shui, <http://tibetologic.blogspot.co.uk/2009/10/swats-good-feng-shui.html>.

Oḍḍiyāna, Padmasambhava, at the very beginning of this transmission.⁴³ It reports that he imparted several Rdzogs chen teachings to his principal twenty-five disciples.⁴⁴ Successively, foreseeing that in the future Tibet would face a period of decline of the Buddhist doctrine, he decided to hide them until the time had come for their rediscovery and promulgation. *Gter ma* is a general term for all sorts of hidden teachings. However, these treasures take different forms. The two most common are the *sa gter* and *dgongs gter*. The first consists of a material text, written usually in a non-human, divine language, which has been concealed in the physical territory of Tibet. The *dgongs gter* are teachings that Padmasambhava hid in the consciousness of his twenty-five disciples, for discovery through their reincarnations at a suitable time.⁴⁵

Treasure rediscovery began in the eleventh century. Tradition identifies Sangs rgyas bla ma (1000-1080) as the first *gter ston* (discoverer of treasures).⁴⁶ However, large-scale discoveries commenced only in the twelfth century through the Rdzogs chen master Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192). After him, treasure discovery spread widely and became the means for ongoing renewal of Rdzogs chen teachings.

The Threefold Classification of the Rdzogs chen Teachings

There seems to be a correlation between the two methods of transmission and the classification of the Rdzogs chen teachings into three groups. Many view the Sems sde and Klong sde series to be diffused through the *bka' ma* transmission and the Man ngag sde through the *gter ma* transmission. The first two series descended in an oral form. The Man ngag sde tradition unfolded drawing on both

⁴³ One of the first masters to promote Padmasambhava as a key figure of the Rnying ma tradition was Nyang ral in his *Zangs gling ma*. See Germano 2005:22 and Hirshberg, 2012.

⁴⁴ Hirshberg reports that the tradition of Padmasambhava's twenty-five main disciples and one-hundred and eight secondary disciples postdates Nyang ral. See Hirshberg, 2012: 22, n. 6.

⁴⁵ Hirshberg has interestingly noticed that at the time of Nyang ral the treasures were only material, physical objects, usually found inside baskets. The value of the teaching was proportionate to the richness of the materials used to compose the text itself or the basket in which it was stored. The concept of *dgongs gter* came some time after the 12th century. Hirshberg 2012: 170-172.

⁴⁶ Bdud 'joms rin po che. (trnsd by) 'Gyur med rdo rje and Matthew Kapstein, 1991, Boston: 751.

kinds of transmission, even if it favours the *gter ma*.⁴⁷ The reason for this preference is easily explained: the *gter ma* method allows for increase and modification of the content of the teachings according to one's need.⁴⁸ The Sems sde and the Klong sde teachings, in contrast, were forced to remain within a certain doctrinal domain. Therefore, it is not surprising that these two series declined after the proliferation of the *gter ma* teachings. Still, it would be a mistake to think that, from the eleventh/twelfth century onwards, the Mind Series remained a mere side study with no doctrinal growth.⁴⁹ It is true that the people who kept this tradition alive were few and mainly involved in Man ngag sde teachings and rituals. Still, the Mind Series invigorated itself through repeated bursts of revival over the centuries and, as we shall see, was flexible enough to be used and modelled to serve new purposes.

Historical development

The origin of the division of Rdzogs chen teachings in Sems sde, Klong sde and Man ngag sde is still unclear. While the term *sems phyogs* (i.e. Sems sde) is well attested in early sources⁵⁰ little or no reference is found for the names of the other two series in early sources. Janet Gyatso found an early occurrence of the term *man ngag sde* in a text belonging to the Seventeen Tantras of the Man ngag sde (*man ngag sde'i rgyud bco bdun*) called *Sgra thal 'gyur*.⁵¹ Tradition holds that Vimalamitra transmitted this group of texts to his student Nyang ban Ting 'dzin bzang po. The latter hid the texts and they were found in the eleventh century by a certain Gnas brtan ldang ma lhun rgyal. If the *Sgra thal 'gyur* was really discovered at that time, the division goes back to the eleventh century at

⁴⁷ It should also be considered that once the treasure has been discovered the *gter ston* transmits the teaching he has found to his disciples, thus starting a new oral tradition.

⁴⁸ It also follows that together with the increment of the number of teachings, the *gter ma* tradition, also provided for new doxographies. The subdivisions internal to the Man ngag series all derive from *gter ma* sources. It should be noticed however, that the content of many of the *gter mas* tends to follow the standard of the earlier literature.

⁴⁹ See for example Karmay, [1988] 2007: 208.

⁵⁰ Liljenberg for example found it in the *Dbal 'bzhed*. This term is also found in the eleventh century work *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor* by 'Gos Khug pa (see *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor*. 1979. Thimphu: Kunsang Topgyel and Manu Dorji, 22:2) It also appears in the *MNy*, 353:5; 483:10; 484:1; 486:10; 488:7, etc. and in several other early works.

⁵¹ Gyatso, 1998: 153-154. The *Sgra thal 'gyur* is traditionally considered to be the root tantra of the Man ngag sde.

the latest.⁵² The division into Sems sde, Klong sde and Man ngag sde is also attested in the famous *Snying thig lo rgyus chen mo*.⁵³ This text first appeared inside Klong chen pa's collection *Snying thig ya bzhi*. Internal evidence suggests, however, that this work should be attributed to Zhang ston Bkra shis rdo rje who lived between 1097 and 1167.⁵⁴ Since these are the only two early texts that contain the term Man ngag sde, we must be cautious to attribute such an early date to this series. The prevalent theory among scholars is that the Mind Series developed earlier than the other two series, and that the subdivision of Rdzogs chen in Sems sde, Klong sde and Man ngag sde took place only at a second stage.⁵⁵ Kapstein attributed its creation to the followers of the Man ngag series.⁵⁶ This would explain why the Man ngag sde always ranks the highest of the three in Rnying ma doxographies. Germano noted that Man ngag sde treatises assemble many different teachings.⁵⁷ This seems to indicate that the term *man*

⁵² By this I mean that, if the *Man ngag sde'i rgyud bco bdun* had been recovered in the eleventh century the subdivision started circulating at that time. Rdzogs chen pas hold that the division was created from the beginning of the Rdzogs chen teachings. Their position therefore agrees with the account that the *Man ngag sde'i rgyud bco bdun* had been translated and hidden in the eighth century. Unfortunately, there is no empirical proof to back up the existence of this cycle at such an early stage, thus, here I refer to it as an eleventh century cycle of texts.

⁵³ This text's first appearance is in Klong chen pa's *Snying thig ya bzhi*. The version I consulted is the one found in two of the *Rnying ma bka' pa* collections, the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* vol. 45, 503-657 and the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 34. The pages are the same as the two volumes seems to have been printed from the same woodblocks.

⁵⁴ See Karmay, [1988] 2007: 209, fn. 16; Germano, 1994: 271 (Germano quotes Karmay as his reference); Martin, 1997: 28. Their reason for dating back the text to the eleventh century is that almost at the end of the text there is a quotation which says: "lce ston gyis thon nas lo lnga bcu na bdag gis gsang ba bla na med pa'i skor 'di rnams bstan bton nas [...]" "After Lce ston revealed [this gter ma] in fifty years I [re] discovered the teachings of these unsurpassable secret cycle." (*Rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gi lo rgyus chen mo*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* vol. 45, 656:2-3 and *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 34, 656:2-3). From this passage Karmay must have identified Zhang bkra shis rdo rje to be the author. Ehrhard instead pointed out that this text has three sections: the *Rgyal ba'i dgongs brgyud*, the *Rig 'dzin brda' brgyud* and the *Gang zag snyan brgyud*. (Ehrhard, 1990: 105). In fact, on page 576 line 1 of this text we find the end of the first section and the beginning of the new. On page 632 lines 5&6 there is the colophon of the middle section and the beginning of the third. According to Ehrhard only the last portion of the text could be attributed to Zhang ston while the others are even older than the rest (probably dating back to the ninth century). The colophon of the middle section is penned by two masters who sign themselves as Ka and Cog. Ehrhard identifies Ka as Ka ba dpa brtsegs and Cog as Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan both of who lived in the ninth century (*Ibidem*). Davidson instead seems to attribute this text to Klong chen pa himself (Davidson, 1981: 10-11). Although more research on this text is necessary to draw any conclusion as to the identity of its author(s), I suspect that if Klong chen pa did not write this text, he at least added his own words to it. I shall return to this subject in chapter two, when I analyse Mañjuśrīmitra's biography. In fact this middle portion (which runs from 576:1 to 632:5) where we find the three subdivisions of the Rdzogs chen teachings (595: 2-3) is that dedicated to the life of Mañjuśrīmitra.

⁵⁵ Not all scholars agree with this view. Achard for example argued for a simultaneous genesis of all the three classes. Achard, 1999: 240.

⁵⁶ Kapstein 2008: 283, fn. 11.

⁵⁷ Germano, 2005: 13.

ngag sde was applied retrospectively to embrace a heterogeneous group of practices. Nyang ral, in the twelfth century, introduced a doxography of Rdzogs chen teachings which identified the *thod rgal* teachings as the highest, followed by *yang ti* and finally *spyi ti*.⁵⁸ They all belong now to the Man ngag series, however, the same work does not contain a single reference to the general term of *man ngag sde*.

By the fourteenth century Klong chen rab 'byams (1308-1364) had institutionalized the doxography of Rdzogs chen teachings in the three series (and sub-series).⁵⁹

By the fifteenth century the characteristics of Sems sde, Klong sde and Man ngag sde were well known both inside and outside the Rnying ma school. In fact, in the *Blue Annals* (hereafter *DNg*), Gzhon nu dpal clearly distinguishes them.⁶⁰

Doctrinal Differences

Rdzogs chen masters differentiate these three classes by the teachings they include.

Klong chen pa, in his *Theg pa thams cad kyi don gsal bar byed pa*, gives a definition of the nature of the three classes. He says that texts classified as Sems sde reach the understanding of non-duality through the recognition that phenomenal appearances arise from the conceptual mind and are not existent. The primordial enlightened mind, however, is like a mirror that reflects what is in front of it, and does not change its nature in the process of reflection.⁶¹

⁵⁸ *Bka' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i gter ston myang sprul sku nyi ma 'od zer gyi rnam thar gsal ba'i me long*. 1985. Paro: Lama Ngodrup. 356:6-357:1.

⁵⁹ Klong chen pa talks of the three series in several of his works. However, his most famous systematization of the Rdzogs chen teachings is to be found in his *Grub mtha' mdzod*.

⁶⁰ Gō lo tsa ba Gzhon nu dpal. (1974). *Deb ther sngon po*. Sata-Pitaka series, vol. 212. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture. 96: 1-2. Roerich, 1979: 107.

⁶¹ *Theg pa thams cad* 17v:4. Translation by Tulku Thondup in *The Practice of Dzogchen*, 1996. The two subsequent definitions are also drawn from this source.

Later masters defined the nature of the three series in a slightly different way. As Liljenberg summarises in her thesis quoting Bdud 'joms rin po che: "Although profound, the Mind Series is described as falling short of the "radiance" achieved by the Space Series, and "almost clings to

The texts that belong to the Space Series focus on the purity of the appearances themselves. Therefore, appearances should be allowed to arise, because the moment they arise they are already self-liberated.⁶²

To Klong chen pa, the Man ngag sde is the highest of the classes. Sems sde teachings equate phenomenal appearances with the mind; Klong sde claims that phenomenal existents are the same in terms of the ultimate nature. Therefore both of them still incorporate mental analysis. The Man ngag sde in contrast, is superior and leads a person to realise naturally the ultimate nature.⁶³

This brief exposition of the three classes sketches Rdzogs chen standardization of its different teachings. Klong chen pa's systematization enjoyed a great popularity among Tibetan and Western scholars. From his time onwards, the Sems and Klong Series were formally superseded by the Man ngag sde. Thus, while it is almost impossible to find a work that devalues the teachings of the Mind Series or Space Series, most consider the Instruction Series to be the best and highest.

Teachings of the Mind Series

In his *Grub mtha' mdzod*, Klong chen pa enumerates the twenty-one tantras that constitute the core of the Sems sde.⁶⁴ These consist of the so-called "Eighteen Major Scriptures" (*lung chen bco brgyad*) plus the three tantras known as the *Kun byed rgyal po*, the *Rmad byung* and *Mdo bcu*.

mental scrutiny because it does not recognize the expressive power of radiance to be reality." The Space Series itself "almost falls into the deviation of emptiness", while both the Mind and Space Series are surpassed by the Instruction Series "because it gathers all appearances of reality within reality itself." Liljenberg, 2012: 17. In this context it is interesting to see how the Mental Class has been considered as lacking in "radiance". The radiance of the mind is in fact one of the features early Rdzogs chen pas used to differentiate their doctrine from Chan.

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 49.

⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 51.

⁶⁴ Dri med 'od zer. (2000). *Grub mtha' mdzod* in *Dri med 'od zer gyi gsung 'bum*. In 5 vols. Sde dge: Sde dge par khang chen mo. Vol. 2, 1225:7- 1226:3.

The Eighteen Major Scriptures are traditionally divided into two groups: the first consist of five texts and the second of thirteen. The first five scriptures are thought to have been translated before the other thirteen. For this reason, they are known as the “Five Early Translations” (*snga ’gyur lnga*). The other thirteen bear the name “Thirteen Later Translations” (*rdzogs chen phyi ’gyur bcu gsum*). Tradition holds that the Five Early Translations were translated by Vairocana;⁶⁵ the Thirteen Later Translations by Vimalamitra, Gnyags Jñānakumāra and G.yu sgra snying po.⁶⁶

The *Kun byed rgyal po* is the only Sems sde text included in the *Bka’ ’gyur* section of the Canon of the new schools.⁶⁷ It was probably composed after the Eighteen Major Scriptures. The *Kun byed rgyal po* contains the texts of the Five Early Translations. Germano argued that the *Kun byed rgyal po* must have been written later than the ninth century, perhaps during the late tenth century because Gñub chen’s *Bsam gtan mig sgron* does not mention this work.⁶⁸

The full title of the *Rmyad byung* is *Byang chub kyi sems rmad du byung ba*.⁶⁹ It is found in the *Bai ro rgyud ’bum*⁷⁰ and in all subsequent *Rnying ma rgyud ’bum* collections.⁷¹ The *Rmyad byung* is sometimes included among of the Thirteen Later Translations,⁷² and its translation in Tibetan is ascribed to Vairocana.⁷³

⁶⁵ *Grub mtha’ mdzod*, 1225:7-1226:1.

⁶⁶ *Ibidem*, 1226:1. For a study on the Thirteen Later Translations see Liljenberg, 2012. Liljenberg in her thesis pointed out the strange and gradual disassociation of Vimalamitra from the Mind Series. In fact, Vimalamitra is now mostly referred to as a lineage-holder of the Secret Instruction Series (Man ngag sde), despite the fact that he is still traditionally considered to be the translator of thirteen of the Mind Class’s fundamental texts. See Liljenberg, 2012: 18-19.

⁶⁷ *Bka’ gyur (sde dge par phud)*. (1976-1079). Vol. 1-103. Delhi: Karmapa Chodhey gyalwae sungrab partung khang. vol. 3, 1-171, and *Bka’ ’gyur (snar thang)*. (18th century). Vols 1-102. Bka’ ’gyur (Lhasa). (1940s). 1-100. Lhasa: Zhol bka’ ’gyur par khang, vol. 97, 1-245.

⁶⁸ See Germano, 1994: 235. For a more comprehensive discussion on the date of composition of the *Kun byed rgyal po* see Liljenberg, 2012: 54- 57.

⁶⁹ For an English translation of this text see *The Marvellous Primordial State*. (2013). Translated by Elio Guarisco, Adriano Clemente and Jim Valby.

⁷⁰ *Bai ro ’i rgyud ’bum*. (1971). In Smarntsis shesrig spendzod Series. Vols. 16-23. Leh: S.W. Tashigangpa, vol. 2, 96:5-161:4.

⁷¹ *Rnying ma rgyud ’bum (mtshams brag dgon pa’i bris ma)*. 1982. Vols. 1-46. Thimphu: National Library, Royal Government of Bhutan, 654:6-692:7 and *Rnying ma rgyud ’bum (gting skyes)*. *Rnying ma rgyud ’bum (Sgang steng)*, vol.2, 352a-282b.

⁷² Liljenberg, 2012: 426.

⁷³ *Grub mtha’ mdzod*, 1226:3.

The *Mdo Bcu* feature also in the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* collections. As before, Klong chen pa attributed their translation to Vairocana.⁷⁴

The Sems sde tradition claims several other minor texts. Sog bzlog pa, the author of the *Sems sde'i khrid yig* (*Nyang lugs*), speaks of eighty-two secondary texts of the Mind Series.⁷⁵ However, because he does not disclose their titles it is impossible to ascertain whether any of these are still available.⁷⁶

Pra khrid, Bde khrid and Khrid yig

The *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs*, besides all being oral teachings of the Rdzogs chen Mind Class, also share the feature of all being manuals of instructions *khrid yig*. Another two terms, related to *khrid yig*,⁷⁷ feature in the text titles of the *A ro lugs* and *Khams lugs*, these are respectively, *bde khrid* and *pra khrid*.⁷⁸ This section discusses the meaning of *khrid yig*, *bde khrid* and *pra khrid* in order to see what they can tell us about the nature of these texts.

Khrid yig is the general Tibetan term for ‘manual of instructions’ or ‘guidebook’. *Khrid pa* is a verb that means ‘to lead’; *yig* means ‘syllable, ‘letter’, or ‘writing’. A *khrid yig* therefore is a manual that leads through the stages of something, in this case of meditation. Kapstein defines the *khrid yigs* as “practical manuals explicating particular systems of meditation, yoga and ritual.”⁷⁹ If the English word ‘system’ in this quote corresponds to the Tibetan ‘*lugs*’, a *khrid yig* becomes a practical manual that explains a particular *lugs* (system). To the person who introduced the word *lugs* to unite the titles of our texts, they are manuals of instructions that explain the methods of Khams, A ro and Nyang. This would suggest that the term *lugs* stands for any sort of method or system.

⁷⁴ *Grub mtha' mdzod*, 1226:3.

⁷⁵ *Bdag po rin po che'i chos 'byung la zhal snga nas blo bzang pas bdag pa mdzad pa*. In *Blo gros rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*. (1975). Vols 1-2. New Delhi: Sanje Dorje, vol. 2, 258:3. See also Liljenberg, 2012: 79.

⁷⁶ One of these could be A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas' *Theg chen rnal 'byor*.

⁷⁷ The common syllable *khrid* — coming from the verb *khrid pa*, “to lead” — places these words into the same semantic category.

⁷⁸ From Chapter 2 onwards, I shall refer to the texts that expound the Khams, A ro and Nyang methods of meditation respectively as *pra khrid*, *bde khrid* and *khrid yig*.

⁷⁹ Kapstein, 1996: 276.

However, in our specific case the meaning of *lugs* is better defined. In his preface to the *Sung Kama* collection, Bsod nams stobs rgyal kazi says:

“The Kama collection is devoted to these treasured esoteric teachings that have enjoyed an uninterrupted transmission from guru to disciple since the first they were promulgated in the world by Samantabhadra or the Shakyamuni Buddha. The actual texts themselves are included in the canonical collections of the Kanjur (bka’-’gyur) and the Nyingmay Jubum (Rnying-ma’i Rgyud-’bum). What one finds in the Kama are the instructional precepts and liturgical arrangements that accomplished gurus of the past have found to be of use in following the approaches set forth by the Buddhas, in realising the Non-Duality of the illusory and the ultimate in actual practice.”⁸⁰

This statement does away with several little problems. For example, the lineages of transmission of the *lugs* start from the Buddha and run through a line of non-historical and historical masters before they arrive at the person who is considered the creator of the system (and after whom the *lugs* is often named). If a *lugs* is a master’s specific arrangement of the teachings of Samantabhadra or Śākyamuni, it becomes possible to explain the presence of the portion of the lineage that from the Buddha arrives at the developer of the *lugs*. In fact, according to Bsod nams stobs rgyal kazi, all texts of the *Rnying ma Bka’ ma* are derivatives of canonical teachings. Therefore, the initial portion of the lineage can be added to increase the authority of the method and it can be justified as the method derives from teachings that came from ‘the mouth’ of the Buddha.

The *Me tog snying po* (MNy) explains the origins of several *lugs*.⁸¹ For example:

⁸⁰ *Sung Kama*, volume Ka i.e. volume 7. Preface.

⁸¹ This work has been attributed to Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1124-1192), however, Hirshberg in analysing this work and its four colophons, concludes that the *Me tog snying po a)* is not a single text; and b) it is not composed by Nyang ral but most probably by one of his disciples. The section of this work that is of interest to the present research is that which Meisezahl calls ‘the addendum’ and which the colophon of the ‘addendum’ calls *Bstan pa phyi dar lo rgyus* (Tafel 359 middle page, line 3, in Beijing’s *Me tog snying po* 494: 19). The dates of birth of the masters whose names we find in these pages, as Hirshberg notices (p. 234), never postdate Nyang ral’s date of death so the document, even though not exactly written by this master, it has probably been composed during his own lifetime or immediately after. Hirshberg also discusses the short summary of the content of the work that is found at the end of the first colophon (p. 239. In Beijing’s *Me tog snying po*, 500:15-21, in Meisezahl, Tafel 364 first page, line 5 to Tafel 363

*kun byed rgyal po ma bu dgu skor ni/ bai ro tsa na/ g.yu sgra/ gsang ston ye
shes bla ma/ a ro ye shes/ sba sangs rgyas mgon po/ sba rakshi ta/ ya zi dar
ma shes rab/ nyang ston pra ba [...] dar ma shes rab bsod nams/ de la dha
tsha hor po/ dam pa shaka rgyal po/ sems phyogs **khams lugs** zhes grags so/*

middle page, line 2). This summary asserts that the *Me tog snying po* was written at the request of three masters: Zhig po bdud rtsi (here found as Bdud rtsi Zhig po), 'Jig rten mgon po rin po che (1123-1217) and Mthu bo chos ye, whom Hirshberg identifies with Nyang brang pa Chos kyi ye shes (p. 242). He therefore states that it is very likely that the *Me tog snying po* was the combined work of these masters (and possibly of others as well) (pp. 240-43. See also pp. 253-262 for the general conclusions). This attribution becomes interesting in light of the fact that Zhig po bdud rtsi is the person who, above all others, contributed to the keeping of A ro's legacy and that it is in this addendum that we find several references to A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas and his work. Thus, Zhig po bdud rtsi's authorship of this portion of the addendum does not sound unlikely. Another thing worth noticing is the presence of a 'Bri gung master, 'Jig rten mgon po, among those who 'prompted' Nyang ral to write this work, or in other words, of a possible 'Bri gung co-author of the *Me tog snying po*. Hirshberg justifies the presence of his name in this summary by pointing out that Zhig po bdud rtsi made a stay in 'Bri gung and the same Nyang ral might have met 'Jig rten mgon po on the route between 'Bri gung and Khom mthing (p. 241-42). He also spots that the addendum explains the transmissions of several Bka' brgyud masters as well, which might hint at a possible (partial) authorship of 'Jig rten mgon po (pp. 242-43). At the same time Hirshberg highlights the fact that 'Jig rten mgon po wrote against the *gter ma* tradition and that he had no special ties with the Rnying ma school (p. 241). All things considered therefore, it seems more likely that if there was any connection between these masters it was between Zhig po bdud rtsi and 'Jig rten mgon po, and that the former asked the latter to add some words concerning his own school and transmissions. Zhig po was in fact only concerned with oral teachings and was not involved in the *gter ma* tradition (see the *Blue Annals* where he is said to have affirmed: "I have only followed the Mental Orientation!", "*nga sems phyogs kho na sgrub pa yin gsung nas*" *DNg*, 123:3; Roerich, 1979:137). Moreover, the *Blue Annals* reports that Zhig po bdud rtsi met and became close with the famous Bka' brgyud master Bla ma Zhang (*DNg*, 124:5-125:2; Roerich, 1979:139). Hirshberg points to the fact that while Zhig po appears to be a major disciple of Nyang ral in Nyang ral's biographies, Nyang ral is never mentioned in the biographies of Zhig po bdud rtsi (Hirshberg, 2012: 240 and fn. 79 on the same page). I wonder whether this absence of Nyang ral's name in Zhig po bdud rtsi's biographies could be imputed to an attempt on the side of Zhig po bdud rtsi's disciples to take the due distance from the *gter ma* movement which might have compromised their relations with the new schools and above all with the Bka' brgyud pa. Finally, although Hirshberg observes that the *Me tog snying po* had a limited diffusion (Hirshberg: 2012:218), there seems to be a similarity in the report of the *lugs* in the *Blue Annals*' biography of Zhig po bdud rtsi and in the information about the *lugs* presented in the *MNy*, which seems to indicate that Gzhon nu dpal had access to the *MNy* or (more likely) to a source that drew from it. The latter option seems more plausible because Gzhon nu dpal's report partly differs from that of the *MNy*. In fact, (as we shall see in brief below) the *MNy* describes the *Khams*, the *Rong* and the *Skor lugs* as coming from the teachings of the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po* and then turns to another *lugs* called the *Bram ze'i lugs* (see footnote below for reference). In the *Blue Annals* Gzhon nu dpal says that Zhig po bdud rtsi received these three *lugs* but asserts that they derive from the Eighteen tantras of the Sems sde (*DNg*, 123:4, Roerich, 1979:137). Moreover, a few lines below he repeats that Zhig po bdud rtsi received the *Khams*, the *Rong* and the *Skor lugs* but this time instead of classing them as belonging to the transmission of the Eighteen tantras of the Sems sde, he talks of them as belonging to the oral transmission (*DNg*, 123:5; Roerich, 1979:138). In this instance, Gzhon nu dpal also speaks of the *Bram ze'i lugs*. All in all, it sounds possible that Gzhon nu dpal drew the account of the life of Zhig po bdud rtsi from a (nowadays lost) biography written by some disciple of Zhig po bdud rtsi who wished to stress Zhig po's affiliation with the Mind Series, and his good relationships with the Bka' brgyud, and was aware of the transmissions reported in the *MNy* (either by hearing them from Zhig po bdud rtsi's mouth or through access to this work).

*skor ston shes rab grags pa la skor lugs su grags/ gtsang gi mkhas pa chos
kyi bzang po la rong lugs su grags/*⁸²

This extract suggests that the Cycle of the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po* was transmitted from Vairocana to G.yu sgra snying po, to Gsang ston Ye shes bla ma, A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas and so forth until it reached Dha tsha hor po and Dam pa Śāk rgyal po. Henceforth, the transmission became known as *Khams lugs*. According to *MNy*, the transmission of the Cycle of the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po* is thus divided into three branches known as *Khams lugs*, *Skor lugs* and *Rong lugs*.⁸³

In conclusion, the term *khrid yig* assumes the further connotation of a teaching that, although new to a certain extent, originates from canonical works. Therefore, the legitimation of a *khrid yig* comes from the teachings from which it draws.

The terms *bde khrid* and *pra khrid* can both be considered subcategories of the more generic term *khrid yig*. In fact, the syllables *bde* and *pra* supply further detail about the type of guidelines (*khrid*) the *A ro* and *Khams lugs* introduce.

Bde khrid literally means “easy guidelines”. It occurs in the title of the *Snyan brgyud rin po che'i khrid kyi man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid (A ro lugs)* penned by Mkha' spyod pa. The only other text I was able to find that contained the word *bde khrid* is another work of Mkha' spyod pa, the *Bar do yid bzhin snying po'i bde khrid*,⁸⁴ so it is possible that it was he who coined this term.

⁸² *MNy*, 491:15- 492:3. (see also Meisezahl 1995, middle pages of Tafel 357 and 358). I omit some of the names of the masters who received the teachings of the cycle of the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po* because at the moment I am not interested in the transmission itself. I do not translate this passage because it is basically only a list of personal names.

⁸³ These three branches constitute three different meditation methods (*lugs*) derived from the same source. Each of these has from that point onwards its own specific transmission. The *DNg* also talks of these three *lugs* as belonging to the Mind Series. The same source also talks of another *Rong lugs*, which is also called *Nyang lugs*. It is the transmission of this latter *Rong lugs* that we find in more modern works. On this subject see Chapter 4.

⁸⁴ This text is not available at present, but it appears among the titles of Mkha' spyod pa's *Gsung 'bum* as it is listed in the *thob yig* of Gnyos ston Dpal ldan bzang po (1447-1507). See *Mon ban dpal bzang po bdag gi thob yig thos pa rgya mtsho*, Dorji Namgyal:Thimphu, 1985, 100:2.

The etymology and precise meaning of *pra khrid* is difficult to establish. *Pra khrid* features in the title of the *Khams lugs: Slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag*.⁸⁵ The text itself does not explain the meaning of *pra khrid* but, since it identifies the *Rdzogs pa chen po ting nge 'dzin gyi rim pa pra khrid nyams kyi man ngag* as its main root scripture, it may easily have borrowed this term from its root text.⁸⁶ The incipit of the *Rdzogs chen ting nge 'dzin gyi rim pa pra khrid nyams kyi man ngag* gives a Tibetan transliteration of the Indic version of its title: “*san ti ma hā sa ma ti kra ma sra ti u pa de sha nā ma*”. *Santimahā*, (or *Mahāsānti*) is one of the Sanskrit readings for *Rdzogs pa chen po*;⁸⁷ “*sa ma ti*” translates “*ting nge 'dzin*” (*samādhi*), *krama* corresponds to “*rim pa*” (stages) and *upadeśa* clearly renders *man ngag*. Consequently, “*sra ti*” should represent the “*pra khrid nyams (kyi)*”. We could understand *sra* (i.e. *sra ba*) as a transliteration of the Sanskrit *sāra*. *Sāra* has among its meanings “compendium”, “summary”, “epitome”⁸⁸ and it is usually with this meaning that this syllable is found in

⁸⁵ *Bka' ma: The Redaction*, vol. 20:161, the *Bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol. 17:435 and the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30:435.

⁸⁶ The colophon of this text attributes its authorship to Dga' rab rdo re. Therefore, it is clear that the title of the *Slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag* is closely related to that of its root source. The *Rdzogs chen ting nge 'dzin gyi rim pa pra khrid nyams kyi man ngag* is found in the *Bka ma shin tu rgyas pa Kaḥ thog*, vol. 108, pp. 377-384, and *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 103, 313-318.

⁸⁷ The term *Rdzogs chen* has been variously translated in Sanskrit as *Mahāsandhi*, *Śāntimahā* and *Mahāsānti*. *Mahāsandhi* was used from a very early period, since we find it as a Sanskrit translation of *Rdzogs chen* in the *Rdzogs pa chen po chos nyid byang chub kyi sems thig le rgya mtsho gnas la 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud*. The colophon of this work marks Vimalamitra and G.yu sgra snying po as its translators (*Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, Mtshams brag dgon pa'i bris ma, vol. 5, 127:2). Liljenberg found the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*'s quotations of the *Thig le drug pa* (one of the Thirteen Later Translations of *Rdzogs chen*) in chapter 3 of the *Rdzogs pa chen po chos nyid byang chub kyi sems thig le rgya mtsho gnas la 'jug pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud*. In so doing she demonstrated that at least section 3 of this work pre-dated the *Bsam gtan mig sgron* (see Liljenberg, 2012a:139 and 2012b:112). It is possible that the Sanskritization of *Rdzogs chen* at the beginning of the *Rdzogs pa chen po chos nyid byang chub kyi sems thig le rgya mtsho gnas la 'jug pa* postdates chapter 3. Yet, as Liljenberg remarked, it is still probably a relatively early text (Liljenberg, 2012b:112). Karmay discussed the issue of the *Mahāsandhi* in connection with the wider issue of the origin of *Rdzogs chen*. He in fact was the first scholar in the West to pay attention to 'Bri gung dpal 'dzin's (14th century) criticism of the *Rdzogs chen* tradition (Karmay, [1988] 2007:140-2). 'Bri gung dpal 'dzin believed that *Rdzogs chen* was a Tibetan invention and that *Rdzogs chen* pas created the word *Mahāsandhi* to legitimise their school. The source for 'Bri gung dpal's critical comments is the *Chos dang chos ma yin pa rnam par dbye ba'i rab tu byed pa* found in the *gsung 'bum* of Sog bzlog pa. Sog bzlog pa recorded 'Bri gung dpal 'dzin's words in order to confute them. For 'Bri gung dpal's criticism, especially on the combination of syllables of *Mahāsānti*/*Śāntimahā* see *Gsang sngags snga 'gyur la bod du rtsod pa snga phyir byung ba'i lan nges don 'brug sgra*, in Sog bzlog pa's *gsung 'bum*, New Delhi: Sanji Dorje.1, 307:5-308-6).

⁸⁸ I thank Dr. Roesler for suggesting the word *sāra* to me as a possible reading of the word *sra ba*. Moreover, as she pointed out it is also possible that *sra* and *pra* were confused in the process

Sanskrit transliterations of Tibetan titles. Still, this word has also another connotation, that is “real meaning” or “main point”. It follows that if we understand *sra* to mean “real meaning” and *ti* to be a transliteration of *khrid*, *pra khrid* would mean “manual leading to the real meaning”. Nonetheless, the syllable *nyams* would always be missing. In sum, it seems likely that the Sanskrit title was created on the basis of the Tibetan rather than the other way around.

The TBRC interprets *pra khrid* as referring to a “ritual for examination of signs”. It is included in the broader category of “Instructional Manual”. Indeed, the syllable *pra* is mostly used to refer to *prasena*, which constitutes a particular kind of divination.⁸⁹ Strickmann notes that it first appears in the *Amoghapāśa Sūtra* and in the *Āryasubāhupariṣcchānāmatantra* (Tib. *'phags pa dpung bzang gis zhus pa zhes bya ba'i rgyud*), a text that held a certain popularity both in China and Tibet.⁹⁰ The *Amoghapāśa Sūtra* presents Prasena as a young divine messenger of the gods. The *Āryasubāhupariṣcchānāmatantra* describes a Buddhist priest using children as mediums to contact the deity Prasena. When the deity takes possession of the children the priest asks them to gaze at objects such as mirrors, still water, fingers (that have been previously greased with unguents to make them shine), lamp-flames and sword-blades. The children then report the signs they see to the priest who in turn believes them to be answers to his

of copying the text, especially if the earlier version was in *dbu med*. Although we do not have any earlier version of this text at present (either in *dbu med* or *dbu can*), we know that there must have been one. The present version of the *Rdzogs pa chen po ting nge 'dzin gyi rim pa pra khrid nyams kyi man ngag* contains a commentary that runs side by side the main text, commenting upon single syllables or verses. The colophon attributes the text to Dga' rab rdo rje and the commentarial section to a certain Lha rje bde gshegs (probably the the famous Rdzogs chen master Zur chen Śākya 'byung gnas 1002-1062). Consequently, we can safely assume that there must have been at least two versions, the root text and the root text with commentary. (That the root text was known also without this commentary is demonstrated by the fact that Nam mkha' rdo rje reports exclusively the root text and never alludes to Lha rje gshegs pa's commentary). See in the section dedicated to the sources of the *Khams lugs*, Nam mkha' rdo rje quotes only the main text in his work.

⁸⁹ Lokesh Chandra Tibetan-Sanskrit dictionary gives its full name as “*pra phab pa*”. (Rinsen Books: Kyoto, p. 1454, see also Strickmann, 2012:215). Dan Martin noticed that one text in the *Bstan 'gyur*, the *Spra khrid lung te lo'i gsungs*, presents a Sanskrit title that seems to point to the “*prasena*” understanding of the term, although here the Sanskrit word that represents the syllable *pra* is *nimitta* (sign, omen) and *khrid* is *sūcanā* (pointing out, indicating), Martin, 2014.

⁹⁰ This text was translated into Chinese twice: the first time in 726 by Śubhakarasiṃha and the second during the end of the 11th century. See Strickmann, 2002:211. The Tibetan version is found in the *Bka' 'gyur*, see *Dpung bzang zhus pa'i rgyud*, *Bka' 'gyur* (sde dge par phud), Sde dge par khang: Delhi, 1976-1979, Vol.96, pp. 235-280. Van Schaik found another early reference to *prasena* (*pra*) divination in the Dunhuang manuscript IOL Tib J 401. See, <https://earlytibet.com/2009/02/19/a-tibetan-book-of-spells/>, (consulted on 20.02.2017);

questions.⁹¹ Strickmann reports that the same kind of ritual is used in Tibet to evoke and consult King Gesar.⁹² Here however, the text calls only on one child and adds that if no suitable child is available, the monk can proceed on his own. In modern times, *pra* meditation no longer involves children.⁹³

The fact that *Pra*-divination in Tibet did not strictly require the presence of a child may suggest that *pra/prasena* divination mostly became a matter of “reading signs” rather than of medium possession.

The *Rdzogs pa chen po ting nge 'dzin gyi rim pa pra khrid* contains only a couple of references to signs (*rtags*). The first instance of the term *rtags* occurs in a passage that states: “good signs occur in dreams when [the practitioner’s] preoccupation with food and clothes and any feeling of aversion or attachment to positive or negative feelings decreases and [he experiences] an increase of altruism.”⁹⁴ The second appears at the very end of the text. Here the text describes the final stage of the meditation practice in three points: example (*dpe*), signs (*rtags*) and result (*'bras bu*). The example “is incomparable like the sky”⁹⁵, the signs consist of the “occurrence of miraculous display of Buddhahood”, and

⁹¹ The whole ritual is more complex than the summary I provide here. For details see Strickmann, 2002:211-215.

⁹² Strickmann, 2002:216. The description of this ritual is in Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1956:462-64. Nebesky-Wojkowitz points out that this ritual is actually shared among all the schools of Tibetan Buddhism.

⁹³ Chime Radha, 1981:8-14 and also Strickmann, 2002:216-17. According to Chime the *pra* divination simply requires that the diviner (who could be a monk, an old lady or a person with that specific ability) would clear his mind and focus on the question he wished to ask while reciting mantras and staring at a small round mirror or at the sky or at the clear surface of a lake. The answer could either come from a deity that manifested in front of him, or in the shape of signs (manifesting on the surfaces of the ritual implements listed above) that he would then have to interpret. Chime reports that the Fourteenth Dalai Lama was discovered through this kind of divination. Strickmann hypothesises that because in Tibet the *pra*-divination came to be used in matters so important and secretive such as the choice of the new Dalai Lama, monks decided that it was safer and wiser not to use any child as a medium (i.e. to keep the outcome of the divination as secret as possible). Strickmann then explains that the origin of such divination probably has its roots exactly in the symmetry between the supernatural and the human world: Prasena is a young god, ergo, Prasena needs to possess a child-medium. He also put forward the hypothesis that Prasena was a mundane deity who developed out of the figure of Skanda, a much-venerated god in South India, Sri Lanka and China. In fact, both Prasena and Skanda are said to be young in years, and when priests summoned them they needed to use children as mediums. *Ibidem*, 2002:224-5 and 327-28, fn 43. See also Sanderson, 2015, http://www.academia.edu/10689989/%C5%9A%C4%81kta_Procedures_for_Weather_Control_and_other_Supernatural_Effects_through_Power_over_N%C4%81gas_G%C4%81ru%E1%B8%8Dika_Passages_in_the_Jayadrathay%C4%81mala (consulted on 20.02.2017).

⁹⁴ *Bka ma shin tu rgyas pa Kah thog*, vol. 108, p. 382:1-4: “*de tshe zas dang gos kyi 'du shes chung/nyon mongs la sogs chags sdad chung/ snying rje phan sems rab tu che/ rmi lam rtags bzang rab tu byung*”.

⁹⁵ Here the writer plays with words: the example *dpe* is incomparable *dpe med*.

the result is “Buddhahood itself”.⁹⁶ The signs here described occur when the meditation practice is successful. Thus the practitioner can verify his meditative progress on the basis of their appearances.⁹⁷ Still, signs in the *Rdzogs pa chen po ting nge ’dzin gyi rim pa pra khrid* do not guide (*khrid*) the practitioner through the text, they are simply part of the meditation process. However, the *Dga’ rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa pa’i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde’i pra khrid kyi man ngag (Khams lugs)* uses signs more frequently and systematically than its root text. The *Khams lugs* borrows the three points seen above — example, signs and result— and adds a fourth, i.e. method (*thabs*).⁹⁸ It applies this fourfold division to analyse each of the four concentrations that constitute its main practice. This means that each of the four concentrations has a section dedicated to signs that occur in meditation. If we understand the *pra* of *pra khrid* to refer to signs of meditation rather than to a proper divination ritual, *pra khrid* might mean “a guidance through meditation signs”. *Pra khrid* in the title of the *Khams lugs* would thus imply that this text is a manual of meditation that guides the practitioner through signs of meditation.

Another potential (albeit improbable) reading of the syllable *pra* is *pramāṇa*. This is usually translated as *tshad ma* (‘valid cognition’). *Pramāṇa* is a central concept in Buddhist logic. However, when featuring in the compound *pra khrid*, *pramāṇa* might have assumed the more generic meaning of “right instructions”. Jäschke glosses the word “*spra ’khrid pa*” with “to lead, to direct right”, which seems to echo this more generic rendering of *pramāṇa*.⁹⁹ This interpretation would imply that the *Dga’ rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa pa’i rdzogs pa chen po*

⁹⁶ *Bka ma shin tu rgyas pa Kaḥ thog*, vol. 108, p. 384:2-3. “*dpe ni dpe med nam mkha’ ’dra/ rtags ni sangs rgyas kyi rdzu ’phrul ’byung//’bras bu sangs rgyas de nyid do*”.

⁹⁷ Interestingly, the *Āryasubāhupariṣcchānāmatantra* says that if instead of a child a priest wishes to use an image, he will receive signs of the deity in night dreams (Strickmann, 2002:212). Moreover, the *Rdzogs chen ting nge ’dzin gyi rim pa pra khrid* uses water of oceans and lamps in its similes, which are also object of *pra*-divination. Still, since lamps, oceans and night dreams are at the order of the day in Tibetan writings (and in the *Rdzogs chen ting nge ’dzin gyi rim pa pra khrid* they do not function as mediums but as examples) these connections are all very feeble.

⁹⁸ This fourth element is *thabs* in the first and second concentrations and own-essence (*rang gi ngo bo*) in the fourth and second, but the three “examples, signs and results” remain unvaried throughout the four concentrations.

⁹⁹ Jäschke, 2008 (1881): 335.

sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag and its root text are manuals that correctly guide practitioners through the meditation methods they describe.¹⁰⁰

Finally *pra khrid*, in the present context might also be a misspelling of *phra khrid*, “fine instructions” or “detailed instructions”.¹⁰¹ This would also suit well the titles of the two texts. If this were the case, the *Khams lugs* and its root text would be manuals of instructions that guide practitioners in detail through the stages of the meditation practice.

In conclusion, both *bde* and *pra* describe how the action of *khrid* is carried out. *Bde khrid* refers to a manual of instructions that leads the practitioner easily through the *A ro lugs'* three stages of meditation. *Pra khrid* is open to more than one interpretation. Yet, on balance, the most likely reading is perhaps that of *pra-prasena*. *Pra khrid* in fact is mostly used in Tibetan texts to refer to *prasena* or signs of divination rather than to *pramāṇa*. The *Khams lugs* seems to support this hypothesis by integrating a section on signs for each of its four *yoga*. *Phra khrid* is less common – as a compound – than *pra khrid*. The *Khams lugs* draws this term from its root text, so it cannot have been mistaken for *phra khrid*. Whether it was the root text which was at fault is difficult to establish but, if it was, the *Khams lugs* by expanding the section on signs seems to have justified the term *pra khrid* in its title.

¹⁰⁰ Another source that I did not have time to consult but that may shed some light on the formation of *pra khrids*, is the Bon text, *Mdo ka ba gling dgu* in *Bka' gyur* (Bon po), vol. 50, 170:4, *et passim*. I thank H. Blezer for pointing out this text to me.

¹⁰¹ We find the word *phra khrid* in the *Sgrub chen zin bris* by 'Jigs med Bstan pa'i nyi ma (1865-1926), in which the meaning seems to be that of “detailed instructions” (“*bde 'dus sgrub kyi phra khrid sogs gzhan la'ang bltas nas*”, 'Jigs med Bstan pa'i nyi ma. 2003. *Sgrub chen zin bris, Rdo grub chen 'jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma'i gsung 'bum*. Beijing: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, vol. 5, 172:3-5). A research into online resources shows that *pra khrid* is much more frequently used than *phra khrid* (still, this result is partial and not conclusive, since we can only search inside those texts that have been digitalised). Sometimes the same text presents the word *phra khrid* in one of its editions and *pra khrid* in another, thus showing that the two were confused (The text *Rin po che rlung gi pra khrid*, found in several editions of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* has been spelled *Rin po che rlung gi phra khrid* in the latest edition of this same collection. The Saranath 2007 edition of Padma Dkar po's *Phyag rgya chen po'i man ngag gi bshad sbyar rgyal ba'i gan mdzod* and the Darjeeling 1973-74 edition of the same text have respectively, at the same point of the text, *phra khrid* and *pra khrid*. However, the TBRC only possesses the e-text of the Saranath edition, so it is not possible to verify whether this is a typo that happened during the digital transcription of this text or if the same spelling appears in the paper copy of the text transcribed).

Concept of Author in the Khams, A ro and Nyang lugs

The present research is mostly based on the analysis of the lineages, colophons and quotations found inside the *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs*, and *Nyang lugs*. Therefore, a short digression becomes necessary to explain the method used for interpreting and examining this material. It is generally known that the information contained in colophons and lineages is not to be taken at face value.¹⁰² From an historical point of view, colophons and lineages are often unreliable, created more to suit the author's wish for legitimization and authority than in faithfulness to actual historical facts. Likewise, the use of quotations in Tibetan texts is also problematic for Western scholars' standards. Tibetan authors do not always acknowledge the sources from which they draw, with the consequence that we occasionally attribute to them words written by someone else.¹⁰³ Cabezón was one of the first scholars to address the issue of authorship in the Tibetan world.¹⁰⁴ More recently, scholars continued his work in two volumes: *Authors and Editors in the Literary Traditions of Asian Buddhism*¹⁰⁵ and *Reuse and Intertextuality in the Context of Buddhist Texts*.¹⁰⁶ These publications, besides dealing with the concept of authorship, widen the scope of inquiry to the role of quotations and intertextuality in Tibetan texts. Both publications endeavour to take into account both emic and etic points of view. In the second,

¹⁰² Scholars have frequently addressed the problem of the unreliability of colophons and lineages, showing that they often do not report historical facts but mere reconstructions intended to lend credibility to the content of the texts. This is perhaps more frequent with regard to lineages than colophons. Colophons are sometimes added after some time has passed from the redaction of the texts, and although some misattribution might derive from the desire of connecting a text with an important master of one's tradition, some certainly are to be imputed to ignorance about the real identity of the author.

¹⁰³ Terrone's experience with the writings of Bde chen 'od gsal rdo rje is emblematic of the sort of difficulty Western scholars often face when reading Tibetan texts that do not acknowledge substantial borrowing from other works. Terrone, 2016: 203-4.

¹⁰⁴ In 2001, Cabezón, starting from Western theories on authorship, brought his inquiry about the role of the author into the Tibetan Buddhist world (Cabezón. 2001:234). Through the examination of a number of colophons and the observation of current text-production he reached the conclusion that in the vast majority of cases, there is no single author. Instead there is a team of people who, involved in the process of creation, all leave their own mark on the final product as we read it. At the same time Cabezón argues that the very act of authorship, which in the Western world would also imply a certain amount of originality and creativeness, is, in a post-modernist way, almost completely confined to the mastery of connecting 'blocks of content-related elements' (*Ibidem*, p. 242). Silk, in a recently published article, also recognises the ability to create new structures through old bricks as the main feature of authorship (Silk, 2015: 208). With these premises it is clear the boundaries between author and editor fade away and the two roles become interchangeable.

¹⁰⁵ *JIAS*, 2015:36-37.

¹⁰⁶ *Buddhist Studies Review*, 2016:33.

Cantwell demonstrates that the reuse of texts, the copying of long passages from previous works whether acknowledged or unacknowledged, was accepted in the Tibetan world. Tibetan audiences did not expect originality from new texts but rather repetition of what tradition has already established. This contrasts with the Western idea that the main attribute of authorship is to present something new to the world. Cantwell's study demonstrates that the best way to define the author's role in a specific society is to look at the audience and what the audience expects from the author. Tibetan Buddhist readers expect their authors to report only what the tradition teaches, thus a Tibetan author, instead of promoting his own original thought, feels the necessity of minimising it.¹⁰⁷ In sum, the difference lies in: a) the level of emphasis that is given to originality; b) the relationship between the author and his audience. Tibetan scholars wrote mainly for the sake of their disciples and community, and frequently at their own request. The author and his public therefore shared the same set of knowledge. Even when an author did not disclose the sources he used or copied to create his text he could easily expect that his audience knew from where those passages derived. This is particularly true when we consider authorship in non-modern contexts, when printing was relegated to a few highly valued works and knowledge circulated in small circles by means of words of mouth or a few manuscripts. Shared knowledge, coupled with the necessity of being as close to the tradition as possible, made (and still makes) unacknowledged borrowings perfectly acceptable.

On the whole, however, there is no great difference between the process of composition in the Western and in the Tibetan world. In both, an author's main

¹⁰⁷ Cantwell, 2016:193. In this article she also shows that even in the *gter ma* tradition, where space for innovation might be greater, treasures tend to replicate tradition, copying from texts already established in the oral transmission or in previous rediscoveries. New *gter ma* discoveries and new texts created on the basis of old *gter mas* answer two main needs: they revive an already existing teaching and they allow for a *gter rton* to reframe this teaching in a liturgical structure that is easier to memorise for daily recitation. For these purposes, the framework in which a teaching is inserted is usually one that is well known to its readers, copied from already memorised texts. Thus, in such a context, copying and insertion of long passages from other texts becomes a natural process of composition of new teachings. The *Khams lugs* and the *Nyang lugs*, however, explicitly give the title of the work or name of the master from whom the passage is quoted. The *A ro lugs* contains no quotation. The text is so terse and schematic (and so short) that there seems to be little room for hidden borrowings.

contribution consists in the selection of his sources and the way he combines them.

Yet, Cabezón, Cantwell and other scholars demonstrated that Tibetan works, rather than a contribution of one single author, were frequently the conjoined production of a number of people.¹⁰⁸ If one were to look at these issues with a post-modernist eye one would probably consider anyone who is somehow involved in the production of a text to be an author: from the composer to the editor and finally the printer, since they all leave their mark on the final product as we read it. Although this is undoubtedly the case, Tibetan scholars (like their Western counterparts) usually acknowledged only one master as the author of a text.¹⁰⁹ This usually was the person who first composed the teaching (in oral or written form) and who was the most famous of the group of people involved in the composition. Cabezón also noticed that Tibetans' usage of verbs in texts' colophons is very precise as to the kind of action performed by the author/s and his/their associates. When a master was (or considered himself to be) the author of a text, he would not employ in the colophon verbs that emphasise the act of writing (action that was mostly done by some scribe or disciple). He would deploy verbs that indicate the act of creation, such as "to make" (*mdzad pa*), "to compose" (*rtsom pa*)¹¹⁰, "to establish" (*'god pa*) and "to compile" (*sbyor ba*).¹¹¹ The action of *'bri ba*, "to write", although occasionally encountered in colophons, is not related to the authorial activity but to that of a scribe. This distinction is not universally applied, yet it seems valid for the colophons of the *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs*, *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* and *Nyang lugs*.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸ Cabezón, 2001:240-254; Cantwell, 2016:200.

¹⁰⁹ Cabezón, 2001:204. Even the longer colophons that include more information about the people involved in the composition of the text mostly distinguish between the different roles they had in this creation. The Tibetan concept of authorship is in many cases very similar to the Western ideal.

¹¹⁰ *Rtsom pa* (to compose) and *bkod pa* (to arrange) have slightly different meanings but, according to Cabezón, in colophons they convey the meaning of authorship. Cabezón, 2001:242. This is not always the case for all texts, so it is not possible to infer whether a person consider or not consider himself an author only on this basis. In this context however, it seems to work. See below for further details.

¹¹¹ Cabezón, 2001:241.

¹¹² An analysis of the colophons written by Mkha' spyod pa, Nam mkha' rdo rje and Sog bzlog pa shows that they employed different verbs when they composed a text or when they wrote it down.

Nam mkha' rdo rje, in the colophon of the *Khams lugs*, deploys the verb 'bkod pa'. This suggests that he is the author of this text, that he considered the *Khams lugs* as his personal creation. By contrast, in the colophon of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*, he uses the verb 'bri ba. This shows that Nam mkha' rdo rje distinguished the action of "establishing" (*bkod pa*)¹¹³ and that of "writing" ('*bri ba*). It is reasonable to assume that Nam mkha' rdo rje considered himself only a scribe of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*, since he clearly considered this to be A ro's meditation method, and not his own. The verb 'bri ba would also make us believe that Nam mkha' rdo rje only transcribed this method, that is to say, that the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* is only a written form of its recited oral version. It is impossible for us to know Nam mkha' rdo rje's degree of agency in the composition of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* both as a text and as a meditation method. We can however imagine that in transcribing this oral meditation method he also redacted it. I thus call Nam mkha' rdo rje the "author" of the *Khams lugs*, and the "redactor" of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*.¹¹⁴

Mkha' spyod pa in the colophon of the *A ro lugs* uses the verb 'bri ba.¹¹⁵ Once again, it is impossible to settle to what extent Mkha' spyod pa shaped either the wording of the text or its meditation method, though it is clear that he considered the *A ro lugs* to be a method he received and not his own invention. As in the previous case, I call Mkha' spyod pa throughout my research the "redactor" of the *A ro lugs*.

¹¹³ I use here the verb "to compose" to emphasise that Nam mkha' rdo rje created this method of meditation. However, it would be more correct to use the verb "to arrange". The *Khams lugs* is made largely of quotations. Nam mkha' rdo rje's activity can thus also be said to consist in "arranging" quotations to form a new method. Nonetheless, in Chapter 2, it will become clear that the use he makes of quotations is very personal. For this reason I call him an author.

¹¹⁴ If 'bri ba was the action performed by a scribe, maybe "transcribe" would be a better translation of this verb. On the other hand, Cabezón showed that these scribes at times did more than simply transcribe a text. They actually chose how to render what the master/author dictated to them in a literary form (Cabezón, 2001:241-2). Consequently, it is difficult to ascertain their precise level of intervention in the texts, which very likely depended on specific circumstances.

¹¹⁵ In the colophons of biographies that we know to be authored by him, Mkha' spyod dbang po employs the verb *bkod pa* and not 'bri ba. This shows that he distinguished the actions *bkod pa* and 'bri ba and was not unwilling to own his work when he thought it to be his own composition. See for example the *Chos kyi rje mnga' bdag mar pa lo tsa tsha'i rnam par thar pa gsang ba mdzod kyi lde mig*, in *Bde mchog snyan brgyud kyi rnam thar skor*, Kargyud sungrab nyamso khang: Darjeeling, 1983, 131:6: "mkha' spyod pa dri med ye shes kyis gnod mdzes mkhar gyi sa cha dpal ldan gyi bor gus pas bkod pa'o".

The colophon of the *Nyang lugs* is more difficult to interpret. Sog bzlog pa uses ‘*bkod pa*’ but he does not sign himself. He says that this method of meditation is ‘the good method of Zhig po bdud rtsi’. The agent of the transitive verb *bkod pa* is missing. Still, a line of dots connects *bkod pa* to the name “Sog bzlog pa rgyal mtshan” that was annotated in between two lines of text. Since Sog bzlog pa includes this text in the list of his own teachings (*tho byang*)¹¹⁶, it is clear that Sog bzlog pa considers himself the author of the text of the *Nyang lugs*, but not of the meditation method described therein. Throughout my research I call Sog bzlog pa the “author” of the *Nyang lugs*. However, it should be understood that Sog bzlog pa is only the author of the text and not of the method of meditation described therein. The meditation method, however, is not Sog bzlog pa’s only or even principal reason for writing this text. A quick perusal of the *Nyang lugs*, *A ro lugs*, *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* (and even of the *Khams lugs*) soon reveals that Sog bzlog pa’s text is widely different from all others. What immediately strikes the eye is that the majority of the quotations contained in the *Nyang lugs* comes from Bka’ brgyud pa authors. Quotations from canonical Rdzogs chen Sems sde texts, such as the *Kun byed rgyal po* or the eighteen texts of the Mind Series, are missing.¹¹⁷ Further investigation also reveals that the principal aim of the *Nyang lugs* is not to train practitioners in a specific method of meditation, but to demonstrate that Mahāmudrā and Rdzogs chen teach the same doctrine. This cannot have been Zhig po bdud rtsi’s objective.

The pronounced difference of Sog bzlog pa’s text also affects the way I examine quotations in the *Nyang lugs*. Thus, it will be found that I devote more space to the analysis of the quotations included in the *Khams lugs*, than to those contained in Sog bzlog pa’s text. The *Khams lugs* exemplifies the process of creation of Tibetan methods and texts explained above. Nam mkha’ rdo rje composes his

¹¹⁶ Van der Kuijp found one of the first occurrences of *tho byang/mtho’ byang* in the title of one of the works of the famous Bka’ brgyud madman/ scholar Bla ma Zhang (1123-1193). He translates this word as “register” or “list” and hypothesises that it was the forerunner of the genre-titles *gsan yig* and *thob yig*. Van der Kuijp, 1995:919-20.

¹¹⁷ Sometimes the text quotes passages that are said to come from the Rdzogs chen Sems sde, but it does not write the title of the work/s and I was not able to find these passages in any of these famous Rdzogs chen works. On the contrary, Bka’ brgyud quotations are always preceded by the name of the Bka’ brgyud master who uttered those words.

method on the basis of a root text and a number of other famous Rdzogs chen Sems sde works. His originality mainly lies in the way he combines these quotations and, to some degree, shapes them in order to fit in his exposition. To disclose this process, Chapter 2 first identifies the quotations inside the *Khams lugs* and then it examines the way Nam mkha' rdo rje uses them inside his method. The quotations inserted in the *Nyang lugs* are not analysed in the same way. Sog bzlog pa evidently inserts them only to prove the parallelism between the Rdzogs chen meditation method he is expounding and the method explained by famous Bka' brgyud masters. In a case like this, a detailed analysis of Sog bzlog pa's sources cannot disclose anything that is not already evident at first sight.

Together with quotations, lineages help us identify the doctrinal affiliation of a teaching and of its author. In his study on Chan lineages, McRae urges us to consider these “strings of pearls” to be myth-making productions of scholars inside the tradition.¹¹⁸ Lineages respond to the needs and ideals of the generation of practitioners who created them, and thus they offer only sparse glimpses of the time period they propose to cover. Each represents a new and specific formulation of the tradition's identity. According to McRae, historical truth that happens to appear in these reconstructions is only accidental.¹¹⁹ Yet, when one looks at lineages as constructions, they tell us something about the intentions (needs and ideals) of the creator. Thus, if not quite capable of revealing the historical picture in which their author/s lived, they might disclose (to one who has a previous historical knowledge of the period in question) the standpoint of the author and his tradition in it. In this regard, the study of Bon lineages is instructive. As Bon pos had not organised themselves in a tradition until the definitive establishment of Buddhism in the 11th century (but claimed a longer history than their Buddhist counterparts), they needed to create new narratives that formulated a unitary and continuous Bon identity.¹²⁰ They thus employed

¹¹⁸ The “String of Pearls fallacy” is the second of McRae's four rules of Chan studies. The four together are: 1. “It is not true, and therefore it's more important”; 2. “Lineage assertions are as wrong as they are strong”; 3. Precision implies inaccuracy”; 4. Romanticism breeds cynicism” McRae, 2003. These rules can be applied to the Tibetan study of lineages as well, although they need sometimes to be adjusted to specific circumstances.

¹¹⁹ McRae, 2003:6.

¹²⁰ Blezer, 2011b:210-11.

ingenious means to build a Bon identity that is at the same time an alternative other (in complementary opposition with Buddhism) while encompassing Buddhism as part of their wider system.¹²¹ As Blezer noticed, however, many of these fictions are not meant to deceive.¹²² Their concern is not with historical truths in the first place. Just as the borrowings of unacknowledged passages from other works were never considered ‘plagiarism’, similarly, lineages were mostly accepted despite their many historical inconsistencies.

Blezer observed that Tibetan Bon lineages contain multiple narratives usually organised in groups.¹²³ Two groups span all others: the *ring (b)rgyud* or far transmission and *nye (b)rgyud* or near transmission.¹²⁴ The *ring (b)rgyud* comprises a mythical, legendary setting and a historical setting. The *nye (b)rgyud* alludes to a direct method of transmission, in which a practitioner receives teachings from the manifestation of a deity, i.e. directly from the original source.¹²⁵ Generally, the lineages of the Rnying ma Rdzogs chen Mind Series follow the *ring (b)rgyud* model of transmission. They usually comprise three or more sections. The first section relates the transmission among Buddhas, which happens through mental connection. The second concerns the transmission among *vidyādhara*s; this contains mythical characters and/or gods that usually hold an Indian background.¹²⁶ The third conveys the transmission among human beings and takes place in Tibet. Each of these sections unfolds a different narrative and sometimes more than one. The initial section of the lineage informs

¹²¹ Blezer identified a number of techniques that Bon scholars employed in order to construct their lineages and define their identity. Among those that served them best to create their own identity in relation and contrast to the Buddhist identity there are: Appropriation of Buddhist Narratives and Subsequent Dissimilation (like the Bon pos’ appropriation of the Early Diffusion’s Buddhist *vinaya*. See also Chapter 2), Reduplication and Transference of Attributes (borrowings of biographical episodes of the lives of important figures from Bon to Buddhism and *vice versa*). Blezer, 2011b:214-218.

¹²² Blezer, 2010:78.

¹²³ *Ibidem*.

¹²⁴ *Ibidem*, 78-80. The *nye (b)rgyud* is typical of the *gter ma* transmission of the Man ngag class. Yet, as we shall see, the lineage of the *Khams lugs* contains a short and very short transmission next to the usual *ring (b)rgyud* of the Mind Series.

¹²⁵ For example, in this *nye (b)rgyud* Zhang chung lineage the first lineage-holder of this group, Snang bzher lod po, had received the transmission in a vision directly from Ta pi hri tsa. Blezer, 2010:79.

¹²⁶ Although it is the norm to say that this is an Indian section, in the case of Rnying ma-Rdzogs chen lineages it usually also contains famous lineage-holders coming from Oḍḍiyāna, See Chapter 2 for a lengthier discussion on the three kinds of transmission and on the specific lineage-holders.

the reader of the doctrinal affiliation of the author and the teaching with which the transmission is associated. Thus, the presence of Buddha Samantabhadra at the beginning of the Buddhas' transmission, or of Śrī Siṃha at the end of the *vidyādhara*'s transmission, tells the reader that he is looking at a Rdzogs chen lineage.¹²⁷ This is also true for the third type of transmission, that of the human beings. The names of specific masters are typical of one tradition and they are never or rarely found in others. Here however, the situation becomes complicated, since the transmission among humans pertains to the historical domain, to verifiable events. In the human transmission the process of lineage-creation resembles that of history-making. They both single out events and/or personalities that they consider key for the development of their narratives. Equally, they omit or downplay events or people that, in their judgement, are not essential to the master narrative. McRae's four rules of Chan refer particularly to this section of the lineage. Transmissions that consist of historical people set out to tell us something about the actual history of a teaching's diffusion, even though they reflect the author's specific intentions. Yet, two aspects need be taken into account. The first is the high number of lineages found in Tibetan Buddhist literature. The second is the evident attempt of some Tibetan masters to create narratives that, although limited, had some foundation in reality. The first point is important because a great number of different lineages prevents a single transmission from dominating the scene, in other words from becoming history. We said before that the one thing we can define through the study of a lineage is the standpoint of its author and his tradition, provided that we possess an historical framework to help us understand the author's choice. This means that if we were the audience of the Tibetan writer, living at his time, we would probably know why he selected certain lineage-holders instead of others. In the eyes of a Tibetan scholar one lineage remains one of the possible lineages, a selection and not the ultimate truth.

¹²⁷ Yet, when copying already existing transmissions, a Tibetan author would often resort to abbreviation to shorten an otherwise excessively long list, leaving only the names of those masters who are particularly well known. See Chapter 2 on this.

The second point tells us not to dismiss all that the author says as a construction useful only to understand the exigencies of the author at the time he writes.¹²⁸ In other words, a lineage might reflect a narrative orchestrated by the author, but it might, at the same time, use for such a re-construction actual facts. Therefore, while we should not forget to look at lineages as manifestos of specific traditions at a specific point in time, it would be mistaken to dismiss those “accidental” historical relations they occasionally provide. As Dalton pointed out, these transmissions could not be made out of nothing, and Tibetan authors needed some building material in order to create their own lineages.¹²⁹ They often based their new narratives on previous material (*rnam thars*, *thob yigs* and the like), exactly as any Western historian would do in reconstructing history. Therefore, it happens at times that the biographies of certain Buddhist masters verify their relationship with either the preceding or the succeeding lineage-holder in the list. Although limited and reconstructed, lineages can sometimes still offer a partial vision of the diffusion of certain teachings and the wide variety of people (often belonging to different traditions) involved in those practices.

Dalton’s thesis furnishes us with an example of multiple lineages. In analysing the transmission of the Anuyoga’s principal text, the *Dgongs pa ’dus pa’i mdo*, he found that three of the existing lineages run parallel until they arrive at Sgrol ma ba ’Bro ston Bsam grub rdo rje (1294-1375). From this lineage-holder onwards, three lines of transmission are recorded: one that passes through his son, Sgrol chen Sangs rgyas rin chen; one to Zur Ham Śākya ’byung gnas, and one to Zur Ham’s sister Zur mo Dge ’bum. He shows that the first was upheld by Sog bzlog pa, the second was endorsed by the tradition of Kaḥ thog and the third was created later by the second head of Rdo rje brag, Padma ’phrin las (1641-1717). Dharma śrī, the brother of the founder of Smin grol gling monastery, reported all

¹²⁸ McRae’s second rule of Chan Studies (Lineage assertions are strong as they are wrong) could sometimes be applied to Tibetan lineages to the opposite effect, as he himself noticed (“lineage assertions are problematic in direct proportion to their significance” McRae, 2003:8). This is to say: because some of their lineage claims are not so very strong (and indeed some lineages do not seem to have occupied their authors’ thoughts so entirely) they are not too very wrong (or at least present very poor narratives).

¹²⁹ Dalton, 2003:164.

of these three lineages in his work.¹³⁰ Between Sog bzlog pa, his patrons, and the community of Kaḥ thog there was a good relationship. The two lineages were thus mutually recognised as two related but distinct branches. About a century after Sog bzlog pa's death, the Fifth Dalai Lama pressed Padma 'phrin las to establish his own tradition of the *Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*. In writing the lineage of this teaching, Padma 'phrin las could not adopt Sog bzlog pa's transmission. In fact his patron, the Fifth Dalai Lama, had repressed Sog bzlog pa's tradition for political reasons, and Padma 'phrin las would not borrow the transmission of Kaḥ thog, because of his personal dislike of that school.¹³¹ Therefore he constructed his own line of transmission specific to Rdo rje brag and the *Byang gter* tradition. Dharma śrī and his brother also enjoyed the favours of the Great Fifth, but they were also very much concerned about the future of the Rnying ma school.¹³² Their aim was to bring together all the surviving strings of this tradition and thus, despite the Dalai Lama's aversion, they took care to preserve and record all the transmissions available.

The members of a tradition could certainly recognise the specific transmission of their own school, and probably also reconnect the other transmissions to their distinctive schools. They were therefore aware of the existence of a number of transmissions and that each of them represented the specific narrative of a specific group.

By the fourteenth century some lineages became fixed and were repeated time and again unmodified.¹³³ The only changes that are perceivable are caused by: a) omissions ascribable to the forgetfulness of the scribe or author, b) different abbreviations of stock lineages (the author skips some of the lineage-holders

¹³⁰ Dalton, 2002:168. He does not specify where in Dharma śrī's writings we can find these three lineages but says that Bdud 'jom rin po che copied verbatim Dharma śrī's account. *Ibidem*, p. 168 fn. 11.

¹³¹ Dalton attributes Padma 'phrin las' dislike of the Kaḥ thog tradition to an event which happened at the time when the two *Byang gter* teachers, Ngag gi dbang po and his father Bkra shis stob rgyal were residing at Kaḥ thog. See Dalton, 2001:198-99.

¹³² For a discussion on the relationship between Sog bzlog pa's tradition, the two Smin grol gling brothers and the Fifth Dalai Lama, see Chapter 4.

¹³³ Dalton drew a line between lineages written before and after the 15th century. Those written before aimed to respond to the criticism they received from the Gsar ma schools. Lineages written after the 15th century tried to procure legitimization for new transmissions and focussed on the validity of the lineages of different factions. Dalton, 2003:162-3.

because he takes them for granted) and, c) changes at the end of the line of transmission. The latter may comprise the addition of only a few names (those of the author and perhaps his immediate teachers), or a new group of names. When the names added at the end of the stock lineage are many, one witnesses a new line of transmission, with a new narrative attached to it. All these possible scenarios are common in lineages and they all appear in the transmission of the *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs*.

This research analyses five main lineages: the lineage of the *Khams lugs*, three lineages connected to A ro's tradition of meditation (two related to the *A ro lugs* and one to the *A ro snyan brgyud gyi man ngag*), and the lineage of the *Nyang lugs*.¹³⁴ Each of these represents a different narrative (or multiple narratives) though it is not always possible to establish who created it. In fact, except for Nam mkha' rdo rje's texts, the others do not provide a lineage, or do not provide it fully. Mkha' spyod dbang po only gives an abbreviated lineage at the end of the *A ro lugs*, but Kong sprul, the editor of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, adds two longer lines of transmission to this text. The first he considers to be the complete version of the abbreviated lineage found inside the text, the second he adds without giving any source for it, and one cannot exclude it to be a creation of Kong sprul himself.

The *Nyang lugs* does not contain any line of transmission. It is Kong sprul in his *Gdams ngag mdzod* who associates a lineage with this text. The transmission he proposes also comes from the pen of Sog bzlog pa, from the Sems sde lineage prayer entitled: *Rdzogs chen sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*. This partly justifies its being used as the lineage of the *Nyang lugs*.¹³⁵

¹³⁴ I say *main* lineages because the only lineage that we find inside the text of the *A ro lugs* is an abbreviated lineage made up of only five masters. However, Kong sprul gives two lineages for this method: the first that should be the longer version of the abbreviated one, and a second that is added by him. For this reason I do not consider the abbreviated lineage to be a third lineage of the *A ro lugs*. The third lineage coming from the method of A ro is that found in the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*. Moreover, I do not count as a *main* lineage the additional and shorter lineage that Sog bzlog pa gives at the end of the main lineage.

¹³⁵ Chapter 4 examines the pros and againsts of the connection between the lineage of Sog bzlog pa's dga' ston and the Nyang meditation method. In short, this transmission may well be applied to the Nyang lugs. At the same time, this lineage is general enough to be applied also to a variety of other texts and methods.

As seen, Nam mkha' rdo rje composed the *Khams lugs* and, consequently, also its lineage, which appears at the commencement of this text. The *Khams lugs'* *vidyādhara's* lineage is a combination of classical Rdzogs chen Sems sde lineage-holders and figures hardly traceable in the Mind Series.¹³⁶ Thus, together with *vidyādhara's* such as King Dhahenatalo, Gomadevī, Nagārjuna and so forth, we find figures such as Gaṇeśa, Thor tshugs dgu pa and Mar me mdzad. The human transmission of the *Khams lugs* contains only one lineage-holder that is well established in the Rdzogs chen Sems sde, G.yu sgra snying po. The lineage-holders that intervene between G.yu sgra and the founder of Kaḥ thog's teacher, Byang ston rnam dag, are not well documented. Some of these are traceable in the *MNy*, but not in Rdzogs chen lineages. The lineage-holders that follow Byang ston rnam dag are all abbots or famous monks of Kaḥ thog. The presence of key Rdzogs chen masters in the *Khams lugs vidyādhara* lineage demonstrates its affiliation to the Rdzogs chen Sems sde. Yet, the high number of teachers from other (non-Rdzogs chen) backgrounds seems to suggest that Nam mkha' rdo rje was trying to create a wider lineage for his text, one that could cover the teachings of his own school. Kaḥ thog's curriculum is famously known to be composed of the three branches, *mdo sgyu sems* (*Mdo*, standing for the *Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*, *sgyu* for *sgyu 'phrul*, *Māyājāla* and *sems* for Rdzogs chen Sems sde). The addition of new lineage-holders connected with these practices might thus be explained. That Nam mkha' rdo rje did not intend to create a classical Sems sde lineage is evident not only from the lineage-holders he included, but from those he evidently excluded. The most notable omission is that of the Zur clan. The lineage of the Zurs, besides being the most famous among the *bka' ma* Sems sde transmissions, is also known to have reached the founder of Kaḥ thog, Dam pa bde gshegs. The latter considered himself a heir of the Zur tradition. Much of his Sems sde studies were conducted under the guidance of a student of the famous Zur Śākya seng ge, 'Dzam ston 'Gro ba'i mgon po. 'Dzam ston not only taught him the Great Perfection, but he was also instrumental in the foundation of the Kaḥ thog monastery. Despite all this, Nam mkha' rdo rje leaves out 'Dzam ston in his lineage and recognises Byang ston

¹³⁶ With "classical" lineage-holders, I refer to masters that by the fourteenth century had already been recognised as holders of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde tradition. In fact, these *vidyādhara's* already belonged to the narrative of the *Bai ro 'dra bag* (the biography of Vairocana) when Nam mkha' rdo rje created his lineage. Chapter 2 discusses this point in more detail.

rnam dag as Dam pa's main teacher.¹³⁷ This proves that he wished to formulate a transmission specific to Kaḥ thog, but unconnected with the Zurs.¹³⁸

Nam mkha' rdo rje's avoidance of specific masters of the Mind Series in his own lineage becomes particularly evident when one compares it with the transmission he chose for the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*. It will be remembered that Nam mkha' rdo rje did not consider himself the author of this text or method but only a receiver. The transmission he reported therefore was also not of his own creation. Indeed, it is evident at a single glance that he copied it from one of the stock Rdzogs chen lineages, which comprised all those figures he omitted in the transmission of the *Khams lugs*. To this ready-made list he simply added A ro's name so as to tailor it for A ro's meditation method.

Mkha' spyod pa's abbreviated version of the lineage of the *A ro lugs* contains only five names. Being a short version, the lineage starts with Vairocana and does not include any other member of the Buddha or *vidyādhara*'s transmission. The longer version of this lineage, which Kong sprul provides in his collection, agrees with the abbreviated version in that it contains all five lineage-holders put forward by Mkha' spyod pa. The narrative underlying the long lineage is quite evident: to demonstrate the sameness of Mahāmudrā and Rdzogs chen teachings. This transmission thus combines famous masters from both schools. In this case, the Buddha and *vidyādhara* sections of the lineage are fundamental to establish this point. Not being hampered by possible historical events, these two

¹³⁷ Dam pa bde gshegs studied under several masters, and indeed Byang ston was one of them. Byang ston taught Dam pa a great number of instructions; among these feature the explanations of the Early and Later Translations of the Mind Series. Chapter 2 on this point.

¹³⁸ The reason for Nam mkha' rdo rje's choice however remains unclear. I could not find any source for 14th century Kaḥ thog and the only short biography we possess of Nam mkha' rdo rje was written by the 20th century master 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan. Speculatively, one may connect this choice of Nam mkha' rdo rje to the increasing importance the *gter ma* teachings were assuming at that time. In his late biography, Nam mkha' rdo rje is said to have studied Man ngag sde instructions and to have received the *Rdzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying thig*. The Zurs were famous for their steadfast adherence to the orally transmitted teachings (*bka' ma*). They studied and transmitted all branches of the Rnying ma teachings (*Mahāyoga*, *Anuyoga* and *Ati*) but did not concern themselves with the revelatory movement (*gter ma*). Therefore, it is plausible that in writing the lineage of his own text, Nam mkha' rdo rje avoided those teachers who were too exclusively connected with Rdzogs chen *bka' ma* tradition, among these the Zurs. The addition of a "short" and a "very short" lineage to the long (*bka' ma*) transmission seems to provide some slight corroboration for this hypothesis. Still, evidence is too scarce to draw any definitive conclusion.

transmissions represent the pure will of the author and are decisive in defining the narrative he wished to construct. This is particularly so in this lineage of the *A ro lugs*. In fact, the alternation of Bka' brgyud and Rnying ma lineage-holders in the human section of the lineage could pass unnoticed since the two schools were very close and transmissions often flowed from one to the other. Kong sprul does not say from where he derived this longer transmission but in the *gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama we see a lineage of A ro's *Khams lugs* that resembles very much the one Kong sprul provides. We know that the Fifth Dalai Lama lamented that some of the lineages of the Sems sde included in his *gsan yig* were copied from the work of 'Phrin las lhun grub, the father of Gter bdag gling pa and Lo chen Dharma śrī. 'Phrin las lhun grub was a student of Gong ra Gzhan pha rdo rje, the main disciple of Sog bzlog pa. As discussed above, Sog bzlog pa's main intention in producing the *Nyang lugs* was to demonstrate the identity of Rdzogs chen and Mahāmudrā. Therefore, it is not unlikely that this mixed lineage was the creation of someone who belonged to Sog bzlog pa's tradition.¹³⁹

The second line of transmission Kong sprul proposed for the *A ro lugs* seems to be based partly on the short lineage of A ro's teachings presented in the *MNy*, and partly on a selection of masters who are known (in biographical literature) to have studied A ro's teachings. The impression one receives is that this lineage has been created *ad hoc* on the basis of what other sources said about the diffusion of A ro's teachings. Yet, it has the disadvantage that many of the lineage-holders that are supposed to be linked by a relationship of master/disciple never actually met. That Kong sprul preferred this lineage, however, is not surprising. He was clearly unsatisfied with the first one since it did not fit the structure of the "eight conveyances of transmission" he had adopted in his *Gdams ngag mdzod*. This almost completely pure Rnying ma lineage therefore was better attuned to the general framework of his collection.

¹³⁹ Sog bzlog pa and his circle were not the only people who tried to mix Rdzogs chen and Mahāmudrā. Rang byung rdo rje before then had started to combine Rdzogs chen with Mahāmudrā. Sog bzlog pa's (or his disciples') and Mkha' spyod pa's source for this lineage might therefore be the same. They might all have drawn this lineage from Rang bung rdo rje's teachings. Yet, given the relationship between the Great Fifth, Gter bdag gling pa and Dharma śrī, it seems more likely that this transmission reached the Dalai Lama Sog bzlog pa's circle than from Bka' brgyud sources. On the troubled relationship between the Fifth Dalai Lama and the Sngang-Sog-Gong tradition see Chapter 4.

The first nineteen lineage-holders of Sog bzlog pa's lineage are the same as those of the *NyNy*.¹⁴⁰ Zhig po bdud rtsi, his main disciples and the next few lineage-holders belonging to the Zur tradition, who directly follow the nineteenth lineage-holder, were also by that time established in Rdzogs chen transmissions. The rest of the lineage seems to be Sog bzlog pa's creation. The colophon of this work provides a sketch of the remaining lines of transmission of the Mind Series in the sixteenth century. It says that in the past there were many more transmissions of the Sems sde but, by the time the author was writing, they were lost. Sog bzlog pa calls this lineage a mix of Dbus and Gtsang transmissions. Dbus lineage-holders mainly feature in the first section of the transmission, that which he copied from previous sources. His own addition (i.e. the latter part of the lineage) seems to contain only masters stemming from Gtsang.¹⁴¹ It is difficult to ascertain his motive in writing this lineage since many of the lineage-holders he added are not easily identifiable.¹⁴² It is clear however, that, Sog bzlog pa's Gtsang/Dbus transmission is composed of two different lines: one that he copied from the Zur/Nyang and a second he himself added.

¹⁴⁰ It is clear that Sog bzlog pa knew this beginning stock lineage as "transmission of the Zur", but as Kapstein noticed, there seem to be no clear reference to the *NyNy* directly or any sign that the text was well known in these later circles.

¹⁴¹ I say "seems" because I have not been able to identify with certainty all the members of the second section of the Dbus/Gtsang lineage. It is possible that, if they were all known, some of them might have been from other regions. The lineage that Sog bzlog pa adds in the colophon contains also masters from Mnga' ris and other regions.

¹⁴² In all appearances, Sog bzlog pa was trying to record the lineages of the Sems sde extant at his time. In the colophon he observed that several transmissions had been lost by his time and that the one he knew and received was that of Dbus-Gtsang. At the end of the colophon he also added a second shortened Dbus-Gtsang transmission he had heard of, so reinforcing the idea that he was acting with the aim of preserving all Sems sde transmissions. Yet, considering the typical polemical stamp of Sog bzlog pa's writings, one feels (perhaps wrongly) inclined to believe that there must be some more cogent reason for writing this lineage.

CHAPTER TWO

The Issue of Authorship of the Khams Lugs in Western Literature

The main title of the *Khams lugs* is *Slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag* (henceforth *Pra khrid*).¹⁴³ No study has yet focussed on this text, but a few Western scholars came across it and expressed their opinion about it. Before turning to the analysis of the lineage of the *Pra khrid* (*Khams lugs*), this chapter summarises the views of these scholars and, when stated, their opinion about the authorship of this method of meditation.

Khams lugs or the 'method of Khams' is a very generic title. In fact, there are several different methods and traditions that came to bear this name in the course of time.¹⁴⁴ Rgyal sras in his *ChR* calls *Khams lugs* the teachings of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas.¹⁴⁵ Other scholars, as for instance 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal and the Fifth Dalai Lama, follow his example.¹⁴⁶ Perhaps because of the popularity of these works in the West, modern scholarship often refers to A ro's teachings as the '*Khams lugs*'.¹⁴⁷ Yet, the only known *Sems sde* text which includes, in its title, the name *Khams lugs* is the *Pra khrid*.¹⁴⁸ The *Pra khrid* is always located next to the *A ro lugs* in the collections. Its proximity to a text that includes the name of A ro seems to suggest an identification between the *Pra*

¹⁴³ In this case, text and meditation method can be identified since the text reports (or professes to report) A ro's meditation method as it reached its redactor. We cannot know how much difference there is between the method Mkha' spyod pa received and the text he wrote. Therefore, until new data comes to light, I treat method and text as one.

¹⁴⁴ By the end of Chapter Three we will encounter at least three different *Khams lugs*, all connected with Rdzogs chen teachings.

¹⁴⁵ *ChR*, 394:2.

¹⁴⁶ See *DNg*, 150:4-5; Roerich, p. 167; *Dam pa'i chos kyi gsan yig ganga'i chu rgyun las glegs bam bzhi pa*. 2009. *Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*, vol. 4. Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 308:5-7. This section of the Fifth Dalai Lama's *gsan yig* is in fact drawn from the *ChR*. See Ehrhard, 2012: 91. We shall return to this section of this *gsan yig* in Chapter Four. Other references to the *Khams lugs* as the work of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas are discussed below in Chapter Three.

¹⁴⁷ Examples are given below.

¹⁴⁸ As we saw in Chapter One, although the term *Khams lugs* is part of the title, it appears to be a gloss added at a later stage. The same thing holds true also for the other two methods.

khrid, *Khams lugs* and the *Khams lugs* of the A ro tradition. At the same time, it would call for an analysis of the relationship between the method of A ro called *A ro lugs*, and the method of A ro called *Khams lugs*, since both would be derived from A ro Ye shes.

The authorship of all these *lugs* is multi-layered. The tradition ascribes the root teachings that led to the genesis of these methods to a Buddha (usually Samantabhadra), their emergence on earth to Dga' rab rdo rje and their translation and diffusion in Tibet to Vairocana. In due course, some other masters extracted the essence of their doctrine in order to create meditational methods (*khrid yig*). Finally yet another person wrote down the text. In the case of the *A ro lugs*, the lineage inside the text begins with Vairocana.¹⁴⁹ Then, A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas formulated the method of meditation and Mkha' spyod pa wrote it down. Similarly, the lineage of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* commences with Samantabhadra, runs to A ro, who transformed the teachings into meditation instructions, and finally reaches Nam mkha' rdo rje who put the oral teachings down on paper. When we turn to the analysis of the *Khams lugs* we find that we miss one link of this chain. The very title of this text (*Slob dpon Dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa*) would seem to suggest that Dga' rab rdo rje is the creator of the meditation method of the *Khams lugs*. But Dga' rab rdo rje is a lineage-holder found in all Rdzogs chen lineages. Therefore, it is unclear whether Dga' rab rdo rje's name in the title indicates: a) that he composed the Khams method or; b) that the *Khams lugs*, like all Rdzogs chen teachings, originated from (and is legitimised by) Dga' rab rdo rje. If we accept the latter hypothesis we are left bereft of a master. In this case, Dga' rab rdo rje would symbolise the origin of the tradition and Nam mkha' rdo rje would be its redactor. There would

¹⁴⁹ The text of the *A ro lugs* contains only what the redactor, Mkha' spyod pa, calls a 'short lineage', which is composed of only six lineage-holders (here clearly the term 'short lineage' *nye brgyud* is not to be associated with the transmission of the *gter ma* tradition but only to the fact that Mkha' spyod pa gives an abbreviated form of the transmission). Being very short he omits the vidyādhara section and makes his transmission start from the first human lineage-holder. Mkha' spyod pa informs us of the existence of other different transmissions of the *A ro lugs* ("gzhan ni sna tshogs so." *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30, 4256:1; *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 1, 373:2). Kong sprul gives two lineages of the *A ro lugs* in the *Gdams ngag mdzod* (vol. 18, 464:7- 466:1). As we shall see in the next chapter the first of these lineages is a mixture of *Mahāmudrā* and Rdzogs chen (and in fact starts with Śākyamuni, which is rather uncommon for a Rdzogs chen Sems sde lineage), the other, is a more classical Rdzogs chen transmission and therefore begins with Samantabhadra.

be no individual fountainhead to this specific method of meditation. On the other hand, if we turn to the first interpretation, the origin of the tradition would need to be implied; the method of meditation would go back to Dga' rab rdo rje and its redaction to Nam mkha' rdo rje. In this case A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas would hold no claim on this *Khams lugs*. Therefore, after a brief overview of what Western scholarship has to say on this matter, the next section examines the *Pra khrid* itself for corroboration of either position.

The first scholar to report the name of *Khams lugs* was S. G. Karmay. In 1979, he discussed A ro's teachings in terms of two works: the *A ro khrid yig chen mo*¹⁵⁰ or *Theg chen rnal 'byor*,¹⁵¹ and the *Khams lugs*.¹⁵² The *Theg chen rnal 'byor* is the only extant text that A ro wrote in his own hand. This work, which belongs to the *lam rim* genre, teaches stage by stage how to detach oneself from mundane bonds and reach enlightenment.¹⁵³ Karmay considered the *A ro khrid yig chen mo* and *Theg chen rnal 'byor* to be one and the same text. It is not altogether clear though from where he drew this information. He quoted a number of sources such as the *Blue Annals*, the *ChR*, 'Jigs med gling pa's *Snga 'gyur rnying ma la rgol ngan log rtogs* and Padma rnam rgyal's *Zhe chen chos 'byung*.¹⁵⁴ However, these appear to be his sources only for the statement that Atiśa had read the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*. None of them identifies the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* with the *A ro khrid yig chen mo*. Karmay then speaks of the *Khams lugs* as the method of A ro, which derives its name from the fact that A ro was born in Khams.¹⁵⁵

The next scholar to discuss the A ro's *Khams lugs* is Ehrhard in his *Flügelschläge des Garuḍa* (1990). He speaks of the *Khams lugs* as a teaching connected to a Chinese transmission of which A ro is the seventh link.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵⁰ Karmay, [1988] 2007: 126. In Tibetan sources this is more often found under the name of *A ro khrid mo che*.

¹⁵¹ Karmay, [1988] 2007: 208.

¹⁵² *Ibidem*.

¹⁵³ Thiesen has produced a German translation of the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*. See, Thiesen, 209: 107-163.

¹⁵⁴ Karmay, [1988] 2007: 126-7, fn. 27.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵⁶ Ehrhard, 1990: 12 and 94-95. A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas is said to have been the seventh link of a chain of seven Chinese masters and seven Indian masters. It is not clear what sort of Chinese

Ehrhard's main source here is the *Snga 'gyur chos 'byung* (18th century Gu ru bkra shis). The passages about A ro included in this work however clearly spring from the *Blue Annals*.¹⁵⁷

In 2005, Davidson examined these traditions of meditation a little more systematically. His *Tibetan Renaissance* devoted a few pages to the three Rdzogs chen Sems sde *lugs* and, in particular, to the teachings of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. This is important because it is in his work that we find for the first time a direct association between our *Khams lugs* (i.e. the *Pra khrid*) and A ro's *Khams lugs*. Davidson refers to both our texts, the *A ro lugs* and *Khams lugs* as later versions of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas.¹⁵⁸ He tentatively identified the Nam mkha' rdo rje in the colophon of the *Pra khrid* with Rgya sman pa Nam mkha' rdo rje,¹⁵⁹ a teacher of Ku ma rā dza (1266-1343)¹⁶⁰ and he places the redaction of the text into the year 1273.¹⁶¹

Jean-Luc Achard also consulted the *Khams lugs* (i.e. *Pra khrid*) and the *A ro lugs* (i.e. *Snyan brgyud rin po che'i khrid kyi man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid*). But he was more cautious in his effort to define the relationship between A ro's *Khams lugs* and the *Pra khrid*. In fact, Achard noticed that the lineages charted in the *A ro lugs* and *Khams lugs* are quite distinct. For instance,

Buddhist teachings he received or from where this account of the seven Chinese masters originated. There is no trace of this Chinese connection in A ro's biography (which we are going to see in Chapter 3). The earliest source that reports this fact and that I have been so far able to find is the *DNg*, (*DNg*, 150:4; Roerich, 2979:147).

¹⁵⁷ *Snga 'gyur chos 'byung*, 318: 14-15: "de la rgya gar bdun brgyud dang/ rgya'i slob dpon bdun brgyud kyi gdams pa mnga' zhing/ des cog ro zangs dkar mdzod khur dang/ ya zi bon ston/ des nyid la'o/ 'di la rdzogs chen khams lugs zhes zer". *DNg*, 150:4-5 "de la rgya gar bdun brgyud dang/ rgya'i hwa shang bdun brgyud kyi gdams ba mnga' zhing/ /des cog ro zangs dkar mdzod khur dang/ ya zi bon ston la gsungs te/ de gnyis kyis rong zom la bzhad/ 'di la rdzogs chen khams lugs shes zer"(Roerich, p. 167). Moreover, if we look at the entirety of *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*'s references to A ro Ye shes and his work, we clearly perceive that they are drawn from the *DNg*.

¹⁵⁸ Davidson, 2005: 74-75. The identification of the *A ro lugs* and *Khams lugs* of A ro Ye shes with our two texts, the *Snyan brgyud rin po che'i khrid yig man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid*. *Rdzogs pa chen po sems sde A ro lugs* and the *Slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag*. *Rdzogs pa chen po sems sde Khams lugs* is on page 388, fn. 60 and 65.

¹⁵⁹ Dates unknown.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, fn. 65.

¹⁶¹ As we shall see in the next chapter the colophon of the *Khams lugs* informs us that this text was written in the water, female, bird year. Even during Ku ma rā dza's lifespan there were two possible female bird years, 1273 and 1333. I do not know Davidson's reasons for choosing the first option among the two. Ku ma rā dza was a teacher of the famous Klong chen pa and he will be discussed in Chapter Three. He is in fact one of the masters who received A ro's tradition.

the *Khams lugs*' lineage displays several tantric elements. Furthermore, the *A ro lugs* revolves around three absorptions, while the *Khams lugs*' instructions are based on four absorptions.¹⁶²

The only study wholly dedicated to A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas is Katja Thiesen's magisterarbeit (2009). In chapter three, she introduces many of the Tibetan sources available that cite the teachings related to A ro. She starts by giving an account of the location of the *A ro lugs* and its attribution to Mkha' spyod pa, the second Zhwa dmar pa. She then gives the bibliographical details about the *Khams lugs (Pra khrid)*.¹⁶³ Finally, she tells us where we can find the *Rdzogs pa chen po a ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs ba [pa]'i rim pa* and another text entitled *Rdzogs chen a ro lugs kyi khrid yig bla ma dam pa'i zhal shes* attributed to Dpal sprul 'jigs med chos kyi bzang po (1808-1887).¹⁶⁴ Since these works were not essential to her thesis, she does not identify or analyse these two texts.

I now examine the lineage included in the *Pra khrid* in order to sketch the connections between this text and the A ro's *Khams lugs*.

Internal Evidence: the Lineage of the Khams lugs

In the previous section I examined what little modern scholarship has produced about the origin and formation of the *Khams lugs*. The text itself contains further

¹⁶² Achard, 1999: 29.

¹⁶³ Thiesen, 2009: 88-89.

¹⁶⁴ Thiesen here says that the title of this work in the *dkar chag* of Dpal sprul's collection and that shown at the beginning of the text itself are not the same. She surmises that this work may be the *Theg mchog a ti'i man ngag gnas lugs gsal ston* which is found on the page where, according to the *dkar chag*, A ro's work starts (Thiesen, 2009: 89-90). This is undoubtedly correct. In fact, as Karmay pointed out in the *Great Perfection* (Karmay, [1988] 2007:42-43), Tibetan texts often have more than one title. It is clear that the *dkar chag* of Dpal sprul's collection (The Collected Works of Dpal sprul O rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi bzang po. 1970-71. Ngagyur Nyingmay Sungrab. In 6 volumes from 38 to 43), on many occasions uses different titles from the ones that are reported in the opening of the texts themselves. However, there is no incongruity between the works listed in *dkar chag* and the texts presented in the collection. Dpal sprul's text on A ro's method has now been explained and translated in a book entitled *Pointing Out the Nature of Mind: Dzogchen Pith Instruction of Aro Yeshe Jungne* by Khenchen Palden Sherab Rinpoche and Khenpo Tsewang Donggyal Rinpoche. This work is outside the scope of the present thesis for chronological reasons.

valuable information to help us understand its doctrinal and temporal context. Predictably, the lineage of transmission, the texts quoted within the *Pra khrid* and the colophon constitute our major sources of information.

The three lineages and the mental transmission of the Buddhas

The first four pages of the *Khams lugs* contain the customary opening invocation as well as its lineage of transmission. The latter is divided into five methods: (1) The mental transmission of the Buddhas (*rgyal ba dgongs pa'i brgyud*), (2) the awareness transmission of the *vidyādhara*s (*rig pa 'dzin rig pa'i brgyud*), (3) the oral transmission of the humans (*gang zag snyan nas nyan du brgyud pa*),¹⁶⁵ (4) the short transmission (*nye brgyud*) and (5) the very short transmission (*shin tu nye brgyud*). The first three kinds of lineage are common to all branches of the Rnying ma school.¹⁶⁶ Bdud 'joms rin po che traces the origin of the Buddhas, *vidyādhara*s and humans' transmissions to the *Sgyu 'phrul rgya mtsho*, one of the commentaries of the *Guhyagarbha tantra*. He quotes from this text: "The conventional, symbolic and aural lineages are respectively those of the conquerors, bodhisattvas and yogins".¹⁶⁷ Some scholars draw a correspondence between the three lineages and the three *kāyas* (the first lineage corresponding to the *dharmakāya*, the second to the *saṃbhogakāya* and the third to the *nirmāṇakāya*).¹⁶⁸ In the *Khams lugs*, as in most other texts, the three *kāyas* are all included within the first lineage. The *dharmakāya* Samantabhadra, the *saṃbhogakāya* Vajrasattva and the *nirmāṇakāya* Dga' rab rdo rje here all belong

¹⁶⁵ *Gang zag snyan nas du brgyud pa* has been translated as "The hearing lineage of ordinary beings" (Patrul Rinpoche, 1998:345. Translation by the Padmakara Translation Group); or "Transmission into the Ears of People" (Gyatso, 1986:8). Although "*gang zag*" means "individual", I translate it "humans" because this is the meaning of *gang zag* in the present context.

¹⁶⁶ Harding, 2003:9.

¹⁶⁷ Bdud 'joms rin po che, (transl.) 1991:447. The *Sgyu 'phrul rgya mtsho* is found in the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum Mtshams brag*, vol. 22, pp. 2-103 and *Gting skyes*, vol 15, pp. 338-420. If one compares the verses here quoted one notices that there are slight differences. Bdud 'joms rin po che reads "*rgyal pa'i sems dpa' rnal 'byor pa/ dgongs pa rig pa rna ba brgyud*" (*Snga' 'gyur rdo rje theg pa'i bstan pa rin po che'i ji ltar byung ba'i tshul*. 2008. New Delhi; Chos dpal publications. p. 43:11-12), while in the *Mtshams brag* edition there is a genitive between *rgyal ba* and *sems dpa'* (6:5) and the *Gting skyes* edition reads '*rim pa*' instead of '*rig pa*' (341:1).

¹⁶⁸ Sarah Harding draws this parallel in her book *The Life and Revelations of Pema Lingpa*, 2003 p. 8, and Nathaniel de Witt Garson has reaffirmed it in his thesis, maintaining that the correspondence is implicit in the way these lineages are exposed in *The Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism* 447-450. de Witt, 2004:160, fn. 35.

to the mental transmission of the Buddhas.¹⁶⁹ Vajrasattva and Dga' rab rdo rje are not respectively placed into the symbolic and aural lineages that they represent; they all feature in the first, conventional transmission. This should not be understood to run against the theory that I just mentioned. It means that the author understood the *dharmakāya* to be the source of all *kāyas*. The *dharmakāya*, as the ultimate nature that comprises everything else, is not discernible from the *saṃbhogakāya* and *nirmāṇakāya*; hence they are all included in the first lineage.

The inclusion of Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva and Dga' rab rdo rje at the beginning of this lineage directly places this text within the Rdzogs chen dominion. This corroborates the affiliation of the *Khams lugs* proclaimed in its very title. Samantabhadra is the primordial Buddha from whom the teachings of the Great Perfection descended.¹⁷⁰ Vajrasattva received the teaching from Samantabhadra through mental communication. Dga' rab rdo rje, likewise, received them from Vajrasattva. The Rdzogs chen pas affirm that Dga' rab rdo rje, as the first human to receive the Rdzogs chen teachings on this earth, is the founder of their tradition. In this way they differentiate their origins not only from the New Schools but also from the other branches of the Rnying ma school (i.e. *Mahāyoga* and *Anuyoga*).

The awareness transmission of the vidyādhara

The second lineage, the awareness transmission of the *vidyādhara*s, is sometimes said to exist in two forms: the first comprises only non-humans; the second consists of both, human and non-human *vidyādhara*s.¹⁷¹ In the *Khams lugs*, though, only the second is represented. This lineage is composed of thirteen individuals who are either semi historical/legendary human beings or deities. Some of these figures are well attested in the Rdzogs chen Sems sde tradition;

¹⁶⁹ 'Chos sku kun tu bzang po/ /longs sku rdo rje sems dpa' / /sprul sku dga' rab rdo rje/ /rgyal ba dgongs pa'i brgyud pa'o'. *Khams lugs*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30, 436:3-4.

¹⁷⁰ For an explanation of the myth of Samantabhadra see Kapstein, 2000: 167-170.

¹⁷¹ See Dudjom Rinpoche, (transl) Kapstein and Dorje, 1991: 452.

others are totally extraneous to it. Kapstein noticed this peculiarity and conjectured that this transmission is the remainder of an earlier form of Rdzogs chen's lineages which was preserved at Kaḥ thog but later got lost outside its walls.¹⁷² Kong sprul, however, in the *dkar chag* of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, affirms that this transmission is a mixture of Rdzogs chen and *Māyājāla*'s lineages.¹⁷³

Several members of this *vidyādhara* transmission are typical of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde lineages. Karmay, for example, analysed a similar transmission found in the hagiography of Vairocana, the *Bairo 'dra bag*.¹⁷⁴ Kapstein in turn suggested that this lineage drew from an earlier source:¹⁷⁵ the *Paṅ sgrub rnams kyi thugs bcud snying gi nyi ma* (henceforth *NyNy*). This work is connected with the Sems sde teachings of the Zur clan, which shows an almost identical line of transmission.¹⁷⁶

Van Schaik believes that the lineages of the Sems sde spring from the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*, the famous work by Gnubs chen sangs rgyas.¹⁷⁷ The *Bsam gtan mig sgron* in fact contains the earliest reference to the names of eleven masters who in later works (such as the *NyNy* itself) form the Buddha and *vidyādhara* lineages of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde.¹⁷⁸ He also recognises three stages in the formation

¹⁷² See Kapstein, 2008: 280, fn 15.

¹⁷³ *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 464:2. See also Richard Barron's translation of the *dkar chag* of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, *The Catalog of the Treasuries of Precious Instructions*, p. 115-116.

¹⁷⁴ See Karmay, [1988] 2007:19-20. For a complete translation of the life of Vairocana see the translation of the later version of the *Bai ro 'dra 'bag chen mo* by Palmo, 2004. For this transmission see Table one below.

¹⁷⁵ Both the *BDC* and the *NyNy* are inside the *Bai ro rgyud 'bum*. These two however are not authored by the same person. The *BDC* is found in the last volume of the collection and was probably added later. In fact, while all the rest of the *Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum* is in *dbu can*, Vairocana's biography is in *dbu med*.

¹⁷⁶ See Kapstein, 2008: 279, fn. 14. Kapstein also noticed that other works tend to shorten the list by simply recording that the teachings then passed through a certain number of people and finally arrived at a particular master of the tradition. The clearer example of this is found in the *MNy* where it is said that the lineage of *Atiyoga* passed through "five hundred who were learned, including twenty-five generations" and finally arrived at Śrī Siṃha and Vairocana. See *MNy*, 488:7-14 and Kapstein, 2008: 280, fn. 15. It is interesting to notice that in the *MNy* the lineage is not subdivided into the three sections of the mental, awareness and oral transmissions.

¹⁷⁷ See van Schaik, 2004: 197-199.

¹⁷⁸ The names of these masters are found in glosses that were probably written by Gnubs chen himself. Van Schaik in fact notices that Gnubs chen adds his own name in the glosses using an epithet he adopted for himself (i.e. the little monk). Moreover, he says, the presence of the name of Gnubs chen's own master (who does not appear in the later lists of the Sems sde lineages) is a point in favour to the attribution of the glosses to Gnubs chen; van Schaik, 2004: 197 and fn. 90

of Sems sde lineages. The first phase, represented by the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*, does not contain a lineage but a group of teachers. The *BDC* includes a complete Sems sde vidyādhara lineage, but it acknowledges that the lineage-holders do not follow a fixed order (*go rim pa med pa*).¹⁷⁹ This represents an intermediate stage when the lineage was not yet fully established. By the twelfth century these lineages had become fixed. Van Schaik noticed that the lines of transmission of Rdzog chen Seminal Heart (*snying thig*) omit several lineage-holders in order to compress their lineages.¹⁸⁰ Similarly, the *MNy* cuts its Sems sde transmission short and informs the reader that it omits five hundred learned men.¹⁸¹ Only three lineage-holders in the *MNy*'s lineage are left to represent the *vidyādhara* transmission: Mañjuśrīmitra, Śrī Siṃha and Vairocana.¹⁸² In later sources full *vidyādhara* lineages are often omitted (the authors were probably more concerned with the human transmission) but their absence is not always directly acknowledged.

Whether or not the *Bsam gtan mig sgron* was the primary source for the lineages of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde class¹⁸³ it is clear that the masters it cites are, or came to be considered, the forefathers of the Sems sde tradition in Tibet. As I shall discuss below, not only the first two masters but also several of the later lineage-holders of the *Khams lugs* belong to the list of the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*.

The *Sems sde bco brgyad kyi dgongs pa rig pa 'dzin rnam kyi rdo rje'i glu* also contains a list of teachers very similar to the lineages of the *Khams lugs*, the *NyNy* and the *BDC*.¹⁸⁴ Moreover, the *Rdo rje'i glu* is found in the same circle of Sems sde texts as the *A ro* and the *Khams lugs*. The *Rdo rje'i glu* consists of eighteen chapters, each of which contains a song that presents one of the Eighteen Fundamental Texts of the Sems sde series.¹⁸⁵ Eighteen *vidyādharas*

on the same page. See also D. Esler, 2012 for an in-depth analysis of chapter seven of the *Bsam gtan mig sgron* and the context in which these masters are placed.

¹⁷⁹ *BDC*, 476:3, Karmay, [1988] 2007:20; van Schaik, 2004:198; Palmo, 2004:70.

¹⁸⁰ Van Schaik, 2004:198.

¹⁸¹ *MNy*, 488:7-14. See Table 1 below.

¹⁸² *Ibidem*.

¹⁸³ Not all scholars accepted this theory. For a different point of view see E. Dylan, 2012: 47.

¹⁸⁴ For their names see Table one below.

¹⁸⁵ For a brief explanation of the Eighteen Fundamental Texts of the Mind Class and for further reference see Chapter One.

sing, in turn, one of the songs/texts in order to explain its meaning. Each chapter concludes with a quotation from a reputable source to provide legitimation of its teachings. The dates of the “Vajra songs” are unclear. Karen Liljenberg, on the basis of their stylistic similarity, believes these songs to be all composed by the same author.¹⁸⁶ She recognised the two lines of quotations at the end of the sixth song to stem from the *Shel phreng dkar po*, which is among the list of the teachings that ’Jigs med gling pa received.¹⁸⁷

Let us now turn to the transmission of the *Khams lugs*. While this text shares many lineage-holders with the other Sems sde transmissions here reported, it is worthwhile to compare it with them in order to establish correspondences and/or differences, as the case may be. Table 1 compares the lineages (or groups of masters)¹⁸⁸ that I discussed so far.

Table 1: LINEAGES OF THE VIDYĀDHARAS

	<i>KHAMS LUGS</i>	List in the <i>BSAM GTAN</i> <i>MIG SGRON</i> ¹⁸⁹	<i>SNYING GI NYI</i> <i>MA</i> ¹⁹⁰	<i>BAI</i> <i>RO ’DRA ’BAG</i> ¹⁹¹	List in the <i>RDO RJE’I</i> <i>GLU</i>	<i>ME TOG</i> <i>SNYING PO</i> ¹⁹²
¹	’Jam dpal bshes gnyen [Mañjuśrīmitra]	Ānandā (nun)	’Jam dpal bshes gnyen [Mañjuśrīmitra]	’Jam dpal bshes gnyen [Mañjuśrīmitra]	Rgyal po Dha he na ta lo	’Jam dpal bshes gnyen
²	[King] Dha he na ta lo	Buddhagupta	Rgyal po ’Da he na ta lo	Dha he na ta lo	Sras thu bo Rā dza hasti	Nyi shu rtsa Inga la sogs mkhas pa Inga brgya
³	Indra bhū ti	Dhahenatalo	Sras thu bo Ha ti [Rājahasti]	Thu bo Ra dza ha ri [Rājahasti]	Sras mo Sā rā ni	Paṇḍita Shri sing ha

¹⁸⁶ Liljenberg, 2012: 68.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibidem*. She also reports that Christopher Bell ascribes this text to Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer or to a master contemporary with him. His only source however seems to be an oral communication by Geshe Kushog Karma. The text itself bears no colophon and therefore it even more difficult to ascertain any precise date for its redaction.

¹⁸⁸ ‘Group of masters’ because, as we just saw, neither the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*, nor the *Sems sde bco brgyad kyī dgongs pa rig pa ’dzin rnam kyis rdo rje’i glu* insert the names of these masters into a line of transmission.

¹⁸⁹ As explained before this is not a lineage but the list of masters Gnubs chen mentions in connection with different methods of meditation. This list is taken from D. Esler, 2012a:110-111.

¹⁹⁰ This list is taken from Kapstein, 2008:279-280.

¹⁹¹ This list is taken from Karmay, [1988] 2007:19- 20.

¹⁹² *MNy*, 488:7-14.

						[Śrī Siṃha]
4	Go ma de ba	Dga' rab rdo rje	Sras mo Pa ra ni	Ba ra ni [Bharaṇī]	Klu'i rgyal po	Lo tsā ba Bai ro tsa na [Vairocana]
5	Rab snang brtan ma	Kukurāja	Rgyal po Yon tan lag gi bu mo Gnod sbyin mo byang chub	Klu'i rgyal po	Ku ku ra dza [Kukurāja]	
6	Tshogs kyi bdag po [Gaṇeśa/ Gaṇapati]	Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes	Rmad 'tshong ma Par na	Gnod sbyin ma Byang chub ma	Nā gār dzu na [Nāgārjuna]	
7	'Phags pa Klu sgrub [Nāgārjuna]	Oḍḍiyāna Mahārāja O rgyan Ma hā ra tsa	Kha che'i mkhan po Rab snang	Smad 'tshong ma Ba ra ni [Bharaṇī]	Khyi'i rgyal po phyi ma	
8	Rdo rje legs pa rtsal	Mañjuśrīmitra	U rgyan gyi mkhan po Ma ha ra tsa (King Indrabhūti)	Mkhan po Rab snang of Kha che (Cashmere)	Gnod sbyin mo byang chub	
9	Ku ku ra dza [Kukurāja]	Rājahastin (crown prince)	Sras mo Go ma de byi [Princess Gomadevī]	Mkhan po Mahārāja of O rgyan (Oḍḍiyāna) u rgyan gyi ma ha ra dza	Smad 'tshang ma Buddha ma ti	
10	[King] Thor tshugs dgu pa	Śrīsiṃha	Arya A lo ke ¹⁹³	Sras mo Go ma de byi [Gomadevī]	'Jam dpal bshes gnyen phyi ma	
11	Mar me mdzad [Dīpaṃkara]	Gsal ba rgyal	Khyi'i rgyal po Gu gu ra tsa [Kukurāja]	A tsan tra alo ke [Acintyāloke?]	Ārya pa lo	
12	Shri Sing ha [Śrī Siṃha]	Vairocana	Drang srong Bha sha ti (=ṛṣi Bhāṣita)	Ku ku ra dza [Kukurāja, the First]	O rgyan gyi mkhan po Dha he	
13	Bai ro tsa na [Vairocana]	Vimalamitra	Rmad 'tshong ma Bdag nyid ma	Drang srong Bha shil ta [Bhāṣita]	Drang srong Bhi sha ti	
14			Na ga 'dzu na [Nāgārjuna]	Smad 'tshong ma Bdag nyid ma	Sras mo Go ma de bhī	

¹⁹³ This is probably the same lineage-holder that the *BDC* calls A tsan tra alo ke and the *Rdo rje'i glu* calls Arya pa lo. Karmay proposes Acintyāloke as the Sanskrit behind A tsan tra alo ke. Karmay, [1988] 2007:20.

15			Gu gu ra tsa phyi ma (the Later Kukkarāja)	Na ga dzu na [Nāgārjuna]	Kha che'i rgyal po rab snang	
16			'Jam dpal bshes gnyen phyi ma (the Later Mañjuśrīmitra)	Kukkurāja (the Second)	Rgyal po De ba rā dza	
17			Lha'i mkhan po Ma ha ra [Devarāja]	'Jam dpal bshes gnyen (the Second)	Dharma rā dza	
18			Bud dha kug ta [Buddhagupta]	De va ra dza [Devarāja]	Bhuddha gupta	
19			Shri sing nga [Śrī Siṃha]	Bhu ta kug ta [Buddhagupta]	Shrī singha	
20			Dge slong ma Kun dga' ma	Shri sing ha pra pa ta [Śrīsiṃhaprabhā]		
21			Bye ma la mu tra (Vimalamitra)	Dge slong ma Kun dga' mo		
22			'Phags pa Bei ro tsa na	Bi ma la mi tra [Vimalamitra]		
23				Bei ro tsa na		

Table 1 shows that the author of *Khams lugs* lineage was careful to keep the main points of connection with the Sems sde tradition: nine out of thirteen lineage-holders in the *Khams lugs vidyādhara* transmission feature also in the *NyNy*.¹⁹⁴ At the same time, the text adds lineage-holders atypical to the Mind Series. Both, the beginning and the end of the lineage run parallel to the other Sems sde transmissions. The lineage-holders who appear at the two ends of the lineage are, in a way, more important than the others because they mark the

¹⁹⁴ Liljenberg points out that although Vimalamitra was one of the principal translators of the Thirteen Later Translations of the Mind Series, his name came to be associated, not with the Sems sde, but with the Man ngag sde teachings. She says: “Given his association with these Mind Series works, it is striking that tradition now links Vimalamitra more closely to the Instruction Series transmission. Vimalamitra thus has a slightly paradoxical status, as the chief translator of a series of teachings from whose lineage he seems rather divorced” (Liljenberg, 2012:18-9). The presence of Vimalamitra in *BDC* and the *NyNy* is another proof that both these works are relatively early compositions.

passage from one kind of transmission to the next (for example from the Buddha's lineage to that of the *vidyādhara*s', or from that of the *vidyādhara*s to the humans'). The Rdzogs chen tradition defines its own peculiar origin, and specific alignment with one of its three series, drawn from the choice of the masters it places in these liminary zones. Therefore, all Rdzogs chen Sems sde *vidyādhara*s' lineages end either with Vairocana or Vimalamitra;¹⁹⁵ that is to say, with one of the translators of the Eighteen Fundamental Scriptures of the Mind Class.

In order to compare the *Khams lugs*' with the other Sems sde lineages I now examine the individuals that feature in its transmission.

Mañjuśrīmitra

The *Rdzogs chen* tradition identifies Mañjuśrīmitra primarily as the disciple of Dga' rab rdo rje. His background and biography, however, are firmly rooted in the tantric tradition and consequently he is also an integral part of *Mahāyoga* transmissions. Indeed, Davidson believes that Mañjuśrīmitra's main interest was the study and diffusion of the *Mañjuśrījñānasattvasya Paramārthā Nāmasaṃgīti*.¹⁹⁶ Mañjuśrīmitra sought to harmonise all the aspects of this text that do not quite agree with *Mahāyāna* philosophy.¹⁹⁷ Davidson explained that despite his effort in this direction, Mañjuśrīmitra's commentaries on the *Mañjuśrījñānasattvasya Paramārthā Nāmasaṃgīti* never quite achieved the popularity of his *Byang chub sems bsgom pa*.¹⁹⁸ This is one of the Five Earlier Translations of the Sems sde tradition and belongs to the same category of exegetical Sems sde works as the *Khams lugs*. At any rate, Mañjuśrīmitra remains an important figure for the entire Rdzogs chen school attested by the numerous biographical accounts his life produced. I give here a brief summary of the main biographies. This will help us understand this master and his connection with the lineage-holders juxtaposed in the *Khams lugs* transmission. The various accounts found in Rdzogs chen works can be grouped into three main blocks. Each of these three clearly seeks to connect Mañjuśrīmitra with a specific

¹⁹⁵ Most frequently with Vairocana. See footnote above.

¹⁹⁶ Davidson, 1982: 6

¹⁹⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 6 and fn. 17 on the same page.

Rdzogs chen class (Mind, Space or Secret Instructions). Therefore, even though the stories they report are similar in places, it is clear that different authors modified Mañjuśrīmitra's biography in order to accentuate the importance of one series over the others.

1. The first account of Mañjuśrīmitra's biography stems from the *Bai ro 'dra 'bag chen mo* (henceforth *BDC*).¹⁹⁹ The *BDC* describes the story from a general Mind Series' perspective. This text relates that Mañjuśrīmitra was born in Dvikrama in India to the Brahmin Sukhapāla and his wife Kuṣāṇā. One day, Mañjuśrī appeared to Mañjuśrīmitra and advised him to ask Dga' rab rdo rje to become his student. At that time, Dga' rab rdo rje was the sole holder of the doctrine beyond cause and effect (i.e. Rdzogs chen). Many *paṇḍits* who had heard of this new doctrine grew jealous and distrusted Dga' rab rdo rje. Six of them decided to set out to seek Dga' rab rdo rje and defeat him in debate. Mañjuśrīmitra, who had received a vision concerning Dga' rab rdo rje and wished to meet him, joined this group. They found him, but the *paṇḍits* inevitably lost the debate. Mañjuśrīmitra had never doubted Dga' rab rdo rje's superiority but, out of necessity, he had pretended all the while to side with his opponents. After the debate, Mañjuśrīmitra resolved to cut out his tongue in atonement for having shown disrespect to the master. Dga' rab rdo rje stopped him and transmitted to him the Rdzogs chen Sems sde text entitled *Rdo la gser zhun*.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ This summary is based on Ani Palmo's English translation of the *Bai ro 'dra 'bag: The Great Image*, pp. 45-47. Another summary is also available in Norbu and Clemente, (second edition) 2010: 33-37. Karmay also gives a short summary of this story (Karmay, [1988] 2007:19). The original account is found in the *BDC*, in the *Bai ro 'i rgyud 'bum*. 1971. Leh: S.W. Tashigangpa. Vol. 8: 493:3- 442:4. Karmay relates that there are two versions of the *BDC*, one was found as a *gter ma* and one comes from an oral (*bka' ma*) transmission (*Ibidem*, p. 31). The one he has consulted, is the *bka' ma* version redacted by Dar ma seng ge (end nineteenth century). This is the xylographic edition of the *Be ro 'dra 'bag* published by Khochen Trulku, Dehra Dun in 1977 in Lhasa (*Ibidem*). This is the same edition from which Palmo and Norbu and Clemente took and translated the story of Mañjuśrīmitra summarised above. Dar ma seng ge claimed that the *bka' ma BDC* had been revised and augmented with passages coming from O rgyan gling pa's (1323-1374) *Padma bka' thang*. Thus, Karmay concludes, the present version must postdate O rgyan gling pa, although the main body of the text was, according to the text itself, dictated by Vairocana to his seven main disciples (Karmay, [1988] 2007:31). If we give credit to this assertion at least some portions of the text could be dated back to the eighth-century.

²⁰⁰ For a discussion of this text see Chapter One. The *Rdo la gser zhun* is found in the *Bka' ma* collections in the same section where there are the Sems sde *lugs*.

2. The *Snyan brgyud rdo rje zam pa'i lo rgyus 'bring po gdams ngag dang bcas pa*, belonging to the Space Series, contains a different biography.²⁰¹ Here, Mañjuśrīmitra went to Nālandā in search of the Rdzogs chen teachings. Upon arrival, some *paṇḍits* told him that no one in Nālandā knew such a doctrine. They suggested that he should go to Dga' rab rdo rje. Mañjuśrīmitra set out again and reached Dga' rab rdo rje after an arduous voyage lasting thirteen months. Mañjuśrīmitra paid his respect to the great master, but Dga' rab rdo rje did not say a word in reply. They remained silent for another thirteen months. At the end, Mañjuśrīmitra, convinced that Dga' rab rdo rje will never transmit him the teachings, sets out to commit suicide. At that point Dga' rab rdo rje realised that Mañjuśrīmitra was unable to understand the doctrine through silence, and so he decided to speak. He uttered the syllables A HA HO YE (the seed syllables of the Space Series) for Mañjuśrīmitra to attain the ordinary and the ultimate *siddhis*.

3. Tulku Thondup, in *Masters of Meditation and Miracles*, gives a third account of Mañjuśrīmitra's biography inside the *snying thig* section of the Secret Instruction Series.²⁰² This story tells that Mañjuśrīmitra saw Mañjuśrī in a vision.

²⁰¹ I take this story from Norbu and Clemente's 2010: 36-37. The *Snyan brgyud rdo rje zam pa'i lo rgyus 'bring bog dams ngag dang bcas pa* is in volume 18 of the *Sung Kama*, 316:2-325:1. This text now also appears in the *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 32, pp. 312-448. According to the colophon the author of this text is a certain Kun bzang rdo rje. Dan Martin identified Kun bzang rdo rje, with 'Dzeng Dharma bo dhi's (1052- 1168) disciple, so on this basis he hypothesised this text to date back to the late twelfth century. Martin, 1997: 32-33.

²⁰² Tulku Thondup says he drew his account from seven different texts: 1. the *Rdzogs pa chen po snying thig lo rgyus*; 2. Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung*, 3. the *Rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gi sngon 'gro'i khrid yig kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung* by Dpal sprul rin po che (1808-1887); 4. the *Snga 'gyur rdo rje theg pa gtso bor gyur pa'i sgrub brgyud shing rta brgyad kyi byung ba brjod pa'i pad ma dkar po'i rdzang bu* by 'Gyur med padma Rnam rgyal (1871-1926); 5. the *Snga 'gyur rgyud 'bum rin po che'i rtogs pa brjod pa 'dzam gling tha gru khyab pa'i rgyan* by 'Jigs med gling pa (1729-1798); 6. the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* by Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba (1454-1566) and 7. the *Snga 'gyur chos kyi byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho* (*Gu ru bkra shis chos 'byung*) by Gu ru bkra shis (1550-1602). See Thondup, 1999: pp. 59-61 and 367, fn.76. The earliest of these sources is the *Snying thig lo rgyus chen mo* that, as we saw in Chapter One, has been attributed to the twelfth century master Zhang ston bkra shis rdo rje despite the fact that it first appeared inside the *Snying thig ya bzhi* collection of Klong chen pa. The account summarised above is therefore one of our earliest references to the Rdzogs chen threefold subdivisions in Sems sde, Klong sde and Man ngag sde. It is interesting to notice that the other six sources that Thondup used were all written after Klong chen pa's time. So it would seem that there is no trace of this particular biography of Mañjuśrīmitra before the fourteenth century. Given the role that Klong chen pa had in the systematization of the Rdzogs chen teachings one may suspect that he wrote (or amended) this biography in a way to demonstrate that this subdivision of the Rdzogs chen teachings had always existed. As we shall now see, Davidson also believed that Klong chen pa wrote this biography of Mañjuśrīmitra in order to give authority to the person of Dga' rab rdo rje, whose existence had been doubted by some *gsar ma* scholars.

The deity ordered him to go to the Śītavana charnel ground in order to meet Dga' rab rdo rje. Mañjuśrīmitra did as he was bid and Dga' rab rdo rje transmitted to him the teaching. After seventy-five years spent together, Dga' rab rdo rje passed into *nirvāṇa*. When Mañjuśrīmitra cried in despair, a casket with the testament of Dga' rab rdo rje fell to the ground. The mere sight of that basket allowed Mañjuśrīmitra to attain enlightenment. Mañjuśrīmitra devoted the rest of his life to the classification of the teachings into the three series: Mind Class (Sems sde), Space Class (Klong sde) and Secret Instruction Class (Man ngag sde). The latter he divided into two subclasses, the oral transmission and the explanatory *tantras*.

These three accounts propose a different story depending on which of the three series of Rdzogs chen they want to promote. The first biography of Mañjuśrīmitra, associated with Sems sde, does not mention the three series, or attempt to elevate Sems sde above Klong sde or Man ngag sde.²⁰³ It simply endeavours to provide legitimization for the innovative stamp of the Rdzogs chen teaching in general. It is true that Dga' rab rdo rje transmitted the *Rdo la gser zhun* to Mañjuśrīmitra, which is a Sems sde teaching, but the term “*sems sde*” or “*sems phyogs*” does not appear. The author probably suspected that Buddhist scholars of other traditions would disapprove the Rdzogs chen practices. He thus sets out to demonstrate their validity praising Mañjuśrīmitra's faith in them and accentuating the defeat of the *paṇḍits*.

The *Snyan brgyud rdo rje zam pa'i lo rgyus 'bring bog gdams ngag dang bcas pa* describes Mañjuśrīmitra's inability to comprehend the Rdzogs chen teachings. When Dga' rab rdo rje utters the seed syllables of *klong sde*, Mañjuśrīmitra gains sudden insight. To Kun bzang rdo rje, the author of this text, *klong sde* proves to be the series more apt to convey the instructions of the Great Perfection.

In Thondup's account,²⁰⁴ the main body of the story unfolds after Dga' rab rdo rje's death. Here, Mañjuśrīmitra divides the teachings in a hierarchical fashion that places the Secret Instruction Series above the others.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ Notice however, that the three classes are once mentioned in the *BDC*. See Palmo, 2004: 71 and the *BDC*, 477: 4-5.

²⁰⁴ See also *Snying thig lo rgyus chen mo*, 592:6- 595:5.

According to Davidson, to turn Mañjuśrīmitra into a disciple of Dga' rab rdo rje was a 'stroke of genius' of Klong chen pa.²⁰⁶ Mañjuśrīmitra was a master whom the new schools highly valued. Connecting him and Dga' rab rdo rje lent authority to Dga' rab rdo rje and his teachings. Some *gsar ma* scholars, in particular Bu ston rin chen grub (1290-1364), questioned the validity of the Rdzogs chen teachings.²⁰⁷ Davidson's assessment might be right in general terms. However, the connection between these two masters is attested long before Bu ston and Klong chen pa. The *Snyan brgyud rdo rje zam pa'i lo rgyus 'bring bog dams ngag dang bcas pa*, which contains the second biography of Mañjuśrīmitra, already established Dga' rab rdo rje as the teacher of Mañjuśrīmitra. This text was written roughly a century before Bu ston and Klong chen pa. Moreover, the lineage of the *NyNy*, also compiled around the twelfth century, lists Dga' rab rdo rje and Mañjuśrīmitra next to each other. This hints at a teacher-disciple relationship.²⁰⁸ Klong chen pa therefore only reported what the tradition had already established. Nonetheless, it is possible, that Klong chen pa in the *Lo rgyus chen mo* retold the story in greater length in order to respond to such attacks.²⁰⁹ It is even possible that the authors of *NyNy* or the *Snyan brgyud rdo rje zam pa'i lo rgyus* created such stories for the same reason. For it is likely that

²⁰⁵ Bdud 'joms rin po che presents this figure both in the section concerning the lineage of *Mahāyoga*, specifically in the transmission of Yamāntaka, and in the *Atiyoga* lineage. In the latter he reports a story of Mañjuśrīmitra's encounter with Dga' rab rdo rje that is in line with the *Snying thig*'s version. See *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung*, pp. 493-494.

²⁰⁶ Davidson, 1981: 10-11. Davidson seems to believe that the *Snying thig lo rgyus chen mo* is the work of Klong chen pa. His reference to the *Snying thig lo rgyus* however is not altogether clear. He says that Klong chen pa in his *Lo rgyus chen mo* and his *chos 'byung* wrote biographies of Mañjuśrīmitra in which the latter was presented as a student of Dga' rab rdo rje. The *chos 'byung* he referred to is the *ChR*, which however, is not Klong chen pa's work. For the *Lo rgyus chen mo* he gave in footnote 32 (p. 11) a reference which however cannot be right. If one checks the version of the *Snying thig ya bzhi* he consulted on the page and volume he indicated there is another text. However, since there is no trace of Mañjuśrīmitra in this text on the page he recorded and in the body of his article he refers to the *Lo rgyus chen mo*, it is probable that it is the reference that is wrong and not the text.

²⁰⁷ It is well known that Bu ston in compiling the Tibetan Buddhist Canon excluded most of the teachings belonging to the Rnying ma school. Davidson in his article addresses the specific case of Dga' rab rdo rje's commentary to the *Mañjuśrījñānasattvasya Paramārthā Nāmasaṃgīti*. Bu ston included this text in the *Bstan 'gyur* but expressed doubts on its genuineness. Davidson, 1981: 10-11.

²⁰⁸ *NyNy*, 135: 4-5. See also Kapstein, 2008: 276-277. Kapstein notices that the lineage presented in the *NyNy* is very similar to that of the *BDC*. However, the *BDC* itself states that the lineage it reports does not always follow the chronological order. Karmay, [1988] 2007: 20.

²⁰⁹ Davidson, 1981: 11. This of course could also account for the presence of the threefold subdivision in such an early text. A closer analysis of this text is however required to ascertain the authorship of the *Snying thig lo rgyus chen mo*.

Bu ston's was not the only, nor the earliest, attack on the Rdzogs chen teachings.²¹⁰ The main reason for the inclusion of Mañjuśrīmitra in the Rdzogs chen lineages, though, was probably his importance in the *Mahāyoga* tradition. Several studies pointed to the fundamental role of the *Mahāyoga* tradition in the formation of Rdzogs chen.²¹¹ Mañjuśrīmitra here probably is a remainder of such a connection. If this theory is correct and the masters cited in the *Bsam gtan mig sgron* helped to form the later lineages, Mañjuśrīmitra's inclusion in this list attests to the early *Mahāyoga*-Rdzogs chen relation.²¹²

Dhahenatalo

Dhahenatalo appears only in texts and contexts related to the Mind Series. His connection with Mañjuśrīmitra is not linear. Dhahenatalo was not a disciple of Mañjuśrīmitra but they both were disciples of Dga' rab rdo rje. According to the *Bairo 'dra 'bag*, Dhahenatalo was a son of the king of Oḍḍiyana, Helu Bhandhe and his Queen Bram ze mo Brtson ldan.²¹³ Once a king himself, he²¹⁴ had a daughter named Bharanī who took the vows of a nun. Once, while she was

²¹⁰ For example, in the eleventh century 'Gos Khug pa had already tried to discredit the Rdzogs chen tradition in his famous polemical text *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor*. Here we do not find anything against Dga' rab rdo rje specifically, but 'Gos Khug pa alleged that some of the Sems sde teachings were Vairocana's creations rather than translations. *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor*: "Be tsa na'i gling du sems phyogs kyi chos la nam mkha' che dang kun las 'jug pa rtsal chen dang rdzogs pa spyi dang/ rigs pa'i khug byug dang/ chos lnga brtsams so". (21: 3-6). It is interesting to notice that 'Gos Khug pa does not place these texts under the single heading of Five Earlier Translations but he calls them merely *lnga chos* (although the fact itself that he does not consider them to be translations of Indian texts but rather invention of Vairocana could account for the fact that he does not call them the Five Earlier Translations). The *Nam mkha' che*, the *Rtsal chen*, the *Rig pa khu byug* are in fact among the Five Earlier Translations and the *Rdzogs spyi* (i.e. the *Rdzogs pa spyi ching*) is usually classified among the thirteen later translations. I am not able to identify with certainty the *Kun las 'jug pa*, but it could refer to the *Klong sde* text *Byang chub kyi sems kun la 'jug pa rnam dag ston pa*. If this was so, 'Gos Khug pa's list could be one of the earliest 'catalogues' of the five earliest translations. Finally, it is worthwhile noticing that in this text there is no mention of either the *Klong sde* or the *Man ngag sde*, but only of the *sems phyogs Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor*. 1979. Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgyel and Mani Dorji, 21:5 and 22:2. For a general discussion of 'Gos Khug pa and the *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor* see also, Wedemeyer, 2013: 240-260.

²¹¹ See, Karmay, [1988] 2007:137-152. Karmay traces the origin of the word *rdzogs chen* inside the *Guhyagarbha tantra*. Within this text, *rdzogs chen* meant the final moment of the perfection stage. Afterwards, the famous work *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*, attributed to Padmasambhava, used this word to indicate a whole phase of the inner yoga: the first being the Generation stage, the second the Perfection stage and the third the Great Perfection stage. Karmay then traces the history of the controversial word *mahāsānti* as the Sanskrit equivalent for Rdzogs chen. On this point see fn. no. 87. See also van Schaik, 2004.

²¹² This of course does not discredit Davidson's hypothesis since his argument rests on the student-teacher relationship between Mañjuśrīmitra and Dga' rab rdo rje.

²¹³ *BDC*, 442:4; Palmo, 2004:48.

²¹⁴ *BDC*, 436:7-437:5 & 442:2-3; Palmo, 2004: 43-44 & 47.

bathing in Kutra lake, Vajrapāṇi assumed the shape of a bird and peaked at her. After a year, she gave birth to a son, Dga' rab rdo rje.²¹⁵ Dga' rab rdo rje soon displayed the signs of an extraordinary being. For example, he knew the teachings of the Great Perfection from birth. Thus, at a very early age, he became the instructor of his grandfather (Dhahenatalo), uncle (Rājāhasti) and mother (Bharaṇī). The latter two —Rājāhasti and Bharaṇī— belong to the lineages of the *BDC* and *NyNy*, and appear also among the singing masters in the *Rdo rje'i glu*. In addition, Rājāhasti features among the eight masters who explain different meditation techniques in the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*.²¹⁶ The author of the *Khams lugs* lineage, however, does not include either Rājāhasti or Bharaṇī. He glosses over their names, perhaps because he does not consider them sufficiently relevant.²¹⁷

The *Khams lugs* ignores another two or three lineage-holders that appear in the *NyNy* and *BDC*.²¹⁸ The master that follows in these two lineages, Mkhan po Rab snang, though, is included later in the *Khams lugs* transmission and will be discussed below.

²¹⁵ Here the text gives Dga' rab rdo rje as the name of the son. Ani Jinba Palmo in her translation sanskritises the term as 'Prahevajra'. Hanson-Barber in her article proposed instead 'Ānandavajra' as a better translation of Dga' rab rdo rje in Sanskrit. See Palmo, 2004:44; and Hanson-Barber, 1986: 9:2. Notice also that there is a difference in the way the *BDC* narrates this story and how it is presented in Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung*. In the first the nun understands directly that her son is an emanation and she treats him with honour. In the second, she does not realise the nature of her child and out of shame she puts him in an ash pit for three days. Then, seeing that the child after so long has yet not died she understands that he is an emanation, picks him up and names him Sukha the 'Zombie or 'Ashen Zombie'''. See Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:490- 493.

²¹⁶ Although the names are not always spelled exactly the same it is clear that they refer to the same individuals. In the *Bsam gtan mig sgron* Dga' rab rdo rje's uncle is named Rājāhastin instead of Rājāhasti, and in the *Rdo rje'i glu* Bharaṇī is spelled Sārāni.

²¹⁷ This process of omission is quite common. The lineage of *Atiyoga* found in the *MNy* given in Table one above, is clear proof of how an author can leave out a great number of members of a lineage if he did not feel them to be important in his work. The aim of the author is rather to stress those figures that he believes important for locating the teaching into its proper doctrinal context. It is possible that Nam mkha' rdo rje (the redactor of the *Khams lugs*) felt that the presence of Dhahenatalo was sufficient to place the text into the Mind Series' transmission and did not feel the need to add the surrounding figures that were so closely related to him.

²¹⁸ Two in the *NyNy* and three in the *BDC*. These are the female *yakṣa* Byang chub ma and the prostitute Parna. The *BDC* also includes a Nāgārāja (klu'i rgyal po). Whether he is one and the same with the father (or companion) of *yakṣa* Byang chub ma, called Yon tan lag in the *NyNy* is unclear. The latter text in fact in talking of Byang chub ma calls her the girl of the king Yon tan lag. *NyNy*, 138:2-3: "rgyal po yon tan lag gi bu mo gnod sbyin mo byang chub". Kapstein, 2008: 279.

Indrabhūti

King Indrabhūti is a very important, yet quite controversial figure to both *gsar ma* and Rnying ma schools. Tibetan accounts generally speak of three Indrabhūtis, respectively referred to as the elder, middle and younger Indrabhūti. The middle Indrabhūti matters to us here.²¹⁹ This master is often identified with a king named Tsa in *gsar ma* texts and Dza in Rnying ma sources (both being phonetic transcriptions of the Sanskrit syllable “ja”). Karmay, in his famous article, “King Tsa/Dza and Vajrayāna” sketched the development of the biography of King Tsa of Oḍḍiyāna and its close ties with the character of King Indrabhūti of Zahor. Karmay believed the tale of King Tsa/Dza to be a Tibetan re-formulation of the legend of King Indrabhūti that we find in the *'Phags pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa tshul brgya lnga bcu pa'i grel ba*.²²⁰ King Tsa provided the key connection between the earlier traditions of Buddhism and the newer tantric systems. Because the latter emerged so many centuries after Śākyamuni, an *ad hoc* prophecy was created: Śākyamuni foresaw that one hundred and twelve years after his death a certain King Tsa would receive the tantric teachings from Vajrapāni and spread them on earth.²²¹ We do not know who was the first to create this legend. Since the name of “King Tsa” appears for

²¹⁹ I identify the Indrabhūti of the *Khams lugs'* lineage with the middle Indrabhūti on the basis of several factors. The *Khams lugs'* Indrabhūti cannot be identified with the Elder Indrabhūti because the elder Indrabhūti lived at the time of the historical Buddha. As De Witt explained in his thesis, the Elder Indrabhūti is probably an invention of the *gsar ma* schools (De Witt, 2004: 155). At any rate, Indrabhūti the Elder is not usually met in Rnying ma sources. (He noticed that the story of King Tsa/Dza soon became problematic for the proponents of the *gsar ma* schools. King Tsa/Dza in fact did not receive the teachings directly from the historical Buddha, but received them through the mediation of Vajrapāni. This could not be welcome to the New Schools. To admit that their tantras were not directly transmitted by Śākyamuni meant that they recognised texts received through visions as valid as any orally transmitted text. This could not be, so they created an Elder Indrabhūti who actually met the historical Buddha.) The young Indrabhūti lived at the time of Khri srong lde btsan and Vimalamitra (eight century) and therefore if the *Khams lugs'* Indrabhūti was the Younger Indrabhūti he would be found at the end of this transmission next to Vairocana and Vimalamitra. Finally, sources when referring to one of these other two Indrabhūtis, tend to specify that they mean the former (*snga ma*) or the later (*phyi ma*).

²²⁰ *Bstan 'gyur*. 1955-1962. Pekin Tibetan Tripiṭaka: edition Suzuki, vol. 77, 44.2:1.

²²¹ Karmay, 1981: 197-198. Karmay reports that he took the quotation of the prophecy from Bu ston's *Rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings*, (*Rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings*, in *Rin chen grub gsung 'bum*. 1965-1971. New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture. Vol. 11, 117:4- 5). The same prophecy is also found in the earlier Bsod nams rtse mo's (1142-1182) *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa*. (See *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa*, in *Sa skya bka' 'bum*. 2006. Kathmandu: Sachen International. Vol. 2, 116:3-5) and in the *MNy*, 88:21- 89:3.

the first time in Pelliot Tibétain 840,²²² it must have unfolded before the tenth/eleventh century.²²³

Some time later the similarities between the biographies of King Indrabhūti and King Tsa began to puzzle Tibetan scholars, so they started to merge the two kings into a single person. The first master to do so was Sa skya pa Bsod nams rtse mo (1142-1181). In his *Rgyud sde spyi rnam* he wrote that this king was either called King Dza or King Indrabhūti. He identified also Za hor with Oḍḍiyāna.²²⁴ After him, some followed his lead tentatively while others asserted it as a matter of fact.

Bu ston, for one, knew of this issue and declared Indrabhūti's legend to be more veracious.²²⁵ In this way, although he did not proclaim the story of King Tsa to be a Tibetan re-working of the legend of Indrabhūti, he cast doubt on the authenticity of King Tsa.

A few centuries later, the Rnying ma scholar O rgyan gling pa (1323-?) connected the two figures and considered them to be one and the same person.²²⁶

The story of King Dza, appears also in the *ChR* re-worked from the version produced in the *Bai ro'i 'rgyud 'bum*.²²⁷ It still modifies it in such a way that the two biographies display an even greater similarity.²²⁸

²²² Karmay, 1981: 194. This portion of the manuscript is reproduced at the end of Karmay's article. The association between the two kings is on the second line from the left.

²²³ This of course is because the Dunhuang caves were closed in the early eleventh century.

²²⁴ *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhag pa*, 116: 5-6 (“*de bas na shākya thub pa mya ngan las 'das nas lo nyi shu na shar lho'i phyogs mtshams za hor gyi yul Oḍyana zhes bya bar rgyal po dza zhes bya ba'am Indra bhū ti zhes bya ba [...]*”). As Karmay noticed although Bu ston rin chen sgrub rightly observed that the spelling “Tsa” is more frequently found in the writings of the New Schools, and the spelling “Dza” prevails in the writings of the Rnying ma pas, here Bsod nams rtse mo, a Sa skya scholar, uses the spelling “Dza” (Karmay, 1981: 199 & fn. 27 and *Rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings*, 118:4).

²²⁵ Karmay, 1981: 198. See the Tibetan quotation from Bu ston's *Rnal 'byor rgyud kyi rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru gzings* in note 17.

²²⁶ Karmay, 1981: 205.

²²⁷ Karmay, 200-201. See also Palmo, 2004: 14-19; *BDC*, 414:1-419:4. Interestingly enough, the name of Indrabhūti the Younger appears in the new version of the *BDC* and in Palmo's translation but it is completely absent in the earlier *dbu med* version that we find in the *Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*. In the newer *BDC*, after Vairocana complains to the King for having been banished to Tsa ba rong, the King expresses his distress and asks Vairocana for advice. Vairocana wishes the king to keep in good health so that one day in the future they may meet again and then

When Kapstein examined the transmission of the *NyNy*, he wrote, next to Mahārāja, the name of Indrabhūti, thus merging the two masters into a single person.²²⁹ Mahārāja is a well-established Sems sde lineage-holder. Table 1 shows that Mahārāja appears in almost all other Mind Series lineages.²³⁰ If Kapstein were right, Indrabhūti or King Dza would be a lineage-holder of the Rdzogs chen Mind Series lineages. Kapstein does not disclose the grounds on which he identified these two people. The association appears to be Ma hā ra tsa = King Tsa = King Indrabhūti. I sketched the factors that led to the identification of King Ja with King Indrabhūti. The link between Mahārāja and King Tsa still needs to be established. Kapstein seems to have isolated the last syllable of Mahārāja (Ma/ ha/ rā/ tsa) and then connected it with the ‘Tsa’ in King Tsa. The *NyNy* and *Bai ro’i rgyud ’bum* both say that this Mahārāja hailed from Odḍiyāna, just like our King Tsa. Moreover, Table 1 shows that the lineage-holder who usually follows Mahārāja is Gomadevī. In the *Khams lugs*, the lineage-holder after Indrabhūti is Gomadevī. Since Mahārāja’s position in the lineage is similar to that of Indrabhūti, the two may well be the same person. This identification is supported further in the *NyNy* and *BDC* by the prefix “*sras mo*” (daughter).²³¹ The last person before Gomadevī is Mahārāja. This would suggest that Mahārāja was the father of Gomadevī. In fact, the *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa tshul brgya lnga bcu pa’i grel ba* recognises Gomadevī as the daughter of King Indrabhūti.²³² This would appear to settle the matter.

Still, our sources display a degree of confusion that is not easily explained away. To begin with, the *BDC* gives both names: King Tsa and Mahārāja. This would

advise: “In the town of Kapilavastu in India, King Indrabhūti has five hundred *paṇḍitas* in his service: Among them the most learned ones are Vimalamitra and Buddhaguhya. You should let them verify my teachings. You should also invite many other pandits, and have all the Dharma translated, without judging if it is better or worse”. After that he leaves Tibet. (Palmo’s translation, p. 168, from *BDC*. 1995. Khreng tu’u: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang. 181: 7-17) In the earlier version of the *BDC*, after Vairocana’s complaint he directly leaves (*Bai ro rgyud ’bum*, 556:7). This addition is very similar to the account that we find in the *Snying thig lo rgyus* although the wording is not exactly the same (*Snying thig lo rgyus chen mo*, 634:5-6).

²²⁸ *Ibidem*.

²²⁹ Kapstein, 2008: 279. See also Table one above.

²³⁰ He is no. 7 in the list of the *Bsam gtan mig sgron*; no. 8 in the transmission of the *NyNy* and no. 9 in the lineage of the *BDC*.

²³¹ *BDC*, 446:7. *NyNy*, 138:3 ([...] *des u rgyan kyi mkhan po maha ra tsa la bshad/ des sras mo go ma de byi la bshad* [...]).

²³² *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa tshul brgya lnga bcu pa’i grel ba*, 44.4:1.

suggest that the two were not the same person.²³³ Second, as Bu ston pointed out, Rnying ma sources tend to speak of the king as “Dza” rather than “Tsa”; the last syllable of Mahārāja (Tib. Ma hā ra tsa) in the *NyNy* is “tsa”.²³⁴ Moreover, the *NyNy* and *BDC* do not call Mahārāja “king” but “abbot” or “scholar” (*mkhan po*). Since he is said to have fathered a daughter we would probably need to translate “*mkhan po*” as scholar. On the other hand, in the *BDC*, the name of Gomadevī is always preceded by “*sras mo*” even when the person with whom she engages is not Mahārāja.²³⁵ Consequently, Palmo translates “*sras mo*” not as “daughter” but as “princess”. If this were true Mahārāja would not be Gomadevī’s father, and could be an abbot. Thus, the association of Mahārāja with King Tsa/ Indrabhūti would become less certain.

In addition, the *MNy*, in one transmission of Hayagrīva, lists Indrabhūti and Mahārāja as two different lineage-holders.²³⁶ Interestingly, while Mahārāja has no epithet, Indrabhūti is called *mkhan po*. A folio below, the same work introduces Gomadevī as the daughter of King Dza.²³⁷ All this suggests that until the twelfth (or perhaps thirteenth) century the link between King Dza and Indrabhūti had not yet taken hold in some Rnying ma circles.

The name Mahārāja occurs first in Gnubs chen’s *Bsam gtan mig sgron*. This text refers to these masters without placing them into a lineage. Van Schaik believed that the first lineages of the Mind Series were formed by forging a line of transmission out of these masters. We cannot know whether Gnubs chen believed Mahārāja to be King Dza or not.

Whatever the specific views expressed in the *STMS*, *BDC* and *NyNy*, it is clear that the legend of King Tsa/Dza/Indrabhūti was always part of the fabric of Sems

²³³ However, Karmay pointed out that the *BDC* has been tampered with; insertions have been made from O rgyan gling pa’s *Padma bka’ thang* (Karmay, [1988] 2007:31). Therefore, it could be that the person who wrote the lineage of Mahārātsa did not know anything about the King Tsa discussed above.

²³⁴ This however is not the case in the older and newer versions of the *BDC* where the name is spelled as Dza (*Bai ro ’dra ’bag* in *Bai ro ’i rgyud ’bum*, 446:7; *BDC*, see page 53 sixth line from the bottom).

²³⁵ See for example when Arya Aloke requests the teachings from *sras mo* Gomadevī. *BDC*, 447:3-4; Palmo, 2004:54.

²³⁶ *MNy*, 485: 18-19.

²³⁷ *Ibidem*, 487: 15.

sde lineages. The very inclusion of Gomadevī and Kukkarāja in Sems sde lineages corroborates it. There is also no doubt that the author of the *Khams lugs* believes Mahārāja, King Tsa and Indrabhūti to be the same person. In fact, at Kaḥ thog monastery, where Nam mkha' rdo rje lived, the link between King Tsa/Dza Indrabhūti appears to have been established at an early date. Lding po pa, a student of Dam pa bde gshegs (1122-1192), the founder of the monastery, wrote a biography of his master. Since it leads up to Dam pa's death it must have been written some time after 1192. This biography hints at the identification of King Dza (here spelled Dzaḥ) with Indrabhūti.²³⁸ It is likely that Nam mkha' rdo rje studying at Kaḥ thog, at the feet of Dam pa bde gshegs' main disciples, might have well regarded these two as the same king. Nam mkha' positioned Indrabhūti in the place usually occupied by Mahārāja. This proves that he did not make any distinction between Mahārātsa, King Dza and Indrabhūti.

Gomadevī

The figure that follows Mahārāja, explained above, is Gomadevī.²³⁹ She too is a classical lineage-holder of Rdzogs chen Sems sde. In fact, she also belongs to the transmissions of the *BDC* and *NyNy* and appears in the list of the *Rdo rje'i glu*. The *BDC* does not provide us with her biography. The *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa tshul brgya lnga bcu pa'i grel ba* however records that she conferred the reading transmissions and instructions to Indrabhūti's son.²⁴⁰ De Witt identifies Gomadevī with Lakṣmīnkarā. She was a princess said to be the sister of Indrabhūti the Younger and hence she was a daughter of the middle Indrabhūti.²⁴¹

Rab snang brtan ma

²³⁸ *Shar kaḥ thog pa dam pa bde gshegs pa'i rnam thar bsduṣ pa grub mchog rjes dran*, TBRC W26096 (year, publication and place of publication unknown). 23v:1-2 (*de 'phral rgyal po dzaH'am indra bod hi yin*).

²³⁹ Although in the *Khams lugs* her name appears as Gomadeva this seems to be only a spelling variation. Indeed, this lineage presents a great number of spelling variations.

²⁴⁰ See *The Great Image*, pp. 53-54. *BDC*, 447:1-2.

²⁴¹ De Witt, 172-173. He also provides a short summary of the life of this Lakṣmīnkarā taken from the Biographical Dictionary of Tibet. He bases his identification of the two princesses on the similarity of their life-stories. However, I could not find any biography for Gomadevī and De Witt does not tell us what source he used for Gomadevī except for the *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa tshul brgya lnga bcu pa'i grel ba*, which as we have seen, gives almost no information about the life of this Princess. The similarity therefore must rest on the fact that Lakṣmīnkarā is said to be the sister of the Young Indrabhūti and Gomadevī the daughter of the middle Indrabhūti.

The next individual is more difficult to pin down. Rab snang brtan ma could be identified as Mkhan po Rab snang who figures just before Mahārāja and Gomadevī in the *BDC* and *NyNy*. Two problems arise from such an interpretation. First, Mkhan po Rab snang is the Indian *paṇḍita* who taught the Rdzogs chen Sems sde to Mahārāja. Therefore, in the lineage, he should appear before the *mkhan po*. Second, the *Khams lugs* adds the title *brtan ma*. This implies that: a) she is a female, and b) that she is not a human being. *Brtan ma*, in fact, designates a class of goddesses that serve to protect Tibet. Hence, Rab snang brtan ma would appear to be the name of a female protective goddess. Since the lineage-holders that follow Rab snang brtan ma are for the most part deities of some sort or other, this might actually be correct. However, since the awareness transmission of the *vidyādhara*s is composed of mythological individuals as well as deities, this does not confirm that Rab snang brtan ma was a deity. On balance, it is perhaps more probable that this Rab snang corresponds to Mkhan po Rab snang. In fact, Rab snang as deity is not attested anywhere.²⁴² It is possible then that the suffix “*brtan ma*” is a mere mistake of the compiler. Rab snang, always carries some sort of epithet: both the *NyNy* and *BDC* call him ‘*mkhan po*’. In the *Rdo rje'i glu* he is referred to as a Kashmiri king. The lineage included in the famous *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* by Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba (1504-1566) introduces him as the ‘the elder’ from Kashmir (*Kha che'i gnas brtan Rab snang*).²⁴³ Perhaps we are dealing here with corruption in the transmission of this text.²⁴⁴

Tshogs kyi bdag po

Tshogs kyi bdag po, (Skt, Gaṇapati or Gaṇeśa) is another variant from the usual Sems sde transmission. This lineage-holder, with non-Buddhist origins, came to be included in the Buddhist pantheon. The rituals connected with Gaṇapati seek to increase one's material possessions.²⁴⁵ The reason for the inclusion of this deity and its connection to the other lineage-holders remains unclear. The *Khams*

²⁴² For example, she does not appear among any of the lineages reported in *The Nyingma School*, or in *Oracles and Demons of Tibet*, by René de Nebesky-Wojkowitz.

²⁴³ *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, p. 582.

²⁴⁴ The *Khams lugs* presents some mistakes but not too many. However, given the importance of the collections where it was inserted (the *Bka' ma* and the *Gdams ngag mdzod*) we might safely assume that before the publication someone corrected the text but left the lineage unaltered.

²⁴⁵ On an analysis of the role of Gaṇapati in a different context see *Studies of an Asian God*.

lugs' method of meditation is not, in any obvious way, associated with Gaṇapati. There is, however, a feeble link connecting Gaṇapati with the lineage-holder next in the line, Nāgārjuna ('Phags pa Klu sgrub).

Nāgārjuna

Nāgārjuna appears also in the lineages of the *BDC* and *NyNy*. Although the *BDC* believes him to be a monk, it is more probable, in light of the context,²⁴⁶ to be the seventh/eighth century tantric practitioner rather than the famous *Mādhyamika* scholar.²⁴⁷ In the Sems sde lineages he receives the transmission from a nun called Smad /Rmad 'tshong ma Bdag nyid ma but there is no reference to Gaṇapati. Still, it appears that this Nāgārjuna wrote a text, (the *Glang po rin po che la nor blang ba'i man ngag*) now included in the *Bstan 'gyur*, explaining how best to increase one's wealth with the help of an elephant, i.e. Gaṇapati.²⁴⁸ It is not clear why the author of the *Khams lugs* decided to include Gaṇapati in this lineage. Perhaps he practised Gaṇapati's ritual to obtain wealth and, knowing Nāgārjuna to be the author of this text, decided to place Gaṇapati close to the tantric master.

Rdo rje legs pa rtsal

Rdo rje legs pa rtsal is probably best understood as the expressive power (*rtsal*) of the protective deity Rdo rje legs pa.²⁴⁹ According to Nebesky-Wojkowitz Rdo rje legs pa was a deity of Central Asian provenance. Tibetans, however, consider him to be the spirit of an Indian monk from Nālandā.²⁵⁰ He later converted to Buddhism at the intervention of Padmasambhava and holds now a place in the

²⁴⁶ The next human lineage-holder is Kukkurāja the Younger, who was according to later sources (such as the *DNg*, 142:5-6 & Roerich, 1979: 159; Bdud 'joms' chos 'byung, p. 487), the disciple of Indrabhūti the Younger. The latter according to the added section in the *BDC* and the *Snying thig lo rgyus chen mo* had, among his retinue of sages, Vimalamitra. After Kukkurāja the next two human lineage-holders are Śrī Siṃha and Vairocana, so everything points to the fact that we are now close to the eighth century. However, this can be of very little importance for the person who wrote the *Khams lugs*' lineage, since usually the two Nāgārjunas were not distinguished and the lineage we are now analysing is composed, in large measure, of unhistorical figures.

²⁴⁷ For a discussion of the Mādhyamika Nāgārjuna and the Nāgārjuna of the "Ārya tradition" see the introduction of Wedemeyer, 2008.

²⁴⁸ This precious elephant is one of the seven attributes of a Cakravartin. In fact, the *Glang po rin po che la nor blang ba'i man ngag* in its introductory homage calls it the "Most noble of the seven jewels". For a translation of this text and an analysis of the figure of Gaṇapati/Gaṇeśa in Tibet see Wilkinson, 1991: 225-241 and 270-274. I thank U. Roesler for pointing this out to me.

²⁴⁹ As far as I know there is no deity or person bearing the name of Rdo rje legs pa rtsal.

²⁵⁰ Nebesky-Wojkowitz, 1993: 155.

Buddhist tantric pantheon.²⁵¹ Rdo rje legs pa, together with Rāhula and Ekajaṭī are the three protectors (*dharmapāla*) of the Rnying ma school.²⁵² Several rituals are connected to this divinity. The most famous were those rediscovered by Rnying ma *gter ston* Ratna gling pa (1403-1479).²⁵³ Thus, even though Rdo rje legs pa is rarely included in Sems sde lineages, his presence in the *Khams lugs* transmission of the *vidyādhara*s is not implausible. Rdo rje legs pa enjoyed a close connection with the Rnying ma tradition within which the Khams method of meditation is anchored.

Kukkurāja

Rnying ma sources, such as the *NyNy* and *BDC* speak of two Kukkurājas: the Younger (*snga ma*) and the Elder (*phyi ma*). Both are also key figures in the tantra tradition. Kukkurāja the Elder was the teacher of the middle King Indrabhūti/ King Dza. He is also an established lineage-holder in the Rdzogs chen Sems sde's transmissions. According to the *BDC*, Kukkurāja the Younger was the son of a Kukkurāja Gatu and his wife Candra Rahu (Zla ba'i sgra gcan).²⁵⁴ He appears in all the lineages and lists of Table one. Kukkurāja the Younger was a disciple of Nāgārjuna. Since this Kukkurāja is separated from Nāgārjuna only by one lineage-holder, we are probably dealing here with Kukkurāja the Younger. The biography of Vairocana reports that he was the son of Gyuhe (i.e Guhya) Nāgatama and Mahina Tsarama.²⁵⁵ According to the *Blue Annals* and Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung* he was also a disciple of the Young Indrabhūti.²⁵⁶

Thor tshugs dgu pa

The tenth person in our lineage is the most obscure of all. He is called Thor tshugs dgu pa, or “the one with nine topknots”. He does not appear in any lineage. I only found his name in a text contained in the twenty-seventh volume

²⁵¹ *Ibidem*.

²⁵² *Ibidem*, pp. 14-15.

²⁵³ See *Dam can rdo rje legs pa*, 1984. Byalakuppe, Mysore: Pema norbu Rinpoche.

²⁵⁴ *BDC*, 447:8- 448:7; Palmo, 2004:55-56. The text refers to this master using sometimes the translation of the name of Kukkurāja “*khyi'i rgyal po*” (King of the Dogs) and sometimes the more usual phonetic transliteration “Ku ku ra tsa”. Sometimes the two are together.

²⁵⁵ *BDC*, 150:2; Palmo, 2004:58.

²⁵⁶ *DNg*, 142:6; Roerich, 159; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:487.

of the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, a collection of *gter ma* texts gathered by Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas in the nineteenth century.²⁵⁷ This source, entitled *Dpal chen po'i thugs dbyung ba yang thig le gcig ma*, is a *gter ma* revolving around the character of Heruka. The *gter ston* Shes rab 'od zer (1518-1584) rediscovered it in the sixteenth century. But even here Thor tshugs dgu pa appears only once. He is described as a king of Oḍḍiyāna who lives there 'at the present moment' while in the past the ruler was King Dza.²⁵⁸ The *BDC* speaks of a region of Oḍḍiyāna called Topknot area. It is thus possible that Thor tshugs dgu pa took his name from that region.²⁵⁹ Except for this somewhat loose connection with King Dza and Oḍḍiyāna, I found no reason why Thor tshugs dgu pa is included in this lineage.

Mar me mdzad

Eleventh in the lineage is Mar me mdzad (Skt. Dīpaṃkara). We know of several individuals bearing that name. It is a) the name of the Buddha of the past, b) the name of the famous master Atiśa, and c) the name of an Indian Buddhist master.²⁶⁰ The first would be out of place in this section. He is a Buddha of a previous eon and as such would belong to the first part of the lineage, which gives the "mental transmission of the Buddhas" (*rgyal ba dgongs pa'i brgyud*). The second also would be unseemly in a Rdzogs chen transmission. The third, Dīpaṃkarabhadrā, coming as he does just before Śrī Siṃha, is the most plausible option. In Tāranātha's *Bka' babs bdun*, Mar me mdzad is a disciple of Buddhaśrījñāna. If one compares Tāranātha's biography of Buddhaśrījñāna with the life of Buddhajñānapāda, as described in Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung*, it becomes clear that the two are the same person.²⁶¹ I mention this because, at the end of Tāranātha's short biography of Dīpaṃkarabhadrā,²⁶² he

²⁵⁷ *Dpal chen po'i thugs pa dbyung ba yang dag thig le gcig ma bzhugs pa shin tu ngo mtshar che*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*. 1976-1980. Paro: Dngos grub and Shes rab dri med vol. 43, pp. 373-287.

²⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 375:2.

²⁵⁹ *BDC*, 446:3; Palmo, 2004:53.

²⁶⁰ Except for Buddha Dīpaṃkara, the other two individuals have slightly different names. Atiśa's name is Dīpaṃkaraśrījñāna (Mar me mdzad dpal ye shes), and Dīpaṃkarabhadrā is Mar me mdzad bzang po.

²⁶¹ *Bka' bab bdun ldan gyi brgyud pa'i rnam thar*. 1970. Palampur: Sungrab nyamso junphel parkhang, 75:2-81:1; Tāranātha, (Templeman trans.) 3rd ed. 2007:71-82; and Dudjom Rinpoche (Kapstein & Dorji transl.), 1991:494-496.

²⁶² *Bka' bab bdun ldan gyi brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, 81:1-85:6; Templeman, 3rd ed. 2007:76-80.

says that Dīpaṃkarabhadra is probably no other than the master that the Old School scholars call Hūmkāra.²⁶³ Bdud 'joms' account of Hūmkāra's life, although concise, is sufficiently similar to that of Dīpaṃkarabhadra to agree with Tāranātha's assertion.²⁶⁴ It would seem therefore that both master and disciple bear different names in the *gsar ma* and Rnying ma schools. It is unclear though why the *Khams lugs* did not use the Rnying ma version of the name, unless the *gsar ma* / Rnying ma divide is not as consistent as Tāranātha would make us believe.

The biography of Mar me mdzad/ Hūmkāra opens in a similar fashion in both the *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung* and *Bka' bab bdun ldan gyi brgyud pa*. They start by relating that he was a great Indian scholar who studied at Nālandā, proficient in all branches of knowledge. Tāranātha then explains the circumstances in which he left Nālandā, met Buddhaśrījñāna and gave all his wealth to him in order to achieve Buddhahood. Bdud 'joms says that Hūmkāra met with two teachers: Buddhajñānapāda and Rāhulabhadra. He received his somewhat peculiar name when, being initiated into Heruka's maṇḍala, he threw the flower on Hūmkāra. A similar event is reported in Tāranātha's version although here it comes later in the biography. Tāranātha first describes a confrontation between Dīpaṃkarabhadra and a heretic king assisted by one of his ministers who was an expert of evil mantras. In the end, Dīpaṃkarabhadra prevailed over both.²⁶⁵ Since his magical power was greatest, he killed the king and his minister. What follows is identical in Bdud 'joms and Tāranātha. Mar me mdzad, disregarding social rules, obtained an outcast girl to serve as a female partner in his practice.²⁶⁶ After six months, he acquired the direct perception of the maṇḍala of Śrī Heruka and achieved the highest level of the Great Seal.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ *Ibidem*, p. 85:1-2 (“*di rnying ma pa la grags pa'i slob dpon Hūm ka ra dang gcig par grags pa*”), Templeman, 2007:79.

²⁶⁴ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:475-477. This does not imply that the Rnying ma version is shorter in general. It might well be that Bdud 'joms abridged it and that the longer story is found somewhere else in Rnying ma accounts. More work is needed to trace the origin of these biographies and to discover the reason why these masters have different names in the *gsar ma* and Rnying ma traditions. Although Bdud 'joms' work is a relatively recent one may easily assume that the two biographies were similar at least from Tāranātha's time since he already acknowledges the possible identification of Dīpaṃkarabhadra with Hūmkāra.

²⁶⁵ *Bka' bab bdun ldan gyi brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, 82:3-83:7; Templeman, 2007:77-78.

²⁶⁶ *Bka' bab*, 84:4-85:1; Templeman, 2007: 79; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:475-476.

²⁶⁷ *Ibidem*.

Mar me mdzad is clearly an exponent of the *Mahāyoga* tradition. King Thor tshugs dgu pa and Mar me mdzad are brought together through their connection with Heruka practices. Heruka maṇḍala and practices are included in the *Māyājāla* group of texts. This corroborates further Kong sprul's view that the lineage of the *Khams lugs* is a combination of Sems sde and *Māyājāla*.²⁶⁸

Śrī Siṃha and Vairocana

The *Khams lugs*' lineage then returns to the *vidyādhara*s, citing two classical Sems sde lineage-holders, Śrī Siṃha and Vairocana.

Their biographies are well known. So I shall only give a short summary of the key events recorded in the *BDC*.²⁶⁹

Both lineage-holders lived in the eighth century at the time when King Khri srong lde brtsan set out to strengthen Buddhism in Tibet, through such deeds as the construction of Bsam yas monastery. One day, the emperor asked Padmasambhava to tell him who among his subjects would be best suited to translate *Atiyoga* teachings into Tibetan. Padmasambhava pointed him to an eight-year-old boy named Vairocana. The king found the boy and even though his parents were not prepared to separate from their child, the king eventually took Vairocana to Yar lung. Here Padmasambhava instructed the boy in Rdzogs chen teachings and Vairocana translated them. The king although happy with the result, knew that none of his subjects would be able to understand these teachings even in translation. Thus, he asked his subjects whether they preferred to receive the doctrine from Padmasambhava or wished Vairocana to go to India for further teachings. They chose the second and so Vairocana and his friend Gtsang legs grub set out. On their journey, they went through sixteen trials risking their lives

²⁶⁸ The teachings belonging to the *Māyājāla* have been either divided in a group of four or eight. The *Guhyagarbha* tantra is unanimously considered the key teaching of this class but sources disagree about rest of the texts. Gyurme Dorje in his thesis mapped the different accounts starting from the first references to the eightfold division in the *Padma bka' thang* to the list proposed by Sangs rgyas gling pa in his *Bka' thang gser phreng*, going through Dpa' bo Mkhas pa'i lde'u and Klong chen rab 'byams and finally to the present-day treatises contained in the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*. See Gyurme Dorje, 1987:37-58.

²⁶⁹ This is a summary of the section of the *BDC* that goes from chapter 6 (489:1) to chapter 9 *BDC1* (489:1-531:3); *BDC2* (85:8-266:7); Palmo, 2004:83-132.

in each of them. When they finally reached India, the local ruler was displeased to see them. He had dreamt that two Tibetans, both emanations, would arrive in his realm to steal the Pith Instructions and take them to Tibet. The two friends, fearful of expulsion or worse, pretended to be only ordinary travellers. One day, an old woman approached them and helped them to get in touch with Śrī Siṃha. Śrī Siṃha was the only person in the country to possess the Rdzogs chen Pith Instructions precepts. For a long time, the two friends studied with Śrī Siṃha. To avoid suspicion, they learned the Mantra Vehicle during the day, while at night Śrī Siṃha imparted to them the Pith Instructions. The *BDC* then explains that Gtsang legs grub decided to leave India before Vairocana but died on his way to Tibet, and that Vairocana journeyed back at a later time. The subsequent events, Vairocana's banishment and his re-admittance to Tibet, connect the *vidyādhara* lineage with that of the humans.

***The Oral Transmission of the Human Lineage-Holders*²⁷⁰**

The oral lineage of the human holders is exclusively populated by Tibetans. It is composed of fifteen members spanning six centuries. The first, G.yu sgra snying po is usually dated to the eighth century and the last Dpal 'bar ba, to the fourteenth. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas speaks about the hybrid nature of this lineage.²⁷¹ The first seven masters in this section of the *Khams lugs*' lineage, with the sole exception of G.yu sgra snying po, are unconnected to the Sems sde tradition. Some of these lineage-holders are difficult to identify; others belong to other strands of Buddhism and seem to corroborate Kong sprul's opinion. Moreover, one needs to draw a distinction between the first eight lineage-holders and the subsequent seven masters. The latter seven all belong to Kaḥ thog and their close relationship is well established. Kaḥ thog was, and still

²⁷⁰ *Khams lugs*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 436:5-437:1 “*De nas g.yu sgra snying po gsal rab chen po/ rma dpal gyi rgyal po/ gnyan byang chub shes rab/ yon tan 'byung gnas/ cog ro sgom chung/ byams pa sgom chen/ byang ston rnam dag/ dam pa bde gshegs/ chos rje gtsang pa/ byams pa chen po/ spyang snga ba/ g.yan pa rin po che/ bo dhi śrī/ chos rje badzra śrī bar gang zag snyan nas snyan du brgyud pa'o*”. This lineage does not resemble any other I could find. Therefore, there is no need of a comparative table for this section of the lineage.

²⁷¹ See section two of this chapter. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas proclaimed the *Khams lugs* Rdzogs chen lineage to be “mixed with *Māyājāla*'s transmission”. *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 464:2. See also Barron, 2013: 115-116.

is, an important centre for the practice and preservation of the Rdzogs chen oral teachings.²⁷² The following analysis of the lineage-holders maps the history of the formation of the *Khams lugs*.

G.yu sgra snying po

G.yu sgra snying po commends great respect in the Rdzogs chen tradition.²⁷³ He was a disciple of Vairocana and hence he provides the link that connects the awareness transmission of the *vidyādhara*s to the Tibetan oral transmission. The *BDC* states that G.yu sgra snying po was the prince of Tsha ba rong, a kingdom in present-day Khams.²⁷⁴ Vairocana met him there during his exile. G.yu sgra begged Vairocana to accept him as his student and the latter, after testing him, conferred on him all the teachings he knew.²⁷⁵ In the meanwhile, King Khri srong lde bstan had sent a certain 'Khon Klu'i dbang po to India in order to ask Vimalamitra to come to Tibet. Vimalamitra accepted the offer and settled down in Dbus where he became a key 'priest' at the court. When Vairocana learned of Vimalamitra's presence in Central Tibet he ordered G.yu sgra snying po to debate with Vimalamitra. Vairocana hoped that G.yu sgra snying po would be able to redeem his good name. G.yu sgra snying po obeyed Vairocana's orders and left for Tibet. Upon arrival, he went directly to Bsam yas monastery where both the king and Vimalamitra were staying. G.yu sgra addressed the Indian master in a few bitter words and accused the king of Vairocana's banishment. Following his departure from Bsam yas, he met the tantric practitioner Gnyags Jñānakumāra and told him how Vairocana had been forced into exile. In a second meeting, both Gnyags and Vimalamitra asked G.yu sgra snying po for Vairocana's instructions and everyone in Bsam yas monastery gathered to hear them. It ensued a dispute about who should prostrate to the other, G.yu sgra snying po or Vimalamitra, and who should sit on the higher throne. The two masters competed to establish who was the more accomplished among them, but

²⁷² The reader will probably remember that, with the only exception of the first, all the editions of the published *Bka' ma* collections have been assembled in Kaḥ thog.

²⁷³ The biography of G.yu sgra snying po is related in the last two chapters of the *BDC*, 564:8-596; Palmo, 2004:179-240.

²⁷⁴ *BDC*, 568:1; *BDC2*, 195:20-196:1, Palmo, 2004:183. Tsha ba rong is probably situated in the North-west part of Sichuan. Karmay reports the diatribe between 'Bri gung Dpal 'dzin and Sog zlog pa about the location of Tsha ba rong. Karmay, [1988] 2007:26, fn.31.

²⁷⁵ Palmo, 2004:191-192. *BDC*, 581:3- 582:8. *BDC2*, 204:12-206:10 (notice that the two versions differ in part).

achieved an equal result. They both prostrated before the other and sat on two equally high thrones. They then simultaneously began to preach. Gnyags Jñānakumāra was able to listen and understand them both. The king and his ministers, amazed at G.yu sgra snying po's accomplishment recognised the greatness of Vairocana's teachings and decided to recall him to Tibet.

This story shows why the author of the *Khams lugs* considered G.yu sgra snying po to be the first non-Indian master to introduce the doctrine to Tibet. Nam mkha' rdo rje was careful to adopt the standard Sems sde transmission, at least at the beginning and end of his lineages. In this way the reader could place the *Khams lugs* into the right tradition at a glance. In most other Sems sde oral lineages, the person to follow G.yu sgra snying po is Gnyags Jñānakumāra. The *Khams lugs*, from the second to the eighth member launches a new peculiar succession of masters. Following G.yu sgra, it includes three individuals whose identity, biography and work are difficult to ascertain: Gsal rab chen po, Rma Dpal gyi rgyal po and Gnyan Byang chub shes rab.

None of the next seven lineage-holders appears in the early accounts of Rdzogs chen transmissions. Some occur in *Mahāyoga* lineages. Others bear names that are unattested, or are too common to allow for identification.

Gsal rab chen po

Karmay encountered a certain Gsal rab rin po che of 'Jeng in IOL 689.²⁷⁶ This text records the abbots of Bsam yas: Gsal rab rin po che is the fifth on the list. It is not possible to determine his dates with precision. The abbot to precede Gsal rab is Rdo rje rgyal po of 'Go 'bom. Karmay believes that the latter might be 'Bog Rdo rje rgyal po.²⁷⁷ 'Bog Rdo rje rgyal po appears in another Dunhuang text: Pelliot 849. Kapstein analysed the events described in this text to conclude that they refer back to the end of the tenth century.²⁷⁸ This would allow us to place Gsal rab rin po che at the end of the tenth or beginning of the eleventh century. However, the content of our sources poses many problems. For example,

²⁷⁶ Karmay, [1988] 2007:78.

²⁷⁷ *Ibidem*, fn. 13.

²⁷⁸ Kapstein, 2006:11.

Pelliot 849 talks of Bsam yas but does not associate the monastery with 'Bog rdo rje. Instead it reports that at that time its abbot was a certain Dbas rgyal ba ye shes. The identity of 'Bog rdo rje rgyal po as 'Go 'Bom rdo rje rgyal po, the abbot of Bsam yas, must remain dubious.

It is also possible that Gsal rab chen po is an inversion of the two initial syllables. Gsal rab is rare as a name. Rab gsal (953-1035) on the other hand, is a very famous master who contributed to the preservation of the monastic vows during the so-called 'Dark-age'.²⁷⁹ Chapter three briefly examines the life of this master. Here I only remark that Rab gsal seems a better candidate for the *Khams lugs*' lineage than the fifth abbot of Bsam yas. First, because Rab gsal operated in Khams, and this transmission is evidently connected to Khams; second, because Rab gsal kept alive the monastic vows during the period of fragmentation. Nam mkha' rdo rje was a Kaḥ thog monk. As will be discussed below, celibacy was strictly observed at Kaḥ thog. It would make good sense for a Kaḥ thog master to include Rab gsal in the transmission of Khams.

Rma Dpal gyi rgyal po

I identified Rma Dpal gyi rgyal po to be Smra (ston) Dpal gyi rgyal po.²⁸⁰ Rma, Smra and even Sma are all attested variants of the name of this clan.²⁸¹ The *MNy* says that Rma Dpal gyi rgyal po received the transmission of a wrathful form of Avalokiteśvara (i.e. Hayagrīva) from two masters: G.yu sgra snying po and Dge slong Ngan lam rgyal ba mchog dbyangs. Interestingly, it also reports that G.yu sgra and Ngan lam received the oral instructions of Hayagrīva. Two traditions stemmed from these instructions, "The tradition of Dbus" (*dbus lugs*) and "The

²⁷⁹ Gsal rab chen po could also be a misspelling of several other names, such as Gshen rab, Shes rab and so on. However, Dgongs pa rab gsal was also known as Bla *chen*, which may account for the second part of Gsal rab's name, "chen po". Dgongs pa rab gsal would also be a convenient link between the masters of the First Diffusion, Vairocana and G.yu sgra snying po, and those who follow Gsal rab in the *Khams lugs*' lineage. The identification of Gsal rab chen po with Bla chen Dgongs pa rab gsal must remain doubtful in high degree.

²⁸⁰ *MNy*, 485: 20-21. Ngag lam rgyal ba mchog dbyangs was one of Padmasambhava's twenty-five disciples.

²⁸¹ The clan known under this surname has been associated with Bon. The earliest references to this clan are contained in the Dunhuang manuscripts. It seems that the Ma clan was particularly active during the beginning of the Second Diffusion. Its members were involved in the integration of several Buddhist components in the Bon religion and were thus instrumental in the creation of G.yang drung Bon. For a thorough discussion of the role of this clan see: Blondeau, 1985 & 1990 and Blezer, 2013.

tradition of Khams” (*kham s lugs*). Ngan lam hailed originally from ’Phan yul, near Lhasa. G.yu sgra snying po lived in Khams. This suggests that the Dbus tradition was connected with Ngag and the Khams tradition with G.yu sgra. However, if we read the names of the two *lugs* and the two masters in their order of appearance, it would seem that the connection is reversed.²⁸² This inclusion of G.yu sgra snying po and Rma dpal gyi rgyal po in another lineage proves that the link between the two was known beyond the *Khams lugs*. It also corroborates Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas’ view that the *Khams lugs* transmission was enmeshed with tantric figures.²⁸³ And yet, the *MNy* lineage of Hayagrīva does not feature Gsal rab. The identity of this person and his relationship with the others remains opaque. If Gsal rab was indeed Rab gsal his link to Dpal gyi rgyal po would be their shared dedication to the monastic transmission. The *MNy*, in fact, says: “The disciples of these two (g.Yu sgra snying po and Dge slong Ngag lam rgyal ba mchog dbyangs) [that is] ’Dzi na gsal ba’i rdo rje, G.yas chen legs pa’i blo gros, Smra ston Dpal gyi rgyal po, Sog ston Ye shes blo gros, Sog po Dpal gyi dbang phyug and ’Tshal chung Shes rab rin chen all took the monastic vows”.²⁸⁴ This passage confirms that the *Khams lugs*, despite its tantric association, meant to include people who had received regular monastic vows in its lineage.

Gnyan Byang chub shes rab

Gnyan Byang chub shes rab appears in the *MNy* a few lines below Smra Dpal gyi rgyal po.²⁸⁵ He belongs to a subdivision of the same Hayagrīva lineage that branched out from ’Tshal chung Shes rab rin chen, one of the disciples of G.yu sgra and Ngag lam. As with the other masters listed, we have little information about him apart from his inclusion in this lineage and his monastic ordination.

²⁸² *MNy*, 485:16-486:1, “g.yu sgra snying po la gdams pa dang/zhu ba po dge slong ngan lam rgya ba mchog dbyangs la gdams pa gnyis la dbus lugs kham s lugs gnyis su grags”. It is among the members of this transmission that Indrabhūti and Mahārāja also feature. So it is clear that the author of the *MNy* did not consider these two individuals to be the same person. *MNy*, 485,18-19.

²⁸³ *MNy*, 485:16- 486:1. The *MNy* also contains a specific lineage for the *Sgyu ’phrul*, but there is no trace of these masters there. Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas, however, talks of the lineage of the ‘*khrid*’, i.e. guidelines or instructions of the *Sgyu ’phrul* so it could well be that he means a specific lineage of the *Sgyu ’phrul*, which is not the main one. See the *Sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad kyi smin grol po phyogs gcig bsdus pa*, in *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18:464: 2.

²⁸⁴ *Ibidem*, 486:1-5.

²⁸⁵ *MNy*, 486:8-9.

Still, the little we know supports our previous suppositions: Gnyan Byang chub was a monk and belonged to the *Māyājāla* transmission.

In order to identify the next three members in the lineage, Yon tan 'byung gnas, Cog ro sgom chung and Byams pa sgom chen, we need to consider them in connection with one another.

Yon tan 'byung gnas

Yon tan 'byung gnas unfortunately is a very common name connected to several masters. It might even be another name of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas (we would certainly expect him to appear in a *Khams lugs'* lineage). Two sources point to this identification: the *Gzhi lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa gtan la 'bebs pa'i grub mtha' tshig gsum* of the famous Bka' brgyud master Bla ma Zhang (1123-1193) and the *Ri chos mtshams kyi zhal gdams* of Karma Chags med (1613-1678).²⁸⁶ Bla ma Zhang includes A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas in the transmission of the *Guhyasamāja tantra*.²⁸⁷ The master after A ro in Bla ma Zhang's list is Cog ro *sgom chen*, who, in turn, is followed by Cog ro *sgom chung*. The lineage-holders that follow Yon tan 'byung gnas in this *Khams lugs'* lineage are Cog ro *sgom chung* and Byams pa *sgom chen*. On its own the link is not very strong. The names do not match precisely, moreover, *sgom chung* and *sgom chen* are reversed. Our second source is more direct. Karma Chags med refers to several accomplished masters who achieved a long life through *bcud len* pills and attained the rainbow body without remainder.²⁸⁸ Among these, he identifies four by name: two Indian masters, Dga' rab rdo rje and Śrī Siṃha, and two Tibetan masters A ro and Cog ro *sgom chung*. Near the name of A ro somebody inserted in a note 'Yon tan 'byung gnas'. It is hence conceivable that Yon tan 'byung gnas was considered to be another name of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. Still, this identification, already based on a weak foundation, is not without problems. For example, why would the redactor of the *Khams lugs* not use A ro's own and best-known name? The choice of calling him "Yon tan 'byung gnas" is here

²⁸⁶ We shall return to this master in Chapter 4.

²⁸⁷ *Zhang rin po che'i bka' 'bum*, 27a;1-4. See also Thiesen, 2009:238.

²⁸⁸ *Ri chos mtshams kyi zhal gdams*. 1970. Brag dkar mgon pa: Brag dkar mgon pa. 640:3-5.

particular odd since Nam mkha' rdo rje penned a text on the stages of A ro's meditation in which he referred to this master as "A ro Ye shes".

Cog ro sgom chung

Cog ro sgom chung is attested only in Karma Chags med's *Ri chos mtshams kyi zhal gdams* and Bla ma Zhang's lineage of the *Guhyasāmajatantra*. Except for these two instances I have not been able to locate any other source that contains this name. One of A ro Ye shes' most famous disciples bore the name of Cog ro, but our sources record his name always as Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khur.²⁸⁹ "Sgom chung" is never used to refer to Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khur. A "Sgom chung" appears also in the *MNy* list of the masters who received the teachings of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, although he is separated from A ro by eight generations.²⁹⁰ This "sgom chung" is the famous Bka' brgyud master Kha rag sgom chung (end eleventh-beginning twelfth century). Despite his Bka' brgyud affiliation, the *Blue Annals* reports that he received several Rdzogs chen teachings.²⁹¹ Sørensen notes that Sba sgom taught the A ro's teachings he had received from Ya zi bon ston to Kha rag.²⁹² Kha rag was born in Upper Gtsang; the district of Cog ro is also in Upper Gtsang. This might explain the name Cog ro Sgom chung, although no source corroborates such an hypothesis. In 1991, Nor brang o rgyan published a work on the Period of Fragmentation. Here he says that Kha rag sgom chung pa Dbang phyug blo gros taught a Dharma text called "The Three cycles of Kha rag".²⁹³ This included the oral instructions of the

²⁸⁹ Cog ro is a famous clan's name and the name of the place it stemmed from. The district of Cog ro is in the northern part of Upper Gtsang.

²⁹⁰ Despite the fact that *MNy* is one of the earliest sources we have, I am not convinced that there was so much temporal distance between these two. As we shall see in a moment, several sources relate that Kha rag was a disciple of Sba sgom. This Sba sgom is said to have received the instructions of A ro from Ya zi bon ston, and all sources recognise Ya zi bon ston to be a direct disciple of A ro. These eight masters however could be explained away by supposing that some of them were roughly of the same age.

²⁹¹ *DNg*, 888:6-7; Roerich, 1979:1001.

²⁹² Sørensen, 2002: 242. See also *DNg*, 887:1; Roerich, 1979:999. Sørensen approximates Kha rag's dates to 1040/45-1115/20. Sørensen, 2002:243.

²⁹³ See *Bod sil bu'i byung ba brjod pa shel dkar phreng ba*, p. 372: 7-11. These three cycles represent the core of Kha rag's teachings. Sørensen reports that sources generally agree in describing the Three Cycles of Kha rag as composed of two *blo sbyong* treatises (the *Lam rim don tshan bcu gnyis* and *Ang yig bdun cu pa* and a text called *Byang chub sems sbyon*). Sørensen, 2002: 244-45. Roesler found this cycle also described in the *Bka' gdams gsung gi gces btus nor bu'i bang mdzod*. Roesler, 2011:121. All sources seem to agree in recording Kha rag pa's involvement with the *lam rim* teachings. This agrees with the account that Kha rag pa

Sems sde that A ro transmitted to Sba sgom. The *DNg* finally report that Sba sgom advised Kha rag to get ordained and that the latter followed his counsel. Like all other masters in our lineage, Kha rag took the monastic vows.²⁹⁴

Byams pa sgom chen

We know little about Byams pa sgom chen. His name, as it is here spelled, is not attested in any of the sources I consulted. The *MNy*, in its list of masters who received A ro's teachings, calls the person after Kha rag sgom chung, Ba rang sgom chen.²⁹⁵ In the *Guhyasamāja*'s lineage Bla ma Zhang lists 'Cog ro sgom chen' and 'Cog ro sgom chung', so inverting the master-disciple relationship between sgom chen and sgom chung.²⁹⁶ Yet, the identification of Byams pa sgom chen with Ba rang sgom chen would not account for the name "Byams pa".

Byang ston rnam dag

Dge bshes Byang ston byams rnam dag is one of the teachers of Kaḥ thog Dam pa bde gshegs, who comes next in the *Khams lugs*' lineage. We know nothing about his life except that Dam pa met him in a place called Kaḥ po when he was sixteen. On that occasion he explained to Dam pa the minor precepts of the *Vinaya*, the major teachings of Vasubandhu, Maitreya, Asaṅga, Kāmalāśīla, Nāgārjuna and many others.²⁹⁷ Moreover, Byang ston introduced Dam pa to the Early and Later Translations of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde.²⁹⁸ Byang ston rnam dag's presence in the *Khams lugs* transmission is not surprising since the lineage-holder who follows him is Dam pa bde gshegs himself, and almost all those who follow Dam pa are abbots of Kaḥ thog. Yet, the author's selection of Byang ston rnam dag is meaningful because, according to Dam pa's biography, Dam pa bde gshegs' main teacher was not Byang ston but 'Dzam ston 'Gro ba'i mgon po. The latter transmitted to Dam pa the teachings of the Zur clan, which included

belonged to A ro's transmission. In fact, A ro's *Theg chen rnal 'byor* can be counted among the earliest *lam rim* treatises.

²⁹⁴ *DNg*, 889:2-3; Roerich, 1979:1001-2.

²⁹⁵ *MNy*, 491:13.

²⁹⁶ This would agree with the *DNg*, according to which Kha rag was a disciple of Ba rang. Yet even the identification of Cog ro sgom chung with Kha rag sgom chung and of Cog ro sgom chen with Ba rang sgom chen remains doubtful.

²⁹⁷ *Shar kaH thog pa dam pa bde gshegs pa'i rnam thar bsdu pa grub mchog rjes dran*, 6r:1-6v:4. TBRC W26096 (publication details unknown).

²⁹⁸ *Ibidem*. Another, even shorter account of this same event is in 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan. *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdu*. 1996. Khreng tu'u: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 21:3-5.

the Rdzogs chen Sems sde. Dam pa considered himself an heir of the Zur tradition, and his writings testify his alliance to them. Yet, there are no Zur members in the *Khams lugs*' lineage and Nam mkha' rdo rje now chooses Byang ston rnam dag over 'Dzam ston.

Dam pa bde gshegs (1122-1192)

Kaḥ thog Dam pa bde gshegs is the famous founder of Kaḥ thog monastery. After him the *Khams lugs* transmission consists exclusively of masters connected to this monastery.²⁹⁹

Dam pa bde gshegs was born in 1122. His father (the tantric yogin Gtsang pa dpal) and mother (called Gtsang rin chen rgyan) had four sons and one daughter. The eldest was the famous Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110-1170).³⁰⁰ The sibling connection is corroborated in the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus* (*Concise History of Kaḥ thog*) which reports that Dam pa bde gshegs and Phag mo grub pa were brothers, but there are also other sources which claim that the two were only cousins.³⁰¹ Bdud 'joms rin po che adopts the latter position, believing them to have been cousins.³⁰² Following his father's wish, Dam pa and Phag mo gru pa went to a monastery in Dpal gyi chos 'khor³⁰³ where they

²⁹⁹ This section on Dam pa's life is based mainly on 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan's short history of Kaḥ thog monastery, the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus* on pp. 19-33 and the biography *Shar kaḥ thog pa dam pa bde gshegs pa'i rnam thar*, which, according to the colophon, was written by Dam pa's disciple Lding po pa. I also consulted *The Nyingma School's* account on pp. 688-691, and the summaries of these sources as they are found in Dalton, 2002: 104-109, and in Ronis, 2009:20.

³⁰⁰ *Shar kaḥ thog pa dam pa bde gshegs pa*, 4r:1-3.

³⁰¹ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus*, 19:19-20:4.

³⁰² Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:688. Here, as Dalton pointed out in his thesis, *ibidem*, p. 104, fn. 104, 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan says that he took this piece of information from a biography of Dam pa written by one of his close disciples, Dge slong lding po. However, if we look at Phag mo gru pa's biography in the fifteenth century *Lho rong chos 'byung* there is no mention of Dam pa bde gshegs as brother of Phag mo gru pa. Indeed, the *Lho rong chos 'byung* tells that Phag mo gru pa had a honourable younger brother but it does not mention his name. However, we are sure that it was not Dam pa, since the same source gives a short biography of Dam pa bde gshegs saying that he was the older of seven brothers and sisters (*Lho rong chos 'byung*. 1994. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang 274: 13). Moreover, the names of the parents differ and while Dam pa bde gshegs' *rnam thars* say that he had three brothers and one sister, in Phag mo gru pa's biography there is only one brother.

³⁰³ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus*, 20:14-15: "gling gi dgon pa dpal gyi chos 'khor". Dalton translates this as: "the island monastery of Dpal-gyi chos-'khor" p. 105. Dpal gyi chos 'khor is usually another name for Lhasa, so I wonder whether the place where the two went was a monastery of which the last syllable was 'gling' in the city of Lhasa. Of course, the most famous monastery with that name is Smin grol gling, although there are 43 kilometres between the two. Notice that there is no reference to this trip in Phag mo grub pa's biography.

studied and practised the *Vinaya (piṭaka)*, *Sūtra (piṭaka)*, *Prajñāpāramitā*, and a selection of *tantras* and *śāstras*.³⁰⁴ Next, they received the vows that lead to the generation of *bodhicitta* and studied the *Samādhirāja*, *Samḍhinirmocanā*, *Laṅkāvatāra*, and the *Prajñāpāramitā* in eight thousand verses. Afterwards, they composed commentarial *tantras*³⁰⁵ and pleased their guru. Dam pa requested the empowerments and instructions of Rdo rje gtum mo and Cakrasaṃvara, and generated a perfect understanding of them. The *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* then reports that Dam pa, together with Phag mo grub pa, freed the heretic king of Me nyag (the Tanguts).³⁰⁶ At sixteen, Dam pa left the monastery and moved to Kaṃ po. There he met with Dge bshes Byams pa rnam dag, the master that appears before him in the *Khams lugs'* lineage. For three years he studied exegetical literature with Byams pa rnam dag and received many oral instructions and empowerments. He then went to Central Tibet where he acquired numerous *Mahāyoga* teachings from several masters belonging to different schools. When he turned twenty-four, he took the *pravrajyā* vows.³⁰⁷ Later on,³⁰⁸ he met Sde pa Nags kyi mkhan chen who gave him full ordination in the Eastern Vinaya of Klu mes.³⁰⁹ Klu mes was one of the Ten men from Central Tibet who went to A mdo to receive the monastic lineage from Dgongs pa rab gsal's disciples.³¹⁰ This is interesting in view of the second lineage-holder of the *Khams lugs* transmission, Gsal rab chen po. If 'Gsal rab' would really be a corruption of Dgongs pa Rab gsal's name, this episode in Dam pa's life could explain why Nam mkha' rdo rje added Gsal rab chen po in his transmission. Dam pa's decision to become a monk was of great importance for the future of Kaḥ thog.³¹¹ In fact, when Dam pa established Kaḥ thog he stressed the importance of the monastic vows to the point that they became a distinctive mark of his institution, and such it remains to

³⁰⁴ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus*, 20:14-17.

³⁰⁵ In *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus mdor bsdus* p. 20:19 'bshad rgyug' is probably a misspelling for 'bshad rgyud'.

³⁰⁶ Dalton notices that at that time the Me nyag were at war with almost all their neighbours but that there is no further evidence for Dam pa's involvement in the killing of their king. Dalton, 2002:105, fn. 11. Moreover, Phag mo grub pa's biography in the *Lho rong chos 'byung* does not back up this story.

³⁰⁷ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 21:20-21; *Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 8v:5.

³⁰⁸ According to the *Shar kaḥ thog pa* Dam pa took full ordination between 25 (*Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 9r:5) and 29 (*Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 10v:2). See *Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 9v:1-2.

³⁰⁹ *Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 9v:1-2.

³¹⁰ On the Ten Men from Dbus/Gtsang and Dgongs pa rab gsal, see Chapter 3.

³¹¹ Ronis, 2009:12-14.

the present day.³¹² Once fully ordained, Dam pa studied under 'Dzam ston 'Gro ba'i mgon po. The latter transmitted to him the oral teachings of the Rdzogs chen Mind Series, which he had received from the Zur tradition. 'Dzam prophesied that if Dam pa were to practise in Kaḥ po he would attain the body of light, but if he went to Kaḥ thog the doctrine would prevail there for a thousand years. Dam pa decided to return to Khams. *En route*, he met several other masters, notably Sgam po pa (1079-1153/9) and the first Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110-1193).³¹³ Next he departed for Kaḥ thog with Tshul khrims rin chen and Rdo rje rgyal mtshan.³¹⁴ Eventually, Dam pa reached the valley of Hor po where he saw a blue rock bearing the letters A and KA. He decided to settle there. But before he was able to build the monastery, Dam pa had to deal with several Bon pos who ruled over the valley and conquer a Bon po deity who hindered its construction. In 1159, Kaḥ thog monastery was established. The biography reports that it was adorned with a number of sacred objects such as the Zur Sgro phug pa's monastic robes and Atiśa's paṇḍita hat.³¹⁵ Dam pa also instituted two centres: a study centre and a meditation centre.³¹⁶ Within a few months time many young men entered the monastery for ordination. In 1192 Dam pa died. He was succeeded by his main disciple, Chos rje gtsang pa ston pa, next in the *Khams lugs* transmission.

Chos rje gtsang pa (1126-1215)

As already noted, Chos rje gtsang pa³¹⁷ was a disciple of Dam pa Bde gshegs. He studied with Dam pa from the age of seventeen until his teacher's death. Dam pa left him the regency of Kaḥ thog. Both the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* and *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung* present a similar account of this master.³¹⁸ They report that Dam pa had a dream in which he saw the valley where Kaḥ thog was built filled with bright water.³¹⁹ Dam pa learned that the clarity of the water symbolised the radiancy of Chos rje gtsang pa who achieved the eleventh *bhūmi*,

³¹² In this regard, Dam pa's biography also reports that several years after the construction of Kaḥ thog, he expelled sixty monks who had transgressed the Vinaya. *Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 25r:5-6.

³¹³ *Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 14r:1.

³¹⁴ The dates of these two masters are unknown.

³¹⁵ *Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 16v:5.

³¹⁶ *Shar kaḥ thog pa*, 17v:5-6.

³¹⁷ For these dates see the discussion in Eimer, 2003:325-326.

³¹⁸ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 33:11-35:24; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:691-693.

³¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 34:10-14; *Ibidem*, 691-2.

called the *bhūmi* of Universal Light (*kun tu 'od kyi sa*). Dam pa understood Chos rje gtsang pa to be the disciple of his dream and appointed him second abbot of Kaḥ thog.³²⁰ Chos rje studied the *dgongs sgyu sems* i.e. the *Sūtra of the Gathered Intentions* (*Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*, a major *Anuyoga* text),³²¹ the *Web of Magical Illusion*, (*Māyājāla tantra*, representing the *Mahāyoga* transmission), and the Mind Series of the Rdzogs chen. After Dam pa's death, Chos rje gtsang pa became famous and attracted a great number of disciples from all over Tibet. Spom Grag pa bsod nams rdo rje (1170-1249), the teacher of the second *Karma pa*, Karma Pakshi (1204-1283), envied the fame of Chos rje gtsang pa and wondered why this Kaḥ thog master had become so influential.³²² One day, he had a dream where he saw Chos rje gtsang pa in a heavenly abode surrounded by deities. He understood that Chos rje was an accomplished master and went to Kaḥ thog to ask him for the *Māyājāla* empowerment. He received it and became a disciple of Chos rje.³²³ Following Chos rje gtsang ston pa's death, Byams pa 'bum was nominated the third abbot of Kaḥ thog. Byams pa 'bum is also the next master in our lineage.

Byams pa chen po (1179-1252)

Byams pa chen po (*alias* Byams pa 'bum) was a student of both, the first and second abbot of Kaḥ thog. Bdud 'joms says that he was a reincarnation of the Indian master Cārindra.³²⁴ Cārindra received a prophecy which announced his birth in Kaḥ thog where he could achieve much good. Hence, his name as Byams pa chen po. The *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* reports that Byams pa was learned in all three Rdzogs chen series.³²⁵ Around the age of forty-eight, he assumed the leadership of the monastery.³²⁶ As we have seen in the life of Chos rje gtsang pa,

³²⁰ *Ibidem*.

³²¹ Dalton, 2002 for a history of this *sūtra*.

³²² *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 35:12-18; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:692.

³²³ There is an echo of this story in the *DNg*. It says: "Once a thought came to him (Spom Grags pa)" "The fame of gTsañ-ston of Ka-thog is great. What sort of man is he?" Thinking thus, he saw him in the Body of Glory residing in the Heavenly Sphere. After he listened to the exposition of the Doctrine by gTsañ ston and became very learned", Roerich's translation, 1979:484. *DNg*, 423:1-2. The Rnying ma accounts I take for this episode are both very late. More research is necessary to ascertain the source/s of this story and whether the *DNg*'s account has been modified by Bdud 'joms and 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan in order to increase Chos rje gtsang pa's prestige or if the *DNg*'s account has been softened not to belittle Spom Grags pa.

³²⁴ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:693.

³²⁵ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 37:4-7.

³²⁶ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:693.

the Bka' brgyud master Spom Grag pa bsod nams (1170-1249) became a disciple of Chos rje gtsang pa. When he, in turn, became the teacher of the second Karma pa, he suggested to him to go to Kaḥ thog. Byams pa chen po was one of the masters who met with Karma Pakshi (1204/6-1283) and, together with his nephew Spyan snga ba chen po Bsod nams 'bum (1223-1283), the fourth regent of Kaḥ thog, ordained him.³²⁷ Byams pa 'bum then granted Karma Pakshi several *Mahāyoga* and Rdzogs chen teachings.

Spyan snga ba (Bsod nams 'bum pa, 1222-1283)

Spyan snga Bsod nams 'bum pa³²⁸ was the fourth abbot of Kaḥ thog and the nephew of the third regent Byams pa chen po.³²⁹ We noted already that Spyan snga ba assisted his uncle in the ordination of Karma Pakshi. Both Bdud 'joms and 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan report that this master privileged the study of the *Dgongs pa 'dus pa'i mdo*, *Māyājāla* and Rdzogs chen teachings which he transmitted to many disciples from Khams and Dbus.³³⁰

The last three lineage-holders of the *Khams lugs* that is to say, the second, third and fourth abbots of Kaḥ thog, appear sometimes as a group of three. Eimer,³³¹ in his study of early Kaḥ thog found such a reference in the *Rgyud 'bum rtogs brjod pa lha'i rnga bo che*.³³² This text was written by Dge rtse sprul sku 'Gyur med tshe dbang mchog grub who lived in the eighteenth century. Here, the three first disciples of Dam pa bde gshegs are collectively known as “The three of Rong po for whom hearing the teachings was sufficient [to achieve realization]”. Individually, they are known by the ordination names of Shes rab Rgyal mtshan, Shes rab Dpal ba and Shes rab Rdo rje. Rong po refers to the place where they

³²⁷ *DNg*, 423:2; Roerich, 1979:486; Gtsug lag 'phreng ba, 1986, *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, vol. 2, 882:12-14; *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 37:11-14; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:693.

³²⁸ As Eimer and Tsering noticed, Bsod nams 'bum pa's biography in the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* has a note that says that according to Drung's biography this master was born in the Wood-Tiger year rather than in the Water-Horse year as here reported (*Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 39: 11-12, Eimer and Tsering, 2003:326). They also reported that the *Dpal rgyal ba kaḥ thog pa'i gdan rabs* gives as the date of death of this master the year 1282. If this were true this master would have been too young to give ordination to Karma Pakshi (1204-1283) so Eimer and Tsering hypothesised that the tradition inverted the roles and that it was the second Karma pa who ordained Bsod nam 'bum (*Ibidem*, p. 327).

³²⁹ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 39:3.

³³⁰ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991: 694-695, *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 39: 18-19.

³³¹ Eimer and Tsering, 1978: 467-469.

³³² I was unable to consult this work.

were born. The title *shes rab* indicates that Dam pa bde gshegs had ordained them all conferring his ordination name (*shes rab seng ge*).³³³ The *Rgyud 'bum* then moves to another group of four: “The four promised sons”. Their biographies also follow those of the three of Rong po in the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*.³³⁴ None of these four masters, though, became abbot of Kaḥ thog and they do not belong to the *Khams lugs*' lineage. However, one of them was the main teacher of two members of the *Khams lugs* “continued lineage”.³³⁵

G.yan pa rin po che (1242-1328)

G.yan pa rin po che is very likely a spelling variant of G.yen pa rin po che.³³⁶ In fact, the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* refers to G.yen pa as one of the teachers of both Nam mkha' rdo rje and the sixth abbot of Kaḥ thog, Byang chub 'bum pa (1284-1347). I could not find any other attestation of G.yen pa apart from those in the *Khams lugs* and *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*.³³⁷ The way the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* organises its biographies, and some internal references led me to identify this master with the fifth abbot of Kaḥ thog Dbu 'od ye shes 'bum pa. These reasons are the following:

1. The fifth abbot was born in a place called G.yen pa.
2. The name bla ma G.yen pa in the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* occurs only after Dbu ye shes 'bum pa's biography, never before.
3. G.yen pa is a teacher of the seventh abbot of Kaḥ thog, Bsod nams bzang po, together with the sixth abbot Grub dbang byang chub 'bum.³³⁸
4. The chronology allows such a connection since Dbu 'od ye shes 'bum pa was born in 1242 and died in 1328. Bsod nams bzang po was born in 1295 and died in 1357.

³³³ *Ibidem*, p. 467.

³³⁴ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 40:5 and 42:20.

³³⁵ I call this “continued lineage” for convenience's sake. This lineage does not have a specific title but it is separated from the oral lineage of the humans.

³³⁶ The *Bka' ma* and *Gdams ngag mdzod* versions of the text both give G.yan pa, while the *Sems sde pra khrid bla ma chen po Kaḥ thog pa'i man ngag* gives it as G.yon pa. The only person with a similar name and connected with the surrounding masters in the lineage however is G.yen pa rin po che, also called Bla ma G.yen.

³³⁷ It is nonetheless very likely that some of the texts produced at Kaḥ thog not available to me at the moment contain the name of this master. In fact, as we shall see in a minute, G.yen pa is most probably one of the names under which the fifth abbot of Kaḥ thog was known.

³³⁸ It is customary that the abbot in charge instructs the new generation of abbots. We saw for example that Dam pa bde gshegs was the teacher of the second and third abbots and that the second abbot in turn instructed the third. So the third abbot had as his main teachers both the first and second abbots.

5. Finally, and more critically, the biography of the sixth abbot speaks of the fifth as G.yen pa rin po che.

Moreover, the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* refers several times to G.yen pa without revealing his identity. If the identification of Bla ma G.yen with Dbu 'od shes 'bum is correct, it would explain the lack of information on Bla ma G.yen in the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*: Bla ma G.yen pa's biography is found under the name of Dbu 'od shes 'bum. The following is a synopsis of the life of the fifth abbot of Kaḥ thog.

Dbu 'od Ye shes 'bum pa was born in G.yen pa. His principal master was Sphyan snga ba Bsod nams 'bum pa, the fourth abbot of Kaḥ thog. G.yen pa was proficient in all the branches of the Rnying ma tradition. Both the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* and *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung* relate an episode that once again attests to the variegated relationship Rnying ma masters entertained with members of other schools: when Sa skya paṇḍita and 'Gro mgon Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1235-1280) were on their way to China, they built a monastery called 'Dzing gi rnam rgyal mgon khang. They asked Ye shes 'bum to perform the temple consecration together with several Sa skya masters. Ye shes 'bum agreed to perform only the initial exorcism that served to purify the temple site. On that occasion, though, he also transmitted the *Guhya garbha* empowerment to 'Phags pa. The latter, after his trip to China, on his way back to Tibet, went to visit Ye shes 'bum and gave him several presents. This sketch of Ye shes 'bum pa's life shows that even prominent masters of the new schools rated Kaḥ thog, and its abbots, highly. Ye shes 'bum had the ear of the three most politically powerful masters of his time: Kar ma Pakshi, Sa skya paṇḍita and 'Phags pa. Ye shes 'bum died in 1328.³³⁹

Bodhi Śrī

Bodhi Śrī does not appear in the history of Kaḥ thog, or in any other source I consulted. Since the masters who precede and follow him are associated with

³³⁹ Micheal Aris wrongly identified this Dbu 'od ye shes 'bum pa as the master who went to Bhutan and brought to that place the Kaḥ thog teachings. Ehrhard showed that the Kaḥ thog teacher who travelled to Bhutan was not Dbu 'od but Bzhag bla ye shes 'bum pa. See Ehrhard, 2003: 9-12.

Kaḥ thog it is unlikely that he was completely divorced from this monastery.³⁴⁰ Hitherto the *Khams lugs* transmission ran through the abbots of the monastery. I suspect that Bodhi Śrī, like G.yen pa and Badzra Śrī, is the name of yet another famous Kaḥ thog resident.

Badzra Śrī

Eimer / Tsering thought that Badzra Śrī might be another name of Rmog ston Rdo rje dpal bzang.³⁴¹ The *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* contains a biography of Rmog ston.³⁴² Although devoided of his dates of birth and death, it reports that Rmog ston was a disciple of the fourteenth century scholars Zur Śākya bshes gnyen and Bra'o chos 'bum.³⁴³ It also says that Rmog ston received the instructions of Tsa lde ba Nam mkha' rdo rje from Mkhas grub Ye shes rgyal mtshan. Mkhas grub Ye shes rgyal mtshan himself obtained them through a series of masters starting with Tsa lde ba Nam mkha' rdo rje himself. Eimer/Tsering established that Rmog ston/Badzra Śrī was a disciple of Mkhas grub Ye shes rgyal mtshan whom they date to the sixteenth century.³⁴⁴ Since it is impossible for Rmog ston to have been a disciple of teachers who lived in both the fourteenth and sixteenth, centuries, the dates of Mkhas grub Ye shes rgyal mtshan must be wrong.

Lineage Continued

With Bodhi Śrī and Badzra Śrī, the human segment of the *Khams lugs*' lineage of comes to an end. The series of lineage-holders however continues. Perhaps the author did not wish to include the members of the “continued lineage” among the distinguished members of the earlier section.³⁴⁵ The masters of the continued

³⁴⁰ I was also unable to find any other masters (in or outside of Kaḥ thog) with these names who lived during the middle-end of the fourteenth century.

³⁴¹ Eimer and Tsering, 1978: 475 and 1981:12.

³⁴² *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 64:3-65:16.

³⁴³ *Ibidem*, 64:5-6. Zur Śākya bshes gnyen was the teacher of the Kaḥ thog monk Bra'o chos 'bum. Gu ru bkra shis lists them together in a Sems sde transmission that eventually arrived up to himself (*Gu ru bkra shis 'chos 'byung*, 314:20-21), 'Jigs med gling pa also places them in the same order inside a Sems sde transmission (van Schaik, 2000:11:12). In all transmissions Zur Śākya is reported to be the disciple of Zur mo dge 'bum, a lineage-holder who we shall see again in Chapter Four.

³⁴⁴ Ehrhard dates Mkhas grub Ye shes rgyal mtshan to the fifteenth century, 1395-1458 (Ehrhard, 2003:9). This date is easier to reconcile with the dates of Mkhas grub Ye shes rgyal mtshan's masters, although it still stretches them of a few decades.

³⁴⁵ It is indeed hard otherwise to understand on what basis the redactor decided to divide these masters from the previous lineage. The three former lineages (the mental transmission of the Buddhas, the awareness transmission of the *vidyādhara*s and the oral transmission of the [aural]

lineage do not belong to any specific transmission. They received the *Khams lugs* teachings from Byams pa chen po, ‘filling them to the brim’ (*gang byo’i tshul*). It is possible that the redactor, Dpal ’bar Nam mkha’ rdo rje, did not wish to elevate himself by adding his own name to the main lineage.³⁴⁶ But, he is not the only master absent from that list. Three other people appear only in the ‘continued lineage’: Drung Thugs rje ye shes, Ston pa Dbang ’byor dpal and Byang chub dpal. The last served as the sixth abbot of Kaḥ thog, yet, despite his rank he features only in this additional list.

The line of transmission can be interpreted in different ways. The *Khams lugs* says: “*yang byams pa chen pos/ tsa sde spyān snga ba/ drung thugs rje ye shes/ Ston pa dbang ’byor dpal/ des badzra shrī ste/ g.yan pa dang/ byang chub dpal/ ston pa ba gsum kas/ dpal ’bar ba la gang byo’i tshul du don ma lus gnang pa’o*”.³⁴⁷

I take this passage to say that Byams pa chen po, the third abbot of Kaḥ thog, bestowed the teaching on the subsequent three masters: Tsa sde spyān snga ba, Drung Thugs rje ye shes and Ston pa Dbang ’byor dpal. Still, we would expect to find the allative case after Ston pa Dbang ’byor dpal, but there is none. The following ‘that’ (*des*) in the agentive case suggests that the last among the three masters, Ston pa Dbang ’byor dpal handed the teachings to Badzra Srī (the last unidentified master of the lineage of aural individuals). Again, Badzra Srī is not marked by the allative; a semi-final particle separates him from the three following masters. The three form a group on their own (*gsum ka*). The first is the fifth abbot G.yen pa, the second is the sixth abbot Byang chub dpal and the third is, once again, Ston pa Dbang ’byor dpal. These three together transmitted the *Khams lugs* to Dpal ’bar ba Nam mkha’ rdo rje. Table 2 summarises the second part of the lineage:

individuals) differed in the method *via* which the teaching was transmitted. Here, on the other hand, we cannot but suppose that this continued lineage was transmitted orally like the previous one.

³⁴⁶ We shall presently see that the *Khams lugs* is not here referring to all the previous masters of the lineage of the aural individuals, but only to a few that it names once again in this ‘continued lineage’.

³⁴⁷ *Khams lugs*, 437: 1-3.

Table no. 2

Byams pa chen po (3rd abbot) > 1. Tsa sde spyān snga ba (4th abbot?)
> 2. Drung Thugs rje ye shes
> 3. Ston pa Dbang 'byor dpal > Badzra Śrī

and

1. G.yen pa (5th abbot) 2. Byang chub dpal (6th abbot) 3. Ston pa Dbang 'byor dpal

↘

↓

↙

Dpal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rdo rje

Both Byams pa chen po and G.yen pa appear in the lineage of the humans. They provide the link between their own lineage and the “lineage continued”.³⁴⁸

The third abbot, Byams pa chen po, taught the *Khams lugs* to Tsa sde spyān snga ba, Drung Thugs rje ye shes and Ston pa Dbang 'byor dpal. The *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus* does not give a biography for either Drung Thugs rje ye shes or Ston pa Dbang 'byor dpal. The two feature among the disciples of Tsa sde snga ba Nam mkha' rdo rje, who was one of the ‘Four promised sons’. The fact that the first four syllables of this master’s name are identical with the first four syllables of the name of the fourth abbot, Tsa sde snga ba Bsod nams 'bum pa causes a problem, in fact the *Khams lugs* gives only the first four syllables of his name. Whether it refers to Tsa sde spyān snga ba Bsod nams 'bum pa (the fourth abbot of Kaḥ thog) or Tsa sde snga ba Nam mkha' rdo rje (Drung thugs and Ston pa Dbang 'byor's teacher) is not immediately clear. Both Tsa sde snga ba were disciples of the third abbot. In the additional lineage the inclusion of Drung and Ston's teacher would seem a more suitable choice than the fourth abbot: first, this lineage is less prestigious than the lineage of the humans (even though this lineage too contains other Kaḥ thog abbots); second, there would be no reason to

³⁴⁸ This part of the lineage, because of its closeness with the author himself, but especially for the non-linear transmission it conveys, seems to present a more genuine scenario.

say again that the transmission passed from the third to the fourth abbot. This transfer is recorded in the lineage of the aural individuals. But, it would also be very odd for the author of the *Khams lugs* to add a new person giving him the same exact name he previously used for another master. At any rate, Tsa sde spyen ba Nam mkha' rdo rje constitutes an important link between Byams pa chen po, Drung Thugs rje and Ston pa Dbang 'byor. Hence, I shall translate the short account of his life from the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*:

Byams pa rin po che prophesied that Tsa sde Nam mkha' rdo rje would be the master of the teachings of the Rdzogs chen Mind orientation. He possessed complete mastery over the treasury of the oral instructions and lineage of the spiritual sons of Chos rje [Dam pa bde gshegs]. [His teachings] reached many disciples of lineage-holders, supreme beings who were learned and accomplished, such as Nya bro ba Drung thugs rje'i ye shes and Rdo reb rgya dpon po ston pa dbang 'byor. [Nam mkha' rdo rje] established the new monastery of Tsa sde in Go 'jo a dkar. He was everywhere known by the name of "Black Crown Nam mkha' rdo rje". Since all Khams and Dbus were filled with [his] lineage of disciples and [his] Dharma lineage, he nowadays appears in all the authentic accounts of the system of transmission of the tradition of Dbus and of the tradition of the Zur on the *Empowerment of the Sūtra that Gathers all Intentions*.³⁴⁹

This short passage does not describe the relationship between Drung Thugs rje, Ston pa Dbang 'byor and the third abbot Byams pa chen po as it is depicted in the *Khams lugs*. Here, it is Tsa sde Nam mkha' rdo rje who establishes the connection between the abbot and the other two. The *Rin po che'i rtogs brjod pa lha'i rnga bo che* confirms the main points of this episode but adds something.³⁵⁰ It reports that Tsa sde spyen snga Nam mkha' rdo rje went to Go 'jo where he

³⁴⁹ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 41:2-11 "Tsa sde ba nam mkha' rdo rje ni/ byams pa rin po ches rdzogs chen sems phyogs kyi bstan pa'i bdag por lung bstan/ chos rje yab sras kyi snyan brgyud gdams pa'i mdzod la mnga' dbang 'byor/ nya bro ba drung thugs rje'i ye shes dang rdo reb rgya dpon pa ston pa dbang 'byor sogs mkhas dang grub pa'i skyes mchog brgyud 'dzin gyi slob ma mang du byon/ go 'jo a dkar tsa sde dgon gsar du btab/ zhwa nag pa nam mkha' rdo rje zhes pa'i mtshan gyis snyan grags phyogs med du khyab/ chos brgyud dang slob brgyud kyi kham dbus kun tu khyab pas da lta mdo dbang zur lugs dang dbus lugs sogs kyi brgyud tshul lo rgyus khungs ma rnams las gsal ba ltar ro".

³⁵⁰ See Ehrhard, 1976:467. The text is found in the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum Gting skyes* and *Mtshams brag dgon pa'i bris ma* (vo. 5, 1-649).

built the monastery of Rtsa sde. His two principal students, Drung Thugs rje ye shes and Ston pa Dbang 'byor, brought back to Dbus the teachings they had received on the *Māyājāla* and the Rdzogs chen cycle. Thus, in Dbus, these teachings came to be known as the tradition of Khams.³⁵¹ If the two students 'brought back' the teachings to Dbus, it is very likely that they were from Dbus in the first place. This could account for their not having any biographical account in the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*. We do not know how long the two remained in Khams. Our lineage suggests that at least one of them, Ston pa Dbang 'byor, stayed long enough to receive the teachings and to set in motion their circulation. Ston pa was, in fact, one of the three masters who transmitted them to Dpal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rdo rje, the author of the *Khams lugs*. It is interesting, therefore, that Ston pa Dbang 'byor, once back to Dbus, called these teachings *Khams lugs*. It would suggest that there is no difference between Nam mkha rdo rje's *Khams lugs* and that of Byams pa chen po. It is also clear that this *Khams lugs* cannot be the text cited in the *MNy*. Firstly, because *MNy* predates all of these masters; second Tsa sde's Khams tradition was not exclusively Rdzogs chen but included also the *Māyājāla* teachings.

Incidentally, Drung Thugs rje ye shes and Ston pa Dbang 'byor dpal appear also among the lineage-holders who transmitted the *Anuyoga* teaching of the *Khu byug rol pa* to the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617-1682).³⁵² The *Kaḥ thog* segment of this lineage includes: *Kaḥ thog pa Dam pa bde gshegs*, Gtsang ston Rdo rje rgyal mtshan, Byams pa rin chen, Spyan snga Nam mkha' rdo rje, Drung Thugs rje ye shes, Ston pa Dbang 'byor dpal ba, Rje bstun Dpal, Ston pa Mgon pa rgyal ba, Tshul khriims rgyal mtshan, etc. This *Anuyoga* transmission is similar to the *Khams lugs*' lineage. Here, again Spyan snga Nam mkha' rdo rje received the teaching from the third abbot and handed it over to Drung Thugs rje and Ston pa Dbang 'byor. If Rje bstun Dpal turns out to be Dpal 'bar ba nam mkha' rdo rje,³⁵³ the *Khu byug* lineage would match that of the Rdzogs chen *Khams* tradition.

³⁵¹ Erhard, *Äbte und Lehrer von Kaḥ thog*, p. 467-469.

³⁵² *Dam pa'i chos kyi gsan yig ganga'i chu rgyun las glegs bam bzhi pa*, 377:13-16.

³⁵³ There are strong suggestions for the identification of Dpal 'bar ba with Rje bstun Dpal. One is that Dpal 'bar ba, as we shall see in his biography, had two students: Mgon po rgyal mtshan and Tshul khriims 'bum pa, who are the two following masters in the Fifth Dalai Lama's list. Another is that in the biography of another master, Mkhas grub chen po Bra'o chos kyi 'bum pa, there is a short lineage of transmission made up by the following four masters: Tsa sde ba Nam mkha' rdo

The last section of the “continued lineage” includes the fifth and sixth abbot of Kaḥ thog, G.yen pa and Byang chub dpal (1284-1347), as well as Ston pa Dbang ’byor dpal. They, as we have seen, handed the instructions to Dpal ’bar ba Nam mkha’ rdo rje.

The *Kaḥ thog pa’i lo rgyus* confirms the link between the sixth abbot and Dpal ’bar ba. In fact, it establishes that the sixth abbot was Dpal ’bar ba’s teacher. Even in this case, the teachings he transmitted include not only Rdzogs chen Sems sde’s but also *Māyājāla* instructions.³⁵⁴ These pieces of information allow us to determine the period in which Dpal ’bar ba, the *Khams lugs* redactor, lived. They matter so much because even his biography in the *History of Kaḥ thog* does not reveal his dates. Yet, since no other account of his life has survived, I report it here:

Dpal ’bar ba Nam mkha’ rdo rje, was born the son of Dpon po grags pa ston pa Dbang ’byor. After he arrived at Kaḥ thog rdo rje, he met in person the two [masters]: Bla ma G.yen pa and Rdo rab rgyal dpon po ston pa Dbang ’byor. Under Mkhas grub chen po Byang chub dpal and Gnam steng pa Rdo rje dpal ba³⁵⁵ he studied to perfection the general *sūtras* and *tantras* and specifically the mothers and sons of the *Guhyagarbha tantra*, the Stages of the Path, the Heart Essence, the elucidation of the *samaya* commitments, the great scriptures [of] the seven main *sūtras* and the successive main *sūtras*, the *Atiyoga Kun byed rgyal po*, the nine sections of the Space Series, the transmission of the Secret Instructions, the complete introduction to the

rje, Nya bro ba Drung Thugs rje ye shes, Rdo reb ston pa Dbang ’byor and Ston pa Mgon rgyal. All these four people appear in the exact same sequence of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s transmission. The only difference is that instead of Rje bstun Dpal, in Mkhas grub’s biography we find Dpal ’bar ba. This might indicate that Rje bstun Dpal was one of Dpal ’bar ba Nam mkha’ rdo rje’s titles.

³⁵⁴ *Kaḥ thog pa’i lo rgyus*, 45:16.

³⁵⁵ For information on all these masters see above. Regarding Gnam steng pa rdo rje dpal’s life there is a short paragraph just before Dpal ’bar ba’s biography. This says: “Gnam steng pa Rdo rje dpal was one of the principal students of Rje bstun ston pa Dbang ’byor. He unfailingly protected the tradition of the spiritual sons of Kaḥ thog Dam pa [bde gshegs] [which consisted of] the teaching and learning of the *sūtra* [*mdo* i.e. *Dgongs pa ’dus pa’i mdo*, *Samājavidyā sūtra*, the *Sūtra that Gathers All Intentions*], the Illusion [*sgyu*, i.e. *sgyu ’phrul drwa ba*, *Māyājāla*, Web of Magical Illusion], etc. [this etc. is very likely the Rdzogs chen Mind class]. He happened [to have] many lineages of students who were holders of the teachings”. *Kaḥ thog pa’i lo rgyus*, 56: 10-14.

exegetical commentaries of the *Guhyasamāja tantra* in seventeen chapters, the Magical Net and the *Abhiṣeka*, the General outline on the nine vehicles,³⁵⁶ the guidance text to the *Mahāmudrā*, the manual of instructions [for] the Rdzogs chen *khregs thod* (*khred chod* and *thod rgal*), and so forth. He was enthroned in the midst of many [assemblies of monks], and was appointed head of the meditation centre (*sgrub sde*). He instituted learning, contemplation and meditation in assemblies of monks from both (all) Dbus and Khams and drafted countless guidelines for the secret *nāḍis* and *prāṇa*, instructions for empowerments (*abhiṣeka*) together with the introductions to secret instructions. He [also] set out the daily instructions for the summer [months] and the night retreats in the wintertime. Together with a retinue of hundreds of scholars, he was invited by the King of Spo 'bor, Tsha shod and Ljang nag, in Rgyal mo tsha ba rong [to the monasteries?] of Bai ro'i grub sde bde chen gling and so forth. Because he taught the major empowerment of the *Māyājāla*, and so forth, many students followed him [and] he impartially spread the victory banners of practice.

Darma Rdo rje heard the guidelines of the *Rdzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying thig* together with [its] secret instructions from the *Rgyal dbang Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje*. In his presence, Kaḥ thog pa Nam mkha' rdo rje requested them. From [him], the successive [line] of transmission [runs as follows]: Yang khrod Tshul khriims 'bum, Bra'o Mchos kyi dbum, Bla ma Sangs rgyas dpal, A gzi Bsod nams 'bum, Dbon po Darma bzang po. From [him], the method of transmission [is] as it is elucidated in the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig* itself. [Nam mkha' rdo rje] newly drafted the textbook *The Secret Instructions of the Mind Class: the detailed guidelines transmitted from Master Dga' rab rdo rje* (i.e. the *Khams lugs*).³⁵⁷ This preserves the continuity of the oral lineage without decline. Many students went [to him], including Yang khrid pa ston pa Mgon po rgyal mtshan 'bum and [his] nephew Tshul khriims 'bum.³⁵⁸

³⁵⁶ This very likely refers to Dam pa bde gshegs's famous texts, *Theg dgu'i spyi chings*.

³⁵⁷ My insertion.

³⁵⁸ *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 56:15-58:2 “Dpal 'bar ba nam mkha' rdo rje ni/ dbon po grags pa dbang 'byor gyi sras su 'khrungs/ kaḥ thog rdo rje'i gdan du byon nas/ bla ma g.yen pa dang rdo rab rgyal dpon pa ston pa dbang 'byor gnyis kyi zhal mjal/ mkhas grub chen po byang chub dpal dang gnam steng pa rdo rje dpal ba gnyis kyi mdun nas mdo sngags spyi dang khyad par gsang snying ma bu/ lam rim/ thugs tig/ dam tshig gsal bkra/ lung chen rtsa mdo bdun dang phyi mdo bdun/ a ti kun byed/ klong dgu/ man ngag gsang brgyud/ bla med rgyud bcu bdun bcas kyi bshad 'grel ngo sprod yongs rdzogs/ sgyu 'phrel dang mdo dbang/ rim dgu'i spyi khrid/ phyag chen don

I shall return to the question of the authorship of the *Khams lugs* at the end of this chapter. First, I turn to the possible timespan in which Dpal 'bar ba could have lived. His biography refers only to a few people for whom we possess some dates. These are the fifth and the sixth abbots: Bla ma G.yen pa (1242-1328) and Byang chub dpal (1284-1347). According to the biography, Dpal 'bar ba encountered them when he first reached Kaḥ thog. Since the biography does not speak of the seventh abbot, Dpal 'bar ba must have been at Kaḥ thog towards the end of the regency of the fifth abbot and the beginning of the regency of the sixth. Bla ma G.yen pa was appointed abbot in 1282. Byang chub dpal took his place in 1327, leaving it to the seventh abbot in 1347. It is thus probable, that Nam mkha' rdo rje was born in the first half of the fourteenth century and probably died some time around the end of the fourteenth century.

The biography also tells us that Dpal 'bar ba received the transmission of the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig* from Darma Rdo rje. This Darma Rdo rje is Mkhas grub Dar [ma] rgyal ba, one of the disciples of the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339). A contemporary text called *'Dam gzhung rdzong gi lo rgyus*, contains a short biography of Darma rgyal ba. This places him, somewhat vaguely, in the fourteenth century.³⁵⁹ But it also reveals that he had had both the third Karma pa and the first Zhwa dmar pa Rtogs ldan grags pa seng ge (1283-1349) as preceptors. Therefore, Darma Rdo rje and Dpal 'bar ba must have lived roughly at the same time. Although this confirms our time-period for Dpal 'bar

khrid/ rdzogs chen khregs thod pra khrid sogs rdzogs par gsan/ dge 'dun stong phrag mang po 'dus pa'i dbus mnga' gsol gzings bstod byed de sgrub sde'i mkhan por mdzad/ khams dbus kun nas 'dus pa'i dge 'dun rnams la thos bsam sgom 'dzugs rtsa rlung gsang khrid dbang khrid man ngag ngo sprod bcas dpag med mdzad/ dbyar snang khrid dang dgun dus mun mtshams bcad/ 'khor grwa slob brgya phrag dang/ bcas rgyal mo tsha ba rong du bai ro'i sgrub sde bde chen gling sogs dang/ spo 'bor dang tsha shod ljang nag rgyal po sogs kyis gdan drangs/ sgyu 'phrul dbang chen sogs gsungs nas gdul bya mang po rjes su 'dzin/ sgrub pa'i rgyal mtshan phyogs med du rgyas/ rdzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying thig gi dbang khrid man ngag bcas rgyal dbang karma pa rang byung rdo rje las dar ma rdo rjes gsan/ de'i mdun nas kaḥ thog pa nam mkha' rdo rje 'dis zhus te rim par brgyud pa las/ yang khrod tshul khirms 'bum/ des bra'o mchos kyi 'bum/ des bla ma sangs rgyas dpal/ des a gzi bsod nams 'bum/ des dbon po dar ma bzang po nas rim par brgyud tshul mkha' 'gro snying thig rang gi lo rgyus las gsal ba ltar ro/ slob dpon dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i sems sde pra khrid kyi man ngag yig cha gсар du mdzad de snyan brgyud kyi rgyun mi nub par bskyangs/ yang khrod pa ston pa mgon po rgyal mtshan 'bum dang dbon po tshul khirms 'bum sogs slob ma mang du byon/".

³⁵⁹ *Dam gzhung rdzong gi lo rgyus*, 33: 1-2.

ba, Darma Rdo rje cannot help us to ascertain precisely the dates of the author of the *Khams lugs*.

The short and the very short lineages

The two last lineages of *Khams lugs* are called short (*nye brgyud*) and very short (*shin tu nye brgyud*) lineages. The *Khams lugs* explains their difference as follows: “As for the short lineage, Vajrasattva bestowed [the teachings] on Dam pa chen po directly through vision. The very short lineage [springs] from all the transmissions which [are represented by] the very root lama, who is the Buddha in person”.³⁶⁰ The very short lineage is easily explained: it is another way to say that one’s own master is the Buddha himself. On the other hand, this short lineage clearly belongs to what the Rnying ma followers call “the pure vision lineage”. This kind of transmission happens through the direct perception of a Buddha, therefore it does not rely on the authority of the uninterrupted oral lineages. It remains doubtful why the redactor decided to include these two transmissions in a professedly *bka’ ma* teaching. He may have felt that the lineage was more complete if associated with all existing forms of transmission. Indeed, Dpal ’bar ba’s biography records that he did not object to forms of teachings other than the Sems sde. He, in fact, received the transmission of the *Mkha’ ’gro snying thig*, a *gter ma* rediscovered by Pad ma las ’brel rtsal not long before Dpal ’bar ba’s birth. The latter was probably only one generation removed from Dpal ’bar ba, since he lived between 1291 and 1315. This suggests that, in this period, despite Kaḥ thog’s principal allegiances to *bka’ ma* teachings, *gter mas* were studied alongside the established oral *curricula*. Let us recall that in this period, beyond the walls of Kaḥ thog, in central Tibet, the Rdzogs chen teachings underwent a far-reaching systematization led by Klong chen rab ’byams (1308-1364).

³⁶⁰ *Khams lugs*, 437:3-5 “*Nye brgyud ni/ dam pa chen po la dpal rdo rje sems dpas dngos su zhal gzigs nas yang dag pa’i don ma lus pa gnang ba’o/ shin tu nye brgyud ni/ rtsa ba’i bla ma nyid sangs rgyas dngos yin par rgyud thams cad nas gsungs so*”.

The Khams lugs' Quotations and Colophon

The *Khams lugs* is a manual of instruction that leads the practitioner through the stages of meditation to bring him to enlightenment. Its content has therefore a practical character. Like most of the texts of this kind, the *Khams lugs* contains a large proportion of quoted material. Most of the quotations differ stylistically from the *Khams lugs*. Many are extracted from the *rgyud* (tantra) or *lung* (treatise) genres, and hence possess a more discursive style.

Nam mkha' rdo rje drew on thirteen sources for the redaction of his text. Four of these were probably oral instructions that he received, memorised and transmitted in his own teaching.³⁶¹ He did not reveal the title of the four, but mentions the names the master from whom they sprang. I list below the titles of these texts (or the names of the masters who taught them) exactly as we find them in the *Khams lugs*, in order of their appearance:

Table no. 3

	Number of times the text is quoted
1. <i>rtsa tshig (las)</i>	13
2. <i>gsang sgron (las)</i>	13
3. Mañjuśrīmitra (<i>gyis</i>)	1
4. Dam pa (<i>s</i>)	7
5. <i>gsal sgron (las)</i>	1
6. <i>nyams sgron (las)</i>	38
7. <i>bang mdzod (las)</i>	2
8. Skyob pa (<i>s</i>)	1
9. <i>klong gsal (las)</i>	1
10. <i>kun byed (las)</i> or <i>lung (las)</i>	3
11. <i>skyong ba (las)</i>	1
12. <i>klong chen (las)</i>	1
13. Chos rje gtsang pa (<i>s</i>)	1

³⁶¹ I write that “they were probably oral instructions” because, besides the fact that the *Khams lugs* presents this material as spoken words, I was not able to find these quotations in any of the texts ascribed to the masters who, according to Dpal 'bar ba, uttered these words.

The names in italics refer to texts titles; the others (3, 4, 8 and 13) followed by the agentive particle, are the names of masters. The table shows that despite the high number of sources at the bedrock of the *Khams lugs*, only four feature regularly: the *Rtsa tshig*, *Gsang sgron*, *Nyams sgron* and, to a lesser extent, Dam pa's instructions. I now analyse the four principal sources one by one and then turn to those of lesser importance, as a group.

The *Rtsa tshig*

Rtsa tshig is the root text on which the *Khams lugs* is based. This, like other similar works, is very short. Its proper title is *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa*. Since 1999 it has been included in the *Bka' ma* collections.³⁶² This version consists of fourteen folios and includes a commentary, written by a certain Lha rje Bde gshegs.³⁶³ The root verses are attributed to Dga' rab rdo rje. The commentary is integrated within the root verses so that the exegetical notes, written in small font, follow every passage or word. The *Khams lugs* follows the root verses closely. There are a few minor variants between the *Khams lugs* quotations and the text itself. The version of the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa* we possess today must have been re-written at least once by the commentator. Thus, we cannot be sure whether the original text was closer to the *Khams lugs* quotations or to the annotated version. At any rate, the differences are really negligible. Dpal 'bar ba treats the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa* differently to the other texts on which he draws. As a root text, its views carry particular weight. In practical terms too it held a special place: first, the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa* alone is reproduced in its entirety; second, it is quoted in the original order of its verses; third, the *rtsa tshig* is quoted at the beginning of each new main topic, as introduction to the annotations. This is not to say that all subject-points open with the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa*. The scope of the *Khams lugs* goes well beyond its *rtsa tshig*.

³⁶² See *Bka ma shin tu rgyas pa Kah thog*, vol. 108, pp. 377-384, and *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 103, 313-318. This text does not appear in the earliest *Bka' ma* collections and I could not find any other version of it detached from this collection.

³⁶³ The only Lha rje bde bde gshegs I have been able to identify is the famous Rdzogs chen master Zur chen Shakya 'byung gnas (1002-1062). This master was a native of Khams and had received monastic ordination from Dgongs pa rab gsal. For a short biographical note on Dgongs pa rab gsal, see the section above "The Oral Lineage of the Humans". For more information on Zur chen Shakya 'byung gnas, see the following chapter.

Nam mkha' rdo rje expands on those points but also adds subsections to the main structure that do not appear in the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa*. He often remodels the meaning and format of the verses he quotes drawing on other sources to convey his point, but he leaves his *rtsa tshig* comparatively unaltered.

The *Gsang sgron*

The full title of the *Gsang sgron* is *Ye shes sang ba sgron ma rin po che man ngag gi rgyud*. This text appears in three different editions of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, the *Gting skyes*, *Mtshams brag dgon pa'i bris ma* and *Sgang steng*.³⁶⁴ The versions of *Gsang sgron* in these collections display some slight variations, but these do not alter its overall meaning.

The *Gting skyes* as a whole is the least complete edition of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*. This affects also its version of the *Gsang sgron*.³⁶⁵ Many verses are occasionally missing. The redactor of the *Gting skyes* was fully aware of this problem and marked the missing verses with dots.

The *Mtshams brag dgon pa'i bris ma* and *Sgang steng* editions are more complete. They are also similar to one another since they both stem from the same region.³⁶⁶ The *Khams lugs* quotations of the *Gsang sgron* do not betray a specific affiliation with any of these three versions. When the editions differ, the *Khams lugs* follows sometimes one and sometimes the other of the versions; at times, it even displays variations not found in any of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* versions. It is possible that Dpal 'bar ba drew on an edition of the *Gsang sgron* that has not survived or, perhaps, he modified some verses himself. He does not always cite linearly from the *Gsang sgron*. As it is often the case with the *Nyams sgron*, he selected and put together the verses in a fashion to suit his own purposes. Sometimes he modifies a sentence in order to make it fit with the

³⁶⁴ In the *Gting skyes* edition the *Gsang sgron* is in volume 4, pp. 1-24. In the *Mtshams brag* the *Gsang sgron* is in volume 1, pp. 810:6-837:2; in the *Sgang steng* it is in volume 3, pp. 1a-17a.

³⁶⁵ For the history and different versions of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* see Cantwell and Mayer, 2007. For the catalogue of the *Sgangs Steng* see Cantwell and Mayer, 2006.

³⁶⁶ Both these versions are Bhutanese. Interestingly, the person who brought the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* to Bhutan was a Kaḥ thog monk, the already mentioned Bsod nams rgyal mtshan. However it seems that he preferred to use a version of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* that he received in Gtsang rather than the one in use at Kaḥ thog. See Cantwell and Mayer, 2007:68 and Ehrhard: 2003.

following one which originally belonged to another section. Dpal 'bar ba's rationale for the selection of the verses is most transparent with the quotations of the *Gsang sgron*. For example:

Quotation of the *Gsang sgron* in the *Khams lugs* (*Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, 457:6- 458:1 - *Gdams ngag mdzod*, 326:4)

ma lus sems can thams cad la/ /byang chub snying po'i rang bzhin gnas/ /de don rtogs par bya ba'i phyir/ 4vm³⁶⁷ /ma zin zin phyir gnad bzhi bsgom/

“In all sentient beings without exception dwells the nature of the essence of enlightenment. In order to understand its meaning [you must] meditate upon the four crucial points without taking hold of them.”

***Gsang sgron* in the *Gting skyes*, 6:7**

ma lus sems can thams cad la/ /byang chub snying po rang bzhin gnas/ /de don rtogs par bya...ba...ni/ /dmigs pa dag la rtan byas nas/ 1 vm /mi dmigs pa'i gom byas na/ 1vm/ma zin zin phyir snang...bzhi bsgom.../³⁶⁸

***Gsang sgron* in the *Sgang steng*, (3:1:4)**

ma lus de sems can thams cad la/ /byang chub snying po rang bzhin gnas/ /de don rtogs par bya thabs ni/ /dmigs pa dag la rten nasu/ /mi dmigs pa ni rab tu skye/ /mi dmigs pa ni goms byas na/ /dmigs med ngo bo nyid du 'grub/ /ma zin zin phyir gnad bzhi bsgoms/

***Gsang sgron* in the *Mtshams brag*, 815:1**

ma lus sems can thams cad la/ /byang chub snying po rang bzhin gnas/ /de don rtogs par bya thabs ni/ /dmigs pa dag la brten nas su/ /mi dmigs pa ni rab tu skye/ /mi dmigs pa ni goms byas na/ /dmigs med ngo bo nyid du 'grub/ /ma zin zin phyir gnad bzhi bsgom/

³⁶⁷ 4 verses missing

³⁶⁸ Dots correspond to the dots in the text. The two missing verses however are not signalled by dots, which gives the idea that the redactor did not know of their existence.

“In all sentient beings without exception dwells the nature of the essence of enlightenment. This is the method to understand its meaning: after you have focussed on a pure object [of meditation], you should generate [a *samādhi*] that is free of objects. Once [you] have familiarised yourself with [a *samādhi*] that is free of objects, you should grasp the essence of non-fixation. [You must] meditate on [these] four crucial points without taking hold of them.”

Before we begin to analyse the differences between these passages, let us note that the quotation is identical in both versions of the *Khams lugs* (*Bka' mas*, *Gdams ngag mdzod*). This shows that any change between the original and Dpal 'bar ba's work does not spring from scribal errors. The *Sgang steng* and the *Mtshams brag* versions also match, differing only in minor details such as contractions or verb tenses.

In our passage, the *Gsang sgron* teaches the method that leads to the contemplation of the essence of enlightenment. This method (*thabs ni*) is composed of four stages. The first and easiest consists of meditating on a pure object. The second is to reach the point where one does not need an object of meditation anymore. The third stabilises the meditation without object. The fourth manifests the realization of the very essence of non-fixation, enlightenment itself. The *Khams lugs* skips the four verses that explain the four stages of this method. It also omits the word “method” (*thabs*) and instead reads *ba'i phyir* “in order to”. Therefore, this passage becomes: “in order to understand its meaning [you must] meditate upon the four crucial points without taking hold of them.” Dpal 'bar ba is thus not bound to follow the *Gsang sgron*'s four points. He displays this quotation to introduce another set of four themes: 1. The seven postures of Vairocana; 2. Meditation with an object; 3. Movement of *prāṇa*; 4. Mind that grasps *samādhi*.³⁶⁹ This demonstrates that, occasionally, the differences between the original text and its quotations in the *Khams lugs* stem from Dpal 'bar ba's intervention.

Nyams sgron

³⁶⁹ It is possible that Nam mkha' rdo rje having memorised the *Gsang sgron* remembered this sentence and thought that he could apply it to his own four points.

The *Nyams sgron* is the principal source on which the *Khams lugs* draws for quotations. Not only it supplies most material (this text is the most frequently quoted in the *Khams lugs*) but its quotations are also the longest, spanning up to a page or more. The full title of the *Nyams sgron* is *Rdzogs pa chen po bsam gtan nyams kyi sgron me*. According to the colophon, it passed from Śrī Simha in India to Vairocana in Tibet.³⁷⁰ A version is contained in the *Bka' ma* collections, in the section apportioned to the Rdzogs chen Mind Series.³⁷¹ It is possible that the *Nyang sgron* was studied at Kaḥ thog as part of the Rdzogs chen *syllabus* because it is also quoted in Bsod nams rgyal mtshan's work on the nine Rnying ma vehicles.³⁷²

The *Nyams sgron* consists of fifteen folios written in verse of seven syllables each. The *Khams lugs* quotes approximately half of it. Indeed, many of the topics treated in the *Khams lugs* are so similar to those in the *Nyams sgron* as to suggest that Dpal 'bar ba was probably inspired in some measure by it when he wrote his *Khams lugs*. However, Dpal 'bar ba does not merely copy from the *Nyams sgron* as he does with the *rtsa tshig*. Instead he uses it to justify his personal method of meditation. Very often, Dpal 'bar ba, in discussing a subject matter, starts with his own explanations but concludes with a quotation from the *Nyams sgron*. These quotations do not always follow linearly the verse sequence of the *Nyams sgron*. That is to say, Dpal 'bar ba sometimes puts together verses in a single passage that were placed on different pages in the original. Therefore, even if the *Khams lugs* is indebted to the *Nyams sgron* for many of its topics, it does not merely reproduce them. Rather, it integrates them into the larger scheme that it draws from the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa*. In fact, the originality of the *Khams lugs*, as that of many of the texts of the *khrid yig* genre, lies in the way it merges different structures, in the order in which the topics are arranged, rather than in its content.

³⁷⁰ *Nyams sgron* in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol.103, 660:1.

³⁷¹ The version I consulted is in the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog in 120 volumes. There is a mistake in the western pagination of this text. Pages 655 and 656 should be pages 253 and 254 and *vice versa*. However, the Tibetan pagination is right and one can clearly see that page 12 (*bcu gnyis*) comes after page 13 (*bcu gsum*).

³⁷² Bsod nams quotes the *Nyams sgron* in his work *Theg pa thams cad kyi shan 'byed nyi 'od rab gsal*, vol. 2, 259: 5; 261:1; 268: 3. Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1466-1560) was a Kaḥ thog monk who travelled to Bhutan and there established a branch monastery of Kaḥ thog. Ehrhard, 2003.

Not all discrepancies between the quotations and the original texts are premeditated alterations. At times, Dpal 'bar ba skips one or two verses that do not change the overall meaning of the passage and that, therefore, would not impair the intended use of a quotation. Sometimes, he forgets passages that are of some importance. For example, when he quotes from the *Nyams sgron* a list of the eight natural appearances that may occur in meditation, Dpal 'bar ba omits to quote one of them. This suggests perhaps that Dpal 'bar ba quoted the *Nyams sgron* from memory, rather than consulting a written text. Some of the changes that he makes in wording might look like inaccuracies which a person may incur when reciting a memorised text. For example, he (or the scribe) exchanges 'drid with *brid*, *cad* with *can*, *gnas* with *nas*, *kun mkhyen* with *rgyu rkyen* and so on.³⁷³ All these words have similar sounds and it is possible that, since they do not alter the rhythm of the repetition, one may confuse one with another. Another symptom that indicates memorization is the inversion of syllables, like in the sentence: “*mnyam nyid kun **dn**gos kun **bral** phyir*”³⁷⁴ which is quoted in the *Khams lugs* as “*mnyam nyid kun **bral** kun **dn**gos phyir*”.³⁷⁵ This said, we need to consider another option: perhaps it is not the *Khams lugs* that is at fault, but our current version of the *Nyams sgron*. The earliest known collection that includes this text is the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog), published in 1999. The previous *Bka' ma* collections do not contain the *Nyams sgron*. It is possible that the *Nyams sgron* was transmitted orally for some time before it was redacted after Dpal 'bar ba's time. In that case, the quotations in the *Khams lugs* would preserve an earlier version/recitation.

Dam pa bde gshegs' instructions

³⁷³ Of course not all these inaccuracies have the same weight. Some can indeed be classified as mistakes, and others are merely variations of the same word, like 'drid and *brid*. Sometimes the changes are for the better since the *Nyams sgron* as it reaches us contains several inaccuracies as well. Roesler identifies three causes for discrepancies between quoted passages and their sources: a) discrepancies that document an earlier version of the source, now lost; b) discrepancies due to mistakes, such as those that may occur when transcribing an oral teaching; c) discrepancies due to the fact that the author did not take his quotation from the original scripture but from compendia or exegetical literature (re-quoting a quotation). Roesler, 2014:6-7. In the present instance the first and the second options seem more probable than the third. The *Khams lugs* draws so extensively from the *Nyang lugs* that it seems more likely that Nam mkha' rdo rje memorised (or had access) to the whole teaching.

³⁷⁴ *Nyams sgron*, in *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 99, 653:3. The bold type is mine.

³⁷⁵ *Khams lugs*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog), vol. 30, 507:2.

The other major source of the *Khams lugs* is Dam pa bde gshegs' oral instructions. Dpal 'bar ba uses Dam pa's words to give practical advice on how to behave when one encounters an obstacle in meditation. The quotations are usually employed to explain the sort of mistakes a person of medium or low abilities may encounter in his *samādhi*. These may give us a glimpse of the meditation classes in the 12th century Kaḥ thog.

The other sources

The remaining sources quoted in the *Khams lugs* appear at the end of Dpal 'bar ba's explanations. They seem more calculated to support Dpal 'bar ba's words than to introduce new insights. Many occur just once and they are generally short.³⁷⁶

The *Bang mdzod 'phrul gyi me long* appears twice in the *Khams lugs*.³⁷⁷ The first quotation comes after a passage extracted from the *Nyams sgron*. Dpal 'bar ba does not engage with either of them. He first explains the topic and then proceeds to expound on it using the words of these other two sources. The second quote features in a section where Dpal 'bar ba explains the essence of realization experienced by those of high, medium and low abilities. For each group Dpal 'bar ba first explains how they engage in meditation and then experience post-meditation. Each section starts with Dpal 'bar ba's exposition and ends with a quotation. The *Bang mdzod 'phrul gyi me long* appears in the part that explains meditation for people of low abilities. Its remark roughly agrees with Dpal 'bar

³⁷⁶ I have not been able to identify all the texts that Dpal 'bar ba quotes. Some have too general titles. I have been through the most famous texts which bear similar titles in the TBRC but I could not find the verses cited in the *Khams lugs*. The sources that for the moment I have not identified are: the *Gsal sgron*, the *Skyong ba* and the *Klong chen*. All these texts are quoted just once. The *Gsal sgron* explains three methods, the outer, the inner and the secret to apply when during a meditation session one becomes either too agitated or too sleepy. In this case, therefore the quotation is useful to introduce new strategies. The text *Skyong ba* turns up after Dpal 'bar ba's explanation of the essence of realization of practitioners of high abilities. It is five verses long and its function, like all the other quotations that appear at the end of a section, is to confirm and expand on Dpal 'bar ba's remarks. The *Klong chen* appears in the section that relates examples of *samādhi*. One of these examples is that of the *thig le (bindu)*, which is said to be like the state that does not distinguish duality. The *Klong chen* final verses on the topic provide a definition of *thig le* as *dharmakāya*.

³⁷⁷ This text is a Rdzogs chen Sems sde text which features in the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* (mtshams brag dgon pa'i bris ma). The colophon traces back this text to Mañjuśrīmitra. It also offers a short transmission of this teaching that runs as follows: Śrī Simha, Vimalamitra, G.yu sgra snying po, Jñānakumāra. See *Bang mdzod 'phrul gyi me long* in *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* (mtshams brag dgon pa'i bris ma), vol. 7, 779:780:1.

ba's explanation, although it does not address specifically the topic. It is more a general remark about *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*.

The *Klong gsal* (*Klong gsal 'bar ma nyi ma'i gsang rgyud*) is a text usually associated with the seventeen tantras of the Man ngag sde. It is not one of them but it has sometimes been added to the list.³⁷⁸ Dpal 'bar ba quotes it only once and for only two verses.³⁷⁹ The verses are used to explain the nature of primordial wisdom. Again, first Dpal 'bar ba discusses the topic in his own words and then concludes with two quotations on the same subject. The first is from the *Klong gsal 'bar ma nyi ma'i gsang rgyud*, the second is from the *Kun byed rgyal po*. Both fit nicely in Dpal 'bar ba's discourse and explain the same subject from different angles. As usual, the *Khams lugs* does not comment upon them but proceeds with its own discussion. The *Kun byed rgyal po* reappears a little later. It surfaces on two other occasions, although Dpal 'bar ba, in these two instances, does not give its title but calls it only *lung*. The two quotations are both on the same page and fulfill the same task as the first. In this section, the *Khams lugs* discusses the six ways of guarding one's *samādhi*. The *lung* occurs at the end of the first and the second method.

The remaining three sources on which Dpal 'bar ba draws are all oral explanations. The first is a quotation of Mañjuśrīmitra.³⁸⁰ The very first occurrence of Mañjuśrīmitra's name, as we saw, is in the lineage. Therefore, this quotation backs up the transmission. The quotation appears at the end of Dpal 'bar ba's explanation; it serves to support and explain his own words.

Chos rje gtsang pa, the second abbot of Kaḥ thog, also appears in the lineage. Dpal 'bar ba attributes one sentence only to Chos rje gtsang pa. The section in which it appears explores the result of the second concentration (*vipaśyanā*) in

³⁷⁸ See Germano, 1994:301.

³⁷⁹ There is one single difference between the verses as we find them in the *Khams lugs* and as they are in the *Klong gsal*. This difference however, is not that small in terms of meaning, since the *Khams lugs* mistakes *rtsal du brjod* for *tsam du brjod*. See the *Khams lugs*, 483:4 and the *Klong gsal 'bar ma nyi ma'i gsang rgyud*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 110, 11:2.

³⁸⁰ We saw before that in the *Bka' ma* collections, in the same section to which the *Khams lugs* belongs, there is a famous text ascribed to Mañjuśrīmitra, the Byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun. These verses however, do not come from this text.

practitioners of medium ability. Dpal 'bar ba reports that Chos rje gtsang pa himself had added it to the teaching. This implies that the subject had already been consolidated in the classes of Kaḥ thog, to the point that every small variant was annotated and perceived to be an addition. Again the usage remains unaltered: the quotation appears at the end of the section and Dpal 'bar ba then shifts, without any comment to the segment, on the practitioners of low abilities.

The colophon

Thus far, we analysed the ways in which Dpal 'bar ba deployed the quotations in the *Khams lugs*. The information hereto gathered shows that the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa* was fundamental the Khams method of meditation, while the remaining sources served to expand on the topic or corroborate his views. In the colophon, Dpal 'bar ba recounts how he wrote the *Khams lugs*. I shall reproduce it here in full:

Therefore [these] words that [explain] the practice [of] the *Rdzogs pa chen po* through the three: preliminaries, main practice and post-attainment [are drawn from]: a) the root verses, the *Nyams rim bzhi pa*; b) the *Nyams sgron* that [acts as a] support [to the root verses] and which has been written by Dga' rab rdo rje himself; c) the investigation of the root verses which is affirmed to have been the work of Mañjuśrīmitra; d) the notes of Dam pa bde gshegs [which concern] the instructions [based on] experience about the thirty-six obscurations and deviations, the six ways of guarding [*samādhi*] the commentaries on general concentration (*dhyāna*) as they are elucidated by Chos rje gtsang pa. Whenever it was needed, the words and meaning in the passages concerning the four practices that generate the inner stages of the *Theg spyi* of the realised Śāk rdor pa, were properly adopted.³⁸¹ The existing bits [of] stages of practice, main practice and oral lineage, [are here] properly assembled. [Moreover, this text] has been supplemented with the

³⁸¹ This could be the Hor po Śākya rdo rje's *lam rim* text entitled *Gsang sngags rdo rje theg pa'i man ngag lam gyi rim pa rin po che rnam par bkod pa'i 'bru dka'i don bkrol gsal byed me long*. However I have not yet been able to identify the verses here attributed to him. Hor po is classed among the same thirteen masters who ruled in between the reigns of the thirteen abbots of Kaḥ thog, to which Dpal 'bar ba nam mkha' rdo rje also belonged. For a short biographical note on this master see *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, 55-56.

Kun byed rgyal po (lung) and also with the instructions of other *tantras*. Having relied on my own method of practice, I, the beggar Nam mkha' rdo rje exerted myself single-mindedly in [giving] the definitive meaning [of this text], through the mind that [desires to] benefit people of future generations [by means of] the practice of the oral instructions. [This text] was put together in retreat [during the] days of the fifth waxing moon of the water-female-bird year, in [the district of] Dpal gnam in Bla ma Dam pa [bde gshegs]'s dwelling place.³⁸²

This colophon repeats a number of facts that we already know. It also shows that Nam mkha' rdo rje built up the *Khams lugs* through these sources. In the meditation classes at Kaḥ thog, he must have frequently followed the instructions contained in these texts; they inspired him to compose the Khams system of meditation. Sometimes he modified the quotation from the *Nyams sgron*, Mañjuśrīmitra and Dam pa to fit the context. Perhaps he quoted the other sources (those not cited in the colophon) to lend authority to his own text. Dpal 'bar ba drew on these texts to bring together, in his meditation method, all the most prominent sources, textual and oral, which formed the Rdzogs chen *curricula* at Kaḥ thog. His short biography in the *Kaḥ thog pa'i lo rgyus*, portrayed Dpal 'bar ba mainly as a teacher. We do not know the nature of his duties in detail but we know that he was at the head of the meditation centre. He probably spent many hours to explain the meaning and practice of the very texts he quoted to his students. The *Khams lugs* constitutes perhaps a synthesis of the meditation points Dpal 'bar ba considered most important in the practice of all these texts. It provided guidance to all his students who, in practicing it, would then connect it with their previous Rdzogs chen studies.

³⁸² *Khams lugs*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30: 516. The letters for the enumeration of the sources are my own addition. “*de ltar sngon 'gro dang dngos gzhi rjes gsum gyis rdzogs pa chen po nyams su blang ba'i yi ge 'di ni/ rtsa tshig nyams rim bzhi pa dang/ de'i rgyab skyor dga' rab rdo rje nyid kyis mdzad pa'i nyams sgron dang/ rtsa tshig gi bar 'byed 'jam dpal bshes gyis mdzad par bzhed pa dang/ dam pa bde gshegs pa'i yig chung nyams kyi man ngag gol sgrib sum bu rtsa drug/ bca' thabs drug pa/ bsam gtan spyi 'grel/ chos rje gtsang pas mdzad pa'i don gsal/ rtogs ldan śāk rdor pa'i theg spyi'i nang du rim skyes pa'i nams lem bzhi'i skabs rnams kyi tshig don gang mkho skabs su ma nor bar blangs shing/ nyams len gyi rim pa dngos gzhi snyan brgyud thor bur yod pa rnams legs par bsgrigs te/ man ngag gi rgyud gzhan nas kyang lung gis kha bskangs shing rang gis nyams su myong tshul la brien nas/ nges pa'i don la blo gcig tu gzhul ba'i sprang po nam mkha' rdo rje phyi rabs kyi gang zag gdams ngag nyams su len pa rnams la phan pa'i blos/ chu mo bya lo zla ba lnga pa'i yar tshes la bla ma dam pa'i bzhugs gnas dpal gnam steng ri khrod du sbyar ba 'dis”.*

This colophon also gives us the time and place of the redaction of the *Pra khrid*: water-female-bird year, Dpal gnam steng ri. Davidson believes the water-female-bird year to be 1273.³⁸³ In my opinion it seems more likely that this date should be assigned to the following *rab byung* cycle, in the year 1333. The place continues to pose some problems: there is a region of Tibet called Dpal gnam. This district however is in Dbus. In view of the reference to Dam pa bde gshegs, it is unlikely that Dpal gnam refers to a place in Dbus. *Steng ri* “upper retreat” also suggests that it was perhaps a secluded hermitage where Dam pa bde gshegs might have gone for spiritual retreats, too small to be recorded on any map. All considered it was probably in the vicinity of Kaḥ thog monastery.

Conclusions

At the beginning of this chapter we noted that the *Khams lugs*, or rather the *Pra khrid*,³⁸⁴ had previously been identified (in Western literature) with the Khams tradition of A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas. A number of factors hinted in that direction: the *Khams lugs* and the *A ro lugs* are always next to each other in both the collections in which they are preserved; the *A ro lugs* is clearly named after A ro Ye shes, and the *ChR* and other texts reported that A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas’ tradition was named *Khams lugs*. Therefore, some thought that this *Khams lugs* was the work of A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas, if not in writing, at least in words. However, our analysis of the text revealed that the author of the *Pra khrid* was Dpal ’bar ba Nam mkha’ rdo rje, a Kaḥ thog master who lived three to four centuries after A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas.³⁸⁵ ’Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan’s recent biography of Nam mkha’ rdo rje says that this Kaḥ thog master wrote “anew” (*gsar du*) the text of the *Khams lugs*. The examination of the lineage and quotations within the *Khams lugs* corroborated this. The only lineage-holder who can be identified with A ro Ye shes is Yon tan ’byung gnas. There is, however, no reason why Nam mkha’ rdo rje would have called A ro by another name. He

³⁸³ Davidson, (2005), *Tibetan Renaissance*, p. 388, fn.65.

³⁸⁴ This is the full title of the *Khams lugs*.

³⁸⁵ The dates of A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas are unknown at the present. My supposition, based on the analysis of the lineages where we find his name, is that he lived at the end of the tenth century.

used that very name in his *Rdzogs pa chen po a ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa*. If Yon tan is not A ro the latter's absence in this lineage demonstrates that he cannot have been the creator of this Khams tradition of meditation. Moreover, A ro is not included among the people whose quotations appear in the *Khams lugs*. So what is the *Khams lugs* then? In Chapter One we saw that the labels of *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs* have been appropriated to serve as glosses for the main titles of the three texts (*Pra khrid*, *Bde khrid* and *Khrid yig*). The aim was to identify the three as the written forms of three famous oral traditions. The title *Slob dpon Dga' rab rdo rje nas brgyud pa'i rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i pra khrid kyi man ngag (Pra khrid)* identifies the text it names as a work which stems from the transmission of Dga' rab rdo rje. This is only partly true. My analysis of the quotations and colophon revealed, in fact, that Nam mkha' rdo rje set out to create a sort of commentary of the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa*. This text is traditionally attributed to Dga' rab rdo rje. However, the extent of Nam mkha' rdo rje's exegesis of the root text goes so far beyond the scope of the *Pra khrid nyams rim bzhi pa* that the *Pra khrid* must be considered to constitute a new teaching. Like all "new" teachings, the *Pra khrid* is made up, in large measure, of quotations and instructions extracted from other sources but systemised in a new fashion. In fact, all the people whose words are cited (and all the authors of the texts that have been quoted) belong to the lineage of this text. The correspondence is so clear that the lineage almost possesses the character of a bibliography.

More recent histories speak of the tradition of Khams as the tradition of Kaḥ thog. Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung*, for example, presents a transmission of Khams wholly made up of Kaḥ thog monks.³⁸⁶ This is strikingly similar to the section of the *Khams lugs'* lineage from Dam pa bde gshegs onwards. Both Bdud 'joms' and Nam mkha' rdo rje's are lists of Kaḥ thog abbots and prominent monks. Therefore, the *Pra khrid* is the method of Khams that stems from the Kaḥ thog school. Of course, the *Pra khrid* constitutes only part of the Kaḥ thog's *Khams lugs*. The tradition of Kaḥ thog consisted, in an equal measure, of the so-called "*mdo sgyu sems gsum*" (*Anuyoga*, *Mahāyoga* and *Rdzogs chen Mind*

³⁸⁶ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:688-699.

Series). It should be remembered that the Dam pa bde gshegs received the Zur tradition (and transmissions) of the *mdo sgyu sems* triad (i.e. the *Dgongs pa 'dus'i mdo*, the *Gsang ba snying po* and *Kun byed rgyal po*). Kong sprul affirmed that the *Khams lugs* transmission was a combination of Rdzogs chen and *Māyājāla*'s lineage-holders. Given that Nam mkha' rdo rje clearly avoids all Zur members in his lineage, his selection of non-Sems sde lineage-holders must be traced to some other tantric teaching. It is possible that Nam mkha' rdo rje was trying to create an alternative Kaḥ thog lineage by combining Rdzogs chen masters with *vidyādhara*s and human lineage-holders that were connected with his daily meditation practices. At present, it is difficult to reach a definitive conclusion on the origin of the *Khams lugs*' lineage. Sources on Kaḥ thog dating to the 14th century are missing and the only biography of Nam mkha' rdo rje I was able to find was written in the 20th century. Nam mkha' rdo rje reveals the connection between the *Khams lugs*' lineage and the Kaḥ thog tradition through his deliberate selection of ordained monks in his lineage.³⁸⁷ Celibacy was a main characteristic of the Kaḥ thog establishment and Nam mkha' rdo rje's lineage-holders all comply with this.

Nam mkha' rdo rje's text shows us the formula for the production of a Sems sde *khrid yig*. He certainly had received the Sems sde classic teachings that came down from the founder of Kaḥ thog. Thus, he was empowered to create his own teaching method. He then built his own text, with old bricks, but in a new fashion. The lineage of this *Khams lugs*, can only refer to the transmission of the texts Nam mkha' rdo rje studied and used. The specific transmission of this text can only unfold from Nam mkha' rdo rje onwards.

Nam mkha' rdo rje did not try to conceal his authorship of the text. He knew that what he did was perfectly legitimate. The method he used to create his own *khrid yig* was very likely the same that earlier masters had used to create theirs. This shows that the fourteenth century was still a period of innovation and diffusion for the Mind Series.

³⁸⁷ Many of the tantric individuals that normally feature in Sems sde lineages are missing in the *Khams lugs* transmission (e.g. Gnyags Jñānakumāra, Gnubs chen, Sogs po, etc.) Nam mkha' rdo rje himself wrote a classical Rdzogs chen lineage for the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*.

CHAPTER THREE

Chapter 3 examines the transmission and origins of A ro's method of meditation (*A ro lugs*) and the text associated with it, the *Snyan brgyud rin po che'i khrid kyi man ngag mkha' dbyings snying po'i bde khrid* (henceforth *Bde khrid*). This text comes from the tradition of meditation which stems from the master A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. Section 1 of this chapter provides a sketch of the life of A ro Ye shes. It draws primarily on A ro's biography and introduces some of the masters also in the lineage of the *A ro lugs*. Section 2 introduces and compares the references to A ro's teachings. Section 3 analyses the transmissions of the *A ro lugs*.

The Biography of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas

A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas' life and principal work, the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*, have both been discussed in Katja Thiesen's Magisterarbeit (University of Hamburg). This contains a translation of A ro's biography as well as the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*.³⁸⁸ I shall here report a summary of this biography again as A ro's life is relevant to my investigation.³⁸⁹ Moreover, Thiesen's Magisterarbeit has not been published. I also provide an interpretation of the data that allows us to place the biography in the wider context of the transmission of A ro's teachings.

³⁸⁸ This text is found in volume 107 of the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa Kah thog*. This tome is a new addition to the *Rnying ma bka' ma*, and therefore we cannot find the texts contained in it in the previous versions of the same collection. The biography is found from page 321 to page 348.

³⁸⁹ The present thesis started as a research on A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. I had already translated this text and proceeded to the analysis of the people who are mentioned in it when I became aware of Thiesen's work on the life of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. Therefore, my work on the biography is to a certain extent repetitive as the only section that Thiesen did not translate is the additional *pecha* about the 'other stories'.

The *A ro ye shes 'byung gnas kyi lo rgyus*³⁹⁰ recounts the life of the master in three sections: the first discloses his previous births, the second relates his deeds and the third describes the way he died.³⁹¹ Section 1 purports to be the record of the direct words of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas who, at the request of one of his main disciples, Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khul, relates his former lives. The second and third sections are reported in the third person.

Section one: the line of rebirths

The narrative commences with A ro's consternation about his disciple's request to speak about his previous reincarnations:

“In a transmigration [process] which has no beginning and no end, [how could] my line of rebirths know any beginning or end?”³⁹²

However, the master agrees to narrate the line of his rebirths starting from the time he converted to Buddhism. His present life is the fifth. The first time he entered the path he was the son of a Brahmin in East India. In the second life he was a god in a heavenly realm. Here, he did not grow attached to the wealth of this Paradise, and he practised the *Samādhi* of the Gods. Therefore, when he died, instead of ending up in one of the lowest realms as many gods are destined to do, he was reborn as a monk in India. During his fourth life he was a Tibetan monk

³⁹⁰ There is no colophon at the end of this work. It is clear from the opening of the biography that at least the first section of the *Lo rgyus* is believed to be the work of A ro's direct disciple Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod, who lived in the 11th century. The first section starts with Cog ro asking questions to A ro. Volume 107 of the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa Kaḥ thog* starts with the declaration that this volume is composed of a group of thirty-eight rare texts (although in the present volume there are only thirty-seven). These were copied from the manuscripts of Rta ston Chen dpal and the notebook of Rta ston jo ye, [both of which derive] from the sayings of the tulku Zhig po [Bdud rtsi] [who belonged to] the oral lineage of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa Kaḥ thog*, vol. 107, 34:2-3 (*A ro ye shes 'byung gnas kyi snyan brgyud sprul sku zhig po'i gsung sgros rta ston jo ye'i yig cha rta ston rin chen dpa' gyi phyag dpe las zhal bshus pa'i dpe dkon tshan so brgyad la sdeb bzhugs*). Rta ston Jo ye lived between 1163 and 1236. Therefore, if we accept the statement at the beginning of the volume, the *A ro'i lo rgyus* (together with all the other texts contained in vol. 107) may be dated to the beginning of the 13th century. The authorship of this text is discussed below in this chapter. On Zhig po bdud rtsi see also Chapter 1, fn. 81.

³⁹¹ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 1r:1-2 “*Dang po skye rgyud bstan pa dang/ bar du mdzad pa bstan pa dang/ /tha mar mthar 'gyur gyi lo rgyus bstan pa'o*”.

³⁹² *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 1v:3-2r:2. “*Cog ro zangs dkar mdzod khul [khur] gyis/ /slob dpon a ro ye shes 'byung gnas la mngon par shes pa mnga' ba rnam la sngon gyi gnas rjes su dran pa bgyi ba bdon mchibs/ /slob dpon nyid kyi sngon gyi skye gnas ji tsam zhig dran pa lags gsung par zhu dang zhes zhus pas/ /slob dpon gyi zhal nas 'khor ba la thog mtha' med par nga'i skye rgyud la thog mtha' cang yod dam gsung*”.

who lived at the time of Padmasambhava and had the chance to receive his instructions. In his fifth life, he was A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, born in Mdo Khams to the father A ro Nyag po and the Mongolian mother Dpal sgron.³⁹³ At the time of his birth five wondrous omens occurred to announce the holy birth. Among these, while his mother was still pregnant with him, the sound of “A” was heard three times.³⁹⁴

Section two: A ro's life

At the very beginning of this second section the text reports that this part of the life and deeds of the master could be divided into nine segments.³⁹⁵ However, I divide the content here in three parts to achieve better clarity.

1. The first part of Section 2 relates to A ro's life from his birth to his decision to take the monastic vows.
2. The second part is devoted to A ro's life as a monk, his studies and his masters' recognition of A ro's superior knowledge.
3. It follows a list of teachings that he bestowed to his four main disciples: Ya zi bon ston, Rngog Legs pa'i sgron ma, Drum shing Shes rab smon lam and Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khur together with a final dedication to A ro's lineage.

³⁹³ Mdo khams includes both A mdo and Khams so it is not altogether clear whether A ro was from A mdo or Khams.

³⁹⁴ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 2v:2-3r:4. “*On kyang ngas lam sna zin nas skye ba lnga tsam rgyud pa yin gsung/ /de rnams gsung par zhu dang byas pas/ /de yang dang po rgya gar shar phyogs su bram ze mgyogs byed ces bya ba'i bur skyes te/ /de'i dus su sa theg pa chen po'i chos la nan tan byas pas chos la nges par sems pa'i bzod pa bya ba thob ste/ /de'i dus su lam sna zin pa yon gsung/ /de nas tshe 'phos nas sum bcu rtsa gsum gyi gnas su lha'i bu kun dga' snying po bya bar skyes te/ /de'u dus su nga lha'i longs spyod la ma chag par lha'i dbang po la chos nyan cing lha'i bsam brtan la mnyam par 'jog pa byas pa yin gsung/ /de nas shi 'phos nas rgya gar du bram ze snon po bya ba'i bu dge slong mtha' grol gzhon nu bya bar skyes te/ rgya gar gyi mkhas pa rnams la sde snod kyi chos ma lus pa mnyan zhing shes rab kyis de dag gi don rtogs shing khong du chud pa yin gsung/ /de nas shi 'phos nas 'gar dge lod ces bya ba'i bu dge slong srid bu nya zhes bya bar skyes te/ /de'i dus su slob dpon pad ma sam b+ha ba bsam yas su byon nas bzhugs pa dang 'byal [mjäl] te gsang sngags zab mo'i chos nyan zhing de'i don rang gcig pur sdad nas bsam brtan [gtan] nyams su len pa 'ba' zhis la brtson par byas pa yin gsung/ / de nas shi 'phos nas mdo khams su pha a ro nyag po dang/ ma sog mo dpal sgron bya ba'i bu a ro ye shes 'byung gnas zhes bya bar skyes pa 'di nyid yin gsung ngo/ /de lta bu'i dam pa de la ngo mtshar can gyi rtags rnam pa lnga byung ste/ /tshe snga ma la chos nyid kyi nyams rgyun chags dang ldan pa'i rtags su ma'i khong pa na gnas pa'i dus su a'i sgra lan gsum byung”.*

³⁹⁵ It is not clear how this division is made in the *Lo rgyus*. Tentatively, we could divide it as it follows: 1. Spiritual friends (3v:3- 4r:4); 2. Stay at the monastery of Chung yang rdzong (4r:4- 4v:2); 3. Stay at the monastery of Yang rtser lung (4v:2- 4r:5); 4. Stay at the monastery of Chos skor glong thang (4v:5- 6r:2); 5. Meeting with Bla chen Dgongs pa gsal and conversion (6r:2- 7r:4); 6. Study under his teachers (7r:4- 7v:5); 7. Stay at the mountain of Srong gum pal ta bu (7v:5- 7v:6); 8. Stay at the monastery of Thebs sku [skyu] stag mo and bestowing of the teachings to his disciples (7v:6- 12r:4); 9. Final dedication to his lineage and students (12r:4- 12v:1).

Part one:

The astonishment of A ro's parents at the extraordinary deeds of their son, induces them to ask for advice from Seng ge rgyal ba'i sras³⁹⁶ and Gong Ye shes g.yu[ng] drung. The two spiritual friends notice that he is acting in accordance with his previous rebirth and therefore, they recognise him to be a *nirmāṇakāya*.³⁹⁷ When he grows up, A ro starts roaming from one monastery to another. The first monastery of the list is Yang sdzong [rdzong]³⁹⁸ where he meditates for seven years and seven months, before moving to Yang rtser lung in Khams. Here he remains for one year and one month and through meditation he acquires *siddhis*.³⁹⁹ The third monastery he reaches is Chos skor glong thang.⁴⁰⁰ This has a particular role in the narration because it is the place where the reader

³⁹⁶ There are no dates for either of these two masters. The second one sometimes appears in the *Sba bzhed* as a practitioner who took the monastic vows under Dgongs pa rab gsal, who probably lived between the ninth and the tenth century. This point will be discussed in more detail below.

³⁹⁷ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 3v:4- 4r:3. “*Dang po dge ba'i bshes gnyen chen po seng ge rgyal ba'i sras pa dang/ yang gong ye shes g.yu drung spyan snga las dang bag chags ji ltar sad pa ni/ de yang pha ma gnyis po des bu'i spyod lam ngo mtshar ba mang po ni mthong/ ji lta bu yin ngo ma shes par gyur pa la dge bshes gnyis po'i spyan sngar khyer nas phyin te/ /bdag cag gi bu 'di la ngo mtshar ba'i rtags 'di lta bu byung pas 'di ji ltar bu gcig lags zhes zhus pas/ /'di'i spyod pa la nged kyis brtag par byas yis bu 'dir zhog la khyed rang song gcig gsungs nas/ /pha mas log ste bu der bzhag pas/ /bu de dge bshes gnyis po la spyan 'bru tshugs su ce re gzigs kyi 'dus pas/ /khong gi byin brlabs dge bshes gnyis po la zhugs nas ting nge 'dzin gyi nyams khyad par can skyes so/ /bu des kyang khong ji ltar mdzad pa'i mdzad spyod ltar byas shing bsgoms pas skye ba snga ma rnams kyi thos bsam dang bsgom bsgrub kyi bag chags thams cad dus de ru sad pa lags skad”.*

³⁹⁸ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 4r:3-4. “*De nas an chung yang sdzong [rdzong] gi dgon par gshegs nas dgongs pa mdzod pas lo bdun dang zla ba bdun na chos nyid mngon sum du mthong ba'i lam mngon du byas te”*. Thiesen found this place in Sørensen and Hazod, 2005:107, fn. 276 and Sørensen and Hazod, 2007:179, fn. 427. They have Yang rdzong of Sgrags as one of the five or eight principal meditation caves of Padmasambhava (Yang rdzong not always features in this list of caves). On the other hand, Thiesen points out that the full name of Dgongs pa rab gsal's monastery is “*Dan tig Shel gyi yang rdzong*”. Considering the fact that A ro Ye shes meets Dgongs pa rab gsal and several of his disciples in this biography it might be the place where A ro went was Dan tig. On the other hand, A ro Ye shes meets Dgongs pa rab gsal later on in the biography, thus either he started his peregrinations from Dan tig and went back there later on or this Yang rdzong is not Dan tig Shel gyi yang rdzong (A mdo) where Dgongs pa gave him ordination. Thiesen, 2009: 35, fn. 51.

³⁹⁹ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 4v:2-5. “*Der yang bzhugs su ma bzhed par khams kyi yang rtser lung gi dgon par gshegs te der lo gcig dang zla ba gcig bzhugs pas/ /sdzu [rdzu] 'phrul dang ting nge 'dzin la dbang thob pa byung ste/ /chen po chung dur 'gyur ba dang/ /chung du chen por 'gyur ba dang/ /yod pa mi snang par 'gyur ba dang/ med pa snang par byed pa dang/ /'gro na 'dug par mthong pa dang/ /'dug na 'gro bar mthong pa la sogs pa'i sdzu [rdzu] 'phrul gyi brag thams cad la dbang bsgyur nus pa byung ngo”.*

⁴⁰⁰ Thiesen identified this place as Glong thang sgröl ma, in Khams north-west of the 'Bri chu river. This was one of the temples built at the time of Srong bstan sgam po, on the top of the palm of the demoness. Thiesen, 2009:36, fn.58; Sørensen and Hazod, 2005:53. The letters ra and nga are similar in Tibetan writing and it is therefore possible that Yang rdzong was Yar dzong in the original text. If this was Yar dzong this could be identified with Zur po che's birthplace in North West Khams. See Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991, map 7, G21.

receives the first impression of A ro as a person. During his stay in Chos skor glong thang, A ro's behaviour is reproachable and it is criticised by the local monastic community.⁴⁰¹ Once arrived in Chos skor glong thang A ro instead of joining the community of monks who lived there, decided to dwell at the foot of a stūpa. Every morning, instead of purifying his body through the normal ablutions he spat on the floor, and at night he blocked the door of the monastery by sleeping on the doorway. All these acts are later justified through a symbolism that seeks to explain A ro's peculiar actions. Accordingly, to live at the foot of the stūpa is meant to symbolise the support of the Three Jewels, to spit saliva purified his internal afflictions, his blocking the door of the monastery at night served to protect the spiritual community that lived in this place.⁴⁰²

Successively, through a demonstration of fabulous magical powers he proves his value and restores his reputation also in the eyes of the community of monks.⁴⁰³ Then, A ro meets Dgongs pa gsal and has a discussion with him that results in A ro's important decision to become a monk.⁴⁰⁴ Even in this context, however, the master shows the arrogant side of his character. The biography records his dialogue with the abbot who is trying to persuade him to take monastic vows:

Bla chen said: "Do not engage in crazy actions, engage in learning and reflecting. Take instead the monastic vows and maintain them!"

⁴⁰¹ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 4v:6.

⁴⁰² *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 4v:5-5r:4. "De nas chos skor glong thang sgron ma'i gnas su gshegs nas lam nyes de lta bu spyod pa mdzad de/ /mchod rten gcig gi rtsar bzhugs nas nyin bzhin khurus kyi dod por kha nas mar chu mthungs kyi bshos/ /mtshan bzhin gnas kyi sgo 'phred bcad kyi nyal/ /de dag kyang brdar bstan pa yin te mchod rten gyi rtsar sdod pa ni rgyab dkon mchog ma gtad na bde bya ba yin/ /khurus khong du byed pa ni nang gi nyon mongs pa dag dgos bya ba yin/ /nub mo sgo 'phred bcad nas nyal ba ni gnas na bzhugs pa'i lam gnas pa'i dge 'dun gyi bar chad bsrung pa yin no".

⁴⁰³ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 5r:5-6r:1. "De nas btsun pa rnams la sdzu [rdzu] 'phrul bstan par bzhed nas/ /khong gis shing 'thur gtang pa'i lag cha thams cad bor nas byung pas/ /khong gis rgya gad dang chas te g.yang la bskyur snyam pa la/ /'di skad tu 'gyur bzhengs pa/ /'khor 'das sems kyi rol snang la/ /bden par bzung du dngos po med/ /rang ngo rang gi shes tsam na/ /'gro drug g.yang la nyam ming/ /'khor ba'i dam grog y.yang sa nas/ /mya ngan 'das pa'i thang chen rnyen/ /ces gsungs pa dang ngam grog dang g.yang sa kun thang mnyam por song skad/ /der btsun pa kun ya mtshan skyes so/ /yang nyin gcig chu 'chur gtang pas chu ba'i lag cha thams cad bcad nas byung ste/ /yang khong gis chu bskyur dgos snyam pa na/ /'khor ba'i rgya mtsho gting ring pas/ /dug lnga'i 'dam las thar dus med/ /skye rgas [rga] na mchi ['chi] 'i chu rgyun de/ /shes rab me yis skams na skoms/ ces gsungs pas chu'i tshogs thams cad ye med par gyur te lung pa thams cad skam por gyur skad/ /der yang btsun pa rnams ngo mtshar chen po skyes so/ /de la sogs pa sdzu [rdzu] 'phrul gyi spyod pa ya mtshan du gyur pa mang po mdzad de".

⁴⁰⁴ The biography does not say where A ro meets Dgongs pa rab gsal, so one presumes that he reaches Dan tig.

A ro, hearing this replied: “The white lion of the snow and the king of dogs (*ku ku ra dza*) from the village have a similar voice, but there is a big difference [in the way] they subdue [other animals] through their strength. The small bird that roams at the foot of the mountains and the great Garuḍa that soars high in the sky both [know] how to use their wings, but soaring high in the sky is greatly different [from roaming at the foot of the mountain]. I [realised] that appearance is without substance, you have a lower intelligence and cling to words. We are both practising the supreme goal but [our] fruition is greatly different.”⁴⁰⁵

Again the abbot repeats his request, and again A ro replies arrogantly. Nonetheless, in the end, he resolves to take the monastic vows for the benefit of all sentient beings. He thus receives the monastic name Ye shes ’byung gnas.⁴⁰⁶

This concludes the first part of Section 2, and his life as a monk begins.

Part two:

After he has taken vows in front of the same Dgongs pa gsal, A ro decides to listen to the dharma from different masters in order to grasp the essence of all their instructions. He thus becomes a disciple of Gnyags Jñānakumāra from whom he receives empowerments and the esoteric name Rdo rje snon po. He also studies under Spa gor Vairocana, Kha che Ye shes rdo rje and G/Snyan chen

⁴⁰⁵ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 6r:2- 6v:1. “*De nas der yang ma bzhugs par gshegs pa dang mkhan po bla chen dgongs pa gsal dang 'byal [mjal] bas/ /bla chen gyi zhal nas smyon thabs kyi spyod pa de lta bu ma mdzad par chos la thos bsam yang mdzod/ /rab tu byung la sdom pa yang bsrungs gsungs pas/ /gangs kyi seng ge dkar mo dang/ /grang gi ku ku ra dza gnyis/ /rang skad 'don par 'dra legs te/ zil gyis gnon par khyad par che/ /ri rtsibs 'grim pa'i byed chung dang/ /nam 'phangs gcod pa'i khyung chen gnyis/ /'dab gshogs rlob par 'dra lags te/ /nam 'phangs gcod par khyad par che/ /nga snang la rang bzhin med pa dang/ /khyod blo dman tshig la zhen pa gnyis/ /don mchog bsgrub par 'dra lags te/ /'bras bu thob par khyad par che/ /zhes gsungs pas”.*

⁴⁰⁶ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 6v:1- 7r:3. “*bla chen po ngo mtshar skyes te/ khyod skyes bu khyad par can du 'dug pas 'gro ba'i don byed dgos pa yin/ /de'i phyir na 'gro ba dang par bya zhing nyes spyod mi dge ba'i tshogs spong pa la 'jug par bya ba'i ched tu rab tu byung pa byed dgos pa yin pas khyed rab tu byung zhig /'bras bu gsang sngags kyi theg pa'i sgo nas don byed pa la slob ma dkyil 'khor gyi lam du 'jug par bya ba'i phyir dbang dgos pa yin pas dbang bskur zhus shig /gzhan dag yid ches par bya ba'i phyir chos nyan dgos pa yin pas mkhan pa rnam kyi spyan mngar [sngar] chos nyon la thugs dgongs bsdur cig gsung pas/ /snar gyi tshigs bcad rnam yang gsungs pa dang bla chen po sngangs pa ni/ /slob dpon nyid thabs khyad par can gyis 'gro ba'i don du bstan pa'i bya ba mdzad pa la dgongs nas/ /bla chen dgongs pa gsal nyid kyi spyan mngar rab tu byung ste bsnyen pa rdzogs pa mdzad nas ming yang dge slong ye shes 'byung gnas zhes btags so”.*

Dpal dbyangs.⁴⁰⁷ He understands that even if their methods are different, their meaning is the same. The following *pecha* is completely devoted to these four masters' eulogy of A ro's understanding of the Dharma.⁴⁰⁸

Then he moves to the mountain Drang srong gtum pa lta bu. Here, he perceives an apparition of Vajrasattva who gives him instructions and recites a prophecy about his pending journey to the monastery of Thebs sku/skyu stag mo. At this monastery, he composes instructional texts and preaches to his students.

Part Three:

Part three consists of five lists of teachings that A ro bestowed to each of his four main disciples (Ya zi bon ston, Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab, Drum shing shes rab smon lam and Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khur) as well as the exoteric teachings that he imparted to the general public.⁴⁰⁹ This section is very long⁴¹⁰ and it concludes with the aspiration prayer:

“May my Dharma arise from the depths of devotion! May the [Dharma] sons who hold the lineage through such devotion, obtain power over their [own] life (time)! May they, in their old age, grow new teeth!”⁴¹¹

Section Three: the master's death

⁴⁰⁷ The latter two teachers remain unidentified. However, both Gnyags and Vairocana lived at the time of King Khri srong lde btsan in the eighth century. Therefore, it seems probable that Kha che Ye shes and S/Gnyan chen Dpal also lived around that period.

⁴⁰⁸ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 7r:3- 7v:3. “*de nas slob dpon chen po snyags dznyā na ku ma ra la dbang rnam rdzogs par zhus te gsang mtshan rdo rje snon po ces bya bar btags so/ /de nas slob dpon chen po pa kor [gor] bai ro tsa na dang/ /kha che ye shes rdo rje dang/ /snyan chen dpal dbyangs la sogs pa mkhas pa mang po la mnyan nas thugs dgongs bsdur bas/ /tshig gi sgras dang mtshon tshul gyi byed pa la cung zad ma mthun yang yang dag pa'i don la mthun par la bcad de dgongs pa gcig tu rtogs nas mtshan yang shes rab can rang 'byung gi ye shes bya bar btags so/ /slob dpon bai ro tsa na'i zhal nas 'di sprul pa'i sku yin gsung/ /gnyags dznya na'i zhal nas sa brgyad non pa'i byang chub sems yin gsung/ /gnyan chen dpal dbyangs gyi zhal nas sa dang po bden pa gzigs pa'i byang chub sems dpa' yin gsung/ bla chen dgongs pa gsal kyi zhal nas 'phags klu sgrub kyi sprul pa yin gsung/ /kha che ye shes rdo rje'i zhal nas rdo rje sems dpa'i sprul pa yin gsung/ kha gcig ni 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi sprul pa yin par bzhed do”.*

⁴⁰⁹ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 11r:3-4. “*Thun mong spyi la ji ltar gdams pa'i gdam lugs bstan pa [...]*”.

⁴¹⁰ This record of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas' instructions is analysed and compared with other records in the section dedicated A ro's teachings below.

⁴¹¹ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 12r:3-6. “*De yang slob dpon gyi zhal nas nga'i chos la mos pa gting nas skyed cig /de ltar mos pa'i sgo nas rgyud pa 'dzin pa'i bu de dag kyang mnga' gnyes par gyur cig /rgan khar se'u skye bar gyur cig /ces gsung nas smon lam btab pa yin ste”.*

This section, the shortest of the three, describes the death of the master. Death, for A ro, is merely the end of the physical body. Since it is only an outward phenomenon, with no intrinsic reality, the perception of A ro's death is only subjective, dictated by the witnesses' different levels of understanding. Therefore, each of his disciples perceived it in a different way. To Ya zi bon ston and other disciples from Khams, he died in a cave while he was in the state of indivisibility from Samantabhadra. According to Zang dkar mdzod khur, he died without leaving any remainder while in the state of indivisibility from Vajrasattva. A ro himself proclaimed that, following his death, he would obtain the body of light.⁴¹²

The last three lines before the end contain another two witnesses of his passing away. The author of the biography seems to have added these in order to refute them and restore A ro's reputation from what he possibly considered to be two not very positive accounts. The text says:

According to Ru snyang chen he appeared directly in the *vidyādhara* level, but this is not the case. According to Ru Padma he [left behind] the remaining aggregates, but this also is not [the case].⁴¹³

This section concludes the *A ro ye shes 'byung gnas kyi lo rgyus*. Right after these two accounts we read the word “it ends” (*sdzogs s+ho*)⁴¹⁴, but the text does

⁴¹² *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 12v:1- 13r:3. “*Tha ma mthar 'gyur gyi lo rgyus la sku gang du gshegs shing ji ltar gshegs pa'i tshul ni/ ya zi bon ston la sogs pa khams kyi slob ma rnams na re khams kyi leng ta phug tu phung po lhag ma med par kun tu bzang po'i dbye ba med pa'i ngang du sangs rgyas pa yin gsung skad/ /zangs ka mdzod khur na re nga'i 'phren gyi brag phug tu phung po lhag [sic] na [med] ru rdo rje sems dpa' dang gnyis su na [med] par sangs rgyas nas da ltar yang sprul pas sems can gyi don sna tshogs mdzad kyi bzhugs gsung ngo/ /slob dpon nyid kyi zhal nas/ drum shing dang rngog legs pa'i shes rab la nga 'di nas shi 'phos nas rab dga'i 'dzin rten gyi khams su da lta'i kun rdzob kyi ming 'di nyid nye ba'i gzung ste ye shes 'byung gnas 'od ces bya bar sangs rgya bar 'gyur zhes gsung pa lags skad/ /de ltar slob ma rnams kyis so sor rang rang gis mthong tshul mi 'dra bas tha dad tu gzigs kyang rgyud tha dad med pa la sprul pa so sor snang pa yin pas gang du mthong yang 'gal ba med de don la chos nyid mnyam pa nyid kyi ngang du sangs rgyas lags so”.*

⁴¹³ *A ro'i lo rgyus*: 13r:3-4. “*ru snyan chen bzhin du rigs 'dzin gyis la dngos su snang pa yang ma lags/ /ru pad ma bzhin du phung po lhag ma dang bcas pa yang ma yin no”.* Dying leaving remainders symbolizes an imperfect attainment of Buddhahood. It is possible that also the author considered the *vidyādhara* level also to be a step below perfect Buddhahood. Still, the specific reason behind these statements is not altogether clear.

⁴¹⁴ Misspelling for *rdzogs s+ho*.

not conclude here. After the end we find another folio that informs us of other different accounts of A ro's birth.

THE OTHER STORIES

The final folio relates eight other stories of A ro's birth, or more precisely of his first appearance in Tibet. Before commentating on them, I shall give here a translation of this short addition.

In general, there are many discrepancies in this biography of the master A ro. One tradition asserts that he appeared all alone as a child from an empty road at the main gate of Khams where there were many merchants.

Another tradition talks about his appearance saying that a nun from that same place (i.e. Khams), called Gsal spyin ma, went to take [some] water and [seeing him] hidden among the leaves in a forest without father or mother, took him and fed him.

Another story asserts that he was born as the bastard child of a maid.

Again, another story says that he was found alone as a child in the middle of a battle among Chinese, Tibetans and Uigurs, and that later he was adopted by the Tibetans.⁴¹⁵

[...]

Another story says that he was found all alone as a child by the storekeeper of the monastic community of Sol nag thang pa of Yar lung.⁴¹⁶

[...]

⁴¹⁵ The following story is difficult to understand. A possible translation could be: "Another story maintains that he was found when a mule and a white mule went to Zag." However, if this is the case 'bro must be changed into 'phro and dred into dre. (or Another story says that he was found by an idiot from 'Bro and a black idiot who had come to Zag?) "'bro dred po dang dred nag gis zag la phyin pas rnyed pa'i lugs kyang 'dug". *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 13v:4-5.

⁴¹⁶ Here follows another story whose meaning is not clear. It is possible that the redactor of the *Lo rgyus* copied this part from a ruined manuscript, because he seems unable to provide all the words, and instead he substitutes them with dots.

Another tradition says that he was the son of the father A ro Shag snying and the mother Sog ma Dpal sgron.

Another claimed that after the master Śāntideva passed away, in his succession of rebirths he was reborn as the son of the king Ajātaśatru.⁴¹⁷

There are many other [stories] that disagree among themselves and say that he had neither father or mother, that he had both father and mother, that he had no father but that he had a mother, and so forth.

Therefore it can certainly be said that he was a *nirmāṇakāya*.⁴¹⁸

It is not clear why the redactor/author decided to report, at the end of the biography, a further eight stories about A ro's birth. None of them sheds a particularly good light on A ro. The majority stress his uncertain origin. It is possible that they were added for the sake of completeness or seek to make the reader understand how unreliable they are. By reproducing them en bloc, the text weakens their authority.

Thiesen noticed that some of the confusion in A ro's dates may well spring from the fact that there were two A ros:⁴¹⁹ one who lived in the eighth century and one

⁴¹⁷ I understand the Tibetan “shan ta de ba” to be Śāntideva. Yet this causes a chronological problem. Therefore, either Shan ta de ba does not refer to the Mahāyāna philosopher or the person who authored this story made a mistake. In all likelihood the author of this last folio was not the same who penned the *A ro'i lo rgyus*.

⁴¹⁸ *A ro'i lo rgyus*: 13r:4-15v:1. “*Spyir slob dpon a ro'i lo rgyus 'di la ma mthun pa mang du 'dug /kham s ky i rgya sgo chen mo na tshong pa mang po yod pa'i shul nas bu chung gcig tu byon pa'i lugs kyang 'dug /yang gnas de nyid ky i dge slong ma gsal sbyin ma zhes bya bas chu len du phyin pas nags ky i gseb shing lo'i khud na pha ma med pa'i bu chung gcig 'dug pa blangs nas gsos pas de la byang ba'i lugs kyang 'dug /khol mo la nal phug [phrug] tu byon par 'dod pa'i lugs kyang 'dug /rgya bod hor gsum 'thab pa'i dbus nas bu chung gcig rnyed pa bod kyis blangs nas gsos pas de la byon pa'i lugs kyang 'dug /'bro dred po dang dred nag gis zag la phyin pas la kha nas rnyed pa'i lugs kyang 'dug /yar lung ky i dge 'dun sol nag thang pa'i gnyer pas bu chung gcig rnyed pa'i lugs kyang 'dug /rtsang gi stag la la 'og gnas brtan skyo ba skyes nas thos bsam mdzad cing bsgom bsgrub la gshegs nas khams su byon pas de la byung ba'i lugs kyang 'dug /pha a ro shag snying dang ma sog ma dpal sgron gnyis ky i bur 'dod pa yang 'dug /slob dpon shan ta de ba shi 'phos nas rgyal pa ma skyes dgra'i sras su skyes pa skyeb brgyud pa'i lugs kyang 'dug /spyi pha ma gnyis ka med pa'i 'dod pa dang/ /gnyis ka yod par 'dod pa dang/ /pha med ma yod par 'dod pa la sogs pa mi mthun pa mang du gda'o/ /des na sprul pa'i sku yin par nges gsung so”.*

⁴¹⁹ Thiesen, 2009:57. She found this earlier A ro in Dietz's *Die Buddhistische Briefliteratur Indiens*. Dietz found him as one of the four people that King Khri srong lde btsan sent in quest for teachings together with Vairocana, Ska ba dpal brtsegs and Klu'i rgyal mtshan. Thiesen

who was the author of the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*. It is therefore possible that some of the stories do not refer to the same A ro. In particular, the fourth story which recounts a war between Chinese, Tibetans and Mongols may well point to the eighth-century-A ro rather than to the author of the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*.⁴²⁰

The *DNg* reports a version of A ro's origin that is similar to the second of these stories:

A-ro had been an incarnation. He assumed the appearance of a small boy concealed in the sand near the Riñ-mo spring. A royal nun saw him there, having come there for a walk, she thought that "people might start gossiping, if I were to take the child with me out of mercy". She reported the matter to an official of the locality, who said to her: "Well, poor thing! Take him!" She took the child. He lay down like a corpse, and emitted the sound of "A-A", because of this he was called 'A-ro'.⁴²¹

The *A ro'i lo rgyus* is included in volume one hundred and seven of the *Rnying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog). According to the statement at the beginning of this volume the texts in this tome were taken from the writings of Rta ston Jo yas (1163-1236) and Rta ston Gzi brjid. The writings of these two men derived from the words of Zhig po bdud rtsi.⁴²² Zhig po bdud rtsi therefore, might have transmitted the *A ro'i lo rgyus* to Rta ston Jo yas (1163-1236) and Rta ston Gzi brjid and one or other of them wrote it down. It is possible hence that this second story took this new shape during the one hundred and ninety-three years that elapsed between Zhig po bdud rtsi's death and the birth of Gzhon nu dpal. All considered, however, it seems more likely that one of the redactors of this text added this final section. Zhig po bdud rtsi and his disciples could have

notices that while Dietz remains uncertain about the identification of this A ro, Stein associates him with the author of the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*, so mistaking the two Aros.

⁴²⁰ It is possible that this occurrence refers to the series of battles, started around 736, fought between the Chinese Tang Dynasty of Xuanzong (685-762) against the confederacy of Tibetans and Western Turks. The confederacy was in fact able to gain territory in Western Sichuan and Qinghai. I thank Dr. Palumbo for pointing this out to me.

⁴²¹ Roerich's translation. Roerich, 1979: 999-1000. *DNg*, 887:1-3. ("A ro ni sprul pa'i sku ste/ chu mig ring mo'i bye gseb tu bu chung du sprul nas bzhugs pa la/ lha btsun ma cig khams bseng du phyin pas mthong/ snying rje yang khyer phyin na ya kha byung gis dogs nas/ gnas gzhi'i dpon la 'di 'dra ba zhig 'dug smras pas/ 'o na snying rje long la shog zer bas blangs/ ro 'dra bar nyal zhing kha nas a a zer bas a ror btags").

⁴²² See fn. no. 390.

no benefit in writing this addition. The volume where A ro's biography is found was added to the *Rnying ma bka' ma* collection in the 1999 edition. This was edited by the disciples of 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan (1929-1999) and Mun sel Rin po che (1916-1994). It is not included in any earlier version of this collection. It seems probable therefore, that it was one of these students who included this last folio.

In the following section, I seek to identify the people that appear in the biography and place them within their historical context.

The Historical Figures in the A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas kyi Lo rgyus

To contextualise the work of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, we need two pieces of information: first, the historical period in which he lived; second, the doctrinal framework that the Rnying ma tradition ascribes to him. Without them, our understanding of A ro's teachings would remain very limited.⁴²³

The *Lo rgyus* is not concerned with the historical time of the events, but it mentions historical people; it also provides a good doctrinal framework. First, I shall identify and discuss, one by one, the personalities included in the *Lo rgyus*; that is, A ro's spiritual friends, his masters and disciples and place them in their historical context. Second, I shall define A ro's temporal context.

Not all of the figures reported in the *Lo rgyus* are identifiable or datable. Still, many permit us to narrow down the historical period in which A ro lived.

The first reference to historical persons is to the spiritual friends:⁴²⁴ Seng ge rgyal ba'i sras and Yang gong Ye shes g.yung drung.⁴²⁵ While the first is not

⁴²³ Thiesen already analysed the persons cited inside this biography and reached the same conclusions as I about the time period in which A ro possibly lived. I repeat the analysis here to make it available to the reader.

⁴²⁴ Strictly speaking, the first figure to appear is Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khur. He is the one who questions A ro at the very beginning of the biography and to whom the master narrates his life. He is mentioned again later, among the main disciples to whom A ro bestows his teachings.

clearly identifiable, the name of the second appears in several works as one who kept alive the monastic vows during the period of fragmentation. The accounts concerning this period and the names of the men involved in the “Rekindling of the flame” are subject to variation. In general lines the story narrates that three monks – Gtsang Rab gsal of Rgya rab pa, Śākyamuni of Gyor stod and G.yo dge ’byung of Drang chung mdo – escaped Central Tibet due to Glang Dar ma’s Buddhist persecution, bringing with them Buddhist scriptures. Having finally settled in A chung gnam rdzong⁴²⁶ a young man came to ask them for ordination. This man received the monastic name of Dgongs pa rab gsal.⁴²⁷ He established his temple at Dan tig (A mdo) and helped others to take monastic vows. It seems that, at first, six men – The six men of Khams (*kham pa mi drug*) – gathered around him.⁴²⁸ At a later stage, another group of men came from Central Tibet to receive monastic vows. This second group is usually known under the name of “the ten men of Dbus Gtsang” but, as Stoddard noticed, the number of men (as well as their names) changes according to the source.⁴²⁹ The name of Yang gong Ye shes g.yung drung, spelled Spa gong Ye shes g.yung drung,⁴³⁰ features in one or the other of these two groups of men, though generally speaking, he belongs to the first list of six Khams pa disciples. The *Sba bzhed zhabs brtags ma* lists him as one of a group of thirteen men from Dbus and Gtsang who went to Mdo smad to receive ordination.⁴³¹ The *MNy* on the other hand, considers Spa gong one of

Here I decided to start the analysis with the next two figures, so that Cog ro can be discussed together with the other disciples of A ro.

⁴²⁵ A ro’s biography spells his name “Yang gong Ye shes g.yu drung” (*A ro’i lo rgyus*, 3v:3), but it seems probable that it is a corruption of Yang gong Ye shes g.yung drung.

⁴²⁶ See Stoddard 2004:60-61 for a discussion on the location where the three men settled. It seems that Tibetan scholars often reported that the three men stopped in Khams. This mistake might be due to the fact that several works recorded that the three men stopped in Mdo khams, yet the place where they stopped at last, ’A chung gnam rdzong, is in nowadays A mdo near Dan tig where Dgongs pa rab gsal then established his temple and community.

⁴²⁷ Although this narrative is generally accepted, not all Tibetan scholars agree upon it. Nel pa paṇḍita said that Dgongs pa rab gsal was not ordained by these three men. See Gurung, 2011:290 *Ne’u chos ’byung*, 1987:122-4 (15v:7-16r:1). For a short discussion about Dgongs pa rab gsal see below.

⁴²⁸ This group is also sometimes called “the Six Early Sog mo” or the “Six Zog mo”, or “Btsun pa mi drug”. See Stoddard, 2004:68-9.

⁴²⁹ Stoddard, 2004:73-4. See also the *Red Annals*: “*Dbus gtsang gi mi lnga’am drug gam bcur grags pa rnam rab tu byung*” *Deb ther dmar po*. Tshal pa kun dga’ rdo rje. 1981. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 56:7-8.

⁴³⁰ The syllables *spa* and *ya* look similar in dbu med script, so it is possible that this variation derives from a scribal mistake. I thank H. Blezer and U. Roesler for reminding me of this.

⁴³¹ See *Sba bzhed zhabs btags ma*, 87:3-8 “*phyis klu mes la sogs pa mi bcu gnyis lam nas log pa gcig dang bcu gsum ’ong/ grum ye shes rgyal mtshan la sgro ma ’dzu shri/ de la klu mes shes rab tshul khrims/ sum paye shes blo gros/ ’bring ye shes yon tan/ rab shi tshul khrims ’byung gnas/*

the Six men from Khams who came before the arrival of the ten men from Dbus Gtsang.⁴³² According to the same source, it was not Dgongs pa rab gsal who ordained Spa gong and the other five Khams pa men, but Grum Ye shes rgyal mtshan.⁴³³ Ne'u paṇḍita, on the contrary, affirms that it was Spa gong who ordained Grum Ye shes rgyal mtshan.⁴³⁴ The *Red Annals* records that Spa gong and Grum Ye shes were ordained together and that they, in turn, imparted the monastic vows to the group of “Ten men from Dbus and Gtsang”.⁴³⁵ Mkhas pa lde'u's *Lde'u chos 'byung* maintains that among the six Khams pa men four became scholars, one of these being Spa gong.⁴³⁶ Gzhon nu dpal reports that Spa gong was the first man to receive the monastic vows from Dgongs pa rab gsal. After him he lists nine other men who received ordination. But although the list thus comprises ten masters, it does not seem to refer to the “Ten men of Dbus and Gtsang”. Several of the names of the ten men he records are the same as those that Mkhas pa lde'u includes in the list of six. Gzhon nu dpal does not write the names of the ten men from Dbus and Gtsang but only informs us that they were led by Klu mes.⁴³⁷ Namgyal Nyima Dagkar reports that while this

sma byan rin po che/ bod dge yon tan/ yang gong ye shes g.yu drung/ lo ston rdo rje dbang phyug/ tshong khe shes rab seng ge/ lag bde dge snyen gcig rnam's 'ongs [...]”.

⁴³² Stoddard, 2004:68-9. *MNy*, 445:5-8. “[...] *ming rin po che ye shes rgyal mtshan tu btags/ des khams pa mi drug rab tu byung ba yin no/ ming ni spa gong ye shes g.yung drung 'bar/ rin chen gsal gnyis btsun pa re byung/ phyis mkhan [po yang byas] za ye shes seng ge dang/ lce shes rab byung chub gnyis ni mkhas btsun ldan pa yin*”.

⁴³³ *Ibidem*.

⁴³⁴ Ne'u chos 'byung, 1987:128 [17r:6] “*de'i che yang ye shes g.yung drung gis/ grum ye shes rgyal mtshan rab tu byung ste*”. See also Stoddard, 2004:69. She tries to make sense of Ne'u paṇḍita's account by means of the *MNy*'s statement that fifteen years after Grum's ordination of Spa gong, the latter – having become learned – taught the *vinaya* to Grum. Ne'u however clearly says that Spa gong gave the monastic vows to Grum and not that he simply taught him the *vinaya* at a later stage.

⁴³⁵ *Deb ther dmar po*, 56:8-9. “*Des spa gong ye shes g.yung drung/ grum a tsa ra ye shes rgyal mtshan/ des dbus gtsang gi mi lnga'am drug gam bcur grags pa rnam's rab tu byung*”.

⁴³⁶ *Lde'u chos 'byung*. 1987. *Rgya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa*, Lhasa: Bod ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang, 156:11. “*de'i rjes la khams pa mi drug gis bla chen sdom pa blangs te/ swa yar gnyis/ ja cog gnyis/ 'al snubs gnyis te drug go de rnam's kyi nang nas mkhas pa mi bzhi byung ste/ spa gong / 'al lam pa/ gnubs dang / cog ro de bzhi'i slob ma se btsun dang gar mi'o*”. See also Stoddard, 2004:72.

⁴³⁷ *DNg*, 60:3-7. “*de ltar dam pa'i spyod pa de lta bus dad pa skyes nas/ spa gong ye shes g.yung drung zhes bya ba de la bor mang po dang bcas nas dan tig tu byon pa dang/ bla chen pos dam pa'i chos 'dul ba nas gsungs ba'i bslab pa'i gzhi rnam's brjod pas/ rang nyid kyi spyod lam de lta bus g.nong zhing dgyod nas tshul bzhin du rab tu byung ste/ de'i rjes su par gnas brtan grags pa zhes bya ba rab tu byung ste/ Spa par gnyis so/ de bzhin tu za pa grags pa dang btsun chen shes rab 'byung gnas gnyis te/ jo cog gnyis so/ de bzhin du bzhad dpal gyi rdo rje zhes bya ba dang srag ba rgya msho zhes bya ba gnyis te/ bzhad srag gnyis so/ 'bal ba rdo rje dbang phyung dang bsnu's lab shi dpal gyi dbang phyug gnyis te/ 'bal bsnu's gnyis so/ jong mchog chos skyong dang 'tshur shes rab mchog gnyis te/ zong 'tshur gnyis so/ 'tshur gyi mkhan bu klu mes shes rab tshul khirms la sogs pa dbus gtsang pa rnam's yin no*”. Roerich, 1979:66.

master is called Spa gong in Buddhist sources, he is known as Ya gong in Bon sources. He adds: “While Buddhist sources all make Ya gong into an ordination disciple of Bla chen, the Bon sources agree that Bla chen belonged to the ordination lineage that descended from Ya gong”.⁴³⁸ Several scholars propose that the Bon pos’ narrative of their ordination lineage was constructed so as to demonstrate that: a) their monastic lineage predates the Buddhist one, and b) the latter is derived from the Bon po monastic lineage.⁴³⁹ In order to do this, Bon po historians used Buddhist histories, names etc. and reinserted them (modified or unmodified) in their own narratives. Dagkar’s identification of Spa gong with Ya gong presents some difficulty in this respect. In fact, while the full name of this master in Buddhist sources is Spa gong Ye shes *g.yung drung*, in Bon sources it is Ya gong Ye shes *rgyal mtshan*. *G.yung drung* is the very signal that this man was a Bon po. It is thus difficult to explain why Bon sources, instead of taking advantage of this connection, decided to overlook it and even change the two final syllables to *rgyal mtshan*. Therefore, it is unlikely that the two were meant to be the same person.⁴⁴⁰ In sum, Yang/Spa gong Ye shes *g.yung drung* is mainly presented as one of the earliest men who reached Dan tig to take ordination. He is considered to be either the teacher of Grum Ye shes *rgyal mtshan*, or his student. Sometimes they are said to be fellow students and teachers. Grum Ye shes *rgyal mtshan* was born in 865 and died in 935.⁴⁴¹ We can therefore conclude that Yang/Spa gong also lived some time around the second half of the ninth century and the first half of the tenth.

⁴³⁸ Namgyal Nyima Dagkar 1998:9.

⁴³⁹ Gurung, 2011:283; Roesler, 2015:435.

⁴⁴⁰ Gurung, in comparing the Bon and Buddhist ordination narratives, drew a comparison between a quarrel that arose among two groups of ordained monks in Bon and Buddhist sources. In Bon sources Ga chu and ’Pham shi quarrelled with Ya gong Ye shes *rgyal mtshan* and Lde btsun. In Buddhist sources the two factions were represented by Grum Ye shes *rgyal mtshan* and Snubs Dpal gyi dbang phyug. Although there is not enough evidence to identify the Bon Ya gong Ye shes *rgyal mtshan* with Grum Ye shes *rgyal mtshan*, the similarity of the narrative seems to suggest this connection. Yet, while this supposed parallelism might do away with the identification between Ya gong and Spa gong, the problem seems to enter once again from the backdoor. Gurung notices: “Gtsug phud tshul khriims was also known as Grum shing slag can and Grum *g-yung drung* ’bar. In the same way, Grum shing slag was the nickname of Grum Ye shes *rgyal mtshan*, who was also Grum ’bar ba byang chub in Tibetan Buddhist sources.” (Gurung, 2011:289). If Grum Ye shes *rgyal mtshan* is also called Grum *G.yung drung* ’bar, it is possible that Ya gong Ye shes *g.yung drung* was effectively Spa gong Ye shes *g.yung drung*. The *Red Annals* also seems to point to such a possibility by calling Spa gong “Spa gong Ye shes *g.yung drung* ’bar” (See fn. no.435 for reference). Still, Buddhist sources clearly refer to Spa gong and Grum Ye shes *rgyal mtshan* as two different persons, one being the disciple and the second the master.

⁴⁴¹ Richardson, 1957:60-2. See also Gurung, 2011:293.

Dgong pa rab gsal is a key figure in Tibetan Buddhism. He held a key position in the small group of men who saved the monastic transmission during the period of fragmentation. His activities are recorded in several *chos 'byungs*. The different accounts resemble each other although many details vary depending on the source. Both in Buddhist and Bon works Dgongs pa rab gsal is often described as a son of a Bon po, who wished to take ordination and keep alive the monastic lineage. Bon po and Buddhist histories disagree about the nature of his affiliation. Bon pos maintain that he was ordained into the Bon *vinaya*, Buddhists link him with the *Mūlasarvāstivāda vinaya*. The affiliation of Dgongs pa rab gsal is particularly important because it was he (and the men he ordained) who transmitted the monastic vows to the future generations of Tibetans. Therefore, if, as Bon po sources say, Dgongs pa rab gsal received Bon monastic vows, all the men after him were not ordained into a Buddhist but a Bon *vinaya*.⁴⁴² In this way the Bon pos' narrative demonstrated that their monastic code was older than that of the Buddhists, and that Buddhists were actually perpetuating the Bon monastic code. Gurung however points out that early Bon sources do not make use of the name Dgongs pa rab gsal. It is only from the 14th century onwards that this name is associated with the Bon master Shes rab tshul khrims (also called Ya zi bon ston).⁴⁴³ Once the identification of Shes rab tshul khrims with Dgongs pa rab gsal had taken place, the appropriation of the Buddhist narrative strengthened. Buddhist sources, however, record the “Rekindling of the Flame” (*me ro 'bar*) well before the 14th century. This demonstrates that Bon pos' histories have little

⁴⁴² For the *Ryal rabs bon kyi 'byung gnas* version of this narrative see Martin, 2001:100-3. The principal figure of the “Rekindling of the Flame” of the Bon monastic code was Mu zi gsal bzang (see also Gurung, 2011:283-5). From him the vows went through a short lineage which reached Shes rab tshul khrims (i.e. Dgongs pa rab gsal). Then the story proceeds according to the general lines of the Buddhist narrative, with men from Gtsang and Dbus coming to him to ask to be ordained. Having bestowed the vows, Dgongs pa rab gsal reminds the men that they are ordained into the Bon monastic *vinaya*. Successively, the same monks who asked Dgongs pa rab gsal for ordination, decide to ask for it again from Atiśa in order to become holders of a Buddhist *vinaya* lineage, but Atiśa advises them to keep the Bon ordination they already received. The episode closes with the sentence “Therefore, the Vinaya (‘Dul-ba) vows also go back to Bon”. Martin, 2001:102.

⁴⁴³ Gurung in his study (Gurung, 2011:285-6) found out that the first text to associate Shes rab tshul khrims/Ya zi bon ston with Dgongs pa rab gsal was the *Srid rgyud kha byang chen mo*. According to the Bon tradition this was a *gter ma* text. Blo gros thogs med rediscovered it in the fourteenth century. As Gurung demonstrated, this text had a great resonance among Bon scholars. Therefore, from the 14th century to the present day Dgongs pa rab gsal, Ya zi bon ston and Shes rab tshul khrims have been considered the same person. See for example the 20th century work, *Legs bshad rin po che'i mdzod spyid ldan dga' ba'i char* in Karmay, [1972] 2001:106-7.

claim on the Buddhist *vinaya* transmission. Nonetheless, it is true (as A ro's biography shows) that men with Bon po names frequently occur in these early Buddhist histories. It seems probable that at that time there were frequent interactions between these two groups. Oral history might have committed to memory the names of these Bon po masters that, in later times, were inserted in newly fashioned narratives.

Dgongs pa rab gsal acted as a bridge between the Early and the Later Diffusion. For this reason, scholars paid much attention to his dates in the hope of creating a feasible timeframe of people and events. Many turn to the dates in the *DNg*. Here, Dgongs pa rab gsal is born in the rat water year and passes away in the pig wood year. The *rang byung* cycle varies. Most scholars now agree that it must refer to the years 832 and 915.⁴⁴⁴ Yet, Gurung demonstrates that these dates still pose some problems. Bu ston affirms that Dgongs pa rab gsal ordained the ten men from Gtsang and Dbus, among whom we find Klu mes Shes rab tshul khrim.⁴⁴⁵ Richardson establishes Klu mes' dates to be 950-1025. If this is true Dgong pa rab gsal died before Klu mes' birth. Van Schaik stated that Ne'u paṇḍita's *chos 'byung* and Bsod nams rtse mo's *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo* testify that one or two generations⁴⁴⁶ intervened between Dgongs pa rab gsal and the ten men of Central Tibet. This would explain the gap that separates Dgongs pa rab gsal's dates from those of the ten men he reportedly ordained. The ten men from Dbus and Gtsang would have been ordained by Grum/Drum Ye shes rgyal tshan after

⁴⁴⁴ See Richardson, 1957: 57-78; Watson, 1985: 265; see also Van Schaik's blog <http://earlytibet.com/2009/01/09/the-decline-of-buddhism-iv-keepers-of-the-flame/>. Stoddard in her article reports that 832-915 are the dates accepted by most scholars though she does not commit herself to any specific date and simply reports the possible options one by one (Stoddard, 2004:63-4).

⁴⁴⁵ Gurung, 2011:293. *Bu ston chos 'byung*, 133v:2-5: “*De nas lo lnga lon pa dang/ dbus nas klag pa lam pa klu mes tshul khrim shes rab 'bring ye shes yon tan/ rag shi tshul khrim 'byung gnas/ rba tshul khrim blo gros / sum pa ye shes blo dang lnga/ gtsang nas 'gur mo rab kha ba lo ston rdo rje dbang phyug /shab sgo lnga'i tshong btsun shes rab seng ge/ mnga' ris pa 'o brgyad spun gnyis/ bo dong ba u pa de dkar dang lnga ste/ mi bcu 'das nas gtsang la bka' drin zhus pas/ nga rgas nas mkhan bu mi skyongs bas/ bla chen po zhus gsungs pas zhus pas/ ngas bsnyen rdzogs byas nas lo lnga las ma lon pas mkhan po mi btub gsung ba la/ gtsang na re/ dmigs bsal la btub pas gyis gsungs nas/ bla chen pos mkhan po byas/ gtsang dang g-yos/ las slob dang gsang ston byas/ smar dang hwa shang gis kha skong byas te/ thams cad chig rdzogs byas so”.*

⁴⁴⁶ We saw before that Ne'u believed that Spa gong ordained Grum Ye shes, therefore as van Schaik points out, there would be two generations between Dgongs pa rab gsal and the ten men.

Dgongs pa rab gsal's death.⁴⁴⁷ Although it would be difficult to reconcile Dgong pa rab gsal's dates with the different accounts of the "Rekindling of the Flame", van Schaik's theory seems to be the most probable.⁴⁴⁸

A ro's biography does not tell for how many years A ro lived. Still, considering the long travels described in the *A ro'i lo rgyus*, he must have been about twenty when he took ordination.⁴⁴⁹ In order to meet Dgongs pa rab gsal, he should have been born in 895 at the latest. This date allows him to have met Dgongs pa rab gsal and Yang gong Ye shes g.yung drung, and, stretching the date of death a little, Ya zi bon ston and Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod. At the same time, it would be too late for him to have received instructions from Vairocana and Gnyags Jñānakumara and a little too early to be the teacher of Atiśa's disciple, Rngogs Legs pa'i shes rab.

I have already discussed Pa gor Vairocana and (G)Snyags Jñānakumāra in Chapter Two. Both lived during the reign of Khri srong lde btsan (740-798) and therefore date to the eighth century.

Kha che rdo rje should be identified with the Kashmiri Jñānavajra. This is probably the same Kashmirian Jñānavajra who started the lineage of the

⁴⁴⁷ See <http://earlytibet.com/2009/01/09/the-decline-of-buddhism-iv-keepers-of-the-flame/>. Van Schaik draws this conclusion by an examination of Nel pa paṇḍita's *chos 'byung* and Bsod nams rtse mo's *Chos la 'jug pa'i sgo*.

⁴⁴⁸ It should be noticed that most sources do not consider the ten men to be the first people Dgongs pa rab gsal ordained. As we saw above, Grum Ye shes rgyal mtshan or Spa gong Ye shes g.yung drung are usually among the first disciples of Dgongs pa rab gsal and they are often said to have ordained the ten men. Although some sources also seem to claim that the ten men also met Dgongs pa rab gsal, it seems possible that their aim is to confer more prestige on this group. Moreover, as I shall discuss below, Bu ston also claims that Dgongs pa rab gsal is a direct teacher of Ya zi bon ston. Yet, some sources declare that Ya zi bon ston is a teacher of Rong zom, who lived in the 11th century. Thus it seems that Bu ston indiscriminately connected all the men involved in the "Rekindling of the Flame" directly to Dgongs pa rab gsal.

⁴⁴⁹ The biography, however, is unreliable on several points. The authors wrote it with a precise intention, so we cannot take all the data it provides for granted. At any rate, if we follow what the biography says, A ro stayed seven months and seven years in An chung yang rdzong and one year and one month in Yang rtser lung (these periods of time – seven/seven-one/one – already look a bit suspicious). Thus, after eight years and eight months he went to Chos skor glong thang. Although the biography talks of A ro's deeds when residing at this monastery it does not say how long he stayed there. We can however imagine that all in all A ro's travels lasted around ten years.

Cakrasaṃvara transmitted in the Shangs pa Bka' brgyud.⁴⁵⁰ He translated the *Cakrasaṃvara* entitled *Ṣaṃvarakhasamatantrarāja* into Tibetan (*Dpal bde mchog nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po*). Still, we do not know when this scripture was translated, nor we possess any biography of this master at present. Therefore, his identity remains rather obscure.⁴⁵¹

G/Snyan chen Dpal dbyangs is the last master cited in the *Lo rgyus*. Dunhuang manuscripts speak of him frequently as the author of *Mahāyoga* texts.⁴⁵² Karmay noticed that, in sources dating from the eleventh century onwards, G/Snyan chen Dpal dbyangs is the disciple of both G/Snyags Jñānakumāra and Gñub chen sangs rgyas ye shes.⁴⁵³ On the basis of later sources, Karmay dates him to the end of the ninth century.⁴⁵⁴

The *A ro'i lo rgyus* speaks of four main students: Ya zi bon ston, Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab, Drum shing shes rab smon lam and Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod.⁴⁵⁵

Ya zi bon ston, as Thiesen noticed, features in most sources as a disciple of A ro ye shes 'byung gnas.⁴⁵⁶ The *MNy* places him in a short lineage of masters who received teachings of A ro.⁴⁵⁷ The *DNg* also identifies him as a student of A ro

⁴⁵⁰ Ehrhard, 2010:134, fn.11. He draws this information from Sna tshogs rang grol. 1982. *Bcom ldan 'das dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i spyi bshad theg mchog bdud rtsi'i dga' ston ye shes chen po'i sman mchog*, Bir: D. Tsondu Senghe, 13:1-4 (*kha che 'i paN+Dita Jnya na bdzra rang bsgyur di mdzad pa'i brgyud pa ni* [...]).

⁴⁵¹ I could not find Kha che rdo rje (Jñānavajra) in Naudou, 1980. According to the TBRC Kha che rdo rje had a disciple called Grags 'byor shes rab who lived in the 11th century. It is not clear where this piece of information comes from. The only work to which TBRC refers seems to be the 20th century *Ming mdzod*, which has restricted access. The situation is further complicated by the existence of another famous translator by the name of Jñānavajra, who seems to be Indian however and not Kashmiri. Grags 'byor had also another teacher, the famous Rin chen bzang po (996-1055). It should be noticed that Rin chen bzang po was a student of Atiśa and that the *A ro'i lo rgyus* refers to Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab, another of the students of Atiśa. If the connection between Grags 'byor shes rab and Kha che rdo rje would prove to be correct, Kha che rdo rje would have lived around the end of the tenth, beginning of the 11th century.

⁴⁵² See van Schaik 2008.

⁴⁵³ Karmay, 2007 (second edition): 11/ 67-69.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁴⁵⁵ The list of A ro's disciples varies according to the sources. See also Thiesen 2009:77-79.

⁴⁵⁶ Thiesen, 2009:41, fn. 67.

⁴⁵⁷ *MNY*, 491:11. This list is reproduced below in Table 6.

Ye shes and a teacher of the famous Rong zom (1012-1088).⁴⁵⁸ Gzhon nu dpal here reports the lineage of the Mind Class which Rong zom received: Vairocana, G.yu sgra snying po, Bla chen po Dgongs pa gsal, Grum shing Glag can, [G]Snubs Dpa' brtan, Ya zi bon ston, Rong zom pa.⁴⁵⁹ From this lineage we learn that three masters intervened between Gongs pa rab gsal and Ya zi bon ston. Still, Bu ston writes that Ya zi bon ston was a disciple of Dgongs pa rab gsal and in that function agreed to ordain a certain 'Bre gzhon tshul.⁴⁶⁰ If one follows Bu ston's account literally, Ya zi bon ston must have lived before 916 (Dgongs pa rab gsal's year of death), and at the same time be still alive to teach Rong zom in the middle of the 11th century. It seems more probable that Ya zi bon ston was not a direct disciple of Dgongs pa rab gsal but a member of Dgongs pa's line of transmission. The *DNg'* narrative, maintaining that Ya zi bon ston and Dgongs pa rab gsal were divided by two generations, would account for this discrepancy. The name of Ya zi bon ston appears in Bon sources as another name of Shes rab tshul khriims. Shes rab tshul khriims is the same man whom, as we have seen, Bon pos identified with Dgongs pa rab gsal from the 14th century onwards.⁴⁶¹ This means that Bon pos considered Ya zi bon ston and Dgongs pa rab gsal to be the

⁴⁵⁸ *DNg*, 150:4-5 “*Yang ldan glong thang sgron mar a ro ye shes 'byung gnas shes bya ba grub pa'i skeyes bu zhig byung ste [...] des cog ro zang dkar mdzod khur dang/ ya zi bon ston la gsungs te*”. Roerich, 1979:167. Nonetheless, Ya zi bon ston does not feature in the short biography of Rong zom, written by the latter's disciple Rdo rje dbang phyug (11th cent.), the *Dge ba'i bshes gnyen chen po chos kyi bzang po'i rnam par thar pa*.

⁴⁵⁹ *DNg*, 150:3-4: “*Yang bai ro tsa nas g.yu sgra snying po/ des bla chen po dgongs pa gsal des grum shing glag can/ des snubs dba' brtan/ des ya zi bon ston/ des rong zom la bshad de sems sde'i brgyud ba gcig go*”. Roerich, 1979:167. Thiesen found the same list in the *Phur pa rong lugs* and the *Chos 'byung dris lan nor bu'i phreng ba*. She quotes from the *Phur pa rong lugs*: “*bai ro tsa na'i chos thams cad kyang/ bai ros g.yu sgra snying po/ des bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal/ des grum shing slag can nas gnubs dpa' brtan/ ya zi bon ston/ des rong zom la bshad de*”. Thiesen, 2009:41, fn. 67.

⁴⁶⁰ According to Bu ston Ya zi died before he could ordain 'Bre gzhon but the latter still considered himself ordained because of Ya zi's assent to his request. *Bu ston chos 'byung*, 136r:1-2. “*Yang 'bre gzhon tshul gyis khams su sdom pa len du phyin pas/ khams kyi khri kha mkhar snar bla chen po'i mkhan bu ya zi bon ston bya ba dang mjal nas/ bka' drin zhush pas der bas zer nas sdom pa sbyin long med par 'das pa dang/ ngas bsnyen rdzogs kyi sdom pa thob pa yin te/ mkhan bu na re der bas gsungs ba'i phyir ro*”. Bu ston, just before this passage, narrates a very similar story, where another disciple of Dgongs pa rab gsal, Kre bo Mchog bla, agreed to ordain A zha Ye shes g.yung drung but he died before he could perform the ceremony. Still, A zha believed himself to have become a monk because Kre bo Mchog bla had given his assent. Although Bu ston calls both Ya zi bon ston and Kre bo Mchog bla disciples (*mkhan bu*) of Dgongs pa rab gsal, it seems clear from the context that some generations must have passed between these two masters and Dgongs pa rab gsal. In fact, this narrative appears after the ten men of Dbus and Gtsang had already gone back to Central Tibet and established their monasteries and traditions.

⁴⁶¹ See Gurung, 2011:283-286. This master's name is subject to a great deal of spelling variations, some of these are typical Buddhist and others typical Bon. For a list see Gurung, 2011:330&303.

same person. Still, there is no early source to corroborate this association and no Buddhist work has ever called Dgongs pa rab gal “Ya zi bon ston”.

Rngog Legs pa’i shes rab was a disciple of Atiśa Dīpaṃkara Śrījñāna (middle of the eleventh century). This association tallies with the report included in the *DNg* that Atiśa went out of his way to praise A ro’s work.⁴⁶² Yet, as Thiesen states, the *A ro’i lo rgyus* remains the only source that speaks of Rngogs Legs pa’i shes rab as a disciple of A ro.⁴⁶³

Drum shing Shes rab smon lam⁴⁶⁴ features in Ne’u paṇḍita’s *chos ’byung* and in Bla ma Bsod nams rgyal mtshan’s *Rgyal rabs gsal ba’i me long* as belonging to a later group of five men who went to A mdo to receive ordination. These five met the previous group from Dbus and Gtsang on the road. The ten men offered to impart ordination to the later group of five, so to save them the journey to Khams.⁴⁶⁵ However, the five refused this proposal and went to Khams.⁴⁶⁶ Ne’u paṇḍita adds that these five took ordination from Grum Ye shes rgyal mtshan.⁴⁶⁷ The first three became monks; Grum shing Shes rab smon lam and Nyang ban

⁴⁶² We find this connection between A ro and Atiśa both in the *DNg* (888:2-3; Roerich, 1989:1001) and in Atiśa’s biography *Jo bo rje lha gcig dpal ldan a ti sha’i rnam thar bla ma’i yon tan chos kyi ’byung gnas sogs bka’ gdams rin po che’i glegs bam* at page 199: “de’i dus su bod ston rnams kyi bod du byas pa’i bstan bcos ’ga’ zung gzigs su phul bas gzhan la ma mnyes/ rnal ’byor a ros mdzad pa’i theg chen rnal ’byor la mnyes te/[...]”.

⁴⁶³ Thiesen, 2009: 44, fn. 81.

⁴⁶⁴ Grum and Drum are both attested variants for this name.

⁴⁶⁵ As discussed above, although the sources say that Dgongs pa rab gsal and his disciples resided in Khams, their actual abode was in A mdo. Here I keep using Khams because Ne’u refers to Khams.

⁴⁶⁶ See Sørensen, 1994:450-1. Bla ma bsod nams rgyal mtshan. 2009. *Rgyal rabs gsal ba’i me long* in *Sa skya’i chos ’byung gces bsodus*, Beijing: krung go’i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 337:9-11: “de’i rting la phyin pa lnga ni/ mtha’ bzhi rgyal ’phags pa/ rag shi tshul khrims ’byung gnas/ sba btsun blo gros dbang phyug/ skyes legs nyang bran chos skyabs/ grum shing shes rab smon lam mo/ de ltar sngon la khams su sdom pa len du phyin pa’i mi bdun po des sdom pa blangs nas phyir ’ongs pa dang/ rting la phyin pa’i mi lnga po dag lam la ’phrad de/ gar ’gro dres pas/ khams su sdom pa len du ’gro zer bas/ sngon ma rnams na re/ nged rnams kyi sdom pa gsum ldan du blangs yod pas nged kyi sdom pa phog pas chog thag ring la ’gro mi dgos zer ba la ma nyan par khams su phyin te”. Ne’u chos ’byung, 128-31 (18r:1-4) “de’i ’og tu phyis phyin pa lnga dge slong du byas/ phyi ma (gnyis) dge gnyen du byas so/ de’i ’og tu phyis phyin pa lnga ni/ mtha’ (bzhi) rgyal ba ’phags/ rag shi (chul khrims) ’byung gnas/ rba bcun (blo gros) dbang phyug/ skye legs nyang ban skyabs/ grum shes rab smon lam mo/ de yang nga ma rnams kyi yar byon pa dang/ phyi ma rnams mar bzhud pa lam du phrad nas/ gtol bar dka’ bas/ nged kyi slab pa legs par blangs nas yod kyi/ nged kyi phog pas chog/ yar log byas pas ma nyan/ ’o na nged kyi mkhan po la long (gcig)/ mkhas bcun ’jom pa yin no zhes smras pas”.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibidem*, (18r:5) “Grum (ye shes) (rgyal mtshan) la bka’ drin mnos so”.

Chos skyabs became *dge snyen* (śramaṇa/upāsaka).⁴⁶⁸ Ne’u paṇḍita also says that although Grum shing was a monk, since he concerned himself only with meditation, his school did not spread.⁴⁶⁹ Grum shing Shes rab smon lam also features in the *DNg*. This work too identifies him as one of A ro’s main students.⁴⁷⁰ It is interesting to notice that Gzhon nu dpal considered Grum shing Shes rab smon lam to be a man from Dbus. This seems to corroborate the view that Grum shing was one of the men who went to Eastern Tibet from Central Tibet to receive the monastic vows.

The fourth disciple, Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khur,⁴⁷¹ appears often in the company of Ya zi bon ston. Thiesen notices that, according to the famous Kaḥ thog scholar Tshe dbang nor bu, Atiśa met Cog ro and paid him respect.⁴⁷² Tshe dbang nor bu lived between 1698 and 1755. As far as I know, there is no earlier work to corroborate this view. Moreover, as Thiesen points out, this episode is missing in Atiśa’s biographies. Still, it should be noted that Atiśa arrived in Tibet in the 1040s and Cog ro (together with Ya zi bon ston) is held to have been a teacher of Rong zom (1012-1088). Our evidence therefore points to the 11th century for both Ya zi bon ston and Cog ro.

⁴⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, 130-1 (18r:5) “*de yang rba rag mtha’ bzhi (gsum) gyis dge slong byas/ nyang grum (gnyis) kyis dge gnyen byas so*”.

⁴⁶⁹ Ne’u paṇḍita does not exactly say that he concerned himself *only* with meditation, but the meaning seems to be this nonetheless. *Ne’u chos ’byung*, 130-1 (18r:5) “*grum gyis phyis rab tu byung pa byas kyang/ bsgom bsgrub la gcor byas pas/ sde pa ’phel ba ni cher med do*”.

⁴⁷⁰ *DNg*, 887:6: “*de’i slob ma yang khams kyi ya zi bon ston/ kha rag gi bry sha rgyal bu/ dbus kyi grum shing shes rab smon lam/ gtsang gi cog ro zangs dkar mdzod khur ro*”. Roerich, 1979:1000. Thiesen found his name in *Gu ru bkra shi chos ’byung*, (199:24) which dates back to the nineteenth century. However, the whole section seems to have been taken from the *DNg* and it does not expand our knowledge on this figure.

⁴⁷¹ A ro’s biography mentions Cog ro two times, and it spells his name differently in each. The first time he is called Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khul (1r:3), the second Cog ro Zangs ka mdzod khur (10r:6). In the *MNy*, he is called Zang ka mdzod khur (491:10-11). ’Gos lo tsa ba in his *DNg* calls him Cog ro Zangs dkar mdzod khur. Considering the two versions in the *A ro’i lo rgyus*, it would seem that zang ka is a misspelling of Zang dkar rather than Zang kha. Still, Zang dkar is in modern Ladakh, while this Cog ro is, according to the *DNg*, a man from Gtsang. The Cog ro clan was in fact settled mainly in Upper Gtsang although it seems that it moved from time to time. See Dotson, 2003:184.

⁴⁷² Thiesen, 2009:47, fn. 106. Rig ’dzin Tshe dbang nor bu. 2006. *Rgyal ba’i bstan pa rin po che byang phyogs su ’byung ba’i rtsa lag bod rje lha bstan po’i gdung rab*, Beijing: Krung go’i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 59:25-60-1. “*Jo bo rje bod du byon pa’i skabs [...] a ro’i slob ma zang dkar mdzod khur la yang gus pas phyag mdzad*”.

In summary, most of the people cited in the *Lo rgyus* date to three periods: the 8th century, end of 9th /beginning of the 10th century, and the end of 10th /beginning of the 11th century.

The first set of dates pertains to A ro's main teachers (Vairocana, etc.). It is unlikely that A ro lived in such an early period. In the first place his name does not appear in any sources before the 11th century.⁴⁷³ Second, the *A ro'i lo rgyus* asserts that A ro, in his previous reincarnation, was a monk contemporary with Padmasambhava. Since A ro could not have lived at the same time as his own previous reincarnation, we can rule out the 8th century. The second set of dates is connected with Dgongs pa rab gsal and his close disciple Yang gong Ye shes g.yung drung. Except for the *A ro'i lo rgyus*, there is no other source that attests to A ro's meeting with Dgongs pa rab gsal and Yang gong Ye shes g.yung drung. A ro's name does not appear in the work of Gnubs Sangs rgyas ye shes or in any version of the Ba testament. In the works of Rdzogs chen masters and their adversaries he is connected with the historical context of the 11th century.⁴⁷⁴ Therefore, it seems unlikely that A ro lived in the 9th century. A ro's disciples – Ya zi bon ston and Drum/Grum shing Shes rab smon lam –are said to be among the men who went to Eastern Tibet in pursuit of ordination. Still, Ya zi bon ston was also a teacher of Rong zom, together with Cog ro, in the 11th century. Neither Ya zi bon ston nor Drum/Grum shing shes rab smon lam belongs to the very first disciples of Dgongs pa rab gsal. Hence, they may have lived between the end of the 10th and the beginning of the 11th century. All this points to the end of the 10th/beginning of the 11th century as the period of A ro's lifetime.

⁴⁷³ He is not mentioned either in the *Dbā' bzhed* or in Gñub chen's *Bsam gtan mig sgron*, and up to now no one has found his name inside the Dunhuang material.

⁴⁷⁴ Thiesen has already elaborated on this point, see Thiesen 2009:54-60. Particularly relevant in this case is the critique voiced by 'Gos Khug pa (eleventh century) in his *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor* (22: 2-3). Also the account of Atiśa reading the *Theg pa chen po'i rnal 'byor*, if it proves to be true, would place A ro between the 10th and the 11th centuries. In fact, Atiśa, arrived in Tibet around 1042 and died in 1054. Therefore, A ro must have composed his text before or during this span of time.

Aims and Objectives of the Lo rgyus

The narrative of the *Lo rgyus* is best understood if we position A ro within the prevailing doctrinal context.

Vairocana, Jñānakumāra and Dpal dbyangs lived much earlier than A ro. We must assume that the author of the *Lo rgyus* was aware of this temporal discrepancy, since he placed A ro's previous reincarnation in the 8th century. As Thiesen observed, the *Lo rgyus* claims this teacher-student relationship in order to direct the fame of these masters onto A ro himself.⁴⁷⁵ This does not surprise since most Tibetan biographies seek to eulogie their teachers. In this case, though, the author may well have been inspired by another motive: to map A ro's teachings and lineage within an authoritative framework. It conferred on A ro a very orthodox role within the Rdzogs chen tradition.

Vairocana, Jñānakumāra and Dpal dbyangs are not only famous practitioners. They also form the bedrock for the propagation of the Rdzogs chen teaching in Tibet, especially its oral tradition (*bka' ma*). Many regard Vairocana to have been the founder of Rdzogs chen in Tibet. In Chapter Two we noted that both Vairocana and Sngon Legs grub left for India to receive the Rdzogs chen teachings from Śrī Simha. Only the first received the entirety of the tradition since his companion decided to return earlier to Tibet, only to die on the road. Thus, tradition considers Vairocana to have been the first to introduce Rdzogs chen doctrines to Tibet.⁴⁷⁶ He translated the orally transmitted teachings to a number of students including S/Gnyags Jñānakumāra. The latter, in turn, gave the teachings to Gnyan dpal dbyangs. This connection lends legitimacy to A ro's teachings, drawing on a lineage that goes back to the First Diffusion, and to India itself.

⁴⁷⁵ Thiesen, 2009:55.

⁴⁷⁶ The others being Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra. However, if we follow the story of the *Be ro tsa na'i rnam thar 'dra 'bag chen mo*, while Padmasabhava taught Atiyoga to Vairocana, Khri srong lde btsan preferred to send the latter to receive the teachings directly from India, and later on he asked Vairocana to bestow those on him. Vimalamitra came to Tibet later, at Vairocana's request.

If we bear in mind this focus on the teachings, it is easier to understand the way in which the information within the *Lo rgyus* is distributed. Out of twenty-six folios of biography ten folios are dedicated to A ro's actual life and his previous rebirths, twelve are dedicated to his studies and teachings, two folios to his death and the last two to the other narratives. The 'teaching section' is the longest. After Vairocana, Jñānakumāra and Dpal dbyangs both praised A ro's understanding of the doctrine, the text lists the teachings of A ro. The list is so long and detailed that it must have served a specific function within the narrative. This was to record the valid teachings of A ro's tradition and legitimise them through the aura of the masters associated with the tradition. The list concludes with a dedication prayer aimed at the 'holders of his lineage'. Had the *Lo rgyus* been primarily concerned with A ro's life, such dedication would have been more fitting at the end of Section 3, after A ro's death. It would have been a last salute to his own disciples. In its current location, it would suggest that the *Lo rgyus* serves primarily to establish the orthodoxy of A ro's lineage and teachings: the eighth-century masters confer authority on the teachings included in the list and then, by implication, to A ro's lineage.

Another trope runs throughout the *Lo rgyus*. This is the trope of the crazy yogin.

To begin with, A ro was scornful of monasticism and social rules. Such behaviour would have been deemed unacceptable had the author not applied a symbolic interpretation to his actions. This justifies A ro, not only because it explains to the reader that he meant no evil, but reveals that A ro acted in accordance with his superior understanding, beyond the comprehension of common people. In this way, A ro enters the safe territory of the crazy yogin. In this context, amorality is the display of the realization of non-duality between good and bad, moral and immoral. The author places him beyond judgement and within a well-known and respected tradition.⁴⁷⁷

⁴⁷⁷ The figure of the crazy yogin also found its orthodoxy in the fact that it stemmed from India. One of the first and most famous yogins was Padmasambhava. There are however, a good number of crazy yogins active around the time of A ro too. Among these, Sgam po pa, the so-called "four children of Pehar" and Bla ma Zhang have been studied by Dan Martin. See Martin 1992, 1996a, 1996b. Davidson also dedicates a section to this phenomenon in his *Tibetan Renaissance* (pp. 328-331). In it he reminds us of the popularity that these figures enjoyed and their diffusion: "Many popular religious movements (*rdol chos*) in the eleventh and twelfth

Another reason for the presence of this section in the *Lo rgyus* could be that the author wanted, by recording A ro's roaming, also to provide the reader with a map of the locations and monasteries connected with him.

A ro's decision to become a monk brings him back to the main path and appropriates for himself, as well as his lineage, the authority of the monastic vows.

The role of Dgongs pa rab gsal is decisive in this context. He is recognized as one of the key figures in the preservation of the monastic vows during the period of fragmentation, not only by Rnying ma and Bon po scholars but also among the exponents of the new schools (*gsar ma*).

It is likely that the author considered the two legitimizations complementary. While the reliability of A ro's doctrine is attested through his connection with Vairocana, Jñānakumāra and Dpal dbyangs, the authenticity of A ro's lineage is guaranteed through Bla chen Dgongs rab gsal.

A final note about the author of the *Lo rgyus*. Zhig po bdud rtsi and his disciples wrote down this biography. There are several small factors that seem to indicate that they were also the authors of the biography (i.e. that they created it). Above all, they were the principal heirs of A ro's instructions and therefore would have been the main beneficiaries of the legitimation of the list of texts (very likely the same they practised daily at the monastery). Moreover, the *DNg*'s biography of Zhig po bdud rtsi shows that this master had direct experience with some of the key themes included in the *Lo rgyus*. For instance, the trope of the crazy yogin recalls Zhig po's friendship with Bla ma Zhang. The *DNg* reports how Zhig po bdud rtsi had implicit faith in Bla ma Zhang even before he met him in person. When they did meet, the two became good friends and Bla ma Zhang named Zhig po's monastery "Chos ldings". Out of respect for Zhig po, many people who before slandered Bla ma Zhang changed their minds and paid respect to

centuries drifted back and forth between inspiration, possession, insanity, and religious praxis". Davidson, 1994:330.

him.⁴⁷⁸ Bla ma Zhang's bizarre behaviour is well known.⁴⁷⁹ The *A ro'i lo rgyus*' report of A ro's queer behaviour seems to draw a parallel between these two masters. These two points weight in favour of the hypothesis that Zhig po bdud rtsi (or/and his disciples) were the authors of A ro's biography.

In sum, the *Lo rgyus* aims to place A ro in a context that validates both his teachings and lineage. It also establishes the historical period of A ro's life at the turn of the tenth/eleventh century. I now proceed to A ro's teachings and lineages.

References to A ro's Work

Two manuals of instructions are directly connected to the teachings of A ro. One is found in all *Bka' ma* collections as well as in the *Gdams ngag mdzod*. The other is in the collection of texts practised at Kaḥ thog called *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor*. The first manual is the *Bde khrid*. The annotation next to the title adds the second title of *Rdzogs pa chen po sems sde A ro lugs*. The title of the second manual is the *Rdzogs pa chen po a ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa*. Both texts are very short: the *A ro lugs* is seven folios (fourteen pages) and the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa* is ten folios (twenty pages).⁴⁸⁰ It is difficult to trace the history of the oral teachings that constitute the bedrock of these texts. Their titles are not recorded in sources that predate their written composition. The term *A ro lugs* appears in Si tu paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas' (1700-1774) *Karma kaṃ tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar*.⁴⁸¹ But this does not refer to the *A ro lugs* as a

⁴⁷⁸ *DNg*, 124:5-125:2; Roerich, 1979:139.

⁴⁷⁹ For a study of Bla ma Zhang see Yamamoto, 2012. The extreme behaviour of Bla ma Zhang is well known. Suffice it to say that in the biography of the first Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa it is said that he went to Bla ma Zhang with the purpose to talk to him and calm him down: “The purpose of my coming to dBus, is to fulfil sGom-tshul's command, who had told me that regardless of what might happen to me, I should return from Khams and establish monasteries between gZu and 'Tshur, and offer a hundred volumes written in gold to Dags-lha sGam-po and to ask bla-ma Žaṅ not to cause troubles, which made people displeased. I have come for this purpose.’ He then asked bla-ma Žaṅ not to create troubles. Žaṅ then grasping his (Kar-ma-pa's) finger, danced wildly, and henceforth did not cause trouble.” Roerich, 1979:479-480, *DNy*, 417:3-5.

⁴⁸⁰ The *A ro lugs* is directly followed by a short commentary authored by Mkha' spyod pa, which is three pages long.

⁴⁸¹ *KKTshGy*, 374:4. This title therefore seems somehow connected to the *Khams lugs* as explained in the *MNy*. The *MNy* claims that the *Khams lugs* was derived from the nine mothers

single text but defines it as “The Eighteen Mothers and Sons of the Mind Series” (*Sems sde ma bu bco brgyad A ro lugs*). Hence, if we want to discover the origin and diffusion of these teachings in their oral form, we must seek out other general terms that refer to A ro’s tradition. Thiesen, in her Magisterarbeit, brought together a good number of sources that cite the work of A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas. Her third chapter is divided into four sections. The first discusses two lists of teachings: one, drawn from the *A ro’i lo rgyus*, enumerates the instructions that A ro transmitted to his disciples; the other, taken from Si tu paṅ chen’s *KKTshGy*,⁴⁸² is an outline of A ro’s teachings as the Sa skya master G.yag sde paṅ chen received them. In Section 2, she gives six extracts from Tibetan works that quote portions of the texts attributed to A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas. Section 3 brings together all the references to A ro’s tradition found in a variety of sources. Section 4 focuses on the connection between A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas and the Chinese Chan tradition.⁴⁸³ The issues that I discuss in the current chapter therefore overlap, to some extent, with Thiesen’s exposition of the sources that shaped A ro’s tradition. Thiesen, however, does not establish the relationship between the different pieces of information. Since she focuses on the *Theg chen rnal ’byor*, she does not consult the texts I examine here. In addition, I shall attempt to link up the different pieces and throw evidence from two more lineages into the mix: the lineages of the *A ro lugs* and *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa’i rim pa*. I do this in order to gain a better understanding of the origin of these two methods of meditation.

A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas’ teachings are sketched in several sources. These include A ro’s biography, the *MNy*, the *ChR* as well as the *KKTshGy*. Their

and sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po*. As we know that the *Kun byed rgyal po* contains some of the Eighteen Fundamental Texts it is likely that the two things are somehow related. The *MNy* however, does not attribute this *lugs* specifically to A ro. Therefore I believe that although somehow related to it, the *A ro lugs* that G.yag sde received is neither the *Khams lugs* found in Nyang ral, nor the present text under study.

⁴⁸² It is interesting to notice that Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi ’byung gnas and the famous Kaḥ thog monk Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755) were close associates. Tshe dbang nor bu was a great advocate for the *bka’ ma* teachings and strongly objected to the *gter ma* leadership at Kaḥ thog. It seems probable therefore that Si tu’s interest and the detailed information he gave about these Rdzogs chen *bka’ ma* teachings is to be attributed to his intimacy with Tshe dbang nor bu. For a description of how Tshe dbang nor bu came to be involved in the affairs of the Karma Bka’ brgyud school and his disapproval of Kaḥ thog’s leadership see Ronis, 2009:89-137.

⁴⁸³ Thiesen, 2009:61-88.

accounts, although similar, do not exactly match. Table 4 and Table 5 map the complex links that exist between the different reports:

Table 4: TEACHINGS RECEIVED BY A RO YE SHES 'BYUNG GNAS

<i>From the teacher</i>	<i>Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod</i> ⁴⁸⁴	<i>Karma kaṃ tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar</i> ⁴⁸⁵
Gnyags Jñānakumāra	Rin chen 'phags pa lam bkod pa'i rgyud	Rin chen 'phags lam bkod pa'i rgyud
""	Ye shes 'khor lo gsal ba snying rgyud ⁴⁸⁶	Ye shes 'khor lo gsang ba snying rgyud
""	Rdzogs pa chen po nyi ma'i snying po'i rgyud	Rdzogs pa chen po nyi ma snying po'i rgyud
""	Ye shes gsang ba sgron ma'i rgyud	Ye shes gsang ba sgron ma'i rgyud

Table 5: A RO YE SHES' TEACHINGS⁴⁸⁷

<i>A ro'i lo rgyus</i> ⁴⁸⁸	<i>Me tog snying po</i> ⁴⁸⁹	<i>Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod</i>	<i>Karma kaṃ tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar</i> ⁴⁹⁰
(to <u>Ya zi bon ston</u>) ⁴⁹¹ Rig pa rtsen gyis gzahag pa'i man ngag	Phyi skor	(Khams lugs A ro'i skor:) ⁴⁹²	(From Bla ma Rta ston Gzi brjid) (A

⁴⁸⁴ *ChR*, 393:19- 394:1.

⁴⁸⁵ *KKTshGy*, 280:3.

⁴⁸⁶ The right spelling of this text is *Ye shes 'khor lo gsang ba snying rgyud* as it appears in the *KKTshGy*. This text is found in the *Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*, vol. 6, pp. 31-46:6.

⁴⁸⁷ The names in bold (except for the titles of the four sources – *A ro'i lo rgyud*, *ChR*, etc.) are those titles that we find attested either in the outline of another source listed in this table or in other sources that we shall discuss below.

⁴⁸⁸ All the instructions listed here were given by A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas.

⁴⁸⁹ Neither the *MNy* nor the *ChR* specify to whom these instructions were given. The *MNy* however, reports a lineage right after the four cycles. *MNy*, 491:9-14.

⁴⁹⁰ All the instructions listed here were received or requested by G.yag sde paṅ chen.

⁴⁹¹ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, (Kaṃ thog) 355:4-337:3 [8r:4-9r:3].

⁴⁹² *ChR*, 394:2-10.

		(Phyi skor:) Theg chen rnal 'byor	ro'i chos skor gdams phran rnams:) ⁴⁹³ A ro'i Theg chen rnal 'byor
(to Ya zi bon ston) Rnam rtog rtsad nas gcod pa spu gri lta bu'i man ngag	Nang skor	(Khams lugs A ro'i skor:) (Nang skor) Mdo lung mdo rtsa mdo 'grel pa	(From Bla ma Rta ston Gzi brjid) (A ro'i chos skor gdams phran rnams:) Zhen log sgron
(to Ya zi bon ston) Rang byung gi shes ma shar ba shar rab byed pa'i man ngag	Gsang skor	(Khams lugs A ro'i skor:) (Gsang skor:) •Rin po che gdab spung gi skor •Thun bdun ma	(From Bla ma Rta ston Gzi brjid) (A ro'i chos skor gdams phran rnams:) skyed sgron me
(to Ya zi bon ston) Rtogs par byed pa lta ba'i gdam ngag	Gzer ka che 'bring (la sogs)	(Khams lugs A ro'i skor:) (Gzer skor) Che 'bring chung gsum	(From Bla ma Rta ston gzi brjid) (A ro'i chos skor/ gdams phran rnams:) Man ngag cog bzhag
(to Ya zi bon ston) Ye shes ngos gzung		(Khams lugs A ro'i skor:) (Sde skor) Sde skor bzhi bcu zhe gnyis	(From Bla ma Rta ston gzi brjid) (A ro'i chos skor gdams phran rnams:) Sems sde ma bu bco bryad a ro lugs
(to Ya zi bon ston) Sems gcod gzhag ma ⁴⁹⁴		(Khams lugs A ro'i skor:)	(from Bla ma Lce zhig chen po

⁴⁹³ *KKTshGy*, 380:4.

⁴⁹⁴ Here *gcog gzhag ma* is a misspelling for *cog gshag ma* (The oral instruction which brings about realisation).

		(Sprul skor) A ro sprul pa'i sku ru byon pa'i tshul dang bcas pa'i gdams ngag rnams	shes 'bum) ⁴⁹⁵ Man ngag gdab spungs gnyis kyi dmar khrid
(to Ya zi bon ston) Rin po che nyams kyi man ngag			(from Bla ma Lce zhig chen po shes 'bum) Kun byed rgyal po'i lung dang mdzub khrid
(to Ya zi bon ston) Dka' ba gcod par byed pa la dris lan brgyad kyi gdam ngag			(A ro'i khyad chos rnams) ⁴⁹⁶ Rgya gar mkhas pa bdun brgyud dang Rgya nag mkhas pa bdun brgyud kyi gdams ngag
(to Ya zi bon ston) Tshul bdun gyi sgo nas rtogs par byed pa			(gdams phran) Dgongs don gsal ba'i sgron me
(to Ya zi bon ston) Rin po che dka' gcog kyi gdams pa			(gdams phran) Sgro skur mun sel
(to Ya zi bon ston) Rin po che gzhung srong gi gdams pa			Lo rgyus chen mo khog dbub rgyas bsdus
(to Ya zi bon ston) Rin po che yang zhun gyi gdams pa			Cog ro Zangs dkar la gdams ka tshom

⁴⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, 375:2.

⁴⁹⁶ From here to Gces ston 'phrul gyi lde mig, *KKTshGy*, 281:7-282:1.

(to Ya zi bon ston) Bar do'i gdams pa rnams			(lde mig bzhi skor) Byang chub sems 'grel rin po che lde mig
(to Ya zi bon ston) Ye shes 'khor los 'jug pa'i sgo ⁴⁹⁷			(lde mig bzhi skor) Sgo gsum gtab la 'bebs pa'i lde mig
(to Ya zi bon ston) Sangs rgyas bzhi'i man ngag gis chos nyid lam du bkhyer (khyer) ba'i rim pa. ⁴⁹⁸			(lde mig bzhi skor) Zhus len gal chen gnad kyi lde mig
(to Ya zi bon ston) Ye shes bzhi'i man ngag gis lta ba			(lde mig bzhi skor) Gces ston 'phrul gyi lde mig
(to Ya zi bon ston) Ye shes sems las byung ba'i man ngag gis sems kyi yon tan			Khyad khams 'phrul gyi lce mig ⁴⁹⁹
(to Ya zi bon ston) Nges pa'i zhus lan rig pa'i bsam brtan gyis the tshom gyi gags bsal			Sgo yong gzer mig drug pa'i man ngag
(to Ya zi bon ston) Byang sems rkyen dbang du mi gtang pa'i man ngag gis sdug bsngal chos nyid [du bstan]			Sems kyi mun sel sgron ma
(to Ya zi bon ston) Rin po thog babs kyi man ngag gi tshe 'di la sangs rgyas kyi dgongs pa			(A ro phyi skor cha lag) Theg pa chen po rnam par

⁴⁹⁷ Thiesen hypothesizes that this work (in Tibetan *ye shes 'khor los 'jug pa'i sgo*) could be identified with the *Ye shes 'khor lo gsang ba'i rgyud*, a teaching that Jñānakumāra transmitted to A ro. This text is available within the *Rnying ma brgyud 'bum* with the full title of *Bdud brtsi rin po che ye shes gsang ba'i 'khor lo'i sgo*. See Thiesen, 2009: 43. If Jñānakumāra really composed this text and it arrived to A ro, this could be a hint that the *Lo rgyus* was right in identifying him as one of A ro's teachers, and the *KKTshGy*'s claim that A ro's teachings derived from those of Jñānakumāra could be confirmed.

⁴⁹⁸ *lam du bkhyer*, misspelling for *lam du khyer*.

⁴⁹⁹ *KKTshGy*, 282:2-282:4.

			mi rtog pa'i man ngag rnam
(to Rngog legs pa) ⁵⁰⁰ Rin po che rang dbang gi thugs kyi man ngag gis man ngag dka' (bka') tshoms kyi 'phrang ⁵⁰¹			(Gsang skor) 'Phrul kyi lde mig
(to Rngog Legs pa) Sa zin pa gsum gyis sku gsum ngo sprad			(Gsang skor) 'khrul 'khor lde mig
(to Rngog Legs pa) Man ngag lce rdor gyis la bzla ⁵⁰²			(Gsang skor) 'Dra ba'i man ngag
(to Rngog Legs pa) Yig phra'n sum bcu rtsa gnyis kyis rtogs pa'i gdeng bskyed pa			(Gsang skor) gzer kha che chung
(to <u>Drum shing Shes rab smon lam</u>) ⁵⁰³ Stong thun bcwo brgyad kyi gdam ngag			(Gsang skor) Mdo bzhi'i gdams pa
(to Drum shing) Snang srid ji ltar byung pa la snang byung lugs kyi sde skor			(Gsang skor) sang tshul nyi ma'i sgron
(to Drum shing) Grub mtha' bstan la 'bebs pa la snang ba bcu bdun gyi sde skor ⁵⁰⁴			(Gsang skor) Gdams pa'i khrid yig skor gsum
(to Drum shing) 'Khrul pa bstan la 'bebs pa la tshad ma brgyad gyi sde skor			Gal 'gegs gser gyi lde mig rnam
(to Drum shing) Sems dang 'byung pa tha mi dad			'Phrul gyi lde mig bzhi skor 'jug sgo

⁵⁰⁰ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, (Kaḥ thog) 337:5- 338:3 [9r:5- 9v:3].

⁵⁰¹ *dka' tshogs*, possibly a misspelling for *bka' tshogs* (The narrow path of the doubts and difficulties through the precious instructions of the freedom of the mind).

⁵⁰² This translation is tentative. The original reads *lce rdor*, here I rendered it as *lcags rdor*.

⁵⁰³ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, (Kaḥ thog) 338:3- 339:6 [9v:3- 10r:6].

⁵⁰⁴ Here Thiesen also noticed a text with a similar title, the *lta ba'i rim pa yi man ngag snang ba bcu bdun*. Its translation has been attributed to the eighth-ninth century master Ska ba dpal. See Thiesen 2009:45.

pa bsgrub pa la 'byung pa drug rtsis kyi sde skor			
(to Drum shing) Lta bsgom spyod pa gsum gtan la 'bebs pa la dpe dgongs drug gi sde skor			
(to Drum shing) (Inga bsdus kyi sde skor lnga:) Sbubs lnga			
(to Drum shing) (Inga bsdus kyi sde skor lnga:) Kun gzhi'i lnga'i sde lus lnga			
(to Drum shing) (Inga bsdus kyi sde skor lnga:) Bar do lnga'i sde skor			
(to Drum shing) (Inga bsdus kyi sde skor lnga:) Sems nyams lnga			
(to Drum shing) (Inga bsdus kyi sde skor lnga:) Rgyas gdab lnga'i sde skor			
(to Drum shing) (bzhi bsdus kyi sde skor:) Sgron ma bzhi			
(to Drum shing) (bzhi bsdus kyi sde skor:) Bsod bzhi'i sde skor			
(to Drum shing) (gsum bsdus kyi sde skor:) Sgo gsum gtan la dbabs pa			
(gsum bsdus kyi sde skor:) Bca' thabs rnam pa gsum			
(to Drum shing) (gsum bsdus kyi sde skor:) Sku gsum gyi sde skor			
(to Drum shing)			

(gnyis bsdus kyi sde skor:) Skad gcig ma gnyis			
(to Drum shing) (gnyis bsdus kyi sde skor:) Sems dang snying po dbye ba			
(to Drum shing) (gnyis bsdus kyi sde skor:) Snying po snang tshul gyi sde skor			
(to Drum shing) (gnyis bsdus kyi sde skor:) Dngos snang dbye ba'i sde skor			
(to Drum shing) Phra mo'i gdams pa nyi shu rtsa gcig pa			
(to <u>Cog ro Zangs ka mdzod khur</u>) ⁵⁰⁵ (bzhi lam 'bras bu gtan la 'bebs pa la) gzhi'i dpe chu bdun			
(to Cog ro) Lam gyi dpe chung bdun			
(to Cog ro) 'Bras bu'i dpe chung bdun			
(to Cog ro) 'Khrul pa gtan la 'bebs la 'khrul pa rtsad bcod gdams pa			
(to Cog ro) Dgongs pa 'phrang gi gnad ston pa la dka' tshogs bcu bzhi'i dgongs pa			
(to Cog ro) (lta ba 'jug sgo nyams gzhag spyod pa gsum gyis gtan la 'bebs pa la) Gzer ka			
(to Cog ro) Gzer ka gnad byung gi gdams pa			
(to Cog ro) (lta bsgom spyod			

⁵⁰⁵ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, (Kaḥ thog) 339:6- 341:2 [10r:6- 11r:2].

pa 'bras bu bzhi gtan gtan la 'bebs la) Yi ge med pa'i snyan rgyud ⁵⁰⁶			
(to Cog ro) (bsgom du yod par 'dod pa la) Gzer dmyigs drug pa (bstan)			
(to Cog ro) (bsgom du med par 'dod pa la) Yi ge bzhi skor (bstan)			
(to Cog ro) (lam bar do gcog pa la) Bar do bzhi'i gdams pa (bstan)			
(to Cog ro) (chos nyid brda' yis mtshan pa la) Gyad khams 'prul gyi sde mig (bstan) ⁵⁰⁷			
(to Cog ro) ('khor ba 'jug zlog gi gnad ston pa la) Gsang tshul nyi ma (bstan)			
(to Cog ro) (nyon mongs pa'i sgrib pa gcod pa la) Rig pa rkyang 'ded kyi gdams ngag (bstan)			
(to Cog ro) (shes bya'i sgrib pa gcod pa la) Lta ba'i sde mig (la sogs bstan)			
(to <u>the general public</u>) ⁵⁰⁸ (Sems sde'i skor:) Sems smad beo brgyad las [la] 'grel pa bcwa brgyad kyis gtan la phab pa			

⁵⁰⁶ As Thiesen noticed, this is a tantra of the Man ngag class. (Thiesen, 2009:48, fn. 109). However, this title is quite common and could have easily indicated a different text. I would therefore be cautious to proceed with such an identification until we are better informed.

⁵⁰⁷ Misspelling: *rgyad* for *brgyad* (The magical keys of the eight *dhātus*).

⁵⁰⁸ *A ro'i lo rgyus*, (Kaḥ thog) 341:3- 343:1 [11r:3-12r:1].

(public) (Sems sde'i skor:) Gnyan chen gyi sgron ma drug la 'grel pa drug ⁵⁰⁹			
(public)(Nyams su len pa bsam brtan gyi sde:) Theg chen rnal 'byor ⁵¹⁰			
(public) (Nyams su len pa bsam brtan ⁵¹¹ gyi sde:) Sems nyams rnam gsum			
(public) (Nyams su len pa bsam brtan gyi sde:) Lung man ngag mdor bsduds			
(public) (Nyams su len pa bsam brtan gyi sde:) A ti yo ga'i man ngag bsdus pa'i bsam bstan			
(public) (Nyams su len pa bsam brtan gyi sde:) Yul kun la 'jug pa'i bsam bstan			
(public) (Nyams su len pa bsam brtan gyi sde:) Rin po che spungs pa'i bsam bstan			
(public) (Nyams su len pa bsam brtan gyi sde:) Bsgom lung gsum pa'i bsam brtan			
(public) (Zab pa lde mig gi skor:) 'Khrul 'khor lde mig gi rtsa 'grel			
(public) (Zab pa lde mig gi skor:) Lta bsgom spyod pa gsum gyi lde mig			

⁵⁰⁹ It is possible that here Gnyan chen stands for Gnyan dpal dbyangs. His “Six Lamps” were famous and their texts have been found among the Dunhuang manuscripts. See Karmay, 1986: 67-68, and van Schaik, 2004. We find again a reference to the six lamps in the section of the ‘general teachings’. This could mean that A ro’s commentaries could have been considered more esoteric than Dpal dbyangs’ originals.

⁵¹⁰ *Theg chen rnal 'byor* is a condensed title for the *Theg pa chen po'i rnal 'byor*.

⁵¹¹ I believe this to be a misspelling for *bsam gtan* (*dhyāna*); in fact throughout the text this word is spelled thus.

(public) (Zab pa lde mig gi skor:) Gal gegs gser gyi lde mig			
(public) (Zab pa lde mig gi skor:) Theg dgu la shan 'byed pa'i lde mig			
(public) (Zab pa lde mig gi skor:) Rgyad khams 'khrul gyi lde mig ⁵¹²			
(public) (Dkar ba gcog pa sgron ma'i skor) ⁵¹³ Dpe don gsum gyi sgron ma			
(public) (Dkar ba gcog pa sgron ma'i skor) Lta ba rin po che'i sgron ma			
(public) (Dkar ba gcog pa sgron ma'i skor) Sems kyī mun sel sgron ma			
(public) (Dkar ba gcog pa sgron ma'i skor) Sgrol skur sel ba'i sgron ma			
(public) (Dkar ba gcog pa sgron ma'i skor) Bdud rnam sel ba'i sgron ma			
(public) (Dkar ba gcog pa sgron ma'i skor) Gsang tshul nyi ma'i sgron ma			

Table 4 reveals some noteworthy information. First, both *ChR* and *KKTshGy* contain the same list of teachings that A ro received from Gnyags Jñānakumāra. The *Rin chen 'phags lam bkod pa'i rgyud* and the *Ye shes gsang ba sgron ma'i*

⁵¹² Again *rgyad* for *brgyad*.

⁵¹³ This list of six lamps does not fully coincide with the titles we know for the “Six Lamps” of Dpal dbyangs. Only the second (the *Lta ba rin po che'i sgron ma*) perfectly corresponds to the list presented in the *Bstan 'gyur*. The fifth (*bdud rnam sel ba'i sgron ma*) could be associated with the *Mtha'i mun sel sgron ma*, but it is hard to identify the others.

rgyud are included in the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*. The *Ye shes 'khor lo gsang ba snying rgyud* is contained in the *Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*. The *Rdzogs pa chen po nyi ma snying po'i rgyud* is not directly identifiable. The *MNy* and *A ro'i lo rgyus* both report that Gnyags Jñānakumāra was one of A ro's teachers but neither specifies the nature of his instructions.

One general issue pervades Table 5. With the sole exception of the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*, we do not know whether these names refer to fully formed teachings or to short instructions (or advices) that A ro gave to his students in the moment of need. These sources do not inform us as to nature of the teachings/ instructions they enumerate. From the high number of titles we received it seems more likely that A ro formulated only a few complete teachings. The others must have been short instructions. The *MNy* and *ChR* divide A ro's work in cycles. The *MNy* records four cycles of instructions (*phyi skor*, *nang skor*, *gsang skor*, and *gzer ka skor*) without revealing the titles in each cycle. The *ChR* too divides A ro's teachings and instructions into cycles, while the *KKTshGy* only names two of these *skors* (the *phyi skor* and *gsang skor*) and the *A ro'i lo rgyus* refers to none of these cycles.

The *skors* in the *ChR* match those described in the *MNy* but the *ChR* adds another two cycles (*sde skor* and *sprul skor*). It also gives some examples of the kind of teachings included in each cycle. Some similarity exists when the sources describe the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* as belonging to the Exoteric Cycle. The *ChR* cites, as example of the texts included in this cycle, the famous *Theg chen rnal 'byor*. The *KKTshGy* also refers to an Exoteric Cycle, made up of the complete instructions of the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*.⁵¹⁴ The *A ro'i lo rgyus*, whilst not including this cycle, describes the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* as one of the teachings that A ro delivered to the general public (*thun mong spyi*). Our sources seemingly rank the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* as a conventional teaching that is open to everyone.

⁵¹⁴ The *KKTshGy* however differentiates between the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* and its instructions. The first is found inside the general label of *A ro'i skor*, while the second is inside the *phyi skor*.

The Secret Cycle is included in the *MNy*, *ChR* and *KKTshGy*. The *ChR* lists the *Rin po che gdab spungs* and the *Thun bdun* among the titles that form this cycle. The *KKTshGy* also reports the *Naked Instructions of Gdab spungs* (collected twigs?) and the *Rgya gar mkhas pa bdun brgyud dang Rgya nag mkhas pa bdun brgyud kyi gdams ngag* (Instructions [coming from] the Transmissions of Seven Indian Sages and Seven Chinese Sages) among A ro's teachings but not as part of the Secret Cycle. The Secret Cycle, according to Si tu, contains the 'Phrul kyi lde mig (Magic Key), the 'Khrul 'khor lde mig (Key of the Yogic exercises), the 'Dra ba'i man ngag (Key to Similarity), *Gzer kha che chung* (Big and Small [Cycles] of the Nails), the *Mdo bzhi'i gdams pa* (Instructions of the four Sūtras), the *Gsang tshul nyi ma'i sgron* (Lamp of the Sun, the Secret Method) and the *Gdams pa'i khrid yig skor gsum* (Three Cycles of the Instructions' Guidelines). The fourth item in this list, the *Gzer kha che chung*, is clearly not a single teaching since the *MNy* and *ChR* report it as one of the main cycles.⁵¹⁵ Finally, the last title, the *Gsang tshul nyi ma'i sgron* features in the *A ro'i lo rgyus* among the teachings that A ro delivered in public. Thus, the two sources do not only disagree in their categorizations of A ro's teachings but also on their import. The *KKTshGy* present the [*G*]sang tshul nyi ma'i sgron as an esoteric teaching, while the *A ro'i lo rgyus* reports that A ro transmitted it to the general public.

The *Rgya gar mkhas pa bdun brgyud dang Rgya nag mkhas pa bdun brgyud kyi gdams ngag* contains the instructions/teachings that A ro inherited through his own two lineages, the Indian and Chinese transmission. Kapstein also believes the *Thub bdun ma* to refer to these same teachings. I shall return to them in a little while.

The *ChR* calls the set of six cycles *Khams lugs* or *A ro'i skor*. It seemingly considered the whole of A ro's teachings and instructions to go by the name of *Khams lugs* or *A ro'i skor*. Similarly, the *KKTshGy* refers to an *A ro'i chos skor*. This, however, is less overarching in reach than the *A ro'i skor* of the *ChR*. It includes only four subtle instructions (*gdams phran rnams*): *Theg chen*

⁵¹⁵ The word "nails" (*gzer kha*) in this context refers to important points that a meditator should keep in mind while he practices. Therefore, from its name, we can hypothesize that this cycle was made of relatively short instructions that guided the practitioner through difficult points in his meditation.

rnal 'byor, *Zhen log sgron* (Lamp that Eliminates Revulsion) *Skyed sgron me* (Lamp that Generates Faith) and the *Man ngag cog bzhad* (Instructions of Freely Resting) together with the *A ro lugs*. The *A ro lugs*, in this context, stands for the Eighteen Texts of the Mind Series. The Eighteen Texts of the Mind Series, as several other titles of instructions mapped in Table 5, are not the work of A ro. Thiesen sought to identify which of the cycles and groupings connected to A ro's tradition contain teachings that we can safely attribute to A ro alone as opposed to those which A ro received from someone else.⁵¹⁶ It seems to me, however, that the issue lies in the fact that different sources included such texts among A ro's own works.⁵¹⁷ It is probable therefore that A ro had a specific method to explain these famous teachings. Perhaps he created new instructions in order to aid students who needed help in order to understand or practise the main teachings of the Mind Series. In this event, the instructions belonging to the same group would be all interconnected.

The *KKTshGy* adds little of substance about the teachers who transmitted/received A ro's instructions that is not already included in the *A ro lugs* and *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*. It lists the following masters: Bla ma Rta ston Gzi brjid, Bla ma Lce zhig chen po shes 'bum and G.yag sde paṅ chen. We already met with Rta ston Gzi brjid in his role as one of the disciples of Zhig po bdud rtsi. Bla ma Lce zhig chen po shes 'bum resists identification.⁵¹⁸ G.yag sde paṅ was an eclectic master who studied with different teachers from all Buddhist traditions, though he was probably closer to Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290-1364), Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339) and Zur Byams pa seng ge.⁵¹⁹ I examine the biographies of Rta ston, Lce ston and G.yag sde further below when

⁵¹⁶ Thiesen, 2009:83-4.

⁵¹⁷ The *A ro 'i lo rgyus* also lists teachings that we know are not A ro's. Some of the "Lamps" in the list above are in fact usually attributed to Dpal dbyangs.

⁵¹⁸ In the lineages of A ro's traditions, we often encounter a certain Lce ston Rgya nag who is also an associate of Zhig po bdud rtsi. However, the chance that this Lce zhig chen po shes 'bum is Lce ston Rgya nag is very small. These two masters seem only to come from the same clan (Lce) and to have lived around the same period.

⁵¹⁹ Roerich, 1979:149 and Kaptein and Dorji, 1991: 666. The dates of Zur Byams pa seng ge are unknown. Bdud 'jom rin po che says that G.yung ston pa received the entire Rdzogs chen Sems sde from Zur Byams pa. We saw that the Zur family was the main keeper of A ro's tradition. Therefore, G.yung ston pa must have received A ro teachings from Zur together with all the rest of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde tradition. Byams pa seng ge's life will be expounded later on in this thesis.

I turn to the analysis of A ro's lineages. I have already examined the people introduced in the *A ro'i lo rgyus*; the *ChR* does not reveal the recipients of A ro's instructions. The *MNy* introduces a lineage for A ro's four cycles (*skor*). This runs as follows:

Table 6: TRANSMISSION OF A RO'S TRADITION ACCORDING TO THE *MNy*

1. Zangs ka [dkar] mdzod khur
2. Kha rag Gru sha rgyal bu
3. Ya zi bon ston
4. Gru gu Glog chung
5. Kong rab mtsho
6. Ltam dar ma
7. 'Tshe me Byang chub rdo rje
8. Sba sgom Bsod snying
9. Kha rag sgom chung
10. Ba rang sgom chen
11. Ma gcig nyang mo
12. Dam pa Śāk rgyal⁵²⁰

We have already met some of these masters in Chapter 2: [Cog ro] Zangs dkar mdzod khur (no. 1), Ya zi bon ston (no. 3), Sba sgom Bsod snying (no. 8) and Kha rag sgom chung (no. 9). These I put aside for the time being.

I propose now to turn to other sources that record A ro's teachings as they passed from one master to another. Typically, they do not contain much detail, but merely record some of the transmissions in which A ro's tradition is cited. These references reveal that, besides the names of the teachings discussed in Chapter One, there are several other titles connected to A ro's instructions. They are variously called *A ro thun bdun* (Seven Sessions of A ro), *A ro khrid mo che*

⁵²⁰ This Dam pa Śāk rgyal is the same that according to the *MNy* created the *Khams lugs*, although as we have seen, this *Khams lugs* is not the tradition of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas but comes from the transmission of the *Nine Mother and Sons of the Kun byed rgyal po*. A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas appears in the lineage of the *Nine Mother and Sons of the Kun byed rgyal po* but before the teaching assumed the name of *Khams lugs*. *MNy*, 491:15-492:1.

(Great Instructions of A ro), *A ro'i rgyud chung gi lung* (Short *Tantra* of A ro), *A ro gsang skor* (Secret Cycle of A ro), *A ro snying thig* (Heart Essence [of the Instructions] of A ro), *A ro skor* (Cycle of A ro), and so on. It is not altogether clear how these titles, and the teachings or instructions they name, are related. Still, it is worth our time to examine the contexts in which these titles appear: first, it complements the information we already hold about A ro's teachings and instructions; second, they allow us to catch a glimpse of the history of their transmission. It also consents us to compare the information preserved in these sources with the lineage data that the text itself contains.

A ro khrid mo che is the name most frequently used to refer to A ro's instructions. Its earliest appearance, as far as I know, is in Klong chen pa's *Lo rgyus rin po che 'phreng ba*.⁵²¹ Here it occurs inside a long section that recounts the life of one of Klong chen pa's teachers called Gzhon nu rgyal po (1266-1343). Klong chen pa says that Gzhon nu rgyal po, in turn, received the Great Instructions of A ro (*A ro khrid mo che*) from Ye shes mgon po⁵²² and that it led to great improvement in his spiritual practice.⁵²³ The *DNg* reports the same transmission. Here too the teachings of A ro are called *A ro khrid mo che*.⁵²⁴ The term appears again in the autobiography of 'Khrul zhig Sangs rgyas dbon po (14th century).⁵²⁵ Here it is a certain Mar ston grags⁵²⁶ who conferred the teachings now called *Rdzogs chen A ro'i khrid mo che* on 'Khrul zhig Sangs rgyas.⁵²⁷ In addition, when the *DNg* refers to the teachings of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, it calls them twice *A ro khrid mo che*. The term appears first in the transmission from Ye shes mgon po to Gzhon nu rgyal po (which we just discussed). It turns up again in a section devoted to the dissemination of *Gcod* in Tibet. Here, a certain Skal ldan

⁵²¹ Klong chen rab 'byams. 2009. *Lo rgyus rin po che 'phreng ba*, in *Klong chen rab 'byams kyi gsung 'bum*, Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang: Beijing, vol. 9, 33: 20.

⁵²² Dates unknown.

⁵²³ This transmission is also reported in Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung*. See Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:571. Gzhon nu rgyal po is better known under the name of Rig 'dzin Kumārāja. He was one of the main teachers of Klong chen pa. For an account of his life see the *Lo rgyus rin po che 'phreng ba*, pp. 29-33 and Nyoshul Khenpo, 2005:93-97.

⁵²⁴ The two passages in the *Lo rgyus rin po che 'i phreng ba* and the *DNg* are indeed very similar. See the *Lo rgyus rin po che 'i phreng ba*, p. 33:20- 34:2. *DNg*, 178:5-6; Roerich, 1979: 200.

⁵²⁵ This 'Khrul zhig sangs rgyas dbon po was a disciple of Grags pa 'od zer (1356-1409), who was a student of Klong chen pa.

⁵²⁶ The dates of this master's life are unknown.

⁵²⁷ Sangs rgyas dbon po, (2009), *'Khrul zhig sangs rgyas dbon po'i rnam thar nyid kyi mdzad pa nor bu'i gsal byed*, in *Klong chen rab 'byams kyi gsung 'bum*, Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang: Beijing, vol. 4, 256:20- 257:1.

rdo rje receives, among other teachings, the *A ro khrid mo che*. The text does not say from whom Skal ldan rdo rje obtained the *A ro khrid mo che*, nor does it give any other information about Skal ldan rdo rje apart from the name of his father, Rgyud 'dzin rdo rje.⁵²⁸ Roerich, in his translation of the *DNg*, adds in parenthesis that the *A ro khrid mo che* is a “*Rnying ma* text” but he does not explain the grounds on which he calls it a ‘text’.⁵²⁹

There is a third reference to A ro’s teachings in the *DNg*. It features on the pages devoted to the life of G.yag sde paṅ chen. Table 5 revealed the extent of A ro’s instructions to G.yag sde according to the *KKTshGy*. The *DNg* only says that G.yag sde secured the transmission of the *A ro’i rgyud chung* (the short *tantra* of A ro) and *A ro’i gdams pa*. He received both from G.yung ston pa (1284-1365). To my knowledge, the *A ro’i rgyud chung* is cited only in the *DNg*.⁵³⁰ The title component *rgyud chung* would seem to allude to a written text, so it is possible that Gzhon nu dpal deploys *A ro’i rgyud chung* to refer to the *Theg chen rnal ’byor*.

Despite their popularity, A ro’s instructions were not appreciated in all quarters. The *DNg* reports that Phag mo gru pa (1110-1170), the founder of the Phag gru Bka’ brgyud school, and alleged brother of Kaḥ thog Dam pa bde gshegs, asked for A ro’s teachings. However, when he heard them he grew dissatisfied since, in his view, they only served to attain *śamatha*.⁵³¹ In this episode, the *DNg* refers to the teachings using the general designation *A ro’i gdams pa* (A ro’s instructions). Moreover, as we just noted, the *A ro’i gdams pa* features in a section about G.yag sde paṅ chen.⁵³² Elsewhere, the *DNg* uses the expression *A ro’i man ngag* when it refers to A ro’s instructions. This term appears in the biography of Sangs rgyas rin chen rgyal mtshan, one of the masters who kept alive the Zur Rdzogs chen

⁵²⁸ Unfortunately, I have not been able to find any date or detail about the lives of either of these masters.

⁵²⁹ Roerich, 1979:988.

⁵³⁰ There is another text that quotes the *A ro’i rgyud chung*, which is the *Kaṃ tshang bka’ brgyud gser phreng* but this, besides being a very recent compilation, copies word for word the whole reference from the *DNg*.

⁵³¹ *DNg*, 484:3. Roerich, 1979:556. In the version of the *DNg* I used there is a mistake; instead of the word ‘*a ro*’ we find ‘*lo ro*’. However, in other versions this is ‘*a ro*’ and Roerich translated it accordingly.

⁵³² *DNg*, 465:2. Roerich, 1979:534.

tradition. Gzhon nu dpal says that this master (who was his own teacher as well)⁵³³ bestowed a number of teachings on his disciples, including the Rdzogs chen of the *A ro 'i man ngag*.⁵³⁴

There is yet another term that was applied to A ro's tradition. This is *A ro gsang skor* (secret cycle of A ro). We met with *A ro gsang skor* in Table 5 in the outlines of the *MNy*, *ChR* and *KKTshGy*. In the *DNg*, this term is used only once in a section that explains the transmission of the *zhi byed* system that Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas introduced towards the end of the 11th or the beginning of the 12th centuries. Many masters in this lineage studied Rnying ma texts as well. One of these, Shes rab 'od (1166-1244), is said to have mastered the *A ro gsang skor*.⁵³⁵ Thiesen discusses a further important source where the secret cycle of A ro is attested. This is the *Gsang sngags rnying ma 'i rnam bshad kyi dka' 'grel* by 'Ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang (1310-1391).⁵³⁶ 'Ba' ra ba Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang was the founder of the 'Ba' ra ba Bka' brgyud school, a branch of the 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud.⁵³⁷ His background and education were similar to those of G.yag sde paṅ chen. They both studied under Rang byung rdo rje and Bu ston Rin chen grub.⁵³⁸ Thiesen shows that 'Ba' ra ba divides the Rdzogs chen Sems sde into three sections: 1) the eighteen texts of the Mind Series (*sems sde ma bu bco brgyad*); 2) the secret cycle of A ro (*A ro gsang skor*); and 3) the profound key (*Zab pa lde mig*). The secret cycle of A ro, in turn, was composed of three categories: the teaching of the base, the teaching of the path and the teaching of the result. She considers *A ro gsang skor* to be a collective title for a number of teachings of the Sems sde tradition, largely because not all the instructions it contains can be attributed to A ro.⁵³⁹ The reference to a Secret Cycle divorced from the other cycles belonging to A ro's teachings shows that the cycles represented units that circulated independently. It is true, though, that

⁵³³ In the *DNg* in fact, Gzhon nu dpal refers to Sangs rgyas rin chen rgyal mtshan as 'our teacher'. *DNg*, 135:7; Roerich, 1979:151.

⁵³⁴ *DNg*, 137:4. Roerich, 1979:153. See also Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:673.

⁵³⁵ *DNg*, 834:5-6. Roerich, 1979: 940.

⁵³⁶ Thiesen pointed to this text as her reference for her paragraph on the *gsang skor*. However, I could not find it in the place she indicated (i.e. *Rnying ma 'i rnam bshad*, in Rgyal mtshan dpal bzang's *gsung 'bum*, vol. 3, 45:1- 46:2). The description she gave is however very detailed, so it is possible that she just mistook the reference. Thiesen, 2009:83.

⁵³⁷ Smith, 2001:45.

⁵³⁸ For a short biography of this master and his lineage see Smith, 2001:48-49.

⁵³⁹ Thiesen, 2009:83.

we do not find the other cycles cited on their own, save once in the *KKTshGy*. Perhaps this was so because the *gsang skor* would have contained the highest esoteric teachings. The *nang skor* and *phyi skor* may have attracted fewer followers and were thus forgotten with the important exception of the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*.

There are two more expressions connected to A ro's tradition. The *A ro thugs kyi yang bcud* (heart essence of A ro) and the *A ro thun bdun* (seven sessions of A ro).⁵⁴⁰ Gzhon nu dpal talks of the *A ro thugs kyi yang bcud* when he narrates the life of Lce ston Rgya nag (1094-1149) of the Rong tradition. According to him, Lce ston received the "heart essence of the *ācārya* Aro, the *Khams lugs*" from Jo mo Myang mo.⁵⁴¹ Clearly, to him the *A ro thugs kyi yang bcud* was synonymous with the *Khams lugs*. Bdud 'jom rin po che, too, draws on this account and identifies the *A ro'i thugs bcud* with the *Khams lugs*.⁵⁴² Here, the term *Khams lugs* does not appear to stand for the whole range of A ro's teachings as proposed in the *ChR*. It constitutes its essence or core. Whether it was arranged in a coherent, single exposition or transmitted as a collection of instructions is difficult to determine.

The second expression, *A ro thun bdun*, features in the transmission of another Rdzogs chen text, but from the Space Series. This is the *Rdo rje zam pa*. Here, in a section about the life of 'Dzeng jo sras,⁵⁴³ Lha rig pa says on his deathbed to 'Dzeng jo sras that although he had studied many teachings in his life, the only one to help him at this critical moment was the *A ro thun bdun*.⁵⁴⁴ Again, also Bdud 'jom rin po che refers to this episode in his *Nyingma School of Tibetan*

⁵⁴⁰ Roerich translates this term as "the seven chapters of A ro". The word 'thun' however means 'session'. Since there is no written text of this name to which these 'chapters' could refer, I rather think that this name indicates a practice in which meditation was composed of seven distinct sessions.

⁵⁴¹ *DNg*, 114:7-115:1; Roerich, 1979:128. Notice that Gzhon nu dpal refers to Lce nag pa with his primary name of Lha rje Lha khang pa.

⁵⁴² Dorji and Kapstein, 1991:651.

⁵⁴³ I could not find the dates of this master's birth and death, however, the *DNg* gives the dates of 'Dzengs jo sras' main teacher (who was named 'Dzeng himself) as 1052-1169 and says that he lived one hundred and seven years! If we accept this statement and the dates we can at least place 'Dzeng jo sras in the twelfth century.

⁵⁴⁴ *DNg*, 167: 2-3; Roerich, 1979:187.

Buddhism.⁵⁴⁵ In a footnote, Kapstein explains that the ‘Seven Sessions of A ro’ correspond to the *A ro khrid mo che* and that the *A ro thun bdun* bears this title because A ro is the seventh link of both a Chinese and Indian lineage.⁵⁴⁶ The *DNg* is, once again, our earliest source to report A ro’s twin lineages.⁵⁴⁷ However, it does not draw any connection between the seven meditation sessions and the seventh link of the two lineages. Of course, they are both attributed to A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas, but the account that speaks of the two lineages and the title *A ro thun bdun* appear on different pages; crucially perhaps, Gzhon nu dpal does not link the two. It is still possible, of course, that *Thun bdun* refers to the seven (*bdun*) links (*thun*) of the Indian and Chinese lineages and not to meditation that unfolds in seven sessions. In any case, Situ paṅ chen’s *KKTshGy* confirms that instructions derived from such two traditions did exist. In fact, he specifically includes an instruction called *Rgya gar mkhas pa bdun brgyud dang Rgya nag mkhas pa bdun kyi gdams nags* among A ro’s teachings.⁵⁴⁸

Even the relationship between the *A ro khrid mo che* and *A ro thun bdun* has yet to be established. It is possible, though perhaps not very likely, that the two refer to the same set of instructions. Alternatively, the *A ro thun bdun* may have constituted a section of the *A ro khrid mo che*, since its name points perhaps to a bigger system of practice. Until new evidence comes to light, we are not in a position to resolve these issues.

But the situation is not quite as desparate. For there is one important category of evidence to which we have not yet turned. This is the lineages of transmissions of both the *A ro lugs* and the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*. The lineages contain many important clues that help us resolve the relationship between the different sources variously connected with A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas.

⁵⁴⁵ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:550.

⁵⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 46, fn. 608.

⁵⁴⁷ *DNg*, 150: 4. Roerich, 1979:167.

⁵⁴⁸ See Table One. Unfortunately the title of these instructions does not contain the word “*thun*” that might indicate that the *Thun bdun* was a contraction of a longer title. The ambiguity of the title *Thun bdun* might one day be removed by finding Zhon nu dpal’s source for this title.

The A ro lugs

Unlike the *Khams lugs*, the *A ro lugs* only contains a very short lineage. This is not placed at the beginning of the text, as in the *Khams lugs*, but in the colophon. It states: “[This text] was written by Dpal mkha’ spyod pa in a region near the river Ganga Gser ldan.⁵⁴⁹ A short transmission [of this text] is: Rnam par snang mdzad, Gzhon nu ye shes, A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas, Bsod nams snying po, Dpal (dus gsum shes bya kun mkhyen) ldan rin chen. [However] there are several other [lines of transmission]”.⁵⁵⁰ We are now going to examine the lineage-holders of this short transmission, except for the first three masters, who have already been treated in chapter two.⁵⁵¹

Vairocana, Gnyags Jñānakumāra, A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas

The first two lineage-holders of this short lineage are Vairocana (i.e. Rnam par snang mdzad) and Gnyags Jñānakumāra (i.e. Gzhon nu ye shes). They both appear in almost all the lineages of the Sems sde tradition and their teachings were the principal sources of A ro’s instructions.⁵⁵² As we have seen at the commencement of this chapter, the *A ro’i lo rgyus* considered both these masters to be A ro’s teachers. Moreover, all sources unanimously recorded that Gnyags transmitted his teachings to A ro, on the basis of which A ro created his own method. Therefore, although we know that A ro and Gnyags could not possibly have met, it is not surprising that the *A ro lugs’* lineage places them one after the other.

⁵⁴⁹ The Gser ldan is a river in Khams in the district of Gapa also called ’Bri chu River (Yángzǐ jiāng in Chinese). Shakabpa (2000:98, fn. 12, vol.1, transl. by Derek F. Maher) explains the etymology of the name of this river thus: “Gold has been found within the Northern branch of the Driчу River. Thus many Tibetan records refer to it as Serden River (*gser ldan*) that is, the gold-possessor”.

⁵⁵⁰ *Bka’ ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kah thog), vol. 30, 425: 6- 426: 1. “Dpal mkha’ spyod pas chu bo gangā gser ldan dang nye ba’i ljongs su bris pa’o/ /rnam par snang mdzad/ /gzhon nu ye shes/ a ro ye shes ’byung gnas/ bsod nams snying po/ /dpal (dus gsum shes bya kun mkhen) ldan rin chen zhes bya ba ni nye brgyud do/ /gshan ni sna tshogs so/ /manga lam/”. The words in parenthesis are annotated in the text.

⁵⁵¹ In this case “short transmission” (nye brgyud) does not refer to the direct short lineage of the *gter ma* tradition. This is rather an abbreviated *bka’ ma* lineage. Mkha’ spyod pa lists only the few masters he believes to be the most important.

⁵⁵² *A ro’i lo rgyus*, 7v:1- 8r:5.

Bsod noms snying po

The fourth lineage-holder, Bsod noms snying po, is not easily recognisable under this name.⁵⁵³ Although his identity must consequently remain to some degree uncertain, we may still reach some conclusion by following a line of hints and suggestions that bring us from Bsod noms snying po to Sba sgom Bsod noms rgyal mtshan. In the first place, Kong sprul, in reporting the short lineage in his *Catalogue*, calls this master Sba sgom Bsod noms snying po.⁵⁵⁴ When we look at the transmission of the teachings of A ro given in the *MNy* we see that the eighth lineage-holder is a certain Sba sgom Bsod snying.⁵⁵⁵ Since “bsod snying” is clearly a contraction of “Bsod noms snying po”, we can safely assume that this Bsod noms snying po and Sba sgom Bsod snying are the same person. The lineage-holder who follows Sba sgom Bsod snying in the *MNy* is the famous Kha rag sgom chung.⁵⁵⁶ We saw in Chapter Two that the only person from whom Kha rag sgom chung received the instructions of A ro was a certain Sba sgom Bsod noms rgyal mtshan. It is therefore logical to conclude that Sba sgom Bsod snying and Sba sgom Bsod noms rgyal mtshan were in truth the same master. Of course, it may be that some of the information gathered here is incorrect and that therefore the identification is wrong, nonetheless Sba sgom Bsod noms rgyal mtshan seems a likely choice for this lineage. In fact, Sba sgom was a student of Atiśa and he was probably the same person who introduced A ro’s *Theg chen rnal ’byor* to this great master.⁵⁵⁷ Therefore, Mkha’ spyod pa might have selected this particular master because his connection with Atiśa gave credit and authority to the A ro tradition he had himself received.

⁵⁵³ There are a few masters named Bsod noms snying po. These however are rather late; two of them date back to the sixteenth century and one to the thirteenth. The first two must be necessarily excluded since the redactor of this lineage, Mkha’ spyod pa died in 1405. The third is a Gung thang master. His tradition is the subject of Ehrhard’s study “A Rosary of Rubies” (Ehrhard, 2008). He also is unlikely to be the Bsod noms snying po of the *A ro lugs’* lineage, since here Bsod noms snying po is placed between A ro Ye shes and the first *Karma pa* (1110-1193) and thus he would not fit in the chronological order.

⁵⁵⁴ *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 465:6.

⁵⁵⁵ See Table Six above for the transmission and reference.

⁵⁵⁶ On this master see pp. 92-3 and fn.293.

⁵⁵⁷ *DNg*, 888:1-3; Roerich, 1979: 1000-1; *Jo bo rje lha gcig dpal ldan a ti sha’i rnam thar*, 199. The *DNg* calls this master Rba and not Sba sgom. Both variants, as we know from the Ba Testament, are later versions of the earlier Dba.

Dus gsum mkhyen pa, First *Karma pa*

The reason for the choice of Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110-1193) as the fifth lineage-holder is also quite clear. Dus gsum mkhyen pa, like Mkha' spyod pa, was a prominent personage of the Bka' brgyud school. He was the founder of the Karma Bka' brgyud tradition, the first *Karma pa*, and a disciple of the famous Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen (1079-1153). Mkha' spyod dbang po also authored a biography of this master.⁵⁵⁸ Dus gsum mkhyen pa was born in Lower Khams to a *yoginī* of the name of Lha thog Gza' sngang lcam ming 'dren and the *yogin* Sgom pa Rdo rje mgon.⁵⁵⁹ In his childhood he studied under his father and uncle.⁵⁶⁰ Then in his teens, he studied Atiśa's tradition with one of Jo bo's disciples, Yol chos dbang.⁵⁶¹ At thirty he decided to become a student of Sgam po pa (1079-1153). He first received from him a Bka' gdams pa's *lam rim* and practised its instruction for several months.⁵⁶² At the end of a period of meditation Sgam po pa also passed on to him the introduction to the mind called *Gnas lugs don gyi ngo sprod*. Dus gsum mkhen pa also met several other masters. Among these the teacher Brag dkar mo ba bestowed on him A ro's transmission.⁵⁶³ When he turned fifty Dus gsum mkhyen pa went to Tre bo in Khams where he remained for a long time and attracted many disciples. One of them was the founder of the Kaḥ thog monastery, Dam pa bde gshegs. He finally went back to Dbus where he reprimanded Bla ma Zhang and built two monasteries: Mtshur phu and Stod lung. He died at the age of eighty-four.⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁵⁸ Mkha' spyod dbang po, *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar dgos 'dod kun 'byung*, in *Zhwa dmar Mkha' spyod dbang po 'i gsung 'bum*, Gangtok: Gonpo Tseten, 1978, vol. 1, pp. 435-504.

⁵⁵⁹ *Ibidem*, 442:1-3; *DNg*, 413:2-3; Roerich, 1979:474. It is very likely that Gzhon nu dpal took his biography of the first *Karma pa* from Mkha' spyod pa's text. The two texts do not coincide in every point but their wording is similar enough to perceive a correlation between the two. Gzhon nu dpal though did not copy blindly the text (as sometimes he does with other biographies) but he cut and re-arranged the information found inside the *Dus gsum mkhyen pa'i rnam thar dgos 'dod kun 'byung* and probably added more from another source.

⁵⁶⁰ *Ibidem*, 442:3-4.

⁵⁶¹ *Ibidem*, 443:3-4; *DNg*, 413:6; Roerich, 1979:475.

⁵⁶² *Ibidem*, 444:5-445:4; *DNg*, 414:3-6; Roerich, 1979:475-6.

⁵⁶³ *Ibidem*, 446:4; *DNg*, 415:3; Roerich, 1979: 477. Roesler (2011:110-11) found that he was born in the year of the monkey. However, sources do not provide his birth's element, so the precise date cannot be determined. Roesler hypothesised these three dates for Brag dkar pa's birth: 1056, 1068 or 1080. He is said to have died at the age of eighty. Hence, he might have died in 1136, 1148 or 1160. For Brag dkar ba's relationship with Po to ba and his role in the process that led to the compilation of this master's words, see Roesler, 2011:205-6 and 227-8.

⁵⁶⁴ *DNg*, 417:6; Roerich, 480.

Dpal mkha' spyod dbang po, Second *Zhwa dmar pa*

As we saw, Dpal mkha' spyod is the second *Zhwa dmar pa*, who lived between 1350 and 1405. He was born in Gnam gzhung bye ma lung in Dbus to the mother 'Brog mo and the father Lha rgyal.⁵⁶⁵ Biographies report that since he was a child he possessed miraculous powers. When he reached his seventh month he grasped flower-blossoms and they immediately bloomed in his hands.⁵⁶⁶ Soon he recognised himself as the reincarnation of the first *Zhwa dmar pa* Grags pa seng ge (1283-1349) and repeated in detail all his former deeds to Grags pa seng ge's disciples.⁵⁶⁷ Therefore, from a very early age he assumed a role that surrounded him with the most prominent religious figures of his time. The Fourth *Karma pa* Rol pa rdo rje (1340-1383) gave him many important Bka' brgyud instructions and ordained him.⁵⁶⁸ G.yung ston pa also gave to Mkha' spyod dbang po instructions on white Tārā.⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, the Second *Zhwa dmar pa* also received initiations from Kun dga' 'od zer,⁵⁷⁰ an important disciple of the third *Karma pa* Rang byung rdo rje. After the death of Rol pa rdo rje he met the Fifth *Karma pa* De bzhin gshegs pa (1384-1415).⁵⁷¹ Although he appears to have been in contact with several masters who possessed A ro's tradition, from his biographies it is not clear when or from whom exactly he received these teachings. The master that precedes him in this lineage, Dus gsum mkhyen pa had already died when Mkha' spyod dbang po was born. The missing links however might be found elsewhere. In fact, in volume eighteen of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, Kong sprul lists two other long lineages for the *A ro lugs*. As we saw from the colophon, Mkha' spyod pa knew of the existence of different lines of transmission, since he acknowledges that: "There are several other [transmissions of the *A ro lugs*]"⁵⁷²

The other transmissions

The author of volume eighteen of the *Gdams ngag mdzod* is Kong sprul himself.

⁵⁶⁵ *KKTshGy*, vol.11, 492:3; *DNg*, 470:4 ; Roerich, 1979:540.

⁵⁶⁶ *KKTshGy*, vol.11, 492:3-4.

⁵⁶⁷ *KKTshGy*, vol.11, 492:4-5; *DNg*, 470:5-6; Roerich 1979:540.

⁵⁶⁸ *KKTshGy*, vol.11, 493:5-6; *DNg*, 471:2; Roerich 1979:541.

⁵⁶⁹ *KKTshGy*, vol.11, 493:7; *DNg*, 471:3; Roerich 1979:541.

⁵⁷⁰ Dates unknown.

⁵⁷¹ *KKTshGy*, vol.11, 498:5-7; *DNg*, 473:3-4; Roerich, 1979:543.

⁵⁷² See the translation of the colophon above.

This volume is a catalogue of the texts that he chose for his compilation.⁵⁷³ For each text Kong sprul re-writes the colophon and gives the lineages of transmission. In talking of the *A ro lugs*, he first writes a long lineage and then he reports the lineage that appears in Mkha' spyod pa's colophon.⁵⁷⁴ Finally he says that there exist other lineages and gives an example by listing a second long lineage. From his words it is clear that he considers the first long lineage the complete version of the abbreviated one that Mkha' spyod pa wrote in the colophon. Kong sprul does not say from where he draws these two long lineages. However, it is clear that Mkha' spyod pa cannot have been the author of the whole lineages here reported. In fact, these extend up to the time of Kong sprul (nineteenth century). It is very likely that these lineages are composite works, written by two or more hands.⁵⁷⁵ Therefore these lists are partly late and very long. I shall here report them both in order to compare them and present those lineage-holders that are most useful for our analysis. However, I shall not treat each master in an individual section. My aim is rather to show the relationship that existed between the lineage-holders and see whether we can find in these lists the names of the masters that we have previously encountered.⁵⁷⁶

LINEAGE ONE⁵⁷⁷

1. Thub dbang (Buddha)
2. Lha'i bu sems lhag can
3. Dga' rab rdo rje
4. Sha ba ri dbang phyug
5. Mai tri pa
6. Śrī Siṃha

⁵⁷³ Richard Barron has translated this volume into English. See Barron, 2013.

⁵⁷⁴ *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 465:5-6.

⁵⁷⁵ Of course a lineage is the 'work' of all the masters who belong to the transmission. Each of them can in fact add his own name and that of the teacher who transmitted the doctrine to him at the end of the line. This 'work' however remains mostly oral. Only a few masters recorded in writings the transmission from which they received specific teachings (*thob yig*). In this case Kong sprul could have either taken these two transmissions from a written source, or he might have received them orally. Considering that Mkha' spyod pa already acknowledged the existence of several lines of transmissions and wrote down a short one himself, it is more likely that Kong sprul drew at least the first part of the lineage from a written source.

⁵⁷⁶ The masters whose names are underlined are those that we find in the short lineage inside the *A ro lugs*. Those in bold are the masters that we know from other sources to have received A ro's teachings.

⁵⁷⁷ From now on I shall call this 'Lineage One'.

7. Bai ro tsa na
8. G.yu sgra snying po
9. Gnyags Ye shes gzhon nu
- 10. Sprul pa'i sku A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas**
- 11. Ya zi bon ston**
- 12. Cog ro Zangs dkar ba**
13. Blo gros 'byung gnas
- 14. Kong rab 'tsho ldan dar ma ba**
- 15. Lce sgom nag po (1094-1149)**
- 16. Bla ma Brag dkar pa**
- 17. Dpal ldan Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110-1193)**
18. 'Gro mgon Ras chen (1148-1218)
19. Rgyal sras Spom brag pa (1170-1249)
20. Grub chen Karma pakshi (1204-1339) 2nd *Karma pa*
21. Gnyan ras Dge 'dun 'bum
22. Kun mkhyen Rang byung rdo rje (1284-1339) 3rd *Karma pa*
23. Rtogs ldan Grags pa seng ge (1283-1349) 1st *Zhwa dmar pa*
24. Ri khrod pa Dar ma rgyal ba
- 25. Mkha' spyod dbang po (1350-1405)**
26. Bla ma Śākya grags pa (? – 1454)
27. Chos dpal ye shes (1406-1452) 3rd *Zhwa dmar pa*

Up to here this was the uninterrupted transmission of the instructions given depending on [each master's] experience [in this practice].⁵⁷⁸ The lineage then continues reaching the 19th century.⁵⁷⁹

Kong sprul then reports the short lineage that appears in the colophon of the *A ro lugs* and then says that there is another lineage of this teaching, which is:

LINEAGE TWO⁵⁸⁰

1. Kun bzang [tu bzang po]

⁵⁷⁸ “*di yan nyams khrid brgyud pa bar ma chad du byon*”. *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 465:4.

⁵⁷⁹ My analysis stops at the redactor of the *A ro lugs*, Mkha' spyod dbang po, so I do not include the lineage-holders who follow him.

⁵⁸⁰ From now on I shall call this lineage ‘Lineage Two’.

2. Rdor sems [dpa' Vajrasattva]
3. Dga' rab [rdo rje]
4. Śrī Siṃ [ha]
5. Bai ro[tsa na]
6. G.yu sgra [snying po]
7. **Ye shes 'byung gnas [A ro]**
8. **Ya se bon ston**
9. **Gru gu Glog 'byung [or Gru gu Glog chung]**
10. **Sba sgom Bsod nams snying po**
11. **Dam pa Mdzes sgom zhig po**
12. **Rtogs ldan 'Ba' ra sgom chen**
13. **Jo bo Nyang mo**
14. **Dam pa Śākya rgyal**

From Dam pa Śākya rgyal [the transmission goes] to the two masters:

15. Ston Śāk from Dbus and 16. Zhig po from Dbus (1125-1195).

From the three: Dam pa Śākya rgyal, Ston Śāk from Dbus and Zhig po from Dbus to:

17. **Spyi mkha' Lha rje lha khang pa yon tan**
18. **Zhig po bdud rtsi (1149-1199)**
19. **Rta ston Jo yes (1163-1236)**
20. **Rta ston Gzi brjid grags**
21. **G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal (1284/88-1365)**
22. **Rgyal dbang Rol pa'i rdo rje**
23. **Rtogs ldan Mkha' spyod dbang po**

“The other [lineage-holders] follow as in [the previous lineage].”⁵⁸¹

Analysis of Lineage One

Even a cursory comparison between these two lines of transmission reveals their

⁵⁸¹ *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 464:6- 466:1. i.e. the transmission from here follows the line of the first lineage as we find it from the sixth *Karma pa* onwards.

different affiliation. The first lineage starts with “*thub dbang*” which is a general name for a Buddha, but which usually refers to the historical Buddha Śākyamuni. Conventionally, Śākyamuni is the first lineage-holder in the transmissions of the New Schools, but not of the Old.⁵⁸² For the *gsar ma pas* Śākyamuni’s presence is the proof of the authenticity of the tradition (whether texts or oral instructions) transmitted in the lineage. The Rnying ma pas instead of Śākyamuni begin their lineages with Samantabhadra and Dga’ rab rdo rje so following their own myth of origin. It is therefore puzzling to see Śākyamuni at the beginning of a Rdzogs chen Sems sde’s transmission. The second master in this first lineage of transmission is Lha’i bu sems lhag can (Adhicitta). This is the name of one of the previous births of Dga’ rab rdo rje, the first human to whom the Rdzogs chen teachings were transmitted. The third lineage-holder is Dga’ rab rdo rje. With him we return to the Rdzogs chen domain. The fourth lineage-holder, Sha ba ri dbang phyug, is Śāvaripa, one of the eighty-four Indian *mahāsiddhas*. He is especially connected with the *Mahāmudrā* transmission where he is considered to be the teacher of Maitripa. Maitripa is also the fifth link of this lineage, although a built-in note⁵⁸³ on the following line adds: “This is not the same [Maitripa] that is known in the New Schools!”⁵⁸⁴ This claim sounds rather awkward especially when Maitripa’s name comes next to that of his teacher. The lineage then goes on with the typical Rdzogs chen Sems sde’s transmission: Śrī Siṃha, Vairocana, G.yu sgra snying po, Gnyags Jñānakumāra, and A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas. The two following lineage-holders are Ya zi bon ston and Cog ro Zangs dkar ba, whom we have seen invariably presented as A ro’s disciples.⁵⁸⁵ The thirteenth master, Blo gros ’byung gnas could be identified as the Bka’ gdams pa master (Gro lung pa) Blo gros ’byung gnas who lived in the eleventh century. He is not usually attested in A ro’s or Rdzogs chen’s lineages in general. In the *DNg* there is a section devoted to Gro lung pa’s life but no relationship

⁵⁸² Of course, this does not mean that Śākyamuni is of secondary importance for the Rnying ma pas, far from it. However, Rdzogs chen pas usually identify the place of origin of their teachings as Zhang Zhung rather than India.

⁵⁸³ A series of dots under the name of Maitripa leads to a note, written in a smaller font, but still inside the main text. The note is inside the line below Maitripa’s name. This is not an interlinear note, therefore the person who wrote it must have realised that he wanted to add this note while he was still writing, or the note would have been added next to Maitripa’s name.

⁵⁸⁴ *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 465:2. “’di dang gsar ma la grags pa dang mi gcig”.

⁵⁸⁵ Among the later sources see A ro’s biography, the *A ro’i lo rgyus*, 8r:4- 8v:3, Roerich, 1979:1000, and Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:706.

transpires between him and A ro's tradition. Therefore, it is not certain that he is the lineage-holder meant here.⁵⁸⁶ The master following Blo gros in the lineage is Kong rab 'tsho ldan dar ma ba. He is again attested in A ro's lineage presented in the *MNy*.⁵⁸⁷ In this work, he is listed as the sixth holder of the transmission, after Ya zi bon ston and Gru gu Glog chung.⁵⁸⁸ The seventh lineage-holder is Lce sgom nag po. He could be identified as Lce ston Rgya nag (1094-1149). Lce ston was a Rnying ma master of the Rong tradition. We have already found him attested in the *DNg* and in *The Nyingma School* as the person who received the "Heart Essence" of A ro's teachings, i.e. the *Khams lugs*.⁵⁸⁹ The next master in the line is the disciple of the famous Bka' gdams pa master Po to ba Rin chen gsal, Bla ma Brag dkar pa. In the explanation of the short lineage we saw that the *DNg* reports that Atiśa read the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* under Sba sgom's recommendation and that Atiśa appreciated it considerably. Atiśa in turn transmitted it to Po to ba. Thus, Po to ba might have bestowed it on Brag dkar pa.⁵⁹⁰ This is one way in which A ro's teachings might have reached Brag dkar pa. However, this does not explain how the transmission passed from Lce sgom nag po to Brag dkar pa as it appears in this lineage. Another possibility is that A ro's instruction reached Bla ma Brag dkar pa through Rta ston Jo ye (1163-1236), one of the two main disciples of Zhig po bdud rtsi (1149-1199). Zhig po bdud rtsi was the nephew and disciple of Dam pa Se brag pa. Dam pa Se brag pa was a disciple of Lce sgom nag po. This would imply that this lineage omits three lineage-holders between Lce sgom and Brag dkar pa. When we examined the life of the first *Karma pa* Dus gsum mkhyen pa in the short lineage, we also encountered Brag dkar. Brag dkar was the teacher who transmitted the *A ro lugs*

⁵⁸⁶ For Gro lung pa Blo gros 'byung gnas, see Roerich, 1979:331-2. The only link that there could be between this master and A ro is that Gro lung pa studied and wrote himself texts of the *Lam rim* genre, and A ro's *Theg chen rnal 'byor* belongs to this same literary category. Moreover, the *DNg* (and also one of Atiśa's biographies) reports that this great master read and appreciated the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*. Therefore, it would not be strange if Gro lung pa had received a transmission of this text. On the other hand, the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* is never listed among the teachings he obtained.

⁵⁸⁷ For the transmission of the *MNy* see Table Six above.

⁵⁸⁸ I could find no dates or information for this master's life.

⁵⁸⁹ In the *DNg* (114:7-115:1; Roerich, 1979:128) and in *The Nyingma School* (Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:651) the female master who gave A ro's teachings to Lce sgom was Jo mo Nyang mo (also spelled Myang mo). Here instead it seems that Kong rab 'tsho transmitted the teachings to Lce sgom. Nonetheless, we cannot know whether this was a different line of transmission or whether the person who recorded this lineage left out some lineage-holders as is often the case.

⁵⁹⁰ For a discussion on the dates of this master see Roesler, 2011:110-11 and also fn. 563, p.174 of this thesis.

to Dus gsum. The master who follows Brag dkar in this lineage is in fact Dus gsum mkhyen pa. Therefore, this lineage explains the missing links between the fourth master of the short lineage, Sba sgom Bsod nams snying, and the fifth, Dus gsum mkhyen pa. From the first *Karma pa* onwards, i.e. from the twelfth century to the nineteenth, all the lineage-holders of this first lineage, with the sole exception of the last, Kong sprul, are Bka' brgyud masters. They are either *Karma pas* or *Zhwa dmar pas* or their teachers. This circumstance makes even more dubious the declaration of the gloss, which claims that the Maitripa who appears in this lineage is not that of the New Schools. On the contrary, since its very inception this lineage seems to try to integrate the *Mahāmudrā* transmission with that of the traditional Rdzogs chen Sems sde of A ro's teachings. In fact, this lineage contains so many eminent Bka' brgyud hierarchs that their presence in this transmission could hardly be justified if Śākyamuni did not legitimise the authenticity of the teaching. And indeed, this Rdzogs chen lineage on the whole contains only a few Rnying ma masters. It remains to be seen where Kong sprul found this lineage. It seems probable that he drew it, or at least the first section of it, from an earlier source. In other words it seems likely that the author of the note did not write this section of the lineage. It seems more plausible that there were at least two hands in the compilation of this lineage. One piece of evidence is found in the Fifth Dalai Lama's collected works (*gsung 'bum*). Here Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682) reports a lineage of A ro's teachings which is very similar to this one. Down the line some of the masters listed in the *gsung 'bum* and those of this lineage are different but the beginning is identical. The Fifth reports: "The transmission of the *Khams lugs* is [such]: Thub ba'i dbang po, Lha'i bu sems lhag can, Rigs 'dzin Dga' rab rdo rje, Sha wa ri Dbang phyug, Rje mai tri pa, Mkhas pa Śrī Siṃgha, Bai ro tsa na, Rgyal mo G.yu sgra, Gnyags la Ye shes gzhon nu, A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, Ya zi bon ston [...]"⁵⁹¹ This is exactly the same mix of *Mahāmūdra* and Rdzogs chen teachers that we find in our lineage, and this time there is no note to remind us that this Maitripa is different from the Maitripa of the New Schools. I shall attempt to give an

⁵⁹¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *Dam pa'i chos kyi gsan yig ganga'i chu rgyun las glegs bam bzhi pa*, in *Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*, Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009, vol. 4, 352:7-10. "*Khams lugs kyi brgyud pa ni/thub ba'i dbang po/lha'i bu sems lhag can/rigs 'dzin dga' rab rdo rje/sha wa ri dbang phyug/rje mai tri pa/mkhas pa shrī singha/bai ro tsa na/rgyal mo g.yu sgra/gnyags la ye shes gzhon nu/a ro ye shes 'byung gnas/ya zi bon ston*[...]"

answer to the question of the genesis of this lineage in the following chapter. At present we can deduce two things from this lineage: first, that Kong sprul very likely did not write this transmission anew, but took it from some other and earlier source; second, that this mixed lineage of *Mahāmudrā* and Rdzogs chen, existed at least from the seventeenth century onward. It is also interesting to notice that Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho says that this is the lineage of the *Khams lugs*. This might weigh in favour of the connection between our text, the *A ro lugs*, and the *Khams lugs* of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas.

In this context the structure of the *Gdams ngag mdzod* explains both the reason for the note on Maitripa and its possible author. In fact, Kong sprul in the eighteenth volume explained that the method he used to assemble his collection followed 'Phreng bo gter ston Shes rab 'od zer's (1518-1584) classification known as *Sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad* (the eight chariots/conveyances of transmission).⁵⁹² These “eight great conveyances” represent eight specific traditions of transmission. These are: (1) the Rnying ma, (2) the Bka' gdams pa, (3) the *Lam rim pas* of the Sa skya order, (4) the Mar pa Bka' brgyud, (5) the Shang pa Bka' brgyud, the (6) *Zhi byed* and *Gcod yul*, (7) the lineage of the *Rdo rje'i rnal 'byor* and (8) the lineage of the *Rdo rje gsum gyi bsnyen sgrub*. The final volume from which these two long lineages are taken is in fact called *Sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad* and it lists the lineages of the texts that Kong sprul gathered following the category of 'Phreng bo shes rab 'od zer. Kapstein argues that this classification tried to fit into predetermined compartments the lineages that until that time “crosscut the distinction of sects”.⁵⁹³ It does not surprise that Kong sprul could not welcome a lineage that mixed so thoroughly two different traditions of transmission. The note about Maitripa must thus have been the result of Kong sprul's discontent with an opening of a Rnying ma lineage that was in such glaring opposition to the general scheme of the collection.

To resume the analysis of Lineage One and the issue of the missing link between

⁵⁹² *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 405:1-3, then follows the detailed explanation of each from 406:2-422:2; for a translation see Barron, 2013:35-53; for a summary and analysis of this method see Kapstein:1996. For further information on these eight conveyances see also Deroche, 2009: 319-341.

⁵⁹³ Kapstein, 1996:276.

Dus gsum mkhyen pa and the redactor of the *A ro lugs* Mkha' dbang spyod pa, we see that according to this lineage the transmission between these two was possible through the agency of seven other masters. These are all Bka' brgyud monks. The two lineage-holders that follow after the first *Karma pa*, 'Gro mgon ras chen (1149-1218) and Rgyal sras Spom brag pa (1170-1249) were both his students. The second was probably the person who recognised Dus gsum's reincarnation, i.e. the second *Karma pa* Karma Pakshi.⁵⁹⁴ Karma Pakshi is also the following lineage-holder in this transmission. In the previous chapter we saw that he was particularly connected with the Kaḥ thog monks, having received ordination from the second and third abbots of this monastery. Interestingly, Karma Pakshi did not receive these Rdzogs chen instructions from the Kaḥ thog hierarchs, but from another Bka' brgyud monk, a disciple of the first *Karma pa*. If one gives credit to the lineage, this would indicate that the transmission of the *A ro lugs* was already so well established among the Bka' brgyud pas that they did not need to request it from Rnying ma monks. The next lineage-holder is a student of Karma Pakshi. His name is Gnyan ras Dge 'dun 'bum.⁵⁹⁵ The *DNg* tells us that he passed a number of transmissions on to the Third *Karma pa* Rang byung rdo rje,⁵⁹⁶ who in fact follows Gnyan ras also in this lineage. The same source reports that Rang byung rdo rje was the main teacher of the First *Zhwa dmar pa* Grags pa seng ge (1283-1349). Grags pa seng ge started his career studying mainly the *Prajñāpāramitā*. In time however, he received the most important Bka' brgyud pa instructions and also some Rnying ma teachings.⁵⁹⁷ Gzhon nu dpal says that he received the *Snying thig* from Rang byung rdo rje⁵⁹⁸ and a good number of Rdzogs chen instructions from Gzhon nu rgyal po.⁵⁹⁹ This Gzhon nu rgyal po was the same master that according to Klong chen pa received the *A ro khrid mo che* from Ye shes mgon po. Therefore if we put together the

⁵⁹⁴ For the biographical details of these two students see their biographies in Mkhas btsun bzang po, 'Gro mgon ras chen & Chos rje Spom Brag pa in *Rgya bod mkhas grub rim byon gyi rnam thar phyogs bsgrigs*, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan works and archives, 1973-1990, vol. 7, pp. 87-98.

⁵⁹⁵ Dates unavailable.

⁵⁹⁶ *DNg*, 426:6; Roerich, 1979:489-490. In the *Lho rong chos 'byung* there are also four lines that gives some biographical details and anecdotes about Gnyan ras dge 'dun, but these tell us nothing about his studies, his teachers or his disciples. See *Lho rong chos 'byung*, 281: 14-18.

⁵⁹⁷ There is however no specific reference to the A ro tradition.

⁵⁹⁸ *DNg*, 459:5-6; Roerich, 1979:526-27.

⁵⁹⁹ i.e. Rig 'dzin Kumārādza who was also Klong chen pa's teacher. *DNg*,461:6-7; Roerich, 1979:529

information provided by the *DNg* and the *ChR*, it seems more probable that the First *Zhwa dmar pa* received the *A ro lugs* from Ye shes mgon po rather than from the Third *Karma pa*. The present transmission however goes from Rang byung rdo rje to Grags pa seng ge. It also should be noticed that this is the second time that we find Rang byung rdo rje connected with Rdzogs chen instructions of the *Snying thig*. In Dpal 'bar ba's biography in fact we read that the author of the *Khams lugs* received the *Snying thig* from Dar ma rgyal mtshan, who had heard it from the third *Karma pa*. This Dar ma rdo rje, whom we identified with Dar ma rgyal mtshan, was one of the disciples of Rang byung rdo rje and here he is the lineage-holder just preceding the redactor of the *A ro lugs*, the Second *Zhwa dmar pa*, Mkha' spyod pa. This first lineage therefore implies that Dar ma rgyal mtshan gave the instructions of A ro to Mkha' spyod pa. If it were so, the author of the *Khams lugs*, Dpal 'bar ba and the redactor of the *A ro lugs*, Mkha' spyod dbang po had at least one teacher in common. The *DNg* and the biographies of the second *Zhwa dmar pa* do not say much about his expeditions to Khams, but they do record their existence. In short, it is highly possible that the two masters who wrote our three main texts (*A ro lugs*, *Khams lugs* and *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa*) knew each other.

Analysis of Lineage Two

The second lineage presents a more standard Rdzogs chen beginning. This starts from Samantabhadra and goes through the usual Vajrasattva, Dga' rab rdo rje, Vairocana, G.yu sgra snying po up to A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. From A ro onwards this lineage, like Lineage One, seems to be drawn from the *MNy*'s account. In fact the next masters, Ya se bon ston, (i.e. Ya zi bon ston) and Gru gu Glog 'byung (also known as Gru gu Glog chung)⁶⁰⁰, are the fourth and the fifth lineage-holders in the A ro transmission given in the *MNy*.⁶⁰¹ The tenth person in this transmission is Sba sgom Snying po. He was one of the six masters that we found inside the short lineage of the *A ro lugs* in the colophon of this text. As we saw, he also appears in the *MNy*'s account as the ninth link of A ro's transmission. The next master, Dam pa Mdzes sgom zhig po should be identified

⁶⁰⁰ Both these spellings are used in texts, however, this looks more like a mistake than a variant spelling since *chung* and *'byung* sound very similar and it is likely that they had been confused in oral communication.

⁶⁰¹ *MNy*, 491:11. As said before this same lineage also appears in Roerich, 1979:1000-1005.

with Dam pa 'Dzi sgom of Gtsang Rong. The latter appears in the *DNg* as one of the persons who received A ro's teachings. This identification is supported by the fact that in the *DNg* Dam pa 'Dzi sgom received the doctrine from R/Sba sgom and transmitted it to 'Ba' ra sgom chen. The Dam pa Mdzes sgom zhig po that we find in this Lineage Two is similarly preceded by Sba sgom and followed by 'Ba' ra sgom pa. It sounds possible that Dam pa Mdzes/'Dzi sgom was another name of Kha rag, since the latter was Sba sgom's main disciple and a teacher of Ba ra sgom. However, the *DNg* immediately before this short transmission of A ro's teaching reports the biography of Kha rag and in it it never gives him the name of Dam pa 'Dzi sgom. Therefore, we must conclude that either Dam pa Mdzes sgom is not Kha rag or that Kha rag was so well known under the name of Dam pa Mdzes sgom that Gzhon nu dpal did not deem it necessary to explain it. However we wish to interpret this, the eleventh lineage-holder of Lineage Two can be considered as an attested receiver of the A ro tradition through his identification with Dam pa 'Dzi sgom. Rtogs ldan 'Ba' ra sgom chen, Kha rag's (and/ or Dam pa Mdzes sgom's) disciple, appears under several different spellings (he is 'Ba' ra sgom chen in this lineage, Ba rang sgom chen in the *MNy* and Ba ra sgom chen in the *DNg*). In the *MNy* he is the eleventh keeper of the lineage of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. The *DNg* repeats the *MNy* transmission and only adds that 'Ba' /Ba ra sgom chen was born in Yar 'brog. The only other piece of information we possess about this master is that he passed on the doctrine to Jo bo Nyang mo, who is also the thirteenth lineage-holder of this transmission.⁶⁰² Jo bo Nyang mo is also recorded as the teacher who bestowed the essence of A ro's teachings (*a ro'i thugs bcud*, i.e. the *Khams lugs*) to the famous Rnying ma master Lce ston Rgya nag, who was the fifteenth lineage-holder of Lineage One.⁶⁰³ However, in this second lineage Lce ston does not appear and instead we find Dam pa Śākya rgyal (end eleventh-twelfth century). In the *MNy* Dam pa Śākya rgyal⁶⁰⁴ is the last master listed in A ro's transmission. In fact, the people who immediately follow Dam pa Śākya in this second lineage are roughly contemporary with Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and his disciples and therefore they could not yet be listed in his *chos 'byung*. Dam pa

⁶⁰² The *MNy* calls this practitioner Ma cig nyang mo (491:13), and the *DNg* presents what seems an older variant of her name, Jo mo myang mo (*DNg*, 892:2-3; Roerich, 1979:1005).

⁶⁰³ See above. The reference for this transmission is in Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:651.

⁶⁰⁴ Dates unknown.

Śākya rgyal was a disciple of the famous Zur Śākya seng ge (1073-1134) and the teacher of Lce ston.⁶⁰⁵ After the Zur family the transmission of the teachings of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde passed on the Rong clan. Bdud 'joms rin po che calls this the “Rong tradition” and makes it start from Lce ston. The five upholders of the Rong tradition following Lce ston, as listed in the *Nyingma School*, are: Lce nag (*alias* Lha rje Lha khang pa), Yon tan bzung (1126-1195), Dam pa Se brag pa, Zhig po of Dbus,⁶⁰⁶ Zhig po Bdud rtsi (1149-1199), Rta ston Jo ye (1163-1230), Rta ston Jo bo bsod nams (1168-1198) and Rta ston Gzi brjid.⁶⁰⁷ With the already mentioned exception of Lce ston all the others appear here as lineage-holders. This might suggest that the author of this lineage conformed to the classical Rdzogs chen Sems sde transmission which goes from the Zur clan to the Rong and so on.

Our lineage says that Dam pa Śākya rgyal transmitted the *A ro lugs* to two disciples: Ston Śāk from Dbus and Zhig po from Dbus. Dam pa Se brag pa is the acquired name of Ston Śāk from Dbus, and it is by this name that we find him in Lineage Two. He became famous as Dam pa Se brag pa because he used to meditate in a place where a rosebush (*se*) bifurcated.⁶⁰⁸ He bestowed A ro's tradition to Zhig po from Dbus. This Zhig po then passed it on to the more famous Zhig po bdud rtsi.⁶⁰⁹ Zhig po bdud rtsi was not only a student of Zhig po from Dbus but was also one of the main disciples of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer.⁶¹⁰ We also found this Zhig po bdud rtsi as the person who authored most of the texts contained in the one-hundred and seventh volume of the *Bka' ma shin tu*

⁶⁰⁵ As I remarked above, according to the *MNy*, Dam pa Śāk rgyal was also the initiator of the *Khams lugs* of the *Nine Mothers and Sons of the Kun byed rgyal po*.

⁶⁰⁶ The dates of both these masters are unknown.

⁶⁰⁷ Dates unknown. For all these masters see Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:650-660.

⁶⁰⁸ *DNg*, 116:3-4; Roerich, 1979:129-30; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:652. It should be noticed that the short biographies of Dam pa Se sbrag pa and Zhig po from Dbus that Bdud 'joms provides consist mainly of anecdotes about events in these masters' lives. The information about the instructions these practitioners received is not very detailed. The *DNg* in describing the lives of these two masters equally abstains from reporting any specific teachings they studied or transmitted. The only section in which A ro's teachings appear is in the biography of Lce ston Rgya nag (Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:650-51). However, since he is the first master of the Rong tradition, and the teachings passed from him to the other members of the Rong lineage, I think that it should be understood that all the masters that come after him in the Rong transmission received the instructions of A ro.

⁶⁰⁹ Because of the sources' silence about the name of the teachings they transmitted to one another it is not clear whether Yon tan received A ro's instructions from his uncle, Lce nag or from his uncle's disciples. The first option seems more probable.

⁶¹⁰ For a tentative explanation of the absence of Nyang ral's name in Zhig po bdud rtsi's biography, see Chapter One, fn. 81.

rgyas pa (Kah thog), which goes under the name of *A ro'i Rdzogs chen*. We saw before, that although the authorship of most of these texts is attributed to Zhig po bdud rtsi, he was not the person who physically wrote them down.⁶¹¹ His vast repertoire of teachings was annotated by one of his students called Rta ston Jo ye (1163-1236), who is also the nineteenth lineage-holder of this second transmission. Gzhon nu dpal's account of Rta ston Jo yes' life, Bdud 'joms rin po che's account and the introduction of volume one-hundred and seven of the *Bka' ma Kah thog* all agree in reporting this master as the "scribe" of Zhig po bdud rtsi's oral instructions.⁶¹² The *DNg* also refers to his meeting with Brag Dkar mo ba. This master transmitted to him the *Gsal ba sgron ma'i rgyud*.⁶¹³ Once again it is interesting to notice the interrelationships between all these masters. We know little about Brag Dkar mo ba but we have already met him in Lineage One as the person who transmitted A ro's tradition to the first *Karma pa*. This raises the questions of whether Brag Dkar mo ba received A ro's transmission from Rta ston Jo ye or whether he received it from Po to ba. Lineage One seems to imply that the missing link is Rta ston Jo ye, however there is no reference about Rta ston Jo ye teaching anything to Brag Dkar mo ba. The *DNg* tells that Rta ston Jo ye desired to leave the monastic life to enter a long period of retreat.⁶¹⁴ Therefore, even though he took up the labour of redacting all Zhig po bdud rtsi's instructions, he did not produce more than 'terse notes',⁶¹⁵ thinking that he would not have time to do more. However, Zhig po bdud rtsi wished him to stay in his establishment to teach, and he finally succeeded in dissuading him. Rta ston Jo ye remained and toiled to keep up the establishment. We do not know whether he ever converted his notes into proper texts. The introduction to volume one-hundred and seven, presented in full at the beginning of this chapter, seems to imply that the texts contained in it had been redacted by a third person named Rin chen Dpal dbyangs. However, if we look at the colophons of the texts themselves Rin chen Dpal dbyangs appears as the editor of only one text and the

⁶¹¹ See fn. 390. For a biographical sketch of Zhig po bdud rtsi's life, see below in the analysis of the lineage of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa*.

⁶¹² It is very likely that the account Bdud 'joms rin po che gives is taken from the *DNg*, which relates a very similar story. See Roerich, 1979:143-147.

⁶¹³This is also one of the texts quoted in Dpal 'bar ba's *Khams lugs*.

⁶¹⁴ *DNg*, 131:7- 132:1; Roerich, 1979:147.

⁶¹⁵ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:659. Gzhon nu dpal here only says that Rta ston Jo ye "wrote down all the precepts and advices (received from his teacher), and was thus of great benefit to later followers". Roerich, 1979:147.

author of another, while Jo bo Ye shes (alias Rta ston Jo yes) is the editor of twelve texts and the author of two. Another person also appears as the editor of one of the works of volume 107. This is Rta ston Gzi brjid, the twentieth lineage-holder of this transmission. The *KKtshGy* described Rta ston Gzi brjid as the person who gave G.yag sde paṅ chen the *A ro'i chos skor*, which was composed of the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*, the *Zhen log sgron [me]*, the *Dad skyed sgon me*, the *Mnga ngag cog bzhag* and the *Sems sde ma bu bco brgyad* or *A ro lugs*.⁶¹⁶ According to the *DNg* the connection between Rta ston Gzi brjid and the lineage-holder who follows him, G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal (1284-1365) is not direct. We have already seen that G.yung ston had a Rnying ma teacher, i.e. Zur Byams pa seng ge. This Zur master was a disciple of Śrī Pakshi Śākya 'od, who in turn was a student of Rta ston Gzi brjid. By virtue of this connection Gzhon nu dpal places the biography of G.yung ston after that of Śākya 'od, although G.yung pa was a Karma Bka' bgyud pa.⁶¹⁷ Bdud 'joms rin po che follows his lead and he also devotes a section to G.yung pa inside the Rnying ma's Rong tradition.⁶¹⁸ From G.yung ston pa this lineage goes to the third *Karma pa*, Rgyal dbang Rol pa'i rdo rje, and finally to the redactor of the *A ro lugs*, Mkha' spyod dbang po.

There is therefore a great difference between the two lineages that Kong sprul records: the first one is, from its very inception, a mixture of Bka' bgyud/*Mahāmudrā* and Rnying ma/Rdzogs chen transmission; the second simply reports the Rnying ma version of the lineage. The first group of masters in both lineages are those found in the A ro transmission of the *MNy*. After them the difference between the two transmissions grows stronger: the first becomes a full Bka' bgyud lineage, the second remains rooted to the Rnying ma tradition and changes its affiliation only at the end to accommodate the Bka' bgyud redactor of the *A ro lugs* and his teacher Rol pa rdo rje. Despite the differences however, they both seem to be constructed transmissions created to serve a particular purpose. Lineage One made a clear and voluntary attempt at mixing A ro's Rdzogs chen lineage with that of a general *Mahāmudrā* teaching. This does not mean that all the transmission is a fake. Starting from A ro up to Mkha' spyod pa we see that at least seven out of the sixteen lineage-holders have been

⁶¹⁶ The *KKtshGy* also contains a short biography of G.yung, see *KKtshGy*, 275:1-6.

⁶¹⁷ *DNg*, 134:1-135:2; Roerich, 1979:149-50.

⁶¹⁸ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:666-7.

attested elsewhere as keepers of A ro's tradition. Nonetheless, the subsequent endless list of Bka' brgyud pa hierarchy hardly looks real. It rather seems to be a stratagem to promote A ro's Rdzogs chen teachings. Lineage Two also looks too perfect to be real. Out of the sixteen lineage-holders (from A ro to Mkha' spyod pa) thirteen are testified elsewhere to have received A ro's instructions and there seem to be good probabilities that the remaining three also received them. Most of these lineage-holders are very famous in Rdzogs chen circles and are recorded in several Rnying ma writings. Kong sprul introduced this as an alternative lineage, a sort of replacement for the unsatisfactory mixture of the preceding transmission but he did not mention the source from which he drew it. From this one may suspect that he created Lineage Two on the basis of what he remembered to be the A ro (and the general Rdzogs chen) lineage from various sources. However, in contrast to the Rnying ma purity of Lineage Two the transmission is deficient, since of the six masters Mkha' spyod pa listed in his short transmission, two are missing.

The Rdzogs pa chen po a ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa

The *Rdzogs pa chen po a ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa* is the only other work of Dpal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rdo rje that has reached us. Like the *Khams lugs*, the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* opens with a long line of transmission. It seems as if Dpal 'bar ba wished to give an immediate impression to the reader of the context in which his work was grounded, and at the same time provide legitimization for it. As expected, Dpal 'bar ba's transmission of A ro's instructions has a few lineage-holders in common with the two transmissions of the *A ro lugs* (especially with the second one) but not enough to permit us to draw parallels between them. On the contrary, the moment one looks at Dpal 'bar ba's lineage, one immediately notices that the more direct source for it is not the *MNy* or A ro's biography, as it had been for Lineage Two of the *A ro lugs*, but the *NyNy*.

The following pages examine the lives of the lineage-holders of the *A ro brgyud*

kyi man ngag. At the end of this analysis we shall be able to draw some conclusion about the nature of the different transmissions of the A ro tradition.

TABLE SEVEN

<i>A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag</i> ⁶¹⁹	<i>Snying gi nyi ma</i> ⁶²⁰
Samantabhadra	Samantabhadra
Vajrasattva	Vajrasattva
Dga' rab rdo rje	Dga' rab rdo rje
Manjuśrī	Manjuśrīmitra
	Twenty other lineage-holders ⁶²¹
Shri seng ha (Śrī siṃha)	Śrī sing nga
	Dge' slong Kun dga' ma
	Bye ma la mu tra
Bhe ro tsa na (Vairocana)	Bai ro tsa na
Nya na ku ma ra (Jñānakumāra)	Bsnyags gnya'
A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas	
Swogs po dpal gyis 'byung gnas	Sog po Lha dpal gyi ye shes
Gnubs sangs rgyas ye shes	Bsnubs sang rgyas ye shes
Khu lungs yon tan rgya mtsho	Pa gor blon chen 'phags pa
	So ye shes dbang phyug
	Sru Legs pa'i sgron ma
	Bsnubs Khung lung Yon tan rgya mtsho
Sras ye shes rgya mtsho	Sras ye shes rgya mtsho
Snang ston shes rab mchog	Myang mi shes rab mchog
Zur chen Śākya 'byung gnas	Myang ye 'byung
Zur chung shes rab grags	Zur Śa kya 'byung gnas
Mda' ti chos śag	Zhang 'Gos chung
	Me myag 'byung grags
	Gzad shes rab rgyal po
	Tsag bla ma
	Zur chung shes rab grags pa
Blan Śākya ye shes	Skyo ston Śākya ye shes

⁶¹⁹ *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*, 632:3-633:4.

⁶²⁰ *NyNy*, 163:5-164:3; Kapstein, 2008:281-2.

⁶²¹ These are the masters of the *vidyādhara* transmission that we have seen in chapter Two. See *Bai ro rgyud 'bum*, vol.1, 163:5 and Kapstein, 2008:281.

	Yang kher bla ma
	Rlan Śākya bzang po
	Mda' tig chos shag
Dam pa śag rgyal	Lha rje Mda' tsha hor po (<i>alias</i> Zur Sgro phug pa)
Lha rje Śākya seng ge = Zur sgro phug pa	Lce ston Rgya nag
Bdud rtsi zhig po	Dbus pa Śākya bla ma
Smyo bham shag 'bum	
'Jam dbyangs brag ri pa	
Mtshung med yag sde pan chen	
Rgya bla ma Ratna Śrī	
Nam mkha' rdo rje	

The life stories of the first seven lineage-holders Samantabhadra, Vajrasattva, Dga' rab rdo rje, Manjuśrī, Śrī siṃha, Vairocana and Jñānakumāra and their role in the Rdzogs chen tradition have already been treated in the chapter devoted to the *Khams lugs'* lineage. Similarly, there is no need to repeat here the life-story of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. Therefore, I start the examination of this lineage with the ninth lineage-holder Swogs po Dpal gyis 'byung gnas.

Swogs po Dpal gyis 'byung gnas

The *Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum* is one of the earliest sources that cites the name of Swogs po dpal 'byung gnas. Here (as we can see from Table Seven above) Swogs po Dpal gyis 'byung gnas is spelled as Sog po Lha dpal gyi ye shes. Sog po is the Tibetan for Sogdian. Bdud 'joms rin po che reports that Sog po Lha dpal gyi ye shes was a blacksmith and that, around the eighth century, all the blacksmiths assumed the name of 'Sogdian'.⁶²² Kapstein explains this peculiarity by noticing that some of those that fell under the label of 'Sogdian', like the Scythians, were actually people who mainly worked with metals.⁶²³ Sog po Lha dpal was the first disciple of Gnyags Jñānakumāra. He helped Gnyags to

⁶²² Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:604.

⁶²³ *Ibidem*, p. 53, fn. 710.

'liberate' (i.e. kill) some of his worst enemies, included Gnyags' own brother.⁶²⁴ Jñānakumāra taught Swog po Dpal the *Dgongs pa'i dus pa'i mdo*, the *Māyājāla tantras* and the *Rdzogs chen Sems sde*. Swog po then transmitted them to Gnubs chen. This section of Bdud 'joms' work provides us with a list of Gnyags Jñānakumāra's main disciples, where of course we find Sog po Dpal gyi 'byung gnas among other seven practitioners.⁶²⁵ Interestingly, A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas is not among them.⁶²⁶

Gnubs Sangs rgyas ye shes

The life and works of Gnubs chen have been the subject of several studies of Western scholarship.⁶²⁷ Gnubs chen's presence in this lineage is not surprising, since he is recorded in several sources as the disciple of Sog Dpal gyi ye shes.⁶²⁸ However, it seems very unlikely that A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas predated Gnubs chen. In fact, in the latter's *Bsam gtan mig sgron* there is no reference to A ro or A ro's work.⁶²⁹ The work of Dga' rab rdo rje, Manjuśrī, Śrī Simha, Vairocana, Gnyags Jñānakumāra, Sog po Lha dpal gyi ye shes and Gnubs chen may well be at the basis of A ro's instructions, but A ro need not have received them through these masters. They were A ro's masters in theory rather than in practice.⁶³⁰ However, since we have no precise date for either Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas or A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas it is difficult to reach any certainty about the precise amount of time that elapsed between the two. Esler has already pointed out that there is a time discrepancy in the events of Gnubs chen's life.⁶³¹ This master's biographies in fact claim that Gnubs chen was at the same time ordained by Śāntarakṣita (in the eighth century) and that he lived during Glang dar ma's reign

⁶²⁴ *Ibidem*, 604-5.

⁶²⁵ *Ibidem*, 1991:605.

⁶²⁶ This seems to indicate that Bdud 'joms was more observant of the chronological order of things than many of his predecessors. On some occasions he also drew conclusions based on the chronological possibility or impossibility of two people having met or not. An example may be found on pages 458-9.

⁶²⁷ See for example, Esler, 2014:5-27; Esler, 2012a:81-136; Esler, 2012b: 317-328; Baroetto, 2010; Meinert, 2014; Dalton and van Schaik, 2003:153-175.

⁶²⁸ See Esler, 2004: 10.

⁶²⁹ There is the possibility that A ro and Gnubs chen lived around the same period. Being located in different parts of Tibet, Gnubs chen might have not known of A ro's existence. However, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, it is more likely that A ro Ye shes lived some time later than Gnubs chen.

⁶³⁰ Thiesen also made a somewhat similar remark. See Thiesen, 2009:57.

⁶³¹ Esler, 2004:19-22. In this article he argues that Gnubs chen must have lived between the end of the ninth and the beginning of the tenth century.

(in the ninth). A similar problem also arises from the accounts of A ro's life. His biography makes him take the ordination vows with Bla ma Dgongs pa rab gsal (953-1035) and at the same time he learn the doctrine directly from Gnyags Jñānakumāra and Vairocana (eighth century).⁶³² There is an interesting circularity in the life stories of these two masters. Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas starts his career taking the monastic vows from Śāntarakṣita and ends it by becoming a celibate tantric practitioner. A ro Ye shes begins his life following the model of the crazy *yogin* and ends up taking monastic vows. Although Esler demonstrated that Gnubs chen cannot have met Śāntarakṣita, these two stories could still give some hints about the chronological order of these masters. Gnubs chen lived in a period in which the monastic vows were mostly abandoned because of the economic and political decline of the Yar lung dynasty. A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas is one of those who marked the revival of monasticism, and thus from a yogin became a monk. His time signalled the beginning of the re-establishment of the monastic institutions. Thus, despite their lack of chronological precision, the overall narratives of these biographies point to two different historical contexts. Consequently, the idea that A ro was the teacher of Gnubs seems out of place. It rather gives the impression that Dpal 'bar ba, after having borrowed the whole first section of the lineage from the *NyNy*, was at a loss about where to place A ro. He probably remembered that many of A ro's teachings derived from Gnyags Jñānakumāra and, regardless of chronology, placed A ro right after Jñānakumāra.

Khu lung Yon tan rgya mtsho

Khu lung Yon tan rgya mtsho was one of the spiritual sons of Gnubs chen, and the only one of his disciples to whom Gnubs chen transmitted all his teachings. Bdud 'joms rin po che tells that Khu lung in a previous life had a brother. This brother during Khu lung's lifetime was the reincarnation of the Indian master Dhanadhala. This Dhanadhala is also recorded in the *Lde'u chos 'byung* as one of the masters who arrived in Tibet between the end of the Early Diffusion and the beginning of the Period of Fragmentation and introduced new *bka' ma*

⁶³² *A ro'i lo rgyus*, 7v: 1-2.

teachings.⁶³³ Bdud 'joms rin po che records that Dhanadhala came to Tibet appositely to instruct Khu lung Yon tan.⁶³⁴

(Sras) Ye shes rgya mtsho

According to Bdud 'joms, Khu lung Yon tan was the father of two sons called Ye shes rgya mtsho and Padma dbang rgyal.⁶³⁵ Only the first is recorded in the lineage of the *NyNy* and it is the same person that we find in the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*'s transmission. Bdud 'joms rin po che describes him as a very humble person who had realised great accomplishment in the practice. He received all his father's knowledge of tantra and esoteric instructions.⁶³⁶

Snang ston Shes rab mchog

Snang ston Shes rab mchog⁶³⁷ (i.e. Nyang/Myang chen Shes rab mchog) was one of the main disciples of Ye shes rgya mtsho.⁶³⁸ Ye shes rgya mtsho passed all his teachings on to Snang ston and also the oral transmission of the *Māyājāla* and of the Rdzogs chen mind orientation.⁶³⁹ This master is also one of the last names in Bdud 'joms' section on the Nyang lineage. The transmission then was perpetuated by the members of the Zur family. Our lineage also follows this line and from the next lineage-holder we move into the Zurs' territory.

⁶³³ See Germano, 2002:252. Dhanadhala was one of the latest to arrive, around the ninth/ tenth century, which would also confirm the dates Esler gave for Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas.

⁶³⁴ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:614.

⁶³⁵ *Ibidem*, 615.

⁶³⁶ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:615.

⁶³⁷ The scribe of this text clearly mistook Snyang for Snang. The same hand that committed to paper the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* wrote down also the other texts in volume one of the *Snyan brgyud khrid chen bcu gsum skor*. The whole tome is replete with mistakes so this could simply be one of them.

⁶³⁸ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:616. Here the name appears as Nyang Ye shes 'byung gnas, but in note 730 Kapstein says that the text wrongly reads Nyang Ye shes rab 'byung gnas and therefore he changed it to Ye shes 'byung gnas. However, it seems likely that Bdud 'joms confused Nyang shes rab mchog and Nyang Ye shes 'byung gnas and mixed their names together as Nyang shes rab 'byung gnas. Both the *NyNy* and a much more recent work, the *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo* of Bstan 'dzin lung rtogs nyi ma (1974-), present Nyang shes rab mchog as the teacher of Nyang Ye shes 'byung gnas. (see *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo*, p. 153. The biography of Nyang shes rab goes from line 1-7 and that of Nyang Ye shes 'byung gnas from line 8 to line 12). The matter is further complicated by the fact that there actually is a Nyang shes rab mchog recorded in the *MNy* (491:3-4) and in the *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo* (206:1-14). Still, if one looks at the context it is clear that he was not the person to whom either the *NyNy* or the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* refer in this instance.

⁶³⁹ *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo*, 153:3.

Zur chen Śākya 'byung gnas (1002-1062) & Zur chung Shes rab grags (1014-1074)

Biographies of these two masters are found both in Gzhon nu dpal's *DNg*⁶⁴⁰ and in Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung*.⁶⁴¹ The similarity of the two stories is evident and yet there are a few differences that seem to suggest that, even though they both relied on a same source (or two very similar sources), they summarised them choosing, at times, different details.⁶⁴²

Zur chen Śākya 'byung gnas was the first very important master of the Zur clan. Bdud 'joms rin po che reports that the Zurs were originally from India,⁶⁴³ although Zur chen was born in Khams. He received many tantras from his own

⁶⁴⁰ *DNg*, 98:5-109:6; Roerich, 1979:110-121.

⁶⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 617-645.

⁶⁴² On a couple of occasions however, the two versions almost disagree, so it would seem that they probably had access to two similar but not exactly identical sources. It is also true that Bdud 'joms certainly consulted the *DNg*, so one may advance the hypothesis that Bdud 'joms copied certain sections from the *DNg* and added some details of his own or drew them from a different source. However, the similarity between the two is so striking and the variations so minute that if Bdud 'joms took them from another text, this text must have been very similar to the *DNg* as the details it adds are totally integrated inside the main narrative. There is also some degree of inconsistency that is present in both Bdud 'joms rin po che's version and in that of the *DNg*. This makes one think that if Bdud 'joms added new pieces of information in the biographies he would have removed equivocations. In Kapstein and Dorje's translation of the *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung* it is evident that they tried to smooth out the ambiguity of the text. For example, the biographies of both these masters clearly place the Zurs inside the class of the tantric practitioners. There is a point in the biography of Zur chen where the Zurs and their followers have to deal with some monks, and the only thing that differentiates the Zurs from the others in the text is that the Zurs are tantric practitioners and the others are monks. Yet, the biographies call the Zurs' followers "*gr(w)a pa*". Kapstein and Dorje never translate this term as "monk", as it would clearly seem in contrast with the context in which the biographies place the Zurs. On the other hand Roerich translates the term as "monk" and therefore leaves the ambiguity there. Again, both Bdud 'joms and Gzhon nu dpal refer to Zu chen and Zur chung's seat as the "the temple" (*gtsug lag khang*, see *DNg*, 100:2; *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung*, 254:16). Kapstein and Dorje translate this as "temple" while Roerich refers to a "monastery" or translates it with the Sanskrit *vihāra*. Now, Zur chen was a monk. His biography tells that Dgongs pa rab gsal ordained him, but his successor, Zur chung had several consorts over his life even after his ascendancy to Zur po che's seat. (If we stick to 832-915 as the dates of Dgongs pa rab gsal, Zur chen could not have taken the vows from him. It is likely that Zur chen, as many other masters, received the vows from a disciple, or a disciple of a disciple of Bla chen). The time when these two Zurs lived was still an unsettled period. The schools were not yet formed and this is reflected in the two biographies. In fact, when there are references to other religious groups we never see a Bka' dams, a Bka' brgyud or a Sa skya monk, but we meet logicians, dialecticians and so on. Zur chen is even said to be a disciple of Brog mi, the founder of the Sa skya school. The mixture of monks and practitioners even among the Zurs show that rules were still flexible. It is very likely that, even among the Zurs' followers, there were people who had taken the monastic vows and those who had not. Thus, the ambiguity in the language of the biographies seems justified.

⁶⁴³ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:617. Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung* informs us that 'Od gsal Lha dbang gzhon nu was born in India. 'Od gsal's son, Ma nda Zang zhush can, had in turn a son who was born in Mdo khams. The source for this story is given as a genealogy of the Zur clan. It is normal for such genealogies to trace the origin of their clans to India or to the Imperial period.

kinsmen and many more instructions from several other teachers, among whom we find Nyang Ye shes 'byung gnas, the disciple of Nyang ston Shes rab mchog.⁶⁴⁴ Ye shes 'byung transmitted to Zur chen the *Māyājāla* and the Rdzogs chen Sems sde.⁶⁴⁵ The biography then refers to his studies under Brog mi (992-1072) the founder of the Sa skya school.⁶⁴⁶ Moreover, Zur chen and his disciples started a long peregrination in order to find the right spot in which to meditate undistracted. At the end of a series of incidents and unexpected meetings they finally found a place in which to settle and the narrative then turns to describe the foundation of the temple of 'Ug pa lung, the seat of Zur po che in the Shang valley in Nya ri.⁶⁴⁷ Zur chung was the favourite disciple of Zur chen and many of the latter's disciples complained of nepotism. They slandered Zur chung until Zur chung's repeated display of formidable magical power overcame gossip and generated faith. A frequent trope of Zur chen's and Zur chung's biographies is the continual necessity of wealth, either to build temples, or to perform rituals or simply to subsist in an unfriendly environment. The narrative is also enlivened by a repertoire of inner and external quarrels. For instance, inside their own establishment the disciples who engaged in book learning scorned those who were mainly ritualists, preventing them from joining in debates. The ritualists in response kept the others from chanting during the daily ritual activities.⁶⁴⁸ Outside their own community Zur chen and Zur chung also had rivals. The biography of Zur chung records that a certain Sba dge mthong, an affiliate to the dialectical school, sent a student of this school to debate with Zur chung pa.⁶⁴⁹ Zur chung however amazed the student with his extraordinary *siddhis* so that the former changed allegiance and became a disciple of Zur chung pa. Zur chung pa's four main disciples also came to him in a similar fashion.⁶⁵⁰ The biography relates that these four (also called the "four pillars") were former students of a

⁶⁴⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁶⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, 619.

⁶⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, 633; *DNg*, 101:1-2; Roerich, 1979:112. Brog mi as usual asked for a lot of gold.

⁶⁴⁷ *Ibidem*. These episodes are described from p. 619 to p. 634. Most of them are missing in the *DNg*.

⁶⁴⁸ *Ibidem*, 626. This episode is not present in the *DNg*.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, 625; *DNg*, 105:2-5; Roerich, 1979:117.

⁶⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 642; *DNg*, 106:6-107:6; Roerich, 1979:119-20. The *DNg* is more detailed than the *Bdud 'joms 'chos 'byung* in the narration of the debates that ensued between these men and Zur chung.

logician named Khyung po grags se.⁶⁵¹ When Khyung po sent them to debate with Zur chung, the four men were defeated by Zur chung pa's answers and decided to leave their master to enlist among Zur chen's students. The biography however also informs us of disciples who went the opposite way, leaving Zur chung to serve other masters. In particular we are informed of three men, dubbed the "three useless men", who took this course of action.⁶⁵² These three possessed an inferior understanding and could not grasp the advanced teachings of Zur chung. One was Mig chung Dbang seng, another was Sum pa Ye 'bar and the third was 'Go bya tsha. Of these the latter joined the Rnying ma detractor Khug pa, the author of the very famous *Sngags log sun 'byin gyi skor* that we have repeatedly met above. 'Gos Khug pa is said to have incited his own students not to pay respect to Zur chung. However, one day at a festival they all saw Zur chung in all his radiance and became overwhelmed by his presence. 'Gos Khug pa himself could not help prostrating in front of him. He then had to justify his conduct to his students by saying that when he saw Zur chung he believed he had seen Yang dag Heruka in Zur chung.⁶⁵³ Although Bdud 'joms drew from the *DNg* much of his information for writing his *chos 'byung*, in this case he omits to report Gzhon nu dpal's account of 'Gos Khug pa's biography. The *DNg* in fact says that 'Gos Khug pa went himself to study under the Zurs but left them because they would only give him manual work and never taught him anything. He also went to study under Brog mi but the latter was avaricious and asked him for much gold in return for his teachings. 'Gos Khug pa found this revolting and decided to go to India to fetch teachings himself.⁶⁵⁴ Therefore it seems improbable that 'Gos Khug pa, who had served under the Zurs, was suddenly struck by Zur chung pa's persona. Another interesting account of the rivalry between the Zurs and other religious groups emerges from their biographies.⁶⁵⁵ They report that a wealthy and childless couple wished to make a donation to some worthy religious group.⁶⁵⁶ In order to do so they asked around who were the best religious masters but the people were of different opinions. Some preferred the tantric Zurs, others took side with some monks and others again

⁶⁵¹ *Ibidem*, 642-3; *DNg*, 106:6; Roerich, 1979:119.

⁶⁵² *Ibidem*, 643. *DNg*, 105:5; Roerich, 1979:117.

⁶⁵³ *Ibidem*, 643. The *DNg* does not report this event.

⁶⁵⁴ *DNg*, 318:7; Roerich, 1979:360.

⁶⁵⁵ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:632-3; *DNg*, 101:2-101:6; Roerich, 1979:112-3.

⁶⁵⁶ *Ibidem*.

supported the Bon po priests. The couple then summoned them all and the three parties decided to build one single temple for all of them. However, because the monk wanted the central statue to be that of Śākyamuni, Zur po che wished to place a statue of Vajrasattva and the Bon po would rather have a statue representing Gshen rab mi bo, they finally decided that each would build his own temple. The Bon po and the Zurs then decided to have a temple between them. However, when the construction works were already at an advanced stage, Zur chen realised that since they would want to place different statues in there too it would have been better if they also constructed separate establishments.⁶⁵⁷ Later on, different patrons proposed that the religious group that was able to build a roof to their temple, would have obtained tax collections from the people. The Bon po and Zur both succeeded, the monk failed.⁶⁵⁸ These episodes show that there was a much closer relationship between the Bon pos and the Zurs rather than between either of these two and the monastic establishment.⁶⁵⁹ This is just as it should be since among the most important teachings transmitted in the Zur family, there were the Rdzogs chen instructions, which we know existed both in the Rnying ma and in the Bon tradition. The monk is depicted as lower than the tantric/Rdzogs chen practitioners. Nonetheless, even between Bon and Rnying ma masters there was not a complete identification since in the end they were not able to overcome the issue of the statue and Zur po che preferred to go away to arrange another temple.⁶⁶⁰

Mda' ti Chos śag

Mda' ti Chos śag/ śak (end eleventh- beginning of twelfth century) was one of the four main disciples (or four pillars) of Zur chung pa, and the uncle of Zur chung pa's famous son, Zur sgro phug pa Śākya seng ge (1074-1135).⁶⁶¹ Zur

⁶⁵⁷ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:632; *DNg*, 101:6-102:1; Roerich, 1979:113.

⁶⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 633.

⁶⁵⁹ Otherwise it would be difficult to explain why, after all parties agreed to build separate temples, the Zurs and the Bon pos had to go through the same decision again. The only possible explanation is that the author wanted to mark the fact that there was a closer relationship between Rnying ma pas and Bon pos.

⁶⁶⁰ This however, may be due to the fact that the Zurs besides being holders of the Rdzogs chen teachings were also (and probably mainly) tantric practitioners. The fact that Zur chen pa wished to have Yang dag Heruka as the central image of the temple seems also to point in this direction.

⁶⁶¹ The *DNg* refers to this master with the name of Mnga' tig jo Śāk. Mda' ti chos shag does not possess his own biography in *The Nyingma School*. His deeds are sporadically reported inside the biographies of these two Zurs, father and son. See p. 642, p. 645 and 647.

Chung pa in fact asked Mda' ti to give him his sister, and the latter consented. Zur chung pa however did not marry Mda' ti's sister and this caused Zur Chung pa's disciples to believe that she was not worthy.⁶⁶² One night, Skyo ston Śākya ye shes (another one of the four main pillars) dreamt that the girl gave birth to a miraculous son. The other disciples also experienced similar auspicious dreams. Thus, in the morning they agreed that she could stay. She indeed gave birth to a child and the merits of this child brought donations that contributed to his sustenance.⁶⁶³ Zur chung died when the child was still young and therefore Mda' ti had a great share in the education of Zur Sgro phug pa.

Bla ma Śākya ye shes

Bla ma Śākya ye shes (i.e. Skyo ston Śākya ye shes)⁶⁶⁴ was another of the four pillar-disciples of Zur po che. Like Mda' tig and the other two pillars he was formerly a student of the dialectician Khyung po grags se.⁶⁶⁵ He was the man who dreamt of the birth of Zur Śākya seng ge from the womb of Mda' ti's sister. We know nothing more about this master's life.

Dam pa Śag rgyal

Dam pa Śag rgyal is another spelling for Dam pa Śākya rgyal.⁶⁶⁶ He is the second lineage-holder after A ro who does not appear in the transmission of the *NyNy*. We met this master in Lineage One of the *A ro lugs* of the second Zhwa dmar pa.

⁶⁶² A similar account is also found in the *DNg*. Roerich however, translates: "The mother of the Venerable sGro-phug-pa chen-po — Ņo-sras-ma mŅa-mo gtsug-tor lčam, was the sister of mŅa'-tig Ņo-šāk. Before he took her as his consort, she was studying religion at the monastery. When she became his wife, all monks became somewhat displeased (at her conduct), and intended to expel her (from the monastery)". Roerich, 1979: 122. Therefore, according to Roerich Zur chung took her as a wife. However, the word Roerich translated as "wife" (*jo mo*) is the same that before he translated as "consort" (*jo mo*). (See *DNg*, 109:7-110:1). The most common term for wife is "*chung ma*" while "*jo mo*" is more frequently used to indicate a nun or a lady of rank or sometimes a female practitioner. Therefore, it seems more likely that Gzhon nu dpal did not mean that Zur chung took her as a wife, but only as a companion female practitioner. Moreover, there is no hint in the text that her behaviour was wrong, Roerich probably added it because he needed to find an explanation for the hostility the other practitioners felt towards her. Bdud 'joms' explanation that the others did not like her because Zur chung did not decide to marry her seems more in line with the text. Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:645-6.

⁶⁶³ Zur chung pa did not contribute to the living expenses of his infant son. He affirmed that if his son possessed merits food would come his way. If he did not, his life was of no use.

⁶⁶⁴ Dates unknown.

⁶⁶⁵ Dates unknown.

⁶⁶⁶ It often happens that the syllables Śak, Śag, and Śākya are use interchangeably. In the *DNg* and In Sog bzlog pa's lineage (that we shall analyse below) this master (here called Dam pa Śag rgyal) is called Dam pa Śāk rgyal. In the first lineage of the *A ro lugs* of Mkha spyod pa he is called Dam pa Śākya rgyal.

Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer considers him one of the masters who received the transmission of the *Kun byed rgyal po* and, more importantly, as one of the two masters by means of whom this important Mind Series teaching became known as *Khams lugs*.⁶⁶⁷ As we saw in the previous lineage Dam pa Śākyā rgyal was a student of Zur Śākyā seng ge. Since in this lineage Zur Śākyā seng ge follows Dam pa Śākyā rgyal there seems to be a mistake in our text.⁶⁶⁸ The *DNg* cites his name inside a line of transmission of the Mind Series teachings that reached its author, Gzhon nu dpal.⁶⁶⁹ Here, Dam pa Śākyā rgyal is preceded by Zur Śākyā seng ge and is followed by Lce ston (Lce ston yab) and his son (Lce ston sras). Similarly, in the lineage that we find at the end of Sog bzlog pa's text, the *Rdzogs chen sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* (which we shall analyse in the next chapter) Dam pa Śākyā rgyal appears not before, but after the name of Zur Śākyā seng ge.

Lha rje Śākyā seng ge (or Lha rje Sgro phug pa, 1074-1134)

The nineteenth lineage-holder of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* is Zur chung pa's son Zur Śākyā seng ge (1074-1135). As we saw, his main teachers were his father's four main disciples, and especially his maternal uncle Mda' tig chos śag. Śākyā seng ge also met the famous *gcod* and *zhi byed* teacher Pha dam pa Sang rgyas (?- 1117).⁶⁷⁰ Bdud 'joms rin po che at the end of Śākyā seng ge's biography gives the usual list of his disciples. However, he is the last master of the Zur lineage important enough to possess a personal biography. The transmission then reaches the Rong lineage.

⁶⁶⁷ *MNy*, 491:15-492:1.

⁶⁶⁸ However, Dam pa Śākyā rgyal does not appear as one of Zur Śākyā seng ge's twelve main disciples in Bdud 'joms rin po che's *chos 'byung*. We can partially account for both his absence in the *NyNy* lineage and among the twelve main disciples thanks to a short note of Bdud 'joms towards the end of Zur Śākyā seng ge's biography where he enumerates Zur Śākyā seng ge's students. This says: "This enumeration is renowned as the "Upper [Tibetan] Tradition of Zur"; but in the "Lower [or Khampa] Tradition" there is a different lineage." (Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:649). Kapstein and Dorje in a footnote also remark that it is from Zur Śākyā seng ge that the *Rong lugs* of Central Tibet and the *Khams lugs* of Khams started to differentiate (Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:58, fn. 793). Now since Dam pa Śākyā rgyal became famous for his *Khams lugs* the fact that he was not present in this Central Tibetan list of Zur Śākyā's students is perfectly justified. It also seems plausible that Dpal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rdo rje added him to the list either because he himself belonged to the Khams tradition and wished to have someone to represent his circle in the lineage, or because he knew that A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas stemmed from A mdo-Khams. Nonetheless, he then continues to copy the transmission from the *NyNy* and consequently he returns to the Rong lineage of Central Tibet.

⁶⁶⁹ *DNg*, 154:3-5. Roerich, 1979:171-72.

⁶⁷⁰ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:648.

Bdud rtsi zhig po⁶⁷¹

Zhig po bdud rtsi is one of the members of the Rong clan. As we have had occasion to appreciate throughout this study, he was a pivotal figure in A ro's transmission and in the dissemination of A ro's teachings. He was the main disciple of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and his uncle Dam pa Se brag pa of the Rong clan.⁶⁷² He also authored many teachings related to A ro's instructions, which are now collected in volume one hundred and seven of the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog). Zhig po bdud rtsi's father died when he was only two years old.⁶⁷³ When the mother discovered that her child was an emanation she sent him to her brother, Dam pa Se brag pa, to receive a monastic education.⁶⁷⁴ Zhig po became an expert in the Rdzogs chen Mental Class to the point that he himself proclaimed that in his whole life he had studied nothing but Sems sde.⁶⁷⁵ His biography says that he studied the tradition of Skor (*skor lugs*), the tradition of Rong (*rong lugs*), the tradition of Khams (*kham lugs*) and so on.⁶⁷⁶ In fact, this is exactly the same list that we find in the *MNy*. Since Zhig po bdud rtsi's work is mainly contained in volume 107 and since he was an expert of all these traditions of Rdzogs chen Sems sde we might wonder how much of the other *lugs* leaked in this volume of *A ro'i rdzogs chen*. The *NyNy* does not (and cannot) record this master or those who come after him since, as Kapstein remarked, this text was written at the time of Zhig po bdud rtsi and possibly by Zhig po bdud rtsi himself or some of his disciples. Therefore, for the section of the transmission from this point up to Nam mkha' rdo rje, the lineage of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* must have relied on other sources.

Smyo bham Śag 'bum

⁶⁷¹ The scribe here inverted the syllables.

⁶⁷² For a possible explanation of the absence of Nyang ral in Zhig po bdud rtsi's biography see footnote 81 in Chapter One.

⁶⁷³ This account is taken from the *DNg*, 119:2-127:2; Roerich, 1979:130-141. *The Nyingma School* gives a very similar account, mostly drawn from the same *DNg*. See Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:653-656.

⁶⁷⁴ Dam pa Se brag pa is the Ston Śākya from Dbus that we found as the fifteenth lineage-holder of the second lineage of the *A ro lugs*.

⁶⁷⁵ See again footnote 81 in Chapter One.

⁶⁷⁶ On the similarity of the lists of these *lugs* in Zhig po's biography and in the *MNy* see footnote 81 in Chapter One.

Smyo bham Śag ’bum is probably another name for Śāk ’bum pa.⁶⁷⁷ This master is also present in the lineage of the *Nyang lugs* analysed below. His name only appears once in the *DNg* where he is said to be the son of the ‘reincarnation from Yar klung’ (Yar klung sprul sku).⁶⁷⁸ Because Śāk ’bum pa’s biography is treated just after that of Śākya ’od (who is said to have been also his teacher) and Śākya ’od was born in Sman lung in Yar klung, it would seem that Śāk ’bum was his son. At any rate, both of these masters are recorded as upholders of the Sems sde teachings, although there is no direct reference to A ro’s instructions specifically.

’Jam dbyangs Brag ri pa

It has not been possible for me to identify this master with certainty. He does not appear either among Zhig po bdud rtsi’s disciples or among the teachers of the lineage-holder who follows him, G.yag sde paṅ chen. There is a famous master of the Mind Series tradition that is called ’Jam dbyangs Bsam ’grub rdo rje (1295-1376).⁶⁷⁹ He was not the teacher (as this transmission seems to imply) but the disciple of G.yag sde paṅ chen. He was also a disciple of the famous Zur Byams pa seng ge. Bsam ’grub rdo rje’s son, Sangs rgyas rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1350-1431), eventually he became the teacher of the *DNg*’s author, Gzhon nu dpal.⁶⁸⁰ At the beginning of this chapter we saw that this master taught A ro’s instructions. Therefore, if the present lineage-holder ’Jam dbyangs Brag ri pa is rightly identified with Sangs rgyas rin chen’s father, we may assuredly say that Sangs rgyas rin chen also received (together with other Rnying ma’s teachings) A ro’s instructions directly from his father. Nonetheless, a doubt remains about the identification of these two masters. In the first place because I could not find “brag ri pa” as an alternative name/title of ’Jam dbyangs Bsam ’grub rdo rje; second because in the *DNg*, his biography preceds that of

⁶⁷⁷ The ‘bham’ of the first name (Smyo bham shag) remains unclear. In the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* we find many of these ‘bham’ in verbal position. It could be a secret syllable, a Sanskrit loan (both things at the same time) or a contraction of two syllables. The word ‘*shu bham*’ (Skt. śubham, May all be well!) is a common aspiration and it is frequently found at the end of Tibetan texts. However ‘*bham*’ on its own is not frequently attested.

⁶⁷⁸ *DNg*, 139:2; Roerich, 1979:155.

⁶⁷⁹ For a short biography of this master see the following chapter.

⁶⁸⁰ *DNg* 135:2-135:7, Roerich, 1979:151.

Śāk 'bum pa,⁶⁸¹ the previous lineage-holder in this transmission, and follows that of G.yag sde paṅ chen, the following lineage-holder in this transmission. Therefore, since 'Jam dbyangs is a very common name we cannot but remain doubtful about the identity of this master.

Mtshung med [G.yag] Yag sde paṅ chen

Mtshung med [G.]yag sde paṅ chen is most probably the Sa skya master and student of Bu ston and the Third *Karma pa*, the teacher of Klong chen pa and many others. His connection to A ro's teaching has been discussed several times both in this and in the second chapter. The outline of A ro's teachings of the *KKTshGy* shown in Table Six lists the vast assortment of A ro's teachings G.yag sde paṅ chen received. The *DNg* reports that he received the *A ro'i brgyud chung*. His knowledge was very extensive as he travelled around Tibet to receive the teachings of all important masters.

Rgya bla ma Ratna Śrī & Nam mkha' rdo rje

This is the last lineage-holder before Dpal 'bar ba Nam mkha' rdo rje, the redactor of this text and the author of the *Khams lugs*. Again, it was not easy to identify this person. This is the same situation that we encountered at the end of the lineage of the *Khams lugs*. We would assume that the masters just before Nam mkha' rdo rje in the lineage must have been known by the author. Therefore, they should appear either among the circle of Kaḥ thog masters who lived in the fourteenth century, or as some external masters featuring in Dpal 'bar ba's biography. However, they are nowhere to be found. One plausible explanation is that Dpal 'bar ba was so well acquainted with them that he decided not to give their official name but rather a name or a nickname or any form of appellation which he used in everyday life. This master however does not only bear an Indian name, as many Tibetan masters do, but also is said to be 'rgya', which might be either Chinese or Indian.⁶⁸²

⁶⁸¹ However, 'Go lo tsa ba does not give us any date for Shāk 'bum pa, so one infers that he lived after 'Jam dbyangs only because he comes after him in the same transmission.

⁶⁸² Of course the fact that the name is in Sanskrit points to the second as the more likely option. However, some Chinese Buddhist masters had Sanskrit names as well, and Kaḥ thog is much closer to China than India.

Conclusions

The lineage of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*, does not specifically belong to the tradition of A ro. The *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* includes a general transmission of the Mind Series teachings drawn from the *NyNy* or some other source that drew from this text. A few but decisive points confirm this hypothesis, as for example the fact that the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* follows the lineage of the *NyNy* so closely and yet the *NyNy* itself does not include the name of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas nor that of the people who were traditionally associated with A ro such as Cog ro and Ya zi bon ston. However, the veracity of some sections of the transmission is corroborated elsewhere. For example, we cannot doubt that the teachings of A ro were transmitted from Zhig po bdud rtsi to Rta ston Jo yes and to Rta ston Gzi brjid. However, the whole line in itself was not meant to be that of A ro's tradition.

The lineages of the *A ro lugs* also present clear signs of alteration. Lineage One may show some true features but the evident intention of mixing the lineages of two different traditions is so conspicuous that one is apt to distrust the whole of it in consequence. Lineage Two is the transmission with the highest number of lineage-holders whose participation in the transmission of A ro's instructions has been attested elsewhere in Tibetan texts. Nonetheless, we are left to face two problems, one regarding the transmission itself and the other the teachings conveyed by these masters. As for the first, although it is true that many of these lineage-holders are attested elsewhere to have received and/or transmitted A ro's teachings, the relationship of master-disciple that should exist among them is often missing. Several masters assuredly received A ro's instructions but not via the lineage-holder who precedes them in the transmission. In fact, through the whole of the analysis of Lineage Two there has been a constant need to provide further links between these people, to hint at possible connection through the intervention of masters not present in the lineage. Of course, this could be simply imputed to the fact that our sources are partial and insufficient, and one may well imagine that the author of the lineage possessed a knowledge superior to that of the written texts that reached us. Nonetheless, this can hold true only for specific cases. In general, it is more likely that the transmission is real when there is no

reference to A ro's teachings in the biographies of the masters who supposedly received them, but when the relationship between two lineage-holders is established. An instance of this situation is that of Dar ma rgyal ba, who transmitted the teachings to the redactor of the *A ro lugs*. We are sure that the redactor of the *A ro lugs* knew of the A ro tradition and that he was a disciple of Dar ma rgyal ba. Therefore, the absence of a specific reference to the A ro teachings in the biographies of these two masters could be easily explained. Both Dar ma rgyal ba and Mkha' spyod pa belonged to another non-Rnying ma Buddhist school; both stood very high in the hierarchy of that school. Consequently, it would be natural if the author/s of their biographies deemed the transmission of the instructions of A ro a very secondary matter and did not choose to refer to them. On the other hand, the veracity of the transmission seems less likely in a situation where the issue results from the fact that the two masters never met. Lce sgom nag po is an example of this case. We are sure that he received A ro's teachings but we do not possess any evidence that he met Bla ma Brag dkar ba, the lineage-holder who follows him. Therefore in this instance the connection between the two (and therefore the lineage) appears to be created by the redactor. Another complication lies in the fact that although several of these lineage-holders are said to have received the instructions of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, they do not seem to have received the same kind of instructions. Regarding Lineage Two for instance, we know that Jo bo Nyang mo, according to the *DNg*, received the *A ro thugs kyi yang bcud* or *Khams lugs*. Yet, down the transmission line we find G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal, who, according to the same source, is said to have received the *A ro'i rgyud chung*. It seems difficult therefore, on the basis of the lineage, to trace the titles of the A ro teachings received by the redactor of the *A ro lugs*. Of course, if the *A ro'i rgyud chung* was another title for the *Theg chen rnal 'byor*, and the latter was included in the wider system of Khams, one may conclude that Mkha' spyod pa received the *Khams lugs*. Kong sprul in the nineteenth century expressed his view of the matter as such: "First, concerning the outer Mind Series cycle,⁶⁸³ [it is said that] having reached Tibet, it was transmitted by means of [those] that are better known as 'the five stages of the

⁶⁸³ It is customary to recognise Rdzogs chen's Mind Series, Space Series and Instruction Series respectively with the outer cycle (i.e. the exoteric teachings), the inner cycle and the secret cycle (i.e. the esoteric teachings).

oral transmission of the great master Vairocana'.⁶⁸⁴ Although [transmissions] arose in infinite number [such as] the three Sgyus, Nyang and Rma; the three Mkhon, Zur and Gnubs; the three Skor, Rong and Khams;⁶⁸⁵ the three Sre'u, Skyal and Skye; and so on, later on they became well known as the 'Method of Nyang' or 'tradition of the oral teachings of Zur clan' and as the 'Method of Khams' or 'Method of A ro'. Both of these [methods] are very well-known."⁶⁸⁶ Thus, according to Kong sprul, the *A ro lugs* is the *Khams lugs* of A ro. He also says that all these methods derive from the teachings of Vairocana. The latter's main contribution to the Mind Series is the Five Earlier Translations. Among the triads of clans and places that Kong sprul enumerates as the result of Vairocana's spread of the doctrine there is also the triad of the *Khams*, the *Rong* and the *Skor lugs* that we found in the *MNy*. The *MNy* referred to these three *skors* as the outcome of the transmission of the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po*. Within this work the Five Earlier Translations are reported in full. Therefore, to a certain extent the two accounts seem to corroborate each other. We cannot know whether Kong sprul's identification of A ro's *Khams lugs* with Mkha' spyod pa's text of A ro's instructions is correct. Mkha' spyod pa does not call the text that he wrote down either "*A ro lugs*" or "*Khams lugs*", although, he connects it with some teachings which stemmed from A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. Still we are confronted with a problem: the *ChR*, which to my knowledge is the earliest source to mention A ro's *Khams lugs*, does not confine the method of Khams to the Earlier Translations or to the *Kun byed rgyal po*. The *Theg chen rnal 'byor* is not directly connected to these teachings and yet, according to the *ChR*, it belongs to the *Khams lugs*. This may suggest that the internal composition of the *Khams lugs* was subject to changes. Table Six clearly showed that the categorization of A ro's teachings is by no means unanimous across the

⁶⁸⁴ "The five stages of the oral transmission" is a reference to the five people to whom Vairocana transmitted the Dharma. These were King Khri srong lde btsan, G.yu sgra snying po, Gsang ston ye shes bla ma, Dbang sangs rgyas mgon po and Li bza' shes sgrol ma. These five then propagated it around Tibet.

⁶⁸⁵ This clearly refers to the triad listed in the *MNy*.

⁶⁸⁶ *Smin grol rgyab brten dang bcas pa'i brgyud yig dngos grub sgo brgya 'byed*. In *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*.1976-1980. Paro: Ngodrub and Sherab Drimay vol.2, 568:1-3. "*Dang po phyi sems sde'i skor la/ bod du thog mar byon cing grags che ba slob dpon chen po bai ro tsa na'i bka' srol rim pa lngar grags pa las brgyud de/ sgyus nyang rma gsum/ 'khor zur gnubs gsum skor rong khams gsum/ sri'u skyal skye gsum sogs kyi lugs srol mtha' yas pa zhig byung na'ang/ physis su nyang lugs sam bka' sde zur pa'i srol dang/ khams lugs sam a ro lugs su grags pa gnyis po grags che ba las*".

sources: what in one text was called a cycle (such as the Nail Cycle) in another became a teaching included inside another cycle (i.e. the Secret Cycle); texts such as the *Theg chen rnal 'byor* and the *Gdabs spung* were included in the Outer and the Secret Cycles in the *ChR*, while, according to the *KKTshGy*, they stood as independent instructions. The *DNg* and the *Lo rgyus rin po che 'phreng ba* and Bdud 'joms's *chos 'byung* named A ro's instructions in a completely different way. All things considered, the titles of A ro's teachings in the *DNg* and *The Nyingma School* and other texts (such as *A ro khrid mo che*, or *A ro'i gdams pa* and so on) are so general that it seems more likely that they referred to a grouping of instructions rather than single texts. Some of the instructions in these groups were not entirely created by A ro but were teachings that he received. His own work probably mainly consisted in teaching techniques that served to make the traditional texts accessible to his students. Many of the instructions A ro bestowed on his students bear titles that suggest their exegetical nature, like the "The cycle of texts of the seventeen appearances that clarifies the philosophical tenets", or "The cycle of texts that lists the six mental events" or "The eighteen commentaries on the eighteen lower minds", or "The six commentaries on the six lamps of Gnyan chen" etc.

The vague information we possess about the sources that informed the *A ro lugs* (and likewise the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*) may lead one to believe that there was no real oral transmission behind the *A ro lugs* and the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag*; that they were, in a way, created by these two masters. While one cannot deny the redactors' share in the wording and maybe structure of these methods, still, I do not believe that either Mkha' spyod pa or Nam mkha' rdo rje invented these *khrid yigs*. Some clues point in this direction. As I noted in Chapter One, both these masters in the colophons used the verb "to write" instead of the more common "to compose" to describe their action in regard to these texts. They in short recorded these instructions but did not consider themselves their authors. This fact is even more evident in Nam mkha' rdo rje's case since, as we have seen, he used the verb "to compose, to arrange" at the end of the *Khams lugs*, showing that he was willing to acknowledge his authorship when that was the case. The *A ro lugs*, for its part, contains a short lineage that directly refers to A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. In addition the method is directly

followed by a short commentary penned by Mkha' spyod pa. This equally shows that Mkha' spyod pa recognised the *A ro lugs* as a received teaching to which he added nothing but which he could, in a separate venue, integrate with his own words.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Tradition of Nyang and its Relationship with Sog bzlog pa's Rdzogs chen Sems sde'i Khrid yig

The third of the three principal oral systems of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde is the *Nyang lugs* (alias, *Myang lugs*), or ‘system of Nyang’. Its full and somewhat generic title is *Rdzogs chen sems sde'i khrid yig* (henceforth *Khrid yig*), “The manual of instruction of the Rdzogs chen Sems sde”.

In the previous chapter we saw that a “system of Myang” appeared alongside the *Khams lugs* and the *Rong lugs* of the Mind Series in the *ChR* of Rgyal sras Rdo rje thugs mchog rtsal. Rgyal sras Rdo rje asserted that the *Myang lugs* was a meditation practice derived from the teachings that Gnyags Jñānakumāra conferred on a certain Nyang Mchog rab gzhon nu.⁶⁸⁷ This is repeated *verbatim* in the *gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama.⁶⁸⁸ The *DNg* says that a system of Nyang,

⁶⁸⁷ *Rgyal sras rdo rje'i chos 'byung*, 394: 12-13. It is difficult to ascertain with precision the dates of birth and death of this master. However, his name, either as Myang or Nyang Mchog rab gzhon nu, is found in four sources all of which situate him during the imperial period. The earliest occurrence of his name is testified in the Dunhuang manuscripts. A Myang Mchog rab gzhon nu appears inside a list of Tibetan masters who are said to be disciples of Śāntarakṣita (see IOL Tib J 689, 116v:4; Karmay, [1988] 2007:78-79). In the *Bshad mdzod yid bzhin nor bu* by Do dam smra ba'i seng ge (15th cent?), Nyang Mchog rab gzhon nu is one of a group of translators among whom we also find Gnyags Jñānakumāra and Rta rin chen mchog (See: *Bshad mdzod chen mo*. Thimphu: Kunsang topgey. 1967. 322:4). In the *Chos 'byung* of Gu ru bkra shis (18th century) Myang mchog rab gzhon nu is described as a disciple of Padmasambhava (See: *Gu ru bkra'i chos 'byung*, Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi ye shes rig dpe skrun khang. 1990. 176:19). In the *Sngon gyi gtam me tog 'phreng ba* a person named Nyang Mchog rab gzhon is said to have built a temple at the time of Glang Dar ma (799?-841) (See: *Sngon gyi gtam me tog 'phreng ba*, in *Deb ther khag lnga*. Lha sa: Bod ljong bod yig rnying dpe skrun khang. 1990. 27:9-10). Therefore, with the only exception of the latter and later source, reports unanimously place him in the eighth century; although, one source claims Myang Mchog rab gzhon nu to be a disciple of Śāntarakṣita, another says that he was a disciple of Gnyags Jñānakumāra and yet another that he was the disciple of Padmasambhava (the *Sngon gyi gtam me tog 'phreng ba* may be referring to another Myang mchog). This being the case, it is impossible from these very few and general references to form an opinion about the traits that characterised the Myang method of teaching the *Nine Mothers and Sons of the Kun byed rgyal po*.

⁶⁸⁸ *Dam pa'i chos kyi gsan yig ganga'i chu rgyun las glegs bam bzhi pa*, vol. nga, 308:7. The Dalai Lama explicitly acknowledges as one of his sources for the redaction of this portion of the Sems sde teachings the *chos 'byung* of Rgyal sras Rdo rje thugs mchog rtsal. *Ibidem*, 309:8. In addition, Rgyal sras Rdo rje says that Gnyags also gave instructions to Sog po Dpal gyi ye shes

also known as system of Rong, was transmitted from Vimalamitra to Gnyags Jñānakumāra. The transmission then goes on to include: Sog po Dpal gyi ye shes, Sangs rgyas ye shes zhabs, Yon tan rgya mtsho, Ye shes rgya mtsho, Myang Shes rab mchog, Myang Ye shes 'byung gnas and then reaches the members of the Zur family.⁶⁸⁹ Since they both included Gnyags Jñānakumāra and Nyang Mchog rab and they are both called *Nyang lugs*, there is reason to believe that there is a connection between the *Nyang lugs* of the *ChR*'s account and that of the *DNy*. Bdud 'jom rin po che and Kun bzang rang grol consider the *Nyang lugs* to be a transmission that went from Sog po Dpal gyi ye shes to Gnubs Sangs rgyas ye shes and then to the Zur clan. More importantly, Kong sprul considered the *Nyang lugs* and A ro's *Khams lugs* to be the only two extant Sems sde *khrid yigs* coming from the transmission of Vairocana.⁶⁹⁰ On that occasion, Kong sprul equated the Nyang method to the oral tradition of the Zur clan.⁶⁹¹ Considering that Kong sprul included the surviving *Nyang lugs* in his *Gdams ngag mdzod* it seems logical that this method of Nyang is the tradition of the Zurs.

The colophon

The colophon of the *Khrid yig* is very short. It only states: “this good method of Zhig po bdud rtsi [has been] composed” (*zhig po bdud rtsi 'i lugs bzang 'di bkod pas*).⁶⁹² A line of dots underneath the verb ‘to compose’ (*bkod pa*) leads to an interlinear note that says “Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan” (1552-1624). This changes the sentence to: “Sog bzlog pa composed this good method of Zhig po bdud rtsi”.⁶⁹³ The annotation, it is clear, attributes the composition of the *Khrid yig* to the famous Rnying ma master Sog bzlog pa. The *Sung 'bum gyi tho*

who then in turn instructed Gnubs (i.e. Gnubs chen) sangs rgyas and Skor ston Shes rab ye shes. *Rgyal sras rdo rje 'i chos 'byung*, 394: 14-20.

⁶⁸⁹ *DNg*, 98:1- 98:2; Roerich, 1979:108-109.

⁶⁹⁰ Kong sprul, in the passage above mentioned, cites two *Nyang lugs*: one is found in the triad Sgyus-Nyang-Rma, and the second seems to refer to the *Nyang lugs* here under study and that Kong sprul included in his *Gdams ngag mdzod*. It is not clear whether the first *Nyang lugs* is the same *Nyang lugs* that stemmed from the tradition of Nyang Mchog rab gzhon nu.

⁶⁹¹ *Smin grol rgyab brten dang bcas pa 'i brgyud yig dngos grub sgo brgya 'byed*, 568:3.

⁶⁹² *Khrid yig*, in *Kaḥ thog Rnying ma bka' ma*, vol. 30, 411:1-4.

⁶⁹³ The name of Sog bzlog pa is found in all the versions of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* and also in Kong sprul's collections and it is always in the shape of an added annotation.

byang (Sog bzlog pa's catalogue of his own works) confirms this.⁶⁹⁴ In fact, the *Khrid yig* appears on the last page of the catalogue.⁶⁹⁵ It is interesting that Sog bzlog pa, in his *tho byang*, does not refer to the *Khrid yig* as 'Nyang lugs'.⁶⁹⁶ Equally, Sog bzlog pa did not directly ascribe this method to one of the members of the Zur clan but to Zhig po bdud rtsi. Still, in later histories of the Dharma, such as the *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung*, Zhig po bdud rtsi is a receiver of the Zur tradition. Therefore, it might well be that the *Khrid yig* is connected with the instructions of the Zur tradition.

The lineage

Although Kong sprul, in his catalogue of the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, supplies a lineage for the *Nyang lugs*⁶⁹⁷ the *Khrid yig* contains no transmission. The lineage that Kong sprul proffers seems to come from another short text, also authored by Sog bzlog pa, found in the Sems sde section of both the *Rnying ma bka' ma* and *Gdam ngag mdzod*. It is called *Rdzogs chen sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* and, as the title apprises, it is a prayer to the masters of the Rdzogs chen Mind Series. The transmission included in this lineage prayer and that of the *Nyang lugs* that Kong sprul gives in his *Gdams ngag mdzod*, are in fact identical. It seems very probable that Kong sprul copied the transmission that he encountered in the prayer to the Sems sde lineage in order to provide a lineage for the *Khrid yig*.⁶⁹⁸ This in turn suggests that Kong sprul considered the

⁶⁹⁴ *Sung 'bum gyi tho byang*, in *Sog bzlog blo gros rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, New Delhi: Sanje Dorje. 1975, pp. 1-7.

⁶⁹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 7:1. This text appears at the very end following the final dedication, so giving the idea that this title was added later either because written later than the first redaction of this text or because Sog bzlog pa forgot it at first and remembered to add it at a later stage.

⁶⁹⁶ Sog bzlog pa wrote other Rdzogs chen Sems sde texts. Two of these are still available; one is the *Byang chub sems kyi don bsgom pa'i yi ge gzhi lam 'bras bu'i don gsal ba zhe bya ba blta bsgom spyod pa'i man ngag*, found in the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, vol. 101 pp. 489- 542 and also individually published in *dbu med* script by Sherab Gyaltzen (Gangtok, 1983). The second is the *Byang chub kyi sems rang grol du bkri ba'i yi ge nges don bdud rtsi'i rol mtsho* found in the *Sog bzlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan gsung thor bu*, Gangtok: Dzongsar Khyentse Labrang. 1985. pp. 1-98. Sog bzlog pa probably refers to these two texts when in the *Khrid yig* he talks of two supporting manuals of the Sems sde written by himself. *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30, 406:5.

⁶⁹⁷ *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 463:5- 464:1.

⁶⁹⁸ In fact, when Kong sprul reaches the section where he should give the lineage of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* he instead directs the reader to the lineage of the

Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston to be a lineage specific to the *Nyang lugs*. This hypothesis receives support from the arrangement that Kong sprul made of these two texts in his collection; in fact, in the *Gdams ngag mdzod* the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* directly follows the *Nyang lugs*. In this way, the prayer occupies the place and role of final lineage of the *Nyang lugs*. This differs from the organization of the texts that we find in the *Rnying ma bka' ma* editions. In these collections, the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* appears either at the beginning of the *Sems sde* section (as an overture to the section) or after the three *lugs* (where the last is not the *Nyang lugs*) so as to close that section. Sog bzlog pa's catalogue gives the title of this lineage prayer, but it is not close or particularly connected to the *Khrid yig*.⁶⁹⁹

Even though Sog bzlog pa affirms his authorship of the lineage prayer in his *tho byang*, it is clear that a long passage has been added to the prayer well after his time. In fact, the list of lineage-holders stretches to the nineteenth-century master Gzhan phan mtha' yas (1800-1855). The colophon does not tell us who composed this second later portion of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*. However, the *Sung Kama* (volume fourteen) attributes the passage to Rgyal sras Gzhan phan mtha' yas.⁷⁰⁰

At the end of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* there is an addendum. This contains a further lineage composed of nineteen masters of whom the last is only referred to as "me". The name of the master who precedes the '*bdag*' in the lineage is a certain Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang dbang who lived in

Nyang lugs for reference, since, he says, they are the same. See *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 18, 464:1-2.

⁶⁹⁹ The title of the *Rdzogs chen sems bde* (i.e. *sde*) *brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs* is on page 4 line 3 of the *Gsung 'bum gyi tho byang*, while the *Khrid yig* is on page 7 line 1.

⁷⁰⁰ See the second page of volume 14 of the *Sung Kama* (the first pages of this collection are not numbered). The change of author is also clear from the different style in which the lineage is written from Sog bzlog pa onwards. The first part of the lineage is usually organised in the following way: first some epithet of the master, then the name of the master himself followed by the allative particle (*la*) and finally the *gsol* ('*debs so*). The final part of the lineage does not respect this order. The name of the masters in this section is hidden among the words that define the deeds and accomplishments of these masters, like a sort of 'commentary' of the single syllables which compose the personal names of the masters. In the *Rnying ma bka' ma* version a dot is added underneath the syllables that make up the personal names as an aid; in the *Gdams ngag mdzod* there is no such aid.

the sixteenth century. Therefore, it is unlikely that Gzhan phan rdo rje composed also this final portion of the text. It is probable however that Rgyal sras Gzhan phan mtha' yas wrote the annotation, underneath the 'bdag', which informs us that the pronoun refers to Sog bzlog pa. The addendum says:⁷⁰¹

In general, the Mind Series contains the Thirteen Later Translations by Vimala[mitra] and the Twenty-one [texts] of the Mind Series,⁷⁰² [plus] the tantras and innumerable Indian commentaries which are not included in these [twenty-one tantras and Thirteen Later Translations]. The transmission [of] the Five Early Translations and so on, [which comes] from Bai ro [tsa na], took place continuously (in the early, later and intermediate time). Here in Tibet, the teachings [during] the Early Diffusion and Later Diffusion up to the time of the omniscient Bu ston (1290-1364) and the Sa skya [scholar] Dpal ldan Bla ma Dam pa (1312-1375), spread greatly. Although there were countless traditions of transmission for each [place] including Mnga' ri, [A] mdo, and Khams, the [most] illustrious (widely known), were established as three root transmissions: the Dbus transmission,⁷⁰³ the transmission of Gtsang and the mixed transmission of Dbus and Gtsang. This is the mixed transmission of Dbus and Gtsang. As for me [Sog bzlog pa], I received the mixed transmission of Dbus and Gtsang. The transmission of Gtsang that I have heard, and which has four or five traditions of transmission, is explicated in (by) the Zur [clan]. Moreover, in one mixed transmission of Dbus and Gtsang [the transmission goes] from Zur chung [pa] to [:]

2. Glan Śākya bzang po
3. Mda' Śākya 'phel
4. Rtogs ldan Śākya seng ge
5. Kyi (Kyo) ston Śākya ye [shes]
6. Mnyam med Dam pa Śāk rgyal

⁷⁰¹ *Bka ma shin tu* Kaḥ thog, vol. 30, 530:6- 531:6. *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. 1, 306:7- 307:5.

⁷⁰² The twenty-one texts according to Klong chen pa are composed of the Five Early Translations, the Thirteen Later Translations plus the *Kun byed rgyal po*, the *Rmad byung rgyal po*, and the *Mdo bcu*. See *Bstan bcos yongs su rdzogs pa mjug gi don bstan pa*, p. 380:19- 381:6.

⁷⁰³ The passage in Tibetan reads: “*yongs grags la rtsa brgyud/ dbus brgyud/ dbus gtsang 'dres ma dang gsum du bzhag pa las*”. Therefore, it would seem that the transmissions really were: the root transmission, the Dbus transmission and the mixed transmission of Dbus and Gtsang. Nonetheless, the addendum does not explain what is this Root transmission. I have never found it mentioned anywhere. The addendum then declares that “I” have heard also of the Gtsang transmission, so proclaiming the existence of a specific Gtsang transmission. Therefore, it would seem more correct to understand this sentence as if there were three root transmissions: the Dbus, the Gtsang and the mixed transmission of Dbus and Gtsang.

7. Bla ma Lha rje chen po
 8. Zhig po bdud rtsi
 9. Sangs rgyas Smyon ston Bla ma
 10. Smyon ston Śāk 'bum
 11. Skye med Dam pa Sangs rgyas
 12. Skyes mchod Sprul sku chen po
 13. Chos rgyal Mnga' ris paṅ chen
 14. Kun spangs ri khrod pa
 15. Mkhan chen Mdzes pa'i Rgyal mtshan
 16. Rtogs ldan Chos dpal Bzang po
 17. Mkhan chen Blo Gros (Rta nag Thub bstan gyi Mkhan po)⁷⁰⁴ Rab yangs
 18. Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang dbang
- And from that to 19. me (Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan)

That [transmission from] the bottom [to] the top is like a supplication. It resembles the received teachings (*thob yig*) of a further method of transmission.⁷⁰⁵ Manga lam.⁷⁰⁶

This short addendum to the text is of interest for several reasons. First, because the author acknowledges that the Sems sde teachings prospered mainly during the Early and the Later Diffusion until the time of Bu ston, and his disciple Bla ma Dam pa. The subsequent decline of the tradition, implied although not overtly

⁷⁰⁴ This and the next names in parenthesis are annotations inserted inside the text.

⁷⁰⁵ It is interesting to notice that this short passage between the end of the lineage and the *Mangalam* appears in the *Bka' ma rnying ma* collections but it is absent in the *Gdams ngag mdzod*. It remains to be understood whether Kong sprul forgot to add this last sentence or some redactor of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* (Rgyal sras Gzhan phan mtha' yas or someone else) added this last sentence.

⁷⁰⁶ *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog), vol.30, 530:5-531:6; *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol.1, 308:7-309:5. “*Spyir sems sde la/ paṅ chen bi ma las bsgyur pa'i phyi 'gyur bcu gsum dang sems sde nyer gcig /de dag tu ma 'dus pa'i rgyud dang rgya gzhung mtha' yas pa yod cing/ snga 'gyur lnga la sogs pa bai ro nas brgyud pa la'ang/ brgyud tshul snga phyi bar gsum byung/ bod 'dir bstan pa snga dar dang/ phyi dar/ phyi sked bu ston thams cad mkhyen pa dang/ sa skya'i dpal ldan bla ma dam pa'i dus yan chod la shing tu dar/ mnga' ris mdo khams yan chad du so sor brgyud lugs mtha' yas yod mdo kyang/ yongs grags la rtsa brgyud/ dbus brgyud/ dbus gtsang 'dres ma dang gsum du bzhas pa las/ 'di ni dbus gtsang 'dres ma yin/ bdag gis thos pa'i gtsang brgyud la yang brgyud lugs bzhi lnga yod pa zur gsal/ yang dbus gtsang 'dres pa'i brgyud lugs gcig la zung chung nas blan śākya bzang po/ mnga' śākya 'phel/ rtogs ldan śākya seng ge /kyi ston śāk ye/ mnyam med dam pa śāk rgyal/ bla ma lha rje chen po/ zhig po bdud rtsi/ sangs rgyas smyon ston bla ma/ smyon ston śāk 'bum/ skye med dam pa sangs rgyas/ skyes mchog sprul sku chen po/ chos rgyal mnga' ri'i paṅ chen/ kun spungs ri khrod pa/ mkhan chen mdzes pa'i rgyal mtshan/ rtogs ldan chos dpal bzang po/ mkhan chen blo gros (rta nag thub bstan gyi mkhan po) rab yangs/ bla chen rdo rje 'chang dbang/ des bdag po la'o (sog bzlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan) de man chod gong gi gsol 'debs ltar dang/ brgyud tshul gzhag thob yig ltar ro // manga lam*”. The underlined section does not appear in the *Gdams ngag mdzod*.

declared, probably reduced the different regional transmissions of the Sems sde teachings to the three best-known lineages: the Gtsang transmission, the Dbus transmission and the mixed transmission of Dbus and Gtsang. It is equally interesting that the author refers to a Khams tradition together with the other regional transmissions, but he does not include it among the three principal lineages. Nonetheless, we know that Sog bzlog pa had contacts with masters abiding in the Kaḥ thog monastery. Thus, he must have been aware of the great oral Mind Series tradition of Khams. In fact, in the colophon of another of his Sems sde texts,⁷⁰⁷ the *Byang chub sems kyi don bsgom pa'i yi ge gzhi lam 'bras bu'i don gsal ba zhe ba blta bsgom spyod pa'i man ngag*, Sog bzlog pa wrote that the Kaḥ thog master Bla ma Śākya bzang po urged him to compose this text.⁷⁰⁸ One cannot but wonder why, if Sog bzlog pa was the author of this addendum, he did not include the Khams Sems sde among the other important transmissions. Perhaps, since Sog bzlog pa lived and operated mainly in Gtsang and Dbus he sought to promote the transmissions that originated in Central Tibet. Another circumstance which might have weighed more heavily is that at the time when Sog bzlog pa lived, Kaḥ thog was undergoing a change in its doctrinal orientation. Gu ru bkra shis noticed that from the rule of the Drung family onwards, *gter ma* teachings became widespread in the Kaḥ thog monastery, while the *bka' ma* transmissions began to decline.⁷⁰⁹ Only one single Sems sde transmission was kept alive: the Zur lineage. A few years after the death of Sog bzlog pa, with the ascension to power of the Sde dge house, the famous *gter ston* Klong gsal snying po (1625-1692) took the abbacy of Kaḥ thog.⁷¹⁰ Klong gsal brought to completion the shift of the monastery curriculum from *bka' ma* to *gter ma*. It is conceivable that a Kaḥ thog lama urged Sog bzlog pa to write down a Mind Series text, because, at that time, the Sems sde transmissions and teachings had begun to fade into oblivion in Khams. This would perhaps explain Sog bzlog

⁷⁰⁷ Sog bzlog pa, *Byang chub sems kyi don bsgom pa'i yi ge gzhi lam 'bras bu'i don gsal ba zhe ba blta bsgom spyod pa'i man ngag*, in *Snga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*. (2009). Chengdu: Si khron dpe skrun tshogs pa. Vol. 101, 542:1.

⁷⁰⁸ *Ibidem*, 542:1.

⁷⁰⁹ *Gu ru bkra'i chos 'byung*, 751:14-16.

⁷¹⁰ The Sde dge rulers decided to establish their power also through the appropriation of the possessions of the Drung family (i.e. of Kaḥ thog and the grounds around it). Then they appointed Klong gsal as the new abbot of Kaḥ thog. For a study on this historical period and the political circumstances that shaped the history of Kaḥ thog see Ronis, 2009:35-70).

pa's decision to omit the Khams lineage among the most famous transmissions of the Mind Series.

The annotation posits Sog bzlog pa as referent to the *la bdag*. This is plausible since the lineage-holder that precedes Sog bzlog pa, Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang dbang, was one of Sog bzlog pa's teachers and occupies the same position in the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*'s line of transmission. The lineage therefore ends at the right point. Still, because the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs* seems to have been subjected to several emendations after Sog bzlog pa's death,⁷¹¹ we need to be cautious concerning the authorship of this appendix. The lineage might have been forged in order to establish Sog bzlog pa as its author.

In the main lineage of the prayer, in the portion that has been added after Sog bzlog pa himself, we find two disciples of the Fifth Dalai Lama, the founder of the Smin grol gling monastery, Gter bdag gling pa (1614-1670), and his brother Ngag dbang dpal rgya mtsho *alias* Lo chen Dharma śrī (1654-1717/1718). They were among the redactors of the earliest printed version of the *Rnying ma bka' ma*. Probably, they were the very same who added the *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs* to the collection of the oral teachings. As we shall see below in more detail, they had an interest in bringing about a mediation between the Dbus and Gtsang lineages. In fact, when the Fifth Dalai Lama took power he imposed a ban on the writings of Zhig po gling pa, Sog bzlog pa, Gong ra Gzhan phan rdo rje (i.e. Sog bzlog pa's main disciple)⁷¹² and their tradition as a whole.⁷¹³ Gter bdag gling pa and Dharma Śrī did not agree to these measures since they believed that the schism they caused could not but harm the Rdzogs chen tradition. Certainly, their repugnance for such proceedings was the strongest because their father was a

⁷¹¹ For example we saw that the last line of the addendum appears in the *Rying ma bka' ma* but not in the *Gdams ngag mdzod* and that Gzhan phan rdo rje added a big chunk of the text in the section preceding the addendum.

⁷¹² The Fifth Dalai Lama also re-baptised the tradition of Zhig po gling pa, Sog bzlog pa and Gong ra Gzhan phan rdo rje as "Snang-Sog-Gong gsum". See *Rulers on the Celestial Plain*, p. 521, fn. 212 and Gentry, 2014:442.

⁷¹³ Gentry, 2014:442. The Fifth Dalai Lama on this occasion also dismissed the abbot of Nges gsang rdo rje gling (the monastery of the Snang-Sog-Gong tradition) and appointed a new one himself, banning all old associations and rites connected to Zhig po gling pa, Sog bzlog pa and Gong ra Gzhan phan rdo rje. *Ibidem*. On the Fifth Dalai Lama's relationship with the Rnying ma school see also Karmay, 1988:3-5. On the fact that the visions that the Fifth Dalai Lama experienced seem to be no less politically motivated than the *gter mas* and rites of his enemies see Karmay, 2005:73-94.

disciple of Gong ra Gzhan phan rdo rje. As a result, they set out to reunite the different strands within the Great Perfection. Gentry, in his thesis, noticed that Gter bdag gling pa attempted to merge the initiations, instructions and transmissions coming from Zhig po gling pa's tradition and those of the *Byang gter* with whom the Dalai Lama held close ties.⁷¹⁴ It is conceivable that the addendum to the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* was written either by Gter bdag gling pa or Lo chen Dharma Śrī in order to bring together the two factions within a unitary Rdzogs chen tradition. If we were to read the addendum as the work of Gter bdag gling pa or his brother, the information it contains would fit better in the general picture. The low status assigned to the Khams tradition among the *Sems sde* transmissions would reconcile better with Gter bdag gling pa's historical period, than with that in which Sog bzlog pa lived. The latter continued to be in contact with Kaḥ thog monastery, and even though this institution was in decline, its administration had not yet fallen into the hands of a *gter ston*. On the other hand, in Gter bdag gling pa's time, the abbacy of Kaḥ thog had already been given to Klong gsal snying po.

I turn now to the lineage of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* in order to identify the masters who contributed to the 'mixed Dbus Gtsang transmission'. Finally, I examine the sources that Sog bzlog pa used in his redaction of the *Nyang lugs* (i.e. the quotations inside this text). This will allow me to establish to what extent the lineage of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* follows the "Zur transmission" or "*Nyang lugs*".⁷¹⁵

⁷¹⁴ Gentry, 2014:479-80.

⁷¹⁵ According to the addendum it is the Gtsang transmission that is mainly connected to the Zur clan. Unfortunately, no lineage of Gtsang is presented to allow us to see the members included in it before the transmission reached Zur chen pa or after the death of Zur Sgro phug pa.

The Lineage of the Sems sde Brgyud pa'i Gsol 'debs Byin rlabs kyi Dga' ston

The *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* contains two lineages: a primary list which underpins its text, and a secondary list included in the addendum. The latter does not set out to cover the whole of the Sems sde transmission but provides a variant to the principal lineage. The addendum talks of three main lineages: the Dbus transmission, the Gtsang transmission and the Dbus-Gtsang transmission. The Dbus-Gtsang transmissions were aligned with the lineage of the *NyNy*. According to Kapstein, the lineage of the *NyNy* was probably written by Zhig po bdud rtsi or one of his close disciples.⁷¹⁶ This transmission gained soon in prominence to become one of the very few (and most popular) early Mind Series lineages that survives to the present day.⁷¹⁷ It is likely that by the time of Sog bzlog pa many of the Sems sde lines of transmission had been lost, which, in turn, led to the pre-eminence of the *Snying gi nyi ma* transmission. Thus, it assumed the importance that it still retains nowadays. Table 8 compares the lineage of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* with that of the *Snying gi nyi ma*.

Table 8: THE LINEAGES OF THE MIXED TRANSMISSION OF DBUS AND GTSANG⁷¹⁸

	<i>Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs</i>	Addendum (other Dbus-Gtsang transmission)	<i>Snying gi nyi ma</i>
1	Kun tu bzang po		Kun tu bzang po
2	Rdo rje sems dpa'		Rdo rje sems dpa'
3	Dga' rab rdo rje		Dga' rab rdo rje
4	'Jam dpal bshes gnyen		'Jam dpal bshes gnyen

⁷¹⁶ Kapstein, 2008:282.

⁷¹⁷ Bdud 'jom rim po che's *Nyingma School* is a clear example of this, since in giving the hagiographies of the masters of the Mind Series tradition he clearly follows the same order that we find in the *Snying gi nyi ma*.

⁷¹⁸ The masters whose name is in bold are found in more than one lineage.

			another seventeen lineage-holders
5	Śrī seng		Śrī Siṃha
			another two lineage-holders
6	Pa gor Bai ro tsa na		'Phags pa Bai ro tsa na
7	G.yu sgra snying po		G.yu sgra snying po
8	Gnyags ston Jñā na ku mā ra		Gnyags Jñānakumāra
9	Sog po Dpal gyi ye shes (G.yon ru, Dbus)		Sog po Lha dpal gyi ye shes
10	Gnubs ban Sangs rgyas ye shes (G.yon ru, Dbus)		Bsnubs (Gnubs) Sangs rgyas ye shes
11	Khu lung gnubs ston Yon tan rgya mtsho		Pa gor Blon chen 'Phags pa
			So Yes shes dbang phyug
			Sru Legs pa'i sgron ma
			Bsnubs Khung lung (Khu lung) Yon tan rgya mtsho
12	Nyang ston chen po Shes rab mchog ldan		Sras Ye shes rgya mtsho
			Myang mi Shes rab mchog
13	Chos lung nyang ston Ye shes 'byung gnas		Myang Ye 'byung
14	Gtsang sgom bde gshegs Zur po che (1002-1062) (Yar dzong, Gsar mo, Khams → Gtsang) ⁷¹⁹		Zur Śākya 'byung gnas

⁷¹⁹ Zur po che was born in Khams but his peregrinations brought him to Gtsang where he established the Seat of 'Ug pa lung. For this reason he is more often associated with the Gtsang

15			Zhang 'Gos chung
			Me myag 'Byung grags
			Gzad Shes rab rgyal po
			Tsag Bla ma
	Lha rje chen po Zur chung shes rab grags (G.yas ru, Gtsang)	Zur chung (1014-1074)	Zur chung Shes rab grags pa
16	Skyo ston Sngags 'chang Śākya ye shes	Glan Śākya bzang po	Skyo ston Śākya ye shes
		Mda' Śākya 'phel	Yang kher (Yang kheng) bla ma
		[Zur] Śākya seng ge	Rlan Śākya bzang po
			Mda' dig Chos shag
17	Lha rje Sgro phug (Śākya seng ge) pa (1074-1134)	Kyi ston Śāk ye [shes]	Lha rje Mda' tsha hor po (= Zur Sgro phug pa)
18	Lce (rgya nag) ston Lha rje (Upper Nyang, Gtsang)	Dam pa Śāk rgyal	Lce ston Rgya nag (1094-1149)
19	Dbus pa Zhig po (1125-1195, Yar lung, Dbus)	Bla ma Lha rje chen po	Dbus pa Śākya bla ma ⁷²⁰
20	Zhig po bdud rtsi (1149-1199 Dbus)	Zhig po bdud rtsi	
21	Rta ston Jo ye ⁷²¹ (1163-1236, Dbus)	Sangs rgyas Smyon ston Bla ma	
22	Rta ston Gzi brjid (Dbus)	Smyon ston Śāk 'bum	

lineage rather than with that of Khams. For a short description of this master's deeds see Chapter Three.

⁷²⁰ Kapstein in his analysis of the NyNy's lineage hypothesised that Dbus pa Śākya bla ma was another name for Dbus pa Zhig po. Kapstein, 2008:282.

⁷²¹ Kong sprul spells the name of this master as Rta ston Jo yes, both in the main text of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs* and in his *Catalogue*, while in the Bka' ma his name is spelled as Rta ston Jo ye.

23	Skype med Dam pa sangs rgyas	Skype med Dam pa Sangs rgyas	
24	Mnyam med sprul sku chen po	Skyes mchod Sprul sku chen po	
25	Zur ston chen po Byams pa seng ge (13 th century, Gtsang)		
26	Zur mo mkhas btsun sangs rgyas		
27	Sgrol chen Bsam 'grub rdo rje (1295-1376, Gtsang) ⁷²²	Chos rgyal Mnga' ri'i (ris) paṅ chen (1487-1542)/ (1306-1389)	
28	Sgrol chen chos rje Sangs rgyas rin chen (1350-1431)	Kun spangs ri khrod pa	
29	Rgyal sras Rdo rje thugs mchog rtsal (Shangs mda', Gtsang)	Mkhan chen Mdzes pa'i Rgyal mtshan	
30	Grag pa dpal 'byor	Rtogs ldan Chos dpal Bzang po (1371-1439)	
31	Blo gros rab yangs	Mkhan chen Blo Gros (Rta nag Thub bstan gyi Mkhan po) Rab yangs	
32	Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang	Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang dbang	
33	Blo gros rgyal mtshan 1552-1624	Lha rje Blo gros bzang po 1552-1624	

⁷²² The date of death of this master is sometimes recorded as 1376 and sometimes as 1334. Orna Almogi, in her thesis, gives it as 1334 (see Almogi, 2009:195). This is repeated on the TBRC website (P5234). I do not know which is the source for this year, so I prefer to stick to the *DNg* which says that this master died in the Fire Male Dragon year (i.e. 1376-77). See *DNg*, 135:4; Roerich, 1979:151.

34	Gzhan phan rdo rje 1594-1654		
35	Dpal bo Rdo rje 'dzin (Rig 'dzin phrin las lhun grub) 1611-1624		
36	Rig 'dzin 'Gyur med rdo rje 1614-1670		
37	Ngag dbang dpal rgya mtsho 1654-1717/1718		
38	Rgyal sras Rin chen rnam rgyal 1694- 1758		
39	Padma bstan 'dzin		
40	O rgyan klong yangs		
41	Kun bzang gzhan phan (1745-1821)		
42	Mi 'gyur Nam mkha'i rdo rje (1793-1870)		
43	Rgyal sras Mtha' yas		

The similarity between these three lineages suggests that the information they supply probably came from the same source. Kapstein believes that the *NyNy* is one of the earliest texts in the *Bai ro rgyud 'bum*. This makes the 'Sun of the Heart' one of the oldest Mind Series texts available.⁷²³ Thus, the lineages of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* probably derive from this text or some other as yet unknown variant. The transmission of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa* of Nam mkha' rdo rje draws also on this common source; and, except for a couple of variations, there is no substantial difference between the transmission of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi*

⁷²³ Kapstein, 2008:281.

man ngag and that of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*.⁷²⁴ Since I expounded the lives of these masters in Chapter Two, I shall quickly compare the few variants and then turn to the new and more interesting section of the lineage.

The *A ro sngan brgyud kyi man ngag* includes Dam pa Śākya rgyal. This master is absent from the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*, but features in the addendum as well as in Lineage Two of Mkha' spyod pa's *A ro lugs*. Although we possess very little information about the life of this master, we saw that according to the *MNy*, it is from Śākya rgyal onwards that the transmission of the *Kun byed rgyal po* takes the name of *Khams lugs*.⁷²⁵ Smyon ston Śāk 'bum is another lineage-holder who appears in both the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* and the addendum. In the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* he is called Smyo bham shag 'bum, in the addendum, Smyon ston Śāk 'bum. In the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* he comes right after Zhig po bdud rtsi, while in the addendum he is the second master after Zhig po bdud rtsi. It would seem possible that Smyon ston Śāk 'bum was a disciple of Zhig po bdud rtsi but I found no source that records this name.⁷²⁶

Since I have already discussed the lives of the first twenty-two lineage-holders I now continue with the twenty-third master of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*, Dam pa Sangs rgyas.

The lineage of the Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston

Our survey starts with Dam pa Sangs rgyas and ends with the author of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*, Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan. The line of masters after Sog bzlog pa reaches the nineteenth century. A detailed account of the lineage-holders who come after him lies beyond the scope of the present work.

Skye med Dam pa Sangs rgyas & Mnyam med Sprul sku chen po

⁷²⁴ Of course the similarity between all these lineages stops after Zhig po bdud rtsi who, according to Kapstain, is the person who wrote the *NyNy*.

⁷²⁵ *MNy*, 491: 21.

⁷²⁶ One could even hypothesise that this was the title of one of the two main disciples of Zhig po, i.e. Rta ston Jo ye or Rta ston Gzi brjid.

It is difficult to identify these two figures. There is no disciple of Rta ston Jo yes or Rta ston Gzi brjid who bears this name.⁷²⁷ It is tempting to identify this Dam pa Sangs rgyas with the famous master Pha dam pa Sang rgyas. However, this would collide with the chronology of the lineage. Rta ston Jo yas lived between 1163 and 1236, while Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas died in 1117. Consequently, we must either assume that the compiler of this transmission made a mistake or that this is not Pha dam pa. It is also conceivable that this lineage-holder refers to Sangs rgyas gling pa, who was the most famous former rebirth of Zhig po gling pa (Sog bzlog pa's teacher). Even this though is unlikely; Sangs rgyas gling pa lived between 1340 and 1396. The next lineage-holder for whom we possess a precise date is Bsam 'grub rdo rje (1295-1376). This means that Bsam 'grub was forty-five years older than Sangs rgyas gling pa. Moreover, Bsam 'grub rdo rje is separated from Sangs rgyas gling pa by three other masters, who must have lived all in the same period to allow this Dam pa Sangs rgyas to be recognised as Sangs rgyas gling pa. Indeed, Sangs rgyas gling pa had a very famous disciple who could well have been venerated as a great reincarnation "sprul sku chen po". This was the fourth Karma pa Rol pa'i rdo rje. Rol pa'i rdo rje and Sangs rgyas gling pa were born in the same year (1340). Thus, Rol pa'i rdo rje's dates do not bring us further in the chronological sequence. In short, they do not exclude the possibility of a contact with Bsam 'grub rdo rje. The next two lineage-holders however, are father and daughter. This implies a gap of one generation. Finally, we know that G.yung ston Rdo rje dpal was a disciple of Byams pa seng ge and a teacher of the fourth *Karma pa*. We would hence expect these two teachers to be reversed in the lineage. The identification of Dam pa Sangs rgyas with Sangs rgyas gling pa must thus remain provisional.⁷²⁸

⁷²⁷ We met Rta ston Jo yes and Rta ston Gzi brjid in Chapter Two as the two principal disciples of Zhig po bdud rtsi.

⁷²⁸ Although we have no dates for Zur Byams pa seng ge, from what we know about his life I do not believe that he could have been still alive when Sangs rgyas gling pa was born. In fact, as we shall see in a moment, Byams pa seng ge lived only 27 years. He was the disciple of Rta ston Gzi brjid. Rta ston Gzi brjid is said to be a student of Zhig po bdud rtsi. Zhig po bdud rtsi died in 1199, which means that Rta ston must have been born before that date. Let us say that he met Zhig po when he was very young, around 8 years old, then Rta ston Gzi brjid's birth would be roughly 1191. Zur Byams pa seng ge was also a teacher of Bsam 'grub rdo rje who was born in 1295. This means that Byams pa seng ge must have died at least 8 years after Bsam 'grub rdo rje's birth, in 1303. Since he lived 27 years his date of birth can be calculated to be 1276. His biography says that he met Rta ston Gzi brjid in his twenties, which means in the last seven years of his life (from 1296 and 1303) so Rta ston Gzi brjid could not have died before 1296. This undoubtedly makes Rta ston's lifespan a bit too long (105 years). It is very likely that the

Zur ston chen po Byams pa seng ge (Thirteenth century, Gtsang?)⁷²⁹

Zur Byams pa seng ge was the son of Zur Nyi ma seng ge.⁷³⁰ We do not know the precise dates of his birth and death. The *DNg* says that he died very young, when he was just twenty-seven.⁷³¹ He appears to have been a contemporary of Rta ston Gzi brjid despite the fact that, in the present lineage, two masters divide Zur Byams pa from Rta ston Gzi brjid. In fact, Byams pa's biography records that Gzi brjid taught him, among other instructions, the teachings of the Great Perfection, through which Byams pa seng ge was able to generate the *thod rgal* stage.⁷³² The sources that refer to Zur Byams pa tell us nothing else of his Sems sde studies, in spite of the fact that we find him both in this lineage and in that of the *A ro lugs*. His biography refers only to the Space Series that Gangs pa Śākya 'bum transmitted to him.⁷³³ His biography and the *Blue Annals* report that he had two main disciples: G.yung ston pa and Bsam 'grub rdo rje (1295-1376).⁷³⁴

Zur mo Mkhas btsun sangs rgyas

The biography of Rje btsun Mi 'gyur dpal gyi sgron ma (1699-1769), written by Khyung po ras pa 'Gyur med 'od gsal (1715-?), records Zur mo Mkhas btsun sangs rgyas as the daughter of Zur Byams pa.⁷³⁵ It also tells us that she was

biography of Byams pa seng ge is wrong in respect to the time when this master met Rta ston Gzi brjid. Nonetheless, it does not seem likely that any of these two masters could have reached 1340, the year of Sangs rgyas gling pa's birth.

⁷²⁹ There are no dates or place of birth in Byams pa seng ge's biographies (most of the biographies now available seem to have all drawn from *The Nyingma School* and the information we find is always the same). However, it is said that he took ordination in Khro phu, a monastery founded in 1771 and which is situated in Gtsang. See Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:663. For a rough estimation of his date of birth and death see the footnote above.

⁷³⁰ Bdud 'joms identifies Zur Nyi ma Seng ge as the son of Mes po pak shi (*The Nyingma School*, p. 663). In the later *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo* by Bstan 'dzin lung rtogs nyi ma (1974-?) this is not specified. However, the rest of the biography is clearly copied from Bdud 'joms' *chos 'byung* (see *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo*, 162:20). Zur Byams pa has been already briefly treated in the previous chapter.

⁷³¹ *DNg*, 133:6; Roerich, 1979:149.

⁷³² *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo*, 163:5.

⁷³³ *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung*, 163:10; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:665.

⁷³⁴ *DNg*, 135:3; Roerich, 1979:151. *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung*, 163:17-18, Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:665. For information about G.yung ston pa see chapter 3. Bsam 'Grub rdo rje belongs to this lineage and is treated below.

⁷³⁵ *Rje btsun mi 'gyur dpal gyi sgron ma'i rnam thar dad pa'i gdung sel*, National Library of Bhutan: Thimphu. 1984. p. 34:4.

known by the name of Zur mo Dge ba 'bum.⁷³⁶ This Zur mo Dge 'bum is found frequently in lineages of the Mind Series. Bdud 'joms rin po che presents Zur mo Dge 'bum as the sister of the later (*phyi*) Zur Śākya 'byung gnas of Yang dben.⁷³⁷ We know, however, that the later Zur Śākya 'byung gnas was the son of Zur pa Bzang po dpal, not of Zur Byams pa seng ge. Therefore, we are left with three choices: first, Zur Mkhas btsun sangs rgyas and the later Zur Śākya seng ge of Yang dben were of the same mother but different fathers both of whom belonged to the Zur clan;⁷³⁸ second, the identification of Zur mo Mkhas btsun sangs rgyas and Zur mo Dge 'bum is wrong; third, one or more of our sources give incorrect information. Bdud 'joms says that the later Zur Śākya 'byung gnas (the alleged brother of Zur mo Dge 'bum) was brought up by Bsam 'grub rdo rje,⁷³⁹ one of the most important disciples of Zur Byams pa seng ge and the next lineage-holder in this transmission. Moreover, Bdud 'joms affirms that Bsam 'grub rdo rje conferred the empowerment of the *Mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa* on both siblings but that only Zur mo Dge 'bum became a lineage-holder. Again, if Zur mo Mkhas btsun sangs rgyas was the daughter of Zur Byams pa, her inclusion in the lineage would be justified since she appears just after her father. On the other

⁷³⁶ *Ibidem*, 34:1.

⁷³⁷ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:700.

⁷³⁸ This of course is possible since we know that in Tibetan society it was custom to share one wife for more than one male family member in order to keep the family estate intact.

⁷³⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 668. Notice that in Roerich's translation of the *Blue Annals* there is a mistake. Roerich says that it was Bsam 'grub Rdo rje who was raised by Zur Śākya and Bla ma Seng ge pa of 'Ug pa lung pa. This sentence in Tibetan is found in almost identical terms in Bdud 'jom rin po che's *chos 'byung* and in the *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo*. It says: "yang dben pa'i Zur Śākya 'byung gnas shes pa shin tu mkhas grub tu grags pa de dang/ 'Ug pa Lung pa'i Bla ma Seng ge ba **gnyis chung chung nas zhabs drung du gzhag nas legs bar bskyangs pas**" This sentence could be translated as: "From childhood [Bsam 'grub rdo rje] stayed at the feet of (i.e. attended) the two Zur Śākya 'byung gnas of Yang dben, famous for being extremely learned and Bla ma Seng ge of 'Ug pa Lung pa and was well instructed [by them]" or as "From childhood the two Zur Śākya 'byung gnas of Yang dben, famous for being extremely learned, and Bla ma Seng ge of 'Ug pa Lung pa stayed at [his] feet (i.e. attended on him) and were well instructed [by him]". I believe the second to be right mainly on the basis of the context. In fact this sentence comes after the information that Bsam 'grub had been initiated by Glan Nya tshal pa into the *Māyājāla* system, so the sentence that speaks of him as a child left to these two masters' care would bring us back chronologically to the beginning of the biography. Moreover, this sentence is followed by the statement: "*phyis gyi zur pa'i brgyud la shin tu bka' drin che*" "[He] was very kind to the lineage of the later Zur [clan]" (a similar sentence is found in Bdud jom's *chos 'byung* and in the *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo* and it is similarly translated by Kapstein in the *Nyingma School* and Roerich). Of course, if he was kind to the Zur clan, it is more likely that he did the favour of raising Zur Śākya 'byung gnas and not vice-versa. See *DNg* 135:3-4; *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo* 163:1-3; and *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung*. 1996. Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang: Khreng tu'u. 323:3-6.

hand, if she was the sister of the later Zur Śākya 'byung gnas and a disciple of Bsam 'grub rje she should follow, and not precede, Bsam 'grub rje.

Bsam 'grub Rdo rje (1295-1334 Rta nag gnas gsar)⁷⁴⁰

Bsam 'grub rdo rje was one of the main disciples of Zur Byams pa seng ge.⁷⁴¹ He also received teachings from several other masters, including Mda' Śākya 'phel and Zur Bde byed mgon po. Bsam 'grub rdo rje soon acquired proficiency in the teachings of the *Guhyagarbha tantra*.⁷⁴² One of his commentaries on this tantra is still available in the collection of the *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog).⁷⁴³ Bdud 'joms informs us that Bsam 'grub rdo rje received the *Sgyu 'phrul drwa ba* from Byams pa Seng ge, but he does not speak of any Mind Series teachings.⁷⁴⁴ Bsam 'grub's biography in the *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung* is more detailed and generally gives the name of the teachings Bsam 'grub studied, together with the name of the master who granted him those teachings. This work records that Bsam 'grub rdo rje studied the Mind Series but unfortunately it does so *en passant* and omits the mention of the master who transmitted it to him.⁷⁴⁵ Bsam 'grub rdo rje had many disciples, but the principal two were his own son, Sangs rgyas rin chen, and Zur Ham lcam sring.⁷⁴⁶ The former played a role in the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs*.

Chos rje Sangs rgyas Rin chen (1350-1431 Rta nag gnas gsar)

Chos rje Sangs rgyas Rin chen was the son of Bsam grub. In his early years he studied with his father and Zur Ham lcam sring. He received many teachings but he was particularly fond of the *Gsang snying gi rgyud*, a text that he learnt by heart when a young boy and on which, later in life, he wrote a commentary.⁷⁴⁷ As we saw in Chapter Three, he also studied and promulgated the instructions of A

⁷⁴⁰ The village of Rta nags gnas gsar is in Gtsang, North-East of Gzhi ka rtse.

⁷⁴¹ *DNg*, 135:3; Roerich, 1979:151, Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:667, *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung*, 189:6-7. In short, Zur Byams pa seng ge was a teacher of Bsam 'grub rdo rje, who in turn became the teacher of 1. his own son (Sangs rgyas rin chen, i.e. Gzhon nu dpal's teacher) and Zur Śākya seng ge and Bla ma Seng ge pa of 'Ug pa lung.

⁷⁴² *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung*, 189:8.

⁷⁴³ *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* Kaḥ thog, vol.70, pp. 591-714.

⁷⁴⁴ Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:668.

⁷⁴⁵ *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung*, 189:9. Of course this lack of information may indicate that it was his main teacher Zur Byams pa Seng ge who transmitted the Mind Series to Bsam 'grub.

⁷⁴⁶ *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung*, 190:6-8.

⁷⁴⁷ *DNg*, 136:2; Roerich, 1979:151; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:672.

ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. The *DNg* says that he bestowed these teachings on others, although it does not reveal the identity of the person from whom he obtained them or the names of the people to whom he imparted them.⁷⁴⁸ Because he had many disciples including the famous 'Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal, his reach may have been far.

Rgyal sras Rdo rje thugs mchog rtsal (Fifteenth century, Shangs mda', Gtsang)

We do not possess much information about this master. He is probably the author of the famous *Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod bstan pa gsal bar byed pa'i nyi 'od*. This work, as Ehrhard and van der Kuijp noticed, has been wrongly associated with Klong chen rab 'byams to the point that it is nowadays known as *Klong chen chos 'byung*.⁷⁴⁹ Its colophon attributes the authorship to a certain Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal. Tibetan and Western scholars identified Rgyal sras with Klong chen rab 'byams.⁷⁵⁰ However, van der Kuijp demonstrated that Klong chen rab 'byams cannot be the author of this famous *chos 'byung*. In fact, Klong chen pa in the list of the numerous pen-names he used to sign his own works does not mention Rgyal sras Rdo rje Thugs mchog rtsal.⁷⁵¹ Moreover, an analysis of the section of the *chos 'byung* that calculates the dates of Śākyamuni establishes 1422 as the year in which this text was written down.⁷⁵² This, of course, rules out Klong chen pa, as he died in 1364. Moreover, Ehrhard pointed out that the Fifth Dalai Lama, in the *Rdzogs chen/ Rnying ma* section of his *gsan yig*, clearly talks of Rgyal sras Rdo rje and of Klong chen pa as two distinct persons.⁷⁵³ In fact he refers to Rgyal sras Rdo rje as the author of the *Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod bstan pa gsal bar byed pa'i nyi 'od* and to Klong chen pa as the author of the *Grub mtha' mdzod*.⁷⁵⁴ Ehrhard was the first Western scholar to notice that the identification of these two masters was problematic. When he analysed a lineage in the *Mkha' 'gro snying thig*, he found

⁷⁴⁸ *DNg*, 137:4, Roerich, 1979:153. See also Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:673 and *Snga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung*, 165:2-3.

⁷⁴⁹ See Ehrhard, 2012:79-96 and van der Kuijp, 2007:124-148.

⁷⁵⁰ van der Kuijp, 2007:127-131.

⁷⁵¹ *Ibidem*, p. 134.

⁷⁵² *Ibidem*, p. 146.

⁷⁵³ Ehrhard, 2012:90.

⁷⁵⁴ *Ibidem*. We shall talk again about this assertion of the Great Fifth below. In fact, in this section he also discusses the source for his passage dedicated to the *lugs* of the Mind Series.

that the name of Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal appeared after Grub chen Mgon po rgyal tshan. This latter lived between 1418 and 1506 and therefore he could not have been a teacher of Klong chen pa. This lineage of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs* presents much the same situation. In fact, the lineage-holder ahead of Rgyal sras Thugs mchog rtsal, Chos rje Sangs rgyas Rin chen, lived from 1350 to 1431. Consequently, we have only two options: either the two names have been inverted and Rgyal sras Thugs mchog (i.e. Klong chen pa) was the teacher of Chos rje Sangs rgyas rin chen or Rgyal sras Thugs mchog is not Klong chen pa. The former case is improbable since we know that, in his earlier years, Sangs rgyas Rin chen was educated by his father and his father's disciple. Meetings with other teachers are not recorded. However, there is another and weightier factor to reject Rgyal sras Rdo rje thugs mchog rtsal as another name for Klong chen pa: our lineage speaks of him as "Rgyal sras Rdo rje thugs mchog rtsal of Shangs mda'". This indicates that he was born in Shangs mda', which is located in the right horn (*g.yas ru*), Gtsang. Klong chen pa was born in G.yo ru, the left horn, Dbus. This piece of information also fits well with the fact that the two previous lineage-holders Bsam 'grub and his son Sangs rgyas Rin chen, also came from a village situated in the right horn, Gtsang.

Although we do not know much about the life history of Rgyal sras Thugs mchog his *chos 'byung* indicates that he possessed a vast knowledge of several Mind Series teachings. It was he who explained the origins of the *Khams lugs*, the *Rong lugs*, the *Skor lugs* and so on. It is probably also significant that in his exposition of the meditation traditions of the Mind Series he does not refer to a *Nyang lugs*.

Grags pa dpal 'byor

I was able to locate only one Grags pa dpal 'byor. This is the Karma Bka' brgyud master Go śrī Grags pa dpal 'byor who lived between 1519 and 1549.⁷⁵⁵ He was

⁷⁵⁵ For a short biography of this master see *Go shrī grags pa dpal 'byor in Karma kaṃ tshang brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar*, vol, 2 pp. 63-65. At eleven he became a student of the eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554), (*Go shrī grags pa dpal 'byor*, 64:1) but in spite of the strong ties that the Bka' brgyud pa seem to have had with the Rdzogs chen Sems sde it doesn't seem that the *Karma pa* transmitted any Great Perfection teachings to Grags pa. The only reference to the "Old school" in the biography is that Grags pa dpal 'byor received the initiation

born in Lho rgyud seng ge sgang.⁷⁵⁶ At the age of eleven, he became a student of the eight Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554).⁷⁵⁷ The *Karma pa* acted as his *mkhan po* and the famous Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba (1504-1566) served as *slob dpon*.⁷⁵⁸ Around the age of twenty-three, he was appointed as regent of Mtshur phu.⁷⁵⁹ Grags pa dpal 'byor's biography does not refer to the teachings of the Mind Series. It refers only to the "Old school". Grags pa dpal 'byor received the initiation and authorization of both new and old tantras from Rje Blo gros rgya mtsho and Bdud mo Bkra shis 'od zer.⁷⁶⁰

It is quite common for a Bka' brgyud master to be included in a Sems sde lineage.⁷⁶¹ Still, his dates of birth and death do not fit at all with those of the previous lineage-holder, and fit badly with the next.⁷⁶² It would still be possible for Grags pa dpal 'byor to have met the next lineage-holder (Blo gros rab yangs), yet Blo gros is almost forty years older than Grags pa from whom he received the teachings.

Blo gros rab yangs⁷⁶³ (Upper Shang, Gtsang)

and authorization of both new and old tantra from Rje Blo gros rgyal mtshan and Bdud mo bkra shis 'od zer (64:3).

⁷⁵⁶ *Go shrī grags pa dpal 'byor*, 63: 6.

⁷⁵⁷ *Ibidem*, 64:1.

⁷⁵⁸ *Ibidem*, 64:2.

⁷⁵⁹ Mtshur phu was the seat of the *Karma pas*. It is located to the northwest of Lhasa.

⁷⁶⁰ *Go shrī grags pa dpal 'byor*, 64:3.

⁷⁶¹ This point should be evident from all the lineages we analysed previously. However, at the end of this chapter we shall see that the connection between Sog bzlog pa and the Bka' brgyud were such as to grant a larger share to this school's masters and doctrines than is usual even in Sems sde sources.

⁷⁶² Van der Kuijp affirmed that the *Chos 'byung rin po che'i gter mdzod* was written in 1422. This work certainly was not the composition of a very young man but even if it was so, and we would pretend that Rgyal sras Rdo rje thugs mchog rtsal was eighteen years old when he wrote the *chos 'byung*, in the year 1519 (i.e. the year of birth of Grags pa dpal 'byor) he would have been one hundred and fifteen.

⁷⁶³ This master was probably born either in 1460 or 1520. There is a biography of Blo gros rab yangs in the British Library Endangered Archives. Some pages are missing and some lines are illegible but it gives the date of birth of this master as the iron-male-dragon year which depending on the rabjung cycle could be identified as 1400, 1460 or 1520. (http://eap.bl.uk/database/overview_item.a4d?catId=159669;r=8365_kha, 1r:3). Considering that Blo gros rab yangs' teacher lived between 1519 and 1549 and that Rab yangs maintained written communication with Rin chen phun tshogs Chos kyi rgyal po (1509-1557) it seems more likely that Blo gros was born in 1520. The biography of this master is very long and its length is very likely attributable to the function it means to perform. Both Blo gros and his teacher were involved in the creation of narrative that legitimatised their role and created political rulers' favours. This sort of narratives naturally attempts to connect the current rulers and tantric practitioners to famous personages of the past. Therefore the biography has more than one

Blo gros rab yangs was the main disciple of the treasure-revealer Bstan gnyis gling pa (1480-1536),⁷⁶⁴ who sprang to fame through his rituals that averted Mongol raids.⁷⁶⁵ Bstan gnyis gling pa was related on his grandfather's side to the ruling house of Ring spungs that ruled over Gtsang,⁷⁶⁶ and was still in power at the time of Sog bzlog pa. Bstan gnyis gling pa was also a disciple of the Kaḥ thog teacher Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1466-1540).⁷⁶⁷ Bsod nams was educated at Kaḥ thog monastery, and studied the instructions of Dam pa bde gshegs and the major works of the Rnying ma school.⁷⁶⁸ Since there is no indication that Blo gros rab yangs actually met Grags pa dpal 'byor it is possible that the Rdzogs chen *bka' ma* Sems sde teachings reached Blo gros rab yangs through the line: Bsod nams rgyal mtshan – Bstan gnyis gling pa.

Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang

Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang features in the '*Dus mdo dbang gi spyi don* of Lo chen Dharmasrī⁷⁶⁹ (1654-1717/1718). Here, Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang appears among teachers of Sog bzlog pa.⁷⁷⁰ It does not say anything else about the identity of Bla chen Rdo rje 'chang.

chronological level; i.e. it narrates the previous life of the master as well as the present one. Often these levels are treated in three sections: an outer biography, an inner biography and a secret biography. See for example, Solmsdof, 2014:75-144. The analysis of this Blo gros rab yangs's biography is beyond the scope of the present paper, as I only wish to give a general sketch of his life in order to provide an overview of the lineage-holders of the transmissions of our texts.

⁷⁶⁴ Blo gros wrote a biography of Bstan gnyis gling pa entitled *Rig 'dzin bstan gyis gling pa'i rnam thar kha bskong gsal ba'i nyin byed*. Nikolai, 2013:119, fn. 15.

⁷⁶⁵ See Everding, 2004:245-266; and Nikolai, 2013:p. 119, fn. 15.

⁷⁶⁶ There seems to exist a sort of similarity between Blo gros rab yangs' role and that of Sog bzlog pa. Both were in fact disciples of famous *gter stons* (Bstan gnyis gling pa of Blo gros rab yangs and Zhig po gling pa of Sog bzlog pa) whose activity laid in performing Mongol-averting rituals. Both Blo gros rab yangs and Sog bzlog pa were therefore involved in keeping alive treasure traditions of a similar kind that had been passed on to them by their own teachers.

⁷⁶⁷ Ehrhard, 2003:22.

⁷⁶⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 14. Bsod nams rgyal mtshan was the nephew of the first Kaḥ thog teacher to go to Bhutan, Glan bla Ye shes 'bum pa. Ehrhard here is drawing from Bsod nams rgyal mtshan's biography called *Dri med yid bzhin nor bu'i phreng ba*. In the summary he gives about the teachings that Bsod nams received at Kaḥ thog, Ehrhard does not explicitly refer to the Rdzogs chen Sems sde; he talks only of the oral teachings of the *Rnying ma*. At any rate the biography specifies also that Bsod nams received the Sems sde teachings. See *Dri med yid bzhin nor bu'i phreng ba*, 66:5.

⁷⁶⁹ Lo chen Dharmasrī *alias* Chos dpal Rgya mtsho was the brother of Gter bdag gling pa the founder of the Smin grol gling monastery. He became the second abbot of this same monastery. As we shall see later, the father of these two famous brothers, Rig 'dzin 'Phrin las lhun grub, was a disciple of Gong ra ba Lo chen Gzhan phan rdo rje, the main disciple of Sog bzlog pa.

⁷⁷⁰ See '*Dus pa chen po mdo'i dbang gi spyi don rgyud lung man ngag gi gnad gsal bar byed pa'i sgron ma*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (Kaḥ thog), vol. 19, p. 129:1. See also Gentry, 2014:110.

Blo gros rgyal mtshan 1552-1624 (G.yas ru Gdong mkhar, Gtsang)⁷⁷¹ and the politics of his time

Blo gros rgyal mtshan, alias Sog bzlog pa, was born in 1552 in Gtsang. He trained as a physician and, in that capacity, visited and built a relationship with the rulers of his region (the Rin spungs pa first and, after their demise, the governor of Gtsang).⁷⁷² It was also through his role as a physician that he met his principal teacher, Zhig po gling pa (1524-1583).⁷⁷³ Zhig po gling pa was a treasure discoverer involved in the politics of his time.⁷⁷⁴ His main treasures contained ritual instructions to protect Tibet from Mongol invasions. Blo gros rgyal mtshan became his main disciple and successor. Following Zhig po gling pa's death, Blo gros carried out the rituals illustrated in Zhig po gling pa's *gter mas*, hence the title 'Sog bzlog pa' (the "Mongol repeller"). Blo gros was not a *gter ston* himself but since Zhig po gling pa recognised him as a rebirth of Gnyags Jñānakumāra, he empowered him to perform his own.⁷⁷⁵ Although it is not explicitly stated in his texts, Sog bzlog pa's involvement in the *bka' ma* Sems sde may well go back to his rebirth as Gnyags Jñānakumāra. Gnyags was in fact a key person in the transmission of the Mind Series and so anyone recognised as his reincarnation would acquire strong legitimization in writing on this subject. At any rate, there is no doubt that Sog bzlog pa's interest was not confined to the *gter ma* material. He also studied the Mind Series as well as the Anuyoga tradition. But it was his performance of Mongol-repelling rituals that propelled him into the centre of political life. During his career he was able, through his connections, to free from imprisonment a certain Bod mkhar nas who had supported the governor of Gtsang during the conflict with the Rin spungs family.⁷⁷⁶ In later times, after the ascendancy of the Gtsang rulers, he received an estate and a monastery in which to perform his rituals. The fact that Sog bzlog pa was often summoned to perform this sort of ritual is not surprising. The Gtsang rulers were in constant dread of Mongol incursions, especially because of the

⁷⁷¹ For an extensive biography of this master see Gentry, 2014:105- 150.

⁷⁷² *Ibidem*, p. 108.

⁷⁷³ *Ibidem*, p. 111.

⁷⁷⁴ On Zhig po gling pa's activities and his political alliance with the 'Bri gung pa and especially the Karma pas see Sørensen and Guntram, 2007:516-519. For a study on Zhig po gling pa's legacy in Sikim see Ehrhard, 2005:11-23.

⁷⁷⁵ Gentry, 2014:120-121.

⁷⁷⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 125. This was of course before the final capitulation of the Rin spungs pas and the seizure of power by the Gtsang pa sde srid.

Mongol alliance with the Dge lugs pa school. The Dge lugs pas steadily increased their power in Dbus which led to a perpetual tension between them and the Bka' brgyud pas supported by the Gtsang authorities. Histories report frequent hostilities between their monasteries. For example, during the Rin spungs pa supremacy, the ruler Don yod rdo rje (1463-1612) established a Bka' brgyud monastery in Lhasa to comply with the wishes of the Seventh Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454-1506). The monks of 'Bras spung and Se ra attacked the monastery and destroyed it. In response, Rin spungs pa forces assaulted Dbus and eventually took control of the Po ta la.⁷⁷⁷ The monks of 'Bras spung and Se ra were henceforth forbidden to participate in the Great Prayer Festival.⁷⁷⁸ These and many other similar incidents took place between the Gtsang-Bka' brgyud on the one hand and Dbus-Dge lugs pa on the other. The Third Dalai Lama, Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1543-1588), enjoyed great popularity, although he also created much apprehension among non-Dge lugs pa rulers. It was he who laid the foundation for the future alliance between Mongols and Dge lugs pas and the consequent ascendancy of the Pho brang rule. In the year 1577, Bsod nams rgya mtsho proceeded to the Mtsho sngon lake with a large delegation to meet the Mongolian leader Altan Khan.⁷⁷⁹ The connection then formed was renewed on the death of the Third Dalai Lama when his rebirth was found to be the nephew of Altan Khan, Yon tan rgya mtsho (1589-1616).⁷⁸⁰ The Gtsang leader, and all who were not allied with the Dge lugs, saw this event with great concern. Sog bzlog pa, who devoted much of his life to avoiding Mongol penetration in the political affairs (and territory) of Tibet, was much distressed at the turn things had taken.⁷⁸¹ The relationship between the Bka' brgyud pa and the Dge lugs pa during the rule of the Fourth Dalai Lama became even more complicated. Shakabpa attributes this hostility to misunderstandings and prejudice among the prelates of the Dge lugs school.⁷⁸² In the meanwhile, Sog bzlog pa continued to perform Zhig po gling pa's Mongol- averting rites. In 1612, however, he was guest to the Gtsang ruler Phun tshogs nam rgyal at the Bsam

⁷⁷⁷ Shakabpa, (trans. by Derek F. Maher), 2010:277.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁷⁹ Shakabpa, (trans. by Derek F. Maher), 2010:298-301.

⁷⁸⁰ *Sog bzlog bgyis tshul gyi lo rgyus*, 250:6-251:1. Shakabpa, (trans. by Derek F. Maher), 2010:304 vol.1.

⁷⁸¹ *Sog bzlog bgyis tshul gyi lo rgyus*, 251:2-3.

⁷⁸² Shakabpa, (trans. by Derek F. Maher), 2010: 308-310, vol.1.

grub palace.⁷⁸³ Phun tshogs rnam rgyal patronised both the Rnying ma and Bka' brgyud schools, although he was particularly close to the tenth *Karma pa* Chos dbyings rdo rje (1604-1674).⁷⁸⁴ Roughly while Sog bzlog pa dwelt at Bsam grub, Phun tshogs decided to build a combined Rnying ma/ Bka' brgyud monastery close to Bkra shis lhung po.⁷⁸⁵ The material for the construction was taken from a hill behind the Dge lugs monastery (presumably causing rockfall and damage to Bkra shis lhung po) and it is said that on the wall of the new Bka' brgyud/ Rnying ma establishment was written "Suppressor of Bkra shis lhung po".⁷⁸⁶ In his final years, Sog bzlog pa no longer performed rituals but wrote several texts.⁷⁸⁷ He died in 1624.

After Sog bzlog pa, Gzhan phan mtha' yas updated the transmission of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs* so that it now reaches the nineteenth century. I shall discuss in general lines the deeds of the four lineage-holders immediately after Sog bzlog pa below. We now turn to the shorter lineage included in the addendum.

The lineage of the addendum

The lineage of the addendum starts with Zur chung. This presumably indicates that the lineage-holders before him match those in the main transmission of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*.

⁷⁸³ It seems that Sog bzlog pa during his stay in Bsam grub occupied himself in writing one of his famous apologetic texts, the *Bla ma 'jo'i zhu lan ma bsgom sangs rgyas kyi brtsid spong*. See Gentry, 2014:148.

⁷⁸⁴ Shakabpa talks of a priest-patron relationship between this secular leader and the Zhwa dmar pa, Shakabpa, (trans. by Derek F. Maher), 2010:277, vol.1.

⁷⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁸⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 283. It is not clear whether this Rnying ma/ Bka' brgyud monastery was truly originally called "the suppressor of Bkra shis lhung po" or if people, perceiving the threat it constituted for the Dge lugs pa establishment, came to call it so. Shakabpa later on also quotes a writing of the Paṅ chen bla ma which says: "[...] A high-walled monastery had been constructed behind Trashi Lhünpo, and because of the foolishness of many people, it was called the "Suppressor of Trashi Lhünpo". *Ibidem*, p. 343.

⁷⁸⁷ Gentry, 2014:148- 149.

There is good reason to identify the master who follows Zur chung, Glan Śākya bzang po, with the Rlan Śākya bzang po, that we see in the *Snying gi nyi ma*'s lineage.⁷⁸⁸

The next lineage-holder, Mda' Śākya 'phel, turns up in several other transmissions. We find him in the *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* of Gtsug lag 'phreng ba (1504-1564/66), inside a section dedicated to the transmissions of the Rnying ma tantras and, specifically, to the *Guhyagarbha tantra*.⁷⁸⁹ Here, he comes after Rta nag bdud 'dul and before Zur Byams pa seng ge.⁷⁹⁰ He again appears in the same place in a transmission presented by the Sa skya master Dpal 'byor bzang po (15th century).⁷⁹¹ Gu ru bkra shis (eighteenth century) also describes Mda' Śākya 'phel as a disciple of Rta nag Bdud 'dul, and Bdud 'joms rin po che repeats verbatim this piece of information in the section of his *chos 'byung* that deals with the Rong tradition.⁷⁹² Rta nag bdud 'dul lived around the thirteenth century; Zur Byams pa seng ge lived between the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It is hence very likely that Mda' Śākya 'phel lived towards the end of the thirteenth century. This, however, is at odds with Mda' Śākya 'phel's position in the lineage of the addendum. Here, in fact, he features between G/Rlang Śākya bzang po and Zur Śākya seng ge. Zur Śākya seng ge lived between 1074 and 1134, thus he clearly could not have been a disciple of Mda' Śākya 'phel. As for G/Rlang Śākya bzang po, although we do not know his dates his inclusion in the transmission of the *NyNy* signals that he cannot have lived after 1199.⁷⁹³ Finally, when one considers that the *NyNy* gives a very similar transmission, with the only exception that the lineage-holder between G/Rlang Śākya bzang po and Zur Sgro phug pa is called Mda' dig Chos Śāg, it

⁷⁸⁸ In the table above he is the master who follows Yang kher (Yang kheng) bla ma in the *Snying gi nyi ma*'s lineage, no. 16.

⁷⁸⁹ Gtsug lag 'phreng ba, 1986, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, vol. 1, 620: 1-2.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁷⁹¹ *Rgya bod du gsang sngags bla med kyi chos lugs dar tshul*, in *Sa skya'i chos 'byung gces bsdus*, Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, vol. 3, 329: 12-13.

⁷⁹² *Gu ru bra shis chos 'byung*, 288:24-289:2; *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung*, 317:10-2; Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:633.

⁷⁹³ This is the date of death of Zhig po bdud rtsi, the alleged author of the *Snying gi nyi ma*.

seems highly probable that the author of the addendum confused this Mda' Śākya 'phel with Mda' dig Chos Śāg.⁷⁹⁴

The nineteenth master in the addendum is Kyi (Kyo) ston Śāk ye. This name corresponds to Skyo ston Śākya ye shes. However, in the *NyNy* Skyo ston preceeds Rlan Śākya bzang po, Mda' tig chos Śāg and Zur Sgro phug pa. Therefore, I suspect that the position of Kyo ston after these three masters in the addendum is a mistake.

I have already discussed the seven lineage-holders that follow Rlan Śākya bzang po, Mda' tig Chos Śāg, Zur Sgro phug pa and Kyi ston. Here, I now jump to the next lineage member: Chos rgyal Mnga' ris paṅ chen.

Chos rgyal Mnga' ris paṅ chen

The identity of Mnga' ris paṅ chen, is as yet unresolved.⁷⁹⁵ Yet, this may be decisive to establish the authorship of the addendum. In fact, there are two possible candidates: one is the famous master Mnga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje (1487-1542) connected with the Northern Treasure tradition; the other is Phyogs las rnam rgyal Chos kyi rgyal po (1306-1386) a Jo nang master from Mnga' ris. Of these two, Phyogs las rnam rgyal is the more plausible candidate because his dates fit better with Mnga' ris paṅ chen's position in the lineage. Nonetheless, since there seem to be objections to the identification of either of the two masters with Mnga' ris paṅ chen, I shall here give both the options.

Mnga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje was the son of 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan, and the grandchild of the Mnga' ris king Chos rgyal Nor bu lde (1450-1484).⁷⁹⁶ His father, who was the illegitimate son of the king, was

⁷⁹⁴ This Mda' dig chos śāg has already been discussed in the previous chapter since he appears also in the transmission of Nam mkha' rdo rje's *A ro bryud*.

⁷⁹⁵ The problem with the identification of so many lineage-holders is due to the fact that the author used titles instead of personal names. The lineage-holder before Mnga' ris paṅ chen (the great scholar from Mnga' ris) is "the Great Reincarnation" (Sprul sku chen po); the master who follows Mnga' ris'i paṅ chen is "the hermit who abandoned everything" (Kun spangs ri khrod pa).

⁷⁹⁶ Everding, 2004:269. However, Everding's assertion that Mnga' ris paṅ chen was the teacher of Tsong kha pa should be revisited. As the time gap between the two makes clear, it is not this

himself a famous Rnying ma practitioner and instructed his sons personally.⁷⁹⁷ Two of his sons became famous: Mnga' ris paṅ chen and his younger brother Legs ldan rdo rje (1512-1625), both generally known under the name of the two “Mnga' ris pa” brothers.⁷⁹⁸ They studied the *Byang gter* tradition (Northern Treasures) at the feet of the *gter ston* Śākya bzang po (15th/16th century).⁷⁹⁹ Mnga' ris paṅ chen evidently did not hail either from Dbus or Gtsang, so he would not fit particularly well in a Dbus/Gtsang lineage. On the other hand, since he was active in Dbus and his own tradition eventually spread to Dbus, his inclusion in a Dbus/Gtsang lineage would be justifiable. Mnga' ris paṅ chen's life is narrated and praised in the writings of the Fifth Dalai Lama. The Dge lugs pa leader advised the people who practised *gter ma* rituals to follow Mnga' ris paṅ chen's treasures. Now, if our Mnga' ris paṅ chen were to be this Mnga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje, the addendum's attribution to Gter bdag gling pa would receive further weight. In fact, Gentry noticed that 'Gyur med rdo rje, in order to achieve the unification of all the Rdzogs chen trends (included those inimical to the Fifth Dalai Lama), merged the initiations, instructions and transmissions of Zhig po gling pa's tradition and that of the *Byang gter*. In these passages, he specifically used the name Mnga' ris paṅ chen to represent the Northern Treasure tradition.⁸⁰⁰ His inclusion in the lineage could thus be another attempt to reconcile the two factions.

Nonetheless, this identification is problematic. Mnga' ris paṅ chen died in 1542. Between his death and the birth of Sog bzlog pa only ten years passed, even though no less than five lineage-holders separate these two masters from each other.

Mnga' ris paṅ chen who was Tsong kha pa's teacher, but Phyog las rnam rgyal, the teacher whose life we are going to investigate after that of Mnga ris paṅ chen. See also *Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho*, (trans. by Zahiruddin Ahmad). 1999:166.

⁷⁹⁷ *Ibidem*. See also Dargyay, 1977:156-157.

⁷⁹⁸ Ehrhard, 2003:23.

⁷⁹⁹ For a very short introduction to Śākya bzang po see Mathes, 2013:37-38.

⁸⁰⁰ Gentry, 2014:479-80. Gentry also noticed that the Great Fifth advised people who practised the rituals of the new treasures to follow the revelations of the following masters: Mnga' ris paṅ chen, 'Bri gung Zur pa rin po che, 'Phrang 'go gter ston and Byang bdag rig sngags 'chang ba chen po. Gentry, 2014:468, fn. 965, (for the Tibetan reference see *Gong ra nges gsang rdo rje gling gi khirms su bca' ba'i rim pa*, in *Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 'i gsum 'bum*, vol. 23, 68: 1-3).

If we still believe Mnga' ris paṅ chen to be our lineage-holder, the only Chos dpal bzang po (the thirtieth in the lineage) to fit in chronologically would be the Dge lugs scholar Spyān snga Chos dpal bzang po (b. sixteenth century).⁸⁰¹ However, we have no evidence that he studied anything related with Rdzogs chen.⁸⁰² Moreover, it would be difficult to identify the lineage-holders that separate Mnga' ris paṅ chen from Chos dpal bzang po.

Phyogs las rnam rgyal Chos kyi rgyal po (1306-1389) was a disciple of the famous Jo nang pa teacher Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1361). Sources from the Jo nang tradition give him a key role in the transmission of the Kālacakra tantra.⁸⁰³ If Phyogs las rnam rgyal were Mnga' ris paṅ chen, we would be able to identify the next lineage-holder in the addendum: Kun spangs ri khrod pa. He would then be a disciple of Phyogs las called Kun spangs Chos grags dpal bzang (1283- 1363). Kun spangs Chos grags, however, was not the only student of Phyogs las rnam rgyal. Phyogs las introduced this tantra also to other disciples including, most notably, Tsong kha pa. Phyogs las thus became de facto one of the teachers of the founder of the Dge lugs pa school. Notwithstanding, in the seventeenth century the Fifth Dalai Lama developed a strong aversion against the Jo nang pa school which, during his lifetime, had become a fierce supporter of the Gtsang rulers. Thus, probably because of Tārānātha's alliance with the Gtsang ruler soon after the ascendancy of the Dga' ldan pho brang power, the members of this school were persecuted, at least in central Tibet.⁸⁰⁴ If the proposed identification is correct, the chances are that Sog bzlog pa himself wrote the addendum. Gter bdag gling pa opposed the wishes of the Fifth Dalai Lama by still keeping alive the Snyang-Sog-Gong tradition. Yet, he did so in order to preserve the unity of the Rdzogs chen school. It seems unlikely that he

⁸⁰¹ Cabezón, 2009/2010:216.

⁸⁰² However, sources are scarce about this master's life. The only very short biography available on the TBRC website is in Ye shes rgyal mtshan's (1713-1793) work *Lam rim bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*. Lhasa: Bid ljongs mi dmangs dpe skrun khang. vol. 1, pp. 476-477. This does not refer to any connection between this master and the Rdzogs chen tradition. Yet, this could be imputed to the fact that the biographies presented in this work only aim to show the lineage of Tsong kha pa's *lam rim* teachings and therefore other lateral studies of these monks might have been easily overlooked.

⁸⁰³ He in fact appears in collections dedicated to the Kālacakra such as the *Dus 'khor chos 'byung indra nī la'i phra tshom* (2005. Mirik: 'Bo dkar nges don chos 'khor gling gi bla spyi spar bskrun zhus. vol. 1, pp. 456-458) and some of his notes and commentaries about this tantra are still available today.

⁸⁰⁴ Karmay, 1988: 5 and Stearns, 1999:72-74.

would have risked the wrath of the Great Fifth over the members of the Jo nang school.⁸⁰⁵ In light of subsequent events, it is improbable that Phyogs las rnam rgyal's association with the great patriarch of the Dge lugs school would have carried any weight to recommend the Jo nang school to the Fifth Dalai Lama. Moreover, it would be difficult to assess the extent to which Phyogs las and his student were involved in the Rdzogs chen Sems sde tradition. G.yag sde paṅ chen, who according to the *KKTshGy* received many Rdzogs chen Sems sde teachings,⁸⁰⁶ also studied under Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs bzang grags pa according to later sources.⁸⁰⁷ It is conceivable that, in return for the teachings he received from him, he transmitted to Bo dong paṅ chen the Rdzogs chen Sems sde.⁸⁰⁸ Moreover, Phyogs las rnam rgyal's teacher, the famous Dol po pa is said to have also studied the Great Perfection.

The thrust of our identification of these two lineage-holders with Phyogs las rnam rgyal and his student rests hence on their respective dates. In fact, although we do not know the identity of the two masters that precede Mnga' ris paṅ chen (number twenty-fifth and six of this lineage), the twenty-fourth lineage-holder, Smyon ston Śāk 'bum, lived towards the end of the thirteenth century. On balance, it would perhaps appear more plausible that Phyogs las rnam rgyal Chos kyi rgyal po is the twenty-seventh master of the addendum rather than Mnga' ris paṅ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje. Between the first and Sog bzlog pa there are one hundred and sixty-six years. This gives room for the five masters that occur between Phyogs las rnam rgyal and Sog bzlog pa. Between Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje and the author of the *Khrid yig* there are only ten years, which would require that those intervening five masters were all contemporaries. Finally, if we accept Phyogs las rnam rgyal as the twenty-seventh lineage-holder of this

⁸⁰⁵ There is also another option that should be considered. This is the possibility that this appendix was added at a much later date, by someone else who had interest in preserving the work of the *Jo nang* school. It is well known that the members of the so-called *Ris med* movement were in favour of a revival of the *Jo nang* teachings and since several of them were likewise involved in the redaction of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* we cannot exclude that this appendix was added by one of them. However, if this was the case, one wonders why instead of Phyogs las rnam rgyal they did not include Dol po pa himself, for whom at least we have proof that he received *Rnying ma* teachings.

⁸⁰⁶ See Chapter Three, Table Five.

⁸⁰⁷ See Mi nyag mgon. 1996-2000. *Gangs can mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rnam thar mdor bsdus*. Beijing: Krung go'i bod kyi shes rig dpe skrun khang. vol. 1, 90:1-3.

⁸⁰⁸ Stearns, 1999:17.

transmission, it would be chronologically possible to identify Rtogs ldan Chos dpal bzang po (the thirtieth in the line) with the Bo dong master Bla chen Chos dpal bzang po (1371-1439).

Chos dpal bzang po (1371-1439)

Chos dpal bzang po was the nephew of the Mang yul king Mchog grub lde.⁸⁰⁹ He was a scholar of both the Sa skya and the Bo dong traditions. In 1471, he became chaplain of the Gung thang royal house.⁸¹⁰ Chos dpal bzang po, like many other Sa skya leaders, had a dislike to the links that the king was forging with certain Rnying ma *gter stons*.⁸¹¹ For example, the biography of Thang ston rgyal po (1385-1464) records that, during his visit to Mang yul Gung thang, Bla chen Chos dpal bzang po attempted to poison him.⁸¹² However, Chos dpal did not extend his aversion to the Rnying ma tradition in general or to its rituals. Indeed, in the colophon of one of his works, the *A ya'i mdos kyi zin bris bkod pa legs so*, he describes himself as a practitioner of both Old and New Tantras.⁸¹³ Ramble believes this text to be a Rnying ma work.⁸¹⁴ Moreover, Chos dpal himself conducted rituals to avert Stod hor Mongols, just as his Rnying ma counterparts.⁸¹⁵ In light of these connections, his inclusion in our lineage is perhaps easier to justify than that of Spyang snga Chos dpal bzang po (whose dates agree with those of Mnga' ris pañ chen Padma dbang rgyal rdo rje). Finally, we should bear in mind that the master right after Chos dpal bzang po, Rab yangs, was a disciple of Bstan gnyis gling pa. The latter was a Rnying ma teacher

⁸⁰⁹ Everding, 2000:517. Stearns instead says that Bla chen Chos dpal bzang po was the half-brother of the king. Stearns, 2007:541, fn. 718. The life of this king has been studied especially in connection with the *gter ston* Rgod ldem can, the founder of the Northern Treasure tradition of whom the Fifth Dalai Lama was a great supporter. Mchog grub lde in fact became the principal patron of Rgod ldem can. See Everding, 2000:489-496.

⁸¹⁰ Everding, 2000:517.

⁸¹¹ Diemberger in her book stresses the fact that this dislike between the two masters was caused by the tension between the Sa skya and the Rnying ma adepts in Mang yul. See Diemberger, 2007:350, fn. 110.

⁸¹² Everding, 2000:518, Stearns, 2007:261-263. It also seems that because of Bla chen's hostility towards Thang ston rgyal po, at that time the princess Chos kyi sgron ma had been prevented from meeting the great *gter ston*. Diemberger, 2007:221.

⁸¹³ See Ramble, 2007:710.

⁸¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹⁵ *Ibidem*. See also Tub bstan 'Jam dbyangs. (1999). *Bla chen chos dpal bzang po rdzong dkar chos sde'i slob dpon du mnga' gsol ba*, in *Rdzong chos chos 'byung bdud rtsi'i zil mngar*. Karnataka: Zongkar Chode Monastery, 50:3-7.

himself who was close to the Gung thang court and practised the same sort of averting rituals.

The next three lineage-holders (Rab yangs Rdo rje 'chang dbang and Sog bzlog pa) match those that feature in the main transmission of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*.

Quotations inside the Khrid yig

The lineages we examined in the last section are those of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston* and its appendix. We took them into consideration because Kong sprul claimed that the lineage of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs* and that of the *Khrid yig* were the same. But are they really? In our analysis of the *Khams lugs* of Nam mkha' rdo rje, we scrutinised both the lineage and the quotations cited in the text. In this way, we verified that the lineage-holders of the *Khams lugs* transmission were, for the majority, the authors of the works cited in this same text. We shall now do the same for the *Khrid yig*.

The *Khrid yig* also contains a great number of quotations. I here list all the works from which Sog bzlog pa drew excerpts:

	number of times it is quoted
1. Mdo [las] ⁸¹⁶	1
2. Mi la ras pa ⁸¹⁷	1
3. Rgyal ba Yang dgon pa[s] ⁸¹⁸	9
4. Rgyal ba Rgod tshang pa ⁸¹⁹	3

⁸¹⁶ This is the *'Phags pa dam pa'i chos dran pa nye bar bzhag pa'i mdo*, the Sūtra on the Application of Mindfulness.

⁸¹⁷ Note that Sog bzlog pa does not say that this quotation derives from Mi la ras pa. However, the quotation itself says: "I Mi la ras pa", although of course we cannot be sure whether Mi la ras pa ever said these words. See *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa Kah thog*, vol. 30, 373:1.

⁸¹⁸ Yang dgon pa was the disciple of Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje (the master who follows him in this list). Although both Yang dgon pa and Rgod tshang pa are considered 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud masters, it seems that Yang dgon pa's relationship with Sa skya paṇḍita (who is also quoted in this text) was strong enough to influence Yang dgon pa's style of exegesis. See Miller, 2013:33. A short biography of this master is also available in the *DNg*, 600:7-603:4; Roerich, 1979:688-691.

5. Bla ma Zhang rin po che[s]	1
6. O rgyan rin po che[s] (Padmasambhava)	3
7. Rje 'Bri gung pa[s] ⁸²⁰	1
8. Sa skya paṅ chen	1
9. 'Das rjes [las] ⁸²¹	2
10. Rdzogs chen [las]	3
11. Rdzogs chen gu ru bzhi [las]	1
12. Rdzogs chen sems phyogs pa[s]	1
13. Grub chen Mi tra dza ki[s] (Mitrayogin) ⁸²²	2
14. Zhi byed pa[s]	1
15. Kun bzang dgongs 'dus	1
16. Rdzogs chen sems sde [las]	1
17. Rdzogs chen snyan brgyud thugs kyi khu [las]	1
18. Rje 'Ba' ra ba[s]	1
19. Shri si ha[s]	1

The high number of quotations (thirty-six over twenty-one folios) and the variety of sources from which they stem tell us that this text is very different from the *Khams lugs* or the *A ro lugs*. In the *Khams lugs*, which is twice as long as the *Khrid yig*, we find many more quotations (eighty-seven against the thirty-five of the *Khrid yig*), but they derive only from thirteen different texts or masters (against the nineteen of the *Khrid yig*). Most importantly, the sources used in the *Khams lugs* all possess a Rnying ma background; and all the people whose words are recorded in the *Khams lugs* also feature in its transmission.

The citations in the *Khrid yig* stem from texts and people that belong to different affiliations. All the major schools are represented in this text, except for the Dge lugs. In light of Sog bzlog pa's background this is not surprising.

⁸¹⁹ *DNg*, 593:6- 599:5. Roerich, 1979:680-687.

⁸²⁰ 'Jig rten dgon po rin chen dpal was the founder of the 'Bri gung pa branch of the Bka' brgyud school. For a study on the early days of this school see Sperling, 1987:33-56; for a short biography of this master see the *DNg*, 519:2-523:5; Roerich, 1979: 596-601.

⁸²¹ I have not been able to identify this text. Given the high number of prophecies that Rdzogs chen *gter ston* were pouring out on the political scene of the fourteenth to seventeenth century Tibet, I provisionally assume this to be one of them.

⁸²² For a biography of this master see the *DNg* 915:6- 921:7; Roerich, 1979:1030-1039.

We can deduce three points from this list: first, there is not even a single quotation that comes from a lineage-holder of *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*;⁸²³ second, the number of quotations coming from Bka' brgyud sources and masters matches (if it does not exceed) that of Rdzogs chen/Rnying ma sources;⁸²⁴ third, while Sog bzlog pa gives clear references for his Bka' brgyud sources, he is less forthright in respect to the provenance of his Rnying ma/Rdzogs chen quotations. For example, he identifies the forthcoming six Bka' brgyud masters: Mi la ras pa (1052/1040-1135/1123), Yang dgon pa (1213-1258), Rgod tshang pa (1189-1258), Bla ma Zhang (1122-1193), Rje 'Bru gung pa (alias 'Jig rten mgon po rin chen dpal 1123-1217), Mitrayogin (twelfth century) and Rje 'Ba' ra ba (1310-1391). Among the Rnying ma quotations, two come from the lips of two famous masters (Padmasambhava and Śrī Siṃha)⁸²⁵ and the rest derive from texts that go under the vague titles of *Rdzogs chen*, *Rdzogs chen sems phyogs*, *Rdzogs chen sems sde* and *Rdzogs chen gu ru bzhi*.⁸²⁶ It is also odd that the only Rnying ma master quoted in the text is Padmasambhava. He would have been better placed in a *gter ma* than in a text that professedly declares to belong to the *bka' ma* Sems sde. The *Khrid yig* also contains two further Rnying ma quotations: one from the *Rdzogs chen snyan brgyud thugs kyi nying (snying?) khu* and the other from the *Kun bzang dgongs 'dus*. Sog bzlog pa attributed the first to *slob dpon* Rdo rje Bzhad pa (alias Vajrahāsyā, eighth century),⁸²⁷ who was a lineage-holder of the *Māyājāla* transmission.⁸²⁸ However, I have not been able to find a text with that title, or a

⁸²³ If, in spite of the dates, we identify the Dam pa Sangs rgyas of the lineage with Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas then we would have a direct connection between one lineage-holder of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs* and a quotation in the *Khrid yig*.

⁸²⁴ As the table makes clear, the number of Rnying ma and that of Bka' brgyud sources are the same: there are seven of each. However, the Bka' brgyud quotations are used more frequently (nineteen times) than the Rnying ma quotations (nine times). Still, since I have been unable to identify the 'testament' (*Das rjes*) the number of the Rnying ma sources could rise to eight and that of its quotations to eleven.

⁸²⁵ Śrī Siṃha's quotation is not even in the main text. It is an addition after the *mangalam* and the colophon (for the colophon of the *Khrid yig* see the beginning of this chapter).

⁸²⁶ It is not clear to me, which are the texts here mentioned. I expected that some of the quotations here called "Rdzogs chen", "Rdzogs chen Sems sde" and "Rdzogs chen Sems phyogs" would come from the *Kun byed rgyal po* but they do not. Sog bzlog pa mentions the *Kun byed rgyal po* once in this text but he only refers to it as a possible further reading. *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa Kaḥ thog*, vol. 30, 406: 4-5.

⁸²⁷ "Slob dpon rdo rje bzhad pas mdzas pa'i rdzogs chen snyan brgyud thugs kyi nying khu", *Khrid yig*, in *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa Kaḥ thog*, vol. 30, 406:3.

⁸²⁸ *MNy*, 486: 11-18.

source that connects Rdo rje Bzhad pa with the A ti yoga tradition. The second, the *Kun bzang dgongs 'dus*, is a *gter ma* that was rediscovered by the Bhutanese master Padma gling pa (1450-1521).⁸²⁹

In view of the historical context in which Sog bzlog pa lived, such abundance of Bka' brgyud quotations makes good sense. The Bka' brgyud tradition was the most powerful school in Gtsang and maintained a close relationship with its regional leaders. The Rnying ma pas held little sway in the political domain except for their ritual experts such as Zhig po gling pa and Sog bzlog pa.⁸³⁰ Their alliance with the Bka' brgyud was often a necessity to them. Yet, the ties between the Rnying ma pa and the Bka' brgyud pa lie even deeper. Solmsdorf, in his study of the Rnying ma master Rig 'dzin Gar dbang rdo rje (1640-1685), speaks of a fusion of the Bka' brgyud and Rnying ma traditions (*bka' rnying*).⁸³¹ Similarly, the Karma Bka' brgyud master Karma Chags med (1613-1678) wrote a manual for the practice of meditation according to the fusion of Rdzogs chen and *Mahāmudrā*.⁸³² There are many more examples of such alliances scattered over sixteenth and seventeenth century central Tibet. Moreover, before the ascendancy of the Dalai Lamas, the boundaries between the schools were less articulated. Practitioners would often study under teachers from different schools.⁸³³ Further proof of the close connection between Rnying ma and Bka' brgyud I supply in this thesis: this ranges from the redactor of the *A ro lugs*, who was the second Zhwa dmar pa leader, to the numerous Bka' brgyud masters who feature as lineage-holders of Sems sde texts and Phun tshogs rnam rgyal's decision to build a unified Rnying ma/ Bka' brgyud monastery in Sog bzlog pa's time. This explains the heterogeneous provenance of Sog bzlog pa's quotations.

⁸²⁹ This *gter ma* is found in volume 4 of Padma gling pa's *Rig 'dzin padma gling pa'i zab gter chos mdzod rin po che*. (1975-76), Thimphu: Kunsang Tobgay. For a short biography of Padma gling pa see Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:796-799. For a more detailed study on Padma gling pa's life and a translation of some of his writings see Harding, 2003.

⁸³⁰ Together with the usual task of averting Mongol raids, avoiding floodings was another very important function of these practitioners. For the political significance of these rituals and the antagonism between practitioners to attain predominance over the others see Sørensen and Guntram, 2007, vol. 2, pp. 511-528.

⁸³¹ Solmsdorf, 2014: 8.

⁸³² This is the *Thugs rje chen po'i dmar khrid phyag rdzogs zung 'jug gi don 'dus go bder bkod pa rgan mo mdzub tshugs*.

⁸³³ The lineages we have examined up to now are a good example of this trend. In particular, the lives of masters such as G.yag sde pañ chen and Bo dong pa show that people who had studied teachings from different contexts were highly esteemed.

His robust relationship with several Bka' brgyud leaders was equally important. Sog bzlog pa inherited his connections to Bka' brgyud leadership through his relationship with Zhig po gling pa, whose social status was high by birth.⁸³⁴ Zhig po gling pa's daughter was married to the Bka' brgyud hierarch Zhabs drung rin po che dpal (1543-1604). After Zhig po gling pa's death, Zhabs drung asked Sog bzlog pa to produce a biography of his father-in-law. This led Sog bzlog pa to the production of the *Sprul sku zhig po gling pa'i rnam thar*.⁸³⁵ Sog bzlog pa himself courted the Bka' brgyud elite in order to secure religious privilege.⁸³⁶ His career as a writer started with a text (the *Nges don 'brug sgra*) in defence of the Rnying ma school and particularly of a kind of pill concocted by Rnying ma practitioners to trigger liberation. The efficacy of this pill was called into question in a polemical *gsar ma* work. Sog bzlog pa believed that the author of the Rnying ma condemnatory work was the Eighth Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507-1554), and so in the *Nges don 'brug sgra* he replied to his accusations.⁸³⁷ However, years later, as he wrote Zhig po gling pa's biography, Sog bzlog pa reported that the *Karma pa* praised and requested from Zhig po gling pa this very same pill.⁸³⁸ According to Gentry, this attests to Sog bzlog pa's high regard for the Karma pa's opinion and his desire to cultivate good relationships with the hierarchs of the Bka' brgyud school. We note something similar in the *Khrid yig*. Here, it seems that Sog bzlog pa's objective was to present Rdzogs chen as the counterpart of *Mahāmudrā*. The high number of Bka' brgyud quotations and the structure of the text itself support this view of the matter. Sog bzlog pa's technique to achieve the unification of *Mahāmudrā* and Rdzogs chen in the *Khrid yig* is as such: first, he explains how to enter a certain stage of Rdzogs chen meditation, then, he tells the reader what such a stage is called in *Mahāmudrā*. The systematic repetition of such a pattern produces the belief in the reader that, nomenclature apart, the two traditions profess exactly the same

⁸³⁴ He was the son of the Snang rtse ruler. See Gentry, 2014:68.

⁸³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 162.

⁸³⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 71-73.

⁸³⁷ There seem to be some doubts regarding attributing the authorship of this condemnatory text to Mi bskyod rdo rje, as one of his closest disciples, Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba, denied its attribution to the Eight Karma pa. See Gentry, 2014:213.

⁸³⁸ Gentry, 2014:71. He takes this extract from the biography of Zhig po gling pa. See Sog bzlog pa. 1975. *Rdzogs chen pa sprul sku zhig po gling pa gar gyi dbang phyug rtsal gyi skyes rabs rags bsdus dang rnam thar*, in *Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan gsung 'bum*, New Delhi: Sanji Dorje. Vol. 2, 52:6-53:3.

doctrine.⁸³⁹ It is probable that Sog bzlog pa wrote this text with a Bka' brgyud audience in mind. In fact he was very careful in referencing his Bka' brgyud quotations, and very inattentive in reporting his Rdzogs chen sources.

His great desire to bring together the Great Perfection with the Great Seal calls to mind the Lineage One of the *A ro lugs*. This transmission in fact set out to integrate the Buddhas, legendary characters and masters of the two schools. The *gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama also reported such a transmission.⁸⁴⁰ Still, more than one hand was responsible for the redaction of the *gsan yig*. The Fifth Dalai Lama on one occasion laments that 'Gyur med rdo rje's father, 'Phrin las lhun grub, copied word for word into his *gsan yig* Gong ra ba's words.⁸⁴¹ In this context he also specifically refers to the Mind Class.⁸⁴² Gong ra ba was the principal disciple of Sog bzlog pa. Therefore, one cannot but wonder whether Lineage One was also a creation of Sog bzlog pa or of one of his disciples.

Conclusions

The *Khrid yig* is the text that, according to the *Gdams ngag mdzod* and *Rnying ma bka' ma* collections, expounds the "method of Nyang". Sog bzlog pa attributes the authorship of the meditation method to Zhig po bdud rtsi. Several scholars, over the time, connect the *Nyang lugs* to the tradition of the Zurs. The lineage of the *NyNy*, on which Sog bzlog pa heavily draws for the transmission of Dbus and Gtsang, is that of the Zur. This demonstrates that Kong sprul's decision to connect the lineage of Dbus and Gtsang to the *Nyang lugs* was partly

⁸³⁹ For example, *Bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa Kah thog*, vol. 30, 395:1 "Becoming one with the [mental] abiding is called unification of *samatha* and *vipāśyanā* [in Rdzogs chen]. The Dwags pa Bka' brgyud call [this state] 'the dropping of the separator between abiding and movement'; and again 395:2 "Since in this [meditation one] needs not to part with the mindfulness of recognition the Bka' brgyud pas call [this] 'mindfulness [of the] recognition of emptiness'; and again 395:5-6 "the self-identification of that *samādhi* of the earlier *samatha* is called unification of *samatha* and *vipāśyana* or Great Seal of Great Perfection"; and yet again 398:6 "[...] This is that first experience which [for the Sems sde] is like the water [falling down] a mountain steep. Bka' brgyud pas call this 'the single-pointedness distracted by the waves of conceptual thought'; and again, 408:5: "The so-called 'Excellent Yoga', is that which the Great Perfection calls "the time in which [one] is free from effort" and the *Mahāmudrā* calls 'non meditation'; and so on and so forth.

⁸⁴⁰ *Dam pa'i chos kyi gsan yig ganga'i chu rgyun las glegs bam bzhi pa*, vol. 4, 352:7-10.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibidem*, 309:14-16; for a translation see Ehrhard, 2012:88-89; see also Gentry, 2012:482.

⁸⁴² *Ibidem*, 310:1, Ehrhard, 2012:89.

justified. Still, we do not know who added the title *Nyang lugs* to the *Khrid yig*. An examination of the quotations inside the *Khrid yig* immediately shows that there is no link between the people and texts quoted in the *Khrid yig* and the lineage of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*. This is odd, since one would expect that at least some of the masters of the lineage would inform the text itself. Thus, the only points of contact between the Gtsang/Dbus lineage, the method of Nyang and the *Khrid yig* are: a) Sog bzlog pa's statement that Zhig po bdud rtsi produced the method, b) Sog bzlog pa's affirmation, in the colophon of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*, that this is the Sems sde transmission he received. The gap between the lineage and the quotations reflects the gulf between the text and its method of meditation (*Nyang lugs*). It is still possible however to explain the discrepancies between lineage and quotations by taking into account the message of the *Khrid yig*. Sog bzlog pa, in his text, aims at something more than simply reporting Zhig po bdud rtsi's meditation method. He sets out to merge *Mahāyoga* and Rdzogs chen for his own political reasons. The method is of secondary importance. In the colophon of the *Sems sde brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs kyi dga' ston*, Sog bzlog pa discloses the place-names of the lineages of the Mind Series in circulation. His transmission however, follows the well-attested Zur lineage. In the colophon of his lineage prayer he adds another possible transmission of Dbus and Gtsang. Yet, the first section of the lineage of the addendum is again the Zur transmission. This suggests that in the 16th century the Zur lineage was the only (or one of the very few) extant early transmissions. Sog bzlog pa's transmission of the lineage prayer agrees with the Nyang method because the Zur transmission is also known as *Nyang lugs*. On the other hand, neither of them seems to refer specifically to the Mind Series. They rather represent the entirety of the Zur's oral Rnying ma teachings. The first section of Sog bzlog pa's lineage could therefore be applied to the *Khrid yig* as to many other Rnying ma texts. It is generally known that the treasure tradition soon achieved prominence over the teachings of the oral transmissions. The *gter ma* tradition, in fact, contributed to the increase and renewal of the teachings. As Hirshberg demonstrated, *gter mas* were, from their inception, mostly written down.⁸⁴³ They were written in the

⁸⁴³ Hirshberg 2012: 170-172. In his opinion however, material *gter mas* were the first to emerge.

dākinī language and needed translation in order to be used. Even *dgong gters* were usually transcribed by the treasure-revealers or their disciples. From the outset, *gter mas* were thus associated with textual production. The *bka' ma* tradition remained undocumented for several centuries. This meant that many of its transmissions were forgotten and subsequently lost. It is significant that the lineage that Sog bzlog pa copied (the Zur/Nyang lineage) is a transmission that had been recorded in writing. As it happens, we also possess an early version of this lineage, the *NyNy*. The Zur transmission may have retained its popularity throughout the centuries because it was written down and hence available. This, in turn, suggests that the people involved in the Sems sde practices were more than those we know. What little information we possess on the Mind Series, reached us through the effort of a few scholars who took the trouble to record its teachings.⁸⁴⁴ Yet, its instructions continued to be used and transmitted, albeit within smaller groups of practitioners. The *Khrid yig* is an example how the *bka' ma* Sems sde teachings were re-modelled to suit the time and needs of its author.

On this point see Chapter 1

⁸⁴⁴ An example is the listing of redactors of the Rnying ma *bka' ma* we saw at the beginning of Chapter One, *Two Methods of Transmission*.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I set out to trace the origin of three texts – the *Pra khrid*, *Bde khrid* and the *Khrid yig*. I further sought to track down the methods of meditation they are said to expound: the *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs*.

Later redactors attached the labels *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs* retrospectively to the *Pra khrid*, *Bde khrid* and *Khrid yig*. In this way, they identified three of the main Rdzogs chen Sems sde traditions with these three texts.

The origins of the names of the *lugs* vary: some are named after their creator, such as the A ro tradition; others come from a clan name, such as the Zur tradition; and still others derive from the name of the place where they originated, such as the Khams tradition. Over time, new traditions emerged, but the names of these *lugs* remained largely the same. Thus, *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs* are not univocal titles. Different sources give different accounts for these traditions. Thus, it is hard to ascertain whether they speak of the same *lugs* or whether the names they refer to are at all connected. The same titles could indicate either a completely different tradition or the evolution of the same tradition. This thesis examined the different reports. I shall now compare them in a more systematic fashion:

Khams lugs:

1. The *MNy* presents the *Khams lugs* as the transmission of the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po* that spread in Khams through the agency of Śākya seng ge and Dam pa Śākya rgyal.⁸⁴⁵ Another two *lugs* originated from the transmission of the same teaching: the *Skor lugs* and the *Rong lugs*.⁸⁴⁶

⁸⁴⁵ *MNy*, 491:15-492:1.

⁸⁴⁶ I shall here focus only on the three *lugs* that are the subject of my thesis. A fourth *lugs*, the *Rong lugs*, has here been added because it has been identified with the *Nyang lugs*. The *skor lugs* is beyond the scope of our investigation so I shall not include it in this list.

2. According to the *ChR* the *Khams lugs* is a general name that gathers together all the teachings of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas.⁸⁴⁷
3. The *DNg* states that the *Khams lugs* represents the core of the teachings of A ro.⁸⁴⁸ (This source contains several other *Khams lugs* which are not connected to the Mind Series teachings).
4. The *Gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama lists two lineages of A ro's *Khams lugs*: one follows the *ChR*,⁸⁴⁹ the other is the mixed lineage we analysed in Chapter Three.⁸⁵⁰
5. Kong sprul considers the *Khams lugs* to be a synonym of *A ro lugs*.⁸⁵¹
6. Bdud 'joms rin po che regards the *Khams lugs* as the tradition of Kah thog monastery.⁸⁵²
7. Kun bzang rab grol uses the term *Khams lugs* to refer to the teachings of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas.⁸⁵³

A ro lugs:

1. The *KKTshGy* refers to an *A ro lugs* that is connected with the teachings of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. This, however, does not encompass the entirety of A ro's teachings but only the Eighteen Scriptures of the Mind Series.⁸⁵⁴
2. According to Kong sprul the *A ro lugs* corresponds to the *Khams lugs*.⁸⁵⁵

Nyang lugs:

1. The *ChR* considers the *Myang/Nyang lugs* to derive from the teachings that Gnyags Jñānakumāra bestowed on Myang Mchog rab gzhon nu.⁸⁵⁶

⁸⁴⁷ *ChR*, 394:2-11.

⁸⁴⁸ *DNg*, 114:7-115:1; Roerich, 1979:128.

⁸⁴⁹ *Dam pa'i chos kyi gsan yig ganga'i chu rgyun las glegs bam bzhi pa*, 308:5-7. There are several other references to the A ro transmission in this work. One we saw above in Chapter Three.

⁸⁵⁰ *Ibidem*, 352:7-10.

⁸⁵¹ Smin grol rgyab brten dang bcas pa'i brgyud yig dngos grub sgo brgya 'byed. In *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*.1976-1980. Paro: Ngodrub and Sherab Drimay vol.2; 49-616.

⁸⁵² Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:687-702.

⁸⁵³ *Rgyal bstan grub mtha' ris med kyi chos 'byung mdor bsdus*. 1986-7. Khreng tu'u: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang. 80:15-17.

⁸⁵⁴ See Table 5 in Chapter Three for reference.

⁸⁵⁵ Smin grol rgyab brten dang bcas pa'i brgyud yig dngos grub sgo brgya 'byed. In *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*.1976-1980. Paro: Ngodrub and Sherab Drimay vol.2; 568:3.

⁸⁵⁶ *ChR*, 394:11-12.

2. According to Gzhon nu dpal, the *Myang lugs* refers to the transmission of several other Rnying ma teachings. This passed from Vimalamitra to Gnyags Jñānakumāra, to Sog po Dpal gyi ye shes and through a series of other masters to Myang shes rab mchog who bestowed it onto Myang Ye shes 'byung gnas. The latter transmitted it to his students, which included the members of the Zur clan.⁸⁵⁷ This is called the *Rong lugs* or *Myang lugs* from the clan name of the teacher.
3. The *gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama repeats verbatim the account of the *ChR*.⁸⁵⁸
4. Kong sprul considered the *Nyang lugs* to be one of the two surviving *lugs* of the Mind Series. He states that this tradition of Nyang was also called “Tradition of the Zur clan”.⁸⁵⁹
5. Bdud 'joms rin po che seems to follow the lead of the *DNg*. He associates the *Rong lugs* with the “*Nyang lugs*”, albeit indirectly.⁸⁶⁰
6. Kun bzang rang grol recognises the Nyang tradition as deriving from the Sog, the Gnubs and the Zur transmissions.⁸⁶¹

Rong lugs:

1. The *MNy* asserts that this *lugs* is one of the three traditions derived from the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po*.⁸⁶² The tradition takes its name from Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po (1042-1136).
2. According to the *ChR* the *Rong lugs* derives from Bsnubs (Gnubs) chen Sangs rgyas ye shes. Gnubs chen received this tradition through Sog po Dpal gyi ye shes, who in turn had received it from Gnyags Jñānakumāra.⁸⁶³
3. Gzhon nu dpal refers to two *Rong lugs*. One is the same as the Nyang tradition as we saw above.⁸⁶⁴ The other is the Rdzogs chen oral

⁸⁵⁷ *DNg*, 98:2-3; Roerich, 1997:109.

⁸⁵⁸ *Dam pa'i chos kyi gsan yig ganga'i chu rgyun las glegs bam bzhi pa*, 308:7.

⁸⁵⁹ *Rin chen gter gyi mdzod chen por ji ltar bzhugs pa'i dkar chag dang Smin grol rgyab brten dang bcas pa'i brgyud yig dngos grub sgo brgya 'byed*, vol.2; 568:1-3.

⁸⁶⁰ See the names of the masters in the section dedicated to the Rong lineage. Dudjom Rinpoche, 1991:650-6.

⁸⁶¹ *Rgyal bstan grub mtha' ris med kyi chos 'byung mdor bsodus*, 80:11-12.

⁸⁶² *MNy*, 492:2-3.

⁸⁶³ *ChR*, 394:13-15

⁸⁶⁴ See fn. 857.

transmission that originated together with the *Skor* and the *Khams lugs*.⁸⁶⁵

This latter *lugs* is clearly the same that we find in the *MNy*.

4. The Fifth Dalai Lama again quotes the words of the *ChR*.⁸⁶⁶
5. Bdud 'joms identifies this *lugs* with the Nyang tradition.⁸⁶⁷
6. Kun bzang rang grol identifies the *Rong lugs* with the tradition of Rong zom. However, the instructions reach Rong zom through two of A ro's disciples (Ya zi bon ston and Gu klog 'byung). This account diverges from the *MNy*, which reports that he received it from the long transmission of the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po*.⁸⁶⁸

This summary reveals at least three scenarios: a) sources that report completely different accounts, b) sources that report exactly the same accounts and c) sources that mix an earlier account with some new information or mix the different accounts of two earlier sources.

At least three different *Khams lugs* emerge: (i) a *Khams lugs* of the *Kun byed rgyal po*; (ii) a *Khams lugs* of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas; (iii) a *Khams lugs* of Kah thog monastery.⁸⁶⁹ There would be a fourth *Khams lugs* if we viewed the Fifth Dalai Lama's second account not as a variant of the first but as a brand new *Khams lugs*. Still, since both are A ro's traditions I count them as one.

The *A ro lugs* appears in only one source that predates the redaction of the *Rnying ma bka' ma*. This is the *KKTshC*. Here the *A ro lugs* is directly connected with the Eighteen Scriptures of the Mind Series. Kong sprul knows the redacted version. It is thus conceivable that the title of *A ro lugs* was invented at the time of its redaction. The redactors may have sought to change the name of A ro's teachings in order to distinguish them from the new *Khams lugs*.

⁸⁶⁵ *DNg*, 123:4 & 123:6; Roerich, 1979:137-8.

⁸⁶⁶ *Dam pa'i chos kyi gsan yig ganga'i chu rgyun las glegs bam bzhi pa*, 308:8-9.

⁸⁶⁷ See fn. 860 for reference.

⁸⁶⁸ *Rgyal bstan grub mtha' ris med kyi chos 'byung mdor bsdus*, 80:17-8.

⁸⁶⁹ Although I counted the *Bdud 'joms chos 'byung* as another source that reports A ro's *Khams lugs*, in reality Bdud 'joms refers to the method of Khams mainly as the tradition stemming from the Kah thog monastery. He in fact analyses the whole lineage from Dam pa bde gshegs onwards. The *Khams lugs* of A ro is only found *en passant* in the biographies of other teachers.

The different accounts of the *Nyang lugs* are more highly connected with each other. For example, the *ChR* reports that the *M/Nyang lugs* takes its title from the master of this tradition, Myang Mchog rab gzhon nu. The *DNg* reports that this same master belonged to a tradition called either *Nyang lugs* or *Rong lugs*. They agree that one of the founders of this tradition was Gnyags Jñānakumāra. Yet, the *ChR* distinguishes between the *Nyang lugs* and *Rong lugs*. They both derive from the teachings of Gnyags Jñānakumāra, but the *Nyang lugs* is connected with Myang Mchog rab gzhon nu, the *Rong lugs* with Dpal gyi Ye shes and Gnubs chen. The *DNg* includes Sog po in his list. So instead of linking Sog po and Nyang Mchog to two separate lineages, they here belong to the same tradition. The *DNg* reports that the transmission eventually passed to the Zur family. Bdud 'joms rin po che holds a similar view: he places the *Rong* and the *Nyang lugs* into one tradition. To him, they both derive from the transmissions of Sog, Gnubs and Zur. Thus, in some measure, his account tallies with that of the *DNg*. Kun bzang rang grol too considers the *Nyang lugs* to be the method which comes from Sog, Gnubs and Zur. The only real difference between Bdud 'jom and Kun bzang is that the latter does not identify the *Nyang lugs* with the *Rong lugs*. Finally, Kong sprul says that the *Nyang lugs* is also known as the Zur tradition. In sum, the *Nyang lugs* reached the Zur clan through several famous teachers of the First Diffusion. The teachings it transmitted, however, do not exclusively contain Sems sde or even more general Rdzogs chen teachings. The *DNg* includes tantras within this lineage, Bdud 'jom rin po che all the Rnying ma *bka' ma* teachings. It is clear that from the time the transmission reached the Zurs in the 11th century, the *Nyang/Rong* lineage came to represent the oral Rnying ma transmission of the Zur's teachings. For this reason, this lineage is sometimes also called the "Zur lineage".

The various accounts of the *Rong lugs*, on the other hand, refer to three different *lugs*. (i) The *lugs* of the *Kun byed rgyal po* that reached Rong zom,⁸⁷⁰ (ii) the *Rong lugs* derived from the teachings Gnubs chen Sangs rgyas received; and (iii)

⁸⁷⁰ One should note however that Kun bzang seems to confuse the account of Rong zom and the Nine Mothers and Sons of the *Kun byed rgyal po* with another account, found in the *DNg*, that says that the teachings of A ro (i.e. the *Khams lugs*) reached Rong zom through two of his disciples, Ya zi bon ston and Gru klong 'byung.

the tradition of Nyang. As said, the second point seems to be a variation to the third. The *ChR* does not spell out which teachings were involved in this transmission. It only says that they passed from Gnyags to Sog po and Gnubs chen. Only the first version – contained in the *MNy* and *DNg* – connects the *Rong lugs* exclusively with Rdzogs chen Sems sde teachings. Here, however, the *Rong lugs* is not called *Nyang lugs*.

While the traditions changed or evolved over the centuries, the titles that defined them often remained the same. This was possible because many of them were sufficiently generic to undergo a re-signification. For example, any tradition that stems from Khams may be called “*Khams lugs*”. Thus, the Sems sde tradition of Khams refers to the tradition of the *Kun byed rgyal po* as was transmitted in Khams, to A ro Ye shes ’byung gnas’ teachings and instructions, and to the tradition of Kaḥ thog monastery. Similarly, the term *Rong lugs* was first used to designate the tradition of the *Kun byed rgyal po* which Rong zom pa diffused. Then, the name of *Rong lugs* came to be identified with the *Nyang lugs* and the teachings of the Sog, Gnubs and Zur clans. Although these *lugs* share the same name they do not refer to the same tradition. The *Rong lugs* of Rong zom only consists of the transmission of the *Kun byed rgyal po*. The *Rong lugs* of Bdud ’joms rin po che includes the whole Rdzogs chen oral tradition as well as the *Mahāyoga* and *Anuyoga*. Equally, A ro’s *Khams lugs* is not the *Khams lugs* of the Kaḥ thog monastery.

We face these problems since Tibetan historians were not prepared to introduce new *lugs* of the Mind Series into their works.⁸⁷¹ The strength of the Mind Series tradition in fact rests in its oral transmission and the legitimization that this transmission grants. A new *lugs* carries less authority than those attested in the early period. Accordingly, the titles of these *lugs* were recycled over time. In point of fact, a new *lugs* should not have generated uneasiness. They were already the Tibetan re-elaborations of the main Sems sde texts. Their authors simply needed to establish that they had received the unbroken transmission of

⁸⁷¹ It is true that sometimes they added more specific names to the generic one of the *lugs*. This however, happened when there was the risk of confusing one *lugs* for another completely different. For example, Kong sprul in his Catalogue, talks of the *A ro’i Khams lugs* because he had to distinguish it from a number of other *Khams lugs*.

the Sems sde ‘classics’. Nam mkha’ rdo rje understood this: he composed a new *lugs* and did not try to hide his share in its production. At the same time his *Khams lugs* embraces the standards of a good Mind Series *lugs*; it only draws on well-established and authoritative texts of the Sems sde.

Even before the fourteenth century, authors started to favour stock lineages over specific transmission of a teaching. It is conceivable that many oral transmissions were not written and thus were gradually lost. The most famous example of this is the *Nyang/Rong* lineage. This transmission did not only contain Rdzogs chen but included all the oral traditions that were studied in the Zur clan. It follows that this lineage could be applied to any teaching this clan transmitted. This might have caused future generations to use the few documented lineages to provide the missing links for the teachings they received. In this way, the transmissions of the *NyNy* (or that of the *MNy* in the case of the *A ro lugs*) became stock catalogues of important teachers. Masters of the Rnying ma tradition repeated them over and over again with very few emendations. In fact, the transmission of the *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag* is nearly identical with the integrated lineage of Dbus and Gtsang, since both derive from the *NyNy*.

Few other Sems sde instructions have reached us besides these three *lugs*. On what basis were these three singled out to represent the *lugs* of the Mind Series? I shall suggest various possible answers.

The *Pra khrid* may have been chosen because it represented the oral tradition of Kaḥ thog, the most prestigious Rnying ma monastery of Khams. Kaḥ thog was also well known for its early preservation of *bka’ ma* teachings. Dam pa bde gshegs was heir to the Zur tradition. However, a lineage starting with the Zur members would have been a combined transmission of Central and Eastern Tibet. Moreover, it would have repeated, at least in its first section, the *Nyang lugs’* lineage. As each *lugs* should represent a specific tradition, each should have its own specific transmission. It would not be appropriate to have two similar lineages for the *Khams* and *Nyang lugs*. Nam mkha’ rdo rje’s transmission evidently belongs to Kaḥ thog. At the same time, it avoids the Zurs and introduces a distinct line of transmission.

Editors might have chosen the *Bde khrid* because it was connected with the tradition of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. A ro's teachings were famous within the Rdzogs chen school and beyond, among the teachers of the new schools. It would have been natural to include them among the key traditions of the Mind Series. Two texts report A ro's tradition of meditation: Nam mkha' rdo rje's *A ro snyan brgyud kyi man ngag nyams su blangs pa'i rim pa* and Mkha' spyod pa's *Bde khrid*. Why did the editors of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* (and *Gdams ngag mdzod*) prefer the Bka' brgyud version to the Rnying ma version? I think of three reasons: first, a text written by the second Zhwa dmar pa would enhance the reputation of the Sems sde teachings. It demonstrates that even the celebrated masters of other schools valued them. Second, the inclusion of two texts of Nam mkha' rdo rje would have given the impression that the Sems sde's diffusion was limited. Third, the lineage that Nam mkha' rdo rje proposed for the teachings of the A ro tradition did not look genuine: it contained none of the associates of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas. Moreover, it would have been too similar to the *Nyang lugs'* lineage.

I can give two reasons for the inclusion of Sog bzlog pa's *Khrid yig* among the representative of the Mind Series manuals of instructions. One is that editors could also add a Sems sde tradition of meditation specific to Central Tibet. Kong sprul himself made use of this opportunity to introduce the famous and best-preserved lineage of the Zurs. Sog bzlog pa was from Central Tibet and wrote lineages that included Zur members. His lineage and method could thus more easily be reconnected to the tradition of this clan. Second, the first redactor of the *Rnying ma bka' ma*, Gter bdag gling pa and his brother, were connected to the Snang-Sog-Gong tradition through their father. Consequently, editors thought it proper to include Sog bzlog pa's text in the list.

Studies on the Mind Series have focussed on its major works. They mainly explore the origins of the early texts, such as the *Kun byed rgyal po* and the Eighteen Major Scriptures. Although fundamental, these studies tended to restrict the Mind Series tradition to those scriptures. This created a narrow and static picture of the Mind Series. The tradition itself sought to depict an unimpeachable,

unbroken transmission of well-established teachings. It did not want to dwell on the vicissitudes and adaptations that the Sems sde underwent over time. Thus, it is easy to forget that the Mind Series was a dynamic tradition. A tradition that brought together masters from different schools; that was subject to change and re-interpretation, and that it sometimes generated new texts. The *Khams lugs* proved to be a method of meditation datable to the 14th century. Its author, Nam mkha' rdo rje was a Kaḥ thog monk who set out to create a specific transmission that would reflect a Kaḥ thog thought free from Zur influence. The method of A ro reached most schools of Tibetan Buddhism. This demonstrates that, despite frequent quarrels among the schools, they enjoyed close links. Such connection was particularly strong between the Rnying ma and the Bka' brgyud schools: the lineage of the *A ro lugs* aimed to fuse the two into a single transmission. This same attempt is visible in Sog bzlog pa's 16th/17th century *Khrid yig*. He drew on an old method to create a text that would serve his own purpose.

The *gter ma* tradition undeniably pushed the Sems sde and the Klong sde into second place. Its ability to adapt to new situations and to bring forth new teachings made it more appealing than the oral instructions. Still, it would be a mistake to view the Mind Series merely as a reminder of the past, texts composed simply to keep alive a dying tradition. The titles *Khams lugs*, *A ro lugs* and *Nyang lugs*, associated with the three texts found in the *Gdams ngag mdzod* and *Rnying ma bka' ma* collections, indicate that the Mind Series enjoyed several revivals since its inception.

My analysis of the lineages, quotations and colophons of the three main *lugs* of the Mind Series revealed a network of relationships between masters belonging to almost every Tibetan Buddhist school. It also shed light on the history of three Rdzogs chen manuals of instructions and their Sems sde texts from their composition to their redaction. But, much work remains to be done on the history of the oral collection of the Rnying ma school to place these works into a wider context. This would help us ascertain who attached the labels *Khams*, *A ro* and *Nyang lugs* to the three texts as we have them now. The three appear in all extant

versions of the *Rnying ma bka' ma*. But were they already included in Gter bdag gling pa's first redaction? If they were, we could trace the recent history of these works, as a group, by following the steps of the *Rnying ma bka' ma* collection.

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