

The Twenty-five Great Sites of Khams:
Religious Geography, Revelation, and Nonsectarianism in Nineteenth-Century Eastern Tibet

by

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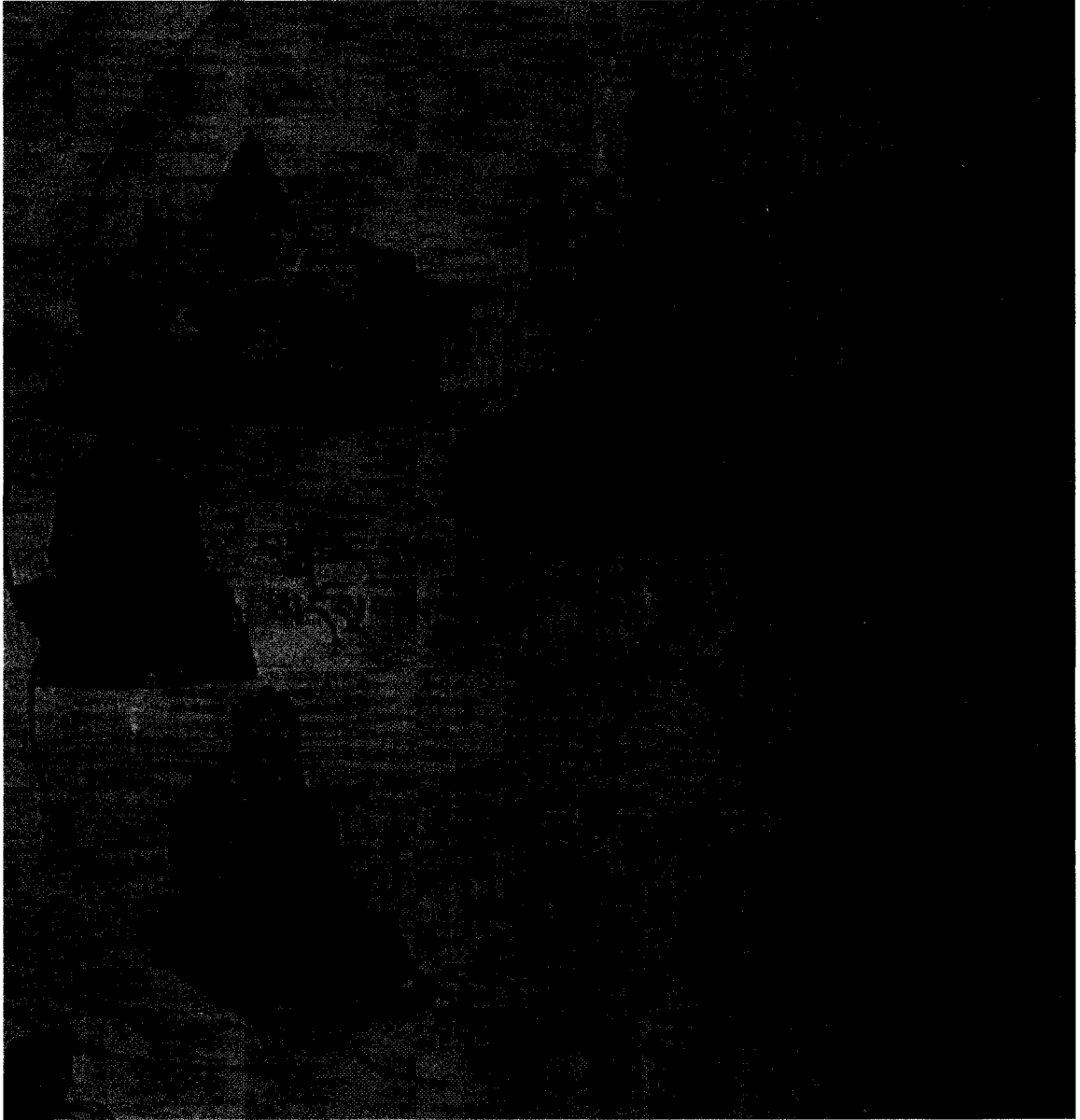
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For my mother, and mothers everywhere

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Preface

On the southeastern corner of the Tibetan Plateau is a region known as Khams, a place where four great rivers carve deeply forested valleys among six mountain ridges. Since the mid-nineteenth century the geographical center and edges of Khams have been identified according to a network of religious sites known as “the twenty-five great sites of Khams” (*Mdo khams gnas chen nyer lnga*). This dissertation sets out to make sense of the narrative map that drew together both renowned sites of religious importance and newly-established sites, and gave geographic coherence to an otherwise unarticulated territory. Two versions of this narrative map were set forth by two men in a space of ten years. Although the authors worked closely in concert, their two versions express the different agendas they pursued, and the different cultural and political contexts in which they worked. The various chapters of this dissertation use the map as a guide to explore not only the history and the cultural and geographic representation of Khams in the nineteenth century, but also important issues in Tibetan and Buddhist Studies such as the issue of “sacred geography”; revelation, rituals of site-consecration and their narratives; and the question of whether events in nineteenth-century Khams warrant the label “nonsectarian movement.”

The discipline of Tibetan Studies has yet to fully come to terms with the fact that politically and culturally the word “Tibet” refers to many different things. The political entity based in Lhasa and known as Tibet has, since the sixth century, grown and shrunk over time. For much of the last millennium, the majority of the territory has been subsumed to varying degrees within the Chinese imperial domain, save for a few brief decades at the start of the last

century. Nevertheless, the term “Tibet” continues to conjure images of the Potala Palace and the vast realm over which its occupant ruled. Yet, over the last fifteen hundred years a great diversity of peoples from Ladakh to Sichuan, and from the marches of Lake Kokonor to the jungles of Yunnan and Aruchanal Pradesh, may have used the term “Tibetan” (*Bod pa*) to refer to themselves; doing so certainly did not make them subjects of Lhasa. A lack of recognition to this fact is a result – if not a cause – of scholarly inattention to the issue of how groups within the vast Tibetan cultural domain have defined themselves in relation to other members and to the Tibetans of Lhasa. Because this dissertation does not adopt the assumption that all Tibetans are of the same land, the word “Tibetan” will be used to refer only to the people of and around Lhasa.

This dissertation is geographically focused on Khams, which for many centuries enjoyed a de facto political independence from both Tibet and China, the fruit of its two powerful neighbors being unable to satisfactorily agree upon and establish control over their border. The situation changed at the end of the nineteenth century. This was a time when the Qing Empire, then losing its coastal regions to Western imperialism, was desperate to hold onto its western territories, and it was also a period in which a nascent Tibetan state began to contemplate independence from China. An autonomous and ill-defined border region was no longer in either power’s interests, and thus the matter of Khams’ place on the map came to the fore. This dissertation offers the narrative map as the Khams pa people’s own solution to their impending cartographic erasure. Facing further divisions and annexation, the map ensured that a cultural entity known as “Khams” would continue to exist regardless of what political solutions were imposed on it when the struggle between China and Tibet ended. The success of the map is evident by the fact that despite the contemporary division of Khams between four separate Chinese provinces (Sichuan, Qinghai, Yunnan and the Tibetan Autonomous Region),

Khams is still a place, and the “twenty-five great sites of Khams” remains a primary means of its geographic identity.

The chief architects of the narrative map and its successful adoption in Khams were three religious leaders who worked so closely in concert that they are still known by a single epithet: *Mkhyen Kong Mchog sde gsum*: the triumvirate of 'Jam dbyang Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892), 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Yon tan rgya mtsho (1813-1899), and O rgyan Mchog gyur bde chen zhig po gling pa (1829-1870). Although much has been written about each of these three lamas, their collaboration and the degree to which each relied on the others for his success, has not yet been adequately addressed. This dissertation explores their relationship as it related to the authentication and dissemination of their literary creations and the geographic representation of Khams, and contributes to the understanding of their collaboration by presenting a piece of biographical narrative in which all three worked together to create the authority by which Khams was first mapped.

Chapter One, “A Treasure Revealer Maps His Authority,” reads the narrative map as the culmination of the charismatic mystic Mchog gyur gling pa's extended quest for legitimation. Mchog gyur gling pa was one of the most prolific revealers of “earth treasure” (*sa gter*), scriptures or objects said to have been concealed in the soil or rocks of Tibet in the eighth century for later extraction when the time was right. His version of the narrative map, the first, was one such text. Mchog gyur gling pa is widely revered today for having made available numerous sets of ritual practices that still form the core of a sizable religious community both in Tibet and in exile, and numerous hagiographies are available that celebrate his achievements. Yet he spent his youth in obscurity and rejection, only attaining renown in his mid and late twenties, with the aid of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul. It is therefore no surprise that the narratives of his life conceal as much as they reveal about his rise to fame. This includes the circumstances of his revelations.

Revealers of treasure were often forced by an understandably skeptical populace to rely on ingenious strategies to legitimate themselves and their revelations. Perhaps more than any other treasure revealer, Mchog gyur gling pa relied on the potency of Tibetan geography to earn his name. Making use of received Tibetan religious templates, he mapped out the sites of his revelations and located the source of their legitimacy – and his own – in the very landscape of Khams. Chapter One will trace the extent of Mchog gyur gling pa’s genius – and that of his colleagues – in establishing the authority he required to lay claim to that treasure.

Biographical narratives of pre-modern Tibetan lamas in English have rarely moved away from the hagiographical materials on which they are based, and as a result the portraits drawn tend to retain a faint glow of the nimbus surrounding their subjects’ heads. Relying on a wealth of sources for the life and activities of Mchog gyur gling pa, the chapter offers a narrative, not of a saint, but of a charismatic man who produced a remarkable solution to the challenge of establishing his legitimacy.

Chapter Two, “Narrative Treasures and Ritual Openings,” will explore the narratives of treasure revelation, paying close attention to the commonly overlooked spatial and ritual aspects of the treasure phenomenon. Scholars have uniformly approached treasure revelation from the perspective of the treasure object, either dismissing the act of revelation as charlatantry or carefully avoiding it out of excessive deference to their Tibetan associates. The starting point of the scholarship has always been the treasure, working from the already-existing object to discover the “logic of its legitimation.” By the era in which the accounts of Mchog gyur gling pa’s treasure were composed, a treasure tradition ever vigilant to defend itself against accusations of inauthenticity had developed standard tropes with which to organize the events. These include many of the supernatural aspects of the tradition – the physical removal of objects from the earth or rock, the notion that a revelation occurred in one moment rather than unfolding over time and space; the so-called “yellow scrolls.” These are all

standard tropes of the treasure tradition, not unlike in Tibetan hagiography, the rainbows that appear in the sky and the flowers that fall like rain at the birth of a particular saint. These elements are neither true nor false; they function to substantiate the claims of the account.

Historical narratives, be they Tibetan or otherwise, tell stories intended for multiple purposes, and not simply to relay facts in a way that might be universally accepted. Accounts of revelation, I argue, can be read as historical reports, but only if we adopt a nuanced understanding of history. Contrary to their apologists, Tibetans, at least in the nineteenth century, did not simplistically embrace a single narrative of revelation, but instead wove together multiple accounts of ritual performance and scriptural production. These accounts of treasure revelation do not make a distinction between empirical fact and what we might understand as myth or legend. As is the case with much of Tibetan historical literature, a single narrative can seamlessly weave together supernatural elements with more mundane information, much to the consternation of many nineteenth and early-twentieth century Western scholars who sought to write Western scientific histories of Tibet. To read revelation accounts literally, either out of naïve piety or careless scientific research is to lose as much as if one were to dismiss the accounts altogether as fantastical nonsense.

Chapter Two presents such a nuanced reading of Mchog gyur gling pa's revelations and, in addition to locating certain standardized motifs in accounts of his treasure revelation, finds that such tropes (the legitimating aspect of those accounts) obscure an important aspect of the phenomenon that has been routinely overlooked by scholars. Namely: treasure revelation was a ritual act, and not all performances of that ritual were intended to produce treasure – other goals, chief among them the consecration of space, were pursued as well. Drawing from the hagiographic, historical and colophon materials, this dissertation, unlike previous studies of treasure, will begin not with the treasure but with its revelation, and trace the development of narratives that increasingly obscured the ritual component of the event. With the

performance of treasure revelation the ritualist marked the site of the extraction as significant, and it might have been unnecessary for that revelation to actually produce any treasure – the act itself was sufficient. I will argue that this function of treasure revelation does not comfortably integrate into the ever-defensive treasure tradition, and it is therefore obscured in the literature. It is this other aspect of treasure revelation, the consecration of landscapes that has found no place in the tradition or in Western scholarship on the phenomenon.

Where Chapter Two examines the act of treasure revelation as the primary method for consecrating sites on the narrative map, Chapter Three: “A Nonsectarian Ideal and a Sectarian Geography of Khams,” returns to the narrative map itself. Ten years after Mchog gyur gling pa produced the initial version, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul wrote a clarification of the list of great sites in a way that established it as a viable representation of Khams. Mchog gyur gling pa's map intentionally left many spots on the list blank – and so open and available for future identification. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's map closed the list so as to firmly establish the geographic territory of Khams. He did so by filling in the lacunas on Mchog gyur gling pa's map with sites related to most of the religious traditions of Khams, thereby investing them all with a stake in the integrity of the territory.

Yet, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul excluded the Dge lugs sect, dominant in Tibet and well represented in Khams. In this way the map is in direct contradiction to the ideals of the so-called “Rimay movement” that he is credited in the West with having founded. “Rimay” is a term that was adopted in the late 1960s and early 1970s by Western authors to explain the tremendous religious and cultural blossoming that occurred in nineteenth century Khams. The term has been embraced by many who wish to promote the fantasy of Buddhism free of religious institutions, normative doctrines and ritual complexity. And, at the same time, it has been wielded by some who would draw a portrait of Tibet as a place beset by sectarian divisions and strife, to which the eclectic “Rimay” was a glorious solution. It would appear that “Rimay”

was adopted as a solution to problems that were real not in Tibetan history but in the minds of its interpreters. The inappropriateness of the term is suggested by the inability of Western authors to agree on its defining characteristics – not to mention a proper spelling of the name: one can read “Rimay,” “Ri-me,” “Rimed,” “Rimé,” and so on. Chapter Three returns the topic of ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s nonsectarian ideal to its proper place and time, and finds no evidence of a “movement.” While he certainly embraced and promoted an eclectic and nonbiased approach to religious study and practice, his activity and outlook were expressions not of a new way to overcome sectarian division, but of the fact that sectarian divisions in Tibet were not as antagonistic as we might wish to believe.

Nevertheless, ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s version of the narrative map did exploit “sectarianism” of a sort in that it set forth a decidedly partisan version of the nonsectarian ideal, one unique to the Khams pa cultural milieu in which he was immersed. Rnying ma, Sa skya, Bka’ brgyud and Bon were drawn together in a common geography that affirmed a common difference from the Dge lugs dominated Tibetans then attempting to annex the region. ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s version of the list established a popular and long-lasting representation of the Khams territory that made a clear distinction of what was and was not Khams, doing so without asserting either a nationalist project or drawing territorial borders. Khams was filled in from the center, an obvious method of territorial representation in a society without the recourse to longitudes and latitudes. In a world where Western cartographical science was fast becoming the norm it was a decidedly local map. The narrative map of Khams is an example of a different sort of mapmaking, a native project that made use of indigenous means – conceptions of religious geographical networks, inter-sectarian alliances, and rituals of spatial representation – to establish its territorial identity. The three chapters of this dissertation, together with appendices of translated texts, draw together this complex history, to offer a detailed key to that remarkable map.

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Chapter One

A Treasure Revealer Maps His Authority

“Our Prophet. His desire made prayer, his prayer made an angel. The angel was real.”
Mother Pitt to Prior Walter, in *Angels in America* by Tony Kushner.

Above the Karma bka' brgyud monastery Dpal spungs, to the southwest of the Sde dge capital¹ in the heart of Khams is a rocky outcrop named Tsā 'dra rin chen brag, the Cārita-like Jeweled Cliff. There lies a hermitage named Kun bzang bde chen 'od gsal gling, the Garden of Auspicious Bliss and Clear Light, the seat of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Yon tan rgya mtsho. As part of the months-long process of its “opening,” or consecration, that began in February 1857, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul asked his colleague Mchog gyur gling pa to compose a written description of the important features of the site. But Mchog gyur gling pa demurred, stating that “Because this is one of the twenty-five great sites of Khams, a gazetteer is concealed as treasure; there is no need [for me] to compose one.”²

Having asserted the existence of a list of great sites to which the hermitage belonged, Mchog gyur gling pa was pressed to produce it. Thus he set off for Ja sbra,³ up-valley from Dpal spungs. There, at a place known as Dpa' po phug gi dbang chen brag,⁴ on the first day of the fire

¹ Dpal spungs thub bstan chos 'khor gling, a Karma bka' brgyud monastery, was founded in 1727 by Si tu VIII Chos kyi 'byung gnas (c.1700-1774), whose previous seat had been Karma dgon, in Lha stod, south of Nang chen. For a recent Tibetan historical overview of the monastery see the entry on Dpal spungs in the *Gsal ba'i me long*, vol. one, pp 555-590. On Si tu VIII see Gene Smith's introductory essay to his diaries reprinted in Smith 2001, pp. 87-96.

² *'Di mdo khams gnas chen nyer lnga'i gral zhig red pas gnas yig gter du sbas pa yod 'dug pas rtsom mi dgos gsungs* (Kong sprul A, f. 85b).

³ According to the Tibetan scholar Thub bstan phun tshogs, this place, named after one of the region's leading families of the same name, is in Lower Dpa' (Dpa' smad) just upriver from Dpal spungs monastery (oral communication, April 2006). The 'Ja sbra were important patrons of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul.

⁴ This site, according to Mchog gyur gling pa (B, p. 113) is connected to the main site of buddha attribute (site #19), the mountain Ru dam gangs kyi ra ba above Rdzogs chen monastery in the Yid lung region of

serpent year (February 25, 1857) he revealed as treasure a text entitled “A Brief Inventory of the Great Sites of Tibet Composed by Padmasambhava, the Wise One of Odḍiyāna” (*Bod kyi gnas chen rnams kyi mdo byang dkar chags o rgyan gyi mkhas pa Padma 'byung gnas kyis bkod pa*).⁵

According to this text, the location of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's hermitage is indeed one of the great sites, the “mind-aspect of the Buddha attribute” (see below), to be precise, in a list that, despite its name, counts forty-two major sites, and not in Tibet, but in Khams.

* * *

All space is organized, be it a cityscape, a wilderness, or a site of religious practice. Space, which seems so innocent, neutral, and natural, is in truth an integral part of the society that organizes

Sde dge. It is listed as one of the four intermediate valleys, associated with the deity Hayagrīva. Mchog gyur gling pa made sure to include this site on the narrative map. For a chart of the sites on the narrative map see Table One; for a visual map of the sites see Figure One.

⁵ For an overview of resources on the life of Mchog gyur gling pa see Doctor 2006, Chapter Four. In his fifth chapter Doctor provides an English rendering of the traditional hagiographic narrative. The main sources for the life are hagiographies (*nam thar*): Mchog gling A (his autobiography), Kong sprul B (a short supplication written soon after Mchog gyur gling pa's death); Mkhyyen brtse A (a “question and answer” text according to its title, but basically organized as a hagiography); Mkhyyen brtse B (an outline of Kong sprul B); Padma ye shes (a hagiography that largely recycles Mkhyyen brtse A that was written at the request of the first reincarnation of Mchog gyur gling pa in the Gnabrtan line, Padma 'gyur med theg mchog bstan 'phel, 1873-1927); Dkon mchog 'gyur med (b?-1938?; the lengthiest hagiography written by the first reincarnation of Mchog gyur gling pa in the Ke la line, that repeats all earlier material and adds a great deal of what would appear to be oral accounts), Kong sprul C (the section on Mchog gyur gling pa from Kong sprul's hagiography of the one hundred great treasure revealers in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*); Orgyen Tobgyal (O rgyan stobs rgyal, a contemporary lama who is the son of Padma 'gyur med Theg mchog bstan 'phel, the second incarnation of Mchog gyur gling pa in the Ke la line); and Schmidt 2005 (the autobiographical reminiscences of Sprul sku O rgyan, the grandson of Mchog gyur gling pa's daughter, Dkon mchog dpal sgron). Other English versions of that narrative are found in Dudjom pp. 841-848 and Nyoshul Khenpo pp. 431-435. A number of treasure histories (*gter 'byung*) are also valuable, primarily Anonymous A, an account of Mchog gyur gling pa's eighth revelation, the *Zab pa skor bdun*. In addition I have made use of numerous colophons from the *Mchog gling gter gzar*. Treasure colophons (*gter byang*) often provide details such as the place and date assigned to the revelation of the text, and, less frequently, information regarding the writing of it, including the place, time, and person who wrote it out. On the value of colophons for reconstructing the composition of a text see Cabezón 2001. The events recounted above are described in Mchog gling A, pp. 183-184, Mchog gling B, p. 123; Mkhyyen brtse A, p. 27; Padma ye shes A, p. 106; Dkon mchog 'gyur med, p. 230; 296; Kong sprul A, f. 86a. The narrative map itself is Mchog gling B; see Appendix One for a translation, and the bibliography for the various published versions. According to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Mchog gyur gling pa also received there a prophetic guide to Seng chen gnam brag, where several of his subsequent treasures would be revealed. Mkhyyen brtse'i dbang po, however, makes no mention of this in his hagiography and enumeration of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure caskets, and thus neither do Padma ye shes or Dkon mchog 'gyur med, who generally follow Mkhyyen brtse'i dbang po's enumeration. Seng brag is in 'Jo mda' (C: Jiangda 江达) on the far side of the 'Dza chu (C: Jinsha 金沙, the upper Yangtze) from Sde dge.

and occupies it. Scholars like James Duncan speak of “reading” a landscape to uncover the symbols by which it mimics power, the myths those symbols evoke, the interests of those who assign them, and the ways they are received, accepted, or rejected by the people who live there. Duncan labels landscape a “pervasive and surprisingly disingenuous cultural production” whose social and political importance is routinely overlooked.⁶

This dissertation sets out to read the particular landscape of Khams as it was conceived, in the second half of the nineteenth century, as a network of twenty-five (that is, forty-two) great sites. This first chapter will focus on the initial version of this network. I will argue that Mchog gyur gling pa’s geographic representation of Khams was a means by which he enlisted the regional landscape to testify to his right to reveal treasure. The network of great sites that his treasure set forth functioned to legitimate the treasures he had revealed to date through affirming the authority of the sites from which he received them. Once the sites where he revealed treasure were rendered authentic sites of Padmasambhava’s blessing, the treasures he revealed at those places were themselves authenticated – and, by extension, Mchog gyur gling pa’s own legitimacy as a treasure revealer was affirmed.

Read this way, Mchog gyur gling pa’s narrative map – his enumeration and description of the great sites of Khams – is a guide for following his years-long quest for legitimacy as a treasure revealer. Before undertaking the journey, however, it is necessary to highlight some of the main conceptual signposts we will encounter along the way, namely the Western category of “sacred geography,” the Tibetan term *gnas*, and the concept of a “narrative map.” This chapter aims in part to discuss Tibetan space-oriented religious activities and programs of territorial representation with a more nuanced engagement with the categories of “sacred” and “profane” space than is usually encountered in Tibetan Studies. Tibetans make use of terms that achieve a conceptual division of the lived world somewhat similar to that of sacred/profane, though their words are far from a perfect translation of ours. The Tibetan *chos*

⁶ Duncan 1990, p. 3.

can translate religion, but it also can be used to translate “reality,” “phenomenon,” and the Indic dharma, in all its multiple meanings. The term *srid*, meanwhile, refers to the opposite of *chos*, and can translate “secular” as well as “mundane existence.” The two terms are often contrasted, but although they represent opposing spheres of meaning, these spheres, not unlike our own sacred/profane, overlap significantly. On the level of society, that which concerns the clerics is *chos*, and the domain of the secular is *srid*, but a layperson can easily move between the two worlds. The average Tibetan routinely engages in behavior on either side of the divide, going in a matter of hours from the home to the temple to the schoolhouse. In a society in which religion is so firmly integrated into daily life, many daily activities can be more accurately be described as straddling the line between *chos* and *srid*. This is as true in contemporary Tibet as it was in pre-Communist times. On an ontological level, the truth of existence referred to by the term *chos* is played out in the realm of *srid*, and so here too the divide between them is one of perspective. If *chos* is manifest in *srid*, then how separate can they be said to be?

Tibetan religious geography and the corresponding geographical religious activities presume a world that is everywhere pregnant with raw power. That power is exposed, via rituals of “opening” or “introducing” a place (*gnas sgo 'byed* or *gnas ngo sprod*), and alternately staked down, as a means of controlling it.⁷ Not operating within a strictly dualistic notion of “sacred” and “profane” space, Tibetan places of religious importance are not conceptualized as qualitatively distinct from the space around them. The meaning of a particular site is most frequently derived not through separation from other space, but by belonging to a network of sites that together serve as representations of a territory as a whole, be it a place called “Tibet,” a region such as Khams, or the four doors of a maṇḍala.

⁷ Both these aspects can be present in a single ritual activity. For an example see my article on the *sa chog* (forthcoming), a rite that draws forth a soil deity to take possession of its power by both venerating and staking it down. In the rite the soil deity, lord over the entire region, is summoned to a specific geographical spot. That spot cannot be said to be qualitatively different from the space around it; rather it is the point of communication between human society and the deity that speaks for the whole region.

I. Ideas of “Sacred Space”

It is Mircea Eliade who perhaps is most responsible for the notion of “sacred space” in contemporary scholarship and popular discourse, and despite the careful correctives of Jonathan Z. Smith, the idea of a place on the globe that is special because a divine presence has broken through there into mundane reality remains current. Eliade drew heavily on the work of Durkheim, who envisioned a reality divided into two opposing spheres: the “sacred” and the “profane.” This was a division that for Durkheim was the “distinctive trait of religious thought.”⁸ As explained by Masuzawa, although Durkheim wrote that “Anything can be sacred,” he also posited that the essential definition of the sacred was that it was not the profane, rendering the division between the two absolute. It was the radical heterogeneity of the sacred-profane dyad that led Durkheim to write that “religious and profane life cannot coexist in the same place. If religious life is to develop, a special place must be prepared for it, one from which profane life is excluded.”⁹ As show by Masuzawa, however, Durkheim’s was a rather unstable absolute,¹⁰ one posited through human activity. Eliade took Durkheim’s dyad to an extreme, eliminating any sense of the human involvement in the process, and transforming it into an ontological principle.

Eliade adopted a radical division between sacred and mundane space. He developed a theory of sacred space that is both wholly other from, and yet, paradoxically and by necessity, breaks through into the profane. “For religious man,” Eliade wrote, “space is not homogeneous; he experiences interruptions, breaks in it; some parts of space are qualitatively different from others.”¹¹ These “interruptions” are manifestations of the divine in the world that Eliade termed “hierophanies.” For Eliade:

⁸ Durkheim 1995, p. 52.

⁹ Durkheim 1995, p. 312.

¹⁰ Masuzawa’s discussion of Durkheim playfully exposes the ambiguity in Durkheim’s writing; alongside this absolute heterogeneous definition of the sacred and profane Durkheim also advanced a second theory in which the sacred is a totalizing “collective effervescence,” the very essence of society (pp 35-37).

¹¹ Eliade 1959, p. 20.

Every sacred space implies a hierophany, an irruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different. . . . *Something* that does not belong to this world has manifested itself apodictically and in so doing has indicated an orientation or determined a course of conduct.¹²

According to Eliade, these points of contact between the sacred and profane worlds are knowable to “homo religiosus” by his innate desire to live in the “Center” of the universe, a place pervaded by the sacred. This desire compels humanity to demarcate space in such a way as to provide access to the sacred, largely through ritual behavior that recreates the cosmic creation and repeatedly affirms a given society’s place at its center.

Eliade was as much a theologian as a historian, and his notion of the sacred was ontological, not sociological. That is, for Eliade the sacred was given, and homo religiosus was charged with accepting it. While highlighting the importance of human ritual behavior, Eliade cautioned that:

we must not suppose that human work is in question here, that it is through his own efforts that man can consecrate a space. In reality the ritual by which he constructs a sacred space is efficacious in the measure in which *it reproduces the work of the gods.*¹³

In other words, for Eliade, sacred space is sacred because of divine, not human, activity. It was precisely this theological flavor of Eliade’s work – the sense that the sacred was ontologically given – that many of his critics responded to. Edward Leech, for example accused Eliade of being a mystic inappropriately occupying a scholar’s chair.¹⁴

¹² Eliade 1959, p. 27.

¹³ Ibid, p. 29; emphasis in the original.

¹⁴ Leech 1966. A useful review of geographers who delved into the topic of religion is Park 1994. Erich Isaac, writing in the journal *Landscape* stated that “To broach the theme of holiness or the sanctity of place in geography always verges on the trite or the impertinent. . . To elaborate on the theme of holiness is to intrude on a domain preempted by theology, and few ventures are as dangerous as the transgression of that sacred boundary” (1964, 28). That said, he then announced his position, with, as he puts it, the “platitude,” that the religious experience is an empirical fact, and “such difficulties as exist in its definition are mainly analytical”; sacred space is just plain sacred, and the geographer’s job is simply to classify the different types (ibid). In an earlier essay Isaac set the parameters of the inquiry, and expressed the discipline’s fundamental division of “religious” and non-religious activity: “The geography of religion is the study of the part played by the religious motive in man’s transformation of the landscape. It presumes the existence of a religious impulse in man which leads him to act upon his environment in a manner which responds secondarily, if at all, to any other need” (1960, p. 14). That is to

Few scholars have gone to the trouble of exposing the degree to which Eliade manipulated his material in order to create examples of his archetypes. The notable exception is the work of Jonathan Z. Smith. In his essay “The Wobbling Pivot,” Smith gently queried Eliade’s notions of Center, chaos, and myth, and the dichotomy of “archaic” and “modern,” without, however, explicitly questioning Eliade’s universalistic or ontological claims. This he did in the first chapter of his 1987 book *To Take Place*, where he carefully documented the numerous details Eliade had to alter or overlook in one elucidation of his theory on the Center. And in his essay “Map is not Territory” Smith exposed certain preconceptions in the notion of an ontological division of sacred/profane. He observed that scholars of religion “have not been attendant to the ordinary, recognizable features of religion as negotiation and application but have rather perceived it to be an extraordinary, exotic category of experience which escapes everyday modes of thought.”¹⁵ Bringing religious activity back to Earth, so to speak, allowed him to then examine the spatial character of religious activity.

Smith’s writings on the subject of place, by attending to the role of “negotiation and application,” are a corrective to Eliade’s theology of space. Smith completed his critique of Eliade with a theory of ritual that reversed the order of Eliade’s ontology, largely by shifting the focus from “the sacred” to “place,” and from God to human society. In his article “The Bare Facts of Ritual” Smith labeled sacred space “a place of clarification (focusing lens)” in which all activity is rendered significant. In such a space, that which would otherwise be ordinary “becomes sacred, simply by *being there*.”¹⁶ He began his *To Take Place* with an observation by Lévi-Strauss, taken from his study of the Australian Tjilpa mythology, that an object possesses sacredness by being in place, and that its relocation would remove that quality. Smith accepted

say, religious space and space employed for all other purposes are to be conceived of as being two separate categories.

¹⁵ Smith 1978, p. 308. Or, as Charles Ramble put it, “Many Tibetans do indeed walk around mountains because they want to acquire merit, or achieve prosperity, or cure disease. In most cases, however, when Tibetans walk around mountains it is because the mountains are in the way” (1999, p 4).

¹⁶ Smith 1980, p. 114.

the position with an important addition: the role of the ritualist. According to Smith “it is the ritualist who sets apart a place for the sacred, not, as in Lévi-Strauss, being in place which confers sacrality.”¹⁷ For Smith the issue of sacred space is not ontological, but sociological and anthropological, and it is the ritualist – and by extension, society – that render places sacred. Ritual, he wrote, is “not an expression of or a response to ‘the Sacred’”; instead, “something or someone is made sacred by ritual.”¹⁸

The shift enabled Smith to recover Durkheim’s sense of the constructed nature of the sacred and the profane, returning the focus of the discussion away from a theological treatment of the sacred and back to space and place. With a focus on place and the spatial rituals that render an object or act sacred, Smith enabled a discussion of the *practice* of sacred space. The sacred/profane division might be as old as society, as some have speculated,¹⁹ but Smith reminds us that it is a conceptual technology, not an empirical reality. As Smith stated in both “The Bare Facts of Ritual” and *To Take Place*, “there is nothing that is inherently sacred or profane. These are not substantive categories, but rather situational or relational categories, mobile boundaries which shift according to the map being employed.”²⁰ Sacred space is no longer a point of entry for the sacred to break through to the ordinary world, recognized as such and treated accordingly, but instead a place that is made sacred by being purposefully separated from the ordinary and marked as such through religious ritual.

¹⁷ Smith 1987, p 121, note 2.

¹⁸ Smith 1987, p. 105.

¹⁹ See Jackson and Henrie: “Discrimination of space into sacred and profane is as old as mankind” (1983, p. 94). They recognized that “sacred space does not exist naturally, but is assigned sanctity as man defines, limits and characterizes it through his culture, experience and goals.” Other geographic theorists also sought a way beyond the Eliadan ontological divide by looking to human activity, though with varying degrees of success. The geographical theorist Andrew Merrifield (1993) took his colleagues to task for maintaining a dualistic conception of spatiality, one in which the Cartesian division between the perceived and the perceiver is held as absolute. These included the humanistic geographer Yi-fu Tuan (who wrote with a prolificacy and grandiloquence not unlike Eliade) who, although he relocated meaning to the subjective, merely shifted it from one pole to the other in the same ontological order.

²⁰ Smith 1980, p. 115. The passage is on page 55 in the 1982 reprint. On page 105 of *To Take Place* Smith wrote: “divine and human, sacred and profane, are transitive categories; they serve as maps and labels, not substances; they are distinctions of office, indices of difference.”

In both Eliade's and Smith's theories sacred space derives its meaning through being separated out from ordinary space. Eliade's position renders the separation absolute, while Smith permits an analysis of space that recognizes the fluidity of the categories. A single place, following Smith, can function as both sacred and profane, as such things depend not on an innate characteristic but a situational practice. This will be the starting point of our discussion of Tibetan religious geography. An examination first of two historical examples that will be outlined in brief, and then of the narrative map of Khams as it was created in the mid-nineteenth century by Mchog gyur gling pa will show that religious sites in Tibet are rendered meaningful both by being contrasted to the space around them and simultaneously by participating in networks of geographical representation that communicate the character of the entire landscape. That is, they are both sacred, separated out from the surrounding space, and profane, serving to represent that space.²¹ Eliade's notion of "irruption," of sacred places being sites where the earth is opened to reveal power, can be preserved only if we understand that the power is the basic nature of the manifold expanse of space, not something occurring only in the "sacred" place, existing outside the lived world and breaking through only in specific spots. Smith's inversion of Eliade's theory of ritual, one that holds human beings responsible for the act of constructing the sacred space, similarly needs to be adjusted to account for the fact that the construction project is one that is relevant for an entire territory, not simply a spot of ground marked off by a ritual act.

In his discussion of the ritual construction and maintenance of sacred space Smith does not address the very thing that led Eliade to develop his theological position: the fact that we are socialized to perceive the world as divided into the sacred and the profane. Sacred space might be socially constructed, as Smith so skillfully revealed, but the fact of its construction is

²¹ Brereton makes this point nicely at the beginning of his article on Sacred Space for the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, remarking that in traditional Maori culture, a latrine is both a place where people formally communicate with the spirits of the dead, thus rendering it "sacred," as well as simply being a latrine, the very model of a profane space (Brereton 1987, p 526).

by necessity fully hidden from view, masked as part of the very process that makes it so. We are socialized to perceive the world as objectively real in the way that society has (in fact) created it. The outsider might recognize the social construction of a place's sacrality, but for those who engage with it, its sacrality is an objective fact. The three-fold dialectic that Peter Berger outlined in his book *The Sacred Canopy* helps to understand why this is so. Berger termed the first mode of the dialectic, the collective creation of the structures of society, "externalization." These things – language, values, the division of the world into sacred and profane – are then "objectivated." Through stories, legends, doctrine, and other means of truth-making, the social construction is masked, made to appear as objectively real things in the world. The third step of Berger's dialectic is "internalization": the appropriation of those structures as the structures of thought. Here the structures of reality that were socially constructed and made to seem natural and given are adopted as the very categories by which we perceive reality. The process thereby continues in an unending process of creation and maintenance.²² Sacrality, in short, might be socially constructed, and the sacrality of a given place might have been ritually established and maintained, but this fact is masked by the language that is used to describe it, and by the fact that those for whom it is sacred are socialized to view the world in terms of "sacred" and "profane."

A similar threefold dialectic was theorized by the Marxist geographer Henri Lefebvre. Though not a perfect match, the Lefebvre's and Berger's dialectics can inform each other. Lefebvre's dialectic is composed of physical space, mental space, and social space. The first is the basic material of the world, that which is given. The second is the formal abstractions of space made by society, and the third is the imaginary spatial projects such as utopias and wilderness that are created based on our socialization. Lefebvre's dialectic has the advantage of beginning with the received world rather than the creation of it, as in Berger's "externalization." Berger's formulation gives the impression of a starting point, a first step

²² See Berger 1990, Chapters One and Two.

(though he doubtlessly did not intend this), whereas for Lefebvre there is always something prior. And for Lefebvre, the entire process of the social production of space is one of obscuration and concealment, whereas Berger conceived of this as a discrete moment in the dialectical process. For Lefebvre the very notion of space as existing prior to human society is a tool for the masking of space. “To speak of ‘producing space’ sounds bizarre,” he wrote, “so great is the sway still held by the idea that empty space is prior to whatever ends up filling it.”²³ In the same way that the construction of “the sacred” has been concealed, so too has the organization of space been made to appear natural, neutral.²⁴

Together Berger and Lefebvre remind us that the social construction of sacrality and of space, and the concealment of that construction, are internalized as the structures by which the world is perceived and lived in. The categories that are employed in the ritual construction of the world are the very categories that are used to mask that process, and they are also the structures of thought that enable the process. We now turn to a discussion of the Tibetan terminology of religious space.

Tibetans use the term *gnas* (“place,” “abode,” “to abide,” pronounced “nay”) to refer to places of supernatural activity and religious significance. Mountain *gnas* (*gnas ri*) are understood to be the abode of deities, either fully enlightened beings or worldly protector gods, many of whom are converted local deities.²⁵ In the case of enlightened beings, the *gnas* is

²³ Lefebvre 1991, p. 15.

²⁴ As a Marxist, Lefebvre was interested primarily in the spatial aspect of capital and class, and less with the specific practices – the rituals – by which particular places are constructed. Edward Soja, drawing heavily on Lefebvre’s work, brought his ideas into the more concrete arena of the geographical analysis of contemporary places. In his case study of Los Angeles in his influential *Postmodern Geographies* he articulated the relevance of Lefebvre’s ideas in a way that points to the insights of James Duncan with which I opened this chapter. He wrote, “We must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with politics and ideology” (Soja 1989, p. 6).

²⁵ An example is given by Buffetrille from a pilgrimage guide to the mountain A mnye rma chen in A mdo, which admonishes the pilgrim to realize that “From the outside, these holy places have the look of a heap of dusty earth, but in reality, since their essence is that of the paradises which have issued forth from the spontaneous apparition of Primordial Wisdom, they are not different from the Potala, Ri bo rtse lnga [Wutaishan] and g.Yo lo bkod paradises [of Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Tārā, respectively]” (1997,

claimed to be the actual pure land of a buddha or bodhisattva. More commonly a mountain *gnas* is said to be the abode of a worldly protector deity, though in this case there is often ambiguity as to whether the mountain is, or is merely the residence, of the god.²⁶ Because deities can be said to reside in any location – a cave, a grove of trees, a lake, an oddly-shaped rock, and so forth, the category of *gnas* is by no means limited to locations as grand as mountains. Also in the category of *gnas* are places that were visited by buddhas or saints, and imbued with their blessing (*byin brlabs*).²⁷ By visiting these sites the pilgrim can partake in this blessing, which permeates the objects of the site.²⁸ The common Tibetan terms for pilgrimage, *gnas skor* (“to tour the *gnas*”)²⁹ or *gnas mjal* (“to encounter the *gnas*”) invoke this aspect of the term, an act of gaining access to a vitality not readily available elsewhere. Moreover, a cave site or mountain will often be described as having the ability to multiply exponentially the merit of any religious

p. 93). The identification of mountains with the pure lands of bodhisattvas is well-established in China, where the institution of the “Four Famous Mountains” (四名山) has a long history. On this see especially Lamotte 1960 and Birnbaum 1984.

²⁶ Huber (1999a) and Buffetrille (1996) conceptualize a distinction between *gnas ri* and *yul lha* – between a mountain of widespread importance and a local protector deity. The worldly deity/mountain *Gnas chen thang lha* is an example that belies the separation. On the history of the mountain cult in Tibet see Karmay 1994 and 1996.

²⁷ This term literally translates to “waves of splendor” or “waves of generosity.” Martin glossed the term as “gift-wave”: “It’s actual, or rather it’s philologically correct, and meaning is ‘received by (way of) giving.’ The believer receives a ‘gift’ from the saint (in person or in vision) relic or consecrated article” (1994, p. 274).

²⁸ Key collections on pilgrimage and mountain cults in Tibet are Blondeau and Steinkellner 1996, Blondeau 1998, MacDonald 1997, McKay 1998, and Huber 1999b. According to a Nepali informant of Stan Mumford, objects so imbued with blessing are collected from a *gnas* and brought back to the village to be placed in stūpas and scattered on fields “to delay deterioration, restoring to some extent the qualities of the good age” (Mumford 97). Such objects include stones, soil, grasses, water, and so on – anything removable from a great site can be said to be imbued with its power and brought home to bless one’s house or fields, or as medicine to cure illness and escape saṃsāra. (Huber 1999a, p 15; Buffetrille 1997, p. 79; Ramble 1997, p. 180).

²⁹ My rendering of the term *gnas skor* as “to tour the *gnas*” needs some explanation. The Tibetan verb *skor ba* has many meanings, among them “to move around” and “to circumambulate,” and is related to the Tibetan word for saṃsāra, *khor ba*. Tibetans famously circle religious objects like a stūpa or a mountain *gnas*. But pilgrimage is not the same thing as circumambulation; it involves getting to the place as well as walking around it, and going from one *gnas* to another. If *gnas skor* is rendered “circumambulate the *gnas*” this last important aspect of pilgrimage is lost. *Gnas mjal*, on the other hand, emphasizes the aspect of pilgrimage associated with actually being at the site, and physically taking the blessing.

activity done there, such as the counting of mantra or prostration, particularly at astrologically auspicious times.³⁰

The variety of origins of different *gnas* make a simple English translation difficult. A *gnas* might be so identified due to the presence of a god, or the past activities of a saint, or because a miracle occurred there. Eliade's notion of sacred places being sites where the supernatural breaks through is, ironically, not entirely out of place here. The corrective would be that Tibetans conceive of that power as being latent in all places. The *gnas* would simply where that power was revealed, not one that is ontologically distinct from its surroundings. Equally important is the fact that Tibetans recognize human activity – the deeds of saints – as the originating event behind many of the *gnas*. A *gnas* therefore curiously crosses the conceptual divide between Eliade and Smith, incorporating both divine power and human activity in its sacrality. Nevertheless, tales of divine and saintly activity are both modes of concealment, masking the human behavior that organized the spaces. And whether or not the residue of a saint's presence – the blessing – can be called “supernatural” complicates the

³⁰ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded such a phenomenon, and an invitation from a colleague to take advantage of it, in his autobiography: “This year [the iron hare, c. February 1831 to January 1832] was said to be the *gnas* 'dus of Seng ge gnam rdzong, during which [every virtuous deed] becomes [increased] a hundred thousand times, and Mgon bla gsang sngag said ‘Let's you and I go on pilgrimage.’” 'Di lo seng ge gnam rdzong du *gnas* 'dus yod par grangs pas 'bum 'gyur nad mgon bla gsang sngags nas nged rang gnyis *gnas* bskor 'gro gsungs pa (Kong sprul A, f. 14b). Gazetteers for religious sites routinely include similar claims. An example is the gazetteer for Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's hermitage site, Padma shel phug, a place Mchog gyur gling pa assisted in opening directly before opening 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's hermitage. The gazetteer was written by Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po: “Third, an explanation of the benefits. If one circumambulates Padma shel phug, [keeping it] in the center, one will cleanse karmic impurities. If one performs a *gaṇacakra*, the accomplishment will be assured. If one practices [there] for seven days meditative experience and realization will increase. Whoever reveres and venerates the place will complete the great accumulation of merit and enter the path to the ultimate goal. Those wishing to pacify sickness and negative illnesses should circumambulate this place, and those wishing to extend life and merit should circumambulate this place. Those wishing to increase experience and realization should practice here. A single day's *gaṇacakra* here is better than a year's practice elsewhere. Why is this? Because it is a maṇḍala of all assembled jina and ḍākinī. Know that it is superior to the enjoyment of riches of such-and-such a person or of an entire village. *Gsum pa phan yon bshad pa ni / dbus kyi padma shel phug nyid / bskor na las kyi sgrub pa byang / tshogs 'khor skor na dngos grub 'byung / zhag bdun sgrub na nyams rtogs 'phel / bkur bsti phu dung sus byas / bsod nams tshogs chen rab rdzogs te / mthar thug legs pa'i lam la sbyor / nad gdon zhi 'dod gnas 'di bskor / tshe bsod rgyas 'dod gnas 'di bskor / nyams rtog 'phel 'dod gnas 'di bsgrub / gzhan du lo gcig bsgrub pa bas / gnas 'dir zhag gcig tshogs 'khor 'phags / ci phyir zhe na dpa' bo dang / mkha' 'gro'i tshogs rnams 'dus pa yi / tshogs kyi dkyil 'khor yin pa'i phyir / grong khyer mi gcig 'bod pa bas / grong khyer dngos su phyin nas kyang / long spyod 'gyer na lhag pa'i phyir / de bas don 'di go bar gyis. (Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse A, pp. 369-370).*

classification of the site and what it is that the site provides access to. Because the English term “sacred” continues to imply an access to a supernatural, (regardless of whether or not that supernatural is understood to be a human construct), I leave it untranslated. Where the Tibetan is *gnas chen*, as in the title of the narrative map, I use the phrase “great site.”

The fluidity of the sacred/profane in regards to space is particularly true in regards to particular Tibetan systems of religious geography. Tibetan sites of religious activity are marked off as possessing particular characteristics, but the demarcation is done in a way that causes them to evoke a greater spatial body that includes the surrounding area from which they are differentiated. Indeed, I will argue that the meaning and significance of a *gnas* is derived from its connection to a larger network of sites that together function to represent the entire region. The practice of pilgrimage is indicative of this. In pilgrimage a given destination is understood to be a site of significance by virtue of its connection to other sites. Across Tibet, the time of year when the fields are dormant and the yak herds are close to home is pilgrimage season, a time to tour the *gnas* of the home region. Nor is it uncommon to spend a year or more visiting distant great sites by foot, bus, or stretching forward in prostration.³¹ The route is generally predetermined according to tradition and pilgrimage guidebooks, a genre of literature that does much to popularize the *gnas* with descriptions and stories of its marvels.³² Pilgrimage rituals nicely elicit this seeming paradox of a site being both unique in its surroundings and at the same time functioning to represent its region, for it both marks the destination as a place where certain types of activity are suitable for performance, and inserts it into a geographic representation of the territory in which it is located.

³¹ Tibetans engage in pilgrimage to distance sites and also circumambulate *gnas* by means of full body prostration, stretching prone on the ground, standing, taking three steps forward, and again prostrating fully. This practice is a familiar sight along modern paved roads.

³² Wylie listed several varieties of geographic literature which all might be loosely translated as “guidebook,” among them *gnas yig*, *gnas bshad* (“description of the site”), *dkar chag*, (“register”), and *lam yig*, which he translated as “passport,” as it was used by pilgrims traveling from one country to another (1965, pp. 17-19). In this dissertation I translate *gnas yig* as “gazetteer,” for they not only provide directions for the pilgrim but describe the important features and provide historical information (mythological or otherwise).

One well-known example of Tibetan pilgrimage destinations is that of the three great mountain *gnas* of Ti se (Kailash), Tsā ri, and La phyi. With the second propagation of Indian Buddhism in Tibet beginning in the tenth century, new forms of Buddhism were introduced, among them the *anuttarayoga* tantras popularized by the nascent New Schools (*gsar ma*): Bka' brgyud, Sa skya, and Dge lugs. Certain Bka' brgyud patriarchs adopted the religious geography set forth in the *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Hevajra* tantras as a means to nativize the new doctrines, recasting the landscape of Tibet as the realm where the activity the tantras describe took place. The *Cakrasaṃvara* tantra sets forth a system of twenty-four *pīṭha*,³³ which are both points in the tantric practitioner's subtle body and on the mythological map of the world where the buddha Cakrasaṃvara subdued Bhairava.³⁴ In the thirteenth century the three mountains named above were hypostatized as three of those *pīṭha*: Himvat, Godāvarī, and Cārita / Devikoṭa, respectively. As noted by Tucci, the entire Cakrasaṃvara maṇḍala, with its twenty-four *pīṭha* and eight cemeteries (*aṣṭa śmaśāna*) arrayed around the perimeter, was imported from India to Tibet, the conflation of the Buddhist cosmic geography with the Tibetan landscape occurring simultaneously with the cultural assimilation of the new forms of Buddhism.³⁵

By successfully reimagining the three mountains, already sites of worship for Tibetans, Bka' brgyud patriarchs, the main lineage holders of the *Cakrasaṃvara* tantra in Tibet, not only nativized the recently imported Indian religious system, but also assimilated important

³³ This is a term translated by Snellgrove as "sacred site," paired with "*kṣetra*," which he translates as "sacred place" (1987, p. 164ff). He explained that "in order to emphasize the essential identity of the outer world (the macrocosm) and the inner world of the yogin's body (the microcosm) these veins [i.e. the *nāḍī* of the subtle body] are equated with the twenty-four or thirty-two meeting-places scattered over the Indian sub-continent where yogins and yoginīs came together" (p. 296). On the *pīṭha* system in contemporary Indian religious geography see Eck 1981 and 1998. On the relationship between the *pīṭha* and the physical human body see Davidson 2002b, pp. 164-165; 210.

³⁴ This is the story of the clash between good and evil some time after the beginning of the current world system. After a lengthy reign of terror in which the malignant deities Śiva (Bhairava/Rudra) dominated this southern continent of Jambudvīpa, the Buddha takes the form of Heruka (*Cakrasaṃvara*/Vajradhara) to defeat him. The enemy together with his retinue are killed and then resuscitated and bound by oath to the Buddhist community. The story is an important element in tantric initiation. On this myth see especially Kapstein (1992b), Stein (1995), Mayer (1998). On the importance of the myth in Tibetan religious geography, see MacDonald (1990), Huber (1990 and 1994a and 1994b), and Buffetrille (1994).

³⁵ Tucci 1940, p. 21 and 1989, pp. 42-43.

religious sites closely associated with their own lineage to the cosmic mythology of that major tantra.³⁶ For by the thirteenth century all three mountains were established locations of Bka' brgyud activity, primarily that of Mi la ras pa (1040-1123), who by then had been credited with actually opening the sites.³⁷ Pilgrims to these mountains are made very aware of the *Cakrasaṃvara* geographic system through oral and written descriptions of the site. Such descriptions would invariably include the mountain's place in the cosmic geography as it was realized on the Tibetan landscape, and to visit the mountain would be to participate in an ongoing geographic representation of the whole of Tibet.

With the success of cults at Kailash, Tsā ri, and La phyi, a rash of imitation was perhaps inevitable. In this we have a nice example of the dialectical process discussed above; a spatial conceptualization was developed, made real, and became a means of perceiving the world. Sites across Tibet have since been labeled as either parts of a maṇḍala or locations of events in the hagiographies of the saints, or both. This was the case with the hermitage Kun bzang bde chen' od gsal gling introduced at the opening of this chapter. Its location was identified by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po as "the third Devīkoṭa, Tsā 'dra rin chen brag," linking it not only to the mythological Indian mountain, but to its Tibetan doppelganger, Tsā ri, in southern Tibet.³⁸

³⁶ See MacDonald 1990 for a partial translation of a late nineteenth century 'Bri gung guide to La phyi. Here MacDonald coins the terms "Buddha-ization" and Lama-ization" to describe the process of first identifying the mountains with the *Cakrasaṃvara pīṭha* ("buddha-ization"), and later with the activity of Mi la ras pa ("lama-ization"). Scholars of pilgrimage in Tibet have made much of the penchant in Tibet for identifying mountains with Indian deities and their maṇḍalas or pure lands, noting that the practice speaks both to the Tibetan assimilation of Buddhism and the multiple techniques available for proponents of particular places to establish and popularize the sites.

³⁷ Huber's contribution to *Religions of Tibet in Practice* provides translations from a guidebook to La phyi that describe Mi la ras pa's activities there (Huber 1997). See also Kapstein's contribution to the same volume, Petech 1978, and MacDonald 1990 for discussions of guidebooks to the mountain. The popularity of the pilgrimage practice at these mountains evidently brought a substantial influence to the Bka' brgyud sect that controlled it, so much so that Sakya paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182-1251) wrote a blistering attack against the identification of the mountains with the *Cakrasaṃvara* mythology. Nevertheless, the identifications held (while Ti se and La phyi retain non-*Cakrasaṃvara*-derived names, Huber never uncovers the pre-*Cakrasaṃvara* name for Tsā ri, clearly a Tibetanization of Cārita). The practice even spread, with the Dge lugs monastery of Pha bong kha acquiring its own Cārita, and, of course, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's hermitage above Dpal spungs (Huber 1990).

³⁸ "Tsā 'dra" means "like Tsā ri." Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po first gave 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's hermitage site this name in midsummer 1856. In the midst of a teaching he stated that "this excellent *gnas* is the third

Further, by extracting treasure there and explicitly making the identification in his description of the site, Mchog gyur gling pa made the site one that had been visited by the eighth-century Indian mystic Padmasambhava, who empowered it with the blessing-residue of his practice. In the process of opening such places as Tsā 'dra rin chen brag, during which the character and history of the place are described, the tropes of cosmic geography and saintly activity that were developed hundreds of years earlier became available for use; the vitality to which the great site was said to provide access was reputed to have been derived from both its place in the cosmic mythology and from the saints who imparted their blessing to the site. Thus we can see that the mythologies and narratives that supply the origin of the site's significance are notions that inform a ritualist's ability to conceive of the landscape, and openly look beyond the particular site to something larger.

The narratives of a religious site need not originate in Indian imports, nor be tied specifically to a particular historical or semi-legendary saint. In the case of the well-known myth of the supine demoness, the significance of the particular places in the spatial network comes not from an imported cosmic geography, but an indigenous conception of the

Devikoṭa, the wisdom eye [at] uppermost point of the central nāḍī" (*Gnas phun sum tshogs pa dpal de wī ko ṭi gsum pa rtsa dbu ma'i yar sne ye shes kyi spyen du mtshon pa*, Kong sprul A, f. 82a). Mchog gyur gling pa later affirmed the identification in his short gazetteer, in which he has Padmasambhava state: "I have practiced and blessed the twenty-four lands and the eight charnel grounds, all the *gnas* in the edges and the center [of the *Cakrasaṃvara* maṇḍala]; in particular the one hundred and eight practice sites in Dbus and Gtsang in the land of Tibet, and the twenty-five great sites in Khams, which benefit whomever encounters them. The swift sign of accomplishment, the supreme site of buddha-mind, is Tsā 'dra rin chen brag, the nāḍī of *Cakrasaṃvara*, known as Vajracittakoṭī. *Gnyer bzhi'i gnas dang dur khrod brgyad / mtha' dbus kun gyi gnas rnams dang / khyad par bod yul 'di nyid kyi / dbus gtsang sgrub gnas brgya rtsa brgyad / khams kyi gnas chen nyer lnga la / bsgrubs pa byas shing byin gyis brlabs / 'brel tshad don dang ldan par byas / thugs kyi gnas mchog grub rtags myur / tsā 'dra rin chen brag 'di ni / bde chen 'khor lo'i rtsa 'dab tshul / ba dzra tsi tta ko ṭi zhas* (Mchog gling and Kong sprul A, f. 160). Notice that here Tsā 'dra is referred to as "the supreme site of buddha-mind," while on Mchog gyur gling pa's narrative map, produced two years earlier, it is the mind-aspect of buddha attribute. I cannot explain the discrepancy other than to suggest that, in a list that makes no hierarchy of the included sites, the classification was apparently arbitrary. Tsā ri was said by the Bka' brgyud pa to be both Cārita and Devikoṭa, effectively conflating the two Indian sites into a single geographic entity. According to the gazetteer, only when the text itself was revealed was the power of Heruka's body speech and mind of the site transferred from Tuṣita. And as with the gazetteer for Padma shel phug, it is claimed here that those who wish to purify karmic stains should circumambulate, and that "one session of meditation here is more profound than a year's practice at another place" (*gzhan du lo gcig sgrub pa bas / 'di ru thun gcig bsgom pa zab*) (ibid, pp. 161-162). See Huber 1990, pp. 151-155, for a discussion of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's explanation of the identification in his own gazetteer of the site.

foundational vitality – as fierce as it is undying – of the Tibetan landscape. In this myth the entire territory of Tibet is represented by a demoness whose body was pinned down by thirteen purposefully placed temples. The myth, though set in the Tibetan Imperial period, developed centuries after the events it described, during a resurgence of unifying institutions and discourse generally known as the “later propagation” (*phyi dar*), and sometimes as the Tibetan Renaissance.³⁹ It thus can be read as an expression of a renewed interest in pan-Tibetan geographic representation. For as a given monastic tradition like the Sa skya or the 'Bri gung began to branch out across the Tibetan Plateau, geographical coherence again became desirable as a means to ensure unity – and promote expansion – of the tradition.

The myth of the supine demoness was perhaps first made known to Western audiences by R. A. Stein,⁴⁰ and has since been separately addressed by Michael Aris, Janet Gyatso, and Robert Miller.⁴¹ Stein described how the whole of Tibet was conceived of as a supine demoness who had to be tamed before Buddhism could flourish there: “Her body already covered the whole extent of Tibet in its period of military greatness (eighth and ninth centuries). Her outspread limbs reached to the present boundaries of Tibetan settlement.” Stein reasonably read the myth as a means of territorial representation:

The conquering and civilizing function of the first king, once he was established in the centre, was performed in accordance with Chinese ideas: in square concentric zones, each boxed in by the next and extending farther from the centre. Temples erected at the four successive squares stand for nails driven, as it were, into the limbs of the demoness, crucifying her. The land is held firm and made fit for habitation.⁴²

³⁹ See, for example, Davidson 2005. The earliest version of the myth is found in the *Mañi bka' 'bum*, a thirteenth-century treasure text revealed by Guru Chos dbang (1212-1270), although traces of it can be found in the *Dbā' bzhed*, the chronicles of the Dbā'/Sba' clan, the core of which is said to date back to the Imperial Period (sixth to eighth centuries). As Aris pointed out and Millar emphasized, versions of the myth can be found in numerous additional Tibetan sources, attesting to its widespread popularity. On *Mañi bka' 'bum* see especially Kapstein 1992b. For a partial translation of the *Dbā' bzhed* see Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger. 2000. Gyatso 1994 is a discussion of the importance of Guru Chos dbang, considered the first of “five treasure kings” in the treasure tradition. Gyatso referenced the 1974 New Delhi edition of the *Mañi bka' 'bum* published by Trayang and Jamyang Samten, where the myth appears on folia 129b-130b.

⁴⁰ Stein 1972, pp. 38-39.

⁴¹ Aris 1979, Gyatso 1987, and Miller 1998.

⁴² Stein 1972, pp. 38-39.

Unmentioned by Stein is the story of the Chinese noblewoman Wencheng gongzhu (文成公主, Mun sheng Kong jo in Tibetan; “gongzhu” is a title equivalent to “princess”), who was given as a bride to the seventh-century Tibetan emperor Srong btsan sgam po (569/617-650).⁴³ According to one version of the myth, it was Wencheng who determined the need for the temples and their placement. As the story goes, while bringing to Tibet an image of the Buddha Śākyamuni, Wencheng was repeatedly obstructed. By consulting Chinese geomancy she determined that the whole of Tibet was a supine demoness whose violent opposition to Buddhism was preventing her arrival, and who could be subjugated by the construction of thirteen temples, one in the center, on the demoness’ heart, four on her shoulders and hips, four on her elbows and knees, and four on her hands and feet, effectively pinning her down. Here the “civilizing function” that Stein drew attention to is not performed by the king but by Buddhism, and Gyatso effectively reads it as a reflection of the violence carried out on Tibetan soil by the conversion to Buddhism, and a narrative enactment of Tibet’s (gendered) submission and conversion.⁴⁴ She notes, importantly, that in the myth there is no mention of death; the demoness remains harnessed, her raw power henceforth channeled into civilized endeavors.

Whether civilization was landscaped in Tibet by Buddhism or by the king is, in fact, a false choice. The thirteenth century was a time when the long-lost Tibetan empire was being reimagined as a virtual Buddhist Pure Land, and its kings were identified as emanations of Buddhist deities. The *Maṇi bka’ ’bum*, which first set forth the geography of the supine demoness myth, also hypostasized Srong btsan sgam po as an emanation of Avalokiteśvara. For the propagators of the myth of the supine demoness, the king and Buddhism were

⁴³ For a survey of scholarship on Wencheng and her impact on the history of Khams, see my review article on Khams (Gardner 2003), pp. 62-63.

⁴⁴ This sort of violence was not confined to the narratives of Srong btsan sgam po. Padmasambhava hagiographies, which were being produced around the same time the myth developed (for the most part as treasure), routinely depicted the Guru’s conquest of autochthonous deities that resisted his Buddhist teachings.

synonymous. As Davidson has recently made clear, one motive for this reimagining was the legitimization of the then-nascent practice of revealing treasure texts, which needed a golden-age, with golden palaces, from which religious materials could be recovered.⁴⁵ The myth of the supine demoness whose power was contained by Buddhist temples can thus be read in more than one way. It is a first a retelling of the eighth century Tibetan conversion to Buddhism during a Buddhist resurgence in the eleventh and twelfth centuries that equated the idealized glory of the Empire with the splendor of the religion. It is also a statement of the spatial conception of Tibet advocated and embraced by the treasure tradition: one in which every square inch of Tibetan soil held the potential to give forth a blessed gift available to those who could open it.

The myth was given foundation by the existence of the thirteen temples – “sacred sites” par excellence – that staked down the demoness.⁴⁶ These temples drew their significance from their participation in the pan-Tibetan geography. Their meaning was derived not by being separated from the space around them, but precisely because of their connection to it. And the supernatural power with which they communed – they were, after all, stakes into specific body

⁴⁵ Davidson 2005, Chapter Six.

⁴⁶ Aris, who sought to understand the history of two of these taming temples located in modern-day Bhutan, was more concerned with the historical issue of the temple distribution and the significance for the territorial representation of the Tibetan Empire. He diagrammed the four-fold layout of temples, which corresponds to the Imperial domain: the center = the capital; the shoulders and hips the “four horns,” or immediate vicinity of the realm; the elbows and knees = the four borders; and the hands and feet = the land beyond the borders. Like Stein, Aris considered this conception of empire to be a likely import from China, where the imperial realm is similarly conceived as divided into five concentric squares. Aris criticized Stein for mistaking myth for history, in the passage quoted above, and implying that the thirteen temples were intentionally built by Srong btsan sgam po as a means to expand his empire. Given the range of variation in temple identifications in the alternate tellings of the myth, it is likely that they were not. If the temples were indeed built in the imperial period, it is more probable that they were placed to mark territory already won. That is, the temples were probably not constructed as an act of imperial expansion, but were later integrated into the Imperial myth to naturalize the imperial territory. Aris nevertheless cited several texts to suggest that the King did indeed construct the temples, including a passage in the *Blue Annals*: “During the king’s reign twelve great monastic colleges were established, as far as Khams” (Roerich 1997, p. 44), and another from the *Dunhuang Chronicle*: “he built temples in all the regions at the centre and at the border” (Bacot et al., 1946, p. 114), a line repeated in an inscription at Skar-cung studied by Richardson (1949, p. 54). On the category of the “four horns” see Uray 1960. Miller included several drawings to illustrate the demoness’ body as it was suggested by the temple layout.

parts – did not so much as “irrupt” there but was held in check there, pervading all space and contained therein. The temples functioned to stake down a power that might erupt anywhere, because it was conceived of being everywhere. Together the temples represented the entire landscape of Tibet, each one playing a specific role in mapping out the supine demoness and the Tibetan territory.

The myth of the supine demoness in this way made use of preexisting religious sites, onto which was overlaid a narrative that connected them to a larger network of signification as well as to a vision of a long-lost golden age. It thereby created a temporal representation that advanced certain goals: specifically, treasure availability and territorial unification that was important to traditions seeking pan-Tibetan acceptance. The mountain *gnas* Tsā ri, in its widely-advertised feature of being the location of Mi la ras pa’s enlightened activities, and by its transformation into the Indian Cakrasaṃvara *pīṭhas* Cāritra and Devikoṭa, can be said to partake of the potency of both the saint and the buddha. And in its place in the *Cakrasaṃvara* maṇḍala, Tsā ri serves as one of many markers of the conception of Tibet as a divine abode. Narrative maps to the place – guidebooks, gazetteers, hagiographies and the like – advertise and affirm the site’s place in this network. Be it a *gnas* or a temple, a geological feature of the landscape, or an edifice built by human labor, places on the Tibetan landscape that are marked as possessing religious value are tied into larger schemes of significance and representation. They are individually important insofar as they are part of a system of meaning: a geographical representation of territory, and thus a text to be read.

II. A Quest for Legitimacy.

Mchog gyur gling pa’s narrative map of Khams, presented in the text titled “A Brief Inventory of the Great Sites of Tibet Composed by Padmasambhava, the Wise One of Oḍḍiyāna,” sets forth a system of religious geography very much in keeping with its precursors. Like the *anuttarayoga*

tantra pīṭha system and the myth of the supine demoness, each site on Mchog gyur gling pa's map made use of some preexisting sites of religious importance and rendered new sites significant by virtue of inserting them into a network of religious sites. And like those systems, there is an agenda at work: namely, the legitimation of Mchog gyur gling pa and his treasures. His narrative map first and foremost drew together the region of Khams in a way that made it a viable field of treasure revelation. The individual sites, sanctified by either divine power or saintly blessing, or both, were formed with the aim of linking them together and having them serve as a representation the entire region. For his network to function he had to enable a transfer of blessing – of authenticity – from already established sites to those that he was introducing to a wider regional community. And he needed to write his map in a way that all of Khams was represented, in a way that the sites would refer to a cohesive territory of Khams, so that the entire place would be available for future revelations. The map had to make known the fact that treasure could irrupt anywhere. That is, they had to be both sacred and profane places, both marked off from manifold space and indicative of that space.

The map was a solution to a circular conundrum Mchog gyur gling pa faced in establishing his authority and the authenticity of his treasures. For his treasures to be accepted as authentic, they had to be shown to be actual testaments of Padmasambhava concealed in the ground at that spot. Mchog gyur gling pa's means of doing this was to affirm that the sites of his revelation had in fact been visited and blessed by Padmasambhava, making it more plausible that the extracted treasures were legitimate. As will be discussed in Chapter Two, the revelation of treasure is a potent means of proving Padmasambhava's presence at a given site, and thus something that renders the site significant, and complex narrative tropes were developed to achieve this. That is, a legitimated treasure is a means to prove that Padmasambhava had visited the site. But if neither the site of extraction nor the treasure had yet been recognized as legitimate, neither could provide authorization to the other. Mchog

gyur gling pa's narrative map borrowed the authenticity of the pre-established sites for the benefit of the entire list, so that all could partake of their authenticity. He inserted the sites of his treasure revelations into a network that included renowned sites; these in turn lent legitimacy to the new sites, authenticating them by association. Once the sites of his treasure were authenticated, the treasures revealed there were as well, and so too was Mchog gyur gling pa.

The now-standard geographic representation of Khams that was envisioned by the narrative map began first with a single man's quest for authority and acceptance, and was initially a means by which the very landscape of Khams could testify to that authority. This section will trace that quest and show that the narrative map is as much a diagram of Mchog gyur gling pa's authority as it is a depiction of the mountains and temples that constitute the physical and cultural geography of Khams. The section, drawing on an abundance of hagiographic and epigraphic materials, will follow Mchog gyur gling pa as he first sought legitimacy in his homeland of Nang chen, to the northwest of Sde dge. It is in Nang chen, I suggest, that we first meet his consort Bde chen/skyid chos sgron, whose presence was potentially a main cause of the young monk's hasty departure from his monastery. Failing to gain credence for his claims in his homeland, Mchog gyur gling pa crossed the 'Bri river (Chinese: Jinsha 金沙) and pursued authorization from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po at their seats at the great monastic centers of Dpal spungs and Rdzong sar. At the latter Mchog gyur gling pa succeeded in gaining Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's formal authorization, but this was merely a step in a lengthy process. Legitimation by leading lamas is a necessary means for a would-be treasure revealer, but it is not sufficient. Mchog gyur gling pa next returned home to Nang chen to enact his new-found status, after which he returned to Sde dge and engaged in the activities that resulted in the production of his narrative map. This is a highly nuanced story that must be carefully wrested from the material. For while Tibetan

hagiographies celebrate the triumphal rise out of obscurity of their subjects, they simultaneously shy away from acknowledging that their subjects were ever anything less than at the top of their form. For us to properly understand the genius of Mchog gyur gling pa's narrative map, however, we must begin with a Mchog gyur gling pa who was unknown, rejected, and nameless.

One. Nang chen

The man who would become known as Mchog gyur bde chen zhig po gling pa was born at the base of Nam mkha' mdzod⁴⁷ on the tenth day of either the sixth or the tenth month of the

⁴⁷ Nam mkha' mdzod, a place that would become site #11 on the narrative map, is the name of a *gnas* that included several places named Gsang rgyal, Ye rgyal, and Yar 'khyil gnas. The first of these was the actual site of Mchog gyur gling pa's birth; the second would have been the site of his seventh treasure revelation, and the third was the spot where, according to Mchog gyur gling pa, thoughts of religion first entered his mind. Other named sites there, or possibly variant names, include Yer/Yel phug, Tshe zhal/rgyas brag and G.yu 'bal brag. According to legend, 'Bri gung rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595-1662), the twenty-fifth throne-holder of 'Bri gung monastery in Tibet, identified Nam mkha' mdzod as one of the legs of the musk deer of Khams (*Khams kyi gla ba rkang gcig*); scarcely a reference to the site is made without mention of this peculiar attribute. See, for example: Mkhyen brtse B, p. 27; Kong sprul D, p. 130; Dkon mchog 'gyur med p. 38 and 290. According to the *Ming mdzod*, Chos kyi grags pa went to Khams sometime after his eighteenth year, and then in his twenty-seventh year, went on an extensive pilgrimage in southern Tibet (p. 1231); presumably his identification of the site occurred during those years, roughly 1613-1622. According to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul there is a gazetteer for Gnam mkha' mdzod written by Karma chags med (1613-1678), though this might simply mean that Karma chags med mentioned the place in a text dedicated to other matters (Kong sprul D, p. 130), 'Jam mgon Kong sprul also identifies Gnam mkha' mdzod as being the seat of Grub chen Yer pa ye shes brtsegs pa, whom I have not identified. Whether or not the association with Chos kyi grags pa, or any of the above figures, was made prior to Mchog gyur gling pa's opening of the site is yet to be determined.

Although Nam mkha' mdzod would remain an important site of Mchog gyur gling pa's activity, he established his two monastic seats elsewhere. The first was the monastery named Gnas bstan mchog 'gyur med pa'i gling and is the seat of the Gnas brtan Mchog gyur gling pa line of incarnations. It is located in modern Ri bo che country, T.A.R., just south of the border with Qinghai province. Gruschke dated it to 1820, but this is certainly mistaken, as he credits Mchog 'gyur gling pa all the same (2004, p. 57). Gyurme Dorje dated the monastery to 1858, but I found no justification for this (2006, p. 525). The other of Mchog gyur gling pa's seats was Rtsi ke/rke dgon. It is the seat of the Rtsi ke, or Ke la Mchog gyur gling pa line of incarnations, and is located near Sman mda' (Chinese Mianda 面达), in Chab mdo county, T.A.R. According to O rgyan stobs rgyal, Mchog gyur gling pa founded this monastery in the late 1850s at the suggestion of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (Orgyen Tobgyal p. 6). The name comes from its location at the confluence of the Rtsi and Ke rivers. The monastery later became the main residence of Gter sras sprul sku; the reincarnation line began by Mchog gyur gling pa's second son, Dbang mchog rdo rje.

female earth ox year (August 9 or November 5, 1829).⁴⁸ His father was a “mad mantrika” named Padma dbang phyug, and his mother was a “straightforward woman” named Tshe ring g.yang mtsho.⁴⁹ According to O rgyan stobs rgyal the family belonged to a clan named Skya su, a name that we will encounter below.⁵⁰ Kun bzang mchog sprul, the incarnation of the treasure revealer Gnam chos Mi ’gyur rdo rje (1645-1667), gave the boy the name Dkon mchog bstan ’dzin.⁵¹ ’Jam mgon Kong sprul, however, recorded his name as Nor bu bstan ’dzin.⁵² *Nor bu* is a synonym of sorts for *dkon mchog*, though it is one that contains little of the supernatural splendor of the latter term. Nowhere else is this name given, and Mchog gyur gling pa himself fails to mention his birth name in his own autobiography. It would seem that most people, if they ever knew it, forgot the name of his youth, while those who did remember it did so poorly.

The full story of Mchog gyur gling pa’s youth in Nang chen, and indeed his remarkable career, is both clarified and obscured by multiple hagiographies that are torn between a vision of the man as a fully realized Buddha and one who suffered repeated rejections before gaining his name. By Mchog gyur gling pa’s own account he received numerous teachings and met several lamas in his youth, few of whom can be identified.⁵³ He provided a bare outline of events in his autobiography: he entered the Stag lung Bka’ brgyud monastery Dpal me dgon⁵⁴ in Nang chen as a novice, was given monk’s vows from Dpa’ bo gtsug lag ’phreng ba VIII Chos kyi rgyal po,⁵⁵ and otherwise moved about, meeting various lamas and receiving Buddhist

⁴⁸ As recorded in Kong sprul C, p. 644 Padma ye shes, p. 94 and Dkon mchog ’gyur med, p. 40, and Kong sprul B, p. 3, respectively.

⁴⁹ Dkon mchog gyur med, p. 38. ’Jam mgon Kong sprul added that the father was related to a minister in the Nang chen court named A lcags ’gru (C, p. 644). This is possibly the source for the occasional claim that Mchog gyur gling pa was related to minor Nang chen royalty.

⁵⁰ Orgyen Tobgyal p. 2.

⁵¹ Padma ye shes, p. 95; Dkon mchog ’gyur med, p. 46.

⁵² Kong sprul C, p. 644; ’Jam mgon Kong sprul does record his name as Dkon mchog bstan ’dzin in his narrative map text. See Appendix Two, the entry for site #24.

⁵³ Mchog gling A, pp. 177-178.

⁵⁴ Dpal me theg chen e vaṃ dga’ tshal gling. Founded either in the seventeenth century, or as early as the late fifteenth century. See Gruschke 2004, pp. 121-122.

⁵⁵ Perhaps this explains why Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po, who stated that Mchog gyur gling pa entered Dpal me dgon at age thirteen, established a tradition of listing Chos kyi rgyal po as the first of Mchog gyur gling pa’s four masters. He references an unidentified treasure prophecy as the justification for the

teachings, primarily Rdzogs chen. At some point he transferred to the 'Brug pa bka' brgyud

fourfold categorization of Mchog gyur gling pa's teachers: "On the outer level he took his *prātimokṣa* vow with 'Bog pa'i mkhan po; on the inner level there was a *kalyāṇamitra* who gave birth to the bodhicitta; on the secret level there was a *vajrācārya* who brought his wisdom to fruition with the Vajrayāna empowerment; ultimately his root guru pointed out the nature of mind according to the definitive Rdzogs chen teachings. These were the four at the beginning, middle and end." *Phyi so thar gyi sdom pa 'bog pa'i mkhan po / nang byang chub du thugs bskyed pa'i dge ba'i bshegs gnyen / gsang ba rdo rje theg pa'i dbang gis ye shes smin par mdzad pa'i rdo rje slob dpon / mthar thug nges don rdzogs pa chen po'i gnas lugs ngos prod pa'i rtsa ba'i bla ma ste / thog mtha' bar gyi Yongs 'dzin chen po bzhi zhes gsungs pa ltar ro* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 20-21). O rgyan stobs rgyal mentioned only one figure in relation to Mchog gyur gling pa's youth, Stag lung rin po che (see below), who he says was the first lama Mchog gyur gling pa met (p. 3). In the earliest hagiographical text for Mchog gyur gling pa's life, however, the short supplication verses written soon after Mchog gyur gling pa's death, Kong sprul makes no mention of there being four primary masters. He only adopted the convention in the hagiography written in the 1880s for the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (Kong sprul C). The passage from the autobiography is as follows: "My guiding bla ma, Kun bzang mchog sprul, gave me the refuge vows and [I] entered the door of the Buddhist teachings. I obtained authorization in White Tārā and the peaceful Guru. In the teaching and practice halls I met with Tshe dbang phrin las. With great faith I accomplished the empowerment of the guru, had visions, and through his kindness he bestowed the four empowerments. At my own residence Dkon mchog don grub and others acted as [my] masters and I trained in the written language, and with Bstan rgyas acting as master I went into retreat. First I practiced White Tārā and the peaceful guru. From the *mantradhara* Rig 'dzin dpal I requested guidance in the rituals of mantra, and [when] I went to the Dbus region I saw that I was under the care of the three roots. Guru Sngags pa gave me the peaceful Rahūla, and at Dpal me dgon I resided in the manner of a monk. I was under the care of Rje btsun Chos nyis nor bu and obtained the ripening of the *Bde gshegs sgrub pa bka' brgyad*. I trained well in the ritual practices of dance, [maṇḍala] proportions and chants. For ten years I was steadfast in my practice of performing a tenth-day feast offering in my home. From my pure lama I received numberless fruition [teachings]. I practiced from the Ya ki Rdzogs pa chen po through to the Ma ki recitation and dance, and I realized the immensity of the great benevolence of learned masters. I received experiential guidance in the Mahāmudrā and Rdzogs chen of Bstan 'dzin chos kyi dbang po, and the sages' oral instructions of the *Rdzogs chen snying thig* became one with my own mind. At Phun tshogs gling I trained in Rnying pa dancing and chanting. 'Dul 'dzin chen po Stag lung rin po che [Stag lung ma Dpa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng ba VIII Chos kyi rgyal po (c.1782-c.1840)] gave me the refuge vows and taught me the ways of monks. The incomparable protector, the supreme emanation [Stag lung ma?] granted me the mind-accomplishment ripening empowerment of Ratna gling pa. I met [the 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud gter ston] Chos rgyal rdo rje (1787-1859) at Na bon rdzong, and he gave me secret oral instruction and taught me Rdzogs chen. 'Dren pa'i bla ma kun bzang mchog sprul gyis / skyabs sdom gnang bas sangs rgyas bstan sgol zhugs / sgrol dkar gu ru zhi ba'i rjes gnang thob / bshad sgrub gling du tshe dbang phrin las mjal / shin tu dad nas gu ru'i dbang sgrub la / dag snang thob cing bka' drin dbang bzhi stsal / rang gi gnas su dkon mchog don grub sogs / slob dpon bgyis nas yi ge bslab pa dang / bstan rgyas skob dpon bgyis nas mtshams sgrub kyi / thog ma sgrol dkar gu ru zhi ba bsnyen / sngags 'chang rig 'dzin dpal las sngags chog gi / phyag bzhes zhus shing dbus kyi phyogs su phyin / rtsa ba gsum gyi rjes su bzung ba mthong / rgu ru sngags pas gza' gdon zhi bar mdzad / dpal me dgon du grwa rgyun tshul du bsdad / rje btsun chos nyid nor bu'i rjes bzung / bde gshegs sgrub pa bka' brgyad smin grol thob / gar thig dbyangs kyi phyag len legs par bslab / tshes bcu khang du tshogs bsgrigs lo bcu 'grim / bla ma dam pas smin grol dpag med stsal / ya ki'i rdzogs pa chen po man chad dang / ma ki'i zlos gar yan chad bslab par mdzad / mkhan slob bka' drin shin tu che bar 'khum / bstan 'dzin chos kyi dbang po'i phyag rdzogs ni / myong khrid stsal zhing bla ma dam pa yi / rdzogs chen snying thig man ngag snying la lhan / phun tshogs gling nas rnying ma'i gar dbyangs bslab / 'dul 'dzin chen po stag lung rin po cher / rab tu byung nas dge slong ngang tshul bstan / mtshungs med mgon po sprul pa'i sku mchog gis / ratna gling pa'i thugs sgrub smin dbang stsal / na bun rdzongs du chos rgyal rdo rje mjal / gsang ba'i man ngag stsal zhing rdzogs chen bstan (Mchog gling A, pp. 177-178). The extent to which he actually mastered these last skills is debated. This will be discussed below. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul stated that he mastered reading and writing at a young age (C, p. 644), but O rgyan stobs rgyal had Mchog gyur gling pa study only a little reading and writing with his uncle, and receive no "higher studies" (Orgyen Tobgyal p. 2).

monastery at the capital, Nang chen gar, a move made, according to O rgyan stobs rgyal, in response to a local law stipulating that each family send one son to the royal monastery.⁵⁶ It was from this monastery that he would depart for Sde dge in the early 1850s.

Mchog gyur gling pa's early treasure revelations are similarly obscured by multiple ambiguous and confused narratives. We will sort through some of the tangled strands in the next chapter; suffice it to say here that Mchog gyur gling pa claimed that before his thirteenth birthday he was visited by a vision of Padmasambhava, and that this was followed by "many unwanted and confusing apparitions," some of them reportedly unintelligible, others apparently clear signs that he would "extract profound treasure."⁵⁷ It seems he did not keep these prophecies to himself, but announced publicly that he would extract treasure from Gnam mkha' mdzod; one of his early masters, however, specifically forbade him from doing so.⁵⁸

Mchog gyur gling pa unfortunately tells us nothing about his time in the Nang chen monasteries. Nor did Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po have much to say about the period beyond the mere enumeration of the treasure revelations that are said to have occurred then. However, later histories such as Dkon mchog 'gyur med, and an oral narrative preserved by the lineal descendants of Mchog gyur gling pa, tell us that Mchog gyur gling pa was scorned by his colleagues in Nang chen and rejected in his claims as being a treasure revealer. As told by O rgyan stobs rgyal:

No one considered him a tertön [*gter ston*; treasure revealer] at this time and when he told some people that he was, he was mocked and nicknamed Kyater [*Skya gter*], or the tertön of Kyasu [*Skya su*], his family name. Guru Rinpoche [Padmasambhava] had predicted that he would remain unrecognized and unknown until the age of twenty-five.⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Orgyen Tobgyal p. 3.

⁵⁷ Mchog gling A, p. 181.

⁵⁸ Dkon mchog 'gyur med p. 24a. This was a lama named Gnas 'dzin pu si ri at Dpal me mgon.

⁵⁹ Orgyen Tobgyal p. 3.

This pejorative name, which suggests in tone something like “the so-called treasure revealer,” appears in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's autobiography, Anonymous A, and Dkon mchog 'gyur med. It drops from use only after Mchog gyur gling pa's status as a treasure revealer was confirmed.

Ultimately these claims to be a treasure revealer appear to have resulted in Mchog gyur gling pa's expulsion from his monastery. This deserves some inquiry. According to O rgyan stobs rgyal, Mchog gyur gling pa was expelled from Nang chen gar after making errors during a ritual dance that were brought on by a vision of Padmasambhava.⁶⁰ This seems unlikely. Instead, we might ask how Mchog gyur gling pa's claims of treasure revelation might have been received at his monastery. It is all too probable that they were heard as justification for Mchog gyur gling pa's having taken a consort. The *gter ma* tradition had long claimed the necessity of sexual yoga for the successful recovery of treasure. Regardless of the question of the validity of this position, it seems that it was been abused sufficiently so as to be regarded with suspicion even by proponents of the treasure tradition.⁶¹ Mchog gyur gling pa was a monk in a monastic institution; sexual practices alone would have been grounds for expulsion, whether the perpetrator was revealing treasure or not. Unfortunately the hagiographies make no mention of when Mchog gyur gling pa began his relationship with Bde skyid chos sgron, evidence perhaps of the treasure tradition's own ambiguous position regarding sexual yogic practices, but there is ample reason to believe the relationship began prior to his arrival in Sde dge in 1853.⁶²

⁶⁰ Orgyen Tobgyal p. 3. An obscure passage from Dkon mchog 'gyur med might be the source of this tale: “At that time, [in his twenty-fifth year, Mchog gyur gling pa] resided in Nang chen, when there was an assembly on the tenth-day. The others, of all ranks, considered themselves learned in dance, chanting, and ritual but they were mistaken.” *De skabs nang chen tshes bcu dgon du bzhugs skor yin la / gzhan mchog dman gyis gar 'cham dbyangs rol sogs la shin tu mkhas snyam las log lta che* / (Dkon mchog 'gyur med, p. 65). Is it to be understood that Mchog gyur gling pa was not accepted by the community?

⁶¹ See Sprul sku O rgyan's comments on the common accusation that claims to the status of treasure revealer were excuses used by monks to have sex with women (Schmidt 2005 p. 90). Gyatso discusses the tradition's assertion that sexual yoga is necessary to break the treasure's seals and decode the text (1998, p. 173).

⁶² The Tibetan language hagiographies entirely erased Bde chen/skyid chos sgron from the narrative of Mchog gyur gling pa's life, and has not even been able to agree on her name. The sole reference to her is in the colophon to the short supplication 'Jam mgon Kong sprul composed after Mchog gyur gling pa's

In short, the most likely reason behind his departure from Nang chen was the frustration Mchog gyur gling pa evidently felt in response to not being permitted by his lamas to produce the treasure he felt entitled to reveal, and to the rejection of his peers and the public at his presumption of the status of a treasure revealer. Dkon mchog 'gyur med provides a puzzling passage that expresses this frustration, leading to the decision to relocate in Sde dge:

When [Mchog gyur gling pa] reached the age of twenty-five, in the summer, spurred by a prophecy by Gu ru rin po che, he went on pilgrimage to Tshang gsar gnam rong⁶³ in upper Nang chen. While there, he was unable to benefit the teachings and sentient beings in accordance with the instructions of O rgyan rin po che. Investigating the reasons [he had this vision: he saw]: a very large river that he was unable to traverse. Casting off a curse, he floated [into the sky] and was able to cross the river and [enter] the region. Looking into the sky, he saw the moon [as it is on] the eighth day [of the lunar month] appearing along with the sun and stars at the same time. He felt happy, and thought that he should go east to Sde dge.⁶⁴

While in Nang chen Mchog gyur gling pa had been unable to cross over from the ranks of the anonymous monks to that of those who are authorized to speak for Padmasambhava; he regarded Sde dge as a place he might be able to do so. Despite the many prophecies the

death. According to the colophon, he did so in response to the request of “the daughter of a noble family, the chief consort Bde chen chos sgron” and several unnamed Mchog gyur gling pa disciples (Kong sprul B, p. 9). Little is otherwise known about her, save that she was the sister of Mchog gyur gling pa’s disciple, the treasure revealer 'Bar ba'i rdo rje (1836-1920) and was the mother of two of Mchog gyur gling pa’s three children. The first was his eldest son Dbang phyug rdo rje/Tshe dbang grags pa, who died at the age of twenty-four or twenty-seven sometime prior to 1892 (O rgyan stobs rgyal stated that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po authorized the search for his reincarnation; Orgyen Tobgyal p. 30). The second was his daughter Dkon mchog dpal sgron (who lived to the age of seventy). See Figure Eight for an image of Tshe dbang grags pa together with his father, mother, and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. Mchog gyur gling pa’s second son was Kun bzang 'jigs med Tshe dbang nor bu; his mother was a niece of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. According to Sprul sku O rgyan, Tshe dbang nor bu was about six months old when his father revealed the *Rdzogs chen sde gsum* treasure cycle at the beginning of 1857 (Schmidt 2000, p. 4). 'Bar ba'i rdo rje reports that he gave his sister to Mchog gyur gling pa as a consort immediately before he describes events that took place in the late summer of 1856 (Yeshe Gyamtso, pp. 37-38). Given that Mchog gling’s second son was born to Mkhyen brtse dbang po’s niece in the summer of 1856, Mchog gyur gling pa must have begun his relationship with Bde skyi chos sgron at least by the beginning of 1855, in order for his eldest son to have been born before the birth of his second son. However, from 1853 to the beginning of 1856 Mchog gyur gling pa was in Sde dge, and so the relationship probably began before he left Nang chen.

⁶³ This valley is in the Yu hru'u (C: Yushu 玉树) prefecture in contemporary Qinghai province.

⁶⁴ *Dgung lo nyer lnga bzhes pa'i tshe gu ru rin po che'i lung gis bskul bas / dbyar dus nang chen stod tshang gsar gnam rong skor phebs skabs / o rgyan rin po che'i bka' bzhin 'gro don 'grub min gzhung chu shin tu che yang de yi pha rol du mchongs thub min la rten 'brel brtags te / dmod bor chin lding pas chu bo dang de tshad kyi sar phebs thub pa byung / yar nam mkha' la gzigs pas / tshes brgyad kyi zla ba dang nyi ma skar ma bcas dus gcig la mngon pas thugs dgyes shing shar phyogs sde dge'i phyogs su phebs par dgongs* (Dkon mchog 'gyur med, p. 65). The eighth day of the lunar month is Guru Rinpoche day.

hagiographic tradition inserted into the narratives of his youth, in Nang chen he was unable to find his voice, and remained the ordinary monk Dkon mchog bstan 'dzin. Moving around Nang chen, doing nothing other than participating in standard monastic rituals, Mchog gyur gling pa's unhappiness was noticed by his mother, who appears to have been the sole person who accepted him as an authentic treasure revealer. She sent him forth to make his name. As Dkon mchog 'gyur med tells it, "Later his aged mother gave him a pair of treasure revealer's boots and said 'As you are unhappy, you should go elsewhere.'"⁶⁵ Thus Mchog gyur gling pa left Nang chen, setting out, according to Dkon mchog 'gyur med, with two servants and two horses, in a departure that attracted the attention of no one.⁶⁶

Two. Dpal spungs

An ambitious twenty-five-year-old in search of religious authorization in eighteenth-century Khams, Mchog gyur gling pa would easily have been drawn to Sde dge, the largest and most vibrant religious and political region in Khams. He may have directly headed for Dpal spungs monastery, or simply arrived there by chance.⁶⁷ Once there he began a three-year pursuit of three of the monastery's leading figures: Ta'i si tu IX Padma nyin byed dbang po, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, and Zla bzang sprul sku Karma nges don (1808-1867). Although his efforts with all three would be unsuccessful, in pursuing 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Mchog gling would eventually

⁶⁵ *Rjes su ma yum gyis gter ston lhwam cha gcig phul nas khyod rang skyid par mi dga' ba 'dug pas rgyal khams phyogs med du songs zhes bkas mnan pas gter ston nyid la 'gro don phyogs med du 'byung ba'i rten 'brel 'grigs pa bcas* (Dkon mchog 'gyur med pp. 65-66).

⁶⁶ *Zhabs gras gnyis dang / chibs chibs hrol gnyis sogs mngon chung tshul gyis rim par phebs pa* (Dkon mchog 'gyur med p. 66). Sprul sku O rgyan had it that the king of Nang chen was blind to Mchog gyur gling pa's abilities and sent him off on an old horse (Schmidt 2005, p. 27). However, why he would have given the man a horse if he had no faith in him is unclear.

⁶⁷ In his autobiography Mchog gyur gling pa provides an unlikely explanation for why he went to Dpal spungs. While still in Nang chen, he explained, he encountered a student of Ta'i si tu IX Padma nyin byed dbang po's named Bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal (d.u.) who had been instructed by Si tu to give him teachings. It was "in accordance with the instructions of the lama" that he went to Dpal spungs to meet with "the Second Maitreya [i.e. Si tu]." *'Gro mgon padma nyin byed bka' bzhin tu / bstan 'dzin rnam rgyal zhabs kyis thugs sgrub btsal / dpal spungs dgon du bla ma'i bka' bzhin phyin / mi pham mgon po gnyis pa'i zhal mjal* (Mchog gling A, pp. 178).

encounter the master who gave him the authorization he desired, 'Jam dbyang mkhyen brtse'i dbang po.

Still carrying the epithet "Skya su *gter ston*" Mchog gyur gling was able to have an audience with Si tu IX in the first month of the water ox year (February to March 1853).⁶⁸ It would appear that he gained entrance by means of a prophecy he presented to Si tu IX that, in effect, proclaimed that their meeting was predetermined.⁶⁹ If I am correct that this prophecy was indeed composed in that year and presented to Si tu IX as a calling card of sorts, than this would also be the earliest textual reference to an audacious claim on Mchog gyur gling pa's part: that he was the reincarnation of Lha sras mu rub btsan po, the second son of the Tibetan emperor Khri srong lde'u btsan (790-844).⁷⁰ The prophecy is important for two reasons: first, it

⁶⁸ Mchog gling A, p. 182; Mkhyen brtse B, p. 22; Kong sprul B, p. 645; Padma ye shes 98.

⁶⁹ The prophecy in question, which can be found in several versions in different sources, has been made part of the *Thugs rje chen po padma gtsug tor*, Mchog gyur gling pa's fourth treasure casket. It is attached somewhat awkwardly and with its own colophon, to the end of the root text of the cycle, the *Thugs rje chen po padma gtsug gtor dri ma med pa'i sgrub thabs theg dgu dang 'brel ba* ("The sādhana of the stainless *Thugs rje chen po padma gtsug gtor* relating to the nine vehicles," Mchog gling C). The texts of this treasure cycle, which Mchog gyur gling pa claimed to have revealed in Nang chen in 1849, had otherwise yet to be deciphered, making this passage one of the earliest of Mchog gyur gling pa's compositions. Given the variation among the different written versions, it is likely that it was preserved first orally, only to be written down later, when Mchog gyur gling pa had been properly authorized and was working with 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po on the composition of his treasures. Reading from the treasure text, Padmasambhava states: "At that time, regarding the appearance in the world of the lord of this dharma [presumably the *Padma gtsug gtor* cycle], at the peak of the Glorious Mountain [*Dpal ri* = *Dpal spungs*], on the left-hand shore of the Golden River [the 'Dzin chu; Chinese: Jinsha jiang 金沙江, 'River of Golden Sand'] [lives] my speech emanation named [Si tu IX] Padma nyin byed. He is the successor of the Conqueror, and raises high the victory banner of practice. In the age of the decline of the dharma he holds a lamp in the darkness. He accomplished the eighty-five perfections of long-life [?] and is a holder of the teachings on the ninety suitable and good conditions [?]. Lha sras, you yourself will meet him when [your future incarnation Mchog gyur gling pa] is twenty-five. Without secrecy, confidence in him will be born, and at that time there will be many uncontrived and spontaneous events." *De dus chos bdag ji ltar 'byung ba ni / gser ldan 'babs pa'i g.yon 'gram dpal ri'i spor / nga yi gsung sprul padma nyin byed shes / rgyal ba'i gdung 'tshob sgrub pa'i rgyal mtshan btsug / dus mtha'i mun rum nang du sgron me 'dzin / tshes sgrub mthar phyin bryad cu rtsa lnga thub / rten 'brel legs 'grigs dgu bcur bstan pa 'dzin / lha sras nyid kyi nyer lnga'i dus su mjal / sba gsang me par blo gtad de ru skyol / de la ma bsgrigs lhun 'grub rten 'brel mang* (Mchog gling C, pp. 263-264). The other versions of the prophecy are found in Kong sprul C, p. 646; Mkhyen brtse A, p. 22; Padma ye shes, p. 98; Dkon mchog, pp. 68-69. The colophon for the text to which the prophecy was amended dated its own revelations the female iron pig year (early February 1851 to late January 1852). Unlike the rest of the cycle, which was sealed in secrecy for seven years, this text was to be sealed for only one year. It was composed, therefore, sometime in 1853 (Mchog gling C, p. 263). The remaining treasure texts belonging to the cycle would not be written for several more years.

⁷⁰ This identification is repeated numerous times in the treasure literature of Mchog gyur gling pa, and was given added legitimacy with the composition of two texts in the curious Tibetan genre of

established an historical connection between Mchog gyur gling pa (via a previous life) and Padmasambhava, a necessity for all treasure revealers. Of more immediate concern, it turned into an historical inevitability what was at the time of composition merely an ardent desire: that the unknown Skya su *gter ston* would find in Si tu IX his predestined patron and master. What better way for an unknown man from another kingdom to announce his arrival than to proclaim it was foretold by Padmasambhava himself?

Mchog gyur gling pa recorded that “When I was twenty-five I met Skyabs mgon Si tu rin po che and offered him my treasure teachings and objects,” but he says no more.⁷¹ In Sprul sku O rgyen’s account Mchog gyur gling pa announced that he had been instructed by Padmasambhava to give Si tu a *kīla* empowerment. Si tu demurred, stating that at his age he had no strength to accumulate the recitations. He instead sent the petitioner into a retreat to perform the practice himself, and when the retreat was complete, they again met so that Mchog gyur gling pa could present the blessing, which Si tu accepted. Despite a dream of a lama

hagiographies of previous incarnations, one by Zla bzang sprul sku, a second by Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po (see Zla bzang, p. 55, and Mkhyen brtse C, p. 70). Both Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po’s hagiography and a section of the treasure history of the *Zab pa skor bdun* (Anonymous A, pp. 344-352) quote a lengthy section of the *Gsal ba’i sgron me*, an account of the past lives of the treasure revealer Zhig po gling pa Gar gyi dbang po (1524-1583), whose own incarnation line was in this way appropriated for Mchog gyur gling pa’s previous lives. (See Doctor 2005, p. 94.)

⁷¹ *Nyer lnga’i dus skyabs mgon si tu rin po che dang mjal / gter chos dang dam rdzas sogs phul* (Mchog gling A, p. 182). According to Mkhyen brtse dbang po, this included a text entitled *Phur ba dbang chen bzhad pa* that Dkon mchog ’gyur med lists as being part of the same extraction that produced the *Thugs rje chen po padma gtsug tor* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 22; Dkon mchog ’gyur med p. 283). No text by that name appears in the *Mchog gling gter gсар*, but given that the colophon to the root text dated its composition to 1853, as explained above, it is possible that it was that root text that Mchog gyur gling pa offered to Si tu as proof of his having revealed treasure. What Mchog gling received from Si tu in return is difficult to know, and the tradition has largely removed Si tu from the list of Mchog gyur gling pa’s teachers. Recall that he is not featured on the list of four teachers. Mkhyen brtse dbang po, in his hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa, follows the above statement with “Rin po che cleared away [Mchog gyur gling pa’s] temporal obscurations and arranged the conditions for his long life” (*rin po che nas kyang snga phyir bar chad sel ba dang / zhabs pad brtan pa’i rten ’brel bsgrigs*). Dkon mchog ’gyur med changes “*rin po che*” to “*rje rin po che*” (p. 66), and ’Jam mgon Kong sprul, who, in his *Rin chen gter mdzod* hagiography, repeats much of Mkhyen brtse verbatim, changes the “*rin po che*,” which one would have presumed to have indicated Si tu, to “I” (*ngos*) (Kong sprul C, pp. 645-646).

named Sngags khrims attesting to Mchog gling's authenticity, Si tu nonetheless made no formal pronouncement regarding the validity of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasures.⁷²

Si tu IX passed away on the seventh day of the fifth month of the water ox year, or June 14, 1853, just four months after Mchog gyur gling pa is said to have first met him.⁷³ Deprived of his first target, Mchog gyur gling pa turned towards the other leading masters of the monastery: 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Zla bzang sprul sku. The hagiographies would have it that Si tu commanded the two to decide the matter of Mchog gyur gling pa's authenticity. However, according to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's autobiography, it was Mchog gyur gling pa who initiated his and Zla bzang sprul sku's involvement in the legitimization of his treasures. In this he was only partially successful; though both later became central figures in the composition and promotion of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, the story that one must carefully wrest from the reluctant hagiographies is that Mchog gyur gling pa again failed to gain authorization, and ultimately left Dpal spungs without a change in status. The tradition might accept without difficulty Mchog gyur gling pa's early obscurity in Nang chen, and admit that Si tu failed to authorize him, but it appears that his biographers preferred to imagine that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and the others recognized his true nature after only a cursory examination, and not in reaction to the would-be treasure revealer's own steadfast efforts.⁷⁴

⁷² Schmidt 2005, pp. 90-91.

⁷³ Kong sprul A, f. 171a.

⁷⁴ Passages such as the following are scattered through the massive hagiography by Dkon mchog 'gyur med that create the fantasy that this was precisely what happened. An example is as follows: "When 'Jam mgon bla ma was thirty-seven, [1850 or so] a dangerous obstacle and some diseases arose. When he was doing practices from the *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* he had a vision of O rgyan rin po che, to whom he bowed down in reverence and received a blessing. [Padmasambhava] then said 'Your life-obstruction of this year is cleared away. A few years from now you will encounter my own self; make sure you are ready to train with him!' Then, when he was forty he met Mchog gling for the first time and it was like an encounter between father and son." *Lhag par 'jam mgon bla ma dgung grangs so bdun par degs 'phrung che zhing bsnyun khams 'ga' zhig kyang byung bar bsnyen sgrub gzhan dang khyad par bla ma dgongs 'dus kyi bsnyen sgrub skabs dag snang du / o rgyan rin po che mjal ba la gus pa chen po'i btud de byin rlabs zhus par sngags tshig 'ga' zhig gis byin rlabs stsal nas / khyod kyi da lo'i tshes gags sel ba yin / phyin chad lo shas mtshams nged rang dngos dang 'phrad 'ong bas bslabs bya rim par byed chog gsungs pa dgung grang bzhi bcu par mchog gling nyid dang mjal ba tsam nas pha bu 'phrad pa ltar* (Dkon mchog 'gyur med, p. 76). The motif of the student struggling to prove his worth to a master is common in Buddhism, a famous Tibetan example being the famous tasks Dmar pa assigned Mi la ras pa ostensibly to purify the would-be disciples karmic stains.

Despite their initial hesitation, Zla bzang sprul sku and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul count as the second and third of Mchog gyur gling pa's four teachers, and though this formulation certainly reflects later hagiographical developments – not to mention the plain fact that they did later embrace him – there is no reason to reject the tradition's claim that Mchog gyur gling pa received further vows and teaching from both at that time: according to the hagiographies, Zla bzang sprul sku gave Mchog gyur gling pa the bodhisattva vows and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul gave him tantric vows.⁷⁵ Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po dated the two vow ceremonies to the fourth day of the sixth month of the water ox year (c. July 11, 1853) and the twenty-fifth day of the sixth month (c. July 31, 1853), respectively.⁷⁶

Other than the statement that Mchog gyur gling pa took vows with them, little more is known about the initial contact with Zla bzang sprul sku and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, and in the lacuna we notice the hagiographies' reluctance to admit that again Mchog gyur gling failed to be authenticated. If Mchog gyur gling indeed received the empowerments, it is possible, even likely, that they came as public empowerments rather than the private rituals that signify the beginning of a personal relationship, given that no such relationship developed until much later. To avoid casting Mchog gyur gling as actively seeking out authorization and yet address the historical fact that he failed to receive 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Zla bzang sprul sku's acceptance, the hagiographies imply that despite their best efforts, neither lama was able to devote the needed time to the endeavor.

However, rather than creating a narrative in which Mchog gyur gling pa's masters consciously set up challenges for him to surmount, the hagiographers have obscured Mchog gyur gling pa's efforts to gain acceptance, resulting in confused account that make little sense against that straightforward narrative found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's own autobiography.

⁷⁵ Mchog gling A, p. 179; Mkhyen brtse A, p. 56 and p. 58.

⁷⁶ Mkhyen brtse A, pp. 20-21. Of the event Mchog gyur gling pa wrote, "I offered my unshakable faith to Drin can nges don bstan 'dzin rab rgyas [= Zla bzang sprul sku] and the will to enlightenment arose. Then began many fruitions; in particular I cut through the misinterpretations of the view. 'Jam mgon bla ma Kong sprul rin po che gave me an empowerment, a tantric exegesis, and finally pith instructions." *Drin can nges don bstan 'dzin rab rgyas la / mi phyed dad pa phul nas sems pbskyed thob / de nas bzung ste smin grol du ma dang / khyad par lta ba'i sgro 'dogs legs par chod / 'Jam mgon bla ma kon sprul rin po che'i [sic] / dbang bskur rgyud bshad man ngag mthar thug stsal* (Mchog gling A, p. 179-180).

Dkon mchog 'gyur med has it that both were instructed by Si tu IX to undertake the investigation,⁷⁷ yet it appears that Dkon mchog 'gyur med drew this information from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's autobiography, which he perhaps deliberately misread. There 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded having received a dream that seemed positive, yet that Zla bzang sprul sku warned against making any judgment in the matter.⁷⁸ Nevertheless, Dkon mchog 'gyur med manages to write of their failure to come to a decision as though it were a positive event; at one point Mchog gling went before the two masters, who put to him several difficult questions, "to which he gave replies that produced radiant smiles of elation." We are told that Zla bzang sprul sku came to the realization that Mchog gyur gling pa was indeed a "fated one" and predicted that his fame would grow, and yet neither he nor Kong sprul authorized him.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ He wrote: "The Lord [Si tu] said, "Jam mgon Yon tan rgya mtsho and Mkhan chen Zla ba bzang po together are to investigate what benefit would come to the teachings and beings if it be the case that Skya su gter ston is authentic, and I myself will also do so." *Rje yi zhal nas / 'jam mgon yon tan rgya mtsho dang / mkhan chen zla ba bzang po lhan la skya su gter ston tshad mar gyur pas bstan 'gro la phan pa zhig de 'ong brtag pa nan tan di gyis dang ngos nas kyang de ltar bya'o zhes phebs don ltar* (Dkon mchog 'gyur med pp. 66-67).

⁷⁸ The passage in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's autobiography reads as follows: "At this time Skya gter was in retreat doing longevity sādhanā on my behalf, for about a month, and he spoke of positive signs in his dreams. Having concluded his practice, in the evening that the substances of long life from his practice appeared, I had good dreams such as that the moon arose, I put on new robes, discovered a treasure casket and so forth. Moreover, earlier [Mchog gyur gling pa] had been persistent in asking Zla [bzang] sprul [sku to come to a decision]. I myself had looked into this while Skyabs rje [Si tu IX Padma nyin byed] was alive but could decide nothing. [Mchog gyur gling pa] came and implored me to investigate, and because leaving the matter unresolved now would definitely be inappropriate I did so, but did not arrive at a decision. [Zla bzang sprul sku] told me, "For now, making connections such as by giving him a treasure revealer's name – aside from "Skya su bla ma" – and requesting empowerments carry great risk and so you do not want to do it." Therefore at that time I did not request a long life empowerment and the like." *Di nas zla ba gcig tsam skya gter nged kyi tshe sgrubs la bzhug / rmis ltas legs gsungs / sgrub pa grol nas tshe rdzas byung ba'i nub mo zla ba shar / gos gsar gyon pa / gter sgrom rnyed pa sogs rmi lam bzang po byung yang sngar zla sprul mdun du'ang nan tan zhus te skyabs rje bzhugs ring 'di thad mthong gang yang ma chod / da ste snyoms bskyar ni / mi nyan nges pa red pas brtags pa mdzad rogs zhus pa ltar brtag pa mdzad kyang thag chod pa zhig ma byung / da gang ltar yang skya su bla ma zer ba ma gtogs gter ston gyi ming btags pa dang dbang chos 'brel pa zhu ba 'di khe nyen che bas gtan nas mi dga' gsung byung bas 'di res tshe dbang zhu ba sogs ni ma byung* (Kong sprul A, ff. 72b-73a). (My translation is tentative, as 'Jam mgon Kong sprul gives little indication of the speaker of much of these lines. See Barron 2003, p. 94 for an alternate reading of this passage. Dkon mchog 'gyur med gives a longer account of the vision on page 67. The editor of the Chinese version changed the phrase "skya su bla ma" to "skyabs su bla ma" (refuge lama; this mistake appears in Dkon mchog 'gyur med as well, on page 47). The error indicates continuing contemporary discomfort with the epithet.)

⁷⁹ An interesting addition to the narrative of Mchog gyur gling pa's failure to gain authorization at Dpal spungs comes in the treasure history of the *Zab pa skor bdun*, (Anonymous A) which I consider to have been composed by Zla bzang sprul sku, though it was probably written down by a disciple. According to this account 'Jam mgon Kong sprul does confer his authorization, but Zla bzang sprul sku withholds his

The man still known as “Skya su *gter ston*” left Dpal spungs towards the beginning of 1854. He did so to continue his pursuit of ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul’s authorization, evidently going back and forth from Dpal spungs to the Gter klung valley to the east.⁸⁰ According to ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul’s account, Mchog gyur gling pa set out for the Gter klung on an alms round. As he

own. The passage is found between two episodes in which Mchog gyur gling pa is recognized as a valid treasure revealer upon returning to Nang chen in 1856, first by Karma pa XIV and then by Zla bzang sprul sku, who traveled there with him. Zla bzang sprul sku’s hesitation following ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul’s authorization sets up the next passage, in which he finally bestows his own approval in Nang chen. This episode will be returned to below. The passage reads, “When the lord protector Zla sprul rin po che was at his seat at Dpal spungs and was investigating by means of Rgyal ba rgya mtsho [Avalokiteśvara] in accordance with the command of the great omniscient translator [i.e. ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul], he had a vision of the Stong nag mgon sprul patriarch Karma sgrub brgyud bstan rgyas [unidentified] who greeted him with a [white] scarf and [said] “Good morning.” Prostrating, [the patriarch] said, “Now we must decide whether this *gter ston* of the Skya su (interlinear note: “lineage”) is authentic or not.” Mkhan chen Rdo rje ‘chang [i.e. Zla bzang] then went to the place of [his?] residence and the sun rose over the mountain to the east of Dpal spungs, the ācārya ridge, and he had a vision of a Bengal tiger to the east, a turquoise dragon to the south, a lion to the west, a garuḍa to the north, a tortoise below and snow mountains to the west. As is described in greater detail in the extensive treasure history composed by Lo chen rin po che [i.e. ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul], [‘Jam mgon] Kong sprul rdo rje ‘chang, having made his decision, affirmed [Mchog gyur gling pa] as authentic and received from him teachings and empowerments. [However], Mkhan chen rdo rje ‘chang did a long life rite from the *Bka’ brgyad*, and thought “In my investigation what certainty is there?” and he left it [undecided].” *Skyabs rje zla sprul rin po ches Dpal spungs gi gdan sar lo chen thams cad mkhyen pa’i bka’ ltar rgyal ba rgya mtsho’i sgo nas brtags pa mdzad skabs / dag pa’i snang bar / stong nag mgon sprul gong ma karma sgrub brgyud bstan rgyas kyis dar nyin mo bde legs zhig phul zhin ‘tshal nas skya su (gdung ru / mchan) gter ston ‘di tshad ldan yin min thugs thad da lta gcod dgos gsung pa dang / mkhan chen rdo rje ‘chang gzim khang gi khar phebs pa dang / Dpal spungs gi shar ri a tsarya’i rgang nyi ma thog mar ‘char ba dang / rgya stag (shar) / g.yu ‘brug (lho) / seng ge (nub) / bya khung (byang) / ru sbal (‘og) / gangs [nub] ris sogs kyi dag snang gter ‘byung rgyas pa lo chen rin po ches mdzad par ‘gyur ba las zhib gsal ltar byung ba las / kong sprul rdo rje ‘chang gis thugs thag chod nas tshad mar mdzad de bka’ dbang zab chos bzhes kyang / mkhan chen rdo rje ‘chang gis sku rim bka’ brgyad bcas btsam las / rang gi brtags pa la nges pa ci yod snyams ste ji mi snyam du lus pa* (Unidentified A, p. 354). The corresponding passage in Dkon mchog ‘gyur med did not include the last line about Zla bzang leaving the matter undecided, thereby implying that both men authorized Mchog gling at that time (pp. 285-287). Such contradictions of fact (remember that earlier in the same text Dkon mchog ‘gyur med reports that both withheld their approval) are not uncharacteristic of the hagiography.

My justification for reading the title Mkhan chen rdo rje ‘chang as Zla bzang sprul sku rather than ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul (who, as can be seen from this passage, is also accorded the epithet Rdo rje ‘chang, Vajradhara) comes from a later passage in the text. The epithet “Mkhan chen rdo rje ‘chang” appears in accounts of events at which ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul was not present. Dkon mchog ‘gyur med clarifies the identity by replacing the epithet with “Zla sprul” in his version of the passage. On the same page the Sanskrit form of the name Zla ba bzang po, Sucandra, is given in apposition to the epithet: “Mkhan chen rdo rje ‘chang su tsandra” (Anonymous A, p. 356; Dkon mchog ‘gyur med, p. 287). I am not sure what the “extensive treasure history composed by Lo chen rin po che” refers to. The only treasure history for this cycle in the *Mchog gling gter gzar* is the one from which this passage is taken. If the reference is to ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul’s hagiographies of one hundred treasure revealers at the beginning of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, then I am mistaken in attributing the text to Zla bzang sprul sku, as he passed away before ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul composed that work.

⁸⁰ If this valley has a standard spelling I am unaware of it. Kong sprul spells it “Gter lhung” and also refers to it as Rting glung; he often combines the two regions of Sman shod and Gter klung as “Rme rting,” a combination of variant spelling of both places. On Chinese maps the name of the river is written *Deng chu* 登曲, while the valley is given the name *Denglong* 登龙 or 灯龙.

was destitute, Kong sprul recorded giving him “at least two sets of my robes, silk scarves, and even ink and paper, whatever provisions he would require.”⁸¹ How Mchog gling came to choose the destination for the alms tour is easy to understand; ’Jam mgon Kong sprul himself traveled to the Gter klung in the ninth month of the water ox year (c. October 1853). His aim there was the consecration of the practice cave Zla gam dbang phug, a project that included the composition a gazetteer for the mountain *gnas* Ri bo dbang zhu where the cave was located and the performance of rituals in the cave itself. He remained there until the second month of the wood tiger year (c. April 1854).⁸²

At the end of the water ox year (before February 28, 1854) “a few disciples” arrived at Zla gam dbang phug to join ’Jam mgon Kong sprul in Mahākāla practice.⁸³ Mchog gyur gling pa was certainly among them, for Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po recorded that Mchog gyur gling pa’s sole pure vision revelation, which took place at Ri bo dbang zhu, occurred while he was there “opening the *gnas*.”⁸⁴ In his enumeration of Mchog gyur gling pa’s thirty-three performances of extensive sādhanā practices (*sgrub chen*) Mkhyen brtse’i dbang also placed Mchog gyur gling pa at Ri bo dbang zhu at the same time Jam mgon Kong sprul was there, having him arrive at the beginning of the tenth month of the male water ox year, (early November 1853). He recorded that “At that occasion, as there were no more than a few masters and disciples, the distractions were minor, and the practice was effective. It was reported that [Mchog gyur gling pa] met with O rgyan rin po che and so forth, and everyone was satisfied.” Such a meeting is a probable

⁸¹ *De rjes khong gter lhung phyogs su gsol ldom byon ’dug kyang phyag rdzas ci’ang med skabs yin pas rang nas gos sne gnyes tsam dang / dar kha / snag shog yan chad ’byong ’khos gang yod kyi mkho chas rnams phul* (Kong sprul A, f. 73a).

⁸² Kong sprul A, f. 73a.

⁸³ Kong sprul A, f. 73a.

⁸⁴ *Gnas ri bo dbang zhu’i gnas zhal ’byed skabs* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 36). Unfortunately colophons for the revelation, the *Bima lha sgrub*, fail to include a date. One colophon does provide a colorful description of its reception, however: “I, Mchog gyur gling pa, while drunk on chang, was madly discoursing in the presence of the faithful and reverent master Blo can Karma tshe dpal (unidentified), speaking in the manner of wanton gossip, when suddenly this text appeared.” *Kho bo mchog gyur gling pa chang gis bzi ba’i skabs su dad gus kyi blo can karma tshe dpal gyi ngor smyo gnam ’chal tshig gi tshul du smras bzhin de ’phral nyid du yi ger snang par byas so.* (Mchog gling D, p. 270).

reference to his having received treasure, and so it would seem that this practice was performed at the same occasion that he received the *Bima lha sgrub*.⁸⁵

Mchog gyur gling pa was at Ri bo dbang zhu again the following year, though whether in pursuit of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul or not is not clear, and again the year after that, in 1855. Where he went in between his visits to the mountain is not difficult to explain; for two years, between the end of 1853 and December 1855, Mchog gyur gling pa continuously traversed the Sman shod valley between Dpal spung and Ri bo dbang zhu. On his way, he repeatedly encountered Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, who would become the next object of his quest.

Three. Rdzong sar

The received narratives of the initial years of Mchog gyur gling pa's relationship with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po are, like the accounts of his time at Dpal spungs, caught between the demand of presenting the first meeting between Mchog gyur gling pa and his main teacher and patron as one in which rainbows filled the sky and flowers fell like rain, and the reality that Mchog gyur gling pa was forced to struggle to prove himself. In the various accounts of the following series of events we also find a certain degree of narrative thrift in action. Tibetan hagiographies often conflate two or more events into one if those events involved the same people and occurred at the same location. This is particularly the case in shorter narratives, such as those of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's *Rin chen gter mdzod* hagiography, Dudjom, and Nyoshul Khenpo, where the life of Mchog gyur gling pa has not only been stripped down to what are considered major events, but events that likely unfolded over an extended period of time are presented as having occurred in a single instance. Contrast this to another frequent practice of Tibetan authors: the random insertion of episodes into a narrative without the month or year specified, producing what is often the false impression that the given episode occurred in chronological

⁸⁵ *De skabs dpon slob nyung ngu las med pas rnams g.yeng chung zhing sgrub pa gnad du 'gro ba dang / o rgyan rin po che'i zhal mjal ba sogs thugs tshim par byung zhes bka' stsal to* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 38).

sequence with the other events in the narrative that precede and follow it. These peculiarities are all featured in the written records of Mchog gyur gling pa's meeting with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po.

It appears that Mchog gyur gling pa met with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po at least three times between October 1853 and November 1855, the same period of his visits to Ri bo dbang zhu.⁸⁶ Given that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's monastery Rdzong sar is on the way between that mountain and Dpal spungs, this is not surprising. According to Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, on the eight day of the ninth month (October 10, 1853), the same year that Mchog gyur gling pa met Si tu IX as well as the same month that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul left for Ri bo dbang zhu, he "offered [Mchog gyur gling pa] a dharma connection in the form of a *Innermost Secret Kīla Razor (Phur pa yang gsang spu gri)*⁸⁷ empowerment by which the obstacles of the year were cleared away."⁸⁸ The date given is repeated in all later hagiographies.⁸⁹ The date makes possible the speculation that Mchog gyur gling pa received this empowerment while on his way to Ri bo dbang zhu for the

⁸⁶ As the forging of a relationship with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was one of the most momentous events in Mchog gyur gling pa's life, a prophecy was composed to affirm the inevitability of its occurrence. Like other prophecies associated with Mchog gyur gling pa, this one is presented as a testament given by Padmasambhava to Prince Lha sras. It appears to primarily predict the extraction of the Mchog gyur gling pa's seventh treasure casket. It is ostensibly quoted from a text entitled the *Skabs rten 'brel mdo chings*, but no text of this title appears in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, and no prophecy is amended to any text of the seventh treasure casket. Reading from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa: "Lha sras, the profound treasures concealed at [Ye rgyal] Nam mkha' mdzod will not remain [concealed]; the inspired being who will remove them will be your final incarnation. At that time the translators and paṇḍitas, the king and most of his subjects will gather. The sovereign father and son [i.e. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa] will meet, and by each aiding the other they will awaken in stages. They will actually encounter me in a pure vision and receive my final instructions, and I will teach them the rubrics of the secret mantra doctrine. In recognizing their own nature they will effortlessly accomplish the attainment and many students who will master the siddhi will come." *Khyad par skabs rten 'brel mdo chings las / nam mkha' mdzod du bas pa'i zab gter rnams / mi bzhas 'don pa'i skyes bu smon lam can / lha sras khyod kyi skye ba'i tha ma 'byung / de dus lo paṇ rje 'bangs phal cher 'dzom / khyad par mnga' bdag yab sras mjal nas su / gcig grogs gcig byed las 'phro rim par sad / nga yi gdams pa mthar thug rnams dang mjal / dag pa'i snang bar nga nyid dngos dang 'phrad / gsang sngags gdams pa'i lag len dmar khrid ston / rang nyams blangs pas 'bad med grub pa thob / dnogs grub brnyes pa'i slob ma du ma 'byung*. The other appearances of this prophecy are Kong sprul C, pp. 646-647; Padma ye shes, p. 101; and Dkon mchog 'gyur med, p. 79.

⁸⁷ According to the Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein this is a treasure text revealed by Gter bdag gling pa (1646-1714), the founder of Smin sgrol gling monastery to the south of Lhasa (p. 286).

⁸⁸ *Phur pa yang gsang spu gri'i dbang chos 'brel du phul bas dgung keg gi bar chad gsal* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 21).

⁸⁹ Mchog gling does not include this or any information regarding the formation of his relationship with Mkhyen brtse, stating only that the latter gave him a teaching titled *The Essence of the Profound Vast Liberation (Smin grol mtha' yas zab don snying khu)* (Mchog gling A, p. 179).

first time, possibly as part of a public empowerment rather than personal transmissions from a master to a disciple, or possibly because Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po noticed something in the man that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul continued overlook.

An alternative to the possibility that the two met by chance is found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's autobiography. This is an account of a letter written by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul on Mchog gyur gling pa's behalf, requesting that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po look into the matter of the would-be revealer's authenticity. If 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was correct in his assertion that the incident was the first meeting between Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, then it is certainly out of chronological order in his autobiography, appearing amidst events of the wood hare year (mid-February 1855 to early-February 1956).⁹⁰ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul gives no indication of the time of year for this episode:

The house of Gnas ra⁹¹ wished for a performance of the *Bka' brgyad* wrathful dance and requested I go there. However, as I had no free time whatsoever, I sent Skya gter as my representative. He wished to meet Rdzong sar sprul sku rin po che [i.e. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po], and asked me for a letter of introduction. I presented him [with one in which I wrote]: "This one has good nature⁹² and so forth; regardless of how one examines him, he is a person like no other. I think he might be a treasure revealer, as he himself claims. He has a treasure teaching called *Padma gtsug gtor*⁹³ but he has not produced an authorization for it, and since he does not know how to compose one,⁹⁴ I respectfully request you look into the matter."⁹⁵

⁹⁰ Not only would the date given conflict with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's account, but it contradicts his own hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa, where he follows Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's dated for the first encounter (Kong sprul A, f. 646).

⁹¹ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's patrons living in Dpal smad, near Dpal spungs.

⁹² The Tibetan term is *kun gzhi*, a translation of the Sanskrit *ālaya*, "the foundation of all things."

⁹³ Recall above that Mchog gyur gling pa presented a treasure by this name to Si tu IX in hopes of being authorized as a treasure revealer.

⁹⁴ This phrase (*rtsom pa'i rigs su mi 'dug pa*) has been read as meaning that Mchog gyur gling pa could not write. O rgyan stobs rgyal's hagiography paraphrases this line of the introductory letter as follows: "[Mchog gyur gling pa] is quite uneducated and couldn't even write a letter himself" (Orgyen Tobgyal p. 4). This might be a later strategy in support of the legitimacy of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasures; if the revealer is illiterate, he could not be accused of writing the treasure texts himself. Numerous colophons, written in the first person and crediting Mchog gyur gling pa with the extraction and the transcription, would indicate otherwise however. For example, the standard colophon for texts belonging to the *Zab pa skor bdun* cycle read as follows: "I, Mchog gyur gling pa extracted this from Nam mkha' mdzod and transcribed the copper scrolls." *Kho bo mchog gyur gling pas nam mkha's mdzod nas spyen drangs shing zangs shog las zhal pa shus pa'o* (Mchog gling I, p. 519). Other colophons in the same cycle, however, do not have the initial "I" (*kho bo*); and example is: "Mchog gyur gling pa transcribed this from the silver certificates which he extracted from Nam mkha' mdzod." *Mchog gyur gling pas nam mkha' mdzod nas phyan drangs pa'i dangul byang las zhal bzhus pa'o* (Mchog gling J, p. 525). In both examples it is possible to imagine that

According to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, it was following this work for the Gnas ra clan that Mchog gyur gling pa met Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po face-to-face for the first time (*sku mdun zhal mjal gyi thog mar*), and received the *Innermost Secret Kīla Razor* empowerment and extensive and detailed teachings which, according to Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's own account, he gave Mchog gyur gling pa in October 1853.⁹⁶

Assuming that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was accurate in his role in bringing Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po together, if not in his dating of the episode, the meeting was not a matter of chance, simply the result of Rdzong sar being on the road to Ri bo dbang zhu. In either case, whether by chance or design, with the first encounter behind them Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po soon began a twofold ritual authorization process that unfolded over a period of one year. As he made clear in his account of the episodes, the events were beneficial for Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po himself, a treasure revealer in his own right:

In the eleventh month of the male wood tiger year [late-December 1854 to late-January 1855], Mchog gling intentionally come [here], and stayed for more than a month. [I] gave him many empowerments, specifically the ripening empowerment, transmission and instruction of the *Rdzogs pa chen po bla ma yang tig yid bzhin nor bu*.⁹⁷ During the descent of

Mchog gyur gling pa dictated the text to a scribe, but the absence of evidence to the contrary leaves the question open.

⁹⁵ *Gnas ra tshang nas bka' brgyad khro rol bca' sgrub dgos pas 'ong rogs byas 'dug kyang khoms lcogs med pas tshab tu skya gter btang / khong rdzong sar sprul sku rin po che mjal 'dod 'dug pas phran la mtshams skyor gyi yi ge bskur rogs gsungs pas / 'di pa kun gzhi bzang ba sogs gang la brtags kyang bzhan dang mi 'dra tsam zhig 'dug pas khong rang gsung ltar gter ston zhig yin nam snyam / gter chos padma gtsug tor zer ba 'dug pa'ang khong nas yig bskur legs pa'ang mi thon pa dang rtsom pa'i rigs su mi 'dug pas gzigs pa gnang grub zhu shog phul.* (Kong sprul A, ff. 77a-b). The text of the letter is almost identical in *Dkon mchog 'gyur med*, pp. 77-78, and comes with no indication of date.

⁹⁶ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul added a detail not recorded by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po: following the meeting Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po sent Mchog gyur gling pa back to Dpal spungs to take a necessary *Māyājāla* empowerment from him. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded that he gave the requested empowerment of the peaceful and wrathful deities, and that from Mchog gyur gling pa "I requested the ablution and blessing from the 'Brug pa [Bka' brgyud] tradition of the five ablution deities." *Khong las 'brug lugs khrus lha lnga'i khrus dang rjes gnang zhu* (Kong sprul A, f. 177b). Barron (p. 100) reads "rjes gnang" as "empowerment," which is possible, but given that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had yet to accept Mchog gyur gling pa as a treasure revealer – he continued at this point to refer to his as "Skya gter" – he was likely still under Zla bzang sprul sku's warning against receiving initiations from him. Following the service Mchog gyur gling pa returned to Rdzong sar. Padma ye shes, who follows Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's narrative, did not include this episode either, but *Dkon mchog 'gyur med*, who drew from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's autobiography, inserts this incident into his own tangled narrative on page 78.

⁹⁷ This is a section of *Klong chen rab 'byams pa's Snying thig ya bzhi*.

the wisdom being in the unelaborated empowerment, the lama, I myself, appeared [to Mchog gyur gling pa] as Vimalamitra, and he saw a *ḍākinī* holding a peacock [feather] parasol over [my] head and many hosts of *ḍākinī* circumambulating [me] to the left. Later, when the [I] introduced him [to the nature of mind] Mchog gling stated that he recognized his naked awareness. After the empowerments and instructions were completed, as an authorization [I] offered him a life-force entrustment of the mantra protectors, at which point [Mchog gyur gling pa] saw Ekajaṭī in person, and there was great resplendence as though the earth was shaking. [Ekajaṭī] said, “If you two, master and disciple, remain in continuous retreat for three years, I shall bestow the great accomplishment!” This was a foreshadowing of our extraction of the *Rdzogs chen sde gsum*.⁹⁸

The narrative here nicely sets up the relationship of master and disciple, with Mchog gyur gling pa seeing Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po as the *Rdzogs chen* patriarch and treasure-master Vimalamitra surrounded by *ḍākinī*. Ekajaṭī is a main Rnying ma protector deity and a primary guardian of *Rdzogs chen* and of hidden treasure. Her involvement here is a strong affirmation of Mchog gyur gling pa's right to extract treasure, and simultaneously foretells the coming extraction of a co-credited treasure from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's own hermitage during its consecration (discussed below).

Later in the hagiography Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po relates a second ceremony, this one a year after the first:

When the lord [Mchog gyur gling pa] reached the age of twenty-seven, in the ninth month of the wood hare year [mid-October to mid-November 1855], [he] came [to Rdzong sar] intentionally [to meet me, and I] offered [him] a Kīla empowerment and teaching of the 'Khon tradition [i.e. the Sa skya order]. He said that he had a positive dream in which the thirty-one demons obstructing profound treasure⁹⁹ were exterminated. In particular, when offering the nine-deity Yang dag empowerment, in the center of a sky that had turned a deep blue the lama, I myself, appeared [to him] as Heruka and dissolved into his forehead, causing the subtle knot in his heart center to open. Then, by means of the vocalization of the teachings on the path and fruition¹⁰⁰ the elements of his veneration and blessing consolidated and his subtle knots were opened. [I] taught him the vital points of the *Mahāmudrā prāṇa* from the pith instructions on Nāgārjuna's system of the *Guhyasamāja*;

⁹⁸ *Khyad par phyi lo shing pho stag gi lo'i mgo ba'i zla ba'i nang ched du byon nas zla gcig lhag tsam bzhugs / dbang chos mang po dang / bye brag rdzogs pa chen po bla ma yang tig yid bzhin nor bu'i dbang khri lung gsum smin par phul ba'i spros med dbang gi ye shes dbab pa'i dus su bla ma nyid bi ma lar dngos su snang pa'i sbyi bor mkha' 'gro mas rma bya'i gdugs bzung dang / mkha' 'gro'i tshogs mang pos g.yon bskor du byed pa gzigs / rjes ngo sprod dus rig pa rjen par ngo 'phrod gsungs / dbang khrid tshar rjes bka' gtad pa'i tshul gyis sngags srung ma'i srog dbang phul skabs e ka dza ṭi dngos su gzigs shing sa g.yo ba lta bu'i zil shing to che ba byung / dpon slob gnyis car la lo gsum gyis mtshams su dngos grub chen po sbyin par gsung pa rdzogs chen sde gsum gyi zab gter thon pa'i snga ltas su snang ngo (Mkhyen brtse A, pp. 21-22).*

⁹⁹ Unidentified. The number 31 is one shy of the 32 caskets Mchog gling was yet to produce.

¹⁰⁰ This line is tentative: *gsung ngag lam 'bras pas. Lam 'bras*, or “path and fruition” is the principle teaching structure of the Sa skya sect to which Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po belonged.

afterwards amazing [experiences] arose in conformity [to those teachings], and vajra songs effortlessly burst forth.¹⁰¹

With this rite Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po concluded what he seems to have intended as a complete authorization process. It began with the clearing away of Mchog gyur gling pa's obstacles in 1853, continued with his authorization in 1854, and finished, in late 1855, with the opening of the knots of Mchog gyur gling pa's subtle body. Thereafter Mchog gyur gling pa would have been physically enabled to properly receive his treasures and to decode them.¹⁰²

It was most likely at one of these services that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po bestowed on Skya su gter ston Dkon mchog bstan 'dzin the name he carried for the rest of his life, O rgyan 'gro 'dul Mchog gyur bde chen zhig po gling pa. However, even with the change in name, no series of rituals, performed with no more than a few attendants to witness, could herald that name across Khams. If Mchog gyur gling pa intended to develop his name to the level of prestige enjoyed by his new patrons, justifying his inclusion in the triumvirate known as "Mkhyen Kong Mchog sde gsum," he would have to display his newly bestowed status before a skeptical public. And he would have to lay a foundation for his authority that stretched beyond the geography of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's own fame. He next set out to do so.

¹⁰¹ *Rje nyid dgung grangs nyer bdun du son pa shing yos dbyug pa zla bar ched kyis phebs par phur pa 'khon lugs kyi dbang bka' phul bas zab gter gyi bar chad 'byung bo sum cu rtsa gcig bsgrol ba'i mnal ltas legs par byung gsungs / khyad par yang dag lha dgu'u dbang chen phul bas / nam mkha' mthing zhun gyi mdog tu gyur pa'i dbus bla ma nyid he ru ka dngos su snang ba snyi bo nas thim pa'i nyams shar bas snying ga'i rtsa mdud grol / de'ang gsung ngag lam 'bras pas mos gus can bying rlabs kyis khams 'dus shing rtsa mdud grol ba dang / 'dus pa 'phag lugs kyi man ngag phyag rgya srog rtsol gyi gnad gsungs pa dang rjes su mthun pa'i ngo mtshar che bar byung / rdo rje'i mgur glu thogs med du brdol (Mkhyen brtse A, pp. 23-24). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul paraphrased this passage (C, p. 648), while Padma ye shes repeated it word-for-word, save for a single adjustment of an article which I have followed to make better sense of the passage: his version reads ". . . de'ang gsung ngag lam 'bras pas / mos gus can byin rlabs kyi khams 'dus shing rtsa mdud grol ba. . ." (p. 103).*

¹⁰² It remains to be fully understood how the rite Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po performed differed from the reputed benefit of sexual yoga. Presumably Mchog gyur gling pa was practicing (or at least claiming to practice) rites with his consort that would have had the same effect. Those practices, however, would not have the vital added advantage of the ceremonies performed by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po: they would not have been publicly witnessed.

Four. Return to Nang chen

Following his time with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, Mchog gyur gling pa returned to his homeland with the aim of enacting his new status in a place where he had previously known only rejection. Passing first through Dpal spungs on his way across 'Dri chu and into Nang chen, Mchog gyur gling pa met with 'Jam mgon Kong sprul. If 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had any reservations about accepting Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's decision on Mchog gyur gling pa's treasures, he did not include them in his autobiography. Recalling this encounter, he used for the first time the new epithet "great treasure revealer" (*gter chen*) in place of "Skya su *gter ston*," which thenceforth is no longer found in the text.¹⁰³ The two exchanged empowerments and transmissions, with 'Jam mgon Kong sprul accepting from Mchog gyur gling pa empowerments for the treasures that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po had just assisted Mchog gyur gling pa in deciphering.¹⁰⁴ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was then suffering from an outbreak of an eye disease that had been plaguing him for some time, and Mchog gyur gling pa was able to diagnose and cure, to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's great delight.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Kong sprul A, f. 78a.

¹⁰⁴ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul wrote of the event: "He conferred on me the complete transmission and empowerment of his mind treasure, the *Bima'i bla sgrub*, the four empowerments of the *Bar chad kun sel*, together with the body, speech and mind empowerments, using a representative statue [of Padmasambhava] and performing it from memory." *De nas khong gi dgongs gter bi ma'i bla sgrub dbang lung tshang ba / thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel gyi zlum po bzhi dbang / sku gsung thugs dbang bcas sku tshab la brten thugs thog nas mdzad* (Kong sprul A, ff. 78a-78b). Note how 'Jam mgon Kong sprul classifies the first cycle as a mind treasure rather than a pure vision treasure as Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po would later do. Its history, it would seem, had yet to be decided on. Mchog gyur gling pa's performing the rites "from memory" is an interesting indication that the liturgies for the cycle had not yet been written down.

¹⁰⁵ It seems that in the *Bar chad kun sel* cycle was a prophecy that identified 'Jam mgon Kong sprul as an incarnation of the imperial translator Vairocana, whose run-in with the Queen Dmar rgyan ma left each of his future incarnations with leprosy of the eye. This Queen, a wife of the Tibetan Khri srong lde'u btsan, made advances on Vairocana. He spurned her, and in revenge she attempted to kill him with an infection of smallpox. Vairocana deflected her poison back to her, but in so doing defiled his karmic stream, resulting in the curse of smallpox infections on his subsequent incarnations. Mchog gyur gling pa's prescription was: "From now recite and practice the *Vajradaṇḍa* [sādhana] from the auxiliary *Bar ched kun sel* and you will definitely be cured." *Da phyin bar chad kun sel cha lag rdo rje be con de'i bzlas sgom gyis dang nges par drag 'gro sogs gsung* (Kong sprul A, f. 78b). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul continued, "After having received the blessing of the *Thugs sgrub* [*bar chad kun sel*] my eye illness never again significantly flared up. After that, I met with Rje rin po che [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po] and he gave me a text on *Vajravidarana*, and I thereafter made it my daily practice and even undertook a retreat, and my eye disease permanently cleared up. Because of this I developed faith in the great treasure revealer's words and treasure teachings, so different from what generally comes out of the dirt and rocks!" *Thugs sgrub*

With both Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's backing secured, Mchog gyur gling pa returned to Nang chen. He was accompanied there by Zla bzang sprul sku, an eminent member of the Bka' brgyud community whose seat was at Karma mgon, one of their primary target destinations.¹⁰⁶ Given that word of events at Rdzong sar and Dpal spungs could not have preceded them, Zla bzang sprul sku would have been an important ambassador for Mchog gyur gling pa's newfound status. Over the course of the fire dragon year (early-February 1856 to late-February 1857) Mchog gling visited three sites he would become closely linked to: 'Og min karma above Karma dgon, Ye rgyal Nam mkha' mdzod in his home valley, near where he would found Gnas rtan monastery, and Zla nyin kha la rong sgo in the upper Rdza chu valley, revealing treasure in the presence of witnesses at each site.

Many of these events are recorded in the treasure history of the *Zap pa skor bdun* (Anonymous A), a text that also included a fairly lengthy section dedicated to the affirmation of Mchog gyur gling pa's newly minted authority. Treasure histories perform several functions, not the least of which is the validation of the treasure revelation they recount. In the case that the revealer himself has not yet attained an unassailable status, they also serve to legitimate him. This is the case with the *Zap pa skor bdun* history. The narrative of authorization there nicely mirrors his struggle for legitimacy to date, and certainly reflects the reality that despite Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's authorizations and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's acceptance of it, Mchog gyur gling pa had yet to gain much approval in his home region. For this reason we will quickly examine the treasure history's authorization narrative, before finally turning to the events that led to the creation of Mchog gyur gling pa's narrative map.

'di'i byin rlabs thob phyin mig nad 'phar ldangs gtan nas ma byung / rjes su rje rin po che'i mdun nas rdo rje be con gyi dpe gnang byung bas de phyin rgyun khyer dang phyis bsnyen sgrub kyang byas pas mig nad de ni gtan dwangs red song bas gter ston gyi gsung dang / gter chos la'ang phyis kyi sa langs rdo langs rnams dang mi 'dra bar yid ches pa byung (Kong sprul A, f. 79a).

¹⁰⁶ Karma dgon was founded in 1184 by the first Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110-1193). It is located in the Rdza chu valley in the T.A.R. to the north of Chab mdo. See Gruschke 2004, pp. 45-49 for a description.

The text begins with several pages of quotations intended to substantiate Mchog gyur gling pa via reference to an account of his past lives, including a lengthy passage from a text composed by Zhig po gling pa, the *Gsal ba'i sgron me*, the text Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po would later use for his account of Mchog gyur gling pa's past lives.¹⁰⁷ It then gives a lengthy account of Mchog gyur gling pa's authorization, told through dreams and recollections, using the epithet "Skya gter" towards the beginning and *gter chen* towards the end in order to emphasize the transformation from that state of illegitimacy into the "great treasure revealer" named Mchog gyur gling pa. Finally it relates the events of the revelation and describes the general structure of its contents.

The *Zab pa skor bdun* history includes three separate episodes of authorization. The first is a dream had by Karma pa XIV Theg mchog rdo rje (1798-1868), then in residence at Karma dgon, prior to Mchog gyur gling pa's arrival. The Karma pa describes his dream, in which he learns that the time had come to reveal treasure from the mountain ridge behind Karma dgon and that the revealer who would do so was on his way:

When the likes of charlatans with fraudulent treasure or no treasure at all come to [Karma] gdan sa, it is certain to be indicated in various ways, such as the ground shaking and a red wind blowing. In accordance with my own dreams, when Skya su ("interlineal note: the name of a place and the ancestral line there, one of the larger lines") *gter ston* comes here many positive marvels such as the sky and earth will be calm and so forth will arise. If the conditions are not mistaken, he is probably an authentic treasure revealer. During the life of every Karma pa there is a great *gter ston* to repel obstacles; now, it seems, [mine] has come.¹⁰⁸

Despite the dramatic prediction of the conditions of Mchog gyur gling pa's arrival, the Karma pa's reservations are apparent with the use of the phrases "if conditions are not mistaken" and "probably." His use of the epithet "Skya gter" further underscores his – that is, the text's – initial hesitation to accept Mchog gyur gling pa. It is a narrative device no doubt intended to

¹⁰⁷ See above, page 31, note #70.

¹⁰⁸ *Gdan sa 'dir zob brdzu gter min gter 'dra'i rigs 'ong tshes tshub rlung dmar sogs mi 'dra ba 'ong ba nges can yin / skya su (yul ming gi gdung rus yin rus chen 'gru yin / mchan) gter ston byon dus nam mkha' gzhis 'jam pa sogs legs pa'i ya mtshan che ba dang rang gi rmis ltas dang mtshungs pas rten 'brel ma 'chug na gter ston tshad ldan zhig yin pa 'dra / karma pa sku phreng rer bar chad zlog pa'i gter chen re byon rgyu yod pa dab yon tshod yin* (Anonymous A, p. 353).

resonate with the reader who, like the Karma pa and Zla bzang sprul sku, was not inclined to accept Mchog gyur gling pa without proof of his legitimacy.

In the text the Karma pa bases his tempered confidence in the coming treasure revealer on Zla bzang sprul sku's opinion of him, and therefore on Zla bzang sprul sku's own reputation. The Karma pa continues:

Earlier, in spite of everything, the authenticity [of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasures] was not perceived. Now this Zla sprul rin po che is [said to be] one whose attributes of learning and realization are in harmony with the realization of the Buddha; if this is not mistaken, and if there is benefit for the doctrine and all beings, it will be amazing.¹⁰⁹

For this to be supported, the narrative had to then justify that opinion, and so it next relates how Zla bzang sprul sku himself gained faith in Mchog gyur gling pa.

First, however, the incident that supposedly took place in 1853 is recounted, in which 'Jam mgon Kong sprul granted authorization at Dpal spungs but in which Zla bzang sprul sku continued to hesitate.¹¹⁰ The episode, with its withholding of Zla bzang sprul sku's authorization, appears to be included here to set the stage for Zla bzang sprul sku to finally and dramatically accept Mchog gyur gling pa, an event which, according to our text, only occurred after their arrival at Karma dgon. Now, Zla bzang sprul sku went before a statue of the *mahāsiddha* Saraha at Karma dgon to contemplate the matter. Slipping into a dreamlike state, Zla bzang sprul sku received from the statue a letter that read:

This treasure revealer Mchog gyur gling pa is inarguably a thrice-authenticated great treasure revealer. May the conditions for requesting empowerment, transmission and instruction be without disturbance! Now, if [you] do not received [his] dharma, and the geographic and temporal circumstances of place pass away or are reversed, there will no benefit to the doctrine and beings; [the time and place] are now!

At this Zla bzang sprul sku "reached a state of incalculable joy."¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ *De sngon ni gya ma thog las tshad ldan ma mthong / zla sprul rin po che 'di mkhyen rtog kyi yon tan grub chen sangs rgyas mnyan pa dang mtshungs pa zhig 'dugs pas rten 'brel gyi gnad ma 'chug na bstan 'gro sems can la phan thog pa zhig byung na ngo mtshar che zhes snang* (Anonymous A, p. 353).

¹¹⁰ See above, page 35, note #79.

¹¹¹ *Gter ston mchog gyur gling pa 'di gter chen rtsod med tshad ma sum ldan yin dbang lung khrid rim zhush la rten 'brel mi 'chol bar gyis / da khyod rang gi chos ma gsan na rten 'brel gyi sa rga log 'gro bas bstan 'gro sems can la phan thog min da lta yin gsung 'dug pas dga' spro dpag tu med pa thob* (Anonymous A, p. 355).

The authenticity of Mchog gyur gling pa having been confirmed in consecutive steps, the narrative next turns to the events of the *Zap pa skor bdun* revelation. Zla bzang sprul sku and Mchog gyur gling pa together performed empowerments from Mchog gyur gling pa's new Vimalamitra and *Padma gtsug gtor* cycles, they sang songs of their realizations, and recalled their past lives. Padmasambhava then appeared to them and handed Mchog gyur gling pa a prophecy for revealing treasure from Karma'i dam can brag, a cliff at 'Og min karma,¹¹² and next, with the Karma pa XIV and several esteemed lamas from Karma dgon in their party, they set off to recover, decode, and write out the treasure. Following that, Mchog gyur gling pa returned to Sde dge.

III. The Narrative Map

We have followed the journey of a young man born Dkon mchog bstan 'dzin who bore the pejorative "so-called treasure revealer of the Skya su clan" from his native Nang chen to the religious and political center of Sde dge, pursued the great lamas of the region in hopes of their blessing, and finally gained their authorization and acceptance. That support of his patrons – Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Zla bzang sprul sku, and the Karma pa XIV – was a necessary component of his authority. Still, a treasure revealer cannot traverse the realm with merely the claim that such-and-such a lama backs him. The treasure tradition had long ago created the figure of Padmasambhava, elevating an eighth-century mystic¹¹³ to the rank of

¹¹² The vision is described as follows: "At that time a wrathfully smiling azure-colored O rgyan Padmasambhava [appeared]. He [wore] a topknot, bone ornaments, a tiger skirt, a purple scarf, and a variegated *pati* robe, a crown of dried skulls, and a garland of flowers. In his right hand he held a skull cup full of amṛta, and in his left a three-pointed khaṭvāṅga. His right leg was bent, his left stretched out in the posture of wrathful dance, sitting on top of a lotus, moon disk, amidst vast rainbow clouds. He gave a prophecy that there was treasure to be received from Karma'i dam can brag." *De skabs o rgyan padma 'byung gnas mthing ga khro 'dzum thor tshug rus rgyan stag sham dar mthing dmar gyi pa ti khra bo dang ldan pa / thod skam gyi dbu rgyan / rin po che dang me tog gi phreng bas brgyan pa g.yas bdud rtsis bkang ba'i thod pa btegs shing g.yon khaṭvāṅga rtse gsum dkur bstan cing 'dzin pa / zhabs g.yas bskum g.yon brkyang ba'i rol stabs kyis pad zla 'ja' sprin gyi klong du gnas pas karma'i dam can brag nas zab gter bzhes pa lung bstan pa* (Anonymous A, pp. 355-356).

¹¹³ See Gyatso 1994 (p. 285, note 21) and 1993 (p. 98, note 2) for lists of other figures credited with the concealing treasure.

a buddha in order to have a sufficiently glorious source for the revealed scriptures and objects. Claiming to be the rebirth of Lha sras btsan po, an historical disciple of Padmasambhava, was one of Mchog gyur gling pa's first ploys to forge a personal link to the master's authority. More impressive was the creation of a narrative map that imbedded that authority in the landscape of Khams, a landscape which he is in charge of opening. With the backing of his patrons, that map found widespread distribution and with it Mchog gyur gling pa's success was ensured. Having gradually staked his reputation to local sites across in Khams – Nam mkha' mdzod and other places in Nang chen, and Ri bo dbang zhu in Sde dge – Mchog gyur gling pa now increased his activity in the efficacious realm of geographic representation, first assisting his two patrons in the consecration of their hermitage sites, and finally producing the text that landscaped the entire territory of Khams.

By the eleventh month of the fire dragon year, some time in January 1857, Mchog gyur gling pa was back in Rdzong sar with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. Over the next years the two of them together composed liturgies for the treasure cycles he had revealed in Nang chen over the previous ten years, and, in January 1857, they opened a cave site that was to be Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's main hermitage, Padma shel phug, the Lotus Crystal Cave. Although this was not the first time Mchog gyur gling pa was involved in a site consecration, it was the first he served in the official capacity of a treasure revealer – the man who produced the physical proof of Padmasambhava's presence there. In that position Mchog gyur gling pa extracted two treasures, including the *Rdzogs chen sde gsum* which had been foretold by the deity Ekajati during this authorization ceremony two years earlier.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁴ These two revelations, according to most accounts, mark the beginning of Mchog gyur gling pa's "public extractions" (*khrom gter*), despite the fact that the previous revelation at 'Og min karma had been performed in the presence of the Karma pa and Zla bzang sprul sku. The hagiographies make much of the fact that from these two caskets onwards most of his revelations would be public extractions, based on Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's assertion to that effect (*'di nas bzung phal cher khrom gter du mdzad*; Mkhyen brtse A, p. 27).

The opening was no easy matter. We learn from Dkon mchog 'gyur med that because the treasure concealed there was under such a weighty injunction, the protector deities “the treasure protectors, local gods and foundational lords brought up a magical gale and so forth” to protect it.¹¹⁵ To placate the deities they offered a ceremonial feast, a petition offering, and a special drum ceremony, and they “resplendently proclaimed their command” that the protectors submit to them.¹¹⁶ Such travails serve to assert the gravity of the treasure and the skill of the revealer. In addition, Mchog gyur gling pa himself reported that he performed a medicine sādhana prior to revealing a Dga' rab rdo rje reliquary,¹¹⁷ to which Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po added, “Although it was the dead of winter a summer-like warmth came. When the

¹¹⁵ Dkon mchog 'gyur med p. 294. O rgyan stobs rgyal included in his lengthy account of the event a statement that prior to the ritual activity the caves above Rdzong sar were considered haunted, to the degree that it was said “[W]hoever went there was eaten right away” (Orgyen Tobgyal p. 8). The cave was known as “the Ghost Cave” due to multiple sightings of ghosts around it. Such stories imbue the site with a force that is all the more potent for having been transformed from evil to good. Even if the site was not actually known as a dangerous place, the stories indicate that at least it was not yet considered a site of religious power; the narrative of transformation would not have been possible otherwise. Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's activities there altered the character of the place, transforming it from cursed (or at least simply neutral) place to a meditation cave of Padmasambhava, Ye shes mtsho rgyal, and Vimalamitra. O rgyan stobs rgyal's account nicely links Mchog gyur gling pa's fortunes to that of Padma shel phug. There Mchog gyur gling pa begins the event as “Skya su gter ston” and comes out the other side accepted by the general public as a treasure revealer: when word had gotten out among the local people that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa (and, erroneously, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul) were planning to go reveal treasure at the caves the people said of Mchog gyur gling pa: “Today Kyater is going to take out a terma. The ghost will eat him.’ Someone else said, ‘Since Khyentse and Kongtrül are here maybe he will indeed take out a terma.”” After the revelation, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po tells the crowd, “Chokling is a great tertön, a very precious one. His terma teaching is extremely precious, as is this place. Everyone should make offerings and circumambulations. The three of us have now opened the gate to this sacred place. When you die, you will all go to the Copper Colored Mountain – I promise.”

¹¹⁶ *Zab gter bka' gnyan pas gter srung yul lha gzhi bdag gi cho 'phrul rlung dmar shin tu ldang ba sogs byung bar / gnas der tshogs skor gsol mchod dang khyad par dam brngar / bka' nan rab brjid du stsal.* We learn some of the names of these deities in one of the treasure histories for the cycle: “Regarding the lords of the treasure, the outer [protector] is the powerful Rdo rje legs pa. The inner [protector] is 'Bar ba me yi gdong can, and the secret [protector] is Ma mo gshogs rgod rtsal. Those three were charged [with protecting the treasure]. Samaya rgya rgya rgya” *gter bdag ni phyi ltar skyes bu rdo rje legs pa / nang ltar 'bar ba me yi gdong can / gsang ba ltar ma mo gshog rgod rtsal gsum la bcol to* (Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse D, p. 28).

¹¹⁷ Mchog gling A, p. 183. The location of this extraction is maintained by the site's current caretakers to be on the circumambulation route, on the ridge above the cave to the north. A painted wooden marker at the base of a rocky outcrop there reads “The cliff is this site's watchman; it is the place where the great treasure revealer lama received as treasure a reliquary of Dga' rab rdo rje. If one intends to complete the circumambulation, one must pass through the open hole, if not [that is, if one's destination is elsewhere] one should go over the cliff.” *'Di gnas kyi bya ra ba gnas pa'i brag yin / gter chen bla mas dga' rab rdo rje'i gdung rten gter nas bzhes sa yin / gnas bskor dus thar na phug pa zang thal 'di nas 'gro / ma thar na gong gi brag phug bar ma nas 'gro dgos.*

medicine was completed he became dizzy, but it came out well; its color, smell, and taste were all perfect.”¹¹⁸

The deities having been placed under command, their treasure surrendered to Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po, and the site having been sufficiently marked out for pilgrims, Mchog gyur gling pa crossed the Hag la between Sman shod and Dpal spungs where he began to assist 'Jam mgon Kong sprul with the opening of Tsā 'dra rin chen brag. His welcome there was in sharp contrast to his first arrival at Dpal spungs nearly five years earlier, which went virtually unnoticed and was followed by a series of disappointing rejections. Now, conches were blown, banners were hung, and flowers fell from the sky.¹¹⁹ Together the three went up to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's hermitage to begin consecrating it. As part of that process, Mchog gyur gling pa announced that Tsā 'dra rin chen brag was one of twenty-five great sites in Khams, and he slipped away to enact the narrative map's revelation. When he returned, Mchog gyur gling pa and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul completed the site's consecration and sat together in Si tu's residence to write out the narrative map, to which we now turn.

The text of the narrative map begins with the assertion that the religious geography of Khams is as real and inevitable as the landscapes of India and Tibet in the cosmological ordering of the universe. We first read that there are “countless millions of world realms,” and that in our realm of “Jambudvīpa, in the country of India, there are twenty great sites.” These

¹¹⁸ *Nam zla dgun sgang yin kyang dyar dus lta bur drod phebs pa dang / sman la phabs btab pa sogs brjed kyand legs par langs shing kha dog dri ro phun sum tshogs pa byung* (Mkhjen brtse A, p. 38). The same passage appears in *Dkon mchog 'gyur med*, p. 560.

¹¹⁹ Moreover, as 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded in his autobiography, he acted as scribe for the transcription of “the yellow scrolls of the empowerment rite of White Amitāyus and so forth, and the signs of virtuous circumstances were favorable. I dreamed that I reached the age of eighty, and I also dreamed of discovering many excellent cycles relating to Yamāntaka. Mchog gling gave me his own treasure teaching of *Padma gtsug tor dri med* and the [*Khor ba*] *dong sprugs* from the *Zap pa skor bdun* cycle he had received the year before at [*Og min*] Karma as well as the empowerment, transmission and instructions for the Longevity Yamāntaka, my own personal lot.” *De'i tshes nyer gsum la gter ston phebs / dar phyar dung 'bud lha bsang btang sogs byas / kha ba me tog bcas babs pa rten 'brel legs gsungs / tshe dkar dbang chog sogs shod ser las phab pa'i yi ge pa bgyis pas rten 'brel dge mtshan kyang legs shing / rmi lam du lo brgyad cu lon nyer 'dug pa dang / gsheg skor khyad par can mang po zhig rnyed par rmis / nyid kyi gter chos padma gtsug tor dri med dang / snga lo karma nas bzhes pa'i Zap pa skor bdun skor las dong sprugs / rang skal gshin rje tshe bdag gi dbang lung khrid bcas gnang* (Kong sprul A, ff. 85a-85b).

go unnamed but the reference is most likely to the geographical system of the *Cakrasaṃvara tantra* described above, or to a similar system found in other texts such as the *Hevajra tantra*. We next learn that Padmasambhava invited the deities of India to Tibet to reside in the landscape there, and “in this way the land and its inhabitants together were blessed, and the aspiration was made that the sites would benefit whomever encounters them.”¹²⁰ From the very outset, then, we have a conception of the entire Tibetan landscape that has been empowered via the familiar motif of the importation of Indian divinities, transforming the whole Tibetan landscape to that of the cosmic geography found in the tantras.

The map then divides Tibet into three separate spheres: upper, middle, and lower, corresponding to the traditional three regions (*’chol kha sde gsum*) of Mnga ris, Dbus gtsang, and Khams. Twenty great mountains, including Ti se and La phyi,¹²¹ are said to be in the upper region. For the middle the text names forty-two religious sites, both important *gnas* such as Tsā ri and imperial-era monasteries such as Bsam yas.¹²² Following this the text is exclusively concerned with the places of the lower region, Khams, which also number forty-two. Unlike those of the middle region, however, the sites of Khams are not all named, and those that are

¹²⁰ *Dngos su bstims shing yun du bzhugs gyur pas / rten dang brten par bcas pas byin gyi brlabs* (Mchog gling B, p. 98). In the gazetteer to Padma shel phug, probably written around the same time, the idea of Tibet being transformed into the pure land of the deities is expanded: “O rgyan chen po spoke as follows: ‘A ho! Few auxiliaries [of the *pīṭha*] of India – a country to which the pure lands of Kecchara have transferred to earth – have appeared in Tibet. Because of this the accomplishments of the Tibetan masters are few. Therefore I, Padma, practiced and blessed whatever sites in Tibet were good and invited all hosts of vidyādhara dākinī who abide in the *gnas* and charnal grounds of Kecchara and India, and they dissolved into each major site there; [Tibet] thus became indivisible from Kecchara. Setting forth inventories, I concealed treasure [there].’” *O rgyan chen pos ’dis skad gsungs / a ho / mkha’ spyod dag pa’i zhing khams rnams / sa la ’phos pa rgya gar yul / yan lag tsam zhig bod du snang / de bas bod rnams grub thob nyung / de phyin padma bdag nyid kyi / bod kyi sa gnad gang bzang du / sgrub pa byas shing byin gyis brlabs / mkha’ spyod zhing dang rgya gar gyi / gnas dang dur khrod la bzhugs pa’i / rig ’dzin mkha’ ’gro’i tshogs thams cad / spyang drangs gnas mchog so sor bstim / mkha’ spyod gnas dang dbyer med byung / dkar chag btab ste gter du sbas* (Mchog gling and Mkhayen brtse A, p. 367).

¹²¹ Six names only are given: Gangs rgyal Ti tsho [sic?], La phyi, Yol mo gangs, Byams sprin khu lung, Ri bo dpal ’bar, and Ri bo bkra shis bzang. Yol mo gangs, or Yol mo gangs kyi ra ba, is a *sbas yul* (“hidden valley”) just over the border in western Nepal, in the modern district of Helambu. It was opened by Ngags ’chang Shakya bzang po (the first Yol mo sprul sku) in the sixteenth century. It is referred to in lists of *sbas yul* found in Rig ’dzin rgod ldem can’s (1337-1408) collected works, and there are several *gnas* *yi* to the site available. Ri bo dpal ’bar and Ri bo bkra shis bzang are sites associated with Byang gter tradition of Rig ’dzin rgod ldem can and the Rnying ma monastery Rdo rje brag south of Lhasa with which the Yol mo sprul sku are associated. I am indebted to Benjamin Bogin for this information.

¹²² Mchog gling B, pp. 97-100.

named are not necessarily intended to be identified. Nevertheless, by introducing the great sites of Khams after the well-established religious geographies of Mnga' ri and Dbus gtsang, the text makes plain that its geographic representation of Khams is as authoritative as the first two.

The forty-two sites are organized into five categories of the enlightened body, speech, mind, activities and attributes of the buddha, which are themselves divided into five according to the same categories. This enumeration is commonly known as the “twenty-five attributes of fruition” (*'bras chos nyer lnga*). The list, however, included also a main site of each category, thus producing thirty: a main site of buddha body, a body-aspect of the buddha body, a speech-aspect of the buddha body, and so forth. The five categories are then revisited, in four “exceptional sites” (*khyad par gnas bzhi*), one each of buddha body, speech, mind and attributes, and “eight emanated sites [which] tame beings through enlightened activity” (*phrin las 'gro 'dul sprul pa'i gnas brgyad*). These last eight are divided according to the four modes of ritual activity (peaceful, expanding, overpowering, and wrathful)¹²³ and by four buddha families: vajra, jewel, lotus, and karma.¹²⁴

The sites fall easily into three distinct categories: well-known sites, unidentified sites, and sites of Mchog gyur gling pa's revelations. First, Mchog gyur gling pa made use of well-known and important religious sites already on the landscape. These fifteen well-known places, clearly named for easy identification, function to legitimate the list as a whole. The sites lend to the entire system a prominence lacking in the new or unknown sites.¹²⁵ Mountains like Kha ba dkar po (#9) and monastic locations such as Kaḥ thog rdo rje ldan (#25) add gravity to what otherwise would have little grounding. Indeed, without them the map would have no spatial orientation at all, for the second category of sites are given without any possibility of locating

¹²³ Davidson renders these into English with glosses as to their meaning: “the four tantric ritual goals: pacifying (diseases, enemies, emotions), augmenting (money, power, merit), controlling (opponents, gods, passions) and killing (enemies, gods, sense of self)” (2005, p. 35).

¹²⁴ What tantric system this is intended to represent is not clear.

¹²⁵ These are: sites 1, 2, 7, 9, 13, 14, 15, 25, 31, 32, 34, 35, 38, 39, and 42.

them, and the third category, the sites of Mchog gyur gling pa's revelations, would as a group not be known to anyone.

The thirteen other sites that fall into the second category are presented in oblique and elusive language.¹²⁶ Their identities are either uncertain or outright indecipherable.¹²⁷ This is no doubt intentional, a stylistic means by which descriptions can be given but identities remain concealed. The map, an act of opening, had to leave open the possibility for further geographic expansion to allow its proponents to develop additional religious sites. It would have been short-sighted for a young man so dedicated to opening sites to set forth a geographical conceptualization of his theater of operations that left no room to grow.

The last fourteen sites on the list, making up the third category of sites, are directly related to Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure revelations. These are the sites that gave purpose to the narrative map, for these are the sites which, by being inserted into a network of forty-two, gave geographic substance to the fledgling legitimacy of the young treasure revealer Mchog gyur gling pa. Every place of Mchog gyur gling pa's activity through to the moment he revealed the narrative map is represented on this list. Every one of his treasures revealed to date was in need of a solid foundation, which the narrative map provided.¹²⁸ Alone, the sites had no

¹²⁶ Little surprise then that in his hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa, in a section that describes his sanctifying activities across Khams, Dkon mchog 'gyur med (pp. 264-281) inserts not Mchog gyur gling pa's list text but 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's clarification of it (Kong sprul D).

¹²⁷ These are: sites 4, 12, 16, 18, 20, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 36, 40, and 41. All but one of these are identified in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's version, discussed in Chapter Three. Homonyms and orthographical errors are common in the narrative map texts. Mchog gyur gling pa wrote that the second site, the body-aspect of buddha body is called "Skyi" whereas 'Jam mgon Kong sprul refers to it in his commentary as "Spyi." In Sde dge dialect both are pronounced similar to the English word "she." An example of orthographical errors is site #18, which is in the Tsha rong valley according 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (p. 131) and Dkon mchog 'gyur med (p. 269) but "tshung rong" in the manuscript version (3b) and "tshu rong" in Blo gros phun tshogs (p. 15).

¹²⁸ Setting aside the first two of his revelations, the correspondence between his revelations through to those immediately following the writing of the list is as follows: casket #3 came from site #5, Zla nyin kha la rong sgo; casket #4 came from site #10, Na bun rdzong; casket #5 came from site #37, Ri bo dbang zhu; casket #6 came from site #3, 'Og min karma; casket #7 came from site #11, Nam mkha' mdzod; casket #8 came from site #5, Zla nyin; caskets #9 and #10 came from site #22, Padma shel phug, casket #11 came from Dpa' bo dbang chen brag (associated with site #19, Ru dam gang gi ra ba); casket #12 came from site #21, 'Bri gnyan ldangs; caskets #13 and #14 came from site #24, Seng ge gnam brag. (Caskets #19 through #29, #33, #34, #37 and #38 also came from sites on the list; see Table Two for a correspondence between

significance, for neither the site itself nor Mchog gyur gling pa's activity there was of sufficient substance. By being inserted into a larger network the sites participated in the representation of a coherent territory. The force of this unified territory would be contained in each site on the map, establishing each as a great site deserving of reverence and renown. Like the individual demon-taming temples and the mountains of the *Cakrasaṃvara maṇḍala* in southern Tibet, each site of Mchog gyur gling pa's revelation was made significant by means of the network's geographic unification of Khams, and simultaneously functioned to embody that unified territory. It was a system of legitimacy-distribution that was a boon to Mchog gyur gling pa, his treasures, and to Khams.

Of the forty-two places on the narrative map, twenty-nine are linked explicitly to Padmasambhava. The remaining thirteen are empowered via an association with other deities like Heruka or Vajrasattva or other important religious sites (Tsā ri appears in three separate instances). Of these thirteen, four are sites of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure revelation, including site #37, Padma shel ri (the mountain *gnas* of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's birthplace to which Mchog gyur gling pa followed 'Jam mgon Kong sprul before being authorized), and site #22, Padma shel phug (Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's hermitage site he assisted in opening in 1856). Of the remaining nine, all but two were well-established sites that did not themselves require an explicit link to Padmasambhava in order to be read as significant. Otherwise, a narrative map that gives only a single line of text to some of the descriptions included information that Padmasambhava practiced at seventy percent of the sites, thus rendering the territory broadly imbued with Padmasambhava's presence. With such a legacy literally soaked into the soil, the landscape of Khams was made available to mediate Padmasambhava's authority and deliver it to Mchog gyur gling pa.

all caskets and the sites on the list.) The first two revelations were said to have occurred when Mchog gyur gling pa was young, in Nang chen, and resulted in no texts or objects. The difficulty the hagiographic tradition had with their place in the corpus of Mchog gyur gling pa's revelations is discussed in Chapter Two.

Mchog gyur gling pa had already solved the problem of how to justify his claim to be Padmasambhava's representative and ensure that the narrative map would find an audience: he tied his and his treasure's fortunes to the still-widening fame of Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul. As remarkably well designed as the narrative map was, Mchog gyur gling pa was still in no position to disseminate it and expect automatic approval by the public. But with the inclusion of the just-consecrated Padma shel phug and Tsā 'dra rin chen brag, Mchog gyur gling pa could count on Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po's and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's support for the map. Both sites, being then under development, were in need themselves of stories of their being blessed by Padmasambhava, and the narrative map would have been the first written descriptions of either place. Padma shel phug is therefore described as not simply a great *gnas*, but "an eminent site among all great sites in Tibet" (*bod kyi gnas chen kun las khyad 'phags pa*). Further, "no other site matches the excellence of this place, for it is the site of the singular treasure of all those under the soil of Tibet, the mind-elixir of all the learned and accomplished ones, the *Rdzogs pa che[n po] sde gsum*."¹²⁹ Although the identification of Tsā 'dra rin chen brag with Devīkoṭa and Tsā ri was not original, this would have been the first written statement of it, and of the fact that the site was visited and blessed by Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and other saints.¹³⁰ These are attributes that any hermitage or pilgrimage site would require to attract pilgrims and practitioners. Mchog gyur gling pa's narrative map provided the necessary descriptions of the necessary characteristics, and as a result Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul would have been inclined to support the narrative map.

The necessity of authoritative patrons in the legitimation of treasure revealers was a crucial aspect of Mchog gyur gling pa's rise to fame, and it too can be traced on the map of Khams that he created. Each site on the narrative map serves a function, be it to legitimate a

¹²⁹ *Char mi nye zhing kun las 'di 'phags pas / bod yul sa 'og kun gyi gter gcig ma / mkhas grub kun gyi thugs bcud rdzogs pa chen sde gsum dam pa'i chos 'di bzugs pa'i gnas* (Mchog gling B, p. 115).

¹³⁰ Mchog gling B, p. 116.

specific treasure, to lend a site of Mchog gyur gling pa's activity some renown, or to preserve the potency of undefined space for later revelation. Read this way, Mchog gyur gling pa's narrative map of Khams is a map of many things: it is a story of Padmasambhava's enlightened activity in the region; it is a representation of a cohesive territory; it is a conduit by which Padmasambhava's authority is transmitted to the treasure revealer who created it; it is a network of geographic signification by which each individual place is rendered meaningful; and it is a guidebook to the successfully arrived at authenticity.

A map is a reflection of the mapmaker as much as a representation of a territory. Maps, according to the cartographer J. B. Harley, can be viewed as discursive tools produced by people with agendas as means of persuasion.¹³¹ Mchog gyur gling pa's map is a fine example of this: with it he persuaded his audience that his authority was as natural and real as the mountains and rivers of Khams. All his actions in pursuit of his legitimation, all those of his patrons and colleagues, as well as the means by which they undertook them, were concealed in the spatial configuration of that legitimacy. To put it another way, the structures of power that the unknown charismatic entered into and exploited for his own gain were rendered innocent and neutral. Mchog gyur gling pa and his collaborators were members of a society that perceived space as pregnant with supernatural power, its land continuously traversed by saints who implanted their blessing residue. These categories of perception have a history, having developed over time and space by those in search of an authority of their own. They became the geographic reality of Tibet, and as such the mode by which those seeking power via geographic representation would themselves perceive their territory.

Mchog gyur gling pa's employment of the theological and geographical tools available to him allowed him to legitimate the sites of his revelation by proving that they had come from authentic sites of Padmasambhava's authority. These included conceptions of the "twenty-five attributes of fruition," the ever-open hagiography of Padmasambhava, and, perhaps most

¹³¹ See his essays on cartography collected in Harley 2001.

importantly, the interconnecting nature of Tibetan religious geographical representation as discussed in the opening section of this chapter. The fluidity of spatial representation – now sacred, now profane – was a vital element in Mchog gyur gling pa’s geography of his authenticity. The sites had to be legitimate *gnas* if the treasures extracted there were to be legitimate. By inserting them into a network of sites, a grand geographical representation of territory, they were made to be so. Alone, like Mchog gyur gling pa himself, the sites of his revelation languished in obscurity, but linked together they were rendered meaningful, important places on a map of legitimacy.

As ardent as Mchog gyur gling pa’s ambition to ascend to the ranks of the great treasure revealers was, the means to achieve it had to be similarly grand. The enlistment of an entire geographic region as a witness to his authority served that need. For great need produces great results, as Hannah Pitt’s statement which opens this chapter indicates. Of all the characters in Kushner’s *Angels in America*, the devout middle-aged Mormon housewife is the only one capable of believing that Prior Walter could extract a book of prophecy from beneath his kitchen floorboards. Perhaps Walter’s revelation was part of a grand deception cooked up by his persevering will to live. His need made prayer, and his prayer made an angel. Even though that angel came to demand that he (and all of humanity) stop living, it was through his struggle with her that he found his victory and survived his disease. Mchog gyur gling pa’s revelation of the list of great sites of Khams required no struggle with the *dākinī* who delivered it, at least as far as we are told in the narratives. Yet the revelation does represent a struggle, one that had occupied him for the better part of his life to that point: the struggle for legitimacy.

Chapter Two

Narrative Treasures and Ritual Openings

“In order to qualify as historical, an event must be susceptible to at least two narrations of its occurrence.” Hayden White.

Four thousand seven hundred fifty meters (15,580 feet) above sea level, to the west of Rdzong sar monastery in Sde dge, lies Seng rgod g.yu mtsho, the Wild Lion Turquoise Lake, a small blue mirror of water at the base of jagged cliffs.¹³² On the eleventh day of the tenth month of the fire tiger year (November 19, 1866) Mchog gyur gling pa, Mkhyaen brtse'i dbang po, and a host of attendants ascended through high yak pasture and traversed a difficult snow-covered scree field to arrive at the lake. Despite the arduousness of their journey, Mchog gyur gling pa recorded that they were delighted upon their arrival, and that primordial awareness easily arose. In one of the many crumbling slate houses scattered about where great practitioners had once resided they prepared a shrine and performed a feast offering. Both lamas are said to have revealed treasure there, and if we can believe the later accounts, everyone in attendance walked away with their pockets full of gold.

Of some eight different accounts of the day at the lake, only two give the name of a text recovered then, the *Thugs sgrub rdo rje drag rtsal*, taken by Mkhyaen brtse'i dbang po from a golden casket he pulled out of the lake.¹³³ Yet according to other accounts, including a colophon for a text by that name in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, it was Mchog gyur gling pa who retrieved

¹³² There are alternate names for this lake, including G.yu mtsho gtan khyil (the Permanently Abiding Turquoise Lake) and Seng rgod g.yu mtsho gtan 'khyil (the Permanently Abiding Wild Lion Turquoise Lake; Mchog gling A, p. 186 and 189), Seng ngu g.yu mtsho (Lion's Roar Turquoise Lake; Blo gros phun tshogs 2004, p. 36), Ma pham seng rgod g.yu mtsho (Invincible Wild Lion Turquoise Lake; Mkhyaen brtse A, p. 31), and simply Seng ge g.yu mtsho (Lion Turquoise Lake; *thang ka*).

¹³³ Kong sprul E, p. 180; Blo gros phun tshogs B.

the golden casket from the frozen waters, and the text named above had already been revealed by Mchog gyur gling pa the day before, in the cave complex of Rong me 'Chi med dkar mo stag tshang, the Deathless White Tiger's Nest of Rong me,¹³⁴ five hundred meters below the lake. What, then, happened at Seng rgod g.yu mtsho?

* * *

Accounts of Tibetan treasure revelation come in many forms, including hagiographies (*rnam thar*), treasure histories (*gter 'byung*), and colophons to the treasure texts (*gter byang*), among others. Each can be said to advance a different (though naturally related) agenda, in much the same way Hayden White has argued that different forms of historical representation do so. How is it that narrative, so smooth and coherent, can be said to accurately depict a reality that is so obviously discontinuous and chaotic? White compared narrative history to annals and chronicles, both of which list events in the sequence in which they occurred but offer no overarching plot or frame. As White illustrated, chronicles can present a vision of reality in which nothing happened, a blank on a page next to the number of the year, suggesting a greater concern for the marking of time's passage than for the interpretation of events. All three forms treat events as real, first because they have been remembered and second because they are capable of being placed in chronological sequence. Yet the mere listing of information brings little satisfaction in a world inundated with it. It is narrative that supplies the desired meaning and order – a plot and a morality.¹³⁵

Narrative achieves the goal of drawing order out of chaos at a price: the subtle implication that reality may not be correctly represented by that narrative. Narrative, by

¹³⁴ Alternate spellings include Rong rme and Rong med.

¹³⁵ See White 1987, Chapter One. On page 21 he writes, "The demand for closure in the historical story is a demand, I suggest, for moral meaning, a demand that sequences of real events be assessed as to their significance as elements of a moral drama."

bringing order to the world, ironically thereby renders events themselves suspect, inspiring doubt as to whether things happened as told. As explained by White, implicit in a narrative is the suggestion that the story could be told in a different way. A narrative presents facts as “tokens of reality” (episodes that by virtue of being remembered must be true) while simultaneously undermining confidence in the events as told (did they really happen that way?). This chapter will take up the contentious topic of treasure revelation – not treasure literature, but revelation – with the aim of sorting through the different types of historical accounts of the practice. The obvious inclination of the Western scholar is to either dismiss as nonsensical (or entirely avoid) the fantastical claims that Tibetans routinely extract texts and objects from the soil, where they had been concealed by the eighth-century mystic Padmasambhava.¹³⁶ Many Western accounts of the phenomenon are contemptuous of the very idea, while others have “tacitly maintained,” as Donald Lopez put it, “a pious fiction of authenticity” around the issue of a text’s supposed concealment and recovery.¹³⁷ I will argue that treasure revelations do occur and have historical reality: they have been remembered and they have been placed in chronological sequence. However, even as we accept the reality of the event, we must suspect it, because the information we are given about such an event – the narrative that is woven around it – is so thick with agendas.

¹³⁶ The Tibetan treasure tradition is by now a well-studied phenomenon, and as there are several solid presentations of the tradition and surveys of the literature on it there is no need to do so here. Doctor 2005 is a particularly compelling survey, while Gyatso 1996 is still the finest basic introduction. It is Gyatso who has made the greatest contribution to the topic’s understanding in the west, with a series of groundbreaking publications (1986, 1992, 1993, 1994, 1996, and 1998). Others (Blondeau 1971, 1984, 1987, 1988; Kapstein 1989; Mayer 1994; Davidson 2002, Doctor 2005) have analyzed particular Tibetan polemics of treasure, both pro and con. Studies of individual treasure revealers (Prats 1980; Dargyay 1981, Goodman 1983 and 1992; Martin 1996 and 2001; Gyatso 1998; Blezer 2001; Harding 2003) have rarely addressed the means by which the revealer himself succeeded in gaining legitimacy, a topic that seems to interest only those who dismiss the practice as akin to or outright charlatanry (Waddell 1895; Vostrikov 1970; Stein 1972; and Aris 1989). See also Cuevas 2003 for a history of one famous treasure text, the so-called *Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Tibetan apologists for the tradition writing in English include Tulku Thondup 1986 and 1990, both of which are solid traditional accounts of the phenomenon by a member of the tradition. Martin 1994 makes the important contribution of reading revealed scripture and objects as relics. Hanna 1994 and Germano 1998 are Western accounts of treasure revelation. On Bon po *gter ma* see especially Karmay 1972, Kværne 1974, and Martin 2001

¹³⁷ Lopez 1998, p. 243 note 32.

Those agendas vary according to the genre of the presentation, much as White has shown that the implicit interest of an annalist or chronicler is different from that of an historian. However, where White appeared to have considered the first two more accurate somehow in their representation of reality than a narrative,¹³⁸ I do not find in any Tibetan account of treasure revelation a depiction of events that is not densely mediated by an agenda. Even in the treasure colophon, a genre of historical writing that most resembles the chronicle in its unelaborated statement of an event's having occurred, there is a specific agenda at work. Whatever the event was that has been remembered and inserted into an account of a revelation, it has already been, by the demands of a treasure tradition constantly vigilant against claims of inauthenticity, molded according to particular norms and presented according to particular requirements of the given format. Whether the account is found in hagiography, treasure history, or colophon, the treasure tradition, which has been on the defensive from the beginning, has made it a requirement to describe a revelation in a particular way in order to substantiate the legitimacy of treasure objects. This is the case whether or not any treasure objects were ever produced.

I will argue that the requirement to defend treasure has had the effect of obscuring two aspects of the phenomenon. First is the simple fact that the revelation of earth treasures occurs not in a single place and moment of time but over an extended period and in different locations, and as the result of specific and conscious steps taken by the treasure revealer and his or her assistants. Although this is not a statement that would surprise readers of hagiographies and treasure histories, it has potential to disturb someone who is familiar only with the claims of the apologists. As is frequently reported in hagiographies and treasure

¹³⁸ White rhetorically asked: "Does the world really present itself to perception in the form of well-made stories, with central subjects, proper beginnings, middles and ends, and a coherence that permits us to see 'the end' in every beginning? Or does it present itself more in the forms that the annals and chronicle suggest, either as mere sequence without beginning or end or as sequences of beginnings that only terminate and never conclude?" Ibid, p. 24. One might consider the very notion of a "sequence" to be yet another form of narrative, given that the events placed in sequence are on some level regarded as important, for otherwise they would not have been preserved.

histories, the reported precise moment of a revelation comes only after initial consideration of the treasure to be revealed, and occurs as part of a ritual performance designed to give rise to an ecstatic state during which the revelation is said to be produced.¹³⁹ The colophon, however, commonly – though not always – erases temporal and spatial extension, creating the common misconception that a treasure text came into being suddenly in one place at one time.¹⁴⁰ Second, the ritual performance of treasure revelation can be said to serve additional goals only tangentially connected to the production of treasure. Chief among these is the consecration of sites. I will argue that the revelation of treasure is a means to provide physical evidence that a saint blessed the site of its extraction, and there is reason to believe that revelations were staged for this purpose primarily. This second point has been particularly effaced by the tradition’s defensiveness, as it undermines the basic claim that from revelation a treasure text or object is produced.

In the first section of this Chapter I respond to perhaps the most notorious Western study of treasure revelation, Michael Aris’ *Hidden Treasures and Secret Lives*. I argue that Aris mistook narrative for historical reporting, an error that led him first to consider the revealer, Padma gling pa (1450-1521), to be a charlatan. Burdened by the belief that what Padma gling pa wrote was historically accurate, Aris was then trapped in the analytical corner of trying to explain Padma gling pa’s intentions and uncover the subconscious motivations behind his deceptions. The study is part muckraking and part psycho-history, the former informed by a

¹³⁹ I use this terminology with some trepidation, as it implies the issue of “shamanism” and other forms of spirit communication. At the very beginning of his 1993 book-length interpretation of Tibetan religion Samuel categorized treasure revealers as shamanic, writing that treasure revelation is what “later Tibetan visionary-lamas” do (1993, p. 9) and later explaining that “The *tertön* seem to represent the ‘wildest’ and most ‘shamanic’ end of Tibetan Buddhist practice” (ibid. p. 296). Numerous reviewers of Samuel’s book have argued persuasively that “shaman” is not a suitable category for much of the phenomena that Samuel used it to describe. Nevertheless, much treasure revelations do incorporate some form of visionary experiences and communication with deities like *dākinī* and local protector gods who are said to guard the treasure. However, mere communication with a deity certainly does not make a person a “shaman.” See especially Gyatso 1998 for a discussion of these visionary aspects of the treasure tradition.

¹⁴⁰ The basic exception to this is information given as to who acted as scribe for the text, and whether the transcription occurred at time and place other than the revelation.

less-than nuanced reading of treasure narrative, and the latter awkwardly borrowing from already-discredited forms of doing history.¹⁴¹ Despite these weaknesses the book is one of the few examples of a work of scholarship that takes the act of revelation seriously. Making use of a wealth of materials relating to the treasures of Mchog gyur gling pa, I too wish to take revelation seriously. I will propose a reading of the historical accounts of treasure revelation – hagiographies, treasure histories and colophons – that accounts for the elision of the ritual performances of treasure revelation that were undertaken for the consecration of sites and that produced no treasure.

In the second section of this chapter I will analyze the composition of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, the collected treasures of Mchog gyur gling pa. The structure of this collection was first developed by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po soon after Mchog gyur gling pa passed away in 1870. This was done in his hagiography of the treasure revealer. There Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po the events of Mchog gyur gling pa's life and his treasures into a coherent order. The work compressed Mchog gyur gling pa's treasures and his revelatory activities into a narrow framework of presentation, one that incorporated elements of treasure narrative from colophons, histories, and hagiographies. In doing so, certain aspects of the treasure recoveries and the revelation rituals were excised from the narrative, reducing the complex process of treasure production to a narrative norm. That norm was the requirement that a treasure revelation consist of elements: an agent, a place, a time, and a treasure. The third section of the chapter will show that the norm Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po developed for the treasure revelations of Mchog gyur gling pa disallowed acknowledgement of an important function of treasure revelation: the consecration of places.

¹⁴¹ The classic examples of what came to be called “psycho-history” are Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) and Erik Erikson’s *Young Man Luther* (1962) and *Gandhi’s Truth: On the Origins of Militant Nonviolence* (1969).

I. On Treasure Revelation

In his study of the treasure revealer Padma gling pa, Michael Aris infamously made use of contentious terms like “charlatanry,” “fraud,” and “hoodwink” to describe the fantastical aspects of Padma gling pa’s treasure extractions. Aris read Padma gling pa’s autobiography as one might read a modern scientific history, presuming that the treasure extractions occurred as described (albeit with some unacknowledged behind the scenes pulling of strings by the revealer). He thus ironically slipped into a trap warned against by Vostrikov, who rejected reading treasure texts as historical documents.¹⁴² Nevertheless, his is one of the sole instances of a Western study of the treasure tradition that focused on the revelation rather than the product. It was an attempt to make sense of the origin stories of what is certainly one of the most problematic genres of Tibetan literature. His observations, generally lost in the din of discomfort his study produced (or perhaps, exposed) in Western academies, are worth a fresh look.

On the topic of the revelation of treasure chests and their contents, Aris wrote:

What was actually contained within the chest at the time of its “discovery” did not much matter since it was the custom not to open it immediately but rather to wait till the appointed time according to further instructions in the “prophecy.” This would give the “discoverer” plenty of time to concoct the contents for further dissemination. The whole point was to recover the chest itself in the presence of independent witnesses. The phrase “crowd treasure” (*khrom-gter*), in the sense of a treasure extracted in the presence of a crowd of people who then receive the blessings of the treasure-chest on their heads, carries conscious allusions to the parallel phrase “crowd initiation” (*khrom-dbang*), which is an activity all important lamas engage in from time to time. The treasure-hunt thus simply becomes an extension of the lama’s customary role in society.¹⁴³

Aris was not interested in the later production of the treasure text itself, dealing only with the fantastical claims of recovering a physical box from a cliff, lake, or soil. I would argue that Aris

¹⁴² Vostrikov surveyed what were considered “historical” treasure texts like the *Maṇi bka’ ’bum* and the *Bka’ thang sde lnga*, texts that claim to be contemporary accounts of events described, but his warnings have resonance for all treasure narratives. See Vostrikov 1970.

¹⁴³ Aris 1989, p. 50.

is entirely correct here, and go further to allow that even the chest itself might not have appeared at the time of the revelation. Aris was working from a single account; but when numerous narratives are made available, seemingly critically important details such as the existence of a casket are in fact inconsistently mentioned. One easily develops the impression that the recovery of the box is immaterial.¹⁴⁴

Aris' biographical account of Padma gling pa makes up the first half of a study of fraud and mistaken identity in Tibet. The book was written to expose what Aris took to be an aura of half-truths and outright mendacity surrounding its two main characters, Padma gling pa and the Sixth Dalai Lama. Aris analyzed the details of many of Padma gling pa's more audacious treasure extractions, asking the question "how did he manage to pull it off?" He attempted to answer the question of why Padma gling pa "perpetrated these complex deceptions and sustained them over such a very long period" with a psychological analysis of Padma gling pa's youth and relationship with his parents. Aris speculated that, given "the mind's infinite capacity for self-deception," Padma gling pa might have deceived not only the public at large but himself as well. Despite his use of pejorative terms and quotation marks to continually drive home the point that he knew better than to accept the claims of the treasure revelation at face value, Aris repeatedly confessed admiration for the man, "if only for the ingenuity of [his] stratagems" and for his undeniably important contribution to the religion and culture of the land.¹⁴⁵

Critics of the book have primarily taken issue with Aris' use of terms and his normative approach to the treasure phenomenon. Dan Martin questioned what Aris would have defined as "authentic" in contrast to Padma gling pa's "fraudulent" revelations, given the nature of the great majority of Buddhist literature.¹⁴⁶ In a particularly vitriolic review of the book Robert

¹⁴⁴ An example that will be returned to below is Mchog gyur gling pa's revelation of his narrative map. It colophon lists details about the physical box while all other narratives do not.

¹⁴⁵ Aris 1989. The quotations are on pages 50, 97-100, 62, and 5.

¹⁴⁶ Martin 2001, p. 17

Thurman presumed that Aris was personally antagonistic to Bhutan and its heroes, and accused him of allowing his personal prejudices to substitute for any viable and coherent analytical framework. Furthermore, he charged him with trying to debunk miracles, a project that “in the absence of any new data” he dismissed as a waste of time and offensive to believers.¹⁴⁷ Certainly Aris’ normative approach to Buddhism led him to chide Padma gling pa for not engaging in the activities Aris felt he ought to have, thereby setting forth a standard that was hardly Padma gling pa’s fault for not living up to.¹⁴⁸ Still, Thurman’s statement that the book was “not grounded either in Tibetan Buddhist thought or in religious studies’ methodology” is overblown.

These criticisms, however, do not address the book’s major argument, and one might nevertheless agree with Eastman’s opening comment in his favorable review of the book: “It is striking that the author of a critical study of biography should find himself at pains to apologize for his frank disbelief of the wildly irrational claims of his subject.”¹⁴⁹ Based on the general response to the book it was not only to the faithful of Tibet and Bhutan that Aris anticipated the need to apologize, but also to Western devotees of the modern lineage holders of the treasure tradition.

Taking Aris to task for the simple fact that he could not prove that Padma gling pa’s revelations were not what he said they were, as Andreas Doctor did in his study of treasure literature, is not an adequate response to the important issue that Aris raised.¹⁵⁰ It is a criticism that allows the reviewer to avoid risking involvement in the contentious Tibetan polemical

¹⁴⁷ Thurman 1991, pp. 375-376. The presumption that Aris had a bone to pick with the royal family of Bhutan, for whom he served as tutor for many years, is not uncommon.

¹⁴⁸ Aris wrote that “Pemalingpa, unlike so many other masters, never seems to have spent any time meditating let alone studying; it is by these methods that the seed of enlightenment is normally supposed to be brought to fruition. Moreover, the word ‘compassion’ scarcely forms part of this vocabulary. . .” and that “there is little evidence that he ever tried to cultivate the Buddhist qualities of equanimity and dispassion in his relations to people” (1989, p. 59; p. 63).

¹⁴⁹ Eastman 1989, pp. 194-195.

¹⁵⁰ Doctor 2005, pp. 42-43.

snarl, as Aris criticized Gyatso for having done.¹⁵¹ Yet to do so avoids addressing Aris' basic thesis, one that any non-pious commentator must confront: that the revelations were staged and that the texts were composed by the men who claimed they had been revealed.

The chief flaw of Aris' study was not this assertion, but rather Aris' insistence that Padma gling pa was a charlatan and an (un)intentional deceiver of a gullible populace for having staged his revelations. Although it might seem reasonable to take an autobiography, ostensibly a first hand account, as authoritatively reporting historical events as they actually happened, this has long since been shown to be naïve.¹⁵² Ironically, like the scholars he accused of possessing "a peculiar reluctance . . . to recognize the entirely fabricated nature of the Tibetan 'treasure texts'," ¹⁵³ it was Aris' presumption that the revelations unfolded as they were described in the autobiography that led him to his charges of charlatantry. His mode of reading forced him to attempt an explanation of the mechanics behind every fantastical element. An explanation for magic tricks actually witnessed might fairly be asked for, but Aris did not witness the tricks; he was a reader of a hagiography written by the man who had an obvious interest in embellishing the account of his own activity.

Aris' presumption was that not only did the hagiography record historical fact, but also that the revelations were staged solely to legitimate a treasure text or object. In trying to debunk the miracle found in the details of the revelation, Aris accused Padma gling pa of forging them, of being a parlayer of false miracles, and thus fell into trying to explain why

¹⁵¹ On page p. 234 note 199 Aris states that Gyatso, in her article subsequently published as Gyatso 1993, "recognizes the apocryphal nature of the texts while explaining all the attempts to legitimize them, but avoids discussion of the motivation and process of the forgery." I would suggest he is being generous, as he would have understood it. Gyatso very carefully avoided making any judgment on whether treasure texts could be deemed "forgeries."

¹⁵² There is a great deal of scholarship on autobiography and memoir that call into question the presumption of accuracy of the genres. Jerome Brunner's description of Mary McCarthy's purposefully embellished memoirs is indicative: "Mary McCarthy wrote short stories in several literary genres. She later gathered some of them together in an order of the increasing age of the chief female protagonist, added some interstitial 'evaluation' sections, and published the lot as an autobiography entitled *Memories of a Catholic Girlhood*. Thereafter (and doubtless to her dismay) readers interpreted her new stories as further installments of autobiography" (1991, p. 14). McCarthy's famous 1963 remark to the Herald Tribune on her autobiographical fiction was "I am putting real plums into an imaginary cake."

¹⁵³ Aris 1989, p. 96.

Padma gling pa might have done so. Certainly Aris' lengthy descent into the intentional fallacy – the analytical error of seeking the psychological causes of Padma gling pa's will to deception – is the weakest part of the book. It was a task not worth his efforts, predicated on a shallow reading of a highly nuanced narrative of miracles. What Aris did not consider was that it was Padma gling pa as author of the narrative, and not Padma gling pa as character in the narrative, who created the miracles.

I do not propose a new reading of Padma gling pa here.¹⁵⁴ The focus of this chapter is the treasure revelations of Mchog gyur gling pa. Thanks to the availability of extensive source material for his career, we can examine multiple types of account of his treasure revelation. With upwards of ten different reports of a single act, it is possible to ask how and why – and even when – certain details were added to a particular event, and consider multiple functions for the revelation. Keeping in mind Martin's admonition against making categorical statements about a complex tradition on the basis of a single person's activities,¹⁵⁵ I will peel away some of the layers of hagiographical narrative, not with the intention of accessing a "real event," but in order to come to a more complex appreciation of how treasure narrative works to legitimate treasure and explain ritual activities.

Treasure reports are written by people who have a stake in affirming that a treasure is authentic. How this is done depends on the genre of the report. Treasure colophons are able to simply state the name of the revealer and the time and place of the revelation, information necessary to assert that the text in hand is indeed a treasure text.¹⁵⁶ The treasure colophon does not, at least typically, tell the story of the revelation; it is concerned solely with categorizing the text as treasure, and so is unconcerned with the act of revelation beyond the simple

¹⁵⁴ See Harding 2003 for a sympathetic presentation of the man and his autobiography.

¹⁵⁵ This was a warning made in the course of taking Aris to task for doing so. See Martin 2001, p. 16.

¹⁵⁶ I do not mean to suggest that all treasure colophons uniformly provide this information. Some treasure texts have no colophons at all, and some do not report the date or place of the revelation. However, at least in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, the great majority of treasure colophons do provide this basic information. See Doctor 2002 for an index of the thirty-nine volumes of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, replete with information taken from each colophon.

statement that it occurred. Hagiographies and treasure histories, however, deal with treasure revelations in a narrative format, offering a chronological account of the event that can and often does include recognition that a revelation took place over time and space. Treasure histories are dedicated not to a single text but to a treasure cycle such as the *Bar chad kun sel* or the *Zab pa skor bdun*, and they typically provide details regarding antecedents such as prophecies and the discovery of authorizing certificates (*byang bu*).¹⁵⁷ They also recount the manner in which the revelation was translated from the *dākinī* script into Tibetan and the (main) texts of the cycle were written out.

Hagiographies also include much of the information provided by a treasure history as part of the central narrative arc of the revealer's enlightened activity. As we saw in Chapter One, hagiography of a treasure revealer such as Mchog gyur gling pa, who was accomplished in neither scholarship nor meditative techniques, could rely on his revelation to provide the transformation from initiate (receiving confused and disturbing indications that treasure is to be revealed) to master (confidently announcing his revelations and compassionately bestowing the transmissions for it). Yet hagiographies alone also tell stories of revelation that produced no treasure, for in chronologically – or, more commonly, thematically – recounting the revealer's activity, there is reason to include those ritual performances done for the consecration of religious sites. Treasure revelation is but one among many such rites. Not being dedicated to the legitimation of a particular treasure text or cycle, a hagiography can recount revelation from the perspective of the ritualist – his activities rather than his products.

These three genres of treasure reporting are rarely so clearly divided, however. I will discuss below how Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po made use of a colophon-like format in his

¹⁵⁷ See Gyatso 1993, pp 126-130 for a discussion of the *byang bu* subgenre of treasure literature. Gyatso translates *byang bu* generally as “certificate,” and explains that it serves to alert the revealer to the presence of a treasure and describe the steps necessary for its recovery. She gives numerous different terms – entrance certificate (*kha byang*), key certificate (*gnad byang*), essential certificate (*snying byang*), list certificate (*tho byang*), and further certificate (*yang byang*) – that all refer to essentially the same type of document. Curiously Gyatso failed to even hint that such texts might have been composed after the revelation they foretell rather than before.

hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa, in the interest of standardizing his numerous revelations. The easy mixing of the information and methods has created an historical conundrum for many commentators on treasure, both Tibetan and non-Tibetan alike. For while hagiographies might be comfortable with revelation as a ritual performance and not demand that every revelation produce treasure, many hagiographies, such as that of Mchog gyur gling pa written by Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po, blur the line between the three formats. Taking their cue not from hagiographies but from treasure histories and colophons, most standard treasure apologetics not only efface the fact that the revelation of treasure is an event stretched across time and place, but that treasure revelation is a common ritual activity that is performed with remarkable frequency. The ritual is performed in order to provide historical reality to the originating claims of texts belonging to the category of "treasure."¹⁵⁸ And it is performed to sanctify a place.

Perhaps it is the historical claim of the treasure tradition – that the miracles occurred in historical time and space – that has made the topic so problematic for Western scholars. Scholars can bracket origin accounts of the Mahāyāna sūtras, another corpus of Buddhist literature in which there is a comparable disjunction between their traditional and historical origin, in order to discuss the content of the text.¹⁵⁹ Tibetan treasure literature, however, unlike the Indian precursors, are connected to much more recent historical figures who are credited with its revelation, and about whom there is substantial other information regarding their movements and activities. The challenge has been to sort between the biographical information that resembles historical fact – dates of birth, ordination, relationships with teachers and students and the like – and the fantastical accounts of treasure revelation that do not. An appreciation of the complex demands of the different modes of treasure narrative will aid in doing so.

¹⁵⁸ Gyatso 1993 is a survey of the strategies behind different types of treasure narratives.

¹⁵⁹ See Mayer 1994 for a comparison between Indian and Tibetan modes of scriptural revelation.

Once a text is classified as treasure it requires an origin account to defend that classification; it is by definition a text that was revealed from somewhere at some time by someone, thus requiring a narrative that provides that information. Because the treasure tradition itself initially began with the production of treasure objects, both texts and relics, the narrative norms of the tradition were developed first to legitimate those objects. Davidson has persuasively argued that in the early days of the treasure tradition texts and objects were claimed to have been recovered from libraries and temples, forgotten relics of an earlier time.¹⁶⁰ These tales of discoveries were elaborated as a way to give historical connection between the explosive innovations of an eleventh century Buddhist resurgence and the authoritative anchor of Tibet's imperial era when, according to the treasure tradition's proponents, the teachings contained in the treasure texts had been propagated. In this case the beginning and the end is the same – the treasure text. Regardless of whether there is an historical core around which the treasure tales developed, the basic structure of revelation narratives – that a physical object or text was recovered from a place in which it had been concealed – was settled on quite early.

I would argue that once narrative standards for the act of treasure revelation were developed, they provided the impetus to actually enact treasure revelations. That is, rather than make up the tales of revelation out of whole cloth, people began to perform them publicly. These public performances would then become “tokens of reality,” to use White's phrase. They were real occurrences that were used to bolster the origin tale of the treasure object – actual historic events at which the revelation was witnessed, usually by more than a few people. Thus

¹⁶⁰ See Davidson 2005, Chapter Six. The image of a monk wiping several inches of dust and debris off a discarded pile of texts in some corner of a defunct temple is not so far from a treasure revealer brushing off soil from a cache of hidden treasure texts. According to the Rdzogs chen tradition, the Sems sde class of teachings were made available in such a manner. As the story goes, in the eleventh century a caretaker at the Zhva'i lha khang to the northeast of Lhasa came across a bundle of texts that he passed on to Lce btsun Seng ge dbang phyug. He identified them as teachings given by Vimalamitra to Myang ting nge 'dzin, two centuries before. Lce btsun systematized these teachings, known as the *Bima snying thig*, or “Seminal Heart of Vairocana” and passed them on to his disciple, Zhang ston Bkra shis rdo rje (1097-1167) and others. See Karmay 1988, p. 210.

action followed after narrative; ritual performances began to appear that put into practice the tropes of the treasure revelation narrative. At some point, I propose, these rituals became divorced slightly from the process of producing treasure, and new functions for the ritual of treasure revelation were able to develop. Thus a new narrative could also exist – a narrative not of the revelation of a treasure, but of the act of treasure revelation. That is, once revelation came to be performed as a ritual for purposes other than the production (and justification) of a treasure text or object, narratives could describe that ritual activity without any reference to a known or existent treasure. As stated above, chief among these additional functions for the ritual, largely subsumed in the narrative of the production of treasure objects, is the consecration of a site of religious importance.

Following the performance of a treasure revelation for the purpose of consecrating a site, accounts of it would naturally be inserted into larger hagiographic narratives of the ritual master, in much the same way other aspects of the consecration were recorded. The concern of such a narrative would be with the *act* of revelation, not the product of a revelation. This sort of treasure revelation account would not need to include explicit reference to a treasure produced, for the simple reason that often no treasure was produced. In this case, the event of a treasure revelation should be as mundane as the other details of a site consecration account, like a smoke offering or a feast and mending rite.

Yet explicit narratives of this sort are rare. I believe this is explained by the defensive posture of the treasure tradition. A tradition on the defensive over its own remarkable claims of extracting previously concealed texts and objects from the earth would understandably be uneasy with stories of revelation performances in which no treasure was produced. Perhaps the potential for the charge of “charlatanry” was ever present. A revelation from which no treasure was forthcoming could potentially call into question stories of other revelations, and undermine the foundational substance of the tradition – that revelations produce treasures.

For this reason the stories of such ritual performances were woven into a fabric of treasure legitimation, and the recovery of treasure texts or objects were credited to the event, transforming the revelation ritual from a consecration to the production of treasure. To differentiate between these two types, I will demarcate narratives of treasure revelation (the story of a ritual performance), and narratives of the recovery of treasure (a narrative told to fill in the necessary history behind an existing treasure text or object). One might understand the difference as one of direction; in treasure revelation, the story begins with the act, and develops forward from there. With the revelation of treasure, the starting point is a text or object in need of legitimation, reaching backwards in history to locate an originating event.

Let us return briefly to the lake episode introduced and the beginning of this chapter and propose a narrative of revelation that does not result in an actual treasure. For reasons unstated, Mchog gyur gling pa, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and their attendants, after spending two weeks consecrating Rong me dkar mo stag tshang, just a day's walk from Rdzong sar, decided to bring the Seng rgod g.yu mtsho into the domain of the cave complex.¹⁶¹ A trip to the lake lengthens an arduous pilgrimage circuit of both Padma shel phug and Rong me dkar mo, adding to an already difficult walk the necessity to traverse two separate scree fields and ascend to an altitude higher than either of the passes on the route. Perhaps the inclusion of the lake to the consecration program was due to legends that placed great hermits from Kaḥ tog monastery there, though it is just as likely that those legends sprang up after Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa consecrated the site. For whatever reason, the lake was deemed important, and the lamas braved winter weather to reach it. Standing on the shore they declared the lake to be the domain of a *nāga*, whom they subjugated with displays of wrath and ritual offerings. They marked it as a place imbued with the blessing of Padmasambhava by revealing treasure he had concealed there. And they inserted it into Buddhist history with the

¹⁶¹ Orgyen Tobgyal and Blo gros phun tshogs B both include 'Jam mgon Kong sprul in the party. This is likely the result of the tendency to name all three lamas as though one unit: "Mkhyen Kong Mchog sde gsum." With this phrase the work of two would easily slip into being the work of three.

assertion that the Kaḥ tog hermits had practiced there. Their work complete, they returned to the caves and the next day left the valley.¹⁶²

In this version of the event, based on the received accounts, no treasure need be identified – the gold functions as the cipher for the treasure, its collection merely another way of saying the treasure was revealed. The event makes perfect sense without any treasure recovery specified. The narrative is valid, fitting the other accounts of this event found in the *Mchog gling gter gsar* and elsewhere which almost universally include no mention of a treasure that resulted from the revelation. In Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's enumeration of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure revelations the product of this revelatory event was simply "lake treasure" (*mtsho gter*).¹⁶³ Thanks to the enumeration of thirty-seven separate revelations, several of which similarly produced no treasure, we can speculate that such ritual performances were not uncommon. Yet narratives of site-consecrating treasure revelation are rare; the site-

¹⁶² Many colorful details are to be found in *Dkon mchog 'gyur med* and other extant accounts. Some of these are as follows: Having cut through the ice in the center of the lake, Mchog gyur gling pa warned the others not to throw rocks, as they might harm the nāga guardian of the lake. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po roared back with "What is there to fear in a nāga? It is a worm! The so-called nāga has no primordial existence. If he is there, I want to wake him up! I do not fear nāga! If there is a nāga, let it come here!" at which point he threw many stones into the lake. The others, however, obeying the command, refrained from throwing stones. Mchog gyur gling pa attempted to retrieve treasure from the lake by tying his lower robes with his belt into a scoop of sorts, and had his attendants cast it into the lake. The robes repeatedly came back empty, perhaps because he forbade the attendants from looking toward the lake, having warned that were they to gaze upon him the nāga would breathe poison on them and refuse to grant treasure. See Figure Ten for a depiction of this episode. Suddenly the lake seethed with serpents, Mchog gyur gling pa screamed "there's a snake!" and pandemonium ensued, in the thick of which Mchog gyur gling pa's rosary broke. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po slapped Mchog gyur gling pa on the cheek, scolding him with the words that as Guru Rinpoche's representative he ought not cower so. In response to it all Mchog gyur gling pa wistfully stated, "Not only has no treasure been extracted but now I have [to collect] all [the beads] of this rosary!" Giving up on the robe, Mchog gyur gling pa sat down on the shore, and with the statement that "this nāga needs to be tormented a little" he entered a wrathful nāga-taming samādhi of Hayagrīva. He shouted to the nāga to come, at which point a treasure chest appeared in the water and the lake and the shore overflowed with gold "like a clay pot full of provisions." Mchog gyur gling pa withdrew the chest with his own hand, his robe sleeve ever after yellow from the gold dust. The lower robe-scoop finally producing something, coming out filled with chunks of gold. Everyone gathered the gold, and Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po did a short treasure-substitute dance. With Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po claiming that it was the rocks he threw that guaranteed the retrieval of the treasure, they returned to the encampment at the cave site below. Remaining in wrathful mode, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po continued to throw stones at everyone, purifying the *kleśa* of all those he struck. See *Mchog gling A*, pp. 186-190; *Mkhyen brtse A* pp. 30-31; *Dkon mchog 'gyur med* pp. 362-378; *Orgyen Tobgyal* pp. 14-16; *thang ka*.

¹⁶³ Mkhyen brtse A, p. 31.

consecration function of treasure revelation has been thoroughly obscured by the proponents of the treasure tradition because of a historical concern with asserting and defending legitimacy.

That defense has produced four standard tropes of a narrative account: a time, a place, a revealer, and a text (or object). These tropes are most commonly condensed in the treasure colophon, but as I will discuss below, hagiographers also made use of the format to promote a standardized presentation of their subject's revelations. The normative role of these standard tropes is not unlike Buddhist sūtras routinely beginning with the phrase "Thus have I heard, at one time . . ." and other statements of the "setting" (*nidāna*, *gleng gzhi*) such as the place and audience of the teaching.¹⁶⁴ These phrases render the sūtra authentic, and therefore it is not surprising that Indian and Tibetan commentators went to some lengths to justify the authority of the "I" in the phrase.¹⁶⁵ In the case of our tropes of treasure narrative, all four serve to substantiate the claim of historicity by providing factual information, which, even if not directly witnessed, can be verified: one can ascertain that at the time of the alleged revelation, at the place it was claimed to have occurred, the revealer was in fact present. If the first three developed to legitimate the last, once performances of treasure revelation were being performed, the last element – the assertion of the existence of a treasure object – serves to provide an outcome to the performance. That is, faced with stories of treasure revelation that involved known people but that were not known to have produced treasure, authors, conscious of the need to legitimate those accounts, added to the narrative the name of a treasure. Having

¹⁶⁴ Or, in the case of Gary Snyder's "Smokey the Bear Sutra," at the very end of the text, the last line being "thus we have heard." See Galloway 1991 for a discussion of the phrase *evaṃ mayā śrutam ekasamin samaye* and the debate over whether the "at one time" refers to the hearer or the Buddha. On page 100 he quotes Kamalaśīla as explaining a five-fold division of the *gleng gzhi*: the time the teaching occurred, the teacher, the place, the retinue, and the teaching (*bstan par bya ba'i dus dang / ston pa dang / gnas dang / 'khor dang / chos*). I use the word "trope" as defined by Hayden White in the Introduction to *Tropics of Discourse* (1978, p. 2): "tropics is the process by which all discourse constitutes the object which it pretends only to describe realistically and analyze objectively."

¹⁶⁵ For a discussion of who the "I" might refer to see Lopez 1996a, Chapter One.

come into its own in a state of defensiveness, the treasure tradition has never abandoned that stance; it is written into the very structure of treasure narrative.

Western scholars have shown that at various points in Tibetan history a polemical debate has erupted over the authenticity of treasure – indeed, the “logic of legitimacy” has been one of scholars’ prime concerns. The often high status of the critic and the defender alike have tended to overstate the case, giving the impression that the debate is perennial and a central concern of the tradition. While individual treasure revealers generally had to establish their authenticity, the *possibility* of treasure has long been widely accepted in Tibet – this is a populace that readily accepted the Mahāyāna sūtras and tantras as authentic with little comment, after all.¹⁶⁶ Nevertheless, one cannot read a treasure narrative without coming away with the sense that it was intended for a hostile audience – almost every page of a given treasure text, from its title to its colophon, seems to have “defense” written all over it.

Yet I would argue that this is not necessarily because prominent critics were ready to attack the text in hand, but rather because the standard tropes of treasure texts were historically developed in an atmosphere of disbelief, and as a result the norms of the literature were organized to assert legitimacy, whether or not such a defense was still required. Certainly by the nineteenth century to write a treasure text was to write a defense of a treasure text, one that required treasures be supported with hard evidence that could be verified by skeptics if any were to present themselves. Thus an earth treasure had to occur at one place and emerge in one moment, for otherwise the revealer himself might be credited with its creation. Moreover, a treasure revelation had to produce a treasure object, for otherwise the act could be called into question, and the revealer could be accused of duping the public with the staged events of a charlatan.

¹⁶⁶ See Lopez 1988, pp. 51, for a discussion of the extent to which Indian Buddhist authors defended the authenticity of texts they likely knew had been written only recently, if not in their own lifetimes.

Like most contemporary scholars who have ventured into the contested waters of the Tibetan treasure tradition, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul took seriously the assertion that a treasure had been extracted at Seng rgod g.yu mtsho. As scribe for many of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure revelations and author of a large percentage of the liturgical material included in the cycles, he was likely inclined to treat the reports of treasure revelation as reports of the recovery of treasure. In his own account, he included all necessary aspects of the narrative. That is, in writing of the revelation he followed the normative language of treasure production, and therefore included all four elements of a treasure narrative – including the identification of the revealed object – in order to substantiate the assertion that treasure had been revealed.

We saw above that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa did not describe a physical object in their narrative of the lake revelations. This is because their treasure revelations were not intended to produce any treasure object, and the narratives they set forth were not intended to legitimate any. But 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, in his hagiography of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, changed the nature of the narrative by supplying the name of an actual text, even though he would have known that the text was already identified as the treasure object of another man from another place. It is possible he did this consciously in order to better exalt his subject, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po.¹⁶⁷ But it is just as likely that he did so because, while there is a well-established protocol for narratives of the revelation of treasure, it seems there is no corresponding norm of a narrative of the ritual of treasure revelation performed for purposes other than treasure production. This is likely because there was nothing in such performances that was in need of justification or defense. Other rites, such as smoke offerings, can be offered as elements of site consecration, but to find instances of treasure revelation performed for that reason, one must carefully excavate what has been carefully concealed.

¹⁶⁷ Kong sprul E is his hagiography of his adored friend and teacher, while Blo gros phun tshogs, who drew his information from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, is an ardent admirer of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po; he told me in May, 2005 that all of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's literary collections (the "Five Treasures," *Mdzod lnga*) had been suggested and/or supervised by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, and so should rightfully be credited to him.

II. The Thirty-Seven Treasure Caskets of Mchog gyur gling pa.

Andreas Doctor has shown that the phenomenon of treasure as it is currently understood is an historical creation. The definitions now taken for granted were put into practice in the late nineteenth century primarily by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, whose *Rin chen gter mdzod* established an orthodoxy of treasure.¹⁶⁸ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's colleague Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po similarly created a standard for treasure narrative that had a significant impact on the treasures and treasure narratives of Mchog gyur gling pa. The standard enumeration of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure revelations has been put into English by Doctor, and therefore need not be repeated here.¹⁶⁹ This section will offer Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa as an example that incorporates colophon-like presentation of information. The hagiography standardized Mchog gyur gling pa's revelations in a way that promoted – though it did not overtly assert – the fiction that each of his treasure revelation was to be credited with the recovery of a treasure text or object.

While further examples will be provided below, a typical entry in Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's list of thirty-seven treasure caskets is as follows:

When he was twenty, on the tenth day of the ninth month of the earth monkey year, [Mchog gyur gling pa] received as secret treasure the *Thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel* from the base of the great glorious cliff at (3) Zla nyin kha la rong sgo.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Doctor 2005; Gene Smith has commented on the orthodoxy engendered by this allegedly nonsectarian project. See Smith 2001, p. 237.

¹⁶⁹ Doctor 2006, pp. 86-95. One of Doctor's important contributions to the study of Tibetan *gter ma* is his insight that scholars have failed to recognize the historical nature of the categories into which revelations are organized, for which his Chapter One is a highly valuable corrective: "Recent western studies have focused on the works of late Tibetan exegetics like Jamgön Kongtrul, Do Drubchen Tenpe Nyima and Dudjom Yeshe Dorje, who view the tradition through a syncretic lens that occasionally leaves out historical developments in consideration of philosophical clarity and traditional homogeneity. Due to the prominent position held in contemporary Tibetan religious circles by these late exemplars of Treasure ideology, their views have at times become portrayed as normative for the Treasure tradition at large or, when discrepancies are found, as authoritative" (Doctor 2005, pp. 19-20). Given this insight, it is curious that he presented the enumeration of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure revelations without acknowledging that the list was created by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and adopted by the later authors as the narrative and organizational standard, his the information of dates, places and objects repeated as though they were historical facts.

¹⁷⁰ *Nyi shu pa sa sprel dbyug pa zla ba'i tshes bcur zla nyin kha la rong sgo'i (3) brag dpal chen po'i zhabs 'og nas thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel gsang gter du bzhes* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 26). Zla nyin kha la rong sgo is in the Zla chu (Mekong) valley to the north of Shor mda', the capital of Nang chen county in Qinghai.

Information on the date, the place, the identity of the revealer, and the name or type of the recovered object is provided. Compare this to his account of the lake revelation:

On the day after the tenth [day of the tenth month of the fire tiger year] from (32) Ma pham seng rgod g.yu mtsho, without any difficulty he revealed a great lake treasure that he marvelously offered [to us].¹⁷¹

Here treasure is also revealed, but it is not identified as anything other than “lake treasure.”

Whether or not Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po gave the name of the text would seem to be indicative of whether the revelation was intended to produce treasure or to consecrate a site.

The divisions of the material into the thirty-seven caskets was made by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po in his hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa, written soon after the treasure revealer's death in 1870.¹⁷² This was only one aspect of the division and classification of Mchog gyur gling pa's life and revelations Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po made in his hagiography, including his teachers and his ritual practices.¹⁷³ In regard to the revelations, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po created a new taxonomy for the purpose, the “seven descents” (*bka' bab bdun*). The seven

¹⁷¹ *Tshe bcu phyi mar (32) ma pham seng rgod g.yu mtsho nas mtsho gter chen mo sogs bar chad med par spyan drangs pas ngo mtshar gyi phul du gyur* (Mkhyen brtse A, pp. 30-31).

¹⁷² The list is found on pages 26-32. In Padma ye shes it is found on pages 103-117, though here for the most part the author integrates into a single continuous narrative the various sections, and some revelations are described earlier; Dkon mchog 'gyur med deals with the caskets twice. The first, pages 182-256, is taken from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, with some additions and corrections to the chronological sequence, and again on 281-423, a section that also includes information on other activities, and seems to rely on oral accounts of the events.

¹⁷³ We saw in the previous chapter that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po standardized Mchog gyur gling pa's teachers to just four: Stag lung rin po che, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Zla bzang sprul sku, and himself, excising from the hagiographic tradition the many names provided by Mchog gyur gling pa in his autobiography; none of them appear in Padma ye shes, Dkon mchog 'gyur med, or any of the English-language hagiographies, including Doctor's. Proof of the role of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's text in determining the hagiographic norm is found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's short supplication to Mchog gyur gling pa written following the treasure revealer's death. There 'Jam mgon Kong sprul listed more teachers (the text is primarily interlineal notes, indicated here with parentheses): “[His] teachers included many great beings, unbiased and authentic, chiefly the hierarchs Kar (*ma pa thegs mchog rdo rje*, Si tu Padma dbang chen, Mkhan chen Bstan pa rab rgyas, 'Jam mgon blo gros mtha' yas) 'Brug (*chen thams cas mkhyen pa*) 'Bri (*gung chos nyi nor bu*) Stag (*lung ma rin po che Ngag dbang bstan pa'i nyi ma*). Kar (*ma pa thegs mchog rdo rje si tu padma dbang chen mkhan chen bstan pa rab rgyas 'jam mgon blo gros mtha' yas*) 'brug (*chen thams cas mkhyen pa*) 'bri (*gung chos nyi nor bu*) stag (*lung ma rin po che ngag dbang bstan pa'i nyi ma*) yab sras btso gyur pa'i / ris med tshad ma'i skyes chen du ma brten (Kong sprul B, p. 4). Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po also enumerated Mchog gyur gling pa's ritual performances in thirty-three separate events, recording location and date in addition to the name of the practice. See Mkhyen brtse A, pp. 38-43.

descents adapted the familiar Rnying ma triad of oral teachings, treasure teachings, and pure vision teachings (*bka' ma*, *gter ma*, and *dag snang*) and divided them into seven: the oral teachings, earth treasure (*sa gter*), mind treasure (*dgongs gter*), rediscovered treasure (*yang gter*), pure vision, recollected teachings (*rjes dran*), and hearing lineage (*snyan brgyud*).¹⁷⁴

It is in the category of earth treasures that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po employs the standard four elements listed above: place, time, agent, and object. Of the thirty-seven entries, only one (casket #18) does not indicate a date for the revelation. When available, he drew his information from other sources, but in many cases they appear to have been his own additions. A close colleague of Mchog gyur gling pa, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po certainly could have received his information from the treasure revealer himself, or, in cases when he was present,

¹⁷⁴ The term “*bka' bab bdun*” itself has a long history, going back to the early days of Rnying ma taxonomy. See Germano 2002. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po does not justify his reformulation of the categories, but 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Padma ye shes and Dkon mchog 'gyur med credit the information that Mchog gyur gling pa received this seven transmissions to a prophecy from the treasure cycle *Rdzogs chen sde gsum*, revealed jointly by Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po in 1857. I have not been able to locate this prophecy in the treasure texts themselves, if it indeed exists there. The references in three later hagiographies are: Kong sprul C, pp. 649–650; Padma ye shes, p. 134; and Dkon mchog 'gyur med, p. 177. The passage, reading from Dkon mchog 'gyur med, is as follows: “Moreover, regarding the process of the seven descents of the dharma, from the prophecy of the *Rdzogs chen sde gsum*: ‘The seven streams of the descent of the *buddhavacana* are: the unbroken spoken transmission of the *buddhavacana*; the profound actual and mind treasures; the treasures of recovered and recollected treasures; the pure vision and the hearing lineage. They came down during the fortunate era of the Lord [Padmasambhava] and [his] disciples, protectors of the teachings during this degenerate age, pervading farther than the subtle and extensive light of the sun.’ If one were to summarize these amazing seven descents it would be: the spoken word (*bka' ma*), the long transmission; the treasure (*gter ma*), the short transmission; and the pure vision, the profound [method].” *Khyad par chos kyi bka' babs tshul yang / rdzogs chen sde gsum lung bstan las / bka' nas bkar brgyud bar ma chad / zab mo dngos dang dgongs pa'i gter / yang gter rjes su dran pa'i gter / dag snang snyan du brgyud pa yi / bka' babs bdun gyi chu bo ni / mnga' bdag yab sras skal bar babs / snying dus bstan pa'i btsas chen byed / zab rgyas nyi 'od lhan par brdal / zhes pa ltar / ngo ma tshar ba'i bka babs bdun yod pa rnam sde tshan bsdu na / ring brgyud bka' ma / nye brgyud gter ma / zab mo dag snang ma ste*. No such lines of prophecy appear in either of the undated treasure histories of the cycle, the typical forum for treasure prophecies (the texts are Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse C and G). It seems likely that the prophecy was composed at some point between Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's text and the later hagiographies. Had it existed when he composed his text he would surely have included it. It should be pointed out that in the prophecy Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po himself is also credited with having received (or with being destined to receive) all seven descents, an accomplishment ascribed to only a few. See Kong sprul E, p. 13 and p. 22; pp. 157–226 is labeled the “inner biography” and contains accounts of all seven descents. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's hagiography of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (Kong sprul C, pp. 659–679) also organizes his life using this schema. Unless it was Padma ye shes who invented this prophecy, its inclusion in his hagiography would suggest it was composed after 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's hagiography of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po or Dkon mchog 'gyur med's hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa.

drawn from his own recollection of events. He also might simply have invented them. The written sources available to him would have been Mchog gyur gling pa's autobiography and the existing colophons of treasure texts (many of which he was involved in writing), as well as 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's short supplication to Mchog gyur gling pa composed after the revealer's death.¹⁷⁵

The enumeration of Mchog gyur gling pa's thirty-seven caskets of earth treasure is remarkable for being a fusion of hagiographical, historical, and colophon-style narratives. Treasure colophons, when they exist, are almost always concise statements of the four key elements of a treasure narrative. They serve a single function: to legitimate the treasure text to which they are amended. Hagiography and treasure histories, on the other hand, can be much more free with their information, as they are concerned with larger issues. These include the life and activity of a revealer, and the mytho-historical narrative behind the entire treasure cycle as opposed to one particular text from it. It is in a treasure history that we are told about Padmasambhava teaching the cycle to his disciples and how it was concealed. In a hagiography, and to a lesser extent in the treasure histories, the temporal and spatial extension of the revelation is preserved, as is, though less frequently, the extensive ritual activities that established the immediate conditions for the revelatory event. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's enumeration, as seen in the examples provided above, is much more similar to a colophon narrative, yet by virtue of its placement, maintains the hagiography's appreciation of the sum total of the subject's career.

Hagiography was no doubt the most conducive genre to accomplish Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's goals of organizing Mchog gyur gling pa's astonishingly prolific production of treasure. Editing out details and streamlining the narrative appeared to have been the guiding principle for the work, reflected in the enumeration of four teachers, thirty-three performances of *sādhana* practice, and thirty-seven treasure revelations, all reductions of the

¹⁷⁵ This text is Kong sprul B. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po composed an outline to it (Mkhyen brtse B).

activity of an entire life into manageable lists. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was a principle proponent of the *Mchog gling gter gsar* and thus had a stake in seeing the treasures organized in a coherent and digestible form that could be easily circulated. Beginning while Mchog gyur gling pa was alive, and continuing long after his death, both he and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul wrote innumerable liturgical texts that fill out the treasure cycles, adding to a given casket's root *sādhana* (often the only text of the cycle to be labeled a treasure) the manuals necessary for its practice. Indeed, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po shares authorship – even credit in the revelation – of many of the treasure texts, including some of the most famous. He therefore had a stake in the successful dissemination of Mchog gyur gling pa's collected treasures.

The section on the four teachers of Mchog gyur gling pa was probably not streamlined merely for the ease of the reader, but perhaps more importantly, in order to begin the text with a solid affirmation of the authority that was invested in him by some of the greatest lamas of the day. We reviewed in Chapter One the detailed accounts of the authorization ceremonies Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po bestowed on his eager disciple, information surely included in the hagiography to give further credence to Mchog gyur gling pa's legitimacy. Much of the information made use of in Chapter One to understand how Mchog gyur gling pa acquired his authority was provided in the hagiography for that very purpose: to properly confirm for readers his authority.

Only after solidly affirming Mchog gyur gling pa's authority and detailing his own role in the composition of one of the main treasure revelations did Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po list the successive treasure caskets. He admitted some difficulty in setting forth the “approximately” (*tsam*) thirty-seven successive earth treasure before beginning the enumeration, as “some had come sealed in secrecy, while others had been [re]concealed as treasure.” Why the number thirty-seven he never explained, but it should be noted that the actual numbers for the individual caskets are found not in the lines of text but are superscribed, written in Tibetan

numerals above the names of the places the revelations occurred. This creates some confusion as to which casket a certain revealed object properly belonged. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po deflected responsibility for the formulation with the statement that "One can express merely that which has been the common consensus of our masters."¹⁷⁶ Perhaps it was in order to create that consensus, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po supplied, for nearly every casket, a location, a date, and its contents.¹⁷⁷

An example of the difficult task Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po faced in organizing the received material into cohesive caskets is to be seen in how he dealt with the first two. Neither of these produced any texts, and thus the only information Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po had to work with, outside of whatever Mchog gyur gling pa might have told him, was a passage in the latter's autobiography:

When I, the emanated great treasure revealer Mchog gyur gling pa, was young, I met O rgyan rin po che in person at a place called Mañi kha. There I obtained a prophecy on the existence of an O rgyan meditation cave. In my thirteenth year, I acquired the treasure inventory from Yar klung shel brag. In my fifteenth year, many unwanted confusing apparitions arose, and whether they were gods or demons I did not know; most were the manifestations of obstacles, but some were early signs that I would extract profound treasure. Except for those, it would be pointless for me to put into

¹⁷⁶ *Snga phyir sa gter gyi gter kha sum chu rtsa bdun tsam phyung tshul ni / spyir 'ga' zhig gsang rgya'i bab dang / la la yang gter du'ang sbas pa sogs zhib par 'chad dka / bdag cag dpon slob thun mong gi spyod yul du gyur pa tsam smos pa ste* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 25). Who those masters would have been, if not himself and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, is difficult to imagine.

¹⁷⁷ Although his formulation became basis for the standard division of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasures, his information was not always accepted by later hagiographers. Alternate dates given in some colophons than those adopted by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po were accepted by Dkon mchog 'gyur med. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po himself occasionally made reference to such variants, such as his interlineal note to the account of casket number four: When he was twenty-one (interlineal note: "In some accounts it is written "twenty-two years old [or] the dog year," but in reality, the history of the first time the empowerment and transmission was bestowed was researched in detail, and it has it like this.") at noon on the tenth day of the eighth month of the female earth bird year (1849), from Bun rdzong, he revealed the *Thugs rje chen po Padma gtsug tor*, a statue of Mahākāruṇika made from the bones of the dharmarāja [Khri srong lde'u brtsan] that liberates on seeing, and other things. *Nyer ('di zin bris la lar nyer gnyis khyi lo zhes bris snang na'ang / ngos la dbang lung thog mar rtsal skabs lo rgyus zhib cha zhus par 'di ltar gsungs / mchan) gcig pa sa mo bya'i lo'i khrus stod zla ba'i tshes bcu'i nyin gung na bun rdzong nas thugs rje chen po padma gtsug tor dang / mthong grol / chos rgyal gyi gdung rus las grub pa'i thugs rje chen po'i sku sogs spyang drang* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 26). The "some accounts" includes Mchog gyur gling pa's own autobiography: "when I was twenty-two, in a bird year (1849) from Na bun rdzong I received the *Thugs rje chen po Padma gtsug tor* but due to several related errors disturbances also arose." *Nyer gnyis bya lor na bun rdzong nas thugs rje chen po padma gtsug tor spyang drang kyang rten 'brel 'ga' zhig 'chug pa'i dbang gis 'tshub slong yang byung* (Mchog gling A, p. 181). What those errors were he did not elaborate. No dog year is given in any available colophon from the treasure texts belonging to that revelation.

writing [references to] anything else. Then, once, from Gnam ru, from a meadow where there were many small flowing streams, I received a scroll which was a treasure inventory.¹⁷⁸

Based on this account, we would expect his first two revelations to consist of two treasure inventories, the first not necessarily written, but the second an actual physical object that would be preserved.

This was not the case. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po created a narrative that even Dkon mchog 'gyur med had difficulty accepting. Although the latter included the account as part of his first enumeration of the caskets, in the second telling he stated that information on the first two caskets is simply not to be found.¹⁷⁹ Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po appears to have based his narrative not on the autobiography alone but also on 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's supplication. In that text we read:

(At Brag dkar rdzong) [Mchog gyur gling pa] received the boons of: the *sādhana* of Lha sras, (the permission to practice the *Dgongs 'dus*, a mirror and vajra, and *sādhana* practices) and so forth, (the heart essence of *Guru drag po hūm dmar* and so forth). I supplicate to the mind treasures that burst forth from space.¹⁸⁰

Where 'Jam mgon Kong sprul derived his information is forever lost, but it has since become the standard for the content of the first treasure casket, via Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's hagiography:

When [Mchog gyur gling pa] was thirteen, in spring of the iron ox year at Maṇi kha, he beheld in a vision O rgyan [and his consort] in sexual union, in accordance with a prophesy. [1] From Brag dkar rdzong chung he revealed [his] first [treasure], which included such things as a vajra that had been possessed by Prince Lha sras, a mirror, and twenty-four samaya *sādhana*. Later he bestowed the mirror to 'Jam mgon bla ma and the vajra to me. In the following consecutive order, in accordance with an inventory that arose from Shel brag mda' when he was thirteen, at age fourteen the

¹⁷⁸ *Sprul pa'i gter chen mchog gyur gling pa bdag chung ngu'i dus nas ma ni kha zhes par / o rgyen rin po che dang dngos su mjal/ der o rgyan gyi sgrub phug yod pa'i lung bstan thob / bcu gsum lo la yar glung shel brag nas kha byang rnyed / bco lnga'i lo la lha 'dre gang yin ngo ma 'tshal ba'i zhal gzigz 'khrul snang mang po byung ba rnams phal cher bar chad kyi rnam par mngon / 'ga' zhig zab mo'i gter thon pa'i snga ltas yin 'dug pa ma gtogs kho bos yi ger bkod pa de rnams la snying po med par mngon / de nas skabs zhig nged la gnam ru nas gram khrod mang po zhig 'dug pa'i gse nas shog dril zhig rnyed 'dug pa mdo byang yin (Mchog gling A, p. 181-182).*

¹⁷⁹ See Dkon mchog 'gyur med pp. 281-282.

¹⁸⁰ (Brag dkar rdzong nas) *Lha sras thugs dam rten dgongs ('dus bka' rtags me long rdo rje thugs dam sgrub thabs) sogs dngos grub thob / (gu ru drag po hūm dmar snying thig sogs) dgongs gter klong nas brdol la gsol ba 'debs (Kong sprul B, p. 4).* Note that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul considered at least part of this to be a mind treasure; how he classified the mirror and vajra is not made clear.

auspicious sign [guidebook?] that he would reveal a profound treasure from [2] the white stūpa at Bsam yas came¹⁸¹ to him, but he hid it again as treasure.¹⁸²

Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po here preserved the visionary meeting with Padmasambhava at age thirteen, and the treasure inventory from Yar klung shel brag/ Shel brag mda' that Mchog gyur gling pa himself recorded, but otherwise drew from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's account. Yet the inventory was not counted as either the first or second casket. Instead Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po favored 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's account of a vajra, mirror, and collection of twenty-four *sādhana* liturgies that Mchog gyur gling pa did not himself record.¹⁸³ Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (or possibly the editor or the wood block carvers – this option must be considered) listed this as his first treasure casket. Even more peculiar is the second casket, which either was to have been revealed or was somehow revealed from the white stūpa at Bsam yas monastery, south of Lhasa, in accordance with the inventory received at age thirteen. It was either the guidebook to that treasure or the treasure itself that Mchog gyur gling pa supposedly re-concealed as treasure.¹⁸⁴ Either way, nothing remains of either the prophetic guide or the second treasure itself, if it ever was recovered.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸¹ Bsam yas, Tibet's first monastery built during the Tibetan Empire, was one of the earliest sites of treasure extraction. The four cardinal directions each had differently-colored stūpa (rebuilt in the last decade) that have from time to time, given up treasure.

¹⁸² *De'ang dgung lo bcu gsum pa lcags mo glang gi lo'i dpyid kar ma ñi khar o rgyan yab yum gyis dngos su rjas su bzung nas lung bstan pa ltar / [1] Brag dkar rdzong chung nas lha sras kyi dgongs 'dus bka' rtags rdo rje / me long / thugs dam sgrub thabs nyer bzhi sogs thog mar bzhes pa / phyis me long 'jam mgon bla ma dang rdo rje 'dir stsal / de nas rim par dgung grangs bcu gsum pa'i dgun shel brag mda' nas kha byang ba ltar / bcu bzhi par [2] bsam yas mchod rten dkar po nas zab gter bzhes pa rten 'brel gyi bab las slar yang gter du sbas par mdzad* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 26). Dkon mchog 'gyur med (p. 182) emphasized that this treasure from Bsam yas was (to have been?) the second casket by inserting the phrase *gter kha gnyis pa* in between *bcu bzhi par* and *bsam yas mchod rten dkar po*. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul (C, p. 650), in his summary of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's enumeration, repeats the first casket contents.

¹⁸³ These are, as might be expected, unaccounted for; O rgyan stobs rgyal states that the twenty *sādhana* were meant for Mchog gyur gling pa alone (p. 2). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, in his later hagiography, added that Mchog gyur gling pa also revealed a skull, and he repeated the statement of the authorization for the *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* cycle, now specifically that of Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340-1396) (Kong sprul C, 650). The *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*, printed in eighteen volumes, is a treasure cycle associated with the Mahāyoga class of Rnying ma tantra, and a ritual cycle particularly favored by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul.

¹⁸⁴ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul does not mention this treasure in either of his hagiographies of Mchog gyur gling pa. Instead, in the later hagiography, he follows the revelation at Brag dkar rdzong chung with a statement that there were thirty-seven caskets in all, and a listing of the more important revelations, beginning with casket number three (Kong sprul C, p. 650-651). It would seem that the only reason we

What we find in his treatment of the first two caskets of earth treasure is that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po drew from Mchog gyur gling pa's and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's accounts (possibly as well as sources) to provide the sort of narrative one would find in a colophon. There being no treasure texts, this sort of narrative was not available elsewhere. As a hagiography, the text provides are bare minimum – less an account of a man's accomplishment of the ultimate goal as a list of his important activities. Every word serves to supply the four main elements of treasure narrative. It would seem that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, in his own quest to affirm the legitimacy of Mchog gyur gling pa and his treasures, rewrote Mchog gyur gling pa's statements of his early revelatory experience, fitting them as best he could into standard depictions of treasure production. He might have let them lie, and dealt only with the revelations that actually produced treasure, but a later commentator might have questioned the events. If Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's goal was to set forth an unassailable standard for the discussion of Mchog gyur gling pa's revelations, he therefore had to deal with everything.

A further example of how Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po organized received material into coherent treasure caskets is his treatment of the events at Ri bo dbang zhu. Here we find Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po dealing with a period in which he himself was involved. We saw in the previous chapter that Mchog gyur gling pa initially went to that cave site in the Gter klung valley in 1853 on the heels of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul. Based on the available materials, Mchog gyur gling pa was at Ri bo dbang zhu at least three times between the end of 1853 and the end of 1855, and during this period he occasionally also met with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. He certainly had good reason to enact a treasure revelation at the site, given that he was in pursuit

have his account of the first revelation is because 'Jam mgon Kong sprul felt the need to begin from an initial revelation, and from there focus on those that he considered worth mentioning.

¹⁸⁵ Mchog gyur gling pa did in fact travel to Tibet towards the end of his life, and did visit Bsam yas, but Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po lists no treasures revealed outside of Khams. Padma ye shes composed an account of the Tibetan trip (Padma ye shes B). Dkon mchog 'gyur med, on page 419, includes some of the interesting items he picked up there: "at Brag yang rdzong he received a finger of G nub chen rin po che and golden scrolls" (*Lhas ldan phebs skabs dgung grangs bzhi bcu pa sa 'brag lor brag yang rdzong nas gnubs chen rin po che'i mtheb skor shog ser sogs bzhes*). The fact that Dkon mchog 'gyur med did not include Padma ye shes' narrative of the Tibet trip, suggests that Padma ye shes wrote after Dkon mchog 'gyur med.

of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's formal recognition of him as a legitimate treasure revealer. At Ri bo dbang zhu Mchog gyur gling pa received, according to Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, a pure vision treasure, an earth treasure, and a material treasure. How Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po dealt with these will be dealt with in that order.

Mchog gyur gling pa made no mention of the *Bima'i bla sgrub*, his only pure vision revelation,¹⁸⁶ in his autobiography. That it existed soon after the period in which it was said to have been received is evident from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's autobiography and the treasure history of the *Zab bdun* (Anonymous A). In the first we read that in 1855, when Mchog gyur gling pa passed through Dpal spungs on his way back to Nang chen, Mchog gyur gling pa conferred on 'Jam mgon Kong sprul "the complete transmission and empowerment of his mind treasure, the *Bima'i bla sgrub*."¹⁸⁷ The second text relates the information that at Karma dgon, "when the lunar mansion Puśya and the planet Jupiter were in conjunction, and the energy of the stars and planets was positive," Mchog gyur gling pa gave the transmission of "the *gter gsar* Vimalamitra cycle together with related instructions," this time to Zla bzang sprul sku.¹⁸⁸ Whether or not the liturgies were in writing at the time,¹⁸⁹ it is clear that by the end of 1855 the treasure cycle existed.

Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po provides no date for the revelation, though one can be inferred. He stated only that "at the *gnas ri* of Ri bo dbang zhu, when he was opening the site, the Vimala[mitra] practice cave was transformed into a tent of light, in the center of which he met Pañchen *Dri med bshes gnyen* [Vimalamitra] and received the instructions of the *Bima'i bla*

¹⁸⁶ The *Bima'i bla sgrub* is found in volume 34 of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*. Later commentators classified an additional revelation as pure vision, but neither Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po nor Dkon mchog 'gyur med more than one in that category. See Doctor 2005, pp. 96-97.

¹⁸⁷ *De nas khong gi dgongs gter bi ma'i bla sgrub dbang lung tshang ba* (Kong sprul A, ff. 78a). Note how 'Jam mgon Kong sprul here also classifies this cycle as a mind treasure rather than a pure vision treasure as Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po would later do.

¹⁸⁸ *Rgyal phur 'grub pa'i sbyor ba gza' skar bzang po rang shugs kyis 'grigs pas/ gter gsar bi ma mi tra'i dbang bzhi khrid dang sbrel ba thog mar gsan* (Unidentified A, p. 355).

¹⁸⁹ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded that during the same visit Mchog gyur gling pa gave him the transmission for the *Bar chad kun sel* and that he performed it from memory (*thugs thog nas mdzad*), suggesting that all the liturgies had not yet been written. See Kong sprul A, ff. 78a-78b.

sgrub.”¹⁹⁰ We know that ’Jam mgon Kong sprul was there in late 1853 to consecrate Zla gam dbang phug, a cave at the mountain. Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po reported that in November 1853 Mchog gyur gling pa was there practicing the “precise and unelaborated extensive *sādhana* rite of Ratna gling pa’s mind *sādhana* [*Phur ba*] *yang gsang bla med* in the Kusali tradition.” It is possibly that Mchog gyur gling pa participated in ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s rites. However, Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po provided no more clues to its date of reception than that. Nor do any of the colophons give date or place. Unlike earth treasure, pure vision revelation did not seem to be something that Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po was terribly concerned with dating.

Regarding what he classified as the fifth earth treasure casket, however, Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po had more material to account for – too much, it would seem, and he was forced to dispute some of it. In this case treasure colophons were available, yet they do not supply the date of the revelation, making it necessary for Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po to establish one. Mchog gyur gling pa wrote in his autobiography that: “When I was twenty-six, in the [wood] tiger year (late February 1854-late February 1855) things [belonging] to the *Thugs sgrub* [*Bar chad kun sel*] emerged from Dkar mo brag.”¹⁹¹ Colophons to some of the texts also provide information, though when they were written cannot be known. In any case, this was information that Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po, the texts’ scribe, had provided:

The indisputably timely emanated great treasure revealer O rgyan Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa revealed this from one of the sites that tame beings through enlightened activity, Ri bo dbang zhu’i brag, in the eastern part of Mdo khams. The joyful servant of the Lake-born guru, Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po¹⁹² transcribed it from the actual handwritten original document of the golden scrolls.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ *Gnas ri bo dbang zhu’i gnas zhal ’byed skabs bi ma la’i sgrub phug ’od kyi gur khyim du gyur pa’i dbus su pañ chen dri med bshes gnyen zhal gzigs te bi ma’i bla sgrub zab mo rjes su gdams pa* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 36). Dkon mchog ’gyur med’s repetition of this passage is on page 260.

¹⁹¹ *Gnyer drug stag lor dkar mo brag nas thugs sgrub cha lag rnams thon* (Mchog gling A, 182). The cycle is in volumes 11 and 12 of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*.

¹⁹² This epithet occurs frequently in colophons in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, but I have yet to see it elsewhere.

¹⁹³ *Rtsod bral dus babs kyi sprul pa’i gter ston chen po o rgyan mchog gyur bde chen gling pas mdo khams shar phyogs phrin las ’gro ba ’dul ba’i gnas chen brgyad kyi ya gyal ri bo dbang zhu’i brag nas spyen drangs pa’i shog ser gyi bu dpe phyag bris dngos las mtsho skyes bla ma dgyes pa’i ’bangs mkhyen brtse’i dbang pos zhal bshus pa dge legs su gyur cig* (Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse F, p. 79). There are three other colophons to texts belonging to this revelation that are nearly identical; two of them add that the site is close to Kañ thog.

From this we can know that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was involved in the composition of the treasure. We would therefore presume he would have known the date of its extraction, and yet in the hagiography he supplies a date different from that given by Mchog gyur gling pa:

In his twenty-seventh year, from the practice site of Slob dpon rin po che [Padmasambhava], Dkar rdzong brag, the peak at Ri bo dbang zhu, [Mchog gyur gling pa] extracted as secret treasure four teachings which clarify obstacles, auxiliaries of the *Thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel* [cycle].¹⁹⁴

Were this a matter of determining the correct date of the revelation we would have to judge either Mchog gyur gling pa or Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po to be in error. Then there is Padma ye shes, who further confused the matter by writing that the extraction of the fifth casket occurred in the tenth month of the very year (the water ox) in which Mchog gling arrived at Dpal spungs (c. December 1853).¹⁹⁵ Thus there are three possible dates: the wood tiger year; when Mchog gyur gling pa was twenty-seven (the wood hare year); or the water ox year – 1854, 1855, or 1853, respectively.

Finally, later in the text Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po recorded that Mchog gyur gling pa also revealed “a minor material treasure” (*rdzas gter phran tshegs*)¹⁹⁶ from Ri bo dbang zhu at the same time that he received the *Bar chad kun sel* auxiliary.¹⁹⁷ Mchog gyur gling pa made no

The identification of Ri bo dbang zhu as one of the sites that tame being through enlightened activity suggests that the colophons were written after 1857, when Mchog gyur gling pa and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul wrote out the narrative map of Khams.

¹⁹⁴ *Nyer bdun par ri bo dbang zhu'i dbu rtse slob dpon rin po che'i sgrub gnas dkar 'dzong brag nas thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel gyi cha lag bar chad sel ba'i chos bzhi gsang gter du thon* (Mkhyen brtse B, p. 26). Dkon mchog 'gyur med (A, p. 284) as usual repeated Mkhyen brtse's passage on the fifth casket nearly verbatim, yet he replaces “when he was twenty-seven” with “in the wood hare year” (mid February 1855 to early February 1856). Curiously he skips the fifth casket altogether in his first enumeration of the thirty-seven, p. 199; it is restored in the second enumeration, p. 284.

¹⁹⁵ See Padma ye shes, p. 99.

¹⁹⁶ This category is not clearly identified in Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's classification of the “seven descents.” Should it belong to the earth treasures? It comes after their enumeration but before the conclusion of that section, suggesting it does. The term is one of the oldest of the treasure tradition. See Gyatso 1994 and Doctor 2005.

¹⁹⁷ This revelation is reported as follows: When [Mchog gyur gling pa] was twenty-seven, after he had received the supplementary material for the *Thugs sgrub* from Gong smos dkar 'dzong brag, he revealed relics of the Buddha and soil from the cave at Maratika from above the door to Nam mkha'i snying po's practice cave at the base of Ri bo dbang zhu. *Dgung grangs nyer bdun par gong smos dkar 'dzong brag nas thugs sgrub cha lag skor bzhes pa'i rjes / ri bo dbang zhu'i zhol nam mkha' snying po'i sgrub phug gi sgo gong nas*

mention of these material treasures in his autobiography. We therefore have no date to compare it to other than that of Padma ye shes, whose alternate date for the combined *Bar chad kun sel* and material treasure revelation is likely simply a product of narrative thrift – one in which the singularity of place provided a constant that obviated the need to provide multiple dates. Had we no recourse to any narrative other than Mchog gyur gling pa’s autobiography, we would, like Aris, simply assume the date given – such a simple piece of historical information – and make nothing of it. Yet we find three different dates to make sense of, and unless we are willing to decide somehow that two of our sources are incorrect, we have to conclude that none can be taken any more authoritatively than the others,¹⁹⁸ and if that is the case, we might come to question whether the revelations were in fact ever enacted. In other words, while the treasures do indeed exist, the rituals of their revelation might never have actually been performed.

The above two examples from the enumeration of thirty-seven caskets of earth treasure show that Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po created a colophon-like narrative for each of Mchog gyur gling pa’s revelations. With Mchog gyur gling pa as the agent, each entry proposed the date, place, and treasure object produced. Tibetan hagiographies organize the life and career of the central character in such a way as to trace his or her journey on the path to the ultimate accomplishment of enlightenment, and the enlightened deeds performed thereafter. Hagiographies of treasure revealers, like those of more conventional saints, include the rituals performed and the compositions produced. Revelations can be described in either context – ritual performance or text creation, and they often are. The enumeration of the thirty-seven caskets is notable for having provided a venue for the sort of information for revelations that

thub pa’i rin bsrel brag phug ma ra ti ka’i sa sna dang bcas pa (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 32). Maratika is a Padmasambhava practice cave in Nepal. On page 104 Padma ye shes signaled his agreement with the simultaneity of the scriptural and material treasure extraction, if not the date, by merging the two passages from Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po’s hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa into one.

¹⁹⁸ Doctor (2005, p. 88) prefers to rely on Mchog gyur gling pa for a dating of the fifth casket, though I see no reason to do so, especially given that Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po was involved in the composition of the treasure.

one would otherwise find in treasure colophons. It would seem to be a compensation for the fact that many of the revelations produced only relics or medicinal objects, and some produced nothing whatsoever. As a result, there were no colophons to record the time, place, agent and object. The enumeration into thirty-three allowed Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po to offer a standardized narrative of each treasure recovery in the cases where no colophon was available to do so. His text appears to be a collection of stories of treasure revelations – episodes in Mchog gyur gling pa's career where he enacted revelation – that produced no treasure texts (or, perhaps, anything at all). The text presents them in a coherent fashion, offering an alternative to the potential accusation that Mchog gyur gling pa went around revealing treasure, but that those revelations produced nothing.

From this discussion one important simple fact becomes evident: the dates and places of a given revelation as recorded in treasure accounts are somewhat arbitrary. What one source might assert is frequently not supported by another. The received dates and places of a given treasure revelation is the product of often repeated editing of treasure accounts. Hagiographies and histories reveal that a given revelation is stretched over time and space – they record pre-revelation prophetic visions and coming into possession of a certificate and the like, ritual activity around an extraction, later deciphering and writing. We have to ask why, then, some Western authors insist on maintaining the fantasy that a revelation came into existence all at once? Tibetan accounts, particularly colophons, have good reason to promote this idea, but it is not the sole presentation available in the Tibetan treasure literature. While the ritual of extraction may have been performed at a stated time and place, this was but one part of a lengthy process of treasure production. Given the reality that the Tibetan treasure literature makes no secret of this, there need be no charges of fraud or charlatanry. The matter is much more complex than such accusations would allow.

In comparing the colophon narratives in the *Mchog gling gter gsar* and the narratives found in Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po's hagiography and the treasure histories, an interesting matter frequently raised by Western scholars comes to the foreground: the so-called "yellow scroll." Reading Western scholarship one might conclude that the yellow scroll is an essential part of a treasure revelation.¹⁹⁹ By reading colophons, hagiographies, and histories, however, one comes to the understanding that the scroll is instead an essential part of treasure *narratives*. The yellow scrolls are a remnant of the earliest days of the treasure tradition, a narrative descendant of the first instances of literal recovery of ancient texts that likely engendered the entire tradition. As discussed above, extraction of "treasure" in Tibet began quite literally, with the retrieval of imperial artifacts – including texts, possibly yellowed from their time in the dusty caches of the deserted temple – in an effort to reconnect (that is, connect the revealer and the revealed teachings) with the glory days of the empire. This sign of the materiality of the treasure, being an early element of the phenomenon, remained constant. Its inclusion into the narrative was a means to reference an historical fact, providing skeptics with physical evidence of Padmasambhava's involvement in the transmission of the teaching contained in the treasure – a "tokens of reality" to use White's term. The issue is not whether a revelation included an object, but that the narrative standards that developed around revelation (that is, claiming that a given text had been revealed) included the claim that a material object or text had been involved. The category of "pure vision" (*dag snang*) and "mind treasure" (*dgong gter*) were available categories for presenting something as a revelation, but "earth treasure," involving a physical object, was preferable, being considered more valid.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Gyatso's essays, many of which rely heavily on the work of Tulku Thondup, repeatedly make central the issue of "yellow scrolls." See especially Gyatso 1986, p. 14.

²⁰⁰ See, for example, O rgyan stobs rgyal's account of the composition of the *Bar chad kun sel*. O rgyan stobs rgyal has Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po state: "I too have a terma teaching called *Tukdrub Deshek Düpa* with the same meaning as yours; even the words are identical. Therefore we should make it into one. Mine is a gongter and yours is a sa-ter, which is more auspicious" (Orgyen Tobgyal p. 5).

The “yellow scroll” was the physical evidence that gave the earth treasure the added stamp of legitimacy and thus the revelation account frequently (though not always) included this trope.

Moreover, the physicality of the yellow scroll allows the participants to claim that the second most important figures for the legitimacy – the *ḍākinī* – were likewise involved. It was the scroll that gave a location for the *ḍākinī* script. This script, as well described by Gyatso, is the “self-ambiguating signification” that allows the revealer to justify his reception of volumes of texts from what is often only a single syllable. The wisdom play of the *ḍākinī* simultaneously conceals and reveals in an “equivocal transmission”; the yellow scroll is extracted but not made known until the *ḍākinī* script is decoded, using the tools provided by the *ḍākinī* themselves. Gyatso rightly sees the play of gender here, as it is the gnostic quality of the *ḍākinī*’s femaleness that permits the coded transmission, and it is the femaleness of the consort’s subtle body, that makes possible its decoding.²⁰¹ The ambiguity of the *ḍākinī*, I would add, is what makes her a suitable bridge between the imputed human authors of the treasure text: Padmasambhava and the revealer. Both these figures have to be simultaneously credited with and absolved from the writing of the text. Ascribing the initial writing – an act of mediation in itself – to a shadowy figure like a *ḍākinī* permits the authorship to be distributed among all figures required to be involved.

Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po hardly mentions the yellow scroll in the hagiography, in fact mentioning that term only once in his enumeration of the thirty-seven caskets of earth treasure. This is in his account of Mchog gyur gling pa’s sixteenth casket of earth treasure, a public extraction that produced medicinal substances but no scriptures:

On the twenty-second [day of the first month of the fire serpent year, or February 17, 1857], from Sman rgyal ’dra ba’i brag [at Seng ge brag, Mchog gyur gling pa] revealed medicinal treasure and a yellow scroll; he gave the medicine to us, but he kept the yellow scroll secret.²⁰²

²⁰¹ Gyatso 1998, pp. 246-256.

²⁰² *Nyer gnyis la sman rgyal ’dra ba’i brag nas sman gyi gter dang shog ser zhig kyang bzhes shing snam bdag cag la gnang / shog ser gsang bar mdzad song* (Mkhyen brtse B, p. 28).

Notice that the scrolls were not actually revealed in the sense of being made available; Mchog gyur gling pa did not display them, but “kept them secret.” They are there to be referred to in the literature, but in such a way that their absence is explained. The *Mchog gling gter gsar* contains no texts linked to this sixteenth casket.²⁰³

Only a few of the treasure histories found in the *Mchog gling gter gsar* make mention of yellow scrolls. The history of the *Zab bdun* (Anonymous A) does so twice, stating first that “on the tenth day of the third month, the black month – a special time – they began, and the white scrolls were well-transcribed.”²⁰⁴ Later, after a seven-day performance of a Kīla rite during which time the ritual implements quivered and leapt about and emitted sound and light, one of the characters in the story, a monk named Dbon Bstan ’dzin byang chub Chos kyi nyi ma stated that as soon as the treasure scrolls had been deciphered they had vanished.²⁰⁵ Another example of a treasure history referencing a scroll is the short history of an Avalokiteśvara cycle named the *Dam chos thugs rje chen po*. Here we are explicitly told that the scrolls for the treasure appeared on the twenty-fifth day of the month (the day the dākinī gather) in plain view of many witnesses. We are also told that the scrolls remained sealed in secrecy, however, until three years later when the Karma pa insisted that they be deciphered.²⁰⁶

²⁰³ Twice Mkhyyen brtse’i dbang po referred simply to a “scroll.” These are found in the thirty-third and thirty-fourth treasure caskets. The first resulted in the inventory of Rdzong shod Bde gshegs ’dus pa’i pho brang (Anonymous B), a text that has no colophon. The second resulted in another place-inventory (Mchog gling, Mkhyyen brtse, and Kong sprul B), but the treasure cycle that Mkhyyen brtse’i dbang po recorded as having come from the scroll – the “*Mkha’ ’gro gsang pa*” – apparently was never decoded, or in any case has been lost; no text of this title appears in the *Mchog gyur gling pa gter gsar*. See Mkhyyen brtse A, p. 31. A later passage in the hagiography is in the section on the material treasure and comes in an interlineal note: “It is said that in his fortieth year, in the earth dragon year (late February 1868 to mid February 1859), when [Mchog gyur gling pa] was on his way to Lha ldan [i.e. Lha sa], at Sgrag yang rdzong he revealed a finger bone of Gnubs chen rin po che together with yellow scrolls, but whoever looks into this matter will find it inconclusive.” (*Lha ldan phebs skabs dgung grang bzhi bcu pa sa ’brul lor sgrag yang rdzong nas gnubs chen rin po che’i mthep skor shog ser bcas bzhes skad tsam las sus kyang zhib cha nges pa ma byung*; Mkhyyen brtse A, p. 32). Here Mkhyyen brtse doubts outright the existence of this revelation, with its finger and yellow scrolls; he states that the occurrence of the revelation is suspect, and he places the entire episode in an interlineal note, further emphasizing its marginality.

²⁰⁴ *Hor zla gsum pa nag pa zla ba’i tshes bcu dus khyad par can la dbu btsug ste dkar shog gi ngos su legs par phab ste* (Anonymous A, p. 357).

²⁰⁵ *Gter shog ’beb tshar nas mi snang bar gyur* (Anonymous A, p. 358).

²⁰⁶ *Mchog gling and Shes rab yes shes*, p. 249.

The most frequent references to scrolls, yellow and otherwise, are found in the colophons, where in fact they are mentioned quite regularly. This makes a certain amount of sense: the colophon is the place where the individual text is legitimated, where the transformation from revelation to its current form was most in need of explanation. Some colophons describe the size of the scrolls, sometimes including even the numbers of lines of text it contains. Yet the infrequency with which the term is met in the hagiography and history narratives compared with its regularity in the colophons supports the claim that the scrolls have more rhetorical than historical substance.

The “yellow scroll” (or its equivalent) can be read as a device that allows the narrative to make the transition from that which was concealed in symbolic script to that which the present reader holds in his hands. The scroll is the thing that was encoded, inscribed, then decoded and transcribed, the physical object that is a proxy for the *ḍākinī*, the bridge between Padmasambhava and the treasure revealer. Here the mention of an actual object is a necessary narrative device, and reference to a “yellow scroll” was the conventional means to describe the reception of an earth treasure. The originating events of the treasure tradition – the discovery of yellowed manuscripts in dusty half-forgotten temples – established a normative trope in treasure narrative, one by which earth treasure was spoken of in terms of its physicality. Yet the yellow scrolls, once the “equivocal transmission” is completed and their presence is no longer useful, can be returned to obscurity, their existence dropped from the discussion.²⁰⁷ Something that is necessary in the colophon is not something needed in the hagiography.

²⁰⁷ Very rare is the existence of a yellow scroll following the composition of a treasure: Tulku Thondup does provide a photograph of a small reliquary containing, among other things, a fragment of a yellow scroll from Mchog gyur gling pa’s twenty-third casket of earth treasure, the *Thugs sgrub yid bzhin nor bu* (Tulku Thondup 1986, figure five, between pages 144 and 145). The historical veracity of relics is an important topic, but one well beyond the scope of this dissertation. Two studies of relics in a Buddhist context that contribute to an understanding of the phenomenon as a piece of complex interaction between practitioner and material objects are Robert Sharf, 1999, “On The Allure of Buddhist Relics,” *Representations* 66, Spring, pp. 75-99; and Gregory Schopen, 1998, “Relic”, In *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, edited by Mark C. Taylor, 256-269, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

The treasure colophon narratives' preservation and emphasis of the trope of a "yellow scroll" can be faulted for obscuring the fact that treasure revelations occurred over an extended period of time and space. A scroll, as an object with the same physicality as a rock or handful of soil, logically emerges from a particular spot, at a particular time. Hagiographies and histories, however, regularly include episodes in the life of the treasure revealer or the origin story of a treasure cycle that dislocate a revelation from a set place and time. These types of narrative commonly include prophecies, dreams, and receptions of treasure certificates that foreshadow a revelation. Such prophecies can be read as indications that a revelation began well before the ascribed date, and at a place different from the treasure extraction site.²⁰⁸ If we choose to read them as having historical validity, then we find in them evidence that the revealer was thinking of the revelation prior to its occurrence. If we read them as later compositions added to the treasure cache for corroboration of its legitimacy, then we find that the treasure tradition itself promoted the temporal and spatial extension of a revelation.

The case of the revelation of Mchog gyur gling pa's narrative map is an especially useful example of this. As seen in the previous chapter, we learn of the map's coming revelation from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, who freely admits to his own role in bringing about the revelation performance. At the time, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was beginning to gather texts for his *Rin chen gter mdzod*, and was evidently concerned that he might not choose the right texts:

While I was in the process of endeavoring to collect important treasures, I requested [Mchog gyur gling pa] to examine thoroughly which would be suitable [for inclusion]. Several inventories and treasure caskets had come to him recently, and he said, "at times like this, meet Guru Rinpoche in person, it is the perfect opportunity to ask him [such] questions; I will not forget [his responses] and will keep them [in my mind]." On the way to Ja sbra he stopped at Dpa' brag and performed a *tshogs skor*. There he received the supplementary inventory for Seng brag. On the first day of the new fire serpent year [February 25, 1857], having received the brief list of the twenty-five great sites, he came here and we made offerings to the lords of the treasure. When I asked about his investigations [on the matter of which treasures to include] he [told me that]

²⁰⁸ An example of such a prophecy can be found in the stories of the revelations at Rong me. The hagiographies of Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po include a description of his reception of a treasure inventory ten months prior to the events at the cave. See Kong sprul E, p. 79 and Blo gros phun tshogs B, where the prophecy is given in the section on Rong me dkar mo and Seng ge g.yu mtsho.

he had put the question to Guru Rinpoche and [received] many lines of verse in response. However, at that time I wrote down only some fragments. The main gist appeared to be that I had received an edict that based on the force of my karmic propensity and aspirations, I was permitted to include whatever I wished.²⁰⁹

For 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, the revelatory event that produced the narrative map was an opportunity for Mchog gyur gling pa to converse with Padmasambhava and ask some specific questions. The answers were less important than the fact that they were asked, and in any case 'Jam mgon Kong sprul could hardly have been disappointed with a response that allowed him complete leeway in his project.

From this passage we might conclude that Mchog gyur gling pa engaged in a revelatory experience for the sole purpose of consulting with Padmasambhava on 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's behalf, and he happened that he picked up a text as well. But as detailed in the previous chapter, there was more to the revelation than that. Mchog gyur gling pa had just announced the existence of the treasure text by name, and it is difficult not to suspect he went to Dpa' bo dbang chen brag specifically to receive it. At the time he, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul were engaged in a rather extensive consecration of Tsā 'dra rin chen brag, and the existence of the narrative map was announced as part of that project. In the midst of elaborate ritual proceedings Mchog gyur gling pa had been given one task – to converse with Padmasambhava – when he created another one for himself – the production of a treasure text listing of twenty-five great sites of Khams. He set out for Ja sbra, and stopped over at Dpa' bo, with the intention not only of having a revelation, but also of recovering a particular treasure. Upon his return he passed onto 'Jam mgon Kong sprul the authorization to proceed with the *Rin chen gter mdzod* as he so desired, and the two sat down to write out the treasure text.

²⁰⁹ *Nged kyiis gter chos gnad chen rigs sdud rtsol bgyid skabs kyang da rung 'di thad rung min sogs brtags pa zhig nan mdzad grub zhus par / khong la ring min kha byang dang gter kha 'ga' re 'byung ba yod pas 'di 'dra'i skabs gu ru rin po che sku dngos mjal nas zhu gnang skabs phyed pa zhig yod pas mi bsnyel ba byed bzhas gsungs / ja sbra la phebs zhor dpa' brag tu tshogs skong mdzad / seng brag yang byang bzhes / me sbrul gnam lo gsar tshes kyi tshes gcig la gnas chen nyer lnga'i mdo byang phyag tu 'byor nas 'dir phebs / gter gyi mnga' dbul phul / brtag pa zhus don de skabs gu ru rin po che la zhus nas lan stsal ba'i tshogs bcad shin tu mang ba zhig 'dug kyang de dus thor ma 'khod / don rtsa las 'phro dang smon lam gyi shugs yin pas gang 'dod bsdu bsgrigs chog pa'i bka' lung thob par snang (Kong sprul A, 85b-86a).*

The colophon to the treasure text, however, makes no mention of the events preceding the revelation (see Appendix One). As one would expect, it did what was necessary to link the text to the revelation time and place, and aside from a few colorful details regarding the shape of the box the text supposedly came in – the physicality of the earth treasure’s transmission – it is a picture of brevity. All indication that the revelation began before the date given is erased. The colophon’s narrative is the one that Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po adopted in his enumeration of the caskets.²¹⁰ Colophons, an invaluable source for learning who was involved in the text’s composition, in this way obscure as much as they reveal. Like the hagiography and the history, the earth treasure colophon narrative has a certain agenda to promote: the actual extraction of a text concealed in encoded writing on a physical scroll by a real historical figure on a date that can be marked on a calendar at a place that can be visited by anyone.

The colophon is written to authenticate the treasure text to which it is affixed. Hagiography and treasure history, on the other hand, are more able to reveal circumstances that the colophon erases, including the fact that the revelation occurred not at one time at one place, but gradually took form, through dream, vision, or even a provisional revelation foretelling its occurrence. But the colophons to the *Mchog gling gter gsar* texts, much like Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po’s enumeration of the caskets of earth treasure, erase this fact so as to better affirm the treasure tradition’s normative trope: at a certain time something was extracted from somewhere by someone.

Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po’s mixing of the different formats of treasure accounts – that of hagiography, treasure history, and colophon – in his hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa, belies his diverse interests in composing the text. On the one hand, his text affirmed the legitimacy of all of Mchog gyur gling pa’s best-known treasure cycles by presenting an

²¹⁰ Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po wrote in the hagiography: “When [Mchog gyur gling pa] reached the age of twenty-nine, on the first day of the first month, from Dpa’ bo dbang chen brag he revealed the list of the twenty-five great sites.” *Dgung grangs nyer dgur son pa’i cho ’phrul zla ba’i tshe gcig la dpa’ bo dbang chen brag* (11) *nas gnas chen nyer lnga’i mdo byang* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 27).

authoritative affirmation that they were, in fact, revealed. That he credited Mchog gyur gling pa with the revelation and provided a date and time for the named treasure cycles established that texts that include the name of the cycle were to be accepted as legitimate revelations. In this the enumeration was very much like a colophon. Yet the text is also a hagiography, and as such it allows for the recounting of ritual events – including treasure revelation – that are not intended to legitimate any third party or object, but serve to glorify the subject of the narrative, Mchog gyur gling pa. In this way the hagiography is a microcosm of the full collection of materials on the life of Mchog gyur gling pa; reading it carefully, we can separate the many layers of historical accounts of the man and his activity, and appreciate how they have been woven together to support the much-revered historical – one might even say legendary – figure.

III. A Return to Rong me dkar mo and Seng rgod g.yu mtsho

Let us return one more time to the cave complex and high alpine lake where Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po revealed treasure – and recovered treasure – in November 1866. The treasure colophons from the texts produced by the revelations are brief, and fail to give the date for the events. This information is easily found in other sources. The rituals performed there are the subject of a *thang ka* painting on the back of which is a handwritten narrative of the separate episodes depicted on the front.²¹¹ The narrative is written in the first person, the author identifying himself as Mchog gyur gling pa, and the passage is nearly identical to the account of the two-week event found in Mchog gyur gling pa's autobiography. It appears to have been a later addition to that work, coming after a section break and being the concluding passage of the section on treasure revelations. If we accept the attribution, then the narrative was composed within four years of the Rong me revelations (Mchog gyur gling pa

²¹¹ See Figure Three for an image of the entire *thang ka* and Figure Four for a photograph of the narrative on the reverse site. The narrative is translated and transcribed in Appendix Four.

died in 1870).²¹² The development of the narrative regarding the events of November 1866 is largely a shift from a narrative of opening a sacred site to that of revealing treasure texts. This is a shift that can be traced through the various sources, beginning with the *thang ka* narrative, passing through accounts by Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, and Dkon mchog 'gyur med, and concluding with recent Western descriptions that simply list the treasure produced.

The narrative found on *thang ka* and in Mchog gyur gling pa's autobiography is one that presents treasure revelation as ritual performance. As a whole and in terms of the vast majority of the details, the *thang ka* is dedicated not to treasure but the site of Rong me – to treasure revelation rather than treasure extraction. The opening depicted and described in all its detail serves to legitimate the site as one of religious importance. Treasure revelation is merely a part of that process.

In his narrative on the reverse side of the painting Mchog gyur gling pa named fifteen different rituals, of which one (*gañacakra*) was performed eight times, and another, smoke offering (*bsangs brngan*) was performed five times. Other ritual included pointing out the features of the site, ritual cake (*gtor ma*) offering, golden ablution (*gser skyems*), mountain cleansing (*ri khrus*), and deity subjugation, all of which were performed once each. These are basic site consecration rites that communicate with the local deity, identifying him and obtaining his service through gifts and displays of wrath. Two additional rituals, the fulfillment and the empowerments, performed twice and thrice respectively, were for the benefit of the royal and general audience, as was the all-night revelry. Only four of the fifteen rituals mentioned relate to treasure: the search for treasure signs (once), the breaking of treasure seals (twice), the act of treasure extraction (four times), and the offering of treasure substitute

²¹² If we choose not to accept the signature of the *thang ka* narrative, dating it becomes difficult, as it could have been amended to the autobiography (itself two sections of a collection of several texts, some of which carry their own separate colophons) at any time before blocks were carved. Many volumes of treasure cycles were carved in the early twentieth century, but it is not known when the blocks for the autobiography were prepared.

(once). Only twice does Mchog gyur gling pa inform us as to what was extracted: “a statue, a ceramic casket hand implement and so forth,” and a vajra, left partially imbedded in the rock. No mention is made of any text.²¹³

Only in later sources are the treasure texts revealed at Rong me named and classified. This process likely began soon after the sojourn at Rong me. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded in his autobiography that immediately following the revelations at Rong me, in the eleventh month of that year (c. December 1866) Mchog gyur gling pa summoned him to Zla gam dbang phug. There they “deciphered the *Bstan srung chos bzhi*, the *Snying po skor lnga*, the *Rtsa sgrub tshan drug*, the *Shwa na'i skor* and so forth,” and Mchog gyur gling pa bestowed the empowerments for the cycles.²¹⁴ Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, as one would expect, combined the information available from the colophons to create a complete statement of these two

²¹³ Visitors to the cave today are shown what is said to be the partially-extracted vajra (see Figure Five).

²¹⁴ *Gter chen zhal rgyas kyis rong me dkar mo stag tshang mtsho brag gi gter kha spyang drang / mchog gling zla gam dbang phug tu bzhugs yod 'dug pas phran 'phral du 'ong dgos pa'i gsung bris 'byor bas bcu gcig pa'i tshes bcu la grol nas phyin pas dgyes tshor mdzad / bstan srung chos bzhi / snying po skor lnga / rtsa sgrub tshan drug / shwa na'i skor sogs phab / bstan srung chos bzhi'i gtor rgyeb phyogs bzhir mdzad / gter gsar mang du zhus*. Kong sprul A, ff. 112a-112b). Only the second cycle mentioned, the *Snying po skor lnga*, appears to have come from Rong me; I have not identified the other titles, if any texts by those names in fact exist. Twelve texts belonging to the *Snying po skor lnga* can be found in volume 31, and four of these have colophons that state the texts were revealed at Rong me by Mchog gyur gling pa and deciphered by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul at Zla gam dbang phug, though none of these supply a date. According to its colophon, an additional revelation was deciphered at Zla gam and written out by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, the *Zhal gdams lam rim ye shes snying po*. Like the previous revelation, this text's colophon did not provide a date, though it located the place of the revelation to the “dākinī cave on the left,” a probable reference to the Ye shes mtsho rgyal cave (Mchog gling and Kong sprul C, p. 64).

A representative colophon reads: “The emanated great treasure revealer Mchog gyur gling pa revealed [this] from the upper left face of the Guru's secret cave at Rong me dkar mo stag tshang; the letters that were placed on the agate scrolls [by?] the dāka were deciphered at Zla gam dbang phug, the site which tames beings via power [of the eight sacred site of which tame beings through] enlightened activity and the heart of Ri bo dbang zhu. They were written by Padma gar dbang blo gros mtha yas. May virtue increase!” *Sprul pa'i gter chen mchog gyur gling pas Rong me dkar mo stag tshang gi gu ru'i gsang phug gong ma'i g.yas gdong nas spyang drangs pa'i mchong shog dpa' bo brtsegs pa'i yi ge las / phrin las 'gro 'dul dbang gi gnas mchog ri bo dbang zhu'i snying po zla gam dbang chen phug tu gtan la phab pa'i yi ge pa ni padma gar dbang blo gros mtha yas gyis bgyis pa dge legs 'phel* (Mchog gling and Kong sprul B, p. 472).

The colophon for an additional text (Mchog gling G) states, curiously, “I, Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa revealed this from Nam mkhas mdzod,” despite carrying a title that clearly marks it as belonging to the cycle that was revealed at Rong me. This sort of mixing of revealed material among diverse caskets is surprisingly common in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*. I hesitate to offer it as further evidence of a given revelation's extension across time and space, as it might be the result of a later editor who considered a particular text better suited to a cycle other than the one he found it in. A comprehensive study of the compilation and distribution of an individual treasure revealer's texts into proper cycles would be of great benefit to the study of treasure literature.

revelations' provenance, establishing the normative account. According to Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po, the thirtieth casket of earth treasure was revealed on the twenty-seventh day of the ninth month from the right-hand secret cave. This was comprised of the *Dam chos snying po skor lnga* "and so forth." Then, on the ninth day, from the left-hand secret cave Mchog gyur gling pa revealed the *Thugs sgrub rdo rje drag tsal*, and vajra on the tenth.

It is in Dkon mchog 'gyur med's hagiography of Mchog gyur gling pa that the event was given its fullest treatment. Episodes of locating and extracting treasure were filled in with greater detail, and additional events were added to highlight the treasure revealing aspects of the two-week period. The additions were substantial. In Mchog gling's nineteen-line text on the back of the *thang ka* roughly four lines alone are dedicated to the extraction of treasure. In the autobiography the entire episode runs roughly five folia sides. In Dkon mchog 'gyur med it covers fifteen folia sides. Many of his additions are merely expansions of the narrative.²¹⁵ Dkon mchog 'gyur med, as is typical of the text, combined both stories of revelation ritual and legitimation of recovered treasure. His was the last to do so. Following accounts of the events such as that of O rgyan stobs rgyal relate the events as though all activity performed at the cave and lake was done for the sole purpose of extracting treasure. Doctor's English rendition of the enumeration of the caskets of earth treasure further highlights the contemporary emphasis on a treasure revealer's activity being dedicated to treasure recovery. His accounting of the revelation moreover carefully marks which caskets' contents are extant, implying a presumption that all revelation necessarily produced treasure. In the cases of caskets with no existing treasure, the treasure is assumed to be missing.

²¹⁵ For example, Mchog gyur gling pa's narrative simply states that a ladder was necessary to access the Ye shes mtsho rgyal cave (Figure Six), and that fire and some cutting was necessary to open the cave (Figure Seven). Dkon mchog 'gyur med extends both events with a harrowing account of a young monk risking life and limb to reach the cave, who calls down to his masters for reassurance. Only by generating a keen awareness and repeating to himself that he was fulfilling his lamas' instructions was the monk able to continue (Dkong mchog 'gyur med, p. 364).

The *thang ka* allows us to see the events at Dkar mo stag tshang in a way that these later narratives do not. Mchog gyur gling pa's consort Bde skyid chos sgron is depicted in the *thang ka* alongside the lamas in the central cave on the first day of ritual activity, a remarkable detail found nowhere else (Figure Eight).²¹⁶ As stated in Chapter One, her name is mentioned only in colophons to texts in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, and there only as a petitioner for a text to be written. Bde skyid chos sgron's presence in the *thang ka* is perhaps one of the clearest differences between the *thang ka* and its focus on ritual, and the narratives' increasing dedication to the treasure texts. In the patriarchic world of text production she would have had little space granted her, but here, in the performance of ritual, she could sit alongside the others in the central cave, because there she had a role to play. For what do we see in these images other than lamas performing rituals with the participation of lay people and the local royalty?

In a similar fashion to the events of the lake described above, I propose the following narrative of the cave site events. Again, it is mine, but it relies faithfully on the hagiographic material: Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa, then at the height of their treasure-extraction and landscape-consecration activities, arrived at Rong me after a fruitful and well-attended ritual event at nearby Padma shel phug. The party surveyed the site and performed preliminary opening rituals such as the feast and smoke offerings. They determined that the necessary features for a great site were present, and they performed further rituals to affirm this. One of those rituals was treasure revelation, a means to prove that Padmasambhava had in fact visited the site and infused it with his blessing. In a public revelation a revealer does not simply state he has taken possession of treasure. He breaks rocks, melts seals, and otherwise physically engages with the place. One can easily speculate that at this point, several days into their activities, word was getting out among the people in the neighboring valleys,

²¹⁶ Mchog gyur gling pa's son, Nam snying byin brlabs Tshe dbang grags pa is also depicted along side his mother, father, and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po.

and a steward came from Sde dge to take stock. He sent word back to the capital, and several days later the King himself arrived, at which point the ritual activity reached its pinnacle. The treasure extraction followed a night-long orgy of singing and dancing and praying, one that would have brought about an ecstatic state conducive to visionary and other forms of revelatory experiences (Figure Nine). Indeed one of the more important of Mchog gyur gling pa's treasures, the *Lam rim ye shes snying po*, for which 'Jam mgon Kong sprul later composed a famous commentary, is attributed to that last day of treasure extraction. The party then proceeded to the lake where they continued their consecration activities (Figure Ten).

Again, I do not intend to offer this narrative as somehow more "accurate" an historical account of the events at Rong me. The caves and the lake there are there as described; on the water's edge there are even what are said to be the remnants of the huts mentioned in the narratives and shown on the *thang ka*. The multiple narratives, as Hayden White might have predicted, tell many different stories; the very nature of narrative, as discussed in the opening of this chapter, implies that a different account is possible. Nevertheless, the *thang ka* and its narrative can be persuasively offered as the earliest account in relation to those that came later. They do not mention the names of the treasure texts. This is because the texts themselves did not yet exist at the time of this first narrative – at least not in any form by which they might be named. Though the process of their production had already begun with a dream of Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po's ten months prior, they were not written out until the three lamas convened at Zla gam dbang phug several months later. It is only in later narratives that treasure texts were assigned to the revelations.

The *thang ka* images and written narrative of ritual activity provide a holistic account of the events at Rong me, one in which treasure revelation was simply one aspect of the site's consecration. Framed by the party's arrival at and departure from the site, neither image nor history is concerned with the production of texts per se – such matters would have to include

the earlier dream and the later writing, neither of which happened at the place that is, ultimately, the subject of the artwork. The *thang ka* nevertheless provided an historical anchor for the narrative legitimation of two earth treasure revelations. It provided information on the place, date, and agent for the story that was amended to the treasure texts as colophons – once the texts were written, that is. The *thang ka*, then, is a narrative of a site more than it is a narrative of a treasure revelation. Its stories were absorbed by later narratives of treasure revelation that were designed not to serve Rong me or the Sde dge kingdom but rather the legitimation of the treasure texts that claimed those revelations for their originating stories.

The events at Rong me and Seng rgod g.yu mtsho are transformed through multiple layers of narratives. The two-week period was primarily a series of ritual performances for the consecration of the site. The treasure revelations had they ultimately produced no texts, could have remained, in the telling of the event, in service of the consecration. The search for signs, the breaking of seals, the dancing – all of this could have been told coherently as a means to affirm the greatness of the cave complex, whether or not anything more came of it. After all, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's enumeration of Mchog gyur gling pa's caskets of earth treasure makes plain that his revelations did not always result in treasure objects. In this case the inspiration was productive, and treasures were indeed given physical form several months later. At that point another layer of narrative became necessary, one that explicitly linked the revelation rituals to the production of the texts.

Western scholars of Tibetan religion have long taken their clues from the normative interpretation passed onto them by their Tibetan teachers and around which their Tibetan texts are organized. Because Tibetan treasure literature is characterized largely by the demands of self-legitimation, because Tibetan lamas had to face a skeptical audience when initially describing the treasures, Western scholarship on the topic is almost exclusively concerned with how treasures have been and continue to be legitimated. The accounts of the

act of treasure revelation have therefore been largely relegated to the realm of the fantastical. One need not take refuge in a hermeneutic shift, relegating all accounts of treasure revelation to a “cosmic” or “mythic” time, as some would have us understand much of Tibetan historical narrative to be.²¹⁷ Nor does one need to construct elaborate explanations for the mechanics of a given revelation, as Aris sought to do. By following Aris’ lead and focusing on the rituals of extraction, while at the same time departing from him in recognizing that much of the detail we encounter is the result of narrative tropes, one can come to a place of being able to appreciate the performance of treasure revelation without the necessity of relying on a treasure text or object to supply its meaning. Furthermore, we can begin to look beyond a single narrative format – the colophon – that assigns a single place and time for the event of the treasure revelation. Hagiographies and histories make no secret of the extended process, and even colophons themselves allow for the steps of deciphering and writing of a treasure text after the revelation has occurred.

As with many Tibetan rites, treasure extraction is performed to draw out the importance of a particular place. It enacts the blessing bestowed on that place by reversing the order in which the blessing came down: what was hidden is now revealed, what lay dormant is now made to serve the community. The ritual of treasure revelation is only sometimes related to a treasure object, and when such a connection exists, it is established through narrative. If a revelation is on its way – if a lama has received a premonition that initiates one – then a ritual of extraction can be performed to both bring about the revelation and simultaneously establish the historical event that will later be inserted into the origin account of the treasure object.

Like any narrative, a treasure narrative unfolds according to certain predetermined parameters. As we have seen, these are the clearest in the treasure colophon; at least in the instance of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*; these are the elements of time, place, agent, and object.

²¹⁷ Samuel writes on page 602, note 4; that even the greatest of Tibetan historians “were scarcely living in the same worlds as modern Western rationalist scholars.”

Designed to substantiate a specific treasure text to which the narrative is amended, the colophon obscures as much as it divulges, reducing a complex event to a set of categories and making it seem that the sole purpose of the revelation ceremony was the production of the treasure object. But this was certainly not the case, and other narrative forms such as hagiographies and treasure histories preserve the complexity. Reading the narratives this way, the existence of a treasure object becomes secondary, a relic of sorts “to encourage faith in the Dharma,” as the accidental anthropologist Span Hanna was told by a Tibetan interpreter after witnessing the extraction of a statue and vajra from a large rock.²¹⁸

Aris’ interpretation of a treasure extraction quoted earlier – that the “treasure-hunt” is “an extension of the lamas customary role in society” rings especially true. Through ritual means the lama has affirmed the presence of Padmasambhava and the guardian deities at a particular site. He has made that available to the local population and pilgrims from afar. He has affirmed himself as the conduit between Padmasambhava and the people, the one who has translated the teachings that are embedded everywhere into a format that they can access. He has also performed an act that will later serve as a foundation for the origin account of such a teaching, if one comes into being, and which will forever link a treasure object to a certain place and a certain time when the lama was there to reveal it. The many different tellings of the revelation – be it in hagiography, treasure history, or colophon – reveal an ambiguity in the treasure tradition towards the practice of treasure revelation, at once embraced as an effective ritual activity, and relegated to the service of the legitimation of treasures.

²¹⁸ Hanna 1994, p. 10.

Chapter Three

A Geography of Khams pa Nonsectarianism

“Tibetan Buddhism today outside the Gelugpa order is largely a product of the Rimed movement.” Geoffrey Samuel

If there were no God, it would be necessary to invent him.” Voltaire

Hanging between rocky outcrops on the route between the 'Dzing and the Gter lung valleys is the *gnas* known as Rdzong shod bde gshegs 'dus pa'i pho brang, the Palace of Assembled Sugatas at Rdzong shod. This was 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's second hermitage, which he developed in the 1860s. He had first noted the site's features while passing through in 1856, and he quickly returned with eleven disciples to begin investigating the site's possibilities.²¹⁹ In the second month of the fire hare year (c. March, 1867) 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa all gathered there to formally consecrate the site. At that time Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa sat 'Jam mgon Kong sprul on a stone seat and formally invested him with a treasure revealer name: 'Chi med bstan gnyis g.yung drung gling pa, and they commanded him to begin extracting treasure.²²⁰ It was an order he did not entirely ignore; although 'Jam mgon Kong sprul did not join the others in extracting treasure then and there at Rdzong shod, soon afterwards, at Mchog gyur gling pa's insistence, he extracted a treasure casket from a cliff face at Padma shel ri.²²¹

²¹⁹ Kong sprul A, p. 84b.

²²⁰ Kong sprul A, p. 113a; Kong sprul G, pp. 34a-34b.

²²¹ Kong sprul A, p. 113a. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had expected Rdzong shod to be a site from which he himself would also extract treasure, but, as “the circumstances never materialized,” he never did so. However, during his first visit there he did come into possession of medicinal pills made by Padmasambhava “in the act of reviving a corpse.” Yet although signs of further treasure arose, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul claims he disregarded them, and so the treasure was never recovered. *Rdzong shod bde*

As discussed in the previous chapters, ten years earlier 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had requested Mchog gyur gling pa to produce a gazetteer for Tsā 'dra, as part of its opening, and as a result Mchog gyur gling pa produced as treasure the narrative map of Khams on which Tsā 'dra was featured. Now 'Jam mgon Kong sprul again asked Mchog gyur gling pa for a gazetteer for another site now under construction. It was a task Mchog gyur gling pa completed.²²² But since Rdzong shod was formally opened over a decade after the Mchog gyur gling pa produced his list of great sites of Khams, in order for it to appear on the map, the map would have to be redrawn. Thus in the spring of 1868 'Jam mgon Kong sprul composed his *Short, Brief Clarification of the List of the Twenty-five Great Sites of Khams Together With Their Auxiliaries*.²²³ His text is a commentary on Mchog gyur gling pa that completed the map.

In Chapter One we read Mchog gyur gling pa's list of great sites of Khams as a map of his own quest for legitimacy. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's map is somewhat more complex. Where Mchog gyur gling pa's geographical representation reflects the legitimation of his treasures and himself, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's map charts his involvement in two of the larger social issues of the day: a religious florescence that encouraged and supported inter-sectarian exchange, and, very much related to that, the immediate threat to the continued political and religious autonomy of the region by an occupying Tibetan army. In response to the real possibility of cartographical erasure, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's text provided the fragmented region with a means for geographic unification. His map was a subtle act of resistance that enabled Khams to survive as a place even as it was absorbed into Tibet and China.

gshegs 'dus pa'i gnas nang du thog mar bgrod skabs / gsungs gnas rta mgrin phug nas gu ru rin po ches bam sgrub mdzad pa'i myang grol sman mchog lag tu son / rig 'dzin brgyad kyi byin rdzas sogs bzhugs pa snga phyi mang du gsal snang la shar yang thog mar btang snyoms song stabs dus tshod 'phyugs pas phyis nas thon je dka' songs ba (Kong sprul G, ff. 35b-36a).

²²² Mchog gyur gling pa's revelation of the gazetteer for Rdzong shod (categorized by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po as his thirty-third treasure casket) is dated to the twenty-eighth day of the second month of the fire hare year (April 2, 1867). The text is Mchog gling H. Although the colophon does not identify an author, it is clear that the editors of the *Mchog gling gter gsar* understood it to be his, as it is the sole text included in the thirty-third casket according to the table of contents.

²²³ Kong sprul D; see Appendix Two for a translation of the text.

In this chapter we will read the map with an eye towards 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's alleged nonsectarianism in the face of the Tibetan invasion. We will find that the map, unlike his compositions and collections that are commonly asserted to be expressions of his unbounded position regarding Tibetan religion, explicitly excludes from the geography of Khams one segment of the community that the Lhasan army's presence had rendered suspect: the regions' Dge lugs pa institutions. In denying the Dge lugs a place on the landscape of Khams, the map explicitly functioned to oppose (Dge lugs) Tibet entrance to Khams. It was, therefore, a decidedly sectarian project by a man who is so famous for his nonsectarianism.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul is popularly credited with founding what has become known as the "Rimay movement," a phrase that has gained widespread use when discussing religious and social events of nineteenth century Khams. This chapter will examine the attempts that have been made over the last thirty-five years in Western publications to define the parameters of that so-called movement. I will argue that "Rimay" has become so unbounded that it has been rendered meaningless. More than that, it (whatever it may have been) has become so all-encompassing that it obscures the remarkable events of the period and the achievements of those involved. In examining some of the historical and biographical information that has been deployed to posit the existence of the "Rimay movement," I will alternate between received interpretations using the "Rimay" terminology, and my own, which avoids the term. The ultimate purpose of this inquiry is to understand 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's version of the narrative map. When viewed in light of the "Rimay movement" he is credited with founding, his narrative map falls short of its universalist ideals. One might find in this reason enough to set aside the notion of a "Rimay movement"; if the man who allegedly founded the movement did not himself embody its ideals, perhaps it is not the man that is flawed, but the conceptual standard by which he is judged.

I. *Ris med*: What's In A Name?

Ever since the publication of E. Gene Smith's introductory essays to a pair of Indian editions of Tibetan writings in 1969 and 1970²²⁴ something called "Rimay" (also Ri-me, Rimed, Rimé, and so forth) has gradually entered the Western lexicon of Tibetan Buddhism.²²⁵ The Tibetan adjective *ris med*, variously glossed as "nonsectarian," "ecumenical," "eclectic," "non-partial," "non-partisan," "universalistic," "unbounded" and so on, has over the following three decades come to be understood in the west as a noun. What in Tibetan appears in phrases such as the "*ris med* patriarch" or the "*ris med* teachings" became in English *the Rimay*, defined as a nonsectarian movement with leaders, social projects, a philosophical platform, and contrasted with a corrupted and debased Tibetan (or occasionally, more specifically, a Dge lugs pa) religio-political society. Once nominalized, "Rimay" floated free of those things to which it originally referred – the very people, places and historical events that "Rimay" was supposed to refer to.

As a result of having been taken up by Western scholars and translators with interests and worldviews of a different sort than those of the so-called movement's proponents, this "Rimay" came to reside firmly in the Western imagination. The ideology of "Rimay" has by now been so thoroughly imbedded in the modern vision of Tibetan Buddhism that to question its reality is futile. The movement has been heralded, and it marches on, embraced by all those who wish to claim an affiliation that can be said to resist the sort of chauvinism and limitations that inevitably and ironically follow religious affiliation. "Rimay" is a convenient conceptual location for both those who would condemn Tibetan sectarianism as well as those who would

²²⁴ The two essays were originally untitled prefaces to Indian publications of Tibetan texts. The earlier of the two appeared as the introduction to 'Jam mgon 'Ju Mi-pham Rgya-mtsho, *Gzhan gyis brtsad pa'i lan mdor bsdus pa rigs lam rab gsal de nyid snang byed: An answer to Blo bzang rab gsal's Refutation of the author's Sher le no bu ke ta ka and its defense, the Brgal lan nyin byed snang ba* (Gangtok: Sonam T. Kazi, 1969): 1-11. The second was the introduction to Koñ-sprul Blo-gros-mtha'-yas, *Koñtrul's Encyclopedia of Indo-Tibetan Culture* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1970): 1-87. Both are reprinted Smith 2001, where they appear, in a section entitled "The Nonsectarian Movement," under the titles "Mi pham and the philosophical controversies of the nineteenth century" (pp. 227-233) and "'Jam mgon kong sprul and the nonsectarian movement" (pp. 235-272), respectively. The pagination of these later editions are cited here.

²²⁵ As Samten Karmay wrote in 1988, "The revelation of the existence and history of this ["Rimay"] movement which is now well known is due to the studies of E.G. Smith" (1988, p. 37).

deny any participation in sectarianism. Perhaps its purported ideals are too attractive to resist: tolerance, open inquiry, inter-sectarian exchange, anti-[Dge lugs] establishment, and a favoring of the periphery [Khams] over the center [Lhasa] – not to mention some of the odder accretions such as collection of texts and the revitalization of lost lineages. Appealing as it is, it comes as no surprise that many Tibetan lamas who teach in the West have come to characterize themselves and their teaching as “Rimay.”²²⁶

Smith’s excellent essays have been endlessly cited in Western publications, to the extent that his insightful suggestions have long since been transformed into truisms. The essays were so rich in detail and so widely cast in scope that for three decades authors have mined their many aspects and created a “Rimay” that ultimately defies definition. Scholars working on a variety of issues, and translators introducing people or ideas now casually drop the term without any apparent need to explain it. Khams in the nineteenth century was undoubtedly the site of a large-scale religious and cultural activity, the extent and implications of which have yet to be explored. Unfortunately the fuzzy catchall “Rimay” does more to obscure that history than reveal it. This is because a full picture of what the so-called movement consisted of, what its essential characteristics were, and what exactly – be it doctrine, politics, personal quests – it was responding to, have never been adequately identified.

This failure of definition has produced a general certainty in the existence of something called “Rimay” that is so vague that it at times seems to include the full spectrum of Tibetan Buddhism, thereby obscuring the rich and subtle achievements of the so-called movement’s participants. That is, once “Rimay” had been reified and popularized, it became the dominant hermeneutic device for the history and geography from which Smith drew when

²²⁶ See for example the recent translation of Ri mgul sprul sku’s 1985 exposition of what he called ‘Jam mgon Kong sprul’s “Ri-me philosophy” (Ringu Tulku 2006). It is interesting to note that the Dalai Lama, who has in past decades made use of the nonsectarian ideal to hold the exile community together, to my knowledge, does not use the term “Rimay.” See the final chapter of Dalai Lama 1984.

he coined the term. The history of Khams in the nineteenth century, not to mention the remarkable achievements – literary, geographical, doctrinal, institutional, political, and otherwise – of the so-called leaders of the so-called movement, in being flattened into the confines of the single category of “Rimay,” have been largely reduced to a single dimension.

This has in part been a result of Smith introducing both 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and “the nonsectarian movement” in the same essay, and labeling 'Ju Mi pham “one of the most talented figures of the nonsectarian movement.” The effect has been that many features of these authors' lives and works have been taken by later interpreters to be essential characteristics of “Rimay,” and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's has been almost universally credited with founding the movement.²²⁷ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's text compilations and his interest in the Madhyamaka *gzhan stong* position, for example, have come to be seen as hallmarks of the “movement” he supposedly initiated. Likewise, in both essays Smith referred to Gzhan phan Chos kyi snang pa (1871-1927) who produced numerous editions of Indian Buddhist classics with copious annotations (*mchan*) for use in monastic colleges, thus leading later writers to presume that a refocused attention on Indic scriptures was likewise a central “Rimay” feature. Given Smith's lengthy discussion of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's contribution to Tibetan art, and his comment that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po were intimately involved in the “political maneuvering” of the period, one might wonder why *thang ka* painting and governance are not also central aspects of “the Rimay.” Could it be that Smith's essays have been misread, to the detriment of the contributions the essays actually have made?

That would be an unfortunate turn of events, as Smith's essays continue to be as valuable and thought provoking today as they were when they first appeared. For anyone

²²⁷ There have been some dissenters, however. According to the contemporary Rnying ma master Tarthang Tulku, we are told that “Ris-med renaissance of Khams in eastern Tibet during the middle of last century [was] led by the gTer-ston 'Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-rtse dbang-po” (Dowman 1974, p. 89). It might be relevant to note that Tarthang Tulku's root guru was one of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's identified reincarnation, 'Jam dbyang Mkhyen brtse'i Chos kyi blo gros (1893-1959), known as the second Rdzong sar Mkhyen brtse.

researching the history and religion of Khams, the lives and compositions of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and his contemporaries, not to mention the history of Tibetan painting, the longer piece remains required reading. Though one might take issue with his use of the term “movement,”²²⁸ the essay itself is a model of careful and meticulous scholarship, containing not only copious information and subtle insights into the workings of Tibetan literature, religion, and history, but also a wealth of suggestions for future research (only a fraction of which have been since addressed). Its place in the canon of Tibetan Studies, if there can be said to be such a thing,²²⁹ is beyond dispute.

Smith's essays were not the only sources for the Western construction of the “Rimay movement.” In 1974 Chögyam Trungpa, one of the earliest and most influential teachers of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, delivered a series of lectures at the Naropa Institute in Boulder Colorado (founded that year) that were later published as *Journey Without Goal: The Tantric Wisdom of the Buddha*.²³⁰ In one talk Trungpa assailed what he called “spiritual materialism,” here specifically the tendency to “collect” empowerments, that, he said, was a “recent corruption in the presentation of [the] vajrayana,” perpetrated by the Tibetans themselves. According to Trungpa, that corruption was what 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had responded to in founding his nonsectarian movement. Trungpa explained that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul received transmission from more than one hundred and thirty-five teachers. It was a collection that Trungpa admired rather than scorned, something that apparently enabled 'Jam mgon Kong sprul to initiate “a reformation of Buddhism in Tibet, which he called the Rime school.”

²²⁸ Indeed, Smith's lengthy survey of sectarianism and intra-sectarian activity in the thousand years preceding 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's life would seem to undermine his own use of the term, suggesting that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was not in fact engaging in anything particularly new.

²²⁹ Yet the essay is not included in Alex McKay's massive three volume collection of Tibetological scholarship, (2003), ceding the place it ought to have occupied to an extract from Geoffrey Samuel's *Civilized Shamans*, “The Nyingma Revival and the Rimed Movement” (McKay 2003, v. 2, pp. 721-731). There Samuel defines the “movement” in contradistinction to the “Gelugpa clerical synthesis,” and piles on so many additional characteristics that it would be difficult not to find his “Rimed” everywhere in Tibetan Buddhism. Samuel's presentation of “Rimay” will be addressed in more detail below.

²³⁰ Trungpa 1981.

Trungpa continued: “The term Rime literally means ‘without bias,’ an ‘ecumenical approach.’” This “Rime school” created a fair amount of opposition, according to Trungpa, and was attacked by those who wished to continue to receive “a succession of abhishekas [empowerments] purely as collectors’ items.” Trungpa had ’Jam mgon Kong sprul respond to the criticism by likening (other people’s?) collection of empowerments to the piling up of manure: “A pile of manure may be ripe, smelly and fantastic, but it is still a pile of shit.”²³¹

According to Trungpa this sort of “spiritual materialism” had become the norm in Tibet by the nineteenth century, as Tibet had long since been isolated from the world, no longer receiving teachings from India. Moreover, its religion and traditions had become “inbred,” its leaders more concerned with the trappings of religion – buildings, statues – than with the “actual practice of their lineage. They sat less and did more business.” ’Jam mgon Kong sprul, who was “like a jewel in a pile of manure” rectified the situation:

He saw that it was necessary to call upon the eight great traditions of Buddhism in Tibet – which included the Gelug tradition, the Sakya tradition, the Kagyü tradition, and the Nyingma tradition – and bring them together: “Let us unite; let us work together within this contemplative tradition. Let us experience this tradition for ourselves, instead of inviting hundreds of artists to build glorious shrines. Let us experience how it feels to sit on our meditation cushions and do nothing.” This reintroduction of practice, which had long been forgotten, was the focus of the contemplative reformation of Tibetan Buddhism during the nineteenth century.

Part of the project was the creation of great treasuries of text from the “various contemplative traditions” of Tibetan Buddhism, among them the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, which “describes how a person can properly received abhisheka.”²³²

In this short passage Trungpa casts ’Jam mgon Kong sprul as not simply the founder of a “Rime school” but savior of all of the Buddhist teachings in Tibet. Tibetan Buddhism had grown corrupt and its religious institutions had long since lost their way, deteriorating into mere buildings and objects – the trappings of what would have been recognized by his audience (so many members of which were then participating in their own anti-institutionalist

²³¹ Trungpa 1981, pp. 89-90

²³² Trungpa 1981, pp. 90-91.

movement) as “organized religion.” According to Trungpa, ’Jam mgon Kong sprul spurned these hollow shells and created the “practice lineage,” by which he meant a meditation teaching that did not rely on institution or tradition. Not depending on Tibetan religious structures, this practice lineage could easily be taken up by Trungpa’s Western students. It was this “practice lineage,” Trungpa told his students, “that we ourselves belong to.”²³³

To Smith’s nonsectarian “Rimay” Trungpa thus added an anti-institutional “Rime,” one that was rejected by corrupted Tibetans and was being offered freely to Western adherents. Drawing on these two originating statements, Western authors now refer to a “Rimay movement” that has two main and four minor characteristics: it is 1) consciously and decidedly nonsectarian, and 2) non-partial in regards to doctrinal positions, or even syncretic.²³⁴ Moreover, adherents to the so-called movement are said to have 1) favored “practice” over “institutions,” 2) advocated a return to fundamentals, 3) endeavored to collect and preserve texts and teaching lineages, and 4) embraced of the *gzhan stong* position. All of these were supposedly means to surmount sectarian divisiveness and to embody a non-biased approach to Buddhist traditions.

These notions do in fact all appear in Smith’s two essays referenced above, yet Smith offers them as suggestions for interpretation of ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s career, not characterizations of the movement. In any case, they were not positions that he intended to argue and defend, and he cannot be faulted for their having been isolated and repeated *ad infinitum*. Trungpa depicted a Tibetan society lost in calcified institutional sectarianism, a problem whose solution was a meditation practice he himself championed. Both decidedly tied

²³³ Trungpa 1981, p. 90.

²³⁴ I offer the Wikipedia entry for “The Rimé movement” as of February 8, 2005. The entry is a field of contesting visions. We read first of a “Rimé movement” that “seeks to unify the various traditions and their philosophies into one coherent school of thought, and is responsible for a large number of scriptural compilations” and then, in a following paragraph, a curious etymology is given: “The school’s name is derived from two Tibetan words: Ris (sectarianism) and Med (refutation), which combined expresses the idea of unification, as opposed to sectarianism. The Rimé movement therefore is often mistaken as trying to unite the various sects through their similarities, which was not the case” http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rime_movement.

“the Rimay” to ’Jam mgon Kong sprul, his life and his writings. Certainly Smith brought this exciting period of Tibetan history to the attention of the world, but I would argue that he did not so much reveal the existence of the “movement” as create it. In what follows I will locate in Smith’s essay the comments that sparked the characterizations of “Rimay” and then briefly trace the development of the notions through Western publications. I do not pretend to be comprehensive in my references, intending only to give a general idea of the Western imagination of “Rimay.”

II. Was ’Jam mgon Kong sprul Non-sectarian?

In identifying the roots of ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s personal nonsectarian outlook, Smith looked to his childhood for episodes of sectarian conflict. One of the most frequently cited passages of Smith’s second essay is from the biographical sketch of ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s life. In that section, following information on ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s transfer to Dpal spungs monastery, Smith wrote:

The Dpal spungs lamas insisted that Kong sprul take a second ordination as a monk, presumably because they did not recognize the Rnying ma pa vows that he had taken the previous year from Zhe chen Dbon sprul. This pettiness and sectarianism distressed Kong sprul, but there was little he could do but accede to the demands of [Dpal spungs] Dbon rgan. This small experience of intolerance seems to have been significant in channeling Kong sprul’s interests toward a nonsectarian approach to Buddhist practice and scholarship.²³⁵

Following the second sentence Smith inserted a footnote that contains a passage (left untranslated) from ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s autobiography offering evidence that he “obviously felt rather strongly about taking the vinaya vows twice.”²³⁶ It indeed does so, as do other passages in the autobiography.

²³⁵ Smith 2001, pp. 247-248.

²³⁶ Smith 2001, p. 333 n. 841. The passage reads as follows. Here ’Jam mgon Kong sprul is arguing with his patron that retaking the vows was unnecessary: “I explained that while staying at Zhe chen I had already received the vows, but he disparaged them with ugly words, and said I must request the vows of the Rgyal ba yab sras [e.g. Karma bka’ brgyud] . . . Dbon rgan told me that I should at that time get ordained. Previously I had requested and received ordination from Zhe chen Dbon sprul, [yet now] there was no

Though 'Jam mgon Kong sprul did indeed express his exasperation at the need to ordain a second time at Dpal spungs, the passages in his autobiography in which he did so reflect more an unhappiness at moving away from Zhe chen than they reveal a stance against sectarianism. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had in fact already been ordained twice, the first as a novice in the Bon po tradition, at the age of three.²³⁷ He was manifestly happy at Zhe chen during the few years he resided there, and had close relationships with teachers and other monks his age. He was just twenty years old at the time, and his stubborn insistence that he not take new vows can be read as an expression of a young man's dismay at having to move away from what had been his home for almost four years.

In any case, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's move to Dpal spungs was prompted by his patron, a local petty chieftain of the Khang sar clan named Tshe 'phel (d. 1842) who was an ordained monk in the 'Brug pa bka' brgyud tradition. It was orchestrated as a result of the desires of an elderly Dpal spungs lama, Dbon rgan sprul sku Karma theg mchog bstan 'phel (d. c.1842).²³⁸ In 1833 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's patron, who had installed him at Zhe chen four years earlier, brought him to Dpal spungs and took him before Dbon rgan. The chieftain, one gathers from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's account, was then in the process of shifting his patronage from Zhe chen to Dpal spungs, for reasons never made clear. Soon after the chieftain informed 'Jam

way to avoid requesting these [new] vows." *Ngos nas zhe chen sdod skabs sdom pa thob tshul bshad kyang sma 'bebs tshig ngan bcas sdom pa rgyal ba yab sras la zhu dgos rgyu red gsungs / . . . dbon rgan tshang nas nges la'ang da res bsnyen rdzogs sgrub dgos gsungs pa / sngar zhe chen dbon sprul mdun nas zhus lugs dang gsung tshul rnam zhus kyang/ sdom pa 'di nas ma zhus thabs med* (Kong sprul, *Phyogs med ris med kyi bstan pa la 'dun shing dge sbyong gi gzugs brnyan 'chang ba blo gros mtha' yas kyi sde'i byung ba brjod pa nor bu sna tshogs mdog can*, in *Rgya chen bka' mdzod*, vol. 10 (New Delhi: Shechen, 2002): 237-656.

²³⁷ He was given tonsure by a Bon lama named Bsod nams blo gros from Gtsang, receiving the name Bstan 'dzin g.yung drung (Kong sprul f. 8a). His ordination at Zhe chen occurred in early February 1832. Whether or not his previous Bon ordination was a problem at the time he does not mention, which would indicate that re-ordination itself was not the issue.

²³⁸ At the time Dpal spungs had two incarnation lines by the title "Dbon sprul." 'Jam mgon Kong sprul referred to this one as Dbon rgan, and the second, who was younger than himself, as Dbon sprul. According to the Beijing-based scholar Thub bstan phun tshogs, the younger, whom 'Jam mgon Kong sprul never names properly, was probably the reincarnation of Bsam gtan rin po che, the younger brother of Si tu VIII, Chos kyi 'byung gnas.

mgon Kong sprul that henceforth he would reside at Dpal spungs and that he would need to take vows from the monastery's head, Ta'i si tu IX Padma nyin byed dbang po (1774-1853).²³⁹

The matter of the second Buddhist ordination deserves some comment. Smith reasonably suggests that the second ordination was needed as the Karma bka' brgyud institution "presumably did not recognize" the vows he had taken the previous year.²⁴⁰ This is not, however, necessarily due to poor relations between the two. All ordinations in Tibet are given according to the Indian Mūlasarvāstivādin school. This is the reason the English term "order" cannot be used to describe the diverse Tibetan religious institutions; technically they are all part of the same order. However, Tibet preserved two separate lineages within the Mūlasarvāstivādin ordination tradition, having received it twice in two separate historical descents.²⁴¹ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's second ordination was not required – a fully ordained monk from any monastery is technically qualified to participate in the *poṣadha* (*gso sbyong*) of any other monastery. However, in order to strengthen Kong sprul's ties to Dpal spungs, and to place him in a position of becoming a lineage holder for the monastery, the vows would have been mandated. Ordination was a means to insert Kong sprul "into the ranks" and for keeping him there. It was "sectarian" but not in the sense of disparaging the neighbors. It was not "petty" but simply was how institutions functioned.

²³⁹ Despite his repeated protests, the second Buddhist ordination took place at Dpal spungs in November 1833. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's comparison of his two Buddhist ordinations is stark. In his autobiography he described his reaction to the first Buddhist ordination, writing that "it all happened as it should have – an understanding was conveyed, and an appropriate awareness was produced in my mind, and so forth." (*De dus brda 'phrod pa dang thob shes bsam pa dus su skye ba sogs tshul ldan cig byung*; Kong sprul A, f. 16a). In contrast, despite 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's lifelong devotion to Si tu Padma nyin byed, he appears to have maintained his opposition to the second Buddhist ordination late into life. He all but dismissed that ordination with the statement "at the time, because of my previous ordination I had thoughts which blocked my mind stream, and therefore no awareness of having received the ordination occurred." (*'Di skabs snga ma'i sdom ro des rgyud bkag pa'i rtag pas thob shes ji bzhin skye ba zhig ni ma byung*; Kong sprul A, f. 19a).

²⁴⁰ Smith 2002, p. 248.

²⁴¹ The first, known as the "smad lugs," or lower (meaning "eastern") tradition" is so-named because it was developed in eastern Tibet, supposedly a continuation of the original Buddhist ordination tradition preserved by Bla chen Dgongs pa rab gsal. This tradition was the ordination of the Bka' dam pa lineage and continues to be upheld by Rnying ma and Dge lugs monasteries. The "stod lugs," or "upper (that is, "Western") tradition," was introduced in the thirteenth century, and is followed by all the rest of Tibetan Buddhist institutions. See Kong sprul F, p. 5a and p. 6a for history of these two lineages.

Despite the “ugly words” the old chieftain had used to characterize the Zhe chen ordination, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul never criticized the man in his autobiography, and in fact praised him in several separate passages.²⁴² This was not the case for the other figure responsible for his transfer, Dbon rgan sprul sku, and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul evidently held him responsible for it. During the brief time the chieftain and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul were at Dpal spungs in 1833 the elderly lama evidently took a fancy to the young man. There is ample reason to believe that it was he who requested the old chieftain to deliver 'Jam mgon Kong sprul to Dpal spungs. Following the unhappy ordination, as Smith notes, Dbon rgan engineered the recognition of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul as a reincarnation, ostensibly in the face of a threat that the Sde dge court might requisition the intelligent young man into public service. After all, it was such service into which the old chieftain had himself requisitioned 'Jam mgon Kong sprul years before.²⁴³ Si tu agreed to the request, and after some consideration (necessary, as only recently a boy had been given a name to settle a dispute and things had turned out badly²⁴⁴) he

²⁴² Recording the man's death, he wrote: “The old chieftain [maintained] the purity of his bhikṣu vows, which [had been given to him] by 'Brug thams cad mkhyen pa ['Brug chen VIII, Kun gzigs chos kyi snang ba (1767-1822)]. He was filled with devotion for Rje Padma nyin byed and others, never ceased the recitation of his prayers, and had accomplished several meditative practices. The religious supports he erected, and the merit he accumulated was vast, and whatever he had he put it to use for the dharma. He never fell into major sin, such as taking lives. At the time of his death his demeanor was so positive that I can't imagine he's had anything but a good rebirth. He cared for me even more than my own mother and father” (*Dpon rgan 'di nyid 'brug thams cad mkhyen pa'i dge slong sdom pa gtsang / rje padma nyin byed sogs la dad gus blos khel zhing / kha ton bzlas brjod la nam yang chag 'phri med pa bsnyen sgrub 'ga' zhid kyang grub / rten bzhengs tshogs gsog shin tu rgya che zhing ci yod chos phyogs su btang / srog gcod sogs sdig pa chen po dang nam yang ma 'dres / 'chi khar mtshams sbyor bzang bas skye gnas bzang po mi 'gyur thabs med snyam*, Kong sprul A, ff. 39a-b).

²⁴³ Dbon rgan sprul sku, according to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, warned Si tu about this possibility, saying “This is one who will be sought after by the Sde dge court for a secretary or some such position. We cannot foretell what the future will bring. It is therefore important that we give him a name as a reincarnation of a member of our institutional ‘family.’” *'Di la sde dge'i mdun nas drung yig 'ded pa sogs thog rgyag ci'ong tshod mi 'dug pas rang tshang sprul sku zhid gi ming btags pa gal che tshul zhus skabs* (Kong sprul C, f. 19b). Buddhist monks ostensibly severed ties to their clans when taking ordination, and thereafter the monastic institution became their “family.”

²⁴⁴ This was the case of Kun sprul, whose conflict with Dpal spungs would later give 'Jam mgon Kong sprul much grief. Kun sprul, whose full name 'Jam mgon Kong sprul never gave, was apparently hastily given his title in the midst of a dispute between Dpal spungs and the house of Khams pa. Kun sprul was a difficult man. He was expelled from Dpal spungs in 1847, blamed 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and sought revenge. At one point he sent men to ambush 'Jam mgon Kong sprul while the latter was traveling around Mgo log that year, but 'Jam mgon Kong sprul proved both too adept at magic and too cunning to

declared that the young man was the rebirth of the previous Si tu's disciple named Kong sprul bam steng sprul sku.²⁴⁵

Dbon rgan thereby succeeded first in bringing the boy into the monastic community, and second in assigning him a title that would protect him from yet another transfer. It would seem, therefore, that it was not so much "petty sectarianism" that brought 'Jam mgon Kong sprul to Dpal spungs. Rather it was the desires of an old patriarch to populate his institutional family with superior stock, and the obedience of a petty chieftain who sought the patriarch's favors. If they such things are to be dismissed as "sectarian" than any and all means by which a given religious institution separates itself from others and maintains its integrity should likewise be labeled "sectarian." This would be reasonable, but it would not be reasonable to fault them for it.

Such, however, was the presumed context into which "Rimay" burst forth. Smith's articles had an almost immediate impact on Western depictions of Tibetan religion, and the notion of a "Rimay movement" seeped quickly into the public sphere. In 1977, Michael Aris published a translation of a short religious history by the second Rdzong sar Mkhayen brtse that he called "a work of the *Ris-med* movement." According to him, "this movement first developed in Eastern Tibet in the 1860's as a reaction on the part of the some great Nyingmapa scholars against the sectarian polemics and persecution which had vitiated the spiritual life of Tibet down to their own day."²⁴⁶ Aside from the mistaken attribution of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po as Rnying ma pa, Aris' depiction of the "*Ris-med* movement" is largely a summary of Smith, whom he credits for the term. Here we can see that Smith's writings firmly established sectarianism as the catalyst for the achievements of "Rimay's" alleged founders.

be trapped. He was able to mollify Kun sprul the following year, to Si tu's pleasure (Kong sprul A, ff. 57b-60a).

²⁴⁵ Kong sprul A, f. 19b.

²⁴⁶ Aris 1977, p. 206.

Smith's attribution of 'Ju Mi pham as a "Rimay" leader also resonated with later scholars. Goodman promoted the inclusion of 'Ju Mi pham among the patriarchs of "Rimay," identifying the man as an heir to the "so-called *Ris-med* ('non-sectarian') movement of Eastern Tibet."²⁴⁷ Ramon Prats likewise connected 'Ji Mi pham to the "Rimay" triumvirate of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa, writing in 1982 that these men together acted as protagonists of the "movimento eclettico (*ris med*)" that, he stated, revitalized religion and culture in the second half of the nineteenth century.²⁴⁸ Several years later the profusion of scholarship on 'Ju Mi pham inspired Franz-Karl Ehrhard to write that this "showed ample proof that we have to deal with Mi-pham rgya-mtsho as a distinguished scholar of the "non-partial" (*ris med*) movement."²⁴⁹

The legacy of Trungpa, meanwhile, is revealed in numerous assertions that "Rimay" leaders' emphasis on practice was the means by which sectarian boundaries were breached. In the introduction to a translation of a teaching by the twentieth-century Bka' brgyud lama Kalu Rinpoche we are told that "the *ri may* [*ris med*] movement . . . revitalized the religious life of Tibet towards the end of the 19th Century by minimizing the importance of sectarian differences and emphasizing the common ground of the lineages and stressing the importance of meditation."²⁵⁰ Kenneth McLeod, in his introduction to a translated excerpt from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's *Gdams ngag mdzod*, had it that two of the three most important objectives of the "Ri-me movement" were to "discourage sectarian prejudice" and "to reemphasize practice and the application of dharma in everyday life." (The third was "to preserve rare teachings.")²⁵¹

²⁴⁷ Goodman 1981, p. 62.

²⁴⁸ Prats 1982, p. 16. Mchog gyur gling pa's inclusion here can be explained solely by his proximity to Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul.

²⁴⁹ Ehrhard 1988, p. 139.

²⁵⁰ Kalu Rinpoche 1986, p. 1.

²⁵¹ McLeod 1987, p. xiii. Although none of the commentators provide historical justification for it, there is reason to posit the existence of meditation technologies – "practice lineage" – that crossed institutional divisions. The Bka' brgyud practice of Mahāmudrā continues to exist in a Dge lugs lineage, while the teaching of Rdzogs chen had been embraced by prominent patriarchs of all denominations. Furthermore, certain Karma Bka' brgyud monasteries in Nang chen had for centuries engaged in a synthesis of

Perhaps the chief inheritor of Trungpa's anti-institutionalism has been the Canadian translator Ngawang Zangpo (Hugh Leslie Thompson). Zangpo has a penchant for painting Tibetan lamas with grand and simplistic brushstrokes that are intended to be complimentary, and his lamas seem to float in exalted states of pristine consciousness unconcerned with the mundane business of living in the world. As he categorically stated in his third book, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, and Mchog gyur gling pa were involved in the political intrigues of their lifetimes only against their will. He explained, "Although these three sometimes interceded in the current events around them, it seems likely that all they wanted from those who wielded power was peace and quiet. They were authentic spiritual masters."²⁵² The assumption is of course that a lama who intentionally involved himself in mundane affairs is somehow inauthentic.

In his first book Zangpo described his vision of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's "non-sectarian view." We are told that he popularized "a unifying vision of Buddhism that revitalized the spiritual life of the Himalayan region." What was condition of Buddhism before the revitalization? According to Zangpo:

Tibetans had come to think of themselves as being divided into four main traditions: the Nyingma, Kagyu, Sakya, and Gayluk. This understandable simplification is based on the fact that by the nineteenth century these four represented the dominant religious institutional structures after ten centuries of political power struggles. This list includes the existing monastic systems but not the scholastic and meditative traditions that provided the inspiration for their establishment.²⁵³

Note the clear division between the "institutional structures" and the "scholastic and meditative traditions." Zangpo explained that while the "original intent" of the monasteries

Mahāmudrā and Rdzogs chen. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul himself noted this fact in his *Ris med chos kyi 'byung gnas* (Kong sprul F; see Appendix Three for a translation). The history of these cross-fertilizations awaits scholarly attention. Their existence undermines the notion of a strict sectarian divisions, and therefore the need for a nonsectarian movement as a reform; all existed well before the so-called "Rimay" movement came into being.

²⁵² Ngawang Zangpo 2001, p. 100. Elsewhere he wrote "The reincarnate lamas of the Himalayan region – Tibet, Nepal, northern India, Sikkim, and Bhutan – are ultimately not political or even religious leaders: they are what are known as bodhisattvas" (Ngawang Zangpo 1997, p. 18).

²⁵³ Zangpo 1994, p. 24.

had been to shelter and cultivate both scholarship and meditation, over the centuries they had become “petty fiefdoms that wielded temporal power and degenerated into havens for political intrigue and self-serving sectarianism.” Apparently aware of this collapse, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul “regarded as spiritually dangerous” the depiction of the history of Buddhism in Tibet as told through the lens of the “development and maintenance of these institutions.”²⁵⁴ Presumably by this he meant that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul would include no names of institutions in a religious history, but of course this is not the case. His *Ris med chos kyi 'byung gnas* translated in Appendix Three includes numerous monasteries of various traditions.

Although the institutions had become corrupt, Zangpo continued, the practices they (once) supported had not. Here Zangpo paraphrases Trungpa, who taught that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul “shifted Buddhists’ attention ‘from the golden roofs of the temples to the meditation cushion’.”²⁵⁵ The “*rimay* view”²⁵⁶ that Zangpo believed 'Jam mgon Kong sprul popularized was one in which an adherent viewed himself or herself not as a member of institutions but as a “practitioner of one or more of the systems of Buddhist spiritual development.”²⁵⁷ Doing so would “cut through the stultifying sectarianism and institution-centrism of the day to reach the heart of tantric Buddhist practice.”²⁵⁸ Zangpo’s repeated use of the questionable term “spiritual” belays his antipathy towards what is commonly conceived as its antithesis, “organized religion,” with all its institutional concerns and sectarian conflicts. The solution to the problems of “organized religion” was once again found in meditation, a ritual act still being taught in the west as something that needed no institutional support.

²⁵⁴ Zangpo 1994, p. 24.

²⁵⁵ Zangpo 1994, p. 25.

²⁵⁶ At the time of his early books Zangpo was working with the Kalu Rinpoche’s International Translation Committee on the translation of the *Shes bya kun khyab*, the first volume of which came out a year after Zangpo’s first book. In the introduction the committee provides a restrained depiction of what they call “Rimé”: “Although Buddhist scholars speak of a Rimé (*ris med*), or nonsectarian, movement in connection with Khyentsé, Kongtrul, Chogling and other masters of eastern Tibet, it is unlikely that these masters intended to create a movement that encompassed the various Tibetan traditions.” As a member of the committee who made such an observation, Zangpo avoids referring to a “movement” in his own writings (Jamgön Kongtrul 1995, p. 27).

²⁵⁷ Jamgön Kongtrul 1995, p. 25.

²⁵⁸ Zangpo 1994, p. 25.

Apparently, for Zangpo, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul came to this solution by exchanging the four dominant sects for what are known as “the eight chariots of the practice lineage,” or simply “the eight great chariots” (T: *sgrub brgyud shing rta brgyad* or *shing rta chen po brgyad*). Zangpo provides the titles of the eight,²⁵⁹ prefaced with the confused statement that “only the first shares the name of an existing system of monasteries.” This is correct only if one is willing to feign a dissociation between Mar pa bka' brgyud and the numerous Bka' brgyud institutions that flowed from Mar pa, deny the strong historical link between the Bka' gdams pa and the Dge lugs school, and pretend that “*lam 'bras*” does not mean “*Sa skya*.” How the “eight practice lineages” avoids the sectarian stain of the more common four-school model is not immediately evident.²⁶⁰ The distinction seems more a sleight of hand, allowing Zangpo to demonize Tibetan religious institutions while celebrating the meditation practices they indisputably supported.

The implication here, one reasonably drawn from Trungpa's comments cited above, is that Tibetan religious institutions had become so moribund that they could no longer provide an environment conducive to meditative practice. “Practice” therefore had to be wrested away from the religious hierarchies of Tibet, and it thereafter found a home in the West among a welcoming populace who were then rejecting their own religious and political institutions. Like Trungpa's, Zangpo's depiction of “Rimay” is one in which organized religion is bad and

²⁵⁹ Zangpo provides a standard list of the eight: 1) Rnying ma, 2) Bka' gdams, 3) Dmar pa bka' brgyud, 4) Shangs pa bka' brgyud, 5) Lam 'bras, 6) Zhi byed and Gcod, 7) Rdo rje rnal 'byor [the Kālachakra, also referred to as *Dus 'khor* or *Sbyor drug*], and 8) Rdo rje gsum gyi bsnyen grub (also known as the O rgyan bsnyen sgrub). According to Kapstein the formulation originated in the sixteenth century with 'Phreng bo gter ston Shes rab 'od zer (1517-1584) (Kapstein 1996, p. 277). It should be pointed out that while 'Jam mgon Kong sprul did make use of the “eight chariots” systematization of Tibetan Buddhism for the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, his *Ris med chos kyi 'byung gnas* makes use of a fairly different model. That text is divided as follows: Bon (863-865); Rnying ma (865-867); Reformed Bon (867-868); Bka' dam (868-869); Mar pa Bka' brgyud: the four main and eight lesser Bka' brgyud (869-880); Shangs pa Bka' brgyud (880); Sa skya (881-883); Zhi byed (883); Gcod (883-884) Jo nang pa/Kālacakra (884-886); Bo dong (885-886) Dge lugs (886-887); Bon gter (887); the *gzhan stong* lineage (888); Dga' ldan Mahāmudrā (888-889); Dben sa snyan brgyud (889). See Appendix Three.

²⁶⁰ Zangpo misleadingly wrote that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul “always described tantric Buddhism from the perspective of its lineages of instruction; he would mention the four monastic systems only in passing” (1994, p. 24).

meditation is good, and that Trungpa and his disciples were successfully preserving that which 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had rescued.

Zangpo did not invent the notion of a Tibet rife with sectarian divisions. It is a story that has long been the dominant view in Western scholarship. Journals articles in the beginning stages of scholarship on Tibetan religion accomplished a reification of sectarian divisions early on,²⁶¹ and surveys of Tibet continue to make use of the categories to describe history and doctrine.²⁶² There certainly have been important instances of sectarianism in Tibetan history, including several well-known examples of warfare in which the battle lines were drawn by religious affiliation. Most, if not all of these were more wars of regional power – Dbus against Gtsang, for example – in the competition for control of the plateau or for Mongol patronage. For centuries Tibetans have used doctrinal polemics to fight many of their battles.²⁶³ Nevertheless, there is perhaps a tendency in Western scholarship to overstate the importance of the violence and polemics. As noted above, there are as many, if not more, significant examples of Tibetan ecumenicalism and inter-sectarian exchanges. It is more likely that the well-known examples of sectarian conflicts were not the norm but rather deviations from it. The simple fact that the greater part of the institutions that held power Tibetan society were religious institutions meant that most conflicts would have been articulated in religious terms.

In addition to the assertion that “Rimay” emphasized meditative practice as a means to surmount entrenched sectarianism, we find in Western writings on a frequent reference to a supposed return to fundamentals. This too can be traced back to comments in Smith’s essays. In his essay on 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Smith remarked that in contrast to Dge lugs pa debate and its specialized logical argumentation, the “nonsectarian tradition” taught Indian śāstras,

²⁶¹ See, for example: Li An-che 1945 (“The Sakya Sect of Lamaism”); Li An-che 1949 (“The bKah-brgyud Sect of Lamaism”); Hugh Richardson 1958 (“The Karma-pa Sect”); and Inaba Shōju 1963 (“The lineage of the Sa skya pa”), to name only a few.

²⁶² Donald Lopez’s introduction to *The Religions of Tibet in Practice*, for example, uses this formulation.

²⁶³ See Lopez 1996b for a discussion of the genre. Interesting case studies are Jackson 1990 and Kapstein 1989.

commonly printed with extensive interlineal notations (*mchan*). According to Smith, “This reorientation towards the Indian originals, it was felt, would eliminate many controversies that arose through variant expositions of the same texts by different Tibetan exegetes.”²⁶⁴ Smith gave as an example of this method of overcoming sectarianism the work of Gzhan phan Chos kyi snang pa (1871-1927), who, Smith wrote “explicitly formulated the principle that the easiest way to put an end to sectarian differences was to attempt to understand and expound upon the basic Indic sources as the scholars of the past would have.”²⁶⁵ It should be noted, however, that Gzhan phan chos kyi snang pa, like his contemporary 'Ju Mi pham,²⁶⁶ flourished a full generation after 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. If Gzhan phan's was a hallmark of the “Rimay,” it was not available until after 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's death. Moreover, one has to wonder why Gzhan phan's “return to fundamentals” ought to be conceived of as significantly different from the centuries of Tibetan scriptural exegesis that preceded him.

In any case, the notion of a return to fundamentals has entered the popular definition of a “Rimay” that made no distinction between the work of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and that of the next generation. Goodman,²⁶⁷ Samuel²⁶⁸ and Hartley²⁶⁹ all rephrase or quote outright Smith's assertions regarding the return to the “Indian originals” (as Samuel put it). The repetition succeeded in inserting this aspect in the common definition of the “Rimay” as evidenced by Andrew Skilton's *A Concise History of Buddhism*, where we learn that

²⁶⁴ Smith 2001, p. 246. The implication that the differences would be erased cannot be supported by history. The famous Khams byed shes grwa at Rdzong sar continues to teach all traditions (save Dge lugs, who, it is said, can easily go elsewhere); it does not efface them.

²⁶⁵ Smith 2001, p. 232.

²⁶⁶ 'Ju Mi pham was a lama whose alleged non-sectarianism, it should be pointed out, had a decidedly Rnying ma institution-building flavor.

²⁶⁷ Goodman had it that “Scholars of the *Ris-med* chose a select number of Indic exegetical treatises (in Tibetan translation) and wrote interlineal and expanding annotations (*mchan*). It was hoped that a return to the study of these authoritative texts would eliminate much of the heated controversies generated by years of artificial and sectarian Tibetan exegesis.” Goodman 1981, p. 62.

²⁶⁸ Samuel explained that “The Rimed lamas returned to the Indian originals, and their students were expected to study these directly, with the aid of interlineal annotations and expansions.” Samuel 1993, p. 538.

²⁶⁹ Hartley simply quoted the passage on the *yig cha* included above. Hartley 1997, p. 50.

“the Ris-med movement . . . sought to draw attention back to the Indian sources of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and reorientate the monastic education programme accordingly.”²⁷⁰

Thus alongside a common “practice lineage,” a “return to fundamentals” was posited as a defining characteristic of “Rimay,” both methods by which proponents supposedly surmounted (or erased) divisions between the various Tibetan Buddhist traditions. Here it should be restated that the characterization of ’Jam mgon Kong sprul as frequently expressing a desire to surmount (though certainly not erase) sectarian divisions and to overcome prejudices is accurate. His writings abound with such statements. In doing so ’Jam mgon Kong sprul shares in a long-standing tradition of Tibetan religious leaders calling for more openness and deriding communalism. Such a rhetoric is of course admirable and appealing, and worked because openness and eclecticism were publicly affirmed values.

Here it might be worthwhile to examine the Tibetan term “*ris med*” as it was used prior to ’Jam mgon Kong sprul. Perhaps because it enjoyed such a rich and densely packed concentration of religious institutions belonging to diverse traditions, the Kingdom of Sde dge was both the model for peaceful coexistence and the site of sectarian clashes. The kings of Sde dge were not merely passive observers in the midst of religious abundance, but were active supporters of institutions belonging to all orders. Though they officially patronized the royal (Sa skya) Lhun grub steng, members of the royal family were involved in the founding of several great monasteries in the region, including Dpal spungs, which Si tu VIII Chos kyi ’byung gnas built on land given by the Sde dge court.²⁷¹ With the Sa skya controlling the royal monastery, as long as the other sects remained balanced against each other, they were free to flourish. Rivalries simmered, and occasionally came to a boil, but it would seem this occurred when one sect – or more commonly when one faction of the royal house – was seen by another

²⁷⁰ Skilton 1995, p. 191

²⁷¹ For example, two great Rnying ma monasteries, Rdzogs chen and Dpal yul, were founded in the late seventeenth century with the assistance of the third abbot of Lhun grub steng, the Sde dge King Sangs rgyas bstan pa. The founder of Rdzogs chen, Padma rig ’dzin (1625-1697), was sent by the Fifth Dalai lama to accomplish the task.

to be growing too powerful. An illustrative case was Queen Tshe dbang lha mo's supposed singular support of the great Rnying ma treasure revealer 'Jigs med gling pa (1730-1798).²⁷²

At the end of the eighteenth century the king of Sde dge, Kun 'grub bde dga' bzang po, (1768-1790, known as Sa dbang) and the queen, Tshe dbang lha mo, became disciples of 'Jigs med gling pa. When Sa dbang died the prince, Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin (1786-1847), was only four years old, and so the queen took control of the government.²⁷³ As the story is generally told, while in power the queen installed 'Jigs med gling pa as virtual state guru, to the consternation of the hierarchs at the Lhun sgrub steng, the royal Sa skya monastery. The same year that 'Jigs med gling pa passed away, she and Rdo grub chen I 'Jigs med phrin las 'od zer (1745-1821) (the disciple of 'Jigs med gling pa who was maliciously rumored to be her lover) were both exiled. The queen died soon after, but 'Jigs med phrin las 'od zer lived another two decades to become one of the greatest Rnying ma lamas of his era. The backlash against the queen's favoritism of the Rnying ma apparently spread beyond those lamas intimately connected with her; Smith added that a number of other lamas were murdered or forced to flee.²⁷⁴ Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin went on to rule for several decades, taking robes in 1826 and composing the famous *Sde dge rgyal rabs*.²⁷⁵

²⁷² On 'Jigs med gling pa see Gyatso 1998, Goodman 1983 and 1992, and Van Schaik 2004. Scholars occasionally credit 'Jigs med gling pa with the birth of the "Rimay" movement: Leslie Kawamura, drawing on Smith, explained that 'Jigs med gling pa was active in Sde dge, "the centre for the Ris-med movement that was initiated by him and that represented a reaction against religious rivalry and persecution that marred Tibet's history" (1984, p. 364). In his exhaustive study of Rdzogs chen David Germano wrote in that 'Jigs med gling pa's reworking of Klong chen pa's Rdzogs chen doctrine "sparked the famous "non-partisan (*ris med*) movement that spread over eastern Tibet in the nineteenth century, for which this renewed Seminal Heart [*Snying thig*] formed the visionary and intellectual heart" (1994, p. 276).

²⁷³ Kolmaš used the phrases "seize power" and "powers she had usurped" to describe the event (1968, 42). Gu ru bkra shis has nothing negative to say about this queen, and although he had her favor the Rnying ma, he added that she relied on masters of all traditions – Karma pa XIII Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1733-1797) declared her an incarnation of Tārā (1990, p. 931). Neither Karma rgyal mtshan (1992 and 1994) nor Yang gling rdo rje (1995) had anything negative to say about the queen, though their accounts of Sde dge history are little more than a string of hagiographies of the rulers, and are almost entirely based on Gu ru bkra shis.

²⁷⁴ Smith 2001, p. 25.

²⁷⁵ For a translation of the *Sde dge rgyal rabs* and its continuation by Sde gzhung Rinpoche, see Kolmaš 1968 and 1988.

This incident awaits a detailed analysis. Unfortunately, Tibetan historical narratives tend to ignore it altogether, praising the queen in language no different than that used for other rulers. However, it is difficult to accept that the conflict was entirely spurred by religious rivalry, or that it was her gender that was likely to have been the cause (outside of Kolmaš account) for the animosity. Not more than a few decades earlier a woman, Tshe dbang lha mo's own husband's aunt, had controlled the throne.²⁷⁶ Perhaps the fact that Tshe dbang lha mo was the wife of a king rather than a daughter offended the living lineage holders – surely some of them would have preferred to sit on the throne themselves. The troubles at the turn of the nineteenth century, in short, were quite possibly the result of a power struggle between members of the royal family. “Religious sectarianism” was the language in which they were articulated rather than the substance of the conflict. Had Tshe dbang lha mo looked solely to the Sa skya hierarchs for religious instruction, and installed no statues of Padmasambhava in the Lhun grub steng's G.yu 'brug gdong temple, it is very possible that she would not have remained on the throne any longer than she did. Her departure, furthermore, might not have been wrapped in the language of religious sectarianism.

The episode of sectarian clash in Sde dge during the reign of Tshe dbang lha mo reveals the delicacy with which the numerous religious institutions coexisted in Sde dge, and the readiness with which their distinctiveness could be turned into political weapons. Nevertheless, sectarianism – whether the sort that is wrapped around forced conversions and murders, or the more subtle forms that throw up barriers to scholarship and religious exchange – is a phenomenon that is abhorred by many Tibetans. Indeed, “*ris med*” is a widely invoked

²⁷⁶ This was Rje btsun dbyang can, who served both as ruler and abbess of Lhun grub steng from the time of the death of her father, Bstan pa tshe ring, in 1774, until her own death in 1786. She was a nun, in the Ngor pa tradition, and of the royal bloodline, perhaps permitting acceptance of her reign. Gu ru bkra shis had it that she served until her nephew, Sa dbang bzang po (1768-1790) came of age (*Sde dge sa dbang bzang po sku nar ma son pa'i bar du*), rather than until her death (1990, p. 930). Since Sa dbang would have been eighteen in 1786 both are likely correct, though Gu ru bkra shis' phrasing suggests that he believed she would have been removed from the throne had she lived. The same phrase is repeated in Karma rgyal mtshan, who drew heavily from Gu ru bkra shis (1994, p. 46).

value in Tibet. If an ideal has widespread currency, it is likely that the opposite is current. No one would speak passionately of nonsectarianism if sectarianism was not perceived to be a problem. For each scholar and mystic that engaged in teachings outside his or her lineage, such as the Fifth Dalai Lama and the second Karma pa, there were critics who might condemn him as heretical. The exemplar of the small-minded orthodox bigot is more than a mere straw man for those who claim to despise the type. Regardless of how real the perceived scourge of sectarianism in Tibetan society might have been, and how unrealized the ideal of nonsectarianism, the two were mutually dependent categories that informed Tibetans' depiction of their own society. Both need to be taken seriously, but to affirm the prevalence of one over the other is to miss the rhetorical nature of both.

The term *ris med* is found in numerous sources. Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin used it to describe his homeland in his *Sde dge rgyal rabs*, though in light of the violence unleashed by the power struggles during his mother's reign, his statement seems more wishful thinking than reality. In the section on the state chaplains, he concludes with the statement:

In brief, when all the kings, with skillful methods and compassion, determined that all the tenet systems, without making boundaries – such as what is known as Sa [skya], Dge [lugs], Dkar [i.e. Bka' brgyud], Rnying [ma], and Bon – were only sources of benefit and happiness, they practiced them without bias, with pure perception, impartially. Through venerating them, the conditions were appropriate for them [the tenet systems] to receive offerings, be protected and propagated.²⁷⁷

The repetition of the phrase *ris su ma chad / bcad*, a synonym of *ris med*, emphasizes the fact that it was not simply that all these traditions – the four main Buddhist and the Bon – were present in Sde dge, but they were held to be valuable, and were therefore protected, supported and promoted by the royal court. Whether or not this was the case, it represents a beautiful ideal.

According to Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin, an ideal Sde dge state was one in which all traditions, including Dge lugs and Bon, were embraced by the court, and great masters from

²⁷⁷ Mdor na rgyal kun thabs mkhas thugs rje yis / sa dge dkar rnying bon du grags la sogs / ris su ma chad grub pa'i mtha' thams cad / phan bde'i 'byung gnas nyid su nges pa na / ris su mi bcad dag snang phyogs bral sbyong / gus pas legs mchod skyong spel mthun rkyen 'os (Tshe dbang rdo rje rig 'dzin 1990, p.131).

each were brought in to perform rites and services. Note that the Sa skya is given pride of place, at the beginning of the list – “without sectarian bias” does not mean here that favoritism is absent. If tolerance meant surrendering favored status for one’s own ways, after all, we would probably never find it put into practice. There are other examples of the use of the term “*ris med*” to praise lamas, such as the well-known religious history of Gu ru bkra shis, written around the time the events in Sde dge described above occurred. The author repeats the term *ris med* countless times in his descriptions of the Sde dge rulers.²⁷⁸

’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s autobiography contains several passages that express his nonsectarian outlook. In his writing he included the term “*ris med*” in a standard list of exalted characteristics – extensive education and meditative accomplishment chief among them. The first, in verse, was written in 1842. Here ’Jam mgon Kong sprul asserted his values, such as preferring *vacana* to *śāstra*, and “renunciation and reading” over “village rituals.” These of course are the very sort of expressions of a normative ideal that confuse the superficial reader of religious literature. ’Jam mgon Kong sprul was certainly not suggesting that he did not read commentaries, nor that he refused to participate in public rituals. Rather, he was participating in a rhetorical convention that maintained a hierarchy of some aspects of Tibetan religion over others.²⁷⁹ While he admits faults such as gossiping and other disharmonious activities, and claims no great understanding or accomplishment, he does allow himself this boast:

By the power of the three roots,
 from an early age I was drawn to virtue.
 Casting off [my] Bon po [heritage] I entered the door of the dharma.
 These days, dissatisfied with the view and practice of the śramaṇa,
 I aspire to follow after the ancients.
 I have read many treatises without sectarian prejudice
 and examined many biographies of the wise and accomplished ones.
 I cannot endure to read the books
 of partisans who arrogantly chase after fame;

²⁷⁸ Mkhjen brtse’i dbang po drew heavily from both Gu ru bkra shis and Tshe dbang rdo rje rig ’dzin in composing his own short history of Sde dge, and his too is filled with the term *ris med*. See Mkhjen brtse D.

²⁷⁹ It bears noting that the norm affirmed here is a distinctly “clerical,” to use Samuel’s term – the very sort of thing that the “Rimed” lamas were defined as not doing.

stating what is good and bad is the way of fools.
 Knowing this, in the cave of enlightened intent
 I have experienced the taste of being without partiality to new or old schools.
 I cultivate a pure view regarding all the teachings of the Victor;
 rejecting [any part] of the dharma is a heavy burden I do not contemplate bearing.²⁸⁰

In this passage we find 'Jam mgon Kong sprul accomplishing a very specific goal. First, he asserted that those who engage in sectarianism are wrong to do so; those who claim that one path is better than another are fools. Second, he affirms that he himself has embraced all teachings of the Buddha, reading scholarship without sectarian bias and viewing the full span of the teachings as worthy and good without discriminating. Again, we should remember that these are not radical notions. Buddhists everywhere are advised in their scriptures to avoid denigrating other teaching lineages, even as their masters devise complex doxographical hierarchies to elevate Mahāyāna over Hīnayāna, and their own teachings above all others.

A second passage in his autobiography in which these ideas are repeated occurs soon after he entered into a formal relationship with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, in 1852 – one year before Mchog gyur gling pa encountered the two. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul first listed an astounding number of transmissions he received from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po during the months they were together that year. These began with the Tshar pa tradition of the Sa skya teachings from the complete transmission of the *Sgrub thabs kun bdus* “that he himself had newly compiled” and continued through Bka' dam pa, Rnying ma, and Bka' brgyud teachings. Inspired by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's example, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul concluded his account with a swipe at those who compare poorly to his new master.

These days, the religious outlook and perception regarding the teachings of the Buddha of even the famous lamas and scholars is limited to their own systems and a few [mainstream] scriptural traditions. Most, of every rank, have little learning, and their dharma transmissions are few. In particular, these latter-day folks, who do not abide in honesty and

²⁸⁰ De ltar na yang rtsa gsum mthus / chung nas blo kha dge la phyogs / bon po bskyur nas chos sgor zhugs / deng sang dge sbyor lta spyod kyis / ma tshims gna' bo rjes su smon / ris med bstan bcos du ma bltas / mkhas grub rnam thar mang po mjal / grags rjes rgyugs pa'i phyogs zhen gyis / dpe cha mthong yang mi bzod par / bzang ngan smra ba blun po'i lugs / shes nas gsar Rnying phyogs med kyi / dgos pa'i phyug la bro ba myong / rgyal bstan kun la dag snang sbyangs / chos spangs khur du lci snyam med (Kong sprul A, f. 42b).

do not possess the eye of the dharma, haughtily chatter on about which dharma systems are good and bad, and which lineages are pure and impure, as though they themselves were of substance. They are frozen in fear by their own systems – not to mention those of others! – like the proverbial blind yak afraid of himself.²⁸¹

²⁸¹ Deng sang bla ma dge bshes grags che gras rnam kyang rang gi lugs srol de dang gzhung lugs 'ga' tsam ma gtogs thub bstan phyogs med la dag snang dang gzigs pa shin tu phra / mchog dman phal mo che thos pa byung zhing chos rgyus chung / khyad par phyis 'dir gzu bor mi gnas shing chos spyang dang mi ldan kyang dbang yod kha drag lta bus chos lugs bzang ngan dang brgyud pa gtsang mi gtsang gi zer brjod shin tu mang zhing gzhan lugs lta shog / rang lugs la'ang g.yag zhar rang 'drog gi dpes rgyu mtshan med pa'i dogs 'dzem shin tu che bas (Kong sprul A, ff. 66b-67a). In his hagiography of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul included a similar passage: "[Mkhyen brtse dbang po counted among his disciples masters from all four schools,] as well the great men of Tibet, ministers, generals and astrologers: the King of Sde dge, the King of Gling and so forth. He taught and propagated the sciences as appropriate, expounded the sūtra and tantra, and spread the teachings, chief among them those of the [Eight practice lineages]: the Rnying ma, Bka' gdams, the three [Sa skya] lineages of Sa [skya] Ngor [pa] and Tshar [pa], Bka' brgyud, Shangs chos, Zhi byed, Gcod yul, and Kālacakra, giving the empowerments, blessings, authorizations, instructions on the development and completions stage, transmissions, and so forth, each according to his desire, without prejudice or sectarian bias. The lord taught without ceasing from that which he had himself received: not only the Bka' 'gyur but also exerted himself in all others [areas]. For the most part, it was countless Tshar pa [Sa skya], but also numberless seekers came asking for [Rnying ma teachings such as] Blessing and Instruction of the dākinī (Mkha' spyod ma'i byin rlabs dang khrid), empowerments and instructions on the Klong chen snying thig and so forth, and he satisfied the wishes of all of them. In general, for the majority of the great beings, male and female, of the four rivers and six ridges of Khams, who came seeking an audience, but who were without any religion, he gave long-life empowerments and transference of consciousness teachings. In this way the great lama and men of Khams and Tibet sincerely bowed to him, and though they made offerings he praised them without preferences. Aiding self and other, he instructed by mimicking those who came asking, not increasing any of the eight worldly dharmas, but guiding those on the path in accordance with the dharma. He was ever humble, never arrogant or wrathful in the slightest, ever abiding in the manner of a renunciate who has abandoned everything; he had a singularly amazing expansive mind. The Lord condemned no tenet system, practicing them with pure vision and without sectarianism, and without mixing them together." Bod kyi mi chen bka' mda' rtsis gsum / chos rgyal sde dge / Gling rgyal mo sogs / rig gnas 'chad spel ci rigs / mdo rgyud kyi bshad bka' / rnying ma / bka' gdams / sa ngor tshar gsum gyi lugs / bka' brgyud / shangs chos / zhi byed / gcod yul / dus 'khor gtsor gyur sde rnam kyi dbang / byin rlabs / rjes gnang / bskyed rdzogs kyi khrid / lung sogs so so'i 'dod pa dang mthun par phyogs dang ris med par spel / Rje nyid kyi gsan rigs rnam las bka' 'gyur tsam ma gtogs gzhan tshar rem 'chad pa med cing / phal cher tshar grags mang po dang / khyad par mkha' spyod ma'i byin rlabs dang khrid / klong chen snying thig dbang khrid sogs ni zhu mkhan chad pa med par 'byur ba la thams cad kyi re ba skong bar mdzad / phyis su mdo khams chu bzhi sgang drug gi skye bo pho mo phal cher zhal mjal zhu bar 'ong brnam la'ang / tsho dbang dang 'pho lung gis mtshon pa'i chos 'bral mos pa dang 'tshams par khor yug tu gnang / de ltar khams dbus kyi bla chen mi chen mtha' dag gis mngon par btud cing mchod kyang / ngos rung phyogs 'dzin dang / rang gzhan gyi mgo 'dren zhu rgyu lta bus mtshon 'jig rten chos brgyad ci'ang mi spel bar chos dang mthun pa'i lam du drang tha ler bzhugs te khengs pa dang dregs pa cung zad tsam yang med par snyom chung kho nas bya btang kun spangs kyi ngang tshul lhur blangs te bzhugs pa ni gcig tu ngo mtshar che bar sems / lar rje nyid nas grub mtha' gang la'ang mi smod/ dag snang ris med du spyangs/ phan tshun bsre ba'ang mi mdzad (Kong sprul E, ff. 59b-60a). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's statement that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was never wrathful calls into question other segments of the portrait – Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was famous for his furious explosions, an example being the event at Seng rgod g.yu mtsho discussed in Chapter Two.

Here we see again Kong sprul affirming nonsectarian engagement as a valued endeavor, and critical of those who do not pursue it. There can be no doubt that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was a man who viewed inter-sectarian exchange as an ideal to strive for.

Nevertheless, to reduce 'Jam mgon Kong sprul to such a poorly defined "Rimay" is to erase much of his accomplishment. Perhaps had Smith been read more carefully, his appreciation for the subtleties of the nonsectarian rhetoric would have been more widely explored. As he wrote in his essay on 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, "Although the nonsectarian movement did engender reactionary intolerance and occasionally the denigration of other traditions of Buddhist practice, even these sectarian responses were couched in the language of eclecticism and unity."²⁸² That is, when nonsectarian activity was attacked by those seeking to keep their lineages "pure" (unmixed), the language used in such sectarian attacks was that of nonsectarianism. Intra-sectarian study and even practice was so widely advocated that even those engaging in sectarian behavior would claim to embrace it. What was unequivocally and unabashedly opposed was the mixing of traditions.

"Nonsectarianism" was such a commonly held virtue that even those who opposed it had to espouse its virtues. Smith's comment is yet another example in which his own insights suggest the inappropriateness of his term "movement." What seems to have been the case in the late nineteenth century, and perhaps the early twentieth as well, was not a "movement" but simply a sizeable community of scholars who put long-held values of inter-sectarian exploration and respect into a regionally and historically specific practice. Yes, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was nonsectarian, but so too were those who came before him. He and his colleagues were scholars and practitioners who participated in a religious blossoming that celebrated commonality and intra-sectarian exchanges. These were, as Smith notes, things that have a long tradition, and none of their activities or professed values can be claimed to place them outside the mainstream nor taken to be essential characteristics of a "movement."

²⁸² Smith 2001, 237.

III. Was 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Impartial?

Having examined some of the means by which the so-called “Rimay movement” advocated the practice of nonsectarianism, we will look next at a second main characterization of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and his “Rimay”: doctrinal impartiality. According to common depictions, impartiality was embodied in the great scriptural collections made or inspired by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, and expressed via the Madhyamaka doctrinal position of *gzhan stong*. “Impartiality” is a tricky English term, one that does not fit comfortably onto 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's work.

In his introduction to the *Shes bya kun khyab* Smith referred to other great literary collections of the second half of the nineteenth century, including the *Rgyud sde kun btus* of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po; Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's collected works the *Sgrub thabs kun btus* of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's student, the Ngor pa patriarch 'Jam dbyangs blo gter dbang po (1847-1914); and the collected works of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul. This last set is traditionally divided into the “five treasuries” (*mdzod lnga*). Of the lot, Smith writes that they “represent our chief literary sources of the nonsectarian movement.”²⁸³ As with his other comments, save for Smith's use of the term “movement,” the statement is accurate. Certainly the fourteen-volume *Sgrub thabs kun btus*,²⁸⁴ a compilation of tantric *sādhana* manuals, express the fervor with which Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and his students explored the wide range of Tibetan Buddhist practices. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's *Shes bya kun khyab*²⁸⁵ and *Gdams ngag mdzod*,²⁸⁶ a collection of

²⁸³ Smith 2001, p. 236. See Appendix Five for a narrative of the composition of these five works.

²⁸⁴ Blocks for this collection were carved in Sde dge in 1902. The modern edition was published in Dehradun, India, in 1970 by G.T.K. Lodoy, N. Gyatsen, and N. Luntok.

²⁸⁵ The *Shes bya kun khyab* has been published twice in India, first in 1970 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture) and again in 1997 (New Delhi: Shechen Publications), both reproducing the Dpal spung blocks. It has also been published twice in China, first in 1982 (Beijing: Mi-rigs Dpe-skrun Khang), and a second time in Western book form, in 2002 (Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang). Because the 2002 edition includes the block print pagination, its detailed table of contents (pp. 1-4) is particularly valuable. Several sections have been translated into English: Jamgön Kongtrul 1995 is a partial translation of Book One; Jamgön Kongtrul 1998 is a partial translation of Book Five; Jamgön Kongtrul 1999 is a translation of Book Five, section one, and Jamgön Kongtrul 2005 is a translation of Book Six, section four.

pith instructions arranged according to the Eight Practice Lineages, likewise represent 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's own commitment to inter-sectarian scholarship.

Yet other collections mentioned are confined in focus to particular schools or traditions within Tibetan Buddhism. The thirty-two volume *Rgyud sde kun btus* is a compilation of tantric initiation liturgies associated with the Sa skya school;²⁸⁷ the *Rin chen gter mdzod* is a collection of Rnying ma and Bon²⁸⁸ revelatory texts;²⁸⁹ the *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod*,²⁹⁰ as its

²⁸⁶ See Smith 2001, pp. 263-264, for a brief introduction; Kapstein 1996 for a discussion of it and the genre *gdams ngag*, and Barron 2003, pp. 517-520 for an outline of the work. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's own description of the work is on Kong sprul A, ff. 198b-201a. He gives very little information about the composition of the *Gdams ngag mdzod* in his autobiography, mentioning it only when it is completed: 1881, the same year he began to give the transmission (Kong sprul A, ff. 157b-159a).

²⁸⁷ This collection was published in thirty volumes in 1971 in New Delhi by N. Lungtok and N. Gyaltsan.

²⁸⁸ According to the tradition, if a treasure was concealed by Padmasambhava it is Rnying ma (or possibly Bon) regardless of the sectarian affiliation of the revealer; not all Rnying ma treasures were concealed by Padmasambhava, however. Vimalamitra, Vairocana, Ye shes mtsho rgyal, Srong btsan sgam po and others from the Dynastic period are also credited with treasure concealment. Gsar ma treasures are those that are purportedly concealed by a Sa skya, Bka' brgyud or Dge lugs patriarch. See Dargyay 1981 for an instance of Dge lugs treasure.

²⁸⁹ Several versions of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* have been published in South Asia. The edition prepared by Ldil mgo mkhyen brtse (one of the recognized reincarnation of Mkhyen brtse dbang po) is the modern standard edition: *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo: a reproduction of the Stod-luñ Mtshur-phu redaction of 'Jam-mgon Kong sprul's great work on the unity of the gter-ma traditions of Tibet, with supplemental texts from the Dpal-spus redaction and other manuscripts* (Paro: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, 1976). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's own description of the work is in Kong sprul A, ff. 196b-198b, though this is largely a list of the *gter ston* from whose revelations he drew material.

The selection of texts was not without controversy. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul excluded the work of the well known if somewhat notorious treasure revealer Rig 'dzin Nyi ma grags pa (1647-1710), a lama to both the royalty of Lhasa and Sde dge. Nyi ma grags pa, a notorious magician, had fallen afoul with the Karma bka' brgyud treasure revealer Yongs dge Mi 'gyur rdo rje Drag po nus ldan rtsal (1628/1641-1708), and was blamed for the death of Karma pa X Chos dbying rdo rje (1604-74). His teachings were henceforth essentially blacklisted from Karma bka' brgyud circles, and thus were not included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*. According to Gu ru bkra shis, the trouble began when Mi 'gyur rdo rje had attempted to meet with Nyi ma grags pa but was waylaid and accosted by local officials. Mi 'gyur rdo rje blamed Nyi ma grags pa and set out to destroy his reputation (1990, pp. 829-855). Prats had it that Nyi ma grags pa accused Mi 'gyur rdo rje of laying claim to treasure that was destined to be revealed by himself (1982, p. 73, note 14). On this controversy see also Blondeau 1988; Martin 1991b, pp. 173-181; and Cuevas 2003, pp. 179-190. The latter is drawn from Gu ru bkra shis' extensive account.

The addition of several Bon liturgies elicited the strongest opposition. In the early twentieth century a Rnying ma pa named Rgya rong Bstan 'dzin grags pa, apparently angry over the exclusion of the treasures of Nyi ma grags pa, made the accusation that the work was corrupted by the Bon po inclusion. According to Blondeau Rgya rong Bstan 'dzin grags pa was a disciple of Dpal sprul O rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po (1808-1887) and Mdo Mkhyen brtse Ye shes rdo rje (1800-1859) (1988, p. 60). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's disciple, Mchog sprul Padma dbang chen (d.u.) requested some of the most illustrious masters of the day to respond: Karma pa XV Mkha' khyab rdo rje (1871-1922), Dpal spung Si tu 11 Padma dbang mchog rgyal po (1886-1952), and Mi pham rgya mtsho. 'Ju Mi pham declined, apparently believing that Bstan 'dzin grags pa's accusation did not warrant the attention, and in his stead his disciple Zhe chen rgyal tshab Padma mnam rgyal (1871-1926) composed a response. These responses are summarized

name suggests, is a collection of Bka' brgyud tantric teachings and liturgies origination with Dmar pa; and the so-called *Rgya chen bka' 'bum*, or *Thun mong ma yin pa'i mdzod*, is simply Kong sprul's collected works proper, though the scope of subject matter it represents can certainly be said to express his nonsectarian interests. Thus to call the "five treasuries" as a group an expression of nonsectarianism might be appropriate, but to label the individual texts with this term is not accurate. The different works accomplish different goals, and those goals cannot be entirely subsumed into the category of "nonsectarianism."

Curiously, the general propensity of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and his colleagues for creating these collections has been assigned to the defining characteristics of "Rimay." As we saw above, Kenneth McLeod had it that one of the "the three most important" objectives of the "Ri-me movement" was "to preserve rare teachings," a goal he claimed 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhyaen brtse'i dbang po "realized principally" through the collections. Hookham, in an otherwise cogent description of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's work, stated that "The Rimay tradition is the name given to the work of a number of nineteenth and twentieth century lamas who strove to gather together and preserve the massive collections of Tantric transmissions. . . ."²⁹¹ Samuel similarly wrote that "a central aspect of Rimed was the bringing together and transmitting of the numerous diverse traditions of Tantric yogic practice that had developed in Tibet over the preceding ten centuries."²⁹² This aspect of the definition reached encyclopedic definitiveness in 2004, with Davidson's statement that the "nonsectarian movement in Eastern Tibet (Khams) . . . tried to move Tibetans from a narrow view of lineage toward an ecumenical

in Blondeau (pp. 62-67). We can understand why 'Jam mgon Kong sprul felt the need for Padmasambhava's blessing, secured via Mchog gyur gling pa, on his choices of texts.

²⁹⁰ The *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod* has been published twice in the last few decades: first in 1974 by Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang, Tibetan Craft Community, Palampur, India, in six volumes, and again in 1982 by Lama Ngodrub and Sherab Drimey, Paro, Bhutan, in eight volumes. See Kong sprul's description of the work, Kong sprul A, ff. 195b-196b.

²⁹¹ Hookham 1991, p. 162.

²⁹² Samuel 1993, p. 541.

vision of Buddhist study and practice and specialized in the collection and publication of compendia of religious practice and ideas.”²⁹³

Nowhere does Smith himself suggest that such collecting was a central aspect of the “nonsectarian movement.” Again, he did state that the collections are the “chief literary sources of the nonsectarian movement,” and he is certainly correct that they are expressions of Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po and ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s unbounded exploration of Tibetan religion. This is not quite the same thing as being the acts of a “movement,” or evidence that “Rimay” was heralded by the collection of texts. It was Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po, ’Jam mgon Kong sprul, and Blo gter dbang po who made the compilations, not the “Rimay.” Smith did not even imply that such collecting was an aspect of ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s “Rimay”; he simply wrote about the two in the same essay. Like with the matter of the *yig cha* and the alleged “return to Indic originals,” it was simply by virtue of having been included in Smith’s essay that the act of compilation has become considered a characteristic of “Rimay.” Ultimately one must ask: What is gained by saying they did so as part of a “movement”? More importantly, what has been overlooked? There is a complicated history behind the compilations that the designation “Rimay” does not bring forth.

Something Smith did explicitly link to the “movement” was the *gzhan stong* doctrine, which he referred to as “the mortar that held [’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s] eclectic structure together.”²⁹⁴ As a result of this statement it has since been asserted that ’Jam mgon Kong sprul took up the *gzhan stong* position as a means to unite the teachings. That is, Smith reasonably suggested that ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s *gzhan stong* was a philosophical position that supported the tricky business of inter-sectarian doctrinal investigations. It was an idea that deserves further investigation, for ’Jam mgon Kong sprul was integrating several strands of philosophical inquiry in a way that none had before him. Later commentators, however, rather

²⁹³ Davidson 2004, 857. The statement comes in a section titled “The Modern Nonsectarian Movement and Monastic Intransigence in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.”

²⁹⁴ Smith 2001, p. 237.

than looking to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's own writings, took Smith's hypothesis as fact, and we find as a result a definition of "Rimay" that includes a purposeful embrace of *gzhan stong* as a means to develop a stance of impartiality. One man's exploration and innovation are thus flattened into being a movement's platform, and the important differences between 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and 'Ju Mi pham, for example, are lost.

Gzhan stong is a philosophical position in which ultimate reality is described in positive terms.²⁹⁵ It is commonly glossed in Western scholarship as "empty of other" or "extrinsic emptiness." Its adherents posit that while conventional reality is properly described as empty of inherent existence, ultimate reality is empty only of all relative and phenomenal factors – "other-empty" – but is not empty of its own characteristics. This is contradistinction to the dominant Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka position, in which it is held that ultimate reality is the absence of a falsely imagined intrinsic nature (*svabhāva, rang bzhin*). In this view emptiness is merely a "non-affirming negation" (*med dgag*), which implies nothing positive in its place. When contrasted to *gzhan stong*, this position is referred to as "*rang stong*," or "self-empty." The Rdzogs chen teachings, a main venue for *gzhan stong* language, are replete with references to "primordial purity" (*ka dag*), "intrinsic awareness" (*rig pa*) and the like, which are asserted to be characteristics of the ultimate. Likewise tantric teachings on immediate enlightenment seem also to presuppose a notion of innate buddhahood replete with positive characteristics.

John Pettit, paraphrasing Smith, explained the value of *gzhan stong* for the "Rimay movement": it "provides an easy hermeneutical link between sūtra and tantra." This is because the tantras, like certain sūtras of the third turning of the wheel, "teach the idea of original enlightenment replete with qualities and symbolically imagine that view in meditation

²⁹⁵ Scholarship on *gzhan stong* includes Ruegg 1963, 1988 and 1995, Kapstein 1992b, 1997b and 2000a and 2000b, Stearns 1995 and 1999; Pettit 1999a and 1999b; Williams 1983, 1998a and 1998b, and 1999; Hookham 1991, and Mathes 2004. See also Hopkin 2006.

practice.”²⁹⁶ Paul Williams, who has written at length on the subject of Tibetan Madhyamaka, explained that *gzhan stong* was adopted by “the enthusiasts for the *ris med* approach” as a means “to bring together in their correct places all the different Buddhist doctrinal systems, perspectives and practices.”²⁹⁷ How exactly this was accomplished was suggested by Kapstein, who wrote that the initial proponents of the formal *gzhan stong* platform, the Jo nang school, argued that *gzhan stong* was not simply the highest teaching, but one found in all of the Buddha’s teaching, if properly understood. This, Kapstein claimed, “encouraged a tolerant and pluralistic orientation,” and resulted in the Jo nang pa becoming “remarkably eclectic.”²⁹⁸ Thus, as Kapstein credits Smith with making known, ’Jam mgon Kong sprul adopted “*gzhan-stong* as the foundation of his own eclectic enterprise during the 19th century.”²⁹⁹

The general question of the supposed “tolerant and pluralistic orientation” of the *gzhan stong* view, along with the historical issue of whether *gzhan stong* produced an eclectic Jo nang school, are matters for other scholars.³⁰⁰ One does wonder if Kapstein might be mistaking effect

²⁹⁶ Pettit 1999, p. 112. He wrote that ’Jam mgon Kong sprul considered *gzhan stong* “the glue that held the various Tibetan Buddhist traditions together.”

²⁹⁷ Williams 1998, p. 199. He elsewhere elaborated this point, writing that *gzhan stong* “became a key expression among *ris med* thinkers precisely for an approach which, in its stress on a nonconceptual Ultimate which thereby transcends ultimate analysis was, I suggest, important to the *ris med* project of harmonising traditional doctrinal rivalries” (1999, p. 143). It was this point that Andrew Skilton chose to focus on in his description of the “Ris-med” philosophical platform, with less than ideal clarity: “In an attempt to reconcile doctrinal differences the Ris-med tended towards upholding a *gzhan tong* [sic] position which takes reality to be a really existent entity beyond the realm of rational thought and thereby undermines the ultimate validity of rational discourse and disagreement” (1994, p. 192).

²⁹⁸ Kapstein 1997, p 465.

²⁹⁹ Kapstein added further on the same page that “the 19th century eclectic movement in Khams encouraged some degree of bridge-building among sectarian traditions that, if not positively hostile, had usually been aloof to one another,” reminding the reader of the practical value of the philosophical exercise. See also van der Kuijp , who wrote, “[*gzhan stong*] attracted a number of thinkers from all the Tibetan Buddhist schools with the exception of the Dga’-ldan-pa. [’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s] brief account of the individuals involved in its propagation, while clearly written in a spirit of enthusiasm and reconciliation, is fraught with considerable problems of a philosophical kind. Nonetheless, it is useful to realise how one of the greatest founders and exponents of the nineteenth century ‘non-partial’ (*ris-med*) movement, which was the direct cause for a renewed interest in this ‘Great madhyamaka’, thought about the antecedents of a way of thinking he felt so close to” (1983, p. 40).

³⁰⁰ An intellectual history of the doctrine would be a valuable contribution to our understanding of the cross-fertilization among the different religious traditions in Tibet. The extensive discussion of *gzhan stong* in the writings of Kaḥ thog rig ’dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1755), a teacher of Dpal sungs Si tu paṅchen Chos kyis ’byung gnas, would be an important starting place to uncover the foundation for ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s own *gzhan stong* view. According to both Smith and Stearns, it was Si tu paṅchen who

for cause in his appreciation of Jo nang eclecticism. The school was always in precarious minority status in Tibet, so much so that for a period of close to two hundred years it effectively dissolved back into its parent Sa skya sect. The *gzhan stong* teachings of Dol po pa were nearly forgotten through neglect and misunderstanding by the lineage that was charged with their preservation, and as a result of severe repression under the Dge lugs pa triumphalism following the establishment of the Dga' ldan pho brang government in Lhasa.³⁰¹ Eclecticism might have been a survival strategy; a practical means to enlist allies and sympathetic interpreters. Even more curious is the characterization as “tolerant and pluralistic” the position that the *gzhan stong* doctrine is to be found in all the Buddhist teachings, if properly understood. One might wonder if the interpretation of other schools’ texts according to one’s own criteria is a sign of tolerance, or of intellectual hegemony. *Gzhan stong* advocates did not say that the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka was equally valid to their own position; they considered it incomplete. It is a move that is reminiscent of the Mahāyāna assertion that the “Hīnayāna” teachings were true but of a lesser value, incomplete and in need of extensive reinterpretation (according to Mahāyāna principles, of course).

There is no question that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was indeed interested in the *gzhan stong* doctrine. He wrote extensively on *gzhan stong*, such as in his *Irreversible Lion's Roar*,³⁰² his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga*,³⁰³ and a short exposition on the *gzhan stong* view, entitled *The Stainless Vajra Moonlight*.³⁰⁴ He wrote about the *gzhan stong* / *rang stong* dyad in the

blended the varying expositions of *gzhan stong* and made them available to those of the next generation. See Smith's introduction to the diaries of Si tu pañchen (Smith 2001, pp. 87-99), and Stearns 1999, p. 76.

³⁰¹ The Dge lugs repression of the Jo nang school has been repeatedly told and need not be revisited here. For a brief discussion of Dge lugs polemical literature on the eve of the establishment of the Dga' ldan pho brang, the government of the Dalai Lamas in Lhasa, see Lopez 1996b.

³⁰² See Kong sprul H for bibliographic information. The text is discussed at length in Hookham 1991, and has been recently translated in Fuchs 2000.

³⁰³ On this text see especially Obermiller 1930; Takasaki 1966; Ruegg 1976; and Hookham 1991. Several translations have been published, including Fuchs 2000.

³⁰⁴ See Kong sprul I for bibliographic information.

Shes bya kun khyab, but the discussion, found in Book Four, section two, is quite brief, and leaves no impression that he found in it a means to surmount sectarianism.³⁰⁵

In the short *Ris med chos kyi 'byung gnas*, however, *gzhan stong* is emphatically posited as the final word on truth, and not as an idea that joins together all views – and certainly not one that is found in all lineages.³⁰⁶ In the section on the Mahāyāna teachings, the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka and the Svātantrika-Madhyamaka “schools,” both of which were said to propound the *rang stong* view, are presented first. Next is the “definitive” Madhyamaka, called here the “great lion’s roar of the irreversible *gzhan stong*” in apparent allusion to his commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* mentioned above. At the conclusion of the text, after the various teaching schools are presented, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul briefly traced two philosophical lineages that cut across the traditional sectarian boundaries. These were the *gzhan stong* and *rang stong*. The first includes all Rnying ma pa, the Jo nang pa, and many great Bka' brgyud and Sa skya lamas; the difference in their teachings, we are told, was minor. In the second lineage the Rnying ma is absent and the Dge lugs takes its place, and among all its proponents, we learn, the differences are substantial. With a final statement that *gzhan stong* is the definitive view of the Madhyamaka, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul then offers his concluding verse and closes the text.

Rather than impartially adopting a universal philosophical platform to unite all Tibetan religions, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's *Ris med chos kyi 'byung gnas* makes use of nonsectarianism to unite some in opposition to others. Interestingly, the opposing side is not itself a united front – their “differences are substantial.” This allowed 'Jam mgon Kong sprul to admit a few patriarchs of the Bka' brgyud and Sa skya schools to the opposing sides, while not actually subsuming them into the opposing camp. Patriarchs he admired for other reasons than their *gzhan stong* position could be in agreement with the Dge lugs pa without being cut of the same

³⁰⁵ Kong sprul J, 1970, vol. 1, ff. 148a-151b; 2002, p. 230-233.

³⁰⁶ See Appendix Three.

cloth. Regardless of how 'Jam mgon Kong sprul might have employed *gzhan stong* to cut across doctrinal barriers, the view was not impartial; as in all expositions of Buddhist history the many diverse teachings embraced by the umbrella of Buddhism are presented hierarchically. Here a highest view is *gzhan stong*, and one might therefore point out that if *gzhan stong* was the thing that established 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's so-called impartiality, then his was a decidedly partial impartiality.

IV. The Khams of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's Narrative map

Even more than the *Ris med chos kyi 'byung gnas*, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's narrative map illustrates his unique sectarian nonsectarianism. We saw above how Sde dge fell into sectarian conflict at the turn of the nineteenth century. I offered that history to show that sectarianism and the *ris med* ideal were vital concerns that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul inherited. This section will introduce 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's narrative map with the historical events of his own lifetime that fueled its composition. A major part of Smith's essay on 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was dedicated to an overview of Tibetan history from the perspective of sectarianism, most of it coming in a section in the 2002 edition under the heading "The Origins of the *Ris med* Tradition." Pointing out that "the roots of eclecticism and tolerance are sunk as deep into the soil of Tibetan tradition as those of sectarianism and bigotry," Smith traced the development of Buddhism in Tibet from the tenth century through to the nineteenth. Drawing on his inexhaustible knowledge of Tibetan history, Smith provided numerous episodes, many of which have since become standard examples of sectarian strife in Tibetan history.³⁰⁷

One of these was the Nyag rong War. The history of this war has been recounted in several studies, and no more than a summary need be given here.³⁰⁸ Beginning in the 1830s

³⁰⁷ See for example Karma phun tshogs 2004, p. 50.

³⁰⁸ The most comprehensive account remains Tashi Tsering 1985. Other studies that have touched on the war are Petech 1972 and 1973; Adshear 1984; Aris 1992; Kolmaš 1968; and Shakabpa 1967. First-hand accounts of conditions in Khams in the wake of the war are found in Baber 1882 and Teichman 1922.

Nyang sked A mgon Mgon po rnam rgyal (d. 1865), a warlord of Nyag rong, the region to the east of Sde dge, began conquering neighboring territories. He first united the upper, middle, and lower parts of the Nyag rong valley, and then expanded outwards, ultimately taking Sde dge in 1862. The war provided the Lhasan government an opportunity to recover a piece of the ancient Tibetan empire that it had ceded to China under duress in 1725, after the Chinese army repelled an invasion of Tibet by the Dzungar Mongols.³⁰⁹ From 1725 on, at least officially, Khams east of the 'Bri chu (C: Jinsha jiang 金沙江) had been a protectorate of the Chinese empire, ostensibly ruled by local chieftains recognized by the Chinese as *tuguan* 土管 or *tusi* 土司.³¹⁰ The Qing had varying degrees of success in stationing troops and establishing rule in towns such as Dar rtse mdo, Li thang and 'Ba' thang along the southern tea route, though for the most part these places retained self-rule until the early twentieth century. The Tibetans meanwhile managed to institute a firm presence in Khams regions west of the 'Bri like Chab mdo and Nang chen.³¹¹ Sde dge was a protectorate in name only, and continued to enjoy autonomy until the advent of the Nyag rong War, when Tibetan annexation and direct rule became a real possibility.

According to the standard account, after the fall of Sde dge in 1862, members of its ruling families fled to Lhasa and petitioned the Tibetan government to send an army against

³⁰⁹ Petech 1972 provided an extensive account of this invasion and its aftermath; he wrote that in the midst of the Mongol onslaught of Tibet, Khams was “practically independent of Lhasa” (p. 51). His account of the partition of cultural Tibet is on page 103; see also Kolmaš 1968, p. 38.

³¹⁰ Herman 1997 is a solid discussion of the Qing era office of *tusi* in Yunnan and Guizhou; see Kolmaš 1986 for the imperial titles bestowed on the Kings of Sde dge, and Teichman 1922 for a British consular officer’s report on the political organization of Khams in the early twentieth century. Tibetan acknowledgement of the offices is illustrated by van der Kuijp, who noted that in a fifteenth century Tibetan history is recorded the granting of the rank *du-si* to a ruler of Rgyal-mkhar-rtse, and that in a biography of Thang-stong rgyal-po the master met a *bdag-po du-si* in Rtse-chen (van der Kuijp 1988, p 10 note 1).

³¹¹ According to David Jackson, Si tu VIII, Chos kyi 'byung gnas's move to Sde dge was likely prompted by the institution of Tibetan rule in western Khams after the 1725 redrawing of the Inner Asian map at the conclusion of the Dzungar invasion of Lhasa (2006, p. 99).

Mgon po rnam rgyal.³¹² The following year it did so, driving the Nyag rong army out of Sde dge in 1864, and killing Mgon po rnam rgyal the next year. Lhasa then demanded an indemnity from Beijing, on the grounds that the region belonged to China and therefore the Qing court should pay the Tibetans' expenses. It was a shrewd move, for in place of the 200,000 *taels* of silver that the nearly bankrupt Qing could not afford, Lhasa accepted a counter offer of sovereignty over Nyag rong. Consequently a governor was installed and a Tibetan army was stationed for the next several decades.³¹³

'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded numerous episodes of his own involvement in the war, though his sympathies are difficult to ascertain. It is likely that his opinion on the conflict changed substantially as more and more of his sponsors and friends suffered from its effects. His loyalties naturally resided first with his monastery, then with his patrons, including the Sde dge court, and finally with Khams in general. In his autobiography he was emphatic in that he never chose to get involved, save for performing rituals at a safe distance in order to protect those he cared about. Yet at the same time, he was not shy in boasting of the benefits of his service, be it to his monastery, Sde dge, or the Tibetan army. This last service he took added pains to justify.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul served all factions in the war. He was summoned before Mgon po rnam rgyal in the sixth month of the iron monkey year, (July-August 1860) along with Ta'i si tu X Padma kun bzang chos rgyal (c.1854-1885), and Karma pa XIV Theg mchog rdo rje (1798-1868), who had arrived at Dpal spung the previous year.³¹⁴ If 'Jam mgon Kong sprul dreaded the

³¹² The extent of the Sde dge request for assistance is unclear. Petech mentions only a few men (1973, p. 120), while Shakabpa had it that six thousand refugees arrived in Lhasa from Sde dge (1967, p. 187). His being a Lhasa-centered history, a higher number of petitioners would better justify the military action.

³¹³ Baber, who traveled the region soon after the conclusion of the conflict, described the administration of the Tibetan governor in Nyag rong as brutal and exploitative, evidence that "a conqueror is not always a judicious administrator" (1882, pp. 98-99).

³¹⁴ The party met at 'Brang dil, a place name I have not been able to identify. It is most likely somewhere in modern Dpal yul county, in or near the 'Dzin chu valley that flows into the 'Bri at Hor po. This is because 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded that the party returned to Dpal spungs via the Gter klung valley and joined Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po at Zla gam dbang phug (Kong sprul A, f. 97b; Kong sprul E, f. 88b).

summons or resented performing rituals for the warlord, he made no indication of it in his autobiography or in his hagiography of Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po, where he also recounts the episode. He simply related the events with the same neutrality he used to describe his other ritual activity, either personally undertaken or done at the behest of his patrons in Sde dge or elsewhere. In 1860 Mgon po rnam rgyal had yet to threaten Sde dge, and he had only recently annexed the neighboring Hor states without much fighting. As a result 'Jam mgon Kong sprul might not yet have considered him an enemy. Certainly, the caliber of the lamas who obeyed the summons indicates the degree of power Mgon po rnam rgyal had attained by that point. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul would have not been in a position to refuse.

Soon afterwards began a series of events that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul characterized as summons to which "I could find no way of not going" (*phran ma song ka med red 'dug pa*). He went to Sde dge city to perform long-life rites for Queen Chos dbying bzang mo (1815-1892),³¹⁵ who was preparing to flee, and on behalf of the two princes, Dpal ldan 'Chi med rtags pa'i rdo rje (1840-1898?)³¹⁶ and his brother, whose name is not known, both of who soon fled to Hor khog. He did so despite fearing involvement and the possible wrath of Mgon po rnam rgyal.³¹⁷ In the second month (late March to late April, 1863) the Nyag rong army reached Sman shod and Gter klung, and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul reported that there was intense destruction and that several of his important patrons met violent deaths.³¹⁸ Meanwhile Mgon po rnam rgyal, perhaps

The Gter klung lies between the 'Dzin chu and Dpal spungs. Kong sprul wrote in the autobiography that they "fulfilled the Nyag chieftain's wishes, performing a "name burning" [a form of merit transfer] service for his dead son, an 'authorization', and [the Karma pa's] 'hat ritual' and so forth." (*Nyag dpon bu shi ba'i byung bzhu/ rjes gnang/ dbu zhwa mjal kha sogs re skong mdzad*).

³¹⁵ The widow of King Dam tshig rdo rje (1811-1852/3).

³¹⁶ Although 'Chi med rtags pa'i rdo rje was at the time in his early twenties, it appears he had not yet been enthroned; perhaps the chaos of war had prevented the benediction ceremonies from taking place. When he married his wife, Tshe brtan sgrol dkar, is not known; their children were not born until the mid 1870s (Kolmaš 1988, p. 132). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded that at the war's conclusion, after the events at Rong me described in Chapter Two, he and Mchog gyur gling pa performed an enthronement ceremony for the prince, for which Mchog gyur gling pa composed an especially beautiful benediction (Kong sprul A, f. 112b).

³¹⁷ Kong sprul A, f. 101b.

³¹⁸ Kong sprul A, f. 104b; according to Yang gling rdo rje the Nyag rong army arrived in Sman shod on the fourteenth day of the third month of the water pig year (May 3, 1863). Rdzogs sar was party damaged by

fearing resistance from the populace and clerics, had rounded up as hostages many lamas of Dgon chen and other monasteries, as well as the local royalty.³¹⁹ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul narrowly avoided being included among the hostages, though how he did so goes unexplained, save for it being due to “the compassion of the [three] jewels.”³²⁰ The possibility has to be entertained that he was merely summoned to minister the warlord as before, and was not the subject of a failed kidnapping attempt. His Dpal spungs colleague Dbon sprul Rinpoche, after all, accompanied Mgon po rnam rgyal through much of the later campaigns of the war, unhappily perhaps, but probably not as a captive.³²¹ That he now viewed Mgon po rnam rgyal as a real threat is indicated by two dreams he related in his autobiography, both portending the destruction of the city and the arrival of a conquering foreign army.³²²

the marauding soldiers, but the main buildings were spared from both fire and looting. It would seem that Nyag sked was paid a substantial ransom from the treasury to leave the temples and their relics intact (1995, p. 75).

³¹⁹ According to the Tibetan historian Karma rgyal mtshan (1994, pp. 56-57), Nyag sked had many high lamas from Rdzogs chen and Kah thog tied in leather sacks and thrown into the Rdza chu river. This is unlikely, given Mgon po rnam rgyal's reported reverence for Rdzogs chen IV Mi 'gyur nam mkha'i rdo rje (1793-1870). Tashi Tsering (1985, pp. 207-208), includes the story of Mgon po rnam rgyal asking Mi 'gyur nam mkha'i rdo rje to foretell his next incarnation. Despite warnings from his attendants, Mi 'gyur nam mkha'i rdo rje gave him the bad news – he would be going straight to hell. Mgon po rnam rgyal was impressed by the lama's bravery and truthfulness, and, securing the lama's promise to save him from hell for at least one subsequent lifetime, he made an offering and departed. Smyo shul mkhan po does not relate this incident in his short biography of Mi 'gyur nam mkha'i rdo rje (vol. 2, pp. 89a-94a), but it can be found in a modern history of Rdzogs chen monastery (Bstan 'dzin kun bzang lung rtogs bstan pa'i nyi ma, 2004, pp. 351-352), where not only does Mi 'gyur nam mkha'i rdo rje tell Mgon po rnam rgyal that he will be going nowhere else but vajra hell after death, but also, being subsequently asked if that would change were he to conquer Lhasa, that he will never even reach Chab mdo, much less Tibet. Mgon po rnam rgyal's roots in the heavily Rnying ma pa Nyag rong region, one would furthermore hope, would have inspired him to grant Rnying ma monastics some protection. The three-volume compendium of modern histories of Khams pa monasteries ('Jigs med bzang spyod et. al., 1995, vol. 3) records that Mgon po rnam rgyal lavishly patronized three of the regions great Rnying ma monasteries: Zhi ba'i mgon, 'Byung khungs dgon, and Byams 'byor dgon, which Mgon po rnam rgyal allegedly referred to as Nyag rong's own Se ra, 'Bras spung and Dga' ldan, the three main Tibetan monasteries of the ruling Lhasan Dge lugs pas. (the statement is repeated in the histories of each of the three monasteries; vol. 3, pp. 213, 230, and 253).

³²⁰ Dkon mchog thugs rjes rang yal song; Kong sprul A, f. 106a.

³²¹ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul announced Dbon sprul's departure for Nyag rong in the middle of 1963 with the concern only that he would have to organize the summer retreat himself: “Because a need arose for Dbon sprul to go to Nyag khog, there was no one to lead this year's summer retreat . . .” (*Dbon sprul nyag khog phebs dgos byung stabs 'di lo fbyar gnas 'dzug mkhan mi 'dug pas*, Kong sprul A, f. 105.5).

³²² Kong sprul A, f. 101b.

Although 'Jam mgon Kong sprul survived being taken hostage by one side, he could not avoid answering a summons by the Tibetans. In the ninth month of the wood bird year (c. October 1864) the Tibetan army, “so large that heaven and earth seemed to shake,” had run the Nyag rong forces out of Sde dge,³²³ and “a situation of heartbreaking chaos like being in the *bar do* ensued.”³²⁴ According to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, “those [territories] nearby that did not swear allegiance³²⁵ were attacked by the army.”³²⁶ Dpal spungs was targeted, having been “faulted with great wrongdoing,” and was about to be seized, when an opportunity arose for him to protect it.³²⁷ The leader of the 'Brag yab regiment, Gdong kam khri ba (d.u.) fell ill, and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was recommended to him as the most skilled physician to be had in the region. He was sent for, and accordingly crossed over to the military encampment.

As he told it in his autobiography, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul considered answering the Tibetans' summons a great risk, confessing fear of retribution by Nyag rong chieftain and his armies. Before making the journey he performed divinations to determine the likelihood of his safety, and was apparently satisfied. Reaching the Tibetan encampment, he performed divinations on behalf of the invalid and advised that he be taken back to 'Brag yab. The advice was taken, but rather than being dismissed, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was retained and commanded to perform further divinations; this time regarding the coming battles. Although he states in the autobiography that such matters were outside the parameters of any known divination techniques, he complied with the orders and simply “spoke whatever came to

³²³ Dpung dmag mang pos gnam sa 'gul ba ltar, Kong sprul A, f. 103b.

³²⁴ *Nyag dmag phyi dpung slebs pas 'ung sing sems gzan bar do'i gnas skabs 'dra ba byung* (Kong sprul A, f. 106a). Where the Dpal spung blocks read *'ung zing* the Chinese edition (p. 222) reads *'ur zing*, a preferable version that is repeated in Karma rgyal mtshan (1992, p. 57) and Yang gling rdo rje (1995, p. 76), who both repeat the phrase.

³²⁵ The term here, *mgo btag*, literally means “tie the head.” Baber reported that the “king of Dege ‘tied his head’ to the Lhasa-de,” i.e. the *Lhasa sde*, or *Dga' ldan pho brang*; for the phrase “tied his head” Baber gives “*gota*.” Speaking to Sde dge locals in the late 1870s, Baber, stated that the people of Sde dge denied having done so, but this was likely revisionist on their part (1882, p. 98).

³²⁶ *Nye skor mgo brtags ma zhus pa rnams la dmag brgyabs* (Kong sprul A, f. 106a). Petech cites the *Da Qing lichao shilu* and reports that the Tibetan victory “was marred by the indiscipline of the Tibetan troops, who inflicted much looting and violence upon the local population” (1973, p. 120).

³²⁷ Khag ngan che bas dmag gis bzung nye ba'i skabs (Kong sprul A, f. 106a).

mind.” Events unfolded as he predicted, and when the army was victorious he was highly praised and rewarded. As a result he was given a guarantee that Dpal spungs, its temples and territories, would not be harmed.³²⁸ After the conclusion of the fighting he was lavishly rewarded for his service, first by the Sde dge court, and then by the leadership at Dpal spungs.³²⁹

'Jam mgon Kong sprul's account is less than candid, and it should be emphasized that it is the only narrative we have of his activities. What exactly, one wonders, had Dpal spungs been accused of, that would have brought the ruin of the monastery had 'Jam mgon Kong sprul not interceded? Certainly he and Si tu had ministered to Mgon po rnam rgyal, but by that measure nearly every monastery in the region would have been threatened. Smith suggested that the Dge lugs pa Tibetan government's army was intent on converting non-Dge lugs pa monasteries as a means to effect control of the region, and was using the war as a pretext for destroying those institutions that posed a threat to their power. It is a reasonable hypothesis. Conversion had been an oft-used tool for such a goal, both in the region and across Tibet.³³⁰ I have found no evidence that such conversions actually took place in Khams at this time.³³¹ Until further

³²⁸ Kong sprul A, f. 106b.

³²⁹ From the Tibetans he received a parcel of land nearby to his monastery. The royal family offered gifts in return for the protective rituals he continually had sponsored and performed himself on their behalf. Dbon sprul, when he returned to Dpal spungs, credited 'Jam mgon Kong sprul with protecting the monastery from the Tibetans, and as a reward gave him two parcels of land for the upkeep of his hermitage (Kong sprul A, ff. 109a-109b). In relating the gift 'Jam mgon Kong sprul strongly emphasized that the land was abandoned, wary of appearing to have benefited from the Tibetan invasion: “[Phu lung pa] gave me some nomadic lands below Dpal [spungs] around Tshe phru, both the main fields and some related places that were unoccupied and deserted, the sort that anyone who wanted them might take, and which at that time had no owner” *gzhung sa la zhabs 'degs chen por byung ba'i gtong rag tu phywa g.yang gur bu stong shul gyi sa zhing bar lam btsan po su 'dod kyis blangs / de skabs bdag med gyur pa rtsa ba yan lag dang bcas pa / dpa' 'og tshe phru'i skor gyi 'brog sa rnams gnang* (Kong sprul A, f. 109a).

³³⁰ The people of Khams would certainly have in their memories the events in neighboring Rgyal mo rong (Chinese: Jinchuan 金川) a less than a hundred years before, during which the Lhasa government teamed up with the Qing to defeat a resistant population. The Qing embraced a policy of forced conversion of Bon po institutions by the Dge lugs pas. As explained by Mansier, the Qing supported Dge lugs expansion as a way to unite the entire Tibetan plateau under their proxy ruler, the Dalai Lama (Mansier 1990). On the Rgyal mo rong wars see also Martin 1990, Kværne and Sperling 1993, Greatrex 1994, Waley-Cohen 1998, and Dai Yingcong 2001.

³³¹ According to the histories of the Dge lugs pa monasteries in Sde dge, Dkar mdzes, and Sher zhul counties in the three-volume contemporary history of Khams pa monasteries, none were converted from

sources on the dangers faced by the Khams pa institutions emerge, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's autobiography remains our only source. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul could have over-emphasized the dangers faced by himself and Dpal spungs in order to allay accusations that he assisted the Tibetan army. By the time he was writing, several decades after the events, the lingering occupation of Nyag rong by the Tibetans had produced a great deal of antipathy, and Mgon po rnam rgyal was on his way to being regarded as a Khams pa hero, a man who had tried to unite Khams but had been destroyed by invading Tibetans.³³² 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's service to the Tibetans, the rituals he performed to bring about the defeat of Mgon po rnam rgyal, and the rewards he received as a result, might have by the end of the century required some defense.

The Nyag rong War can be contextualized as a skirmish in the centuries-long struggle between Beijing and Lhasa to agree on the nature of their relationship. The matter of their mutual border was a topic of much dispute. By the second half of the nineteenth century the transformation was well under way of the Qing empire from a traditional empire – with its imperial capital surrounded by concentric rings of territory in ever lessening degrees of integration – to a modern nation-state. Part of this process was the fixing of the borders. With a set border all territories and people on the inside were reconceived as being equal subjects of a unified state.³³³ As several scholars have pointed out, maps were key weapons in the process. They were a tool both to defend claims of internal cohesion and to repel foreign pressures. Maps, as Perdue put it, “control people, not just land.”³³⁴ With the drawing of the fixed borders

a different sect in the 1860s. Two Dge lugs pa nunneries, Dga' ldan jo mo dgon and Kun bzang chos gling, were established in Dkar mdzes in the post-war period, but what relation those have to the possible repression of Rnying ma institutions is not evident. There are no Dge lugs pa monasteries in Nyag rong or Dpal yul counties ('Jigs med bzang spyod et. al., 1995).

³³² As told by Tashi Tsering 1985.

³³³ As with other border regions, in Khams this meant the policy of *gaitu guiliu* 改土归流. This was a process by which the *tusi/tuguan* were abolished and replaced with officials appointed by the central government. See Herman 1997. The campaigns of the infamous Manchu general Zhao Erfeng 赵尔丰, an instance of the policy being forcibly put in place, have been well researched. See especially 1976, Sperling, Kolmaš 1968, Li 1947, and the essays in Epstein 2002, which primarily deal with the period in which Khams was forced into the Chinese state.

³³⁴ Perdue 1998, p. 265.

the people both within and without needed to be known, defined, and controlled, prevented from crossing back and forth, and certainly from forging relationships with powers on both sides of the line.³³⁵ A key border territory in the Qing's conflict with Tibet, Khams was at the foreground of the new mapping of the Chinese state. Lhasa did what it could to obstruct the Chinese cartography, but its opposition to China was for Khams just another violent force of geographic division.

Such were conditions in Khams in the decade before 'Jam mgon Kong sprul produced his version of the narrative map. Although he went about his daily routines as much as he could manage, the war years cast a shadow over much of his activity, so much so that regular events took on a dire interpretation, and ordinary protection rites gained added urgency.³³⁶ Despite the consuming nature of the war in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's life, no definition of "Rimay" that I

³³⁵ Laura Hostetler examined the great technological changes in China brought about by this cartographic and ethnographic need in her *Qing Colonial Enterprise*. Her case study was the process by which the peoples of Guizhou were charted and described into the empire. A useful comparison to her work is Thongchai Winichakul's *Siam Mapped*. Much like the Qing, the modern nation-state of Thailand transformed itself from the regionally powerful Siam kingdom which had numerous dependant peoples into a modern nation state with fixed and defended borders. Both the Qing and Siam faced external threats, and both lost territory to European colonists, but both preserved independent statehood by attending to their boundaries and organizing their people. Where Hostetler outlines the Qing construction of "minority nationalities" as part of their nation-building program, Thongchai describes the creation of a national Thai identity that united all ethnicities within the national boundary. The key word there being "within" – groups that straddled the border were divided, those parts in Thai territory becoming Thai first and foremost. In Thongchai's Thailand, people who previously paid tribute to multiple parties not only had to choose which side of the new international border to reside on and submit to a new form of sovereign, but also had to surrender themselves to a new national ethnic identity. See Hostetler 2001 and Thongchai 1994.

³³⁶ The building of a Kīla hall in which to conduct yearly rites for the protection of the Karma bka' brgyud teachings might be seen as an indication of the anxiety experienced at Dpal spung on the eve of Mgon po rnam rgyal's conquest of Sde dge. It seems that in the sixth month of the water dog year (c. July, 1862), Mchog gyur gling pa had announced that great harm would come to the Buddhist teachings if a yearly Vajrakīla *sgrub chen* ritual was not reestablished at the Kīla hall at Dpal spung. These rites had been initially called for by the great Kaḥ thog revitalizer Rig 'dzin tshe dbang nor bu (1698-1785) as a means to prevent the decay of the new Dpal spungs monastery – a fate that befell the earlier Sa skya and 'Bri gung bka' brgyud monasteries that had occupied the site – and to guard against the wrath of the ghosts of men who had died in violent circumstances. Ta'i si tu VIII Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699-1774) had accordingly built a Kīla hall and installed a lama, but the Kīla *sgrub chen* had been performed only one time. Now, from Mchog gling's prophetic guides and pure visions, the admonition was again repeated: were they not to reestablish the rites "there would be great harm to the Karma bka' brgyud teachings, and thus there was no way around instituting yearly Kīla *sgrub chen* in the hall" (*kar bstan la gegs che bas phur sgrub lo bstar ma tshugs thabs med*). Notice that Kong sprul writes "the Karma bka' brgyud teachings" rather than simply "the Buddhist teachings" (Kong sprul A, ff. 102a-102b).

have yet come across connects the war to the “movement.” Only Karma phun tshogs finds in the violence of the war a seed of the so-called “*ris med* movement,” but he fails to elaborate, citing as Smith as his only source for the statement,³³⁷ even though Smith himself makes no such connection. The war did not inspire 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's nonsectarian outlook so much as inspire him to make use of his astounding intra-sectarian abilities to resist the real enemy of the day – not “sectarianism,” but Lhasa and its dominant Dge lugs pa order. For while 'Jam mgon Kong sprul filled in the many blank spaces on Mchog gyur gling pa's map with sites associated with the Rnying ma, Bka' brgyud, Sa skya and Bon traditions, he excluded the Dge lugs, who, through their association with the Tibetans, were rendered suspect and thus were denied a place on the new map of Khams. We now turn to that map.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul's narrative map united Khams geographically and culturally in a way that provided the means to resist, if only symbolically, not only the Tibetan occupation, but Qing cartography. The map established an indigenous cartographic reality to what had before been the mere idea of a place. Fragmented, borderless, the region was empty space waiting for a force to come and define it. The sole attempt at political unification – the bloody and destructive Nyag rong War, had failed. The Tibetans exploited Khams pa political fragmentation to further absorb its land into a nascent Tibetan state. In the wake of the war and at the height of the Tibetan occupation, with political unification not an option, geographic unification was still possible via the network of religious sites set forth by Mchog gyur gling pa a decade earlier. Thus 'Jam mgon Kong sprul drew his own narrative map. It might not hold back armies or administrators, but it would preserve a sense of place.

To distinguish it from Tibet, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's narrative map overtly excluded the Dge lugs from the geographical representation of Khams. As we saw in Chapter One, Mchog gyur gling pa's text left numerous slots open for later identification, and it was by addressing

³³⁷ Karma phun tshogs 2004, p. 50.

these lacuna that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul filled in the map of Khams, if somewhat cautiously.³³⁸ The project was sparked no doubt by the desire to add his newly opened hermitage site,³³⁹ but the implications extended far beyond that single spot. One of the primary pieces of information that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul adds to the list is the name of the men who are associated with the sites, such as who opened them and who revealed treasure there. He provides this information for all but ten of the sites. Numerous sites share multi-sectarian heritage, combinations of Rnying ma, Bka' brgyud, Sa skya, Gcod, Phag mo gru, and Bon, though many sites are associated with one sect alone. The text provides some of the great names of the Rnying ma, Bka' brgyud, and Sa skya traditions in Khams and Tibetan Buddhism in general; not a single site is associated with a Dge lugs pa master or institution.³⁴⁰

'Jam mgon Kong sprul made use of Mchog gyur gling pa's symbolic landscape of religious sites, a geography of Khams by which he could draw together the region's borders and center, linking together disparate locations in a way as to map them into a cohesive whole. His

³³⁸ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul located all but one of the remaining fourteen open spaces on Mchog gling's list. These were sites #4, #12, #16, #18, #20, #26, #27, #28, #29, #30, #33, #36, #40, and #41. Of the single unidentified site (#33), which Mchog gyur gling pa named *Spo ne shel mdung*, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul writes that "the one that consolidates the sacred sites of the buddha mind, *Spo ne mdung*, needs further investigation" (*thugs kyi gnas 'dus pa spo ne mdung slar dpyad*; Kong sprul D, p. 137); the manuscript version preserves the full name given by Mchog gling: *Spo ne shel mdung*. Other than Rdzong shod he definitively named only four additional places of the fourteen open sites (#4, #20, #26 and #27). He admits to uncertainty with the remaining nine, giving a single possible identification for four sites (#16, #28, #29, #30), and multiple possible sites for a further four (#12, #18, #36, #41). His caution is evident in his repeated use of the phrase "further analysis is necessary" (*dpyad dgos*, or *slar dpyad*) in his comments for five of these nine slots (#12, #18, #28, #30, #41). Nevertheless, in making provisional identifications, he managed to fill in the map.

³³⁹ On Mchog gyur gling pa's narrative map site #20, the attribute-aspect of the buddha attribute is so enigmatic as to be downright undecipherable, and it certainly provides no name or identifying characteristics. See Appendix Two. The line in question reads: *Yon tan sku yi yon tan dag la 'dus / brda thim/* (Mchog gling B, p. 114). The text's obscurity enabled 'Jam mgon Kong sprul to write that the attribute-aspect of the buddha attribute was none other than Rdzong shod bde gshegs 'dus pa'i pho brang.

³⁴⁰ The list includes Yon dge sprul sku Gnam chos Mi 'gyur rdo rje (1645-1667), Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje (b. 1655) *Spo bo gter ston Bdud 'dul rdo rje* (1615-1672) and Mchog gyur gling pa, of the Rnying ma; Gam po pa Dwags po lha rjes (1079-1153), Karma pa I Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110-1193), Karma pa II Karma Pakši (1205-1283), Karma pa III, Rang 'byung rdo rje (1285-1339), Rma se rtogs ldan blo gros rin chen (b. 1386) 'Bri gung chung tshang I Rig 'dzin chos kyi grags pa (1595-1659), Karma chags med (1613-1678) of the Bka' brgyud; Thang stong rgyal po (1361-1485) and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po of the Sa skya; and Kun grol grags pa (b. 1700) of the Bon, to name only the most famous. Some sites, it should be pointed out, are important due to events that occurred prior to the development of the sectarian divisions. These are #13, #14, and #38.

geography was produced within an intellectual framework of his eclectic outlook, and within an historical context of the geopolitical crisis in Khams wrought by the Nyag rong War and the competition between China and Tibet for supremacy in Khams. It was likewise produced in a politico-religious context in which non-Dge lugs pa orders were drawn together to protect themselves from Dge lugs chauvinism.

The map in this way brilliantly draws the many sites together while simultaneously preserving their individual integrity. Like Mchog gyur gling pa's version, it draws together disparate sites across Khams to produce a united and coherent whole. But where Mchog gyur gling pa's unified landscape was largely placed in service of his authority and the legitimation of his treasures, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's territorial creation can be seen to have benefited Khams itself: its institutions, its people, its culture. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's map gave Khams a geographic representation in an era when it was losing territorial cohesion, soon to be absorbed by a power that itself would be lost on a global map not many decades later. It would be a fine expression of a universalist ideal save for the absence of the Dge lugs. It is in this that we see that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was a complicated mouthpiece for a "Rimay" that boundlessly embraced all things, and a man who was capable of responding to real events with whatever means he had available.

V. Multiple vectors drawn together

Our starting point in the discussion of the origin and development of the "*ris med* movement" was Gene Smith's groundbreaking essays on 'Ju Mi pham and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, first published over thirty-five years ago. We saw how later authors mined Smith's many illuminating remarks to gradually grind a opaque lens through which events of the nineteenth century in Khams were viewed. Appealing aspects of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's career mentioned by Smith, as well as other random matters he raised, were cobbled into a conceptual grid that

grew increasingly larger and eventually came to dominate discussions of the period and its luminaries. Reified, “Rimay” obscured events and made investigation difficult, for it has come to be the case that anything said to have occurred in all of Tibet, much less Khams, in the second half of the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth, is part of the “Rimay” – unless, that is, it was in reaction to or conflict with it.

As noted above, Smith rightly pointed out that the Nyag rong War brought a heightened conflict between the Dge lugs pa and the other religious schools, mainly because the Lhasa army that sought conquest in Khams was loyal to that order. Sectarianism, in this case, was inarguably a religious means for political struggle, and, I argued, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's nonsectarian ideal was made a weapon of resistance in that conflict. To conclude this chapter one work central to the Western establishment of the “Rimay” deserves a look. It is a book remarkable for its success in drawing together the innumerable strands of “Rimay” definition that grew out of Smith's essays. This is Geoffrey Samuel's 1993 *Civilized Shamans*.

The book and its premise are well known in Tibetan Studies as being one of the few examples of a comprehensive historical survey of Tibetan religions. It is an enormous compendium of scholarship through to the date of its publication, from which it drew a unifying theory to explain Tibetan history and culture. At the core of the book is the supposition that Tibetan religion is characterized by a pair of opposites: clerics and elite institutions on the one side, and what Samuel called “shamans” – the practitioners of magic such as the village lama, the wandering yogin, or the solitary hermit on the other. These later types banded together in the nineteenth century under the banner of the “Rimed” movement. For Samuel, the history of Tibetan Buddhism was the history of the struggle between these two extremities of religious society. Samuel found in Tibetan history many sources for the “shamanic” element – pre-Buddhist ritual, the Indian Siddha tradition and so forth. All

religious conflict was interpreted in this light – the banning of certain tantric practices, the suppression of the Bon and the Rnying ma, and the like.

As was pointed out by Lopez soon after the book appeared, Samuel's opposing ends of Tibetan religion are not unlike those found in Waddell's 1895 *The Religions of Tibet or Lamaism*, in which the "lama" is not a Buddhist at all, but a worshipper of demons and practitioner of magic.³⁴¹ Now, in Samuel, the village lama or the magician are still not Buddhists (being "shamans") but at least now the category is a positive one. By asserting such a fundamental opposition between the "cleric" and the "shaman," what Samuel's narrative does is render the "Rimed" inevitable. It was only a matter of time before the Dge lugs pa clerics would drive the other sects together to forge a union in opposition to it, and this is how Samuel defines "Rimed." Samuel's dualism between "cleric" and "shaman" might further be compared to Zangpo's "authentic" and "inauthentic" religion, and its distortion of the role played by monasteries and other normalizing institutions in religion. They both seem to belong to a Western Protestant suspicion of "organized religion" that seems unfairly projected onto Tibet.

Filling out the details of "Rimed" Samuel stuffs in every piece of every definition that had been attempted up to that point. His section "T8c," ("The Nyingma Revival and the Rimed Movement") in Chapter 27 ("Tibet: Gelugpa Power and Rimed Synthesis") is literally a laundry list of attributes, using Smith's essay on 'Jam mgon Kong sprul as its basis but absorbing everything that had been said about "Rimed" after Smith. First, we have a brief discussion of 'Jig med gling pa, who "laid the foundation of the Rimed movement," a claim we heard from Kawamura and Germano. And one of the "Rimed" legacies of 'Jigs med gling pa, Samuel claims, was his emphasis on practice over monastic scholarship, recalling Trungpa and those, like Ngawang Zangpo, who echoed him.

Whether "Rimed" was a "school" or not appears for Samuel to have centered on the issue of whether there was a single doctrinal position embraced by all those labeled members

³⁴¹ Lopez n.d.; Waddell's tome is published nowadays under the title *Tibetan Buddhism*.

of the movement. Starting with the supposition that something called the “Rimed” existed, and that both ’Jam mgon Kong sprul and ’Ju Mi pham were prominent leaders, Samuel found himself in a bit of a bind with the issue of *gzhan stong*. Because his sources were of two minds,³⁴² he concluded that “Rimed was not a school with a definite doctrinal position,” for while ’Jam mgon Kong sprul “was a strong proponent of the Jonangpa *shentong* theory,” ’Ju Mi pham, “an important Nyingmapa scholar and Rimed lama of the next generation” rejected it. The sentence is ambiguous – is it a school that has no doctrinal position, or is it not a school at all for not having one? The answer would seem to come later on in the same paragraph: “Rimed today does not constitute an organized monastic order with its own *gompa*. The lamas who carry the Rimed tradition today continue to come from the Sakyapa, Nyingmapa, and Kagyüdpä *gompa*, and to continue the specific lineages and practices of their own *gompa* as well as the general Rimed practices.”³⁴³ Yet, this is no answer at all. We are told only that “Rimed” is not a monastic order. That is hardly news – none of Samuel’s sources had anything to do with the ordination tradition of the alleged participants in the “Rimay.” Did Samuel intend to assert that “Rimed” was not a philosophical school tied to one religious institutional tradition alone, but rather something that was embraced by all by the Dge lugs? This might hold if we understood the four main sects of Tibetan Buddhism as monolithic entities, and denied the existence of the multiple voices – many of which were mutually contradictory – within a given sect. If the “Rimed synthesis” stood and continued to stand in opposition to the “Gelugpa,” what of those Rnying ma, Sa skyä and Bka’ brgyud lamas who rejected the *gzhan stong*, the project’s supposed glue?

Despite the allusion to Trungpa’s anti-intellectual “practice,” Samuel tells us that “Rimed involved a renewal of the academic and intellectual tradition within the non-Gelugpa schools,” a statement he appears to have based not on previous scholars, but on his own

³⁴² See the published debate between Pettit (1999a) and Williams (1999) on the topic of ’Ju Mi pham’s *gzhan stong* position.

³⁴³ Samuel 1993, pp. 537-538.

observation that many leaders of the “Rimed” were said to be emanations of Mañjuśrī, including, curiously, Mchog gyur gling pa. Mchog gyur gling pa might have been a great lama and a prolific revealer of treasure, but he was no scholar. Asserting that the “Gelugpa academic tradition” had by the nineteenth century become “a fairly arid business” Samuel explained that the “Rimed” lamas bypassed centuries of controversy by returning to “Indian originals.” Samuel takes these claims, citing only Smith but surely basing his statement on later scholars, without a second thought. One might wonder how anyone could present a return to fundamentals and an erasure of controversy as a means for fermenting intellectual exploration, but Samuel does not raise the question.

Yet lest we jump to the conclusion that “Rimed” lamas were clerical, and so not in opposition to the “Gelugpa,” Samuel next brought in evidence of a “strongly popular side.” ’Ju Mi pham’s inclusion in the “Rimed” provided Samuel the vehicle to bring in the Ge sar myth, on which ’Ju Mi pham wrote extensively. Ge sar, for Samuel, is a “trickster-shaman figure with many similarities to Padmasambhava,” and his embrace by the “Rimed” was further evidence for Samuel of “the extent to which their position was open to the shamanic aspects of Tibetan religion and society.” “Rimed” lamas were likewise more apt to be treasure revealers, whose visionary experiences made them eminently eligible for entry to the ranks of the shaman. The fact that many of them were married was for Samuel yet more proof of their being in contradistinction to the clerics. And if some of them happened to be celibate monastics, well, this was simply an expression of “the essence of the Rimed teaching,” which was to “not reject on path (e.g., monasticism) in favor of another (such as that of the lay yogin).”³⁴⁴ “Rimed,” as the chapter continues, is expanding exponentially, and any internal contradiction is explained away by means of the term itself. It is a curiously tautological history.

And still we are not yet finished. There remains the aspect of the “Rimed” that led to the collections. A “central aspect of Rimed,” Samuel explained, “was the bringing together and

³⁴⁴ Samuel 1993, pp. 540-541.

transmitting of the numerous diverse traditions of Tantric yogic practice that had developed in Tibetan over the preceding ten centuries.” Hence ’Jam mgon Kong sprul’s five treasuries and Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po’s *Sgrub thabs kun btus*. And yet it would appear that these collections of equally valid teachings, in the hands of the shamanic “Rimed” lamas, were no longer devoted to Buddhist enlightenment: they were that which “might help to provoke the central insight of the shamanic vision.” In the conflict between the cleric and the shaman Samuel’s shaman might be the good guy, but like in Waddell, whose model of Tibetan Buddhism Samuel inverted, the shaman is still not a Buddhist. From here the obvious segue into the involvement in the “Rimed” of the “Bönpo,” who are for Samuel the Tibetan *ur shaman*, and we are reminded that ’Jam mgon Kong sprul came from a Bon background, and that Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po was “particularly open” to the Bon.

It would seem that according to Samuel there was nothing that the “Rimed” leaders were not open to. “Rimed” was “clerical” and “shamanic”; it encompassed practice and scholarship; it embarked on contemporary innovation alongside a return to Indian Buddhist fundamentals; it embraced any teaching that produced a “shamanic vision”; its members were monks and laymen alike; and came from all backgrounds save one: the “Gelugpa.” Ultimately it would appear that Samuel’s “Rimed” has one definitive characteristic alone – it was not “Gelugpa.” This despite the fact that Samuel’s definition of “Rimed” embodied all the characteristics of the Dge lugs (as well as their opposites). Samuel’s “Rimed” not only erases the differences between the “non-Gelugpa” traditions, but also subsumed all activities into the singular category of “Rimed.” Whitewashing it all with the same wide brush, he denied the possibility of any shade of grey amongst them. When faced with conflicting accounts of the embrace by the “Rimed” of *gzhan stong* – some did, some did not – Samuel hedges and decides it was not a “school” but a tradition that flowed through different “*gompa*,” by which Samuel means religious institution. The distinction is lost, however, once those different sects are

submerged in a singular “Rimed.” In being all-pervasive, “Rimed” becomes something that erases everything.

Though Samuel might be the most complete example of this phenomenon, any use of the term “Rimay movement” points in that direction. Samuel’s characterization of a “Rimed” that is in opposition to a “Gelugpa” was something he found not in history or through textual analysis, but by combing through Western publications for material that would support his grand theory of Tibetan religion. “Rimed” existed for Samuel because it had to, so that his “clerical” and “shamanic” dyad would function. Samuel’s work is not unique in this. The Western substantiation of Tibetan “sects” as non-mutually pervading entities created an inevitability for the nonsectarian “movement.” Sectarianism, both Tibetans and their Western interpreters agree upon, is an unappealing and undesirable phenomenon. Tibetans dealt with the reality of institutional and doctrinal conflict with the advocacy of a nonsectarian ideal. The scourge of sectarianism – those partisan and dismissive lamas who limited their view – was a Tibetan a rhetorical move that came to exist in Western scholarship as an unexamined aspect of Tibetan history. Naturally, the oft-mentioned *ris med* ideal underwent a similar process, becoming a counterbalancing historical movement. Tibetan literature is rife with condemnation of sectarianism and the praise of nonsectarianism. But the full picture of the nature of those conflicts, and of absence of conflict – and its opposite, a genuine ecumenical exchange – has yet to be drawn. And the Western categories by which Tibetan history and religion has been interpreted have yet to be adequately debated. My intention with this chapter was to begin to do so.

Logically, if Samuel’s “Rimed” is unsupported in Tibetan literature and history, his opposite construct “Gelugpa” is as well. And yet, what then of the real conflict in nineteenth century between the Dge lugs Tibetans and the people of Khams. If we set aside overly simplistic scholastic reifications such as Samuel’s, and take up the challenge Smith’s essays

posed three decades ago to look seriously at the events of Khams in the nineteenth century, the matter of Khams pa resistance to Tibetan imperialism comes to the fore. Although I will not call this “Rimay,” I do find ’Jam mgon Kong sprul taking up his nonsectarian ideal and wielding it as a weapon to resist the Tibetans. Because the Tibetans appear to have themselves wielded their Dge lugs pa religion as a means of conquest, ’Jam mgon Kong sprul adjusted his ideal to oppose the Dge lugs. This is the key to understanding his narrative map: Khams was geographically represented using religious categories, as a place united in opposition to Tibet, and its landscape was shorn of that one element that would efface the differentiation: the Dge lugs pa.

This chapter has traced the development of the “Rimay movement” from its initial appearance in Smith’s essays on ’Jam mgon Kong sprul and ’Ju Mi pham. “Rimay” caught on at once, an appealing device with which to present Tibetan Buddhism as one desired it to be: tolerant, open, innovative, something that could shake off the weight of institutional religion, and so forth. “Rimay” became a cipher for all that is good, and the opponent of all that is bad in Tibetan religion. The reification of Tibetan sects in Western writing had rendered the insubstantiation of a nonsectarian movement – the counterbalance – inevitable. Once the Tibetan adjective “*ris med*” had been transformed into the English noun “Rimay,” its historical existence became too desirable to question. Elaborate dances were performed to make sure that those who Smith had labeled as belonging to the movement were properly credited for their roles. Less coherently, definitions were produced to include in the movement those subjects raised in Smith’s foundational essays. Save for art and politics, if Smith credited ’Jam mgon Kong sprul with an interest in it, then it was a defining characteristic of “Rimay.” “Rimay,” as we saw in Samuel’s treatment of it, thus became not a means to interpret history but to make it; because “Rimay” existed – whether it was to project a desired image of Tibetan religion or to justify a grand theory – all information was placed in the service of justifying its continued

usage. With apologies to Voltaire, although “Rimay” did not exist, scholars felt the need to invent it.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul's map and its place in the geographic establishment of Khams are not served well by the hermeneutic device known as “Rimay.” With the terms so defined, the map's exclusion of the Dge lugs would surely render its author “sectarian,” an unfair judgment by any standard. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul used the format of the narrative map to set forth a conception of Khams that was religiously and geographically bound together in the face of a Tibetan threat. The Tibetans were Dge lugs pa, thus the map was not. This was not a “Rimed” as Samuel would have it, in which the Dge lugs by virtue of being Dge lugs were opposed; it was Khams in opposition to Tibet. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's narrative map was written at a time when Universalist ideals were perhaps not so easily put into practice, and certain segments could not be drawn in. Sectarianism has its place in Tibetan society – in the organization and preservation of lineage, of distinct teaching methods and of practices; to dismiss these things as corrupt or unauthentic is to make a rather intolerant, and historically inaccurate, judgment. If everything 'Jam mgon Kong sprul did was “Rimay” then this remarkable geographic achievement is lost to history.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul's narrative map is in many ways a direct opposite of Mchog gyur gling pa's. Where Mchog gyur gling pa left Khams open, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul closed it; where Mchog gyur gling pa's map was still of a fantastical place of largely unrevealed potential and possibility, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul completed the identification of the center and borders, closing the many doors that Mchog gyur gling pa had opened. Yet both are maps of a coherent place that provided a means to unite the region. Mchog gyur gling pa's did so to legitimate the treasure he had already revealed and those that he had yet to draw forth, linking the many sites of religious importance together to empower the region as a singular place that could testify to his authority. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul turned Mchog gyur gling pa's religious map into

a weapon of defense, landscaping a religious ideal of nonsectarianism – one that was by no means universal – in a way that united the region in the face of an external threat. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul filled in the many lacuna left by Mchog gyur gling pa in a very particular way, excluding from the Khams pa terrain the Dge lugs pa sect, the sole symbolic representation of the enemy that was available to him to use. Thus the two versions of the Twenty-five great sites of Khams are at once utterly different and yet manage to achieve the same goal: the unification of Khams and the assertion of it as a place; one that remains in existence despite having no representation on any contemporary political map of the earth.

Conclusion

In this dissertation I investigated the religious geography known as the “twenty-five great sites of Khams.” With the two versions of the narrative map as my guide, I explored the cultural landscape of nineteenth-century Khams, entering three areas of inquiry important to Tibetan studies: the individual legitimation of authority, the practices and narratives of treasure revelation, and the so-called “Rimay movement” of ’Jam mgon Kong sprul and his collaborators. The geographic representation of Khams around which I organized the dissertation is so close to the surface of the region that a traveler there could scarcely overlook it. Yet a mere handful of references to the system are to be found in Western publications.³⁴⁵ Scholarship has until recently relegated Khams to a mere outpost of the Tibetan center in Lhasa, as though it were a place through which Chinese and Tibetan intermediaries must pass, but that lacked a history of its own. Given that its history has been so neglected, it is not so surprising that the geography of Khams has received scant attention. Geography might not appear to be the most compelling of topics, to paraphrase Foucault, who in essence called it a poor cousin of History,³⁴⁶ but it is in fact a vital area of inquiry, and without its insights much of

³⁴⁵ Some of these are oblique. Huber called attention to the large number of *gnas yig* in Mchog gyur gling pa’s collected works in a footnote and remarked that “The pilgrimage traditions and sacred geography of Eastern Tibet in these texts is an important research priority for Tibetologists” (Huber 1990, p. 152, note 76). Ngawang Zangpo has written extensively about the place of Tsa ’dra on the list, though his analysis is confused and fails to take into account basic historical information. See especially Ngawang Zangpo 1994 and 2001. Gyurme Dorje, in his excellent *Tibet Handbook*, referred to the system in several locations: the “25 important power places of Kham and Amdo,” (Gyurme Dorje 2004, p. 602); the “25 important meditation sites associated with Padmasambhava sites in Kham and Amdo” (p. 443); or “25 Padmasambhava sites in East Tibet” (p. 478). He listed the first thirty of the “great 25 power places” (pp. 403), but never identified the source of the system.

³⁴⁶ Foucault made this point in two separate interviews collected in Foucault 1980. In “The Eye to Power” he remarked that space had long suffered a “certain neglect”; “[s]pace used to be either dismissed as belonging to ‘nature’ – that is, the given, the basic conditions, ‘physical geography,’ in other words a sort

history is obscured. In the same way that people once considered History to be neutral – that facts were recorded free of bias or agendas – scholars continue to overlook the importance of space in the functioning of society and power. Yet the ways in which space is organized and represented both reflects and plays a part in the flow of power in a given society. This is as true in Khams as anywhere else.

The narrative map of Khams provided me with the space to address the above-mentioned issues, and it lays the foundation for further questions. The two versions of the map, I argued, revealed that a single geographical system could be analyzed to reveal very different projects. I showed in Chapter One how the map was used by Mchog gyur gling pa to affirm his legitimacy and transform Khams into a field of his treasure revelations. In Chapter Three I showed how 'Jam mgon Kong sprul later used Mchog gyur gling pa's map to differentiate Khams from Tibet, and to unify it with symbolic religious geography. These are two different projects of two different figures, and I treated them as such; however, my dissertation also reveals how intimately connected the authors of the two versions were. Future research into the nature and significance of the collaboration between Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, and Mchog gyur gling pa will not only shed much needed light onto the process of treasure composition, but will also help to explore the nature and history of intra-sectarian exchanges in Tibetan Buddhism. Treasures, it seems, were frequently found across sectarian divides.

What is repeatedly depicted in my chapters is the importance of the collaboration between Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, and Mchog gyur gling pa. Chapter One, with its singular focus on Mchog gyur gling pa, nevertheless describes how the would-be treasure revealer depended on Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul to

of 'prehistoric' stratum; or else it was conceived as the residential site or field of expansion of people, or a culture, a language or a State" (1980, p. 149). And in the interview titled "Questions on Geography" he commented that due to a "devaluation of space that has prevailed for generations . . . [s]pace was treated as the dead, the fixed, the undialectical, the immobile. Time, on the contrary, was richness, fecundity, life, dialectic" (1980 p. 70).

transform himself from an ordinary monk to a great master of concealed scriptures. I explained that through their association with Mchog gyur gling pa, the two luminaries benefited by having their hermitage sites consecrated. Yet the collaboration went far beyond what my dissertation discusses, and further research is needed to explore the extent and significance of that collaboration. For example, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul composed hundreds of liturgical texts for Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure cycles, both as scribe of revelatory material and as signed author of non-treasure texts. Like Karma pa XIV, who reputedly announced that "during the life of every Karma pa there comes a great treasure revealer to repel obstacles,"³⁴⁷ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, whose own attempts at revelation were abortive at best, seemed to have had the need for a treasure revealer himself. Similarly, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, whom 'Jam mgon Kong sprul named one of the "five kingly treasure revealers,"³⁴⁸ appears to have relied heavily on Mchog gyur gling pa for the dissemination of his own treasure compositions. Several of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's significant treasures are considered to have been co-revealed with Mchog gyur gling pa, including both the *Bar chad kun sel* and the *Rdzogs chen sde gsum*.

The acceptance of the married charismatic mystic Mchog gyur gling pa by the two celibate monastic patriarchs Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, is in fact not unprecedented. In his narrative map 'Jam mgon Kong sprul made repeated reference to Karma Chags med, Bdud 'dul rdo rje, and Nams mkha' Mi 'gyur rdo rje. This triumvirate of monastics and mystics resembles closely that of the "Mkhyen Kong Mchog sde gsum" active two centuries later. Karma Chags med (1613-1678) was a prolific scholar in the Karma Bka' brgyud and Rnying ma traditions. His colleague Bdud 'dul rdo rje (1615-1672) was an active and sought after treasure revealer who seemed to have tremendous difficulty in establishing his revelations – many titles are known, but all but a few vanished back into that transitional space where the

³⁴⁷ *Karma pa sku phreng rer bar chad zlog pa'i gter chen re byon* (Anonymous A, p. 353). See Chapter One, page 46.

³⁴⁸ *Gter ston rgyal po lnga*. They first four are: Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192), Guru Chos dbang (1212-1273), Rdo rje gling pa (1346-1405), and Padma gling pa (1445-1521).

ḍākinī roam.³⁴⁹ Together they cultivated the revelatory activity of the beguiling Mi 'gyur rdo rje (1645-1667), a man whose revelations were as extensive as his life was short. One wonders how much, if any, of the teenage Mi 'gyur rdo rje's discoveries would exist without the support – without the collaboration – of his patrons. That every Karma pa has a treasure revealer, that there are multiple instances of great scholars and institutional leaders embracing charismatic mystics, points to the vital role of the treasure revealer in Tibetan society. It also reminds us of the strictures that were imposed upon religious activities by the institutional system, while simultaneously directing us to some of the ways in which they circumnavigated those limitations. Perhaps Mchog gyur gling pa did for 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po what they could not do for themselves.

Collaborations of this sort are further evidence that the dominant image of Tibetan religion as being divided into four Buddhist sects and the non-Buddhist Bon, each jealously guarding its institutional structures and doctrinal lineages, is in need of complication. In Chapter Three I suggested that the hypostatization of Tibetan sectarianism in Western writings rendered the nonsectarian “Rimay” inevitable. But like the “practice lineage” that Trungpa told his students runs throughout Tibetan religion, embraced by all irrespective of sectarian affiliation, it would appear that the desire for treasure revelations – the need to place some compositions into the category of revealed scripture – was something that caused religious hierarchs to cross their sectarian fences and reach out to charismatics; nor can it be relegated to the non-Dge lugs pa traditions, given widespread Dge lugs pa acceptance of particular treasures such as the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* and the *Bka' chems bka' khol ma*. Research would almost certainly produce instances of Dge lugs pa collaborations with a Rnying ma treasure revealer.

I began my research for Chapter Three with the intention of providing a coherent presentation of “Rimay,” working with the hypothesis that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's narrative map was the geographic expression of the movement. Searching through Western writings

³⁴⁹ See Dudjom 1991. pp. 813-817.

and pouring over 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's works, I found that no such coherent presentation was possible, for no "Rimay" existed. Based on that observation, a more nuanced history of the thing that the "Rimay" was allegedly reacting to becomes a desideratum.

The narrative map of the twenty-five great sites of Khams is a foundation for these questions, for as I have emphasized in this dissertation, the act of treasure revelation is a practice that has a decidedly spatial nature. Whatever the origin of the treasure tradition, certainly by the nineteenth century the matter of place became one of central importance. Without attention to place, the narratives of treasure revelation are merely fantastical, shorn of real-world concerns of the revealer and his patrons. Attention to place the sectarian differences that are commonly discussed in Tibetan literature is exaggerated to the point of constant conflict. The reality is that in a given Tibetan valley or watershed, institutions of multiple lineages and affiliations not only coexist but also cultivate exchange. Simply locating these places on a map forces one to reevaluate the presumed structural partitions. Collaborations happen on the ground, but if that ground is not known, the activity that took place there cannot be recognized. Without a spatial foundation, the history of Tibet drifts away.

Table One

The Twenty-five Great Sites of Khams

List number	Name	Location (county)
1. Main site of buddha body	Seng ge rdzong	Lho za (Skye rgu mdo)
2. body-aspect of buddha body	Skyi 'byams nyi zla cave	Lho za (Skye rgu mdo)
3. speech-aspect of buddha body	'Og min karma	Nang chen
4. mind-aspect of buddha body	uncertain: Gnyan pa tshang sdar	'Bri valley
5. attribute-aspect of buddha body	Zla nyin kha la rong sgo	Nang chen
6. activity-aspect of buddha body	He brag = Sga stod g.yu brag	Sga stod (Skye rgu mdo)
7. main site of buddha speech	Spu bo dga' ba lung	Padma bkod (Sman gling?)
8. speech-aspect of buddha speech	Padma shel ri	Gter klung (Sde dge)
9. body-aspect of buddha speech	Kha ba dkar po	Bde chen
10. mind-aspect of buddha speech	Na bun rdzong	Nang chen
11. attribute-aspect of buddha speech	Ye rgyal nam mkha' mdzod	Nang chen
12. activity-aspect of buddha speech	Lcags mdud kha ba lung	Hor tre shod (Nyag rong)
13. main site of buddha mind	Dan ti	Rma khog (Ba yan?)
14. mind-aspect of buddha mind	Rdo rje brag	Rma khog (Ba yan?)
15. body-aspect of buddha mind	Mi nyag Lha rtse (near Lha gang)	Mi nyag (Dar rtse mdo)
16. speech-aspect of buddha mind	uncertain: War ti'i brag	Chab mdo
17. attribute-aspect of buddha mind	Mkha' 'gro 'bum rdzong	Lho za (Skye rgu mdo)
18. activity-aspect of buddha mind	uncertain: Spo ne brag dkar	Rngu valley, in Sa ngan (Go 'jo)
19. main site of buddha attribute	Ru dam gangs kyi ra ba	Sde dge
20. attribute-aspect of buddha attribute	Bde gzhegs 'dus pa'i pho brang	Rdzong shod (Dpal yul)
21. body-aspect of buddha attribute	'Bri gnyan ldangs.	Sde dge

22. speech-aspect of buddha attribute	Padma shel phug	Sde dge
23. mind-aspect of buddha attribute	Tsā 'dra rin chen brag	Sde dge
24. activity-aspect of buddha attribute	Seng ge'i za 'gram nam mkha'i brag	'Bri valley (Jo mda')
25. main site of buddha activity	Kaḥ thog rdo rje ldan	Sde dge
26. activity-aspect of buddha activity	Bse rag lcog brag	Sde dge
27. speech-aspect of buddha activity	Gtsang gshis rdo rje gro lod	Tsha sgang smad chu (Cham mdo)
28. body-aspect of buddha activity	uncertain: Phra rag brag	Rdu valley (Nang chen?)
29. mind-aspect of buddha activity	Uncertain: Kaḥ po gangs ra	Li thang
30. attribute-aspect of buddha activity	uncertain: Hyal gyi brag ³⁵⁰	Sga stod (Skye rgu mdo)

KHYAD PAR GNAS BZHI

The four exceptional places

31. Body	Ma yo gangs in Thog; Zo rgyal gwa pa	Nang chen
32. Speech	Spo ne brag	Ri bo che
33. Mind	“Spo ne mdung”	--
34. Attribute	A mountain between Rtsi zla'i bar stabs rgyal ngang ba seng seng and Sang zur mang stabs sgrub	Zur mang (Nang chen)

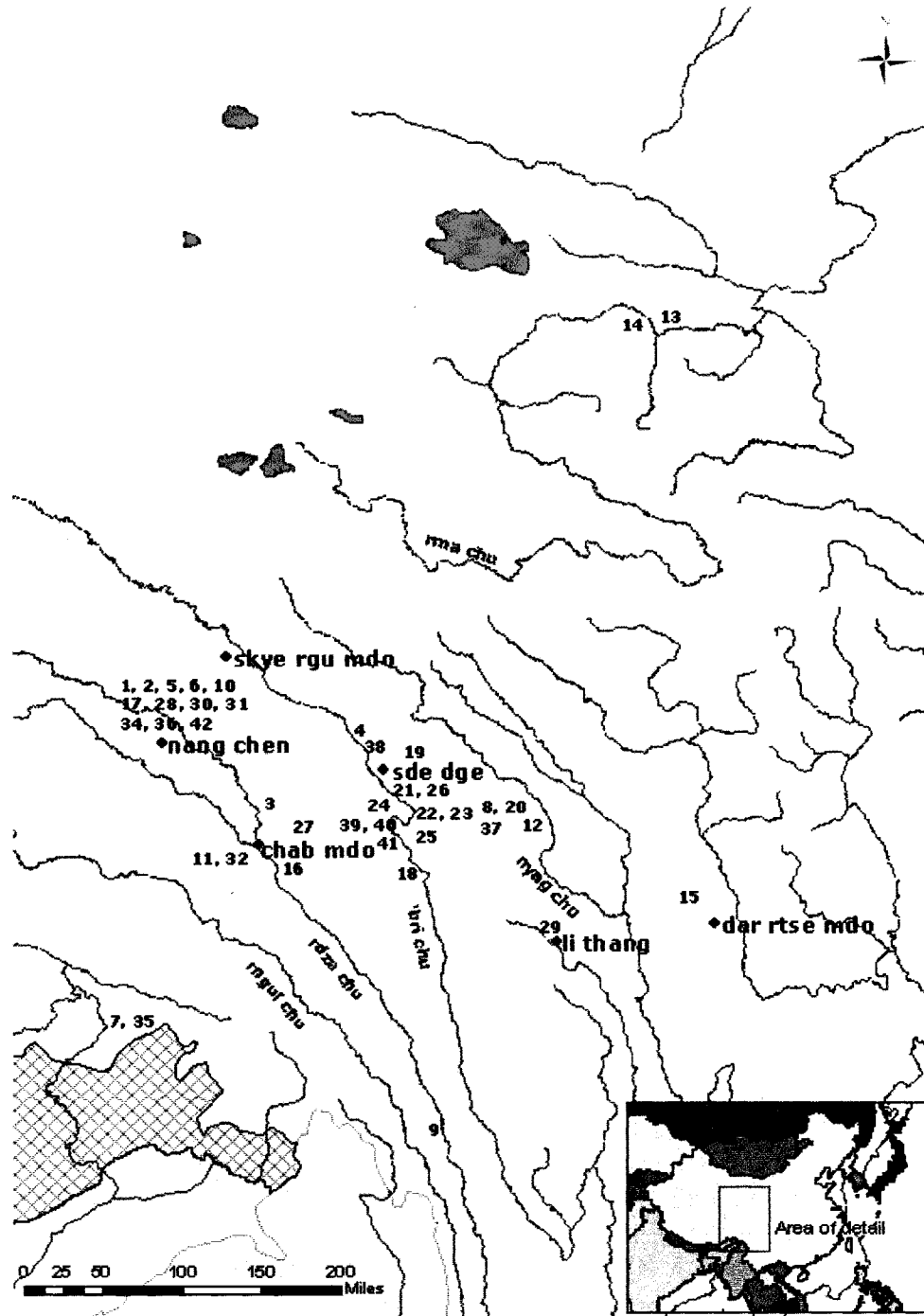
PHRIN LAS 'GRO 'DUL SPRUL PA'I GNAS BRGYAD

The eight sacred sites that tame beings through enlightened activity

35. Zhi ba	Rgyam rdo ti gangs dkar Padma bkod pa'i mtsho gling	Padma bkod (Sman gling?)
36. Rgyas ba	uncertain: Sga stod Jo bo zhal dkar or 'Brognas mched lnga'i nang chen sred spangs sgyogs chen gdong ra.	Sga stod (Skye rgu mdo)
37. Dbang	Ri bo dbang zhu	Gter klung (Dpal yul)
38. Drag po	Seng ge gnam rdzong	Klong thang (Sde dge)
39. Rdo rje rigs	Rmug sangs	'Jo mda
40. Rin chen rigs	Rong brag nag po in the 'Bri	'Jo mda
41. Padma rigs	uncertain: Dkar yag	Rong rgyab (Sde dge)
42. Las rigs	Dbon stod khra spom brag	Nang chen

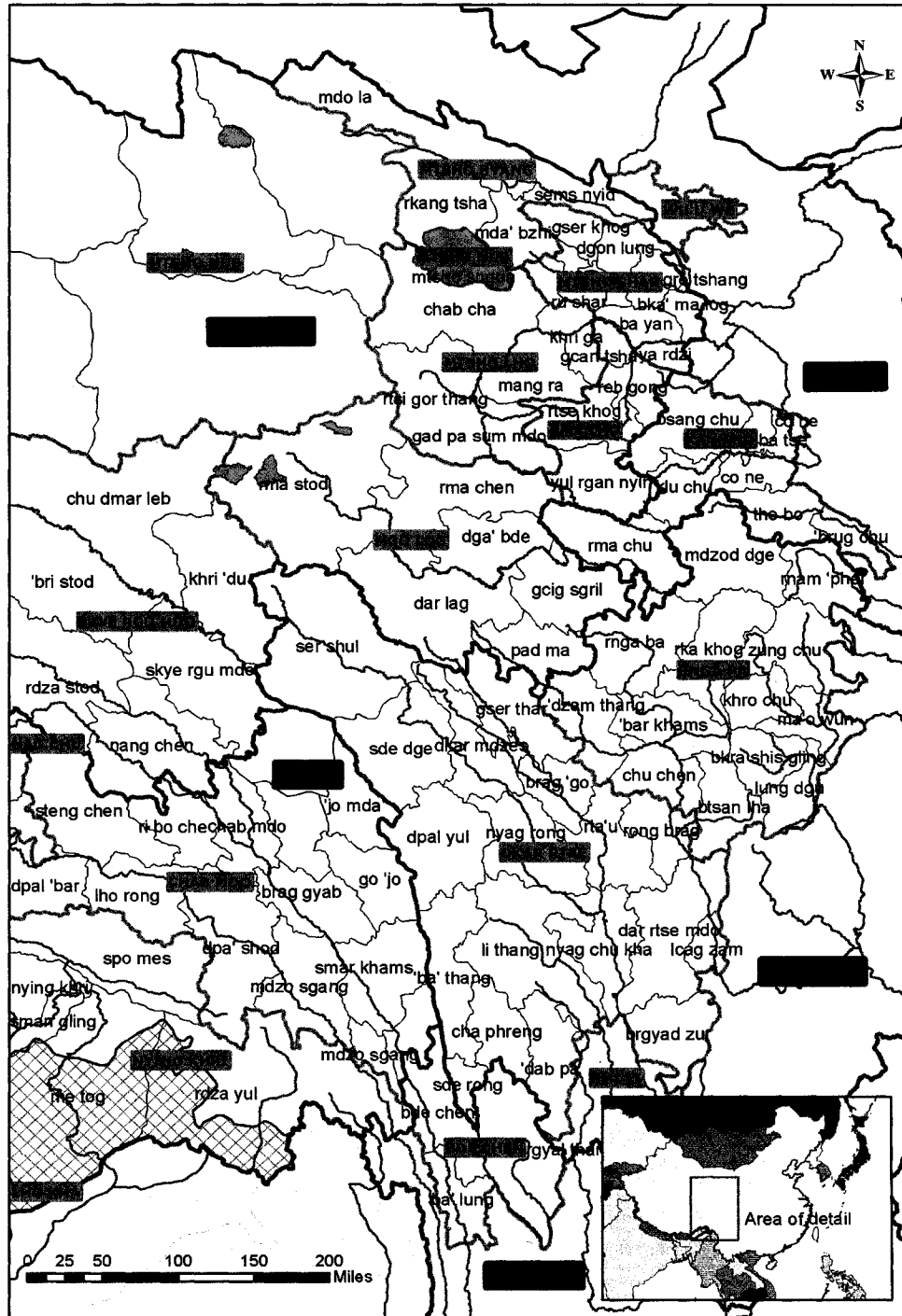
³⁵⁰ Kong sprul seems to conflate this with He brag in Sga stod, which Mkhyen brtse identifies with Sga stod g.yu brag.

Figure One. A Map of the Twenty-five Great Sites of Khams



This map was prepared using materials made available by THDL.

Figure Two. A Contemporary Political Map of Khams



This map was prepared using materials made available by THDL.

Table Two
**Correspondence of Mchog gyur gling pa's Treasure Caskets to
the Twenty-five Great Sites of Khams**

Casket no.	List Site Number and Name of Treasure
casket 1	--
casket 2	--
casket 3	5. Zla nyin Kha la rong sgo
casket 4	10. Na bun rdzong
casket 5	37. Ri bo dbang zhu
casket 6	3. 'Og min Karma
casket 7	11. Nam mkha' mdzod
casket 8	5. Zla nyin Kha la rong sgo
casket 9	22. Padma shel phug
casket 10	22. Padma shel phug
casket 11	19. Dpa' bo dbang chen brag
casket 12	21. 'Bri gnyan ldangs
casket 13	24. Seng chen gnam brag
casket 14	24. Seng brag
casket 15	Brag rin chen 'bar ba
casket 16	Sman rgyal 'dra ba'i brag
casket 17	'Dzi padma shel phug
casket 18	Ke rong rdo rje cong phug
casket 19	17. 'Bum rdzong
casket 20	17. 'Bum rdzong
casket 21	17. 'Bum rdzong
casket 22	3. 'Og min Karma
casket 23	3. Ke la nor bu
casket 24	3. near Ke la nor bu
casket 25	23. Tsā 'dra rin chen brag
casket 26	11. Nam mkha' mdzod
casket 27	11. Nam mkha' mdzod
casket 28	11. Nam mkha' mdzod
casket 29	11. Nam mkha' mdzod
casket 30	Dkar mo stag tshang
casket 31	Dkar mo stag tshang
casket 32	Seng ge g.yu mtsho
casket 33	20. Rdzong shod
casket 34	8. Padma shel ri
casket 35	Khyung tshang brag
casket 36	Khyung tshang brag
casket 37	19. Ru dam gang gi ra ba
casket 38	3. Ke la nor bu

Figure Three. The *thang ka* (recto)

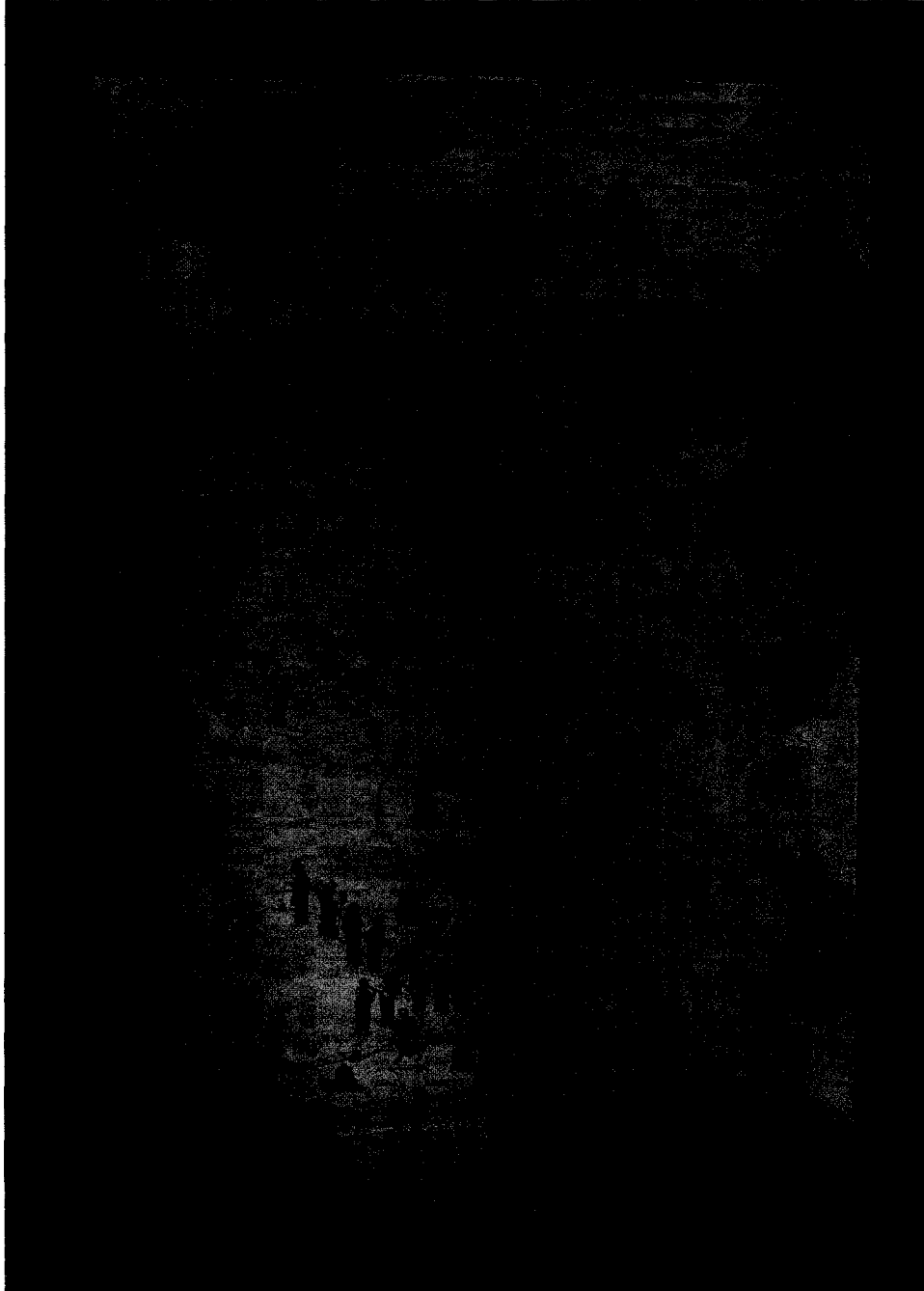


Figure Four: The *thang ka* (verso)

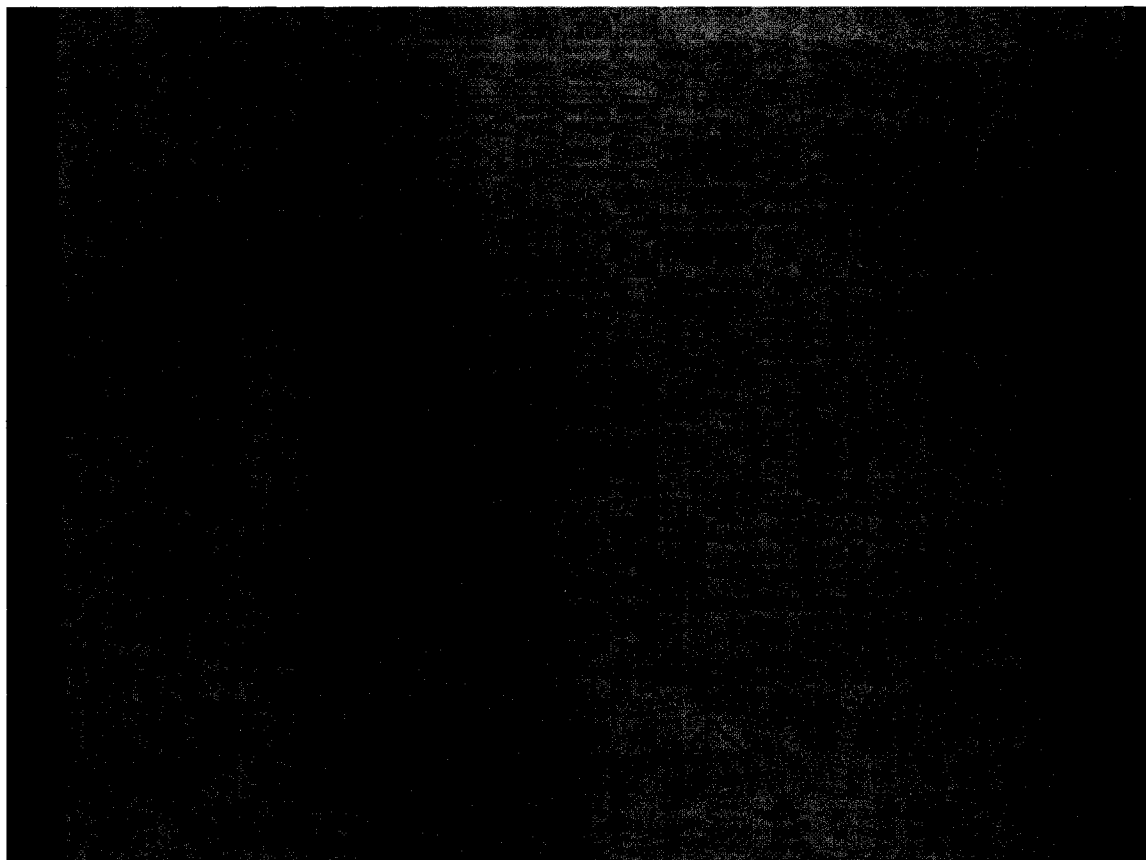
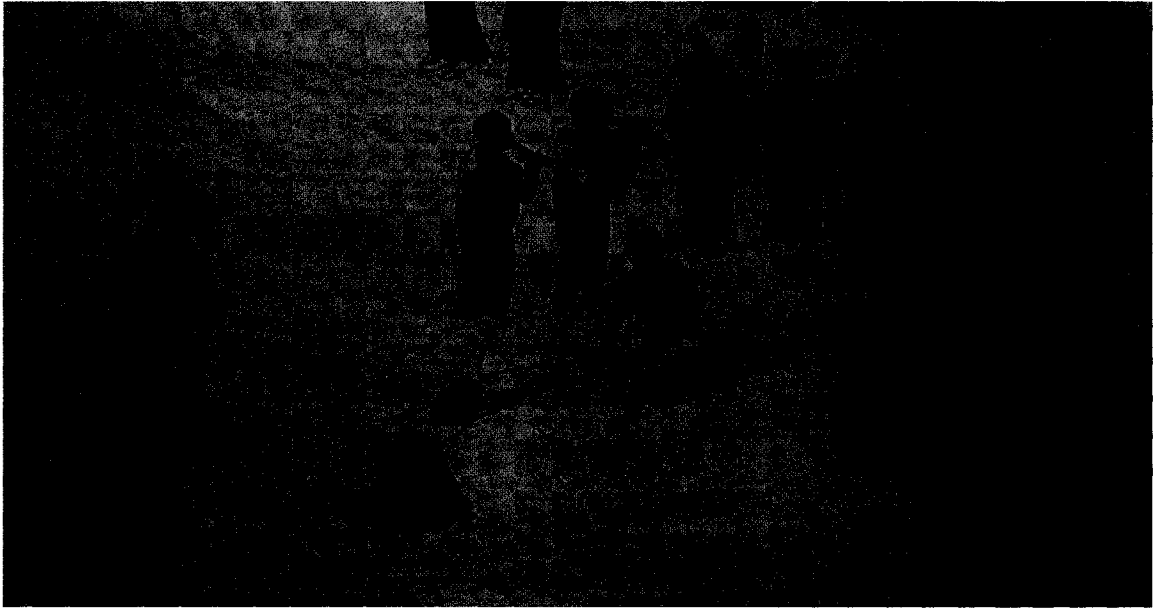


Figure Five. The Semi-extracted Vajra



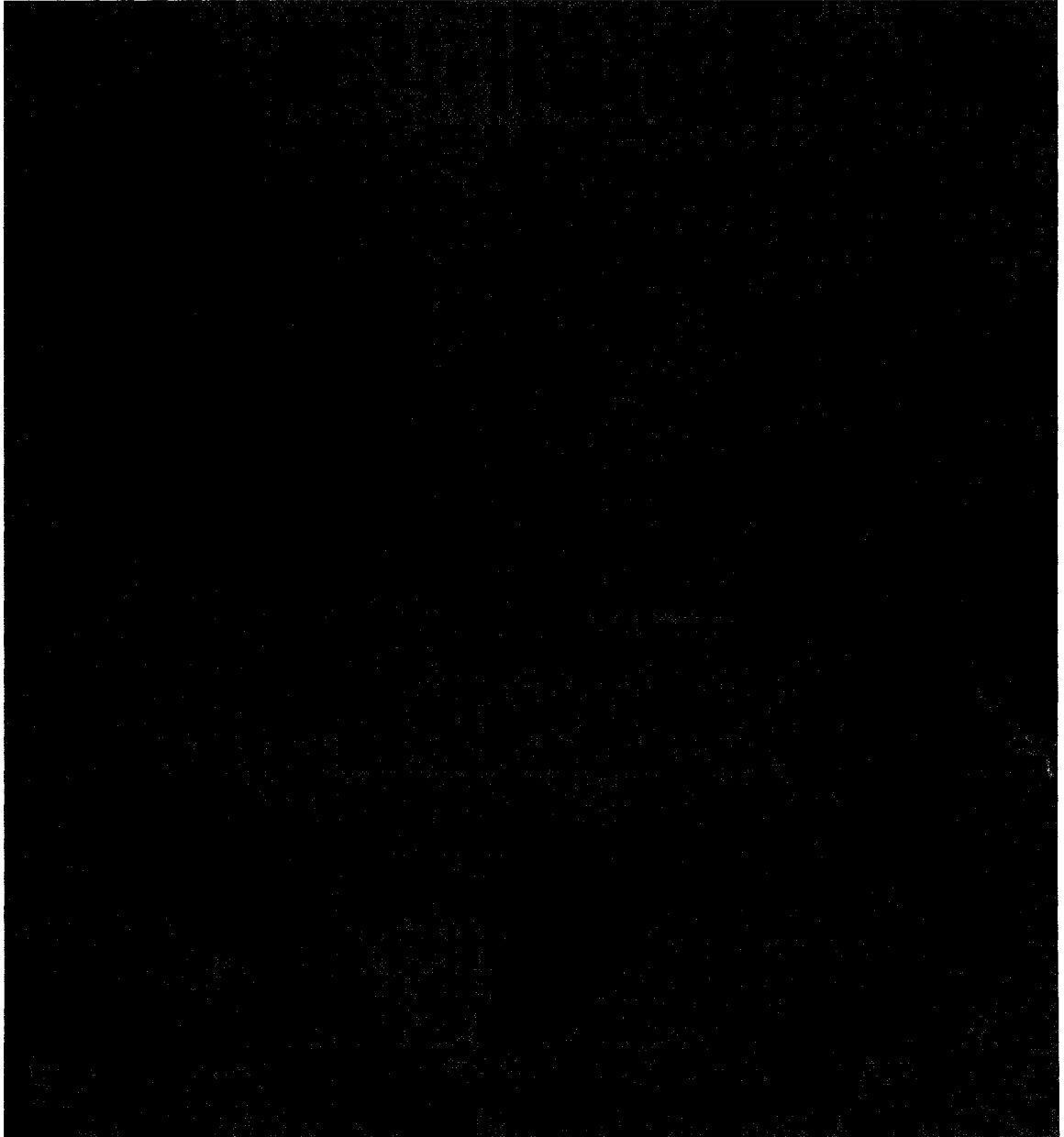
Photograph taken by the author, May 2004

Figure Six. The Ladder



The caption, under the ladder, reads: "Carrying the juniper ladder on the twenty-eight day of the month."

Figure Seven. The Ye shes mtsho rgyal Cave



The caption reads "Mtsho rgyal secret cave."

Figure Eight. The Main Cave, Showing Bde skyid chos sgron's Presence



The captions, starting with the uppermost figure and proceeding clockwise, read: Padma 'od gsal mdo sngags gling pa [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po]; Nam snying byin brlabs Tshe dbang grags pa [Mchog gyur gling pa's son]; O rgyan Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa; Dbyings yum Bde skyid chos sgron [Mchog gyur gling pa's consort]. The cave is titled the Bsam 'grub ke'u tshang.

Figure Nine. The Revelatory Crowd



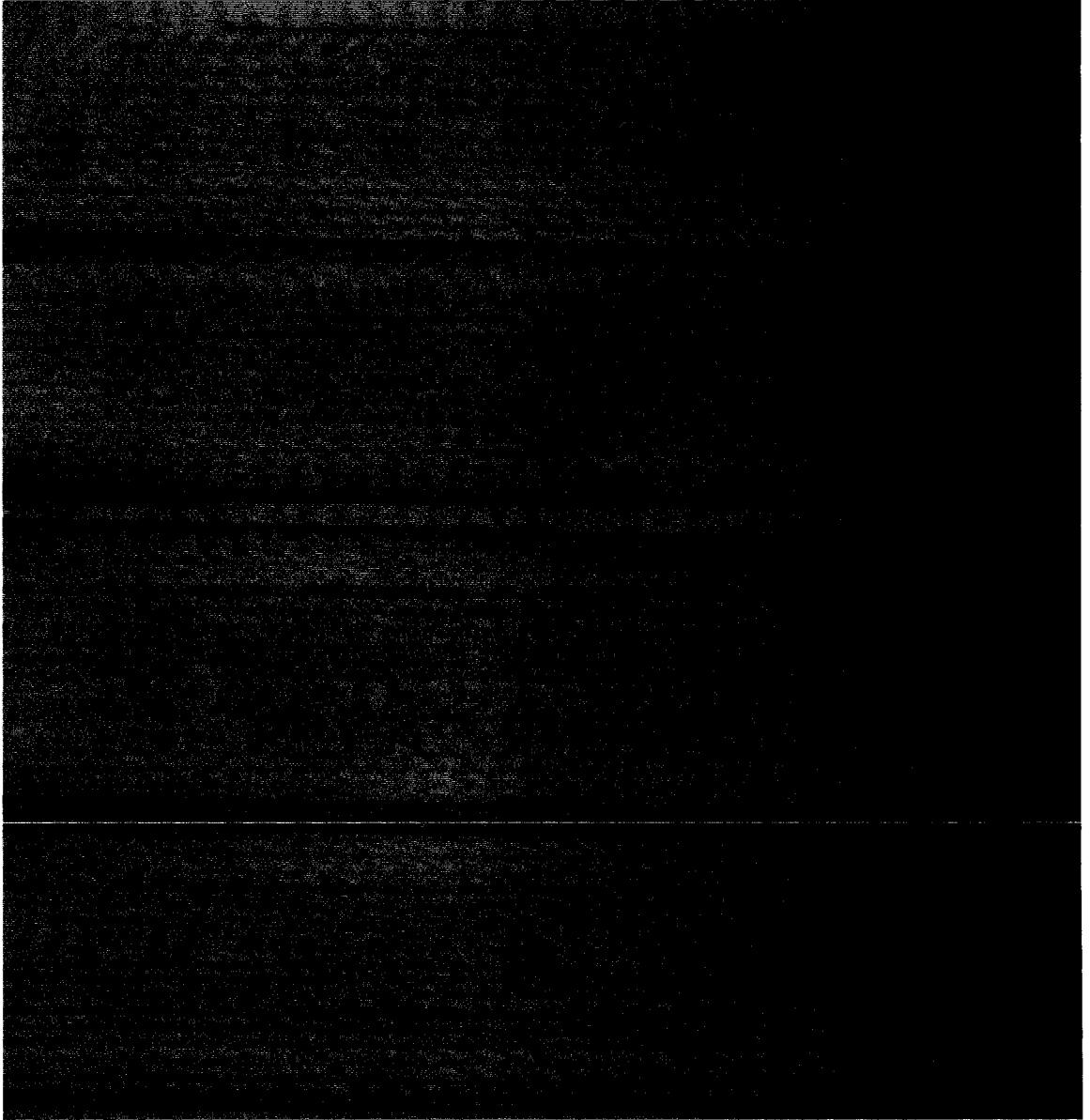
The captions, under the worshipping laypeople read: “On the evening of the ninth day and the tenth day of the month the Precious Emperor of Sde dge and the imperial minister recited prayers and received sight of the treasure.”

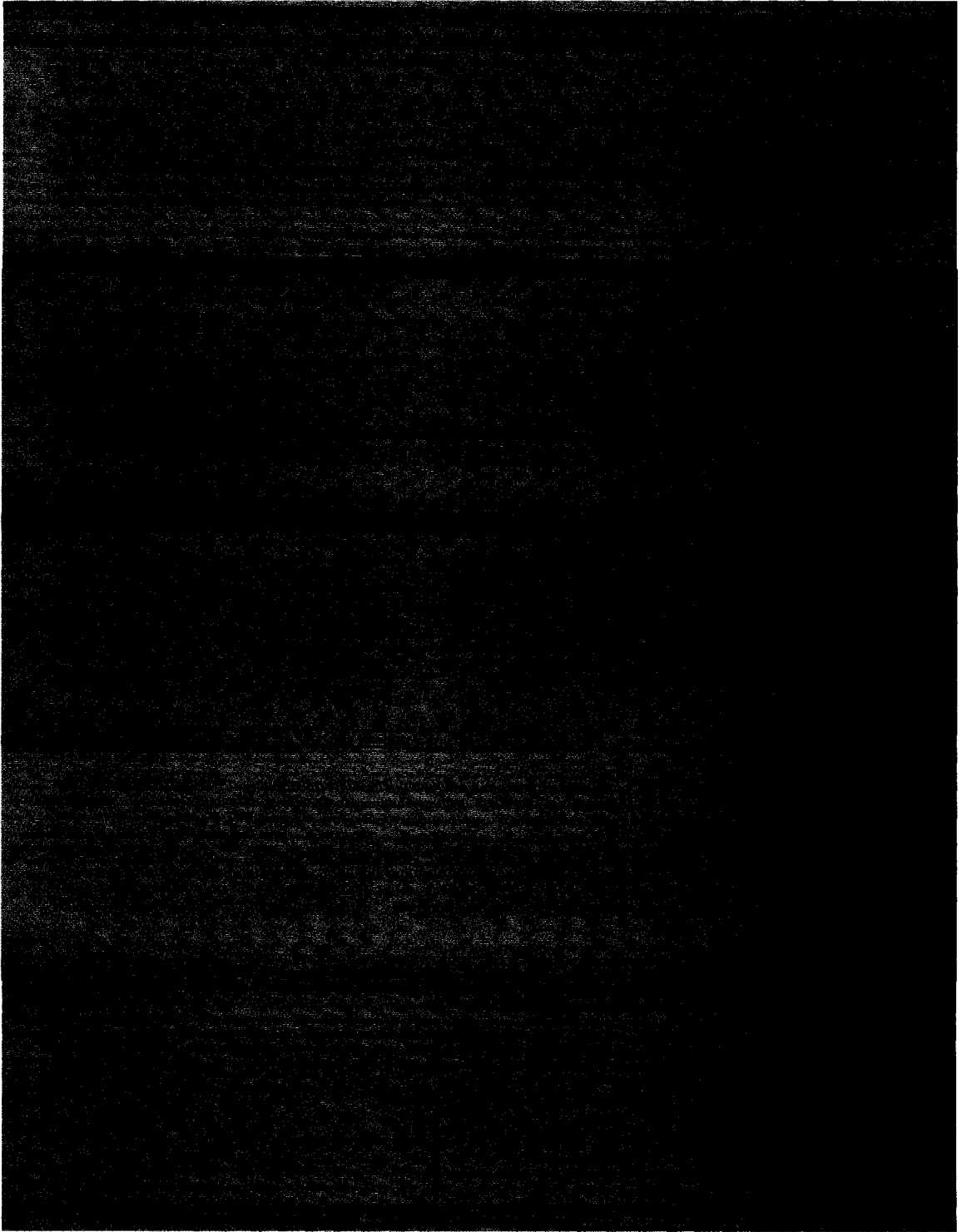
Figure Ten. Seng rgod g.yu mtsho

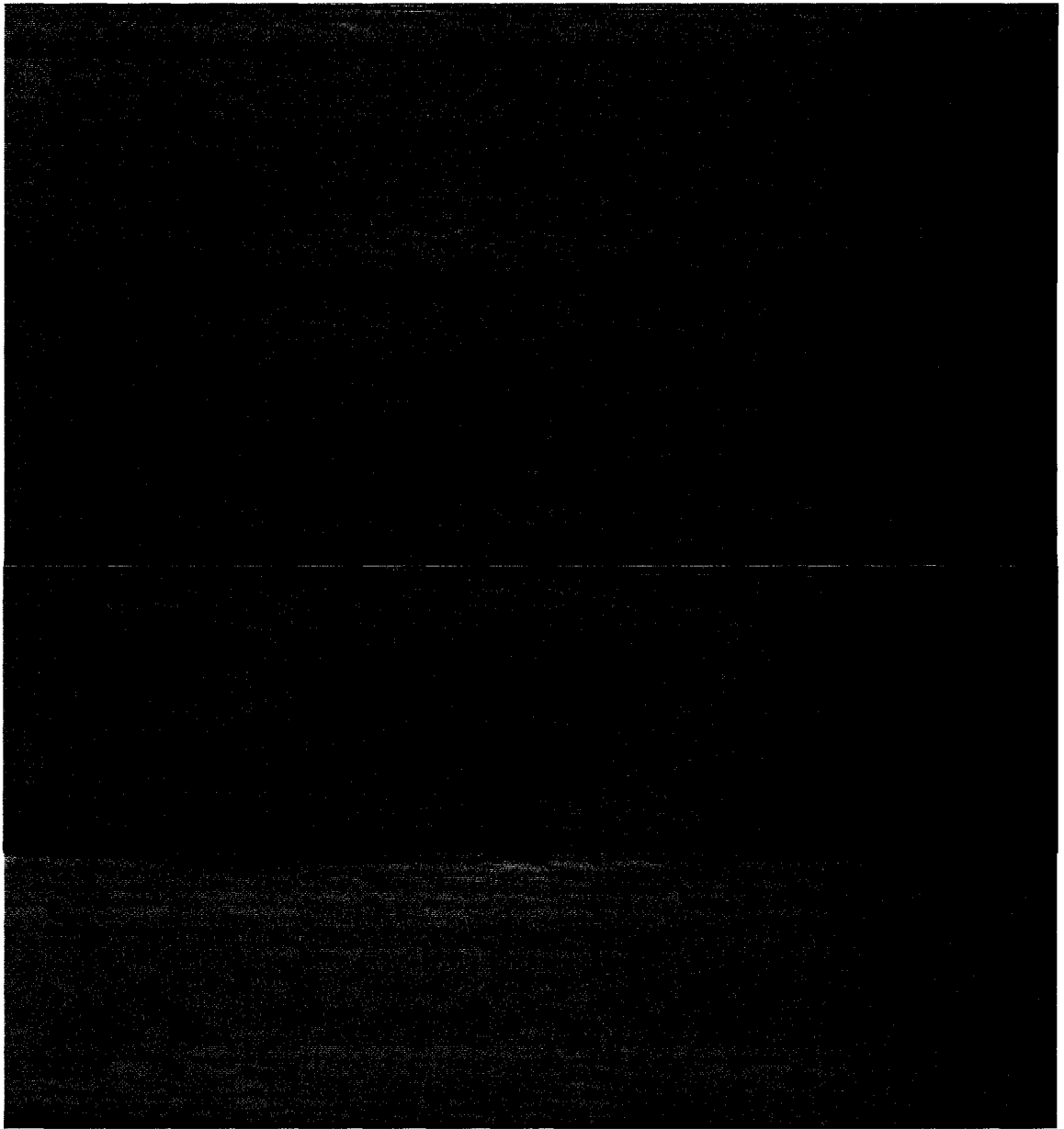


The caption reads: "Seng ge g.yu mtsho."

Figure Eleven. The Manuscript Edition of Kong sprul D







Appendix One

A Translation of A Brief Inventory of the Great Sites of Tibet Composed by the Wise One of Oḍḍiyāna, Padmasambhava

I respectfully pay homage to the three bodies of [the buddha]: the primordial protector Samantabhadra, the [dharma]kāya free from diminishing and developing; the saṃbhogakāya, naturally and spontaneously accomplished of the five buddha families;³⁵¹ the nirmāṇakāya, the teacher of limitless abilities who responds to all beings wherever they may be; and to the sons of the victor [i.e. the bodhisattvas].

I, O rgyan Padma myself said: “In order to bring joy to those who will come in the future, this list of the great sites in the land of Tibet will bring bounty to any valley and cause those living there to attain the siddhi.” [97] From the *Tantra of the Gathered Buddhas* (? *Sangs rgyas 'dus pa'i rgyud*):

The buddha realms [arise] from the aspect of intrinsic wisdom, while the mundane worlds of existence [arise] from ignorance; from the expanse of wisdom [comes] the meditative wisdom.

All the learned ones also teach this:

All the phenomena that appear in all the buddha realms appears in the mundane world in precisely the same manner, infused with the blessings of the pure ones.

There are countless millions of world realms; even more than those are the nirmāṇakāya buddha realms, and [in each of] the countless buddha realms there are nirmāṇakāya teachers. Because these cannot be described, what else is there to say? Moreover, in the central land of this Jambuḍvīpa, the country of India, there are twenty great sites.

³⁵¹ The buddha family, the vajra family, the jewel family, the lotus family, and the karma family.

Countless siddhas whose lineages are unbroken have arisen [there]. [98] This land of Tibet is, generally, a land of benevolence; specifically, I, O rgyan Padma, practiced at the important places at which the auspicious circumstances of the three times converge; [I] invited [to Tibet] the vira, ḍākinī, guru-vidhyadhara, bodhisattva, tutelary deities, and peaceful and wrathful deities [of India]. They actually entered [into the sites] and came to lastingly abide there.³⁵² The temples and the religious objects blessed it, and the aspiration was made that whoever encounters the sites would benefit. An inventory key of authorizing aspiration was placed in the minds of the beings who will open them; one superior being in particular will arise.

In Tibet, Mnga' ris, Dbus gtsang and Khams are divided as the upper, lower and middle [regions]. In the upper region there is Gangs rgyal Ti tshe, La phyi, Yol mo gangs and Byams sprin khu lung, Ri bo dpal 'bar, Ri bo bkra shis bzang, and other further inconceivable sites; if one enumerates a list, there are twenty snow mountains. In the middle region, there is Zab lung phung po phug mo che, [99] Lung bzang g.ya' brag dpyid kyi nyi ma lung, Kha rag gzhu and Skyid gshong rta sgo gangs, Lha sa, Bsam yas, Mchims phu, G.ya' ma lung, 'On ljang mang rdzong shel pbrag sham po gangs, Chu bo ri and G.yu sgang padma gling, Zangs yag sgang po brag dkar bya rog phug, Nyung po dpal ri yar 'brog rin chen brag, Tsā ri tsa gong gcig car ri bo nag, Spa gro stag tshang, Mon gyi dkar po brag, Gru shul rin brag, Brag ri khyung chen sding, Brag dmar ri mo can and Dge ri brag, Mkha' ri gang rgyal mkhar chu gnam skas can, Srin mo sbar rjes, Lho brag lcogs po brag, 'Phan yul gong mo lung and Thar lha gangs, Ti gro brag dkar

³⁵² This passage is similar to the opening lines of the gazetteer for Padma shel phug, a text that was, according to the colophon, discovered less than a month prior to the narrative map and deciphered immediately by Mchog gyur gling pa and written out by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po: "In the *Sde drug gnas yig skor gsum*, O rgyan chen po says this: 'A ho! Only a few branch [sites] of India, the pure lands of Kecchāra transferred to earth, appeared in Tibet, and therefore there have been few siddhas in Tibet. Therefore I, Padma, practiced and blessed whatever sites in Tibet were good, and I invited all hosts of vidyādhara ḍākinī who abide in the great sites and charnel grounds of Kecchāra and India [to Tibet, where they] dissolved into each great site; these then became indivisible from the realm of Kecchāra. Setting forth inventories, I concealed them as treasure.'" *Sde drug gnas yig skor gsum las / o rgyan chen pos 'di skad gsungs / a ho / mkha' spyod dag pa'i zhing khams rnams / sa la 'phos pa rgya gar yul / yan lag tsam zhid bod di snang / de bas bod rnams grub thob nyung / de phyir padma bdag nyid kyis / bod kyi sa gnad gang bzang du / sgrub pa byas shing byin gyis brlabs / mkha' spyod zhing dang rgya gar gyi / gnas dang dur khrod la bzhugs pa'i / rig 'dzin mkha' 'gro'i tshogs thams cad / spyang drangs gnas mchog so sor bstim / mkha' spyod gnas dang dbyer med byung / dkar chag gter ste gter du sbas* (Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse A, p. 367).

smad shod dkar mo brag, Kong po rgya la sing gtam bu chu, Grib kyi spu ri phug and Kong 'phrang phug, Kong gi ljon pa lung and La thog phug, Lugs legs mchod rten known as kīla stūpa, Bang ri rin chen bdud ri me 'bar, Kong po bon po ri and Tsā ri 'dra, Hom 'phrang lcags sgo brag dkar lha chu, Bdud rtsi phug and [100] Gsang ba padma phug, 'Jig tshon 'khyil, Lha ri snang mtha', Lho brag sdon po kong smad rtsi thang brag, Brag dmar me 'bar ma, and Rdo rje phug. These are the [great sites] of the middle region.

In the lower region there are twenty-five sites of the lower region, which are set forth in this brief but sound account, and explained here.

[1] [Regarding the main site of the buddha body,] in the Tibetan region called Lho zla,³⁵³ [there is a place] called Skyo like a conch [colored] lion leaping into the sky. The navel of the site is called Seng ge rdzong. I, O rgyan Padma, practiced [there] for three months. At the door to the cave there is a sign of accomplishment, an imprint of [my] foot. Mahākāruṇika dwells [at] the cliff to the right, and Vajravārāhī at the cliff to the left. The right, left and center together comprise the shape of the syllable Om. There are three treasure hidden there that will be necessary for the whole of Tibet.³⁵⁴ At each site twenty caskets of power treasure (*dbang ba'i gter kha*) are hidden, and ten treasure which are suitable for extraction by whoever needs them.

[2] The eminent site of the body-aspect of the buddha body is a section of a cliff called Skyi named Nyi zla cave, where I practiced for one year. Above it is the palace of black nāgā demon (*Klu bdud nag po*). In the future [101] at this eminent site, (Interlinear note: The great treasure revealer made this comment: “Skyi’ is Skyi ’byams nyi zla cave. The renowned being is Skyo brag Bla ma Grags pa,³⁵⁵ who paid great homage to that place. About five generations after him, when black stone relics appear from underneath a cracked black stone stūpa that was made by O rgyan, it will be a sign of suffering in Tibet and Khams [at the hands of] the Mongol armies of

³⁵³ A region between Nang chen and Chab mdo.

³⁵⁴ There is no record of Mchog gyur gling pa revealing treasure from this site.

³⁵⁵ Skyo brag is a 'Ba' rom ba Bka' brgyud monastery in Nang chen. On the events this passage seems to refer to, the Mongol destruction of the Tangut state, a major patron of the 'Ba' rom Bka' brgyud, see Sperling 1987a, 1987b, 1994, and 2004.

Yo langs and so forth.”) when a renowned being pays homage [here] a black stūpa made by myself will crack and from underneath it a black relic will emerge.³⁵⁶ The chiefs of the Tibetan clans will then come to harm. In order to benefit them a clay stūpa is concealed in a black boulder eight spans of an arrow-flight from there. When that emerges the stūpa will be repaired. The one who will extract it will be named “Grub.”

[3] Regarding the eminent site of the speech-aspect of the buddha body, it is a mountain with a letter Ka on it called Gle, in Tibetan Mdo khams region called Lho zla. [102] On the back side of a crescent [-shaped] mountain is the cave where I, O rgyan, practiced Maheśvara. There sign of immovability and a vermilion swastika. At a grouse-like cliff there is hidden the *Zab bdun*.³⁵⁷ At the base of this mountain one known as Karma pa will come forth, reborn seven times, and in a sequence of thirteen incarnations.³⁵⁸

[4] Regarding the eminent site of the mind-aspect of the buddha body, in [a place] called Gnyan in the 'Bri valley in Tibetan Mdo khams there is a three-tier lotus mountain, the center of which is the site of where I, O rgyan, practiced. There is a cliff cave that has the shape of a six-sided star, in which there is a miraculous self-arisen stūpa³⁵⁹ that is connected to the so-called Klong thang sgröl ma. In the future my emanation, known as Gnam mkha', will arise.³⁶⁰

[5] Regarding the eminent site of the attribute-aspect of the buddha body, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called Lho zla, considered to be the border of Khams and Dbus, is a mountain in the shape of Śrī Heruka. In a crevasse in the center is the site of my practice. In the vicinity are supports of body, speech and mind, and hidden there are fifteen treasure, with and without titles. [103] [Together with] the eight [surrounding] valleys [it constitutes] the nine palace islands (*pho brang gling*), in which reside the eight Heruka such as Yang dag. The lower parts of

³⁵⁶ The text repeats the lines from “renowned” to “a black relic will emerge.”

³⁵⁷ This is the *Zab ba skor bdun*, the sixth treasure revelation according to Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's enumeration.

³⁵⁸ At the time of the text's composition Karma pa XIV, Theg mchog rdo rje (1797-1867) was alive.

³⁵⁹ The word is written *rten mchod* rather than *mchod rten*.

³⁶⁰ According to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul this is a reference to Gnam mkha' Mi 'gyur rdo rje (1645-1667).

the valleys where the peaceful and wrathful [deities] have come [to reside] have hidden in them about eight great treasures for the polluted regions. In the lower part of the Klong shod valley [I] built eight stūpa. When they have deteriorated an inventory will come to the surface of the earth.

[6] Regarding the eminent site of the activity-aspect of the buddha body, in a place called He in the 'Bri valley region, is a mountain like a vajra jutting into the sky. In the rear region there is a square cliff cave where I, O rgyan, practiced. Inside, where the cliff opens, there is a clear statue of Śrī Vajrakumāra.

Those are the five eminent sites of the buddha body. The sites of the buddha body are gathered together in the chief site of the buddha body. The [one] who will open them will be Mi 'gyur rdo rje.

[7] Next, the five sites of buddha speech. The chief site of buddha speech is called Dga' ba lung, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region of Spu bo. In the center of a valley that has the manner of the letter "A" five extraordinary self-arisen stone images [are concealed]. The being who will extract them will be named [104] Bsam gtan gling.³⁶¹

[8] Regarding the eminent site of the speech-aspect of buddha speech, it is Padma shel ri, a concealed eminent site, at the confluence of the Lo hi ta river. The inventory³⁶² for this place is concealed at Ru dam nag po.

[9] Regarding the eminent site of the body-aspect of buddha speech, in what is called Gangs kyi ra ba,³⁶³ in the Tibetan Mdo khams [region] called Tsha ba rong, there is the actual Heruka city. The inventory for this place is hidden at Spo ne brag.

[10] Regarding the eminent site of the mind-aspect of buddha speech, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called Lho zla is a mountain called Na bun that is like a poisonous snake. There, in

³⁶¹ Bsam gtan gling pa is more commonly known as Stag sham Nus ldan rdo rje (1655-1688?). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's commentary confirms this identification.

³⁶² This is possibly Mchog gling, Mkhyen brtse and Kong sprul B, although the colophon does not state where the revelation occurred.

³⁶³ More commonly known as Kha ba dkar po.

a cave made from magical stones piled up by Nam mkha'i snying po and Vairocana, I Padma practiced *Hum* for three months. There are seven carved letters written on a skull of a tamed Dam sri ral nag demon. There are five mind treasures and five body treasures hidden there, and one exalted speech treasure hidden there.

[11] Regarding the eminent site of the attribute-aspect of buddha speech, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called Lho is a eminent emanated site named Nam mkha' mdzod, [105] a mountain that is like a variegated turquoise dragon going through the sky. One thousand self arisen buddhas of the fortunate age have come there, and one hundred and eight types of jewels of [the Pure Land called] Mtha' gru³⁶⁴ are hidden there. The secret cave is about the span of an arrow-flight. I, Padma, practiced there for seven years. Five speech treasures and five attribute treasures are concealed there. The center of a place like a *śrīvātva*³⁶⁵ has magically arisen footprints. The mountain to the left is like a leaping conch-[colored] lion. An emanation of Gnyag ban³⁶⁶ [named] ([interlinear note:] Sangs rgyas) Ye shes will come. ([interlinear note:] Ye shes brtsegs).³⁶⁷

[12] Regarding the eminent site of activity-aspect of buddha speech, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called Kre, there is mountain called Thod dkar that is like a white conch.³⁶⁸ To the south of it is my practice cave, and on the cliff is a self-arisen [image] of Śrī Heruka.

The eminent sites of buddha speech are gathered together in the main site. Those are the five eminent sites of buddha speech. The being who will open them will be [born in] an elephant year.

³⁶⁴ I have relied on Mkhan po Phan pa bkra shis at the Rdzong sar Khams bye shes grwa for this reading. I do not know what pure land this might be.

³⁶⁵ *Yul gyi chags tshul dga' 'khyil = dpal be'u*. This is the “endless knot” of the eight auspicious symbols.

³⁶⁶ This is possibly a reference to Gnyag dza nya na ku ma ra, a figure who is counted among the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava and of whom Zla bzang sprul sku Karma nges don was considered to be an incarnation.

³⁶⁷ Both 2004 and 2005 editions drop this interlinear note. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul however makes use of it to identify the “Ye shes” with a figure named Yel ba Ye shes brtsegs pa. I have not identified this person. Could it be a name of Zla bzang sprul sku?

³⁶⁸ *Thod dkar zhes bya ri bo dung dkar 'dra*. Thod dkar means “white skull.”

[13] Now the eminent sites of buddha mind. In the Tibetan Mdo khams region of Rma zla is the main site of mind, Dan ti shel gyi brag. [106] The center mountain has the form of *citta* jewel (*rin chen tsitta'i dbyibs*); in the eastern valley of magic trees is the tathā[gata]; in the south jewels; to the west is a box valley (*sgrom lung*), the north a pillar valley,³⁶⁹ in the southeast is a medicine valley, the southwest a river, the northwest is a clear valley, the northeast deep ravine (*rong lung*). These eight [valleys] are like a blossoming lotus. To the right and left are two rivers, and the central Rma river (C: Huang he 黄河, the Yellow River) is a *gnas* that has the form of the three roots [Guru, yi dam, and ḍākinī], perfected as a wheel of blissful mind (*bde chen thugs kyi 'khor lor rdzogs*). In the eastern direction from the [central mountain] the shape of *citta* there is a cave that is like a residential brocade tent, the site where I, O rgyan, practiced for three years; an auspicious *gnas* like an jeweled residential tent; an auspicious *gnas* [like] an eight-spoked wheel in the sky; an auspicious *gnas* [like] an eight-petal lotus on the ground; an auspicious [site like] a eight-valleys of the Guru's eight auspicious symbols; an auspicious *gnas* like the Kokonor maṇḍala; an auspicious *gnas* like a magical tree banner; this [place] is the same as the O rgyan gandola [buddha realm]. It is an auspicious *gnas* of signs of accomplishment [such as] hand and foot [prints]. Inside the cave is a vajradhātu maṇḍala. [107] To the right, the northwest, is a [site that has the shape of a] turquoise dragon traveling upwards; on the dragon's right hand is [Ye shes] mtsho rgyal's secret cave. From there, in the following sequence, are the caves of the seven pure fortunate ones:³⁷⁰ Nam [mkha'i] snying [po], Vairo[cana], Rgyal [ba] mchog [dbyangs], Shud bu Dpal seng ge, and the others. To the left, which is like a vase, there is life-elixir, and clearly carved seven-syllable [mantra] and Om Ā Hūm. Twenty-five mind treasure caskets are concealed there.

³⁶⁹ All editions write “*bya ka lung*” rather than “*byang ka lung*.”

³⁷⁰ The first seven men ordained in Tibet, all of whom are counted among Padmasambhava's twenty-five disciples.

[14] Regarding the eminent site of the mind-aspect of buddha mind, it is Rdo rje'i brag in Lower Rma on the Mongolian-Tibet border. In the center is the *gnas* where [I], O rgyan, practiced. Inside, which is like a blossoming lotus, are clear statues of the twelve Rdzogs chen teachers.³⁷¹ The peak of the cliff is like eight erect vajras; on the side of each is one of the eight bodhisattvas, and at the tip of each is a round cave, in which are the sites of the eight signs of the eight emanations of Padmasambhava. About nine profound treasures are concealed there.

[15] Regarding the eminent site of the body-aspect of buddha mind, in Tibetan Mdo khams region of Me nyag is Lha rtse, like a leaping conch lion. [108] In the southeast, in the middle section of the valley [named] Shu, on a mountain is like a heap of jewels, is a cave in which [I] Padmasambhava practiced for three months. [The cave] has the shape of circular white dharma conch, and inside are clear images of the peaceful and wrathful Ati [i.e. Rdzogs chen] deities. All the mountains in the valleys to the right are the abodes of the eight bodhisattvas and Hayagrīva and Vajravārāhī in sexual union. Inside are hidden dharmadhātu stūpa made of precious *gzi* stone about the span of an arrow-flight in size, and the [treasure named] *Lha sras thugs dam rgyal bka' gyur tshad* is hidden there,³⁷² and many *rgyal gter*, *'phrul gter*, and *nor gter* are hidden there.

[16] Regarding the eminent site of the speech-aspect of buddha mind, in the Tibetan Mdo khams regions called Mtshams there is War ti'i brag ri, like a living tree of paradise, with one hundred and eight meditation caves that bring one to fruition. I, Padmasambhava, practiced for three days in all of them. Thirteen of them have miraculous nectar springs, and all have statues of the Buddha and the eight bodhisattvas. Outside are clearly evident statues of the sixteen offering goddesses, White and Green Tārā, and the thirty-eight gods. [109] There is a great pith-instruction treasure and thirteen great treasure hidden there.³⁷³

³⁷¹ A group of twelve buddhas who are said to have taught Rdzogs chen in various world-systems, including Śākyamuni, who is generally listed as the fourth.

³⁷² No treasure by this name is found in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*.

³⁷³ The text repeats a phrase: *man ngag gter chen gter chen bcu gsum sbas*.

[17] Regarding the eminent site of the attribute-aspect of buddha mind, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region of Lho zla is a mountain called 'Bum that is like Amitābha. In the center of the mountain is a self-arisen stūpa, [on which is] a cave of power that is the site of three years of Padmasambhava's practice [where there are] and signs of accomplishment and religious items of the buddha body, speech and mind. There is a turquoise lake of O rgyan's accomplishment water; in the center of the lake is a large stone box. The mountain to the right called the celestial palace of An chung; the mountain in the rear is a human-eating *klu btsan*; and the mountain range to the left are called Rdzong 'phang; in the front [they are known as] Ha ri. All have my, O rgyan, meditation caves. Hidden there are twenty minor pith-instruction treasure and three extremely important profound treasure.

[18] Regarding the eminent site of the activity-aspect of buddha mind, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called Rngu is Spo ne brag dkar, like a pitched crystal tent. Inside are self-arisen statues of the five buddha families, the ten bodhisattvas, the four wrathful ones,³⁷⁴ and of the Buddha. There is a clear imprint of my, Padmasambhava's, body. [110] Eight minor treasures, profound treasures, and *gnyan* treasures.

The sites of the buddha mind are collected together in the chief site of the buddha mind. This is the discussion of the five sites of the great bliss mind. The one who will open them will be named Padma.

[19] Now, the five sites of the buddha attribute. The main site of buddha attribute will be described at length. In the Tibetan Mdo khams region called 'Bri zla is the hidden land of Ru dam Gangs kyi ra ba. In the center, in the Mountain of the Eight Interwoven Lions (*Ri bo seng chen brgyad bsnol*), are fifteen hidden lands which are a suitable vessels for the secret mantra. The valley's shape (*chags tshul*) is like a blossoming lotus. One league above the central mountain is a marvelous self-arisen stone stūpa, [like] clear light passing in the open sky. Inside the cliff is an emanated temple called Radiant Light about the span of an arrow-flight in size.

³⁷⁴ *Khro bo bzhi*: Yamāntaka, Mahābala, Hayagrīva and Amṛtakunḍalin.

Inside that is a statue of the Buddha a single storey high. There are also eight life-size statues of the eight bodhisattva and [statues] of White and Green Tārā made of conch and turquoise [respectively] built by the patron (*yon bdag*) Dpal mo he. [111] There are various jewels given to me, Padmasambhava, by the king of Chinese Pālata³⁷⁵ and a finely-made *khyad bye ru* Amitāyus. All of Kamala[śīla]’s Sanskrit texts are there. Hidden in each of the eight main valleys in the cardinal and intermediate directions are three great treasures and eight minor treasures. Entrusted willingly as their protectors are the twelve Yama goddesses,³⁷⁶ the eight *ma sangs* deities, and the deity Dge bsnyen rdo rje [legs pa³⁷⁷].

The mountain to the right is like a raised sword. On the eastern cliff are the assembly of sages and arhants. There are three profound treasure entrusted to the wealth-protector sons (*dkor srung sras*). The mountain to the left is like a leaping lion. The southern cliff has exceedingly clear images of the eight bodhisattva and the buddhas of the ten directions. Nine exceedingly special treasures (*sgos khyad gter*) are entrusted to a wealth-protecting mother (*dkor srung yum*). A multicolored gate temple appears on the iron mountain to the south. Inside of the gate is a jewel-like mountain. In the center is [my,] Padmasambhava’s meditation cave. There are clear self-arisen statues of the nine heruka, Vajrasattva, Vajradhara, the sixth [Rdzogs chen teacher], Śākyamuni, and of me, O rgyan. [112]

[Regarding] the lower parts of the four great valleys of the four cardinal directions: in [that part of] the eastern [valley] is a pure white radiant stūpa; in the south are fifteen *akśa* wheels; in the west are eight *seng rdzong* reliquaries; and in the north are black boulders. In all these areas are the eight unchanging symbols (*mi ’gyur ba yi rtags brgyad*) and the nine signs (*mtshan rtag dgu*).

³⁷⁵ Mkhan po Phan bkra: a country in China.

³⁷⁶ related to the twelve Brtan ma

³⁷⁷ Possibly one of the main Rnying ma worldly protectors who was subjugated by Padmasambhava, as told in the hagiographies. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz Chapter 10, pp. 154-159.

[Regarding] the upper parts of the great valleys in the intermediate directions, to the southeast is a mountain like a *dpal gtor ma* where there is a self-arisen statue magically blessed by Mngon rdzogs rgyal po³⁷⁸ and the thirty learned ones.³⁷⁹ The eight male and eight female gods of wealth together with the two main figures, and the eighteen lords of treasure bring a rain of jewels. In the southwest is a mountain like a vajra where I, Padmasambhava manifested various miracles and left inconceivable signs; there is self-arisen accomplishment-water, deathless life-water, siddhi water, and ablution water. In the northwest is a box-like jewel mountain where there are emblems of the *ma sangs* [deities] having been bound under oath,³⁸⁰ Vajravīdāraṇa, Vijaya, and Sitātapatrā; [113] the goddesses of the five dhāraṇi and the assembly of Kri la goddesses. In the northeast is a mountain like a treasure vase, where there are forty-two assemblies of Karuṇādeva [i.e. manifestations of Avalokiteśvara], especially the thousand-eye thousand-armed [Avalokiteśvara], and Hayagrīva with nine faces and eighteen arms, as well as the deities of the Mkha' 'gro dgongs 'dus maṇḍala such as Vajravārāhī with three faces and so forth, all self-arisen.

[Regarding] the great valleys between the cardinal and intermediate directions, first, at Dpa' bo brag there is Hayagrīva; second, at Ru yi brag there is Black Mañjuśrī; third, at a Sku'i brag there is Vajrapāṇi; and fourth, at Nye ba'i brag is Bhurkumkuṭā. In the southern cliffs are the assemblies of vidhyadhara and so forth, and clear images of the immense ocean maṇḍala. In particular, in the mountain in the center of the southern region is the secret cave of the Brtan ma [goddesses]; to the right is [that of Ye shes] mtsho rgyal; above is [the cave of] Vairo[cana]; behind is [that of] Gnyag chen and so forth. It is also the *gnas* where the pure fortunate seven

³⁷⁸ Mngon rdzogs rgyal po, “the perfected victor,” is an epithet of Samantabhadra in his role as the eleventh Rdzogs chen teacher.

³⁷⁹ Unidentified.

³⁸⁰ *Ma sangs dam la brtags pa'i mtshan rtags*

practiced,³⁸¹ and there are signs of their accomplishment. [114] It is said to be an unchanging land, a glorious spot.³⁸² Hidden there are five attribute treasures and twenty minor treasures.

[20] [The attribute-aspect of the buddha attribute] is condensed in attributes of the body-aspect of the buddha attribute. Signs dissolved.³⁸³

[21] Regarding the eminent site of the body-aspect of the buddha attribute, it is a mountain called Ldang in a valley called Dngul in the Tibetan Mdo kham s 'Bri region, like a turquoise dragon going through the sky. In the center of the mountain is the *gnas* where I, Padmasambhava, practiced. Inside a cave like a brocade residential tent is the site where Vimalamitra resided for one year, together with my, Padmasambhava's seven disciples and their nine great power maṇḍala palaces. At the lintel of the cave is a Mahākāruṇika; to the right is Hayagrīva, to the left is Vajravārāhī. Above the cave is the protector Amitāyus and also various carved letters clearly [evident]. Hidden there are five profound treasure and three body treasure. The deity Lha chen blo gros himself is appointed their protector. To the base of this mountain an emanation of me, a siddha named Brtson 'grus will come and open the door [to the *gnas*]; a king named Byis with a great mind will come [115] and perform the work of the victor [e.g. the Buddha]. Then, after about five generations of *Sil ma*³⁸⁴ an emanation of Mu tig [btsan po]³⁸⁵ named Dpal will come. At that time this inventory will come to the surface of the earth.

[22] Regarding the eminent site of the speech-aspect of the buddha attribute, in the Tibetan Mdo kham s 'Bri region, in one of the great valleys (*shod chen*) called Smad shod 'dzoms, is an eminent site among all great sites in Tibet, the site of Dga' rab rdo rje, who attained the wisdom

³⁸¹ *Las can dag pa'i 'khor bdun*; the first seven men ordained in Tibet.

³⁸² This phrase is uncertain: *mi 'gyur 'dzer gyis [= gyi sa?] rab tu gtam pa'o*.

³⁸³ This difficult line reads: *Yon tan sku yi yon tan dag la 'dus / brda thim /*. The text is almost surely corrupt. Its peculiarity is compounded by the fact that the last *gter shad*, the grammar marker, is slightly over the inner margin of the text, and has been overlooked by later editors; the 2004 (p. 9) and 2005 (p. 11) versions thus attach the words *brda thim* to the following line like so: *Brda thim yon tan sku yi gnas mchog. . .* rather than beginning the next phrase *Yon tan sku yi. . .*

³⁸⁴ Presumably a reference to the Sde dge royal house.

³⁸⁵ One of the three sons of Khri srong lde'u btsan.

body, and Śrī sing ha who attained the indivisible body, where the four masters of the four main traditions of Tibetan Buddhism magically visited; even more famous than Kailash, Tsā ri, and Zab lung – Bde chen Padma shel phug. No others match the excellence of this place, for it is the site of the singular treasure [superior to] all those under the soil of Tibet, the mind-elixir of all the learned and accomplished ones, the *Rdzogs pa che[n po] sde gsum*, [in a] jeweled golden treasure casket box that will remain there until saṃsāra is emptied. [116]

[23] Now an exposition of the remaining [sites] of buddha attribute. Regarding the eminent site of the mind-aspect of the buddha attribute, on a glorious (*dpal*) mountain like a standing elephant, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called 'Bri, is Devīkoṭi Tsā 'dra rin chen brag, a site in the manner of the nine Śrī Heruka. The cave where [I,] Padmasambhava practiced is like a blossoming flower. The cliff has self-arisen peaceful and wrathful [deities] and is the site, in the form of a crescent moon, of the practice of the vidhyadhara of the buddha mind, Nam mkha' snying po.³⁸⁶ Desiring [an] eminent [site for his] practice, he one-pointedly practiced here. Concealed elsewhere is the site which was blessed by my crown ornament, Vimalamitra. The Mantra protector of the place is Bhaṭayī. In a nearby is the site where I, O rgyan, practiced. While there the mind vidhyadhara Hūṃkara came, and for three days [I] compiled the Buddhist teachings. There is a self-arisen statue of myself, the master [Padmasambhava],³⁸⁷ and clearly [evident] signs of the wisdom body; [the site] is in possession of that sort of amazing thing.

[24] Regarding the eminent site of the activity-aspect of the buddha attribute, it is Seng ge'i za 'gram nam mkha'i brag in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called 'Bri. [117] In the center is my, O rgyan's, practice cave and a detailed inventory is hidden to the right.³⁸⁸ The being who will reveal it will be named Ratna.³⁸⁹ Coming from the south like a bolt of lightning, at that time

³⁸⁶ One of Padmasambhava's twenty-five disciples.

³⁸⁷ *Slob dpon nyid kyī sku brnyan rang byon*; one of several passages where the text appears to drop the third person. I have maintained it in my translation for consistency.

³⁸⁸ This is a most certainly a reference to Mchog gling and Kong sprul D, an inventory to this place that, according to its colophon, was discovered there.

³⁸⁹ Mchog gyur gling pa himself, according to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's reading.

[a being] will descend from a lake-like sky, an incarnation of Padma[sambhava], called Padmasamnatbhadra or Padma'i rgyal po snying po, a being who will purify the impure beings to their great relief.³⁹⁰ His manner will be one of skyward-looking yogic-gaze.³⁹¹

The sites of the buddha attributes are condensed in the chief site of the buddha attribute. This has been a brief explanation of the five sites of buddha attribute. It is indicated that there will be six great beings who will open them.

[25] Regarding the main site of the buddha activity, it is [a cave] on the slope of a mountain called Kaḥ that is like a standing lion, in the 'Bri valley region of Tibetan Mdo khams. In a jewel-like cliff is the rock-overhang, the site of practice where I, Padmasambhava, resided for one year. Inside is a self-arisen assembly of magical gods. In the future an emanation of mine named Bde gshegs will come from lower Bstan pa'i Me ro, [118] a holder of the lineage of Padmasambhava, a master of the teachings, and thirteen lion-like generations will follow [him].³⁹²

[26] To the east of there is the site of the activities-aspect of buddha activities. On a mountain known as Rdo rje spung pa the entire divine assembly of Vajrakīla is present. In the center is the site, in the shape of a six-pointed star, where I, O rgyan, practiced Kīla. In the cliff is an imprint where I drove in a kīla, and in the secret cave there is an accomplishment kīla.

[27] Regarding the eminent site of the speech-aspect of buddha activity,³⁹³ it is a vajra-like mountain called Gtsang in the Tibetan Mdo khams region of Rngu [the Mekong river valley]. There is a site with an imprint of where I, Padma, arose in wrathful guise, and where [I] practiced for three months. Hidden there are three body treasures and five speech treasures.

[28] Regarding the eminent site of the body-aspect of the buddha activity, it is at [a mountain like] a heap of jewels called Phra rag brag in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called

³⁹⁰ *Ma dag tshar gcod dag pa dbyug.*

³⁹¹ Si tu IX, according to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul.

³⁹² A standard reference to the history of Kaḥ thog: Dam pa bde gshegs (1122-1192) founded the monastery, after whom are counted thirteen generations of great patriarchs.

³⁹³ Note that here "speech" comes prior to "body."

Rngu. In the center, inside a square cave where [I] Padma practiced, is a self arisen representational statue of me, O rgyan. [119] To the right are fifteen *akṣa*, and to the left the mantra of Kīla is written.

[29] Regarding the eminent site of the mind-aspect of the buddha activity, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called Bu 'bor,³⁹⁴ is a mountain named Bkra shis, like a burning flame. In the center is a meditation cave where I, O rgyan, [practiced]. At a snow mountain to the east is a statue of Avalokiteśvara; [at] a house-like (*spe ne*) mountain to the south is Hayagrīva and Vajravārāhī; [at] a red-cliff mountain to the west is of Cakrasaṃvara, and [at] a *dhis* (?) mountain in the north is Kīla. On the central mountain there is a self-arisen eleven-faced [Avalokiteśvara]. In all those places the deities' mantras are also present.

[30] Regarding the eminent site of the attributes-aspect of the buddha activity, it is a mountain called Hyel, like a white garuḍa going through the sky, in the Tibetan Mdo khams region called Zal mo sgang. In the center is a cavern where I, Padmasambhava, practiced for seven days. Inside is a self-arisen E khrom maṇḍala and an exceptional Śrī [Heruka] statue. Hidden there are seven great and small profound activity treasure. [No mention is made regarding which site the five sites of buddha activity are subsumed in.]

[31] Now, the exceptional sites: [120] In the Tibetan Mdo khams called La thog there is Ma yo gangs ra, which is the same as Tsā ri. That is the mountain in which the eminent sites of the buddha body are condensed.

[32] In between the Tibetan Mdo khams regions of 'Dzi and Zla is Spo yi brag dkar, the site in which the eminent sites of the buddha speech are condensed. There is a self-arisen stūpa with a vivid letter Ā. That is the cliff in which eminent sites of the buddha speech are condensed.

³⁹⁴ According to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's reading, this would be a region near Li thang in southern Khams.

[33] In Tibetan Mdo khams, Spo ne shel mdung, at a vajra-like cliff there is a brilliant white Vajrapāṇi statue, [like] a burning flame. This is the mountain in which the eminent sites of the buddha mind are condensed.

[34] In the Tibetan Mdo khams region between Rtsi and Zla there is a mountain called Stabs that is like a glorious gtor ma. On the side of the box-mountain in the east is [an image of] Vajrasattva; on the white Ha cliff to the south is [an image of] Amṛtakunḍalin. On the Gle cliff to the west are statues of Śrī Hayagrīva and G.yu mtsho sngon mo and Khros ma nag mo.³⁹⁵ On the horse cliff to the north is Tārā. [This] is the land in which the eminent sites of the buddha attributes are condensed. These four are the four exceptional sites.

[35] Regarding the eight emanated sites [which] tame beings through activity, [121] the [site that] tames peacefully, Rdo ti gangs ra, is a mountain [where] there is the presence of a self-arisen Śrī Heruka. There is an assembly of deities act peacefully in the manner of a market gathering.

[36] The [site that] tames expansively is called Jo bo ri. There reside Śrī Heruka and an assembly of the deities that act expansively.

[37] The [site that] tames powerfully is called Ri bo dbang zhu. There reside Śrī Heruka and an assembly of the deities that act powerfully.

[38] The [site that] tames wrathfully is to the north of Klong thang, on a mountain like the pressed-down back of a lion, is a crystal cave, the site where I, Padma, practiced.

[39] The [site that] tames via the vajra family is called Rmug sangs in the 'Bri valley. On a mountain like an erect vajra there is a peaceful activity cave in the shape of a sun and moon.

[40] Regarding the eminent site that tames via the jewel family, on the right bank of the 'Bri valley in Tibetan Mdo khams is Rong brag nag po, like *vaidūrya* piled into the sky. In the center is the cave where [I], Padma, practiced, and the secret caves of Vairocāna and [Ye shes] mtsho rgyal. A renowned man who engages with profound treasure will come there, and will be the

³⁹⁵ “Black Wrathful Female”; a form of Ekajaṭī.

one who will open an auxiliary treasure door. [122] About three generations after he has passed [into nirvāṇa] a being with powerful name that sounds like “g.yu” will come.

[41] Regarding the eminent site that tames via the lotus family, in a place of one *tsha lam* [a measure of distance] to the east of [Rong brag nag po] is a mountain in the shape of a lotus hat called Dkar lung. At what is like the peak of the hat is the cave where [I], O rgyan, practiced. From there down [to the valley floor] takes one day by horse.

[42] Regarding the eminent site that tames via the karma family, it is called Khra brag and is like an alighting peacock. At Og byi stengs is the cave where [I], Padma, practiced. These are what are called the eight sites of activity.

Now, a presentation of the benefits of the places. Circumambulating by prostration will shut the door to birth in the lower realms. If one venerates them one will be born in the higher realms. A single feast offering completes a great accumulation of merit. Two feast offerings will purify the ripening of karma. Three feast offerings [will result] in seeing me, O rgyan Padma, in reality, in vision and in dreams. One hundred feast offerings [will result] in birth in Kheccara. If one wants the supreme attainment [of enlightenment], by practicing one-pointedly one will attain it. They are the eminent sites which benefit anyone who encounters them, [123] E ma ho!

I, O rgyan Padmasambhava, for the sake of those born later in the entire Tibetan [region of] Khams, have put this inventory into letters and concealed it, and at Dpa' bo dbang chen brag sealed it with a *tham*. Ekajaṭī protects the document. When the needs arises it will be entrusted to a destined one; at that time, by knowing the method [of revealing it], may it be released! *Samaya rgya rgya kha tham guhye*.

I, the rebirth of Lha sras mu rub btsan po, Gter chen Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa,³⁹⁶ on the first day of the first month of the fire serpent year (February 25, 1857) in the midst of about twenty predestined ones, as though remembering my personal destiny, extracted a three-sided lacquered leather box that had the shape of a dharmapāla's club from the side of

³⁹⁶ The text reads: “Gter chen Mchog gyur bde chen mchog gyur bde chen gling pa.”

Dpa' brag dkar po, which is clear and self arisen on the Dpa' bo Hayagrīva cliff on the front side of the Khro ri rdo rje zil khrom, to the east of the Sde dge dharmarāja's palace, and on which were nine clear seals. This treasure casket was opened during the consecration of the hermitage Kun bzang bde chen 'od gsal gling to the left of the left of Padmasambhava's practice cave in the center of the throat of the third Devīkoṭi, Tsā 'dra rin chen brag, which has the appearance of an assembly of the nine heruka deities, at the same time that the site of Devīkoṭi was newly opened, at the foot of the lion throne of the joyful dharma holder in the residence of benevolent protector, the omniscient Ta'i si tu, at the main temple of the great seat of Dpal spung. The symbolic script was decoded from the six lines of symbolic script in Padmasambhava's own hand measuring four finger-widths across rolled up yellow scrolls several hand- and finger-widths in diameter. Padma gar dbang blo gros mtha' yas, who is also called Yon tan rgya mtsho acted as scribe. May good fortune and auspiciousness manifest for the teaching and beings without sectarian bias, and may it spread to all places and through all times. *Sarvathāmangalam.*

Appendix Two

A Translation of A Short, Brief Clarification of the List of the Twenty-five Great Sites of Khams Together With Their Auxiliaries

Oṃ svasti siddham

[I make] offerings to the lama who protect us until the essence of enlightenment [is reached];

[who attained] enlightened as the primordially unmovable great bliss vajra;

the one who grants the royal empowerment of the four vidyadhāra even in this eon of strife;

the lake-born lord [Padmasambhava], who manifested the great rainbow body.

I bow reverentially to the treasure revealer [Mchog gyur gling pa] and the lama [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po],

supreme kingly guides, in the non-existent never-divisible world, to the three secrets,³⁹⁷

famous as the sun and the moon, and whose benevolence is incomparable.

The Buddha and bodhisattvas, together with the great heroes,

who are perfected as the wheel of the *Māyājāla*;

their everlasting and all-pervasive activities are spontaneously present

[in] the realm of the three times and the timeless time, equally-extensive.

[I] begin from the realm of the three boundless bodies,

the singular eminent unequalled proclamation

for beings of this fortunate age, the elixir of vajra speech

³⁹⁷ According to Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein, these are the buddha body, speech, and mind (1991, p. 120).

which clearly emanated list of the great sites. [126]

I compose this with a straightforward and clear mind

for the benefit of those who see, hear, think and feel;

[for] those beings who wish to be liberated and whose three kinds of faith is expanding,
of the class that readily grasps by delight and expansion.

These words are offered with all sincerity, *gling par bya'o*

[1] Now, the first of the twenty-five great sites of Khams, the main site of the buddha body, called Skyo, is the widely-known mountain Skyo brag seng ge rdzong, on the far side of the Rdza river.³⁹⁸

[2] The body-aspect of the buddha body, called Spyi, is Tsha ri Spyi 'byams zla phug in the Rdza chu [valley]. Now, [regarding] the meaning of [the lines] “a renowned being will come” and so forth, the renowned being is Skyo grags Lama grags pa. He is the one who greatly venerated that site. Where it says that about five generations after him a stone capsule will come from underneath a stūpa of black stone made by O rgyan and that time will be an era of turbulence of the Mongol armies and so forth, evil times for Tibetan Khams, and that the one who will repair the stūpa will be named Grub, this all refers to Lhun grub rab brtan³⁹⁹ or [127] [Rdzogs chen IV, 'Jigs med mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug 'phrin las?] Rnam rgyal rdo rje. Gnam chos Mi 'gyur rdo rje first opened the site of Skyo brag. After him Lon dge Mi 'gyur rdo rje habitually (*spyi 'byams*) revealed treasure such as longevity sāddhana. There is also a *gnas yig*.⁴⁰⁰

[3] Gle thu ['Og min] karma, the site of the speech-aspect of the buddha body, is, according to common parlance, the terrestrial speech abode of Dwags po lha rjes [Gam po pa and] Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa, and was established as their seat as was prophesied, and the line of incarnations of the Karma pa and his disciples such as [Karma] Chags med and Yon dge [Mi

³⁹⁸ The Mekong; according to the Tshig mdzod chen mo (p. 2350), “Rdza” is a corruption of Zla.

³⁹⁹ Unidentified.

⁴⁰⁰ I have not located this in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*.

'gyur rdo rje] have been recognized and praised, Mchog gyur gling pa revealed the *Zab bdun*⁴⁰¹ from Dam can brag 'gags, and the *Ma mo spyi bsdus* from Dpal gyi de'u⁴⁰² and so forth, and also received a *gnas yig* as treasure.⁴⁰³ This is also detailed at length in [Karma] Chags med Rin po che's *Gnas brten gyi che bshad*.⁴⁰⁴

[4] Regarding the Gnyan/Mnyan⁴⁰⁵ in the 'Bri valley region, the site of the mind-aspect of the buddha body, it is the chief of a mountain [called] Gnyan/Mnyan pa tshang sdar on the far side [of the valley], and so is an abbreviation of that [name]. The three-tier Lotus mountain is a side-mountain of Padma ri mtho. [128] The line "my emanation named Nam mkha'" refers to Rdzogs chen IV, Mi 'gyur man mkha'i rdo rje.

[5] The site of the attribute-aspect of the buddha body, called Kha, is Gtam khog kha brag, or Kha la rong sgo, in the Rdza river basin in the region of Nang chen. A far-side mountain is a Zangs mdog dpal ri, a side-mountain known as Khro bo dbu dgu. The great treasure revealer [Mchog gyur gling pa] revealed the *Thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel* and the gazetteer,⁴⁰⁶ and he opened the site.

[6] The site of the activity-aspect of the buddha body, called He, is He brag dkar, in the Sa ngan region of the 'Bri valley⁴⁰⁷ where there is an He[ruka] six-pointed star. It is said that an auxiliary of it is G.yu brag in Sga stod.⁴⁰⁸ There is also a He brag in the river valley of Ku se sde

⁴⁰¹ The sixth treasure casket. The *nam thar* and the *dkar chag* give the name: Karma'i dam can brag. The history of the *Zab bdun* referred to here is likely Anonymous A.

⁴⁰² The twenty-second treasure casket. An alternate name for the treasure site is given in *Dkon mchog 'gyur med*: Karma'i dbang gyi le'u ma mo rol pa'i pho brang

⁴⁰³ Mchog gling and Shes rab rgyal mtshan. The latter was one of Mchog gyur gling pa's disciples in Nang chen.

⁴⁰⁴ I have yet to identify this text. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul repeatedly refers to it as Chags med's *gnas yig*.

⁴⁰⁵ The manuscript version of this text preserves the spelling given by Mchog gyur gling pa in his list text; the *Mchog gling gter gsar* version of this text, however, changes the spelling to "Mnyan."

⁴⁰⁶ This is Mchog gling K.

⁴⁰⁷ Sa ngan is in 'Jo mda' (江达) in the T.A.R.

⁴⁰⁸ This was the site of the revelation of Mchog gyur gling pa's 27th treasure casket, according to Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, and is one of the few that he left undated. Sga stod is in Yus hru'u to the northeast of Skye sku mdo.

bzhung mdo that was opened by Khyung grags rdo rje,⁴⁰⁹ and there is said to be a treasure door there.

[7] The chief site of the buddha speech, *Spu bo Dga' ba lung*, is in a place called Lesser Drag po bkod, to the north of Greater Padma bkod. The great treasure revealer Stag shams [Nus ldan] rdo rje [Bsam gtan gling pa] (b. 1655?) opened the site. There are amazing statues of Hayagrīva and Vajravārāhī, as supports for the buddha body, and the *Yid dam dgongs 'dus*⁴¹⁰ as a support for the buddha speech, and [Ye shes] mtsho rgyal's kīla box as a support for the buddha mind.⁴¹¹

[8] The site of the speech-aspect of the buddha speech, [129] Padma shel ri, has not yet actually been opened. An auxiliary is a mountain near Khang mdo brag dmar zangs yag nam mkha' rdzong in the Rting lhung.

[9] The site of the body-aspect of the buddha speech is the well-known Tsha ba rong Kha ba dkar po. It is said that Karma pakṣi first opened it, and Rang 'byung rdo rje after him; there is a *gnas yig* by Rang 'byung [rdo rje].⁴¹² Regarding the line “the inventory is concealed at Spor ne/ne⁴¹³ brag, this is in the area of Ri bo che.

[10] The site of the mind-aspect of the buddha speech, called Na bun, is Cham gshis Na bun rdzong in Nang chen. Bdud 'dul [rdo rje], Mi 'gyur rdo rje, [Karma] chags med and so forth went there and opened the site, and there is a *gnas yig* by Bdud 'dul [rdo rje]. The great treasure revealer himself revealed his first ever treasure casket there, the *Padma gtsug gtor dri med* cycle.

[11] The site of the attribute-aspect of the buddha body is a side mountain at Phar nang Ri bo che in Nang chen. [130] 'Bri gung [rig 'dzin] chos [kyi] grags [pa] (1595-1662) went there and recognized it as a leg of the musk deer of Khams when he went there; it is widely known as Lho

⁴⁰⁹ Unidentified.

⁴¹⁰ A treasure cycle revealed by Stag sham nus ldan rdo rje.

⁴¹¹ The *Mchog gling gter gsar* version of this text drops the last two phrases, ending after “supports for the body, and.” Because the next phrase begins with “gsung,” as does the following list entry, it would seem that the editors of the text mistakenly dropped the final phrase of the text. The entire entry is preserved in the manuscript (f. 2b) and Dkon mchog 'gyur med's version (p. 266).

⁴¹² The manuscript repeats the words “*zhabs kyis*” twice, the second being crossed out with a red pen by a later reader (f. 2b).

⁴¹³ The manuscript reads “ne” (f. 2b).

Yel phug and its nearby [branch] Ye rgyal Nam mkha' mdzod. There are five treasuries and three boxes of profound great treasure. The great treasure revealer also revealed many treasure from there.⁴¹⁴ And there is also a gazetteer by [Karma] chags med. The line “an emanation of Gnyag ban [named] ye shes will come” refers to the fact that this is the primary seat of Yel ba Ye shes brtsegs pa.⁴¹⁵

[12] The site of the activity-aspect of the buddha speech, if it is in Hor Tre shod⁴¹⁶ and is Lcags mdud Kha ba lung ring,⁴¹⁷ needs to be investigated. It is generally said that there is a gazetteer by the great siddha Gsal stong sho sgom.⁴¹⁸

[13] The main site of buddha mind, Dan ti shel gyi brag is in the north, in Upper Rma khog, widely known as the place where Bla chen Dgongs pa rab gsal⁴¹⁹ and the others resided. This is also said by some to be Bdud ri bya rog sgra gcan, the abode of Prince Dri med kun ldan. [131]

[14] The site of the mind-aspect of buddha mind is Rdo rje'i brag in Lower Rma.

[15] The site of the body-aspect of buddha mind is the widely known as Me nyag Gzhag ra lha rtse.⁴²⁰ The great siddha Thang stong rgyal po, and later 'Bri gung [rig 'dzin] Chos [kyi] grags [pa] went there, and there is a gazetteer.

⁴¹⁴ This was the site of the revelation of the seventh treasure casket, auxiliary texts of the *Zab pa skor bdun*, as described in Anonymous A.

⁴¹⁵ Unidentified.

⁴¹⁶ Dkon mchog 'gyur med reads Hor ke shod (p. 267); all other version, including the manuscript (3a) read “Tre.”

⁴¹⁷ Mkhan po Bsod nams bstan 'dzin at Kaḥ thog, a Nyag rong pa, agreed; Lcags mdud Kha ba lung ring is commonly known as a Padmasambhava site and the activity-aspect of the buddha speech. The name of the site means “Iron knot long snow valley.” This is a major *gnas* in Nyag rong. According to Tashi Tsering Nyag rong was one of four “iron knots” in the earth, one which was greatly disturbed by the killing of Mgon po rnam rgyal (1985, p. 213).

⁴¹⁸ Unidentified.

⁴¹⁹ Dan ti is one of the main sites of religious importance in A mdo. In the aftermath of the Tibetan king Glang dar ma's withdrawal of imperial patronage from monasteries in central Tibet in the tenth century, three disciples of Sba Ratna, the first Tibetan to receive Buddhist ordination, left central Tibet and eventually made their way to Dan tig in A mdo (C: Dandi 旦迪 in present day Hualong Hui Autonomous County 化隆回族自治县). There they ordained Bla chen Dgongs pa rab gsal (b. 892) with the assistance of two Chinese monks sent to them by Lha lhung dpal kyi rdo rje, who was then residing at Klong thang. Bla chen later ordained ten men from central Tibet who returned to restore the Vinaya at the start of the Second Propagation of Buddhism (Dudjom 524-527; Davidson 2005, pp. XXX).

⁴²⁰ This is a mountain near the Lha gangs, to the northwest of Dar rtse mdo.

[16] The site of the speech-aspect of buddha mind, War ti'i brag, was opened by Khyung brag rdo rje.⁴²¹ It is a treasure site said to hold many profound treasures, such as testaments of Padmasambhava, a canyon [called] Mtshams between Go 'jo and Sa ngan, though this is unclear. If one were to examine the place called "Mtshams," might it be in southern Brag yab, the region where there are six syllable mantra?⁴²²

[17] The site of the attribute-aspect of buddha mind, called ['Bum] is Mkha' 'gro 'bum rdzong in Lower Nang chen. Drung Rma se Blo gros rin chen (b.1386) first opened the site. Gnam chos [Mi 'gyur rdo rje] and [Karma] chags med composed a gazetteer. The great treasure revealer received many treasure from here such as the 'Khor ba dong sprugs [cycle]⁴²³ in addition to the gazetteer.⁴²⁴ Regarding the mountain to the right, An chung nam mkha' rdzong, it is taught that these days it is called Spo ngu.

[18] If we investigate the region where the site of the activity-aspect of buddha mind, Spo ne brag dkar, [is located], based on the sound of [the syllable] "rngu," it is likely in the vicinity of either the Sa ngan Rngu [river] that flows from Tsha rongs,⁴²⁵ or the Rgyal mo dngul chu,⁴²⁶ [132] but this requires further inquiry. There is also said to be a treasure site of Klong gsal [snying po]⁴²⁷ called Spo ne brag dkar in the Sa ngan region.

[19] The chief site of the buddha attributes, Ru dam gangs kyi ra ba [is also known as] Khro ri rdo rje zil khrom. The great treasure revealer [Mchog gyur gling pa] himself received the

⁴²¹ A lama of Kaḥ thog monastery who lived from 1625 to 1692.

⁴²² The translation for this entry follows the manuscript (ff. 3a-3b), as the *Mchog gling gter gsar* drops the major part of this entry, reading: "The [identification of] site of the speech-aspect of buddha mind, War ti'i brag is obscure and uncertain. If one investigates the place which is called Mtshams, it might be in the region of Brag yab where there are six-syllable mantra."

⁴²³ Classified as the nineteenth treasure casket, dated by Mkhyaen brtse'i dbang po to the twenty-fifth day of the tenth month of the fire serpent year (Dec 12 1857); the texts are mostly in volumes 25 and 26 of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*.

⁴²⁴ Mchog gling L.

⁴²⁵ Manuscript (3b): "tshung rong;" Blo gros phun tshogs's (p. 15) version reads "tshu rong." Dkon mchog 'gyur med (p. 269) is the same as Kong sprul.

⁴²⁶ Here referring to Rgyal rong in Skye kun mdo county in Qinghai. The *Mchog gling gter gsar* version adds the phrase "that flows from Rgyal rong" (Rgyal rong nas "babs pa'i).

⁴²⁷ 1625-1692; a treasure revealer associated with Kaḥ thog monastery.

gazetteer⁴²⁸ for this place from Rdzogs chen gangs khrod, and a few further treasures;⁴²⁹ Bdud 'dul [rdo rje] also opened [the door] to treasure [there]. Regarding the “gate temple of the multi-colored iron mountain in the south” it is evidently in the area of the Wrathful Lake (*Khro mtsho*), on the slope of the Zil khrom *gnas*. In the southern area, on what is these days known as the gate-protector, there is a practice cave on the mountain and exceedingly profound treasure; this is not only the site, but the very heart center of the site. [Regarding the valleys of the four cardinal directions,] the “gtsang dkar” to the east [is] 'Dzum gtsang dkar. The “'khor lo” in the south is 'Khor lo mdo. The “seng rdzong” to the west [requires further] investigation. The “pha waṃ” in the north is Ru dam pha waṃ zhabs che chung. [Regarding the valleys of the intermediate directions,] that which resembles a glorious *gtor ma* (*dpal gtor*) in the southeast is Rdo mu nam; the cliff in the southwest that resembles a vajra is the place where Lha lung stayed, near where Lha lung dpal gyi rdo rje practiced.⁴³⁰ [133] The box-like rock mountain in the northeast and that in the northwest which is like a treasure vase [need to be] examined again (*slar brtags*). The first [great valley between] the cardinal and intermediate directions, the dpa' bo cliff, it is Dpa' 'og gi dpa' bo dbang chen brag. That which is called Yongs grags dpa' ra is the treasure site of this list. All the others need to be examined. In particular, the rock mountain in the center of the southern direction is where the *sgo khang* is, as stated above.

⁴²⁸ The text is Mchog gling and Mkhan po Ratna. Mkhan po Ratna was a well-known abbot of Karma dgon, and was at the opening of Karmo stag tshang with Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, though he is not depicted in the *thang ka*.

⁴²⁹ Mchog gyur gling pa's thirty-seventh treasure casket, the *Bde mchog sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* cycle, is said to have been revealed from here. The texts of which are mostly in volume 33 of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*.

⁴³⁰ The *Mchog gling gter gsar* edition reads: *lho nub rdo rje 'dra ba'i brag ni/ ni lha lung zhud dang nye ba na lha lung dpal rdor sgrub gnas*. The version found in Dkon mchog 'gyur med reads *lho nub rdo rje 'dra ba'i brag ri ni lha lung khud dang nye ba na lha lung dpal rdor sgrub gnas* (p. 269-270), which might translate to something like “The mountain in the south that is like a vajra is related to (?) Lha lung; nearby is a practice cave of Lha lung dpal rdor. The manuscript (4a), though unclear, appears to read: *lho nub rdo rje 'dra ba'i brag ni/ lha lung bzhugs dang nye ba lha lung dpal rdor sgrub gnas*. I have followed that version. Lha lung dpal is the legendary assassin of the Tibetan King Glang dar ma in the early tenth century.

[20] The attributes-aspect of the buddha attributes, which is unrevealed in the text here, is Rdzong shod bde gshegs 'dus pa'i pho brang in the 'Dzings region.⁴³¹ The omniscient lama and the great treasure revealer, father and son, together opened the site and received profound treasure.⁴³²

[21] The site of body-aspect of the buddha attributes, Rngul mda' pho brang, is in front of the Sde dge Lhun grub steng, 'Bri gnyan ldangs. Bdud 'dul rdo rje opened the site, and there are *gnas yig* by the siddhas of Sde dge, the great treasure himself and [one by] Gnam chos Mi 'gyur rdo rje.⁴³³ The line “my emanation named Brtson 'grus” refers to the great siddha Thang stong rgyal po or to Brtson 'grus bzang po,⁴³⁴ [both of whom] came at the beginning to chose the first site of the Sde dge capital and bless it and so forth. [134] The king named Byi is the *dharmarāja* Bstan pa tshe ring (1678-1738) The emanation of Mu tig is today's Lha sras Dpal ldan 'chi med rtag pa'i rdo rje (b.1840-1898?).

[22] The site of the speech-aspect of the buddha attributes is Padma shel phug, in the *kīla* of 'Dzom nang, in Smad shod, which is also known as Rme shod. Here the father and son together revealed the Rdzogs chen sde gsum and the gazetteer⁴³⁵ for the place, and opened the site.

[23] Regarding the mind-aspect of the buddha attributes, Tsā 'dra rin chen brag, it is a is in the vicinity of the renowned mountain behind Dpal spungs monastery, Dbu che brag dkar. The mountain is, in general, Dewikoṭī, but the rock mountain to the east is the actual Tsā 'dra. Regarding [where it says] “Vimala[mitra]'s supreme site is hidden elsewhere,” it is above the

⁴³¹ The 'Dzing river (Chinese: Zeng qu 贈曲) drains western and northern Dpal yul county and flows into the 'Bri river at Hor po (Chinese Hepo 河坡).

⁴³² This would be the *Bka brgyad bde gshegs kun dus* cycle, the texts of which are mostly in volume 31, classified by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was the thirty-third treasure casket. The revelation of the *Zhi byed skor bdun* cycle also is also attributed to this site. These texts are mostly in volume 33. The inventory for the site is Anonymous B.

⁴³³ No gazetteer to the site is preserved in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*, nor is there mention of one having been produced in any of the hagiographies.

⁴³⁴ Unidentified.

⁴³⁵ The gazetteer is *Mchog gling* and Mkhyen brtse A.

hermitage Kun bzang bde chen 'od gsal gling. Having received the *Gsang thig skor gsum*⁴³⁶ and the gazetteer⁴³⁷ from here, the site was opened.

[24] The site of the activities-aspect of the buddha attribute is known as Seng gnam brag at the head of the Ka 'dzom [valley] in the 'Bri region. [135] The great treasure revealer Bdud 'dul rdo rje opened the site and there is a gazetteer.⁴³⁸ The one named Ratna is the one whose religious name is known as Dkon mchog bstan 'dzin – Mchog gyur gling pa himself, who received the [cycles called] *Dam chos shog sde drug, Chos rgyal bla dpe*,⁴³⁹ the gazetteer and so forth. Regarding the line “from the sky lake” and so forth, this is a reference to Situ Padma kun bzang chos kyi rgyal po [also named], as per the prophesies, Padma'i snying po and so forth, who was an emanation of Padma[sambhava] and a reincarnation of those who do the work of Padma himself, and was born at the edge of the Byang gnam lake.

[25] The main site of buddha activities is the renowned Kaḥ thog rdo rje gdan. The line “My emanation named Bde gshegs” refers to Kaḥ dam pa bde gshegs (1122-1192). [The phrase] “lion-like generations” refers to what are known as the thirteen generations [of Kaḥ thog] abbots that began with Dam [pa bde gshegs, [Chos rje btsan bston] Gtsang [ston Rdo rje rgyal mtshan] (1126-1215), and Byams [pa 'bum] (1179-1252).

[26] [Regarding the activity-aspect of buddha activity, if one investigates the rock mountain [named] Rdo je spung pa it is [to be identified as] Bse rag lcog brag. This is in accordance with the statement that it is to the east [of Kaḥ thog]. [136]

[27] Regarding the site of the speech-aspect of the buddha activities called “Gtsang,” it is Gtsang gshis rdo rje gro lod near the Rngu river in lower Tsha sgang. There is an extensive gazetteer by Stag shams [nus ldan rdo rje, also known as] Bsam gtan gling pa. Bdud 'dul drag mo and others received profound treasure there.

⁴³⁶ Classified by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po as the twenty fifth treasure casket.

⁴³⁷ Mchog gling and Kong sprul A.

⁴³⁸ The gazetteer is Mchog gling and Kong sprul D.

⁴³⁹ These are classified as the thirteenth and fourteenth treasure casket; I have not located the gazetteer, if it exists.

[28] The site of the body-aspect of the buddha activities, Phra rag brag/Phra rag tshes pa in the region called Rdu, might be near the Rdu river basin, but this requires further investigation.

[29] The site of the mind-aspect of buddha activity, called Bkra shis, in Bu 'bor sgang, is possibly in the area around Li thang, and if one investigates, [one would find that] it is probably Kam po gangs ra.⁴⁴⁰ If that is the case, it is [described] at length in the gazetteer of Zhwa dmar [VI] Chos kyi dbang phyug (1584-1630).

[30] Regarding the site of the attributes-aspect of the buddha activity, Hyel gyi brag, it is said there is a “Hyal gyi brag” in Sga stod, but this needs investigation.

[31] Of the four exceptional sites, the one which consolidates all the sites of buddha body, Ma yo gangs ra, it is in Upper Nang chen, called Gze rgyal gwa pa, and has had many door-openers, such as Khams pa Kun dga' bstan 'dzin [Khams sprul III, Ngag dbang kun dga' bstan 'dzin] (1680 1728).

[32] Between 'Dzi and Zla is the [site which] consolidates the sites of buddha speech, Spo ne brag at Ri bo che. [137] [Dharma seng ge] Sangs rgyas dbon (1177-1237) and Jñānaśrī opened the door to the site. Bdud 'dul [rdo rje] and Gnam chos [Karma] chags med met there.

[33] The [site] that consolidates the sites of the buddha mind, Spo ne mdung, needs further investigation.

[34] Stabs gyal ngang sengge,⁴⁴¹ between the Rtsi and Zla rivers, the [site which] consolidates the sites of the buddha attributes, is the mountain behind the retreat center [at Zur mang], these days [known as] Zur mang stabs.

[35] From the eight emanated sites [which] tame beings through activity, the [site] which tames peacefully, the land of Rgyam rdo ti gangs dkar padma bkod, was opened by the great treasure revealer himself. The gazetteer was received from Sga stod rin chen shel brag.⁴⁴²

⁴⁴⁰ The first of three Karma bka' brgyud monasteries established by Karma pa I, Dus gsum mkhyen pa, founded in 1164.

⁴⁴¹ Following the manuscript (5a). The gter gсар version reads “seng seng.”

⁴⁴² Possibly Mchog gling M.

[Karma pa IV] Rol pa'i rdo rje (1340-1384) extracted amazing magical profound treasure from Mtsho nag on the front side.

[36] Jo bo ri, [the site] that tames expansively, is either [the place] known as either Jo bo zhal dkar in Sga stod, or Srid spangs sgyogs chen gdong ra, which is one of five related nomadic lands. It is said that one named Drung Kun dga'i rin chen from the Gcod tradition⁴⁴³ opened the door to the site. [138]

[37] The [site which] tames powerfully, Ri bo dbang zhu, is in the Rting lhung. Rje lama [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po] made a request to the great treasure revealer himself and [in response Mchog gyur gling pa] composed a gazetteer.⁴⁴⁴ From the Dkar mo brag there they received as treasure parts of the *Thugs sgrub [bar chad kun sel]*.⁴⁴⁵ According to a section of the gazetteer for Rdzong shod Bde gshegs 'dus pa that was revealed as treasure by the omniscient lama [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po], there is a gazetteer for this place.⁴⁴⁶

[38] The [site which] tames fiercely is associated with the front side of Padma ri mtho, a rear mountain to the north of Klong thang sgröl ma,⁴⁴⁷ and is known as Seng ge gnam rdzong.

[39] Regarding Smugs sangs, the [site which] tames via the Vajra family, Rngu chos rdor⁴⁴⁸ opened the site. It was a place where Gnam chos Mi 'gyur rdo rje resided, commonly known as Ku se smugs sangs. The gazetteer for the caves to the right and left of here was made by Gnam chos. The second auxiliary of this place is the auspicious heart of the site which is known as Rmugs sangs, the near Lcags ra'i mnga' 'og tshe tsha. [139] Rje lama [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po]

⁴⁴³ Unidentified.

⁴⁴⁴ No gazetteer for Ri bo dbang zhu is preserved in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*.

⁴⁴⁵ Classified by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po as casket #5, dated to either 1854 or 55. The texts are in vol. 11-12 of the *Mchog gling gter gsar*.

⁴⁴⁶ This line is curious, and the manuscript does not add anything significant, differing only in the last word of the passage. The the *Mchog gling gter gsar* version reads *las* instead of the manuscript's more reasonable *lags* (manuscript f. 5b).

⁴⁴⁷ The manuscript reads Thang sgröl ma (f. 5b).

⁴⁴⁸ Unidentified.

and the great treasure revealer together opened this site and received the gazetteer as mind treasure.⁴⁴⁹

[40] Regarding Rong brag nag po, the [site which] tames via the jewel family, it is in Mkhar mdo'i mnga' khul in 'Bri chu phar ka, widely known as a Bon place, a Bon treasure cache called Zhe zhol stag rtse; [Bstan gnyis gling pa] Tshe dbang rgyal po (1480-1535) opened the place.

Regarding “one who engages profound treasure,” this refers to [Rig 'dzin] Kun grol grags pa (b. 1700). Whether or not [the line] “about three generations after him a being with powerful name that sounds like “g.yu”” [refers to] Tshe dbang grags pa⁴⁵⁰ needs to be investigated.

[41] To the east of that is the site which tames via the lotus family. It might be what is called Dkar yag in the mountains in Rong rgyab, a site which was opened by Spang mtshes dpa'i po,⁴⁵¹ or else it is what is called G.yu drung dkar chung in Kun grol lung; whichever it is needs to be investigated. The rock mountain which is like a lotus hat, if it were to be investigated, is the former.⁴⁵²

[42] Regarding the site which tames via the karma family, it is the seat of the siddha Rgyal sras Spom brag pa [Bsod nams rdo rje] (1170-1249) of Karma kam tshang [monastery]. [140] The great siddha [Karma] Pakṣi and so forth blessed the site, and there is a gazetteer which is the work of Gnam chos Mi 'gyur rdo rje. It is also the site where the amazing Gcod tradition of the nephew of Spon brag pa arose.

Here these forty-two [sites] made explicitly clear [by the treasure text], whether or not [their identities] can be deciphered, those which have been actually opened are: Gle thu karma [#3] Kha la rong sgo [#4] Na bun rdzong [#10] Sga stod g.yu brag [#6] Ye rgyal nam mkha' rdzong [#11] Mkha' 'gro 'bum rdzong [#14] Khro zil khrom [aka Ru dam gangs kyi ra ba, #19]

⁴⁴⁹ No gazetteer to Rmugs sangs is found in the *Mchog gling gter gsar*.

⁴⁵⁰ Unidentified.

⁴⁵¹ Unidentified.

⁴⁵² 'Jam mgon Kong sprul completed the identification of this site, the mountain called Padma lha rtse located in his home valley of Rong rgyab, in 1878. See his autobiography, ff. 148b-150a, for a recounting of his exploration of the mountain and his discovery of the Padmasambhava cave there.

Dpa' 'og dbang chen brag,⁴⁵³ Rdzong shod [#20] Padma shel phug [#22] Tsā 'dra rin chen brag [#23] Seng gnam brag [#24] Rdo ti gangs dkar [#35] Ri bo dbang zhu [#37] and Smugs sangs gnyis pa Bkra shis gnas [#39].

Not included here are scattered sites such as: Brag dkar rdzong chung in the gter chen's own birthplace; [141] Nang chen Bla rdzo brag dkar; Dpa' rong dkar bar brag; Rdza shar lung bya rdzong; A 'bum rin chen spungs pa; 'Dzi smad mkha' 'gro shel phug; Gter sgar sgrol ma phug; Rag shul ble mtsho; Zur mang gnya' na med; Sga stod me seng rin chen shel brag; Khri 'du ri mgo po tā la; Dpa' 'og 'bur mo brag; Dge rgyal nang lama nor lha'i gnas smug yag ma; Rme shod Rong rme dkar mo stag tshang bzhi pa; Ma pham gsum pa si du g.yu mtsho spom 'bom padma shel ri; 'Dzing yul khro bo khyung lung dngul mkhar; Nyin lhung g.yu lung shel brag; Kha lag phyag mo dpal ri; A thang thugs rje kun sgrol gnas; Sprel zla dbal gsas rngam pa'i gnas te lnga; Hor lung khyung tshang gnas lnga; Bu la g.yu drung rnam bkod; the main site and its six auxiliaries; Go stod rin chen rnam par bkod pa; the main site and its five auxiliaries; the auxiliary of the site of the body-aspect of the buddha attributes, 'Bri rgyal gnyan ldangs, Rdzong chen khang phug, the main site and its auxiliaries; [142] the sites on the edge of Rmugs sangs gnyis pa Bkra shis dpal phug, especially Zhi khro shel phug in the south, the glorious hill site of Gnod sbyin nor lha in Kha gting, in the north.

In the gazetteer of the Rdzong shod bde gshegs 'dus pa'i pho brang chen po, it is clear that in the east is an auxiliary, in A rig, called Dpal chen dgyis pa'i pho brang, a second Yang le shod. In the south is the dwelling of Guru Rdo rje gro lod, Dmar mdo brag dmar zangs yag nam mkha' rdzong. In the west above the site of Amitāyus is Bkra shis Zla gam dbang phug, the heart of Smos pa'i ri bo dbang zhu'i. In the north is the site of Gnod sbyin nor lha, 'bar rgyal khong ri. These are four great places.

Thus, here, not only are there those forty-two sites established by the list, but together with the forty-three there are about eighty-five. [143] By the benevolent activity arising from

⁴⁵³ Unclear.

the decisive conditions of the blessing of the emanated treasure revealer's wisdom-vision, all degeneration of the teachings and beings of greater Tibet, in general and specific, is eased; and the [positive] circumstances for all beings who see, hear, think and touch and the well-being and prosperity of the ultimate universal benefit has increased.

Lest they be forgotten, these notes, in accordance with the wishes of the great treasure revealer and the master, the father and son, were written on the on the day that the ḍākinī gather [the twenty-fifth day] in the second half of the twelfth month of the fire hare year of the fifteenth sexagenary cycle, (February 19, 1868) by Padma gar dbang blo gros mtha' yas. *Suśri yebha vetu.*

Appendix Three

A Translation of *The Beautiful Necklace of Clear Mind: Brief Remarks on the Origin of the Teachings Without Bias*

[860] Homage to the Buddha. He whose resolve is greater than that of the two thousand enlightened guides in this fortunate eon and whose ability is supreme, our teacher, Lord Śākya; according to the common vehicle, he first generated the mind of enlightenment and thereby awakened to the naturally intrinsic potential [of buddhahood]. For thirty-three countless eons he [practiced] the ethics of merit and wisdom, and, via the means of the six or the ten worldly and world-transcendent perfections, attained complete accumulations. He increased, developed and stabilized the final family of potential to be developed.⁴⁵⁴ He perfectly completed the thirty-seven factors of enlightenment⁴⁵⁵ [861] and so traversed the five *mārga*,⁴⁵⁶ and at the end of the continuum of the ten *bhūmi* he conquered the adventitious and the subtle stains, and thereby actually accomplished every aspect of the nature of the fundamental sugatagarbha. Having done so, he [attained] a true and perfected enlightenment in the reality of all dharmas.

For the sake of those disciples of the lowest capacity [he turned] the wheel of dharma [that teaches] the cycle of the twelve links [of dependent origination], thrice announcing his initial teaching of the four truths of suffering, origin, path and cessation. For the sake of those [disciples] of intermediate capacity [he turned] the wheel of dharma that ascertains that all perceived characteristics of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* are without essence, his middle teachings,

⁴⁵⁴ *Rgyas 'gyur gyi rigs*; this contrasts to *rang bzhin gnas rigs*, the *gotra* (family, class) that is unconditioned and naturally occurring.

⁴⁵⁵ *Byang chub phyogs kyi chos sum bu rtsa bdun*: the four essential recollections, the four correct renunciations, the four stages of miraculous ability, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven branches of enlightenment, and eightfold path.

⁴⁵⁶ The paths of accumulation, joining, seeing, cultivating and beyond training.

from [the teaching on] form through to the [teaching of] omniscience. For the sake of those [disciples] of the highest capacity [862] he turned the wheel of dharma that correctly distinguishes whether dharmas are existent or non-existent, empty or not empty, via the three characteristics of the continuum of the path;⁴⁵⁷ the ultimate teaching on the imaginary, the dependent, and the absolute.⁴⁵⁸

In actuality the perfect Buddha, the vajrakāya, is the very existence of the unchanging wheel of the three times, though in the common perception of the disciples of lower intellect he abides in equanimity in the expanse of peace.

There were three councils for the compilation of teaching led by Mahākaśyapa and the others. At the final council the śrāvaka split into eighteen sects, producing the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntrika sects. Then the venerable Avitarka and about five hundred ācārya came, and they initiated the Cittamātra tenet system.⁴⁵⁹ Then came Ārya Nāgārjuna, the mahācārya prophesied by the Buddha, came and he composed the Collection of Advice, commentaries on the first turning of the wheel;⁴⁶⁰ the Six Works on Reasoning, commentaries on the second turning of the wheel;⁴⁶¹ and the Collection of Praises, commentaries on the final [turning of the wheel].⁴⁶² He was the first in the tradition of great charioteers of the Mahāyāna.

The tenet system of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka is the system of his follower Buddhapālita; Bhāvaviveka expounded the tenet system of the Svātantrika-Madhyamaka. Śāntarakṣita and others were the three masters of the Eastern Prāsaṅgika -Madhyamaka;⁴⁶³

⁴⁵⁷ *Mtshan nyid gsum*. These are the characteristics of knowledge, entrance to the path, and the result.

⁴⁵⁸ *Dbang po rab kyi don tu bka' tha ma kun brtags gzhan dbang yongs grub ste mtshan nyid gsum gyis chos yod med dang stong mi stong legs par rnam par phye ba'i chos kyi 'khor lo bskor*.

⁴⁵⁹ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul drew this from the Jo nang pa historians. According to Tāranātha, Avitarka was one of five hundred masters during the time of Aśoka responsible for disseminating the early Mahāyāna sūtras such as the *Avataṃsaka* and the *Laṅkāvatāra* and for expanding the university monastery of Nālandā (Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya, pp. 98-102). See Kapstein 2000b, pp. 116-119 for Avitarka's place in the Jo nang exposition of *gzhan stong* and Cittamātra.

⁴⁶⁰ *Gtam tshogs*. These include such works as the *Suhrilleka* (*Bshes pa'i sprin yig*) the "Letter to a Friend."

⁴⁶¹ *Rigs tshogs*. These include the *Madyamakakārikā*.

⁴⁶² *Bstod tshogs*; texts concerned with the dharmadhātu.

⁴⁶³ *Rang rgyud shar gsum*: These are Śāntarakṣita, who wrote the *Madhyamakālamkāra*, his master Jñānagarbha, who wrote the *Dbu ma bden gnyis* and Kamalaśīla, who wrote the *Dbu ma snang ba*.

Candrakīrti and Śāntideva and others promoted the tenet system of *rang stong*, which defeats all wrong views by means of the Prāsaṅgika argument. [863]

Then the second charioteer, Ārya Asanga came into the world. Having gone to Tuṣita [and met] Maitreya in person, he received the five Mahāyāna [texts]: the Two Ornaments,⁴⁶⁴ the Two Differentiations,⁴⁶⁵ and the *Uttaratantra* [*Ratnagotravibhāga*] which he then propagated in the human world. His younger brother [Vasubhandu] and Candragomī[n] and others, many superior masters in learning and practice, taught and practiced the twenty treatises relating to Maitreya⁴⁶⁶ and thereby established them. They then proclaimed the great lion's roar of the irreversible *gzhan stong*,⁴⁶⁷ and the tenet system of the definitive Madhyamaka spread [as though] filling the sky. Countless vajrācārya, chief among them the eighty-four siddha such as Śrī Saraha and Lūipa, Ghaṅṭāpa, and Kṛṣṇācārya, who were taken as disciples by the Herukas and Vajradākinīs, were introduced to many tantras of the secret mantra via the great secret treasury of the naturally accomplished.⁴⁶⁸ Many hundreds of thousands of assemblies of those of this fortunate eon accomplished the non-dual wisdom body.

This snowy country was initially a lower realm, an isolated coil in the ocean,⁴⁶⁹ the monkey and rock demoness, emanations of Avalokiteśvara and Tārā, spread the seed of human

⁴⁶⁴ These are the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra* (*Mdo sde rgyan*) and the *Abhisamayālamkāra* (*Mngon rtog rgyan*).

⁴⁶⁵ These are the *Madhyāntavibhāga* (*Dbus dang mtha' rnam par 'byed pa'i bstan bcos*) and the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāga* (*Chos dang chos dang nyid rnam par 'byed pa'i bstan bcos*).

⁴⁶⁶ These are the Five Books of Maitreya [named above by Kong sprul], the *Yogācārabhūmiśāstra* (*Sa sde lnga*) and the *Sdom rnam gnyis* by Asanga, and the *Aṣṭaparakaraṇa* by Vasubandhu. The *Sa sde lnga* are: the *Bhūmivastu* (*Rnal 'byor spyod pa'i sa*), the *Vastusaṃgrahaṇī* (*Rnal 'byor spyod pa'i sa las gzhi bsdu ba*), the *Paryāyasamgrahaṇī* (*Rnal 'byor spyod pa'i sa las rnam grangs bsdu ba*), the *Vivaraṇasamgrahaṇī* (*Rnal 'byor spyod pa'i sa las rnam par bshad pa'i bsdu ba*) and the *Viniścayasamgrahaṇī* (*Rnal 'byor spyod pa'i sa las gtan la phab pa'i bsdu ba*). The *Sdom rnam gnyis* are: the *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (*Mngon pa kun las btsu pa*) and the *Mahāyānasamgraha* (*Theg pa chen po bsdu pa*). The *Aṣṭaparakaraṇa* are: the *Sūtrālamkāravṛtti* (*Mdo sde rgyan gyi bshad pa*), the *Madhyāntavibhāṅgavṛtti* (*Dbus dang mtha' rnam par 'byed pa'i 'grel pa*), the *Dharmadharmatāvibhāṅgavṛtti* (*Chos dang chos nyid rnam par 'byed pa'i 'grel pa*), the *Vyākhyāyukti* (*Rnam par bshad pa'i rig pa*), the *Karmasiddhiparakaraṇa* (*Las grub pa'i rab tu 'byed pa*), the *Pañcaskandhaparakaraṇa* (*Phung po lnga'i rab tu 'byed pa*), the *Viṃśatikā* (*Nyi shu pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*), and the *Triṃśikā* (*Sum cu pa'i tshig le'ur byas pa*).

⁴⁶⁷ This appears to be reference to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's own commentary on the *Uttaratantra*, the *Irreversible Lion's Roar*. See Kong sprul H.

⁴⁶⁸ *Rang bzhin gyis grub pa'i gsang ba chen po'i mdzod*.

⁴⁶⁹ *Rgya mtsho gcig tu 'khyil*.

beings. [864] Gradually the power of the craven realm – the *phyā*, *dmu* and *gtshug* demons, and the *bdud*, *btsan* and *ma sang* and so forth, came to an end. The King Gnya' khri btsan po, who came from the line of the Śākya Licavī descended via the *dmu* chord and became the lord of the realm of the Tibetan realm. Then, in that line of kings, there were the seven whose thrones were in the sky, the two who were over water, the six who were good to the land, the eight who were in the ether, the five who were strict with words and so forth. The political system was maintained by the Bon, the Sgrung and the Lde'u. Of those, the Bon was transmitted earlier; in their tradition there are [numerous vehicles], including: three types of divinations of the Zhang zhung Sgo, Phug and Bar; the vehicle of the prognostic Gshen [rab], making prophecies on the happiness and suffering of life and death by means of the three hundred and sixty main and countless lesser classes of *mdud* regarding the gods, demons and men they make prognostications; the vehicle of the emanated Gzhan [rab], which has many different classes of conventional astrology that separate the *gtsug lag* into three hundred and sixty *gab rtse* diagrams; the vehicle of the life Gshen [rab], which creates bliss [for] the *bla* of death and the realm of the living by the great deed of subjugating the executioners and the enemies of the heavens, the earth and the ether; the vehicle of appearing Gshan [rab by which], by means of the three hundred sixty different methods of ransom, the gods and executioners do not pass above, misfortune and the *sri* do not press below, and fortune and luck are not surpassed in-between. By virtue of the propagation of these worldly vehicles once concludes that the earlier tenet systems in the land of Tibet were Bon po. [865]

Then the emanation of the bodhisattva Samantabhadra, Lha tho tho ri snyan shal⁴⁷⁰ discovered the dharma for the first time. Then the actual Avalokiteśvara, Srong btsan sgam po initiated [the Buddhist] tradition. [The emanation of] Mañjuśrī, Khri srong lde'u btsan, and the emanation of Vajrapāṇi, Khri Ral pa can both propagated and caused it to flourish. From

⁴⁷⁰ This is Lha tho tho ri snyan btsan. Purportedly born in 433, he is credited with bringing the first Buddhist scripture to Tibet, often said to be the *Kāraṇḍavyūhasūtra*.

Oḍḍyāna [came] the Ācārya Sarohavajra [i.e. Padmasambhava]; from Zahor [came] Mkhan chen rin po che Bodhisattva [Śāntarakṣita]; and from the land of the Kaśmir [came] Kamalaśīla. These two great masters who had accomplished the vajrakāya [that is, Padmasambhava and Kamalaśīla] together with the Mkhan chen, were the three main learned and accomplished masters of all the one hundred mahāpaṇḍitas who came [to Tibet]. Many great emanated translators such as Lo chen Vairocana and the three translators [named] Ska [ba dpal brtsegs],⁴⁷¹ Cog [ro klu'i rgyal mtshan]⁴⁷² and Zhang [ye shes sde]⁴⁷³ and others translated all the vacana and śāstra of enlightened intent that were well known in India. Padmasambhava and others also introduced, from the secret ḍākinī storehouse, the profound secret tantras that were said to be common in India but which did not [yet] exist [in Tibet], and great merit came to Tibet. The great master of the maṇḍala of the Ocean of Dharma that Embodies all Teachings⁴⁷⁴ [i.e. Padmasambhava] caused his twenty-five disciples and countless others to attain fruition and the vajra and rainbow bodies.

The first teachings of the early transmission of the secret mantra Vajrayāna went to Gnyag [ñānakumāra].⁴⁷⁵ [866] It next went to Gnubs [Sangs rgyas ye shes] and finally to Zur.⁴⁷⁶ It is said that the drumbeat of their doctrine was like the wind in the mountains. Moreover, that which is commonly known as the nine vehicles of the early transmission consolidates the great collection of tantra in general and specific [categories]. The teachings and practice of the *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*, the *Sgyu 'phrul zhi khro* [i.e. the *Māyājāla*] and the *Sgrub sde chen po bka'*

⁴⁷¹ One of the first seven Tibetan monks ordained by Śāntarakṣita.

⁴⁷² A Vinaya master and patriarch of the treasure tradition, as well as one of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava.

⁴⁷³ One of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava.

⁴⁷⁴ *Bka' 'dus chos kyi gya mtsho* – is this a text or an epithet?

⁴⁷⁵ One of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava; Zla bzang sprul sku Karma nge don was said to have been his reincarnation.

⁴⁷⁶ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul likely intends the entire Zur clan here, the first teacher being Lha rje Zur po che Śākya 'byung gnas. See Dudjom 1991, pp. 601-606 for the lineage of Gnyag; pp. 607-616 for that of Gnubs; and pp. 617-649 for that of the Zur.

*brgyad*⁴⁷⁷ having been made manifest, the disciples and their disciples certainly attained the fruit [of the path] in their next life or in the *bar do*, or attained the body of coemergence in their very own lifetime; that is sure.

The chief lineage-holder teachers [of the early translations] in the Upper region [of Western Tibet] were the kings of mantra: So [Ye shes dbang phyug?], Zur, and Gnubs. In the Lower region [Khams] they were [Kaḥ thog] Dam [pa bde gshegs (1122-1192)] Gtsang [Ston pa; Kaḥ thog rgyal tshab I, Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (1126-1216)] and [Kaḥ thog rgyal tshab II] Byams [pa 'bum (1179-1252)], together with their disciples.⁴⁷⁸ From the time of Rong zom [chos kyi bzang po] (1012-1088) and the others, the lineage of doctrine-holders has remained unbroken through to the present. O rgyan dus gsum mkhyen pa [i.e. Padmasambhava], in consideration of disciples in general, and specifically beings of the degenerate age, hid myriad named and countless unnamed [treasures], the main ones being in the five great treasure caskets in the four directions and the center. The rebirths and emanations of the fortunate ones who the Great One of Oḍḍyāna brought to fruition via the Vajra maṇḍala, King [Khri srong lde'u btsan], the subject [Ba sgor Vairocana] and the companion [Ye shes mtsho rgyal] chief among them, became known as the one hundred great treasure revealers and the one thousand lesser treasure revealers: the three supreme *sprul sku*, the eleven *gling pa*, the five *dri me*, the eleven *nus ldan* and so forth. [867] They [have been extracting] treasure caskets of teachings, jewels, substances, medicine and places and so forth, for the sake of beings, taming them according to their needs, [and will continue to do so] until the arrival of Maitreya. These are the teachers of the early transmission sect which later came to be known as the Gsang sngags Rnying ma. Nowadays, belonging to that, there are many independent tenet systems that hold to the Rnying ma, such as the “upper” Rdor [brag] and Sming [grol gling traditions]; the “lower” Kaḥ [thog] and Dpal [yul traditions] and the “middle” Zhe [chen] and Rdzogs [chen traditions].

⁴⁷⁷ Three principle Mahāyoga tantra revealed as treasure. The first is sometimes counted among the so-called Eighteen tantra of the Sems sde class of Rdzogs chen scripture.

⁴⁷⁸ On the Kaḥ thog lineage see Dudjom 1991, pp. 688-699.

There is not a single tenet system in Tibet into which these treasure teachings have not spread.⁴⁷⁹

Following the sovereign Khri Ral [pa chan], as prophesied by the *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*, came the perverted king Glang dar who suppressed the teachings and erased even the words sūtra and tantra from Dbus and Gtsang. At that time [Stod lung pa] Smar [Śākyamuni], G.yog [dge 'byung], and ['Jad kyi gyel mi] Gtsang [pa rab gsal] were in Mdo smad, residing at Dan tig Shel gyi phug. They gave monks vows to Bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal; that lineage of vows is known as the “lower vinaya” and today is the lineage of vows in the Rnying ma and Dge lugs.⁴⁸⁰

At the time of the sovereign Khri srong [lde'u btsan]'s religious laws, in accordance with the wishes of Mkhān [po Śāntarakṣita] and Slob [dpon Padmasambhava] the outer Bon, which advocated a destructive doctrine,⁴⁸¹ was for the most part suppressed, and some [of the proponents] were exiled. Divination, astrology, the reading of omens and the reading of fortunes and so forth, those things which are of benefit to beings, were largely left as they were. [868] The teachings of the essential meaning of the [Bon] sūtra, [Bon] *Aṣṭasāhasrikaprajñāpāramitā* and the [Bon] *dhāraṇī* by means of the five treasuries and the four gates to the five world-transcendent vehicles – the *Dge bsnyen* vehicle, the *Drang srong* vehicle, the *A dkar* vehicle, the *Ye gshen* vehicle, and the *Khyad par thegs pa*) – were also left as they were. Because of this, the six great lama of the upper region, the thirteen descendents in the middle, and the four intelligent men in the lower region, the eight vidhyādhara translators, the nine magicians, the twenty great Bon, the three thousand ministers, the specially remembered father and son and so forth; these were all said work for the benefit of religion and secular society and propagate Bon.

⁴⁷⁹ This is a remarkable claim regarding the dissemination of the Rnying ma teachings into other lineages: *gter chos rnams kyis ma khyab pa'i grub mtha' ni bod na gcig kyang med do.*

⁴⁸⁰ *Mnga' bdag khri ral gyi rjes su 'jam dpal rtsa rgyud las lung bstan pa log pa'i rgyal po glang dar gyis bstan pa bsnub cing dbus gtsang du mdo sngags gnyis ka ming med du gyur pa'i tshe mdo smad dan tig shel gyi phug par bzhugs pa'i smar g.yo gtsang gsum gyis bla chen dgongs pa rab gsal bsnyen par rdzogs shing / de'i sdom rgyun la smad 'dul zhes grags la / da lta rnying ma dang dge lugs kyi sdom rgyun de yin.*

⁴⁸¹ *Tshe ba chos su smra ba'i phyi bon.*

After Glang dar ma suppressed the teachings, Lha bla ma [Ye shes 'od and Byang chub 'od], uncle and nephew, sent twenty-one youths such as Lo chen Rin chen bzang po (957-1055) and others, to India. They invited the Lord, Śrī Atisha (982-1054). By the kindness of those two translators the countless profound teachings of sūtra and tantra were translated anew. This was the commencement of what is called the new mantra later transmission. Lord [Atisha]'s three disciples were Khu [ston Brtson 'grus g.yung drung] Rngog [Legs pa'i shes rab] and 'Brom [ston Rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas, 1004-1064]. 'Brom [ston]'s disciples Pu to ba [rin chen sal], Spyan snga ba [tshul khriims 'bar, 1038-1103], and Phu chung ba [gzhun nu rgyal mtshan], were known as the three brothers. Many disciples of the earlier [i.e. Pu to ba] came, such Sangs rgyas 'od dpag med (d.u), Glang ri thang pa (1054-1123), Rdo rje seng ge (d.u.) and so forth, lords of bodhicitta and good like the arhants; countless [holders of their lineage] came [869] and brought boundless beings to liberation by means of the stages of the path of the three kinds of persons.⁴⁸² They came to be known as the Bka' dam pa. Their earliest monastic seats were many, such as Bde, Gsang [phu ne'u thog]⁴⁸³ and Gung, and Dga', Skyo, and Zul.⁴⁸⁴ However, nowadays not only has [the lineage] been mixed into the Bka' brgyud, Dge lugs and Sa skya and so forth, but aside from 'Brom chen po's seat, Ra sgren and so forth, there are no autonomous [Bka' dam pa] tenet systems remaining.

Around the same time, Khro phu lo tsā ba Byams pa dpal (1173-1225)⁴⁸⁵ invited Kaśmiri Śākyaśrī, the paṇḍita of Vikramalaśīla. In one day eleven men such as Sa skya paṇ chen (1182-1251) and others took complete ordination; the main preceptor, Byang chub dpal (d.u), completed the quorum of monks; he and Rdo rje dpal (d.u.) were the preceptor and the cantor, and Bsod nams [rgyal mtshan] (1182-1261) and Dkong mchog rgyal mtshan (d.u) were the *chos lung* and the *bye rdzing*. This transmission came to be known as the “upper” transmission of the

⁴⁸² *Skyes bu gsum gyi lam rim*; also the name of a text by Tsong kha pa.

⁴⁸³ This monastery, not far from Lhasa, was founded by Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab in 1073.

⁴⁸⁴ I cannot identify any of these save Gsang phu ne'u thog.

⁴⁸⁵ Founded Khro phu monastery and the lineage of the Khro phu bka' brgyud via Phags mo gru pa and Rin chen rgyal tsha.

vinaya, and is for the most part the tradition of the vinaya lineage of the Bka' brgyud and the Sa skya.

Lord [Atisha's] disciple and the founder of the seat of Gsang phu [ne'u thog] was Rngog Legs pa'i shes rab (d.u.). His nephew, Rngog lo chen blo ldan shes rab (1059-1109), spent twenty-five years in north-east India and became an unequalled scholar-adept. [870] The lineage his disciples is known as the "Lions of the Phya pa teachings" (i.e. the Sautrāntika-Madhyamaka); because the power of their awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal*) was unexcelled they initiated the system of *Tshad ma bsdus ra* ("Collected Topics on Logic"). His followers came to be known as the eight great lions of Gsang phu [ne'u thog] and their enlightened deeds were legion.

The lord Mar pa chos kyi blo gros (1012-1097/9), Hevajra appeared in actuality, went three times to the land of the ārya [i.e. India]. Having taken as teachers many learned adepts, chief among them the universally renowned mahāpaṇḍitas Nāropa and the lord Maitripa, he received the complete pure nectar of the four tantra sections the secret mantra⁴⁸⁶ in general, and four transmissions of the teachings,⁴⁸⁷ specifically, and he attained the rank of mahāsiddha. His disciple lineage flourished and his dharma lineage was like a major river, fulfilling a long-standing prophesy. Of his disciples such as "the four main pillars,"⁴⁸⁸ from Rngog ston Chos sku rdo rje, [who received] the transmission of the scriptural commentaries that was like a flowing river, arose an autonomous tradition that survived into later times. The transmission of inner heat went to the venerable Mi la [ras pa], who through countless hardships attained the siddhi.

[Mi la ras pa] had endless disciples who attained the actual signs of accomplishment, chief among them Ras chung rdo rje grags pa (1084-1161), who was like the moon. He who wore a long braid of the physical renunciate, and in his line of disciples were Khyung tshang ras pa

⁴⁸⁶ Presumably Kriyā, Charyā, Yoga, and Anuttarayoga, the new schools' fourfold doxography of the tantras.

⁴⁸⁷ That of the illusory body (*sgyu lus kyi bka' babs*) received from the siddha Nāgārjuna; of dreams (*rmi lam gyi bka' babs*) from the siddha Cāryapa; of clear light (*'od gsal gyi bka' babs*) from the siddha Lavapa; and of inner heat (*gtum mo'i bka' babs*) from Jñāna dākinī.

⁴⁸⁸ His four main disciples were Rngog ston Chos sku rdo rje (1036-1106), Mtshur ston Dbang gi rdo rje d.u. Mes ston tshon po (d.u.) and Mi la ras pa (1040-1123).

[Ye shes bla ma] (1115-1176) and Rgyal ba lo [ras pa] (1187-1250) and so forth. Later Gtsang smyon [he ru ka] Rus pa'i rgyan can (1452-1507),⁴⁸⁹ known as an emanation of Ras chung pa himself, [871] and others divided the lineage and instituted the independent tradition of Ras chung's oral lineage. From Ngan rdzong ras pa Byang chub rgyal po (d.u.) came the Ngan rdzong oral lineage. In particular, the matchless radiant sun-like Zla 'od gzhun nu, also known as Rgyal bas mdo yong [Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen] (1079-1153). These three, [main disciples of Mi la ras pa] were known as the *dge slong 'tsho byad* and were clearly prophesied.

After them the five hundred pure disciples and the five hundred impure disciples⁴⁹⁰ and so forth arose. Chief among the eight-hundred great practitioners prophesied by the Buddha were the three men of Khams,⁴⁹¹ who instituted the precious Bka' brgyud [lineage] that came to be known as the matchless Dwags po bka' brgyud, renowned in saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as being like the sun and the moon. They were followers of [Sgam po pa] and also of his nephew Sgom Tshul khrim snyin po (1116-1169). The seat was at Dwags po, which gradually became the foundation of the Dwags po bka' brgyud.

The dharma lineage of the nephew Sgom's disciple known as Zhang g.yu drag pa Brtson grus grags pa (1123-1193) came to be known as the Tshal pa bka' brgyud. From earlier days he was one whose enlightened activity in both religious and secular affairs in Tshal gung thang was inconceivable. From the dharma lineage of the Khams pa dbu se, or [Karmapa I] Dpal Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110-1193), came to be known as the Karma bka' brgyud. From the buddha, the actual smasher of saṃsāra, the Khams pa Rdo rje rgyal po, [872] the glorious Phag mo gru pa, came the Phag gru bka' brgyud, and from [his] siddha-disciples came the eight minor Bka' brgyud lineages.⁴⁹² From the disciples of 'Ba' ram pa dar ma dbang phyug came the 'Ba' ram bka'

⁴⁸⁹ The author of the well-known biography of Mi la ras pa.

⁴⁹⁰ *Dag pa'i 'khor lnga brgya / ma dag pa'i 'khor lnga brgya*.

⁴⁹¹ Three students of Sgam po pa: Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110-1170), Karma pa I, Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110-1193), and 'Ba' rom Dar ma dbang phyug (1127-1199).

⁴⁹² These are: 1) the 'Bri gung bka' brgyud, from 'Bri gung skyop pa 'Jigs rten gsum mgon (1143-1217); 2) Stag lung bka' brgyud from Stag lung thang pa Bkra shis dpal (1142-1210); 3) Gling ras bka' brgyud from

brgyud. In this lineage] were many special siddha; one, 'Gro mgon Ti śrī ras pa, went to China to serve as lama; 'Gro mgon ti śrī ras pa also went, and in an earlier meditation center in Nang chen he spread the religion and secular ways of the eighty Ri khag widely; this was his dharma lineage. Those four are the four major Bka' brgyud lineages.

Next, the Karma kaṃ tshang [lineage]. The incarnation of Dus [gsum] mkhyen [pa], the second [Karma pa], called Grub chen Chos kyi bla ma [Karma Pakṣi] (1204-1283), was, in renunciation and realization no different in any way from Śrī Saraha. He is universally praised as the performer of enlightened activity of the primordial victors. The name, Śrī Karmapa, is universally renowned in Tuṣita and across the oceans. Because of the simple reason that those who collectively are known as his disciples took the letters [of his title] as their name, [that which is known as] the Glorious Karma bka' brgyud arose. This truly exalted tenet system is like the top ornament of a victory banner in the center of this snowy land, itself a palace of the Buddha's teaching. That is the origin of this tenet system. Fourteen Karma pas, mighty Avalokiteśvaras, have come, [873] and the stories of their liberation and activities are known across India, China, and all of Tibet.

Manifesting as their disciples, though in reality their abandonment and realization and attributes are undifferentiated, have been [the following lines of incarnations:] the ten incarnations of Zhwa dmar pa, the victorious protector Amitābha; the [line of the] Rgyal tshab, Vajrapāṇī [incarnate], the incarnations of Go śrī – from [Rgyal tshab I, Go śrī] Dpal 'byor don grub (c. 1427-1489), five incarnations up through and including [Rgyal tshab VI] Nor bu bzang po (c. 1659-1698); and [the incarnations of] Maitreya, Kwan ting Ta'i situ,⁴⁹³ of whom there have

Gling rje ras pa padma rdo rje (1128-1288), which later became the 'Brug pa bka' brgyud under his disciple Gtsang pa rgya ras Ye shes rdo rje (1161-1211); 4) G.ya' bzang bka' brgyud from Zwa ra ba Skal ldan ye shes seng ge (d.1207); 5) Khro phu bka' brgyud from Rgya tsha (1118-1195), Kun ldan ras pa (1148-1217) and their nephew Khro phu lotsāwa Byams pa dpal (1173-1228); 6) Shug gseb bka' brgyud from Gyer sgom Tshul khrim seng ge (1144-1204); 7) Yel pa bka' brgyud from Ye shes brtsegs pa (d.u.); and 8) Smar tshang bka' brgyud from Smar pa grub thob Shes rab seng ge (d.u.)

⁴⁹³ *Guanding* 灌頂? *quanting* 官廳? 大司徒.

been six with the dharma eye and six with the lotus tongue.⁴⁹⁴ Together with the lines of Dpal ldan Dpa' bo⁴⁹⁵ and Hre'o rin po che⁴⁹⁶ there are five father and sons.

These five are described in many treasure prophecies of Padmasambhava, and are the subject of much praise for having accomplished the stage of the non-returner in regards to their sight, hearing, touch and taste. These teachers of the ways of the learned, foretold in the scripture, were not mere ordinary beings without qualities and compassion for others, but were teachers whose way of accomplishment is utterly indivisible from the great charioteers of India, and who have accomplished every aspect of the signs on the path, and who reached the status of the mahā vajrācārya. Moreover, their knowledge of the methods that could be understood [by beings], and their attainment of learning and their learning of the attainments for the benefit of others, [875] were not petty or partial. Indeed, their enlightened activity was understood by every ordinary being, and in every corner of the globe and their work for others was everlasting, spontaneous, and all-pervading.

Rma se blo gros rin chen (d.u.), a direct disciples of the Tathāgata, the lord [Karmapa] V, [Bde bzhin gshegs pa] (1385-1415), [attained] the siddha of the *Mkha' 'gro'i snying thig*, and to him was transmitted to the Cakrasaṃvara ḍākinī oral lineage [known as] the Three Cycles of the Precious Jewels. Having adopted the wisdom body of a great buddha, he established the tradition of the Great Feast Dance, and because he established the monastic seat of Zur mang, [his lineage] became known as the Zur mang bka' brgyud. The disciple of Zhwa dmar VI, Gar dbang Chos kyi dbang phyug (1584-1630), the heart son of the ninth lord [Karma pa Dbang phyug rdo rje (1556-1603)], was [Karma] Chags med (1613-1678). He perfected the four aspects

⁴⁹⁴ According to Mkhan po Phun tshogs rnam rgyal at Rdzong sar, this is a reference to there being six Ta'i si tu who were especially accomplished and six named Padma; if that is the case then there were some who had both attributes; at the time of Kong sprul's death in 1899 Ta'i si tu XI, Padma dbang phyug rgyal po (1886-1952) was alive.

⁴⁹⁵ The Dpa' bo line began with Chos dbang lhun grub (1440-1503); one of the more famous incarnations was the second, Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba (1505-1566), the author of the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, an important history of Buddhism in India and Tibet.

⁴⁹⁶ Unidentified.

of “approach and accomplishment” of the entire maṇḍalas of the old and new schools, and attained stabilization in the generation and completion stages. His unique aspiration was to take up the mantle of the teachings of many great treasure revealers, and from that the seat of the religious lineage that he spread throughout [Tibet] of the enlightened activity and tenet systems of the pure dharma came to be known as the Gnas mdo bka’ brgyud. Those two initiated the two autonomous tenet systems in which Bka’ [brgyud] and Rnying [ma] are merged into one stream, as branches of the Kaṃ tshang [tradition] still active today.

Furthermore, the disciples of those father and sons, chief among them ’Jam dbyang chen po and Karma phrin las of Mtshur phu, [875] Zha lu lo tsā, Dwags ram pa, Rje dbon karma, ’Be lo tsha dbang kun khyab, and so forth, all became great scholars. There have been a hundred thousand monks of the Gnyan ras and eighty realized beings of the Yang ri. These include Rje ban sgar pa, Sangs rgyas mnyan pa grub chen, E ba drung yig pa, Stag tsang yang dag, Tsā ri rtogs ldan, Bam steng sprul sku and others, great siddhas who personally realized the accomplishment. The lineage of learned adepts has remained unbroken through to the present day, and they have been working for the sake of the teachings and beings.

The seats of Stod lung mtshur phu, Karma ri gling, and Kaṃ po gnas nang are said to be the cakras of the buddha body, speech and mind. The eastern monastery of Spungs ri [Dpal spungs] and Hre kaṃ khyim are the sites of buddha qualities. ’Bar ra and the four Grwam grub are the sites of buddha activity. A greater number of monasteries cover the wide earth with their temples. These days, in the era of the decay of the teachings, most monastic seats are in decline. However, because of the kindness of both former and later incarnations of the Omniscient [Ta’i si tu VIII] Chos kyi ’byung gnas, the corpse of the teachings will arise again from Mdo khams to replenish the foundation of the Karma bka’ brgyud teaching and practice. Dpal spung thub bstan chos ’khor gling [876] itself is the head of a hundred springs.

The disciples of the unequaled Dwags po [Sgam po pa] became masters of attainment in the meditation on luminosity and emptiness and they enacted the vinaya of the asuras, in accordance with the prophecies, protecting all beings. A few dharma lineages developed earlier, but they no longer exist today, and their descendants reside in idle obscurity.

Rje Phag mo gru pa, or Khams pa Rdo rje rgyal mo, first received the dharma from [the Sa skya patriarch] Sa chen [Kun dga' snying po] (1092-1158) and became a learned adept in the Tibetan system. However, he was not confident in his realization. Having come into the presence of the unequaled Dwags po [Sgam po pa], by merely seeing him he perceived the truth of the dharmatā. Of his eight hundred disciples five hundred were “parasol-carriers” [that is, exceptional]; several of the greatest cultivated separate seats, which came to be known as the eight lesser lineages of the Bka' brgyud, [so that now we speak of] the “four great and the eight lesser” lines. At the seat of the Phag mo gru the lineage has not been cut, and in their great work in Mongolia and China they have come to also be rulers with the title *Sde srid*. From [the Phag mo gru] came what are known as the 'Bri [gung bka' brgyud] and the Stag [lung bka' brgyud], the Khro [phu bka' brgyud] and the Gling [ras bka' brgyud], the Smar [tshang bka' brgyud] and the Yel [pa bka' brgyud], the G.ya' [bzang bka' brgyud] and the Shugs [gseb bka' brgyud].

First, ['Bri gung] skyob pa 'Jig rten gsum mgon (1143-1217), who perfected the twelve links of dependent origination, founded the seat of 'Bri gung. He is famous for having eighteen thousand students [including] the three siddhas Chos, Gnyos and Mgar, [877] 'Bri gung gling pa and others. The saying, “All mountains are 'Bri gung's mountains, all plains are 'Bri gung's plains” became popular as [the tradition] spread far and wide. Later the father-son lineage of Chos rgyal Rin chen phun tshogs (1509-1557) developed the tradition of new and old treasure teachings.

Second, Stag lung thang pa Bkra shis dpal (1142-1210), who perfected devotion, founded the seat of Stag lung. Even today the lineage has not been broken. Sangs rgyas dbon built Stag lung mar thang [Ri bo che] and many high born beings such as Chos sku O rgyan mgon po came there. Later, in the incarnation lineage of Mkharr drung Mtsho skyes rdo rje [d.u.] were adherents named Bka', Dgongs and Phur and so forth, and Rad gling and others incorporated the vast scripture of the Rnying ma *bka' ma* and *gter ma*.

Third, Rgyal tsha Kun ldan ras pa (1148-1217) built the seat of Khro phu [and gave rise to the Khro phu bka' brgyud]. Their nephew Khro phu lotsāwa Byams pa dpal (1173-1228) invited three [Indian adepts]: Midrajoki, Buddhaśrī, and Kaśmiri mahāpaṇḍitas, and he erected a statue of Maitreya that liberates on sight. After four or five generations of the nephew's lineage came the omniscient Bu ston rin po che (1290-1364). He perfected the teaching and practice of the yogas of the general and specific tantra and produced the specific dharma lineage known as the Bu system. [878] The seat, because it possessed the drinking cup and religious items of Paṇ chen Śākya śrī, also came to be known as Zha lu.

Fourth, the siddha Gling rje ras pa Padma rdo rje (1128-1288) who was renowned as the most realized being north of the Gangā river in India, and was also known as Rna phu ras pa after the name of his residence. His disciple, the siddha Gtsang ba rgya ras [Ye shes rdo rje] (1161-1211) amassed an inconceivable number of disciples, whom he assembled three times, and the teaching of the glorious 'Brug pa spread the distance a vulture can fly in eighteen days. Moreover, in accordance with a prophecy from the glorious Dus gsum mkhyen pa, he established his monastic seat in 'Brug ra lung, and the fame of the Dpal ldan 'Brug pa spread in the world like the wind. One of his main disciples, Lord Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje (1189-1258) [established] the upper 'Brug, and Rgyal ba lo ras Dar ma dbang phyug (1187-1250) [established] the lower 'Brug. The lineage from the nephew himself [Gtsang ba rgya ras] was the middle ['Brug], known as the Rgya ras seng ge dgu tshar. From 'Ba' ra rgyal mtshan bzang po

came the [sub-sect known as] 'Ba' ra bka' brgyud. The Lord Ngag dbang rnam rgyal (1594-1651) conquered the four parts of Mon pa [i.e. Bhutan] using his miraculous powers, and covered the land with the religious government of the Southern 'Brug. In short, there is the saying: "half of all people are 'Brug pa; half of all 'Brug pa are beggars; half of all beggars are siddhas."⁴⁹⁷

Fifth, in the disciple line of Smar pa grub thob Shes rab seng ge (d.u.) [the founder of the Smar tshang bka' brgyud] [879] were many high-born extraordinary people such as Rgyal ba Yang mgon ye shes rgyal mtshan (d.u.), Rin chen gling pa (1295-1375), Spang mkhan chen 'Od zer bla ma (d.u.), and 'Gro mgon shing mgos pa (d.u.). Later the dharma lineage was absorbed by the Stag bu lamas, and these days has come to be mixed with the blessing stream of the Dpal yul pa.

Sixth, Yel pa sgrub thob Ye shes brtsegs pa, (d.u.) [the founder of the Yel pa bka' brgyud,] established Lho Yel phug and Byang Rta rna and so forth. The kings of Gling took him as their lama, and they offered him all their ancestral weaponry, which is still at Rta rna today. In the early days the lineage was widely spread, but since then has encountered some troubles, yet today, thanks to the kindness of Si tu [IX] Padma snyin byed, Byang Rta rna upholds the Kaṃ tshang tradition.

Seventh, the dharma transmission and tenet system of Zar ba Skal ldan ye shes seng ge (d. 1207) [known as the G.ya' bzang bka' brgyud] produced many wealthy and powerful men known by [the title] G.ya' bzang Sde srid.

Eighth is the amazing dharma transmission [known as the Shugs gseb bka' brgyud] that was established at Snyi phu shugs gseb by the incomparable Gyer sgom chen po [Tshul khriṃs seng ge] (1144-1204). His enlightened activity was vast, yet these days one does not hear of it having an independent dharma transmission.

In that way the basic divisions of the first produced the eight, as described above, [880] [all eight of which into existence] through the disciples of the sugata Phag mo gru pa alone.

⁴⁹⁷ *Mi phyed 'Brug pa/ 'Brug phyed sprang po/ sprang phyed grub thob.*

[Regarding the Shang pa bka' brgyud, its founder], the learned-adept known as Khyung po rnal 'byor (1002-1064), was originally a Bon po, and next a Rnying ma pa, but he was unsatisfied with those teachings. So, when he was already older than fifty, he went to India. He received the complete mind-elixir of one hundred and fifty learned-adepts, chief among them the wisdom ḍākinī Niguma and Sukhasiddhi. [His] attainment was equal to the three Indians [mahāsiddhas], Lūipa, Kṛṣṇācārya, and Ghaṇṭāpa. In Tibet, during the early transmission there were the twenty-five disciples [of Padmasambhava]; it would seem that in the later transmission none have come who could compare to him in the mastery of everything – learning, accomplishment, magic and enlightened activity. [A singular line of transmission persisted] from his disciple Rmog lcog pa [through] Dbon ston skyer sgang ba, Gnyan ston, and up through to Sangs rgyas ston pa, known as the transmission of the seven precious Shangs pa. Then a single bodhisattva, a great being, broke [open the secret tradition] and three learned adepts and those from the incarnation line of Khyung po tshul mgon put the oral tradition into writing. Holders of this autonomous system are known as the Rmog lcog pa, and they continue to exist today. The dharma lineage has been mixed into the oral teachings of the Kar [ma bka' brgyud], Dge [lugs], Sa skya, and Jo [nang]. In particular, Jo nang Rje btsun Kun dga' 'grol mchog (1507-1566) had a vision of the ḍākinī Niguma. She gave him hearing lineage instructions, and holders of these instructions [881] still remain today. That is a brief summary of the Shangs pa bka' brgyud.

Regarding the Sa skya pa, from G.yu ring, an emanation of Mañjuśrī, through to G.ya' spang, there were five generations of divine beings. They, for the sake of the family line, battled the *srin po* demons, after which the sons were named 'Khon [“warfare,” “hostility”], who kept the name of 'Khon for his lineage.⁴⁹⁸ 'Khon Dkon mchog rgyal po (1034-1102) established the

⁴⁹⁸ *Sa skya ni 'jam dbyangs sprul pa g.yu ring nas g.ya' spang skyes yan chad lha'i gdung rabs lnga / des khab kyi don du srin dang 'khon bas sras 'khon bar skyes nas bzung 'khon gyi gdung zhes min du chags.* This passage is a poor abbreviation of the section on the Sa skya lineage (p 91 et passim) of the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Song of the Spring Queen, the Annals of Tibet (Gangs can yul gyi sa la spyod pa'i mtho ris kyi rgyal blon gtso bor brjod pa'i*

first monastic seat, and his son, Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092-1158) founded the dharma center at upper Sa skya and it thereby acquired the name Sa skya. His knowledge of sūtra and tantra was ocean-like, and, in particular, [he received] the uncommon transmission of the *Lam 'bras bu*, the oral instructions of the mahāsiddha Virwapa [Virupa]. [Kun dga' snying po's] son, Rje btsun Bsod nams rtse mo (1142-1182) went to Kheccara without leaving behind his body. His younger son Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147-1216) became a *mahā vajrācārya*. His grandson Sa skya paṅ chen [Kun dga' rgyal mtshan] (1182-1252) and [great grandson] 'Gro mgon chos rgyal 'phags pa (1235-1280) were teachers of the entire Buddhist doctrine, and the story of their enlightenment is known throughout China and Tibet. Some call these the five patriarchs [of the Sa skya]. In the line of [Sa paṅ's?] nephews were Dpal ldan bsod nams rgyal mtshan (d.u.) and Thegs chen chos rje Kun dga' bkra shis (d.u.); those seven are known to have been prophesied by O rgyan chen po as the lineage of seven [emanations of] Mañjuśrī. [882] The King of Mongolia gave the three provinces of Tibet to 'Gro mgon chos [rgyal 'Phags [pa] at a dinner ceremony (*nub gcig gi dbang yon*); the wealth and power of the regency was without compare; the line of his descendants has lasted a long time, and it seems that it still exists.

From the dividing of the disciple lineages of the glorious Sa skya lamas the three [subsects of] Ngor, Gong, and Tshar later developed. Also, from the disciple of Brag thog pa Bsod nams bzang po (d.u), [Bu ston] Kun dga' Rnam rgyal Dpal bzang po (1432-1496) developed and spread the Gangs dkar rdo rje gdan and thus arose the Gong dkar [lineage]. The root disciple of Shar chen Ye shes rgyal mtshan (d.u.), Ngor chen Rdo rje 'chang Kun dga' bzang po

deb ther rdzogs ldan gzhon nu'i dga' ston dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs). The originating text sheds little light on the passage, and my translation of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul is tentative. There we read of a conflict between the divine ancestors of the 'Khon and demonic forces who were subjugated. The text reads: *De yang rje btsun chen po 'di nyid kyi rigs ni/ gnam nas lce ring g.yu ring / g.yu bse mched gsum las/ chung bas mi rje mdzad de/ g.yu bse byi la spun bzhi byung ba/ 'dong gi rus chen bco brgyad dang 'khrugs pas gnam la g.yu ring gi rogs mdzad de btul nas bran du bkol/ g.yu ring gi rmu'i bu mo dmu sa ldem khab tu bzhes par sras ma sangs spun bdun byung ba'i che ba drug dang yab lha yul du byon/ chung ba'i sras thog tsha dpa' bo stag byung bar mon bza' mtsho mo rgyal khab tu bsus pa la sras g.ya' spang skyes 'khrungs/ srin po skya rengs khrag med bas / g.ya' grum bsil ma phrogs te khab tu bzhes par sras shig byung ba de srin po dang 'khon pa'i bar du skyes pas ming 'khon par skyes su btags pa la 'khon gyi gdung brgyud ces pa'i don de ltar yin zhing*. This comparison was made possible by the THDL website's transliteration of the Fifth Dalai Lama's text.

(1382-1444) founded the seat of Ngor E waṃ chos ldan. A line of throne-holders rich in the scholarship, discipline, and virtue, gradually arose and this was known as the Ngor [pa Sa skya].

Later there were two [named] Kun dga' who were learned in the mantra, and two [named] G.yag rong who were learned in the sūtra. Both [pairs] were known as the two [pairs of] Mkhas pa go śāka. From the tradition of teaching of those well-born beings the glorious Sa [skya] and Ngor lineages thrived. During the lives of [Gnas gsar 'Jam dbyang] Mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug (1524-1568) and Mang thos klu sgrub (1523-1596) and so forth, the holders of the teachings of Char chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho, [who was] the disciple of Rdo ring kun spang pa chen po [Kun bzang chos kyi nyi ma] (1449-1524), the separate dharma lineage known as Tshar pa arose. It has produced many great beings such as Lord Bka' 'gyur pa, Gnas gsar pa and so forth. [883] These days there are still [lineage] holders [at] the seat in Yar lung. From Rdzong chung also came a separate teaching tradition of the *Lam 'bras tshogs bshad*, and this came to be known as Rdzong pa [Sa skya].

Having completely received the mind-elixir of fifty-four mahāsiddhas in India, Rje btsun [Pha] dam pa sangs rgya (d. 1117), who reached the stage of the mahāsiddha, went to Tibet five times. The second time he [taught] Zhang zhung gling kha ba and Khro tshang Bon po 'brug lha. The fourth time he [taught] Rma [Chos kyi shes rab] So [Dge 'dun bar] Kaṃ [Ye shes rgyal mtshan]. The fifth time, [he taught] those known as “the four yogin of the four gates”: in the east, there was Dam pa phyag chen; in the south was Rdo rje kro dha; in the west Dam pa phyar chung; and in the north Dam pa kun dga'.⁴⁹⁹ These were the main disciples to whom he gave his instructions. He gave them the pure teaching that pacifies suffering: the periods of his good works on behalf of sentient beings, by means of his instructions on pratīyasamutpāda, came to be known in the early, middle, and later *Zhi byed*. Ding ri kun spang chen po and others upheld the continuity of the instructions and it has remained through to today.

⁴⁹⁹ These four are credited with writing down Pha dam pa sangs rgyas's teachings.

Further, Dam pa rgya gar [=Pha dam pa sangs rgyas] gave his relative, Skyo ston [Bsod nams bla ma] (d.u.) the pure teaching of the means to cut through demonic obstruction (*Bdud kyi gcod yul*). Skyo Bsod nams bla ma gave the *Pho gcod* to Ma gcig (1055-1143), the emanation of the Supreme Mother, Ma gcig lab kyi sgron ma, [884] who in actuality was Rdo rje btsun mo, the actual mother who gave birth to all victors, yet who appeared in the conventional reality, pretending to gain realization and attain the siddhi as a teaching [for the rest of us] despite having already perfected wisdom. She concentrated on the promotion of the instructions on Gcod yul, and this became known as the Ma gcod. Ma gcig had four sons and four daughters: her biological sons were Rgyal ba don grub and Thod smyon bsam 'grub, and her dharma sons were Skye med dga' yan and so forth. The benefit to beings from these eight disciples, known to be equal to herself, was as great as the sky. In order to tame the flesh-eating half-breed Lcog la sgron, Ma gcig herself emanated as Rdo rje sgron ma; she revealed as treasure the Gcod texts which were hidden as a succession of amendments, and this came to be known as the Treasure Gcod (*Gter gcod*). Later the actual Ma gcig gave the Gcod instructions to Rgyal thang Bsam gtan 'od zer (d.u.), and this came to be known as the Rgyal thang Gcod tradition. Many came [and received] the transmission lineage, such as Drung pa ri ba, father and son, and so forth; the special transmission, the tradition of the Zur mang Gcod which the omniscient Rang byung zhabs la mnga' ba transmitted, is still today widely practiced, and is the most popular line.

[At] the hermitage of Gtsang nag rgyal in Jo mo nang, [885] in succession, Gun spang chen po Thugs rje brtson 'grus (1243-1313), Byang sems rgyal ba ye shes (1247-1320), and Mkhas btsun yon tan rgya mtsho (1260-1327) performed the great work of teaching and practicing the sūtra and tantra, chief among them being the Vajrayogini. After them Kun mkhyen Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292-1361) went to the seat and proclaimed the supreme dharma of the Golden Age, the great lion's roar of *gzhan stong Madhyamaka*⁵⁰⁰ and he split the great system of Vajrayogini. His prominent disciples, the two lo tsā [named] Nya dbon chos rje [Kun dga' dpal]

⁵⁰⁰ *Gzhan stong dbu ma seng ge'i sgra chen po.*

(1285-1379) and [Jo nang] Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1306-1386) and so forth, were a burning lamp of the doctrine.

Later, the reincarnation of [the mahāsiddha] Kṛṣṇācārya, Rje btsun Kun dga' 'grol mchog (1507-1566), was reborn as Tāranātha [Kun dga' snying po] (1575-1635), who was equal to the attributes of scholarship and accomplishment of the mahāsiddha Spyod 'chang dbang po/ Ācāryadharendra himself.⁵⁰¹ He [initiated] a tradition of secret mantra based on the essential general and specific definitive meaning of the Kālacakra chiefly, as well as the Cakrasaṃvara, Hayagrīva and Guhyagarbha, shining clearly like the sun, and it remains to this day. This is a brief account of the Jo nang system.

Furthermore, a few independent tenet systems developed from the four transmission lines of the disciples of Bo dong phyogs las rnam rgyal (1375-1450), the learned-adept who was blessed by Sarasvatī herself, and Pa tshab lo tsā Nyi ma grags (1055-1145?). These included [those of] Zhang, Thang, Sag, and so forth, [886] though these days most no longer exist.

The embodied blessing of Mañjuśrī, Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa'i dpal (1357-1419), the lord who completely perfected the knowledge and realization, founded 'Brog ri bo dge ldan rnam rgyal gling [Dga' ldan monastery]. From Rgyal tshab rje [Dharma rin chen] (1364-1432), came a line of dharma transmission of throne-holders known as the Ri bo dge ldan. 'Dul 'dzin grags pa rgyal mtshan (1374-1434) and Rgyal tshab Dar ma rin chen were [Tsong kha pa's] eminent heart-sons. His inner heart son was Mkhas grub Dge legs dpal bzang (1385-1438). At the four major seats there were four great sons. The sons whose activities were equal to the sun included Gung ru Rgyal mtshan bzang po and others, one hundred forty seven great sons are known to have come, among them Rje Shes rab seng ge (1383-1445), who founded the Dpal ldan smad rgyud college [in 1433], and his disciple Rgyud chen Dkon mchog don 'grub (1419-1486), who founded Rgyud stod college [in 1474]. 'Jam dbyangs [Chos rje] bkra shis [dpal ldan] (1379-

⁵⁰¹ For Tāranātha's own account of these previous incarnations see David Templeman, 1989, *Tāranātha's Life of Kṛṣṇācārya*, Dharamsala: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives.

1449) founded Dpal ldan 'Bras spung [in 1416]. Theg chen Chos kyi rgyal po [Byams chen Chos rje Śākya ye shes] (1354-1435) [founded] Se ra, and Rje Dge 'dun grub (1391-1474) founded Bkra shis lhun po. The rebirths of Dge 'dun grub [are known as] Rgyal ba [rin po che, the Dalai Lamas]; the reincarnations of Mkhas grub rje [are known as] the line of the Paṅ chen [Lamas]. These and other sublime beings who uphold the doctrine continue to spread the teachings today. [The lives and careers of] the famous incarnation of the translator of Rngog [Legs pa'i shes rab] and his nephew [Blo ldan shes rab], Bka' bcu⁵⁰² Grags pa rgyal mtshan, and his incarnations, the major and minor Brag g.yab sprul skus, and the throne holders of the seat of [Byang sems] Shes rab bzang po, the actual disciple of Rje rin po che, at Chab mdo zhi 'phags [887] are recounted in detail in their hagiographies.

Furthermore, three men, [with the title] ācārya and so forth, began the [Bon] gter [tradition]. Four defended the scriptures:⁵⁰³ Sprul sku Gshen chen klu dga' (996-1035), Gyer me nyi 'od (12th c.), Rma ston srol 'dzin (b. 1092), and Dbyil ston khyung rgod rtsal (b. 1175). Rgyal rigs gzhen, Rje'u rigs gru, Dbang ldan zhu, Mkhas pa rme'u, and Grub thob spa tshang upheld the lineage, and after the later Bon spread, [their teachings] were known as the old treasures cycles. [The teachings of] Blo ldan snying po (1360-1385?), Mi shig rdo rje (d.u.), Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340-1396), and Kun grol grags pa (b. 1700), were known as the system of the four later emanations, and count among the new treasures. These are some of the manifestations of the inconceivable methods of Padmasambhava and his twenty-five disciples for taming beings. By giving these teachings the name “Bon” there is [nonetheless] no conflict with the four seals that signify the teachings of the Buddha regarding the view and practice;⁵⁰⁴ it is a definite teaching on the path and the ultimate goal. Moreover, these [teachings, in both] origin [and

⁵⁰² A title awarded at Bkra shis lhun po, the equivalent of *dge shes*.

⁵⁰³ *Gzhung bsrang: don gzhung drang por bsrangs pa, ...drang pos gzhung bsrangs na sgo ngas rta khyog*

⁵⁰⁴ *Bka' rtags kyi phyag rgya bzhi: 'dus byas thams cad mi rtag pa, zag bcas thams cad sdug bsngal ba, chos thams cad stong zhing bdag med pa, mya ngan las 'das pa zhi ba* (all composite things are impermanent, all defiled things are suffering, all phenomena are empty and devoid of self, nirvana is peace).

practice], are a complete support, and therefore they are spoken of as ancillaries [to the Buddhist tradition].⁵⁰⁵

Thus, concerning the tenet system of those dharma systems [discussed above], here in Tibet the view is Madhyamaka and the conduct [i.e. Vinaya] is the Sarvāstivādin alone.⁵⁰⁶ There were many different [schools] other [than these] the conduct of which was ineffective, and by order of the king adherents to the Vaibāśika, Sautantrika and Cittamatra did not come to Tibet. [888]

Regarding the view and conduct of the learned adepts of the secret mantra Rnying ma school such as the omniscient [Klong chen pa] Dri med 'od zer (1308-1363) and others, followers of Padmasambhava; the learned adepts of the four major and eight minor Bka' brgyud, from the followers of Mar [pa], Mi [la ras pa] and Dwags [po lha rje, Sgam po pa] to all-seeing religious advisor for the entire doctrine [Situ paṅ chen] Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1700-1774); Sa chen [Kun dga' snying po] and grandson [Sakya paṅ ita], Zi lung paṅ chen [Śākya mchog ldan] (1428-1507), Bo dong [paṅ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal] (1375-1450), and particularly the all-knowing buddha of the three times, the great Dol po pa, whose teaching was clarified by Rje btsun chen po Tāranātha and the other great beings in the transmission line of the Jo nang pa, it was the *gzhan stong* Madhyamaka alone; though there are particularities in their method of explanation, the differences are minor.

There were also a few upholders of the Svātantrika-Madhyamaka view, such as Rong ston Shes bya kun rig (1367-1449), Khra tshang pa Blo mchog rdo rje (1595-1671) and Rdo rje brag pa⁵⁰⁷ and so forth. These were true disciples of Śāntarakṣita. The omniscient Bu [ston] rin po che and later [masters of the] Sa [skya], Ngor and Tshar, Rje [Karma pa VIII] Mi bskyod [rdo rje] (1507-1554), 'Brug [chen IV Pad [ma] dkar [po] (1527-1592) and all the Dge lugs pa followers

⁵⁰⁵ *Chos la bon ming btags pas lta spyod bka' rtags kyi phyag rgya bzhi po dang mi 'gal ba thar lam yod nges can du snang ste de dag kyang chos lugs grub mtha'i byung khungs rkang tshang phyir zhar byung du smos pa lags.*

⁵⁰⁶ *Bod 'dir lta ba dbu ma spyod pa yod smra kho na.*

⁵⁰⁷ Unclear – this might be a reference to Ngag gi dbang po (1580-1639) or to Padma 'phrin las (1641-1717).

of Rje rin po che [Tsong kha pa] set forth the view of the Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka. The particularities among [their teachings] are substantial.

Between [the eras of] Rje rin po che [Tsong kha pa] and 'Jam dbyangs [bzhad pa I, Ngag dbang brtson 'grus 1648-1722], Dbu ma pa Dpa' bo rdo rje (1357-1419), by means of his translations and [889] the view and instructions of Madhyamaka he had received gave rise to what came to be known as the Dga' ldan Mahāmudrā. Moreover, the Dben sa snyan brgyud lineage of the Paṅ chen [lamas] [that came down] from the realized yogi 'Jam dpal rgya mtsho (1356-1428), Ba so chos [kyi] rgyal [mtshan] (1402-1473) and others, and [Rgyal ba dben sa pa] Blo bzang don 'grub (1505-1566), and the transmission from Shes rab sengge and later the lineal transmission that was held by the one named Byams pa, both remain independent traditions today.

That being the case, the view and instruction of the *gzhan stong* Madhyamaka, or the exposition of the actual teaching on the twenty sūtra of the essential common definitive teaching, or the uncommon later dharma of Maitreya, or the indivisible profound and clear meaning of the pith instructions, or even the tradition of the two Zu btsan [?] translators, [all these lineages] remain unbroken.

The learned do not desire this sort of thing –

Foolish songs that explain how

the pleasure garden of the mind – ornamented with

necklaces of explanations and proclamations,

a flower garland of deception and foolishness – will pass and transfer on,

and be called something else.

By these one is not made wise.

If one has made the mistake of studying too many scriptures

the collections of words become like the dancing of speech itself.

The hagiographies of the saints are like elixir;
when even a mere fragment touches the ear
one is struck by the ardent desire for permanence.
May that be the liberation through hearing of virtue.⁵⁰⁸

In response to repeated earnest requests by my refuge lords and attendants, [I], Yon tan rgya mtsho wrote this at Dpal spungs yid dga' chos 'dzin. May virtuous goodness increase.

⁵⁰⁸Di 'dra mkhas la mi dgos kyang / byis blo 'brig pa'i me tog phreng / bshad 'dod rnams kyi mgrin pa'i rgyan / blo gros skyed tshal grong nas 'phos / gzhan zer zlos nas 'chad pa la / blun po mgu yis mkhas rnams min / gzhung mang thos pa'i nor ldan na / tshig tshogs ngag gi gar stabs nyid / dam pa'i rnam thar bdud rtsi bzhin / rna bar zegs tsam lhung bas kyang / gtan gyi dbul pa 'phrog pas na / dge bas thos grol nyid du shog.

Appendix Four

A Translation and Transliteration of *The Pleasant Auspicious Tambhura Melody: A Brief Account of the Discovery of Treasure at 'Chi med dkar mo stag tshang's Rdo rje brag and G.yu mtsho gtan 'khyil*⁵⁰⁹

Homage to Guru Rinpoche, in whom the three roots are entirely subsumed. On the virtuous day that the *ḍākinī* gather, the twenty-fifth, in the second half of the ninth month of the fire tiger year,⁵¹⁰ [1] O rgyan mchog gyur bde chen gling pa of the lotus clan, and the 'Jam mgon bla ma, Padma 'od gsal mdo sngags [2] gling pa, together with lama and *ḍākinī*, in connection with prophecies and clear visions, traveled to the Seng ge bsam 'grub ke'u tshang at Chi med dkar mo stag tshang, one of the source-sites for the auspiciousness of Tibet and Khams, arriving there at noon. [We] performed a smoke offering and a feast offering and so forth at the base of the site and then went to the Bsam 'grub ke'u tshang, [where we] performed a feast offering [4] and so forth.⁵¹¹

The next morning, the twenty-sixth,⁵¹² we went to the peak of the site and surveyed the surroundings. With the aim [of promoting] the general and specific well-being of Tibet and Khams [we] completed one hundred feast offerings and fulfillments, gtor ma offerings, smoke offerings, and golden oblations. [5]

⁵⁰⁹ *'Chi med dkar mo stag tshang gi rdo rje'i brag dang / g.yu mtsho gtan 'khyil nas zab gter spyang drang bkod pa zhal byang dang bcas pa mdor bsdu bkra shis tambhu ra'i dbyang snyan bzhugs so*. The *thang ka* itself carries the title: "A Painting of the Treasure History of 'Chi med dkar mo stag tshang seng ge bsam 'grub brag and the Lake Treasure [of Seng ge g.yu mtsho]" (*'Chi med dkar mo stag tshang seng ge bsam 'grub brag dang mtsho gter gyi gter byung zhal thang dge*), which is written on the reverse side at the upper edge of the upper frame. The *thang ka* is in the possession of Blo gros phun tshogs of Rdzong sar monastery, Sde dge county, Sichuan province, China. The text is repeated almost verbatim on pages 186-191 of Mchog gling A.

⁵¹⁰ November 2, 1866.

⁵¹¹ See Figure Eight.

⁵¹² November 3, 1866.

In the early part of the twenty-seventh day⁵¹³ [we] went to the O rgyan gsang phug. [We] sought out the treasure-signs and gradually broke the cliff-seals. Using charcoal fire we melted the rock-paste (*?rdo spyin*). Without too much hardship, [6] around noon, and as witnessed by all the public and so forth, [I] revealed a statue, a ceramic casket hand implement and so forth.

[Earlier,] on the day of the twenty-six [we] had made [our] way to the entrance of the Mtsho rgyal gsang phug, but due to scant suitable conditions nothing had manifest. [7] [Now,] on the twenty-eighth,⁵¹⁴ the sun rising to the zenith, cutting a *brug* tree [we] constructed a ladder.⁵¹⁵ By digging in the area of the above-mentioned cave, in a rock about two finger-widths [deep?] [we] cut open a new entrance to the cavern. When [we] saw the edges (*tshams*) precisely, [8] [we] straightaway extracted [treasure] using hand tools {and other} methods; with some difficulty the excavator remained behind and then that evening returned.⁵¹⁶

The next day, the twenty-ninth,⁵¹⁷ as soon as the steward Bsod noms stobs rgyal arrived at our camp [we] gave the Sde dge King's ministers treasure empowerments and so forth. [9] In their honor [we] began the ritual practices of Rdo rje gro lod and 'Jam dpal pha rol sgol 'joms.⁵¹⁸

On the thirtieth⁵¹⁹ [we] satisfied the wishes of the sponsors. On the first day of the tenth month⁵²⁰ we gave a White Tārā long-life empowerment to the Sde dge dharma rāja ['s] relatives and in stages performed a smoke offering and a *ri khrus* [for the welfare of] the nation and surrounding areas. Again, on the second day⁵²¹ a few of us masters and disciples arrived at the

⁵¹³ November 4, 1866.

⁵¹⁴ November 5, 1866.

⁵¹⁵ See Figure Six.

⁵¹⁶ See Figure Seven.

⁵¹⁷ November 6, 1866.

⁵¹⁸ There are 14 texts relating to this deity in volume 5 of the *Mchog gling gter sar*, making it, presumably, a section of the *Bar chad kun sel*.

⁵¹⁹ November 7, 1866.

⁵²⁰ November 8, 1866.

⁵²¹ November 8, 1866.

site. [We] continued digging the treasure-seal and performed many smoke offerings and feast-mendings [11] and so forth.

On the fifth day⁵²² the Sde dge dharmarāja also came. On the sixth day⁵²³ 'Jam mgon bla ma also came. From the seventh day⁵²⁴ we and the masters and disciples together performed a feast-mending and a smoke offering and so forth. [12] There were many treasure seals, and gradually we broke them; from time to time many marvels such as mud of melted gold, *sa sbyor* of various colors and so forth appeared.

From the morning of the ninth⁵²⁵ the treasure-revealer, [in a state of] keen awareness, remained at the uncompleted excavation. [13] That evening, in the pitch of night, without ceasing we sang and danced and shouted forth prayers in lovely melodies, performing them with the necessary energy 'ur 'ur *chem chem!*⁵²⁶ Then I, the masters and disciples together with the Sde dge King [14] and ministers went to the practice cave, clambering and clanging. [We] performed a feast offering and recited prayers, shouting forth in the rush of the beautiful melodies.

In the early morning the tenth day of the tenth month⁵²⁷ [15] we sought out treasure signs on the face of the cave, and, having discovered [some], without much effort [we] extracted a meteorite vajra that was the hand-implement of Rig 'dzin Rdo rje drag po rtsal, and was protruding halfway from the rock as though in mud,⁵²⁸ because everyone [16] had faith they rested in primordial awareness. Everyone was permitted entrance to see it right away. Then, when the day had grown warm, [I] revealed treasure inside and outside of the retreat cave. [I] then gave a treasure empowerment to about three hundred people, including the Sde dge King and ministers and the public.

⁵²² November 12, 1866.

⁵²³ November 13, 1866.

⁵²⁴ November 14, 1866.

⁵²⁵ November 16, 1866.

⁵²⁶ See Figure Nine.

⁵²⁷ November 17, 1866.

⁵²⁸ See Figure Five.

Furthermore, in accordance with the urging of several pure visions [which Mchog gling and/or Mkhyen brtse experienced] around this time, [on the eleventh day of the tenth month⁵²⁹] I, the masters and disciples, came to the edge of the eternally-abiding Seng rgod g.yu mtsho and were immediately delighted.⁵³⁰ [18] [Our] primordial awareness easily arose, and the sky was filled with fresh summer clouds radiating rainbow light. Crumbling slate houses that had been the residences of past great practitioners were scattered about. [19] Inside of one of these [we] arranged feast *gtor ma* and performed a *gañacakra*. Furthermore, along with a special feast offering, we made prayers and practiced; in the rush of *thod rgal* practice [we saw] large banner [-like clouds] come over the center of the lake. [20] In the depths of the gathering banner [-like clouds], from a hole at the edge came a rainbow, the edge of which struck a treasure-site; this was seen clearly.

'Jam mgon bla ma also had a profound vision, [21] and he conquered the *nāgārāja* treasure lords [by binding them to] oath. At the tip of a staff [I] hung my belt and my lower robe and commanded [the *nāgā*] to give me treasure. As I did this a rain of flowers fell from a cloudless sky. [22] The *nāgārāja* bodhisattvas cast flowers of gold dust and on the edge of the lake glittered with gold. Simultaneously [I] effortlessly revealed profound treasure and offered a treasure-substitute and sublime feast substances and so forth. [23] That evening we arrived at the foundation of the sacred place.

The next day [the twelfth] [we] deciphered some of the scrolls [that had been received] earlier and then returned.

In the beginning, middle and end [of this period] there were no manifestations of vexation or sweat [from excessive effort] and the like, not even subtle hindrances, [24] and magnificent auspiciousness arose.

⁵²⁹ November 18, 1866.

⁵³⁰ See Figure Ten.

In order to fulfill the happiness of the victorious one, holder of the lineage of the Victorious Lotus, the supreme incarnation of the refuge lord Situ,⁵³¹ [I], the holder of the lineage of O rgyan bla ma, [25] Mchog gyur gling pa, without any misrepresentation, and without the slightest distortion, wrote this in the natural state. By the compassion Śantarakṣita, Padmasambhava, and Khri srong lde'u btsan, the magical emanations of the three roots, may Tibet and Khams, [26] the borders and the center benefit and are permanently in a state of well-being and abundance. *Sarva mangalam*

Transliteration of the text. Line numbers are in brackets. Interlineal notes are in braces. My notes are in regular parenthesis. I have preserved the color scheme of the original.

*Rtsa gsum kun 'tus Gu ru rin po che la phyag 'tshal lo / Padma'i gdung 'dzin O rgyan mchog gyur bde
 chen gling pa dang / 'Jam mgon bla ma Padma 'od gsal mdo sngag [2] gling pa thun mong du bla ma dang
 mkhros (= mkha' 'gros) lung bstan cing gsal snang khyad par can gyis mtshams sbyar te me stag dbyug
 pa zla ba'i dmar phyogs mkhro (= mkha' 'gro) 'du pa'i tshes dge bar {25} Bod khams bkris (=bkra
 shis) 'byung ba'i gnas kyi bye [3] brag 'Chi med dkar mo stag tshang seng ge bsam 'grub ke'u tshang du
 bskyod nas nyin gung la sleb / gnas mthil du bsang dang tshogs mchod sogs bgyis te bsam 'grub ke'u
 tshang du phyin / tshogs kyi mchod pa [4] sogs bgyis / phyir nang tshes {26} la gnas kyi ri rtse'i bar du
 phyin te bkod pa bstas / Bod khams spyi bye brag gi bde thabs la gdmigs pa'i rtsa ba gsum gyi tshogs
 skong / gtor bsngo / bsang / gser skyems / [5] brgya rtsa rnams legs par bsgrubs / tshes {27} snga char O
 rgyan gsang phug tu phyin / gter mtshan btsal nas brag gi rgya rim par bshigs / rdo spyin rnams sol me'i
 ngad la bzhus te dka' tshogs cher med par [6] nyin gung tsam la khrom tshogs kun gyis mthong bar sku
 tshab dang / rdza sgrom spyag mtsan sogs gdan drangs / tshes {26} nyin Mtsho rgyal gsang phug sgo
 dung nge 'dug rung rkyen cung zad kyis mi mngon par par gyur pa / [7] tshes {28} nyi rtse shar spyin nas
 brug sdong bcad de skas su btshugs / snga ma'i gsang phug yod pa'i thad nas brkos pas brag sor do tsam*

⁵³¹ Likely Ta'i Situ Padma kun bzang (1854?-1885).

zhid pa na phug pa'i sgo gsar du bcad pa'i mtshams zhib par mthong na'ang [8] 'phral du lag cha sogs
 {zhan} stabs thon dka' bas rko mkhan bzhag ste de nyin phyi dro phyr song / phyr nyin tshes {29} la
 phrag mdzod bsodmas (= bsod nams) stobs rgyal tshang par sleb 'phral sde dge rgyal slon la gter dbang
 sogs bgyis [9] te rim gror rdo rje gro lod dang / 'jam dpal pha rol sgol 'joms kyi 'phang ba'i las sbyor
 brtsam / tshes {30} la sbyin bdagi (= bdag gi) re ba rkong / smin sgrug zla ba'i tshes {1} la sde dge chos
 rgyal sku mched la sgrol dkar [10] gyi tshe ba dang / yul phyogs kyi spyi rim bsang ri khros sogs bgyis te
 / slar yang tshes {2} la nged rang dpon slob nyung shas gnas du sleb / gter rgya brko bzhin pa'i 'phro
 mthud / bsang gsol tshogs skong [11] sogs mang bar bgyis / tshes {5} la Sde dge chos rgyal kyang byon /
 tshe {6} la 'Jam mgon bla ma'ang pheps / tshes {7} nas nges rang dpon slob rnam thun mong nas tshogs
 skong bsod gsol sogs bgyis / gter rgya [12] mang du 'dug pa rim par bshigs pa'i bar bar du gser zhun
 ma'i 'dam bag dang / sa sbyor kha dog sna tshogs pa sogs de mtshar ba mang du byung / tshes {9} snga
 dro nas gter thon nye bar rig pas brko 'phro bzhag ste [13] de nub srod 'khor nas bzung glu gar dang /
 gsol 'debs kyi glu dbyangs rgyun mi chad par sgrogs pas mtshon dgos pa'i dbang gi 'ur 'ur chem chem
 mang du bgyis te ngos dpon slob dang / sde dge rgyal [14] blon sogs 'khor bcas sgrub phug tu sa 'ur
 rdo 'ur gyis phyin / tshogs mchod dang gsol 'debs kyi dza pra dbyangs rgyun mi chad pa 'ur dir gyis
 bsgrags te / smin drug zla ba'i tshes bcu'i skya rengs shar ba dang lhan [15] cig phug pa'i gdong nas gter
 mtshan btsal te brnyes pas dka' tshes med par rig 'dzin rdoe drago (= do rje drag po) rtsal gyi phrag
 mtshan gnam lcags rdoe [= rdo rje] brag gi nang du 'dam star zug pa phyed tsam bton nas themd [= thams
 ced] [16] yid ched pa'i phyr de gar bzhag ste / de 'phral themd (= thams ced) la mjal du bcug / de nas nyi
 shar dros mtshams phug pa'i phyi nang gi zab gter rnam spyang drang pa / sde dge rgyal slob sogs khrom
 sogs sum rgya [17] tsam la gter dbang sogs bgyis / slar yang snga phyr gsal snang 'ga' zhid gis bskul ba
 star / tshes {11} la ngos dpon slob rnam Seng rgod g.yu mtsho gtan 'khyil gyi khar sleb ma thag nyams
 dga' [18] zhid / rig pa dang la bag phebs par byung / nam' (= nam mkha') dbyar sprin gsar pa'i 'ja'
 tshon snogs (= sna tshogs) pa 'phro bas khengs / sngon gyi sgrub brtson snyigs stobs can rnam bsdad pa'i
 brul g.ya' khang tho re 'dug pa [19] zhid gi nang du tshogs gtor bshams shing tshogs mchod bgyis / slar
 yang tshogs kyi mchod pa khyadr (= khyad par) dang bcas gsol ba btab bas nyams thod rgal du 'ur nas

mtsho la dar chen chags pa'i dkyil du bgrod de [20] dar khung chen po gtib pa na ngos kyi mig las 'ja' sne
 zug pas zab gter gyi gnas tshul gsal bar mthong zhing / 'Jam mgon bla ma la'ang gsal snang khyad par
 can dang bcas gter bdag [21] klu'i rgyal po rnams dam la gzir / dbyug pa'i rtser ngos kyi ska rags dang /
 sham thabs dpyang te zab gter sprod par bka' bsgos pa bzhin namkha' (= nam mkha') sprin med pa las me
 tog gi char khu 'phang [22] sta bur babs zhing / klu rgyal byamb sedam' (= byang chub sems dpa'?)
 rnams kyis gser phye'i me tog gtor ba mtsho khar ser nyil gyis chags pa dang lhan cig zab gter bde blag tu
 gdan drang shing gter tshab tshogs rdzas sogs [23] gya nol pa phul te de nub gnas mthil du sleb / phyir
 nyin snga ma'i gter shog 'ga' zhig phabs te phyir 'ong / thog mtha' bar gsum du lhongs dang rngul gyi
 rnam pa sogs gegs bar [24] phra mo'ang med par bkris (= bkra shis) la byin chags par byung ngo dang /
 shes pa'ang rgyal dbang padma'i 'dung zin skyabs mgon si tu mchog sprul roien'i (= rin po che) thugs kyi
 dgyes pa bskang ba'i phyir o rgyan bla ma'i gdung [25] 'dzin mchog gyur gling pas sgro skur sogs kyi dri
 mas cung zad kyang ma bslad par gnas lugs rang por bris te phul ba rigs gsum sprul pa'i sgyu 'sprul
 mkhan slob chos gsum gyi thugs rjes bod khams [26] mtha' dbus kun tu phan pa dang bde ba'i dge
 mtshan phun sum tshogs dus rtag tu 'byung bar gyur cig / sarvamangalam

Appendix Five

The Composition of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's Five Treasuries

The impetus for the creation of four of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's five treasuries came from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, who was perhaps his sole rival in scope and profundity of received teachings. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po inspired by example, completing during the same period his own collections of teachings, the *Sgrub thabs kun bdus*, and he gave 'Jam mgon Kong sprul direct instructions to undertake the projects. It was Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po who proposed the *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod*, the organization for the *Rin chen gter mdzod* and the outline of the *Rgya chen bka' mdzod*, and although it was Zla bzang sprul sku who commissioned the *Shes bya kun khyab*, it was Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po who insisted that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul compose an auto-commentary for it when Zla bzang sprul sku proved unable to do so.

As far as the conception of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's work into five distinct "treasuries," this too came from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. It was a notion he came by in a dream, in the third month of the iron bird year (April 11 to May 10, 1861). In his autobiography, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul explained that while the two were at Rtsa 'dra rin chen brag exchanging transmissions and consecrating the hermitage, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po had a vision of a large stūpa with four doors at the base and a fifth in the upper vase section. Entering, he saw many sacred objects and countless volumes of scripture. He asked what the texts were and was told by an unnamed man that they were the five treasuries, and in interpreting the dream for 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, he stated, "This is your mandate for what will be called the 'five treasuries'."⁵³²

⁵³² *Khyod la mdzod lnga zhes pa'i bka' babs shig yod pa yin 'dug pas* (Kong sprul A, f. 100a). In his biography of Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, Kong sprul described the vision and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's interpretation in greater detail. He also pushes up the date of the vision by six years, allowing him to put into Mkhyen

The first of the Five treasures that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul began work on was the *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod*. This collection of tantric teachings of the Bka' brgyud school was built upon a collection of *sādhana* and *maṇḍala* known as the *Rngog dkyil 'khor bdun* that were transmitted by Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros (1012-1097) to his disciple Rngog ston Chos sku rdo rje (1036-1102). The inspiration for the collection came from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, to whom 'Jam mgon Kong sprul transmitted the *Rngog dkyil 'khor bdun* in the summer of 1848. According to his account, he performed the transmission using the *yig cha* composed by Karma chags med. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po found the manuals inadequate, and began pressuring him to arrange new ones.⁵³³ Apparently he shared his idea with Zla bzang sprul sku and Zhe chen dbon sprul, who added their voices to the call for a new set of ritual manuals for the *Rngog maṇḍala*.⁵³⁴

brtse'i dbang po's mouth details about the five works that could not have been known in 1862: "In the beginning of the fifteenth sexagenary cycle, during the evening of the first day of the eleventh month of the fire hare (November 27, 1967) while kindly performing the consecration of the [Rtse 'dra rin chen brag] hermitage's meditation hall, limitless visions arose. At one point he saw a large mountain-like stūpa with four sides and four doors. Inside were five treasures (*mdzod lnga*), each filled with dharma treasure (*chos gter*) which many paṇḍita, siddha and ḍākinī interpreted [for him]. The lord [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po] had a look, and [immediately] knew with certainty their entire meaning; their protectors were four particular dharma protectors." Pe har rgyal po, who apparently was the chief protector, next complains about not receiving sufficient offerings. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po then told 'Jam mgon Kong sprul "the meaning of the stūpa is that you must complete what will be known as the 'five treasures': a treasury of all common objects of knowledge [to be called] the *Shes bya kun khyab*; a treasury of uncommon mantra (*Thun min sngags mdzod*) cycles of the new and old tantra; a precious treasury (*Rin chen gter mdzod*) of ritual arrangements of the recent and earlier dharma treasure; a treasury of the profound instructions (*Zab mo gdams ngag go mdzod*) for "ripening and liberation" of the eight charioteers of the practice lineages, a miscellaneous treasury (*Thun mong ma yin pa'i mdzod*) of earth treasures, mind treasures – whatever you produce. Those [begun in] the past are the beginning, and will be accomplished over time. There has been nothing like these, and it is of the utmost importance that you complete them." At this point Pe har promised to preserve and restore all broken lineages and support the reprinting and propagation of the texts. *Rab byung bco lnga pa thog mar tshes pa med yos zla ba bcu gcig pa'i dga' ba dang por yang khrod sgrub khang 'dir rab gnas bka' drin stsal ba'i nub dag snang mu med pa shar / skabs shig ri bo lta bu'i mchod rten chen po zhig gi phyogs bzhir sgo bzhi / nang du mdzod lnga yod pa'i mdzod re re bzhin chos gter gyis gtams pa la pa' grub dang mkha' 'gro mang pos brda sprod / rje nyid nas kyang bzigs pa btsal bas de dang la don gang yod thugs la nges shing de'i srung ma chos srung khyad par ba bzhi yod pa dang . . . mchod rten de'i don khyod la mdzod lngar grags pa zhig tshar dgos par 'dug pas shes bya kun khyab de'i phyogs gtogs bcas thun mongs shes bya'i mdzod / gsar rnying gi rgyud sde'i skor rnam thun min s sngags kyi mdzod / gter chos gsar rnying gi chog bsgrigs rnam rin chen gter gyi mdzod / sgrub brgyud shing rta brgyad kyi smin gro'l rnam zab mo gtams ngag gi mdzod / sa gter dgongs gter gang byung gsang ba thun mong min pa'i mdzod kyi brdar bzhag nas de snga 'go bzhag grub pa rnam rim par mtha' 'dus grub pa dang / de snga med rigs de lta bu'i 'grigs shig byung na dgos ba gnad don che bar 'dug cing (Kong sprul E, ff. 52a-b).*

⁵³³ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul recorded Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's comment: "The continuity of blessing of these Rngog tantras is uncorrupted. However, the *yig cha* of [Karma] chags med is entirely inadequate for *sādhana*, offerings, and so forth. Therefore you absolutely must arrange a suitable *yig cha* for each of them." *Bka' las rngog pa'i rgyud sde 'di rnam byin rlabs kyi rgyun ma nyams par 'dugs kyang / chags med yig cha*

Several years later, in 1851, when Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was in Tibet, he repeated his request in a letter, and gained added reasons for asking it. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul explained that while visiting the seat of the Rngog clan, Gzhung spe shing,⁵³⁵ in Gtsang, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po received a prophecy to the effect that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul needed to write up the Rngog maṇḍala. In addition, while at the nearby Zhwa lu monastery Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was told by a lama named Mchog sprul that his lama, who was considered to be an emanation of Mar pa, had given him a prophecy to the effect that were someone in his lineage to compose a scholastic manual (*yig cha*) for the Mar pa tantras there would be great benefit to the Buddhist teachings. Mchog sprul had been unable to locate someone capable of the job among his own students and thus asked Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po to handle the matter. Thus, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul commented, "I was requested repeatedly to take up this task."⁵³⁶

The composition of the *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod* was also influenced by the death of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's master, Ta'i si tu, who passed away on the seventh day of the fifth month of the water ox year (c. July 12, 1853). More than a decade before this event, Dbon rgan Karma theg mchog bstan 'phel (who had passed away in 1842) had told 'Jam mgon Kong sprul that since Si tu was an incarnation of Mar pa, texts relating to the *Hevajra* and *Guhyasamāja* (two primary *Bka' brgyud* tantras) would need to be placed in his reliquary. Dbon rgan charged 'Jam mgon Kong sprul with making a detailed analysis of the maṇḍala and the *sādhana* texts, a project he worked on slowly over the years. Thus, by the time Si tu passed away 'Jam mgon

'dis sgrub mchod sogs ci'ang go mi chod pas / khyod nas 'di dang la yig cha go chod nges re'i chog bsgrigs mdzad dgos zhes gsungs (Kong sprul A, f. 61b).

⁵³⁴ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul contextualized the pressure to compose the *yig cha* within his request that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Zla bzang investigate his previous rebirths. His reasoning was that he was as yet unsure that he had the right to undertake such a project, and were he to do so without such a right he would harm both himself and the teachings. Zla bzang sprul sku and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po then produced a series of dreams revealing 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's illustrious line of previous rebirths, thereby assuring him that he had held authorization for such teachings in previous lives (Kong sprul A, ff. 67b-69b).

⁵³⁵ Or "Gzhung spre zhing," according to Dge ye ba Tshul khriims seng ge's (fifteenth century) *Rgya bod kyi chos 'byung rin po che* (Zogai no. 11847, Library of Otani University, p. 30b). See Martin 1997, p. 77 for information on this history. The Rngog seat is in Lho brag; this is where Mi la ras pa fled while building his famous tower, hoping to receive from Rngog ston the teachings Mar pa was still refusing him.

⁵³⁶ Kong sprul A, f. 69a.

Kong sprul had already prepared materials, and was able to prepare a collection of Mar pa's tantric teachings. It seems only with the passing of Si tu did Kong sprul begin the project that he had first been asked to undertake in 1848.⁵³⁷

Finally, in the fifth month of the wood tiger year (c. July 1854), 'Jam mgon Kong sprul arranged *sādhana* and maṇḍala of some thirteen tantras – those of the Rngog tradition with a few additions – together with necessary prerequisites, instructions on the completion stages, authorization, and the cycles on the protectors. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul wrote “I gave this the title the *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod*, and thereby completed the task I had begun the previous year [on the occasion of Si tu's death].”⁵³⁸ Later that same year, as an expression of gratitude towards the goddess Vetālī, in whose protection he placed the collection, he performed a recitation of the “One hundred prayers to Vetālī.”⁵³⁹ Two years later, in the seventh month of the fire dragon year (c. August 1856) 'Jam mgon Kong sprul first transmitted the collection, at Dpal spungs, to Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po and about twenty other lamas from Dpal spungs and neighboring

⁵³⁷ Kong sprul A, ff. 71b-72a.

⁵³⁸ *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod du mtshan gsol nas na ning gi 'phros rnams rin par bsgrigs* (Kong sprul A, f. 74a). In his autobiography 'Jam mgon Kong sprul described the process by which he accomplished the project: “I began arranging with the Hevajra Tantra *sādhana* and maṇḍala. In Si tu's residence there were manuscripts and printed texts on the *sādhana* and maṇḍala by Khrus khang lo tsā ba [Khrims khang Bsod nams rgya mtsho (1424-1482)] and Rngog Rin chen bzang po (1243-1319) and others, but the transmission was not intact. Among the later [writers], several of [Zhwa dmar IV,] Spyan snga chos grags' (1453-1524) scholastic guidebooks were more or less appropriate, and did not distort the Rngog tradition. In Jo nang rje brtsun rin po che's [Tāranātha] collected works there were several [texts dealing with] the Mar pa tantra, which were like cast gold. Taking these two [i.e. the work of Zhwa mar and Tāranātha] as my basis, at the end of the forty-nine day mourning period, while I was still compiling materials, Khra leb [VI,] Ye shes nyi ma (d.u.) arrived. Previously [Chab tsha sprul sku] Dbon sprul Karma rin chen (d.u.), himself a student of [Zur mang Tshe dbang] kun khyab (d.u.) [who was a disciple of Ta'i si tu VIII, Chos kyi 'byung gnas] had given him [Khra leb] the empowerments and transmissions of Spyan snga [chos grags'] tantra teachings. By requesting all of these [from him, I received] all the lineages of transmission and empowerments and so it happened that I did not need to look elsewhere.” *Rgyud sde dgyes rdor gyi sgrub dkyil nas rim par sgrig pa'i dbu brtsam / bla brang phyag dper bzhugs pa'i khrus khang lo tsā ba / rngog rin chen bzang po sogs kyi sgrub dkyil snang yang lung ma bzhugs / physis byon nang sbyan snga chos grags kyi yig cha mang nyung 'tshams shing rngog lugs bsalad med dang / jo nang rje brtsun rin po che'i bka' 'bum du mar pa'i rgyud sde kha shes bzhugs pa rnams gser zhun lta bur snang bas de gnyis la gzhi byas nas bsgrigs skabs gsol dgung rdzogs pa'i skabs khra leb ye shes nyi ma phebs / khong kun khyab slob ma dbon sprul karma rin chen nas gnang ba'i sbyan snga'i rgyud sde rnams kyi dbang lung bzhugs 'dug pas tshang ma zhus pas dbang rgyun nam dag dang lung rgyun kyang gzhan la ltos mi dgos pa byung* (Kong sprul A, f. 72a).

⁵³⁹ *Dud sol ma'i gsol brgya*; Kong sprul A, f. 78a.

monasteries such as Sde dge dgon chen and Rdzogs chen. He would give the transmission seven times in all.⁵⁴⁰

The second of the five treasuries that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul began was his famous *Rin chen gter mdzod*. This is a collection of root *sādhana* and other liturgical manuals, many of which he wrote himself, relating to treasure revelations of well over one hundred different treasure revealers. The main section is arranged according to the traditional composition of a complete cycle of Rnying ma tantric liturgy: the Guru *sādhana*, arranged by inner, outer, and secret Padmasambhava practices; the tutelary deity (*yi dam*) section, arranged by the categories of the *Bka' brgyad*;⁵⁴¹ and the *ḍākinī* / dharmapala section. These, the original core of the work, totaled some sixty-three volumes, to which an additional forty-seven volumes of ritual liturgies were amended by Ldil mgo Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po Rinpoche (1910-1991) in the late 1970s to total one hundred eleven volumes.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul began work on the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, a project that would occupy him for over thirty years, in the spring of 1855, not long after completing the *Bka' brgyud sngags mdzod* and during the time that Mchog gyur gling pa was gaining authorization from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po. The idea for it apparently had come to him sometime earlier:

During the summer solstice [of 1855] I spent a week practicing the White Tārā from Bdud 'dul [rdo rje]'s treasure revelations. Previously I had thought that if there were a text which gathered all the many important old minor treasure that I had received over the years it would go some distance towards being of benefit to their transmission, and I mustered the effort [to undertake the project]. In addition to those, I thought it would be good if the collection of the received empowerments of the rare and uncommon dharma treasures of the major illustrious treasure revealers included minor treasures as well, since they too have efficacious, if minor, practices. I put this to my all-seeing master [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po]; he said, "Write about four volumes collecting the minor treasure; it would be very good if, using those as a basis, it were to be written according to the texts of the complete Guru *sādhana*, Rdzogs chen, and Avalokiteśvara practices of the great *gter ston*, in accordance with your aspirations."⁵⁴²

⁵⁴⁰ Kong sprul A, f. 202a.

⁵⁴¹ These are the traditional eight *yi dam* of the Rnying ma school: Yamāntaka, Hayagrīva, Śrīheruka, Vajrāmṛta, Vajrakīla, Mātaraḥ, Dmod pa drag sngags and 'jig rten mchod bstod. The last two are said to have been among the native deities subjugated by Padmasambhava.

⁵⁴² *Nyi ma byang bgrad skabs bdud 'dul sgrol dkar bdun gcig bsnyen / sngar rang go bsam yul du gter phran Rnying ma gal chen mang po snga phyir thob pa 'di rnams phyogs bsdu kyi dpe zhig yod na rgyun la phan 'gro bar 'dug*

We see that he carefully preserved for himself the genesis of the idea behind the work, yet affirmed its validity by recording Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po's consent, and crediting him with the structure.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul then asked Mkhjen brtse'i dbang po to compose a list of which treasure cycles warranted inclusion. This is a subject about which he had little to say in his autobiography, though he addresses some of the issues around selection process in a lengthy *dkar chags* in the second volume of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*. The selection of texts was not without controversy. He excluded the work of the well-known if somewhat notorious treasure revealer Rig 'dzin Nyi ma grags pa (1647-1710), a lama to both the royalty of Lhasa and Sde dge.⁵⁴³ Nyi ma grags pa, a notorious magician, had fallen afoul with the Karma bka' brgyud treasure revealer Yongs dge Mi 'gyur rdo rje Drag po nus ldan rtsal (1628/1641-1708),⁵⁴⁴ and was blamed for the death of Karma pa X Chos dbying rdo rje (1604-74). His teachings were henceforth essentially blacklisted from Karma bka' brgyud circles, and thus were not included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*.

The addition of several Bon liturgies elicited the strongest opposition.⁵⁴⁵ In the early twentieth century a Rnying ma pa named Rgya rong Bstan 'dzin grags pa, apparently angry

snyam de'i rtsol ba zhig dran / yang de dag kyang phran gnod kyi las phran tshegs tsam red 'dug pas gter ston yongs grags gco bo rnams kyi gter chos rgyun dkon cing nyung la 'dus pa rnams kyi dbang rgyun phyogs bsdus zhig gi mnyam du gter phran rnams yod pa zhig byung na legs snyam kun gzigs rin po cher bka' 'dri zhug par / khong nas kyang gter phran rnams bsdus pa'i pod bzhi tsam bris / das te de rnams la gzhi byas nas khyod kyi 'dod pa de ltar gter chen rnams kyi bla rdzogs thugs gsum tshang ba zhig gis gzhung byas nas bri rgyu byung na shin tu legs 'dugs gsungs pa phebs pas (Kong sprul A, ff. 79a-b).

⁵⁴³ On this controversial figure and the reasons behind 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's exclusion see Prats 1982, pp. 73-73, note 14; Blondeau 1988; Martin 1991b, pp. 173-181; and Cuevas 2003, pp. 179-190, who drew from Gu ru bkra shis' extensive account (1990, pp. 829-855).

⁵⁴⁴ According to Gu ru bkra shis, the trouble began when Mi 'gyur rdo rje attempted to meet with Nyi ma grags pa but was waylaid and accosted by local officials. Mi 'gyur rdo rje blamed Nyi ma grags pa and set out to destroy his reputation.

⁵⁴⁵ Blondeau's 1988 article is fascinating discussion of this issue. Prats has it that Nyi ma grags pa accused Mi 'gyur rdo rje of laying claim to treasure that was destined to be revealed by himself (1982, p. 73, note 14).

over the exclusion of the treasures of Nyi ma grags pa,⁵⁴⁶ made the accusation that the work was corrupted by the Bon po inclusion. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's disciple, Mchog sprul Padma dbang chen (d.u.) requested some of the most illustrious masters of the day to respond: Karma pa XV Mkha' khyab rdo rje (1871-1922), Dpal spung Si tu 11 Padma dbang mchog rgyal po (1886-1952), and 'Ju Mi pham rgya mtsho. 'Ju Mi pham declined, apparently believing that Bstan 'dzin grags pa's accusation did not warrant the attention, and in his stead his disciple Zhe chen rgyal tshab Padma rnam rgyal (1871-1926) composed a response.⁵⁴⁷

Although clearly caving in to institutional pressures, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was otherwise quite active in making sure he had the materials he desired to include. For example, although he described asking Mchog gyur gling pa in 1857 for his recommendation regarding which of his treasure the latter felt should be included in the collection,⁵⁴⁸ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul relates an episode from 1863 in which he pressured Mchog gyur gling pa to “decipher” a *sādhana* from a recent revelation at Seng brag, southwest of Sde dge that included a treasure cycle titled the *Six Scrolls of Pure Dharma* and a hagiography of Padmasambhava entitled the *Garland of Jewels*.⁵⁴⁹ Mchog gyur gling pa therefore deciphered one section, the *Heart essence of Vajrasattva*, and, telling 'Jam mgon Kong sprul that “he had supplicated O rgyan Rinpoche for the transmission and empowerment for this and had received an omen that he had been given them,” he gave 'Jam mgon Kong sprul the transmission.⁵⁵⁰ With the text and its transmission in

⁵⁴⁶ According to Blondeau he was a disciple of Dpal sprul O rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po (1808-1887) and Mdo Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po Ye shes rdo rje (1800-1859) (1988, p. 60).

⁵⁴⁷ Blondeau 1988 pp. 62-67 summarized each of the three defenses.

⁵⁴⁸ Kong sprul A, f. 85b. The request appears to have been part of the inspiration behind the revelation that produced the list text; it was at the same communion with Padmasambhava that resulted in the narrative map that Mchog gyur gling pa received from Padmasambhava the good news that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul could include whatever texts he wished to.

⁵⁴⁹ The revelation, part of Mchog gyur gling pa's fourteenth treasure casket, is said to have occurred on the nineteenth day of the first month of the fire serpent year (c. February 14, 1957). The hagiography is not found in the *Mchog gyur gling pa gter gsar* and is presumably lost, if it ever, in fact, existed.

⁵⁵⁰ *'Di'i dbang lung o rgyan rin po che la gsol ba thob dang gnang ba'i ltas byung gsung nas bskur byung ba* (Kong sprul A, f. 104a).

hand, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was able to insert it into the Vajrasattva section of the *Gter mdzod*.⁵⁵¹

The working title of the collection was the *Gter spreng*, or “Garland of treasures.” Already in summer of 1856 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had completed some ten volumes, which he had edited and proofed, of a work that, he wrote, did not yet deserve the name “treasury”.⁵⁵² The impetus for the name change came with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's prophetic dream from 1861, discussed above. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, after relating this dream to 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and informing him that he would need to compose what would be known as the five treasuries, added that he should therefore call the collection of treasures he was working on by the name *Gter mdzod*.⁵⁵³ He reports assigning the name the following year, in 1862, while the Nyag rong War raged all around him, while he continued to arrange and compose liturgies for the collection.⁵⁵⁴

⁵⁵¹ The *sādhana* for the *Rdor sems thugs kyi snying po* is found in volume 42 (*go*) of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, pp. 433-449, followed by an empowerment manual of Kong sprul's composition titled *Dam chos shog sde drug pa las rdor sems thugs kyi snying po'i dbang gi cho ga 'od gsal snying po*, pp. 451-467. The colophon for this text repeats the circumstances of the text's production (something which suggests that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul likely drew on colophons he had previously written when preparing his autobiography). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul composed this text, he explained in the colophon, because he “perceived it as unsuitable for a *sādhana* to be without an associated empowerment manual” *sgrub thabs dang 'brel ba'i smin byed med du mi rung bar mthong nas* (Kong sprul G, p 467, H, p. 37). The same two texts are included in the *Mchog gyur gling pa gter gсар*, volume 25, pp. 1-20 and 21-37. Curiously, while the two versions of the treasure text are entirely different in layout, the two versions of Kong sprul's empowerment manual are identical, suggesting that the blocks were carved using a printing from the *Gter mdzod*. This is because the *Gter mdzod* was finished many decades before the blocks for the *Mchog gyur gling pa gter gсар* were carved. Why, one might ask, did the same not happen for the *Gter mdzod* edition of the treasure text? Such a curious inconsistency indicates the need for a better understanding of Tibetan print culture. [The “important circumstances” in the above passage might refer to the Nyag rong War, or the recent death of a woman named Tshul khri ms dpal mo who acted as guide for Mchog gyur gling pa when opening sacred sites, and who served him during feast offerings (Kong sprul A, f. 103b). I suspect she was a consort, but no other mention of her is made anywhere.]

⁵⁵² *Di skor gter chos gсар bris rnams la mdzod kyi ming thogs rin chog pa med pas gter phreng du btags pa pod bcu skor grub 'dug pa'i briss pa rnams nas zhu dag brda mtshon dang yon sprad* (Kong sprul A, f. 82a). Either this is an anachronism on Kong sprul's part – it was still five years before Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po would suggest he label the work a “treasury” – or the idea for such a name had already occurred to him by this date. Barron reads *yon sprad* as “sponsoring publication”, which would mean carving began at this early date. I suspect this is incorrect.

⁵⁵³ Kong sprul A, f. 100a.

⁵⁵⁴ Kong sprul A, f. 102a; f. 105b.

It was during this period that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul also composed the *Shes bya kun khyab*. In early 1862 Zla bzang sprul sku requested 'Jam mgon Kong sprul to compose a treatise on the Three vows,⁵⁵⁵ for which he, Zla bzang sprul sku would then write a commentary. He was not terribly interested in the commission, remarking that “everyone has a treatise on the Three vows” (*sdom gsum bstan bcos su la'ang 'dug pa*). Instead he suggested that were he to compose a treatise “that addressed all the classifications [of knowledge], it would be of benefit to those who had not studied much” (*bstan bcos bris phyin rnam gzhaq tshang ba zhiq yod na thos pa chung ba la phan snyam*). Taking this as his focus 'Jam mgon Kong sprul composed a concise treatise on the Three trainings⁵⁵⁶ that became the root for the *Shes bya kun khyab*. As evidently was his habit, he showed the basic work to Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, who stated that the work revealed the blessing that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul had received from the great masters of the past and of having had his *nāḍi* opened by the *ḍākinī*, and that it was the first of the five treasuries, naming it the *Shes bya mdzod*. He further told 'Jam mgon Kong sprul that he must write an auto-commentary, which he agreed to do.⁵⁵⁷ 'Jam mgon Kong sprul wrote the auto-commentary between the fourth and seventh lunar month of the water pig year (c. May to August, 1863), with the financial support of a lama named Bkra shis 'od ser.⁵⁵⁸ Due no doubt to the Nyag rong War, the first that 'Jam mgon Kong sprul reports teaching the text is in 1866, once to a group that included Rngor slob Ngag dbang rin chen,⁵⁵⁹ and again to Mchog gyur gling pa.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁵ Such treatises on the Three vows (*sdom gsum*; those of the Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna) belong to a standard genre of Tibetan Buddhism. Among the more famous examples are those of Sa skya pa' ita's (1182-1251) *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, and Mnga' ris pa' chen Padma dbang rgyal's (1487-1542) *Sdom pa gsum rnam par nges pa*. Kong sprul had received teachings on Lo chen darma śrī's (1654-1717) while at Zhe chen, from a lama named 'Gyur med bstan 'dzin (Kong sprul A, f. 14b).

⁵⁵⁶ *Bslab pa gsum*: discipline, concentration and discriminating knowledge

⁵⁵⁷ Kong sprul A, ff. 101b-102a.

⁵⁵⁸ Kong sprul A, f. 105a.

⁵⁵⁹ This is likely the thirty-sixth throne holder of Sa skya, Ngag dbang kun dga' theg chen dbang sdud bkra shis rin chen grags pa rgyal mtshan (1824-1865).

⁵⁶⁰ Kong sprul A, f 110b; f. 111b. Kong sprul reports another occasion in which he taught the text, in 1875, indicating that it was not long before the text left his own control and spread throughout Tibet. “Rje bla ma, Khang sar mkhan Rinpoche [Ggag dbang bsod nams rgyal mtshan, c.1835-c.1895] and others lamas, in all about twenty tulku, and kalyāṅamitra, received the transmission for the *Shes bya kun khyab* – the root text, the commentary and the additional explanation, which took about ten days. After it was done we

As a piece of literature the *Shes bya kun khyab* can be related to the *chos 'byung*, or “religious history” genre.⁵⁶¹ Though commonly described as being a treatment of traditional Tibetan topics of study, the work is as much a religious history, outlining the development of the Buddhist teachings from the early teachings of the Buddha and the differentiation of the doctrine into the various schools of thought. The work is divided into four books with four sections each, some of which cover secular matters, other sacred.⁵⁶² The historical frame is most evident in book four of the work, particularly in section three⁵⁶³ where 'Jam mgon Kong sprul made use of a standard doxographical structure, the Eight Practice Lineages (*sgrub brgyud shing rta brgyad*), to describe the development of Buddhism in Tibet.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul employed this same structure in both the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, where it serves as the outline for the entire work, and again in a short *Ris med chos 'byung*.⁵⁶⁴ This work, unlike either of the longer works, includes a sizable discussion of the Bon tradition

recited the dedication prayer and benediction. [They] praised it effusively, calling it a treatise which blocks the three times (?). [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po] instructed the representatives of each monastery to propagate it [at his seat]; and each promised to do so, Mkhan Rinpoche saying he would propagate it at Ngor, and so forth. Whether the promise remained in their thoughts later on is uncertain.” *Rje nyid dang khang sar mkhan rin po che sogs bla sprul dge ba'i bshes gnyen nyi shu tsam nas shes bya kun khyab gsan par mdzad pas / rtsa ba dang 'grel pa sbyar ba'i bshad lung sbrags ma nyin bcu tsam bgyis / grub mthar bsngo smon shis brjod dang / dus gsum khegs pa'i bstan bcos yin tshul gyi ljags bshad snyan 'jebs rgya cher gnang / so so'i dgon khag rnams su 'chad spel dgos pa'i bka' bslab gnang bas / mkhan rin po ches ngor la 'chad spel sogs so sos zhal bzhes ni zhus song / rjes su thugs la yod med ma nges* (Kong sprul A, f. 136b).

It was still a decade before the blocks were carved for the printing of either the *Shes bya kun khyab* and the *Rin chen gter mdzod*. Dbon sprul Rinpoche, who had passed away in 1873, left funds for the printing of the *Gter mdzod*, and Kong sprul reports that he requested the Sde dge royal family to sponsor the printing as well. Thus, in early 1875 the steward Pad legs took up the task, publishing first the three-volume *Shes bya kun khyab* and beginning the lengthy process of preparing the blocks for the *Gter mdzod*. Kong sprul reports being consumed solely with the composition of the ritual manuals, giving one the impression that the texts were carved onto blocks as quickly as he could write them, (Kong sprul A, f. 135a) though in fact it was another four years, in 1879, before the blocks for the first forty volumes had been completed (Kong sprul A, f. 153).

⁵⁶¹ On the genre of *chos 'byung* see Vostrikov 1970, van der Kuijp 1996, and Martin 1997. Tucci (1949, p. 139), touching briefly on the genre, wrote “Tibetans show a particular interest, if not precisely a great accuracy, in recording facts.” Martin 1997 is the standard bibliography of Tibetan historical material.

⁵⁶² For an outline see the 2002 edition, pp. 1-4. An English outline without reference to volume or page number is Barron 2003, pp. 529-531. This was based on Smith's outline from his Introduction to the 1970 edition of the *Shes bya kun khyab*, which was not included in the 2001 reprint.

⁵⁶³ Kong sprul M, pp. 255-278.

⁵⁶⁴ Kong sprul J.

(pp. 863-865 and again 887), and so recalls the *Rin chen gter mdzod*'s affirmation that teachings of the Bon school are also valid avenues of inquiry for Buddhist scholars and practitioners – a position that reflects Bstan pa tshe ring's articulation of the *ris med* ideal in the *Sde dge rgyal rabs*.

The *Shes bya kun khyab*, freed from an overarching chronological framework, is able to not only presents the vast content of the Buddhist teachings historically, but also hierarchically. The work is not simply a catalogue of teachings, it is a doxography,⁵⁶⁵ presenting each subject of Buddhist knowledge in turn – cosmology (book one), life of the Buddha (book two), doctrine (book three), history (book four), ethics (book five), philosophy (books six and seven), meditation (books eight and nine) and realization (book ten) – known in Tibet. Beginning with the organization of the world, it culminates with its transcendence. 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's preferences are evident within the historical and topical outline, in his granting certain topics extensive attention and denying comparable space to others. As Gene Smith pointed out, the “special intention” of the *Shes bya kun khyab* was “to stress the virtues of the Rdzogs chen *atiyoga* approach of the Rnying ma sect.”⁵⁶⁶ Not only does the entire work conclude with a discussion of the Rdzogs chen fulfillment stage of tantric practice, but also most books likewise conclude with a discussion of this Rdzogs chen. Rdzogs chen, we are to understand, is the highest teaching, the final development of the Buddhist doctrine and the most effective path to liberation.

⁵⁶⁵ *Chos 'byung*, of course, are also doxographical, reflecting the attempt of an author to organize the Buddhist teachings according to received or invented categories. For a detailed study of the structures and strategies of Tibetan tantric doxography see Dalton (forthcoming).

⁵⁶⁶ 2001, p. 251.

Appendix Six

An Account of the *Bar chad kun sel* Revelation and Composition

The hagiographic tradition records two revelations of Mchog gyur gling pa that occurred before he left Nang chen in 1853 and that produced treasure. Like his first two caskets, these were received while he was still unnamed and unaccepted. These, his third and fourth treasures caskets, both of which count among his major revelations, remained “sealed in secrecy” until he found authorization more than half a decade later. The precise moments the subsequent events occurred is not a matter on which we find much agreement in the sources.

The revelation of the third casket took place below the “naturally abiding great glorious cliff” (*rang byung du bzhugs brag dpal chen po*) at Zla nyin kha la rong sgo, in Nang chen. There he received the *Thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel*, a Māyājāla-related treasure cycle of Amitāyus, Avalokiteśvara and Padmasambhava in his twelve forms.⁵⁶⁷ Mchog gyur gling pa records in his autobiography that the revelation “was marked as secret for eight years.”⁵⁶⁸ From a colophon, however, we learn that the root *sādhana* alone was transcribed in the iron pig year (February 1851 to February 1852), at which point, because “for a while yet the time would not be appropriate [to reveal them, it was again] sealed in utmost secrecy.”⁵⁶⁹ The secrecy attested in several other colophons in the cycle,⁵⁷⁰ and the root text for the cycle reports that the transcription was done by Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po at Padma shel phug, and event that took

⁵⁶⁷ For a description of this cycle see Schmidt 1989, 1999, and Doctor 2006. The texts are found in volumes 1-10 of the *Mchog gyur gling pa gter gsar*.

⁵⁶⁸ *Lo brgyad bar du gsang rgyas btab* (Mchog gling A, p. 182).

⁵⁶⁹ *Rtsa ba'i sgrub thabs tsam lcags phag lor 'bebs par rtsams / re zhig dus la ma bab par rig nas shintu gsang ba'i rgyas btab pa* (Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse B, p. 27-28).

⁵⁷⁰ For example, Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse E, p. 68 and Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse D, p. 178.

place roughly eight years later.⁵⁷¹ Regarding the date the treasure was received, in his autobiography Mchog gyur gling pa relates that this took place on the tenth day of the eighth month of the earth monkey year, which would have been October 7, 1848.⁵⁷² However the date given in the colophons of the root *sādhana* and three other texts from the cycle⁵⁷³ is the tenth day of the ninth month, or November 7, 1848, the same date given by Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po,⁵⁷⁴ who is followed by Padma ye shes⁵⁷⁵ and Dkon mchog 'gyur med.⁵⁷⁶ Given that the texts were allegedly written down in 1855, presumably by Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po, it is no surprise that the colophons accord with his own account. Mchog gyur gling pa's alternate date, if an error on his part, is peculiar, given that he composed his autobiography after the colophons were written and presumably would have had access to the texts he helped create.

The following year, at Na bun rdzong, Mchog gyur gling pa received his fourth revelation of earth treasures, the *Thugs rje chen po Padma gtsug tor cycle*.⁵⁷⁷ Various sources add further material to the revelation, including: a statue of Mahākāruṇā made of the bones of either the dharmarāja Khri srong lde'u bstan⁵⁷⁸ or of Ye shes mtsho rgyal,⁵⁷⁹ and texts entitled

⁵⁷¹ Mchog gling and Mkhyan brtse C, pp. 460-461. See below for a discussion of when the Bar chad revelations were translated into scripture; the sole date given in the cycle is the tenth day of the tenth month of the wood hare year, or October 21, 1855 (Mchog gling and Mkhyan brtse B, p. 28, Mchog gling and Mkhyan brtse E, p. 178). The root *sādhana* to the cycle also includes a treasure history, an account of Padmasambhava transmitting the teaching at Bsam yas in the last winter month of the male earth monkey year to Khri srong lde'u btsan and others; Lha sras Ye shes rol pa tsal, Khri srong lde'u btsan's second son and reputed previous incarnation of Mchog gling, gave Padmasambhava a golden maṇḍala and offered a long supplication, after which point the prophesy for its future retrieval was given (pp. 16-26). The origin of the legend that Lha sras was a previous incarnation of Mchog gling is not clear, though it might have been made first by Mchog gling himself prior to arriving in the Sde dge region. A separate treasure history for the cycle is Mchog gling G.

⁵⁷² Mchog gling A p. 182.

⁵⁷³ These are Mchog gling and Mkhyan brtse B, p. 27; C p. 460; D, p. 178; and E, p. 68.

⁵⁷⁴ Mkhyan brtse A p. 26.

⁵⁷⁵ Padma ye shes p. 96.

⁵⁷⁶ Dkon mchog 'gyur med p. 183.

⁵⁷⁷ This cycle contains only about eight texts, beginning with volume 10 page 125, through volume 11, page 53. The first few are *sādhana*; only one is dated to 1849. According to the colophons the texts are composed by Mchog gyur gling pa, Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po, or Mchog gyur gling pa's eldest son, Kun bzang 'jigs med tshe dbang nor bu.

⁵⁷⁸ Mkhyan brtse A, p. 26; Dkon mchog 'gyur med p. 283.

⁵⁷⁹ Padma ye shes p. 97.

Phur pa dbang chen bshad pa and a *Dpal gyi dbang phyug gi thun phur*.⁵⁸⁰ Neither texts are found in the *Mchog gyur gling pa gter gsar*. In his autobiography Mchog gyur gling pa states that this revelation occurred in a bird year when he was twenty-two years old.⁵⁸¹ The bird year would have been the earth bird year, late February 1849 to mid January 1850. A colophon from one of the treasure texts of the cycle gives a full date: the tenth day of the eighth month of the female earth bird year,⁵⁸² or September twenty-sixth, 1849. Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po also gives this date, but states that it was Mchog gyur gling pa's twenty-first year, and he writes in an interlinear note that elsewhere it was written that the event occurred in Mchog gyur gling pa's twenty-second year, the dog year (mid February 1850-early March 1851).⁵⁸³ He does not identify what source he was referring to – there is no dog year given in any colophon – and of course Mchog gyur gling pa's autobiography would not yet have been written. It appears that whatever source Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was responding to has been lost.

The bird year, however, is not the only year given in colophons from the cycle. The colophon for the root text of the cycle (Mchog gling C) states that the revelation took place in the female iron pig year (February 1851 to January 1852) at a place called *Mi gyel phu'i brag*, which may or may not be a site at Na bun rdzong. One is tempted to assume it was – the root text, containing the extensive treasure history, empowerment and *sādhana*, ought to have originated with the initial revelation. This text is the one that contains the prophecy relating to Mchog gyur gling pa's attempt to gain the recognition of one of the major religious figures of the day, Ta'i si tu Padma nyin byed (1774-1853). Following the prophecy there is a further colophon stating simply that Mchog gyur gling pa revealed the treasure at Na bun rdzong. The dates given for this cycle are particularly difficult to sort through, though are in no way is this

⁵⁸⁰ Dkon mchog 'gyur med, pp. 283-284.

⁵⁸¹ Mchog gling A, p. 182.

⁵⁸² Mchog gling and Blo gter dbang po A, p. 290.

⁵⁸³ Mkhyen brtse A, p. 26.

atypical for the material. Dates in the various narratives and colophons rarely in fact accord with one another. Nevertheless, the large variant in the root text is especially peculiar.

Having been suitably authorized, and having had his subtle knots loosened, with Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's help the "seals of secrecy" on Mchog gyur gling pa's treasures could now be broken, and his revelations decoded. In his autobiography Mchog gyur gling pa describes the events of the last of the three meetings described above, though the passage is misplaced in the chronological narrative, and the date given cannot be accepted. He writes "the fifteenth day of the eleventh month" without indicating the year other than by placing it after events of the ninth month of the fire dragon year. This would have been January 11, 1857. The eleventh month of the wood hare year, December 25, 1856, is also not feasible, as by that point Mchog gyur gling pa was in Nang chen. Nevertheless, the passage bears quoting, as it remains Mchog gyur gling pa's own description of the moment he attained Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's authorization:

On the fifteenth day of the eleventh month the seal of the *Thugs sgrub Bar chad kun sel* was broken; the maṇḍala was opened, and the gods and demons were bound to oath. That evening I saw the face of the dharma lord Zhabs drung rin po che [Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po] himself, the most eminent vidhyādhara, filling the sky. Furthermore there were some signs of the blessing of O rgyan rin po che, a swirling five-colored rainbow that was seen by all together in a smoke offering, and in the heavens five-colored rainbow *thig le* and *thig pran* which were seen by all.⁵⁸⁴

'Jam mgon Kong sprul, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and many of the treasure text colophons indicate that the process of transcribing the revelation of the *Bar chad kun sel* began at least the same month Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po had their third

⁵⁸⁴ *Zla ba bcu gcig pa'i tshes bco lnga la thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel gyi bka'rgya bkrol te dkyil 'khor zhal phyas / lha srin dam bsgrags mdzad par / de nub chos bdag zhabs drung rin po che nyid la khyad par 'phags pa'i rig 'dzin nam mkha' gang ba zhig zhal gzigs pa dang / gzhan rnam la o rgyan rin po che'i byin rlabs zhugs pa'i rtags 'ga' re byung 'dug pa dang / kun gyis mthong snang mthun par bsang dud 'ja' 'od sna sngar 'khyil ba dang / bar snang du 'od lnga'i 'ja' 'od kyi thig phran gyis gang ba sogs mthon ngo* (Mchog gling A, p. 183). Dkon mchog 'gyur med's version of this passage includes the information that they received the prophesy for the *Rdzogs chen sde gsum* (p. 293). Here we can see that in retelling the story he received from Mchog gling's autobiography, he has added information he learned from Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po.

meeting. For example, the colophon to the root text of the *Bar chad kun sel*, Mchog gyur gling pa reports having foreseen the events of the transcription:

I saw specific signs that in the future the time will come; [the scriptures] will be transcribed via dictation (*zhal bshus pa*) with a pure mind and intense dedication from the actual yellow scrolls that are written in the supreme vidhyādhara master's hand. Having perfectly apprehended the good fortune of the elixir of the speech of the uncontested timely emanated great treasure revealer vidhyādhara, the joyful servant of the Lake born gu ru, 'Jam dbyang Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po dbang po kun dga' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, while resting in the cool shade of a white parasol and blessed by the Glorious O rgyan chos kyi rgyal po [will undertake the transcription] in his own residence of 'Chi med grub pa'i dga' tshal at the important dharma center of Rdzong sar bkra shis lha rtse, famous for having been blessed by the exalted master of beings in the three realms in a previous birth, which is to the east of the palace of the magnificent dharmarāja of Sde dge, the holy ground of the realm of greater Tibet, and is near the truly exalted mountain retreat that is praised in the vajra-prophecy as the king of practice sites, Bde chen Padma shel phug.⁵⁸⁵

In other colophons dates are also provided. Both the colophons to a main empowerment liturgy in the cycle and a short *sādhana* give the date for their transcription as October 21, 1855. The *sādhana* text colophon is as follows:

I, Mchog gyur bde chen gling pa, extracted [this] from below the Dpal chen po [cliff] of Zla nyin kha la rong sgo, on the tenth day of the ninth month of the earth monkey year (October 7, 1848). For eight years it was sealed in secrecy. Then, on the tenth day of the tenth month of the wood hare year (October 21, 1855) the conditions of time and place were positive, and it was transcribed from the prajñā ḍākinī secret symbolic script. The writing was done by the joyful servant of the lake born bla ma, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po dbang po.⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁵ *Slad nas rig 'dzin bla ma mchog gi phyag bris shog ser gyi bu dpe dngos las dus su babs nges pa'i ltas khyad par can mthong ba na / bod chen po'i ljongs kyi yi thig le sde bzhi dge bcu'i dpal gyis 'byor pa'i chos rgyal chen po'i pho brang gi shar phyogs / gangs ri'i khrod tsam na mngon par mtho ba'i sgrub gnas kyi rgyal por rdo rje'i lung gis bsngags pa bde chen padma shel phug dang 'dabs 'byor pa / sngon gyi tshe khams gsum 'gro ba'i bla ma 'phags pa rin po ches byin gyis brlabs par grags pa'i rdzongs sar bkra shis lha rtse'i chos grwa gal pa'i rang gnas bsam gtad gyi khang bu 'chi med grub pa'i dga' tshal du / dpal o rgyan chos kyi rgyal po'i byin rlabs gdugs dkar po'i grib bsil yangs par ngal 'tsho zhing / rtsod bral dus babs kyi sprul pa'i gter ston chen po'i gsung gi bdud rtsi'i skal bzang rdzogs par thob pa rig 'dzin gyi btsun pa mtsho skyes bla ma dgyes pa'i 'bangs 'jam dbyang Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po dbang po kun dga' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan dpal bzang pos bsam pa dag cing sbyor ba gus pas zhal bshus pa Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse C, pp 460-461).*

⁵⁸⁶ *Kho bo mchog gyur bde chen gling pas zla nyin kha la rong sgo'i dpal chen po'i zhabs 'og nas sa spreld dbyug pa zla ba'i tshes bcur spyang drang / lo brgyad gsang rgyas gdab ste / slar shing yos smin drug zla ba'i tshes bcur gnas dus kyi rten 'brel phun sum tshogs pa bcas ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro'i gsang ba'i brda ris las gtan la phab pa'i yi ge pa ni mtsho skyes bla ma dgyes pa'i 'bangs Mkhyen brtse'i dbang pos mdzad pa'o (Mchog gling and Mkhyen brtse D, p. 178).*

From these we see that at Rdzong sar, in October 1855, Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po at least began the process of transcribing the revelation of the *Bar chad kun sel*.

Notice that according to the dates given in the above *Bar chad kun sel* colophon the “secrecy” was broken after only seven years, not eight as the same colophon claims. If Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa wrote out the texts for the fourth treasure casket at the same time, it would have been six years after its revelation. As we have seen, however, the colophons have it that the revelation was sealed in secrecy for seven years. Thus if the writing took place in 1855 following Mchog gyur gling pa and Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's third encounter, both caskets' seals were broken one year too early. This is perhaps due to the vexing Tibetan penchant for counting years by the turn of the new year rather than twelve month periods. Revealed in the ninth month of the earth monkey year, three months later at the beginning of the earth bird the *Bar chad kun sel* could be counted as having been sealed in secrecy for two years. By the end of the wood hare six new years would have passed, making a count of seven years.

It should be noted that the *Bima lha sgrub* was also decoded and transcribed at this time, as well as well as parts of the fifth casket, the auxiliaries to the *Bar chad kun sel*. This can be known only from 'Jam mgon Kong sprul, who records receiving transmission and empowerments for these cycles soon afterwards.⁵⁸⁷

Something that the colophons do not indicate is that Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po considered the *Bar chad kun sel* to be nearly identical in words and meaning with a treasure he himself had received. He writes:

Earlier there had been difficulties in deciphering the symbolic script of the *Thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel*; now they were cleared away without much trouble. Not only was it the same in meaning as my own transmission of the *Thugs sgrub bde gshegs 'dus pa*, but the major part of the writing was also very much in agreement.⁵⁸⁸

⁵⁸⁷ Kong sprul A, ff. 78a-79b.

⁵⁸⁸ *Sngon chad thugs sgrub bar chad kun sel gyi brda yig gtan la 'bebs dka' bar byung ba de nas bzung ste tsheds med du khrol ba ltar / nged rang la bka' babs pa'i thugs sgrub bde gshegs 'dus pa dang don gcig tu babs par ma zad / tshig ris phal cher kyang shin tu mthun par byung ste* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 24).

'Jam mgon Kong sprul clarifies what this passage implicitly states: “Therefore working together the two, as though joining mother and son, were able without obstacle to decipher it.”⁵⁸⁹ That is, Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po and Mchog gyur gling pa's two revelations were merged into one. According to O rgyan stobs rgyal Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po's was a mind treasure and thus not as auspicious as Mchog gyur gling pa's, and perhaps this is the reason the treasure continued to be attributed to him.⁵⁹⁰

This is a remarkable added stamp of legitimacy for Mchog gyur gling pa's treasure, and it is one that Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po apparently felt the need to justify. He does so by providing a precedent for the merging of the two previous treasure revelations. The precedent he gave is the fundamental similarity between two treasures, one by Mnga' ris paṇ chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487-1542) and a second by 'Phreng po gter ston Shes rab 'od zer (1518-1584): In the treasure prophesy of *Grol tig dgongs pa rang grol*⁵⁹¹ it is written, “Except in the case of secret prophesies, it is suitable to edit /revise; because each depends on the other they are free from error.” [This refers to the fact that] the profound treasure of Mnga' ris paṇ chen rin po che [entitled] the *Rig 'dzin yongs 'dus*, and the *Grol tig dgongs pa rang grol* of the omniscient Prajñā rasmi [i.e. Shes rab 'od zer] each depends on the other and so are mutually affirmed, and are in accordance with one another in method.⁵⁹²

Just as these two treasures are identical [and therefore were combined?], so to were Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po's *Thugs sgrub bde gshegs 'dus pa* and Mchog gyur gling pa's *Bar chad kun sel*; he continued:

⁵⁸⁹ *Rnam gnyis lhan rgyas pas ma bu zung bsdebs kyi tshul du bar med par gtan la phabs* (Kong sprul C, p. 648).

⁵⁹⁰ Orgyen Tobgyal p. 5.

⁵⁹¹ *The Bindu of Liberation, the Self-Liberated Mind*; Mkhyan brtse'i dbang po “rediscovered” this *gter ma*, it having been originally revealed by Shes rab 'od zer. *Sādhana* for the cycle are found in volume 8 of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*.

⁵⁹² *Grol tig dgongs pa rang grol gyi gter lung las / gsang ba'i lung bstan ma gtogs zhus dag pher / gcig la gcig yid ches pas 'khrul pa bral / zhes mnga' ris pa' chen rin po che'i thab gter rig 'dzin yongs 'dus dang / kun mkhyen pradznyā rasmi'i grol tig dgongs pa rang grol phan tshun dag dang tshul mthun par gcig la gcig yid ches shing* (Mkhyan brtse A, p. 24).

Not only was the symbolic [script] translated in just this way, but there were no extra words, and by means of the extreme secrets it was deciphered without difficulty. Because we also did the preparatory rituals for the treasure together a vast pure vision of the Guru and his consort in sexual union taking us into their care appeared, and suddenly numerous certificates for treasure caskets arose and so forth, and many of the entrances to immeasurable conditions were set in place.⁵⁹³

Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's is an interesting narrative, for he first states that the two treasures were identical, next justifies their union, states that they did in fact join them, and then affirms that the deed was divinely sanctioned. This sort of defense begs the question as to whether such a move was somehow fraught with the potential for doubt. In authorizing Mchog gyur gling pa, he was in a sense risking his own position, offering up his own religious capital to sponsor a twenty-eight year old lapsed monk from the other side of Khams who, his consort and children in tow, had been chasing validation for close to ten years. It should be noted that neither 'Jam mgon Kong sprul nor Padma ye shes felt the need to include his justification in their narratives, though both state that the joining of the two treasures occurred.⁵⁹⁴ After two years of encounters with Mchog gyur gling pa, Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po was willing to declare his treasures valid, but with the caveat, apparently, that this was so in part because they were the same as his own. By the time 'Jam mgon Kong sprul and Padma ye shes composed their narratives, Mchog gyur gling pa's status as an authentic treasure revealer was secure, and the justification for the union of the two treasures was information that could be dropped from the narrative.

⁵⁹³ *Brda bsgyur las ji ltar 'byung ba ma gtogs tshig gi lhad kyang med par shin tu gsang ba'i sgo nas bar chad med par gtan la phab / gter sgrub kyang lhan du mdzad pas gu ru yab yum gyis dngos su rjes su bzung ba'i dag sngang mtha' yas pa shar / lhag par gter kha du ma kha byang byung ba sogs dpag par dka' ba'i rten 'brel gyi sgo du ma 'grigs* (Mkhyen brtse A, p. 24). 'Jam mgon Kong sprul repeats this passage, having omitted Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's example of treasure-unification given above, and adds, "Because they depended on each other, and Rje bla ma also possessed the maturing and liberating nectar for these new treasures, he authorized them. The two were like the sun and moon, universally renowned as beyond dispute" (Kong sprul C, p. 648).

⁵⁹⁴ Dkon mchog 'gyur med does repeat Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po's justification, but as we have seen he included virtually everything he read.

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thang ka. 'Chi med dkar mo stag tshang gi rdo rje'i brag dang / g.yu mtsho gtan 'khyil nas zab gter spyang drang bkod pa zhal byang dang bcas pa mdor bsdu bkra shis tambhu ra'i dbyang snyan. In the possession of Rdzong sar monastery.

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