

ÖSTERREICHISCHE AKADEMIE DER WISSENSCHAFTEN
TIBETAN ACADEMY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES OF THE AUTONOMOUS REGION TIBET

NGAG DBANG SKAL LDAN RGYA MTSHO

SHEL DKAR CHOS 'BYUNG

HISTORY OF THE "WHITE CRYSTAL"

RELIGION AND POLITICS OF SOUTHERN LA STOD



Translation and Facsimile Edition of the Tibetan Text
by Pasang Wangdu and Hildegard Diemberger
in Cooperation with Guntram Hazod

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PHILOSOPHISCH-HISTORISCHE KLASSE
DENKSCHRIFTEN, 252. BAND

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HERAUSGEGEBEN VON WALTER DOSTAL

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INTRODUCTION

The manuscript

In January 1993, during a research trip organized by the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, the University of Vienna with the support of the "Fonds zur Förderung der Wissenschaftlichen Forschung", the Austrian Academy of Sciences, and the Italian "Ev-K2-CNR"-Project we came across a manuscript bearing the title: *Shel dkar chos 'byung legs bshad nor bu'i me long skal bzang mgrin rgyan* (Propitious sayings concerning the history of Shel dkar, mirror of jewels and necklace of good fortune).

Our attention was immediately attracted by the manuscript. In fact this proved to be more than a simple chronicle of the monastery. The author, having collected the sources available to him, had tried to outline the history of the area of southern La stod, of its lords, and of the Shel dkar monastery. From the time of the Tibetan kings up to 1731, when he started to write, he provided an account which, according to the sources he had at his disposal and the events reported, varies in style and detail.

The manuscript consists of 118 folios (they are numbered 1 to 116 but page 54 and page 84 are given twice) nicely written in black and occasionally red ink in *dbu can* characters on a thick, yellowish paper (*bod shog*). Each folio measures 55.1 cm by 9.3 cm.

The first page gives the bare title, whereas the second page is nicely decorated with six images representing:

- The Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī
- The Buddha Śākyamuni
- The goddess Sarasvatī
- The Fifth Dalai Lama
- Tsong kha pa
- Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho (author).

The particular relevance of the text is given by the fact that there is little mention about southern La stod and its lords, the lHo *bdag*, in the sources, as was also personally pointed out to us by Prof. Petech years before.

The Fifth Dalai Lama's History mentions the lords of northern La stod (*dPyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs*, folio 65b–67a; Tucci 1949: 631–632) and other *khri skor* but not the lords of southern La stod (lHo *bdag*). The *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* mentions southern and northern La stod only briefly (*Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* 191). The *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru* briefly mentions that Phag mo gru pa's army arrived at the residence of the lHo *bdag* in sPo (*Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru* 317). Besides, this source as well as all those which provide lists of the Sa skya *dpon chen* and the thirteen *khri skor* mention the *dpon chen* stemming from the lHo *bdag* family and the La stod lho khri skor (e.g. *rGya bod yig tshang* 299, 359–362; cf. also Petech 1990: 27–29, 53, 75, 78, 92).

Ka thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu's *Gung thang gdung rabs* mentions La stod lho and some of the lHo *bdag* occasionally because of the close relations between La stod lho and Gung thang (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 125, 130, 134, 139–140, 144). The *Byang pa gdung rabs* mentions the lHo *bdag* occasionally due to the marriage relations between the two ruling families (cf. also Sperling 1992: 272–277). More precisely La stod lho and the lHo *bdag* are mentioned in the *Byang pa lho bdag po'i gdung rabs* (folio 7b–8b), a manuscript which reports the genealogy of the Byang pa and is completed by two folios narrating briefly the story of the lords of La stod lho. This document which we came upon just before the publication of the present work basically confirms what is reported in the first chapter of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*. A number of differences between the two texts, however, seem to indicate that the *Byang pa lho bdag po'i gdung rabs* and the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* constitute independent sources. Finally, brief mention of localities in La stod lho and of the lHo *bdag* can be found in the *Deb ther sngon po* and in biographies of people who operated in the area such as Mi la ras pa, Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, Thang stong rgyal po, Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal, gTsang smyon Heruka, etc.

Despite the scarcity of documentation, the lHo *bdag* family, having brought forth two famous *dpon chen*, gZhon nu dbang phyug (ruled in 1288 and 1298), 'Od zer seng ge (ruled c. 1315–1317 and 1328/29), and the last acting *dpon chen* Amogha (after 1368), had a significant political relevance during the *Sa skya* period and immediately afterwards. As secular rulers of the area they also offered decisive support for the religious traditions which developed in the 14th–15th century in upper gTsang.

The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* – containing among others the genealogy of the lHo *bdag* – is the most detailed text available on the subject of the lords and the history of southern La stod and the relevant religious traditions (particularly the Bo dong pa). It provides also the account of the foundation of the Shel dkar monastery and its branches in great detail as well as short biographies of the abbots who succeeded each other against the background of the major historical events. Yet, being a *chos 'byung*, the religious history in general is given more emphasis, whereas the secular events are kept mainly in the background.

In the present context we try to provide a first access to this interesting text. The translation which should provide a guide-line to the facsimile copy given in the second part of the book focuses on the main meaning of the text rather than being literal. Poems of eulogy and poems which relate again events narrated in prose are simply mentioned. The final part concerning the dGe lugs pa abbots, when repetitive and rich in well-known data, is summarized (however the reference to the original text is always given).

In the translation and in the summary, words inside brackets () are clarifications and corrections as well as Sanskrit terms and the Pinyin Chinese form (whenever this was identifiable) of the titles bestowed by the Yüan to the Tibetans. Additions are given in square brackets [].

The geographical terms which could be identified are reported in the map or are mentioned in relation to terms reported in the map. The numerous religious works and rituals mentioned in the text could only be identified when they were not too generic, and in any case this has to be considered as a mere first step. We hope that this preliminary work will be a basis for further detailed studies addressing the numerous specific topics mentioned in the text.

Finally, the present work as a first result of a new-born international cooperation tries to match different perspectives, i.e. the approach of the Tibetan historian and that of the European scholars.

Shel dkar in southern La stod

The place where the manuscript is kept at present is the monastery of Shel dkar as rebuilt under the guidance of the monk Blo bzang shes rab in the 80s. The monastery at present counts 44 monks and is situated on the south-eastern slope of the hill of Shel dkar. Its white and red buildings are surrounded by the ruins both of the ancient monastery and the fortress (*rdzong*), which reach the summit of the hill. On the top, among the abandoned walls, bunches of prayer-flags bear witness to the periodic worship by the local community. At the foot of the hill lies the old village of Shel dkar to which some new constructions in Chinese style have been added. In fact this ancient administrative centre with the name of "New Dingri" became the seat of the *rdzong* government in the administration established after 1959.

The Shel dkar monastery, as reported by the manuscript, was founded in 1385 by the great translator Grags pa rgyal mtshan with the support of the lord *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen. This monastery had great influence throughout the area of southern La stod and in the bordering regions. The area of southern La stod itself is reported as extending from Chu 'dus in the east to Ya' 'o la in the west (cf. Map).

According to the *She dkar chos 'byung*, at the time of the Tibetan kings this region was considered the southern part of Ru lag, one of the big areas into which Tibet was subdivided (cf. Tucci 1956: 75ff.; Uray 1960: 31–56), and a number of relevant settlements are mentioned. Yet only non-contemporary sources confirm Ding ri and Pha drug as significant localities during the Tibetan kingdom (*bKa' thang sde lnga* 185). Furthermore, the ancestral land of the 'Khon family, gNyan tshe thang, is reported as located in this area (cf. *Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 3b, 9a; *rGya bod yig tshang* 307).

The area corresponding to southern La stod, lying on one of the main routes from Nepal to Central Tibet either via sKyid grong or via gNya' lam, is mentioned by various sources as a flourishing area where hermits and saints such as Mi la ras pa, Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, and rGod tshang pa (cf. e.g. the biography of Mi la ras pa, *Deb ther sngon po*) were active. In particular the holy mountain of rTib ri situated between Shel dkar and Ding ri is reported as a main site linked to the spread of Buddhism from the 11th century onwards and as a sacred geographic reference in the literature concerning the "Hidden Valleys" to the south of the Himalaya in the 14th century (particularly the rNying ma Byang gter tradition).

The name "La stod lho" seems to go back to the Sa skya period when La stod lho is reported as one of the thirteen *khri skor* (myriarchy), the administrative units of the Sa skya-Yüan régime in Tibet (*Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* 191; Petech 1990: 53). The lho *bdag* used to be the rulers (*khri dpon*) of southern La stod.

The first capital of this *khri skor* was located in Ding ri where *dpon chen* Phyug po sGang dkar ba resided and where *dpon chen* 'Od zer seng ge (ruled c. 1315–1317 and 1328/29–1333) was born. Then since "the border had to be defended against the army coming from the north... when Don yod dpal bzang (son of 'Od zer seng ge) ruled the lho brgyud *khri skor*, the *dpon chen* and the ministers discussed the project of establishing a strong fortress with the relevant estates in the middle of southern La stod. After the decision was taken, they built a great fortress in Rin chen spo in the middle of the rGyal nor area" (*Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 9b, 10a). Eventually, southern La stod was occupied by the army of northern La stod and afterwards the son of Don yod dpal bzang, *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen (? – 1402 A.D.), established the famous fortress in Shel dkar and later, in 1385, the monastery of Shel dkar chos sde. *Si tu* Chos kyi rin chen was still residing in Rin chen spo and La stod lho is reported as already fused with La stod byang when the army of Phag mo gru pa seized this capital in 1359 (*Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru* 317). Whereas the incursion by the army of Phag mo gru pa is ignored by the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*, the events concerning the occupation by the army of northern La stod and the adventures of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen on that occasion are mentioned in detail (*Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 12a–16b). Taken as prisoner, *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen married the daughter of the Byang *bdag*, Nam mkha' 'bum (cf. also *Byang pa gdung rabs* folio 6b), and thanks to this alliance was entrusted with the administration of southern La stod enjoying a highly autonomous position. Later on, Amogha – nephew of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and last *dpon chen* – obtained again from the son of the emperor Toyon Themür (ruled 1332–1368? A.D.) the official appointment of his uncle as ruler of the area (*Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 7a, 17a).

Southern La stod was closely interlinked with the bordering areas of northern La stod, Gung thang, and Sa skya not only politically but also by kin. In fact marriage alliances made up a network of relations among the political leadership of these areas of which the relevant genealogies bear witness. In particular, the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* reports that the mother, the wife, and the daughter-in-law of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen stemmed all from the family of the Byang *bdag*. The *Byang pa gdung rabs* mentions also that the daughter of 'Od zer seng ge and the daughter of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen married into the family of the Byang *bdag*. The fact that northern and southern La stod were tightly linked to each other by kin is also briefly mentioned by the *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* (*Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* 191; cf. also Petech 1990: 53).

After continuous conflicts which are mentioned in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* as troubling the abbots of the Shel dkar monastery the lords of northern La stod acquired again and again dominion over southern La stod. Still southern La stod did not lose its political identity and its rulers occasionally regained some power (e.g. when the army of the Rin spungs pa which had occupied southern La stod

was defeated by the king of Gung thang in 1555, cf. *Gung thang gdung rabs* in *Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 139–140).

Southern La stod, tightly interlinked also with the Gung thang kingdom, shared the fate of this latter and was occupied by the gTsang *sde pa* in the same period in which he put an end to the Gung thang kingdom (1619/1620 A.D.). At that time the last king of Gung thang was forced to reside in Shel dkar where he died (cf. *Gung thang gdung rabs* in *Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 144). The gTsang *sde pa* in his turn was defeated by the army of Guśri Khan establishing in 1642 the rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama.

The support by the lords of southern La stod (the lHo *bdag*) and the initiative of scholars such as dPang lo tsā ba and his successors brought forth the Shel dkar monastery. Land donations on the part of the lords granted the permanent material support for the monastery and its branches which developed significantly under the rule of the so-called "early abbots". This time is also called the time of the twenty-one colleges belonging to the Sa skya pa, Bo dong pa, and dGe lugs pa traditions (cf. *Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 32a, 34b; *Vaidūrya ser po* 401–402). At first the abbots belonged to the Bo dong pa tradition and in particular to the family of dPang lo tsā ba. They were not only abbots of the Shel dkar monastery but also of Bo dong E, Gung thang chos sde, and other monasteries of the area. The text reports that at the time of the gTsang *sde pa* he used to appoint the abbots of the Shel dkar monastery and that these came from Chos skor lhun po (*Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 54a). The monastery declined considerably during the unstable situation in the early 17th century and the text mentions a period of famine preceding 1642. When the Fifth Dalai Lama established the dGa' ldan pho brang government, the Shel dkar monastery was transformed into dGe lugs pa and was attached to the *rdzong* administering the area. From then onwards the abbots belonged to the dGe lugs pa tradition and came mainly from 'Bras spungs. During this period the monastery developed greatly receiving further land from the government which used to name the abbots directly.

The text goes until 1731 at which date the author started to compile it. This was the time of Pho lha nas. During his rule Shel dkar was also a military post (cf. Petech 1973: 201). Shel dkar rdzong acquired even more military relevance from the time of the first Gorkha invasion onwards. At that time the Gorkha army made an intrusion into Tibet via sKyid grong and reached the fortress in 1788 with an army of 5,000 soldiers and 3,000 porters (as reported in the biography of the Fourth Pañchen Lama; cf. e.g. Shakabpa 1967: 158). Because of the war Shel dkar obtained additional support from the central government, one *bka' blon* resided there for a long period of time and the *dbu mdzad* of the monastery obtained the rank of *mkhan chung* for the support given to the Tibetan army. Later on in 1855, bShad sgra started from Shel dkar his counteroffensive to reconquer sKyid grong and rDzong kha (cf. Petech 1973: 171).

Due to the military relevance acquired by the whole area also the ancient militia of Ding ri sGang dkar was reinforced. Until 1959 there used to be about 500 Tibetan soldiers with their families (cf. *Bod*

kyi rig gnas lo rgyus dpyad gzhi'i rgyu cha bdams bsgrigs 45). A Chinese cemetery on the hill of Ding ri sGang dkar reveals that also the Chinese army chose this locality as a military base during the hostilities they took part in. At present a Chinese military camp established after 1959 is witness to the still relevant military strategic position of this area.

The hill of Shel dkar remained the seat of the local government until 1959. The last *rdzong dpon* living at present in gZhis ka rtse was deposed at that time. According to his account two *rdzong dpon*, a lay and a monk official, headed the local administration which ruled over 11 *rgan po*, headmen responsible also for the collection of tributes and 'u lag services. From the relevant estates (*mchod gzhis*) the monastery of Shel dkar obtained revenues which sustained the monastic community and the religious activity. In 1959 the monastery counted 297 monks and 6 *khamts tshan* (*Shel dkar lo rgyus* 33).

The evolution of the monastery through the centuries reflects the general trend implying a transfer of resources from the aristocracy and the government towards the monastic institutions (cf. Schuh 1988: 5–15). This trend becomes particularly visible after the establishment of the dGe lugs pa rule which in Shel dkar starts with the assignment of new land and the 300 new monks gathered as *chos khral* (recruitment of monks as a form of tribute) by the first dGe lugs pa abbot. The monastery grew further, particularly under the third dGe lugs pa abbot in the last decades of the 17th century. He erected new buildings, obtained further land from the government and established new branch monasteries.

After 1959 the monastery and the government palace were completely destroyed. Since 1980 the monastery which was abandoned during the cultural revolution, thanks to local monks, is growing again into a centre of religious practice. In the new context, lacking the traditional economic basis, the monastery depends on private donations and contributions from governmental and non-governmental institutions (in particular non-governmental organizations, such as the Tibet Development Fund and the Development Fund of the Qomolangma Area).

The author and his time

Not much is given about the author. From the colophon we know that he was a scholar called Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho and that he came from of Shel dkar. It is further reported that when the Tibetan government made a new *bKa' 'gyur* print, a *bla ma* who came to Shel dkar to take care of the works suggested to the author to write about the origin of the lHo *bdag* and their great deeds and the Shel dkar area in general. On the basis of a successful preliminary work Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho wrote the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* between 1731 and 1732.

The few data given by the colophon match well with what we know from other sources. In fact the biography of Pho lha nas reports that as an initiative of Pho lha nas himself between 1730 and 1731 the blockprints for the *sNar thang bKa' 'gyur* were carved in Shel dkar (Biography of Pho lha nas 738–745). There the wood carving skills were excellent (Biography of Pho lha nas 744) and probably the availability of wood in this little town which was closely linked by trade to the Nepalese cis-Himalayan

valleys was far from insignificant. Besides, Pho lha nas was well acquainted with Shel dkar where he had already been warmly welcomed in 1719 when he had been an official in the gNya' nang district on the Nepalese border (Biography of Pho lha nas 362–364; Petech 1950: 51ff.; 1988b: 229). Rig pa 'dzin pa chen po mnga' bdag brag pa is reported as one of the main persons in charge of the concrete organization of the works and possibly he was the *bla ma* referred to by the author of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*.

In any case the compilation of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* belongs to the period of religious deeds promoted by Pho lha nas after winning the war between dBus and gTsang and becoming the ruler of Tibet (1728 A.D.). According to the political context of that time, with Pho lha nas seeking an alliance with the Manchu emperor, it might not be casual that the text gives a particular emphasis to the relationship between southern La stod and the emperors of China: the Yüan (in the framework of the Sa skya rule over Tibet), to some extent the Ming (who according to the *Byang pa gdung rabs* bestowed titles on the lords of northern La stod and are considered by the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* initiators of thirteen monasteries on the holy mountain of rTsi ri), and eventually the Qing (visited by one of the abbots of Shel dkar sent as envoy by the Seventh Dalai Lama).

The context might even cast light on the fact that conversely the Phag mo gru pa rule is hardly mentioned despite the interactions reported by the *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru*. According to this source the Phag mo gru pa army reached Rin chen spo, the ancient capital of southern La stod (*Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru* 317).

Finally, the local context at the time of the compilation was shaped also by the economic and intellectual flourishing of the monastery which followed the establishment of the dGe lugs pa rule in 1642. Such a situation in fact gave birth to a scholar able to compile such a work as well as the necessary material support. This flourishing is also witnessed by the very decision of letting the material for the print of the *sNar thang bKa' 'gyur* be prepared in Shel dkar.

The author tried a certain critical analysis when different sources referred to the same event and addressed the issue of the relationship between oral and written traditions. Though the perspective of the author reflects the dGe lugs pa view as given in the *Vaidūrya ser po*, he tried to be consistent with the local facts even when these contradicted this authoritative source. For example, he kept the formula of the twenty-one colleges made up by seven dGe lugs pa, seven Sa skya pa, and seven Bo dong pa (cf. *Vaidūrya ser po* 401). However, from the list of the concrete colleges mentioned in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 55b) a numerical and religious dominance on the part of the Bo dong pa – far more than seven – can be clearly perceived.

For the general events the author follows the *Vaidūrya ser po* faithfully, e.g. when presenting the dark prophecies linked to the gTsang *sde pa* considered as an emanation of a demon (folio 55b).

The structure of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*

The *Shel dkar chos 'byung*, due to the heterogeneous nature of the sources, presents considerable variations in style in the different parts. Though the scope and the declared framework of the text into which the author combined the various sources is that of a *chos 'byung*, an account on how Buddhism came forth in the area, the text has a somewhat atypical character. The text is basically subdivided into three parts of unequal length:

A first part (folio 4a–8a) is dedicated to the genealogy of the lords of southern La stod, the lHo *bdag*, and presents the style of a genealogical document comparable to some extent e.g. to the *Byang pa gdung rabs*.

A second part (folio 8b–34b) is dedicated to the so-called thirteen great propitious deeds of the *si tu* and bears the features of a *lo rgyus* and a *dkar chag*. This part might have also been inspired by a comparable work mentioned by the author presenting the deeds of the lords of rGyal rtse (*Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 33b).

A third part (folio 35a–113b) is dedicated to the monastery and its religious traditions. It comprises short biographies of the abbots of the Shel dkar monastery, both the early abbots and the dGe lugs pa abbots after 1642 (to which a short biography of Tsong kha pa is added). This part preserves to some extent the character of the various *rnam thar* on which it is based. The main deeds of the abbots and the rituals of the monastery are given again at the end of this part (folio 99b–109b).

At the end a colophon (folio 113b–116a) provides some data on the origin of the text and of the copy produced in 1929.

Sources utilized by the author for the compilation of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*

The main sources on which the author based himself are given in the colophon:

lHo pa'i rus yig, the genealogy of the lords of the South. This book, very important for the study of La stod lho and its ruling family, is not available as a separate source. Thus the fact that it is reported in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* gives us access to these data, albeit indirectly. The original document possibly goes back to the early 16th century. In fact the genealogy ends with 'Jam dbyangs, son of the lHo *bdag* Kun dga' mam rgyal, and, according to the *Gung thang gdung rabs* (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 134), this latter married the daughter of the king of Gung thang rNam rgyal lde (1422–1502 A.D.). Furthermore, the genealogy reported by the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* does not mention the lHo *bdag* Bye sa (probably a descendant of 'Jam dbyangs). This latter was appointed to his position, after the king of Gung thang had defeated in 1555 the army of the Rin spungs pa, who had taken him hostage (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 140).

Sa skya dpon chen rnams kyi 'byung khungs can either refer to a specific book on the Sa skya dpon chen which is not available or generically refer to historical material about the Sa skya dpon chen. The data reported in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* in fact correspond to what is reported in works such as the *rGya bod yig tshang*.

dGa' ldan chos 'byung Vaidūrya ser po written by *sde srid* Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho in 1698. The author bases himself on this important *chos 'byung* of the dGe lugs pa tradition in the section concerning the monastery, after this was transformed into dGe lugs pa. This book, reporting how Tsong kha pa founded the dGe lugs pa tradition, also gives an account on the various dGe lugs pa monasteries among which the monastery of Shel dkar and its history are briefly mentioned (*Vaidūrya ser po* 401).

Seng rdzong dkar chag – This document which is not available is apparently the *dkar chag* of the *Seng rdzong* monastery, which was situated on the northern slopes of rTsis ri in southern La stod.

dPang lo yab sras kyi rnam thar, the biographies of dPang Blo gros brtan pa (1276–1342 A.D.) and his successors Byang chub rtse mo (1315–1392 A.D.), Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352–1405 A.D.), Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal (1375–1451 A.D.), and the succeeding abbots of the Bo dong pa tradition. So far we have only been able to find the biography of Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal. The biographies of dPang lo tsā ba, Byang chub rtse mo, and Grags pa rgyal mtshan are given in a very synthetic form by the *Deb ther sngon po* (*Deb ther sngon po* 920–923; Roerich 1988: 786–788). 'Gos lo tsā ba seems to have drawn from the same sources as the author of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*, the latter, however, reports the biographies in a more detailed form. The biography of dPang lo tsā ba is also given in a synthetic form by the *'Brug pa'i chos 'byung* (*'Brug pa'i chos 'byung* 314–316).

Legs mdzad bcu gsum, "the thirteen great propitious deeds", a document compiled according to the local oral tradition. The author decided to include this source which gives a colourful account of the country and its lords and thus integrates the somewhat dry data of the other documents. Because of the origin of this document the author tried to draw upon it by critical analysis combining its data with more reliable sources. The author in fact undertook a remarkable attempt to integrate the oral and the written tradition. This document provides thereby insight on how oral tradition could become literary tradition. Yet the great deeds of the *si tu* survived as oral tradition, too, up to the present day. In fact in the localities where the great deeds took place, the elders still report these events. History became thus part of the local mythology with the powerful mountain deities and the tutelary gods of the local religious traditions directly intervening on the political scene (cf. the third great propitious deed of the *si tu*, *Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 11b–15a). Despite the fantastic character of such tales a concrete and specific political context can be perceived from the accounts (cf. Appendix).

In addition to these sources mentioned in the colophon the author refers also to a number of other well-known texts:

bKa' gdams pha chos bu chos – The father and son transmission of the *bKa' gdams pa* doctrine. This text reports questions and answers concerning the doctrine between Atiśa and his main disciples 'Brom ston pa rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas, rNgog legs pa'i shes rab, and Khu ston brtson 'grus.

bKa' thang sde lnga – The five *gter ma* texts considered to be "discovered" in the 14th century by O rgyan gling pa.

Ma ni bka' 'bum – The famous text dedicated to Avalokiteśvara, considered to be the testament of king Srong btsan sgam po.

Ratna'i spyi lung – Prophecies by Ratna gling pa (1403–1478 A.D.) quoted e.g. by the *Vaiḍūrya ser po* as *Ratna gling pa bstan pa spyi lung* (cf. *Vaiḍūrya ser po* 372).

Chronological references

As is well known, there is a great number of traditions reporting different dates of Buddha's birth and *nirvāṇa* (on the Tibetan traditions cf. Macdonald 1963: 66ff.; the contributions by Claus Vogel, Per Kvaerne, David Seyfort Ruegg, Eckart Zabel, and Champa Thupten Zongtse in Bechert 1991–1992).

The system used by the author of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* is quite atypical and refers to the birth of the Buddha instead of to the *nirvāṇa*. The birth of the Buddha placed in the iron-monkey year (961 B.C.) comes close to the *Kālacakra* dates (Macdonald 1963: 68) and possibly corresponds to the so-called mTsho sna pa system mentioned by Sum pa ye shes dpal 'byor (*dPag bsam* 93; cf. also Schuh 1973: 8). mTsho sna pa chen po Shes rab bzang po himself is mentioned in a different context by the author when he introduces Tsong kha pa and the dGe lugs pa tradition (cf. *Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 57a).

Historical context of the main events reported by the text

The text tries to cover the time from the Tibetan kings up to the moment of its compilation in a somewhat teleological orientation. In this context the sources at his disposal and the relevance of the events led the author to focus mainly on three periods:

- the time of the Tibetan kings;

- the time of the lHo *bdag* during and immediately after the Sa skya rule with the foundation of the Shel dkar *rdzong* and the monastery. This is also the time of the early abbots linked to the Bo dong pa tradition;
- the time of the transformation of the monastery into dGe lugs pa.

Though combining mythological aspects with history, the text presents in an interesting way the evolution of Tibetan society from the ancient clans to the aristocratic families which later on supported the diffusion of Buddhism in the local contexts. These secular families were then to be superseded finally in their political role by the monastic institutions when the Fifth Dalai Lama established his rule throughout Tibet. The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* gives therefore a perception of history from the point of view of a peripheral, albeit important centre.

The time of the Tibetan kings in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*

A brief reference to the time of the kings of religion introduces the text pointing out the importance of a ruler's support for the spread of the Buddhist religion (folio 3b). This standard introduction is typical for a *chos 'byung* and provides also a kind of thematic framework – the relationship between lords and religious institutions – in which the events reported concerning the area of southern La stod are placed.

A somewhat more detailed reference to the time of the Tibetan kings is given when the author tries to draft the dawn of history in the area considered to be part of southern Ru lag. So he gives some concise myths concerning the origin of the world and of human beings (folio 10a) and mentions the first settlements in the area at the time when Kamalaśīla stopped in La stod lho on his way to bSam yas (folio 8a). Unfortunately the relevant sources are not explicitly mentioned. The author generically refers to the military documents (mentioned as *dmag deb*) of Khri song lde btsan when reporting Ding ri and Pha drug as settlements of some standing (folio 9a). This corresponds to what is given in the *rGyal po bka' thang* where these localities are mentioned among the villages of Ru lag (*bKa' thang sde lnga* 185). A further reference to the time of the Tibetan kings is given when the author narrates the origin and the genealogy of the lHo *bdag*.

The author, basing himself on the *lHo pa'i rus yig*, mentions that the lHo *bdag* stem from a particular lineage, the Shes phrug, deriving from the ancient dBas clan (folio 4a). In particular he mentions dBas rGod ldongs btsan among the seven skilled ministers of king 'Dus song mang po rje. Obviously the text – being a later source – combines history and myth in giving this genealogical origin.

From the historical point of view we know from the Dunhuang documents that the dBas clan was present at the dawn of the Tibetan kingdom. In fact dBas dByi tshab was a vassal of Zhing po rje ruling a petty kingdom (*rgyal phran*) north of the sKyid chu ('Phan yul). Then, during the time of gNam ri

srong btsan, this ancestor of the dBas clan with the two clans Myang and mNon helped gNam ri srong btsan to occupy the area of the sKyid chu. Thus they became important ministers of gNam ri srong btsan and later of his son Srong btsan sgam po (on these events cf. Bacot, Thomas, Toussaint 1940: 137, 138; Richardson 1977: 12). Many famous *blon chen* stemmed from the dBas clan such as dBa's Khri gzigs shang nyan (under Khri lde gtsug btsan appointed *blon chen* in 705 A.D.) and dBa's Khri sum rje rtsang bzher (*blon chen po* between 721 and 725 A.D. [Bacot, Thomas, Toussaint 1940: 46, 47]).

A particular problem is given concerning the name "dBas" itself. In fact this name turns up in various spellings in the historical sources. It can be written dBas, dBa', sBas, and dBa's and always seems to indicate one and the same clan. The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* gives the name dBas rGod ldongs btsan as one of the seven skilled ministers of 'Dus srong. Historical sources such as *mKhas pa lde'u chos 'byung* (*mKhas pa lde'u chos 'byung* 299) and *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* 293) mention this minister as sBas rGod ldong btsan. However, the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* reports also the above-mentioned three ministers of gNam ri srong btsan (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston* 171) using the "sBas" spelling, whereas the Dunhuang documents use "dBa's" spelling for the same people and the same event. Thus this fact proves a confusion between the spellings in the later sources.

A further reference to the time of the kingdom is given by the mention of a military expedition led by the son of king Khri srong lde btsan to occupy Bhata hor. Though historically that period was dense with hostilities on the Chinese-Tibetan border, the specific event seems to have a legendary character (cf. also Tucci 1949: 734).

According to the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* some army units at the time of the occupation of Bhata hor and the transfer of Pe har to bSam yas remained in the north. There the members of a particular lineage stemming from the dBas clan were entrusted with the task of proclaiming the law. The name of this lineage, Shes phrug, derives from *shes su 'jug pa*, "to proclaim, make know". Shes phrug dBas lHa seng belonging to this lineage moved to mTshur phu where his descendants became devoted supporters of rGyal ba Karma pa. Some descendants moved to 'Phan yul from where at the time of the Sa skya rule the first lHo *bdag* of the Shes phrug lineage stemmed.

The fact of recalling the legend of Pe har in giving the ancestral origin of the lHo *bdag* family could reflect the relevance that this deity acquired in Shel dkar after the transformation into a dGe lugs pa monastery. In fact when the issue of continuing the worship of the former protector of the monastery bKra shis 'od 'bar had arisen, the Fifth Dalai Lama agreed but he required the introduction of the gNas chung *chos skyong* (Pe har) as well (folio 65a). Karmay suggests that the legend of the occupation of Bhata hor and the transfer of Pe har to bSam yas – not mentioned in the *sBa bzhed* – stems from a later period (probably the time of the Mongol invasions). He underlines that it is particularly emphasized in the *bKa' thang* literature and was used by the Fifth Dalai Lama to legitimize the origin of his family from Za hor. As is well known, at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama this deity was transferred from bSam yas to gNas chung (Karmay 1991: 356).

The time of the lHo *bdag* during and after the Sa *skya* rule

La stod lho as definition of the area is first given in the context of the 13 *khri skor*, the thirteen administrative units introduced during the *Sa skya* rule by the Mongols (probably 1268, the time of the first census). Each unit was ruled by a *khri dpon*. At first in southern La stod the ruler stemmed from a family called Ding ri sGang dkar khri tshang and seems to have resided in Ding ri sGang dkar. One ruler of this family was called Phyug po sGang dkar ba and had some kin relations with Śākya bzang po, the first Sa *skya dpon chen*. He was appointed the fourth Sa *skya dpon chen* and acted as such until 1280. Since he had no male offspring, he called Ma sangs Śākya 'bum from 'Phan yul to Ding ri sGang dkar who was appointed lHo *bdag*, the lord of the South. He was the first lHo *bdag* belonging to the lineage of the Shes phrug. However, since both had no male offspring, they invited Ma sangs Śākya 'bum's nephew gZhon nu dbang phyug as adoptive son (*bu tshab*) (folio 5a). He was appointed *khri dpon* of the lHo *khri skor* and Chu mig *khri skor*. Later he was appointed also the seventh Sa *skya dpon chen*.

Two important *dpon chen*, gZhon nu dbang phyug and 'Od zer seng ge, belonged to the lHo *bdag* family. 'Od zer seng ge received from the Yüan government the title and the seal of head of the *xuan-zheng-yuan* office. This was established in 1288 in Beijing for the administration of the Tibetan and Buddhist affairs (cf. Petech 1990: 35) and was usually kept by high ministers of the Yüan government. San-ko, a uighurized Tibetan, was the first holder of this office (cf. Franke 1942: 90–113; Petech 1988d: 395–412).

As mentioned above, the rulers of southern La stod were tightly interlinked with the neighbouring areas and in particular with northern La stod.

The establishment of the dGe lugs pa rule under the Fifth Dalai Lama

After defeating gTsang *sde pa* the Dalai Lama decided to establish *rdzong* joined to monasteries. This meant integration of the political and religious spheres (referred to as *chos srid zung 'brel*). Both, the lay *rdzong dpon* and the abbot were named by the government.

In this context in 1642 many monasteries were established, and 13 monasteries were changed into *dGe lugs pa* (*Vaiḍūrya ser po* 396–410) such as Phun tshog gling, which was forced to change from the Jo nang pa to the dGe lugs pa tradition.

The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* follows the dGe lugs pa perspective of the *Vaiḍūrya ser po* in describing the preceding period as a dark time ruled by a demon embodied by the gTsang *sde pa*. The arrival of the Dalai Lama as the lord of the doctrine (and the support of Guñri Khan) is given as prophetically announced. Furthermore, according to the *Ratna'i spyi lung* prophecy, the control over dBus and gTsang could be achieved by building fortresses on the three hills of dBus and the three hills of gTsang. One of these hills was La stod rdo rje ri, the hill of Shel dkar (folio 56a).

The monastery of Shel dkar, after the transformation into dGe lugs pa, received additional land, the opportunity of setting up new branches, and the right of gathering new monks as a form of tribute (*chos khral*). Whereas at the time of the 21 colleges the monastery seemed somewhat autonomous, after 1642 it came more and more under government control. All the abbots were appointed by the government and the Dalai Lama was consulted for all doctrinal matters such as the worship of local deities. This was the case when the issue of continuing the worship of bKra shis 'od 'bar, the traditional protector of the monastery, emerged (folio 65a).

Shel dkar and the Bo dong pa tradition

The time of the early abbots in Shel dkar is intimately linked with a family of scholars stemming from the area north of Ding ri. dPang lo tsā ba and his nephew Byang chub rtse mo gave the first prophetic indications for the foundation of the Shel dkar monastery (folio 23a, 23b). Byang chub rtse mo's nephew Grags pa rgyal mtshan was the first effective abbot of the monastery when this was founded in 1385 (folio 42b). The great Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal alias 'Jigs med grags pa alias 'Jigs bral was his nephew and succeeded him as abbot of Shel dkar chos sde and the other related monasteries. After him the succession line continued in this family. Among the monasteries closely connected to Shel dkar was the Bo dong E monastery which also gave the name to the specific tradition which shaped in this period the religious development in gTsang.

The monastery of Bo dong E was founded in 1049 by *dge bshes* Mudrā chen po, who offered it to the Indian scholar 'Bum phrag gsum pa, a teacher of the great translator rNgog Blo ldan shes rab. From that time onward it became the seat of great scholars such as Bo dong Rin chen rtse mo, dPang blo gros brtan pa, etc. 'Gos lo tsā ba in the *Deb ther sngon po* reports (referring to the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*): "Most of the Piṭakadharas residing at Bo dong, the seat of 'Bum phrag gsum pa (Sthirapāla), became learned in this text. Though I did not succeed in finding the history of the Lineage of the Abbots of Bo-dōṅ, there cannot be any doubt that this monastery had many learned men with an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, Logic, Abhidharma, Vinaya, Sanskrit grammar, Prosody, etc. This monastery has been a remarkable place!" (*Deb ther sngon po* 420; Roerich 1988: 345–346).

The idea of a specific Bo dong pa tradition is linked to Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal (1375–1451 A.D.). This gifted philosopher and author of more than 130 volumes was expert in a great number of disciplines and was particularly famous for his poetry and skill in philosophical debates. Among his disciples were the most renowned religious figures of his time such as mKhas grub dGe legs dpal bzang po and dGe 'dun grub pa. Phyogs las mam rgyal was educated in the religious tradition of his uncles (dPang Blo gros brtan pa, Byang chub rtse mo, Grags pa rgyal mtshan) and these were disciples of various great masters. dPang lo tsā ba – Phyogs las mam rgyal's great grand-uncle maternally – was a disciple of U rgyan pa (a chief disciple of rGod tshang pa), sTag sde ba, and a

number of Sa skya pa scholars. dPang lo tsā ba is also particularly renowned as a founder of studies on language (*sgra rig pa*) in Tibet and has translated significant works on this topic.

The importance and the diffusion of this tradition in gTsang during the 14th and 15th century can be perceived also by the fact that the biography of Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1457 A.D.), the founder of the Ngor pa subset of the Sa skya pa, reports that in Lo (Mustang and upper Kali Gandaki area) A mes dpal first had dealings with Phyogs las mam rgyal and only after these proved fruitless did he contact Kun dga' bzang po (Tucci 1956: 16ff.).

The biography of Phyogs las mam rgyal narrates that the main work of this scholar, the *dPal de kho na nyid 'dus pa* (in Collected Works of Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal), was composed, after gShong ston rDo rje rgyal mtshan had appeared to the scholar in sKyid grong. In the vision the great translator appeared with seven elephants in train loaded with all the volumes of the holy doctrine. He gave teachings and empowerments to Phyogs las mam rgyal leaving over five volumes about which he felt less competent than his disciple. Then he invited this latter to start writing the *dPal de kho na nyid 'dus pa*. When Phyogs las mam rgyal started composing "he did this as follows: He used to dictate to twenty amanuenses without any mistake or confusion like a big river following slowly and constantly its course ... In such a way he composed the great work on all aspects of the doctrine ... The great work is structured in four parts (*'jug pa'i sgo bzhi*) – the part concerning children, the part concerning scholars, the part concerning the *sūtra*, the part concerning the *tantra*: the part concerning children comprises the education of body, speech, and mind. The education of the body is subdivided in two: when the child is still in the mother's womb, and following birth. The education of speech concerns reading and writing. The education of the mind concerns the science of the law of the worldly existence (*'jig rten lugs kyi bstan bcos*) of kings, ministers, and common people and the science of the examination (*brtag pa'i bstan bcos*) of animate beings and objects. The part concerning scholars comprises arts and crafts, medicine, grammar, logic and philosophy. The part concerning the *sūtra* comprises the relevant doctrine in general and in particular; the part about the doctrine in particular describes the mDo sde pa (Sautrāntikas school), Bye brag pa (Vaibhāṣika school), Sems tsam pa (Cittamātra school), dBu ma pa (Madhyamaka school). The part concerning the *tantra* presents them in general and in particular; the part on the *tantra* in particular describes the four classes of *tantra*..." (Biography of Phyogs las mam rgyal 223–227). A number of copies of this huge work – numbering in its detailed form one hundred and ten volumes (*glegs bam*), in its summarized form twenty, in its short form two and in its shortest form one volume – were made thanks to the support of some lords and monasteries of that time. Among them were the lHo *bdag* lHa btsan skyabs ma and the monastery of Shel dkar as well as Nor bu bzang po of Rin spungs, the Byang *bdag* rNam rgyal grags pa, sTag lung Thang pa, *si tu* Rab brtan of rGyal rtse, rNam rgyal gling pa of Shangs, the monastery of Gung thang, etc. (Biography of Phyogs las mam rgyal 333–334). The *dPal de kho na nyid 'dus pa* constituted the doctrinal basis for the followers of the Bo dong pa tradition. The doctrinal specificity of this tradition needs, however, further studies so that more light might be shed upon it.

The *Bo dong chos 'byung*, a historical text going back to the 16th century, mentions a number of disciples of the great Bo dong pa who continued his tradition. Among them female practitioners had a relevant position as shown by the particular attention given to the princess of Gung thang Chos kyi sgron me (depicted in an original copy of the biography of Phyogs las mam rgyal), her friend dPal 'chi med grub pa, and their reincarnations. The princess of Gung thang was considered an emanation of rDo rje phag mo and a reincarnation of *mkha' 'gro* Lakṣmīṅkarā; according to the Bo dong pa tradition she began the reincarnation line of the female abbots of bSam sdings. The text narrates: "At that time in Tibet, the Land of Snow, there were no *bla ma* greater than her (Kun dga' bzang mo, reincarnation of Chos kyi sgron me) and Karma Chos grags rgya mtsho (the seventh Karma pa). Between them there was no difference. When they had the chance to meet, Karma pa used to sit to the right and the *rje btsun* to the left. They received equal thrones and service. In brief, she let the doctrine of *dPal kho na nyid 'dus pa* prosper greatly" (*Bo dong chos 'byung* 22b). Also among the early abbots of Shel dkar we find a woman belonging to the Bo dong pa tradition, "Ye shes mtsho mo, an incarnation of *mkha' 'gro* Lakṣmīṅkarā, was appointed abbot of Shel dkar by the gTsang *sde srid*. She was in charge of all the Bo dong pa monasteries in the Shel dkar area..." (*Shel dkar chos 'byung* folio 54a). Ye she mtsho mo was also one of the bSam sdings rDo rje phag mo (bKra shis Tshe ring 1993: 31).

The *Bo dong chos 'byung* narrates further that the Bo dong pa tradition declined for a number of reasons such as the remoteness of the abodes selected by Phyogs las mam rgyal, linked to his explicit aversion for any involvement in worldly affairs. The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 32) defines this tradition as eclectic (*gzhung lugs kun don bsdu mdzad bo dong pa*), and up to the present day the Bo dong pa see themselves as a tradition which does not belong to any of the main schools and rather aims at a non-sectarian approach. This tradition declined significantly with the rise of the dGe lugs pa and some of the monasteries which originally were under their guidance (e.g. Shel dkar chos sde and Gung thang chos sde) were transformed into dGe lugs pa under the Fifth Dalai Lama. Throughout the centuries the Bo dong pa held a rather marginal political position. Most monasteries were badly damaged after 1959, but from the beginning of the 80s have been in part rebuilt.

Today the few surviving Bo dong pa monasteries are:

Bo dong E (to the west of gZhis ka rtse), which was rebuilt in the 80s and counts fourteen monks; this monastery still preserves a few texts of this tradition, two little statues as well as relics of Phyogs las mam rgyal such as his monk's robe, shoes, etc.;

bSam lding (on the western shore of the Yar 'brog g.yu mtsho), which was entirely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution and partially rebuilt since 1985 with the efforts of eight of the former seventy monks;

Ngon dga' (to the north-east of rTsib ri), which consists today of a small prayer-hall containing old relics (e.g. the mummified 18th abbot of Shel dkar, sPo rong Nam mkha'i dkar po) and counts at present two monks;

sPo rong pad ma (or dpal mo) chos sdings (between ancient La stod and Gung thang), which was partly rebuilt, counts eleven monks and preserves a *thang kha* collection, ritual items, texts, the hat of Phyogs las mam rgyal, the hat of rGyal ba Yang dgon pa saved from the Cultural Revolution; a recent reprint of the complete works by Phyogs las mam rgyal is also available there.

A new branch of sPo rong pad ma chos sdings was built in the 80s in Kathmandu and contains precious relics stemming from sPo rong pad ma chos sdings in Tibet (e.g. the "miraculous" statue of Bo dong paṅ chen, the mask of bKra shis 'od 'bar, etc.). A small centre for the support of the Bo dong pa tradition and the cultural traditions of the sPo rong nomads has been established in Switzerland around *bla ma* Tshe ring dam chos.

Finally in Kathmandu there is a new seat of the Shel dkar monastery which follows the dGe lugs pa tradition.

In Shel dkar up to the present day the Bo dong pa protector bKra shis 'od 'bar and Phyogs las mam rgyal are beloved protagonists of the oral traditions and the local folk-songs. And when in summer Blo bzang shes rab climbs the roof of the monastery spitting *mantra* towards the sky in order to prevent hail and bring rain to the fields, he recalls the tradition of the former abbots of Shel dkar. bKra shis 'od 'bar, the *chos bdag* on the blue horse (cf. Appendix), should still protect the land and the people.

TABLE OF CONTENTS ACCORDING TO THE SHEL DKAR CHOS 'BYUNG

Since the text does not present any specific *dkar chag*, the following table of contents is made on the basis of the subdivisions and titles given by the author.

Title (1a)

Eulogy poems and introduction (1b–4a)

I. THE HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE LHO *BDAG* (4a–8a)

II. THE 13 GREAT PROPITIOUS DEEDS OF THE *SI TU* (8b–34b)

1. The first great propitious deed of the *si tu* (8b–11a):

The foundation of the first capital in sPo.

2. The second great propitious deed of the *si tu* (11a–11b):

The creation of fields in gNas thang and gNas lung, the channelling of the rGyal nor phu river for irrigation.

3. The third great propitious deed of the *si tu* (11b–15a):

The construction of the fortress on the hill of rGyal mo ri.

4. The fourth great propitious deed of the *si tu* (15a–16b):

The construction of the gDong dkar house for *bla ma* Bya bral chos rje, taken as spiritual guide (by the *si tu*).

5. The fifth great propitious deed of the *si tu* (16b–18a):

A great palace and a *Kālacakra* temple were built at the same time on the "neck" of the Shel ri hill.

6. The sixth great propitious deed of the *si tu* (18a–21a):

Within the fortress three temples are built together to subdue the hostile earth spirits (*sa dgra*) and to represent the three jewels [of Buddhism].

7. The seventh great propitious deed of the *si tu* (21a–25b):

The Shel ri hill resembles the figure of Tārā (*je btsun* 'Phags ma), it was propitious to build a school of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) above its left knee.

8. The eighth great propitious deed of the *si tu* (25b–28a):

It was propitious to build a meditation place (*sgrub grwa*) in rGya ra sgang in order to stop the flow of sins.

9. The ninth great propitious deed of the *si tu* (28a–30b):

It was propitious to set up the *yi dam* gods on the Seng ge gnam 'phyong hill according to a prophecy of Tārā (*'Phags ma'i lung*).

10. The tenth great propitious deed of the *si tu* (30b–32a):

It was propitious to set up schools of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) and places of meditation (*sgom grwa*) as branches (*yan lag*) of the two monasteries (Shel dkar chos sde and bSam gling).

11. The eleventh great propitious deed of the *si tu* (32a–33a):

It was propitious to make a good path on Paṅ chen sgang for daily prostrations, offerings, and prayers to the *bla ma*.

12. The twelfth great propitious deed of the *si tu* (33a):

It was propitious to increase the livestock in the pastures and in the villages.

13. The thirteenth great propitious deed of the *si tu* (33b–34b):

It was propitious to increase the granaries of the farmers and trade by opening the doors of the passes in the various directions.

III. THE ABBOTS WHO SPREAD THE DOCTRINE OF THE *SŪTRA* AND THE *TANTRA* IN THE GREAT MONASTERY OF SHEL DKAR DGA' LDAN LEGS BSHAD GLING

1.0 The early abbots of the time of the 21 colleges

1.1. The first early abbot, the lord of scholars dPang ston Blo gros bstan pa (1276–1342): a short biography (35a–40a).

1.2. The second early abbot Lo chen Byang [chub] rtse [mo] (1315–1392) (40a–41a).

1.3. The third early abbot Lo chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352–1405): a short biography (41b–44a).

1.4. The fourth early abbot *rje btsun* 'Jigs bral chen po (Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal) (1375–1451): the miraculous story (44a–46b).

1.5. The fifth early abbot Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan (46b–47a).

- 1.6. The sixth early abbot *rje btsun rGyal ba dbang po* (47a).
- 1.7. The seventh early abbot Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1385–1463) (47b–49a).
- 1.8. The eighth early abbot 'Jam dbyang don yod mam rgyal (49a–50a).
- 1.9. The ninth early abbot Nam mkha'i rdo rje (50a–53a).
- 1.10. The tenth early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' rin chen (53a).
- 1.11. The eleventh early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' dkon mchog (53b).
- 1.12. The twelfth early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' 'od zer (53b).
- 1.13. The thirteenth early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' rin chen (53b–54a).
- 1.14. The fourteenth early abbot Ye shes mtsho mo (54a).
- 1.15. The fifteenth early abbot 'Jam mgon tshul khirms grags pa (54b).
- 1.16. The sixteenth early abbot *rje* Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (54b).
- 1.17. The seventeenth early abbot (name missing) (54a/bis).
- 1.18. The eighteenth early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' dkar po (54b/bis).

The abbots after the "yellow-hat tradition" of Ri bo dga' ldan pa was established (in Shel dkar)

- 2.0. How the monastery dGa' ldan legs bshad gling following the yellow-hat tradition was founded in Shel dkar (i.e. the transformation of the Shel dkar monastery into dGe lugs pa) (55a–56b) (1643 A.D.).
- 2.1. The short biography of Tsong kha pa (57a–60b).
- 2.2.1. The first dGe lugs pa abbot Legs pa'i don grub (abbot from 1643 to 1654) (60b–64a).
- 2.2.2. The second dGe lugs pa abbot Sangs rgyas dpal byor (abbot of Shel dkar from 1654 to 1678) (64a–71b).

2.2.3. The third dGe lugs pa abbot 'Jam dbyang bkra shis rgya mtsho (abbot of Shel dkar from 1678 to 1684) (71b–82a).

2.2.4. The fourth dGe lugs pa abbot Ye shes rgya mtsho (abbot of Shel dkar from 1684 to 1688 A.D.) (82a–84a/bis).

2.2.5. The fifth dGe lugs pa abbot Ngag dbang ye shes (abbot of Shel dkar from 1689 to 1697A.D.) (84a/bis–85b).

2.2.6. The sixth dGe lugs pa abbot Ngag dbang dge 'dun (abbot of Shel dkar from 1697 to 1706 A.D.) (85b–88a).

2.2.7. The seventh dGe lugs pa abbot Blo bzang snyan grags dpal bzang po (abbot of Shel dkar from 1706 to 1710 A.D.) (88a–89a).

2.2.8. The eighth dGe lugs pa abbot Grags pa rgyal mtsho (abbot of Shel dkar from 1710 to 1718 A.D.) (89b–90b).

2.2.9. The ninth dGe lugs pa abbot Blo ldan rgya mtsho (abbot of Shel dkar from ?) (90b–92b).

2.2.10. The tenth dGe lugs pa abbot Blo bzang snyan grags dpal bzang po (abbot of Shel dkar from 1723? to 1726, 2nd term) (93a–97b).

2.2.11. The eleventh dGe lugs pa abbot Blo bzang bkra shis dpal bzang po (abbot of Shel dkar from 1726 to 1731 A.D.) (97b–99b).

2.3. The way in which the abbots made the doctrine grow (99b–109b).

Final remarks on the compilation of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (113b–116a).

SHEL DKAR CHOS 'BYUNG: HISTORY OF THE "WHITE CRYSTAL"

by

Shel dkar ba Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho

According to the colophon: Text compiled in the monastery of Shel dkar in the year of the water-rat of the 12th *rab byung* (1732 A.D.) based upon the following sources: *lHo pa'i rus yig*, *Sa skya dpon chen rnamts kyī 'byung khungs*, *rnam thar* of numerous *bla ma* such as *dPang lo yab sras*, *dGa' ldan chos 'byung*: *Vaidūrya ser po*, *Seng rdzong dkar chag*, all historical documents concerning Shel dkar and the reliable oral accounts of famous people of the past laid down in writing such as the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum* (cf. Introduction).

1a Title: *Shel dkar chos 'byung legs bshad nor bu'i me long skal bzang mgrin rgyan*. (Propitious sayings concerning the history of Shel dkar, mirror of the jewel and necklace of good fortune.)

1b–3a Poems of eulogy addressing Buddha Śākyamuni, Tsong kha pa, the Seventh Dalai Lama, the Bodhisattva Mañjuśrī, the goddess Sarasvatī, the kings of Tibet, the seven Mañjuśrī of gTsang (abbots of dGa' ldan), the translator Blo gros brtan pa (dPang lo tsā ba) and his descendant 'Jigs bral (Bo dong Phyogs las nam rgyal), the lords of La stod lho and the protecting gods Phyag drug, dMag zor ma and bKra shis 'od 'bar. Finally the poem mentions the monastery of Shel dkar and the title of the present text.

3a–3b The doctrine of the Buddha is the source of benefit for all human beings and gods. The growth of the doctrine depends upon a king of religion (*chos rgyal*).¹ Thus the kings of the royal Tibetan lineage from gNya' khri btsan po² – incarnation of Kun tu bzang po (Samantabhadra) – to the last three *btsan* performed many deeds to propagate the doctrine of the Buddha in this northern land of snow. They used skilful means in order to elevate and lead the remote barbarians (the Tibetans) to spiritual liberation. In particular, during the time of king Tho ri gnya' btsan³ there was the real beginning of the holy doctrine; at the time of king Phyag na padma (Padmapāṇi) Srong btsan sgam po

¹ In this text the term *chos rgyal* is used in various ways: it can refer to a Tibetan king, to a local lord devoted to the spreading of religion as well as to a high *bla ma*.

² The royal progenitor from which the traditional twenty-seven generations of Tibetan kings descended (cf. e.g. Haahr 1969: 33; Karmay 1994: 408–429; Sørensen 1991: 63ff.).

³ According to the Tibetan tradition the 27th or 28th king (probably around the fourth or fifth century A.D.).

(?–649/50) the holy doctrine was established; during the time of Khri srong lde btsan (742–797 A.D.) – incarnation of 'Jam dpal dbyangs (Mañjuśrī) – the abbot (Śāntarakṣita) and the teacher (Padmasambhava), one hundred (one hundred and eight) great *paṇḍita* and one hundred and eight translators expanded the holy doctrine; then king Khri ral pa can (ruling 815–838 A.D.?) – incarnation of gSang ba'i bdag po (Guhyapati=Vajrapāṇi) – promoted rectifications such as the Great Revision,⁴ and thereby the precious doctrine of the Buddha developed in this "cool land" (*bsil ldan gyi ljongs*). There are three main chapters concerning how the holy doctrine developed in the area known as Shel dkar, an earth-jewel in the southern Ru lag:⁵

- how the lHo *bdag* (the rulers of the southern La stod),⁶ who were the basis for the development of the Buddhist religion, arrived;
- what the 13 great propitious deeds (*legs mdzad*) of the *si tu* were like;
- how the Buddhist religion developed in the numerous monasteries established by these great deeds.

⁴ In the text mentioned as *skad gsar bcad*. On the codification of the translation system; cf. e.g. Uray 1989: 3–21.

⁵ Ru lag, "the supplementary horn", was one of the four great administrative units of the Tibetan kingdom. Ru lag with its (still unidentified) centre of sPrad kyi ngur pa sna (*mKhas pa lde'u chos 'byung* 272) seems to have comprised areas in the following present-day *rdzong*: sKyid grong, Ding ri, Sa skya, lHa rtse, gNya' lam, Pa snam, gZhis ka rtse, rGyal rtse. Every *ru* was subdivided into "thousand-districts" (*stong sde*), and a further subdivision was constituted by the "villages" (*yul tshan*). Cf. Tucci 1956: 75ff.; Uray 1960: 31–57; 1983: 545–548; Uebach 1985: 147–151, 1992: 823–831 – on *yul tshan* see Takeuchi 1994: 848–862.

⁶ During the Yüan-Sa skya period Tibet was divided into thirteen *khri skor* (cf. a.o. Petech 1990: 50ff.). Southern La stod was one of the *khri skor* and its lord was the lHo *bdag*, the "ruler of the southern La stod". This *khri skor* was also called lHo bryud *khri skor*.

I. THE HISTORY OF THE ORIGIN OF THE LHO *BDAG*

4a When the bSam yas monastery⁷ was founded by king Khri srong lde btsan, the king, the abbot (Śāntarakṣita), and the teacher (Padmasambhava) consulted each other in order to establish which deity deserved to become the protector of the monastery. By order of the great king, *lha sras* Mu tig btsan po (son of Khri srong lde btsan) and *zhang* lHa bzang klu dpal (minister), acting as generals, conquered the meditation place (*sgom grwa*) of Bhata hor (abode of Pe har). They came together with a great Tibetan army bearing the rNam sras rta bdag brgyad⁸ painted by the great teacher (Padmasambhava) on their banner and with an innumerable host made up of variously shaped emanations of the rNam sras retinue. Pe har was conveyed there from Bhata hor and appointed "owner" of the holy place of bSam yas. Taken there along with him were a turquoise image of Śākyamuni, a leather mask (*bse 'bag*), and a number of sacred precious objects belonging to the kings of Za hor such as Dharmapāla. At the time when the troops were returning, the prince and *zhang* lHa bzang klu dpal consulted each other and left some army units scattered in the wide country of the Byang thang to protect the border between China and Tibet. Later, the nomad communities expanded widely and from there stems the clan (*sku rus*) of the lHo *bdag* as follows: earlier, at the time of the Tibetan king 'Dus srong mang [po] rje (676–704 A.D.), there were seven skilful (*rtsal chen*) ministers,⁹ one among them was dBas rGod ldongs btsan,¹⁰ who was able to shoot an arrow to a distance of three "eye sights" (*mig mthong*).¹¹ From his clan (*sku rus*) (the dBas clan) originated the lineage (*gdung brgyud*) of the lords of the "string holder" (*re thag 'dzin pa*) (northern nomads).

4b This lineage received the order to proclaim (*shes su 'jug pa*) both [religious and civil] laws (*lugs gnyis khrims*)¹² to these great northern nomadic communities. Thus the descendants became known by

⁷ The first Buddhist monastery in Tibet built in the second half of the 8th century.

⁸ Vaiśravaṇa's retinue "eight masters of horses". Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 69, 100–101; for rNam sras linked to the legend of Pe har cf. also Tucci 1949: 734.

⁹ These seven legendary great ministers are mentioned e.g. in *mKhas pa lde'u chos 'byung* 299 and *Deb ther dmar po* 36.

¹⁰ dBas (alias dBa', dBa's) is the name of an important ancient Tibetan clan from which many great ministers of the Tibetan kingdom stemmed (cf. Introduction).

¹¹ Meaning measuring the distance according to a unit based on how far the arrow could be seen by the human eye from the point of its departure.

¹² *Lugs gnyis* "(Mong. qoyar yosun) << The two (legal) systems >> ... means a political system created in Tibet by Qubilai's and 'Phags pa's concordat of 1260. This system was based on the equal value of ecclesiastical and monarchic rules" (Uray 1972: 25).

the clan name (*rus ming*) of Shes phrug. Shes phrug dBas lHa seng, stemming from this lineage, gradually moved towards Central Tibet and his descendant Shes phrug dKon mchog 'bum, brave and skilful in his judgements, married *jo mo* 'Od zer 'bum, who was endowed with all the signs of a *mkha'* 'gro. Then their son Shes phrug lJang tsha was born. He was later known as rDo rje 'bar and ruled as *sde dpon* the area of mTsur phu in sTod lung.¹³ Since he had a priest and patron relationship (*yon mchod*)¹⁴ with Karma Pakši, the reincarnation of Karma pa Dus gsum mkhyen pa,¹⁵ he provided the financial support when the Karma pa built a big statue of Śākyamuni. rDo rje 'bar married a niece of the Karma pa and their son Shes phrug rGyal mtsan 'bum was born. He, in his turn, had a very close patronage relationship to the Karma pa and married Kar dbon 'Od gsal skyong ma who gave birth to a son called Shes phrug Kartsha dKon mchog dpal, skilled in his judgements according to religious and civil laws. His wife dPal ldan rgyan was the daughter of Pakši Nam mkha'i rin chen, and their son was Shes phrug dGe ba bzang po. Being very famous for his bravery, he ruled a large *sde dpon* area in 'Phan yul.¹⁶ At that time he married *lha lcam* Hor skyid, the youngest daughter of the six children of 'Od skyid 'bar, who belonged to the Tibetan royal lineage.

5a Their son was Shes phrug dPal ldan 'bum, who married *lha lcam* Gra ma, and their son was Shes phrug dKon mchog skyabs. Up to this point the genealogy had followed one single line. Since the name Shes phrug derives from *shes* (of *shes su 'jug pa*, cf. folio 4b), all the descendants were known as She phrug (approximately "children of the proclaimer"). The wife of dKon mchog skyabs was dPal ldan skyid, the daughter of a silversmith called dPal ldan, who belonged to a craftsman lineage of statue-makers (*bla bzo*) working for the Tibetan kings. Two sons were born to them, She phrug bSod nams 'bum and Ma sangs Śākya 'bum. When Ma sangs Śākya 'bum was young, there was in La stod sGang dkar khri tshang¹⁷ a *dpon chen*¹⁸ called Phyug po khri dpal¹⁹ belonging to the nephew-lineage (*dbon*

¹³ sTod lung is an area to the west of Lhasa. mTsur phu is the locality where the famous monastery of the Karma bKa' brgyud pa was founded in 1187 by Karma Dus gsum mkhyen pa.

¹⁴ The relationship between the priest in charge of the religious activity and the patron providing the relevant material support.

¹⁵ Karma Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193 A.D.) was the founder of the Karma bKa' brgyud pa tradition. Karma Pakši Chos kyi bla ma (1204 or 1206–1283 A.D.) was the second incarnation of Karma pa (on the reincarnation system of the Karma pa cf. e.g. Wylie 1978: 579–586).

¹⁶ Area to the north of Lhasa.

¹⁷ La stod sGang dkar corresponds to the present-day Ding ri sGang dkar (Dingri Gangar, Dingri Nyingba). According to the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*, this used to be the first centre of the lHo khri skor during the Yüan-Sa skya period. Later, Shel dkar became the capital of this region.

¹⁸ The Sa skya *dpon chen* was the head of the administration during the Yüan-Sa skya period (cf. Petech 1990: 43ff.). *rGya bod yig tshang* (*rGya bod yig tshang* 362) gives a list of twenty-four *dpon chen* and among them three people were in charge of this office for two periods.

brgyud) of *dpon chen* Śākya bzang po.²⁰ Due to the kin ties he had with him, Ma sangs Śākya 'bum was invited there and appointed the lHo *bdag* (ruler of the southern La stod).²¹ The eldest son (of Shes phrug dKon mchog skyabs) She phrug bSod namg 'bum married dPal ldan 'bum, a daughter of mKhar rtse pa of 'Phan yul. gZhon nu dbang phyug and dKon mchog skyabs were born respectively as their elder and younger sons. The elder of the two brothers was invited by his uncle (*khru bo*) Ma sangs Śākya 'bum to sGang dkar. Since his uncle and *dpon chen* Phyug po had no male offspring, he became the adoptive son (*bu tshab*) of *dpon chen* Phyug po. By order of Sa skya he was sent to offer the New Year presents²² to the emperor of China and to report in detail on the issues of the monastery. Having accomplished everything very successfully, he became the *khri dpon* of dGang dkar and Chu mig.²³

5b Before, sGang dkar pa Rin chen dpal²⁴ and Zhang btsun²⁵ had been in office as *dpon chen* only a few months each. Afterwards, Shangs mkhar po che pa Byang rin²⁶ was appointed *dpon chen* (c. 1281 A.D.). Then lHo nas lum ba rgyus dkar ba Kun dga' gzhon nu²⁷ took over the Sa skya seal from him and held the post of *dpon chen* (c. 1282 A.D.). At that time, since he had a large income, 'Phan yul ba gZhon nu dbang phyug was sent to China again as an envoy of *dpon chen* Kun dga' gzhon nu to offer

¹⁹ Phyug po khri dpal sGang dkar ba, the fourth Sa skya *dpon chen*, was also the head of the lHo *khri skor*. According to Petech he acted as *dpon chen* until 1280 (cf. Petech 1990: 144). The *Byang pa lho bdag po'i gdung rabs* mentions on folio 7b that Phyug po sGang dkar ba acted as the head of La stod lho, which was subdivided in four *tsho* (federative units): 'Gu tsho, Tsa tsho, sPu tsho, and 'Dar tsho. From these *tsho* the general headmen used to be appointed in turn. When Phyug po sGang dkar ba had to go to China, he sent as his representative his adoptive son gZhon nu dbang phyug of the Shes phrug lineage, who later became *dpon chen* as well.

²⁰ Śākya bzang po was the first Sa skya *dpon chen*. According to Petech he acted as *dpon chen* c. 1264–1270 (Petech 1990: 144).

²¹ He was thus considered the first ruler of the southern La stod descending from the dBas Shes phrug.

²² During the Sa skya time on the occasion of the New Year celebrations a delegation was sometimes sent to the Mongol emperor to offer auspicious wishes and presents.

²³ One of the thirteen *khri skor* situated close to gZhis ka rtse (Petech 1990: 53).

²⁴ Since no *dpon chen* with this name stemming from sGang dkar is known of, this might be another name for Phyug po sGang dkar ba or the name of a local ruler who was not Sa skya *dpon chen* (cf. folio 9a). Rin chen dpal bzang po was also the religious name given (later) to *dpon chen* Nam mkha'i stan pa rgyal mtshan by Bu ston (cf. Petech 1990: 132).

²⁵ The third *dpon chen*.

²⁶ The fifth *dpon chen*. His full name was Shangs mkhar po che pa Byang chub rin chen and he is mentioned for example in *rGya bod yig tshang* (*rGya bod yig tshang* 359). The name Shangs mkhar po che pa refers to his family and to his place of origin lying to the north of gZhis ka rtse.

²⁷ The sixth *dpon chen*. Usually he is known as Kun dga' gzhon nu. The name lHo nas lum ba rgyus dkar ba refers to his family and place of origin lying in Zur tsho to the north-west of Ding ri (cf. Map).

the New Year presents. He met *bla ma* 'Phags pa²⁸ and the emperor Se chen,²⁹ respectively the priest and the patron. He proposed that the census (*rtsis grangs*)³⁰ and the mail service (*'ja' mo*)³¹ in dBu gTsang and Khams be organized according to the Mongolian custom. Since the king and the priest appreciated this very much and considered gZhon nu dbang phyug from 'Phan yul as somebody bringing great benefit to them, he was appointed successor of Kun dga' gzhon nu by royal order. The priest and the patron gave him the title of *ti shri zam mgon (di-shi san-guan?)*³² and the seal of the *son wa ti (xuan-wei-si)*.³³ Furthermore they promulgated a *ta'i si'i (da-si-tu)*³⁴ edict and an edict to proclaim [his appointment] throughout the *khri skor* up to lHo chu 'dus³⁵ and gave him the tiger head button of the third rank (*lag rtags stag mgo gsum pa*). During his term of office *dpon chen* gZhon nu dbang phyug performed many great deeds for both [religious and civil] laws, particularly the great reorganization of dBu gTsang as far as land tenure and taxation were concerned and the codification of the law.³⁶

6a In lHo sGang dkar, gZhon nu dbang phyug's son 'Od zer seng ge³⁷ was born. Growing up he became very gifted with insight into both [religious and civil] laws, and thus he was sent together with his uncle dKon mchog skyabs to meet the emperor Bu yan du (Buyantu).³⁸ By the order of the emperor, who was very pleased with him, 'Od zer seng ge was given the seal of *dpon byings dben shri (xuan-*

²⁸ 'Phags pa blo gros rgyal mtshan (1235–1280 A.D.), the first imperial preceptor (*di-shi*). In this case there are chronological problems in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*: 'Phags pa died on December 15th, 1280. Possibly, the meeting mentioned refers to the previous visit to China by gZhon nu dbang phyug.

²⁹ Qubilai (1215–1294 A.D.), the first emperor of the Yüan dynasty.

³⁰ The census of population based on households constituted the basis for the administrative organization and taxation (cf. Petech 1980: 233–238; Petech 1990: 46ff.). A first time it was carried out under Śākya bzang po and some Mongol representatives. A second time it was carried out under gZhon nu dbang phyug (cf. also *rGya bod yig tshang* 298ff.) and some Mongol representatives.

³¹ On this system cf. Petech 1990: 61ff. "Census, tribute militia and mail service were the four supporting pillars of Mongol rule in all the outer dependencies of the empire" (Petech 1980: 223).

³² *Di-shi* is a Chinese title indicating the imperial religious preceptor, *zam-mgon* could stand for *san-guan* meaning "honorary title".

³³ This Chinese term, often given in Tibetan sources as *son wi si* (e.g. *Deb ther dmar po* 53), indicates the government organization in Tibet dealing both with civil and military instances (cf. Petech 1990: 39).

³⁴ Chinese term indicating some powerful headmen (e.g. the *khri dpon* of Phag mo gru pa – *ta' si tu* Byang chub rgyal mtshan).

³⁵ Locality to the west of Sa skya representing the eastern border of La stod lho.

³⁶ This codification of the law was carried out "possibly to bring them in line with the Mongol law introduced in 1268" (cf. Petech 1990: 29).

³⁷ He was the second *dpon chen* belonging to the lHo *bdag* family. He is mentioned in all books providing the lists of *dpon chen* and according to Petech he ruled c. 1315–1317 and ?–1328/29 (Petech 1990: 145).

³⁸ Buyantu alias Ayurbarwada (rl. 1312–1320 A.D.), fourth emperor of the Yüan dynasty after Qubilai.

zheng-yuan shi),³⁹ and the honorary title of *kha'i hu'i tun zam shi zam mgon (kai-fu yi tong-san si san-guan?)*,⁴⁰ with the office of *son wi si bzhi (xuan-wei si shi)* by imperial edict stamped with a great seal in golden letters. Then he was appointed Sa skya *dpon chen* and senior officer (*rgan po*)⁴¹ of the three regions of Tibet (*chol kha gsum*).⁴² On their way back, the uncle and the nephew received one *bre chen*⁴³ of silver. Though the uncle dKon mchog skyabs felt some resentment towards 'Od zer seng ge, thanks to his breadth of mind, nothing untoward happened. Also the son of dKon mchog skyabs, the *du dben sha (du-yuan-shuai)*⁴⁴ Nam mkha'i dpal, went to China and received from the emperor the *khoo ta'i (?)* seal and office as well as the decree as *son gin ta'i dben shri (xuan-zheng da yuan shi)*. After his return to Tibet, he very satisfactorily carried out his duties to the emperor and the church with regard to the affairs of the three regions of Tibet and to the grand monastery (Sa skya). As to the circumstances of 'Od zer seng ge's second term as Sa skya *dpon chen*, Kun rin, Don yod pa, and Yon btsun had become *dpon chen* after 'Od zer seng ge. After them 'Od zer seng ge, who earlier in the time of emperor Go dan⁴⁵ had returned to Tibet, was given [the office of] *dpon byings dben shri (xuan-zheng yuan-shi)* and the honorary title of *g.yu lung rda'i zam mgon (rong-lu da [fu]san-guan ?)*.⁴⁶ Later when he went to meet the emperor again on behalf of the See (Sa skya), he was given [the office of] *dpon byings dben shri (xuan-zheng-yuan shi)* and the decree granting him the seal of *son wi si (xuan-wei si)* and the honorary title (*zam mgon, san-guan*) of *g.yu lung rda (rong-lu da [fu])*. Then he was appointed senior officer (*rgan po*) of the three senior posts of *son wi si* [protecting the three regions of Tibet].

6b At that time there was a popular saying that went:

The *dpon chen* "Lion Ray of Light" ('Od zer seng ge)

is the lion of the happy human people,

is the lion of the increasing prosperity of dBus gTsang.

After he was again appointed Sa skya *dpon chen*, he was called the "double *dpon chen*". Going up to the top of a small hill close to Sa skya, he settled his camp there so that the place was later known as

³⁹ Chinese term referring to the head of the office in charge of the Tibetan and Buddhist affairs in the Yüan government; cf. Petech 1990: 35.

⁴⁰ Civil official title; cf. Farquhar 1990: 25 (see no. 1).

⁴¹ This term, which usually indicates a simple headman, is here used in a strange way to indicate a very high position (Chin. *wang-fu*).

⁴² *Chol kha gsum* refers to the three regions into which the Tibetan speaking area was subdivided and corresponded to dBus gTsang, A mdo, and Khams; cf. also Petech 1990: 39.

⁴³ Unit of measure of capacity used among others things for gold and silver.

⁴⁴ Chinese term used to indicate a regional commander of the troops; cf. Farquhar 1990: 412.

⁴⁵ Go dan stands here for Gi gan which gives the Mong. "Gogan" alias Śidibala (ruled 1320–1323 A.D.); cf. *Deb ther dmar po* 30.

⁴⁶ Civil official title; cf. Farquhar 1990: 25 (see no. 8).

Seng ge sgang (the lion hill). *dPon chen* 'Od zer seng ge had two sons, the elder was Don yod dpal bzang po and the younger Kun dga' chos skyong. The elder of the two sons married Nam mkha' khye ma, a daughter of the Byang *bdag* (the ruler of the northern La stod)⁴⁷ *ta' si tu* rDo rje mgon po.⁴⁸ Then their sons dKon mchog bzang po and Chos kyi rin chen⁴⁹ were born. The father Don yod dpal bzang po went to the imperial palace in China and passed away just after having been officially appointed. Following this, *dpon* Kun dga' chos skyong went to meet the emperor, too. From him he received the edict to proclaim [the law and his appointment] to the lHo *khri skor*. On his way back, as soon as he arrived at Sa skya, he passed away. To *dpon chen* dKon mchog bzang po a son called Amogha don yod⁵⁰ was born. Afterwards he went to the imperial palace, received the edict from the emperor to proclaim [the law and his appointment] to the lHo *khri skor* but he died in China. Though *dpon* Chos kyi rin chen had never been to China, the emperor trusted him, and thus he was given the edict to proclaim [his appointment] to the lHo *khri skor* and the seal of *bon po thon shu* (?) during the time of emperor Tho gden (gan) the mur (Thoyan Temür).⁵¹

7a Again when the army of Byang (Byang *dmag*) indulged in certain hostile acts, the son of dKon mchog bzang po, Amogha, intervened. He had been a monk since his childhood and was known under the name of *slob dpon* Amogha. Despite his youth he went to the camp of the *than tshe*,⁵² the son of the emperor Tho gan the mur, in the northern land of Hor in order to take care of the political matters of his uncle. He obtained for him the edict to proclaim [his appointment] to the lHo *khri skor* up to Chu 'dus, the edict appointing him *ti si tu* (*da-si-tu*), the silver seal, the tiger-headed button of the third rank. Later Amogha himself was appointed Sa skya *dpon chen*. Afterwards Chos kyi rin chen received the title of *gung* (*gong*)⁵³ and the crystal seal (*shel gyi dam kha*) and became a great lord of religion (*chos kyi bdag*

⁴⁷ The lord of the *khri skor* of northern La stod residing in Ngam ring.

⁴⁸ rDor rje mgon po is mentioned by the *Byang pa gdung rabs* (folio 4b) as son of *dpon chen* Yon btsun Grags pa dar. He was also the father of *dpon chen* Nam kha' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan. It seems thus that *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, the protagonist of many events reported by the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*, was this latter's nephew.

⁴⁹ He became a famous ruler of southern La stod and founded the monastery of Shel dkar in 1385. He passed away in 1402, and the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* reports in detail his deeds.

⁵⁰ The last Sa skya *dpon chen*, mentioned also in the *rGya bod yig tshang* (*rGya bod yig tshang* 362). He belonged to the family of the lHo *bdag*. Remarkably, the Tibetan sources report the names of the *dpon chen* even after the demise of the Yüan dynasty and this fact underlines that they still felt as a Mongol protectorate.

⁵¹ Thoyan Temür was the last emperor of the Yüan dynasty (ruled 1332–1368?). He had close relations with Tibet, bestowed many titles and supported the Buddhist religion there.

⁵² The term *than tshe* stands probably for *tai-zi* ("heir apparent") indicating the prince imperial (the Mong. *taiji* derived from the same term used to refer to the descendants of the Borjigin family [cf. Farquhar 1990: 15, 18], or for *tien-zi* ("son of heaven") which however was used to indicate the emperor himself.

⁵³ "Duke"; cf. Farquhar 1990: 30.

po chen po). The wife of *ta' si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, Nam mkha' 'bum,⁵⁴ a daughter of the Byang *bdag ta' dben* Manydzu gho kha (*da-yuan* Mañjughoṣa), came to him in a spontaneous and extraordinary way. From her their son *ta' si tu bdag chen* lHa btsan skyabs ma was born. He obtained from the emperor the edict for proclaiming [the law and his appointment] to the southern area from Zur tsho⁵⁵ to Chu 'dus, the appointment as *ta' si tu*, and the crystal seal. Furthermore, he possessed a deep knowledge of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. He married bTsan lcam rgyal mo, a daughter of the Byang *bdag rNam rgyal ba*,⁵⁶ and their son *bdag chen* Nam mkha tshe dbang bkra shis was born.

7b His son *bdag chen* sGrol ma bsod nams dpal bzang po. His son *bdag chen* Kun dga' nam par rgyal ba rab tu brtan pa'i rdo rje dpal bzang po.⁵⁷ His son *su ti* (*si tu*) 'Jam dbyangs. The great deeds of the various *dpon chen* such as Don yod [dpal bzang po] will be described in the context of the thirteen great deeds of the *si tu*.

7b–8b Poems relating again in verses the description of people and events mentioned above (folio 3a–7b).

⁵⁴ Nam kha' 'bum is mentioned also by the *Byang pa gdung rabs* (*Byang pa gdung rabs* folio 6a,b) as a daughter of *ta' dben* (*da yuan*) Nam mkha' bstan pa rgyal mtshan and of dPal ldan 'bum pa, daughter of 'Od zer seng ge. In the same source she is also reported as having married Chos kyi rin chen and having given birth to lHa btsan skyabs ma – both rulers of southern La stod extensively mentioned in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*. The *Byang pa gdung rabs* mentions further 'Jam dbyangs (Mañjughoṣa) as brother of Nam mkha' 'bum. He obtained the name 'Jam dbyangs because of his religious activity, took care of the affairs of La stod byang, though the officially appointed Byang *bdag* were his father and then his elder brother Rin rgyal. It is possible that the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* made some confusions between Nam mkha' bstan pa rgyal mtshan and 'Jam dbyangs. Since the *Byang pa gdung rabs* was written by a son of 'Jam dbyangs, it is probably more reliable. A further Nam mkha' 'bum daughter of Byang *ta' dben* is mentioned by the *Gung thang gdung rabs* (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 117). She had married into the family of the kings of Gung thang, but her husband died very young and she went back to La stod byang. In 1371, one year after her husband had passed away, she gave birth to Khri rgyal bsod nams lde, who later supported Grags pa rgyal mtshan in the construction of the Gung thang monastery.

⁵⁵ Area to the north-west of Ding ri sGang dkar (cf. Map); some scholars of the 14th and 15th century such as dPang Blo gros brtan pa, Byang chub rtse mo, and Grags pa rgyal mtshan stemmed from this area.

⁵⁶ *Ta' si tu* rNam rgyal grags pa (1395–1475 A.D.) was a famous patron of Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal (cf. Biography of Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal 193, 333). The *Byang pa gdung rabs* mentions the wife of lHa btsan skyabs ma as a sister of rNam rgyal grags pa (*Byang pa gdung rabs* folio 8b).

⁵⁷ The lHo *bdag* Kun dga' nam rgyal, according to the *Gung thang gdung rabs* (*Gung thang gdung rabs* 34), married the daughter of the king of Gung thang rNam rgyal lde (1422–1502 A.D.).

II. THE THIRTEEN GREAT PROPITIOUS DEEDS OF THE *SI TU*

The first great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

The foundation of the first capital in sPo

8b Out of the thirteen great propitious deeds of these *dpon chen*, the first concerns the foundation of the first capital in sPo.⁵⁸ The history of its origin is as follows: In ancient times there was no particular lord (*mi bdag*) of the southern country (lHo phyogs) and there were only a few families of nomads and farmers. The area was rich in grass and water and many wild animals dwelt there. When Kamalaśīla⁵⁹ went to bSam yas, invited by the king of religion Khri srong lde btsan, he stopped in La stod lho.

9a It is said that at that time there were a few nomad families in Ding ri sa dmar po, that there was nothing but one house of lHa btsan dar ma ye shes in lCags kyi kha sgang, that there were seven families of potters in Chu drug sri, the Nang pa spang khang pa people in Bong shod,⁶⁰ the gSer pa spe hru pa people in Pha drug⁶¹ in the upper part (*phu*) of lDings. Except for a few villages such as g.Yag mig in Gram mtsho,⁶² no other settlements were reported. Then, since Pha drug and Dir ri (Ding ri) are mentioned in the army documents (*dmag deb*) of king Khri srong lde btsan,⁶³ it seems that several towns (*grong khyer*) had been established. Afterwards, dKon pa rje gung stag,⁶⁴ an ancestor of the Sa skya family, during his search for a suitable land, found the excellent site of Ya byang ('chang) in La stod gNyan tshe thang.⁶⁵ After seizing this area, the whole southern region increased in prosperity. Later on, in Pha drug, there was a local headman (*dpon chung*) called Bul stod *dpon*, in Zur tsho there

⁵⁸ sPo is a locality to the north of Shel dkar and is often called Rin chen spo. Nowadays there is a small village on a hill still bearing this same name and the local people consider it as the place of the residence of the ancient ruler and as the traditional centre of the area called rGyal nor (cf. Map).

⁵⁹ Cf. Demiéville 1952: 792–794.

⁶⁰ Area to the south-west of Shel dkar (cf. Map).

⁶¹ Area to the south of Shel dkar (cf. Map).

⁶² Area to the east of Shel dkar (cf. Map).

⁶³ Ding ri and Pha drug are mentioned in the *rGyal po bka' thang* (*bKa' thang sde lnga* 185) as part of Ru lag.

⁶⁴ *rGya bod yig tshang* (*rGya bod yig tshang* 307) mentions dKon pa rje gung stag btsan as one of the ancestors of the Sa skya lineage. According to this source, he was sent by his father to look for land and occupied La stod gNyan rtse thang.

⁶⁵ gNyan tshe thang belongs to Gram mtsho and is known as the ancestral land of the 'Khon lineage; cf. *rGya bod yig tshang* 307.

was Lum du rgyus dkar ba Kun dga' gzhon nu,⁶⁶ in Chu drug⁶⁷ there was *dpon* Kun dga' rin chen, in Gram mtsho there was *sde sa rDzong pa*, etc. These were under an appointed general headman (*spyi dpon*), *dpon chen* Rin chen dpal⁶⁸ stemming from the Śākya bzang po's family and ruling over the fortress and the relevant estates (*rdzong gzhis*) of Ding ri sGang dkar khri tshang. Since [the demise of] *dpon chen* Rin chen dpal, several generations [of his family] acted as *khri dpon* of the southern area up to *dpon chen* Phyug po khri dpal. Due to his lack of male offspring, Ma sangs Śākya 'bum, the younger son of dKon mchog skyabs of 'Phan yul, who had kin ties (*sku gnyen*) with *dpon chen* Phyug po khri dpal, came to lHo brgyud sGang dkar and acted as *dpon chen* after having obtained the mandate.

9b Since Ma sangs Śākya 'bum like *dpon chen* Phyug po had no sons, the elder son of *dpon* She phrug bSod nams 'bum, gZhon nu dbang phyug, was invited to lHo sGang dkar by his uncle Ma sangs Śākya 'bum and became the adoptive son of *dpon chen* Phyug po. Since he was very skilled in both [religious and civil] laws, he was sent to China by order of Sa skya and performed several great deeds for the priest and the patron (the emperor). The emperor, being very pleased, appointed him Sa skya *dpon chen* and *khri dpon* of Chu mig and lHo brgyud (southern La stod). As far as he is concerned, it was clear that he was the great man prophesied by the *Thang yig*: "The demonic (?) lineage of Ma sangs sha po⁶⁹ will appear in dBus." 'Od zer seng ge, son of *dpon chen* gZhon nu dbang phyug, acted twice as Sa skya *dpon chen* (in the text erroneously *khri dpon*) and ruled prosperously over all living beings of lHo. *dPon chen* 'Od zer seng ge had two sons, Don yod dpal bzang and Kun dga' chos skyong. The various *dpon chen* often had to go to Sa skya to rule the area and to collect the taxes as far as Chu 'dus. In addition, they had to defend the border against the army coming from the north (Byang *dmag*). For these reasons, when Don yod dpal bzang ruled the lHo brgyud *khri skor*, the *dpon chen* and the ministers discussed the project of establishing a strong fortress with the relevant estates (*rdzong gzhis*) in the middle of La stod lho.

⁶⁶ This might be the above-mentioned lHo nas lum ba rgyud dkar ba Kun dga' gzhon nu, the sixth *dpon chen*.

⁶⁷ Locality to the west of Shel dkar situated between Bar mtsho and Gling shar (cf. Map).

⁶⁸ This text mentions *dpon chen* Rin chen dpal, but no Sa skya *dpon chen* with this name is mentioned by other sources. It seems thus that the author referred to a local headman erroneously considered to have acted as *dpon chen*. The *Byang pa lho pa'i gdung rabs* 7b narrates that in early times there were four *tsho* which provided in turn the general *rgan po*. Phyug po sGang dkar ba was one of the *rgan po* who carried out this function. The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* says that the lineage of Phyug po sGang dkar ba was ruling the area since several generations. The two sources differ therefore slightly in their description of the political system and the evolution from local headmen to general rulers appointed by the Yüan emperor.

⁶⁹ Ma sangs is a Tibetan ancestral name linked to the myths of origin. Usually it is referred to as the Ma sangs spun dgu, Ma sangs rus dgu; cf. e.g. *Deb ther dmar po* 33.

10a After the decision was taken, they built a great fortress in Rin chen spo in the middle of the rGyal nor area. Formerly this area used to belong to many village communities (*mi sde*) such as Kham pa rgyal and Nor bu – called in the Khams dialect rNor bu.⁷⁰ The harvests were so rich, the cattle so healthy, the territory developed so much in every way that the learned people started to say it had been very propitious to establish the first capital in sPo.

In ancient times the country of the southern range
 was dominated by beautiful snow mountains,
 below there was grassland and forest,
 at the bottom the earth was covered by a great ocean.
 Time passed, the water flowed to the southern ocean, the earth emerged.
 The earth was covered with forests
 where apes, monkeys, and birds dwelt happily.
 Then, following the law of impermanence,
 the trees became fewer and fewer
 and the earth-goddess (Nor 'dzin 'phags mo) was covered with new clothing.
 At the time of the king of religion ruling Tibet⁷¹
 in this country a race of people and some villages originated
 and with them also the few headmen they needed were there.
 Then, from the nephew-lineage (*dbon brgyud*) of Śākyabhadra (Śākya bzang po)
 in sGang dkar khri tshang several *dpon chen* ruling the lHo rgyud came forth.

....

(**10a–10b** The verses continue by relating again the events linked to the foundation of the first capital in sPo and described from 8b to 10a).

**The second great propitious deed of the *si tu*:
 The creation of fields in gNas thang and Nas lung,
 the channelling of the rGyal nor phu river for irrigation**

11a For the creation of the fields of gNas thang⁷² and Nas lung⁷³ the water from the upper part of rGyal nor was channelled for irrigation and this was very propitious. The wish-fulfilling palace with a

⁷⁰ Herewith the author gives an explanation of the toponym rGyal nor deriving it from the name of former village communities.

⁷¹ Khri srong lde btsan, literally indicated in the text as the middle of the ancestor-descendants (*mes dbon*) kings referring to Srong btsan sgam po, Khri srong lde btsan, and Khri ral pa can.

⁷² Village to the north of Shel dkar (cf. Map).

⁷³ Area of cultivated fields attached to gNas thang.

magnificent garden came forth as follows: at the time when *dpon chen* Don yod dpal bzang founded the Rin chen spo palace and he was sent to the emperor in order to offer the New Year presents, his younger brother Kun dga' chos skyong acted as chief administrator of the law (*khri ms bdag*). At that time a large estate called Rin chen gnas was established at gNas thang in rGyal nor. A propitious *kakni* (*kaniṣka?*) *stūpa*⁷⁴ was built on the main road in front of it. In the plains of gNas thang and Nas lung fields were created and the estate (*gzhis ka*) became very wealthy, the water of the upper part of rGyal nor was channelled for irrigation, and by cultivating the fields the granaries increased. Furthermore, in every village a pond called *lo rdzing* was built in order to collect the water during the night. A big register was organized to regulate the water that was to be drawn to the fields of each farmer. This register was also compiled by mTsho sgo 'Jigs med dpal bzang⁷⁵ according to the order of the great lord (*bdag chen*).

dPon chen Don yod dpal bzang⁷⁶ passed away in China after going there in order to pay the New Year tributes and receive an edict and a seal like his ancestors and predecessors. Because of this, *bdag chen* Kun dga' chos skyong⁷⁷ went to China with some imperial envoys. The emperor gave him good rewards, an edict and a seal, but he passed away as soon as he arrived at Sa skya.

11b *dPon chen* Don yod dpal bzang's elder son dKon mchog bzang po – the younger son being Chos kyi rin chen – became *khri dpon* of lHo rgyud after his uncle. As before, he was given the edict, etc. by the emperor and he was the one who prosperously ruled the subjects.⁷⁸

The third great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

The construction of the fortress (of Shel dkar) on the hill of rGyal mo ri

Chos rgyal si tu Chos kyi rin chen, the younger son of *dpon chen* Don yod dpal bzang, was known as the reincarnation of *rgyal po* Zla ba bzang po.

12a Though externally he used to dress like a royal *paṇḍita*, in his intimate self he was a Buddhist monk. His birth was marked by many propitious omens and during his youth he used to behave very

⁷⁴ This is possibly one so-called *kanika stūpa* with four doors in the cardinal directions. Cf. also Klimburg-Salter 1982: fig. 12.

⁷⁵ mTsho go is both the name of an area in southern La stod and of an aristocratic family originating from there; cf. Petech 1973: 138–141.

⁷⁶ The fifteenth *dpon chen*. He was 'Od zer seng ge's son and thus belonged to the family of the lHo *bdag*.

⁷⁷ 'Od zer seng ge's younger son who acted as lHo *bdag khri dpon*.

⁷⁸ Since he died in China (see folio 6b, 12a), this sentence seems to refer merely to his appointment (or to some power he might have had before). Otherwise this passage contradicts what was affirmed before.

piously. He followed numerous Buddhist practices such as *sMan bla* and *sGrol ma phyag 'tshal nyer gcig*,⁷⁹ he possessed a wide range of knowledge and was not inferior to his ancestors in administering the country. Earlier, at the time of the emperor Tho gan the mur (Thoyan Temür), since the emperor trusted Chos kyi rin chen, he received the edict to proclaim [the law and his appointment] to the lHo brgyud *khri skor* and the seal of *bon po'i thon shu*. This came about because his father, his uncle, and his elder brother who had gone to China with some representatives of Sa skya to receive the appointment had all passed away. *Si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, being very young, was humiliated by an uprising. A local headman called Dung 'od sha of rTsa skor⁸⁰ and the abbot of the Pha drug skal monastery, who was a follower of *dge slong lHa chen po*, plotted against him and sent a message to the Byang *bdag*. Thanks to the fact that the traitors revealed the internal situation and the *zhal ngo*⁸¹ was sick,⁸² some troops of the army of Byang managed to come secretly, surround and attack the fortress of Rin chen spo several times.⁸³

12b Since some officers were not trustworthy, the fortress surrendered and the great lord (*si tu* Chos kyi rin chen) was taken prisoner by his enemies. The army, taking their prisoner, the great lord, back towards the north, stopped in g.Yang khang thang⁸⁴ to set up camp. At that time, some soldiers, pointing their fingers towards the rGyal mo ri,⁸⁵ said that this time they had seized Rin chen spo without any major difficulty, whereas, had the fortress been on that hill, it would have been hopeless. The great lord kept this in his mind. While the greater part of the army left for the north, due to the opposition of rTsa skor du(ng) 'od sha and the abbot of the sKal monastery, some generals took the great lord towards Kha rta⁸⁶ and stopped in Dam pa 'phrang.⁸⁷ Here they wanted to throw him into the river. With his mind turned towards his impending death by drowning, sorrowfully he recited the *sGrol*

⁷⁹ Popular prayers dedicated respectively to the Buddha of medicine (Bhaiṣajyaguru) and Tārā. On the Buddha of medicine cf. e.g. Meyer 1988: 100–101, Bernbaum 1979. On the twenty-one Tārā cf. e.g. Tucci 1949: 388, Beyer 1988: 333–335, 469–470.

⁸⁰ rTsa skor is a locality situated between Shel dkar and Ding ri (cf. Map).

⁸¹ Main official under the lHo *bdag*.

⁸² Probably *zhal ngo sku nyung* erroneously for *zhal ngo sku snyung*.

⁸³ According to the *Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru* (*Rlangs kyi po ti bse ru* 317) this fortress of Rin chen spo was also seized by the army of 'Phag mo gru pa around 1359. At that time *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen was still residing there. This event, however, is not mentioned in this text.

⁸⁴ The great plain lying to the east of the rGyal mo ri hill where later the fortress and the monastery of Shel dkar were built.

⁸⁵ This hill of Shel dkar is also called *sGrol ma ri*, *rDo rje ri*, *Shel ri*.

⁸⁶ Area lying to the south of Pha drug (cf. Map).

⁸⁷ Locality characterized by a gorge of the Bong chu in mKha rta.

ma nyer gcig bstod pa. After his prayer a magnificent red man on a red horse appeared in the sky⁸⁸ with his three weapons (arrow or lasso, spear, and sword). He spoke the prophecy of the gods (*lha lung*): "Don't kill the king of religion (*chos rgyal*), or else terrible wind and storm will rise!" The generals were shocked and confused by this apparition. Afterwards two messengers with *ha lo* flowers as a sign appeared. They said that the Byang *bdag* ordered the lHo *bdag* to be brought without tying him up and that proper instructions would soon arrive.

13a So the execution of the lHo *bdag* was suspended. When the generals and the great lord arrived at the summit of the Che la, on their way towards the north, they ran into two real messengers looking like those who had appeared in the vision. These delivered the message to them with the order of the Byang *bdag*. This said: "The generals are informed that they have to take over the fortress with the relevant estates (*rdzong gzhis*) and the subjects of the southern area as well as to appoint a *rdzong dpon*. The great lord is invited to come to the north without being tied up." Accordingly, the great lord was invited to proceed at a slow pace to Ngam ring⁸⁹ in Byang stod. The above-mentioned red man on the red horse is cited in the *Seng rdzong dkar chag*⁹⁰ as being Pho lha lha btsan sGang dmar.⁹¹ This god, endowed with magic power, belonged to the seven Dregs pa'i sde dpon btsan rgod 'bar ba brothers.⁹² The great teacher Padmasambhava had bestowed upon him the empowerment (*dbang*) relevant to the *maṇḍala* of the '*Jig rten chod bstod dregs pa* and the assignment of protector of the Buddhist religion. Besides, wise men report that the two figures looking like messengers were emanations of *rje btsun sGrol ma* (Tārā). After the arrival of the great lord at Ngam ring, the generals reported the extraordinary event saying that when they were about to throw the great lord into the river, his *pho lha*⁹³ and his *yi dam*⁹⁴ saved his life.

13b The Byang *bdag* was deeply impressed by this account and offered to marry his daughter *lha lcam* Nam mka' 'burn to the lHo *bdag*, even though no such request had ever been made before. Despite the fact that the lHo *bdag* seemed strictly guarded during his stay in [the country of] Byang, he enjoyed

⁸⁸ As mentioned in this text (folio 13a), this was lHa btsan sGang dmar (alias Ding ri sGang dmar), a main mountain deity of the Ding ri area.

⁸⁹ The capital of northern La stod (cf. Map).

⁹⁰ Seng rdzong was a monastery built by *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen on the northern slopes of the holy mountains of Śrī ri alias rTsig ri (cf. Map).

⁹¹ An important mountain deity lying to the south of Glang skor in Ding ri (cf. Map and Appendix). The *Gung thang gdung rabs* (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 130) mentions this deity also as particularly related to one king of Gung thang born in Ding ri and as linked by kin to the protective deities of the Tibetan kings.

⁹² Protective deities (cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 166ff.).

⁹³ Ancestral deity of the male descent line.

⁹⁴ The Buddhist meditation deity to whom somebody is particularly devoted.

some freedom with his wife. Since the lHo *bdag* was very expert in both [religious and civil] laws, the Byang *bdag* happily said: "For a short while we will administer the law in the lHo *khri skor*. In the future if you take proper care of my daughter, I will give you a good position. Now I give to you and to my daughter a sufficient portion of land and some servants." Afterwards the great lord, with his wife, some attendants, and some personal effects came back to his own country, the land of lHo brgyud. Then he was allowed [by the Byang *bdag*] to settle with his servants in bKra shis 'dzoms⁹⁵ of Pha drug for a short while. Sometime later, after reflecting carefully, he asked to set up a new estate with the relevant house (*gzhis khang*). He remembered the words of the soldiers in g.Yang thang saying that if a fortress had been built on the hill of rGyal mo ri it would have been strong and difficult to capture. So he built a new house with sPe zhol (construction), high walls, and a well in front of that hill.⁹⁶

14a He led a life devoted to pious deeds such as the worship of the Three Jewels and charity. He used to recite particularly the *sMan bla'i mdo chog* and the *sGrol ma nyer goig*, and thus his behaviour corresponded to his name: dKon mchog chos kyi rin chen. Because of this his might (*mnga' thang*) increased and his wife gave birth to a son endowed with extraordinary signs. They considered him as coming from the mercy of gods and *yi dam*, so they called him lHa btsan skyabs ma.⁹⁷ The final *ma* derived from the *yi dam* sGrol ma (Tārā). At that time he had the wish in his mind to build gradually a mighty palace on the hill of rGyal mo ri from which the living beings [of the country] of lHo could be ruled prosperously. Thus he reported to the Byang *bdag* as follows: "On the hill where I live there is a small monastery and plenty of wild animals and birds. The animals are killed by hunters and suffer great harm because of the rolling stones. In order to protect the life of the living beings and prevent harm coming to animals and people from the rolling stones I request permission to build a house on the top of the hill of rGyal mo ri." Then a three-storeyed palace, bright with big windows, was built on the top of that hill. The hill became known as Shel dkar. As, seen from far away, this rGyal mtshan rdzong fortress was like a bowl of white crystal⁹⁸ turned upside down, the site was called Shel dkar, "white crystal". Before the hill used to be called rGyal mo ri after the queen (*rgyal mo*) of the *mkha' 'gro*, rDo rje g.yu sgron, who used to dwell there. Then it was called Shel dkar.

⁹⁵ A main village in Pha drug (cf. Map). This locality, located to the east of Ding ri and to the south of Shel dkar, is also mentioned in the geographical work *'Dzam gling rgyas bshad* as bKra shis rdzong; cf. Wylie 1962: 66.

⁹⁶ This house can be seen in the old photographs of Shel dkar such as those taken during the expedition of Col. Howard-Bury in 1921. It was subsequently destroyed with the fortress in the 60s.

⁹⁷ As extensively mentioned in this text, he was a devoted supporter of the religious personalities of his time and he is also known as supporter of Thang stong rgyal po in the construction of gCung ri bo che; cf. Biography of Thang stong rgyal po 269.

⁹⁸ *Shel* usually translates "crystal" but sometimes can also translate "jade"; cf. the case of the "river of jade" (Shel chab) in Khotan discussed by Uray and Stein (cf. Uray 1979: 291).

14b Finally, when the construction of the palace was complete, since the front side of the hill resembled a seated sGrol ma, the hill became known as sGrol ma ri ("the hill of Tārā"). Such an explanation of the name of Shel dkar is generally considered correct, though some also say that a goddess (*jo mo*) gave some white crystal food, that a white crystal bowl was discovered under the earth, that the *ta' si tu* Chos kyi rin chen belonging to the She phrug lineage built a crystal house,⁹⁹ and so on, but these constitute unreliable rumours. After father, mother, and son, together with their close attendants, began to live in the new palace, this became known also as Shel dkar rtse rgyal ("the royal summit of the white crystal"). Regarding all these events, the learned people started to say that it had been propitious to build a fortress (*srog rdzong*) on the top of the rGyal mo ri. Since this represented the root of the great plan of the lHo *bdag*, this saying is equivalent to the words of the Buddha.

14b–15a Verses relating again the third great propitious deed of the *si tu* described from 11b to 14b.

The fourth great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

The construction of the gDong dkar house for *bla ma* Bya bral chos rje, taken as spiritual guide (by the *si tu*)

15a When *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen had settled in the fortress (*srog rdzong*) of Shel dkar rtse rgyal with his wife, son, and attendants, he used to devote himself generally to a great number of good deeds. Especially, since the benefit and happiness of this and of the next life depend upon the *dge ba'i bshes gnyen*,¹⁰⁰ with great respect he listened to the numerous and elaborate teachings of dPang Blo gros brtan pa,¹⁰¹ bKa' bzhi pa Nam mkha' 'od zer,¹⁰² and the great translator Byang chub rtse mo.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ *She khang* for *shel khang* or for *She phrug khang*.

¹⁰⁰ Generally speaking this term indicates Buddhist teachers who, having mastered the sacred literature, act as spiritual guides. In a more specific sense this term is used as a title.

¹⁰¹ dPang Blo gros brtan pa (often called dPang lo tsā ba) (1276–1342 A.D.) was a famous translator and he is considered the first of the abbots of Shel dkar. His biography is mentioned in this text (folio 35a–40a) and (more concisely) in *Deb ther sngon po* 920–921 (Roerich 1988: 785–787).

¹⁰² The *Deb ther sngon po* (*Deb ther sngon po* 804; Roerich 1988: 687) describes bKa' bzhi pa Nam mkha' 'od zer as a disciple of Ma gcig Chos sgron, who is listed among the successors of Phu ri ba dKon mchog rgyal mtshan. This latter was a spiritual son of rGod tshang pa and founded a monastery in Pha drug.

¹⁰³ Byang chub rtse mo (1303–1380 A.D.), a great translator, was a nephew of dPang Blo gros brtan pa and was considered the second abbot of Shel dkar. His biography is given in this text (folio 40a–41a) and (more concisely) in the *Deb ther sngon po* (*Deb ther sngon po* 921–923; Roerich 1988: 787–788).

15b He learned astronomy and astrology (*dkar rtsis*)¹⁰⁴ as well as the art of divination (*dbyangs char*)¹⁰⁵ from the Bo dong pa scholar g.Yul rgyal ba Yon tan 'byung gnas. In particular, he let this scholar act as preceptor of his son lHa btsan skyabs ma, who diligently studied grammar (*sgra*),¹⁰⁶ poetry (*snyan [ngag]*), astronomy and astrology (*dkar rtsis*), and divination (*dbyangs char*). Thus the lord behaved in a way characteristic of the biography of a king *paṇḍita*. In the royal palace there are still several texts which were written and signed by the scholar Yon tan 'byung gnas. These are commentaries of *dbyangs char*, etc. requested of this scholar by the lHo *bdag*. At one stage the great lord felt the need to dedicate himself to the profound doctrine which concerns the knowledge of the truth (*nges don*) and he therefore listened to the numerous teachings of various *bla ma*. In particular, he took as his main spiritual guide the famous Bya bral chos rje brtson 'grus shes rab, the *bla ma Ze phug pa*¹⁰⁷ of the lHag tu mkhan tshang college. This is to say, when Bya bral chos rje was young, he diligently studied philosophy according to the Sa skya pa tradition. Afterwards he studied Sa skya pa doctrines such as the *Lam 'bras snyan rgyud tshad ma bzhi ldan*. He also received innumerable empowerments and precepts (*dbang, lung*) of the *gsar ma* tantric traditions from many spiritually accomplished scholars without any distinction of sect.

16a He became the lord (*mnga' bdag*) of countless doctrines through the early translations (*snga 'gyur*) such as the *Thugs rje chen po'i yang snying 'dus pa'i skor*, the *Las byang le'u gsum ma'i skor*, the *rTa mgrin gyi skor*, the *Tshe dbang rdzogs chen gyi snyan rgyud skor*, the *gTad rgya chig (cig?) brgyud tshad ma*, and the *rDzog chen sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* belonging to the Guru Chos dbang¹⁰⁸ line of the rNying ma pa tradition. Then he performed many good deeds such as the construction of the *mchod rten* of dPang che. This omniscient *chos rje* became the *rtsa ba'i bla ma* (of the lHo *bdag*). The lHo *bdag* listened to and practised numerous doctrines. He supported the *chos rje* continuously in his monastery of sPang po che¹⁰⁹ and, in order to show his faith, he built the gDong dkar house where every day he used to come, prostrate himself and pray to him (from this house the lord could see the

¹⁰⁴ Also written as *skar rtsis*, this is one of the so-called five minor sciences (*rig gnas chung ba lnga*): *skar rtsis* (astronomy and astrology), *mngon brjod* (one of the sciences of words), *sdeb sbyor* (metrical science), *snyen ngag* (poetry), *zlos gar* (science of dramatic performance); cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 2682.

¹⁰⁵ A kind of divination and calculation based on the vowels of the language.

¹⁰⁶ *sGra rig pa* is one of the so-called five major sciences (*rig gnas che ba lnga*), the other being *bzo rig pa* (arts and crafts), *gso ba rig pa* (medicine), *tshad ma* and *gtan tshig rig pa* (epistemology and logic), *nang don rig pa* (philosophy). In the text are listed some of the ancillary sciences which constituted the basic training of a scholar; cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 2682; Tucci 1949: 94.

¹⁰⁷ Ze phug was a monastery in rGyal nor situated close to sTeng gro to the east of it.

¹⁰⁸ Gu ru Chos dbang (1212–1273 A.D.), one of the great *gter ston* of the rNying ma pa tradition; cf. e.g. Dargyay 1979: 103ff.

¹⁰⁹ Small monastery, residence of dPang lo tsā ba, situated above the gNas thang village.

monastery of his spiritual guide). Because of these religious deeds, the learned said that, having taken *Bya bral chos rje* as *bla ma*, it had been propitious to build the *gDong dkar* house for him.

16a–16b Verses relating again the fourth propitious deed of the *si tu*, as given from 15a to 16a.

The fifth great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

A great palace and a *Dus 'khor (Kālacakra)* temple were built at the same time on the "neck" of the Shel ri hill

16b After the great lord and his son had stayed in the fortress of *Shel dkar rtse rgyal* for some years, the son *lHa btsan skyabs ma* dedicated himself to the study of the *Dus 'khor (Kālacakra)* and his faith in the deities of the *Dus 'khor* increased. He thought he would gradually build a large palace on the "neck" of the *Shel ri* hill and thus he sent a message to the *Byang bdag*: "We, father and son, have a particularly strong faith in the deities of the *Dus 'khor* and we request permission to build a *Dus 'khor* temple on this hill where we reside." The *Byang bdag* answered positively and they built a large palace, a *Dus 'khor* temple, and a *chu spe* (?) below the neck on the "left breast" of the *sGrol ma ri*.

17a This temple contained mural paintings of the *Dus 'khor* deities and later many gold and copper statues of the *Dus 'khor* in addition to a *blo bslangs* (three-dimensional *maṇḍala*) were made. Beautiful *ganydzi ra* pinnacles were set up of which today only a few can still be seen. When *Rin chen spo* had been occupied, *slob dpon Amogha*, the son of the great lord *dKon mchog dpal bzang po*, used to dwell in *Sa skya*. Although young he was very brave and he could not tolerate the fact that *Rin chen spo* had been occupied by enemies. Relying upon the fact that the emperor *The (Tho) gan the mur (Thoyan Temür)* had previously trusted the *lHo bdag*, *Amogha* went north to the camp of the *Then tsha (Tai-zi?)*, the son of *The (Tho) gan the mur*, to report that the position of *khri dpon* occupied by his uncle had been seized. So *dKon mchog chos kyi rin chen* was given the order to proclaim [the law and his appointment] to the *lHo khri skor* and the title of *ta' si tu*, the silver seal, and the tiger-headed button of third rank. At that time *Amogha* came back with the *gung* title and the crystal seal and was accompanied by many Mongols (*Hor*). Subsequently, the *dpon (Amogha)* became *Sa skya dpon chen* and he showed the order of the emperor to the *Byang bdag*. Because of this and also because the *Byang bdag* liked his own daughter and his grandson very much, the great lord *Chos kyi rin chen* was appointed lord of the *lHo khri skor* again. As such he became the root from which the well-being and happiness for the southern country grew.

17b In fact, many "symbols for body, speech, and mind" (*sku gsung thugs rten*) such as the *Dus 'khor* temple were built. So the learned said that to build a large palace and a *Dus 'khor* temple on the "neck" of the Shel ri had been propitious.

17b Verses relating again the fifth great propitious deed of the *si tu*, as given from 16a to 17b.

The sixth great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

Within the fortress three temples are built together to subdue the hostile earth spirits (*sa dgra*) and to represent the three jewels [of Buddhism]

18a The above-mentioned great propitious deeds of the lHo *bdag* Chos kyi rin chen were mostly of religious character. He ruled the lHo *khri skor* according to civil and religious law thanks to the infinite power which derived from his meritorious acts. His wish was to bring benefit and happiness to this and to the future life of himself and all other beings. He took as an example the great deeds of the Bodhisattva ancestral kings of religion, as well as of the three Sa [skya pa], 'Bri [gung pa],¹¹⁰ sTag [lung pa];¹¹¹ the three lHa [pa?], Bya [yul ba],¹¹² Phag [mo gru pa];¹¹³ the three Tshal [pa],¹¹⁴ 'Phyong [rgyas pa],¹¹⁵ dGa' [ldan pa]; the three Byang [pa],¹¹⁶ Rong [Rin spungs], rGyal [rtse ba]. So he wanted to build many religious symbols (*rten*) such as temples. At that time seven craftsmen dressed as Nepalese appeared and asked whether the king had any religious symbol (*rten*) to be built. Considering the circumstances to be auspicious (*rten 'brel 'grigs pa*), [Chos kyi rin chen] established a workshop for

¹¹⁰ The 'Bri gung pa constitute a subsect of the bKa' brgyud pa which was founded in the 12th century by sKyobs pa 'Jig rten mgon po. 'Bri gung itself lies to the east of Lhasa; cf. Ferrari 1958: 111–112.

¹¹¹ The sTag lung pa constitute a subsect of the bKa' brgyud pa which was founded in the 12th century by Thang pa rin po che bKra shis dpal. sTag lung itself lies to the north of Lhasa; cf. Ferrari 1958: 82.

¹¹² Tradition named after Bya yul ba chen po (1075–1138 A.D.) and the monastery founded by him in Bya yul in Dwags po, cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 348ff.; Roerich 1988: 285ff.

¹¹³ The Phag mo gru pa constitute a subsect of the bKa' brgyud pa which was founded in the 12th century by 'Gro mgon Phag mo gru pa. In the middle of the 14th century the *khri dpon* of Phag mo gru pa, Byang chub rgyal mtshan, taking over the power from the Sa skya, became the ruler of Tibet. The main monastery is gDan sa mthil and is located in lHo kha next to Yar lung; cf. Ferrari 1958: 120.

¹¹⁴ The Tshal pa constitute a subsect of the bKa' brgyud pa which was founded in the 12th century by Zhang brtson 'grus grags pa. Tshal pa itself lies in the eastern suburbs of Lhasa; cf. Ferrari 1958: 105.

¹¹⁵ Possibly this is *sde pa* 'Phyong rgyas pa. However this local ruler became significant only later (17th century). In this case as in that of a few other names the author might have added some names which were not congruous with the time of the events he is relating.

¹¹⁶ Byang pa can refer either to the lords of northern La stod or to Byang *khri dpon* ruling the Shangs area north of gZhis ka rtse; cf. *rGya bod yig tshang* 406.

the construction of symbols of the three jewels on three small land elevations within the fortress compound. He constructed three temples to subdue the earth's hostile spirit (*sa dgra*) of the demoness (*srin mo*) gDoms gdangs of the eastern hill. The first temple was the bSam 'grub lha khang. When its mural paintings had been completed, numerous gold and copper statues were made, but these can no longer be seen. According to the present register of the monastery there were: The main statue of bCom ldan 'das Śākya seng ge (Buddha) measuring 2 *khru* (cubit) 1 *tho* 8 1/2 *sor*¹¹⁷ in height with precious turquoises in the eyebrows;

18b two standing statues each with two precious turquoises and a gold and copper throne back; on the right a gold statue of the standing sPyan ras gzigs (Avalokiteśvara) measuring 2 *khru* 1 *tho* 3 *sor* in height with 13 turquoises and 21 pearls on the eyebrows; on the left a gold statue of the standing Phyag na rdo rje (Vajrapāṇi) measuring 2 *khru* 1 *tho* 1 *sor* with 13 turquoises and 13 pearls in the eyebrows; a gold statue of mNyam med Thub pa'i dbang po (Śākyamuni) measuring 2 *khru* 1 *tho* 6 1/2 *sor* with precious turquoises in the eyebrows having the upper part of the throne and the throne back made of gold and a standing statue on the right with 11 turquoises and one on the left with 12 turquoises; a precious big gold statue of Thub dbang (Śākyamuni) with green turquoises, without throne and having a gold throne back; a precious gold statue of Tshe dpag med (Amitāyus) with a precious turquoise in each eyebrow and 367 further turquoises, having a gold and copper throne back and a standing statue on its right with 6 turquoises and one on the left with 4 turquoises; a precious gold statue of Byams pa (Maitreya) with turquoises having a gold and copper throne and a double throne back.

19a (The list is here summarized and continues by mentioning) one sGrol ma (Tārā) of sandalwood, one gold White sGrol ma, one gold mGon po shing drung ma, two gold 'Jam dpal dbyangs (Mañjuḥṣa), one gold sGrol ma, one gold Thub dbang, three brass Thub dbang, one brass and one copper Tshe dpag med, one statue of Tshe dpag med made of red sandalwood, one bronze Byams pa, one gold sPyan ras gzigs, one brass sPyan ras gzigs, one gold sPyan ras gzigs with 1,000 hands and 1,000 heads, one statue of Thub dbang of white sandalwood;

19b one rDo rje sems pa (Vajrasattva), one brass rDo rje can (Vajradhara), two White sGrol ma, one gold 'Jams dpal dbyangs, two gold Green sGrol ma, three U rgyan sku (Padmasambhava), one gold sMan bla (Bhaiṣajyaguru), one copper statue and one statue of alloy according to the bKa' gdams pa tradition, one gold Yum chen mo, one brass statue of black Jambhala and a statue of white stone, some Thub dbang, sGrol ma, one Mri tha pyag tshwa (?), one Jo nang thog thub ma,¹¹⁸ one statue of Bya bral chos rje. These statues were made under *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and his descendants. As "symbols of the

¹¹⁷ 1 *khru* (cubit) measures approximately 40 cm and corresponds to 2 *tho*; 1 *tho* corresponds to 12 *sor* (finger).

¹¹⁸ Protectress of the Jo nang pa tradition.

speech" (*gsung rten*) ninety-seven volumes of the *bKa' 'gyur* were made under the various generations of the lHo *bdag* and are mentioned in the *Nyi khri dkar chag*. It is also true that some statues and books were taken to the north, as reported by the learned people. As "symbols of the spirit" (*thugs rten*) there were made a brass *mchod rten* with gold throne back, a gold *rnam rgyal mchod rten* with twenty-one turquoises, three reliquaries (*gdung rten*), and one clay reliquary (*sa 'bum*) when lHa btsan skyabs ma's mother passed away.

20a In the chapel of the protectors there were two statues of Gur mgon brother and sister,¹¹⁹ the mask of rDo rje g.yu sgron ma,¹²⁰ also known as *jo mo* Shel dkar ma, with big turquoises, a big copper vessel (*khro skon*), various sets of seven bowls for water offering, drums, conch shells, etc. made under *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and his successors. At the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, who ruled according to religious and civil law for the benefit of all living beings in China, Mongolia, and Tibet, the *phyag mdzod* (treasurer) transferred from mNgon dga' to the temple [of Shel dkar] the main gold statue of Thub dbang and 25 statues of *bla ma*, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, protectors of religion, *rgyal chen*, etc. Besides, "symbols of speech" in the form of many texts, "symbols of mind" such as gold *rnam rgyal mchod rten* were made in the temple of bSam 'grub lha khang, and to the living beings of the southern country these became the first foundations for the growth of happiness and merits. Then the temple of Phun tshogs lha khang was built. It is a three-storeyed building, now called the Red Temple. The middle floor has six pillars and there are mural paintings of Thub dbang, sMan bla, 'Jam dpal dbyangs, Byams pa, rNam rgyal ma, Red and Green sGrol ma, Gur mgon brother and sister, the rNam sras rta bdag brgyad,¹²¹ lHa btsan sGang dmar,¹²² and many other gods. In addition, there used to be many clay statues of a number of *bla ma*, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, but, as most of them got broken and were thrown into the river, nowadays they can no longer be seen.

20b Then the temple of sGrol ma lha khang was built. In its mural paintings the various aspects of sGrol ma were depicted. There were also some clay statues which nowadays can no longer be seen. In early times, all this was propitiously built.

20b–21a Verses relating again the sixth propitious great deed of the *si tu*, as given from 18a to 20b.

¹¹⁹ Protecting deities particularly important for the Sa skya pa; cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 49.

¹²⁰ Considered locally as the queen of the *mka' 'gro* residing on the hill of Shel dkar (cf. also folio 14a); she is one of the *bsTan ma bcu gnyis*; cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 95, 181ff.

¹²¹ Cf. folio 4a of this text.

¹²² Cf. folio 13a of this text.

The seventh great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

The Shel ri hill resembles the figure of Tārā (*je bisun 'Phags ma*), it was propitious to build a school of philosophy (*bshad grwa*)¹²³ above its left knee

21a According to the *bTsun mo bka' thang*,¹²⁴ "when the perfect elements will come together: the teacher (the doctrine, missing in the text), the place, the time, the followers..." generally speaking, 'Dzam bu gling (Jambudvīpa, the continent inhabited by human beings) is the holy place where a thousand spiritual teachers turn the wheel of the doctrine and thus is a perfect place. In it '*Jam dpal rtsa rgyud*¹²⁵ reports that, as far as Tibet is concerned, after the sea dries up in the Land of Snow, a forest of *sa la* trees will appear. This is the country of *sa la* medicinal plants. According to the *bDe mchog mkha' 'gro'i rgyud*:¹²⁶

"Tibet, spontaneously originated,
staying in the house of rock
is one of the twenty-four lands
self-originated cradle of life."

21b Furthermore there are many prophecies by the *sūtra* and the *tantra*; moreover, the *rGyal po bka' 'bum (Maṇi bka' 'bum)*¹²⁷ said that Tibet is the land of conversion of sPyan ras gzigs. The *Bu chos glegs bam*¹²⁸ said:

"... to the north of the eastern Bodhgayā,
there is *spu rgyal*-Tibet,¹²⁹
there lie high mountains like pillars of the sky,

¹²³ *bShad grwa* indicates the teaching place in a monastery. Usually the main subjects studied there are called the "five volumes of the *sūtra*" and comprise: *dBu ma (Madhyamaka)*, *Phar phyin (Prajñāpāramitā)*, *Tshad ma (Pramāṇa)*, *'Dul ba (Vinaya)*, *mNgon pa mdzod (Abhidharma)*.

¹²⁴ One of the five parts of the *bKa' thang sde lnga*, the famous *gter ma* discovered by O rgyan gling pa in the fourteenth century (*bKa' thang sde lnga* 229–302). This passage seems to refer to the auspicious circumstances mentioned there.

¹²⁵ *Mañjuśrīmūlatantra* alias *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*; for the translation and the discussion of this work cf. Macdonald 1962. On such prophecies cf. Stein 1987: 15.

¹²⁶ *Tantra* of the *Samvara* cycle; cf. Snellgrove 1987: 153ff.

¹²⁷ *Maṇi bka' 'bum*, the famous text dedicated to Avalokiteśvara and considered to be the spiritual testament of Srong btsan sgam po.

¹²⁸ One part of the *bKa' gdams glegs bam*, or *bKa' gdams pha chos bu chos*. This text reports questions and answers, concerning the doctrine, between Atiśa and his main disciples 'Brom ston pa rGyal ba'i 'byung gnas, rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab, and Khu ston brTson 'grus. The passage quoted by the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* is also given by the *Vaidūrya ser po (Vaidūrya ser po 364)*.

¹²⁹ One name for Tibet; *spu rgyal* was a title of the early Tibetan kings and it derives from the royal ancestors 'O lde spu rgyal and sPu lde gung rgyal.

below the lakes are like a *maṇḍala* of turquoise,
 white snow mountains are like *stūpa* of white crystal,
 the ochre slopes are like mountains of gold,
 there are incense plants of pleasant scent,
 autumn is coloured with golden flowers,
 summer is coloured with turquoise flowers,
 Oh! sPyan ras gzigs, protector of the snow mountains,
 in this place lies your spiritual land
 where the beings you have to convert dwell;"
 the country and the living beings of Tibet are prophesied.

Further:

"Oh! sPyan ras gzigs, protector of the snow mountains,
 the country, source of good fortune (*bkra' shis*), is your land of conversion,
 and so on."

All these prophecies were pronounced to the ten directions by the *mkha' 'gro ma* singing according to the melody of the *rDo rje glu* (the *Vajra* song) and Phyang na padmo bestowed his blessing upon Tibet and great Tibet.¹³⁰ Out of the whole area, the religious region (*chol kha*) of dBus gTsang is the most precious. Even the emperor of China said that this propitious western country abode of the gods exists according to prophecies. Furthermore, this land is endowed with the ten virtues such as the propitious soil for houses and fields. Here, scattered throughout the area, live about ten thousand families ... (some words missing in the original text) ... this area is endowed with many miraculous signs [of its holiness and its prophetic origin].

22a There are four great holy places: in the east there is Sa skya, the main seat of the seven reincarnations of 'Jam dpal dbyangs;¹³¹ in the south there is mTsha'o,¹³² a great holy place which is like bDe mchog Heruka, appearing like the moon mirrored in the water; in the west there is the dPal 'Khor lo bsdom pa's palace Śrī Pra bha ta (Parvāta),¹³³ in the north there is sTeng gro¹³⁴ where rGyal ba rGod

¹³⁰ *Bod chen po* refers to the whole area inhabited by Tibetans, whereas *Bod* refers to Central and Western Tibet.

¹³¹ The heads of the Sa skya pa Buddhist tradition were considered incarnations of 'Jam dpal dbyangs (Mañjuśrī).

¹³² Locality to the east of Shel dkar close to Chu lho (cf. Map).

¹³³ Probably Śrī ri alias rTsib ri, a main holy mountain to the west of Shel dkar. This *gnas ri* with many holy places linked to the deeds of mystics such as rGod tshang pa, Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, and Mi la ras pa was an important religious centre in La stod lho (cf. Aziz 1978: 217–219); for a detailed study on this holy mountain and the relevant practise of pilgrimage see Buffetrille forthcoming.

¹³⁴ Monastery founded by rGod tshang pa in the upper part of rGyal nor to the north of Shel dkar. Here, late in his life, he resided for thirteen years (*Deb ther sngon po* 802; Roerich 1988: 686).

tshang pa¹³⁵ obtained the stage of *zung 'jug*.¹³⁶ There are four great snow mountains:¹³⁷ lHa rgod gangs¹³⁸ in the east; Jo longs gang[s]¹³⁹ in the south; rTa skyong gangs¹⁴⁰ in the west; Bu le gangs¹⁴¹ in the north. In the country of lHo, around [the capital], there are four perfect villages:¹⁴² in the east there is Logs lung; in the south there is Bong shod; in the west there is Se sgang, in the north there is rGyal khrom. In every country there is one river: Logs chu in the east, Bong chu in the south, Se chu in the west, rGyal chu in the north. Furthermore around this area there are seven hills with miraculous marks which are like the seven gems of the royal power (*rgyal srid sna bdun*).¹⁴³

g.Yam ba ri with the shape of the wheel in the west,
 lHa btsan rdzong ri with the shape of the jewel in the south-west,
 Phug chung ri with the shape of the elephant in the south,
 gDong skya ri with the shape of the marvellous horse in the south-east,
 mGon nag bla ri with the shape of the general¹⁴⁴ in the east,
 sGrub ri sngo sang with the shape of the queen in the north-east,
 lTa'u ri with the shape of the precious minister in the north.

One hundred *dpag tshad*¹⁴⁵ to the north of rDo rje gdan (Bodhgayā), there is the Land of Snow, the land of Phyag na padma (Padmapāṇi). In this area there is Shel dkar rdo rje ri of Ru lag, looking like *rje*

¹³⁵ rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje (1189–1258 A.D.) was a great *bla ma* of the bKa' brgyud pa tradition; cf. e.g. *Deb ther sngon po* 796ff.; Roerich 1988: 680ff.

¹³⁶ *Yuganaddha*, "two-in-one" concept in the practice of tantric yogins expressed as unification of Wisdom/Mean, Voidness/Compassion, Female/Male, Lotus/Vajra; cf. Snellgrove 1987: 285ff.

¹³⁷ These mountains can be seen from the top of the hill of Shel dkar. rTa skyong is also a mountain deity sacred to the community of sPo rong and to some particular local priests called *a ya*.

¹³⁸ Mountain to the north-east of Shel dkar (close to Mang dkar).

¹³⁹ Mountain to the south-east of Shel dkar located between Ding skye and mKha rta.

¹⁴⁰ Mountain to the west of Shel dkar and to the north of rTsib ri. This mountain is particularly worshipped by the nomad community of sPo rong.

¹⁴¹ Mountain situated above the rGya mtsho la to the north of Shel dkar

¹⁴² These four areas are still to be found around Shel dkar in the four cardinal directions (cf. Map).

¹⁴³ The seven precious gems of sovereignty are the precious wheel (*'khor lo rin po che*), the precious jewel (*nor bu rin po che*), the precious queen (*btsun mo rin po che*), the precious minister (*blon po rin po che*), the precious elephant (*glang po rin po che*), the precious marvellous horse (*rta mchog rin po che*), the precious general (*dmag dpon rin po che*). These are mentioned for example in the popular *maṅdal*-offering prayers, cf. e.g. Beyer 1988: 151.

¹⁴⁴ *dpag* erroneously for *dmag* in the text.

¹⁴⁵ Ancient Indian unit of measure. According to the *Abhidharma* system, one *dpag tshad* corresponds to five hundred *gzhu gdom* (*gdom pa*). One *gdom pa* indicates the length between the outstretched hands. According to *Dus 'khor*: 24 *sor mo* correspond to 1 *khru* (cubit), 4 *khru* correspond to 1 *gzhu gdom*. 2,000 *gzhu gdom* correspond

btsun 'Phags ma (sGrol ma). In this way Shel dkar ri, the centre of the country of lHo, looks like Kailāsa encircled by one hundred thousand suns.

22b The *rGyal po'i bka' 'bum* (*Ma ṅi bka' 'bum*) said that "this land of snow has high mountains and a pure earth." Generally, the earth and the high mountains of Tibet were all prophesied. In particular, the part on *sa dpyad* (discrimination of land) in the *Thang yig* reports that Ru lag in gTsang looks like a youth. In fact most hills behind Shel ri look like young woods, so this is the prophesied hill without any doubt.¹⁴⁶

According to the *Ratna'i spyi lung*.¹⁴⁷ "If a fortress is built in gTsang on the three hills Ri bo che, Ngam ru ri, and La stod rdo rje ri, the two *ru*¹⁴⁸ of gTsang and the area between mNga' ris¹⁴⁹ and Nepal can be ruled."

In the area under the rGyal dbang Phyag na padmo (Fifth Dalai Lama) ruling China, Mongolia, and Tibet, there is La stod rdo rje ri which is truly mentioned in prophecies. According to the *bKa' gdams pha chos*¹⁵⁰ "the triangular rocky mountain is very high, here is your place for the spread of the doctrine." Later Phyag na padma dGe 'dun grub pa,¹⁵¹ the incarnation of 'Brom ston,¹⁵² thought that this was the place for the spread of the bKa' gdams pa doctrine. Thus he came here bestowing his blessing and bringing forth auspicious circumstances (*rtan 'brel 'grig pa*). According to the *sa dpyad* (land discrimination) the mountains behind [Shel dkar] to the north-west are high, the mountains in

to 1 *rgyang grags*. 4 *rgyang grags* correspond to 1 *dpag tshad* (cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 1622; Schuh 1973: 48). If 1 *khru* corresponds approximately to 41.5 cm (1 *gzhu gdong* = 4 *khru* = 5 *khre rtse* = c. 166 cm since 1 *khre rtse* = 0.333 cm), then 1 *dpag tshad* corresponds approximately to 13 km (41.5 by 32,000).

¹⁴⁶ The meaning is rather vague, but probably the author is just trying to find concrete features which match the prophecy.

¹⁴⁷ This prophecy is reported in the *Vaidūrya ser po* (*Vaidūrya ser po* 372). Here it is quoted as *Ratna gling pa bstan pa spyi lung*, i.e. a prophecy by Ratna gling pa (1403–1479 A.D.); cf. e.g. Dargyay 1979: 144ff.

¹⁴⁸ That is to say g.Yas ru and Ru lag, corresponding to two of the four big administrative units of the ancient kingdom; cf. Uray 1960: 31–57.

¹⁴⁹ *mNga' ris* literally meaning "dominion" as a geographical term usually refers to the Western Tibetan area (mNga' ris skor gsum). However, in this text this term mostly refers to mNga' ris smad, corresponding to the area of Mang yul Gung thang. The *rGyal po bka' thang* (*bKa' thang sde lnga* 185) reports a certain mNga' ris as part of Ru lag, and the *mKhas pa lde'u chos 'byung* (1987: 256) mentions Mang yul as part of Ru lag during the Tibetan kingdom. The *Gung thang gdung rabs* refers to Gung thang as mNga' ri (ris) smad; cf. *Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag nga* 87, 89.

¹⁵⁰ See note 128.

¹⁵¹ dGe 'dun grub pa (1391–1474 A.D.) was the disciple of Tsong kha pa who founded the bKra shis lhun po monastery in gZhis ka rtse and was later recognized as the First Dalai Lama.

¹⁵² 'Brom ston pa rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas (1005[1004]–1065 A.D.) was the main disciple of Atiśa and founded the Rwa sgreng monastery of the bKa' gdams pa.

front of [Shel dkar] to the south-east are low. So the mountains have the shape of followers listening to the doctrine. In front of the hill there is a kind of basin with the shape of Dzam ba la (Jambhala, a god of wealth) in which many rocks look like jewels.

23a All these are auspicious signs of happiness. Shel ri has the shape of sGrol ma (Tārā), and its secret place looks like the source (*chos 'byung*)¹⁵³ for the growth of the rDo rje theg pa (Vajrayāna) tradition. The sole of the right foot is like the blowing of a white conch shell, auspicious sign of its future great fame. Concerning the way the school of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) was built on the Shel ri hill, it is said that the southern country, abode of the holy men, is the land of the merit and virtue of its lord. Once upon a time, above the left knee of the rGyal mo ri hill, which has the shape of sGrol ma, there was a place of meditation (*sgrub gnas*). This site was blessed by dPang lo [tsā ba],¹⁵⁴ who prayed that a great school of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) might be founded there in the future. He told to lHo bdag Don yod dpal bzang that if this were built on the hill of rGyal mo ri, it would grow into a great school of philosophy, and he asked the lord for material support. Though the lord agreed and kept this intention, he did not carry it out because the northern army indulged in hostilities, and he was sent to China as messenger of Sa skya. When *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, patron of the doctrine, had become a great lord of lHo, *lo chen* Byang chub rtse mo¹⁵⁵ dwelt in this place of meditation. He said to the great lord that a school of philosophy should be built here since this had been prophesied by dPang lo [tsā ba].

23b The great translator Grags pa [rgyal mtshan]¹⁵⁶ also intended to build a monastery following the prophecy of dPang lo [tsā ba]. He suggested to the great lord that if the monastery were to be built, a good *dge bshes* should be invited from Sa skya to guide it as *bla ma* and that a certain number of villages had to be assigned to the monastery as estates (*mchod gzhis*) to sustain the monks. When *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen discussed the issue with the headmen (*sde pa* and *dpon po*) of his court, they said that the monks of the rTse thang monastery¹⁵⁷ and the mNga' ris monastery had become exigent like the Mongols and they did not think that such large support was convenient for a new monastery. Then the

¹⁵³ *Chos 'byung* can be used as a metaphorical term for the "secret places" alias female genitals (*Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 841). Herewith the author indicates the "secret places" of the goddess to which the hill resembles as a place from which the Vajrayāna tradition is generated (on this topic cf. also Appendix).

¹⁵⁴ Cf. folio 35a–40a of this text.

¹⁵⁵ Cf. folio 40a–41a of this text.

¹⁵⁶ Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352–1405 A.D.) was the nephew of Byang chub rtse mo; he founded the monastery of Shel dkar in 1385 with the support of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and he is considered the third abbot of Shel dkar. His biography is reported in this text (folio 41b–44a) and he is mentioned in the *Deb ther sngon po* (*Deb ther sngon po* 923; Roerich 1988: 788).

¹⁵⁷ The monastery of rTse (rTsed) thang was founded by *si tu* Byang chub rgyal mtshan in 1351 A.D. in Yar lung.

great lord asked for suggestions. dPal don grub, the administrator (*zhal ngo*) of the great abbot Legs shin pa of dGa' ldan, said: "One *bre*¹⁵⁸ (of flour) for each of the three meals of every monk. If there are around twenty monks for the celebration of the *tshugs ston* (opening ritual) and *grol ston* (closing ritual) and the recitation of the *Byams chos*,¹⁵⁹ they must get one good meal. At the time when food is abundant 60 *bre* of rice are required for rice soup.¹⁶⁰ At the time of *skyur* (time of the sour food?) one *dar kha* (?) has to be offered to each monk. Usually, rice soup should be provided for the early morning and late morning meal. If this could be done it would be a good support."

24a The great translator Grags pa [rgyal mtshan] said that if what he proposed could not be fulfilled then it was correct to provide support as suggested by [the administrator of] the great abbot. *Si tu* Chos kyi rin chen confirmed that he could provide such support and some clever young boys to become monks. Then the great lord requested that the great translator Grags pa rgyal mtshan became a religious teacher (*chos dpon*). Remembering the prophecy of dPang lo tsā ba and the words of *rje lo tsā ba* [Byang chub rtse mo], he agreed and, at the age of thirty-four,¹⁶¹ he arrived at Shel dkar from [Bo dong] E¹⁶² having passed through Gyam.¹⁶³ The lHo *bdag* Chos kyi rin chen provided excellent material for the construction, the great translator performed the rituals for the selection of the land and for the request (to the earth goddess) as well as purifications, etc. according to the *tantra*. The temple (*dri gtsang khang*), the main hall, the storeroom, and the college of the Shel dkar monastery were completed in the wood-ox year (1385 A.D.), which is called in the divine language of India *kro dha na*, and, according to the *bDe mchog bstod 'grel* custom used in this country, *khro bo*. This took place 2345 years after the birth of the Buddha in the year of the iron-monkey in Lumbinī.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁸ Unit of measure of capacity used among others things for cereals and various agricultural products. 20 *bre* = 1 *khal* (= c. 13 kg in case of cereals); cf. Schuh 1988: 6.

¹⁵⁹ *Byams chos sde lnga*, "The Five Treatises of Maitreya", which are considered as inspired by Maitreya to Asaṅga.

¹⁶⁰ This corresponds to the general traditional custom of providing rice soup as main food during the ceremonies in the Tibetan monasteries.

¹⁶¹ Means when he was thirty-three.

¹⁶² Bo dong E is a monastery to the west of gZhis ka rtse (cf. Map) founded in 1049 A.D. by *dge bshes* Mu drā chen po (cf. also Ferrari 1958: 156). Later the same invited the Indian scholar *paṇ chen* 'Bum phrag gsum pa (Sthirapāla) and the monastery became a centre of learning; cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 419ff.; Roerich 1988: 345–346. In the 15th century it became the main seat of the Bo dong pa tradition thanks to the great scholar Bo dong paṇ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal alias 'Jigs med grags pa (1375–1451 A.D.).

¹⁶³ Gyam in Zur tsho (to the west of Shel dkar, cf. Map) was the birthplace of dPang lo tsā ba.

¹⁶⁴ This seems to refer to the date of the birth of the Buddha as 961 B.C. This date could correspond to the so-called *mTsho sna pa* system; cf. *dPag bsam* 93, see also Schuh 1973: 8. *mTsho sna pa* chen po Shes rab bzang po himself is mentioned in a different context by the author when he introduces Tsong kha pa and the dGe lugs pa tradition (cf. folio 57a).

24b In the same year, the school of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) was founded on the fourth day of the sixth month which was the recurrence of the day when the Buddha turned the wheel of the doctrine pronouncing the four noble truths. In that very year there were over one hundred diligent monks. Only a short time later, over one hundred monks studied the scriptures (*bka' pod*)¹⁶⁵ such as *Phar [phyin]* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) and *Tshad [ma]* (*Pramāṇa*) thanks to the extremely correct explanation of the doctrine given by Grags pa [rgyal mtshan]. During the debates those monks received particularly good food. During every session forty monks gathered there, coming from other areas, and these were also given proper sustenance. The fifteen monks who used to recite the *Byams chos sde lnga* had some fields belonging to the estates of the monastery (*mchod gzhis*) and destined specifically for their material support. Two monks, called *rtse pa byams chos pa*, were in charge of the organization of these supplies and took care as *sku gnyer ba* of the bSam 'grub lha khang. Since conditions were constantly improving, later, up to seven hundred and fifty monks, experts in *sūtra* and *tantra*, would assemble here, and so the precious Buddhist doctrine developed greatly.

24b–25b Verses relating again the seventh great propitious deed of the *si tu*.

The eighth great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

**It was propitious to build a place of meditation (*sgrub grwa*)¹⁶⁶
in rGya ra sgang in order to stop the flow of sins**

25b *Si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, inspired by the ancestral kings of religion,¹⁶⁷ built the monastery without hindrance. However, he did not feel satisfied with this good deed and, even when he was old, he thought he would build a great place of meditation (*sgrub grwa*). Then he asked his ministers whether it would possible to build this in lHo mdzes, a small monastery where *chos rje bKa' bzhi pa* Nam mkha' 'od zer used to dwell.

26a The ministers replied that to the south of rGyal gyi Śrī ri (rTsis ri) there was a nice place called rGya rwa sgang where every day hunters used to lay snares to kill many animals. In order to cut the

¹⁶⁵ The *bKa' pod lnga*, the "five volumes of the *sūtra*", constitute the basic subjects studied in order to obtain the *dge bshes* degree: *dBu ma* (*Madhyamaka*), *Phar phyin* (*Prajñāpāramitā*), *Tshad ma* (*Pramāṇa*), *'Dul ba* (*Vinaya*), *mDzod* (*Abhidharma*).

¹⁶⁶ A monastery comprises teaching places for the *sūtra*, the above-mentioned *bshad grwa*, and meditation places (*sgrub grwa*) for the practice of the *tantra*.

¹⁶⁷ *Mes dbon rnam gsum*, the three ancestral kings, meaning Srong btsan sgam po, Khri srong lde btsan, and Khri ral pa can.

flow of sins it was good to build a place of meditation (*sgrub grwa*). The great lord agreed and knew that it was a perfect place. Then he invited *chos rje* Nam mkha' 'od zer from dPyad pu seng ge gling of Zur tsho to become the *bla ma*, and a new place of meditation called bSam gling¹⁶⁸ was built. Since everything required was provided in the most perfect way, numerous monks assembled there to devote themselves to the realization of the truth. According to the *Seng rdzong dkar chag*, bSam gling was built by the great lord Nam mkha' tshe dbang bkra shis, the son of lHa btsan skyabs ma. However, since *rje bKa' bzhi pa* (Nam mkha'i 'od zer) was a disciple of the great translator Byang chub rtse mo and was invited from bSam gling¹⁶⁹ to Shel dkar by lHa btsan skyabs, it seems that bSam gling was built instead under the preceding great lord (*si tu* Chos kyi rin chen) towards the end of his life. The statement mentioned by the *Seng rdzong dkar chag* that [bSam gling] was built under the great lord Nam mkha' tshe dbang bkra shis can be attributed to a probable misunderstanding. In fact when sGang dkar mKhas btsun built a large Byams pa (Maitreya) statue, this great lord provided very good support for the temple and the assembly hall. It is therefore likely that the two events were confused.

A short biography of bKa' bzhi pa Nam mkha' 'od zer, the first *bla ma* of bSam gling (is given as follows): He was born in La stod lho.

26b During his youth he was very clever and studied difficult subjects such as *Phar [phyin]* (*Prajñāpāramitā*), *Tshad [ma]* (*Pramāṇa*), *mNgon [mdzod]* (*Abhidharma*), *'Dul [ba]* (*Vinaya*) originating in India and translated by the great translators. He studied the *bka' chen bzhi* (four main subjects) thoroughly and was thus called bKa' bzhi pa. He learned the largest part of the doctrine of the *sūtra* and *tantra* from many famous scholars such as the great translator Byang chub rtse mo and he became a very learned and expert scholar.

He listened to numerous doctrines such as *Phyag chen (Mahāmudrā)* and *Lam 'bras* from many great saints such as Bya btang Śākya dpal and authentic female ascetics (*mtshan ldan ri khrod ma*) and he practised them. He achieved the state of emptiness (*stong pa*) of the unborn infinite nature (*chos nyid skye med*) and his action developed widely. Then he acted as chief of bSam gling, the main monastery of rGyal gyi Śrī ri. He led the lHo *bdag*, both father and son, as well as many Buddhist scholars (*bstan 'dzin bshes gnyen*) to the way of salvation by advising them in depth according to the holy doctrine.

Then 'Dzam gling pa chos rje bSod nams 'od zer, who was born to the family (*rigs*) of lHo gser, became *bla ma* on the holy throne (of bSam gling). He had a very vast knowledge of the doctrine and was recognized as the incarnation of Heruka by a prophecy of Thang stong rgyal po.¹⁷⁰ Afterwards

¹⁶⁸ bSam gling later became a monastery on the holy mountain of Śrī ri.

¹⁶⁹ The bSam gling monastery, also called rGya ra sgang, was situated on the southern slopes of the holy mountain of rTsis ri (Śrī ri).

¹⁷⁰ Thang stong rgyal po (1385–1464 A.D.) was a great *siddha* particularly famous for the construction of iron bridges across the gTsang po (Brahmaputra) and other big rivers. Besides, he is considered the founder of the

mKhas grub chos rje succeeded bSod nams 'od zer to the throne. He was followed on the throne by sGang dkar mkhas btsun chos rje, and this latter spread the doctrine of meditation and spiritual realization. From Nyang stod bya sgang¹⁷¹ he brought relics of the Buddha (*ring bsrel*) shaped like *rje btsun* Byams mgon (Maitreya).

27a To house them he wished to build a gold and copper statue of Byams pa (Maitreya). In order to get the necessary gold and copper, he asked the great lord Nam mkha' tshe dbang bkra shis for support. The great lord met the request satisfactorily, and so an assembly hall and a Byams khang temple with a two-storey-high statue of Byams pa were built. sGang dkar mkhas btsun chos rje took perfectly care of the monastery. When he reached an advanced age, he ordered that 'Dzam gling pa chos rje bSod nams chos sgrub should succeed him to the throne as abbot of the monastery for teaching and practice. He retired into a secret remote place in order to meditate until he passed away. After that lCi lung pa ras chen gZhon nu dpal ldan, Las lung pa chos rje brTson 'grus rgyal mtshan, *chos rje* mGon po ba, *lo paṅ* Ras chen, *paṅ chen* gZhung brgya pa dngos grub dpal 'bar, *lha btsun* Grags pa, and *chos rje* Mus pa dpal 'byor followed on the throne. Until the last of these, the monastery appeared to those outside to follow the Sa [skya pa] tradition, but in fact it used to practise mainly the bKa' brgyud pa (teachings) such as *Phyag chen* (*Mahāmudrā*). However, when bsTan 'dzin dar rgyas, *sde pa* in gTsang, acted as Shel dkar *rdzong dpon*,¹⁷² *rje* rGya mtsho pad dkar was invited to become the *bla ma* of bSam gling and [the monastery] changed to the pure 'Brug pa¹⁷³ tradition. He was devoted to spiritual liberation without any distractions and he promoted both the civil and the religious practice of the monastery.

27b He built many religious symbols (*rten*) such as the one-storey-high statue of bDe mchog yab yum (Cakrasaṃvara) to the left of the Byams chen lha khang (Maitreya temple). He also rebuilt the *bla brang* bSam gtan yang rtse. From then on, the following were heads of the monastery: *mkhas dbang* Sangs rgyas rdo rje, his disciple sPu ta pad dkar bstan 'dzin, furthermore *rje* Gsang rdor ba, *rje* Mi pham bsam grub, *chos rje* Grags pa, sPu ta ba rje dkar rgyud nam rgyal,¹⁷⁴ *bla ma* bSam gtan nor bu, reincarnations of *rje* bKa' brgyud rNam rgyal. Earlier the lHo *bdag* had granted as estates of the

Tibetan "Opera" (*lha mo*). With the support of lHa btsan skyabs ma, the Byang *bdag*, and the kings of Gung thang he built the *stūpa* of gCung ri bo che in northern La stod.

¹⁷¹ Nyang stod indicates the upper part of the valley of the Myang chu (area of rGyal rtse).

¹⁷² This passage is unclear and seems to refer to a time after the decline of the lHo *bdag* family. See also folio 55b–56b.

¹⁷³ One subsect of the bKa' brgyud pa founded in the 13th century by the teacher of rGod tshang pa, gTsang pa rgya ras pa ye shes rdo rje. rGod tshang pa himself developed the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa tradition in southern La stod and this became known as sTod 'brug; cf. e.g. *Deb ther sngon po* 796ff.; Roerich 1988: 680ff.

¹⁷⁴ Most probably the below mentioned *rje* bKa' brgyud rnam rgyal. Here the name seems just to have been erroneously written.

monastery (*mchod gzhis*) gNas ze mo, four *rkang*¹⁷⁵ of Phu chen (?), *gzhis ka* Yo leb of rTsa skor. Some fields from each village had also been offered as support for the monastery. At the end of every year Shel dkar rdzong offered some produce for the religious service (*sku rim sgrub chos*), and monks from all the monasteries of Śrī ri assembled [in bSam gling] for the general religious service (*spyi rim*) of this monastery. This event was called *bSam gling sku rim*. This was called the eighth great propitious deed of the *si tu*.

27b–28a Verses relating again the eighth great propitious deed of the *si tu*.

The ninth great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

It was propitious to set up the *yi dam* gods on the Seng ge gnam 'phyong hill according to the 'Phags ma'i lung (Tārā's prophecy)

28a On the basis of a critical analysis of the *Seng rdzong dkar chag*, and as reported in the third (in the text erroneously "first") great propitious deed of the *si tu*, *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen had great faith in sGrol ma and sMan bla. Thanks to the power deriving from his faith, he was saved in Dam pa 'phrang and thus he usually used to pray to her. One day at dawn he dreamed of a beautiful girl dressed in blue who told him about a place on the hill of dPal gyi ri (Śrī ri alias rTsi b ri) which resembled a lion jumping into the sky. Were he to build a temple (*gtsug lag khang*) there, he would avoid all hindrances in life. Were he to fail to do so, hindrances would affect him badly. In the dream the features of this place also appeared.

28b After waking up the great lord thought that this was a miraculous sign and with some faithful servants he went to see the place of his dream. Taking the upper way he saw many rainbows above Seng rdzong and the rocky hill where now a statue of sGrol ma has been placed became like a rainbow itself. The great lord hurried to get closer. He saw all the rainbows entering into the summit of the hill, which resembled the top of the head of sGrol ma. Then he decided to build a temple there and returned to Shel dkar.

Examining the *Seng rdzong dkar chag*, it is reported that the temple was built immediately after this event. However, the sGrol ma temple of Seng rdzong was built in fact only after the bSam sgrub lha khang. According to the word of learned people the seven Nepalese (mentioned in the *Seng rdzong dkar chag*) are those who also intervened in the construction of bSam grub lha khang. Though the great lord wanted to follow the order (*bka'*) from sGrol ma, the religious symbols (*rten*) in bSams grub lha khang

¹⁷⁵ Unit of measure of land (depending on a number of variable factors) on which the taxation system was based; cf. Goldstein 1971: 7ff.; Schuh 1988: 7.

were very important and not yet complete. After receiving many successive appeals from sGrol ma, the great lHo *bdag*, the reincarnation of the *chos rgyal* Zla bzang, went with some servants and many workers to the place in Śrī ri to set up a temple.

29a At the beginning of construction there were some miraculous signs. The beautifully shaped stones of the foundations originated from the south of Maṅi smug po and were called treasure stones (*gter rdo*). When the foundations, the exterior walls and some central areas were built, the wood was provided from various directions by gods (*lha*) and *klu* devoted to the doctrine. In the end it is said that people provided wood of better quality. When the wood construction and the plastering of the walls had been completed, the "king of religion" (*chos rgyal*) thought he would erect a statue of sGrol ma and further blessed statues on this hill which had the natural shape of sGrol ma. If those statues were to be made of precious materials, the people of this degenerate age, possessed by troubles and desire, would destroy them and bring about sinful deeds. Were the statues to be made of clay and wood, they would not be worthy of a king of religion. If they were of clay with aromatic plants, silk, and brocade they would bring great benefit to all living beings. Thus, skilled craftsmen were needed. With this thought in mind he prayed to sGrol ma, and shortly afterwards seven Nepalese craftsmen came and asked: "*Ra' dza' (rāja)*, do you need any statues or paintings?" The great lord replied: "I wish to make some statues and paintings. Are you able to do such work?" The Nepalese answered that they knew those skills and that they even had the required colours.

29b The great lord provided the necessary support and organization. Among the seven Nepalese some made the paintings, others made the statues. In the sKye tshang (cave?) inside the rocks, they set up a Green sGrol ma in the centre, to the right 'Od zer can, to the left Ral geig ma and around them the sGrol ma 'jigs pa brgyad skyob ma (the eight Tārā protecting from the eight fears). On the rock above there were the eight sMan bla bde gshegs, below there was an eleven-faced (Avalokiteśvara) to the right and one to the left, below that one mChod pa lha mo on each side, below it a mGon po gur (Gur mgon, protector of the Sa skya pa tradition) and a lHa mo Bong gzhon ma (goddess riding an ass), below the four great kings (*rgyal chen bzhi*). As far as paintings are concerned on the back wall, the sGrol ma 'khor ba stong skyob kyī zhing khams (field of Tārā) [was depicted], to the right the gods of bDe mchog (Cakrasaṃvara), to the left the gods of *Dus 'khor (Kālacakra)*. On the wall to the right one *rje btsun* Seng ldeng nags sGrol ma (a form of Green Tārā) with a yak skull and surrounded by the twenty-eight dBang phyug ma (Durgā) [were depicted]. Above there were the nine gods of rNam rgyal. On the opposite side *rje btsun* Grags pa¹⁷⁶ and Sa [skya] Paṅ [ḍita], 'Jam dpal dbyangs, the gNas (brtan) bcu (drug) (sixteen Arhats), to the right the field of 'Jam dpal dbyangs, to the left according to Chinese

¹⁷⁶ This indicates probably Grags pa rgyal mtshan of Sa skya (1147–1216 A.D.) and not the abbot of the Shel dkar monastery of the same name. In fact he is mentioned together with Sa skya Paṅḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, the great scholar of the Sa skya pa tradition (1182–1251 A.D.).

style one Śākyamuni called Gangs can mtsho. In the centre there were the one thousand five hundred Buddhas of the age of good fortune (*skal bzang*), in the *skor khang* there were Srong btsan [sgam po] and his two wives and two ministers (mGar sTon btsan and Thu mi Sam bho ṭa), in the outer *skor khang* one thousand 'Od phag med (Amitābha), the great teacher (Padmasambhava), the Bodhisattva abbot (Śāntarakṣita), the king of religion Khri srong lde btsan, *paṅ chen* Ka ma la shi la (Kamalaśīla), the great translator Vairocana. To the right and to the left of the courtyard there were the fields of sMan bla, 'Od dpag med, 'Jam dpal dbyangs, sPyan ras gzigs.

30a To the left of the outer courtyard there were the Mi 'khrugs pa zhing khams (a Buddha field), rNam sras rta bdag brgyad (retinue of Vaiśravaṇa), Gur mgon, Lo ma gyon pa. Below, there was the great teacher (Padmasambhava) as main god (*rigs bdag*) of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen. All these represent a precious blessing and benefit for all living beings. After the consecration (*rab gnas*), one after another the seven Nepalese vanished into the statue of sGrol ma. In fact these Nepalese are said to have been craftsmen of divine emanation. These events are called the ninth great propitious deed of the *si tu*.

Verses relating again the ninth great propitious deed of the *si tu*, as described from 28a to 30b.

The tenth great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

It was propitious to set up schools of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) and places of meditation (*sgom grwa*) as branches (*yan lag*) of the two monasteries (Shel dkar chos sde and bSam gling)

30b In the Shel dkar monastery in the southern region
the colour saffron (monk's robe) filled the space
between earth and sky with vermilion light;
everywhere holy precepts (*lung*) and wise learning (*rig pa*) resounded.

In this way the scholar Shre ya pi dza praised the monastery. This praise corresponded to reality. At the beginning in the Shel dkar monastery there were some colleges (*grwa tshang*)¹⁷⁷ of the Sa skya pa tradition and one or two colleges of the Bo dong pa tradition. As the monastery was not large, the great lords established new colleges of *sūtra* and *tantra* and they ordered other people to do so as well. This happened as follows: at the time of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and *lo chen* Grags pa rgyal mtshan the school of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) had been founded in the monastery of Shel dkar. Not long afterwards

¹⁷⁷ *Grwa tshang* is a basic teaching unit of a monastery specializing in a certain subject. Usually, this term is translated into English by "college".

around twelve colleges such as the three '*Dul ba (Vinaya)*¹⁷⁸ colleges of dGa' ldan pa were established under the abbot Legs shing pa and a few '*Dul ba* colleges under the abbot mKhan tshang pa. From the time of lHa btsan skyabs colleges gradually appeared as follows:¹⁷⁹ the lHo *bdag* gave an order to Bla brang dKar po ba from the Se dkar lineage of rGyal khrom¹⁸⁰ to build a monastery. Accordingly, the *zhal ngo* (administrator) of Bla brang dKar po¹⁸¹ who had been a monk at Gangs can chos 'phel¹⁸² founded the dKar po college in his area. Bla brang gSer gling pa, who had split from the Bla brang dKar po, founded the gSer gling college.

31a Another *zhal ngo* of Bla brang dKar po, called Bla brang Nub, who used to stay in rGya nor bDe gling, founded the sPo college. *sDe pa* gNas 'og pa¹⁸³ founded the gNas 'og college. (A list of further colleges follows:) the Ze phug mkhan tshang ba¹⁸⁴ (college), the seat of Bya bral chos rje,¹⁸⁵ the Chos lung college founded by Tsha thang pa chos rje Legs pa bzang po, the Byang ma college and the sGrub sgo college founded under the abbot bShang skya, the sGo gsum dga' ldan college founded by the abbot Legs shing pa,¹⁸⁶ the Gling stod lHa gdong¹⁸⁷ college, the seat of rGyal ba Yang dgon pa,¹⁸⁸ the sNyan rtse¹⁸⁹ college founded by mTsho sgo brTse chen pa, the Kha rta Khams pa¹⁹⁰ college, the Nyo stod Grog mkhar college, the Gram mtsho Lung bzang¹⁹¹ college, the sKyi phug college of *Tshad ma (Pramāna)* founded in Sos snga Ding ri,¹⁹² the Ding ri Ber rtse college, the Shar pa college nowadays called Byang ma dgon, the sMan khab Khang gsar bde skyid¹⁹³ college, the Pha drug sGye

¹⁷⁸ In the text (here and two lines below) the "l" of '*dul ba* is missing. This solution is suggested by the poetic passage relating to the same event (cf. folio 32a).

¹⁷⁹ The colleges mentioned in the list are situated throughout southern La stod (cf. Map).

¹⁸⁰ rGyal khrom alias rGyal nor to the north of Shel dkar.

¹⁸¹ Monastery situated very close to Rin chen spo.

¹⁸² Gangs can chos 'phel is a dGe lugs pa monastery to the west of gZhis ka rtse (close to the sNar thang monastery); cf. also *Vaidūrya ser po* 243.

¹⁸³ The *sde pa gnas 'og pa* were local headmen of the gNas 'og area to the south-west of Shel dkar.

¹⁸⁴ Located in rGyal nor to east of sTeng 'gro.

¹⁸⁵ Teacher of *si tu* Chos kyī rin chen; cf. folio 15a–16a.

¹⁸⁶ The abbot of the dGa' ldan college of Shel dkar. According to a small note by the author this college belonged to the Sa skya pa and then to the Bo dong pa tradition; cf. folio 47a.

¹⁸⁷ Located in the area of lHa gdong to the south of Shel dkar (cf. Map).

¹⁸⁸ rGyal ba Yang dgon pa (1153–1198 A.D.) was a disciple of rGod tshang pa and was born in dGon pa lHa gdong in La stod lho; cf. *Deb ther sgnon po* 806; Roerich 1988: 688ff.

¹⁸⁹ Located in the area of Gram mtsho to the east of Shel dkar (cf. Map).

¹⁹⁰ Located in the homonymous locality in the area of mKha rta (cf. Map).

¹⁹¹ Located in the Gram mtsho area to the east of Shel dkar (cf. Map).

¹⁹² Locality to the east of Shel dkar close to Chu lho (cf. Map).

¹⁹³ Located in sMan khab between gNya' nang and Ding ri (cf. Map).

chu college, the Yol le Kun 'dzom college,¹⁹⁴ the Gri nges Grwa bor¹⁹⁵ and Gung ma colleges, the Gram stod Gram bsam college, the gNam sgo college, the 'O bkod phug¹⁹⁶ (college) also called Chos 'khor phug founded by *bshes gnyen* Blo gro rgyal mtshan¹⁹⁷ with the support of the great lord sGrol ma skyabs,¹⁹⁸ the Gru bzhi sgo mo chos sding¹⁹⁹ founded by sPo ba Rin chen chos rgyal, who succeeded *pañ chen* 'Jigs bral [Phyogs las rnam rgyal], 'Dod rgyal gros pa dgon pa,²⁰⁰ Manydzu dgon pa brag 'og pa.²⁰¹ All these colleges used to assemble since the earliest times. Gram mtsho gSer mkhar was founded later by *dge bshes* Byang pa bstan 'phel, who used to come to the Shel dkar monastery in summer and in winter.²⁰²

31b sMan khab dPal sding was founded by *rje* Sangs rgyas dpal bzang, a disciple of mKhas grub rje, Thos bSam gling was founded by *rje* Thar pa rgyal mtshan according to the order and consecration of land (*sa chog*) by *rje* Ngag dbang grags pa. The mNgon dga' monastery, the Sos nga gam pa college and so on were founded by *chos rje* Nam mkha' rin chen (the thirteenth early abbot) who was the Yar pa rgya dpon and *rje dbon*.²⁰³

All these colleges (and monasteries) followed the custom of gathering (*'du srol*) to the Shel dkar monastery and constituted branches of this great monastery. The branches of bSam gling in Śrī ri used to assemble there for the bSam gling *sku rim*. It is said that of the thirteen monasteries of Śrī ri

¹⁹⁴ Located south-west of Shel dkar close to rTsa skor (cf. Map).

¹⁹⁵ Located near Chu lho (cf. Map).

¹⁹⁶ Located near Chu lho (cf. Map).

¹⁹⁷ The seventh early abbot of the Shel dkar monastery. His biography is concisely reported in this text (cf. folio 47b–49a).

¹⁹⁸ sGrol ma skyabs could be sGrol ma bsod nams dpal bzang po, a grandson of lHa btsan skyabs. However sGrol ma skyabs seems to be used in this text to indicate lHa btsan skyabs himself. With this name he is also mentioned by the *Gung thang gdung rabs* (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 125). There it is reported that king Khri rNam rgyal lde (1422–1502 A.D.) during his youth performed sinful deeds and then apologized to sGrol ma skyabs. lHa btsan skyabs was still ruling when Phyogs las rnam rgyal towards the end of his life completed the *dPal kho na nyid 'dus pa* (cf. Introduction) and preached the doctrine in Shel dkar in 1449/50 A.D. (cf. Biography of Pañ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal 361).

¹⁹⁹ Close to Shel dkar to the east of it.

²⁰⁰ In the next vicinity of Shel dkar.

²⁰¹ Added by the author in small unclear characters: "nowadays *zhal ma ba* (?) '*dur ba*'" corresponding to Man dur situated above the Shel dkar village itself.

²⁰² Probably for the summer and winter ceremonies, *dbyar chos* and *dgun chos*, which are often mentioned by this text. The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 51aff.) reports concisely how this tradition was established in Shel dkar.

²⁰³ The title of *rje dbon* (added in small characters by the author) indicates the sPo rong *rje dbon*, who until 1959 was the lord of the nomads of sPo rong, Zur tsho, and neighbouring areas and claimed ancestral links to the Tibetan kings. On the political implications of the term *dbon* cf. Uebach 1980: 301–309.

established by the Ta' Ming emperors²⁰⁴ some were built with the support of the lHo *bdag*, some were built thanks to the orders he gave to others to act in the same way. The main monastery in Śrī ri is bSam gling. The thirteen branches are: Chos 'khor sgang, Cor rdzong,²⁰⁵ Rin rdzong,²⁰⁶ Mang lam, rDza skya,²⁰⁷ Zur phug stod, Nakra, Om bar, rGo po, Seng rdzong,²⁰⁸ Chu bzang, Bya tho sgang,²⁰⁹ Śrī ri byang rdzong. Also the former ones, rGod tshang, Lo pan, (one name cancelled), Zur phug gling smad, etc. all assembled for the bSam gling *sku rim*. Furthermore, the lord took as *bla ma khra ston* Byang chub rgyal mtshan belonging to the Shangs [bKa' brgyud pa]²¹⁰ tradition and founded the Bong shwa (shod) ri bo che²¹¹ monastery as a residence for the *bla ma*. He offered estates (*mchod gzhis*) and all that was required to make religious symbols (statues, etc.) in a perfect way. Ri pa gZhon nu blo gros founded the monastery Blon po bde chen mgul where later Red mtha' (mda') ba gZhon nu blo gros²¹² resided. For this the lHo *bdag* provided very good support and the monastery was one of the branches of the Shel dkar monastery.

32a Besides all these monasteries, there were numerous nunneries (*btsun ma dgon pa*) which continuously received support from the lHo *bdag*, father and son, and which are not reported here. The above-mentioned twenty-one colleges belonging to the Sa [skya pa], dGe [lugs pa], and Bo [dong pa] traditions and the thirteen monasteries established in Śrī ri by order of the Ta' Ming emperors, according to the learned people, constitute the tenth great propitious deed of the *si tu*, and thus has been put into writing.

Verses concerning the tenth great propitious deed of the *si tu* as reported from 30b to 32a.

²⁰⁴ The emperors of the Ming dynasty ruling in China 1368–1644 A.D. They used to give some titles to high Tibetan political and religious personalities. Among others they bestowed titles on the Byang *bdag* (cf. *Byang pa gdung rabs* 8b; Sperling 1992: 272ff.). However, the statement that thirteen colleges were established by these emperors sounds quite dubious. At least we could not find any reference proving their concrete involvement in the construction of monasteries in this area.

²⁰⁵ Close to mNgon dga' on the northern slopes of rTsib ri (Śrī ri) (cf. Map).

²⁰⁶ Close to Me mo on the southern slopes of rTsib ri (cf. Map).

²⁰⁷ Located in the Gad dmar area north-east of rTsib ri.

²⁰⁸ Located on the northern slopes of rTsib ri.

²⁰⁹ Located close to mNgon dga' to the north of rTsib ri (cf. Map).

²¹⁰ One of the main subsects of the bKa' brgyud pa tradition founded by Khyung po mal 'byor pa (11th–12th century).

²¹¹ Bong shod is the area on the southern bank of the Bong chu (cf. Map).

²¹² Red mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros (1349–1412 A.D.) was a famous scholar of Sa skya and a teacher of Tsong kha pa. rGyal tshab dar ma rin chen and mKhas grub rje were also his disciples.

The eleventh great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

It was propitious to make a good path on Paṅ chen sgang for daily prostrations, offerings, and prayers to the *bla ma*

32b On the north-eastern side of the royal summit (Shel dkar rtse rgyal), the abbots from Grags pa rgyal mtshan onwards and the great lords with their attendants periodically used to worship in a perfect way. They performed ritual offerings to the jewels [of Buddhism], recited prayers and listened diligently to the doctrine. When in particular *bshes gnyen* Blo gros rgyal mtshan (the seventh early abbot) retired to dGa' ldan 'brangs rgyas, the lHo *bdag* used to come every day to prostrate himself and pray following the path of Paṅ chen bde lam. The great *bshes gnyen* had *zhal dpyad* (habit?) of going to the roof of the 'Brang rgyas bla brang for a walk after taking his meal. Therefore it was propitious to make a good path. This is one great propitious deed.

Verses relating again the eleventh great propitious deed of the *si tu*.

The twelfth great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

It was propitious to increase the livestock in the pastures and in the villages

33a The above-mentioned deeds are of a religious nature, but a lord (*mi rje*) who rules according to both [religious and civil] laws (*lugs gnyis*) needs a perfect majesty (*mnga' thang*). Due to this reason, the outer majesty [made up of] horses, mules, *mdzo*, yaks, goats, and sheep had to be increased. Thus he ordered that those of his subjects with large numbers of horses, yaks, goats, and sheep in the pasture land (*rtsa thang*) and in the villages (*khrom sa*) be ruled without heavy taxes (*khral*). Since the outer prosperity of the political power [constituted by] horses, mules, and so on increased greatly, this was called by the learned the twelfth great propitious deed of the *si tu*.

Verses relating again the twelfth great propitious deed of the *si tu*.

The thirteenth great propitious deed of the *si tu*:

It was propitious to increase the granaries of the farmers and trade by opening the doors of the passes in the various directions

33b The great deeds of [Tibetan] kings and ministers who were Bodhisattvas are recorded in annals, religious histories, and so on. In an analogous way the great deeds of Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags,²¹³ the lord of rGyal rtse, are recorded in the so-called "eighteen *phun tshogs*" (perfect deeds). The above-mentioned great deeds of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen together with those of his ancestors and descendants can compete with them. The thirteen great propitious deeds are not like the activities of the farmers who take responsibility only for themselves. It is reliably said that one third of the revenue of the Shel dkar chos rdzong²¹⁴ was offered for the provision of services and honours to sustain the monks for the summer and winter religious festivities²¹⁵ in the great monastery of Shel dkar and to support the worship of the jewels [of Buddhism] in the temples in general. Thanks to the revenue from agriculture, trade, etc. the offering hand was outstretched with an all-wishes-granting rain for the monastic community. Everywhere the learned say that this is the thirteenth great propitious deed of the *si tu*.

33b–34b Verses relating again the thirteenth great propitious deed of the *si tu* and introducing the monastery of Shel dkar with the relevant abbots.

²¹³ Rab brtan kun bzang 'phags was a famous lord of rGyal rtse in the 15th century. He founded the rGyal rtse sku 'bum and the dPal 'khor bde chen gtsug lag khang.

²¹⁴ Abbreviation indicating the Shel dkar monastery and the Shel dkar rdzong (local government) as source of the revenues.

²¹⁵ Ritual time for ceremonies and sessions of study.

III. THE ABBOTS WHO SPREAD THE DOCTRINE OF THE *SŪTRA* AND THE *TANTRA* IN THE GREAT MONASTERY OF SHEL DKAR DGA' LDAN LEGS BSHAD GLING

The early abbots of the time of the twenty-one colleges (*grwa tshang*) and the abbots after the yellow-hat tradition of Ri bo dGa' ldan pa had been established

34b When the lHo *bdag* Don yod dpal [bzang] resided in the palace of Rin chen spo in rGyal khrom (alias rGyal nor), above the left knee of the sGrol ma ri there was a tiny chapel for meditation. dPang lo tsā ba went there and blessed this place. He also prophesied that if a school of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) were to be founded there, great prosperity would come. He instructed Don yod dpal bzang to establish a monastery there, but the latter did not manage to do so.

35a Again, the great translator Byang [chub] rtse [mo] told the lHo *bdag* Don yod dpal bzang the prophecy of dPang lo [tsā ba] and gave an order to establish a monastery accordingly. However, this could not be built. Afterwards the great translator Byang [chub] rtse [mo] related the prophecy of dPang lo [tsā ba] to *ta' si tu* Chos [kyi] rin [chen]. It is said that the first abbot [after the effective foundation] was the great translator Grags pa [rgyal mtshan]. However; dPang lo [tsā ba] and his spiritual son stayed in the original abode for meditation and thus he is considered the first abbot of Shel dkar. When all things are considered, this seems correct.

The first early abbot, the lord of scholars dPang ston Blo gros brtan pa (dPang lo tsā ba, 1276–1342 A.D.) – a short biography

Verses of eulogy.

Innumerable lives before, dPang ston Blo gros brtan pa was a *mahāpaṇḍita*, as was reported by himself: "Having studied in former lives, the classes of the doctrine can be known as easily as playing in this life." His birthplace was Gyam in Zur rtso (tsho) and he was born in the year of the fire-male-mouse (1276 A.D.). As he had been separated from his mother, he was brought up on sheep's milk. Again and again he used to complain that had these foolish men given him cow's milk, this would have been good, whereas since they had given him sheep's milk half of his intelligence had eclipsed.

35b One maternal aunt went to see *bla ma* U rgyan pa,²¹⁶ told him that there was a boy with a disturbed mind and asked for a protective thread (*bsrung mdud*). The *bla ma* said that the boy was to become a great *dge bshes* and gave her his tea cup. When [the boy] was three or four he was called *btsun chung lu gu* (lamb-little monk). When he was five he went to meet *rin po che* Byang gling pa, the abbot of 'Brog rdo gling, which formerly used to be the seat of rGyal ba rGod gtsang pa. There he took the vows of *dge bsnyen*.²¹⁷ [Byang gling pa] said that he would become a *dge bshes*. Then he had him sit down and he gave him the name Blo gros brtan pa. He stayed there for two years. At the age of seven he was ordained (*rab tu byung*) and studied the *Vinaya* and the *sūtra* from the great abbots gSer khang pa and Me'u 'dul 'dzin. His father took the vows of *dge slong*,²¹⁸ he was called *dge slong* Byang seng and was considered extremely diligent. At the age of ten he said: "I have the commentaries to the *Vinaya* [...]."²¹⁹ At that time he received many invitations to perform rituals. Once, being unable to cross a river, he was carried by an older friend. [dPang lo tsā ba] said: "You are very strong, you can carry the weight of the whole doctrine of the Buddha." When crossing the river the older friend threw him into the water, but he managed to grasp his monk's robe and cross safely. The friend said: "When I carried you, unable to cross the river, you were boasting!" When he was thirteen he made a new exposition, the so-called *Chos byang*.

36a Then he proceeded to Sa skya. He stayed there several nights and heard about the fame of *bla ma* sTag sde ba.²²⁰ After proceeding to Tsha sna he was first taught the *mNgon pa* (*Abhidharma*) by this *bla ma*. When he was sixteen he could teach this subject. Then he was taught the *Phar* [*phyin*] (*Prajñāpāramitā*) together with *Tshad* [*ma*] (*Pramāṇa*). When he was eighteen he could teach both subjects. He also learned the *Dus 'khor* (*Kālacakra*). He asked for the deep and wide tradition of the *Phal chen* (*Mahāsaṃghika*) and the *Sa sde* (*Yogacaryābhūmi*)²²¹ as well as for the *Sems bskyed* (*Cittotpāda*).²²² He obtained also the *dBu ma* (*Madhyamaka*).

Verses praising his religious activity.

²¹⁶ Disciple and spiritual son of rGyal ba rGod tshang pa; cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 816ff.; Roerich 1988: 696ff.

²¹⁷ Civil buddhist devotee observing five basic vows.

²¹⁸ The highest order implying the observation of 253 vows.

²¹⁹ *Khyi ma bu bdun gyi brdas kyang thon pa*.

²²⁰ sTag sde ba Seng ge rgyal mtshan (1212–1294 A.D.), disciple of Bo dong rin chen rtse mo, was the teacher of dPang lo tsā ba and of Shong ston rDo rje rgyal mtshan; cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 917–920; Roerich 1988: 783ff.

²²¹ *Sa sde lnga* are the five texts by Asaṅga on levels of attainment; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5536.

²²² Probably the *Byang chub tu sems bskyed cho ga*, *Bodhicittotpāda* by Nāgārjuna; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5361.

He had been continuously learning the *Tshad ma kun las btus pa* (*Pramāṇasamuccaya*)²²³ for six years.

Verses praising his teacher sTag sde ba.

When [dPang lo tsā ba] was nineteen, *bla ma* sTag sde ba passed away. After that he used to perform ritual offerings (*lo mchod*) annually (for the anniversary of the death of the *bla ma*). His devotion was great since he used to pronounce a dedication to sTag sde ba during the ritual offering of the first food and drink.

36b Then he proceeded to Mang mkhar khra tshang²²⁴ to meet *bla ma* mChog ldan pa. In that autumn he obtained the *Ka la' pa* (*Kalāpa*),²²⁵ *Tsandra pa* (*Candra pa*),²²⁶ *sNyan ngag me long* (*Kāvyaḍarśa*).²²⁷ In winter he proceeded to Sa skya and obtained the *sTag* (*brTag*) *gnyis* (*Hevajratantra*),²²⁸ *rNam 'grel* (*Pramāṇavārttika*),²²⁹ and *Rig gter*.²³⁰ In spring he took the vows of *dge slong* from the great abbot gSer khang pa and obtained the commentaries on the *Karika khong*. He also obtained many doctrines such as *Sems bskyed* (*Cittotpāda*), [b]*Slab btus* (*Śikṣāsamuccaya*),²³¹ *mDo sde rgyan* (*Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*),²³² *mNgon [rtogs] rgyan* (*Abhisamayālamkāra*).²³³ With great devotion he used to dance and say: "I didn't meet gSer khang pa too early, I didn't meet gSer khang pa too late." The abbot [gSer khang pa] prophesied that he would become a great translator. He learned the

²²³ Text on valid cognition written by Dignāga; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5700.

²²⁴ Locality close to lHa rtse (there the monastery of sMyu gu lung was famous as the residence of 'Brog mi lo tsā ba Śākya gzhon nu in the 11th century).

²²⁵ Text on grammar (*sgra rig pa*) translated into Tibetan by dPang lo tsā ba; cf. Ōtani cat. No. 5775.

²²⁶ *Lung du ston pa'i candra pa'i mdo 'grel ba*, text on grammar by Chandragomin; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5767.

²²⁷ Famous text on poetry written by the Indian scholar Daṇḍin, translated into Tibetan in the 13th century by Shong ston rDo rje rgyal mtshan; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5789.

²²⁸ The *Hevajratantra*; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 10.

²²⁹ *Tshad ma rnam 'grel*, one of the seven texts on valid cognition written by Dharmakīrti, cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5717.

²³⁰ *Tshad ma rig gter*, work of Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan, presenting the main points of the texts on valid cognition by Dharmakīrti.

²³¹ *bSlab pa kun las btus pa*, text written by Śāntideva; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5336.

²³² *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, one of the five texts called *Byams chos sde lnga* (*mDo sde rgyan*, *mNgon rtogs rgyan*, *rGyud bla ma*, *Chos dang chos nyid rnam 'byed*, *dBus mtha' rnam 'byed*) considered to have been inspired by Maitreya to Asaṅga.

²³³ According to the *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (*Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 687), *mNgon rtogs rgyan* stands for *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i man ngag gi bstan bcos mngon par rtogs pa'i rgyan zhes bya ba*, *Abhisamayālamkāranāmaprajñāpāramitopadeśa* as one of the five texts (*Byams chos sde lnga*) considered to have been inspired by Maitreya to Asaṅga; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5184.

So *sor thar pa'i mdo* (*Prātimokṣasūtra*),²³⁴ the *sKyes rabs* (*Jātaka*),²³⁵ and the *sPyod 'jug* (*Bodhicaryāvatāra*)²³⁶ very well. He obtained many doctrines from *slob dpon* Me'u 'dul 'dzin, teacher of the *Tshigs gnyis* (?). He received many doctrines such as *gSang ston* from *slob dpon* sTobs. He proceeded [again] to Sa skya where he borrowed the texts *sGra ka la' pa*, *Tsandra pa*, *Me long 'chi med mdzod* from the nephew (*dbon po*) of Shong ston [rDo rje rgyal mtshan]. He learned '*Phral skad* (*Prākṛit*) from the *a tsā ra* (*ācaryā*) whom he had the chance to meet to prepare himself to go to Nepal. At that time he took care of the religious music for the periodical rituals and his practice of grammar (*sgra*) improved greatly. Since he acted as translator for *bla ma* bZhi thog pa and the *paṇḍita* he was known as *lo tsā ba*, "the translator". He made notes on the *dPag bsam 'khri shing* (*Bodhisattvāvadānakalpalatā*).²³⁷

37a In one day he put into sequence the *bsTod pa rgyan* and sent it to rTog shing pa. Then at the age of twenty-one he went to Nepal with some gold coins (*srang*) and some clothing he had received from him and from Chos bzang. There he obtained the *sGra tsandra pa* from Ra' ma na a' tsa rya (*Rāmana ācaryā*) and Ma da na a' tsa rya (*Madana ācaryā*). Then having travelled to Sa skya in summer at the time of harvest, he translated the *Ka la' pa* and thus the festival of good sayings in Tibet, this land of snow, became marvellous. In the appendix he wrote:

Having received the key of the good sayings from Shong ston,
the treasure of the Sanskrit scriptures was opened.
Having received the jewels of all kinds of knowledge,
the festival of good sayings was enjoyed.

He sent a poem to rTog shing pa.

"rTog shing pa!
Having moved the body to India and Nepal
and having moved the mind (*blo gros*) for learning,
having moved the voice for speaking Sanskrit,
and holding the name "always stable" (*brtan pa*),
please listen to the one who speaks two languages."²³⁸

Then having received one *bre* of silver he returned to Nepal. In his spare time from learning he used to make religious paintings (*thang sku*) and to copy numerous texts of the *rDo rje 'phreng ba*

²³⁴ A basic *Vinaya* text; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 1031.

²³⁵ Biographical accounts and rebirth stories of the Buddha.

²³⁶ A text about the practice of the Bodhisattva written by Śāntideva; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5272.

²³⁷ Text by Kṣemendra and Somendra first translated into Tibetan in the 13th century by Shong ston rDo rje rgyal mtshan and Paṇḍita Lakṣmīkara; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5655.

²³⁸ These seem verses of implicit request of support.

(*Vajrāvalināmamaṇḍalopāyikā*).²³⁹ He compiled various works about *Tsandra pa*. He translated the *sPyir btang*²⁴⁰ and the *Dam pa rtog dkar*. He began the translation of the *dGongs rgyan*²⁴¹ and [the texts of] *rGyal dbang blo (Jinendrabuddhi)*.²⁴²

Returning to Sa skya he was disappointed with most of what he saw. He said:

"Most monks like the bustle of worldly affairs,
their study of the holy doctrines is poor,
most people commit all kinds of sin without shame,
most conceited scholars who studied the doctrines
for a long time do not look at them.

37b Though the gifts of new knowledge
are seriously presented, nobody receives them,
despite the wish to allow the doctrines to grow,
the situation of the people is like this.
All those who have a [human] body,
by the saying of the *bde gshegs*
have the essence (*snying po*),
and the training of the pure attitude (*dag snang*)."

Having suffered from jaundice (*mig ser*) he accomplished a great work on *mig ser*. It is said that when *bla ma 'Jam skya ba* came, he welcomed him with a procession. Though he had many disciples learning subjects such as grammar, he went seven times to Nepal and India. He revised the translation of *sGra Tsandra pa*, translated the *sByor ba rgyas (brgya) pa*,²⁴³ revised the translation of the *mDzod (Abhidharmakośa)*²⁴⁴ and made the relevant notes, revised the translation of *rNam 'grel (Pramāṇavārttika)* and made the relevant notes, translated the fourth chapter of [the text of] *lHa dbang*

²³⁹ The Ōtani catalogue reports that dPang lo tsā ba revised the translation of the *dKyil 'khor gyi cho ga rdo rje phreng ba shes bya ba* by Abhayākaragupta; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 3961.

²⁴⁰ The Ōtani catalogue reports that dPang lo tsā ba translated the text on grammar *sPyir btang ba yang dag par bsdu pa shes bya ba, Adhikārasaṃgrahanāma*; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5771.

²⁴¹ The Ōtani catalogue reports that dPang lo tsā ba revised the translation of *Thub pa'i dgongs pa'i rgyan, Munimatālamkāra*, by Abhayākaraguptapāda, which was translated into Tibetan by Shong ston; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5299.

²⁴² The Ōtani catalogue reports that dPang lo tsā ba translated the *Yangs ba dang dri ma med pa dang ldang pa shes bya ba tshad ma kun las btus pa'i 'grel bshad, Visālamalavatināmapramāṇasamuccayaṭikā* by Jinendrabuddhi; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5766.

²⁴³ Text on medicine written by Nāgārjuna; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5795.

²⁴⁴ *Chos mngon pa'i mdzod* by Vasubandhu; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5591.

blo (Devendrabuddhi) and the *rTog ge'i skad* (*Tarkabhāṣā*).²⁴⁵ It is reliably said that when he went to India once the *chos bdag* bKra shis 'od 'bar²⁴⁶ entered his hat, followed him and promised to protect the doctrine. From time to time he went to Sa skya and obtained the *Lam 'bras* from *bla ma* bZhi thog pa and *bla ma* 'Jam skya [ba]. Then he obtained many doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* from *bla ma* mChog ldan pa. Most *paṇḍita* in Nepal received the *Man snyen* (*Man ngag snye ma*, *Upadeśamañjari*?)²⁴⁷ and the *dGongs rgyan* from him. Later he resided in Gung thang gNas po che²⁴⁸ to establish the basis for religion following a request from the ruler. At that time some people of Amogha, who was the nephew of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, brought the edict and the seal for the lHo *bdag*. An invitation from the emperor of China arrived [for dPang lo tsā ba] as well but he declined.

38a During the summer religious festivities (*dbyar chos*), at the age of thirty-two, he established [the practice of] the *Dus 'khor*. In winter he started to teach the *Phar* [*phyin*] (*Prajñāpāramitā*), *Tshad* [*ma*] (*Pramāṇa*), *dBu ma* (*Madhyamaka*), and *Rig gter*. Most *dge bshes* from mNga' ris [Gung thang] such as *slob dpon* bDe blo obtained them from him. From *bla ma* dGe 'dun bstan pa he received many empowerments (*dbang*) and precepts (*lung*) of *rDo rje 'phreng ba* (*Vajrāvalināmamaṅḍalopāyikā*) and conversely he taught him many doctrines. During the following twenty-five years, except for a few trips to Sa skya, he used to stay in gNas po che to explain the doctrine, write, translate, and re-translate many texts. Besides, he went one time to meet *bla ma* mChog ldan pa for empowerments, instructions, and blessings and one time to sNar thang²⁴⁹ to offer butterlamps to a symbol (*nang rten*) of *sTag sde ba*. When teaching *mNgon pa*, *Tshad ma*, and *Sa sde* according to the Indian commentaries, the monks had some difficulties in understanding them and requested him to write some commentaries. Thus he began to compose. Afterwards he said that he wrote because of the request of his disciples.

He was invited by the king of Ya tshe²⁵⁰ but he only replied with a letter. He acted as abbot of [Bo dong] E, the monastery of *pan chen* 'Bum phrag gsum pa. Meanwhile he prophesied again that it would be good to build a school of philosophy in rGyal mo ri (Shel dkar). He finished translating the texts he had not managed to complete before and he translated the *Man snye* (*Man ngag snye ma?*), the *'Jigs pa*

²⁴⁵ The Ōtani catalogue reports that dPang lo tsā ba translated the *rTog ge'i skad*, *Tarkabhāṣā*, by Mokṣākaragupta; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5762.

²⁴⁶ This deity later became a main protector of the Bo dong pa tradition and of the Shel dkar monastery.

²⁴⁷ *Upadeśamañjarināmasarvatantrotpannopannasāmāyabhāṣya* by Abhayākaraguptapāda; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5024.

²⁴⁸ A locality in Mang yul Gung thang next to rDzong kha.

²⁴⁹ sNar thang was a famous bKa' dam pa monastery founded by *gtum ston* Blo gros grags pa in 1153.

²⁵⁰ This small kingdom, called also Semjā, used to belong to mNga' ris and its rulers were considered to be linked to the Tibetan royal lineage. It seems to correspond to an area located in present-day north-western Nepal in the vicinity of Jumla; cf. Tucci 1956: 112ff., Petech 1988c: 369ff.

med pa'i gzhung 'grel,²⁵¹ the *Dus 'khor phreng ba*, the *bDe mchog mngon rtogs*, the *Lohipa'i 'grel pa* (commentary on *Lū yi pa?*), the *dBang mdor bstan gyi 'grel ba*,²⁵² the *Naro 'grel ba* (commentary of Nāropa),²⁵³ the *Mi g.yo snang ba*, the *Ka la' pa'i 'grel pa* (commentary on the *Kalāpasūtra*).²⁵⁴

38b He made subdivisions into chapters and notes on the *Byang chub gsal ba* and the *dGongs rgyan*. He made subdivisions into chapters on the *dBu ma rgyan*. He made notes on the *mDo sde rgyan* and *bsDus pa* (summary?). He made subdivisions into chapters and notes on the *Me long*. He made notes on the *sNying po gsal ba* and the *sDeb sbyor*.²⁵⁵ He wrote a prayer to sGrol ma. He wrote also a eulogy and a further prayer. Sometimes he taught the *Dus 'khor sdom 'byung*, the *brTag gnyis (Hevajra Tantra)*, the *gSang 'dus (Guhyasamāja)*, the *dGongs rgyan*, the *dBu ma rgyan*, the *sPyod 'jug (Bodhicaryāvatāra)*, the *Me long (Kāvyadarśa)*. He asked *bla ma Ri 'dabs pa* to teach the *sByor drug (Śaḍaṅgayoga)*, the *dBu ma chen po*, and the practice of Ma gcig Lab sgron ma.²⁵⁶ After having been invited to China again through a messenger of Amogha, he declined two or three times. (The text reports verses with syllables inspired by the name of Amogha expressing the refusal and verses referring to the religious task of dPang lo tsā ba.)

39a He travelled to Sa skya and wrote commentaries on the *Me long*. According to the order of *chos rje bla ma Dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan*²⁵⁷ he made notes on the *Dus 'khor* and commentaries on the *mNgon pa*. After finishing his task as abbot of the [Bo dong] E monastery, he proceeded to dBus where he remained for sixteen months.

²⁵¹ Probably the *dPal sangs rgyas thod pa'i rgyud kyi rgyal po chen po'i rgya cher 'grel pa 'jigs pa med pa'i gzhung 'grel shes bya ba*, *Śribuddhakapālamahāntrarājāṅkābhayapaddhatināma* by Abhaya which, according to the Ōtani catalogue, was translated by dPang lo tsā ba; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 2526.

²⁵² A commentary on the *Sekkodeśa*. The Ōtani catalogue reports that dPang lo tsā ba translated the *dBang dor bstan pa'i brjed byang, Sekkodeśaṭippani* by Vijayendra; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 2104.

²⁵³ Probably the *rDo rje tshig gi snying po bsdus pa'i dka' 'grel, Vajrapādasārasaṅgrahapañjikā*, translated by Shong ston and revised by dPang lo tsā ba; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 2316.

²⁵⁴ Probably the *Ka la pa'i mdo 'grel ba slob ma phan pa, Śiṣyahitākālapasūtravṛtti*, by Ārya Rudrabhūti translated by dPang lo tsā ba and his nephew Byang chub rtse mo; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5884.

²⁵⁵ *sDeb byor gyi phreng ba'i bstod pa, Vṛttamālāstuti*, by Jñānaśrīmitra translated by dPang lo tsā ba; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5792.

²⁵⁶ Ma cig Lab sgron, who lived in the 11th and 12th century, was a disciple of Pha dam pa sangs rgyas and founded the gCod tradition; cf. e.g. Gyatso 1985: 320–341; Kollmar-Paulenz 1993.

²⁵⁷ A famous Sa skya pa scholar, author of the *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long*, who lived in the 14th century.

On the way to dBus he said: "May the texts increase the happiness of many monks." In Lhasa, bSam yas, Gung thang, sTag lung,²⁵⁸ Byang ra sgren,²⁵⁹ and gSang phu ne'u thog²⁶⁰ he taught many doctrines such as *Dus 'khor*, *dGongs rgyan*, *Phar [phyin]*, *Tshad [ma]*, *dBu ma*, *dBu ma rgyan*, *sGra*, *sNyan ngag*, *Zab mo'i mdo lnga* and most *dge bshes* of dBus listened to him. After completing his religious activity in gSang phu he said: "Were I to die, I would not regret it." Afterwards he returned to gTsang and stayed at sNar thang for a short while. There he taught *dGongs rgyan*, *sGra*, and *sNyan ngag* to *mkhan chen* Blo bzang and others. Then he went to Bo dong E and Sa skya and taught many doctrines. Afterwards he translated the *sByor drug rtsa 'bral ('grel)*²⁶¹ upon the request of *bla ma* Kun spangs pa and, going to rGyal mo ri (Shel dkar, added in small characters by the author himself), he blessed this place. Then, at the request of *bla ma* Ba ri ba brJid gzi seng ge, he composed a eulogy (*bstod pa*) and a commentary for the *Dus khor 'grel chen*.²⁶²

39b He wrote the *Tshogs gsum gsal ba*.²⁶³ Furthermore he translated commentaries on the science of debate (*rTsod rigs kyi 'grel bshad*), various kinds of *slob 'phan* (?), the *'Grel pa brtag pa*,²⁶⁴ and some methods of meditation. Wherever he stayed he meditated deeply and his practice was as follows: after practising yoga, he used to stay in deep meditation and murmur. Then he would get up, do the *gtor ma rim pa* ritual and then meditate on bDe mchog until he got the first hot tea. Then he usually used to teach, write and translate. At the time of the noontime meal he would meditate as before and during the seven tea-times he would recite for the dark red, the brownish, the yellowish-red, the yellow (referring to 'Jigs rje?).²⁶⁵ When he was in a good mood, he would recite a tea-offering prayer: "In ancient times the expert of the game of dice²⁶⁶ was not he called Śākya thub pa? In the middle time the experts of the

²⁵⁸ The main monastery of the sTag lung bka' brgyud pa, founded in 1180 by sTag lung thang pa bkra shis dpal and located to the north of Lhasa.

²⁵⁹ The main monastery of the bKa' gdams pa, founded in 1057 by 'Brom ston rgyal ba'i 'byung gnas and located to the north of Lhasa.

²⁶⁰ A monastery famous for its philosophical studies, located to the south of Lhasa, founded in 1073 by rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab.

²⁶¹ Possibly this is the commentary on Śūnyasrī's *Ṣaḍaṅgayoga* which Roerich reports as translated by dPang lo tsā ba; cf. Roerich 1988: 764.

²⁶² The *Vimalaprabhā*, the great commentary on the *Kālacakratāntra*, attributed to the mythical king of Śāmbhala; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 2064.

²⁶³ *Dag yig tshogs gsum gsal ba*, a grammatical treatise on Tibetan orthography; cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 2293.

²⁶⁴ Probably *'Brel pa brtag pa*, *Sambandhapariḷḷa* (Analysis of relationship), one of the seven texts by Dharmakīrti on valid cognition.

²⁶⁵ This obscure passage was translated with the help of the monks of Shel dkar who suggested this alternative.

²⁶⁶ The game of dice seems to indicate here the art of divination and knowledge, e.g. Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mnam rgyal wrote treatises on the *sho mo rtsis* in which the game of dice has such a meaning.

game of dice weren't they called *rgyan drug mchog gnyis*?²⁶⁷ In the present time the expert of the game of dice isn't he called *dge bshes rGya gur*?" *dGe bshes rGya gur* means that his white hairs were like a Chinese tent so he was called *bla ma rGya gur* and he called himself *dge bshes rGya gur*. When he was writing, translating and teaching he used to recite the prayer to sGrol ma and murmur many *mantra*. In the evening he used to recite for the *gtor ma rim pa dgu* and the *yi dam*. He took two or three nights to practise the *Shes [rab] snying [po]* (*Prajñāhṛdaya*). This is the general schedule of his activity.

40a At the periodic ceremonies he used to perform the ritual offering of food and drink to the *bla ma*, among whom the most important were [Blo gros] Seng [ge], gSer [khang pa], mChog [ldan pa], as well as to the Buddha, the chief of the doctrine. He said that he received blessings and grace by obtaining the nectar of the holy doctrine from numerous kind and holy *bla ma*. As prophesied, those who perform religious services considered him as the representative of the Buddha and he behaved accordingly. Thus he followed the holy doctrine and accomplished virtue by continuously perfecting his activities. From the age of seven up to sixty-seven he listened, taught and meditated on the holy doctrines. He wrote, translated and taught for the benefit of all living beings and for the benefit of the precious doctrine. Yet with humility he used to say: "I have been studying since I was seven until now and I am over sixty, but I do not know anything." At the age of sixty-seven, during the evening of the 13th day of the 3rd month in the year of the water-male-horse (1342 A.D.), he passed away and it is said that – in accordance with his dreams – he went to dGa' ldan (Tuṣita).

The second early abbot Lo chen Byang [chub] rtse [mo]

40b Verses of eulogy for Byang chub rtse mo.

Byang chub rtse mo²⁶⁸ was born in Cha gog khro of Zur rtso (tsho) in the year of the wood-female-hare (1315 A.D.). (According to the *Deb ther sngon po* the year of the water-female-hare corresponds to 1303 A.D.)²⁶⁹ His father was gZhon nu dpal bzang and his mother was Ye shes sman ne, a sister of

²⁶⁷ "The six ornaments and two excellences". The eight great Indian masters: Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Dignāga, Dharmakīrti, Guṇaprabha, Śākyaprabha; cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 545.

²⁶⁸ Cf. also *Deb ther sngon po* 921–923; Roerich 1988: 787–788.

²⁶⁹ The date of birth given by the *Deb ther sngon po* seems more correct. In fact it matches also with the date of death at the age of seventy-seven in the year of the iron-male-monkey given in both sources. It can be concluded that the date of birth given by the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* is based on a mistake. The date given by Roerich in the translation of the *Deb ther sngon po*, 1243 A.D., is mistaken by one *rab byung* and is not compatible with the fact that Byang chub rtse mo was the nephew of dPang lo tsā ba and that this latter was already active during Byang chub rtse mo's childhood.

dPang lo tsā ba. *Bla ma* Mi skyod pa, who had been invited, bestowed an empowerment (*dbang*) on him and gave him the name Chos skyong rtse mo. At the age of six or seven he met dPang lo tsā ba at bCad phu 'Jig med seng ge gling, after this latter had received the invitation from the Mongols. There he took the vows of *dge bsnyen* and received the name Byang chub rtse mo. Then he was ordained monk by *mkhan chen* Chos skyong dpal, a nephew of the Shong brothers.²⁷⁰ At the age of sixteen, in the year of the iron-male-horse (1330 A.D.), he went to Gung thang gnas po che to study *sNgon pa* (*mNgon pa*, *Abhidharma*), *Tshad ma* (*Pramāṇa*), etc. Then, when he proceeded to Sa skya, he repeated the *mNgon pa kun btus* (*Abhidharmasamuccaya*).²⁷¹ Afterwards he reached lDan pa thad. While he was explaining some elements of the *mNgon pa*,²⁷² a *bshes gnyen* in monk's robe was listening from afar. When the religious activity was over he went to see dPang lo tsā ba who recognized him and asked: "Are you the one who was teaching?" He answered affirmatively and [dPang lo tsā ba] added: "You are very expert in the holy doctrine." Afterwards dPang lo tsā ba was invited to Bo dong E. At the age of twenty-three [Byang chub rtse mo] was ordained *dge slong* by *mkhan po* Don yod rgyal mtshan, *las byed* dPal ldan blo gros brtan pa, *gsang ston* chos rje bSod nams rgyal mtshan, Grib tsod pa dad pa'i dge 'dun sDom brtson dam pa, etc.

41a Then dPang lo tsā ba passed away.

[Byang chub rtse mo] obtained many empowerments (*dbang*), precepts (*lung*), and advice (*man ngag*) from *bla ma* Dam pa [bSod nams rgyal mtsan] and Bu ston.²⁷³ He gave many teachings on the classes of the eighteen *bka' chen*. He bestowed empowerments (*dbang*) and explained the doctrine many times in Shangs rTsed gdong,²⁷⁴ 'U yug,²⁷⁵ Rong,²⁷⁶ and Nyang stod.²⁷⁷ Many people possessed by evil spirits and many dumb received great benefit from seeing his face, from his blessing, and from his (holy) spittle. He gave blessings beyond imagination, healing people suffering from eye-diseases, making deaf people hear, liberating from their sickness people suffering from diseases of the arms and

²⁷⁰ Shong ston rDo rje rgyal mtshan and his younger brother Shong Blo gros brtan pa; cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 918–919; Roerich 1988: 784–785.

²⁷¹ *Chos mngon pa kun las btus pa* by Asaṅga; cf. Ōtani cat. no. 5550.

²⁷² *mNgon pa'i nang gi tshig don khams dang | sa gang du gang zag gang la | dge mi dge lung ma stan gyi chos | sa bon dbang ldan mngon gyur du ldan pa'i tshul brtsi ba na.*

²⁷³ Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364 A.D.), the famous scholar abbot of the Sha lu monastery and author of the *Bu ston chos 'byung*.

²⁷⁴ The rTsed gdong monastery lies in the Shangs area north of gZhis ka rtse and north of the gTsang po. During the time of the Sa skya pa rule this area used to be one of the thirteen *khri skor*.

²⁷⁵ Locality to the east of Shangs.

²⁷⁶ The Rong (Rin spungs) area to the east of gZhis ka rtse. Here, in the 15th century, Rin spungs Don yod rdo rje established the main centre of political power in gTsang.

²⁷⁷ The upper basin of the Nyang river where rGyal rtse is located.

legs. He gave up completely all affairs of the outside world and in his interior spiritual existence he abandoned any clinging to one's own self. He performed magic to some small extent. His skill at mastering the mind and the *rlung* was extraordinary. Once, after going to Shel dkar, he ordered the great lord Chos kyi rin chen to build a monastery according to the prophecy of dPang lo tsā ba and blessed the place. He stayed a while at Chos lung byang rtse and led many converts to spiritual liberation. He was invited to dBus by Gong ma sNe gdong,²⁷⁸ who asked for many religious empowerments. The innumerable predictions and miracles he performed were accurately recorded. At the age of seventy-seven, on the 21st day of the first month in the year of the iron-male-monkey (1392 A.D.), he passed away in Chu mig²⁷⁹ in gTsang. At that time the people saw him going to all spiritual spheres (*zhing khams*). In order to know further details the biography should be consulted.

The third early abbot Lo chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan – a short biography

41b Grags pa rgyal mtshan²⁸⁰ was born at Phyag chung in bCad p[h]u Seng ge gling in La stod Zur tsho at an auspicious time in the year of the water-male-dragon (1352 A.D.) as the son of Chos skyong bsam 'grub and dPal chen 'bum. *Bla ma* rDo rje zla ba gave him the name rGyal mtshan rtse mo. During his youth he used to be absorbed in deep meditation (*ting nge 'dzin*) to compose his mind for perfect rest (*mnyam gzhaq*). He liked solitude, he had little attachment to anything, he was meek and had great compassion. He liked to make generous offerings and refrained from any childish vices. At the age of seven he was ordained by Byang chub rtse mo and received the name Grags pa rgyal mtshan. He proceeded to dPal [Bo dong] E where he studied the six *dka'* (*bka'*) *chen* for many years, while showing extreme respect to the great *paṇḍita* [Byang chub] rtse mo. At the age of twenty he took the vows of *dge slong* in the presence of many *dge slong* headed by *rgyal sras* 'Gro ba'i mgon po and *paṇ chen* Byang chub rtse mo. He promised to observe the 253 rules. He confessed over and over even the slightest sins. He thought of *rgyal sras rin po che* with wishful prayers and said: "It is important to endeavour after the thought of enlightenment, which is to be full of love for others more than for oneself."

42a At the time of *rgyal sras* Thogs med, dPal ldan rtse mo, *bla ma* Dam pa, gZung kyi dbang phyug dpal ba, and *lo tsā ba* bsTan 'dzin bsod rgyal, he followed the most famous scholars (*bshes gnyen*) to listen to the doctrine of the Buddha free from any defilement. He persisted with his reading, studying, teaching, debating and writing. He used to perform the yearly and monthly ritual offerings for

²⁷⁸ The ruler of Phag mo grub pa who used to reside in sNe gdong and thus was called Gong ma sNe gdong.

²⁷⁹ Locality lying to the west of gZhis ka rtse. During the time of the Sa skya pa rule Chu mig was one of the thirteen *khri skor*.

²⁸⁰ Cf. also *Deb ther sngon po* 923; Roerich 1988: 788.

holy *bla ma* such as on the 13th day (of each month) for dPang lo [tsā ba], on the 20th day for the *rgyal sras ba*, on the 21st day for Byang [chub] rtse [mo] and on the 25th day for *bla ma* Dam pa [bSod nams rgyal mtshan]. He took the vow of confession (*bshag sdom*) concerning the fourteen basic rules and the other eight additional rules. At the age of thirty he proceeded to the monastery of dPal [Bo dong] E and acted as abbot, succeeding the great translator (dPang lo tsā ba). He commented on and praised the *Tripitaka* and the four classes of *tantra*. He took care of the wide and profound ways of practising the doctrine such as the *sems bskyed* (awakening of the thought of enlightenment), *gdam[s] ngag* (advice), etc. He taught *snyan ngag* (poetry), *sdebs sbyor* (metrics), *ming gi mngon brjod* (*abhidānautaratantra*, explanation of terms), *tshig brgyan* (*rgyan*) (words used to emphasize), *zlos gar* (dramatic performance),²⁸¹ etc. This activity and the celebrations allowed the great monastery to grow. At the age of thirty-one he acted as abbot of Gyam and turned the wheel of the *dharma* to a great extent. Then he was appointed abbot of Sa skya brang mo che where he gave many religious teachings. The great translator Grags pa [rgyal mtshan] had in mind to build a monastery in Shel dkar because Byang chub rtse mo had previously instructed *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen [to do so].

42b Thus [Grags pa rgyal mtshan] was invited by *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen to become abbot. He agreed, and, at the age of thirty-four, during the summer religious festivities (*dbyar chos*) in the year of the wood-female-ox (1385 A.D.) the great monastery of Shel dkar was established. There he explained the doctrine to 750 monks. In short, every time groups of around 40 monks gathered to learn *Phar* [*phyin*] (*Prajñāpāramitā*), *Tshad* [*ma*] (*Pramāṇa*), etc. Several hundred monks who knew the *bKa' bzhi* and the *bKa' bcu* came forth. Not long afterwards, during the Shel dkar summer religious festivities (*dbyar chos*), he gave teachings on philosophy to the [monks of the] twelve colleges and the schools of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) such as mKhan tshang pa and gNas 'og pa, which were organized under *mkhan po* Legs shing ba. During the winter religious festivities (*dgun chos*) he (Grags pa rgyal mtshan) used to bestow empowerments (*dbang*), teach the *tantra*, and give advice to the monks participating in the *Shel dkar sgrub mchod* ceremony. He thereby led a multitude of fortunate people who were converted to spiritual liberation. The great flame of the doctrine was burning more brightly. At the age of forty-three, with the support of Khri rgyal bSod nams lde,²⁸² he established the monastery of Gung thang chos

²⁸¹ *mNgon brjod*, *snyan ngag*, *sdebs sbyor*, *zlos gar*, and *rtsis* are known as the five lesser sciences; see note 104.

²⁸² Khri rgyal bSod nams lde (1371–1404 A.D.) was an important king of Gung thang who ruled this kingdom prosperously and invited many scholars and saints such as Grags pa rgyal mtshan, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can, Red mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros; cf. the *Gung thang gdung rabs* (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 118–120). The granddaughter of Khri rgyal bSod nams lde, called 'A grol chos kyi sgron me, became a disciple of Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal. She was recognized as the emanation of rDo rje phag mo and as a reincarnation of *mkha' gro* Lakṣmīnkarā and started the famous line of female reincarnations who acted as the spiritual guides of the bSam sdings monastery close to the Yar 'brog mtsho; cf. the *Gung thang gdung rabs* (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 125).

sde²⁸³ in the year of the wood-male-dog (1394 A.D.). There he gave complete teachings on the *sūtra* and the *tantra* to those who had been converted. Then he explained the various doctrines one after the other. He made three commentaries on the *mNgon rtogs rgyan 'grel* (*Abhisamayālaṅkāraṭīkā*) and on the parts of the *bKa' chen* which had not yet been commented upon by his predecessors. Besides, he wrote a commentary on the *rNam 'grel* (*Pramāṇavārttika*), a summary of the *mNgon pa kun btus kyi mdo* (*Abhidharmasamuccaya*), a *bSam gzugs kyi zur bskol*, a commentary on the *mDzod* (*Abhidharmakośa*), a *Dus tshig kyi rnam bzhag*, a *'Dul ba'i las chog*, a commentary on the *mDo sde rgyan* (*Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*), a *Theg gsum bsal byed* (clarification of the three vehicles), a commentary on the *[b]rTag gnyis* (*Hevajratantra*).

43a Furthermore, he turned the wheel of the *dharmā* innumerable times according to the mind of every converted person.

All exterior and interior things
are the mere [illusion of] one's own clinging to things,
thus saying, there is no clinging to the self,
do not be attached to anything even for one single moment.

He knew all hidden things, for example on the way from Sa skya to Shel dkar he knew that some robbers were waiting for him on the 'Brung ('Brong) ngu la.²⁸⁴ He gave blessings and protection to demented and sick people. Just by looking at his face they were relieved from all suffering. In order to convert [people] by means of the profound way of the *skyed [rim]* (*utpattikrama*, process of emanation)²⁸⁵ and the *rdzogs [rim]* (*sampannakrama*, process of realization), he devoted himself to solitude so that the chair of the monastery of Sa skya grang mo che was handed over (to somebody else). This chair together with the teaching activity of the [Bo dong] E monastery was given to the *rJe btsun*.²⁸⁶ When he thought of also giving up Shel dkar, *si tu* [Chos kyi rin chen] insistently requested him: "Keep the chair of abbot till my death," and he agreed. He gave to the great lord the deep *gSang 'dus* and *Rim lnga'i rdzogs rim*. Then, in the year of the water-male-horse (1402 A.D.), *si tu* [Chos kyi

²⁸³ Gung thang chos sde, alias rDzong kha chos sde, alias mNga' ris chos sde, was founded by Grags pa rgyal mtshan with the support of the king of Gung thang Khri rgyal bSod nams lde. According to Ka: thog Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu, this monastery was founded in the iron-horse year (1390 A.D.) by Grags pa rgyal mtshan, who also acted as first abbot; cf. the *Gung thang gdung rabs* (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga* 121). Although later this monastery was transformed into dGe lugs pa, until the 1950s it had to pay a tribute of two monks (*chos khral*) to the Bo dong pa order (information from representatives of the Bo dong pa tradition).

²⁸⁴ A pass to the west of Sa skya.

²⁸⁵ Cf. e.g. Snellgrove 1987: 295.

²⁸⁶ *rJe btsun* is a generic honorific title for scholars and abbots. From the context it is clear that the *rje btsun* referred to in this case is 'Jigs bral chen po alias Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mnam rgyal; cf. the biography of the fourth early abbot, folio 44a–46b of this text.

rin chen] passed away with miraculous signs such as the "thought of enlightenment" dropping above (from the nose) (*gyen du 'babs*).²⁸⁷ Then 'Khon Kun dga' bkra shis and all the *bla ma* of the southern area were invited to Shel dkar (monastery) for the funeral and they performed a great religious ceremony. At that time the great virtue of the *si tu* was praised with beautiful poetic words and even this much can hardly be achieved in one single life.

43b For forty-nine days ceremonies were performed and many ritual offerings to the spiritual symbols (*rten*) were made, together with new prints of the '*Grel ba don gsal*, many *rtsha rtsha*,²⁸⁸ the consecration (*rab gnas*) of the texts of the doctrine written in gold characters (*gser 'bum*), etc. Afterwards, [still] in the year of the water-male-horse (1402 A.D.), he handed over the charge of the religious activities of the Shel dkar monastery and the mNga' ris monastery (Gung thang chos sde) to the *rje btsun* (the fourth abbot). Then, in the year of the water-female-sheep (1403 A.D.), he gave teachings on the doctrine of *thugs skyed* (awakening of the thought of enlightenment) to many living beings in dGe sdings²⁸⁹ where rNal 'byor dBang phyug held the religious seat (as head of the monastery). At that time a shower of flowers fell and 'Bir ba pa (Virūpā) and dPal ldan tog rtse pa were seen as visions. During the rituals for the previous *bla ma* their faces were also seen as a vision. Later they were seen transforming into the five classes of Buddhas. Then, whilst he was teaching *Lam 'bras*, *blo sbyong*, etc. in sMan sdings, he removed all hindrances (*gegs*) by his mere blessing and many male and female renunciates became followers. When he gave the empowerment on rDo rje dbyings (Vajradhātu),²⁹⁰ the earth shook six times. Then he made the consecration of the statue of the *Dus 'khor* at Khyung rtse and he taught the doctrine according to the minds of the converts in Shel dkar. When the great translator was in Shel dkar, *rje btsun* Red mda' ba²⁹¹ was residing there, too, and great work was accomplished teaching, debating and writing. The *chos rje* [Grags pa rgyal mtshan] did his last writing such as a ritual text for the '*Dul ba*. Wishing to meet *bla ma* rGyal mtshan 'od zer, he went to the entrance of his retreat, when asked about the next meeting and knowing the future, he said that they would not meet again.

44a On the way back, with *slob dpon* bSod rin assisting him, when he met somebody in places such as *lDog gcod*, he would say, "We will not meet again", and he often foretold the future, such as when he said, "People without grain and flour will come to borrow some." Then he proceeded to Gyam (in Zur tsho). In the evening of the 8th day of the 7th month in the year of wood-female-bird (1405 A.D.) he

²⁸⁷ Some great saints when they pass away produce some miraculous signs. One of these signs can be a particular white fluid coming from the nose (*Byang sems dkar po gyen du 'babs*).

²⁸⁸ Miniature figures moulded in clay and often placed as offering inside *stūpa* and statues.

²⁸⁹ Locality in the Shab area between gZhis ka rtse and lHa rtse.

²⁹⁰ Empowerment relating to the *maṇḍala* of the Vajra-sphere in the *Yogatantra*; cf. Snellgrove 1987: 241–242.

²⁹¹ See note 212.

made the *gtor ma* for the evocation of *Kye rdor*, as well as the religious music, the *maṇḍala*, the prostrations, and the ritual offerings. After this had been completed and after showing many miracles and miraculous signs in order to increase the devotion of the converts, he passed away at the age of fifty-four. A great funeral ceremony was performed for the great lord with his outer spiritual symbol and the inner spiritual symbol and so on. The detailed events can be read in the biography written by 'Jigs bral.

The fourth early abbot *rje btsun 'Jigs bral chen po* (Bo dong paṇ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal)²⁹² – the miraculous story

Innumerable lives before, 'Jigs bral chen po was born into a beggar family at the time when De bzhin gshegs pa (Tathāgata) sTobs kyi rgyal po came into the world.

44b At that time he changed into food the money obtained by selling himself and offered it to the Buddha. Thus the thought of enlightenment was first born in him.

How he acquired merits during an ocean of ages (*bskal pa*), improved the doctrines, and led many people to spiritual liberation, can hardly be mentioned. So only the manner in which he made the doctrine of the Buddha grow will be presented here. He became Nyan thos 'Od srungs chen po (the early disciple Mahākāśyapa) and after the Buddha had passed away, he took care of the doctrine and the monastic community. Then he was born as 'Jigs bral Zla ba grags pa (Candrakīrti)²⁹³ and made a clear approach to the *dBu ma* (*Madhyamaka*). Subsequently becoming the translator Vairocana,²⁹⁴ he translated many *sūtra* and *tantra* and made the great flame of the doctrine burn in this land of Tibet. Eventually, for those who practised the *sūtra* and the *tantra* incorrectly and in order to let the fortunate people follow, he was born as the great Bo dong pa. His lineage (*gdung*) was as follows: a son came forth from [the lineage of] Zhwa ma [lo] tsā ba Seng ge rgyal mtshan, a reincarnation of Srong btsan sgam po, who was an emanation of Thugs rje chen po (Avalokiteśvara), and [of] the Zhwa ma wisdom *ḍākini*, a reincarnation of Kong jo, who was an emanation of sGrol ma.²⁹⁵ From this son descended dGe

²⁹² This great scholar (1375–1451 A.D.), founder of the Bo dong pa tradition and author of over 130 volumes covering a great number of subjects, is mentioned in this text as *rje btsun 'Jigs bral chen po*. He is usually known under other names such as 'Jigs med grags pa (cf. also *Deb ther sngon po* 923; Roerich 1988: 788), Bo dong paṇ chen, Bo dong paṇ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal, Chos kyi rgyal mtshan.

²⁹³ Indian scholar who founded the tradition of *dBu ma thal 'gyur ba* (Prāsaṅgika) in the 7th century.

²⁹⁴ Famous Tibetan translator living in the 8th century.

²⁹⁵ Zha ma Seng ge rgyal mtshan was a translator who lived in the 11th and 12th century and translated Dignāga's *Tshad ma kun las btus pa* (*Pramāṇasamuccaya*). Ma gcig Zha ma (1062–1149 A.D.) was his younger sister, famous for her tantric practice. Both were born in Pha drug and are mentioned in the chapter concerning the *Lam*

'dun rin chen, who obtained the doctrines for the *skyed rdzogs* (process of emanation and realization). His son was sNgags 'chang bsod nams mgon po. His son Chos rgyal mgon. His son Chos ldan. The second of his three sons was sTon pa chos rgyal mtshan.

45a He and *jo lcam* Byang chub chos sgron, the sister of the great translator Grags pa [rgyal mtshan], gave birth to a son (Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal). He was born on an autumn night with a full moon, just as the moon was rising, in the year of the hare (1375 A.D.). His birthplace was dByi gu, close to rGyal gyi Śrī ri, where many *dpa' bo* and *mkha' 'gro* used to assemble. Immediately after his birth he said:

"There is nothing the mind confides in;

for those foolish people who have nothing to hold on I feel compassion."

At the age of seven when he was dwelling on a lawn at Gyam, a white man with some extraordinary marks brought some rice and a volume of scriptures and said: "Boy! Eat this food, and this volume is your share of inheritance." Then after reading it once he left. [Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal] was ordained monk by *rje btsun* Grags pa [rgyal mtshan] and he received the name Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan. He studied the sciences (*rig gnas*) and became a great expert in poetry. He composed a eulogy (*bstod brgya*) for 'Jam dbyangs (Mañjuḥṣa) and wrote a story about *gZhon nu nor bzang* and *sTag mo lus sbyin*. Just to show his skill in studying, the following examples can be given: in one morning he managed to learn by heart the *mNgon pa mdzod* (*Abhidharmakośa*), he managed to learn by heart in one day the *mNgon pa kun btus* (*Abhidharmasamuccaya*) learning the pages five by five by reading them three times. In Shel dkar he studied very extensively doctrines such as *rNam 'grel* and *Phar phyin* and their commentaries. Then he proceeded to Sa skya where he participated in debates concerning as many volumes of scriptures as the years of his age. Infinite sadness for the state of *samsāra* (*'khor ba*) rose in his mind:

"Having seen the worldly manifestations

and thinking about them all, there is reason to be tired.

There is nothing the mind confides in,

for the foolish without hold I feel compassion."

45b He used to say this again and again. Then whilst staying in the Shel dkar monastery, he studied and mastered the five sciences (*gnas lnga rig pa*). He received the final ordination among innumerable monks from the abbot *paṅ chen* Grags pa [rgyal mtshan] and the great scholar Re zla pa (Red mda' ba). Then he usually used to recite *mantra* of many gods such as 'Jam dpal dbyangs, dByangs can ma (Sarasvatī), Phag dkar, etc. and he was blessed by them. Since he used to recite in particular the

'bras tradition; cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 271ff.; Roerich 1988: 219ff. Also the biography of Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal (Biography of Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal 16) reports that the latter's father stemmed from the lineage of Zha ma.

dByangs can ma (prayer) without interruption he was called *dByangs can dga'*. The *Ratna'i spyi lung*²⁹⁶ reports: "The reincarnation of Vairocana, called *Bo dong pa*, will come." Accordingly, he was the reincarnation of Vairocana; so just by reading the doctrine he acquired unshakeable confidence. At the age of twenty-three he went to *rTse (rtsed) thang*²⁹⁷ and, since his fame had spread very widely, he was welcomed in an extraordinary way by all the scholars (*bshes gnyen*) who showed him great respect and praised him in a most perfect way. Then, amongst thousands of scholars and seated on the throne of the fearless lion, he explained the eighteen great texts of the doctrine in a way that was fitting to their minds. Numerous fortunate living beings followed him. At *bSang pu (gSang phu)*²⁹⁸ his brilliance defeated *Rigs dmar rgan po* (in debating). Amongst thousands of scholars, he debated on the thirteen great texts of the doctrine. Paying him great respect, they said that he exclusively followed 'Jam dpal dbyangs. Being praised as [belonging to] the excellent lineage of *Blo gros brtan pa (dPang lo tsā ba)*, "the eye of the world",²⁹⁹ he became very devoted. Then he was appointed Master of the Doctrine of *dPal [Bo dong] E by paṅ chen Grags pa [rgyal mtshan]*.

46a During three years he gave many teachings on the *sūtra* and the *tantra* and wrote commentaries on the doctrines such as the *Phar phyin*, the *Tshad ma*, *Rig gter* and made some general summaries (*stong 'thun*). Then he was invited by *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and *Khri rgyal bSod nams lde* (king of *Gung thang*) to the monasteries of *Shel dkar* and *mNga' ris (Gung thang)*. In *Shel dkar* during one year about one hundred *bka' bcu pa* (scholars expert in the ten great texts of the doctrine) and innumerable *bka' bzhi pa* were trained. In *Shel dkar*, [*Bo dong Phyogs las nram rgyal*] debated with the great scholar *g.Yag phrug Sangs rgyas dpal* in the middle of thousands of scholars. The opponent [was defeated and] prostrated with his canopy (*gdugs kyi phyag phul*). The face of *Mi [g.]yo pa*³⁰⁰ appeared in vision and it was said: "His god turned his back, not even one volume was of help."³⁰¹ In the same way [*Bo dong*

²⁹⁶ See note 147.

²⁹⁷ The *rTse (rtsed) thang* monastery, founded by *Phag mo gru pa Byang chub rgyal mtshan* in 1351 in *Yar lung*.

²⁹⁸ The *gSang phu ne'u thog* monastery close to *Lhasa*, founded by *rNgog legs pa'i shes rab*, a disciple of *Atiśa*, in 1073. Before the foundation of the great *dGe lugs pa* monasteries, this was the most famous of the six monasteries specializing in philosophical studies (the other five were *Ra ba stod*, *sKyor mo lung*, *Tshal Gung thang*, *dGa' gdong*, *Zul phu*).

²⁹⁹ Metaphorical term for "translator".

³⁰⁰ Protector (*mgon po*) mentioned more extensively in the context of this same debate reported by the biography of *Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las nram rgyal* (Biography of *Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las nram rgyal* 172–174).

³⁰¹ This passage is unclear in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*. This debate is also mentioned in the biography of the scholar and this passage is reported as follows: *pod gcig ma mgo ma thon | gdong gang la rtsod pa pham | lha gcig ma ngo log*. Cf. *ibid.* 173–174.

Phyogs las nam rgyal] debated with mKhas grub dGe legs³⁰² in Ngam ring and afterwards he was invited to the palace of bKra shis rtse by the great lord rNam rgyal grags bzang (the Byang *bdag*). Later he defeated in debate great scholars such as Rong ston, who after this event had great faith in him. Furthermore, when he bestowed the empowerment on gShin rje gshed (Yamāntaka), gShin rje appeared in vision. When performing the *drug cu pa* at Bo dong he appeared with horns of 'Jigs byed (Vajrabhairava) on his head and teeth of 'Jigs byed in his mouth. During the religious fasting (*smjung gnas*) he was seen in vision as sPyan ras gzigs (Avalokiteśvara). At Logs lo chos lung,³⁰³ when *bla ma* Legs pa bzang po received the *Phyag chen (Mahāmudrā)*, a youth adorned with the jewels and the silken clothing of 'Jam dpal dbyangs (Mañjuḥṣa) appeared as a vision on the throne of the Master.

46b He used to convert in different ways according to each fortunate follower, being just like rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara). In Shel dkar, as he bestowed the empowerment on the *ta' si tu* during the winter, in a vase green sprouts grew blossoming with blue flowers. When he fell sick in Sa skya ri bo che he went to the roof of the house and with great devotion he gave instructions to perform immediately a ritual offering. He gave the nectar of the gods (*Iha'i bdud rtsi*) to *rje* Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan (the fifth abbot), then 'Phags pa Byams pa and innumerable gods with their retinue surrounded him to attend to his sickness and he recovered rapidly. In dGe sdings he obtained the *Lam 'bras* from rNal 'byor dBang phyug and at that time many extraordinary and miraculous events took place. The relevant details are recorded in his detailed biography (*rnam thar chen mo*).³⁰⁴

The fifth early abbot Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan

IHa mo 'dze ma, the sister of 'Jigs bral chen po, gave birth to two sons, Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan and rGyal ba'i dbang po. The elder occupied the chair of abbot [of Shel dkar]. He studied the doctrine with 'Jigs bral chen po. He studied philosophy in gSang phu and obtained the various stages (*rim pa*) of the *tantra* from the *rje btsun*. Then *rje* Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan succeeded 'Jigs bral chen po and acted as abbot of Shel dkar and Glang skor.³⁰⁵

³⁰² This famous debate is reported *ibid.* 192. mKhas grub rje dGe legs dpal bzang po (1385–1438 A.D.) was a main disciple of Tsong kha pa, later recognized as the First Pañchen Lama.

³⁰³ Locality to the east of Shel dkar.

³⁰⁴ This detailed biography was written by a disciple of the scholar called Amoghasiddhi alias dKon mchog (or 'Jigs med) dbang in 1453 A.D., and it is commonly known as *rNam thar ngo mtshar dga' ston* (cf. *ibid.* 414–415).

³⁰⁵ The monastery of Glang skor, a main monastery in the area of Ding ri. This locality is famous for being linked to the name of Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, who lived and operated there in the 11th and 12th century.

47a Following the example of his predecessors, he preached widely the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. After taking care of the *rje btsun* during his sickness, he had a vision of his *bla ma* as *mgon po* Mi pham, *rje btsun* sGrol ma as beautiful turquoise girl, and sPyan ras gzigs as white man with a crystal rosary. He performed great deeds for the doctrine such as teaching, debating and writing. In particular he wrote a biography of the *rje btsun* called Ngag dbang ma.³⁰⁶ He was short-lived and after he had passed away, his bones generated many images of gods and many *ring srel*.

The sixth early abbot *rje btsun* rGyal ba dbang po

Verses of eulogy.

After the death of his paternal uncle (*khu bo*),³⁰⁷ rGyal ba dbang po took over the chair of abbot in the monasteries of Shel dkar and Glang skor. During the summer religious festivities (*dbyar chos*) and the winter religious festivities (*dgun chos*) he preached in a perfect way the teachings of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* and thereby numerous learned scholars (*dge bshes*) came forth. Since the *si tu* lHa btsan skyabs ma had great faith in him, the dGa' ldan monastery³⁰⁸ was offered to him as a site for his teaching activity. When the abbot wrapped with his monk's robe a thunderbolt which had struck the top of Shel dkar, the *si tu* and his family, some disciples, and some supporters were astonished.

He went to the pure land (passed away) according to the prophecies of the *rje btsun* [Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal].

The seventh early abbot Blo gros rgyal mtshan

47b Blo gros rgyal mtshan was the son of Blo gros dpal ldan, a paternal uncle of 'Jigs bral chen po (Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal). During his youth he studied intensively the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. Once 'Jigs bral asked him: "Since my other nephews have passed away, would you like to become the abbot of Shel dkar?" He answered: "You didn't assign me this task when I was young, now being very old I will not be able to do this." ['Jigs bral replied]: "You will have a long life, this is why I left you for the later time." Yet he persisted: "I will not do this." The *rje btsun* ['Jigs bral]

³⁰⁶ A concise biography which was also used for the compilation of the detailed biography (*rNam thar ngo mtshar dga' ston*).

³⁰⁷ According to the above-mentioned biography of Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan, it seems that rGyal ba dbang po was the younger brother and not the nephew of the former abbot.

³⁰⁸ (Note by the Tibetan author:) This dGa' ldan monastery whose head was Legs shing pa, in early times used to belong to the Sa skya pa tradition, later, for a short while, it was transformed into Bo dong pa.

said: "Blo ldan! Take my vase of urine and with its content wash the feet of Blo gros rgyal mtshan. Two wheels will appear on his soles." Then Blo gros rgyal mtshan looked at his feet and there was a wheel on each sole. Thus, thinking that 'Jigs bral was omniscient, he agreed to act as abbot of the monasteries of Bo dong, Shel dkar, Glang skor, Gyam, mNga' ris [Gung thang]. When *rje btsun* ['Jigs bral] passed away, he made a gold statue of the Buddha in human dimensions and with an excellent throne back.

48a Furthermore he performed a great funeral and took care of the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* in those monasteries just like the *rje btsun* ['Jigs bral]. Then he acted as *bla ma* for the lHo *bdag*, for the Byang *bdag*, for [the king of] mNga' ris [Gung thang], and for Seng rtse ba. The good deeds for both [the religious and the civil] laws increased greatly. According to the *sūtra*: "In the forest of numerous [teachings] to be listened to is the blissful place for the old men", he said that getting old, the time for seeking solitude had come. Then he appointed 'Jam dbyangs don yod mam rgyal as abbot of the monasteries of Bo dong, Shel dkar, and Glang skor and went to Chos sdings to meditate. After seeing the *chos skyong* and the gods of gSang ba 'dus pa (Guhyasamāja), he promised to follow their orders. Afterwards he handed over the chairs of abbot of the monasteries of mNga' ris [Gung thang], Chos sdings,³⁰⁹ and Gyam to 'Jam dbyangs don yod mam rgyal. Once when he went to see a holy lake [for prophetic visions] he saw on the way the cave of 'O skod and there he remained several months to meditate. During this time he had the vision of the god of gTsug tor mam rgyal. With the support of the lord sGrol ma skyabs³¹⁰ he established the Chos 'khor phug monastery for [the practice of] the *tantra* where fifty monks of sincere faith could assemble. He went to the dGa' ldan monastery and built 'Brang rgyas bSam gtan gling where about twenty monks used to meditate.

48b He organized all that was needed to celebrate the anniversaries of the *rje btsun* [Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal]. In those [monasteries] he turned the wheel of the doctrine to a great extent.

(Verses referring to the fact that a goddess subdued the demon of death and when Blo gros rgyal mtshan had completed his worldly task he went to another spiritual sphere [*zhing khams*] for other followers.)

In the year of the earth-sheep (1499 A.D.) in the third month at the time of the new moon he passed away at the age of seventy-eight with miraculous signs such as a shower of flowers. These miraculous signs are mentioned in detail in the praise [*b]sTod pa 'dul ba rgya mtsho ma*. The learned report a story concerning how the greatest statue of Thub chen (Buddha) was set up in the Shel dkar monastery which,

³⁰⁹ The monastery of dPal mo chos sdings, founded by Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal in the area of sPo rong which lies between Shel dkar and Gung thang (close to the Pad khud mtsho).

³¹⁰ See note 198.

however, is not mentioned in his general biography. When he was residing in dGa' ldan 'brang rgyas he used to keep a small box for holding some gold which had been offered to him by the lHo *bdag*. Once some robbers entered the *bla brang*³¹¹ at night and tried to steal it. One attendant threw this box into the privy and ran away. It is said that [the robbers] did not find any gold and killed the scholar (*bshes gnyen*). From his neck flowed milk (instead of blood). The attendant went to 'O skod phug and told this to the great abbot 'Jam dbyangs don yod mam rgyal. Then they went to see what had happened to the gold. They managed to find all of it.

49a Later 'Jam dbyangs don yod mam rgyal used this gold and some copper to make the statue of Buddha called Thub chen 'dzam gling 'od 'bar and the statue of rNam rgyal ma (Tārā) in Shel dkar. After building a *byang chub mchod rten (bodhistūpa)* in Chos sdings, in Shel dkar the lord Nam mkha' tshé dbang (son of lHa btsan skyabs ma) built a second additional floor and adorned it with beautiful paintings. The great statue of Thub chen 'dzam gling 'od 'bar was placed there. The statue of the great protector of religion (bKra shis 'od 'bar?) which had been brought there from Bo dong E by 'Jigs bral chen po was placed there, too. All these (statues) received a perfect consecration.

The eighth early abbot 'Jam dbyangs don yod rnam rgyal

'Jam dbyangs don yod mam rgyal was born as son of Drung chen rgya gar, the elder brother of the great *bshes gnyen* (the seventh abbot). After taking his vows, he studied philosophy with *kun mkhyen* Nam bsod and listened to the *tantra* classes of his uncle, the great *bshes gnyen*. He acted as abbot of the monasteries of Bo dong, Shel dkar, and mNga' ris (Gung thang). As mentioned above he made the great statue of Buddha (Thub chen) of Shel dkar as spiritual symbol (*nang rten*) of Blo gros rgyal mtshan (the former abbot). He made many spiritual symbols of body, speech, and mind (*sku gsung thugs rten*) such as the golden top of the *ye shes mchod rten (stūpa)* of Chos sdings and many *thang kha* of the four classes of *tantra*.

49b He did many virtuous deeds, such as taking care of the funerals [of his predecessor], respecting and supporting the monastic community and offering alms to all living beings. According to the order of his main teacher (*riśa ba'i bla ma*), Ma ti dhra dza, he spread the tradition of teaching the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. In particular, he gave excellent empowerments (*dbang*), teachings (*'khrīd*), and practices (*nyams len*) concerning the general *tantra* and the *sbas snying* (hidden essence?) such as the *Dus 'khor*, the *gSang 'dus*, and the *Lam 'bras*. He composed also many excellent texts about them. In Chos sdings his *yi dam*, the goddesses Phag dkar and dByangs can ma, transmitted to him the scriptures by divine

³¹¹ Usually in a monastery this term indicates the residence of a *bla ma* or an abbot.

inspiration, and thus his wisdom developed greatly and he became very learned. For this reason he was called *yogi of Dus 'khor*, Don yod mam par rgyal ba'i lha, and he obtained great devotion from his fortunate disciples. [Earlier] when the monks of Bo dong E requested *rgyal sras* Thogs med bzang po dpal to become abbot, he had replied: "I will not manage to do this, but I give you the prophecy that there will be seven people of a good lineage who will be able to bring great benefit to your monastery." Then the great *rje btsun* dPang lo [tsā ba] was invited to become abbot. From him up to 'Jam dbyangs don yod mam rgyal (the abbots) were called the lineage of the seven 'Jam dbyangs. When dPang lo tsā ba was abbot of [Bo dong] E, he resided in Blo sde sgang.

50a At that time [dPang lo tsā ba] was warmly welcomed with processions by the Bo dong pa people. He happily said: "My lineage will greatly benefit your monastery. In particular a person named 'Jam dbyangs will come [to become abbot]." According to this prophecy all the disciples, both of good and of lesser intellectual capacities, saw in the face of 'Jam dbyangs don yod mam rgyal the sword of wisdom on his right cheek, the scriptures on the left. The colour of his face looked slightly more blue than the rest of his body and had a mole which resembled a drawing. Further details are reported in his detailed biography.

The ninth early abbot Nam mkha'i rdo rje

Nam mkha'i rdo rje, an incarnation of sPyan ras gzigs, was born as son of *drung chen* Blo gros rgyal po, who was a nephew of 'Jigs bral chen po. When he was in his mother's womb there were many miraculous signs. During his childhood he showed great compassion and like dPang lo [tsā ba] refrained from childish behaviour. Thus he was known as a reincarnation of dPang lo [tsā ba]. After being ordained he studied philosophy with *kun mkhyen* Sangs rgyas 'phel. He listened in a complete way to the *tantra* from Don yod mam rgyal (the eighth abbot), *pan chen* Sangs rgyas seng ge, his maternal uncle 'Jam dbyangs grags pa, and Byang sems bsod nams dpal.

50b He became thereby very expert in the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. Afterwards, when he was residing at the *sgrub sde* bSam gtan gling of Chos sdings, the ruler of the southern territories, together with the *bla ma*, the disciples, the colleges, and the people of the monastic estates invited him and asked him to become the abbot of Shel dkar. He agreed. When he proceeded to the throne a shower of flowers fell. His spirit was pure and he was satisfied with the doctrine and wealth, the needs of the monastic community and of the living beings in general. At the monasteries of Shel dkar, Bo dong, and mNga' ris (Gung thang) he turned the wheel of the doctrine to a great extent. While he was bestowing the *Dus 'khor* empowerments in Shel dkar and Bo dong, a shower of flowers fell. While he was bestowing the empowerment and giving teachings on the four classes of *tantra* in the *dge 'dun gyi kun*

dga' rwa ba (*ārāma*, park used for debates) of the Shel dkar monastery, an agreeable scent spread all over the place. He was always endowed with extraordinary moral purity. If he was reported that on the occasion of disputes regarding the monastic estates some official had taken something, he used to say that they could not receive even one piece of livestock which had not been given by the people [spontaneously]. If he heard that some brutal people had killed and robbed somebody he was moved to tears without control. It is said that the tradition of assembling and classifying the twenty-one colleges³¹² goes back to the times of the great lord Nam mkha' tshe dbang bkra shis and the religious teacher Nam mkha' rdo rje.

51a During the religious festivities a great number of monks used to assemble in Shel dkar and had to set up many *maṇḍala* of various colours. These were realized between the eastern wall and one line of pillars of the main assembly hall. [Nam mkha'i rdo rje] had the mural painting of the assembly hall made in a perfect way. Then he consecrated them and prayed to a great extent for the growth of the doctrine of the Buddha.

The concise story on how the tradition of holding winter and summer religious festivities, which had been established by *rje btsun* Grags pa rgyal mtshan, developed at the time of sPyan ras gzigs dbang phyug nam mkha' rdo rje is as follows: The summer religious festivities of Shel dkar started on the 10th day of the sixth month. Before that date, the great religious teacher, together with four other abbots [of colleges], *mkhan po* Legs shing pa, Ze phug mkhan tshang pa, bShad skya mkhan po, Khams pa mkhan chen pa, and some secretaries [of the monastery] collected what was required from the lower estates of the monastery such as Gru bzhi pa and from the middle estates such as Gram mtsho. The preparations lasted up to the 8th day. At the 10th day all colleges were assembled, and the *Yum* had to be read for three nights as general religious prayer service (*spyi rim*) for the lHo *khri skor* and its rulers. Then there were numerous teachings, debates, discussions, and prayers regarding philosophy, foremost on the four great texts (*bKa' chen bzhi*). Many different texts written by *bla ma* of the Sa skya pa, Bo dong pa, and dGe lugs pa traditions were read as well and, according to the support of the patrons, religious services and prayers were performed for them.

51b During the summer religious festivities fifteen or twenty clever monks repeated the *Byams chos sde lnga*,³¹³ and they were taken care of by the rTse pa *sku gnyer* and *Byams chos gnyer pa*. The monks belonging to the colleges and those coming from outside were maintained according to the traditional custom and they carried out excellent religious practices such as the debates. Those who acted as officials (*gzhung las pa*), such as the *sbyor bkod bka' chen*, promoted a growth in the philosophical

³¹² The "twenty-one colleges" are the traditional definition of the Sa skya pa, Bo dong pa, and dGe lugs pa colleges constituting the Shel dkar monastery before the transformation into pure dGe lugs pa in 1643. Cf. folio 55a.

³¹³ The five texts inspired by Maitreya to Asaṅga; cf. note 230.

doctrine comparable to that of Ngam ring [monastery].³¹⁴ The winter religious festivities were as follows: the abbot, the teachers, and the monk officials collected the income from the upper monastery estates of Ding ri and until the 8th day of the 12th month made some preparations like those for the summer festivities. At the 10th day all the colleges assembled and from the 11th day for three nights they read the 'Bum³¹⁵ for the lord and the subjects of the southern area. At the 14th day [they] received from the *drung las* (monk official) all that was required for the ceremony such as *gtor [ma]*, *phye [ma]*, ritual objects, etc. At the 15th day the various colours and lines of the *mandala* were made and from the 16th day up to the 29th day the ceremonies, each with at least the set number of celebrating monks, were celebrated [in the various colleges]. The rituals of the seven Sa skya pa colleges were: the *sDom 'byung* in the college of sMan khab khang gsar bde skyid; the *Kye rdor mtshon cha can* in the college of Logs lo chos lung; the *Bla med snying rgyan* in the college of Ze phug mkhan tshang pa; the *bDe mchog rtsa ba* in the college of Pha drug nyo phu grog mkhar;

52a the *rDo rje gzhon nu* in the college of Kha rta kham pa; the *Phyag na rdo rje 'khor chen* in the college of Pha drug sgye sdings lho ma; the *sMan bla* in the college of mTsho sgo snyan rtse.

The rituals of the seven dGe lugs pa colleges were: the *gSang 'dus tshig bcad ma* in the college of rGyal nor dkar po; the *bDag med lha mo bco lnga* in the college of gSer gling; the *gShed dmar lha lnga pa* in the college of sPo; the *gShed dmar lha bcu gsum ma* and *gTsug dgu ma* in the college of gNas 'og – this college before used to belong to the Sa skya pa sect, later an official (*zhal ngo*) of *sde pa* gNas 'og pa who had been a monk in Gangs can transformed it into a dGe lugs pa college; the *Dam tshig gsum bkod* in the college of Kun 'dzoms; the *gShin rje dgra nag* in the college of Bu brdzi; the *Sangs rgyas thod pa* in the college of Shar pa. Among the twenty-one colleges, the above-mentioned seven dGe lugs pa colleges are reported in the ritual documents (*cho ga'i tho yig*). In the *dGa' ldan chos 'byung bai ser* (*Vaidūrya ser po*), gZe mkhar is mentioned as one of the seven dGe lugs pa colleges.³¹⁶ This might refer to the fact that when Shel dkar was transformed into a dGe lugs pa monastery there were already thirty monks of gZe mkhar.

The rituals of the seven Bo dong pa colleges: the *bDe mchog lus dkyil* in the college of lHa gdong; the *rDo rje gdan bzhi* in the college of Byang ma; the *rDor dbyings* in the college of dGa' ldan pa; the *rNam snang mngon byang* in [the college of] sGrub sgo ba; the *Dus 'khor* in the college of Chos 'khor phug pa of 'O skod; the *rNam 'joms* in the college of sKyi phug pa; the *Kun rig rnams gtong* in the college of sGo mo chos sdings; the *gDong drug* and *gSang 'dus* in the college of Lung bzang;

³¹⁴ The monastery of Ngam ring chos sde was founded by the great scholar Kun mkhyen shes rab rgyal mtshan of the Jo nang pa tradition and his disciple Jo nang Phyogs las rnam rgyal; cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 911; Roerich 1988: 778. Ngam ring was also famous as the seat of the Byang *bdag*.

³¹⁵ Volume containing the *Prajñāpāramitāsūtra* made up of 100,000 *śloka*; cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 1971.

³¹⁶ Cf. *Vaidūrya ser po* 401–402.

52b the *rDo rje 'jigs byed* in the college of rNam sgo (gNam sgo); the *rNam snang sngo ljang* in the college of Gram stod grang bsam pa; the *mKha' 'gro rgya mtsho* in the college of Gru shar. In the *Tshad ma (Pramāṇa)* college of Bra 'or everyone who had not been sent (somewhere else) attended the general assembly. The Mañjuśrī college of Brag 'og had to take care of the storeroom work and did not need to celebrate the *maṇḍala* of the ceremony. At the end of those religious festivities during the three days of the 28th, 29th, and new moon, many monks, mainly the monks of the tantric colleges, performed the religious dances of the *gar 'chams* and the *'bag 'chams*. Besides, under the lead of two elders (*rgan rgon*), many civil people dressed up like the present-day lay officials and wearing furthermore a round yellow hat (*zhwa theb*) and a quiver (*bse dong*) fastened (to their waist) performed the *'chams*, dancing and singing. At the 29th day the monks of the tantric colleges performed the *gtor rgyag* ceremony, and the colleges read the scriptures expelling the evil (*rgyab chos zlog pa*). Meanwhile *sngag pa* of the southern area threw out the *gtor ma (zlos gtor)* pronouncing the relevant spells. Such a growth of the tantric doctrine took place during the time of the religious teacher Nam mkha' rdo rje. The story of the summer and winter religious festivities is recorded in a document belonging to Grong dkar rgya dpon. In such a way Nam mkha' rdo rje promoted the development of the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* in Shel dkar. He also set up a temple called bDe chen rab rgyas at Chos sdings where he had the mural paintings of more than five hundred *maṇḍala* made. On the wall of the porch, paintings representing the biography of the *rje btsun* [Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal?] were made, too. When he consecrated them a shower of flowers fell. In despair for the disputes between [La stod] lHo and [La stod] Byang, he left for Bo dong and Chos sdings where he succeeded as abbot respectively to *rje Nam* [mkha'] rin [chen]³¹⁷ and *rje Nam* [mkha'] bkra [shis].

53a He came back to Shel dkar in order to discuss the appointment of the abbot on the seat which had remained vacant. At that time, struck by the defilement (*grib*) of the conflicts, he suddenly passed away at the age of fifty-five in the year of the ox at the 8th day of the second (*khra*) month. Before opening the door of the place where the body lay, many rainbows appeared. Many miraculous images appeared, such as a statue on a throne of five-coloured *ring srel* endowed with the three syllables *om āḥ huṃ*.

The tenth early abbot *rje Nam mkha' rin chen*

Nam mkha' rin chen was born at Zur tsho. He entered the Buddhist religious order and studied the scriptures of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* in a complete way. Thus he became very learned and took over the

³¹⁷ The tenth abbot of Shel dkar.

seat of abbot of Bo dong, 'O skod chos 'khor phug, and Glang skor. After the religious teacher Nam mkha' rdo rje had passed away, he was invited by the lHo *bdag* and the officials to take over the seat of abbot in Shel dkar. Like his predecessors he promoted the growth of the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*.

The eleventh early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' dkon mchog

53b Nam mkha' dkon mchog took over the throne of Shel dkar after *rje* Nam mkha' rin chen. He promoted the growth of the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*.

The twelfth early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' 'od zer

Nam mkha' 'od zer was known as the incarnation of bShod pu dPal seng ge.³¹⁸ He was born as the son of 'Brog yar ba brgya dpon descending from the Mi nyag lDong clan.³¹⁹ During his youth, after being ordained, he studied the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* in many monasteries such as Bye mkhar. He became very learned and took over the seat of abbot of Shel dkar after *rje* Nam mkha' rin chen (*rje* Nam mkha' dkon mchog?). He acted in a way which was not inferior to that of his predecessors. Wishing to set up a retreat, he built the sGam mchog monastery where he concentrated on meditation only and achieved great spiritual realization. He once wrapped a thunderbolt in his monk's robe and was thus known as *rje* Thog thub pa. There are many further miraculous stories like this.

The thirteenth early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' rin chen

Nam mkha' rin chen (in the text Nam mkha' rin chen ma) was born at g.Yu nyer of rGyal phu as the son of an official (*zhal ngo*) of a local ruler (*brgya dpon*) descending from the lDong clan. During his childhood he used to enjoy performing religious activities and entered the Buddhist religious order.

54a According to the indications of his uncle *rje* Nam mkha' 'od zer (the twelfth abbot), he listened to and reflected on the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* in many monasteries such as sNye mo chos sde. He became very learned and a great expert in teaching, debating, writing and he composed several texts. When he thought that the time for converting had come he took over many seats of abbot such as

³¹⁸ One of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava.

³¹⁹ lDong is the name of one of the ancient Tibetan ancestral clans. The Mi nyag pa form one branch of the lDong; cf. e.g. *rGya bod yig tshang* 11, Stein 1961: 31ff.

that of the Shel dkar monastery where he succeeded *rje* Nam mkha' 'od zer. Following the civil and religious law he promoted a great flourishing of them. While he was abbot he performed good deeds such as building the mNgon dga'³²⁰ monastery.

The fourteenth early abbot Ye shes mtsho mo

Ye shes mtsho mo, an incarnation of *mkha' 'gro* Lakshi ma ka ra (Lakṣmīṅkarā),³²¹ was appointed abbot of Shel dkar by gTsang *sde srid*.³²² She was in charge of all the Bo dong pa monasteries in the Shel dkar area and made good religious activity there. All people had great faith in her, but she was short-lived. It is said that when she passed away in dGa' ldan zhal ser ma many miraculous signs appeared.

The fifteenth early abbot 'Jam mgon tshul khrim grags pa

54b 'Jam mgon tshul khrim grags pa was ordained during his childhood in the Chos 'khor lhun po monastery. He studied and mastered the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. In particular he was known as a reincarnation of Grub chen gling and was highly respected by everybody. gTsang *sde srid* had ordered that one good scholar (*bka' ram grags pa*) had to be sent as *bla ma* (to Shel dkar). Accordingly, the *rje btsun* went to Shel dkar and took over the seat of abbot succeeding to *rje btsun* mKha' spyod ma (the fourteenth abbot). Like his predecessors he promoted the activity in favour of the Buddhist doctrine such as the teaching of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* and the religious celebrations.

The sixteenth early abbot *rje* Chos kyi rgyal mtshan

Chos kyi rgyal mtshan during his youth studied [the doctrine] and mastered the four systems (*grub mtha' rnam par bzhi*).³²³ He took over the abbot throne of Shel dkar succeeding to 'Jam mgon tshul

³²⁰ The mNgon dga' monastery lies to the west of Shel dkar close to the rTsi b ri mountain (cf. Map).

³²¹ She was the sister of king Indrabuddhi, of whom Phag mo gru pa was considered an incarnation; cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 652; Roerich 1988: 553. She was also one of the bSam sdings rDo rje phag mo; cf. bKra shis Tshe ring 1993: 31; rDo rje phag mo bde chen chos sgron & Thub bstan rnam rgyal 1994: 37.

³²² The ruler of gTsang in the 16th and first half of the 17th century whose government was located in gZhis kha bsam grub rtse (gZhis ka rtse).

³²³ The four philosophical traditions of early Buddhism: *Bye brag smra pa*, *mDo sde pa*, *Sems tsam pa*, *dBu ma pa*.

khrim grags pa. Though his religious activity was not inferior to that of his predecessors, since he was short-lived, he was active for only a few years. It is said that when he passed away some miraculous signs appeared.

The seventeenth early abbot (name missing)

54a/bis The name of the seventeenth abbot is not known, but he used to be called 'Dren dpon chos mdzad according to the name of his birthplace (*yul ming*) 'Dren dpon of rGyal nor spo. He came from the monastery of Chos 'khor lhun po to Shel dkar and was appointed abbot after *rje* Chos kyi rgyal mtshan. Once during the summer religious festivities, while in the morning he had been in charge of the assembly of the monks, in the afternoon he was invited to his birthplace. In the evening, on his way back, he and one relative with their horses were swept away by the water of a newly made channel of the rGyal nor phu river. The former abbots used to practise the *tantra* to a great extent, but those abbots who came from Chos 'khor lhun po were experts in philosophy rather than in the *tantra*. Probably because of this they hardly managed to keep the throne in their hands and anyway they were all short-lived. With regard to this fact, some malevolent rumours went:

"No good deeds of the *bka' ram* scholars of Chos 'khor lhun po,
no compassion of the protector of religion bKra shis 'od 'bar."

These *bla ma* coming from Chos 'khor lhun po did not arrive at Shel dkar at the proper time. Furthermore for three years there was a great famine in Tibet and this time corresponded to what was prophesied by the Great Teacher (Padmasambhava): "By abandoning one symbol of Tibet to remoteness, the centre and the remote areas will both get annihilated." For these reasons, the estates of the monastery of Shel dkar being unable to provide the set revenue, the use of holding the winter and the summer religious festivities was interrupted respectively in the year of the iron-snake (1641 A.D.) and in the year of the water-horse (1642 A.D.) of the 11th *rab byung*.

The eighteenth early abbot *rje* Nam mkha' dkar po

54b/bis *rJe* Nam mkha' dkar po was born at Nas phra'i lhas of rGyal phu (rGyal nor phu close to Shel dkar) as the son of *rje dbon* Nam mkha' mnam sras.³²⁴ He studied and mastered the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. When he was abbot of the mNgon dga' monastery,³²⁵ since nobody wanted to act as abbot of Shel dkar, he went there and took good care of the monastic community and had the winter

³²⁴ A sPo rong *rje dbon*, lord of the nomads of sPo rong (see note 203).

³²⁵ In the mNgon dga' monastery, partially rebuilt in the 1980s, a precious relic of this abbot is still preserved: his body transformed into a statue with a golden mask.

religious festivities of the water-horse year (1642 A.D.) performed in a simple way. It was miraculous that he had such a wish to revive the doctrine of Buddhism. Herewith the account on the early abbots is completed.

54b/bis–55a Verses of eulogy mentioning the early abbots.

How the monastery dGa' ldan legs bshad gling following the yellow-hat tradition was founded in Shel dkar (i.e. the transformation of the Shel dkar monastery into dGe lugs pa) (55a–56b)

55a According to the *Vaidūrya ser po*: "In the surroundings of Shel dkar rdzong in southern La stod there were seven Sa skya pa colleges, seven Bo dong pa colleges, and seven dGe lugs pa colleges which were founded by Grags pa rgyal mtshan. Tsong kha pa and dGe 'dun grub came here.

55b Later the curse of the *bdud mo* rNo myur nag mo came true and Zhing shag pa³²⁶ seized power (*mnga' thang*) from the Byang *bdag*. During this time, both the religious and civil rule declined, but what was worse was that the signs of the monastic vows could hardly be seen. In these circumstances the Sa skya pa and the Bo dong pa colleges which had lost their monastic rule moved elsewhere. Then the time of the teacher Gram mtsho ba Legs pa don grub (the first dGe lugs pa abbot) came. He gathered the colleges which had followed the dGe lugs pa tradition: Shar pa, gSer gling, Bur rdzi, sPo, Kun 'dzom, gNas 'og, gZer mkhar and collected the tribute [of new monks] from the areas of southern La stod and gNya' nam. On this basis in the wood-bird year (1645 A.D.) he founded the monastery."³²⁷

According to the prophecy of the *Bla ma bka' brgyad yong 'dus*: "The *bdud mo* rNo myur nag mo will generate nine sons who will occupy the world; in particular in Tibet, the Land of Snow, nine emanations of the demons (*bdud*) and their nine ministers will appear," and "nine [by] nine, eighty-one, will lead the living beings." When this prophesied time arrived, Zhing shag pa seized power from the Ring spungs pa and, becoming famous as gTsang stod *rgyal po*, deprived of his power also g.Yas ru Byang pa (the Byang *bdag*). Since he became the ruler of La stod lho, the religious and civil laws of the Shel dkar monastery declined badly. During the time of three or four abbots the summer and winter religious festivities were performed only in a very simple way. The religious teachings and the practice of the doctrine were very poor.

³²⁶ Zhing shag pa Tshe brtan rdo rje was a powerful ruler in gTsang during the 16th century. Later his descendant Karma bstan skyong became the ruler of gTsang (rl. 1618–1642 A.D.). He is also known as gTsang stod *rgyal po*, the king of Upper gTsang. He was killed by the Mongol army of Guśri Khan.

³²⁷ Cf. *Vaidūrya ser po* 401–402. The author follows this text in quoting most of the prophecies; cf. also *Vaidūrya ser po* 345–381.

56a In such a situation the king of vows, the *mgon po* Phyag na pad ma (Padmapāṇi) arrived. The 'Jam dpal rtsa rgyud (*Mañjuśrīmūlatantra*) reports:³²⁸

"When Buddhism on the earth
and the world degenerates at the end of time,
the king of vows will appear,
this is without the least doubt."

The *Ratna'i spyi lung* prophesised:³²⁹

From "The ones having the horns of a female yak ('bri) and the ones having the tail of a pig (*phag*)" to "Under such one who will rule over the whole of dBus gTsang their doctrine will exist for sixty years (?)." And further:

"A Lord of the Doctrine with great power and miracles will come. Setting up palaces on the three hills of dBus – the dMar po ri³³⁰ of Lhasa, the Chu bo ri,³³¹ and the Hal po ri³³² – the areas of dBus, g.Yo, and the borders (*mtha'*) will be ruled.

Setting up palaces on the three hills of gTsang – Ngam ru ri, Ri bo che, and La stod rdo rje'i ri³³³ – the two *ru* of gTsang and the land between mNga' ris and Nepal will be ruled. Thirteen monasteries will be founded in dBus gTsang, of the fortresses of the others not even the walls will be left (?).

And:

"His civil law will be a golden yoke *sgram* (strong?) and heavy,
his religious law will be a silken knot smooth and firm;
without sickness, weapons, famines, and suffering
all will live as in the happy land of the gods."

In the prophecy by *gter ston* Zla ba rgyal mthan it is said:³³⁴

"At the end of the lineage of Za hor, [somebody] named bZang po."

And:

"At the time of the future degenerate age

³²⁸ Cf. *Vaidūrya ser po* 366, see note 125.

³²⁹ Cf. *Vaidūrya ser po* 372–373. The first part of the prophecy which refers to the 'Bri gung pa and the Phag mo gru pa is quoted more extensively and explained in the *Vaidūrya ser po*.

³³⁰ The famous hill on which the Potala palace is situated.

³³¹ A famous hill on the southern bank of the gTsang po close to Chu shul (which is situated on the northern bank).

³³² A famous hill in bSam yas.

³³³ The hill of Shel dkar.

³³⁴ Cf. *Vaidūrya ser po* 366.

the Lord (*mnga' bdag*) God of Flowers³³⁵
will adorn the world."

56b Thus, as it is prophesied in numerous prophecies of the *bKa' ma* and the *gTer ma*, in the *Bu chos*, etc., the time came when the great [Fifth] Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho covered with his umbrella of religious and political rule all the three countries China, Mongolia, and Tibet. In the prophecy (*gter lung*) of *gter ston* Dri med lhun po³³⁶ it is said: "When the border army [will come] the last of seven times, a king who is an incarnation of Vajrapāṇi will come bringing happiness and growth to Tibet (Bod Khams). The thus prophesied bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal (Guśri Khan)³³⁷ and bSod nams rab brtan³³⁸ took part in the meeting (with the Dalai Lama) held in the palace of bSam grub rtse (gZhis ka rtse). Here it was decided that in the gTsang region numerous new monasteries associated with the *rdzong* were to be established. Among them a new monastery following the yellow-hat tradition of Tsong kha pa was set up in Shel dkar.

Three points must be mentioned regarding the foundation of the Shel dkar monastery of Tsong kha pa's yellow-hat tradition:

- 1) The concise story of the Buddhist doctrinal tradition to which the monastery belongs;
- 2) Who acted as abbot;
- 3) The way in which the abbots made the doctrine grow.

57a–60b The short biography of Tsong kha pa³³⁹

The author gives an extremely concise version of the biography of Tsong kha pa based on that reported in the *Vaidūrya ser po*.

³³⁵ Khri srong lde btsan's initiation name.

³³⁶ *gTer ston* who lived in the fourteenth century; mentioned in Dargyay 1979: 134.

³³⁷ The ruler of the Qośot Mongols residing in A mdo. He came to Central Tibet with his army, in 1642 he defeated the gTsang *sde pa* and helped the dGe lugs pa to establish the new government called dGa' ldan pho brang. He received the name bsTan 'dzin chos rgyal from the Fifth Dalai Lama.

³³⁸ The first regent (*sde srid*) at the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama ruling 1642–1658; cf. Petech 1988a: 133–134. In the text he is referred to as a reincarnation of the king Go cha, who offered to the omniscient rGyal po Don grub the rule and his daughter.

³³⁹ Cf. *Vaidūrya ser po* 60ff.

60b–64a The first dGe lugs pa abbot Legs pa'i don grub (summary)

61a Legs pa'i don grub was born at Brag sna shar in Gram mtsho. During his youth he was ordained in the gZe mkhar monastery. When he reached adulthood he went to Gangs can chos 'phel and studied the five volumes of doctrine concerning philosophy, logic, etc. He studied also the *tantra* in a perfect way. He took numerous scholars as teachers and practised the doctrine to a great extent. It is said that he was a reincarnation of mKhas grub shes rab seng ge. When he was the *bla ma* of gZe mkhar, his monastery of origin (*gzhis grwa*), because of the wars between gTsang [sde pa] and the Mongol (army of Guśri Khan) he moved to Gangs can chos 'phel. **61b** After the dGa' ldan pho brang³⁴⁰ had taken over the rule over the whole of Tibet in the water-horse year (1642 A.D.), he was appointed abbot with the task of establishing the dGe lugs pa tradition in the monastery of Shel dkar. He received the order with the relevant seal to apply the *chos khral*³⁴¹ in the southern area and gNya' nang.³⁴² In the second month of the water-sheep year (1643 A.D.) he came to the Shel dkar monastery. At that time he defined the monastic estates. He also assembled around three hundred monks, some coming from the former colleges and some gathered according to the *chos khral*, and these were given a general religious training. **62a** Wishing to set up a tantric college he requested the relevant authorization from the government. He received a positive answer recommending, however, that most colleges of the monastery should be schools of philosophy (*bshad grwa*) and that the tantric college had to follow strictly the tradition of the dGe lugs pa tantric colleges. Afterwards he invited to Shel dkar two teachers of philosophy, Drung rab 'byams pa Blo bzang bstan pa and bKa' bcu 'Jam dbyangs, as well as thirty senior monks from gZe mkhar. Drung rab pa used to reside in dGa' ldan grwa khang, and his disciples were from Khyung rtse, So Inga, Gram mtsho, mTsho sgo, Nyi shar, and rGya mtsho. bKa' bcu pa ['Jam dbyangs] used to reside in Gung ma grwa khang and his disciples were from Pha [drug], Ding [ri], Bong shod, Chu drug, 'Brog pa sPo rong, sMan Khab pa, rGyag, Chag, Phan, and gNya' nang.³⁴³ **62b** A college of philosophy was established in the wood-hen year (1645 A.D.) and followed the system of Gangs can [chos 'phel]. The tantric college was set up according to the system of Gangs can [chos 'phel],³⁴⁴ too. Then the great abbot applied to the [Tibetan] government requesting some new estates. Accordingly 'Og ka, mTsho dbar, Ri bskor, rDor brag, Bya stod, sKyid sbug, and gNas gсар were

³⁴⁰ The name of the dGe lugs pa government deriving from the Dalai Lama's palace (dGa' ldan pho brang) in the 'Bras spungs monastery.

³⁴¹ A form of tribute consisting in providing monks to the monastery on the part of the families residing in the estates concerned.

³⁴² The area lying south-west of Ding ri on the way towards Nepal. This area is particularly famous for its holy places linked to Mi la ras pa.

³⁴³ The localities mentioned here are situated in southern La stod (cf. Map). rGya [mtsho], Chag [pa], Phan [phyi] or sMan phyi are nomad areas which were under the ruler of the sPo rong *rje dbon*.

³⁴⁴ Teachings and ritual calendar according to the system of Gangs can are mentioned in the text.

assigned to the Shel dkar monastery. In addition to this, the estate of Yol lcags in Pha drug was given for the support of the great prayer of dGa' ldan [Inga mchod].³⁴⁵ **63a** The great abbot transformed into dGe lugs pa the monastery of Bong shod ri bo che which was founded by Khra ston pa Byang chub rgyal mtshan and had belonged first to the Shangs pa [bKa' brgyud pa]³⁴⁶ and then to the rNying ma pa. He transformed into dGe lugs pa the monastery of Ding ri chos lung which had followed the Zhi byed tradition³⁴⁷ and had become a monastery of lay practitioners and assumed its leadership. In the small monastery of Gram mtsho rdzi bo dgon he established a nunnery called Rab brtan chos lung and under this name this became a branch of the Shel dkar monastery. In dGe dgon dkar po where there were a few old buildings he made some new constructions and a new *bla brang*. For this he used some good wood of Yol gdong rdzong obtained from the [Tibetan] government. Furthermore he restored the statue of Śākyamuni and some temples which were in ruins. He introduced some rules for the tantric colleges and those specialized in the *sūtra*. He also took care of everything that had to be done inside and outside the monastery. **63b** He acted in such a way for twelve years from the water-sheep year (1643 A.D.) to the wood-horse year (1654 A.D.). Then, being advanced in age, he asked the [Tibetan] government if he could resign. Just before the arrival of his successor he passed away in the fourth month of the wood-horse year (1654 A.D.). He remained seven days in the position of meditation, the body was burnt according to tantric rituals, and there were many miraculous signs.³⁴⁸ This abbot is considered to have been very important in establishing the dGe lugs pa tradition in the Shel dkar monastery.

64a–71b The second dGe lugs pa abbot Sangs rgyas dpal 'byor (summary)

64a Sangs rgyas dpal 'byor was born at brGya bskor ba near Cham (Chab) nag ri bo dga' ldan³⁴⁹ in Kong po with many miraculous signs. During his childhood he was sent to the monastery of Cham nag ri bo dga' ldan where he was ordained and received the name Sangs rgyas dpal 'byor. After reaching

³⁴⁵ Ceremony taking place at the 25th day of the tenth month on the occasion of the anniversary of the passing away of Tsong kha pa.

³⁴⁶ One bKa' brgyud pa tradition founded by Khyung po rnal 'byor in the 11th century. He went to India and Nepal to study the doctrine and after coming back he set up some monasteries in the areas of Shangs and 'Phan yul. He had numerous followers and he is considered to have lived around 150 years; cf. e.g. *'Brug pa'i chos byung* 319.

³⁴⁷ Tradition founded by Pha dam pa sangs rgyas at the beginning of the 12th century; cf. *Deb ther sngon po* 1015ff.; Roerich 1988: 867ff.

³⁴⁸ The signs are mentioned in detail in the text.

³⁴⁹ A dGe lugs pa monastery in Chab nag (to the west of Mt. gNam lcags 'bar ba) on the southern bank of the gTsang po in Kong po.

adulthood he went to dBus and studied *bsDus* [*grwa*]³⁵⁰ and *Tshad* [*ma*] (*Pramāṇa*) in Ra ba stod³⁵¹ and *dBu* [*ma*] (*Madhyamaka*), *Phar* [*phyin*] (*Prajñāpāramitā*), 'Dul [*ba*] (*Vinaya*), *mDzod* (*Abhidharma*) in 'Bras spung chos 'khor gling. Once he remained in Lhasa to listen to some great teachers after the Great Prayer (*smoṅ lam chen mo*).³⁵² At that time, since the abbot of Shel dkar was very advanced in age, he (Sangs rgyas dpal 'byor) was appointed by the Fifth Dalai Lama as his successor.

Then in the fifth month of the wood-horse year (1654 A.D.) he went to Shel dkar and was warmly welcomed there. When he was enthroned, there were auspicious conditions with a light rain and the sound of thunder. He united the two colleges established by the former abbot and established the first yearly [summer] religious festivities in the sixth month of the wood-horse year (1654 A.D.).³⁵³ **65a** He established also the tradition of holding the [winter] religious festivities beginning on the 15th day of the 11th month.

He established the tradition of holding a great prayer from the 8th to the 15th of the first month³⁵⁴ with the support derived from the donations of the devoted people, both while they were still alive and after their death. Since the great *chos bdag* bKra shis 'od 'bar (protector of Shel dkar) had not been adequately worshipped, the riding-mules suffered considerable losses. At that time the great abbot reported the event to the Dalai Lama and asked for his prophetic advice. The Dalai Lama replied prophesying that were this deity taken as protector of the monastery, every activity would prove to be a great success. Besides, according to the instructions of the Dalai Lama, the *gNas chung* (*chos skyong*)³⁵⁵ came to be worshipped as protector of the monastery, too. **68b** He promoted the growth of philosophical studies, so that hundreds of monks became expert philosophers. He also promoted the tantric studies. He sent as teacher five or six monks expert in the *sūtra* and the *tantra* to the rTag brtan monastery,³⁵⁶ which had just been transformed into dGe lugs pa. There the dGe lugs pa tantric tradition

³⁵⁰ In Tibetan monasteries, *bsDus grwa* is a subject learnt at the beginning of the studies of logic. This tradition was founded by the famous philosopher Cha pa Chos kyi seng ge (1099–1169 A.D.); cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 1488.

³⁵¹ The Ra ba stod bde ba can monastery (also known as Ra stod), located to the south-west of Lhasa, was one of the six famous monasteries specialized in philosophical studies before the foundation of the great dGe lugs pa monasteries dGa' ldan, 'Bras spungs, Se ra, etc.

³⁵² The Great Prayer ceremony founded by Tsong kha pa which used to take place in Lhasa in the gTsong lag khang in the first month and which was first held in 1409.

³⁵³ A detailed schedule of the ceremonies with references concerning the relevant scriptures and religious activities is given in the text.

³⁵⁴ A detailed schedule of the relevant religious activities is given in the text.

³⁵⁵ Pe har rgyal po, the famous protecting deity (*srung ma*) and state-oracle of the Tibetan government.

³⁵⁶ rTag brtan phun tshogs gling belonging to the Jo nang pa tradition was founded by Tāranātha in 1614. This monastery was transformed in 1642 into dGe lugs pa and took the name of dGa' ldan phun tshogs gling; cf. e.g. *Vaiḍūrya ser po* 402.

was studied very thoroughly. **69a** He also set up a new meditation monastery (*sgrub sde*) called dGa' ldan bsam gling³⁵⁷ with approximately fifteen monks coming from the Shel dkar monastery. For this he laid down fixed rules (*bca' yig*) according to the dGe lugs pa tantric tradition to regulate the study and the practice of the doctrine. In Śrī ri Glang ma phug³⁵⁸ he had established a meditation monastery (*sgrub sde*), but this did not flourish. So he decided to build a further meditation monastery called Śrī ri chu bzang bsam gtan yang rtse³⁵⁹ with twelve monks. This was situated in a place where there was a meditation cave of Dam pa rgya gar (Pha dam pa sangs rgyas). The great abbot Sangs rgyas dpal 'byor set up a nunnery in Log lung lha chos 'khor³⁶⁰ with nineteen nuns. This place was blessed by having been the residence of dGe 'dun grub pa and later the meditation place of a Sa skya *bla ma* called Byams pa, etc. Furthermore he set up: The Gros sa nunnery with twenty-two nuns; the Śrī ri byang ngos³⁶¹ nunnery with sixteen nuns – here some buildings had belonged formerly to *sde pa* gNas 'og pa;³⁶² the Chos skor dGa' ldan chos gling³⁶³ nunnery in Pha drug with twenty-three nuns; **70a** the dGa' ldan chos phug nunnery at Ri skor rdzong phug in Sos lnga with forty-five nuns; the gNas 'og maṇi nunnery with fourteen nuns; the Ding ri dGa' ldan chos lung³⁶⁴ nunnery with twenty-five nuns. Once a monk of the Shar rtse college of bKra shis lhun po, called Shes 'dod ras pa rje blo bzang byams pa, who was known as a reincarnation of Zur chen mying pa grub chen gling, visited the sTod area. This monk, after having been invited to bSam gtan gling, gave teachings on the *Phyag chen (Mahāmudrā)* of the dBen sa bKa' rgyud³⁶⁵ presenting the doctrinal position, the meditation, and the activity (*lta sgom spyod*). Also the great abbot, having practised it on this occasion, later gave teachings on this doctrine, and many followers dedicated themselves to the retreat for the practice of meditation. Once when the great abbot visited the meditation cave of Śrī ri rgod tshang,³⁶⁶ the hat of red brocade fell from the head of rGod tshang pa's statue. Despite the efforts of the guardian to replace the hat it fell down again. Finally, the great abbot himself, by offering a *snyan dar* and pronouncing some prayers, replaced the hat which

³⁵⁷ Located to the north of mNgon dga'; cf. *Vaidūrya ser po* 269; Schuh 1988: 17.

³⁵⁸ Monastery built on the meditation cave of Pha dam pa sangs rgyas, also mentioned in the *Vaidūrya ser po* (*Vaidūrya ser po* 270).

³⁵⁹ Located on the northern slopes of rTsis ri, close to gNas 'og.

³⁶⁰ Located in Log lung to the east of Shel dkar, also mentioned in the *Vaidūrya ser po* (*Vaidūrya ser po* 270).

³⁶¹ Located on the northern slopes of rTsis ri, close to mNgon dga'. It is mentioned also in the *Vaidūrya ser po* (*Vaidūrya ser po* 270).

³⁶² See note 183.

³⁶³ Mentioned also in the *Vaidūrya ser po* (*Vaidūrya ser po* 270).

³⁶⁴ Located to the east of Shel dkar, close to Chu lho, and mentioned in the *Vaidūrya ser po* (*Vaidūrya ser po* 270).

³⁶⁵ dBen sa bka' brgyud possibly refers to the tradition established by dBen sa pa Blo bzang don grub in the 16th century. The dBen sa monastery lies to the east of gZhis ka rtse.

³⁶⁶ Meditation place of rGod tshang pa, see note 135.

remained in its proper place. It is said that in such a way the statue took off its hat as a sign of respect for the great abbot. **71a** From the wood-horse year of the 11th *rab byung* (1654 A.D.) onward he occupied the seat of abbot of the Shel dkar monastery for twenty-four years. During this time he gave many religious teachings, set up a great number of religious symbols of body, speech, and mind (*sku gsung thug rten*), provided the necessary care and performed the relevant offerings to the religious symbols such as the great statue of Śākyamuni. He performed the rituals for the worship of the *chos bdag* bKra shis 'od 'bar without interruption for eighteen years. After submitting his resignation to the [Tibetan] government, he resided in his original monastery Cham nag ri bo dga' ldan, a main monastery in Kong po. There he had the *bKa' 'gyur* reprinted and dedicated himself to holy deeds. After reaching an extremely advanced age, he passed away with many miraculous signs and leaving many *ring srel*.³⁶⁷

71b–82a The third dGe lugs pa abbot 'Jam dbyangs bkra shis rgya mtsho (summary)

Some descendants of the Tshal *khri dpon*³⁶⁸ Sangs rgyas dngos grub, belonging to the lineage of mGar sTong btsan yul bsrung, a great minister of Srong btsan sgam po, had moved to mNga' ris Gung thang and here after some generations the lineage of *sde pa* Rab spe ba originated. The great abbot 'Jam dbyangs bkra shis rgya mtsho was born on the third day of the third month of the iron-female-snake year (1641 A.D.) as son of *sde pa* [Rab spe ba] Blo gros nam rgyal. His mother was Tshe dbang dpal 'dzom, a daughter of *sde pa* Sum mdo pa. **72a** Because of his behaviour his parents thought that he was the reincarnation of a holy *bla ma*, so they sent him to the great abbot Shes rab bzang po in mNga' ris dGa' ldan 'phel rgyas gling to become a monk. There he studied the rituals of worship of the protectors of religion such as 'Jigs byed bcu gsum,³⁶⁹ as well as *Sum rtags* (Tibetan grammar), etc. Then he proceeded to dBus and listened to a great number of doctrines from the great Fifth Dalai Lama. At the age of twenty in the *kun ldan* year (iron-monkey, 1660 A.D.) he took the vows of *dge slong* from Khri chen Ngag dbang rdo rje. Afterwards he went to many monasteries in dBus and gTsang and studied very thoroughly the *sūtra* and the *tantra*: he studied the *sūtra* in the mKhas snyan college of the Se ra monastery with 'Dul 'dzin mkhas grub bSod nams rgyal mtshan; he studied the five volumes of philosophy in the great monastery of rTse (rTsed) thang and, taking part in the debates, he gained great fame for being very learned; he went to the bKra shis lhun po monastery and, taking part in the debates, he gained great fame there, too. Then he returned to dBus and listened to innumerable holy doctrines such as the *sūtra*, the works of Tsong kha pa, the works of the Dalai Lama and the Pañchen Lama, the dGe lugs pa empowerments of 'Jigs byed bcu gsum and so on from the Fifth Dalai Lama, Pha bong kha

³⁶⁷ Glittering particles said to be found in the burnt ashes of certain holy *bla ma*.

³⁶⁸ Tshal pa was one of the thirteen *khri skor* during the Sa skya pa rule. Its ruler was called Tshal *khri dpon* and resided in Tshal Gung thang close to Lhasa.

³⁶⁹ Vajrabhairava together with his retinue of twelve deities, particularly worshipped by the dGe lugs pa.

'Jam dbyangs grags pa, Gung thang lo chen bShes gnyen mam rgyal, *rgyal sras* Blo bzang bstan 'dzin, *rje A nanta shi* 'la (Ānantaśīla), 'Bras gling rtse thang las chen, *rje* Ngag dbang rgyal mtshan, *mkhan chen* Mañjuśrī, *mkhan chen* Shes rab bzang po, Drung pa brTson 'grus rgyal mtshan, *grub chen* bKa' bcu Byams pa 'phrin las, etc. **73a** Afterwards he went to the college of Phan bde legs bshad gling where he studied thoroughly the rDo rje theg pa (Vajrayāna) from the Fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *rje btsun* gTer bdag gling pa,³⁷⁰ *gnas brtan chen po* 'Jam dbyangs grags pa, etc. and became a great *rdo rje slob dpon* (*vajrācaryā*). Then, according to the order of the Dalai Lama, he was enthroned as abbot of lCam mda' mNgon dga' dgon in mDo Khams. Afterwards he came back to dBus to listen to many doctrines and at that time he was appointed abbot of the Shel dkar monastery by the regent (*sde srid*).³⁷¹ Wishing to dedicate himself to retreat he resigned, but the Fifth Dalai Lama ordered him to go to Shel dkar all the same and gave him the relevant instructions and some texts. In the twelfth month of the fire-snake year (1677 A.D.) he left the Potala and in the first month of the earth-horse year (1678 A.D.) he arrived at Shel dkar. Like the former abbots during the winter religious festivities he gave teachings and he also introduced some new rituals. **74a** He requested the authorization to perform the *tshe bcu* rituals (rituals of the 10th day) from the Dalai Lama. He answered positively replying that these rituals are of great benefit for Tibet. Since he noticed that the main temple of the Shel dkar monastery was in bad condition, he wished to set up some new buildings. Having received the authorization from the [Tibetan] government, he started the construction in the second month of the earth-female-sheep year (1679 A.D.). During this year he built a main assembly hall with thirty-six pillars and above it, towards the north-west, a temple with four pillars called dGa' ldan 'og min lha khang for the talking statue of rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara). To the east of it he built the dGa' ldan lam rim temple with six pillars. To the south-east he built the 'Phags pa gnas brtan temple. To the south he built the tantric college called gSang sngags dga' tshal mdo phug. To the south-west he built a *rung khang* (storeroom) with four big pillars. Above it the office (*spyi khang*) called Rab gsal phun tshogs 'byor rgyas khang was situated. To the west he built the sGron gzhu nyer mkho bde skyid khang. Furthermore he built a *shing khang chen po* (great storeroom for wood?). **75a** In the summer of the iron-bird year (1681 A.D.) the skilled painter mKhas pa chos 'phel with some others made the mural paintings³⁷² in the porch (*seng g.yab*) of the main assembly hall. The paintings³⁷³ of the main assembly hall were completed during the summer of the water-dog year (1682 A.D.). The *rje btsun bla ma* ['Jam dpal dbyangs chos rje bkra shis] acted as abbot during seven years from the earth-horse year of the 11th *rab hyung* (1678 A.D.) to the wood-mouse year (1684 A.D.). He gave philosophical teachings without

³⁷⁰ gTer bdag gling pa (1634 or 1646–1714 A.D.) was a great *gter ston*, disciple and later teacher of the Fifth Dalai Lama; cf. e.g. Dargyay 1979: 174ff.

³⁷¹ According to the time given in the text this *sde srid* was Blo bzang sbyin pa ruling under the Fifth Dalai Lama from 1675 to 1679; cf. Petech 1988a: 134–135.

³⁷² A list of the paintings is given in the text.

³⁷³ A list of the paintings is given in the text.

interruptions, constructed many buildings such as the main assembly hall, bestowed empowerments on 'Jigs byed bcu gsum of the dGe lugs pa tradition and so on.³⁷⁴ **77a** After the arrival of his successor Mi nyag *grub chen* Ye shes rgya mtsho he left for Gung thang. On the third day of the 11th month of the wood-mouse year (1684 A.D.) he arrived at mChed mkhar lcags thag phug of Gung thang where he resided dedicating himself to the tantric practice³⁷⁵ of the old and the new traditions for thirty-four years. At the age of seventy-eight on the fourth day of the fourth month of the *rnams 'phyang* year (earth-dog, 1718 A.D.) he passed away with many miraculous signs. **78a** He belongs to a reincarnation line mentioned in his biography comprising Lang 'gro dkon mchog 'byung gnas,³⁷⁶ Ratna gling pa,³⁷⁷ Darma dri med, dPang Blo gros brtan pa,³⁷⁸ sPyan ras gzigs Nam mkha' rdo rje,³⁷⁹ his maternal uncle Chos rje Blo gros rgyal mtshan,³⁸⁰ and 'Jam dpal dbyangs chos rje bkra shis ('Jam dbyangs bkra shis rgya mtsho).

82a–84a/bis The fourth dGe lugs pa abbot Ye shes rgya mtsho (summary)

82a The great abbot Ye shes rgya mtsho was born in Mi nyag³⁸¹ in mDo Khams in the wood-monkey year of the 11th *rab byung* (1644 A.D.). Since he had shown an extraordinary religious attitude during his childhood, his parents sent him with some attendants to dBus. There he was ordained by the Dalai Lama and he received the name Ye shes rgya mtsho. He resided at the college of Blo gsal gling³⁸² in 'Bras spungs where many scholars used to assemble. **82b** There he studied very thoroughly *blo skor* (epistemology), *rtags skor* (logic), *rNam 'grel* (*Pramāṇavārttika*), the commentaries on *dBU [ma]*, *Phar [phyin]*, *'Dul [ba]*, *mDzod*, *phyir thal*, and some *zur bkol* (separate editions). He offered to his teachers what he had taken from his country of origin, he used to give many offerings to poor people and to his friends; so he led a life without many possessions and devoted to study. At that time he defeated in debate a pedantic scholar belonging to the college of sGo mang and despite his youth he became famous and was called Mi nyag *dge bshes*. After returning from an official trip of eighteen

³⁷⁴ A detailed list of the teachings is given in the text.

³⁷⁵ The visions are mentioned in detail in the text, a.o. the Fifth Dalai Lama and the deity bKra shis 'od 'bar.

³⁷⁶ One of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava.

³⁷⁷ Ratna gling pa (1403–1479 A.D.), the *gter ston* collector of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*; cf. e.g. Dargyay 1979: 144ff.

³⁷⁸ The first abbot of Shel dkar; cf. folio 35a–40a.

³⁷⁹ The ninth early abbot of Shel dkar; cf. folio 50a–53a.

³⁸⁰ The seventh early abbot of Shel dkar; cf. folio 47b–49a.

³⁸¹ Mi nyag lies in south-eastern mDo Khams between Dar tse mdo and rTa'u.

³⁸² The greatest of the four colleges in the 'Bras spungs monastery (the other three were sGo mang, sDe sbyang, sNgags pa).

months to Kong po, he took the final ordination from the great Dalai Lama. **83a** During the "Great Prayer" he defeated in debate many scholars, his fame increased greatly and he became a great *dge bshes*. In order to study the tantric scriptures such as *gSang* ['*dus*] (*Guhyasamāja*), *bDe* [*mchog*] (*Cakrasamvara*), '*Jigs* [*byed*] (*Vajrabhairava*), he entered the college of sMad rgyud³⁸³ and obtained numerous empowerments, instructions, and precepts (*dbang, lung, man ngag*). He was a great master in general and the gNas chung chos skyong prophesied that he was the reincarnation of an Indian scholar. Thus he was considered as a great [reincarnated] *bla ma*. When the former abbot of Shel dkar, 'Jam dbyangs bkra shis rgya mtsho, submitted his resignation he indicated that his successor should be somebody widely learned in the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. The government requested from the 'Bras spungs Blo gsal gling college to choose somebody with a wide knowledge in the *sūtra* and the *tantra* as *bla ma* for the Shel dkar monastery. **83b** Accordingly Mi nyag pa rab 'byams Ye shes rgya mtsho, taking the government order and the necessary items, went to the Shel dkar monastery and took over the throne on the 25th day of the eleventh month (wood-mouse year 1684 A.D.).

During the religious ceremonies he used to give teachings about *dBu* [*ma*], *Phar* [*phyin*], and *mDzod* according to the commentaries of the Fifth Dalai Lama, and *rNam 'grel* according to the Ra ba stod pa tradition. He gave some new teachings and rectified the methods of practising each *yi dam* and *chos skyong* in the tantric colleges. **84a** In the summer of the wood-ox year (1685 A.D.) with one hundred followers he travelled in dBus gTsang in order to perform religious prayer service (*zhabs brtan*) for the omniscient Dalai Lama, the Pañchen Lama, the great ruler 'Jam dpal dbyangs.³⁸⁴ Afterwards he visited the Śākyamuni statue of the gTsong lag khang, distributed alms at the 'Bras spungs Blo gsal gling college and met his teachers. Afterwards he came back to Shel dkar. On his way back he met one of his teachers in sKyor mo lung³⁸⁵ who advised him to take care of his *khrag rlung*³⁸⁶ disease. In fact he said that many scholars of 'Bras spungs had passed away at the age of forty-five and advised him to be cautious when he reached that age. While chatting he reported this event and said that the words of his teacher would become true. At that time nobody gave much thought to this. However, when he reached the age of forty-five the prophetic words came true. In the fire-hare year (1687 A.D.), while travelling around in the southern area, giving some teachings, **84b** his *khrag rlung* disease worsened because of some disputes between his attendants and some other people. In the twelfth month of the earth-dragon year (1688 A.D.) he passed away with many miraculous signs³⁸⁷ such as looking very young with his eyes like those of Śākyamuni. For his funeral, alms were distributed to the

³⁸³ Usually called rGyud smad grwa tshang, this was one of the famous dGe lugs pa tantric colleges in Lhasa.

³⁸⁴ This title often referred to the emperor of China.

³⁸⁵ The sKyor mo lung monastery lies in sTod lung to the west of Lhasa. This was one of the six monasteries specialized in philosophy in the early times before the foundation of the three biggest dGe lugs pa monasteries.

³⁸⁶ A *rlung* disease linked to blood circulation. It can be associated with high blood pressure.

³⁸⁷ These miraculous signs are mentioned in detail in the text.

monastic community, statues of Tsong kha pa, of the Dalai Lama, and of the great abbot himself were made. After a while a reincarnation appeared for the enhancement of the doctrine.

84a/bis–85b The fifth dGe lugs pa abbot Ngag dbang ye shes (summary)

84a/bis The great abbot Ngag dbang ye shes was born at sGro bseb in sTod lung in the earth-ox year of the 11th *rab byung* (1649 A.D.). He was the son of an illegitimate child of *sde pa* Yangs pa can. During his youth he became a monk in the Lam pa monastery³⁸⁸ in sTod lung. Then he proceeded to the sDe yangs college of 'Bras spungs to study philosophy. At that time he acted as a member of gNas chung chos skyong's retinue and thus he studied the rituals of worship (*bskang gso*) for *yi dam* and *chos skyong*. After having studied philosophy thoroughly, he was appointed *spyän 'dren chen po* (master of ceremony) of the sDe yangs college. After some years the [Tibetan] government appointed him *bla ma* of Shel dkar in order to meet the relevant request. In the first month of the earth-snake year (1689 A.D.), having received the necessary items (*bla chos khri 'gyed*),³⁸⁹ he proceeded to the dGa' ldan lhun po palace³⁹⁰ of Shel dkar. **84b/bis** In the second month of the same year he was ceremonially enthroned. He continued the religious activity of his predecessors. Then in the wood-dog year (1694 A.D.) with one hundred followers he performed religious prayer services for the [Tibetan] government and the Pañchen Lama respectively in dBus and gTsang. He set up a nunnery called sDog bkra shis chos gling in sKyid mkhar phu of Pha drug and bestowed empowerments in many villages and monasteries of the southern area. In particular each summer he performed the rituals to cause rainfall. Since the rain never failed to come within three days, he was called *grub thob char 'bebs pa* (the rain-bringing saint). **85a** Once when he was invited from Shel dkar to the meditation monastery (*sgrub sde*) of Śrī ri chu bzang, the main statue of Thugs rje chen po (Avalokiteśvara) uttered the sound *om*. Once while he was residing in the dGa' ldan lhun po palace he had a vision of Tsong kha pa, who said to him: "You will not have a long life, so you should perform the *tshe sgrub* rituals."³⁹¹ From the earth-snake year (1689 A.D.) to the fire-ox year (1697 A.D.) he took good care of the monasteries, increased greatly the number of converts thanks to some miraculous events. Since he did not perform properly the *tshe sgrub* rituals mentioned by Tsong kha pa's prophetic instructions, he suddenly fell ill and passed away in the first month of the fire-ox year (1697 A.D.).

³⁸⁸ The Lam pa monastery is situated in the homonymous village in sTod lung.

³⁸⁹ When somebody was appointed abbot or *bla ma* of a monastery, the government used to provide various items such as ritual objects, clothing, etc.

³⁹⁰ The residence of the abbot.

³⁹¹ Rituals performed in order to increase the life span of somebody.

85b–88a The sixth dGe lugs pa abbot Ngag dbang dge 'dun (summary)

85b The great abbot Ngag dbang dge 'dun was born at rTse (rTsed) thang in g.Yo ru.³⁹² During his childhood he used to behave very religiously and his parents let him enter the great monastery of rTsed thang to become a monk. After growing up he used to reside at the Blo gsal gling college of the 'Bras spungs monastery where he studied thoroughly the *bsDus [g]rwa*, which is the gate to profound knowledge, as well as many other philosophical subjects. He successfully took part in the scholarly debates. Then, while he was studying the *tantra* such as *'Jigs [byed]* and *gSang ['dus]*, the request for a new *bla ma* of the Shel dkar monastery arrived. Thanks to the fact that his elder sister was the best weaver of the dBus *snam* cloth for the authorities, he was appointed. Then, having received many necessary items, he arrived at the dGa' ldan lhun po palace of the Shel dkar monastery in the second month of the fire-ox year (1697 A.D.) and was warmly welcomed there. **86a** In the same month he was ceremonially enthroned. Like the former abbots he gave teachings whenever the monks were assembled such as for the winter and summer religious festivities, besides organizing the debates. Being very widely learned he also developed the tantric college and he used to perform the rituals of worship (*bskang gso*) himself. While he became abbot, the Sixth Dalai Lama succeeded to the golden throne in the fire-ox year, too. Taking plenty of offerings given by the lay population and by the monks of the southern area and also providing himself generously what was necessary, he went to perform religious prayer services for the Dalai Lama, the great ruler 'Jam dpal dbyangs, and the Pañchen Lama. While the great abbot resided in the Shel dkar monastery from the fire-ox year (1697 A.D.) to the fire-dog year (1706 A.D.), he gave a lot of empowerments and religious teachings to the people of the southern area. Though he did not perform any great deeds, he paid great respect to the monastic community, taught well the *sūtra* and the *tantra* and took proper care of the monastery affairs.

88a–89a The seventh dGe lugs pa abbot Blo bzang snyan grags dpal bzang po (summary)

88a The great abbot Blo bzang snyan grags dpal bzang po was born at a propitious place close to the gNam mtsho³⁹³ in the fire-horse year (1666 A.D.). His father was Hor rma bha yan belonging to the lineage of rMa dGe ba'i blo gros,³⁹⁴ one of the eight (one hundred and eight) translators of the time of Khri song lde btsan; his mother was A lce sman. During his youth he felt very attracted to religion. So, though he was the eldest son, his parents thinking of his *las (karma)* sent him to the sGo mang college of 'Bras spungs to be ordained. Growing up, for six years he studied thoroughly the *bsDus [g]rwa* and

³⁹² One of the four traditional subdivisions of Central Tibet (dBus gTsang ru bzhi). g.Yo ru included the area of Yar lung where rTsed thang is located.

³⁹³ The biggest lake in Central Tibet lying to the north of Lhasa.

³⁹⁴ This famous translator of the 11th century was erroneously mentioned by the autor in this context.

the commentaries on 'Dul [ba], mNgon [pa], dBu [ma], Tshad [ma], Phar phyin, etc. 88b During these six years he studied very hard without taking off his clothing (*sku tshag*) and became a very learned scholar. He acted as *bka' bcu* in the gDong college of the 'Bras spungs monastery and as *dge bskos*³⁹⁵ of the sGo mang college. In order to drink the nectar of the holy doctrine he obtained many empowerments, instructions, precepts, and practices from numerous teachers such as *pañ chen* Blo bzang ye shes. (A list of teachers is given in the text.) Afterwards he was appointed abbot of the Shel dkar monastery and was ceremonially enthroned in the fourth month of the fire-mouse year (erroneously for fire-dog, 1706 A.D.).³⁹⁶ 89a Like his predecessors he used to give profound teachings without interruption. In the sixth month, according to the custom of the monastery, he used to give teachings on both *Lam rim*,³⁹⁷ 'Jam dpal zhal lung, and *bKa' gdams pha chos bu chos*.³⁹⁸ Besides this, he bestowed many empowerments on *tshe rta*, *rigs gsum mgon po*,³⁹⁹ *khyung phra*, *lo gyon ma*, etc. in the main villages and monasteries. He had the rules of the monastery strictly observed and showed great respect to the monastic community. In the iron-tiger year (1710 A.D.), the fifth year after his arrival to Shel dkar, two of his attendants suddenly died of small-pox ('*grum nad* erron. for '*brum bu nad*). Feeling tired of the world he submitted his resignation and moved to Padma khang in 'Bras spungs.

89b–90b The eighth dGe lugs pa abbot Grag pa rgya mtsho (summary)

89b The great abbot Grag pa rgya mtsho was born in the iron-ox year of the 11th *rab byung* (1661 A.D.) in lower sTod lung. During his childhood he was ordained in the Chu bzang monastery in sTod lung. After growing up he went to the Se ra smad college in order to study the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra*. Being gifted with a good voice he became the *spyän 'dren pa* of the Se ra smad college. He also acted as *bla ma* of the sDing kha monastery and of the Chu bzang monastery in sTod lung. At that time he was appointed *bla ma* of the Shel dkar monastery by the [Tibetan] government and he was ceremonially enthroned in the 11th month of the iron-tiger year (1710 A.D.). Like the former abbots he took good care of the religious procedures and of the general affairs of the monastery. Using his own possessions he built a *byang chub mchod rten* (*bodhistūpa*) with a statue of the Fifth Dalai Lama made

³⁹⁵ The monk who has to take care of the discipline in a college or in a monastery.

³⁹⁶ According to this text the former abbot occupied the chair of abbot from fire-ox year (1697 A.D.) to the fire-dog year (1706 A.D.). The fire-mouse year, however, corresponds to 1696. It seems that the author or the copyist made a mistake as far as the animal component is concerned and in fact meant the fire-dog year (1706 A.D.). This date is confirmed also by what is reported at the end of his biography.

³⁹⁷ A main work by Tsong kha pa called *Byang chub lam kyī rim pa* (Stages of the Bodhisattva path), Vol. *pa* in Tsong kha pa's collected works.

³⁹⁸ See note 128.

³⁹⁹ The three main *yi dam* according to the dGe lugs pa tradition: Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi.

of silver and copper. **90a** For the sake of the prosperity of the Shel dkar monastery he set up some branches: Pha drug rdzong lung, Yol lcags dga' ldan dgon gsar, Ding ri Byang ma dgon, g.Yu ri bSam gtan gling. Furthermore the [Tibetan] government gave: Lo pan dgon pa ma mo, Padma chos gling, Theg chen lhun po, Glang mtsho, Dgon pa sngon mo, Yul chung dgon gsar, Kha rta Sa skya gdeng, Ding ri phu gu dkar po, Seng ge brag. **90b** He acted as abbot for a period of nine years (1710–1718 A.D.), during which great deeds were performed to a larger extent than under his predecessors. Then, a new abbot came to the Shel dkar monastery from the sKyor mo lung monastery, and the great abbot Grags pa [rgya mtsho] handed over the chair to his successor. In his turn he became the abbot of the sKyor mo lung monastery. Later he performed further good deeds such as acting as *bla ma* of the bKra shis rab brtan monastery⁴⁰⁰ in Kong po.

90b–92b The ninth dGe lugs pa abbot Blo ldan rgya mtsho (summary)

The great abbot Blo ldan rgya mtsho was born in 'Phan yul in the wood-hare year of the 11th *rab byung* (1645 A.D.). He was ordained in the Se ra smad college and studied thoroughly philosophy. **91a** Then in order to study most texts of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* he obtained many empowerments and instructions from a great number of scholars such as *chos rje paṇḍita* Blo bzang sbyin pa, mKhar rdo dpon slob Blo bzang sgom chung, his brother Ngag dbang bzod pa, Ra ga brag ri dpon slob Byams pa. Being very learned he was appointed abbot of the sKyor mo lung monastery in sTod lung. During this time he exchanged his position with the abbot of the Shel dkar monastery. Accordingly he came to Shel dkar in the 12th month of the earth-dog year (1718 A.D.) and was ceremonially enthroned in the first month of the earth-pig year (1719 A.D.). During the great prayer and the religious festivities of the sixth month he used to give many profound teachings such as *Lam rim* and the relevant commentaries. Whenever the monks were assembled, he used to give teachings according to the tradition of the former abbots. He introduced the new monks into the skills of debate by basing oneself on precepts and reasoning (*lung rigs*) and gave teachings to the senior monks on *Lam rim* and *sNgags rim*,⁴⁰¹ *sByin sreg dngos grub rgya mtsho* (a fire-offering), *mGon po phyag drug* (a dGe lugs pa *dharmapāla*), and the works of the Dalai Lamas. **91b** Once while performing some religious prayer services for the (Seventh) Dalai Lama sKal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–1757 A.D.) and the Pañchen Lama, he recited some beautiful verses he had composed on the basis of many prophecies. Both great *bla ma* were very pleased and some new monks were entranced. Then, he returned to Shel dkar for the sake of supporting the assembly of the monks and performing the religious services. Using some silk-brocade for which he had

⁴⁰⁰ A dGe lugs pa monastery situated on the northern bank of the gTsang po in Kong po.

⁴⁰¹ *sNgags rim chen mo*, a work of Tsong kha pa about the tantric practice (Stages of the path of *mantra*), Vol. ga in Tsong kha pa's collected works, Tashilhunpo edition.

paid one *bre chen*⁴⁰² of good silver he made [for the monastery] a *rgyal mtshan* and a *phye phur* (a kind of small bag). He was in charge of this monastery for four years.

**93a–97b The tenth dGe lugs pa abbot Blo bzang snyan grags [dpal bzang po] (2nd term)
(summary)**

93a The great abbot Blo bzang snyan grags, as soon as he arrived at 'Bras spungs from Shel dkar, became the abbot of the 'Dul ba college for several years. Then he was appointed abbot of the dGa' ldan don gnyis gling monastery⁴⁰³ in lHo brag and made the religious activity grow prosperously. Afterwards while he was residing in 'Bras spungs again he was sent to China by the Seventh Dalai Lama as representative (*mkhan po sku tshab*). On the way in Khams sgo 'jo he was assaulted by a large band of robbers (*jag dmag*) who tried to plunder the government delegation. The great abbot Blo bzang snyan grags dpal bzang po without the least hesitation went into the midst of the robber band and preached doctrines concerning the karmic law of cause and effect (*las rgyu 'bras*). He added: "Even if you do not believe in the law of cause and effect, you will anyway face great hardship when the Chinese emperor and the Tibetan government send an army to destroy you." Then he put the *thang kha* of rDo rje 'jigs byed on the head of chief of the robbers and nobody did harm the delegation. **93b** In the Chinese imperial palace he went to meet the emperor holding between his hands the *thugs dam*⁴⁰⁴ of the Dalai Lama. The emperor came down from his throne and in Mongolian⁴⁰⁵ without the help of any translator asked him about the health and deeds of the Dalai Lama. When he returned to Tibet bringing the letter and gifts of the emperor, the Dalai Lama was very pleased with him. While he was residing in 'Bras spungs he was again appointed abbot of the Shel dkar monastery and arrived there in the 10th month of the earth-pig year (1719 A.D.).⁴⁰⁶ In this monastery he performed good deeds for the civil

⁴⁰² Unit of measure, see note 42.

⁴⁰³ One of the monasteries which were transformed into dGe lugs pa in 1642 like the monastery of Shel dkar.

⁴⁰⁴ The personal *yi dam* of the Dalai Lama.

⁴⁰⁵ In Tibetan *sog skad* can also refer to the Manchu language.

⁴⁰⁶ According to the dates and the events reported in the biographies of the preceding and following abbots there is a chronological mistake. It seems likely that the author (or the copyist) made a mistake reporting this date: The year corresponds to that of the enthronement of the preceding abbot; instead of it there should be a date corresponding approximately to 1723. In fact the preceding abbot enthroned in 1719 is reported as having ruled for 4 years and this abbot ruled for 3 years before dying in 1726. These dates are also consistent with the fact that before being enthroned a second time Blo bzang snyan grags was sent to China by the Seventh Dalai Lama. This event can be thus situated in the lapse of time between the enthronement of the Seventh Dalai Lama (1720 A.D.) and 1723 A.D.

and religious law to a greater extent than before. He gave a great number of teachings⁴⁰⁷ to the monks and the lay people. To the senior monks he gave some teachings such as *Byang chub lam rim*⁴⁰⁸ and bestowed some empowerments. Once when he fell seriously ill, he recovered immediately thanks to the rituals of worship of dPal lhan mo dmag zor ma (protecting goddess)⁴⁰⁹ performed as religious prayer service (*sku rim*). **95a** Then, for three years he went on performing good deeds to a great extent such as giving many teachings in the branch monasteries and letting the monastery of dGon pa smug ri become a branch of the Shel dkar monastery. Afterwards at the end of the first month of the fire-horse year (1726 A.D.) he began to feel weak and sick. Thanks to the great religious prayer services (*sku rim*) organized by his administrator (*phyag mdzod*) he recovered, but in the seventh month of the same year he fell sick again and his physical condition worsened greatly. Despite many different religious services he did not recover. Perhaps his deeds for the sake of the living beings were now completed. So he remained in such condition without pain but without recovering. Afterwards, without any fear of death he gave some speeches. Once he said quietly to his disciples that this time the sickness would not release him and gave detailed instructions on how to burn his body after his death. Afterwards, while practising deep meditation he passed away at the age of sixty in the eighth month of the fire-horse year (1726 A.D.). A rainbow appeared on the top of Shel dkar Śrī ri, and after one week his mortal remains were burnt according to the *sByin sreg* funeral rituals of *rDo rje 'jigs [byed]* with many miraculous signs.

97b–99b The eleventh dGe lugs pa abbot Blo bzang bkra shis dpal bzang po (summary)

97b The great abbot Blo bzang bkra shis dpal bzang po was born in gSang sngags sde chen in dBu ru skyi shod (Lhasa area) in the fire-mouse year of the 12th *rab byung* (1696 A.D.). His father A'o gsum dga' stemmed from a good lineage, his mother was A lce gsum mchog endowed with a perfect character. **98a** During his childhood he was attracted by the religious activity. Though there was no other son to keep the house (*gzhi 'dzin pa*), his parents being very pious sent him to the gSang sngags mkhar monastery to enter the door of the doctrine of Tsong kha pa. After growing up he went to the sDe yang college of 'Bras spungs and learned by heart what used to be recited (*'don chos*) in that college and some rituals of sMan bla and Kun rig (Vairocana). Then he studied thoroughly philosophy from *bsDus [g]rwa* to *Blo skor*, *rTags skor*, *rNam 'grel*, *dBu[ma]*, *Phar phyin*, *'Dul ba*, *mNgon [pa]* and became very learned. Then he took the vows of *dge slong* from the great scholar Yon tan dar rgyas dpal bzang po. He obtained numerous doctrines from religious teachers such as Pha bong kha pa rje btsun Rab brtan rgya mtsho, mKhar rdo dpon slob Blo bzang sgom chung, the abbot of the sDe yang college Ngag dbang rab

⁴⁰⁷ The list of teachings is given in the Tibetan text.

⁴⁰⁸ See note 396.

⁴⁰⁹ Cf. Nebesky-Wojtkowitz 1993: 24ff.

brtan, and dPon slob byams pa. **98b** He became a great scholar of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* and was appointed abbot of the Shel dkar monastery by order of the Dalai Lama and according to the prophecy of the gNas chung chos skyong. In the 10th month of the fire-horse year (1726 A.D.) he arrived at the dGa' ldan lhun po palace in Shel dkar with the necessary items he had received. After being ceremonially enthroned in the same month, he took care of the affairs of the monastery like the former abbots. During the great prayer of the fire-sheep year (1727 A.D.) he gave teachings on the *bKa' gdams pha chos* and during the summer and winter religious festivities he gave many further teachings. He used to study the *sūtra* and the *tantra* to a great extent and practise meditation on many *yi dam* divinities such as 'Jigs byed bcu gsum ma. In two meditation monasteries (*sgrub sde*) he introduced the rituals for this divinity. He gave twenty *bal tam* (Nepalese money) for the yearly ceremonies in the fourth month in recurrence of the passing away of the former abbot. When he went to perform religious prayer service (*zhabs brtan*) for the Dalai Lama he offered a gold and copper *maṅdal* to the sDe yang college in 'Bras spungs. From the fire-horse (1726 A.D.) to the iron-pig year (1731 A.D.) he then performed many good deeds according to both [the civil and religious] laws for the Shel dkar monastery. **99b** Herewith the enumeration of the short biographies of the dGe lugs pa abbots is completed.

99b–109b The way in which the abbots made the doctrine grow

The deeds of the dGe lugs pa abbots are related again giving in great detail rituals, religious teachings, descriptions of ritual dances, and ceremonies. These generally follow the dGe lugs pa tradition with few adaptations to the local context.

109b–110b Verses of praise dedicated to the dGe lugs pa abbots of Shel dkar and the dGe lugs pa tradition.

111a–113b Verses which relate again in brief people and places of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*, introduce the compilation of the text and the relevant sources, as described in the following paragraph, and invoke auspicious circumstances and the protection of the gods.

113b–116a Final remarks on the compilation of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*

In this area in the past there were many great and holy people as well as scholars expert in the works on religious history (*chos 'byung*) and other historical documents. However, nobody ever wrote about the origin and the deeds of the lords of the lHo pa lineage in relation to the spread of the Buddhist

doctrine. Despite my humble achievements, still I felt the need to write a simple work on this topic. When the government let a new *bKa' gyur* be printed, the *bla ma* in charge of this task suggested that I write about the origin of the lHo *bdag*, their deeds, and the features of the Shel dkar area. At first I made something like a guide (*dkar chag*) based on the books I could consult. Then some friends, after seeing this little work, suggested to me to write a complete and detailed historical work (*lo rgyus chos 'byung*). *Si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and his lineage constituted the very basis for the spread of the holy doctrine in this area. Thinking about this fact, feeling deep faith in the great abbots of the past and overcoming my laziness I decided to write. The basic documents for the compilation of this book are the genealogical documents of the lHo *bdag* (*lHo pa'i rus yig*), the documents on the origin of the Sa skya *dpon chen* (*Sa skya dpon chen rnams 'byung khungs*), biographies of many *bla ma* such as dPang lo [tsā ba] and his descendants, the religious history of *dGa' ldan*, *Vaidūrya ser po*, the *Seng rdzong dkar chag*, and so on. Besides, I consulted the reliable oral accounts of famous people of the past laid down in writing such as the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum*.

I started writing in the month of the flowers (4th month) of the iron-pig year (1731 A.D.). On an auspicious day,⁴¹⁰ the eighth day (*dkar cha rgyal ba'i gnyis pa*)⁴¹¹ of the 1st month (*cho phrul zla ba*)⁴¹² in the water-male-mouse year of the 12th *rab byung* (1732 A.D.) in my cell of the gSer gling *grwa khang* close to the main temple of the Shel dkar monastery the work was completed; 2,693 years after the birth of Śākyamuni in Lumbini in the iron-monkey year; 375 years after the birth of Tsong kha pa in the fire-bird year (1357 A.D.); 347 years after *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and the great translator Grags pa rgyal mtshan founded this monastery in Shel dkar of La stod in the wood-ox year of the sixth *rab byung* (1385 A.D.); 88 years after the tradition of the dGa' ldan pa was established in Shel dkar, the white umbrella of the religious and political rule of the Fifth Dalai Lama having covered China, Mongolia, and Tibet, and the [first] great abbot had come taking over the estates and assembling the monks in the water-sheep year (1643 A.D.); 86 years after the introduction of the rules for studying the doctrines of the *sūtra* and the *tantra* in the wood-bird year of the 11th *rab byung* (1645 A.D.).

The *Shel dkar chos 'byung legs bshad nor bu'i me long skal bzang mgrin rgyan* by the lord of scholars Shel dkar ba Ngag dbang skal ldan rgya mtsho narrates the origin of the rulers of [La stod] lho and their religious deeds, the foundation of the monastery in La stod rdo rje ri, one of the so-called "three mountains of gTsang", and the biography of its abbots. The biography of the dGe lugs pa abbots, after Tsong kha pa's tradition was established there, is given in a particularly detailed way. Therefore this book should be considered very precious for the lHo rgyud *khri skor* and the Shel dkar monastery.

This book used to be available in two copies, one in *dbu chen* (*dbu can*) and one in *dbu chung* (*dbu med*). However, both got damaged, dirty, and nearly unreadable either because they were read too often

⁴¹⁰ Astrological details are given in the text according to the *Dus 'khor*.

⁴¹¹ Metaphorical definition of the eighth day.

⁴¹² *Cho 'phrul* is one name of the Great Prayer held in the first month.

by many people interested in this history or because they were handled carelessly. Being in danger of disappearing completely a new copy was made in the first month of the *dkar po* year (earth-snake) of the 16th *rab byung* (1929 A.D.) with the support of the monk Blo bzang bstan 'dzin tshul khriims rgyal mtshan.

May thereby the knowledge of culture spread in all directions.

May all living beings obtain the faculty of narrating without interruption the history of the origin of religion.

May the good come forth (*subham*).

THE WORLD OF THE SHEL DKAR CHOS 'BYUNG

Concluding remarks on the founding history of Shel dkar

by Guntram Hazod

The world of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* is above all the world of the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum*, the "thirteen propitious deeds" of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen. This chapter narrates the events accompanying the foundation of fortress and monastery in Shel dkar and together with the preceding short chapter on the genealogy of the lHo *bdag* – based on the *lHo pa'i rus yig* – it supplies us with an important source on the way these events unfolded, laying down the basis for the spread of Buddhism in this region. This basis is political, socio-economical, and religio-historical. The *chos 'byung*, in whose framework we find these data, often allows one to recognize the origins of the sources: the narrative heritage of the local oral tradition, which in the case of the hymns of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen presents certain epic traits and which is close to popular folk tales. This heritage integrates the data from written sources at the disposal of the author. The fact that the history of the noble dynasty as well the history and geography of the locality of Shel dkar is accorded such ample space in the book is certainly also related to the author's own Shel dkar origin. As a religious protagonist of the dGe lugs pa epoch he not only advocates the perspectives of this religious movement and its time, but also the narrower perspectives of the history of this area. This becomes evident in the happenings which transform the "hill of the white crystal" (Shel dkar ri) into the central place of events. It is worthwhile to separately present the essential moments of these events in their causal as well as their structural connection.

1. The gardens of rGyal nor and the union of fortress and monastery in Shel dkar

Right from the beginning the book leaves no doubt about the question upon whom the spreading of the holy doctrine generally depends: "The growth of the doctrine depends upon a king of religion (*chos rgyal*)" (folio 3b), a fact whose development the text places at the reign of king lHa tho tho ri gnyan btsan following the orthodox Tibetan tradition. On a regional level the appearance of the "rulers of the southern region" (lHo brgyud *bdag po*), to whom the region owes the spreading of the doctrine, is seen in this tradition.

What exactly does this mean? – Chronologically considered, this means firstly the establishment of a political rule in a land which is still without a "lord of the people" (*mi bdag*) (folio 8b). As to the way it developed, three centres are relevant for this region: the ancient Ding ri sGang dkar, the residence of Rin chen spo in rGyal nor, and the Shel dkar castle.

With Ding ri sGang dkar, the old administrative centre of the *khri skor* La stod lho, a first political centralization became apparent which united the smaller leaderships already established in former times (namely those of Pha drug, Zur tsho, Chu drug, and Gram tsho; cf. Map). Ding ri is already known to us as one of the subdivisions of Ru lag during the Tibetan kingdom and then as the dwelling of Pha dam pa sangs rgyas. Later it became the seat of the early lHo *bdag* (and lHo brgyud *khri dpon*), starting with Rin chen dpal, who came from the nephew lineage (*dbon brgyud*) of Śākya bzang po (folio 9a, 10a). At the time of Phyug po khri dpal La stod lho comprised four federative units (*tsho*) as mentioned in the *Byang pa lho bdag po'i gdung rabs* (folio 7b). After the hereditary position of the lHo *bdag* had been taken over by the (related) lineage of Shes phrug (at the end of the thirteenth century), under the lHo *bdag* Don yod dpal bzang po the residence was transferred to the "middle of La stod lho", to the valley of rGyal nor, not least for strategic reasons against the enemy armies from the north (folio 9b, 10a). Now we are in the immediate vicinity of the soaring hill of rGyal mo ri (at the southern exit of rGyal nor), upon which *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen will later erect the Shel dkar fortress. The chronology of the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum* now makes it evident that the following foundation of the monastery of Shel dkar implies the political and socio-economical structures given by the existence of the court of the lHo *bdag*. These prerequisites are based to a large extent on the assertion and recognition of the prince's sacred political power and prestige, rendered as *mnga' thang*. It is on this that the necessary loyalty of the vassals and smaller headmen depends. Furthermore, such power and prestige should also be seen in connection with the establishment and extension of feudal principles which the text mentions in the context of the foundation of the new capital in rGyal nor (i.e. Rin chen spo).¹

Originally the valley of rGyal nor was the area of settlement of communities coming from Khams in the surroundings of the villages of Kham pa rgyal and Nor bu. The joining of the two parts – as explained in the text – to make up the toponym "rGyal nor" corresponds to a transformation of these areas and their arable land into a "subject territory" (*shing mnga' shabs*) (folio 10a) of the new local princely residence (*rgyal sa*). This transformation is accompanied by a large-scale economic project which served to create new fields (*shing du btul*) (folio 11a) in the plains north of Shel dkar (in gNas thang und Nas lung) and which required the construction of large irrigation canals (*jur ba*). The irrigation system was planned to collect snow water from upper rGyal nor in artificial ponds (*lo rdzing*)

¹ There is no reason to suppose that the *mnga' thang* (majesty) of the later post-dynastic Tibetan princes basically does not have the same function as in the case of the early Tibetan kings. In this context the study by G. Tucci is still the authoritative standard. In his work he sees the sacred character of the kings in the *mnga' thang* which is the sacred force of the divine ancestor that manifests itself in the king, being handed down from father to son in the course of the construction of the succession. With the enthronement the king guarantees the order of the world and vice versa "if the *mnga' thang* is extinguished or corrupted, the grass will dry up and everything will go wrong" (Tucci 1955: 200). In the joint recognition of this conception of the sacred king we see one of the pre-conditions for the annulment of decentralized structures and the enforcement of a comprehensive political centralism.

which can still be seen throughout the area (plate 9). A "register" (*tho*) administered by the court kept a record of the distribution of water to the individual fields (and in all probability also of the distribution and organization of the work to maintain the system). In this description we find a centralistic system of water distribution bound up with the establishment and extension of the "relevant estates" (*rdzong gzhis*) which obviously led to an increase in the economic output, to an "increase in the granaries": "The estates became very wealthy and the granaries (*bang ba*) increased" (folio 11a). Speaking of this cultivated land under the direct control of the ruler, the text gives a colourful description of sumptuous gardens which surround the palace and whose entrance was adorned by a *kanika-stūpa*.

This climate of a flourishing centralized rule, albeit local, "where the lHo *bdag* prosperously ruled the subjects" (*'bangs rnams bde bar skyongs bar mdzad pa yin no*) (folio 11b) is abruptly marred by the war with northern La stod which results in the occupation of Rin chen spo and the imprisonment of young *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen. But, as we will see further on, a kind destiny allowed him to return home strengthened and with the necessary insignia of power whereupon he ordered the erection of the mighty and unconquerable fortress of Shel dkar. In this markedly invigorated environment of political power which links up with the already laid out "gardens of rGyal nor" the relevant religious protagonists now enter the scene. Referring to the prophecy on the founding of the monastery (folio 23a, 34a), already made by the so-called first abbots (dPang lo tsā ba und Byang chub rtse mo), *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen is asked by Grags pa rgyal mtshan if he is prepared to provide the necessary means for building the monastery. This includes the transfer (*bskur*) of a number of villages as *mchod gzhis* (religious estates) for the subsistence (*bsas*) of the monks and the maintenance of the monastery (folio 23b). The readiness to provide for these material needs by the lord of Shel dkar (which did not come about without grumblings from the local *sde pa* and *dpon po*) (folio 23b) finally released the forces necessary for the realization of the religious projects mentioned by the *Lags mdzad bcu gsum*, the founding of temples and colleges, etc.

"lHo *bdag* Chos kyi rin chen provided excellent material for the construction (of the first temples), the great translator (Grags pa rgyal mtshan) selected the land and bestowed his blessing by performing tantric rituals" (folio 24a). A unity of fortress and monastery (*rdzong* and *chos sde*) arose from whose revenues one third accrued for the maintenance of the monastery and its branches and for the great summer and winter ceremonies (*dbyar chos*, *dgun chos*) (folio 33b). The tasks of the abbot in this union of ruler and priest included the functions of religious teacher for the lHo *bdag* and present "great lord of religion" (*chos kyi bdag po chen po*).

The mechanisms which we encounter here are known as such. We find ourselves in the atmosphere of a contract between patron and priest which is basically an atmosphere of "exchanging gifts" between taker and giver and which falls under the purview of a compulsory mutual obligation: the seigniorial protection and material support through the "lord of gifts" (*sbyin bdag*) is faced by the "religious gifts" of recognizing the patron as *chos rgyal*, whose spiritual protection by the priest is as mandatory as the ruler's obligation to serve the religious cause. This "contract" which contains a legal as well as an

economic consequence is theologically defined in its essence. It encompasses the ruler in his entire person and position. He is carried in the wake of the doctrine since the spirit of his gift is just as religious: the protection, the land he gives away, and the revenues accrued from it are "religious earnings" whose virtually karmic fruits must be rated according to the hierarchical position of the giver. Thus, he is a prince who, as protector of the doctrine, does not stand outside it, but in its midst. What is more, he is its driving force, as far as its propagation is concerned, through the provision of the relevant funds for the founding of monasteries, temples, statues, etc.: "Were he to build the temple... he would avoid all hindrances in life. Were he to fail to do so hindrances would affect him badly" (folio 28a). This means that the personal religious merits whose result always also applies (and should apply) to the entire country was in perpetual need of renewal which eventually resulted in the never-ending chain of religious deeds treated in the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum*.

Someone who gives so much must always have been a pious and learned Buddhist. This is the picture of the lHo *bdag* and the protagonists of the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum* which the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* paints from the very beginning. But it withholds a basic change which concerns the nature of the ruler himself. In this context the twelfth propitious deed makes clear that the ruler's *mnga' thang* is achieved through the "religious nature" (*chos phyogs*) of his works. Dependent on the quality of this virtually inner *mnga' thang* is the increase of the outer one (*phyi'i mnga' thang*), which is understood as the "increase of the outward prosperity of the government" (*rgyal srid kyi phyi'i longs spyod rgya cher 'phel ba*), whose wealth is contingent on the thriving of community, land, and cattle (folio 33a). Together these two make up the "perfect *mnga' thang*" (*mnga' thang phun sum tshogs pa*), essential for a "lord of the people" (*mi rje*), who rules by "both (religious and civil) laws" (*lugs gnyis*) (folio 33a). In this world there is theoretically no more room for the traditional principles on which the ancient *mnga' thang* was based (such as the principle of divine descent which was mentioned above); they have been suspended, or at least been downgraded in their importance. But the text can pass over mutely these discontinuities accompanying the history of the Tibetan *chos rgyal*, for they do not touch upon the proclaimed aim of the reign: the prosperity of the country. Then and now it is seen in the sacredness of the sovereignty. But in the context of the established union of castle and monastery it envelops the land and its subjects in an entirely new mantle of religious deeds and works.

2. The hill of Shel dkar: the geographical position

One hundred *dpag tsad* (c. 1,300 km) to the north of Bodhgayā there is the Land of Snow, the Land of Phyag na padma. In this area there is Shel dkar rdo rje ri of Ru lag looking like rJe btsun 'phag ma (sGrol ma). In this way Shel dkar ri, the centre of the southern country,

looks like Kailāsa encircled by one hundred thousand suns.
 (folio 22a, 22b).

At the beginning of the seventh *legs mdzad* (folio 21a, 22b) we find a description of the geographical position of the new centre of the southern region, which is dominated by the hill of Shel dkar. The description follows the classic model of groups of four which, as is known, we frequently meet in the Tibetan tradition (and elsewhere) whenever a "centre" is to be given prominence. In terms of fact we find four holy places (*gnas chen bzhi*), four snowy mountains (*gangs chen bzhi*), and four

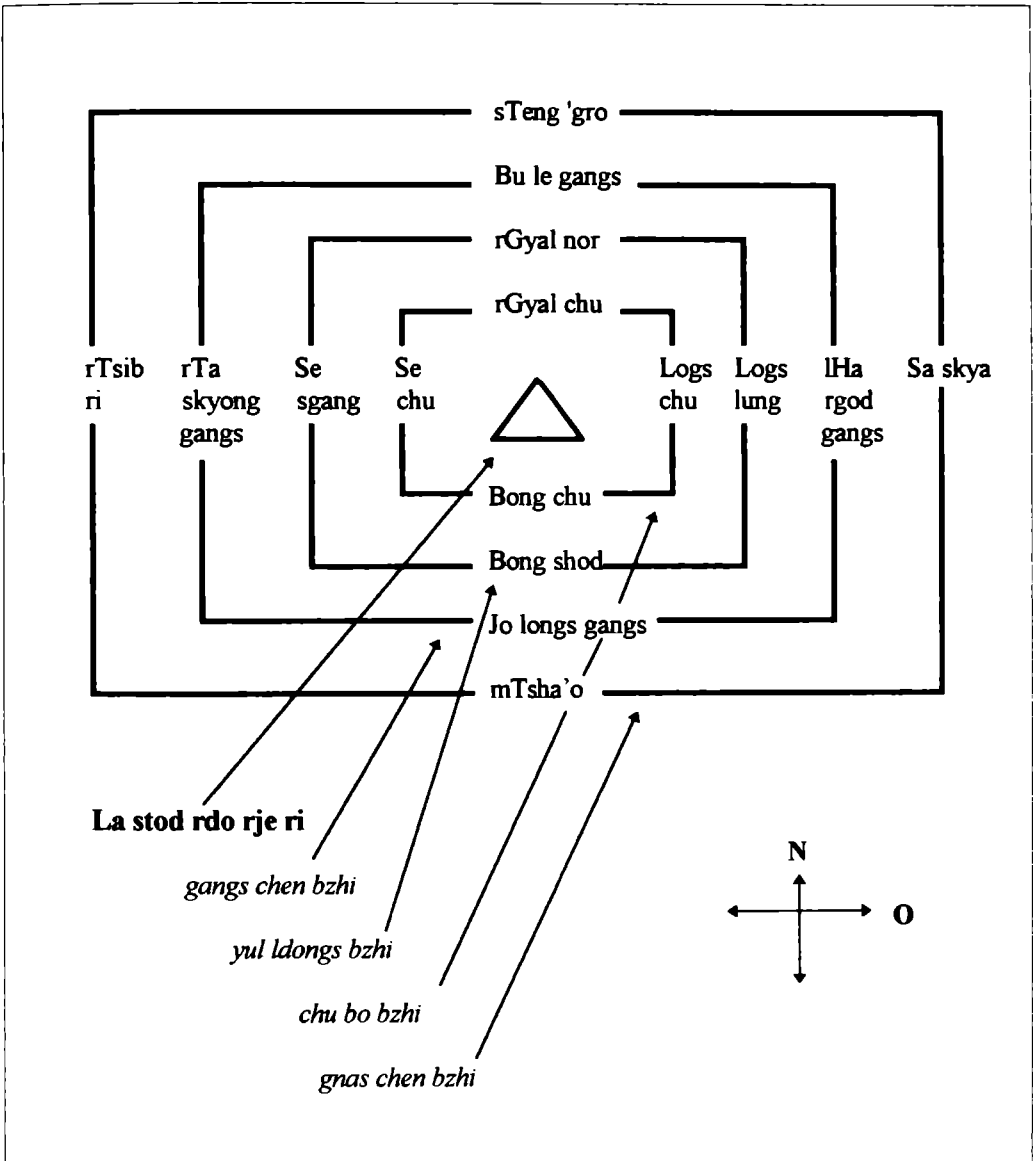


Fig. 1: The geographical position of the centre of La stod lho, La stod rdo rje ri

"countries" (*yal ldongs bzhi*) with four rivers (*chu bo bzhi*) arranged in concentric circles around the capital (*rgyal sa*) which is at the same time surrounded by seven hills in the shape of the "seven precious gems of the government" (*rgyal srid rin chen sna bdun*). With the exception of Sa skya, the first of the four holy places, all the geographical names come from the closer and wider vicinity of Shel dkar, and the author who originates from here obviously adopted the local oral tradition which is still alive today in this form, as we were able to ascertain. This model of religiously interpreted geography catches the sacredness of the landscape in a horizontal as well as a vertical dimension: mountain – plain (of the colonized space) – water, this is the well-known topographical vertical line of *ri – lung (thang) – chu* (mountain – cultivated valley/plain – water), which at the same time represents the places of different divine spheres of existence.² Four mountains, rivers, and settlements, each surround the centre

² Traditionally these are the categories of *lha*, *btsan*, and *klu*. The "songs of the high mountains" (*Gangs de'i mtho po'i glu*), a fixed part of the folklore in Shel dkar (see examples a, b, c) and generally of gTsang stod, are a special expression of the spiritualization of the landscape in whose ideal centre the mountain is situated; it combines all the levels mentioned here which have not only religious attributes, but also social and political components. In the sGrol ma ri (alias Shel dkar ri) song (a), for example, we find the subdivision of fundament, middle, and top of the mountain with the ascription of household level, princely level, and level of the religious master. In the other example (b) the mountain has the contours of a tent, the fundament is a *maṇḍala*, and the top are the bones (of the kinship line), the place of the eagles. In the rTsis ri song (c) (the song of the great *gnas ri*, the rocky mountain with the dark bones) eagles and fish circle around the mountain to gather religious merits.

a) *ri 'di sgrol ma ri la*
rtsa ba mar nas bltas pas
rtsa ba drin chen pha ma
yar la yar zhog gsung byung

ri 'di sgrol ma ri la
rked pa yar nas bltas pas
rked pa 'go 'dren dpon pos
yar la yar zhog gsung byung

ri 'di sgrol ma ri la
rtse mo yar nas bltas pas
rtse mo rtsa ba'i bla mas
yar la yar zhog gsung byung

b) *rtsa ba maṇḍala shig shig*
mchod 'bru brgya yi babs sa
rked pa gur kral shig shig
ma dang mkha' 'gro'i bzhugs sa

and the whole is bordered by already established Buddhist holy places (such as Sa skya and the places of rGod gtsang pa, sTeng 'gro, Śrī ri) (see Map).

In the end this local geography is placed within the greater Tibetan space (referring to *spu rgyal bod* and its "characteristics") (folio 21a) which position in its turn is placed within the Indian Buddhist geography. In concrete terms this means being listed in relation to the distance from Bodhgayā (folio 22a), the place where Buddha was enlightened. Classic texts such as the *Ma ṇi bka' 'bum*, which the author refers to in this context, bestow an impression of validity on everything, all the more so when they are quoted in the context of the prophecy. Like Tibet in general, so is this place with all its external characteristics and auspicious signs (*long spyod kyi rten 'brel*) a prophesied place in the sense of a favourable "place for the spread of the doctrine" (*bstan pa 'phel ba'i sa*) (folio 22b).

The reader is thus gradually led to this newly developed source for the spreading of the doctrine, and in doing so the appearance of the hill itself, the ground on which castle and monastery stand, becomes the focus of attention. The original sacred aspect of this place is based on its being the seat of a goddess, namely, the "queen of the sky-walkers" (*mkha' gro'i rgyal mo*), rDo rje g.yu sgron ma. This mountain comes to be identified by the text as an effigy of sGrol ma (Tārā), the personal *yi dam* of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen (folio 14a). Behind this stands a change of the toponymy of rGyal mo ri, "the mountain of the [*mkha' gro'i*] *rgyal mo*" to sGrol ma ri, a change which is important because it corresponds directly to the events of the foundation of the fortress in which the protective goddess took part.

rtse mo gdung rtse rog rog
bya rgyal brgya yi babs sa

- c) *gnas chen rtsib ri ri la*
brag ri gdung rtse rog rog
brag ri 'di la 'khor ba'i
bya rgyal bsod nams bsags pa

rtsib ri byang la rgyugs pa'i
chu mo dga' ldan phu chu
chu mo de la 'khor ba'i
nya chung bsod nams bsags pa.

3. The "odyssey" of *si tu Chos kyi rin chen*

One of the prophecies the author refers to in connection with Shel dkar exclusively concerns the foundation of the fortress, especially with regard to its possible strategic function. Together with the fortresses on two other hills in gTsang (Ngam ru ri und Ri bo che), its erection on this very spot would give total control over the whole of gTsang (including mNga' ris smad) (folio 22b, 56a). As mentioned in the Introduction, this prophecy by the *Ratna'i spyi lung* is quoted by the author in connection with a chronologically later context dealing with entirely different political constellations (the seizure of power by the Fifth Dalai Lama and the end of the "dark era" of gTsang stod rgyal po), but this in no way diminishes its general strategic message. But then this is not hard to recognize. The "triangular rocky mountain" (*ri thur gsum brag*) rises steeply at the crossroads of two ancient routes, a south-north one (coming from Pha drug heading towards Byang ngam ring) and a west-east one from sKyid grong or from gNya' lam heading towards lHa rtse and Sa skya, via Ding ri. These roads were (and still are) as much traditional trade routes as they are ancient pilgrimage trails (such as those between Śrī ri [alias rTib ri] and Ding ri / Glang kor). So the spot for the capital was also favourable for the establishment of a market which – as is known from the later Shel dkar rdzong – especially flourished during the time of the great annual celebrations when the walls protected the business conducted by the pilgrims, tradesmen, and the nomads camping in the vicinity.

As the delineations in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* clearly show, the reasons for the foundation of the fortress were a reaction to the outcome of the war between La stod lho and La stod byang, in the course of which the walls of Rin chen spo had proved to be indefensible. The erection of the new residence of Shel dkar was preceded by a strange turn in the relation between the two countries as a result of which lHo regained the autonomy it had lost to Byang, and which is closely connected with the hero of the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum, si tu Chos kyi rin chen*.³

The conflicts between lHo and Byang go back to the time of Don yod dpal bzang po and were fomented by repeated territorial claims of the Byang *bdag*. Thus transferring the residence to rGyal nor was already planned with regard to defending the northern borders of lHo *khri skor*. The decisive raid of the troops of Byang, which led to the capture of young *si tu Chos kyi rin chen*, had been preceded by the defection of a number of vassals which coincided with a precarious situation at the southern court. This arose when – as can be deduced from the text – the previous lHo *bdag* (or lHo *khri dpon*), respectively, the father, uncle, and elder brother (*yab, khu bo, gcen*) of the young *si tu Chos kyi rin chen*

³ From other sources we learn very little about this conflict between lHo and Byang. The *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* sums up this chapter of the history of lHo as follows: "On one occasion they fought with the chieftain of Byang, but were defeated; therefore, by losing the districts they suffered great damages; nevertheless by fighting again they recovered it" (Tucci 1971: 191). On the other hand the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* says nothing about the fact that the districts were obtained through renewed fights; furthermore the dating of the conflict by the *Deb ther dmar po gsar ma* is too late – after the foundation of the monastery of Shel dkar (Tucci 1971: 191).

died in succession, so that the court, left without leadership, was helplessly exposed to the attacks of the enemy. We read that Amogha, the later (last) Sa skya *dpon chen*,⁴ tried to intervene at the Mongolian court in this connection (folio 7a). He at least succeeded in gaining the confidence of the emperor (Toyan Temür), who presented him – instead of the absent *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen – with the official edict for the assumption of the lHo *khri skor* and the title of *ta'i si tu*, together with the necessary seals (folio 7a).⁵

This intervention by Amogha, who was related to the lord of La stod byang on his mother's side,⁶ did not prevent the conquest of Rin chen spo and the capture of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen which had practically been prepared by treason in his own ranks (folio 12a, 12b). What now follows is a kind of odyssey of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen which inevitably contains some of the miraculous proceedings that are usually associated with an epic hero.

Si tu Chos kyi rin chen is taken by some officers via Gyang thang⁷ to Kha rta, to a place called

⁴ Cf. *rGya bod yig tshang* 362.

⁵ According to the remark in folio 37b Amogha's intervention would have to be set at a date before 1342 A.D. because it is said there that at the time of dPang lo tsā ba the edict and the seal were brought to *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen from China. dPang lo tsā ba died in 1342 A.D. In 1332/33 A.D. Toyan Temür, the last Yüan emperor who was responsible for the confirmation of titles, was enthroned, so that we can set this date as the earliest limit for these events. But *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, whose date of birth is not known to us and who died in 1402 A.D., must have been a boy at the time. Due to the lack of pertinent dates of the lHo *bdag* and the Byang *bdag* (in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* as well as in the *Byang pa gdung rabs*) a more concrete chronological determination of the events is hardly possible. It must be added that, according to Petech's research, Don yod dpal bzang po was in office as *dpon chen* around the year 1320 A.D. (as successor of Kun dga' rin chen and predecessor of Byang Yon btsun (Grags pa dar), who died before 1322 A.D.; Petech 1990: 79). The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* says that he died immediately after his accession to office in China, so that we can set the date of his death around 1320/21 A.D. He was followed by his brother Kun dga' chos skyong as lHo *khri dpon*, who held the office of *khri bdag* (chief administrator of the law) at the time of the foundation of Rin chen spo (folio 11a); he died shortly after his official appointment on the journey home from China in Sa skya (folio 6b). On the condition that the kinship relations of the lHo *bdag* in the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* are described correctly, the next lHo *bdag* and *khri dpon*, dKon mchog dpal bzang po, the elder son of Don yod dpal bzang po, must have been considerably older than his brother *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, since Amogha, his son, is situated one generation below his uncle *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen. Concerning the death of dKon mchog dpal bzang po the text contradicts itself, at one point he died after his appointment as *khri dpon* in China (folio 6b, 12a) (shortly after his predecessors), in another passage it is said that after his official appointment to "*khri dpon* of lHo rgyud he prosperously ruled the subjects (in rGyal nor)" (folio 11b).

⁶ This under the condition that Amogha also originates from the relation mentioned in folio 6b between dKon mchog dpal bzang po and Nam mkha' khye ma, daughter of Byang *bdag* rDor rje mgon po, and not from a relationship with some secondary wife not mentioned here.

⁷ In this plain immediately to the east of Shel dkar, at a halt, soldiers remarked to the captured *si tu* Chos kyi rin

Dam pa 'phrang. Here the officers set about drowning him in the river. After praying to the *yi dam* sGrol ma, a red knight and then two "messengers" (*mi bang*) appeared to *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and saved him. The red knight threatened the soldiers with the destructive power of nature should they kill the *chos rgyal*. Afterwards, the two *mi bang* delivered the Byang *bdag's* order to the soldiers that the prince was to be taken north, "invited" (*gdan 'dren pa*) to Ngam ring, the residence of the Byang *bdag* (folio 13a) which was duly carried out. Those who came to rescue *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen were his *pho lha* and his *yi dam*, namely the mountain god Pho lha lha btsan sGang dmar from Ding ri and rJe btsun sGrol ma (Tārā).

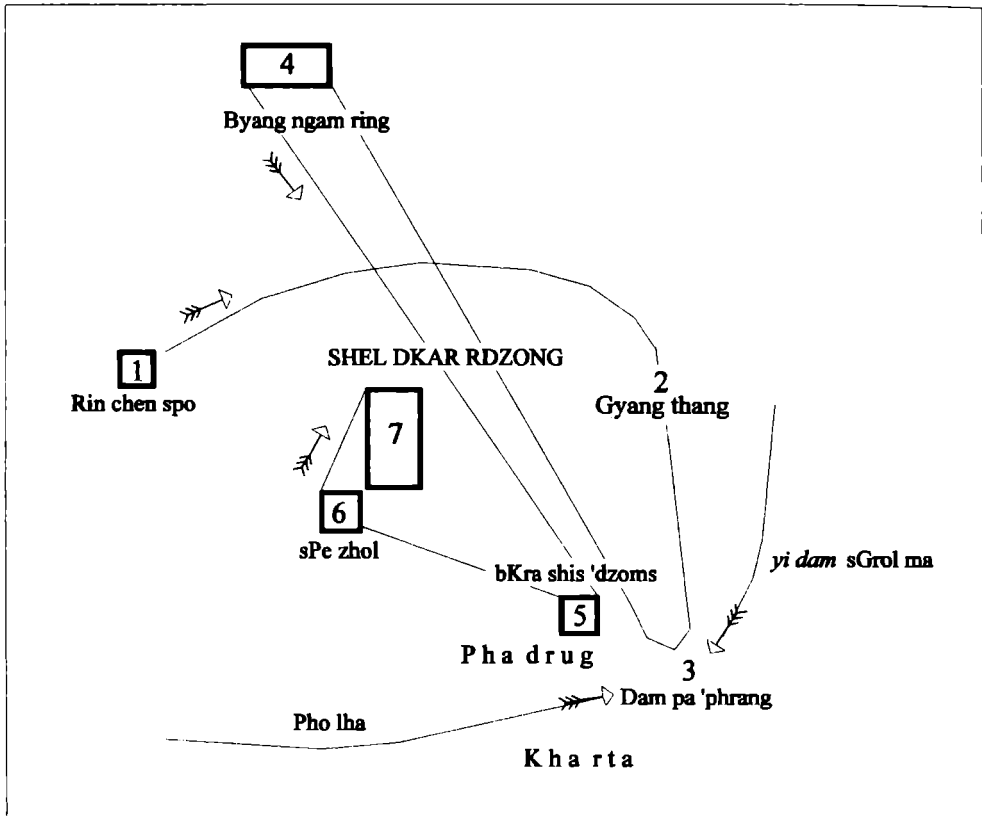


Fig.2: The "odyssey" of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen

The Byang *bdag* was deeply impressed by this rescue operation, not least because the favour of the gods was a clear sign of the legitimacy of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen's power. He granted liberties to him at his court and gave him his daughter (*lha lcam* Nam mkha' 'bum) in marriage. After the Byang *bdag* had convinced himself of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen's qualities as son-in-law and administrator according to

chen that their conquest of La stod lho would have failed if he had erected his residence on this hill (rGyal mo ri) (folio 12b).

"both [religious and civil] laws", he let him return to La stod lho as "his" lord and ruler of the southern country. At first *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and his followers stayed in bKra shis 'dzoms (in Pha drug), before he moved to the hill of rGyal mo ri where he erected a domicile (folio 13b) (the house sPe zhol of the text; cf. note 93). This rustic building was followed by the construction of the great fortress on the same spot, after having obtained the approval of the Byang *bdag*. Later Amogha intervened once more at the Mongolian court (speaking to Thoyan Temür's son) and obtained the official re-appointment of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen as lHo *khri dpon*; whereupon Amogha showed the emperor's order to the Byang *bdag*, who complied with it (folio 17a).

The two ruling families (who both supplied Sa skya *dpon chen* in the 14th century) were related by marriage since dKon mchog dpal bzang po. Regarded from the viewpoint of a "sociology of kinship relationship" the lHo *bdag*, who were related to the Byang *bdag* on the mother's side, were in the slightly lower position of recipients of women. And it is exactly into this constellation of power that we have to fit the behaviour of the lord of Ngam ring and young *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen. The lord of northern La stod does not appear as the conqueror who wants to fortify his rule over the southern region for all time; instead the text considers him as the "good uncle" or the father-in-law (to be)⁸ who puts his future son-in-law to the test, i.e. lets him "work off" the bride and dowry, before he dismisses him to lHo brgyud (to the patrilocal residence): "For a short while we will administer the law in the districts of lHo *khri skor*. In the future if you take care properly of my daughter, I will give you a good position" (folio 13b).

So we must consider the possibility that the war between lHo and Byang and the conquest of Rin chen spo might also have been carried out with a view to imposing the matrimonial relation which meant a contextual superiority for the Byang *bdag*.⁹ Here an "odyssey" is imposed on *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, the hero, but through his wisdom and through the guardianship of the gods it eventually secures him his bride and rule over his country.

4. The hill of Shel dkar and the source of the doctrine

In the abode of sPe zhol on rGyal mo ri, whose strategically favourable position had become evident to *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen during his captivity (see note 7), he now developed the plan to extend the existing walls so as to make a large fortress. In response to the argument that the people and animals living there needed adequate protection, the Byang *bdag*'s consent to the enlargement was given (folio

⁸ In this affinal constellation he represents the side of the *zhang*, the side of the "mother-brother" and giver of women, as far as classification is concerned.

⁹ In any case the clear supremacy of the Byang *bdag* corresponds to his position of giver of women. Here the married daughter appears as a "subject of barter and connection" within given or newly formulated constellations of power.

14a). A huge three-storeyed palace was created and it is said that the large, bright windows made it look like a white crystal (*shel dkar*) from afar. There are several different explanations for this new name of the locality; the text favours the one according to which the fortress looked like an "upside-down crystal bowl" (*shel dkar gyi ka yol kha pug*) (folio 14a). Another view held by the local people – which is mentioned but not considered any further by the author – is that a crystal bowl with crystal food (*shel dkar gyi bras*), bestowed by the resident goddess rDo rje g.yu sgron ma, is hidden in the mountain. Among the locals one can also hear that a white conch shell (*dung dkar*) is hidden in a cave in the mountain, reference of which is also made elsewhere in the text (folio 23a). The above-mentioned *mkha' 'gro* rDo rje g.yu sgron ma belongs to that group of wild mountain goddesses whose demonic nature was once subdued by Padmasambhava, who converted them into protectors of the new doctrine (*bstan srung*); in the lamaistic classifications she appears among others as leader of the well-known group of bsTan srung ma bcu gnyis in the shape of a white goddess, whose "white body" is also described as a shimmering crystal.¹⁰ Could this mean that with the erection of the princely residence on the mountain which represents the body of the goddess her "secret" was brought to light, too?

After the palace had been completed, people saw the mountain as Tārā (looking eastward), on whose body the first buildings of the monastery of Shel dkar chos sde were being erected, namely the *Dus 'khor* (*Kālacakra*) temple on the "left breast" (*nur 'bur g.yon pa*) and "below the neck" (*mgul 'og*) respectively, and the great "school of philosophy" (*bshad grwa*) (completed in 1385 A.D.) "above the left knee" (*zhabs pus g.yon pa*). It is said that seven Nepalese craftsmen offered to equip the three main temples within the fortress, bSam grub lha khang, Phun tshog lha khang, and sGrol ma lha khang, which were erected for the suppression (*gnon pa*) of the demoness (*shar gyi ri bo srin mo*) residing on this (the eastern) side of the hill. But this *srin mo* represents none other than the demonic aspect of the local goddess herself which is subdued through the fortification of the rule and the erection of religious buildings upon her body, so that in the end the goddess crystallizes in the transcendental figure of Tārā. The mountain becomes the sGrol ma ri, the mountain of Tārā, whose body now, in the positive (i.e. Buddhist) sense, incorporates the house of the ruler as well as that of the doctrine. In this context of transformation, or reinterpretation of the mountain, respectively, the "secret" of the goddess also changes: the nourishing, hidden place of the female cave where the bowl or white conch shell of the goddess is hidden becomes the "secret place" (*gsang gnas*) (alias the female genitals) of Tārā from which the source of the doctrine (*chos 'byung*) now flows (folio 23a). It seems that in this place the actual centre of the sacredness of the mountain manifests itself of which the prophecies speak and which reveals the auspiciousness of its future great fame in the context of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* (folio 23a).

¹⁰ Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 181, 190f. A connection between rDo rje g.yu sgron ma and "crystal mountain" (*shel ri*) is also given in the case of the great *gnas ri* Dag pa shel ri ("pure crystal mountain"), the central mountain within the pilgrimage region of Tsa ri (south-eastern Tibet) (Huber 1994: 352).

5. The protectors of Shel dkar

rJe btsun sGrol ma and Pho lha lha btsan sGang dmar

As we can see, the figure of the "goddess" plays an important role behind the scene of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung*. As "lady of Shel dkar" (Jo mo shel dkar ma) she encompasses the basic aspects of the Tibetan goddess: the demonic aspect of the local *srin mo* and the wild, but at the same time food-providing mountain goddess (in the local manifestation of rDo rje g.yu sgron ma) who, after the erection of the first temples, acts as protectress of this new location of the doctrine. A mask is dedicated to her which was kept in the *mgon khang* of the first of the three temples together with the statues of Gur mgon lcam dral (folio 20a). Situated at the outermost border of this female-divine spectrum is the aspect of the female transcendent Bodhisattva Tārā, who eventually encompasses the entire sacredness of this place in the identification of the mountain as sGrol ma ri. As personal *yi dam* of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen she (rJe btsun sGrol ma alias rJe btsun 'Phag ma) appears as a driving force in the context of the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum*; she rescues him and leads him to his future bride (to the court of the Byang bdag); she protects the birth of his son, Lha btsan skyab ma, and, appearing to him in his dreams, induces *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen to expand his religious works such as the monasteries and temples in the vicinity of the holy places of rTsi b ri (bSam gling, Seng dzong, etc.). The third of the first three temples on Shel dkar ri is dedicated to her, as well as numerous paintings and statues, into which – as mentioned in one passage – the seven divine craftsmen "disappeared" after completing their work (folio 30a).

In the second temple, Phun tshog lha khang, among other things a mural painting of the "male" rescuer of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, Pho lha lha btsan sGang dmar, was to be found. In the text he is specified as a member of the *dregs pa'i sde dpon btsan rgod 'bar ba spun bdun* (folio 13a), who are probably closely connected with the well-known group (led by Tsi'u dmar po) of the *btsan rgod 'bar ba spun bdun*. They are the leaders of the wild *btsan*, armed, red-helmeted men on red horses.¹¹ It is in this shape (as *mi dmar rta dmar*) that the mountain god appeared at the site of the dramatic event in Kha rta, after *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen had evoked his tutelary deity (the *yi dam* sGrol ma). The god shocked the soldiers by threatening them with a devastating storm should they drown *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen in the river (folio 12b).

Pho lha lha btsan sGang dmar is identical with Ding ri sGang dmar, a mountain in the vicinity of Glang kor, the famous centre of Pha dam pa sangs rgyas' mission in Tibet (early 12th century). This mountain god with his pervasive presence protects La stod lho and is considered to be related by kin to the ancestral gods of the ancient kings of Tibet (*Gung thang gdung rabs* 130). He is still worshipped by the nomadic communities of Ding ri and upper Pha drug and traditionally was considered a particular protector of the military camp of Ding ri (Ding ri dmag gar). With his ministers not only does he protect the whole area, but has relations as far away as Gung thang, gCung ri bo che, and even remote Dol po.

¹¹ Cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 170ff.

In fact he is reported as *skyes lha* of one king of Gung thang who was born in Ding ri (*Gung thang gdung rabs* 130) and as deity embodied by a *gtor ma* on the altars of Ban tshang in eastern Dol po.¹² The people of gCung ri bo che narrate that he helped Thang stong rgyal po in taking the central wooden pole (*srog shing*) of the great *stūpa* from the forests of Kha rta to the construction site on the northern bank of the gTsang po. Ding ri sGang dmar has particularly close ties with Kha rta (south-east of La stod lho), since the mountain god and lord of sBas yul mkhan pa lung, Zur ra rwa skyes, is classified as one of his ministers.¹³ In Kha rta – according to the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* – Ding ri sGang dmar appeared in his function as *pho lha* of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen, a function which goes back to the time when the lineage of Shes phrug took over the position of the lHo *bdag* in Ding ri, thus placing itself under the ancestral protection of the mountain god.

Since the text makes no mention of a connection between *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen (or his family) and Kha rta, the question arises why the soldiers took their captive on that long road to the south-east of La stod lho to drown him at the place called Dam pa 'phrang. Or, perhaps, should we ask what motivated his biographers to transfer the story of his momentous rescue to this remote corner?

The context of the story suggests that the locality should be connected with the figures of the rescuers. Tārā, in particular, whose evocation on this spot induced the rescue operation. Indeed Kha rta is closely connected with a famous "historical manifestation" of the goddess, namely with the great sacred woman of La stod lho, the *mkha' 'gro* Ma gcig Zha ma (also Zha chung ma, born in 1062 A.D.) from Pha drug. As we were able to ascertain, the biography of Ma gcig Zha ma which is narrated in the *Deb ther sngon po*¹⁴ has an analogy in the local tradition of Kha rta.¹⁵ These analogies relate to the passage about her incisive biographic experience: the syphilis-like disease which befell her after the death of her teacher rMa lo tsā ba, the "diagnosis" by Pha dam pa sangs rgyas and her eventual healing and the spiritual perfection which she attained, among other places, in the seclusion of the southern border region. This process of personal development corresponds to the local narration according to which she healed her disease (a form of *klu nad*, a disease caused by the *klu*, water-spirits) by draining up a lake in the valley of the Kha rta chu, a lateral valley of the Bong chu. The geomorphological features of this valley prove that a lake formed by a moraine had effectively existed there and the account of Ma gcig Zha ma can be considered a mythical explanation of natural phenomena (plate 23). At the same time this "lake story" also contains a description of the cultural origin of the land: the draining of the lake allowed the settlement of the nine *tsho* (federative units) of Kha rta¹⁶ and of the

¹² Ethnographic data by C. Schicklgruber.

¹³ Concerning the relations mentioned here see Diemberger & Hazod (forthcoming).

¹⁴ *Deb ther sngon po* 272–279; Roerich 1988: 219–226.

¹⁵ Cf. Diemberger & Hazod 1994.

¹⁶ It is characteristic that the place of the bursting of the lake is marked by the *yul lha* (a *brag btsan*) of the first *tsho* (i.e. Yul 'bar) and the common sacrificial site for the superior Zu ra rwa skyes. The shrine is situated at the end of a moraine, the rock of the red *brag btsan* is opposite to it, with the river cutting its way between them. For

first Buddhist temple (attributed to Ma gcig Zha ma).

So this "place of origin" reflects the story of a healing process which at the same time includes the story of a process of "becoming holy", this being the transition from the wild and demonic nature of the *mkha' 'gro* to the spiritual transcendence of the Tārā.¹⁷ It is possible that the expression "Dam pa 'phrang" – "Holy place of narrowness (of passage, transition)", an expression which is used both in the topographical as well as in the religious sense¹⁸ – refers to this significant locality in Kha rta. This would mean that the episode of the saving of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen directly relates to this local narrative heritage and that the evocation of the *yi dam* sGrol ma stands in an inner connection with the destiny of the protagonist of this lake and healing story.

bKra shis 'od 'bar

bKra shis 'od 'bar, the "Burning Light of Blessing", is the divine guardian of the Shel dkar monastery and the religious protector of the Bo dong pa school, according to whose tradition he was introduced from India to Tibet by dPang lo tsā ba (1276–1342 A.D.), the so-called first abbot of Shel dkar chos sde (folio 37b). The actual foundation of the Bo dong tradition goes back to Bo dong Phyogs las nam rgyal (1375–1451 A.D.), the fourth abbot of Shel dkar chos sde (see Introduction). He was born in dByi gu (north of rTsig ri) and maternally he descended from dPang lo tsā ba. His paternal line (*rus*) is given as that of the Zha ma and his biography and the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* mention the two prominent members of this family from Pha drug in this context, the *lo tsā ba* Seng ge rgyal po and his sister Ma gcig Zha ma (folio 44b).¹⁹ The great popularity of Phyogs las nam rgyal and bKra shis 'od 'bar is still deeply rooted in the areas of the original religious works of the Bo dong pa.²⁰ In the text

the local people of mKha rta this place is also regarded as the starting point for the northern approach to the Hidden Valley of mKhan pa lung.

¹⁷ Cf. Diemberger & Hazod 1994: 35.

¹⁸ Cf. Das 1989: 853; Roerich 1985, Vol. 6: 142.

¹⁹ Cf. Biography of Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las nam rgyal 16.

²⁰ A "beer-offering song" (*chang bshad*) dedicated to Phyogs las nam rgyal is widely known in gTsang stod and is sung by the lay population at all kinds of larger festivities. The men sit together in a circle and are then ceremonially served beer by the women. The latter sing the "beer-offering song" to each guest. The one being offered the beer at the moment is identified with Phyogs las nam rgyal, who shall lend support on one's way; the guest is asked to empty half the bowl after the *phud gtor* (i.e. three drops from the bowl for the gods), then the whole contents, three bowls altogether.

sbya ri'i (?) lam 'di dkaḡ byas

sbya ri'i lam 'di gzungḡ byas

Phyogs las nam rgyal phyag bzhes ma la phyag bzhes

bKra shis 'od 'bar is mentioned quite rarely which is related to the fact that the monastic ritual adoration (*bskang gso*) of the *srung ma* was more or less a matter of course; he is mentioned by name where this matter of course is questioned and then we meet the deity in his ascribed function as first (male) protector of the monastery and of the lives of the people, cattle, and fields connected to it. The famine of the 17th century and the death of the seventeenth abbot who drowned in an irrigation canal in rGyal nor is ascribed to the irritation of the *chos bdag*, since – as the author points out – the worship of bKra shis 'od 'bar was neglected at this time, due to a preoccupation with philosophical studies at the costs of tantric rituals (folio 54a). A similar neglect is noted by the author at the beginning of the dGe lugs pa period of the monastery: after a considerable loss of cattle, the abbot turned to the Dalai Lama for advice who finally confirmed that the traditional worship of bKra shis 'od 'bar had to be continued. Significantly he further ordered the worship of the protective deity of the dGe lugs pa (i.e. gNas chung chos skyong alias Pe har) (folio 65a). The great *bskang gso*, the rituals of worship, for bKra shis 'od 'bar and Pe har were held monthly on the 29th day and at the end of the year when bKra shis 'od 'bar appeared in the course of a *'bag 'cham* (dance with masks) of the newly installed dGe lugs pa tradition (folio 101a, 102b).

In sPo rong dPal mo chos sdings, which was not subjected to the upsetting transformations by the dGe lugs pa, bKra shis 'od 'bar was represented in the dances by an ape mask (plate 19) and it is said that it represented the "presence" of Phyogs las nam rgyal, who had brought the deity there. A *lha pa* (oracle) had the function of the local medium of the god who was generally described to us in effusive terms as a kindly divine appearance, benevolently treating all the affairs of the community.

As a rule, the standard iconography depicts the *dharmapāla* with benevolent features: he is a rider with a red hat, sitting on a blue horse which is called rLung rta sngon po; in his right hand he holds a *mdung dar* (lance), in his left a flame jewel, and he frequently also carries a knife with a bright shaft which is thought to be the ritual knife of Phyogs las nam rgyal (plate 21). The wrathful aspects of bKra shis 'od 'bar are embodied in a separate deity which is called rDo rje rgyal mtshan, a fierce knight riding his horse Phur bu rag pa (plate 18, 20).

sbya ri'i lam 'di dkag byas

sbya ri'i lam 'di gzungs byas

Phyogs las rnam rgyal phud gtor ma la phud gtor

sbya ri'i lam 'di dkag byas

sbya ri'i lam 'di gzungs byas

Phyogs las rnam rgyal phyed bzhes ma la phyed bzhes

sbya ri'i lam 'di dkag byas

sbya ri'i lam 'di gzungs byas

Phyogs las rnam rgyal khrung tag ma la khrung tag.

In Shel dkar, when we asked for the abodes of bKra shis 'od 'bar, we were referred to Pha drug, to the village Shan chung in Pha drug smad (lower Pha drug), which was also once covered by a mythical lake. There, half-way up a mountain ridge behind the village, we found a simple red shrine and a small spring in the immediate vicinity (plate 22). This shrine is called Yul lha bKra shis 'od 'bar by the locals. According to the local oral tradition, dPang lo tsā ba rested here on his way back to Tibet from India; he put his hat on the ground and left the god – whom he was carrying along in his hat – behind.

But the term *yul lha* indicates an entirely different tradition, a "mountain cult" tradition which usually also appears in connection with territorial and socio-political principles of organization.²¹ The place on the opposite side of the river (i.e. Dza dkar chu, a confluent of the Bong chu) is called Pha glang and is regarded as the first of the six *pha*, the original clans of Pha drug (*pha drug*, "six fathers"). Pha glang and wide areas of Pha drug smad and Pha drug stod are strewn with ancient ruins whose layout and dimension indicate a state-like form of organization, a political centralism whose core was probably Pha glang. Judging by our information to date, we suppose that this *yul lha*-shrine goes back to the beginnings of this social structure. To our astonishment the radiocarbon dating of pieces of wood which we took with us from the ruins in the vicinity of the shrine resulted in the date of 971 A.D. +/- 50 years. The samples were only single pieces and efficient digging might bring much older material to light. It is quite conceivable that what we have here is the ancient *yul sde* of Pha drug (one of the sixteen subdivisions of Ru lag),²² on the other hand, the large buildings could be an indication of the "realm" of those mythical "Mon-kings" of which one hears so frequently in the area of mKhan pa lung such as king Bong shod pa or dBas ru dpa' bo.²³ The locals call the ruins of Pha drug "Mon-buildings" and the tombs of Pha glang "*mon dur sa*".

Whether bKra shis 'od 'bar is connected with this territory and with the "god of the land" (*yul lha*) of Shan chung right from the beginning, or whether this "bKra shis 'od 'bar-place" represents a secondary interpretation going back to the legend of the arrival of dPang lo tsā ba in Pha drug, is uncertain. In this context we have already indicated that the actual author of the Bo dong pa protector might be Phyogs las mam rgyal, who even has a direct genealogical connection to Pha drug.

Things become even more confusing when it is realized that there is a second tradition of bKra shis 'od 'bar, which, seen chronologically, is much older than that of Bo dong. The origin of this tradition points to mDo Khams and features a connection to the dBas clan, the clan from whose branch the lineage of *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen originates (the line of Shes phrug).²⁴ A study on the question of the

²¹ See for example the above-mentioned case of the *yul lha* of the first *tsho* (i.e. the village Yul 'bar) in mKha rta. The connection between *yul lha* and territorial principles as well as those of local politics was described for the first time by Walsh 1906: 203ff.

²² *bKa' thang sde lnga* 185.

²³ Cf. Diemberger 1994: 150.

²⁴ See the story of bKra shis 'od 'bar in the *gTam gyi tshogs* (394ff.) where his origin from Khams is indicated; according to the *Deb ther sngon po* the heart of Phag mo gru pa (1110–1170 A.D.) was buried in a "bKra shis 'od

historical connection between these two traditions is in preparation. For the moment matters can rest with the connections existing between bKra shis 'od 'bar, Bo dong Phyogs las mam rgyal, Pha drug, and *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen. As mentioned above, Pha drug was also one of the stations in *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen's "odyssey" where he resided for a while with his wife and followers in bKra shis 'dzoms (between Pha drug stod and Pha drug smad). From the viewpoint of oral tradition it is a fact that bKra shis 'od 'bar first came to Pha drug from where he moved to Shel dkar practically at the same time with *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and his "rescuers".

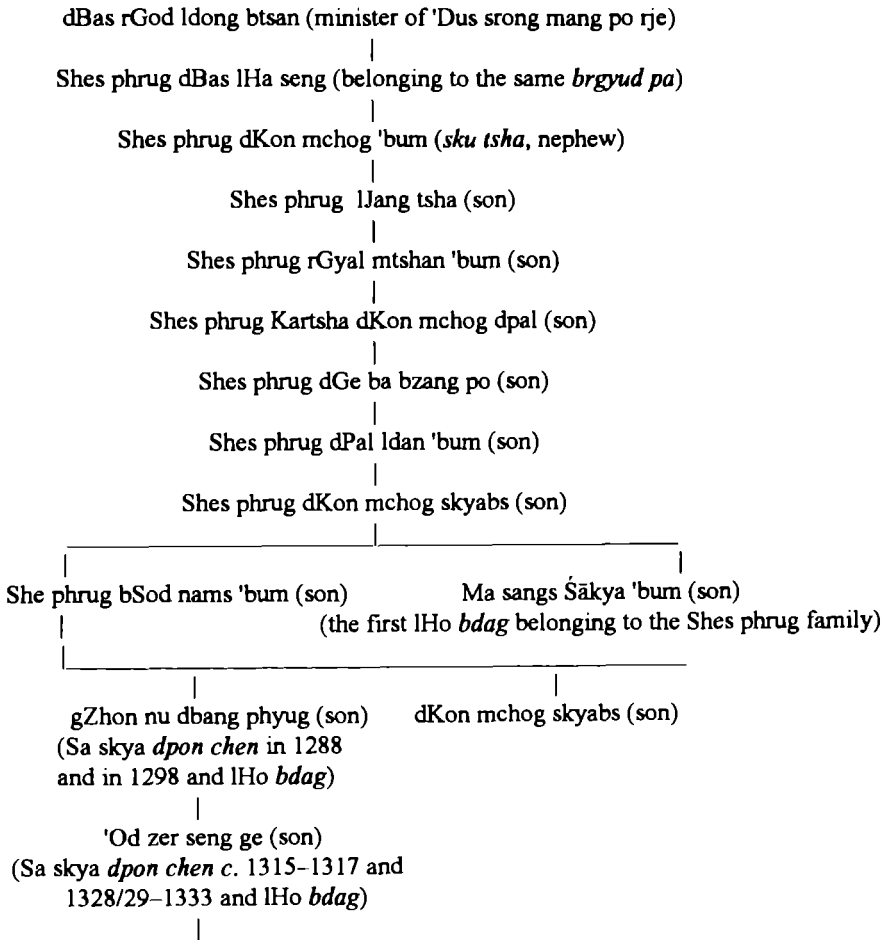
6. Conclusion

The *Shel dkar chos 'byung* imparts to us the founding history of fortress and monastery in Shel dkar, specifically stringing together sober historical data, Buddhist ideas, and – as we like to call it – epic themes, revolving around the destiny of the hero of the *Legs mdzad bcu gsum*. In doing so, the author never tires of stating that *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and his lineage (*yab mes dbon rgyud*) constituted the basis for the spread of the doctrine. This is the starting point that creates the ground on which the comprehensive construction of the monastic institution, the doctrine, and its propagation can rest.

Looking at the narrative structures one notes that the historical events intertwine with mythical configurations which are used as the basis for these events and which all have to do with the act of foundation: the female-divine protection of the hero, the ancestral protection by the mountain god, the winning of the bride after the fight with the enemy, the establishment of the feudal residence on the (female) demonic "body" of the earth, and finally, the establishment of the religious protective deities. Besides the historical relevance of the protagonists, all this also creates a rich mythological field of relations; the coincidence of different aspects of male and female divine figures which we meet in this context is one such example. It gives the narrative structure a mythical dimension by which the world of the *Shel dkar chos 'byung* has a "timelessness" to it. And in this form it is still alive in the oral tradition up to this day.

'bar-shrine" (*gdung rten* bKra shis 'od 'bar) in gDan sa mthil (*Deb ther sngon po* 663; Roerich 1988: 563). Phag mo gru pa (b. 1110 A.D.) descended from a branch of the dBas clan in the south of mDo Khams, where his tongue is allegedly stored (*Deb ther sngon po* 653, 663; Roerich 1988: 553, 563). There bKra shis 'od 'bar is designated as dPa' bo khro bar, "which is supposed to be the spirit of a war-lord from Khams who had been killed in a battle" (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1993: 174).

I. GENEALOGY OF THE DBAS SHES PHRUG FAMILY



(the genealogy continues in the table concerning the lHo *bdag*)

II. THE LHO BDAG

Rin chen dpal (sGang dkar khri tshang *dpon chen* belonging to the nephew-lineage, *dbon brgyud*, of Śākya bzang po)

Phyug po khri dpal (belonging to the nephew-lineage of Śākya bzang po and Sa skya *dpon chen* in 1280)

Ma sangs Śākya 'bum (relative of Phyug po khri dpal)

gZhon nu dbang phyug (nephew of Ma sangs Śākya 'bum and adoptive son of Phyug po khri dpal, Sa skya *dpon chen*)

'Od zer seng ge (son) (Sa skya *dpon chen*)

Don yod dpal bzang po (son)

Kun dga' chos skyong (son)

dKon mchog dpal bzang po (son)

Chos kyi rin chen (son)

(1385 founded the Shel dkar monastery, died 1402)

Amogha (son; last *dpon chen*)

lHa btsan skyabs ma (son)

Nam mkha' tshe dbang bkra shis (son)

sGrol ma bsod nams dpal bzang po (son)

Kun dga' mam pa rgyal ba (son)

'Jam dbyangs (son)

III. CHINESE TERMS

kha'i hu'i tun zam shi zam mgon
(*kai-fu yi tong-san si san-guan?*)

開府(儀)同三司散官?

gung (gong)

公?

goo ta'i (guo-shi?)

國師

ta' dben (da-yuan)

大元

ta'i si'i (da-si-tu)

大司徒

ta' si tu (da-si-tu)

大司徒

ti si tu (da-si-tu)

大司徒

ti shri zam mgon (di-shi san-guan)

帝師,散官?

than tshe (tai-zi?)

太子?

du dben sha (du-yuan-shuai)

都元帥

dpon byings dben shri (xuan-zheng-yuan shi)

宣政院使

zam mgon (san guan)

散官？

gyu lung rda (rong-lu da [fu])

策緣大夫？

gyu lung rda'i zam mgon (rong-lu da [fu]san-kuan)

策緣大夫散官？

si tu (si-tu)

司徒

son gin ta'i dben shri (xuan-zheng da yuan shi)

宣政大院使？

son wa ti (xuan-wei-si)

宣慰司

son wi si (xuan-wei-si)

宣慰司

son wi si bzhi (xuan-wei si shi)

宣慰司使

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MAPS





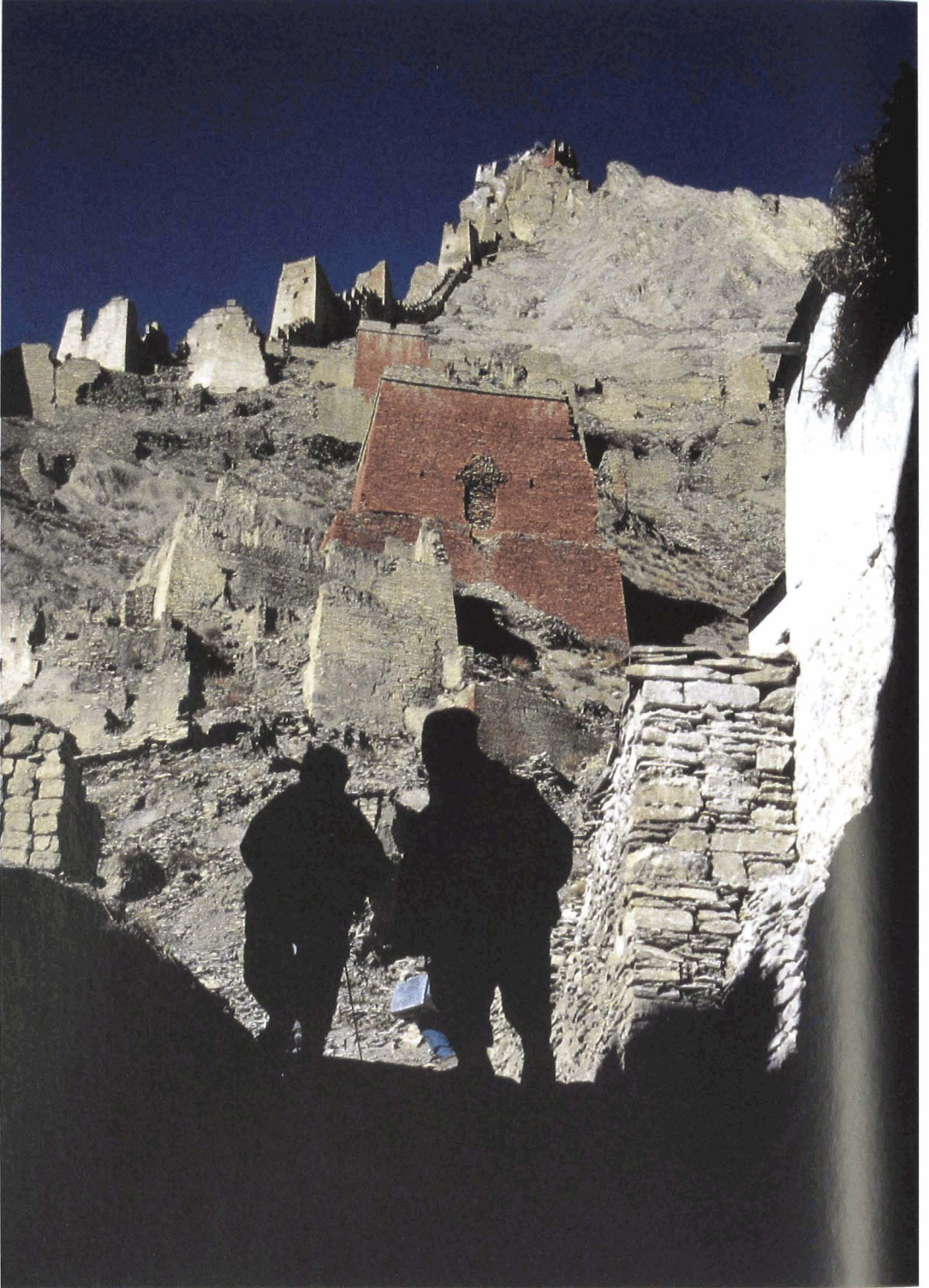
PHOTOGRAPHS



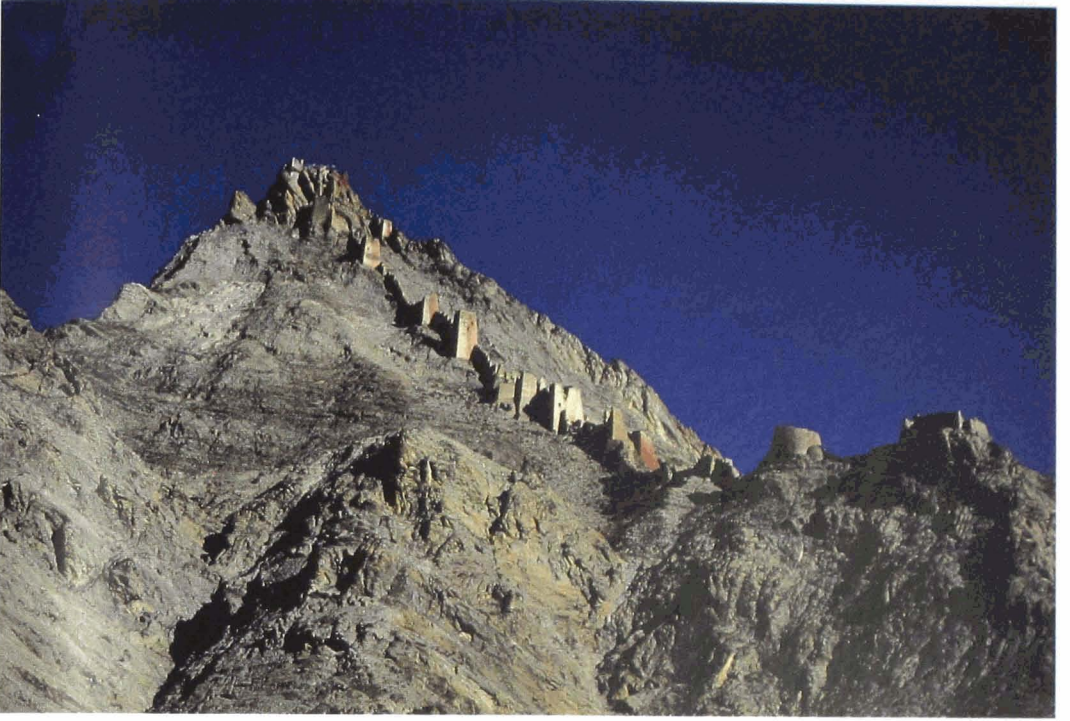
The first page of the manuscript of *Shel dkar chos 'byung*.



July 1994, Pasang Wangdu reads the text to the monks gathered in the library.



From the monastery, the path climbs among the ruins of the monastic buildings and of the fortress to the top of Mount Shel dkar.



The fortress on Shel dkar ri, seat of the 1Ho *bdag*.



Ruins of the Byang *bdag* palace in Ngam ring.

The mountain and mountain god Ding ri sGang dmar, who was the ancestral protector of the Iho bdag.



The holy mountain rTsi ri ("mountain of the ribs"), th the west of Shel dkar.



Nas lung, in rGyal nor valley. The pond (*lo rdzang*) for collecting water was dug by the *Iho bdag* and still exists. Its construction is mentioned in the manuscript.



Rin chen spo, the ancient capital of the Lords of the South, surrounded by flowering fields in summer.





Mount Shel dkar is also known as the „mountain in the shape of sGrol ma“ (Tārā).



The Kālacakra temple built on Shel dkar ri by *si tu* Chos kyi rin chen and his son, the great Lords of the South, who were particularly devoted to the temple's deities „imported“ from India.



Grags pa rgyal mtshan, the third abbot of the Shel dkar monastery. The small statue is kept in Kathmandu.



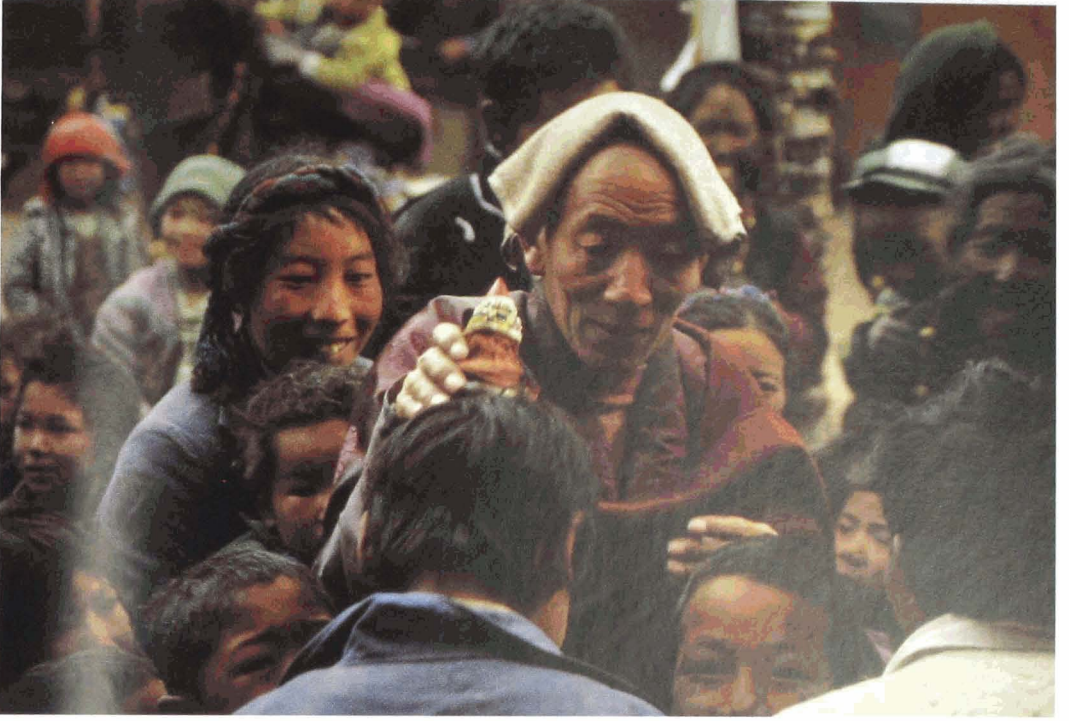
Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal, the fourth abbot of Shel dkar and founder of the Bo dong pa tradition. The small statue is kept in the monastery of sPo rong pad ma chos lding.



The biography of Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las mam rgyal. In the miniature painting on the first page he is depicted together with his protective deities and his disciple, the princess of Gung thang A grol chos kyi sgron me.



The great abbots of the Sa skya pa and the Bo dong pa tradition who lived in the monasteries in the Land of the South. This *thangka* is kept in the monastery of sPo rong pad ma chos lding.



The abbot of Bo dong E blessed the faithful by touching their heads with a powerful relic of Bo dong pan chen Phyogs las mam rgyal.



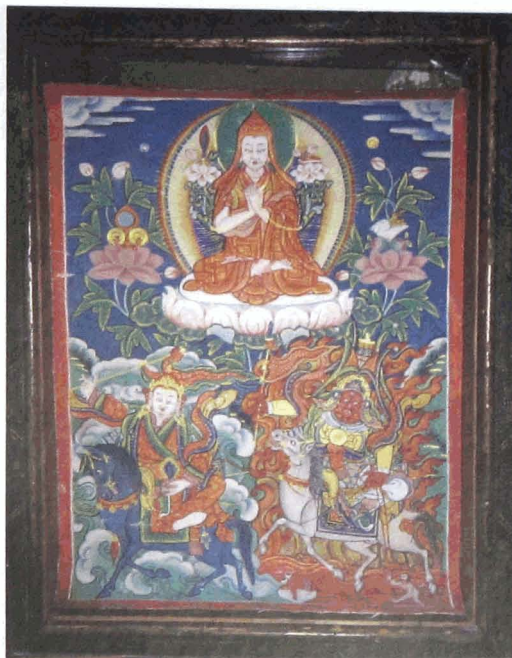
Nam mkha' dkar po, the last of the early abbots. In effect, the statue is his mummified body covered with a golden mask.



bKra shis 'od 'bar, the protector god of the Bo dong pa tradition. The *dharmapāla* riding his blue horse, the Rlung rta sngon po, is surrounded by a monkey, an elephant and a lion. The animals are said to represent the wrathful aspects of bKra shis 'od 'bar which are embodied in the deity rDo rje rgyal mtshan. This is a painted stone relief kept in the *mgon khang* of the Shel dkar monastery.



Mask of bKra shis 'od 'bar with his monkey face. This can be seen in the Bo dong pa monastery in Kathmandu.



Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las nam rgyal, bKra shis 'od 'bar and rDo rje rgyal mtshan in a picture belonging to the bSam sdings monastery.



bKra shis 'od 'bar in a recent mural painting which can be seen in the Shel dkar monastery.



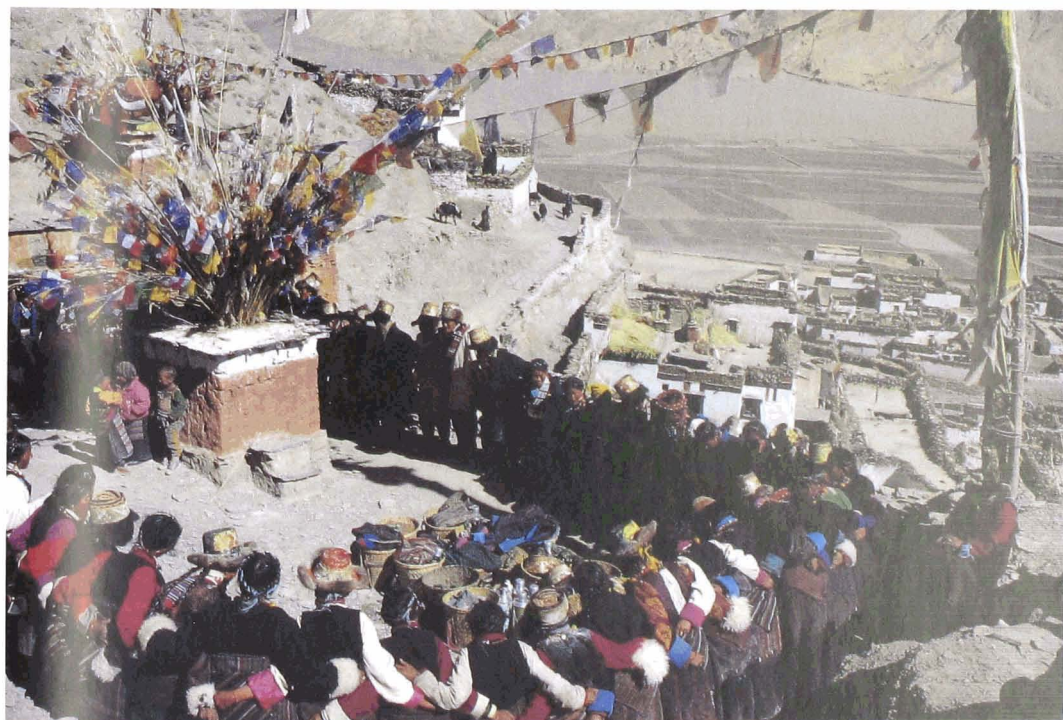
The shrine of bKra shis 'od 'bar in the Pha drug area.



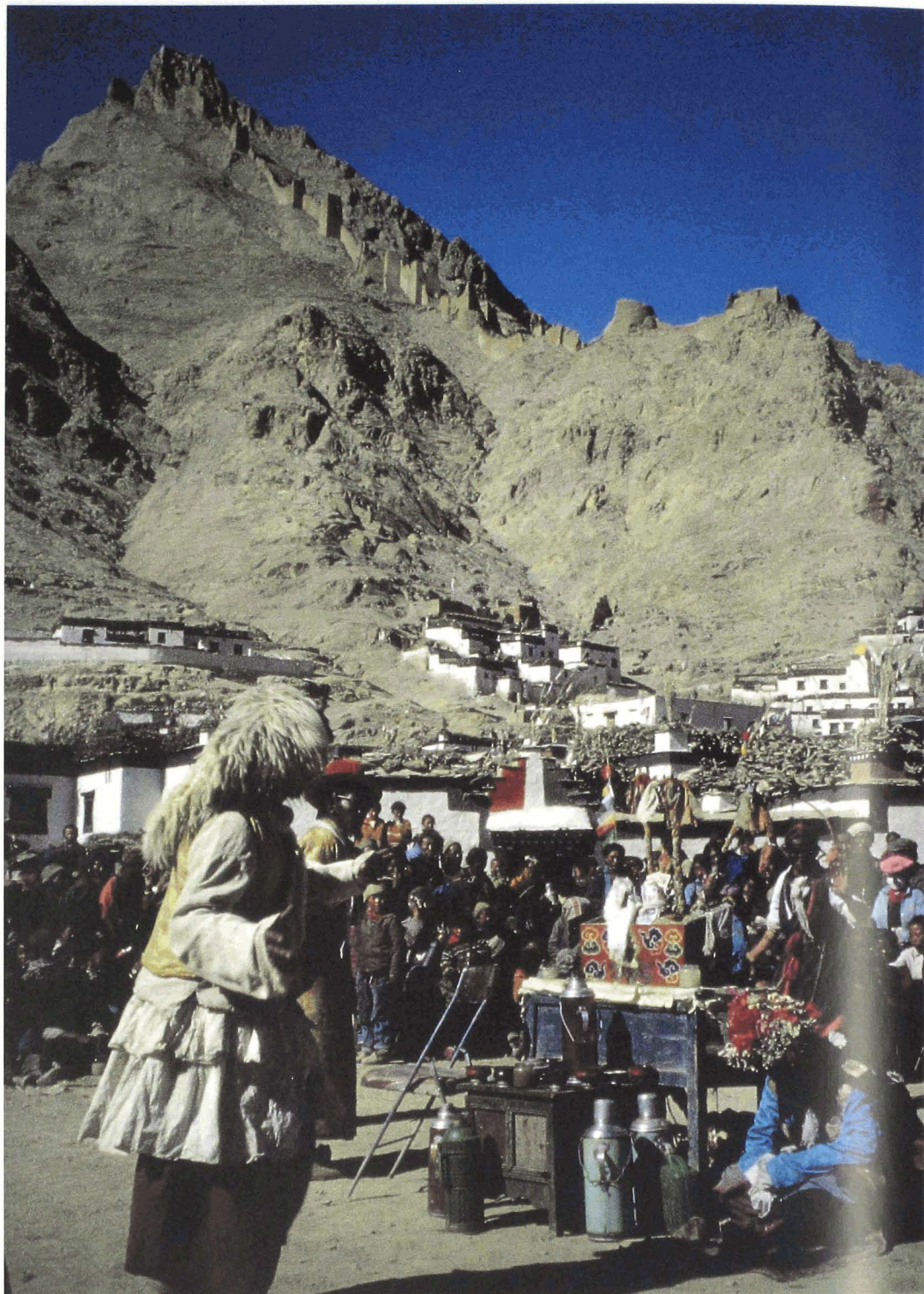
The valley of the Kha rta river which is considered to have been a lake.



July 1993. The community of Shel dkar celebrates the traditional ritual chos skor. Each of the faithful carries a sacred book from the monastery on his back.



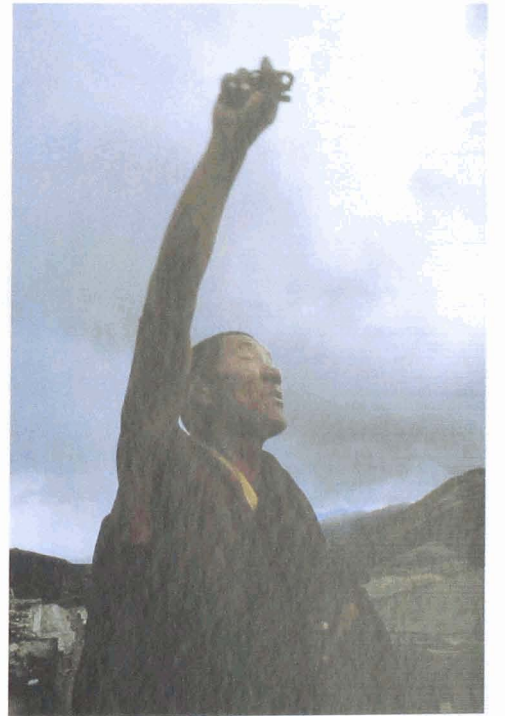
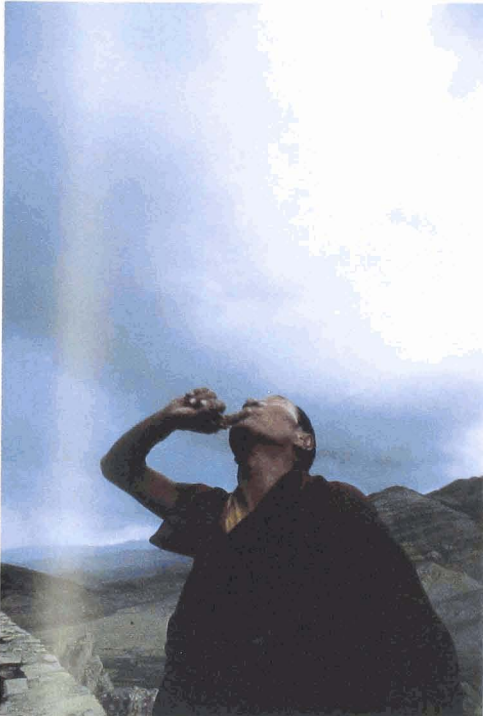
Dances at the end of the New Year ceremony on Mount Shel dkar.



The Tibetan opera (A phyi lha mo) at Shel dkar during the New Year festival. The lHo *bdag* lHa btsan skyab ma was also the patron of the founder of the Tibetan opera Thang stong rgyal po.



The monastic community of Shel dkar. Today, forty-four monks live in the monastery.



On the roof of the monastery, the abbot Blo bzang shes rab celebrates a ritual to placate the deities and avert hailstorms.

*FAKSIMILE
OF THE SHEL DKAR CHOS 'BYUNG
MANUSCRIPT*

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines. The right margin contains the number '१३१'.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines. The right margin contains the number '१३२'.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines. The right margin contains the number '१३३'.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is arranged in approximately 10 horizontal lines. The right margin contains the number '१३४'.

ਪਦਕਾ... ਸਮਾਜ... ਚਿੰਤਨ... ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼... ਸੁਖ... ਭਾਗ... ਦਿਲ... ਸੇਵਾ... ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼... ਸੁਖ... ਭਾਗ... ਦਿਲ... ਸੇਵਾ...

ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਚਿੰਤਨ... ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼... ਸੁਖ... ਭਾਗ... ਦਿਲ... ਸੇਵਾ... ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼... ਸੁਖ... ਭਾਗ... ਦਿਲ... ਸੇਵਾ...

ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਚਿੰਤਨ... ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼... ਸੁਖ... ਭਾਗ... ਦਿਲ... ਸੇਵਾ... ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼... ਸੁਖ... ਭਾਗ... ਦਿਲ... ਸੇਵਾ...

ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਚਿੰਤਨ... ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼... ਸੁਖ... ਭਾਗ... ਦਿਲ... ਸੇਵਾ... ਮਨੁੱਖ... ਪ੍ਰਕਾਸ਼... ਸੁਖ... ਭਾਗ... ਦਿਲ... ਸੇਵਾ...

മരണമുദയം... കൈകൾ... കർമ്മ...
കൈകൾ... കർമ്മ...
കൈകൾ... കർമ്മ...
കൈകൾ... കർമ്മ...

301
കൈകൾ
കർമ്മ
കൈകൾ
കർമ്മ

കൈകൾ... കർമ്മ... കർമ്മ...
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കൈകൾ... കർമ്മ... കർമ്മ...
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കൈകൾ
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കൈകൾ
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കൈകൾ... കർമ്മ... കർമ്മ...
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കൈകൾ... കർമ്മ... കർമ്മ...

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a historical record or administrative document.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, continuing the narrative or record.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, continuing the narrative or record.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, concluding the page's content.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a religious or philosophical treatise, spanning the top portion of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, continuing the treatise from the previous page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, concluding the section on this page.

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Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is dense and appears to be a continuous passage. The right margin contains some marginal notes or a column of text.

Vertical text in the right margin, possibly a page number or a reference.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is dense and appears to be a continuous passage. The right margin contains some marginal notes or a column of text.

Vertical text in the right margin, possibly a page number or a reference.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is dense and appears to be a continuous passage. The right margin contains some marginal notes or a column of text.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is dense and appears to be a continuous passage. The right margin contains some marginal notes or a column of text.

Vertical text in the right margin, possibly a page number or a reference.

३०१
 ३०२
 ३०३
 ३०४
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३०६
 ३०७
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 ३०९
 ३१०

३११
 ३१२
 ३१३
 ३१४
 ३१५

३१६
 ३१७
 ३१८
 ३१९
 ३२०

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a historical record or administrative document. The text is densely packed and covers most of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, continuing the narrative or record from the previous page. The script is consistent and legible.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, starting with a new section or entry. The text is well-preserved and clear.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, concluding the page with several lines of text. The ink is dark and the characters are sharp.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, top section of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, middle section of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, top section of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, bottom section of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a religious or philosophical treatise.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, continuing the discourse from the previous page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, concluding the section on this page.

Main body of handwritten text in the first page, written in a historical script.

Main body of handwritten text in the second page, continuing the narrative or document.

Main body of handwritten text in the third page, concluding the visible portion of the document.

Page 100

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, top section of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, middle section of the page.

Page 101

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, top section of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, bottom section of the page.

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Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is dense and appears to be a continuous passage.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is dense and appears to be a continuous passage.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is dense and appears to be a continuous passage.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, top section of the first page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, middle section of the first page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, top section of the second page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, bottom section of the second page.

... ३६४ ... ३६५ ... ३६६ ... ३६७ ... ३६८ ... ३६९ ... ३७० ... ३७१ ... ३७२ ... ३७३ ... ३७४ ... ३७५ ... ३७६ ... ३७७ ... ३७८ ... ३७९ ... ३८० ... ३८१ ... ३८२ ... ३८३ ... ३८४ ... ३८५ ... ३८६ ... ३८७ ... ३८८ ... ३८९ ... ३९० ... ३९१ ... ३९२ ... ३९३ ... ३९४ ... ३९५ ... ३९६ ... ३९७ ... ३९८ ... ३९९ ... ४०० ...

... ४०१ ... ४०२ ... ४०३ ... ४०४ ... ४०५ ... ४०६ ... ४०७ ... ४०८ ... ४०९ ... ४१० ... ४११ ... ४१२ ... ४१३ ... ४१४ ... ४१५ ... ४१६ ... ४१७ ... ४१८ ... ४१९ ... ४२० ... ४२१ ... ४२२ ... ४२३ ... ४२४ ... ४२५ ... ४२६ ... ४२७ ... ४२८ ... ४२९ ... ४३० ...

... ४३१ ... ४३२ ... ४३३ ... ४३४ ... ४३५ ... ४३६ ... ४३७ ... ४३८ ... ४३९ ... ४४० ... ४४१ ... ४४२ ... ४४३ ... ४४४ ... ४४५ ... ४४६ ... ४४७ ... ४४८ ... ४४९ ... ४५० ... ४५१ ... ४५२ ... ४५३ ... ४५४ ... ४५५ ... ४५६ ... ४५७ ... ४५८ ... ४५९ ... ४६० ...

... ४६१ ... ४६२ ... ४६३ ... ४६४ ... ४६५ ... ४६६ ... ४६७ ... ४६८ ... ४६९ ... ४७० ... ४७१ ... ४७२ ... ४७३ ... ४७४ ... ४७५ ... ४७६ ... ४७७ ... ४७८ ... ४७९ ... ४८० ... ४८१ ... ४८२ ... ४८३ ... ४८४ ... ४८५ ... ४८६ ... ४८७ ... ४८८ ... ४८९ ... ४९० ...

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines. The script is dense and appears to be a form of Sanskrit or Hindi. There are some faint markings and what might be a page number at the top center.

Vertical text on the right margin, possibly a page number or a reference code, written in Devanagari script.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines. The script is dense and appears to be a form of Sanskrit or Hindi. There are some faint markings and what might be a page number at the top center.

Vertical text on the right margin, possibly a page number or a reference code, written in Devanagari script.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines. The script is dense and appears to be a form of Sanskrit or Hindi. There are some faint markings and what might be a page number at the top center.

Vertical text on the right margin, possibly a page number or a reference code, written in Devanagari script.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a manuscript page. The text is arranged in approximately 12 horizontal lines. The script is dense and appears to be a form of Sanskrit or Hindi. There are some faint markings and what might be a page number at the top center.

Vertical text on the right margin, possibly a page number or a reference code, written in Devanagari script.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a historical document or manuscript. The text is densely packed and spans the width of the page.

Vertical text on the right margin, possibly a page number or a reference mark.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, continuing the narrative or list from the previous page. The script is consistent and well-preserved.

40

Handwritten text in a cursive script, with a page number '40' centered at the top. The text is organized into several lines across the page.

Vertical text on the right margin, likely a page number or a reference mark.

Handwritten text in a cursive script, continuing the document's content. The text is dense and fills most of the page area.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, top section of the page.

Vertical text on the right margin of the top section.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, middle section of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, top section of the second page.

Vertical text on the right margin of the second page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, bottom section of the second page.

Main body of handwritten text in the first page, written in a traditional script.

Main body of handwritten text in the second page, continuing the script from the first page.

Main body of handwritten text in the third page, continuing the script from the second page.

Main body of handwritten text in the top section, written in a dense, cursive script.

Second section of handwritten text, continuing the narrative or list.

601

Main body of handwritten text in the middle section, starting with the page number 601.

Bottom section of handwritten text, concluding the page's content.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, likely a historical record or administrative document. The text is dense and covers most of the page.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, continuing from the previous page. It contains several lines of text with some visible ink bleed-through from the reverse side.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, continuing the narrative or record. The handwriting is consistent with the previous pages.

Handwritten text in Devanagari script, the final page shown. It includes a large block of text at the bottom, possibly a signature or a concluding statement.

Handwritten text line in the upper section of the page.

Handwritten text line in the upper section of the page.

11

Main body of handwritten text in the upper section, consisting of several lines.

Main body of handwritten text in the lower section, consisting of several lines.

111

Main body of handwritten text at the bottom of the page, consisting of several lines.