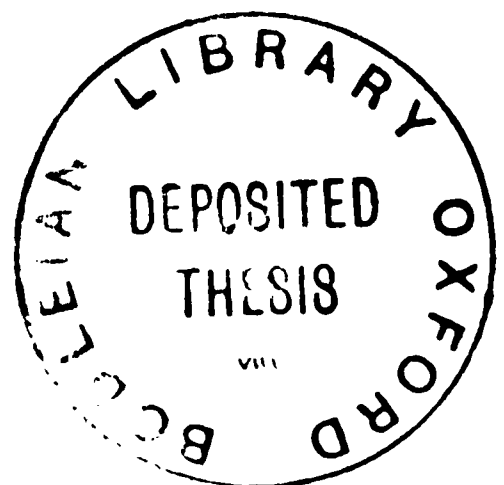


The Biographies of Ras-chung-pa

The Evolution of a Tibetan Hagiography

Thesis submitted
for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Faculty of Oriental Studies
University of Oxford

by Peter Alan Roberts
Harris Manchester College, Oxford
Trinity Term, October 2000





To my parents

Iorwerth and Glenys Roberts

You're trapped. Time moves in only one direction—forward...

If you could just go back in time and take a peek, you'd know, and all
this would be unnecessary...

This is all you know. This is all you can be told.

From the screenplay of *Reversal of Fortune*, by Nicholas Kazan, based on the
book by Alan Dershowitz.

Peter Alan Roberts
Harris Manchester College
Oxford

D.Phil Degree
Trinity Term
2000

Abstract

The Biographies of Ras-chung-pa: The evolution of a Tibetan Hagiography

This thesis examines accounts of the life of Ras-chung-pa, also known as rDo-rje Grags-pa (1084-1161), written from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. It identifies what sources are presently available and discusses their inter-relationship.

The thesis will present a development of narrative traditions that fuse and eventually climax in the sixteenth century *Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar* by rGod-tshang Ras-pa, which is the standard biography for present-day Tibetan Buddhism. This thesis will reveal how rGod-tshang Ras-pa's version of the first half of Ras-chung-pa's life is a late composite of various conflicting narratives.

As the primary source materials have been little studied or even identified, a major part of the thesis will be an exploration and identification of the sources.

The thesis will both show how narratives about Ras-chung-pa evolved and suggest their possible historical sources.

Chapter One: An examination of the relationship of hagiographic narrative to objective historical truth and whether the latter is a viable goal. An introduction that places both Ras-chung-pa and the authors of his biographies within the context of Tibetan Buddhism.

Chapter Two: An examination of all the sources now available for the life of Ras-chung-pa. This chapter attempts to identify and analyse those texts, some of which have previously been obscure or inaccurately identified. They are presented in an approximate chronological sequence according to the dates in which the texts took their final form or were compiled, even though the germane contents may be older.

Chapter Three: A detailed examination of the textual correspondences in the opening passages of the sources, comparing the different versions of Ras-chung-pa's childhood. This will demonstrate a basic relationship between the texts, the discrepancies between the narratives, and to what extent it is possible to establish historical facts.

Chapter Four: An examination of the variant narratives concerning Ras-chung-pa's first visit to India in search of a cure for his illness, which will further develop an understanding of how the succession of texts represents variant strands of narrative evolution.

Chapter Five: An examination of the principal episodes in the early part of Ras-chung-pa's life: his visit to India to obtain the *ḍāka-karṇa-tantra*, in which the texts will be formed into three groups according to their textual relationship rather than arranged chronologically by probable dates of compilation.

Chapter Six: An overview of the remainder of his life, and his status in the bKa'-brgyud-pa traditions.

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CONTENTS

Frontispiece: Ras-chung-pa represented in a mural at Yol-mo, Nepal.

Photograph by Ani Ye-shes dPal-mo.

Abstract

Acknowledgements

Introduction 1

1. Chapter One: The Context of the Ras-chung-pa Hagiographies

1.1.....Hagiography and Historical Truth 10

1.2.....The geographical background to the life of Ras-chung-pa 19

1.3.....Ras-chung-pa's form of Vajrayāna Buddhism 23

1.4.....The religious context of the named authors of the biographies

1.4.1.....Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud 34

1.4.2.....Karma bKa'-brgyud 35

1.4.3.....Zur-mang bKa'-brgyud 36

1.4.4.....Phag-gru bKa'-brgyud 36

1.4.5.....sTag-lung bKa'-brgyud 37

1.4.6.....'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud 37

1.4.7.....'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud 37

1.4.8. sNyan-rgyud traditions 39

1.4.8.1.....bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud 41

1.4.8.2.....Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud 45

2. Chapter Two: The Sources

2.1..... The Earliest Sources

2.1.1.....Lost Biographies of Ras-chung-pa by his contemporaries 47

2.1.1.1.....*Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* 48

2.1.2.....Late texts that appear to be early works 52

2.1.3.....The Earliest Biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa 53

2.1.3.1..... Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa 54

2.1.3.2..... sGam-po-pa’s *rJe Mar-pa dang rJe-btsun Mi-la’i rNam-thar* 55

2.1.3.3..... Bla-ma Zhang’s.*Mi-la Ras-pa’i rnam-thar* 59

2.1.4.....Early Biographies of Ras-chung-pa

2.1.4.1.....Don-mo-ri-pa in *bKa'-brgyud kyi rnam-thar chen-mo* 64

2.1.4.1.1..... Editions 65

2.1.4.1.2.....Authorship and date of the text 67

2.1.4.2..... rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje’s *gSer-ri’i ‘Phreng-ba’i rNam-par Thar-pa* 75

2.1.4.2.1.....Structure 76

2.1.4.2.2.....The Author 78

2.1.4.2.3.....The Date 83

2.1.4.2.4.....The Ras-chung-pa biography 87

2.1.4.2.5.....Relationship between rGya-ldang-pa and the
sGam-po-pa / Bla-ma Zhang/Don-mo-ri-pa texts 89

2.1.4.2.6.....	The <i>bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud</i> biographies version	91
2.1.4.3.....	<i>bKa’-brgyud Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi ’Phreng-ba</i>	92
2.2.....	Intermediary Sources: From the <i>bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar</i> to gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka	
2.2.1.....	The <i>bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar</i> a.k.a. <i>Bu-chen bCu-gnyis</i>	94
2.2.1.1.....	Editions	95
2.2.1.2.....	Authorship	99
2.2.1.3.....	Date	106
2.2.1.4.....	Relationship with other earlier works	107
2.2.2.....	<i>Byin-rlabs kyi Chu-rgyun</i>	110
2.2.2.1.....	Two Lost Sources for the <i>Byin-rlabs kyi Chu-rgyun</i>	112
2.2.2.2.....	Date and Authorship	114
2.2.3.....	Kun-dga’ rDo-rje’s <i>Deb-ther dMar-po</i>	115
2.2.4.....	Zhwa-dmar-pa’s <i>Byin-brlabs kyi sPrin-phung</i>	116
2.2.5.....	dPal-’byor bZang-po’s <i>rGya-bod Yig-tshang Chen-mo</i>	117
2.2.6.....	<i>lHo-rong Chos-’byung</i> , a.k.a. <i>rTa-tshag Chos-’byung</i>	118
2.2.7.....	Mon-rtse Kun-dga’ dPal-ldan’s <i>bKa-’brgyud gSer-’phreng</i>	119
2.2.8.....	Kun-dga’ dPal-’byor’s <i>dKar-brgyud Chos-’byung</i>	120
2.2.8.....	’Gos gZhon-nu dPal’s <i>Deb-ther sNgon-po</i>	121
2.3.....	Later Sources: gTsang-smyon Heruka onwards	
2.3.1...	gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka’s <i>bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud</i>	122
2.3.2...	gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka’s <i>Mi-la’i rNam-thar</i>	
	& <i>Mi-la’i mGur-’bum</i>	124

2.3.3...lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal's <i>Tshe-gcig la 'Ja'-lus</i> <i>brNyes-pa rJe Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar Rags-bsdus</i> <i>mGur-rnams rGyas-pa</i>	128
2.3.4...'Brug-chen 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa's <i>Nor-bu 'Od kyi Phreng-ba</i>	130
2.3.5...Sangs-rgyas Dar-po's <i>bDe-gshegs bsTan-pa gSal-byed</i> <i>bKa-brgyud Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas Rin-chen sPungs-pa</i> <i>'Od-stong 'Khyil-ba</i>	132
2.3.6...'Bri-gung Chos-rje Kun-dga' Rin-chen's <i>bKa'-brgyud</i> <i>Bla-ma-rnams kyi rNam-thar</i>	137
2.3.7...Karma-pa Mi-bskyod rDo-rje's <i>bKa-brgyud mGur-tsho</i>	137
2.3.8...rGod-tshang Ras-pa a.k.a rGod-tshang sNa-tshogs Rang-grol's <i>rJe-btsun Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar rNam-mkhyen Thar-lam</i> <i>gSal-bar-ston-pa'i Me-long Ye-shes kyi sNang-ba</i>	138
2.3.9...rJe-btsun Mi-la Ras-pa'i rDo-rje'i mGur-drug sogs <i>gSung-rgyun Thor-bu 'ga'</i>	152
2.3.10 Byang-chub bZang-po's <i>bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud</i>	155
2.4.....From the sixteenth century onwards: Works influenced by gTsang-smyon and his followers.	
2.4.1...dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'Phreng-ba's <i>mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston</i>	157
2.4.2...'Brug-chen Pad-ma dKarmo's <i>Chos-'byung bsTan-pa'i Padma</i> <i>rGyas-pa'i Nyin-byed</i>	157
2.4.3... sTag-lung Ngag-dbang nam-rgyal's <i>Chos-'byung Ngo-mtshar</i> <i>rGya-mtsho</i>	158

2.4.4...Zhwa-dmar Chos-kyi Don-grub's <i>Tshe-dpag-med dBang-bskur</i>	159
2.4.5...'Bri-gung bsTan-'dzin Pad-ma'i rGyal-mtshan's <i>'Bri-gung-pa Chen-po'i gDan-rabs</i>	159
2.4.6... Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu's <i>Mar Mi Dwags-po</i>	160
2.4.7...Śākya Rin-chen's <i>dKar-brgyud kyi nam-thar gser-gyi phreng-ba</i>	160
2.4.8...Situ Padma Nyin-byed dBang-po's <i>'Phags-pa-mchog sPyan-ras-gzigs rGyal-ba rGya-mtsho'i dBang-bskur Ye-shes Myur-'bebs</i>	161
2.4.9...NGMPP's <i>sbKa'-brgyud kyi rNam-thar</i>	162
2.4.10... <i>Rwa-lung bka'-brgyud gSer gyi 'Phreng-ba</i>	163
2.4.11...Gu-ru bKra-shi's <i>Gu-bkra'i Chos-'byung</i>	163
2.4.12... <i>bKa'-brgyud gSer-phreng Chen-mo</i>	164

3. Chapter Three: Ras-chung-pa's Childhood; An Introduction to Textual Relationships

3.1..... Earliest years	
3.1.1.....Birthplace	165
3.1.2.....The Date of Ras-chung-pa's birth	175
3.1.3.....Family Name	178
3.1.4.....Personal Name	180
3.1.5.....Family	186
3.1.6.....The orphan with a parent	191

3.2..... Meeting Mi-la Ras-pa

3.2.1.....Earliest versions 195

3.2.2.....Fifteenth century versions 204

3.2.3.....The versions of gTsang-smyon and his followers 208

3.2.4.....Versions that post-date rGod-tshang Ras-pa 224

4. A Sick Ras-chung-pa Goes to India: The appearance and development of
a narrative segment

4.1..... Introduction 232

4.2.....The absence of this passage in primary sources 232

4.3.....rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje 233

4.3.1.....The Sickness 238

4.3.2.....Varacandra 240

4.3.3.....Tirhut 241

4.4.....The Fourteenth Century 244

4.5.....The Fifteenth Century

4.5.1.....*lHo-rong Chos-'byung* 245

4.5.2.....Mon-rtse-pa 248

4.5.3.....Byang-chub bZang-po 250

4.5.4.....*Deb-ther sNgon-po* 253

4.5.5.....Two works by gTsang-smyon Heruka (1452-1507)

4.5.5.1.....*bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud* 254

4.5.5.2.....	<i>Mi-la'i mGur-'bum</i>	255
4.6.....	The Sixteenth Century	
4.6.1.....	lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal	258
4.6.2.....	Sangs-rgyas Dar-po	259
4.6.3.....	'Brug-chen 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa	259
4.6.4.....	rGod-tshang Ras-pa	261
4.7.....	Versions that post-date rGod-tshang Ras-pa and his pupils	
4.7.1.....	dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'Phreng-ba	275
4.7.2.....	Pad-ma dKar-po	277
4.7.3.....	Śākya Rin-chen	279
4.7.4	NGMPP <i>bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar</i>	
	& <i>Rwa-lung bKa'-brgyud gSer-'Phreng</i>	279
5.	Ras-chung-pa and the <i>mKha'-'gro'i sNyan-rgyud</i> : An examination of the central episode in the life of Ras-chung-pa	
5.1.....	Introduction	284
5.2.....	The Circumstances which led Ras-chung-pa to go to India for the <i>Dāka-niṣkāya-dharma</i>	
5.2.1.....	rGya-ldang-pa	286
5.2.2.	<i>Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi Phreng-ba</i>	289
5.2.3.....	<i>bZhad-pa'i rDo'rje'i rNam-thar</i>	292
5.2.4.....	Zhwa-dmar mKha-spyod dBang-phyug	298
5.2.5.....	<i>lHo-rong Chos-'byung</i>	298
5.2.6	<i>Deb-ther sNgon-po</i>	299

5.2.7.....	Mon-rtse-pa	299
5.2.8.....	<i>Byin-rlabs kyi Chu-rgyun</i>	301
5.2.9.....	gTsang-smyon's <i>bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud</i>	304
5.2.10.....	gTsang-smyon's <i>Mi-la'i mGur-'bum</i>	305
5.2.11.....	lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal	308
5.2.12.....	rGod-tshang Ras-pa	309
5.2.13.....	'Brug-chen 'Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa	310
5.2.14.....	Byang-chub bZang-po	310
5.2.15.....	dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'Phreng-ba & Pad-ma dKar-po	310
5.2.16.....	Śākya Rin-chen	311
5.2.17.....	NGMPP <i>bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar</i> <i>& Rwa-lung gSer-phreng</i>	312
5.2.18.....	<i>gSer-phreng chen-mo</i>	313
5.3 Ras-chung-pa obtains the <i>Dāka-niṣkāya-dharma</i> in India		
5.3.1.....	rGya-ldang-pa	315
5.3.2.....	<i>Yid-bzhin Nor-bu gSer-phreng</i>	319
5.3.3.	<i>bZhad-pa'i rDo'rje'i rNam-thar</i>	320
5.3.4.....	Zhwa-dmar mKha-spyod dBang-phyug	325
5.3.5.....	<i>rGya-bod Yig-tshang Chen-mo</i>	325
5.3.6.....	<i>lHo-rong Chos-'byung</i>	325
5.3.7.....	<i>Deb-ther sNgon-po</i>	325
5.3.8.....	Mon-rtse-pa (1408-1475)	326
5.3.9.....	<i>Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun</i>	327
5.3.10.....	gTsang-smyon's <i>bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud.</i>	328

5.3.11.....	gTsang-smyon's <i>Mi-la'i mGur-'bum</i>	328
5.3.12.....	lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal	329
5.3.13.....	rGod-tshang Ras-pa	333
5.3.14.....	'Brug-chen 'Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa	342
5.3.15.....	Sangs-rgyas Dar-po	343
5.3.16.....	Byang-chub bZang-po	343
5.3.17.....	<i>bKa'-brgyud mGur-mtsho</i>	345
5.3.18.....	dPa'-bo gTsug-lag Phreng-ba	345
5.3.19.....	'Brug-chen Pad-ma dKar-po	345
5.3.20.....	Zhwa-dmar Chos-kyi Don-grub	346
5.3.21.....	Śākya Rin-chen	346
5.3.22.....	Situ Padma Nyin-byed dBang-po	347
5.3.23.....	NGMPP <i>bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar</i>	
	and <i>Rwa-lung gSer-phreng</i>	348
5.3.24.....	<i>gSer-phreng chen-mo</i>	349

5.3.25.....	<i>Gu-bkra'i Chos-'Byung</i>	349
5.4.....	Ras-chung-pa's Return to Tibet and Conflict with Mi-la Ras-pa	
5.4.1.....	Introduction	351
5.4.2.....	Group 1: The rGya-ldang-pa tradition	
5.4.2.1.....	rGya-ldang-pa	352
5.4.2.2.....	Mon-rtse-pa	355
5.4.2.3.....	Byang-chub bZang-po	355
5.4.3.....	Group 2: The NGMPP <i>rNam-thar</i> tradition	357
5.4.4.....	Group 3 : The <i>bZhad-pa'i rDo'rje'i rNam-thar</i> Tradition	
5.4.4.1.....	<i>bZhad-pa'i rDo'rje'i rNam-thar</i>	360
5.4.4.2.....	Zhwa-dmar mKha'-spyod dBang-po	370
5.4.4.3.....	<i>Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun</i>	373
5.4.4.4.....	<i>Mi-la'i mGur-'bum</i>	380
5.4.4.5.....	'Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa	387
5.4.4.6.....	lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal	388
5.4.4.7.....	rGod-tshang Ras-pa	393
5.4.4.8.....	Śākya Rin-chen	395
5.4.4.9.....	dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'Phreng-ba	397
5.4.4.10.....	'Brug-chen Pad-ma dKarmo	398
5.5.....	Conclusion	399

6. The latter part of Ras-chung-pa’s life

6.1..... Ras-chung-pa as the successor of Mi-la Ras-pa	400
6.2..... Ras-chung-pa and lHa-cig lDem-bu	418
6.3..... Ras-chung-pa and contemporary teachers	427
6.4..... Ras-chung-pa and his pupils	432
6.5..... The Death of Ras-chung-pa	434
6.6..... Ras-chung-pa as divine incarnation.	437

Appendixes

Appendix A..... The Merger in the <i>Mi-la’i mGur-‘bum</i> of two Ras-chung-pa songs from the <i>bZhad-pa’i rDor-je’i rNam-thar</i>	443
Appendix B..... Relevant Texts in the Derge Canon	459
Appendix C..... The Identity of the Nepalese King that Ras-chung-pa petitions.	470
Appendix D..... The Identity of the Buddhist Masters that appear in the biographies of Ras-chung-pa	474
1. Ye-rang-pa	474
2. Rāmapāla	476
3. Atulyadāsa	476
4. Ben-da-ba (a.k.a. Painḍapātika/Jinadatta)	477
5. Ha-mu dKar-po (Varendraruci/Puṇyākarabhadra)	478
6. Asu	479
7. rMa Lo-tsā-ba and ‘Gos Lo-tsa-ba	480
8. Pham-thing-pa and Tha-chung ‘Ba’-ro	481

9. Sumatikīrti	482
10. Amoghavajra	482
11. Tipupa	483
Appendix E.....A Comparison of the “holes in the shoes” song	489
Appendix F.....The Dates of Mi-la Ras-pa.	492
Appendix G Chronological Diagram of Textual Relationships	497
Appendix H.....A Comparison of versions of Ras-chung-pa’s dream	498
Bibliography	502
Abbreviations	520

Introduction

Ras-chung-pa rDo-rje Grags-pa (1084-1161) was the source of the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, *Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud* and *mKha’-‘gro sNyan-rgyud* lineages in Tibet.

He is popularly known from his depiction in two fifteenth-century texts that tell one version of the life-story of his teacher: Mi-la bZhad-pa rDo-rje, also known as Mi-la Ras-pa (1040-1123). Those two texts are *The Life of Mi-la Ras-pa (Mi-la’i rNam-thar)*¹ and its companion volume, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Mi-la Ras-pa (Mi-la’i mGur-‘bum)*.² Their author, the idiosyncratic and outrageous gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka (1452-1507), completed them in 1488, over three centuries after the death of his subject, and the texts are not a factual record of a life, but the climax of a long process of narrative development. These two works established Mi-la Ras-pa as a paradigm of diligent devotion to meditation for Tibetan Buddhists in general and for the members of the various bKa’-brgyud-pa traditions in particular.

Most of the *Mi-la’i rNam-thar* is in the form of an autobiographical narration delivered by Mi-la Ras-pa on the insistent request of Ras-chung-pa, who also features

¹ gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, *rNal-‘byor gyi dBang-phyug Dam-pa rJe-btsun Mi-la Ras-pa’i rNam-thar Thar-pa dang Thams-cad mKhyen-pa’i Lam sTon-pa*.

Mi-la’i rNam-thar is the brief title, usually found on individual page margins.

Mi la ras pa’i rnam thar: Texte Tibétain de la vie de Milarépa, ed. J. W. de Jong (‘s-Gravenhage: Mouton & Co., 1959), is a critical edition based on five Tibetan editions.

gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka *The Life of Mi-la Ras-pa*, trans. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa (Paladin, 1979) is the most recent English translation. E. Gene Smith’s survey of Tibetan editions of this text is to be found in Rgod-tshang-ras-pa Sna-tshogs-rang-grol, *The Life of the Saint of Gtsang*, ed. Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1969) 17-21.

² gTsang-smyon Heruka, *rJe-btsun Mi-la Ras-pa’i rNam-thar rGyas-par Phye-ba mGur-‘bum*. Short title: *Mi-la’i mGur-‘bum* (Antwerp: Tibetaans Boeddhistisch Meditatiecentrum). E. Gene Smith’s survey of Tibetan editions of this text is to be found in Rgod-tshang-ras-pa Sna-tshogs-rang-grol, *The Life of the Saint of Gtsang*, 17-21.

The sole complete translation into English:

prominently in the chapter on Mi-la's cremation and in eight chapters of the *Mi-a'i mGur-'bum*. Ras-chung-pa is therefore popularly considered to be the author of the *Mi-la'i rNam-thar* and the first Bodleian Library listed the first acquisitions of this text as having Ras-chung-pa as their author.

The bKa'-brgyud-pa traditions, which identify themselves as the spiritual successors of Mi-la Ras-pa, were a dominant force in Tibet when these two works were composed. A master becomes prominent in biographical literature in proportion to the subsequent growth of his lineage, even though a member of that lineage would naturally believe the opposite: that it was the exceptional life of the master that caused an inevitable flourishing of the lineage.

Most readers, East and West, know Ras-chung-pa only from these two texts by gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka and are therefore curious as to his eventual fate. However, there are a number of Tibetans who are familiar with a lengthy biography of Ras-chung-pa, composed, or perhaps it is more accurate to say compiled, by rGod-tshang sNa-tshogs Rang-grol and as rGod-tshang Ras-pa (late-fifteenth to mid-sixteenth century), who was a pupil of gTsang-smyon's. This work survives in at least six different editions, but has not yet been translated into English or any other language.

The extent of Ras-chung-pa's prominence in biographical literature is related to the fortunes of his spiritual descendants. His prominence in gTsang-smyon's version of the life of Mi-la ras-pa is directly related to the fact that gTsang-smyon was a holder of the lineages derived from Ras-chung-pa. One of gTsang-smyon's other works was a collection of *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud* teachings. gTsang-smyon's

gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Mi-la Ras-pa*, trans. Garma C. C. Chang (New York: University Books, 1962).

biographical information on Mi-la Ras-pa and on Mi-la's teacher Mar-pa, concerning whom he also wrote the best known hagiography, was probably derived from narrative traditions within lineages descended from Ras-chung-pa. His pupil, rGod-tshang Ras-pa, also wrote *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud* texts in addition to his biography of Ras-chung-pa.

In contrast, Ras-chung-pa has only a marginal role in those versions of Mi-la Ras-pa's life which were written within bKa'-brgyud lineages for whom Ras-chung-pa's teachings played no significant role.

We will see that in this century Ras-chung-pa's biographies have been preserved and reproduced primarily within the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud tradition, a prominent and widespread monastic tradition. This is directly related to the fact that the practices of Ras-chung-pa's lineage form an essential part of that tradition. The 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud have been crucial in the preservation of Ras-chung-pa biographies and teachings, for Ras-chung-pa lineages per se remained restricted to peripatetic yogins, who would have formed a small audience for these works. Much of the earlier Mi-la Ras-pa biographical tradition was indeed restricted to such practitioners, but gTsang-smyon and his followers, who had a close relationship with the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud, made these erstwhile secret texts available to the bKa'-brgyud-pa traditions at large.

gTsang-smyon and his followers' biographies of Ras-chung-pa's predecessors were relevant not only to the practitioners of Ras-chung-pa's lineage, but to the larger readership of all those bKa'-brgyud-pas who traced their spiritual ancestry back through another pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa: sGam-po-pa, aka bSod-nams Rin-chen, aka Dwags-po lHa-rje (1079-1153). sGam-po-pa was a monk who, unlike Ras-chung-pa,

organised a monastic setting for Mi-la Ras-pa's teachings, thus establishing a foundation for the later great bKa'-brgyud schools, such as the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud, 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud and Karma bKa'-brgyud.

gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka and his pupils were exceptional for their time in the manner by which they made their works available to others. Earlier hagiographies had remained in hand-copied manuscript form, for woodblock printing was still uncommon in Tibet, but gTsang-smyon went to great lengths to organise the carving of woodblocks that would guarantee a wide distribution for his writings. This example was followed by his pupils, especially the two who compiled biographies of Ras-chung-pa: lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557) and rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

That these texts were composed outside the established monastic milieu of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries is not surprising. A monk would not have composed works in which so much castigation of the monastic life occurs. Religious authors compose narratives that reflect and validate their own lives. The gTsang-smyon community consisted of peripatetic, cave-dwelling practitioners of the *Karṇatantra* teachings of Ras-chung-pa. Therefore, the subjects are also such individuals: the Indians Tilopa (ca., 928-1009) and Nāropa (ca., 956-1040); the Tibetans Mar-pa, Mi-la Ras-pa, Ras-chung-pa, Lo-ras-pa (aka dBang-phyug bTson-'grus) (1187-1250) and rGod-tshang-pa mGon-po rDo-rje (1189-1258), the latter two being monks who were *Karṇatantra* practitioners within the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud tradition.

The late fifteenth and sixteenth century texts from the gTsang-smyon community have become the standard source for the details of the lives of Mar-pa, Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa, even though they were composed about four

centuries after the lifetimes of their subjects. Very little research has been published on the antecedents of the life-stories of Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa. There have been only some vague references in forewords,³ and recent research on Mi-la Ras-pa hagiographies by Father Francis Tiso.⁴

This thesis sets out to show the complex development of biographical traditions of Ras-chung-pa that climaxed in rGod-tshang Ras-pa's version of Ras-chung-pa's life, demonstrating that it is a composite formed from various sources that have undergone centuries of transformation, or narrative evolution. This inevitably requires some examination of the Mi-la Ras-pa narrative traditions too.

It was not common in the eleventh century for the lives of Buddhist masters to be recorded with precision during or shortly after their lifetime. This gave later authors greater freedom to reformulate and re-invent the lives of these masters for dramatic or inspirational effect. In Ras-chung-pa's case, however, a biographical record was made both during and shortly after his lifetime. Though this does not appear to be extant, it does appear to have inhibited changing the account of the latter half of his life. His time with Mi-la Ras-pa, however, appears to have undergone the same process of narrative evolution as the biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa did.

There is a feature unique to the Ras-chung-pa narratives. They concentrate on the guru-pupil relationship, as guru devotion is particularly emphasised in the bKa'-

³ E. Gene Smith, preface to *The Life of the Saint of Gtsang*, by rGod-tshang-ras-pa sNa-tshogs-sang-grol, ed. Lokesh Chandra, Śata-piṭaka series, vol. 79 (New Delhi: Sharada Rani 1969), 17, note 2.

Lobsang P. Lhalungpa, introduction to *The Life of Mi-la Ras-pa*, trans. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa (London: Granada, 1977), xxx.

brgyud lineages, but unlike the paradigm of selfless guru devotion described in the lives of Nāropa and Mi-la Ras-pa, Ras-chung-pa's biography represents the interesting topic of guru-disciple conflict, which presumably had some relevance for later authors and readers. Ras-chung-pa is depicted as disobeying his guru's instructions, arguing with him, even being revolted by him, but is nevertheless not portrayed as a bad example who comes to a sticky end. On the contrary, in the biographies by lHa-btsun and rGod-tshang Ras-pa, he is successful in his spiritual practice and becomes a great master. Not only that, but in spite of his personal crises he is declared to be a primordial buddha in human form, who had therefore been enlightened all along.

Ras-chung-pa's display of arrogance, obstinacy and rebelliousness in gTsang-smyon and rGod-tshang Ras-pa's works attracts enthusiastic empathy in some readers. Presumably they are able to identify with someone who complains about living austere in the mountains when he could instead be enjoying sensory pleasures through tantric practice. In addition to being rebellious and wilful, he is also depicted as young and handsome, a James Dean of Tibetan Buddhism.

However, as the present-day bKa'-brgyud-pa traditions are descended from sGam-po-pa, there is a tendency to present Ras-chung-pa as the unsuccessful pupil, particularly as the histories of the lineages that descended from him are not widely known, nor is it popularly known that he is the provenance of important practices within the bKa'-brgyud-pa tradition. This image of Ras-chung-pa is in fact partly the result of gTsang-smyon's presentation of him as flawed and secondary to sGam-po-pa, which contrasts with the representation of Ras-chung-pa in the works of his

⁴ Francis Tiso, "A study of the Buddhist Saint in Relation to the Biographical Tradition of Mi-la Ras-pa" (Ph. D. diss., Columbia University, New York, 1989).

pupils, where Ras-chung-pa is unequivocally Mi-la Ras-pa's supreme pupil. This thesis will examine the reasons for this anomaly.

This thesis, in examining the available sources, also presents evidence for lost texts which may, one hopes, be discovered in the near future.

The available sources can be grouped into four principal phases in the evolution of the Ras-chung-pa narrative:

1. The earliest phase, up to the thirteenth century: Localised narrative traditions independent of each other.
2. Thirteenth to fifteenth centuries: The localised, independent traditions provide the material for new syncretic traditions.
3. The end of the fifteenth to the sixteenth century: The use of these syncretic traditions in the works of the three most important *Karṇatantra* authors: gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and rGod-tshang Ras-pa.
4. Sixteenth century to the present day: Works that are primarily based upon the works of the gTsang-smyon circle of authors.

The works of the first two phases are now largely forgotten. I shall seek to show how they formed the foundation for the present-day standard version of the biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa, and, in particular, Ras-chung-pa. This will demonstrate the gradual development and composite nature of the contemporary general view of Ras-chung-pa and the incidents in his life.

This thesis assumes a familiarity with Tibetan language and Tibetan Buddhism. For the transliteration of Tibetan I have chosen to capitalise the root-letter rather than the first letter; I have only hyphenated syllables into words when they are names of people, places or books, and have not followed the system of hyphenating the particles to their associated nouns. I am not claiming any superiority for this approach, but it is merely the form of transliteration that I am most familiar with and therefore most at ease with.

In focusing on the life of Ras-chung-pa (1084-1161) primarily during his time as a pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa, this thesis does not give a detailed description of his entire life as a normal biographical study would. Instead the thesis focuses upon the complex relationship between the numerous variants to be found in texts that have been little studied or even read. Previous approaches to Mi-la Ras-pa such as Van Tyul,⁵ Goss⁶ and Urubshurow⁷ have examined solely one version of Mi-la Ras-pa's life, that by gTsang-smyon Heruka (1452-1507), which is easily accessible in Tibetan and Western languages. This approach ignores the three and a half centuries of hagiographical material that preceded and informed this version. Therefore Goss's thesis, which argues that gTsang-smyon's work had a reformist agenda, is weakened by not knowing what elements in the text gTsang-smyon himself contributed and which were from a received narrative tradition. In fact, while his texts are dedicated to the life of a peripatetic meditator, we shall see that gTsang-smyon, in spite of his

⁵ Charles D. Van Tyul, *An Analysis of Chapter Twenty-eight of the Hundred Thousand Songs of Mila-Raspa, a Buddhist Poet and Saint of Tibet* (Ph. D. diss., Indiana University, 1971).

⁶ Robert Everet Goss, *The Hermeneutics of Madness: A literary and Hermeneutical Analysis of the Mi-la'i-rnam-thar by Gtsang-smyon Heruka* (Doctor of Theology diss., Faculty of Harvard Divinity School, 1993).

⁷ Victoria Kennick Urubshurow, *Symbolic Process on the Buddhist path: spiritual development in the biographical tradition of Milarepa* (Ph. D. diss., University of Chicago, 1984).

personal life-style (quite different from Mi-la's in terms of his extremely bizarre behaviour), has introduced into his text the elements of a rapprochement with the monastic bKa'-brgyud tradition.

This thesis is not concerned with Ras-chung-pa's particular version of Tibetan Buddhism or the history of his lineage. These topics would furnish ample material for two more theses, and therefore they are only briefly described in this first chapter. Neither is much time spent upon a general theory of hagiography; much of such theory is itself an induction from Christian hagiography, while a study of this material of the early bKa'-brgyud masters requires first an acquaintance with the distinctive characteristics of the raw material of the sources. They prove to be an excruciatingly complex field of study, and much of the primary source material is rare. There is therefore very little secondary literature on this subject.

The most important goal of this thesis is to introduce the reader into a potentially bewildering labyrinth, already booby-trapped by the earlier misidentification of certain works. Its goal will have been achieved if future explorers have a charted region that they can traverse so as to correct my errors and make fresh discoveries.

Chapter One

1. The Context of the Ras-chung-pa Hagiographies

1.1. Hagiography and Historical Truth

Modern scientific history as a “systematic knowledge of the past” that “deals with real events and real men”¹ is a comparatively recent development, which initially encountered resistance within a religious context. Its introduction into Christian studies was seen by some as “the most serious test that the church has had to face through nineteen centuries.”² Although historical analysis of Biblical material became dominant among Protestants by the end of the nineteenth century, Pius X in 1907 formally rejected this approach, and it was not accepted by the Catholic Church until Pope Pius XII in 1943 made historical method not only permissible but a duty.³

Faith and the historical method have two different means of determining truth and reality.⁴ Conservative theology has always found historical criticism a problem. On the one hand, the conservative insists on the importance of history, but on the other hand, he fears the destruction of faith which positivistic historical criticism has brought.⁵

The Buddhist tradition, especially the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, has only recently begun to encounter this historical method of re-evaluation. One of its earliest proponents in this century was dGe-‘dun Chos-‘phel (1905-1950), whose works, which for example reject the flat-earth cosmology and refute the existence of the fabulous snow-lion, excited fierce condemnation. Even the leading

¹ Edgar Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 34.

² Ibid., 4; a quotation from E. C. Blackman, *Biblical Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1959).

³ Ibid., 29.

⁴ Ibid., 68.

contemporary scholar of the Karma bKa'-brgyud tradition, mKhen-chen Khra-'gu Rin-po-che, has recently criticised the historical approach of dGe-'dun Chos-'phel. He states that a "historical" account should not be concerned with facts that are in opposition to the received tradition. If the information is neutral, such as a description of height and hair-colour, it is valueless and a waste of time. If it is an exposure of imperfections and faults, it is counterproductive, because the sole purpose of history should be to inspire dedication to Buddhist practice. Therefore, it doesn't matter how tall Mi-la Ras-pa was or what colour his hair was, because no purpose is served by knowing or giving that information.⁶ In these terms, hagiography has an explicit pedagogical, if not propagandist purpose, and therefore my investigation of these materials is, from the traditional perspective, a waste of time.

Urubshurow's thesis on gTsang-smyon's biography of Mi-la Ras-pa attempts to present Tibetan hagiography as neither history or myth, claiming that it is a third category of literature which has its origins in some transcendent substratum: the notion that "a domain of spiritual realities exists, wherein symbolic forms generate and communicate extraordinary experience."⁷ However, it is past question that contemporary propagators of the Mi-la Ras-pa myth are convinced of its literal historical reality. Its validity as a reference point of meaning is based upon the assumed historical validity of the narrative. The Mi-la legend is in fact not, as Urubshurow claims, a narrative outside ordinary time and space, but gains its dynamic and power by claiming to be an accurate representation of reality. Nevertheless, such a narrative does have greater power than a factual chronicle or an entirely fantastic creation. Cunningham notes "the striking fact that many people testify to the power of the lives of the saints in their own spiritual development."⁸ That narrative power is the result of the narrative being an alternative "reality" based

⁵ Ibid., 76.

⁶ Pers. Comm., mKhan-chen Khra-'gu Rin-po-che, Bodhnath, 1990.

⁷ Urubshurow, 55.

⁸ Lawrence S. Cunningham, *The Meaning of Saints* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980), 64.

upon actual events but designed to create a greater impact upon the audience by the exaggeration or dramatic heightening of those events, thus creating a work of "faction". The factional character has a more vivid presence in the reader's mind than the factual person that it is both based upon and eclipses, a vividness that is nevertheless in great part due to the very fact that a particular factual person's image is being eclipsed or transmuted.

There is another objection to the historical method, from a quite different source. Structuralist theory counters that one should not attempt to go back to "the era from which the text has received its cultural stamp, or the event to which it refers. The goal of structural analysis is not historical knowledge, and it is suspicious of any light of clarification that is projected from *outside* the text onto the text".⁹ Instead, "*the text* is autonomous. For the most part it is indefinitely its own interpreter and its own subject; and it is accountable only to itself."¹⁰ Structuralism's condemnation of historical criticism is that "there is only a difference of degree between the dogmatic age and the historical-critical era... The historical-critical method itself is proven to be ideologically marked."¹¹

Thus, according to structuralism, an ideological-historical agenda shapes historical analyses of texts, and the process itself is condemned: "It is useless to search for the reality or modality of the events reported, and it is also useless to investigate the intentions of the authors... They no longer exist except by virtue of the text and thanks to it. The text, which is the first reality that the exegete confronts, is also the last reality to which he can have recourse. The author, message, receiver, meaning, and everything is in the text."¹²

⁹ Corina Galland, "A Structural Reading Defined," in *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics: A Collection of essays*, ed. and trans. Alfred M. Johnson Jr. (Pittsburgh: Pickwick Press, 1979), 183.

¹⁰ Alain Blancy, "Structuralism and Hermeneutics" in *ibid.*, 87.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 80.

¹² Jean Pouillon, "Structuralism: A definitional essay," in *Structuralism and Biblical Hermeneutics*, 31.

A complete denial of “historical truth” would be, however, a rarefied academic conceit. While it may be often beyond determination, not even in the most controversial trials have defence lawyers attempted to undermine the existence of past events as an objective valid truth that may be deduced “beyond reasonable doubt”, but have only disputed what it may have been. The analogy is not facetious. Historical research is a form of detective work, and as such it is salutary to remember that a court does not convict a person upon probabilities, speculation or a hypothesis in which possibilities are spliced onto probabilities. Though I will certainly enumerate possibilities, I shall attempt to avoid the instinctive temptation to deny or ignore an unsatisfactory absence of certain knowledge. If we possess only varying, limited accounts of events of which we cannot have further direct knowledge or evidence, then an *apparent* historical verity is the most that we can expect. This apparent verity is formed when a community of texts agree among themselves and also in their relation with contiguous communities of texts. We have only what the texts tell us and that is never enough. This deficiency cannot genuinely be made good. The evolution of hagiographic narratives, however, is often the result of the relentless dynamic of needing to fill in the empty spaces, to have the satisfaction of knowing what has happened, as one wishes it to have happened.

An impartial analysis of materials requires not only abandoning a predilection for any particular solution to a problem, but also the requirement to have a solution at all. What one faces is the static, mute presence of an accumulation of words; mute in that one cannot engage in a dialogue with them. Faced by contradictory accounts, there is no a priori reason to insist that one is truer than another, or to accept certain sections as more genuine, and others as interpolations. An acceptance of the inaccessibility of the past and a recognition of the limitations of textual evidence does not, however, mean abrogating any attempt to discover the truth. Nevertheless, weak evidence is, in effect, the same as no evidence, so that while we may learn a great deal concerning what the texts say, the amount of certain

knowledge which we can deduce concerning the subject of the texts, not as he exists within the text, but as the initial cause for the text, while not non-existent, can, particularly when we are examining twelfth-century Tibet, be very limited compared to the plethora of “information” that the texts provide.

Thus, in spite of our perpetual imprisonment in an amorphous present, it is nevertheless possible to attempt, without the intrusion of personal agendas, to map out relationships *between* texts, discover their temporal sequences, their borrowings, and the processes of alteration and addition.

The Tibetan practice of repeating entire sections of earlier texts, word for word, without any acknowledgement of one's sources, provides a basis for analysis that can yield a family tree for generations of texts. The texts are related in terms of two levels of contents:

- 1) narrative units: details of the story: places, actions, people and objects.
- 2) textual replication, in which phrases and sentences are repeated from earlier works.

The written narratives are formed from the fusion of earlier written narrative traditions and the infusion of developing oral traditions. These narrative elements are analogous to chromosomes, replicating and fusing, creating new combinations among which those with increased dramatic characteristics have a better chance of survival and promulgation.

Unlike the replication of genetic material, however, the reformulation of narrative elements does not occur by chance, though not necessarily by conscious design either. A retold story may have undergone a process of fermentation in the memory, losing and gaining (by invention or borrowing) primary or secondary narrative elements, without the narrator realising that his memory has deceived him, so that the new version is given out in all good faith.

How and why do hagiographies and religious narratives develop so freely? Critical historians are a minority, vastly outnumbered by people who would prefer to hear an inspiring tale. This "good read" is far more than entertainment. It is a depiction of existence, of the past, present or future *as it is wished to be*, as the individual who is audience or author believes it *ought* to be. This is a general characteristic of religious belief in general. A human being has a very limited understanding of the nature of the universe. He is endowed with the biological instincts for survival but also the paradox of a self-consciousness of inevitable death, the annihilation of that self. Humans in diverse cultures have created an image of the universe which makes sense of this appalling circumstance, with life prolonged beyond death, and with paradises and divinities which are fundamentally creations based on their own image and the image of their own physical and cultural environment. Thus they imagine something to hope for, and, its inevitable corollary, something to fear, which provide a moral and meaningful structure, a psychological security for an individual's life and death. Human beings appear to have an innate, spontaneous desire and capability to believe in anything, however unlikely, in order to fulfil this unconscious psychological agenda. Thus, diverse religions have played a crucial role in the cultural and psychological evolution and survival of the human species. Faith, in order to exist, requires an object that is outside reason or logic. Hence, the apparent absurdity either of all religious faith, or of all faiths other than one's own.

Can we find an instance of oft maligned "objective historical truth" within hagiographies? Can we even be certain that the subject ever existed? There are subjects for whom an apparently historical account survives, though sometimes with only a small random fact as the kernel of a centuries old snowball of story-telling, such as the name of a Welsh warrior: Arthur. The earliest records of other subjects, such as Krishna or Merlin, are solely contained within the context of literature, of story-telling, so that we can only trace their development back as far as the earliest form of a series of legends.

The boundary-line between religious myths, secular legends and even self-avowed works of fiction is not a barrier between closed systems. In reading or viewing fiction, the audience fulfils a need by entering into the portrayed world as if it were real, and experiences sadness, fear, mishaps, struggles, but undergoes them by proxy, in safety. The border between reality and imagination blurs. In Verona one can stand on Juliet's balcony, visit Romeo's house and Juliet's tomb, even though the story which was the basis for Shakespeare's play was set in Padua and Juliet's tomb in Verona is an old horse-trough. Yet, even while knowing this, we still visit the balcony and gain a genuine pleasure and satisfaction from standing in it.

Even when the historical verity of a person and his activities is well established, the most vivid images of that person's career are often fictional: Francis Drake finishing his game of bowls before tackling the Armada; King Alfred burning cakes; Robert the Bruce observing a struggling spider in a cave; George Washington cutting down his father's cherry tree. These episodes or images remain more vivid and more real than the recorded details of their lives, not in spite of being a product of the imagination, but *because* they are products of the imagination. These events have their reality within the minds of the people who believe in them. These are the results of a primal and powerful need to believe, and that which is contrary to those beliefs displeases, whether it be Darwin's theory of evolution, the proof that there was never a Robin Hood in Sherwood Forest, or the Christian scholar's subversion of the historicity of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

Fictionalised versions of historical events, whether in literature, song or cinema, eclipse a less engaging truth. For example, the twelve year old Pocahontas's (probably staged) intercession to save the life of Captain Smith was transformed in John Davis' 1805 novelisation into the act of a fourteen year old motivated by romantic love. It is this "faction" that has proved the fertile basis for all reworkings

of the Pocahontas story and created a popularly memorable and psychologically resonant figure.

The same fictionalising process occurs in religious "histories". The Christian tradition's ahistorical depersonalisation of saints derives from the process and contents of the repetitive story-telling of oral and localised folklore, the imaginative process taking precedence over recorded facts or earlier written sources. History blends with myth and imagination in these hagiographies, to the extent that the fourth century St. Jerome can introduce a satyr and centaur into his *Life of St. Paul*.¹³ As Clare Stancliffe states in *St. Martin and his Hagiographers*:

In antiquity, literary conventions were such as to allow for the heightening of a story for literary ends. With the genre of biography we encounter additional complications, for the borderline between fiction and reality was thinner in biography than in ordinary historiography."¹⁴

The fiction of Mi-la Ras-pa's sorcery against a wicked uncle, or of his building and demolishing buildings, fulfils a need for belief in the listener or reader. Encountering the ordinary facts of his life, as for example recorded by his pupil sGam-po-pa, can be not only disappointing, but even profoundly disturbing to a reader whose world-view and emotional security are fused with the story. But if one were to say that Mi-la Ras-pa was five-foot four and not, say, five-foot nine (there is no record of his height), this would not cause a commensurate perturbation as neither height fulfils a psychological agenda. Therefore, such mundane details are irrelevant for the hagiographer (unless it is the superhuman height ascribed to the Buddha).

Tucci describes the Tibetan hagiographies as "mostly uniform and a list of itineraries, studies, monasteries",¹⁵ and that "in almost every case personality

¹³ *ibid.* 159.

¹⁴ *ibid.* 56.

¹⁵ Giuseppe Tucci, *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (Rome: La Libreria dello Stato, 1949), 144.

recedes before a type" without "the light of human passion" or "spiritual strife",¹⁶ "with the exception of some masterpieces of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka". rGodtshang Ras-pa's biography of Ras-chung-pa is one of the group of such "masterpieces" composed by gTsang-smyon and his pupils, which in celebrating their subjects also celebrate their own life-style, that of the peripatetic meditator. Indeed, biographies originating in monasteries can be surprisingly dull, less because their subjects have become remote ciphers of a distant past than because they reflect the monotonous succession of studies, initiations, itineraries and duties that comprised the lives of both subjects and authors. Eventful, dramatic biographies appear to have been the *métier* of the non-monastic yogin in particular. In these the figures develop increasingly distinctive personalities, while quotidian details are marginalised.

The denigration often heaped upon monastic establishments and scholarship in the biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa reflects the values of the community in which they were written. gTsang-smyon and his pupils, living more than three centuries after their subjects, were atypical practitioners, for they lived in a time dominated by centralised monastic traditions that sometimes exercised secular power.

The Tibetan tradition of hagiography has little in common with the Indian; the similarities are minimal and superficial in spite of the immense influence of the Indian canonical tradition. Indeed, the Tibetan hagiographic tradition has more in common with Chinese hagiography, with its attention to detailed records. But, in general, Tibetan biographies are the product of Tibet's own tradition of narrative, folklore, songs and historical records. In a predominantly illiterate society, the oral transmission of song-punctuated narrative was of central importance, and their characters indulged in song-dialogues in the most unlikely circumstances.

¹⁶ Ibid., 152.

Tibetan accounts of Indian lives however, appear to conform to the unbridled imaginings of Indian narratives. When Ras-chung-pa leaves Tibet for India we are suddenly plunged into a world where reality appears to lose its normal constraining laws, where men have three eyes, women are born from lotuses, and Ras-chung-pa reduces hundreds of *tīrthika* (non-Buddhist) villages to powder. His return to Tibet is analogous to a return to a real world; even though miracles are depicted there, they occur within a context of ordinariness and are in sometimes humorous contrast to the surrounding mundane reality.

Tibetan biographies are normally classed as *mam-thar* (“liberation”), for they relate the story of a person’s attainment of liberation. The Sanskrit equivalent of this term, *vimokṣa*, does not occur as a literary term in that language. Early biographies in the Sa-skya tradition are normally termed *lo-rgyus* (“histories”), but biographies of the earliest *bKa’-gdams-pa* masters such as Atiśa, Rin-chen bZang-po and ‘Brom-ston use the term *mam-thar* in their titles. It could be argued that these are later interpolations, but sGam-po-pa, the earliest *bKa’-brgyud* biographer also uses this term, and his literary activities are to a great extent the fruit of his earlier *bKa’-gdams-pa* training. Our sources will include not only *mam-thar* but also *chos-’byung* (“Histories of Buddhism”), *gSer-phreng* (“Histories of bKa’-brgyud lineages”), and some examples of the history of the transmission of a practice, normally included within a *dbang-dpe* (“the text of an initiation rite”).

1.2. The geographical background to the life of Ras-chung-pa

The pressure of the Indian sub-continent against the original landmass of Asia has caused, and continues to cause, the rise of the Tibetan plateau. That plateau has the Himalayas as its southern edge, behind which the Brahmaputra

river—known in Tibet as the gTsang-po— flows from the far west of Tibet through its southern regions until it breaks through the mountain range to enter Assam.

Ras-chung-pa was from the southern side of the Himalayan watershed, separated by high passes from the Tibetan plateau to the north. It was in such valleys that Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa spent most of their lives. Ras-chung-pa spent most of his early years with Mi-la Ras-pa in this region. Some versions of his life describe him as herding animals on his own, particularly while the village people were engaged in the demanding work of the harvest.

In the latter half of his life, when he was a teacher with his own community of pupils, Ras-chung-pa lived farther east, in valleys from which rivers descended through what is now Arunachal Pradesh into the Brahmaputra in Assam. One of these valleys —the Lo-ro— supplied Ras-chung-pa with his personal toponym—Lo-ro-ba.

Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa did not have to travel far south to be within what is now Nepalese territory. A number of ethnically Tibetan areas including sites associated with Mi-la Ras-pa, lie within the present-day political territory of Nepal. These areas, as well as such ethnically Tibetan areas as Ladakh in Kashmir, have preserved texts and manuscripts that are central to this thesis; they would otherwise have been destroyed in the Cultural Revolution.

From Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa's homeland, an established route led down from about 9000 feet above sea level to the 4000 feet of the Kathmandu Valley. Many Tibetans followed this route in search of Buddhist teachings that were either unavailable in Tibet or too expensive. For example, sGam-po-pa and later authors state that Mar-pa found 'Brog-mi Lo-tsā-ba's fees far too high, which inspired him to head for Nepal to obtain the teachings directly. The gold that had to be given as an offering to Nepalese or Indian masters was easier to procure in Tibet, and such an investment was easily recouped when the Tibetan returned home and demanded, as did Mar-pa, a high fee for his hard-won secret instructions.

Some Tibetans made Nepal their goal, and obtained empowerments and instructions from Newar or visiting Indian masters in this climatically more benevolent setting. Others would proceed on down to the Indian plains and its exacting climate. There are passing references in the literature to the frequent deaths of Tibetans in India. For example, Chag Lo-tsā-ba (also known as Chos-rje dpal, 1197-1264), who kept an account of his visit to India in 1234-36, while staying through a summer at Nālandā was informed that the Tibetan who had done the same the previous year had died of fever.¹⁷ Chag Lo-tsā-ba's maternal uncle, who was accompanying him, had died in Nepal, en route to India,¹⁸ and he himself, while staying in Nālandā, broke out in three hundred boils,¹⁹ and on his return journey came close to death, lying in a house where the “host” daily tried to persuade him to leave before he died!²⁰ Many crossed the Ganges to reach the centres of Buddhist teaching, as Mar-pa went to Nāropa's hermitage of Pullahari near Nālandā. Tibetans normally restricted their Indian visits to the central Gangetic region, roughly the present-day area of Bihar State. A further journey would have been even harder on the Tibetan constitution. Beyond Bihar there would also have been further linguistic boundaries to cross. In the Bihar region, Buddhist masters from all over India would be present, making it less necessary to search further afield for instructions. Also, the institutions and masters there must have become accustomed to the arrival of Tibetans.

Ras-chung-pa is described as having limited his travelling even further. He reached only the Mithila region, adjacent to the Nepalese foothills, an area which the twelfth century Chag Lo-tsā-ba describes as a land the border of which is marked

¹⁷ *Biography of Dharmasvāmin (Chag lo-tsā-ba Chos-rje-dpal): Tibetan monk pilgrim*, trans. Dr. George Roerich (Patna: K. P. Jayaswal Research Institute, 1959), (Tibetan): 33, (translation): 95.

[Śākya'i dge-bsnyen Chos-dpal dPar-dpyang], *The Biography of Chag Lo-tsā-ba Chos rje dpal (Dharmasvāmin)* ed. Champa Thupten Zongtse (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1981), ms:156/ revised edition: 157.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, (Roerich) 8, 57 [the word “uncle” is omitted in the translation]; (Zongtse) 30/1.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, (Roerich) 33, 95; (Zongtse) 156/7.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, (Roerich) 36, 98-9; (Zongtse) 168/69 – 170/71.

by a transition from Nepalese to an Indian (Maithili) language.²¹ Tipupa, whom Ras-chung-pa sought out, is described as already having Tibetan interpreters present.²² This was a region which was considered of relatively easy access, for Ras-chung-pa is described as having made his way there for the first time while so seriously ill that he sometimes had great difficulty in walking.²³ His first teacher in the area, Walatsandra (i.e. Bālacandra), though a resident there, is described by rGya-ldang-pa, in the earliest account available of this teacher, as Nepalese.²⁴

Ras-chung-pa's visits onto the Tibetan plateau proper were confined to the gTsang-po valley basin. North of the mountain ranges that mark the northern limit of the gTsang-po valley, there lies only the vast and sparsely inhabited Byang-thang plain, which is inhospitable and subject to extreme cold. Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa are said to have gone on pilgrimage to the sacred mountain of Kailash in the far west, near the gTsang-po's source and also near the sources of the Ganges and Indus.

The central region of the gTsang-po valley is principally divided into the two regions of gTsang (with Shigatse [gZhis-ka-rtse] as its capital) and dBus (with lHa-sa as its capital). Mi-la Ras-pa is said to have studied under sorcerers in gTsang and also in the Yar-lung valley in dBus, before becoming Mar-pa's pupil at lHo-brag, which borders the north of Bhutan. Ras-chung-pa studied *Mahāmudrā* under As-u in gTsang, and for a while lived as a nobleman in Yar-lung before his ill-fated marriage ended. The Yar-lung valley was to be an important site for Ras-chung-pa's lineage. A hermitage named Ras-chung-phug —“Ras-chung-pa's Cave”— developed around a small cave where Ras-chung-pa was said to have dwelt. It was there that gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka died in 1507, and that rGod-tshang Ras-pa's *Life of Ras-chung-pa* was printed. By the twentieth century, it had developed into a

²¹ Ibid., (Roerich) 8, 57; (Zongtse) 30/31.

²² rGya-ldang-pa, 352; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark) 68b1 ff.; (Oxford) 53a3 ff.; (Stockholm) n.a.

²³ rGya-ldang-pa, 345.

²⁴ Ibid., 346.

substantial monastery with its own series of Rechung incarnations as abbots. It was described by Hugh Richardson, who visited it in 1949:

[It] clings, at different levels, to the hillside which separates the Yarlung and 'Phyong-rgyas valleys. It is built above the meditation cave of Ras-chung-pa... a rather shallow recess with images of Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa on the altar and a small mchod-rten [stūpa] in front.²⁵

1.3. Ras-chung-pa's form of Vajrayāna Buddhism

During Ras-chung-pa's lifetime, there was little centralisation of religious organisations, so that allegiance was normally owed solely to one's own personal teacher. When one became a master in turn, this entailed creating one's own independent community of pupils, not founding an extension of an organisation that would have a central authority.

After Ras-chung-pa's lifetime, and during the lifetime of the authors of his biographies, certain localised lineages grew and absorbed others, the holder of a prospering lineage sometimes becoming the successor to a lineage with few practitioners. In this way, certain lineages lost their independent status, while their teachings and practices continued to be preserved.

In Ras-chung-pa's time, the domain of Indian Buddhism was not too far away, and many of the most prestigious masters of the time were Lo-tsā-ba (also spelt lo-ts.tshā-ba). This honorific term for translators is said to be derived from an abbreviation of the Sanskrit *Lokacaksus* and with a substantive particle *ba* added, though this does not explain the lengthening of the vowel and may be a false etymology. It is therefore translated into Tibetan as 'jig-rten mig ("the eye of the

²⁵ Hugh Richardson, *High Peaks, Pure Earth* (London: Serindia Publications, 1998), 319-20.

world”).²⁶ However, the term signified more than translation; it also signified having braved a visit to India, successfully located a guru who had a teaching not yet available in Tibet, and mastered that practice. Such was Ras-chung-pa’s historically most important activity.

In the word *vajrayāna*, the word *vajra* refers in particular to the “thunderbolt”, the indestructible irresistible weapon that first appears in Indian literature in the hand of the Vedic deity Indra. The *vajrayāna* is therefore a path that has inconceivable power, able to cut through obstacles and obscurations which lesser paths would require aeons of practice to eliminate.

The *vajrayāna* practitioner visualised himself as the deity in order to realise his obscured innate purity. The earliest strata of tantric practice, later classified as “outer Tantras” had no sexual content. The outer tantras are subdivided into three sets of tantras: Kriyā, Caryā and Yoga. Those practices that involve the visualisation of deities in sexual union, such as *Guhyasamāja*, *Yamāntaka*, *Hevajra*, *Cakrasaṃvara* and *Kālacakra*, are classed as inner tantras. The inner tantras are also known as the *Niruttara Tantras* “the highest tantras”. The Tibetan *bla-med rgyud* is usually represented in Sanskrit as Anuttara Tantra, but there is no evidence for this term in Sanskrit.²⁷ The practice of the inner tantras is traditionally divided into two types:

- 1) The generation stage (Skt: *utpattikrama*; Tib: *bskyed-rim*).
- 2) The completion stage (Skt: *sampannakrama*, Tib: *rdzogs-rim*).

The generation stage entails the elaborate visualisation of oneself as a deity, surrounded by an entourage of deities, in the centre of a divine palace. This habituation to “pure perception” is intended to displace habituation to ordinary

²⁶ *Bod-rgya tshig-mdzod chen-mo*, 3 vols. China: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1984, 2811; Cf., Sir Monier Monier-Williams, *A Sanskrit-English Dictionary* (Delhi: Motilala Banarsidass, 1988), 906.

²⁷ Elizabeth English, “Vajrayoginī: Her Visualisation, Rituals and Forms” (D.Phil diss., University of Oxford, 1999), 4.

perception so that the practitioner can see the intrinsic purity of the world and its inhabitants.

This practice can also be the context for an elaborate offering named the *gaṇacakra* (Tibetan: *tshogs-kyi 'khor-lo*). This normally involves a gathering of practitioners, who offer and consume a feast of food and drink. Though *tshogs* is glossed in Tibetan as referring to an *accumulation* of merit and wisdom through this practice,²⁸ the Sanskrit equivalent for this use of *tshogs* is *saṃbhāra* and therefore this is an example of false etymology. The word *gaṇa* though translated by the same word in Tibetan, refers to a gathering or assembly of individuals. Alcohol and meat are often specified to be eaten and drunk at these gatherings. The *gaṇacakra* is meant to heal any breakage in commitment, and was an opportunity for practitioners to offer songs expressing their realisations and experience. For the disciples of Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa, who did not have the routinised gatherings of monastic institutions, these *gaṇacakra* assemblies were of great importance.

In addition to the visualisation and mantra repetition of the generation stage, there are various yogic practices of the perfection stage, which were originally found associated with particular Tantric deities, but were subsequently compiled into a set of practices which can complement a single generation stage practice. In the contemporary bKa'-brgyud school, they are normally presented as “the six *dharma*s of Nāropa” (*Nā-ro chos-drug*), which Mar-pa obtained from his Indian teacher Nāropa (c. 956-1040). These have become commonly known in the west as “The six yogas of Naropa”. This popular name appears to have its origins in the first translation of these teachings into the west, when Evanz-Wentz speaks of “the Yoga Philosophy” upon which he claims the treatise as a whole is based.²⁹ However, even the title of his own translation is *The Yoga of the Six Doctrines* (i.e., *Dharma*s), and throughout he refers to these practices as the six doctrines and not the six yogas.

²⁸ Cf. *Tshigs-mdzod Chen-mo*, 2289-90: ... tshogs kyed par can gsog pa'i cho ga zhig (A ritual for gathering an exceptional accumulation)

The list of the practices covered by this term varies considerably but in all versions the principal practice is *caṇḍālī*. This is based upon an esoteric physiology, which has three primary characteristics:

- 1) A network of channels (Sanskrit: *nāḍī*; Tibetan: *rtsa*) that pervades the body
- 2) The air or winds (*vāyu*) or breath which moves through these channels. In the context of tantric practice this primarily means the breath, though in the medical tradition there are different kinds of *vāyu*, which include the *vāyu* which causes downward emissions (of urine, faeces, semen, menstrual blood) and the *vāyu* that causes digestion.
- 3) The drops (Sanskrit: *bindu*; Tibetan: *thig-le*). These are drops of vital essences located particularly within the central channel (*avadhūtī*; *dbu-ma*) that runs parallel to the spine, usually from the crown of the head to the navel or the genitalia.

The description of these three and of the nature of the *avadhūtī* varies. In particular there are various points on the *avadhūtī* where subsidiary *nāḍis* branch out, which are called *cakras* (*rtsa-yi-'khor-lo* “wheels of channels”). There are two secondary channels parallel to the *avadhūtī*: the *rasanā* and *lalanā* respectively to the *avadhūtī*’s left and right. Their upper openings are the left and right nostrils. Some descriptions of the *cakras* describe them as the points where the right and left channels twist around the *avadhūtī*.

It is believed that breath from the two nostrils normally moves through the right and left channels. The aim of the practitioner is to cause the breath to move into the central channel. This is because the mind rides the *vāyu* as a steed, and if the breath enters the non-duality of the *avadhūtī*, the mind too will enter a non-dual state. This is accomplished partly through breath retention.

²⁹ *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, ed. W. Y. Evans-Wentz, (London: Oxford University Press, 1935), vii.

In particular, the *caṇḍālī* practice involves visualising a flame growing within the central channel from the level of the navel, or just below. This melts the *bodhicitta* (which here is a term for semen) that is situated near the summit of the central channel at the *brahmarandhra* (*tshangs-pa'i bu-ga*), the principal cranial suture which forms the greater fontanel. As it melts, drops of *bodhicitta* drip down the central channel. As it passes through the four *cakras* it gives rise to four stages of bliss. The *cakras* are here described as points where subsidiary channels of a specific number branch off from the central channel. The semen should not be ejaculated but drawn back up the central channel to its point of origin, creating four more stages of bliss, in which one should be able to realise the nature of the mind. The signs of success in this practice are bliss and physical heat. This practice is intended to transform sexual bliss into enlightenment.

This is sometimes called liberation through the upper door, in contrast to actual sexual practice, which is bliss through the lower door, which enhances the former practice. The practice of union with a consort, called a *karmamudrā*, is another *sampannakrama* practice that also involves this descent and reversal of the semen. In this practice however, it is believed that one draws back up from the tip of the penis the union of the male fluid with the female's fluid.

An ancillary to *caṇḍālī* practice is *'phrul-'khor*, or *yantra*, which involves a number of postures and movements, usually conjoined with breathing techniques and visualisations that are intended to loosen knots and eliminate faults in the body's channels that prevent a proper flow of the air through them. Mi-la is described in some of our sources as miraculously practising this inside a yak horn.

The "illusory body" (*sgyu-lus*, *māyākāya*) practice develops a perception of all phenomena as an illusion.

The dream (*rmi-lam*, *svapna*) practice involves gaining awareness and control of the dream state.

The luminosity (*'od-gsal*, *prabhāsvara*) practice involves maintaining awareness on entering dreamless sleep.

The transference (*‘pho-ba*, *saṃkrānti*) practice involves training in firing one’s consciousness, visualised as a tiny sphere in one’s heart, up through the central channel to the fontanelle, so that at the time of death one can visualise actually exiting through it. This will ensure the attainment of enlightenment, or a good rebirth.

The intermeditate state (*bar-do*, *antarābhava*) practice trains the individual for the after-death experience.

One perfection stage practice in earlier lists of the six *dharma*s of Nāropa, is called “entering a town” (*grong-‘jug*, *purapraveśa*) or less obscurely “entering another’s body” (*gzhan-lus ‘jug-pa*, *parakāyapraveśa*); in this one transfers one’s consciousness into a dead body. The former name is derived from the analogy of leaving one town to live in another. This practice is done so that one can abandon one’s own sick or old body and continue with one’s practice of the path in a healthy young one.³⁰ Mastery of this practice is indicated in the biographies of masters by their temporary re-animation of a dead animal; for instance, Ras-chung-pa’s pupil Sangs-rgyas sTon-pa, also known as Yang-dag dPal, re-animated a dead lamb by temporarily transferring his consciousness into it.³¹ This practice is an important element in the life-story of Tipupa as described in rGod-tshang Ras-pa’s *Life of Ras-chung-pa*; it identifies Tipupa as Mar-pa’s son, who on his death transferred his consciousness to a dead Indian youth.

As for Ras-chung-pa’s own presentation of *sampannakrama* practices, according to ‘Jam-mgon Kong-sprul,³² Ras-chung-pa taught a set of nine practices, based upon the theme of “blending” (*sres-ba*):

- 1) *Caṇḍālī* — the blending of desire with bliss.
- 2) Illusory body — the blending of anger with unreality.
- 3) Luminosity — the blending of ignorance with non-thought.

³⁰ ‘Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, *Shes-bya Kun-khyab*, vol.3 (China: Mi-rigs dPe-skrun-khang, 1982), 373-74.

³¹ lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, “Tshe gcig la ‘ja’-lus brnyes pa rje ras-chung-pa’i mam-thar rags bsdus mgur-rnam [sic] rgyas-pa” in *Bka’-brgyud-pa Hagiographies*, Vol. 1 (Tashi Jong, India: Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang, 1972), 749.

- 4) Daytime meditation—the blending of *caṇḍālī* and illusory body.
- 5) Night-time meditation—the blending of dream and luminosity.
- 6) Death-time meditation—the blending of “transference” and “the intermediate state”.
- 7) For an individual with diligence—blending with *Caṇḍālī*.
- 8) For the lazy individual—blending with the dream practice.
- 9) For one with not long to live—blending with “the transference of consciousness”.

All these elaborate practices are classified as “the path of methods” (*thabs-lam*, *upāya-mārga*) in contrast to “the path of liberation” (*grol-lam*, *mokṣa-mārga*). The latter is the *Mahāmudrā*, and is comprised of forms of meditation that do not rely on elaborate visualisations and techniques, but deal directly with the mind. Ras-chung-pa played an important role in the transmission of the *Mahāmudrā* in Tibet.

Apart from the numerous songs ascribed to Ras-chung-pa there are also some brief manuals from Ras-chung-pa’s lineage which are ascribed to him.

In *The List of the Profound Instructions from “The Lower Entrance of the Glorious Saṃvara-karṇatantra”* (*dPal bde-mchog snyan-brgyud kyi ‘og sgo las zab mo gdams pa’i tho-yig*), which is ascribed to Ras-chung-pa, it is said:

The perfect vessels for the secret method
 Are women with great lust,
 And similarly, [sexually] mature men,
 With perfect youth and bliss.

Bu med chags pa che ba dang
 De bzhin skyes bu dar la bab

³² ‘Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, *Shes-bya Kun-khyab*, vol. 3, 327.

Lang tsho bde ba phun sum tshogs

Gsang ba thabs kyi snod mchog yin³³

It adds that this method is not for those who are without desire, who are not sexually mature, or who are ascetics. The text, all in verse, is unabashed in setting forth its purpose and the details of the practice. For example, it advises the practitioner not to be frightened of biting the woman on such places as the lips, breasts and nipples, because this will give her pleasure. It also advises where to kiss (the list starts with both eyes and culminates with the vagina), where to pinch and where to scratch.³⁴

He calls this practice “The supreme path of stainless bliss, the profound meaning, the one way travelled by the Buddhas of the three times” (*bde chen dri med lam gyi mchog / dus gsum sangs rgyas thams cad kyi / bgrod pa gcig pa zab mo'i don*).³⁵

However, it is necessary to make sure that one's consort is of the right kind. Another text from Ras-chung-pa's lineage, *Examining the Signs of the dākinīs* (*Mkha'-'gro'i mtshan-brtags*), is entirely devoted to the evaluation of women as prospective partners in sexual practice.³⁶

The biographies are very reticent about this aspect of their subjects' lives. In gTsang-smyon's texts on Mi-la Ras-pa the only consorts he has are the Tshe-ring-ma mountain goddesses. Nevertheless, earlier texts do mention in passing his sexual partners.

³³ rJe Ras-chung, “dPal bde-mchog sNyan-brgyud [sic] kyi ‘og-sgo las zab-mo gdams-pa'i tho-yig” in *mKha'-'gro sNyan-brgyud kyi Yig-mying*, ed. ‘Brug-chen Pad-ma dKar-po, vol. 2 (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1982), 2.

³⁴ Ibid., 5.

³⁵ Padma dKar-po, *mKha'-'gro sNyan-brgyud kyi Yig-mying*, 2 vols. (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1982), vol. 1, 6.

³⁶ “mKha'-'gro'i mtshan brtags” in *mKha'-'gro sNyan-brgyud kyi Yig-mying*, ed. ‘Brug-chen Pad-ma dKar-po, Vol.2 (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1982), 7-13.

The marginalisation of sexual practices in Tibetan Buddhism is indicated by two texts composed by Zhang Lo-tsā-ba (died 1237). Zhang Lo-tsā-ba³⁷ studied with a great number of important contemporary teachers of various traditions, but in terms of his own transmission his importance lies in being a successor to a lineage that derives from Khyung-tshang-pa, an atypical but historically important monastic pupil of Ras-chung-pa. In *The Great-bliss Light-consort*,³⁸ Zhang Lo-tsā-ba admonishes practitioners to use a woman who is entirely the product of one's own imagination, stating that doing so with a real woman would be like trying to ride a horse for the first time without a bridle or saddle and would be disastrous for both.

In a later text, however,³⁹ Zhang Lo-tsā-ba provides the instruction, presumably for a select few, that the practice should be done with a real woman, in order to make the semen descend, be halted, be reversed and made to spread through the body. There are stages in this practice, starting by trying to accomplish this by just looking at the breasts, etc., and passing through a number of stages of training before practising actual penetration. Even during the actual act of coition, the two partners visualise each other as deities, the male reciting the female mantra and the female the male mantra. For each stage of the semen descent, etc., there are stares, breathing exercises and visualisations prescribed. In order to obtain a consort there are practices to cause a woman to be attracted to oneself. However, Zhang Lo-tsā-ba balks at giving the details of this practice and directs the reader to his own teacher for private instruction.

Unlike the householder Mar-pa, who was the origin of the bKa'-brgyud lineage in Tibet, and unlike sGam-po-pa the monk, the founder of the monastic Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud lineage, Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa, as their names

³⁷ rTa-tshag Tshe-dbang rGyal, *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* (China: Bod-ljongs Bod-yig dPe-mying dPe-skrun-khang, 1994) 126-30.

³⁸ Zhang Lo-tsā-ba, "Og-sgo mkha'-'gro gSang-ba bDe-ba Chen-po'i Lam gyi 'Od-rig bDe-chen" in Padma dKar-po, *mkha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-mying*, vol. 1, 15-34.

³⁹ Zhang Lo-tsā-ba, "Og-sgo bde-chen mkha'-'gro'i snying-khrag lta-bu (The Great Bliss Lower-entrance, that is like the heart blood of the dakṇīs)" in Padma dKar-po, *mkha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-mying*, vol. 1, 35-73.

suggest, were *ras-pa*. *Ras-pa* is a generic term originating at that time but later falling into disuse, to be replaced by *mal-'byor-pa* (*yogin*). *Ras* means cotton, and *pa* is a substantiative. A *ras-pa* therefore means "someone who wears cotton", but actually refers to someone who has mastered the practice of *caṇḍālī*, (*gtum-mo*). The practice should result in an experience of bliss and actual physical warmth. It is this warmth that should enable the practitioner to wear solely cotton even in cold weather, even above the snow line. Frequently the mark of accomplishment in the biographies of pupils of Mi-la Ras-pa is that he or she became "able to wear [only] cotton". The word *bKa'-brgyud* ("Lineage of instructions") is sometimes, in the 'Brug-pa *bKa'-brgyud* school, written as *dKar-brgyud*, meaning the "white lineage", which refers to the *ras-pa* cotton costume.

However, a biography of Khyung-tshang-pa describes the aged Ras-chung-pa as wearing a cotton robe over clothing of felt.⁴⁰ Therefore the cotton robe was primarily worn as a distinguishing mark of his practice. While not engaged in the necessary visualisation and breathing techniques, recourse to warm clothes was necessary.

These early *ras-pa* had few possessions and lived in caves in remote areas, dependent upon the limited patronage of villagers. They were dedicated to meditation practice, not the pursuit of scholarship.

Ras-chung-pa was a successor to the lineage introduced by Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros (whose dates are problematic) and transmitted to him via Mi-la Ras-pa.

Mar-pa lived during the "later transmission" (Tib: *Phyi-dar*) in contrast to the "early transmission" (Tib: *sNga-dar*) under the auspices of the Buddhist Kings. His lineage goes back through Nāropa to Tilopa, a peripatetic Bengali who is said to have gone to Oḍḍiyāna, the land of the *dākinīs*. There he was able to withstand their threats, and through his songs of realisation gained access to their queen and

⁴⁰ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 116.

obtained Tantric teachings. Of particular relevance to this thesis, he received there the *Kaṇatantra* (*sNyan-rgyud*), “The Aural Tantra”, from the bodiless *dākinīs*. He could only hear their voices reciting *The Vajra Verses* (*rDo-rje'i Tshig-rkang*) (See Appendix B), which are highly symbolic in content. These teachings are therefore also known as “the dharmas of the bodiless *dākinīs*” (*lus-med mkha'-'gro'i chos-skor, dāka-niṣkāya-dharma*). This is a teaching which Mar-pa only partially received from Nāropa and which Ras-chung-pa, on Mi-la Ras-pa's instruction went to India to obtain in full, from Tipupa, a successor in Nāropa's lineage.

The name *sNyan-rgyud* also occurs as *sNyan-brgyud*, where it is taken to mean an oral transmission. However, we find that a number of authors are specific about retaining the spelling *rgyud*, meaning *Tantra*. For example, 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa uses the term *snyan-rgyud* but for lineage uses *brgyud*, even in the same sentence—*snyan-rgyud nor-bu'i skor-gsum ring-brgyud* (“the long lineage of the trilogy of the Kaṇatantra Jewel”).⁴¹ gTsang-smyon gives *Kaṇatantra* as the Oḍḍiyāna equivalent of *sNyan-rgyud*.⁴² The title of a canonical text by Tilopa (See Appendix B) contains the words *mukhakāṇa-paramparā* translated as *zhal nas snyan du brgyud-pa* (“A lineage [passed] from mouth to ear”). However, in contrast the title of a text by Nāropa contains the word *Kaṇatantra*, which has been translated as *sNyan-brgyud*, though this may be a scribal corruption (see Appendix B).

The monastic *bKa'-brgyud* tradition founded by sGam-po-pa soon diversified into numerous independent lineages, which are traditionally cited in an over-simplified list as “the four senior and eight junior” (*che bzhi chung brgyad*) lineages. As there was no over-all unity, allegiance to the successors of one's own lineage was of great importance, as they defined one's own religious community

⁴¹ 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, “bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud las brGyud-pa ring-lugs kyi rNam-thar Nor-bu 'Od kyi Phreng-ba” in *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-cha* (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1985), 1.

⁴² gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, “Yid-bzhin Nor-bu Zhes-bya-ba sNyan-rgyud kyi rtsa-ba rdo-rje'i gzhuṅ-chung” in *bDe-mchog mkha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud (Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud): Two manuscript collections of texts from the yig-cha of gTsang-smyon Heruka*, vol. 2 (Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1971) 9.

and distinguished it from one's nearest relatives on the bKa'-brgyud family-tree. Therefore, it is in this milieu that there appeared the literary tradition of lineage histories (Tibetan: *gSer-'phreng* "Golden Garland/Succession"). Each of these claim their own particular lineage to be the mainstream of the succession. For example, parallel with this literary tradition of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud, we also find the chronicles of the rNgog lineage, which traces itself back to Mar-pa's pupil rNgog-ston instead of Mi-la Ras-pa. There are also the variant Karmatantra lineage histories that have their spiritual ancestor in Ras-chung-pa and not sGam-po-pa.

1.4. The religious context of the named authors of the biographies

Our sources, which will be examined in chapter two, are derived from various branches of the bKa'-brgyud traditions. I shall here attempt to place the known authors in the context of their specific traditions.

1.4.1. Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud

Bla-ma Zhang was the founder of the Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud. Zhang gYu-brag-pa brTson-'grus Grags-pa, also known as Bla-ma Zhang (1123-93) was a pupil of sGam-po-pa's nephew and successor, sGom-tshul (1116-1169). He composed a number of biographies, including those of Mi-la Ras-pa and sGam-po-pa. The Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud became briefly of secular importance in the thirteenth century. Kun-dga' rDo-rje (1309-1364) completed the first general history of Buddhism in 1346: the *Deb-ther dMar-po (Red Annals)*, sometimes called the *Old Red Annals* to distinguish it from a later work with the same name which is not relevant to this thesis.

1.4.2. The Karma bKa'-brgyud

This lineage originates with a pupil of sGam-po-pa known toponymically as Tshur-pu-pa, after the site of his principal monastery, and also as the first Karma-pa in a series of hierarchs operating on the principle of succession through identified reincarnation.

The second Karma-pa had been taught the Ras-chung bKa'-brgyud's Jinasāgara form of Avalokiteśvara, as his teacher had also studied with a pupil of Ras-chung-pa's, and this became the traditional deity of the Karma-pas, and ranks in importance within the Karma bKa'-brgyud only behind Cakrasamvara and Vajravārāhī.

The third Karma-pa, Rang-byung rDo-rje (1284-1339) was an important and eclectic figure in the consolidation of the identity of the Karma bKa'-brgyud lineage. His teacher was O-rgyan-pa Rin-chen dPal (1229-1309), the holder of a number of transmissions, who in addition to transmitting to him the Karma bKa'-brgyud teachings of the previous Karma-pa, also taught him Ras-chung-pa's "nine blendings and transferences", and the *Ro-snyoms sKor-drug* attributed to Ras-chung-pa.⁴³ Karma-pa Rang-byung rDo-rje was an important author and systematiser. He also wrote *The Black Treasury (mDzod Nag-ma)*, a now lost work on Mi-la Ras-pa, which however was used as a source by the anonymous Karma bKa'-brgyud-pa author of *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*.

The fourth Karma-pa Rol-pa'i rDo-rje recognised the seven-year-old mKha'-spyod dBang-po (1350-1405) as the rebirth of "the first Zhwa-dmar", a pupil of the third Karma-pa. Zhwa-dmar mKha'-spyod dBang-po used the third Karma-pa's work as a source for his biography of Mi-la Ras-pa, entitled *Byin-brlabs kyi sPrin-spung*.

⁴³ 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu dPal] *The Blue Annals*, trans. George N. Roerich (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1949), 668. The English translation is faulty here; the sentence that he was in his twenty-ninth year in the earth-bird year of 1184 in fact specifying the time when gTsang-pa rGya-ras discovered the *Ro-snyoms sKor-drug*.

'Gos Lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu dPal, *The Blue Annals* (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1974), 583.

The Karma bKa'-brgyud became a widespread and powerful school, particularly from the late fifteenth century to the early seventeenth century. This period saw three great works of history written by Karma bKa'-brgyud authors: *The Blue Annals* (*Deb-ther sNgon-po*) (completed 1478), *The lHo-rong Dharma History [of the bKa'-brgyud Lineages]* (*lHo-rong Chos-'byung*) (1451) and the second dPa'-bo, gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba's (1504-1566) *Feast of the Scholars* (*mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston*).

1.4.3. Zur-mang bKa'-brgyud

The Karma bKa'-brgyud gave rise to a branch lineage known as the Zur-mang bKa'-brgyud founded by 'Khrung-rma-se (also known as rMa-se rTogs-ldan Blo-gros Rin-chen), based upon the Ras-chung-pa's snyan-rgyud taught to him by the fifth Karma-pa, bDe-bzhin gShegs-pa (1384-1415). In this form, called the bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro'i sNyan-brgyud Nor-bu sKor-gsum,⁴⁴ or in brief the mKha'-'gro snyan-brgyud, it was maintained by the successive incarnations of 'Khrung-rma-se's principal pupil: the Drung-pa sPrul-sku. The tenth Drung-pa sPrul-sku (1939-1986), though a well known author and teacher in the west, did not propagate this lineage as he appears to have left Tibet before receiving it. This lineage is our source for the biography of Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa.

1.4.4. Phag-gru bKa'-brgyud

The Phag-gru bKa'-brgyud was founded by sGam-po-pa's pupil Phag-mo Gru-pa (1110-70), but the eight "junior lineages" originated from amongst his pupils. Three of these are important for our sources.

⁴⁴ E. Gene Smith, Introduction to Mon-rtse-pa Kun-dga'-dpal-ldan, *Dkar brgyud gser 'phreng* (Leh: Sonam W. Tashigang, 1970), 4.

1.4.5. sTag-lung bKa'-brgyud

The sTag-lung bKa'-brgyud founded by sTag-lung-pa bKra-shis-dpal (1142-1210), transmitted the Ras-chung teachings, and a history of the sTag-lung lineage by its hierarch Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (1571-1626) serves as one of the sources for this thesis. An eighteenth century hierarch sTag-lung-pa Ngag-dbang bsTan-pa'i Nyi-ma (1788-?), who became the abbot of sTag-lung in 1804, wrote a commentary on these teachings.⁴⁵

1.4.6. The 'Bri-gung (or 'Bri-khung) bKa'-brgyud.

The 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud was founded by 'Bri-khung sKyob-pa 'Jig-rten mGon-po (1143-1217) and initially diversified into local lineages. One of our sources is from a far-western branch in the kingdom of Gu-ge, contained within the fourteenth century compilation by rDo-rje mDzes-'od, and another from the succession at 'Bri-gung monastery itself.

1.4.7. 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud

This lineage is of particular relevance for Ras-chung-pa and his hagiographers. Gling-ras-pa Padma rDo-rje (1128-88) had previously been a pupil of two of Ras-chung-pa's pupils— Khyung-tshang-pa and Sum-pa.⁴⁶ Therefore the Ras-chung lineage as well as the Phag-gru teachings were transmitted to his principal pupil gTsang-pa rGya-ras Ye-shes rDo-rje (1161-1211). gTsang-pa rGya-ras also discovered what were said to be the hidden teachings of Ras-chung-pa: *The Six Teachings on Equal Taste (ro-snyoms skor drug)*, which became central to the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud.⁴⁷ He established the monastery that gave the school its name. gTsang-pa rGya-ras's successor was his own nephew, dBon-ras Dar-ma

⁴⁵ sTag-lung-pa Ngag-dbang bsTan-pa Nyi-ma, *sNyan rgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang gi 'brel bshad: A detailed exposition of the snyan rgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang and the precepts of Nāropa (Na ro chos drug)* (Arunachal Pradesh: Tibetan Nyingmapa Monastery, 1974).

Seng-ge (1177-1237/8), and this succession based at that monastery is known as the Bar-‘brug or “middle/central ‘Brug-pa”.

gTsang-pa rGya-ras is also known, retrospectively, as the first ‘Brug-chen after the Bar-‘brug adopted succession by incarnation some centuries later. The second ‘Brug-chen, rGyal-dbang Kun-dga’ dPal-‘byor (1428-1476) is the author of one of our sources.

The third ‘Brug-chen, ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523), had a vision, in 1508, of Ras-chung-pa, from whom he received a direct lineage of the sNyan-rgyud. He compiled this with the instructions of the established lineage in his *Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud gSar-ma* (*The New Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud*).⁴⁶

The fourth ‘Brug-chen was Pad-ma dKar-po (1527-1592), the ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud’s greatest author, who wrote one of our sources. He also compiled two volumes on the teachings of Ras-chung-pa: *mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-mying* (“*The ancient writings of the Dākini-Karmatantra*”).

After Pad-ma dKar-po’s death, a dispute between the promoters of two candidates for recognition as his rebirth divided this tradition into two. The Byang-‘Brug (Northern ‘Brug-pa) and the lHo-‘brug (southern ‘Brug-pa). The lHo-‘brug created the territorial entity of Bhutan and has been important in the preservation and composition of texts. Of particular importance for this thesis is the lineage history by Śākya Rin-chen, who was the Ninth head-abbot “rJe-mkhan-po” of Bhutan from 1744 to 1755.

The Ras-chung teachings continued to have importance in the Byang-‘Brug also. For example, the fourth Yongs-‘dzin, ‘Jam-dpal dPa-bo (1527-1592) composed a commentary on the sNyan-rgyud.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ *Lho-rong Chos-’byung*, 630.

⁴⁷ E. Gene Smith. Introduction to Mon-rtse-pa Kun-dga’-dPal-Idan, 6.

⁴⁸ ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-Grags, *Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud gSar-ma* (Tashijong, H.P.: Khampa Gar Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Pang, 1985).

⁴⁹ bDe-chen Chos-‘khor Yongs-‘dzin ‘Jam-dpal dPa’-bo, *sNyan-rgyud Yid-bzhin Nor-bu’i rNam-bshad kyi Zin-bris*, 2 vols. (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1978).

rGod-tshang-pa mGon-po rDo-rje (1189-1258), a pupil of gTsang-pa rGya-ras, founded the lineage known as the sTod-‘Brug (the Upper or Western ‘Brug-pa) in contrast with the sMad-‘Brug (Lower or Eastern ‘Brug-pa) founded by Lo-ras-pa dBang-phyug bTson-‘grus (1187-1250). It is one of rGod-tshang Ras-pa’s pupils, rGya-ldang-pa (also known as rGyal-thang-pa), who wrote a history of this lineage that includes the earliest biography of Ras-chung-pa to survive in its original form. From this lineage there branched the ‘Ba’-ra bKa’-brgyud,⁵⁰ within which Mon-rtse-pa Kun-dga’-dpal (1408-1475?) composed a lineage history that includes a biography of Ras-chung-pa.⁵¹

The ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud, unlike other bKa’-brgyud traditions, principally practise Vajravārāhī according to Ras-chung-pa’s own tradition, and the sNyan-rgyud practice is specifically maintained.

The ‘Brug-pa monasteries in Ladakh have also been of great value in preserving manuscripts, such as that of rGya-ldang-pa.

1.4.8. sNyan-rgyud traditions

The fifth volume of the *gDams-ngag-mdzod* (*Treasury of Instructions*) by ‘Jam-mgon Kong-sprul bLo-gros mTha’-yas (1813-1899) categorises the sNyan-rgyud lineages in the following manner:

1) The elaborate form: the Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud, transmitted through Ras-chung-pa’s principal pupils.

2) The medium form: bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud lineage, transmitted from Ras-chung-pa via Mi-la Ras-pa to Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa and on through his successors.

3) The brief form: Dwags-po snyan-rgyud, taught by Ras-chung-pa to sGam-po-pa, a.k.a Dwags-po lHa-rje.

⁵⁰ E. Gene Smith. Introduction to Mon-rtse-pa Kun-dga’-dpal-ldan, 7.

Bla-ma Zhang (1123-1193), a pupil of sGam-po-pa's nephew and the founder of the Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud lineage, was critical of lineages that had not been transmitted through sGam-po-pa. Though he does not name them, this must include the various Ras-chung snyan-rgyud and bDe-mchog snyan-rgyud lineages, which would indeed be found at fault for being non-scholarly and based solely on practice instructions.

There are many holders of Lord Mila's lineage in Tibet. Though one group is called “a lineage of teaching” and another “a lineage of practice”, some of these have gone astray in being purely a lineage of practise instructions; some have gone astray in being solely experiential—attached to the bliss, clarity, and non-thought of śamathā; [for some] the realisation of meaning has gone astray in examination and analysis, as an object of the intellect, so that they have gone astray in their contemplation of the meaning... the pure lineage is solely that held by this precious guru (sGam-po-pa).⁵²

rje-btsun mi la'i brgyud pa 'dzin pa bod la mang du bzhugs te / tshan cig
nams (sic) kyang bshad brgyud pa yin / sgrub brgyud du gsol ba nams
kyang la la man ngag rkyang pa'i brgyud pa shor / la la zhi gnas kyi bde ba
gsal mi rtogs pa la zhen nas nyams myong rkyang par shor / don gyi rtogs
pa ni brtags dpyad dang go yul du shor te / don la bsam mnor shor / rje-
btsun mi la'i brgyud pa 'dzin pa bod la mang du bzhugs te / ...brgyud pa
gsha' ma de bla ma rin po che 'di kho nas zin pa yin /

⁵² Bla-ma Zhang gYu-brag-pa brTson-'grus Grags-pa, "Bla-ma Dags-po lHar-rje'i rNam-thar" in *mDzad-pa rNam-thar gyi skor*, 70a.

Other pupils of Mi-la Ras-pa, such as Zhi-ba-'od and Khyi-ra-ras-pa are recorded to have had pupils,⁵³ though the only one for whom the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* records a lineage is 'Bri-sgom Ras-pa.⁵⁴

Paradoxically, Bla-ma Zhang wrote an eulogising biography of Mal Yer-ba-pa (1105-1170),⁵⁵ who was a principal pupil of 'Gri-sgom Ras-pa.⁵⁶ Earlier in his career, Bla-ma Zhang developed the *caṇḍālī* heat and was able to wear only cotton⁵⁷ while he was a pupil of Mal Yer-ba-pa. However, he himself says that until he practised under sGom-tshul he had been prey to mistaking analysis by the intellect for realisation, an error which he assigns to the "inferior" lineages.⁵⁸

1.4.8.1. bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud

Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa, the source of the bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud, is also known as Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa Byang-chub rGyal-po, as Ngan-rdzong Bodhirāja, as Ngan rdzong Ras-pa, and as Ngam-rdzong Ras-pa. He was the author of the four chapters concerning the Tshe-ring-ma goddesses, which appear verbatim in both the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*. Indeed, his biography states that while in the Singala forest in Nepal he himself bound the goddess Tshe-ring-ma to an oath and commanded her to perform deeds for him.⁵⁹

The variation between *Ngan* and *Ngam* must have occurred at a time and in a locality where the 'n suffix' did not alter the vowel (as is still the case in such dialects as mGo-log). The title sTon-pa agrees with the account that he was a scholar before he met Mi-la.

One finds an even greater variation in the spelling of his place of origin: according to the *Ngan-dzong rNam-thar* he was from Cem-lung (in La-stod);

⁵³ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 167.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 159.

⁵⁵ Bla-ma Zhang, "rJe Yer-pa-ba'i rNam-thar," in *mDzad-pa rNam-thar gyi skor*, 104a-123a.

⁵⁶ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 159-164.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 164.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 191.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 152.

though the *Blue Annals* agrees, the Roerich translation has lCam-lung,⁶⁰ while the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*⁶¹ and *sTag-lung Chos-'byung*⁶² state that he is from lCim-lung. *The Red Annals* has lCan-lung,⁶³ while both gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka⁶⁴ and Pad-ma dKar-po⁶⁵ have gCen-lung.

He should not be conflated with the wealthy patron Ngan-rdzong Byang-chub 'Bar of lCim-lung,⁶⁶ who appears in both the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*. In the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, gTsang-smyon adds a brief addendum to that chapter, perhaps to pre-empt such an error: following the meeting with the wealthy patron at lCen-lung, Mi-la meets Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa, who leaves with him as his disciple. This passage also occurs verbatim in *The Unmistaken Life of Lord Ngan-rdzong Ras-pa, from The Wish-fulfilling Jewel Lineage*,⁶⁷ which in its surviving form is said to have been written by rJe Dam-pa Ras-chen, a pupil of Ngan-rdzong, and somewhat added to, centuries later, by rGod-tshang Ras-pa (*rnal-sbyor (sic) rGod-tshang Ras-pas cung-zad rgyan-par bkod-pa*).⁶⁸ The original was therefore presumably gTsang-smyon's source. It states that Ngan-rdzong stayed with Mi-la for seventeen years, presumably the last seventeen years of Mi-la's life.

The *Ngan-rDzong rNam-thar* describes Ngan-rdzong in the ubiquitous Tibetan lineage-centric manner, as the highest of his spiritual sons.⁶⁹ The *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, however, lists Ngan-rdzong as only one of the principal pupils of

⁶⁰ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 435: lCam-lung [sic]; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 380: lCem-lung.

⁶¹ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 151.

⁶² sTag-lung-pa Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal, *Chos-'byung ngo-mtshar rgya-mtsho: A detailed account of the development of Buddhism in Tibet with special emphasis on the sTag-lung bKa'-brgyud-pa*, ed., Khams-sprul Don-brgyud Nyi-ma (H.P. India: Tashi Jong, 1972), 218.

⁶³ Tshal-pa kun-dga' rdo-rje, *Deb-ther dmar-po* (China: Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1981), 80.

⁶⁴ gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* (trans.) Chang, 190, (Tib.) Antwerp, 168.

⁶⁵ Pad-ma dKar-po, *Chos-'byung bstan-pa'i padma rgyas-pa'i nyin-byed*, published as *Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po*, ed. Prof. Dr. Lokesh Chandra, foreword by E. Gene Smith (New Delhi, India: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), 510 (255b).

⁶⁶ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, Chapter fifteen, section five: *sBa-'gur* ("The Song of the Bamboo-staff"), (Newark), 143b6-147a2; (Oxford), 108a3-110a6; (Stockholm), 137b3-140b2.

⁶⁷ "rGyud-pa Yid-bzhin Nor-bu las rJe-btsun Ngan-rdzong Ras-pa'i rNam-thar 'Khrul-med [sic] (grul-med) in *Ngam-rdzong sNyan-brgyud kyis* [sic] skor.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 2.

Mi-la Ras-pa. Though both texts appear to be using a very similar source for the earliest part of his life, the description of their meeting differs. In the *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*, Ngan-rdzong, on hearing of Mi-la's reputation, gives away his scholarly texts and seeks him out. Both versions agree, however, that he had previously been a pupil of Mar-pa mGo-yag (also written mGo-yags⁷⁰), a pupil of Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros, and he is listed as one of Mar-pa mGo-yag's pupils in that master's biography.⁷¹ Ngan-rdzong therefore already received the transmission of Mar-pa's teachings before meeting Mi-la Ras-pa.

The *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* section dedicated to Ngan-rdzong (written as Ngam-rdzong)⁷² states that he was born in lCim-lung in Ding-ri, which is in southern La-stod. Although in this section the *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* states that he was definitely known both as lCim-lung Ngam-rdzong and as bDe-ba-skyong, not only does *The Blue Annals* list bDe-ba-skyong as a separate pupil,⁷³ but the *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* itself expresses uncertainty elsewhere, when it states⁷⁴

It should be examined to see whether Ras-pa bDe-ba sKyong is one of the eight *ras-pa* brothers or is [another] name of Ngam-rdzong Ras-pa.

Ras pa bde ba skyong ni/ ras pa mched brgyad kyi ya gyal lam/
ngam rdzong ras pa'i mtshan yin nam brtag par bya'o/

The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* lists a lineage derived from Ngan-rdzong that had continued until the time of its writing in the fifteenth century.

The bDe-mchog snyan-brgyud lineage was apparently rich in narrative tradition for it appears to be the source of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and

⁷⁰ *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, (Roerich) 401, 403; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 353, 355.

⁷¹ *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 71.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 151-52.

⁷³ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 435; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 380.

⁷⁴ *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 168.

provided gTsang-smyon Heruka with his principal source for his *Mar-pa rNam-thar*, although Tibetan historians have viewed this version of Mar-pa's life as suspect. Tārānātha, for example, writing about an unnamed version of Mar-pa's life, though the description tallies perfectly with gTsang-smyon's work, declares, "...while already not specially outstanding for [chronological] order, they do not appear to be based on sources much superior to women's [tales]..."⁷⁵

gTsang-smyon, in his colophon to that text, provides, presumably from the colophons of one of his sources, a rare description of Ras-chung-pa at work on a biography and clearly on close terms with Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa:

Lord Mi-la and Mar-pa mGo-legs [presumably a variation of the name Mar-pa mGo-yags] orally transmitted in extensive detail [the life-story of Mar-pa] to Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa. Lord Mi-la also passed this on to Ras-chung-pa. Ras-chung-pa and Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa Byang-chub rGyal-po worked together to compile the principal later life-story, to which I have added the [earlier] accounts of Bla-ma rNgog-ston, Tshur-ston and Mes-ston, and many other life-stories [to compile] this Life of Mar-pa [entitled] "Beneficial to See."

De-ltar rje-btsun mar-ston chos-kyi blo-gros kyi nam-par-thar-pa
mthong-ba don-ldan 'di nyid/ rje btsun mi-la dang/ mar-pa mgo legs
gnyis kyis/ ngan-rdzong ston-pa la zhib rgyas zhal nas snyan du
brgyud pa dang/ rje btsun mi las ras chung pa la yang gnang bas/
ras chung pa dang/ ngan rdzong ston pa byang chub rgyal po gnyis
bka' bgros nas/ bgrigs pa'i mam thar phyi mo'i gtso bor bzhugs pa

⁷⁵ Hubert Decler, "The Melodious Drum Sound All-Pervading" in *Tibetan Studies Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Narita 1989*, 2 vols., ed. Ihara Shoren and Yamaguchi Zuiho, vol 1 (Tokyo: Naritasan Shinshoji, 1992), 19.

las/ bla-ma rngog-pa/ tshur-ston/ mes-ston mams kyi zhal nas byung
ba'i yig cha la sogs mam thar mang dag 'dzom...⁷⁶

1.4.8.2. Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud

Ras-chung-pa's own pupils were numerous. In his own community north of Arunachal Pradesh, his principal pupils were rGyal-lo, gTsang-pa Sum-pa (also known as Dam-pa Sum-pa, gTsang-pa Sum-pa and Sum-ston) and Yang-dgon (also known as sTon-pa Yang-dag dPal and Sangs-rgyas sTon); they are responsible for his earliest biography.

Sum-pa in particular was noted for his devotion to Ras-chung-pa; he met Ras-chung-pa while he was a twenty-year old monk, and he burned away a ring-finger as an offering to him, prostrated whenever they met and acted as his personal attendant. In reciprocation, Ras-chung-pa would not teach in his absence. Sum-pa was his successor at his seat.⁷⁷

The lineage of Khyung-tshang-pa (1115-76) was a secret monk disciple, who established a community independent from those of Ras-chung-pa's other pupils. It is this branch of the Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud, however, that has the greater number of lineage histories and literature. This transmission is also distinctive for having two female teachers in its succession during the early centuries: Ma-cig Ang-co and Ras-ma Zhig-mo.⁷⁸

The 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud, in particular, adopted both the bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud and the Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud, with the latter having the greater significance.

gTsang-smyon Heruka and his pupils were associated with the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud, but gTsang-smyon was principally a holder of the independent transmission of the sNyan-rgyud. When he was nineteen years old, he received the

⁷⁶ gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, *sGra-bsgyur mar-pa lo-tstsha'i mam-thar inthong-ba don-ldan*, 113a.

⁷⁷ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 440-1; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 384-85.

lineages of the Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud, bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud and Dwags-po sNyan-rgyud from his teacher Sha-ra Rab-'byams-pa. He compiled these Ras-chung-pa teachings, the most important of the transmissions being the Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud and wrote the Mar-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa biographies which have become classics of Tibetan literature and the primary source for the popular image of Ras-chung-pa.

⁷⁸ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 119-20 and 138-42, respectively, for examples of their biographies.

Chapter Two

2. The Sources

2.1. The Earliest Sources

The earliest works are sometimes of obscure origin. However, we can trace the appearance and continuation of narrative transmissions that existed concurrently but independently of each other. In the fourteenth century, authors will begin combining differing traditions to form a single biography that contains elements from diverse sources.

2.1.1. Lost Biographies of Ras-chung-pa by his contemporaries

The following texts appear to be no longer extant in their original form, but the existence of texts (1), (2), (3) and (5) are attested to by rGod-tshang Ras-pa, while the existence of text (4) is implied by rGya-ldang-pa:

- 1) During Ras-chung-pa's lifetime, his pupil, Yang-dag dPal, wrote about the latter part of his life.
- 2) Sum-pa used this and other sources, under the supervision of Ras-chung-pa himself, to compile a biography.
- 3) During Ras-chung-pa's lifetime, "the scholar from Brin" wrote about Ras-chung-pa's early life.
- 4) Khyung-tshang-pa (1115-1176), Ras-chung-pa's pupil, appears to have written a memoir, either during or shortly after Ras-chung-pa's

lifetime, which rGya-ldang-pa used as a source in the thirteenth century.

- 5) In 1195, thirty-four years after Ras-chung-pa's death¹ and twenty-one years after Khyung-tshang-pa's death, Sum-pa expanded the biography he had compiled during Ras-chung-pa's lifetime, to form the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* ("The Essence of a Wonderful Jewel").

2.1.1.1. *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*

The *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, which dates from 1195, was the primary source for two sixteenth-century texts, both written by followers of Tibet's most famous biographer: gTsang-smyon Heruka (1452-1507). lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557) completed his life of Ras-chung-pa in 1503, and rGod-tshang Ras-pa completed his at an unspecified date after gTsang-smyon's death. These later works serve as the sole source for our information on the earlier text.

Both authors state that the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* was not their sole source, but they do not name their other sources, nor do they indicate when any one particular source is being used. A comparison of the contents of Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and rGod-tshang Ras-pa's works reveals that they used the same source in describing the latter part of Ras-chung-pa's life, after his final departure from Mi-la Ras-pa, which forms the larger part of both texts. In lHa-btsun's text this part reads like a summary of the corresponding part in rGod-tshang Ras-pa. Therefore, lHa-btsun was probably summarising from the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, while rGod-tshang Ras-pa may well have made a verbatim reproduction of the latter part of the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*.

¹ According to rGod-tshang Ras-pa, in a passage that may come from Sum-pa's work, Ras-chung-pa died in 1171; in that case the text would have been compiled twenty-four years after Ras-chung-pa's death.

However, the lHa-btsun and rGod-tshang Ras-pa texts differ greatly concerning significant incidents in the earlier part of Ras-chung-pa's life, which takes up just under a half of the six hundred and seventy-six pages in the Quinghai edition of the rGod-tshang Ras-pa version. The differing portions may be additions from different sources to a simpler narrative basis in the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*. For example, the miraculous details of Ras-chung-pa's meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa upon his final return from India vary considerably between these two texts, while the earliest surviving biography, that of rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje, has a simple narrative devoid of miracles and with little drama, which may possibly represent an original version.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa included the colophon of the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* within his own text. It follows what appear to be verbatim extracts that are comprised of first-person accounts by Sum-pa and Yang-dag dPal of Ras-chung-pa's last days and his death.

The colophon to the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* was written by Sum-pa. It is of sufficient importance to be written out in full.²

The first part: from the beginning, and including the Ti-phu chapter etc., is derived from the writing of the scholar (sTon-pa) from Brin, which I, Sum-ston, and the attendant Rin-chen Grags later corrected with the guru himself, and rewrote.

The middle part: the lHa-gcig chapter and so on, is as told by the attendant [Rin-chen Grags] and was later corrected with the guru and lHa-gcig, and then written out.

The last part: the chapters on the earlier, middle, and later departures to dBus, and so on, are from:

² rGod-Tshang Ras-pa sNa-tshogs Rang-grol, *rJe-btsun ras-chung-ba'i nam-thar* (Zi-ling: mtsho-sngon mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1992), 654-55.

- i) The oral accounts given by the lord guru himself.
- ii) The oral accounts and notes of his long-term pupils: the attendant Rin-chen Grags, dGe-shes Khyung-po, sTag-shod ras-pa and other [spiritual] brothers that have been a long time at the lotus-feet of the lord guru.
- iii) The writings of Teacher (sTon) Yang-dag, which were a compilation of what we three —the senior and junior [spiritual] brothers— had seen, heard, and remembered.

I, Sum-sTon, compiled this into one work.

It was subsequently checked and corrected by the lord guru.

In addition, I, Sum-pa, added the chapter on miscellaneous teachings, which were derived from the notes made by rGyal-lo.

I, Sum-pa, composed this life-story of the lord guru, entitled *The Essence of the Wonderful Jewel*, in the wood-hare year (1195).

De'i thog ma nas/ ti phu'i skor sogs stod³ kyi cha rnams / brin
gyi ston pas yi ger bris pa las / phyis su sum ston bdag dang nye gnas
rin chen grags gnyis kyi / bla ma rang gi drung du zhus dag lags par
byas te yi ger bkod / de man lha gcig gi skor sogs bar skabs kyi cha
rnams / nye gnas kyi zhal las ji ltar byung ba bzhin / phyis bla ma rang
dang / lha gcig gnyis kyi drung du zhus dag bgyis shing yi ger bkod /
dbus bzhud snga phyi bar gsum gyi skor sogs smad kyi cha rnams / bla
ma rje btsun nyid kyi zhal rgyun las byung ba dang / nye gnas rin chen
grags sku mched / dge bshes khyung po / stag shod ras pa la sogs pa'i
/ bla ma rje btsun kyi zhabs kyi pad mo yun ring du bsten pa'i grogs
mched gong ma rnams kyi zhal las ji ltar byung ba dang / zin bris su
'khod pa rnams dang / bdag cag grogs mched bgres gzhon gsum gyi
mthong thos dran pa rnams / ston yang bdag gis phyogs gcig tu bkod

³ Ibid., 654 has the scribal error of *bstod* for *stod*.

pa'i yi ge ba ni sum ston bdag gis bgyis nas / slad kyi bla ma rje'i
 drung du zhus shing dag par bgyis / zhal gdams thor bu'i skor mams ni
 / rgyal ba los zin bris su mdzad pa las / slar yang sum pa bdag gis shing
 mo lug gi lo la / bla ma rje btsun nyid kyi nam par thar ba / ngo mtshar
 nor bu'i snying po zhes bya ba bkod pa ...

This colophon demonstrates that Ras-chung-pa's own pupils considered Ti-phu-pa, lHa-gcig and three visits to dBus as significant episodes in his early life.

Sum-pa does not provide a name—only a general epithet and homeland—for the author who provided the information on the earliest part of Ras-chung-pa's life. However, no one from Brin—a place Ras-chung-pa had often visited with Mi-la Ras-pa—appears in the various lists of Ras-chung-pa's pupils.

The colophon states that other informants included Ras-chung-pa himself, lHa-gcig (Ras-chung-pa's ex-wife), and Rin-chen Grags, also known as Ra Sher-s nang (Ras-chung-pa's attendant both before and during his marriage to lHa-gcig), who were themselves principal figures within the life-story.

rGyal-lo's record of his question and answer sessions with Ras-chung-pa, while not used by lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, appears to have been reproduced in full by rGod-tshang Ras-pa.⁴

The “three senior and junior [spiritual] brothers” are Sum-pa, Yang-dag dPal, and rGyal-lo. rGod-tshang Ras-pa, in his own colophon, attributes the authorship of the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* to these “three siddha-brothers” (*Grub-thob sku-mched gsum*).⁵ In rGod-tshang Ras-pa's list of the eight principal pupils of Ras-chung-pa, he groups those three together with Rin-chen Grags-pa as “the four great sons of the south”.⁶

⁴ Ibid., 530-58.

⁵ Ibid., 665.

⁶ Ibid., 637.

Yang-dag dPal's compilation must have been the source for the first-person accounts of Ras-chung-pa's last days by Yang-dag dPal himself and by Sum-pa.

The other two sources mentioned in the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*'s colophon are dGe-shes Khyung-po (not to be confused with Khyung-tshang-pa) and sTag-shod Ras-pa. rGod-tshang Ras-pa lists these two amongst "the four great sons from the north". The latter was one of Ras-chung-pa's later attendants and a subsequent lineage holder.⁷

Clearly, Sum-pa, writing about twenty years after Khyung-tshang-pa's death in 1176, did not use Khyung-tshang-pa's memoir as a source, or perhaps had no access to it. Khyung-tshang-pa's memoir appears not to have included Ras-chung-pa's death, which corresponds with Khyung-tshang-pa having (according to him, on Ras-chung-pa's instruction) immediately gone to live at a great distance from Ras-chung-pa's community and avoided all contact with it. He therefore understandably was to fall under the suspicion of being a fraud.

2.1.2. Late texts that appear to be early works

1. A text published in 1979 from a manuscript from Khyung-dmar in Ladakh. It has the intriguing title: "*The Essence of the Wonderful Jewel*" from the *Garland of Inexhaustible Adornments: The precious liberation of the Lord of Yogins, Vajrakīrti* (rNal-'byor gyi dBang-phyug Badzrakirti'i rNam-par Thar-pa Rin-po-che mi-zad-pa rgyan gyi 'phreng-ba las Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po).⁸ Vajrakīrti (Tibetan transliteration: Badzrakirti) is the Sanskrit for rDo-rje Grags-pa, Ras-chung-pa's name.

⁷ Ibid., 338-39 and 414.

⁸ rGod-tshang Ras-pa sNa-tshogs Rang- grol, *Biography and Collected mGur of Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags* [rNal-'byor gyi dBang-phyug Badzrakirti'i rNam-par Thar-pa Rin-po-che mi-zad-pa rgyan gyi 'phreng-ba las Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po: *The Biography with interspersed Songs (mGur) of Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags: A version of the redaction made by rGod-tshang Ras-pa sNa-tshogs Rang- grol*] (Delhi: Tashi Dorji, 1979).

However, this is merely rGod-tshang Ras-pa's text with a change of colophon and attribution of authorship. Although published with rGod-tshang Ras-pa credited as the author, the text itself gives the author's name as dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan. This may well be a plagiarisation of the rGod-tshang Ras-pa text, as will be shown below.

2. A biography of Ras-chung-pa that claims to be of an early date is to be found in the the *brGyud-pa Yid-bzhin Nor-bu'i rNam-par-thar-pa*. (*The Life Stories of the Wish-fulfilling-jewel Lineage*), which is contained within the *bDe-mchog mkha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*.⁹ This was compiled by a Byang-chub bZang-po, probably earliest in the sixteenth century. In these biographies of the Ras-chung-pa lineage as transmitted through Khyung-tshang-pa, the biographies of Tilopa¹⁰ and Nāropa¹¹ are attributed to Mar-pa, that of Mar-pa¹² to Mi-la Ras-pa, that of Mi-la Ras-pa to Ras-chung-pa, and that of Ras-chung-pa¹³ to Ra Sher-s nang-pa, also known as Rin-chen Grags-pa. If this were indeed a biography of Ras-chung-pa written by his attendant, it would be of great value. Unfortunately, although the colophons of Tibetan texts can usually be taken on trust, these biographies are not from an early date, and their attributed authorship is spurious; it is probably a late devotional attribution, as will be shown below.

2.1.3. The earliest biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa

The earlier part of Ras-chung-pa's life often features prominently in biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa. Therefore, although no Ras-chung-pa biographies by

⁹ Byang-chub bZang-po, *bDe-mchog mkha'-'gro snyan-rgyud*, (New Delhi: 1973), vol. 2.

¹⁰ Ibid., 8-28.

Mar-pa Chos-kyi bLo-gros, *The Life of the Mahāsiddha Tilopa*, trans. Fabrizio Toricelli and Āchārya Sangye T. Naga (Dharamsala, India: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1995).

¹¹ Ibid., 29-62.

¹² Ibid., 63-96.

¹³ Ibid., 125-50.

his contemporaries appear to have survived in their original form, we can investigate the early biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa composed by his contemporaries. Unfortunately, they do not even mention Ras-chung-pa. Nevertheless, they still have significance for this thesis in that we can compare their versions of the life of Mi-la Ras-pa with those that occur in the earliest surviving works in which Ras-chung-pa does appear. They shall be given considerable attention because the extent of narrative evolution that we find has occurred in the Mi-la Ras-pa narrative also indicates the possible extent of narrative development that may have occurred in the Ras-chung-pa narrative tradition by the time of his earliest surviving biography.

2.1.3.1. Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa's accounts of Mi-la Ras-pa

In the seventeenth chapter of *bZhad-pa rDo-rje'i rNam-thar mGur-mching dang bcas-pa* (also known as *Bu-chen bCu-gnyis*), there are four texts by Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa. Three of these are co-authored with Zhi-ba-'od, another pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa. The *bZhad-pa rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* is perhaps from the thirteenth or fourteenth century, and is examined later in this chapter. However, these four texts are solely concerned with Mi-la Ras-pa's encounter and exchange of songs with the Tshe-ring-ma goddesses, an account derived from a visionary experience of Zhi-ba 'Od, and said to have taken place in 1112 and 1113.¹⁴

gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka reproduced what was said to be another of Ngan-rdzong's texts as the Sa-le-'od chapter of the *Mi-la'i mgur-'bum*,¹⁵ and this contains a little biographical information, and in particular a reference to Ras-chung-pa, but it appears to be a later interpolation, as will be shown below.

¹⁴ *dPal bZhad-pa rDo-rje'i rNam-thar mGur-mching dang bcas-pa* (Newark ms.), 153b5; (Oxford ms.), 125a3; (Stockholm xylograph), n.a.

¹⁵ *Mi-la'i mgur-bum*, 386-400. Sa-le 'od (named gSal-le-'od in the colophon of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*) was a female pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa.

2.1.3.2. sGam-po-pa's *rJe Mar-pa dang rJe-btsun Mi-la'i
rNam-thar*

Author: sGam-po-pa (1079-1153).

Date: circa 1145-53.

The earliest extant bKa'-brgyud biographies are found in two short texts by sGam-po-pa, also known as sGam-po-pa bSod-nams Rin-chen and Dwags-po lHa-rje (1079-1153), the pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa who founded the Dwags-po Bka'-brgyud tradition, the source of all the monastic bKa'-brgyud lineages. These biographies by sGam-po-pa are, in hindsight, an embryonic form of the later bKa'-brgyud lineage histories: the *bKa'-brgyud gSer-'phreng (The Golden Succession of the bKa'-brgyud)*.

That these are the earliest bKa'-brgyud-pa historical material is consistent with sGam-po-pa's being responsible for the first substantial literary corpus of the bKa'-brgyud-pa, reflecting his own earlier bKa'-gdams-pa training and that tradition's emphasis on scholarship. The texts are:

1) *The Lives of Tailo and Nāro (Tailo¹⁶ dang Nāro'i mam-thar)*¹⁷

2) *The Lives of Mar-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa (rJe Mar-pa dang rJe-btsun Mi-la'i rNam-thar)*.¹⁸

¹⁶ Other variants: Tillopa, Tillipa, Tellipa, Telopa. Fabrizio Torricelli, "A Thirteenth Century Tibetan Hymn to the Siddha Tilopa," *The Tibet Journal*, Vol XXIII (Spring 1998), 3.

¹⁷ *Selected Writings of sGam-po-pa: The Gemur Manuscript* (Dolanji, H.P. India: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1974), 1-18.

¹⁸ sGam-po-pa bSod-nams Rin-chen, "rJe Mar-pa dang rje-btsun mi-la'i rnam-thar" in: *Selected Writings of sGam-po-pa bSod-nams Rin-chen (Dwags-po Lha-rje), with the biography written by his descendant bSod-nams Lhun-grub* (Dolanji, H.P., India: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1974), 18-30.

The Collected Works (gSung-'bum) of sGam-po-pa bSod-nams Rin-chen, ed. Khasdub Gyatsho Shashin (Delhi: 1975), vol. 1, 16-26.

Prepared from a manuscript in bKra-shis rDzong monastery in Lahul.

The Collected Works (gSung-'bum) of sGam-po-pa bSod-nams Rin-chen, ed. sPyan-snga bSod-nams Lhun-grub (Darjeeling, West Bengal: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, February 1982) vol. 1, 23-42.

Grub-thob O-rgyan-pa Rin-chen-dpal, *bKa' rbygyud Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi 'Phreng-ba*, Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod, vol. 38 (Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1972), 718-29.

The Lives of Tilopa and Naropa is a text authored by sGam-po-pa himself, written in the same precise literary style as his major work *Dwags-po Thar-brgyan*.¹⁹

The Lives of Mar-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa is a *zin-bris*— a pupil's record of what may have been a single oral lecture by sGam-po-pa. Many of his teachings are preserved in this form in *The Collected Works of sGam-po-pa*. Unfortunately, in this case the writer has not provided his name.

The latter text serves as an addendum to the former. Apart from the textual division created by the title and format, *The Lives of Mar-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa* begins as a continuation of *The Lives of Tilopa and Naropa*, the first line being "His pupil was..." without having to explain who the "he" was. Its literary style, in contrast, is somewhat ungainly and occasionally obscure. Tiso has even called it "a primitive text".²⁰

In the biography of Mi-la Ras-pa, key narrative details differ considerably from later versions, which replaced mundane with more dramatic and engaging details. Here we find that:

- 1) Mi-la Ras-pa's father does *not* die while he is young, and his mother is never mentioned.²¹
- 2) Mi-la Ras-pa does only household tasks in return for teachings, and does *not* erect or demolish buildings.²²
- 3) Mar-pa does *not* refuse to give Mi-la Ras-pa teachings.²³
- 4) Mi-la Ras-pa is *not* said secretly to escape to study under Bla-ma rNgog.²⁴

Selected Writings of sGam-po-pa: The Gemur Manuscript (Dolanji, H.P. India: Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, 1974), 18-30.

¹⁹ lHa-rje bSod-nams Rin-chen, *Dam-chos Yid-bzhin Nor-bu Thar-pa Rin-po-che'i rGyan* (China: Si-khron Mi-rigs dPe-skrun-khang, 1990).

²⁰ Francis Vincent Tiso, "The biographical tradition of Milarepa: Orality, Literacy and Iconography" in *The Tibet Journal*, vol. 21, no. 2 (Dharamsala, India: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1996), 10.

²¹ sGam-po-pa (Gemur ms.), 21.

²² Ibid., 22.

²³ Ibid., 22.

²⁴ Ibid., 22.

- 5) When snowed in on La-phyi Mountain, Mi-la Ras-pa mistakes the calls of the search party for the cries of animals. He eventually makes a smoke signal to attract their attention. He does *not* transform into a snow leopard that leads the search party to his cave.²⁵
- 6) He is an emanation, and not, as in gTsang-smyon, an ordinary being who achieves Buddhahood through the power of the vajrayāna.²⁶

There are passages in the narrative where Mi-la Ras-pa is shown to be in error or to have limitations that are gradually omitted in later versions and are not found in gTsang-smyon:

- 1) He mistakes candlelight for meditative illumination.²⁷
- 2) He is unaware of how thin he has become.²⁸
- 3) He mistakes the cries of the search party for those of animals.²⁹
- 4) He has breathing difficulties because of breaking a promise made to patrons.³⁰
- 5) Miraculous manifestations are described as taking place in the minds of those who perceive them, with Mi-la Ras-pa unaware, for example, that someone has perceived him to be a white stūpa.³¹
- 6) He denies the truth of a report that he once flew.³²

This first generation account of Mi-la Ras-pa's life indicates that confusion and rumour were already present during the subject's lifetime, for sGam-po-pa has to find out from Mi-la Ras-pa himself the truth behind rumours that he has heard.

²⁵ Ibid., 25.

²⁶ Ibid., 30.

²⁷ Ibid., 22.

²⁸ Ibid., 23.

²⁹ Ibid., 25.

³⁰ Ibid., 26.

³¹ Ibid., 27.

³² Ibid., 29.

Similarly, sGam-po-pa records that Mar-pa, while crossing a lake in the Tibetan region of Nub, lost the texts he had collected in India. He notes an alternative account, according to which a jealous rival translator had thrown the texts into the water. This version is modified by the non-honorific verb *zer*, as opposed to sGam-po-pa's own statements, which are qualified by *gsung*.³³ However, it is the latter version that subsequently gained precedence in Mar-pa hagiographies, developing into an elaborate episode complete with songs, which has remained popular in spite of being vigorously condemned by Tibetan historians such as Tāranātha (1575-1634) and 'Be-lo Tshe-dbang Kun-khyab (eighteenth century).³⁴

It could be argued that the absence of such narrative details as Mi-la Ras-pa's house building does not constitute a denial of them, particularly as the text states that there was much more to be related concerning Mi-la Ras-pa's time with Mar-pa. However, the absence of the house building is of importance here, as it would have served as the most striking detail in the narrative. The tower (now known as "Mi-la's tower") is even mentioned by sGam-po-pa as part of Mar-pa's legacy for the future, without associating Mi-la Ras-pa with it. The theme of purification, through suffering, of the bad karma accrued by his practice of sorcery is also absent, even though Mi-la is called a great sorcerer (*mthu-chen*), and causes hail-storms to punish the enemies of Bla-ma rNgog. There is no indication in these passages that these were undesirable actions as we will see in later versions where sorcery played a sometimes ambiguous and inconsistent role in the narratives. The lives of other early masters, such as Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros, Rwa Lo-tsā-ba, Bla-ma Zhang, and Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa contain incidents of the successful practice of sorcery that though resulting in the deaths of others are not portrayed as accruing bad karma.

³³ Ibid., 19.

³⁴ Hubert Decleer, 19, 27.

The early date of this text is characterised by its inclusion of a short account of Bla-ma rNgog as Mi-la's teacher, which will be absent in later histories that emphasise the succession passing from Mar-pa to Mi-la Ras-pa. Similarly, sGam-po-pa does not name any other pupils of Mi-la Ras-pa. What is therefore implied in this text is a spiritual succession that has culminated in sGam-po-pa.

2.1.3.3. “*Mi-la Ras-pa'i rnam-thar*” in *mDzad-pa rnam-thar gyi skor*

The Life of Mi-la Ras-pa in “Deeds and Lives”

Author: Bla-ma Zhang

Date: circa 1160-93

The early bKa'-brgyud lineage is also described in the seminal *Deeds and Lives (mDzad-pa rnam-thar gyi skor)*³⁵ by Bla-ma Zhang gYu-bra-pa brTson-'grus Grags-pa (1123-1193), the founder of the Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud and a pupil of sGam-po-pa's heir and nephew: sGom-tshul (Dwags-po sGom-tshul Tshul-khrims sNying-po, 1116-1169). This work does not have the standard form of the later *gSer-'phreng* literature, in which each biography forms a chapter in a single text. This has the form of a collection of biographies, each with its own title and colophon. Unlike the two sGam-po-pa texts, however, it deals with each subject separately, so that in hindsight it demonstrates a further stage in the textual evolution of the *gSer-'phreng* literature.

³⁵ Collected Works of Bla-ma Zhang (Dan Martin ms.) Volume Ka. Telopa: 45a; Nāropa: 47b; Mar-pa: 56b; Mi-la Ras-pa: 59b; Dags-po lha-rje: 65b; Dags-po bsgom-pa (sgom-tshul): 71a; rGwa-lo: 76a; bLa-ma bShen-pa: 94b; Yer-ba-pa: 104a; Bhe-ro-pa: 123b. An edition was published in India: *Writings (Bka' 'Thor bu) of Zhang g.yu-brag-pa Brtson-'grus-grags-pa*. Reproduced from the library of Burmiok Athing by Khams-sprul Don-brgyud Nyi-ma; (Tashijong, Palampur, H.P. India: The Sungrab Nyamso Gyunpel Parkhang Tibetan Craft Community, 1972). However it is extremely corrupt, the order of the source pages having been confused in transcription, so that in mid-sentence the narrative leaps ahead, to return to the postponed material later. The error is confirmed by a comparison with the sGam-po-pa text on which it is based and by the manuscript in the collection of Dan Martin.

The lineage described by sGam-po-pa is here augmented by biographies of two successors between Mi-la Ras-pa and Bla-ma Zhang: sGam-po-pa himself and sGom-tshul. In addition, Bla-ma Zhang also includes biographies of four of his other teachers.

In the lifetime of Bla-ma Zhang, the hereditary bKa'-brgyud lineage of rNgog was distinct from sGam-po-pa's lineage and therefore in this work, as in future *gSer-'phreng*, rNgog is not given the emphasis of meriting his own biography. The text, however, includes the life-stories of Bla-ma Zhang's other teachers, which in their turn will not reappear in future lineage histories, though here they serve the purpose of demonstrating that Bla-ma Zhang was the repository of various transmissions, forming the identity of his *Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud* school.

Bla-ma Zhang evidently based himself upon the sGam-po-pa text. Bla-ma Zhang greatly expanded the Tilopa section, and altered the sequence and identity of the twelve hardships that Nāropa undergoes under Tilopa (an additional alternative version of one of the hardships in sGam-po-pa replaces one of the original twelve). Bla-ma Zhang inserted brief passages, omitted others, and summarised or modulated the retained text.

Examples of the way in which the text has been reused with minor alterations are provided here from the opening of the *Mi-la Ras-pa'i rNam-thar*. It is representative of how biographical material is adapted by Tibetan authors. Omitted words are designated by being struck through and the additions (by Zhang) are underlined.³⁶

The [spiritual] son of both Mar-pa and rNgog was the venerable Mi-la Ras-pa. He was from His Gung-thang and his ~~family~~ name was Mi-la ~~and his name was~~ Thos-pa dGa'-ba. There was only himself and his father, and as they were of inferior status ~~matters were~~ ~~desperate~~, he went to dBus to seek [the practice of] sorcery. ~~He~~

³⁶ Bla-ma Zhang gYu-bra-pa brTson-'grus Grags-pa, "Mi-la Ras-pa'i rnam-thar" in *mDzad-pa rnam-thar gyi skor*, 59b-65b.

~~pas 'o na chu len pa la sogs pa gyis gsung / de nas ming mthu chen~~
~~bya bar btags so / de'i nang par nyin mo rang nas nye gnas su chud /~~
~~de'i byas pa'i lo rgyus mang du yang yed gsung /~~

~~Der bla ma mar pa lo lnga brten³⁷ nas / sgrub rgyud kyi~~
~~gdam ngag mams zhus / de nas rngog lo gcig brten nas /~~

Bla-ma Zhang omits not only sGam-po-pa's short life of rNgog, but also the description of Mila's stay with him, merely stating that Mila stayed with him for a year. This accords with the process of de-emphasising the source of other lineages that could potentially challenge one's presentation of one's own lineage as the principal succession.

This is explicit when Bla-ma Zhang, in his biography of sGam-po-pa, is critical of the lineages derived from Mi-la Ras-pa that have not been transmitted through sGam-po-pa, as described in the previous chapter.³⁸

Bla-ma Zhang does not disagree on any of the salient points listed in sGam-po-pa. He does however omit three of sGam-po-pa's six incidents that reveal flaws or limitations in Mi-la Ras-pa:

- 1) Mistaking the butter-lamp light for meditative illumination.
- 2) Mistaking the calls of the search party for the cries of animals.
- 3) Being unaware of the miraculous manifestations that others perceive on seeing him.

There are only two additions to sGam-po-pa's narrative. In other words, they appear to be the only additional material available to Bla-ma Zhang, a central and literary figure in the bKa'-brgyud tradition, during the decades after sGam-po-pa's death.

³⁷ Ibid., 60a3: bsten.

³⁸ Bla-ma Zhang, "Bla-ma Dags-po lHa-rje'i rNam-thar" *mDzad-pa nam-thar gyi skor*. 70a.

1) Mi-la Ras-pa shows his genitals to his aunt and sister, who are scandalised.

2) He arranges for a group of girls to masturbate him, but this only causes his penis to shrink until it vanishes into his body.

It is possible these anecdotes had currency during sGam-po-pa's time, but that he withheld them out of a sense of decorum.

2.1.4. Early Biographies of Ras-chung-pa

2.1.4.1. Don-mo Ri-pa in *bKa'-brgyud kyi nam-thar chen-mo bKa'-brgyud kyi nam-thar chen-mo rin-po-che'i gter-mdzod dgos-'dod 'byung-gnas*

“The Source of what is desired: A Treasury of Jewels: the Great Lives of the bKa'-brgyud.”

Author: rDo-rje mDzes-'od.

Date: after 1344, including a text by Don-mo Ri-pa (born 1203), written circa 1245.

rDo-rje mDzes-'od was a 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud-pa, active in the mid-fourteenth century, who compiled an account of his west-Tibetan 'Bri-gung lineage. rDo-rje mDzes-'od's principal agenda in writing this work was to inspire faith in his own 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud tradition. Therefore rDo-rje mDzes-'od compiled a lineage succession that consists of Mi-la Ras-pa, sGam-po-pa, Phag-mo-gru-pa and 'Jig-rten gSum-mgon, also known as 'Bri-gung-pa (1143-1217),³⁹ the founder of the 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud school. Therefore, in contrast with the other bKa'-brgyud traditions derived from Phag-mo-gru, rDo-rje mDzes-'od's text describes 'Jig-rten gSum-mgon as “the one, unrivalled amongst all the [pupils of

Phag-mo-gru-pa], who is the single [spiritual] son that holds the lineage” (*de thams cad kyi 'gran gyi zla bo dang bral ba ni gdung rgyud 'dzin pa'i sras gcig pu ni*).⁴⁰ If we compare this with a lineage history of the '*Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud* however, we find that it is gLing-ras-pa, Phag-mo-gru-pa's pupil who was the antecedent of the '*Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud*, who is “unrivalled in realisation this side of the Ganges river”.⁴¹

As the 'Bri-gung is a lineage that derives from sGam-po-pa, not Ras-chung-pa, the text does not provide a biography of Ras-chung-pa. Nevertheless, he appears within the life-story of Mi-la Ras-pa, a great deal of which is reproduced from the sGam-po-pa text. It may be the comparative remoteness of far-west Tibet from hagiographic developments that resulted in this mid-fourteenth century text retaining an early stratum of the Mi-la Ras-pa narrative. Thus, Mi-la's father does not die early, his mother does not play an important role and he does not build or demolish buildings for Mar-pa. It is apparently indicated within the text that the first seven biographies were written down by Don-mo Ri-pa on the dictation of Rikhröd dBang-phyug between 1244 and 1246, as described below.

2.1.4.1.1. Editions

The 1981 Delhi edition of the text I have obtained is described in its *gleng-brjod* on page 527, as having been edited by sBrang-smad Yo-red-tshang bTson-'grus Seng-ge, who corrected mistakes and incorrect Sanskrit transliterations in the text, but left obscure archaisms and colloquialisms as he found them. Therefore there are frequent archaic spellings and passages with obscure vocabulary. The

³⁹ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich) 596-601; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 519-23.

⁴⁰ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, *bKa'-brgyud kyi rNam-thar Chen-mo Rin-po-che'i gTer-mdzod dGos-'dod 'byung-gnas* (Kangra, H.P.: Tzongdu Senghe, 1985), 374.

The Great Kagyu Masters: The golden lineage treasury, trans. Khenpo Könchok Gyaltsen, ed. Victoria Huckenpähler (Ithaca, New York: Snow Lion, Publications, 1990), 277.

⁴¹ Śākya Rin-chen, 316.

manuscript from which this edition was prepared was in mDzongs-'phel rGyas-gling monastery in Phyi-sle-ma in Nepal, a copy of which is in the Gene Smith collection.

mKhan-po dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan provided a poor translation of this text under the title: *The Great Kagyu Masters: The Golden Lineage Treasury*. For example, we see a mistranslation as the result of the influence of the later narrative of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, which emphasised (for the first time in Tibet) Mi-la as an ordinary being who was not an emanation (*sprul-pa*). The Tibetan text has a sentence, based on sGam-po-pa's text, which reads:

He was a *nirmāṇakāya* [who] saw and made manifest the final truth of the *dharmatā*.

(chos nyid bden-pa mthar thug pa gzigs shing mngon du gyur pa sprul-pa'i sku yin).⁴²

mKhan-po dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan was presumably strongly influenced by the ubiquitous gTsang-smyon presentation of Mi-la as an ordinary being, not a *nirmāṇakāya*. The result is that the passage is translated in such a manner that the emanation-status given to Mi-la is obliterated. The Tibetan *sprul-pa'i sku* (Sanskrit: *nirmāṇakāya*) is even translated as *dharmakāya* (*chos-kyi sku*):

“[Mi-la Ras-pa] ... achieved the absolute truth of the *Dharmatā*, the manifestation of *Dharmakāya*.⁴³

mKhan-po dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan's introduction demonstrates an approach to variations in hagiographic narratives that is representative of a common Tibetan response to anomalies, whether between canonical works or hagiographies:

⁴² rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 214-15.

⁴³ *The Great Kagyu Masters*, 142.

a denial of the existence of contradictions. mKhan-po dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan downplays the anomalies by not only describing this version as being only “somewhat different from that found in some other texts” but also stating that the apparent discrepancies between this text and other narratives are not in fact real, because:

... great teachers have different life stories according to the way they are perceived by different disciples. For example, while some of his students saw Mila walking, others saw him meditating, still others saw him giving teachings, and yet others saw him as ill—all at the same time!⁴⁴

In fact, he cites an incident that does not occur anywhere in the Mi-la narratives, and even that does not explain the discrepancies that involve all the ordinary, or even evil, characters that figure in the narratives. The argument exemplifies a frequent Tibetan avoidance of comparative analysis, so that each hagiographic account is taken on its own terms, viewed as a source of inspiration for the practitioner, not as a source of academic, historical information. This tendency itself facilitated the development and the preservation of hagiographic variants.

2.1.4.1.2. Authorship and date of the text

The final part of the text was silently omitted in mKhan-po dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan’s translation, without his informing us that it continues with an account of a further four spiritual generations. He culminates his translation with the biography of 'Bri-gung-pa, also known as Jig-rten gSum-mgon (1143-1217).⁴⁵ The

⁴⁴ *The Great Kagyu Masters*, XI.

⁴⁵ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich) 596-601; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 519-23 .

Tibetan, however, continues with the life-story of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug (1181-1252)⁴⁶ and an account of the independent western 'Bri-gung lineage derived from him. The far west of Tibet was once important for its economic and religious activity, but fell into a drastic decline in the seventeenth century, its capital becoming a ghost town. rDo-rje mDzes-'od portrays this western lineage as the principal succession from 'Bri-gung-pa. Ri-khrod dBang-phyug is called "the sole son who held the lineage" (*gdung brgyud 'dzin pa'i sras gcig po*).⁴⁷ This contrasts with the view of the succession derived from Jig-rten gSum-mgon's pupil Tshul-khrims rDo-rje (1154-1221), which became a succession by incarnation in the seventeenth century and to which all present day 'Bri-gung-pa have their allegiance. Therefore, mKhan-po dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan's omission itself exemplifies a lineage-centric approach to religious history.

mKhan-po dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan misinforms the reader, without citing his source, that rDo-rje mDzes-'od's own teacher was dPal-ldan Ri-khrod dBang-phyug, "a disciple of 'Jig-rten gSum-mgon".⁴⁸ Tiso, relying on dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan, dates the text to the early 1200's.⁴⁹ However, in rDo-rje mDzes-'od's text, 'Jig-rten gSum-mgon's biography is followed by the lives of a succession of teachers, commencing with that of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug⁵⁰ (1181-1255).⁵¹ The name dPal-ldan Ri-khrod dBang-phyug is an appellation ("Glorious Lord of the Mountains") for a hermit meditator, while his ordination name was Seng-ge Ye-shes.⁵² However, neither of the names, nor an account of his life under another name, occurs in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*'s enumeration of 'Jig-rten

⁴⁶ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 472–89.

⁴⁷ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 427.

⁴⁸ *The Great Kagyu Masters*, XVI..

⁴⁹ Francis V. Tiso, "The Death of Milarepa: towards a Redaktionsgeschichte of the Mila mam thar Traditions" in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995*, ed. Helmut Krasser, Michael Torsten Much, Ernst Steinkellner, Helmut Tauscher (Vienna: Verlag Der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997) 991.

⁵⁰ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 427–89.

⁵¹ Ibid., 431 gives the iron-ox year as his birth; 481 states that he died in his seventy-fifth year in a hare year, which would be a wood-hare year.

⁵² Ibid., 434.

gSum-mgon's twenty principal pupils, nor in the detailed description of the early 'Bri-gung in the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*.

Therefore, rDo-rje mDzes-'od's western lineage history attests to a decentralisation of the 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud tradition, which is also indicated by the diversity of early 'Bri-gung transmissions described in the *lHo-rong Chos-byung*.⁵³ rDo-rje mDzes-'od's motivation in compiling this text is to record and glorify the particular transmission that he has himself received. Therefore, Ri-khrod dBang-phyug, though ignored in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* and the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, is portrayed in rDo-rje mDzes-'od's text as 'Bri-gung-pa's principal pupil, with the words

The one who is unrivalled amongst those pupils, the beautiful
[spiritual] son who is in the Dharma Lord's mind, the sole
[spiritual] son who holds his lineage, accomplishing the [guru's]
intentions perfectly.”

De rnams kyi nang nas 'gran gyi do zla dang bral ba/ chos rje'i
thugs su byon pa'i sras sdu gu thugs dgongs ji lta ba bzhin sgrub
pa'i gdung brgyud 'dzin pa'i sras gcig po.⁵⁴

The text gives the year of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug's birth as the iron-ox year,⁵⁵ and states that he died in his seventy-fifth year in a hare year⁵⁶ which would have to be a wood-hare year. Considering 'Bri-gung-pa's dates, the iron-ox year of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug's birth must be 1181 and the wood-hare year of his death must be 1255.

Other dates given within the account of his life are consistent with 1181-1255, For example, the text states that Ri-khrod dBang-phyug was

⁵³ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 352 ff.

⁵⁴ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 427.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 431.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 481.

present when 'Bri-gung-pa died in 1217, and subsequently he went to Kailash with 'Bri-gung gLing Shes-rab 'Byung-gnas (1187-1241) in what must have been 1219. Roberto Vitali, in his *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.Hrang*, is able to tie in this journey of 1219 with the local history of Pu-hrang, confirming this date.⁵⁷ Vitali provides excerpts from rDo-rje mDzes-'od's *bKa'-brgyud nam-thar chen-mo*, in which he states that the nam-thar of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug was “partly written by his disciple Don-mo Ri-pa.”⁵⁸ In fact, we shall see that *most* of that biography was authored by Don-mo Ri-pa.

The text next describes the life of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug's pupil Don-mo Ri-pa⁵⁹ (1203-1264/76/88). He was born in the water-pig year of 1203⁶⁰ and died in a rat year⁶¹ that could be 1264, 1276 or 1288. rDo-rje mDzes-'od states that most of the account of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug's life-story⁶² was written by Don-mo Ri-pa himself in the simple statement:

Up to this point was written by Don-mo Ri-pa.

'di yan bla ma don mo ri pas mdzad.⁶³

This authorship is confirmed by such phrases within the biography as “I, Don-mo Ri-pa, and the precious lama” (*bla ma rin po che dang bdag don mo ri pa*).⁶⁴ This section does include an interlinear addendum in which *bdag* is qualified

⁵⁷ Roberto Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang: according to mNga'ris rgyal.rabs by Gu.ge mkhan.chen Ngag.dbang grags.pa* (Dharamsala, India: Tho.ling gtsug.lag.khang lo.gcig.stong 'khor.ba'i rjes.dran.mdzad sgo'i go.sgrig tshogs.chung, 1996), 379.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 377, n. 604.

⁵⁹ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 489-504.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 489.

⁶¹ Ibid., 504.

⁶² Ibid., 427-73.

⁶³ Ibid., 473.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 468.

by rDo-rje mDzes-'od,⁶⁵ but this is clearly an error. The remaining pages of the biography, composed or probably compiled, by rDo-rje mDzes-'od, are concerned with the last nine years of Ri-krhrod dBang-phyug's life (1246-55), his death and funeral.⁶⁶

The final sentence of the Don-mo Ri-pa section appears to indicate that he wrote all the preceding biographies or, more accurately, Ri-khrod dBang-phyug dictated them to him. Don-mo Ri-pa wrote:

One day, in the Bra-'og cave hermitage, I asked permission to make a written record of the histories or life-stories of the bKa'-brgyud lamas exactly as [he] told them. He said, "That would be good and so write down in one text a little of the histories of the bKa'-brgyud lamas exactly as I tell them." Then I wrote down the lives of the great gurus without addition or subtraction, exactly as related by the precious lama, for the sake of those [ordinary beings] who can only see this life.

dgon pa brag 'og gi phug der zhag gcig gi dus na bdag gis bka'
brgyud kyi bla ma mams kyi lo rgyus sam nam thar ji ltar gsungs
pa bzhin du yi ge'i ris su cig bri lags sam zhus pas / de shin tu legs
pas bka' brgyud kyi bla ma mams kyi lo rgyus nam thar ji ltar
bshad pa bzhin du bris shig gsung nas / bla ma rin po che'i gsung las
ji ltar byon pa las 'bri snon med par bla ma gong ma mams kyi lo
rgyus zur tsam phyogs cig tshu rol mthong ba mams kyi don du yi
ge'i ris su bkod pa yin no//⁶⁷

⁶⁵ Ibid., 470.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 473-89.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 472-73.

Don-mo Ri-pa is said to have met Ri-khrod dBang-phyug at Byang-chub gLing in a bird year, when Don-mo Ri-pa was in his thirty-fifth year, which would be 1237, a fire-bird year, when Ri-khrod dBang-phyug was fifty-six. The last date given by Don-mo Ri-pa is the middle autumn month (i.e., eighth month) of a dragon year, which must be the wood-dragon year of 1244, in approximately October. rDo-rje mDzes-'od continues the story of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug, first introducing a prayer of several pages, apparently quoted from a text entitled *rNam-par-thar-pa rDo-rje Rin-po-che Mi-zad-pa'i gter*.⁶⁸ When he takes up the narrative from the point where it had been left off by Don-mo Ri-pa, he mentions the spring of a horse year that must be the fire-horse year of 1246. Therefore the account of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug's life, and possibly all the earlier biographies, would have been composed in 1245, when Ri-khrod dBang-phyug was about sixty-four and Don-mo Ri-pa was about forty-two.

Ri-khrod dBang-phyug was a pupil of 'Bri-gung-pa, and therefore only the third in a spiritual succession after sGam-po-pa. Therefore, his text, in its original independent form, would be the earliest dateable text after sGam-po-pa and Bla-ma Zhang's works that describes the lives of the early *bKa'-brgyud-pa*. Moreover, this would be the earliest source of biographical information on Ras-chung-pa. Such an authorship would make the text's dependence upon the sGam-po-pa text less surprising. It also reveals separate transmissions of the sGam-po-pa's texts: one through sGom-tshul to Bla-ma Zhang, and the other through Phag-mo-gru-pa and 'Bri-gung-pa to Ri-khrod dBang-phyug, who appears to have had no knowledge of the Bla-ma Zhang adaptation. This Ri-khrod dBang-phyug/Don-mo Ri-pa version reveals greater narrative accretions than had occurred in Bla-ma Zhang. For example, Mi-la engages in building work (but not demolishing) for Mar-pa, who however stops him, considering he is too good for such work.

Don-mo Ri-pa (described to be alive at the death of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug, so that his own death must be later than 1255) received teachings from Khro-phu

⁶⁸ Ibid., 473-77.

Lo-tsā-ba Tshul-khrims Shes-rab. According to the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* Khro-phu Lo-tsā-ba was born in a water-snake year, which is 1173.⁶⁹ According to the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, he was born in the water-dragon year of 1172.⁷⁰ The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* states that Don-mo Ri-pa received from Khro-phu Lo-tsā-ba the teachings of two of the Indian masters that Khro-phu Lo-tsā-ba had invited to Tibet—Mitrayogin and Śākyaśrī. The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* specifies that Mitrayogin was in Tibet for eighteen months, after being invited from Nepal by Khro-phu Lo-tsā-ba, when the latter was in his twenty-fourth year,⁷¹ which would be 1196/7, while the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* states that this was in his twenty-sixth year,⁷² which would be 1197/8. The second master was Śākyaśrī, who travelled through Tibet from 1204 to 1214, and died in Kashmir in 1225. Khro-phu Lo-tsā-ba had also met 'Bri-gung-pa (1143-1217) in his thirty-second year, circa 1203/04.

Don-mo Ri-pa must have received the Mitrayogin and Śākyaśrī teachings from Khro-phu Lo-tsā-ba after Śākyaśrī's departure from Tibet in 1214, which agrees with Don-mo Ri-pa being only eleven years old in that year.

Don-mo Ri-pa was in his forty-third year, which would be 1245, when he went to Phu-rang, where he became established as an eminent master.⁷³ This was ten years before Ri-khrod dBang-phyug's death and is perhaps why his biography of Ri-khrod dBang-phyug did not conclude with his death, but had to be supplemented by a later author, perhaps rDo-rje mDzes-'od.

Don-mo Ri-pa does not appear to be identical with the Don-mo Ri-pa that is recorded in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*.⁷⁴ The latter was the secret preceptor to Sangs-rgyas Yar-byon Shes-rab Bla-ma in the latter's twentieth year. Sangs-rgyas Yar-byon Shes-rab Bla-ma is said by the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* to have been born in 1203, and was therefore the same age as

⁶⁹ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 708; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 618.

⁷⁰ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 331.

⁷¹ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 709; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 620.

⁷² *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 331.

⁷³ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 499.

⁷⁴ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich) 627; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 547.

Don-mo Ri-pa, who would have been too young to act as his secret preceptor, but it may be that the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*'s dates are here incorrect.

rDo-rje mDzes-'od continues his *bKa'-brgyud nam-thar chen-mo* with accounts of Don-mo Ri-pa's four main pupils:

- 1) Bla-ma Rin-po-che 'Jig-rten bLos-btang.⁷⁵
- 2) Bla-ma 'Od-sku brTse-ba.⁷⁶
- 3) Bla-ma Yang-dag rDzong-gong-ma,⁷⁷ who died in his eighty-second year.
- 4) Chun-'dor-ba, whose ordination name was 'Od-dpal Yes-shes.⁷⁸

Chun-'dor-ba was given to Don-mo Ri-pa when he was in his seventh year,⁷⁹ which is presumably after Don-mo Ri-pa went to Pu-hrang in 1245 and became an established master. Chun-'dor-ba, in his eightieth year, spoke of his intention to die, but as a result of the supplication of his pupils he lived until his eighty-second year,⁸⁰ when he died in a dog year.⁸¹ Dog years include 1298, 1310, 1322, 1334, etc., but his dates, by a process of elimination, must be 1241-1322. Earlier dates for his birth would not match his being given to Don-mo Ri-pa at Pu-hrang in his seventh year, and later dates would conflict with those of his pupil, Legs-ldan Ye-shes (1263-1344). This means that he was given to Don-mo Ri-pa in 1247, two years after Don-mo Ri-pa's arrival in Pu-hrang, and was either 23, 35, or 47 years

⁷⁵ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 504-505.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 505.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 505-7.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 507.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 507.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 511.

⁸¹ Ibid., 513.

old at Don-mo Ri-pa's death, according to whether that took place in 1264, 1276 or 1288.

Chun-'dor-ba's biography is followed by that of his principal pupil, who is referred to by rDo-rje mDzes-'od simply by the familiar yet respectful title of Bla-ma lags, while his actual ordination name as provided in the text is Legs-ldan Ye-shes (1263-1344).⁸² This is clearly rDo-rje mDzes-'od's own teacher, and rDo-rje mDzes-'od also states that he discussed the writing of this life-story with Legs-ldan Ye-shes's other pupils.

Legs-ldan Ye-shes is said to have been born in a water-pig year⁸³ and died in his eighty-second year,⁸⁴ which would probably be the wood-monkey year, though possibly a neighbouring year. Only 1263-1344 could coincide with someone who had Chun-'dor-ba as a master. The earlier alternative (1203-1284) would make Legs-ldan Ye-shes the same age as Don-mo Ri-pa, and the later alternative (1323-1404) creates too wide a temporal gap for his teacher to be a pupil of Don-mo Ri-pa. The 1263-1344 life-span itself eliminates possible birth dates for 'Chun-dor-ba except for one.

rDo-rje mDzes-'od must therefore have compiled his text following the wood-monkey year of 1344, in which Legs-ldan Ye-shes died.

There are therefore six 'generations' of teachers between rDo-rje mDzes-'od and sGam-po-pa.

In brief, the succession of teachers that are described in this text, the last of whom provides a mid fourteenth-century date for the text are as follows:

sGam-po-pa bSod-nams Rin-chen (1079-1153)

Phag-mo-gru-pa rDo-rje rGyal-mtshan (1110-1170)

'Jig-rten gSum-mgon, also known as 'Bri-gung-pa (1143-1217)

⁸² Ibid., 514-25.

⁸³ Ibid., 514.

Ri-khrod dBang-phyug (1181-1252)

Don-mo Ri-pa (1203-64) or (1203-76) or (1203-88)

Chun-'dor-ba (1241-1322)

Legs-ldan Ye-shes (1263-1344)

2.1.4.2. rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje's gSer-ri'i 'Phreng-ba'i rNam-par Thar-pa

“Biographies of the Chain of Golden Mountains”

Author : rGya-ldang-pa (rGyal-thang-pa) bDe-chen rDo-rje.

Date: circa 1258-66.

The next oldest account of the life of Mi-la Ras-pa occurs within a text that also contains the earliest surviving independent biography of Ras-chung-pa. It was composed by rGya-ldang-pa (also known as rGyal-thang-pa) bDe-chen rDo-rje and is entitled:

A Compilation of Chapters which are brief summaries of biographies of the succession of golden mountains of previous siddhas: the glorious Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud's 'Brug Ra-lung succession, which is the precious teaching of the Glorious Summer-drum [i.e., Thunder, which is 'brug in Tibetan] the lineage of the [ultimate] meaning, up until Chos-rje dBon-ras and rGod-tshangs-pa.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ Ibid., 523-24.

⁸⁵ dPal dwags-po bka'-brgyud las/ don-brgyud dpal-ldan dbyar-mga-pa'i bstan-pa rin-po-cher byon-pa'i 'brug ra-lung gdan-rabs Chos-rje dBon-ras dang / rGod-tshangs-pa yan gong-ma grub-thob gser-ri'i 'phreng-ba'i nam-par thar-pa mdor-tshang rags-bsdus le-tshan-mams phyogs-bsgrigs bzhugs.

Published as:

rGyal-thang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje (rGya-ldang-pa), dKar-brgyud gSer-'phreng: *A thirteenth-century collection of verse hagiographies of the succession of eminent masters of the*

This text is a lineage history that commences with the origins of the bKa'-brgyud lineage in India and culminates with two pupils of the founder of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud tradition: gTsang-pa rGya-ras.

It uses the archaic spelling of Mi-la Ras-pa's name, Mid-la Ras-pa, which will also be found in such texts as the thirteenth or fourteenth-century *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and the fifteenth-century *Deb-ther sNgon-po*.

The text appears to have survived as solely one *dbu-med* manuscript in the library of Hemis Monastery, a 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud monastery in Ladakh. In 1973, in Himachal Pradesh, Khams-sprul Rin-po-che, a 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud master in exile from Tibet, reproduced that text as *Dkar Brgyud Gser 'Phreng: A Thirteenth Century Collection of Verse Hagiographies of the Succession of Eminent Masters of the 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa Tradition*.

2.1.4.2.1. Structure

rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje's text is a collection of twelve separate biographies, one of which was not authored by him. It does not, unlike the later *gSer-'phreng*, have the form of a single work with one final colophon. Instead, as with Bla-ma Zhang, each biography has its own colophon. It is closer in form to the later *gSer-'phreng* than Bla-ma Zhang, however, in that its biographies almost form a linear succession. I say "almost" for two reasons. First, it concludes with the biographies of two contemporaries, though one was a teacher of the other. (As they are the sources of separate lineages, later histories of these lineages omit one or the other accordingly). Secondly, the text includes Ras-chung-pa's life-story, even though it is an account of a succession that has passed through sGam-po-pa. This anomaly will continue to appear in later 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud lineage histories

'Brug-pa dKar-brgyud-pa tradition (H.P., India: Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang,

also, because of the importance of Ras-chung-pa's lineage within the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud.

The early part of the biography of Mi-la Ras-pa appears to be an unhomogenised mixture of traditions, with Mi-la Ras-pa's father dying twice and the family falling into destitution three times. This is not evident in the Tiso translation, where, for example, one passage is translated as: "After some years, the father was stricken by a disease of the lungs. It could not be expelled by any means. All the property was taken on behalf of the father's side of the family."⁸⁶ This is an instance of the translation of an earlier narrative being influenced by the contents of the later famous narrative of gTsang-smyon. The principal elements of the gTsang-smyon version, e.g. the wicked paternal uncle, are imposed upon the somewhat ambiguous language of rGya-ldang-pa. My translation of the same passage is as follows:

After some years, the father was stricken with dropsy, and he died without anything being able to avert it. They used all he owned for that purpose and the mother and two children were left with nothing.

De nas lo 'ga' zhig nas/ yab de nyid la lho (sic. lhog) nad kyis
btab ste / cis kyang ma zlogs par gum / der de'i phyogs su / yod
pa'i dngos po thams cad btang nas / yum smad gsum po la cang
yang med par bzhugs pas /.⁸⁷

1973).

⁸⁶ Francis Vincent Tiso, *A Study of the Buddhist Saint in relation to the biographical tradition of Milarepa* (New York: Columbia University, 1989), 341.

⁸⁷ rGya-ldang-pa, 200.

2.1.4.2.2. The Author

The title page of the Khams-'phrul publication gives the name of the author as rGyal-thang-pa bDe-chen rDorje, as does the short English preface anonymously written by E. Gene Smith. This is derived from the scribe's colophon, which occurs at the end of the manuscript.

At the conclusion of all eleven biographies, however, the author gives his name as rGya-ldang-pa, not rGyal-thang-pa.

In medieval Tibetan rGya-ldang and rGyal-thang may have been almost homophones, owing to the pronunciation of the super-fixed la. Place-names in Tibet are particularly susceptible to phonological and subsequently scribal mutation, and even the same phoneme can have various spellings; Tibetan society was predominantly illiterate, and there were no “Welcome to—” signs outside any village. Tibetan place-names have not only mutated, but have also been replaced. Tiso assumes that rGya-ldang-pa was a native or resident of rGyal-thang, a fertile plain in the south-eastern extremity of the Tibetan plateau, corresponding to the present-day rGyal-thang county in Yunnan, yet he cites *skye ru ma 'dod* as a possible Ladakhi phrase.⁸⁸ It is however a general Tibetan expression.⁸⁹ rGya-ldang-pa also uses the vocative *ko-re*, which is a characteristic Khams-pa, rather impolite, vocative that is not found elsewhere.

In all but one of these colophons, that to the life of gTsang-pa rGya-ras,⁹⁰ rGya-ldang-pa refers to himself as Ri-khrod-gnas-'dzin Gangs-sgom rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje. Tiso has interpreted the epithets that occur before his name to mean that rGya-ldang-pa was the successor to rGod-tshang-pa's retreat centre, situated in a cave near Lhasa. However, *Ri-khrod* is unlikely to have the modern meaning of "retreat"; the medieval meaning was simply "mountains". Therefore, rGya-ldang-pa was simply referring to himself as "one who dwells in the

⁸⁸ Tiso, *A Study of the Buddhist Saint*, 240.

⁸⁹ mKhan-chen Khra-'gu, pers. comm., September 2000.

mountains, the meditator in the snows” a term that has been used for other mendicant mountain-dwelling yogins (cf. the phrase *ri-khod 'dzin-pa'i sgom-chen bu slob 'ga'* “Some pupils who were meditators staying in the mountains”⁹¹).

The English preface, which is anonymous, is in fact by E. Gene Smith, who notes that there is no biographical information on the author but states, though without specifying a source, that “it is known that he was a disciple of Rgod-tshang-pa Mgon-po-rdo-rje.”⁹² However, Smith states that he knows of no evidence to support that remark for he has relied on unsubstantiated, and not always accurate, oral sources for his prefaces. Nevertheless, this identification is indeed likely, in that the final biography in this collection is that of rGod-tshang-pa.

Tiso clouds these waters by stating that the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* tells us that “one of [rGod-tshang-pa's] disciples, rGyal-mtshan-'bum, composed biographies of the bKa'-brgyud-pa teachers.”⁹³ One might be led to assume that this is an alternative name for rGya-ldang-pa. However Tiso misread this passage in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*; it does not state that rGyal-mtshan 'Bum was a pupil of rGod-tshang-pa, but records that he was a pupil of rGyal-ba Yang-dgon-pa, rGod-tshang-pa's principal pupil.⁹⁴ Moreover, the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* states that the biographies were composed by a *pupil* of rGyal-mtshan 'Bum, named La-stod Shes-rab mGon-po, who had studied with many other teachers, including the third Karma-pa Rangbyung rDo-rje (1284-1339). The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* states that a detailed biography of this author existed.⁹⁵ Unfortunately, no copy of La-stod Shes-rab mGon-po's biography or of his works are presently available.

rGya-ldang-pa himself lists the principal pupils of rGod-tshang-pa as Yang-dgon-pa, Bla-ma Rin-po-che rTse-rgyal, Ma-bdun-pa, Ba-ri-pa, Phu-ri-pa, O-rgyan-pa, Byang-chub gLing-pa, Ri-khod-pa and Gangs-pa.

⁹⁰ rGya-ldang-pa, 252.

⁹¹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 362.

⁹² rGya-ldang-pa, preface.

⁹³ Francis Tiso, 163.

⁹⁴ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 695; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 607.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 695-96; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 607-8.

rGod-tshang-pa is recorded as having declared that eight of these nine were his equal, while Yang-dgon-pa was his superior. This gives the impression of having been written after Yang-dgon-pa's reputation was established, but this does not argue for a later date, for Yang-dgon-pa died in 1258, at the age of forty-five, in the very same year as his teacher rGod-tshang-pa died at the age of sixty-nine. Therefore, the text could still have been written shortly after rGod-tshang-pa's death.

There remains a possibility that rGya-ldang-pa refers to himself amongst the list of rGod-tshang-pa's pupils. Perhaps the names Gangs-pa or Ri-khrod-pa refer to rGya-ldang-pa's appellations Gangs-sgom or Ri-khrod-gnas-'dzin.

The fifteenth-century *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* (written between 1446 and 1451) provides us with the next oldest surviving list of rGod-tshang-pa's pupils. It also lists Yang-dgon-pa as superior to rGod-tshang-pa although the other eight are his equal only in one each of eight qualities that rGod-tshang-pa possessed.

The list appears to have suffered an accidental omission, as only seven are listed. The missing member is probably Phu-ri-ba, who is listed in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* as "equal in austerities" and as having the personal name dKon-mchog rGyal-mtshan,⁹⁶ Gangs-pa is listed as Gang-pa. Bla-ma Rin-po-che rTse-rgyal and Ri-khrod-pa are omitted and replaced by Nel-rengs-pa, and sPyil-dkar-ba, which are presumably alternative names. In addition, the text lists two *ras-pa* and another twenty male pupils. However, rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje does not appear amongst them.⁹⁷

The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* (completed 1478) lists twelve pupils of rGod Tshang-pa.⁹⁸ It adds information on only some of the pupils in this list, so that only four are specifically said to be rGod-tshang-pa's equals in one of his qualities. In the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, the names rTse-rgyal, Ri-khrod-pa and Gangs-pa do not occur. Ma-bdun-pa is given the additional name of mDo-bo Che-ba. Confusingly, Ba-ri-pa

⁹⁶ Ibid., (Roerich), 687-88; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 599.

⁹⁷ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 699-700.

is said to be known as Ba-ri sPyil-dkar-ba, which appears to be a conflation of the Ba-ri-pa and sPyil-dkar-ba of the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* list, unless the error is that of the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*. One of the twelve pupils listed by the *Blue Annals* is one of the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*'s two *ras-pa*: Śākya Ras-pa. Those of the twelve that might be alternative appellations for rTse-rgyal, Ri-khrod-pa and Gangs-pa, are Ne-rings-pa Zhi-byed mGon-po, Sangs-rgyas Khrom-ras, dPal skyer Shing-ras-pa, and 'Dar-ras.

Ne-rings-pa (cf. *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*: Nel-rengs-pa), also known as Ne-rings bDe-legs rGyal-mthsan (1225-1281) founded the Ne-rings monastery from which his toponym is derived, and which gave rise to the Ne-rings bKa'-brgyud subdivision of the sTod-'brug. The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* gives his personal name as bDe-legs rGyal-mtshan.⁹⁹ The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* states that he was recognised as the rebirth of Maitrīpa and lCog-ro sMyon-pa¹⁰⁰ (a pupil of Dam-pa Sangs-rgyas [died c.1117]¹⁰¹). Therefore, because of his importance, he was probably a member of the rGya-ldang-pa list and was either rTse-rgyal, Ri-khrod-pa or Gangs-pa.

There is a Gangs-pa who is said to be a holder of U-rgyan-pa's *Trivajra-sevasādhana* (*rdo-rje gsum gyi snyan-sgrub*) lineage. bSod-nams dPal (born 1349, a pupil of Zla-ba Seng-ge, who was a pupil of U-rgyan-pa) met this Gangs-pa when he started on his dharma studies, though Gangs-pa passed away soon afterwards.¹⁰² Unless the Gangs-pa, who was a pupil of rGod-tshang-pa (who had died in 1258) lived to an immense age, this appears to be another Gangs-pa. There was also a Gangs-pa (1175-1249), who was a pupil of the first Karma-pa, Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa.¹⁰³ This plethora of Gangs-pa is not unlikely, for the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* lists a number of lamas named Gangs-pa, and *The lHo-rong Chos-*

⁹⁸ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich) 686-7; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 599.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 688; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 600.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, (Roerich), [with errata of lCog-po for lCog-ro] 688; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 600.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, (Roerich) 912; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 810-11.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 703; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 614.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 518; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 452.

'byung lists a Gangs-chen in addition to Gangs-pa amongst rGod-tshang-pa's pupils.

There is a text attributed to rGod-tshang-pa mGon-po rDo-rje himself, entitled *'Brug-pa'i Lo-rgyus Zur-tsam* (*A Brief Account of the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud*), which is contained in his collected works. It is classed by Dan Martin in *Tibetan Histories* as a "brief and remarkably early history of the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud."¹⁰⁴ However, though the text contains a quotation attributed to rGod-tshang-pa, the rest of the text gives the impression of being late. It is primarily concerned with the identity of rGod-tshang-pa's pupils.

The list fails to clarify rGya-ldang-pa's list, and is yet another variation. The alternative name for Ma-bdun-pa which was given in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* (i.e. mDo-bo-che) is listed as a separate pupil. It disagrees with the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, but agrees with the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, in listing Ba-ri-ba and sPyi[l]-dkar-ba as separate pupils.

The list which the text provides does not even agree with the quotation from rGod-tshang-pa: Yang-dgon-pa, U-rgyan-pa, Ne-rings-pa, Ba-ri-ba, Ma-bdun-pa, mDo-bo-che-pa, Gangs-pa, sPyi-dkar-ba (sic) and Byang-chub Gling-pa. This omits rGya-ldang-pa's rTse-rgyal, Phu-ri-pa and Ri-khrod-pa, with Ne-rings-pa, mDo-bo-che and sPyi-dkar-ba(sic) included instead.

It also states that there were two differing traditions, one in which Yang-dgon-pa is considered the superior pupil, and one in which O-rgyan-pa is considered the superior pupil, and the text declares itself to belong to the latter tradition.

The quotation from rGod-tshang-pa however, lists only eight pupils *including* both Yang-mgon-pa and U-rgyan-pa. They are each praised for excelling in a particular quality. The eight are 1) U-rgyan-pa (austerities), 2) Yang-mgon-pa (view), 3) Ba-ri-ba (dedication to practice), 4) Ne-rings-pa (devotion), 5) Phu-ri-ba

¹⁰⁴ Dan Martin, *Tibetan Histories: A bibliography of Tibetan-language historical works* (London: Serindia, 1997), 38.

(renunciation), 6) Ma-bdun-pa (compassion), 7) Gangs-pa (pure perception), 8) Byang-chub gLing-pa (bliss and warmth).

Apart from Ba-ri-ba and Ma-bdun-pa, the associated qualities appear almost randomly distributed when compared with *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, or if this quote is the original source, randomly redistributed within *lHo-rong*.

The question of the identity of rGod-tshang-pa's pupils is thus murkier than previously thought.

This enquiry leaves the question of rGya-ldang-pa's identity unresolved. However, it appears that he may not have been a prominent successor to rGod-tshang-pa as a spiritual teacher, his importance being restricted to his biographical work.

2.1.4.2.3. The Date

The two last biographies in rGya-ldang-pa's text are of:

1) Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras (gTsang-pa rGya-ras's nephew and the successor to his monastery), who is the starting point for the Bar-'Brug, or Central 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud tradition.

2) rGod-tshang-pa, who is the starting point for the sTod-'Brug: the Upper (i.e., Western) 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud.

There are indications that the text was written in the wake of rGod-tshang-pa's death as there is a detailed account of rGod-tshang-pa's last days.

rGya-ldang-pa states that rGod-tshang-pa's death occurred in the year of a horse, without specifying the element that would place the year more specifically within a sixty-year cycle, as later texts do. The last mention of rGod-tshang-pa's age occurs in the chapter before that which describes his death, when he is said to have reached his sixty-eighth year on establishing a monastery at rDo-rje gLing.¹⁰⁵ rGya-ldang-pa does not specify the elements of the years of rGod-tshang-pa's birth or

death, but the dates given in later histories—birth in the earth-bird year of 1189 and death in the earth-horse year of 1258—agree with rGya-ldang-pa's chronology, as he would have died in his seventieth year, i.e., aged sixty-nine. The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* specifies that he spent two years at rDo-rje gLing but this may not be corroboration, for the calculation may itself be based on rGya-ldang-pa's information, as 'Gos-Lo-tsā-ba's principal source appears to be rGya-ldang-pa. The *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*¹⁰⁶ also states that he died in his seventieth year in an earth-horse year, following two years at Bar-'brug rDo-rje gLing.

One of the biographies within this text was not authored by rGya-ldang-pa. This is the *'Brug Ra-lung gi Chos-rje Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras kyi rNam-thar*, which is the biography of Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras (also known as Dar-ma Seng-ge 1177-1237/8). It is the eleventh of the twelve texts. Its author was dGe-slong Rin-chen Sangs-rgyas, who was evidently an actual pupil of Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras. Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras was both an elder fellow-pupil of rGod-tshang-pa's and a teacher of his. He died twenty years before rGod-tshang-pa's death. In his colophon, Rinchen Seng-ge states¹⁰⁷ that he wrote this biography at Rwa-lung, the seat of Sangs-ryas dBon-ras, on the request of fellow pupils, and he used information that Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras and his consort had related directly to the author himself. It was therefore probably written not too long after 1237, and was, in all likelihood, inspired by the event of Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras's death. Therefore, the text would already have been at least twenty years old when rGya-ldang-pa composed his biography of rGod-tshang-pa. The style of rGya-ldang-pa's biographies (with the exception of Ras-chung-pa's biography) closely follows that of the Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras biography. First the life is described concisely in verse, and then each verse is repeated with a lengthy commentary. This is a literary form, based on Indian antecedents, which is

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 611.

¹⁰⁶ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 699.

¹⁰⁷ rGya-ldang-pa, 564-5: rje'i zhal nas gsung pa dang/ yum gyi ngag nas thos pa dang / bdag gis gsung gleng zhus pa las / rang dgar bcug pa mi gdog pas / ... yon tan mam thar bjod par mi nus kyang / slob ma mched grogs mams kyi skul ba'i ngor/ ... dpal ra lung

normally used solely for scholarly works. rGya-ldang-pa appears to have adopted Rin-chen Seng-ge's text as a model. It is probable that rGya-ldang-pa compiled Rin-chen Seng-ge's text with his own to form one work with a collective title, in spite of the absence of an overall colophon, and did so at a time when Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras and rGod-tshang-pa were both eminent masters in living memory. Sangs-rgyas dBon-ras was gTsang-pa rGya-ras's nephew, the successor to his seat and a teacher of rGod-tshang-pa, and therefore would, at such a time, have been considered by rGya-ldang-pa to merit inclusion in a lineage history that culminated with rGod-tshang-pa. The Western and Central traditions had yet to develop their own distinct identities and lineage histories. Later 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud histories, such as that of rMon-rtse-pa, in emphasising their own particular traditions include biographies of only one of these masters, according to whether they are describing the Central or Western 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud.

Zur Legs-pa rGyal-mtshan, the scribe of the Hemis manuscript of the rGya-ldang-pa text, added his own colophon. He gives a lineage for the transmission of the text itself; it begins with "rGyal-thang-pa," and he himself is sixth in the succession.¹⁰⁸ The passage of time during which this transmission occurred could at one extreme be very short, or at the other, if the text was transmitted each time towards the end of a long life, be more than three centuries. The pictorial style of the manuscript is assumed by Smith to be of the late fifteenth or early sixteenth century,¹⁰⁹ but this is too late for rGya-ldang-pa to have written in the middle of the thirteenth century, since that would entail an average of about forty years between each transmission of the text. One would more reasonably expect the manuscript to date from the latter half of the fourteenth century or from the early fifteenth century.

dgon pa'i sa phyogs dben gnas su / shākya'i dge slong rin chen seng ge yis / legs sbyar...

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 619. The lineage of these biographies: 1) rGyal-thang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje. 2) Chos-rje Thogs-med-pa. 3) Slob-dpon Shes-rab 'Byung-gnas. 4) bKa'-bcu-pa Sangs-rgyas bKra-shis. 5) mKhas-grub Chos-kyi rGyal-mtshan. 6) And to myself, Svasti Dhvacha. Zur Legs-pa rGyal-mtshan.

¹⁰⁹ E. Gene Smith, "Preface" in rGya-ldang-pa.

Seven of rGyal-ldang-pa's twelve colophons, including that for the *mam-thar* of rGod-tshang-pa, may provide evidence for a mid-thirteenth-century date. They each state that those particular biographies were written on the request of Slop-dpon mGon-po 'Od-zer. He is described in the colophon to the first of the texts—*dPal-ldan Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud-pa'i rNam-par-thar-pa*—as "rich in the wealth of hearing and contemplating the scriptures, logic and practice instruction; one who definitely resides in meditation, and has perfect faith in the bKa'-brgyud-pa lamas."¹¹⁰

The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* lists only one lama of that name: he was the abbot of dPal-gSang-phu monastery, also known as Ne'u-thog monastery, which was founded in 1073 by rNgog Legs-pa'i Shes-rab, the uncle of rNgog Blo-ldan Shes-rab the famous translator (1059-1109).¹¹¹ mGon-po 'Od-zer was abbot for thirty-five years, until 1266, which was presumably the year of his death.¹¹²

If this mGon-po 'Od-zer is the one mentioned in the colophon, and if the request was fulfilled while mGon-po 'Od-zer was alive, and if the work was commenced after rGod-tshang-pa's death, the text would have been composed between 1258 and 1266. There is however no conclusive evidence to identify these two names as referring to the same person. Against that hypothesis is the fact that gSang-phu monastery was not a 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud establishment.

Nevertheless, in spite of having to rely solely on internal evidence, none of which is completely decisive, the strongest probability is that rGya-ldang-pa was a pupil of rGod-tshang-pa, and that the text was written in the mid-thirteenth century.

¹¹⁰ rGya-ldang-pa, 13. The other colophons that mention mGon-po 'Od-zer have a simplified form of this description— "...rich in the wealth of hearing, contemplation and meditation of scriptures, logic and practice instructions ..." This occurs at the conclusion of the *mam-thars* of Mar-pa (p.187) sGam-po-pa (p.339) Phag-mo gru-pa (p. 435) gLing-ras-pa (p. 483) gTsang-pa rGya-ras (p. 525), and rGod-tshang-pa (pp. 618-9).

¹¹¹ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich) 324-5; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 287-8.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, (Roerich) 329; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 292-3: 'Jam-dbyangs Śākya gzhon-nu succeeds 'Od-zer mGon-po as abbot of gSang-phu in a fire tiger year, which must be 1266. 'Od-zer mGon-po of gSang-phu is also listed [(Roerich) 307; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 273] as one of the contemporaries of bSod-nams Rin-chen (1214-1286), who became abbot of the bKa'-gdams-pa Kam-Kam monastery in 1254.

2.1.4.2.4. The Ras-chung-pa Biography

The biography of Ras-chung-pa appears to be at variance with the other biographies in this text for two reasons:

1. It is not written in the verse and commentary style of the others.
2. It is not a part of the lineal succession through sGam-po-pa, to the founders of the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud.

Its style suggests that *The Life of Ras-chung-pa* may have been a final addition to this collection. Nevertheless, it appears to have been intended to be an integral part of it, for the reader is at one point referred to the preceding *Life of Mi-la Ras-pa*¹¹³ in order to read a song in full. The song is in fact not to be found there, but this may well have been an error on rGya-ldang-pa's part, who thought the song had been included in that section. The alternative is that this biography of Ras-chung-pa was originally a part of a different earlier work by rGya-ldang-pa.

Ras-chung-pa's inclusion is an indication of the important status of Ras-chung-pa's teachings, and of gTsang-pa rGya-ras's *gter-ma* within the Drukpa bKa'-brgyud lineage. Therefore a biography of Ras-chung-pa is important for the history and self-validation of the 'brug-pa lineage.

rGya-ldang-pa mentions no source for his *Life of Ras-chung-pa* other than Khyung-tshang-pa, who is mentioned twice in passing.

rGya-ldang-pa states that Khyung-tshang-pa described a meeting with Ras-chung-pa's ex-wife when she was an elderly yoginī.¹¹⁴ There is also a reference to a song by Rong-chung-pa that Khyung-tshang-pa had known but no longer remembered.¹¹⁵ rGya-ldang-pa was writing long after Khyung-tshang-pa's death in 1176. Though it is possible that he derived his information from an orally transmitted narrative, rGya-ldang-pa very likely had recourse to a now lost text by

¹¹³ rGya-ldang-pa, 350: *mid la'i lo rgyus kyi skabs ltar du gsungs*.

¹¹⁴ rGya-ldang-pa, 380.

Khyung-tshang-pa, or a text that incorporated material from such a text. The absence of a description of Ras-chung-pa's death also implies that rGya-ldang-pa did not have access to Sum-pa's *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*. Perhaps the Khyung-tshang-pa text available to rGya-ldang-pa did not include an account of the end of Ras-chung-pa's life. Khyung-tshang-pa is said to have remained with Ras-chung-pa for less than two months and was not present at the time of his death, having gone to a distant place where he kept himself apart from Ras-chug-pa's community of pupils. His own death occurred fifteen years after Ras-chung-pa's, and more than the first half of that time was spent in solitary retreats.¹¹⁶ This may explain the incompleteness of rGya-ldang-pa's biography if he relied upon Khyung-tshang-pa as his principal or sole source.

It remains unclear whether Khyung-tshang-pa or Sumpa's works included the story of the wicked uncle and Ras-chung-pa's "leprosy", which are significant features in the rGya-ldang-pa description of Ras-chung-pa's childhood. These are details that are absent in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, which we shall examine next.

rGya-ldang-pa's *Life of Ras-chung-pa* is divided into two sections:

- 1) An initial chapter entitled "The qualities of hardship, which is connected with his family."
- 2) The rest of the text, in seventeen chapters, is entitled "The qualities of experience, which is connected with meditation."

This division is also found in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* account of the life of Mi-la Ras-pa as well as later histories. It appears to be a form which these texts inherited along with their common narrative content.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 365.

¹¹⁶ *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 117-19.

2.1.4.2.5. Relationship between rGya-ldang-pa and the sGam-po-pa / Bla-ma Zhang /Don-mo Ri-pa texts

rGya-ldang-pa's biography is the earliest surviving biography of Ras-chung-pa that remains in its original form. However, sufficient time had passed since Ras-chung-pa's death for its historical reliability to be questionable. This is evident when we compare rGya-ldang-pa's version of Mi-la Ras-pa's life¹¹⁷ with that of sGam-po-pa and Bla-ma Zhang and Don-mo Ri-pa.

Gya-ldang-pa's version of Mi-la's life contains additional material, including some features that will make gTsang-smyon's fifteenth-century version of Mi-la Ras-pa's life story so popular and influential.

Significant material in rGya-ldang-pa, which is not to be found in the sGam-po-pa/Bla-ma Zhang/Don-mo Ri-pa versions, is as follows:

- 1) Mi-la Ras-pa, though stated to be an emanation by sGam-po-pa and Zhang, is specified by rGya-ldang-pa to be an emanation of the Buddha, his last life having been as Nāgārjunagarbha.¹¹⁸
- 2) Mi-la Ras-pa's father dies early, and his mother features strongly in his life.
- 3) The troubles experienced by Mi-la's family are specified to be caused by relatives and neighbours.
- 4) Mi-la, on his mother's urging, attacks the relatives and neighbours with sorcery, and every one of them dies.
- 5) When Mi-la meets Mar-pa, Mar-pa refuses at first to give him the teachings. In order to receive them Mi-la has first to practise sorcery against Mar-pa's enemies and then single-handedly erect and demolish a succession of buildings. He is still refused the teachings.

¹¹⁷ rGya-ldang-pa, 189-265.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 195.

- 6) On Mar-pa's wife's suggestion, and having requested permission from Mar-pa, Mi-la goes to study with rNgog for a year. On their return to Mar-pa, Mar-pa is very pleased that rNgog has given him all the instruction, even though Mi-la has made no spiritual progress.

The sGam-po-pa/Bla-ma Zhang/Don-mo Ri-pa version was eclipsed by narrative traditions that contain the dramatic ingredients found in rGya-ldang-pa.

rGya-ldang-pa does not reproduce Mi-la Ras-pa textual material from sGam-po-pa and Bla-ma Zhang; instead it has narrative details that place it in a line of narrative transmission which is distinct from those texts, and produced the *bZha-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, as we shall see below.

There is one curious textual coincidence between rGya-ldang-pa and sGam-po-pa/Bla-ma Zhang. In the opening passage of sGam-po-pa/Bla-ma Zhang's life of Mila there is the line: "There were only the father and son".¹¹⁹ This phrase recurs in Gya-ldang-pa within the context of a long description of the low quality of the ancestry of Mi-la's father, in which each family had but one son. This coincidence is, however, likely to be an unrelated use of a stock phrase.

Though sGam-po-pa, Bla-ma Zhang and Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od made references to songs, and quoted a few lines, rGya-ldang-pa is the first to provide us with songs by Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa, and will therefore will be particularly relevant in tracing the history of these songs.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 197.

2.1.4.2.6 “*bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud biographies*” version

Date: Compiled after 1360.

This is a history of a *sNyan-brgyud* lineage that was transmitted from Ras-chung-pa through Khyung-tshang-pa. It concludes with the life of ‘gro-mgon gZi-brjid-pa,¹²⁰ which follows the life of Bya-btang-pa. In gTsang-smyon’s *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, however, the sequence is reversed, with an additional lama, mKhan-po dBang-phyug Shes-rab, in between these two.

This discrepancy appears to be explained when calculating the dates of these masters, for it appears that though gZi-brjid received teachings from Bya-btang-pa, he was older than him. gZi-brjid’s dates can be calculated to be 1290-1360. Therefore, the text was probably compiled shortly after 1360. The text states that this lineage is active throughout central and eastern Tibet.

The Ras-chung-pa section is comprised of the entire rGya-ldang-pa biography of Ras-chung-pa, which is repeated verbatim (with fewer scribal errors than in our edition of rGya-ldang-pa), but missing its colophon, and with no reference to rGya-ldang-pa as the source. In that text, it forms the chapter on *The History of Lord Ras-chung-pa* within a section entitled “Incomplete collection of biographies of masters in the transmission lineage of the Ras-chung snyan-brgyud teachings”.¹²¹

The text survived as an *dbu-med* manuscript in the library of sTag-sna monastery, Ladakh. In 1983, the bKa’-brgyud gSung-rab Nyams-gso-khang in Darjeeling, an organisation dedicated to the revival of bKa'-brgyud literature, reproduced it as *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud Biographies*.

¹²⁰ *Bde-mchog sNyan-rgyud Biographies: Reproduction of a collection of rare manuscripts from the sTag-sna monastery in Ladakh* (Darjeeling: Kagyu Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1983), 373-401.

The redaction of the *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud Biographies* presumably occurred soon after the death of the last lineage figure whose life is recorded in that text—'Gor-mgon gZi-brjid-pa (1290-1360). This text's use of rGya-ldang-pa as the source for its biography of Ras-chung-pa indicates the convergence between the Ras-chung-pa lineages and the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud, a convergence that at the end of the fifteenth century would serve as the milieu for Tibet's greatest biographical literature.

2.1.4.3. *bKa'-brgyud yid-bzhin nor-bu yi 'phreng-ba*

The Kagyu Garland of Wish-fulfilling Jewels

Date: Compiled after 1244

The Kagyu Garland of Wish-fulfilling Jewels (bKa'-brgyud Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi 'Phreng-ba), was published in India in 1972 from a manuscript from the library of Kangyur Rinpoche. It is a somewhat haphazard compilation of life stories, which includes an edition of sGam-po-pa's *Mar-pa dang Mi-la'i rNam-thar*¹²² that is peculiarly detached from the *Nāro dang Telo'i rNam-thar*, to which it is an adjunct. This collection does not include a biography of Ras-chung-pa, but does have a *Mi-la'i rnam-thar*¹²³ within a series of biographies that culminates in the 'Bri-gung masters who comprise the succession of 'Bri-gung monastery, in contrast to rDo-rje mDzes-'od's West Tibetan tradition. The *Mi-la'i rNam-thar* has no author or date. One of the texts is a biography of 'Gar Dam-pa Chos-sdings-pa (1180-1240),¹²⁴ a pupil of 'Bri-gung 'Jig-rten mGon-po (1143-1217), which was composed by his nephew and successor, O-rgyan-pa (a biography of 'Gar-dam-pa is also found in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*).¹²⁵ This led to a conflation of this earlier

¹²² Grub-thob O-rgyan-pa Rin-chen-dpal, *bKa'-brgyud Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi 'Phreng-ba: A precious rosary of lives of the 'Bri-gun-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa tradition* (Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1982), 718-29.

¹²³ Ibid., 174-245.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 400-634.

¹²⁵ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 602-3; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 524-25.

O-rgyan-pa with the famous O-rgyan-pa Rin-chen dPal (1229/30-1309), a pupil of rGod-tshang-pa and the second Karma-pa.¹²⁶ The entire collection of life-stories was assumed by Smith, trusting his Tibetan informants, to be by this author, so that the publication erroneously has the famous O-rgyan-pa credited with its authorship.

The *Mi-la'i rNam-thar* has at least one element that connects it with the Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od version. Mi-la's earliest name is given as 'Go-yags, while in rDo-rje mDzes-'od it is mGo-yag, which is said to mean "a good beginning" so that the second suffix *s* in the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* is probably a corruption. Nevertheless, the majority of the narrative, though brief, is comprised of narrative elements that are close to the rGya-ldang-pa version, with a high proportion of words and the occasional phrase in common. However, later chapters in this thesis will show that the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*'s biography of Mi-la is based not upon rGya-ldang-pa but on a common source.

The narrative is condensed and loses some clarity; for example, in rGya-ldang-pa, when Mi-la causes a building to collapse through his sorcery, the survivors become possessed, and speak as if they are Mi-la, declaring that he caused this, and then they all die. In the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi 'Phreng-ba*, their possession and their subsequent deaths are omitted, which makes the narrative vague. There is also an unexplained transition from the use of 'Go-yags to Thos-pa dGa' as Mi-la's personal name (while the transition was explained in rDo-rje mDzes-'od). The *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi 'Phreng-ba* has an additional narrative detail, which may have existed in the common source and been omitted by rGya-ldang-pa: the villagers hold a secret meeting and decide to send someone to murder Mi-la. The wife of the principal conspirator hears him talk about their plans in his sleep and she informs Mi-la's mother of the danger.

The biography of 'Gar Dam-pa Chos-sdings-pa was concluded in 1244. However, it was dated by Smith to 1304, a sixty-year cycle later, as a result of

¹²⁶ *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 717-50. O-rgyan-pa Rin-chen dPal's biography appears here under the name Grub-chen Sangs-rgyas dPal.

misidentifying the author. There is no biography of any later figure and therefore the compilation may possibly date to the middle of the thirteenth century.

2.2 . Intermediary Sources: From the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* until gTsang-smyon

2.2.1. *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (also known as *Bu-chen bCu-gnyis*)

Author: Anonymous.

Date: Thirteenth to fifteenth century

This important text is only known to survive in three copies, none of which has been published. There are two manuscripts, and the sole surviving copy of a xylograph print. One of the manuscripts has a blank title page and the other two versions have different titles. The colophons of all three agree, however, apart from minor spelling variations, that the title is *dPal bZhad-pa'i¹²⁷ rdo-rje'i rnam-thar 'gur-chings¹²⁸ dang bcas pa* (*The Life of Glorious bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje, including a collection of his songs*).

In 1969, E. Gene Smith referred to the text, which he had been unable to locate a specimen of in India, as "the *Bu chen bcu gñis* biography of Mi-la Ras-pa" and described it as a major source for gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka's famous *Mi-la rnam-thar* and its accompanying volume *Mi-la'i mgur-'bum*.¹²⁹ I will refer to the text, more accurately, in this thesis by the shorter form of its actual title: *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.

¹²⁷ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark): bzhad-pa. It is less likely that an original bzhad-pa would be changed to bzhad-pa'i, than for an earlier bzhad-pa'i to be modified to bzhad-pa.

¹²⁸ Ibid., (Newark): mgul-chings; (Oxford and Stockholm): mgur-chings. 'Gur appears to be the original spelling, which is intermittently changed to mgur in both texts.

¹²⁹ E. Gene Smith, preface to *The Life of the Saint of Gtsañ*, by Rgod-tshañ-ras-pa Sna-tshogs-rañ-grol, ed. Lokesh Chandra, Sata-Piṭaka Series: Indo-Asian Literatures, vol. 79 (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1969), 17, n. 2.

lHa-lung-pa, in his introduction to *The Life of Mi-la Ras-pa* also states that “one notable version [of the life of Mi-la Ras-pa] was compiled by the twelve Great Disciples,”¹³⁰ though he had not seen a copy of it. Both the above had received their information from Deshung Rinpoche who had examined the library of Brag-dkar rTa-so. lHa-lung-pa states that Deshung had also seen a rare manuscript of a fifteenth-century *Mi-la'i nam-thar* by a Zhi-byed Ras-pa, which will be identified below.

The so-called “*Bu-chen bCu-gnyis*” includes chapters that are solely concerned with Ras-chung-pa. The author is anonymous, but he is clearly a holder of Ngan-rdzong's lineage of Ras-chung-pa's teachings.

2.2.1.1. Editions

The three unpublished versions of *dPal bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar mGur-chings dang-bcas-pa* (“*The Life and Songs of Glorious bZhad-pa rDo-rje*”), also known as *Bu-chen bCu-gnyis*:

- 1) The Oxford manuscript, in the Bodleian library in Oxford, England.
- 2) The Newark manuscript, in the Newark library, New Jersey, USA.
- 3) The Stockholm xylograph, in the Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm, Sweden.

1) The Oxford manuscript has no title on its title page. It is in 193 folios. The last folio is actually numbered as 192, but there are two consecutive pages that have both been numbered 126. There are frequent simple spelling errors, such as leaving off the second-suffix *sa*. It is listed as having been acquired in

¹³⁰ *The Life of Milarepa*, trans. Lobsang P. Lhalungpa, xxx.

1905. The manner of its acquisition is therefore described by Ulrich Pagel in his account of British Library Tibetan acquisitions when he wrote that

... a wave of new acquisitions reached Britain in 1905, consisting of books collected during the Younghusband campaign of 1904 ... The selection of the material took place under the supervision of Lieut. Col. L. A. Waddell. The selection criteria themselves had been defined by F. W. Thomas in a list of book desiderata compiled shortly before Younghusband set out on his mission ... it took several months to assemble the material and prepare it for shipment to the UK (Waddell 1912). Every text had to be checked for completeness and physical condition before it was deemed suitable for transport. The majority of the collection was donated to the India Office Library. Other parts went to the Department of Oriental Printed Books and Manuscripts, British Museum, the Bodleian Library and Cambridge University Library.¹³¹

It is therefore the checking process in India that was responsible for the somewhat worm-eaten slip of paper that now accompanies the manuscript in Oxford, identifying it as a biography of Mi-la Ras-pa and noting the errors in the Tibetan page numbering.

2) The Newark manuscript bears the title (which is not that given in the colophon): *The Profound Life of the great noble lord Mid-la Ras-pa (rje bstun mid-la ras-pa'i nam-thar zab mo bzhugs so)*. It has 161 folios, with almost every page illustrated by drawings, which are occasionally merely decorative objects but usually illustrations of the scenes being described. The earliest part of Mi-la Ras-

¹³¹ Ulrich Pagel, "The British Library Tibetica: A Historical Survey" in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 7th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies, Graz 1995*, ed. Helmut Krasser, Michael Torsten Much, Ernst Steinkellner, Helmut Tauscher (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1997), 726.

pa's life, including his pupilage under Mar-pa, is not illustrated. It seems that the idea of illustrating the episodes was taken up after the work had commenced.

It was collected by a missionary (probably Carter D. Holden or M. G. Griebnow) in 1933, from the dGe-lugs-pa monastery of Bla-brang ("Labrang") in Amdo.¹³² Its dGe-lugs-pa background is evident from the illustrations, in which Indian gurus are portrayed wearing dGe-lugs-pa monastic dress, and gTsong-kha-pa is featured on folio 153b.

The scribe's colophon (which is unreadable on the micro-film) makes a prayer for six deceased people, wishing that they attain Buddhahood through the blessing of the text. It also prays for eleven living donors, that they be free of obstacles. However, the scribe gives no date or location for the work.

Page 1b, the reverse of the title-page, has Vajradhara represented in the centre with Mid-la-ras-pa at the left end of the page, (that is upon Vajradhara's right, the principal position) and Ras-chung-pa at the right end (on Vajradhara's right, the secondary position). Dwags-po Lha-rje, also known as sGam-po-pa, appears upon page 2a, and therefore in a less prominent position than Ras-chung-pa. This pictorial hierarchy therefore gives a higher ranking to Ras-chung-pa than to sGam-po-pa, as would be expected of a text that has its origin in a lineage derived from Ras-chung-pa.

There is considerable scribal corruption in the Newark manuscript, with words seriously misspelled or phrases omitted. A minor, less obvious example occurs within the title itself, when it is given in the colophon as *dPal bZhad-pa rDo-rje'i rNam-thar mGul-chings dang-bcas-pa* ("The Life of Glorious bZhad-pa rDo-rje, with neck-adornment"), in which *mgul-chings* ("neck-adornment") is in error for the obscure term *mgur-chings*.

¹³² Valrae Reynolds and Amy Heller, *Introduction to the Newark Museum Tibetan Collection*, (Newark: The Newark Museum, 1983), 58.

I have not discovered the word *mgur-chings* in any other context. However, *chings* is used in compounds to refer to a summary, epitome or outline, as in *mdo-chings*, *bsdus-don gyi chings* and *spyi-chings*.

Both the Oxford and Newark manuscripts have interlinear emendations where haplographies have occurred, and the manuscripts mutually confirm the correctness of these interlinear emendations.

1) The Stockholm xylograph is located in the Folkens Museum Etnografiska in Stockholm.

This is printed from a woodblock at the printery of the Brag-dkar-rta-so monastery that was noted by Deshung Rinpoche on his visit there.¹³³ The monastery had been founded at a site associated with Mi-la Ras-pa's life. lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-gyal, a prolific biographer and one of the principal pupils of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, was active there in the printing of texts. Its library and printing-blocks were destroyed in the Cultural Revolution.

The only known surviving copy taken from this block was amongst a number of texts sold by the Chini Lama of Bodhnath, Nepal, to Toni Schmid in the early sixties. Her collection was kept private, normally inaccessible to study by Tibetologists, but E. Gene Smith had briefly seen the text on a visit to Sweden in 1963. However, the concluding pages of a sGam-po-pa text had been inadvertantly mixed with it, so that Smith had recorded it to be a *zin-bris* of sGam-po-pa's teachings.¹³⁴ After her death in the 1970s, the collection was donated to the Folkens Museum Etnografiska in Stockholm.¹³⁵ Its cover-title is *rJe-btsun Mid-la Ras-chen gyi rNam-thar bKa'-'bum Chen-mo Grub-thob Ras-pa bCu-gnyis kyis bsGrigs-pa*.

¹³³ Pers. comm., E. Gene Smith, Hiar Foundation, New York, December 1997.

¹³⁴ Pers. comm., E. Gene Smith.

¹³⁵ Pers. comm., Hakan Wahlquist, Senior Curator Asian Collections, Folkens Museum Etnografiska, Stockholm, February 1998.

(*The Life of Lord Mila Rechen: the Great Hundred Thousand Teachings aranged by the twelve ras-pa siddhas*).

The printer's colophon, however, gives the text a slightly different title: *Gangs-stod Mid-la Ras-chen gyi bKa'-'bum Chen-mo Grub-thob Ras-pa bCu-gnyis kyis bsGrigs-pa* (*The Hundred-thousand Teachings of Great Ras-pa Mila of the Upper Snows, arranged by the twelve Ras-pa Siddhas*). The printer is named as Gu-na-ma-ti (i.e. Guṇamati, the Sanskrit for Yon-tan Blo-gros), "a great *ras-pa* of the upper snows, a yogin from the Dwags-po region in the east." The text was printed in "the solitary place of the Sham-bu snow-mountain."¹³⁶

This edition of the text must therefore be the source for the title *Bu-chen bCu-gnyis*, as reported by Deshung Rinpoche.

It appears to have 276 folios. Unfortunately, though the text was read and photocopied in the 1980s by Gudrun Hegardt, formerly of that museum, the whereabouts of the text is presently unknown (but has hopefully been sealed in presently inaccessible containers by the Textile Department). I was able to obtain an incomplete set of the photocopy (though almost all the folios have been photocopied in such a manner that one end is missing).

2.2.1.2. Authorship

An examination of the colophon, identical in all three versions, establishes that the title of the Stockholm xylograph is erroneous in attributing its compilation to twelve great *ras-pa* pupils of Mi-la Ras-pa.

The colophon¹³⁷ states:

This Life [of Mi-la Ras-pa] has been written down, for the benefit of worthy meditators, as the words of Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa Bodhirāja¹³⁸ and the other twelve great [spiritual] sons.

¹³⁶ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Stockholm), 276b. Shar dags (sic) po'i rnal 'byor pa gangs stod kyi ras chen guna matis / sham bu gangs dkar mo'i dben gnas su bsgrubs pa.

mam-thar 'di skal-ldan sgom¹³⁹-chen nams kyi don du /¹⁴⁰ ngan rdzongs¹⁴¹ ston-pa bodhi¹⁴² radza¹⁴³ la sogs pa'i ras pa bu-chen bcu-gnyis kyi yig-ger¹⁴⁴ bkod-pa.

Bodhirāja is Sanskrit for Byang-chub rGyal-po, which was Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa's personal name. Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa was the source of the *bDe-mchog snyan-rgyud* lineages. This emphasis upon him is an indication of the background for the creation of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. In fact, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* includes within itself four short texts, complete with their titles and colophons, one of which was written by Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa alone, and the other three written by him in partnership with another of the twelve *ras-pa* sons— Zhi-ba-'od. In the above colophon, the term *ras-pa bu-chen bcu-gnyis* is qualified by the genitive particle, not the instrumental. They are not stated to be the compilers of this text (as the title of the Stockholm edition declares), rather it is their words, whether written or orally transmitted, that have been compiled. It is not purely written works that the compiler used to form the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, otherwise he would not have written of the danger of this material being forgotten. The anonymous compiler confirms the significance of the emphasis on Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa, when he declares which lineage this text has been written for— the *['Khor-lo]-bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud* lineage (Sanskrit: *Cakrasaṃvara-karṇatantra*):¹⁴⁵

¹³⁷ Ibid., (Newark) 243b; (Oxford) 191b; (Stockholm) 274b.

¹³⁸ This is a Sanskrit translation of Ngan-ston's Tibetan name— Byang-chub rGyal-po "King of Enlightenment".

¹³⁹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Oxford), bsgom.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., (Newark) shad omitted.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., (Stockholm) rdzong.

¹⁴² Ibid., (Oxford) bodhe.

¹⁴³ Ibid., (Oxford) ratsa.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., (Stockholm) 274b. The section — pa'i ras pa bu-chen bcu-gnyis kyi yig-ger — is unavailable.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., (Newark) 243b6-244a1; (Oxford) 192a1-2; (Stockholm) 275a3-4.

This has been written down in accordance with the lama's words,
 For I was afraid that those with lesser intelligence [amongst]
 The future lineage-holders of this wish-fulfilling jewel—
 The lineage of the Kaṇatantra Cakrasamvara— might forget it.

snyan rgyud bde mchog¹⁴⁶ 'khor lo yi¹⁴⁷ / rgyud¹⁴⁸ pa yi
 bzhin nor bu¹⁴⁹ 'di¹⁵⁰ / ma 'ongs¹⁵¹ gdung rgyud¹⁵² 'dzin pa
 rnams / blo dman rjed¹⁵³ pas 'jigs pa'i phyir¹⁵⁴ / bla ma'i
 gsung¹⁵⁵ bzhin yi ger bkod /

The colophon is itself based upon the colophon¹⁵⁶ of the Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa text compiled as the beginning of the seventeenth chapter of part two. That text¹⁵⁷ describes the attack of demons at Chu-bar, and Mi-la's encounter with the five Tshe-ring-ma goddesses. This text dates the subjugation of the demons at Chu-bar to the water-dragon year (1112).¹⁵⁸ It is evidently the source for 'Gos lotsawa gzhon-nu dPal's statement, in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* (completed in 1478), that, according to Ngan-rdzong, that war with the demons took place in a water-dragon year.¹⁵⁹

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., (Stockholm) the four words *snyan rgyud bde mchog* are not available.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., (Newark) 'di.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., (Stockholm) brgyud.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., (Newark) 'khor lo.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., (Stockholm) 'dis.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., (Newark) 'ong.

¹⁵² *gdung-rgyud* normally refers to a hereditary lineage. Here we see *rgyud* without a *ba*-prefix clearly meaning a lineage.

¹⁵³ Ibid., (Stockholm & Newark) brjed.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., (Newark) pa gsal ba'i phyir /

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., (Newark) gsungs.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., (Newark) 162b6-163a5; (Oxford) 129a6-129b4; (Stockholm) 163b3-7.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., (Newark) 153a5-163a5; (Oxford) 124b6-129b4; (Stockholm) na-163b7.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., (Newark) 153b5; (Oxford) 125a3; (Stockholm) na.

¹⁵⁹ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich) 435; ('Gos Lo-tsa-ba) 380.

It is clear that the compiler recycled significant phrases from Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa's colophon, the meaning of which was clearer in the original context. The colophon of chapter seventeen includes this passage:¹⁶⁰

This outpouring of a transcendent experience,
Should not be set down in words,
However, I was afraid that I would forget it,
And in order to inspire and delight
Future holders of the lineage,
I have written it down, in accordance with the lama's
words.¹⁶¹

I made the request [to do this] three times,
And he did not gladly give his permission.¹⁶²
He said, "I have vowed not to anger the *ḍākinīs*,
Therefore, I have not been careless, have not torn the
cotton.¹⁶³

As for the meditators who come henceforward in the future,
Do not show the words of the text to those
That don't have the true experience of the oral practice instructions."
The guru lord sealed this [text] with his command.
If you transgress that command,
You will be punished by the *ḍākinīs*.
Therefore, I ask you to keep this concealed and not promulgate it.

thod rgal nyams kyi skyugs pa 'di/

¹⁶⁰ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark) 163a1-4; (Oxford) 129b1-3; (Stockholm) 163b4-7.

¹⁶¹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark) 163a2; (Oxford) 129b1; (Stockholm) 163b5.

¹⁶² I assume that the quotation has not yet begun at this point, because of the honorific *gnang*, while the quotation uses the familiar *byas* that is used in first-person speech.

¹⁶³ *ras chod*. The meaning is obscure, but it occurs elsewhere. Perhaps it is an idiomatic phrase referring to betraying the values of a *ras-pa*.

yi ger bkod pa mi rigs kyang/
 bdag nyid brjed pa'i 'jigs pa dang/
 ma 'ongs gdung rgyud 'dzin pa rnams/
 mos shing spro ba bskyed pa'i phyir/
 bla ma'i gsung bzhin yi ger bris/
 lan gsum bar du zhu phul nas/
 dgyes bzhin gnang ba ma lags pa/
 mkha' 'gros ko long sdom pa'i phyir/
 gzu lum ras chod ngas ma byas/
 slad nas 'byon pa'i bsgom chen la/
 dmar khrid nyams tshad ma byas par/
 dpe rgyud yi ge ma bstan gsungs/
 bla ma rje'i bka' rgyas btab/
 gal te bka' las 'das gyur na/
 mkha' 'gro'i bka' chad byung ba'i phyir/
 yi ge mi spel sba bar zhu/

Gtsang-smyon He-ru-ka repeated this text as the twenty-eighth chapter of his *Mi-la-mgur-'bum*, and therefore he repeats the colophon, but omits what would have been the awkward injunction not to promulgate the text that he was about to make a printed edition of!

The “twelve great sons” must be the four heart-sons and eight close-sons that are listed in the final colophon of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.¹⁶⁴

The four hearts sons were Ras-chung, Se-ban Ras-pa, Ngan-rdzongs Ras-pa and 'Bri-sgom Ras-pa.

¹⁶⁴ (Newark) 243b3-4; (Oxford) 192b5-6; (Stockholm) 24b7 – 275a1.

The eight close sons were Ras-pa Zhi-ba-'od, Ras-pa Sangs-rgyas sKyabs, Ras-pa rDo-rje dBang-phyug, gZhen-sgom ras-pa, Rong-chung Ras-pa, mKhar-chung Ras-pa, gNyen¹⁶⁵-sgom Ras-pa, and Khyi-ra Ras-pa.

de la¹⁶⁶ thugs kyi sras bzhi ni /¹⁶⁷ ras chung ba¹⁶⁸ dang¹⁶⁹ / se ban ras pa¹⁷⁰ / ngan rdzongs¹⁷¹ ras pa¹⁷² / 'bri sgom ras pa dang bzhi'o / nye ba'i sras brgyad ni / ras pa zhi¹⁷³ ba 'od/ ras pa sangs rgyas skyabs¹⁷⁴ / ras pa rdo rje dbang phyug / gshen sgom ras pa / rong chung¹⁷⁵ ras pa / mkhar chung ras pa / gnyen¹⁷⁶ sgom ras pa / khyi ra¹⁷⁷ ras pa dang brgyad do /

Ras-chung-pa is given first place in the list of heart sons, while Ngan-rdzong is singled out, as quoted earlier, as one whose words this text purports to record. sGam-po-pa, as Dwags-po Lha-rje, is relegated to a list of “six pupils from the end of Mi-la Ras-pa's life” (*sku gshegs pa'i slob-ma drug*).

Thus, the text is a compilation made from texts and oral tradition, which has been attributed to Mi-la Ras-pa's principal *ras-pa* pupils. It was redacted by a member of the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud* transmission, perhaps within the context of the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud lineage, as there are several chapters dedicated to

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., (Newark) sNyan; (Oxford) Ra-rdza Ras-pa.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., (Newark) de'i.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., (Newark) omits shad.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., (Stockholm & Newark) pa.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., (Stockholm) *dang* is omitted.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., (Newark) ras pa dang /

¹⁷¹ Ibid., (Stockholm) rdzong.

¹⁷² Ibid., (Newark) ras pa dang /

¹⁷³ Ibid., (Stockholm) the section *brgyad ni/ ras-pa zhi-ba* is unavailable.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., (Oxford) skyab.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid., (Newark) drong sog.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., (Newark) snyan.

sGam-po-pa. It was for the exclusive use of dedicated practitioners of that lineage. It was intended that this text be kept secret from anyone else. This is made clear by the final colophon, which employs the words and phrases of the earlier colophon to create a different meaning.¹⁷⁸

I pray for the patience of the gurus and ḍākinīs.
 This is sealed by the Lord guru's command,
 Except for those individuals in later generations,
 Who are bases (for the teaching) that joyfully practise
 Empowerment, blessing and *gaṇacakra*,
 Make offerings to the ḍākas and ḍākinīs.
 Because of the strict anger of the ḍākinīs
 If one transgresses that command,
 I ask you not to promulgate these writings, but to keep them secret.

bla ma mkha' 'gro'i¹⁷⁹ bzod par gsol /
 phyi rabs¹⁸⁰ rten gyi¹⁸¹ gang zag rnams¹⁸² /
 dbang bskur byin brlabs tshogs¹⁸³ 'khor dang¹⁸⁴ /
 dpa' bo dpa' mo¹⁸⁵ mchod pa la¹⁸⁶ /
 dgyes shing¹⁸⁷ gnang ba ma gtogs par¹⁸⁸ /
 bla ma rje'i¹⁸⁹ bka' rgyas btab /

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., (Newark) gra.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., (Newark) 244a1-3; (Oxford) 192a2-3; (Stockholm) 274b7-275a1.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., (Oxford) 'gro la.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., (Oxford) rab.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., (Stockholm) The section— 'gro'i bzod par gsol/ phyi rabs rten gyi— is unavailable.

¹⁸² Ibid., (Stockholm) la.

¹⁸³ Ibid., (Stockholm & Newark) chos.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., (Newark) rnams.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., (Stockholm) mo'i.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., (Oxford) mchod la sogs; (Stockholm) mchod pa las.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., (Stockholm) bzhin.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., (Stockholm & Oxford) pa.

gal te bka' las 'das gyur na /
 mkha' 'gro ko longs¹⁹⁰ dam¹⁹¹ pas na¹⁹² /
 yi ge ma¹⁹³ spel gsang bar zhu /

This admonition would certainly have contributed to the text remaining for a considerable time in rare hand-written manuscripts, even after the publication of gTsang-smyon's works. Ironically, it was the primary source for gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, which repeated much of the text almost verbatim, and he had blockprints carved to ensure a widespread distribution. Therefore, the "secret" contents of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* have become one of the most widely available literary works of Tibet, translated into western and other oriental languages.

2.2.1.3. Date

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* possesses elements that are the result of a narrative evolution over a few generations of transmission at least.

The text served as a source for gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka (1452-1507), who refers to it as *rJe-btsun Mi-la'i 'Gur-'bum* (sic) in his *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*.¹⁹⁴ Extracts were also derived from it by the eighth Karma-pa, Mi-bskyod rDo-rje (1507-1554) for his *bKa'-brgyud mGur-mtsho*.¹⁹⁵ Thus, it is evidently earlier than the late fifteenth century.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., (Stockholm) rje yis.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., (Newark) rko long.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., (Stockholm) The section— *las 'das gyur na/ mkha' 'gro ko longs dam*— is unavailable.

¹⁹² Ibid., (Stockholm) pa'i phyir.

¹⁹³ Ibid., (Stockholm & Newark) mi.

¹⁹⁴ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, vol 1, 195; vol 2, 171.

¹⁹⁵ *bKa'-brgyud mGur-mtsho* (Rumtek, Sikkim: Rumtek monastery, n.d.), 72a2-101a3; *The Rain of Wisdom*, trans. Nālandā Translation Committee (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala Publications, 1980) 165-217.

The text is a source of obscure origins for the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, which, as will be shown below, appears to date from the latter half of the fifteenth century at the earliest.

As for the earliest possible date, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* appears to have been compiled after the lifetime of Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa, who, as a pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa for seventeen years, would, like Ras-chung-pa and sGam-po-pa, not have lived much beyond the middle of the twelfth century.

This suggests that the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* could have been compiled sometime between 1200 and 1400. However, in comparison to rGya-ldang-pa it appears to be of a later stratum of narrative development, which suggests that it is more likely to be from the fourteenth rather than the thirteenth century.

2.2.1.4. Relationship with other earlier works

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* shares with the rGya-ldang-pa text the same principal differences to sGam-po-pa/ Bla-ma Zhang and belongs therefore to the same branch of narrative tradition as rGya-ldang-pa.

The early life of Mi-la Ras-pa is very brief in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, but it has specific details that are not found in rGya-ldang-pa but were to be influential upon the gTsang-smyon version. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* specifies that a paternal uncle was responsible for Mi-la's early miseries, and there is an aunt that survives the sorcery. Mar-pa does not know that Mi-la Ras-pa has gone to rNgog, for he was under the influence of strong beer that his wife had deliberately made for him, so as to allow Mi-la Ras-pa to run away.

The sGam-po-pa/Bla-ma Zhang version of Mi-la's being snowed in at La-phyi mountains has Mi-la mistaking the cries of the search-party for animals. In rGya-ldang-pa he does not make that mistake, but as they cannot reach him because of the snow, he flies down to them, and then, carrying the search-party, he flies further down the mountain. In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* Mi-la Ras-pa

transforms into a snow-leopard that watches the search-party as they look for him. They follow the leopard tracks, which turn into human footprints that lead to Mi-la's cave.

These few examples reveal that *rGya-ldang-pa* and *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* are independent variants of the same narrative tradition. Although the story lines are in parallel, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*'s narrative has on the whole evolved further from the *sGam-po-pa/Bla-ma Zhang* narrative base than *rGya-ldang-pa* has.

We will see the same narrative relationship when we compare the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and *rGya-ldang-pa* versions of incidents in the life of *Ras-chung-pa*.

The number of songs is far greater than in *rGya-ldang-pa*. The same narrative situation gives rise to a few songs of a similar nature rather than just one, and narrative passages without song in *rGya-ldang-pa* gain them here, however unlikely it may be that the individuals would break into song.

Nevertheless, there are songs that are found in both texts. This extract from when Mi-la has discovered his family home in ruins, demonstrates the expansion and variation that occurs in such a song:

rGya-ldang-pa, 219:

I pay homage to the lord gurus.

Alas! Alas! There is no essence.

Generally, *samsāra* has no essence.

Always, always, without essence.

Changing, changing without essence.

rJe bla ma mams la phyag 'tshal lo /

Kye ma kye ma snying po med /

sPyir 'khor ba'i chos la snying po med /

rTags (sic = rtag) shing rtags (sic) shing snying po med /

'Gyur gyin 'gyur gyin snying po med /

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* has a more polished, literary form:

(*bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* 16a5)

Alas!

The phenomena of saṃsāra have no essence

Impermanent, impermanent, without essence

Changing, changing, without essence

Uncertain, uncertain without essence.

Kye ma

'Khor ba'i chos la snying po med /

Mi rtag mi rtag snying po med /

'Gyur zhing 'gyur zhing snying po med /

Mi nges mi nges snying po med /

rGya-ldang-pa's next two lines, which are grounded in the narrative, are:

Though there are land, mother and sister,

[Though there are] all three, there is no essence.

yul dang ma dang sring mo gsum /

gsum kar yod kyang snying po med /

This is expanded in *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* into four almost identical verses, ringing the changes on the subject of land and master, father and son, father and mother, and man and wealth, which are examples of a much smoother literary composition, though slightly distanced from its narrative context. The first of these is:

If there is land and no owner, there is no essence
 If there is an owner but no land, there is no essence
 Though owner and land come together, there is no essence,
 The phenomena of saṃsāra have no essence.

yul yod bdag med snying po med /
 bdag yod yul med snying po med /
 bdag dang yul gnyis 'dzom yang snying po med /
 'khor ba'i chos la snying po med /

We will also find such a variation in the songs concerning or attributed to Ras-chung-pa.

2.2.2. *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun (A River of Blessings)*

Author: Anonymous

Date: Perhaps late fifteenth or sixteenth century.

This text provides an example of how earlier independent traditions provide the material for syncretic traditions. The *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun gyis Nyon-mongs pa'i Tsha-gdung Sel-bar-byed-pa (A River of Blessings that Dispels the*

Tormenting Heat of the Defilements)¹⁹⁶ is an extensive compilation describing the life and songs of Mi-la Ras-pa. The single known surviving manuscript runs to five hundred and thirty-nine folios.

Its colophon states that it was based primarily upon three works. Only one of these is given a specific title: The *mDzod-nag-ma* (*Black Treasury*) by Rang-byung rDo-rje, the third Karma-pa (1284-1339). The scribe of the existing manuscript of *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* erroneously refers to the text as the *mDzod-nag-ma* itself,¹⁹⁷ perhaps confused by the syntactically clumsy colophon of the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* itself.¹⁹⁸ The title error was perpetuated in its publication in India.

The scribe states that he wrote this text in Pad-ma bKod, a lush border area that he delicately describes. He refers to himself as “the old mendicant” who failed to start his work for some time due to a lack of resources. He lists various donors that supplied him with paper to write on and food. He commenced the work in a water-tiger and completed it in the following water-hare year. It contains the prayer that a contemporary master names Pad-ma bsTan-‘dzin have a long life.¹⁹⁹ An examination of the religious history of Pad-ma bKod, which begins in the seventeenth century with bDud-‘dul rDo-rje (1615-1672),²⁰⁰ may be able to fix the time of the writing out of this manuscript. Possible dates for the manuscript are 1722-3, 1782-3, 1842-3 and 1902-3, with the latter two dates being more likely.

Much of the *Byin-brlabs kyi chu-rgyun* is comprised of verbatim extracts from the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*. The absence of a specific title in the colophon’s citation of that text agrees with the absence of a title in the Oxford

¹⁹⁶ Its full title as given in the colophon is *rJe rnal-'byor gyi dbang-phyug mi-la bzhad-pa'i rdo-rje'i 'gur-tshogs lo-rgyus kyis spras-pa: Byin-brlabs kyi chu-rgyun gyis nyon-mongs pa'i tsha-gdung sel-bar byed-pa zhes-bya-ba rdzogs ste.*

(*A flow of blessings that dispels the burning heat of the kleshas: A Collection of the Vajra-songs of the lord of yogins, Mila Shepa Dorje, adorned by his history.*)

¹⁹⁷ *rNal 'byor gyi dbang-phyug mi-la bzhad-pa rdo-rje'i gsung-mgur mdzod-nag-ma: The Life and Songs of realisation of Mi-las-ras-pa (Bzhad-pa-rdo-rje)*, ed. 3rd Black Hat Karma-pa Rañ-byun-rdo-rje, vol.2 (Dalhousie: Damchoe Sangpo, 1978), 557.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 553-54.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, 555-57.

manuscript and the variant titles found in the other two examples of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, and the reference to it by gTsang-smyon in his *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud* as having the title *rJe-btsun Mi-la'i 'Gur-'bum*.²⁰¹

The origins of the two untitled sources were obscure enough to have given rise to a hearsay account of their origins, which is indicated by the use of the verb *zer* in qualifying the information.²⁰²

The bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar is described as

[A text] which is said to have been excellently created at the great temple of glory in Gung-thang by compiling seventeen different song-collections.

'Gur 'bum rigs mi gcig pa bcu bdun bsags nas gung thang dpal gyi gtsug lag khang chen por legs par sgrub zer ba.²⁰³

2.2.2.1. Two Lost Sources for the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*

The *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* relied on two other sources apart from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*: They are described in the colophon (which may owe its awkwardness to being a compilation of earlier colophons):

- 1) The Dharma-lord Karma-pa had stated, "Most of the great venerable one's songs are present in the hundred and eight collections of songs that I have read (or: the collection of songs known as 'The Hundred and Eight [songs] to read')," and then

²⁰⁰ Gyurme Dorje, 478; Eva M. Dargyay, *The Rise of Esoteric Buddhism in Tibet* (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1977), 165.

²⁰¹ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog mkha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*, vol. 1, 195; vol. 2, 171.

²⁰² *Byin-brlabs kyi chu-rgyun*, vol. 2, p. 553, f. 537a5-6.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 553, f. 537a5-6.

the Dharma-lord Rang-byung rDo-rje wrote out the *mDzod-nag-ma*, which has valid sources and was well researched.

- 2) [A text] which is said to be a compilation from reading a hundred and twenty-seven different life-stories.

chos kyi rje karma pa'i zhal nas rje btsun chen po'i gsung 'gur phyogs cig tu sgrigs pa brgya rtsa brgyad gzigs pa'i nang nas kyang mang shos su 'dug gsungs nas/ chos rje rang byung rdo rje nyid kyis phyag²⁰⁴ bris mdzad pa khung btsun shing thugs rtsis shin tu che ba'i mdzod nag ma zhes pa dang/ ... rje btsun gyi²⁰⁵ nam thar rigs mi gcig²⁰⁶ pa brgya dang nyi shu tsa bdun gzigs nas phyogs gcig²⁰⁷ tu sgrigs pa yin zer ba...

As this text repeats *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* material practically verbatim, the use of this source is evident. There are sections of the text that correspond with the second Zhwa-dmar-pa's life of Mi-la Ras-pa. As the second Zhwa-dmar-pa (mKha'-spyod dBang-po 1350-1405) was a hierarch of the Karma-bKa'-brgyud, and a personal pupil of the fourth Karma-pa, it is likely that he would have used the writings of the third Karma-pa as a source. Therefore, the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* passages that correspond with the Zhwa-dmar-pa's text are likely to represent the contents of the *mDzod-nag-ma*.

The *Byin-brlabs kyi chu-rgyun* clearly has a third component in its contents, which must correspond with the untitled life-story, about which it was said that it was a compilation of a hundred and twenty-seven biographies. Kah-thog Tshedbang Nor-bu refers in the eighteenth century to such a text as a source for his chronology, which he states is by one named *Zhi-byed Ri-pa*, renowned for his

²⁰⁴ Ibid., phag.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., gyis.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., cig.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., cig.

having read a hundred and twenty-seven biographies of Mi-lahere written in the eastern form of “Myi-la” (*zhi byed ri pa bya ba myi la'i nam thar brgya dang nyer bdun gzigs par grags pas...*).²⁰⁸ This may be what lHa-lung-pa refers to as:

....among the comparatively little known versions is one compiled by Shijay Repa, a contemporary of the great Bodong Panchen [Bodong Pan-chen] (1377-1451). The life of Situ Chokyi Junnay [Si-tu Chos-kyi 'byung-gnas (1700-1774)] refers to this version as ‘the manuscript preserved at the monastery of Chuwar [Chu-bar] in Drin [Brin].’²⁰⁹

These passages from the latter work are written in a colloquial manner, quite distinct from the literary style of the third Karma-pa, and contain delightful versions of incidents in the life of Mi-la Ras-pa. It appears to have been born out of a tradition of lively and humorous story-telling. *Ri-pa* could easily be a corruption of, or be corrupted to, *ras-pa*.

These two lost works therefore represent two early independent narrative transmissions.

2.2.2.2. Date and Authorship

The colophon's prayer for the future of the “sGrub-brgyud” lineage and its reverence for the Karma-pa identifies the anonymous compiler as having a connection with the monastic tradition of the Karma bKa'-brgyud lineage. The author first refers to the Karma-pa without the need to specify which Karma-pa he is. Subsequently, within the context of a panegyric concerning the care the Karma-

²⁰⁸ Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, “Mar mi dwagspo jo-bo-rje yab-sras sogs dam-pa 'ga'-zhig gi nam-thar sa-bon dus kyi nges-pa brjod-pa dag-lan nyung-gsal” in *Selected Writings of Kah-thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu*, Vol. 1 (Darjeeling: Kargyu Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1973), 692.

pa spent in composing the *mDzod-nag-ma*, he identifies him, in passing, as Rangbyung rDo-rje, the third Karma-pa (1284-1339). This appears to imply that the author assumed the authorship of the *mDzod-nag-ma* was well known to his potential readership, and was writing not long after that Karma-pa's lifetime. However, the compilation appears to have occurred at a much later date, perhaps in the fifteenth or sixteenth century, before the dominant influence of gTsang-smyon's version.

The identification of one of the sources as a compilation by Zhi-byed Ri-pa fixes a more precise dating, if he can be identified with Lhalungpa's Zhi-byed Raspa. This would place Zhi-byed Ri-pa's compilation to the first half of the fifteenth century, and therefore the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* would date from the latter half of the fifteenth century at the earliest.

2.2.3. Kun-dga' rDo-rje's *Deb-ther dMar-po*

"The [Old] Red Annals"

Author: Mi'i bDag-po Kun-dga' rDo-rje,

Date: Completed in 1346.²¹⁰

This is one of the earliest of the general histories of Buddhism in Tibet (*Chos-'byung*). It was completed in the beginning of 1346 by Kun-dga' rDo-rje,²¹¹ the then head of the Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud and therefore the successor to the lineage that originated with Bla-ma Zhang, the earliest biographer of note within the bKa'-brgyud school. It is of marginal importance to this thesis however, as it does not give prominence to Ras-chung-pa and ignores the lineages that derived from

²⁰⁹ Lobsang P. Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa* (London: Paladin, 1977), xxx.

²¹⁰ Tshal-pa Kun-dga' rDo-rje *Deb-ther dmar-po*, ed. Dung-dkar bLo-bzang 'Phrin-las kyi smchan-'grel bkod. (China: Mi-ris dpe-skrun-khang, 1981).

²¹¹ For a brief description of his life, see *The Blue Annals* (Roerich), vi-vii.

him. This reveals that the Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud was of no importance in the context of the Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud.

Kun-dga' rDo-rje's contemporary, Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub (1290-1364) compiled an early Buddhist canon and also wrote a history of Buddhism in Tibet²¹² that served as a source for the *Deb-ther dMar-po*. However, it has no relevance to this thesis. Another of Kun-dga' rDo-rje's sources was *The Nel-pa History of Buddhism (Nel-pa'i Chos-'byung)*²¹³ by Nel-pa Paṇḍita (Nel-pa Paṇḍit, also known as Grags-pa sMon-lam Tshul-khrims). This text also, in spite of its historical importance, does not deal with the lives that are the topic of this thesis.

2.2.4. Zhwa-dmar mKha'-spyod dBang-phyug's *Byin-brlabs gyi sPrin-phung*

Chos-rje dPal-ldan Mi-la Ras-chen gyi rNam-par-thar-pa Byin-brlabs gyi sPrin-phung

“Clouds of Blessing: The Life of the Dharma Lord Glorious Mi-la Ras-chen”

Author: Zhwa-dmar-pa mKha'-spyod dBang-po (1350-1405)

Chos-rje dPal-ldan Mi-la Ras-chen gyi rNam-par-thar-pa Byin-brlabs gyi sPrin-phung is an account of the life of Mi-la Ras-pa by Zhwa-dmar mKha'-spyod dBang-po (1350-1405). It is probably based on the lost *mDzod-nag-ma* by the third Karma-pa, Rang-byung rDo-rje (1284-1339) for, as mentioned above, the *Byin-brlabs kyi chu-rgyun* contains corresponding passages. The Zhwa-dmar-pa had succeeded to the position of hierarch of the Karma bKa'-brgyud school following the death of the

²¹² Bu-ston Rin-chen-grub, *History of Buddhism (Chos-hbyung)*, trans. E. Obermiller (Leipzig: Harrassowitz, 1931-32).

fourth Karma-pa, Rol-pa'i rDo-rje (1340-1383). This tradition was founded by the first Karma-pa, Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa (1110-1193), a pupil of both sGam-po-pa and Ras-chung-pa.²¹⁴ Zhwa-dmar-pa also identified the child who would be his successor, the fifth Karma-pa bDe-bzhin gShegs-pa (1384-1415).

The only surviving manuscript of this text is incomplete and is reproduced in the first of four volumes of the collected works of mKha'-spyod dBang-po.²¹⁵

2.5.5. dPal-'byor bZang-po's *rGya-bod Yig-tshang Chen-mo*
"The Great Chronicle of China and Tibet"

Author: sTag-tshang rDzong-pa dPal-'byor bZang-po

Date: Written in 1434.

This text is not solely an example of *Chos-'byung* literature, for it also contains records of cultural and political interest, such as the introduction of tea and porcelain into Tibet and a history of the kings of Gyantse (rGyal-rtse). dPal-'byor bZang-po's title of sTag-tshang rDzong-pa indicates that he was a lay official, and though there is no information concerning the author, Dung-dkar Blo-bzang 'Phrin-las ascertained the time of composition from internal evidence.²¹⁶ The text contains a brief but significant reference to Ras-chung-pa.²¹⁷

²¹³ Its actual title is: *sNgon gyi gtam Me-tog Phreng-ba* and is contained in *Rare Tibetan Historical and Literary Texts from the Library of Tsepon W.D. Shakabpa*, ed. T. Tsepel Taikhang (New Delhi: T. Tsepel Taikhang, 1974), 60-165.

²¹⁴ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 230.

²¹⁵ The Collected Writings (gSung-'bum) of the Second Zhvadmar Mkha'Spyod Dbang Po (mKha'-spyod dBang-po gSung-'bum), 4 vols. (Gangtok: Gonpo Tseten, 1978), vol. Ka, 187-317 (162a-266a).

²¹⁶ dPal-'byor bZang-po, *rGya-bod Yig-tshang Chen-mo* (Szechwan: Si-khron Mi-rigs dPe-skrun-khang, 1985), ngo-sprod (introduction), 1.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 526-27.

2.2.6. *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* (also known as *rTa-tshag Chos-'byung*)

“The *Lho-rong Dharma-history that Illuminates Śākyamuni’s Teaching*”

Author: rTa-tshag Tshe-dbang-rgyal.

Date: begun in 1446 and completed in 1451.

The author’s colophon gives the title as *Chos ‘byung thub bstan gsal byed* (“The Dharma History that Illuminates [Śākya]muni’s Teaching”).

This text, which survived as one manuscript, was recently republished in China. It is of particular importance amongst the *chos-'byung* literature as it concentrates entirely on the various branches of the bKa'-brgyud-pa traditions, and therefore includes a short biography of Ras-chung-pa²¹⁸ and those in the lineages derived from him.²¹⁹ The author was a resident of a monastery at rTa-tshag in the county of lHo-rong, hence the name by which the text is known.

There is a passage at the beginning of Ras-chung-pa’s biography which is identical to the passage found in Zhwa-dmar-pa,²²⁰ so that either the Zhwa-dmar-pa or the *mDzod-nag-ma* was used as a source.

In the colophon, Tshe-dbang-rgyal states that he collected whatever histories he could find over many years.²²¹ He relied upon sPyan-snga’s *Chos'byung Mig-'byed 'od-stong* as a principal authority, and appears to have spent far longer on revision than on the completion of the first draft; an understandable time-lag to anyone writing a doctoral thesis! First, rTa-tshag Tshe-dbang rGyal describes his work of compilation as a supplication made with faith, as a contemplation of the qualities of the lamas. Then he gives the dates of composition, repeating his description of the text in a more concise form.

²¹⁸ rTa-tshag Tshe-dbang rGyal, *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* (Bod-ljongs Bod-yig dPe-mying dPe-skrun-khang, 1994), 108-113.

²¹⁹ Ibid., 113-59.

²²⁰ Ibid., 108; Zhwa-dmar-pa, 237.

In the fire-tiger year (1446) I compiled all the histories of the precious bKa'-brgyud that I could find and [this] faithful supplication of myself and others was completed in the first month of the *rab-byung* year (1447).

Me pho stag gi lo la bka' brgyud rin po che'i lo rgyus rnyed
tshad phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa rang gzhan dad pa'i gsol 'debs
ni rab byung zhes pa'i lo zla ba dang po'i yar tshes la legs par
'grub pa yin/

Revision and correction of this [text], *The Dharma History that Illuminates [Śākya]muni's Teaching*, was completed in the third day of the waning moon in the fifth month of the sheep year (1451).

Chos 'byung thub bstan gsal byed 'di nyid lug lo hor zla lnga
pa'i dmar phyogs gsum pa'i 'phrul 'khor la zhus shing dag par
grub pa'o/ ²²²

2.2.7. Mon-rtse Kun-dga' dPal-ldan's *bKa'-brgyud gSer-phreng*

Author: Mon-rtse Kun-dga' dPal-ldan (1408-1475).

Date: c. 1450- 1475.

Mon-rtse-pa includes a biography of Ras-chung-pa, entitled *rJe-btsun Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags-kyi mam-par-thar-pa* in his history of the 'Ba'-ra bKa'-

²²¹ Ibid., 844.

²²² *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 845.

brgyud.²²³ Mon-rtse-pa was a member of the 'Ba'-ra bKa-brgyud-pa, a branch of the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa. He includes a biography of Ras-chung-pa, placed between those of Mi-la and sGam-po-pa, in the history of his lineage. His account of Ras-chung-pa appears to rely upon the same narrative that was used as a source by rGya-ldang-pa, even down to the structural division of the life-story into two parts: "hardship in connection with the family" and "experience connected to meditation".

2.2.8. 'Brug-chen Kun-dga' dPal-'byor's *dKar-brgyud Chos-'byung*

A History of the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud

Author: 'brug-chen Kun-dga' dPal-'byor (1428-1476)

Date: composed circa 1460-1476.

Kun-dga' dPal-'byor was the hereditary hierarch of the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa, who declared himself to be the rebirth of gTsang-pa rGya-ras (1161-1211), the founder of the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud. This led to succession by incarnation, in which Kun-dga' dPal-'byor is counted as the second 'brug-chen, Gtsang-pa rGya-ras being considered the first. This fourteen folio text, from his two volumes of collected works,²²⁴ is an account of the bKa'-brgyud lineages that emphasises his own 'brug-pa tradition. It includes a brief account of Ras-chung-pa's life, as his lineage was of great importance for the 'brug-pa bKa'-brgyud.

²²³ Mon-rtse Kun-dga' dPal-ldan (1408-1475). *rJe-btsun Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags-kyi mam-par-thar-pa*, in *Dkar-brgyud Gser-phreng: A golden rosary of lives of eminent gurus*, Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod, vol. 3 (Leh: Sonam W. Tashigang, 1970), 165-187.

²²⁴ 'Brug-chen II, Kun-dga' dPal-'byor, *Collected Works* (Gsung 'Bum) of Rgyal-dbang Rje Kun-dga'-dPal (rGyal-dbang rJe Kun-dga' dPal-'byor gyi bKa'-'bum), 2 vols. (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1982).

2.2.2. 'Gos gZhon-nu dPal's *Deb-ther sngon-po*

The Blue Annals

Author: 'Gos Lotsāba gZhon-nu-dpal (1392-1481).

Date: Completed in 1478.

This extensive *chos-'byung* covers the history of all lineages in Tibet. The lack of partisanship is perhaps interrelated with a greater degree of historical critical method in dealing with his sources, rather than primarily attempting to create an inspirational work. 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba is particularly concerned with calculating the correct dates for the lives of his subjects and their synchronisation with each other, even though the unwieldiness of Tibet's system of dating by sixty-year cycles does result in instances of error. He based himself on a great number of sources, but does not cite them or state which versions he either rejects or adopts. The text includes an account of Ras-chung-pa's life²²⁵ and lineages.²²⁶

²²⁵ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 436-40; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 381-84.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 440-451; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 384-93.

2.3. Later Sources: gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka onwards

2.3.1. *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*

Author: gTsang-smyon Heruka (1452-1507)

This work, by the author of Tibet’s most popular literary work, is primarily a compilation of instructions from the lineage of Ras-chung-pa. The largest work within this compilation is the *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud kyi gZhung-’brel sa-bcad dang sBrags-pa (Commentary and Outline for the Saṃvara-dākiṇī-karma-tantra)*. It includes a history of the lineage transmitted through Ras-chung-pa’s pupil Khyung-tshang-pa (1115-1176) and eventually to gTsang-smyon’s own master Sha-ra Rab-’byams-pa Sangs-rgyas Seng-ge. It also includes a list of other lineages from Ras-chung-pa, which gTsang-smyon had also received. The brief biographies are not divided into distinct works, and Ras-chung-pa’s biography is only two folios long.²²³ It is of particular importance in the investigation of narrative development however, for here we have an instance of one of two differing versions produced by the same author.

gTsang-smyon created a smooth narrative flow in his two famous works: *Mi-la’i rNam-thar* and *Mi-la’i mGur-’bum*, in spite of their being syncretic. His *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud* biographies²²⁴ are comparatively restrained and dry. According to the biography of gTsang-smyon by rGod-tshang Ras-pa, he began writing *sNyan-rgyud* texts before his well-known *Mi-la* texts, which were

²²³ *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud (Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud): Two manuscript collections of texts from the yig-cha of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka*, 2 vols. (Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1971), vol 1, Bya-btang ‘Phrin-las dPal-’bar manuscript, 91-93; vol. 2, Gra-dkar Rab-jam-pa manuscript, 167-69.

²²⁴ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*, vol 1. 93-5; vol 2. 169-71.

completed in 1488, while the bulk of the *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud* was written from 1490 until near his death in 1207.²²⁵ However, my analysis of the text will indicate that gTsang-smyon used the *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud* version of the life of Ras-chung-pa as a pre-existing basis for writing the corresponding passages in the *Mi-la’i mGur-’bum*. rGod-tshang Ras-pa, in describing the writing of the *bDe-mchog Ras-chung sNyan-brgyud* is specifying solely the authoring of practice instructions. gTsang-smyon may have compiled biographies, which he had written at an earlier date, into this text. Further evidence for an earlier date for this material comes from a sentence that at first glance appears to be evidence for the opposite. At the conclusion of the short biography, gTsang-smyon refers the reader to the *Mi-la’i mGur-’bum* by stating, “A detailed life of Ras-chung-pa is to be found in *The Hundred Thousand Songs of Lord Mi-la*.” (*Ras chung pa’i rnam thar rgyas pa ni rje btsun mi la’i ‘gur ‘bum na gsal lo*).²²⁶ That title (*rJe-btsun Mi-la’i ‘Gur-’bum*) does not correspond exactly with what one would expect as an abbreviation of the title of gTsang-smyon’s *Mi-la’i mgur-’bum*, and there is clear evidence that gTsang-smyon was not referring to his own work. Apart from the eight chapters of the *Mi-la’i mgur-’bum* in which Ras-chung-pa’s dialogues and song exchanges with Mi-la Ras-pa feature strongly, it contains nothing about Ras-chung-pa’s individual career apart from Mi-la Ras-pa. However, the *Mi-la’i mGur-’bum*’s primary source, the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*, does. In the *Mi-la’i mgur-bum* itself, at the point when the narrative turns from Mi-la to describe Ras-chung-pa’s time with his wife lHa-cig in central Tibet, gTsang-smyon provides a very brief summary and adds, “...the accounts of which are to be found in Ras-chung-pa’s own biography” (*lo rgyus nams ras*

²²⁵ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *The Life of the Saint of gTsang*, 159, 235.

²²⁶ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*, vol. 1, 195; vol. 2, 171.

chung pa rang gi rnam thar na gsal lo).²²⁷ The latter reference is presumably to *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, which gTsang-smyon's own pupils, lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and rGod-tshang Ras-pa would name as the primary source for their biographies of Ras-chung-pa. It is evident from its surviving colophon that it described Ras-chung-pa's time in central Tibet with lHa-cig. However what was the text entitled *rJe-btsun Mi-la'i 'Gur-'bum* that gTsang-smyon referred to in the *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud*? This must have been the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, the primary source that he adapted and expanded to form his *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* does not appear to have had a fixed title, for two of the surviving editions supply different names and the third gives no title at all. *mGur-'bum* ("A Hundred Thousand Songs") was a generic title for the collected songs of any Buddhist master, and therefore it appears that gTsang-smyon used this name for what has become known, probably only in this century, as the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.

2.3.2. *Mi-la'i rNam-thar* and *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*

The Life of Mi-la Ras-pa and *The Hundred Thousand Songs of*

Mi-la Ras-pa

Author: gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka (1452-1507).

Date: Completed in 1488.

The *Mi-la'i rNam-thar* is Tibet's most popular literary work and has been translated into both oriental and western languages. It is not dry or tendentious, but has dramatic tension, humour, tragedy and vivid personalities. Its success as a literary work is in great part due to gTsang-smyon's isolating into a different

²²⁷ *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 575.

volume the long account of Mi-la's time as a teacher (when he is no longer involved in his own personal struggle). This part of his life story principally consists of songs that were attributed to him, forms the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*. Therefore, the *Mi-la'i rNam-thar*'s narrative of the hardships of Mi-la's pupillage and his decade of solitude in the mountains moves directly on to his death and cremation. These last two events in his biography portray that he has achieved the goal of those early years— Buddhahood. Unlike other hagiographies, therefore, there is no suspension of the dramatic tension of the principal character's struggle to attain his goal and it possesses the formulaic plot-structure for any successful literary work or screenplay.

Also, by transforming the Mi-la narrative from a third-person account to a first-person account, delivered on Ras-chung-pa's urging, the narrative is given a more powerful immediacy and emotional impact. Therefore, the texts became popular amongst both lay and monastic communities, even though the recurring theme is that one should avoid both worldly and monastic lifestyles and dedicate oneself to meditation in remote places. gTsang-smyon's version of Mi-la, which is the first to present Mi-la as an ordinary being instead of an incarnation of a buddha, is used as an ubiquitous example, in all Tibetan Buddhist schools, of the power of *vajrayāna* practice to transform an ordinary being into a buddha. Paradoxically, however, the extreme nature of hardship and diligence portrayed in this work also serves to demonstrate that buddhahood is gained by rare individuals only, so that the lack of success by practitioners is owing to their own deficiencies and not that of the *vajrayāna*.

gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka's *Mi-la'i rNam-thar* has proved to be the most accessible product of Tibetan literature for those outside Tibetan culture. As early

as the 1920s it was translated into English²²⁸ and French.²²⁹ It has inspired an Italian movie,²³⁰ a comic-strip book²³¹ and a French play.²³² Mi-la Ras-pa even served as a recondite ingredient for Iris Murdoch's Booker Prize winner novel *The Sea, the Sea* in 1978, in which the narrator eventually searches in vain amongst Italian poets to find the songs of "Milarepa", while the reader is tacitly assumed to know the identity of this "poet".²³³ It has also, naturally, been the subject of doctoral theses.²³⁴

The works of gTsang-smyon and his followers have a crucial position in the development of the Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa narratives. The community's songs and story-telling, which celebrated the lives of early mendicant practitioners, created versions that eclipsed their predecessors and became a dominant influence over later versions.

There are three biographies of gTsang-smyon. Two are by the authors of biographies of Ras-chung-pa: lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal²³⁵ and rGod-tshang

²²⁸ *Tibet's Great Yogi Mi-la Ras-pa: a biography from the Tibetan*, trans. Lama Kazi Dawa Samdup, ed. W.Y. Evanz-Wentz (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1928).

²²⁹ *Le Poète Tibétain Mi-la Ras-pa, ses crimes, ses épreuves, son Nirvana*, trans. Jacques Bacot (Paris: Editions Bossard, 1925).

²³⁰ Liliana Cavani, *Mi-la Ras-pa*, Dal soggetto al film, no. 49 (Bologna: Cappelli, 1974).

²³¹ Eva van Dam, *The magic life of Mi-la Ras-pa Tibet's great yogi* (Boston: Shambhala 1991).

²³² Eric-Emmanuel Schmitt, *Mi-la Ras-pa*, (Paris: Albin Michel, 1997).

²³³ Iris Murdoch, *The Sea, the Sea* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1978).

²³⁴ Robert Goss, "The hermeneutics of madness: A literary and hermeneutical analysis of the "Mi-la'i-rnam-thar" by gTsang-smyon Heruka" (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1993).

Francis Tiso, "A Study of the Buddhist Saint in relation to the biographical tradition of Mi-la Ras-pa" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, New York, 1989).

Charles Van Tyul, *An Analysis of Chapter Twenty-eight of the Hundred Thousand Songs of Milaraspa, a Buddhist Poet and Sain of Tibet* (Ph.D. Diss., Indiana University, 1972).

Victoria K. Urubshurow. "Symbolic Process on the Buddhist Path: Spiritual Development in the Biographical Tradition of Mi-la Ras-pa" (Ph.D. diss., The University of Chicago, 1984).

²³⁵ lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, *Grub-thob gTsang-pa sMyon-pa'i rNam-thar Dad-pa'i sPu-slong-g.yo-ba*, in *bDe-mchog mKha-'gro sNyan-rgyud (Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud): Two manuscript collections of texts from the yig-cha of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka*, 2 vols. (Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1971), vol. 1, 1-129.

dPal-'bar— which was described by E. Gene Smith,²³⁷ but in spite of Smith stating that he had a copy in his own collection in 1969, he recently stated that the only known copy at present is believed to be in the collection of A. Macdonald.²³⁸

gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka's monastic name was Sangs-rgyas rGyal-mtshan, and the name given him by his principal teacher was Chos-kyi Grags-pa. He was ordained as a monk in his seventh year.²³⁹ In his eighteenth year, according to rGod-tshang Ras-pa, his fourteenth according to lHa-btsun, he fled from the monastery to go on pilgrimage, and en route met Sha-ra Rab-'byams-pa Sangs-rgyas, a holder of the Ras-chung-pa lineages.²⁴⁰ gTsang-smyon became his pupil and was swiftly able to generate heat and wear only cotton.²⁴¹ According to lHa-btsun, he served as Sha-ra's consort's attendant for six months.²⁴² He had numerous visions and experiences of going to other realms, so that his fellow pupils considered him either a fraud or mad.²⁴³ However his teacher passed on the transmission of all the sNyan-rgyud lineages to him, and authorised him as his successor. He then departed to practise in various sacred sites, particularly rTsa-ri.²⁴⁴ After a period of tantric studies, he abandoned his monastic costume, and his outrageous behaviour, such as offering people shit to eat and throwing urine over them, inspired a devotional response amongst the populace, who called him rTsa-ri dPa'-bo.²⁴⁵ Later, considering that normal behaviour would limit his ability to benefit beings, he covered himself in human ash, adorned himself with human grease and blood, he severed fingers and toes from corpses and made them into a

²³⁷ Smith, Preface to *The Life of the Saint of gTsang*, 24.

²³⁸ Personal communication from Alexandru Anton-Luca, New York, January 7th 2000.

²³⁹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *The Life of the Saint of gTsang*, 16-17.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 20; lHa-btsun, *Grub-thob gTsang-pa sMyon-pa'i rNam-thar*, 9.

²⁴¹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *The Life of the Saint of gTsang*, 22.

²⁴² lHa-btsun, *Grub-thob gTsang-pa sMyon-pa'i rNam-thar*, 15.

²⁴³ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *The Life of the Saint of gTsang*, 24.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 25-26.

garland that he wound into his hair, extracted intestine from the corpses and made them into necklaces, armlets, and anklets, and wore carved, human-bone jewellery that had been offered to him. Otherwise naked, he came into town, alternately laughing and crying, singing and dancing, and with his penis erect, he chased women. Sometimes he bound his penis so that only his pubic hair was visible and chased men, shouting “Fuck me!” (*nga la rgyor shog*).²⁴⁶ He also drank urine, ate faeces, and threw them at people, who generally were terrified by him. Those who felt devotion gave him at this time his most well-known name: gTsang-pa sMyon-pa (“madman from gTsang”) or gTsang-smyon in its short form.²⁴⁷ However, once, when he arrived in lHa-sa, the people fled in fear, thinking he was a demon.²⁴⁸ He had also previously received the “secret” name Khrag-thung rGyal-po from a vision of Hevajra.²⁴⁹ *Khrag-thung* is Tibetan for *He-ru-ka*, and this may be the origin for the second part of the name by which he is presently well known: gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka.

2.3.3. *Tshe-gcig la ‘Ja’-lus brNyes-pa rJe Ras-chung-pa’i rNam-thar
Rags-bsdus mGur rNam-rgyas-pa*

Author: Lha-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557)

Date: Completed in 1503

Lha-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557) completed in the water-pig year of 1503 the earliest surviving biography of Ras-chung-pa written as a wholly independent work. Based at Brag-dkar rTa-so, a site where Mi-la Ras-pa had

²⁴⁵ Ibid., 34-35

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 48.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 37-38.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 44.

Lha-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557) completed in the water-pig year of 1503 the earliest surviving biography of Ras-chung-pa written as a wholly independent work. Based at Brag-dkar rTa-so, a site where Mi-la Ras-pa had lived, he followed the example of his teacher gTsang-smyon in writing and publishing hagiographies. The full title of his biography of Ras-chung-pa is *Tshe-gcig la 'Ja'-lus brNyes-pa rJe Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar Rags-bsdus mGur rNam-rgyas-pa* ("The attainment of the Rainbow-body in One Lifetime: A brief biography and extensive song collection of Lord Ras-chung-pa").

One hundred and ninety-five folios in length, the colophon reads:

[This] slightly abbreviated form of the general biographies with a hundred and fifty-five vajra songs [are derived] from the extensive biography and songs by Sangs-rgyas sTon-pa, rGyal-ba-lo, and Dam-pa Sum-pa, and was completed at Brag-dkar rTa-so by lHa'i-btsun-pa ("the royal monk") Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, his mind blended with Siddha gTsang-pa, on a waxing summer month of a water male pig year (1503).²⁵⁰

sangs-rgyas ston-pa rgyal-ba-lo / dam-pa sum pa nams
kyis mdzad pa'i rnam mgur rgyas pa las / thun mong pa'i
rnam-thar nams cung zad bsdus / rdo-rje'i gsung mgur
brgya lnga bcu nga lnga nams / chu pho phag gi lo'i dbyar

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 36.

²⁵⁰ lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, *Tshe-gcig la 'ja' lus brnyes pa rje ras-chung pa'i rnam thar rags bsdus mgur rnam rgyas pa* in *bKa' brgyud Hagiographies*, ed. Don-brgyud Nyi-ma Khams-sprul, 3 vols (Kangra, HP: Khampa Gar Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Pang, Tibetan Craft Community, 1972), vol. 3, 485-833.

zla ba'i yar tshes la / grub thob gtsang pa dang thugs yid
gcig tu 'dres pa / lha'i btsun pa rin-chen nam rgyal gyis /
gnas chen brag dkar rta sor par du sgrubs/

The text referred to here as the source is the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, described earlier. The main body of lHa-btsun's work corresponds with the contents of the biography by rGod-tshang Ras-pa, which was also based on this work, and therefore probably represents its contents. The earlier part of Ras-chung-pa's life differs in both these works, making it uncertain what the early part of the *Ngo-tshar Nor-bu sNying-po* contained.

Smith cites the existence of two biographies of lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, which are the source for his dates, his royal ancestry, a belief that he was a rebirth of a wellknown abbot, and that he built a hermitage at Brag-dkar rTa-so.²⁵¹

2.3.4. *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud las brGyud-pa Ring-lugs kyi rNam-thar*

Nor-bu 'Od kyi Phreng-ba

*"A Garland of jewel –lights: The life stories of the long Saṃvara-
kaṇa-tantra lineage"*

Author: The Third 'Brug-chen, 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa
(1478-1523)

The third 'Brug-chen, the hierarch of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud, was a contemporary of lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal. He was the first successor to the 'Brug-pa lineage through recognised incarnation, but had to maintain his own seat

entourage.²⁵² The teachings of Ras-chung-pa were already of great importance for the ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud, but ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa enlarged the Ras-chung corpus of teachings. He is said to have obtained these instructions from a vision of Ras-chung-pa that he had in 1508. In a nineteenth-century history of the lineage, he is said to have demonstrated to a group of ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud masters how Ras-chung-pa appeared to him, by floating naked in space, his hands in the symbolic gesture of teaching the Dharma.²⁵³ To give an example of the difference between a textual and oral account: I was told by Chos-dgon Rin-po-che that Ras-chung-pa had come to visit the third ‘Brug-chen as an old man whom all others present had also seen.²⁵⁴

The third ‘Brug-chen thus received a “direct lineage” (*nye-brgyud*) of the *sNyan-rgyud*, as opposed to a “long lineage” (*ring-brgyud*) transmitted from Ras-chung-pa through a succession of teachers. He compiled these teachings in the *Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud Yig-gsar* (*New Writings of the Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud*).²⁵⁵

The third ‘Brug-chen also compiled the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-cha* (“*Writings on the Samvara-karma-tantra*”)²⁵⁶ within which occurs the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud las brgyud-pa ring-lugs kyi nam-thar Nor-bu ‘od kyi*

²⁵² Smith, “Foreword” in *Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po*, ed. Lokesh Chandra (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), 5-6.

²⁵³ *Rwa-lung gSer-'phreng*, vol 3, 368-69.

²⁵⁴ Chos-dGon Rin-po-che, August 1998, Oxford.

²⁵⁵ ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-[kyi] Grags[-pa], *Ras-chung snyan-rgyud Yig-gsar: The corpus of the Ras-chung snyan-rgyud teachings, both extended and immediate transmissions, arranged into a coherent system of practice by the Third ‘Brug-chen ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523)* Reproduced on the basis of a manuscript collection received from Gru-gu Chos-rgyal Monastery in Khams, 2 vols. (Kangra, HP: Khampa Gar Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Pang, Tibetan Craft Community, 1985).

²⁵⁶ ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-cha* (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1985).

phreng-ba (“A Garland of jewel-lights: The life stories of the long Saṃvara-karṇa-tantra lineage”).²⁵⁷

Unlike other sNyan-rgyud lineage histories, which have a succession of Tilopa, Nāropa, Mar-pa (as the first Tibetan in the lineage) Mi-la Ras-pa and then Ras-chung-pa (and not sGam-po-pa as in the Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud lineage), here Ras-chung-pa is the first Tibetan in the succession of the lineage. In accordance with an increased emphasis on Ras-chung-pa’s importance, the lineage is given as Tilopa, Nāropa, Maitripa, Tipupa and then Ras-chung-pa.

Nevertheless, the account of his life is brief,²⁵⁸ as the entire lineage is described, with an emphasis on later ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud masters, without division into separate life-stories. He has clearly used rGya-l dang-pa as a source, for it similarly ends abruptly with an episode in which Ras-chung-pa teaches tree-goddesses.²⁵⁹

2.3.5. *bDe-gshegs bsTan-pa gSal-byed bKa-brgyud Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas*

Rin-chen sPungs-pa ‘Od-stong ‘Khyil-ba

A Heap of Gems with a Swirling Thousand Lights: A Dharma History of the bKa’brgyud, [which] Illuminates the Teaching of the Sugata.

Author: Sangs-rgyas Dar-po.

Date: 1544 or 1568.

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 1-64.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 9-13.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 13.

E. Gene Smith lists Sangs-rgyas Dar-pa as one of six authors who were pupils of gTsang-smyon. He ascribes to him a biography of rGod-tshang-pa mGon-po rDo-rje (1189-1258) which was compiled from eight earlier sources (one of which was the biography by rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje) in 1540.²⁶⁰ In addition, in the collection of E. Gene Smith there is this unpublished text in eighty-seven folios. Only the first half of the title is clearly legible on the title page, but the title reappears in the colophon.²⁶¹

The text commences with the history of Buddhism in India, and includes brief descriptions of the lives of Ras-chung-pa and his followers. Sangs-rgyas Dar-po appears to identify himself as a 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa more than a Ras-chung bKa'-brgyud-pa, for he emphasises sGam-po-pa and the 'Brug-pa succession over Ras-chung-pa's lineage. He repeats passages verbatim from gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*.

He quotes his principal sources in the conclusion's verses,²⁶² but owing to metrical restriction, the titles are brief and vague. In addition, they appear to have suffered scribal corruption. They are:

- 1) *Deb-ther sNgon* by E-bzang rTse-ba. Perhaps the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* of 'Gos Lotsāba gZhon-nu-dpal.
- 2) *Chos-'byung* by Khru-phu-bu. Perhaps this refers to *Khro-phu lo-tsā-ba's Thugs-rje Chen-po'i Chos-'byung*, which is listed as a source

²⁶⁰ E. Gene Smith, *dKar-brgyud-pa Hagiographical Works by gTsang-smyon and his school*, in the preface to [rGod-tshang sNa-tshogs Rang-grol,] *The Life of the Saint of Gtsang*, Śata-piṭaka Series, vol. 79 (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1969), 30-31.

²⁶¹ Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, *bDe-gshegs bsTan-pa gSal-byed bKa-brgyud Chos-kyi-'byung-ba* / *Rin-chen sPungs-pa 'Od-stong 'Khyil-ba*, 83a7, 84b4.
Cf. Dan Martin, 88.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 84b1-2.

in the nineteenth-century *A-mdo Chos-'byung* (*A History of Buddhism in A-mdo*).²⁶³

- 3) *bKa'-brgyud Chos-'byung Mig-'byed* (*Opening the Eyes: A History of the bKa'-brgyud*) by sPyan-mnga' bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan.²⁶⁴

This is referred to in the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*²⁶⁵ and in the *A-mdo Chos-'byung*: "*The Thousand lights that Open the Eyes*: a Dharma history by the twenty-second sPyan-snga: bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan (*sPyan-snga nyer-gnyis-pa bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan gyi Chos-'byung. Mig-'byed 'Od-stong*). The Sangs-rgyas Dar-po manuscript has the meaningless *mig-'jeng*, which could be read as a scribal corruption of *mig-'dzad*, but the evidence of *A-mdo Chos-'byung* reveals that the *je* is a corruption of, or what appears to be an erroneous overwriting of, *bye*.²⁶⁶

- 4) *bKa'-brgyud Chos-'byung* by mKhas-grub Ras-chen Chos-rje Shar-ka.

This may be the Shar-kha Ras-chen, who appears in the succession of the bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud lineage compiled in the early sixteenth century by Byang-chub bZang-po.²⁶⁷

He adds that he also relied upon many other texts, the oral tradition of his teachers and works written by his fellow pupils.

²⁶³ [Brag-dgon Zhabs-drung dKon-mchog bsTan-pa Rab-rgyas], *The Ocean Annals of Amdo* (*Yul mdo-smad kyi lJongs su Thub-bstan Rin-po-che Ji-ltar Dar-ba'i tshul gSal -bar -brjod-pa Deb-ther rGya-mtsho, also known as A-mdo Chos-'byung*) Śata-piṭaka Series vol. 256 (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1977), 11.

See also Dan Martin, 36.

²⁶⁴ Ibid., 8.

²⁶⁵ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 844.

²⁶⁶ Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, 84b.

²⁶⁷ Byang-chub bZang-po, *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*, 281-91.

He provides a date for his work: the year that is known both as *mams-byung* (in error for *mam-'byung*) and as “earth-dragon”, which must be 1568. However, he states that this was thirty-eight years after the passing of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka (*gangs can grub mchog gtsang smyon he ru ka / gshegs nas sum cu rtsa brgyad 'das pa'i mthar*), which, however, would place gTsang-smyon's death (counting inclusively as is usual in Tibetan) in 1531. However, according to rGod-tshang Ras-pa, gTsang-smyon died in his fifty-sixth year in the the fifth lunar month of the *rab-byung* or water-hare (*chu-yos*) year (which could be 1483 or 1543).²⁶⁸ However, this must be a scribal error, for the *rab-byung* year is in fact another name for the fire-hare (*me-yos*) year (in this case 1507); the water-hare's alternative name is *mdzes-byed*.²⁶⁹ Also, the water-hare year does not match with rGod-tshang Ras-pa's record of a fifty-five year life-span and birth in the *ang-gir* or water monkey²⁷⁰ (1452) year, while the fire hare (1507) does. 1507 is confirmed by lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal's biography of gTsang-smyon, in which he states that gTsang-smyon died in the *rab-byung* fire-hare year (*rab byung zhes bya ba me mo yos kyi lo*).²⁷¹

Thirty-eight years inclusive from 1507 yields 1544, which is a wood-dragon year, also known as *khro-mo*. None of the neighbouring years has a name similar to *mam-'byung*. *Shing-'brug* (wood-dragon) could easily be corrupted to *sa-'brug* (earth-dragon), but the specific name of *mam-'byung* appears to negate the possibility of scribal corruption, unless Sangs-rgyas Dar-po made an error in checking some table.

²⁶⁸ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Life of the Saint of gTsang*, 274.

²⁶⁹ *Dag-yig gSar-bsgrigs* (China: mTsho-sngon Mi-rigs dPe-skrun-khang, 1989), 880, 883.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁷¹ lHa-btsun, *Grub-thob gTsang-pa sMyon-pa'i rNam-thar*, 126.

As the Tibetan system does not have a linear numeral succession of years, but a stew of elements and animals, did Sangs-rgyas Dar-po simply miscalculate in working out how many years separated the earth-male-dragon of 1568 from the fire-female-hare of 1507? The hare directly precedes the dragon in the twelve-year cycle, and a male-fire occurs four years (inclusive) before a female earth year in each ten year cycle of elements. Would a correct calculation have resulted in sixty-two years? Sixty-two years seems an awfully long time to be still writing after the death of one's teacher! In such a case, it may be that Sangs-rgyas Dar-po was a member of the next generation of gTsang-smyon's followers, and not a direct pupil.

However, Sangs-rgyas Dar-po also states that he was writing two hundred and eighty-eight years after the deaths of rGod-tshang-pa and Yang-dag dGon. They both died in 1258, so that this yields the date of 1545 (counting inclusively). He also gives the number of three hundred and fifty-seven years after Gling-ras-pa's death, which occurred in 1188, which yields 1544. Three hundred and ninety-two years after sGam-po-pa's death (in 1153) also yields 1544. The majority of his calculations therefore seem to point to around 1544, and according to Smith he composed his other text in 1540. Nevertheless, it seems peculiar that he would have made an error over the year in which he was writing, as he specifies both names for it. We are faced with the puzzle of whether it is wiser to trust the date given in his colophon or his mathematics.

2.3.6. *bKa'-brgyud Bla-ma-rnams kyi rNam-thar.*

Life stories of the bKa'-brgyud lamas.

Author: 'Bri-gung Chos-rje Kun-dga' Rin-chen (1475-1527).

Date: 1508.

This text occurs within the *bKa'-Bum Thor-bu* ("Miscellaneous Writings") of 'Bri-gung Chos-rje Kun-dga' Rin-chen. He was a successor to the principal 'Bri-gung seat.²⁷² There is no biography of Ras-chung-pa in the lineage history contained within this text, but there is a biography of Mi-la Ras-pa,²⁷³ followed by a biography of sGam-po-pa.

2.3.7. *bKa'-brgyud mGur-tsho.*

Ocean of bKa'-brgyud Songs.

Author: Mi-bskyod rDo-rje.

Date: Compiled circa 1542.

Its full title is *mChog gi dngos-grub mngon-du-byed-pa'i myur-lam bka'-brgyud bla-ma-rnams kyi rdo-rje'i mgur-dbyangs ye-shes char-'bebs rang-grol lhun-grub bde-chen rab-'bar nges-don rgya-mtsho'i snying-po* ("The essence of the ocean of the definitive meaning; self-liberating, naturally present, brilliant bliss; a rain of wisdom; the vajra songs of the bKa'-brgyud lamas; the swift path that manifests the supreme attainment")

²⁷² His biography is in 'Bri-gung gDan-rabs gSer-phreng, 162-85.

²⁷³ Kun-dga' Rin-chen, 'Bri-gung Chos-rje Kun-dga' Rin-chen gyi *bKa'-Bum Thor-bu*, *Smanrtsis Shesrig Spendzod* vol. 27 (Leh: Tashigangpa, 1972), 41-51.

Mi-bskyod rDo-rje (1507-1554) was eighth in the succession of the Karma-pa incarnations, and authored a number of texts (the only other Karma-pas to have a quantitatively significant literary output were the third and fifteenth Karma-pas) This text is a compilation of songs produced by figures in the Karma bKa'-brgyud lineage traced back to Ti-lo-pa. Subsequent generations have enlarged the work by adding the songs of subsequent Karma bKa'-brgyud masters down to this century. The Mi-la Ras-pa selection²⁷⁴ does not feature Ras-chung-pa, but a song by Ras-chung-pa (the one addressed to the King of Nepal) is included.²⁷⁵ The Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa songs are all repeated verbatim from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, therefore it does not add any material of significance, except towards a critical edition of that text. The *bKa'-brgyud mGur-mtsho* does, however, demonstrate that the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* still took precedence over gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* sixty years after the latter's publication, and in spite of the seventh Karma-pa (Chos-grags rGya-mtsho, 1454-1505), gTsang-smyon's contemporary, having composed a praise to him.

2.3.8. *rJe-btsun Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar rNam-mkhyen Thar-lam gSal-bar-ston-pa'i Me-long Ye-shes kyi sNang-ba*

The radiance of Wisdom, A Mirror that clearly reveals the path to liberation and omniscience: A biography of Lord Ras-chung-pa.

Author: rGod-tshang-pa sNa-tshogs Rang-grol, aka rGod-tshang Ras-pa (late fifteenth to sixteenth centuries).

No date.

²⁷⁴ *bKa'-brgyud mGur-mtsho*, 72a2-100a6; *The Rain of Wisdom*, 165-215.

This extensive compilation of Ras-chung-pa's life and songs is the version that is well known in Tibet, and has become the standard version of his life.

The latter two-thirds of the text appear to be derived verbatim from the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, including some first-person descriptions by Ras-chung-pa's pupils of his death. The entire and informative colophon of the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* is included within the biography, and was given in the preceding chapter of this thesis.²⁷⁶

Towards the end of the text is rGod-tshang Ras-pa's own colophon:²⁷⁷

The life story of venerable Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags-pa is a compilation of the genuine, the credible and the certain from amongst many differing texts describing the manner in which he benefited beings in this realm; the primary [source] was the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* (“*The Essence of a Wonderful Jewel*”), which is the life story composed by “the three siddha brothers”. This [book] —*The Radiance of Wisdom: A Mirror that reveals the precious path to wisdom and liberation*— was [composed] by a yogin of the supreme yāna, rGod-tshang Ras-pa, a man with many names, in ‘Og-min mKha'-spyod Pho-brang (“*The Akaniṣṭha-khasarpana Palace*”), which is the highest *bla-brang* (lama's residence) in *dPal Ras-chung Phug-pa* (“*The Glorious Ras-chung-pa Cave*”). This is the famous sacred place that is a second

²⁷⁵ *bKa'-'brgyud mGur-mtsho*, 100a6-101a3; *The Rain of Wisdom.*, 215-17.

²⁷⁶ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar*, 654-55.

Kuśīnagara for it is where Vajradhara in human form —gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka— merged his *rūpakāya* into the *dharmadhātu*; it was blessed by Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags, as prophesied by Mi-la Ras-pa, and is upon the side of a mountain known as *Lo-ma Lo-ri*, resembling a ripened rice-plant, with a peak like a heap of jewels, where the earth is the growth of a tier of five *dharmodayas* in the centre of the land of *Yar-mo Lungs-rings*.²⁷⁸

rje btsun ras chung rdo rje grags pa'i mam thar / zhing 'dir 'gro
 don mdzad tshul gyi yig cha mi 'dra ba du ma las / grub thob sku
 mched gsum gyis mdzad pa'i rnam thar / ngo mtshar nor bu'i
 snying po gtso bor byas shing / gzhan yang yid ches shing khungs
 btsun pa / nges 'drongs rnam phyogs gcig tu bsdus pa / rnam
 mkhyen thar lam rin po che gsal ba'i me long ye shes snang ba
 zhes bya ba 'di nyid / theg pa mchog gi rnal 'byor ba / rgod tshang
 ras pa sna tshogs ming can gyis / yul yar mo lung rings kyi dbus /
 sa chos 'byung lnga brtsegs kyi 'phel kha / ri rtsa ba 'bras kyi
 ljang pa 'dra bas / lo mo lo ri zhes grags pa rtse mo rin chen
 spungs pa 'dra ba'i 'dabs / dpal ldan bzhad pa rdo rje lung bstan pa
 bzhin du / ras chung rdo rje grags pas byin gyis brlabs shing /
 rgyal dbang rdo rje 'chang chen mo'i gzugs su sprul pa / gtsang
 smyon he ru ka'i gzugs sku chos dbyings su thim pa'i tshul bstan
 pa'i sa / rtsa mchog gnyis pa lta bu / dpal ras chung phug pa zhes
 yongs su grags pa'i gnas chen gyi bla brang yang rtse / 'og min
 mkha' spyod pho brang du yi ger bkod pa /

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 665-56.

He gives no date for this composition. The Ras-chung-phug edition alone has a colophon in which rGod-tshang Ras-pa describes the circumstances in which the blockprint was made. He describes himself as “rGod-tshang Ras-pa: a man with many names and no certain location, with unwavering faith in the Buddha’s teachings and the bKa’-brgyud [lineage].”²⁷⁹ (*nges med phyogs bral sna tshogs ming ldan pa/ /sangs rgyas bstan dang bka' rgyud 'di nyid la/ /mi phyed dad ldan rgod tshang ras pa*). He states that a Karma-pa had twice instructed him to have these blockprints made. This Karma-pa must have been the eighth Karma-pa Mi-bskyod rDo-rje (1507-1554), who compiled the *bKa’-brgyud mGur-tsho*. The available example in the India Office library is unclear, but he appears merely to state that it was in the third month of a hare year (which could be 1531, 1543 or 1555, the latter being the year after the Karma-pa’s death) that he began on the work of creating statues of the bKa’-brgyud and sNyan-rgyud lineages; and...

...for the increase of the gift of the Dharma, of
inexhaustible representations of the Buddha’s speech, I
arranged (*bkod*) the extensive life and “hundred thousand
songs” of venerable Ras-chung-pa, the *nirmāṇakāya* of
Guhyapati (“Lord of Secrets”, i.e., Vajrapāṇi)

/ gsung rten mi zad chos spyin dpel ba'i phyir / / gsang bdag
sprul sku rje btsun ras chung pa'i / / nam thar mgur 'bum
rgyas par bkod pa /

²⁷⁸ The Yar-lungs valley.

He also had a new edition carved of the previously printed (*bzhengs*) blocks of his record of oral instructions. Presumably this was his hundred and twenty-three folio text on the Cakrasamvara instructions, the colophon of which sadly gives no information upon the date of its composition.²⁸⁰ He composed ancillary texts for that work, and a supplication to accompany his biography of Ras-chung-pa. He states that this adds up to four hundred and thirty-two blocks. The number of blocks seem small; the Ras-chung-mam-thar itself, in the Ras-chung-phug edition, numbers two hundred and forty-eight folios. However, it seems that both sides of a folio were on each block.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa adds that he also had blocks made for the gTsang-smyon *mam-thar* that had been previously carved (*bzheng*) at Dags-po-rgyal. The hundred and forty-six folio text (as in the present Ras-chung-phug edition), together with a supplication, is said to amount to a hundred and seventy blocks, which suggests that the blocks did indeed have both sides of a folio on each block. In addition to those, there are another forty works, making a total of seven hundred and seventy-five woodblocks.

As for the use by rGod-tshang Ras-pa of the words *bkod* and *bzheng*, their usage is very clear in the colophon to his biography of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, which he writes first in prose and then repeats in verse. He uses *yi-ger bkod* for the writing of the text, using it interchangeably on one occasion with *bris*

²⁷⁹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar*, (Ras-chung-phug), 243b-244a.

²⁸⁰ rGod-tshang Ras-pa sNa-tshogs Rang-grol, *bCom-ldan-'das dPal 'Khor-lo sDom-pa'i sPyi-bshad Theg-mchog Ye-shes Chen-po'i sMan-mchog* (Himachal Pradesh, Kangra: The Bir Tibetan Society, 1982), 250-53.

(written);²⁸¹ *bzhengs* is used solely for creating a wood-block for printing, and is combined with *spar*.²⁸²

The gTsang-smyon biography appears from that colophon to be an earlier work. Gene Smith in his preface to that text, states that "the colophon states that the biography was written in 1547".²⁸³ However, the colophon of the biography reads *spre'u'i lo hor zla dang po'i yar tshes bcwo lnga la grub par sbyar ba'o*: "I completed this on the fifteenth day of the lunar month of the monkey year."²⁸⁴ 1547 was a sheep year with its first few months being in the horse year. The date of that text therefore, as no element is specified, could be 1512, 1524, 1536 or 1548.

The final page of the Ras-chung-phug edition contains a drawing of rGod-tshang Ras-pa, who is portrayed wearing bone adornments and earrings, his hair in a topknot, seated on a deer skin, and having the attributes of a bow and set of arrows.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa wrote a short autobiography in verse, which according to Smith was in the private collection of Ariane Macdonald, though she reports not having it.²⁸⁵ However, E. Gene Smith has an incomplete transcription (the first two folios) amongst his notes.²⁸⁶ This portion, unfortunately, goes only as far as his twelfth year. He describes receiving a number of teachings during that year, including the corpus of Tshal-pa bKa'-brgyud and Shangs-pa bKa'-brgyud teachings, his paternal uncle being a lama.

²⁸¹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *The Life of the Saint of Gtsang*, 285, 286, 290.

²⁸² Ibid., 288, 290.

²⁸³ E. Gene Smith, Preface to [rGod-tshang sNa-tshogs Rang-grol], *The Life of the Saint of Gtsang*, Śata-piṭaka Series, vol. 79 (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1969), 5.

²⁸⁴ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *The Life of the Saint of Gtsang*, 284.

²⁸⁵ Fernard Meyer, pers. comm., Aug 2000.

He states that in his eighth year:

A tea-merchant that had been to lHa-sa said, “There was a yogin, who wore a human skin, named gTsang-smyon,” and as soon as I heard that my body-hair stood up and tears came to my eyes.

de dus lha sar phyin [f. 2r] pa'i ja tshongs pas / gtsang
smyon zhes bya mi lpags gsol ba yi / rnal 'byor pa gcig
'dug zhes thos ma thag / ba spu g.yo zhing mchi ma 'khug
(khrug?) par byung/).²⁸⁷

Unfortunately, he is as vague in giving the year of his birth as he is in dating the composition of his texts, merely stating that he was born in a tiger year.²⁸⁸

E. Gene Smith notes that Dhongthong Rinpoche, in his *Important Events in Tibetan History*, Delhi, 1968, p.72) mentions that rNying-ma-pa by the name of sNa-tshogs Rang-grol, who was born in 1494 (which was a tiger year) but Smith dismisses the identification of our author with this master. Nevertheless, Smith's entry on this author in Dan Martin's bibliography supplies him with the birth and death dates of the rNying-ma master. This would have made rGod-tshang Ras-pa only thirteen at the time of gTsang-smyon's death. Khams-sprul Rin-po-che, Don-brgyud Nyi-ma, also appears to have accepted that identification, giving rGod-tshang

²⁸⁶ E. Gene Smith, Central Tibetan Prints, vol. 2 (Unpublished).

²⁸⁷ rNal-'byor gyi dbang-phyug rgod tshang ras chen pa'i mam thar tshigs gcad ma dngos grub kyi rgya mtsho zhes bya ba dad ldan spro ba bskyed byed, 1b-2a.

Ras-pa the dates (1494-1570) in his edition of the Ras-chung-pa biography. The remaining six folios of his autobiography should cast some light on the dates of his life and writings.

The rGod-tshang Ras-pa biography of Ras-chung-pa was available to me in eight editions:

- 1) A Ras-chung-phug edition, a xylograph of poor quality, contained in the Bell collection in the India Office library (acquired in 1933). 248 folios.
- 2) A Bhutanese edition: *The Biography of Ras-chun* by sNa-tshogs-rañ-grol. Published by the Tango Monastic Community, Tango Monastery, Thimpu, Bhutan, in April 1982. It is said to be reproduced from a rare Bhutanese manuscript from the library of sLob-dpon Kun-legs.
- 3) Tashi Jong edition: *The life of Ras-chung* (1083-161) by rGod-tshang Ras-pa (1494-1570); Volume three of *Bka'-brgyud -pa Hagiographies: A collection of rnam-thar of eminent master (sic) of Tibetan Buddhism*. Compiled and edited by Khams-sprul Don-brgyud Nyi-ma. Himachel Pradesh: Khampa Gar Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Pang, Tibetan Craft Community, Tashijong, Palampur, H.P. (India) 1973. The manuscript is stated to be a careful copy of a print from the blocks preserved at Ras-chung Phug. 697 pages.
- 4) Kulu Manali edition: 342 folios. The publisher's colophon states:²⁸⁹

This precious biography and songs of Lord Vajrapāṇi was newly printed at the seat of the father and son lords of practice—the Cetari retreat centre of Kulu Manali— by the second in

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 1b.

the hereditary succession of the lord of siddhas, Heruka Śākya Śrī; the eldest holder of the lineage of maturation and liberation; the precious unrivalled unequalled bodhisattva who is the illuminating daylight of the teachings of the practice-lineage during the darkness of the five kinds of degeneration: Ngag-dbang Ye-shes Rang-grol mChog [aka A-pho Rin-po-che] at the hereditary seat of the practice centre of Kulu Manali Cetari.

rje-btsun rdo-rje 'dzin-pa'i mam-mgur rin-po-che 'di-nyid/
 rje grub-pa'i dbang-phyug he-ru-ka-pa śākyaśrī'i gdung-rab
 gnyis-pa/ smin-grol brgyud-'dzin gyi thu-bo/ lnga-bdo'i
 mun nang du bsgrub-brgyud bstan-pa'i nyin-mo ches-cher
 gsal la 'gran-'bral zla-med rgyal-sras rin-po-che ngag-dbang
 ye-shes rang-'grol mchog gis gsar du btab-pa grub rje yab-
 sras kyi gdan-sa kulu manali cetari'i bsgrub-sder bzhugs/

5) Quinghai edition: mTsho-sngon mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1992, pp. 676.

Reproduced in Western format from an example, owned by gYer-gshong sPrul-sku dGe-'dun rGya-mtsho, of an edition previously published (according to the colophon)²⁹⁰ in gYer-gshong bSam-gtan Chos-'phel Gling, Amdo, on the instruction and patronage of Klu-'bum dKa'-bcu-pa, bKra-shis Chos-grags, in an iron-pig year.²⁹¹

²⁸⁹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-ba'i rNam-thar* (Kulu Manali), 342a1-5.

²⁹⁰ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-ba'i rNam-thar* (Quinghai), 675.

²⁹¹ Ibid., 671, 675.

- 6) A microfilm in the Nepal German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP)²⁹² of a manuscript which was photographed in 1997. It is written in *dbu-med* script and consists of 101 folios, though two are missing from this manuscript. The title page, which uses the archaic terminating particle *s.ho*, gives both a short title: *Ras-chung ka-'bum*[sic., *bka'-'bum*] “*The Hundred Thousand Teachings of Ras-chung*” and a long title: *rJe btsun Ras-chung pa'i rnam-mgur mthong-pa rang-sgrol* (sic, *rang-grol*) *skal-ldan dad-pa'i gsol 'debs dri-med 'tshangs dbyangs 'brug-sgra* “*The Thunder of the Stainless Brahma-speech: The songs and life of venerable Ras-chung that spontaneously liberate upon being seen; a supplication by the worthy faithful.*”

The author is listed as Ras-chung-pa, but it is identical to the rGod-tshang Ras-pa text apart from some minor differences in the colophon, where there is a different concluding prayer and a scribe's colophon written in mis-spelt *yig-chung*. He states that it was written in the Char-chab Grub-khang [sic, the correct spelling is sGrub-khang], a place blessed by many previous lamas, and gives his name as Thugs-rje. There follows a prayer to Ras-chung-pa and a praise of the beauty of the locality, and in conclusion the scribe states that the location of the retreat centre is Char-chab²⁹³ ‘Dol-gang, and his own name is dMan-mo Thugs-rje.

- 7) An edition of the text, printed in 1979 from a manuscript in Ladakh. It is identical to the rGod-tshang Ras-pa version apart from its title page and the colophons.

The title is given as *rNal-'byor gyi dBang-phyug Vajrakīrti'i rNam-par-tharpa Rin-po-che Mi-zad-pa rGyan gyi 'phreng-ba las Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu*

²⁹² Ms. no. L7670.

sNying-po. (The Essence of a Wonderful Jewel from the string [of jewels] that are an inexhaustible adornment: The precious Life-story of the Lord of Yogins, Vajrakīrti (rDo-rje Grags-pa)). 376 folios. This may preserve the full title of the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* compilation by Sum-pa, the pupil of Ras-chung-pa. Nevertheless, as in the *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* texts, the introduction contains a passage in which the text's title is given as *rNam-mkhyen Thar-lam gSal-bar sTon-pa'i Me-long Ye-shes sNang-ba*,²⁹⁴ in contradiction to the title page and in conformity with the title of the *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* versions. This appears to be evidence that this is the *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* version with solely the title on the first page changed for this version, without the resulting internal discrepancy being noticed.

The fact that this text is otherwise identical with *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* led to the title page of the Delhi reprint having the subtitle: *A version of the redaction made by rGod-tshang Ras-pa sNa-tshogs-rang-grol.*

The only obvious differences between the two versions are in the colophons. Where the reproduced *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* colophon is about to commence, *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* has:

Those were the thirty-one chapters [of the main part of this biography], which conclude the third part: How he finally traversed the levels and paths, and so on; established the best, medium and least pupils in the three kinds of results and brought benefit through every connection; manifested

²⁹³ Written in *bsdus-yig* as *Charb*.

²⁹⁴ dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, *rNal-'byor gyi dBang-phyug Vajrakīrti'i* (sic) *rNam-par-thar-pa Rin-po-che Mi-zad-pa rGyan gyi 'phreng-ba las Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* (Delhi: Tashi Dorji, 1979), 5.

the three kāyas, and, without abandoning his body, went to the pure realms.

The main part [of the biography] is concluded.

de ltar skor tsho chen po sum cu so gcig ste / mthar sa lam
rim gyis bgrod pa'i tshul bstan pa la sogs / gdul bya mchog
'bring dman gsum 'bras bu gsum la bkod cing / 'brel tshad
don dang ldan pa / sku gsum mngon du gyur te sku lus ma
spangs par dag pa mkha' spyod du gshegs pa'i tshul te gsum
pa'o/ dngos gzhi yongs su rdzogs so /²⁹⁵

dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan does not have this, but instead merely has:

Those were the part on miscellaneous advice, and so [it] is completely concluded.

de rnams ni zhal gdams thor bu'i skor te / yongs su rdzogs
so/²⁹⁶

However, the phrase *zhal-gdams thor-bu* appears, suspiciously, in both texts just a little further along, when Sum-ston describes his sources:²⁹⁷

Where both versions reach the point that states that “until space is destroyed countless, inconceivable emanations will appear,

²⁹⁵ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar*, 654.

²⁹⁶ dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, 742-43.

which are infinite and indescribable,”²⁹⁸ dGa’-bde rGyal-mtshan inserts his own colophon.²⁹⁹

The holy heart-sons of the guru: Sangs-rgyas sTon-yang, rGyal-ba Lo and Dam-pa Sum-pa composed the holy guru’s life-story entitled *The Essence of a Wonderful Jewel*. I used this as the basis and supplemented it with the oral tradition of his pupils, and the life-stories and song-collections of pupils in dBus and rTsang [sic] that have come into my hands, [using] whatever was worthy to promulgate and avoiding interpolation. [I,] the mountain dweller dGa’-bde rGyal-tshan, who has been moistened by the venerable one’s rain of compassion, compiled this life story of the venerable guru entitled *An Adorning Garland of Never-ending Jewels*. I pray to the gurus and ḍākinīs to forgive me if any error has been made.

ces pa ni sngon bla ma nyid kyi thugs sras dam par gyur par
/sangs rgyas ston yang dang / rgyal ba lo/ dam pa sum pa/
rnams kyi bla ma dam pa’i nam par thar pa nor bu’i snying
po zhes bya ba mdzad pa nyid gzahir gzahag ste / phyis slob ma
rnams kyi zhal rgyun las byung pa dang / dbus rtsang (sic) gi
slob ma rnams kyi / nam thar mgur ‘bum mdzad pa’i / dpe lag
tu byung ba rnams kyi kha ‘gengs pa dang / dpel bar ‘os pa

²⁹⁷ dGa’-bde rGyal-mtshan, 744; rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-pa’i rNam-thar*, 655.

²⁹⁸ dGa’-bde rGyal-mtshan, 746; rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-pa’i rNam-thar*, 656.

dag sgro skur [747] spangs te rje btsun nyid kyi thugs rje'i char
 rgyun gyi (sic) rlan pa'i ri khrod pa dGa'-bde rGyal-tshan zhes
 bya bas / bla ma rje btsun nyid kyi nam par thar pa rin po che
 mi zad pa rgyan gyi phreng ba zhes bya ba 'di phyogs cig tu
 sdebs pa la/ 'gal 'khrul byung na bla ma mkha' 'gro'i tshogs la
 bzod par mdzad tu gsol

There then commences in both texts an account of Ras-chung-pa's pupils, with minor variations, particularly in the beginning of that passage.³⁰⁰ Most noticeable is that Khyung-tshang-pa's life story is absent in dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, while it follows that of the other pupils in rGod-tshang Ras-pa.³⁰¹

dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan then concludes with a four-line verse,³⁰² while rGod-tshang Ras-pa has the first two of those lines but continues with another seven³⁰³ different lines. rGod-tshang Ras-pa then writes that the text is concluded³⁰⁴ and adds a long prayer³⁰⁵ before writing his own colophon.³⁰⁶

Thus, the texts are almost identical. The origin of dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan's version is a mystery. The text is a hand-written manuscript however, and it seems that it was never printed. The discrepancy between the titles as given on the title page and in the introduction is evidence for

²⁹⁹ dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, 746-47.

³⁰⁰ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar*, 656-61.

³⁰¹ dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, 747-53; rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 660-61.

³⁰² dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, 753.

³⁰³ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar*, 661.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., 661-62.

³⁰⁵ Ibid., 662-65.

³⁰⁶ Ibid., 665-66.

dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan being later. There is the possibility that dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan is a different name for rGod-tshang Ras-pa, for he claims to have many names, but why should he change his own text in this manner? Śākya Rin-chen in the eighteenth century in Bhutan clearly knew Ras-chung-pa's biography from this version of the text, for he cites dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan as his source.³⁰⁷ This is not a local Bhutanese variation, however, as the Delhi reprint is from a manuscript in Ladakh.

2.3.9. *rJe-btsun Mi-la Ras-pa'i rDo-rje'i mGur-drug sogs gSung-rgyun Thor-bu 'ga'.*

Some Miscellaneous Oral Transmissions including the Venerable Mi-la Ras-pa's Six Vajra Songs.

Author: Includes a compilation made by lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557).

Date: Probably after 1557.

This text has been translated into English in two parts.³⁰⁸ The compiler has not given his name or date. However, there is a name for the person who has composed a prayer for the printed edition: Jam-dbyangs dGe-legs.³⁰⁹ There is the possibility that the printer and compiler are the same.

³⁰⁷ Śākya Rin-chen, 262.

³⁰⁸ *Drinking the Mountain stream: New stories and songs by Milarepa*, trans. Lama Kunga Rinpoche and Brian Cutillo (California: Lotsawa Novata, 1978).

Miraculous Journey: New Stories and Songs by Milarepa, trans. Lama Kunga Rinpoche and Brian Cutillo (California: Lotsawa, 1986).

³⁰⁹ (*rDo-rje'i mGur-drug*) *rJe btsun Mi la ras pa'i rdo-rje'i mgur drug sogs gsung rgyun thor bu 'ga'*, 160a.

It is a compilation of songs, often with title and a brief, concluding dedication, which indicates that they first existed independently as individual short texts. The first section is comprised of a compilation that was first printed by lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, though there is no indication that he was responsible for its original compilation. It seems probable that lHa-btsun's text was compiled into this greater one after his lifetime. The lHa-btsun section has a brief colophon that is representative of gTsang-smyon's approach of making previously secret songs and narrative widely available:

Though there is a strict seal upon the six vajra songs
 Lha'i bstun-pa (royal monk) Rin-chen rNam-rgyal has,
 Purely from an intention to benefit others,
 In this later time, published them.
 I pray for the patience of the gurus and dākinīs.³¹⁰

rdo-rje' mgur drug bka' rgya shin tu dam na yang /
 lha'i btsun pa rin chen rnam rgyal gyis /
 gzhan phan kho na'i bsam sbyor ngang nyid nas
 phyis su par du bsgrubs pa la /
 bla ma mkha' 'gro'i tshogs la bzod par gsol

The songs in that section, though sometimes addressed to Ras-chung-pa are devoid of narrative. The opening salutation and introduction of the text is by the later compiler, for he both introduces the text as the eight hundred songs of Mi-la

³¹⁰ Ibid. 11b.

Ras-pa³¹¹ and declares the eight hundred concluded shortly before describing Mi-la's death towards the end of the text.³¹²

The description of Mi-la's death and funeral is derived verbatim from gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i rNam-thar*, demonstrating the primacy of that text over the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* for the compiler. gTsang-smyon described Mi-la's instruction to his pupils to dig under the hearth after his death, for he had buried something there for them, and then had him commencing on advice for practice. It is that advice section which is introduced into this later text, the *rDo-rje'i mGur-drug*, with a line of dialogue subtly but awkwardly transformed into a line of narrative.

gTsang-smyon:

Khyed rnams kyi nyams len byed lugs la/ da lta chos pa
bzang por rlom pa'i mi...
“Concerning how you should practise, in these times, men
proud of being good Dharma practitioners...”³¹³

rDo-rje'i mGur-drug:

Bu-slob rnams kyi nyams len la / da lta chos pa bzang por rlom pa'i
mi...
Concerning the practice of the pupils [he said], “In these times,
men proud of being good Dharma practitioners...”³¹⁴

³¹¹ Ibid., 2b.

³¹² Ibid., 155b.

³¹³ De Jong, 180, line 21.

³¹⁴ *rDo-rje'i mGur-drug (rJe-btsun Mi-la Ras-pa'i rDo-rje'i mGur drug sogs gsung-rgyun thor-bu 'ga'-ba)*, 155b5-6.

Ras-chung-pa appears only incidentally within this compilation, and so it is of little significance in terms of the development of the narrative of his life.

2.3.10. *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*.

Author: Compiled by Byang-chub bZang-po.

Date: Sixteenth century.

Some of the members in this lineage were tentatively dated by E. Gene Smith in his list of contents to its Indian publication. Those dates do not appear to be accurate when one examines the internal evidence of the biographies. Bya-btang-pa bDe-legs Rin-chen died in 1337 and not Smith’s 1277. Therefore, gZi-brjid rGyal-mtshan’s dates are 1290-1360; Dus-zhabs-pa Rin-chen rGya-mtsho died in 1400 and his life story was written in 1417; ‘Jam-dpa’i-dbyangs Rin-chen rGyal-mtshan’s dates are therefore 1453-1517. He is followed by an undated Kun-mkhyen Byams-pa gSer-mchog, who is followed by his pupil Shar-kha Ras-chen, who was the teacher of Byang-chub bZang-po, the compiler of this text. Therefore, the text was probably compiled around the middle of the sixteenth century.

The text itself consists, to a large extent, of the work of Shar-kha Ras-chen, Kun-dga’ Dar-po, and Byang-chub bZang-po. Shar-kha Ras-chen is probably the Ras-chen Chos-rje Shar-ka that Sangs-rgyas Dar-po [Text 2.3.5.] cites as a source in 1568.

Therefore, Byang-chub bZang-po probably compiled the *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud* in the mid-sixteenth century and at that time wrote the biography of his own teacher, which concludes the lineage histories. However, the

biographies of the earlier masters of the lineage belong to an earlier date, and were therefore uninfluenced by gTsang-smyon. Later chapters will demonstrate how the biography of Ras-chung-pa³¹⁵ contained in this compilation is a crude summary of the same source as used by rGya-ldang-pa.

The text demonstrates the unusual practice of a fanciful attribution of authorship. The biographies of Ti-lo and Nāro are credited to Mar-pa; that of Mar-pa to Mi-la Ras-pa, that of Mi-la to Ras-chung-pa, and that of Ras-chung-pa to his attendant and earliest pupil: Ra Sher-s nang-pa. If the authorship of these texts were genuine they would be by far the most significant biographical texts in the bKa'-brgyud tradition, but sadly that is not the case.

For example, a comparison of the biography of Nāropa³¹⁶ with those by sGam-po-pa, Bla-ma Zhang and rGya-ldang-pa demonstrates that this is a later development within the narrative tradition. As the authorship is falsely attributed to Mar-pa, who is said to have written it for his son Dar-ma mDo-sde,³¹⁷ the authorship of the Tilopa biography, edited and translated by Toricelli and Naga is also, unfortunately, falsely attributed, although they accept the colophon on face value.³¹⁸

³¹⁵ Byang chub bzang po, *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*, 2 vols. (New Delhi: reproduced from a rare manuscript in the library of Apho Rinpoche, 1973) vol 1., 125-50.

³¹⁶ Ibid., 29-62.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 62:dpal na ro paṇ chen gyi lo rgyus bstan zin te / sras mdo sde'i don du mar pas yi ger bkod pa rdzogs so //

³¹⁸ Mar-pa Chos-kyi bLo-gros, *The Life of the Mahāsiddha Tilopa*, trans. Fabrizio Toricelli and Āchārya Sangye T. Naga (India: Library of Tibetan Works and Archives, 1995), vii.

2.4. From the sixteenth century to the present day: Works influenced by gTsang-smyon and his followers.

2.4.1. dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba's *mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston*.

Dam-pa'i Chos kyi 'Khor-lo-bsgyur-ba-rnams kyi Byung-ba gSal-bar-byed-pa mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston.

A Feast for Scholars That Illuminates the Origins of the Cakravartins of the Sacred Dharma.

Author: dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba (1504-66).

Date: Written between 1545 and 1565.

This mammoth work, by one of the principal Karma bKa'-brgyud masters of his time, contains a brief biography of Ras-chung-pa,³¹⁹ primarily repeating gTsang-smyon's version, with, in spite of the author's reputation, a disappointing lack of scholarly analysis, and an abuse of the material for didactic reasons.

2.4.2. 'Brug-chen Pad-ma dKarmo's Chos-'byung bsTan-pa'i Padma rGyas-pa'i Nyin-byed.

The Sun that Opens the Lotus of the Teachings: A History of the Dharma.

Author: the Fourth 'Brug-chen, Pad-ma dKarmo (1527-1592).

Date: 1575.

³¹⁹ dPa'-bo gTsug-lag Phreng-ba, *Dam-pa'i Chos kyi 'Khor-lo-bsgyur-ba-rnams kyi Byung-ba gSal-bar-byed-pa mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston* (short title: *mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston*; also known as *lHo-brag Chos-'byung*), 3 vols., ed. Raghu Vira, *Indo-Asian Literatures* vol. 9 (1-3) (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1961), vol. 2, 366-70.

Pad-ma dKar-po was the successor, through incarnation, of the third ‘Brug-chen, ‘Jams-dbyangs Grags-pa (author of text 2.3.4). Padma dKar-po is the most famous author in the history of the ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud tradition. He also made his own compilations of instruction texts on the sNyan-rgyud of Ras-chung-pa.³²⁰ His history contains a brief biography of Ras-chung-pa, influenced by gTsang-smyon and his followers.³²¹

2.4.3. *Chos-’byung Ngo-mtshar rGya-mtsho*

“A Wonderful Ocean : A Dharma History”

Author: sTag-lung Ngag-dbang nam-rgyal (1571-1626).

Date: 1609.

This was composed by a hierarch of the sTag-lung bKa’-brgyud. Although the *Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud* lineage is transmitted within this tradition, the emphasis in this text is upon the succession of the bKa’-brgyud through sGam-po-pa, and Ras-chung-pa does not feature prominently.³²² Nevertheless, the list of Mi-la Ras-pa’s pupils is derived directly from the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*.

³²⁰ Padma dKar-po, *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud Nor-bu sKor-gsum Yig-mying*. 2 vols. (Tashijong, H.P.: Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang, 1985).

Padma dKar-po, *mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-mying*. 2 vols. (Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1982).

³²¹ Padma dKar-po, *Tibetan Chronicle of Padma-dkar-po*, ed. Lokesh Chandra, foreword by E. Gene Smith, Śata-pitaka Series, vol. 75 (New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1968), 499-506 (250a-253b).

³²² sTag-lung Ngag-dbang nam-rgyal, *Chos-’byung Ngo-mtshar rGya-mtsho* (Tashijong, H.P.: Sungrab Nyamso Gyunpel Parkhang, 1972) 210, 217-8.

2.4.4. Zhwa-dmar Chos-kyi Don-grub's *Tshe-dpag-med gyi dBang-bskur*.

Author: the eighth Zhwa-dmar-pa, Chos-kyi Don-grub (1695-1732).

Date: Early eighteenth century.

This *Tshe-dpag-med* (Amitāyus) empowerment text, ironically composed by a short lived lama, includes a history of the transmission of the text, which relies heavily on rGod-tshang Ras-pa as a source.

2.4.5. 'Bri-gung-pa Chen-po'i gDan-rabs

Nges-don bsTan-pa'i sNying-po mGon-po 'Bri-gung-pa Chen-po'i gDan-rabs Chos-kyi-byung-tshul gSer-gyi-phreng-ba.

“The Golden Garland: The Origin of the Succession of the Great ‘Bri-gung-pas, the Protectors of the Essence of the Teachings of the Definitive Meaning”.

Author: 'Bri-gung bsTan-'dzin Pad-ma'i rGyal-mtshan (born 1700).

Date: Eighteenth century.

Composed by a hierarch of the 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud, it emphasises the succession of sGam-po-pa to Mi-la Ras-pa; Ras-chung-pa does not feature prominently.³²³

³²³ 'Bri-gung bsTan-'dzin Pad-ma'i rGyal-mtshan, *'Bri-gung gDan-rabs gser-phreng* (China: Bod-ljangs bod-yig dpe-mying dpe-skrun-khang, 1989), 46-50.

2.4.6. Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu's *Mar Mi Dwags-po*

*Mar Mi Dwags-po Jo-bo-rje yab-sras sogs dam-pa 'ga'-zhig gi mam-thar
sa-bon dus kyi nges-pa brjod-pa dag-ldan nyung-gsal*

*“Clear, brief pure description of a definite chronology; seeds of the
biographies of some holy ones, such as Mar-pa. Mi-la, Dwags-po
and Atiśa”*

Author: Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu (1698-1755).³²⁴

Date: 1742.

Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu was a successor of the Kaḥ-thog rNying-ma lineage but also had close ties with the bKa'-brgyud-pa lineage. He was for example, a teacher of the seventh 'Brug-chen Phrin-las Shing-rta (1718-1766) and Situ Chos-kyi 'byung-gnas (1700-1777). His text is concerned with establishing the dates of the early bKa'-brgyud masters, including Ras-chung-pa and reveals how muddled the waters are, his solutions only creating further problems, resulting in obviously inaccurate dates for Ras-chung-pa.

2.4.7. *dKar-brgyud kyi mam-thar gser-gyi phreng-ba lta-bu*

dKar-brgyud-pa Life-stories, resembling a Golden Garland.

Author: rGyal-ba Śākya Rin-chen.

Date: mid-eighteenth century.

Śākya-Rin-chen was the ninth Je-mkhan-po (head-abbot) of Bhutan from 1744 to 1755. This lineage history is contained in the first volume of *Thub-dbang*

³²⁴ Dan Martin, 126.

Gnyis-pa rGyal-ba Śākya Rin-chen gyi gSung-‘bum. (The Collected Works of The second Lord of Munis: rGyal-ba Śākya Rin-chen). The first volume is entirely comprised of the biographies of selected individuals of the ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud lineage. It commences with Tillipa (i.e. Tilopa) and Nāropa, omits Mar-pa, and continues with Mi-la Ras-pa. The next two life-stories are of Siddharājñī (Ma-cig Grub-pa’i rGyal-mo),³²⁵ the female Indian teacher of Ras-chung-pa, and a biography of Ras-chung-pa himself.³²⁶ Both of these are derived primarily, but not entirely, from the rGod-tshang Ras-pa text, though he was using the version ascribed to dGa-bde rGyal-mtshan.

2.4.8. *‘Phags pa mchog spyān ras gzigs rgyal ba rgya msho’i dbang bskur
ye shes myur ‘bebs*

The swift descent of wisdom: an empowerment of Avalokita-Jinasāgara.

Author: Situ Padma Nyin-byed dBang-po (1774-1853).

Date: late eighteenth or before 1853.

This text, consisting of thirty-four folios in cursive script, is for ritual use, and includes a history of the transmission of the practice for which the initiation is being given. These histories are traditionally read out at the time of the initiation. It was composed by the ninth Tai Situpa, a leading incarnation of the Karma bKa’-brgyud, and includes an account of Ras-chung-pa’s introduction of the Jinasāgara practice into Tibet that differs from those found in the biographies. Jinasāgara was introduced into the Karma bKa’-brgyud at the time of the second

³²⁵ Śākya Rin-chen, *The Collected Works (gSung-‘bum) of rJe Śākya Rin-chen* (No named publisher, 1976), 179-88.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*, 189-262.

Karma-pa, and since that time has been the traditional meditation deity of the Karma-pas.

2.4.9. NGMPP's *bKa'-brgyud kyi rNam-thar Thog-mar rDo-rje 'Chang gi rNam-thar nas Rim-par bZhugs so*

Successive Life-stories of the bKa'-brgyud, commencing with Vajradhara.

Author: Unknown.

Date: After 1258. Probably after 1500.

A manuscript of three hundred and sixty-five folios in cursive script from the Nepalese German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP). Discovered in Tshum, in the north of Nepal, it was photographed in 1994. It is an incomplete first volume (*Ka-pa*) of biographies in the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud tradition. As the subsequent volume or volumes is unavailable we cannot ascertain from the final biography the date of its compilation. Nevertheless, the available folios reach as far as Lo-ras-pa dBang-phyug bTson-'grus (1187-1250) and rGod-tshang-pa mGon-po rDo-rje (1189-1258), the founders, respectively, of the *sMad* and *sTod* traditions of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud. As there is at least one more volume, the entire collection probably dates later than the fifteenth century, and possibly much later. It is an important text in that unlike other versions that post-date rGod-tshang Ras-pa it preserves a biography of Ras-chung-pa that demonstrates a distinct narrative transmission,³²⁷ which appears to have been the basis for the version compiled within the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng* (2.4.9.).

³²⁷ NGMPP L5083, *bKa'-brgyud gSer-phreng*, 25a-31a.

2.4.10. *Rwa-lung bka'-brgyud gSer gyi 'phreng-ba*

The Golden Garland of the Rwa-lung bKa'-brgyud.

Author: Unknown.

Date: Compiled circa 1799-1803.

This is a history of the 'Bar-'Brug lineage of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud. It contains a biography of Ras-chung-pa,³²⁸ the majority of which is which is identical with that in the NGMPP's *Bka'-brgyud rNam-thar*, apart from some variation in the first few lines and certain other passages.

2.4.11. Gu-ru bKra-shi's *Gu-bkra'i Chos-'byung*

*bsTan pa'i snying po gsang chen snga 'gyur nges don zab mo'i chos kyī
byung ba gsal bar byed pa'i legs bshad mkhas pa dga' byed ngo
mtshar gtam gyi rol mtsho*

*“An Ocean of wonderful accounts that gladden scholars: An elegant
discourse that illuminates the origin of the profound Dharma of the
definitive meaning: the early translations, the great secret, the
essence of the Teachings.”*

Author: Guru bKra-shis.

Date: between 1807 and 1813.

This history of the *rNying-ma* tradition is of interest in that it codifies Ras-chung-pa as a *gter-ston* or “treasure-revealer”, who is characteristic of the *rNying-ma* tradition, but untypical of the bKa'-brgyud.

³²⁸ *Rwa-lung bka'-brgyu gser gyi 'phreng-ba: Brief lives of the successive masters in the transmission lineage of the Bar 'Brug-pa dKar-brgyud-pa of Rwa-lung*, (Palampur, H.P.: Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang, 1975), vol.1, 209-23.

2.4.12. *bKa'-brgyud gSer-phreng Chen-mo*

Author: unknown.

Date: compiled after 1838.

The last biography in the four volumes is that of Rig-'dzin Chos-dbyings rDo-rje (1772-1838). It does not contain a biography of Ras-chung-pa. However the Mi-la Ras-pa biography contained within it³²⁹ appears to be of a very early date and appears to use the same source as that used by rGya-ldang-pa; it is more summarised than rGya-ldang-pa, but less so than the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu Phreng-ba*.

Having now explored and presented the field of investigation, the next chapter will commence upon the actual investigation of the different versions of Ras-chung-pa's life as found in these texts, which will also begin to establish the nature of the relationships between these texts.

³²⁹ *gSer-phreng Chen-mo*, 203-73.

Chapter Three

3. Ras-chung-pa's Childhood

An Introduction to Textual Relationships

3.1 The Earliest Years

3.1.1 Birthplace

The child who became known as Ras-chung-pa was born in the Ra-la valley outside the district capital of Gung-thang. At least, that is the consensus of all surviving accounts of his life but one. This district capital was known as Dzongka (*rDzong-ga*), though it is not referred to by that name in these biographies. It has recently been given the partially Chinese name of Kyirong Xian.¹ It is located in the north of present day Kyirong (*sKyid-grong*) county, which borders Nepal.² However, within Kyirong County, to the west of the southern Kyirong valley, there is a Gung-thang valley, which is one of the headwaters of the Gandaki river. This valley and its small town named Gung-thang (written as Gungtang) should not be confused with the Gung-thang near which Ras-chung-pa was born. Mi-la Ras-pa was born in Tsa-lung, which is also near to Dzongka and far from the present-day Gungtang, but he is nevertheless referred to as “Gung-thang Mi-la Ras-pa”. Therefore, in these life-stories Khab (capital) Gung-thang refers to Dzongka itself and Gung-thang to its district, primarily the northern half of the Kyirong valley. This is arid and barren in contrast to the lush southern part of the Kyirong valley, which is one of the lowest areas of Tibet. Chan states that southern Kyirong is the ancient district of Mang-yul, in contrast with northern Kyirong, which was the

¹ Chan, 929-31.

² Gyurme Dorje, 376.

ancient district of Gung-thang.³ Southern Kyirong, or Mang-yul, had its district capital at Kyirong, which was recently, but no longer, known as Kyirong Qu.⁴

Dzongka (rDzong-dkar) was the seat of the Gung-thang kings.⁵ During Ras-chung-pa's lifetime there was no central Tibetan government, instead there was a patchwork of kingdoms on the plateau. King gCen lHa-mchog lDe (also known as King 'Dol-le)⁶, a contemporary of Ras-chung-pa, was a flourishing ruler of Gung-thang, and it was he who built Dzongka's impressive eight metre tall defensive walls, which were mostly destroyed in the nineteenth century. Apparently, their construction was underway around the time when Ras-chung-pa met Mi-la Ras-pa at Ra-la; it is referred to in that narrative.⁷ In the twentieth century, Harrer rather unflatteringly says it "really deserved to be called a village. It contained about a hundred mud-brick houses grouped about a monastery... the place was enclosed by a thirty-foot rampart..." and states without sarcasm, "...the tree line was only two days away."⁸

In the thirteenth century, however, rGya-ldang-pa, who composed the earliest surviving biography of Ras-chung-pa, records that Ras-chung-pa was born in Ral-pa in Gung-thang.⁹ *Ral-pa* is not necessarily a scribal error for *Ra-la*, as Tibetan place-names undergo phonological mutation and sometimes a concomitant variation in spelling. Therefore, though *Ra-la* can be translated as Goat Pass (Garma C. C. Chang translated it as Goat Hill)¹⁰, that meaning is not necessarily the origin of the name. In fact Vitali points out the alternative spelling of *Re-la*, and has

³ Chan, 924.

⁴ Ibid., 929.

⁵ Ibid., 924.

⁶ Ka thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, *Bod-rje lHa-btsad-po'i gDung-rabs mNga'-ris-smad Gung-thang du Ji-ltar-byung-ba'i Tshul: Deb-ther Dwangs-shel 'Phrul-gyi Me-long* in *Bod kyi Lo-rgyus Deb-ther Khag-lnga*, ed. Chab-spel Tshe-brtan Phun-tshogs, vol. 9 of *Gangs-can Rigs-mdzod*, (Bod-ljongs Bod-yig dPe-rnying dPe-skrun-khang, 1990), 92.

⁷ Ibid., 93.

⁸ Harrer, 73.

⁹ rGya-ldang-pa, 342.

¹⁰ Chang, 108.

calculated the founding of this site by by king Nyi-ma mGon (described in *La-dwags rGyal-rabs*) to the year 910.¹¹

Ral-pa occurs in other sources: Mon-rtse-pa(c.1450-75), who relied on the same source as rGya-ldang-pa did, also states that Ras-chung-pa was born in ‘Phrang of Ral-pa in Gung-thang (*gung-thang ral-pa’i ‘phrang*).¹² Dzongka was situated upon a crucial trade route between Nepal and Lhasa,¹³ but though ‘*phrang*’ can mean “narrow route” or “trail” ‘Phrang appears to be used here as the name for a village situated within an area named Ral-pa. rGya-ldang-pa’s biography of Ras-chung-pa was reproduced verbatim in a later bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud history, which therefore also gives the birthplace as Ral-pa.¹⁴ Even the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng*, written as late as c.1799-1803, states that he was born in Ral-pa, not Ra-la, in Gungthang, in spite of otherwise following the NGMPP *bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar* closely.

There is yet another variant on the name. The fifteenth-century *lHo-rong Chos-’byung* states that he was born in Ra-ba in Khab-gung-thang ‘Phrang.¹⁵ *Khab* signifies a capital, and therefore Khab-gung-thang means the capital of Gung-thang, with ‘*phrang*’ signifying “trail” or the name of a village. This is an inversion of the order of words found in Mon-rtse-pa (*gung thang ral pa’i ‘phrang*). In Byang-chub bZang-po’s sixteenth-century compilation of sNyan-rgyud history, Ras-chung-pa’s biography has a colophon that states the author is Ras-chung-pa’s attendant, Ra-she-srang,¹⁶ but the biography is primarily an unskilful summary of the source of the rGya-ldang-pa narrative, and has correspondences with both Mon-rtse-pa and *lHo-rong Chos-’byung*. The birthplace is as given in the *lHo-rong Chos-’byung*, except for the addition of a genitive particle between *gung-thang* and

¹¹ Roberto Vitali, *The Kingdoms of Gu.ge Pu.hrang According to mNga’ris rgyal.rabs by Gu.ge mKhan.chen Ngag.dbang Grags.pa* (Dharamsala, India: Tho.ling gtsug.lag.khang, 1996), 148.

¹² Mon-rtse-pa, 165.

¹³ Chan, 930.

¹⁴ *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud Biographies*, 192.

¹⁵ *lHo-rong Chos-’byung*, 108. khab gung thang ‘phrang gi ra ba.

¹⁶ Byang-chub bZang-po, 150.

‘*phrang*: Ra-ba of “the Trail” of Gung-thang (*yul gung-thang gi ‘phrang gi ra ba*),¹⁷ making explicit the inversion of what we find in Mon-rtse-pa.

Other early histories agree upon Gung-thang as Ras-chung-pa’s birthplace: *Deb-ther dMar-po* (1363)¹⁸ and sTag-lung Ngag-dbang-rNam-rgyal (1571-1626)¹⁹ refer to Ras-chung-pa as a native of Gung-thang, while both ‘Brug-chen Kun-dga’-dPal-byor(1428-1507)²⁰ and *Deb-ther sNgon-po* (1478)²¹ state that he was born in Khab Gung-thang.

Biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa begin their accounts of Ras-chung-pa at the point of his first meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa. As he is said to still be a child living at home, the setting for this meeting should also be an indication of his birthplace. The texts are however vague concerning this location, and one version is apparently incorrect: according to the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*, the meeting took place in sNye-snam. This is spelled sNya-nam in rGya-ldang-pa, gNya’-nam in Mon-rtse-pa²² and gNya’-nag in Byang-chub bZang-po.²³ This is the present-day “Nyalam” (gNya’-lam) area.²⁴ This lies to the east of the Kyirong valley, in the adjoining county of Nyalam. Both valleys lead down into Nepal, but while sNye-snam’s Matsang Tsangpo is a headwater of the Sunkosi river, the valley of the Kyirong Tsangpo (sKyid-grong gTsang-po) is the source of the Trishuli river,²⁵ so that these locations were distinct enough from each other not to be easily conflated. However, sNye-snam became a locality particularly associated with Mi-la Ras-pa, and acts as the setting for many of his songs and teachings, so that it might easily substitute for a forgotten location. The drama of Ras-chung-pa’s childhood as described by rGya-ldang-pa —the wicked uncle and the attack of “leprosy”— was

¹⁷ Ibid., 125.

¹⁸ *Deb-ther dMar-po*, 87.

¹⁹ sTag-lung NGag-dbang rNam-rgyal, 218.

²⁰ Kun-dga’-dPal-’byor, 499. Here “kha-ba” is a scribal error for “khab”.

²¹ Roerich, 436.

²² Mon-rtse-pa, 167.

²³ Byang-chub bZang-po, 126.

²⁴ *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*, (Newark) 37b; (Oxford) 29b; (Stockholm) na.

²⁵ Chan, 924.

unknown to the author of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, even though he gave prominence to episodes in Ras-chung-pa's later life, such as his visit to India.

One can however make a case for Gung-thang that goes beyond reasonable doubt. Ras-chung-pa's biography by his own pupils, *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, is lost, but neither of the sixteenth-century authors who used it as their source mention sNye-snam as a possible birthplace; instead both give specific details on Gung-thang. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* makes no reference to Ras-chung-pa's home, family, or even personal name. There does seem therefore to have been a loss of information within that narrative tradition, which was a part of the bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud lineage. That lineage did not descend directly from Ras-chung-pa, but was passed on by him to his own teacher, Mi-la Ras-pa, and subsequently from Mi-la Ras-pa to Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa, who was another pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa's. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* apparently represents an orally transmitted tradition initially kept secret from those outside the bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud's communities of primarily peripatetic practitioners. The text gives the impression of originating in an isolated transmission, passed on by mendicants, dating from before the cross-fertilisation of narrative traditions. This may explain the attenuation of part of the narrative material as well as the striking narrative developments that are not found in rGya-ldang-pa and would have a great influence on future narratives.

Further evidence for Gung-thang as Ras-chung-pa's birthplace can be gleaned from four fourteenth-century texts. There is a succession of three fourteenth-century Karma bKa'-brgyud texts: the lost *mDzod-nag-ma* by the third Karma-pa(1284-1339), the second Zhwa-dmar-pa's(1350-1405) biography of Mi-la Ras-pa and the anonymous *Byin-brlabs kyi chu-rgyun*, with the latter two texts relying on the first as a source. The Don-mo Ri-pa section of rDo-rje mDzes-'od's fourteenth-century history of a western 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud lineage (circa 1350), which may have been written as early as 1245, appears to be closely related

to the Karma bKa'-brgyud narrative transmission on Ras-chung-pa. They all begin Ras-chung-pa's story with his meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa, but do not specify its location, apart from the name of the cave, Za-'og, which is unnamed in rGya-ldang-pa.²⁶ However, both *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* and Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od give a list of Mi-la Ras-pa's pupils, in which they refer to Ras-chung-pa as a native of Gung-thang.²⁷

gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka(1452-1507) and his followers created the versions of the Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa biographies that became the standard versions, and therefore the principal source for the birthplace of Ras-chung-pa. gTsang-smyon refers the reader of his *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* to a biography of Ras-chung-pa, which presumably was *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* that may therefore have provided him with the details of Ras-chung-pa's birthplace. Two of his followers, lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557) and rGod-tshang Ras-pa (1494-1570), state that their biographies of Ras-chung-pa are based on this source.

gTsang-smyon, in his history of the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, appears to state that Ras-chung-pa was born in Ra-la in Gung-thang in Mang-yul. He writes "Mang-yul Gung-thang"²⁸ and this juxtaposition of names is normally to be taken rather like a reverse postal address ("Gung-thang in Mang-yul" as Roerich translates in *Deb-ther sNgon-po*).²⁹ This would not be an absurdity for Mang-yul, according to the *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo*, is not a name for southern Kyirong, but an ancient name for those areas of Tibet that bordered on Nepal, from Puhrang in the west as far eastwards as Kyirong itself.³⁰ Therefore, gTsang-smyon could have used the word in that sense here. However, in the *Mi-la'i rNam-thar*, also by

²⁶ *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, 212; Zhwa-dmar-pa, 237; rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 192.

²⁷ *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, 551; rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 215.

²⁸ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog mKha'-gro sNyan rgyud*, vol. 1, 93.

²⁹ *The Blue Annals* (Roerich), 855.

gTsang-smyon, Mi-la's great-grandfather is said to have come to live at "Mang-yul Gung-thang" and to have made short business trips *between* Gung-thang and Mang-yul.³¹ Therefore, gTsang-smyon was either using the word Mang-yul in two different senses, or when he used the phrase Mang-yul Gung-thang, it was with the meaning "Gungthang near Mangyul" (which is how the phrase was translated by Lhalungpa) or as a generic name for both regions: "[the area of] Gung-thang [and] Mang-yul".³² This appears to be the meaning of the short composite form *Mang-gung*, which is found in Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od: "[Mi-la] also went to sNye-nam, and [he] also came to Mang-gung" (*snye-nam du yang gshegs / mang gung du yang byon*).³³

However, a map that accompanies the translation of 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-rtse dBang-po's guide to Tibet shows the town of *rDsong-kha* (sic) in Gung-thang, with the Gung-thang pass to the north, while to the south lies the district of Mang-yul, which includes the town of sKyid-grong.³⁴

Tshe-dbang Norbu, in his eighteenth-century history of the district, has "Mnga'-ris Mang-yul Gung-thang", which means Gung-thang in (or and) Mang-yul, in mNga'-ris.³⁵ lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, in his biography of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka states "This Gung-thang (in or and) Mang-yul within mNga'-ris" (*mnga'-ris char gtogs mang yul gung thang 'dir*).³⁶

The term mNga'-ris nowadays refers solely to the far west of Tibet.³⁷ However, Gung-thang was at one time a part of the mNga'-ris kingdom,³⁸ and the

³⁰ Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo, 2055. Mang yul, stod mnga' ris spu hreng nas gtsang gi ngam ring dang skyid grong bar bal yul dang thag nye ba'i sa rgyud kyi ming rmying pa.

³¹ De Jong, 28. Lhalungpa, 14.

³² Lhalungpa, 14.

³³ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 192.

³⁴ *mKhyen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Tibet*, Serie Orientale Roma 16(Roma: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1958), Map A.

³⁵ Ka thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, 89.

³⁶ lHa-btsun, *Grub-thob gTsang-pa sMyon-pa'i rNam-thar*, 128.

³⁷ See Gyurme Dorje, 395-98.

³⁸ Chan, 924.

Gung-thang dynasty was a branch of the mNga'-ris line. Tshe-dbang Nor-bu does in fact refer to Gung-thang as mNga'-ris sMad: "Lower (or eastern) mNga'-ris".³⁹

The Gung-thang dynasty still ruled the region from rDzong-dkar during gTsang-smyon's lifetime and a successor in that dynasty, Khri rNam-rgyal lDe (1482-1562, reigned 1496-1562), paid homage to gTsang-smyon early in his reign.⁴⁰ Therefore, gTsang-smyon was personally familiar with both the dynasty and the kingdom of Gung-thang.

In gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, it is prophesied to Mi-la that he will meet a pupil in Ra-la, which is said to be in the upper reaches of Gung-thang (gung thang gi phu).⁴¹ And in both the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* and gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog snyan-rgyud*, this occurs at the Za-'og cave, which is said to be in the upper reaches of Ra-la.⁴²

Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, a pupil of gTsang-smyon, concurs that Ras-chung-pa was born in Ra-la in Gung-thang,⁴³ as does the NGMPP's *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar*.

lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557) writes in his biography of Ras-chung-pa that the birthplace was Ral in "Upper Gungthang" (Gung-thang stod),⁴⁴ which concurs with gTsang-smyon's "upper reaches of Gung-thang". *Ral* instead of *Ra-la* could be a scribal error —the omission of the dot that separates syllables— but it may reflect another toponymic tradition, such as rGya-l dang-pa's *Ral-pa*.

³⁹ Ka thog Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, 87

⁴⁰ Rig-'dzin Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, 126.

⁴¹ gTsang-smyon, *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 87.

⁴² gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog mKha'-gro sNyan rgyud*, vol. 1, 94; idem, *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 87.

⁴³ Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, 74b.

⁴⁴ lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, 9.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa (1494-1570), in his extensive biography of Ras-chung-pa, states that Ras-chung-pa was born in Ra-la, which he describes as one of the minor valleys in “the elevated land” of Gung-thang, which he locates in mNga’-ris. In the context of the prophecy, he repeats gTsang-smyon’s “upper reaches of Gung-thang” (gung thang gi phu) and later glosses it as “Upper Gungthang” (gung thang stod).⁴⁵ However, he also adds that Ras-chung-pa was born in a village called Pad-dkar Phrang-ra.⁴⁶ Phrang-ra may be a short form of ‘Phrang Ra-la (*phrang* is an alternative spelling for ‘*phrang*, which means “a narrow route”. *Pad-dkar* is a short form of *Pad-ma dkar-po* (“White Lotus”). This may mean the village Phrang-ra within an area named Pad-ma dKar-po. It is possible that this village name comes from the twelfth-century *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, which is the basis for rGod-tshang Ras-pa. Curiously, when Ras-chung-pa sings about his childhood, he names this birthplace Ra-sa in all editions,⁴⁷ even though it is Ral-pa in the equivalent songs in both rGya-ldang-pa and Mon-rtse-pa. This may be a scribal error in the original Ras-chung-phug blockprint, but it may also be a mutation from Ra-la within the transmission of the song, which the text faithfully reproduces. The same song in the fourteenth century *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* gives the homeland as Rong-sa, which appears to be a further phonological development from Ra-sa.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa’s “Pad-dkar Phrang-ra in Ra-la” is not quite the earliest record for a specific village name. The third ‘Brug-chen, ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523) states that Ras-chung-pa was born in the village of Phreng-ra in Gung-thang Pad-ma dKar-po.⁴⁸ As well as the variation in spelling (*phreng* instead of *phrang*, which could be a scribal corruption but is repeated by dPa’-bo gTsug-lag Phreng-ba) the name Pad-ma dKar-po is associated with Gung-thang

⁴⁵ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 13.

⁴⁶ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 9.

⁴⁷ Ibid., (Quinghai) 53; (Manali) 29a; (dGa’-bde rGyal-mtshan) 65.

⁴⁸ ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 9. “...gung thang pad ma dkar po’i grong phreng ra zhes bya bar...”

rather than the village of Phrang-ra, implying that it is a sub-district within Gung-thang.

The fourth 'Brug-chen, Pad-ma dKar-po (1527-1592), gives the birthplace as 'Phrang-ra in Gung-thang,⁴⁹ as does the Bhutanese 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa Śākya Rin-chen (1744-55).⁵⁰ The latter claims to have used the dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan text, which is identical, apart from a colophon, to the rGod-tshang Ras-pa version. Pad-ma dKar-po also used rGod-tshang Ras-pa as a source. Therefore, they both must have simplified the reference by omitting Pad-dkar.

Pad-ma dKar-po's contemporary, the historian dPa'-bo gTsug-lag Phreng-ba (1504-66), in his *mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston* repeats from 'Jam-dbyangs Grags-pa that Ras-chung-pa was born in the village of Phreng-ra in Pad-ma dKar-po, situated in Gung-thang, which was in Mang-yul.⁵¹

In summation, it appears that Ras-chung-pa was born in what is now called the village of Ra-la, but which has also been known as Ral-pa, Ra-ba and Phrang-ra or Phreng-ra, and which may have been situated in an area named Pad-ma dKar-po, within a valley also known as Ra-la. The present-day village of Ra-la is in the area where the cave of Za-'og, which is still associated with Ras-chung-pa's meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa, is located.

According to Andrew Quintman:

Ra-la and Zwa-'og are less than an hour's drive up a side valley running SE from Dzongkha, which is the current (and ancient) administrative center for Gungthang (and now all of Kyirong). The locals

⁴⁹ Pad-ma dKar-po, 499.

⁵⁰ Śākya Rin-chen, 191.

⁵¹ dPa'-bo gTsug-lag Phreng-ba, 377. "...mang yul gung thang gi pad ma dkar po'i grong phreng ra."

still remember both names and the famous story of Mila and Rechungpa meeting.⁵²

3.1.2. The Date of Ras-chung-pa's birth

The lack of certain dates for important individuals of the eleventh and twelfth centuries is not unusual. The earliest accounts of Mi-la Ras-pa's life —those by his pupil, sGam-po-pa, and by Bla-ma Zhang— give no such information. Instead, we have a diversity of dates from later sources, which, while at variance, can also be very specific (See Appendix F). This is probably because practitioners needed specific dates of death to serve as special days of practice. This is analogous to the variant dates for the birth of Christ in the Catholic and Orthodox traditions: a specific date fills what has become an unwelcome vacuum.

Unlike the number of variant biographies and dates for Mi-la Ras-pa, there are fewer sources of information on Ras-chung-pa, and therefore less variation in dates. However, neither Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od, our earliest source, or rGya-ldang-pa, our earliest surviving biography, give any indication of when Ras-chung-pa was born or of when he died. rGya-ldang-pa does, however, give a lifespan of eighty-two years, in that he died in his eighty-third year on the dawn of the twenty-ninth day of a lunar month, but with no year specified.⁵³ Other later texts, where one might expect at least that much information, such as Mon-rtse-pa, the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog snNan-rgyud rNam-thar*, Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, dPa'-bo gTsug-la 'phreng-ba, Byang-chub bZang-po, the *NGMPP bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* and the *Rwa-lung gSer-'phreng* are completely silent on the subject. That is particularly curious in the latter two texts, which give many dates and periods of time for events within Ras-chung-pa's life.

⁵² Andrew Quintinan, pers. comm., June 30, 1999.

The fourth ‘Brug-chen, Pad-ma dKar-po follows the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* in merely mentioning, in the context of Siddharājñī’s prophecy to Ras-chung-pa, that he will live for eighty-eight years (that is until his eighty-eighth year),⁵⁴ but we shall shortly see how dubious this passage is. This is even more surprising as the previous ‘Brug-chen supplies us with a date for Ras-chung-pa’s birth.

lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal gives no birth date, but does supply a precise date for his death: a dawn in the middle spring month, the time of the *dbyug-pa* constellation (the ninth lunar month), in the iron hare year (1171), but without a life-span this gives no indication of the year of his birth.

There are only three texts that supply us with a date for Ras-chung-pa’s birth: *Deb-ther sNgon-po* (completed 1478), the third ‘Brug-chen ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa’s history of the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud* (1478-1523) and rGod-tshang Ras-pa’s biography of Ras-chung-pa (completed 1547). They are all in agreement that he was born in the wood-rat year (1084). However the Roerich translation glosses this year as 1083, in what was most likely a typographical error,⁵⁵ but which has subsequently been repeated by E. Gene Smith⁵⁶ and other secondary sources.

‘Gos gZhon-nu dPal in *Deb-ther sNgon-po* dismisses an account of Ras-chung-pa’s living until his eighty-second year, which he says is derived from the story of Ras-chung-pa receiving a life-lengthening practice from Siddharājñī.⁵⁷ This story has an important function in establishing the power of its practice through the example of its effect upon Ras-chung-pa. We have seen this life span being given by rGya-ldang-pa, at the conclusion of his biography of Ras-chung-pa. rGya-ldang-pa does not relate the Siddharājñī story, even though there is a reference to her in

⁵³ rGya-ldang-pa, 386.

⁵⁴ Pad-ma dKar-po, 501.

⁵⁵ Roerich, 436.

⁵⁶ Smith, preface to *The Life of the Saint of gTsang*, 30, for example.

⁵⁷ Roerich, 440; ‘Gos Lo-tsā-ba, 384.

one of Ras-chung-pa's songs that is included in the text.⁵⁸ However, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, which does relate this story, has Ras-chung-pa's life-span being doubled from the forty-fourth year, which he had reached, to a span of eighty-eight years,⁵⁹ a version which will be repeated by both rGod-Tshang Ras-pa and Pad-ma dKar-po. gZhon-nu dPal (1392-1481) however, states that it is evident from a text written by Ras-chung-pa's personal pupils that he lived until his seventy-eighth year.⁶⁰

What is this text that gZhon-nu dPal had access to? It appears that it must have been the lost *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, completed in 1195. If that is so, gZhon-nu dPal may be repeating information from that text when he gives the wood rat year (1084) as the year of Ras-chung-pa's birth.⁶¹ He also specifies the iron-snake year (1161) as the year of Ras-chung-pa's death.⁶² This, however, stands in contradiction to the date of death that will be given by lHa-btsun and rGod-tshang Ras-pa. This problematic date for his death (which conflicts with other chronologies) may have originated in an attempt to incorporate the life span as given in the Siddharājñī story. That story implies a date of 1126/7 for Ras-chung-pa's final visit to India, which would conflict with the majority of the dates for Mi-la Ras-pa's death, as all versions describe that death as having occurred quite some time after Ras-chung-pa's return from India.

'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523) and rGod-tshang Ras-pa concur with *Deb-ther sNgon-po* in giving the wood rat year (1084) as Ras-chung-pa's birth year.⁶³ rGod-tshang Ras-pa adds that the birth occurred in the middle autumn month, the ninth lunar month (*dbyug-pa*), which is roughly equivalent to October, and adds the apparently contradictory information that he had been

⁵⁸ rGya-ltang-pa, 354.

⁵⁹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 70a; (Oxford), 54b; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁶⁰ Roerich, 439; 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba, 384.

⁶¹ Ibid., 436. Roerich incorrectly gives 1083 for the wood rat year, an error reproduced by E. Gene Smith in rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *The Life of the Saint of gTsang*, Preface, 30.

⁶² Ibid., 439.

⁶³ 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 9; rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 11.

conceived nine to ten months previously *within the same (Tibetan) year*. The middle autumn month is the same lunar month that he, and also lHa-btsun, give for Ras-chung-pa's death,⁶⁴ which gives rise to the suspicion that the month of the death was duplicated to serve as the month of the birth. Śākya Rin-chen (1744-55), basing himself on rGod-tshang Ras-pa, naturally gives the same month and year of birth.⁶⁵

Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu (1698-1755) is alone in his choice of Ras-chung-pa's year of birth. He is driven to this conclusion by his erroneous calculation of Mi-la's dates as 1028-1111. Equating Ras-chung-pa's birth with the commencement of Mi-la's solitary retreats he arrives at the years of water-rat or wood-tiger (1072 or 1074), so that Ras-chung-pa dies in his seventy-eighth year therefore in 1249 or 1251. However, he notes that "some people" say he was born in the wood-rat year(1084).⁶⁶

Other than this aberration, we have, unlike the narrative tradition of Mi-la Ras-pa (see Appendix F) no other information about the date of Ras-chung-pa's birth other than the ninth Tibetan month of 1084, which is at least consistent with the rest of the narrative.

3.1.3. Family Name

Almost all the sources that mention Ras-chung-pa's family name (in Tibetan, the family name is normally placed before the personal name) agree that it was *gNyan*.

Those sources are Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od,⁶⁷ rGya-ldang-pa,⁶⁸ Kun-dga' dPal-'byor,⁶⁹ Mon-rtse-pa,⁷⁰ gTsang-smyon,⁷¹ 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi

⁶⁴ lHa-btsun, 829; rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 646.

⁶⁵ Śākya Rin-chen, 192.

⁶⁶ Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, 697-98.

⁶⁷ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 193, 215.

⁶⁸ rGya-ldang-pa, 342.

Grags-pa,⁷² rGod-tshang Ras-pa,⁷³ Byang-chub bZang-po,⁷⁴ Pad-ma dKar-po,⁷⁵ dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba,⁷⁶ sTag-lung Ngag-dbang-rNam-rgyal⁷⁷ and Śākya Rin-chen.⁷⁸ Nearly all these works were within the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud tradition (three of them by successive 'Brug-chen), so that the agreement is to be expected.

Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od, however, was compiled within the 'Bri-gung tradition in the far west of Tibet in the mid-fourteenth century so that the early thirteenth-century Don-mo Ri-pa account is a different narrative tradition from that exemplified by the thirteenth-century rGya-ldang-pa. He gives the name gNyan both in the narrative of the meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa and in a list of Mi-la Ras-pa's pupils. He therefore appears to give an independent verification for the name.

It is noteworthy that rGya-ldang-pa, bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar, Deb-ther sNgon-po, Mon-rtse-pa and other texts spell Mi-la Ras-pa's family name as Mid-la, and not Mi-la, which can be phonologically very similar. Mid-la appears to be an older spelling, though it would not correspond with the fanciful origin for the name Mi-la that was given by gTsang-smyon, who says it means "Oh man!", the cry of a demon defeated by the founder of the family-line.⁷⁹

There are two fourteenth-century works, neither of which are 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud, that disagree concerning the family name: the Karma bKa'-brgyud *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* has gNyen,⁸⁰ and *Deb-ther dMar-po* has sNyan.⁸¹ Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, a pupil of gTsang-smyon Heruka, also writes sNyan.⁸² All three variant spellings would be pronounced in most dialects, nowadays at least, as

⁶⁹ Kun-dga'-dPal-'byor, 499.

⁷⁰ Mon-rtse-pa, 165.

⁷¹ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan rgyud*, vol. 1, 93.

⁷² 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 9.

⁷³ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 9.

⁷⁴ Byang-chub bZang-po, 125.

⁷⁵ Pad-ma dKar-po, 499.

⁷⁶ dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba, 377.

⁷⁷ sTag-lung nGag-dbang rNam-rgyal, 218.

⁷⁸ Śākya Rin-chen, 191.

⁷⁹ de Jong, 27; Lhalungpa, 13.

⁸⁰ *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, vol. 2, 551.

⁸¹ *Deb-ther dMar-po*, 87.

⁸² Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, 74b.

“Nyen”, and therefore the discrepancy may have been only in terms of spelling and not phonology. Therefore even the variant spellings indicate a consensus in the oral narrative transmissions.

There is one possible witness to the contrary. dPal-’byor bZang-po, writing *circa* 1434, names him as Ra rDo-rje Grags-pa,⁸³ in which *Ra* appears to be a family name, but this is most likely a contraction of the name of his homeland, which is often affixed before people’s names.

gNyan, however, is not an uncommon family name; there have been other Buddhist masters who have been “Mr gNyan”, in particular gNyan Lotsāba, an important translator of the late eleventh century. Śākya Rin-chen, even makes the point that Ras-chung-pa was born into “a ‘family’ (*rigs*) in which had appeared gNyan Lotsāba and many other scholars and siddhas.”⁸⁴ However, Śākya Rin-chen must be referring to gNyan in its most generic aspect as a family name, rather than a particular family-line.

3.1.4. Personal Name

Ras-chung-pa is an epithet; its meaning is “Junior *Ras-pa*” in contrast with Ras-chen (“Senior *ras-pa*”), who was Mi-la Ras-pa, so it is a name he acquired while he was Mi-la’s pupil. Our sources vary as to exactly when this occurred, but all agree that it was in his early years as a pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa, and after he had mastered *caṇḍālī*, and was able to wear only cotton while practising it. In fact, the term is occasionally used in a generic manner to refer to pupils collectively as “junior *ras-pa*” (*ras-chung mams*).

⁸³ dPal-’byor bZang-po, 521

⁸⁴ Śākya Rin-chen. 191.

Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od refers to him as gNyan-chung Ras-pa.⁸⁵ gNyan-chung is a diminutive of gNyan, "the young gNyan", in reference to his adoption at an early age by Mi-la Ras-pa. Similarly, *Deb-ther dMar-po*⁸⁶ and sTag-lung Ngag-dbang rNam-rgyal (1571-1626)⁸⁷ refer to him as sNyan-chung Ras-pa. *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* refers to him in its list of Mi-la Ras-pa's pupils by the short form of that name, with its variant spelling: gNyen-ras.⁸⁸

rDo-rje Grags-pa, or its slightly shorter form rDo-rje Grags, is consistently given as Ras-chung-pa's personal name in all sources that supply one. However, the songs attributed to Ras-chung-pa or Mi-la ras-pa normally refer to him as Ras-chung-pa or its shorter form: Ras-chung.

rGya-ldang-pa, our earliest independent biography, has Mi-la Ras-pa giving him the name Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags following his mastery of *caṇḍālī*.⁸⁹ The name then occurs in two songs. These songs make references to events that are not covered by the narrative, indicating that the songs had an independent existence and the narrative was compiled around them by rGya-ldang-pa. In one of these songs, Ras-chung-pa refers to himself as "being Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags" in contrast to when he was previously known as "the orphan" (*do-phrug ser-skye*).⁹⁰ The latter appears to be a nickname, though it is a general epithet which varies considerably in form in other sources while retaining the meaning of "orphan", as will be described below when examining his parentage. In the other song, Ras-chung-pa both declares, "I am Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags" and refers to himself as "Ras-chung

⁸⁵ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 215.

⁸⁶ *Deb-ther dMar-po*, 87.

⁸⁷ sTag-lung nGag-dbang rNam-rgyal, 218.

⁸⁸ *River of Blessing*, 551.

⁸⁹ rGya-ldang-pa, 348.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 348.

rDo-rje Grags-pa.”⁹¹ The colophon to rGya-ldang-pa’s biography of Ras-chung-pa gives it the title “The history of the life of Lord Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags-pa”.⁹²

Mon-rtse-pa is very close to rGya-ldang-pa and supplies the name Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags in the same song, although the verse order differs.⁹³

Don-mo Ri-pa, our earliest source on Ras-chung-pa, has some interesting variations. Although he is named as gNyan-chung Ras-pa and gNyan-chung rDo-rje Grags,⁹⁴ he is first introduced as Bla-ma Lo-gro-ba.⁹⁵ Lo-gro-ba is either a corruption or a variant of Lo-ro-ba. Ras-chung-pa, in his later years, was based at Lo-ro, now in Tsona County in southern Tibet, on the border with Arunachal Pradesh. He became so associated with this place that he appears to have gained this personal toponym during his lifetime (as for example sGam-po-pa did from his association with sGam-po), and this name appears to have had considerable currency. The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* also refers to Ras-chung-pa as Lo-ro-ba,⁹⁶ Lo-ro Ras-pa,⁹⁷ and Lo-ro Ras-chung-pa.⁹⁸ The association of Ras-chung-pa with Lo-ro even appears to have led to an incorrect belief that it was his birthplace.⁹⁹

Other texts that cite Ras-chung-pa’s personal name as rDo-rje Grags-pa are dPal-’byor bZang-po’s *rGya-bod Yig-tshang Chen-mo* (written c. 1434),¹⁰⁰ the *lHo-rong Chos-’byung*,¹⁰¹ gTsang-smyon’s *Mi-la rNam-thar*,¹⁰² Kun-dga’ dPal-’byor’s *bKa’-brgyud Chos-’byung*¹⁰³ and dPa’-bo gTsug-lag ‘phreng-ba’s (1504-66) *mKhas-pa’i dGa’-ston*.¹⁰⁴

⁹¹ Ibid., 367.

⁹² Ibid., 385.

⁹³ Mon-rtse-pa, 168.

⁹⁴ rDo-rje mDzes-’od, 193.

⁹⁵ Ibid., 192.

⁹⁶ Roerich, 948.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 568.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 235.

⁹⁹ Gyurme Dorje, 264.

¹⁰⁰ dPal-’byor bZang-po, 521.

¹⁰¹ *lHo-rong Chos-’byung*, 108.

¹⁰² de Jong, 23; Lhalungpa, 9.

¹⁰³ Kun-dga’ dPal-’byor, 498, 499.

¹⁰⁴ dPa’-bo gTsug-lag ‘phreng-ba, 377.

The name rDo-rje Grags-pa is unknown to the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and is not supplied by the authors of other Mi-la Ras-pa texts in the fourteenth century. This does not necessarily mean that the name was unknown to them. For example, gTsang-smyon does not use this name throughout the voluminous *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, nor does it appear in his short biography of Ras-chung-pa within the *bDe-mchog snyan-rgyud rNam-thar*, yet he uses it in the *Mi-la'i rnam-thar*.¹⁰⁵ One reason for its omission in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* may be gTsang-smyon's reliance on the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* as a source, a text in which little appears to be known about Ras-chung-pa's early years.

All these texts, with the exception of rGya-ldang-pa and Pad-ma dKar-po's account of Mi-la Ras-pa's life, assume that rDo-rje Grags-pa was his name from his earliest years. Pad-ma dKar-po, however, states in his biography of Mi-la Ras-pa that it was Mi-la who gave him this name,¹⁰⁶ but then contradicts himself when telling the life-story of Ras-chung-pa, for there he describes Ras-chung-pa as already being known as rDo-rje Grags-pa before he met Mi-la Ras-pa.¹⁰⁷ This contradiction is derived from the rGod-tshang Ras-pa narrative, where Mi-la Ras-pa is said to give Ras-chung-pa the name "Ras-chung Do-rje Grags".¹⁰⁸ This is in spite of rGod-tshang Ras-pa having previously stated that the name rDo-rje Grags-pa was given to Ras-chung-pa just after his birth. rGod-tshang Ras-pa agrees with 'Jam-dbyangs Grags-pa in giving the father's name as Dar-ma Grags,¹⁰⁹ suggesting that Ras-chung-pa's name is a variation of his father's. It is said that his parents' lama blessed the new-born baby and gave him this name.¹¹⁰ This detail was repeated by Śākya Rin-chen, who adds that the lama was from dBus,¹¹¹ the region in central Tibet within which lHa-sa is situated, presumably equating him

¹⁰⁵ De Jong, 23.

¹⁰⁶ Padma dKar-po, 494.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 499.

¹⁰⁸ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 16.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 10.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹¹¹ Śākya Rin-chen, 192.

with the lama from dBus with whom Ras-chung-pa studied reading in the rGod-tshang Ras-pa version.¹¹²

rGod-tshang Ras-pa was either unknowingly contradicting himself, or rationalising the merger of the rGya-ldang-pa and other versions by considering Ras-chung as an addition to his previous name, thereby creating a new *composite* name. Pad-ma dKar-po, who used rGod-tshang Ras-pa as a source, certainly took this passage to mean that he was being given the name rDo-rje Grags-pa.

Later, rGod-tshang Ras-pa describes Mi-la Ras-pa as giving Ras-chung-pa another personal name when Ras-chung-pa has sung the song that contrasts his present happiness of being Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags-pa with his past.¹¹³ The song was used in rGya-ldang-pa to contrast Ras-chung-pa's character with that of his teacher. Whatever the historical persons who were the source of these narratives may have been like, the Mi-la Ras-pa of this literature is generally portrayed as opposed to almost every worldly activity. His aspersions on every detail of normal human life leave him open to the accusation of having a jaundiced and bitter perspective due to personal trauma and dysfunctionality. Ras-chung-pa, as portrayed in this literature, has a similar traumatised youth, and a similar world-renouncing life-style. Nevertheless, in spite of both being possessionless mendicants living in caves, there is a life-affirming element, however ambivalent, in Ras-chung-pa's character, in his songs, statements and life-story, which serves by contrast to highlight Mi-la Ras-pa's dourness. Therefore when, in rGya-ldang-pa, Ras-chung-pa sings of his present happiness, Mi-la confesses, "Your life and mine are [so] different. I, until my death, will have seen saṃsāra as nothing but suffering, but you have gained the recognition of bliss."¹¹⁴

¹¹² rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 12.

¹¹³ Ibid., 54.

¹¹⁴ rGya-ldang-pa, 349. Nga dang khyod gnyis skye tshul mi 'dra ba 'dug / nga la 'chi kyi bar la
'khor ba 'di sdul [=sdug bsngal] du shes pa cig las ma byung / khyod la bde ba ngo
'phraod pa cig byung 'dug.

Mon-rtse-pa does not include that statement.¹¹⁵ This is not entirely surprising. The greatest number of self-deprecating remarks and accounts of errors of judgement by Mi-la Ras-pa are to be found in his biography by his own pupil, sGam-po-pa. Successive reworkings steadily diminished the number of these details until they disappeared.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa does not include the self-deprecating statement either, but instead, at the conclusion of the song, Mi-la Ras-pa says:

“Son, that recognition of bliss is a sign of the development of a quality, so you should have the name bDe-ba Yon-tan (Quality of Bliss).” At that time there also sounded the voices of *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs*, saying, “Excellent! That is how it is.”¹¹⁶

Bu bde ba ngo shes pa de yon tan skyes pa'i rtags yin / khyod kyi
ming yang bde ba'i yon tan du thogs gsung / de dus dpa' bo mkha'
'gro mams kyis kyang legs so de ltar ro zhes bya ba'i sgra byung /

The entire episode is absent in lHa-btsun. He had however based his work upon *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, as rGod-tshang Ras-pa did, and is unlikely to have omitted it. Therefore rGod-tshang Ras-pa most likely obtained it from another source. Its conclusion appears to be a later development; it introduces a motif (deities joining in when a teacher confers a name on a pupil) that occurs in the lives of other masters, and also introduces a common expression from the sūtras to give it an impressive canonical touch.

¹¹⁵ Mon-rtse-pa, 168.

¹¹⁶ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 54.

In brief, it appears that the Ras-chung-pa of our sources was in his early years a child named gNyan rDo-rje Grags-pa in present day Ra-la near the present day rDzong-dkar, or Kyirong Xian in Kyirong County.

3.1.5. Family

Don-mo Ri-pa, in rDo-rje mDzes-'od, writing circa 1245, mentions no family other than an unnamed paternal uncle (*khu-bo*) who appears to have sole paternal authority, implying that Ras-chung-pa is an orphan.¹¹⁷

rGya-ldang-pa, in the course of his thirteenth-century narrative, mentions a father, mother and paternal uncle, but their personal names are not given. No other relatives are mentioned, and there are no other family members to whom Ras-chung-pa, when he became sick with leprosy, could turn to for help, or who came to assist him. He was entirely at the mercy of his mother's indifference and hostility.

In the sixteenth century, 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523), lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and rGod-tshang Ras-pa supply names for the family. 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa wrote that the father was gNyan Dar-ma Grags and the mother Ra-lo gTsug-tor sGron.¹¹⁸

According to lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, the father was Sangs-rgyas sKyabs, and the mother was lHa-mo mDzes. rGod-tshang Ras-pa agrees with 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa: he gives the father's name as gNyan Dar-ma Grags and the mother's as Ra-mo gTsug-tor sGron, which disagrees only in the latter name's second syllable. This is one of a number of indications that lHa-btsun and rGod-tshang Ras-pa were supplementing *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, their stated primary source, with other sources. rGod-tshang Ras-pa was presumably relying upon the same source as the third 'Brug-chen. It is possible that the variation in the mother's name is a scribal corruption as a result of the similarity of

¹¹⁷ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 193.

“l” and “m” in the *dbu-med* script. Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, their contemporary, gives us no information on the family.

Later writers, such as gTsug-lag ‘phreng-ba, Pad-ma dKar-po and Śākya Rin-chen, follow ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa and rGod-tshang Ras-pa in naming the father. One text that demurs is the late (c.1799-1803) *Rwa-lung bKa’-brgyud gSer-’phreng*. In both editions of this text, the opening lines (which are one of the few parts that differ from the earlier *NGMPP bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar*) claim that the father’s name was the peculiar gNyan Yod-grags.¹¹⁹ The letter *nga* can easily be written so that it is confused with *da*, and one expects this therefore to be a corruption of Yong-grags, but in both editions it is unmistakably *da*. There seems to be no easy explanation for why *dar-ma* might have been replaced by *yod* or *yong*.

Amongst later authors, only Śākya Rin-chen mentions the mother’s name, spelling her family name Rwa-mo and claiming that she was from the family line of Rwa Lotsāba. Rwa Lotsāba (who was important for the introduction of the *Yamāntaka* teachings in Tibet) was a contemporary of Ras-chung-pa and appears, briefly and unfavorably, in his life-story. The other famous Rwa Lotsāba was that Rwa Lotsāba’s nephew, who was one of the principal early translators and propagators of the *Kālacakra* teachings in Tibet. Śākya Rin-chen therefore cannot be pointing out an ancestry, even if it was his intention to imply so, merely a family connection, and the *Rwa* is presumably a corruption of *Ra*.

The paternal uncle, the villain in Ras-chung-pa’s childhood, is named in only a few texts. He is called gNyan ‘Bar-re in rGod-tshang Ras-pa¹²⁰ (and the identical dGa’-bde rGyal-mtshan¹²¹) and the *Rwa-lung gSer-’phreng*.¹²² The *NGMPP bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar* names him gNyan Khyi-’bar,¹²³ which again marks the latter text as belonging to an unique branch of the narrative tradition.

¹¹⁸ ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 9.

¹¹⁹ *Rwa-lung gSer-’phreng*, (Palampur) 211.

¹²⁰ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 11.

¹²¹ dGa’-bde rGyal-mtshan, 16.

¹²² *Rwa-lung gSer-’phreng* (Palampur), 211.

Apart from this opening passage it is otherwise reproduced almost verbatim by the *Rwa-lung gSer-'phreng*.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa states that Ras-chung-pa's paternal grandfather was a *mantrayāna* practitioner named gNyan Me-pho lHa-rje.¹²⁴ Later in the narrative, Mi-la Ras-pa refers to this grandfather when he first meets Ras-chung-pa, saying, "Your ancestor, that lHa-rje, was a pupil of my lama, Mar-pa." (*khyod kyi mes-po lha rje de/ nga'i bla-ma mar pa'i slob ma yin*).¹²⁵ It appears likely that this later piece of the narrative is the source for the name that was given earlier in the text for Ras-chung-pa's ancestor, Me-pho lHa-rje, as we shall see shortly, but with *mes-po* corrupted to *me-pho*.¹²⁶

Mi-la Ras-pa's comment on Ras-chung-pa's grandfather appears in only two other texts, which are practically identical: the *NGMPP bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* and the *Rwa-lung gSer-'phreng*. They appear to be corrupt, with a transposition of *nga'i* ("my") and the loss of *bla-ma* ("lama") and *de* ("that"): "Your ancestor was a pupil of my *lha-rje*, Mar-pa." (*khyod kyi mes po nga'i lha rje mar pa'i slob ma yin*).¹²⁷ *lHa-rje*, literally "Lord of the Gods", is used as an honorific title, but is normally reserved for physicians.¹²⁸

rGod-tshang Ras-pa, in the course of the narrative, also mentions unnamed maternal and paternal uncles who have various roles to play in his version of Ras-chung-pa's childhood, as we shall see in the following chapter.

The conception, pregnancy and birth are all described in rGod-tshang Ras-pa, which is the most detailed narrative of Ras-chung-pa's life. It is made clear that Ras-chung-pa is a Buddha who has chosen his parents and birth. It closely follows

¹²³ *NGMPP bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar.*, 25a-25b.

¹²⁴ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 9.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹²⁷ *Rwa-lung gSer-'phreng*, Palampur, 211.

¹²⁸ cf. *Da-yig gSar-bsgrigs*, 862. According to *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo*, 3081, it was originally a title for royal physicians in the eighth century.

the narrative of the life of the Buddha, who was said to take birth upon seeing five favourable factors. Similarly, Ras-chung-pa, or the “pre-Ras-chung-pa Buddha”, sees the time, place, class, paternal ancestry and maternal ancestry of his birth. Membership of the four Indian classes (*varṇa*): *śūdra*, *vaiśya*, *kṣatriya*, *brahman*, was of great importance in an Indian context. The standard Tibetan translation for *varṇa*, i.e., *rigs*, is the term used here. This passage¹²⁹ is a rather obvious transplant into the context of Tibetan society. Ras-chung-pa’s class is said to be *dmangs-rigs*, the standard Tibetan translation for *śūdra*, but this is a rather forced equivalence to the rigid four-fold stratification of Indian society. The comparative social mobility of Tibetan society is exemplified in the narrative itself, where Ras-chung-pa rises to join the ranks of the upper classes through marriage.

However, rGod-tshang Ras-pa does not wish to give the impression of a base birth, for he adds that Ras-chung-pa was born into “the supreme mantra-born Dharma-possessing class”. This, as mentioned above, is because his grandfather was gNyan Me-pho lHa-rje, a *mantrayāna* practitioner. The mother qualifies for this rank too, because she had the signs of being a *vajra-dākiṇī*, an enlightened female holder of the *mantrayāna* who has taken human form. The conception is no ordinary affair either. Mimicking the Buddha’s descent from the Tuṣita heaven, Ras-chung-pa’s conception is accompanied by light-rays from Alakāvatī, the realm of Vajrapāṇi, which purify the mother’s womb before Ras-chung-pa, in the form of a shining, crystal, five-pronged *vajra* descends from the sky and enters it. Deities sing in the sky that Vajrapāṇi is sending an emanation into Tibet; all the buddhas and bodhisattvas look on and listen as the earth shakes, and lights, rainbows and sounds occur throughout Gung-thang. The parents experience a world transcending state of non-thought, and in their dreams they see pure realms and receive offerings from *dākas* and *dākiṇīs*. The parents lovingly nurture the unborn child, particularly as this is their first child. The birth is accompanied by marvellous omens, such as a rain of

¹²⁹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 9.

flowers. The baby does not even appear to be human, but is like a child of the gods; he possesses all the major and minor distinguishing marks of a great being which the Buddha also possessed.¹³⁰

What is most striking about this passage is how ill it fits with the narrative that follows it. The mother appears to have forgotten all her realisation and experience and is perhaps the most heartless mother in Tibetan literature. In the *rGya-ldang-pa* narrative, *Mi-la Ras-pa* expresses surprise at how nasty she is, and *Ras-chung-pa* remarks that even though it's usually step-mothers who are wicked, there is one exception to that rule, his own mother, who is even worse than a wicked step-mother.¹³¹

The text offers no explanation why *Ras-chung-pa*, allegedly a buddha, is now plunged into torment and subject to the effects of karma like any other ordinary being would be. There is no longer any mention of major and minor signs. If it was assumed by the narrator that he was indeed golden, with hands reaching down to his knees, and so on, one would expect at least a passing reference to this in the narrative. Nor is any reason given, other than that she married an unpleasant person, for why his mother had such a personality transformation, which makes the qualities of enlightenment seem very transient indeed.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa also includes in this introductory section an account of *Ras-chung-pa's* previous lives.¹³² This also occurs in *lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal*,¹³³ the texts coinciding almost verbatim. This will be examined in more detail in the final chapter when we look at *Ras-chung-pa's* identity as an enlightened being. It seems unlikely that these two authors obtained this information from *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, as one would then expect it to be consistent with the rest of the narrative. Also, if these ideas had already been in circulation for a long time, one would expect some reference in earlier works to *Ras-chung-pa's* status as an

¹³⁰ Ibid., 11.

¹³¹ *rGya-ldang-pa* 343.

¹³² *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, 3-6.

emanation of Vajrapāṇi. However, this identification of Ras-chung-pa is only to be found in later texts, such as that of Śākya Rin-chen.¹³⁴

3.1.6. The “orphan” with a parent

In rGya-ldang-pa, Ras-chung-pa sings¹³⁵

I am happier now in Brod-phug cave in sNya-nam
Than in my past homeland of Ral-pa.

I am happier now, being with my guru,
Than when I was the servant of my mother and uncle.

I am happier now, cleaning this hut,
Than when I tilled my father's field.

I am happier now, being Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags,
Than when I was “the pitiful, fatherless child”.

I am happier now, with a single, pure cotton robe,
Than when I was always hot or cold.

I am happier now, being nourished by meditation,
Than when I was always hungry and thirsty.

¹³³ lHa-btsun, 485-93.

¹³⁴ Śākya Rin-chen. 191.

¹³⁵ rGya-ldang-pa, 348.

I am happier now, being someone who is offered to,
Than when I inspired pity on being seen or heard.

The term “pitiful, fatherless child” here translates *do-phrug ser-skye*. There are variants of this song in other texts, in which this term also varies. In Mon-rtse-pa, it is *da-phrug skye-ser*.¹³⁶

In rGod-tshang Ras-pa it is *dwa-phrug kha-ser*.¹³⁷

The dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan edition of the rGod-tshang Ras-pa text, and the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* have *da-sprug kha-ser*.¹³⁸

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* has *bu-chung kha-ser*.¹³⁹

Da-phrug and *Dwa-phrug* are merely alternative spellings,¹⁴⁰ with the likelihood that the *dwa* form is the original, as a word is more likely to lose a *wa-zur* (a subscribed *wa*) than to gain one. Normally, when reading Sanskrit in transliteration, a letter with a subscribed *wa*, such as *dwa* (representing *dva*) would be pronounced “do”. Therefore *do* in this context is likely to be a corruption of *dwa*.

Dag-yig gSar-bsgrigs defines *dwa-phrug* as “a child whose parents have died, when (he or she) was young.”¹⁴¹ The *Tshig-mdzos Chen-mo* adds that *dwa phrug kha ser* is a young orphan (*dwa phrug chung ngu*).¹⁴²

In spite of this, the song clearly states that Ras-chung-pa's mother was still alive in his childhood.

There is the possibility that the wicked uncle and mother narrative was added to an original less dramatic orphan narrative, which is implied by both the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and the Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od

¹³⁶ Mon-rtse-pa, 168.

¹³⁷ rGod-tshang Ras-pa (mTsho-sngon), 53; (Manali) 29a.

¹³⁸ dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, 65; *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, vol. 1, 332.

¹³⁹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 37b. (Oxford), 29b. (Stockholm), missing.

¹⁴⁰ *Dag-yig gSar-bsgrigs*, 353.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 375. chung ngu pha ma shi ba'i byis pa.

¹⁴² *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo*, 1311.

narratives and thus created this anomaly. The latter in particular, containing perhaps the earliest source of information on Ras-chung-pa, presents him as parentless. However, one would expect a narrator or singer to remedy such an obvious contradiction. The more likely alternative is that, whatever historical basis the narrative may or may not have, this term was also used for a child who has lost only a father. This is confirmed by mKhan-chen Khra-'gu Rin-po-che, who states that *dwa-phrug* is used for a child who has lost either one or both parents, while *kha-ser* refers to a child being in a pitiful state due to unfortunate circumstances.¹⁴³ Also, Charles Ramble has pointed out the term *Do-ser*, in current usage, which means a child who has lost one parent,¹⁴⁴ and therefore there would be no inconsistency between term and narrative.

When did this father die? Don-mo Ri-pa does not mention the father. rGya-ldang-pa merely says that this occurred when he was "little".¹⁴⁵ Mon-rtse-pa, relying on rGya-ldang-pa merely repeats this, as do *Deb-ther sNgon-po*,¹⁴⁶ gTsang-smyon,¹⁴⁷ lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal,¹⁴⁸ Sangs-rgyas Dar-po¹⁴⁹ (who, as in gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, adds that Ras-chung-pa was his parents' only child) and Byang-chub bZang-po.¹⁵⁰

The third 'Brug-chen, 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523) appears to be the earliest author to supply a time; he says that the death occurred in Ras-chung-pa's eighth year (which would be circa 1091).¹⁵¹ The fourth 'Brug-chen, Pad-ma dKar-po, as one might expect, agrees.¹⁵² Where did 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa obtain this information? It is unlikely that he obtained the year of the father's death from *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, as lHa-btsun would

¹⁴³ mKhan-chen Khra-'gu, pers. comm., 10/9/00.

¹⁴⁴ Charles Ramble, pers.comm., 2/3/01.

¹⁴⁵ rGya-ldang-pa, 342.

¹⁴⁶ Roerich, 436.

¹⁴⁷ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, vol 1. 93; vol. 2, 170; *idem*, *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 90.

¹⁴⁸ lHa-btsun, 492.

¹⁴⁹ Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, 74b.

¹⁵⁰ Byang-chub bZang-po. 125.

¹⁵¹ 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 9.

surely have reproduced this small but salient detail. The isolated narrative transmission of the NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* and the *Rwa-lung bKa'-brgyud gSer-'phreng*, state that the death occurred in “about his eighth year.”¹⁵³ This may indicate a common source, or a marginal influence of one narrative transmission upon the other. The slightly hesitant dating of the latter is perhaps because it can then accord with rGod-tshang Ras-pa, who explicitly states that the father died when Ras-chung-pa reached his seventh year, leaving his mother and himself behind, thus implying that he had no siblings.¹⁵⁴ This year for the father's death is also repeated by dPa-bo gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba (1504-66) in his *mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston*.¹⁵⁵

It therefore appears that lHa-btsun did not supplement *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* from other sources for information concerning the time of the father's death, but that 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa and rGod-tshang Ras-pa did. However, they relied upon different, slightly variant sources, both of which appear to show the result of a narrator's (as well as nature's) abhorrence of a vacuum.

¹⁵² Padma dKar-po, 500.

¹⁵³ NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar*, 25b; *Rwa-lung gSer-'phreng*, (Palampur), 211.

¹⁵⁴ rGod-thang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-ba'i rNam-thar* (Quinghai), 11.

¹⁵⁵ dPa-bo gTsug-la 'phreng-ba, 377.

3.2. Meeting Mi-la Ras-pa

3.2.1. Earliest versions

rGya-ldang-pa's narrative has all the essential narrative factors to be found in all the sources that deal with the wicked uncle scenario of Ras-chung-pa's meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa: the father died while Ras-chung-pa was young. His father's brother married his mother, and they both turned against him, resulting in his being adopted by Mi-la.¹⁵⁶

A wicked paternal uncle who takes advantage of a father's early death is a salient feature of most versions of Mi-la Ras-pa's life, including the famous version by gTsang-smyon Heruka. The earliest versions of Mi-la Ras-pa's life (sGam-po-pa, Bla-ma Zhang and Don-mo Ri-pa), however, do not contain this early death of the father. This first occurs in rGya-ldang-pa's text, written at least ten years after Don-mo Ri-pa, sixty years after Bla-ma Zhang and a hundred years after sGam-po-pa, where the life-story has acquired a number of dramatic elements, such as the mother's wish for vengeance and Mi-la's building and demolition of houses on Mar-pa's instruction. This gives the impression that a fictionalisation of Mi-la Ras-pa's life has taken place. As the earliest source for Ras-chung-pa's life, i.e. *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, has not yet come to light, we cannot tell to what extent the childhood of Ras-chung-pa we are about to examine is fictionalised.

Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od, our earliest source, who relies heavily on sGam-po-pa for his version of Mi-la Ras-pa's life, and who appears to follow a narrative tradition concerning Ras-chung-pa that the early Karma bKa'-brgyud narratives would correspond closely to, makes no mention of a surviving mother, only a paternal uncle. This uncle complains that Ras-chung-pa, instead of staying up in the hills with Mi-la Ras-pa, should keep helping the village during the busy time

¹⁵⁶ rGya-ldang-pa, 342-44.

of harvest.¹⁵⁷ If this was written in 1245, as it seems to have been, it may represent an early narrative foundation upon which the wicked uncle and mother narrative was added.

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* refers only to a group of people that Ras-chung-pa, said to be “pitiful child” (perhaps assumed by this phrase to be an orphan), was accompanying. They gave him to Mi-la Ras-pa.¹⁵⁸ Whether the people who were being so generous with him were relatives or not is not mentioned, but presumably the reader is meant to assume that they were his guardians or near-relatives.

The wicked uncle narrative first appears in *rGya-ldang-pa* in the mid-thirteenth century but does not reappear in other narrative transmissions until the fifteenth century. Its narrative function is to give the context and the cause for Ras-chung-pa's meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa. There are three basic versions of Ras-chung-pa's meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa:

- 1) *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.
- 2) Don-mo Ri-pa/*rDo-rje mDzes-'od* and the early Karma *bKa'-brgyud* works.
- 3) *rGya-ldang-pa*.

An essential point that any narrative has to address is how Ras-chung-pa comes to meet Mi-la Ras-pa at a cave up above his village. As we have just seen, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* has a simple solution: he is brought along by a group of people that come to receive Mi-la Ras-pa's teachings. A principal characteristic of this version is that the child becomes entranced by Mi-la Ras-pa's

¹⁵⁷ *rDo-rje mDzes-'od*, 194.

¹⁵⁸ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 37b1-38a6; (Oxford), 29b7-31b7; (Stockholm), n.a.

singing and naturally enters a state of meditation, and this inspires those present to offer him to Mi-la Ras-pa.¹⁵⁹

Then fifth: The Quality of Experiences Arising as Bliss.

[Mi-la] was residing at the cliffs of sNye-nams. All good and bad conditions spontaneously arose as bliss. During a month when many people came to receive Dharma teaching, someone called "Pitiful little boy" (*bu-chung kha-ser*) came. Distracted by the song that the venerable one sang, he remained, about to get up, an abstracted meditation having been born in him. Enraptured by the song he was left there, so that the people offered him to the venerable one, who said "Bring him [to me]!" He set him to meditating and good experiences were born [within him]. The guru was pleased and sang this song ...

de nas lnga pa nyams myong bde bar shar ba'i yon tan ni/ snye nams
kyi¹⁶⁰ brag cig la¹⁶¹ bzhugs pa / rkyen bzang ngan thams cad bde
bar lam lam shar ba¹⁶² byung bas/ chos zhu mi mang po yongs
pa'i¹⁶³ zla ba la¹⁶⁴ bu chung kha ser bya ba cig yongs bas¹⁶⁵ / rje
btsun gyi 'gur gsungs pa la¹⁶⁶ yengs¹⁶⁷ nas lang rung la lus pas /¹⁶⁸
bsgom¹⁶⁹ gtad med la skyes te¹⁷⁰ / dbyangs la chags nas¹⁷¹ zhag tu

¹⁵⁹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 37b3-4; (Oxford), 29b7-30a2; (Stockholm), n.a. The present unavailability of this section of the Stockholm text makes the selection for a critical edition uncertain.

¹⁶⁰ Oxford nam. gyi.

¹⁶¹ Newark, brag la.

¹⁶² Newark, nas.

¹⁶³ Oxford, byung ba'i.

¹⁶⁴ Oxford, zla.la /.

¹⁶⁵ Oxford, pas.

¹⁶⁶ Oxford, la /.

¹⁶⁷ Oxford, yeng.

¹⁶⁸ Newark, ngs ma rungs / lus pa med.

¹⁶⁹ Newark, sgoms.

¹⁷⁰ Oxford, nas.

lus pas/ mi rnams kyis¹⁷² rje btsun la 'bul pa la¹⁷³ khrid gsungs nas
 /¹⁷⁴ bsgom du bcug pas nyams bzang po skyes pa dang¹⁷⁵ bla ma
 mnyes nas 'gur 'di gsungs so//

The Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun reproduces a large part of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* verbatim, but nevertheless makes that account of the meeting into a secondary alternative version by inserting before it what appears to be an extract from the third Karma-pa's lost *mDzod-nag-ma*. This version is repeated by the second Zhwa-dmar-pa (mKha'-spyod dBang-po 1350-1405) in his *Byin-brlabs kyi sPrin-spung*, and an earlier variant of it is found in Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od, which may date to 1245. In the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* and according to the Second Zhwa-dmar, Ras-chung-pa goes up to the mountains because he is herding donkeys. He hears Mi-la Ras-pa singing and goes to him. Mi-la Ras-pa asks him what he had dreamed the previous night, and is pleased when he answers:

"I turned to face the sun in the south-east and went [in that direction]. I came to a very wide plain of pasture, where many women adorned my head with many flower garlands."¹⁷⁶

bDag gis nyi ma shar lh'i mtshams su kha bltas te phyin pas / spang
 thang shin tu yangs pa cig na bud med gzhon nu ma mang pos bdag
 gi mgo la me tog gi phreng ba mang pos brgyan pa /

¹⁷¹ Oxford, te.

¹⁷² Oxford, mi thsos.

¹⁷³ Oxford, phul nas /.

¹⁷⁴ Oxford, no *shad*.

¹⁷⁵ Oxford, dang /.

¹⁷⁶ mKha'-spyod dBang-po, 237.

He offers to take on Ras-chung-pa as his pupil, and the boy accepts the offer.

Don-mo Ri-pa, in *rDo-rje mDzes-'od*, is the earliest source for this episode and has a feature shared by the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* narrative tradition, for in it the donkey-herding boy becomes entranced by Mi-la Ras-pa's song and enters a state of meditation. As a result, the donkeys wander home unattended. Ras-chung-pa returns to the village and explains what happened, and the next day, early, seeks out Mi-la Ras-pa, who then asks him about his dream the night before. Ras-chung-pa's dream is the same, and appears to be repeated by mKha-spyod dBang-po and presumably the third Karma-pa. One detail that was omitted was that the women brought their flowers out from a churn, or from a mis-spelt tree (*sdong-po*) (*dong-po cig gi nang nas*). When he agrees to become Mi-la's pupil, there then follows the complaint from an unnamed uncle, mentioned above, that the village needs him to continue with his work. Nevertheless, Ras-chung-pa leaves the area with Mi-la Ras-pa, though due to his young age Mi-la has to carry him when they cross the wide plain of dPal-mo dPal-thang, which is in the near vicinity.¹⁷⁷

The third and most elaborate version of the meeting is in *rGya-ldang-pa*. This is the ancestor of further versions over the next centuries and proves to be the narrative with greatest survival power, absorbing certain elements from other versions. It was repeated verbatim in the *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud biographies*, (written after 1360), which demonstrates the influence of *rGya-ldang-pa*'s narrative and of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud tradition upon the lineage of Khyung-tshang-pa (a pupil of Ras-chung-pa) which that text records.

The *rGya-ldang-pa* version has greater internal consistency than its descendants, which acquire additional narrative elements that undermine the organic unity of the original story.

¹⁷⁷ *rDo-rje mDzes-'od*, 192-93.

His family name was gNyan; his homeland was Ral-pa in Gung-thang. When he was little, his father died. His mother and paternal uncle married. The mother, listening to the uncle, came to detest Ras-chung-pa. He had great intelligence from an early age and so studied reading with a teacher, a *rNying-ma* lama who made *maṇḍalas* of the eight nāgas. He mastered reading very well and went to read for all the patrons. His mother took no care of him other than to bind the texts and tie on his belt. There was a patron he regularly went to read for, and he mixed the tsampa¹⁷⁸ dough left over from the morning with that from the afternoon and took it to his mother, who waited at a certain place for it at that time.

One day, the patron being busy, Ras-chung-pa was not able to put the tsampa together at the usual time. His mother was waiting, and when [Ras-chung-pa] did not turn up, not realising that it was because the patron was busy, she thought it was because her son was not going to give her [the tsampa]. She left him a nasty message, telling him not to bother to come back to her again.

Later, Ras-chung-pa obtained the extra tsampa and brought his payment, but his mother was not there, only the nasty message. He was deeply upset, and went up to a cave. There was a yogin there. Ras-chung-pa gave the extra tsampa to him. They talked and he told him of his troubles. The yogin said that Ras-chung-pa's life was like his own [childhood]. The yogin was Mi-la Ras-pa.¹⁷⁹

Rus gnyan yul gung thang ga (sic) ral pa yin / pha chung ngu la
grongs nas / ma dang khu bo 'dus te / ma khu'i go (sic: 'og) tu

¹⁷⁸ Ground roasted barley, a staple of the Tibetan diet.

sdad pas shin du sdang bar byung / chung ngu nas thugs rab chen
 po yod pas / slob dpon mying ma klu brgyas dkyil 'khor 'dra byed
 pa cig yod pa la klog slabs pas / klog mkhas pa shes nas / yon bdag
 kun gyi klog la phyin pas / po ti sbre ba dang sku rags 'ching ba
 stabs kyis ma 'chun par gzhan la bcal cing byas / lan cig yon bdag
 gi klog rgyun pa cig la phyin pas / snga gro'i zan lhag dang / nyin
 mo'i zan lhag sdoms kyin 'jar ba thon pa dang ma la skyel / ma de
 yang dus tshod la gugs pa cig yod pa la / nyin [343] cig yon bdag
 ma khom nas / 'jar-ba dus su ma byung bas / mas sgugs pas / bu
 ma byung bar yon bdag ma khom pa ni cha med / bus mi ster ba yin
 bsam nas lon bzhag ste / do phrug khyod da nas nga can nyug dang
 ma 'ong cig bya ba'i phrin ngan gzhag 'dug / der phyi mo nas 'jar
 ba byung nas 'khyos ma khyer phyin pas / phrin ngan bzhag nas ma
 mi 'dug / der snying ma dga' ste / grog phug cig yar phyin pas /
 rnal 'byor pa cig 'dug / de la zan lhag phyin pas gtam byas / sdug
 gtam btang bas / khyed rang nga 'dra bar 'dug gsung / de rje btsun
 mid la tu 'dug /

As a narrative cause for the meeting, this is slightly weaker logically than that of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and the Don-mo Ri-pa and Karma bKa'-brgyud "donkey-herder" group of texts, but it is stronger dramatically. If the mother herself is able to read and write why is she so dependant on Ras-chung-pa's reading abilities? Perhaps the reader narrator meant to imply she had left a verbal message, but with whom? Why should a child, instead of turning to neighbours or family, go up to an inhospitable cave in the mountains? While there may be explanations, they are not given. Later narrators rejected this segment, as we shall see, and had differing solutions as to how to replace it.

¹⁷⁹ rGya-ldang-pa, 342-43.

The first evidence for the recycling of this narrative in a new form comes from the fifteenth century, two centuries after rGya-ldang-pa wrote. His basic narrative background for Ras-chung-pa's first meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa is briefly alluded to in *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, which simply states:

From an early age, he had mastered reading and he supported his mother and uncle with the payments for his reading.

Chung ngu nas klog yig la mkhas par sbyangs te klog gi tshal mas
ma khu rnams skyong zhing yod pa'i skabs su ...

It makes no allusion to any hardship that Ras-chung-pa had to undergo and does not describe the circumstances under which he met Mi-la. However it gives a specific age for Ras-chung-pa at the time of this first meeting, and does repeat the dream from the Don-mo Ri-pa and Karma bKa'-brgyud narrative tradition so closely that it is clearly relying upon it as a source also.

Then, in his thirteenth year, he met the Lord Mi-la Ras-pa, who asked, "Boy what kind of dream did you have last night?" The child replied, "I dreamt that I faced the sun in the south-east and [went in that direction]. Also, upon a very great plain, many young women put many flower garlands upon my head."

The guru was very pleased and asked, "Boy, will you follow me and practise the Dharma?"

[The boy] answered, "I shall be your attendant."

...rje btsun mi la ras pa dang dgung lo bcu gsum gyi steng nas
 mjal / bu khyod mdang rmi lam ci 'dra ba rmis gsungs / byis pa
 na re / bdag gis nyi ma shar lho'i mtshams su kha gtad te phyin
 pas / yang thang shin tu yangs pa zhig na / bud med gzhon nu
 ma mang pos bdag gi mgo la me tog gi phreng ba mang po
 brgyan pa rmis zhus pas / bla ma yang shin tu dgyes / bu
 khyod nga yi rjes su chos byed pa la 'gro 'am gsungs pas /
 phyag phyir 'brang ba lags zhes zhus shing...¹⁸⁰

This source is presumably the lost *mDzod-nag-ma*. The correspondence between *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, *mKha'-spyod dBang-po* and the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* passages is evident. This is the first occasion on which we encounter passages corresponding between texts.

Nevertheless, when we evaluate the concrete relationship between these passages in the three texts, we discover a slightly closer correspondence between the second *Zhwa-dmar-pa* and *The Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* than between the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* and *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*.¹⁸¹

The *Zhwa-dmar* and *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* texts, in spite of having less correspondence between each other, have a few correspondences which agree but differ from *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*. Examples of these correspondences are the retention of the particle *la* in the phrase *bu khyod la*, the adjective “young” (*gzhon nu ma*), and the literary form of the first person instrumental (*bdag gis*). This indicates that they had a common source that was other than *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*. It could be argued that they are preserving an original, uncorrupted form of *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, particularly as that manuscript teems with simple errors. However, the *Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od* version of this passage, which has less correspondence with *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, also has the above

¹⁸⁰ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 108.

mentioned correspondences with the Zhwa-dmar-pa and *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*. As the Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od narrative may predate all other versions, either that text itself, or a closely related text, such as *mDzod-nag-ma*, was adapted independently by *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, the Zhwa-dmar-pa and the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*.

Therefore it appears that all four texts: Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od, *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, Zhwa-dmar-pa and *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* are examples of separate narrative developments from some original textual source, with the lost *mDzod Nag-ma* of the third Karma-pa being the direct source for the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, and most likely also for the Zhwa-dmar and *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*.

3.2.2. Fifteenth century versions

rGya-ldang-pa's narrative tradition is distinct from that of the above mentioned texts except for the last of them, the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, which show signs of an osmosis of some elements from the rGya-ldang-pa tradition.

rGya-ldang-pa's entire biography of Ras-chung-pa was reproduced in its entirety in the fourteenth century in the *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud biographies* (written after 1360), as mentioned above; it then occurs, refashioned, in the fifteenth century, primarily within the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud-pa tradition, in which rGya-ldang-pa's text had originally appeared.

The 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud master Mon-rtse-pa, writing circa 1450-1475, repeats some essential elements of the passage found in the rGya-ldang-pa narrative, but only about twenty percent of the words found in rGya-ldang-pa reoccur, with most of them transposed. The narrative is simpler than rGya-ldang-pa's, leaving out both the mother's dominant role and the slim narrative logic for bringing Ras-chung-pa up to the mountains. Therefore, while it clearly has the same

¹⁸¹ See Appendix H.

source as rGya-ldang-pa, it bears the clear symptoms of narrative mutation, primarily through omission.¹⁸²

When he was little, he learnt to read and count and knew it well. When he was little, his father died and his mother and paternal uncle married and they sent Ras-chung-pa out to read and they consumed the food payments.

One day when he was bringing the payments, his mother and uncle were not there, so he went to Mi-la... at the side of a ravine.¹⁸³

Chung ngu la yig rtsis slabs nas mkhas par shes so / chung
ngu la pha shi nas mha khu gnyis 'dus nas ras chung pa la
glog (sic: klog) la btang nas yon dang skyos ma khong gi
zos lo / nyin cig skyos ma khyer nas 'ongs tsa na / ma khu
mi 'dug nas / mid la grog logs kyi byi mo phung po'i gseb
na mgo su zing nge 'dug pa'i drung du phyin pas /

The second 'Brug-chen, Kun-dga' dPal-'byor (1428-1507), a contemporary of Mon-rtse-pa, provides no details on Ras-chung-pa's life, but concurs with the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, which was also written during his lifetime, that the meeting with Mi-la took place in Ras-chung-pa's thirteenth year.¹⁸⁴

A few years after Mon-rtse-pa's death, 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba gZhon-nu dPal (1392-1481) completed his mammoth work, *Deb-ther sNgon-po*. 'Gos Lotsāba,

¹⁸² Mon-rtse-pa, 165.

¹⁸³ Ibid., the sentence includes the obscure phrase "...grog logs kyi byi mo phung po'i gseb na mgo su zing nge 'dug pa," if I have interpreted zing nge correctly from the *bsdus-yig*. This could mean something like "whose head stood out amidst the nests of rodents at the side of the ravine" but may be a corruption.

¹⁸⁴ Kun-dga' dPal-'byor, 499.

who was very keen on dates, specifies the year in which Ras-chung-pa (or Ras-chung-ba as written here) met Mi-la to be the wood dog year (early 1094 to early 1095). He also adds that this was in Ras-chung-pa's eleventh year (which agrees with 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba's date of 1084 for his birth).¹⁸⁵

The year of their meeting may have been calculated from a narrative tradition that differed from *IHo-rong* and Kun-dga' dPal-'byor in that it made Ras-chung-pa two years younger. Alternatively, and more probably, it was calculated from accounts of Mi-la Ras-pa's life, which 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba paid great attention to dating. Therefore, Ras-chung-pa's year of birth is introduced in terms of its correlation with the dates of Mi-la Ras-pa's biography. His dating of the meeting may therefore be derived from Mi-la Ras-pa narratives that state, or imply, that the meeting occurred the year after Mi-la Ras-pa's nine years of solitary retreat and at the very beginning of his career as a teacher. Thus, according to 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba's dating of the events in Mi-la Ras-pa's life, this meeting with the ten-year old rDo-rje Grags-pa would have taken place in 1094, Mi-la being fifty-four years old at the time.

This would account for 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba's divergence from the *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* and Kun-dga' dPal-'byor, which were only slightly earlier works, and to which he probably had no recourse.

'Gos Lo-tsā-ba writes:

He was born in the locality of Khab Gung-thang in the wood male rat year [1084]¹⁸⁶ in which Lord [Mi-la] began his practice [in retreat]. He was named rDo-rje Grags. His father died early. His paternal uncle and mother married and he became his uncle's servant. He knew reading well from an

¹⁸⁵ *Blue Annals*, (Roerich) 436; ('Gos Lotsāba) 381.

early age and he pleased his uncle and mother with payments for reading in the village. When he reached this eleventh year, in the wood male dog year [1094] following Lord Mi-la's completion of his nine-year retreat [in 1093], he met the Lord who was residing in a ravine in Gung-thang.

rje btsun sgrub pa la thogs ma bzhugs pa'i shing pho byi ba
 la khab gung thang gi sa char 'khrungs / mtshan rdo rje
 grags shes zer / pha snga mo nas shi / khu bo dang ma 'dus
 nas / khu bo'i g.yog byed cing / gzhon pa'i tshe nyid nas
 klog legs par mkhyen / grong klog byas pa'i skyos mas khu
 bo dang ma mgu bar byed cing yod / ras chung bas lo bcu
 gcig lon zhing / rje btsun mid la'i mtshams lo dgu po tshar
 rjes kyi shing pho khyi'i lo la / rje btsun gung thang gi grog
 po zhig na bzhugs pa dang mjal

The textual correspondences with rGya-ldang-pa are minimal, merely a few words such as *Gung-thang*, *pha* (father) and *grog* (ravine). The word for payments, *skyos ma*, it is spelled '*khyos-ma*' in rGya-ldang-pa and is used at a different point in the narrative.¹⁸⁶ The only substantial text-element to reappear is "the uncle and mother married" (*khu bo dang ma 'dus te*), but with uncle and mother transposed (rGya-ldang-pa: *ma dang khu-bo 'dus-te*) which harmonises with the lessening of the narrative importance of the mother. It is however probably a stock phrase, and does not imply any direct reliance on rGya-ldang-pa. The *Deb-ther-sNgon-po* has the same minimal textual correspondence with Mon-rtse-pa. This divergence gives

¹⁸⁶ Roerich, surely inadvertently, interprets this as 1083. His error has been widely perpetuated by those using this translation as a source, e.g., Smith, preface to *The Life of the Saint of Gtsang*, 30.

¹⁸⁷ rGya-ldang-pa, 343.

the impression that 'Gos Lotsāba did not use the rGya-ldang-pa narrative tradition directly, but some variant of that tradition, while revealing the same simplification and the omission of the mother element as in the narrative of Mon-rtse-pa. This narrative element of the mother's role will not reappear in any other version, and appears to have lost out in the battle for survival of dramatic elements in the narrative jungle. Perhaps it was too tawdry and unpleasant. The emphasis on a wicked mother was too unappetising in a culture in which one's development of compassion is based upon believing that all beings have been one's mother in a previous life, and therefore, for that very reason, have shown one great kindness that needs to be repaid. I have personally heard contemporary Tibetans, including lamas, refusing to believe reports of parental cruelty, considering the very idea an oxymoron.

This omission left a gap in the narrative, which was eventually filled, not by the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*'s simple version, which was ignored by all later authors, but by the only other existing piece of narrative DNA: the donkey herder.

3.2.3. The versions of gTsang-smyon and his followers

This syncretism is first found in the works of gTsang-smyon Heruka (1452-1507). His two versions of the life of Ras-chung-pa are interesting in that we see narrative developments or variations occurring in two works by the same author.

The narrative elements of Ras-chung-pa as herder, as found in the *mDzod-nag-ma*, and that of entering instant *samādhi*, as found in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* were both present in the earliest available version—Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od. They were presented separately, within alternative accounts in *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* gTsang-smyon, in both his *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud* and *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, may have spliced these two re-conjoined elements to the paternal uncle's marriage of the mother and Ras-chung-pa's employment as a

reader, as found in rGya-ldang-pa. As in the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, there is no explicit mention of any mistreatment or parental animosity before his meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa. In fact, one could gain the impression that he was well cared for in that he had been provided with a rare education in reading. gTsang-smyon's texts also specify that the uncle and mother were following custom in marrying and bringing up Ras-chung-pa, which emphasises a normalcy rather than disfunctionality of the family. The unpleasantness of rGya-ldang-pa is not eliminated completely, however, as we shall see that the incidents he described following Ras-chung-pa's meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa remain.

The herder motif loses a narrative detail in gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*: the herd Ras-chung-pa is responsible for is no longer said to be composed of donkeys, but simply of "animals". This particular omission of narrative detail is filled by gTsang-smyon in his other work, the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, by a new detail: the animals are specified to be oxen. A trace of the donkey element of the original version remains, in that Ras-chung-pa is said to be riding a donkey while herding the oxen. In neither of gTsang-smyon's versions did he preserve the dream sequence that accompanied the donkey herding motif in the earlier works, in which the dream caused Mi-la Ras-pa to consider Ras-chung-pa to be a worthy student. This is replaced in gTsang-smyon's works by a particularly important element that here makes its first appearance: a prophecy that leads Mi-la to meeting Ras-chung-pa. The meeting is no longer portrayed as a random incident, (though theologically speaking however they met would have been owing to karmic connection, and not chance). Indeed, Mi-la Ras-pa, who was in Gung-thang, comes to Ra-la specifically in order to meet Ras-chung-pa, for he has just been informed by a *ḍākiṇī* in a vision that he will there meet the "worthy vessel" that will inherit the sNyan-rgyud teachings from him. The dream analysis therefore becomes superfluous.

This is the earliest surviving text, still in its original form, to refer to Ras-chung-pa as a special being from birth. gTsang-smyon had denied the earlier tradition of the emanation status of Mi-la Ras-pa, as elaborated for example by rGya-ldang-pa, by explicitly emphasising his unenlightened status in his early life.¹⁸⁸ However, gTsang-smyon still portrayed Mi-la Ras-pa as a person who was marked out for spiritual supremacy. He did so in the narrative in which his teacher Mar-pa has a prophetic dream concerning Mi-la Ras-pa's importance shortly before their meeting. Therefore, this passage in the life of Ras-chung-pa does not imply that gTsang-smyon is presenting Ras-chung-pa as enlightened from before birth, (as gTsang-smyon's pupils, lHa-btsun and rGod-tshang Ras-pa will do), but merely as one who is karmically ready for enlightenment.

As mentioned in the chapter on the sources, the *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud* biography¹⁸⁹ is dry and restrained compared to gTsang-smyon's famous works, and predates them.

The description of Ras-chung-pa's childhood and meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* has the enhancing touches that have made it and the *Mi-la'i rNam-thar* the most popular literary productions of Tibet. The *bDe-mchog mKha'-'grp sNyan-rgyud* version meanwhile belongs to an earlier stratum of stylistic and narrative development.

bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud

Ras-chung-pa's birth-place was Ra-la in Gung-thang, Mang-yul. He was the only son of his parents who were of the gNyan family-line. His father died early and his uncle and mother then followed the custom of living together, the uncle bringing him up.

¹⁸⁸ gTsang-smyon, *Mi-la'i rNam-thar*, (de Jong), 154; (lHa-lung-pa), 144.

¹⁸⁹ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*, vol 1. 93-95; vol. 2, 169-71.

At that time, he knew how to read well from an early age. As he was in great demand for his readings, many gifts of food came to his uncle and mother.

When Lord Mi-la was staying in rDo-rje rDzong (Vajra Castle) at Brag-skyā (White Rock), he received a prophetic injunction from a *dākinī* who said that Ras-chung-pa was the worthy vessel for the *Karṇa-tantra* instructions. Therefore the Lord thought that he should take [Ras-chung-pa] as his pupil, and so came to Za-'og cave in upper Ra-la and meditated there.

Ras-chung-pa, while herding animals, came there and met Mi-la Ras-pa. As soon as he saw the Lord's face an excellent samādhi arose in his mind. His perceptions were transformed, and from then on he brought the gifts of food for his readings to the Lord and requested Dharma teachings from him.¹⁹⁰

Ras chung pa'i 'khrungs sa mang yul gung thang gi ra la / gdung
gnyan du gyur pa'i yab yum gnyis kyi sras cig po'i yab snga mar
'ongs pas / khu bo [94] dang yum lhan cig du song bas / khu bos
mgo 'don pa'i lugs su yod tshe chung ngu nas klog bzang po
mkhyen nas / gsung sgrog pa la shin tu drin pas ma khu gnyis la za
yon mang po 'bab cing yod pa las / rje btsun mi la brag skyā rdo rje
na bzhugs dus snyan rgyud gyi gdams ngag gi snod ldan ras chung
pa mkha' 'gros lung bstan pa'i phyir / rje btsun gyis kyang rjes su
'dzin par dgongs te / ra la'i phu za 'og phug tu byon nas sgom zhing
bzhugs pas / ras chung pas phyugs mthor phyin pas mjal te rje
btsun gyi zhal mthong ba'i mdo la ting nge 'dzin bzang po thugs la

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., 93-94; 169-70.

‘khrungs / snang ba ‘gyur nas phyis gsung sgrogs byas pa’i za yon
rnams rje btsun gyi drung du khyer chos zhus pa la /

The *Mi-la’i mGur-’bum* brings some life into the *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*’s version of the story. We can note small, inspired details interwoven into the narrative. This is development by addition, such as when the anonymous animals become oxen. However, there is also a reappearance of certain earlier narrative elements, which were present in Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-’od, but had not appeared in the *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*: i.e., Ras-chung-pa hearing a song and ignoring his herd.

Of particular importance in terms of the contemporary popular Ras-chung-pa image is a reference to his good looks. The *mGur-’bum* is an interesting example of narrative variation from the same author. The *mGur-’bum* relies on the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* in particular, as did the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*. The *mGur-’bum* and the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* both make independent variations on their source and show no influence on each other. The *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* had presented the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* and Karma bKa’-brgyud versions as alternative accounts. As in the *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*, gTsang-smyon has combined them into one version conjoined with elements from rGya-ldang-pa. It is preceded by the prophecy from the *dākinī*, and also an encounter with those engaged in building at Khab Gung-thang (rDzong-dkar):

Afterwards, the Lord resided in the Za-’og cave at the upper valley of Ra-la. At Ra-la there lived a good looking and very intelligent boy, whose father had died some time before. His mother and father’s brother followed the custom of marrying and looking after him.

That boy knew how to read well from an early age. His pronunciation was clear and he was in great demand, so that he received many gifts.

At one time, he went up into the upper reaches of the valley, riding a donkey, herding oxen. When he reached the cave where the Lord was practising, the boy heard the Lord singing a song, which had a transformative effect upon him. He got off his donkey and abandoned the cattle. He came to the Lord and as soon as he saw his face, an inexpressible, inconceivable samādhi arose in his being, and he remained in a continuous, unwavering state. This was [Mi-la Ras-pa's] heart-son, Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags-pa.

De nas rje btsun gyis za 'og phug tu bzhugs pas / ra la na pha
snga mo nas shi ba'i bu bzhin legs la shes rab che ba zhig yod
pa de'i ma dang khu bo tshogs nas skyong ba'i lugs su yod pa
la / bu des gzhon nu nas klog bzang po shes pas / gsung
sgrogs la shin tu brin pas 'khyos ma mang po 'ong ba zhig yod
pas / nam zhig gi tshe khong rang gi lung pa'i phu de na yar la
bong bu zhon nas [91] ba glang gi rdzi bo la phyin pas / rje
btsun gyi sgrub phug gi mdun na yar sleb pa dang / rje btsun
mgur gsung ba thos nas snang ba 'gyur te / bong bu las babs
phyugs rnams bor nas / rje btsun kyi drung du phyin pas / zhal
mthong ma thag smra mi shes pa'i ting nge 'dzin rgyud la skyes
te yug cig khrong nge lus te 'dug pa de thugs sras ras chung rdo
rje grags pa yin no /¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ gTsang-smyon, *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 90-91.

The third 'Brug-chen, 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa's (1478-1523) *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-cha*, unlike other sNyan-rgyud lineage histories, has Ras-chung-pa as the first Tibetan in the succession of the lineage. Instead of Tilopa, Nāropa, Mar-pa, Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa, it has Tilopa, Nāropa, Maitripa, Tipupa and then Ras-chung-pa.

In spite of this emphasis, Ras-chung-pa's earliest years are described only briefly. As with gTsang-smyon, there is no early mistreatment by his mother and uncle, and one could think that he had been well cared for. The manner of meeting Mi-la Ras-pa is not described. That is, those particular rGya-ldang-pa elements have been omitted but not replaced by elements from another tradition. He does however add that this meeting occurred in Ras-chung-pa's twelfth year. This is a year earlier than that given by both *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* and his 'Brug-chen predecessor, but a year later than 'Gos Lotsāba's calculation. His disagreement with his previous incarnation might seem rather peculiar, though it is made less surprising by the political circumstances of the 'Brug-chen succession. He was the first successor to this title by recognised reincarnation (the lineage had previously been hereditary), but also had to create and maintain a new and independent seat from the previous 'Brug-chen, which remained under the control and possession of the previous 'Brug-chen's family and entourage. There is no known source for this date, but it agrees with the undated NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar*.

He was born in the village of 'Phrang-ra in Pad-ma dKar-po, Gung-thang, as the son of gNyan Dar-ma Grags, his father, and Ra-mo gTsug-tor sGron, his mother, in the wood male rat year (1084). In his eighth year (1091) his father died. His uncle brought him up and he mastered the knowledge of reading. In his twelfth year he met Lord Mid-la.¹⁹²

¹⁹² 'Jam-dbyangs Grags-pa, 9-10.

Gung thang padma dkar po'i grong phreng ra zhes bya bar / yab
 gnyan dar ma grags / yum ra lo gtsug tor sgron gnyis gyi sras
 su shing po (sic) byi ba la 'khrungs / dgung lo brgyad kyi
 stengs su yab gshegs / khu bos bskyed bsrings te klog mkhas
 par mkhyen / dgung lo bcu gnyis bzhes [10] su rje btsun mid la
 dang mjal ba...

Sangs-rgyas Dar-po merely repeats verbatim gTsang-smyon's decription of the meeting in his *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*.¹⁹³ lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557), a personal pupil of gTsang-smyon, wrote the earliest surviving biography of Ras-chung-pa that is of considerable length. However, it concentrates on his later years, and his childhood is described only briefly.¹⁹⁴ Although he explicitly refers to the lost *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* as a source,¹⁹⁵ it is uncertain that the information on Ras-chung-pa's earlier years was primarily obtained from there, as will be seen when comparing lHa-btsun's version with that of rGod-tshang Ras-pa. What is of particular interest is that here we can compare the pupil's version with the two that his own teacher wrote. Textual analysis demonstrates that lHa-btsun adapted the passage from his teacher's *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, as did gTsang-smyon himself when writing his *mGur-'bum*. They both substituted synonyms for certain words and phrases, not always for the same words, and sometimes using different synonyms. This is immediately obvious from the Tibetan, but inevitably obscured in translation.

One may suggest the possibility that the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud* version is a verbatim reproduction from *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, and lHa-btsun was adapting the passage from that work. The argument against that is the fact that the

¹⁹³ gTsang-smyon, *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, 74b-75a.

¹⁹⁴ lHa-btsun, 493-95.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 833.

bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud version has the characteristics of a late work in that it has combined the elements of two narrative traditions: Ras-chung-pa the reader from rGya-ldang-pa, and Ras-chung-pa the herder from Don-mo Ri-pa and the Third Karma-pa.

Lord Ras-chung-pa was born in Ral in upper Gung Thang.

His father was Sangs-rgyas sKyabs and his mother lHa-mo mDzes and his birth was accompanied by marvellous good omens. He was given the name rDo-rje Grags-pa.

His father died early. His paternal uncle and mother followed the custom of marrying and bringing him up. When they were very poor, because he had learned to read without difficulty from an early age, he was in great demand for readings. He brought many payments for his readings to his uncle and mother and they were happy. His karmic latencies from past lives being awakened, he met Lord [Mi-la Ras-pa], prostrated to him and touched his feet.

196

rje btsun ras chung pa de nyid kyi sku 'khrungs pa'i yul gung
thang stod kyi ral zhes bya bar / yab sangs rgyas skyabs dang /
yum [494] lha mo mdzes gnyis la ngo mtshar ba'i ltas bzang po
dang bcas te sku 'khrungs / mtshan rdo rje grags par btags / yab
snga mo nas 'das / khu bo dang yum gnyis gcig tu gyur nas mgo
'don pa'i lugs su byas / shin tu bkren par yod pa'i tshe / chung
ngu nas klog yig bslabs pas tshegs med par mkhyen / gsung
sgrogs la shin tu drin par byung nas / ma khu gnyis la klog yon
gyi mkhyos ma mang po khyer yongs nas skyid por song yod pa

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 493-94.

la / sngon gyi bag chags sad te / rje btsun dang mjal phyag btsal
 zhabs la btugs nas / ...

As in gTsang-smyon, the mother and uncle are said to be following a custom of marriage and bringing him up after the death of his father. The principal additional detail is the mention of their poverty, which emphasises that Ras-chung-pa's ability to read became the means by which he supported his family.

We now move on to the most developed and best known version of Ras-chung-pa's life. The immense work by rGod-tshang-pa sNa-tshogs Rang-grol, aka rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

The author claims to base himself primarily upon the same source as lHa-btsun used, *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, but his version of the early part of Ras-chung-pa's life differs from that found in both lHa-btsun and gTsang-smyon. It is his version solely of the latter half of Ras-chung-pa's life that coincides with lHa-btsun's version and thus reveals a common source.

In the chapter on Ras-chung-pa's birth, there are four sub-chapters. The last of these is entitled, "[Ras-chung-pa] undergoes hardship, experiences directly the truth of suffering, develops an intense desire for liberation and enters the supreme teaching under his guru."¹⁹⁷

This version of Ras-chung-pa's childhood supplies more details than did any earlier versions. Nevertheless, rGod-tshang Ras-pa does not reproduce those principal elements in rGya-ldang-pa's version that had been ignored by previous authors. Though some elements from rGya-ldang-pa reoccur, the result is quite different in tone. Instead of the mother being the principal wicked character in the tale, it is now the uncle. The mother's loss of maternal affection

is mentioned in passing, but is said to have been owing to the influence of the uncle, who has an evil nature and is the cause of all Ras-chung-pa's suffering, just like Mi-la Ras-pa's uncle in gTsang-smyon's version of Mi-la Ras-pa's life. This parallel narrative development is surely more than a coincidence. The popularity of these versions certainly demonstrates that an usurping wicked uncle is an effective dramatic element—the Hamlet-like loss of the good father and his replacement by the villainous brother.

It is therefore not possible for rGod-tshang Ras-pa to imply that the uncle was responsible for Ras-chung-pa learning to read. Instead, “sympathetic neighbours” take on this role as much as they can. The narrative cannot go as far as making Ras-chung-pa learn to read in spite of his uncle, but manages to gloss over the fact that his “wicked” uncle provided him with this education. He learns from his father's lama, who the later author Śākya Rin-chen, who based himself on this work, assumed was the one who gave Ras-chung-pa the name rDo-rje Grags-pa. rGod-tshang Ras-pa declares Ras-chung-pa to be an emanation, but there are only a few places in the narrative where this can be emphasised, one of them is here, when he learns to read uncannily rapidly. The dire poverty, mentioned by lHa-btsun, is not specified, with the result that Ras-chung-pa supporting his parents is given the flavour of exploitation. This is, as with Mi-la Ras-pa, a good opening for a dramatic narrative: a poor child is plunged into terrible suffering by fate, but nevertheless, with great difficulty and with the aid of his spiritual mentor, he will rise above his origins.

When Ras-chung-pa reached his seventh year, the time for his father's death had come, and so Dar-ma Grags gNyan ceased to be. Ras-chung-pa and his mother were very sad. Ras-chung-pa's uncle, gNyan 'Bar-re, who was his father's

¹⁹⁷ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 11. DKa'-ba spyod cing sdug bsngal gyi bden pa gzigs pas / nges 'byung

younger brother, gained control over his mother. gNyan 'Bar-re enjoyed doing bad actions; he was cruel; he had no faith in the Dharma and despised it. Ras-chung-pa's mother fell under the power of 'Bar-re so that both she and he developed a strong aversion towards Ras-chung-pa. There seemed to be no way out of Ras-chung-pa's sadness and suffering. Kind and sympathetic neighbours told his parents, "rDo-rje Grags is very intelligent. If he studied something like reading, he would be able to learn it easily." [Ras-chung-pa] was sent to his father's own teacher, who was from dBus, and studied reading with him. He soon learnt to read perfectly, mastering it through just being shown the letters. People said of him, "rDo-rje Grags learns as if he was an emanation." The people of the area asked him to come and read for them; there was such a demand that he entered upon a period of happiness, as he was able to support his mother and uncle with the payments he was given, and this made them very happy.¹⁹⁸

Sras dgung lo bdun lon tshe yab gnyan dar ma grags dus la
 bab pas / mi rtag par gyur te yum sras gnyis shin tu skyo
 tshe / yab kyi gcung po khu bo gnyan 'ba' re bya bas yum
 dbang du bsdus / gnyan 'ba' re de sdig la dga' zhing snying
 rje chung / de'i dbang du ma yang song ste ma khu gnyis
 [12] kyis shin tu sdang bar gyur / der skyo ba dang sdug
 bsngal bas ci bya gtol med par gyur pa'i tshe / khyim
 mtshes blo nye ba dang sha tsha ba mams na re / shes rab

che bar 'dug pas klog 'dra slob dang sla bar yong zer / der
 pha'i slob dpon dbus pa zhig yod pa'i sar phyin nas / klog
 yig bslabs pas yun ring ma 'gor bar brda bstan pa tsam gyis
 mkhas pa'i phul du phyin par mkhyen / mi mams na re
 sprul ba (sic) bslab tshul ston pa dang 'dra zer skad / de nas
 yul mi mams kyis klog 'don la bos pas / shin tu brin par
 byung dus rang yang gnas skabs su skyid cing bde ba dang /
 klog gi khyos mas ma khu gnyis bskyangs pas khong gnyis
 shin tu mgu bar gyur to /

The meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa is described in a new chapter. Here one can see many sources artfully being knitted together. It commences with the prophecy from the *dākinī* received by Mi-la Ras-pa in rDo-rje rDzong, as had been described by gTsang-smyon. rGod-tshang Ras-pa generally maintains a strong correspondence with the text of the *mGur-'bum* throughout much of the description of Ras-chung-pa's relationship with Mi-la Ras-pa, but deviates markedly in the short passage that describes how this meeting took place. There are certain phrases that nevertheless correspond such as: "into the upper reaches of the valley" (*lung pa'i phu...na yar*), "riding a donkey" (*bong bu zhon nas*), "perceptions transformed" (*snang ba 'gyur*). rGod-tshang Ras-pa also attempts to bring in elements from Mon-rtse-pa, and the result is not particularly successful. Not content with the solution of placing Ras-chung-pa in the mountains by the simple act of herding, which gTsang-smyon chose, he combines it with Mon-rtse-pa's version in which Ras-chung-pa returns from reading and on not finding his uncle or mother goes up to the mountains. That itself was Mon-rtse-pa's truncated and rather meaningless version of the earlier rGya-ldang-pa narrative. Also, rGod-tshang has Ras-chung-pa becoming

¹⁹⁸ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 11-12.

curious as to why many people are heading up into the upper reaches of the valley. This element appears to have been absorbed from the dream he will have in India, when being cured of his skin illness. That dream is also found in the earlier narrative tradition of rGya-ldang-pa and within the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. Not wishing to lose the herding narrative element as it appeared in gTsang-smyon, rGod-tshang Ras-pa is forced to have Ras-chung-pa follow these people, while also riding a donkey and driving animals before him. He then has Ras-chung-pa become entranced at Mi-la Ras-pa's singing, an element that gTsang-smyon had derived from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. However, remarkably, rGod-tshang Ras-pa introduces another element from that source, which we have not seen in a text since the thirteenth century. This is no solitary meeting, and the other people present offer Ras-chung-pa to Mi-la Ras-pa. This makes narrative sense in the context of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, where Ras-chung-pa is introduced as an orphan in the company of these people, but inserted into this version it does not sit well with Ras-chung-pa having parents at home. This is therefore a more ambitious attempt at a comprehensive compilation of sources, creating an eventful, crowded but somewhat confused narrative.

Mi-la Ras-pa left rDo-rje rDzong in Brag-skyā and gradually made his way through Gung-thang until he came to the Za-'og cave in upper Ra-la, where he stayed.

The boy rDo-rje Grags gNyan called "the hapless, fatherless one" had now reached his eleventh year. One day he took his payment home but found that his mother and uncle were not there. He saw many people heading up into the upper valley. He wondered, "What could be up there?" and riding a

donkey and driving forward some animals that he was herding, he followed the people.

The master of yogins, Mi-la Ras-pa, was staying in the Za-'og cave in upper Ra-la. When rDo-rje Grags heard the sound of his singing, he obtained a blessing that transformed his perceptions and a spontaneous faith was born in him. rDo-rje Grags went up to Mi-la Ras-pa, and in a state in which his mind was dazzled, unable to think, unable to speak, he sat unmoving for some time.

The other people there were making offerings to Mi-la Ras-pa, so rDo-rje Grags gave his payment for reading to him.

This made Mi-la Ras-pa very happy. He said to rDo-rje Grags, "lHa-rje, your grandfather, was a pupil of my guru, Mar-pa."

Listening to Mi-la Ras-pa singing awoke rDo-rje Grags' white karmic connection with Mi-la Ras-pa and he easily entered a state of meditation in which he experienced clarity and emptiness without grasping. Mi-la Ras-pa was very pleased by this and thought, "He would make a good *ras-pa*." He said again and again, "If he could just become a *ras-pa*, he would be excellent." The people there said, "If merely that would please you so much, he could be given to you."

It is said that Ras-chung-pa had reached his eleventh year at that time.¹⁹⁹

rje btsun yang brag skya rdo rje rdzong nas rim gyis gung
thang brgyud de ra la'i phu za 'og phug tu bzhugs so / de

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

dus khye'u gnyan phrug rdo rje grags dwa phrug kha ser
 zhes pa de nyid dgung lo bcu gcig 'gro la / nyin gcig khyos
 ma khyer phyin tsa na ma khu gnyis mi 'dug / mi gzhan
 mang po lung pa'i phu na yar 'gro zhing 'dug / ci yod na
 snyam sems can 'tsho rgyu 'dra yod pa ded / bong bu la
 zhon nas rjes la phyin pas / ra la'i phu za 'og phug pa na /
 rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug mi la ras pa bzhugs 'dug cing
 mgur gsung ba'i sgra lhang lhang thos pa tsam gyis byin
 gyis brlabs te / snang ba 'gyur zhing rang dbang med pa'i
 dad pa skyes nas / drung du phyin pas zil bun pa dang bcas
 bsam mi shes shing / brjod du mi btub pa'i nyams shig shar
 nas re zhig krong nge lus / der gzhan rnams kyis kyang 'bul
 ba byed cing 'dug / rang gis kyang klog gi khyos ma de
 phul bas / rje btsun gyi gsung nas khyod kyis mes po lha rje
 de / nga'i bla ma mar pa'i slob ma yin gsungs nas shin tu
 mnyes par mdzad / de dus rje btsun gyi mgur gsungs [13]
 pa la nyan pas dkar po'i las 'brel sad de / ting nge 'dzin du
 phyam phyam du song zhing gsal stong 'dzin med kyis
 nyams skyes pa la/ rje btsun shin tu mnyes te 'di la ras pa
 bzang po zhig ong / ras pa tsam la bzang ba gcig yong yang
 yang gsungs pas / mi rnams na re de tsam du mnyes na rje
 bstun la phul bas chog zer / de dus dgung lo bcu gcig bzhes
 pa yin skad /

3.2.4. Versions that post-date rGod-tshang Ras-pa

What influence has this version of the meeting had on future authors? Many works, focusing on Mi-la Ras-pa, give no details of the meeting, or do not even mention it.

The meeting is briefly described by dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba (1504-66) the Karma bKa'-brgyud-pa historian, in his *mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston* which was composed between 1545 and 1565.

However the passage is very brief and is merely a simplified version of the rGya-ldang-pa narrative tradition. gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba repeats textual components used by rGya-ldang-pa. Compare rGya-ldang-pa's "the mother and uncle married, and the mother, living under the uncle's [influence], developed a strong aversion to him" (*ma dang khu bo 'dus te/ ma khu'i go* (sic. 'og) *tu sdad pas shin tu sdang bar byung*) with gTsug-lag's "The married mother and uncle married and developed a strong aversion towards him" (*yum dang khu bo 'dus pa shin tu sdang bar gyur*).

rGod-tshang Ras-pa has "Ras-chung-pa's mother fell under his power so that they both developed a strong aversion towards [Ras-chung-pa]." (*de'i dbang du ma yang song ste ma khu gnyis kyis shin tu sdang bar gyur*) but gTsug-lag and rGod-tshang Ras-pa's adaptations of the narrative are evidently independent of each other. gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba has:

In his seventh year, his father passed away. His mother and uncle married and developed a strong aversion towards him. Having learned how to read fluently, he supported his mother and uncle by the gift of food he received for readings. In his

twelfth year he met Lord Mi-la and a spontaneous meditation occurred.²⁰⁰

Lo bdun na yab gshegs / yum dang khu bo 'dus pa shin tu
sdang bar byung / klog tshegs med du mkhyen nas klog gi
zas yon gyis ma khu bskyangs / lo bcu gnyis la rje mi la dang
mjal te rang byung gi sgom skyes

Tsug-lag's contemporary, the third 'Brug-chen, Pad-ma dKar-po (1527-1592) completed his *Pad-ma dKarmo Chos-'byung* in 1575, about ten years after gTsug-lag's death. His history contains two versions of the meeting, one in the context of Mi-la Ras-pa's biography and one in Ras-chung-pa's biography. Here again we have the interesting case of two versions by the same author. Curiously, they often do not agree. Consistency does not appear to have been Pad-ma dKar-po's primary concern. As already mentioned earlier, in the Mi-la Ras-pa chapter Ras-chung-pa is given the name rDo-rje Grags-pa after he has been a pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa for some time, while in the Ras-chung-pa chapter he has the name from birth.

The version in the story of Mi-la Ras-pa at first appears to consist primarily of elements that have their original source in the simple *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* narrative, in that Ras-chung-pa accompanies a group of people who have come to see Mi-la Ras-pa. However there are no direct borrowings from that text itself. The herder element is also present, but merged into this framework so that Ras-chung-pa is not a herder but comes *with* a group of herders.

The passage has some incidences of textual correlation to the equivalent passage in gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*. However there is also some

²⁰⁰ dPa'-bo gTsug-lag Phreng-ba, 377.

textual correlation to the rGod-tshang Ras-pa text, such as the use of *khrong-nge lus* (“became immobile”) and as rGod-tshang Ras-pa also combined the group narrative element in his version, Pad-ma dKar-po may well be basing his passage on rGod-tshang Ras-pa, which, owing to the lack of clarity in the writing, could be interpreted and summarised into the version that Pad-ma dKar-po gives us here. Therefore this may be the first indication of rGod-tshang Ras-pa’s influence on Ras-chung-pa biographies.

Pad-ma dKar-po's version in his biography of Mi-la Ras-pa:²⁰¹

When [Mi-la] was staying in Za-‘og cave in the upper reaches of Ra-la, there was a child with the herders of that region who had come into his presence. Just by seeing the lord, his hairs stood on end, the appearances of this life stopped in his mind, and he was remained transfixed where he stood.

Ra la'i phu za 'og phug tu bzhugs dus / yul de'i phyugs rdzi
mams drung du byung ba'i byis pa zhig rje btsun mthong ba
tsam gyis lus skyi bung / semse tshe 'di'i snang ba 'gags /
khrong nge lus /

Pad-ma dKar-po follows the biography of Mi-la Ras-pa with a brief account of Ras-chung-pa’s life. The simple version is composed of narrative elements from rGod-tshang Ras-pa and there are a number of word correlations, so that it appears to have been based upon rGod-tshang Ras-pa. The story is drastically simplified however, and adds very little, though there is a special emphasis on Ras-chung-pa's

²⁰¹ Pad-ma dKar-po, 493.

physical beauty. Like Mon-rtse-pa, the narrative problem of bringing Ras-chung-pa to Mi-la Ras-pa is solved by being ignored.

His name was rDo-rje Grags. He was like a god's child as his body was a pure result. He trained and became skilled in reading. When he was eight his father died. His mother married his uncle, who did not like the Dharma, and Ras-chung-pa's mother fell under his power, and developed a strong aversion to him. He obtained excellent food and gifts from his readings. Taking these he went to Mi-la at the Za-'og cave.²⁰²

mtshan rdo rje grags pa zer / sku 'bras gtsang bas lha'i bu 'dra /
der klog yig mkhas [500] par bslabs / dgung lo brgyad la yab
gshegs / yum a khus bsdus / de chos la mi dga' bas ma'ang de
(sic) dbang song nas shin tu sdang / der klog bklags pas za yon
phun sum tshogs pa byung / de bsnams za 'og phug tu mi la'i
rtsar byon /

sTag-lung Ngag-dbang mam-rgyal (1571-1626) completed his *Chos-'byung Ngo-mtshar rGya-mtsho* in 1609. This contains merely a brief reference to the meeting. The textual element *zhal mthong ma thag* implies a reliance on gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* rather than on rGod-tshang Ras-pa, which would accord with the growing fame and influence of the former.

²⁰² Pad-ma dKar-po, 499-500.

When he was residing in the Za-‘og cave in upper Ra-la, a child of that area developed faith in him by just seeing his face, and listened to some Dharma teachings.²⁰³

ra la'i phu za 'og phug du bzhugs dus yul de'i byis [211] pa zhig
zhal mthong ba tsam gyis dad pa skyes / chos thun 'ga' nyan /

rJe Śākya Rin-chen (the Je-mkhan-po of Bhutan from 1744 to 1755, which would have been the year of his death) wrote that he relied on the Ras-chung-pa biography by dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan (which is identical to rGod-tshang Ras-pa's text, apart from the author's colophon) in writing the biography of Ras-chung-pa in his *dKar-brgyud kyi nam-thar gser-gyi phreng-ba*. It is indeed a straightforward summary of the rGod-tshang Ras-pa version, without any additions, merely omitting certain details. For example, when he follows people heading towards the upper reaches of the valley, riding a donkey and herding animals is omitted. They are not integral to the narration and merely muddled the flow in rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

When Ras-chung-pa was in his eighth year, his father, having been seized by a severe illness, died. The mother and son were sad. There was a paternal uncle named gNyan 'Bar-re who married the mother. He disliked the Dharma and the mother also fell under his influence and developed a strong aversion [towards Ras-chung-pa]. While he was undergoing the limitless suffering of sadness, neighbours who felt close to him said, "As he is very

²⁰³ sTag-lung Thang-pa, 210-11.

intelligent, he should learn to read and it will be easy [for him].” He went to a teacher from dBus and mastered reading. He was invited to do readings for the valley people and was much in demand. He brought his earnings for reading to his mother and uncle and they became a little more kind. One day, he brought the food he had earned from reading, arrived home, but his mother and uncle were not there. Many people were going to the upper reaches of the valley. He wondered “What’s there?” and followed them. Lord Mi-la was at the cave called Za'-og in the upper reaches of the valley. On meeting him he had goose-flesh, and the appearances of this life stopped in his mind. He remained transfixed for a while. He offered his reading-payment to him. Lord Mi-la said, “Your grandfather, Lha-rje, was a pupil of my teacher, Mar-pa,” and he was very pleased. Mi-la sang a song and his karma was awoken and he naturally went into meditation. [Mi-la] said again and again, “He could be a *ras-pa*. If he were to just become a *ras-pa*, he would be someone good.” The people said, “”If just that will please you, we can offer him to you.”²⁰⁴

...dgung lo brgyad bzhes pa'i tshe / yab de snyun drag pos zin
 nas sku gshegs / yum sras gnyis skyo bar gyur pa la / a khu
 gnyan 'ba' re bya ba zhig yod pa des yum bsdus / de chos la mi
 dga' ba yum yang de'i dbang du song ste shin tu sdang bar gyur
 pas / skyo ba la tshad med pa'i sdug bsngal gyis 'da' bar yod dus
 / khyim mdzes blo nye ba dag na re / shes rab che bar 'dug pas
 klog 'dra slob dang las sla bar yong zer / der slob dpon dbus pa'i
 drung du phyin nas klog yig mkhas par bslabs / yul mi mams

²⁰⁴ Śākya Rin-chen, 192-93.

kyis klog ‘don la bos nas shin tu brims par byung zhing / klog
yon ma khu gnyis la bskyal bas cung zad byams par yod dus /
nyin gcig klog bklags pa’i za yon khyer nas khyim du byon pas
ma khu gnyis mi ‘dug / mi mang po lung pa’i phu na yar ‘gro
zhing ‘dug par ci yod na snyam rjes la byon pas / ra la’i phu za
‘og phug bya ba na / rje mi la bzhugs ‘dug pa mjal bas lus skyi
bung / sems tshe ‘di’i snang ba ‘gags / dar gcig khrong nge lus /
klog gi za yon mams der phul bas / rje mi la’i zhal nas / khyod
kyi mes po lha rje de nga’i bla ma mar pa’i slob ma yin gsung
shin tu mnyes mnyes mdzad / der rje btsun gyis mgur gsung ba
la nyan pas / las sad de ting nge ‘dzin la phyam phyam ‘gro ba
byung / rje btsun gyis / ‘di la ras pa gcig ‘ong / ras pa tsam la
bzang ba zhig yong zhes yang yang gsung bas / mi mams kyis /
de tsam du mnyes na rje btsun la phul bas chog zer

The undated, anonymous *bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar* in the NGMPP collection has very interesting variants, most of which are reproduced in the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng* (circa 1799-1803). There are variations between those two texts at the beginning (e.g., the *Rwa-lung bKa’-brgyud gSer-phreng* changes the uncle’s name to match rGod-tshang Ras-pa and ‘marrying’ *bsdus* is corrupted to ‘beat’ *brdungs*), but in this passage, as in most of the text, they correspond. It appears that the redactor of the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng* made few revisions after the first page. The texts consist almost entirely of narrative elements that appear in rGod-tshang Ras-pa, including numerous textual correlations. The NGMPP *bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar* reads:

[He was born in] Ra-la in Gung-thang. His name was gNyan Jo-sras rDo-rje Grags. When he reached his eighth year, his father died and his uncle, gNyan [25b] Khyi-'bar, married his mother, and they developed a strong aversion towards him.

The neighbours advised that he study reading with his father's teacher, who was a dBus-pa. He learnt to read well.

When he reached his twelfth year he took his reading payments to the venerable Mi-la, who was staying in the Za-'og cave in upper Ra-la, and met him there. [Mi-la] said, "Your grandfather was a pupil of my lha-rje (guru), Mar-pa." [Mi-la] earnestly took [rDo-rje Grags] into his care and their minds blended.²⁰⁵

de yang gung thang ra la zhes bya bar / gnyan jo sras rdo rje
grags ces bya ba lo brgyad lon tsam na / yab gum nas khu bo
gnyan [25b] Khyi 'bar bya ba des ma bsdus te / shin tu sdang
bar byung nas khyim mdzes rnams kyis bslab te / pha'i slob
dpon dbus pa gcig yod pa'i rtsar klog bslabs so / klog legs par
shes te lo bcu gnyis lon tsam na / ra la'i phu / za 'og phug pa
zhes bya ba na / rje btsu (sic) mi la bzhugs pa'i spyen sngar
klog gi 'khyos ma khyer cing phyin te mjal ba dang / khyod kyi
mes po nga'i lha rje mar pa'i slob ma yin gsung (sic) nas / shin
tu thugs la btags nas thugs yid 'dres par gyur te /

This survey of the different versions of the meeting alone is of course limited in its scope, but from it emerges a general picture of the relationship of these texts shown in the diagram that forms Appendix G.

²⁰⁵ NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar*, 25a-25b.

Chapter Four

4. A Sick Ras-chung-pa Goes to India

The appearance and development of a narrative segment

4.1. Introduction

In this chapter, we shall examine in some detail the first major events in Ras-chung-pa's life following his meeting with Mi-la Ras-pa as described in *rGya-ltang-pa* and those texts that follow that narrative lead. These events are his illness and his search for a cure in India. I shall mainly summarise the corresponding passages in the texts, instead of providing translations and their Tibetan originals.

4.2. The absence of this passage in primary sources

These events are entirely absent from the Don-mo Ri-pa section of the *bKa'-brgyud kyi nam-thar chen-mo* of rDo-rje mDzes-'od, the Second Zhwa-dmar-pa mKha'-spyod dBang-phyug's (1350-1405) *Byin-brlabs kyi sPrin-spung* and the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, as well as from later works such as the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* and sTag-lung Ngag-dbang nam-rgyal (1571-1626).

It is not that these texts skip ahead, leaving narrative gaps where these events in Ras-chung-pa's life could have taken place.

In the Don-mo Ri-pa section of rDo-rje mDzes-'od, Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa leave Ras-chung-pa's home area, Mi-la carrying the young boy across the dPal-thang plain, and thereafter they live in a succession of remote locations.¹

In *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, after the initial meeting² Mi-la takes Ras-chung-pa, in spite of his reluctance, to a remote forested area in lHo-mon (which

¹ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 194.

refers to present-day Nepalese territory).³ There then follows an account of many years spent in such locations⁴ until there occurs the conflict and debate with bKa'-gdams-pa monks⁵ that precipitates Ras-chung-pa's journey to India in search of the *snyan-rgyud* instructions.⁶

The *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, a twelfth-century text by Ras-chung-pa's pupils, is now lost, but its colophon was preserved by rGod-tshang Ras-pa.⁷ It indicates that the lost biography contained a description of Ras-chung-pa's visit to India to study under Ti-pu-pa, but supplies no proof that it included an earlier visit to be cured of an illness by Varacandra. It is unlikely that rGod-tshang Ras-pa's own description of Ras-chung-pa's sickness and cure was repeated verbatim from that primary source, for it is evidently composite and has less narrative consistency and clarity than rGya-ldang-pa's thirteenth-century version.

4.3.1. rGya-ldang-pa bDe-chen rDo-rje

rJe-bstun Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags-pa'i rNam-thar (1268-66)

In rGya-ldang-pa's version of the life of Mi-la Ras-pa,⁸ he includes the early death of Mi-la's father, the existence of a sister, the building and demolition of buildings, etc., which were absent from the versions surviving from the previous century. The Mi-la Ras-pa biography also shows signs of being a summary and compilation resulting in the narrative being a little disjointed and sometimes lacking in clarity. Therefore, rGya-ldang-pa may also have included detailed but fanciful elements in his version of Ras-chung-pa's life. Although the *Vajracāṇḍa* practice of Vajrapāṇi was taught by Varacandra in India (see Appendix B) and by Ras-chung-pa in Tibet, Ras-chung-pa's sickness and early

² *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 37b-42a; (Oxford), 29b7-31b7; (Stockholm), n.a.

³ *Ibid.*, (Newark), 42a-46b; (Oxford), 31b7-33b6; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁴ *Ibid.* (Newark), 46b-59b, (Oxford), 33b6-46b7; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁵ *Ibid.*, (Newark), 59b-65a6; (Oxford), 46b7-50b6; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁶ *Ibid.*, (Newark), 65a6-73a5; (Oxford), 50b6-56b2; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁷ rGod-Tshang Ras-pa, 654-55.

⁸ rGya-ldang-pa, 189-263.

visit to India could be an apocryphal story designed to inspire faith in the power of the practice.

That sickness and visit to India are described within rGya-ldang-pa's biography of Ras-chung-pa,⁹ Mi-la Ras-pa, on meeting Ras-chung-pa, tells him that his own childhood had been similar to his. For the next few days Ras-chung-pa brings Mi-la Ras-pa the food that he earns by reading. His mother finds out from the patrons what is going on. Angry, she throws stones at Mi-la Ras-pa. Mi-la Ras-pa decides that Ras-chung-pa would be better off living with him than with her, and so they stay together through the winter.

In the spring the mother and uncle forcibly take Ras-chung-pa home to work at ploughing. He disturbs a local deity in doing this and falls sick with an illness called *btsan-'dze*.¹⁰ His mother and uncle send him back to Mi-la. When Ras-chung-pa tells Mi-la what has happened, Mi-la admonishes him, telling him he is stupider than an animal. An animal goes from bad grass to better, but Ras-chung-pa has come to him, and he is unable to help. Mi-la tells him to seek help from someone else.

Ras-chung-pa goes to a rNying-ma lama who has just returned from Kong-po in central Tibet. The lama gives Ras-chung-pa a house to stay in. Another lama teaches him a protective mantra and he goes to practise it in a cave. During this time his mother supports him by sending him meagre amounts of food, but eventually sends a message that she is not going to give him any more.

A little while later, three Indian yogins passing by ask him for food. He invites them in and shares his remaining food with them. One of the yogins, staring at him, calls out "Tsi-ti dzwa-la"¹¹ and "na-ga bha-'u-ta." One of the yogins knows Tibetan and translates this as: "You have 'dze. You are being harmed by many nāgas."

⁹ Ibid., 343-48.

¹⁰ Ibid., 344.

¹¹ Ibid., 344-45: tsi-tsi dzwa-la; *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud Biographies*, 194: tsi-ti dzo-la.

The *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud Biographies* edition has *ci-ti dzo-la*. *Dzo-la* is a corruption of *dzwa-la* based on its phonology, as Tibetans normally pronounce a word with an “a” vowel and a subfixed *wa* as “o” when the word is a transliteration from the Sanskrit. *Ci-ti* however is more likely to be the original form as the *gSo-ba rig-pa’i tshig-mdzod g.yu-thog dgongs-rgyan*, quoting from *rGyud-bzhi’i dKa’-’grel* by dPal-spungs dBon Karma bsTan-’dzin ’Phrin-las Rab-rgyas, gives *citi-jvala* as the Sanskrit for *mdze*, which is an alternative spelling of ‘dze.¹² *Citi-jvala*, which would literally mean “the blaze of consciousness”, does not appear in available Sanskrit dictionaries. The *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo* gives the form *rtsi ti dzwa la*, stating that it is a Sanskrit word and gives the Tibetan as “blazing mdze” (*mdze ’bar-ba*).¹³ What is meant here by this word, regularly but unreliably translated into English as leprosy, will be discussed further on.

Na-ga bha-’u-ta is presumably derived from an Indic dialect or from a corruption of the Sanskrit *nāga* and the indeclinable *bahutaḥ* (“from many”, “by many” or “from all sides”).¹⁴

The yogins decide to forgo their pilgrimage to Mount Wu-t’ai-shan in China, and instead take Ras-chung-pa to their guru Walatsaṇḍa¹⁵ (Varacandra or Bālacandra; see below) in India. Ras-chung-pa is told to bring with him a horn for sucking out blood from his swellings and a gourd for collecting pus and blood.

When they reach India and Ras-chung-pa sees Varacandra’s hermitage in the distance, he does not walk the last stretch of the journey, but prostrates himself and goes along the ground “like a worm”. Varacandra sends the three yogins to Oḍḍiyāna and teaches Ras-chung-pa the “Wrathful Vajrapāṇi with Garuḍa supplement” (*rdo-rje gtum-po khyung-sham-can*). Ras-chung-pa

¹² *gSo-ba rig-pa’i tshig-mdzod g.yu-thog dgongs-rgyan*, ed. dBang’dus (China: mi-rigs dpe-skrunkhang, 1982), 510.

¹³ *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo*, 2218.

¹⁴ Monier-Williams, 724.

¹⁵ rGya-ldang-pa, (a scribal error here leaves out *ḍa*), 345; *Biographies*, 195.

practises this for twenty-one days and then dreams that many people are going to watch his army fight the spirits of Tibet. He sees *garuḍas* chasing creatures into the sky, and awakes to find himself healed.

Ras-chung-pa waits until the morning before going to see Varacandra, fearful of interrupting his night because he's Nepalese and has that people's short temper! Indeed, when Ras-chung-pa does tell him the good news, Varacandra upbraids him for having a Tibetan lack of dedication and tells him to carry on practising.

Varacandra's wife, on discovering that Ras-chung-pa is a practitioner in a lineage derived from Nāropa, gives him cloth that he can take as a gift to "Te-pu-pa (the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud Biographies* version has Ti-bu-pa),¹⁶ a pupil of Nāropa".

Afterwards, Ras-chung-pa, again on the wife's advice, accompanies Varacandra on two healing missions. In the first of these, Varacandra cures a queen by releasing a frog from inside a growth on her head. In the second case, he deflates a woman swollen from snakebite by making her blow into a chicken's beak. The chicken swells up, loses its feathers and dies, and the woman is cured. Varacandra assures Ras-chung-pa that he has the power to cause the unfortunate chicken to be reborn in a higher existence.

Varacandra declares Ras-chung-pa cured and sends him back to Tibet. In Nepal he hears that Mi-la is in sNya-nam and so seeks him out there, at Brod-phug cave.

The story of Ras-chung-pa's family is then brought to a slightly peculiar conclusion in what appears to be a crude addition to the narrative, perhaps designed to make Mi-la seem more caring. Mi-la tells Ras-chung-pa that he had sent for him, wishing to nurse him, only to find that he had gone to India. Then Ras-chung-pa's mother and uncle come for him again (even though the narrative has now removed Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa far from his homeland). Mi-la

¹⁶ rGya-ldang-pa, 346; *Biographies*, 197.

threatens them with sorcery and they run away, both out of Ras-chung-pa's life and out of rGya-ldang-pa's narrative. It is not, however, explained why Mi-la didn't do that in the first place, and save Ras-chung-pa all his troubles.

Ras-chung-pa then makes a commitment to stay with Mi-la for twelve years. He receives the *caṇḍālī* instructions, and by mastering its practice becomes able to wear cotton only. Therefore he is given the name Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags.

One is struck by Mi-la Ras-pa's limitations in this version. This portrayal reminds one of the human and fallible version of Mi-la Ras-pa as described by his own pupil, sGam-po-pa, in what is the earliest available version of Mi-la Ras-pa's life. In rGya-ldang-pa's version, Mi-la Ras-pa does not know who the child he meets is or what his background is. When winter is over and Ras-chung-pa is needed for ploughing, Mi-la is unable to prevent the mother and uncle from taking Ras-chung-pa away and he is particularly unhelpful when Ras-chung-pa falls sick. In later narratives there is a diminution of signs of deficiency in Mi-la Ras-pa, and an increase in his clairvoyant faculties and supernatural powers. However, surviving elements from this passage, which are ineluctably a part of the narrative structure, remain to cause problems in creating a coherent, internally consistent narrative.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Ras-chung-pa's mother is the principal villain and the uncle is a background figure in rGya-ldang-pa's story, but future versions will reverse their roles.

The story of Ras-chung-pa's sickness and cure demonstrates for a practitioner the efficacy as well as the origins of "the Wrathful Vajrapāṇi with Garuḍa supplement" in combating sickness. This practice was introduced into Tibet by Ras-chung-pa and is still a method used to combat various epidermal illnesses. The practice is therefore also known as "The Caṇḍamahārocana Vajrapāṇi of the Ras-chung tradition". He is portrayed in *Five Hundred Buddhist Deities* as having

three eyes and blazing hair. He stands, legs astride, upon two prostrate naked human figures, wearing a tiger-skin skirt and serpent adornments, both hands in a threatening gesture, with the right holding aloft a vajra, and the left resting a bell against the hip.¹⁷ Meditation practice as a method to cure illness by countering the influence of supernatural beings is not at all unusual.

4.3.2. The Sickness

Whether there is a historical basis to this story or not, what is this ‘*dze*’ sickness that Ras-chung-pa is said to suffer from? The only symptoms mentioned are swelling of the body, and sores that drip blood and pus, but miraculously fall off his body during the night he is healed.

The illness is called *btsan-‘dze*. ‘*Dze*’ is an alternative spelling for the more common *mdze*. A *bTsan* is a class of local deity in Tibet, and is said to cause illness. *mDze* is classed as an illness that is caused by non-humans.¹⁸ The word is also used in compounds to mean powerful.

mDze is normally translated into English as leprosy. However, though leprosy is *mdze*, *mdze* may not be leprosy in the modern sense of the word, which refers to what is called Hansen’s disease. Medical terminology is very limited in Tibetan, so that various illnesses can be covered by one word. Thus *mdze*, as in the western archaic use of “leprosy” can refer to a number of skin diseases. According to the *Tshig mDzod Chen-mo* there are eighteen or thirty-six kinds of *mdze*.¹⁹ Chandra Das translates *mdze* as leprosy and gives *kuṣṭha* as the Sanskrit equivalent. Monier Williams states that there are eighteen forms of *kuṣṭha*, only eleven of which are serious.²⁰ One form, *koṭha*, seems to be ringworm or impetigo,²¹ while

¹⁷ *Five Hundred Buddhist Deities; Senri Ethnological Reports 2*, compiled by Musashi Tachikawa, Masahide Mori, Shinobu Yamauchi (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1995), 199.

¹⁸ *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo*, 1354.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 2337.

²⁰ Monier-Williams, 297.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 313.

śvitra (Tibetan: *mdze-skyā*) is translated as both “white leprosy” and vitiligo.²² This suggests that the Tibetan term *mdze* may also refer to a variety of illnesses other than Hansen’s disease.

For example the term *glang-zhu*, in Tibetan refers to two illnesses: an itching skin-disease in which the skin becomes white and has soft, small, white lumps and a type of *mdze* in which the skin and flesh becomes thick, like an ox’s nape, and crack.²³ The latter is probably synonymous with *lPags-mdze* in which the colour of the skin becomes ashen and rough to the touch, like an elephant’s skin. This is clearly distinct from the *mdze* named *lPags-myags* (literally “rotting skin”), in which the skin of the body rots, and there are running sores (*gram-pa*),²⁴ and the *mdze* named *Shu-ba Kha-brgya*, “hundred-mouth lesions”, in which the dead flesh has lesions and many cracks.²⁵

An illness called *Chu-ser nag-po* (“Black lymph”) on the other hand is not classed as *mdze*, even though its symptoms include a darkened and itchy skin with the loss of hair and eyebrows, but it is said to become *mdze* in its severest form.²⁶

It is uncertain therefore which specific kinds of *mdze* correspond to the two forms of leprosy (or Hansen’s disease) recognised in Western medical literature, both of which are caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium leprae*. In Tuberculoid Hansen’s disease there are raised, scaly hairless lesions on the skin. Lepromatous Hansen’s disease is the classical form of leprosy, in which there are swellings on the body and the loss of eyebrows, nose-cartilage and the bones of the fingers and toes.

Leprosy and various other skin illnesses are often associated with *nāgas*, the serpent deities of India, which in China were identified with dragons and in Tibet with the water and river deities called *Klu*. Nevertheless, *rGya-ltang-pa* makes no direct reference to a *nāga*, only to a “deity of the ground”, but the *Vajrapāṇi-Garuḍa*

²² Ibid., 1106.

²³ *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo*, 422.

²⁴ Ibid., 1648.

²⁵ Ibid., 2851.

²⁶ Ibid., 812.

practice is directed against *nāgas*. The *garuḍa* is portrayed biting on a *nāga*, and Vajrapāṇi wears the five castes of the *nāgas* as body adornments,

Ras-chung-pa is not alone in Tibetan religious history in being miraculously cured of an illness named *mdze*. ‘Bri-gung ‘Jig-rten mGon-po po, the founder of the ‘Bri-gung bKa’-brgyud tradition, is said to have fallen ill with *mdze* so that he prepared to go into the mountains to die. However, he was overcome by intense compassion, so that during the night he saw *nāgas* leave his body. He was then cured within days.²⁷ Another example is Thod-smyon bSam-grub (the great-grandson of the eleventh-century female master Ma-cig Lab-kyi sGron-ma). He is said to have been cured of *mdze* during a meditation retreat in which he became free of the illness “as a snake sheds its skin”.²⁸

4.3.3 Varacandra

The name Walatsaṇḍa may be a Nepalese or Maithili pronunciation of Varacandra, for in those languages *Ba* and *La* regularly replace the classical *Va* and *Ra*. Otherwise the name would have to be Bālacandra, with a long first vowel. Varacandra appears to be confirmed by the translation of his name in some colophons as Zla-ba bZang-po (See Appendix B).

The only accounts of Varacandra available to us are those that appear in Ras-chung-pa biographies, and they only concern Varacandra’s relationship with Ras-chung-pa. Nevertheless, Varacandra is not a legendary figure. His historical existence is attested to by the colophons of fourteen canonical texts that he helped to translate into Tibetan, and he may have been involved in the translation of at least another eight texts (See Appendix B). Though listed as one of two translators, this does not imply that Varacandra knew Tibetan, but simply that he helped the Tibetan translator to understand the text. The translations that he assisted in were made by Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims, of whom there is no information other than the

²⁷ *Deb-thcr sNgon-po* (Roerich) 597; (‘Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 520.

colophons to his seventeen translations, and he is not recorded in the canon as having worked with any other Indian master.

Varacandra was a Vajrapāṇi master. He helped to translate two Vajrapāṇi tantras and at least seven Vajrapāṇi texts composed by Karmavajra, which are the very teachings transmitted in Ras-chung-pa's lineage. Varacandra was also involved in the translation of other works that were important for Ras-chung-pa: the Amitāyus practices composed by Ras-chung-pa's female guru Siddharājñī (See Appendix B).

Karmavajra himself worked on the translation of seven texts with a Tibetan named Kumaraśīla, also known as gZhon-nu Tshul-khrims (See Appendix B).²⁹ One of those seven texts was authored by Lalitavajra, a pupil of Tilopa and therefore a contemporary of Nāropa (who died in 1040). This would make Karmavajra probably active in the middle to latter half of the eleventh century and probably a direct teacher of Varacandra.

Karmavajra appears in rGod-tshang Ras-pa's list of Ras-chung-pa's previous lives (though not in the list given by lHa-btsun). This is based upon their both being an emanation of Vajrapāṇi; other Vajrapāṇi emanations —Ānanda, Indrabhūti, King Sucandra of Śambhala, etc.— are identified as previous lives of Ras-chung-pa by rGod-tshang Ras-pa.³⁰ Although Varacandra is an obvious candidate to be recognised as an emanation of Vajrapāṇi he is never declared to be so in rGod-tshang Ras-pa's narrative, presumably because this would lead to the awkwardness that Ras-chung-pa's teacher would be his own previous life!

4.3.3. Tirhut

Before we go further, we should address the question of where exactly in India Ras-chung-pa has been portrayed as going. Whether this early visit was

²⁸ Ibid., (Roerich) 986; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 874.

²⁹ Derge bsTang'yur, texts 480, 1635, 1636, 1826, 1840, 3769, 4712.

³⁰ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 5-6.

fictional or not, it is the same area where Ras-chung-pa's pupilage under Ti-pu-pa took place, and there are some clues as to this location.

None of the versions portray Ras-chung-pa as travelling at length through the Indian plain, let alone crossing the Ganges, which features strongly in the biographies of other masters such as Mar-pa. He does not reach any important centre of Buddhism south of the Ganges, such as Nālandā, or even a district such as Vaiśālī to the north of the Ganges.

Accounts of the earlier visit do not describe Ras-chung-pa passing through the Kathmandu valley, but accounts of this one definitely historical visit to India do. In those accounts, Ras-chung-pa was initially prevented from proceeding beyond the southern borders of Nepal into the next kingdom as there was a restriction on travel owing to conflict between these two kingdoms.

South of the Nepalese kingdom, at the beginning of the Indian plain, lay the kingdom of Tirhut. This land has had a dozen names:³¹ it was referred to as Videha in the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa before the middle of the first millennium BC, and the name Tirabhukti has been found on seals dating from the sixth century AD.³² Tirabhukti is the origin for the variant Tirhut, which was Sanskritised into Trihuta.³³ Mithila was one of a number of ancient alternative names, and is now the most commonly used.

The term Tirhut or Mithila can refer, geographically, to all the land between the Ganges and the Himalayas that is bordered on the west by the Gandaki River and on the east by the Kosi.³⁴ However as a political entity the independent Tirhut or Mithila kingdom was not established until it broke away from the Pala empire in 1079. This martial feat was accomplished by Nanyadeva (reigned 1079-1147), the founder of the Karnataka dynasty (1079-1324). Nanyadeva established the capital at

³¹ C. P. N. Sinha, *Mithila under the Karnatas: c., 1097-1325 A.D.* (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1979), 4.

³² J. C. Jha, *Migration and Achievements of Maithila Paṇḍitas: The Migrant Scholars of Mithila, 800-1947 AD* (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, 1991), 2.

³³ *Ibid.*, 4.

³⁴ C. P. N. Sinha, 3.

Simraon, on the Mithila-Nepal border³⁵ and used military means to expand his territory. He is recorded as invading Nepal in 1119-20.³⁶ His kingdom of Mithila was not as extensive as the geographical area of that name.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa is the only author to provide a name for the land that Ras-chung-pa visits, calling it bDe-ba (“Bliss”). There seems to be no obvious source for this name. It is perhaps possible that it was derived from *bhukti* as a short form of Tirabhukti, as *bhukti* can mean “enjoyment”, although *bhukti* in its usage here is presently considered to mean “an administrative unit”.³⁷

rGod-tshang Ras-pa names the town in *bDe-ba* as Pa-ta-bas-ta (but also as Ta-bas-ta and Ta-ba-sa-ta, which indicates the degree of corruption non-Tibetan names were susceptible to even within the same text). Evidence that this refers to Tirhut appears to be found in the travel accounts of Chag Lotsāba (also known as Chos-rje dPal, 1197-1264), who wrote an unique first-person account of his journey in India.³⁸ He went there at the age of thirty-seven, in 1234, and stayed there for two years, spending one monsoon at Bodhgayā and a second at Nālandā.³⁹

In rGod-tshang Ras-pa there are no intimations of danger from Muslims during Ras-chung-pa’s time in India. The destructive Muslim raids early in the eleventh century were long past, and the next Muslim invasion, which was to prove so disastrous for Indian Buddhism, still lay nearly a century ahead. They did not overrun Tirhut until 1324. By the time of Chag Lotsāba, Ikhtiyār-ud-Dīn Muḥammad had conquered Bihar and Bengal, between 1193 and 1205, and bands of Afghani-Turk Muslim soldiers were roaming the countryside. En route, Chag Lotsawa stayed at the capital of Tirhut, where he found additional guards posted outside the palace, since the Muslims had made an unsuccessful attempt at invasion the previous year. Chag Lotsawa had an audience with Nanyadeva’s descendant,

³⁵ Makhan Jha, *Civilizational Regions of Mithila and Mahakoshal* (Delhi: Capital Publishing House, 1982), 181.

³⁶ C. P. N. Sinha, 49.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 3.

³⁸ *Biography of Dharmasvāmin*, (Roerich), 57-60, 98-100; (Zongtse), 28-40, 166-78.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 63- 97; (Zongtse), 40-166.

King Rāmasimhadeva (1227-1285).⁴⁰ Chag Lotsāba states that the capital, named Pata, was within easy reach of Nepal; when he had left the area where Nepalese was spoken, he had directly entered Tirhut, and had met many Nepalese there. He states that Tirhut was 20 days journey at its narrowest,⁴¹ but that it took him three months to travel south through Tirhut, followed by just another eight days to reach Vaiśālī⁴² and then a further eight to reach Bodhgaya.⁴³ This agrees with the chronicles that state that the previous king had extended his territory to the south.

Chag Lo-tsā-ba gives the city's name as *Pa-ta*, and not as Simrāon-garh (aka Simarāma-garh) as it is generally recorded.⁴⁴ Sīmarāma-garh was also known as Sīmarāma-paṭṭana, with *paṭṭana* simply meaning city⁴⁵ (cf. Patan's name—Lalitapaṭṭana). Chag Lotsāba's *Pa-ta* is therefore probably derived from an abbreviation of the latter half of that name. *Pa-ta* could also be the source for rGod-tshang Ras-pa's *Pa-ta-bas-ta*. There is the possibility that rGod-tshang Ras-pa's *Pa-ta-bas-ta* is an uncorrupted version of a place name. The second half of the name—*basta*—does occur in certain Indian/Nepali place names, and is derived originally from *vasta* or *vastu*, meaning “a site”.

4.4. The Fourteenth Century

Only two surviving fourteenth-century texts repeat this episode. One of these, the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud Biographies* (compiled after 1360), merely repeats rGya-ldang-pa's life of Ras-chung-pa verbatim.⁴⁶

The *Deb-ther dMar-po* (completed in 1363) covers this subject in just one short sentence, but obviously accepts the basic narrative that rGya-ldang-pa uses.

⁴⁰ R. K. Choudhari, 110.

⁴¹ Ibid., (Roerich) 8, 57; (Zongtse) 32/33.

⁴² Ibid., (Roerich), 10, 61; (Zongtse) 40/41.

⁴³ Ibid., (Roerich) 11, 63; (Zongtse) 46/7.

⁴⁴ Ibid., (Roerich) 110.

⁴⁵ Monier-Williams, 579, col.3, for *paṭṭa*, cf. *Paṭṭanivasana*.

⁴⁶ *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud Biographies*, 191-243.

The *Red Annals* states that Ras-chung-pa received Vajrapāṇi from Pa-la-tsan-tra (i.e., Varacandra), practised it and recovered from *mdze*.

4.5. The Fifteenth Century

Here we can first compare four works: *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, Mon-rtse-pa, *Deb-ther sNgon-po* and Byang-chub bZang-po to see their relationship to rGya-ldang-pa and each other in terms of Ras-chung-pa's visit to Varacandra.

This will followed by an examination of this passage in the works of gTsang-smyon Heruka.

4.5.1 *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*⁴⁷

(written between 1446 and 1451)

As stated above, the earlier Karma bKa'-brgyud versions and the 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud version of rDo-rje mDzes-'od did not have the "leprosy" and Varacandra episode. The *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, as we have already seen, merged those narrative traditions with that of rGya-ldang-pa, adopting from the latter the "Ras-chung-pa as reader" motif. *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* also gives a summarised version of the rGya-ldang-pa type "sickness and cure in India" episode, but is not based on rGya-ldang-pa itself.

The *lHo-rong Chos-byung* does not mention the passing of winter *before* the mother and uncle take Ras-chung-pa home to work in the fields, so that it gives the impression that this occurred as soon as Ras-chung-pa became Mi-la Ras-pa's pupil. The illness is specified to be a nāga-sickness (*klu'i-nad*). rGya-ldang-pa's *btsan-mdze* does not appear again in any narrative tradition. On falling ill, Ras-chung-pa is, as in rGya-ldang-pa, sent to Mi-la Ras-pa, but Mi-la's lack of a warm welcome and his protestation of helplessness are now omitted. This creates a narrative jolt, for

⁴⁷ *lHo-rong*, 108-9.

Ras-chung-pa next, for no apparent reason, is suddenly receiving instructions from a rNying-ma lama, who gives him a house to stay in. The two lamas who helped Ras-chung-pa in rGya-ldang-pa are here merged into one. The *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* adds that the mantra practice he received did succeed in making him better, thus removing the implication of an ineffective mantra practice. The two narrative locations of house and cave that were given in rGya-ldang-pa appear to merge into one, the cave being eliminated. There does remain a shadow of the second location however, for Ras-chung-pa's mother, for no apparent reason, does not allow him to stay at that house and so he leaves, though it is not said where he moves to. Perhaps the *lHo-rong* interpreted the narrative to mean that Ras-chung-pa's parents' home belonged to the lama and Ras-chung-pa had been commanded to stay in his own home. It is a possible reading of rGya-ldang-pa, but sits awkwardly with his mother sending him a pack of food.

It is not said where he went on leaving the house, but the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* then repeats the meeting with three Indians yogins. One of them cries out *tsi-tsi dzo-la*, which is mutated (in the same way as had occurred in the *bDe-mchog sNyan-brgyud Biographies*) from the *Tsi tsi dzwa-la*⁴⁸ given by rGya-ldang-pa.

This brief account provides no details of the journey to India, but it is said that he was cured twenty-five days after receiving the Vajrapāṇi-Garuda practice from Walatsaṇḍa (Varacandra). This might be a combination of rGya-ldang-pa's twenty-one days with his unspecified time of extra practice after the cure.

The two stories of Varacandra's powers of healing are conflated into one. Varacandra cures a queen, but her sickness is not a growth on her head, but a swollen body caused by snakebite. She blows into a peacock, not a chicken, which dies.

⁴⁸ rGya-ldang-pa, 345.

Ras-chung-pa is sent to meet Ti-pu-pa, but as Varacandra's wife is left out of the narrative the impression given is that he was sent by Varacandra himself. He is then, as in rGya-ldang-pa, sent back to Tibet and meets Mi-la at sNye-nam.

He receives *caṇḍalī* instructions from Mi-la, and after a year of practice can wear cotton alone. He makes a commitment to remain with Mi-la for twelve years, is given all Mi-la's other instructions and becomes a master over all the other pupils.

There are precise textual elements from rGya-ldang-pa that are inherited by the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*. A comparison with Mon-rtse-pa and Byang-chub bZang-po reveals how they chose different passages or words from the same source. For example, in the sentence where Ras-chung-pa's parents send him to Mi-la:

rGya-ldang-pa has *slob-dpon* preceded by the second person genitive in: *da khyod rang gi slob dpon de can la rgyug cig zer* ("Now, run off to that master of yours!")⁴⁹

Mon-rtse-pa retains only the *da*, *can* and *zer* in: *da mi la can du song zer* ("Now, go to Mi-la!").⁵⁰

lHo-rong Chos-'byung has the same variation, but retains the second-person pronoun, while omitting the genitive particle, making the second person pronoun into a nominative: *da khyod rang mi la can du song zer* ("Now, you go to Mi-la!").

Byang-chub bZang-po has the same line of dialogue by the parents, though transposed to a slightly later and ill-fitting part of the narrative, omitting *da*, using synonyms, but agreeing with the other two texts in the use of *song*: *khyod rang gi rnal-'byor pa'i sar song zer* ("Go to your yogin!").⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid., 344.

⁵⁰ Mon-rtse-pa, 166.

⁵¹ Byang-chub bZang-po, 126.

Both Mon-rtse-pa and *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* have written *mid-la can du song* instead of *slob-dpon de can rgyug*, (although *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* replaces the archaic spelling of Mid-la with Mi-la), while Byang-chub bZang-po has used a synonym. This demonstrates that the later three authors probably based themselves on the same material, which was not identical with rGya-ldang-pa, and perhaps also served as rGya-ldang-pa's source.

4.5.2. Mon-rtse-pa

(written sometime between 1450 and 1475)

Mon-rtse-pa presents a simplified form of the rGya-ldang-pa passage and sometimes replaces words in the original text with synonyms. This reworking initially obscures the close correspondence between the two texts. He follows the basic rGya-ldang-pa version of the narrative, but adds the following details:⁵²

He learns to read and count *before* his father dies, so that his uncle and mother become more villainous, as they are only taking advantage of his learning rather than providing him with this education.

Mi-la Ras-pa states that Ras-chung-pa's childhood is better than his was, rather than the same. This reflects an increasing emphasis on the uniqueness of Mi-la Ras-pa's suffering and achievement.

Mi-la Ras-pa teaches Ras-chung-pa the mantra of Mañjuśrī. (This mantra is still considered good as an initial mantra for children, to increase their learning capacity.)

The day after the meeting, Ras-chung-pa brings Mi-la Ras-pa a leg of meat, not just tsampa.

⁵² Mon-rtse-pa, 166-67.

When a patron escorts Ras-chung-pa home, the mother and uncle take the food from him, but don't bring him into the house. This saddens him and makes him think of going to live with Mi-la.

A lady patron (it is not clear if this is the same person who had escorted him home) accompanies Ras-chung-pa when he decides to go to Mi-la Ras-pa and she offers Mi-la a turquoise, which he refuses.

The uncle, as well as the mother, because of the interruption of their food supply, come and break down Mi-la's door, throw stones at him and take Ras-chung-pa away. This reflects the decreased emphasis on the mother as principal villain in this narrative. The stone throwing is no longer, as it was in *rGya-ldang-pa*, the cause for Ras-chung-pa's departure from home, because he has already left.

There is no seasonal pause and no advent of spring before they take him home to plough the fields. Instead, Mon-rtse-pa presents the ploughing as work that Ras-chung-pa's parents make him do as a substitute for supporting them through his reading.

Following Ras-chung-pa's sickness, Mon-rtse-pa provides a brief version of Mi-la Ras-pa's admonition to Ras-chung-pa (in which he compares him unfavourably to an animal) and Mi-la's declaration of his inability to help him. However, oddly, Mi-la Ras-pa also teaches Ras-chung-pa the Vajrapāṇi-Garuḍa practice, so that the *rNying-ma* lama is omitted. This is presumably to offset the image of Mi-la Ras-pa as giving no help at all, but it runs contrary to the logic of the narrative in which Ras-chung-pa remains sick and has to travel all the way to India to obtain this very same cure. A further narrative problem is that, in conformity with the structure of the original narrative, Ras-chung-pa goes to practise in another place away from Mi-la Ras-pa, but now for no apparent reason.

In conformity with the mother's not being portrayed as the principal villain, both uncle and mother state that they have no more supplies for him.

The meeting with the three yogins and the journey to Varacandra, here named Wa-la-tsan-tra, is similar to *rGya-ldang-pa* but brief and simplified, though

the text does make one addition: “[Ras-chung-pa] could not travel, [so] he would be sent [ahead] early in the morning.” This appears to originate in a scribal corruption of rGya-ldang-pa’s *sngams rus gcig dang* (“a sucking-horn and...”) to *snga-du btang* (“sent early”). *gCig* is usually written in *dbu-med* as just the sign for the numeral one, and therefore could easily be missed.

Mon-rtse-pa specifies that at the point when Varacandra’s hermitage comes into sight, it is the yogins that proceed by prostrating, and that is the reason why the journey takes a long time. This theme will be differently developed in rGod-tshang Ras-pa into Ras-chung-pa’s inability to walk, so that he has to pull himself along the ground, not out of devotion, but because of physical inability (although, anomalously, on reaching the hermitage he is up on his feet again).

In this version Mi-la has already taught the Vajrapāṇi practice to Ras-chung-pa, and perhaps that is why Varacandra cures him by “water blessed with mantras” in twenty-five days, with no mention of Vajrapāṇi.

Varacandra’s healing visits are omitted, but his wife remains in the story, sending Ras-chung-pa to meet Ti-pu-pa.

As in the earlier versions, Ras-chung-pa returns to Brod-phug cave in sNye-nams. Mon-rtse-pa, basing himself on the same source used by rGya-ldang-pa, also has Mi-la saying that he had enquired after Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la’s frightening away the mother and uncle with the threat of sorcery (in spite of the narrative having now placed Mi-la and Ras-chung far from his home).

Ras-chung-pa promises to stay with him for twelve years. He is given the name rDo-rje Grags and practises *caṇḍālī* successfully.

4.5.3. Byang-chub bZang-po

The version that appears in Byang-chub bZang-po’s text⁵³ is earlier than the date of his mid-sixteenth century compilation, and the author is unknown (but falsely attributed). Its narrative seems to be a rather crude summary based upon a

⁵³ Byang-chub bZang-po, vol. 1, 125-50.

source that was also used by rGya-ldang-pa, *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, Mon-rtse-pa and the *lHo-rong Chos-byung*, and shows no signs of being influenced by gTsang-smyon or rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

As in Mon-rtse-pa, the day after Ras-chung-pa's first meeting with Mi-la, he takes him a leg of meat, though here the uncle comes searching for the meat and beats both Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa. This peculiar addition appears to be a mutation of a phrase that is repeated in Mon-rtse-pa at this point in the narrative: "[Ras-chung-pa] brought it to the venerable one so that they both ate it (rje btsun la drangs pas/ gnyis kas gsol lo).⁵⁴ In Byang-chub bZang-po the very same place in the narrative has "[Ras-chung-pa] brought it to the lama so that [the uncle] beat the lama and both" (bla ma la drangs pas/ bla ma dang gnyis ka brdungs), where "lama" appears to be a rather crude addition, causing poor grammar.

It is not until this point in Byang-chub bZang-po that Ras-chung-pa tells Mi-la his story and Mi-la says that their childhood is the same (without adding that his own was a little worse, as in Mon-rtse-pa). He learns "the path of method" (a phrase that covers all deity visualisation and yoga practices) from Mi-la but is then taken by the mother and uncle to plough. Following his illness, Mi-la declares he cannot help him (as in rGya-ldang-pa and Mon-rtse-pa). He learns the wrathful Vajrapāṇi (which he also receives at this time in Mon-rtse-pa, though from Mi-la) from another unspecified lama. Thus, the Byang-chub bZang-po version retains the other master who is found in rGya-ldang-pa and in an attenuated form in the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, but was omitted by Mon-rtse-pa. Nevertheless, it is Mon-rtse-pa who first introduces the motif of Ras-chung-pa having already received the Vajrapāṇi practice before going to India (a detail that will be repeated by rGod-tshang Ras-pa). The Vajrapāṇi practised by Ras-chung-pa is said to be with garuḍa wings (*gshog*), rather than garuḍa supplement (*gsham*) as was stated in Mon-rtse-pa. This variation is also found in gTsang-smyon and rGod-tshang Ras-pa, although otherwise there seems to be no other influence on those texts. The Byang-

⁵⁴ Mon-rtse-pa, 165.

chub bZang-po text, while using the same rare phrasing as Mon-rtse-pa, adds that this practice did not help, while *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* says it did.⁵⁵ This again gives the impression that they are both adapting a common source, making their own modulations through omission and addition.

When the mother and uncle send Ras-chung-pa a limited and final provision they also send the message, "There is nothing else. Go to your yogin." (*khyod rang gi mal 'byor pa'i sar song zer*). This is clearly transposed to an illogical place from its earlier position in the other narratives, which is when Ras-chung-pa falls ill. This phrase occurs in Byang-chub bZang-po at the point where in Mon-rtse-pa there is a slightly similar phrase (*de nas ras chung pa'i rtsar*), in which Ras-chung-pa is the accusative object for the verb of the arrival of the yogins. This phrase is absent in the Byang-chub bZang-po text, replaced, it appears, by the earlier, similar, transposed phrase.

Three yogins (as in rGya-ldang-pa, *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* and Mon-rtse-pa and the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*) appear and their leader says, "Tsi-tsi dzo-la," a corruption of *dzwa-la* as in *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*. There follows a unique variation, probably inspired by the original text that Mon-rtse-pa and *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* relied on (though in this case Byang-chub bZang-po shows a closer affinity to *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* rather than to Mon-rtse-pa). The leading yogin's statement that they were on the way to Wu-t'ai-shan is slightly changed to mean that he is coming *back* from there, so that Ras-chung-pa's troubles do not interrupt their pilgrimage. Ras-chung-pa's journey to India and his practice under Wa-la-tsaṇḍa (Varacandra) are mentioned briefly, simply stating that Ras-chung-pa was cured in twenty-five days (as in Mon-rtse-pa and the *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*).

Only one healing visit by Varacandra is described. As in the *IHo-rong Chos-'byung* (the healing visits were omitted by Mon-rtse-pa), the Byang-chub bZang-po text merges the two visits described by rGya-ldang-pa into one: the queen with a growth on her head and the snake-bitten woman are merged into a snake-

⁵⁵ *IHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 109.

bitten queen. The *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* and Byang-chub bZang-po are textually very close and therefore are obviously based on the same source. Where rGya-lidang-pa has *smugs* for “bite” (which is a common contemporary term in gTsang)⁵⁶, the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* has *brgyab* (incorrectly written as *brgyan* in the dPe-mying dPe-skrun-khang edition). Byang-chub bZang-po, though usually retaining the more obscure word, has here used the more accessible *so-btab*. The unfortunate bird is a red chicken (*bya 'thsal lu*), whereas the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* affixes *rma* before *bya tsha-lu*, (a variant spelling of *bya-'thsal lu* or *mtshal lu*) to create a peculiar, unattested word for peacock.

Ras-chung-pa does not go to visit Ti-pu-pa, but returns to Tibet, going to gNya'-nang (as in *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, where it is spelled sNye-nam, and Monrtse-pa, where it is spelled gNya'-nam).

Therefore, though this version of the life of Ras-chung-pa appears in a text compiled by Byang-chub bZang-po in the mid-sixteenth century, it appears to belong to the same generation of texts, in terms of stages of development, as Monrtse-pa and *lHo-rong Chos-byung*.

4.5.4. *Deb-ther sNgon-po*

Completed in 1478.

The passage is brief, merely stating that both uncle and mother complained about their payments stopping and that Mi-la taught Ras-chung-pa the *caṇḍālī* practice. In the previous versions, this teaching occurred at a later time, but is made possible earlier in this narrative because the period between Ras-chung-pa's becoming a pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa and his developing leprosy is extended. 'Gos Lotsāba's emphasis on dates resulted in his ignoring the internal logic of the narratives: he has Ras-chung-pa meet Mi-la in his eleventh year, in 1094, and Ras-

⁵⁶ Charles Ramble, pers.comm., 2/3/01.

chung-pa does not develop his sickness until his fifteenth year, in 1098. This error was repeated by Kah-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu a few centuries later, though the latter compounded the error by dating the events to ten years earlier.⁵⁷ ‘Gos Lotsāba wrote that he became ill because he ploughed a field for his uncle and that then lived in empty houses. Then he went with the three yogins to Varacandra and was cured by the Vajrapāṇi-garuda practice. ‘Gos Lotsāba does not describe the return to Tibet. Thus, he preserves the essential elements of the rGya-ldang-pa narrative, and his narrative may be based on the same source as the *lHo-rong Chos-byung*, Mon-rtse-pa and Byang-chub bZang-po.

4.5.5. The two works of gTsang-smyon Heruka (1452-1507)

4.5.5.1 *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*

(written between circa 1490 and circa 1507)

gTsang-smyon’s *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*’s version of this passage is very brief. gTsang-smyon follows the basic narrative found in rGya-ldang-pa, but reveals no evidence of having used either that thirteenth-century text or any of those by his three fifteenth-century predecessors. The story here seems to be in an original form and its avoidance of the complexity of the earlier versions reflects gTsang-smyon’s emphasis on creating a smooth narrative.

Ras-chung-pa does not at first stay with Mi-la, only taking his reading payments to him. His mother and uncle disapprove of this and make him plough the fields instead. Thus the narrative is masterfully simplified and clarified. The illness is caused by a “subterranean demon” that was disturbed by the ploughing, but the illness is not specified. gTsang-smyon interprets this event in terms of Buddhist practice—it is not simply a misfortune but “a negative condition arising as an aid”, in that it develops Ras-chung-pa’s motivation to practice, so that instead of being

⁵⁷ Kah-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, 697.

sent away by his mother and uncle, Ras-chung-pa dismisses them from his mind and of his own volition goes to live with Mi-la Ras-pa, who adopts him. No more is heard of Ras-chung-pa's family, who therefore do not play a villainous role in this narrative. Mi-la Ras-pa does not send Ras-chung-pa away either, but sets him to meditating. Therefore, the rNying-ma lama is eliminated from the narrative, as is Mi-la's unhelpfulness. However, in keeping with the narrative tradition, Ras-chung-pa still has to make his journey to India, but it is described so briefly that it loses any specific characteristics. gTsang-smyon merely writes, "Many Indian yogins arrived and together with them [Ras-chung-pa] went to the Indian guru Balatsantra (Varacandra). He was completely cured from his illness. Then he returned to Lord Mi-la Ras-pa."

Varacandra's role and Ras-chung-pa's dependence upon him for a cure are thus de-emphasised in this version, which aids gTsang-smyon's presentation of Mi-la as a perfect guru.

4.5.5.2. *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*

Completed in 1488.

gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* contains the version of Ras-chung-pa's early life that is best known to both Western and Tibetan readers. It does not repeat the simplified version found in his *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*.

The mother and uncle, acting in unison, first look for him and find he is living with Mi-la when they ask the patrons whether they are still paying Ras-chung-pa, because they have not received any of his payments; they discover that he is now giving it all to Mi-la.⁵⁸ Thus the narrative offers a reason for their anger towards Ras-chung-pa, instead of just a long-standing antipathy. Unlike in gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, Ras-chung-pa receives and masters the *caṇḍalī* instructions, wears cotton and is named Ras-chung-pa *before* his mother and uncle

take him home to plough the land.⁵⁹ He develops a “land-deity” illness, and again the awkward business of Mi-la Ras-pa’s unhelpful reaction and Ras-chung-pa’s obtaining help from other lamas is entirely omitted in a very brief description that merely states that he went on retreat hoping to cure himself of the “land-deity” illness.

The Indian yogins are five in number, as opposed to gTsang-smyon’s *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*’s “many” and the three yogins of rGya-ldang-pa, Mon-rtse-pa, *lHo-rong Chos-’byung*, Byang-chub bZang-po and the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*.

The next part of the narrative is more detailed: it states that they eat the supply of food Ras-chung-pa received from his uncle and mother. All five yogins, not just one of them, cry out “Tsi-tsi dzwa-la [Cici jvala].” The yogins are no longer on a pilgrimage to Wu-t’ai-shan in China, but to Tibet itself, and say that they will take him to Walatsandra (Varacandra).

An exceptional addition to the narrative is that now Ras-chung-pa goes to Mi-la Ras-pa first, to tell him of his intention to go to India, and asks him for permission to do so. There follows a song of advice from Mi-la Ras-pa, which is in fact one of the genre of “Mi-la Ras-pa songs” composed by generations of yogin-bards and storytellers. The only portions of any song that can be attributed with certainty to Mi-la Ras-pa are the verse and the few lines that sGam-po-pa records in his biography, but they either do not survive unaltered in later versions, or do not survive at all. Paradoxically, we probably have a more certain record of Ras-chung-pa’s songs from the latter half of his life than we do of Mi-la’s, for Ras-chung-pa’s pupils recorded them during his lifetime in the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*. These songs appear to have been faithfully reproduced from that text by both lHa-btsun and rGod-tshang Ras-pa in the sixteenth century.

⁵⁸ These two enquiries are merged into one in the translation by Garma C. C. Chang.

⁵⁹ Chang mistranslates *phru-rlog du bcug* (91) “made to plough”, as “sent him a pot on which a curse had been placed” (Chang, 199).

A further dramatic element is added in the *mGur-'bum* version of Ras-chung-pa's early years. Before leaving for India, Ras-chung-pa walls Mi-la up inside a cave. His stay in India is described in one simple sentence without details, and the practice is written as "Vajrapāṇī with garuḍa wings" instead of "with garuḍa supplement". This could be a scribal error of *gshog* for *gsham*. It would certainly fit gTsang-smyon's approach to choose the more dramatic name for the practice.

As Mi-la is walled up in a cave and they had not earlier left the area of Ra-la in upper Gung-thang, this has to be the Za-'og cave. Therefore their next meeting after Ras-chung-pa's return cannot take place in sNye-snam and retain narrative logic. The narrative drama is heightened on Ras-chung-pa's return to Tibet by his first asking about Mi-la's whereabouts in sKyid-rong, to find that no one has heard anything of him for a while, which makes Ras-chung-pa worry that Mi-la has died. He then goes further north to Za-'og cave and when he sees that the cave is still sealed becomes certain that Mi-la has died. But on dismantling the wall he is overjoyed to find Mi-la still sitting in meditation inside. This reveals an intrusion into the narrative of a particular narrator's skill in creating suspense and relief, and also introducing a miraculous mastery of meditation. This reunion becomes the setting for a well-known Mi-la Ras-pa song about happiness or "well-being" when Ras-chung-pa asks after his health.⁶⁰ Za-'og cave continues in this narrative to be the setting for further teaching and practice and is said to be the place "where [Ras-chung-pa] attained the final experiences and realisations".⁶¹ This contrasts particularly Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-'od, in which Za-'og is abandoned shortly after the first meeting, and the successive locations that they moved to are specifically listed.⁶²

gTsang-smyon's narrative brings Ras-chung-pa back to his home area, but even so he resists the temptation of adding a reappearance, as in rGya-ldang-pa and

⁶⁰ gTsang-smyon, *Mi-la mGur-'bum*, 93.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶² rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 194.

Mon-rtse-pa, of Ras-chung-pa's parents who are then threatened with sorcery. gTsang-smyon may have wished to avoid portraying Mi-la Ras-pa threatening someone with sorcery at such a late stage in his religious career, or did not wish to crowd his narrative with too many incidents and also raise the thorny question of why Mi-la had not helped Ras-chung-pa in that way in the first place.

In other words, gTsang-smyon's *mGur-'bum*, more than his *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*, demonstrates a skilful narrative invention. This version was to gain currency amongst later generations as the unquestioned standard version of events.

4.6. Sixteenth Century

4.6.1. lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1503)

gTsang-smyon's pupil, lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, describes Ras-chung-pa's early years in a concise version that does not entirely agree with either of the two versions his teacher had composed. He does not describe the circumstances though which Ras-chung-pa met Mi-la, but, according to this narrative, he was not carrying any food-payments with him, for Ras-chung-pa departs after saying, "I don't have anything to give you today, but I will come to see you another time."⁶³

He agrees with gTsang-smyon that Ras-chung-pa practised *caṇḍalī* successfully and gained his name —Ras-chung-pa— *before* his uncle and mother made him work at ploughing. The sickness is blamed upon a nāga. His visit to, and return from, India are described by lHa-btsun in the briefest fashion, with no mention of the number of yogins involved, and no details concerning *Walacanda* (Varacandra).

4.6.2. Sangs-rgyas Dar-po

Sangs-rgyas Dar-po merely repeats verbatim from gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-brgyud*.

4.6.3. 'Brug-chen III, 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523)

The third 'Brug-chen, the hierarch of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud, was a contemporary of lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal. His *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud kyi Yig-cha* version has a few additional details that we have not previously seen, plus some details from rGya-ldang-pa that have been ignored by previous texts. The sickness is caused by a *klu-gnyan*, which is a class of Tibetan spirit that is derived from an union of a *klu* (*nāga*) and *gnyan* spirits. The number of yogins that Ras-chung-pa meets is four, not the three of earlier texts or the five of gTsang-smyon. Their exclamation of "Bhu-rna⁶⁴ bhu-hu na-ga bhu-hu" is clearly corrupt, though it is still glossed as meaning *klu-mang-po* ("many *nāgas*").

There follows a striking deviation from the previous narratives. The yogins state that Walatsaṇḍa (Varacandra) is merely their neighbour, not their guru, and instead of accompanying Ras-chung-pa to India they merely send a message to Varacandra that will enable him to receive the Vajrapāṇi instructions. 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa reproduces an element from the early rGya-ldang-pa narrative that we have not seen reproduced until now: Ras-chung-pa takes a gourd with him to collect the pus and blood that drips from his body. In all previous versions in which he went to India, he went empty-handed, as one would expect of a poverty-stricken child. Here there is a new detail: he takes three and a half *zho* (three tenth-ounces) of gold with him as an offering for Varacandra; where he had obtained this sudden wealth is not mentioned.

⁶³ lHa-btsun, 494. De ring 'bul rgyu med phyis mjal du yong

⁶⁴ 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 10. The *ma* is most likely a scribal corruption of *hu*, which is similar in the *dbu-med* script.

‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa specifies that Varacandra taught Ras-chung-pa the medium *sādhana* of Vajrapāṇi composed by Karmavajra, a detail that had not appeared in previous versions. Another additional detail is that while Ras-chung-pa recites the mantra his body’s swelling decreases, but in between sessions and while he is sleeping it reappears. rGya-ldang-pa had said that Ras-chung-pa was cured after twenty-one days; lHo-rong and Mon-rtse-pa both gave twenty-five days, but the third ‘Brug-chen lengthens it further to a month. Unlike *lHo-rong Chos-’byung* and Mon-rtse-pa, the third ‘Brug-chen repeats the dream described by Gya-ldang-pa, though the *garuḍas* are said to be birds and the “creatures” are specified to be frogs and snakes. Ras-chung-pa is told in the dream that these animals are the *nāgas* harming rDo-rje Grags-pa, i.e., himself. He specifically waits until the morning to see Varacandra, though rGya-ldang-pa’s reason for the hesitation—that Varacandra is a Nepalese and therefore short-tempered—is omitted. The response from Varacandra is also kinder: he is not told off for being happy, but advised to enter a fortnight’s retreat for protection against a recurrence of the illness.

The third ‘Brug-chen’s source does not appear to be the rGya-ldang-pa text itself, but some intermediary text or oral tradition, for while still retaining elements of that earlier stratum there are a variety of additions and omissions that change the story. One of the additions to the narrative is that Ras-chung-pa is very briefly described as going to Tibet only to return again to India in order to offer Varacandra three and a half ounces of gold as a thanks for the cure. He then receives the entire wrathful Vajrapāṇi (Sanskrit: Vajraçāṇḍa: Tibetan: rDo-rje gtum-po) instructions. These three and a half ounces of gold, given belatedly in thanks, may have replicated themselves within the narrative as the three tenth-ounces Ras-chung-pa brought on his first visit. This second visit to India does not appear in the previous texts, with the possible exception of the *Deb-ther dMar-po* and the *rGya-bod Tshang-yig*, which state that Ras-chung-pa made five visits to India, but without specifying what they were. The Third ‘Brug-chen

briefly describes yet another visit that does not appear in earlier sources: a visit to Nepal and India to receive Vārāhī and Cakrasaṃvara teachings from Rāmapāla (written Ramaphala), Tipupa and Ye-rang-pa (possibly Vajrapāṇi; see Appendix D).

Deb-ther sNgon-po also mentions another journey south, but only to Nepal, where he received instructions on Cakrasaṃvara from Atulyadāsa (See Appendix D) and others.

These teachers will reappear in the description of Ras-chung-pa's principal visit to India, which is included in all sources and is the visit from which originates the *snyan-rgyud* lineage of instructions that Ras-chung-pa introduced into Tibet. Texts such as the thirteenth-century *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* describe that as Ras-chung-pa's sole visit to India, and the others that we have examined present it as his second, except for the third 'Brug-chen, for whom it was his fourth.

4.6.4. rGod-tshang Ras-pa (1494-1570)

Ras-chung rNam-thar (completed in 1547)

rGod-tshang Ras-pa's version of Ras-chung-pa's sickness and the Varacandra passage is its most developed form, but inclusivity has taken precedence over clarity and consistency. It contrasts with gTsang-smyon's approach, in which readability and a smooth flow of narrative were a primary concern.

The composite nature of this passage indicates that it is not a reproduction from the earliest, but lost, source: the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* written by Ras-chung-pa's own pupils. We cannot even be certain, in the absence of a copy of that text, whether this entire episode even features in that biography.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa clearly uses Mon-rtse-pa's version (and not the earlier rGya-ldang-pa), repeating portions of that text. However, peculiarly, rGod-tshang Ras-pa has Ras-chung-pa bringing Mi-la food an unspecified number of times

before his initial conversation with Mi-la. This may be the result of incorporating lHa-bstun's unique detail of an empty-handed Ras-chung-pa stating he will come back to see him when he has something to offer him and only then engaging in conversation.

At the point where Mon-rtse-pa had Mi-la telling Ras-chung-pa that his childhood was a little better than his own had been, rGod-tshang Ras-pa takes the opportunity to make Mi-la relate the story of his life in the version as told by gTsang-smyon in his *Life of Mi-la Ras-pa*. However, gTsang-smyon's famous work begins by describing a time towards the end of Mi-la's life when Ras-chung-pa has a dream in which he travels to Buddha-realms and listens to life-stories there. He is told that he should ask his own teacher for his life-story, for it is even more wonderful. Consequently, on Ras-chung-pa's insistence, Mi-la relates the story of his life, which none of his pupils appear to have heard before. This device enabled gTsang-smyon to present the life-story of Mi-la Ras-pa as an "autobiography" in which each chapter ends with a description of the emotional reaction of his listeners, giving the work a greater impact. It has also resulted in gTsang-smyon's work being popularly attributed to Ras-chung-pa himself.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa was devoted to the memory of gTsang-smyon; he described the place of his death as a second Kuśinagara,⁶⁵ thus equating him with the Buddha, and he wrote his hagiography.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, he did not take recourse to his guru's literary device, but used this more logical juncture in his narrative—the first meeting of Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa—to tell Mi-la's life-story. This illustrates how a narrative tradition is easily transformed by successive generations without rigidly adhering to an earlier albeit respected version.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa concludes his brief account of Mi-la's life with Mi-la's statement that Ras-chung-pa doesn't need to undergo the same suffering as he did.

⁶⁵ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 666.

⁶⁶ rGod-tshang Ras-pa sNa-tshogs Rang-grol, *The Life of the Saint of gTsang* (gTsang-smyon heru-ka phyogs thams-cad las mam-par-rgyal-ba'i mam-thar rdo-rje theg-pa'i gsal-byed nyi-ma'i snying-po), ed. Lokesh Chandra, Śāta-piṭaka Series: Indo-Asian Literatures, vol. 79 (New Delhi: Sharada Rani, 1969).

This serves an important function in allowing the readership to be inspired by the account of Mi-la's unquestioning devotion without either a teacher or pupil feeling obliged in consequence to repeat this process. It validates for the reader the normal non-extreme teacher-pupil relationship, in contrast to the extreme legendary version.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa then reproduces a passage from gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*. rGod-tshang Ras-pa repeats from that text "Owing to the power of good karmic tendencies and latencies from past lives," in contradiction to his initial introduction of Ras-chung-pa as a Buddha's emanation who has therefore already transcended karma.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa's insertion of gTsang-smyon's initial meeting in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* causes him to repeat himself, for he once again states that Ras-chung-pa takes his food-payments to Mi-la. At the point where the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* merely states that Ras-chung-pa received teachings, rGod-tshang inserts some pedagogic material of introductory Buddhist teachings before returning to the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*'s narrative at the point where the uncle and mother enquire about Ras-chung-pa and find that he is living with Mi-la and giving him his payments.⁶⁷ But in rGod-tshang Ras-pa, instead of immediately taking him away, they merely forbid him to give Mi-la his payments, and he continues to do so. rGod-tshang Ras-pa states that at this time, Mi-la Ras-pa gave Ras-chung-pa vows, the abhiṣeka of Vajravārāhī and the practice of *caṇḍālī*, which, as in the gTsang-smyon version, he masters at this time. Mi-la also gives him the name Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags. As described earlier, this apparently contradicts the account from a few pages earlier in which he received the name rDo-rje Grags-pa shortly after his birth. Perhaps rGod-tshang Ras-pa was aware of this and meant that only the epithet part of the name—Ras-chung—was new.

Mon-rtse-pa's description of Ras-chung-pa's offering of meat at the beginning of their relationship is inserted at this point. Its original position in the narrative is betrayed by Ras-chung-pa being described as taking this to Mi-la

⁶⁷ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, *Ras-chung-pa'i rNam-thar*, 15.

instead of to his parents, whereas that change has already been established by rGod-tshang Ras-pa. The parents complain to the patrons and Ras-chung-pa decides he has no choice but to take his parents the payments, so that once again he is brought back to his earlier position in the narrative, and yet another version can unfold.

Mon-rtse-pa's patroness is now introduced, the narrative logic just about being held together by making Ras-chung-pa refuse to accept her payment unless he can take it to the person of his choice. She agrees and, intrigued, she accompanies him to Mi-la who refuses her offering of a turquoise.

Another smaller (*chung-ba*) cave is introduced as a place that Ras-chung-pa goes to live in. Continuing with Mon-rtse-pa as a source, the narrative states that Ras-chung-pa is taking tsampa to Mi-la, who teaches him the practice of Mañjuśrī. This beginner's practice is now out of sequence, having already been preceded by Ras-chung-pa mastering the advanced practices. It is at this point that Ras-chung-pa's uncle and mother come for him. Still using Mon-rtse-pa's text as a basis, rGod-tshang Ras-pa has (assuming that neither text was the victim of scribal corruption) changed Mon-rtse-pa's "first broke the door" (dang po sgo glag [sic. klag]⁶⁸ byas) into the peculiar "first crowded into the doorway" (dang por sgo la brdzangs).⁶⁹ This episode is then extended as the stone throwing (at Ras-chung as well as Mi-la) is interrupted by the arrival of some people. They return later, when no one else is present, throw stones at Mi-la again and take Ras-chung-pa away. It is emphasised that this is primarily the cruel uncle's doing, not the mother's.

Mi-la Ras-pa's unhelpful inactivity is left unexplained, only adding that, though he could do nothing to help, Mi-la Ras-pa had compassion for Ras-chung-pa. rGod-tshang Ras-pa, in accepting this basic narrative, had no choice but to include this peculiarity.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa provides extra detail concerning Ras-chung-pa's ploughing. White frogs and tadpoles in a barberry thicket in the upper part of a field and black frogs and tadpoles in a peashrub and wild rose thicket in the lower part

⁶⁸ Mon-rtse-pa 166. This is not the only example of 'g' written for 'k'.

indicate the presence of a four-tailed, three-headed *nāga* named dPal. People made offerings at these sites to this *nāga* before they engaged in ploughing, harvest or battle. Ras-chung-pa's illness is first ascribed to his having destroyed these thickets. rGod-tshang Ras-pa states that Ras-chung-pa became ill in his fourteenth year (circa 1097), in spite of having stated just a few pages earlier that Ras-chung-pa was in his eleventh year when he met Mi-la. There is no room for the lapse of three years in this narrative, in spite of the number of events that rGod-tshang has stuffed into it. This temporal aberration reminds us of 'Gos Lotsāba's *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, in which Ras-chung-pa met Mi-la in his eleventh year but did not develop his illness until his fifteenth year. That passage, or one related to it, appears to have influenced rGod-tshang Ras-pa, and done so adversely in terms of narrative consistency.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa's inclusive approach is demonstrated here by a valuable record of two alternative versions of the cause for Ras-chung-pa's sickness. They do not appear in any other surviving text and testify to the mutability and inventiveness of oral narratives.

One version is that a paternal uncle, who was a thief, had died and his corpse was walled up in a cave next to a spring that was the *nāga*'s residence. Though Ras-chung-pa was not personally responsible for this, upsetting a local deity by some act of pollution was believed to cause illness in local inhabitants. For example, in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, the Tshe-ring-ma mountain goddesses, in spite of being devotees of Mi-la Ras-pa, cause death to the local population and livestock purely because in the previous summer some shepherds had lit a smoky fire which made the goddesses ill.⁷⁰

Another version that is cited states that a maternal uncle had practised sorcery that involved the burial of ritual objects in this place. Ras-chung-pa fell ill because he had helped this uncle by digging that ground.

All three versions have an uncle, whether maternal or paternal, who is a dubious character, and the disturbance of some sacred ground, but otherwise have

⁶⁹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 17.

developed quite different scenarios. It is uncommon for an author to include such contradictory accounts in a biography, so this passage indicates that many alternative versions may have developed but never have been recorded.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa then follows Mon-rtse-pa in having Ras-chung-pa sent to Mi-la, who is not welcoming. We can see here an example of how rGod-tshang Ras-pa, by modulating the text slightly, is able to cast Mi-la Ras-pa in a better light than his source did.

The Mon-rtse-pa version:

[They] said, “Now go to Mid-la.” He went and the venerable one said, “You idiot! Even an animal runs away to a pleasant place, but I can’t help you in this.”⁷¹

rGod-tshang Ras-pa’s version:

The mother and uncle said, “Now, go to Mi-la, don’t stay here!” and then he went to the venerable one and the venerable one said, “You idiot! Even an animal runs away to a pleasant place, but you have come to me only. Now I will see whether I can help you.”⁷²

I give here a comparison of the Tibetan of both texts, in which the words in common are highlighted for ease of recognition. The discarded Mon-rtse-pa words are struck through, and rGod-tshang’s addition underlined:

ma khu na re da mid la can du song ‘dir ma sdod zer de nas rje
btsun gyi drung du phyin pas/ rje btsun gyi zhal nas khyod
 glen dud ‘gro yang skyid par ‘bros pa yin te/da la khyod ~~kyi-di~~
~~la~~ nga las mi yong ba da ngas khyod la mi e phan lta yi gsung/

⁷⁰ *Mi-la’i mGur-‘bum*, 312-13.

⁷¹ Mon-rtse-pa, 166.

It is evident from this that Mon-rtse-pa did not summarise a source that rGod-tshang Ras-pa later reproduced in full, but that rGod-tshang Ras-pa was adapting Mon-rtse-pa's text. For example, rGod-tshang's addition of *rje-btsun* ("venerable one") causes a repetition of the word that would have been avoided in an original text. In the conclusion of this passage, the omission of one syllable, the negating *mi*, and the addition of just three syllables transforms the sentence from an admission of inability into an intention to help.

Compare this with the passage as written by the thirteenth-century rGya-ltang-pa, which concludes with Mi-la's declaration of an explicit lack of ability, stating that he does *not know* how to help him.

His mother and uncle said, "Now run off to your master!" He went to Mid-la, who asked, "Are you happy?"

[Ras-chung-pa replied,] "Let alone being happy, they made me plough and I struck against a local deity and have fallen ill with 'dze. Venerable one, protect me!"

Mid-la said, "You are no different from an animal. Even an animal will go from a place with bad grass to a place with good grass, will escape from suffering to happiness, but you go from happiness to suffering. Now, I do not know how to help you through [a practice of] protection; you must ask someone else who does know."⁷³

der ma khu gnyis na re / da khyod rang gi slob dpon can rgyug cig zer
 bton / der rje btsun can phyin pas / khyod skyid dam gsung / skyid pa
 dag ci ma tshang ste / phru klog tu bcug pas / sa bdag dang thug / 'dze
 yis zin / rje btsun la bsrung ba zhu 'tshal byas pas / bla ma na re khyod
 byol song dang khyad mi 'dug / byol song yin yang rtsa ngan sa nas /

⁷² rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 18.

bzang sa ru 'gro / sdug sa nas / skyid sa ru 'bros pa la / khyod skyid
 sa nas sdug sa ru 'gro yin 'dug pa / da ngas 'di la phan pa'i bsrung ba
 mi shes pas / gzhan shes pa cig la zhus gsung /

rGod-tshang Ras-pa had instead relied on Mon-rtse-pa as a source, who had preserved some narrative elements found in rGya-ldang-pa, but without basing himself upon the rGya-ldang-pa text itself.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa, in accordance with his portrayal of a more helpful Mi-la Ras-pa, states that Ras-chung-pa practised meditation instructions given to him by Mi-la for five months (first practising the *nāga* Apalala and then Vajrapāṇi), but to no avail. He does this in various places of solitude, not with Mi-la Ras-pa, so that the earlier stratum of the narrative can be followed. Many details that have not appeared in previous texts force their way in here. A maternal uncle takes pity on him and takes him to another area of Gung-thang. There he meets a meditator who, through his practice of Karmavajra's medium-length *sādhana* of Vajrapāṇi with Garuḍa supplement, has the miraculous power of stopping hailstorms and preventing alcohol and curds from going sour. He teaches this practice to Ras-chung-pa, although this is the practice that the third 'Brug-chen specifies as the one taught to Ras-chung-pa by Varacandra and which effects his cure. In rGod-tshang Ras-pa, Ras-chung-pa practises this Vajrapāṇi throughout the summer and autumn, living on supplies that he has accumulated from his readings. When they are used up, he sends a request to his parents for supplies. His maternal uncle (now oddly limited in his help because he cannot interfere too much with the narrative that he has blundered into and is about to disappear from) gives him a little food. Also—so as to return to the earlier stratum of narrative—on the uncle's urging, Ras-chung-pa's parents send four handfuls of tsampa with a message that they will send no more and never want to hear from him again. This plunges Ras-chung-pa into deep sorrow. Then, one bitterly cold day, Ras-chung-pa meets the yogins.

⁷³ rGya-ldang-pa, 344.

The extended narrative that has preceded this meeting has a number of ingredients thrown together to make a somewhat confusing stew. The narrative drive has become erratic and repetitive, and tries to make the parents as villainous as possible.

The yogins to whom Ras-chung-pa offers food to are four in number, as in the third ‘Brug-chen’s version, in contrast to gTsang-smyon’s five, and the three of all other versions. “*Bhu-hu bhu-hu na-ga bhu-hu*,” translated as *klu mang-po* (“many nāgas”), is the exact corruption of the Sanskrit that was found in the third ‘Brug-chen’s version, which points either to a common source or a familiarity of rGod-tshang Ras-pa with that work.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa does not specify what practice the yogins say can be obtained from Varacandra and will cure him. As rGod-tshang in his addition to the narrative has already described Ras-chung-pa as practising Vajrapāṇi-garūḍa, specifying it now would no longer make sense.

We find a substantial amount of additional detail in what follows. The leader of the yogins sends the others on to Wu-t’ai-shan, and says he will take Ras-chung-pa to Wa-la-tsaṇḍa (Varacandra) “who lives near the town of Ta-bas-ta”,⁷⁴ though a few pages later, when they arrive, it is called “Pa-ta-bas-ta”,⁷⁵ the former probably being the scribal corruption.

On the yogin’s instructions, Ras-chung-pa collects four *zho* (tenths of an ounce) of gold as well as the gourd and horn mentioned in earlier versions, and also some other provisions such as yak-hair pads for his soon-to-be blistered feet. The gold is probably derived from the third ‘Brug-chen’s text where he takes three and a half *zho* on his first visit. “Three and a half” is expressed in Tibetan as *phyed dang bzhi*⁷⁶ “half and four” and is therefore liable to be rounded up to four.

⁷⁴ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 21.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 23.

⁷⁶ ‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 10.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa then uses the gTsang-smyon *mGur-'bum* version to describe Ras-chung-pa going to tell Mi-la that he is leaving for India, Mi-la's song of advice, and Ras-chung-pa sealing his teacher into a cave.

After setting out for India there is an unexplained anomaly in the narrative. Though Ras-chung-pa is said to be travelling with the yogin alone, the narrative slips into the plural when referring to those travelling with him. Perhaps this is a residue of an earlier version in which all the yogins accompanied Ras-chung-pa. The yogin is no longer the ordinary person of earlier versions. In one night he makes the six-month journey to see Varacandra and back; he admits to Ras-chung-pa he is a siddha and grants Ras-chung-pa's request for a blessing.

When they arrive in the land of *bDe-ba* and approach Varacandra's hermitage Ras-chung-pa drags himself along the ground, not because he is prostrating himself out of devotion, but because he is unable to walk as a result of his illness. This detail is immediately contradicted in the narrative, for on reaching the destination he is back on his feet.

The hermitage is in a forest encircled by water and Ras-chung-pa, advised by the yogin, has to pass through ordeals in order to reach it. He is surrounded by animal-headed beings that he has to ignore, whatever their threats or promises. Before they reach Varacandra, Ras-chung-pa's guide transforms himself into a large blue man, with canines like conches, three staring eyes as bright as suns, and four arms, and he flies away into the sky.

The hermitage is a small, square hut, adorned by flowers, in the centre of a glade that even during the night is as bright as if lit by the sun. Varacandra is seated inside. He is fat, three-eyed, has long moustaches and a goatee beard, and sparks are shooting from his red coloured body. Ras-chung-pa offers him the gold, and is told by him that the creatures he was surrounded by were the guardians of the teachings who had sent the "yogin" to bring him to Varacandra. The guru sings in praise of Ras-chung-pa, identifying him as Padmākara, who is popularly considered the most important figure in the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet, and further

lauds him as “a jewel of the teachings”, “a lamp of the Dharma” and compares him to the long-suffering bodhisattva Sadāprarudita.

This version has undergone the alchemy of hagiography to the extent that it contrasts greatly with earlier versions such as *rGya-ldang-pa*, in which Varacandra’s first response on seeing Ras-chung-pa is merely to say, “What is this Tibetan doing here?”⁷⁷ *rGod-tshang*’s version however retains contrasting, inconsistent elements from earlier narrative strata.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa is now unable to avoid stating that Ras-chung-pa is taught Karmavajra’s medium Vajrapāṇi *sādhana* (which according to this narrative he has already been practising in Tibet!). According to *rGya-ldang-pa*, Ras-chung-pa was cured after twenty-one days and followed this with an unspecified length of time in which he practised to prevent a recurrence of the illness. *lHo-rong* and *Mon-rtse-pa* both say it took twenty-five days, while the third ‘Brug-chen specifies a month plus a fortnight to prevent recurrence. *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* extends this much further in what appears to be a cut-and-paste job from various sources. First Ras-chung-pa practises for twenty-one days (as in *rGya-ldang-pa*), but then adds a practice of the garuḍa supplement for three months, during which his condition worsens as his body swells painfully. He loses hope but is encouraged by Varacandra, who joins him in his retreat for another seven days. *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* then appears to use material from the third ‘Brug-chen’s narrative, stating that the swelling decreased during mantra repetition and then returned when he slept but that after a month he has the dream which coincides with his cure. There are a few more details added to the third ‘Brug-chen’s version: Ras-chung-pa is accompanied to the mountain top by Mi-la Ras-pa and an unnamed person, and scorpions are added to the frogs and snakes being chased away by the birds. An additional detail is that a great snake turns to look at him before leaving.

When Ras-chung-pa wakes to find himself cured he is overjoyed but he hesitates to see Varacandra because of his short temper. This is as in *rGya-ldang-*

⁷⁷ *rGya-ldang-pa*, 345.

pa, but the reason given for Varacandra's short temper is not that he is Nepalese, but that he is Indian! When Ras-chung-pa does meet Varacandra, the great snake is interpreted as an omen of a possible recurrence of the illness and so another month of practice has to be performed (in contrast to the third 'Brug-chen's fortnight). rGod-tshang Ras-pa's length of time of practice thus adds up to about six months.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa follows the structure of a double visit to Varacandra as given by the third 'Brug-chen, but makes the second visit more substantial by moving the second half of the first visit into it. Thus on being cured, Ras-chung-pa tells Varacandra that he will go to Tibet and return with gold, but that it will take about four years to accumulate it.

On Ras-chung-pa's return to Tibet, he receives an oddly enthusiastic invitation from his parents to return home and inherit his father's wealth, but rejects it, as he is disillusioned with worldly life. This reintroduces the parents, as in rGyal-dang-pa and Mon-rtse-pa, but without Mi-la's recourse to a threat of sorcery as the cause for what will have been their final departure from the narrative. Such a version emphasises a more religiously correct motivation for Ras-chung-pa and removes the narrative problem of why Mi-la hadn't helped Ras-chung-pa by the threat of sorcery in the first place, although the alternative version is also present later in the narrative.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa agrees with gTsang-smyon that Ras-chung-pa returns to the sealed up cave near his home. The anxiety that Mi-la might have died, which was drawn out by gTsang-smyon, is omitted, so that the breaking open of the sealed cave is deprived of its drama. rGod-tshang Ras-pa here adds (from Mon-rtse-pa) Mi-la's statement that he had sent for Ras-chung-pa only to find out that he had gone to India, even though rGod-tshang Ras-pa has already used gTsang-smyon's description of Ras-chung-pa taking his leave from Mi-la and going to India with his blessing! Peculiarly rGod-tshang Ras-pa here repeats, from Mon-rtse-pa, Mi-la Ras-pa's threat of sorcery against the parents, even though that strand of narrative had already been brought to a conclusion.

The above examples demonstrate how rGod-tshang Ras-pa sacrificed consistency in his wish to include alternative versions.

In rGod-tshang Ras-pa, Ras-chung-pa's second visit to India begins with Mi-la giving permission for Ras-chung-pa to go begging to accumulate gold. It takes him two years to accumulate three and a half ounces, partly through obtaining land from his mother and uncle, though we are not told what prompts their out-of-character generosity. Ras-chung-pa sets off and "quickly arrives" at his destination, Ras-chung-pa gives two ounces to Varacandra and one to Varacandra's wife. In rGod-tshang Ras-pa, Varacandra's two acts of healing take place in this second visit, but they are different from the earlier versions. Both seem to be variations based on the swelling and snake bite that are found in the second of rGya-ldang-pa's two stories, in which a woman had swollen up as the result of being bitten by a snake, and was cured by blowing into a chicken. In rGod-tshang Ras-pa's version, Varacandra first cures a woman whose body was swollen because she had washed a buffalo-calf's lungs in a river. The treatment involves a five day retreat on a hill named Coba and the woman is made to face the intense fire of the concluding session. The second cure is of a man who has a snake wrapped tightly around him. Varacandra sprinkles water over a chicken (which does not die in this version) and the snake leaves the man.

Ras-chung-pa subsequently receives not only the complete teachings of Vajrapāṇi, but also *Buddhahood Through Hearing (Sangs-rgyas Thos-chog)*,⁷⁸ which he is told to bury as a *gter-ma* that will be discovered after seven generations. This is one of two prophecies concerning the discovery of teachings hidden by Ras-chung-pa, here presented after the fact. The second prophecy was "fulfilled" by gTsang-pa rGya-ras (1161-1211), a founder of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud tradition, who is said to have discovered while on retreat (in 1184, aged twenty-eight) *The*

⁷⁸ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 35.

Six Teachings on Equal Taste (Ro-snyoms skor-drug) that had been secretly buried by Ras-chung-pa.⁷⁹

In rGod-tshang Ras-pa there next follows a peculiarly maladroit piece of compilation: Varacandra, after praising Ras-chung-pa and prophesying a future pupil and location for his teachings, asks Ras-chung-pa “Whose pupil are you?” which is highly unconvincing at such a late date. This is derived from the question asked by Varacandra’s wife in rGya-ldang-pa, which leads to Ras-chung-pa’s first meeting with Ti-pu-pa.⁸⁰ The wife’s role is diminished here, though she is still, as in Mon-rtse-pa,⁸¹ the one who gives Ras-chung-pa cloth to take as an offering, so that he should not go empty-handed to Ti-pu-pa. That detail is derived from the earlier versions in which Ras-chung-pa was indeed empty-handed on his first visit to India, and had not come with a supply of gold. In this version, he has given all the gold he had left to Varacandra just before this conversation, which enables the gift of cloth to find a place in the narrative.

As in the earlier versions, there is a brief meeting with Ti-pu-pa (spelled Ti-phu here), solely to create the seed for the next visit to India. However, this is expanded by rGod-tshang Ras-pa with a significant addition. Ras-chung-pa becomes involved in a conversation with Ti-pu-pa’s Tibetan translator, who is called Jo-rgyal. There is no record of such a translator elsewhere, but the entire passage is of dubious authenticity. It consists of an extended biography of Ti-phu that reveals him to be a re-animated corpse (See Appendix D).⁸²

Ras-chung-pa returns to “Ta-ba-sa-ta” and Varacandra sends him back to Tibet. A new detail inserted here is that first he receives instructions (on “Garuda wings”) from a guru named rMi-rti Khyung-shog, a name composed perhaps of a corruption of *Smṛti* conjoined with the Tibetan for “garuda-wings”, which is itself a corruption of *khyung-shams* within the name for the Vajrapāṇi practice. Ras-chung-

⁷⁹ *The Blue Annals*, (Roerich) 668; (‘Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 583. The English translation is faulty and does not tie in the date with the discovery.

⁸⁰ rGya-ldang-pa, 346.

⁸¹ Mon-rtse-pa, 166.

⁸² rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 36-41.

pa receives from him the instructions for *rkang-mgyogs* (“swift feet”), one of the legendary eight siddhis, and after a month of meditation gains the power of being able to travel swiftly, so that he makes it back to Mi-la Ras-pa, on foot, in seven days. Also, before meeting Mi-la, Ras-chung-pa receives *Mahāmudrā* and other teachings from three masters and *rDzogs-chen* teachings from a rNying-ma master, none of whom are attested to elsewhere. *rDzogs-chen* is described as “the view that there are no deities or demons”. This simplistic and misleading definition is in fact just setting *rDzogs-chen* up for a blow that will be delivered against it further on in the text, during his principal journey to India. This is a residue of an antipathy to *rDzogs-chen* that is found in early bKa’-brgyud material such as rGya-ldang-pa. The earliest example is in sGam-po-pa’s biography of Mi-la Ras-pa, in which (unlike later versions in which this passage is toned down) Mi-la’s *rDzogs-chen* teacher confesses that the teachings are useless and he himself has gained no benefit from them.⁸³

In rGod-tshang Ras-pa, on Ras-chung-pa’s return to Tibet, Mi-la is said still to be at Za-‘og cave. In rGya-ldang-pa they had only stayed there through winter and then until Ras-chung-pa’s departure, and for an even shorter time in Don-mo Ri-pa/rDo-rje mDzes-‘od, but in this version, as a result of narrative expansion, Mi-la Ras-pa stays there for years.

4.7. Versions that post-date rGod-tshang Ras-pa

4.7.1. dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'Phreng-ba (1504-66)

mKhas-pa'i dGa'-ston (The Feast of Scholars) written between 1545 and 1565.

This major historical work describes this part of Ras-chung-pa’s life very briefly. It merely states:

⁸³ sGam-po-pa, 22.

Because his mother and uncle made him dig in many sacred places he fell ill with 'dze. A yogin going to Wu-t'ai-shan became his guide and he reached India. The guru Wa-la-tsaṇḍa (Varacandra) taught him the "Wrathful Vajrapāṇi with Garuḍa supplement" which he practised for three months. Though he became [more] ill at first, in the end special signs occurred and the demon of illness was expelled.⁸⁴

Yang ma khus sa gnyan du ma brkor bcug pas bsnyung mdze byung
/ dzo gi ri bo rtse lnga la 'gro ba zhig gis skyel mi la sbyar te rgya
gar du btol / bla ma wa la tsaṇḍas gtum po khyung sham can gnang
ste zla ba gsum bsgrubs pas dang por snyung du song yang mthar
rtags khyad par can byung / nad gdon yul 'bud /

The three-month period indicates an affiliation with rGod-tshang Ras-pa's work, which had been printed nearly twenty years before the completion of dPa'-bo's mammoth work, even though in that text it was an *extra* three months. In conformity with rGod-tshang Ras-pa, a second visit is mentioned, but so briefly that it appears to be the same visit. Ras-chung-pa offers Varacandra three ounces of gold, which is a diminution of the three and a half ounces found in the third 'Brug-chen and rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

In other words, this appears to be a not very skilful summary of rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

⁸⁴gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba, 377-78.

4.7.2. Pad-ma dKarmo (1527-1592)

Pad-ma dKar-po Chos-'byung (completed in 1575)

In *Pad-ma dKar-po's History of the Dharma*, the story of Ras-chung-pa's sickness and visit to India is told twice: in Ras-chung-pa's own biography and in that of Mi-la Ras-pa. The Mi-la version is quite brief: after Ras-chung-pa falls ill Mi-la Ras-pa teaches him a mantra-repetition. Four yogins meet him and the eldest of them takes him to India. Before Ras-chung-pa leaves he walls up Mi-la in a cave, and after a year in India he is cured.

All these details can only be derived from rGod-tshang Ras-pa. Even though rGod-tshang Ras-pa did not specify how long it took Ras-chung-pa to be cured, Pad-ma dKar-po has evidently added up rGod-tshang Ras-pa's list of successive periods of practice: three weeks, three months, one week, one month, and a final month, making approximately six months. Also, earlier in rGod-tshang Ras-pa's narrative, it was mentioned that the guide magically made what should have been a six months journey to Varacandra take only one night. Thus it appears that Pad-ma dKar-po, relying exclusively on rGod-tshang Ras-pa, assuming it took Ras-chung-pa six months to reach Varacandra, calculates that a year passed between Ras-chung-pa's departure and his cure. No further visit to India is described until his principal visit to receive the *karma-tantra* teaching from Ti-pu-pa.

However, the return from India, and Ras-chung-pa's concern that Mi-la has died in his absence was clearly derived from gTsang-smyon's *mGur-'bum*, for rGod-tshang Ras-pa had lost the dramatic tension of that passage in his retelling of the discovery of Mi-la still walled up in his cave. However, Pad-ma dKar-po seems to be retelling the narrative of both texts from memory, in his own words, and never shows signs of copying the words of the text itself.

An additional detail is that Mi-la Ras-pa cuts Ras-chung-pa's hair when giving him the name rDo-rje Grags-pa, which seems an anomalous detail in the context of yogins. Mi-la also gives him the *upāsaka* and *bodhicitta* vows, a

Cakrasaṃvara *abhiṣeka* and the “blending and transference” (*bsre-'pho*) instructions.⁸⁵ The source for this passage is rGod-tshang Ras-pa, where however all this had occurred *before* his uncle and mother took him away to work at ploughing, and Ras-chung-pa was taught Vajravārāhī, not Cakrasaṃvara, and *caṇḍālī*, not “blending and transference”. The teaching of *caṇḍālī* would have accorded better with what follows in both Pad-ma dKar-po versions: the development of physical heat through *caṇḍālī* so that he can wear just cotton and thereby gains the name Ras-chung-pa.

The more detailed version of this passage in Pad-ma dKar-po's biography of Ras-chung-pa is a summary of rGod-tshang Ras-pa apart from a few minor details. The father is said to die in Ras-chung-pa's eighth year, unusually agreeing, perhaps inadvertently, with his predecessor, the third 'Brug-chen, rather than rGod-tshang Ras-pa. When he falls sick Mi-la teaches him “the Vajrapāṇi of the gLan tradition”.⁸⁶ Pad-ma dKar-po thus demonstrates familiarity with the canonical texts of Ras-chung-pa's tradition (for which he wrote commentaries) the majority of which were translated by gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims with Varacandra (See Appendix B). This is in fact known as “the Vajrapāṇi of the Ras-chung tradition” but such a name would obviously be out of place here. Other details, such as staying with a maternal uncle at Tsher-yul, there being four yogins and only their leader coming to India, and Ras-chung-pa learning to speak the language from him, are all derived from rGod-tshang Ras-pa. Even the variant toponym Ta-pa-sa-ta used on their arrival in India is the same. Similarly, there is a second visit in which Ras-chung-pa gives three and a half ounces of gold to Varacandra and meets Ti-pu-pa briefly.

As in Pad-ma dKar-po's life of Mi-la (and rGya-ldang-pa, *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, Mon-rtse-pa, gTsang-smyon's *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud* and the third 'Brug-chen), it is not till this point that he practises *caṇḍālī* and becomes

⁸⁵ Pad-ma dKar-po, 494.

known as Ras-chung-pa. This disagrees with the version in which this occurs before his sickness, which is found in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

4.7.3. Śākya Rin-chen

(Je-mkhan-po of Bhutan from 1744 to 1755)

This text demonstrates the influence of the rGod-tshang Ras-pa version in Bhutan, even though it is based on an identical version attributed to a dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan. Śākya Rin-chen also demonstrates a familiarity with Pad-ma dKar-po's summary for he adds the detail of the Vajrapāṇi practice being of "the gLan tradition".

As in Pad-ma dKar-po, the leave-taking from Mi-la is omitted. Rin-chen mentions periods of practice of three months, seven days and half a month only, the latter being written *zla ba phyed mtshams bcad*⁸⁷ although dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan and all available editions of rGod-tshang Ras-pa have *zla ba gcig mtshams bcad*.⁸⁸

4.7.4. NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* and the *Rwa-lung bKa'-brgyud gSer- 'Phreng*

These practically identical texts are of great interest because of their deviation from the principal narrative development that originated within the rGyal-dang-pa group and climaxed in rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

Nothing is said of Ras-chung-pa's family problems, merely: "In his fourteenth or fifteenth year he became sick. He went to guru Walatsandra

⁸⁶ Ibid., 500.

⁸⁷ Śākya Rin-chen, 196.

⁸⁸ rGod-tshang ras-pa, 28; dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, 35

(Varacandra) and was cured.” The text follows the tradition that Ras-chung-pa did not bring gold, as do all texts earlier than the third ‘Brug-chen, for he offers nothing but a flower in thanks for his healing. Therefore, the narrative, while being within the general rGya-ldang-pa tradition, developed independently from the third ‘Brug-chen and rGod-tshang Ras-pa versions.

The most surprising difference is what occurs after his cure:

Then the proud young Tantrika married [26a] Lady Sar-nam Za-lha-phug, and was a householder for a little while. Then he became saddened by her. He sang

A wonderful and beautiful queen
Adorned by jewels, gold and turquoises,
Offers me a throne and maidservants,
But I have rejected them, afraid of long term attachment.

In his eighteenth or nineteenth year, he returned to lord Mi-la, received the *caṇḍālī* instructions, meditated upon them, and became known as Ras-chung-pa.⁸⁹

sngags chung nga rgyal can gyis / jo mo sar ni za lha phug [23a]
zhes bya ba cig blangs te khyim pa yug pa cig mdzad do / de nas jo
mo de la thugs skyo ba skyes te /

mtshar la mdzes pa'i btsun mo la /
rin chen gser dang g.yus brgyan nas /
bting khrid khol mor bcas 'bul yang /
yun tu chags kyi dogs nas spangs pa lags /

⁸⁹ NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar*, 22b-23a.

ces gsung nas lo bco brgyad bcu dgu tsam la / rje mi la'i spyan
 sngar phyin te / gtum mo zhus bsgoms te ras gon pas ras chung pa
 zhes grags so /

The Rwa-lung gSer-phreng edition has some significant discrepancies. The opening sentence there reads (in the Palampur edition):

Then he was greeted at the place of a woman, named Nam-za
 lHa-yug, who was the wife of a proud young Tantrika, and was
 a householder for a little while. Then the wicked lady made him
 sad...

de nas sngags chung ra (sic) rgyal can zhig gi jo mo'i sa ru /
 nam za lha yug bya ba'i bud med [212] cig bsus nas khyim pa
 yug cig kyang mdzad do / de nas jo mo thu bas skyo ba skyes
 te...⁹⁰

The Bhutanese edition of the Rwa-lung edition has a major haplography, omitting all between the *yug* of the lady's name and the *yug* meaning "a little while".

The Rwa-lung version of the song, which is identical in both editions, shows signs of corruption when compared with the NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar*. It has *mo-btsun* instead of *btsun-mo* and nine syllables instead of seven in the third line, because of the addition of *rdzong-nga* at its beginning. The fourth line is nine syllables in NGMPP and eight in both Rwa-lung versions. The latter appears to be corrupt: *spun chags gi thogs nas* instead of NGMPP's *yun tu chags kyi dogs*

⁹⁰ *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng*, 211-12.

nas (“afraid of long-time attachment”). *sPu* and *yu* are very similar in the *dbu-med* script, and *spun*, meaning “chaff” was probably adopted by the copyist as this is a common simile for an object of rejection. It also suggests an original version of *yun chags dogs nas*, into which the NGMPP intruded the particles *tu* and *kyi*.

The Ra-lung’s *bsus*, which means to come and greet a visitor on the road before he reaches your home, is suspect. The NGMPP equivalent is *blang*, literally “adopt” or “take up”, which is used as a verb for entering a “marriage”. The Rwa-lung is probably a corruption of another verb used with this same meaning: *bsdus*. It also seems unlikely that a writer would repeat the word *yug* so soon, such repetition normally being avoided by Tibetan writers, so that the lady’s name as given in the NGMPP manuscript is probably closer to the original version, however obscure it may be: Sar-nam Za-lha-phug. The *sar* would have been interpreted by the Rwa-lung source as an alternative form of *sa ru* “at the place”, thus necessitating a genitive after *Jo-mo*. It seems very unlikely that the corruption would proceed in the opposite direction, and the Rwa-lung sentence is peculiar. The word *thu-ba* (which does not occur in any dictionary, my translation “wicked” is derived from the word *thu*) appears to be a corruption of *thugs* in the NGMPP phrase *jo mo de la thugs skyo ba skyes* (“He became saddened by that lady”), which is preferable to Rwa-lung’s *jo mo thu bas skyo ba skyes*.

There remains another problem. In the discrepancy between versions of the first sentence in the above quotes, the *Rwa-lung gSer-'phreng* has a genitive in *sngags chung nga rgyal can gyi* while the NGMPP has an instrumental in *sngags chung nga rgyal can gyis*. In spite of the NGMPP appearing to be more reliable, the sudden reference to Ras-chung-pa as a proud, young tantrika (*sngags-chung*) seems suspect. Ras-chung-pa is never otherwise referred to as a *sngags-pa* (a householder-lama), and Jo-mo is regularly used to mean “wife” in the Ras-chung-pa narratives. Therefore, the Rwa-lung version may preserve the original sentence, which says that he took up with someone else’s partner. Alternatively, he was

entering into a *sngags-pa* life-style by adopting a wife and being “proud” was a defect that caused him to do so.

There appears to be no precedent for this passage, or for specifying his age when he returned to Mi-la (which would date the return to 1101 or 1102). This is possibly a narrative duplication of the ill-fated marriage from later in his life.

The next part of the narrative accords with the versions that have him mastering *caṇḍalī* and becoming known as Ras-chung-pa *after* his visit to Varacandra, i.e., rGya-ldang-pa, *lHo-rong Chos-byung*, Mon-rtse-pa, gTsang-smyon’s *bDe-mchog mKha’-’gro sNyan-rgyud*, the third ‘Brug-chen (vaguely) and Pad-ma dKar-po. In other words, it disagrees with those texts that have this occurring before his sickness and visit to Varacandra: *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, gTsang-smyon’s *mGur-’bum*, lHa-btsun, rGod-tshang Ras-pa and Śākya Rin-chen.

We have gained some familiarity with the lie of the land in this tangled landscape. The next chapter will, without sifting through all the details of the discrepancies, investigate the major part of Ras-chung-pa’s life.

Chapter Five

5. Ras-chung-pa and the *mKha’-’gro’i sNyan-rgyud*

An examination of the central episode in the life of Ras-chung-pa

5.1. Introduction

Ras-chung-pa’s introduction of the *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma* (*lus-med mkha’-’gro’i chos-skor*) into Tibet is a crucial episode in his biographies, for this was the origin of the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud* and *mKha’-’gro’i sNyan-rgyud* or *Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud* lineages, which are the traditions that initially compiled, preserved and elaborated his biographies. These narrative traditions were also of great importance in the development of biographies of Mi-la, Mar-pa, Tilo and Nāro. It is for that reason that Ras-chung-pa plays such an important role in Mi-la Ras-pa biographies such as that by gTsang-smyon Heruka, himself a successor to *sNyan-rgyud* lineages.

In the development of the Mi-la Ras-pa mythology, Ras-chung-pa’s character acquired and increasingly developed the role of the ‘rebel-pupil’, in great measure as a result of the wilful waywardness of his character. Of particular importance for the *Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud* traditions, he is increasingly portrayed as having an importance secondary to sGam-po-pa, the founder of those traditions. We shall also see in this chapter how this rebellious character, well known to contemporary Tibetan Buddhists, was gradually fabricated within certain narrative traditions.

The colophon of the lost *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, as reproduced by rGod-tshang Ras-pa, reveals that Ras-chung-pa’s own pupils recorded that he had

studied under Tipupa in India.¹ There are twenty-one available sources in reference to Ras-chung-pa's journey to India to obtain the *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma*. Of these the following ten sources describe his time in India in some detail.

- 1) a) rGya-ldang-pa's *gSer-phreng*; b) *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud Biographies*.
- 2) *Yid bzhin-gyi Nor-bu*.
- 3) *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.
- 4) Mon-tse-pa.
- 5) *Byin-brlabs Chu-rgyun*.
- 6) lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal.
- 7) a) rGod-tshang Ras-pa; b) dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan.
- 8) Byang-chub bZang-po.
- 9) Śākya-Rin-chen.
- 10) *gSer-phreng Chen-mo*.

The following eleven sources make a brief reference to Ras-chung-pa's visit to India:

- 1) Zhwa-dmar-pa.
- 2) *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*.
- 3) *Deb-ther sNgon-po*.
- 4) gTsang-smyon Heruka's *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*.
- 5) gTsang-smyon Heruka's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*.

¹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 654.

- 6) 'Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, the Third 'Brug-chen.
- 7) gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba.
- 8) Pad-ma dKar-po.
- 9) Zhwa-dmar Chos-kyi Don-grub
- 10) Situ Padma Nyin-byed dBang-po
- 11 a) NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar*, b) Rwa-lung gSer-phreng.

It will be convenient to divide this episode into three parts:

- 5.2) The circumstances which led Ras-chung-pa to go to India for the *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma*,
- 5.3) Ras-chung-pa's visit to India.
- 5.4) Mi-la Ras-pa's response to his return.

5..2. The Circumstances which led Ras-chung-pa to go to India for the *Ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma*

5.2.1. The rGya-ldang-pa Version (mid-thirteenth century)

rGya-ldang-pa's biography of Ras-chung-pa jumps forward from the Balacandra episode to a time when he has become the foremost in a group of *ras-pa* who are Mi-la Ras-pa's pupils. There is resentment towards Ras-chung-pa, who is believed to have gained this status only because he has been personally brought up by

Mi-la. During one *gaṇacakra*, when ‘Bri-sgom Ras-pa states that Ras-chung-pa is the only one amongst them capable of composing a song of his experiences, Se-ban Ras-pa hurls his bowl of beer at ‘Bri-sgom, so that Mi-la suspends *gaṇacakras* for a few years.² This squabbling amongst Mi-la’s principal pupils was unsurprisingly omitted, or diminished, in later versions. The song which Ras-chung-pa obligingly sings, is in fact the autobiographical song concerning his present happiness which was discussed in chapter four.

Some time later, Mi-la instructs Ras-chung-pa to go to India to obtain the remaining five *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma* that Mar-pa had originally told Mi-la to go and find. Gold has to be collected for that purpose. Patrons readily bring donations of gold on hearing that Mi-la requires them in order to send Ras-chung-pa to India. However, they assume that Mi-la is planning to send Ras-chung-pa to learn the art of logic and debate, because they have heard that Mi-la has recently been defeated in debate by a certain sTon-pa Dar-lo. The title *sTon-pa*, literally ‘teacher’, is used in these narratives to designate a scholar, who is often, but not always, a *bKa’-gdams-pa* monk. The patrons plead with Mi-la that learning logic is unnecessary and ask Mi-la not to send Ras-chung-pa to India. Mi-la informs them that this is in fact not the purpose of Ras-chung-pa’s journey, moreover he has not been defeated by Dar-lo, who on the contrary has become his pupil.³

This passage is a reference to an episode given in detail in rGya-ldang-pa’s biography of Mi-la Ras-pa,⁴ an incident subject to much variation and development in the Mi-la Ras-pa literature. It essentially forms an attack on the scholasticism of the *bKa’-gdams-pa* tradition, a tradition that was nevertheless adopted by the *Dwags-po*

² rGya-ldang-pa, 348-49.

Bka'-brgyud traditions, although in doing so they emphasised its subordination to meditation.

sGam-po-pa and Bla-ma Zhang had described a conflict with aggrieved monks in Gung-thang,⁵ but it is rGya-ldang-pa who first provides the narration of Mi-la being challenged to debate and physically attacked by a scholar-monk. His version is not only, along with perhaps the *Yid-bzhin gyi Nor-bu*, the earliest available, but also, unsurprisingly, the simplest and clearest in terms of its narrative structure.

sTon-pa Dar-lo visits Mi-la, debates with him, loses his temper, strikes him on the head and throws earth and ashes in his face. At this point, the plural of *ras-chung-pa* is used, viz., *ras-chung-pa mams*, which has to refer to the group of “junior *ras-pa*”, or Mi-la’s senior pupils, presumably including Ras-chung-pa. They are said to wish to attack Dar-lo, but Mi-la forbids them. Instead, Mi-la sings to Dar-lo, and he is soon converted.⁶ However, in what appears to be an addition to the original narrative, unknown to all other sources, a subsequent meeting is inserted. It is introduced with the awkward narrative bridge of Dar-lo, en route home, deciding to return to apologise to Mi-la, so that he goes through the procedure of meeting Mi-la again. Dar-lo is mystified by meeting multiple emanated Mi-las and is eventually defeated in debate by a *paṇḍita* who dissolves into Mi-la Ras-pa.⁷

The next episode in rGya-ldang-pa’s biography of Mi-la Ras-pa is his persecution by a monastery that he visits;⁸ this passage is based upon the episode in sGam-po-pa and Bla-ma Zhang but adds more miracles.

³ Ibid., 349-50.

⁴ Ibid., 245-49.

⁵ sGam-po-pa, 24; Bla-ma Zhang, 62a.

⁶ rGya-ldang-pa, 245-48.

⁷ Ibid., 248-49.

⁸ Ibid., 249-51.

To return to rGya-ldang-pa's biography of Ras-chung-pa, in order for his venture to India to have the blessing of the *dākinīs* and thus be successful, Mi-la Ras-pa seats Ras-chung-pa on a high throne, while he sits on a lower one. Mi-la then offers the donated gold to Ras-chung-pa, in a reversal of the teacher-pupil relationship.⁹

Therefore, in the rGya-ldang-pa version, the only connection between the Dar-lo confrontation and Ras-chung-pa's departure to India is a misunderstanding by Mi-la's patrons and Ras-chung-pa is not in any way at fault. On the contrary, rGya-ldang-pa is emphasising his pre-eminence.

We will witness this portrayal being subtly but dramatically transformed over the subsequent centuries.

5.2.2. The *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi Phreng-ba* Version

This independent variant of the life of Mi-la is based on the source used by rGya-ldang-pa.

In this brief version,¹⁰ Dar-lo is accompanied by two scholars, making a group of three scholar-monks. As in rGya-ldang-pa, Dar-lo, angered, throws earth in Mi-la Ras-pa's face, but does not strike him, an element that is not present in all other versions apart from the very significant and singular version, probably from Zhi-byed Ri-pa, contained in the *Byin-brlabs gyi Chu-bo*. Again, it is Mi-la's followers in general who wish to attack Dar-lo and whom Mi-la orders to hold back. The song that

⁹ Ibid., 350.

converts Dar-lo is quite different, apart from a similarity between two lines,¹¹ from that found in rGya-ldang-pa. This is one of many examples that indicate the inventiveness of the yogin-bard tradition of Mi-la narrative and song.

There is no separate Ras-chung-pa biography contained within this text, and therefore, unlike rGya-ldang-pa's biography of Mi-la, the story of Ras-chung-pa's departure for India is told within the Mi-la biography.¹² It comes after the encounter with Dar-lo but before the narrative moves on to the story of Mi-la Ras-pa's miracles performed in response to the monastery that persecutes him.¹³

Mi-la instructs Ras-chung-pa to obtain the 'marvellous five dharmas' (*ngo-mtshar che-ba'i chos-skor lnga*) from India. As in rGya-ldang-pa, the donors of the gold erroneously believe that Ras-chung-pa is being sent to learn logic and debate because of Mi-la's encounter with Dar-lo, and ask him not to send him. At the offering of gold to the enthroned Ras-chung-pa, Mi-la explains the real purpose of Ras-chung-pa's journey and sings a song¹⁴ that includes an enumeration of the five instructions desired:

- 1) Knowledge: The Lamp of Wisdom (*Rig-pa ye-shes sgron-me*).
- 2) Nāḍis and vāyus: the cakra-network (*rtsa lung dra-mig 'khor-lo*).
- 3) Equal taste: The mirror of externals (*ro-snyoms phyi'i me-long*).
- 4) Self-liberation: the Māhamudrā (*rang-grol phyag-rgya chen-po*).
- 5) Great bliss: the jewel of speech (*bde-chen gsung-gi rin-chen*).

¹⁰ *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, 228-31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 229, *bsgom ste sangs rgyas mi tsol bar/ thos pa ches pas ci la phan*.

¹² *Ibid.*, 229-31.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 231-33.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 230-31.

rGya-ldang-pa had merely referred the reader to his version of the life of Mi-la for the song, providing only the first and last line in the Ras-chung-pa biography.¹⁵ However, the song is not to be found in his Mi-la biography. rGya-ldang-pa appears to have made an error in not realising that he had omitted the song in his compilation of Mi-la's life story. The *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* version of the song has an additional three lines following what rGya-ldang-pa cites as the final line. However, both texts were relying upon the same or a similar source.

Here there is a detail not found in rGya-ldang-pa, perhaps also drawn from their common source: Ras-chung-pa, having received the gold, casts two grains (*gser 'bru gnyis*) from it onto Mi-la's head.¹⁶ Ras-chung-pa departs, but his subsequent return from India is not described in this text. He is next mentioned, only in passing, as being with Mi-la on retreat in a haunted cave.¹⁷

Again, as in rGya-ldang-pa, the connection between Ras-chung-pa's journey to India and the persecution by monks is tenuous and Ras-chung-pa is chosen for the task because of his pre-eminence, and not because of any suspect motivation on Ras-chung-pa's part.

¹⁵ rGya-ldang-pa, 350: thos chung rtsod pa 'pham pa dang / ces pa nas / ras chung mi [*sic.*, ma] 'dug rgya gar song/ ces pa'i bar mid la'i lo rgyus kyi skabs ltar du gsungs

¹⁶ *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, 231, line 3.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 233.

5.2.3. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version

This represents a further stratum in the development of the Ras-chung-pa legend, and formed a fruitful foundation for later developments. Its chapter divisions and titles are very similar to those in the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu yi Phreng-ba*. In both texts the Dar-lo chapter (*dar-lo'i skor*) is introduced by the title 'The Quality of not being crushed by debate' (*rtsod pas mi rdzi ba'i yon tan*).¹⁸

In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version,¹⁹ the motifs of the resentful monastery and the confrontational monk-scholar have combined. Moreover, they are not only explicitly identified as bKa'-gdams-pa monks, but the fact that they are under the power of attachment and aversion is said to be *because* they are bKa'-gdams-pa.²⁰ The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* was probably the product of an independent sNyan-rgyud lineage, in contrast to the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud, founded by sGam-po-pa, which had adopted bKa'-gdams-pa monasticism and scholasticism. This condemnatory portrait of bKa'-gdams-pa monks is therefore absent or considerably muted within the Mi-la biographies of explicitly Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud texts. From rGya-ldang-pa onwards authors refrained from identifying these monks with any sectarian allegiance. By the time of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka, although he was himself a non-monastic sNyan-rgyud practitioner, even the monk who assassinates Mi-la Ras-pa becomes replaced by a Bon-po priest, which created a less disturbing narrative for the monastic bKa'-brgyud tradition which was to be gTsang-smyon's primary audience.

¹⁸ Ibid., 228; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 59b; (Oxford), 46b; (Stockholm), n.a.

¹⁹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 59b-65a; (Oxford), 46b-50b; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁰ Ibid., (Newark), 60a: der ston pa rnams bka' gdams pa yin pas chags sdang byas nas... (Oxford), 47a: der ston pa ka [sic] gdams pa yin bas chags sdang byas te; (Stockholm), n.a.

In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, the animosity of the monks is no longer solely the result of Mi-la's growing spiritual reputation. The monks of the monastery of sTeng-chen in sNye-nam refuse to loan grain to the populace during a drought. Disillusioned, the people thenceforth give their offerings for prayers for the dead, and so on, to Mi-la Ras-pa instead, which excites the ire that the bKa'-gdams-pa are, apparently, naturally prey to.

An even greater narrative development has taken place in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*: Dar-lo appears to have asexually reproduced to create two scholar monks— sTon-pa Dar-lo and Lo-ston. Alternatively, there may have been two separate narrative variants, which have been brought together in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* narrative transmission. The number of encounters with Mi-la Ras-pa also increases.

This division allows all the most negative aspects of the Dar-lo of earlier versions to be siphoned off into a character that can play the role of a villain who gets his just desserts. This also has the effect of enabling Dar-lo to become an important pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa without such grave blots on his record as having previously attacked his putative guru.

Therefore, it is Lo-ston who concocts the plan to shame Mi-la into leaving the area by defeating him in debate. He sends three scholar-monks (echoing the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* narrative, but here not including Dar-lo) to debate with him. Mi-la sings a number of songs (not found in the earlier sources) which convert the three unnamed monks into becoming his pupils. The principal confrontation is therefore unrealistically displaced to many months later, in a new setting, where Lo-ston, Dar-lo and their followers meet Mi-la and his followers at a festival. There, they see, to

their shock, the three former monks dressed as *ras-pa* amongst Mi-la Ras-pa's pupils. It is not explained why Lo-ston had not been wondering about their fate in the meantime, but this is characteristic of the many "narrative sutures" that one discovers in the developed biographies. The new units of narrative, while perhaps internally logically consistent, reveal weaknesses, at the points where they fuse with other narrative units.

Mi-la sings to Lo-ston, who, enraged, throws ashes into Mi-la's face (but does not strike him). Instead of the pupils in general, as in earlier versions, it is Ras-chung-pa, alone, who seizes a stick and goes to hit Lo-ston. Here we see the birth of an impetuous Ras-chung-pa in the narrative tradition. As unrealistically as in any musical, Mi-la seizes Ras-chung-pa by the arm and all action freezes while Mi-la sings a song to calm him down, until "...Ras-chung-pa's fierce pride was pacified and he meditated on patience" (*ras chung pa nga rgyal gtum²¹ pa zhi bas bzod pa bsgom mo*);²² This song²³ was a further addition to the Mi-la song repertoire and formed the basis for a popular variant in gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*.

Ras-chung-pa's character has acquired marked defects in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, in spite of its being a text from a Ras-chung-pa lineage. We witness an increase in the dichotomy of imperfect pupil and perfect teacher, which gives an increased dynamism to the narrative. This portrait is tempered by the context: Ras-chung-pa is still a pupil, and the reader knows he will eventually become a master and lineage holder in his own right.

At this point Lo-ston makes an awkward, abrupt exit, simply vanishing from the narrative of the day's events. As Dar-lo's doppelgänger, he fulfils his narrative

²¹ Ibid., (Newark): tum, (Oxford): dum; (Stockholm): n.a.

function through the medium of a brief description of his fate. He is said to have run out of merit and been rejected by the populace. Then, on his death, as the consequence of his attachment to a peacock feather, he was reborn as a treasure-guarding deity (*dkor-bdag*) that the local populace made oaths upon.²⁴ Thus, a narrative character guilty of aggression towards Mi-la is provided with a suitable doom.

Meanwhile, by sleight of narrative hand, Dar-lo continues from where his evil variant had left off, continuing the dialogue with Mi-la Ras-pa, but developing faith in him, and even becoming one of his six “ordained scholar-monk meditator [pupils]” (*ston bsgom rab-byung drug gi ya bar gyur ba cig*). However, this entailed receiving Mi-la’s instructions and practising them secretly, unbeknown to other monks, for these two approaches are presented as diametrically opposed.²⁵

²² Ibid., (Newark), 65b, (Oxford), 49b; (Stockholm): n.a.

²³ Ibid., (Newark), 63a6 to 63b4; (Oxford), 49a-49b; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁴ Ibid., (Newark), 63b6; (Oxford), 49b; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁵ Ibid., (Newark), 65a5; (Oxford), 50b; (Stockholm), n.a.

In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, this confrontation with the scholar monks is integrally combined with Ras-chung-pa's departure for India, again depicted in a manner that is detrimental to his character. The intention to learn logic is no longer an erroneous assumption made by the patrons; it is Ras-chung-pa himself, worried about their being embarrassed by defeat in debate, who privately decides to go to India to learn logic and debate. This makes little narrative sense, for there was no need to go to India for such a purpose: it would have been far easier for him to learn this exacting subject in his own language in Tibet. However, this provides an occasion for Mi-la's strong condemnation of the study of logic, identifying it as an obstacle to Buddhahood and condemning the wish to engage in debate as attributable to the *Māras*.²⁶ Ras-chung-pa's response to this rebuke, oddly, is to sing, to Mi-la's satisfaction, the autobiographical song concerning his present happiness, which in *rGya-ldang-pa* had occurred earlier in the narrative, following inter-pupillary conflict at the *gaṇacakra*.

The narrative flow appears to be damaged, as no explanation is at first given as to why gold is being collected and offered to Ras-chung-pa.²⁷ The high throne for Ras-chung-pa is omitted, and entrusting him with the gold is performed without any formal demonstration of Ras-chung-pa's status.²⁸ The illustrated Newark manuscript as a result portrays him sitting lower than Mi-la. Mi-la sings a variant of the song listing the five *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma* that was given in the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*,²⁹ and includes, belatedly, for the first time in this narrative, the admonition to go to India to obtain them. Ras-chung-pa throws a slightly increased amount—one small piece

²⁶ Ibid., (Newark), 65a1; (Oxford), 50b; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁷ Ibid., (Newark), 65b5; (Oxford), 51a; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁸ Ibid., (Newark), 65b, 66a; (Oxford), 51a; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁹ Ibid., (Newark), 65b5 to 66a3; (Oxford), 51a; (Stockholm), n.a.

(*theg po cig*)— of gold on Mi-la's head, and sings a song asking for Mi-la's blessing for the journey. This song was but a four line verse in *rGya-ldang-pa*, but here, while retaining the first two lines, it has increased to eighteen lines, an example of the growth of songs attributed to Ras-chung-pa.³⁰

Following a further warning against logic, Ras-chung-pa is belatedly told the reason why he is being asked to obtain the five *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma*. This is followed by an additional song of general advice that could have been located anywhere in the biography, and then Ras-chung-pa departs for India. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, in spite of being a biography of Mi-la and having tarnished Ras-chung-pa's image, will follow Ras-chung-pa to India for an entire chapter, instead of staying with Mi-la. This is because of the central importance of the introduction of the *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma* for the sNyan-rgyud tradition that is the background to this text. In contrast, gTsang-smyon Heruka will omit this and other Ras-chung-pa episodes, in spite of an inevitable lack of smoothness in the flow of his story.

³⁰ *rGya-ldang-pa*, 350; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 66a4 to 66a6; (Oxford), 51a-51b; (Stockholm), n.a.

5.2.4. Zhwa-dmar mKha-spyod dBang-phyug

Zhwa-dmar's (1350-1405) version,³¹ probably based on the lost *mDzod-nag-ma* of Karma-pa Rang-byung rDo-rje (1284-1339), represents a different narrative branch, akin to the early Don-mo Ri-pa version of circa 1245. The order of events varies, in that Ras-chung-pa meets Mi-la before the latter is snowed in upon La-phyi mountain.³² As in Don-mo Ri-pa, there is no conflict between Mi-la and any community of monks, a subject that may not have appealed to these monastic, scholarly authors. Therefore, as with rGya-ldang-pa and the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu Phreng-ba*, Mi-la's instruction to Ras-chung-pa to obtain the five *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma* is a straightforward assignation given to a chosen pupil. However the number of *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma* required are given as four, not five, with five of the nine already brought to Tibet by Mar-pa.³³ The text however does not specify what constitutes these five *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharmas*.

This non-dramatic tradition was continued among more sober authors in contrast to the evolution of more dramatic hagiographies, which we shall see in the following examples.

5.2.5. lHo-rong Chos-'byung (completed 1446)

rTa-tshag Tshe-dbang-rgyal provides a chronology for Mi-la's life, in which, as in Zhwa-dmar, Mi-la is snowed in at La-phyi mountain³⁴ some time after his

³¹ Zhwa-dmar, 285.

³² Ibid., 243-44.

³³ Ibid., 285.

³⁴ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 87.

meeting with Ras-chung-pa³⁵ (which, according to this chronology, occurred some time after his twelve year retreat ended in 1095).³⁶ The winter spent on La-phyi was followed by an eight month retreat from the beginning of a hare year, which has to be 1111 AD, and was closely preceded by sending Ras-chung-pa to India for the *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma* (their number is not specified).³⁷ In other words, according to the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, Ras-chung-pa was sent to India in 1110 AD, when he would have reached the age of twenty-six and Mi-la was seventy.

As in Zhwa-dmar, Ras-chung-pa's journey to India is in no way attributed to an intention to study logic, and the scholar-monks are not mentioned.

5.2.6. *Deb-ther sNgon-po* (completed 1478)

'Gos Lotsāba makes no reference to the conflict with monks, and, as in Zhwa-dmar, Ras-chung-pa is sent to obtain the remaining four, not five, of the nine 'Bodiless *ḍākiṇī* dharmas' (*ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma*; *lus-med mkha'-'gro'i chos*)³⁸ that Mar-pa had not obtained.

5.2.7. *Mon-rtse-pa* (c.1450-1475)

In *Mon-rtse-pa*, we find the *rGya-ldang-pa* type narrative in a crudely simplified form. It does not display the narrative developments of the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* and *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. *Mon-rtse-pa* reproduces *rGya-ldang-pa's*

³⁵ Ibid., 84.

³⁶ Ibid., 81-83.

³⁷ Ibid., 87.

³⁸ *The Blue Annals* (Roerich) 437; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 382.

chapter divisions exactly and the text itself often follows rGya-ldang-pa's closely. However it gives another version of Se-ban's futile rivalry with Ras-chung-pa, which is much milder. Following the identical complaint that Ras-chung is favoured only because he was brought up by Mi-la, Se-ban and others fail to arrange a complex *gaṇacakra*, and Ras-chung-pa is established to be the only one in the community of pupils with the knowledge to do so. As in rGya-ldang-pa, Ras-chung-pa is also the only one amongst them able to sing of his experiences; Se-ban's beer-throwing is omitted.³⁹

Mon-rtse-pa even follows rGya-ldang-pa in merely giving the last line of the song in which Mi-la instructs Ras-chung-pa to go to India. As in rGya-ldang-pa, Ras-chung-pa is sent to obtain five *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma*.

Nevertheless, there is no reference to a conflict with scholar monks, either in Mon-rtse-pa's biography of Mi-la or of Ras-chung-pa. However, his attempt to write a cogent narrative piece despite this omission fails miserably, demonstrating that this version was a deviation, or based upon a deviation from a received tradition. Again, this was probably because the episode was not very palatable to an audience of scholar-monks.

Mi-la asks Ras-chung to also obtain 'the instructions that bring Buddhahood through the power of their being heard' (*gdams ngag thos pa'i stobs gyis sangs rgya ba*).⁴⁰ This latter instruction is included in the narrative because by Mon-rtse-pa's time it had been discovered as a *gter-ma* said to have been concealed by Ras-chung-pa, so it is here projected back into the history. However, it was not added to the

³⁹ Mon-rtse-pa, 167.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 168.

narrative describing Ras-chung-pa's time in India, where it is not mentioned amongst the teachings he received.

Again, the collection of the gold is not described; Ras-chung-pa receiving it from Mi-la while seated on a high throne is also omitted. Ras-chung-pa places 'a little gold' (*gser en tsam*) on Mi-la's head. Some lines of his song asking for blessing are given in prose form, and then he departs.

5.2.8. *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*

Of greater interest than Mon-rtse-pa is this text, which combines not only the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and Karma-pa narrative traditions, but also the Zhi-byed Ri-pa version. The *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* is principally based upon the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, and that text's version of the confrontation with scholar-monks is repeated here.⁴¹ However, it preceded by an alternative version, probably from Zhi-byed Ri-pa, characterised by archaic colloquialism, that is presented as an additional, earlier event and the narrative is as follows.⁴²

Three monks named dGa'-lo, Ra-lo, and Shing-lo live in a *bKa'-gdams-pa* monastery in sNye-nam. These three peculiar names appear to originate from Dar-lo, and are related to the narrative motif of Mi-la's being challenged by three monks, although they appear to have become separated from that function, for they send three anonymous monks to Mi-la instead of going themselves. The episode begins with the monks' refusal to provide a loan of grain to the villagers. Mi-la sends Ras-chung-pa

⁴¹ *Byin-brlabs Chu-rgyun*, 312-37.

to wait for the returning villagers at a crossroad and to invite them up to his cave with the promise to provide them with grain. Ras-chung-pa, though he knows that they have no grain to give, dutifully obeys. The villagers are well aware that Mi-la has no stores, but decide to come to see him anyway. Ras-chung-pa arrives ahead of them, to warn Mi-la that they are coming. Mi-la tells Ras-chung-pa to make three heaps of earth and stones, which Mi-la transforms into even greater mounds of barley. He then transforms water into delicious beer, and changes other heaps to tsampa-dough and sweet-buckwheat.⁴³

Annoyed, dGa'-lo, Ra-lo and Shing-lo send three scholar-monks to debate with Mi-la, to drive him away, but they develop faith in him and return to the monastery with that news.⁴⁴ The next day, dGa'-lo himself (the other two monks vanish from the narrative) comes physically to attack Mi-la. The clairvoyant Mi-la knows this, and to prevent trouble sends Ras-chung-pa away to collect firewood. dGa'-lo arrives, throws ashes into Mi-la's face and beats him with a staff until he is too tired to beat him any more. Mi-la then warns dGa'-lo to leave before Ras-chung-pa returns or he will find himself on the receiving end of Ras-chung-pa's blows. When Ras-chung-pa returns, he discovers Mi-la covered in bruises, bleeding and weak. Mi-la has to dissuade Ras-chung-pa from running out to find and beat the monk.

This episode was not adopted by other works, where it would contradict the portrait of an invulnerable Mi-la who never comes to harm (except when he wishes to, as in gTsang-smyon's version of his death, when he deliberately consumes a

⁴² Ibid., 301-12.

⁴³ Ibid., 304. The term used for sweet buckwheat is *rgya-ri*, which also appears as *rgya-bra/rgya-'bras* in modern Tibetan. Charles Ramble, pers.comm., 2/3/01. mKhan-chen Khra-'gu believes it may be Manangi dialect for millet., pers. comm., Aug 98.

poisoned dish, and yet does not suffer the physical agony that a normal human being would.)

In this Zhi-byed Ri-pa part of the text we find a distinctive approach to the subject of sorcery: Ras-chung-pa, deeply upset by dGa'-lo's attack, pleads with Mi-la to use his sorcery against the monk (whose name from this point on is spelt rGa-lo).⁴⁵ Mi-la agrees, but later Ras-chung-pa discovers that Mi-la is doing the life-lengthening practice of Amitāyus. Mi-la calls it a 'profound sorcery' because by it they will outlive the monk! Ras-chung-pa, dissatisfied, states that he will go to India to learn sorcery himself, thus introducing an alternative motive for his visit to India, in contrast to the wish to learn logic.

Mi-la gives him permission to go to India, but solely to obtain the remaining four *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharmas* and not sorcery, the number of *dharmas* agreeing with the Zhwa-dmar-pa and related texts. Then, in a unique piece of narrative, Mi-la advises him that if he does learn sorcery, he should not practise it in India, for though it will be effective over a long distance, people will not believe that the result —the calamity that befalls the monk— was his doing. If he waits to do it until after his return, he will become famous in Tibet for his sorcery.

This narrative, in its independent form, must have continued at this point with Ras-chung-pa's departure. However, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version is introduced at this point, so that a confrontation re-commences, this time with Lo-ston and Dar-lo. The initial visit of the three-scholar monks and the setting of the festival is omitted, but otherwise the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* is followed closely. Instead of meeting at the festival, Lo-ston and Dar-lo come from sTeng-chen

⁴⁴ Ibid., 305-6.

monastery to see Mi-la in his cave. The dialogue and songs are almost identical. It is added, however, that when Ras-chung-pa is prevented from attacking Lo-ston by Mi-la's song, the sNye-nams patrons, who are observing the action, comment that Lo-ston was at fault, but Ras-chung-pa was blameless.

This episode continues to its conclusion as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, with Ras-chung-pa asking for permission to go to India, so that he can debate with these monks. Similarly, there follows Mi-la's objections to logic, the gift of gold and Ras-chung-pa's departure, though with an additional song wishing for Ras-chung-pa's good fortune.⁴⁶ There is, however, one addition within this passage: a sentence in which Ras-chung-pa states that he is going to India to learn sorcery, because of the physical attacks by rGa-lo and Lo-ston.⁴⁷ Here, the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* compiler has attempted to blend these two diverse versions of Ras-chung-pa's initial motivation into one whole, although the narrative sutures remain evident.

5.2.9. gTsang-smyon Heruka's *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*.

In this earlier work, gTsang-smyon merely states that Mi-la Ras-pa sent Ras-chung-pa to India for the *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma*, 'the dharmas of the bodiless ḍākinīs', without any further information.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 309.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 336-37.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 332.

5.2.10. gTsang-smyon Heruka's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*

(completed in 1488)

This is the most popular version of this episode in Ras-chung-pa's life.⁴⁸ The essential narrative is at first almost identical to the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, upon which it is based. Although there is some verbatim textual replication, the whole narrative has been transmuted by gTsang-smyon's literary talent; he interpolates new material and rephrases older material. Though he has created a more accessible and enjoyable story, the narrative has reached its most complex form as a result of the successive layers of narrative addition.

The two leaders of the monastery in gNya'-nang (as gTsang-smyon spells sNya-nam) are given expanded names: Lo-ston is Lo-ston dGe-'dun 'Bum and Dar-lo is Ra-ston Dar-ma Blo-gros, or Dar-blo in short. This short version of his name appeared in the introductory root verse of rGya-ldang-pa⁴⁹ and once only in the main body of the text⁵⁰ (though it was used by Tiso in his translation throughout). It is more likely that Dar-lo would be corrupted to Dar-blo, which could be understood as an abbreviation of some common names (Tibetan names are abbreviated by retaining the first syllable of each name) than that Dar-blo would be changed to a comparatively peculiar Dar-lo. Therefore, the name Dar-blo may have suggested gTsang-smyon's Dar-ma Blo-gros, the abbreviation, in a reverse process, having created a full name.

The first significant innovation appears when the narrative reaches the festival, where the three erstwhile scholar-monks are seen in their yogin outfits (with the added detail of their drinking alcohol from skull-bowls). It is Dar-blo, in a surprising

⁴⁸ *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 351-82.

exchange of roles (perhaps echoing the rGya-ldang-pa version), who throws earth at Mi-la. Ras-chung-pa's response is stronger than in earlier versions, for he believes it will be a 'root-downfall' (*rtsa-ltung*) of the *mantrayāna* vows if he does not slay this sinner, but an accumulation of merit if he does. The word used for 'slay' is the specific term used in the context of *mantrayāna* practice for killing those who deserve, from the *mantrayāna* point of view, to be killed— *bsgral*⁵¹ (though Chang translated this as 'punished',⁵² presumably loath to believe that Ras-chung-pa had murder in mind). Ras-chung-pa thinks of Dar-lo as "a sinner who strives against the [guru's] body" (*sku la bsdo ba'i sdig can*), the very term used in the standard Tantric list of the ten attributes of one who deserves to be slain.

Although the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* and the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* are independent variations based on the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, yet they both have somewhat similar, minor additions, which appear to indicate an alternative common source. In the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* the populace are said to consider Ras-chung-pa blameless in his action, while in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* the patrons not only fault the monk, but also criticise Ras-chung-pa a little. This less favourable description of Ras-chung-pa corresponds to gTsang-smyon's portrayal of Ras-chung-pa as more flawed than in the works of his predecessors.

This is followed by the indication of a narrative suture, for the festival episode ends unresolved and is followed by Dar-blo and Lo-ston coming to visit Mi-la, bringing an offering of meat and debating with him in yet another variation that is presented as an additional encounter.

⁴⁹ rGya-ldang-pa, 244.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 246, line 4.

⁵¹ *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 360.

⁵² Chang, 382.

In response to their debate, Mi-la sings and performs a sequence of miracles such as riding rocks, wading in the ground, solidifying space, etc., with the result that Lo-ston develops faith in him.

Dar-blo, being marked out to play the role of villain in gTsang-smyon, remains furious and an even more embarrassing and complete downfall is provided for him than in earlier versions. Mi-la hints at a guilty secret, which prompts Ras-chung-pa, in spite of Mi-la's attempts to prevent him, to expose Dar-blo. This awkward sleight of narrative hand transfers the responsibility for exposing Dar-blo to an uncontrollable Ras-chung-pa. He reveals that Dar-blo had given a bracelet to a pretty girl, who happened to have faith in Ras-chung-pa (but only a little in Mi-la). Ras-chung-pa, whom one has to assume she confided in, unless he was informed by the clairvoyant Mi-la, even goes to her home to bring back Dar-blo's mantra-beads that he had also given to her. This accords with gTsang-smyon's portrayal of Ras-chung-pa as handsome and exciting his own following, distinct from Mi-la's.

The disgraced Dar-blo, having in this version swapped fates with Lo-ston (or alternatively one could say that the characters have swapped their names), dies and becomes a terrifying demon. This is an even worse rebirth than the 'wealth-guardian' of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, though inconsistently, the populace are still said to make oaths upon him.

Meanwhile, it is Lo-ston who becomes one of Mi-la's five close monk-disciples, with an additional anecdote in which he pours blood into his monk's bowl and milk into his skull in order to test Mi-la Ras-pa's clairvoyance.

Ras-chung-pa's subsequent departure for India follows the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version and therefore omits the prestigious throne for Ras-chung-pa.

However, Ras-chung-pa's initial motive for going to India is now not solely to learn logic in order to combat the monks in debate, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, but also, as in *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, to learn sorcery in order to destroy the monks. This is an example of another parallel yet independent addition to these two later texts. This reflects a probable development in the oral tradition that fed new material into the textual tradition, but will also correlate with, and was perhaps suggested by, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* narrative's account of Ras-chung-pa's involvement with sorcery on his return from India.

Therefore, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* had already muted the portrait of Ras-chung-pa as the perfect pupil, and the narrative modulations and additions of the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* further increased the representation of a barely controllable, wayward young Ras-chung-pa that was to become his established image.

5.2.11 lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557)

Lha-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, who was gTsang-smyon's pupil, entirely omits the debate with scholar-monks in his biography of Ras-chung-pa. Up to this point,⁵³ Ras-chung-pa is portrayed as receiving the secret transmissions and Mi-la as pleased with his progress and realisation. This is why he is chosen by Mi-la to go to India to obtain the *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma*, and why he provides him with the necessary gold (though without the description of how it was acquired). Nevertheless, as in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, Mi-la warns Ras-chung-pa not to study logic and debate, for it

⁵³ lHa-btsun, 500.

will ‘easily stiffen and harden his being’ (*rang rgyud gyong hreng ‘gro ba la tshegs med*) even though the narrative has not mentioned the subject previously.

Ras-chung-pa places upon Mi-la’s head what is now a *large* piece of gold (*gser thig-po che ba*), which has grown considerably from the two grains in the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*. He sings a song⁵⁴ that is a slight variant of that in the *Mi-la’i mGur-bum*⁵⁵ and departs.

Thus, in writing a biography that is focused upon Ras-chung-pa and particularly the latter half of his life, lHa-btsun prefers to diminish any details that are detrimental to Ras-chung-pa’s image, but nevertheless has relied on the *Mi-la’i mGur-bum* as his source for this passage.

5.2.12. rGod-tshang Ras-pa (Sixteenth century)

In this extensive work, the standard biography of Ras-chung-pa, rGod-tshang Ras-pa bases this episode⁵⁶ upon the version in the *Mi-la’i mGur-bum*, which was written by his teacher. He even assumes the reader’s familiarity with that work, for in summarising this episode he merely lists the songs by their titles as they occur in the *Mi-la’i mGur-bum*, without reproducing them in his own text. However, those portions or phrases in the *Mi-la’i mGur-bum* that would reflect unfavourably upon Ras-chung-pa, such as Ras-chung-pa’s brusque refusal to allow the scholar-monks to meet Mi-la, are omitted by rGod-tshang Ras-pa.⁵⁷ Otherwise, he remains faithful to

⁵⁴ Ibid., 500.

⁵⁵ *Mi-la’i mgur-bum*, 380-81.

⁵⁶ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 55-62.

⁵⁷ *Mi-la’i mgur-bum*, 362.

the *mGur-'bum* narrative, including its new details, such as exposing Dar-lo (as it is spelt here) through revealing his gift of a bangle.

5.2.13. 'Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa,

The Third 'Brug-chen (1478-1523).

Like some earlier authors, he simply states that Ras-chung-pa was sent to India for instruction, with no background narrative.⁵⁸

5.2.14. Byang-chub bZang-po.

This passage⁵⁹ is a summary based on *rGya-ldang-pa*. The patrons suspect that Ras-chung-pa is going to India to learn logic. Mi-la has Ras-chung-pa seated upon a high throne and offers him the gold so that he may obtain the *five* (as in *rGya-ldang-pa*) *dharma*s. The story of Dar-lo (as it is spelt here) in the Mi-la biography within this collection is also a summary of the corresponding *rGya-ldang-pa* text, with fewer songs included.⁶⁰

5.2.15. dPa'-bo gTsug-lag 'phreng-ba and Pad-ma dKar-po

Both authors merely mention that Ras-chung-pa was sent to India for the *Dāka-niṣkāya-dharma*.⁶¹

⁵⁸ 'Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 11.

⁵⁹ Byang-chub bZang-po, 127-28.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 114-15.

⁶¹ gTsug-lag Phreng-ba, 378; Pad-ma dKar-po, 502.

5.2.16. Śākya-Rin-chen (mid-eighteenth century)

Although stated in the colophon to be a summary of dGa'-bde rGyal-mtshan, which is identical to the rGod-tshang Ras-pa text, the components of this version are more complex than that, for it is not simply a summary of the *mGur-'bum* episode, but appears, as in rGod-tshang Ras-pa, to have drawn on various sources.⁶² It does have the dual characters of Dar-lo and Lo-ston, but merely states that they were overcome by Mi-la's miracles, and does not mention their individual fates. Ras-chung-pa, dissatisfied, pleads to be allowed to go to India to study logic (not sorcery) and Mi-la's response appears to be textually related to the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, with identical or similar phraseology: for example, Śākya Rin-chen's *tshig ngan gyi lan 'debs 'dod pa de bdud langs ba yin* ("The desire to answer with bad words is the arising of *Māra*")⁶³ for *tshig ngan gyi lan 'debs 'dod pas*⁶⁴ / *bdud langs pa yin* as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.⁶⁵ In addition to Ras-chung-pa's initial motivation, there is also the misconception of the patrons, who not only believe that he is being sent to learn logic, but also receive the impression that this is a good thing to learn. Nevertheless, they plead for Ras-chung-pa to remain. Unlike the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and its descendants, but like rGya-Idang-pa, *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* (see above) and *gSer-phreng Chen-mo* (see below) Ras-chung-pa is provided with a higher throne⁶⁶ and five *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma* are listed.⁶⁷ Śākya Rin-chen also uses the same phrase as found in gTsang-smyon and lHa-btsun Rin-chen for the warning that logic 'stiffens one's being' (*rang rgyud gyong hreng 'gro ba la tshegs med*) .

⁶² Śākya Rin-chen, 201-203.

⁶³ Ibid., 202 lines 1-2.

⁶⁴ Newark: tsa na.

⁶⁵ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 65b1; (Oxford), 50b; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁶⁶ Śākya Rin-chen., 202.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 202-203.

There is also practically the same expression as used in lHa-btsun for the larger piece of gold Ras-chung-pa places on Mi-la's head (viz., *Thig pa che ba gcig*).

Therefore, Śākya Rin-chen appears to have drawn on earlier rGya-ldang-pa and later *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and gTsang-smyon narratives.

The same incident as portrayed in Śākya Rin-chen's biography of Mi-la Ras-pa provides hardly any information.⁶⁸

5.2.17. NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* & Rwa-lung gSer-phreng

This unique narrative appears to be a variant of the rGya-ldang-pa type narrative. It specifies, as mentioned in the previous chapter of this thesis, that Ras-chung-pa was in his eighteenth or nineteenth year (which would be 1101 or 1102 AD) on his return to Mi-la following his cure and his relationship with a certain Sar-nam Za-lha-phug.

Later, after he had mastered the meditation practices, an *abhidharma* scholar named sTon-pa Dar-lo, came to see Mi-la and became angry with him, threw ashes in his face and left.⁶⁹

Ras-chung-pa is not given any dialogue or thoughts. He is merely said to clean Mi-la's face. Mi-la then tells him that there is no point in receiving teachings from these scholar-monks. Instead, he should go to India for a third time to resolve doubts about the commentaries upon the Tantras from masters in the lineage of Nāropa, and that in addition, he himself will give Ras-chung-pa profound teachings.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 166.

The *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma* are not specifically mentioned, nor is any interest in logic expressed by Ras-chung-pa.⁷⁰

5.2.18. *gSer-phreng chen-mo* (compiled after 1838)

In spite of the late date of this compilation, it follows the rGya-ldang-pa type narrative even more closely than *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, and again without the second miraculous episode found in rGya-ldang-pa. It is less detailed than the equivalent in rGya-ldang-pa but more so than *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*. Of particular note is that Dar-lo comes to see Mi-la on his own individual initiative. It is Mi-la's pupils in general who wish to kill the monk, and 'Bri-sgom and Ras-chung-pa accompany Mi-la in his song (as in the earlier compilations). Dar-lo (as spelt here) is converted, but though he stops accumulating bad karma and develops good meditation he is not listed as being one of a group of principal monk disciples (thus conforming with rGya-ldang-pa).⁷¹

The instruction to Ras-chung-pa to go to India is set later in the narrative and is not directly related to the Dar-lo incident. As in rGya-ldang-pa, the patrons misconceive the intention of Ras-chung-pa's journey as being to learn logic because of Dar-lo, Ras-chung-pa is set on a high throne and Mi-la explains the true reason for Ras-chung-pa's departure.⁷² The beginning of the song that rGya-ldang-pa only

⁶⁹ NGMPP 26a-b.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 26b.

⁷¹ *gSer-phreng Chen-mo*, 248-50.

⁷² Ibid., 251.

referred to and was given in full in *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* is provided, but after three lines alternates from prose to verse.⁷³

Mi-la appears to have no prior knowledge of Ti-pu-pa, as he merely states, “It is possible that there is a pupil of Nāropa [still alive in India].”⁷⁴

As in the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* there is no continuation of the Ras-chung-pa narrative, or a description of his return, as he is next mentioned in passing when he and Mi-la go to stay in a haunted cave.⁷⁵

This text also demonstrates the survival, well after the influence of the fully developed popular mythology of gTsang-smyon’s version, of narratives based in the earliest strata of the tradition.

Without the contemporary witness of the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, we have only the variant witnesses of rGya-ldang-pa, *Yid-bzin Nor-bu*, Mon-rtse-pa, the NGMPP *bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar*, and the *gSer-phreng Chen-mo* as indications of the a version of this episode that dates back at least to the early thirteenth century. We can contrast this rGya-ldang-pa type version with the narrative tradition of the Zhwa-dmar-pa, which makes no connection between the two narrative of the debate and the journey to India.

⁷³ Ibid., 251-53.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 253.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 256.

5.3. Ras-chung-pa obtains the *Dāka-niṣkāya-dharma* in India

5.3.1. The rGya-ldang-pa Version (mid-thirteenth century)

According to rGya-ldang-pa, Ras-chung-pa travelled to Nepal with a group of people that included the rNying-ma master Kyi-ston. He is described here as a former hunter who adopted the religious life because he was deeply moved by the suffering of a deer that he had shot. He was a vegetarian and had many lay pupils.

Kyi-ston's role in the narrative serves as an opportunity to attack the *rDzogs-chen* practice of the rNying-ma tradition, a possible rival to the *Mahāmudrā* practice of the bKa'-brgyud.

During Ras-chung-pa's enforced stay in Nepal (because of conflict between Nepal and Tirhut), Kyi-ston's teachings are roundly condemned by a Nepalese woman named Bharima. Though in this source it is used as a personal name, it is evident from other sources that *bharima* is a generic term, probably related to *bhariman*, meaning 'household' or 'family', 'nourishing' or 'supporting'.⁷³ It is here clearly used to refer to female lay-devotees or patronesses in Nepal. Ras-chung-pa is intrigued by this woman, who is initially listening respectfully to Kyi-ston's teaching, but soon becomes displeased and stops listening. She tells Ras-chung-pa that this *rDzogs-chen* is a practice found only among Tibetan yogins, and that it denies the existence of deities or demons, which are in fact the true source of *siddhis* and harm.

rDzogs-chen was previously derided in sGam-po-pa's biography of Mi-la Ras-pa in a passage that was omitted by Bla-ma Zhang. In sGam-po-pa, Mi-la Ras-pa's *rDzogs-chen* teacher confesses that, in spite of his claims that *rDzogs-chen* would bring immediate enlightenment, it had failed to bring benefit either to Mi-la or himself. The *rDzogs-chen* master himself would now go to be Mar-pa's pupil if

were not for his decrepitude through old age.⁷⁴ This is another instance of emphasising the superiority of one's own tradition by belittling another. The anecdote has survived in Mi-la Ras-pa literature, even after the adoption of rNying-ma practice within the bKa'-brgyud and even in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* in which Mi-la is identified as an emanation of Mañjuśrīmitra,⁷⁵ one of the Indian masters in the *rDzogs-chen* lineage. However, the passage is toned down in later works, so that *rDzogs-chen* fails Mi-la only because of his own unworthiness.

Ras-chung-pa asks Bharima what her own secret practice is, but she, shocked that he would even ask, refuses to tell. Undeterred, Ras-chung-pa bribes her female servant, who mimics the pose of Vajrayoginī. This apparently inconsequential episode is in fact integral to the narrative structure, for Bharima will turn out to be a pupil of Tipupa, and be of crucial importance to Ras-chung-pa on his return journey.

Having spent a winter in Nepal (the text does not specify in which town in the Kathmandu valley he is residing), encouraged by Mi-la Ras-pa in a dream, he goes to seek a travel permit from a king, taking a yak tail and gold as gifts. He is refused entry, but sings to the king from outside the courtyard. (The King's possible identity is discussed in Appendix C).

The song is translated for the King. It transpires that he already knows of Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa, and gives him a travel permit, here called a *gha-'dra*, that enables him to take twelve people with him to India.⁷⁶

As Ras-chung-pa's destination is Tirhut, there is no description of a lengthy or difficult journey; in the very next sentence, he is already making an offering to Varacandra and his wife. He stays with them for a few days and receives all the remaining Vajrapāṇi instruction that he still lacked. He then goes to the nearby

⁷³ Monier-Williams, 748.

⁷⁴ sGam-po-pa, 22.

⁷⁵ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 2a; (Oxford), 2a; (Stockholm), 1b; Zhwa-dmar, 188; 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, *rJe-btsun ras-pa chen-po la brten-pa'i mal-'byor gyi zin-bris ye-shes gsal-byed*, (publisher unknown), 13a.

Tipupa, whom, according to rGya-ldang-pa, he had already met on his previous visit, and who Ras-chung-pa knew was of the lineage of Nāropa (For the identity of Tipupa, see Appendix D).

Though there was no reference to a problem in linguistic communication with Varacandra or Bharima (implying that either they knew Tibetan or Ras-chung-pa knew Newar), there are said to be two interpreters with Tipupa, whom Ras-chung-pa has to rely upon. The implication, whether intended or not, is that Ras-chung-pa knew neither Sanskrit nor any of Tipupa's own colloquial languages, which presumably included Maithili, the language of the region in which he lived. The interpreters are rMa Lo-tsā-ba, "a good translator but not a good person," and 'Og Lo-tsā-ba, "a good person but a bad translator!" (See Appendix D)

Ras-chung-pa sings to Tipupa. His song describes his dangerous journey from Tibet to Nepal, over swaying rope bridges, through bandit-infested forests and his arrival in a plague-ridden Kathmandu valley, where corpses are piled in heaps as if they were compost.⁷⁷

rMa Lo-tsā-ba translates the song, but counters Tipupa's favourable impression by claiming that this was not a spontaneous song but had been crafted during the preceding months. Tipupa tests Ras-chung-pa with questions that he answers in another song, which contains a request for the five *dāka-niṣkāya-dharmas*, thus discrediting rMa Lo-tsā-ba's criticism. Tipupa replies with a song that lists the instructions that he will give Ras-chung-pa.⁷⁸

Ras-chung-pa has to wait some time until Tipupa is ready to give his teachings. In the meantime, Ras-chung-pa is told that Indians are reluctant to teach Tibetans but that he could receive the same teachings from the Nepalese Asu, who lives in Tibet(See Appendix D). Asu's teacher was the Indian Vajrapāṇi, who, like Mar-pa was a pupil of Maitripa. The apparently random introduction of Asu at this

⁷⁶ bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar (Newark), 67b1-67b6; (Oxford), 51a6-51b4; (Stockholm), 90b4-90b6. Byin-brlab kyi Chu-bo, 449-51; Mi-la'i mGur-'bum, 261-64.

⁷⁷ rGya-ldang-pa, 352-53.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 353-54.

point is in fact an important detail for the narrative as studying with Asu will be an important episode in Ras-chung-pa's life. It is also at this time that Ras-chung-pa is said to discover that Bharima is a pupil of Tipupa.⁷⁹

Ras-chung-pa then sings another song that appears to look back upon his visit to India and Nepal, listing the people, objects and places he has seen. The contents of this song, however, are at odds with its narrative setting, for the list includes not only Tipupa, but many things or people who have not yet appeared in the narrative, including Siddharājñī and the 'Vārāhī of Bhagala'.⁸⁰

The identity of the latter we will find to vary in this narrative tradition; sometimes she is said to be identical with Siddharājñī, though here they are not only distinct but the Vārāhī could also be understood to be a statue, which is also suggested by certain other versions, as we shall see.

One of the 'wondrous sights' is "water flowing from the mouths of makaras" (*chu-srin kha nas chu 'bab*) which could also be understood as being in the singular, but must refer to the distinctive Nepali architectural detail of stone *makara* heads from whose mouths the water pours at bathing tanks. Seeing water issuing from these might not amaze someone used to taps, but must have been a marvel for a Tibetan of that time.

Ras-chung-pa then stays in the lower storey (*'og-khang*) of, presumably, a three-storey building, for Tipupa and his wife are said to be in the middle storey (*bar-khang*). He sneaks upstairs to spy on Tipupa, to discover what he is practising, but is confronted by rMa Lo-tsā-ba and defended by Tipupa's wife. The wife is otherwise not mentioned, and her narrative purpose is unclear. However Ras-chung-pa is then initiated into sexual practice, to which he applies himself assiduously, but it is not said with whom. During the formal initiation, the pupil engages in sexual intercourse with the guru's consort, unless this is done only symbolically. Although Tipupa would have been advanced in years, his wife could

⁷⁹ Ibid., 354.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 355.

well have been younger. In fact, one finds in the accounts of both Indian and Tibetan masters, such as rMa Lo-tsā-ba and Dam-pa Sangs-rgyas, a partnership with temporary but very young consorts.⁸¹ The consort's partiality to Ras-chung-pa may possibly have its origins to some earlier narrative reference to a partnership in sexual practice.

Tipupa teaches Ras-chung-pa the Maitripa lineage of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajravārāhī. Ras-chung-pa holds a *gaṇacakra* to thank him and sings, giving a list of eleven teachings that he has received.⁸² This list includes only four of the *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharmas* listed previously, omitting the *mahāmudrā*, so that the song appears to agree with those narratives that state that he went in search of only four *dharmas*, Mar-pa having already obtained five, not four.

After a brief song of farewell, he returns to Nepal, where he meets Bharima in a street. He pretends clairvoyance and sings her a song in which he “realises” from her physical features, etc., all the information that he had learned about her in India. For example, her bloodshot eyes reveal that she meditates on Vajrayoginī, which was the exact information that she had previously refused him.⁸³

Bharima, however, realises that he too has become a pupil of Tipupa and invites him to her house. But he had already been invited to stay with another patroness, so, in accordance with local manners, she sends a servant formally to invite him. She allows him to copy out texts that she possesses. Then he leaves for Tibet.⁸⁴

5.3.2. *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu gSer-phreng*

Unfortunately, the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, which is closely related to rGya-ldang-pa and also to *gSer-phreng Chen-mo* does not provide this part of the

⁸¹ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 221, 225; ('Gos Lotsāba), 198, 201.

⁸² rGya-ldang-pa, 355-56

⁸³ Ibid., 356.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 356-57.

narrative, principally because it does not have a separate biography dedicated to Ras-chung-pa.

5.3.3. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version

This text is distinct from the narrative tradition of rGya-ldang-pa, *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, *gSer-phreng Chen-mo* and others. It is the principal ancestor of such texts as the *Byin rlabs kyi Chu-bo* and rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

In this version Ras-chung-pa goes with Kyi-ston, the *rDzogs-chen* master, and about fifteen of Kyi-ston's pupils to Nepal.

Bharima is here clearly used as a generic term rather than a personal name, and appears to refer to upper-class lay-devotee patronesses in Nepal. The text relates that all the *bharimas* came to hear Kyi-ston teach. Ras-chung-pa notices that one *bharima* becomes displeased as the talk continues. He approaches her and she condemns Kyi-ston's teaching in similar terms to those in the rGya-ldang-pa version. She refuses to tell Ras-chung-pa what her own practice is, and, as in the above version, he bribes her servant, who then adopts a yoginī posture.

Having to spend the winter in Nepal, Ras-chung-pa learns 'the Vārāhī of the Nepalese Hang-bu dKar-mo'.⁸⁵ The female ending of this name is probably an error. The text does not state that he received this teaching directly from Hang-bu dKar-mo, but we shall see in later versions that he becomes the direct pupil of a master with a similar, but masculine, name, with Mon-rtse-pa probably wrongly specifying 'Hang-ngu dKar-po' to be female.⁸⁶ This is in fact almost certainly a reference to the Newar master Varendraruci (For the identity of this Nepalese master see Appendix D).

⁸⁵ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, 67a6; (Oxford), 52a; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁸⁶ Mon-rtse-pa, 171.

Ras-chung-pa addresses the same song to the Nepalese King as he does in the other versions, doing so from “on top of the palace”.⁸⁷ As in rGya-ldang-pa, the King identifies Ras-chung-pa as a pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa, and gives him a pass, here called *'gan-'dras rtags* (rGya-ldang-pa: *gha-'dra*). In this version the King is far more generous to Ras-chung-pa, allowing him to take as many people with him as he wishes, so that Ras-chung-pa takes a hundred people, not just twelve.

As Varacandra is absent from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (which therefore has no account of Ras-chung-pa's illness and cure), Ras-chung-pa goes directly to Tipupa and sings to him the same songs as in rGya-ldang-pa. rMa Lo-tsā-ba appears suddenly in the narrative, indicative of a missing introduction, to cast his aspersions on Ras-chung-pa's wisdom. He is discredited by a further song from Ras-chung-pa, and Tipupa sings of the teachings that he will give Ras-chung-pa.⁸⁸

There is a further lack of narrative wholeness when Ras-chung-pa expresses misgivings about “these translators” (*lo-ts.tsha-ba 'di mams*), though the presence of only one has been mentioned so far. There is an additional song in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, in which Ras-chung-pa sings to rMa Lo-tsā-ba and 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba, offering them gold and asking them not to be jealous.⁸⁹

'Gos Lo-tsā-ba is clearly a variant of 'Og Lotsāba, resulting from an orthographic ambiguity concerning which consonant (' or ga) the vowel sign was centred over, and as 'Gos is a well known translator's name it is the rGya-ldang-pa version that almost certainly is corrupt (see Appendix D).

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* agrees with rGya-ldang-pa and Mon-rtse-pa in giving rMa Lo-tsā-ba an unpleasant role (in fact, only Byang-chub bZang-po from amongst our sources will differ on this point). However, it also makes *both* translators dubious characters, lacking in gratitude.

⁸⁷ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 67b; (Oxford), 52b; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁸⁸ Ibid., (Newark), 68a-69a; (Oxford), 52b-53a; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁸⁹ Ibid., (Newark), 69a; (Oxford), 53b; (Stockholm), n.a.

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* specifies that Ras-chung-pa has to wait a whole year for further teaching, after which, as in *rGya-ldang-pa*, he sings to Tipupa the song that lists the wondrous sights that he has seen.⁹⁰

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* omits the night-time spying found in *rGya-ldang-pa*, but presents a new episode that is related to the preceding song addressed to the translators: Ras-chung-pa privately expresses his misgivings concerning rMa's translation to Tipupa, and so Tipupa has 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba secretly retranslate the teachings. This is presumably being kept secret from rMa Lo-tsā-ba, but conflicts with Ras-chung-pa having misgivings concerning both. It does, however, fit *rGya-ldang-pa*'s description of one of the two translators as good-natured but incompetent, who, in that version, after his introduction had no narrative role. Here that role is carried out, but without an introduction establishing him as good-natured but inadequate. Thus, it is as if the two versions have separately preserved different fragments of an original narrative. Ras-chung-pa still doesn't trust the translation (the implication here, without the characteristic of inadequacy found in *rGya-ldang-pa*, is again the less satisfactory—in narrative terms—motive of deliberate mistranslation). Tipupa subsequently confirms to Ras-chung-pa that he has not received a proper translation but prophesies that he will meet a *dākinī* on his way home who will correct it.⁹¹

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, unlike *rGya-ldang-pa*, supplies a piece of narrative that matches, though belatedly, the lines in the previous song concerning wondrous experiences in which he states that he has seen Siddharājñī (*Grub-pa'i rGyal-mo*). Ras-chung-pa receives one night an Amitāyus *abhiṣeka* from the said Siddharājñī. She asks him how long he wishes to live. He answers "Until I feel ready to die." She rejects his answer and says, "The son should live as long as the father." Consequently, Ras-chung-pa's life-span is increased from forty-

⁹⁰ Ibid., (Newark), 69a-69b; (Oxford), 53b-54a; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁹¹ Ibid., (Newark), 69b; (Oxford), 54a; (Stockholm), n.a.

four to eighty-eight years.⁹² Siddharājñī's obscure phrase does not refer to the life-span of Mi-la, for he does not have such a life span in any of the versions that exist (see Appendix F), let alone in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* itself. It could be argued that the reader is meant to assume that she is referring to Tipupa, or that Ras-chung-pa has reached his forty-fourth year, and she is cryptically referring to his past and future years. Whichever interpretation is valid, the passage is of dubious authenticity. 'Gos gZhon-nu dPal, in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* rejects this life-span for Ras-chung-pa, which he notes is derived from the mythology of Ras-chung-pa's Amitāyus lineage, for it is contradicted by the seventy-eight year life-span in the chronicles of Ras-chung-pa's own pupils that was available to 'Gos gZhon-nu dPal.⁹³

There is an episode that does not appear in the preceding song of wondrous sights but will appear in its reprise in the later song of farewell. One night Ras-chung-pa is present at a *gaṇacakra* held in the forest by a certain Paṇḍita Candragarbha (See Appendix D). When it is completed, Ras-chung-pa follows Candragarbha to a forest glade where the *paṇḍita* prostrates himself before a wish-fulfilling cow that is lying under a circle of light. Candragarbha dances in the air; it rains flowers; and *ḍākinīs* appear amidst rainbow-light and sing a song, which includes the declaration that the Vārāhī of Bhagala is born (*bha ga la'i phag mor 'khrung*).⁹⁴ Ras-chung-pa falls asleep. He is dismayed on waking up to find that he cannot remember the words of the song, but then finds them written on a palm leaf on the lintel above Tipupa's door. This passage is concluded by the uncommon (in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*) phrase, "it is said" (*skad-do*),⁹⁵ which may indicate an insertion into the narrative from oral sources.

After receiving many teachings, Ras-chung-pa asks (presumably Tipupa, though the original narrative source may imply some other person, as we find in

⁹² Ibid. (Newark), 69b.; (Oxford), 54a; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁹³ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 439-40; ('Gos Lotsāba), 384.

⁹⁴ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 70a-70b; (Oxford), 54b; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁹⁵ Ibid., (Newark), 70b; (Oxford), 54b; (Stockholm), n.a.

rGya-ldang-pa) who is the master of *Mahāmudrā* and is told off for being so stupid as not to know that it is the "Nepalese guru".⁹⁶ This is a vague reference to Asu, who was more clearly specified in rGya-ldang-pa as an important detail for presaging a later episode in Ras-chung-pa's life.

Ras-chung-pa sings to Tipupa a farewell song in which he recounts the teachings he has received and again lists the wonderful sights he has seen, but this time including Candragarbha and the wish-fulfilling cow. Siddharājñī is described as being surrounded by secret *dākinīs*, which is a first sign of her gradual narrative deification.⁹⁷ In this version, Tipupa gives Ras-chung-pa an array of gifts to take to Mi-la, including camphor, saffron, *sindhura*, and a staff of black acacia. Then after an exchange of songs with Tipupa, Ras-chung-pa departs for Nepal.⁹⁸

In Nepal, he meets Bharima and sings her the song interpreting the signs on her body. However, in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, Bharima not only asks after Tipupa but asks if "the hundred year old Siddharājñī" is well; this is the first mention, made only in passing, of her being of an advanced age. Ras-chung-pa answers that he has also seen the Vārāhī and the wish-fulfilling cow; thus, he still distinguishes Vārāhī —without the narrative providing any information on who or what she is— from Siddharājñī.⁹⁹

Unlike rGya-ldang-pa, where Ras-chung-pa merely obtained more texts from Bharima, here Ras-chung-pa shows Bharima his text, and Bharima reads it with alternating sorrow and joy; she complains that Ras-chung-pa's ignorance of the (unspecified) language is a major defect, for the envious translators have omitted every single important instruction. She edits the text, making the necessary cuts and additions. Therefore the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* differs here from rGya-ldang-pa but is similar to Byang-chub bZang-po. Ras-chung-pa thus realises that

⁹⁶ Ibid., (Newark), 70b; (Oxford), 54b; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁹⁷ Ibid., (Newark), 70b-71a; (Oxford) 54b; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁹⁸ Ibid., (Newark), 71a-72a; (Oxford), 55b; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁹⁹ Ibid., (Newark), 72a-72b; (Oxford), 56a; (Stockholm), n.a.

Tipupa's prophecy has been fulfilled. This is an instance of a prophecy entering the narrative tradition along with the incident of its fulfilment.¹⁰⁰

5.3.4. Zhwa-dmar mKha-spyod dBang-phyug

This text does not describe Ras-chung-pa's visit to India, only his departure and return.

5.3.5. *rGya-bod Yig-tshang Chen-mo*

This merely states —as in the *Red Annals*— that Ras-chung-pa went to India five times, without specifying what these visits consisted of.¹⁰¹

5.3.6. *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* (written from 1446 to 1451)

This text provides a brief summary of Ras-chung-pa's visit, mentioning Tipupa (written as Ti-phu) and Bharima, but supplying only the bare bones of the narrative without detail.¹⁰²

5.3.7. *Deb-ther sNgon-po*: (completed 1478)

This text does not describe Ras-chung-pa's visit to India.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., (Newark), 72b-73a; (Oxford), 56a; (Stockholm), n.a.

¹⁰¹ *rGya-bod yig-tshang chen-mo*, 526-27.

¹⁰² *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 109-10.

5.3.8. Mon-rtse-pa (written somewhere between 1450 and 1475)

As in rGya-ldang-pa, Ras-chung-pa travels to Nepal with Kyi-ston, where he asks (as will be implied in Byang-chub bZang-po and stated specifically in rGod-tshang Ras-pa) to stay with a younger Bharima. The condemnation of *rDzogs-chen* and the interrogation of the elder Bharima's servant are omitted. As in the previous narratives, Ras-chung-pa sings a song to the King, from a window, as he cannot gain entry. It is added here, however, that the King asks him to write a letter asking for a travel permit. It seems to state that he wrote for a travel permit for nineteen people, and is answered with one for thirteen (which would agree with rGya-ldang-pa's version that he had twelve fellow travellers). However the very brief passage is ambiguous and could be interpreted to mean that nineteen were given permission in the King's letter, and thirteen returned from the journey.¹⁰³

As in rGya-ldang-pa, he first goes to the aged¹⁰⁴ Varacandra and then proceeds to Tipupa (Ti-bu in this version). When Tipupa is pleased by his song, the narrative introduces dMa' Lo-tsā-ba as making the same objection as in the preceding versions. dMa' is but an orthographic variant of the same phoneme that occurs as rMa in rGya-ldang-pa and the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, and agrees with them in providing dMa'/rMa with this unpleasant role.¹⁰⁵

As in rGya-ldang-pa and the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, Tipupa himself sings a song in which he lists the five *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma* that Ras-chung-pa requires. He adds that he received these instructions from Ghayadhara and Maitripa (See Appendix D). He gives this teaching to Ras-chung-pa and offers more, but Ras-chung-pa demurs, as he is eager to return to Tibet because of Mi-la's

¹⁰³ Mon-rtse-pa, 169. rGyal po na re sngar mi 'ong pa da yi ger bris la skur gyis zer nas yi ge la mi bcu dgu thon / tshur la bcy gsum 'ongs /

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 169, *sgres* for *bgras*.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 169.

advanced age.¹⁰⁶ He offers a *gaṇacakra* and a verse of farewell. In addition, Mon-rtse-pa states that Tipupa gives Ras-chung-pa a statue to take to Mi-la.

Ras-chung-pa's song of the wonderful things he has seen is omitted, and there is no reference at all to Siddharājñī.

As in rGya-ldang-pa, on his return to Nepal, he meets Bharima in the street and sings her his "clairvoyant" song. She asks him to repeat it, which he does. This passage then concludes briefly with his going to her home and receiving instructions from her, there is no mention of the problem of there being another host, or of his texts being mistranslated. However, Mon-rtse-pa then adds that Ras-chung-pa also received instruction from a Nepalese yoginī named Hang-ngu dKar-po (See Appendix D). This contrasts with the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, in which Ras-chung-pa was a pupil of a 'Hang-bu dKar-mo' on his outward, not return, journey.¹⁰⁷

The Nepalese King declares to Ras-chung-pa that he venerates Mila and gives Ras-chung-pa a letter to take to him.

5.3.9. *Byin-rlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*

This text¹⁰⁸ follows the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* closely in relating this episode. There are a few minor differences, but they are probably due to scribal corruption. Instead of asking Bharima what instruction she has received, he asks her to give him instruction, but receives the same reply: "I don't know any." He receives Vārāhī from a male named Ha-ngu dKar-po (Varendraruci), and not a female Hang-bu dKar-mo or Hang-ngu dKar-po as we have seen above (See Appendix D). Otherwise his entire stay in India is practically identical.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 170, *bsgres*.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 171.

¹⁰⁸ *Byin-rlab gyi Chu-bo*, 337-54.

5.3.10. gTsang-smyon Heruka's *bDe-mchog mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud*.

This text does not describe Ras-chung-pa's visit to India.

5.3.11. gTsang-smyon Heruka's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*

The *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* covers this period of Ras-chung-pa's life in one brief passage that merely summarises the contents of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* but follows its sequence of events:

In Nepal, Ras-chung-pa and Kyi-ston had a little religious activity. He met Bharima, a pupil of Tipupa. He told his story to the King of Bhaktapur and requested a travel permit. [The King] said, "You are a pupil of the siddha that I was unable to bring here," and Ras-chung-pa obtained a '*ga-'dra* (cf. *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* — '*gan-'dras*; rGya-ldang-pa: *gha-'dra*) and travel provisions. He went to India, met Tipupa and received the *dharma*s that he desired. Tipupa had faith in the venerable [Mi-la] and sent him an acacia staff. Also, Ras-chung-pa met Ekamātra Siddharājñi and received the instructions on Amitāyus.¹⁰⁹

bal por ras chung pa dang kyi ston la phrin las kyang cung zad byung
bas / ti pu pa'i slob ma bha-ri-ma dang mjal / kho khom rgyal po la lo
rgyus byas lam yig zhus pas / sngar spyen ma 'drongs pa'i grub thob
de'i thugs sras yin par 'dug zer 'dod pa bzhin gyi 'ga' 'dra rang chas
byung ste / rgya gar du phebs nas ti pu pa dang mjal nas chos kyang
'dod pa bzhin thob pa dang / ti pu pa yang rje btsun la dad nas skyes su
a ka ru'i phyag 'khar zhig bskur ba dang / gzhan yang ras chung pas

¹⁰⁹ *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 382.

ma gcig grub pa'i rgyal mo dang mjal te tshe dpag med kyi gdams ngag
thob pa...

5.3.12. lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557)

This passage is based upon the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, but the narrative is brief. It commences by simply stating that he went to Nepal and sought a travel permit from the King. Then the song sung to the King is given in full.¹¹⁰ As in *rGya-ldang-pa*, *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, the King identifies him as the pupil of Mi-la Ras-pa and gives him a pass, which, unlike in the preceding versions, is given a Tibetan name only (*lam-yig*). He also gives him provisions.

In Nepal and India he receives teachings from many gurus, but lHa-btsun specifies only Tipupa by name.¹¹¹ As in the other versions, Ras-chung-pa sings to Tipupa of his journey and rMa Lo-tsā-ba criticises him. Tipupa, pleased by another song, sings to Ras-chung-pa.¹¹²

Echoing Ras-chung-pa's dialogue with Bharima in the *rGya-ldang-pa*, Byang-chub bZang-po and *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* versions, Ras-chung-pa asks Tipupa what his deity-practice is, and though Tipupa initially states that it is a secret, he gives Ras-chung-pa the *abhiṣeka* for it, telling him to keep it secret.

Tipupa adds that he had received this instruction from his own father, who had received it from Ghayadhara, who had been a pupil of Nāropa and Maitripa (See Appendix D). At that time, Tipupa was a child, and had therefore received this instruction from both his father and Ghayadhara.¹¹³ This contrasts with *Mon-rtse-pa*, in which Tipupa was a pupil of Ghayadhara and Maitripa.

¹¹⁰ lHa-btsun, 501.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 502.

¹¹² Ibid., 502-6.

¹¹³ Ibid., 507.

Ras-chung-pa, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, is suspicious of rMa Lo-tsā-ba's translation. He offers gold to him alone (not to both translators, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*) and sings to him. rMa Lo-tsā-ba retranslates the teaching. Ras-chung-pa remains doubtful, and tells Tipupa, so the instructions are again translated, secretly, by Lo-tsā Jo-rgyal, who is here the equivalent of the 'Og or 'Gos Lo-tsā-bas of the other versions (See Appendix D).¹¹⁴

Then knowing (though it is not explained how) that he has only seven days to live, he goes to Siddharājñī and receives the Amitāyus and other instruction, including Jinasāgara, from her.¹¹⁵

At a *gaṇacakra*, he offers gold to Tipupa, Siddharājñī, and *three* translators (though it is not specified who they are) and he sings to them the song that lists the wondrous things he has seen; here he has not previously sung about them as in the narratives discussed above. The song includes the Vārāhī of Bhagala, as distinct from Siddharājñī, and also lists the wish-fulfilling cow, a certain Śīlabharo of Nepal, and the conduct of Bharograma, none of which appear in this narrative.¹¹⁶ The narrative also omits any reference by Tipu to Bharima.

A passage which has no parallel in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* describes how at a *gaṇacakra* Siddharājñī stares hard at Ras-chung-pa and sings him a song.¹¹⁷ In this song she declares Ras-chung-pa to be, simultaneously, Vajradhara, Cakrasaṃvara, Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi. She adds that he must go back to Tibet where he will teach beings at a particular place sacred to herself and the *jñānā-dākinīs*. This place is said to be on the southern edge of Tibet, south-east of the image of Śākyamuni (which is a reference to the *Jo-bo* statue in lHa-sa). The land is also said to lie to the north-east of Mon, a “land of ignorance”. The Mon people are a minority group on both sides of the border with Arunachal Pradesh in India, east of Bhutan, which is sometimes also included within this

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 507-8.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 508.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 508-10.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 510-11.

generic name.¹¹⁸ The location described is that of the Lo-ro and Byar areas, in the present day Tsona and Lhuntse counties of southern Tibet.¹¹⁹ This is where Ras-chung-pa was based in the latter half of his life.¹²⁰ She also prophesies, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, that he will live to his eighty-eighth year.

Nowhere else in the literature (apart from the introduction to this text by lHa-btsun) have we previously seen such a hagiographic acclamation of Ras-chung-pa. Ras-chung-pa's extended life-span demonstrates that this passage is unlikely to be derived from the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* by Ras-chung-pa's own pupils. Therefore the "prophecy" of the area of Lo-ro appears also to post-date Ras-chung-pa's lifetime, and to be a result, not a cause, of his eventual geographic location.

Siddharājñī also gives Ras-chung-pa a gift to take to Mi-la Ras-pa: a *kapāla*, made from the head of an actual *ḍākinī* from Oḍḍiyāna, her cleaver and her bone-jewellery.¹²¹

The narrative then again coincides with that of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*: Ras-chung-pa, having left Siddharājñī, takes his farewell from Tipupa. However, there is some additional material here. Tipupa gives Ras-chung-pa the 'Six Teachings of Equal Taste' (*ro-snyoms skor-drug*). He states that they appeared in Nāropa's mind spontaneously while he underwent his famed sequence of twelve hardships under Tilopa. They are said to be like the ghee distilled from the ocean of milk which is India, an instruction not evident in the Tantras, but only possessed by Nāropa. Contradicting the earlier passage, which said he was a child when he met Nāropa's pupil, Tipupa states that he received this teaching directly from Nāropa. He tells Ras-chung-pa that this is not the time for this teaching to be spread in Tibet; it should be concealed as a *gter-ma* and three generations later a worthy individual will discover it.¹²² This is a reference to the *gter-ma* discovered by gTsang-pa rGya-ras, which became important for the 'Brug-pa bka'-brgyud lineage. It is distinct from

¹¹⁸ Gyurme Dorje, 63.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 260-64.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 264. Dorje incorrectly states that it was Ras-chung-pa's birthplace.

¹²¹ lHa-btsun, 512.

the *gter-ma* referred to in Mon-rtse-pa,¹²³ but references to both *gter-ma* will be compiled by rGod-tshang Ras-pa in his text.

There follows a farewell song on the subject of this quintessential teaching of Nāropa and its future discovery, repeating in verse the contents of the preceding prose.¹²⁴

In the Mon-rtse-pa narrative, Ras-chung-pa, though offered more teachings, hurries back to Tibet to see Mi-la. In this version, by contrast, he remains to receive all the remaining teaching that Tipupa has to give. These instructions include the *Mahāmudra Doha* teachings, which, however, he will later receive in Tibet from Asu, as if for the first time.¹²⁵

There is a final farewell song, listing the teachings that he has received.¹²⁶ This long list includes the *purapraveśa* practice of entering another's body, which features so strongly in the Dar-ma mDo-sde/Tipupa myth (See Appendix D). Tipupa gives Ras-chung-pa gifts to take to Mi-la: the black acacia staff listed in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* appears, but there are also an iron vajra of miraculous origin, a painting of Saṃvara, an antelope-skin and a *damaru*.

There is another final *gaṇacakra*, and another farewell song in which Ras-chung-pa repeats the list of wondrous things he has seen, with the addition of Candragarbha as well as the wish-fulfilling cow, even though they have been omitted from the lHa-btsun narrative.¹²⁷

Then after yet another farewell song, in which he wishes good health to Tipupa,¹²⁸ he goes to Nepal. There he receives teachings from Asu and Ye-rang-ba (possibly Asu's teacher: Vajrapāṇi, see Appendix D). Bharima is introduced for the first time into the narrative, as a pupil of Tipupa. He offers her his text and sings a

¹²² Ibid., 512-13.

¹²³ Mon-rtse-pa, 168.

¹²⁴ lHa-btsun, 512-15.

¹²⁵ Ibid., 515.

¹²⁶ Ibid., 515-17.

¹²⁷ Ibid., 518-20.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 520-21.

song asking her for her blessing,¹²⁹ this is not the song interpreting her physical features that appears in the above versions of their meeting.

The narrative then coincides with the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, though in a briefer form. Bharima, while reading, is alternately pleased and angered, complains that Ras-chung-pa did not know the language, and corrects the translation. He then leaves for Tibet.¹³⁰

5.3.13. rGod-tshang Ras-pa

This extensive version shares a narrative tradition with lHa-btsun, a tradition closely related to, but not identical with corresponding passages in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. It attempts to be comprehensive, compiling elements found in various sources.

In Mon-rtse-pa, “*Buddhahood just through Hearing*” was a *gter-ma* text that Mi-la Ras-pa told Ras-chung-pa to obtain from India, though there was no subsequent description of his doing so. In rGod-tshang Ras-pa, this text has already been received, on an earlier visit, from Varacandra who instructed him to bury it where it would eventually be discovered seven generations later.¹³¹

Post-dating the Rwa-lo biography (See 6.3.), it states that Ras-chung-pa went to Nepal in the company of both Rwa-lo rDo-rje Grags-pa and Khyi-ston Byang-chub Sems-dpa'. The name Khyi-ston “dog teacher” instead of Kyi-ston allows for a story in which the teacher's name originates from his giving up his hunting dogs.

En route to the Kathmandu valley, Ras-chung-pa is invited to the home of a previous host, while Rwa goes to another house, and conveniently leaves the narrative. The next passage has the function of establishing Ras-chung-pa's supremacy over these other two teachers. Khyi-ston and his pupils are left searching for lodging. Ras-chung-pa invites him in, but Khyi-ston becomes drunk.

¹²⁹ Ibid., 521-22

¹³⁰ Ibid., 522.

In his enthusiasm for Ras-chung-pa, he, rather peculiarly (unless there is some scribal corruption here), bites Ras-chung-pa's chest,¹³² calls him a true Dharma practitioner and then proceeds to criticise Rwa-lo, calling him a proud, grandiose lama. Ras-chung-pa refuses this "old monk's" sycophantic request to carry his baggage for him for the rest of the journey.

On arriving in the Kathmandu valley, he stays, as in Byang-chub bZang-po and Mon-rtse-pa, with a younger Bharima (*bharim chung shos*), and there follows the episode of Khyi-ston teaching *rDzogs-chen* to the Nepalese and his meeting with another Bharima. She is specified to be Bhari-yoginī, the daughter of Bhari-bhaśa (and apparently the equivalent of the "elder" Bharima in the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* version given below).

In this version, his efforts to discover Bharima's secret practice—Vajravārāhī—are multiplied superfluously, presumably aggregating variants of the story. In addition to bribing the servant, whose pose leaves him uncertain, he climbs the wall of her house to look in through her window at her images, only to find too many. He finally obtains the information, including that Tipupa is her guru, from simply asking her husband, after giving him some flowers and fruit!¹³³

Ye-rang-pa (previously mentioned by lHa-btsun; see appendix D) refuses to give him a deity initiation, but during the winter in which he has to stay in Nepal, due to war between "the King of Nepal and the King of India" he receives Vajravārāhī from the Nepalese Ha-du dKar-bo (Varendraruci; see Appendix D). This contrasts with Hang-bu dKar-mo of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and "the Nepalese yoginī named Hang-ngu dKar-po" in Mon-rtse-pa (this taking place in the latter version during Ras-chung-pa's return to Nepal).

He receives Cakrasamvara teachings from a Bho-ro Shor-chung and studies under the siddha Amogha (See Appendix D). He sees "the conduct of the attachment-less" siddha Śrīlabharo (*zhan-pa med-pa grub thob śrī la bha ro'i spyod-*

¹³¹ Ibid., 35.

¹³² Ibid., 63: *khyi ston bzi nas rje btsun gyi brang la so btab nas /*.

'*gros mthong*'), which may be a corruption of Śīlabharo which is the form that appears in lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, and may be the equivalent of Śīlabhadra. The latter occurs in every version of the song of wondrous things he has seen, which he sings to Tipupa, but this is the only instance in which it appears in a prose narrative. Even this text, however, provides no clarification, except that its spelling in this instance at least makes the phrase appear meaningful.

The subsequent meeting with the king is the same as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* but provided with more details. His pass is referred to as a *ghaṇḍa'i rtags*, literally 'the sign of a bell'.

On arriving in India, Ras-chung-pa studies Tantras under the 'the junior Kashmiri Priest' (*Kha-che Ben-chung*), Ben-da-ba and Atulyavajra (see Appendix D), and learns the controlled transference of consciousness at death ('*pho-ba*) from an unnamed yoginī who could walk on water.¹³⁴

The meeting with Tipupa is the same as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. It however includes an amusing version of the night-time spying episode found in rGya-ldang-pa. When staying with the guru, he is said to make his bed in a building called by the non-Tibetan name of *copari*¹³⁵ along with the rMa Lo-tsā-ba. *Copara* does occur as a Newar name for a simple building with a grass or reed roof.¹³⁶ Tipupa sleeps upstairs with his consort. Ras-chung-pa sneaks upstairs to listen to the guru recite his mantra, wishing to identify it so that he can request that teaching, but fails. In this version, it is Tipupa, who, when finished, asks Ras-chung-pa what he is doing creeping around at night with no clothes on, and rMa Lo-tsā-ba, now awake, and the consort join in the conversation. On hearing his confessed motive they all laugh at him.

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* had not described Tipupa's antecedents, but here, as in lHa-btsun, Tipupa, on giving the teachings to Ras-

¹³³ Ibid., 66.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 68.

¹³⁵ Ibid., 72.

¹³⁶ Charles Ramble, pers. comm., 2/3/01.

chung-pa, tells him where his teachings came from; but there is some discrepancy. According to lHa-btsun,¹³⁷ Tipupa's father had received instruction from Ghayadhara, a pupil of Nāropa and Maitripa. In rGod-tshang Ras-pa, however, the same sentence is repeated, with a change of case and the addition of the verb *yin* so that it reads that his father was Ghayadhara.¹³⁸ This passage also changes the identity of Tipupa's teachers when he was a child from being his father and Ghayadhara to being Nāropa and Maitripa themselves. (Mon-rtse-pa, in another variation, had Tipupa declaring himself a pupil of Ghayadhara and Maitripa).¹³⁹ No reference is made in this part of rGod-tshang Ras-pa to the transference of bodies of Mar-pa's son, Dar-ma mDo-sde, which is a narrative derived from gTsang-smyon's *Mar-pa'i mam-thar*,¹⁴⁰ although earlier in the text this story had been related to Ras-chung-pa on his first visit to India, as an obvious narrative insert.¹⁴¹ In that passage, Dar-ma mDo-sde is said to have occupied the body of a twelve-year old Dharmavajra, the eldest child of Ghayadhara, with Paṇḍita Amoghavajra as maternal uncle, Paṇḍita Candragarbha as paternal uncle and Līlāvajra (*sGegs-pa'i rDo-rje*) as paternal grandfather (See Appendix D).

rGod-tshang Ras-pa includes a story of a naturally formed image of Vajrayoginī. This could be assumed to be the narrative background for the Vārāhī of Bhagala referred to in the song on the wondrous things that Ras-chung-pa has seen. However, a human Vārāhī of Bhagala will soon appear in this narrative. This story appears to be a variant of the wish-fulfilling cow story in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, which will also appear later in this text. It is said that Ghayadhara (who, here, is Tipupa's father) had a calf that was not obtaining any milk from its mother. Puzzled, Ghayadhara tied one end of a long piece of twine to his own leg and the other to the cow's leg. During one teaching, he felt the twine pull and then

¹³⁷ lHa-btsun, 507: *Nga'i phas nā ro mei tri gnyis ka'i slob ma / gha ya dha ra la zhus.*

¹³⁸ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 74: *Nga'i pha nāro me tri gnyis ka'i slob ma yin / paṇḍita gha ya dha ra bya ba yin /.*

¹³⁹ Mon-rtse-pa, 170.

¹⁴⁰ gTsang-smyon Heruka, *sGra-bsgyur Mar-pa Lotsāba'i rNam-thar mThong-ba Don-ldan* (Kulu Manali: A-pho Rin-po-che'i dgon-pa), 89b-99b.

followed the cow to a sandalwood tree. The cow sprayed all its milk onto the tree as an offering. The next day he cut down the tree and found a Vajrayoginī statue made of beryl inside it. When he consecrated the statue, it rained flowers and a bodiless voice from space asked him what siddhis he desired. He wished for “the lineages of seven siddhas”. Therefore, in memory of this event, on Tipupa's lintel the following verses were written:

Caṇḍikā has the body-siddhi,
The wish-fulfilling cow, found
Her body-image: the Vārāhī of Bhagala.
An invoked rain of flowers fell.

Somanātha attained the siddhi of invisibility,
Ghayadhara, the movement of sun-rays,
Siddharājñī, power over life,
Ti-phu was adorned by charnel-ground adornments.¹⁴²

Tsaṇḍika la dngos grub sku /
'Dod 'jo'i ba mo sku'i rten /
Bha ga la'i phag mo rnyed /
Spyan drangs me tog char rgyun phab /
Zla mgon mi snang dngos grub thob /
Gha ya dha ra nyi zer rgyu /
Grub pa'i rgyal mo tshe la dbang /
Ti phu dur khrod chas kyis brgyan /

¹⁴¹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa., 36-37.

¹⁴² Ibid., 75.

There is no further clarification of the meaning of the song, or of the requested lineages, so it appears that the narrative has been fragmented over time. Somanātha, a pupil of Nāropa, who introduced the Kālacakra into Tibet is not referred to in the biography outside this song.

There then follows, as in the previous versions, a long wait for the teaching and when it is finally given, the mistrust of rMa Lo-tsā-ba's translation, the offering of gold and a song to him. rMa then translates the remaining teachings (but not all over again from the beginning, as in lHa-btsun). Ras-chung-pa still has misgivings and Jo-rgyal Lo-tsā-ba (as in lHa-btsun) retranslates secretly, so that it is discovered that rMa had left half of the teaching out.¹⁴³

Tipupa makes Kālācakra calculations for Ras-chung-pa. (Nāropa was the principal Kālācakra master of his time and his pupils, such as Somanātha, were crucial in its propagation. However this teaching did not form a part of either Marpa or Ras-chung-pa's lineages.) Tipupa discovers that Ras-chung-pa has not long to live, gives him an abhiṣeka, but tells him he should meet the holder of this teaching.

There appears another dislocated narrative fragment. At a gaṇacakra, a tall yoginī, wearing bone-adornments and accompanied by some yogins and yoginis turns up to lead the rite and then mysteriously disappear at its conclusion. Tipupa states that she was the Vārāhī of Bhagala, who at present was not giving teachings, but he, Ras-chung-pa, could obtain them in the future.¹⁴⁴ However, no further reference is made to her.

This is followed by what seems to be an alternative version of the discovery of Ras-chung-pa's short life-span, that we find given in brief in lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal.

Tipupa sends Ras-chung-pa to enjoy a festival, where he meets an intimidating yogin who says that he has only seven days left to live. Ras-chung-pa returns to Tipupa, who says that he knew this already, but sent him to the festival,

¹⁴³ Ibid., 75-77.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 77-78.

to meet Amoghavajra¹⁴⁵ (not specified as earlier to be an uncle of Tipupa, and he has Ras-chung-pa was earlier said to have met this *karmatantra* master in Nepal), so that Ras-chung-pa would be convinced that it was true. Tipupa tells him that he must go and see Siddharājñī, who appears to be sixteen, but is said to be five hundred years old. This is a five-fold increase of her age as given in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. He practises her Amitāyus instruction for seven days without sleeping. She then asks him how old he is, and he says he is in his forty-second year, whereas in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, he was said to be a week away from the end of a forty-four year life span, which was doubled. As in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, his life-span is increased to eighty-eight, with the same obscure phrase "so that the son will be the same as the father".¹⁴⁶

rGod-tshang Ras-pa then follows the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* by providing the episode of following Candragarbha into the forest, seeing the wish-fulfilling cow, hearing the *dākiṇī* verses and rediscovering them on Tipupa's lintel. The song is not identical with that in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, for it includes all the *dāka-niṣkāya-dharmas*, but there is some similarity between the lines. Therefore, it is not a direct reproduction from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. rGod-tshang Ras-pa relied not only on another version, but included a quite different variant of this episode in the preceding episode of Ghayadhara and his cow.

The final dialogue with Tipupa and Siddharājñī together is as in lHa-btsun, but with an extra, striking passage. Tipupa, with Siddharājñī's permission, describes her origin and life in terms that clearly present her as no ordinary human being. The description of her birth is clearly modelled on most *gter-ma* versions of Padmākāra's lotus birth, which in its turn was based upon the birth of Sakara as described in *The Eighty-four Mahāsiddhas*.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix D.

¹⁴⁶ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 80. Bu pha'i tshe dang mnyam pa zhig byed dgos.

¹⁴⁷ Abhayadatta, *Grub-thob brGyad-bcu-rtsa-bzhi'i Chos-skor (Caturaśīti-siddha-pravṛtti)*, trans. sMon-'grub Shes-rab (New Delhi: Chopel Legdan, 1973), 276-83.

She first appeared in Oḍḍiyāna, where all the inhabitants were *ḍākas* and *ḍākinīs*. She emerged as a fully-formed eight-year old within a lotus before a crystal *gandhola* in the centre of this realm. She was circumambulated by the *ḍākinīs* and worshipped as the *nirmāṇakāya* of Vajravārāhī. Like that deity, she was endowed with the thirty-two major signs, and held a cleaver and skull-bowl. The hagiographic rNying-ma influence is indicated by her being described as becoming a pupil of Padmākāra. In addition, she became a pupil of all the eighty-four *mahāsiddhas*.¹⁴⁸

She travels to other Buddha-realms, meets every Buddha, teaches hundreds of thousands of *ḍākinīs* simultaneously, and manifests countless bodies so that she can be the mistress of hundreds of *gaṇacakras* at the same time. Her prophecy to Ras-chung-pa is displaced to a subsequent *gaṇacakra*, which immediately follows in the narrative.¹⁴⁹

There is another intrusion into the narrative, reminiscent of that by the Vajravārāhī of Bhagala: *yogins* and *yoginīs*, five in number, mysteriously appear and disappear. This serves as the basis for an admonition to Tibetan practitioners. Tipupa says that those yogins lived in a charnel ground and gained realisation of the *dharmakāya* through blessing alone, without meditation of any kind; he contrasts them with those in Tibet, who run and jump around when they feel transformed by what they think is a blessing.¹⁵⁰

As in Mon-rtse-pa, Ras-chung-pa insists on leaving for Tibet, anxious to see Mi-la before he dies. But this immediately segues into the lHa-btsun version: Ras-chung-pa stays on to receive an even longer list of Tipupa's teachings, including the 'Equal Taste' *gter-ma*.¹⁵¹

There then follows, as in lHa-btsun, the song of farewell which provides a list of teachings. The same gifts are sent for Mi-la. After declaring Mi-la the best of

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 84-90.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 90-92.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 92-93.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 94-98.

practitioners in Tibet, Tipupa instructs Ras-chung-pa to study with Asu, thus legitimising Ras-chung-pa's wish to be the pupil of another teacher in Tibet, without undermining Mi-la Ras-pa's supremacy.¹⁵²

His journey homewards includes a peculiar episode not seen in the other sources. He cures people of sickness caused by a *nāga*. A woman offers herself sexually to him, but he refuses her. She is upset, challenges his views and leaves. Ras-chung-pa then decides to practise sorcery that will liberate her by killing her. Naked, wearing bone-adornments, and holding a trident, he invokes a storm and she is killed by lightning. Her brother, a non-Buddhist, in revenge has sorcery practised against Ras-chung-pa. Ras-chung-pa dons an elaborate symbolic costume, including a white pointed cap (which was to become his principal iconic marker) and prevents the magic harming himself. Then he turns the tempest back against the brother, killing him also. Not stopping there, he proceeds to liberate through death seven hundred villages of non-Buddhists. In honour of this achievement, Ras-chung-pa is given the name Vajracakra.¹⁵³

Awkwardly transposed from its place much earlier in the narrative, it is now that Ras-chung-pa enquires as to who is a great master of Mahāmudra and is rebuked for not knowing that it is Asu.¹⁵⁴

He next goes to Ye-rang-pa (who here appears to be of a later generation than Vajrapāni), who states that he obtained his lineage of Vārāhī from Ramaphala (Rāmapāla), the pupil of Maitripa (See Appendix D).¹⁵⁵

Though Ye-rang-pa is normally portrayed as being resident in Nepal, it is only now that the rGod-tshang-pa narrative has Ras-chung-pa arriving in Nepal. Ras-chung-pa then meets Bharima on the street, but in this version she has come to welcome him. He sings the song in which he appears to interpret her characteristics clairvoyantly, this time including the manner she greets him which indicates that she

¹⁵² Ibid., 100.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 105-8.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 108.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 108-9.

is a pupil of Siddharājñī, who is referred to simply by the respectful title of ‘Aunt’ (*A-ne*). In immediate contradiction with this, but in accord with the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*, Bharima asks after the *A-ne* and Ras-chung-pa asks her who she is, to be told that she is a woman who is five hundred years old. Ras-chung-pa adds (as in the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*) that he has seen wondrous things “such as Vārāhī and the wish-fulfilling cow”. Bharima, as in *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* and *lHa-btsun*, reads and corrects the faults of the translators.¹⁵⁶

Instead of making an offering to the King, Ras-chung-pa, his status here much enhanced, is welcomed by the king and given gifts to take to Mi-la Ras-pa.¹⁵⁷

5.3.14. 'Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa

Ras-chung-pa's visit portrayed in the preceding texts is here presented as three separate visits:

1) He returns with an offering of gold for Varacandra and receives the remaining Vajrapāni instructions.¹⁵⁸

2) He receives Vārāhī from Rāmapāla (*Ra-ma-pha-la*) and the thirteen-deity Cakrasaṃvara and the two-faced Vārāhī from Tipupa and Ye-rang-pa (See Appendix D). In this version, it is not until after returning from this second visit that Ras-chung-pa masters *caṇḍalī*, becomes known as Ras-chung-pa, and sings the song of his present happiness.

3) Mi-la sends him to obtain the *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma*, though in this version it is only three of the nine that still remain to be obtained (it is not specified which three). Therefore, it is on his *fourth* visit to India (the first having been to obtain his cure from Varacandra) that he receives the *ḍāka-niṣkāya-dharma* from Tipupa. He also receives the Amitāyus, Jinasāgara and other teachings from the

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 111-12

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 112.

¹⁵⁸ Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 10.

Vārāhī of Bhagala, who is here identified with, or more accurately, conflated with, Siddharājñī.¹⁵⁹

In this brief description, Bharima and rMa Lo-tsā-ba are not mentioned, but there is some information concerning teachers that accords with that given by rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

5.3.15. Sangs-rgyas Dar-po (early sixteenth century)

This text merely says that he met Tipupa and Siddharājñī and obtained from them the *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma* and *Amitāyus*.¹⁶⁰

5.3.16. Byang-chub bZang-po (compiled in the 16th century)

This passage¹⁶¹ is a summary, probably based on the same source as that used by rGya-ldang-pa.

Kyi-ston is not mentioned. Extracts from Ras-chung-pa's song that described his journey to Nepal, such as the heaps of corpses of plague victims, have been used as prose narrative.

There are two Bharimas in this version, dividing between them the narrative of the single Bharima in rGya-ldang-pa (or alternatively rGya-ldang-pa merged two Bharimas into one). Ras-chung-pa stays with a *younger* Bharima. As a result of injudicious summarising, no agent is provided for the verb when it is said that this Bharima was taught *rDzogs-chen*, so that the text could be understood, perversely, to mean that she was taught this by Ras-chung-pa. Her responding criticism of "Tibetan yogins" (or "the Tibetan yogin") is that they meditate on emptiness alone "which will not bring buddhahood", ignoring the practice of guru, deity, and protector meditations. Ras-chung-pa then enquires of the *elder* Bharima's servant as

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 11.

¹⁶⁰ Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, 75a.

¹⁶¹ Byang-chub bZang-po, 128-32.

to the nature of her practice and, as in *rGya-ldang-pa*, she strikes a Vajrayoginī pose.

He sings to the King, and receives a travel permit for himself and seventeen other people¹⁶² (*rGya-ldang-pa* had twelve).

He returns to Varacandra and the narrative introduces, for the first time, Tipupa (named Ti-bu in this version), whom he goes to on Varacandra's advice. However, Tipupa's wife, or consort, informs Tipupa that Ras-chung-pa had visited them on a previous occasion, so that again we see the clumsiness of this summary, for the previous visit has been omitted. The two translators present are given the opposite identification to that given by *rGya-ldang-pa*: 'Og Lo-tsā-ba (cf., 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba) is here the bad person, but a good translator, and rMa Lo-tsā-ba is the contrary (See Appendix D).

With 'Og Lo-tsā-ba as semi-villainous translator, the narrative unfolds as in *rGya-ldang-pa* until the point when Ras-chung-pa is living with Tipupa and his wife.¹⁶³ In a vague parallel to the *rGya-ldang-pa* version, it is said that the couple quarrel; 'Og Lo-tsā-ba tells Ras-chung-pa that it is his fault, but Tipupa's wife comes to his defence, saying he is blameless.¹⁶⁴

Otherwise, the brief narrative continues as in *rGya-ldang-pa*, except that 'Og Lo-tsā-ba is the interpreter for the teachings. The song listing the instructions he received is omitted, but the four-line verse of farewell is included.

Ras-chung-pa returns to Nepal and meets the elder Bharima, and sings her the song interpreting the signs of her body.¹⁶⁵ On Bharima the elder's invitation, he explains that he is a guest of the younger Bharima, which makes the passage more relevant than in *rGya-ldang-pa*. However, there appears to be an unskilful omission from the narrative flow, for after the elder Bharima has explained that in Nepal it is considered very important not to abandon one's host, Ras-chung-pa is immediately

¹⁶² Ibid., 129.

¹⁶³ Ibid., 129-31.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 131.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 131-32.

described as going to the elder Bharima's, without the explanation that he is formally invited.

Unlike rGya-ldang-pa, where Ras-chung-pa merely obtained more texts from Bharima, here Ras-chung-pa shows Bharima his texts, and she complains that where Tipupa had taught at length 'Og Lo-tsā-ba had translated only a little, and when Tipupa was brief, he had added unnecessary material. Therefore, Bharima corrects the translations. The languages involved are not mentioned.

Ras-chung-pa offers his remaining gold to Bharima and the King before his return to Tibet.¹⁶⁶

5.3.17. *bKa'-brgyud mGur-mtsho*

This anthology of *bKa'-brgyud* songs, though compiled after the *Mi-la'i mGur-bum*, derived its Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la songs from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. The single song of Ras-chung-pa that is included is a verbatim reproduction of the passage in which Ras-chung-pa sings to the King in Nepal.¹⁶⁷

5.3.18. *gTsug-lag Phreng-ba*

This merely states that Ras-chung-pa was sent by Mi-la Ras-pa to India to obtain four (as in the Zhwa-dmar-pa, *Deb-ther sNgon-po* and *Byin-rlabs kyi Churgyun*) *dāka-niṣkāya-dharmas*, and received instruction from Tipupa, Siddharājñi and the Nepalese Ye-rang-pa.¹⁶⁸

5.3.19. *Pad-ma dKar-po*

Pad-ma dKar-po's narrative is brief and merely states¹⁶⁹ that Ras-chung-pa met Tipupa. He identifies Ghayadara as his father, but also, oddly, he not only calls

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 132.

¹⁶⁷ *bKa'-brgyud mGur-mtsho*, 100a6-101a3; *The Rain of Wisdom*, 215-17.

¹⁶⁸ *gTsug-lag Phreng-ba*, 378.

¹⁶⁹ *Pad-ma dKar-po*, 502.

Tipupa a pupil of Varacandra but identifies him as being a Paṇḍita Candraprabha (not to be confused with Candragarbha).

The episode of meeting Amoghavajra at the festival, receiving Amitāyus from Siddharājñī and obtaining an eighty-eight year life-span is included.

As in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, Tipupa prophesies that a *ḍākinī* will correct his texts and make up for his deficiency in not knowing the language (although *Ras-chung-pa's* problem with the translator is omitted).

A significant evolution in the description of Siddharājñī is that Pad-ma dKar-po says that only certain worthy ones are able to see her, for she is invisible to ordinary human beings.¹⁷⁰

5.3.20. Zhwa-dmar Chos-kyi Don-grub

The eighth Zhwa-dmar-pa (1695-1732) was a hierarch of the Karm-bKa'-brgyud school. In his initiation text for Siddharājñī's Amitāyus he recounts how *Ras-chung-pa*, on the last of his three visits to India, is sent by Tipupa to a festival where he is told he has seven days to live. In fact, the entire episode is nothing but a summary from *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, and refers to Tipupa as Darma mDo-sde who had previously entered that body through the practice of *purapraveśa*.¹⁷¹

5.3.21. Śākya Rin-chen

This is simply a summary of *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, giving identical information, unlike the preceding passage in the text, which used additional sources in describing the circumstances which caused *Ras-chung-pa* to go to India. This lineage-history by Śākya Rin-chen also includes a separate biography of Siddharājñī,¹⁷² most of which is based on what is contained in *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, thus describing her supernatural birth in the divine realm of Oddiyāna. She is also

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., 503.

¹⁷¹ Zhwa-dmar Chos-kyi Don-grub, *Tshe-dpag-med dBang-dpe* (title page n.a.), 15b.

said to have forms and activities that are beyond human comprehension. The text further identifies her with Niguma, the sister of Nāropa, on the basis of Vanaratna's identification of her tradition's *maṇḍala* of Jinasāgara as belonging to the Niguma tradition. Vanaratna was born in 1384, apparently in eastern Bengal and first came to Tibet, for the first time in 1426, and the last time in 1453. There he taught, among others, 'Gos Lotsāba, the author of the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*.¹⁷³

Śākya Rin-chen also identifies Siddharājñī as the sister of Ghayadhara, Tipupa's father; he does so because she is referred to as an aunt in the hagiographies (although "aunt" can be just a honorific term) and explains the inconsistency of this identification as an example of her leading multiple lives simultaneously.

5.3.22. Situ Padma Nyin-byed dBang-po (1774-1853)

The ninth Taisitupa, who was a hierarch of the Karma bKa'-brgyud school, describes the transmission of the Jinasāgara practice in his initiation text. The practice is traditionally of great importance for the Karma bKa'-brgyud because of its association with the Karma-pa, the principal hierarch of the lineage. Ras-chung-pa is portrayed as receiving three separate transmissions of this practice in a fusion of bKa'-brgyud and rNying-ma traditions. In relation to our narrative Ras-chung-pa is said to have "actually" met Siddharājñī on Tipupa's instruction, implying that she did not have a mundane existence that anyone could perceive. However, she gave him the text of the practice, written in *dākinī* script. As it was said to have later been translated into Tibetan by gLan-chung Lo-tsā-ba, this probably refers to Text no. 2140 in the bsTan-'gyur (see Appendix B).

He receives another transmission however, not mentioned in any other biography, which was passed on by Maitripa to Vajrapāṇi and then to a Newar

¹⁷² Śākya Rin-chen, 179-88.

¹⁷³ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 797-802; ('Gos Lotsāba), 701-5.

named Sumatikīrti (See Appendix D). The latter transmitted this initiation to Ras-chung-pa in Nepal at the Ratnakrama* (Rin-chen-tshul) temple.

The third transmission is a rNying-ma *gter-ma* transmission of which there is no mention in the biographies. It is said to have been given to Ras-chung-pa by Nyang-ral Mi-bskyod rDo-rje, who had received it from his father, the discoverer of this “hidden treasure”.¹⁷⁴ The father was the famous Nyang-ral Nyi-ma ‘Od-zer (1124-1192), one of the most famous early *gter-ston*. However, as we can see from his dates, this transmission is entirely fanciful.

5.3.23. NGMPP’s *bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar* and the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng*

This unique and unfortunately brief version either represents an earlier stratum than the common source of the preceding texts or a considerable mutation of its basic constituents. The Rwa-lung version is at times clearer, apparently containing words or phrases that have been omitted in the NGMPP manuscript creating further ambiguity. At times it appears to have additions, derived from the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* tradition.

Ras-chung-pa goes to Nepal, where he receives Cakrasaṃvara and some minor Tantra teachings from Guru Pam-thing-pa, and his younger brother named Tha-chung ‘Ba’-ro (according to NGMPP) or his younger brother Tha-chung and a third individual named ‘Ba’-ro (according to the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng*).¹⁷⁵ He received their teaching through the services of two translators: Lotsā-ba Jo-Jo rGyal-mtshan and Glang-chung [*sic*] (Glan-chung) Dar-ma Tshul-khrims. (See Appendix D) Ras-chung-pa does so without any wish to learn scholastic terminology but solely practises meditation.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Situ Padma Nyin-byed dBang-po, *‘Phags pa mchog spyen ras gzigs rgyal ba rgya mtsho’i dbang bskur ye shes myur ‘bebs*, 11b-12a.

¹⁷⁵ NGMPP, 26b; *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng*, 213.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid., 26b-27a.

In an obscure, doubtless summarised passage a paṇḍita and lo-tsā-ba state that the instruction to drink alcohol, lie in the sun and thoughtlessly enjoy women, doing whatever one wishes, caused Ras-chung-pa a loss of meditative experience. Then, in what appears to be a non-sequitur, they add that the Acharya Dar-lo (in NGMPP) or sTon-pa Dar-blo (in *Rwa-lung*) has become a *māra*.

After this, Ras-chung-pa received teachings from Tipupa, Atulyavajra (*a-thu-la ba-dzra*)¹⁷⁷ and Amoghavajra¹⁷⁸ before returning to Tibet. (See Appendix D)

Rwa-lung gSer-phreng adds that in particular he obtained the five requested dharmas, plus the other six (though in both available editions of the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng*, this is added up to thirteen dharmas!)

5.3.22. *gSer-phreng Chen-mo* (compiled after 1838)

Unfortunately, the *gSer-phreng Chen-mo* which is closely related to rGya-ltang-pa and also to *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, (Text 2), does not provide this part of the narrative, principally because it does not have a separate biography dedicated to Ras-chung-pa.

5.3.21. *Gu-bkra'i Chos-'byung*

As this text is a rNying-ma history, it exemplifies how Ras-chung-pa has been assimilated into that tradition. It states¹⁷⁹ that he went to India three times, thus agreeing with rGod-tshang Ras-pa. It then introduces Siddharājñī with a *rNying-ma* identity as being Mandarava, Padmākara's Indian consort from before his eighth-century visit to Tibet. She is said to be "also known" as Siddharājñī. In agreement with Pad-ma dKar-po, and further enhancing her divine nature, it is said that she was perceived by Ras-chung-pa, but could not be perceived by others, and therefore

¹⁷⁷ *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng*, 213: Written as *Arulavajra*.

¹⁷⁸ NGMPP, 27a: Written as *Amukavajra*.

the teachings that he received from her are classed within the *dag-snang* (vision through pure perception) category. This contrasts with the teachings classified as *gter-ma*, which is the discovery of a previously concealed teaching, whether physically concealed in the ground *sa-gter*, or within one's mind from a previous life, *dgongs-gter*. It also states that Ras-chung-pa received from her, in addition to Amitāyus, the practices of Mahākaruṇika (Jinasāgara, the red Avalokiteśvara in union with a consort) and Hayagrīva. (See Appendix B) Jinasāgara in particular is a practice widespread amongst Tibetan traditions that trace their origin back to Siddharājñī and Ras-chung-pa, but yet it does not feature in the preceding Ras-chung-pa hagiographies at all.

¹⁷⁹ Guru bKra-shis, 601.

5.4. Ras-chung-pa's Return to Tibet and Conflict with Mi-la Ras-pa

5.4.1. Introduction

This passage is important in the Ras-chung-pa myth as, in its most famous version (that in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*), it portrays a deep conflict between a wilful Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa. It thus supplies a dominant characteristic in the contemporary, traditional portrait of Ras-chung-pa as a gifted but seriously flawed pupil, and therefore secondary to sGam-po-pa.

There are basically three versions of this episode:

1) There is a group of five texts, including rGya-ldang-pa, which are based on the same source. Among these, the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* and *gSer-phreng Chen-mo* do not touch upon this episode. rGya-ldang-pa, Mon-rtse-pa and Byang-chub bZang-po correspond closely, rGya-ldang-pa suffering less from summarisation. This narrative tradition appears to represent the basis for the developments found in group 3.

2) The NGMPP/*Rwa-lung* versions, which are unique variants related to Group 1.

3) The *bZhad-pa'i rDo'rje'i rNam-thar* and its descendants, which provide the principal image of Ras-chung-pa for contemporary Tibetan Buddhism, they intensify dramatic and miraculous elements in the narrative, in particular by introducing the yak-horn incident.

The key feature in the plot of this episode is a volume of texts, which, in addition to those he received from Tipupa, Ras-chung-pa brings back to Tibet and Mi-la Ras-pa burns. The volume is referred to as a *be'u-bum*. This is a general term for what could be loosely termed a “manual”, in that it is a collection of useful instructions that a practitioner keeps with him. For example, collections of early

bKa'-gdams-pa instructions were known as *be'u-bum*.¹ Latterly however, it has become more closely associated with magical rites, from the beneficial, such as healing, to those for gaining control over others or causing their death.²

The different narratives disagree as to what the contents of Ras-chung-pa's burned *be'u bum* were, and therefore Mi-la Ras-pa's motive for burning it.

5.4.2. Group 1: The rGya-ldang-pa tradition

5.4.2.1. rGya-ldang-pa (after 1256)

rGya-ldang-pa states that Ras-chung-pa obtained the *be'u-bum* en route from Kathmandu to sNya-nam at an unidentified place named *Min-shing* (in the rGya-ldang-pa *gSer-phreng*) or *Men-zhing* (in the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud* edition). There he obtained "the largest *be'u-bum*" from a patroness.³

On his arrival in Tibet, Mi-la comes to greet him. In response to Ras-chung-pa's question about his welfare, Mi-la sings a short song listing the meditation practices that have brought him happiness.⁴

Mi-la asks Ras-chung-pa about his visit to India and Ras-chung-pa sings of the instructions that he has received.⁵ He gives his *be'u-bum* to Mi-la, which here appears to mean a collection of *all* the texts that he has accumulated. Mi-la walks on swiftly to Brod-phug cave, while Ras-chung-pa follows behind, unable to keep up. rGya-ldang-

¹ *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo*, 1841.

² An example is Mi-pham 'Jam-dbyangs rGya-mtsho, *Las Sna-tshogs kyi Be'u-bum* (China: Mi-rigs dPe-skrun-khang, 1999).

³ rGya-ldang-pa, 356-57.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 357.

pa merely reports that Ras-chung-pa sang a “running song” as he followed Mi-la.⁶ We will only find the song in the *bZhad-pa’i rDo’rje’i rNam-thar* group of texts.

On arrival at Brod-phug, Mi-la sends Ras-chung-pa to get fresh water, because the nearby water is not good, but he has had to use it in Ras-chung-pa’s absence. Mi-la stays behind to light a fire. He prays for the *dāka-niṣkāya-dharmas* to separate themselves from the other texts and throws the *be’u-bum* onto the fire. The *dāka-niṣkāya* teachings float up into a crack in the cave wall and the rest of the texts burn. When Ras-chung-pa returns, he believes that *all* the texts have been burned, and cannot understand why, as Mi-la had sent him to obtain them in the first place. When he asks Mi-la why he has done this, Mi-la replies with a song that emphasises the path of meditation, and expresses his concern that the numerous teachings in the *be’u-bum* would result in Ras-chung-pa becoming a master of scholarly terminology. For example, he sings that a meditator should wear a hole in his cushion, but studying the *be’u-bum* would only result in his becoming a great scholar who wears holes in his shoes. He also sings that one should understand all through mastering one practice, while the scholarship gained from the burned texts would only result in a fruitless knowledge of everything. It is evident that in this narrative, the manual contained works of scholarship, as in the *bKa’-gdams-pa* tradition, and not sorcery.

Mi-la ends his song with the words:

Do not be angry, [for that] will burn your being.

Do not suffer, [for that] destroys the mind.

⁵ Ibid., 357. The variations of this song in the biographical tradition is demonstrated in Appendix A.

⁶ Ibid., 357. The song is called ‘*Dur-dbyangs*. Although ‘*Dur* can have a variety of meanings, here it appears to have the simplest of these meanings, an equivalent of ‘*gro*, (“to go”), thus signifying a song sung while walking or running.

If you wish to practise, [know that] the instructions
 Flew like a bird and disappeared into the rock.
 If [I] pray [for them] they will return.⁷

zhe sdang ma byed bdag rgyud bsreg / sdug bsngal ma byed rang sems
 rlag / khyod sgrub na gdams ngag bya bzhin du / 'phur te brag gi gseb
 tu thal / gsol ba btab na byon te mchi /

Mi-la calls for them and they reappear; Ras-chung-pa thinks, “This was a sign that [these texts] were either harmful or without benefit,” and his mind is completely set at ease.⁸

Later, Se-ban Ras-pa, still playing the role of the envious fool, repeats the complaint the patrons made before Ras-chung-pa was sent to India. He claims that their community already knows how to debate, so that Ras-chung-pa’s journey was pointless. When Mi-la challenges them to explain what refutation they would use, they are unable to answer. Ras-chung-pa then sings of a refutation (of ignorance and other mental states) that is accomplished purely by the practice of the *dāka-niṣkāya-dharmas*. Ras-chung-pa thus dismisses the scholastic approach, and a pleased Mi-la Ras-pa gives his approval.

We therefore see in this version a minimum of friction between the guru and pupil, and that Ras-chung-pa, who had never intended to learn logic, was never seduced into studying it. Neither is there any mention of the practice of sorcery. On

⁷ Ibid., 358.

⁸ Ibid., 359. Ras chung pa'i bsam pa la / 'o na de rnams kyis / ngal la gnod pa'am mi phan pa'i rtags
 yin snam nas blo zhi lhan song ngo //

the contrary, Ras-chung-pa's return to Tibet establishes his supremacy among Mi-la's pupils.

5.4.2.2. Mon-rtse-pa (written between c. 1450 and 1475)

Mon-rtse-pa, in an unskilful summary, omits Ras-chung-pa's obtaining the *be'u-bum*, but adds that Ras-chung-pa left many texts with the patroness Legs-se, and then brought eleven *dāka-niṣkāya-dharma* and other texts to Mi-la. Perhaps the intended meaning was that Ras-chung-pa obtained many texts that were in Legs-se's possession, for this parallels the point in rGya-ldang-pa when the texts are first introduced into the narrative as being in the possession of an anonymous patroness.⁹

The subsequent meeting and the burning of the texts is as in rGya-ldang-pa apart from some additional dialogue: when Ras-chung-pa sees that his texts have apparently been burned, Mi-la asks "Are you unhappy?" and Ras-chung-pa replies, "I'm unhappy."¹⁰ There is a little variation in the songs (see appendix A for one example) but the rest, including Ras-chung-pa's song on refutation, is as in rGya-ldang-pa.

5.4.2.3. Byang-chub bZang-po (compiled in the sixteenth century)

A crude summary of rGya-ldang-pa's source, Byang-chub bZang-po obscurely states that Ras-chung-pa obtained a *be'u-bum* from "a brother" (*ming-po cig*).¹¹

⁹ Mon-rtse-pa, 171: Ras chung pa legs se can du spe [*sic*] cha mang du bzhag; rGya-ldang-pa, 357: yon bdag mo cig la dpe cha be [alternative spelling for *be'u*] bum che shos cig yod pa...

¹⁰ Mon-rtse-pa., 172.

However, this may well be a corruption of the toponym *Min-shing* or (less likely) *Men-zhing* in rGya-ldang-pa's source.

Mi-la declares that he knows Ras-chung-pa is coming, and goes to greet him. In Mi-la Ras-pa's song of happiness there are additional practices to those listed in rGya-ldang-pa and Mon-rtse-pa, such as "happy in the non-duality of *purapraveśa* (*grong-'jug*)"¹² which contrasts with the popular Tibetan view that the transmission of this practice ended with Mar-pa's son. (see Appendix D). Ras-chung-pa's brief song to Mi-la is a variant related to rGya-ldang-pa (see Appendix A).¹³ On their return to the cave, Mi-la confesses to poor health caused by the nearby water, which he had not mentioned earlier as he did not wish to upset Ras-chung-pa. This reference to physical vulnerability will be avoided in gTsang-smyon's hagiography of Mi-la. The narrative is then the same as in rGya-ldang-pa and Mon-rtse-pa, though the song on Ras-chung-pa's return is more similar to rGya-ldang-pa's than Mon-rtse-pa's version, but with its own variations, including a final additional line: "[Too] many teachings will become *māras*."¹⁴

The song on debate is the same as above, though Se-ban Ras-pa's initial objection is omitted.

¹¹ Byang-chub bZang-po, 132.

¹² Ibid., 132.

¹³ Ibid., 132.

¹⁴ Ibid., 133: gdams ngag mang na bdud du 'gro.

5.4.3. Group 2: The NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* tradition

NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* (compiled after fourteenth century)

Rwa-lung gSer-phreng (compiled circa 1799-1803)

This briefly describes that on Ras-chung-pa's return, he relates to Mi-la what he has learned. Mi-la worries that instead of Ras-chung-pa becoming one who "through knowing one thing is liberated from all" (that is in the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng* version, it is "learned in all" in the NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar*) he will be one who "knows all but is incapable of anything".¹⁵ He sends Ras-chung-pa for water. The *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* simply states that Mi-la burns the texts. The *Rwa-lung* adds an element that is probably derived from the *Bu-chen bCu-gnyis* narrative tradition, particularly as found in the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, viz., Ras-chung-pa, having gone for water, watches the marvel of a hundred kyang (Tibetan wild asses) and their young playing together.

On Ras-chung-pa's return, he thinks that all his texts have been destroyed and therefore returns to India. Thus, unlike the rGya-ldang-pa version, the *dāka-niṣkāya* teachings have not been miraculously preserved, and as Ras-chung-pa had clearly avoided teachings on logic, it is the *dāka-niṣkāya* teachings that Mi-la has destroyed.

The *Rwa-lung* version adds that Ras-chung-pa thinks, "Whatever the guru does is excellent," and realises that the kyang were his miraculous manifestations; however, it does not explain why the destruction of the texts was such a good idea. In both versions Ras-chung-pa thus sets off on what is a fourth visit to India to receive

¹⁵ NGMPP *rNam-thar*, 27a-27b: 'di gcig shes kun la mkhas pa cig 'ong mno' (sic: mno) tsa na / kun shes gcig la gdugs pa cig 'ong bar 'dug... ; *Rwa-lung*, 213: rje btsun gyi gsung nas 'di gcig shes kun grol zhig yong ngam smyam tsa na / kun shes gcig la rdugs pa zhig yong bar 'dug...

them once more. However, on this visit, only the Vajravārāhī, Cakrasaṃvara and Māhamudrā instructions are specifically listed, though he is said to have received the complete *sampannakrama* instructions, which should therefore include the *ḍāka-ṇiṣkāya-dharmas*. The *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng* adds that he received the *ro-snyoms* (“equal taste”) and other teachings, which appears to indicate the influence of the *Ro-snyoms gter-ma* tradition upon the narrative.

When he returns to Tibet, some monks from sPu-rangs offer Ras-chung-pa gold to take them to his great teachers in India. Ras-chung-pa sells the land and building that he owned in his homeland, and that which he has no right to sell he gave to the teacher who taught him to read. Earlier in the narrative this man was said to be from dBus and to have been the teacher of Ras-chung-pa’s father. No reference is made to his mother and uncle, also mentioned briefly earlier in the narrative. The implication therefore is that they had passed away by this time.

The monks are not mentioned again in the NGMPP *bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar*, but the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng* specifies that he took them with him to meet Tipupa on what in both texts is his fifth visit. It is at this point that Ras-chung-pa sings to Tipupa of the hardships he underwent in order to come. This song is a variant of the one that in the rGya-ldang-pa narrative was sung on Ras-chung-pa’s first request for teachings from Tipupa. NGMPP only mentions the name of the song, while the *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng* gives it in full.

This version divides the journey into five parts. The first is down to the road to Nepal, through forests and over swaying bamboo bridges. The second part is a descent to the Sing-ga forest, with its dark forest, robbers and piles of bodies higher than manure heaps. The last detail may have bled upwards from the description of

plague-ridden Nepal. The third part is travelling across the two passes of rDzong-dkar where the plague is fierce and again bodies are piled higher than manure heaps, and where there are more toll-men than hairs on the head, so that he has never had to give away so much. The fourth part is travelling across to the centre of Nepal (i.e., the Kathmandu valley), which in this version is devoid of plague, for he lists only religious sights, such as Svayambhū Stūpa and the “conduct of Śīlabhabho” (cf., Śīlabharo in lHa-tsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and Śrīlabharo in rGod-tshang Ras-pa.), which is probably a corruption of Śīlabharo. The fifth part is to the locality of Tipupa (the place named *Shing-spang gSer-gyi Maṇḍal*), where he also sees Siddharājñī and “the Vārāhī of sKu-ma-ta”.

This is the only Ras-chung-pa narrative tradition that lists five visits, and therefore is presumably the source for the *Deb-ther dMar-po* and the *rGya-bod Tshang-yig*, which also mention five visits, though without specifying what they consisted of.¹⁶

On this final visit, he receives all of Tipupa’s teachings, without remainder, and returns to Tibet. There is no further clarification of Mi-la’s reasons for previously burning the texts, nor any description of his reaction to Ras-chung-pa’s other two visits. Both texts merely state that he was Mi-la Ras-pa’s attendant for “many years”.¹⁷ They add that Ras-chung-pa was in his twelfth year when he met Mi-la (which would be circa 1095) and (according to the *bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar* only) in his fortieth year (circa 1123) when he left Mi-la to go to dBus. This confirms that the

¹⁶ *Deb-ther dMar-po*, 80; *rGya-bod Tshang-yig*, 526-27.

¹⁷ NGMPP *rNam-thar*, 28a: The text also adds at this point that Ras-chung-pa’s stay at the hermitage of bCung-pa mChog-dkar both in earlier and later years added up to a total of thirteen. However, the identity of this hermitage is obscure. Perhaps the name is an alternative for Brag-dkar rTa-so.

spurious chronology in the narrative of the Amitāyus transmission (in which Ras-chung-pa is in his forty-fourth year when in India) was not universally held.

5.4.4. Group 3 : The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar Tradition*

5.4.4.1. *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*

In this text we are introduced to the principal ingredients of the popular legendary version of Ras-chung-pa's return to Tibet.

As mentioned earlier, unlike *rGya-ldang-pa* and its related texts, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* provides Ras-chung-pa with a faulty motivation for going to India in the first place: a desire to learn logic. In this passage he compounds his error by meeting a non-Buddhist (*tīrthika*) after leaving Bharima. This master is very keen to aid Ras-chung-pa—in exchange for a payment of gold—in spreading his teachings.¹⁸ The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* contradicts itself here, however, for it had earlier portrayed him as giving all his remaining gold to Tipupa before his homeward journey. Ras-chung-pa learns a range of magical practices (that seem, however, particularly Tibetan) including causing hailstorms, sickness and death, and preventing the death of children. The implication will be that it is these teachings, and not, as in *rGya-ldang-pa*, logic, which will form the unwelcome part of Ras-chung-pa's texts.

¹⁸ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 73a; (Oxford), 56a-b; (Stockholm), n.a.

Meanwhile, Mi-la Ras-pa, who is at Brag-dmar mChong-lung¹⁹ —and not the sNye-nam of rGya-ldang-pa— clairvoyantly sees Rechungpa within a crystal stūpa. Ras-chung-pa's image becomes obscured by a dust-storm as a result of receiving instructions from the non-Buddhist. Mi-la Ras-pa goes to meet him on the empty plain of dPal-mo dPal-thang (Newark: dPa'-mo dPa'-thang).

Ras-chung-pa expects Mi-la to bow down to him in return, but he does not. At this point, as in rGya-ldang-pa,²⁰ Ras-chung-pa enquires as to Mi-la Ras-pa's welfare and Mi-la Ras-pa sings a song of his happiness that concludes by asking Ras-chung-pa if he has been successful.²¹ This first song is entirely different and far longer than that in rGya-ldang-pa, but a variant of the rGya-ldang-pa song will appear a little further on in this text.²² This is an example of the creation of two different songs upon the same theme within the Mi-la narrative and song tradition.

After Mi-la's first song the text returns to the theme of the prostration that was not performed by Mi-la. Ras-chung-pa explains that if Mi-la does not pay homage “stupid Tibetan villagers” (*bod blun po'i grong khyer mi*)²³ will not have faith in the *dāka-niṣkāya-dharmas*. Without any response from Mi-la, Ras-chung-pa sings of his journey to India²⁴ with a song that is, as with Mi-la's, different from that found in rGya-ldang-pa at this point, though the first two lines of the songs are related (see Appendix A).

At this point (probably as the result of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* combining two different versions of the meeting) there is a superfluous repetition of

¹⁹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, 73a, has mChong-gling in error.

²⁰ rGya-ldang-pa, 357.

²¹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 73b-74a; (Oxford), 56b-57a; (Stockholm), n.a.

²² *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 74b-75a; (Oxford), 57b; (Stockholm), 71a.

²³ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 74a; (Oxford), 57a; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁴ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 74a; (Oxford), 57a; (Stockholm), n.a.

narrative: Ras-chung-pa enquires after Mi-la's welfare a second time and Mi-la replies with an extended version of the corresponding rGya-ldang-pa song,²⁵ this version listing more practices.²⁶ The Byang-chub bZang-po version also included more practices in its version of this song, such as the *pura-praveśa*, but the variations on rGya-ldang-pa found in that text are independent of those in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. For example, in contrast to Byang-chub bZang-po's "happy in the non-duality of *pura-praveśa*"²⁷ in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* Mi-la sings, "happy in the *pura-praveśa* that is like discarding and putting on a snake-skin" (*grong 'jug sbrul lpags dor len bde*).²⁸

There is a song-dialogue, again concerning Mi-la's welfare, that is related to the song-dialogue found in rGya-ldang-pa (See Appendix A for an examination of these songs).

In reply to this, Ras-chung-pa sings the song of the teachings he has obtained in India;²⁹ this is a development of his song in rGya-ldang-pa.³⁰ Mi-la Ras-pa's response contrasts with that in rGya-ldang-pa, however, for he considers that Ras-chung-pa has become proud. The principal focus of the rest of this passage is Mi-la Ras-pa's deliberate humbling of Ras-chung-pa, a theme that is not found in the rGya-ldang-pa or NGMPP versions. Therefore, Mi-la sings a song to break Ras-chung-pa's pride, warning of the different kinds of ruin that can befall a practitioner.³¹

As in rGya-ldang-pa, Ras-chung gives his texts to Mi-la who sets off ahead, with Ras-chung-pa following, unable to keep up. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*

²⁵ rGya-ldang-pa, 357.

²⁶ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 74a-b; (Oxford), 57a-b; (Stockholm), concludes on 71b.

²⁷ Byang-chub bZang-po, 132.

²⁸ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 74b; (Oxford) 57b; (Stockholm) n.a.

²⁹ Ibid., (Newark), 74b-75a; (Oxford) 57b; (Stockholm) 71b. See Appendix A.

³⁰ rGya-ldang-pa, 357. See Appendix A.

narrative adds that Ras-chung-pa is worried that Mi-la is displeased, and that if he doesn't keep up with Mi-la he might give his texts away to someone who will not make good use of them. Unlike rGya-l dang-pa, who merely stated that there was said to be such a song, *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* provides an entire song said to be sung while Ras-chung-pa is following Mi-la Ras-pa; in fact he is here specified to have started running before singing. The song is a description of the teachings, practices and blessed objects that he has carried to Tibet for Mi-la. In apparent contradiction to the surrounding narrative however, the refrain is a plea for Mi-la to accept his offerings, while in the prose Mi-la is already walking ahead with them. The final verse is a plaintive request for "the supreme gift" of rest, food, drink and kind words.³²

The song has the effect of making Mi-la wait for Ras-chung-pa. He sings Ras-chung-pa a song on the dangers of discord between "father and son",³³ and establishes his own superiority over Ras-chung-pa with what appear to be utterly unfounded, extravagant claims:

I have a more profound relationship
 With Tipu Mantravṛkṣa than you do.
 If the secret words of the *mātrkāś* and *dākiṇīs*
 Were kept secret from me, who else could they be taught to?
 There is no better pupil
 Of Ekamātrkā Siddharājñī than I.
 I have consumed many gaṇacakras
 At Shing-spangs gSer-gyi Maṇḍala.

³¹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 75a-b; (Oxford), 57b-58a; (Stockholm), 71b-72a.

³² *Ibid.*, (Newark), 75b-76a; (Oxford), 58a-58b; (Stockholm), 72a-b.

Ti³⁴ pu³⁵ gsang ngags sdong po la
 Khyod pas nga rang 'brel pa³⁶ zab
 Ma dang mkha' 'gro'i³⁷ gsang tshig la
 Nga la gsang³⁸ na³⁹ su la bshad⁴⁰
 Ma cig grub pa'i rgyal mo la
 Nga las⁴¹ bzang ba'i slob ma med
 Shing spang⁴² gser gyi maṇḍal la⁴³
 tshogs kyi skal⁴⁴ ba⁴⁵ mang po zos

He concludes by exhorting him not to be arrogant and to meditate in the solitude of the mountains.⁴⁶ The chapter ends with Ras-chung-pa convinced of Mi-la's clairvoyance and wisdom and asking to go wherever Mi-la wishes, so that they set off across dPal-mo dPal-thang, a plain that is the stage for the most famous incident in the story of Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa. It had previously appeared in Don-mo Ri-pa as the plain over which Mi-la carried the newly adopted Ras-chung-pa when they left the latter's home, and he was not strong enough for the journey.⁴⁷ In a

³³ Ibid., (Newark), 76b; (Oxford), 58b-59a; (Stockholm), 72b-73a.

³⁴ Ibid., (Oxford), te.

³⁵ Ibid., (Stockholm), phu.

³⁶ Ibid., (Newark), pas.

³⁷ Ibid., (Oxford), 'gro.

³⁸ Ibid., (Stockholm) gsangs; (Oxford), haplography in which the scribe omitted all from the *gsang* in the previous line.

³⁹ Ibid., (Oxford & Stockholm), nas

⁴⁰ Ibid., (Oxford), bzlo.

⁴¹ Ibid., (Newark), yis.

⁴² Ibid., (Newark & Stockholm), spangs.

⁴³ Ibid., (Oxford), sna, with no line break.

⁴⁴ Ibid., (Oxford), bska

⁴⁵ Ibid., (Newark & Oxford), pa.

⁴⁶ Ibid., (Newark) 76b; (Oxford), 58b-59a; (Stockholm), 73a.

⁴⁷ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 193.

peculiar contrast with the conclusion of the previous chapter, Ras-chung-pa has “evil thoughts” of resenting the poor welcome he has received. Mi-la tells Ras-chung-pa to pick up a yak-horn they come across, which he does, though he protests that it will be of no use to them. They are caught in a sudden, severe hailstorm with hailstones the size of one’s hand. Ras-chung-pa throws away the horn and sits covering his head with his robe. He cannot see Mi-la anywhere, but then hears him singing, his voice coming from inside the yak horn. He tries to pick it up, but it is as if glued to the ground. He looks inside to find that Mi-la is inside, even though his body has not grown any smaller. Mi-la sings to Ras-chung-pa,⁴⁸ saying “It is pleasant in the narrow end of the mighty castle of the yak horn” (mkhar btsan⁴⁹ po g.yag ru’i phug⁵⁰ la⁵¹ skyid) where he is practising the *yantra-yoga* exercises (which include jumping and landing in the full cross-legged posture). His song also criticises the defects in Ras-chung-pa’s understanding, meditation and conduct and invites him into his “house” (*khyim*).⁵² Ras-chung-pa attempts to enter, but can’t even get his hand in.

He sings a song of supplication,⁵³ Mi-la comes out of the horn, the sky clears and they sit in the sun.

This is followed by another episode not found in rGya-ldang-pa: Ras-chung-pa believes that Mi-la caused the hailstorm to punish him for having learned sorcery in India. He complains about this to Mi-la and also requests that they go begging for alms, as he is hungry. Mi-la denies responsibility for the storm and declares that it is an inappropriate time for begging alms. Ras-chung-pa insists and so Mi-la says they

⁴⁸ *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* (Newark), 77b-78a; (Oxford), 59b; (Stockholm), 73b-74a.

⁴⁹ Ibid., (Newark), brtsan.

⁵⁰ Ibid., (Stockholm), phugs.

⁵¹ Ibid., (Newark), pa; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁵² Ibid., (Newark), 77b-78a; (Oxford), 59b; (Stockholm), 74a.

⁵³ Ibid., (Newark), 78a; (Oxford), 60a; (Stockholm), 74a-b.

should beg from a large tent directly ahead in the distance. Ras-chung-pa demands that they go to a nearby, small tent. Mi-la is again proved right, as the old lady in the tent abuses them for begging in the afternoon. They leave and Mi-la commands that they must go without food that evening.

The next morning they find that the encampment has moved on but the old lady has died in the night as a result of having abused a holy man. Mi-la makes Ras-chung-pa carry the body some distance, even though Ras-chung-pa is worried about the spiritual pollution (*grib*) that comes from contact with a corpse. Mi-la places his staff on the corpse's heart, sings of impermanence and declares that they should go to meditate in the mountains.⁵⁴ Ras-chung-pa, still fatigued from his journey, pleads to stay at any nearby comfortable hermitage. This plea introduces a song and counter-song between Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa on the theme of abandoning all material concerns.⁵⁵

The next part of this episode —the burning of the texts— begins with their arrival at Brag-dmar mChong, situated between Din-ri and Nye-snam (and not at Brod-phug of Nye-snam, as in rGya-ldang-pa). In rGya-ldang-pa Mi-la said that the local water was bad for his health, while here Mi-la specifies that it is bad for his eyes, and the water he sends Ras-chung-pa to obtain is “healing water” (*gso-chu*).⁵⁶ After Ras-chung-pa's departure, Mi-la lights a fire, places the two text-boards on the right and left, and then, as in rGya-ldang-pa, prays for the *dāka-niṣkāya* texts to float into a crack in the cave wall; but he also prays that the non-Buddhist sorcery float into the fireplace.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Ibid., (Newark), 79b-80a; (Oxford), 61a-b; (Stockholm), 75b-76a.

⁵⁵ Ibid., (Newark), 80a-81a; (Oxford), 61b-62a; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁵⁶ Ibid., (Newark), 81a; (Oxford), 62a; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁵⁷ Ibid., (Newark), 81b; (Oxford), 62a-b; (Stockholm), n.a.

Ras-chung-pa is (superfluously it seems) delayed by a wondrous sight. In this version, he sees seven kyang (the Tibetan wild ass), comprising a mother and her young, and seven wolves, also a mother with her young, playing together. He watches them until they disappear into the distance. When he hurries back he sees that his texts have been burned. Unlike in rGya-ldang-pa, he loses his faith in Mi-la and turns his back on him. Mi-la performs a succession of five miracles with accompanying songs, but to no avail:

- 1) The gurus of the lineage appear above his head.
- 2) A crystal stupa appears on his tongue.
- 3) The nine Hevajra deities appear in his heart.
- 4) Mi-la splits and moulds a boulder as if it were clay.
- 5) He uses his robe as wings and flies high into the sky.⁵⁸

Ras-chung-pa is unmoved by these miracles and after the first song states that he would rather watch kyang and wolves playing.⁵⁹ In this text, the narrative function of these animals is to serve as a counterpoint to Mi-la's miracles. Mi-la refers to them in his songs, saying that his display is better than watching the animals, and there is no indication in this text that they were magical creations by Mi-la (as in later texts). In his songs he derides them by, for example, singing that "the kyang are [just] ghosts in the mountains, and wolves are [their] karmic executioners" (*rkyang ni ri'i*⁶⁰ 'byung po yin / spyang ku⁶¹ las kyi shan pa yin)⁶² and "the stupid kyang family bring the meat, the sinful wolf family make relationships with corpses, and those who watch

⁵⁸ Ibid., (Newark), 81b-83b; (Oxford), 62b-64a; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁵⁹ Ibid., (Newark), 82a; (Oxford), 63b; (Stockholm), 78a.

⁶⁰ Ibid., (Stockholm), ri yi.

⁶¹ Ibid., (Stockholm), khu.

⁶² Ibid., (Newark), 83b; (Oxford), 64a; (Stockholm), 79a.

them are hunters” (*rkyang ma*⁶³ *smad glen pa sha skyel yin / spyang ma*⁶⁴ *smad sdig*⁶⁵ *pa*⁶⁶ *ro sbrel yin / de la lta ba rñgon pa yin*).⁶⁷

Mi-la disappears into the sky and Ras-chung-pa, overcome with regret, recovers his faith in him. In what seems to be narrative repetition as a result of compilation, Mi-la reappears in the sky before Ras-chung-pa, sings to him, and vanishes once more,⁶⁸ this time “going through a rock fissure of mChong-lung that only a bird could pass through, so that he could not be seen anywhere” (*mchong lung gi brag seb na*⁶⁹ *bya min pas*⁷⁰ *mi thar*⁷¹ *ba cig tu byon nas*⁷² *song bas gar yod yang mi mthong bar*⁷³ ‘*dug pas...*’)⁷⁴ and Ras-chung-pa is again overcome with remorse. He wishes to die, but decides it is wrong to commit suicide by jumping to his death. Instead, he prays to die accidentally as a punishment from Mi-la and climbs the cliff to provide that opportunity. Near the top, he sees a cave in which there are three Mi-la Ras-pas who sing to him, asking him to repent his conduct.⁷⁵ Then the scene transforms into Ras-chung-pa sitting by Mi-la next to the ashes of the texts. Thus the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* narrative resorts to an abrupt return to the original narrative framework into which the miraculous episodes have been inserted. Mi-la tells him that sorcery is only beneficial for this life, and he was worried that Ras-chung-pa might become a sorcerer. There was no greater sorcerer than himself, but it

⁶³ Ibid., (Newark & Stockholm), *ma* not present.

⁶⁴ Ibid., (Newark & Stockholm), *ma* not present.

⁶⁵ Ibid., (Stockholm), *sdigs*.

⁶⁶ Ibid., (Stockholm), *ba*.

⁶⁷ Ibid., (Newark), 83a; (Oxford), 63b; (Stockholm), 78b.

⁶⁸ Ibid., (Newark), 83b-84b; (Oxford), 64a-b; (Stockholm), 79a-b.

⁶⁹ Ibid., (Newark), *seb na* not present.

⁷⁰ Ibid., (Oxford), *ba*.

⁷¹ Ibid., (Newark), *thon*.

⁷² Ibid., (Newark), *nas* not present.

⁷³ Ibid., (Newark), *par*.

⁷⁴ Ibid., (Newark), 84b; (Oxford), 64b; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁷⁵ Ibid., (Newark), 84b-85a; (Oxford), 65a; (Stockholm), 79b-80a.

had caused him much difficulty until he had purified himself of those actions; he therefore admonishes him for obtaining these instructions from a non-Buddhist, and sings to him.⁷⁶ At this point the narrative re-coincides with *rGya-ldang-pa* for this is the song which in that text Mi-la sang to Ras-chung-pa on his return to the cave.⁷⁷ The song betrays its origin by agreeing with the *rGya-ldang-pa* narrative in stating that Ras-chung-pa has brought back a manual of logic, thus disagreeing with the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version of a text of sorcery. As in *rGya-ldang-pa*, Ras-chung-pa is filled with faith on hearing the song, a sign that the preceding occasions when he loses his doubts and regains his faith were insertions. The texts fly back into his lap and he realises that Mi-la is a Buddha. In an additional detail, Ras-chung-pa states that he has been Mi-la's attendant for sixteen years but vows to continue for a further sixteen, so that from then on they were inseparable.⁷⁸ This number of years may be arbitrary, and does seem unreliable, as it is unlikely that the time span from their initial meeting in circa 1096/7 until Mi-la's death was as long as thirty-two years (See Appendix F on Mi-la's dates).

The following chapter in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* continues along the line of the *rGya-ldang-pa* type narratives. Seban Ras-pa and 'Bri-sgom Ras-pa discuss the Dharma with each other, but lack the confidence to discuss it with Ras-chung-pa. Mi-la Ras-pa instructs Ras-chung-pa to tell them whether he can refute Tibetan debaters by using the instructions that he has received in India. He sings of a refutation that is accomplished by the practice of meditation. Mi-la Ras-pa, pleased,

⁷⁶ Ibid., (Newark), 85a-b; (Oxford), 65a-b; (Stockholm), 80a-b.

⁷⁷ *rGya-ldang-pa*, 358.

⁷⁸ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 85b; (Oxford), 65b; (Stockholm), 80b.

gives him the name rTsod-pa Zlog-pa'i Rin-chen ("The Jewel of the Refutation of Debate").⁷⁹

This version has therefore removed Se-ban Ras-pa's protestations against Ras-chung-pa, replacing them with an awed deference.

The clash of wills introduced by the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* may seem too extreme for the context and contrasts with every other Tibetan account of a guru-pupil relationship; but it appears that it is this very extreme nature which has given such a long life and popularity to this version of the narrative.

5.4.4.2. Zhwa-dmar mKha'-spyod dBang-po

Zhwa-dmar mKha'-spyod dBang-po (1350-1405) includes what is clearly a summary of a narrative which appears to predate, in terms of narrative development, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. This passage may possibly have appeared in the lost *mDzod Nag-ma*, and represents an early stage of the interpolation of the miracles into the rGya-ldang-pa type narrative.

The passage is very brief.⁸⁰ Mi-la clairvoyantly knows that Ras-chung-pa has developed "a little pride" and goes to meet him. It is specifically stated that Mi-la miraculously causes the storm, though it is a rain-storm in this instance and not hail.

Mi-la, within the horn, sings to Ras-chung-pa. The entire song is not given, only the first eight lines, beginning "Son, your view is like a vulture/ A vulture is sometimes high and sometimes low..." (*Bu khyod kyi lta ba rgod pa 'dra/ rGod po*

⁷⁹ Ibid., (Newark), 86a; (Oxford), 66a; (Stockholm), 81a-b.

⁸⁰ Zhwa-dmar-pa, 285-88.

8) The eighth miracle is squeezing and destroying a boulder, which corresponds with the fourth miracle in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.

9) The ninth miracle appears to correspond to the multiple Mi-la Ras-pas that Ras-chung-pa encounters after he had thought Mi-la was gone forever. Here, Mi-la without having first vanished into the sky, multiplies himself on the surface of a vast lake, and subsequently these manifestations are absorbed into three Mi-las and then into one.

Then they are back at the cave in a sudden jump in the narrative, as occurs in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. Ras-chung-pa now has strong faith in Mi-la, and we are given the first four lines only of a song by Mi-la. It expresses his concern that the texts would have caused Ras-chung-pa to become a logician. Thus, Zhwa-dmar-pa displays the same dichotomy concerning the text's content—condemned as sorcery, yet described in song as dedicated to logic— as we have seen in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. This song (see Appendix E) states:

Ras-chung-pa, the son that I have brought up since he was little,
[I] have the hope that [you will be] a meditator who wears a hole in his
cushion,
But as a result of the prolixity of this text
There is the danger that [you will be] a scholar who wears holes in his
shoes.⁸³

⁸³ Zhwa-dmar-pa, 287.

Bu Chung nas skyangs pa'i ras chung pa /
 Sgom chen stan rdol cig re ba la /
 Dpe cha 'di yi mang lugs kyis /
 Ston chen lham rdol cig 'ong nyen gda' /

These four lines are in *rGya-ldang-pa* as well as reappearing in *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. Zhwa-dmar's version does not have the extensive development that has taken place in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version of the song (though they both share the addition of the word "Son" (*bu*)). This demonstrates that they are independent variations from the *rGya-ldang-pa* type tradition and points to the Zhwa-dmar text as being an instance of an earlier stage of narrative development than the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. (See Appendix E).

The passage ends abruptly at this point, simply stating that Ras-chung-pa's pride had been eliminated.

Thus, though Zhwa-dmar-pa has the interpolation of miraculous episodes into a *rGya-ldang-pa* type narrative, it does not accentuate Ras-chung-pa's failings and the guru-pupil conflict to the extent that the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* does.

5.4.4.3. *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*

The *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* version of this episode primarily repeats the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* verbatim. The lost *mDzod-nag-ma*, one of the text's three main sources, does not appear to have provided it with any additional

information. This episode is absent from Zhwa-dmar-pa mKha'-spyod dBang-po's biography of Mi-la Ras-pa, and as he probably relied upon the *mDzod-nag-ma* as a source, it seems that the *mDzod-nag-ma* did not relate this episode of Ras-chung-pa's return. This corresponds with Ras-chung-pa being of less importance for the *Karma bKa'-brgyud* than for the '*Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud* and *sNyan-rgyud* lineages.

The narrative in this text is identical to the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, apart from minor variations and textual corruption, until the conclusion of the yak horn episode.⁸⁴ The first narrative deviation from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* comes after the hailstorm and Mi-la's denial of responsibility for it. This variation and much of what follows appears to be from the colourful, untitled biography of Mi-la Ras-pa, the lost third source listed by the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, which appears to be the Zhi-byed Ri-pa or Zhi-byed Ras-pa version. The *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* therefore preserves an alternative to the yak horn story: Mi-la Ras-pa sits with his back to the stem of a yellow flower, sheltering under its blossom as if it were a parasol. He asks Ras-chung-pa to join him there, saying, "If there is room for the mind, there's room for the body; we, father and son, should sing together under this flower parasol."⁸⁵

There is then an abrupt jump to the point where Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa sing the song and counter-song concerning abandoning all material concerns (which in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* was sung *after* the death of the old lady).⁸⁶ No further mention is made of the flower; it is not even stated whether Ras-chung-pa joined him there or not. It is clearly a pleasant fragment that the compiler could not resist and

⁸⁴ *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, 365-70.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 371. Sems shong na lus shong bas rang re pha spad me tog gi gdugs 'di yis (sic) zhabs na dbyang cig thon dgos.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 371-72.

crudely introduced from the now lost source. Their approach to the tents is probably also derived from that lost biography, as it contains an unique description of the environs, including sheep and cattle around the tents and children playing on the bank of a river. Unlike in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* it is Mi-la who wishes to go begging, and Ras-chung-pa who disagrees, because night is falling. Mi-la insists that as the encampment might leave before morning it is best to go there immediately. The rest is as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* apart from the detail of the old lady having a bamboo cane and stones in both hands.⁸⁷ After her death there is a song on impermanence that is not found in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*; it uses many natural examples, and is probably derived from the lost source.⁸⁸ Mi-la, to Ras-chung-pa's exasperation, says that it's an old man's job to eat the food of the dead and a young man's job to carry the body.⁸⁹

After the body has been carried onto the plain, Mi-la states that the dead woman had the same selfish viewpoint as a dog, and then sings the same song on impermanence as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.⁹⁰ This text, however, adds that on the conclusion of the song, rainbow light touched her body as her consciousness was transferred.

The rest of the episode continues as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* until their arrival in the cave,⁹¹ where we discover yet another variation on the text-burning episode.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 373.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 374-75.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 375.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 376-79; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 79b-80a; (Oxford), 61a-b; (Stockholm), 75b-76a.

⁹¹ Ibid., 379-82.

Ras-chung-pa has secretly kept to himself one text, which he keeps under his pillow. Mi-la thinks there must be a reason for hiding it, so one morning, “when enough snow to whiten the earth had fallen”⁹² Mila asks Ras-chung-pa whether he would prefer to light the fire or get the water. Ras-chung-pa says he will get the water and takes two horns to use as vessels. Mi-la meditates and snaps his fingers, which causes the spring to dry up. When Ras-chung-pa returns with this news, Mi-la says that as Ras-chung-pa has now promised to perform this task, he will have to go to the river, which is far away. This version, probably from Zhi-byed Ri-pa, has thus taken the place of the motif of nearby water causing Mi-la health problems, as found in rGya-ldang-pa and the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, and is indeed more appropriate for an idealised hagiography.

In this version it is Mi-la Ras-pa who manifests the animals that Ras-chung-pa sees. Their number has multiplied: a hundred kyang give birth to a hundred young, and then a hundred wolves give birth to a hundred wolf cubs; the kyang and their new-born run away, chased by the wolves. Then the mother wolves sit and watch the kyang chase the wolf cubs back. Then the wolf cubs chase the young kyang. Ras-chung-pa is amazed by both the unseasonal birth and the strange activity so that he does not notice the passing of time.

Meanwhile, Mi-la investigates Ras-chung-pa's text and finds many sorcery practices. He thinks, “Oh, my son, whom I hoped would become a meditator who wears a hole in his cushion, is going to become a red-handed executioner and if all these evil mantras are disseminated in Tibet it will ruin many people.”⁹³ Echoing the

⁹² Ibid., 382. kha ba sa skya cig bab pas...

⁹³ Ibid., 383. A pha nga yis (sic) bu ras chung pa 'di la bsgom [sic] chen ston rdol cig re ba la gshan pa lags [sic] dmar cig 'ong bar snang / ngan sngags 'di kun bod du phel na mi mang po phung bar snang /

sentence in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* where Mi-la places one text cover on either side of himself, he prays that the beneficial writings may go to the right and the harmful to the left and throws the pages into the air. He then throws the left-hand pile on the fire, but with the prayer that anything beneficial contained among them may not burn. As a result, some pages are burned on one side only while on the other side the writing remains unharmed. Then Mi-la places those pages from the fire and the entire right-hand pile between the text covers, roughly half of the original amount, and binds them in cloth. Through the power of his visualisation, the text floats away, not into the cave wall, as in *rGya-ldang-pa* and the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, but to another place named Brag-dkar bSam-gling. However, perhaps as a result of splicing together two narratives, there is an internal contradiction in the narrative; Mi-la Ras-pa appears to have performed this act upon all the texts that Ras-chung-pa brought, whereas it had earlier been stated that Ras-chung-pa had already given most of them to Mi-la. It may be that in the *Zhi-byed Ri-pa* version he did not initially give any texts to Mi-la but kept them all in his possession and under his pillow.

Having burned the texts, Mi-la, with ashes on his hair, goes to lie on his bed. Ras-chung-pa returns and sees smoke and ashes. Mi-la merely asks him where he's been all this time. Ras-chung-pa tells him about the animals, looks under his pillow, becomes furious and sits with his back turned to Mi-la.⁹⁴

Mi-la refers to the kyang, saying he can put on a better show. There then follows a sequence of miracles which differs from that in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, with a total of three additional miracles and all the accompanying songs in longer variants, perhaps derived from *Zhi-byed Ri-pa*.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 382-86.

1) The gurus of the lineage appear above Mi-la's head. After the song Ras-chung-pa reaffirms his wish to learn sorcery and says that he will return to India, learn it and use it against dGa-lo and Lo-ston.⁹⁵

2) An additional miracle not found in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*: Rainbow lights fill the sky, and offering goddesses appear from the tips of light-rays. The planets act as pillars, the lunar asterisms as a canopy and the gurus appear beneath it.⁹⁶ The accompanying song is a variant of that which accompanied the crystal stūpa in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.

3) Corresponding to the crystal stūpa miracle of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, a golden stūpa adorned by turquoises appears upon Mi-la Ras-pa's tongue. This is accompanied by an entirely new song.⁹⁷

4) Corresponding to the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*'s third miracle, in this version Mi-la Ras-pa cuts his own chest open with a knife to reveal not only Hevajra but also Guhyasamāja and Cakrasaṃvara within. This is accompanied by a new song.⁹⁸

5) In an additional miracle Mi-la Ras-pa also cuts open his own stomach to reveal the Indian areas sacred to Cakrasaṃvara within: the twenty-four *pīṭha* (*yul*) and thirty-eight *kṣetra* (*gnas*).⁹⁹ This is accompanied by an entirely new song.¹⁰⁰

6) Mi-la opens his robe and reveals within it the most famous buddha-realms and their inhabitants. Ras-chung-pa, however, complains that Mi-la has been training

⁹⁵ Ibid., 386-87.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 387-88.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 388-9.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 389-90.

⁹⁹ This sacred sites are listed in both the Hevajra and Cakrasaṃvara Tantras, but in neither do we find thirty-eight *kṣetra*. See David L. Snellgrove, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism* (London: Serindia Publications, 1987) 167-70.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 390-91

in optical illusions and repeats his wish to practise sorcery against the scholar-monks.¹⁰¹

7) In an equivalent to the fourth miracle in *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* Mi-la asks Ras-chung-pa to come down to the lake, promising that he will give him back his texts there. On arrival, Mi-la rides a boulder as if it were a horse, squeezes it as if it were clay, and finally shatters it with a kick. It is accompanied by a song which is a variant of that in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. Ras-chung-pa is now convinced that these are not mere illusions but nevertheless he still wishes to return to India. This miracle and song are followed by another song, unaccompanied by a miracle.¹⁰²

8) The equivalent of *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*'s fifth and last miracle; Mi-la tells Ras-chung-pa that the texts are in the rock wall of Brag bSam-ye, previously referred to as Brag-dkar bSam-gling. When they reach the top of this place, Mi-la uses his robe as wings, and while flying sings a song that is a variant of the one in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.¹⁰³

Mi-la vanishes and Ras-chung-pa goes in search of him, but instead of finding three identical Mi-las in a cave, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, he comes to a mountain top where there is a Mi-la on the tip of every blade of grass. These gradually merge into each other coming down at first to a hundred thousand, then a thousand, a hundred, ten and finally three, coinciding with the "three Mi-la" narrative in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 391-92.

¹⁰² Ibid., 392-95.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 395-97.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 398-401.

After Mi-la ras-pa has become single again, instead of suddenly finding themselves back in the cave (as in *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*) they walk back to Brag-dmar mChong-lung. Following the dialogue in which Mi-la condemns sorcery, the sequence of events follows those of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* more closely, though this results in an internal contradiction, for now the texts float out from the cave wall and not from Brag-dkar bSam-gling.

Ras-chung-pa gains faith in Mi-la and through his own meditation is eventually able to fly and manifest illusory bodies. The text repeats the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* chronology of Ras-chung-pa being Mi-la's attendant for a previous sixteen and a subsequent sixteen years.¹⁰⁵

The subsequent episode on meditation as a substitute for refutation by debate is as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*.

5.4.4.4. gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*

This text follows the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* narrative; its variations, omissions and additions are independent of those in the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*. The episode of Ras-chung-pa's stay in India is omitted. Instead, the text remains centred upon Mi-la Ras-pa as the principal character. The period between Ras-chung-pa's departure and return is filled by a chapter concerning one of Mi-la Ras-pa's female disciples: gSal-le 'Od.¹⁰⁶ The chapter's colophon states that it was composed by Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa, even though the chapter does not appear in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* for which Ngan-rDzong sTon-pa's writings were a principal

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 404.

¹⁰⁶ *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 386-400.

source. This chapter describes Mi-la Ras-pa's initial meeting and a later encounter with Sa-le 'Od. In-between these two events, Mi-la Ras-pa has his vision of Ras-chung-pa within a crystal stūpa.¹⁰⁷ While the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* narrative could be interpreted as Mi-la gazing into an actual crystal stūpa as a divinatory device (an interpretation made by gTsug-lag Phreng-ba, see below), here, more plausibly, it is clear that the stūpa itself is a part of Mi-la Ras-pa's vision. Ras-chung-pa is said to be obscured by a dust-storm because he learned sorcery from a non-Buddhist. This vague reference is the only indication as to what occurred in the narrative of Ras-chung-pa's visit to India. As it is a loose end, this reference is evidently derived from another source and is presumably interpolated by gTsang-smyon.

In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* narrative Mi-la's vision was immediately followed by his meeting with Ras-chung-pa. Here, however, after the vision Mi-la flies from Brag-dmar sPo-mtho to Ras-chen cave at La-phyi, creating footprints on the rock as he lands.¹⁰⁸ He then observes Ras-chung-pa clairvoyantly once more, comes to the conclusion that the problem is not serious and so sets off to visit gSal-le 'Od, which gives the impression of a very awkward compilation of narratives. The passage concerning Ras-chung-pa has enough in common with the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* to demonstrate textual replication from that source. Some colloquial phraseology of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* is replaced by more polished classical forms. Possibly, gTsang-smyon inserted the Ras-chung-pa vision into Ngan-rdzong sTon-pa's text, without writing a colophon to note the insertion.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 396.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 396. Chang, 416 mistranslates the cave as being half-way between Brag-dmar and La-phyi.

When Mi-la has left gSal-le 'Od, the preceding fragment of narrative concerning Ras-chung-pa is repeated so as to serve as an introduction for the meeting with Ras-chung-pa. Mi-la is staying at Be-rtse 'Dod-yon rDzong. There he sees that Ras-chung-pa has arrived in Gung-thang and “has a little pride”. He goes to meet him at dPal-mo dPal-thang. There is little textual replication in the following episode, which is almost entirely rewritten. Ras-chung-pa has the arrogance to think that though Mi-la is superior in compassion and blessing, he is Mi-la's superior in instruction and logic. This is the reason why he expects Mi-la to prostrate himself to him and is displeased when Mi-la does not. In the earlier version it was a desire for the *dāka-niṣkāya* teachings to be respected. This sentence is not repeated by gTsang-smyon. The result is that the wish for Mi-la to prostrate himself appears to be due solely to egoism.

Mi-la sings the song of his happiness—in reply to Ras-chung-pa's question concerning his welfare—which is as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (not the version in rGya-ldang-pa). Ras-chung-pa's song in reply is a composite compiled from Ras-chung-pa's first two songs to Mi-la in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (see Appendix A), while Mi-la's song that had its place between those two songs is omitted in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*. We see here gTsang-smyon's version removing, by merger, the repetitiveness that resulted from the compilation of parallel narratives in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. However, in the compiled song, Ras-chung-pa specifically asks, with two new lines added for this topic, for Mi-la's homage for the teachings he has obtained, in order to ensure their future success. This indicates that, whether gTsang-smyon or an earlier author combined the two songs, it fails to be in harmony with the preceding prose narrative.

The subsequent sequence of songs is as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*; the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* even marks the same point where the chapter concludes in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* with the conclusion of a sub-chapter.¹⁰⁹

The subsequent yak-horn episode is retold by gTsang-smyon in his own words. The passage becomes more amusing and memorable, with Ras-chung-pa thinking more “evil thoughts” than in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. He broods on his own importance, his right to enjoy himself, and how Mi-la is “sometimes full of anger like an old dog, [sometimes] full of desire like an old man”.¹¹⁰

The narrative progresses into the hailstorm as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. The song that Mi-la sings inside the yak horn to invite Ras-chung-pa in, is a variant of that in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. Ras-chung-pa's song in response is different from that in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, apart from one occurrence of its refrain— “Whether my cotton robe is dry or wet, I pray to you” (*ras gos skam rung rlon rung gsol ba 'debs*).¹¹¹ The narrative from the point of Mi-la's emergence from the horn and through to the death of the old lady and the subsequent songs, follows the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* more closely, for though no sentence is left unaltered, most of the text's words are retained.¹¹²

For the next episode, the burning of the texts, unsurprisingly, the location is Brag-dmar, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and in disagreement with rGyal-dang-pa. The site is specified to be the cave of Nyi-ma rDzong at Brag-dmar sPo-mtho, and not Brag-dmar mChong-lung as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. Unlike the preceding versions, no reason is given why Ras-chung-pa has to go some

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 407; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 77a; (Oxford), 59a; (Stockholm), 73a.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 408. Ras 'ga' ni khyi rgas kyin zhe sdang che / mi rgas kyin 'dod pa che /

¹¹¹ Ibid., 411; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 78a; (Oxford), 60a; (Stockholm), 74a.

distance for water, thus omitting any reference to the water being harmful for Mi-la, which would not conform with gTsang-smyon's portrait of the enlightened Mi-la as a transcendent being.

Ras-chung-pa is said to arrive at a wide plain in between sPo-mtho and sKyid-phug. The sight he sees there is more miraculous than previous versions. He sees a kyang give birth. Both mother and child then each give birth, and so on until there are a hundred mothers and a hundred offspring. (The mathematics of course does not work). The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version had only a total of seven kyang, but the number of a hundred coincides with that in both the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* and the *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar/Rwa-lung gSer-'phreng* versions, indicating similar but independent developments from the original kyang narrative. These kyang play together, without any of the wolves who figure in the other versions. Instead, one of the kyang eventually transforms into a wolf and chases the other kyang away over a mountain pass. The burning of the texts by Mi-la is described briefly and vaguely, though Mi-la does rely on the *dākinīs* to separate the beneficial texts from the harmful. He then burns all but a few scrolls, which are *not* said to float away into the cave wall.

When Ras-chung-pa returns to find nothing but the text-covers left, some humour is injected into the narrative as Mi-la laconically tells Ras-chung-pa that he had been gone for so long that he came to the conclusion that Ras-chung-pa had died, and as he had no use for the texts himself he had burned them. "What took you so long?" he asks Ras-chung-pa, who loses all faith in Mi-la.

¹¹² Ibid., 411-19; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 78b-81a; (Oxford), 60a-62b; (Stockholm), 74b-n.a.

The series of miracles and songs are a developed form of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* versions and not of the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*. Both miracles and songs are greatly elaborated.

1) Mar-pa in the form of Vajradhara, surrounded by the gurus of the lineage, appears above Mi-la's head. But also the sun and moon appear at Mi-la's ears, rainbow lights come from his nostrils, the Sanskrit alphabet appears on a lotus sun and moon seat upon his tongue, and a shining knot of eternity appears at his heart.¹¹³

2) In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* a crystal stupa appeared on his tongue as the second miracle. That miracle is omitted in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*. Instead, the second miracle is a version of the third miracle in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* by which Hevajra deities appeared in his heart. In this version his body becomes transparent (so that he does not cut himself open) to reveal even more deities: Catuḥpīṭha, Cakrasaṃvara, Hevajra, Mahāmāya and Buddhakapāla at the *cakras* of, respectively, the groin, navel, heart, throat, mid-eyebrow and crown. It is accompanied by a new song.¹¹⁴

4 and 5) These two are equivalents of the fourth miracle in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, where he splits and moulds a boulder as if it were clay, and of the seventh in the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* where he goes down to the shore of a lake, rides around on a boulder, squeezes it and shatters it. In this version he passes through solid objects, rides a boulder, walks on water, blazes with fire, spouts water and emanates and reabsorbs copies of himself. This is accompanied by a new song that describes these miracles.

¹¹³ Ibid., 422-23.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 424-25.

As a fifth miracle, he slices like dough, squeezes like clay and finally with one hand throws into a river a boulder that was blocking a trader's route. This is accompanied by its own new song.¹¹⁵

6) In the equivalent of the fifth miracle in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, he uses his robe as wings and flies into the sky where he "hovers like a vulture, swoops like a hawk, darts like lightning."¹¹⁶ This is accompanied by a new song that is not just a variant (as in the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*). Also, unlike the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, he does not yet disappear and reappear, but "once again" flies up into the sky, before singing a second song. After Mi-la disappears in the sky, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, he reappears to sing once more before disappearing again. The song is new, though there is still a reference to kyang and wolf.¹¹⁷

Ras-chung-pa's response to Mi-la's departure is more drastic than in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* where he rejected the idea of suicide as wrong (and climbed instead so as to risk his life and invite punishment). Here, he decides to kill himself. With a prayer that he may meet Mi-la in all his lives, he throws himself off the cliff, but does not fall. Then Mi-la's shadow passes over him. He attempts to fly, but failing to do so, he follows Mi-la's shadow which takes him up the side of the mountain until he comes across the three Mi-la Ras-pas that sing to him, thus coinciding again with the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* narrative. The *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* at this point has an extended dialogue in song between Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa, in which Mi-la admonishes him for having brought back works on logic and sorcery. In one song Mi-la mentions that the preserved teachings have flown into a crack in the cave-wall, a detail omitted in the narrative up to this point. Nor is there

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 425-27.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 427. rGod ltar lding zhing khra ltar bzhud pa dang / glog ltar 'khyug pa la sogs...

any narrative transition to bring Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa back to the cave where the texts had been burned. Yet the texts return to Ras-chung-pa when he prays for them.¹¹⁸

From this point on, the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, returns to the earlier narrative stratum found in the rGya-ldang-pa family of texts. Ras-chung-pa makes a commitment to remain as Mi-la's attendant, but does not specify the number of years as in the other texts. Without beginning a new chapter, the narrative moves immediately to the episode of refutation through meditation practice. Mi-la's pupils gather to welcome Ras-chung-pa and he sings in response to Se-ban Ras-pa's request that he debate using logic.

However, we again witness here a demotion of Ras-chung-pa's status. Instead of unequivocal praise, Mi-la Ras-pa adds that there is still something that Ras-chung-pa lacks and sings a song on the subject, thereby giving the impression that Ras-chung-pa's understanding was incomplete.

5.4.4.5 'Jams-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa (1478-1523).

This account is too brief to demonstrate provenance. There is no mention of Ras-chung-pa acquiring a *be'u-bum* or of Mi-la Ras-pa burning it. There is solely Mi-la Ras-pa's manifestation of "signs of accomplishment" in order to break Ras-chung-pa's pride (the motif that first appears in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*). After this, Ras-chung-pa offers his profound instructions to Mi-la. It may be that this text's

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 427-29.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 429-33.

emphasis upon Ras-chung-pa as the lineage-bearer causes a diminution of biographical facets that did not reflect favourably upon him.¹¹⁹

5.4.4.6. lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal (1473-1557).

For this passage, lHa-btsun appears to have used both gTsang-smyon's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* and the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* as a source, making his own combination of the material provided by these two texts. To what extent he relied upon the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* (written by Ras-chung-pa's own pupils) we cannot tell until a copy comes to light. It is possible that the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, like the rGya-ldang-pa versions, does not have the developed form of this passage.

lHa-btsun summarises his sources to the extent that he does not mention Ras-chung-pa obtaining a *be'u-bum* in Nepal. He does state (as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* but qualified with "little", as in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*) that Ras-chung-pa has developed a "little pride", though, out of respect for Ras-chung-pa, in this text the honorific *thugs-rgyal* is used for "pride" instead of the common *nga-rgyal*.¹²⁰

Only the first two lines of Mi-la Ras-pa's song concerning his welfare are supplied, as this is a collection focussing upon Ras-chung-pa's songs. In spite of the accessibility of the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* —authored and printed by his own teacher— to lHa-btsun's potential readership, it is the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version that lHa-btsun primarily relies upon, as is evident, for example, in the first line of this song.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ 'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa, 11.

¹²⁰ lHa-btsun, 522.

¹²¹ lHa-btsun, 523; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 73b-74a; (Oxford), 56b; (Stockholm), n.a.: rje gangs dkar 'grims [Oxford: 'grim] pa'i rnal-'byor pa [Newark: *la* an interlinear

Ras-chung-pa's request in prose and song for Mi-la to honour the teachings he has brought back is also as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and not the version in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*.¹²² lHa-btsun, relying on the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, gives only the first two lines of Mi-la's next song (in which Mi-la lists the practices which make him happy), which was entirely omitted by the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*.¹²³ lHa-bstun gives in full Ras-chung-pa's next song (which the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* had combined with the preceding song of Ras-chung-pa).¹²⁴

The first two lines only of Mi-la's song "to break Ras-chung-pa's pride" are provided (the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* repeat it in its entirety).¹²⁵ There is an abbreviation of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*'s narrative link, when Mi-la goes off with Ras-chung-pa's texts and Ras-chung-pa follows him singing "the Running-song" (*mdur-dbyangs*)¹²⁶—which was referred to in rGya-ldang-pa— here exactly as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, while the *mGur-'bum* version is a variant.¹²⁷

The lHa-btsun narrative omits any reference to Mi-la's song of advice,¹²⁸ and merely mentions that Mi-la sang a song inside the yak horn.¹²⁹ Thus it quickly reaches

addition or emendation of *pa*]; *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 401-2: *da gangs-stongs 'grims pa'i mal 'byor pa*.

¹²² lHa-btsun, 523-4; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 74a; (Oxford), 57a; *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 402-3.

¹²³ lHa-btsun, 524. *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 74a-b; (Oxford), 57a-b; (Stockholm), n.a.

¹²⁴ lHa-btsun, 524-5, *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 74b-75a; (Oxford), 57b; (Stockholm), n.a.; *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 402-3. See Appendix A.

¹²⁵ lHa-btsun, 525; *Bu-chen* (Newark), 75a-b; (Oxford), 57b-58a; (Stockholm), 71b-72a; *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 403-5.

¹²⁶ *mDur* is an alternative spelling of *'dur*.

¹²⁷ lHa-btsun, 526-7; *Bu-chen* (Newark), 75b-76a; (Oxford), 58a-58b; (Stockholm), 72a-b; *mGur-'bum*, 405-406.

¹²⁸ lHa-btsun, 528; *Bu-chen* (Newark), 76b; (Oxford), 58b-59a; (Stockholm), 72b-73a.; *mGur-'bum*, 406-7.

¹²⁹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 77b-78a; (Oxford), 59b; *mGur-'bum*, 409-10.

what is here called Ras-chung-pa's "shivering song" (*'dar ma dbyangs*)¹³⁰ as he looks into the horn. This song is again identical to that in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, while the *mGur-'bum* supplies a variant.¹³¹

lHa-btsun omits the following episode of the old woman in the encampment who dies, probably because this is devoid of songs, and jumps forward to Mi-la's suggestion that they go to meditate at Kailash, and Ras-chung-pa's wish to go to a nearby hermitage to rest. This prompts Mi-la's song of "the eight sufficiencies", which is only referred to here, lHa-btsun reproducing only Ras-chung-pa's counter-song, which pleads that though one's body alone is sufficient as a hermitage one still needs an external hermitage, and so on.¹³²

They proceed to sKyid-phug cave at Brag-dmar Khyung-lding. In *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, they went to an unspecified cave at mChong-lung (previously referred to in that text as Brag-dmar mChong-gling; in *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* they go to Nyi-ma rDzong cave at Brag-dmar sPo-mtho. rGya-ldang-pa set this scene at Brod-phug cave in sNya-nam).

The following narrative is brief. Ras-chung-pa is sent for water (with no reason given) and he watches a hundred kyang and their young playing, without wolves, as in the Rwa-lung version and corresponding with the *mGur-'bum* version. Mi-la, meanwhile, prays that the beneficial texts may go into the hands of the *ḍākinīs*. Those pages fly into the rock wall, (as in *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and rGya-ldang-pa, though that detail is omitted by the *mGur-'bum*). Mi-la burns the remainder

¹³⁰ lHa-btsun, 528.

¹³¹ lHa-btsun, 528-9; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 78a; (Oxford), 60a; *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 410-11.

¹³² lHa-btsun, 529-31; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 80b-81a; (Oxford), 61b-62a; (Stockholm), n.a.; *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 418-9.

and following the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* closely, Ras-chung-pa hurries back, is at first worried by smelling burned paper and then finds his worst fears confirmed.

The entire miracle sequence is summarised in one sentence, thus eliminating all of Mi-la's songs:

He lost all faith. Whatever miracles the venerable one demonstrated, he did not believe in him; [Mi-la] flew into the sky and rose up high until only his voice could be heard and his body could not be seen.¹³³

Unlike the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, and similar to the *mGur-'bum*, Ras-chung-pa *does* attempt suicide on believing that Mi-la has departed from this life. This text simply states:

He jumped off a cliff, regained consciousness and the master and pupil arrived at the place where the paper was burned. [Ras-chung-pa] developed unwavering faith in his guru and made a commitment to be his inseparable attendant for twelve years.¹³⁴

Thus, the meeting with the multiple Mi-las is omitted, and the number of years that he promises to be Mi-la's attendant contrasts with the sixteen years of *Bu-chen*

¹³³ lHa-btsun, 531-32: dad pa gting nas log yod pa la / rje btsun gyi rdzu 'phrul ci bstan rung yid ma ches par / nam mkha'i mthongs la 'phur nas mtho ru btang / gsung lhang ba ma gtogs sku mi mthong bar song ba dang /

¹³⁴ Ibid., 532: gcong g.yang sa la 'phyongs / brgyal ba sangs pa dang / dpon slob gnyis shog bu bsregs sa na sleb 'dug pas / bla ma la mi phyed pa'i dad pa skyes nas / lo bcu gnyis 'bral med du zhabs tog byed pa'i dam bca' phul lo /

and *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*. The other texts above do not specify the number of years.

lHa-btsun appears to pass directly to the “debate” passage, for Mi-la asks Ras-chung-pa how he would refute others in debate. But not only is the setting of Se-ban Ras-pa and the other pupils missing, the song that Ras-chung-pa sings is quite another, which is not directly related to debate.¹³⁵

Therefore we see that lHa-btsun did not rely on his master, gTsang-smyon’s, version, but primarily followed the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* as his source.

There is a slightly later episode,¹³⁶ however, which preserves a variant of the miracle episode. While staying at La-phyi, Ras-chung-pa dreams of Tipupa and wishes to return to India. Mi-la says, “Tibet is more marvellous than India” and manifests a series of miracles and short songs, each ending with the refrain “Son, there is nothing marvellous about India”:

- 1) Mar-pa appears on Mi-la’s head.
- 2) Sunlight and moonlight come from his ears.
- 3) Lights of five colours appear at the tip of his nose.
- 4) An *urṇa* hair shines with great light between his eyebrows.
- 5) The Sanskrit alphabet appears upon his tongue.
- 6) A knot of eternity appears upon his upper body
- 7) Deities appear at the sites of the cakras: Cakrasaṃvara at the navel, Hevajra at the heart, Māhamāya at the throat, Guhyasamāja at the crown,

¹³⁵ Ibid., 532-34.

¹³⁶ Ibid., 549-57.

Buddhakapāla between the eyebrows and Catuḥpīṭha at the genital area (cf. the second miracle in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*).

8) He passes through the walls of the cave.

9) A kyang gives birth to a kyang that immediately gives birth, creating three, which distracts Ras-chung-pa.

10) Mi-la rides a boulder like a horse.

11) Mi-la levitates into the air.

12) There appear three Mi-la Ras-pas.

Of particular interest here is the ninth miracle in which Ras-chung-pa is distracted (but from what?) by the three kyang. Here they are explained to be the symbols of the three kāyas. Also the final miracle of the triplicate Mi-la appears in one form or another at the conclusion of the conflict episode in the other narratives.

It has features of a later stratum of the development of the miracles. We must remember that they did not appear at all in *rGya-ldang-pa* and appear to be an inclusive systematisation of the narrative.

5.4.4.7. *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*

The description of Ras-chung-pa receiving sorcery instruction from a *tīrthika* follows the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* almost word for word, including the termination of a section at this point, naming it *Ras-chung ti-phu'i skor* (*Ti-pu'i skor* in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*).¹³⁷

¹³⁷ *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, 112-3; *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 73a; (Oxford), 56b; (Stockholm), n.a.

It therefore ignores the *mGur-'bum*'s chapter on gSal-le 'Od. As in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, it places Mi-la at Brag-dmar mChong-lung (Brag-dmar mChong gi gling in *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*) for his vision of Ras-chung-pa within a crystal stūpa. However there then follows a narrative link that does seem to be derived from the gSal-le 'Od chapter, though there is no direct textual replication. Mi-la, as in the gSal-le 'Od chapter, flies to Ras-chen phug at La-phyi, where he creates a clear set of footprints in the rock when he lands. At this point rGod-tshang Ras-pa segues into the *mGur-'bum* narrative, at the point where chapter thirty-eight commences in the latter text and Mi-la is said to be staying at Be-rtse 'Dod-yon rDzong.¹³⁸ From this point on, though predominantly based upon the *mGur-'bum*, often reproducing passages verbatim, rGod-tshang Ras-pa also occasionally replicates phrases or passages from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, conjoining them with material from the *mGur-'bum* and with other material that appears for the first time in this text.

The episode of the burning of Ras-chung-pa's texts begins with Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa going to stay at at the sKyid-phug cave named Nyi-ma rDzong at Brag-dmar sPo-mtho (as in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*). Mi-la sends Ras-chung-pa for water from Brag-dmar mChong-lung, for the nearby water is harmful to Mi-la's eyes—this description of the water being a direct replication of the words in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, although according to that text they were staying at Brag-dmar mChong-lung itself. He has to travel across a wide plain *between* sPo-mtho and sKyid-phug, even though rGod-tshang Ras-pa appears to have located sKyid-phug at sPo-mtho. Perhaps rGod-tshang Ras-pa's meaning was that sKyid-phug was near to

¹³⁸ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 113; *mGur-'bum*, 400.

sPo-mtho, but it demonstrates a lack of clarity that is characteristic of some of his own contributions to the narrative, which certainly do not improve upon gTsang-smyon's powers of story-telling.

At this point, rGod-tshang Ras-pa inserts an interesting judgement on the narrative tradition of "old writings" (*yig-cha rnying*), which appear to be based upon a narrative tradition related to the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. rGod-tshang Ras-pa claims that these writings are unreliable, but his further comments are unclear for he appears to assume that the reader is familiar with these sources.

As in lHa-btsun, a second set of miracles occurs when Mi-la wishes to dissuade Ras-chung-pa from returning to India, but rGod-tshang Ras-pa does not seem to have been enthusiastic about including it, in spite of his tendency to be comprehensive. Therefore, he only gives the first song and miracle, and merely states that there were many more.¹³⁹

Thus, unlike lHa-btsun, rGod-tshang Ras-pa used the *mGur-'bum* as his primary source, instead of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, only relying on the latter text for the section on Ras-chung-pa's visit to India, which was not covered by the *mGur-'bum*.

5.4.4.8. Śākya-Rin-chen (mid-eighteenth century)

This passage¹⁴⁰ is primarily a summary of rGod-tshang Ras-pa, replicating chosen phrases from that text and omitting all songs. One minor addition is an unusual colloquial description of Mi-la as seen through Ras-chung-pa's eyes after he

¹³⁹ Ibid., 165.

¹⁴⁰ Śākya Rin-chen, 209-17.

has been disappointed by his welcome. He is said to have an untidy belt made of grass around his worn out clothes. Where his hair is long, it has been pounded by stones, but the shorter parts have been ignored. His blackened bare-feet are covered in bleeding cuts and sores. He thinks, “People say my guru is mad. He certainly looks like a madman. He might be someone incapable of working who’s just called a *siddha*” (*nga’i bla ma ‘di mi rnams kyang smyon pa yin zer / ‘dra yang smyon pa cig rang ‘dra ‘dug / las ma nus pa zhig la ming grub thob tu btags pa ni min las che ang snyam...*).¹⁴¹ We also find that Śākya Rin-chen repeats a detail that we have not seen since the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*,¹⁴² in which Ras-chung-pa is anxious to keep up with Mi-la, worried that he does not value the texts and might give them away to just anybody.

It is also said that Mi-la practises the physical movements of *yantra yoga* (*‘khrul-‘khor*) when he is inside the yak horn.¹⁴³ A detail that appears only in Pad-ma dKar-po’s account (see below), which Śākya Rin-chen, as a later member of the ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud lineage had surely read.

The same miracles as in *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* are briefly listed (without the songs), but when Ras-chung-pa throws himself off the cliff, there is the addition of his being “caught by the venerable one’s miraculous powers and settled on a rock” (*rje btsun gyi rdzu ‘phrul gyis bzung nas brag steng zhing la chags...*)¹⁴⁴ In *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* the cause of his survival was not explicit, and of course, in the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* he never jumped, while in *rGya-ldang-pa* the entire episode

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 211.

¹⁴² *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* (Newark), 75b; (Oxford), 58a; (Stockholm), 72a.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 211.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 216.

of the miracles did not occur. Thus even at this later period, when a version has become well established, there is still the accretion of details that enhance the legend.

In Śākya Rin-chen, the passage ends with praise of Ras-chung-pa by Mi-la, so that the reader is left in no doubt that, in spite of the preceding conflict, Ras-chung-pa has succeeded upon the spiritual path. An important point for the ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud to emphasise, since it has Ras-chung-pa’s transmission as a central part of its corpus of teachings.

5.4.4.9. dPa’-bo gTsug-lag ‘phreng-ba (1504-66)

In his *mKhas-pa’i dGa’-ston* (*The Feast of Scholars*), written between 1545 and 1565, this Karma bKa’-brgyud master appears to present a brief summary of rGod-tshang Ras-pa.¹⁴⁵ This could just as well be a summary of the *Mi-la’i mGur-bum* except that Ras-chung-pa vows to stay with Mi-la for a further twelve years, a detail that is found in rGod-tshang Ras-pa only.

However, he misinterprets the crystal stūpa in Mi-la Ras-pa’s vision of Ras-chung-pa as a physical object, for he says that Mi-la was constantly observing Ras-chung-pa within it. He also uses this passage as a warning to readers against non-buddhists. He states that one should never have a connection with one even for beneficial teachings, let alone for harmful ones such as sorcery.

This is not a very rewarding version, probably because of the relative lack of importance that Ras-chung-pa has for the Karma bKa’-brgyud tradition.

¹⁴⁵ dPa’-bo gTsug-lag, 378.

5.4.4.10. ‘Brug-chen Pad-ma dKarmo (1527-1592)

In his history of Buddhism, completed in 1575, Pad-ma dKarmo relates this episode extremely briefly in his account of Ras-chung-pa’s life,¹⁴⁶ but relates it at slightly greater length in his account of Mi-la Ras-pa’s life.

In the latter account he mentions Mi-la practising *yantra-yoga* inside the yak horn (which was repeated a few centuries later by Śākya Rin-chen, as described above). He also has a hundred wolves chasing the hundred kyang, which we have only seen in *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, though there is no other evidence to indicate that Pad-ma dKarmo is relying on that text. The miracles, related in brief, are as in the *Mi-la’i mGur-‘bum*. Pad-ma dKarmo charts Mi-la Ras-pa’s spiritual evolution through this life-story. For example, he takes this manifestation of miracles as a sign that he had “unravelling the *nāḍī* knot in his forehead” (*dpral ba’i rtsa mdud grol bas...*) and had become a bodhisattva on the tenth *bhūmi*, the highest stage, where “the post-meditation state is identical to that of a Buddha” (*rjes thob de bzhin gshegs pa mams dang khyed par med*).¹⁴⁷ Also, he states that at the time of his death, Mi-la had reached the twelfth *bhūmi* with still further to go to Buddhahood, which he would achieve after death in Akśobhya’s realm of Abhirati.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Pad-ma dKarmo, 503.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 497.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 498.

5.5. Conclusion

We have seen that this crucial episode in Ras-chung-pa's life was subject to a continuing transformation and evolution. We can be certain that Ras-chung-pa brought back the teachings of Tipupa to Tibet, and that he had gone to India for that purpose, but whether there is any historical basis to Mi-la burning any of his texts will not be certain until the discovery of a copy of the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*. That incident, even if a later addition to the Ras-chung-pa legend, proved a fruitful seed for later narrators, developing into a display of miracles by Mi-la Ras-pa which were to serve as proof for Pad-ma dKar-po of Mi-la's enlightenment. For the Ras-chung-pa figure in the narrative tradition, however, this entailed a corresponding increase in the transgressiveness of his character, so that he became guilty of a loss of faith and of hostility to his guru. Though the lapse was brief, such a deviation is normally considered the gravest fault in a *vajrayāna* practitioner. This created an image of Ras-chung-pa characterised by imperfection, particularly among those who were unaware of the subsequent events of his life. That image was further enhanced by his "demotion" in status to sGam-po-pa, which is particularly evident in gTsang-smyon Heruka's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* and which is a topic that will be briefly explored in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Six

6. The latter part of Ras-chung-pa's life

This final chapter will briefly survey the rest of Ras-chung-pa's life after his final visit to India. This is not as complex a subject as those covered in the preceding chapters because accounts of the later part of his life are fewer and tend to agree.

These sources are principally rGya-ltang-pa, lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and rGod-tshang Ras-pa, though details of the latter years of Ras-chung-pa also appear in biographies of his contemporaries and pupils.

6.1. Ras-chung-pa as the successor of Mi-la Ras-pa

Before looking at Ras-chung-pa's independent career, both before and after Mi-la's death, we shall examine the subject of Ras-chung-pa's status as Mi-la's pupil and successor in his lineage.

In the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, which provides the popular image of Ras-chung-pa, he is unequivocally portrayed as secondary to sGam-po-pa, the bKa'-gdams-pa monk who fused Mi-la's teaching with the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition to form the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud school. According to the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, a *ḍākiṇī* had prophesied that sGam-po-pa would be "the sun pupil" while Ras-chung-pa would be the "moon pupil".¹ The *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* makes no reference to a future lineage from Ras-chung-pa, so that a reader unfamiliar with the history of the sNyan-rgyud can gain the impression that Ras-chung-pa was to prove unsuccessful as a propagator

¹ *Mi-la'i mGur-bum*, 87, 440-41.

of his teachings. In fact, gTsang-smyon was a holder of Ras-chung-pa's lineage, and his immediate circle would have been aware of this. However, gTsang-smyon did not attempt to emphasise this in his work; on the contrary, various episodes emphasise Ras-chung-pa's deficiencies and the superiority of sGam-po-pa. The text even gives the impression that sGam-po-pa alone received the entire transmission of Mi-la Ras-pa's instruction. It is true that, long before gTsang-smyon's time, the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud had taken on a powerful role in Tibetan religion, so that sGam-po-pa was retrospectively and historically by far the more significant figure.

gTsang-smyon's depiction of sGam-po-pa's relationship with Mi-la, from the perspective of members of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud traditions, confirms their superiority. They would certainly not find it pleasing to see their founder represented as secondary in status to Ras-chung-pa; this would give their lineage too a secondary status. It is of crucial importance for a practitioner to be on the 'central highway' of the transmission of the Buddha's teaching.

Ras-chung-pa's inferiority is at its most explicit, unsurprisingly, within biographies of sGam-po-pa. For example:

This Ras-chung-pa has attained an irreversible result for himself, but he will not bring great benefit to beings. Now wait; a scholar from dBus who will benefit many beings has come.²

² bSod-nams lHun-grub, *mNyam-med sGam-po-ba'i rNam-thar* (Zi-ling, China: mTsho-sngon Mi-rigs dPe-skrun-khang, 1993), 65.

Ras chung pa 'di kho rang gi 'bras bu phyin ci ma log pa thob kyang /
 'gro ba la phan chen po mi thogs / da sdod dbus pa ston pa zhig gis 'gro
 ba mang po la phan thogs pa 'ong ba yin

Similarly, sNyan-rgyud lineage histories unequivocally state Ras-chung-pa to be Mi-la Ras-pa's principal pupil and successor, a status that has been eclipsed due to that lineage's subsequent marginalisation and its absorption into the Karma, sTag-lung and, in particular, the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud. However, these incorporated lineage histories still retain apparently anomalous declarations of Ras-chung-pa's supremacy.

In rGya-ldang-pa's biography of Ras-chung-pa, the personal relationship between Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la is not beset with difficulties, though it is lively. For example, Ras-chung-pa's persistence in badgering Mi-la for songs of instruction provokes the good-natured complaint, "This Ras-chung-pa won't let an old man sit down!" (*ras chung pa 'dis mi rgan sdod du mi ster ba 'dug gsungs*) before complying.³ Mi-la interprets Ras-chung's dreams that appear to be very bad omens as signs of spiritual success. He is listed as first amongst his four principal *ras-pa* pupils, and these four are amongst the twenty-five prophesied to Mi-la in a vision by a *dākinī*. sGam-po-pa does not appear among those twenty-five, though rGya-ldang-pa's text is a lineage history of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud and Ras-chung-pa's biography is preceded in that text by a laudatory biography of sGam-po-pa; this itself

³ rGya-ldang-pa, 360.

betrays that this Ras-chung-pa biography had its origins within the sNyan-rgyud tradition. That Khyung-tshang-pa is twice referred to as a source shows the same.

Ras-chung-pa is declared by Mi-la to be particularly characterised by “great wisdom” (*shes rab can*).⁴ Mi-la transmits to Ras-chung-pa the lineage of “buddhahood without meditation” (*ma sgoms par sang rgya ba*), which he had been told he could pass on to one pupil only.⁵ This refers to the practices of sexual yoga, which is said to be ‘without meditation’ because of their emphasis on physical movement, posture, breathing, and the normal morphology of sexual excitement. The implication therefore is that Mi-la transmitted this to no one else, and therefore not to sGam-po-pa. Ras-chung-pa leaves Mi-la for central Tibet on Mi-la’s insistence, even though he wishes to stay until Mi-la dies. Mi-la tells Ras-chung-pa that he is not “a disciple who is a son that takes care of his father's corpse” (*khyod pha ro bus sum pa’i slob ma de khyod min*).⁶

Ras-chung-pa’s departure provides the context for a song unusual in the context of a hagiography, and one which appears to run counter to the meaning of its surrounding narrative. Mi-la sings a plaintive song about the “shameless Ras-chung-pa” who has abandoned him, though his description of Ras-chung-pa emphasises his spiritual attainments, and he laments that from now on, though the valley were filled with people, he would be alone. His listener’s distress is calmed when Mi-la explains that he was only joking and had actually been responsible for sending him away!

Apart from one return visit, to bring Mi-la an offering of meat, they do not meet again, and Ras-chung-pa is not said to attend Mi-la’s cremation in either the Mi-la or Ras-chung biographies by rGya-ldang-pa.

⁴ Ibid., 364.

⁵ Ibid., 365-66.

Don-mo Ri-pa also lists Ras-chung-pa as the first of the four “heart sons” of Ras-chung-pa, adding sGam-po-pa as the first of six “pupils from the latter days”.⁷

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, unsurprisingly, has the same kind of list,⁸ although several of its chapters are dedicated to sGam-po-pa. A version of this form of listing Mi-la's pupils is also found in such texts as the *Deb-ther dMar-po*⁹ and the *rGya-bod Tshang-yig*,¹⁰ where Ras-chung-pa is the first of eight principal pupils. It appears even in later texts in which Ras-chung-pa does not feature prominently, such as the *Chos-'byung Ngo-mtshar rGya-mtsho*, which lists him as the first of eight principal pupils, with sGam-po-pa in the list of six latter-day pupils.¹¹ The *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*¹² has a more complex list, but Mi-la's four heart sons are the first four of eight “ras-pa brothers”; as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, these are Ras-chung-pa, Ngan-rdzong (written as Ngam-rdzong), ‘Bri-sgom and Se-ban Ras-pa. sGam-po-pa, however, does not appear in this list, not even amongst “the six scholars of [Mi-la's] old age” (*sku bgres khar 'khrungs*¹³ *pa'i ston pa drug*). Instead, sGam-po-pa is extracted from this lowly position and introduced further on in the text as “supreme amongst [Mi-la's pupils]”.¹⁴

The NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* also expresses this dichotomy in a simplified list which begins: “Amongst the many heart-sons of the venerable one, the chief were Lord Ras-chung-pa, the emanated bodhisattva sGam-po-pa . . .” (*thugs kyi*

⁶ Ibid., 366.

⁷ *rDo-rje mDzes-'od*, 141.

⁸ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 243b; (Oxford), 192b; (Stockholm), 274b – 275a.

⁹ *Deb-ther dMar-po*, 80.

¹⁰ *Pal-'byor bZang-po*, 526.

¹¹ *sTag-lung-pa*, 218.

¹² *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 106-7.

¹³ ‘*khrungs* (born) is probably an error in transcribing *byung* (appeared/arose) from the *dbu-med* script.

¹⁴ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 168.

sras mang po'i nang nas mthu bor gyur pa rje ras chung pa / sprul pa'i byang chub sems dpa' sgam po pa...), Yet, sixteen names further on the list concludes by saying, "Amongst these, who had realised the *dharmatā*, the venerable sGam-po-pa was supreme" (*chos nyid kyi don rtogs pa mams kyi nang nas rje btsun sgam po pa de mchog tu gyur pa lags so*).¹⁵ Zhwa-dmar Chos-kyi dBang-phyug We shall see that gTsang-smyon manages to iron out this internal contradiction.

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (and its almost verbatim repetition in the *Byin-rlabs kyi Chu-bo*), as we have seen earlier, portrays a more troubled relationship between Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la than rGya-ldang-pa does. It also describes two departures from Mi-la. In the first of these (somewhat unconvincingly, considering the rest of this biography of Mi-la Ras-pa), the patrons are said to have a higher opinion of Ras-chung-pa because he has been to India, so that he gets excellent offerings, while Mi-la is given only rotten meat, sour beer and the like. Ras-chung-pa, shocked by this, decides to leave and in a dialogue of song and counter-song Mi-la vainly attempts to persuade an unmoved Ras-chung-pa to stay. Ras-chung says that though his guru and fellow pupils will be displeased that he leaves, he will have no regrets. Mi-la reluctantly agrees on condition that he perform a set of hundreds of offerings and homages.¹⁶

The next day Ras-chung-pa forgets to do them and leaves. To test Ras-chung-pa, Mi-la emanates first as a dying ant that Ras-chung-pa cuts off his own flesh to feed, then as seven bandits who prepare to kill him, which causes him to meditate on his guru, and then as seven yogins who ask him polite questions to which he gives

¹⁵ NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar.*, 24b-25a.

inspired answers in song. They then transform into Mi-la who sings a song wishing him good fortune and warns him of a "russet bitch" that will seize him by the leg (which will be explained below), and gives him permission to receive *Mahāmudrā* teachings from the Nepalese master Asu.¹⁷

After Ras-chung-pa's departure, when female lay followers come and find he is gone, they hide the nice offerings meant for Ras-chung-pa before going to see Mi-la. Mi-la sings four songs about Ras-chung-pa, one of them a brief version of the rGya-ldang-pa song. The extra songs are filled with poetic imagery: Ras-chung-pa is more beautiful than a peacock, whiter than a snow mountain, is a tiger who has left his father-forest, etc.; but they lack the emphasis on Mi-la's personal sorrow, and so remove an image of Mi-la as vulnerable to sorrow, even if that sorrow is explained away by the accompanying narrative, as in rGya-ldang-pa, as a jest.¹⁸

After the lHa-cig episode,¹⁹ which will be described below, unlike rGya-ldang-pa, Ras-chung-pa returns to see Mi-la, an episode which forms the "Meeting in the Shrine Room" (*mChod-khang Zhal-mjal*) chapter.²⁰ The chapters on sGam-po-pa (the division of the narrative into chapters differs in the sources) then follow,²¹ and conclude by describing his departure. Further on in the text is the chapter on Ras-chung-pa's final departure,²² which parallels the single departure in the rGya-ldang-pa version. Mi-la persuades Ras-chung-pa to leave, even though his own death is near, and, emphasising his disobedience to his guru's instructions, complains that when he

¹⁶ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar: Ras chung dbus bzhud*, (Newark), 195a-200a; (Oxford), 150b-155a; (Stockholm), 197b-202a.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, *dBus gtad bar pa*, (Newark), 200a-201b; (Oxford), 155a-156b; (Stockholm), 202a-203b.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, *dBus gtad 'og ma ste nya-ma*, (Newark), 201b-204a; (Oxford), 156b-158b; (Stockholm), 203b-207a.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, (Newark), 204b-210a; (Oxford), 158b-162b; (Stockholm), 207a-212b.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, (Newark), 210a-212a; (Oxford), 162b-164a; (Stockholm), 212b-214b.

²¹ *Ibid.*, (Newark), 212a-221a; (Oxford), 164a-176b; (Stockholm), 214b-233a.

²² *Ibid.*, (Newark), 223b-226b; (Oxford), 178a-179b; (Stockholm), n.a.

tried to get Ras-chung-pa to stay, he wouldn't stay, but now that he wants him to leave, he won't go!

However, Ras-chung finally agrees to leave, and in a long sequence of leave-taking, Mi-la prophecies his future area of activity and transmits the entire sNyan-rgyud to him. Mi-la then says that there is one instruction remaining that has not been transmitted to him, and he finally decides to do so. He shows Ras-chung-pa his bottom, which due to prolonged sitting in meditation has come to resemble “a monkey's bottom” (*spre'u yi*²³ ‘*phongs*)²⁴ in that the entire skin is callused. Mi-la says, “There is nothing more profound than this” (*'di las*²⁵ *zab pa med*).²⁶

Ras-chung-pa leaves, never to see Mi-la again. He is not present at the cremation, though Zhi-ba-'od, 'Bri-sgom Ras-pa and Se-ban Ras-pa are.

As mentioned above, sGam-po-pa makes his appearance following Ras-chung-pa's return to Mi-la after his liaison with lHa-cig lDem-bu and before Ras-chung-pa's final departure. Like early versions of sGam-po-pa's life, such as that by Bla-ma Zhang, the narrative of sGam-po-pa has not been elaborated by miraculous and dramatic elements. However there is a certain lack of resolution in the contrast between the status of Ras-chung-pa and that of sGam-po-pa. The text as a whole implies that sGam-po-pa has not received the entire transmission from Mi-la, as Ras-chung-pa has. Nevertheless, when Ras-chung-pa says to Mi-la that he assumes he will be the one who protects the instructions and the community of the lineage,²⁷ for he was the earliest of the pupils, Mi-la does not take the opportunity to declare him to be his principal successor. Then two weeks later sGam-po-pa turns up. Mi-la,

²³ Ibid., (Newark), *yi* omitted.

²⁴ Ibid., (Newark), 226a; (Oxford), 179b; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁵ Ibid., (Oxford) *bas*.

²⁶ Ibid., (Newark), 226b; (Oxford), 179b; (Stockholm), n.a

accompanied by Ras-chung-pa and Se-ban Ras-pa, sing to this *ston-pa* (scholar) and subsequently gives him instructions and interprets his dreams.

In particular, on one occasion Mi-la asks Ras-chung, Se-ban and sGam-po-pa to describe a certain night's dreams. (This passage is not present in the Stockholm edition.) Se-ban's dream of a blazing fire where three valleys meet meant that he would not achieve much in this life, but he would manifest as a *rūpakāya* in the next. Ras-chung-pa's dream of driving ahead a salt-laden donkey and blowing a conch meant his fame would pervade the world. sGam-po-pa's dream of being on top of a white rock at sunrise while vultures circled him meant that he would help many pupils at a great rocky mountain.²⁸ Therefore, Mi-la instructs sGam-po-pa to go to dBus to carry out this activity. The account contrasts strikingly with the gTsang-smyon version we shall see below.

Mi-la escorts sGam-po-pa a little of the way and after some general advice instructs him to return on the tenth of the horse month of the hare year (the date of Mi-la's death). The text does not explain why he did not return; later versions such as gTsang-smyon's have him simply forgetting, with Ras-chung-pa also forgetting a similar instruction, a duplication of a highly unlikely turn of events.

There follows a final dialogue between Mi-la Ras-pa and sGam-po-pa, during which Mi-la says that he dreamt of a yellow bird flying to dBus where it was joined on a rocky mountain by five hundred ducks. His explanation of the meaning of this dream involves a prophecy, which plays a vital role in the legitimisation of the monastic lineage of sGam-po-pa. There is an interesting variation between the three surviving examples of this text.

²⁷ Ibid., (Newark), 212a (Oxford), 164a; (Stockholm), 214b.

²⁸ Ibid., (Newark) 219a-b; (Oxford) 173b; (Stockholm), absent.

The Newark version has: “I am a yogin but all my followers will be solely monks.” (*kho bo rnal ‘byor pa yin pa la/ kho-bo* (sic: *kho bo’i*) *rjes ‘jug thams cad rab tu byung ba ‘ba’ zhig yod* (sic : *yong*) *bar ‘dug*). This appears to be in direct contradiction with the existence of Ras-chung-pa’s lineage.²⁹ Unlike the other versions, this is related directly to sGam-po-pa, who is referred to as “You, the scholar-doctor...” (*lha rje ston pa khyod*).

In the Oxford manuscript, Mi-la Ras-pa states, “I am a yogin but all *his* followers will be *some* monks” (*kho bo rnal ‘byor pa yin pa la/ kho’i rjes ‘jug thams cad rab tu byung ba ‘ga’ zhig ‘ong bar gda’*).³⁰

The Stockholm version has: “I am a yogin but *my* monastic followers will be *many*” (*kho bo rnal ‘byor pa yin pa la/ kho-bo’i rjes ‘jug rab tu byung ba mang po ‘ong bar ‘dug*),³¹ in which the words “all” (*thams cad*) and “solely” (*‘ba’ zhig*) are not present and “many” (*mang po*) has been introduced. Absent from the Newark version is an introduction in which Mi-la returns to his pupils so that he tells them of the dream and its meaning, referring to “that scholar-doctor” (*lha rje ston pa des*).

Such a prophecy is not recorded in the earliest biographies of sGam-po-pa, such as that by Bla-ma Zhang, a pupil of sGam-po-pa’s nephew. The sGam-po-pa biographies have thus undergone a development parallel to those of Mi-la Ras-pa. From simple beginnings there is a growth that corresponds with the growth of the Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud establishments. The textual question here is whether the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* included a pro-monastic prophecy, which was amended in the Stockholm version, or whether the Newark version has a (not necessarily deliberate) emendation, which is possible as that manuscript was the

²⁹ Ibid., (Newark), 221a.

³⁰ Ibid., (Oxford), 175a-b.

produced in a dGe-lugs-pa monastery. There is even the possibility of the *kho'i* (“his”) in the Oxford manuscript representing the original and not being a corruption.

However, as we shall see below, gTsang-smyon’s version of 1488 is based upon the Stockholm variant, which is evidence for its early existence; moreover the Newark version creates an anomaly in terms of bKa’-brgyud history. So the Stockholm variant probably represents the original form.

In the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*, sGam-po-pa then hears of Mi-la’s death and receives relics, such as his staff, from a merchant. The merchant’s role will be taken by Ras-chung-pa, miraculously transposed to the cremation, in gTsang-smyon’s version.

The earliest surviving description of Ras-chung-pa attending Mi-la’s cremation is found in Zhwa-dmar-pa Chos-kyi dBang-phyug’s *Byin-rlabs kyi sPrin-spungs*.³² Though Mi-la is said to have been beyond death and vanished leaving only his clothes behind, there is a description of a more normal death as perceived by “impure beings”. However, as the narrative unfolds this proves to be the perception of all his principal pupils! Ras-chung-pa is told of Mi-la’s passing by a *ḍākiṇī* in a vision, and goes there by miraculous speed, meeting an emanation of Mi-la on the way, and (for the sake of the narrative that he arrive late in spite of his miraculous powers) being delayed for a week by stopping for a drink of water. Mi-la revives in the flames in response to a song by Ras-chung-pa. This passage will be retold with greater dramatic power by gTsang-smyon.

³¹ Ibid., (Stockholm), 230a.

³² Zhwa-dmar-pa, 309-16.

gTsang-smyon Heruka, in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, rewrites significant episodes from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (or chooses to compile striking variants) to create a version of Mi-la and Ras-chung-pa's relationship that has become almost universally accepted as the "true" version.

gTsang-smyon brings the episode of sGam-po-pa's stay with Mi-la forward, so that it follows soon after Ras-chung-pa's return from India, and before Ras-chung-pa's first departure to dBus. gTsang-smyon provides an elaborated form of the life of sGam-po-pa (including details such as Mi-la Ras-pa emanating as beggars that will instigate in sGam-po-pa the wish to come and meet him). When Mi-la asks three pupils to report their dreams, the third is Zhi-ba 'Od, not Se-ban Ras-pa as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*. Zhi-ba 'Od's dream of a sun entering his heart has a similar meaning to that of the dream of Se-ban Ras-pa—that he will not benefit many beings in his lifetime, but will be reborn in a Buddha's realm. Ras-chung-pa's dream, however, is similar to that of Se-ban ras-pa's in that it takes place at the junction of three valleys, though, as in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, he makes a great noise, but this time by shouting. sGam-po-pa is troubled by a quite different dream in which he kills many people, but Mi-la declares it an auspicious dream; he even declares that at last a son has been born to him and his work has reached its conclusion. Ras-chung-pa's apparently good dream gives rise to a strong rebuke unlike anything we have previously seen in the Ras-chung literature; it is a condemnation that has nevertheless popularly adhered to the image of Ras-chung-pa in Tibetan culture. Mi-la declares that Ras-chung-pa, because of having disobeyed him three times, will be reborn three more times in three different valleys, though he will be a famous scholar in each of those lifetimes. The implication therefore is that

he will fail to reach complete Buddhahood in his lifetime, whereas sGam-po-pa will. The three occasions of disobedience are not explained, and what may be referred to here is a matter for speculation. It precedes his going to dBus against Mi-la's wishes (though in rGya-ldang-pa of course he went on Mi-la's command). This shows it to be a piece of stray narrative inserted into the text.

Mi-la sings a song of prophecy concerning sGam-po-pa's future, but he does not tell him of his dream of birds. Instead, after sGam-po-pa has left he tells it to his other pupils. The dream is enhanced in this version for it is a vulture, not a yellow duck, that flies to the peak of a jewel instead of a mountain, but still in the district of dBus. Ducks come and gather around, but are specifically five hundred in number, and they also disperse throughout the land. The substitution of a vulture for the initial duck takes away from the image of sGam-po-pa the monk being surrounded by other duck/monks. Presumably the vulture is meant to contrast the yogin, i.e., Mi-la Ras-pa, with the monks, but results in an internal contradiction, as it is sGam-po-pa who leaves for dBus. The inserted number represents the approximate number of pupils that sGam-po-pa was later said to have gathered around him. As mentioned above, Mi-la's interpretation of the dream reveals that gTsang-smyon based himself on a version that accords with the Stockholm edition. Therefore gTsang-smyon relates the dream and its meaning to Mi-la's other pupils. He omits the second instance of the pronoun, and *rjes su 'jug-pa* ("followers") is reduced to *rje-su*, meaning "afterwards". Also, he adds "also" (*yang*), thus implying the already assumed existence of the non-monastic practitioners whom he is addressing (gTsang-smyon himself was a non-monastic practitioner). In this version, Mi-la says "I am a yogin but *afterwards* there will *also* be many monks" (*kho bo mal 'byor pa yin pa la rjes su rab tu byung ba*

mang po yang 'ong bar 'dug).³³ The fact that this declaration is made by Mi-la to his own non-monastic community intensifies its import, and this passage is often quoted to demonstrate the legitimacy of the monastic Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud lineage in spite of its yogin origins.

In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* there was a final conversation between Ras-chung-pa and Mi-la, in which Mi-la stated that he had given every instruction to him alone, but one remained, and then revealed his meditation-hardened bottom. This passage also appears in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* but with one very significant difference: Ras-chung-pa is replaced by sGam-po-pa, and therefore it takes place at the time of sGam-po-pa's departure.

This could not have been an error due to gTsang-smyon's lapse of memory, as he was evidently familiar with the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, so he either deliberately created this version, or, more probably, used an oral narrative that was already in circulation. Such a version would have been spontaneously formed due to osmosis in the memory, where events and details unconsciously are transferred from one person's image to another to form a subjectively more pleasing and inspiring version of events. This new account dovetails perfectly with gTsang-smyon's portrayal of sGam-po-pa as Mi-la Ras-pa's principal successor, diminishing the inherent contradiction of earlier versions. This may seem a perverse move by an author who was a holder and transmitter of the bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud, but it appears that this lineage-identity had been superseded or absorbed into that of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud. The latter lineage already had Ras-chung-pa's transmission as its kernel since the time of its first masters: Gling ras-pa (who was a pupil of Khyung-

³³ *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 483.

tshang-pa and Sum-pa as well as Phag-mo Gru-pa) and gTsang-pa rGya-ras, the discoverer of Ras-chung-pa's concealed instructions. Thus the Ras-chung-pa lineage, together with its lineage biographies, were already contained within it, and the 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud could also claim, because of the size of its tradition, to be the principal propagator of Ras-chung-pa teachings. This monastic tradition even preserved the lifestyle of the yogin tradition. Even in present day 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud institutions there are senior monks who join a numerically limited yogin community within the monastery, adopting a yogin's garb and hairstyle, as a small but central part of the monastery.

gTsang-smyon's pupil, lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, in addition to his biography of Ras-chung-pa is also responsible for biographies of the 'Brug-pa BKa'-brgyud masters Phag-mo gru-pa, Gling Ras-pa and rGod-tshang-pa (with whom rGod-tshang Ras-pa has been confused). Another pupil, 'Jam-dpal Chos-lha, wrote a biography of Yang-dgon-pa, who was a pupil of rGod-tshang-pa. Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, another pupil of gTsang-smyon, also wrote a biography of rGod-tshang-pa. The latter appears to diminish the space allocated to Ras-chung-pa in his *bKa-brgyud Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas*, and the list of Mi-la's pupils begins with the "sun-like sGam-po-pa" followed by "the moon-like Ras-chung-pa".³⁴ Nevertheless, in the later section on Ras-chung-pa he is declared to be "the holder of the mKha'-'gro sNyan-rgyud or Ras-chung sNyan-rgyud" and as being not only "as famous as the sun and moon"³⁵ but as being "the supreme heart son of Mi-la Ras-pa",³⁶ thus demonstrating this ambivalent dual identity and allegiance towards the lineages of sGam-po-pa and Ras-chung-pa.

³⁴ Sangs-rgyas Dar-po, 50b.

³⁵ Ibid., 74b.

³⁶ Ibid., 75a.

In sum, this group of writers demonstrate the absorption of the Ras-chung-pa lineage and its hagiographic material into the ‘Brug-pa bKa’-brgyud and therefore Dwags-po bKa’-brgyud tradition.

In gTsang-smyon, Ras-chung-pa’s final departure is primarily the result of his own strong desire to go to dBus, so that the poor offerings given to Mi-la are merely the catalyst that makes him leave. Thus, as in the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*, he does so against Mi-la’s wishes, though the song-dialogue that takes place differs. Mi-la states that he has sworn an oath to his followers not to let him go, but “as all oaths are dreams and illusions” (*mna’ kun rmi lam sgyu ma yin*)³⁷ he gives his permission. Mi-la does not, as in the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*, instruct Ras-chung-pa to perform sets of hundreds of devotional practices. There is another group of songs before Ras-chung-pa’s departure and it is at this point that the prophecy of a bitch that will seize him by the leg is given.

Concerned that Ras-chung-pa did not look back when he left, Mi-la emanates as seven yogins that question him (omitting the ant and bandits of the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*). Female lay followers subsequently gather to hear Mi-la’s complaint that “Ras-chung-pa has no shame, no conscience, no commitment” (*ras chung pa la khrel ngo-tsha dam tshig mi ‘dug*).³⁸ They listen to a version of a lament on Ras-chung-pa’s departure, with such lines as “The son like a white conch-lion has gone to dBus; the old father, like a grey fox, has been left behind” (*bu dung seng dkar mo dang ‘dra ba dbus su thal / pha rgan wa skya dang ‘dra ba shul du bar*).³⁹ When the patrons attempt to console him, he sings a song that reveals he knows about the good offerings they had brought for Ras-chung-pa and which they had hidden when

³⁷ *Mi-la’i mGur-‘bum*, 560.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 567.

they found out that he had gone. Ashamed, they later bring him their best offerings with renewed faith. Thus this version, while enhancing Mi-la Ras-pa's status, has further blackened the character of Ras-chung-pa's image.

His return visit takes place after the lHa-cig episode, which will be examined below. In the *mGur-'bum* it is included in its third and final section of miscellany, for the sGam-po-pa chapter is given the climactic position of the penultimate chapter of the section on Mi-la's human pupils. The latter chapters on Ras-chung-pa include much of the dream interpretation found in rGya-ldang-pa. Mi-la instructs Ras-chung-pa on his future activity, but the demonstration of the state of his bottom and the accompanying declaration that Ras-chung-pa alone has received all the instruction is omitted, for this has already been transposed to sGam-po-pa's departure.

Ras-chung-pa is instructed to return at the date of Mi-la's death, and, unlike earlier works, with the exception of Zhwa-dmar-pa (and possibly the lost *mDzod Nag-ma*), he arrives for the cremation even though he had forgotten Mi-la's instruction to come at this time, for he is notified of Mi-la's death in a vision. This episode is related in the *Mi-la'i rNam-thar*, the *mGur-'bum*'s companion text. Ras-chung-pa plays a central role in the *rNam-thar*, for it is on his exhortation (inspired by Bharima in a dream) that Mi-la relates his life; he also plays the principal role at the cremation, for the fire refuses to light until his arrival. When he does arrive, the drama is heightened by Ras-chung-pa's not being allowed access to the body. This is accomplished by the narrator's device of having more recent pupils, who do not know Ras-chung-pa by sight, posted at the perimeter of the ceremony and refusing him admission. This is in spite of Ras-chung-pa's mastery of miraculous powers by this

³⁹ Ibid., 567.

time —he had just performed a two-month journey in that one morning, itself a necessary narrative device to place Ras-chung-pa at the cremation in spite of his continued residence in distant Lo-ro. Ras-chung-pa sings a supplication to Mi-la⁴⁰ and the sound of Ras-chung-pa's voice causes the fire to ignite spontaneously. Even though he is now recognised and welcomed, put out by his treatment, Ras-chung-pa refuses to approach the cremation until he has finished his song. The song has the result of bringing Mi-la briefly back to life amidst the flames; sitting upon the fire as if upon a lotus, he delivers both a final praise of Ras-chung-pa and a final reprimand; he tells him not to take offence, and concludes by singing an affectionate song to Ras-chung-pa.

Following the cremation Ras-chung-pa sets out to meet sGam-po-pa (who is also late), gives him the bad news and some relics, and then accompanies him to his monastery, where he gives sGam-po-pa the transmission of the sNyan-rgyud.

Neither lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal nor rGod-tshang Ras-pa follows gTsang-smyon's example by including Ras-chung-pa's miraculous return to Mi-la's cremation, though rGod-tshang Ras-pa refers to it briefly in a single sentence,⁴¹ which is clearly summarising the passage in the *Mi-la'i rNam-thar*. Therefore it appears unlikely that the cremation episode appeared in the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, their source for Ras-chung-pa's life-story following his departure from Mi-la.

⁴⁰ *Mi-la'i rnam-thar*, 267-68.

⁴¹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 603.

6.2. Ras-chung-pa and lHa-cig lDem-bu

A central episode in the middle part of Ras-chung-pa's life is his "marriage" to lHa-cig lDem-bu. This is also of interest in terms of the role and status of the female in the lives of twelfth-century yogins, at least as seen from the sixteenth century.

According to rGya-ltang-pa, Ras-chung-pa, already accompanied by his first pupil Ra Sher-snang as an attendant, comes to the valley of Yar-lung, famous as the ancestral seat of the ancient Tibetan monarchy. The local ruler becomes his patron and gives him his daughter, Lha-cig lDem-bu, as his "servant", a euphemism for his assistant in sexual practices.

Ras-chung-pa, Lha-cig and Sher-snang go to receive *Mahāmudrā* instruction from the Nepalese Asu. They work as a team, with Lha-cig memorising the lineage histories, Sher-snang memorising the *Mahāmudrā* songs, and Ras-chung-pa "contemplating the meaning" (*don la bsams*).⁴² She encourages an unhappy Ras-chung-pa, who is on the point of abandoning receiving these instructions, to persevere, and she also collects a barley tax from the Yar-lung residents in order to finance his studies.

Later they all go to live at Lo-ro, which along with Byar-po was to be the principal residence of Ras-chung-pa for the rest of his life. However, lHa-cig becomes angry with Ras-chung-pa. This makes him identify her with the "russet bitch" prophesied by Mi-la. The next day, after a night of prayer and meditation, he does not get up early, which infuriates lHa-cig further so that she attacks him with a stick. Ras-chung-pa decides she has broken her religious commitments and abandons

⁴² rGya-ltang-pa, 371.

her immediately in spite of her pleas for forgiveness and her claim that she had been temporarily possessed by a demon.⁴³

The motive for his peremptory departure instead of exercising the Buddhist virtue of patience and compassion and sorting out his marriage may be clarified by the contents of one of the texts from within Ras-chung-pa's lineage. Certainly this explains the viewpoint of the followers of his lineage upon telling or hearing this story.

Examining the Signs of the dākinīs (Mkha'-'gro'i mtshan-brtags), is entirely devoted to the evaluation of women as prospective partners in sexual practice.

This text differentiates women into three classes, in descending order: lotus, conch and picture. Each is subdivided into best, medium and inferior, making a total of nine classes of women, distinguished by various physical, vocal and mental characteristics. Recognising these different classes is crucial; for example, the best lotus woman, if used as a partner, will bring liberation in one night, while the medium will take three months. The inferior lotus woman, however, will in a month cause a decline in meditation; after two months, a decline in merit, complexion and health, and after a year, death. Ras-chung-pa warns that one should not befriend the lowest "picture woman" for even an instant.

Behaviour and mental states such as anger and jealousy primarily distinguish a lower class of woman, so that any woman who proves difficult to live with becomes in the yogin's eyes extremely dangerous, both physically and spiritually. From that point of view, it is no surprise that Ras-chung-pa ended up going back to live in

⁴³ Ibid., 376-77

hermitages and in a community of yogin practitioners, where sexual relationships were divorced from any semblance of a lasting marital relationship.

rGya-ldang-pa relates that lHa-cig subsequently married a maternal uncle, who then fell ill with *mdze*; as explained earlier, though often translated as “leprosy”, this can refer to any one of a range of disfiguring skin illnesses. Her husband attributed his illness to her treatment of Ras-chung-pa and they went in search of him to obtain his forgiveness.

They find him in Byar-po. Ra Sher-s nang promises to help her, arranges a meeting and encourages Ras-chung-pa to forgive the weeping lHa-cig. First, Ras-chung-pa sings a belittling song to “the lama beater” (*bla ma dung ba’i tho mo che*)⁴⁴ and then more kindly describes her fallen state, including the lines, “You abandoned your guru and went with your uncle / Haven’t you ended up as a constant nurse?” (*bla ma spangs nas zhang dang ‘grogs / nad g.yog rgyun du ma babs sam*)⁴⁵ and encourages her to plead for forgiveness. Then he takes her as his pupil, and the uncle recovers his health.

rGya-ldang-pa’s lost source written by Khyung-tshang-pa states that at the undated time when he met Ras-chung-pa, the uncle had died suddenly the previous year and lHa-cig was there as a good practitioner, and served as an example of Ras-chung-pa’s compassion in that he cared for her in spite of her previous treatment of him.⁴⁶

The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* touches only briefly on this incident, but gives a distinct variant which is not found elsewhere, providing quite another, or an

⁴⁴ Ibid., 379.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 379.

additional, motive for Ras-chung-pa's abandoning her, one which is less suitable for a hagiography. It states:

Then he stayed in *Yar-klungs* and had a *mudrā* (consort) named lHa-gcig. She slept with another man, and saddened he ran away.⁴⁷

de nas yar klungs su bzhugs pa la phyag rgya mo lha gcig yod
pa / des skyes pa gzhan dang lhan cig nyal bas thugs skyo ste
bros nas...

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* version of Ras-chung-pa's relationship with lHa-cig lDem-bu (which takes place in the section⁴⁸ entitled *lHa-cig*⁴⁹ *lDem-bu'i*⁵⁰ *skor*⁵¹) is, as we have come to expect, far more dramatic. Also, just as Ras-chung-pa is portrayed less favourably than in *rGya-l dang-pa*, lHa-cig is given an even worse depiction. She is not described as accompanying or helping Ras-chung-pa in his studies under Asu, nor does she live in a hermitage with him. She first appears infuriated that a beggar has called at the door, only to change her mind as soon as she sees how good-looking Ras-chung-pa is, and this physical attraction is given as her reason for inviting him in to see her sick father.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 378-80.

⁴⁷ *Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 439; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 383.

⁴⁸ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 204b-210a; (Oxford), 158b-162b; (Stockholm), 207a-212b.

⁴⁹ Ibid., (Oxford), lcam.

⁵⁰ Ibid., (Oxford), bu.

⁵¹ Ibid., (Oxford), omitted.

Ras-chung-pa gains her father's patronage by curing him and is given her father's province as well as lHa-cig. He lives with them at the palace for three years. Mi-la, unhappy at Ras-chung-pa's life style, comes there and transforms himself into three pleading, dying beggars to whom Ras-chung-pa throws a turquoise from the top of the palace. lHa-cig is furious when she discovers what he has done. Ras-chung-pa's night of prayers and meditation, which featured in rGya-ldang-pa, is not mentioned. The next morning, lHa-cig, instead of bringing him his usual breakfast, sends a maid with some basic fare. When she hears that he hasn't eaten it she throws it over him and hits him. Ras-chung-pa immediately changes into his cotton robe and leaves. lHa-cig, immediately repentant, enlists the help of Ra Sher-snang (named Rin-chen Grags in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*), who appears suddenly without any previous introduction —evidence that the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* is using extracts from another source, in this case somewhat unskillfully. This introduces a long episode of five songs that Ras-chung-pa sings in response to the pleas of lHa-cig, Ra Sher-snang and the local populace. These songs portray deficiencies in himself as well as lHa-cig. For example, he sings "Staring at lHa-cig's face, I was not aware I'd forgotten the mother *dākinīs*" (*lha cig gi gdong la bltas bltas nas / ma mkha' 'gro brjed pa ma tshor zin*).⁵²

His final song declares his intention to return to lHa-cig, but is meant to deceive her, for she is clinging tightly to his cotton robe. The song ends by asking her not to pull at his robe as it will tear and it's all he has to wear. However, the moment she lets go, he makes his escape, and she, now doubting the sincerity of his last song, is in hot pursuit. He reaches a river, and as no boat is available he sits on his robe as a

⁵² Ibid., (Newark), 205b; (Oxford), 159a; (Stockholm), 208a ...*brjed pa ngas ma tshor /*.

raft and rows himself over with a staff. The text says (though this episode was not previously mentioned) that on his arrival he had done this without even getting his robe wet, but now, as a result of being contaminated by his relationship, he sinks to his waist. He sings another song to lHa-cig from the further bank and departs. She crosses in a boat only to be told that he has departed with miraculous speed, so that she could not overtake him even on horseback. (Such miraculous prowess seems to make its appearance only when convenient for the narrative.)

Not only is her personality painted in darker colours, her fate is also much harsher. Her father wants her to be executed, but the ministers intercede, not from compassion but out of a sense of propriety, and instead she is condemned to be given away to the first person who comes to the palace next morning. lHa-cig is portrayed as hoping for an excellent young man, but instead it is a pauper, who, grammatically, appears to be a person from the region of Zhang, named dGa'-le, who is suffering from *mdze* (*zhang gi mdze-po dga' le*), but, as we shall see, *zhang* here must mean a maternal uncle. She leaves with him, acting as his servant, leading his donkey. She herself develops *mdze-skya*, which as mentioned in chapter four, appears to be vitiligo.

Ras-chung-pa has meanwhile (though this is actually described in a subsequent chapter entitled "The Meeting in the Shrine Room" [*mChod' khang zhal 'jal'*],⁵³) returned to Mi-la, seen the turquoise he gave to the beggars on the shrine, and realised that they were Mi-la. It is at this time that he takes his final leave of Mi-la and returns to the Lo-ro region.

⁵³ Ibid., (Newark), 210a-212a; (Oxford), 162b-164a; (Stockholm), 212b-214b.

Later, lHa-cig hears of Ras-chung-pa's ability to cure hundreds and thousands of people who have *mdze* illnesses. She and her companion find Ras-chung-pa's residence and she asks Ra Sher-snang to intercede for her. Ras-chung-pa is at first dismissive, saying "Her faith is in turquoises," (*mo la g.yu la dad pa cig yod*)⁵⁴ and sends her some. She says she would rather die than not be able to repent of her actions towards him. Eventually he agrees to meet her if a curtain is drawn between them. In the subsequent dialogue there are songs sung by lHa-cig as well as Ras-chung-pa. One of Ras-chung-pa's songs, however, is a variant of that in rGya-ldang-pa, and appears not to agree with the narrative in which Ras-chung-pa abandoned lHa-cig. For example, there is the line, "You left the guru and went with the uncle/ [but] aren't you experiencing the suffering of being a nurse?" (*khyod bla ma bzhag nas zhang dang 'grogs / nad g.yogs gi sdug bsngal ma spyod dam*), which again indicates a compilation lacking homogeneity. In conclusion, he forgives her, gives her practices to purify herself, gives her gold to make images with, etc., and both she and her companion are cured. She attains realisation through the sNyan-rgyud practices and becomes a teacher of others.

Thus, as in many other aspects of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, the defects of its central characters are intensified so that both the drama and the eventual spiritual accomplishment against all internal or external odds is given more impact.

The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*'s source appears to be very similar to the version found in rGod-tshang Ras-pa, which describes these two episodes in elaborate

⁵⁴ Ibid., (Newark), 208b; (Oxford), 161b: *mo g.yu la dga' ba cig yod*; (Stockholm), 211a: *mo g.yu la dad che ba zhig yod*.

detail.⁵⁵ There is, however, a little variation. lHga-cig goes in search of Ras-chung-pa twice, the second time after being condemned to death by her father, and it is on that occasion that he sings to her from the other side of the river.⁵⁶ Their subsequent meeting (after a considerable time and a number of chapters on Ras-chung-pa's activities) is much more difficult for her to accomplish, and she and her companions, who number a hundred, have to do numerous practices of purification in-between two meetings with Ras-chung-pa.⁵⁷ Perhaps, the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* deliberately simplified these passages, or rGod-tshang Ras-pa elaborated on them. lHa-cig's sick companion is identified as someone named sGa-le (dGa-le in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*),⁵⁸ and the *zhang gi mdze-po* of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* is glossed as *mo rang gi zhang gi rigs* which means that he is classed as being her maternal uncle".⁵⁹ This may perhaps explain the basis for the apparently divergent versions of rGya-ldang-pa and *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, but is more probably another instance of rGod-tshang Ras-pa merging two variants, as he regularly does elsewhere in his narrative.

lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal's version is merely a summary of what we find in rGod-tshang Ras-pa, omitting all songs from the episode of Ras-chung-pa's abandonment of lHa-cig.⁶⁰

Another motive for the abandonment of lHa-cig is provided by rGod-tshang Ras-pa. Ras-chung-pa, refusing to listen to Rin-chen Grags (Ra Sher-snang), warns him that even drinking water from the same valley as one who has broken their

⁵⁵ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 264-329, 499-519.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 319-27.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 507-8.

⁵⁸ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 208b; (Oxford), 161b; (Stockholm) 211a.

⁵⁹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 328.

⁶⁰ lHa-btsun, 636-37.

commitments will result in rebirth in Avīci hell.⁶¹ Turning against one's guru is certainly considered the deepest sin in *vajrayāna* Buddhism, and unfortunately for lHa-cig in her case her guru was also her husband.

During his stay in Yar-klungs he is depicted as going with Ra Sher-s nang to study with Asu,⁶² but lHa-cig is not mentioned specifically as accompanying them. In rGod-tshang Ras-pa alone, there is also a description of his establishing a retreat in the Yar-klungs valley,⁶³ which is the site around which the Ras-chung-phug monastery was later claimed to be based, and where gTsang-smyon Heruka died and rGod-tshang Ras-pa wrote his biography of Ras-chung-pa.

lHa-cig's historicity is attested by Sum-pa's colophon, reproduced by rGod-tshang Ras-pa, in which he states:

The middle part: the lHa-gcig chapter and so on, is as told by the attendant [Rin-chen Grags], later corrected by the guru and lHa-gcig, and then written out.⁶⁴

Unfortunately, until a copy of the *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po* itself is discovered we cannot be certain whether the version presented by lHa-btsun and rGod-tshang Ras-pa is, as it appears to be, a faithful reproduction of its contents.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa says that seven or eight years after their reunion lHa-cig died amongst auspicious signs and her relics were placed in a *stūpa* consecrated by

⁶¹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 309-10.

⁶² Ibid., 265-74.

⁶³ Ibid., 294.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 654.

Ras-chung-pa.⁶⁵ He declared that she had been reborn in Alakāvatī as the chief of sixteen thousand queens of Vajrapāṇi. This, as we shall see below, is in the context of the declaration in rGod-tshang Ras-pa's text that Ras-chung-pa was an incarnation of Vajrapāṇi.

These texts show a woman on the one hand as capable of attaining spiritual realisation and being a full member of the practising community, but on the other as entirely under male authority. Even her spiritual path begins by her being given to Ras-chung-pa as a gift, just as she is later given to the sick beggar, and even her life is at the mercy of male authority. Even her transcendent rebirth is a depiction of a secondary status. We shall see another instance of this below amongst Ras-chung-pa's pupils.

6.3. Ras-chung-pa and contemporary teachers

The bulk of the rGod-tshang Ras-pa biography concerns Ras-chung-pa's encounters with other teachers and his own pupils, almost all involving songs. This will not be examined in detail here.

The encounters with other teachers invariably provide an opportunity for demonstrating his superiority over them, and thus the superiority of his own instructions and lineage. This is symptomatic of Tibetan religious biographies, and indeed the same incident may be used to demonstrate the superiority of two different lamas.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 516-17.

An example of this occurs in Ras-chung-pa's travelling to Nepal in the company of sKyi-ston and Rwa Lotsāba. sKyi-ston, also written Kyi-ston (as in rGya-ldang-pa) and Khyi-ston (in rGod-tshang Ras-pa) was a *rDzogs-chen* master; the rather pathetic inferiority of his person and his teaching to those of Ras-chung-pa we have already seen established in chapter five. This episode was also the occasion, through Kyi-ston's denunciation of Rwa Lo-tsā-ba as a proud and grandiose lama, of establishing Ras-chung-pa's superiority over the master who was the source of the Yamāntaka tradition in Tibet.

In the biography of Rwa Lo-tsā-ba, however, we see the same incident from a different perspective, that of members of Rwa's lineage. This also has Kyi-ston's claim that Ras-chung-pa is superior to him (here said to be caused by anger that Rwa-lo did not respectfully stand up to greet sKyi-ston),⁶⁶ but this biography provides an addition. Later, while they are in Kathmandu, sKyi-ston kills someone in a drunken quarrel and is condemned to death. Rwa-lo ransoms him with sixty ounces of gold. sKyi-ston has now changed his mind and asks for instruction from him. Rwa-lo wryly replies, "You are a true Dharma practitioner, so why would you take teachings from me, when I'm filled with the arrogance of being important?" (*khyod chos pa tshad ldan zhag nga mi chen po'i nga rgyal gyis khengs pas la chos zhu'am*)⁶⁷ sKyi-ston both regrets his previous words and is too embarrassed to come and see him again.⁶⁸ Unfortunately, we do not have the sKyi-ston version of events.

In another parallel, Rwa-lo is depicted as teaching rNgtog-ston, a pupil of Mar-pa, and his son, and also liberating a pupil and relative of Mar-pa who had failed

⁶⁶ Rwa Ye-shes Seng-ge, *mThu-stobs dBang-phyug rJe-btsun Rwa Lo-tsā-ba'i rNam-par-thar-pa Kun-khyab sNyan-pa'i rNga-sgra* (Zi-ling, China: mTsho-sngon Mi-rigs dPe-skrun-khang, 1989), 272.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 275.

to gain success through fourteen years of meditation under Mar-pa's instruction;⁶⁹ this establishes the superiority of Rwa-lo's instruction to those of the bKa'-brgyud lineages. Further, by superior sorcery Rwa-lo kills Mar-pa's son Dar-ma mDo-sde, whose own sorcery attacks had failed to harm him.⁷⁰ Also, he magically slew those pupils of Mar-pa who tried to prevent Rwa-lo from paying homage at Mar-pa's tomb; he passed through its wall nevertheless, and there spontaneously appeared miraculous relics for him to take away, thus showing that even Mar-pa honoured him.⁷¹ Similarly, Ras-chung-pa also encounters a pupil of Mar-pa and demonstrates his superiority over him. This pupil is Tshur-ston dBang-nge, one of Mar-pa's four most important pupils, and an important name in the early history of the bKa'-brgyud. In rGya-ltang-pa, though Ras-chung-pa receives instruction from Tshur-ston, he is not impressed and demonstrates his own superior control over breath by putting cotton-wool on his nose and holding his breath for a day, so that it does not move. In rGod-tshang Ras-pa, Ras-chung-pa demonstrates his superiority by both levitating and sinking into the floor. In this manner he demonstrates the superiority of not just himself but by implication the superiority of Mi-la Ras-pa's transmission over that of his fellow pupil Tshur-ston: this is important for the self-identification of the Dwags-po bKa'-brgyud as the principal descendants of Mar-pa.

Ras-chung-pa's transmission of teachings based on *Mahāmudrā* songs was to prove important for future generations. He received this from the Nepalese master Asu, who was living in Tibet. The biographies relate that Mi-la gives Ras-chung-pa permission to study under him, and tells him that he is even free to abandon Mi-la's

⁶⁸ Ibid., 274-75.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 246-47.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 210-3.

⁷¹ Ibid., 240.

teachings if he finds Asu's better. The biographies however emphasise Ras-chung-pa's dissatisfaction with Asu, both in his style of teaching and as an individual. At one point he even sings a song containing an implied criticism that makes Asu's face darken and prompts him to retreat into isolated meditation, breaking off the teaching for a while. Such a disrespectful attitude to one's teacher might appear to conflict with the *vajrayāna* ideals that the text is promoting. However, what this passage does is present Asu as a character that does not divide the focus of the reader's devotion, so that within Tibet the Mi-la Ras-pa to Ras-chung-pa transmission remains inviolably superior.

Ras-chung-pa also encounters bKa'-gdams-pa teachers who are well known in the history of that school and there are episodes certainly not present in their traditional biographies. Though the monks in the monastery of gZhon-nu 'Od, also known as Bya-yul-pa (1075-1138),⁷² at first eject Ras-chung-pa, hearing his song causes Bya-yul-pa to shed tears. The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* includes a brief form of this account up till Bya-yul-pa shedding tears⁷³ but not what follows in rGod-tshang Ras-pa's biography, in which Bya-yul-pa sends his monks in search of Ras-chung-pa and then invites him into his private rooms, where over a period of three weeks he receives the sNyan-rgyud instructions. The monks subsequently complain that this has had a deleterious effect on their leader's normally strict conduct, but through the benefit of this practice he becomes a teacher of many pupils. A sNyan-rgyud transmission named *Ras-chung lugs* is thus said to originate with him, commencing with a secret transmission to his principal pupil gTsang-pa Mi-bskyod rDo-rje (1077-

⁷² *Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 286-91 ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 255-60

⁷³ *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 438; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 383.

1161).⁷⁴ Later a monk is secretly sent to Ras-chung-pa by Bya-yul-pa, who is called a pupil of Ras-chung-pa. The monk had become a great scholar but believes that such study was of no benefit and Bya-yul-pa secretly tells him that he is right: that though he has received the sNyan-rgyud from Ras-chung-pa himself, his other pupils, all students of logic, are not yet ready to hear the truth.⁷⁵ Thus the inferiority of the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition is declared by one of its principal exponents!

Similarly, rGod-tshang Ras-pa describes how Ras-chung-pa taught, in their private chambers, the bKa'-gdams-pa abbots sNe'u Zur-pa Yeshe 'Bar (1042-1118)⁷⁶ who loses his habitual dislike of yogins on meeting Ras-chung-pa (and who the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* states became a friend of Mi-la Ras-pa), and sPyan-snga Tshul-khrims 'Bar (1038-1103), the teacher of Bya-yul-pa (who according to the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* was considered to have miraculous powers that rivalled if not superseded those of Mi-la Ras-pa).⁷⁷ However, the dates of both these masters cast doubt upon the historicity of their meeting with Ras-chung-pa.⁷⁸

The biography therefore is proud to list a number of bKa'-gdams-pa masters amongst Ras-chung-pa's pupils,⁷⁹ even though they are secret pupils, or, as in the case of Bya 'Chad-kha-ba Ye-shes rDo-rje (1101-75),⁸⁰ were his pupils before entering the bKa'-gdams-pa tradition.⁸¹

Ras-chung-pa also taught Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa, the founder of the Karma bKa'-brgyud tradition, who was also a pupil of sGam-po-pa, and even the latter is

⁷⁴ Ibid., (Roerich), 292; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 260-4; rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 386-96.

⁷⁵ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 522-24.

⁷⁶ *Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 311-4; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 276-9; rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 379-83.

⁷⁷ Ibid., (Roerich), 285; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 254 rje btsun mid la dang rdzu 'phrul su che zer ba byung

⁷⁸ Ibid., (Roerich), 284-5 ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 254-5; rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 383-6.

⁷⁹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 641.

⁸⁰ *Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 273-76; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 244-7.

⁸¹ Ibid., (Roerich), 273; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 244; sku na gzhon pa nas lo ro ras chung pa'i slob ma yin pa.

also listed as a pupil of Ras-chung-pa. This interchange of pupils demonstrates that sectarian bKa'-brgyud identities were not yet fully established.

6.4. Ras-chung-pa and his pupils

Ras-chung-pa had numerous male and female pupils. As there is not the space to examine the plentiful material on this subject I shall here briefly mention only two figures who were to be particularly important for the future transmission of Ras-chung-pa's lineage and in the transmission of his biography: Khyung-tshang-pa and Sum-ston aka Sum-pa.

Sum-pa was a close attendant of Ras-chung-pa, was constantly present at Ras-chung-pa's teachings and gives a personal account his death. He also included in his lost biography of Ras-chung-pa Yang-dgon-pa's account of this event and a long chapter in question and answer form, in which rGyal-ba Lo receives instruction from Ras-chung-pa. These three were the principal pupils of Ras-chung-pa within his somewhat peripatetic community.

In contrast, Khyung-tshang-pa stayed only briefly with Ras-chung-pa and thereafter lived at a considerable distance, with no further contact with Ras-chung-pa's community. According to Khyung-tshang-pa, he secretly received the complete transmission of the sNyan-rgyud from Ras-chung-pa, who told him to keep himself separate from his community. He also instructed Khyung-tshang-pa not to let it be known that he had received the sNyan-rgyud transmission until after his death. This naturally gives rise to suspicion, and not only in present-day readers: for example, according to biographies of gLing-ras-pa, who was the source of the 'Brug-pa bKa'-

brgyud and was a pupil of Khyung-tshang-pa, he doubted the authenticity of his teaching until he subsequently studied under Sum-pa.⁸² The reason Khyung-tshang-pa gave for this peculiar arrangement by Ras-chung-pa was that he was a monk, while Ras-chung-pa's community of practitioners was non-monastic and Ras-chung-pa had a reputation for not wishing to teach his lineage to monks. This non-monasticism is unsurprising considering the sNyan-rgyud's emphasis upon the practice of sexual yoga.

Although Ras-chung-pa had a female teacher as well as female pupils, and though they were not only needed for sexual practice, but were in some cases considered realised and their relics enshrined, it would unfortunately be incorrect to project contemporary views of female equality onto this community. Miranda Shaw gives Ras-chung-pa's life as an example⁸³ in her argument that "Women's sense of freedom from male authority in this movement was reinforced by the fact that women were not dependent upon male approval for religious advancement either in theory or in practice."⁸⁴ Sadly, the details of Ras-chung-pa's life do not appear to confirm this.

An example of the often hapless status of women, if the sorry tale of lHa-cig does not suffice, is supplied by another of his consorts. Ras-chung-pa gives vows and deathbed instruction to a man named gYo-ba Zla-ba Grags who is in the terminal stages of *tsi-tsi dzwo-la*, (which is described as a sickness that cannot be cured, even though Ras-chung-pa is said to suffer from and cure himself from it in the Varacandra episode). The dying man has a wife named Hob-mo gYang-mgos and he offers her to Ras-chung-pa. Ras-chung-pa declines, stating that it is the nature of women to have

⁸² *Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 660; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 577. *rGod tshang ras pa ras chung pa dngos dang mjal ba'i gsung mang po gnang ba la cung zad the tshoms skyes*.

⁸³ Miranda Shaw, *Passionate Enlightenment: Women in Tantric Buddhism* (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers: 1998), 117-25.

faults and that women capable of maintaining their commitment are as rare as daytime stars. He adds that even women on the level of lHa-cig, who at least confessed her transgressions, were difficult to find. Zla-ba Grags has an alternative plan, which turns out to be that he is going to kill his wife before he dies,⁸⁵ and so, solely in order to prevent her death, Ras-chung-pa takes her on as his consort.⁸⁶ It is therefore evident that within this society, even in the context of a community of Tantric practitioners, as with lHa-cig, women had little control over whether they were to be allowed to live or to whom they would be given in a sexual relationship.

6.5. The Death of Ras-chung-pa

Ras-chung-pa died at the age of seventy-seven in 1161 (an iron bird year). lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and rGod-tshang Ras-pa states that the death took place in 1171 (iron hare year). That the latter date is incorrect is the view of 'Gos Lotsāba in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, where he attributes it to the distorting influence of the Siddharājñī and Amitāyus story, which necessitated the lengthening of Ras-chung-pa's life-span to match the story's prophecy. 'Gos Lotsāba states that according to the record of Ras-chung-pa's own pupils he died in his seventy-eighth year. He does not name his source but presumably this must have been Sum-pa's *Ngo-mtshar Nor-bu sNying-po*, which demonstrates that we cannot be certain which parts were modified, removed or added by rGod-tshang Ras-pa in his biography. 'Gos Lotsāba's view is supported by other material such as the life-story of Gling Ras-pa

⁸⁴ Ibid., 69.

⁸⁵ An example of a custom of legally killing one's wife is given by Indra Majupuria, *Tibetan Women* (M. Devi, 1990), 118; quoted in Ruth Campbell, *Traveller in Space* (London: Athlone Press, 1996), 29.

(1128-1188) in the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*; the latter goes in 1162, in his thirty-fifth year, to see Ras-chung-pa at Lo-ro only to find that he had died the previous year, so he studies under Sum-pa instead.⁸⁷ But according to the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, Gling Ras-pa already knew Ras-chung-pa had died and went to Lo-ro in his thirty-first year, which would be in 1158,⁸⁸ which would place Ras-chung-pa's death at an even earlier unattested date.

Nevertheless, the first-person accounts by Sum-pa and Yang-dgon dPal, which rGod-tshang Ras-pa reproduces, can be assumed to be unadulterated, as they retain their first-person form grammatically. His death took place at the hermitage of Tshe-skong in the Lo-ro area. Aware that death was close he said that he would not leave his body behind and that he would pervade all Buddha-realms so that in whatever direction his pupils directed their supplications, they would be fruitful.

At dusk, he told Sum-pa to go and meditate, but not to approach his cave until dawn, whatever he heard. Sum-pa returned to his cabin. At midnight he heard music and saw not only lights but various parts of dancing *dākas* and *dākinīs* appearing and disappearing in the sky. Amongst them, he could see sometimes Ras-chung-pa and sometimes Saṃvara. He called the other pupils and at sunrise he and others went up to the cave to find only his clothes and cushion.⁸⁹

This is the basis for the phrase “who attained the rainbow-body” in the title of lHa-bstun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal's biography of Ras-chung-pa. In the *rDzogs-chen* tradition, the transmutation of the material nature of the body is said to result in its dissolution into light at death, leaving only the inanimate parts of the body: hair and

⁸⁶ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 520-21.

⁸⁷ *Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 660-661; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 577.

⁸⁸ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 630-31.

⁸⁹ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 643-46.

nails. Among Mi-la Ras-pa and Ras-chung-pa's pupils, however, there are a number who, at the end of their lives, are said to have physically departed for the perfect realms inhabited by buddhas. Similarly, in the case of Ras-chung-pa we find only his clothes left behind and no dead body, not even hair or nails.

On the one hand, it could be argued that this is not a genuine or truthful account of Ras-chung-pa's death because bodies do not disappear at death, however holy the person. The visions can be explained as subjective experience, and it is interesting to note that though Sum-pa's account in *rGod-tshang Ras-pa* is a description of his own perception alone, in *Lha-btsun*, which summarises this passage, the list of people that Sum-pa calls is transformed into a list of people who also witness these apparitions in the sky, thus lending them an objective existence.⁹⁰ *lHa-btsun* presumably assumed that if they had been called they would have seen what Sum-pa saw. The missing body may have had a cause other than dematerialisation. The biography previously records that on more than one occasion Ras-chung-pa's pupils found his cave empty, without warning, and searched in the mountains for days before locating him alone in a cave.⁹¹ He had simply tired of human company, wished to spend his days alone and sneaked away without leaving any indication of where he had gone. Though he had failed to escape on those previous occasions, it could be argued that he may have at last succeeded. Assuming his death, his disciples failed to search for him. Though this is a particularly unwelcome explanation from the religious point of view, it is the inevitable result of applying Occam's razor to this ancient knot. *Lha-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal's* description of the discovery of Ras-chung-pa's disappearance has a curious variant

⁹⁰ *lHa-btsun*, 829.

⁹¹ *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, 475.

from rGod-tshang Ras-pa. He has an additional detail —that a pigeon sized hole was found in the cave’s roof, through which he had presumably departed— and that Ras-chung-pa’s clothes had also gone from the room.⁹² This could be taken as another misleading summary: “There were no clothes on the bed” (*gzim mal na na bza’ min pa*) for “there was nothing other than his cushion and clothes” (*na bza’ dang bzhugs gdan ma gtogs mi ‘dug*). Or it may be evidence for his having indeed sneaked away, unless he also took his clothes with him into the transcendent, inconceivable state!

6.6. Ras-chung-pa as divine incarnation.

All surviving texts that predate Lha-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal and rGod-tshang Ras-pa are silent on the subjects of Ras-chung-pa’s divine status and of his previous lives. However, both these authors give these subjects much attention.

Though the terms *sprul-pa* (*nirmāṇa*) and *sprul-sku* (*nirmāṇakāya*) are basically synonymous, in current Tibetan usage, the former designates the manifestation of a buddha or bodhisattva, while the latter signifies the rebirth of a recently deceased master, who may not necessarily be considered to have attained enlightenment. In fact there is an informal distinction made between high, medium and low *sprul-sku*. Succession by incarnation originated amongst the Karma bKa’-brgyud school in the thirteenth century, but has since become widespread, numbering thousands by this century. Let alone no canonical basis, there is no textual tradition for the Tibetan *sprul-sku* system, and a large conference of *sprul-skus* and scholars held by the Dalai Lama in Varanasi in 1990 failed to define the subject.

⁹² lHa-btsun, 829-30.

The Indian Mahāyāna tradition recognised that a buddha's *nirmāṇakāya* could take various forms, as well as appearing as a buddha, which is classed as the supreme *nirmāṇakāya*. The concept of *sprul-pa* is closer to that earlier view. Therefore, a lama might be the *sprul-ku* of a deceased lama, but also the *sprul-pa* of a bodhisattva, such as Avalokiteśvara (as is the case with the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa). This is further complicated by individuals being recognised as emanations of different bodhisattvas. Identifications tend to accumulate over successive, formally recognised rebirths, creating a complex and sometimes paradoxical labyrinth of identity. This is even further complicated when one lama has multiple rebirths. These are sometimes limited to two; to three— representing the body, speech and mind; or to five, representing those three plus good qualities and activity, but there may be even more. Each of these incarnations can then develop a complex identity. Occasionally one child is recognised as the rebirth of two distinct lamas, the one with the higher position tending to subsume the lower.⁹³ There is an accepted tradition in which a child is recognised by a lama as his *sprul-sku* before he has passed away.⁹⁴ Sometimes, a boy is chosen to become a *sprul-sku*, and in a special ceremony invoking a *jñānasattva*, the boy is transformed into a *sprul-ku*.⁹⁵ There are also cases in which, when there is more than one candidate for one position, the runner-up is recognised as an 'Os-'*phrul* ("Worthy to be a *sprul-sku*") though the passive form of the verb "emanate" is used in the formal title) and will become the beginning of a series of rebirths.⁹⁶

⁹³ gZan-dkar Rin-po-che, pers. comm. London, 1984.

⁹⁴ Bla-ma Thub-bstan rNam-rgyal, pers. comm, Birmingham 1985.

⁹⁵ See Orgyan Tobgyal, *The Life and Teaching of Chokgyur Lingpa*, trans. Tulku Jigmey and Erik Pema Kunsang (Rangjung Yeshe Publications, 1988), 47.

⁹⁶ Paṅ-chen 'Os-sprul, pers. comm., County Cavan, Ireland, 1989.

In the earlier centuries of the previous millennium, the identification of an individual master as a *sprul-pa* was of great significance in that it established that he was already enlightened at birth, and it only *seemed* as if he benefited by practising the lineage's instructions. His very human life was just a display, and as an enlightened being he validated the path he practised by adopting it. The earliest biographies of Mi-la Ras-pa therefore emphasised that he was not an ordinary being, but only appeared to be so, and that he was an incarnation or emanation (*sprul-pa*) of a buddha and/or a great master of the past. This perspective is found as early as in sGam-po-pa,⁹⁷ Bla-ma Zhang⁹⁸ and Don-mo Ri-pa (the latter two replicating sGam-po-pa's words), and is made very specific in rGya-ldang-pa.⁹⁹ The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*¹⁰⁰ and the Zhwa-dmar-pa's¹⁰¹ specific identification of Mi-la as a *yang-'phrul* or "re-emanation" of Mañjuśrīmitra is still the view of 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, the principal bKa'-brgyud-pa author of the nineteenth century.¹⁰² This could very well have been derived by Zhwa-dmar (1350-1405) from the lost *mDzod-nag-ma* by one of his predecessors in the Karma-bKa'-brgyud hierarchy: the third Karma-pa Rang-byung rDo-rje (1284-1339). The latter introduced rNying-ma instruction into the lineage, creating his own lineage of *rDzogs-chen*, of which Mañjuśrīmitra is said to be one of the earlier Indian masters. The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* is probably influenced by the Rang-byung rDo-rje tradition of Mi-la rather than the other way around. (The line identifying Mi-la as an emanation of Mañjuśrīmitra is practically identical in both the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and Zhwa-dmar-pa).

⁹⁷ sGam-po-pa, 42.

⁹⁸ Bla-ma Zhang, 65b.

⁹⁹ rGya-ldang-pa, 194-95.

¹⁰⁰ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 2a; (Oxford), 2a; (Stockholm), 1b.

¹⁰¹ Zhwa-dmar-pa, 188.

However, Mon-rtse-pa makes no mention of it and gTsang-smyon Heruka transforms a dialogue in rGya-ldang-pa in which Mi-la reveals that he is an incarnation of the Buddha¹⁰³ into a dialogue in which he condemns such a view as a slur on the vajrayāna.¹⁰⁴ This radical reworking of the text is similar to that concerning Ras-chung-pa, sGam-po-pa and Mi-la Ras-pa's bottom. gTsang-smyon's portrait of Mi-la as an ordinary being able to attain Buddhahood in spite of accumulating bad karma became very popular, if not universal.

The reverse process appears to have taken place with Ras-chung-pa. For in spite of the earlier works not giving him the status of an emanation the two later works identify him with Vajrapāṇi, presumably due to the importance of this practice in his life and lineage. Thereby, all figures in Buddhist history that have been identified in the Tibetan tradition as Vajrapāṇi emanations automatically become Ras-chung-pa's "previous lives". Therefore, lHa-btsun and rGod-tshang Ras-pa list the historical and legendary figures of Ānanda, King Indrabodhi of Oḍḍiyāna, and King Sucandra of Śambhala among his previous existences as well as Karmavajra, the source of his lineage of Vajrapāṇi practices.

As Ras-chung-pa pre-dates the *sprul-sku* system, there is no series of Ras-chung-pa incarnations. Ras-chung Rin-po-che derives the name from the name of his monastery of Ras-chung-phug). Nevertheless, a *sprul-sku* may be indentified as a *sprul-pa* of Mar-pa, Mi-la, sGam-po-pa or Ras-chung-pa. The second A-dkon Rin-po-che of bSam-yas gLing in Scotland, for example, is regarded as being simultaneously an emanation of Bhaiṣajyaguru (*Sangs-rgyas sMan-bla* "the Medicine Buddha") and

¹⁰² 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, *rJe-btsun ras-pa chen-po la brten-pa'i mal-'byor gyi zin-bris ye-shes gsal-byed* (publisher unknown), 13a.

¹⁰³ rGya-ldang-pa, 195.

¹⁰⁴ gTsang-smyon, *Mi-la'i rNam-thar*, 106b; Lhalungpa, 144.

of Ras-chung-pa, because the first A-dkon was so recognised, each emanation identified by a different lama (the second Kar-sras Kon-sprul and the ninth Drung-pa sPrul-sku respectively).

As for Ras-chung-pa, he is portrayed by rGod-tshang Ras-pa and lHa-btsun as not having such a simple identity as being only the bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi residing in his realm of Alakāvatī, for that bodhisattva is himself one of countless incarnations from the *Dharmakāya* Buddha. This Buddha is presented by these two authors as a composite of the rNying-ma and bKa'-brgyud versions of this Buddha: Samantabhadra-Vajradhara. This itself is a sign that this passage post-dates the adoption of rNying-ma practices in the bKa'-brgyud tradition, which was certainly well established in the early fourteenth century. These emanations include Buddhas in other worlds in past aeons. In other words, the biography presents Ras-chung-pa as someone who has *never* been an ordinary being, but is a manifestation of primordial Buddhahood appearing as an ordinary being solely in order to liberate others. This is specifically stated in a concluding prayer in rGod-tshang Ras-pa's text:

Although you are a beginningless Buddha

You accomplish compassionate activity until the end of existence...¹⁰⁵

Thog med dus nas mngon par sangs rgyas kyang / Thugs rje'i phrin las srid
mthar mdzad pa yis

Just before his death, or disappearance, Ras-chung-pa alternates between stating that after his death he will be omnipresent with no particular location and

¹⁰⁵ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 662.

predicting a number of specific incarnations in paradises or Buddha-realms —for example his vajra-mind will be incarnated in Alakāvatī, while his vajra speech and vajra-body appear as other beings elsewhere.¹⁰⁶

Thus his identity both before and after his life is, as would traditionally be stated, inconceivable.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 644-45.

Appendix A

The Merger in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* of two Ras-chung-pa songs from the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*

In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, the second of Ras-chung-pa's songs on his return from his final visit to India is a development of a song in rGya-ldang-pa's biography of Ras-chung-pa.¹ This also appears in the *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud Biographies*,² where a single spelling mistake in rGya-ldang-pa is corrected.

There are a number of scribal corruptions in the Newark manuscript of the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, the lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal text reproduces these two songs with few variants and suffers from fewer spelling mistakes. The corruptions in all these texts appear to be primarily caused by a misinterpretation of *bsdus-yig* by the reader, a misunderstanding of the phonemes by the listening scribe, or the scribe's inability to spell.

The song in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum* is also within the rGod-tshang Ras-pa biography of Ras-chung-pa.

In surveying the development of these songs:

- a) Text in common between two texts is in normal font.
- b) Additions are indicated by bold, underlined font.
- c) Omitted text is indicated by being struck through.
- d) Transposition of text is indicated by italics.

¹ rGya-ldang-pa, 357.

Abbreviations in the footnotes:

G = rGya-ldang-pa, 357.

ZDN (N) = *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark manuscript).

ZDN (S) = *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Stockholm manuscript). As at this time the text is still mislaid at the Stockholm Folksmuseum and only an incomplete zerox is available, missing portions are marked n.a. (not available).

ZDN (O) = *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Oxford manuscript).

MG = gTsang-smyon Heruka's *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*.

LT = lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal's *Ras-chung rNam-thar*.

GR (mTsho) = rGod-tshang Ras-pa's *Ras-chung rNam-thar* (mTsho-sngon edition).

GR (M) = rGod-tshang Ras-pa's *Ras-chung rNam-thar* (Manali edition), 61b-62b.

rGya-ldang-pa, 357. Bde-mchog snyan-rgyud biographies edition, 210

bla ma'i bka' bzhin sgrub lags pas

dka' ba ma spyad³ dgu cig spyad⁴

sdug bsngal ma myong dgu cig myong

gdams ngag ma thos dgu cig thos

rig pa ye shes sgron me thos

rtsa rlung dra mig 'khor lo thos

ro snyoms phyi yi me long thos

rang grol phyag rgya chen po thos

² *bDemchog snyan-rgyud biographies*, 210.

³ G dpyad.

bde chen gsung gi rin chen thos
 gzhan yang dgos pa'i chos drug thos
 brda don gsum gyi gdams ngag thos
 rin chen lnga yi gdams ngag thos
 bsam mi khyab kyi gdams ngag thos
 bsam gtan thun 'jog gdams ngag thos
 'chi med bcud len gdams ngag thos
 ngo sprod bar do'i gdams ngag thos
 'di thos bla ma dag la 'bul

Byang-chub bZang-po version

bsdug bsngal nam pa sna tshogs spyad
 gdams ngag nam pa sna tshogs thob
 rtsa rlung gra mig 'khor lo thob
 rig pa ye shes sgron me thob
 des 'dre:
 [bde chen gsung gi rin chen thob
 rang grol phyag rgya chen po thob
 ro snyoms phyi yi me long thob]

⁴ G dpyad.

de mams bla ma rje la 'bul

Byang-chub bZang-po relationship with rGya-ldang-pa

~~bla ma'i bka' bzhin sgrub lags pas~~

~~dka' ba ma spyad⁵ dgu eig spyad⁶~~ (*last word displaced below*)

~~bsdug bsngal ma myong dgu eig myong~~ nam pa sna tshogs *spyad* (*last word displaced from above*)

gdams ngag ~~ma thos dgu eig~~ nam pa sna tshogs thos thob

~~rig pa ye shes sgron me thos~~

rtsa rlung gra⁷ mig 'khor lo ~~thos~~ thob

rig pa ye shes sgron me thos thob (*displaced from above*)

des 'dre

[This means that the remaining three instructions, as listed in an earlier song within Byang-chub bZang-po, are to be repeated, which implies the variation of three lines and the omission of seven instructions, when compared with what is actually written out in rGya-ldang-pa:]

bde chen gsung gi rin chen ~~thos~~ thob (*displaced*)

rang grol phyag rgya chen po ~~thos~~ thob (*displaced*)

ro snyoms phyi yi me long ~~thos~~ thob (*displaced*)

~~gzhan yang dgos pa'i chos drug thos~~

~~brda don gsum gyi gdams ngag thos~~

~~rin chen lnga yi gdams ngag thos~~

⁵ G dpyad.

⁶ G dpyad.

~~bsam mi khyab kyi gdams ngag thos~~

~~bsam gtan thun 'jog gdams ngag thos~~

~~'chi med beud len gdams ngag thos~~

~~ngo sprod bar do'i gdams ngag thos~~

[The last line is then written out in both Byang-chub bZang-po and rGya-ldang-pa:]

de mams 'di thos bla ma dag rje la 'bul

Mon-rtse-pa 171

This also preserves a short version as in Byang-chub bZang-po, though with more correspondence with rGya-ldang-pa:

bla ma'i bka' bzhin sgrubs pa yis

dka' ba ma spyad dgu cig spyad

bsdug bsngal ma myong dgu cig myong

gdams ngag ma thos dgu cig thos

de thos bla ma dag la 'bul

Mon-rtse-pa compared with rGya-ldang-pa

The variation is marginal, apart from the omission, which may be a deliberate shortening of the song by Mon-rtse-pa, though it may also indicate that the list of additional teachings was inserted into the song by rGya-ldang-pa.

⁷ G dra.

bla ma'i bka' bzhin sgrubs ~~lags pas~~ pa yis
 dka' ba ma spyad⁸ dgu cig spyad⁹
 bsdug bsngal ma myong dgu cig myong
 gdams ngag ma thos dgu cig thos
 [next twelve lines of rGya-ldang-pa, listing the teachings not present]
 'di de thos bla ma dag la 'bul

Song 1 *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark manuscript), 74a; (Oxford), 57a;
 (Stockholm), n.a.; Lha-btsun Rinchen, 532-534.

rje bla ma'i bka' bzhin¹⁰ dka' ba spyad
 lam 'phrang¹¹ 'jigs¹² pa'i¹³ sdug bsngal byung
 dka'¹⁴ spyad sdug bsngal rin thang che
 rin thang bla ma rje dang¹⁵ mjal
 ma dang mkha' 'gro sprin bzhin 'dus
 ngo mtshar ltad mo thams cad mthong
 gdams¹⁶ ngag mkha' 'gro'i srog snying zhus
 lha dang bla ma¹⁷ mnyes mnyes mdzad
 bdag dang byin brlabs¹⁸ cig¹⁹ tu 'dres

⁸ G dpyad.
⁹ G dpyad.
¹⁰ ZDN (N) drin; (S) n.a.
¹¹ ZDN (N) 'phring; (O) 'phrangs; (S) n.a.
¹² ZDN (N) 'jig; (S) n.a.
¹³ ZDN (O) pas.
¹⁴ ZDN (O) dka ba.
¹⁵ ZDN (O) la.
¹⁶ ZDN (N & O) gdam; (S) n.a.

dngos grub me tog char pa babs²⁰
 dbang²¹ dang²² rjes gnang gos su bskon²³
 lha dang rten ‘brel mgul²⁴ du btags
 lha yi²⁵ pha bab²⁶ kha [524] nas²⁷ bcug
 man ngag dmar khrid lag tu gtad
 bkra shis smon lam skyel ma mdzad
 rtags²⁸ dang lung bstan sun²⁹ mas bsus³⁰
 don chen bsam pa dgung³¹ du³² ‘grub
 spro dga’ skyid pa’i nyi ma shar
 yang dag bla ma khyed dang mjal
 lus med mkha’ ‘gro’i chos skor³³ la
 mchod bstod zhabs tog khyed rang shes

bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar Song 2: (Newark manuscript) 74b-75a; (Oxford)
 57b; (Stockholm) 71b.

Lha-btsun Rinchen: Song 2: 524-525.

¹⁷ ZDN (S), n.a.; LT, mas.

¹⁸ ZDN (O) rlab

¹⁹ ZDN (N) gcig; (S) n.a.

²⁰ ZDN (N & O) bab; (S) n.a.

²¹ ZDN (O) rang.

²² ZDN (O) dbang.

²³ ZDN (N) bsgon; (S) n.a.; LT, gyon.

²⁴ ZDN (N) ‘gul; (S) n.a.

²⁵ ZDN (N & O) lha’i (S) n.a.

²⁶ ZDN (S) n.a.; LT, phogs.

²⁷ ZDN (O) n.a.

²⁸ ZDN (S) n.a.; LT ltas.

²⁹ ZDN (O) bsun.

³⁰ ZDN (O) gsus.

³¹ ZDN (N) rgung; (O) dgu; (S) n.a.

³² ZDN (O) ru; (S) n.a.; LT nas.

rje bla ma'i gsung³⁴ ngag rdo rje'i tshig
 bsgrubs³⁵ pas³⁶ rgya gar yul du phyin
 gsang ngags sdong po rje dang mjal
 [dka' las ma byas dgu cig byas]³⁷
 [sdug bsngal ma myong dgu cig myong]³⁸
 [gdam ngag ma thob dgu cig thob]³⁹
 grub pa'i rgyal mo'i dngos grub thob
 ngo mtshar che ba'i⁴⁰ yi dam mthong
 mkha' 'gro'i lung bstan [525] rtags dang mjal
 gdams⁴¹ ngag rin chen bum pa thob
 rig pa ye shes sgron me thob⁴²
 rtsa rlung dra⁴³ mig 'khor lo thob⁴⁴
 ro snyoms phyi yi⁴⁵ me long thob⁴⁶
 bde chen gsung gi rin chen thob
 dam tshig rang sems me long thob
 dam rdzas rtogs pa'i nyi ma thob
 spyod pa chu la ral gri thob

³³ ZDN (O) bskor.

³⁴ ZDN (N) gsungs

³⁵ ZDN (N & O) bsgrub; LT sgrub.

³⁶ LT gnas

³⁷ ZDN (N & O & S), entire line not present.

³⁸ ZDN (N & O & S), entire line not present.

³⁹ ZDN (N & O & S), entire line not present.

⁴⁰ ZDN (N), bas.

⁴¹ ZDN (N & O), gdam.

⁴² ZDN (N & O) entire line not present

⁴³ ZDN (S) gra.

⁴⁴ ZDN (N & O) entire line not present

⁴⁵ ZDN (N) phyi'i; (S) n.a.

⁴⁶ ZDN (O) entire line not present.

rang grol phyag rgya chen po thob
 ‘chi med bdud rtsi’i bcud len thob
 ngo sprod gnad kyi bar do thob
 bsam gtan thun ‘jog⁴⁷ gdams⁴⁸ ngag thob
 brda⁴⁹ don gsum dang rin chen lnga
 gzhan yang⁵⁰ dgos pa’i chos drug dang
 bsam⁵¹ mi khyab pa’i⁵² gdams⁵³ ngag thob
 rin chen gser dang dra ba’i chos
 mang du bzhugs pas⁵⁴ mchod bstod mdzod⁵⁵
 thugs la⁵⁶ e⁵⁷ ‘phrod⁵⁸ gzigs par zhu

The first two lines only of the single rGya-ldang-pa song appear to be related to the
 first line of the first song in *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* and lHa-btsun:

rje Bla ma’i bka’ bzhin⁵⁹ sgrub lags pas
 dka’ ba ma spyad⁶⁰ dgu eig spyad⁶¹

⁴⁷ ZDN (N) ‘dzom; (S) n.a.

⁴⁸ ZDN (N) & LT, gdam; ZDN (O) man.

⁴⁹ ZDN (N) bda’.

⁵⁰ ZDN (N) as interlinear addition

⁵¹ ZDN (N) bsam gyi.

⁵² ZDN (N) not present; NT kyi.

⁵³ ZDN (N & O) gdam.

⁵⁴ ZDN (N) pa’i.

⁵⁵ ZDN (O) mdzod.

⁵⁶ ZDN (N) su; (S) n.a.

⁵⁷ ZDN (N) i; (S) n.a.

⁵⁸ ZDN (O) phrod.

⁵⁹ ZDN (N) drin; (S) n.a.

⁶⁰ G dpyad.

Relation of the second song with the rGya-ldang-pa song. Some of the variation may be the result of scribal transmission as *thos* and *thob* are very similar in dbu-med script, and *spyad* and *byed* are phonetically similar:

rje Bla ma'i ~~bka' bzhin~~ ⁶² gsung ngag rdo rje'i tshig
bsgrubs⁶³ ⁶⁴ lags pas rgya gar yul du phyin
gsang ngags sdong po rje dang mjal
[dka' ~~ba~~ las ma ⁶⁵ spyad byas dgu cig ⁶⁶ spyad byas] ⁶⁷
[sdug bsngal ma myong dgu cig myong] ⁶⁸
[gdams⁶⁹ ngag ma ~~thos~~ thob dgu cig ~~thos~~ thob] ⁷⁰
grub pa'i rgyal mo'i dngos grub thob
ngo mtshar che ba'i⁷¹ yi dam mthong
mkha' 'gro'i lung bstan [525] rtags dang mjal
gdams⁷² ngag rin chen bum pa thob
rig pa ye shes sgron me ~~thos~~ thob⁷³
rtsa rlung dra⁷⁴ mig 'khor lo ~~thos~~ thob⁷⁵
ro snyoms phyi yi⁷⁶ me long ~~thos~~ thob⁷⁷

⁶¹ G dpyad.
⁶² ZDN (N) gsungs.
⁶³ ZDN (N & O) bsgrub; LT sgrub.
⁶⁴ LT gnas.
⁶⁵ G dpyad.
⁶⁶ G dpyad.
⁶⁷ ZDN (N & O & S) entire line not present.
⁶⁸ ZDN (N & O & S) entire line not present.
⁶⁹ LT gdam.
⁷⁰ ZDN (N & O & S) entire line not present.
⁷¹ ZDN (N), bas.
⁷² ZDN (N), gdam.
⁷³ ZDN (N & O) entire line not present
⁷⁴ ZDN (S) gra.

rang grol phyag rgya chen po ~~thos~~ thob
 bde chen gsung gi rin chen ~~thos~~ thob
dam tshig rang sems me long thob
dam rdzas rtogs pa'i nyi ma thob
spyod pa chu la ral gri thob
rang grol phyag rgya chen po thob
~~'chi med bdud-rtsi'i bcud len thob~~ [displaced below]
~~ngo sprod gnad kyi bar do thob~~ [displaced below]
~~bsam gtan thun 'jog gdams ngag thob~~ [displaced below]
~~gzhan yang dgos pa'i chos drug thos thob~~ [displaced below]
 brda⁷⁸ don gsum gyi gdams ngag thos dang rin chen lnga [displaced from below]
 gzhan yang⁷⁹ dgos pa'i chos drug thos dang [displaced from above]
~~rin chen lnga~~ [displaced to above] yi gdams ngag thos
 bsam⁸⁰ mi khyab pa'i⁸¹ gdams⁸² ngag ~~thos~~ thob
 bsam gtan thun 'jog⁸³ gdams⁸⁴ ngag thob [displaced from above]
 'chi med bdud-rtsi'i bcud len ~~gdams ngag thos~~ thob [displaced from above]
 ngo sprod gnad kyi bar do'i ~~gdams ngag thos~~ thob [displaced from above]
 'di thos bla ma dag la 'bul
rin chen gser dang dra ba'i chos
mang du bzhugs pas⁸⁵ mchod bstod mdzod⁸⁶

⁷⁵ ZDN (N & O) entire line not present
⁷⁶ ZDN (N) phyi'i; (S) n.a.
⁷⁷ ZDN (O) entire line not present.
⁷⁸ ZDN (N) bda'
⁷⁹ ZDN (N) as interlinear addition
⁸⁰ ZDN (N) bsam gyi
⁸¹ ZDN (N) not present; NT kyi.
⁸² ZDN (N) gdam
⁸³ ZDN (N) 'dzom; (S) n.a.

thugs la⁸⁷ e⁸⁸ ‘phrod⁸⁹ gzigs par zhu

The merger of the two songs in the *Mi-la’i mGur-‘bum* 402-3 and rGod-tshang Ras-
pa, 116-7.

From Song 2:

rje bla ma’i ~~gsung⁹⁰~~ ~~ngag~~ bka’ lung rdo rje’i tshig gsung
sgrub⁹¹ ~~gnas⁹²~~ phyir rgya gar yul du phyin⁹³

From Song 1:

~~rje bla ma’i bka’ bzhin⁹⁴ dka’ ba spyad~~
lam ‘phrang⁹⁵ ‘jigs⁹⁶ ~~pa’i sdug bsngal byung~~ pa che bas⁹⁷ na
dka’ spyad sdug bsngal mang po⁹⁸ myong
‘on kyang dka’ ba spyad rin mchog⁹⁹ thang che

⁸⁴ ZDN (N) & LT, gdam; ZDN (O) man.
⁸⁵ ZDN (N) pa’i
⁸⁶ ZDN (O) mdzod.
⁸⁷ ZDN (N) su; (S) n.a.
⁸⁸ ZDN (N) i; (S) n.a.
⁸⁹ ZDN (O) phrod.
⁹⁰ ZDN gsungs
⁹¹ ZDN bsgrub.
⁹² ZDN pas.
⁹³ GR (mTsho-sngon), gyin.
⁹⁴ ZDN (N) drin; (S) n.a.
⁹⁵ ZDN (N) ‘phring; (S) n.a.
⁹⁶ ZDN (N) ‘jig; (S) n.a.
⁹⁷ GR (M), ba.
⁹⁸ GR (mTsho) bo.
⁹⁹ GR (M), chog.

From Song 2:

~~rje bla ma'i gsung~~¹⁰⁰ ~~ngag rdo rje'i tshig~~
~~bsgrubs~~¹⁰¹ ~~pas~~¹⁰² ~~rgya gar yul du phyin~~
ti pu¹⁰³ Gsang ngags sdong po rje¹⁰⁴ dang ~~mjal~~
~~dka' las ma byas dgu cig byas~~¹⁰⁵
~~sdug bsngal ma myong dgu cig myong~~¹⁰⁶
~~gdam ngag ma thob dgu cig thob~~¹⁰⁷
ma gcig Grub pa'i rgyal mo'i ~~ngos grub thob mjal~~
 ngo mtshar che ba'i¹⁰⁸ yi dam mthong
 mkha' 'gro'i lung bstan [LT 525] rtags dang mjal
~~gdams~~¹⁰⁹ ~~ngag rin chen bum pa thob~~
rang re 'dod¹¹⁰ pa'i man ngag ni
 rig pa ye shes sgron me ~~thob~~ dang¹¹¹
 rtsa rlung dra¹¹² mig 'khor lo ~~thob~~ dang¹¹³
 ro snyoms phyi yi¹¹⁴ me long ~~thob~~ dang
 bde chen gsung gi rin chen¹¹⁵ ~~thob~~ dang
 dam tshig rang sems me [GB 403] long ~~thob~~ dang

¹⁰⁰ ZDN (N) gsungs.
¹⁰¹ ZDN (N) bsgrub; LT sgrub.
¹⁰² LT gnas.
¹⁰³ GR (mTsho) & (M), phu.
¹⁰⁴ GR (mTsho) & (M), not present.
¹⁰⁵ ZDN (N & S) entire line not present.
¹⁰⁶ ZDN (N & S) entire line not present.
¹⁰⁷ ZDN (N & S) entire line not present.
¹⁰⁸ ZDN (N), bas.
¹⁰⁹ ZDN (N), gdam.
¹¹⁰ GR (mTsho) & (M) bzhed.
¹¹¹ ZDN (N) entire line not present.
¹¹² GR (mTsho) grwa; (M) drwa.
¹¹³ ZDN (N) entire line not present.
¹¹⁴ ZDN (N) & GR (mTsho) phyi'i; (S) n.a.
¹¹⁵ MG sgron me (sic).

dam rdzas [GR (M) 62a] rtogs pa'i nyi ma ~~thob~~ dang

spyod pa chu la ral gri ~~thob~~ dang

rang grol phyag rgya chen po ~~thob~~ dang

'chi med bdud rtsi'i bcud len thob

~~ngo sprod gnad kyi bar do thob~~ [displaced below]

~~bsam gtan thun 'jog gdams ngag thob~~ [displaced below]

~~brda¹¹⁶ don gsum dang rin chen lnga~~ [displaced below]

gzhan yang¹¹⁷ ~~dgos pa'i chos drug dang~~ [displaced below]

~~bsam mi khyab kyi gdams ngag thob~~ [displaced below]

~~rin chen~~ gser dang dra ba'i chos

ngo sprod gnad kyi bar do ~~thob~~ dang [displaced from above]

bsam gtan thun 'jog¹¹⁸ gdams¹¹⁹ ngag ~~thob~~ dang [displaced from above]

brda¹²⁰ don gsum dang rin chen lnga [displaced from above]

nyams su len pa'i ~~dgos pa'i~~ chos drug dang [displaced from above]

tshe 'dir dgos pa'i gdams ngag sogs

bsam¹²¹ mi khyab kyi¹²² gdams¹²³ ngag la ~~thob~~ [displaced from above]

From Song 1:

~~rin thang bla ma rje dang mjal~~

ma dang mkha' 'gro sprin bzhin 'dus

~~ngo mtshar ltad mo thams cad mthong~~¹²⁴ [displaced below]

¹¹⁶ ZDN bda'.

¹¹⁷ ZDN (N) as interlinear addition.

¹¹⁸ ZDN (N) 'dzom; (S) n.a.

¹¹⁹ ZDN (N) & LT, gdam.

¹²⁰ ZDN (N) bda'.

¹²¹ ZDN (N) & GR (mTsho) & GR (M), bsam gyi [sic] (gyis).

~~gdams~~¹²⁵ ~~ngag mkha' 'gro'i srog snying zhus~~¹²⁶ [displaced below]

lha dang bla mas¹²⁷ mnyes mnyes mdzad

ngo mtshar ltad mo thams cad mthong¹²⁸ [displaced from above]

gdams¹²⁹ ngag mkha' 'gro'i srog snying zhus¹³⁰ [displaced from above]

bdag dang ~~byin brlabs~~ thugs yid gcig¹³¹ tu 'dres

dngos grub me tog char pa¹³² babs¹³³

dbang dang rjes gnang gos su [GR (mTsho) 118] gyon¹³⁴

~~lha dang~~ ltas¹³⁵ bzang rten 'brel mgul¹³⁶ du btags

lha yi¹³⁷ kha¹³⁸ 'bags¹³⁹ kha [NT 524] nas ru bcug

man ngag dmar khrid lag tu gtad

bkra shis smon lam skyel ma mdzad

ltas¹⁴⁰ dang lung bstan bsu bsu¹⁴¹ mas bsus¹⁴²

don chen bsam pa dgung¹⁴³ du¹⁴⁴ 'grub

~~spro dga'~~ dga' spro skyid pa'i nyi ma shar

¹²² ZDN (N) & GR (mTsho) & GR (M), not present; ZDN (S) pa'i.
¹²³ ZDN gdam.
¹²⁴ MG line not present.
¹²⁵ ZDN gdam.
¹²⁶ MG line not present.
¹²⁷ ZDN ma.
¹²⁸ MG, line not present.
¹²⁹ ZDN gdam.
¹³⁰ MG line not present.
¹³¹ NT cig.
¹³² GR (mTsho) ba.
¹³³ ZDN & GR (mTsho) & GR (M), bab.
¹³⁴ ZDN bsgon. Mi-la'i Mgur-'bum. Entire line not present.
¹³⁵ GR (M), bltas.
¹³⁶ ZDN 'gul NT mgul, MG, mgur.
¹³⁷ ZDN & GR (mTsho) & GR (M), lha'i
¹³⁸ NT & GR (M), pha; GR (mTsho), la.
¹³⁹ ZDN (N) bab; (S) n.a.; GR (mTsho) 'babs; GR (M) 'bab, NT phogs.
¹⁴⁰ ZDN (N) rtags; (S) n.a., GR (M), bltas.
¹⁴¹ ZDN (N) sun; (S) n.a.
¹⁴² MG, entire line not present.
¹⁴³ ZDN (N) rgung; (S) n.a., GR (M), gung.
¹⁴⁴ NT nas; ZDN (S) n.a.

~~yang dag~~ da ni bla ma ~~khyed dang~~ rje btsun mjal
lus med mkha' 'gro'i chos skor la sogs
bdag gis thob pa'i dam chos la
gong¹⁴⁵ du 'phrin las 'byung ba'i phyir

From Song 2:

~~mang du bzhugs pas¹⁴⁶~~ ~~mchod bstod mdzod~~
thugs la¹⁴⁷ e¹⁴⁸ 'phrod gzigs ~~par zhu~~ nas kyang [end of song 2]

From Song 1:

mchod bstod ~~zhabs tog khyed rang shes~~ mnga' [GR (M) 62b] gsol mdzad par¹⁴⁹ zhu

¹⁴⁵ GR (mTsho) & GR (M), bod.
¹⁴⁶ ZDN (N) pa'i, (S) n.a.
¹⁴⁷ ZDN (N) su; (S) n.a.
¹⁴⁸ ZDN (N) & GR (M) i; (S) n.a.
¹⁴⁹ GR (M) pa.

Appendix B

Relevant texts in the Derge Canon

Some texts appear in more than one list.

A Sanskrit reconstruction is marked by an asterisk.

Kaṇṭatantra texts

1987 Vajra-pada-vibheda (rDo-rje'i tshig nam-par dbye-ba).

Author Amoghavajra.

Translators : Unknown (possibly Amoghavajra himself).

2337 Śrī-cakrasaṃvaropadeśa-mukhakarma-paramparā-cintāmaṇi (dPal 'khor-lo sdom-pa'i man-ngag zhal nas snyan du brgyud-pa yid-bzhin nor-bu).

Author: Tillipa.

Translators: Nāropa and Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros.

2338 Kaṇṭatantra-vajrapada (sNyan-brgyud rdo-rje'i tshig-skang).

Author: Nāropa.

Translators: Nāropa and Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros.

Texts translated by Ras-chung-pa

There is one translation under the name Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags. The Dharma Publishing index inaccurately cross-references him with [Rwa] rDo-rje Grags-pa.

4531 Vajrapada-vibhaṅga/vibedha* (rDo-rje'i tshig gi mam-par dbye-ba).

Author: Amoghavajra.

Co-translator: Ti-phu gSang-ngags sDong-po.

Translations by Tipupa

There are two texts with variants of his name in the colophons.

i) Under the name Thepupa:

1747 Dharmābhiṣeka-mārgasaṃhati (dBang-chos rten-'brel 'gro-ldog).

Author: Nāropa.

Translated with rMa-ban Chos'bar.

ii) Under the name Ti-phu gSang-ngags sDong-po:

4531 Vajrapada-vibhaṅga* (rDo-rje'i tshig gi mam-par dbye-ba).

Author: Amoghavajra.

Translated with Ras-chung rDo-rje Grags-pa.

Texts authored by Jñānadākinī Siddharājñī*

- i) 2140 Āryalokeśvaraguhyā-sādhana ('Phags-pa 'jig-rten dbang-phyug gsang-ba'i sgrub-thabs).

Translators: Not mentioned. Possibly translated by Varacandra and Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- ii) 2141 Aparimitāyurjñāna-maṇḍalavidhi (Tshe dpag tu med-pa'i dkyil-'khor gyi cho ga).

Translators: Zla-ba bZang-po (Varacandra) and [Glan-chung] Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- iii) 2142 Hayagrīva-sādhana (rta-mgrin gyi sgrub-thabs).

Translators: Zla-ba bZang-po (Varacandra) and [Glan-chung] Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- iv) 2143 Aparimitāyurjñāna-sādhana-nāma (Tshe-dpag-tu-med-pa zhes-bya-ba'i sgrub-thabs).

Translators: Zla-ba bZang-po (Varacandra) and [Glan-chung] Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- v) 2144 Aparimitāyur-homavidhi (Tshe dpag-tu-med-pa'i sbyin-sreg gi cho ga).

Translators: Varacandra and [Glan-chung] Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- vi) 2145 Aparimitāyurjñāna-sadhana (Tshe dang ye-shes dPag-tu-med-pa'i sgrub-thabs).

Translators: Not mentioned. Possibly translated by Varacandra and Glan-
chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

vii) 2146 Bhagavad-aparimitāyurjñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi (bCom-ldan-'das Tshe dang
yes-shes dpag-tu-med-pa'i dkyil-'khor gyi cho-ga).

Translators: Not mentioned. Possibly translated by Varacandra and Glan-
chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

viii) 4775 Bhagavad-aparimitāyurjñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi (bCom-ldan-'das Tshe dang
yes-shes dpag-tu-med-pa'i dkyil-'khor gyi cho-ga).

Translators: Not mentioned. Possibly translated by Varacandra and Glan-
chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

Translations by Varacandra

There are fourteen texts that are stated to have been translated into Tibetan with the assistance of Varacandra plus eight translations that he may have assisted with.

His name appears in the colophons as Balacandra (and in the biographies as Wa-la-tsan-dra) without a long vowel. However, Prof. Richard Gombrich points out that there is no such Indian name as Balacandra, but Bālacandra (“Young Moon”) is a recognised Indian name; it is also a name of Kṛṣṇa.¹ However, the translation of his name as Zla-ba bZang-po agrees with Varacandra, and Walatsandra (as in the

¹ Richard Gombrich, pers. comm., 2000.

narratives) or Balatsandra (as in the colophons) would be Nepalese or Maithili versions of Varacandra, due to their substitution of *La* for *Ra*.

bKa-‘gyur Tantra Section

- i) 463 Śrī-vajrapāṇi-guhyābhideśa-tantra (dPal phyag-na rdo-rje gsang-ba bstan-pa’i rgyud).

Translated with Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims

- ii) 464 Bhagavad-vajrapāṇi- guhyābhideśa-tantra-rāja (bCom-ldan-‘das phyag-na rdo-rje gsang-ba mngon-par bstan-pa’i rgyud kyi rgyal-po). Translated with Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

bsTan-‘gyur

- iii) 2140 Āryalokeśvaraguhyā-sādhana (‘Phags-pa ‘jig-rten dbang-phyug gsang-ba’i sgrub-thabs).

Author: Jñānadākinī Siddharājñī.

[Perhaps translated by Varacandra and Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims]

- iv) 2141 Aparimitāyurjñāna-maṇḍalavidhi (Tshe dpag tu med-pa’i dkyil-‘khor gyi cho ga).

[Author: Jñānadākinī Siddharājñī].

Translated with [Glan-chung] Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

His name is given in Tibetan as Zla-ba bZang-po (“Good Moon”), which suggests Varacandra as the classical form of the Balatsandra of the colophons.

v) 2142 Hayagrīva-sādhana (rta-mgrin gyi sgrub-thabs).

Author: Jñānaḍākinī Siddharājñī.

Translated with [Glan-chung] Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

Varacandra’s name is translated as Zla-ba bZang-po.

vi) 2143 Aparimitāyurjñāna- sādhana (Tshe dpag tu med-pa zhes-bya-ba’i sgrub-thabs). by Jñānaḍākinī Siddharājñī.

Translated with [Glan-chung] Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

Varacandra’s name is translated as Zla-ba bZang-po.

vii) 2144 Aparimitāyur-homavidhi (Tshe dpag tu med-pa’i sbyin-sreg gi cho ga).

Author: Jñānaḍākinī Siddharājñī.

Translated with [Glan-chung] Dar-ma Tshul-khrims

viii) 2145 Aparimtāyurjñāna-sadhana (Tshe dang ye-shes dPag-tu-med-pa’i sgrub-thabs).

Author: Jñānaḍākinī Siddharājñī.

Possibly translated by Varacandra and Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

ix) 2146 Bhagavad-aparamitāyurjñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi (bCom-ldan-'das Tshe dang yes-shes dpag-tu-med-pa'i dkyil-'khor gyi cho-ga).

Author: Jñānaḍākinī Siddharājñī.

Possibly translated by Varacandra and Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

x) 2192 Mahāyakṣasenāpati-nīlāmbaradhara-vajrapāṇi-garuḍa-sādhana gNod-sbyin gyi sde-dpon chen-po lag-na rdo-rje gos-sngon-po can dang bya-khyung gi sgrub-thabs).

Author: Karmavajra.

Translated with gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

xi) 2193 Śrī-vajrapāṇi-sādhana (dPal phyag-na rdo-rje sgrub-pa'i thabs).

Author: Karmavajra.

Translated with gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

xii) 2194 [Vidya-vidhāna-stambhana-vidhi] (Rig-sngags bcad-pa dang mnan-pa'i cho-ga).

Author: Not given.

Translated by gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims. [Perhaps with assistance from Varacandra].

xiii) 2195 [Śrī-vajrapāṇi-homasamkṣepa] (dPal phyag-na rdo-rje'i sbyin-sreg mdor-bsdus-pa).

Author: [probably Karmavajra].

Translated by gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims. [Probably with assistance from Varacandra].

xiv) 2196 [Nāgavistarabali] (Klu-gtor rgyas-pa).

Author: Not given.

Translated by gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims. [Perhaps with assistance from Varacandra].

xv) 2199 Vajracāṇḍa-maṇḍala-vidhi-bhadra-saṃkṣepa (rdo-rje gtum-po'i dkyil-'khor gyi cho-ga bzang-po mdor-bsdus-pa).

Author: Karmavajra.

Translated with gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

Varacandra's name is translated as Zla-ba bZang-po.

xvi) 4775 Bhagavad-aparamitāyurjñāna-maṇḍala-vidhi (bCom-ldan-'das Tshe dang yes-shes dpag-tu-med-pa'i dkyil-'khor gyi cho-ga).

Translators: Not mentioned. Possibly translated by Varacandra and Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

xvii) 4840 Yakṣa-mahākāla-sādhana (gNod-sbyin nag-po chen-po'i sgrub-thabs).

Author: Karmavajra (his name is given in translation as Las-kyi rDo-rje).

Translated with gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

xviii) 4841 Śrī-mahākāla-sādhana (dPal nag-po chen-po'i sgrub-thabs).

Author: Karmavajra (his name is given in translation as Las-kyi rDo-rje).

Translated with gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- xix) 4842 Yakṣa-mahākāla-ratnastuti (gNod-sbyin nag-po chen-po la rin-po-ches bstod-pa).

Author: Karmavajra (his name is given in translation as Las-kyi rDo-rje).

Translated with gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- xx) 4875 Yakṣiṇī-kālī-māraṇa (gNod-sbyin nag-mos bsad-pa'i sgrub-thabs).

Author: Karmavajra (his name is given in translation as Las-kyi rDo-rje).

Translated with gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- xxi) 4876 Krodharāja-trailokyavijaya-sādhana (Khro-bo'i rgyal-po kham gsun nam-par rgyal-ba'i sgrub-thabs).

Author: Karmavajra (his name is given in translation as Las-kyi rDo-rje).

Translated with gLan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims.

- xxii) 4877 Mahākrodhāmṛtakuṇḍali-sādhana (Khro-bo chen-po bdud-rtsi 'khyil-pa'i sgrub-thabs).

Author: Thang-lo-pa.

Translated by Glan-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims. [Perhaps with assistance from Varacandra].

Texts co-translated by Karmavajra

bKa’-‘gyur

- i) 480 Vajraśekhara-mahāguhya-yogatantra (gSang-ba mal-’byor chen-po’i rgyud rdo-rje rtse-mo).

Co-translator: gZhon-nu Tshul-khrims.

bsTan-‘gyur

- ii) 1635 Śrī-buddhaḍākinī-sāhana (dPal sangs-rgyas mkha’-’gro ma’i sgrub-thabs)

Author: Kṛṣṇapa.

Co-translator: gZhon-nu Tshul-khrims.

- iii) 1636 Mahāmāyā-maṇḍala-vidhi-krama (sGy-‘phrul chen-mo’i dkyil-‘khor gyi cho-ga’i rim-pa gsal-ba).

Author: Kṛṣṇapa.

Co-translator: gZhon-nu Tshul-khrims.

- iv) 1826 Piṇḍīkṛta-sādhana-vṛtti-ratnāvalī (mdor-bsdus-pa’i sgrub-thabs kyi ‘grel-pa rin-chen phreng-ba).

Author: Ratnākaraśānti.

Co-translator: Not given.

iv) 1840 Pañcakrama-tīkā-maṇimālā* (Rim-pa lnga'i nam-par bshad-pa)

Author: Nāgabodhi.

Co-translator: gZhon-nu Tshul-khrims.

v) 3769 Nānātantroddhṛta-balividhi (rgyud sna-tshogs las btus-pa'i gtor-ma'i choga).

Author: Nāgārjuna.

Co-translator: gZhon-nu Tshul-khrims.

vi) 4712 Śrī-vajrabhairava-tantra-vṛtti-alamkāropadeśa (dPal rdo-rje 'gigs-byed kyi rgyud kyi 'grel-pa man-ngag dang ldan-pa'i rgyan).

Author: Lalitavajra.

Co-translator: gZhon-nu Tshul-khrims.

Appendix C

The identity of the Nepalese King that Ras-chung-pa petitions

The records concerning the Kathmandu valley's kings during the lifetime of Ras-chung-pa are somewhat unclear, as the political conditions were unstable and complex. There is the additional confusion of later "thoroughly unreliable" chronicles that have influenced earlier researchers into the subject.¹ Nevertheless, it is possible to identify the king that he is said to have met. There were three cities: Kathmandu (Tibetan: *Yam-bu*, derived from Newari, the name Kathmandu having its origins in the fifteenth century), Patan, also known as Lalitpur (Tibetan: *Ye-rangs* or *Ye-rang*, derived from the Newari *Yala* or *Yalai*),² and Bhaktapur, aka Bhatgaon (Tibetan: *Kho-khom* [in *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*],³ *Khu-khom* in *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*]⁴ or *Khu-khrom* [a corruption of *Khu-khom* in *Byin-rlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*],⁵ derived from the Newari *Khopo*, cf. the Chinese *Kou-k'ou-mou*) that could potentially each function simultaneously as the capitals of different kings. In fact, only the northern part of present-day Kathmandu was called Yam-bu, while the southern area was a separate town called Ya-'gal or Tripureśvara.⁶ In addition to chronicles, the colophons of texts and inscriptions on coins indicate that there were two contemporary kings at this time.

¹ Regmi, 153.

² Turrell Wylie, *A Tibetan Religious Geography of Nepal* Serie Orientale Roma 42 (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il Medio ed Estremo Oriente, 1970), 13 n.10.

³ *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 261.

⁴ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 96b5; (Oxford), 74a2; (Stockholm), n.a.

⁵ *Byin-brlab gyi Chu-bo*, 449.

⁶ *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, 268; Petech, 187.

King Śivadeva (19 June 1057-1126) reigned for twenty-seven years and seven months.⁷ This reign therefore appears to have begun in, or soon after the death of the King Harśadeva in 1098. However, the only portion of Śivadeva's reign that can be definitely ascertained from colophons is between 1120 and 1123.⁸ He was a Śaivite, who gilded the temple roof of Paśupati and built a palace at Bhaktapur.⁹

His heir apparent, crown-prince Mahendradeva, (April 18th 1079-1154) appears not to have succeeded to the throne. He is recorded to be the son of a rival King Siṃhadeva, also known as Sīhadeva, though Petech thinks he was the son of Śivadeva,¹⁰ while Regmi believes that he was the son of the contemporary king in the Kathmandu valley, who was closely related to Śivadeva and may even have been his brother.¹¹ Siṃhadeva (also known as Sīhadeva) we know from colophons to have reigned at least from 1111 to 1112, while Petech guesses a reign of c.1110-1125.¹² According to both Petech and Regmi,¹³ Śivadeva and Siṃhadeva are without question different, contemporary monarchs. They state that previous scholars, such as Sylvain Levi, did not have access to the entire textual evidence, and therefore conflated the two kings. With the entire *Vaṃśāvalī* chronicle available, Petech discovered, for example, that the text “mentions first Śivadeva and a line below Siṃhadeva without the slightest hint about their being one and the same person.”¹⁴ Regmi states that the

⁷ Luciano Petech, *Mediaeval history of Nepal 750-1480*, Serie Orientale Roma, vol. 10: Materials for the Study of Nepalese History, vol 3 (Rome: Istituto Italiano per il medio de estremo oriente, 1958), 55.

⁸ D. R. Regmi, *Medieval Nepal*, vol. 1, *Early Medieval Period 750-1530 A.D.* (Calcutta: Firma K. L. Mukhopadhyay, 1965), 161.

⁹ Regmi, 56.

¹⁰ Petech, 55.

¹¹ Regmi, 164.

¹² Petech, 57.

¹³ Regmi, 159.

¹⁴ Petech, 56.

available colophons "prove beyond doubt that Siṃhadeva was a different person from Śivadeva and that he ruled by himself between 231 [1111] and 242 NS [1122 AD]."¹⁵

The name of King Siṃhadeva is unique amongst the kings of Nepal in this period, in that he is "the only Nepalese King who openly proclaimed his faith in the Buddhist religion."¹⁶ He is mentioned in the colophons to five Buddhist texts and is referred to as a Paramasaugata (supreme Buddhist), though as Regmi warns, this does not necessarily mean that he was exclusively a Buddhist, but may have been a Śaivite also.¹⁷

From amongst the colophons that provide evidence for Siṃhadeva's reign from 1111 to 1124, one states that he ruled in Patan in March 1120. However, the first of the Śivadeva colophons indicate that Śivadeva ruled Patan in June 1120. Regmi deduces from this a gradual diminution of Siṃhadeva's power, with the loss of Patan between March and June of 1120.¹⁸

Though not to be found in rGya-ldang-pa, Bla-ma Zhang or sGam-po-pa, later works describe Mi-la Ras-pa as being visited by a gift-bearing emissary of a King of both Patan and Bhaktapur, while he was staying in what is now the Nepalese area called Manang.¹⁹ The *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, in a brief parallel version, has a King of India sending the gifts to Mi-la when he is at an unspecified location, but apparently in Tibet, before the encounter with Dar-lo.²⁰ The *gSer-phreng Chen-mo* is similar, though the king is not even identified with a territory.²¹ In the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i*

¹⁵ Regmi, 159.

¹⁶ Petech, 57, n.8.

¹⁷ Regmi, 160.

¹⁸ Ibid., 163.

¹⁹ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (Newark), 95b-97b; (Oxford), 74a1-74a3; (Stockholm), n.a.

²⁰ *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu*, 225-26.

²¹ *gSer-phreng Chen-mo*, 244-45.

rNam-thar,²² and the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*²³ Ras-chung-pa's meeting with the King takes place *before* the King sends his emissary to Mi-la, while it takes place *after* (and thus makes for better narrative sense) in the *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*.²⁴ In the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, these events are set around 1110, so that the only possible historical basis for this story would be King Simhadeva, whether identical with Śivadeva or not..

Thus the narrative develops over time from its obscure origins in the *Yid-bzhin Nor-bu* and *gSer-phreng Chen-mo*, and is perhaps a later association of Mi-la with a vague memory of a Nepalese King known for his patronage of Buddhism.

²² *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 67b1-67b6; (Oxford), 51a6-51b4; (Stockholm), 90b4-90b6.

²³ *Byin-brlab kyi Chu-rgyun*, 449-51.

²⁴ gTsang-smyon, *Mi-la'i mGur-'bum*, 261-64.

Appendix D

The Identity of the Buddhist Masters that appear in the biographies of Ras-chung-pa

This appendix is not assuming the historical verity of Ras-chung-pa's meetings with these masters, though it will indicate whether it was possible. Of greater importance is who the narrators assumed these people to be, and why it was significant that Ras-chung-pa should have met them, even if their significance and identity was to a great extent forgotten within the narrative tradition itself.

1. Ye-rang-pa

This personal toponym means the man from Ye-rang, which is Lalitpur or Patan. In *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, Asu states that this was the town in the Kathmandu valley that Indians settled in, while Tibetans stayed in Yam-bu or north Kathmandu, while neither Indians nor Tibetans settled in either south Kathmandu or Bhaktapur.¹

The name Ye-rang-pa could therefore apply to more than one master. However, a Ye-rang-pa is said to be one of the four famous masters in Nepal during the teens of 'Khon-pu-ba (1069-1124), i.e., in the 1080's. 'Khon-pu-ba went to Nepal in 1094 and received the teaching of Maitripa from him.² The other three famous masters are said to be Pham-thing-pa, Atulyavajra and Mo-han rDo-rje. Ye-rang-pa

¹ *rGod-tshang Ras-pa*, 268.

² *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 227; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 203.

could be another name for Vajrapāṇi, and although this will prove to be less likely an identification, it is worthwhile describing who he was.

In 1074 Dam-pa sKor (1062-1112) is told that Vajrapāṇi is one of the three great masters in Nepal,³ the other two being Pham-thing-pa and Bha-ro Phyag-rdum.⁴

Vajrapāṇi (born 1017),⁵ was one of the “four great pupils” of Maitripa (1107/10-1087), the Mahāmudrā master who was also a teacher of Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros, and therefore one of the Indian progenitors of the bKa’-brgyud lineage. The other three “great pupils” were Natekara (also known as Sahajavajra), Śūnyatāsamādhi (also known as Devākaracandra) and Rāmapāla. Ras-chung-pa is depicted as also receiving teachings from Rāmapāla.

Vajrapāṇi went to Lalitpur/Patan in 1066, at the age of forty-nine. He became so eminent and wealthy that the translator dPyal Kun-dga’ rDo-rje considered him above his means to invite to Tibet, and so invited Devākaracandra instead.⁶ Nevertheless Vajrapāṇi did go to Tibet on the invitation of ‘Brog Jo-sras rDo-rje ‘Bar where he had numerous pupils and he assisted in the translation of nearly forty texts and authored eleven that are in the canon. The “upper” “lower” and “later” traditions of *Māhamudrā* all originate from Vajrapāṇi’s pupils, the lower (*smad-‘gyur*) being that of his pupil Asu, who Ras-chung-pa studied with in Tibet.⁷ Asu described Vajrapāṇi as a white-haired Paṇḍita who liked to give sugar cane to Tibetans and also enjoyed getting them drunk.⁸

³ Ibid., (Roerich), 851; (‘Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 753.

⁴ Decleer, H. “The Sacred Biography of Bhara ‘Maimed Hand’” in *Buddha Jayanti Souvenir*, ed. R. Shakya & M. Shakya (Lalitpur: 2538th Buddha Jayanti Organising Committee, 1994).

⁵ *Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 843; (‘Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 746.

⁶ Ibid., (Roerich), 396; (‘Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 348.

⁷ Ibid., (Roerich), 843; (‘Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 747.

⁸ rGod-tshang Ras-pa, 268.

His pupils included the translator rMa-ban Chos-'bar, also known as rMa Lo-tsā-ba, the teacher of Khon-pu-pa who also worked on a translation with Tipupa (See Appendix B).

Vajrapāṇi would have been in his nineties at least when Ras-chung-pa was visiting India, and so belongs to the generation of Mar-pa, Mi-la's teacher, rather than that of Mi-la. Rāmapāla and Tipupa are also of that earlier generation, though the latter would have been more than ten years younger than Vajrapāṇi.

Lo Bue points out another possible identification for Ye-rang-pa that would be a more likely candidate for the Ye-rang-pa in Ras-chung-pa's biography: Mahākaruṇa, who he describes as "one of the greatest Newar scholars of the eleventh century," was known as *ye rang gi dge bsnyen chen po 'am bal po thugs rje chen po* (The great upāsaka of Lalitpur, or Māhakarūṇa)⁹ who taught Khon-pu-ba, Rwa Lo-tsā-ba and 'Gos lhas-brtsas.

2. Rāmapāla

One of "the four great pupils of Maitripa."¹⁰ He is the author of one canonical text (No. 2253) which was taught by Vajrapāṇi in Tibet,¹¹ and which was translated into Tibetan by Nag-tsho Lo-tsā-ba (born 1110).

3. Atulyadāsa

Also known as Atulyadāsavajra, Atulyavajra, Atulyapāda Adulopa, Aduladhasa.

⁹ Lo Bue, 652.

¹⁰ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 842; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 746.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 857; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 757.

He is one of the seven “middle-ranking” pupils of Maitripa,¹² as was Tipupa. As mentioned above, he was one of the four most famous masters in Nepal during the 1080’s. He assisted on the translation of eight canonical texts, three of them¹³ with rNgog Blo-ldan Shes-rab (1059-1109) who came to Nepal in the mid-1090’s,¹⁴ and one¹⁵ with Ba-ri Rin-chen Grags (born 1040).

4. Ben-da-ba (aka Painḍapātika and Jinadatta)

There was an earlier Bengalese master of that name, who was also known as Avadhūtipa. The later Painḍapātika was his pupil and could have been a contemporary of Ras-chung-pa. He was also known as Jinadatta, and said to be from a low caste in Magadha.¹⁶ With his pupil Buddhadatta, he went to Nepal where he taught Devākaracandra, also known as Śūnyatāsamādhi (one of Maitripa’s four great pupils) who was a high caste Newar from Ya-‘gal (southern Kathmandu, or Tripureśvara), Ma-he Bhāro, and Ha-mu dKar-po (see below). He also taught the translator dPyal Kun-dga’ rDo-rje, who took Devākaracandra to Tibet and who was a pupil of Ha-mu dKar-po also.¹⁷ In the Rwa Lo-tsā-ba biography dPyal Kun-dga’ rDo-rje is depicted as developing faith in Rwa Chos-kyi Grags-pa (who is said to have travelled to Nepal at the same time as Ras-chung-pa). This was after initial cynicism, and, though dPyal was an established master, he becomes Rwa’s pupil.¹⁸

¹² Ibid., (Roerich), 843; (’Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 746.

¹³ *Derge Canon*, texts 1933, 3876, 3978.

¹⁴ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 325; (’Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 288.

¹⁵ *Derge Canon*, text 1403.

¹⁶ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 390; (’Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 344.

¹⁷ Ibid., (Roerich), 386; (’Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 341.

¹⁸ Rwa Ye-shes Seng-ge, 196-202

5. Ha-mu dKar-po (Ha-ngu dKar-po, Ha-du dKar-po)

According to the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, his “real” name was Puṇyākarabhadra (bSod-nams ‘byung-gnas), his formal name was Varendraruci, and he learned Vajravārāhī from Devākaracandra, aka Śūnyatāsamādhi.¹⁹ Perhaps because he was a teacher of the Vajrayoginī practice, the Ras-chung-pa narrative tradition has transformed his name into a female form. His name is given as Hang-bu dKar-mo in the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*; in Mon-rtse-pa, though the name is male — Hang-ngu dKar-po — he is specified to be a female.

However, he is a male Ha-ngu dKar-po in *Byin-rlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* and is Ha-du dKar-bo in rGod-tshang Ras-pa.

The Newar word *haṇḍu* is the equivalent of the Tibetan *sngags-pa (tāntrika)*, denoting a married *vajrayāna* practitioner.²⁰

There was an earlier Haṇḍu dKar-po, also known as Śāntibhadra, who was a teacher of Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros.²¹ The Ras-chung-pa narrative must refer to the later Ha-du dKar-po that was a leading Newar Buddhist master at the end of the eleventh century. As mentioned above, he was, along with Devākaracandra (a.k.a. Śūnyatāsamādhi), Ma-he Bhāro and Buddhadatta, a pupil of Ben-da-ba (a.k.a. Painḍapātika), who Ras-chung-pa is also said to have received teaching from. Ha-du dKar-po’s Sanskrit name was Puṇyākarabhadra, while his scholastic name was Varendraruci.

¹⁹ *Blue Annals* (Roerich) 394; (‘Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 347.

²⁰ Erberto F. Lo Bue, “The Role of Newar Scholars in transmitting the Indian Buddhist heritage to Tibet (c. 750-c.1200)” in *Les Habitants du Toit du Monde*, ed. Samten Karmay & Phillipe Sagant (Nanterre: Société d’ethnologie, 1997), 642.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 639-40.

Like Vajrapāṇi and Tipupa he worked on translations with rMa Lo-tsā-ba²² and, like Atulydāsa, he worked on translations with rNgog Blo-ldan Shes-rab²³ (1059-1109) who came to Nepal in the mid-1090's.²⁴ Together they translated texts authored by Buddhadatta,²⁵ Śūnyatāsāmādhi/Devākaracandra²⁶ and Avadhūtipa (the earlier Painḍapātika).²⁷ He also authored a Vajravārāhī text.²⁸

Although all our Tibetan sources refer to him as Nepalese, Lo Bue notes that the *rGyud-'grel* refers to him as Indian. Lo Bue concludes that this may be an nickname, but it could also be an original lack of attention to detail.²⁹

The *Deb-ther sNgon-po* includes an amusing anecdote that when Ha-mu dKar-po had invited Painḍapātika to his home to give himself, Mahe Bhāro, Buddhadatta and Śūnyatāsāmādhi an initiation, five consorts were required. However Ha-mu dKar-po's wife was jealous so the young girls were rendered invisible. Her suspicions were aroused on seeing the bowls of alcohol being held by them. However Painḍapātika came to the rescue by telling her that they were floating through his blessing!

6. Asu

Also known as Bal-po sKye-med.³⁰ He had an Indian grandfather, but was a native of Nepal and became a pupil of Vajrapāṇi. He is said to have been en route to China on pilgrimage when he married and settled down in Tibet where he founded the *sMad-'gyur* tradition of Māhamudrā.

²² Derge Canon, texts 1265, 1485, 1550, 1555.

²³ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 396; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 348.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, texts 1551-4, 1556.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, text 1556.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, texts 1551, 1553.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, text 1552.

²⁸ Derge, text 1580.

²⁹ Lo Bue, 636.

7. rMa Lo-tsā-ba and 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba

The translators that Ras-chung-pa encounters with Tipupa in most versions, with 'Gos corrupted to 'Og in some, owe their names no doubt to the well known rMa Chos-'bar (1044-1089) and 'Gos Khug-pa lHa-brtsas.

rMa Chos-'bar had worked with Tipupa and other teachers that Ras-chung-pa is said to have met. However, as he was murdered by poisoning in Tibet when Ras-chung-pa was five years old,³¹ he cannot be identified with the interpreter in the narrative.

The prolific 'Gos, with seventy-two translations in the canon appears to be from an earlier generation, having studied under such masters as Atiśa (982-1054)³² and had worked on translations with Gayadhara and 'Brog-mi Lo-tsā-ba.³³ Therefore he could not be identified with the 'Gos in the narrative. However, the Rwa Lo-tsā-ba biography depicts Rwa as killing 'Gos Khug-pa lHa-brtsas by sorcery in response to a similar attack from him.³⁴ Also, 'Gos also worked with Amoghavajra, who also appears in the Ras-chung-pa narrative, on a translation of that author's text on sexual practices.³⁵ Therefore, he also appears to belong to the later end of the eleventh century.

Though there were other translators with the family name of 'Gos, (including the fifteenth century author of the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*), it was probably the continuing resonance of such names as 'Gos, rMa, Gayadhara and Amoghavavra that was the

³⁰ Ibid., 642.

³¹ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 220-27; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 197-203.

³² Ibid., (Roerich), 360; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 319.

³³ Dege Canon, 4605.

³⁴ Rwa Ye-shes Seng-ge, 168.

³⁵ Derge Canon, 1746.

cause for their appearance in the Ras-chung-pa narrative. 'Gos was however replaced by the more innocuous Jo-rgyal in lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal, which is presumably an abbreviation of the obscure Jo-jo (sic) rGyal-mtshan in NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* and *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng*, in which that translator is accompanied by Glang-(sic: Glan)-chung Dar-ma Tshul-khrims, who we know from having worked on translations with Varacandra (See Appendix B) and Vajrāsanaguru, also known as Amoghavara.³⁶

8. Pham-thing-pa and Tha-chung 'Ba'-ro

In the NGMPP *bKa'-brgyud rNam-thar* and *Rwa-lung gSer-phreng* only is Ras-chung-pa said to receive teaching from Pam-thing-pa and his brother. Pham-thing is the present day Parphing in on the southern edge of the Kathmandu valley. Lo Bue's analysis of the difficult topic of identifying the number and identity of Pham-thing-pa brothers, identifies Pham-thing-pa the elder brother as Dharmamati, also known as Abhayakīrti, and Pham-thing-pa the younger brother as Vagīśvarakīrti, also known as A-des Chen-po.³⁷ Anyway, as they were pupils of Nāropa (died 1040) and teachers of Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros, they are of an earlier generation, and therefore Ras-chung-pa would not have been their pupil. Yet, a Pham-thing-pa is declared to be one of the famous masters of Nepal in the 1080's and as a contemporary of Atulyavajra and Tipupa.³⁸ In addition, Mar-pa Do-pa, also known as Mar-pa Chos-kyi

³⁶ Derge Canon, 4892.

³⁷ Lo Bue, 645.

³⁸ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 227; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 203.

dBang-phyug (1042-1136),³⁹ studied under a Pam-thing-pa as well as Vajrapāṇi and Sumatikīrti. Therefore, this may refer to a descendant.

9. Sumatikīrti

Situ Padma Nyin-byed dBang-po gives this name for a Nepalese pupil of Vajrapāṇi, who taught Ras-chung-pa the Jinasāgara practice.

In the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, rNgog Blo-ltan Shes-rab is said to have studied under him in Tibet before his visit to Nepal (in the nineties) to study under Atulyavajra and Varendraruci / Ha-du dKar-po.⁴⁰ Khyung-po rNal-'byor (born 1086) is said to have studied under Sumatikīrti and also under Rāmapāla and Natekara (two of Maitripa's "four great pupils") at Nālanda. (However accounts of Khyung-po rNal-byor's life are not historically consistent, so that he meets masters of different generations).

Sumatikīrti worked on the translation of eight texts⁴¹ with rNgog Blo-ltan Shes-rab, eighteen texts⁴² with Mar-pa Do-pa and another text with both rNgog and Mar-pa Do-pa together.⁴³

Mar-pa Do-pa also studied under Pam-thing-pa and Vajrapāṇi.

10. Amoghavajra

He was also known as the earlier Vajrāsanaguru (gDo-rje gDan-pa). He was the author of a text translated by Ras-chung-pa with Ti-pu-pa (See Appendix B).

³⁹ Ibid., (Roerich), 383-84; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 336-40.

⁴⁰ Ibid., (Roerich), 325; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 288.

⁴¹ Derge, texts 1465, 1466, 1467, 1468, 1469, 3795, 3968, 4544.

⁴² Ibid., texts 1271, 1434, 1435, 1437, 1441, 1443, 1444, 1448, 1541, 1568-72, 1887, 1925, 3663, 4592.

⁴³ Derge Canon, 2710.

However, he was himself fluent in Tibetan for he translated at least thirty-four texts on his own, twenty of which were his own works. He is a contemporary of teachers featured in Ras-chung-pa's biography and in this appendix, for he was a pupil of Painḍapātika and of Mitrayogin⁴⁴ (whose transmission includes a distinct form of Jinasāgara, white in colour unlike the red of Ras-chung-pa's lineage). He translated ninety texts with Ba-ri Rin-chen Grags, also known as Ba-ri Lo-tsā-ba (1040-1111).⁴⁵ His work begins from the middle of the eleventh century, for he worked on a translation⁴⁶ with Rin-chen bZang-po (958-1055), and one of his texts was translated by Atiśa (982-1054) and Nag-tsho Lo-tsā-ba.⁴⁷ He also made translations with rMa Lo-tsā-ba,⁴⁸ 'Gos lHa-brtsas,⁴⁹ and Glan Dar-ma Blo-gros (Bālacandra's translator).⁵⁰

In rGod-tshang Ras-pa he is curiously depicted as Tipupa's uncle, and as the fearsome yogin who tells Ras-chung-pa that he has seven days left to live. This is particularly anomalous as Ras-chung-pa is supposed to have already received teaching from him in Nepal.

11. Tipupa

We find in the biographies the variant spellings of Ti-phu, Ti-phu-pa, Te-pu-pa,⁵¹ Ti-phu-ba⁵² and Ti-bu⁵³ and he is listed as The-pu-pa in the colophon of one

⁴⁴ *Blue Annals*, (Roerich), 1042.

⁴⁵ *Derge Canon*, 564, 682, 901, 988, 1314, 1476, 1737, 2725, 2899, 3131, 3308, 3310, 3321, 3329-99, 3673, 4735, 4879, 4882, 4885, 4975.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 4625.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 3738.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 1986.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1745-6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 4892.

⁵¹ *The Blue Annals* (Roerich), 437; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 382.

⁵² *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 110.

⁵³ *Byang-chub bZang-po*, 129.

canonical text (See Appendix B). In the biographies he is also named sNgags-kyi sDong-po (Mantravṛkṣa*).

In the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* he is classed as one of the seven “middle ranking” pupils of Maitripa, another one of whom was Atulyavajra.⁵⁴

In rGod-tshang Ras-pa he is said to be a re-animated corpse. A young dead brahmin sat up on his funeral pyre and immediately claimed not to be a *vetāla*— a malicious spirit that possesses corpses. He returned home, but his family realised that their dead son's body had indeed become inhabited by another being, but didn't mind, as his character was a definite improvement on that of their son. The body had been re-animated due to a transference of consciousness through *purapraveśa* (*grong-'jug*) that had been carried out in Tibet by Mar-pa Chos-kyi Blo-gros's son, Dar-ma mDo-sde after being mortally injured in a riding accident. The only available body was that of a dead pigeon. Mar-pa instructed him to fly to India, where he alighted on the young dead brahmin and transferred his consciousness into the body. It is said that he is known as Ti-pu-pa because Ti-pu was an Indian word for pigeon. However this is an entirely imaginary etymology.

This identification does have the function of unifying the Ras-chung-pa and Mar-pa lineages, for a bKa'-brgyud-pa practitioner; it also makes good both the loss of Mar-pa's lineage's successor and Mar-pa's failure to receive the complete *dākinī* instructions through the extraordinary narrative device of embodying both the missing successor and the instructions in the person of Tipupa.

⁵⁴ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 843; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 746.

Concerning this story, Jo-nang Tārānatha (1575-1634) warned "One should be aware that many such accounts are actually compilations of falsehood."⁵⁵ Tshe-dbang Kun-khyab, the eminent eighteenth-century Karma bKa'-brgyud historian wrote that "the entire story is spurious".⁵⁶

In rGya-ldang-pa it is evident that Dar-ma mDo-sde was believed to have outlived Mar-pa. Mi-la Ras-pa, now an old man, tells Ras-chung-pa that he has instructions that he can pass on to one individual only, and that Mar-pa had told him to teach them to mDo-sde or an equally worthy recipient. Mi-la says to Ras-chung-pa, "mDo-sde has died last year, and now there is no one else that can be a worthy recipient other than you."⁵⁷

In the biography of Rwa Lo-tsā-ba, Chos-kyi Grags-pa (which is attributed to Rwa's grand-nephew, Rwa Ye-shes Seng-ge), Rwa and mDo-sde practise sorcery against each other which results in mDo-sde's death in a riding accident, but this takes place after Mar-pa's lifetime and mDo-sde has no opportunity to practice *purapraveśa*.⁵⁸

The earlier version of the story is found in *The Lhorong Chos-'byung*. It relates that Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa, the first Karma-pa, who appears to have often identified his contemporaries as the rebirths of previous great masters, declared Yontan bZang-po, who was at the time a child, to be a rebirth of Dar-ma mDo-sde. Dus-gsum mKhyen-pa states that mDo-sde died during Mar-pa's lifetime, and that Mar-pa had instructed him to perform *purapraveśa* into the body of a pigeon (*ldir-mo*). On

⁵⁵ Decleer, Hubert. "The Melodious Drum Sound All-Pervading," in *Tibetan Studies: Proceedings of the 5th Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies Narita 1989*, (Tokyo: Naritasan Shinshoji, 1992), vol 1., 27.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 27.

⁵⁷ rGya-ldang-pa, 366.

⁵⁸ Rwa Ye-shes Seng-ge, 210-13.

Marpa's instructions he then flew to the eastern land of Abhirati, where he was born as the King's second son. He renounced the kingdom for the last twelve years of his life, dying in his seventieth year. He was then reborn into an artist's family in Kathmandu, but died in his thirty-seventh year, to be the reborn as Yon-tan bZang-po.⁵⁹

Though Yon-tan-bZang-po was the pupil of many bKa'-brgyud masters, his biography is primarily recorded in the 'Bri-khung bKa'-brgyud school. Whether this is an authentic record of the first Karma-pa's pronouncement or not, it shows that the Dar-ma mDo-sde—Ti-pu-pa relationship was not universally known or accepted within the bKa'-brgyud-pa tradition.

rGya-ldang-pa does not specify who Tipupa's teacher was, but does say that he passes on the teachings of Maitripa, which agrees with the *Deb-ther sNgon-po*'s identification of him as the latter's pupil. Mon-rtse-pa states that Tipupa received instructions from Maitripa and the obscure Ghayadhara (sic).

'Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa does not include the pigeon story, but states that he was born to Gayadhara and a female attendant of Nāropa's. Similarly, Lhabtsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal does not include the pigeon story. Instead, Tipupa describes his own family. He states that he received teaching from his own (unnamed) father, who had received it from Ghayadhara (sic), a pupil of both Nāropa and Maitripa. In fact when Tipupa was a child, he received this instruction from both his father *and* Ghayadhara. There was a Gayādhara who was Virupa's pupil and 'Brog-mi Lo-tsā-ba's (992-1072) teacher, and who is therefore of too early a date to be

⁵⁹ *Lho-rong Chos-'byung*, 155.

identified with this obscure character. lHa-btsun appears to make Tipupa of a later generation than that of Maitripa's pupils, perhaps to make Ras-chung-pa's life overlap more easily with his.

It appears that rGod-tshang Ras-pa fused together two narrative traditions. In Ras-chung-pa's earlier visit, he is told the pigeon story, as it occurs in gTsang-smyon's biography of Mar-pa, but later, when Ras-chung-pa is Tipupa's pupil there is no mention of it. Instead, Tipupa's father is said to be Ghayadhara himself, while the obscure Candragarbha, who in *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* encountered the wish-fulfilling cow, is said to be Tipupa's paternal uncle, i.e., Ghayadhara's brother. Paṇḍita Amoghavajra is said to be Tipupa's maternal uncle and Līlāvajra (*sGegs-pa'i rDo-rje*), a prolific author from earlier in the century, is said to be his paternal grandfather. This may all be a later accretion of family to enhance Tipupa's standing.

Pad-ma dKar-po, though relying on gTsang-smyon and rGod-tshang Ras-pa, appears to balk at associating Tipupa with this story. He states that Dar-ma mDo-sde died of a riding accident in his twenty-first year, and that Mar-pa told him to fly to east India, where he should enter a young brahmin's corpse. Pad-ma dKar-po then tersely adds. "Nothing more was subsequently heard of him."⁶⁰

When he comes to describe Tipupa he repeats only rGod-tshang Ras-pa's identification of Paṇḍita Ghayadhara as being his father. Pad-ma dKar-po identifies Tipupa himself as Paṇḍita Candrabhadra (not to be confused with [but derived from?] Candragarbha, he of the cow), but with no intimation as to where this name came from.

⁶⁰ Pad-ma dKar-po, 502.

Accounts of Tipupa being a child towards the end of the life of Nāropa (died 1040) would mean that he was in his forties when rMa Lo-tsā-ba was in India. Ras-chung-pa's pupilage under Ti-pu-pa must have taken place no later than the first two decades of the twelfth century, when Ti-pu-pa would have been in his seventies and eighties.

rMa Lo-tsā-ba's stay in India took place before his adoption of the sixteen-year old Ma-gcig Zha-ma (Khon-pu-ba's sister) as a consort in 1085. This accords with Tipupa being famous in the 80's,⁶¹ being a pupil of Maitripa (born 1107/10-1087),⁶² and living long enough to be Ras-chung-pa's teacher in the beginning of the eleventh century.

⁶¹ *Blue Annals* (Roerich), 227; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 203.

⁶² *Ibid.*, (Roerich), 842; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba), 745.

Appendix E

A Comparison of the “Holes in the Shoes” song as found in rGya-ldang-
pa, Zhwa-dmar-pa and the *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar*

rGya-ldang-pa, 358

chung nas skyangs pa’i ras chung pa
gdams ngag sgro ‘dogs gcod btsug pas
be bum ‘di yi mang lugs kyis
tha snyad mkhan du shor gyi dogs
sgom chen stan rdol cig re ba la
dpe cha ‘di yi mang lugs kyis
ston chen lham rdol cig byung gis dogs

bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar, 85a-b

bu chung nas skyangs pa’i ras chung pa
khyod gdams ngag len du btang ba la
dpe cha ‘di’i mang lugs kyis
gzhung bshad mkhan cig byung gis dogs
khyod lta rtogs rang gi sems la thong
bu chung nas skyang pa’i ras chung pa

khyod la Sgom chen stan rdol cig re ba la
 bshad pa ‘di yi mang lugs kyis
 ston chen lham rdol cig byung gis dogs

Zhwa-dmar, 287

bu chung nas skyangs pa’i ras chung pa
 sgom chen stan rdol cig re ba la
 dpe cha ‘di yi mang lugs kyis
 ston chen lham rdol cig ‘ong nyen gda’

rGya-ldang-pa — *bZhad-pa’i rDo-rje’i rNam-thar* comparative

bu chung nas skyangs pa’i ras chung pa
~~khyod gdams ngag sgre ‘dogs geod btsug pas len du btang ba la~~
~~be bum~~ dpe cha ‘di yi¹ mang lugs kyis
~~tha snyad mkhan du shor~~ gzhung bshad mkhan cig byung gyi² dogs
khyod lta rtogs rang gi sems la thong
bu chung nas skyang pa’i ras chung pa
khyod la Sgom chen stan rdol cig re ba la
~~dpe cha~~ bshad pa ‘di yi mang lugs kyis
 ston chen lham rdol cig byung gis dogs

¹ ‘di’i.

² gis.

rGya-ldang-pa — Zhwa-dmar comparative

bu chung nas skyangs pa'i ras chung pa
~~gdams ngag sgro 'dogs geod btsug pas~~
~~be bum 'di yi mang lugs kyis~~
~~tha snyad mkhan du shor gyi dogs~~
sgom chen stan rdol cig re ba la
dpe cha 'di yi mang lugs kyis
ston chen lham rdol cig ~~byung gis dogs~~ 'ong nyen gda'

Appendix F

The Dates of Mi-la Ras-pa

1) sGam-po-pa and Bla-ma Zhang, which are our earliest sources, provide no life-span or dates for Mi-la Ras-pa.

2) Don-mo Ri-pa's account (written circa 1245) is included in rDo-rje mDzes-'od (writing after 1344). He gives no year for Mi-la Ras-pa's birth, but states that he died in his eighty-second year on the eighth day of the fourth month in a year of the bird.¹

Corresponding western dates for Mi-la's life span could be 1024-1105, 1036-1117 or 1048-1129. The birth would have taken place in a year of the rat.

3) rGya-ldang-pa (thirteenth-century) states that Mi-la Ras-pa was born in a sheep year² and died, in his seventy-third year, in the third spring month of a monkey year.³ Though in western terms the seventy-third year would normally correspond to seventy-two years old, this life-span works out at seventy-three in western enumeration, and so the year of his death should have been given as seventy-fourth in Tibetan. These dates could be 1043-1116, 1055-1128 or 1067-1140.

¹ rDo-rje mDzes-'od, 215.

² rGya-ldang-pa, 198.

³ Ibid., 260.

4) *Deb-ther dMar-po*, completed in 1346, tends towards history rather than hagiography. It supplies no dates for Mi-la Ras-pa, which implies that none were available for its author.

5) mKha'-spyod dBang-po, the second Zhwa-dmar-pa (1350-1405) gives no year for Mi-la's birth or death, only stating that he died in his eighty-fourth year, i.e., when eighty-three years old.⁴

6) The *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* (circa fourteenth or early fifteenth century) gives no year for Mi-la Ras-pa's birth, but specifies that he died in his eighty-eighth year during seven days of a solitary retreat which commenced on the fifteenth day of the tiger month in the winter of a hare year.⁵ These dates could correspond to 1036-1123 or 1048-1135, with the birth therefore occurring in a rat year.

7) The *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun* (possibly late fifteenth or sixteenth century), begins by putting Mi-la Ras-pa's birth in a water-dragon year (1052).⁶ Towards the conclusion of the text, however, it repeats the life span (eighty-seven years) and year of death (1123 or 1135) as given in the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, upon which the text draws heavily, even though this could not possibly agree with a birth-year of 1052.⁷

8) Mon-rtse-pa (writing somewhere between *circa* 1450 and 1475), in spite of the importance of his account of Mi-la Ras-pa's life, supplies no dates.

⁴ Zhwa-dmar-pa, 309.

⁵ *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*, (Newark), 235b.

⁶ *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*, 8.

9) The *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* (written 1446-1451) states that Mi-la was born in the iron dragon year (1040)⁸ and died, in his eighty-fourth year in the fourteenth day of the horse month (that is the first month)⁹ in the water hare year (1123).¹⁰ It rejects the dates of birth in a water-dragon year (1052) and death, in his eighty-fourth year, in the wood hare (1135) because it conflicts with the dates for sGam-po-pa's meeting with him.

10) *Deb-ther sNgon-po*, completed by 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba in 1478, lays great stress upon dating, and employs cross-referencing between biographies in an attempt to establish an accurate date. Unfortunately, he rarely informs us what his sources are. 'Gos Lo-tsā-ba comes to the same conclusion as the *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*. He decides upon the iron dragon year (1040) for Mi-la Ras-pa's birth and the water hare year (1123) for his death during his eighty-fourth year, i.e., when eighty-three years old.¹¹

11) The narrative of gTsang-smyon He-ru-ka's famous life of Mi-la Ras-pa (completed in 1488) was based on Mon-rtse-pa's text, which provided no dates. gTsang-smyon has water-dragon (1052) for the birth year (in agreement with the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*) and death in a hare-year (in agreement with both the *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar* and the *Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun*). However, gTsang-smyon specifies an element for this hare year, declaring it to have been a wood-hare year (1135), thus providing the specific dates of 1052-1135. The

⁷ Ibid., 532.

⁸ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 72.

⁹ *Tshig-mdzod Chen-mo*, 1062.

¹⁰ *lHo-rong Chos-'byung*, 100.

¹¹ *Blue Annals* (Roerich) 427, 436; ('Gos Lo-tsā-ba) 371, 381.

resulting life span of eighty-three years agrees with the *Deb-ther sNgon-po* and *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* as does birth in a dragon year and death in a hare year, but with a twelve year difference due to discrepancy in the elements.

12) Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu attempted to make some sense from this confusion, but he fails.

He lists four possible dates:¹²

- i) The fire-hare year of 1026 derived from the Zhi-byed Ri-pa text.
- ii) The earth dragon year of 1028, which he claims to be the view of Karma-pa Rang-byung rDo-rje and Zhwa-dmar mKha'-spyod dBang-po.¹³
- iii) The iron dragon year of 1040 (which agrees with *lHo-rong Chos-'byung* and *Deb-ther sNgon-po*).
- iv) The water dragon year of 1052 (which agrees with gTsang-smyon and *bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar*).

He bases his calculations on the “certainty” that sGam-po-pa (1079-1153) met Mi-la in the wood-ox year of 1109 when he was in his thirty-first year, and Mi-la died soon after. He states that this came from the reliable source of sGam-po-pa's own pupil. However, he does at times seem to be repeating verbatim from the biography by sGam-po-pa's “nephew” bSod-nams Tshe-ring. By nephew here is surely meant a successor in the uncle-nephew hereditary succession, for the colophon states that the text was written in the iron dragon year of 1520, three

¹² Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang Nor-bu, 692.

¹³ Ibid., 694.

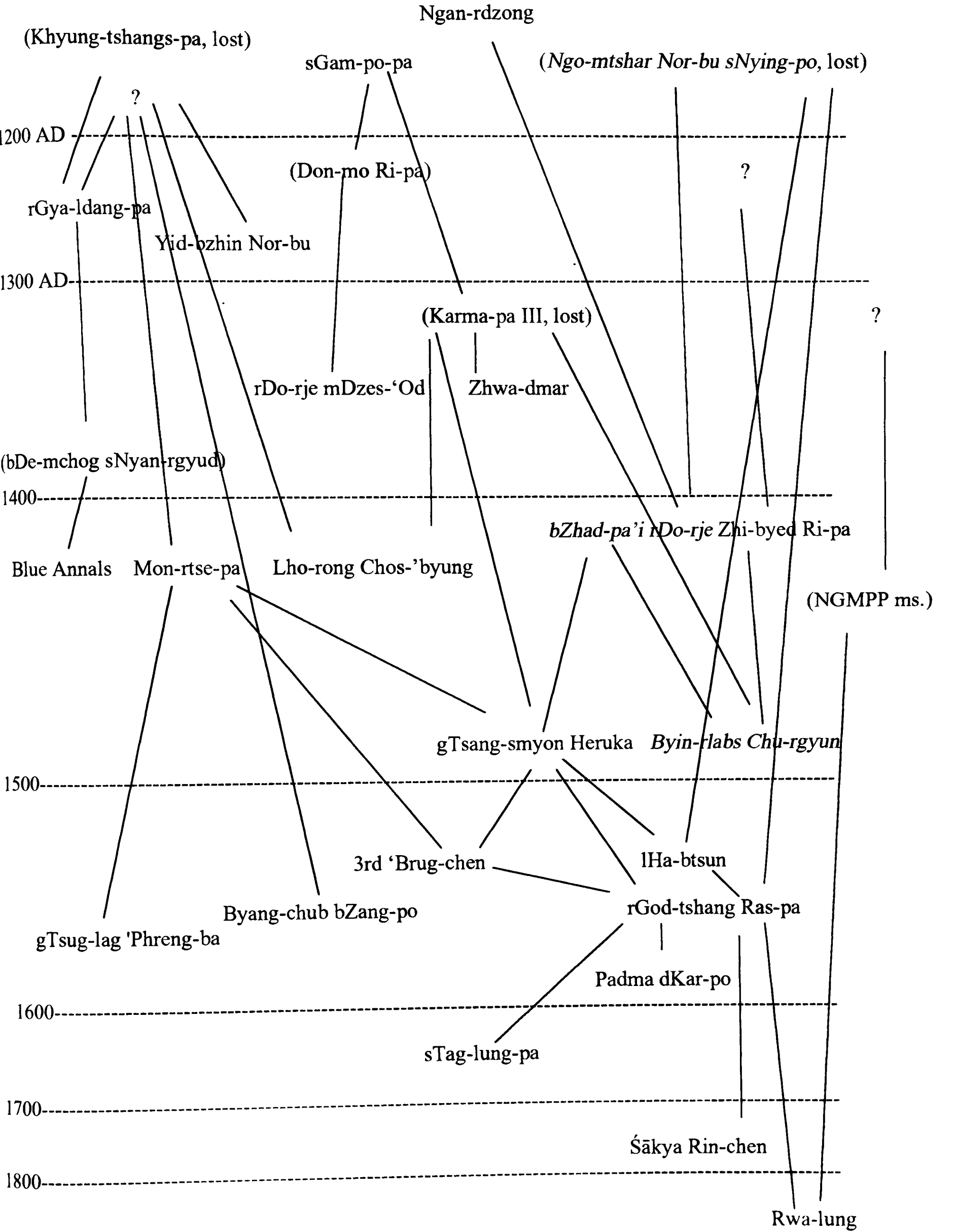
hundred and sixty-seven years after sGam-po-pa's death.¹⁴ However, wherever he obtained this information from, it does not accord with other works in which sGam-po-pa meets Mi-la in the iron ox year of 1121, when he was in his forty-third year, and the solution that he arrives at creates only more problems in terms of synchronising with the dates of other biographies.

gTsang-smyon's dating became popularly adopted in the West, due to the prevalence of his biography, but has become recently overshadowed by the dates of the more scholarly *Deb-ther sNgon-po*.

However the absence of any definitely early documentation means that none are certainly reliable, but are the result of the biographer, as well as nature, abhorring a vacuum.

¹⁴ bSod-nams Tshe-ring, *MNyam-med sGam-po-ba'i rNam-thar*, (mTsho-sngon Mi-rigs dpe-skrun-khang, 1994), 181.

Appendix G: Chronological Diagram of Textual Relationships



Appendix H

Comparison of versions of Ras-chung-pa's dream on meeting Mi-la

Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun, vol 1, 212-3.

bla ma'i zhal nas / bu khyod mdangs rmi lam ci rmis gsung pas / byis pa na re / ngas nyi
ma shar lho'i mtshams su kha ltas ste phyin pas spang thang shin tu yang pa zhig na bud
med mang pos bdag gis mgo la me tog gis 'phreng ba mang pos brgyan pa rmis zhus pas /
bu khyod nga'i rjes su chos byed pa la 'gro 'am gsung pas thugs rjes 'dzin pas zhu zhu
ste / chags phyir 'brang pas bla ma yang shin tu dgyes so /

mKha-spyod dBang-po, 237.

bla ma'i zhal nas/ bu khyod la mdang rmi lam ci 'dra cig rmis gsung / byis pa na re/ bdag
gis nyi ma shar lho'i mtshams su kha bltas te phyin pas/ spang thang shin tu yangs pa cig
na bud med gzhon nu ma mang pos bdag gi mgo la me tog gi phreng ba mang pos brgyan
pa rmis zhus pas / bu khyod nga'i rjes su chos byed pa la 'gro 'am gsungs pas / thugs rjes
'dzin par zhus te / phyags phyir 'brengs / bla mas kyang shin tu dgyes par mdzad /

Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun, vol 1, 212-3 contrasted with rDo-rje mdzes-'od, 193.

~~bla ma'i~~ ru'i zhal nas /¹ ~~bu~~ mdang khyod la ~~mdangs~~² rmi lam ci 'dra ba rmis gsung pas
/³ der byis pa na re / ~~ngas~~ bdag gis nyi ma shar lho'i mtshams su kha ltas⁴ ~~ste phyin pas~~

¹ DD / omitted

² DD mdang khyod. Transposition

³ DD omitted.

nas spang thang shin tu yang pa zhig na la phyin pa rmis / bud med gzhon nu ma mang
pos tshan cig gis dong pa zhig gi nang nas bdag gis mgo la⁵ me tog gis ‘phreng⁶ ba mang
pos bdag gi mgo la brgyan btags pa rmis zhus byas pas / rje btsun chen pos bu khyod
nga’i rjes su rting la chos byed pa la ‘gro ‘am gsung⁷ pas thugs rjes ‘dzin pas zhu zhu ste /
chags phyir ‘brang pas bla ma yang shin tu dgyes so / de nas ‘dris pas bla mas thuugs la
btags nas de bzhin du yong bas /

Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun, vol 1, 212-3 contrasted with mKha-spyod dBang-po, 237.

bla ma’i zhal nas / bu khyod la mdangs⁸ rmi lam ci ‘dra cig rmis gsung pas / byis pa na
re / ngas bdag gis nyi ma shar lho’i mtshams su kha lta⁹ ste¹⁰ phyin pas¹¹ spang thang
shin tu yang¹² pa zhig¹³ na bud med gzhon nu ma mang pos bdag gis¹⁴ mgo la me tog
gis¹⁵ ‘phreng ba mang pos brgyan pa rmis zhus pas / bu khyod nga’i rjes su chos byed pa
la ‘gro ‘am gsung¹⁶ pas thugs rjes ‘dzin pas zhu par zhu ste¹⁷ / chags¹⁸ phyir ‘brang¹⁹ pas
bla ma²⁰ yang²¹ shin tu dgyes so par mdzad /

82 corr. from 88 93 percent

⁴ DD bltas
⁵ transposition
⁶ DD phreng
⁷ DD gsungs /
⁸ mdang
⁹ bltas
¹⁰ te
¹¹ /
¹² yangs
¹³ cig
¹⁴ gi
¹⁵ gi
¹⁶ gsungs
¹⁷ te
¹⁸ phyags
¹⁹ ‘brengs /
²⁰ mas
²¹ kyang

Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun, vol 1, 212-3 contrasted with lHo-rong Chos-‘byung 108

~~bla-ma'i-zhal-nas~~/ bu khyod la mdangs²² rmi lam ci 'dra ba rmis gsung²³ ~~pas~~ / phyis pa na
re/ ~~ngas~~-bdag gis nyi ma shar lho'i mtshams su kha ~~ltas-ste~~ btad de phyin pas²⁴ spang²⁵
thang shin tu yang²⁶ pa zhig na²⁷ bud med gzhon nu ma mang pos bdag gi mgo la me tog
gi 'phreng²⁸ ba mang pos²⁹ brgyan pa rmis zhus pas / bla ma yang shin tu dgyes/ bu
khyod nga'i³⁰ rjes su chos byed pa la 'gro 'am gsungs pas³¹ ~~thugs-rjes-dzin-par-zhu-zhus~~
~~te~~/ chags³² phyir 'brang ~~pas-bla-ma-yang-shin-tu-dgyes-so~~-ba lags zhes zhus shing //
69, 76 inc. transposition 78percent or 86

mKha-spyod dBang-po, 237 contrasted with lHo-rong Chos-‘byung, 108.

~~bla-ma'i-zhal-nas~~/ bu khyod la mdang rmi lam ci 'dra eig ba rmis gsung³³ / phyis pa na re/
bdag gis nyi ma shar lho'i mtshams su kha ~~ltas-te~~ btad de phyin pas/ spang³⁴ thang shin
tu yangs pa cig³⁵ na³⁶ bud med gzhon nu ma mang pos bdag gi mgo la me tog gi phreng

²² lHo-rong, mdang. Correct form
²³ lHo-rong, gsungs. Correct form
²⁴ lho-rong, /. As in mKha-spyod dBang-po
²⁵ lHo-rong,a misreading of the bdu-med for spang as yang.
²⁶ lHo-rong, yangs. The correct form.
²⁷ lHo-rong, /
²⁸ lHo-rong, phreng. As in mKha-spyod dBang-po
²⁹ lHo-rong, po.
³⁰ lHo-rong,nga yi
³¹ lHo-rong, /.
³² lHo-rong, phyags.
³³ lHo-rong, gsungs.
³⁴ lHo-rong,a misreadin of the bdu-med for spang as yang.
³⁵ lHo-rong, zhig.
³⁶ lHo-rong, /

ba mang pos³⁷ brgyan pa rmis zhus pas / bla ma yang shin tu dgyes/ bu khyod nga'i³⁸ rjes
su chos byed pa la 'gro 'am gsungs pas / ~~thugs rjes 'dzin par zhus te~~/ phyags phyir
~~'brengs 'brang~~ /³⁹ ~~bla mas kyang shin tu dgyes par mdzad~~ ba lags zhes zhus shing //

75 word correspondence

mKha-spyod dBang-po, 237 contrasted with Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun, vol 1, 212-3.

bla ma'i zhal nas/ bu khyod ~~la~~mdang⁴⁰ rmi lam ci ~~'dra eig~~ rmis gsung pas / byis-pa na re/
~~bdag gis ngas~~ nyi ma⁴¹ shar lho'i mtshams su⁴² kha bltas⁴³ te⁴⁴ phyin pas/⁴⁵ spang thang
shin tu yangs⁴⁶ pa cig⁴⁷ na bud med⁴⁸ ~~gzhen nu ma~~ mang pos bdag gi⁴⁹ mgo la me tog gi⁵⁰
phreng⁵¹ ba mang pos brgyan pa rmis zhus pas / bu khyod nga'i rjes su⁵² chos byed pa la
'gro 'am gsungs pas /⁵³ thugs rjes⁵⁴ 'dzin par ~~zhus~~ zhu zhu te⁵⁵ / phyags⁵⁶ phyir ~~'brengs~~
'brang pas /⁵⁷ bla ma yang shin tu dgyes ~~par mdzad~~ so //

³⁷ lHo-rong, po.
³⁸ lHo-rong, nga yi
³⁹ lHo-rong, / omitted.
⁴⁰ mdangs
⁴¹ Chu'i byin-brlabs, composite form: nyima
⁴² Chu'i byin-brlabs, composite form: 'thsamsu.
⁴³ Chu'i byin-brlabs, ltas
⁴⁴ Chu'i byin-brlabs, ste
⁴⁵ Chu'i byin-brlabs, / omitted.
⁴⁶ Chu'i byin-brlabs, yang
⁴⁷ Chu'i byin-brlabs, zhig.
⁴⁸ Chu'i byin-brlabs, composite form: bumed
⁴⁹ Chu'i byin-brlabs, composite form: bdagis
⁵⁰ Chu'i byin-brlabs, composite form: metogis
⁵¹ Chu'i byin-brlabs, 'phreng
⁵² Chu'i byin-brlabs, composite form: rjesu
⁵³ Chu'i byin-brlabs, / omitted.
⁵⁴ Chu'i byin-brlabs, composite form: thyes
⁵⁵ Chu'i byin-brlabs, ste.
⁵⁶ Chu'i byin-brlabs, chags
⁵⁷ Chu'i byin-brlabs, / omitted.

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Abbreviations

The numbers indicate the sections of the thesis that identify the text

NGMPP *bKa’-brgyud rNam-thar*.....2.4.9.

rGod-tshang Ras-pa.....2.3.8.

rGya-ldang-pa.....2.1.4.2

rGya-bod Yig-tshang.....2.2.5.

sGam-po-pa.....2.1.3.2

‘Jam-dbyangs Chos-kyi Grags-pa.....2.3.4.

sTag-lung-pa.....2.4.3.

Deb-ther sNgon-po.....2.2.8.

Deb-ther dMar-po.....2.2.3.

Don-mo Ri-pa.....2.1.4.1.

bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud Biographies.....2.1.4.2.6.

Padma dKar-po.....2.4.2.

dPa’-bo gTsug-lag ‘phreng-ba.....2.4.1.

Byang-chub bZang-po.....2.3.10

Byin-brlabs kyi Chu-rgyun.....2.2.2.

Bla-ma Zhang.....2.1.3.3.

Mi-la’i mGur-‘bum.....2.3.2.

Mi-la’i rNam-thar.....2.3.2.

Mon-rtse-pa.....2.2.7.

gTsang-smyon’s *bDe-mchog sNyan-rgyud*.....2.3.1.

Zhwa-dmar-pa.....2.2.4.

bZhad-pa'i rDo-rje'i rNam-thar.....2.2.1

Yid-bzhin Nor-bu.....2.1.4.3.

Rwa-lung gSer-phreng.....2.4.10.

Śākya Rin-chen.....2.4.7.

Sangs-rgyas Dar-po.....2.3.5.

lHa-btsun Rin-chen rNam-rgyal.....2.3.3.

lHo-rong Chos-'byung.....2.2.6.

