

The History of the Mountain Teachings: 13th century Practice Lineages at rTsib ri*

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During the 13th century, the sacred mountain of rTsib ri and its adjacent areas, such as Ding ri, were home to a lively religious community. Indeed, solitary hermits chose the mountain's caves for prolonged retreats, local masters of fame attracted disciples from afar, and new monasteries and hermitages were constructed in the surroundings. Dan Martin has labelled Ding ri “in the decades around the year 1100 as something like what would nowadays be termed a ‘culture contact zone’”, and it seems that a century later it was still a place of exchange with South Asia, where a composite religious environment thrived.¹

Among the most famous locally born masters was Yang dgon pa rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1213–1258), a native of the village of lHa gdong, located west of rTsib ri, and leader of this village's temple at age eleven. Also called lHa gdong pa, this teacher was well-known among the local faithful already as a youth, and became one of the most revered and influential masters of his time. In particular, he is credited with compiling a comprehensive set of practice instructions for his pupils who engaged in extended mountain retreats on the rTsib ri massif, called the *Mountain Teachings* (*Ri chos*). The text studied here, the *History of How the Mountain Teachings Were Transmitted* (*Ri chos brgyud tshul gyi lo rgyus*), hereafter *History of the Mountain Teachings*,

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¹ See Martin 2008. Later than Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas, masters still travelled to Ding ri from South Asia to teach to their Tibetan pupils. For example, at the beginning of the 13th c. the *mahāpaṇḍita* Vibhūticandra reached the area via sKyid grong to teach the Kālacakra at the invitation of Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1170–1249); according to Tibetan tradition, the Indian master also eventually requested teachings from Ko brag pa; see Stearns 1996: 141–145. I heartily thank Cyrus Stearns and Jörg Heimbel for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

provides the background from which these teachings emerged, detailing the lineages and textual transmissions received by Yang dgon pa. It shows how he was trained in all the main practice traditions of his time, out of which he modeled his unique approach.



Fig. 1 — Ding ri seen from rTsi ri mountain (photo M. Sernesi, 2016).

Yang dgon pa's legacy was later claimed by 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po (1310–1391), who was recognized as his rebirth.² This master transmitted the teachings of Yang dgon pa, who was then retrospectively considered a 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud, belonging to the transmission lineage set forth by 'Ba' ra ba.³ However, the local landscape during the 13th century was eclectic, and individual masters trained in a number of distinct practices, without necessarily identifying with a given school affiliation. This is true for Yang dgon

² He was a native of 'Ba' ra brag in the Shangs valley, where he later established the monastery of Don grub sdings, which became the home monastery of the lineage and the seat of the 'Ba' ra ba *sprul skus*. Trained at Sa skya, he took his novice vows at Bo dong E, and counted among his teachers the 3rd Karma pa Rang 'byung rdo rje (1284–1339), Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364), and Sa skya Bla ma dam pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375). He travelled to rTsi ri to receive teachings from Zur phug pa gZhon nu rin chen dpal bzang po, a later holder of Yang dgon pa's teachings (see below) and took full ordination from him. For this master and his lineage, see Erschbamer 2017.

³ See *'Ba' ra ba gser phreng*, in which Yang dgon pa follows rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje (1189–1258). For this collection, see Ehrhard 2009.

pa as well, who had a dozen teachers of different traditions. Four were his most important masters, both for the teachings that they transmitted, as recorded in the *History of the Mountain Teachings*, and for the role that they are granted in Yang dgon pa's life story the *Great Mirror*.⁴ These are Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1170–1249) and rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje (1189–1258), who were his two main masters, and 'Bri gung sPyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas (1175–1255) and Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251), who were renowned religious leaders of the time, and who instructed thoroughly Yang dgon pa. These four teachers transmitted to him the core of the practice transmissions that were integrated into the *Mountain Teachings*. Moreover, according to the *Great Mirror*: “It is said that Bla ma Zhang Rin po che and sPyan snga ba (i.e., Yang dgon pa) were master and pupil for many lifetimes, and in this [lifetime] as well [Yang dgon pa] had the same devotion for him than that for a root-teacher, and thus also performed regularly the [prescribed] memorial services for him.”⁵ Indeed, the teaching transmissions of the Tshal pa bKa' brgyud, as well as a visionary transmission received in a dream directly from Bla ma Zhang g.Yu brag pa (1123–1193) are recorded in the *History of the Mountain Teachings*.

Therefore, Yang dgon pa received bKa' brgyud and Sa skya esoteric instructions, in both their most common “mainstream” formulations, and as transmitted in some lesser-known lineages. The master was also trained in several other teaching traditions and received instructions from local teachers. By detailing all the distinct textual traditions and related practice transmissions that Yang dgon pa combined in his creative synthesis, the *History of the Mountain Teachings* provides a precious insight into the religious life of rTsig ri hermits in the 13th century.

2. Mountain Teachings

“Mountain teachings” (*ri chos*) is a general term to indicate teachings dedicated to *ri pa*, or mountain dwellers, individuals who engage in extended retreats on the mountains. The most famous teachings of this kind are ascribed to Karma chags med (1613–1678), but the tradition is much older. In fact, the source translated below provides evidence that Yang dgon pa received and integrated into his teaching system instructions for mountain retreats attributed to Phag mo gru pa rDo rje rgyal po (1110–1170) and 'Bri gung 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), called

⁴ See Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, trans. Guarisco 2015, and below.

⁵ Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, p. 85: *bla ma zhang rin po che dang spyan snga ba nyid skye ba mang po'i dpon slob yin gsung/ da lta'ang rtsa ba'i bla ma dang mos gus mnyam par yod pas/ dus mchod kyang ma chag pa mdzad/*.

Large and Small Vases of Nectar of the Mountain Teachings (*Ri chos bdud rtsi bum pa che chung*) and *Golden Pouch of the Mountain Teachings* (*Ri chos gser khug ma*).⁶ The cycle of teachings compiled by Yang dgon pa, however, is much wider in scope, comprising preliminary practices, guidance on choosing the right place for retreat, how to perform daily rituals, step-by-step meditation instructions of the tantric generation and completion stages, teachings on how to manipulate the inner energies of the body through bodily postures, breath control, and the visualization of mantra syllables, as well as clarifications on how to recognize signs of progress and how to overcome the most common obstacles during the retreat.

The extant literature on the *Mountain Teachings* of Yang dgon pa consists mainly of two manuscript collections preserved in Bhutan.⁷ The teaching cycle is centred on the main practice manual, called *Gleaming Jewel, The Source of Qualities of the Mountain Teachings* (*Ri chos yon tan kun 'byung ba rin po che 'bar ba*), which was composed by Yang dgon pa himself, and which covers all the main topics.⁸ The *Gleaming Jewel* summarizes not only the path, but also the practical instructions for conducting a solitary retreat. Its seven sections deal with:

- (1) the characteristics of the practitioners (*gang gis nyams su blangs pa gang zag gi mtshan nyid*);
- (2) the characteristics of the places where to practice (*gang du nyams su blangs pa gnas kyi mtshan nyid*);
- (3) the stages of the path, [or] how to practice (*ji ltar nyams su blangs pa lam gyi rin pa*);
- (4) teachings on the impediments to the path, [or how] to dispel hindrances to meditative absorption (*lam de la bar chad kyi chos bsam gtan gyi gegs gsal ba*);
- (5) enhancing the practice, [or how] to quickly generate the qualities of the path (*lam de la yon tan myur du skye ba bogs dbyungs pa*);
- (6) teachings on the demarcations of the path and on how to generate heat and signs (*lam gyi sa mtshams dang drod rtags skye tshul bstan pa*);
- (7) teachings on the fruit at the end of the path (*lam de mthar phyin pa'i 'bras bu bstan pa*).

⁶ See rDo rje rgyal po, *gSung 'bum*, vol. 7, 599–611; 'Jig rten gsum mgon, *bKa' 'bum*, vol. 7, pp. 36–158. The text also states that Yang dgon pa received *ri chos* teachings from one unidentified Bar 'brog Me lung pa.

⁷ See *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I* (manuscript from Pha jo ldings monastery), and *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum II* (manuscript from rTa mgo monastery). An incomplete cursive manuscript has been published as *The Collected Works (gSun-'bum) of Yang-dgon-pa rGyal-mtshan-dpal*, Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, Darjeeling, 1973 (TBRC W23790). This collection includes only a few works and is missing the *History of the Mountain Teachings*. Also, *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum III* does not include this text.

⁸ See *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, vol. 1, pp. 447–570; *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum II*, vol. 1, pp. 443–548.

At the beginning, the text stresses the importance of renunciation and of receiving the initiations (section 1), and then instructs on how to choose a fitting place in the wilderness for a retreat, which has the appropriate geomantic characteristics (section 2). The third section constitutes the main body of the text, and deals with the preliminaries, the generation stage, and the completion stage: the latter is differentiated into practice with signs—i.e., the generation of the inner heat (*gtum mo*), the practice of radiance (*'od gsal*), illusion (*sgyu ma*), dream (*rmi lam*), transference (*'pho ba*), and *guruyoga*—and practice without signs, namely the *Great Seal* (*phyag rgya chen po*). These teachings are followed by instructions on the “practice” (*spyod pa, cārya*) and on the vows. Moreover, teachings on dispelling hindrances (*gegs sel*) were a specialty of Ko brag pa and are integrated into the system (section 4), paired with the instructions on how to enhance the practice (*bogs dbyung*), that is to say, how to improve several specific aspects of it, such as visualization, recitation, concentration, etc. (section 5). Finally, there are overviews of the stages of the path (section 6) and of the final attainments (section 7).

The *Mountain Teachings* textual collections comprise a number of explanatory works on the *Gleaming Jewel*, codified teachings on specific topics, as well as more informal and punctual instructions and songs. Some of these were composed by Yang dgon pa, but many were in fact written down by his pupils, who also in turn composed explanations, indexes, and further training texts. Yang dgon pa's attendant and principal pupil was called Rin chen ldan, and he may be regarded as the individual responsible for the first compilation of the *Mountain Teachings* textual corpus. Born in Ding ri, according to the *Blue Annals* he was eleven years senior to his teacher (b. 1202), whom he encountered for the first time as a five-year old child. He attended on the master for thirty-five years (that is 1223–1258, from Yang dgon pa's eleventh to his forty-sixth year, when he died) and in this capacity he accompanied him and received the same teaching transmissions as did Yang dgon pa.⁹ He is credited with writing the main extant hagiography of his teacher, the *Great Mirror* (*Me long chen mo*), which is a long verse eulogy with a prose commentary. This source is organized

⁹ The only extant life story of Rin chen ldan is brief and lacks detail. See *Thugs sras spyan mnga' [=snga] rin chen ldan gyi rnam par thar pa rin chen mgul brgyan*, in *'Ba' ra ba gser phreng*, vol. 1. It doesn't provide the dates nor the life span of the master, and states that he received teachings from Yang dgon pa and from the latter's four main teachers, namely Ko brag pa, rGod tshang pa, Sa skya Paṇḍita, and 'Bri gung sPyan snga ba [Grag pa 'byung gnas] (*ibid.*, p. 8). This hagiography is attributed to one La stod pa, whom I believe to be Shes rab mgon (see below). The *Blue Annals* merely summarize this source, but provide a birth date of *chu pho kyi*, i.e., 1202; see Roerich 1949: 691–692. See also Dan Martin's biographical sketch of this master in *The Treasury of Lives*.

topically around the verses of praise, and thus groups together related information, instead of offering a chronologically arranged account of the life of the master.¹⁰

Rin chen Idan also recorded, edited, and collected the teachings received. In particular, he wrote a register (*dkar chag*) in which he organized Yang dgon pa's teachings into four cycles and their respective ornaments, and listed for each the relevant texts:¹¹

- I. *The Three Cycles of Mountain Teachings ornamented by the Oral Instructions (ri chos bskor gsum zhal gdams kyis brgyan pa)*
- II. *The Practical Guidance on the Path ornamented by Dispelling Hindrances (lam dmar khrid gegs sel gyis brgyan pa)*
- III. *The Miscellanea, ornamented by the Fragments (sna tshogs kyis sde tshan sil bus brgyan pa)*
- IV. *The Collected Songs ornamented by their Register ('gur [=mgur] 'bum dkar chag gis brgyan)*

The first, which are the *Mountain Teachings* proper, are in turn constituted into three cycles of teachings, for each of which there is a practice manual:

- I.1. *Gleaming Jewel, The Source of Qualities of the Mountain Teachings (Ri chos yon tan kun 'byung ba rin po che 'bar ba)*. This is expanded ("ornamented") by four sets of instructions. These are the supplements (*lhan thabs*), the religious practices (*chos spyod*), the so-called *Six Mothers (Ma drug)*, as well as the profound instructions (*zab khrid*).¹² The latter, also called the "three instructions" (*khrid gsum*), in fact comprise more than three sets of teachings, including the *Six Teachings of Nāropa (Nā ro chos drug)*, instructions on the *Co-emergent Yoga of the Great Seal (Phyag rgya chen po lhan cig skyes sbyor)*, the *Four Yogas of the Great Seal (rNal 'byor bzhi'i rim pa)*, the *Secret Practice (gSang spyod)* and *Dispelling Obstacles (Gegs sel)*.
- I.2. *Hidden Explanation of the Vajra Body (rDo rje lus kyis sbas bshad)*.
- I.3. *Deliverance from the Perilous Straits of the Bardo (Bar do gnad kyis 'phrang sgrol)*.

Hence, these "three cycles of instructions" (*zhal gdams skor gsum*) or "three cycles of mountain teachings" (*ri chos skor gsum*) include the three most important texts of instruction and supplementary explana-

¹⁰ See Rin chen Idan, *Me long chen mo*, trans. Guarisco 2015.

¹¹ Rin chen Idan, *Ri chos kyis dkar chag*. For a study of this text, an overview of the *Mountain Teachings* textual materials, and the compositional profiles of the principal texts of instruction, see Sernesi 2019.

¹² The *Six Mothers* are visionary teachings written down by Rin chen Idan; see *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, vol. 2, pp. 231–285, and below.

tions taught by Yang dgon pa: *Gleaming Jewel*, the actual “manual” for hermitic practice, *Hidden Explanation of the Vajra Body*, a lengthy exposition of the inner bodily energies (“channels, winds and drops”, *rtsa lung byang chub sems*), and *Deliverance from the Perilous Straits of the Bardo* (*Bar do 'phrang sgrol*), a complete practice tradition for the intermediate state.¹³ All three of these compilations constitute original syntheses that harmonize and organize for teaching purposes the distinct strands of teachings received by Yang dgon pa.

The *Hidden Explanation of the Vajra Body* (*rDo rje lus kyi sbas bshad*) sets out the explanation of the inner bodily energies and pathways, with the goal of reconciling different systems as expounded in the *tantras* and related commentaries and practice instructions. Yang dgon pa claims to rely on personal experience (having “seen” the *vajra* body while practicing the path of means), and quotes selectively the scriptures to support the treatise’s overview. In the colophon of the text Yang dgon pa praises the teachings received from 'Bri gung rin chen, INga rig paṇ chen (i.e., Sa skya Paṇḍita), the Lord of the Yogins named [rGod tshang pa mGon po] rdo rje, and the “unwavering Victory Banner who perfected Merit” (Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan, i.e., Merit Victory Banner).¹⁴ In fact, it has been noted that two bKa' brgyud works that foreshadow Yang dgon pa’s are *rDo rje lus kyi gnas lugs* by Phag mo gru pa and *Tshangs par spyod pa thig le'i khrid* by 'Jig rten mgon po, but that the title echoes instructions on the same topic by Sa skya Paṇḍita named *Hidden Explanation of the Path* (*Lam sbas bshad*).¹⁵ Not only were Yang dgon pa’s sources eclectic, but his treatise influenced both bKa' brgyud and Sa skya later treatments of the *vajra* body. Indeed, while its influence on Rang 'byung rdo rje’s *Profound Inner Principles* (*Zab mo nang gi don*) is noticeable, the *Hidden Explanation of the Vajra Body* is quoted profusely in Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho (1502–1566)’s *Explanation of the Profound Body Maṇḍala* (*Zab mo lus dkyil gyi rnam par bshad pa*), which remained a Sa skya reference work on the topic. This master’s disciple 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug (1524–1568) recognized the role of Yang dgon pa in the transmission lineage of the *Path and Fruit* (*Lam 'bras*) teachings, listing him among the disciples of Sa skya Paṇḍita (as the disciple “who

¹³ *Hidden Explanation of the Vajra Body* is studied in Blythe Miller 2013 and translated in Guarisco 2015. For *Deliverance from the Perilous Straits of the Bardo*, see Cuevas 2003: 56–57.

¹⁴ See text and translation of the passage in Blythe Miller 2013: 52–53. She notes that in an interlinear note from a modern edition of the text (Beijing, Mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1991), 'Bri gung rin po che is identified as 'Bri gung gCung rDo rje grags pa (1210–1278), the 5th abbot of 'Bri gung.

¹⁵ Blythe Miller 2013: 97–99, 142–145. Sa skya Paṇḍita is quoted three times in the work; see trans. Guarisco 2015: 247, 257, 276. Yang dgon pa received the teachings of the *Hidden Explanation of the Path* from Sa skya Paṇḍita; see below.

upheld the transmission of practice”) in his history of the tradition titled *Expansion of the Great Secret Doctrine* (*gSang chen bstan pa rgyas byed*).¹⁶

Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug, following his teacher Tshar chen Blo gsal rgya mtsho, also relied on Yang dgon pa's *Deliverance from the Perilous Straits of the Bardo* (*Bar do 'phrang sgrol*) in the presentation of the intermediate state in the context of the *Path and Fruit's* Explication for Disciples (*slob bshad*).¹⁷ According to the *History of the Deliverance from the Perilous Straits of the Bardo* (*Bar do 'phrang sgrol gyi lo rgyus*) of the *Mountain Teachings*, these instructions summarize various strands of presentation of the intermediate state. The core of the teachings is the *Response to the Sisters of Long Life* (*Tshe ring ma'i zhus len*), the famous exchange between the goddesses and Mi la ras pa; the Five Sisters of Long Life also appeared directly to Yang dgon pa (see *History of the Mountain Teachings*, paragraph 13 in the translation below). But the *History of the Deliverance from the Perilous Straits of the Bardo* also mentions other traditions, such as those of Bla ma Zhang g.Yu brag pa, of the Shangs pa bKa' brgyud lineage, and of mNga' bdag N[/M]yang ral [Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192)]. Among these:

Within the instructions of the Path with the Fruit of the Lord of Yogins Virūpa there are also many points instructing on the very profound instructions on the intermediate state. [In particular,] there are also the profound points called *Bar do snyan brgyud*, *Bar do mkha' spyod*, and *Bar do mngon sum* by Jo mo lha rje ma [i.e. Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma (1062–1149)].¹⁸

¹⁶ For Rang byung rdo rje's *Profound Inner Principles*, see Callahan 2014. For Tshar chen's *Explanation of the Profound Body Maṇḍala that Makes the Lotus Hearts of the Fortunate Blossom* (*Zab mo lus dkyil gyi rnam par bshad pa skal bzang snying gi pad mo bzhad pa*) “the definitive exposition for the Sakya tradition” which “incorporated large sections of Yangönpa's text into his own,” see Stearns 2000: 25, n. 36. For the reference from the *Expansion of the Great Secret Doctrine*, see the translation of the text in Stearns 2006: 239.

¹⁷ See *Notes on the Outer Creation Stage* (*Phyi bskyed rim gyi zin bris*), trans. Stearns 2006: 523. The other authoritative source mentioned in the text is a treatise by g.Yar sbu ba ma that is lost; see *ibid.*: 682, n. 851.

¹⁸ See *Bar do 'phrang sgrol gyi lo rgyus tshe rings ma'i zhus len*, in *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, vol. 2, pp. 531–549: rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug bir ba pa'i lam 'bras bu dang bcas pa'i gdams ngag nas / bar do'i gdams ngag shin tu zab par gsungs pa'i gnad kyang mang du yod / jo mo lha rje ma'i bar do snyan brgyud bar do mkha' spyod dang / bar do mngon sum ma zhes bya ba / gnad zab pa rnams kyang yod de / (p. 548). See also Stearns 2001: 241–242, n. 159, who states that Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma's texts on the intermediate state do not seem to have survived. The *History of the Deliverance from the Perilous Straits of the Bardo* (p. 548) also mentions three other teaching traditions, ascribed to one paṇḍita mNgon shes can, one b'Tsun mo can, and one dByar ston dBu ma pa respectively (unidentified). For the Shangs pa bKa' brgyud tradition, see Kapstein

These are no doubt the instructions on the intermediate state by Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma that Yang dgon pa received from Ko brag pa, which are mentioned in the *History of the Mountain Teachings* (paragraph 3 in the translation below). Hence, Yang dgon pa's synthesis drew from all the main teaching traditions on the *bar do* known at the time, and remained an important reference text at least until the 16th century.

This overview shows how all three of Yang dgon pa's main treatises that, according to Rin chen Idan, constitute the core of the *Mountain Teachings* draw from disparate teaching traditions that Yang dgon pa had received, and combine them to present comprehensive and structured expositions which had long lasting renown. It may be noted that Yang dgon pa's contemporary O[/U] rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1230–1309), who was also a prominent pupil of rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje, promulgated his own teaching tradition, which, according to his hagiographies, he had received directly from Vajrayoginī. These tantric instructions, known as *Service and Attainment of the Three Vajras* (*rDo rje gsum gyi bsnyen sgrub*), were also popular among rTsit ri hermits in the 14th century, and were later considered one of the “eight great charriots” or “practice lineages” (*sgrub brgyud shing rta chen po brgyad*).¹⁹ Therefore, it seems that, at that time, syntheses of eclectic materials that offered complete sets of teachings for advanced tantric practice received good reception and spread rapidly among the religious communities of Western Tibet.

3. The History of the Mountain Teachings

The *History of the Mountain Teachings* is a brief text detailing the early transmission of Yang dgon pa's teachings for hermits.²⁰ The text does not have a narrative character and does not provide any sketch of the life of the teachers of the lineage, nor does it provide any date or other

1980, and for the so-called *Six Yogas of Niguma*, including the *Intermediate State*, see Harding 2010. The instructions of Mi la ras pa to the Five Sisters of Long Life are recorded in chapter 30 of the *Collected Songs* (*mGur 'bum*) of Mi la ras pa in the redaction by gTsang smyon Heruka (1452–1507) and are lifted from the previous hagiographic tradition; see Stagg (trans.) 2016: 349–375; see also van Tuyl 1975, Tiso 2019.

¹⁹ For the life of O rgyan pa, see Li 2011. Note that both bSod nams 'od zer and Zla ba seng ge, two important disciples of O rgyan pa, also figure among Zur phug pa Rin chen dpal bzang's disciples; see Sernesi forthcoming. The “eight great charriots” were formulated by 'Phreng bo gter ston Shes rab 'od zer (Prajñāraśmi) (1517–1584) and then also treated in detail by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899) in his *Treasury of Knowledge* (*Shes bya mdzod*). They also constitute the organizational principle of the *Treasury of Instructions* (*gDams ngag mdzod*). See Kapstein 1996; 2007; Deroche 2009; Ngawang Zangpo (trans.) 2010: 321–375; Harding (trans.) 2007; Barron (trans.) 2013.

²⁰ The work is listed as entry no. 73 in Martin 2020: 87.

chronological data. Instead, it accounts for multiple transmission lineages, recorded from their alleged origin to the text's compiler, and thereby it reads as an early example of a "record of teachings received" (*gsan yig*). In fact, in the colophon it is characterized as a "short writing on the way the *Mountain Teachings* were transmitted and on the way the instructions were collected," pointing at the process of formation of the textual corpus of the *Mountain Teachings*.

The work is divided in two distinct sections: the first part details the teaching lineages received by Yang dgon pa that were combined into the *Mountain Teachings*.²¹ The list of masters provided therein closely mirrors the information about Yang dgon pa's religious training that is related in his biography *Great Mirror* compiled by the attendant Rin chen Idan. However, in inventoring and tracing back the teaching lineages that Yang dgon pa received from each master, the *History of the Mountain Teachings* greatly enriches the picture, providing an overview of the "practice lineages" (*sgrub brgyud*) diffused in the rTsi ri region during the early 13th century. These include esoteric teachings of the 'Bri gung pa, 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa, and Sa skya pa, major cycles of instructions such as the *Path and Fruit* (*Lam 'bras*) in the tradition of Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma, prominent local practice traditions, some rDzogs chen teachings, and other lesser-known cycles of instruction. According to this account, Yang dgon pa "relied on eleven teachers" (*bla ma bcu gcig brten pa'o*) in all, although the text mentions in fact thirteen names. Moreover, Yang dgon pa received direct instructions in dreams and visions from deities (*yi dam*), *dākinīs*, and from Bla ma Zhang g.Yu brag pa (1122–1193). Topics (*gnad*) from all the teachings received and practiced were then skillfully combined in the instructions for mountain hermits.

The second section of the *History of the Mountain Teachings* is titled "how [the teachings] were transmitted from the venerable teacher to me" (*chos rje nas bdag la brgyud tshul ni*), and recounts the transmission lineages of the *Mountain Teachings* during three generations after Yang dgon pa. Indeed, the author of this text is Shes rab mgon, a later holder of the teachings who, according to his own account, received the instructions from the wider community of rTsi ri hermits, made of disciples of disciples of Yang dgon pa. Therefore, this section of the *History of the Mountain Teachings* provides a picture of the religious community on the sacred mountain at the end of the 13th/beginning of

²¹ Note that this first part may have been lifted from a lost source known as *Ri chos 'byung khungs* attributed to sPyan snga Rin chen Idan; see Martin 2020: 88, entry no. 74. According to a later register of the *Collected Works* of Yang dgon pa, it also existed a "record of teachings received" (*gsan yig*) of the master, now lost as an independent text. See *Chos rje yang dgon pa'i bka' bum gyi dkar chag*, in *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum III*, vol. 2, p. 556.

the 14th century.²² 'Gos lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal (1392–1481), in the *Blue Annals*, includes a short biographical note of Shes rab mgon in which he is said to be a native of lHa gdong, that is the same location west of rTsib ri in which Yang dgon pa was born. He studied at first in his birthplace with a local disciple of Yang dgon pa and of O rgyan pa Rin chen dpal called rGyal mtshan 'bum. At age nineteen he took full ordination in the presence of the master Zur phug pa Rin chen dpal bzang (1263–1330)—who was a disciple of Yang dgon pa and of his attendant Rin chen ldan—who is best known as the teacher of 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang po. After training with masters of the hermitic community residing on rTsib ri mountain, he spent there seven years of solitary retreat. Afterwards, he travelled to Central Tibet (dBus) where he received teachings from the 3rd Karma pa Rang 'byung rdo rje (1284–1339) and from Rig 'dzin gZhon nu rgyal po (Kumārārāja) (1266–1343), that is to say the main teacher of Klong chen Rab 'byams pa (1308–1364).²³

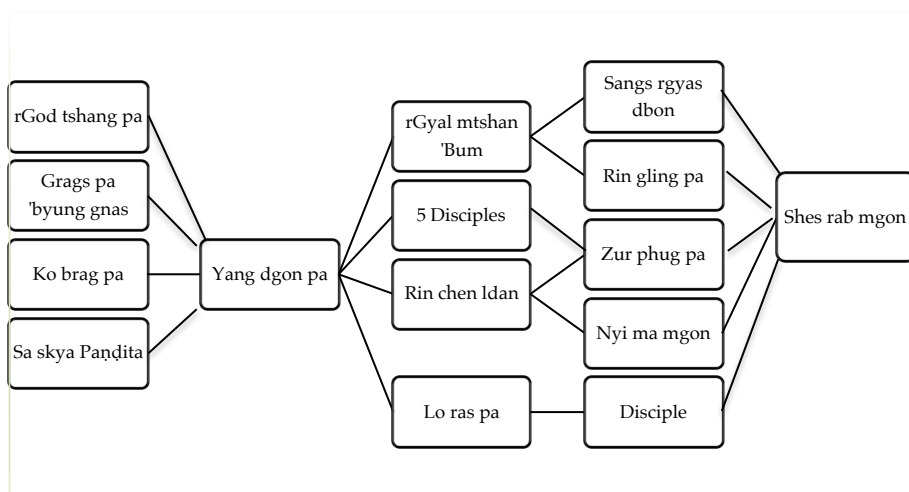


Fig. 2 — Simplified Transmission Lineage of the Mountain Teachings to Shes rab mgon

The *Blue Annals* mention that he composed biographies of bKa' brgyud teachers, and in fact he is the compiler of the only extant hagiography of the master Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1170–1249), which he signed as La stod pa Shes rab mgon.²⁴ It is likely that he was also the

²² The hermitic community described in this second section of the text is studied more in detail in Sernesi forthcoming.

²³ See Roerich 1949: 695–696. 'Gos lo tsā ba mentions a full-fledged life story of Shes rab mgon which has not yet surfaced.

²⁴ See van der Kuyp 1994: 185–186; Stearns 2000: 23, n. 16.

compiler of a brief life story of Rin chen ldan included in the *'Ba' ra ba gser phreng*, set in writing by one La stod pa, on the basis of extant written narratives and of the oral accounts by Zur phug pa and Grub thob Nyi ma mgon (both pupils of Rin chen ldan and teachers of Shes rab mgon) (see fig. 2).²⁵

According to the account of the *History of the Mountain Teachings*, Shes rab mgon sought out the numerous masters who held the *Mountain Teachings*. They resided at monasteries and hermitages on and around rTsis ri mountain, and most of them had studied with direct disciples of Yang dgon pa. Among those who can be located in the area, are Bla ma lHa sdings pa (lHa [g/]sding[s] being an hermitage on rTsis ri established by Yang dgon pa), the lead chanter (*dbu mdzad*) of lHa gdong pa called Slob dpon Shes rab dar, and Bla ma Dar ma bzang po and Bla ma Rin chen mgon po residents of Zur phug; they are both listed as respectively the second and third Zur phug pa (i.e., head of the homonymous hermitage) among the disciples of the "first" Zur phug pa Rin chen dpal bzang in the latter's biography.²⁶ Therefore, Shes rab mgon presents himself as an authorized and reliable source for the history of the teachings, having purposefully gathered information from the living tradition. The work was written down for students and a few mountain dwellers (*ri pa*) at Sham po gang: if this were the Yar lha Sham po mountain in Yar lungs, this would attest to an early diffusion of Yang dgon pa's instructions in Central Tibet (dBus), among new, far away communities of mountain hermits.

4. Main Practice Lineages

The *History of the Mountain Teachings* is edited and translated below and divided in distinct numbered paragraphs for convenience. In the following remarks I refer to the text employing these paragraphs' numbers in square brackets.

The first master mentioned in the text is 'Bri gung spyān snga Grags pa 'byung gnas, from whom Yang dgon pa received "all the instructions of the Dwags po bKa' brgyud, starting from the *Six Teachings of Nāropa* and so forth" [2]. The *Great Mirror* maintains that the teaching transmission occurred over a year and entailed the complete 'Bri gung instructions, without mentioning any specific topic except for physical yogic exercises (*'khrul 'khor, yantra*).²⁷ In a further

²⁵ *Thugs sras spyān mnga' [=snga] rin chen ldan gyi rnam par thar pa rin chen mgul brgyan*, in *'Ba' ra ba gser phreng*, vol. 1, p. 12: /lo rgyus 'ga' re yi ge la 'dug pa dang/ dpal zur phug pa dang/ grub thob nyi ma mgon gyi zhal nas byon pa la sogs kyang dgrigs [= 'grigs] nas/ la stod pas zur tsam 'di yi ger bkod pa lags so/.

²⁶ For these hermitages and these masters, see Sernesi forthcoming.

²⁷ See Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, pp. 93–101; trans. Guarisco 2015: 185–191.

paragraph of the *History of the Mountain Teachings* [21] the teachings received from Grags pa 'byung gnas are listed in greater detail. Emphasized are the “profound teachings” (*zab chos*) or “profound instructions” (*zab khrid*) of 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), alongside the *Fivefold [Teachings on the Great Seal] (lNga ldan)* and the *Golden Pouch of the Mountain Teachings (Ri chos gser khug ma)*: as mentioned above, the latter is a short composition providing instructions to hermits, which is a direct precursor of Yang dgon pa's manual.²⁸

Also detailed is the information about the instructions that Yang dgon pa received from rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje, with whom he developed a deep and long-lasting relationship. According to the *Great Mirror*, Yang dgon pa met this teacher young, before his ordination at age twenty-two, while rGod tshang pa was practising at rGod tshang (“The Vulture Nest”), the hermitage on rTsib ri mountain from which the teacher eventually took his name.²⁹ The main teaching transmission occurred some time later at sTeng gro, a monastery founded by mGon po rdo rje in the rGyal nor area north of rTsib ri. According to the *Great Mirror*, on that occasion Yang dgon pa received instructions on the *Path of Means* and on the *Five Rivets for Clearing Obstacles (Gegs sel gzer lnga)*.³⁰ In the *History of the Mountain Teachings*, the *Five Rivets* are listed among the instructions that Yang dgon pa received before his ordination [18], while the teachings received from rGod tshang pa are thoroughly listed separately [5, 9, 19]. These include the most representative instructions of rGod tshang pa's teacher gTsang pa rGya ras Ye shes rdo rje (1161–1211), namely the *Six Cycles [of Teachings on] Equal Taste (Ro snyoms skor drug)*. The transmission lineage provided for these teachings [5] reflects the fact that they are considered “treasure texts” (*gter ma*) ascribed to Ras chung pa (who had received them from the Indian *siddha* Tipupa) and recovered by gTsang pa rGya ras during a retreat in mKhar chu.³¹ Moreover, the text specifies that the teaching transmission included the instructions of Phag mo gru pa, and those that Gling ras pas Pad

²⁸ For these “profound teachings” see 'Jig rten mgon po, *'Bri gung thel chos bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*; for the *Ri chos gser khug ma* see *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 299–322.

²⁹ Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, p. 44: *sku dge bsnyen du bzhuvs pa'i dus su sku 'khor lnga yis sprang po'i chas su mdzad/ shri'i dgon pa rnams gzigs su byon pa'i dus su/ chos rje rgod tshang na sgrub pa mdzad pa dang mjal*. For the whole episode of the life story summarizing the main meetings between the two, see *ibid.* pp. 44–48, trans. Guarisco 2015: 147–150. For rGod tshang, see Akester 2016: 665–668, Sernesi forthcoming.

³⁰ Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, p. 46. A text on this set of practices ascribed to Nāropa is included in *gDams ngag mdzod*, vol. 9 (Ta), pp. 256–276; see Barron (trans.) 2013: 98.

³¹ For the concealment and discovery of the *Ro snyoms skor drug*, see Roerich 1949: 438, 668; Tshe dbang rgyal, *lHo rong chos 'byung*, pp. 649–651.

ma rdo rje (1128–1188) had received directly from Ras chung pa's disciples Sum pa ras pa and rGyal ba lo, and passed on to gTsang pa rGya ras [5, 9].³²

Ko brag pa bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1170–1249) [3, 4, 15, 20] was one of the most prominent masters of his time. This figure was not claimed by any major school narrative of later date, and thus relatively little is known about him despite his fame during his lifetime.³³ According to the *Great Mirror*, Yang dgon pa was eleven when he met his teacher, and relied on him until the latter's death, hence for over twenty-five years. Together with rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje, this was the most influential figure in Yang dgon pa's life. Ko brag pa was the holder of four main teaching transmissions, three of which he passed on to his pupil, namely the practices of Vajravārāhī, which was Yang dgon pa's chosen deity (*yid dam*) [4], the *Path and Fruit* (*Lam 'bras*) in the tradition of Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma (1062–1149) [3], and the *Pacification* (*Zhi byed*) of Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas [15].³⁴ The *Pacification* tradition is mentioned only in passing—together with the *Great Perfection* (*rDzogs chen*) teachings—and does not seem to have had a great impact on the formulation of the *Mountain Teachings*. This is quite surprising, given that Pha dam pa sangs rgyas had taught it while residing in Ding ri Glang 'khor, and thus his teaching tradition must have been popular in the area.³⁵ The transmission lineage of the practice of the goddess provided in the *History of the Mountain Teachings* [4] is that of the famous corpus of *Six Vajravārāhī Scriptures* (*Phag mo gzhung drug*) originating with Lakṣmīnkarā and one Virūpa, and passing through the elusive Nepalese teacher Hang du dkar po,

³² For gTsang pa rGya ras and his teacher Gling ras pa, see Blythe Miller 2005. For Gling ras pa, see also Martin 1979, Walther 2017. Short biographies of both teachers and of rGod tshang ras pa were written by Dan Martin for *The Treasury of Lives*. For the training of Gling ras pa with disciples of Ras chung pa, see also Roerich 1949: 660–661; Tshedbang rgyal, *lHo rong chos 'byung*, p. 632, which states that the master spent altogether ca. fifteen years in gNyal Lo ro (i.e., where Ras chung pa's community had settled). For a survey of the 'Brug pa teaching cycles, see Kun dga' dpal 'byor, *Tshig gi me tog*; Schiller 2014: 239–244; Walther 2017: 68–72. For an early history of the 'Brug pa bKa' brgyud pa, see Blythe Miller 2006.

³³ For Ko brag pa's life and religious songs, see Stearns 2000. See also the master's brief life sketch by Dan Martin in *The Treasury of Lives*.

³⁴ The fourth is the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga* practice of the Kālacakra tantra taught by Vibhūticandra; see Stearns 1996; 2000: 4–5. The *History of the Mountain Teachings* mentions that the *Mountain Teachings* include points from the “path of means” of Ko brag pa (*rje ko brag pa'i thabs lam*) [20], but it is unlikely that this refers to the *ṣaḍaṅgayoga*. Note also that together with the *Path and Fruit*, the text mentions the transmission of instructions on the intermediate state by Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma [3], for which see above.

³⁵ For Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas and his *Pacification* teachings, see Martin 2006, 2008, and a number of unpublished papers and of blogposts on *Tibeto-logic*. Yang dgon pa also received the *Zhi byed rmang lam ma*, see below.

that greatly spread in Tibet.³⁶ The *History of the Mountain Teachings* [3] doesn't specify the lineage of transmission of the *Path and Fruit* to Ko brag pa, but according to the master's biography (that, as mentioned above, was also compiled by Shes rab mgon), he received these teachings from his two main teachers, namely Zhang ston Se mig pa and gNyos Chos kyi gzi brjid (1164–1224). This important teacher of the gNyos clan, also known as Kha rag pa or lHa nang pa gZi brjid dpal, was the son of gNyos Grags pa dpal (1106–1165/1182?), who controlled the lHa sa area and instructed, among others, Phag mo gru pa.³⁷ Chos kyi gzi brjid is best known as a prominent pupil of 'Jig rten mgon po, but he also received the transmission of the *Path and Fruit* from sMon d[/m]khar ba Nyang rgyal po grags. According to Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po (1382–1456), Nyang rgyal po grags received the transmission from a direct pupil of Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma named simply “the great meditator from Nyang” (Nyang sgom chen po), and in turn also taught one Shes rab tshul khrims qualified as the son of sMon mkhar ba's lord or as Zh[w]a ma's nephew. According to this account, this individual was also a teacher of Ko brag pa. Zhang ston Se mig pa, on the other hand, received the *Path and Fruit* from a disciple of Nyang sgom chen po named sTon g.yung (see fig. 3).³⁸

³⁶ For this transmission, see Roerich 390–397. For the master named Virūpa of this lineage, also known as Eastern Virūpa (Shar phyogs Bir wa pa), and different from the better-known Virūpa of the *Path and Fruit*, see Stearns 2016: 133, 639 n. 123. For Hang du dkar po, who is sometimes identified as one of the Pham 'thing brothers (i.e., the teachers residing in Pham [/]thing in the Kathmandu valley, nowadays Pharping), see Stearns 2001: 206–207, n. 15 and references provided therein. The following teacher in the lineage of the *History of the Mountain Teachings* [4] is one lCal (!) ston lo tsā ba, which must be corrected to dPyal lo tsā ba, i.e., Se bSod nams rgyal mtshan alias Kun dga' rdo rje; indeed, one of the lineages of transmission mentioned in the *Blue Annals* passes through dPyal Kun rdor and mNga' ris kyi ston, matching that of the *History of the Mountain Teachings*; see Roerich 1949: 397. This teacher of the dPyal family was also at the origin of the so-called dPyal system of Hevajra, that he had received “from the elder one of the Pham thing brothers, i.e. 'Jigs med grags pa”; see Sobisch 2008: 48, n. 125.

³⁷ For gNyos Chos kyi gzi brjid, see Jñānavajra (Ye shes rdo rje), *lHa nang pa'i rnam thar*. For the gNyos clan, including Chos kyi gzi brjid's influential father and his nephew lHa rin chen rgyal po (1201–1270), who founded the Gye re lha khang in 1231, see An., *Kha rag gnyos gdung rabs*, esp. pp. 31–41 for Chos kyi gzi brjid; Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 385–391, 413–448. See also Vitali 2004: 133–143; Roerich 1949: 372–373; Tshe dbang rgyal, *lHo rong chos 'byung*, pp. 425–426.

³⁸ See Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po, *Lam 'bras*, p. 466: *de lta bu'i rje btsun ma de la bla ma nyang sgom chen pos lo bcu gnyis bsten nas zhus/ de la bla ma smon mkhar ba nyang rgyal po grags/ des kha rag gi gnyos chos kyi gzi brjid/ des bla ma ko brag pa/ des bla ma lha srung pa tro la bryud do/ /yang nyang sgom la ston g.yung gis zhus/ de la zhang ston se mig pas/ de la ko brag pas so/ /yang bla ma smon mkhar bas/ smon mkhar jo sras sam zhwa ma'i dbon po shes rab tshul khrims su grags pa la bshad/ de la ko brag pas so/*. This is summarized in fig. 3. See also Stearn 2000: 24, n. 26. For the life of Ma gcig Zh[w]a

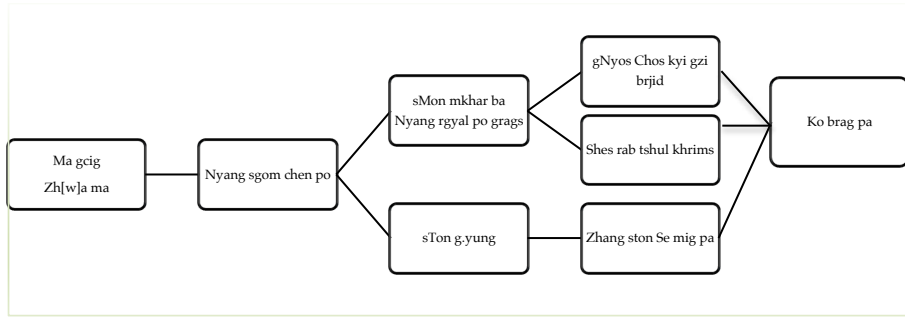


Fig. 3 — Transmission Lineage of the Path and Fruit of Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma according to Ngor chen

Ko brag pa is credited with the compilation of texts of instruction on the *Path and Fruit*, and in particular on the techniques for “dispelling hindrances” (*gegs sel*).³⁹ These teachings, as mentioned above, were incorporated in the *Mountain Teachings*, and form a specific section of the *Gleaming Jewel*, followed by instructions on “enhancing the practice” (*bogs dbyung*).

While this tradition of the *Path and Fruit* is called the “middling” (*'bring*) tradition, Yang dgon pa also received what in the *History of the Mountain Teachings* [6.1] is called the “extensive” (*rgyas*) tradition of practice, which was transmitted within the Sa skya pa. Indeed, the work accounts for the main transmission lineage from Se ston Kun rig (1025–1122) to the elder of the Zhang ston brothers, namely Chos 'bar (1053–1135), and from him to Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158) and the early Sa skya hierarchs. It was Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251) who passed it on to Yang dgon pa.⁴⁰ According to the *Great Mirror*, after an initial meeting between them that occurred on the road, Yang dgon pa travelled to Sa skya monastery, where he received from the paṇḍita tantric initiations of Cakrasaṃvara [6.2] and Hevajra, the textual transmission of sūtra and tantra scriptures, as well as several special instructions. Explicitly mentioned is the *Hidden Explanation of the Path* (*Lam sbas bshad*) that was bestowed directly from Virūpa to Sa chen Kun dga' snying po, and “was unknown to others”

ma and his brother, see Roerich 1949: 218–229; Stearns 2001: 125–131; 2006: 208–212.

³⁹ For the writings of Ko brag pa on the topic, see Ngor chen Kun dga' bzung po, *Lam 'bras*, p. 467; Stearns 2000: 4, 22 nn. 11–12, 25 n. 34 and references quoted therein. The most famous work by the master on “dispelling hindrances” was titled *Gegs sel ha dmigs rgya mtsho* and is not extant; see also Stearns 2006: 248.

⁴⁰ This is the main transmission lineage of the *Path and Fruit*; see Stearns 2001; 2006: 163–251.

[6.3].⁴¹ The transmission lineage of the Cakrasaṃvara practice provided in the *History of the Mountain Teachings* [6.2] is that of the tradition of Ghaṅṭapāda, that Sa chen Kun dga' snying po had received from Mal lo tsā ba Blo gros grags.⁴²

5. Other Transmission Lineages

The *History of the Mountain Teachings* also records that Yang dgon pa received teachings of the Tshal pa bKa' brgyud [7, 8]. In the transmission lineages provided in the text, Bla ma Zhang is followed by rJe Ro skam pa and Sangs rgyas ras pa (or Sangs rgyas ras chen). rJe Ro skam pa is Nyi ma shes rab (1139–1208), the founder of the monastery of Ro skam. He had a nephew called Sangs rgyas rdo rje (1169–1226) who studied with 'Jig rten mgon po and sPyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas and succeeded his uncle as the second abbot of Ro skam monastery. However, the Sangs rgyas ras chen of the *History of the Mountain Teachings* is more likely the homonymous (seventh) throne holder of Tshal Yang dgon. Indeed, Yang dgon pa travelled there to pay homage to Bla ma Zhang's statue, so he might have received instructions at the time.⁴³ The teachings that Yang dgon pa

⁴¹ See Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, p. 89: *de'i dus phyis dpal sa skyar byon/ bcom ldan 'das 'khor lo bde mchog dang/ dgyes pa rdo rje la sogs pa'i dbang ka mang po dang/ mdo rgyud mang po'i lung dang/ gdams pa khyad par 'phags pa mang po dang/ rje sa skya pa chen po la dpal bir ba pas dngos su gnang ba'i lam sbas bshad kyi zhal gdams gzhan la ma grags pa mang po dang/ gzhan yang chos rnam par dag pa'i rnam dbye mang po gsungs/*. For the whole episode, see *ibid.* pp. 88–91, trans. Guarisco 2015: 181–183. For the *Lam sbas bshad*, see Stearns 2001: 152, 251 n. 220 (referring to an instruction manual on the subject by Sa skya Paṅḍita), 255 n. 235; Sobisch 2008: 108–109.

⁴² The lineage is provided in Ngor chen Kun dga' bzang po, *Thob yig rgya mtsho*, p. 206 as follows: */yang bde mchog dril bu pa'i brgyud pa'i bka' babs gnyis dang ldan pa'i dbang thob pa'i brgyud pa la/ sa lugs kyi brgyud pa ni/ rdo rje 'chang/ rdo rje rnal 'byor ma/ rdo rje dril bu pa/ rus sbal zhabs/ 'bar ba 'dzin/ gu hya pa/ tai lo pa/ nā ro pa/ pham mthing ba/ klog skya shes rab brtsegs/ mal dzo lo tstsha ba/ rje sa chen yab sras gsum/ chos rje sa skya paṅḍi tal/ (...)*. Here 'Bar ba 'dzin (*Jālandhara) instead of Karṇapa is inserted between Rus sbal zhabs (*Kūmapāda) and Guhyapa. See also Luczanits 2011: 190 table 2, where both *Jālandhara and Karṇapa are listed: the lineage is depicted on a thangka of the deity reproduced in *ibid.*: 187 fig. 6.9 (private collection, originally acquired by Tucci). See also Roerich 1949: 382: in this account the Pham mthing pa who taught Klog skya Shes rab brtsegs seems to be the younger of the brothers from Pham [*/m]thing in the Kathmandu valley. For a summary of the information about these brothers that can be gleaned from the *Blue Annals*, see Lo Bue 1997: 643–652. For the transmission from Mal lo tsā ba to Sa chen, see Stearns 2001: 141, 247 n. 192.

⁴³ For Ro skam pa and his nephew, see Tshal pa Kun dga' rdo rje, *Deb ther dmar po* pp. 135–136; Grags pa 'byung gnas and rGyal ba blo bzang, *Ming mdzod*, pp. 1621, 1740–1741; Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 117–118. See also the biographical sketch of Ro skam pa by Dan Martin in *The Treasury of Lives*. For Yang dgon pa's trip to Tshal

held are the *Seven Days Inner Heat* (*gTum mo zhag bdun ma*), that Bla ma Zhang received from rG[w]a lo tsā ba gZhon nu dpal (1105/1110–1198/1202) [8], and the *Four Secrets* (*sBas bzhi*) [7], that the master received from Mal yer pa, who was a pupil of Ras chung pa and Gling kha ba, themselves disciples of Mi la ras pa. In the *Mountain Teachings* collection there are texts devoted to both these practices. The “notes” (*zin bris*) on the *Four Secrets*, which teach the manipulation of the inner winds and drops, were compiled by Shes rab mgon at the request of some spiritual friends at mTshur phu, while the *Inner Heat* instructions are ascribed to Yang dgon pa. In both cases, it is stated that Yang dgon pa transmitted the teachings to sPyan snga Rin chen ldan, who instructed Zur phug pa, who in turn taught Shes rab mgon; the *Inner Heat* instructions also provide the alternative lineage Yang dgon pa, Bla ma [rGyal mtshan] 'Bum, Sangs rgyas dbon, Shes rab mgon. These are the two main transmission lineages of the *Mountain Teachings* recorded in the second part of the *History of the Mountain Teachings* [27, 28, fig. 2]. Moreover, this text specifies that Shes rab mgon received the *Four Secrets* from another pupil of Rin chen ldan, namely Nyi ma mgon [32, fig. 2].⁴⁴

Yang dgon pa also encountered Bla ma Zhang in dreams and visions. In particular, he received from him instructions on how to take gods and demons as the path (*lha dre lam du khyer ba*) called *Dream Secret Practice* (*gSang spyod rmang lam ma*) [11]. This is one of the so-called *Six Mothers* (*Ma drug*), visionary teachings recorded and compiled after the death of his teacher by the attendant Rin chen ldan.⁴⁵

Yang dgon, see Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, pp. 86–87; trans. Guarisco 2015: 180; Tshed dbang rgyal, *lHo rong chos 'byung*, p. 707. For the tenure of Sangs rgyas ras pa, or Sangs rgyas gzhon nu (d. 1260), see Grags pa 'byung gnas and rGyal ba blo bzang, *Ming mdzod*, p. 1742; Sørensen and Hazod 2007: 104. Note, however, that Sangs rgyas ras pa is also mentioned in the *History of the Mountain Teachings* [18] as one of the early masters of Yang dgon pa, so he might also be a homonymous local teacher.

⁴⁴ For Bla ma Zhang's two teachers, see Yamamoto 2012: 57–62. For the *Zab mo sba bzhi'i khrid dang 'khrul 'khor gyi zin bris*, see *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, vol. 3, pp. 143–156; note that in the transmission lineage provided therein, instead of Sangs rgyas ras pa one finds a teacher indicated only with the epithet *Bya bral ba chen po* (“Great Ascetic”). For the *gTum mo zhag bdun ma*, see *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum II*, vol. 1, pp. 355–367; in the transmission lineage therein a dGe ba'i bshes gnyen Ro snyoms pa substitutes Ro skam pa.

⁴⁵ The six teachings of the *Ma drug* are: *Drag rlung gnad lnga ma*, *gSang spyod rmang lam ma*, *sTong nyid tshig drug ma*, *'Pho ba hūṃ dmar ma*, *Nad 'don hūṃ chos ma*, *'Dzag bsrung bka' rgya ma*. See Rin chen ldan, *Ri chos kyi dkar chag*, p. 158; *gDam ngag gnad kyi ma drug*, in *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, vol. 2, pp. 231–286 (esp. pp. 261–280 for the visions of Bla ma Zhang and the *gSang spyod rmang lam ma*). For the visions of Bla ma Zhang in Yang dgon pa's life story, see Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, pp. 85–88, trans. Guarisco 2015: 179–180.

Other visionary teachings received by Yang dgon pa are those of the syllable Hūṃ transmitted by the *dākinīs* [10].⁴⁶

The other teachers of Yang dgon pa are little-known, and some could not be identified.⁴⁷ His early teachers were one Phul dmar ba [15], who was the teacher of Yang dgon pa's father and also instructed him as an infant, and one rDzing phu pa: the latter transmitted to his pupil bKa' gdams pa teachings, but also the *Cutting (gCod)*, and the *Great Perfection* teachings in the tradition of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas [16].⁴⁸ Another important teacher of Yang dgon pa was Drod chung pa: a disciple of gNyos Chos kyi gzi brjid, he transmitted to Yang dgon pa the *Large and Small Vases of Nectar of the Mountain Teachings*, and the *Pacification Received in Dream (Zhi byed rmang lam ma)*, which are instructions that Phag mo gru pa received in a dream from Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas [22].⁴⁹ One Bla ma Go lung pa is also mentioned in passing in the *History of the Mountain Teachings* [25]: Go lung is a locality in Zur tsho (an area west of La stod lHo, near the dPal khud mtsho) where the family lineage of O rgyan pa had settled in the 11th/12th century. Hence, this teacher could be the latter's uncle (and early teacher) Go lung Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan.⁵⁰ Finally, one Mi bskyod rdo rje transmitted to Yang dgon pa the "teaching cycles of the guru [Padmasambhava]" [17]: the name is common, but this may refer to one La stod pa Mi bskyod rdo rje who was a disciple of N[/M]yang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192) and transmitted the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*.⁵¹

⁴⁶ See *Rigs bzhi dā ki'i hūṃ chos gñang tshul dang bcas pa*, in *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, vol. 2, pp. 287–294. For the visionary transmission from the *dākinīs*, see Rin chen ldan, *Me long chen mo*, pp. 59–60, trans. Guarisco 2015: 159. Two more direct transmissions are recorded in the *History of the Mountain Teachings*, namely the 'Khrul 'khor bka' rgya ma received from bDag med ma [12], and intermediate state teachings received from mkha' 'gro Tshe dbang ma, probably Tshe ring ma [13].

⁴⁷ These include his uncle named Grub thob Dar ma [23], one Bar 'brog Me lung pa [24], and lHa btsun Swo kha ba [25]. Bar 'brog is an area in La stod, where rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje founded the monastery of rDo rje gling, which was the place where he last met with Yang dgon pa and then passed away; see Blythe Miller 2006: 28; Guarisco (trans.) 2015: 202; Li 2011: 134; Roerich 1949: 686. There is also a transmission lineage of the *Great Seal* in the tradition of Maitrīpa passing through one rTsang shod pa [14], whom I could not identify. Compare a similar *Great Seal* transmission lineage in a text from XiXia; see Zhang 2019: 7, 9 table 1 (#3.3).

⁴⁸ For A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, see Roerich 1949: 999–1000; Ostensen 2018.

⁴⁹ For the *Pacification Received in Dream (Zhi byed rmang lam ma)*, see Schiller 2014: 603 (PHAG 95). Drod chung pa transmitted to Yang dgon pa teachings of the 'Bri gung pa and the sNyos (!) kyi bdun chos, which I take to be a sevenfold set of teachings of the gNyos lineage [22].

⁵⁰ See Li 2011: 111 fig. 33, 112.

⁵¹ The transmission lineage of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum* passing from Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer to La stod pa Mi bskyod rdo rje, and from the latter to the treasure discoverer rje btsun Śākya bzang po, is provided in the opening "supplicatory prayers" (*gsol 'debs*) of the work; see Ehrhard 2014: 144, 147 n. 8. See also Martin 2020: 50 no. 13.

The *History of the Mountain Teachings* details the diversity of instructions and texts received by Yang dgon pa from his many teachers. As shown above, these include the most prominent and famous masters of his time active in the western regions: fervent and gifted practitioners like Yang dgon pa would seek them out to request their particular teaching systems, especially those of the highest tantric practices. The source attests to a religious landscape where these different traditions of practice—eventually considered specialties of distinct Buddhist “schools”—co-existed and intersected. Yang dgon pa was thoroughly trained in the *Six Yogas of Nāropa*, the *Great Seal*, the *Equal Taste*, and the *Path and Fruit* of two different lineage transmissions, and he also received instructions on the *Great Perfection*, the *Pacification*, the *Secret Practice*, and so on, as well as different styles of teaching on the intermediate state, the dispelling of obstacles, and the physical yogic exercises. He combined and elaborated this lore in his own system of teachings for hermits, a comprehensive presentation of specialized esoteric knowledge.



Tibetan Text of the History of the Mountain Teachings

Witnesses:

A: *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, Pha jo ldings, Thimpu 1976 (W1KG17449), vol. 1, pp. 1–9.

B: *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum II*, Rta mgo, Thimpu 1982 (W23654), vol. 1, pp. 5–12.

C: EAP 570/6/3/6, fols. 1–5.

The manuscript from which the earliest publication (A) was prepared has now been photographed and made available online by the British Library Endangered Archives Programme (EAP). It was documented within Programme 570 in the collection of the Pha jo lding 'Og min lHa khang (EAP570/6). It consists of two volumes: the first, labelled *Ka* in the initial *dkar chag*, and catalogued as EAP 570/6/3/6 (*Ri chos brgyud tshul*), corresponds to *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, vol. 1 and vol. 2, pp. 1–293. The second volume, labeled *Kha*, and photographed as EAP 570/6/3/22 (*Ri chos gleng gzhi*), corresponds to *Yang dgon pa'i gsung 'bum I*, vol. 2, pp. 295–643, and vol. 3. See <https://eap.bl.uk/project/EAP570> (accessed October 2021).

Abbreviations employed:

em. : emendation; *add.* : addition; *om.* : omission

Note: Punctuation follows A, C; variants in B have not been marked.

(A1, B5, C1a) Ri chos brgyud tshul gyi lo rgyus bzhugs so //
 (A2, B6, C1b) [1] / bla ma dam pa rnam la phyag btsal te // slob mas
 skul phyir lo rgyus bsdus pa bri // ri chos skor gsum gyi brgyud tshul
 dang rnam bzhag ni / spyir sde snod gsum dang rgyud sde bzhi'i
 snying phyung pa yin la / khyad par du gdam ngag zab dgu'i bcud
 bsdus pa yin te /

[2] nā ro⁵² chos drug la sogs pa dags po bka' brgyud kyī gdam ngag
 thams cad / rdo rje 'chang / te lo pa / nā ro pa / mar pa / mi la / sgam
 po pa / mtha' rtsa pa / 'bri khung pa / spyān snga rin po che nas dpal
 yang dgon pa la brgyud /

[3] lam 'bras 'bring po dang / zha ma'i bar do'i gdam ngag la sogs
 pa / se ston kun rig / ma gcig zha ma / chos rje ko brag pa nas / dpal
 yang dgon pa la'o /

[4] / chos rje'i⁵³ zhal gzigs kyī lha rdo rje phag mo yin cing / ri chos
 skor du bskyed rims skabs su rdo rje phag mo nges par sgom par bshad
 cing / zab chos (A3, C2a) thams cad kyī dbu na yang / na mo shri ba
 dzra yo gi ni ces pa yod / de'i brgyud pa ni rdo rje phag mo / lcam
 legs smin ka ra / bir⁵⁴ ba pa / a wa⁵⁵ dhū ti pa / bsod snyoms pa che
 chung / rje btsun ldong ngar ba / hang du dkar po / dpyal⁵⁶ ston lo
 tstsha ba / mnga' ris kyī ston / lha rje ston pa / zhang se mig pa / chos
 rje ko brag pa / dpal (B7) yang dgon pa la'o // 'di zhal⁵⁷ gzigs kyī
 brgyud pa ma chad pa yin no /

[5] / ro snyoms bskor drug gi gnad thams cad ri chos na yod de /
 de'i brgyud pa ni / rdo rje 'chang / te lo pa / nā ro pa / ti pu⁵⁸ pa / ras
 chung pa / gtsang pa rgya ras / chos rje rgod tshang pa / dpal yang
 dgon pa la'o // gzhan yang rje phag mo gru pas grub thob gling la
 brgyud pa dang / rje sum pa⁵⁹ ba / rgyal ba lo la sogs pa mang po nas
 grub thob gling la brgyud / des gtsang pa rgya⁶⁰ la brgyud pa'i bsre
 'pho la sogs pa'i gnad rnam s yod do /

[6] / lam 'bras⁶¹ rgyas pa dang / (A4 C2b) bde mchog dgyes rdor /
 lam sbas⁶² bshad la sogs pa / sa skyā pa'i gdam ngag thams cad yod
 de /

[6.1] lam 'bras brgyud pa ni / rdo rje 'chang / bdag med ma / bir
 ba pa / ḍa ma ru pa / nag po pa / ga ya dha ra / 'brog mi lo tstsha ba

52 ro] ro'i AC

53 rje'i] rje B

54 bir] 'bir B

55 wa] *em.* ba ABC

56 dpyal] *em.* lcal ABC

57 zhal] *em.* gzhal ABC

58 pu] phu B

59 pa] *em.* bha ABC

60 rgya] *add.* ras B

61 lam 'bras] *em.* lam ABC

62 sbas] *em.* rbas ABC

/ se 'khar chung ba / zhang dgon pa ba / sa chen kun dga' snying po
/ grags pa rgyal mtshan / bsod nams rtse mo / pan chen lo tstsha /
dpal yang dgon pa la'o /

[6.2] / bde mchog brgyud pa ni / bde mchog / phag mo / gha dha
pa / rus sba⁶³ zhabs / karna pa / gurna pa / rnam rgyal zhabs / te lo
pa / nā ro pa / pham mthing pa nas / sa skya lo tstsha nas / dpal yang
dgon pa la'o /

[6.3] / lam sbas⁶⁴ bshad bir ba pa dngos kyis⁶⁵ / sa chen la gnang
nas / (B8) chos rje la'o /

[7] / sba⁶⁶ bzhi'i brgyud pa ni / rdo rje 'chang / te lo pa / nā ro pa
/ ra khang ras pa / 'bri sgom gling kha ba / mal yer pa ba / bla ma
zhang / rje ro skam pa / sangs rgyas ras pa / dpal yang dgon pa la'o /

[8] / gtum mo zhag bdun ma'i brgyud pa ni / ye shes kyi mkha'
'gro shri tsa mun tri / dpal rga lo / bla ma zhang / rje ro skam pa /
sangs rgyas ras chen / dpal yang dgon pa la'o /

[9] / gsang khrid brgyud pa ni / gong tsho ro snyoms dang 'dra /
ras chung pa sku mched gsum / sna phu pa⁶⁷ / gtsang pa rgya / ras
pa (A5 C3a) rdo rje ye shes / dpal yang dgon pa la'o /

[10] / hūṃ chos skor ni / mkha' 'gro sde bzhis dpal yang dgon pa
la dngos su gnang ngo /

[11] / gsang spyod rmang lam ma ni / bla ma zhang gis dpal yang
dgon pa la rmang lam du gnang ngo /

[12] / 'khrul 'khor bka' rgya ma ni / bdag med mas⁶⁸ chos rje la
dngos su gnang ba'o⁶⁹ /

[13] / bar do'i gnad zab mo la sogs gdam ngag mang pa cig / mkha'
'gro⁷⁰ tshe dbang mas chos rje la dngos su gsungs so / / de bzhin du /
bla ma dang / yi dam dang / ye shes kyi mkha' 'gro⁷¹ mas dngos sam
rmi lam du gsungs pa'i gnad mang po yod /

[14] phyag rgya chen po'i skor tsho / sangs rgyas bde chen mgon
po⁷² / byang chub sems dpa' blo gros rin chen / ri khrod pa lcam sring
/ mi tri pa / rgya gar phyag na / rtsang shod pa nas brgyud nas / dpal
yang dgon pa la'o /

[15] / rdzogs chen gyi gdams pa ye shes gsang rdzogs la sogs pa'i
gnad mang po dang / gzhan yang zhi byed kyi gdam ngag / 'jam dpal
smra seng nas / pha dam pa nas / chos rje ko brag pa dang / bla ma

⁶³ sba] *em.* rbal ABC

⁶⁴ sbas] *em.* rbas ABC

⁶⁵ kyis] ni B

⁶⁶ sba] *em.* rba ABC

⁶⁷ sna phu pa] rna phu ba AC

⁶⁸ mas] ma'i B

⁶⁹ ba'o] pa'o AC

⁷⁰ mkha' 'gro] mkha' <'>gro AC

⁷¹ mkha' 'gro] mkha' <'>gro AC

⁷² mgon po] dgon po B

phul dmar ba sku mched dang / sangs rgyas mi bskyod⁷³ rdo rje nas
brgyud pa'i (B9) gnad kyang bag re yod de /

[16] sgyu 'phrul sems 'jog a ro'i gdam ngag / theg chen blo sbyong
la sogs dang / lam sgron la swo bka' gdams kyi skor / spyod 'jug / ma
gcig gi (A6 C3b) bdud kyi spyod la swo pa yang / bla ma rdzing⁷⁴ phu
pa la gsan nas yod do /

[17] / gu ru'i⁷⁵ skor⁷⁶ kyang rna po ba nas mi bskyod rdo rje nas
brgyud nas yod do /

[18] / gzer lnga / gnad lnga / dpal rga lo nas kyi lhan skyes kyi
skor / ting nge 'dzin gyi dbang / bla ma'i gsang sgrub / snying rje blo
rdeg ma la sogs pa gdam ngag mang po cig / sku dge bsnyen du
bzhugs dus / sangs rgyas ras pa la sogs pa la gsan nas / ri chos na
gnad rnams yod do /

[19] / rtsang pa rgya'i rten 'brel gyi bskor / bla ma sgrub pa'i skor
la sogs pa⁷⁷ rnams dang / rje rgod tshang pa'i khrid chen brgyad la
sogs pa'i gnad rnams kyang yod do /

[20] / rje ko brag pa'i thabs lam gyi gnad / thugs kyi gdams pa'i
gnad bsam gyis mi khyab pa bzhugs so /

[21] / chos rje 'bri khung pa'i zab chos / bcu chos sum chos / tshe
dpag med kyi khrid / chos drug so ma / byams khrid / snying rje'i⁷⁸
khrid / thig le'i khrid / lnga ldan gyi khrid / ri chos gser khug ma /
gro lung ma / gnad brgyad ma la sogs bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i gnad
rnams / spyan snga⁷⁹ rin po che la gsan nas yod do /

[22] / sbyor drug / gnyos⁸⁰ kyi bdun chos / ri chos bdud rtsi bum
pa che chung / zhi byed rmang lam ma⁸¹ la sogs pa mang po cig bla
ma drod chung pa la gsan pa'i gnad tsho yod do /

[23] / khu bo grub thob dar ma la chos mang po cig gsan pa'i gnad
tsho yang yod do /

[24] / bar 'brog me lung pa la ri chos la sogs chos mang du gsan pa'i
gnad tsho yod do /

[25] (B 10) / gzhan yang bla ma go lung pa dang / lha btsun swo
kha ba yang bla ma yin te / bla ma bcu gcig brten pa'o /

[26] / chos rje nyid rdo rje 'chang dngos 'jig rten du byon pa yin
zhing / lung dang rtogs pa'i chos ma lus pa thugs su chud pa'i thugs
nyams kyi gnad zab mo bsam gyis mi khyab pa rnams bzhugs so⁸² //

⁷³ bskyod] skyod AC

⁷⁴ rdzing] rjing C

⁷⁵ gu ru'i] gu ru B

⁷⁶ skor] bskor AC

⁷⁷ add. sgrub skor AC

⁷⁸ rje'i] rje B

⁷⁹ snga] lnga AC

⁸⁰ gnyos] *em.* snyos ABC

⁸¹ ma] *om.* B

⁸² bzhugs so] bzhugs<s>o C

II. (A7 C4a) / chos rje nas bdag la brgyud tshul ni /

[27] dpal yang dgon pa nas / slob dpon 'bum rin po che / sangs rgyas dbon la brgyud / yang gzhan nas kyang brgyud de / sangs rgyas dbon la ri chos skor thams cad bdag gis rdzogs par zhus⁸³ so /

[28] / yang dpal yang dgon pas chos rje rin chen ldan la gnang / de la dpal zur phug pas lo bcu gnyis brten cing / chos thams cad rdzogs par zhus / gzhan yang dpal yang dgon pa'i bu chen shag rdor ma dang / bla ma sgom ye / mkhan chen tshul khrim snying po / yon sgom rgyal mtshan bzang dang lnga la dpal zur phur pas gtugs⁸⁴ shing / mkhas grub chen por grags cing / ri chos kyi bdag por bzhugs pa de la / bka' lung khrid lag len ma lus pa rdzogs par zhus so /

[29] / dpal yang dgon pa la bslobs⁸⁵ pa'i dngos slob slob dpon 'bum la / bla ma rin gling pa ri chos tsho'i bka' lung gsan dus / brgyud pa nye ba la phan gsung nas / nged lo bcu gcig lon pa cig khrid nas chos thun ma chag par zhus so /

[30] / yang slob dpon gzhan tshul zer ba bzang po cig yod pa la / dpal yang dgon pa la yang sleb nas chos 'ga' re gsan 'dug

[31] / chos rje'i slob ma bzang shos gdan sa mdzad pa'i chos rje lo ras la chos thams cad rdzogs par gsan lo mang du brten / de la bdag gis⁸⁶ ri chos phal cher zhus so /

[32] / yang chos rje rin ldan gyi slob ma / grub thob nyi ma mgon la / sba⁸⁷ bzhi'i dmar khrid dang / gsang khrid kyi lag len dmar khrid du zhus so / / ri chos kyi gzhan yang mang du zhus so /

[33] / yang dpal zur phug pa'i gdan sar bzhugs pa'i / bla ma dar bzangs pas / dpal yang dgon pa'i dngos slob bu rgan nyi shu rtsa lnga la (A8 C4b) gtugs⁸⁸ (B 11) shing / ri chos la shin tu mkhas par bzhugs pa de la gtugs⁸⁹ / 'khrul 'khor lag len / zhal shes / khrid dang / sug dang gnad mang du zhus so /

[34] / dpal zur phug pa'i dbu mdzad bla ma rin mgon la yang ri chos skor gyi ma bde ba zhu btug dang / lag len gyi gsal 'debs la sogs yang yang du zhus so /

[35] / lha⁹⁰ gdong pa'i dbu mdzad slob dpon shes rab dar la yang ri chos skor mang du zhus so /

[36] / bla ma lha sdings⁹¹ pa la 'phrang sgrol gyi 'khrul 'khor rnam dang / 'gag dang ma bde ba 'ga' re zhus so /

⁸³ zhus] bzhugs B

⁸⁴ gtugs] btugs AC

⁸⁵ bslobs] *em.* sleb AC, slob B

⁸⁶ gis] gi B

⁸⁷ sba] *em.* rba ABC

⁸⁸ gtugs] *em.* btugs ABC

⁸⁹ gtugs] *em.* bstugs ABC

⁹⁰ lha] lhag B

⁹¹ sdings] bsdings AC

[37] / slob dpon chos kyi dpal la khrid chen gsum kyi lag khrid tsho dang / gzhan yang ri chos 'ga' re zhus so /

[38] / rtogs ldan khro rgyal la 'phrang sgröl gyi⁹² ma bde ba rnam dang / lam 'bras kyi lus sbyongs la sogs zhus so /

[39] / slob dpon dkon mchog bzang po la / ri chos skor dang bka' 'phrang mang du zhus so /

[40] / slob dpon gzhan nu snying po la sba⁹³ bzhi'i lag khrid dang / ri chos kyi ma bde ba mang du zhus so /

[41] / gzhan yang lha⁹⁴ gdong gyi bu⁹⁵ rgan slob dpon brtson 'grus mgon / dge slong grub rgyal la sogs bzang bzang mang po nas zhu btug byas so /

[42] / bla ma bsam bsdings pa dang rdzong kha ba nas brgyud pa dang / zhu ston nas brgyud pa la sogs nas kyang gnad 'ga' re byung pa yod do /

[43] / ri chos 'di la dpe thob lung thob kyi mi chog par 'dug pas / lag len mchod⁹⁶ pa re mdzad pa zhu / bla med kyi dbang ma thob pa la khrid chen gsum mi 'debs / khrid chen gsum ma rdzogs pa la ri chos skor mi ston / skor gsum ma rdzogs par zab khrid tsho mi ston / khrid tsho la nyams khrid ma rtogs pa klag lung mi bya / chos la sre slad dang bcos kha mi bya / sbas bshad / sba⁹⁷ bzhi / gsang khrid la sogs shin tu gnyan pas gzab pa gal che (A9 5a) brtse bas bris pa'i yig chung 'di / / 'gro ba kun la phan par shog

[44] / ri chos brgyud tshul dang / gdam ngag 'dus tshul gyi yig chung 'di / slob ma dge ba'i bshes gnyen dang / ri pa bzang po 'ga' res bskul nas / ldom bu pa shes rab mgon gyis sham po⁹⁸ gang su bris pa'o / / 'gro ba rnam la phan thogs par gyur cig / /

Translation of the History of the Mountain Teachings

“History of How the *Mountain Teachings* Were Transmitted”

[1] I pay homage to the holy masters! At the request of the disciples, I will write this short history. This is the means of transmission and the arrangement of the three cycles of *Mountain Teachings*: in general, they are the essence of the three baskets [of the scriptures] and the four classes of tantric scriptures; in particular, they are the condensed quintessence of the nine profound instructions.

⁹² gyi] *om.* B

⁹³ sba] *em.* rba ABC

⁹⁴ lha] lhag B

⁹⁵ bu] *em.* bur ABC

⁹⁶ mchod] *em.* chod ABC

⁹⁷ sba] *em.* rba ABC

⁹⁸ po] pa A

[2] All the instructions of the Dwags po bKa' brgyud, starting from the *Six Teachings of Nāropa* and so forth, were transmitted [as follows]: rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara), Tilopa, Nāropa, Mar pa, Mi la [ras pa], sGam po pa (1079–1153), mTha' rtsa pa [i.e., Phag mo gru pa (1110–1170)], 'Bri khung pa ['Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217)], [and] from sPyan snga Rin po che [Grags pa 'byung gnas (1175–1255)] to dPal Yang dgon pa (1213–1258).

[3] The “intermediate [transmission]” of the *Path and Fruit*, the instructions on the intermediate state by [Ma gcig] Zh[w]a ma, etc., [were transmitted as follows]: Se ston Kun rig (1025–1122), Ma gcig Zh[w]a ma (1062–1149), [and] from Chos rje Ko brag pa (1170–1249) to dPal Yang dgon pa.

[4] Since rDo rje phag mo (Vajravārāhī) is the Venerable [Yang dgon pa]'s [chosen] visualization deity, the time of the generation stage in the cycles of *Mountain Teachings* is certainly explained as the meditation on rDo rje phag mo. Moreover, at the beginning of all the profound teachings, one finds [the verse of homage] *namo śrī vajrayoginī*. Its lineage of transmission is: rDo rje phag mo, Lakṣmīnkara, Virūpa, Avadhūti, bSod snyoms pa (*Paiṇḍapātika) the older and the younger, rJe btsun lDong ngar ba, Hang du dkar po, dPyal ston lo tsā ba, mNga' ris kyi ston, lHa rje ston pa, Zhang Se mig pa, Chos rje Ko brag pa, and dPal Yang dgon pa. This is an uninterrupted lineage [of masters who] had visions [of the deity].

[5] In the *Mountain Teachings* there are all the main points of the *Six Cycles of Equal Taste*. Their transmission lineage is: rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara), Tilopa, Nāropa, Tipupa, Ras chung pa, gTsang pa rGya ras [Ye shes rdo rje (1161–1211)], Chos rje rGod tshang pa [mGon po rdo rje (1189–1258)], dPal Yang dgon pa. Moreover, Grub thob Gling [ras pa Pad ma rdo rje (1128–1188)] had received the transmission from Phag mo gru pa, and he had received the transmission from many [masters] such as the Venerable Sum pa ras pa and rGyal ba lo. [In the *Mountain Teachings*] there are many points [of instruction] such as those on *Mixing and Ejecting* transmitted from him to gTsang pa rGya ras.

[6] [In the *Mountain Teachings*] there are all the Sa skya instructions, including the extensive *Path and Fruit*, the Cakrasaṃvara and Hevajra, and the *Hidden Explanation of the Path*.

[6.1] The transmission lineage of the *Path and Fruit* is: rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara), bDag med ma (Nairātmyā), Virūpa, Ḍamarupa, Kāṇha, Gayadhara (d. 1103), 'Brog mi lo tsā ba [Sākya ye shes (993–1077)], Se '['/m]khar chung ba [Se ston Kun rig (1025–1122)], Zhang dGon pa [Zhang ston Chos 'bar (1053–1135)], Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158), Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216), bSod nams rtse mo (1142–

1182), Paṅ chen lo tsā ba [Sa skya Paṅḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251)], Yang dgon pa.

[6.2] The transmission lineage of Cakrasaṃvara: bDe mchog (Cakrasaṃvara), [rDo rje] phag mo (Vajravārahī), Ghaṅṅapāda, Rus sbaḥ zhabs (*Kūmapāda), Karṇapa, Guhyapa, rNam rgyal zhabs (*Vijayapāda), Tilopa, Nāropa, and from Pham mthing pa [in a transmission lineage to] Sa skya lo tsā ba [Paṅḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan] and from him to Yang dgon pa.

[6.3] Virūpa himself gave the *Hidden Explanation of the Path* to Sa chen [Kun dga' snying po], and from him [the teachings were transmitted via Sa skya Paṅḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan] to Chos rje [Yang dgon pa].

[7] The lineage of transmission of the *Four Secrets*: rDo rje 'chang (Vajradhara), Tilopa, Nāropa, Ra khang ras pa, 'Bri sgom Gling kha ba, Mal yer pa, Bla ma Zhang [g.Yu brag pa br'Tson 'grus grags pa (1123–1193)], rJe Ro skam pa [Nyi ma shes rab (1139–1208)], Sangs rgyas ras pa, dPal Yang dgon pa.

[8] The lineage of transmission of the *Seven Days Inner Heat*: Wisdom Dākinī Tsamuntri (= Cāmuṅḍī?), rG[w]a lo tsā ba [gZhon nu dpal (1105/1110–1198/1202)], Bla ma Zhang, rJe Ro skam pa [Nyi ma shes rab], Sangs rgyas ras chen, Yang dgon pa.

[9] The transmission lineage of the *Secret Guidance* is like that given above for the *Equal Taste*: from the three “brothers” [disciples of] Ras chung pa to sNa phu pa [i.e., Gling ras pa], gTsang pa rGya [ras Ye shes rdo rje], and to Yang dgon pa [via rGod tshang pa mGon po rdo rje].

[Direct transmissions 10–13:]

[10] The cycle of Hūṃ teachings was given directly from the four classes of *dākinīs* to Yang dgon pa.

[11] The *Dream Secret Practice* was given to dPal Yang dgon pa by Bla ma Zhang in a dream.

[12] The *Seal of Yantra* was given directly to Chos rje [Yang dgon pa] by bDag me ma (Nairātmyā).

[13] Many instructions such as the profound points of the *Intermediate State* were given directly to the venerable teacher by the *dākinī* Tshe dbang ma (= Tshe ring ma?). In the same way, [in the *Mountain Teachings*] there are many points spoken directly or in a dream by the chosen deities (*yi dam*) and wisdom *dākinīs*.

[14] The cycles [of teachings] on the *Great Seal* were transmitted by the buddha bDe chen mgon po (*Mahāsukhanātha), the bodhisattva Blo gros rin chen (*Matiratna), the sisters Ri khrod pa (Śavaripa), Maitrīpa, the Indian Phyag na (= [Vajra]pāṇi?), rTsang shod pa, and to the venerable Yang dgon pa.

[15] [In the *Mountain Teachings*] there are many topics such as instructions on the *Great Perfection* [called] *Ye shes gsang rdzogs*, and, moreover, instructions on *Pacification* transmitted from 'Jam dpal smra ba'i seng ge and from Pha dam pa Sangs rgyas through Ko brag pa, and also some little topics transmitted from Bla ma Phul dmar ba and his brother, and from Sangs rgyas Mi bskyod rdo rje.

[16] [In the *Mountain Teachings*] there are [also the teachings that Yang dgon pa] received from Bla ma rDzing phu pa: the instructions of A ro [Ye shes byung gnas called] *Illusion Entering the Mind*, the cycles [of teachings] of the bKa' gdams pa such as the *Mind Purification of the Great Vehicle* and the *Illuminating Lamp* (*Byang chub lam sgron; Bodhipathapradīpa*) and so forth, the *Bodhisattvacāryāvātāra*, the practice with demons of Ma gcig (i.e., the *Cutting [gCod]*), etc.

[17] [In the *Mountain Teachings*] there are [also] the cycles of [teaching of] Guru [Padmasambhava] transmitted from rNa po ba and from Mi bskyod rdo rje.

[18] In the *Mountain Teachings* there are topics that [Yang dgon pa] received while he was living as a layman (*upāsaka*) from [teachers] such as Sangs rgyas ras pa. These are many instructions like: the *Five Rivets*, the *Five Points*, the cycle on *Co-emergent* [*Yoga of the Great Seal* transmitted] from the Venerable rG[w]a lo [tsā ba], the *Empowerment of Samādhi*, the *Secret Sādhanā of the Teacher*, the *Mind Blowing* [*Teachings on*] *Compassion*, etc.

[19] [In the *Mountain Teachings*] there are also topics like the cycles on *Co-dependent Arising* by gTsang pa rGya [ras], the cycles on the *Masters' Accomplishments*, and the *Eight Great Transmissions* of the Venerable rGod tshang pa.

[20] [In the *Mountain Teachings*] there are also the points on the *Path of Means* by the Venerable Ko brag pa and inconceivable topics of mind instruction.

[21] [Yang dgon pa] received inconceivable topics [of instruction] from sPyan snga Rin po che [Grags pa 'byung gnas]: the “profound teachings” of Chos rje 'Bri gung pa [Jig rten mgon po], the *Ten Teachings*, the *Transmission of Tshe dpag med* (*Amitāyus*), the *Six Teachings*, *Guidance on Love*, *Guidance on Compassion*, *Guidance on Drops*, *Guidance on the Fivefold* [*Great Seal*], the *Golden Pouch of the Mountain Teachings*, the *Gro lung ma* (i.e., the *bsTan rim chen mo* by Gro lung pa Blo gros 'byung gnas?), the *Eight Topics*, etc.

[22] [In the *Mountain Teachings*,] there are also topics from the many [teachings] that he received from Bla ma Drod chung pa, namely the *Six Unions*, the *Seven Teachings of gNyos*, *Large and Small Vases of Nectar of the Mountain Teachings*, *Pacification* [*Received in*] *Dream*, etc.

[23] [In the *Mountain Teachings*,] there are also topics from the many teachings that he received from his uncle Grub thob Dar ma.

[24] [In the *Mountain Teachings*,] there are topics from the many teachings, such as the *Mountain Teachings*, that he received from Bar 'brog Me lung pa.

[25] Moreover, Bla ma Go lung pa and lHa btsun Swo kha ba were also teachers [of Yang dgon pa]. He relied on eleven teachers [in all].

[26] The Venerable teacher is really rDo rje 'chang who came into this world. He took at heart all the teachings of scriptures and realizations without exception and holds inconceivable profound points of inner experience.

II. How [the teachings] were transmitted from the venerable teacher to me.

[27] They were transmitted from dPal Yang dgon pa to Slob dpon 'Bum rin po che, [and from him to] Sangs rgyas dbon. Sangs rgyas dbon also received the transmission from others, and I completely received from Sang rgyas dbon all the cycles of *Mountain Teachings*.

[28] Moreover, dPal Yang dgon pa entrusted [the teachings] to Chos rje Rin chen ldan. Having dPal Zur phug pa trained with the latter for twelve years, he completely received all the teachings. Moreover, dPal Zur phug pa encountered the five major disciples of dPal Yang dgon pa, namely Shag rdor ma, Bla ma sGom ye, mKhan chen Tshul khrim snying po, Yon sgom, [and] rGyal mtshan bzang. Thus, he was known as the great learned and accomplished one and as the Lord of the *Mountain Teachings*. From him I completely received the textual transmission, the explanations, and the practice instructions without exception.

[29] Bla ma Rin gling pa received the textual transmission of the *Mountain Teachings* from Slob dpon 'Bum, who had come and been a direct disciple of dPal Yang dgon pa. At that time, he said that it was beneficial to the close transmission. When I was ten years old, I received [from him] all the explanatory teaching sessions without interruption.

[30] Also there is one good [fellow] called Slob dpon gZhon tshul who also had come [to learn at the feet of] dPal Yang dgon pa, from whom I received some teachings.

[31] The venerable teacher's best pupil, who founded the seat [of Lo paṅ] was Chos rje Lo ras pa. [His student] trained with him for many years and received completely all the teachings: from him I received most of the *Mountain Teachings*.

[32] Moreover, I received direct guidance on the *Four Hidden Teachings* (sBa bzhi) and direct guidance for the practice of the *Secret Guidance* (gSang khrid) from Grub thob Nyi ma mgon, who is a disciple of Chos rje Rin [chen] ldan. I also received many *Mountain Teachings* [from him].

[33] Moreover, Bla ma Dar [ma] bzang [po] who took the seat of dPal Zur phug pa, met at age twenty-four an old direct pupil of Yang dgon pa. He thus became very knowledgeable in the *Mountain Teachings*: having met him, I received [instructions on how to] practice the yogic exercises, the oral instructions, and the explanations, and [instructions] on many topics.

[34] I also went again and again to request [clarifications] on [overcoming] difficulties [in the practice] of the *Mountain Teachings*, advice on practice, etc., from the lead chanter of dPal Zur phug pa, Bla ma Rin [chen] mgon [po].

[35] I also received many cycles of *Mountain Teachings* from the lead chanter of lHa gdong pa, Slob dpon Shes rab dar.

[36] I received the yogic exercises [for the practice of] *Deliverance from the Perilous Straits [of the Bardo]* and some [guidance on overcoming] obstructions and difficulties [of the practice] from Bla ma lHa sdings pa.

[37] I received practice guidance on the *Three Great Instructions (Khrid chen gsum)* and also some *Mountain Teachings* from Slob dpon Chos kyi dpal.

[38] I received from rTogs ldan Khro rgyal [guidance on overcoming] the difficulties of the [practice of] *Deliverance from the Perilous Straits [of the Bardo]*, the body training of the *Path and Fruit*, etc.

[39] I received from Slob dpon dKon mchog bzang po the cycles of *Mountain Teachings* and many instructions on *bKa' 'phrang(?)*.

[40] I received from Slob dpon gZhon nu snying po practice guidance on the *Four Hidden [Teachings]* and many [instructions on overcoming] the difficulties of the [practice of the] *Mountain Teachings*.

[41] Moreover, I went to request [instructions] from many very good [teachers] such as the old disciples of lHa gdong, Slob spon brTson 'grus mgon and dGe slong grub rgyal.

[42] I also received some topics of the lineage transmissions [descending] from Bla ma bSam [b]sding[s] pa and rDzong kha ba, as well as the lineage transmission of Zhu ston.

[43] Since I wasn't satisfied with obtaining the books and textual transmission of these *Mountain Teachings*, I received the practice and liturgical [instructions] of each one. Someone who did not obtain the supreme empowerments doesn't ask for the *Three Great Instructions*. Without the complete *Three Great Instructions*, one does not teach the *Three Mountain Teachings*. Without the complete *Three Cycles [of Mountain Teachings]* one does not teach the profound instructions. Without understanding the experiential guidance of those instructions, refrain from the [mere] reading transmission. Refrain from adulterating and fabricating the teachings. The *Hidden Explanation*, the *Four Hidden [Teachings]*, the *Secret Guidance*, and so forth are extremely

fierce, so it is of uttermost importance to be careful. May this short writing, written out of love, be helpful to all beings!

[44] This short writing on the way the Mountain Teachings were transmitted and on the way the instructions were collected was written in Sham po gang by the beggar Shes rab mgon, at the request of a few students, friends, and good mountain dwellers. May it be helpful to sentient beings!

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