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On the Foundation of the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang*, Ladakh*

Despite its significance as a major historical and archaeological religious site attesting to the appropriation of Indo-Buddhist civilisation in Ladakh around the turn of the 10th/11th century CE,¹ no detailed comprehensive and comparative study of the Buddhist temple complex of Nyarma² has yet been carried out, a circumstance that is certainly also due to the fact that the majority of the original structure has long been ruined. There are only a small number of works that deal with Nyarma, such as publications by David Snellgrove and Tadeusz Skorupski (1977, 1980), Jampa Losang Panglung (1995 [1983]), Roberto Vitali (1996) and Gerald Kozicz (2007, 2010, 2014). Most are confined to certain aspects of the archaeological remains and architecture of Nyarma and provide a partial (re-)evaluation of various historical evidence relating to this site.

Based on field research on the archaeological, architectural and art historical remains of the site and the discovery of a hitherto unknown substantive report, including drawings and measurements, by Joseph Gergan from 1917, the archaeology, architecture, art and

religious traditions of the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang* are discussed in distinct contributions in this volume.³ The gist is a reassessment of the archaeological, architectural and art-history evidence, with the aim of arriving as far as possible at a sound reconstruction of the main temple or *gtsug lag khang* in its original setting and the contemporary religio-political context from an integrated interdisciplinary perspective comprising archaeological, architectural, art-history and historical approaches. Based on this and in addition to these findings, the present contribution looks into the foundation of the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang* from an historical social anthropological view by re-evaluating relevant textual materials and through a comparative analysis of the historical processes during the period in question.

The earliest references to Nyarma as one of the first and major ground-breaking Buddhist foundations in the period of the Later Diffusion of Buddhism (*bstan pa phyi dar*) in mNga' ris skor gsum are found in religio-historical texts and inscriptions. The *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po*⁴ is probably the oldest

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¹ See Seyfort Ruegg 2010 for a discussion of this process in a wider historical context of the creative absorption of Buddhism in Tibet.

² Throughout the text, the popular modern spelling Nyarma is used. In Tibetan sources, various spellings are found, such as Myar ma (*Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 29b2), Nyar ma (*Nyang ral chos 'byung B*: 463.13; *lHa bla ma ye shes 'od kyi rnam thar rgyas pa*, see Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text", this volume, p. 140; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 305 and Do rgya dBang drag rdo rje 2013: 22), Nya mar (*Nyang ral chos 'byung A*: 336.1.2) and Nyer ma (*gDung rabs zam 'phreng*, cited in Yo seb dGe rgan 1976: 338.16).

³ See Jahoda, "Joseph Thsertan Gergan's Report on Nyarma, 1917", pp. 171–199; Devers, "An archaeological account of Nyarma and its surroundings, Ladakh", pp. 201–224; Feiglstorfer, "The architecture of the Buddhist temple complex of Nyarma", pp. 225–257; Kalantari, "Note on the spatial iconography of the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang* in context", pp. 259–278.

⁴ Of this biography, a couple of what are known as medium-length versions (*rnam thar 'bring po*, a designation found at the end of these texts) have come down to us which agree to a large extent with one another in terms of content and structure despite some significant variations in terms of language, orthography and certain details of the account. In addition to these explicitly designated medium-length versions, several shorter versions exist whose extent is about half of that of the medium-length versions or even less (see, for example, CBM 1977: 230–278 and Tucci 1988: 103–121). It is not clear whether

and also most reliable source in terms of the validity of the historical information contained in it.⁵ In the various extant versions of this

they can be identified as short or abbreviated versions (*rnam thar bsdud pa*). The only available example of such an abbreviated version is contained in CBM 1977: 147–229, which is an extract from a history of mGur gyi mgon po and in fact much longer than the medium-length versions. Tucci referred to a short or “modest” version which consisted just of a few folios that came into the possession of Joseph Gergan in 1926 (and which he made available to August Hermann Francke) (Tucci 1933: 53; Tucci 1988 53).

According to this and other information, it was only in 1926 “when Francke was ‘enabled to study the biography of this famous lama, which had been discovered, copied and translated by Joseph Gergan.’ (cited from Francke’s manuscript of his Preface to Shuttleworth 1929 [...]). This accords with Shuttleworth who mentions in his unpublished work ‘History of Spiti’ that ‘R[in chen bzang po]’s biography [...] was found in 1924/5’ [...]” (Jahoda 2007: 372, n. 35).

The version possessed by Gergan and used by Francke is not available at present. Tucci considered it as an abbreviation of a longer version, such as the medium-length version sent to him in 1932 from Pooh in Upper Kinnaur (held in the Tucci Archive of the ISIAO in Rome; see *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*). Questions related to the possible origin of these short or “concise” versions remain to be clarified, as well as other questions of interest in relation to the middle-length version authored by Ye shes dpal from Khyi thang (see also Martin 2008: 17, n. 12). The existence of a long or extended version of Rin chen bzang po’s biography is mentioned in the medium-length versions, where it is referred to as *rnam thar chen mo*. So far, this long version has not come to light, although its existence was indicated to the author by several informants in Western Tibet in 2010.

Unpublished versions are Gu ge’i Khyi dang ba dPal ye shes, *Lo tsha tsa ba rin chen bzang po’i rnam thar* (see under *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* in the bibliography), 58 folios, *dbu can* MS, Tucci Archive, ISIAO, Rome (shelf number 654; see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 330) which is mainly used here. Zhang chung ba Chos dbang grags pa’s *Gangs can gyi skad gnyis smra ba thams cad kyi gtsug gi rgyan lo chen thams cad mkhyen pa rin chen bzang po’i rnam thar snyan dngags punḍa rī ka’i phreng ba*, 6 folios, woodblock print (Amnye Machen Institute, McLeod Ganj; see Martin 2008: 30–47), in addition also *Gangs can gyi skad gnyis smra ba thams cad kyi gtsug gi rgyan lo chen thams cad mkhyen pa rin chen bzang po’i rnam thar snyan dngags punḍarīka’i phreng ba*, 6 folios, *dbu can* blockprint (Tucci Archive, ISIAO, Rome, shelf number 653; see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 330); *Jig rten mig gyur lo chen rin chen bzang po’i rnam thar gsol ’debs*, 9 folios (incomplete text), *dbu can* blockprint (Tucci Archive, ISIAO, Rome, shelf number 655; see De Rossi Filibeck 2003: 330). Further unpublished versions are mentioned in the Drepung Catalogue 2004 II: 1529 and 1563.

Published versions are contained in Thub bstan dpal ldan/Thupstan Paldan 1976: 55–83; CBM 1977: 51–128; CBM 1977: 147–229; CBM 1977: 230–278; in Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980: 101–111 (a comparison of a version microfilmed in Likir in 1974 and the versions published in CBM 1977: 51–128, 147–229 and 230–278; in Tucci 1988: 103–121; *Jig rten mig gyur lo chen rin chen bzang po’i rnam thar gsol ’debs*, in *Bod ljongs nang bstan*, 7/1: 131–133; in Gu ge Khyi rang Dznyānashrī 1990: 134–148; Gu ge Khyi thang Dznyānashrī 1996: 11–33; in Gu ge Khyi thang Dznyānashrī 1996: 37–57 (cf. also Martin 2008: 30–47 for a published version of the larger part of this text); in Gu ge Khyi thang Dznyānashrī 1996: 65–71; in Negi 1996.

⁵ Some scholars like Tucci and Snellgrove expressed doubts regarding the antiquity of this biography or treated the existing versions as later redactions (see Tucci 1932: 27–28, 55; see also Tucci 1988: 27–28, 55; Snellgrove 1987: 477–478), Dan Martin holds this text to be “genuinely old and preserved today

text the founding of Nyarma in Mar yul⁶ is related in conjunction with that of the ‘Khor chags⁷ *gtsug lag khang* in Pu hrangs⁸ and the “Twelve Isles” (*gling phran bcu gnyis*) of Tho ling⁹ in Gu ge. It is even

in a form reasonably close to the original” (Martin 1996: 177 [n. 24]) and “dating as early as 1060 A.D.” (*ibid.*; see also Martin 2008: 17). Jampa L. Panglung expressed the view that although the existing written versions cannot be dated to the 11th century, they contain a high degree reliable information going back to the 11th century (Panglung, personal communication, Vienna, May 2002) (see also Jahoda 2006: 23–24, n. 20).

⁶ Mar yul refers to the area which can be identified to a large degree, at least with its core region, with that of the later kingdom of Ladakh (see also Vitali 1996: 156). Vitali (2005: 99–100) defined it with reference to the 13th–14th centuries as the “upper side” of the region of La dwags, with a dynasty or lineage of rulers centred in Shel (also She ye). Vitali (“Territory and Trends in land control”, this volume, p. 2) follows Cunningham, Francke and Pelliot in identifying Mar yul with “Mo-lo-so” (Moluosuo) in the report by the 8th-century Chinese pilgrim Xuanzang (see also Zeisler 2010: 432–436 for a critical discussion and the likelihood of this identification). Pre-12th-century Tibetan inscripational evidence for the use of Mar yul seems to be missing. Also it does not occur in *Yig rmying*, where, however, *yul* is only used with reference to countries outside of sTod mNga’ ris and only a few place names appear, without reference to a specific region. In Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s chapter on the history of mNga’ ris in *Nyi ma’i rigs kyi rgyal rabs skye dgu’i cod pan nyi zla’i phreng mdzes*, Mar yul appears as the main inherited land which dPal gyi mgon received from this father sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon. The reference to Mar yul, which appears five times in this chapter seems to refer to an area along the river valley plain of the Indus. She ye (Shel) and dPe dug (dPe thub) are explicitly mentioned as places belonging to Mar yul (see Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, “Relating the history of mNga’ ris as set down in writing in Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s *Nyi ma’i rigs kyi rgyal rabs skye dgu’i cod pan nyi zla’i phreng mdzes*: The Tibetan text (with variant readings by Tsering Drongshar and Christian Jahoda)”, this volume, pp. 101, 103, 104, 109, 111). According to Nils Martin, Mar yul (stod) is mentioned in a 12th-century manuscript of Matho in Ladakh as the region where the temple of Nyarma was erected. His assumption that “by the 11th or 12th century, *mar yul* designated primarily a region lying along the Indus River, extending westward at least down to Alchi” (2019: 222, n. 105) seems reasonable.

⁷ Various spellings such as Kha char, Khwa char, Kha phyar, Kho char, etc. are found in historical texts.

⁸ Also in this case various spellings such as Pu hrangs, sPu hrangs, Pu hrang, Pu rang, sPu rangs appear in written sources. According to Dan Martin, “the name of Pu-hrang, like many other place names in Western Tibet, is in pure Zhang-zhung language. The *pu* means ‘head,’ while the *hrang* means ‘horse.’ Hence it corresponds to Tibetan **Rta-mgo*, and means the ‘head’ [of the river that comes from the mouth of the] ‘horse.’” (Martin 2008: 47).

⁹ As stated by Vitali, this description that the *gtsug lag khang* consisted of a central temple surrounded by four major buildings, to which eight lesser buildings—*gling phran*, “temple divisions”—were attached, agrees with the notion found in *mNga’ ris rgyal rabs* (see Vitali 256–257, n. 374; see also Vitali 1999: 119). In later sources, such as in *Chos ’byung mkhas pa’i yid ’phrog*, this classification is also found and specific names are given for these temples, which is different from the corresponding classification in the *Tho ling rten deb* (see Vitali 2012: 17). Variant spellings such as mTho gling (used, for example, predominantly in the *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes ’od*; see Tsering

said that their foundations were laid on one (that is, the same) day. It is also mentioned that after these three big *gtsug lag khang* were completed, their religious consecration (*rab gnas*) and inauguration (*zhal bsro*) was executed in a detailed and extended manner. At a later time, referring to years or even decades after the work on the temples was finished and the opening ceremonies had been carried out, it is reported, that the sPu rang people said, that “the Great Lama Translator was here and founded our temple and consecrated it”, while the Gu ge people said that he stayed at Tho ling and the Mar yul people said the same of Nyarma (Snellgrove and Skorupski 1980: 92). It seems that this piece of information was part of oral traditions which were perhaps based on early contemporary oral accounts and which were still prevalent at the time when Gu ge Khyi thang pa composed the Great Translator’s *rnam thar*. In the version of the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po* from Pooh, which in style and language possibly represents one of the earliest redactions available at present, the description of the foundation of Nyarma and the other two *gtsug lag khang* is given in the following words:

de nas bla chen po lha ldes/ kha char kyi gtsug lag khang
bzhengs su gsol pa dang/ gu ge ru 'phebs pa dang/ lha bla ma
ye shes 'od kyis tho ling gi gling phran bcu gnyis bzhengs pa
dang/ mar yul du myar ma bzhengs pa dang/ gsum gi smang
zhag cig la 'things pa yin no/¹⁰ (*Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 29a3–f. 29b3)

After that the Great Superior One (*bla chen po*)¹¹ lHa lde requested [Rin chen bzang po] to build the *gtsug lag khang* of Kha char [Khor chags], and [then Rin chen bzang po] went to Gu ge, and [there] the Twelve Isles of Tho ling were built by the Royal Lama (*lha bla ma*)¹² Ye shes 'od, and in Mar yul Myar ma [Nyarma] was

Drongshar and Jahoda, “The Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text”, this volume, pp. 124, 138, 140, 141, 142, 143, 146, 148, 149, 151, 168; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 278, 301, 305, 306, 309, 311, 317, 319, 320, 321, 323, 355), Tho gling, mTho lding, 'Thon 'thing, etc. are found.

¹⁰ Gu ge Khyi rang Dznyanashrī 1990: 141 has “.. dang gsum gyi rmang zhag gcig la btsugs pa yin no/”.

¹¹ For a discussion of this and other titles see Appendix I: A note on some titles of rulers and other members of the West Tibetan royal family according to 10th- and 11th-century inscriptions and the “Old Manuscript” (*Yig rnying*) from Tholing.

¹² According to the *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od* this was his title upon his ordination as a monk (*gcung srong nge rab tu byung ba ni/ lha bla ma ye shes 'od di nyid do/*) (see Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, “The Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text”, this volume, p. 122; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 275). This agrees with *Yig rnying*, p. 37 (“*thard par gshegs te/ lha*

built [by him?]. The foundations of [these] three were laid on one [that is, the same] day.

Based on the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po* contained in CBM this passage was translated by Roberto Vitali as follows:

de nas bla chen po lha ldes/ kha char kyis gtsug lag khang
bzhengs su gsol ba dang/ gu ge ru 'phebs pa dang_lha bla ma
ye shes 'od kyis tho ling gi gling phran bcu gnyis bzhengs pa
dang/ mar yul du nyar ma bzhengs pa dang_gsum gyis smang
zhag gcig la btsugs pa yin no/ (CBM 1977: 88.5–89.2; different readings are underlined)

“Then bla.chen lHa.lde requested [Rin.chen bzang.po] to build Khwa.char gtsug.lag.khang. [The latter] went to Gu.ge and built the twelve mTho.liding *gling.phran*-s with lha.bla.ma Ye.shes.'od. They built Nyar.ma in Mar.yul, these three. Their foundations were laid in one day.” (Vitali 1996: 262; my emphases).

Vitali’s translation as well as his résumé¹³ differ from the above one in several points, which is not due to the slight variations or variant readings in the case of a few words. The biggest difference is that, according to his translation, Rin chen bzang po is regarded as having built the Tho ling *gtsug lag khang* together with the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od, and moreover he also names them as having built the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang*. In my view, it is necessary to pay attention to the final passage, which mentions that the foundations of the three temples were laid on the same day. This makes it impossible for Rin chen bzang po to have been present in a physical sense at the three places at the same time. In my view, the meaning of the introductory words of the passage cited therefore need to be interpreted with regard to the foundation. It is basically a statement about the builder (in the sense of the initiating person/power-holder/donor) of the *gtsug lag khang* at 'Khor chags (explicit mention of lHa lde) and the one at Tho ling (explicit mention of Ye shes 'od). In my view this text does not explicitly state who was responsible for initiating the building of the *gtsug lag khang* at Nyarma, although Vitali’s interpretation to read the phrase “*mar yul du myar ma bzhengs pa dang*” as a continuation of the one before (and in relation with Ye shes 'od) is likewise maintainable. The text mentions Rin chen bzang po’s appointment to build the *gtsug lag khang* in the case of 'Khor chags. On the basis that the passage

bla ma ye shes od du mtshan gsol/”. See also Appendix I, p. 290.

¹³ In a summarising statement later in the text, Vitali says that “*Rin.chen bzang.po rnam.thar 'bring.po* attributes Kha.char to lHa.lde, Tho.ling and Nyar.ma to Ye.shes.'od, somewhat eulogistically adding that they were all built with the collaboration of Rin.chen bzang.po (p. 88 line 5-p. 89 line 2).” (Vitali 1996: 259).

related relevant oral accounts in this regard (see below), we can assume without much doubt that he was not only responsible for laying the foundation but also for the architectural building activities as well as the final consecration of this temple. In contrast to this, in the case of Tho ling, it is (only) said that he went there, and from this we can assume that he was involved in the (building and/or other) works there at least at some point in time.¹⁴ As regards Nyarma, in the above passage relating to the foundation, based on a strict reading of the text, nothing is really stated explicitly about the initiator/donor or about Rin chen bzang po's participation.

A few lines further on in the same text, again taking the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po* from Pooh as reference, the topic of the foundation of the three *gtsug lag khang* and Rin chen bzang po's participation in each case is continued, this time with the focus on the phase(s)¹⁵ after the work on/in all three *gtsug lag khang* was finished and the ritual consecration and formal opening had been concluded:

de nas pu hrangs kyi 'kha 'char/ gu ge'i tho ling/ mar yul gi myar
ma dang gsum ste/ /gtsug lag khang chen po gsum po de

¹⁴ Trusting the accepted chronology based on his biography that Rin chen bzang po went to Kashmir some time in 996 and returned with sculptors only in 1001 (see Vitali 2003: 59, 60), his involvement in the construction and even decoration works could only have been very limited.

¹⁵ While it is plausible and consistently mentioned in all relevant sources that the foundations of the three *gtsug lag khang* were laid on one day, we have to assume with great probability that the consecration and inauguration, depending on the requirements of the different programmes and the progress of the various building and other activities must have happened at different times. Despite the fact that the events described in these two passages seem to have followed each other closely in time, we have to assume rather the opposite. From the *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od*, we know that, for example, in the case of the Tho ling *gtsug lag khang*, from the year in which the foundation took place (in Fire Male Monkey year 996) it took eight years to finish the sculptures and the wall paintings (consecrated in Wood Male Dragon year 1004). See Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan*: The Tibetan text," this volume, pp. 138–140; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 301–305. Later on in the text the consecration (*rab gnas*) of the Great Temple (lHa khang chen mo) is mentioned, without any further information, as having happened in the Fire Dragon year 1016, perhaps mistakenly using the element fire (*me*) instead of wood (*shing*). See Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan*: The Tibetan text," this volume, p. 149; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 320. *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* provides another (also Dragon) year date for a consecration or great renovation according to Vitali, Earth Male Dragon year 1028 (Vitali 1996: 53, 109).

'tshar nas/ rab gnas dang zhal spros¹⁶ rgyas par mdzad do¹⁷/ /de nas pu hrangs pa zer bas bla ma lo tsha ba chen po 'dir bzhugs nas gtsug lag khang bzhengs zhing rab gnas mdzad ces zer/ gu ge ba 'dir bzhugs zer/ mar yul ba 'dir bzhugs ces zer/ bla ma lo tsha ba la zhus pas/ /de gsum dkar na yang nga¹⁸ yod pa bden gsungs so/ (*Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 30b1–f. 31a3)

Then 'Kha 'char ['Khor chags] of [in] Purang, Tho ling of [in] Guge, Myar ma [Nyarma] of [in] Mar yul and [as regards these] three, after the three great *gtsug lag khang* were completed, the consecration and inauguration took place in an extended way. Then the sPu rang people said, "the Great Lama Translator stayed here, built this temple and performed the consecration ritual", the Gu ge people said, "(he) [that is, the Great Lama Translator] stayed here [in Gu ge]", the Mar yul people said, "(he) [that is, the Great Lama Translator] stayed here [in Mar yul]". When the Lama Translator was asked he said: "At all these three [places] actually, it is true that I was there."

What the statement cited by Rin chen bzang po makes explicitly clear is that he stayed in all three places, which can be implicitly understood as confirmation that to some degree—the extent and focus of which is difficult to assess on the basis of the textual evidence—he took part in the activities at Tho ling and Nyarma, in addition to the essential role he is mentioned as having fulfilled at 'Khor chags, where, according to local oral traditions, he was engaged not only in laying the foundation, consecutive construction and other activities but also seems to have carried out the final consecration ritual of the *gtsug lag khang*. His important and leading role in this case obviously agrees with his function as chief priest (*dbu'i mchod gnas*) and Tantric Teacher (*rdo rje slob dpon, vajrācārya*) assigned to him by the Great Superior One (*bla chen po*) lHa lde, information which is given at the start of section eight of his *rnam thar* in a passage immediately preceding the ones cited above. From this point of view, his major engagement in the case of 'Khor chags

¹⁶ Instead of *zhal spros*, one should read perhaps *zhal bsro*, explained as an "eye-opening" ritual (for deities/statues) as part of *rab gnas* rituals (cf. *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* 1986 III: 2383).

¹⁷ Gu ge Khyi rang Dznyanashrī (1990: 141) has a shortened reading of this passage: "de nas pu hrangs kyi kwa char gu ge mtho lding mar yul gyi nyar ma dang gsum gyi gtsug lang khang gi rab gnas zhal bsro rgya chen po mdzad do". Another variant of this shortened reading is contained in CBM (1977: 90.1–2): "de nas pu hrangs kyi kwa char gu ge mtho lding mar yul gyi nyar dang gsum gyi gtsug lang khang gi rab gnas zhal kros rgyas chen po mdzad do". In these versions the information concerning the finishing of the work on/in the temples and their subsequent consecration and formal opening is less precise.

¹⁸ CBM (1977: 90.5) has "de gsum ka nas yang ngas yod pa bden gsung ngo".

as opposed to a comparatively reduced or minor one in Tho ling and Nyarma appears to be completely reasonable (and also consistent with other information).

As was mentioned above, the founding of the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang* in Mar yul is related in conjunction with that of the *gtsug lag khang* in 'Khor chags in Pu hrangs and Tho ling in Gu ge. From a comparative perspective it is therefore necessary to include these other temples, and in addition also some more in a number of smaller places in view of the wider related context.

Of course, one has to take into account the respective genre (whether *rnam thar* or *chos 'byung*) and perspective (and interest, perhaps even bias) informing a textual source. In the case of the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po*, this perspective and interest is, of course, related to the presentation of *lo chen's* deeds by Gu ge Khyi thang pa Ye shes dpal, one of his direct disciples. Moreover, in terms of his regional or political affiliation it seems to reflect certain priorities and a chronological sequence. Of the three "regions" or "power spheres" (*mnga' ris*) under discussion here, Pu hrangs is presented as having been personally more important to him, at least during certain periods of his life, than Gu ge (not to speak of Mar yul). Not only does the making of his "career" appear to have been critically associated from the start with incidents reported to have happened there, but various events are also strong evidence for this. For example, his defeat of a monk (*dge bshes*), which earned him great respect, took place in sPu hrangs and his appointment as *dbu'i mchod gnas* and *rdo rje blo dpon* as well as the receipt of sites in sPu hrangs by IHa lde preceding in the *rnam thar* the narration of the latter's request to found the *gtsug lag khang* at 'Khor chags as well as the prominent role he seems to have fulfilled in this case. The area where he is said to have founded 108 temples (and that he seems to have favoured for meditational practice) is described as stretching "from Zher sa in Pu hrangs as far as Ho bu lang ka",¹⁹ which covers a coherent geographical zone along the upper rMa bya gtsang po (Peacock river, Karnāli) and Glang chen kha 'babs (Sutlej) rivers from lower sPu hrangs to the area of present-day Ribba in Kinnaur respectively.²⁰ sPu hrangs and in particular 'Khor chags seem

¹⁹ "Pu hrangs kyi Zher sa nas/ Ho bu lang ka'i bar du gtsug lag khang brgya tsa gzhangs pa'i zhal bzhes mdzad do/ (Rin chen bzang po rnam thar, f. 29a2-3) (cf. also Vitali 1996: 245). This phrase is repeated more or less twice later on in the text: "dor na Pu hrangs kyi 'Kha' char man bcod la/ Ho bu lang bka' yan mchod la gtsug lag khang rgya rtsa brgyad bzhangs pa" (Rin chen bzang po rnam thar, f. 44a4-44b1; cf. also *ibid.*, f. 46b2-3, where 'Kha' char is replaced again by Zher sa).

²⁰ According to Hira Paul Gangnegi, Ho bu lang ka refers to the modern Kalpa area of Kinnaur: "Chini was the old name of Kalpa. The area close to Chini is called La ang. The area that encloses ten villages along with Chini is known

to have played also a key role in the later phases of *lo chen* Rin chen bzang po's life. Various textual sources as well as oral and festival traditions closely related to the Great Translator can still be found in 'Khor chags today (see Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po 2006: 119f., Jahoda 2012: 42; Jahoda 2015a [2012]: 226).²¹

On account of the evidence contained in the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po*, we can conclude that Rin chen bzang po was heavily involved throughout the whole foundation process (laying of the foundation, construction, consecration, inauguration) of the *gtsug lag khang* at 'Khor chags, most probably as a result of the leading religious function and support assigned to him by IHa lde. Only after his initial work at 'Khor chags was finished did he go to Guge, where Ye shes 'od built the *gtsug lag khang* in Tho ling (see above). As already stated by Vitali, IHa lde and, of course, Rin chen bzang po receive comparatively much more attention in *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar 'bring po* than in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*, while there, in contrast to *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar 'bring po*, Ye shes 'od's role and deeds are generally highlighted. In *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*, Rin chen bzang po is consistently referred to as *lo chen* or *lo tsā ba* and, not only due to the longer historical period treated in this text, appears as a more marginal figure (beside many others) whose activities are mainly characterised by (and in fact appear limited to) his work as translator.²²

Comparing the result of this preliminary résumé with the account contained in the *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od*,²³ which

as Ho pu." (personal communication, Nov. 20, 2000). This agrees with Vitali's assumption that Ho bu lang ka should be placed "somewhere near Khu nu" (Vitali 1996: 278-79, n. 424). Additional evidence in support of this identification is provided by certain oral traditions extant in Ribba, in particular a song about *lo chen* Rin chen bzang po (Lotsa Rinchen Zangpo) which was recorded there by Veronika Hein in 2001. In this song he is mentioned as having stayed at the Ho (bu) lang (ka) *mchod rten* below Ribba before entering the village (cf. Hein 2002: 26). The correct identification of this site was confirmed on the spot by villagers during field research by the author in 2002.

²¹ Field research and documentation of these traditions at 'Khor chags was carried out in February-March 2010 by Hubert Feiglstorfer, Veronika Hein, Christian Jahoda, Christiane Kalantari and Patrick Sutherland (collaborators in research projects located at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna) in cooperation with Tshe ring rgyal po (Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, Lhasa).

²² Vitali's comment is certainly to the point when he states that "*mNga'ris rgyal.rabs* does not treat Rin.chen bzang.po as a major figure of *bstan.pa phyi.dar* in sTod. Little is said about lo.chen in the text, while the members of the Gu.ge Pu.hrang royal line are given priority, probably because this work is a *rgyal.rabs*, not focusing on religious exponents as would a *chos.byung*." (Vitali 1996: 240).

²³ See Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text", this volume; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011 and Do rgya dBang drag rdo rje 2013.

centres to a large degree on the deeds of this ruler and later Royal Lama, who was largely responsible for the political and religious reorganisation or Buddhist transformation of historical Western Tibet in the late 10th/early 11th century (between the 980s up to 1019 when he died in Tho ling according to this source), it emerges that the information contained there with regard to the foundation process of the three *gtsug lag khang* is quite precise in the case of the Tho ling Khang dmar dpe med lhun gyi grub pa('i) *gtsug lag khang* but that it is rather silent about that of the *gtsug lag khang* in 'Khor chags and in Nyarma, in particular concerning the questions of its founders/initiating donors as well as *lo chen* Rin chen bzang po's participation. Despite the fact that Rin chen bzang po's work as translator and his participation in the introduction (and dissemination) of various tantric cycles finds some consideration, there is no explicit mention in the case of a particular temple as to the where, what and how of his contribution(s). On the basis of a future critical study of the texts he translated (and partly also revised) over the years (in fact, decades) which are found in the *bKa' gyur* and *bsTan gyur*, it will perhaps become possible to reconstruct and assess the influence of his work in greater detail that has so far been possible, also with regard to the temporal dimension.²⁴

The *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od* states that the foundations of the Tho ling lHa khang chen po (also the variant lHa khang chen mo occurs) were drawn in a Fire Male Monkey year (996)²⁵ and—in the consecutive passage resembling one in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* (Vitali 1996: 59.13–16, 113) where it appears embedded in a different temporal framework—that in the spring of a Fire Female Bird year (997) *lha bla ma* Ye shes 'od and his sons Devarāja (De ba rā dza; MS De ba rā rdzā) and Nāgarāja (Nā ga rā dza; MS: Nā ga rā dzā) resided in a hermitage at Pa sgam and that at the time when his two sons were ordained, from all over mNga' ris skor gsum altogether two hundred youths with considerable wisdom, diligent minds, bright intelligence and strong hearts were gathered and delivered on the path of liberation, one hundred from Gu ge, forty from Pu hrangs, thirty from Pil chog²⁶—that is the area of the Spiti valley—and

²⁴ See, for example, Weinberger 2003: 317ff.

²⁵ See Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text", this volume, p. 138; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 301.

²⁶ Cf. Yo seb dge rgan 1976: 182, n. 2 for an explanation of the meaning. "The terms sPi lCog, sPi ti lCog la, sPyi sde lCog la or lCog la'i sde found in inscriptions and texts (see Petech 1997: 252, n. 20) presumably reflect a larger historical (administrative) regional unit to which Tabo also once belonged, as attested by the expression Pil Cog du rTa po [(*Nyang ral chos 'byung* A: 336.1.1–2).]" (Jahoda 2015b: 24). Cf. *Nyang ral chos 'byung* b: 461.11 which has the spelling Sil chog tu rTa po.

thirty from Mar yul. In a later passage, the consecration of the above-mentioned temple (*lha khang de nyid*) is said to have taken place in a Wood Male Dragon year (1004), an event that is mentioned in the text immediately after the invitation of the *paṇḍita* Dharmapāla. The place where this temple is described as having been founded (obviously after the performance of the relevant *sa chog* rituals) is referred to as the centre of the peculiar power of this location (*sa'i dmigs*) (cf. Labdrön 2003: 319, n. 26; Gardner 2009: 4). From the consecration ritual until the performance of the concluding "eye-opening" ritual, a great festival was celebrated for twenty-one days. The temple was named Tho ling khang dmar dpe med lhun gyi grub pa'i gtsug lag khang. In the centre a statue of the Great Lord of the Teachings (*bstan pa'i gtso che sku*), Buddha Śākyamuni was built. From the Fire Monkey year (996) until the Wood Male Dragon year (1004), for full eight years, in each of the "Isles" (*gling*) murals and statues were made of the assembly of deities of the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala* and Dharmadhātu *maṇḍala* according to the Yoga Tantras. It is said that furthermore (one can assume during the same period mentioned) the Yid bzhin lhun gyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khang was built at 'Khor chags in Pu hrangs, with about a hundred pillars, diverse "Isles" and a statue of Maitreyañātha (Byams pa'i mgon po) at the centre. Moreover, at Ta po in Pi ti (Spiti) a *lha khang*, the ornament of lCog la, in Mar yul the *lha khang* of Nyarma, with a statue of Buddha Dīpaṃkara (Sangs rgyas mar me mdzad) residing in the centre, the border-protecting *gtsug lag khang*, such as the *lha khang* of Ka nam in Nga ra, the *lha khang* of Mo na in Drug pag, the *lha khang* of sPu in Rong chung and furthermore in Pu hrangs Tsha ba sgang and others, more than 100 *lha khang* and countless *mchod rten*, silver, gold and bronze statues were made.²⁷

In *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, this phase of erecting new temples is narrated as immediately following the assassination of Ye shes 'od's *mchod gnas* Ser po:

sPu rang du kho char dang/ pil cog du rta po dang/ mar yul du nya mar dang/ bu rigs su sha ling dang/ gu ger tho ling gtsug lag khang chen mo bzhengs so / gtsug lag khang de'i lCags ri cig gi khongs na ghan ji rwa btsugs pa'i lha khang drug bcu rtsa bzhi yod do/ (*Nyang ral chos 'byung* A 336.1.1–4)²⁸

²⁷ See Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text", this volume, pp. 138–140; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 301–305.

²⁸ Apart from some variant readings, *Nyang ral chos 'byung* B 461.10–12 has the same text: sPu [rang] du kho char dang/ sil chog tu rta po dang/ mar yul du nyar ma dang/ dbu rig tu sha ling dang/ gu ger tho ling gi gtsug lag khang chen po bzhengs so/ gtsug lag khang de'i lCags ri gcig gi khongs na ganydzira btsugs pa'i lha khang drug cu rtsa bzhi yod do/.

In sPu rang Kho char [‘Khor chags] and in Pil cog rTa po [Tabo] and in Mar yul Nya mar [Nyarma] and in Bu rigs Sha ling and in Gu ge the great Tho ling *gtsug lag khang* were built. Within the boundary wall of this *gtsug lag khang*, there are sixty-four *lha khang* with multi-lobed spires (*gan dzi ra*).

In contrast to Roberto Vitali, who says that “*Nyang.ral chos’byung* [...] credits Ye.shes.’od with the *impulse* that led to the foundations of Kha.char in sPu[rang], rTa.po in Sil.chog (sic for Pi.Cog), Nyar.ma in Mar.yul, Sha.ling in dBu.rig (sic for sPu.rig) and Tho.ling in Gu.ge” (Vitali 1996: 261; my emphasis) and that “*Nyang.ral chos’byung* (p. 461 lines 10–12), after introducing the episode of Ye.shes.’od obtaining the Dong.rtse.wang gold-fields from the Sa.sgang ‘Brog.mi-s, records the founding of *his* main temples” (*ibid.*: 261, n. 384; my emphasis), in my view the text does not explicitly mention *who* built these temples nor *who* was the responsible or initiating person/power-holder/donor. In my understanding, the intention of the statement is merely to narrate the sequence of events and which temples were built but not by whom. Aside from the mention of a temple in Pu rigs, however, it is remarkable to note the reversed order of giving the places where temples were built, even without using the words *lha khang* or *gtsug lag khang*, except for the great *gtsug lag khang* at Tho ling, which is described with some valuable details.

Neither Rin chen bzang po nor any other religious figure is explicitly mentioned in direct relation to these building activities. An interesting detail is contained a few lines further on, in the context of reporting the invitation of numerous *paṇḍitas* from India and Kashmir and the results of their work, when, as an introduction to his translation activities, Rin chen bzang po is characterised or referred to as the “statue-maker from Zhang zhung” (*Zhang zhung gi lha bzo*) (*Nyang ral chos ’byung A 335.2.6*). It can perhaps be concluded from this piece of information (which suits the one contained in his biography)²⁹ that, at least at a certain phase in his life (for example, during the above-mentioned phase of erecting and decorating new temples), Rin chen bzang po seems to have been involved with the making of sculptures (as well as perhaps with other technical work). Another interesting piece of information contained in *Nyang ral chos ’byung* relates to the meeting (and stay) of the *paṇḍitas* Buddhaśrisantipā(da), Buddhapāla and Kamalagupta at Nyarma:

Mar yul sum mdo’i chos ’khor nya mar paṇḍita Bhu ta shi shan ti pa dang Bhudha pha la dang Ka ma la gub ta gsum dang mjal

²⁹ Where he is mentioned as having come back after a six-year stay in Kashmir (Kha che) bringing thirty-two statue-makers (*lha bzo’ ba*) (see *Rin chen bzang po nram thar*, f. 33b2-3).

nas zhu ba phul chos mang po bsgyur/ (*Nyang ral chos ’byung A 336.3.6–337.1.2*)³⁰

At the *chos ’khor*³¹ of Nya ma in Mar yul sum mdo, the *paṇḍitas* Buddhaśrisantipā[da], Buddhapāla and Kamalagupta met and then a request was made to them. Many religious writings were translated.

There is some evidence which makes it possible to determine a relatively narrow period for this event and the *paṇḍitas’* activities in Western Tibet. These three are also named in the *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes ’od* together with other *paṇḍitas* and scholars (*mkhas pa*) such as Śraddhākaravarman and Padmakaragupta, who were invited to Western Tibet and who, by their translation work, were responsible for introducing various new religious cycles. They are mentioned there—in the same order and slightly different spelling—in the context of Rin chen bzang po’s work as translator etc. and his contribution to the introduction of new doctrinal cycles (*chos skor*).³²

³⁰ Cf. *Nyang ral chos ’byung B 463.13–15: Mar yul sum mdo’i chos ’khor nya mar/ paṇḍi ta Buddha shi shan tam ba dang/ Buddha pa la dang/ Ka ma la gub ta gsum dang mjal nas zhu ba phul/ chos mang po bsgyur/*.

³¹ The designation as *chos ’khor* or *chos skor* was used for monasteries where the words of the Buddha and related commentaries were translated by learned spiritual masters from Kashmir and India together with Tibetan scholars. The new teachings were obviously also taught at the newly erected temples, which were decorated with up-to-date religious cycles (*chos skor*). See also Shastri 1997: 336. bSam yas in Central Tibet is considered the earliest example of *chos ’khor* in the sense of a place where the holy *dharma* was spread and an excellent location where translators and *paṇḍitas* translated many Buddhist teachings or cycles of esoteric instructions (see *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* 2002: 2115). See also the classification of the three temples of IHa sa, bSam yas and Khra ’brug as *chos ’khor gnas gsum* (discussed by Sørensen and Hazod, in cooperation with Tsering Gyalbo 2005: 4).

³² In a section in the *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes ’od* after mentioning the ordination of Ye shes ’od (in Earth Female Ox year, 989) and prior to events which took place in the middle summer month of Wood Female Sheep year (995) (*shing mo lug gi dbyar zla ’bring po*), Rin chen bzang po is introduced to the reader and his activities and merits are mentioned. Related to the time when he was in his thirties (*lo chen dgung lo sum bcu [cu] so bgrangs [grangs] kyi dus su*), that is the years between 987 and 996 (when he was thirty and thirty-nine according to Tibetan reckoning), thus fitting chronologically with the events framing this biographical information (see Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, “The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes ’od* by *Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan*: The Tibetan text”, this volume, p. 135; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 295), an interaction with Ye shes ’od is mentioned, who gave him a blessing. In addition, at the end of this section, the Great Translator’s contribution to a IHa khang chen mo (Great Temple)—which could have been no other than the IHa khang chen mo at Tho ling—is mentioned. This consisted in a golden image of Buddha Śākyamuni (Śākya thub pa), designated as the “inner receptacle” (*nang rten*) of the Great Translator, which was placed at the

Like Śraddhākaravarman, Buddhaśrīsānti[*pāda?*] and Kamalagupta are known as direct collaborators of Rin chen bzangpo. They are mentioned as having assisted him in the translation of a considerable number of texts (cf. the lists in Gangnegi 1994: 104ff.). Śraddhākaravarman, Kamalagupta and Rin chen bzang po collaborated, for example, in the translation of Ānandagarbha's *Extensive Commentary on the Śrī Paramādyā (dPal mchog dang po'i rgya cher bshad pa)* (see Weinberger 2003: 88). One can therefore assume that their activities fell into the lifetime of Rin chen bzang po and that their translation activities can be dated most probably somewhere in the late 10th or, more probably, in the early 11th century. Furthermore, one can also conclude that the Buddhist complex that existed at Nyarma at this time, certainly the *gtsug lag khang* founded in 996, was not only conceived but most importantly functioned as a *chos 'khor* in the above-mentioned sense. Information that Nyarma served early on—according to certain historical sources immediately after its foundation—as a place where Kashmiri *paṇḍitas* went for summer retreat and were requested to spread the Buddhist teachings is also contained in *Dung rabs zam 'phreng* (cited in Yo seb dge rgan 1976: 338.18–19) and in the rNam rtse version of *rGyal rabs gsal ba'i me long* (cf. Vitali 1996: 576, n. 989).

The way in which the temple at Nyarma as well as the other early contemporary temples are referred to in terms of classificatory

centre of the lHa khang chen mo where deities of the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala* resided. The size of this image is given as eighteen spans high (that is, over 3 m) at the back, with an ornate throne back, the Great Translator's hair, monk's robe and clothes with blessings from numerous learned and (spiritually) accomplished masters (see Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text*", this volume, p. 135; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 295–296). As was mentioned above, the making of the murals and statues of the assembly of deities of the Vajradhātu and Dharmadhātu *maṇḍalas* in the lHa khang chen mo took eight years and was only finished in 1004 when the temple was consecrated. This, together with the established chronology of Rin chen bzang po's life (his return from Kashmir in 1001 after a six-year stay starting in 996), can be taken as evidence of his participation at the beginning of the construction (when the foundation was laid in 996) and in the years between 1001 and 1004 after his return, culminating in his contribution of the central statue.

Immediately following this excursus on the Great Translator, it is said in the *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od* that in addition (during this time and in the following years) many scholars, such as *paṇḍita* Śraddhākaravarman (Shrā dh aka ra warman), *paṇḍita* Padmakaragubta (Padma ka ra gu [gub] ta), Budha shrī shanti (Buddhaśrīsānti), Bud dha bā la (Buddhapāla), Ka ma la gu (gub) ta (Kamalagupta), and others were invited, and that—related to these invitations, stays and collaborations—various new religious cycles (*chos skor*) were introduced (see Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text*", this volume, pp. 135–136; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 296).

designation (*gtsug lag khang*, *chos 'khor*, *lha khang*) and individual name in trustworthy historical sources shows some remarkable differentiations: the main divisions are between a group of mostly three or four temples in major places whose foundations were laid in 996 and which are commonly referred to as *gtsug lag khang* or *gtsug lag khang chen po* and a group of temples in smaller places and a third group of border-protecting temples (referred to as *mtha' 'dul gtsug [gyi] lag khang* or *lha khang*). It is obvious that these divisions are based on a hierarchical spatial concept which has the most important temple(s) in the centre of a major area, less important temples in smaller places or in the centre of smaller areas and temples specifically dedicated to the protection of these areas in peripheral border zones.³³

In the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po*, as mentioned perhaps the earliest relevant source in this respect, the temples in 'Khor chags, Tho ling and Nyarma are collectively referred to as the three great *gtsug lag khang*, which are located in the three different areas or political territories of sPu hrangs, Gu ge and Mar yul. A strong territorial notion or relationship is also visible in the *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od*, *Nyang ral chos 'byung* and *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*, also in the case of the temples in smaller places. Nevertheless, as we have seen in the passage cited above from *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 29a3–f. 29b3, there is an important "internal" differentiation in referring to these three temples that is based on their religious programme and design, in particular the main (central) cult statue.

As in most other sources, in the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po* the temple in Tho ling is referred to as the "Twelve Isles" (*gling phran bcu gnyis*), in respect of its particular structure and obviously also paramount importance, while Nyarma—in contrast to 'Khor chags (referred to as *gtsug lag khang*)—is without any specific designation. In the *Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od*, highest priority is given to the foundation of the temple at Tho ling, which, in the context of laying the foundations, is first referred to as Tho ling *lha khang chen po* and simply as *lha khang de nyid* but after its consecration with its full individual name and classificatory designation as Tho ling khang dmar dpe med lhun gyi grub pa'i gtsug

³³ In 996 (Fire Male Monkey year) altogether eight major foundations were founded simultaneously: the main monasteries (*gtsug lag khang*) of Tholing, Nyarma, Khorchag and Tabo as well as four smaller ones, the monasteries and temples at Phyang (Pi wang/Phyi dbang), Kanam (Ka nam), Ropa (Ro dpag) and Pu (sPu). The latter three in present-day Upper Kinnaur were designated as "border-protecting temples" (*mtha' 'dul gyi gtsug lag khang*). Presumably only the four bigger ones were designated and functioned as *chos 'khor*. See Vitali 1996: 53–60, 109, 148.

lag khang. Additional details are given, such as the central statue of the Great Lord of the Teachings (*bstan pa'i gtso che sku*). Basic analogous information is also provided with regard to the temple at 'Khor chags in Pu hrangs—the Yid bzhin lhun gyis grub pa'i gtsug lag khang, with about one hundred pillars, diverse "Isles" and a statue of Maitreyañātha (Byams pa'i mgon po) at the centre—and the temples at Tabo and Nyarma, both referred to simply as temples (*lha khang*). Tabo, which in this case is listed before Nyarma, is referred to as the temple of Tabo in Spiti, the ornament of lCog la (*pi ti ta pod lcog la rgyan gyi lha khang*). Nyarma is mentioned as the temple (*lha khang*) in Mar yul, with a statue of Buddha Dipamkara (Sangs rgyas mar me mdzad) in the centre. In the case of the border-protecting temples (collectively designated as *mtha' 'dul gtsug lag khang* as in the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po* and *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*), the individual location of these temples, referred to on this instance only as *lha khang*, is given in terms of place and area or territory (for example, *lha khang* of Ka nam in Nga ra, the *lha khang* of Mo na in Drug pag, the *lha khang* of sPu in Rong chung). *Nyang ral chos 'byung* mentions also Sha ling temple in Bu rigs as an early foundation.

Appendix I: A Note on Some Titles of Rulers and Other Members of the West Tibetan Royal Family according to 10th- and 11th-Century Inscriptions and the "Old Manuscript" (*Yig rnying*) from Tholing

The title *bla chen po* given to King lHa lde in the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po* (see, for example, *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 29a3–f. 29b3, and CBM 1977: 88.5–89.2) is not unique. It appears to have been used, also in the form of *bla chen*, in later (post-14th-century) sources (such as the *Blue Annals*) commonly as a purely religious title, most probably as an abbreviation of *bla ma chen po* (lit. 'great *bla ma*/monk').

In the earlier historical context of 10th–12th-century Western Tibet, the usage and understanding of this title seems to have been closely connected to and ostensibly introduced as part of the regulations of the code of laws (*rgyal khrims*) issued by King Khri lDe srong gtsug btsan,³⁴ which specifically related to the royal family. Roberto Vitali's translation of the relevant passage contained in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* (Vitali 1996: 55.4–5) reads as follows: "Given that in antiquity there had been a law by which, unless the king had died, the heir apparent

(rgyal.sras) could not be enthroned, a custom was introduced according to which, if his (the heir apparent's) father became a monk (*bla.chen*), [his] son was to be appointed *mnga'.bdag*." (*ibid.*: 110). According to this view, the usage of this title was therefore intimately connected to the rules of succession that were set up in accordance with the religio-political system of governance established by King Khri lDe srong gtsug btsan together with other leading members of the royal family. The author of *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* seems to have more or less followed the usage of *bla chen/bla chen po* in this sense consistently throughout the whole text. An exception is represented by rTse lde, who is referred to as *mnga' bdag bla chen* of Guge (*ibid.*: 72, 123). Vitali does not think that in this instance *bla chen* implied that rTse lde was a monk (*ibid.*: 123, n. 113).

As we have seen, several West Tibetan rulers were designated as *bla chen* in Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's chapter on the history of mNga' ris in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*.³⁵ This was stated not only in the case of *bla chen* rTse lde, who is said to have ruled over Guge (*Gu ge la mnga' mdzad*), but for earlier times with regard to *bla chen po* sTong (an ancestral ruler of related Zhang chung clans) (see *ibid.*, p. 77) as well as later with regard to Khri 'bar btsan (early 13th century), also known as sTag tsha Khri 'bar (see *ibid.*, p. 83). Of the latter it is stated in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* that he was called *bla chen po* sTag tsha at the instance of the appointment of his son to the throne of mNga' ris and that he was reputed to be an incarnation of Byang chub sems dpa' zla ba rgyal mtshan.

The information contained in an untitled fragmentary chronicle from Tholing (designated as *Yig rnying* [Old Manuscript] by the late Guge Tsering Gyalpo) serves to shed more and better light on this and other titles. This document, which may date from the 12th century, tells the history of the early (Central) Tibetan rulers until the collapse of the empire in the 9th century and continues with the rulers of the West Tibetan kingdom up to King rTse lde (d. around 1088 according to Vitali 2003: 66). Initial studies of this important source are by Patshab Pasang Wangdu (2012a, 2012b) (the latter includes a pale black-and-white facsimile of the manuscript) and by Khyungdak (2013). Recently this document was also discussed by David Pritzker (2017). I am basing my reading of this work on the original photographic documentation of this manuscript (in colour) by Guge Tsering Gyalpo in 2012 in situ at Tholing.

A preliminary analysis of this text shows that the titles and terms of reference denoting a certain kinship status for the rulers

³⁴ Also named Khri lDe srong btsan, Khri lde srong gtsug and Khri Srong lde gtsan (see Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od* by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text", this volume, pp. 124, 132, 148, 149; see also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 278, 290, 320, 321), identical with Srong nge, known as Ye shes 'od after his ordination as a Buddhist monk in 989.

³⁵ See Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, "Relating the history of mNga' ris as set down in writing in Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs skye dgu'i cod paṇ nyi zla'i phreng mdzes*: The Tibetan text", this volume, p. 83.

mentioned appear to have been used in a very specific way. The text seeks to provide a strong individual and genealogical profile of the rulers, in particular for those closer to the present time when the text was written, for the 10th and 11th century period, in addition also of further prominent members of the royal family. For this reason, together with the relatively close chronological proximity to the West Tibetan rulers of the 10th and 11th centuries and due to the probability that it was written by someone close to or perhaps even belonging to the West Tibetan royal family, the information and historical views contained in this document seem highly likely to express an authoritative elite (self-)view of the royal family. The stress on conveying the correct (time-)specific authoritative titles of the members of the royal family, partially also with related explanations, is quite obvious. The specific choice of the names of the rulers as well as the spelling of their names seems to represent the common or prevalent use in oral contemporary contexts.

Four earlier rulers, two of the Central Tibetan dynasty are designated as ancestor (*myes* Srong rtsan sgam po, ca. 605–649; *mes* Khri Srong lde brtsan, 742–ca. 800 [*Yig rnying*, p. 11 and p. 19]), fittingly with their necronym or valedictory, posthumous names (see Dotson 2016: 27). Also the founder of the West Tibetan kingdom is referred to as ancestor (*mes* Khri sKyil lding [*Yig rnying*, p. 33])³⁶—perhaps also a necronym or valedictory, posthumous name, nickname or the name as he was remembered. His three sons, in later sources commonly named as sTod kyi mgon gsum (the “Three Protectors of sTod”), are also collectively referred to as *mes mched gsum*, the “three ancestor siblings” (*Yig rnying*, p. 33–34).

Other rulers of the Central Tibetan dynasty are referred to as prince (*lha sras*), such as *lha sras* Mu ni btsan po (reigned ca. 797–798, remembered as Mu ne btsan po; see Dotson 2016: 27) and Khri (accession name of rulers), such as Khri lde gTsong brtsan (704–754),³⁷ Khri gTsong lde Ral pa can (plus added nickname) (reigned 815–841) and Khri Dar ma Wi dur brtsan (phonetic rendering of ‘U’i dum brtsan/brtan, commonly remembered through his nickname Glang dar ma, reigned 841–842).

The last ruler of the Central Tibetan dynasty, bearing the accession name Khri ‘Od srung brtsan (reigned ca. 846–ca. 893), is referred to as Lord (*rje*) gNam lde ‘Od srung (*Yig rnying*, p. 29), his nickname or name through which he was remembered posthumously (Dotson 2016: 27). The designation *rje* is applied to nearly all other rulers of the

³⁶ A phonetically similar name for sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon—Khri sKyid lding—is quoted by Vitali 1996: 158.

³⁷ He is also characterized as younger (*gcung*) although in a chronologically wrong setting.

West Tibetan royal family, such as bKra shis mgon (*Yig rnying*, p. 34), lHa lde brtsan (*Yig rnying*, p. 42), dBu ‘byams pa (that is, ‘Od lde) (*Yig rnying*, p. 44), and rTse lde brtsan (*Yig rnying*, p. 49). In addition, they are referred to mostly as *mnga’ bdag* (ruler), for example, *rje mnga’ bdag* bKra shis mgon, *rje mnga’ bdag chen po* (great ruler) dBu ‘byams pa. The title *rje* is also given to other members of the royal family who, as far as we know, were never in a position as rulers, such as *rje bla ma chen po btsun pa* (Lord Great Lama Monk) Zhi ba ‘od. This means we have to differentiate between *rje* as a status designation for a member of the royal family and the following title associated with a specific function, such as great lama (*bla ma chen po*) or monk of divine descent (*lha btsun [pa]*), (great) worldly ruler (*mnga’ bdag*, *mnga’ bdag chen po*) and (former) ruler with superior status (*bla chen po*). Based on the case of King lHa lde, who is first named in the text as lHa lde rtsan, the ruler, the nephew (of King Srong nge/Royal Lama Ye shes ‘od) who had been given (“offered”) power over worldly affairs; “*myi chos kyi mnga’ dbon mnga’ bdag phul*,” *Yig rnying*, p. 37)³⁸ and for a later period (after he had handed over worldly power to ‘Od lde, most probably in 995 or 996)³⁹ as *rje bla chen po* (Lord Superior One) lHa lde brtsan, a clear differentiation is to be made between *bla ma chen po* and *bla chen po*. The latter title (*rje bla chen po*) is also given to King rTse lde rtsan. This leads back to what was stated above in *mNga’ ris rgyal rabs* with regard to *mnga’ bdag bla chen* rTse lde and with regard to *bla chen po* sTag tsha in *Nyi ma’i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*. In agreement with a custom that had been introduced—most probably by King Khri lde srong gtsug btsan (later known as *lha bla ma* Ye shes ‘od)—the royal heir apparent’s father received the title *bla chen* (Great Superior One) as soon as (his) son was appointed *mnga’ bdag* (ruler).⁴⁰

³⁸ Thus *Yig rnying* clearly expresses the view that worldly power was handed over from Srong nge to his nephew lHa lde (and not to his elder brother ‘Khor re). Cf. n. 60 on the possible temporary administering of power by ‘Khor re instead of Srong nge from ca. 986 to ca. 989.

³⁹ According to *Nyi ma’i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*, King lHa lde became a monk at the age of thirty-six and took the name Dharmaprabha (see Gu ge Tshering rgyal po, “Relating the history of mNga’ ris as as set down in writing in Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan’s *Nyi ma’i rigs kyi rgyal rabs skye dgu’i cod paṅ nyi zla’i phreng mdzes*: The Tibetan text”, this volume, p. 109), thus adding new chronological information on this incident (also reported in *mNga’ ris rgyal rabs* (see Vitali 1996: 61.12–13, 115, 243; Vitali 2003: 61). This piece of information, together with other chronological considerations, makes his abdication in 1024 as suggested by Vitali (2003: 61) highly unlikely. See also Appendix II: Some Thoughts on the Chronology of the Rulers of the West Tibetan Kingdom Between the Years 879 and 1042.

⁴⁰ I suggest translating *sngar yab rgyal po ma drongs par rgyal sras rgyal sar mi ‘don pa’i khri ms yod pa la khong gi yab bla chen du ston nas/ sras mnga’ bdag tu bkur ba’i srol stod/* (Vitali 1996: 55) in *mNga’ ris rgyal rabs* thus: While earlier [relating to the period of the Central Tibetan dynasty or at least pre-Ye

Due to lack of sufficient evidence, for example on the real power associated with the title *bla chen*, its exact meaning and function can hardly be determined. According to written evidence, the available information on the four rulers who held this title (lHa lde, rTse lde, sTag tsha) or who can be suspected of having held this title (Ye shes 'od), records that they were active—according to the available information seemingly exclusively—as founders of Buddhist monuments (temples and monasteries), as sponsors of monks and as donors of precious religious objects. Thus, while they seem to have handed over political power entirely to the respective ruler (*mnga' bdag*), they must have had ample access to and/or control over land and economic resources for financing these religious projects as well as over personnel (recruitment of monks, provision of estates and related lay subjects). Their clearly visible focus on religious activities in some of the main religious centres of the kingdom (such as Tabo in Spiti, Shel in Mar yul, Tholing in Guge, Khorchag in Purang) with an exemplary function, visibility and publicity across the whole dominion must have been associated with sufficient socio-economic power and supported or legitimated by the attribution of a unique superior title and status of a transcendental nature. sTag tsha was regarded as the incarnation of a revered *bla ma*. Ye shes 'od was at least posthumously considered a bodhisattva.

Taking the historical inscriptions and captions in the Entry Hall (*sgo khang*) and the so-called Renovation Inscription in the Assembly Hall (*'du khang*) at Tabo monastery as examples for the authoritative (self-)representation of the leading members of the West Tibetan royal family, it is clear that there the social and religious status of those depicted is given in particular through titles in the case of the Entry Hall, and in addition through references to kinship relationships in the case of the Renovation Inscription. As far as we can conclude from a comparative analysis of historical sources, both follow the code of laws and rules of succession proclaimed by King Srong nge (later Ye shes 'od) as mentioned in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* (Vitali 1996: 55–56, 110–111).

The earliest extant historical inscriptions in historical Western Tibet are those in the Entry Hall at Tabo monastery. They follow an overall unified visual design and formal structure, in addition also a systematic approach is manifest in the identification of those depicted, first in terms of their actual social status—descent

(royal family, clan) and function/title (only in one exceptional case of an outstanding figure of highest religious status does descent seem not to have been mentioned)—and second through their actual personal names (see Luczanits 1999: 105–113; on these inscriptions see also Jahoda 2017: 142–144; Jahoda and Kalantari 2016: 85–89; Jahoda 2019: 215–220).⁴¹ Unfortunately, the first part of the caption identifying Ye shes 'od (*.. chen po ye shes 'od*) was no longer clearly readable in 1991, when Christian Luczanits photographed and documented it. While *lha bla ma* is not supported by the remaining traces (see Luczanits 1999: 105), reading *dge slong chen po* (great monk)—also in view of the generally frequent occurrence in further captions—or *dpal chen po* (Great Glorious/Holy One)—echoing Ye shes 'od's designation as *skyes bu chen po* in *Yig rnying*, p. 37—is not excluded by the remaining traces (considered on the basis of Christian Luczanits' 1991 photographs in the Western Himalayan Archive Vienna).

In *Yig rnying* the common denominator in the references to actual and former rulers as well as to members of the royal family in leading religious positions seems to be *rje* (lord): *rje mnga' bdag* bKra shis mgon, *rje bla chen po* lHa lde brtsan, *rje mnga' bdag chen po* dBu 'byams pa, *rje bla ma chen po* Zhi ba 'od, and *rje bla chen po* rTse lde rtsan. The only exception is *lha btsun pa* Byang chub 'od. However, in the Renovation Inscription at Tabo he is named as *rje rgyal lha btsun* (Lord-Ruler Royal Monk) Byang chub 'od and also as *chos rgyal rje btsun* (Dharma King Lord-Monk) Byang chub 'od (see Steinkellner and Luczanits 1999: 17), that is, at a time when he was holding highest power over religious and worldly affairs. According to the convention followed in *Yig rnying*, it would make sense to find *rje* also as initial reference in the case of Ye shes 'od. Reading the letter *ja* (with the superscript *ra* and *'greng bu* perhaps gone) instead of *da* (which “seems fairly clear” according to Luczanits 1999: 105, but also clearly slightly differs from the final *da* in 'od in the line below) an initial *rje* is not entirely excluded by the remaining traces. The next letter(s) which “can be read in the range of *slob* to *bla ma*” according to Luczanits (*ibid.*) can be read with much probability as a subscripted *la*. However, while the reading *slob chen po* seems highly unusual, the reading *bla ma* is possible although in view of the space taken by the letters in the words *chen po* and *ye shes* in the first and 'od

shes 'od times] a law existed (according to which) as long as the father, the king, had not passed away the son of the king was not enthroned, (in the present) a custom was introduced according to which after his father was revealed (and addressed) as *bla chen* (Great Superior One) the son was enthroned as *mnga' bdag* (ruler).

⁴¹ Personal names in historical Western Tibet were subject to change, following alterations in the social or religious belonging and/or status. They were therefore associated with performative aspects (*rite de passage*), and biographical stages, in particular also in the case of kings, as has been demonstrated by Dotson (2016: 27), who differentiates the following categories: birth name, accession name, necronym/valedictory name and nickname/remembered as.

in the second line of the inscription this reading appears to be somewhat less likely. In view of the space, even the reading *bla* (or *bla'*) alone can be considered possible, thus reading *rje bla (bla') chen po* Ye shes 'od.

Support for this hypothesis can be found in the following reference in the middle-length version of *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar* from Pooh where at the end of chapter eight beginning of chapter 9 it reads: "*lha bla ma ye shes 'od snyung ba san nas myur du zhal 'jal du byon pas gnyung bzhi drag pos zin nas/ zhal ma 'jal lo/ gdung mchod dang ngan song sbyong ba la sogs pa ni bla ma lo tsha ba chen pos mdzad do/ dgu pa ni bla chen po lHa lde dang/ bla chen po byang chub sems dpa' yis yul chung ni shu rtsa gcig 'phul nas mchod pa las/ gnas gzhi nyi shu rtsa gcig/ yul chung nyi shu rtsa gcig tu lo cig khyud 'khor la/ mdo' mangs cha gsum gsum/ yum cha bdun bdun la sogs pa/ sku gsung thugs kyi rten dpag tu med pa zhabs rtog mdzad do/*" (*Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 34a2–34b2; my emphasis).⁴² These events relate to the time when Ye shes 'od fell seriously ill and passed away before the Great Translator (who conducted the funeral rites) was able to see him. Obviously related to this, the Great Superior One (*bla chen po*) lHa lde and the Great Superior One (*bla chen po*) the Bodhisattva—certainly no other than Ye shes 'od who must have ordered this donation prior to his passing away (as in the case of the donation for consecrating a *Shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa stong phrag brgya pa* in advance (see below)—offered twenty-one minor domains (*yul chung*) dedicated to worship, together with many other offerings.

The titles given to Ye shes 'od in various contemporary and later sources and the question of whether he was already referred to as a bodhisattva (*byang chub sems dpa'*) while he was still alive has been analysed by Cristina Scherrer-Schaub on the basis of a colophon and the inscriptional evidence from Tabo, Tholing and Pooh. She concluded that the reference as *byang chub sems dpa'* in the colophon dates most likely from 1019, when Ye shes 'od was "no doubt weakened by illness, but still alive" (Scherrer-Schaub 1999: 222). Based on the *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama*,

⁴² Cf. Snellgrove and Skorupski (1980: 106–107) where it reads similarly at the end of chapter 8: "*lha bla ma ye shes 'od snyung bar gsan nas/ myur du zhal mjal du byon pa la/ snyung gzhi drag po gcig gis zin nas zhal ma mjal lo/ gdung mchod ngan song sbyong ba la sogs pa ni/ lo tsha ba khong rang gis mdzad do/ 'bul ba ni bla chen po lHa lde dang/ bla chen po byang chub sems dpa' yis yul chung ni shu rtsa gcig 'phul nas/ mchod pa la gnas gzhi nyi shu rtsa gcig/ yul chung nyi shu rtsa gcig tu lo khyud 'khor la mdo mangs cha gsum gsum/ 'bum cha bdun la sogs pa sku gsung thugs kyi rten dpag tu med pa' zhabs rtog mdzad do/*" (my emphasis).

1019 seems to have been the year when he passed away.⁴³ As regards the question of when he received the title *lha bla ma* (Ye shes 'od) it is said in *Yig rnying* (p. 37) that this happened after he had embarked on the path of liberation (in Earth Female Ox year 989 according to the *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama*).⁴⁴ In view of the narrative in *Yig rnying*, which continues with the handing over of worldly power to his nephew lHa lde rtsan (which must have taken place prior to his, most probably in the same year), the reference to Ye shes 'od as *bla ma* or *lha bla ma* can be assumed to have started from 989.

The Renovation Inscription at Tabo, which starts by referring to Ye shes 'od as *mes byang chub sems dpa'* (ancestor bodhisattva), names him in addition as having been born of divine descent from a lineage of bodhisattvas (*lha'i rig 'khrungs byang chub sems dpa'i gdungs*) (thus retrospectively exalting his status), also honours him as king (ruler over men, *myi rje*), personified by/acting in the way of a god (*lhas mdzad*) and protector of all black-headed people (*mgo' nag yongs kyi mgon*), does not name him as *lha bla ma*, *bla chen po* or *bla ma chen po*. This is not surprising since, in the understanding of the author of the inscription, the bodhisattva status attributed to him must have seemingly outdated such "preliminary" titles of his earlier worldly form of existence. Practising the conduct of a bodhisattva and proceeding towards highest enlightenment is also mentioned as the motivation of the noble donor (*chos rgyal rje btsun* Byang chub 'od) and explicitly formulated as the desired goal of all lay people (see Steinkellner and Luczanits 1999: 18, 23).

To understand the full range of the religio-political connotations of the *bla chen (po)* title, the related customs and social import, further enquiries are necessary, which should also be extended to include the actual contemporary inheritance practices and status culture (also on the basis of visual materials, such as portraits). It is, however, quite clear that *bla chen po* is a title with the additional

⁴³ See Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od* by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text", this volume, p. 149: "*rab tu byung zhing (b)snyen par bsdzogs (brdzogs) nas lo sum bcu (cu) gcig gi bar du sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa'i bdag por gyur nas/ dar rgyas mdzad pa dang/ ston pa sha kya seng ge nyi kho na ltar gyur to/ 'l de nas mo lug gi lo la mtho gling gzim(s) khang du zhi bar gshegs pa*" (after having been ordained for 31 years [he] became the owner of the teaching of the Buddha and spread it, until he became himself like the Teacher, the Lion of the Śākyas [Śākya Siṃha, an epithet of the Buddha Śākyamuni]. Then [he] passed away in his residence at Tholing). See also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 321).

⁴⁴ See Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od* by Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan: The Tibetan text", this volume, pp. 133, 149. See also Gu ge Paṇ chen Grags pa rgyal mtshan 2011: 292, 320, and above n. 12.

religious connotation of a former ruler after giving up secular power and following either Buddhist vows as a layman or entering the Buddhist order, which endowed him perhaps with an elevated status by way of a particular religious legitimation that went with this title (and inherited tradition).⁴⁵ Based on the existing evidence, one can suspect that lHa lde may have assumed this title at the latest by 995 or 996, when his son 'Od lde seems to have become ruler (and he himself was ordained to the *dge slong* vow, thus perhaps following his uncle's model) See below, pp. 294–295.

Following the information given in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs* for the sons of 'Od lde, it cannot be excluded that a differentiation between rule over Purang and Guge and related titles needs to be considered. So lon tsha bTsan srong (commonly known as bTsan srong), the eldest son of the ruler (*mnga' bdag*) Khri bKra shis 'Od lde btsan (commonly known as 'Od lde) and Cho chen tsha rTse lde (commonly known as rTse lde), the middle son of king 'Od lde, are described as *mnga' bdag* and *bla chen* respectively. The first is said to have ruled over Pu hrangs, the second over Gu ge.⁴⁶ *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* refers to rTse lde as *mnga' bdag bla chen* of Guge (Vitali 1996: 72, 123). The information on rTse lde's title provided by *Yig rnying (rje bla chen po)*, *mNga' ris rgyal rabs (mnga' bdag bla chen)* and *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs (bla chen)* seems to convey that rTse lde had power in and ruled over Guge, despite holding the title *bla chen (po)*. Should we assume that at this time specific conditions pertained to rule over Guge? That it should be considered a kind of religious political entity with a different type of leadership. where the title and status of *bla chen (po)* was compatible with the status of *mnga' bdag*? As there is no evidence to support such hypotheses in my view, an explanation for this ambiguity should ideally be based on the comparative investigation of further historical sources (such as the historiographical manuscript of Matho in Ladakh referred to as EN036 by Martin 2019: 218, n. 90). In addition, it should not be excluded that this ambiguity may have been the result of extraordinary circumstances or adverse developments. It is not unlikely that, in contrast to the earlier generation (where Ye shes 'od handed over worldly rule to his nephew lHa lde and both continued to collaborate in a number of major projects, as described in the *Biography of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po*), such a peaceful collaboration

⁴⁵ How the relationship in particular between *bla chen (po)*/former ruler and *mnga' bdag*/actual ruler was defined and practised is entirely unclear due to missing evidence.

⁴⁶ See Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, "Relating the history of mNga' ris as as set down in writing in Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs skye dgu'i cod paṇ nyi zla'i phreng mdzes*: The Tibetan text (with variant readings by Tsering Drongshar and Christian Jahoda)", this volume, p. 113.

and handing over of power did not take place in this generation. According to Vitali (2003: 66) King rTse lde was murdered around 1088 and dBang lde (also known as 'Bar lde), the son of rTse lde's (younger) brother Grags btsan rtse (named lDong rtsha Khri srong, also Grags mtshan lde in *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*)⁴⁷ together with a woman of the Zangs kha clan usurped the throne of Guge at the age of thirteen. This led to the establishment of a separate lineage ruling over Guge, and from then there were different genealogies in Purang and Guge.

Appendix II: On the Chronology of the Rulers of the West Tibetan Kingdom and Their Activities Between 879 and 1042

The current understanding of the chronology of the West Tibetan kingdom, the rulers and their activities was to a large degree established by Roberto Vitali based on his translation and analysis of *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* by Gu ge mkhan chen Ngag dbang grags pa (Vitali 1996). In an article published in 2003 he compiled a chronology of events in the history of mNga' ris, which was based primarily on the information contained in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*, in addition also on other sources, such as *La dwags rgyal rabs*, *Nyang ral chos 'byung*, *rGya Bod yig tshang*, *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar 'bring po*, *Baidūr ser po* and others. It is the aim of this appendix to present the chronological information contained in Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's chapter on the history of mNga' ris in his *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs skye dgu'i cod paṇ nyi zla'i phreng mdzes* and in *lHa bla ma ye shes 'od kyi rnam thar rgyas pa (Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od)*, highlighting in particular those—new or deviating—data that suggest consideration of a different chronological view on certain incidents. In addition, new information on the sequence of certain activities contained in *Yig rnying* is quoted and finally also a few new conclusions based on a re-reading of *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar 'bring po* will be included, with the aim of adding to an overall coherent chronological framework chronology of the rulers of the West Tibetan kingdom and recorded events and activities in the 10th and 11th centuries.

Abbreviations

NR = *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs*, f. 123b–f. 137b.

TD = Tsering Drongshar and Jahoda, "The *Extended Biography of the Royal Lama Ye shes 'od*", this volume, pp. 121–169.

⁴⁷ See Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, "Relating the history of mNga' ris as as set down in writing in Paṇḍita Grags pa rgyal mtshan's *Nyi ma'i rigs kyi rgyal rabs skye dgu'i cod paṇ nyi zla'i phreng mdzes*: The Tibetan text (with variant readings by Tsering Drongshar and Christian Jahoda)", this volume, p. 113.

TG = Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, “Relating the History of mNga’ ris,” this volume, pp. 89–119.

YÖ = *lHa bla ma ye shes ’od kyi rnam thar rgyas pa*, f. 1a–f. 41a.

879 (Pig year):

sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon was born (NR, f. 124a; see TG, p. 95).⁴⁸

906 (Tiger year):

In the middle autumn month Khyung po Khri lhen skyu se and dGe shing A ring mo were sent to invite dPal lHa btsan po Khri bKra shis sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon to come to mNga’ ris (NR, f. 127a; see TG, p. 96).

At the age of twenty-eight, sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon went to mNga’ ris stod (NR, f. 124a; see TG, p. 95), together with ministers, monks, altogether fifty people (NR, f. 128a; see TG, p. 99).⁴⁹

907 (Rabbit year):

From Zhang zhung fifty-one horsemen arrived at the Srid pa

⁴⁸ The year of sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon’s birth is not given by any other sources. The Pig (*phag*) year given in NR is difficult to determine. It could possibly refer to 891 and 903 but 879 works best in view of the dates of his predecessors, successors and additional chronological context. The dates established for his father dPal ’khor btsan—according to various sources born in an Ox (*glang*) year (chronologically best fitting is 857), on the throne for eighteen years, most probably between 893 and 910, and assassinated during the second *kheng log*, which began in gTsang in 905 and lasted approximately until 910 (Vitali 1996: 547–548; see also Hazod 2013: 85, 101–107 who sets the plundering of the tombs of the Tibetan emperors in ’Phyong rgyas in southern Central Tibet by a number of aristocratic clans for 913, nine years following the outbreak of the *kheng log* in gTsang and three years after dPal ’khor btsan’s death, an event which marked the end of the imperial era)—and also the dates established for ’Od srung (840–893), the father of dPal ’khor btsan and grandfather of sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon, would fit with these dates (Vitali 1996: 547).

⁴⁹ Named among his company are Cang Legs skyes, the son of dPal ’khor btsan’s Great Minister (*blon chen*) Cang A pho—obviously still active at this time in this function for dPal ’khor btsan and after the latter’s assassination even acting as king (*rgyal po*) for three years (see Hazod 2013: 104)—as well as members of the ’Bro and Cog ro clans who were also allied with dPal ’khor btsan and active in lHa rtse where the g.Yu rung (g.Yung drung) palace was one of his main residences. Fitting with this, *sku mkhar* lHa rtse Brag mkhar is mentioned by NR as the place where sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon resided when the invitation to come to mNga’ ris reached him. Also the information that bKra shis brtsegs pa dpal, the younger son of dPal ’khor btsan (and not sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon), conducted the funeral for the father, is a clear indication that sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon was already in mNga’ ris at this time (and did not participate).

Based on the information in *mNga’ ris rgyal rabs*, which does not mention sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon’s invitation and nor any of the events reported in NR for 906 to 911 when he had brought under his power all territories, Vitali came to the conclusion that sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon “went to sTod following his father’s assassination” (in 910) and that “Thus Nyi.ma.mgon was not in Pu.hrang before 912 or thereabouts, the *terminus post quem* for the foundation of the mNga’.ris skor.gsum kingdom” (Vitali 1996: 548).

Fortress of Ra la mkhar dmar in the summer to welcome sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon and his entourage (NR, f. 128a; see TG, p. 99).

908 (Dragon year):

sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon went to the north of Gu ge and made a circumambulation of Kailas (Gangs Ti se) and Lake Manasarovar; going to the valley of sMan nags he went to sKyid lde gling (NR, f. 129b; see TG, p. 102).

909 (Snake year) – 910 (Horse year):

As mNga’ ris could not be brought under control, sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon built two temples at sKyid lde gling and established the rituals for the Medicine Buddha (NR, f. 129b; see TG, p. 102).⁵⁰

911 (Sheep year):

sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon had brought all the territories belonging to Western Tibet under his control (NR, f. 124; see TG, p. 95); ’Bro Seng dkar⁵¹ offered the Nyi bzungs palace to sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon and he married his daughter, ’Bro za ’Khor skyong, upon which mNga’ ris kor gsum was brought under his control (NR, f. 129b; see TG, this volume, p. 102). He gave ’Bro tsha ’Khor skyong, the daughter of dGe zher bKra shis btsan, to sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon in marriage (NR, f. 130b; see TG, p. 103).⁵²

⁵⁰ The place sKyid lde gling, which is not mentioned in any other sources as far as I can see can be assumed to be located in the Kailas area. The same is true for the two temples which would thus represent the earliest examples of a Buddhist monument in historical Western Tibet.

⁵¹ ’Bro Seng dkar denotes a male member of a clan (or sub-clan according to Vitali 1996: 169) whose personal name is not given.

⁵² The account of sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon’s marriage is not entirely clear. If we do not read this as partly conflicting or variant versions, what is stated here by the author seems to be that ’Bro Seng dkar offered his (in case of reference to a [sub-]clan their) palace to sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon, which together with the marriage of his (their) daughter led to the full control over mNga’ ris skor gsum. The information that dGe zher bKra shis btsan (who was among those who had accompanied him to mNga’ ris stod) gave ’Bro tsha ’Khor skyong to him in marriage (and not ’Bro Seng dkar) is thus an additional specification. As for the reasons for this one can only speculate, for example, whether ’Bro Seng dkar (person or [sub-]clan) may have been unable or unwilling for some reason to give his (their) daughter to him in marriage. The information in NR (f. 124a) seems to indicate that sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon actively seized the castle of Nyi bzung and assumed power.

The second part of this account of sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon’s marriage agrees with the one in *La dwags rgyal rabs* but differs sharply from the one given in *Nyang ral chos ’byung*, mentioning a Cog ro Zangs kha ma as his first wife and the mother of his three sons (known as the three sTod kyi mgon). See Vitali 1996: 171–172.

Between 912 and early 920s:

Birth of dPal gyi mgon, bKra shis mgon and lDe gtsug mgon, the three sons of sKyid lDe Nyi ma mgon from this marriage to 'Bro tsha/za 'Khor skyong.⁵³

Between 913 and early 920s:

Birth of bKra shis mgon, father of 'Khor re and Srong nge.⁵⁴

937 (Bird year):

sKyid lDe Nyi ma mgon passed away at the age of fifty-nine (NR, f. 124; see TG, p. 95).

Between mid-930s and early 940s:

Birth of 'Khor re, elder son of bKra shis mgon.⁵⁵

947 (Fire Female Sheep year):

Khri lDe Srong btsan was born ("Khri lDe Srong btsan me mo lug la 'khrungs", YÖ, f. 3b; see TD, p. 124).⁵⁶

960 or 961:

Birth of lHa lDe, the eldest son of 'Khor re.⁵⁷

⁵³ The dates suggested are calculated following the above-mentioned chronological reading of the account in NR that dPal gyi mgon, bKra shis mgon and lDe gtsug mgon were sons of sKyid lDe Nyi ma mgon's marriage to 'Bro tsha/za (bza') 'Khor skyong. The birth of the eldest son dPal gyi mgon could have taken place at the earliest in 912 while that of the youngest lDe gtsug mgon should not have taken place later than the early 920s. The latter in view of the circumstance that all received one share of the kingdom from their father, latest in 937 when he is said to have passed away, and assuming that the youngest son was at least thirteen at this time, which makes the early 920s the most likely terminus ante quem for the birth of the youngest son.

⁵⁴ The date suggested is calculated following the above-mentioned chronological reading of the account in NR, together with the known genealogical sequence of his successors, his elder son 'Khor re, then his younger son Srong nge (most probably born in 947 according to Vitali's [1996: 181–183] analysis and YÖ, f. 3b), followed by lHa lDe, the son of 'Khor re and nephew of Srong nge (and various additional related chronological information).

⁵⁵ The date suggested is calculated following the above-mentioned chronological reading of the account in NR, together with the known genealogical sequence of his successors, his younger brother Srong nge succeeded by lHa lDe, the son of 'Khor re and nephew of Srong nge (and various additional related chronological information).

⁵⁶ This explicit chronological information agrees (and thus confirms) that the birth of Srong nge, the younger son of bKra shis mgon, took place in 947. See Vitali (1996: 146, 180–183), who calculated this date on the authority of *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* and other texts as the most likely one (as compared to 935).

⁵⁷ The date suggested is basically following the above-mentioned chronological reading of the account in NR, together with the known genealogical sequence of his predecessors, his father 'Khor re and his uncle Srong nge and his successor,

977:

Enthronement of Khri lDe Srong gtsug btsan.⁵⁸

his son 'Od lDe (and various additional related chronological information). In particular, the date is calculated back on the basis of the information in NR that he was ordained at the age of thirty-six in the presence of the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po, obviously immediately before stepping down and handing over the throne to his son 'Od lDe. Of the latter it is said in NR that in a Bird year he waged war on Ho pu at the age of fifteen, thus obviously already acting as a ruler after having ascended the throne. This could have been earliest according to the reported custom when he was thirteen. Furthermore, the information in historical sources agrees that 'Od lDe was the eldest son of lHa lDe, bKra shis 'od (later known as Byang chub 'od) the middle son, and Yongs srong lDe (later known as Zhi ba 'od) the youngest. Vitali calculates the birth of bKra shis 'od as having happened in Monkey year 984 (Vitali 1996: 296, Vitali 2003: 56) based on *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*. For reason of coherence the birth of the eldest son 'Od lDe, reported for a Sheep year (NR, f. 134b), should have therefore taken place before and not after 984 (in Sheep year 995, as derived by Vitali from *Baidür ser po* [Vitali 1996: 147; Vitali 2003: 58]), accordingly in Sheep year 983. (See also Martin 2019: 204, *passim*, partly also based on NR, for a different chronological reading of 'Od lDe's activities, all set one or two twelve-year-cycles later.)

An important additional argument in support of this hypothesis can be found in *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar 'bring po* in the use of titles given to lHa lDe (and also Ye shes 'od) in the narrative of their interaction with the Great Translator Rin chen bzang po. In my view there the titles accorded to them in the sequence of the chapters fully agree with the related events within a coherent chronological framework. At the first instance where lHa lDe appears, in the time after Rin chen bzang po's return from Kashmir to sPu rang (that is, some time between 988 and 996—most probably in 995 or 996, when he was ordained according to my calculation based on NR, f. 133b; see TG, p. 109), he (lHa lDe) is already named as *bla chen po* lHa lDe (initially in fact as *bla ma chen po* lHa lDe, then several instances as *bla chen po* lHa lDe; cf. *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 28a3, f. 28b3, f. 29a3, f. 34a2-3), never as *mnga' bdag!* The most reasonable explanation is that at this time he had already left the throne, and that his ordination in the presence of the Great Translator must have taken place at the latest in 996 (when this one left again for Kashmir). The only other earlier possible date for lHa lDe's ordination, fitting with the calculated possible years for the succession of his son 'Od lDe (995–997), at the earliest aged thirteen, is 995.

Not only the titles used for lHa lDe but also for Ye shes 'od and for Rin chen bzang po himself agree with their respective contemporary status in the narrative and chronological sequence in *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar 'bring po*. Ye shes 'od, who was named *lha bla ma* on the instance of his ordination in 989 (as stated by *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* and YÖ, confirmed by *Yig rnying*, pp. 36–37), is from the first instance of his appearance (in the context of the foundation of Tholing in 996) designated as *lha bla ma* Ye shes 'od (*Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 29b1, 31a4, 33b3, 41a3), only for the time around his funeral and the dedication of places for his post-mortal worship is he referred to explicitly as *bodhisattva (bla chen po byang chub sems dpa')*.

⁵⁸ Calculated on the basis of the information in YÖ f. 9b (see TD, p. 132) that he stayed Fire Female Pig year 987 in Pu hrangs, when he was in the eleventh year of his rule (*lo bcu gcig pa*).

983 (Sheep year):

Birth of 'Od Ide, eldest son of IHa Ide (NR, f. 134b; see TG, p. 110).⁵⁹

986 (Fire Female Dog year):

The elder (son) 'Khor re, Khri Ide Srong gtsug, the paternal relatives, uncles and nephews (of the royal family) met at Ka pe hrag in gTsang. All learned subjects of Pu Gug (Pu rang Gu ge) were present. It was discussed how to spread the holy religion. After accepting the ordination of Srong nge, the elder was asked to take care of (his) dominion or to administer (his) power (*mnga' skyong bar zhu phul*).⁶⁰ To each one of the two laws a legal document (*bca' yig*) was proclaimed (YÖ, f. 9b; see TD, p. 132).⁶¹

986 (Fire Male Dog year):

Khri sde (Ide) bSrong btsug brtsan (gtsug btsan) gathered the learned subjects of Pu Gug (Pu rang Gu ge) at Kam pe drag in gTsang. It was discussed how to spread the holy religion in bsTod (sTod) mNga' ris. Written versions of the two customs (*lugs gnyis*) were made (YÖ, 23b; see TD, p. 149).⁶²

⁵⁹ See n. 57.

⁶⁰ The full meaning of this statement is not clear. In my view, the most probable meaning is that, from this time onward when Srong nge's future ordination was accepted (986) until his ordination was carried out (in 989), 'Khor re was asked to act temporarily on behalf of Srong nge (not implying that he succeeded him). In addition, the sphere of power under the control of Srong nge is not entirely clear. According to NR, f. 131b (see TD, p. 105), 'Khor re ruled over Pu hrangs while Srong nge ruled over Gu ge so that 'Khor re may have administered Srong nge's power over Gu ge for a very limited time (perhaps until 989) until it was handed over to 'Khor re's son and Srong nge's nephew IHa Ide (who is said to have succeeded Srong nge according to *Yig rnying*, p. 37, most probably in 989, after Srong nge's ordination).

⁶¹ See n. 61.

⁶² The information in YÖ on the meeting in Ka pe hrag/Kam pe drag in gTsang in Fire Male/Female Dog year 986 in f. 9b and f. 23b notably deviates from one another in certain aspects but agrees on the year (986). The main difference lies in the naming of the participants on the side of the royal family and the succession after Srong nge's planned ordination.

Yet another version of this event is found in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* (Vitali 1996: 52–53, 108–109). Here the place in gTsang is called dKar se nag and instead of the ruler the minister Zhang rung is named as the one who gathered people and proclaimed the text of the two laws (*chos khriims, rgyal khriims*). The date when this took place is mentioned as Earth Male Dog year (998), corrected by Vitali (1996: 108) to Earth Male Rat year (988).

The conclusion to be drawn with some probability from these slightly differing accounts seems to be that a meeting happened at a place in gTsang called Ka pe hrag/Kam pe drag/Kar se nag where fundamental new customs or laws relating to the ruling family and Buddhism (*rgyal khriims, chos khriims*) were put into writing and then proclaimed and spread. In the light of the information provided by YÖ it appears plausible that the texts of both laws were already spread in 986 and not only two years later. In addition, the identification of 986

987 (Fire Female Pig year):

Following a stay in Pu rang (hrangs) (in the eleventh year of his rule, *lo bcu gcig pa*)⁶³ where Khri Ide Srong gtsug btsan made a speech on how to protect the dominion, a temple (*gtsug lag khang*) was built at mKhar Itag⁶⁴ of sKya ru (YÖ, f. 9b; see TD, p. 132).

988 (Rat year):

Prince IHa 'khor btsan, the younger brother of Khri Ide mGon btsan (YÖ, f. 6a; see TD, p. 127; erroneously called IHa Ide mgon in YÖ, f. 24b; see TD, p. 150), was born (YÖ, f. 9b; see TD, p. 132).

989 (Earth Female Ox year):

Srong nge was ordained by the great abbot (*mkhan po chen po*), the elder monk Ku ma ra bha ṭa, and at once became a full monk with the name Ye shes 'od (YÖ, f. 10b; see TD, p. 133).

Khri sde (Ide) bSrong (Srong) btsug brtsan (gtsug btsan) was ordained and received the name Ye shes 'od (YÖ, f. 23b; see TD, p. 149).

Srong nge received the title *lha bla ma* (Ye shes 'od) immediately after he had been ordained as a full monk according to *Yig rnying* (pp. 36–37).⁶⁵

995 or 996:

At the age of thirty-six, amid the great *paṇḍita* Dznya na dha ra and the Great Translator (*lo chen*) Rin chen bzang po and many other monks, IHa Ide became an ordained monk and took the name Dharma pra bha, meaning Radiance of Dharma (*chos kyi 'od zer*) (NR, f. 133b; see TG, p. 109).⁶⁶

as the end of a 146-year period when Buddhism was discarded—as suggested by Vitali 1996: 51, 108, 174, n. 236 based on information in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*—is also supported by an account in very similar words in YÖ (f. 6b). The overall description of this period (in particular with regard to mNga' ris) in terms of (non-Buddhist) practice is less negative or rigorous in YÖ (f. 6b; see TD, p. 128)—*dam pa'i chos kyi (kyis) mkhyab cing/ cha bzhang pa'i dus*, the time when the holy religion was not widely spread (followed) and relied upon—than in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*—*chos kyi phongs pa'i dus*, translated by Vitali 1996: 108 “the time when Chos was discarded” (or lacking).

⁶³ Unless one assumes a scribal mistake this seems to be the most probable interpretation of this passage.

⁶⁴ According to Bellezza (2010; <http://www.thlib.org/bellezza/#!book=/bellezza/wb/b1-1-65/>) mKhar Itag may have been a citadel in current rTsa mda' County.

⁶⁵ In *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*, the date and circumstances of Ye shes 'od's ordination are not mentioned. Vitali assumed this to have happened in 988, following his abdication and the birth of his younger son IHa 'khor btsan, which he calculated for Rat year 988 (Vitali 1996: 234–236; Vitali 2003: 57).

⁶⁶ See n. 57.

996 (Fire Male Monkey year):

The foundations of the Tholing lHa khang chen mo were laid out (YÖ, f. 15a; see TD, p. 138). (See also YÖ, f. 23b; see TD, p. 149 where this statement is found with nearly the same words again later in the text).⁶⁷

The elder son of Khri Srong lde gtsan (btsan), Khri lde mGon btsan (YÖ, f. 6a; see TD, p. 127, here erroneously called lHa lde mgon), was ordained at Ka ru rgam in the presence of *paṇḍita* Dharma pha la and *lo tsha ba* (*lo tsā ba*) Rin chen bzang po, and received the name De ba rā dza. At this time, eighty-seven subjects devoted to Buddhism were also ordained (YÖ, f. 24b; see TD, p. 150).⁶⁸

997 (Fire Female Bird year):

In the last spring month *lha bla ma* Ye shes 'od, De ba rā dza and Nā ga rā dza resided at the hermitage (*dben gnas*) of Sa (Pa?) rgam. At the time when the two sons were ordained, two hundred youths from mNga' ris skor gsum who had considerable wisdom, bright intelligence, diligent minds and good hearts were gathered together and liberated (that is, ordained as monks), one hundred from Gu ge, forty from Pu hrangs, thirty from Pil chog and thirty from Mar yul (YÖ, f. 15a; see TD, p. 138).⁶⁹

997 (Bird year):

At the age of fifteen 'Od lde waged war on Hu pu (a region along the Sutlej valley in present-day Kinnaur) (NR, f. 134b; see TG, p. 111), obviously after having ascended the throne in this year or more probably in 996 or 995, when he was thirteen.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ This information—"me pho spre (*sprel*) lo la mtho gling gi lha khang chen mo'i smangs (*rmang*) bris (*bres*) so" (YÖ, f. 15a) and "me pho spre'u'i lo la mtho gling lha khang chen mo'i rmangs bris (*rmang bres*)" (YÖ, f. 15a)—conforms closely to the one contained in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* ("me pho spre'u lo la gu ger tho gling gi gtsug lag khang gi rmangs bris", Vitali 1996: 53, 109).

⁶⁸ This event is reported for the same year with some variation in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*, such as the name of the elder son as a lay person and monk (given as Khri lde mGon btsan and De ba pra bha—not De ba rā dza as one would expect) and the name of the place and temple—Par sgam Byams snyon gling: "sras che khri lde mgon btsan me pho spre'u la/ pa sgam byams snyon gling du rje 'bangs brgyad rtsa brgyad rab tu gshegs te/ mtshan dhe ba pra bhar gsol to", Vitali 1996: 53, 109).

⁶⁹ The sons of Ye shes 'od were ordained in 996 and 998 according to *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* and Vitali's analysis (1996: 113–114). The recruitment of altogether two hundred monks around this time, who "were delivered on the path of liberation in the footsteps of [Ye shes 'od's] two sons" (*ibid.*: 113), and the account of eighty-seven subject, who were ordained together with De ba rā dza, fully agree in YÖ and *mNga' ris rgyal rabs*.

⁷⁰ This age of thirteen was considered by Tibetan historians as a rule of succession when the king took the throne, accompanied by the ritualised death

998 (Earth Male Dog year):

At the age of eleven, the younger brother of De ba rā dza, Prince (*lha sras*) lHa 'khor btsan, was ordained as a lay practitioner (*dge bsnyen*) and received the name Nā ga rā dza (YÖ, f. 24b; see TD, p. 150).

1004 (Wood Male Dragon year):

On the 15th day of the Great Miracle (month), the above-mentioned lHa khang chen mo at Tho gling) was consecrated (YÖ, f. 16a; see TD, p. 139).⁷¹

It received the name Tho (mTho) gling Khang dmar dpe med lhun gyi (gyis) grub pa'i *gtsug lag khang*. A statue of the Great Lord of the Teachings (*bstan pa'i gtso che sku*) was built in the centre. From the Fire Monkey year (996) until the Wood Male Dragon year (1004), a full eight years, in each of the "Isles" (*gling*) murals and statues were made of the assembly of deities of the Vajradhātu *maṇḍala* and Dharmadhātu *maṇḍala* according to the Yoga Tantras (YÖ, f. 16b; see TD, p. 139).⁷²

1009 (Bird year):⁷³

At the age of twenty-six 'Od lde waged war on 'U then (Khotan) and brought it under his power.

In the same year, the Gar log and many other invading armies came (NR, f. 134b–f. 135a; see TG, p. 111).⁷⁴

of this father (although this is not supported by the available chronological evidence according to Dotson 2009: 26).

⁷¹ Later in the text, YÖ, f. 23b (see TD, p. 149) gives Fire Male Dragon year (1016) as the date for the consecration and inauguration celebration of the erection of the mTho gling lHa khang chen mo (*zhal spro bsgrubs*).

⁷² This account presents quite detailed information and seems to be fairly consistent in the dates, duration, content and finishing of works, which gives it a high degree of plausibility. The comparative account in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* is completely silent in this regard. It does not mention any other works, the original programme, statues, paintings, nor the consecration but immediately after the foundation works a renovation (Vitali reads *zhal sro* for *zhal sgo*) in Earth Male Dragon year (1028) is reported, followed by information obviously related to this (see Vitali 1996: 53, 109).

⁷³ This year is based on the calculated birth of 'Od lde in 983. See n. 57. Martin (2019: 204) takes the Sheep year for 'Od lde's birth as referring to 995 or 1007, and consequently the Bird year when this event is said to have taken place as referring to 1021 or 1033.

⁷⁴ Gar log seems to be a rendering of Qarluq (also Karluk, etc.), the name of a Türkic tribe. They can be identified as having belonged to the Qarakhanid dynasty, a political confederation which ruled the west of present-day Xinjiang from the 9th through the 13th centuries. After their conversion to Islam in 960, the Qarakhanids destroyed the Samanid dynasty in 1000 and before 1006 the Buddhist city-state of Khotan was besieged and conquered (Millward 2007: 50–55; see also Vitali, "Territory and trends in land control: The Byang thang 'Heartland' and the mNga' ris 'Periphery,'" this volume, pp. 12–13, and

1010:

'Od lde went to the place of 'U then (Khotan) again.⁷⁵

That same year, 'Od lde laid the foundation of a *gtsug lag khang* at Nyar ma (NR, f. 135a; see TG, p. 111) and after two years (1011), he established a community of monks (*dge 'dun gyi sde*) and a school for religious instruction (*chos grwa*).⁷⁶

1012 (Rat year):

In the third year,⁷⁷ 'Od lde went to Mar yul and built the temple of dPe dug (dPe thub) and founded a monastic community (NR, f. 135a; see TG, p. 111).⁷⁸

1016 (Fire Male Dragon year):

The mTho gling lHa khang chen mo was consecrated and its inauguration celebrated (*zhal spro bsgrubs*) (YÖ, f. 23b; see TD, p. 149).⁷⁹

At the age of twenty-nine, in a Dragon year (1016), Nā ga rā dza was fully ordained (YÖ, f. 24b; see TD, p. 150).

1019 (Earth Female Sheep year):

After having spread the teaching of the Buddha, etc. for thirty-one years⁸⁰ Ye shes 'od seemed to have passed away in his residence at Tholing (YÖ, f. 24a; see TD, p. 149).⁸¹

Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po, "A brief analysis of the reputed passing away of *lha bla ma* Ye shes 'od among the Gar log", this volume, p. 329). It cannot be excluded that the Gar log/Qarlug/Qarakhanid and other armies also went to the south of Khotan, which was not very far from the northern border area of the contemporary West Tibetan kingdom.

⁷⁵ The text has 'U then bzhi(r) the meaning of which is unclear. Reading *gzhi(r)* instead of *bzhi(r)*, thus (to the) place, is a possible solution. The year (1010) is calculated back from the account on the following years, up to a Rat year (1012, possibly also 1024 or even 1036 as suggested by Martin 2019: 204).

⁷⁶ As we do not assume that this foundation refers to the earliest *gtsug lag khang* built at Nyarma, this may well refer to one of the other nearby temples (see Jahoda, "Joseph Thsertan Gergan's *Report on Nyarma*, 1917"; Devers, "An archaeological account of Nyarma and its surroundings, Ladakh"; Feiglstorfer, "On the architecture of the Buddhist temple complex of Nyarma", and Kalantari, "Note on the spatial iconography of the Nyarma *gtsug lag khang* in context").

⁷⁷ The text has *sum pa byi' ba'i lo la*, which may refer to the third year (*gsum pa*) or to the year when he was thirty (continuing the way of relating events to his age).

⁷⁸ dPe dug (dPe thub) is identical with the modern Spituk monastery in Ladakh. In Martin's reading the Rat year of the foundation of this temple corresponds to 1024 or 1036 (Martin 2019: 204).

⁷⁹ It is unclear whether this refers to a later extension or renovation (see also n. 70) or represents a textual inconsistency.

⁸⁰ Obviously counting from the year of his ordination in 989.

⁸¹ The offering of twenty-one minor domains (*yul chung*) by the Great Superior One (*bla chen po*) lHa lde and the Great Superior One (*bla chen po*)

1023 (Water Female Pig year):

After De ba rā dza had been ordained (in 996), twenty-eight years passed (when) in the Water Female Pig (*chu mo phag*) year his father *lha bla ma* Ye shes 'od passed away (YÖ, f. 24b; see TD, p. 150).⁸²

1027 (Rabbit year):

After that (the passing away of his father *lha bla ma* Ye shes 'od), having like his father protected the teaching (of the Buddha) for another five years, De ba rā dza passed away in Rabbit year (1027) (YÖ, f. 24b; see TD, p. 150).

1027 (Rabbit year) – 1030:

Nā ga rā dza protected the teaching for four full years after having been fully ordained for full eleven years, following the passing away of this elder brother (in 1027) (YÖ, f. 24b; see TD, p. 150).

1037 (1031?):

Passing away of 'Od lde.⁸³

1042:

At the age of fifty-five, Nā ga rā dza (passed away in a mountain place (YÖ, f. 24b; see TD, p. 150).

the Bodhisattva Ye shes 'od to Rin chen bzang po mentioned in *Rin chen bzang po rnam thar*, f. 34a2–34b2 may have taken place prior to Ye shes 'od's passing away but clearly with the aim to dedicate them for worship following his passing away. The passage in YÖ (f. 24a; see TD, p. 149f.) seems to convey the notion (presumably in agreement with his bodhisattva status) that he continued to work for the benefit of others after he had seemingly left his bodily existence. I want to thank Tsering Drongshar for a discussion of this question.

⁸² For the following narrative of main activities in the lives of the two sons of Ye shes 'od a similar account, with partly identical sentences, is found in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* (Vitali 1996: 60, 114). The essential difference is that in *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* no specific dates are given, only the time-span in terms of years passed since earlier events, such as that De ba rā dza protected the teachings for twenty-eight years after this ordination (before he must have passed away according to Vitali's conclusion in 1023), and that Nā ga rā dza did so for four years after his elder brother had passed away (leading to Vitali's conclusion that he died in 1027).

⁸³ The date of 'Od lde's passing away was calculated by Vitali (1996: 117, 180) on the basis of *mNga' ris rgyal rabs* and other sources with reference to Nag tsho lo tsā ba and the order by Byang chub 'od given to rGya brTson 'grus seng ge to invite Atiśa. The information given by Gu ge Tshe ring rgyal po indicates such an invitation extended to Atiśa by rGya brTson 'grus seng ge already in 1031, thus suggesting perhaps an earlier terminus ante quem for 'Od lde's passing away (see also NR, p. 112).

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