

PART 1

Description of the texts

Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya

The manuscript *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya* (MS199) was found in the Eugen Pander Tibetan Collection kept at the Jagiellonian Library, Cracow, with the accession number “Pander A 199: acc. 1889. 535, Tib. man. 36 l”. Details about the Eugen Pander Tibetan collection kept at the Jagiellonian Library can be found in the book *A Preliminary Report on the Wanli Kanjur Kept in the Jagiellonian Library, Krakow*. Also, the text is recorded in detail in the monograph *Catalogue of the Tibetan Texts in the Pander Collection, Part A (Complete) and Part B (Partial)* held by the Jagiellonian Library, Cracow.³ The text *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya* contains thirty-seven folios; however, the first folio is missing, so we cannot ascertain the exact title of the text. The manuscript is written in *Dbu med Tshug ma khyug* script, and with the exception of the second folio and one side of the tenth folio, each side of the folio has six lines. In the text, two names are written in red ink: the name of the author's grandfather Mtsho skyes rdo rje (on folio 27b.) and the name of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on folio 29a. Probably the author wanted to stress the importance of these two people in his life or in the history of Tibet. Furthermore, we see some differences in the paper and handwriting between the folios up to folio 19 and the later part of the text. The text is well preserved and, amazingly, in very good condition.

The whole text, except for the colophon, is composed in verses with beautiful poetic language. It contains 450 ślokas with different numbers of syllables and metres. Among them, the first four ślokas are dedicated to paying homage (*mchod par brjod pa*) to individuals: paying homage to the deity Mañjuśrī, the goddess Sarasvatī, and his father, each with a śloka. The first two ślokas, paying homage to the deity Kālacakra and to Mañjuśrī, are composed with nineteen syllables; those paying homage to goddess Sarasvatī and his father consist of fifteen and thirteen syllables, respectively. The next three ślokas are promises to compose (*rtsom par dam bca'*). They are composed in seven and nine syllabic verses. In the commitment for composition (*rtsom pa dam bca'*), the author states that

³ Chashab and Majkowski, 2015: p. 140.

his present work covers three great fields of science (Tibetan poetry, rhetoric and synonyms); it is without any grammatical errors. Furthermore, he says that he is confident in writing not only by learning in this life, but also through experience in previous lives, and the author says that he is not sure if this piece of work benefits his land.

A major part of the text – or to put it another way, the body of the text – is written in nine syllabic verses; in total there are 389 ślokas. The remaining 54 ślokas, without counting the verses for paying homage and promises to compose, are composed with different numbers of syllables and metres. Among them we can find verses with 7, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23, 25, 29, 43, and 85 syllables. In total, adding the seven ślokas that pay homage and promise to compose to the 54 ślokas with different syllabic metres plus the 389 ślokas with nine syllabic verses, we have in total 450 ślokas in the text.

It is important to let readers know about the two other existing copies of the text *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya*, which were used during my work. The first incomplete text of *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya* in printed version (henceforth BP1) is found in *Gangs ljongs mkhas dbang rim byon gyi rtsom yig gser gyi sbram bu* (GKLS), and the second complete text of *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya* (henceforth MSLT) is a scanned copy of a Bhutanese manuscript kept at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives. GKLS is a compilation of writings of Tibetan scholars in three volumes, printed in Xining, China in 1988, and Ngag dbang 'jig grags is one of the authors mentioned in the book, with his short biography along with two of his works: a biography of Sa skya Paṇḍita and an incomplete *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya*, as mentioned above. The Bhutanese manuscript (MSLT) was reproduced as a scanned copy by the Library of Tibetan Works and Archive (LTWA), Dharamsala in 1974, with the help of the Bhutanese education adviser Slob dpon Gnag mdog. The same scanned copy of the manuscript is also preserved in the Buddhist Digital Resource Centre (BDRC). The title of the text found in all copies differs, and the titles of the two copies mentioned above are given below as footnotes.⁴ Furthermore, in the handwritten list of the Pander Tibetan Collection kept in the *Staatsbibliothek* the text has been recorded under the title *Rigs kyi thig le zab mo*, (*Profound Essence of Knowledge*). In all three records, not only do the titles vary, but they also do not reveal with a single word that the text contains a guide to Śambhala. In GKLS, although a colophon is missing, exactly the same date of composition is given as the one we find in the text I am dealing with and a *Dbu med* manuscript of the same text found in Bhutan. Therefore, the question arises: What was the original manuscript on which the printed version is based and prepared? And from where did the editor of the above-mentioned book obtain the information on the year of its composition?

⁴ MSLT: *Rang gi yab rje rigs ldan chos kyi rgyal po ngag dbang rnam par rgyal ba la zhu 'phrin du bya ba rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya zhes bya ba bzhugs so//.*

BP1: *Chos kyi rgyal po ngag dbang rnam rgyal la phul ba'i zhu 'phrin rigs 'dzin pho nya//.*

The reliability and authenticity of the three texts are described in Part 4; one may check these by analysing comparative footnotes provided under the Tibetan text. In brief, I think, by all means the manuscript kept at the Jagiellonian Library is orthographically more reliable than the other two. There is also the question of whether the manuscript kept at the Jagiellonian Library is a copy or whether it is a manuscript that was written at the time of the author Ngag dbang 'jig grags, or perhaps even by him.

Despite having the same contents, the two above-mentioned manuscripts found in Cracow and the scanned copy from LTWA differ in the number of the text lines in the folios, the size of the folios and the style of the calligraphy and paper. Having inquired about the paper differences between the two texts with the oriental paper specialist Agnieszka Helman-Ważny, I was told that at first glance the manuscript kept at the Jagiellonian Library is possibly Bhutanese paper and the one in Bhutan is written on Chinese paper.

Ngag dbang 'jig grags, the author of the text

The author, Ngag dbang 'jig rten dbang phyug grags pa rdo rje⁵ (henceforth Ngag dbang 'jig grags), the last ruler of Rin spungs pa in Central Tibet, was the son of Rin spungs ngag dbang rnam rgyal and grandson of Mtsho skyes rdo rje. The author of this text, Ngag dbang 'jig grags, made several valuable contributions to Tibetan literary culture, mainly in the field of Tibetan poetry. The works attributed to him are, according to GKLS: a biography of Sa skya Paṇḍita, called *Bskal bzang legs lam*, (*An Excellent Path of the Fortunate One*)⁶, written in the Earth Rabbit year 1519; a commentary on synonyms, called *Mngon brjod mkhas pa'i rna rgyan*⁷, (*An Ear Ornament of a Scholar*), written in Khyu mchog, in the Iron Snake year 1521; a commentary on Daṇḍin's Kāvyaḍarśa (*snyan ngag me long*), called *Mi 'jigs seng ge'i nga ro*, (*Fearless Roar of a Lion*), written in the Fire Dog year 1526; and the letter to his father, *Chos kyi rgyal po ngag dbang rnam par rgyal ba la zhu 'phrin du bya ba rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya zhes pa shambha la'i lam gyi yi ge dang bcas pa*, (*A Letter to the Father, Dharma King Ngag dbang rnam rgyal, called Vidyadhara – The Messenger, Including a Guide Letter to Shambhala*), written in the Fire Snake year 1557. In the catalogue of BDRC we can find one more book of collected poems by Ngag dbang 'jig grags in the form of a manuscript written in *Dbu med Tshug ma khyug* script. It consists of 17 folios; the BDRC cataloguing ID is W1CZ2743.

⁵ In the catalogue of LTWA and BDRC the name of the author is written “Ngag dbang 'jigs med grags pa”, which is different from what we find in the colophon of the text *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya*.

⁶ The work consists of 12 chapters, but in GKLS we have only nine chapters, the last three chapters are missing.

⁷ We can find this text in the Cracow Pander collection under the serial number Pander A 332, acc. 1889. 668. I must apologize that by mistake in the catalogue of Pander Tibetan collection prepared by friend Filip Majkowski and me, instead of “mkhas pa'i rna rgyan” it is written “mkhas pa'i kha rgyan”.

The collection is registered under the author's name Ngag dbang 'jig med grags pa, but from the title on the cover folio of the text we learn that it is by Ngag dbang 'jig grags. Most of the Tibetan history books fail to mention his works on either the synonyms or the letter to his father as well as his work mentioned above.

We are certain that his talent and passion for traditional Tibetan poetry were enormous. He has been adorned with the name *rgyal po paṇḍita*, i.e. “the king paṇḍita” by many historians. Also, commentators of *Bodhisattvâvadānakalpalatā*, A mes zhabs Ngag dbang kun dga' bsod nams (1597–1659/60) and the Fifth Ra sgrenḡ 'Jam dpal ye shes bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1912–1947) praised and mentioned Ngag dbang 'jig grags in the colophon of their commentaries. First, A mes zhabs says, “Ornamented with summarized excellent explanation of the great Ngag dbang of Rin spungs, known as the second Dge dbang (Kṣemendra) on this tradition,”⁸ and secondly Ra sgrenḡ 'Jam dpal ye shes bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan says in the colophon, “The Fifth Dalai Lama consulted his commentary in Sanskrit and in Tibetan languages with reliable texts of chieftain of Rin spungs.”⁹ Hence, the first colophon information by A mes zhabs gives us the impression that Ngag dbang 'jig grags had also written a short commentary on *Avadānakalpalatā* or a text related to it, and from the second colophon we can learn that Ngag dbang 'jig grags had at his disposal many reliable original text materials written in Tibetan and Sanskrit.

According to the colophon of the text *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya*, it was completed in the third month (*'dod pa'i zla ba nag pa can*) of the Fire Snake year, which corresponds to 1557 CE, and it was the last literary work of Ngag dbang 'jig grags. Information regarding the author's date of birth and his death found in different sources seems to be speculation rather than confirmed facts. In this work as well, the author does not tell us the date of his birth, and we can only estimate by comparing other sources that he was born at the very end of the 15th century or at the beginning of the 16th century. Electronic sources are not always reliable; however, Wikipedia gives 1565 CE as the date of his death but does not give his date of birth.¹⁰ However, in the book *Dpal karma pa sku phreng rim byon gyi mdzad rnam* it is said that in the year 1566 CE (*Me stag*) Ngag dbang 'jig grags invited the eleven-year-old ninth Karma pa Dbang phyug rdo rje with the fifth Zha dmar ma pa Kun mchog yan lag to the Rin spungs fort (BDRC, W18133, vol. 1, p. 171). But the book *Bka' brgyud gser phreng rnam thar Zla ba chu shel gyi phreng ba* informs us that it happened in 1567 CE (*Yos lo*), one year later than mentioned above (*Bka' brgyud gser phreng*, vol. 2, p. 418). The offerings he made at that time for two lamas are recored in detail in his seventeen-folio poem mentioned above (BDRC, W1CZ2743). A short biography of the author in GKLS provides the year 1482 as his date of birth and further explains that there is no

⁸ <http://sakyalibrary.com/Assets/files/AMAI057: ལྷུལ་བའི་རྫོགས་བརྗོད་དཔག་བསམ་འཁྲིལ་གི་རྫོན་འབྲེལ་.pdf>, p. 237, l.18.

⁹ Ra sgrenḡs Ho thog thu Thub bstan 'jam dpal ye shes bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 2008: p. 407.

¹⁰ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rinpungpa>

document that precisely dates his death. Moreover, the text says that, according to the Fifth Dalai Lama's History of Tibet, he lost almost all power at the end of his life at the hand of Zhing shag pa in 1565.¹¹ Thus, the author of the short biography of Ngag dbang 'jig grags in GKLS gives the impression that he believes that Ngag dbang 'jig grags's date of death was 1565 or thereabouts. In the History of Tibet by the Fifth Dalai Lama, *Dpyid kyi rgyal mo'i glu dbyangs*, with an annotation given by Nor brang dbu rgyan, there is no mention of the death of Ngag dbang 'jigs grags at all, neither in the main text nor in the annotation. However, Nor brang O rgyan annotates:¹²

ས་སྐུ་བ་དང་བྱང་བ་དག་མ་མཐུན་པའི་སྐབས་ཉེ་ཆུ་མག་སྤྱི་ལོ་ ༡༥༦༣ ལོར་ས་སྐུའི་དབྱང་རྒྱལ་ཏུ་རེན་སྐྱབས་
 དག་དབང་འཛིག་གྲགས་དབྱང་བཅས་མེབས་པ་དེའི་ཆེ་སྐབས་དེའི་བསམ་བློ་ཚེའི་རྫོང་དཔོན་ཞིང་གཞག་ཆེ་
 བརྟན་རྫོ་རྗེ་འདི་བས་འབངས་གྲུན་ལོག་བྱས་སྐབས་དག་དབང་འཛིག་གྲགས་ཀྱི་སྐས་བསྐྱོད་ཀྱི་བཞུང་ས་
 བའི་གཏམ་བྱུང་བ།།

In 1563, when Sakya pa and Byang pa were in conflict, Rin spungs Ngag dbang 'jig grags with his army went to the battle in support of Sakya pa. He heard the news of the assassination of his son Padma dkar po during an uprising of Zhing gzhag pa Tshe brtan rdo rje, head of the Bsam grub rtse district.

It confirms the fact that Ngag dbang 'jig grags's date of death cannot be earlier than 1563. In the BDRC we can find different information. There, 1482/1542 is given as the date of his birth and 1595 as the date of his death. Dimitrov gives the year 1542 as Ngag dbang 'jig grags' date of birth and 1645 as his date of death.¹³ Based on the date of composition of the text *Rig pa 'dzin pa'i pho nya* found in its colophon, his date of birth in the middle of the 16th century is not possible.

Kingdom of Rin spungs and Rin spungs pa rulers

Rin spungs palace and the Rin spungs district fort (*Rin spungs rdzong*), one of the most magnificent district forts of its kind, is located in Gtsang, Central Tibet. After the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1950 at the time when Mao's Cultural Revolution (1967–1976) penetrated into Tibet, it was destroyed and wiped out completely. Therefore, sadly, the Rin spungs fort does not stand anymore in Rin spungs, as evidence of Tibet's history. The name Rin spungs pa was given to the Sger clan after appointing Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan to the post of district governor of Rin spungs at the end of the 14th or the beginning of the 15th century. The term "Rin spungs" in Tibetan means "pile of jewels". The place Rin spungs and the

¹¹ Nor brang O rgyan (ed.), 1993: p. 410, l.10.

¹² Ibid.: p. 410.

¹³ Dimitrov, 2002: p. 391.

hill on which the Rin spungs fort was built are a similar shape to a pile of jewels; therefore, the place was called Rin spungs. The Rin spungs district is located in between the Lho kha district in the east, Rgyal rtse district in the south, Gzhis rtse district in the west and Rnam gling district in the north in Gtsang. Before Si tu byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1364) came into power in Central Tibet, the place Rin spungs was a single *gzhis ka* (estate). Later, during the reign of Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan, he rearranged the administrative area and created 13 districts. Rin spungs was one of them.¹⁴ We do not know whether the Rin spungs pa family lived in that area from the beginnings of their clan history or after Rin spungs pa Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan became the governor of the district.

In this part, I focus on analysing the points on Rin spungs pa that are unclear or the points on which historians do not agree, and unless it is necessary, I try not to repeat what has already been said by other historical sources. Furthermore, here I have often consulted *Rin spungs gdung rabs* by A 'bum, which seems to have been neglected by Tibetan historians. Unfortunately, according to my knowledge, the dates of birth and death of A 'bum, the author of *Rin spungs gdung rabs*, are as yet unknown.

Rin spungs pas were the descendant of one of the three Sger clans: Phyi sger, Nang sger and Grub sger, and they belonged to Nang sger. Tibetan history books recount briefly the history of the Sger clan from the time of Po te gung rgyal,¹⁵ son of Gri gum btsan po, in the 1st century BCE. A 'bum says that during the reign of Srong btsan sgam po descendants of Sger clan Ral pa can worked in his court. Zla ba rgyal mtshan of Sger also held a political role in the court of King Khri srong sde bstan,¹⁶ but we do not find this information in A 'bum's work. Before Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, who was appointed governor of Rin spungs district, his ancestors, Bkra shis mgon po, Shakya dpal and Shakya rgyal mtshan already had tutor-disciple relations with Spyan snga pa¹⁷ and worked as a liaison (*sna len pa*) for Hor, Sa skya and Sne sdong.¹⁸ According to the account of A 'bum, one of the two Si tus of Phag gru, either Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan or the second throne-holder Si tu Gu shri Shakya rgyal mtshan (1340-1374), probably the first Si tu, when he reorganized the thirteen districts in Central Tibet, granted the Rin spungs district to Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. The account says:

ནས་མཁའ་རྒྱལ་མཚན་པས་གུ་ཤི་ནང་ཚོན་མཛད་པའི་ངོས་ནས་ཉའི་མི་ཏུས་བཀའ་གནང་། ལོ་རྒྱུ་བཟང་པོའི་
 ཉེར་གཅིག་ལ་གཞིས་ཀ་རིན་ཆེན་སྤངས་པའི་རྫོང་དཔོན་ལ་བསྐོས་བཞག་གནང་། དེའི་རྗེས་གཙང་ཆུ་མིག་གི་ཆེན་
 པོ་མཛད་པས་ཆེན་པོ་ནས་མཁའ་རྒྱལ་མཚན་དུ་གྲགས་པ་དེ་ནས་བྱུང་།

¹⁴ Rag ra Ngag dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1990: p. 233.

¹⁵ A 'bum, 1990: fol. 125. Histories of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Bdud 'jom rin po che claim that it was from the time of Sha khri btsan po; Rag ra on the other hand states it was from the time of Nya khri btsan po. Whatever the case, Sha khri and Nya khri were brothers.

¹⁶ Bdud 'joms rin po che 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, 1978: p. 355.

¹⁷ Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las, 2009: p. 1299.

¹⁸ A 'bum, 1990: fol. 127.

Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, while being the home minister of Gu shri, was ordered by Si tu. On the twenty-first [day] of the prosperous month and year he was appointed district governor of the Rin spungs estate. Later he made Gtsang Chu mig chen po¹⁹ [offering, and] because of that he was known as the great Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan.

Contrary to the above statement by A 'bum, in the history book of the Fifth Dalai Lama annotated by Nor brang O rgyan, Rag ra Ngag dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan and Shakabpa explain that Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan was granted the Rin spungs district by the Fifth Phag gru throne-holder Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1374–1432).²⁰ Furthermore, Shakabpa affirms that it happened in 1408.²¹ Also, except for A 'bum, all other Tibetan historians claim that Phag gru Grags pa rgyal mtshan granted a lifelong authority to rule the district to the district governor, as well as authority to confer the power to the governor's descendants.²² Closer to the statement of A 'bum, yet not exactly the same, Czaja states that Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan served as home minister of Phag gru 'Jam dbyangs Si tu Shakya rgyal mtshan.²³ Therefore, it is not certain which Phag gru sde srid granted the Rin spungs district to Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan. Nevertheless, A 'bum stated that Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan also worked for Gong ma grags pa rgyal mtshan²⁴ and passed away at the age of forty-seven.

A son of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Nam mkha' rgyal po, was appointed governor of Rin spungs at the age of fifteen. Nor bu bzang po (1403–1469?), son of Nam mkha' rgyal po and grandson of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, took power of Rin spungs at the age of twelve (1414 or 1415), and worked with and became an important minister of Gong ma Grags pa rgyal mtshan, the Fifth Phag gru throne holder (1385–1432).

In the above quotation of A 'bum we can see two titles, Gu shri and Ta'i si tu, referring to two important persons in the history of Tibet in that period of time without, however, knowing their proper names. A 'bum was not precise and left us speculating about the identity of those two personalities. The title “Gu shri” means “National Preceptor” and was accorded to Sa skya pa lamas and lamas of Karma bka' brgyud school by the Mongol Yuan emperor of China and the Ming Chinese emperor.²⁵ Moreover, at the beginning of the 17th century Khal kha king and his ministers bestowed the Gu shri title to Bstan 'dzin chos rgyal (1582–1654), and Khal kha rje btsun dam pa in the 18th century also gave a title Gu shri to a Mongol monk Blo bzang chos 'phel (1760?).²⁶ The encyclopaedic dictionary of Dung dkar

¹⁹ Ibid.: fol. 128, l.1.

²⁰ Nor brang O rgyan (ed.), 1993: p. 380. Rag ra Ngag dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1990: p. 241.

²¹ Shakabpa, 1976: p. 351.

²² Nor brang O rgyan (ed.), 1993: p. 379, l.5. Rag ra Ngag dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1990: p. 237.

²³ Czaja, 2013: p. 213, l.5.

²⁴ A 'bum, 1990: fol. 128.

²⁵ Dung dkar blo bzang 'phrin las, 2002: pp. 504–506.

²⁶ Ibid.: pp. 502–506.

blo bzang 'phrin las explains that at the end of the 14th century, presumably at the same time as Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, Sa skya pa Kun dga' legs pa'i blo gros (1357–1384), as well as the second and fourth throne holders of Phag gru, Shakya rgyal mtshan in 1365 and Bsod nams grags pa [ruled from 1381 to 1385] in 1388 received the title Gu shri from the Yuan emperor. Information about when exactly Sa skya pa Kun dga' legs pa was awarded with this title is not provided in the *Dung dkar's* dictionary.

The title Si tu means “local headman”, and it was awarded by the Ming Chinese emperor to Tibetan local leaders. An article on conferment of the title of Si tu was written by the late Elliot Sperling.²⁷ According to the sources, among the Phag gru rulers, the First Phag gru sde srid Byang chub rgyal mtshan held the title Si tu, and the second throne-holder Shakya rgyal mtshan (1340–1373), who ruled from 1364 to 1373, also had the title Si tu.²⁸ From whom Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan received the title is unclear. No lamas of the Sa skya pa family held the Si tu title; therefore, I suppose the holders of the two titles Si tu and Gu shri mentioned by A 'bum should be assigned to one of the Phag gru sde srid as Si tu, and Gu shri to a lama of the Sa skya pa family. Secondly, although all the Tibetan historians agree that Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan served as the head of the Great Temple of Sa skya (*Sa skya lha khang chen mo*), A 'bum disagrees with them regarding one aspect: the person who appointed him to that position. Bdud 'joms rin po che did not make any remarks on this,²⁹ and of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Shakabpa, and Nor brang O rgyan in his annotation, all three explain that Phag gru Grags pa rgyal mtshan was the one who appointed him to that post.³⁰ Contrary to that statement, A 'bum clearly states that Gu shri was the one who appointed Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan to that post³¹ and that Gu shri should be one of the Sa skya lamas, it seems. Thus, as far as the sources I have dealt with are concerned, none of them certifies that Grags pa rgyal mtshan held the title of Gu shri. Also, during the reign of Grags pa rgyal mtshan Phag gru, power in Central Tibet was in decline, and Nor bu bzang po, a grandson of Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan, was one of the most influential ministers in his court. Rag ra Ngag dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan does not specifically mention his work at the Great Temple of Sa skya.³²

According to Bdud 'joms rin po che, the rule of Phag gru in Central Tibet ended in 1435.³³ It was the time when Phag gru Grags pa rgyal mtshan died and Grags pa 'byung gnas (1414–1445) was enthroned on Sne sdong rtse by ministers of the Phag gru court in consultation with Spyan snga pa. Grags pa 'byungs's father,

²⁷ Sperling, 2000: pp. 23–27.

²⁸ Phun tshogs tshe ring, 1987: p. 110. Czaja, 2013: p. 197.

²⁹ Bdud 'joms rin po che 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, 1978: p. 355.

³⁰ Nor brang O rgyan (ed.), 1993: p. 403. Shakabpa, 1976: p. 351.

³¹ A 'bum, 1990: fol. 128.

³² Rag ra Ngag dbang bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan, 1990: p. 241.

³³ Bdud 'joms rin po che 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, 1978: p. 354, 1.9.

Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan, was not successful in fulfilling his dream to ascend to the Phag gru throne, and it caused the first family conflict between the Phag gru father and son. That was the beginning of the decline of Phag gru power in Central Tibet. Rin spungs Nor bu bzang po, a minister at the Phag gru court, seizing the opportunity, expanded his power and influence in Central Tibet. Therefore, it is believed by Tibetan historians that, after Phag gru, Central Tibet was ruled by Rin spungs pas. However, except for Bdud 'joms rin po che, none of the other Tibetan historians give the duration of Rin spungs rule in Central Tibet. Bdud 'joms rin po che believes that Rin spungs pas ruled Central Tibet from 1435 to 1565, from the time of Rin spungs Nor bu bzang po until the last Rin spungs ruler Ngag dbang 'jig grags, but no Tibetan records tell us whether any of the Rin spungs pa rulers, from Nam mkha' rgyal mtshan to Ngag dbang 'jig grags, held any title accorded by the Ming emperor. In those days Phag gru sde srids were conferred with the title “Wang” by the Ming emperor,³⁴ but it seems that at the end of the 15th and during the 16th century Phag gru sde srids were rulers merely in name, without proper power. From this example we may judge the influence of the Ming court in Tibetan politics and the effectiveness of the titles bestowed by the Ming emperors on Tibetan rulers. The relations between the Ming dynasty and Tibetan lamas at that time were merely a priest-patron relationship.³⁵

Phun tshogs tshe ring, in his book *Bod kyi lo rgyus don chen re'u mig*, also skipped Rin spungs pas when talking about Tibetan rulers.³⁶ We can find a similar kind of treatment in Panchen Bsod nams grags pa's (1478–1554) history book, titled *Deb ther dmar po gсар ma*. In this work, the author explained the reigns of Sa kya pa, Phag gru ba and Rin spungs pa under the title “Bod du rgya hor gyi lung byung tshul skor, (How Mongolian and Chinese Order Appear in Tibet)”, although the author lived in the era of Phag gru ba and Rin spungs pa rulers. This shows, at least to me, that Panchen was under the strong influence of the Mongols or the Ming dynasty of China. Under the title “Tibetan History”, the author only described early Tibetan empires of the 7th and 8th centuries. The historical book *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi 'phreng ba* by Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs explained the reigns of Phag gru ba and Gtsang pa sde srid but did not mention the Rin spungs pa rulers who supposedly ruled Central Tibet between the two mentioned Phag gru ba and Gtsang pa rulers in the 15th and 16th centuries. The author devoted only a few lines to two or three Rin spungs pa rulers. Were there political reasons for Chab spel to refrain from writing about Rin spungs?

The third chapter, “The Religious History of Tibet” in *Chos byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* by Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba (1504–1564/66), describes only the ancient history of Tibet up to the time of the two sons of Glang dar ma and the

³⁴ Nor brang O rgyan (ed.), 1993: pp. 378–392.

³⁵ Bayer, Dziak, 2015: pp. 167–194. Smith, 1997: pp. 10–105.

³⁶ Phun tshogs tshe ring, 1987: pp. 110–113.

disintegration of the Tibetan empire, conflict and repressions inflicted on Buddhist practitioners, as well as the renovation of the Ra sa 'phrul snang temple. Although the author was a contemporary to Rin spungs Ngag dbang 'jig grags, he did not write in much detail about political activities or about the power of Sa skya pa, Phag gru or Rin spungs pa in this chapter. Despite the lack of information on the rule of Sa skya pas and subsequent Tibetan rulers, the author stated that the damage and misuse of religion at the time of the disintegration of the Tibetan empire³⁷ was worse than at the time of Glang dar ma, the last royal dynasty of the Tibetan empire, who destroyed the Buddhism that was once well-established by his ancestors in Tibet.³⁸ Moreover, Gtsug lag phreng ba gives us to understand in general that the political conflict and war fought by monks was immense in the 16th century, when he lived and the monasteries became like military garrisons. While the author talks about the Tshal pa bka' rgyud tradition and the lineage of Zhang rin po che, he says that before the Sa skya pa came into power in Central Tibet, the Tshal pa chieftains unofficially controlled Central Tibet (*dbus* and *gtsang*) like parents for nearly 140 years. It says:³⁹

དཔོན་ཆེན་དང་མ་གཞིན་ཏུ་ནས་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་ཚབ་ལུགས་གཉིས་ཀྱི་བདག་པོར་བསྐྱོས་པའི་ཉེ་གནས་ཆེན་མོ་ལ་
 རིམ་པར་འབྲུགས་⁴⁰པ་ལས་ཚལ་དཔོན་སངས་རྒྱས་དངོས་གྲུབ་བྱིན་ལློན་པོ་མགར་ཀྱི་རྒྱུད་ལ་འབྲུགས་པའི་ཚལ་
 པའི་དཔོན་ཆེན་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་ལོ་བརྒྱ་དང་བཞི་བརྒྱར་ཉེ་བར་དབྱུས་གཙང་གི་བདག་པོ་དང་འདྲ་བའི་སྐྱེ་དབང་གིས་
 ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་བ་མ་ལྷར་བྱམས་པས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་དུང་།

After the great chieftain Dar ma gzhon nu, as his [Zhang rin po che's] successor, holder of two traditions [secular and religious], [he] appointed his own great servant (*nye gnas*) and subsequently [power] was inherited by the chieftain of Tshal pa, Sangs rgyas dngos grub. Later power was inherited by a descendant of minister Mgar⁴¹ and Tshal pa chieftains unofficially, with a power similar to that of the owner of Dbus and Gtsang, who like parents took care [of the area] for nearly a hundred and forty years.

We can learn from the above quotation that the Tshal pa bka' rgyud pa chiefs were the most powerful group of people before the Mongols put Sa skya pas in the position of power over Central Tibet.

Ngag dbang 'jig grags was probably the eighth and last Rin spungs pa ruler. However, we can find different information regarding Rin spungs rulers who ascended the Rin spungs throne. If one counts carefully, some sources tell us of seven generations and some refer to four generations of the Sger clan of Rin spungs pa, who ascended the Rin spungs throne and ruled in Central Tibet. When we analyse the work of A 'bum and the history of the Fifth Dalai Lama, it seems

³⁷ Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba, 1986: pp. 439–441.

³⁸ Ibid.: pp. 425–428.

³⁹ Ibid.: pp. 810–811.

⁴⁰ I understood the word “byags” as “jags.”

⁴¹ Minister of Srong btsan sgam po.