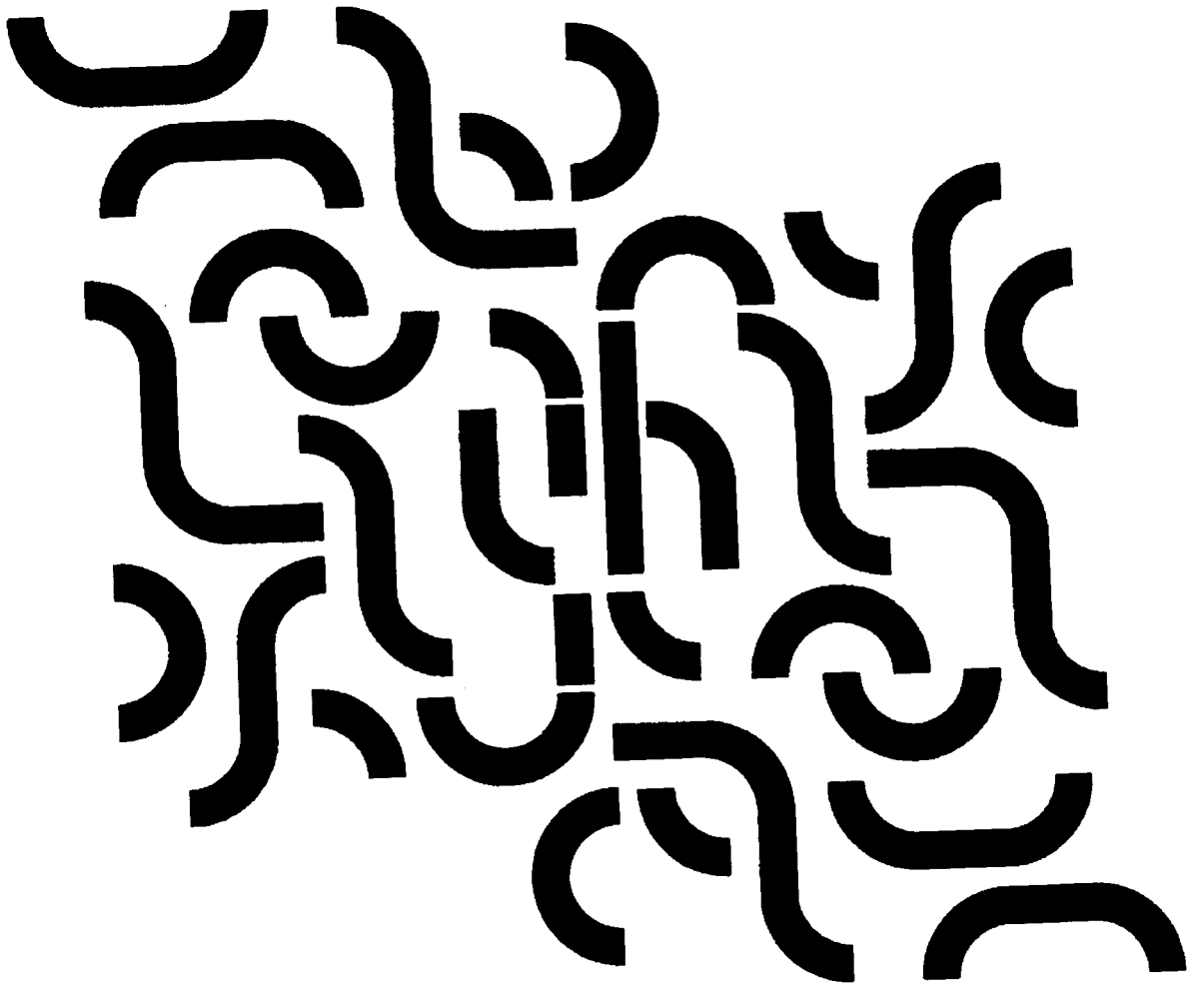


Puchung Tsering

**The History of Zha lu Monastery, Ri sbug Hermitage
and rGyan gong Temple**



Tibet People's Publishing House

0011
.Z952
Z358
2017

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

夏鲁寺历史文化研究:英文/普穷次仁著. —拉萨:西藏人民出版社,2017.11
ISBN 978-7-223-05715-8

I. ①夏… II. ①普… III. ①喇嘛宗—寺庙—历史—文化研究—日喀则地区—英文 IV. ①B947.275.4

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2017)第 240426 号

夏鲁寺历史文化研究

编 著	普穷次仁
责任编辑	桑杰加
责任印制	扎西桑珠
封面设计	格桑罗布
出版发行	西藏人民出版社(拉萨市林廓北路 20 号)
印 刷	西藏新华印刷厂
开 本	890×1240 1/16
印 张	22
字 数	150 千
版 次	2017 年 11 月第 1 版
印 次	2017 年 11 月第 1 次印刷
印 数	01-1,000
书 号	ISBN 978-7-223-05715-8
定 价	32.00 元

版权所有 翻印必究

རྒྱལ་ཁབ་རིམ་པའི་གཙོ་གནད་རིག་ཚན།
ཕོད་སྐད་ཡིག་རྩམ་རིག་རིག་ཚན་དཔེ་ཚོགས་རྩམ་སྒྲིག་ལྷན་ཁྲུང་ལང།
中西部高校提升综合实力专项：
国家级重点学科——藏语言文学学科系类专著

འགན་འཛིན་པ། ལྷག་པ་ཚེ་བརྟན།
负责人：拉巴次旦

ཁོངས་མི། འཕམ་མན་རླབ་ཚེ་རིང་། ཅུད་རླབ་ཚུང་། འཚིམེད། རླབ་ཚེ་རིང་། ཉི་བཟླ་། ཚེད་བང་ནམ་རྒྱལ།
སྐལ་བཟང་དགེ་འདུན། བཟ་ཤིས་ལུན་ཚོགས། ལྷ་རྒྱན་རྒྱལ་མཚན།
成员：小侠·达娃次仁 堆拉·普琼 其米 达瓦次仁 尼旦 次旺南木加
格桑更堆 扎西平措 伍金加参

Homage and Thesis Statement

You accomplished perfect enlightenment countless eons ago, yet by taking the form of a Bodhisattva, a son of the victorious ones,
And by displaying various miraculous actions, such as the countable number of the Twelve Deeds,
You dispelled the darkness of ignorance of countless beings and skillfully showed them the excellent path to maturation and liberation,
May the son of Śuddhodana, the leader of countless *devas* and human beings, grant me auspiciousness!

The rain-laden clouds of your compassion are clumping together at the center of the vast sky of your body,
Whenever needed, you have brought down the timely rain of wisdom and loving kindness over the miserable beings of the earth,
You have skillfully nurtured the crops of the teaching and beings through miraculous deeds whichever is suitable to the needs of each of us,
I will place the one who is holding the lotus flower in his hands on top of my crown throughout all my lives.

You raised the victorious banner of the secular and religious affairs of the Tibetan people, as high as Mount Sumeru,
Your outstanding deeds of translating Buddha's teaching and its commentaries even surpassed the boundary of the beautiful maiden earth,
The three ancestral fathers, whose order and law were justice, and the kind and generous translators and *paṇḍitas* of India and Tibet,
I cannot stop my yearning for your kindness, therefore, please accept this praising eulogy as a cloud of offering.

You are unparalleled in upholding the Buddha's teaching, the sole source of all happiness and benefits of the sentient beings;
You are adorned with the ornament of the three trainings, the essence of the teachings, and with the three types of saffron colored dharma robes,
Bu ston, the father, and his spiritual sons, the imperial uncles, and the successive throne-holders are genuine supporters of the teachings and sentient beings,
May the glorious Zha lu, whose monastic community is harmonious, flourish in all directions and for perpetuity!

The Golden Temple of the Glorious Zha lu, which integrates all the holy dharmas on the earth into one,
Is like an ornament beautifying the golden valley of Lower Myang River in the medicinal land of *Sal* trees.
Zha lu's fame in the three realms is like the amazingly unprecedented sound of the Dundubhi drum,
In order to please the learned beings on the earth, hereby, I will beat it with the drumstick of learning, diligence, and faith.

Acknowledgements

Writing a doctoral dissertation is an arduous task in an academic career of a student like me. Upon the stage of completion, I would like to express my gratitude to people and institutions, from both my home country and Norway, who have contributed in various ways to the making of this thesis. Thinking of their generous and valuable support, all these persons vividly appear in front of my eyes. Hereby, taking this opportunity, I want to thank them all.

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to my supervisor Associate Professor Hanna Havnevik under whose dedicated and careful supervision and training I was able to come to the end of my journey of writing the dissertation. Hanna's profound knowledge of Tibetan culture in general, and on Tibetan Buddhist literature in particular, has greatly enriched my understanding of the subject and enhanced my scientific research skills. Her devotion and enthusiasm towards Tibetan culture and its people will have an everlasting impact not only within the Tibetological circles, but also on the effort of keeping the Tibetan cultural traditions alive. I feel extremely lucky to have become one of her many fortunate students, in this degenerate eon according to Tibetan Buddhism, to have been given the opportunity to listen to her precious teachings in the bright and clean classrooms at the University of Oslo (UiO), and to spend hours discussing various matters related to my topic. She acts as the teacher in the classroom and acts as our close friend outside. She has brought me to many parts of her beautiful country so that I have learned more about Norway, its people, and its culture. Through my life, I will cherish the support and teachings that Hanna Havnevik has provided me, and bring the unforgettable memories from Norway to Tibet, the Land of Snows. Her wisdom, patience, generosity, diligence, and modesty are difficult to express in a short sentence. All these have approved that she is a genuine Kalyāṇamitra of the fortunate students in this part of the world.

Secondly, my special thanks are due to Dr. Dan Martin, my co-supervisor, for his invaluable help and supervision during the last two years. With his unparalleled knowledge of the Tibetan language, its culture, and literature, he has provided me with invaluable comments and precious advice. His generous suggestions have brought about significant improvements of my thesis during the various stages of my writing.

I am also grateful to my home university Tibet University (TU) in Lhasa for granting me the permission to study in Norway. Without the support and encouragement of Professor Tseyang Changngopa, Vice President of TU, Mrs. Weihong, the Director of International Students Exchange, Kalsang Wangdu and Professor Tseten Tashi, respectively the Party

Secretary and Director of the Department of Humanities, my study at the University of Oslo would not have come true. Especially Mrs. Weihong's sincere support throughout my studies and her company during my field trip in 2010, together with Hanna, to different places and monasteries in Central Tibet, is much appreciated.

I am indebted to Astrid Hovden, Heidi Fjeld, and Inger Vasstveit for spending many hours to correct the English language in my initial drafts and for providing me with useful suggestions and comments. I am also grateful to Stig Oppedal for proofreading my thesis and Ragnhild Holiman for reading my draft, taking time off to help me during her valuable vacation from her busy teaching work at Tibet University. All the abovementioned academics, administrators, and friends deserve warm thanks for their readiness and sincerity in helping me.

My special gratitude is extended to the Network for University Co-operation Tibet-Norway for providing me with financial support during my four-year study at the University of Oslo in Norway. I also acknowledge the Norwegian Agency for Development Co-operation (NORAD) for its continuous and generous financial support of the Network's program of recruiting Tibetan students and research fellows. I thank the staff members at the Network office including Kristine Hoitomt, Rinzin Thargyal, Hilde Øvreneess, and Siv Tonje Håkensen for organizing many useful seminars and study trips during my time in Norway. Their enthusiasm and support both regarding my studies and my daily life throughout the program period, made my stay in Norway a comfortable, joyful, and meaningful one. The friendship that has been established between the Tibetan students and the Norwegian staff members will have a great impact on the promotion of the bilateral cooperation.

I do not forget my former fellow librarian Mrs. Tenzin Drolma, Director of the Tibetan Public Library in Lhasa. She supplied me with valuable source information and helped me in the search for texts pertaining to my subject from her library. I also thank the librarians at the UIO for their hospitality and sincerity and librarians at Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC) including Chungdak Nangpa and Kelsang Lhamo for helping me with sources for my research.

My sincere thanks are also due to my wife Penba Drolma, who is taking care of our only beloved son. Being herself a Tibetan language teacher, she not only carefully nurtures our son but also gives him private family tuition helping him in receiving a good school education.

Last, but not least, I thank Penba Wangdu, teacher at the Art Department of TU, and Pasang Phanthok, a master's student in the Department of Humanities at TU, for taking

pictures of the Ri sbug Hermitage and for helping identifying relevant Tibetan language research materials.

Finally, I thank all my fellow students in Norway from various parts of Tibet and Bhutan including Kunsel Palmo, Tenzin, Kunga Lhandze, Penba, Yangzom, Lhakpa Tsering, Loten, Nasa Drolma, Chokden, Nyingwogyal, Nyingkargyal, Chaksham Tsering, Pelmokyi, Lhakpa Samdrub, Migmar Wangdu, Yeshe Lhamo, Sonam Wangmo, Gyatso, Tashi Tsering, Tenzin Jamtso, and Choni Tshewang for spending many rainy seasons and for sharing happiness and sorrows while studying at UiO and living at Sogn and Kringsjå Student Villages. Their friendship, support, and encouragement I deem immensely valuable while writing my dissertation.

If the dissertation blossoms any flowers and bears any fruits, I will dedicate them all to the people mentioned here, my monk informants Blo gsal rgya mtsho and rDo rje, and to former Zha lu masters who made Zha lu a prestigious monastic university, and to today's Zha lu masters who contribute to the flourishing of the unique Tibetan Buddhist tradition in their home monastery today. Sarva Maṅgalam!

Note on Transliteration and Language

The transliteration of Tibetan is made according to the Wylie system (1959)¹ and the Tibetan Himalayan Library (THL)'s Extended Wylie Transliteration System.² The former is strictly followed in the main body of the thesis, which is comprised of the historical analysis of Zha lu and its affiliated institutions and the partial translation of the two first chapters of the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*. For titles, personal names and geographical names I have capitalized the root letter of the first syllable. In the case of titles of texts, I have capitalized only in the first syllable and given the complete titles in italics. Technical terms in the main body of the work are transliterated, given in italics enclosed in parentheses.

I have given the transliteration of the two first chapters of the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* following the Extended Wylie. For instance, I have rendered Paṇḍita Śākyaśrībhadrā in the main body of the thesis whereas paN+Dita shAkya shrI b+hadra is given in the transliteration of the Tibetan text. The Extended Wylie provides not only transliteration equivalents, but also methods for handling Tibetan transliteration of Sanskrit. I found it is useful to be able to convert back and forth between Tibetan script and transliteration into Latin letters. By using the Extended Wylie, the whole transliterated Tibetan text can be converted into Tibetan script in a short time so that it can be accessible for Tibetan readers who are not familiar with Latin transliteration.

Throughout my work I have consulted *The Chicago Manual of Style* for guidance in the formatting of my thesis, and generally I have used the American English spelling. I have used straight single quotation marks for the transliteration and curly ones (single and double) for quotations and apostrophes. In cases where the spelling in the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* is apparently wrong, I put the correct spelling in the transliteration, but I give a footnote showing the original spelling. The page numbers are given in square brackets according to the page numbers given on the photographically reproduced *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, instead of following the page numbers given in the original woodblock print. In addition to the clear separation of the chapters of the original text, for the sake of clarity paragraph divisions are made wherever necessary and suitable in some of the longer life stories.

¹ Wylie 1959: 261-267.

² <http://www.thlib.org/reference/transliteration/wyconverter.php>

Note on the Technical Terms, Indian Masters, and Sanskrit Titles

A list, arranged according to the Tibetan alphabetical order, of technical terms, the names of Indian masters (in Tibetan transcription and in Sanskrit), the titles of religious teachings and texts (in Tibetan and Sanskrit) is given as they are found in the first two chapters of *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*. Sanskrit equivalents for Tibetan names and terms have been provided according to works and dictionaries such as *History of Buddhism (Chos-hbyung)* by Bu ston,³ *Sanskrit-Tibetan-English Vocabulary* by Alexander Csoma de Körös⁴ and *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary* by Dr. Lokesh Chandra.⁵

³ Obermiller (1932)

⁴ Csoma de Körös (1984).

⁵ Chandra (1976).

Contents

Homage and Thesis Statement	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Note on Transliteration and Language	vi
Note on the Technical Terms, Indian Masters, and Sanskrit Titles	vii
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 The Theme of the Thesis	1
1.2 Motivation for Studying Zha lu and its Affiliated Institutions	2
1.3 The Structure of the Thesis	4
1.4 The Primary Source <i>mKhan brgyud rnam thar</i>	6
1.4.1 The Content of the <i>mKhan brgyud rnam thar</i>	10
1.5 Other Primary and Secondary Tibetan Sources	12
1.6 The Tibetan Biographical Genre	17
1.7 Theoretical and Methodological Reflections	23
1.8 Fieldwork in Zha lu and Fieldwork Methodology	26
1.9 Ethical Considerations	29
Chapter 2 A Survey of Previous Research on Zha lu Monastery	31
2.1 Phase One, 1932-1966: The Early Studies on Zha lu	32
2.2 Phase Two, Since 1980: Recent Research on Zha lu	34
Chapter 3 The Zha lu Monastery	37
3.1 The Historical Background	37
3.2 The Location of the Monastery	41
3.3 The History of the Myang Region	44
3.4 The Founder of the Monastery, Lce btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas	47
3.5 The Founding Date of the Monastery	51
3.6 The Naming Tradition of Tibetan Buddhist Schools	56
3.7 The Origin of the Name of Zha lu Monastery	57
Chapter 4 The Zha lu Chapels and their Holy Objects	63
4.1 The Architectural Structure of the Monastery	63
4.2 The Zha lu Chapels and their Holy Objects	66
4.2.1 The Chapel with the Cuirbouilli Door	67
4.2.2 The South and North Chapels	69
4.2.3 The Triple Door Chapel	70
4.2.4 The Inner Circumambulation Path	72

4.2.5 Yum chen mo Chapel.....	73
4.2.6 The Pavilions on the Second Floor	75
4.3 Contribution to Zha lu by Bu ston and his Immediate Disciples	76
4.4 Zha lu as a Cultural Heritage Site in TAR and PRC.....	79
4.5 The Religious Festivals of Zha lu	81
4.5.1 Offering to Vaiśravaṇa.....	82
4.5.2 Offering to Ma he.....	84
Chapter 5 The Ri sbug Hermitage.....	95
5.1 Introduction	95
5.2 The Name and Geographic Features of Ri sbug.....	97
5.3 The Formative Period of Ri sbug.....	101
5.3.1 Atiśa's Visit to Ri sbug.....	101
5.3.2 Atiśa's Meditation Water	103
5.4 Ri sbug in the Fourteenth Century	105
5.4.1 The Northern Assembly Hall ('Du khang byang)	108
5.4.2 The Southern Assembly Hall ('Du khang lho).....	110
5.4.3 The Great Instruction Palace.....	112
5.4.4 The Four Colleges of Ri sbug	113
5.5 Other Monuments and Buildings at Ri sbug	118
5.5.1 The Meditation Cell called the Utmost of Full Liberation.....	118
5.5.2 The Northern College.....	118
5.5.3 The Dharma Throne Area	119
5.5.4 The Ground of the sKu 'bum	120
5.5.5 The Dam of the Great Abbot and the Great Maṇi Wall.....	121
5.6 Three Holiest Objects of Ri sbug	123
5.6.1 Liberation through Wearing.....	124
5.6.2 The Great Liberation through Seeing.....	125
5.6.3 The Sacred Water Vase	127
5.7 The Contemporary Situation	129
Chapter 6 The rGyan gong Temple.....	131
6.1 Introduction	131
6.2 The Founding Date of rGyan gong	134
6.3 The Founder of rGyan gong Temple.....	135
6.4 The Early Development of rGyan gong	136

6.5 The Lha mo of rGyan gong	138
6.6 The Worship of the Lha mo Today	141
6.7 The Main Objects of Worship at rGyan gong	143
Concluding Remarks.....	143
Chapter 7 An Annotated Translation of the First Two Chapters of the <i>mKhan brgyud</i>	
<i>rnam thar</i>	147
7.1. <i>mKhan brgyud rnam thar</i> 's Chapter 1	147
7.2. <i>mKhan brgyud rnam thar</i> 's Chapter 2	188
Appendix 1 A List of the Scholars of Zha lu.....	247
Appendix 2 Transliteration of the First Two Chapters	253
Personal Names	291
Geographical Names	309
Technical Terms, Indian Masters, and Sanskrit Titles.....	315
Bibliography	325
Sources in Tibetan.....	325
Works in English	330
List of Internet Sources	336

Chapter 1 Introduction

1.1 The Theme of the Thesis

This thesis will investigate the history of Zha lu Monastery along with its affiliated institutions, the Ri sbug Hermitage and the rGyan gong Temple. Zha lu is considered to be among the earliest monastic establishments in Central Tibet that were founded during the Second Diffusion of Buddhism in the eleventh century. It is also one of the most famous monasteries in Central Tibet, famous for having produced excellent Buddhist scholars, and famous for its architecture and works of religious arts. Furthermore, the monastery's importance for the religious identity of Tibetans in general and for the people of the gTsang region in particular, can hardly be overestimated.

Some research has already been done on Zha lu, particularly on the earliest history of the monastery: on its founding, on the combined secular and abbatial rule of Zha lu during the first three centuries, on the architectural style, on the murals and art works, and particularly on its famous scholar and abbot Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364). Nonetheless, our knowledge about Zha lu is still incomplete, and this thesis will attempt to critically review and complement the research on Zha lu's history. Furthermore, particular attention will be directed to the contribution to the Zha lu tradition made by Bu ston and his immediate disciples, i.e. the developments during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Hardly any in-depth research on Zha lu during these centuries has been carried out. I see this period as an important part of the history of Zha lu. As will be shown in the dissertation, it was during this period that the monastery was at its peak of fame.

Zha lu's philosophical tradition is important and has a long history, but my interest is in the wider religious and cultural history of Zha lu of which the philosophical tradition is but a part. To understand the religious and cultural history of Zha lu, the dissertation will also include an investigation of the history of the important Ri sbug Hermitage, which was and still is, closely affiliated to Zha lu. The Ri sbug Hermitage, located at a beautiful site on the mountain slope above Zha lu, has a history dating back at least to the eleventh century when many hermits were already living here. Many of the buildings and monuments at Ri sbug are in ruins today, and therefore it is particularly important to document and to study the activities in the past. The information on the historical buildings and their functions contributes to make our knowledge about the history of Zha lu and its associated institutions more complete. The rGyan gong temple, predating Zha lu by six years, is another important complex affiliated to

the monastery. It continues to serve as the chapel of the protectress of Zha lu. It used, however, to be a large monastic seat in former times, i.e. during the eleventh century. So far, except for brief mention in travelers' guidebooks, there has not been any detailed research on this important temple built by Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug (tenth to eleventh centuries), the teacher of the founder of Zha lu lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas (b. 973 A.D.). In this thesis the history of the rGyan gong temple's founding, development, and its Lhamo rituals will be described.

My contribution to the research of Zha lu is mainly on the history of Zha lu after Bu ston's period up to the fifteenth century, such as the enlargement of scripture colleges, the building of tomb stupas, and the renovation of the printing house. I also discuss some problems concerning the name of Zha lu, its founding date, and the origin of its holy objects. Furthermore, I will provide first hand information to the historical development of Ri sbug and its surroundings, relying on historical and contemporary Tibetan sources, and on the still-popular rGyan gong Temple.

1.2 Motivation for Studying Zha lu and its Affiliated Institutions

My initial project for my PhD thesis was to continue the study I did for my M.Phil. thesis, also at the University of Oslo, and under the supervision of Prof. Emeritus Per Kværne, on the history of the 'Ba' rom bKa' brgyud tradition entitled "The Early History of the 'Ba' rom bKa' brgyud School and the Biography of Dar ma dbang phyug" (2001). I intended, partly based on fieldwork at important 'Ba' rom bKa' brgyud monasteries in Khams and A mdo, eastern Tibet, to bring my research on this very little known bKa' brgyud tradition up till the present. However, difficulties in obtaining research permission and the lack of textual sources made me reconsider my project. At the library of the University of Oslo, I accidentally found a Zha lu text not known to me before: *On the History of the Monastery of Zhwa lu: being the text of Zhwa lu gdan rabs and Autobiography of Blo gsal bstan skyong*. The short title of this work that I use is: the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* 'The Biography of Successive Abbots.'⁶ This is a biographical text written in the nineteenth century by a monk scholar from the monastery. The text, a collection of religious biographies, including those of Bu ston and his nineteen direct disciples, which is the part of the biographical work under study here, will be described in detail below. Although the text has been used as a work of historical reference in modern

⁶ For the full title of the biographical text and its translation, see below, section 1.4 and chapter 7.

research on Zha lu,⁷ much information in this encompassing work has not been academically scrutinized. That is particularly the case for information about the successive abbots following Bu ston, as well as the abbots' contribution to the prosperity of Zha lu and Ri sbug. Furthermore, the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, neither the complete text nor parts of it, has ever been translated into any western language.

My main motivation to study Zha lu Monastery is first of all that there is still a lack of historical knowledge about this remarkable monastery, its affiliated institutions and its body of monks and their activities. There is also a personal reason for my interest. Since my childhood, I have had a close personal relationship with the monastery. My grandmother was born in a village near Zha lu and one of her sisters married into a family in the Zha lu village. Therefore, our family, mainly my mother Mig dmar (1929–1996), had close ties with the village as well as with the monastery. Furthermore, several of our relatives became monks in Zha lu during the time of my grandparents and my parents.

When I was young, I visited Zha lu many times with my parents to see the prestigious religious festival which took place annually around the Tibetan New Year, and we also called on our relatives in Zha lu at other occasions. I remember two of our old maternal uncles (*a zhang*), A zhang Khu dpon and A zhang sPen pa tshe ring, who were monks in the monastery, and who even during the Cultural Revolution did not disrobe. They became members of Zha lu monastic community again in the early 1980s, when the monastery reopened and was partially rebuilt, but they both passed away not long after their newly restored monastic life.

In 1985, about a decade after the end of the Cultural Revolution (1966–76), my oldest sister and I went to visit Zha lu. At the time only my uncle sPen pa tshe ring was still alive. I remember visiting his room on the third floor in an old and partially destroyed building, which was formerly part of the monks' residence (*grwa shags*). From there, I could see many other demolished buildings and ruins surrounding the main temple. Today three of our younger relatives are monks at Zha lu. Among them bsTan rgyan (b. 1968) became a monk here in 1984. He is now serving as the principal teacher of religious dance (*'cham dpon*). Another relative of mine, bKra shis tshe ring (b. 1991), became a monk much later, in 2007. Because of all the devotional visits I paid Zha lu with my mother, I naturally became a devotee at a young age, which was also the case for my four older sisters and three brothers. Also all the inhabitants in my town bKra shis skyed tshal ('The Auspicious Grove,' located

⁷ Tucci 1949; Ruegg 1966; and Vitali 1990. For a detailed discussion of the modern research see below, section 2.1.

twenty-four kilometers to the north of Zha lu),⁸ in gZhis ka rtse were devotees of Zha lu. I hope that this thesis will contribute to restore the tradition of Zha lu that has so sadly declined in modern times.

1.3 The Structure of the Thesis

In this thesis, after presenting my primary Tibetan sources as well as some that belong to the category of secondary Tibetan sources on Zha lu (1.4–1.6), I will discuss some theoretical and methodological problems connected with the textual investigation on which this study is based (1.6). I also briefly describe how I obtained information in the field, as well as methodological problems connected with contemporary data collection (1.7). Then I present a history of research on the study of Zha lu by modern scholars (chapter 2), where I emphasize the works on Zha lu carried out by some prominent early Tibetologists such as Giuseppe Tucci (1949) and David Seyfort Ruegg (1966), as well as the later studies by Roberto Vitali (1990). In my main investigation of the history of Zha lu (chapter 3), I critically review some of the previous research and add new information based on my reading and analysis of the whole *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* as well as of numerous other Tibetan sources. In this chapter, I focus mainly on the historical development of Zha lu, including the naming, origin and founding date of Zha lu, as these are the points where past scholars have disagreed the most. In chapter 4 I give a description of the important Zha lu chapels and their holy objects.

In chapter 5, I present the historical and present situation of the Ri sbug Hermitage, which is closely affiliated to Zha lu. Although Ri sbug Hermitage is famous due to its important role in the history of Zha lu school, it has hardly been mentioned in modern research on Zha lu. All that is written about Ri sbug, apart from brief mentions in Tibetan biographical sources and two traditional guidebooks, is *dPal zha lu'i gnas yig* 'Guidebook of the Glorious Zha lu' by Blo gsal rgya mtsho and a two page description in a modern Tibetan guide book *gZhis ka rtse sa khul gyi gnas yig* 'Guidebook to gZhis ka rtse Prefecture'

⁸ In the early 1980s, there were about 300 households in bKra shis skyed tshal, and it was a long ride to the center of gZhis ka rtse. Today, the village is connected to the city through a network of roads and the number of households has multiplied almost five times. In the 1960s the village became the seventh out of eight districts (*sa khul*) of gZhis ka rtse. The inhabitants rely mainly on farming and crafts, for which the village is famous. My late father worked as an artisan for bKra shis lhun po Monastery and my younger brother still continues my father's professional skills. My home village was visited by Sarat Chandra Das in 1881 and described in his famous book *Journey to Lhasa and Central Tibet* (1902): "(December 26) We left Tashilhunpo at 3 p.m., and rode off at a gentle trot towards the village of Tashi-gyantsa [bKra shis skyed tshal]. The view of Tashilhunpo from Tashi-gyantsa was most beautiful, and the four gilded tombs of the former Tashi lamas, situated in the middle of the lamasery, blazed in the rays of the sun. [...] The whole village is inhabited by clerks, copyists, painters, and artisans from Tashilhunpo, most of whom get allowances (*pod*) from Labrang." (Chandra Das 1902: 69–70).

composed by Chos 'phel, who presents a brief history of the hermitage and gives some comments about its current restoration.⁹ The aim of this chapter is to provide more thorough information relating to the history of the important former chapels, religious objects, monuments, and sites.

In chapter 6, I will illustrate the historical development of rGyan gong temple and the current worship of Zha lu Lha mo, whose image is enshrined in the temple. In Chapter 7, I have provided an annotated translation of the first two chapters of the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, i.e. the biographies of Bu ston Rin chen grub and nineteen of his disciples. This is the most detailed research of my thesis, and it is on this that my historical analysis is based. The two most important disciples were Rin chen nam rgyal (1318–1388) and sKu zhang Nam mkha' mchog grub (fourteenth century). These twenty biographies, which cover two of the four chapters of the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, are replete with religious and historical information, and I find it necessary to give extensive notes on technical terms, local expressions, vocabulary, spellings, historical, cultural and religious subjects and events, and on personalities, in order to give, as far as possible, an accurate understanding of the content as well as the social, religious and historical context of the text.

The reason I have chosen to focus on the first two chapters of the biography and to do a full translation of these, is first because the two chapters contain the life stories of what the Tibetan literature call the direct disciples (*dnegos slob*) of Bu ston. Secondly, they cover the time period of the fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries, which is the time period that my research mainly focuses on.

Furthermore, a full translation of the two chapters will give insight into the selection of information offered by biographers, of the activities at Zha lu and Ri sbug, of Bu ston's and his direct disciples' activities. The translation will also give the reader an understanding of how biographies of important Tibetan religious masters during the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries were composed by a monk author belonging to the same monastery, but living several centuries later, i.e. in the nineteenth century. The translation of the text will also clearly show both the value and the limitations of using these biographies as a source for the historical study of Zha lu and Ri sbug. An annotated translation of part of the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* will help both the reader and myself to check the reliability of relevant historical information from my cross reading of a number of Tibetan sources.

⁹ *gZhis rtse 'i gnas yig* 2008: 158–160.

Following chapter 7 are two appendices: appendix 1 listing the Zha lu masters whose biographies are recorded in the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, and appendix 2 containing the transliteration of the first two chapters and indices of the personal names, locations as well as of technical terms. At the very end comes the bibliography.

1.4 The Primary Source *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*

My investigation of the history of Zha lu and its affiliated institutions will be based mainly on a translation and an examination of the life stories of Bu ston and his nineteen direct disciples from the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* 'The Biography of Successive Abbots'. The full title of the biographical text is *dPal ldan zhwa lu pa'i bstan pa la bka' drin che ba'i skeyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar lo rgyus ngo mtshar dad pa'i 'jug ngogs* 'The Biography of the Great Beings Immensely Beneficial to the Teachings of the Glorious Zha lu Tradition Called the Wonderful Entrance¹⁰ of the Faithful Ones'.

According to its colophon, the text was composed by Blo gsal bstan skyong, a renowned reincarnate lama of Ri sbug Hermitage, in the year of the water-female-sheep, when he was thirty-two years old. This Tibetan date corresponds to 1835. The same date of composition is also given in de Rossi Filibeck, *Catalogue*, Vol. 2, p. 349 (no. 752, in 236 folios).¹¹ The *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* was composed at the behest of one of his religious fellows, the eminent dGe lugs pa historian of A mdo, Brag dgon Zhabs drung dKon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas (b. 1801), the author of the remarkable *mDo smad chos 'byung* 'The Religious History of Amdo.'¹² The colophon further states that the place where it was composed was the meditation cell of rNam grol yang rtse 'The Topmost of the Full Liberation' at Ri sbug Hermitage.

While reading the whole text, I have examined the calligraphy closely, and it appears as if the manuscript of *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* was the product of at least two different scribes. In his introduction to the reproduced text, Tashi Yangphel states that the

¹⁰ Here the word 'entrance' is used to translate 'jug ngogs' in Tibetan. It is difficult to find a suitable English equivalent for 'jug ngogs'. However, Martin comments that it means a point of embarkation boarding a boat or raft, a place where one can get on a floating device in order to try and make it across a potentially dangerous body of water. He says that it could be easily understood by referring to the Sanskrit words *tīra*, *tīrtha*, and *srota*, all of which have something to do with water crossing. (Martin's comments, 26.08.2011).

¹¹ See *Yig cha ngos 'dzin*, fol. 18v.2, Martin 1997: 144 and *Zhol and other Par-khang Printery Catalogues (Par-tho)* part IV, p. 71. <https://sites.google.com/site/tibetological/50-tibetan-geo-texts/Home/printeries-par-khang> (accessed on 17.09.2011).

¹² This historical record of Brag dgon pa dKon mchog bstan pa rab rgyas is, according to Tashi Yangphel, one of the greatest monuments of the nineteenth century Tibetan historiography. See the "Introduction" to the reproduced text.

xylograph print was *presumably* reprinted from woodblocks preserved at Zha lu.¹³ His doubt can be removed if one takes a closer look at available sources. The *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* is listed on fol. 18v.2 of *Yig cha ngos 'dzin*¹⁴ written by Rin chen Blo bzang mkhyen rab of Zha lu, a former abbot of Ri sbug byang gling. The latter text, which was composed in the fire-male-rat year, corresponding to 1876, states as follows: “*dPal ldan zhwa lu'i bstan pa la bka' drin che ba'i skyes bu dam pa rnams kyi rnam thar ngo mtshar dad pa'i 'jug ngog [sic] la 236.*”¹⁵ Moreover, the preface reads, “What I will explain here is regarding the scriptures, headed by the Four Great Classes of Tantra, that were formerly printed at the great monastic seat [of Zha lu]. Lately all of them have been damaged so that they are of no benefit for the beings. Following the suggestion of sKyabs rje rDo rje 'chang, [for the sake of] the Buddha's teaching, aiming to serve [both] the community and individuals, I have brought all the texts [from Zha lu] to Ri sbug and arranged them in order while adding missing ones. In order to provide convenient access for readers to search [the texts], I have recently carved the letters [from] Ka [to] Ta on the woodblocks.”¹⁶ The title and the preface both confirm that the woodblock print of this biographical text was in fact prepared at Ri sbug of Zha lu Monastery.

According to Blo gsal rgya mtsho, a forty-three-year old monk scholar at the monastery,¹⁷ there used to be a printing house in Zha lu, in which the collected works of Zha lu scholars such as Bu ston Rin chen grub, sGra tshad pa Rin chen nam rgyal, and Zha lu Lo tsā ba Chos skyong bzang po (1441–1528), as well as numerous texts relating to the *maṇḍala* and the ritual manuals of the fifty-two tantras were printed. Blo gsal rgya mtsho says that the texts that were formerly printed at the printing house were listed in the *Yig cha ngos 'dzin* ‘Recognition of Manuals’ composed by Ri zur Thub bstan rin chen Legs bshad dbang phyug. *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* was one of the many biographies that were printed in Zha lu Monastery. Unfortunately, the printing house was destroyed and woodblocks dispersed during the Cultural Revolution.¹⁸ Currently, only a part of the woodblocks have been kept in Zha lu

¹³ See the “Introduction” to the reproduction.

¹⁴ The full title of *Yig cha ngos 'dzin* is *rDo rje theg pa'i dkyil 'khor chen po rnams kyi cho ga phyag len du mdzad pa'i par tho dkar chag dang 'brel ba'i yig cha ngos 'dzin thugs rje'i chu rgyun* and it is a woodblock print in twenty folios.

¹⁵ Martin 1997: 144.

¹⁶ *gang bshad par bya ba ni chos grwa chen po 'di nyid du / rgyud sde chen po bzhis mtshon pa'i gsung la par 'khos sngar bzhugs rnams // par lam thams cad 'jing rkyen du song gshis 'gro don med par brten / skyabs rje rdo rje 'chang de nyid kyi thugs dgongs dang / spyi sgos bstan pa'i zhabs 'degs su dmigs te / zhwa mthil nas ri phug tu gdan zhu thegs mtshang kha bskong dang bcas tshang ma sgrigs te / don gnyer can dgo tshal (?) bde khyad / chos mtshan xxx xxx shing gi ldebs su ka ta gsar bkod dang / See Zhol and Other Par-khang Printery Catalogue (Par-tho) (p. 72), produced and input by Dan Martin on website <http://sites.google.com/site/tibetological/50-tibetan-geo-texts/Home/printeries-par-khang> (accessed 30.07.2011).*

¹⁷ Interviewed on 06.07.2009.

¹⁸ For detailed research on scriptoriums and printing houses in Tibet, see Schaeffer 2009.

Monastery. These are rather incomplete and worn out collections since there has been no restoration of the woodblocks and the printing house after the re-opening of the monastery in the early 1980s.

Owing to the great effort of the abbot of Thyangpoche¹⁹ Monastery²⁰ in Solukhumbu in Nepal, the text has been available to western researchers since 1971, the year when the book collector Tashi Yangphel made a reproduction of the text and published it in Leh, Ladakh, under the title *On the History of the Monastery of Zha lu: Being the Text of the Zha lu gdan rabs and the Autobiography of Blo gsal bstan skyong*. Tashi Yangphel reproduced this text photographically from xylographic prints belonging to the abbot of the Thyangpoche Monastery where it is labeled as the series number 9 of the collection of *sMan rtsis shes rig dpe mdzod* ('Book Collection on Medicine, Astrology, and Civilization'). For his reproduced text, Tashi Yangphel chose to give a different short marginal title *Zha lu'i gdan rabs* 'The Successive Throne-Holders of Zha lu,' which is different from the short title written vertically on the edge of the scripture itself. The purpose of giving such a short marginal title is to make explicit to the readers what the content of the text is and where it is from.

This work is commonly known among the Zha lu monks as *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* 'The Biography of Successive Abbots,'²¹ which is the short title written vertically on the left side of the folios along with the page numbers. Following Tashi Yangphel, in the west the text is generally referred to the abbreviated title *Zha lu'i gdan rabs* 'The History of Successive Throne-Holders of Zha lu,' while Roberto Vitali, in his *Early Temples of Tibet* (1990), uses the abbreviation *Zhwa lu rnam thar* (abbr. ZLNT) 'Biographies of Zha lu.' In order to honor the monks who currently uphold the teachings of Zha lu in their home monastery, I will use the short title *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*.

During my fieldwork at the monastery, I was shown a similar xylographic print as the one in the Oslo University Library's collection and was told that some former Zha lu masters got that copy from a tourist.²² The monk also told me that the monastery possesses a copy of the original biography that was formerly printed here, and that it is also available for the public, both monks and the laity. But, unfortunately, for some reason, I was not able to see this text, which makes me doubt that the monastery possesses a copy of the original text.

¹⁹ This is a rather strange way of writing the name, however, it is written that way in the reproduced text.

²⁰ The name of the monastery is recorded as Khum bu sTeng po che gSang sngags Theg mchog chos gling Monastery in Khetsun's works, and it was founded by rDza sprul Ngag dbang bstan 'dzin nor bu in the wood hare year of the fifteenth sixty-year cycle, which corresponds to 1915. See Khetsun Sangpo 1973, vol. III: 721.

²¹ During my fieldwork in July 2009, whenever I mentioned the text, the monks always referred to the text using this short title.

²² The reproduced text that monks had was a rather worn out one. Therefore, when I went to Zha lu in May 2010 with my supervisor, I offered a copy that I made from the Oslo collection to a monk of the monastery.

Although the text has been available outside Tibet since 1971, the year the text was reproduced as a photocopy of the xylography, it is difficult to find in Tibet. Recently, the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* was listed in the *Drepung Catalogue* (2004)²³ made by a group of young Tibetan scholars, including Shes rab bzang po, a librarian at Tibet University Library, and published by the Nationalities' Publishing House in Beijing in 2004. According to Shes rab bzang po, the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* has only been circulated within the compilers' group and not yet made available for public research.²⁴

The *Drepung Catalogue* lists the text on its page 2012 with the cataloging number 000669 and provides some basic information about the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*. According to the catalogue, the text is a 236-folio long woodblock print (*shing par ma*) and Zha lu ba Blo gsal bstan skyong is its author. Each sheet varies slightly in size due to the paper having been cut by hand, but the average measurement is 10.20 centimeters wide by 54.50 centimeters long. The text has also been given a so-called 'inner number', specified as 152, which may indicate that the text is in private circulation, or a book belonging to the 'Bras spungs Palace, as the catalogue section is entitled 'Catalogue of the Texts of the Venerable Lama Lam rim pa (1922–1997) in his residence at 'Bras spungs.'²⁵ But there is no information regarding the publisher of the original scripture. In his *Tibetan Histories: A Bibliography of Tibetan-Language Historical Works* (1997: 144), Dan Martin has also listed the biographical text (entry no. 334) with a description of its page number, authorship, and content. According to Martin, this work is also listed by *Bod kyi lo rgyus dpe tho* (no. 1713),²⁶ but it wrongly attributes the authorship to Thub bstan 'od gsal bstan pa'i nyi ma.²⁷

The copy that I am using in my thesis is a part of the collection of Tibetan texts acquired by the University of Oslo Library.²⁸ It is a copy of the reproduced text of Tashi Yangphel mentioned earlier. In contrast to some old texts, the reproduced *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* is fairly clear and legible. The reproduction of the *mKhan rgyud rnam thar* is a large volume containing 236 double-sized folios with six lines in each, except for the last

²³ The full title of the *Drepung Catalogue* is 'Bras spungs dgon du bzhugs su gsol ba'i dpe rnying dkar chag 'A Catalogue of the Classical Texts Preserved at 'Bras spungs Monastery'.

²⁴ Personal communication with Shes rab bzang po, a librarian at Tibet University Library, on 20.08.2011.

²⁵ According to sPen pa dbang 'dus, assistant professor at the Art Department of Tibet University, Lam rim Rin po che at 'Bras spung Monastery passed away on the twenty-first day of the fourth month in 1997 according to Tibetan calendar. (Interviewed on 30.06.2011).

²⁶ *Bod kyi lo rgyus dpe tho* is abbreviated BLP by Martin.

²⁷ Martin 1990: 144.

²⁸ The copy at the University of Oslo Library is preserved in open stacks on the fourth floor. It is easily accessible through the university library's database with cataloguing information "On the History of the Manastery of Zhwa-lu: begin [sic] the texts of the Zhwa lu gdan rabs and the autobiography, by Zhwa-lu-Ri sbug Sprul-sku Blo-gsal-bstan-skyong. Samnrtsis shesrig spenmdzod 9, Blo-gsal-bstan-skyong Zwa-lu Ri-sbug Sprul-sku b. 1804. Printed in 1971. Document location UHS, Mes, Øst qHs 5415."

page which has only one side, but with seven lines and three distinct cover pages. The reproduced text has been supplied with Arabic numerals on each side of the folios so that the total page number comes to 471 as one side of the last folio is blank. I use the Arabic numbering given in the reproduction when I refer to a specific page number of the text in my thesis, the same Arabic page numbers are applied in the transliteration of the two first chapters of the text.

On the main cover page, the title of the text is presented in Sanskrit, in Tibetan transliteration of Sanskrit, and in Tibetan. On the inner cover page, in addition to the title, two images, one of the fifth Dalai Lama Ngag dbang Blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682) and one of Bu ston Rin chen grub, are inserted respectively on the right and left margins of the page. On the third cover page, the title is written in four different scripts including Sanskrit, Siddham, transliteration of Sanskrit, and Tibetan. Three figures are inserted on this page. In the center is a figure of the Buddha Śākyamuni. On the right margin, a figure depicts Bu ston Rin chen grub and on the left side we find a figure depicting sGra tshad pa Rin chen nam rgyal, the chief disciple of Bu ston.

1.4.1 The Content of the *mKhan brgyud nam thar*

Concerning the content and subject matter of the biographical text, it is a collection of life stories of Bu ston and his disciples and successive abbots of Zha lu Monastery and Ri sbug Hermitage. It is divided into four chapters: the first chapter is the life story of Bu ston, the most eminent Zha lu master of all time, the second chapter contains the biographies of the principal disciples of Bu ston, the third chapter is devoted to the life stories of the scholars and saints connected with the Zha lu school, and the last chapter contains the biographies of the successive abbots of Zha lu and Ri sbug, in which lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas, the founder of the monastery, is presented as the first abbot.

This text is one of a few available historical sources relating to the life stories of Zha lu masters and to the history of the monastery. Although it mainly focuses on the life stories of the Zha lu masters, as one can assumed from its title, it also provides, as do many other Tibetan biographies, valuable and considerable historical information, e.g. about the foundation of the monastery and its sister monasteries, the teachings at the Zha lu Monastery, and major religious ceremonies and religious activities conducted here.

The *mKhan brgyud nam thar* is a composition relying on several earlier biographies, eulogies, and miscellaneous writings dating back to between the fourteenth and eighteenth

centuries. It is a long and comprehensive work, containing altogether one hundred and thirty biographies. The last recorded abbot passed away in 1841, so it spans the time period from the foundation of the monastery in the eleventh century to that of the author's own time. In addition to information about the monasteries that the Zha lu masters established, besides their main seat Zha lu, the biographies provide substantial information relating to the monastic structure of Zha lu and Ri sbug, the size of the assembly halls, the names and number of the colleges, printing houses, meditation cells, some of the important residential buildings of high lamas, and exterior monuments such as stupas.

The investigation of Zha lu is based on the close reading of the whole *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, but my research will mainly focus on the first two chapters of the text containing the biographies of Bu ston and his immediate disciples, i.e. twenty biographies in total. I find it nonetheless important to give a short description of the content of the entire text. Some of these biographies contain short, schematically standard biographical information such as the birth date, parents, birth names, childhood, ordination, ordination names, studying, traveling for study (*grwa skor*), the training of disciples and the final nirvāṇa or death. Attention will be paid to the historical information of each chapter relating to Zha lu: the festivals of the monastery, the patrons and devotees, the ordination practices, the study tradition, and the teachings. It is important also to pay notice to the Zha lu abbots' and monks' relationship with other monasteries, with patrons, and with their natal villages in order to say something about the religious activities of the monks outside their monasteries.

The last two parts of the text (i.e. about the religious masters succeeding Bu ston and his immediate disciples) are not directly related to the period of history of Zha lu during the time of Bu ston and his disciples, and the information contained in these later biographies does not contribute significantly to the historical information I am interested in (i.e. the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries). Therefore I have chosen to omit these parts, but I have read all the biographies in the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* thoroughly, and extracted information relevant for my thesis. Although I will not give a full translation of the last two chapters of *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, I have made extensive use of the complete text in my research, and I also give detailed page references when I use the biographies contained in the latter half of the text. Given its importance, an index of personal names, an index of geographical names, and an index of technical terms from the entire biographical text is attached at the end of the thesis in order to provide easy access to information in all the biographies.

There are many scattered accounts of significant buildings and places in *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*. While it narrates the life stories, it also mentions the names of many important buildings at Ri sbug, although they no longer exist. Information about Ri sbug may also be gleaned from other Tibetan sources.

The *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* mentions rGyan gong Temple many times, in particular when it deals with the founder and founding date of the temple. According to some passages of the text, rGyan gong used to function as the reception station for prominent figures when they visited Zha lu monastery. The monks of Zha lu would prepare a welcoming procession (*ser sbrengs*) at rGyan gong to receive their honored guests. It was also here that the monks of Zha lu saw their lamas and other eminent scholars off when they departed from Zha lu to other regions.

1.5 Other Primary and Secondary Tibetan Sources

In addition to the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, in order to contextualize and analyze comparatively the information this biographical text offers, I have made use of a wide range of Tibetan historical sources connected with the history of Zha lu Monastery, including religious histories (*chos 'byung*), such as *Myang chos 'byung* 'The Religious History of the Myang [River Valley], a clan history (*gdung rabs*), e.g. the *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* 'The Genealogy of lCe Clan,' and monastic histories (*dgon pa'i dkar chag*) such as *Zha lu dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus* 'A Brief History of Zha lu Monastery' and *dPal zha lu'i gnas yig* 'Guidebook of the Glorious Zha lu' as well as other Tibetan historical sources that are listed in the bibliography. Furthermore, I scrutinize other Tibetan biographical texts, such as that of *sNyim pa'i me tog* 'A Handful of Flowers,' which is the life story of Bu ston composed by Rin chen nam rgyal, Bu ston's closest disciple. It was translated into English in 1966 by Ruegg (see chapter 2.1 below). I also consulted the *Jam mgon chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po'i rnam thar* 'Biography of the Great Dharma King Tsong kha pa' (1981), which is a life story of Tsong kha pa, the founder of the dGe lugs pa school, composed by Blo bzang 'phrin las nam rgyal in 1845. The latter reports on Tsong kha pa's visit to Zha lu and his studies under Bu ston's immediate disciples.²⁹ Many of the sources that I have used for Zha lu will also be used when I investigate the history of Ri sbug³⁰ and Zha lu's protector's chapel rGyan

²⁹ See *Tsong kha pa'i rnam thar* 1981: 126, 190.

³⁰ The hermitage is also described in other books about Zha lu. Among them, the most important include the *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs*, *Zha lu dgon gyi lo rgyus*, and *dPal zha lu'i gnas yig*.

gong. In the following, I will briefly introduce these Tibetan sources by discussing their composition dates, authorship, and contents.

The first source that I would like to discuss here is *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* 'The Genealogy of the Noble lCe Clan.' The full title of the text is *Chos grwa chen po dpal zha lu gser khang gi bdag po jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* 'The Genealogy of the Noble lCe, the Lords of the Great Monastic Seat, the Glorious Golden Temple of Zha lu'. The author of this genealogical text was a certain Amoghasiddhi or bKra shis don grub in Tibetan, a local Zha lu monk. The dates of the author are not certain. However, since the last abbot that Amoghasiddhi wrote about in his genealogical history was the eleventh abbot Lha'i btsun pa Blo bzang bstan pa who ascended to the throne between 1537 and 1543, it seems reasonable to assume that the *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* was composed sometime in the middle of the sixteenth century. In his colophon, Amoghasiddhi mentioned some of his source materials, including 'Phags pa thugs rje chen po'i dkar chag 'A Guide to [the image of] the Noble Avalokiteśvara' and *rNam thar mthong ba don ldan* 'Biography Called Meaningful to Behold' by sKu zhang Chos rje Rin chen mkhyen rab mchog grub (1436–1497). The *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* covers the historical period from the ancestors of the lCe clan to the ministers of the lCe family of the early Tibetan kings, including lCe lo tsā ba Jñānasiddhi and lCe khyi 'brug, until the middle of the sixteenth century.

The *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* is the oldest source material available as far as the history of Zha lu, Ri sbug, and rGyan gong is concerned. The *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* begins with a description of the location and landscape of the Zha lu region, the Nyang ro mthil 'Lower part of the Nyang Region' and likens the shape of the land of Zha lu to the body of Avalokiteśvara. This is followed by an account of the divine origin of the lCe clan, the lCe's migration from western Tibet to Yar klungs and then to gTsang. Then, the text records the founding dates of rGyan gong, Zha lu, and the Ri sbug Hermitage. The greater part of the genealogy is devoted to the detailed history of the sKu zhang, the secular rulers of Zha lu, and the first eleven abbots of Zha lu Monastery. Furthermore, it tells the stories about how the image of Avalokiteśvara, the main object of worship, and other statues were brought to Zha lu from India and other Tibetan areas. The *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* is a woodblock print of 55 folios and is probably printed at Zha lu. Selected parts of the *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs* were translated into English with extensive notes by Tucci in his *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* (1949: 656–662).

The next source on Zha lu is *Myang chos 'byung* 'The Religious History of Myang [River Valley]' written by Jo nang Tāranātha Kun dga' snying po (1575–1634), who is the

author of the famous *History of Buddhism in India*.³¹ The *Myang chos 'byung* was republished in modern book shape in Lhasa in 1983 with the title *Myang yul stod smad bar gsum gyi ngo mtshar gtam gyi legs bshad mkhas pa'i 'jug ngogs* 'The Excellent Description of the Upper, Intermediate, and Lower Myang Regions [called] the Entrance of the Scholars.' Starting with an explanation of the name of the Myang River and its surrounding mountains, *Myang chos 'byung* covers the history of all the important places in the area. Tāranātha provides information on the division of the Myang River Valley into three administrative zones, namely the Upper, Middle, and Lower Myang River Valley (*Myang yul stod smad bar gsum*). He provides information on the character of the inhabitants, crops, animals, and products as well as the traditional market places in the area. Most of the text is devoted to the establishment of monasteries and famous masters and secular leaders who ruled the area during the early period of the Second Diffusion of Buddhism and up till the seventeenth century. As far as the history of the Zha lu Monastery is concerned, *Myang chos 'byung* devotes a long chapter to it, from page 108 to page 180. To the best of my knowledge, this is one of the earliest available sources, second only to *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs*. The *Myang chos 'byung* provides ample information regarding the landscape, the founding date and the founder of Zha lu Monastery and the rGyan gong Temple. Moreover, the text includes important descriptions of the different chapels of Zha lu and their objects of worship as well as the life story of Bu ston Rin chen grub.

Other sources that I have made use of in my investigation include *dBus gtsang gi gnas rten rags rim* 'A Brief Description of the Holy Places of dBus and gTsang.'³² This pilgrims' guidebook was written by 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po (1820–1892) during his pilgrimage to Central Tibet in 1851. It was translated with extensive footnotes by Alfonsa Ferrari, student of Tucci. Because of her untimely death the work was not finished, but the remaining work was completed and edited by Luciano Petech with the help of Hugh Richardson and published posthumously in 1958 as *mK'yen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places in Central Tibet*. *mK'yen brtse's Guide* covers a large geographical area and does, albeit briefly, mention some of the most important reliquaries and objects of worship in Ri sbug and rGyan gong on one folio page.³³ The next book is the *dBus gtsang gnas yig* 'Guidebook to

³¹ *History of Buddhism in India* was translated into German as *Tāranātha's Geschichte des Buddhismus in Indien* by Anton Schiefner in St. Petersburg and published in 1869; then it was translated into the English language by Lama Chimpa and Alaka Chattopadhyaya and published in 1970.

³² The full title of the Tibetan work is *dBus gtsang gi gnas rten rags rim gyi mtshan byang mdor bsdu dad pa'i sa bon*, 'A Brief List of Names of Some of the Holy Places and Images of dBus and gTsang called the Seed of Faith.' See Ferrari 1958: 37.

³³ *dBus gtsang gnas rten*, fol. 17v. and Ferrari 1958: 19-20.

Central Tibet' written by Kaḥ thog Si tu Chos kyi rgya mtsho (1880–1925), a later follower of mKhyen brtse's route. The text that I have been using is photographically reproduced from the original Tibetan xylograph by Khams sprul Don brgyud nyi ma and is published by Sungrab Nyamso Gyunphel Parkhang in 1972. This book was based on his pilgrimage to Central Tibet between 1918 and 1920. Providing only a simple description of the landscape of Ri sbug, Kaḥ thog Si tu was more interested in the shrines and the holy objects contained in the Ri sbug Hermitage of which he offers a five-page long description.³⁴ At the same time, he gives relatively good information regarding the precise location of the different chapels within the Ri sbug Hermitage site. One weak point of Si tu's guide, from a historian's point of view, is that it provides too detailed lists of the names of the images and monuments and too little on the actual history of, e.g. Ri sbug. Kaḥ thog's guide book was republished in Lha sa in 1999 under the title of *Kaḥ thog si tu'i dbus gtsang gnas yig* 'Kaḥ thog Si tu's Guidebook of Central Tibet' by Bod ljongs bod yig dpe mying dpe skrun khang 'Tibetan Ancient Book Publishing House.' This edition consists of a total of 392 pages. However, in my research I have consulted mainly the photographically reproduced text.³⁵ The books written by Kaḥ thog Si tu and mKhyen brtse belong to what we call the 'pilgrimage guide' (*gnas skor lam yig*) genre of Tibetan literature which shares some features with the 'religio-historical records' (*chos 'byung*) genre. And likewise the *Myang chos 'byung* mentioned above, which from its title we know belongs to the *chos 'byung* genre, also shares some features of a traditional guidebook (*gnas yig*), because it describes the monasteries founded along the Myang river in the same manner as guidebook authors usually do.

In addition to mKhyen brtse's and Kaḥ thog Si tu's books, three recent publications appeared in Lha sa respectively in 1987, 2005, and in 2008. These are written by contemporary Tibetan researchers and monk scholars in the Tibetan language. The first one is entitled *Zha lu dgon gyi lo rgyus mdor bsdus* 'A Brief History of Zha lu Monastery' written by sKal bzang and rGyal po, both local monks at Zha lu, who base their descriptions on the *Myang chos 'byung* as well as on other sources.³⁶ The second one is entitled *dPal zha lu'i gnas yig* 'Guidebook of the Glorious Zha lu' written in 2005 by Blo gsal rgya mtsho,³⁷ a native

³⁴ The description of Ri sbug covers pages 414 to 418 of *dBus gtsang gnas yig*.

³⁵ I am indebted to my supervisor for informing me about the existence of Kaḥ thog Si tu's guide and for lending me her copy.

³⁶ The other sources that sKal bzang and rGyal po used include *An Incomplete Guide Book of the Ancient Zha lu (gNa' rabs zha lu'i gnas yig cha tshang min zhig)*, *sNyim pa'i me tog*, *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, and *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs*. See *Zha lu dgon gyi lo rgyus* 1987: 46.

³⁷ Blo gsal rgyal mtsho was born in Zha lu in 1966. When he was eighteen years old, he gave up the chance of going to university and became a monk at Zha lu. Since the year 2000, he has been the vice chairman and general secretary of the Buddhist Association of gZhis ka rtse Prefecture and director of the Democratic

monk scholar and the director of the Democratic Management Committee of Zha lu Monastery.³⁸ He used Kah thog Si tu's book as his main source. Blo gsal rgya mtsho's guidebook recounts the history of both Zha lu Monastery and Ri sbug Hermitage. About Ri sbug, it provides detailed descriptions of the main assembly hall and the colleges attributed to Bu ston, the protector's chapel as well as the stupas that were later built in the vicinity of the main assembly hall. This book focuses on the holy objects of worship in the past, particularly the sKu 'bum mThong grol Chen mo 'The Great Stupa that Liberates upon Sight.'³⁹ The third book is *gZhis rtse'i gnas yig* 'Guidebook to gZhis ka rtse Prefecture,'⁴⁰ written by Chos 'phel as a part of a series of pilgrimage guidebooks to monasteries in Central Tibet. This book includes most of the important monasteries in gZhis ka rtse Prefecture, and it provides some information regarding the historical and present situation of Ri sbug within one and half pages⁴¹ and mentions what can be seen today of the remains of the original hermitage. *gZhis rtse'i gnas yig* 'Guidebook to gZhis ka rtse Prefecture' can be said to be a modern pilgrimage guide based on traditional narratives and current interviews, and the language and terminology it uses are relatively simple and modern.

These three works are meant as pilgrims' guides for the general public providing information about the monastery and its hermitage. Unfortunately no sources on which they base their information are given, although earlier sources like Amoghasiddhi's *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs*, Tāranātha's *Myang chos 'byung*, and Blo gsal bstan skyong's *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* would have been easily available and have actually been used. The four contemporary writers mentioned here do provide some new information about the present situation of Zha lu and origins of some of the main objects of Ri sbug not found from other publications, and in that respect they are useful. Particularly *dPal zha lu'i gnas yig* 'Guidebook of the Glorious Zha lu', gives first hand information, and particularly useful is the c. forty-page long description (pp. 65–104) of Ri sbug Hermitage not described elsewhere.

Management Committee of Zha lu Monastery (*spyi lo 2000 lo nas da bar gzhis rtse sa gnas nang bstan mthun tshogs kyi tshogs gtso gzhon pa dang drung yig chen mo ba/ zha lu dgon dmang gtso bdag gnyer u yon lhan khang gi kru'u rin bcas gnang mus lags*). See the cover page of *dPal zha lu'i gnas yig* 2005.

³⁸ The book was published in Lha sa around 2005 and is preserved in the TBRC digital library with the work number 2DB4542. Although the TBRC edition does not state the publishing date, in a passage of the book (p. 11), when it discusses the founding date of Zha lu, it states, "It has passed 1002 years since the founding of the monastery till the year of 2005."

³⁹ Since sKu 'bum mThong grol chen mo is one of the three most important monuments at Ri sbug today, I will include a brief history of this stupa in Chapter 4.

⁴⁰ In addition to *gZhis rtse'i gnas yig* (2008, series No. 3), Chos 'phel has composed three other guidebooks in this series including: *Lho ka'i gnas yig* 'Guidebook of Lhokha Prefecture' (2002, series No. 1), *Lha sa'i gnas yig* 'Guidebook of Lha sa Prefecture' (2004, series No. 2), and *mNga' ris kyi gnas yig* 'Guidebook of Ngari Prefecture' (2008, series No. 4).

⁴¹ *gZhis rtse'i gnas yig* 2008: 158–160.

Very little of the historical development and current situation of Ri sbug is recorded in the books written by western travelers or researchers. There is, however, one sentence about Ri sbug in Keith Dowman's *The Power-Places of Central Tibet* ([1988] 2008), which is based on Ferrari's translation of *mK'yen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*, and on his own extended travels in Central Tibet. Ri sbug is also briefly mentioned in a couple of guidebooks, including Victor Chan's *Tibet Handbook*⁴² and Gyurme Dorje's *Tibet Handbook*;⁴³ in both only one short paragraph is devoted to Ri sbug. Compared to the guidebooks mentioned above, the latter guidebooks provide very sketchy information, and they are often limited to identifying the most important objects and images and the founder.

1.6 The Tibetan Biographical Genre

This thesis is primarily based on Tibetan primary sources, particularly on a close reading and translation of a part of the main source, the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*. Although written during the nineteenth century, it is written in the classical Tibetan style and it belongs to a special literary genre what the researchers categorized as holy biography or what the Tibetans call *rnam thar*.⁴⁴ The terms 'vita' and 'hagiography' are used for biographies of Christian saints and have also become general terms for sacred biographies in other religious traditions. Tibetan holy biographies are in many ways similar to Christian hagiographies, there are also differences. One difference is that Tibetan *rnam thar* often also describes the former lives of a religious master. Concerning the content of *rnam thar*, Blo bzang 'Phrin las rnam rgyal states in his *rJe tsong kha pa chen po'i rnam thar* 'The Biography of the Great Venerable Tsong kha pa.'⁴⁵

"A biography of the elect is either a series of their former births or, generally speaking, a narrative of their prodigious virtues on the three fold plane, physical, verbal, and spiritual, which surpass those of common people and, in particular, the method of purification in learning the sacred doctrine and reflecting and meditating upon it." (Tucci's translation)⁴⁶

⁴² See Chan 1994: 411

⁴³ See Gyurme Dorje 1999: 272–275.

⁴⁴ For a discussion of genres of Tibetan literature, see Cabezon and Jackson 1996.

⁴⁵ *Tsong kha pa'i rnam thar* 1981: 10.

⁴⁶ Tucci 1949: 151.

Chapter 3 The Zha lu Monastery

When studying monastic history, significant matters requiring investigation include the location of the monastery, the founder and the founding date, the name of the monastery, the architectural structure and the holy objects that it contains. This chapter therefore aims, based on the primary and secondary sources mentioned above, to provide a discussion regarding these aspects of Zha lu Monastery. I also add some information based on my own observations during my fieldwork at the monastic site in recent years, including the landscape surrounding Zha lu.

In this chapter, I present a general historical account of the Zha lu Monastery regarding its founder, the founding date, and the main sanctuary of the monastery. At the same time, I will raise some specific and critical questions relating to the founding date of Zha lu Monastery and what the name Zha lu means. The chapter contains the following seven sub-sections: (1) the historical background, (2) the location of Zha lu Monastery, (3) the history of the Myang Region, (4) the founder of Zha lu, lCe btsun shes rab 'byung gnas, (5) the founding date of the monastery, (6) the naming tradition of Tibetan Buddhist schools, and (7) the origin of the name of Zha lu Monastery.

3.1 The Historical Background

Before we discuss the actual history of Zha lu Monastery, such as its founding, school affiliation and scholarly activities, it will be useful to provide a brief and general overview of the historical background of Tibetan Buddhism, especially the history of the Second Diffusion of Buddhism in which Zha lu Monastery was founded and during which what has been coined as the 'Zha lu doctrine' in historical records was established.⁸¹

The first introduction of Buddhism occurred in Tibet during the reign of the Tibetan king Srong btsan sGam po (A.D. 609–649) who was on the throne in the middle of the seventh century, whom Tibetan records reckon as the thirty-third in the king's lineage. According to the major Tibetan historical sources such as *Chos byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* of dPa' bo gTsong lag phreng ba (1503–1565),⁸² *gNas rnying chos 'byung*, and *Deb ther sngon po* 'The Blue Annals' of 'Gos Lo tsā ba, *Shes bya kun khyab* of Kong sprul Yon tan rgya mtsho (1813–1899), Srong btsan sGam po dispatched Thon mi Sambhoṭa together with sixteen

⁸¹ For a recent discussion of the spread of Buddhism in Tibet, see Kapstein 2000.

⁸² The narratives about Srong btsan sGam po can be found in *Chos byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*. See e.g. *Chos byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* 1986: 180–183.

youths to India in order to learn the Sanskrit language and to acquire Buddhist texts. Western scholars believe that writing was brought to Tibet also for administrative purposes at this time, while Tibetan sources and older western research mainly emphasize that the purpose of creating the Tibetan script was in order to translate religious texts. The Tibetan histories state that after having returned to Tibet, Sambhoṭa developed the Tibetan script and translated some major texts, including *sPyan ras gzigs kyi mdo rgyud nyer gcig* 'Twenty-One Sūtras and Tantras of Avalokiteśvara'.⁸³ These Buddhist texts were supposed to be the first Sanskrit texts ever translated into the Tibetan language. At that time, the records say that Srong btsan sGam po married a Chinese and a Nepalese princess with the aim of establishing the Buddha's teaching in Tibet.

From ancient time the land of Tibet was conceived mythologically as a demoness laying on her back, and she was believed to be opposed to the introduction of Buddhism. Therefore, in order to subdue her and bring about the propagation of Buddhism, the king is said to have commissioned the construction of twelve temples at parts of her body, referred to as 'subjugation of peripheral and further peripheral [regions]' (*mtha' 'dul yang 'dul*) with the purpose of preventing local spirits and demons from creating troubles for the propagation of Buddhism. These temples were built in three sets of four: (1) four for the central regions, referred to as the 'four horns' (*ru bzhi*);⁸⁴ (2) four to subdue the border regions (*mtha' 'dul*) and (3) four for the outer regions (*yang 'dul*).⁸⁵ After these building projects were carried out, which the Tibetan sources say were done with the assistance of his Chinese and Nepalese wives, Srong btsan sGam po built the Jo khang at the heart of the demoness and this completed his subjugation of evil spirits. Jokhang, along with Ra mo che and Khra 'brug, were supposed to be the earliest temples of Central Tibet, from which Buddhism then spread.

In this way, Buddhism was, according to Tibetan historians, introduced into Tibet. Thereafter, Buddhism further flourished during the following two centuries. During the reign of Glang dar ma (c. 803–842), however, an anti-Buddhist campaign supporting the indigenous religion was carried out and Buddhists were persecuted. Tucci states in *The Religion of Tibet* (1980), "The persecution carried out by Glang dar ma, who was assassinated in 842, dealt a devastating blow to the Buddhist community of monks, which not only lost the protection of the court, but was also deprived of all its property."⁸⁶ As a result, Glang dar ma was

⁸³ *Chos byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston* 1986: 182.

⁸⁴ The sources say that the four *ru gnön* temples were built on the palms of the hands and soles of feet of the demoness. See *g. Yu yi phreng ba* 1989: 198.

⁸⁵ See Aris 1979: 15-20.

⁸⁶ Tucci 1980: 16.

assassinated, and Tibet became decentralized. According to Samten G. Karmay, it was institutional Buddhism that lost royal support at the time of Glang dar ma, and later Tibetan history has unjustly portrayed him as an evil and anti-Buddhist king. Karmay writes that Buddhism continued to flourish, at least in its Tantric form, while institutional Buddhism disintegrated due to lack of state support,⁸⁷ and the strict upkeep of the monastic code, the Vinaya, which is regarded to be the core of monastic Buddhism, disintegrated.

Approximately eighty years (some say one hundred years) after the assassination of the last Tibetan king in 842, Buddhism was reintroduced by Lha Lama Ye shes 'od from mNga' ris in western Tibet and the followers of Bla chen dGongs pa rab gsal from present-day A mdo province in eastern Tibet. As they mainly restored the monastic code, which they thought of as the core of the Buddha's teachings, these events became subsequently known as *stod 'dul* 'the monastic code [restored from] the Upper Part [of Tibet]' and *smad 'dul* 'the monastic code [restored from] the Lower Part [of Tibet]'.

The monastic discipline from Lower Tibet was introduced in the end of the tenth century by Bla chen's disciples, who were known as the 'Ten Men of dBus gTsang' (*dbus gtsang mi bcu*).⁸⁸ Along with the reintroduction of the Vinaya teachings, many monastic communities were established throughout Central Tibet by 'ten men' and their disciples. Among these ten men, Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug (tenth to eleventh centuries), the teacher of lCe btsun Shes rab 'byung gnas (b. 973), built a temple called rGyan gong near Zha lu, which some earlier Zha lu lamas acknowledged as the grandmother monastery of the Zha lu school.⁸⁹

Zha lu's important status in Tibetan history is prominent, and Zha lu became among the most influential regional powers in terms of both religion and politics during the thirteenth century. This was the historical era when the Sa skya pa became the ruling power of Tibet with the support of the Yuan Dynasty.

During the thirteenth century, approximately one century before what is called 'the Zha lu doctrine' flourished, the Mongols became a dominant power in Asia and the Mongol

⁸⁷ Karmay 1988: 8–9.

⁸⁸ According to the *Bu ston chos 'byung or Bu ston's History of Buddhism*, the ten men of dBus and gTsang included five men from dBus and five from gTsang. The five men from dBus were: 1. Klag pa lam pa Klu mes tshul khrims, 2) Shes rab 'bring Ye shes yon tan, 3) Rag shi Tshul khrims 'byung gnas, 4) rBa Tshul khrims blo gros, and 5) Sum pa Ye shes blo, and five from gTsang were: 1) mGur mo Rab kha pa Lo ston rDo rje dbang phyug, 2) Shab sgo lnga'i Tshong btsun Shes rab seng ge, 3, 4) mNga' ris pa 'Od brgyad sbung nyis, 5) U pa de dkar pa. See Obermiller 1931: 202, part II.

⁸⁹ It is stated in *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, "Khyung po says that rGyan gong was the foremost of all temples established at the time when the Buddha's teaching prospered from the lower part of Tibet (*khyung po na re/ rgyan gong bstan pa smad nas dar ba'i dus kyi gtsug lag khang thams cad kyi ma mo yin*). See *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, p. 357.

army was threatening Tibet. When the Mongols approached the border, the Tibetan chieftains assembled to negotiate with Genghis Khan. In *Religions of Tibet* (1980), Tucci states "By this time, *Sa skya pa* monks had already achieved great authority, but the other most powerful monasteries were also competing for favor of the Mongols. The *Sa skya pa* emerged from this competition as the winners."⁹⁰ Eventually, the *Sa skya pa*, one of the four major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, was able to establish the relationship known to historians as the 'priest and patron' (*mchod yon*)⁹¹ relationship between the Tibetan and the Mongol ruler. *Sa skya Paṇḍita's* nephew, Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1235–1280), was summoned to the court where he conferred Kublai Khan, the chief of Mongols, with the empowerment of Hevajra. For his spiritual teachings and empowerment, the emperor in return granted him the sovereignty over Tibet. In this way, from the middle of the thirteenth century, the *Sa skya pa* had gained dominant power in terms of political and religious matters. The successive heads of the *Sa skya School* became the rulers of Tibet, which was comprised of the three regions (*chol kha gsum*), i.e. *dBus gTsang*, *A mdo*, and *Khams*.⁹² During this time the *dBus gTsang* region was also further subdivided into thirteen myriarchies (division of 10,000, Tib. *khri skor bcu gsum*)⁹³ or administrative divisions, in which *Zha lu* formed a part known as the *Zha lu Myriarchy* (*Zha lu khri skor*). Among the thirteen myriarchies, *Zha lu* was classified, according to its geographical location, as one of the six throne-holders of the *gTsang* province. The chieftain of the *Zha lu Myriarchy* was known as *Zha lu khri dpon*, meaning 'the head of *Zha lu Myriarchy*.'

At that time, *Zha lu* was able to develop a close relationship with the *Sa skya pa*, who was the ruler of the territory under imperial edict, through a marriage between *Ma gcig mKha' 'gro 'bum*,⁹⁴ the daughter of *A mes Sangs rgyas ye shes* of the *lCe* clan and *Phyag na rdo rje* (1239–1267),⁹⁵ the son of *Zangs tsha bSod nams rgyal mtshan*, the *Sa skya* chieftain

⁹⁰ Tucci 1980: 27.

⁹¹ Tib. *mchod yon* means 'patron and priest', resembling the relationship between some emperors and popes in European history. See Tucci 1980: 27.

⁹² The three regions of Tibet is the traditional division of the Tibetan administration in which *dBus gtsang* is the Central Tibetan area, *A mdo* is the northeastern Tibetan area and *Khams* the southeastern Tibetan area.

⁹³ The thirteen myriarchies were established by *Sa skya Lama Chos rgyal 'phags pa* when he became the sovereign of *dBus gtsang* under the imperial order of Kubilai Khan (*Se chen rgyal po*). The thirteen myriarchies are divided into six myriarchies in *gTsang*, which are: Southern *La stod*, Northern *La stod*, *mGur mo*, *Chu mig*, *Shangs* and *Zha lu*, six myriarchies in *dBus*, which are: *rGya ma*, *'Bri gung*, *Tshal pa*, *Thang po che*, *Phag mo gru*, and *g.Ya' bzung*, and *Yar 'brog stag lung* myriarchy, the *khri skor* belonging neither to *dBus* nor to *gTsang*. See *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo* 2003: 346 and *Chos kyi rnam grangs* 1988: 384.

⁹⁴ *g.Yu yi phreng ba* (1990: 85) states, however, that *mKha' 'gro 'bum* was the daughter of *sKu zhang rNga sgra*, the interior minister of the Mongol emperor. But according to *Tāranātha*, *mKha' 'gro 'bum* was the sister of *sKu zhang rNga sgra*. They were two (girl and boy) of the six children of *A mes Sangs rgyas ye shes*. See *Myang chos 'byung* 1983: 165.

⁹⁵ About the life of *Phyag na rdo rje*, see *g.Yu yi phreng ba* 1990: 84-85.

known as *bdag chen*.⁹⁶ As a result of the marriage, Zha lu gained substantial political and economic support from Sa skya pa and the Yuan court and enjoyed greater power and higher reputation than the other chieftains in dBus gTsang. It was during this time that the head of Zha lu Myriarchy was granted the title of sKu zhang, meaning 'The Imperial Uncle'. This is confirmed in Vitali's *The Early Temples of Central Tibet* where Vitali states, "Because of this marriage, A mes Sangs rgyas ye shes was awarded the title sku zhang [respected uncle] of the Sa skya rulers of Tibet."⁹⁷ In the lineage of the Zha lu chieftains, A mes Sangs rgyas ye shes became the first ruler who received the *sku zhang* title, a title in use until the middle of the twentieth century.

When Bu ston Rin chen grub was invited to Zha lu Monastery to become the abbot between 1320 and 1356, the chieftain during the first six years of his abbacy was sKu zhang Grags pa rgyal mtshan, and he was succeeded by sKu zhang Kun dga' don grub. The latter is recorded to be the ruler of the Zha lu Myriarchy between 1326 and 1350s.⁹⁸ During the reign of Grags pa rgyal mtshan, Zha lu underwent a substantial renovation with the support of Sa skya and the Yuan court. Both the interior and exterior of the monastery appeared in a new architectural style, with the roofs of glazed tiles in the Yuan style. While Rin chen nam rgyal was the abbot of the Zha lu monastic seat between 1356 and 1388, the chieftain of the Zha lu Myriarchy was Du dben sha Legs pa don grub (the second half of the fourteenth century), who was said to have earnestly supported Rin chen nam rgyal's teachings and his idea to preserve precious texts and relics of Ri sbug, the hermitage of Zha lu Monastery.

3.2 The Location of the Monastery

Zha lu Monastery is situated in the region known as the lower Myang River Valley (Myang smad), one of the three regions along the Myang river in gTsang of Central Tibet. The full name of the monastery is dPal Zha lu gser khang khra mo which can be translated as 'the Glorious Zha lu the Multicolored Golden Temple' and in some accounts, Zha lu is metaphorically referred to as the second Bodhgaya of Tibet,⁹⁹ which indicates the importance

⁹⁶ This marriage was followed by a second marriage between Zha lu and Sa skya pa, between the son of Phyang na rdo rje and Jo jo stag 'bum, the sister of mKha' 'gro 'bum.

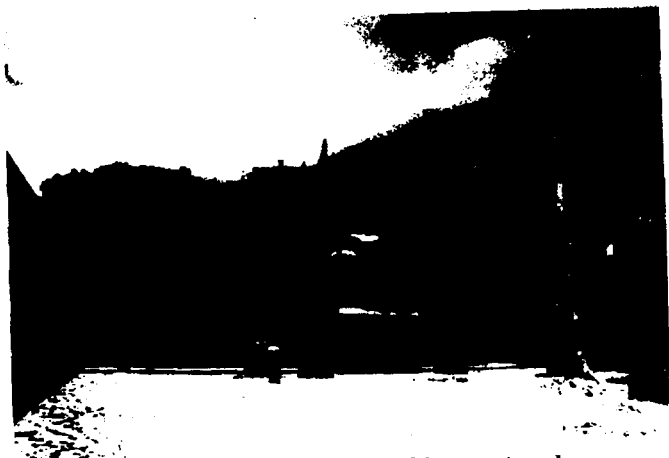
⁹⁷ Vitali 1990: 99.

⁹⁸ See *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs*, TBRC, fol. 48v.

⁹⁹ See for instance the author's statement in *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs*: "For the benefit of later generations and for the sake of the courageous people such as sKu zhangs of the throne-holders of the glorious Zha lu the Golden Temple, the second Bodhgaya of Tibet, Amoghasiddhi wrote this in order to obtain the retention of unforgettable memory. May virtue and excellence increase!" (*phyi rabs kyi skye bo rnams la phan pa'i phyir/ bod kyi rdo rje gdan gnyis pa dpal zha lu'i gser khang gi bdag po'i bla ma'i sku'i zhang sogs zhen rus chen ba rnams kyi don du mi brjed gzungs su yi ge bkod pa/dge legs 'phel bar gyur cig*). *Jo bo lce'i gdung rabs*, TBRC fol. 55v. or p. 110.

and sacredness of the monastery. For Tāranātha, the surrounding area of Zha lu Monastery was conceived as the abode of Avalokiteśvara.

The monastery is located about nineteen kilometers to the south of the city of gZhis ka rtse,¹⁰⁰ the present day prefectural capital. Today, Zha lu frequently receives pilgrims from remote regions of Tibet, constant visits of local devotees, as well as tourists from the mainland China and abroad. From a walking pilgrim's perspective, it is about a four-hour walk from gZhis ka



The Zha lu Monastery and its courtyard
Photo: Havnevik 2007

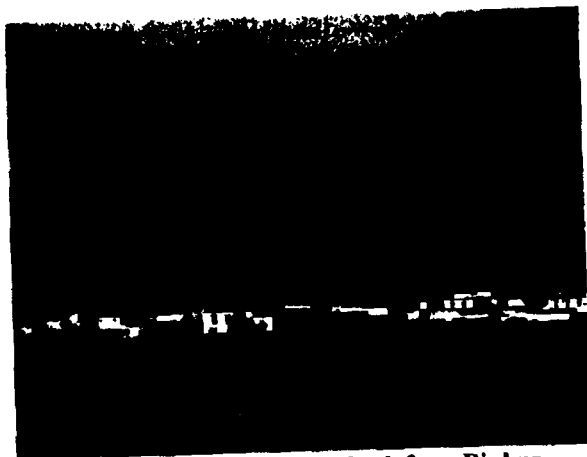
rtse along the main road to rGyal rtse.¹⁰¹ From Tshong 'dus village,¹⁰² which is the closest village located at the turn off to Zha lu, the monastery lies to the south of the main road, about four kilometers further up the Zha lu valley, and the turquoise-colored glazed tiles of Zha lu's roofs are clearly visible from a distance. After the turn off to the right at Tshong 'dus, with a huge black rock and many prayer flags hanging from trees, one will first pass the two-storey temple of rGyan gong, which is believed to be the first monastery established in Central Tibet at the beginning of the Second Diffusion of Buddhism. Since rGyan gong has been closely associated with Zha lu since the eleventh century, I will write more in detail about this temple in chapter 6 below.

¹⁰⁰ The distance is recorded by Batchelor (1987: 307) and Chan (1994: 401). The distance proposed by Gyurme Dorje (1999: 275) seems a little exaggerated, especially when he gives 49 kilometers from rGyal rtse to Zha lu.

¹⁰¹ This time measurement for trekking is given by Chan (1994: 400).

¹⁰² Tshong 'dus, meaning 'market place,' is an important village situated approximately nineteen kilometers to the southeast of gZhis ka rtse, at the turn off to Zha lu Monastery on the main road to rGyal rtse. Today it has about one hundred households with about six hundred people. Farming is the main livelihood of the village, and the main crops are barley, wheat, buckwheat, beans, and rapeseed, while the main livestock are cows and Tibetan sheep and goats. Today many young villagers, both men and women, go out of the village to the cities and bigger towns in other parts of Tibet in search of extra income in summer when farming is not busy. According to *rGya bod yig tshang chen mo* (1985: 371), during the time of sKu zhang [Kun dga' don grub], in the beginning of the fourteenth century, a palace called Tshong 'dus 'Phrul spe was built here and according to *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, the village is the birth place of some renowned Zha lu masters including Khyung lhas pa, a disciple of Bu ston, and also the home of Tshong 'dus Khri khang rgyal po. See *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, pp. 77 and 165. See also *Bod ljongs sa ming* 1995: 74.

Zha lu was built in the center of a plain like bSam yas Monastery, the first Buddhist establishment of Tibet on the north bank of the Brahmaputra. In the near past, before the Cultural Revolution, Zha lu was a very active and lively Buddhist studying center with multiple activities. In addition to its main temple known as Zha lu mThil, there used to be many hermitages and small monasteries and nunneries in the



Zha lu as seen on the way back from Ri sbug
Photo: Puchung Tsering 2010

vicinity of Zha lu. Among them are Ri sbug,¹⁰³ dGa' lung,¹⁰⁴ dBen rtsa,¹⁰⁵ Chos lung,¹⁰⁶ Rāja shar,¹⁰⁷ gNas gsar dge 'phel,¹⁰⁸ Byams pa gling,¹⁰⁹ and Chos phug,¹¹⁰ most of which are recorded to be founded by Zha lu masters. Many of these remain in ruins today. Among these hermitages, parts of the most important one, Ri sbug, exist today, and after having given the history of Zha lu I present Ri sbug and then of some other smaller hermitages nearby. Currently, in addition to many old village houses, the monastery is surrounded by many newly developed secular buildings, including dwelling houses of farmers, tailors and artisans – as well as buildings of small businesses in the Zha lu village. Furthermore, nearby, on the west side of the monastery, there is a large building, a scriptural college (*bshad grwa*), which was completed in 2008 as part of restoring the historical college that existed before 1959. The aim is to resume the philosophical teachings of the Zha lu tradition. Like the case is at other

¹⁰³ On the history of Ri sbug, see chapter 6.

¹⁰⁴ The dGa' lung is located to the north of Ri sbug and it is associated with Zha lu master bSod nam 'phel (1361-1438). According to *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* (p. 113), it was here that the omniscient Rin po che bSod nam 'phel gave the transmissions of 'the Collected Works of Bu ston' (*Bu ston gsung 'bum*) to Lama Rin bral ba and many others.

¹⁰⁵ The dBen rtsa Monastery was originally a hermitage situated in the Upper Zha lu (Zha lu phu) and according to the *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* (p. 113), it was built by Zha lu master Kun mkhyen Rin po che bSod nam 'phel sometime between 1401 and 1403.

¹⁰⁶ The Chos lung Hermitage is located in the upper part of the sky burial site named Zur gsum ri, situated to the east of Zha lu Monastery. It is associated with Chos rje dka' bzhi pa. See *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, pp. 139 and 165.

¹⁰⁷ Tāranātha gives a different spelling Rā dza shar and pointed out that it is located in the upper Zha lu valley (Zha lu'i phu) and was the residence of Ko brag pa bSod nam rgyal mtshan, who lived between 1170 and 1249. See *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed* (143) and *Myang chos 'byung* 1983: 148. *mKhan brgyud rnam thar* (p. 182) states that it is the place where Thar lo Nyi ma rgyal mtshan spent a long time in meditation retreat.

¹⁰⁸ gNas gsar dge 'phel is located in the upper west part of Zha lu. See *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, p. 448.

¹⁰⁹ Ri khrod Byams pa gling, which remains as ruins today, is a small nunnery near Zha lu Monastery. The Byams pa gling Nunnery is about one and half hour walk to the north of Zha lu, halfway up a steep side valley. In the vicinity are the remains of several stupas. See *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, p. 347 and Chan 1994: 411.

¹¹⁰ The Chos phug is a small monastery locating to the north of Ri sbug and was founded by Khyung lhas pa gZhon nu bsod nam towards the end of his life. See *mKhan brgyud rnam thar*, p. 77.

important monasteries in the Tibet Autonomous Region such philosophical colleges are being restored, like e.g. at Sa skya, and Nalanda in 'Phan po.

When I visited Zha lu Monastery in the summer of 2010, a large open square in front of the monastery's main entrance, as well as a two-storey guest house on the right side of the entrance were being built. All the old buildings in front of the main gate have been demolished in order to make an open square, which makes the monastery visible immediately on one's arrival in the village. This newly built open square is made of stone and is almost double the size of the former space before 2009. Such open squares have also recently been made in front of many other historical monasteries all over Tibetan areas, examples being the Jo khang, the Potala, bKra shis lhun po, and one is being proposed to be built in front of the dGa' ldan Chos 'khor gling in the Shangs district, just to mention a few. This is a government policy of modernizing the monasteries in order to upkeep Tibetan culture and to attract tourists.

3.3 The History of the Myang Region

The name of the Myang region is also spelled Nyang in some earlier texts such as *gNas rnying chos 'byung*.¹¹¹ Myang refers to the large area that covers all the places located along the Myang River, a tributary of the gTsang po or Brahmaputra River. Myang actually means 'taste' and Tāranātha explains that the reason why this area was named Myang is to recall a legend about Padmasambhava. In his *Myang chos 'byung*, Tāranātha states,

[In the beginning] Ācārya Padmasambhava, together with his retinue consisting of twenty-five kings, ministers, and subjects (*rje 'bangs nyer lnga*), climbed the mountain named *Bya rgod spungs pa'i ri bo che* ('The Great Vulture's Peak' or Skt. *Gr̥dhrakūṭaparvata*), also called *'Dod yon spungs pa'i ri bo che* ('The Great Mountain of Heaped Desirable Qualities') and blessed the surrounding areas. At the same moment, Indra, the king of gods, came there with a crystal vase filled with nectar in his hands. [Indra] handed over the vase of nectar to the Ācārya and asked him to taste the divine nectar. The Ācārya blessed the nectar vase, which from then on could never become empty. He then miraculously multiplied the number of the nectar vases enough for his twenty-five disciples and told them,

¹¹¹ *gNas rnying chos 'byung* TBRC. 2006: 16, 17, 63, and so on.