INTRODUCTION

Since the 8th century onwards, Tibet has been the theatre of religious developments that were to shape its destiny over the centuries. Traditional accounts of these religious developments are now mostly known from Buddhist sources written as early as the 11th and the 12th centuries. In these works, Bon is essentially depicted as an ancient religion which flourished since time immemorial down to the historical kings (7th–9th century), and which was defeated during alleged debates opposing the masters of the Bon tradition to those of the newly introduced faith. The Bon historical tradition itself has retained traces of these debates which actually look like magical battles between siddhas of both sides. In Bon texts, the results of these debates are obviously seen in a different light but the decline of Bon and the actual persecution it had to face during the 8th century are described in interesting anecdotal terms which give them a semblance of historical events.

After the collapse of the royal power in Central Tibet at the end of the 9th century and the beginnings of the second spread of Buddhism in the late 10th and early 11th centuries, Bon pos appear on the religious scene as a fully organised tradition, able to compete with the Buddhist traditions that were spread during the royal period and with those newly introduced at that time.

The three kinds of Bon

From the view-point of modern followers of Bon, their tradition represents the original religion of Tibet that was spread in Zhang zhung,
Tibet and several other geographically related areas since ancient times down to the present day. In the view of modern Bon pos, the Bon tradition was spread in 360 countries, including India, China, etc.

Moreover, according to traditional indigenous accounts of Bon, several Enlightened Beings (sangs rgyas) appeared during this kalpa and sTon pa gshen rab was the 8th of them. Before reaching enlightenment, he followed the teachings of gShen lha ‘od dkar in a pure realm (zhing khams) and then incarnated on the human level of existence in order to guide beings and to liberate them from the circle of rebirths. With this perspective in mind, contemporaneous Bon pos consider that three kinds of Bon have existed and that at least two of them are now still being practised in Tibet, and to a lesser extent in India:

— The first is known as the “old Bon” (bon rnying) which was practised in Tibet itself before the coming of sTon pa gshen rab to the Land of Snows where he converted some Bon pos practising animal sacrifices and rituals now loosely related to some of the causal Vehicles (rgyu’i theg pa) of the second kind of Bon.\(^4\) This religious tradition seems to have been somehow connected to the ancient (and in some cases legendary) kings of Tibet as particular priests were directly connected to the royal power and known as sku gshen or “Priests of the Body”, i.e., the king’s body. This royal cult survived even after the introduction of Buddhism in the 7th century and was still practised in the 8th century, before being slowly discarded during the reign of the later religious kings (chos kyi rgyal po). In its royal cult-related aspect, this tradition has disappeared but some ritual practices that are probably related to it are still to be seen on the borders of the cultural areas of Tibet. It was eventually suppressed during the period of the religious kings (8th–9th centuries) by the followers of the Buddhist religion.

\(^4\) These are only connected in some ways, as followers of the second kind of Bon prohibited animal sacrifices. Many of the names and ritual practices associated with these Vehicles (at least the second of them) are now unknown to modern Bon pos, and it must have been the case since the 10th–11th centuries. See Snellgrove, The Nine Ways of Bon, pp. 2, 9.

was an organised religious system comparable to that of Buddhism during the royal period. For a contradictory view, see S.G. Karmay, “Un témoignage sur le Bon face au Bouddhisme à l’époque des rois tibétains”, passim.
— The second is styled as “Eternal Bon” (gyung drung bon) and, according to present-day Bon pos, it stands as the teachings that were taught and spread by sTon pa gshen rab in the region of 'Ol mo lung ring, in sTag gzig. It is this kind of Bon that contemporary Bon pos consider as the “authentic” (yang dag) tradition of Bon.

— The New Bon (bon gsar or sometimes gsar bon and even gsar ma bon) represents a new current of teachings related to both Eternal Bon and to the rNying ma pa tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. It is often—but not always and not only—centred on the personages of Dran pa nam mkha’, Tshe dbang rig ’dzin and Padmasambhava, all three thought to have lived in the 8th century, even if the case of Dran pa nam mkha’ is more complex as we shall see below.

So in the view of present-day followers of Bon, the teachings of sTon pa gshen rab were diffused in sTag gzig 'Ol mo lung ring, and then in Zhang zhung and Tibet. sTon pa gshen rab himself is said to have come to Tibet once and to have converted bon pos there. Later, his teachings are said to have spread wider while the ancient cults and rituals were gradually suppressed. After sTon pa gshen rab’s nirvāna, numerous works were translated into the language of Zhang zhung by ancient Sages whose names are still venerated nowadays.

In Bon historical works, these ancient masters played important roles in the translation of texts from the language of Zhang zhung into that of Tibet, writing extensive commentaries to the works of sTon pa gshen rab. Many of such key figures of the Eternal Bon lineages are associated with the discoveries of bDe chen gling pa, including famous personages such as Dran pa nam mkha’ and his consort mKha’ ’gro Od ldan ’bar ma, the four Scholars (mkhas pa mi bzhi),5 the ancient Treasure Revealers (gter ston) of the 10th and following centuries, etc. By the second part of the 14th century, a new kind of Bon teachings started to spread, essentially in Eastern Tibet. The initiator of this movement was sPrul sku Blo ldan snying po (b. 1360) who discovered the famed gZi brjid, the longest version of sTon pa gshen rab’s biography.6 One of Blo ldan snying po’s

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5 See the biographical index in fine.
6 Adepts of the Eternal Bon tradition also consider this text as an authoritative
main incarnations was gTer chen Mi shig rdo rje whose revelations (gter ma) were largely spread in Eastern Tibet. sPrul sku Sangs rgyas gling pa (a.k.a. Byang chub rdo rje, b. 1705) was also a key-figure of this movement in the middle of the 18th century, together with the first Kun grol grags pa (Ja’ tshon snying po Las ’phro gling pa, b. 1700) whose influence was even greater.7

The four above-mentioned masters—Blo ldan snying po, Mi shig rdo rje, Sangs rgyas gling pa and Kun grol grags pa—are collectively known as the four Emanation Bodies (sprul sku mam bzhû) and are considered as the founders of the most important lineages within the New Bon tradition. However, they do not consider themselves as “new bon pos”, since for them there is no reason to differentiate between the teachings styled as Eternal Bon and those they themselves discovered. Indeed, adepts of Eternal Bon use the designation “New Bon” in a rather pejorative way as they consider these gter mas as being tinged with Buddhist teachings mostly linked to Padmasambhava. Shar rdza rin po che (1859–1934) answered these critics with interesting arguments in his Treasury of Good Sayings (Legs bshad mdzod).8

bDe chen gling pa, whose revelations are catalogued in the present volume, appears as a complex figure within the history of this movement and the more general development of Bon teachings in Eastern Tibet. He was clearly educated in a rather non-sectarian manner and lived his life in the very same way, meeting important masters of various Bon lineages such as Nyi ma bstan ’dzin (the 22nd abbot of sMan ri) and eclectic Buddhist personages such as ’Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse’i dbang po (1820–1892) and gTer chen mChog gyur gling pa (1829–1870) who both clearly advocated connections with Bon.9
1. Birth and early years

bDe chen gling pa belonged to the rMe’u family of the famed Ba gor clan. He was born in the sDe dge district in Khams, on the right side of the ’Bri chu river, in a place called sPung tshal. His birth took place on the dawn of the first day of the first month of the Water-snake year (1833). Ngag dbang bstan pa, his father, was a rNying ma and a Bon po devotee who studied some time in Thub bstan phun tshogs gling before becoming a disciple of Grub dbang g.Yung drung phun tshogs.11

As soon as he was born, he uttered the five heroic syllables: a ôm hûm ram dza. On his body appeared the letter Hûm and other wondrous signs transcending language’s capacity for description. These are however clearly described in his autobiographies. At the time of
his birth, Grub dbang rin po che gave him the name Tshe dbang grags pa.

Among his preceding incarnations stands one of the most important figures of the New Bon tradition, gTer chen Mi shigs rdo rje (b. 1650), who was himself the second incarnation of sPrul sku Blo ldan snying po (b. 1360).

When he was five, bDe chen gling pa studied the arts of reading and writing under his father’s guidance. One day in the course of the next year, as he was fetching water, he came across a *tsha tsha* from which pages or folios were coming out. He brought them home and showed them to his father and to a man named Bon po rnam dag. The pages appeared to belong to a text related to Vairocana, thus showing the early connection of bDe chen gling pa to one of the foremost representatives of New Bon. That same year, his father transmitted him a Buddhist practice of rTa mgrin, which the young boy apparently took greatly to heart.

The first vision that he clearly recalls was a vision of the Protector Srid pa rgyal mo that he beheld at the age of 11. The following year, in 1844, he met Nyi ma bstan 'dzin dbang gi rgyal po, the 22nd abbot of sMan ri, who was travelling through mDo gam in order to spread the Bon tradition of sMan ri in Eastern Tibet.\(^\text{12}\) At that time, Nyi ma bstan 'dzin gave him the transmission of the following cycles:

1. the *g.Yung drung klong chen rgyas pa* which was discovered by Go lde ’phags pa (this transmission probably included the associated works written by mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan [1356–1415] and sKu mdun bSod nams blo gros [1784–1835]);
2. the *rNam dag padma klong yangs*, an important sûtra which was discovered by gShen chen Klu dga’ (996–1035);\(^\text{13}\)
3. the *Zhi ba g.yung drung yongs rdzogs*, an important tantric cycle associated with the discoveries of rMa ston Srol 'dzin;
4. the *dBal gsas las rim snying po* (this may be the *dBal gsas las rim mngon rtons gsal byed nyi ma'i snying po* which was composed by mNyam med Shes rab rgyal mtshan);

\(^\text{12}\) In the previous centuries, New Bon teachings were extensively spread throughout Eastern Tibet, often eclipsing those of traditional g.Yung drung Bon.

\(^\text{13}\) On this key figure for the Eternal Bon tradition, see Dan Martin, *Unearthing Bon Treasures*, passim.
5. the Khro bo ngo mtshar rgyas pa which was discovered in 1017 by gShen chen Klu dga’;
6. the Phur pa nag po rgyud gsum which probably correspond to texts discovered by three Nepalese yogins and handed over to mTha’ bzhi ‘Phrul gsas in the 10th century; and
7. the Rab gnas skor gsum.14

He also received medical practices associated with the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities (zhi khro sman sgrub), rituals centred upon Srid pa’i rgyal mo riding a black mule, etc.15

Then, in 1845, he took part in a visionary feast offering (tshogs) during which he realised the inseparability of phenomena and mind (bon sems dbyer mi phyed pa) and it is in the course of this vision that Padmasambhava conferred upon him the secret name (gsang ming) O rgyan bDe chen gling pa. Following this event, he studied with his uncle g.Yung drung phun tshogs and received from him guiding instructions on phenomena and mind (bon sems kyi khrid lung). Three years later, he started the practice of tantric yoga centred on channels and winds (rtsa rlung) and received many signs of authentic liberating experiences.

At the age of 16 (in 1848),16 he received a yellow scroll (shog dril ser po) from the hands of a beautiful maiden who was probably an emanation of Ma gcig Srid pa’i rgyal mo (whose practice bDe chen gling pa had been doing since the age of 12).17 According to his Innermost Secret Biography,18 during a dream which he had that same year, bDe chen gling pa received from Padmasambhava a direct confrontation (ngo sprod) with the Natural State of the Great Perfection (rdzogs pa chen po’i gnas lugs). In the course of this amazing vision,

15 According to text no. 388 (p. 743), the transmissions lasted for a month and 12 days.
16 Tibetans count the year of gestation in their age.
17 According to text no. 388 (p. 69), he first had a vision of Srid pa’i rgyal mo and later went to a cave where a beautiful maiden entrusted him with a yellow scroll containing many “treasure scripts” (gter yig), some of which always remained unclear to him. Several possibilities can explain the fact that he could not decipher the scripts: 1. he still needed to improve his spiritual realisations to be able to read them without doubt; or 2. these were not all connected to his revelations but also to those of others. Indeed, he sometimes had visions related to treasures which were not his, as he remarks in text no. 388 (p. 360).
18 Yang gsang rnam thar chos byung rdo rje sgeg pa’i phreng ba, pp. 28 et seq.
songs were sung by Padmasambhava and a couple of maidens, soon joined by a retinue of twenty-five young girls who started performing religious dances before the great Guru. After the praises sung by the retinue, Padmasambhava transmitted them the four initiations \( (dbang bzhi) \) and further oral instructions. At the end of this vision, Padmasambhava gave him again the name O rgyan bDe chen gling pa—here styled as an “initiation name” \( (dbang ming, \text{p. } 31) \)—which he was requested to keep secret for a duration of eight years.

The following year (1849), his uncle g.Yung drung phun tshogs gave him the transmissions of several rDzogs chen cycles including the following ones:

— the \textit{Bru rgyal ba a khrid chen mo}, i.e. the \textit{Fifteen Sessions of A khrid} \( (A \text{ khrid thun mtsham bco lnga pa}) \) composed by Bru rGyal ba g.yung drung \( (1246–1290)\);\(^{19}\)
— the \textit{rDzogs chen yongs (= yang) rtse klong chen} which was discovered by bZhod ston dNgos grub in 1110 in the mKho mthing temple in Lho brag;\(^{20}\)
— the \textit{rDzogs chen nam mkha’ spyi gcod}, discovered by sPrul sku Blo ldan snying po \( (b. \text{1360})\);
— the \textit{rDzogs chen ye khri mtha’ sel} rediscovered by sPrul sku Lha gnyen;\(^{21}\)
— the \textit{sNyan rgyud khrid rdzogs chen mo} which is not clearly identified yet;\(^{22}\)
— the \textit{Zhi ba dri med lhan skyes} rediscovered by Bon zhig Khyung nag \( (1103–1183)\);\(^{23}\)
— the \textit{Lam rim thar lam gsal byed} by Kun grol grags pa \( (b.1700)\);
— the \textit{'Dzub khrid thar lam them skas} also probably by Kun grol grags pa;
— the \textit{dMar khrid dgongs pa yongs ’dus} by Kun grol grags pa; and
— the \textit{dMar mo ’dzub tshugs} by Kun grol grags pa.

\(^{19}\) See the English translation of the first ten sessions of this text in P. Kvaerne & Thubten K. Rikey, \textit{The A khrid System of Meditation, passim.}
\(^{20}\) On bZhod ston, see A.-M. Blondeau, \textit{“Le découvreur du Mani bka’ bum était-il bon po?”}, \textit{passim.}
\(^{21}\) On this cycle, see Achard, \textit{L’Essence Perlée du Secret}, p. 224 n. 31.
\(^{22}\) It is apparently associated with the \textit{Zhang zhung snyan rgyud} or \textit{Nyams rgyud} cycle.
\(^{23}\) On this cycle see Achard, \textit{“Bon zhig khyung nag and the Rig pa gzer mthong tradition of rDzogs chen”}, \textit{passim.}
The influence of Kun grol grags pa’s rdzogs chen works is visible in the structure and contents of bDe chen gling pa’s own rdzogs chen cycle, the Rig ’dzin sku gsun dgongs ’dus (see texts nos. 31–41), so that the influence of New Bon is clear in bDe chen gling pa’s rdzogs chen teachings. It would be difficult to be so categorical when dealing with his sūtric and tantric works.

When he was 19, bDe chen gling pa met the 4th Kun grol grags pa rin po che, bsTan ’dzin tshul khrims grags pa,24 and received from him all the teachings associated with the Kun grol lineage during a transmission which lasted two months.

At the age of 20, he again took part in a visionary feast offering during which he received the name Rig ’dzin Kun grol gsang ba rtsal which he regarded as his inner name.25 At the same time, he received several oral instructions on View (lta ba), Meditation (sgom pa) and Conduct (spyod pa), as well as ultimate teachings on the Stages and Paths (sa lam).26

Later that year, he received several initiations and instructions from the 4th Kun grol rin po che and became his heart-son (thugs kyi sras bu). At the same time, he received initiations and lectures (dbang lung) from Rab ’byams bsTan pa dbang rgyal.

At 21, he went to dPal ri monastery where he met again bsTan pa dbang rgyal and received from him teachings mostly associated with the ji dam Phur pa and Zhang zhung Me ri. In particular, bsTan pa dbang rgyal gave him transmissions of Khro bo gtso mchog and Phur pa, together with their extensive commentaries.

2. The Revelation of textual Treasures

bDe chen gling pa’s formative years went on, regularly marked with discoveries of new gter ma or twice-discovered treasures (yang gter). Thus, at the age of 21,27 he was staying in his home in Thar bde mi g.yo bsam gtan gling when signs occurred indicating that the
time had come for him to reveal a treasure (gter ma) hidden in the vicinity of his house. With three friends, he went in search of it, looking around in the eastern direction. There, at a relatively close distance, a pillar of light appeared above a rock while fragrant perfumes were to be smelted by the searching party. As the group proceeded towards the place indicated by the signs, all four of them felt cheerful and exalted. Whey they reached the exact spot, they found a rock and removed a seal covering it: inside the rock they found a small casket marked with the fingerprints of Gu ru rin po che (Padmasambhava). Inside were a golden egg containing long-life pills, as well as a gter shog\textsuperscript{28} of orange colour which was a twice-discovered (yang gter) text by gTer chen Byang chub rdo rje.\textsuperscript{29} This text contained the five sections (sde lnga) of the Heart Drops of the Sky Dancers (mKha’ ’gro thugs tig) belonging to the cycle known as the Heart Drops of [Ye shes] mTsho rgyal (mTsho rgyal thugs tig).\textsuperscript{30}

bDe chen gling pa brought everything back to his hermitage where he prepared a mandala offering, placing the scrolls on the top of it and practising for five days. Many signs occurred during that time and several people came to his place to witness them. He and his sanctuary then became quite famous from that time onwards. bDe chen gling pa found out in the Rig ’dzin ’dus pa’i gsang lung\textsuperscript{31} discovered by Rig ’dzin Byang chub rdo rje that he was prophesied under the name grags pa (for Tshe dbang gsang sngags grags pa) and that he was supposed to discover some treasures (gter) in 1853 (chu mo glang).

During a vision that occurred later that year, he received the secret name Mi ’gyur g.yung drung bdud ’dul thugs med rtsal which appears in the title of his secret autobiography.\textsuperscript{32}

The following year, in 1854 (when he was 22), he went to Glang thang Seng ge gnams rdzong and found in the vicinity of the site a

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[28]{Lit. Treasure (gter) page (shog), which can be a small scroll or a piece of ancient-looking parchment. Often, these are generically called shog ser, yellow scrolls, even if some are actually blue, red, etc., with silver or gold ink, or written with blood.}
\footnotetext[29]{Works known as yang gter are treasures that were revealed prior to a given discovery and hidden again, mostly by the first gter ston himself. gTer chen Byang chub rdo rje (Sangs rgyas gling pa) was an important predecessor of bDe chen gling pa in the Bon gsar movement and we shall see that our gter ston considered himself as one of his emanations.}
\footnotetext[30]{It is not included in the present form of bDe chen gling pa’s gter ma collection.}
\footnotetext[31]{Quoted in the rNam thar bs dus don, p. 13.}
\footnotetext[32]{See text no. 389. This vision is described in the rNam thar bs dus don, p. 14.}
\end{footnotes}
blue treasure paper (gter shog sngon po). Later, when he was in rDo rje gsang brag, on his way back from Seng ge gnam rdzong, he found several other treasures including the dBang drag ’bar ba me yi phreng ba which is a yang gter hidden by Mig shig rdo rje, as well as a small statue (sku tshab) of the 8th century translator Vairocana. Among the works he found on this occasion were the Zab mo lde mig skor gsum, the Kha byang gsal ba’i sgron me, the Yang byang ’phrul gi me long and the Yang gab snying gi rgya can. That same year, he went to the upper cave of sTag gzigs stobs rdzogs where he discovered several works including five sûtras (mdo lnga) such as the sDong po dgu ’dus, etc.33

Then, in 1855, he revealed several Treasures associated with the Body (statues), Speech (texts) and Mind (stûpas or tsha tsha) supports of the Buddha, together with several lists of texts to be revealed (lung byang). That same year, he discovered the O rgyan thugs tig, a twice-revealed treasure (yang gter) which was hidden by gTer chen Sangs rgyas gling pa. Still later in the course of the same year, he again received extensive teachings and transmissions from his root-master, the 4th Kun grol rin po che.

At the age of 24, he met Bla khri rGyal ba g.yung drung from whom he received numerous gter ma teachings, after which he went to Shel brag tshal where he started giving transmissions to a group of qualified followers. The teachings he gave at that time covered the Path from preliminaries (sngon ’gro) to advanced practices including the Transference of consciousness (’pho ba), essential guidance on the nature of Mind (sems nyid dmar khrid), as well as gradual instructions on inner heat (gtam mo), etc. Then he went to rTse drug khyung nag rdzong where he remained in strict retreat. Later on (still in 1856), he revealed the bKa’ brgyad gsang ba ’dus pa34 from the peak of Mount Seng ge g.yu ral.

The next year (in 1857), when he was in sDe dge, he revealed many gter ma associated with Padmasambhava, Ye shes mtsho rgyal, Nam mkha’i snying po and Mu rub btsad po, etc., which he handed over to the king of sDe dge. The following year, as he was staying in sTag rtse g.Yung drung gling, he discovered extraordinary supports

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33 On this important year for bDe chen gling pa, see text no. 388 pp. 133 passim, and especially pp. 148 et seq.
34 Also known as the bKa’ brgyad yi dam sde dgu, one of the most important gter ma among the bDe chen gling pa Revelations.
of the Body, Speech and Mind (*sku gsung thugs kyi rtön*), as well as sacred substances (*dam rdzäs*), etc.35

When he was 26 in 1858, he discovered the Kun bzang nam mkha’ rgyal po and the Rig ’dzin gsang ba’i bon skor and later that same year, he had a vision of dMu tsha gyer med who gave him a series of scrolls (*shog dril*). This vision occurred when bDe chen gling pa was staying in the Secret Cave (*gsang phug*) of the gSang ba yongs rdzogs complex in Kong po bon ri.

In 1859 (*sa lug*), bDe chen gling pa went to Brag gsum g.yu mtsho were he stayed in retreat to transcribe some of the yellow scrolls (*shog ser*) he had previously discovered. Upon leaving his retreat, he went to the southern part of the Brag gsum lake and found there a casket containing special substances (*rdzas*) and other objects. Later, he went to Zangs brag rin chen ’bar ba where he opened another treasure door (*gter sgo*) and found the yellow scrolls containing the Bon skyong dgongs ’dus. Later that same year, he fell seriously ill in Shel brag tshal and had the sensation he was coming near to death. At that time, he was absorbed in a vision during which he envisioned a reddish *thig le* (sphere or disc of light) entering his central channel and dissolving in his heart. As soon as the dissolution was completed, he had an experience of total spiritual transparency (*phyi nang zang thal*). This was followed by a vision of Khyung sprul Sangs rgyas gling pa who clearly appeared to him as his previous incarnation.36

That same year, he met Kun bzang nges don klong yangs (b. 1814) in Chos ’khor gling and gave him the transmission of several of his new Treasures (*gter gsar*), as well as some of his profound Buddhist teachings (*zab chos skor*) which he had previously discovered. From Kun bzang rin po che, he received the initiations and reading transmissions (*dbang lung*) of the *rDzogs chen zang thal ma*, i.e., the famed Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal which was revealed by Rig ’dzin rGod ldem (1337–1408).37 At the same time, Kun bzang rin po che trans-

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35 The supports of the Body are often small statues; those of Speech are books, scrolls, protective wheels, etc.; and those of the Mind are small stūpas, *tsha tshas*, etc.

36 He clearly says he considers himself as an emanation of Sangs rgyas gling in text no. 388 (p. 23). More specifically, bDe chen gling pa had four lineages—outer, inner, secret and innermost secret—of previous embodiments and Sangs rgyas gling pa stands as the 6th in the secret incarnation line. See text no. 389, pp. 49–52.

37 He was one of bDe chen gling pa’s previous incarnations; see text no. 389 pp. 44–45.
mitted him several other important texts from the rGod ldem revelations, including the Le’u bdun ma, the bSam pa lhun grub and the biographies of the masters of the Northern Transmission (byang rgyud).

At the age of 32 (in 1864), he met gTer chen mChog gyur gling pa (1829–1870), one of the founding members of the Ris med movement, who gave him the secret name Rig ’dzin Kun grol gsang ba rtsal. From that time onwards, he met several masters of this movement, such as sKyabs mgon mKhyen brtse’i dbang po, 1820–1892, Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas (1813–1899), as well as lCang sprul rin po che (’Jigs med Bon dbyings che mchog rang grol snying po, 19th century). A few years later, when he was 42 (1874), bDe chen gling pa revealed an important gter-casket (gter sbram) containing Garuda-pills which he gave to Kong sprul rin po che to cure his smallpox (’brum nad). He later transmitted the casket to mKhyen brtse’i dbang po.

3. The bDe chen gling pa lineages

Throughout his life, bDe chen gling pa kept on receiving teachings in vision and from some of his most prestigious contemporaries. He acknowledges following the teachings of thirteen bla mas who transmitted him numerous cycles of liberating instructions. According to his Innermost Secret Biography, his five main masters were:

38 As we have seen, Kong sprul was educated in the Bon po tradition in his early life. He met bDe chen gling pa in 1872 (chu spred) in rDzong sar dgon where mKhyen brtse’i dbang po was residing. On that occasion, he requested from bDe chen gling pa the transmission of a long life initiation (tshe dbang). See Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas, Physi’i rnam thar, pp. 257–258. In this outer autobiography, Kong sprul mentions bDe chen gling pa several times (mostly in connection with rDzong sar monastery and mKhyen brtse’i dbang po) under the names Bon gter Tshe dbang grags, gTer ston Tshe dbang grags pa and gTer sras Tshe dbang grags. See for example Physi’i rnam thar, pp. 266, 270, 292, 302, 331, etc.

39 This cure is attributed to mChog gyur gling pa in Orgyen Tobgyel, The Life and Teaching of Chokgyur Lingpa, p. 11. It can’t obviously be excluded that the role played by the two gter ston had a combined effect. Fourteen years earlier (in 1860), bDe chen gling pa did a short but intensive retreat during which he performed the practice of the Black Wrathful Garuda (dBal khyung nag po) and reached associated accomplishments (usually medical ones). In particular, in his dreams during this retreat, he was able to transform into a Garuda (Khyung), flying over the Mt. Meru and visiting the pure realm of the Thirty-three Gods and that of Bar lha ’od gsal (see text no. 388, p. 402). These were signs indicating that bDe chen gling pa had reached accomplishments (dngos grub) liable to help him cure others through his practice of Garuda.

40 See text no. 389.
1. his uncle Grub dbang g.Yung drung phun tshogs;\textsuperscript{41}
2. Nyi ma bstan ’dzin dbang gi rgyal po (b.1813), the 22nd Abbot of sMan ri monastery in gTsang;
3. Yang sprul bsTan ’dzin tshul khrims grags pa, the 4th Kun grol rin po che;
4. Rab ’byams bsTan pa dbang rgyal of dPal ri monastery and
d. Bal ’bar stag slag can (1832–?), a.k.a, bDud ’dul thogs med rtsal.

His other masters were:

6. mChog gyur gling pa (1829–1870);
7. The 14th Karma pa, Theg mchog rdo rje (1798–1868);\textsuperscript{42}
8. Kong sprul Yon tan rgya mtsho (1813–1899);
9. Bla khri Wer ya drung mu (rGyal ba g.yang drung);
10. ’Gru (= ’Bru) btsun drung mu wer zhi (g.Yung drung rgyal mtshan, ?–1870);
11. Se kho Ratna khang spyod;
12. sTag zhig dMu wer shel shin (rNam rgyal bstan ’dzin); and
13. Me btsun Surya wer zhi (Nyi ma rgyal mtshan).\textsuperscript{43}

bDe chen gling pa’s main seat remained a hermitage he built above the lake next to sTag rtse rin chen ’bar ba, a place associated with the original seat of gTer gnyis Tshe dbang rgyal po.\textsuperscript{44} After having extensively worked for the welfare of all beings, he departed in 1893, at the age of 60. At that time, his body dissolved into the Space of Reality (\textit{bon nyid dbyings su bsdus}), which means he did not leave physical remains behind, although no reference to rainbow body (\textit{ja’ lus}) is made here.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{41} In text no. 388 (p. 5), he is also styled as Rang grol Nam mkha’i rnal ’byor.
\textsuperscript{42} See his biography in N. Douglas & M. White, \textit{Karma\text{"{a}}pa, the Black Hat Lama of Tibet}, pp. 99–100.
\textsuperscript{43} The complete list of his masters is given in text no. 388, pp. 745–746.
\textsuperscript{44} He is more usually known as bsTan gnyis gling pa (and not gTer gnyis); see below, n. 55.
\textsuperscript{45} bDe chen gling pa’s main seat was not known as a \textit{ja’ lus pa} (a person who reached rainbow body) but his main disciple, Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan, is well known for achieving this level of realisation at the end of his life. The dissolution of bDe chen gling pa’s body is certainly to be associated with the level of \textit{khrugs chod} (Cutting through Rigidity) realisation in which the atoms of the body simply dissolve into space while speech dissolves in echoes and the mind dissolves into the Space of Reality (\textit{bon dbyings}). The description of his demise appears differently in text no. 388 where we learn that his body was cremated, his son rGyal sras Tshe dbang ’gyur med leading the funerary ceremonies (pp. 752–755).
He had numerous disciples but three of them stand out and initiated lineages of transmissions linked to his *gter ma*: bsTan 'dzin rin chen who was the editor of his works; Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan who reached rainbow body (*ja' lus*) in 1934; and his own son rGyal sras Tshe dbang 'gyur med.  

Tshe dbang 'gyur med played a key role in the spread of his father’s Revelations (especially regarding the *rdzogs chen* teachings bDe chen gling pa had himself received from his various masters). Since his early childhood, he was endowed with a very clear mind and was always full of compassion. He learned reading and writing quite easily and received from an early age on many transmissions from his father. He was deeply attracted to *rDzogs chen* teachings and practised them with great zeal throughout his life. He was definitely an important figure in the further development of Bon in Eastern Tibet and was renowned as an important lineage holder of the *A khrid* system of meditation. In this regard, he was the master of Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1859–1934) who received from him the Bru lineage of *A khrid*.

4. *bDe chen gling pa*’s various names  

Among the hundreds of great Treasure Revealers, bDe chen gling pa has brought to light a large number of works filling thirteen volumes. His texts are linked to the original Words (*bka’*) of the masters of the past, that is to uninterrupted lineages of teachings, but also to the profound Treasure tradition (*zab pa’i gter*) and to the even more profound Oral Transmission (*yang zab kyi snyan rgyud*). He is also associated with the “short lineage” (*nye rgyud*) of pure visions (*dag snang*) and was thus considered as an authentic recipient of those four kinds of transmissions. Most of the works presented in the collection are *gter ma* or orally transmitted texts. In the colophons, bDe chen gling pa uses several names to sign his works. According to the *g.Yung drung bdud ’dul thogs med rtsal gyi yang gsang mam thar klu* ....

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46 He mentions a few early ones in text no. 388 (p. 458), such as sMon rgyal bsTan 'dzin smon lam, Se kho sMon lam g.yung drung, etc.  
47 Born to his consort Karma dPal sgron. He also had a daughter named Phrin las lha mo (*op. cit.*, p. 495).
dbang gtsug gi nor bu yang gab tsitta’i rgya can (text no. 389, p. 3) which is dated of 1873, he had four main names:

1. His outer name (phyi’i ming) was Mi ’gyur Tshe dbang gsang sngags grags pa.48
2. His inner name (nang gi ming) was Rig ’dzin Kun grol gsang ba rtsal.
3. His secret name (gsang ming) was gTer ston O rgyan bDe chen gling pa.
4. His innermost secret name (yang gsang ming) was g.Yung drung bdud ’dul Thogs med rtsal.

Some of his other names were mostly given by Padmasambhava during visions he had early on (from the age of 16). During his first visionary encounter with Padmasambhava, he received the name O rgyan bDe chen gling pa after being directly confronted with the natural state (gnas lugs) by the Lotus-Born of Oddiyâna. During another vision, Padmasambhava named him Padma g.Yung drung can, bDe chen gling pa again, and Mi ’gyur Tshe dbang grags pa. So his outer and secret names were given or confirmed by Padmasambhava.49 As we have seen previously, he received his inner name from mChog gyur gling pa (see text no. 392, p. 28).

5. The Structure of the Collected Revelations

Most of bDe chen gling pa’s life was spent in visions which he beheld regularly throughout his gter ston career. But many of these visions were not only prophecies for gter ma he was supposed to reveal, as a large number of them were visionary encounters during which he received teachings. He apparently did not consider these as gter ma50 but rather as “pure visions” (dag snang) or “orally transmitted” (snyan brgyud) texts or teachings. These are mostly to be found within his

48 As seen above, the shorter form of this name (Tshe dbang grags pa) was given to him by g.Yung drung phun tshogs. See text no. 388, pp. 44–45. The fuller form (Mi ’gyur Tshe dbang gsang sngags grags pa) was given to him by the 4th Kun grol rin po che (op. cit., pp. 98–99) at the age of 19.
49 In the rNam thar chos ’byung rdo rje sgeg pa’i phreng ba (text no. 390, p. 54), Padmasambhava gave him the name Rig ’dzin Padma rdo rje (which could not be more Buddhist). At the age of 21, bDe chen gling pa received from dPal sprul rin po che (1906–1887) the name Tshul khrims stobs rgyal.
50 Which are to be understood here as “mind treasure” (dgongs gter) stricto sensu.
autobiographies and not necessarily in the corpus of his revelations proper. During these visionary encounters, bDe chen gling pa met masters from remote past, such as Dran pa nam mkha’, but also some of his contemporaries such as mChog gyur gling pa and others. Many of these visions started with the appearance of young maidens of various skin complexion. In fact, his visions reflect his eclectic tendencies in terms of his being associated with a given religious tradition. He frequently had visions in which Padmasambhava appeared surrounded by masters of both Bon and rNying ma traditions, such as Dam pa rang grol (1038–1096), rDo rje gling pa (14th century), Dam pa rgya gar, Khro tshang ’Brug lha (956–1077), Gu ru rnon rtse (1136–?), etc. Some of these names (but not all) are those of well-known figures advocating both faiths or to whom gter ma of both traditions are commonly attributed.

It is not surprising that a large number—if not all—of bDe chen gling pa’s gter ma are associated with Dran pa nam mkha’ as the latter gave him a prophetic description of the whole corpus he was to reveal.51 During one of these visions, bDe chen gling pa is presented with an overview of all gter ma he shall discover and the whole collection appears constituted of three sets of texts:52

1. those of yellow colour (ser po) contain cycles of sûtras (mdo sde) and cycles of magic formulas (gzungs sde);
2. the red ones (dmar po) contain tantric and rdzogs chen teachings; and
3. the blue ones (sngon po) contain ancillary works (cha lag) and activity manuals (las mtha").

This classification obviously does not appear in the texts as we have them and in fact a second way of classifying the works appears later in the biography (pp. 174 et seq.) where the gter ma collection is divided into four groups:

1. The outer treatises (phyi rgyud) dealing with sûtras (mdo) in which the following works are included:

51 See the details of the visionary account in his Yang gsang rnam thar (text no. 389), pp. 173 et seq. In another section of this vision (p. 176), Dran pa nam mkha’ clearly states that all these teachings are to be associated with himself.
52 Only textual treasures are concerned here, not sacred substances, statues, etc., that are often discovered during gter ma revelations.
Several ancillary texts (unlisted in the biography, p. 174) are to be included in this category. Other important works include the Dus kyi 'khor lo 'byung ba man ngag mdo (compare with text no. 294), etc.

2. The inner treatises (nang rgyud) dealing with Tantras proper (sngags) such as:
   — bDer gshegs bkra' brgyad gsang 'dus sngags kyi rgyud (see texts included in vol. 2),
   — gSang 'dus don rgyud (not included in the present version of the collection),
   — dBal phur thugs kyi gzer bu lung gi sngags (see texts included in vol. 3)
   — bDer gshegs dgongs rgyud thugs sgrub (see texts included in vol. 7).

3. The secret treatises (gsang rgyud) with texts such as:
   — mKha’ ’gro shes rab gsang ba ba ga rgyud (?),
   — Ma mo yang snying 'dus pa (see texts included in vol. 8),
   — Dug mtsho khol ma (see texts included in vol. 1),
   — gSer ’od nor bu (text no. 385).53

4. The Quintessence of Bon (bon gyi yang snying), i.e., the Supreme Way (bla med theg pa) covering the instructions belonging to the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen) and divided into three groups.54

Among bDe chen gling pa’s heirs in the lineage of transmission, the most important one was bsTan ’dzin rin chen, who was recognised as a sprul sku of Tshe dbang rgyal po55 himself and who was respon-

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53 The works in this category are divided into three groups: 1. dByings chen zab mo bstan pa rgyud kyi sde represented by the mKha’ ’gro shes rab gsang ba ba ga rgyud; 2. mKha’ gsang gab pa sgron me lung gi sde represented by the cycles centred on the Awareness Holders (rig ’dzin), etc.; and 3. Srid pa klong gi man ngag rgyud kyi skor with works such as the Ma mo yang snying ’dus pa, the Dug mtsho khol ma’i rgyud, etc.
54 Outer (phyi), inner (nang) and neither of them (gnyis ka ma yin). See the texts included in vol. 4.
55 g.Yung drung Padma Tshe dbang rgyal po (1480–1535) who discovered the famed Refined Gold of the Great Perfection (rDzogs chen gser zhun) and many other important texts in both the Bon and rNying ma traditions. One of his most famous gter ma revelations for the Buddhists is his Yang tig ye shes mthong grol.
sible for the printing of his master’s works. However, as he was engaged in collecting the texts, bsTan ’dzin rin chen fell ill and could not complete his work. He requested his own followers to bring it to completion by adding the History of Treasures (gTer byon, that is, the story of bDe chen gling pa’s revelation of his own Treasures) to the already collected volumes. He had them make this promise as his own last will and then passed away. A first edition was then issued with the help of bSod nams tshe dbang and Bla ma rab ’byams. The version of the Collected Revelations of bDe chen gling pa used for the present catalogue is thus apparently the second printing. It was compiled in 1990 and 1000 sets were printed in Chab mdo. The texts of this second edition are typographically printed in dbu can script on thick brown paper.56

The source of the Collected Revelations of bDe chen gling pa

Regarding the proto-historical data provided by the texts, I have chosen to simply convey the informations as given, in order to avoid the awkward use of the conditional tense throughout the work. One should thus not be surprised by the attribution of the redaction of practically the whole corpus of texts to such non-historical figures as Dran pa nam mkha’. These attributions just reflect the contents of the texts and are not necessarily the opinion shared by most western Tibetologists. I have chosen to leave aside the discussion of such attributions and to simply concentrate on the data without discussing them a priori.

One of the main interest of these texts is their so-called bon gsar (New Bon) affiliation, although bDe chen gling pa often emphatically uses the expression gyung drung bon in prayers or for qualifying his own revelations. However, if most of the New Bon cycles are directly or indirectly linked to Padmasambhava (and to some extent to Vairocana), this is not the case in bDe chen gling pa’s gter ma.57 Rather, his revelations are linked to Dran pa nam mkha’, a key

56 To provide a quick overview of the contents of bDe chen gling pa’s works, the list of cycles is given below in the section entitled “General Contents of the Collection”.
57 As will be seen in the catalogue itself, the important role played by Padmasambhava in his visions is not directly linked to his gter ma revelations.
figure in Bon history. In the transmission lines of these Treasures, Padmasambhava appears as a son of Dran pa nam mkha’ (a younger twin brother of Tshe dbang rig ’dzin), in accordance with the tradition established in the sNyin rgyud rin chen sgron gsal (Tshe dbang bod yul ma) of g.Yung drung gling pa (14th century). However, on several occasions did Padmasambhava give him direct transmissions: for instance, in the bsTan gnyis bde chen gling pa’i yang gsang mam thar (text no. 390), the author records all the visions and teachings he received from Padmasambhava. He also states that he studied the Treasures revealed by Rig ’dzin rGod kyi ldem ’phru can (1337–1408), as well as works revealed by New Bon masters (especially Sangs rgyas gling pa Byang chub rdo rje, b. 1705) and the Shel brag ma biography discovered by O rgyan gling pa (b. 1323).

One point should be mentioned though: the original g.Yung drung Bon tradition recognises three different personages known as Dran pa nam mkha’.

The most ancient one was known as sTag gzig Dran pa nam mkha’ and was supposed to have been spontaneously born on a lotus in the country of sTag gzig, in very archaic times. He is associated with the A dkar dgongs ’dus cycle of revelations which is for the most part lost.

The second Dran pa nam mkha’ was the siddha who lived during the reigns of ancient Tibetan Kings, especially during the reign of Gri gum btsan po. According to tradition, he was in charge of hiding most of the texts hidden during this period and to be later rediscovered at the end of the 10th century. He was considered by post 14th century Bon po masters as the father of twin brothers: Tshe dbang rig ’dzin and Padma mthong grol (Padmasambhava).

The third Dran pa nam mkha’ was an important Bon po scholar and a great Sage who was forced to give up Bon and to adopt the Buddhist faith in order to preserve his life and tradition. He is sup-

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59 According to Kun grol grags pa’s Catalogue of the Kanjur (g.Yung drung bon gyi bka’ rgyur dkar chag), pp. 231–232, the cycle is entitled rDzogs pa chen po dran pa’i a dkar dgongs ’dus and contains the eight following works: 1. A dkar ’od kyi sgom sgrub nyams len; 2. bCud len dge sbyor mthun rgyen lam bryaggs; 3. Thugs dgongs bskul ba’i gsal ’debs byin labs char babs; 4. Bla chen dran pa’i sku yi yon tan mthun gyi bstud pa; 5. Tshig nyung don dril ngo sprod zab mo’i gdams pa; 6. gTer du shas shing gter slob ‘byung tshul gyi lung bstan; 7. Rigts nang bsdud kyi gnod pa’i b rig pa’i rdzas sngags ting rgye ‘dzin; and 8. ’Gro mgon dus bab gter ston bla ma’i ston tshul.
posed to have worked with important Bon po masters of his time such as Co za bon mo and others. He also took part in hiding many texts during the persecution of Bon launched by Khri srong lde btsan in the 8th century.

From bDe chen gling pa’s work, one has the impression that the second and third Dran pa nam mkha’ have been blended together in a single personage, working in close connection with his consort ’Od ldan ’bar ma and the 8th century translator Vairocana.

A provisional chronology of the Revelations and compositions of bDe chen gling pa’s works

This short table shows the main lines of bDe chen gling pa’s Revelations and compositions throughout his life. Some of the dates in the colophons of the texts themselves show discrepancies but these should be resolved in the future by the analysis of his autobiographies. In consequence the historical evidence from the texts themselves has been incorporated in this provisional chronology but should be carefully checked in further research on bDe chen gling pa’s life.

1853 Discovery of the mkha’ ’gro thugs tig which is a yang gter already discovered by gTer chen Sangs rgyas gling pa.

1854 Discovery in ’Bri ldan glang thang of his dkar chag (contained in vol. 9) or list of treasures to be revealed.
— Discovery of the rTa mchog dbang drag ’bar ba me phreng cycle (contained in vol. 5) in rDo rje gsang brag, located east of Seng ge gnam rdzong (in mDo smad). This cycle is apparently a yang gter which was first discovered by gTer chen Mi shigs rdo rje.

1855 Discovery of the dBal phur nag po’i rgyud (included in vol. 3) which was transmitted during a vision of mkha’ ’gro ’Od ldan ’bar ma. Associated texts such as no. 65 were written as late as 1882. Some of the root-texts were disclosed in 1861. This oral transmission (snyan rgyud) of the dBal phur nag po corpus constitutes the shorter version of the instructions, the larger and medium version having been hidden as gter ma.
— Disclosure of some of the rTa mchog dbang drag cycle to worthy disciples.
Discovery of the 'Jigs byed gshin rje'i gsang rgyud cycle at Seng ge g.yu ral, famous treasure site (gter gnas) located in Gyim shod. Some of the works associated with this cycle were completed in the years following the discovery itself, especially in 1858. Others, such as text no. 13 were written as late as 1879. The collection itself was sealed for 13 years and disclosed to worthy disciples in 1869. The cycle is included in volume 1 of the Collected Revelations.

— Revelation of the bKa’ brgyad yi dam sde dgu cycle (included in vol. 2). It was kept secret for 13 years and only transmitted in 1869.

— Transcription of parts of the rTa mchog dbang drag cycle (revealed in 1854) and resumed in the following year as well as in 1858 and 1863.

Transcription of several works belonging to the dBal phur nag po cycle.

— Further revelations (through snyan rgyud) of other parts of the dBal phur nag po corpus.

— Transcription of some of the texts of the rTa mchog dbang drag 'bar ba me phreng gi skor.

— Discovery of the Byams ma yang gsang rgyun mchod cycle contained in vol. 12).

Discovery of the Rig ’dzin sku gsum dgongs ’dus cycle in Kong po bon ri. This gter ma was actually transcribed the following year, with the composition of additional texts (such as no. 33 which gives the table of contents of the cycle). This cycle is included in volumes 2 and 4 of the Collected Revelations.

— Composition, transmission and further revelations of several works belonging to the dBal phur nag po cycle whose root texts were discovered in 1855.

— Discovery of the Kun bzang nam mkha’i rgyal po rgyud gzhung contained in vol. 10.

Transcription of some of the texts belonging to the Rig ’dzin sku gsum dgongs ’dus.

— Discovery of the Ma mo yang snying ’dus pa cycle (contained in vol. 8) in Gyim shod zangs brag rin chen ’bar ba.

Receiving of the Oral Transmission of the gSang chen rol pa zang thal cycle (contained in vol. 7), later transcribed in 1864.
1861 Transcription of some of the texts belonging to the Kun bzang nam mkha’i rgyal po cycle.

1862 Composition of additional works belonging to the rTa mchog dbang drag cycle.
Further transcriptions of some of the texts belonging to the Kun bzang nam mkha’i rgyal po cycle.

1863 Composition of tantric works related to the Rig ’dzin sku gsum dgongs ’dus cycle.

1864 Transcription of the gSang chen rol pa zang thal cycle.

1868 Discovery of the Sa snying ’khrug bcos cycle (contained in vol. 6).

1869 Transcription of some texts belonging to the Sa snying ’khrug bcos cycle.

1871 Discovery of the rTsa gsum me mchod ye shes byang bu which was later transcribed in 1885.
— Composition of the rTsa gsum las sbyor associated with the previous discovered text.

1877 Discovery of the Zab lam ngo mtshar rdzu ’phrul gyi gdams pa in the cave named gSang brag Seng ge rgyab bsol.

1885 Transcription of the Zab lam ngo mtshar rdzu ’phrul gyi gdams pa revealed in 1877.

1888 Composition of the bDud rtsi yon tan yongs rdzogs kyi sgrub khog chen po’i chog khrid (contained in vol. 13).

1890 Transcription of some of the bDe gshegs ’dus pa (Bla ma dgongs pa ’dus pa) cycle which is the same as the Rig ’dzin sKu gsum dgongs ’dus.

The compilation of the Catalogue

The titles of the texts are listed according to their order in the original collection. A separate index lists them according to their full titles and to their individual titles when they belong to a cycle.

A number has been given to each individual text and three to four subentries are to be found after the title according to the following scheme:
XX. [number of the text]
[Title]

a. page references
b. margin title
c. colophon
d. notes and remarks

The “d” section is sometimes simply dropped when no interesting information was gathered regarding a particular title. Consequently, section “d” may sometimes be left blanks, but generally should contain remarks based on material from the body of the text (like the brgyud rim sections) or from the colophon. In compiling these short notes, I was mainly interested in the history and lineage transmissions of the texts, rather than in the nature of the many rituals contained in this collection. Even though fascinating subjects in themselves, their description and analysis have been regarded as beyond the original intent of the present work. Moreover, in several instances, the informations contained in colophons have been skipped here and there, especially when they provide no historical data or in order to avoid repetitions. For details, readers may refer to the transliterated colophons.