The rNying ma pa and the Bonpo have a similar historical background. Both trace their origins back to the royal period, especially to the eighth century. While the rNying ma pa acclaim Padmasambhava as their principal patriarch, the Bonpo treat Dran-pa nam-mkha’ likewise. Both traditions naturally present them as historical masters engaged in propagating their respective doctrines.

They also share the same kind of tradition according to which they had been through a process of concealment and rediscovery of their texts. For the rNying ma pa a great number were concealed in the royal period, because the teaching they contained was not appropriate at the time. For the Bonpo, however, persecution in the same period led to texts having to be hidden so that they would be saved from destruction. But neither of them accept the fact that there was an interruption in Tibetan history after the assassination of Glang Dar-ma 842 A.D., that the Tibetan cultural and religious development took a new turn after this period, and that it was late in the ninth century that they began to reorganise their doctrines and became what now are known as the rNying ma and g-Yung drung Bon.

The Tun-huang documents which we have studied go back to this period, for example, the *Rig pa’i khu byug* and *sBas pa’i rgum chung*. It was during this period, too, that masters like gNyan dPal-dbyangs composed short treatises and that the term *rdzogs chen* began to be used to designate what one can describe as the fusion of certain elements of the Cig car ba tradition, the Sems sde type teachings and predominantly tantric doctrines expounded in tantras such as *SNy*.

Although the *sBas pa’i rgum chung* is not present as an independent work among the texts collected in *NyG*, it is in fact the “prototype” of the Sems sde texts, such as *KG* and the *gSer gyi rus sbal* of the *bsGrags pa skor gsum* of Bon. From the eleventh century both the rNying ma pa and the Bonpo already possessed a number of works that were specifically regarded as rDzogs chen texts. Moreover, both traditions then began to have *gter ston* who “rediscovered” texts and who were either Buddhist or Bonpo or both. The inter-exchange of texts between *gter ston* of both traditions was common and this practice was continued throughout the centuries.

rDo-rje gling-pa (1346–1405) is the embodiment of this eclectic tradition. Besides this, he occupies a special place in the development of the
rDzogs chen thought in general. While Klong-chen rab-'byams’s scholastic approach was aiming at re-structuring and organising the rDzogs chen philosophy, rDo-rje gling-pa was still producing new materials which gave a further dimension to the doctrine. The ITa ba klong yangs is perhaps the best example among the “rediscoveries”.

He fervently believed that he himself was a rebirth of Vairocana. It was because of this belief that he became interested in Bon at quite an early age. He had his own way of telling the life story of Vairocana. He considers that Vairocana was formerly Yid-kyi khye’u-chung, the disciple of gShen-rab mi-bo and later Ånanda with Śākyamuni. He writes that in the time of Khri Srong-lde-btsan, Vairocana was first a follower of Bon and was called g.Yung-drung gtsug-lag, but he was taught Sanskrit and later sent to India to look for the Atiyoga doctrine. When he returned to Tibet, he was banished to Tsha-ba-rong by the Bonpo ministers, because he practised Buddhism. Padmasambhava sent him a message telling him to propagate Bon in Tsha-ba-rong. That is why when he returned to bSam-yas he worked so much for the sake of the Bon doctrine. He paid a visit to ‘Ol-mo lung-ring and there he met Ta-pi hri-tsa and Dran-pa nam-mkha’ from both of whom he received countless teachings. When the persecution of Bon took place Vairocana joined the Bonpo in concealing texts in various places and it was during this time that Vairocana and some other Bonpo priests went to Pa-gro stag-tshang (Paro, Bhutan) to conceal the gSer thur collection of the Bonpo rDzogs chen texts. When Vairocana was just about to conceal the texts, Dran-pa nam-mkha’ appeared in his vision and gave instruction in the doctrine contained in the gSer thur. At this time, Dran-pa nam-mkha’ prophesied: “in the future there will be one called Bon-zhig who is your own emanation and who will take out the gSer thur from its hidden place.”

It is against this background that rDo-rje gling-pa began to produce works on Bonpo rDzogs chen. He was at g.Yer-stod chu bo ri when he had signs in a dream in the year earth-bird (1369). He soon set out on his journey. In the year iron-dog (1370) when he was twenty-five he “rediscovered” the gSer thur at Pa-gro. He then left Pa-gro and went to sKu-’bum near bSam-gling, the place of Bla-ma ’Dul-ba Rin-po-che where in the year iron-pig (1371), he wrote it down in Tibetan (phab pa) as the manuscript (shog ser) was in different languages.  

1 rDzogs chen gser gyi thur ma (’i) lo rgyus sphyi ching chen po go ba ’byed pa’i lde mig (from now on referred to as gSer thur lo rgyus), ff. 13–26.
2 rDzogs chen gser thur rmi lam lung bstan, ff. 420–29. Bla-ma ’Dul-ba Rin-po-che is probably Bru ’Dul-ba rgyal-mtshan (1239–1293) of the monastery of g.Yas-ru dBen-sa-kha. He lived for some time in Bum-thang(Bhutan), A-tri thun-tsham cha-na dang cha-lag, Delhi 1967, rTogs ldan nyams rgyud kyi rnam thar rin chen phreng ba (from now on referred to