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Etudes rDzogs chen — volume II

sous la direction de Jean-Luc Achard



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Préface

par Jean-Luc Achard
(CNRS, CRCAO)

Dans ce second volume dédié aux études académiques sur le système de la Grande Perfection (rDzogs chen), on retrouve les thèmes qui ont, pour l'essentiel, intéressé les participants au premier volume paru en janvier de cette année. Doxographie, philosophie, histoire, études comparatives et linguistiques sont une fois encore au cœur des préoccupations des chercheurs travaillant sur cette tradition religieuse si particulière. C'est d'ailleurs quasiment autour des mêmes thèmes spécifiques que les études rdzogs chen ont débuté aux alentours des années 1960s et jusque dans les années 1990s, avec des pionniers comme H.V. Guenther, et dans une moindre mesure, G. Tucci. Depuis cette époque, des progrès considérables ont été accomplis dans ce domaine, même si l'étude de certains aspects de la Grande Perfection, à peine esquissée au siècle dernier, n'a pas su trouver de candidat prêt à en explorer de manière approfondie les recoins les plus inattendus. Tucci, pour ne mentionner que lui, est par exemple le premier à avoir signalé l'existence d'obscures traditions internes du rDzogs chen comme le système de la Grande Limite (*mtha' chen*) qui n'a depuis, malheureusement, guère attiré l'attention des spécialistes.¹

Quoi qu'il en soit, on peut se féliciter des progrès effectués depuis au moins les deux dernières décennies, progrès grâce auxquels on a pu se débarrasser de certaines idées reçues extrêmement tenaces, dépeignant quasi systématiquement les Dzogchenpas comme des "saints fous" ou des adeptes aux mœurs résolument étranges, des asociaux à l'éthique douteuse, etc. Ces lieux communs indigents ayant fort heureusement vécu, il est maintenant possible de se défaire de ces réflexes hérités de certains anthropologues peu scrupuleux pour enfin embrasser réellement les multiples facettes de la Grande Perfection avec sérénité et un professionnalisme jusqu'à présent inégalé dans le domaine.

¹ J'y ai pour ma part très brièvement et très imparfaitement contribué à travers quelques mentions de cette "Grande Limite" dans divers travaux récents sans toutefois l'aborder de front. La mention pionnière de la Grande Limite chez Tucci figure in *Minor Buddhist Texts II* (Kyoto, 1978), p. 391 (et 412).

Comme mentionné brièvement dans la préface au précédent volume, cette approche nouvelle a été largement rendue possible grâce au nombre considérable de textes rdzogs chen disponibles sur le BDRC (ex-TBRC). En effet, la générosité de Gene Smith, Jeff Wallman, et des autres responsables de ce site, a permis l'accès à des centaines — si ce n'est plus — de textes rdzogs chen, pour certains rares, que l'on pensait perdus, ou dont on ignorait totalement l'existence. Malgré cela, l'origine du système de la Grande Perfection reste encore totalement auréolée de mystère. Par exemple, en dépit de son histoire traditionnelle, aucun texte en une quelconque langue indienne n'a, à ma connaissance, été découvert jusqu'à présent, qui établirait sans ambiguïté l'origine de cette tradition. On sait que la diffusion des Tantras fonctionne plus ou moins par vagues ou tendances, pour ne pas dire modes, les textes les plus anciens étant lentement éclipsés par les nouvelles révélations. C'est ainsi que l'on passe progressivement des Kriyā-, Caryā-tantras, etc., aux Anuttarayogatantras, les plus récents occupant une place toujours plus importante au détriment des plus anciens. Selon ce schéma, le rDzogs chen qui se tient au sommet de l'édifice doctrinal tantrique devrait logiquement être le plus récent, mais il semble au contraire que, selon les récits tardifs, le système ait totalement disparu d'Inde avec Vimalamitra (8e s.), alors que d'autres courants tantriques allaient se développer par la suite.

Si le rDzogs chen présente des traits si particuliers, en comparaison des autres systèmes tantriques bouddhiques, c'est qu'il n'a peut-être tout simplement pas une origine indienne. De fait, les deux traditions — le Bön et l'école rNying ma — qui en véhiculent les enseignements affirment qu'il est originaire de l'Ouest, en référence au Zhang zhung ou à la région de Tazig pour la première, et à l'Oḍḍiyāna pour la seconde. Ces affirmations sont bien sûr indémonstrables, mais on peut les considérer comme des pointeurs intéressants, en particulier parce que les régions à l'ouest de l'Inde ont subi des influences religieuses et culturelles dont l'origine se situe peut-être encore beaucoup plus à l'Ouest qu'on ne l'imagine. On y trouve des traditions religieuses pour lesquelles la concentration sur la lumière ou le ciel (deux pratiques incontournables dans le rDzogs chen) revêtent une importance considérable, non pas seulement dans la religion perse ancienne comme on le pense ordinairement, mais plutôt dans divers mouvements d'origine ou de culture grecque, avec une évidente influence de l'hermétisme puis du gnosticisme.² Des études comparatives systématiques devraient certainement jeter des

² Guenther a pointé dans la même direction dans son *Wholeness Lost and Wholeness Regained*, sans pour autant approfondir les éventuelles influences qu'il pressent sur la pensée de Padmasambhava.

lumières insoupçonnées sur les éventuelles influences que le rDzogs chen a pu subir, plus précisément dans son lexique si particulier. A titre d'exemple, si le vocabulaire figurant dans les instructions de *khregs chod* recoupe en partie celui que l'on peut trouver ailleurs dans le Bouddhisme Tibétain, comme dans les instructions de la Mahāmudrā, on ne trouve en revanche rien de commun aux systèmes des Lampes (*sgron ma*), des canaux de lumières (*'od rtsa*), des visions (*snang ba*), etc., qui caractérisent si spécifiquement le lexique figurant dans les instructions de *thod rgal*. Il ne faut pas manquer de noter ici que cette apparente innovation lexicale ne peut répondre qu'à une réalité autre que sémantique pour avoir perduré jusqu'à nos jours. Dans la mesure où les représentations véhiculées par ce lexique n'existent pas ailleurs dans les Tantras, il faut bien les rechercher en dehors et, à défaut de pouvoir identifier des sources hermétiques qui pourraient sembler évidentes à certains (*Poimandres* et autres *Alsepius*), proposer des pistes pour la recherche comparative. Toutes ces hypothèses n'excluent d'ailleurs pas des innovations purement tibétaines en la matière.

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On peut regrouper les articles présentés dans ce second volume en fonction de trois thèmes principaux. Le premier concerne des textes et des traditions anciennes du rDzogs chen, à commencer par l'article de M. Ostensen (p. 9-30) sur la tradition du grand maître A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas et sa lignée d'instructions rattachées à la Section de l'Esprit (*Sems sde*). Il est suivi par l'étude de K. Liljenberg (p. 31-108) sur deux textes anciens appartenant également à la Section de l'Esprit. L'article suivant de M. Kapstein (p. 109-128) consiste en une étude sur la tradition Zur qui montre que celle-ci, contrairement à l'image que l'on s'en fait ordinairement, ne se limite pas à la seule Section de l'Esprit.

Le second groupe constitué de trois articles a pour thèmes essentiels certaines représentations particulières du système philosophique de la Grande Perfection. Le premier d'entre eux, de M-H. Deroche (p. 129-158) étudie la notion d'impartialité (*ris med*) dans une optique à la fois philosophique et philologique. Il est suivi par la contribution de K. Takahashi (p. 159-177) portant sur un ensemble de représentations liées à la Vue du Mahāyoga, qui ont une parenté manifeste avec les théories du rDzogs chen. Enfin, dans le troisième article de ce second groupe, K. Keutzer présente (p. 178-230) une étude approfondie de la notion de "Phalange" (*tshon gang*), c'est-à-dire la double Phalange de Lumière (*'od kyi tshon gang*) et de Sagesse (*ye shes tshon gang*) qui tient une place centrale dans le cycle du *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud*.

Le dernier article de ce volume (Achard, p. 231-257), le seul portant sur une biographie d'un patriarche clef de la tradition rDzogs

chen, est consacré au maître Nyi ma 'bum (1158–1213) et au rôle extrêmement important qu'il a joué dans la tradition des *Essences Perlées* (*sNying thig*), en proposant un exposé analytique de l'ensemble de cette tradition, selon un système en onze thèmes (*tshig don bcu gcig pa*). Ce système, basé sur deux Tantras appartenant au corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*), a été repris par Klong chen pa (1308–1364), ainsi que d'autres avant lui, notamment dans le Bön (et plus précisément dans le cycle du *Ye khri dkar po mtha' sel*).

*

Ce qui va clairement manquer dans les contributions à ces deux volumes, c'est l'étude des aspects pratiques ou yogiques — pourtant d'une importance centrale dans le rDzogs chen — qui sont toutefois relativement bien connus grâce à la littérature non académique sur le sujet. Les lecteurs et chercheurs familiers des textes de la Grande Perfection savent que même les thèmes et présentations les plus apparemment théoriques ou purement philosophiques du rDzogs chen s'inscrivent dans une perspective dont le point focal reste l'expérience libératrice (*grol ba*) elle-même. En effet, l'ensemble de ce système n'a de sens que dans une optique sotériologique qui va jusqu'à donner son nom à l'une des expressions récurrentes qualifiant la tradition rDzogs chen, à savoir "la Voie de la Liberté Naturelle" (*rang grol gyi lam*). Les théories qui animent cette Voie, notamment celles relatives à la notion de Base (*gzhi*), d'égarement (*'khrul*) et de libération (*grol*), n'ont effectivement un sens que parce qu'elles expliquent, clarifient ou justifient, toute une succession de pratiques logiques, parfaitement structurées et organisées en un corpus qui vise, non à l'élaboration exclusive d'une Vue conçue comme supérieure à toutes les autres — ce qu'elle est d'ailleurs pour les adeptes du rDzogs chen —,³ mais à la compréhension décisive de la nature de l'esprit dont l'expérience paroxystique conduit au renversement des plans de l'égarement (*'khrul pa*) et de la Liberté (*grol ba*), avec l'obtention d'un Fruit exprimé sous la forme de Corps (*sku*), de Sagesses (*ye shes*), et d'Activités rédemptrices (*phrin las*).



³ Cette rhétorique triomphaliste est un thème endémique des Tantras du rDzogs chen et d'une partie de la littérature secondaire consacrée à ce système. Elle s'appuie sur une gradation des Vues qui aboutit, notamment avec le système dit de la Quintessence Noire (*Yang ti nag po*), à la négation de la validité de toutes les autres Vues, y compris celles d'autres branches du rDzogs chen qui sont doxographiquement situées sous cette Quintessence Noire.

Muddy Waters and Blurred Lines: A ro ye shes 'byung gnas and the Anomalous Origins of the rDzogs pa chen po Sems sde A ro lugs¹

Morten Ostensen
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When it comes to the bKa' ma teachings of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*), most of the scholarly attention of the past three decades or so has thus far been focused on the more philological and scriptural aspects related to the theory upon which this genre is based, as opposed to the more pragmatic instructions through which such teachings are applied, which were enshrined within a handful of the practice traditions. Therefore, while some significant efforts have been made to chart the literary relics of the earliest available literature related to this genre, the traditions that they spawned have been for the most part overlooked or, at least, under studied to the point that many misconceptions have developed and been allowed to fester. Of course, the main reason for this is lack of available information, especially of accounts from within the tradition's themselves, and thus scholars have tended to rely on much later accounts of these traditions coming from somewhat external sources. The A ro Tradition of the Great Perfection Mind Series (*rDzogs pa chen po sems sde a ro lugs*), is an abject lesson in this regard, as we find not only a wide range of dates for its presumed founder A ro ye shes 'byung gnas, but also the common conflation of it with other Mind Series traditions, as well as the long persisting, yet unsubstantiated, claim that it incorporated elements of Chinese Chan teachings. Fortunately, as more literature related to this tradition has come to light via the recent publications of the *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* much of these misrepresentations can be easily dispelled. However, the A ro literature itself presents us with some rather unusual claims, specifically in regards to the Indian progenitors of the tradition, which raise many new questions as to the nature of the A ro

¹ This paper was extracted from my doctoral dissertation on the Mind Series practice traditions and their associated literature, the research for which was funded by an Advanced Studies Scholarship from Tsadra Foundation.

Tradition, in particular, and the Mind Series, in general. Therefore, in the following paper I will be attempting to peel away the layers of ambiguity and blatant fallacy that has been allowed to collect onto the A ro Tradition, so that I may address the numerous peculiarities found in the A ro literature itself that have been thus obscured by decades, or perhaps even centuries, of glossing in later sources.

A ro ye shes 'byung gnas

Perhaps the best place to start is with the man himself, A ro ye shes 'byung gnas, whom was not only a major conduit of the Mind Series lineage that would come to bear his name, but also of the Khams Tradition, though as we shall see there are those that consider these to be one and the same. And, while, he did compose a renowned work on general Mahāyāna practices, entitled *Distinguishing the Specific Methods of Engaging in the Yoga of the Great Vehicle*,² he is more commonly associated with the above Mind Series transmission lineages. However, he is also the subject of the *History of Master A ro ye shes 'byung gnas*,³ which is not signed by its author, though it may very well be the work of rTa ston jo bo ye shes, a.k.a. dbus pa rta ye (1163-1230).⁴ Nevertheless, this relatively short biography provides an interesting overview of his life and works. It starts with a recap of A ro's former lives as a Buddhist, reportedly recounted from the master's own memories of these events, which begins with his initial entry onto the path as a Brahmin born in eastern India where he first was able to study the Mahāyāna teachings. This is followed by a life in the celestial God Realm of the Thirty-three, before once again being born as a Brahmin in India. The location of his birth in the subsequent fourth life is not specified, but it is stated that it was during the time in which Padmasambhava arrived at bSam yas Monastery and that he met and received Tantric teachings from this master, which combined with an apparent clan name affixed to his parent's name makes it fairly clear that it was in Tibet. However, it was in the following life that he was

² A ro ye shes 'byung gnas, *Theg pa chen po'i rnal 'byor la 'jug pa'i thabs bye brag tu 'byed pa*, in *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 121, pp. 1-36. This text seems to have only come to light fairly recently. For instance, Karmey refers to it as no longer being extant, while Davidson mentions in his 2008 publication that he is indebted to Germano for sharing with him this rare text. However, it is readily available these days in the recent printing of the rNying ma bKa' ma, as cited above.

³ *Slob dpon a ro ye shes 'byung gnas kyi lo rgyus*, in *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 99, pp. 403-422.

⁴ This assumption is based on the fact that the recent compilers of the rNying ma bKa' ma collections have affixed his name in the margins of this work.

born in eastern Tibet as the figure with which we are presently concerned, though, unfortunately, no dates are given for the year of his birth. Nevertheless, the account of this life states that the child exhibited signs of having gained realization of the nature of phenomena (*chos nyid*) in his former lives. It seems that the child would enter into meditative states and at one point while he was abiding in such a trance he is said to have intoned the sound of the syllable 'A' three times, which, along with other remarkable indications, convinced his mother and others to conclude that the child was an emanation (*sprul pa'i sku*). Alternatively, gZhon nu dpal, in his *Blue Annals* (*Deb ther sngon po*), recounts another version of this story, in which the boy is found by a nun lying motionless on the ground. He later makes the sound of 'A' and thus becomes known as A ro, i.e. the corpse (*ro*) [that intoned] 'A.' This account goes on to say that when he was but a small child he attempted to join the local monks in their daily prayer services, which amused the monks whom began to playfully tease the young boy. However, after one handed him a copy of the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra* and he was actually able to read it, the monks were taken aback. To this, the boy told them he knew many teachings that they had likely never heard before, and so the monks nicknamed him Ye shes 'byung gnas, i.e. "the source of wisdom."⁵ And, though this version of the story is certainly reminiscent of tales of dGa rab rdo rje's childhood, the *History of A ro* does actually mention both parents by name, as A ro nyag po and Sog mo dpal sgron,⁶ thus putting a damper on gZhon nu dpal's fantastic yarn. However, these inconsistencies concerning A ro's early life are actually addressed in a brief addendum tagged onto the end of the text.⁷ Thus, the story of him being found by a nun is discussed, though there is no mention of him uttering 'A.' Then again, several other scenarios are mentioned, including the famed Sāntideva and the son of King Ajatasatru being included in his succession of births, though the author seems to leave it up to the reader which of these accounts one might wish to believe.

In terms of teachers, the *History of A ro* states that from a very early age the child was brought before two teachers in order to assess the child's apparent gifts. It continues on to say that the child remained with these two teachers, referred to as the two dge bshes, and under their tutelage "gave rise to remarkable experiences of meditative absorption."⁸ And, once he is a bit older, he takes up residence at a monastery, or perhaps a hermitage considering this early stage of

⁵ Roerich, *The Blue Annals*. Delhi: 1976 Ed., pp. 999-1000.

⁶ *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 99, p. 406.

⁷ See *Ibid*, pp. 421-422.

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 407. *ting nge 'dzin gyi nyams khyad par can skyes so*.

Tibetan Buddhist history, where he later develops these abilities to the utmost degree, to the point of leaving hand and footprints in solid rock, according to the narrative. Later he meets the famous dGongs pa rab gsal, whom is celebrated in Tibetan history for his influential role in the preservation of the ordination lineage that, according to traditional accounts, he received directly from the monks dMar, g.Yo, and gTsang. This master is amazed by A ro's abilities and encourages him to take full ordination, which he later grants him, giving him the ordination name dGe slong Ye shes 'byung gnas, an epithet reserved for monks holding the complete set of monastic vows. Furthermore, he persuades him to request empowerments, so that he may properly enter into the path of Secret Mantra, and to visit a variety of scholar-monks, so that he may receive more extensive teachings.⁹ This leads to his first meeting with gNyags Jñānakumāra, the renowned disciple of the eminent translator Bai ro tsa na, at which time A ro requests empowerments thus forging a master-disciple relationship of his own. gNyags, having acquiesced to his request, bestows upon A ro an extensive list of empowerments, after which, he is given the secret initiatory name rDo rje snon po.¹⁰ Furthermore, he goes on to study with many illustrious masters of the period, including Bai ro tsa na, the Kashmiri Ye shes rdo rje and sNyan chen dpal dbyangs. All of these masters are said to have been impressed with A ro and made various claims as to the reason for his exceptional capacity. Bai ro tsa na claims that he is an emanation, gNyags claims that he is a bodhisattva that has attained the eighth bodhisattva ground, or bhūmi, sNyan chen dpal dbyangs claims that he is a bodhisattva that has attained the first bhūmi and thus perceives the true nature of things, dGongs pa rab gsal claims that he is an emanation of the Noble Nāgārjuna, the Kashmiri Ye shes rdo rje claims that he is an emanation of Vajrasatva, while some claim that he is an emanation of Mañjuśrī.¹¹ Suffice to say, according to this account, he was held in quite high regard by some of the most prominent teachers of his time.

After an undetermined period of study with the above masters, A ro heads off into the mountains to live like a wild wandering yogi. It is there that he has a vision of Vajrasatva who grants him instructions and a prophecy, in which he is told not to remain where he is, but rather to go to a particular monastery, or more likely an isolated area, called 'Thebs skyu stag mo where he will come to understand the meaning of all the Sūtras and Tantras and thus be capable of benefiting

⁹ Ibid, pp. 410-412.

¹⁰ Ibid. p. 412.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 412.

beings.¹² A ro heeds the injunction of Vajrasatva and the circumstances unfold just as predicted, in that the true meaning of all the scriptures dawns within his mind and thereafter he begins guiding students according to their individual capacities. It is explained that he taught his students whom were of the lesser capacity according to the outer Sūtra class, according to the inner Secret Mantra for those of mediocre capacity, and according to the secret aspect of their own meditative experiences (*nyams myong*) for those of the highest capacity, which corresponds to the outer, inner and secret cycles of his teachings.¹³ Among his foremost students, the first is Ya zi bon ston, followed by rNgog legs pa'i shes rab, Drum shing shes rab smon lam, and Cog ro zangs ka mdzod mkhur, according to the *History of A ro*.¹⁴ And, most of the rest of the *History* is devoted to extensive lists of the teachings that each of these disciples received from A ro, the texts of many of which have been preserved to this day among the literary corpus of the A ro Tradition.¹⁵ However, in addition to such lineage specific texts, several more general Mind Series works are also mentioned, such as the *Eighteen Scriptural Statements of the Mind Series (Sems sde bco brgyad)*, as well as some other notable inclusions, such as his teacher sNyan chen dpal dbyangs's *Six Lamps (sGron ma drug)*.¹⁶ Therefore, it would seem that the accounts contained in the *History of A ro* of teachings which the master passed onto his four principal students are not necessarily intended to represent the makeup of the instructional corpus of the A ro Tradition alone, but rather show the extent of A ro ye shes byung gnas's teaching capabilities across a variety of related, but somewhat distinct instruction lineages. Though, in terms of the A ro Tradition instructions in particular, Ya zi bon ston, is clearly the main recipient of this lineage, as it is primarily through him that the extended lineage passes, which is also attested to in another A ro

¹² Ibid, p. 413.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ gZhon nu dpal gives a slight variation of this list of four, which replaces rNgog Legs pa'i shes rab with one Kha rag gi bru sha rgyal bu. However this is a name that could very well be descriptive rather than given, as it reads as if he were the prince of a particular valley in an area in gTsang. He also gives a slightly different spelling of the place name that precedes Shes rab smon lam's name, as Grum shing, rather than Drum shing. See Roerich, *The Blue Annals*. Delhi: 1976 Ed., p. 1000, or gZhon nu dpal, *Deb ther sngon po*. Chengdu, 1984, Vol. 2, p. 1163, for the Tibetan. Furthermore, Rin chen dpal, in his *Elucidation of the Hearing Lineage* also omits Legs pa'i Shes rab and includes the seemingly same replacement, though he refers to him as "the one called Bru sha or Khyung po mdo ston seng ge rgyal mtshan," see *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 100, p. 140.

¹⁵ Another list of A ro texts and teaching cycles can be found in *Klong chen chos 'byung*. Lhasa, 1991: pp. 393-394.

¹⁶ For more on this work and its author, see Van Schaik, 2004, pp. 190-195.

Tradition text, entitled the *Elucidation of the Hearing Lineage*,¹⁷ that states that from among the four, only Ya zi received all three cycles, while the other mainly received either the *Emanation Cycle* (*sprul skor*) or the *Cycle of the Nails* (*gZer ka*).¹⁸

Now that I've covered the basics of the traditional accounts of his life, it is possible to address some of the apparent misconceptions that have proliferated in modern literature in regards to A ro ye shes 'byung gnas and have thus muddied the waters preventing us from gaining a clear picture of this influential figure. Much of these issues can simply be chalked up to the dearth of information available to scholars before the recent publications of the extensive collections of the rNying ma bKa' ma put together by the late mKhan po Mun sel (1916-1993) and his students at Kaḥ thog Monastery.¹⁹ Therefore, it is entirely on the basis of these recent developments that any further clarification of the present topic is even possible. However, that is not to say that rampant misconceptions need not be actively rooted out, as with these new findings there is still much work to be done, or undone, as the case may be.

First of all, there is the issue of dating A ro ye shes 'byung gnas, as we find quite a bit of disagreement in this regard in academic literature, as well as in modern traditional perspectives that have recently found their way into publication. As for the former, Karmay suggests that A ro lived in the first half of the 11th century, which, if this statement is intended to place A ro's birth in this century, would make him at least a couple of decades, or so, the junior of the Bengali teacher Atiśa Dīpaṅkara Śrījñāna who was born in the late 10th century and visited Tibet near the end of his life, passing away there in the mid 11th century.²⁰ The reason I mention this teacher is because of an account mentioned by gZhon nu dpal, and repeated often by contemporary authors, that Atiśa was quite enchanted with A ro's, aforementioned, *Yoga of the Great Vehicle*. As the story goes, Atiśa was not particularly impressed by the available Tibetan compositions of his

¹⁷ rTa rin chen dpal, *sNyan brgyud gsal byed*, in *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 100, pp. 137-166.

¹⁸ *sNgag 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 100, pp 140-141.

¹⁹ Prior to these, only the Dudjom edition of the bKa' ma was readily available, which was only about half the size, coming in at fifty-eight volumes, and thus lacked many key works that have only become available in the last decade or so. In fact, all of the works I have discussed above in relation to the A ro Tradition are drawn from these recent collections. Moreover, without the triumphant efforts of the late E. Gene Smith and his brainchild, The Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, such a massive corpus of literature would still be out of reach of those who aren't able to procure hardcopies of these works. Therefore, it is to these contemporary preservationists and their protégés that scholars of this field are eternally indebted.

²⁰ Karmay, 1988, p. 126. The most common dates given for Atiśa seem to be 982-1054.

time, but upon perusing A ro's work proclaimed, "Now, this has extremely beautifully poetic phrasing and the meaning is exceedingly excellent."²¹ However, this text was presented to Atiśa by one rBa sgom bsod nam rgyal mtshan, whom is four members away from A ro in the lineage presented by gZhon nu dpal, which was propagated only after Ya zi bon ston relocated from eastern to central Tibet.²² Therefore, by this account there seems to be quite a bit of distance temporally between A ro ye shes 'byung gnas and Atiśa, or at the very least suggests that the former would have been the senior of the two. On the other hand, gZhon nu dpal states elsewhere that A ro's students Ya zi bon ston and Cog ro zangs dkar mdzod khur taught Rong zom chos kyi bzang po (1042-1136), whom is also reported to have met Atiśa, though apparently when he was just a boy and the latter was nearing the end of his life.²³ Furthermore, in accounts related to Rong zom's transmission lineage of the practices related to the deity Vajrakīlaya (*rdo rje phur ba*), it is stated that he met and studied with mDo ston seng ge rgyal mtshan, another one of A ro's students, when he was thirteen years old, which if the above dates are accurate would have been around the time of Atiśa's death.²⁴ So, these relationships would suggest that A ro's direct disciples certainly outlived Atiśa, let alone their own teacher, A ro. Though, perhaps, even more compelling is the mention in the *History of A ro* that rNgog legs pa'i shes rab was one of the four principle students of A ro, as this certainly seems to refer to the same individual that was one of Atiśa's three principle disciples.²⁵ And, considering that this figure is most commonly known as a member of the bKa' gdams sect, which developed in the wake of Atiśa, and, in particular, for his founding of the bKa' gdams affiliated gSang phu ne'u thog Monastery in 1072, it would suggest that he became a student of Atiśa after he was a student of A ro. Thus we get the sense that though A ro may very well have lived in the first half of the 11th century, it seems more likely that this period would have witnessed his death, rather than his birth.

In light of the above, it seems that while A ro ye shes 'byung gnas might have lived into at least the beginning of the 11th century he was

²¹ gZhon nu rpal, *Deb ther sngon po*, Chengdu, 1984. Vol. 2, p. 1164. 'di tshig snyan ngag che don shin tu bzang.

²² Ibid, 1163-1164. Here, the lineage is described as passing from Ya zi to Gru gu klog 'byung and then to Glan sgom tshul 'khriims snying po and then to rBa sgom.

²³ Roerich, *The Blue Annals*. Delhi, 1976 Ed., p. 167, and gZhon nu rpal, *Deb ther sngon po*, Chengdu, 1984. Vol. 1, p. 211.

²⁴ *rDo rje phur pa'i chos 'byung dang rgyud 'grel phyogs bsgrigs*. Mi rigs dpe skrun khang: Beijing, 2006, p. 20.

²⁵ Legs pa'i shes rab was also the uncle of the translator rNgog blo ldan shes rab (1059-1109) whom is well known for his work on the *Bodhisattvacaryāvatāra*.

likely born sometime in the previous century, which somewhat coincides with Davidson's assessment that he lived in the late 10th century.²⁶ However, Davidson does find issue with the notion that he was a student of gNyags Jñānakumāra, apparently based on little more than his lack of mention in gNubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes's famous work the *Lamp for the Eyes of Meditative Concentration* (*bsam gtan mig sgron*).²⁷ However, this is not much of a problem in relation to what we now know of the lineage associated with A ro, as according to the *History of A ro* he doesn't actually begin teaching until after his hiatus in the wilds, which would have occurred after he departed from central Tibet. Furthermore, this teaching activity occurs in eastern Tibet and his major literary contribution is restricted to a single work on the Mahāyāna. Therefore, there is little reason to assume that he need be represented in gNubs chen's work, which, for better or worse, seems to have become the veritable litmus test for the existence of early Great Perfection literature. And so, while Davidson's assessment of A ro's dates may indeed be plausible his denial of the relationship with his purported teacher is not entirely warranted based on the criteria he provides.

Another, more traditionally oriented perspective on the dating of A ro can be found in the recent publication of the transcripts of a teaching given by the contemporary teacher Khenchen Palden Sherab on dPal sprul 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po's (1808-1887) *Clear Demonstration of the Natural State: Pith Instructions of the Supreme Vehicle of Ati* (*Theg mchog ati'i man ngag gnas lugs gsal ston*).²⁸ In it we find the assertion that A ro lived in the 10th century along with a recounting of the story found in the *Blue Annals* of how he received his name and so on. However, Khenchen takes the tale a bit further than gZhon nu dpal does, and includes another back and forth between the young A ro and the monks who have dubbed him Ye shes 'byung gnas. In this version, the monks ask him where he learned these teachings and the young boy says from Bai ro tsa na and Jñānakumāra, and Khenchen explains the surprising nature of this statement by asserting that these masters lived two centuries prior.²⁹ However, this is again a bit of a stretch as

²⁶ Davidson, 2005, p. 75.

²⁷ Ibid, p. 388, n.60.

²⁸ Khenchen Palden Sherab and Khenpo Tsewang Dongyal, *Pointing Out the Nature of Mind: Dzogchen Pith Instructions of A ro ye shes 'byung gnas*. New York: 2012. Though it is unclear why the teachings presented in this book are unequivocally attributed to A ro Yeshe Junge, as dPal sprul's text is obviously a redaction of Sog bzlog pa's *Nyang Tradition Mind Series Guidance Manual* (*Sems sde khrid yig: nyangs lugs so*), it does however provide a more contemporary, yet traditional, account of A ro's life.

²⁹ Ibid, pp. 2-3.

even by the commonly accepted royal accounts bSam yas was not founded until the end of the 8th century and thus these masters would have ostensibly lived well into the 9th century, with gNyags Jñānakumāra perhaps not even being born until then. Though if we consider Dudjom's date of 827 for the year that the, so-called, Seven Test Subjects were ordained, then Bai ro tsa na may very well have not been born until the 9th century, as traditional accounts claim he was but a young man at the time of his ordination. Besides, according to the *History of A ro*, it is claimed that it was in A ro's previous life that he had lived at the time of the founding of bSam yas, so rather it was in his life as A ro ye shes 'byung gnas that he studied with these masters, though the same text does admit to their being a variety of contradictory accounts of his early life. However, it is clear that even according to the perspective of those that suggest that A ro lived in the 10th century, there seems to be an unwillingness to connect him with those dynastic era teachers from whom he is reported to have received his lineage from.

Now that I have addressed the prevalent perspectives on the issue of dating A ro ye shes 'byung gnas, it is useful to once again return to the *History of A ro* to see if any useful information can be reasonably gleaned from its account of the events of his life. However, in order to attempt to date him from this source, it is inevitable that I must address his relationship with other figures around which there is considerable disagreement in terms of dates. Though it goes without saying that the lack of evidence we have concerning Bai ro tsa na and his immediate disciples lends little support to this endeavor, perhaps even more contentious is dGongs pa rab gsal whom is famously reported to have began his Buddhist career when he was the first to be ordained by the three monks fleeing from central Tibetan in the wake of Glang dar ma's assassination. In light of this association, the water-mouse year of dGongs pa rab gsal's birth has often been considered to be as early as 832, though sources are not exactly clear on this point and so some have placed his birth in the subsequent sixty year cycles of 892 or 952. Though it is certainly understandable why modern scholars might be more accepting of this earlier date, due to the relative consensus that Glang dar ma's assassination occurred in the 840's, it is actually the later of these dates that are most commonly suggested by traditional historians, which coincides with later dates for Glang dar ma's reign as well.³⁰ And, so based on the notion that Glang dar ma was

³⁰ One of the issues that arise from the earlier dates of Glang dar ma's reign is that it makes it basically impossible for dGongs pa rab gsal to form the link in the chain of ordinations that he is famously attributed with in Tibetan historical narratives. In particular it is his reception of vows from the trio of dMar, g.Yo, and gTsang, and his passing them on to the, so-called, Ten Men from dBus gtsang. Due to this

assassinated in 906, claimed by traditional historians like dPa' bo gtsug lag 'phreng wa (1504-1564/6) in his religious history and echoed by contemporary rNying ma authors such as Dudjom, we find dGongs pa rab gsal's birth associated with the middle of the three cycles in the year 892.³¹ Nevertheless, according to the *History of A ro* it was from this teacher that A ro received ordination and was encouraged to study and request empowerments from the likes of gNyags Jñānakumāra. Therefore, if one were to accept this affiliation, as well as the somewhat later dates for dGongs pa rab gsal and Glang dar ma, then A ro ye shes 'byung gnas would likely have been born in the first half of the 10thth century and perhaps living into the 11th century. And, in this regard, it might also be worth noting that gZhon nu dpal does insinuate that he lived a rather full life, in that "he remained for a long time (*yun ring bar bzhu*gs)." ³² Therefore, it is not entirely unlikely that he could have been born early enough to meet his reported teachers and still have his immediate students and the successive generations of his lineage interacting with prominent 11th century figures like Atiśa and Rong zom pa.³³ Though, as we shall see, the lack of reliable dates for A ro ye shes 'byung gnas are only the tip of iceberg when it comes to making sense of this important, yet rather nebulous figure, and the tradition he reportedly spawned.

Until the last decade or so, most of the information related to A ro ye shes 'byung gnas that has found its way into academic literature seems to derive, by and large, from a single source. Though long since outdated, Roerich's translation of *The Blue Annals* has been a widely influential reference work for Tibetologists for several generations. However, the vast breadth of gZhon nu dpal's voluminous 15th century work on the history of Tibetan Buddhist traditions inevitably lends itself to treating much of its subjects with such brevity that it can often obscure the intent of the author's inclusion of certain information. This seems to be the case with much of the discussion of A ro ye shes 'byung gnas and his subsequent treatment by modern academics. Moreover, since gZhon nu dpal doesn't mention the A ro Tradition by name, but only alludes to its lineage in passing,

dating issue, many modern scholars have attributed him with only the first of these, while suggesting that the latter group of the Ten Men actually received their vows from Rabsel's student.

³¹ See dPa'o gtsug lag 'phreng ba, *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*. Mi rigs dpe skrun khang: Beijing, 2006, and Dudjom, 1991, p. 905. This later date also allows for dGongs pa rab gsal to act as the preceptor to the Ten Men from Ütsang.

³² gZhon nu rpal, *Deb ther sngon po*, Chengdu, 1984. Vol. 2, p. 1163.

³³ Of course, this would also entail the acceptance that many of the figures and events we have come to associate with the 8th century, should likely be assigned to the 9th century.

academics have been under the impression that this figure was primarily the patriarch of the Khams tradition of the Mind Series.³⁴ And, thus, even though the guidance manual associated with the A ro Tradition has been widely available to modern scholars due to its inclusion in the *Treasury of Spiritual Instructions* (*gdams ngag mdzod*), the tradition itself has been overlooked based on the apparent assumption that the Khams Tradition was the sole recipient of his output, or rather that the names A ro and Khams refer to the same tradition. However, it is now clear, as recounted in the *History of A ro*, that actually many lines of transmission pass through this figure rather than simply one. Furthermore, the notion that he was somehow involved with intentionally developing a syncretic approach to the Mind Series is not attested to in any of these texts, which quite clearly represent him as a conduit rather than the source of these various lineages.

Perhaps the most egregious of the claims made about A ro is that he incorporated the Chan teachings into the Khams Tradition.³⁵ This idea seems to be based merely on the juxtaposition of gZhon nu dpal's mention that he "held the instructions of the line of seven Indians and the line of seven Chinese Hwashangs,"³⁶ which is followed by a statement regarding his propagation of the Khams Tradition, onto which Roerich has seemingly added his own commentary in an apparent attempt to contextualize the sparse original phrasing.³⁷ However, in the Tibetan it seems that gZhon nu dpal is merely introducing A ro ye shes 'byung gnas by mentioning where he was from and his credentials, before going on to say that he gave explanation to his students Cog ro zangs dkar mdzod khur and Ya zi bon ston, whom jointly passed it onto Rong zom pa, which gZhon nu dpal labels as the Khams Tradition. Nevertheless, the insinuation that the teachings he passed on to his students consisted of the above Indian and Chinese lines of seven is contradicted, or at least undermined, by the way this is presented in the *Elucidation of the Hearing Lineage*. In this text, A ro's possession of these instructions is obviously mentioned to demonstrate that he was "an expert in the entirety of the sacred Dharma,"³⁸ which is then followed by statements

³⁴ As discussed earlier, this claim is also made Klong chen pa in his *History of Dharma*. However, considering that he passed away some three decades before Nam mkha'i rdo rje wrote the Khams Tradition guidebook, it is likely that he had little familiarity with this tradition as we now understand it.

³⁵ Davidson, 2005, p. 75, is just one overt example of this, though many others seem to allude to this without properly citing their source.

³⁶ Ibid, Vol. 1, p. 211. *rgya khar bdun brgyud dang rgya'i hwa shang bdun brgyud kyi gdams pa mnga'*.

³⁷ See Roerich, *The Blue Annals*, p.167.

³⁸ *sNgag 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 100, p. 140. *dam pa'i chos mtha' dag la mkhas pa*.

concerning his high level of attainment in regards to practice, in that he was “endowed with the thorough experience that arises from meditation and the five types of higher perceptions.”³⁹ And, therefore, in regards to the instructions of the two lines of seven, they seem to only be mentioned in order to bolster his reputation as an accomplished practitioner, which he had garnered prior to his meeting with dGongs pa rab gsal whom sent him to gNyags Jñānakumāra from whom he received the Great Perfections teachings that would come to bear his name.

Furthermore, we have little information on what these two lines of seven actually refer to, though based on the *History of A ro* these would likely have been received from A ro's two childhood teachers. Though, Karmay actually cites Sog bzlog pa whom states in his *The Roar of Definitive Meaning: Replies to Disputations (Dris lan nges don 'brug sgra)* that this Chinese line of seven refers to Great Perfection instructions, and not to Chan.⁴⁰ However, upon a closer look at the Tibetan it seems that Karmay may have somewhat misrepresented Sog bzlog pa's assertion, as the passage in question seemingly intends to differentiate the Chinese line of seven held by A ro from the Great Perfection teachings propagated by the Chinese students of Śrī Singha.⁴¹ Nevertheless, the lack of mention of the Chinese line of seven in any of the A ro Tradition's Mind Series literature that I have come across, with the exception of the *History of A ro* in which it is included for the above biographical reason, should be enough to dispel the notion that this lineage was ever considered to be an integral part of the A ro Tradition's Great Perfection transmission lineage. Therefore, it seems that modern assertions that Chan was incorporated into this or the Khams Tradition is based entirely on circumstantial evidence, rather than being attributed to any direct claim made by the lineage holders themselves. Of course, if one were to include A ro's *Yoga of the Great Vehicle*, as Klong chen pa does, into the fold of the Khams Tradition by way of the successive cycles of A ro, then perhaps one could make somewhat of an argument for this assumed syncretism.⁴² However, since these instructions are included in the so-called outer cycle, while those of the Great Perfection teachings stemming from Bai ro tsa na are included in the inner cycle, there is no reason to impute some intermingling of the two when there is no explicit evidence of it. In fact, Tibetan Buddhists have shown themselves to be quite adept at

³⁹ Ibid. *shin tu sgom nyams dang ldan pa dang mngon par shes pa lnga dang ldan pa'o.*

⁴⁰ See Karmay, 1988, p. 93, n. 42.

⁴¹ Sog bzlog pa blo gros rgyal mtshan, *Dris lan nges don 'brug sgra.* Chengdu: 1997, p. 235.

⁴² Klong chen rab 'byams dri med 'od zer, *Klong chen chos 'byung*, 1991, pp. 393-394.

compartmentalizing various strains of teachings and organizing them into the rungs and branches of doxographical frameworks. And so, while it is certainly the case that A ro ye shes 'byung gnas is credited with an important work on Mahāyana practice that may very well have been based on his interaction with teachings from Indian and Chinese lineages, there is no reason to assume that this knowledge should somehow impugn his ability to pass on teachings from other sources and traditions without mixing them into some sort of an amalgamation. Furthermore, the apparent source for these claims, if it is indeed gZhon nu dpal's *Blue Annals*, seems to be little more than a misinterpretation of the author's intent. Unfortunately, such misconceptions persist, despite the tenuous nature of the evidence that they seem to be based upon.

Origins of the rDzogs chen Sems sde A ro lugs

As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, one of the more peculiar aspects of the A ro Tradition is the anomalous accounts of its origins, especially in terms of the Indian antecedents to the Tibetan lineage. A prime example of this can be found in an exceedingly brief text entitled *The History and Summary of the Great Perfection*,⁴³ which recounts a story of the Indian monk Maitripa (*me tri ba*) and his search for the Great Perfection teachings, which seemingly cites another text titled *The History of the Sacred Dharma (dam pa chos kyi lo rgyus)* that is apparently no longer extant.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, in this version, Maitripa having searched everywhere for the teachings, but to no avail, hears of an emanation of Śākyamuni living on a mountain in southern India. After travelling for more than a month under difficult conditions he meets a mendicant living in a hut in the forest, and not having been able to find sustenance, he asks the man if he has any food or water. This quickly turns into a discussion about eating meat, to which Maitripa asserts that as a monk he does not partake of slaughtered meat, i.e. the flesh of animals killed specifically for food. This seems to draw the ire of the mendicant who mildly scolds him, saying that if he wishes to practice

⁴³ *rDzogs chen gyi lo rgyus dang sdus don*, in *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 100, pp. 125-127.

⁴⁴ It is unclear whether this title should be translated as above or whether *dam pa* could refer to the author of the text, which could perhaps point to it being written by a certain Dam pa shag rgyal mentioned in the lineage presented in the text. Or it could even refer to Dam pa bde gshegs (1122-1192). However, though this latter figure was nearly a contemporary of the authors of many A ro Tradition texts, he is much more firmly associated with the Khams Tradition of Mind Series, which makes it perhaps less likely, though not entirely implausible, that he would be recounting histories of the A ro Tradition, with which he had less affiliation.

the Dharma he must first restore his health, upon which the man and his hut vanish without a trace. Realizing his mistake, the monk then makes confessions and pays homage causing the mendicant to reappear in the sky, from where he explains that due to lack of good fortune for the two of them to meet at the present time he should rather go to see his student in the south, from whom he should receive instructions. And so, Maitripa does as directed and receives instructions from the mendicant's student, about which nothing is explained other than that he is an ordained monk. The text then continues on to say that he passed the teachings onto Śrī Singha, who then passed them onto Bai ro tsa na, who then passed them to gNyags, who passed them onto A ro, and so on, down to the apparent author of the text, referring to himself as rTa ban, by way of his teacher rTa ston gzi brjid (c. 13th century). All in all, eighteen holders of the lineage are mentioned from Maitripa to rTa ban.

What is so perplexing about the above story is that the only Maitripa known to us is the circa 10th to 11th century Indian master associated with the Mahāmudra teachings that he passed onto his Tibetan students Mar pa lo tsā ba chos kyi blo gros (1012-1097) and Khyung po rnal 'byor (990-1127), both of whom were highly instrumental in the founding of their respective branches of the bKa' rgyud school. However, even if one were to accept the possibility of the same Maitripa's involvement with the early Great Perfection tradition, the notion that he would have lived prior to Bai ro tsa na goes against all the accounts we have of either of these individuals. Moreover, it suggests that there was another line of Great Perfection teachings passed through Śrī Singha that did not originate with either dGa' rab rdo rje or his student Mañjuśrīmitra. It is this last point that is perhaps the most remarkable, as the later tradition adopted such a standardized lineage in which this particular origin account seems to have been completely ignored, unless of course this work is merely referring to these teachers using different names. Though, if this account were only found in the above text of only a few folios, then such a lack of consideration may very well be warranted, but, alas, that is not the case with this particular story.

In the *Elucidation of the Hearing Lineage* we find a much more detailed account of the same story.⁴⁵ This text was written by rTa rin chen dpal (c. 12th to 13th century), who if not actually being the same individual as the aforementioned rTa ban would certainly have been a contemporary of his, as they definitely would have had one or more

⁴⁵ rTa rin chen dpal, *sNyan brgyud gsal byed*, in *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 100, pp. 138-140.

teachers in common.⁴⁶ Regardless, this text actually names the emanation of Śākyamuni as one Śrī Aparakīrti (dPal A pa ra ghir ti, or alternatively as A pa ra ghar ti) in whom the former has emanated apparently because the time had not yet been ripe to teach the Tantras during his lifetime. Information about this figure, whose name could perhaps be rendered as “boundless fame,” ironically, is nowhere to be found outside of the A ro Tradition, in which he does appear in connection with two brief works on an instruction entitled the *Jñānacakra* (*ye shes 'khor lo*).⁴⁷ Otherwise, the story follows along the same lines as the above in that Maitripa is unable to locate the teachings on the Great Perfection, with the slight variation of referring to him as mNga' bdag Maitripa (*me tri ba*), which, being a common epithet of the Maitripa we are otherwise familiar with, should remove all doubt that, at least to the Tibetan author of this particular text, this is intended to refer to the same person. And, as the story goes, Maitripa, although he was vastly learned and had studied under numerous scholars and yogis, could not come across the spiritual instructions of the Great Perfection, so he supplicated the dākinīs in the context of a feast offering who then granted him the following prophecy (*lung bstan*).

*In the southern direction in the place known as Śrī Parvata,
In the supreme sacred site that quells the subjective mind,
The one known as Ghir ti a pa ra,
The emanated form of dGa' rab rdo rje,
The great Saraha, dwells.
You, oh child, must go. Having gone there,
The meaning of “the buddha is immersed in one’s own mind,”
The spiritual instruction of the unmistakable truth,
You must remember to request.*⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Another reason that I believe these two names might refer to the same individual is because in the 1999 Chengdu edition of the *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa* the entire A ro Tradition section is subsumed under a heading which attributes all of the texts to three masters, the last of which is rTa rin chen dpal. And since, the other two, being his teacher and his teacher's teacher, are already mentioned in the lineage preceding rTa ban, it is likely that this is Rin chen dpal simply signing his name as the “venerable one from Ta,” i.e. rTa ban. “Venerable,” in this context, is an honorific title for monk, taken from the Sanskrit *vandya*, or *bande* as it would have been commonly written in areas closer to the Tibetan border such as Nepal.

⁴⁷ See *Khrid ye shes 'khor lo gtan la dbab pa'i man ngag* and *dpal a pa ra ghir ti'i ye shes 'khor lo gtan la dbab pa'i man ngag* in *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 100, pp. 119-124 and 166-168, respectively.

⁴⁸ *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 100, p. 139. *lho phyogs dang dpal gyi ri zhes pa/ yid 'pham byed pa'i gnas mchog na/ ghir ti a pa ra zhes pas/ dga' rab rdo rje'i sprul pa'i sku/ sa ra ha ni chen po bzhuks/ bu khyod song zhig der song la/ rang sems sangs rgyas snyug pa'i don/ ma nor bden pa'i gdams ngag ste/ zhus la yid la dran par gyis/.*

Now, as far as prophecies go, the above is fairly straight forward, but unfortunately the nature of the verses give us very little to go on in terms of grammar, especially in order to decipher the relationship between the fourth and fifth lines mentioning dGa' rab rdo rje and Saraha. Of course, Śrī Parvata, a mountain in south India, is well known as the former residence of the mahāsiddha Saraha, so his appearance in this verse is not entirely out of place. Furthermore, he is believed to have lived around the 8th century, so, by Mind Series standards, at least we are in the temporal ballpark in which the Great Perfection teachings would have been transmitted in India via figures like Śrī Singha and later Bai ro tsa na. However, it is not clear whom the verse is referring to as the emanation of dGa' rab rdo rje. The text has already referred to Aparakīrti as being an emanation of Śākyamuni, but it almost seems as if the prophecy is referring to him as being the emanation of dGa' rab rdo rje, as well, especially since I know of no tradition which considers Saraha as such. Nor does it seem that the text is referring to dGa' rab rdo rje as a separate member of a list, grammatically speaking, or by his association with Śrī Parvata, as there doesn't seem to be any accounts of him ever residing in the area. And, if all three individual names are somehow referring back to Aparakīrti, then it would be quite odd that the texts would use the least known of his names to refer to him, as there would be much more authority derived from either of the other two. However, since we have such little information to go on and no further explanation of the prophecy, it seems that it will remain mysterious until some further clarification comes to light. Otherwise, the rest of this section of the text, once more, cites the *History of Sublime Dharma* and gives a very concise account of the hardships Maitripa had to endure prior to arriving before the teacher and then his receiving four aspects of the teachings from Aparakīrti, namely, "the root [texts], the implements, the hearing lineage, and the mind generation, these four he was granted."⁴⁹ Thus ends the discussions of this figure in the text and, as of yet, I have not been able to locate any other mentions of him in literature related to the A ro Tradition, or otherwise, leaving the mystery thoroughly intact, for the time being. And though I can only assume that most modern scholars will scoff at the idea of Maitripa's involvement in the early Great Perfection lineage, let alone the appearance of another unsubstantiated Indian Great Perfection lineage holder, it is certainly of interest that there is obviously more

⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 139. *rtsa ba/ phyag cha/ snyan brgyud/ sems bkyed bzhi gnang ngo/*

to the early traditional accounts of these lineages than the later, more streamlined, versions would have us believe.

Another interesting anomaly in the A ro Tradition corpus can be found in another brief text entitled *The Spiritual Instructions of the Four Masters*.⁵⁰ In this work, concise instructions from the following four masters are detailed: dGa' rab rdo rje, King Indrabhuti (or rather Indrabodhi in this particular text), Padmasambhava, and Tilopa (*te lo pa*). The first master is, certainly, no surprise and his contribution is a simple three-line instruction in which he uses the analogy of the clarity of undisturbed water to demonstrate how bliss occurs in the uncontrived mind. The next member of the list is a bit more out of place as King Indrabhuti is a name not commonly associated with the Great Perfection teachings. Of course, there are several Indian figures referred to by this name that play various roles in the Indian Tantric lineages, as they are envisioned by later Tibetan accounts, leading to various suffixes being applied to each of these individuals, such as the Great, the Middle, the Younger, and so on. However, in this text there is no indication which of these it is referring to, but, again, his contribution is exceedingly brief, consisting of only two lines, which might be rendered as,

*Just as the mind that has cast aside activities,
Abides exactly as it is, in just way one should rest.*⁵¹

Now, the third member of the list, Padmasambhava, is not necessarily out of place considering that we are still within the confines of the rNying ma tradition, though, in terms of the Mind Series, this is a rare appearance, indeed. It is also the longest of the four and involves a story of the master meeting three old ladies while passing through Mang yul, an area near the present day Tibetan border with Nepal.⁵² As the story goes, three old ladies ask Padmasambhava for instructions, but he tells them to first go seek out the mind (*sems tshol*) and after having done so, he promises to grant them instructions. The old ladies then go off by themselves and try to seek out the mind with each of them achieving varying degrees of success. The first old lady claims to have found it pervading the body, the second is filled with doubt and concludes it must be some kind of illusion, while the third finds nothing at all, not without or within the body, no color, no shape, and so forth. The three of them, then, return to the master and explain

⁵⁰ *Slob dpon bzhi'i gdams ngag*, in *sNga 'gyur bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*, 2009, Vol. 99, pp. 279-283.

⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 279. *bya ba gtang pa'i sems bzhin du/ ji ltar gnas pa de ltar gzhang/*

⁵² *Ibid*, pp. 279-281.

in detail their conclusions, to which Padma replies that the first is foolish, the second has come up with mediocre results, while the last is truly skilled. He then explains why this is so, imparting to them profound instructions on the way, and the whole story wraps up with a song. It's an interesting account, as we rarely see Padmasambhava portrayed in this light, stripped of all magical pomp and circumstance and helping out a few old ladies. Moreover, it's quite unusual to see this figure in Mind Series literature, as apart from his role as the instigator of Bai ro tsa na 's journey in the *Great Portrait* and in a similar capacity in the *Copper Temple Chronicles*, he is generally not so involved in this aspect of the Great Perfection teachings, being much more associated with the Pith Instruction Series and other treasure related developments. Nevertheless, it is the last member of the group of four that is by far the most surprising.

Tilopa was the famed teacher of Nāropa, who also was well known by way of his Tibetan student Marpa.⁵³ So, again, we have a famous Indian Mahāmudra master showing up in the literature of the A ro Tradition and teaching the Great Perfection. However, his extremely succinct instruction to, "remain undistracted while not deliberating, not thinking, not contemplating, not meditating, and not implementing,"⁵⁴ could surely be described as belonging to either of these traditions. However, it is in fact a derivative of the often repeated Mahāmudra instructions commonly known as the *Six Nails of the Key Points* (*gnad kyi gzer drug*), though it is also referred to by Zhang brtson 'grus grags pa (1123-1193) as the *Six Dharmas of Tilopa* (*Tai lo pa'i chos drug*).⁵⁵ Though, it is perhaps this very overlap in subject matter and instructional style that blurs the lines between the Mind Series and certain aspects of the Mahāmudra teachings. Nonetheless, besides dGa' rab rdo rje, everybody else in this list of four masters are certainly not commonplace in Mind Series literature and so, once more, we get a sense of the peculiarity of the A ro Tradition's inclusivity of what would otherwise be deemed as external influences.

Based on the above instances, it would seem that the hard

⁵³ It is perhaps of interest that Naropa was once an abbot at the monastic university of Nālandā, during which time he was known as Abhayakīrti. And though the somewhat similarity of the name with the mysterious Aparakīrti is little more than circumstantial, he was more or less a contemporary of the Maitripa we are familiar with and was at one point the monk disciple of the notoriously unorthodox mendicant Tilopa.

⁵⁴ Ibid, p. 281. *mi bsam mi mno mi sems mi sgom mi spyad ma yengs par zhog cigl.*

⁵⁵ Interestingly, Zhang's iteration of this instruction (*mi mno mi bsam mi sems mi sgom mi spyad sems rang bzhin du gnas*) has even more of Great Perfection flavor than the version found in the A ro literature, which follows the more common version found in Mahāmudra literature. See gSung 'bum brtson 'grus grags pa. Gampopa Library: Kathmandu, 2004, p. 356.

distinction between the Mind Series and Mahāmudra is significantly diminished within the literature of the A ro Tradition. And so, we not only see Mahāmudra masters, such as Maitripa, inserted into the early Great Perfection lineage, but also Mahāmudra teachings, such as Tilopa's famous advice mentioned above, being taken as, or at least placed on equal footing with, Mind Series instructions. And, while it may be tempting to see this as evidence of the concomitant relationship of these two traditions, which could be used as fuel for claims that one is the source from which the other is drawn, it might have more to do with time in which the accounts were recorded than anything else. Most of the A ro literature that has recently come to light seems to have been set down in the 13th century by disciples of dBus pa mtha' yas, mentioned previously as the potential author of the *History of A ro*, whom in turn received them from his own teacher Zhig po bdud rtsi (1149-1199).⁵⁶ Therefore, these accounts, themselves, represent an understanding of masters active in the Buddhist milieu 8th to 9th century India as it would have been viewed by Tibetan Buddhists in the late 12th to 13th century. Though, of course, these accounts could possibly extend back through oral transmission to earlier periods, it is perhaps more likely that they are a product of the times in which they were written down, as referencing masters such as Maitripa, and so on, could presumably lend them an air of authenticity in relation to the prominent traditions of the day, which held such Mahāmudra masters and their teachings in the highest regard. Furthermore, since the historical picture represented by these accounts seems to be restricted to merely a handful of A ro related works, we get the sense that it might not have been readily accepted by parties on either side of the rNying-gSar divide. Consequently, figures such as Aparakīrti all but vanished from the collective rNying ma memory as the various written and oral accounts of their tradition's history became more and more standardized with the passage of each century. Therefore, rather than assuming that accounts such as those found among the literary relics of the A ro Tradition necessarily represent some long lost information on early figures that the tradition has since forgotten, it's perhaps more useful to view them as a snapshot of a particular moment in this ongoing process of reimagining history. Because, while the chances of locating Aparakīrti and determining the true role of Maitripa in these events are exceedingly slim, examples such as this that draw our attention to this process can also act as a reminder to us that we too are engaging in the act of reimagining. And while our sources of authority are different, the picture we are collectively painting is equally a work in progress.

⁵⁶ In Dudjom, 1991, p. 653, it puts the date of his birth in 1143.

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From treatise to tantra: the *Pure Golden Ore* (*rDo la gser zhun*) and the *Tantra of Meditation on Bodhicitta* (*Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*)

Karen Liljenberg

This paper presents an examination, translation and edition of the *Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*, or *Tantra of Meditation on Bodhicitta*, (hereafter SGG).¹ This hitherto-unstudied early text of the Tibetan *rDzogs chen* tradition is found in at least three editions of the *rNying ma* Collected Tantras (*rNying ma'i rgyud 'bum*; hereafter NGB).²

The importance of the SGG derives mainly from the fact that it is closely related to the similarly-titled *Meditation on Bodhicitta* (*Byang chub sems bsgom pa*), also known as *Pure Golden Ore* (*rDo la gser zhun*, hereafter DLSZ).³ It is not my intention here to focus on the DLSZ *per se*, as it has received attention elsewhere,⁴ but rather on the SGG and the relationship between the two texts.

A comparative study of both texts, which I provide below,⁵ reveals contrasting styles and doctrinal emphases, which I would argue indicate that they belong to successive periods during which *rDzogs chen* was gradually emerging as a philosophical and meditational system

¹ This paper incorporates the research that I conducted for my 2008 Master's dissertation at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London.

² These are: mTshams brag (Tb. 37), sDe dge (Dg. 155) and gTing skyes (Tk. 69). It is probable that the missing volume Ga of the Tshe dbang nor bu NGB also included the SGG. The absence of the SGG from the Collected Tantras of Vairocana (*Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*), however, is noteworthy.

³ The DLSZ is found in the Tibetan commentarial canon (*bsTan 'gyur*) as P. 3415, as well as in the *Collected Tantras of Vairocana* (*Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*; hereafter VGB) as Bg.119, and also in the sDe dge (Dg. 157) and mTshams brag (Tb. 22) NGB editions. A much shorter version of the DLSZ also forms Chapter 26 of the *All-creating King* (*Kun byed rgyal po*, hereafter KBG), the sole *rDzogs chen* work to be included in the Tibetan scriptural canon (*bKa' 'gyur*).

⁴ My principal reference in regard to the *rDo la gser zhun* is Lipman, 2001, whose work was very useful to my research on the *Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*.

⁵ See *infra* the section "Outline and comparative structural analysis of the SGG and the DLSZ."

in its own right.⁶ It also constitutes an unusually clear-cut case of the process of transformation of an authored Indian commentarial text⁷ into a hybrid Indo-Tibetan tantric scripture, accorded sacred status equivalent to the Word of the Buddha (Skt. *buddha vacana*).

One of the most important early rDzogs chen texts, the DLSZ is remarkable for its early exposition of *rDzogs chen* in the context of logic and philosophy. According to tradition, it is one of the first five rDzogs chen texts to be translated by Vairocana into Tibetan, known as the *Five Earlier Translations of the Mind Series* (*sems sde snga 'gyur lnga*).⁸

Traditional accounts attribute the composition of the DLSZ to the Indian scholar Mañjuśrīmitra,⁹ an obscure but important figure in the early rDzogs chen lineage. No early biography of him has survived, although he is mentioned in the hagiography of Vairocana.¹⁰ Later sources portray him as a learned paṇḍita from Sri Lanka, resident at a monastic university (perhaps Nālandā) in eighth-century India when dGa' rab rDo rje, the first rDzogs chen master, began to teach. Mañjuśrīmitra is said to have written the DLSZ after receiving and immediately attaining a profound understanding of these first rDzogs chen teachings, in order to make amends for his initial scholarly distrust of dGa' rab rdo rje.¹¹

⁶ The stages of the historical emergence of rDzogs chen have generally been conflated in traditional, and also some modern, works. For example, Lipman, *op. cit.*, p. 9, explains the absence from the DLSZ of terminology that characterises the rDzogs chen discourse of later literature as due to Mañjuśrīmitra's newness to rDzogs chen, rather than, as I think more likely, the newness of rDzogs chen itself at that time.

⁷ Note, however, that the DLSZ itself has survived as a separate work in the Tibetan commentarial canon up to the present day.

⁸ The *Five Earlier Translations of the Mind Series* themselves comprise a sub-set of the *Eighteen Texts of the Mind Series* (*sems sde bco brgyad*), the other thirteen texts of which are known as the *Thirteen Later Translations* (*phyi 'gyur bcu gsum*). These thirteen texts were the subject of my PhD thesis; see Liljenberg, Karen, 2012. See also Lopez, 2018. The DLSZ is also incorporated into the *mDo bcu*; whose full title is: *Chos thams cad rdzogs pa chen po byang chub kyi sems su 'dus pa'i mdo*; mTshams brag Tb. 7. This is a commentary that incorporates the very brief version of the DLSZ as well as others of the *sems sde snga 'gyur lnga*. Interestingly, the DLSZ precedes the other four texts in this category (the *Rig pa'i khu byug*, *rTsal chen sprugs pa*, etc.) in the *mDo bcu*'s Topic 8 commentary. This might hint that its composition or translation (contrary to received tradition) was prior to theirs. From the doctrinal point of view this seems to me quite probable.

⁹ Tib. 'Jam dpal gshes gnyen.

¹⁰ Vairocana's hagiography (*rnam thar*), the *'Dra bag chen mo*, is available in English translation under the title *The Great Image*, see Palmo, 2004.

¹¹ He is also said, in the *Lo rgyus chen mo*, to have classified the rDzogs chen teachings into three categories (*sde*); these three categories are: *sems sde*, *long sde* and

The central theme of the DLSZ is *bodhicitta*, variously translated in English, for example as "awakening mind" or "the mind of enlightenment". Of course, *bodhicitta* is praised throughout the Mahāyāna as indispensable from the outset for the bodhisattva. Developing the authentic Mahāyāna motivation was (and is) known as "generating bodhicitta". Śāntideva (695-743 C.E.) praises it as:

"The supreme gold-making elixir,
For it transforms the unclean body we have taken
Into the priceless jewel of a Buddha-form.
Therefore firmly seize this Awakening Mind"¹²

The concept of *bodhicitta* evolved over time until, in the Vajrayāna context of Mahāyoga *sādhana*s, generating *bodhicitta* became part of the deity yoga visualization practice of *bskyed rim*, the development stage, where it is the key to the second of the three *samādhis*, the "All-illuminating samādhi".¹³

In the subsequent Mahāyoga practice of *rdzogs rim*, the perfection stage, *bodhicitta* could also signify the sexual fluid that embodied the practitioner's realization of bliss and Emptiness. One Dunhuang treatise on the development and perfection stages, PT 321, refers to the *bodhicitta* substance as "the great perfection, the great self, the heart nectar".¹⁴

The DLSZ, however, is more conservative in its interpretation of *bodhicitta*, at least at the outset. It describes it as:

"the very essence of Youthful Mañjuśrī, who is the true, essential nature of the Dharma itself. Because it has been the matrix of all the Sugatas it is the sole mother of all the victors."¹⁵

The key point that the DLSZ addresses is how to cultivate¹⁶ this *bodhi-*

man ngag sde. Lo rgyus chen mo p. 104 (in the *Bi ma snying thig* - New Delhi: Trulku Tsewang, Jamyang and L. Tashi, 1970).

¹² *Bodhicaryāvatāra* Ch. 1 verse 10, translated in Batchelor S., 1993 p. 5 The *Bodhicaryāvatāra* imagery of transformation of coarse matter into gold here contrasts with the later commentarial literature on the *rdō la gser zhun*, where gold ore is said to be essentially as good as gold itself - that is, all sentient beings are already, in essence, enlightened. See Dowman, 2006, p. 27.

¹³ See Khyentse D., 1992, p. 20.

¹⁴ van Schaik, 2004, p. 168, n. 10. The "Great self" or "great lord" (*bdag nyid chen po*) is given in the SGG as one of the names of the enlightened figures who utter the text.

¹⁵ fol. 320a.7: *chos la chos nyid snying por gyur pa/ 'jam dpal gzhon nu'i snying po nyid/ bde shegs ma lus yum du gyur pas rgyal ba kun gyi yum gcig pul.*

¹⁶ Tib. *bsgom pa*, Skt. *bhavana*. Although I use them here, the standard translations of this term as "cultivation" or "meditation" or "development" are less than adequate

citta? Taking as its starting-point the steps of conventional Buddhist logical analysis in order to determine that the twin notions of really-existing "self" and material phenomena are erroneous, the DLSZ then describes in detail the manner in which the delusory perceptions of ordinary beings arise and lead to continued rebirth. It presents this process in terms derived from Yogācāra philosophy, such as the three phases of transformation.¹⁷ Thus far, the DLSZ proceeds through a gradual, intellectual approach towards the realization of the view of emptiness. However, once the limits of conceptual and verbal analysis have been reached, the text emphasises that its "path of great sages" is "free of verbal designations" and "not arrived at by words" but by practice in accord with the instructions of one's master. This, at least from the viewpoint of later rDzogs chen tradition, is the point where the DLSZ could be considered to approach the domain of rDzogs chen *per se*.

It is noteworthy, however, that the DLSZ nowhere refers to itself as a rDzogs chen work, or to the path which it sets out as *rdzogs chen*, but simply as "this yogic path".¹⁸ Otherwise, the DLSZ presents its doctrine simply as "yoga". Moreover, it still orients itself in respectful reference to the framework of tantric deity-practice, in this case either of Mañjuśrī, or, more radically, of Samanta [bhadra]-Vajrasattva. Such practice is validated as a relative, symbolic basis on which to approach *bodhicitta* in the absolute sense, with the implication that not all are able to immediately tackle the more difficult path.

After this brief look at the DLSZ, let us turn now to the principal subject of this paper, the SGG. I have found that it incorporates almost the entire DLSZ *verbatim*, but also greatly expands upon it, at over twice its length.¹⁹ Thus, rather than being simply another recension of the DLSZ,²⁰ it is better characterised as a derivative, but substantially different text.

The relationship of the SGG to the DLSZ is in some ways similar to both an experiential instruction (*nyams khrid*) and a commentary, although the DLSZ "root text" is undifferentiated from the SGG's exegesis. The main structural difference between the two works, apart

in a strictly rDzogs chen context; "familiarisation (with)" would probably be better.

¹⁷ SGG fol. 324b.4: *sems dang sems las byung ba de nyid lus gsum don du snang ba yin /*.

¹⁸ An exceptional use of the term *rig pa*, in the sense similar to later rDzogs chen discourse, occurs only in the commentarial redaction of the DLSZ by the nineteenth-century lama Mipham: It is also present in one of the SGG passages shared with the DLSZ, at fol. 328b.6. (It occurs without this rDzogs chen sense at: fol. 324b.1; fol. 325a.5; fol. 325b.5).

¹⁹ The SGG comprises 26 folio sides, while the DLSZ has 10.

²⁰ As described by Lipman 2001, p. 6, n. 17.

from the great difference in their length, is the division of the SGG into eleven chapters. Whereas the DLSZ is a continuous undifferentiated exposition, each SGG chapter is pronounced by a Buddha-figure, in a manner similar to the sutras. However, the SGG departs from sūtric tradition in that its mouthpieces are all hypostatized personifications of spiritual accomplishment rather than named Buddhas. So, for example, in chapter one we encounter "the Lord of all Blessed Tāthāgatas (*bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi bdag po*), and later "the great lord who is no different from the realization and understanding of this nature of the ultimate truth" (*don dam pa'i rang bzhin de rtogs shing shes par bya ba/ gnyis su med pa'i bdag nyid chen po*²¹) or "the Blessed One, Great Bliss" (*bcom ldan 'das bde ba chen po*).²²

Who was the author of the SGG?

There is no authorship colophon in the SGG, so what, if anything, can we deduce about who may have written it? The lDan kar ma/Lhan kar ma library catalogue from the early ninth century²³ mentions two texts with the same title of *byang chub sems bsgom pa* - one attributed to rGyal ba'i 'od, said to comprise one hundred ślokas, and the other to Mañjuśrīmitra,²⁴ in sixty-eight ślokas.²⁵ The only slightly later 'Phang thang catalogue also includes these two works in its "Stotras praised by former Ācāryas and Kings" section. Interestingly, the text by Ācārya Jayaprabhā (transliterated there as Dza ya pra bha) is described as from his "tantric collection".²⁶

It is highly significant that there was already a text titled *byang chub sems bsgom pa* attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra at this early date, and it is extremely probable that this was an early version of the DLSZ. In that case, the lDan kar's *Byang chub sems bsgom pa* by rGyal ba'i 'od, a significantly longer work, may plausibly have been an early commentary on the DLSZ.²⁷ If it was an early version of the SGG, then

²¹ At the introduction to chapter three.

²² Chapters eight to eleven are uttered by this last figure.

²³ Most probably dating to 812 CE, although the exact date is disputed. See Harrison P., pp 72-74, in Cabezón and Jackson, 1995.

²⁴ Lalou Items 609/610.

²⁵ Unfortunately, as Lalou pointed out, even though all the works in the catalogue are enumerated in ślokas, of those titles extant today, by no means all are entirely in verse, so it is impossible to be sure what exactly "śloka" signifies in the catalogue.

²⁶ *Byang chub sems sgom pa slob dpon dza ya pra bhas sngags kyi tan tra las btus te bgyis pa* (No. 642); See Halkias, p. 72.

²⁷ There are several other examples of pairs of works listed consecutively nearby in the 'Phang thang catalogue, one of which is a commentary on the other. For ex-

rGyal ba'i 'od would be our missing author. It could, of course, have been a different commentary altogether.²⁸

It is also conceivable that parts of the SGG may even derive from Vairocana himself. As the Tibetan translator of the DLSZ, he would be in a good position to transmit and expound as well as, perhaps, expand upon it. If it was passed down and gradually altered by disciples in his lineage, rGyal ba'i 'od may have been among them. The fact that no-one of this name²⁹ appears in the lineage lists of early rDzogs chen does not preclude this possibility, as they are not reliable for historical purposes.

There is in the *bsTan 'gyur* a sādhana of Buddha Vairocana composed by a certain Jayaprabhā around the end of the eighth century and the beginning of the ninth. These dates would fit very well with the Jayaprabhā of the IDan kar/'Phang thang catalogues.³⁰ However, even if the sādhana author Jayaprabhā was also the author of the catalogues' longer *Byang chub sems bsgom pa*, the identity of that text itself must remain uncertain. In my view, it is unlikely to have been identical to the SGG as we currently have it, although it could have been a precursor to it.³¹

The literary tradition of the DLSZ

It is feasible that the *Byang chub sems bsgom pa*/DLSZ actually gave rise to a whole genre of texts known as *byang chub sems*, because a large number of early rDzogs chen works include this phrase in their titles.³² The introductory section of the *sBas pa'i rgum chung* even refers to the text itself as "this Mind of Enlightenment", (*byang chub sems 'di*) thus implying the existence of a literary genre and/or practice

ample, the *Trailokyavijaya-tantra* ('Jig rten gsum las rnampar rgyal ba 'i rgyud, No. 888) with its commentary (No. 889); Nāgārjuna's *Jewelled Necklace*, the *Ratnamala* (*Rin po che 'phreng ba*) (No. 629) with commentary (No. 630); Nāgārjuna's *Letter to a Friend* (*Grogs po'i 'phrin yig*) (No. 633) and its commentary (No. 635).

²⁸ Such as Tb. 76; on which see below, p. 12, and p. 18.

²⁹ The Tibetan name *rGyal ba'i 'od* could be either Jinaprabhā or Jayaprabhā in Sanskrit, but it is the latter form that appears in the 'Phang Thang catalogue.

³⁰ The sādhana is Peking bsTan 'gyur 3489, vol. 77, pp. 358-368, *rNam par snang mdzad kyi sgrub pa'i thabs kyi cho ga*. See Lobsang Nyima Laurent, 2013, p. 200 and n. 21; and see also Heller, 2002, p. 52 n. 28.

³¹ Another possible author for the SGG, if not rGyal ba'i 'od, would be the so-called "second Mañjuśrīmitra" ('jam dpal bshes gnyen phyi ma) who according to tradition lived 125 years after the first. The historicity of this figure is, however, debated. See also Lipman, p. 136 n. 1.

³² *Byang chub (kyi) sems*, Skt. *bodhicitta* is one of several terms that later rDzogs chen tradition has taken as synonyms for the actual term *rDzogs chen*. See Norbu, in Lipman 2001 p. ix.

tradition so-called.³³ This rubric seems to have preceded that of *sems phyogs*, "mind-oriented"³⁴ to refer to rDzogs chen works mostly later retrospectively classified as the Mind Series (*sems sde*).³⁵

However, most closely related to the DLSZ are the large number of texts which include its original title *Byang chub sems bsgom pa* within theirs, including, of course, the SGG.³⁶ Some of these are clearly commentaries on the DLSZ, such as the *rNa mar rgyud* or *Oral Instructions* (full title: *Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i bsam gtan rna mar rgyud [kyi man ngag]*),³⁷ as well as the *Twelve-Point Commentary* (*Byang chub sems bsgom pa don bcu gnyis bstan pa*).³⁸ Also among this group of relatively early commentaries is the *Wheel that Cuts through the Vehicles* (*Theg pa gcod pa'i 'khor lo*).³⁹ The first work in volume one of the *Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*, the *Sun of the Heart* (*sNying gi nyi ma*), includes a section of commentary on the DLSZ.⁴⁰ In the late eleventh century the prestige of the DLSZ was such that it is the most frequently-cited work in Rong zom chos kyi bzang po's *Disclosing the Great Vehicle Approach* (*Theg chen tshul 'jug*), in which he set out to defend the legitimacy of rDzogs chen as an authentic Buddhist vehicle in the face of serious criticism.⁴¹ The famous nineteenth-century rNying ma scholar Mipham also wrote a commentary on the DLSZ.⁴²

Most relevant to our present examination of the SGG, however, is another text with a title that is very similar, and indeed identical in its

³³ *sBas pa'i rgum chung*, IOL Tib J 594 fol. 1a l.

³⁴ The terms *sems phyogs* and *sems sde* have not yet been found in any reliably-dated pre-eleventh century text. See van Schaik 2004 p. 167. The only possible exception of which I am presently aware: *sems phyogs* does occur in an interesting account of the transmission by Padmasambhava of the *Ita ba'i phreng ba* that is given in the *sBa bzhed*, an early chronicle dating in origin (though not all its recensions) to the Tibetan imperial period. See Karmay, 1988, pp. 143, 144.

³⁵ Ostensen has recently argued that the rubric *sems phyogs* should not be considered to be exactly synonymous with *sems sde*, as some texts once classified as *sems phyogs* are now extant as Expanse Series (*klong sde*) or even Instruction Series (*man ngag sde*) works. See Ostensen, 2018, p. 35.

³⁶ I discuss some other works in this group, and provide a table of all texts related to the SGG of which I am currently aware below, in Appendix IV.

³⁷ *Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*, Bg 4, vol. 1, pp. 49-64. The colophon attributes it to Mañjuśrīmitra. For a translation of this work, under the title *Meditation: the oral instructions of Mañjuśrīmitra* see Lipman, 2001, pp. 31-51.

³⁸ P. 3405, vol. 75, pp. 140-147. No author is attributed.

³⁹ *Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum*, 108; vol. 5, pp. 1-59. Lipman believes this text may have been written by Vairocana himself, but I think it is considerably later. For a topical outline of it, see Lipman o p. cit.; pp. 128-131.

⁴⁰ See Kapstein, 2008.

⁴¹ See Sur, 2017, pp. 32, 84, 165-66, 178-80, 184, 191.

⁴² *Byang chub sems bsgom pa rdo la gser zhun gyi mchan 'grel de kho na nyid gsal ba'i sgron me*; contained in his *Collected Writings* as well as in the *rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*.

abbreviated Tibetan form, namely *The Tantra of Meditation on Bodhicitta, the Universal Unborn Skylike Nature* (*Thams cad nam mkha'i ngo bo skye ba med pa'i byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud.*) In the mTshams brag edition of the NGB this is Tb.76, which is how I shall refer to it from now on. Similar title notwithstanding, it is, nevertheless, an entirely different work to the SGG.⁴³ Before we try to understand the nature of the relationship between the DLSZ, SGG and Tb.76, it is necessary first to consider another important work, the *bSam gtan mig sgron*.

The SGG and the *bSam gtan mig sgron*

The *Lamp for the Eye of Contemplation* (*bSam gtan mig sgron*, henceforth STMG), by gNubs chen sangs rgyas ye shes,⁴⁴ dates to the late ninth or early tenth century. The STMG's seventh chapter is the most detailed and systematic extant exposition of early rDzogs chen, comparing it with other vehicles and setting forth nine different interpretations of the rDzogs chen view.⁴⁵

The STMG contains three groups of citations that are relevant to our discussion: those citing a text entitled *sems bsgom [pa'i] rgyud*; those citing *sems bsgom [pa]*; and those citing the [*sems bsgom*] *rdo la gser zhun*.

If I may be forgiven a slight digression here, I shall deal first with the citations from the *sems bsgom [pa]* and [*sems bsgom*] *rdo la gser zhun*. Although these are less directly relevant to the SGG itself, they are nonetheless of interest for what they can tell us about the history of the DLSZ, and also their potential implications for the date of another important early rDzogs chen text, the *All-creating King* (*Kun byed rgyal po*).

I found two citations of the DLSZ as such (i.e. under that actual title) in the STMG. The first, citing "*sems bsgom rdo la gser zhun las*" is in

⁴³ Tshe dbang mchog grub in his *rtogs brjod* to the NGB mentions a DLSZ without chapters, and clearly implies the existence of another version of the DLSZ that *was* divided into chapters. This could have been Tb. 76, or the SGG. Since the SGG could be characterised somewhat loosely as a much expanded version of the DLSZ, I think the SGG is a more likely candidate. See Lipman, p. 136 n. 1.

⁴⁴ Eleventh century and later tradition says that he was a disciple of gNyan dpal byangs, author of the *rDo rje sems dpa' zhus lan*. See Karmay, 1988, p. 207.

⁴⁵ These views are ascribed in interlinear notes to various named teachers. Esler argues convincingly that it is unlikely that the notes were written by gNubs chen himself, but he believes that they were probably inserted by an immediate disciple, perhaps as *verbatim* notes taken in an oral teaching given by gNubs chen. See Esler, 2012, p. 129.

both the SGG and DLSZ.⁴⁶ The second, "*rdo la gser zhun las*" is again found in both texts,⁴⁷ but omits five lines that intervene in the middle.⁴⁸ The vast majority (eleven in total) of the relevant STMG quotations from the DLSZ are given under the abbreviated title *sems bsgom [pa]*. All of these except one can be located in the body of text shared by both DLSZ and SGG.

The single exceptional *sems bsgom* citation has an interlinear note which states "the position of Mañjuśrīmitra". It is not found in either the SGG or DLSZ, but, significantly, is part of the very short version of the DLSZ subsumed into the *All-creating King*.⁴⁹

Of the other *snga 'gyur lnga* texts also included in the KBG, the DLSZ is the only one that is shorter in the KBG than the stand-alone version. This leads Clemente to suggest that the KGB version of the text might be "the original one that Mañjuśrīmitra authored his text on the basis of".⁵⁰

The colophon to KBG chapter twenty-six states it comes "from the *Ten Instructions on perfect non-action*".⁵¹ Chapters twenty-two to twenty-seven of the KBG all have colophons stating that they are from these *Ten Instructions*, and include several other *snga 'gyur lnga* texts.⁵² Thus, the KBG is a composite work drawing here, by its own admission, on an earlier grouping of texts.⁵³

⁴⁶ (STMG 269.2/SGG 321a.2-3/DLSZ fol. 562.2).

⁴⁷ (STMG 313.5 to 314.2/SGG fol. 320a.7/DLSZ fol. 281.3).

⁴⁸ Where there are differences between the SGG and DLSZ here (minor variant readings) the STMG tends to follow the DLSZ version. For example, the STMG reads *lam gcig go* at the end of the first line of the citation, following DLSZ, whereas SGG reads *yum gcig pu*.

⁴⁹ STMG 414.5: "The darkness of wisdom that does not distinguish any form and the lamp of clarity that illuminates everything without hindrance are both beyond thought. The naturally quiescent condition is the supreme contemplation". See Norbu and Clemente, 1999, p. 164.

⁵⁰ See Norbu and Clemente 1999, p. 272, n. 122.

⁵¹ KBG (Tshams brag edition) fol. 49b *bya med rdzogs pa'i lung bcu las/bya med rdzogs pa bsgom du med pa'i le'u ste rtsa drug pa'o/ /*.

⁵² The two presently-available translations of the KBG differ on which chapters constitute these *Ten Instructions on Non-action*, and if all ten are, in fact, included in the KBG they are not all apparently contiguous. See Clemente 1999, p. 174; p. 260 and Neumaier-Dargyay 1992, p. 208-209.

⁵³ Karmay, (1988, p. 207, and n. 7) was undecided on the question of whether the KBG was composed on the basis of the *snga 'gyur lnga* texts, or they are extractions from it. He notes that the fifth Dalai Lama considered the latter to be true. However, it seems *prima facie* unlikely that these texts, considered so fundamental to the later rDzogs chen tradition, would have been later extracted without acknowledgment from the KBG. The early separate existence of the *rig pa'i khu byug* at Dunhuang supports this view. Moreover, a parallel reading of the DLSZ and KBG chapter twenty six gives the distinct impression that the latter is a condensed, very free paraphrase of the former. Cf. KBG fol. 97.1 "*de med mi 'byung de*

From the eleventh century edict of Pho brang Zhi ba 'od onwards, doubts were expressed about the KBG's authenticity.⁵⁴ The fact that the STMG makes no mention of the KBG seems to support such qualms.

What, then, are we to make of the STMG quoting a passage from "*sems bsgom*" that appears to be extant solely in the KBG version of the DLSZ? It follows that either there was a different⁵⁵ *sems bsgom* text containing this passage available at the time of the STMG's composition, or the STMG is indeed quoting directly from the KBG here - meaning, of course, that the KBG would pre-date the STMG. The fact that the citation is not, however, attributed by name to the KBG, which is indeed never referenced in the STMG, tends to support the former hypothesis. It seems more likely that the KBG version of the DLSZ previously circulated separately, and was then included, perhaps already in a shortened form, as part of a collection of texts called the *Ten Instructions on Perfect Non-action*. It is unlikely to have formed part of the KBG at the time of STMG's composition. Despite the status that it accrued in later centuries as the principal tantra of the rDzogs chen Mind Series, all the evidence points to the KBG being compiled considerably later than the STMG.⁵⁶

Returning now to our discussion of the SGG itself, there are just three instances where the *bSam gtan mig sgron* cites from a *sems bsgom* (*pa'i*) *rgyud*. I was initially surprised to discover that none of them are present in the SGG. The first citation⁵⁷ comes not in the STMG's Atiyoga (rDzogs chen) section (chapter seven), but much earlier in the text. I have located this citation in Tb.76. The second citation is near

'phyir nga yi rnam grol mchog gi lam" with SGG/DLSZ's "*de med mi 'byung de ni rnam grol mchog gi lam*". It is more plausible that KBG has added "*nga yi*" to suit its distinctive first-person narrative, than that this has been removed from the other two texts. I am therefore disinclined to accept Clemente's suggestion that the KBG version is the "original" one.

⁵⁴ However, I am aware of the danger of collapsing the difference between known historical references to a text's existence and the possibility of much earlier undocumented origins. For an overview of the Tibetan debates on the KBG's "authenticity", i.e. its claim to being a translation from a Sanskrit original, see Karmay 1975.

⁵⁵ Different, that is, from the SGG and the DLSZ (and also different from Tb. 76, which does not contain this STMG citation either). As discussed above, apart from this one KBG passage, STMG cites a version of the DLSZ text that is common to both the SGG and the DLSZ, while excluding altogether those passages unique to the SGG.

⁵⁶ The *Eighteen Texts of the Mind Series* (*sems sde bco brgyad*) are extensively cited as independent, individual works in the STMG. See Liljenberg, 2012.

⁵⁷ STMG fol. 45.1: *sems bsgom pa'i rgyud las/ mchod rten lha khang la sogs pa//dus byas dge rtsa mnyam snyoms bzhang/ /Tb. 76, p. 642.4: mchod rten lha khang la sogs 'dus byas dge rtsa btang snyoms bzhang/.*

the beginning of the STMG's chapter seven, in an interlinear note, and so could have been written considerably later than the root text.⁵⁸ I have also located this citation in Tb.76.⁵⁹ The third *sems bsgom pa'i rgyud* quotation,⁶⁰ again absent from both the SGG (and DLSZ)⁶¹ is found in Tb.76 as well.⁶²

Since it contains all three STMG *sems bsgom pa'i rgyud* quotations, I therefore believe Tb.76 is very likely to be the *sems bsgom pa'i rgyud* that is cited by the STMG.

The significance of Tb.76 is further enhanced by the fact that the above-mentioned commentary on the DLSZ, the *Oral Instructions/ rNa mar rgyud* also draws heavily upon it. Like the STMG, it also contains many quotations from a *byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*.⁶³ I have located almost all of these quotations in Tb.76.⁶⁴

Tb.76 and the SGG

The question then arises, why should both the STMG and the NMG quote the Tb.76 *Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud* and ignore the SGG? It seems that gNubs chen, author of the STMG, as well as whoever wrote the NMG, were either unaware of the SGG - perhaps because it had not yet been composed - or did not consider it as suitable to their purpose as Tb.76. However, if the latter reason is correct, why did neither author take care to differentiate between the two very similarly-titled sources?

⁵⁸ STMG 293.3 *sems bsgom rgyud las/la la ma brtags pa las rgyal ba 'byung gi brtags pa 'khyal zhes 'byung phyir/*. Karmay translates this as follows: "The *sems bsgom rgyud* says "In some texts, it is said that the Buddha results from non-investigation; investigation is erroneous". He notes "The *sems sgom rgyud* remains unidentified". Karmay, 1988, p. 109, n. 15.

⁵⁹ Tb. 76, p. 628.1.

⁶⁰ STMG 463.5.

⁶¹ It is, however, also found in the *sBas pa'i rgum chung* by Buddhagupta.

⁶² Tb. 76, p. 603.3-4.

⁶³ Lipman (2001, p. 145 n. 12) states that he has not been able to locate this tantra. A search for these passages in the SGG indeed proves fruitless.

⁶⁴ Tb. 76; (Taipei Tb1 4535) Quotations as follows: NMG fol. 51.2/Tb. 76 p. 641-642/Lipman 2001 edition p. 37; NMG fol. 51.3-5/Tb. 76 p. 632/Lip. ed. p. 37; NMG fol. 53.3/Tb. 76 p. 603.2/Lip. ed. p. 39; NMG fol. 53.4/Tb. 76 p. 604.1-2/Lip. ed. p. 40; NMG fol. 53.5/Tb. 76 p. 604.4 -5/Lip. ed. p. 40; NMG fol. 54.2-4/Tb. 76 p. 604.2-3/Lip. ed./ p. 41; NMG fol. 55.1-2/Tb. 76 p. 605.3-4/Lip. ed. p. 42; NMG fol. 57.2-3/Tb. 76 p. 607.7/Lip. ed. p. 44; NMG fol. 58.4-6/ Tb. 76 p. 621.2/Lip. ed. p. 45; NMG fol. 59.6/ Tb. 76 p. 636.4/Lip. ed. p. 46; NMG fol. 63.2/Tb. 76 p. 626.5-6/Lip. ed. p. 49. There are just two or three short NMG citations that I have not yet found in Tb. 76, but I expect these will be locatable on a more thorough reading of Tb. 76.

At first evaluation, therefore, it looks possible that the SGG was compiled and written later than Tb.76. Other evidence that might lend support to this view is that Tb.76 adheres more closely to the DLSZ than the SGG. Where the SGG and DLSZ readings differ from each other, Tb.76 consistently adopts those of the DLSZ. At points where the SGG diverges from the DLSZ, Tb.76 retains the DLSZ's unbroken sequence.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, Tb.76 incorporates and comments on passages in apparently random order from the DLSZ, without explicitly differentiating them from the rest of its text.⁶⁶ From its chapter sixteen onwards, however, it contains no further DLSZ root text or commentary,⁶⁷ thus it only comments on roughly two-thirds of the DLSZ,⁶⁸ (text shared by the DLSZ and SGG up to the end of SGG's chapter eight).⁶⁹

The major problem with the hypothesis that the SGG is later in date than Tb. 76 is that Tb.76's doctrinal elements and language appear markedly more developed than those of the SGG. It pays homage to Samantabhadra in its opening, emphasizes non-duality and effortless naturalness, and rejects formal meditation practices⁷⁰ and traditional meritorious actions at temples and stūpas. It frequently employs the actual term *rdzogs(pa) chen (po)*. Even more tellingly with regard to its date, it mentions *thod rgal*,⁷¹ a rDzogs chen practice considered by most academic scholarship to be a later introduction, since it is referenced only from the eleventh century on, in the *snying thig* literature of the *man ngag sde*.⁷²

⁶⁵ Of course, the fact that Tb. 76 departs less than the SGG from the readings of the DLSZ could also be due to different factors affecting its transmission history, rather than to its date alone.

⁶⁶ Note that it includes no text specific to the SGG.

⁶⁷ The last inclusion of a line from the DLSZ is on p. 637.2.

⁶⁸ Perhaps supporting the hypothesis that the final part of the DLSZ and SGG's chapters nine to eleven were later additions.

⁶⁹ The final chapter of Tb. 76 is described as "teaching that the explanation of [the?] tantra is bodhicitta, and praising [the?] tantra, and teaching that it is indivisible from the teacher." Tb. 76 p. 644.7: *rgyud kyi 'grel pa byang chub sems yin par bstan pa dang/rgyud la bstod pa dang/slob dpon dbyer med par bstan pa'i skabs*. This may also point to the distinctive character of Tb. 76's last chapter(s).

⁷⁰ For example, the three *samādhis*, *zhi gnas*, and *lhag mthong*.

⁷¹ Tb. 76 p. 627.1. Its chapter 12 is also entitled '*jig med thod rgal gyi skabs*'.

⁷² See Karmay, 1988, p. 193, 214; Germano, 2005 p. 18. On debate concerning the date of introduction of the *Man ngag sde*, see Achard, 2018. I am not suggesting that the Tb. 76 references constitute conclusive evidence for the pre-STMG existence or incorporation into rDzogs chen doctrines of the practice of *thod rgal*. Obviously, Tb. 76 must be older - at least in some parts - than the eleventh century, given that the STMG quotes from it. Nevertheless, the possibility remains that the *thod rgal* references were added at a later date.

Doctrinal variations between the DLSZ and SGG

(1) *Ālaya (kun gzhi)* in the SGG and DLSZ

A full discussion of the doctrinal differences between the DLSZ and the SGG is outside the scope of this present paper. However, one or two points of interest are worth highlighting.

Firstly, the DLSZ presents the Yogācāra notion of the *Ālaya*, the "basis of all" or "universal ground" (Tib. *kun gzhi*), as the site of the karmic imprints or habitual tendencies (Skt. *vāsanā*/Tib. *bag chag*) which lead to the imputation of a "self", and hence the perpetuation of Samsaric suffering. However, it also goes further, towards the apophatic realm of the Madhyamaka, declaring:

"Since they are produced by erroneous, conceptual thought, habitual tendencies are not [truly] existent, and since it has no sphere of operation, the basis-of-all does not exist, nor do the various kinds of cognition exist. Since there are no boundaries, and neither objects nor basis for them, how could cognitive perceptions arise? Therefore, this mind transcends the extremes of existence and non-existence, and is free of [notions of being] one or many."⁷³

In contrast, just after the above passage, the SGG gives a quite different description of the *kun gzhi* from the previous Yogācāra/Madhyamaka-derived one, in which it is explicitly identified with the Dharmakāya, the source of all manifestation, the "adamantine mind itself",⁷⁴ the mind of enlightenment:

"The mind⁷⁵ is not situated internally, nor is it situated externally, nor [somewhere] in-between. It has never wavered from the state of reality which resides equally in everyone, everywhere. This adamant mind itself, the totally pure, great path, is everything that can be known, and gives rise to everything. Without focusing on any object, it extends its branches everywhere, in the manner of the essential clear light. Primordially-present Suchness is one's own reflexive awareness, and the space of the primordial matrix; resting in this unchanging Suchness is what is called the mind [of enlighten-

⁷³ In shared text with the SGG, fol. 325b.5-6: *spyod yul med phyir kun gzhi (l.6) med cing rnam rig de yang med pa yin/ phyogs rnam med phyir dmigs dang gnas med rnam shes rig pa ji ltar skyel/ de phyir sems 'di yod med mtha' las 'das (l.7) shing gcig dang du ma bral/*.

⁷⁴ (*sems nyid rdo rje*), SGG fol. 326a.1.

⁷⁵ That is, the mind of enlightenment, *bodhicitta*.

ment]."⁷⁶

Almost right at the outset, in chapter one, the SGG equates the Ālaya with the state of Suchness, that is, enlightenment, the non-dual universal basis from which all phenomena are generated:

"The true state of non-duality of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa is the essence of phenomena, the universal basis of outer and inner phenomena without exception. The matrix of all the Sugatas, Mistress of Secret Space, is the actual supreme mudra of great bliss, the secure state of Suchness."⁷⁷

Another example, from chapter seven this time:

"Nothing obscures, destroys, or manifests this, from which everything manifests, so it is also the Basis-of-all."⁷⁸

This interpretation of the Ālaya/*kun gzhi* as the basis of manifestation of everything (i.e. both Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa) is characteristic of rDzogs chen Mind Series literature. The SGG's use of the term in this manner predates the careful distinction made in later rDzogs chen discourse between the *kun gzhi* and the *kun gzhi rnam par shes pa*,⁷⁹ but it is not alone among early rDzogs chen texts in describing the *kun gzhi* in this way.⁸⁰

In contrast, in later rDzogs chen works, especially those of Longchenpa, the Ālaya/*kun gzhi* is viewed differently, in a more negative

⁷⁶ SGG: *sems ni nang na mi gnas phyi rol mi gnas bar na gnas pa min/ thams cad kun la mnyam gnas de nyid ngang las g.yos pa med/* (fol. 326a/ p. 651) *rnam dag lam chen sems nyid rdo rje 'di ni shes bya nyid de thams cad skyel/*.

⁷⁷ SGG fol. 319a: *kun gyi gzhi/ bde gshegs kun gyi yum gyur gsang ba'i dbyings phyug ma/ de bzhin nyid kyi ngang btsan bde ba chen po'i rgya mchog nyid/ thams cad rang byung* (fol. 319b/ p. 638) (l.1) *dkyil 'khor 'dir ni rnam par dag/ bde dang mi bde gnyis med ye nas rdzogs pa'i chos/*

⁷⁸ SGG, fol. 326a.4; *cis kyang mi sgrib mi shigs mi snang ba las thams cad snang bas kun gyi gzhi yang yin/ sems kyi ting 'di mthong na sems las ma gtogs* (l.5) *chos rnam gang yang med/*.

⁷⁹ Especially in Longchenpa's writings. See Karmay, 1988, p. 179 ; also van Schaik, 2018.

⁸⁰ The preamble to the *sBas pa'i rgum chung* describes it as the *kun gzhi mkha' dbyings rnam par dag pa*. The STMG refers to it as *kun gzhi byang chub kyi sems*. See Karmay, 1988, p. 178. As Karmay also noted, (op. cit., p. 180 n. 37) the *rTse mo byung rgyal*, one of the *Eighteen Texts of the Mind Series* uses not only *kun gzhi* but also *kun gzhi rnam shes* "in the rDzogs chen context". For example, *rTse mo byung rgyal* on fol. 306b states that "the fundamental consciousness is primordial dharma-dhātu". (*kun gzhi rnam shes ye nas chos kyi dbyings /*). This passage may be consulted in the edition of the *rTse mo byung rgyal* included in my PhD thesis. See Liljenberg, 2012, p. 244.

light.⁸¹

(2) Vajrayāna affiliations in the SGG and DLSZ

The SGG and DLSZ both make reference to the techniques and principles of Mahāyoga. The principal passage in this regard in the SGG, which it shares with the DLSZ, is in chapter ten. It assumes the reader's familiarity with meditation methods specific to Mahāyoga, such as the three *samādhis*, etc. These techniques are useful "as a basis for generating and meditating on the actual mind of enlightenment". Thus, the DLSZ and SGG both integrate Mahāyoga practice into their discourse, even if merely as a basis for their main focus, namely "meditating on the expanse of the mind".

The DLSZ, however, never defines itself by the term Mahāyoga (*rnal 'byor chen po*), instead rather ambiguously referring to its doctrine as a "yogic path" (*'rnal 'byor lam*).

The SGG, while it explicitly identifies its doctrine as rDzogs chen on several occasions, clearly considers that it is also part of the Vajrayāna.⁸² Thus on the one hand it characterizes its teaching as "this great ocean of secret mantra",⁸³ while on the other it makes clear the superiority of the practice of rDzogs chen, "this non-action that transcends words", within the Mantrayāna as "the great supreme secret mantra".

The links between early rDzogs chen and the *Guhyagarbha tantra* were well-established by Karmay, who noted that in the eleventh century Rong zom chos kyi bzang po described the *Man ngag lta ba'i 'phreng ba*, attributed to Padmasambhava, as a note on the *Guhyagarbha's* chapter XIII.⁸⁴

It is, therefore, noteworthy how closely the opening lines of chapter two of the SGG echo chapter two of the *Guhyagarbha tantra*.⁸⁵ The SGG has, however, made some interesting alterations and added characteristic hyperbole: the *Guhyagarbha* says that its "dharma, secret from the beginning, has been spoken by all the perfect Buddhas" but the SGG declares that "unaltered and unuttered by anyone, the unal-

⁸¹ For a full discussion of the changing way the Ālaya has been interpreted in rDzogs chen see van Schaik, 2018.

⁸² The term *vajra* itself occurs frequently in the SGG. Note the use, also, of the term *sems kyi phur pa*, see below, p. 41.

⁸³ SGG fol. 321b.2: *gsang sngags rgya mtsho chen po 'dis/*

⁸⁴ See Karmay, 1988 p. 139; also Germano, 1994 pp. 214, 215. Rong zom also listed other rDzogs chen works related to the same chapter.

⁸⁵ This *Guhyagarbha* quotation is also found in IOL Tib J 437/2; see van Schaik, 2008.

tered state elucidates itself."⁸⁶ Other parallels with the *Guhyagarbha* include the fact that both texts are (partly) pronounced by *bdag nyid chen po* and both contain the phrase "*ma lus mi lus lus pa med pa*".⁸⁷

3) Some aspects of rDzogs chen doctrines and terminology in the SGG and DLSZ

In chapter seven of the STMG, nine different interpretations of the rDzogs chen view or philosophical theory (*lta ba*) of the primordial basis (*gdod ma'i gzhi*) are expounded. Among them, the seventh, "of the principle [i.e. view] as non-duality in accordance with the supreme great yoga"⁸⁸ is ascribed in an interlinear note to Mañjuśrīmitra.⁸⁹ This ascription may be based on the note-writer's familiarity with the DLSZ, already probably attributed (correctly or not) to Mañjuśrīmitra. Therefore, even if we find such a view expressed in the DLSZ/SGG, to take it as evidence of its authorship by Mañjuśrīmitra runs the risk of a circular argument.

With this *caveat* in mind, one can search in the DLSZ for this view, paraphrased by the STMG as: "the *bodhicitta* which exists from the beginning is effortless and is the same as the Great Bliss. That means that all known extremes are non-dual as far as the Great Bliss is concerned". Now, one finds no mention of either bliss or great bliss (*bde ba [chen po]*) in the text unique to the DLSZ. By contrast, the SGG is replete with references to it, including in chapter one, the phrase "all dharmas are...primordially perfect, with no duality of happiness and unhappiness [=bliss and non-bliss]";⁹⁰ and in chapter four a description of Suchness as "the great space of bliss, without any need for action". Moreover, chapters eight to eleven are actually uttered by "The blessed one, the non-dual great bliss".

Nonduality (*gnyis med*) as well as oneness (*mi gnyis*) do occur in the DLSZ,⁹¹ but they are again more visible in the SGG, with its in-

⁸⁶ IOL Tib J 437 reads; *e ma 'o ye nas gsang ba'i chos/ rdzogs pa'i sang rgyas kun gyis gsungs/skye pa myed las thams cad skyes/skyes pa nyid na skye pa myed/*. The SGG fol. 319b.3 reads: *e e ma'o ngo mtshar gsang ba rmad du byung ba'i chos chen po/ sus kyang ma bcos ma gsungs ma bcos ngang gis gsal/ skye ba med las thams (l.4) cad skyes kyang skye ba med/*.

⁸⁷ SGG fol. 319a 1.2; mTshams brag NGB vol. 20 Tb 417 fol. 77 1.2. I am grateful to Sam van Schaik for alerting me to these parallels.

⁸⁸ (*lhag pa'i rnal 'byor chen po pas gnyis su med par lta ba*).

⁸⁹ Karmay, 1988, p. 117 n. 53.

⁹⁰ SGG fol. 319b.1: *bde dang mi bde gnyis med ye nas rdzogs pa'i chos/*.

⁹¹ For example in the phrase *mi gnyis lam mchog 'di*, in the concluding section of the DLSZ, not shared with SGG. See line 155 in Lipman's edition.

sistence on the nondual sameness of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa.⁹² It is possible, then, that the author of the STMG note was deriving his conclusions on Mañjuśrīmitra's view not directly from the DLSZ but the SGG, or another *rgyud* text such as Tb.76.

Most of the SGG's chapters are pronounced by the "great lord" or "great self".⁹³ A note in the STMG ascribes this view to Vairocana,⁹⁴ who is traditionally credited with translating the DLSZ into Tibetan⁹⁵. None of the passages unique to the DLSZ contain this term, but it is possible that Vairocana's influence is reflected in the SGG's "great Lord".

As stated above, the actual term *rdzogs pa chen po* occurs only in the SGG, and not in the DLSZ, where we find instead phrases such as "this yogic path"⁹⁶ and "this supreme path of nonduality".⁹⁷

We have already discussed the differing use of the term *kun gzhi* in the DLSZ and the SGG.⁹⁸

Further examples would perhaps only labor the point, that the DLSZ exhibits far less of the vocabulary and doctrines that rDzogs chen gradually made its own than the SGG does. Even so, I believe the SGG itself to have been written relatively early in this period of development. Karmay observed that the terms *bdag nyid chen po*, *bde ba chen po*, and also *rang byung ye shes*⁹⁹ "primarily convey tantric notions".¹⁰⁰ Although these terms, absent altogether from the DLSZ, are present in the SGG, the latter contains relatively few of the key terms or neologisms that are peculiar to rDzogs chen, such as "spontaneous presence" (*lhun grub*),¹⁰¹ "great sphere" (*thig le chen po*)¹⁰² and "pure from the beginning" (*ka dag*).¹⁰³

Finally, in contrast to Tb. 76, which may contain the earliest literary reference to the practice of *thod rgal*,¹⁰⁴ the SGG mentions no for-

⁹² See, for example, Appendix I, p. 51.

⁹³ (*bdag nyid chen po*).

⁹⁴ Karmay, 1988, p. 114, n. 39.

⁹⁵ The colophon found only in the *gDams ngag mdzod* ascribes the translation jointly to Śrī Simha and Vairocana. See Lipman 2001 p. 123, n. 143.

⁹⁶ (*rnal 'byor lam 'di*).

⁹⁷ (*mi gnyis lam mchog 'di*). See above, n. 91.

⁹⁸ See above p. 21.

⁹⁹ This occurs once in SGG, at fol. 321a.7-321b.1.

¹⁰⁰ Karmay, 1988, p. 119.

¹⁰¹ *Lhun grub* is found only once in the SGG, at fol. 323b.1.

¹⁰² "*Thig le chen po*" itself does not occur in SGG, but what may be considered a paraphrase or precursor of the concept is found at SGG fol. 327b.6: *de phyir gang yang mi 'byed (l.7) zag med de bzhin nyid kyi thig ler thams cad gcig pa yin /*

¹⁰³ "*Ka dag*" is not found in the SGG, although the phrase *ye nas rnam par dag*, the logical precursor to it, occurs at SGG fol. 321b.6.

¹⁰⁴ See above p. 19, and n. 72.

mal practices specific to rDzogs chen. Indeed its main practice, meditation on *bodhicitta*, would in later rDzogs chen tradition be called resting in *rig pa*.¹⁰⁵

Conclusion

The principal problem in the intertextual relationship of the SGG and DLSZ is the question of whether the SGG incorporated and expanded the DLSZ, or the DLSZ is a redaction of the SGG. A close parallel reading of both texts¹⁰⁶ demonstrates that, if the passages unique to SGG are removed, the continuity of the DLSZ is unimpaired. We have also found several places where the restoration of part of a missing line or whole line from DLSZ into the SGG improves the sense. Thus, we conclude that the DLSZ certainly preceded the composition of the SGG.

In the context of the Tibetan literary tradition, where a text has continued to circulate as a freestanding work, and yet continued to undergo some degree of modification, it is probably safe to say that the movement has more often been towards accretion of additional text rather than contraction. This may be true especially of those texts that had the greatest prestige, and eventual canonical status.¹⁰⁷ As well as deliberate insertions or additions, gradually accreted interlinear notes and commentaries were sometimes incorporated into the root texts themselves, with the distinction between them sometimes becoming obscured¹⁰⁸.

We do not have to look far for a parallel to the way the DLSZ became the basis upon which the SGG was elaborated. This is the *rig pa'i khu byug*; like the DLSZ, also one of the *snga 'gyur lnga* - indeed, often regarded as the first and foremost among them. Karmay notes that its six verses are "split up and put into different parts" of a text

¹⁰⁵ Where the term *rig pa* occurs in the DLSZ and SGG it does not have the connotation of pristine awareness that it has in later rDzogs chen literature. The version of the DLSZ found in Mipham's (19th century) commentary seems to have a note incorporating the term *rig pa* arguably with its later meaning into the line beginning "*sems kyi dbyings su bsgom pas...*", found in mTshams brag fol. 384b 1.6 See Lipman's edition of the DLSZ text, Lipman, 2001 p. 121 n. 95.

¹⁰⁶ See below, p. 32.

¹⁰⁷ But this is by no means always the case. See Lalou, 1953, p. 315.

¹⁰⁸ Of course, traditional concepts of authorship and literary legitimacy in Tibet and elsewhere were very different from the proprietorial and legal copyright approaches that have prevailed in recent times. Incorporation of an earlier work (or passages from it) into a new one, even unacknowledged, far from being disrespectful, could be viewed as one way of honouring, preserving, and passing it on in an unbroken line of transmission.

entitled *bkra shis pa'i rig pa'i khu byug gi rgyud* in order to fit in different contexts.¹⁰⁹ The addition of "tantra" (*rgyud*) to the title, just as with the SGG, signals its claim to Vajrayāna scriptural status.

Investigation of the reception of the SGG and its place in the early literary tradition of the DLSZ and the Mind Series in general has, so far at least, not thrown up any evidence that it is cited in later works. On the contrary, I have established that Tb.76, and not the SGG, is the *byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud* cited by the STMG and the NMG.¹¹⁰

We may ask why gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes should have apparently preferred Tb.76 over the SGG. Tb.76 may have supplanted the SGG in popularity or accessibility, or both. The fact that the NMG also incorporated passages from Tb.76 rather than the SGG may have influenced his choice. Further investigation of the intertextual relationship of Tb.76 with the SGG and the DLSZ may shed light on these questions. There may also be more evidence to be gleaned from some of the other related texts, not all of which I have been able to fully examine in this study.¹¹¹

The motive of Mañjuśrīmitra, if he was indeed its author, for writing the DLSZ appears to have been to present and promote the matrix of ideas from which early rDzogs chen was emerging in the context of the Mahāyāna, Cittamātra/Yogācāra philosophy, and Mahāyoga.

Given the nature of the material unique to SGG, the principal motives of the author(s) or redactor(s) of the SGG also seem clear: a desire to supplement the logical analysis and philosophical argument of the DLSZ with much more explicit rDzogs chen material designed to instruct and inspire confidence in the reader, and above all, to validate the rDzogs chen teaching itself, "the supreme path of sages",¹¹² as the authentic word of the Buddha.

In the process of elevating the status of the SGG to that of scripture, its author erased himself (and also, incidentally, Mañjuśrīmitra) from the picture, to become instead an anonymous mouthpiece of the buddhas. To what extent did he achieve his aims? To judge from the fact that, as far as we can currently tell, it was eclipsed shortly after it was composed by other similarly-titled texts, it may only have been a partial success. Perhaps its juxtaposition of the comparatively objec-

¹⁰⁹ Karmay, 1988, p. 48 and n. 29.

¹¹⁰ Along the way, we have seen that gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes must have known the short DLSZ version that is incorporated into the KBG. He refers to this as the *rdo la gser zhun*. The longer version, usually referred to in the later tradition as the DLSZ, he refers to simply as the "*sems bsgom [pa]*". This has potential implications for the dating of the KBG.

¹¹¹ For example, the *Theg pa gcod pa'i khor lo*, Bg 108 (found in VGB Vol.5 pp. 1-59).

¹¹² SGG fol. 320b.7; Appendix 1, p. 29.

tive, scholarly text of the DLSZ right alongside its own bold, lyrical assertions of the "great universal marvel" of rDzogs chen was just too stark a contrast for its time. Even so, it secured itself a place in the Collected Tantras of the rNying ma school, and so survived to bear witness to the manner in which a treatise could transform into a tantra during the early days of rDzogs chen.

Outline and comparative structural analysis of the SGG and the DLSZ

Chapter 1

As the titles of both texts indicate, and I have discussed above, their main subject is *bodhicitta* and how to meditate on or cultivate it. The DLSZ moves swiftly onto this theme after its opening homage, but the SGG's first two chapters are concerned with the wider sphere of rDzogs chen, and in establishing the text's scriptural authority by placing it in the mouth of the "great lord"¹¹³

Whereas the DLSZ opens with homage to the Youthful Mañjuśrī, the SGG pays homage to Samantabhadra, thereby identifying itself as a rDzogs chen text.¹¹⁴ The passage that follows may perhaps foreshadow the later rDzogs chen elaboration of the three-kāya, essence/nature/energy ontological system, although here only the Sambhogakāya is explicitly mentioned.¹¹⁵

Halfway through its first chapter, the SGG echoes the Buddha's first utterance after his enlightenment ("In this peace, the nature of all, there is lucidity...").¹¹⁶ These are also the first words that the SGG has in common with the DLSZ, which precedes them with homage to the Buddha. The DLSZ's variant reading of *lam* where SGG reads *las*

¹¹³ Tib. *bdag nyid chen po*. Various English translations of this term exist, such as the periphrastic "All-inclusive state of the individual", or more literal "Great Self". All such translations, including the one I have chosen, unless understood in their correct context, unfortunately risk reifying and even theistic misinterpretation.

¹¹⁴ See, for example, the commentary on the *Rig pa'i khu byug* in IOL Tib J 647, where the writer justifies paying homage to Samantabhadra rather than Vajrasattva. Karmay argued that this indicates that "at that time, no tantras like the later rDzogs chen tantras having Kun tu bzang po as the supreme Buddha yet existed". Karmay, 1988 p. 52 n. 48. However, there could already have been others - the justification merely proves that it was still a relatively novel departure from accepted practice.

¹¹⁵ See van Schaik 2004, p. 54 n. 181; also Norbu N. 2000 pp. 97-101 for a simple exposition of the system of *ngo bo*, *rang bzhin*, and *thugs rje/rstal*, *rol pa*, and *dang*.

¹¹⁶ SGG fol. 319a.6/DLSZ (mTshams brag) fol. 281a 1.1. For these words of the Buddha, see the paraphrase in Nyoshul Khenpo, 1989, p4.

here makes it clear that this sentence pays homage to the second of the Three Jewels, the (Dharma) path.¹¹⁷

The poetic, mystical tone of SGG's first chapter, with its themes of the nonduality of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa and its rDzogs chen appropriation of tantric motifs,¹¹⁸ could hardly be more different to the DLSZ's more restrained and formal opening. The two texts have only one sentence in common in this chapter.

Chapter two

Chapter two is entirely unique to the SGG. It begins with the "great lord" engaged in soliloquy - thereby subtly emphasizing the reader's non-duality from him. The triple repetition of "e" (presumably for emphasis) in the exclamation of wonder seems to be without exact parallel in other texts.¹¹⁹

His first utterance expresses wonder at primordial enlightenment. The second explains how beings become deluded, giving equal emphasis to "the truth of non-self and non-duality". The beginning of the third utterance, "Great Dharma without basis or root"¹²⁰ closely echoes the *Vajrasattva Questions and Answers* (*rDo rje sems dpa' zhus lan*) by gNyan dPal byangs,¹²¹ which dates to the early ninth century. It also occurs in the STMG¹²², and is common in later rDzogs chen literature.¹²³ The passage that follows then describes the state of Suchness, twice said to be beyond cause and effect.¹²⁴

The chapter ends with the first occurrence of the actual term *rdzogs pa chen po*. This term occurs only three times in the entire text - here, and in the passages, also unique to the SGG, that conclude chapters

¹¹⁷ However, the last of the three objects of refuge, the sangha, must wait until after the opening lines of SGG's chapter three. (SGG fol. 320a.6).

¹¹⁸ "The actual supreme mudra of great bliss, the secure state of Suchness"; and "all dharmas are completely pure within this naturally-arising maṇḍala". See Appendix 1. p. 52.

¹¹⁹ However, the text closely follows chapter two of the *Guhyagarbha tantra* here. See above, n. 85.

¹²⁰ SGG fol. 319b.7.

¹²¹ IOL Tib J 470: "This mind itself, which is without basis or root" quoted by Sam van Schaik at <http://earlytibet.com/2008/01/15/early-dzogchen-ii/>.

¹²² STMG 209.1, where it is attributed to the "*sgyu 'phrul chen po yon tan rdzogs pa'i rgyud bgyad pa*".

¹²³ For example, the phrase "*gzhi med rtsa bral*" in *rgyab brten padma dkar po*, fol. 494.192 where it is attributed to the Abhisamayālamkāra. See van Schaik, 2004, p. 277.

¹²⁴ Later tradition frequently characterised the rDzogs chen teachings as being beyond cause and effect. See, for example, Vairocana's biography, translated as *The Great Image*, Palmo, p. 143.

nine and ten. Its complete absence from the DLSZ and rarity even in SGG argues for both texts being of early date (with the SGG just a little later) in the evolution of rDzogs chen as a distinct tradition.

Chapter three

Chapter three opens with the lord "who is no different from the realization and understanding of this nature of the ultimate truth" declaring that there is nothing to be rejected or accepted in the nature of mind, the "Sovereign [and] female consort"¹²⁵ The SGG then rejoins the DLSZ, but instead of paying homage to those who are "one with all the Victors endowed with the ten powers",¹²⁶ (that is, the Sangha), the SGG equates the nature of mind itself with this attainment.

In the intersection between the two texts here it is evident that the SGG is incorporating the text of the DLSZ rather than the DLSZ editing the SGG. The reference to the "very sameness of the three places" in the next sentence makes a good deal more sense in the context of the triple homage that we see in the DLSZ.

A shared passage then follows on the importance of having meditated in the method of the state of perfect *bodhicitta*,¹²⁷ indispensable to becoming a bodhisattva. It is significant that the word the DLSZ uses here is *tshul*, "method" "mode" or "system", but the SGG in sections unique to itself repeatedly and emphatically employs the term "*theg pa*", "vehicle".¹²⁸ This elevation of rDzogs chen from a mere method in the DLSZ to not just a vehicle in its own right, but supreme among all vehicles in the SGG, is indicative of the greater degree of authority that it had gained between the composition of the two works.

The next passage, unique to the SGG,¹²⁹ expounds the blissful, unchanging nature of the mind, referring to "this dharma of the enlightened essence" that does not objectify *bodhicitta*. Its enthusiastic, laudatory tone is characteristic of many of the passages exclusive to the SGG, in marked contrast to the DLSZ's more measured and impersonal style.¹³⁰ Defining meditation as "one's reflexive awareness" (*rang*

¹²⁵ See Appendix II, fol. 320a.5.

¹²⁶ Lipman, 2001, p. 55.

¹²⁷ *rnam dag byang chub sems kyi ngang tshul bsgoms*; SGG fol. 320a.5 to fol. 320b.4.

¹²⁸ For example, at the start of SGG chapter six: "The mind of enlightenment is the very jewel that confers every good quality; it is Great Perfection, the highest vehicle, particularly excellent and extolled by all." fol. 323a; *byang chub sems ni yon tan thams cad 'byin pa'i nor bu nyid de theg (l.6) pa'i mchog/ khyad par mchog tu gyur cing kun gyis rab tu bsnags pas rDzogs chen yin/*.

¹²⁹ From SGG fol. 320b.5, up to fol. 321a.1.

¹³⁰ SGG fol. 320b.5: *bla med rang bzhin mchog gi mchog nyid 'di ni kun gyi mchog*.

rig) resting without thinking or effort on one's mind that is without essence, this has the flavor of an experiential commentary, one of several such SGG passages, as mentioned above.¹³¹ Since the next part common to both texts appears to flow logically on from the point where this SGG passage begins, one may conclude that a commentarial section has been inserted into the SGG here.¹³²

Both texts then ask how should one meditate on this state, symbolized by the figure of "*kun tu rdo rje sems dpa'*", an unusual conflation of *kun tu bzang po* (Samantabhadra) and *rdo rje sems dpa'* (Vajrasattva).¹³³ In general, Vajrasattva is the chief deity of the maṇḍala in Mahāyoga, while Samantabhadra came to be increasingly invoked in rDzogs chen texts.¹³⁴ This juxtaposition may therefore help to position the doctrine of the DLSZ, in particular, at a stage of equipoise between both traditions.

After the admonition that this subtle and difficult path "is not arrived at by words",¹³⁵ both texts summarize the inherent limitations of trying to arrive at true understanding of reality through the operation of logical thought.

With the declaration "Since they are, everywhere, primordially pure and equal..."¹³⁶ the SGG diverges sharply from the DLSZ. This is the longest continuous SGG section not found in the DLSZ, comprising the second half of chapter three, and the whole of chapters four, five, and six. It is significant, as further evidence that the SGG derives from the DLSZ rather than vice versa, that the two lines in the DLSZ between which this part of SGG is apparently interpolated both contain the words *lam 'dir*, and show no sign of discontinuity.

The concluding part of SGG's chapter three describes the primordial sameness and purity of all phenomena. Even the way that phenomena appear "is the nature of the sphere of reality, Suchness itself".¹³⁷ This "sublime dimension of the causal result" is "not imputed by comparisons or logical reasoning". This section underscores the ultimate futility of logic *vis à vis* the pure perception of "this great

¹³¹ See above, p. 7.

¹³² In fact, this passage, which could be said to answer the question posed below it ("How, then, is it that one should meditate on Samanta[bhadra]-Vajrasattva?") could well derive from "the oral instructions of one's masters" that are recommended to the reader.

¹³³ SGG fol. 321a.1.

¹³⁴ See above, p. 19, and n. 114.

¹³⁵ Appendix I, p. 55; Appendix II, fol. 321a.2.

¹³⁶ SGG fol. 321a.5 *phyogs su mnyam nyid rnam par dag pa ye nas yin pas na /*.

¹³⁷ Appendix I, p. 55.

ocean of secret mantra".¹³⁸ The chapter is described as showing "the method for achieving realization of the nature of the ultimate truth, and showing it as irrefutable by logic".¹³⁹

Chapter four

This chapter is a brief, potentially originally self-contained teaching on formless meditation.¹⁴⁰ With its references to great bliss and the vajra body, again, this passage seems to illustrate the stage of rDzogs chen's evolution when it was still primarily an interpretive framework for the contemplative experiences arising from the *rdzogs rim* phase of Mahāyoga practice, as argued by various scholars.¹⁴¹

Chapter five

This chapter, expounding "the meaning and character of the Mahayāna sūtra section", begins by describing the "conception of unhappiness" as the process whereby the mind fixates and becomes attached to things. This occurs "if the mind should waver" from the level of ultimate truth. If the mind is unwavering, without conceptual thought, then there is "unborn awareness of nowness". These themes are common in later rDzogs chen works.¹⁴²

The text then¹⁴³ veers back towards the basic Buddhist doctrine of the non-self of the individual and of phenomena (*bdag med gnyis*). This section appears quite disjointed, rather as if a series of aphorisms and pieces of advice has been brought together. For example, the passage that begins "in order to know the mind..." reads like practical instructions for retreatants. With the sentence "the essential emptiness of all dharmas..." it turns to the topic of the fruition, Buddhahood, according to the Mahāyāna.

¹³⁸ Note the reference here to *sang sngags*, secret mantra[yāna] See above, p. 24, and n. 82.

¹³⁹ Compare this with the characterization of the DLSZ in the *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* as presenting the rDzogs chen *sems sde* through "non-contradictory logical means" Lipman, 2001, p. 6 n. 13.

¹⁴⁰ That is, meditation that does not take any object as its focus of concentration.

¹⁴¹ The term "*rdzogs pa'i sku*" is particularly suggestive here. See Karmay 1988 p. 138, Germano 1994 pp. 213-226; Dalton 2004 p. 17; van Schaik 2004b, p. 171.

¹⁴² See for example, Dudjom Rinpoche "Since pure awareness of nowness is the real Buddha" (*da lta'i shes pa sang rgyas ngon sum du 'dug pas...*) from his *Calling the lama from afar*, quoted in Wallace (trans.) 2015, p. 15; see also van Schaik 2004, p. 68 for a discussion of "nowness" in the works of Jigme Lingpa and Longchen Rabjam.

¹⁴³ From "Just as the Buddhas do..," Appendix I p. 58; Appendix II, fol. 322b.

Chapter six

This chapter extols *bodhicitta*, as "[the] Great Perfection" (*rDzogs chen*). Because it is non-objectifiable, it is free of effort, without even an iota of meditation to do. It is Suchness, the state of ultimate reality, in which all the buddhas reside. It is also spontaneously-accomplished great bliss, the clear light of the pristine Dharmakāya. This "vehicle" (*theg pa* - by implication, *rDzogs chen*)¹⁴⁴ - is said to transcend the All-illuminating (bodhisattva) level.¹⁴⁵ Other vehicles are inferior, being all within the realm of thought. *This* vehicle, on the other hand "does not depend on any of the tenets of other vehicles; it is the nature of all of them".¹⁴⁶

This all-encompassing, universal mind of enlightenment is the "dimension of the pure vital essence".¹⁴⁷ It is also called "the sovereign of the non-dual sameness of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa". The process of samsaric manifestation is ascribed to non-realization of Suchness.¹⁴⁸

The chapter concludes with advice on returning to the state of Suchness and then remaining in it. After "having plunged the mind's dagger into the depths of Suchness, one should not arise from this [state of] resting". The "mind's dagger"¹⁴⁹ is a term also found in the Mahāyoga literature of Vajra Kilāya¹⁵⁰

Chapter seven

The SGG opens this chapter with two lines that declare it to be the utterance of the non-dual "great lord".

Rejoining the DLSZ at this point, a lengthy discussion ensues of how phenomena manifest through the power of delusion. This employs terms and concepts drawn from the Yogācāra or Mind Only (Skt. *cittamātra*; Tib. *sems tsam*) school of Indian Buddhist philosophy.

The two texts then diverge again¹⁵¹. Where they rejoin, in chapter

¹⁴⁴ Appendix I, p. 60. The fact that *rDzogs chen* is called a "vehicle" here is of relevance to assigning at least a rough date to the SGG. See above, p. 36, n. 128.

¹⁴⁵ *kun tu 'od sa; samantaprabha*. This is the 11th or 12th bodhisattva level - equivalent to Buddhahood in the sūtra system. See Tsepa Rigdzin, 1986, p. 279.

¹⁴⁶ Appendix I, p. 61.

¹⁴⁷ (*thig le dag pa'i sku*). *Thig le chen po* is one of the nine *rDzogs chen* views of the basis or ground given in the STMG. See Karmay, 1988, p. 118.

¹⁴⁸ See Karmay loc. cit.; this is View no. 9 in the STMG.

¹⁴⁹ *sems kyi phur pa*.

¹⁵⁰ For early *phur pa* references in PT44 from Dunhuang, see Bischoff and Hartman 1971, passim. Tb. 76 contains *phur pa* references. Also Tāranātha's unusual biography of Padmasambhava, translated as *Threefold confidence* in Zangpo, 2002. p. 109 ff. contains several references to *sems kyi phur pa*.

¹⁵¹ SGG fol. 325b.7, from: *sems ni nang na mi gnas phyi rol mi gnas bar na gnas pa min /*.

eight of the SGG, the restoration of a line from the DLSZ that is missing in the SGG¹⁵² seems to be required for the text to make satisfactory sense. A little further in the same chapter, another line from the DLSZ, absent in the SGG, would similarly improve the sense if restored.¹⁵³

The second half of chapter seven is unique to the SGG. The introductory words "*sems ni*" which introduce this section are characteristic of what is known in the later rDzogs chen tradition as *sems khrid*, or experiential instructions on the nature of the mind.¹⁵⁴ The text here emphasizes the cosmogonic aspect of (enlightened) mind, its all-pervasiveness, and its gnostic accessibility to *rang rig*. The phrase *gnas sa de kar bzahag* perhaps presages the four "letting be" (*cog bzahag*) precepts of the *man ngag sde*.¹⁵⁵

The text continues by stressing the primordially of Buddhahood and the need to abandon "all paths of exertion". It refers to *this* path as "the swift path of perfect bliss, the three-kāya level of Vajradhāra", another tantric reference.

After declaring that the "essence itself" is not present in the objects of analysis of the Mind Only school, the chapter closes with more advice on resting the mind in Suchness. Its conclusion describes this chapter as "[on how] *Ati* [yoga],¹⁵⁶ transcends the view of Mind-only and its results and qualities."

Chapter eight

Pronounced this time by "the non-dual Great Bliss", this chapter is introduced as "teaching on the appearance of his magical display to those who are deluded". The same section in the DLSZ, discussed in the second part of the 12-point commentary's point five,¹⁵⁷ is entitled "pointing out how the state of clarification makes itself felt within the state of deception".¹⁵⁸

¹⁵² DLSZ fol. 566.1: *chos kyi dbyings nyid la ni de dag dmigs shing skye bar brtags* (l.2) *pa yang*/ This is line 81 in Lipman's edition.

¹⁵³ AT SGG fol. 327b between lines 5 and 6, the DLSZ (fol. 284 l.3) has: *ji srid yid kyi g.yo ba de srid bdud kyi yul te phra ba'i lam/*.

¹⁵⁴ See Hookham, S. 1991 p. 62.

¹⁵⁵ On the four *cog bzahag*, see Lipman 2001, p. 144 n. 5.

¹⁵⁶ This is the sole occurrence of the term *ati* (I have supplied the word 'yoga' in my translation) in the SGG. It adds to the evidence pointing towards a later date for the SGG than the DLSZ, as this term probably came into widespread use in the context of the development of the Nine Yāna system, in which rDzogs chen is the highest Yāna.

¹⁵⁷ See Appendix III, my concordance table for the SGG and the *Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa don bcu gnyis bstan pa*.

¹⁵⁸ Lipman, 2001, p. 92.

In the entire DLSZ (apart from its concluding passage) we find only three extra lines that are absent from the SGG, and the first of these omissions occurs in chapter eight. It is probably due to a visual copying error caused by the repetition of *chos (kyi) dbyings* at the start of both the line missing from SGG and the second line to follow it in both texts.¹⁵⁹ Its restoration to the SGG improves the sense here.

The second extra line is also absent from SGG's chapter eight, and seems to be another copying error, as it involves repetition of the word *g.yo* in two adjacent lines.¹⁶⁰

A short passage on Suchness,¹⁶¹ unique to the SGG, following a quotation that defines *bodhicitta* (attributed to the Buddha), may have originated as a commentarial note expatiating on this definition.¹⁶² The shared DLSZ/SGG text, without this passage, appears to proceed logically from citing the Buddha to discussing how even the *sūtra* path of renunciation "is itself Mara",¹⁶³ that is, an obstacle to practice.

The seventh topic of the Twelve-point commentary (P 3405), divided into two sub-sections in that text, appears to be divided in the SGG between two chapters, eight and nine¹⁶⁴ with a short (interpolated?) passage on non-action ending chapter eight. However, the opening of chapter nine seems to partially incorporate the wording of the commentary's subheading (i.e. "pointing out the true meaning").

Chapter nine

Chapter nine is introduced as "intending to point out genuine reality", and in its conclusion described as "summarizing the Great Perfection, the supreme path of meditation". This is a similarly-titled section in the Twelve-point commentary on the DLSZ.¹⁶⁵

The section of SGG's chapter nine shared with DLSZ is an instruction on meditation practice. It appears to have a rather tangential relationship to the DLSZ's progression here, and it is tempting to speculate that this was originally an interlinear note (ending "one should meditate on this supreme path") on the passage that leads to the conclusion of SGG's chapter eight (also ending with the words "this very

¹⁵⁹ SGG fol. 327a.4, n. 477. Appendix I, n. 210.

¹⁶⁰ SGG fol. 327b.5-6, Appendix II, n. 514; Appendix I, n. 216.

¹⁶¹ SGG fol. 327b.6 (From: *de phyir gang yang mi 'byed...*) to 328a.1.

¹⁶² SGG fol. 327b.6 - fol. 327a.1.

¹⁶³ The SGG appears to lack the ending to a line here, which I have supplied from the TK and DLSZ versions. See Appendix I, n. 219; Appendix II, n. 532, n. 533.

¹⁶⁴ See concordance table in Appendix III.

¹⁶⁵ See concordance table, Appendix III. It is part of point seven, translated by Lipman as "pointing out the true sense of cultivation", Lipman, 2001 p. 64, p. 101.

path").¹⁶⁶

The last of the three DLSZ lines missing from the SGG occurs here in chapter nine.¹⁶⁷ That a copying error may have caused its omission is suggested by the fact that the next line is also truncated in SGG, apparently due to a copyist's eye skipping ahead to the second occurrence of the word *mchog* in that line.¹⁶⁸

The passage on Suchness, unique to SGG here, may perhaps have begun as a note on the previous passage common to both texts, as it amplifies it and adds the characteristic rDzogs chen themes of non-action and all-inclusiveness.

Chapter ten

Roughly the first half of the SGG's chapter ten is also found in the DLSZ. This continues the second point in P. 3405's seventh topic,¹⁶⁹ "pointing out the true sense of meditation", describing how, for the practitioner who realizes that nothing has substance, all phenomena are Nirvāṇic. Reality is not objectifiable and is without characteristics such as virtue or non-virtue. Meditation on or cultivation of this state involves no dualistic analysis, fixation, or effort. The signs of successful practice include imperturbability, fearlessness, etc. This meditation encompasses the *Paramitās* and other aspects of the Mahāyāna bodhisattva path, and without it, awareness of the clear light of ultimate truth is said not to come about.

In a tacit acknowledgment that a more gradual approach may sometimes be required,¹⁷⁰ the next section¹⁷¹ focuses on *bodhicitta* in Mahāyoga practice as "a basis for generating and meditating on the actual mind of enlightenment", and also on aspiration towards *bodhicitta*, as (relative) methods leading towards the (ultimate) mind of enlightenment.

By meditating on Vajrasattva, the primordial Buddha *par excellence* of Mahāyoga, one cultivates "all paths, without error".¹⁷² In immedi-

¹⁶⁶ If this tentative hypothesis is correct, the DLSZ text would originally have read as follows: "The domain and state of all the noble ones, Nirvāṇa and so on, are nothing other than this very path. Conditioned factors do not arise; all phenomena do not come about; and all phenomena are Nirvāṇic" etc.

¹⁶⁷ SGG fol. 328a.6, Appendix II n. 549; DLSZ fol 284b.1; Appendix I, n. 221.

¹⁶⁸ DLSZ fol. 284b.1-2. SGG: fol. 328a.6; Appendix I, n. 222; Appendix II, n. 550.

¹⁶⁹ See Appendix III.

¹⁷⁰ The *Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa don bcu gnyis bstan pa* explicitly states "When one has not arrived at the real sense of "nonaction"" (one employs the following methods); Lipman 2001 p. 106.

¹⁷¹ Beginning "since the teacher has declared..." Appendix I, p. 73.

¹⁷² SGG fol. 329a.1; Appendix 1 p. 73.

ate juxtaposition we see Samantabhadra and Samantabhadrī, the rDzogs chen personifications of skilful means and wisdom. Samantabhadrī¹⁷³ here is analogous to *Prajñāpāramitā*. Just as realization of Emptiness is said in the Mahāyāna to "seal" (that is, safeguard) the merit of positive actions, the "conduct of Samantabhadrī" that is, the rDzogs chen realization of the mind of enlightenment, is also said to prevent the exhaustion of positive qualities.

Chapter ten then sets out the positive effects and merits of *bodhicitta* in aspiration, in exoteric as well as esoteric Mahāyāna contexts. It includes what appears to be a quotation from Nāgārjuna's *Bodhicittavivarana*, to the effect that space would be too small to contain the merit of generating *bodhicitta*, if it took physical form.¹⁷⁴

The second half of SGG's chapter ten is absent from the DLSZ. It continues and expands on the preceding section eulogizing the mind of enlightenment, emphasizing its total transcendence of characteristics. The intellect that realizes the meaning of this "great, supreme secret mantra" is equated with Mañjuśrī himself. A more conventional attitude to goal-oriented practice is unflatteringly compared to the view of "frogs in a well".¹⁷⁵ The colophon to this chapter describes it as "with pride in the nature of the Great Perfection". This better describes the chapter's second half, as the first half focuses on the merits of *bodhicitta* itself, while it is the second that proclaims its superiority to other vehicles.¹⁷⁶

Chapter eleven

Only half of the DLSZ's eleventh topic¹⁷⁷ "pointing out that those who have gone wrong are the object of compassion", is found in the SGG's chapter eleven.¹⁷⁸ This includes the passage that gave the DLSZ its informal title.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷³ Samantabhadri is also the consort of Vajrasattva in Dunhuang mss IOL Tib J 552 and 716.

¹⁷⁴ *Bodhicittavivarana*, verse 107. See Lindtner, 1982.

¹⁷⁵ This story is retold by Patrul Rinpoche, describing unsuitable teachers. See Patrul, 1994, p. 140.

¹⁷⁶ The pride spoken of here, rather than being one of the ordinary afflictive emotions, is analogous to the *lha'i nga rgyal* of tantric practice, that is, confidence in one's *Tāthāgatagarbha* nature. See Khyentse D., 1992, p. 84.

¹⁷⁷ According to P. 3405, the *Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa don bcu gnyis bstan pa*. See Appendix III.

¹⁷⁸ See Appendix III.

¹⁷⁹ The text's "*rdo la gser bzhin*" must have been extracted and given a twist to make the informal title "*rdo la gser zhun*" by the time of the composition of the STMG (late ninth century) as the title appears in there, although far outnumbered by references simply to "*sems bsgom*".

The SGG then diverges from the DLSZ. It is worth closely examining the sentence that follows this juncture in both texts. The DLSZ continues from here its theme of compassion for sentient beings' lack of understanding, mentioning that this is the period of the last five hundred years of the Buddha's teaching.¹⁸⁰ The SGG closely echoes the first words of this line, but then departs from it in the second half, seeming there to use the ideas expressed several lines later in the DLSZ.¹⁸¹

After condensing the next DLSZ passage into one line¹⁸² the SGG replaces its comparatively lengthy dedication with its own very brief statement of the purpose of the text.¹⁸³ It then describes the universality of the mind of enlightenment, and its inalienability (*mi 'phrogs*). We should note the use of the rDzogs chen term (*ye shes*) *zang thal*¹⁸⁴ here in connection with Suchness. This term is rarely encountered in the earlier rDzogs chen literature.¹⁸⁵ The text then seems to cite from an explanation of this point "by the Dharmakāya Amitābha", the nearest the SGG ever comes to suggesting a source.¹⁸⁶

The SGG then ends on a note of personal instruction to the reader - most unusually addressed directly as "you" - to aspire towards the Dharmakāya, and to regard this teaching as "the vast, supreme speech of the Dharmakāya". Frequent repetition of the honorific verb for "speak", (*gsungs*) lends this closing part of the text a scriptural gravity as Buddha-speech. In place of the DLSZ's colophon¹⁸⁷ attributing the text's composition to Mañjuśrīmitra, here its origin is placed firmly in the exalted Dharmakāya sphere, as it has been throughout the SGG.

¹⁸⁰ DLSZ fol. 285b.4: *shin tu ma sbyangs dus kyis mnar ba'i skye bo lnga brgya tha ma la /*.

¹⁸¹ DLSZ fol. 285b.6: *kun tu rgyal ba nam kyī spyod yul thun mong ma yin yang /*.

¹⁸² "This quintessential speech does not manifest to those unfortunates whose wisdom has not been trained" See Appendix I, p. 76.

¹⁸³ The text is declared to be uttered in order for the speech of the *dharmakāya* to become manifest to all. *ibid*.

¹⁸⁴ See Guenther, 1994, p. 79, p. 113.

¹⁸⁵ It is most frequently associated with the *gter ma* of Rig 'dzin rgod ldem (1337-1408), entitled *dGongs pa zang thal*.

¹⁸⁶ However, I have not been able to trace the source of this quotation, if that is indeed what it is.

¹⁸⁷ Only found in the *gDams ngag dzod* version, Lipman 2001 p. 123 n. 143.

The final section of the DLSZ

The DLSZ's final section, comprising eleven sentences in the mTshams brag edition,¹⁸⁸ is the only lengthy section that it does not share with the SGG. It emphasizes the ignorance of sentient beings "stirred up by this river of misunderstanding",¹⁸⁹ implying that this is the reason for the text's composition. The tone of the SGG is by contrast more positive, exhorting the reader to aspire towards the Dharmakāya.¹⁹⁰

The DLSZ states that its (human) author has validated this "path of all the victorious ones" through meditation and logic.¹⁹¹ However, the SGG proclaims that "the Dharmakāya that is beyond activity appears in this way and speaks in order that it may manifest to all".¹⁹²

There is no colophon in the mTshams brag DLSZ. The only version of the text that does have a colophon, ascribing its composition to Mañjuśrīmitra and translation to Śrī Siṃha and Vairocana, is found in the *gDams ngag mdzod*.¹⁹³



Appendix I - *Translation of the Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*¹⁹⁴
(Passages in bold are absent from the *rdo la gser zhun*)

[Folio 318b]

Sanskrit Title: Bodhicitta abaya tantra

English title: The Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind.

[Folio 319]

Homage to Samantabhadra, the glorious, transcendent victor!

These words were elucidated at a time of the indivisibility, without any omission in past, present and future, of the lord of all blessed tathāgatas, the special essence itself, from the blessed

¹⁸⁸ DLSZ fol. 570.4 to fol. 571.2.

¹⁸⁹ DLSZ fol. 570.6.

¹⁹⁰ SGG fol. 330b.6.

¹⁹¹ DLSZ fol. 570.7.

¹⁹² SGG fol. 331a.2-3.

¹⁹³ Lipman 2001 p. 123, n. 143.

¹⁹⁴ My edition of the Tibetan text is a diplomatic one, adhering to the mTshams brag readings throughout, and merely indicating variant readings in the apparatus. However, I was inevitably obliged to choose what I consider the best readings available in order to produce a reasonable translation of the SGG. Where this meant that I opted for readings other than the mTshams brag ones, I have tried to indicate this in my notes to the translation.

tathāgatas, the perfectly enlightened buddhas.

It was pronounced to a great gathering in the pure celestial palace called Blazing with Enlightened Qualities.

Springing from the power of the great compassion of the universal nature, the innumerable great saṃbhogakāya forms and the forms that appear in common perception, and so on, are wondrously renowned.

Realizing his non-duality with the nature of all the tathāgatas that is primordially subsumed, with nothing omitted, in the body of the great lord himself, the great lord of non-duality uttered the following to himself:

"This peace, the nature of all, is luminosity and the unsurpassed path. The true state of non-duality of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa is the essence of phenomena, the universal basis of outer and inner phenomena without exception. The matrix of all the Sugatas, Mistress of Secret Space, is the actual supreme mudra of great bliss, the secure state of Suchness. [Folio 319b] All are completely pure within this naturally-arising maṇḍala. The non-duality of bliss and non-bliss is the Dharma of primordial perfection, which neither develops nor ceases, and is nothing on which to reflect or focus."

The Introductory first chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, on the ultimate truth, [is concluded].

[Chapter 2]

Then the great lord uttered to himself and on his own behalf these words of wonder:

"How wonderful! What a marvelous, mysterious, great and wondrous Dharma! Unaltered and unuttered by anyone, it is expressed by the unaltered state [itself]. Even though everything develops from the unborn state, it is [nonetheless] unborn. All fixations on terms and ideas are primordially enlightened."

Then the wondrous, marvelous [state] uttered these words of wonder concerning non-realization:

"Ignorant, mistaken, deluded conceptual thought, dichotomizing into subject and object, imagines existence where there is non-existence, and conceives of interdependence as duality. The actual nature of things, surpassing subject and object, is unpaired, [but] when one does not see the truth of non-self and non-duality, fixating on such things as illusions as real, one spoils the truth, like some fool tying [imaginary] knots in the sky."

Then the great lord uttered the following, on the nonexistence of a basis or root, to himself:

"Great Dharma of no basis or root, that makes no distinction between cause and result! From the non-conceptual state free of

objects [Folio 320a] the variety of conceptual objects arises. It is not something to accomplish - in this there is nothing at all that should be accomplished. As it is the actual state of Suchness, it remains firm; and as it is free from the malaise of the effort of conceptual objectifying and non-objectifying, it is without even the slightest thing to correct by antidotes. Extremely hard to analyze,¹⁹⁵ its profundity is unimaginable. It is not within the domain of imputing cause and effect."

The second chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, verbally expressing wonder at the Great Perfection and at those who have not realized it, and expounding the nature of the ultimate truth [is concluded].

[Chapter 3]

Then the great lord who is no different from the realization and understanding of this nature of the ultimate truth, said to himself:

"The nature of mind is supreme among all: it is the sovereign [and] consort, without anything to be rejected or accepted. It is one in attainment¹⁹⁶ with all the victors endowed with the ten powers, such as non-returning, and so on. One should faithfully aspire, with a non-conceptualizing mind, towards this, the very sameness of the three places. It is equally praised by teachers who have been the light of the world. It is the very essence of Youthful Mañjuśrī, who is the true, essential nature of the Dharma itself. Because it has been the matrix of all the Sugatas it is the sole mother¹⁹⁷ of all the victors. [Folio 320b] It is the basis for the vast activity of the path of the perfections, such as discipline and so on.

"The special value of having meditated in the condition of the state of perfect bodhicitta is: as soon as a wise person actualizes, on one occasion, this sacred mind, this, the victor has said, is called the dharmakāya, supreme among the three kāyas. It is also called cognition that has become sublime, the eye of wisdom. This very thing is, also, the supreme vajra peak itself, non-conceptual primordial wisdom. All those things taught as aspects of the liberation of the noble ones, all those positive qualities, will emerge from the perfect path of bodhicitta itself. Without this, none of the great and noble family of deathless bodhisattvas would come into being; this is, therefore, the actual, supreme path of liberation.

"This unexcelled nature, supremely high, surpasses all. The

¹⁹⁵ Amending the mTshams Brag reading *rtaḡ* to *brtaḡ* here.

¹⁹⁶ I have followed the DLSZ reading here (*gcig brnyes pa*).

¹⁹⁷ The DLSZ reading here is *lam gcig go*, "it is the sole path".

mind itself, which is without basis or root, is like a precious jewel; since there is nothing in it to point out, there is nothing: no pre-existing character. Because it is not destroyed by anything, it is the adamantine essence. This Dharma of the enlightened essence that remains in Suchness in the dimension of unchanging bliss does not objectify bodhicitta, which is not an object. This authentic state is the supreme path of sages. When mind sees mind itself in this way, there is supreme bliss. One's reflexive awareness rests in this way on one's mind that is without essence: [Folio 321a] remaining like that without thinking or effort is meditation.

"How, then, should one meditate on Samanta[bhadra]-Vajrasattva? This path of great sages, subtle and difficult to understand, transcends non-thought and thought. Difficult to analyze and difficult to teach, it is free of verbal designations. It is not arrived at by words, and is not within the domain of spiritually-immature people and those following other [vehicles]. But one should look at the teacher's definitive statements and the instructions of one's masters on this subject.

"Through such means as direct perception, one applies the concepts of refutation and affirmation to material entities. [But] this very analysis, after logically affirming its object, the flow of thoughts, as valid cognition, is [then] refuted by the intellect. Since thoughts are limitless, therefore the exercise would be limitless: as there is no essence, what is the point of logic? Therefore, analysis of conventional worldly designations is not necessary on this yogic path.

"Since they are everywhere primordial pure and equal, the diversity of all phenomena comes under one's control, just as one wishes.

"If all things, of this world or transmundane, are understood after proper analysis through correct cognition, whatever phenomena appear and arise in all their variety from the peerless nature, no matter how they appear, are in that very appearance the nature of the sphere of reality, Suchness itself. [Folio 321b]

"The essential self-arising primordial wisdom that brings about such understanding, although it controls all the various phenomena, [is] unimpaired [and] non-existent.¹⁹⁸ Therefore, although conventional designations that assert the four valid cognitions and cause and effect are indeed established in logic, where is there anything for logic to negate in this sublime dimension of the causal result? There is nothing.

"Not imputed by comparisons or logical reasoning, this

¹⁹⁸ Both mTshams Brag and gTing sKyes read *mi nyams med*; my translation here is tentative.

great ocean of secret mantra pervades all, produces everything, and abides as the essence, and [yet] is also the fruition."

The third chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, which shows the method for achieving realization of the nature of the ultimate truth, and showing it as irrefutable by logic, [is concluded].

[Chapter Four]

Then the great lord of all the tathāgatas expounded to himself the meaning of 'nothing on which to meditate':

"Vast in grandeur, this exceedingly subtle nature of reality itself, secured by the state that does not distinguish cause and effect, is Suchness. Naturally remaining in it is the great space of bliss, without any need for action. Not fit to be heard from another, it transcends words. The tongue is not fit to express the primordial purity of the universe and its inhabitants, the vajra body devoid of acceptance or rejection, and the body of perfection.

"Sages entering into the truth should not analyze it; by analyzing this meaning one falls away from the space of non-conceptuality. In this essence of phenomena, there is no meditation to accomplish. [Folio 322a] If one focuses on anything, it is like one realizes the 'characteristic' of absence of characteristics. The space¹⁹⁹ of conceptual thought [becomes] non-conceptuality, and gives rise to primordial wisdom.

"On the supreme path of the nature of reality itself, where nothing whatsoever manifests, if one does not search for anything and is free of thoughts, this is the space of meditation. If one does search and analyze, one deviates from this supreme path. From this, the bliss of Suchness does not arise, [as it] involves cause and effect.

"Making something the object of attention while in a state of non-meditation is like creating a mirage of water."

The fourth chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, which expounds the method of meditation, [is concluded].

¹⁹⁹ I have followed the TK reading (*klung*) rather than the mTshams brag one (*rlung*) here, as the word *klung* occurs repeatedly in this part of the text. However, there is also something to be said for *rlung*, as the arising of conceptual thought is believed to be dependent on a particular aspect of *prāṇa*.

[Chapter Five]

Then the great lord of non-duality expounded to himself on the meaning of the Great Vehicle and on characteristics:

"The mind that is like a rock or a tree, and commits no karmic action, virtuous or unvirtuous, is a sublime mind. On the [level of] the ultimate truth, there are no names and characteristics; the mind cannot objectify it, nor can speech express it.

"When the mind has wavered, [there is] the concept of characteristics. This cause of characteristics, when labelled, is called "name and characteristics".

"When one holds onto and becomes attached to any concept, its illusory name is the conception of unhappiness. [But] the realization and understanding that names and characteristics are nowhere existent is called true wisdom.

"All names and characteristics, one's reflexive awareness which does not arise from the intellectual mind, are explained as 'Suchness'. [Folio 322b] As is true in the Mahāyāna, unwavering consciousness is the unborn mind-continuum itself. Where there is no conceptual thought, there is unborn consciousness of nowness.

"Just as the Buddhas do, one knows that the mind does not exist, and that there are no existents in phenomena.

"Where there is a mind that is aware of formlessness, that is awareness, [but] where phenomena have no form in a mind without awareness, that [formlessness of phenomena²⁰⁰] is non-awareness.

"Those who see male and female lay and ordained people, or sentient beings and Buddhas and so on - as long as [their focus] does not waver, are correctly applying the Dharma path.

"In order to know this mind, it is inappropriate for a person who meditates to be served by anyone. Because the people on whom one depends have untamed minds, and look for what profit they might get out of it, they are harmful to meditation.

"The person who cultivates a thorough understanding of the mind applies himself in secret diligence, day and night without laziness. Through understanding that all phenomena are [merely] imputed to exist, and are therefore false, untrue, and indeterminate, he has no fear of the moment of death, and through the force of this habitual tendency, he has no anxiety about the hell-realms for, after Buddhahood, not even the name of the infernal hosts exists. The essential emptiness of all dharmas is the perfect path of the Buddhas.

²⁰⁰ TK omits SGG's repetition of *chos la gzugs med* here, and as this reading seems to me preferable, I have placed SGG's extra phrase in parenthesis.

"Having thoroughly realized²⁰¹ this, [the moment of] this attainment is, itself, [Folio 323a] Buddhahood, the Buddha has said. Having thus understood this teaching, and then expounded it to others, he was skilful in liberating the beings in Saṃsāra. All the Buddhas of the three times, furthermore, come about from such a realization and attainment as this [and] display the marks and signs.

"Otherwise, without the realization of this essential emptiness, there would be no Dharmadhātu, or the fruition of Buddhahood. Furthermore, as long as one's practice of essential emptiness is not attached to the empty essence, this, itself, is Nirvāṇa.

"Words are not fit to explain the authentic meaning of this; one cannot reach it through verbal explanation."

The fifth chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, which expounds the meaning and characteristics of the Mahāyāna Sūtra section, [is concluded].

[Chapter Six]

Then the great lord of non-duality delivered to himself this special utterance on the essential meaning:

"The mind of enlightenment is the very jewel that confers every good quality; it is Great Perfection, the highest vehicle, particularly excellent and extolled by all.

"There is not even an iota on which to meditate in this universal nature, free of anything to be done, the vast essence. This is because the nature of the unborn mind of enlightenment is insubstantial, and non-objectifiable.

"The mind of enlightenment does not depart from the state of Suchness. Thus, this is the Suchness in which all the tathāgatas [Folio 323b] dwell and which they understand. The mind of the tathāgatas, itself, does not emerge from this Suchness. This is also the level of the spontaneously-accomplished great bliss, the stainless clear light of the totally-pure Dharmakāya.

"This unsurpassed, great vehicle, which transcends the unimaginably vast expanse of the All-illuminating [bodhisattva] Level, is the sovereign healer which cures the ills of all [other] vehicles, and there exists nowhere a dharma more profound than this: it is exceedingly subtle.

"Without seeing this, even though one were to see as many Buddhas as the Ganges' sands, there is no true enlightenment.

"Although other vehicles' ideas may seem deep, and affect purification [on the] path through their great wisdom, [they are

²⁰¹ I have followed the TK reading (*rtogs*) here.

within] the realm of thought. Although one may have practiced at the level of the mind for a long period of time, this is actually the mere grasp of philosophical tenets.

"This [mind of enlightenment] does not depend on any of the tenets of other vehicles: it is the nature of all [of them]. The brilliantly blazing primordial wisdom that emanates marvelously out from this pervades everything with its clarity.

"There is no phenomenon that is not contained within this, and this dimension of the pure vital essence has nothing to objectify or meditate on: it transcends conventional meditation.

"There is no path to travel: the supreme path, the innermost part of the path, is the innermost path of Suchness.

"In this there is no conceptual activity to be done, [as] everything is Buddhahood, from the beginning. The sovereign of the non-dual sameness of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa has nothing to reject or accept.

"If the constituents of non-realization of Suchness [Folio 324a] were apart from it, there would be existence. These constituents are the automatic appearance of all phenomena along with the flow of conditioned factors. Because conceptual thought processes [and] karmic imprints are continuous, uninterrupted phenomena, one should not analyze things that appear.

"Because they are the continual process of mind occurring and engaging, they should not be thought to be anything other than primordial Buddhahood. In this way, in the space of Suchness, [they are] Suchness itself.

"Having plunged the mind's dagger into the depths of Suchness, one should not withdraw it from this [state of] resting. When movement and disturbance occur one should completely refrain from entering into binding or emerging."

The sixth chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, on the nature of the essential meaning, along with its good qualities, [is concluded.]

[Chapter Seven]

Then again, the great lord of non-duality expounded to himself the characteristics of the [mind of] the afflicted emotions:

"One should examine this path starting from the stories [that are] the basis of the concept of existing entities. The phenomenon that dominates the minds of all living beings, of [things] designated internal or external, is not as it is seen and analyzed by the six fixating senses, [but] is deceptive.

"If the perceptions apprehended while one is intoxicated by one's own conceptual thoughts were true, then one could be classed

as becoming like the enemy-defeating arhats, who have realized the non-substantiality of those [perceptions].

"[However] it is evident that those [people] are deluded, because they are defeated by the enemy, time, and afflicted with suffering. Otherwise, [Folio 324b] if what is known via the sense-fields was valid cognition, the fact that it was valid cognition would mean that no-one would need the path of the noble ones. This path is taught as the path of total liberation, and [yet] sensory cognition does not free anyone. Perceptual awareness removes no suffering; it is the source that produces the afflictive emotions. Therefore it is evident that what is seen by living beings is deceptive, as the victor taught.

"How do things appear from that, through the power of delusion?

"Overcome and impaired by the process of erroneous conceptual thoughts, because one's intelligence is distorted and controlled by the conditioning factor of ignorance, mind and mental events manifest in [the following] three phases of transformation:²⁰²

1. Once the karmic imprints of various conditioning factors have accumulated, as they grow strong through habituation, mind itself, manifesting as objects and a body, appears like a pile of bones.
2. A self is imputed by the mental faculty from the objectified continuum of accumulated karmic imprints, but it does not exist.
3. Specific perceptions arise due to obscuration by the power of conditioning factors, and failure to see the [true] subtlety. The power of the mind, with its continual process, is such that it is swept along in the wake of non-realized conceptual thoughts²⁰³ and then conceives out of this a contaminated self-nature, causing 'phenomena' and 'self'²⁰⁴ to proliferate.

"From not seeing this very subtle²⁰⁵ movement of mind and its associated tendencies, the various views, such as that of the self, arise and are conceived of as liberation. This mind becomes the site of a multiplicity of karmic imprints, and their infinite habitual tendencies are innumerable.

"Multiple kinds of conditions reinforce and activate the habitual tendencies. Some conditions mature some tendencies, and manifest as the body of a human being, while other conditions activate

²⁰² I have added numbering in order to clarify the order of the three phases here.

²⁰³ I have amended the texts' *rtogs* here to *rtog*, in line with the DLSZ.

²⁰⁴ Following the DLSZ reading *bdag dang chos rnam*s.

²⁰⁵ Inserting *phra bar*, in line with the DLSZ.

other tendencies.

"After seeing the power of this transformation some claim that this is done by Śiva, and so on, but that path does not bring peace or liberation. It is the cause of doubt that weakens the yogic path, and brings about non-realization of the subtlety of this process. Obscured by imputing [the existence of] a self, one is estranged from the lineage of the noble ones. By imputing [the existence of] phenomena various kinds of suffering arise, and one will be reborn in the lower realms.

"Moreover, since consciousness grasps at different characteristics from out of the continuing flow of conditioning factors, its particular functions appear as [if] eightfold, although [in fact] they are not multiple in type. Consciousness and cognition are of a single type; they are not many in type.

"Therefore, in that first moment of mind, one's body and all phenomena are [already] present. Due to thinking becoming attached to that, the later [moment] arises and appears to happen.

"No phenomena exist, for either noble ones or ordinary beings, other than in their own mind-streams. The different paths of the six types of sentient beings are also due to their own mind-sets. Since the mind's continuum is completely unbounded, there is no basis for it [to be] 'one'. Since it has no boundaries, limitless Buddha-fields are one's own body. Although one's own body [may] manifest as limitless Buddha-fields and as the body of an ordinary being, it is very difficult to investigate whether the mind and habitual tendencies are the same or different.

"As for saying that all of this arises and ceases in accordance with dependent origination: like a burnt seed, a non-existent [effect] does not arise from a non-existent [cause]; cause and effect do not exist. One's mind itself, seizing onto things as real existents and presenting them as cause and effect, appears as causes and conditions, but as neither of these exists, there is no origination or cessation.

"Since origination and cessation²⁰⁶ do not exist, there is no self and other. Since there is no birth or death, there is no eternity or annihilation. Therefore, it is obvious that neither deceptive Saṃsāra nor Nirvāṇa exists. They are the same in their status, inseparable even for a moment: if one does not exist, neither does the other.

"Since they are produced by erroneous, conceptual thought, habitual tendencies are not [truly] existent, and since it has no sphere of operation, the Basis-of-all does not exist, nor do the various kinds of cognition exist. Since there are no boundaries, and neither objects nor basis for them, how could cognitive perceptions arise? Therefore,

²⁰⁶ Following the DLSZ reading 'jig here, rather than the SGG 'chi.

this mind transcends the extremes of existence and non-existence, and is free of [notions of being] one or many.

"The mind is not situated internally, nor is it situated externally, nor [somewhere] in-between. It has never wavered from the state of reality which resides equally in everyone, everywhere.

"This adamant mind itself, the totally pure, great path, is everything that can be known, and gives rise to everything. Without focusing on any object, it extends its branches everywhere, in the manner of the essential clear light. Primordially-present Suchness is one's own reflexive awareness, and the space of the primordial matrix; resting in this unchanging Suchness is what is called the mind [of enlightenment].

"The mind is not in characteristics, but it is the expanse that produces all things. Without limit or centre, as it transcends both conceptuality and non-conceptuality, it is explained as the Dharmakāya. This very [Dharmakāya], primordially clear to the host of noble ones, is the great accumulation of wisdom. Nothing obscures, destroys, or manifests this, from which everything manifests, so it is also the Basis-of-all.

"When one sees this depth of the mind, there are no phenomena apart from mind. This supremely wondrous, marvelous, exceptional object is the great, universal marvel. Reflexive awareness, the subject that knows Suchness, its object of knowledge, enters into it of its own accord. Furthermore, since this reflexive awareness emerges from Suchness, yet is still present within it, one should leave it just where it is.

"This truth is the conclusion of whatever other path one might follow. Therefore, this source of all is the fruition of [all] schools of thought. Experiencing the state [of Suchness], and remaining in it in a sky-like manner, is the universal guide of the blind that directs the minds²⁰⁷ of other [schools of thought].

Since everything is the activity of the sovereign of sameness, it transcends action. Thus, this primordial presence is not created by anyone, [and] resting in this essential Suchness is the great mind of enlightenment. The totally-perfect true, natural state, the essence of Dharma, it is perfect in its view and conduct.

"In²⁰⁸ this essence of Dharma, acting to accomplish the view and conduct [is] far from the essence. Not seeing the essence due to this, being involved in activity, one falls away from the essence. This [essence], primordially²⁰⁹ free from effort, has, from the begin-

²⁰⁷ Amending *gzhan lo* to *gzhan blo*.

²⁰⁸ I have followed the TK reading *la* rather than mTsham brag's double *lta* here.

²⁰⁹ TK omits the repetition of *ye nas* in this line.

ning, nothing to strive for, and so it is the supreme essence.

"Moreover, all the victors of the past, present, and future see it, by resting [in the state] without accomplishment, purification or effort. As soon as they see it, they fully realize it, without any need for purification, effort, or regret. This is the state of realization in which all the infinite victorious Buddhas of the past, present, and future remain.

"By abandoning all paths of exertion for the purpose of reaching Buddhahood, they are primordially enlightened. While one remains on the path of progressive effort, one is merely at the entrance to the level of the noble ones. Therefore, this essence is called 'the swift path of perfect bliss, the three-kāya level of Vajradhāra.' Arriving at the untravelled-to place, one's own pure mind-stream is also the destination.

"The view of outer and inner mental objects, along with the flow of habitual tendencies, is [that of] the Mind-only [school]. [But] this essence itself is not present in this concept of habitual tendencies and the mind's process. Therefore, the view of objects and the body is itself the process of conceptual thought.

"Not meditating, accomplishing, or maintaining [it], one leaves one's conceptual mind in [the state of] Suchness. Since this very resting-place, destination, and abode, is the universal journey's end, it is the swift path."

The seventh chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, [on how] Ati [yoga] transcends the view of Mind-only and its results and qualities, [is concluded.]

[Chapter Eight]

Then the Blessed One, the non-dual, non-substantially-existing Great Bliss, uttered to himself this teaching on the appearance of his magical display to those who are deluded:

"Because the enlightenment of the Sugātas does not exist, it is its magical display that appears, like an illusion, to [those who are] deluded. Although the wisdoms of the Tāthāgatas, the very cause of virtue²¹⁰ and the dharmadhātu itself, are imagined to be objects that arise, due to the fact that the vajra [-like mind] has no basis, they are equivalent, and alike in nature. Since the supreme vajra, the dharmadhātu, is without boundaries, there are no momentary existents. Since, [like] a reflection, the source²¹¹ of pure virtues is non-existent, mundane wisdom²¹² does not exist.

²¹⁰ I have inserted the extra line found in the DLSZ here.

²¹¹ Here following the DLSZ reading, *dag pa'i dge rtsa*.

²¹² Again following the DLSZ reading *'jig rten ye shes*.

"Therefore, since enlightenment and non-enlightenment are the same in their absence of characteristics, there is nothing to accept or reject. In this sense, synonyms for the Ultimate, [such as] 'unborn and unceasing', 'the state of equality', 'non-duality', 'transcending thought', 'Emptiness', 'the sphere of reality beyond utterance', and so on, are all [just] conventionally-taught designations. The ultimate²¹³ truth does not exist, nor does the state of total obscuration. To say 'this is the real path on the ultimate level' is itself the state of total obscuration.

"One should not act to reject doubt, where it is present, or to remain in a state of the absence of doubt. Because there is no meditator and no dharmadhātu, there is neither doubt nor [correct] View of the Ultimate.

"Since, when analyzed in this way, the concepts of existent entities vanish like an illusion, even non-existence, being dependent on existence, does not exist; nor does its non-existence exist.²¹⁴

"Since these conceptual extremes do not exist, no middle [between them] exists. Nor should one posit the non-existence of the middle.²¹⁵

"The Lotus Lord of the World rejects nothing [but] remains in equality, with the complete realization that seeing phenomena as delusory is itself delusion, and does not even reject the work of Mara, the teachings of the six [Hindu] schools, conceiving them as evil. Due to the fact that even the conduct of wisdom and skillful means does not exist, such activity is like that of Mara. When one becomes proud and triumphant at one's superior understanding, then attachment and aversion arise, and disputes occur - this is ignorance, not seeing the true meaning.²¹⁶ One should not remain in the extremes of [either] movement or non-movement; nor is there any remaining in remaining. The Sugāta has said, 'The Middle Path without [delusory] appearances is the mind of enlightenment'.²¹⁷

"Therefore, in the immaculate seminal essence of Suchness, where nothing is divided, everything is the same. There is nothing other

²¹³ Following the DLSZ reading of *don dam* here.

²¹⁴ I have followed the DLSZ reading here: *yod las ltos pa'i med pa med de med pa'ang med*, which seems more logical.

²¹⁵ TK and DLSZ both read *dbu la'ang gnas par mi byed do*, "one should not act to remain in the middle, either".

²¹⁶ The DLSZ has an extra line here, which would clarify the word *g.yo* in the next line of the SGG: *ji srid yid kyi g.yo ba de srid bdud kyi yul te phra ba'i lam*: "However much the mind moves, that much is the domain of Mara: (this is) a subtle path."

²¹⁷ Following the DLSZ reading here. The next three sentences in the SGG are absent from the DLSZ

than this; it is the cause and the result; it is also the [enlightened] essence. If this is not seen, whatever one may contend, one is within the realm of conceptual thought. [Folio 328/p. 655]

"Cultivating the Three Gateways to Liberation after renouncing attachment to form, characteristics and wishfulness²¹⁸ - even this is the activity of Mara: form itself is empty. Rejecting the Three Paths of Saṃsāra and cultivating the Path of Nirvāṇa²¹⁹ is itself Mara. This is not natural, peaceful [cessation] - the nature of Suchness to seek and the non-pacified nature [of Saṃsāra] to renounce are both without basis. The domain and state of all the Noble Ones, Nirvāṇa and so on, are nothing other than this very path."

The Eighth Chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, the ultimate teaching on the path of Nirvāṇa, [is concluded]

[Chapter Nine]

Then the Blessed One, Great Bliss, intending to point out genuine reality, Buddhahood itself, said to himself:

"Whether thoughts arise or do not arise,²²⁰ one should neither deliberately reject them nor establish a physical mental basis for them. The slightest movement [of thought] that is not Mañjuśrī is [still] Suchness, [although] one does not remain in it. Since one finds no basis of meditation, one will find nothing by meditating, either.²²¹

"Free of attributes, without anything better or worse - one should meditate on this supreme path.²²² **Free from action, actor, or anything to be done, thus one naturally remains in the primordial state of Suchness.²²³ In this there is no Saṃsāra or Nirvāṇa, [yet] there is nothing lacking from it: it is all-endowed."**

The Ninth Chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, summarizing the Great Perfection, the supreme path of

²¹⁸ The DLSZ supplies *smon pa*, absent from the SGG here.

²¹⁹ The DLSZ (and also TK) supply the following ending to this line, absent from the SGG, which seems to be required for it to make sense: *byed pa'ang bdud nyid de*.

²²⁰ Although the mTshams Brag DLSZ here follows the SGG, two other versions of the DLSZ (the *gDams ngag mdzod*/Mipham's Commentary) here read '*bras bu rnyed par mi 'gyur te* "one will not find a result by meditating, either". See Lipman p. 120, line 111, n. 77.

²²¹ The DLSZ has an extra line absent from the SGG here: *sems kyi spyod yul shes pa de dag chos rnam kyi ni chos nyid yin*, "Conscious perceptions, the sphere of operation of the mind, are the real nature of phenomena".

²²² Following the DLSZ and TK readings here, as the SGG appears to have omitted half a line (probably due to a copying error caused by the eye skipping ahead to the second *mchog* in the line).

²²³ This line of 17 syllables, absent from the DLSZ, is here edited to 15 (as it is in TK) by removing one of the repetitions of *de bzhin*, probably a copying error.

meditation, [is concluded]**[Chapter Ten]**

Then again, he whose nature is Great Bliss pronounced this special utterance to himself:

"Conditioned factors do not arise; all dharmas²²⁴ have no origin; and absolutely all phenomena are Nirvanic. [When one realizes that] things have no substance, one understands that everything is the dharmadhātu - [and] this knowledge [means that] one is a sublime arhat.

"Space is not objectifiable, just a name; and virtue and non-virtue are indivisible, and do not arise. One does not focus attention on striving, or keeping one's mind on anything; one is free from knowing and not knowing. Inseparable from mindfulness,²²⁵ rejecting and accepting, aversion and attachment are equally absent; one does not objectify anything. Without dualistic analysis of the state of sameness, free of utterance, without anything to do or not do, there is no increase or decrease [of merit].²²⁶

"Without any deliberate effort or mental focus, one's awareness of sameness is undisturbed by anything. There is no fear of attachment to anything, or intoxication by any object - one neither withdraws from them nor lingers on them. In this one knows the four [kinds of] undisturbed awareness of sameness, the factors [conducive to enlightenment], and the Pāramitās.

"By meditating on the expanse of the mind, one penetrates to the innermost [part of] the path, but by meditating otherwise one will not develop awareness²²⁷ of the clear light of ultimate reality.

"Since the Teacher has declared that latching onto the truth symbolically is also the mind of enlightenment, this is a basis for generating and meditating on the actual mind of enlightenment. After stabilizing the three samādhis and using the three symbolic mudras, one activates the nature of mind itself as the great mudra of the Dharma, reciting the heart [mantra] and meditating [on the deity]. By meditating on Vajrasattva one meditates on all paths, without error.

"Unless whatever positive qualities [one may have] are embraced by the conduct of Samantabhadrī, [then] the conduct of Samantabhadra will become the work of Mara, and will be exhausted and come to an end. As for actions which are endowed with this

²²⁴ Both TK and DLSZ here read *chos* rather than SGG's *mchog*.

²²⁵ The DLSZ reads *dran dang 'byed med* - "without mindfulness or analysis" which seems to fit the argument slightly better than the SGG's reading here.

²²⁶ DLSZ has *srog bri med*, "there is no decrease in vitality".

²²⁷ Tib. *rig pa*.

[conduct of Samantabhadrī], even the works of Mara, they are [still] said to be the conduct of the great mind of enlightenment.

"Aspiration towards this goal is also praised by the Victorious One as the great mind of enlightenment. The Buddha has declared that by merely activating this state, the arhats, who are venerated by the inhabitants of the three worlds who pay them homage,²²⁸ subjugate the hosts of Mara. This very thing is also the great secret conduct of the bodhisattva who is skilful in means. Without this, Buddha Vairocana could not teach the Three Vehicles.

"In just an instant, feeling powerful faith, one has quickly become youthful Mañjuśrī, entered into the secret mandala, and observed the supreme Mahāyāna vow. One has also observed all the vows of ethical discipline, and been consecrated as a supreme object of veneration.

"Therefore, the Victorious Ones have accordingly declared that if the merit of the mind of enlightenment were to take physical form, even the expanse of space would be too small to contain it.

"The perfect Sugātas all, without exception, abide in the mind of enlightenment. There is no dharma that is not equivalent to the mind of enlightenment. The Victorious Ones are enlightened through seeing [this] subtle reality of the mind. Suppressing negative forces,²²⁹ this [is] the state of the [dharma]dhātu.²³⁰ It has no space or obstruction, union or separation whatsoever. There is no dimension of wisdom and no Nirvāṇa, either. All so-called 'phenomena' are, by necessity, perfect. It completely pacifies conceptual characteristics; there are no characteristics, and their absence is also non-existent. It even transcends the non-existence of the non-existence of the absence of self-nature, and because it transcends practice with another it is superior.

"It is superior to vehicles that label and [try to] accomplish [this] non-objectifiable Emptiness, non-self-nature, the actual state of Suchness, and verbal designations [such as] entering or not entering it, that are limited from²³¹ the beginning. Since this non-action that transcends words is all-pervasive, it is the supreme limitlessness. Totally free of verbal recitation, it is the great, supreme Secret Mantra.

"Once one has realized in this way that the self-arisen state

²²⁸ Following the TK/DLSZ reading *mchod* rather than SGG's *chos* here.

²²⁹ The text reads *bdud dang des*, but I suggest it might have originally read *bdud dang 'dres*, which would make sense and avoid the peculiarity of "*dang*" otherwise. As this is admittedly speculative, I have glossed this as "negative forces"

²³⁰ This line is unusually short at only 9/10 syllables and I suspect it is corrupt.

²³¹ The Tibetan reads *ye na rgya chad*. I have not come across *ye na* anywhere else, and therefore assume it is an error for *ye nas*.

could never, from the beginning, be altered from this, the intellect that remains in this is the highest intellect. This is actually what is referred to as glorious youthful Mañjuśrī. All the Buddhas of the three times have established and taken this to heart, and all the countless Buddhas are equivalent to this.

"Since this arises from the basis of the uncultivated natural state, [Folio 330/659] than which nothing higher could ever be sought, there is no other teaching apart from this Great Vehicle of the Victorious Ones, whose qualities other teachings do not name.

"Therefore, those who assert that results are obtained after entering and proceeding along the Dharma path are like frogs in a well."

The Tenth Chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, with pride in the nature of the Great Perfection, [is concluded].

[Chapter Eleven]

Then the Blessed One, Great Bliss, summing up the meaning, pronounced these words to himself:

"Living beings have been born and will be born in various [forms of] birth, controlled by the demon of birth. Not knowing the limits of conceptuality, they are deceived by thoughts, and it becomes impossible for them to withdraw from the confusing, continuous flow²³² of thoughts. Illusory beings are deluded by illusions, like when magical illusionists conjure up illusory elephants.²³³ Like dreamers who, in their dreams, lose their dream-happiness and fall under the power of the dream, they reject this [correct] path and regard different, or extreme [views] as the path, teaching them as the unerring path. Although these people, like those who mistake stone for gold, are the object of activity of those who have excellently purified their wisdom, [causing them to be] carried away by compassion and to exclaim in pity, this quintessential [enlightened] speech does not manifest to those unfortunates whose wisdom has not been purified."

This supreme, nectar-like path practised by the Victorious ones, the great objective achieved [by] the Victorious ones, is the supreme discovery. Having met such a goal as this, may I repay it!

Whatever ordinary beings, such as foxes or dogs, aspire towards this, they, too, are in pursuit of the happiness of the great mind of enlightenment, and so they, too, are venerable and great, included among the noble ones.

²³² Following the TK and DLSZ reading *rgyun 'brangs* here.

²³³ Following the TK and DLSZ reading *glang po* rather than SGG's *grang po* here.

After realizing this, it is hardly necessary to mention activity, since it, too, is Buddhahood. Sentient beings' actions do not despoil this, nor does the compassion of the noble ones maintain it. This goal of goals is the sovereign, ultimate goal without meditation or effort.

The vast mind of enlightenment, the essence of the immaculate ocean [of] the profound speech [that is] the hidden quintessence of the mind of the Buddhas, is the basis of all Vehicles and supreme among the Resultant Vehicles. To know the primordially-present true nature in this manner is also to meditate, and to be enlightened.

Unimpeded wisdom that is embraced by [this] View is, similarly, the great central deity of the mandala. As this point is explained by the Dharmakāya Amitābha: 'Is this how the proclaimed speech of the Victorious Ones manifests? You²³⁴ should aspire to possess the limitless Dharmakāya of the Tāthāgatas. You should also regard this vast, supreme speech of the Dharmakāya in the same way. Due to the fact that this is abiding on the tenth [bodhisattva] level,²³⁵ [you] should also aim for that. Those whose minds abide in this are supreme bodhisattva siddhas. [Folio 331] [As for] the level, the presence of this meaning in the mind even for one instant, is taught to be the perfect Dharmakāya. The blessing of this, all the Victorious Ones also proclaim'.²³⁶

It would be impossible to realize the meaning of this [even if] taught by a Nirmanakāya [form endowed] with the major and minor marks [of Buddhahood]. Since it is non-conceptual the tongue cannot explain it - therefore, the Dharmakāya speaks it. The Victorious One has said: 'The Dharmakāya that is beyond activity appears in this way and speaks in order that it may manifest to all.'

The Eleventh Chapter of the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind, in which the very pinnacle of Vehicles praises itself, and gives instructions, [is concluded].

The essence of [all] Vehicles, the Tantra of Meditation on Enlightened Mind is concluded.

²³⁴ TK has *de la* here in place of SGG's unusual *khyod la*.

²³⁵ Following TK's *phyir na* here.

²³⁶ I have not been able to trace this quotation.

Appendix II - Edition of the *Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*

Used as a basis for this edition:

mTshams brag edition of the rNying ma rgyud 'bum, Tb. 37, vol. 1 (ka); incipit p. 636.7 - *Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*.

Other rNying ma rgyud 'bum sources used:

gTing skyes, vol. 3 (ga), Text 4 - *Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*.
mTshams brag, Tb. 22 vol. 1 (ka) - *Byang chub sems bsgom pa/sems bsgom rdo la gser zhun*.

Folio 318b/p. 636)

(l.7) rgya gar skad du/ bo dhi tsi tta a ba ya tan tra /bod skad du/
byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud/ bcom (folio 319a/p. 637) (l.1)
ldan 'das dpal kun tu bzang po la phyag 'tshal lo/ 'di skad bshad pa'i
dus gcig na/ bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa yang dag (l.2) par
rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad
kyi bdag po khyad par du gyur pa'i snying po nyid ma lus mi lus lus
pa med pa dang dbyer med pa'o/ (l.3) mkha' dag pa'i gzhal yas
khang yon tan gyi me 'od 'bar ba na brtag pa ni/ kun tu zhal rgyas
par gsol lo/ kun gyi rang bzhin gyi thugs rje chen po'i mthu las/ (l.4)
long spyod chen po'i sku dang 'thun par snang ba'i sku la sogs pa
bsam yas pa rmad byung bar grags so/ de bzhin gshegs pa thams
cad kyi rang bzhin bdag nyid chen (l.5) po'i sku la/ gang yang ma lus
par ye nas 'dus pa de gnyis su med par rtog²³⁷ pas/ de nas gnyis su
med pa'i bdag nyid chen pos nyid kyis²³⁸ nyid la ched du brjod do²³⁹/
(l.6) ²⁴⁰kun gyi rang bzhin zhi ba 'di la gsal zhing bla med las²⁴¹ mchog
ste/ ²⁴²mya ngan 'das dang 'khor ba gnyis med yang dag nyid/ chos
kyi snying po phyi nang ma lus chos rnam (l.7) kun gyi gzhi/ bde
gshegs kun gyi yum gyur gsang ba'i dbyings phyug ma/ de bzhin
nyid kyi ngang btsan bde ba chen po'i rgya mchog nyid/ thams cad
rang byung (folio 319b/p. 638)

(l.1) dkyil 'khor 'dir ni rnam par dag/ bde dang mi bde gnyis med ye

²³⁷ TK rtogs.

²³⁸ TK kyi.

²³⁹ TK ched du brjod pa 'di ched du brjod do.

²⁴⁰ The mTshams Brag edition of the rDo la gSer Zhun (Tb. 22) replaces the opening passage of the SGG, up to this point, with the following (folio 280b l.7): rgya gar skad du/ bo dhi ci tta sa ma' dhi/ bod skad du/ byang chub sems bsgom pa/bcom ldan 'das dbyings gsum rnam par dag pa'i ngang la (folio 281a) phyag 'tshal lo/ bdag med gnyis nyid bde gshegs mi rtog ye shes chos dbyings sku brnyes pa.

²⁴¹ DLSZ lam.

²⁴² The DLSZ omits this and all the following lines of the SGG up to folio 320a l.5 (mi ldogs la sogs pa dbang bcu rgyal ba kun dang cig mnyes pa).

nas rdzogs pa'i chos/ mi skye ci²⁴³ 'gag cir yang mi dgongs dmigs su med/ byang chub kyi sems (l.2) bsgom pa'i rgyud las/ don dam pa'i gleng gzhi'i le'u ste dang po'o/ /

de nas bdag nyid chen pos ngo mtshar ba'i tshig 'di nyid la²⁴⁴ nyid kyis chad (l.3) du brjod pas/ e e e ma'o ngo mtshar gsang ba rmad du byung ba'i chos chen po/ sus kyang ma bcos ma gsungs ma bcos ngang²⁴⁵ gis²⁴⁶ gsal/ skye ba med las thams (l.4) cad skyes kyang skye ba med/ ming dang tha snyad 'dzin pa thams cad ye nas sang rgyas yin/ de nas ngo mtshar ba'i rmad du byung ba ste ma rtogs²⁴⁷ pa la ngo mtshar ba'i tshig 'di (l.5) brjod do/ ma rig log 'khrul rtog pa'i gzung 'dzin gyis/ med la yod brtags²⁴⁸ rten 'brel gnyis su 'khor/ bya byed las phags rang bzhin nyid la nyams (l.6) pa med/ bdag med gnyis med bden pa ma mthong bas/ sgyu ma la sogs dngos por 'dzin pas yang dag nyams/ blun po gang zhig mkha'²⁴⁹ la mdud por 'dra/ (l.7) de nas bdag nyid chen po gzhi dang rtsa ba med pa nyid la nyid kyis²⁵⁰ brjod pa/ rgyu 'bras mi 'byed gzhi dang rtsa ba med pa'i chos chen po/ mi dmigs dmigs pa med las (folio 320a/p. 639) (l.1) dmigs pa sna tshogs 'byung/ bsgrub tu med cing grub par bya ba 'di la ci yang med/ ji bzhin nyid kyi ngang nyid yin pas btsan²⁵¹ par gnas pa ste/ (l.2) dmigs dang dmigs med rtsol ba'i nad dang bral bas na/ gnyen pos bcos su rdul tsam med pa yin/ shin tu rtag²⁵² dka' gting dpag bsam yas pa/ rgyu dang (l.3) 'bras bur 'dogs pa'i spyod yul min/ byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud las/ rdzogs pa chen po la ngo mtshar ba'i tshig bstan pa dang/ de ma rtogs pa la ngo mtshar (l.4) ba dang don dam pa'i rang bzhin bstan pa'i le'u ste gnyis pa'o/ /

de nas don dam pa'i rang bzhin de rtogs shing shes par bya ba²⁵³/ gnyis (l.5) su med pa'i bdag nyid chen po des²⁵⁴ nyid kyi²⁵⁵ nyid la brjod pa/ sems²⁵⁶ kyi rang bzhin kun gyi mchog ste blang dor med pa'i rgyal po yum/ ²⁵⁷mi ldogs la sogs pa²⁵⁸ dbang bcu rgyal ba (l.6)

²⁴³ TK mi.

²⁴⁴ 'di nyid kyi ched du.

²⁴⁵ TK rang.

²⁴⁶ TK gi?.

²⁴⁷ TK rtog.

²⁴⁸ TK rtags.

²⁴⁹ TK kha.

²⁵⁰ TK kyi.

²⁵¹ TK btsun.

²⁵² TK rtags.

²⁵³ TK omits ba.

²⁵⁴ TK de.

²⁵⁵ TK kyis.

²⁵⁶ TK inserts: can.

²⁵⁷ DLSZ resumes at this point.

kun dang cig²⁵⁹ mnyes²⁶⁰ pa/ gnas gsum mnyam nyid de la mtshan med yid²⁶¹ kyis²⁶² rab tu de la²⁶³ dad pas mos/ ston pa 'jig rten sgron²⁶⁴ mar gyur gyis mtshungs par²⁶⁵ rab bsngags (l.7) pa/ chos la chos nyid²⁶⁶ snying por gyur pa²⁶⁷ 'jam dpal gzhon nu'i snying po nyid²⁶⁸ / bde shegs ma lus yum du gyur pas rgyal ba kun gyi yum gcig pu²⁶⁹ / tshul khirms(folio 320b/p. 640) (l.1) la sogs pha rol phyin lam spyod pa rgya mtsho'i gzhir gyur pa/ rnam dag byang chub sems kyi ngang tshul bsgoms dang yon tan khyad par ni/ blo ldan nam zhig sems kyi dam pa de (l.2) ni mngon du gyur pa²⁷⁰ na/ de la sku gsum mchog tu gyur pa²⁷¹ chos kyi sku zhes rgyal bas gsungs/ shes byed²⁷² dam par gyur pa²⁷³ shes rab spyan²⁷⁴ zhes kyang ni de la bya/ rdo rje rtse (l.3) mo'i²⁷⁵ mchog nyid mi rtog²⁷⁶ ye shes de yang de nyid do/ ji snyed 'phags pa'i²⁷⁷ rnam grol chos su bstan²⁷⁸ pa de dag thams cad²⁷⁹ kyang/ byang chub sems nyid rdzogs lam²⁸⁰ de yi²⁸¹ yon (l.4) tan de dag de las 'byung/ 'phags pa'i rigs chen 'chi med byang chub sems dpa' de dag thams cad kyang/ de med mi 'byung de phyir de ni rnam grol mchog gi lam nyid do/ (l.5) ²⁸²bla med rang bzhin mchog gi mchog nyid 'di ni kun gyi mchog/ gzhi rtsa med pa'i sems nyid rin chen nor 'dra la/ mtshon du med pas gang yang med de rigs rgyud

²⁵⁸ DLSZ te.

²⁵⁹ TK gcig; DLSZ gcig.

²⁶⁰ TK gnyes; DLSZ brnyes.

²⁶¹ TK omits: yid.

²⁶² TK kyi.

²⁶³ DLSZ omits: de la.

²⁶⁴ TK sgron.

²⁶⁵ DLSZ reads: ston pa 'jig rten sgron mar gyur pa kun gyis mtshungs par gyur pa.

²⁶⁶ DLSZ kyi.

²⁶⁷ DLSZ pas.

²⁶⁸ DLSZ yin.

²⁶⁹ TK po; DLSZ lam gcig go.

²⁷⁰ DLSZ pas.

²⁷¹ DLSZ pas.

²⁷² TK bya.

²⁷³ DLSZ pas.

²⁷⁴ TK can.

²⁷⁵ DLSZ mo.

²⁷⁶ rtogs.

²⁷⁷ TK omits: pa'i.

²⁷⁸ DLSZ bsnyad.

²⁷⁹ DLSZ omits: thams cad.

²⁸⁰ DLSZ las.

²⁸¹ TK de'i.

²⁸² This and following lines of the SGG up to folio 321 l.1 (de na kun tu rdo rje sems dpa' ci 'dra bar bsgom par bya bar 'gyur) are omitted from the DLSZ.

yod ma²⁸³ yin/ (l.6) cis kyang gzhig tu med phyir rdo rje²⁸⁴ nyid/ mi 'gyur²⁸⁵ bde ba'i klung na de bzhin de gnas pa'i/ byang chub snying po'i chos 'di mi dmigs byang chub sems mi dmigs/ 'di (l.7) ni yang dag nyid de drang srong rnams kyi lam gyi mchog/ sems kyis sems nyid de ltar mthong na bde ba'i mchog/ ²⁸⁶rang bzhin med pa'i²⁸⁷ sems la rang rig de bzhin bzhag²⁸⁸ / (folio 321a/p. 641) (l.1) ma bsams ma btsal²⁸⁹ de bzhin gnas pa bsgom pa yin/ ²⁹⁰de na kun tu rdo rje sems dpa' ci 'dra bar²⁹¹ bsgom par bya bar 'gyur/ phra zhing shes (l.2) dka' drang srong chen po'i lam 'di²⁹² mi rtog²⁹³ rtog las 'das/ brtag par dka' zhing bstan par dka' la brjod pa'i tha snyad rnams dang bral/ tshig gi²⁹⁴ mi phebs gzhan (l.3) dang byis pa kun gyi spyod yul ma yin kyang²⁹⁵ / ston pa nges pa'i lung dang bla ma rnams kyi²⁹⁶ man ngag de nyid²⁹⁷ don 'dir blta²⁹⁸ / mngon sum la sogs rgyu yis dngos po 'jig²⁹⁹ cing (l.4) grub pa'i mtha' spyod pa/ de nyid rtogs pa'i rgyun 'brangs³⁰⁰ spyod yul tshad³⁰¹ mar bzhag³⁰² nas blo yis 'jig byed de³⁰³ / rtog mtha' med de³⁰⁴ phyir spyod mtha' med de snying po med (l.5) na tshad mar³⁰⁵ gang/ de phyir 'jig rten tha snyad brtag³⁰⁶ pa³⁰⁷ rnal 'byor lam 'dir mi dgos so/³⁰⁸ phyogs

²⁸³ TK pa.

²⁸⁴ TK inserts rdo rje.

²⁸⁵ TK omits the following passage beginning: bde ba'i klung... .

²⁸⁶ TK resumes here.

²⁸⁷ TK pas.

²⁸⁸ TK gshegs.

²⁸⁹ TK rtsal.

²⁹⁰ DLSZ resumes here.

²⁹¹ DLSZ ci 'drar.

²⁹² DLSZ 'di'i.

²⁹³ TK rtogs.

²⁹⁴ TK gi.

²⁹⁵ TK yang; DLSZ yang.

²⁹⁶ TK kyis.

²⁹⁷ DLSZ omits: de nyid.

²⁹⁸ DLSZ lta.

²⁹⁹ TK 'jigs.

³⁰⁰ TK rgyu 'bras.

³⁰¹ TK mtshan.

³⁰² DLSZ gzhag.

³⁰³ TK do.

³⁰⁴ TK and DLSZ omit: de.

³⁰⁵ DLSZ ma.

³⁰⁶ TK brtags; DLSZ brtags pa'i tha snyad.

³⁰⁷ DLSZ omits: pa.

³⁰⁸ DLSZ omits this and all following lines up to chapter seven of the SGG, folio 324.5 (dngos po mtha' yi rgyu...).

su³⁰⁹ mnyam nyid rnam par dag pa ye nas yin pas na/ sna tshogs (l.6)
 chos rnam kun la ji ltar 'dod dbang sgyur³¹⁰/ 'jig rten 'das dang 'jig
 rten ma 'das³¹¹ thams cad kun/ yang dag shes³¹² pas rab tu brtags nas
 rtogs 'gyur na/ (l.7) rang bzhin mnyam pa med las cir yang snang
 zhing 'byung/ ji ltar snang ba nyid na'ang dbyings kyi rang bzhin de
 bzhin nyid yin te/ de ltar rtogs par gyur pa'i rang byung ye (folio
 321b/p. 642) (l.1) shes snying po ni/ sna tshogs chos rnam kun la
 dbang yang sgyur³¹³ bas mi nyams med/ de phyir tshad bzhi rgyu
 'bras 'dod pa'i tha snyad pas na tshad mar 'jog mod kyi/ rgyu yi (l.2)
 'bras bu dam pa'i yul 'di tshad mas gshig tu ga la yod de med/ dpe
 dang tshad mas bsnyad min gsang sngags rgya mtsho chen po 'dis/
 yongs snums³¹⁴ kun skyed snying por (l.3) gnas te 'bras bu'ang yin/
 byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud las/ don dam pa'i rang bzhin
 rtogs par bya ba'i thabs bstan pa dang/ tshad mas gzhiig tu med (l.4)
 par bstan pa'i le'u ste gsum pa'o/ /

de nas de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi³¹⁵ bdag po chen po³¹⁶
 des/ nyid la nyid kyis³¹⁷ bsgom du med pa'i (l.5) don brjod pa/ yangs
 so³¹⁸ che yi³¹⁹ shin tu phra ba'i chos nyid 'di/ rgyu 'bras mi 'byed
 ngang gis btsan pas³²⁰ de bzhin nyid/ rang bzhin³²¹ gnas pas bya med
 bde ba'i klung³²² chen (l.6) po/ rna bas gzhan nas thos par mi rung
 tshig³²³ las 'das/ lces³²⁴ kyang brjod du mi rung snod bcud ye nas
 rnam par dag/ blang³²⁵ dor med pa'i rdo rje'i sku ste rdzogs pa'i (l.7)
 sku/ drang srong bden par bzhugs³²⁶ pa rnam kyis brtag³²⁷ mi bya/
 don 'di brtags pas mi rtog³²⁸ klung las nyams/ chos kyi³²⁹ snying po

³⁰⁹ TK dus.

³¹⁰ TK bsgyur.

³¹¹ TK omits ma 'das.

³¹² TK gshegs.

³¹³ TK bsgyur.

³¹⁴ TK bsnums.

³¹⁵ TK kyis.

³¹⁶ TK omits chen po.

³¹⁷ TK kyi.

³¹⁸ TK yongs su.

³¹⁹ TK che'o.

³²⁰ TK pa.

³²¹ TK omits de bzhin nyid/ rang bzhin.

³²² TK klong.

³²³ TK tshigs.

³²⁴ TK cis.

³²⁵ TK blangs.

³²⁶ TK zhugs.

³²⁷ TK brtags.

³²⁸ TK rtogs.

³²⁹ TK 'di'i.

'di la bsgom du cir yang grub pa (folio 322a/p. 643) (l.1) med/ gang yang dmigs na mtshan med mtshan ma 'dra ste rtog³³⁰/ mi rtog pa nyid rtog pa'i rlung³³¹ ste ye shes skye/ gang yang snang ba med pa'i chos nyid (l.2) lam³³² mchog la/ ma btsal bsam dang bral na bsgom pa'i klung/ btsal zhing brtags na lam mchog de las gol³³³/ de las de bzhin bde ba mi 'byung rgyu 'bras bcas/ (l.3) bsgom du med bzhin dmigs par byed pa smig rgyu chu byed 'dra/ byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud las/ bsgom pa'i thabs bstan pa'i le'u ste bzhi pa'o//

(l.4) de nas gnyis su med pa'i bdag nyid chen pos theg pa chen po'i don dang mtshan nyid la nyid³³⁴ kyis brjod pa/ sems ni rdo shing 'dra ste dge dang mi dge ba'i las mi (l.5) spyod pa dam pa'i sems yin no/ don dam nyid la ming dang mtshan ma med de sems kyis³³⁵ dmigs par nus pa ma yin ngag³³⁶ gis bshad par nus³³⁷ ma yin/ sems g.yos (l.6) na mtshan ma nyid de mtshan ma'i rgyu la ming btags³³⁸ pa de ming dang mtshan ma zhes bya'o/ rnam par rtog³³⁹ pa gang yang len cing chags na ming sgyu ma mi bde ba'i 'du shes yin/ ming (l.7) dang mtshan ma gang na'ang med par rtogs shing shes³⁴⁰ de ming yang dag pa'i ye shes so/ ming dang mtshan ma ci yang rang rig yid las ma³⁴¹ skyes ba ni de bzhin nyid ces bshad/ (folio 322b/p. 644) (l.1) theg pa chen po gang na bden pa bzhin du rnam par shes pa mi g.yo zhing ni sems ky'i rgyud nyid skye ba med pa'o/ rnam par rtog pa med pa gang na da ltar gyi ni rnam par shes pa mi skye (l.2) pa'o/ sangs rgyas spyod pa ji lta bu na sems med par shes chos la chos med par shes pa'o/ sems gzugs med la shes pa yod pa gang na sems la shes pa med (l.3) la chos la gzugs med chos la gzugs med³⁴² pa de shes dang mi shes pa'o/ pho mo khyim pa rab tu byung dang sems can sangs rgyas la sogs mthong ba de dag ma g.yos pa na (l.4) yang dag pa bzhin chos lam spyod pa yin/ sems de shes par bya phyir bsgom pa'i mis ni sus kyang bsnyen par mi rigs³⁴³ te³⁴⁴/ brten³⁴⁵

³³⁰ TK rtogs.

³³¹ TK klung.

³³² TK omits lam.

³³³ TK grol.

³³⁴ TK omits: nyid la.

³³⁵ TK ky'i.

³³⁶ TK dag.

³³⁷ TK inserts: pa.

³³⁸ TK brtags.

³³⁹ TK rtogs.

³⁴⁰ TK inserts: na.

³⁴¹ TK mi.

³⁴² TK omits:chos la gzugs med.

³⁴³ TK rig.

pa'i mi rnams mi rgod sems dang (l.5) chas shing khe³⁴⁶ spogs³⁴⁷ ci thob tshol ba yin pas bsgom la gnod phyir ro/ sems rtogs bsgom pa'i mis ni 'grus par gsang³⁴⁸ ba nyin³⁴⁹ mtshan le lo mi byed pa'o/ chos rnams (l.6) thams cad btag³⁵⁰ pa yod phyir brdzun³⁵¹ te bden med nges pa med par shes pas³⁵² chi³⁵³ tshe³⁵⁴ 'jigs med la/ bag chags de mthus dmyal ba'i bag tsha med de sangs rgyas nyid las (l.7) dmyal tshogs ming yang med/ chos rnams thams cad ngo bo nyid kyis stong pa de ni sangs rgyas rnams kyi yang dag pa yi³⁵⁵ lam yin no/ de ltar rtog³⁵⁶ nas thob pa³⁵⁷ na de nyid sangs (folio 323a/p. 645) (l.1) rgyas yin par sangs rgyas gsung/ de 'dra yi ni chos 'di rtogs nas gzhan la 'chad pa de ni 'khor wa'i sems can sgrol la mkhas pa yin/ (l.2) dus gsum sangs rgyas kyis³⁵⁸ kyang 'di bzhin rtogs shing thob las byung nas mtshan dpe dod³⁵⁹/ ngo bo nyid kyis³⁶⁰ stong pa 'di ma rtogs par gzhan na chos dbyings med cing 'bras bu (l.3) sangs rgyas med/ ngo bo nyid stong spyod pa stong pa'i ngo bo nyid la'ang mi chags pa na de nyid mya ngan 'das pa'o/ yang dag don ni tshig gis bshad du mi rung tshig dang bshad pas (l.4) sleb par nus ma yin/ byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud las/ theg pa chen po'i mdo sde'i don dang mtshan nyid bstan pa'i le'u ste lnga pa'o/ /

(l.5) de nas gnyis su med pa'i bdag nyid chen pos snying po'i³⁶¹ don nyid³⁶² nyid kyis³⁶³ nyid la brjod pa 'di ched du brjod do/ byang chub sems ni yon tan thams cad 'byin pa'i nor bu nyid de theg (l.6) pa'i mchog/ khyad par mchog tu gyur cing kun gyis rab tu bsn-gags pas rDzogs chen yin/ kun gyi rang bzhin bya bral yangs pa'i snying po 'di ni bsgom du rdul tsam med/ (l.7) de ni skye med byang

³⁴⁴ TK ste.

³⁴⁵ TK rten.

³⁴⁶ TK khye.

³⁴⁷ TK phogs.

³⁴⁸ TK gsad?.

³⁴⁹ TK nyid.

³⁵⁰ TK btags.

³⁵¹ TK rdzun.

³⁵² TK inserts: mi.

³⁵³ TK chi ?.

³⁵⁴ TK omits: tshe.

³⁵⁵ TK pa'i.

³⁵⁶ TK rtogs.

³⁵⁷ TK omits pa.

³⁵⁸ TK kyi.

³⁵⁹ TK dang.

³⁶⁰ TK kyi.

³⁶¹ TK pos.

³⁶² TK inserts: kyis.

³⁶³ TK omits nyid kyis.

chub sems kyi rang bzhin dngos med dmigs su med pas so/ byang
 chub sems ni de bzhin nyid las ngang gis³⁶⁴ 'da' mi byed/ de ltar de
 bzhin 'di la de bzhin (folio 323b/p. 646) gshegs pa kun gnas 'di la
 dgongs/ de bzhin gshegs pa'i thugs nyid de³⁶⁵ de bzhin de las de mi
 'byung/ de ni rnam dag chos sku dri med 'od gsal bde chen lhun
 grub sa'ang (l.2) yin/ mkha' dbyings gzhal yas kun tu 'od sa 'das pa'i
 bla med theg chen 'di/ theg pa kun gyi nad³⁶⁶ gso mdzad pa'i sman
 pa'i rgyal po ste/ 'di las zab pa'i (l.3) chos ni gang na'ang med pa yin
 te shin tu phra/ 'di ma mthong bar gang ga'i³⁶⁷ bye snyed sangs rgyas
 mthong yang yang dag byang chub med/ theg gzhan blo yi³⁶⁸ gting
 du snang zhing ye shes (l.4) chen pos lam sbyangs byas kyang rtog
 pa'i klung³⁶⁹/ blo'i rim pas yun rings yun du bsgrubs na grub mtha'
 'dzin pa kho na de nyid do/ theg gzhan grub mtha' 'di ni cir yang
 (l.5) dmigs su med de³⁷⁰ kun gyi rang bzhin yin/ 'di las ya mtshan
 'phrul gyi ye shes 'od 'bar de ni kun la khyab par gsal/ 'dir ma 'khyil
 ba'i chos ni gang na'ang med de (l.6) thig le dag pa'i sku 'di ni dmigs
 shing sgom du med de bsgom pa'i tha snyad 'das/ lam du bgrod du
 med de lam mchog lam gyi phugs³⁷¹ te de bzhin lam phugs nyid/ 'di
 la (l.7) rtog par byar med kun sangs rgyas pa ye nas yin/ 'khor ba
 mya ngan 'das pa gnyis med mnyam pa'i rgyal po blang dor med/ de
 bzhin nyid ma rtogs³⁷² pa'i chos rnam gud (folio 324a/p. 647) (l.1) na
 yod pa yin/ chos 'di snang ba thams cad 'du byed rgyun dang bcas
 pa mthu nyid snang ba ste/ rgyun rtog bag chags rgyun du rgyun
 ma chad par snang ba (l.2) yin pas snang ba'i dngos po brtag mi bya/
 de dag sems kyi 'byung 'jug rgyun bcas yin phyir ye sangs rgyas pa
 las/ gzhan du mi bsam de bzhin de bzhin gyi nar de bzhin (l.3) nyid/
 sems kyi phur pa de bzhin gting du btab nas bzhag pa de las dbyung
 mi bya/ 'gul zhing g.yo ba'i tshe na cing zhing 'byung du gzhug
 par³⁷³ yongs mi bya/ byang chub (l. 4) sems bsgom pa'i rgyud las/
 don gyi snying po'i rang bzhin yon tan dang bcas pa'i le'u ste drug
 pa'o//

de nas yang gnyis su med pa'i bdag nyid (l.5) chen pos/ kun
 nas nyon mongs pa'i mtshan nyid nyid la nyid kyiis brjod pa/

³⁶⁴ TK gi.

³⁶⁵ TK omits de.

³⁶⁶ TK omits nad.

³⁶⁷ TK ga'i?.

³⁶⁸ TK blo'i.

³⁶⁹ TK klong.

³⁷⁰ TK omits de.

³⁷¹ TK phug.

³⁷² TK gtogs.

³⁷³ TK pa.

³⁷⁴ dngos po mtha³⁷⁵ yi rgyu³⁷⁶ ni lo rgyus dag las lam 'di³⁷⁷ brtag³⁷⁸ par bya/ skye bo kun gyi sems la (l.6) mngon snang phyi nang grags pa'i chos 'di ni/ 'dzin pa drug gis ji ltar mthong zhing brtag³⁷⁹ pa de lta³⁸⁰ ma yin 'khrul/ rang gi rtog pas myos pa de bzhin bzung ba³⁸¹ bden gyur³⁸² na/ (l.7) de dag dngos po med rtogs dgra bcom 'dra bar³⁸³ 'gyur ba'i³⁸⁴ rigs/ de dag dus dgras 'joms³⁸⁵ dang sdug bsngal nyen las des 'khrul mngon par 'gyur/ gzhan du skye (folio 324b/p. 648) mched sgo nas rig pa de dag tshad mar gyur nas³⁸⁶ ni/ de nyid³⁸⁷ tshad mar gyur pa³⁸⁸ 'phags pa'i lam de su la'ang dgos mi 'gyur/ lam de rnam grol lam du bstan cing dbang po'i³⁸⁹ (l.2) shes pas mi thar te/ sdug bsngal 'ga' yang mi 'jil rnam rig³⁹⁰ shes te nyon mongs skye³⁹¹ ba'i gnas/ de phyir skye bos³⁹² mthong ba de dag 'khrul par mngon zhing³⁹³ rgyal ba³⁹⁴ gsungs/ (l.3) de las³⁹⁵ 'khrul pa'i dbang gis ji ltar snang bar 'gyur³⁹⁶/ kun tu rtog cing³⁹⁷ yang dag ma yin kun tu rtog³⁹⁸ pas bcom med nyams/ blo gros phyin ci log tu gyur cing ma rig rkyen (l.4) gyi³⁹⁹ dbang song bas/ sems dang sems las byung ba de nyid lus gsum don du snang ba yin/ 'du byed sna tshogs dag gi bag chags bsags las gang goms⁴⁰⁰ mthu rtas (l.5) tshe/ sems nyid yul dang lus 'drar snang ba rus pas gang ba bzhin du snang/ bag chags bsags

³⁷⁴ DLSZ resumes here.

³⁷⁵ TK mtha'i.

³⁷⁶ TK rgyud.

³⁷⁷ DLSZ 'dir.

³⁷⁸ TK rtag.

³⁷⁹ DLSZ brtags.

³⁸⁰ DLSZ ltar.

³⁸¹ DLSZ reads: myos shing gzung ba de bzhin.

³⁸² TK 'gyur.

³⁸³ DLSZ inserts: grol bar.

³⁸⁴ DLSZ bar.

³⁸⁵ TK 'jom.

³⁸⁶ DLSZ na.

³⁸⁷ DLSZ dag.

³⁸⁸ TK and DLSZ: pas.

³⁸⁹ TK pos.

³⁹⁰ TK rigs.

³⁹¹ DLSZ 'byung.

³⁹² TK bo'i.

³⁹³ DLSZ zhes.

³⁹⁴ TK and DLSZ: bas.

³⁹⁵ DLSZ de na de la 'di dag.

³⁹⁶ DLSZ inserts: zhe na.

³⁹⁷ DLSZ can.

³⁹⁸ TK rtogs.

³⁹⁹ TK gyis.

⁴⁰⁰ TK sgoms.

pa'i rgyun la⁴⁰¹ dmigs skyes yid las⁴⁰² btags pa'i bdag ni/ (l.6) med/
 'du byed mthu yis bsgribs shing phra ba ma mthong de las rnam rig
 skye/ rgyun dang bcas pa'i⁴⁰³ sems kyi mthu ni ma rtogs rtogs⁴⁰⁴ pa'i
 rjes 'brangs nas/ (l.7) de las zag bcas rang bzhin rtogs pas bdag gi⁴⁰⁵
 chos rnam rgyas par byed/ ldan par 'byung ba shin tu⁴⁰⁶ rgyu ba de
 ni ma mthong⁴⁰⁷ las⁴⁰⁸ / bdag tu⁴⁰⁹ sogs pa⁴¹⁰ lta ba sna (folio 325a/p.
 649) tshogs skye zhing thar pa rtogs⁴¹¹ / sems 'di las rnam sna
 tshogs⁴¹² gnas⁴¹³ 'gyur bag chags mtha' med nges pa med/ bag chags
 rtas shing/ (l.2) sad par byed pa'i rkyen yang rnam pa sna tshogs te/
 rkyen 'gas⁴¹⁴ bag chags 'ga' zhig smin nas mi yi⁴¹⁵ rgyud kyi lus snang
 la/ rkyen gzhan dag gis bag chags gzhan (l.3) sad byas tshe 'gyur ba'i
 mthu mthong nas/ dbang phyug la sogs byed par 'dod de⁴¹⁶ lam des
 mi zhi⁴¹⁷ grol mi 'gyur⁴¹⁸ / rnal 'byor lam slad the tsom⁴¹⁹ rgyu yang
 rgyun 'di phra ba ma (l.4) rtogs rkye⁴²⁰ / bdag tu brtag⁴²¹ pas bsgribs te
 'phags pa'i rig dang rnam par bral/ chos su brtag⁴²² pas sdug bsngal
 sna tshogs 'byung zhing ngan song srid par 'gyur/ (l.5) rnam shes de
 yang 'du byed rgyun las mtshan ma tha dad 'dzin pas na/ las kyi
 khyad par dag gis brgyad du snang gi rigs la du ma med/ shes shing
 rig pa'i rigs (l.6) su gcig ste rigs la du ma med⁴²³ / de phyir sems kyi
 skad cig dang po de la lus dang chos kun gnas/ de la⁴²⁴ bsam pa zhen
 phyir phyi ma des 'byung de la snang/ rang (l.7) sems rgyun las

⁴⁰¹ DLSZ las.

⁴⁰² DLSZ la.

⁴⁰³ TK bsam pa'i.

⁴⁰⁴ DLSZ rtog.

⁴⁰⁵ DLSZ dang.

⁴⁰⁶ DLSZ inserts: phra bar.

⁴⁰⁷ TK inserts: ba.

⁴⁰⁸ DLSZ bas.

⁴⁰⁹ TK inserts: lta.

⁴¹⁰ DLSZ reads: bdag tu lta la sogs pa mu stegs.

⁴¹¹ TK and DLSZ: rtog.

⁴¹² DLSZ rnam mtha' yas.

⁴¹³ TK gzhas.

⁴¹⁴ TK 'gags.

⁴¹⁵ TK mi'i.

⁴¹⁶ DLSZ pas.

⁴¹⁷ TK inserts: mi.

⁴¹⁸ TK inserts: ro.

⁴¹⁹ TK tshom.

⁴²⁰ TK skye; DLSZ skyes.

⁴²¹ DLSZ brtags.

⁴²² TK and DLSZ brtags.

⁴²³ DLSZ omits this sentence.

⁴²⁴ TK las.

'phags pa skye bo'i chos ni gzhan na yod pa⁴²⁵ min/ rgyud drug rigs lam⁴²⁶ de la'ang⁴²⁷ sna tshogs de dag rang gi⁴²⁸ ting 'dzin no⁴²⁹/ sems rgyun de ni phyogs (folio 325b/p. 650) kyang cung zad med pas gcig la⁴³⁰ brten med do⁴³¹/ de la phyogs med phyir na mtha' yas zhing rnam bdag gi⁴³² lus/ bdag gi⁴³³ lus ni mtha' yas zhing dang skye bo'i lus su (l.2) rab snang yang/ sems dang bag chags tha dad ma yin gcig min⁴³⁴ brtag⁴³⁵ pa⁴³⁶ rab tu dka'/ 'di kun brten⁴³⁷ cing 'brel 'byung tshul te skye dang 'gag⁴³⁸ gyur zhes pa ni⁴³⁹/ (l.3) tshig pa'i sa bon bzhin du med las med pa mi 'byung rgyu 'bras med/ dngos por zhen cing rgyu dang 'bras bur ston⁴⁴⁰ pa'i sems nyid ni/ rgyu dang rkyen du snang ste de⁴⁴¹ gnyis (l.4) ⁴⁴²med phyir skye dang 'jig pa med/ skye 'chi⁴⁴³ med phyir bdag gzhan med de 'chi 'pho med phyir rtag chad med/ des na 'khrul 'khor med cing mya ngan 'das pa⁴⁴⁴ med par ⁴⁴⁵mngon/ (l.5) gnas kyis skad cig nam yang mi 'bral ⁴⁴⁶mnyam 'gyur de med med/ yang dag ma yin rtog⁴⁴⁷ pas bskyed phyir bag chags yod pa ma yin dang/ spyod yul med phyir kun gzhi (l.6) med cing rnam rig de yang med pa yin/ phyogs rnam med phyir dmigs dang gnas med rnam shes rig pa ji ltar skye/ de phyir sems 'di yod med mtha' las 'das (l.7) shing gcig dang du ma⁴⁴⁸ bral/ ⁴⁴⁹sems ni nang na

⁴²⁵ DLSZ ma.

⁴²⁶ DLSZ las.

⁴²⁷ DLSZ de yang.

⁴²⁸ DLSZ gis.

⁴²⁹ DLSZ to.

⁴³⁰ DLSZ reads: med pas de'ang.

⁴³¹ DLSZ de.

⁴³² TK dag gis.

⁴³³ TKand DLSZ: gis.

⁴³⁴ DLSZ reads: gcig min tha dad ma yin.

⁴³⁵ TK rtag.

⁴³⁶ DLSZ par.

⁴³⁷ TK and DLSZ: rten.

⁴³⁸ DLSZ inserts: par.

⁴³⁹ DLSZ omits: ni.

⁴⁴⁰ DLSZ rtog.

⁴⁴¹ DLSZ omits:de.

⁴⁴² DLSZ inserts: su.

⁴⁴³ DLSZ 'jig.

⁴⁴⁴ DLSZ pa'ang.

⁴⁴⁵ DLSZ med pa nyid du.

⁴⁴⁶ DLSZ inserts: de tshe.

⁴⁴⁷ TK rtogs.

⁴⁴⁸ DLSZ mar.

⁴⁴⁹ DLSZ omits the entire following passage, resuming in SGG Chapter eight, folio 327 l.3 (bde gshegs...).

mi gnas phyi rol mi gnas bar na gnas⁴⁵⁰ pa min/ thams cad kun la mnyam gnas de nyid ngang las g.yos pa med/ (folio 326a/p. 651) rnam dag lam chen sems nyid rdo rje 'di ni shes bya nyid de thams cad skye/ cir yang mi dmigs kun tu 'od gsal snying po'i tshul de yan lag rgyas/ (l.2) ye nas gnas pa'i de bzhin nyid ni rang rig rnam par dag pa ste/ ye nyid yum gyi mkha' ste mi 'gyur de bzhin gnas pas sems zhes bya/ sems ni mtshan mar ma yin (l.3) thams cad 'byung bas dbyings kyang yin/ mtha' dang dbus med mi rtog rtog las 'das pas chos skur bshad/ de nyid 'phags pa'i tshogs su ye nas gsal bas ye (l.4) shes tshogs chen po/ cis kyang mi sgrub mi shigs⁴⁵¹ mi snang ba las thams cad snang bas kun gyi gzhi yang yin/ sems kyi ting 'di mthong na sems las ma gtogs (l.5) chos rnam gang yang med/ mchog tu rmad byung ngo mtshar khyad par yul 'di kun gyi rmad chen yin/ shes bya de bzhin nyid la rang rig rig byed rang zhir⁴⁵² 'gro ru gzhug⁴⁵³/ (l.6) rang rig de yang de las byung nas de la gnas pa yin pas gnas sa de kar bzhag/ lam gzhan ji ltar bgrod kyang grub mtha' de nyid yin/ de phyir kun gyi byung khung de ni (l.7) grub mtha'⁴⁵⁴ 'bras bu yin/ thams cad ngang gis 'char bas nam mkha'i⁴⁵⁵ tshul la'ang gnas/ 'di ni kun gyi dmigs bu yin te gzhan lo⁴⁵⁶ khrid par byed/ thams cad (Folio 326b/p. 652) mnyam pa'i rgyal po bya ba yin pas spyod las 'das pa yin/ de ltar ye nas gnas pa de la⁴⁵⁷ su'ang mi 'chos ngo bo de nyid de bzhin 'jog pa byang chub che/ de kho kun rdzogs⁴⁵⁸ rang (l.2) bzhin chos kyi snying po lta spyod rdzogs pa yin/ chos kyi snying po 'di lta⁴⁵⁹ lta zhing spyod de sgrub par byed pa de la snying po ring/ de yis snying po ma mthong spyod dang bcas pas snying (l.3) po nyams/ 'di ni rtsol⁴⁶⁰ dang ye nas⁴⁶¹ bral bas btsal du ye nas med phyir snying po'i mchog/ dus gsum rgyal bas kyang ni ma bsgrubs ma sbyangs ma btsal bzhag pas (l.4) mthong/ mthong ma thag tu sbyang btsal 'gyod de sbyang ma dgos par rtogs⁴⁶²/ rtogs pa'i ngang de la ni dus gsum rgyal ba'i sang rgyas rdul snyed⁴⁶³ gnas/

⁴⁵⁰ TK omits: bar na gnas.

⁴⁵¹ TK shig.

⁴⁵² TK bzhin.

⁴⁵³ TK gzhugs.

⁴⁵⁴ TK omits: mtha'.

⁴⁵⁵ TK kha'i.

⁴⁵⁶ TK la?.

⁴⁵⁷ TK las.

⁴⁵⁸ TK rdzob.

⁴⁵⁹ TK la.

⁴⁶⁰ TK brtsol.

⁴⁶¹ TK omits: ye nas.

⁴⁶² TK rtog.

⁴⁶³ TK bsnyed.

sang rgyas (l.5) bgrod phyir rtsol ba'i lam kun bor bas gdod sang rgyas/ rtsol bgrod lam la gnas tshe 'phags pa'i sar tshud tsam/ de phyir nye lam bde rdzogs sku gsum rdo rje 'chang (l.6) ba'i sa zhes snying po 'di la bya/ ma bgrod gnas su phyin par⁴⁶⁴ rang rgyud dag pas phyin pa'i sa yang yin/ phyi nang sems kyi⁴⁶⁵ spyod yul bag chags rgyun dang bcas par lta ba (l.7) sems tsam yin/ sems rgyun bag chags rtog⁴⁶⁶ pa de la snying po 'di nyid med/ de phyir yul dang lus su lta ba de nyid rtog⁴⁶⁷ pa'i rgyun nyid do/ mi sgom mi sgrub mi srung⁴⁶⁸ (folio 327a/p. 653) de bzhin nyid la rang blo de bzhin bzhag/ de kha bzhag sa 'gro sa 'dug sa kun gyis bgrod sar phyin pa yin pas nye lam mo/ byang chub⁴⁶⁹ sems bsgom (l.2) pa'i rgyud las/ sems tsam gyi lta ba 'bras bu yon tan dang bcas pa a tir las bzlas pa'i⁴⁷⁰ le'u ste bdun pa'o/ /

(folio 327a/p. 653) (l.2) de nas bcom ldan 'das (l.3) gnyis su med pa'i bde ba chen pos yang dag pa ma grub pas/ de'i rdzu 'phrul 'khrul pa rnams la snang bar bstan pa 'di nyid la nyid kyis⁴⁷¹ ched⁴⁷² du brjod do/ bde gshegs (l.4) byang chub med phyir de'i rdzu 'phrul sgyu 'dra⁴⁷³ 'khrul la snang/ de bzhin gshegs⁴⁷⁴ pa'i ye shes de dag shin tu⁴⁷⁵ dge ba'i rgyun⁴⁷⁶ nyid dang/ ⁴⁷⁷rdo rje⁴⁷⁸ gnas med⁴⁷⁹ phyir na mnyam (l.5) gnas rang bzhin 'drar gyur nas⁴⁸⁰/ chos dbyings rdo rje'i⁴⁸¹ rtse mo de dag phyogs nyid med pas skad cig min/ dag pa'i dag pa⁴⁸² gzugs brnyan med pas 'jig rten ⁴⁸³yod mi (l.6) 'gyur/ de phyir byang chub ma chub mtshan nyid med par gcig pas blang dor

⁴⁶⁴ TK pa.

⁴⁶⁵ TK kyis.

⁴⁶⁶ TK rtogs.

⁴⁶⁷ TK rtogs.

⁴⁶⁸ TK bsrung.

⁴⁶⁹ TK inserts: kyi.

⁴⁷⁰ TK zla ba'i .

⁴⁷¹ TK kyi.

⁴⁷² TK mched.

⁴⁷³ DLSZ 'drar.

⁴⁷⁴ DLSZ dag.

⁴⁷⁵ DLSZ omits shin tu.

⁴⁷⁶ DLSZ rgyu.

⁴⁷⁷ DLSZ inserts an extra line here: chos kyi dbyings nyid la ni de dag dmigs shing skye bar brtags pa yang/ .

⁴⁷⁸ DLSZ rje'i.

⁴⁷⁹ TK byed.

⁴⁸⁰ DLSZ 'gyur dang.

⁴⁸¹ DLSZ rje.

⁴⁸² DLSZ dge rtsa.

⁴⁸³ DLSZ inserts: ye shes.

med/ don de'i tshul gyi⁴⁸⁴ don dam rnam grangs skye 'gag med dang mnyam nyid dang/ gnyis (l.7) med bsam 'das stong nyid chos dbyings brjod dang⁴⁸⁵ bral ba lag⁴⁸⁶ sogs/ bstan pa de kun tha snyad yin de⁴⁸⁷ don⁴⁸⁸ med cing kun sgrib med/ don dam tshul gyis lam nyid 'di (folio 327b/p. 654) 'dra zhes pa de nyid kun sgrib yin⁴⁸⁹/ the tsom yod med chos ni gang la'ang spong⁴⁹⁰ zhing⁴⁹¹ gnas par mi byed do/ bsgom pa dang ni chos dbyings med phyir som nyi med la'ang⁴⁹² dam (l.2) par lta ba⁴⁹³ med/ de ltar dngos po'i mtha' rnam brtags⁴⁹⁴ deng⁴⁹⁵ de⁴⁹⁶ bzhin sgyu ma med 'gyur phyir/ yod la⁴⁹⁷ ltos pa'i med pa'ang⁴⁹⁸ med de yod⁴⁹⁹ pa'ang med/ mtha' rnam (l.3) med phyir dbus med dbus la'ang med⁵⁰⁰ par mi byed do/ gang la'ang 'jig rten dbang phyug padmo⁵⁰¹ kun kyang mi spong 'drar⁵⁰² mnyam⁵⁰³ gnas/ chos la 'khrul par mthong ba de (l.4) nyid 'khrul pa yin par rab rtogs te/ drug gi⁵⁰⁴ bstan pa'i⁵⁰⁵ bdud kyis⁵⁰⁶ las kyang mi 'dor ngan du mi rtog go/ shes rab thabs kyi spyod pa la'ang⁵⁰⁷ mi gnas phyir na bdud (l.5) kyi dra⁵⁰⁸ bar spyod/ rang gi shes pa dam par byas⁵⁰⁹ shing⁵¹⁰ kun las rgyal te⁵¹¹ snyems⁵¹² nas⁵¹³/ 'dod chags zhe sdang skyes nas rtsod

⁴⁸⁴ TK and DLSZ gyis.

⁴⁸⁵ DLSZ inserts: tha snyad.

⁴⁸⁶ DLSZ bral la.

⁴⁸⁷ TK and DLSZ te.

⁴⁸⁸ DLSZ inserts: dam.

⁴⁸⁹ TK nas.

⁴⁹⁰ TK spongs.

⁴⁹¹ TK shing.

⁴⁹² DLSZ omits 'ang.

⁴⁹³ DLSZ inserts: 'ang.

⁴⁹⁴ TK rtag.

⁴⁹⁵ TK and DLSZ dang.

⁴⁹⁶ DLSZ rang.

⁴⁹⁷ DLSZ las.

⁴⁹⁸ DLSZ omits 'ang.

⁴⁹⁹ DLSZ med.

⁵⁰⁰ DLSZ gnas.

⁵⁰¹ DLSZ padma.

⁵⁰² DLSZ 'dra.

⁵⁰³ TK omits mnyam.

⁵⁰⁴ TK and DLSZ gi.

⁵⁰⁵ DLSZ pa.

⁵⁰⁶ DLSZ kyi.

⁵⁰⁷ DLSZ omits la'ang.

⁵⁰⁸ TK and DLSZ 'dra.

⁵⁰⁹ DLSZ bya.

⁵¹⁰ DLSZ ste.

⁵¹¹ TK and DLSZ insert de.

⁵¹² TK snyams.

'byung gti mug yin te don mi mthong/ ⁵¹⁴g.yo (l.6) dang mi g.yo tha snyad mi gnas gnas pa⁵¹⁵ la'ang gnas pa med⁵¹⁶/ snang med dus su ma'i⁵¹⁷ lam de byang chub sems zhes bde gshegs gsungs/ ⁵¹⁸de phyir gang yang mi 'byed (l.7) zag med de bzhin nyid kyi ther⁵¹⁹ thams cad gcig pa yin/ 'di las gzhan med rgyu yin 'bras bu nyid de snying po yang yin/ 'di ma mthong na gang la bsnyad kyang rtog⁵²⁰ pa'i (folio 328a/p. 655) klung⁵²¹ na gnas/ gzugs dang mtshan mar⁵²² 'dzin par⁵²³ smon pa⁵²⁴ ⁵²⁵rab ⁵²⁶spangs nas⁵²⁷/ rnam par⁵²⁸ thar pa⁵²⁹ gsum po bsgom pa'ang bdud kyi las yin⁵³⁰ gzugs nyid (l.2) stong pa'o/ 'khor ba'i lam gsum spong zhing mya ngan las⁵³¹ 'das lam bsgom pa'i⁵³² ⁵³³/ de nyid rang bzhin ma zhi rang bzhin rtsal spang⁵³⁴ gar mi gnas/ 'phags pa kun gyi (l.3) yun⁵³⁵ la⁵³⁶ gnas dang⁵³⁷ 'das sogs lam nyid gzhan na med/ ⁵³⁸byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud las/ mya ngan las 'das pa'i lam mthar gtugs pa'i⁵³⁹ le'u ste brgyad pa'o/ /

(l.4) de nas bcom ldan 'das bde ba chen po'i yang dag po'i ⁵⁴⁰don mdzub⁵⁴¹ tshugs su dgongs pa sangs rgyas nyid kyi nyid⁵⁴² la

⁵¹³ DLSZ na.

⁵¹⁴ DLSZ inserts an extra sentence: ji srid yid kyi g.yo ba de srid bdud kyi yul te phra ba'i lam/.

⁵¹⁵ TK and DLSZ omit pa.

⁵¹⁶ DLSZ reads gnas par mi byed da. *da* may be crossed out.

⁵¹⁷ TK and DLSZ read: snang med dbu ma'i.

⁵¹⁸ DLSZ omits the following few lines, up until fol. 328a: gzugs dang mtshan mar....

⁵¹⁹ TK thig ler.

⁵²⁰ TK rtogs.

⁵²¹ TK klong.

⁵²² DLSZ ma.

⁵²³ TK pa; DLSZ omits 'dzin par.

⁵²⁴ DLSZ par.

⁵²⁵ DLSZ inserts 'dzin pa.

⁵²⁶ DLSZ inserts tu.

⁵²⁷ DLSZ inserts su.

⁵²⁸ DLSZ omits par.

⁵²⁹ DLSZ omits pa.

⁵³⁰ DLSZ te.

⁵³¹ DLSZ omits las.

⁵³² TK reads: bsgom pa'ang bdud nyid do/.

⁵³³ DLSZ reads: sgom byed pa'ang bdud nyid de/.

⁵³⁴ DLSZ spangs.

⁵³⁵ TK and DLSZ yul.

⁵³⁶ TK and DLSZ dang.

⁵³⁷ DLSZ kyang.

⁵³⁸ DLSZ omits the following lines up to: lha dang mi ldang...

⁵³⁹ TK reads: mthar gtugs pa bstan pa'i.

⁵⁴⁰ TK pa'i.

⁵⁴¹ TK 'dzub.

ched⁵⁴³ du brjod do/ lha⁵⁴⁴ dang mi (l.5) ldang ched⁵⁴⁵ du mi spong
 sems rten⁵⁴⁶ mi 'cha' mngon⁵⁴⁷ du min/ 'jam dpal ma yin rdul tsam
 g.yo ba⁵⁴⁸ de nyid de yin der mi gnas/ bsgom pa'i sa mi rnyed phyir
 bsgoms pas (l.6) rnyed par mi 'gyur te/⁵⁴⁹ rnam bral gang la'ang
 mchog⁵⁵⁰ 'di bsgom mo/ ⁵⁵¹bya byed bya bral ye nas de bzhin nyid 'di
 de bzhin de bzhin⁵⁵² rang bzhin gnas/ de la 'khor ba mya (l.7) ngan
 'das med gang la yang ni med min thams cad ldan/ byang chub
⁵⁵³sems bsgom pa'i rgyud las/ rdzogs pa chen po mdor bsdus te
 bsgom pa'i lam gyi mchog gi (folio 328b/p. 656) le'u ste dgu pa'o//
 de nas yang bde ba chen por⁵⁵⁴ rang bzhin gyi⁵⁵⁵ nyid la nyid
 kyis ched du brjod pa 'di ched du brjod do/ 'du byed ma skyes
 mchog⁵⁵⁶ kun (l.2) 'byung med shin tu chos rnam mya ngan⁵⁵⁷ 'das/
 dngos med de tshe kun kyang chos kyi dbyings zhes⁵⁵⁸ dgra bcom rab
 'byor yin/ nam mkha'⁵⁵⁹ mi dmigs ming tsam dge dang mi dger⁵⁶⁰ (l.3)
 dbyer⁵⁶¹ med skye ba⁵⁶² med/ rtsol bar⁵⁶³ yid la mi byed gang la⁵⁶⁴
 sems med shes dang mi shes bral/ dran dang dbyer⁵⁶⁵ med spong len
 gang la'ang⁵⁶⁶ chags⁵⁶⁷ dang mtshungs med mi dmigs shing/ (l.4)
 mnyam gnas gnyis su brtag⁵⁶⁸ med brjod bral bya dang mi bya med

⁵⁴² TK omits kyi nyid.

⁵⁴³ TK mched.

⁵⁴⁴ DLSZ ldang.

⁵⁴⁵ TK mched.

⁵⁴⁶ TK omits rten.

⁵⁴⁷ TK don ?.

⁵⁴⁸ TK omits ba.

⁵⁴⁹ DLSZ inserts an extra line: sems kyi spyod yul shes pa de dag chos rnam kyi ni chos nyid yin/.

⁵⁵⁰ TK and DLSZ insert: dang tha ma med par lam.

⁵⁵¹ DLSZ omits the following lines up to fol. 328b l.1: 'du byed ma skyes...

⁵⁵² TK omits the repetition of de bzhin.

⁵⁵³ TK inserts kyi.

⁵⁵⁴ TK po.

⁵⁵⁵ TK gyis.

⁵⁵⁶ TK and DLSZ chos.

⁵⁵⁷ TK inserts las.

⁵⁵⁸ DLSZ she.s

⁵⁵⁹ TK namkha'.

⁵⁶⁰ TK and DLSZ dge.

⁵⁶¹ DLSZ 'byed.

⁵⁶² DLSZ inserts 'ang.

⁵⁶³ DLSZ ba.

⁵⁶⁴ DLSZ inserts 'ang.

⁵⁶⁵ DLSZ 'byed.

⁵⁶⁶ DLSZ reads: gang la'ang spong len.

⁵⁶⁷ TK and DLSZ dga'.

⁵⁶⁸ TK brtags.

de gang⁵⁶⁹ bri med/ ched du rtsol bral⁵⁷⁰ yid la mi byed cis kyang mi
 'khrugs mnyam shes dang/ gang la'ang chags (l.5) dang yul gyis⁵⁷¹
 myos srag⁵⁷² med de mi 'bral mi gnas zhing/ mi 'phrogs mnyam
 shes bzhi po phyogs dang pha rol phyin rnam der shes te/ sems
 kyi⁵⁷³ dbyings su sgom⁵⁷⁴ pas (l.6) lam gyi⁵⁷⁵ phugs⁵⁷⁶ nas⁵⁷⁷ 'dug pa
⁵⁷⁸yin gyi⁵⁷⁹/ gzhan du bsgom⁵⁸⁰ pas 'od gsal don nyid rig par⁵⁸¹ mi
 'gyur ro/ brda⁵⁸² can yang dag len pa'ang byang chub⁵⁸³ yin zhes ston
 pas rab tu⁵⁸⁴ gsungs (l.7) pa'i⁵⁸⁵ phyir/ de la⁵⁸⁶ ⁵⁸⁷byang chub sems
 nyid bskyed cing bsgom pa'i gnas yin te/ ting 'dzin gsum po brtan
 par byas shing⁵⁸⁸ rtags kyi⁵⁸⁹ phyag rgya gsum bcings nas/ (folio
 329a/p. 657) chos kyi phyag rgya chen por sems nyid bskyed de
 snying po brjod cing bsgom⁵⁹⁰/ rdo rje sems dpa' bsgom⁵⁹¹ pas ⁵⁹²lam
 kun ma nor bsgoms pa yin/ kun (l.2) tu bzang mo'i⁵⁹³ spyod pas ma
 zin dge ba'i chos ⁵⁹⁴gang yang rung/ kun tu bzang po'i spyod pa⁵⁹⁵
 bdud kyi las de⁵⁹⁶ zad cing mthar thug 'gyur/ de dang ldan pa'i las ni
 bdud kyi las (l.3) kyang byang chub chen por⁵⁹⁷ spyod par gsungs/

⁵⁶⁹ DLSZ srog.

⁵⁷⁰ DLSZ bar.

⁵⁷¹ DLSZ gyi.

⁵⁷² TK rkrag ?; DLSZ skrag.

⁵⁷³ TK kyis.

⁵⁷⁴ DLSZ bsgom.

⁵⁷⁵ DLSZ 'di.

⁵⁷⁶ TK phug.

⁵⁷⁷ TK na.

⁵⁷⁸ TK inserts ye.

⁵⁷⁹ DLSZ omits: phugs nas 'dug pa yin gyi.

⁵⁸⁰ DLSZ bsgoms.

⁵⁸¹ DLSZ omits: don nyid rig par.

⁵⁸² TK brda'.

⁵⁸³ DLSZ inserts: chen po.

⁵⁸⁴ DLSZ omits tu.

⁵⁸⁵ DLSZ omits pa'i.

⁵⁸⁶ TK inserts ni.

⁵⁸⁷ DLSZ inserts 'di ni.

⁵⁸⁸ DLSZ nas.

⁵⁸⁹ DLSZ inserts mtshan ma.

⁵⁹⁰ DLSZ inserts pa'i gnas.

⁵⁹¹ DLSZ bsgoms.

⁵⁹² DLSZ inserts ma nor.

⁵⁹³ TK mos.

⁵⁹⁴ DLSZ inserts ni.

⁵⁹⁵ DLSZ inserts 'ang.

⁵⁹⁶ TK and DLSZ te.

⁵⁹⁷ DLSZ omits chen por.

don der⁵⁹⁸ mos pa de yang byang chub chen por⁵⁹⁹ yin zhes rgyal bas rab tu bsnags/ gnas 'dir skyes⁶⁰⁰ pa tsam gyi⁶⁰¹ 'jig rten gsum (l.4) po bla mar bcas pa yin⁶⁰² / chos⁶⁰³ gnas nyan thos bdud kyi sde rnams zil gyis gnon⁶⁰⁴ par⁶⁰⁵ sangs rgyas⁶⁰⁶ gsungs/ thabs chen byang chub sems dpa'⁶⁰⁷ gsang ba'i spyod (l.5) pa'ang⁶⁰⁸ 'di nyid do⁶⁰⁹ / 'di med⁶¹⁰ rgyal ba rnam par snang mdzad theg pa gsum ston mi srid do/ skad cig tsam du dad pa'i shugs skyes⁶¹¹ de yang myur du 'jam dpal gzhon nur (l.6) gyur⁶¹² pa⁶¹³ / dkyil 'khor gsang bar zhugs shing theg chen dam tshig mchog kyang srung⁶¹⁴ ba⁶¹⁵ yin/ tshul khriims sdom⁶¹⁶ pa kun kyang bsrungs shing sbyin gnas dam par rab tu (l.7) bsnags/ de phyir byang chub sems kyi bsod nams de la gzugs yod na/ nam⁶¹⁷ mkha' bar snang de⁶¹⁸ yang snod du chung zhes rgyal bas mtshungs par gsungs/ (folio 329b/p. 658) ⁶¹⁹yang dag bde gshegs ma lus byang chub sems la gnas/ byang chub sems dang lam du⁶²⁰ ma tshungs chos gang med/ rgyal bas sems kyi dngos po⁶²¹ phra ba mthong bas rgyas/ (l.2) bdud dang des zil mnan te dbyings kyi ngang/ 'di la dbyings dang 'gag pa med de 'du 'bral ci yang med/ ye shes dbyings med mya ngan 'das pa'ang min/ chos zhes (l.3) ming du gdags⁶²² dgos 'brel thams cad rdzogs/ mtshan ma rab zhi mtshan med med

⁵⁹⁸ TK and DLSZ 'dir.

⁵⁹⁹ DLSZ po.

⁶⁰⁰ TK and DLSZ bskyed.

⁶⁰¹ TK and DLSZ gyis.

⁶⁰² DLSZ yis.

⁶⁰³ TK and DLSZ mchod.

⁶⁰⁴ DLSZ non.

⁶⁰⁵ DLSZ omits par.

⁶⁰⁶ DLSZ rgyal bas.

⁶⁰⁷ DLSZ dpa'i.

⁶⁰⁸ TK omits [ba]'i spyod pa'ang.

⁶⁰⁹ DLSZ de.

⁶¹⁰ DLSZ min.

⁶¹¹ DLSZ bskyed.

⁶¹² DLSZ 'gyur.

⁶¹³ TK and DLSZ omit pa.

⁶¹⁴ DLSZ bsrungs.

⁶¹⁵ DLSZ pa.

⁶¹⁶ TK sdoms.

⁶¹⁷ TK namkha'.

⁶¹⁸ DLSZ 'di.

⁶¹⁹ DLSZ omits this and following lines up to fol. 330a l.3: skye bo skye ba...

⁶²⁰ TK omits lam du.

⁶²¹ TK gzhi.

⁶²² TK inserts su.

pa med/ rang bzhin med pa'i med pa'ang med las 'das te gzhan la⁶²³
 spyod la⁶²⁴ 'das (l.4) pas 'phags/ stong pa mi dmigs⁶²⁵ rang bzhin med
 dang ji bzhin de bzhin nyid/ gdags pa'i sgrub⁶²⁶ par byed pa'i lam ste
 'jug pa'i gnas/ 'di la 'jug dang (l.5) zhugs dang⁶²⁷ ma zhugs ye na⁶²⁸
 rgya chad pas theg pa'i bla/ spyod med tshig las 'das pas kun la
 khyab phyir rgya mchog nyid/ ming tshig bzlas pa rnam⁶²⁹ bral
 gsang sngags (l.6) mchog chen yin/ ye nas de las mi 'gyur du rung
 pa⁶³⁰ yin par nga⁶³¹ byung nyid/ 'di ltar rtogs nas 'di la blo gros gnas
 pa blo gros mchog/ de ni 'jam dpal dpal (l.7) ldan gzhon nu nyid
 ces⁶³² bya/ dus gsum sangs rgyas kun kyang der gtsug⁶³³ khung du
 chung⁶³⁴ zhing rdul rnyed⁶³⁵ sangs rgyas de dang mtshungs/ ye nas
 de las⁶³⁶ yas ma btsal bar ma (folio 330a/p. 659) bsgoms rang bzhin
 gnas las 'byung ba'i phyir/ chos gzhan mi 'dogs yon tan rgyal ba'i
 theg chen 'di las chos gzhan med/ de phyir (l.2) chos lam 'jug dang
 zhugs⁶³⁷ nas 'bras thob 'dod pa khron sbal 'dra/ byang chub kyi sems
 sgom pa'i rgyud las/ rdzogs pa chen po rang bzhin nga rgyal dang
 bcas pa'i (l.3) le'u ste bcu pa'o //

de nas bcom ldan 'das bde ba chen pos don mdor bstan pa'i⁶³⁸
 nyid kyis⁶³⁹ nyid la ched du brjod pa 'di⁶⁴⁰ brjod do/ skye bo skye ba
 (l.4) sna tshogs dag nas⁶⁴¹ ⁶⁴² skyes shing skye ⁶⁴³ 'gyur skye ba'i bdud
 kyis⁶⁴⁴ dbang song ba⁶⁴⁵ / rtog⁶⁴⁶ mtha' mi shes rtog pas bslus shing rtog

⁶²³ TK la'ang.

⁶²⁴ TK las.

⁶²⁵ TK inserts pa.

⁶²⁶ TK grub.

⁶²⁷ TK omits dang.

⁶²⁸ TK omits na.

⁶²⁹ TK rnam.

⁶³⁰ TK par.

⁶³¹ TK rang.

⁶³² TK zhes.

⁶³³ TK btsug.

⁶³⁴ TK chud.

⁶³⁵ TK snyed.

⁶³⁶ TK la.

⁶³⁷ TK zhus.

⁶³⁸ TK pa.

⁶³⁹ TK kyis.

⁶⁴⁰ TK inserts ched du.

⁶⁴¹ TK na.

⁶⁴² DLSZ las.

⁶⁴³ DLSZ inserts:dang skye 'gyur.

⁶⁴⁴ DLSZ rgyun gyis.

⁶⁴⁵ DLSZ bas.

⁶⁴⁶ TK rtogs.

pa'i rgyu 'bras⁶⁴⁷ 'khrul pa'i rtog las⁶⁴⁸ phyir/ ldog (l.5) med 'gyur ba sgyu ma'i sgyu shes dag gis⁶⁴⁹ sgyu ma'i grang⁶⁵⁰ po 'dra bar⁶⁵¹ sgyu ma⁶⁵² ⁶⁵³rnams/ rmi lam rmi ba⁶⁵⁴ bzhin du rmi yis bde⁶⁵⁵ ba⁶⁵⁶ nyams shing rmi lam dbang du song ba'i rmi lam sa⁶⁵⁷ / (l.6) lam 'di spong zhing mtha' dang lam gzhan lam du bltas pas⁶⁵⁸ ma nor lam du⁶⁵⁹ ston pa de/ de dag rdo la⁶⁶⁰ gser bzhin thugs rjes⁶⁶¹ ⁶⁶² thugs rje⁶⁶³ ⁶⁶⁴kye ma⁶⁶⁵ phrog⁶⁶⁶ pa yin/ ⁶⁶⁷mchog tu (l.7) shes rab sbyangs pa rnams kyi⁶⁶⁸ spyod yul 'di yin gyis/ skal med shes rab ma sbyangs pa la gsung gi nying khu 'di mi snang/ rgyal ba rnams kyis bsnyen⁶⁶⁹ pa bdud rtsi⁶⁷⁰ lam (folio 330b/p. 660) mchog 'di/ rgyal ba rnyed pa don chen rnyed pa'i mchog yin no/ de lta'i don ⁶⁷¹ bdag dang phrad⁶⁷² nas bdag gi⁶⁷³ lhogs⁶⁷⁴ gyur cig/ smon cing de la tha mal wa khyi⁶⁷⁵ la sogs gang (l.2) 'dun kyang/ des kyang byang chub chen po'i⁶⁷⁶ bde ba

⁶⁴⁷ DLSZ rgyun 'brangs.

⁶⁴⁸ DLSZ omits: rtog las. The words "pa'i rgyun 'brangs 'khrul pa'i" are all written at a much smaller size than the surrounding text.

⁶⁴⁹ TK gi.

⁶⁵⁰ TK and DLSZ glang.

⁶⁵¹ TK ba.

⁶⁵² DLSZ mas.

⁶⁵³ DLSZ inserts: rmongs pa'i sgyu ma.

⁶⁵⁴ DLSZ reads: rmi lam gyis bslad.

⁶⁵⁵ DLSZ bden.

⁶⁵⁶ DLSZ pa'ang.

⁶⁵⁷ DLSZ pa.

⁶⁵⁸ DLSZ nas.

⁶⁵⁹ DLSZ zhes

⁶⁶⁰ In both mTshams brag and TK there is no clear *tshegs* between *rdo* and *la*, leaving open the possible reading *rdol*.

⁶⁶¹ TK rje'i.

⁶⁶² DLSZ rjer rung zhing.

⁶⁶³ TK rjes; DLSZ rje'i.

⁶⁶⁴ DLSZ inserts: thugs rjes.

⁶⁶⁵ DLSZ inserts: 'o.

⁶⁶⁶ TK 'phrog; DLSZ phrogs.

⁶⁶⁷ The DLSZ and SGG diverge from this point, with no further shared text.

⁶⁶⁸ TK kyis.

⁶⁶⁹ TK snyen.

⁶⁷⁰ TK rtsi'i

⁶⁷¹ TK inserts 'di.

⁶⁷² TK 'phrad.

⁶⁷³ TK gis.

⁶⁷⁴ TK lhog.

⁶⁷⁵ TK khyi'i.

⁶⁷⁶ TK pos.

bsnyags⁶⁷⁷ pa'i phyir/ de ni 'phags pa'i khong na⁶⁷⁸ gnas pa'i nang na
 btsun zhing che/ rtog⁶⁷⁹ nas 'di spyod pa la lta ci smos te (l.3) yang
 sangs rgyas pa yin/ sems can las kyi⁶⁸⁰ 'di la mi 'phrogs shing/ 'phags
 pa'i thugs rjes⁶⁸¹ 'di la bzung du med/ don gyi don de sgom rtsol med
 pa'i don dam (l.4) rgyal po yin/ sangs rgyas thugs kyi nying khu sbas
 pa zab mo'i gsung/ dri med rgya mtsho'i snying po byang chub rgya
 chan⁶⁸² po/ theg pa'i rtsa ba 'bras bu theg pa yongs kyi mchog/ (l.5)
 ye nas gnas pa'i de nyid de ltar shes pa de ni bsgom⁶⁸³ pa yang yin te
 sangs rgyas so/ lta bas zin pa'i ye shes zang thal de bzhin dkyil po
 che/ chos sku 'od dpag med (l.6) pas don 'di bshad pa las/ rgyal ba'i
 gsung gi⁶⁸⁴ bsrag⁶⁸⁵ pa 'di ltar snang ngam⁶⁸⁶ zhes⁶⁸⁷ / de bzhin gshegs
 pa'i chos sku dpag med khyod⁶⁸⁸ la 'dun par gyis/ chos sku'i (l.7)
 gsung mchog rgya mtsho 'di la'ang de bzhin lta/ sa bcu pa la 'di gnas
 phyin⁶⁸⁹ na de la⁶⁹⁰ ang gtad/ 'di blo su la gnas pa byang chub sems
 dpa' rnam grub pa'i mchog/ (folio 331a/p. 661) sa yang don 'di blo
 la skad cig gnas pa de la rdzogs par chos⁶⁹¹ skus⁶⁹² gsungs/ de'i byin
 rlabs rgyal ba kun kyang gsung bar 'gyur te de skad gsungs/ (l.2)
 don 'di gzugs sku mtshan dpe dad⁶⁹³ pas bstan pas rtogs mi rung/
 mi⁶⁹⁴ rtog⁶⁹⁵ phyir na kha lces bshad pa⁶⁹⁶ min phyir chos skus⁶⁹⁷
 gsungs/ chos sku bya bral 'di ltar snang ba (l.3) kun la snang phyir
 gsungs zhes rgyal bas gsungs/ byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud
 las/ theg pa'i mchog nyid dang/ de nyid la de nyid kyi⁶⁹⁸ bstod pa

⁶⁷⁷ TK snyegs.

⁶⁷⁸ TK nas.

⁶⁷⁹ TK rtogs.

⁶⁸⁰ TK kyis.

⁶⁸¹ TK rje.

⁶⁸² TK chen.

⁶⁸³ TK sgom.

⁶⁸⁴ TK gis.

⁶⁸⁵ TK bsgrags.

⁶⁸⁶ TK dam ?.

⁶⁸⁷ TK ces.

⁶⁸⁸ TK de.

⁶⁸⁹ TK phyir.

⁶⁹⁰ TK inserts 'di.

⁶⁹¹ TK omits chos.

⁶⁹² TK sku'i.

⁶⁹³ TK 'dod.

⁶⁹⁴ TK ma.

⁶⁹⁵ TK rtogs.

⁶⁹⁶ TK inserts ma.

⁶⁹⁷ TK sku'i.

⁶⁹⁸ TK kyis.

dang/ gdams⁶⁹⁹ (l.4) pa bshad pa'i le'u ste bcu gcig pa'o// byang chub kyi sems sgom⁷⁰⁰ pa'i rgyud las⁷⁰¹/ theg pa'i snying po rdzogs so//

Appendix III - Concordance table for the DLSZ, SGG, and the Twelve-point Commentary on the DLSZ (P. 3405)

Commentary points (as translated in Lipman)	Line nos. in Lipman's edition of the DLSZ	Location in the SGG (mTshams brag edition)
1. Homage	1-4	(incomplete) Fol. 319a.6/Fol. 320a.5,6
2. Why (the primordial state) should be fully grasped	5-17	Fol. 320a.6-Fol. 320b.4
3. What should be fully grasped	18-21	Fol. 321a.1-3
4. How it can be fully grasped	22-26	Fol. 321a.3-5
5. What has to be inquired into to fully grasp (it)		
a) that which muddies the stream of awareness		
(i) just what is meant by (a)	27-37	Fol. 324a.5-Fol. 324b
(ii) the deceptiveness of how things appear:		
A. What appears	38-45	Fol. 324b.3-325a.4
B. Why it appears	46-55	Fol. 324b.6-325a.4
C. How the deceptiveness of how things appear obstructs (the path)	56-57	Fol. 325a.4-5
D. What defines perception, which is the basis of all appearance	58-59	Fol. 325a.5
E. How that which is to appear becomes present	60-61	Fol. 325a.6
F. Nothing need be added or gotten, because everything is already included within our mind....	62-67	Fol. 325a.6-325b.2
G. An answer to the question: If everything is our emerging mind, why do some things and happenings appear to originate from independent conditions?	68-71	Fol. 325b.2-325b.3

⁶⁹⁹ TK gdam.

⁷⁰⁰ TK bsgom.

⁷⁰¹ TK omits las (and *shad*).

H. That which appears, things and happenings, is not to be found at all	71-73	Fol. 325b.3-4
I. Even our mind, from which all appearance arises, is not to be found at all.	74-78	Fol. 325b.5-7
b) that which is the clarification (of the stream of awareness)		
b i) pointing out how the state of clarification makes itself felt within the state of deception	79	Fol. 327a.3-4
b ii) pointing out that the appearance of the state of clarification is not to be found:-		
A pointing out that non-conceptual ever-fresh awareness is not to be found	80-83	Fol. 327a.4-5 (minus line 81 in Lipman's Edition)
B why is pure, though worldly, ever fresh awareness not to be found?	84	Fol. 327a.5-6
6. Pointing out the real meaning (grasped) after inquiring into (the above)		
a) pointing out fundamental likeness (at the level) of thought		
i) because the two truths are not divided and there is no acceptance and rejection	85-89	Fol. 327a.6-327b.1
ii) pointing out the fundamental likeness of truth and falsity since there is no aversion to the objectionable and no longing for the positive	90-91	Fol. 327b.1-2
iii) since there is nothing for mind to objectify	92-94	Fol. 327b.2
b) fundamental likeness (at the level) of behaviour	95-100	Fol. 327b.3-5 (minus line 101 of Lipman's edition)
c) summing up what defines the primordial state of pure and total presence	101-103	Fol. 327b.5-6
7. Putting the real meaning into practice		
a) pointing out the obstacles to practice	104-108	Fol. 328a.1-3
b) pointing out the true meaning of cultivation		
i) briefly pointing out the true	109	Fol. 328a.4

meaning of cultivation		
ii)why should one cultivate as above?	110-116	Fol. 328a.5-6 (minus line 112 in Lipman's ed.)/Fol. 328b.1-3
iv) (precedes iii)pointing out the logical reason for cultivating in this way	117-19	Fol. 328b.3-4
iii)pointing out the signs of proper cultivation	120-123	Fol. 328b.4-6
8. Special methods taught for fully grasping the real meaning	124-127	Fol. 328b.6-329a.1
9. Pointing out that without fully taking hold of the primordial state of pure and total presence, freedom will not be attained and positive qualities will come to an end	128-131	Fol. 329a.1-3
10.Pointing out that even the arousal of more intense interest (in this primordial state) leads to many superior abilities	132-141	Fol. 329a.3-7
11. Pointing out that those who have gone wrong are the object of compassion	142-151	Fol. 330a.3-6 (minus lines 148-151 in Lipman's ed.)
12. Dedication for (the sake of creating) s foundation of positive qualities	152-157	Absent (although elements of lines 152-3 in Lipman's ed. are visible in Fol. 330a.7

Appendix IV

Brief Notes on some other related texts

Of the potentially-related texts not already discussed above, the *byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i man ngag* (P. 3389) is a two-line instruction on *yi dam* visualization using seed syllables including a white letter 'A'. It pays homage to Mañjuśrī, and is part of a series of texts connected to the Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti.⁷⁰² This text is comparable to IOL Tib J 331.

Bg 49,⁷⁰³ with nine chapters, belongs to a group containing "*yi ge med pa*" in their titles. It includes Bg. 51, which seems to be an abridged version of one (or more) of the other texts. These all share the characteristic of being pronounced by a Buddha-figure, who ad-

⁷⁰² This text is mentioned and partially translated in Lipman, p. 10 and n. 30.

⁷⁰³ Dg 134 /Taipei Tb1. 4539.

dresses an audience declared to be not separate from him. The group also includes P. 4512, with ten chapters, attributed in its colophon to Śrī Siṃha and Jñānagarbha, and translated by "the monk Vairocana". These texts appear to be rather late additions to the *byang chub sems bsgom* sub-genre.

P. 4536 is untitled, but its last line reads: "*byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud rdzogs so*". It contains no passages from the DLSZ or SGG. It is entirely devoid of logical philosophical passages. In eight chapters, the other Buddhas of the Five Families question Buddha Vairocana on how to meditate on *bodhicitta*. The outer and inner practices involve visualization, including a sexual partner or *mudra*, while the secret one, proceeding from the state entered by the first two,⁷⁰⁴ is described as "the inexpressible *samādhi* without conceptual thought".⁷⁰⁵ The references to internal subtle body practices in chapter six suggest that it is a later text than the SGG.⁷⁰⁶

P. 4537,⁷⁰⁷ adjacent to the above text, is similar to its predecessor but contains even more details of the subtle body channels and their visualization practice.⁷⁰⁸ This text is said in its colophon to be a translation by Jñānagarbha and Vairocana, but given its contents, this attribution is dubious.⁷⁰⁹

List of related texts⁷¹⁰ (Identified Texts of the SGG are highlighted in their titles)

Edition	Text title/s	Text No
Peking bsTan 'gyur	Byang chub sems bsgom pa (=rDo la gser zhun)	P. 3418 (=Dg.157, Tb. 22)
	Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa don	P. 3405

⁷⁰⁴ van Schaik 2004, p. 167-168 discusses the meaning of *rDzogs chen* in the *Guhyaagarbha tantra* and early texts from Dunhuang as the "state of being at the climax of the sexual yoga of the perfection stage immediately following consecration with the drop of semen or *bodhicitta*" see ; also Dalton, 2004.

⁷⁰⁵ P. 4536 p. 647/324: *de las skad cig nam grol ba/mi rtog ting 'dzin brjod du med*.

⁷⁰⁶ Subtle body practices are generally thought to be later. See Germano, 2005 p. 21. It is also worth noting that chapter seven of this text, entitled *rnal 'byor gyi don la cig car* [*'jug pa'i le'u*] shows a convergence with certain Chan ideas.

⁷⁰⁷ Entitled the *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad rang bzhin byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud*.

⁷⁰⁸ See, in particular, chapter six.

⁷⁰⁹ A recent search of the TBRC database for texts containing *Byang chub sems bsgom pa* in their titles gave thirty-one results. I hope to clarify these intertextual relationships further in a future paper.

⁷¹⁰ I make no claim for this list being exhaustive.

	bcu gnyis bstan pa	(=Bg.115)
	Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i man ngag (a 2-line visualization instruction)	P. 3389
Bai ro'i rgyud 'bum	Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i bsam btan rna mar rgyud pa (Colophon title: Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rna rgyud kyi man ngag)	Bg. 4
	Byang chub sems bsgom pa (last line: byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa yi ge med pa bstan pa'i skabs dgu pa rdzogs sho)	Bg. 49
	Byang chub sems bsgom pa yi ge med pa'i rgyud	Bg. 50
	Byang chub sems bsgom pa yi ge med pa'i rgyud (colophon title: Byang chub sems bsgom pa yi ge med pa las bsdu gsungs pa'i skabs)	Bg. 51
	Byang chub sems bsgom pa/(title in first line adds: don bcu gnyis kyis ston)	Bg. 115 (=P. 3405)
	Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa	Bg. 119
	Theg pa gcod pa'i khor lo	Bg. 108
NGB gTing skyes	Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa yi ge med pa'i rgyud	Tk. 45
	Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud	Tk. 69
NGB sDe dge	Byang chub sems bsgom pa (Last line: byang chub kyi sems yi ge med pa bstan pa'i skabs dgu pa)	Dg.134 (Taipei Tb1.4539) Bg. 49 Tb. 80 Tk.1.14
	Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa yi ge med pa'i rgyud	Dg.135 (Taipei Tb1.4512) Bg50
	Byang chub kyi sems sgom pa'i rgyud	Dg.155 (Taipei Tb1.4496) Tb. 37 Tk. 69
	Byang chub sems sgom pa rdo la gser zhun	Dg. 157 P. 3418
	Untitled. Last line reads: byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud rdzogs so	Taipei Tb1.4536

	De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad rang bzhin byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud	Taipei Tb1.4537 Tb. 78
NGB mTshams brag	Byang chub sems bsgom pa	Tb. 22 P. 3418 Dg. 157
	Byang chub sems bsgom pa'i rgyud	Tb. 37 Dg. 155 (Taipei Tb1.4496) Tk. 69
	Byang chub sems bsgom pa yi ge med pa'i rgyud	Tb. 53 Bg. 50
	Thams cad nam mkha'i ngo bo skye ba med pa'i byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud	Tb. 76 (Taipei Tb1 4535)
	Byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud	Tb. 77 (Taipei Tb1.4536)
	De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad rang bzhin byang chub kyi sems bsgom pa'i rgyud	Tb. 78 (Taipei Tb1.4537)
	Byang chub sems bsgom pa (called: byang chub sems bsgom pa yi ge med pa'i rgyud at end of Ch 8 and 9)	Tb. 80 (Taipei 4539)

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A Record of the Teachings of the Great Perfection in the Twelfth-century Zur Tradition

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Introduction

In a recent article, I examined an unusual, thirteenth-century manuscript, now in the possession of a private collection, containing the text of the *Kun 'dus rig pa'i sgron me*, the “All-Encompassing Lamp of Awareness.”¹ The text, 231 folios in length, provides an elaborate and exceptionally erudite account of the teachings of the nine successive vehicles (*theg pa rim pa dgu*) of the Rnying ma tradition, with particular attention to the three culminating vehicles of Mahāyoga, Anuyoga, and Atiyoga, or Rdzogs pa chen po. That is to say, its emphasis is squarely upon the distinctive tantric teachings of the Rnying ma pa. Although the same work has appeared in three recent editions of the *Rnying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa* from far eastern Tibet,² the manuscript was crucial for establishing its correct dating and provenance, which I determined to be the Zur lineage of Gtsang and not Kaḥ-thog monastery in Khams, as had been claimed by the editors of the *Rnying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*. Regarding the author, Shākya rdo rje, I proposed that he be identified with an obscure but important figure in the mid-twelfth-century transmission of the Zur teachings, Dbus pa ston shāk, also known to the histories as Dam pa se sbrag pa, the “Holy Man of the Forked

¹ Kapstein, forthcoming. I am grateful to the present owner of the manuscript, who prefers to remain anonymous at this time, for gracious permission to examine and work on this unique artifact.

² Full references to the available editions of the text will be found in Kapstein, forthcoming. Ostensen 2018 has briefly mentioned the “All-Encompassing Lamp” on the basis of references in the writings of the contemporary Rnying ma scholar Mkhan po 'Jam dbyangs, whose assumptions about the history of the text are discussed at length in my article to which I refer here.

Rose.” The dating for this teacher as given in the traditional histories is open to discussion, but I believe that he was active until the mid 1170s and composed the “All-Encompassing Lamp” towards the end of his life.³

The importance of the “All-Encompassing Lamp” lies in the fact that it affords us, for the first time, a detailed record of the teaching system of the early Zur, who, as we know, were of crucial importance for the codification of Rnying ma tantric traditions in general.⁴ Moreover, given the inclusion within the text of many hundreds of citations drawn from Rnying ma canonical writings—what would later come to be called the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum*—it provides a unique perspective on the formation of that corpus. As my arguments concerning these points are detailed in the article referenced above, however, I shall refrain from further discussion of them here. In accord with the interests of the present volume, my topic will be limited to the précis of the Atiyoga teachings set forth by Shākya rdo rje in the first chapter of his work.

While matters relating to Atiyoga are scattered throughout the twenty-three chapters of the “All-Encompassing Lamp,” it is the unique subject of just one, the twenty-first, entitled the “chapter teaching the tenets of Atiyoga” (*a ti yo ga'i 'dod pa bstan pa'i le'u*).⁵ However, in the first chapter, the “general presentation of the doctrine” (*chos spyi'i rnam bzhaq*), which amounts to a self-contained treatise detailing the architecture of the system overall, a brief summary of Atiyoga traditions is given as part of a section treating the “means of exposition” (*'chad thabs*) of the doctrine.⁶ It is this passage that I translate and reproduce below.

³ Following the traditional histories, Dbus pa ston shāk, for whom we do not have precise dates, would have passed away approximately in either 1158 or 1164. But as I argue in notes 32 and 42 of the article cited earlier, the dates probably need to be adjusted by one twelve-year cycle, pushing his likely death date to about 1176.

⁴ The traditional accounts of the Zur lineage are summarized in Dudjom 1991, vol. 1, pp. 617-687. These accounts have in fact remained quite stable within Rnying ma historiography, at least since the fifteenth century, but, as I have shown elsewhere (Kapstein 2010, n. 2), they were probably derived from a now unavailable lineage record of the Zur. As Dalton 2016, p. 52, remarks, few original writings of the Zur patriarchs seem to have survived. Nevertheless, for some facets of the early Zur tradition, refer to Kapstein 2008, 2010, and Wilkinson 2012, 2014.

⁵ In the manuscript, this chapter covers 45 folios, 164-208, and so is the longest chapter of the work as a whole.

⁶ It is now clear that the Zur devoted much attention to the topic of *'chad thabs*. Cf. my remarks on this in Kapstein 2008: 4 and the recent discussion of the treatment

A particular point of interest may be found in Shākya rdo rje's presentations of the traditions of Rdzogs chen teaching known to him. He initially divides these into six major cycles (*skor*): *sems sde'i skor*, *klong sde'i skor*, *rgyud sde'i skor*, *shan 'byed bram ze'i skor*, *la zla rgyal po'i skor*, and *rang grol mngon du ston pa gdam ngag gi skor*. And he lists by title the major tantras assigned to each cycle. All but two of these, as far as I have been able to identify them (and some I cannot), correspond to works now classed among the *Rdzogs chen sems sde* and *klong sde*. Although, on one occasion, he uses the phrase *man ngag gi skor* to refer to the *rang grol mngon du ston pa gdam ngag gi skor* of the foregoing list, the titles he mentions demonstrate that this is not to be identified with the *man ngag sde* as it is known from later Rdzogs chen classifications.⁷

The author goes on to name, as exemplifying the proliferation of Rdzogs chen traditions, no less than eight additional *skor*, among which we find the system of A ro Ye shes 'byung gnas, that has been preserved in the *Rnying ma bka' ma* down to the present,⁸ and what may be the first reference known to the puzzling *spyi ti'i skor*, that, on the basis of what other sources tell us, seems to have emerged in circles close to Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192), who must have been a junior contemporary of Shākya rdo rje.⁹

He mentions, too, three particular persons as exemplifying the attainment of the Great Perfection in Tibet: Sba tshab (= Spa/Pa tshab) Stong grags, Lce btsun Seng ge dbang phyug, and Bla ma Nyang chen po Ri khrod pa. The first figures in a number of Rdzogs chen lineages stemming from the tradition of Gnyags Jñānakumāra;¹⁰ the second, who lived in the late eleventh century, is very well known to Rdzogs chen history and I shall return to him in a moment; the third is perhaps to be identified with either Nyang Shes rab mchog or Nyang Ye shes 'byung gnas, who were particularly important for transmitting the teachings of the Bsnubs tradition to the Zur.¹¹

of it in the *Kun byed rgyal po* in Valby 2012. It will be seen that the latter is particularly pertinent to the text examined here.

⁷ The *locus classicus* of the *sde gsum* division of the Rdzogs chen teachings—*sems sde*, *klong sde* and *man ngag sde*—appears to be the *A ti bkod pa chen po* of the *Bi ma snying thig*. See Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 319.

⁸ Also known as the *A ro thun bdun* and the *Rdzogs chen khams lugs*, several versions have been perpetuated down to the present time.

⁹ On the teachings and traditions of *spyi ti*, refer to Achard 2015.

¹⁰ For instance, in the *gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama: Rgyal dbang, vol. 4: 315, 328.

¹¹ Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 615-616. In the Deb dmar: 81, Nyang ri khrod pa is mentioned among the figures seen in vision by Dpal ldan gro of Snar thang, who must have been active no later than about 1200 and so was perhaps contemporaneous with the author of the "All-Encompassing Lamp." In his commentarial

The various divisions of the Great Perfection teaching outlined above only partially overlap with the threefold hierarchical division that became widespread in Rnying ma pa teaching following the promulgation of the Seventeen Tantras of the *Man ngag sde* and the *Rdzogs chen snying thig* systems based upon them. This is evident from the absence of hierarchical ranking among the several systems mentioned, but even more from the fact that the characteristic distinctions of the *Snying thig* systems, emphasizing *khregs chod*, *thod rgal* and the luminous visions associated with the latter, are entirely absent here. We are left with something of a puzzle in fact, for either these teachings were part of an esoteric transmission on the part of Lce btsun Seng ge dbang phyug that was not yet known even to such a well placed figure as our author, or Lce btsun, for all his inspirational role in the emergence of the *Snying thig*, was not in fact primarily responsible for the redaction of its most distinctive doctrines. As Lce btsun's disciple Zhang ston Bkra shis rdo rje, who may have been the real redactor of the textual traditions of the Seventeen Tantras and their early commentaries, was an exact contemporary of our author, it may well have been the case that this innovative system was not yet much diffused.¹² Nevertheless, among the various systems Shākya rdo rje does mention, there is a mysterious *Ke tshang gi skor* that, like the *Snying thig* traditions, is divided into a *phyi skor*, *nang skor*, *gsang skor* and *gsang ba bla na med pa'i skor*.¹³ Does this suggest that Shākya rdo rje had received early reports of the new teaching that would come to be best known as the *Rdzogs chen snying thig*? The evidence so far available does not permit us to know. In all events, it will be a worthwhile project for the future to compare the information regarding *Rdzogs chen* transmissions and tantras as we find them enumerated in the "All-Encompassing Lamp" with other relatively early sources in which similar matters are detailed, for instance, the pertinent writings of the second Karma pa hierarch, Karma Pakshi (1206-1283).¹⁴

On the several additional topics of interest that are raised in the passage I present here, I have added some discussion in the notes

notes on the Deb dmar, p. 389, Dung dkar identifies Nyang ri khrod pa as Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer, but I do not think that this is plausible. Nor can we eliminate the possibility that Nyang chen po Ri khrod pa is to be identified with the important ninth-century monk-minister, Nyang/Myang Ting 'dzin bzang po, who is recognized as a patriarch of the *Rdzogs chen snying thig* tradition.

¹² On Zhang ston, see Achard 2012.

¹³ Refer to Dudjom, vol. 1: 332. Some memory, at least, of the *Ke tshang gi skor* was conserved in later Rnying ma historiography; see, e.g., Dudjom, vol. 1, 651.

¹⁴ Karma Pakshi's works represent the early tradition at Kaḥ thog, which was, of course, derived from the Zur. Refer to Kapstein 1985.

accompanying my translation, and certain others are considered in my study of the manuscript. Because the orthography of the manuscript, which is of a high standard overall, nevertheless does not always accord with the conventions most familiar at present, I have taken the liberty of using better-known spellings on some occasions in the translation.

Translation: A General Exposition of the Great Perfection

[35b1] According to the system of the Rdzogs pa chen po transmission, when explaining the tantras and precepts, they are to be explained in five general topics. As it says in the *All-Accomplishing King*:

At first, to teach the credible source,
 One should teach the history, the genuine explanatory tradition.
 Because all phenomena are gathered in mind, the root,
 One should then teach the meaning of the root.
 In order to distinguish the specificities of the vehicles,
 One should teach the root meaning of *yoga*.
 To teach that attainment through exertion is unnecessary,
 One then teaches the purpose, the true reason.
 So that the uncomprehended meaning may be realized,
 One must articulate the verbal meaning.

And in the *Ornament*:¹⁵

(I) The history, [which explains] the original source of the precepts,
 (II) The meaning of *yoga*, [which explains] entryway and vehicle,
 (III) The significance of the purpose, [which explains] the individual who is the receptacle [to receive the teachings],
 (IV) The root meaning, in sum, of the title bestowed,
 (V) The verbal meaning, explaining the text from start to finish—
 It is explained through these five general topics.

(I) As for the first, [the history], the *Ornament* says:

In fact, the lineage of the nondual
 Is indicative of the meaning free from conventions;
 It teaches [the Rdzogs chen's] proper characteristic
 Through the epistemic authority of the precepts,¹⁶

¹⁵ I have not yet identified the work here referred to simply as *Rgyan*.

¹⁶ The terminology used here is of considerable interest, in that it suggests that the author of the text cited was intentionally appropriating and subverting the conventions of *pramāṇa*, “logic and epistemology,” *tshad ma* in Tibetan (and translat-

[As transmitted in the lineages] of the Conquerors and Knowledge-Holders,¹⁷ down to mundane individuals.

These are the lineage of the Conquerors' intention, the Knowledge-Holders' [36a1] lineage, by means of their awareness, and the lineage of mundane individuals [which passes] from ear to ear. Furthermore, there are ten [topics]: (1) the greatness of the teacher, the Buddha; (2) the greatness of the teaching, the Dharma; (3) the greatness of the lineage of Knowledge-Holders, or of the learned *paṇḍitas*; (4) the greatness of the translators; (5) the greatness of the field [of merit], the patrons; (6) the distinctions of the shrines that were raised; (7) the greatness of the *siddhas* who accomplished [the goal]; (8) the greatness of the ground that is to be established; (9) the greatness of the path that is to be traversed; and (10) the greatness of the fruit that is disclosed.

(1) There are (1.1) the distinctions between the fully perfect and not fully perfect Teacher; and (1.2) the greatness, or special superiority, of the self-emergent ground, the teacher Samantabhadra, who has never deviated in error.

(1.1) The former [refers to] the Tripiṭaka, etc., as pronounced respectively by the *nirmāṇakāyas* and others, and the Great Perfection transmission, pronounced by the fully perfected Buddhas of the five embodiments.

(1.2) The second is the teacher who is the self-emergent ground, apart from which, being awakened in primordial quiddity, he has never deviated in error, and so is especially superior. He is the buddha of the path, or the buddhas of the respective vehicles, apart from which he has never undergone partiality and progress on the path, and so is especially superior. And he is the buddha of the fruit, the disclosure of realization, apart from which he has never experienced realization by means of the path, and so is especially superior.

ed here as "epistemic authority"). The use of the term *rang mtshan* (Skt. *svalakṣaṇa*) in the preceding line is also adopted from *pramāṇa*, in which context it refers to the "autonomous particular," which is the object of direct perception. However, here it can only be taken to refer to the pith of the Rdzogs-chen teaching, which is "directly perceived," when its true meaning is grasped in immediate experience. The idea that the authority of the *guru* and direct spiritual experience constituted a kind of *tshad ma* was also current in the *Lam-'bras* tradition.

¹⁷ The spelling *rigs-'dzin* instead of *rig-'dzin* may suggest that, instead of *vidyadhara*, lit. "knowledge/spell-holder," the underlying term intended may be *kulaṃdhara*, "family/clan-holder." While the former has surely been predominant in Rnying ma pa thinking, we cannot exclude the second, given the importance of the theory of "clans" (*kula*) for tantric thought overall.

(2) The teaching is taught to be especially superior owing to (2.1) its distinction of being entirely complete and to (2.2) its seven or five greatnesses.

(2.1) As for the former, from among the nine sequential vehicles, the three dialectical vehicles, being the causal vehicles, [36a1] are the teaching of the *nirmāṇakāya*. That, moreover, is pronounced in the 84,000 dharma-gates from among the three *piṭakas*.

The three exoteric tantras among the mantras reveal the fruit just in its general aspect as the path and are said to be primarily the teaching of the *sambhogakāya*. There, moreover, it is said that there are innumerable tantras.

The three esoteric vehicles of overwhelming means are the fully perfect teaching of the five embodiments' spontaneous presence. In particular, they are the teaching of the *svābhāvikakāya* and *dharmakāya*. There, *Mahā[yoga]* and *Anu[yoga]* make the fruit, endowed with its proper characteristics, into the path and teach the nonduality of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*. *Mahā[yoga]* is said to include the *four classes of the Māyājāla*, the *eighteen classes of tantra*,¹⁸ etc., beyond counting or description. *Anu[yoga]* is said to be the *five great Sūtras of the transmission*, etc., the transmitted teaching beyond counting or description.¹⁹

Atiyoga establishes that all phenomena, in self-emergent gnosis, are nondual with respect to cause and fruit, nondual with respect to *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, without limitation or partiality. That, moreover, fully teaches the vehicles up through *Anu[yoga]* and, in particular, teaches that the teaching of *Ati[yoga]* is unbounded, like space.

If that be indicated just in part, there are six: (i) the *cycle of the mind class*, (ii) that of the *spatial class*, (iii) that of the *tantric class*, (iv) that of the *analytic brahman's class*, (v) that of the *determining*²⁰ *kingly class*, and (vi) the *cycle of the esoteric instructions disclosing natural liberation*.

(i) The first is said to include the *eighteen [tantras] of the mind class*—the *Rmad 'byung* (Ng. 45, 47-48),²¹ the *Rig pa mchog* (Ng.

¹⁸ Refer to Eastman 1983.

¹⁹ On the scriptural corpus of the Anuyoga, see now Dalton 2016, appendix.

²⁰ Or: "transcending," *la bzla ba*.

²¹ The tantras mentioned in our text have been identified where possible, using the siglum Ng., according to the online catalogue of the *Rnying ma rgyud 'bum* (NGB) of the Tibetan & Himalayan Library:

<http://www.thlib.org/encyclopedias/literary/canons/ngb/catalog.php-cat=ng>.

It should be noted that in some cases the brief titles given here are suggestive of the titles of several works in the available editions of the NGB so that, where a firm identification is not yet possible, several alternatives are listed.

842, classed as Mahāyoga), and the *Bkra shis* [37a1] *mi 'gyur gsal bar gnas pa'i rgyud* (Ng. 34) and the others among the *eighteen great tantras*—namely, the *five ancient translations* and *thirteen later translations*,²² making eighteen instructions, and others beyond measure.

(ii) In the spatial class there are four: (a) in the *cycle of the seal counted as exoteric*, there are the 180 nails, the *Glang po che rab 'bogi rgyud* (Ng. 555, classed as Mahāyoga), etc.; (b) in the *esoteric cycle of the secret seal* there are 180 esoteric instructions, the *Kun tu bzang po rig pa rtsal shar ba'i rgyud* (Ng. 60), etc.; (c) in the *cycle of the small secret seal*, there are 180 [teachings of] contemplative absorption, the *Rin po che bkod pa'i rgyud* (Ng. 62), etc.; and (d) in the *cycle of the seal conferring the intention*, there are 180 determinations, the *Klong chen rab 'byam rgyal po'i rgyud* (Ng. 58), etc. And it is said that in the *Nam mkha' che* (Ng. 3) there are all four of the aforementioned ways of exposition.

(iii) In the *tantric class*, there are said to be forty-two tantras, including the *Nam mkha' mtha' mnyam* (cf. Ng. 63, 170), the *Nya mo 'khor lo'i rgyud* (Ng. 186), etc., together with the esoteric instructions.

(iv) In the *brahman's cycle*²³ it is said that there are *six root tantras* and *thirty-six branch tantras of the brahman*. Among them, [the six root tantras] are the *Nam mkha' klong yangs kyi rgyud* (Ng. 121, 146, 235), the *Ye shes gting nas rdzogs pa'i rgyud* (Ng. 152), the *Kun tu bzang po ye shes klong gi rgyud* (Ng. 149), the *Rang byung bde' ba 'khor lo'i rgyud* (Ng. 148, 151), the *Nges don 'dus pa gter gyi rgyud* (Ng. 143), and the *'Khor ba rtsad nas gcod pa'i rgyud* (Ng. 25-27, 29, 144-5, 195); the general tantra is the *Ye shes mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud* (Ng. 150).

(v) As for the *determining kingly class*, it includes five root tantras such as the *Bkra shis dus tshod 'dzin pa khu byug gi rgyud* (Ng. 49, 224), the *Yon tan rtsal chen rdzogs pa'i rgyud* (Ng. 1), [37b1] the *Thig le sgron ma gsal ba bkod pa'i rgyud* (cf. Ng. 119), the *Kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud* (Ng. 10-29), and the *Rig pa nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud* (cf. Ng. 63, 170). There are said to be one hundred branch tantras together with their esoteric instructions.

(vi) The *cycle of esoteric instructions* includes: the *cycle of what is hidden*, which discloses the hidden; the *conclusive*²⁴ *cycle*, which turns awareness to the essence; the *cycle of the precipitous path to the fortress*, whereby reality-as-son meets reality-as-mother; and the *cycle of the final lineage*, which teaches the direct perception of

²² Refer to Dudjom 1991, vol. 1, 538, 673-674; vol. 2, 221; Kapstein 2008; Liljenberg 2009, 2012; Lopez 2018.

²³ Cf. Dudjom, vol. 1, 651.

²⁴ Bsgags.

natural liberation. In each there are said to be fully complete tantras together with their esoteric instructions. And in each of those the tenets of all the vehicles are said to be entirely complete, including the rebuttals of the erroneous opinions of the extremists and others, the analyses of the eight [lower] vehicles, the determination of the Great Perfection, and the introduction in direct perception to natural liberation.

Besides those, there are: (vii) the *Ke tshang cycle*, which includes an *exoteric cycle*, an *esoteric cycle*, a *secret cycle*, and an *unsurpassedly secret cycle*, etc.; (viii) the *A ro cycle*; (ix) the *Dom sgro cycle*;²⁵ (x) the *cycle of the unelaborate clarification of the essence*; (xi) the *spyi ti cycle*; (xii) the *spyi mdo cycle*; (xiii) the *cycle of the king's vital treasure*;²⁶ (xiv) the *universal liberation cycle*; and inexpressibly many others.

(2.2) As to its special superiority owing to seven or five greatnesses: (i) owing to the greatness of being the highest pinnacle among the vehicles, it is like Meru, king of mountains; (ii) owing to the greatness of being king among all transmissions, it is like the center of the sun; [38a1] (iii) owing to the greatness of being the commentary upon all pronouncements, it is like the clarification of all the world and its inhabitants within the expanse of space; (iv) owing to the greatness of being the root of all esoteric instructions, it is like a man who has obtained the secret orders of the king; (v) owing to the greatness of being the birthplace of all teachings, it is like the appearance, from the space that supports the elements, of the five elements; (vi) owing to the greatness of bringing to conclusion all topics, it is like a traveler who has returned and arrived once more at his own home; and (vii) owing to the greatness of being the mirror of all *dharma*s, it is like an untarnished mirror. As it says in the *Sūtra*:²⁷

(i) As continents and mountains, within the surrounding perimeter,
Are clarified from the summit of Meru,

²⁵ The term *dom sgro*, probably refers here to a small pouch or casket made of bear's fur. Rgyal dbang, vol. 18, p. 22, relates that, in a dream, Ye shes mtsho rgyal conferred a *dom sgro* on Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1196), which was found to contain the profound doctrines of master Padmasambhava (*thun gcig mnal ba'i dus kyi tshel/ mtsho rgyal sprul pa'i zhing skyes mas/ 'di yi bdag po khyod yin zhes/ yang zab thugs kyi man ngag gi/ dom sgro nag po dngos su gtad/*). I am grateful to Jean-Luc Achard for his help in clarifying this term on the basis of the Bon sources with which he is familiar.

²⁶ The notion of a *rgyal po bla gter*, referring to texts that served as the talismans of Khri Srong lde'u btsan, occurs in relation with other early traditions as well and remains to be investigated in detail. Cf. Dudjom 1991, vol. 1, p. 756, in relation to the *bka' brgyad* revelations of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer.

²⁷ Probably referring to the *Ten Sūtras (mdo bcu)* appended to the *Kun byed rgyal po*.

So all the enumerations of vehicles, as many as may be,
Are clearly seen when the greatness of just that [is beheld].

(ii) The king of light in the world
Is the glorious, bright sun;
That which fully clarifies all *dharmas*
Is just that all-clarifying greatness.

(iii) As the great opening that is space
Opens the place for the four elements,
So it is that the very consummation of the secrets
Clearly comments on all articulate expression.

(iv) One who obtains the [king's] secret order
Depends upon no other man;
When all is mastered in the secret essence,
One need not search among spoken expressions.

(v) The continuous stream of the elements
Arises and appears in the expanse of space;
So too the elements of spoken expression,
Have arisen from the profound sphere of thusness.

(vi) All enumerations construed as topics
In the end, when the fruit [38b1] is attained, converge;
Though enumerations be expressed in abundance,
All are gathered in suchness.

(vii) As the heart of a clarifying mirror
Reveals the face's reflection,
Just so the mirror of *dharma*
Clarifies the nature of all.

The five greatnesses have been explained earlier.²⁸

(3) Third are those who have mastered [the attainments of] the three knowledge-holders and the Great Perfection,²⁹ the non-duality of *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, having realized all *dharmas* in self-emergent gnosis, such as the great teacher Mañjuśrīmitra, Śrīsiṃha,

²⁸ The author here refers the reader to a section near the beginning of the first chapter (folios 6b-7b) treating "the awakening in five greatnesses of the unconditioned gnosis of Ati[yoga]" (*a ti 'dus ma byas kyi ye shes che ba lngar sangs rgyas pa*).

²⁹ Contemporary Rnying ma traditions usually list four *rig 'dzin*—*rnam smin rig 'dzin*, *tshé dbang rig 'dzin*, *phyag chen rig 'dzin*, and *lhun grub rig 'dzin*. Possibly the three mentioned here are the first three of these, with the Great Perfection as equivalent to the fourth. Cf. paragraph (7) below.

Vimalamitra, etc.—the twenty-five who were learned³⁰—as well as king Dza, the five noble ones of the enlightened family, master Hūṃkara, and the venerable Padmasambhava, etc., who ceaselessly realized reality in direct perception, bound gods and demons in servitude, overpowered all that appears, and knew the 360 ways of translation, etc., so that they were able unimpededly to teach the *dharma* in the languages of the six classes of beings.

(4) Fourth are the five *bhikṣus*, Bka' mchog rin po che, Gnyags Jñānakumāra, master Vairocana and the others who were learned in the five sciences, knew the 360 ways of translation, etc., so that they could listen at once, without impediment, to the languages of the six classes of beings, and in whose minds the entire teaching was complete. They are designated as the translators who were knowledge-holders, bodhisattvas, and *nirmāṇakāyas*.

(5) Fifth, [39a1] the patrons are said to have been the three ancestral kings who were *nirmāṇakāyas*: Lha tho tho ri snyan shal was the emanation of Vajrapāṇi; Srong btsan sgam po was the emanation of Mahākāruṇika; Khri Srong lde btsan was the emanation of Mañjuśrī—so it is said.³¹ Moreover, at first the *dharma* made its appearance; in between its tradition was established; and in the end Khri Srong lde btsan spread and increased the *dharma*.

(6) Sixth, [the shrines:] when shrines could not be erected in Tibet, the four [temples] to tame the horns, the four to tame the muzzles, the four [that were like] points of blood-letting, and the four [that were like] moxibustion points, etc., were constructed. One-hundred-eight temples, including Lha sa, Bsam yas, etc., were erected. Many self-emergent assemblies of divinities and assemblies of constructed divinities dwelt there. Srong btsan sgam po and master Padmasambhava and others consecrated them, whereupon the assemblies of gnostic divinities were really invited to come forth and dissolved in union [with the divine images]. Then, it is said, all these receptacles [i.e., the divine images] pronounced *dharma* discourses.

(7) Seventh, [those who accomplished the fruit] in Tibet include the four *bhikṣus*—Bsnuvs Nam mkha'i snying po and the others—as well as She'u Tshul khirms, Gnyan *ācārya* Dpal dbyangs and others, who, by means of Glorious Yang dag [Heruka], obtained [the realizations of] the knowledge-holders with power over longevity, the knowledge-holders of the *mahāmudrā*, etc., who awakened as buddhas without relinquishing their bodies. It is said that many such emerged in each of their respective lineages.

³⁰ Refer to Kapstein 2008: 5-6.

³¹ This exceptional list of the three ancestral kings is discussed in Kapstein, forthcoming.

Pa tshab Stong grags, Lce btsun Seng ge dbang phyug, and Bla ma Nyang chen po the hermit, etc., by means of the Great Perfection realized [39b1] the nonduality of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, whereby all appearance arose [for them] as the body of reality. Without relinquishing their bodies, without coming or going, many such came forth as awakened buddhas—so it is said.

If one wishes [to examine] those matters in detail, they are explained fully in connection with their respective lineage origins.

(8) Eighth, [the greatness of the ground], establishes the ground, the indivisible union of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, as self-emergent gnosis, as is taught below in the chapter on the ground.³²

(9) Ninth, the greatness of the path that is to be traversed, and (10) tenth, the distinction, or greatness, of the fruit that is disclosed, should be known according to the explanations of the chapters on the ground, path, and fruit of the secret mantras.³³

(II) The second general topic is the significance of *yoga*, namely, the analysis of the four *yogas*³⁴ and their culminating determination in Atiyoga.

(III) The third general topic is the purpose: In general, this is explained in the respective sections on the vehicles. In particular, so that one who is energetic in attainment may be free from illness that threatens life, having inerrantly determined the significance of the distinctions of the deviations and obscurations, [the Atiyoga] teaches natural liberation in direct perception.

(IV) Fourth is the summary designation: as all *dharmas*, are gathered in just mind, which is the root, or in self-emergent gnosis, it is perfected; and because nothing is superior to it, it is called the Great Perfection.

If one distinguishes [designations of titles] in particular: the *Śālistambhasūtra* and such like are so titled on the basis of metaphor; the *Laṅkāvatāra* and such like are so titled referring to a country; the *Devaputrāpariprcchāsūtras*³⁵ and such like [are named] after the solicitor; the *Three Stages (Kramatrāya)*, *Hundred and Ten*,³⁶ and such like on the basis of enumerations; the *Stages of the Path*, [40a1] *Secret Nucleus*

³² Ch. 3, *gnas lugs ngo bo nyid kyi gzhi bstan pa'i le'u*, fols. 60-61.

³³ Chapters 11-21 (on the nine vehicles and their subdivision, fols. 98-208) and 22 (on the fruit, fols. 208-226).

³⁴ Sometimes *ting nge 'dzin*, *byin rlabs*, *dbang bskur*, and *mchod pa*. But see also Valby 2012: 160-161.

³⁵ Several canonical sūtras are entitled as "Responses to the Questions of the Son of the Gods" (*devaputrāpariprcchā*).

³⁶ Perhaps erroneous for the various divisions of 180 (for which the text reads *brgya dan brgya bcu*) listed in connection with the spatial class (*klong sde*) above.

(*Guhyaagarbha*), and such like are entitled on the basis of the expressed meaning; [works whose titles include such phrases as] “analysis,” “garland,” and so forth on the basis of the expressive form; and [those including phrases such as] “gathering of intentions,” “all-accomplishing,” “great expanse,” etc., are named with respect to their purport. In these and other ways, it is said that the assignments of titles and their enumerations surpass the imagination.

(V) Fifth, the verbal purport, explained from beginning to end, should be known according to the respective occasions [of the exegesis of each particular text].

Diplomatic Edition of the Text

Because the surviving thirteenth-century manuscript of the “All-Encompassing Lamp,” calligraphed in an early form of the *'bru tsa* script, is the most authentic witness now available, and as that manuscript was scrupulously prepared with very few evident errors, I give here only a diplomatic transcription of the portion of the text translated above. The orthography is quite regular and, with occasional exceptions (e.g. *bcwa* for *bcu*), closely accords with classical conventions, with abbreviations or contractions only infrequently employed. The small number of significant departures from this standard are noted at first occurrence. The following conventions have been adopted:

- Where the scribe introduces a *tsheg* where current convention would not, this is indicated by a blank space, e.g., *pa 'i* instead of *pa'i*.
- Where the scribe contracts by eliminating a *tsheg*, there is no space used in the transcription, e.g., *lasogs* for *la sogs*.
- Folio and line numbers are given in square brackets.
- The *yig-mgo* is represented by @.
- Subscripts are used to indicate insertions in miniscule hand, added—probably by the original scribe—beneath the line in which they are to be inserted. (As these demonstrate, the text was very carefully corrected.)
- Book titles and the proper names of teaching cycles are *italicized*.

[35b1] | |bka' rdzogs pa chen po'i lugs kyi [2] rgyud dang
man ngag 'chad kyang spyi don lngas 'chad de | |kun byed rgyal
po las | dang por yid ches pa'i khungs bstan phyir | |lo rgyud

don gyi bshad lugs bstan par bya | |chos [3] kun rtsa ba sems
 su 'dus pa'i phyir | |de nas rtsa ba'i don de bstan par bya |
 | theg pa'i khyad par so sor dbye ba'i phyir | |yo ga
 don gyi rtsa ba bstan par bya | |rtsol [4] bsgrub bya mi dgos
 par bstan pa'i phyir | |dgos ched don gyi dgos pa de ru bstan |
 | ma rtogs don de rtogs par bya ba'i phyir | |tshig gi don de
 sgra ru brjod par bya ces pa dang | | [5] *rgyan* las |man
 ngag 'byung khungs lo rgyus dang | 'jug sgo theg pa yo ga'i don |
 | rten gyi gang zag dgos pa'i don | |dril nas mtshan gsol
 rtsa ba'i don | | [6] dbu zhabs dkyus bshad tshig gi don | |spyi
 don lnga yis bshad pa yin ces gsungs so | |de la dang po *rgyan*
 las | don gyis mi gnyis brgyud pa can | |tha snyad bral [7] ba'i
 don mtshon pa | |man ngag tshad mas rang mtshan ston |
 | rgyal ba'i rigs 'dzin gang zag tu'o ces pas | rgyal ba dgongs
 pas brgyud pa |³⁷ [8] rigs 'dzin

[36a1] @@ | |rig pas brgyud pa | gang zag snyan nas snyan
 khung du brgyud pa'o | |de yang ston pa sangs rgyas kyi che
 ba dang | |bstan pa chos kyi che ba dang | |rigs 'dzin [2]
 brgyud pa'am mkhas pa pan tri ta'i che ba | sgra bsgyur lo tsha ba'i
 che ba | |yon bdag zhing gi che ba | |bzhengs pa rten gyi
 khyad par | |bsgrub pa 'o grub thob kyi che ba | |gtan [3] la dbab
 bya gzhi'i che ba | |bgrod pa lam gyi che ba | |mngon du byas
 pa 'bras bu'i che ba dang bcu 'o | |dang po ni ston pa yongs su
 rdzogs ma rdzogs kyi khyad par dang | |gzhi [4] rang byung gi
 ston pa kun tu bzang po 'khrul ma myong gis che ba 'am khyad par
 du 'phags pa'o | |snga ma ni sde snod gsum lasogs pa rnam ni
 sprul pa'i sku lasogs pa ^{sku}re res [5] gsungs pa yin la | |bka'
 rdzogs pa chen po ni sku lnga yongs su rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kyis
 gsungs pa'o | |gnyis pa gzhi rang byung gi ston pa ni ye ji bzhin
 pa'i sangs [6] rgyas las 'khrul ma myong te khyad par 'phags |
 | lam gyi sangs rgyas sam theg pa so so'i sangs rgyas las phy-
 ogs 'dzin dang lam bgrod ma myong pas khyad par du 'phags | |
 [7] 'bras bu rtogs pa mngon gyur gyi sangs rgyas las lam gyis rtogs
 ma myong pas khyad par du 'phags so | |gnyis pa ni | bstan pa
 yongs su rdzogs kyi khyad par [8] dang | |che ba bdun nam lnga
 yis khyad par du 'phags te bstan pa'o | |snga ma ni | theg pa
 rim dgu las | |mtshan nyid kyi theg pa gsum ni rgyu'i theg pa yin

³⁷ The final syllables of line 7 and all of line 8 up to the syllables "rigs 'dzin" have been partially erased by grating. The erased passage was a dittography of the phrases beginning with "brgyud pa can" in line six and continuing "dgongs pas brgyud pa" in line 7.

[36b1] zhing sprul pa sku'i bstan pa'o | de yang sde snod rnam
 pa gsum las chos kyi sgo mo brgyad khri bzhi stong du gsungs pa'o |
 |sngags phyi rgyud gsum ni 'bras bu spyi'i rnam pa tsam [2]
 lam du phyed la | longs sku'i bstan pa rtso che bar gsungs te | de
 la 'ang rgyud sde dpag du med pa yod par gsungs so | | nang pa
 dbang bsgyur thabs kyi theg pa gsum ni sku [3] lnga lhun grub gyi
 bstan pa yongs su rdzogs shing khyad par du ngo bo nyid kyi sku
 dang chos sku'i bstan pa'o | | de la ma ha dang a nu 'i 'bras bu rang
 gi mtshan nyid dang ldan pa lam du byed [4] cing 'khor 'das gnyis
 su med pa rston pa 'o | | ma ha ni sgyu 'phrul sde bzhi dang tan tra sde
 bcwa brgyad lasogs pa dpag du med cing brjod pa las 'das pa yod par
 gsungs so | | [5] a nu ni lung gi mdo' chen po lnga lasogs pa lung gi
 chos dpag du med cing brjod pa las 'das pa gsungs so | | la ti yo
 ga ni chos kun rang byung gi ye shes la rgyu 'bras gnyis [6] su med
 cing 'khor 'das gnyis med rgya chad phyogs lhung med par gtan
 la 'bebs pa'o | | de yang a nu man chad kyi theg pa 'ang yongs su
 rdzogs par ston la | | khyad par [7] a sti'i (sic!) bstan pa nam mkha'
 dang 'dra ste mtha' med par bstan pa'o | | de yang phyogs cig
 tsam mtshon na | sems sde'i skor dang | glong³⁸ sde'i | rgyud sde'i |
 shan [8] 'byed bram ze'i | la zla rgyal po'i rang grol mngon du
 ston pa gdam ngag gi skor dang drug go | | dang po ni | sems sde
 bcwa brgyad te smad³⁹ 'byung dang | rig pa mchog gi dang | bkra shis

[37a1] @@ | mi 'gyur gsal bar gnas pa'i rgyud lasogs pa rgyud sde
 chen po bcwa brgyad dang | snga 'gyur lnga phyi 'gyur bcu gsum ste
 gdam ngag bcwa brgyad lasogs pa dpag du med pa [2] yod par
 gsungs so | | klong sde'i skor la bzhi ste | phyi rtsis rgya'i skor la
 glang po che rab 'bog gi rgyud lasogs pa gzer ru brgya dang brgya⁴⁰
 bcu | | nang gsang rgya'i skor la kun tu [3] bzang po rig pa rtsal
 shar ba'i rgyud lasogs pa man ngag brgya dang brgya bcu | | gsang ba
 rgya bu chung gi skor la | | rin po che bkod pa'i rgyud lasogs pas
 bsam gtan brgya dang brgya bcu | [4] dgongs pa gtad rgya'i skor la
 glong chen rab 'byam rgyal po'i rgyud lasogs pa la bzla brgya dang
 brgya bcu yod pa gsungs so | | nam mkha' che la 'ang gong gi bshad
 lugs bzhi po de [5] rnam yod par gsungs so | | rgyud sde'i skor
 la | nam mkha' mtha' mnyam dang | nya mo 'khor lo'i rgyud
 lasogs pa rgyud bzhi bcu zhi⁴¹ gnyis man ngag dang bcas pa yod [6]

³⁸ This spelling is used generally instead of *klong*, which nevertheless does occur on some occasions, as we find in other sources. I have no reason to believe, however, that this represents anything other than an orthographical variant.

³⁹ Read: rmad.

⁴⁰ Read: brgyad. The same variant is found throughout.

⁴¹ Read: zhe.

par gsungs so | | *bram ze'i skor la* | bram ze rtsa ba'i rgyud drug
 yan lag gi rgyud sum bcu rtsa drug gsungs so | | *de la nam mkha'*
klong yangs kyi rgyud dang | *ye shes* [7] *gting nas rdzogs pa'i dang* |
kun tu bzang po ye shes glong gi dang | *rang byung bde' ba 'khor lo'i*
dang | | *nges don 'dus pa gter gyi dang* | *'khor ba rtsad nas gcod*
pa'i dang | *spyi* [8] *rgyud ye shes mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud*
lasogs pa'o | | *la bzla rgyal po'i skor ni* | | *bkra shis dus tshod 'dzin*
pa khu byug gi rgyud | *yon tan rtsal chen rdzogs pa'i*

[37b1] *dang* | *thig le sgron ma gsal ba bkod pa'i dang* | *kun byed*
rgyal po'i dang | *rig pa nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud lasogs*
 te rtsa ba'i rgyud sde lnga'o | [2] yan lag gi rgyud sde brgya tham pa
 man ngag dang bcas pa yod par gsungs so | | *man ngag gi skor ni gab*
 pa mngon du phyung pa *gab pa'i skor dang* | | *rig pa gnad la* [3] 'bebs
 pa *bsgags pa'i skor dang* | | *chos nyid ma bu sprod pa*
rdzong 'phrang gi skor dang | *rang grol mngon sum du ston pa*
brgyud pa tha ma'i skor ro | | *de re re la 'ang rgyud sde dang man*
 ngag [4] du bcas pa yongs su rdzogs pa yod par gsungs so |
 | *de tsho re re'i khongs nas kyang mu stegs lasogs pa'i log*
 rtog bsal ba dang | *theg pa rim pa brgyad kyi shan dbye ba* [5]
 dang | *rdzogs pa chen por la bzla ba dang* | *rang grol mngon sum*
 du ngo sprad pa lasogs pa theg pa thams cad kyi 'dod lugs yongs su
 rdzogs par gsungs so | | *de lasogs te ke* [6] *tshang gi skor la phyi*
skor | *nang skor* | *gsang skor* | *gsang ba bla na med pa'i skor lasogs pa*
dang | *a ro'i skor dang* | *dom sgro'i skor dang* | *spros bral don gsal*
gyi skor dang [7] *spyi ti 'i skor dang* | *spyi mdo skor dang* | *rgyal po*
bla gter gyi skor dang | *kun grol gyi skor lasogs pa brjod pa las 'das pa*
 yod par gsungs so | | *che ba bdun nam* [8] *lnga yis khyad par*
 du 'phags pa ni | *theg pa thams cad kyi yang rtse yin pa'i che ba*
 ri rgyal lhun po lta bu dang | *lung thams cad kyi rgyal po yin pa'i*
 che ba nyi ma'i snying po lta

[38a1] bu dang | *bka' thams cad kyi 'grel pa yin pa'i che ba nam*
mkha'i ngang las snod bcud thams cad gsal ba lta bu dang |
 man ngag thams cad kyi rtsa ba yin pa'i che ba [2] rgyal po'i
 bka' gsang thob pa'i mi lta bu | *bstan pa thams cad kyi 'byung*
gnas yin pa'i che ba 'byung chen gtos kyi nam mkha' las 'byung ba
lngar snang ba lta bu | *don thams cad* [3] *kyi 'jug sdud yin*
pa'i che ba 'gron po byes log nas slar rang gi khyim du 'ong pa lta
bu | *chos thams cad kyi me long yin pa'i che ba me long g.ya' dag*
pa lta bu'o | | *mdo'* [4] *las* | *gling dang ri bo mu khyud bcas* |
lhun po'i rtse mo nyid na gsal | | *ji snyed theg pa'i rnam*
grangs kun | | *de nyid chen po nyid mthong gsal ces* | *'jig rten*
 [5] 'od kyi rgyal po ni | | *gzi ldan gsal ba'i nyi ma yin* |

| chos kun yongs su rdzogs gsal ba | | kun snang chen po de
 nyid do ces so | | go skabs chen po nam [6] mkha' ni |
 | chen po bzhi'i go 'byed ltar | | gsang nyid 'dus pa de nyid
 kyis | | brjod pa'i brjod kun gsal bar 'grel ces so | | gang gis bka'i
 gsang thob na | | [7] mi gang gzhan la rag ma lus |
 | gsang pa'i snying por ku chub na | | smra brjod gang
 la 'ang btsal mi dgos ces so | | rgyun dang bcas pa 'i 'byung ba
 rnams | | nam [8] mkha'i ngang las 'byung zhing snang |
 | de bzhin smra brjod 'byung pa rnams | | de nyid zab
 mo'i dbyings nas byung ces so | | don du bya ba'i nam grangs
 kun | | mthar gyis 'bras bu

[38b1] grub par sdud | | rnam grangs rgya cher brjod
 mod kyang | | de kun de bzhin nyid du 'dus ces so |
 | me long gsal ba'i snying pos ni | | bzhin gyi gzugs
 brnyan ston pa [2] ltar | | de nyid chos kyī me long gis |
 | kun gyi rang bzhin gsal bar byed ces gsungs so | | che ba
 lnga ni gong du bshad pa bzhin no | | gsum pa ni rigs 'dzin rnaM [3]
 pa gsum dang | | rdzogs pa chen po 'khor 'das dbyer med chos kun
 rang byung ye shes su rtogs pas rig pa mchog la mnga' mnyes⁴² pa
 yin te | | slob dpon chen po 'jam dpal [4] bshes gnyen dang |
 | shri sing nga dang | | bi ma la mu tra lasogs pa mkhas pa
 nyi shu rtsa lnga dang | | rgyal po dza dang dam pa'i rigs can
 lnga dang slob dpon h'uM⁴³ ka ra dang ru pad ma 'byung gnas [5]
 lasogs pa rnams ni chos nyid rgyun chad med pa mngon sum du
 rtogs pa lha ma srin bral⁴⁴ du 'khol zhing snang srid dbang du 'dus
 pa | | sgra 'gyur sum brgya drug bcu lasogs pa shes shing [6] rigs
 drug gi skad la thogs pa med par chos ston nus pa'o |
 | bzhi pa ni | | dge' slong mi lnga dang | | bka' mchog rin
 po che | | gnyeg gnya na ku ma ra dang | | slob [7]
 dpon be ro tsa na lasogs pa rig pa'i gnas lnga la mkhas shing sgra
 bsgyur sum brgya drug bcu lasogs pa shes pa | | rigs drug gi skad
 la thogs pa med cing snyan gyis dus cig la [8] nyan nus pa |
 | bstan pa thams cad thugs la rdzogs pa yin te | | rigs 'dzin
 byang chub sems dpa' dang sprul pa sku'i lo tsha ba yin par gsungs
 so | | lnga pa yon

⁴² Read: brnyes.

⁴³ This is a rare instance in which the text represents the Sanskrit in an exact transcription, using the subscript 'a chung to mark the lengthened vowel: *hūṃ*.

⁴⁴ Read: bran.

[39a1] @@ | |bdag ni | rgyal mes on⁴⁵ nram gsum sprul pa'i
 sku yin par gsungs te | |lha tho tho ri snyan shal phyag rdor gyi
 sprul pa | | srong btsan sgam po thugs rje chen [2] po'i
 sprul pa | | khri srong lde btsan 'jam dpal gyi sprul par gsungs
 so | | de yang | dang po chos kyi dbu mnyes | bar du
 srol gtod | | tha ma khri srong lde btsan gyis chos dar zhing rgyas
 par byas so | | drug pa ni | bod du rten bzhengs su ma btub pa la
 ru non bzhi kha non bzhi | | gtar kha bzhi | me btsa' bzhi lasogs pa
 byas [4] ste | | lha sa dang bsam yas lasogs ste rtsug lag khang brgya
 rtsa brgyad bzhengs | | der rang byung gi lha tshogs mang po dngos
 su bzhugs pa dang | | bzhengs pa'i lha tshogs rnam [5] la srong
 btsan sgam po dang slob dpon pad ma 'byung gnas lasogs pas rab
 gnas byas te ye shes kyi lha tshogs dngos su spyang drangs gnyis su
 med par bstims nas | | rten thams [6] cad kyang chos kyi bgro ba
 mdzad par gsungs so | | bdun pa bod du yang snubs nam mkha'i
 snying po lasogs pa dge' srong mi bzhi dang | | she'u tshul
 khirms dang | | gnyan a tsa ra [7] dpal dbyangs lasogs pa dpal yang
 dag gi sgo nas tshe la dbang ba'i rigs 'dzin dang phyag rgya chen po'i rigs 'dzin
 lasogs pa thob te lus bor ma dgos par sangs rgyas pa brgyud pa'i
 lugs re re la 'ang mang du byung par [8] gsungs so |
 | sba tshab stong grags dang | | lce btsun sen ge dbang
 phyug dang | | bla ma nyang chen po ri khrod pa lasogs pa |
 rdzogs pa chen po'i sgo nas 'khor 'das gnyis

[39b1] med du rtogs shing snang srid chos skur shar bas | lus ma
 bor bar 'gro 'ong med par sangs rgyas pa mang du byung bar gsungs
 so | | de rnam rgyas par 'dod na rang rang gi brgyud pa'i
 khungs [2] dang sbyar la rgyas par bshad do | | lbrgyad pa ni |
 gzhi 'khor 'das dbyer myed rang 'byung ye shes su gtan
 la 'bebs pa yin te | | 'og nas gzhi'i skabs su ston pa bzhin
 no | | [3] dgu pa bgrod pa lam gyi che ba dang | | bcu pa mngon
 du byas pa 'bras bu'i khyad par ram che ba ni | | gsang sngags kyi
 gzhi 'am⁴⁶ 'bras bu'i skabs nas bshad pa bzhin du shes par bya [4]
 | 'o | | | | spyi don gnyis pa yo ga'i don ni | | yo ga bzhi'i bye
 brag phye la a ti yo gar la bzla ba'o | | spyi don gsum pa dgos ched
 ni | | spyir theg pa [5] rang rang gi skabs nas bshad pa bzhin
 dang | | khyad par du rtsol sgrub can tshi⁴⁷ chad pa nad dang dbral
 ba'i phyir | | gol sgrub kyi shan phye don ma nor bar la bzla nas |
 rang grol mngon [6] sum du ston pa'o | | | bzhi pa | |

⁴⁵ Read: dbon.

⁴⁶ Evidently err. for lam.

⁴⁷ Read: tshe.

dril nas mtshan tu btags pa ni | chos kun rtsa ba
 sems nyid dam rang byung ye shes su 'dus shing rdzogs la |
 gong na gzhan med pas | [7] rdzogs pa chen po zhes bya'o |
 | bye brag du phye na | mdo' sde sa lu ljang pa
 lasogs pa dpe' la mtshan du btags pa dang | lang kar gshegs pa
 lasogs pa yul la mtshan [8] du btags pa dang | lha'i bus zhus pa'i
 mdo' lasogs pa zhu ba po las dang | rim gsum dang brgya bcu ba
 lasogs pa rnam grangs las dang | lam rim dang gsang
 [40a1] snying lasogs pa brjod bya las mtshan du btags pa dang | la
 shan dang phreng ba lasogs pa brjod byed las dang | dgongs 'dus
 dang | kun byed dang | klong chen lasogs pa don [2] las
 mtshan du btags pa'o | | de lasogs te mtshan gyi 'dogs lugs
 dang rnam grangs bsam gyis mi khyab pa gsungs so | | lnga
 pa | dbu zhabs su dkyus bshad pa tshig gi don [3] ni rang rang gi
 skabs bzhin shes par bya'o | |

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On Being 'Impartial' (*ris med*): From Non-Sectarianism to the Great Perfection*

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Introduction: Impartiality and the History of Buddhism *The Terms phyogs/ris med in the History of Tibetan Buddhism*

he Tibetan expression *phyogs ris su med pa* (including abbreviations or variations like: *phyogs ris med*, *phyogs med*, *ris med*, etc.) has come to describe an important Buddhist contemplative revival in 19th century Khams. In a famous article, the late E. Gene Smith (1970, 2001) introduced scholars to what he termed the “nonsectarian movement,” with its great saints and cultural heroes. “Nonsectarian” was Smith’s translation of *ris med*, while other scholars have used also a variety of terms like “ecumenical,” “eclectic,” or even “universalist,” the latter describing the intent to encompass all Buddhist lineages or teachings. More generally, *phyogs/ris med* can be translated as “impartial,” the most literal and inclusive translation. This rendition has also the advantage to highlight the fundamental Buddhist notion behind –and beyond– the so-called *ris med* movement: the virtue of impartiality.

In previous works, I have made my own modest contribution to the political and religious history of the so-called *ris med* approach in Tibet, focusing on the period of the intensification of sectarianism, the 16th century. Here, the intent of this paper is rather to illuminate this external history by focusing on the transformative power of ideals and related praxis, as well as the symbolic web of resources for the making of meaning and guidelines for action. Rather than etc,

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the perspective here will be emic. Moreover, the ideal of impartiality is not a mere product of social conditions but it can actually transform or reform them. As a prescriptive ideal, it is an injunction to exercise one's own freedom and an effort to free oneself from partiality. In this way, I hope thus to offer a perspective avoiding both the extreme of "naïve idealism," taking impartiality for granted and ignoring the actual inner transformation it takes, as well as the complexity of its implications in a given singular historical context (with the problem of "disguised ideology" or the attempt, conscious or not, to hide selfish interests behind supposed universal values); and the other extreme of "naïve realism," according to which all philosophical and religious ideas could/should be explained externally by the sole terms of their supposed social causes and conditions of origination. Stated simply, impartiality is a dynamic process along the contemplative life that cannot be reduced simply to a form of social diplomacy, negotiation of alliances or feigned tolerance (even if it has also been and can still occasionally be). By showing the contemplative dimension of the terms of *phyogs/ris med*, with special reference to the Great Perfection (*rDzogs chen*), we will see that at the heart of this ideal of impartiality actually lies the notion of intrinsic freedom (*rang grol*): the innate and mysterious¹ capacity to free oneself from the power of external conditions and oppositions, while becoming simply and fully aware of their dynamic play.

The Notion of Impartiality in East and West

In a seminal paper, Paul Demiéville discussed the importance of the "impartial benevolence" in Asian civilizations.² Indeed, the notion of impartiality or the neutrality of the sage appears to be a common ideal in Asia, Buddhism being here especially credited by Demiéville for its emphasis on a universally positive attitude including friends, neutral persons, enemies, and ultimately all sentient beings through

¹ While referring to a different context, the Pāli tradition, Bikkhu Anālayo (2003, p. 60), makes the interesting comment which is significant here as well: "This 'bare attention' aspect of *sati* [mindfulness] has an intriguing potential since it is capable of leading to a 'de-automatization' of mental mechanisms [including reactions of attraction, aversion or ignorance]." And by the capacity of changing one's own reaction, it is possible to change the whole relational system.

² In his article entitled "L'esprit de bienfaisance impartiale dans les civilisations anciennes de l'Extrême-Orient." He wrote (Demiéville 1973 p. 113): "La notion de l'impartialité ou de la neutralité du sage est fort ancienne et assez générale dans ces civilisations, en particulier dans les deux principales d'entre elles, celle de l'Inde et de la Chine, d'où les pays voisins ont tiré les leurs. Quand au principe de la sympathie ou de la pitié, il y est surtout le fait du bouddhisme."

the praxis of the four immeasurables (P. *appamaññā*; Sk. *apramāṇa*): loving-kindness (*mettā, maitrī*), compassion (*karuṇā*), altruistic joy (*muditā*) and equanimity (*upekkhā, upekṣā*).³

In the West, Pierre Hadot's far-reaching redefinition of ancient *philosophia* as a "spiritual exercise," has allowed us to re-envision the common quest of its various schools: the transcendence of passions and egocentrism, and the attainment of what he has called "a universal perspective" beyond partisan and partial points of view.⁴ In a series of contributions, Matthew T. Kapstein (2000, 2013a, 2013b) has shown the relevance of Hadot's definition of philosophy for the study of Buddhism. Hadot himself also noted some striking parallels between ancient *philosophia* and Asian wisdom traditions. In this regard, he noted specifically the common importance of "indifference."⁵ Here of course, it is not the negative type of indifference discussed in Buddhism, but rather the equanimity, the transcendence of self-centered judgments. *Im-partiality* is thus to adopt a universal perspective, that is to say, etymologically and philosophically, the per-

³ Those practices might not have been restricted to Buddhism in India, but it is certainly through Buddhism that they were propagated and cultivated in the rest of Asia.

⁴ Hadot 1995, pp. 291-292: "Presque toutes les écoles proposent des exercices d'ascèse (le mot grec *askesis* signifie précisément 'exercice') et de maîtrise de soi [...]. [Leurs différentes méthodes d'ascèse] supposent toutes un certain dédoublement, par lequel le moi refuse de se confondre avec ses désirs et ses appétits, prend de la distance par rapport aux objets de ses convoitises et prend conscience de son pouvoir de s'en détacher. Il s'élève ainsi d'un point de vue partial et partiel à une perspective universelle, qu'elle soit celle de la nature ou de l'esprit." (For an English translation, see Hadot 2002, pp. 189-191.) See also this passage, p. 415: "Vue de cette manière, la pratique de la philosophie dépasse donc les oppositions des philosophies particulières. Elle est essentiellement un effort pour prendre conscience de nous-mêmes, de notre être-au-monde, de notre être-avec-autrui, un effort aussi pour 'réapprendre à voir le monde,' comme disait Merleau-Ponty, pour atteindre aussi à une vision universelle, grâce à laquelle nous pourrions nous mettre à la place des autres et dépasser notre propre partialité." (English translation, Hadot 2002, p. 276.)

⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 419-420: "Il est très intéressant de constater que dans la Grèce, l'Inde et la Chine, une des voies qui mènent à la sagesse consiste dans l'indifférence, c'est-à-dire dans le refus d'attribuer aux choses des différences de valeur qui exprimeraient le point de vue de l'individu, égoïste, partial et limité, le point de vue de la 'grenouille au fond de son puits' ou de la 'mouche au fond d'une cuve,' dont parle Tchouang-tseu [...]. Ce désintéressement et cette indifférence ramènent ainsi à un état originel : la quiétude, la paix, qui au fond de nous, existe antérieurement à l'affirmation de notre individualité contre le monde et contre autrui, antérieurement à cet égoïsme et cet égocentrisme qui nous séparent de l'univers [...]." (English translation, Hadot 2002, pp. 278-279.)

spective of universe, i.e. of the *totality*.⁶ Such a state, Hadot tells us, is actually our original condition, prior to the affirmation of the ego against the world and the fragmentation of conscious experience. And a whole life following the “love of wisdom” is thus dedicated to regain and re-access it as much as it is possible. The important point is that it demands not simply wholesome intention, but actually a lifelong *askesis*, or “spiritual exercises,” involving in many ways the transformation of the whole subject practicing them.

***The Founding Gesture of the Historical Buddha:
Impartiality in the Aṭṭhakavagga***

The attitude of impartiality is a key element in the founding gesture of Śākyamuni’s teachings, with deep implications in terms of pedagogy, ethics, psychology, epistemology and soteriology. It is also a clearly defined topic in the Pāli collection of the *Suttanipāta*, and especially in its fourth part, the *Aṭṭhakavagga*⁷, which is considered to belong to the oldest strata of texts that we currently have. As shown by Bikkhu Bodhi (2017), we find in the *Suttanipāta* the recurrent use of the term *tadī* in order to express the ideal of impartiality. It can be a simple term of reference or have an elevated meaning to express the idea of impartiality.⁸ In this last sense, as Bikkhu Bodhi explains according to the Pāli commentarial literature, “one might be called *tadī*: because one is impartial toward the desirable and the undesirable; impartial because one has renounced; impartial because one has crossed over; impartial because one is freed; and impartial as a descriptive term.”

Especially, the unifying theme of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* can be described “as the detached stance the sage takes toward debates and doctrinal views” (Bodhi 2017, pp. 138-144). These ancient sources describe a historical context plagued by all sorts of conflicts, including those among ascetics debating, arguing the superiority of their own doctrinal views and trying to defeat each other. This idea of impartiality is thus both descriptive of the state of the sage, and pre-

⁶ The Latin *universum* came with Ciceron to translate the Greek *to holon*, the totality. *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue latine. Histoire des mots*, par A. Ernout et A. Meillet. Paris: Librairie C. Klincksieck, 1951, pp. 1322-1323.

⁷ This text has also a Chinese parallel (*Yizu-jing*, 義足經, T. 198) and thus can also be understood in a way as a common heritage of Indian Buddhist schools.

⁸ Bikkhu Bodhi 2017, pp. 60-61: The usual sense of *tadī* is a “simple term of reference, a demonstrative meaning ‘such a person, a person like that,’ referring to one previously described.” And for the translator of these Pāli texts, “it is not always easy to determine in any particular instance whether *tadī* is being used with [the] elevated meaning [of impartiality] or as a simple term of reference.”

scriptive for those who aspire to peace and serenity, freedom and wisdom. It has also deep epistemological and psychological implications: the identification of oneself to one's own doctrinal views or faction, together with the opposition to others, is seen as the very hallmark of delusion.⁹

Such Pāli texts magnify a heroic spiritual effort and radical choice of life: the ethos of complete detachment concerning all possessions and places, with the insistence on solitary wandering or retreat, control of sense perceptions, as well as constant vigilance. The Buddha teaches to avoid any dispute: the sage is said to be without prejudice and free, to own no school or sect, and to hold no views (*Aṭṭhakavagga*, 800). The eighth *sutta* of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* (*Pasūrasutta*, 824-834) is entirely dedicated to the total discard of sectarian positions, considered to be the sole expressions of passions and attachment. The next (*Magāndiyasutta*, 835-847) further insists on the eradication of any "view" (*diṭṭhi*) and "ideation" (*saññā*). Thus is found the "peace of mind" (*ajjhattasanti*, 838).¹⁰ Similar statements are also found in the overall *Aṭṭhakavagga*, showing eloquently how the Buddhist sage avoids any position and "sees security everywhere" (*khemaṃ passati sabbadhi*, 953). We shall see below in this paper how the latter statement has eloquent parallels in the literature of the Great Perfection.

Features of the Historical Development of Buddhism: Ideals and Their Periodic Revivals

These Pāli *sutta*-s elevate the ideal of the forest-dwelling monks

⁹ Such attachment interplays with feelings of insecurity, compulsive thinking, anxiety, and leads to conceit and conflicts. It is clear and eloquently said in numerous Buddhist scriptures that the identification of concepts of self and others with notions of right vs. wrong, good vs. bad, represents the very knot of the three poisons (attraction, aversion and ignorance), entangling human beings to countless sufferings. In *The Sutta of the Brahma Net (Brahmajāla Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya 1*, translated in Walshe 2012, pp. 67-90), the Buddha has even classified all the main doctrinal views of his time according to their perceived underlying attitudes in terms of craving for existence or for non-existence, presenting in a sense a proto-psychoanalysis of dogmatism.

¹⁰ But as Bikkhu Bodhi (2017, p. 144) rightly points out, there is still the need to establish the "right view" of the Buddhist path. "Right view differs from the kind of views repudiated in the *Aṭṭhakavagga* in that it is offered not as an object of intellectual consent but as a guideline to experiential insight. [...] Thus the enlightened sage, unlike the philosophical skeptic, is not committed to a perpetual aporia. What distinguishes the munis of the *Aṭṭhakavagga* is that, having fulfilled the function of right view, they do not grasp upon views and thus they abide in peace and equanimity." And as shown below in Tibetan contemplative literature, the supreme view is said to be *phyogs ris med*, "without bias."

(*āraññika/āraṇyaka*) or rag robe-wearing monks (*pāmsu-/pāmsu-kūlikā*), that came to be differentiated to town-dwelling monks (*gāma-vāsin*), monks residing in monasteries and who devote a more considerable part of their time to scholastic exegesis and rituals for the laity. This is why the epistemological distinction between scholastic study and contemplative insight can be paralleled respectively with the sociological difference of status between town-dwelling monks and forest-dwelling monks. Nevertheless, these are not exclusive activities or roles, and at both individual and collective levels, what matters most is to elucidate the transformative power of their dynamic interplay. According to Rupert Gethin:

The history of Buddhist monasticism can be seen in the light of a continued interplay, and sometimes tension, between the town-dwelling monks and the forest monks, between the scholar monks and the practitioners. Although the former may have been numerically more significant, the ideal of the forest saint has continued to exercise a considerable power over the imaginations of both the Saṅgha and the laity down to the present day, with the consequence that there have been significant attempts to put that ideal into practice.¹¹

Gethin also points out that the tension between the Indian Buddhist philosophical schools of Madhyamaka and Yogācāra seem to follow this same pattern, since we can see them as respectively emphasizing analytical investigation on one hand, and the “practice of yoga,” i.e. the direct exploration of deep psychological and meditative states, on the other hand. Gethin even goes on by considering some of the debates in Tibet as the continuation of this tension, illustrated by the philosophical debate on intrinsic/extrinsic emptiness (*rang/gzhan stong*), in connection with the sociological differences between schools emphasizing scholasticism (especially the dGe lugs pa and Sa skya pa) or yogic practices (especially bKa’ brgyud pa and rNying ma pa).¹²

¹¹ Gethin 1998, p. 105. He also writes, p. 99 : “the ideal of the wanderer intent on the Buddhist monk’s traditional spiritual quest continued to be seen as embodied in the forest-dwelling or rag robe-wearing monk, and the periodic attempt to re-establish the ancient ascetic ideal is one of the defining features of the history of Buddhist monasticism. But [...] it is the spirit of that ancient ideal that inspires the tradition, not the letter.”

¹² This idea is actually coming from Tibetan authors themselves, as Kong sprul shows in his *Shes bya mdzod* about the reception of Indian Buddhism in Tibet (SK, vol. 1, p. 504): *phyis nas bshad bka’ gtso bor sa dge gnyis / / sgrub brgyud bka’ rnying dag la babs ltar snang / Auto-commentary: bstan pa phyi dar chos lugs tha dad du gyes pa nas brtsams thams cad la bshad sgrub gnyis ka yod mod kyang / bshad bka’ ni gtso bor*

Phyogs/ris med as Tibetan Contemplative Terms and Ideals

From the general history of Buddhism, the 19th century so-called *ris med* movement may also be seen as another attempt to come back to this ancient ideal of contemplative life, within the specific historical context of 19th century sDe dge kingdom in Khams. To illustrate this, we will show here that the terms *phyogs/ris med* belong actually rather to contemplative literature from where they draw their main inspirational power and spiritual guidance. Such terms are actually canonical since we find them already in the *bKa' 'gyur* and *bsTan 'gyur*. I will also show that they play an important role in the Tibetan contemplative indigenous literature, with special reference to the Great Perfection (*rDzogs chen*), because of its importance for 19th century *ris med* teachers. While the various contexts and meanings are not homogeneous and must be distinguished, elucidating a wider semantic web for such terms shall enable us to get a deeper understanding of the notion of impartiality as a symbolic resource in the intellectual background of the *ris med* luminaries of Tibet.

But before envisioning the possibility to overcome gravity thanks to the wings of contemplation, and to enjoy even for brief moments the "view from above," so to speak, we shall first firmly ground our investigation on the very land of Tibet and the socio-historical realities of the context-based singularity of the 19th century *ris med* movement, its specific responses and achievements.

I. The "Impartial" (*ris med*) Approach in Tibet

The so-called "impartial" (*ris med*) movement was a trans-sectarian¹³ activity of collection, revelation, compilation and transmission of various Tibetan lineages and teachings, mainly led by the spiritual trio named *mKhyen Kong mChog sde gsum*, composed by 'Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820-1892), 'Jam mgon Kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas (1813-1899) and mChog 'gyur bde chen gling pa (1829-1870), supported by the network of Sa skya, bKa' brgyud, rNying ma, Jo nang, Bon po monasteries and even dGe lugs figures of sDe dge kingdom, in Khams, Eastern Tibet.

sa dge gnyis la babs pa dang / sgrub brgyud kyi bka' ni gtso bor bka' brgyud dang rnying ma dag la babs pa ltar snang ngo /

¹³ "Trans-sectarian" rather than "non-sectarian" in the sense that key actors still belonged to their own "sects" (*chos lugs*), had to deal with sectarian issues, and did so especially by establishing communications and exchanges "across sects," through the transmission of "lineages" (*brgyud*), and while not mixing them but maintaining coherent and distinct systems of exegesis and practice.

Considering his literary production (his “five great collections,” *mdzod chen lnga*), Kong sprul may be arguably considered as the main compiler of the “movement” which is not to be understood as any institution whatsoever, but as the *activity of a network of people*. With this reservation in mind, I decide to keep the word “movement,” in order to bear in mind the very fact that something specific happened in 19th century, something of which the literary production of Kong sprul is a concrete and singular outcome. When I use the term “approach,” it is to refer to similar tendencies that are found in the overall history of Tibetan Buddhism and form antecedents of the 19th century “movement” or “activity.” Kong sprul in his autobiography chooses the terms *phyogs med* and *ris med* to designate himself¹⁴ and he is also the author of a short historiographical and doxographical work of Indian and Tibetan Buddhism, as well as *Bon*, called *The Impartial History of Buddhism (Ris med chos 'byung)*.¹⁵

¹⁴ As my colleague Dr. Michael Sheehy has investigated (personal communication, Vienna, August 2014), the use of these terms for self-designation by Tibetan authors began to appear quite frequently in the 15th century onwards, and mainly in the colophons of their works.

¹⁵ Kong sprul was actually following a long tradition of Tibetan authors who were able to approach various lineages and teachings beyond the progressive solidification of the borders of the instituted schools. In this context, the term *ris med* could refer for example to an absence of bias concerning either the ancient school (*rnying ma*) tracing its origins back to the first diffusion of Buddhism in Tibet (7th-8th c.) or the new schools (*gsar ma*) of the second diffusion (10th-11th). Kong sprul's eclecticism includes as well both Buddhism and *Bon*, like others did before, especially treasure-revealers (*gter ston*). Regarding traditions in Tibet, *The Impartial History of Buddhism* is arguably a work transcending the opposition of one's own camp (*svapakṣa*, *rang phyogs*) and the other camp (*parapakṣa*, *gzhan phyogs*). The crystallization of Tibetan Buddhist sectarian identities became most salient from the 15th century onwards, where Tibet entered in a period of two centuries of recurrent civil wars, in which religious orders aligned themselves with their rival patrons, until the establishment of the reign of the 5th Dalai Lama Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617-1682) who reunified Tibet in 1642 with Mongol support and established the hegemony of the dGe lugs school. In a sense the *Ris med* movement can be seen as the revival of non-dGe lugs traditions that were able to reaffirm and reorganize themselves in the more pluralist context of sDe dge kingdom. But, it seems exaggerated to reduce the *ris med* movement only as an anti-dGe lugs pa coalition. If it is so to some extent and in some cases (even today), it is more largely because this trend is reminiscent of the time when those non-dGe lugs schools were almost all aligned in political opposition to the rising school of the dGe lugs pa, or dGa' ldan pa, who eventually triumphed politically over all. Geoffrey Samuel (1993) used to refer to dGe lugs power and *ris med* synthesis in order to describe the dialectic between what we could also term two opposite kinds of “universalism”: imperialism/hegemony in the first case, eclecticism/ecumenism in the second case. And the factors differentiating the two are rather of socio-political nature. Samuel made also the distinction between clerical and shamanic tendencies in Tibetan Buddhism. We shall see them as the key fea-

A very significant pluralist compilation of Tibetan contemplative traditions is shown by Kong sprul in his *Treasury of Spiritual Instructions* (*gDams ngag mdzod*) which Smith (1970, 2001) considered especially important to understand the intentions of Kong sprul and his colleagues. Following Kapstein (1996, 2007), I have shown elsewhere (2009, 2011a, 2011b, 2013, forthcoming) that the classificatory model of this exceptional collection is the "Eight Great Lineages of Practice," originally authored by the eclectic figure Prajñāraśmi ('Phreng po *gter ston* Shes rab 'od zer, 1518-1584), living historically and geographically in the very midst of the intensification of sectarianism in central Tibet. In his epistles of the *Ambrosia of Study, Reflection and Meditation* (*Thos bsam dang sgom pa 'chi med kyi bdud rtsi*), he encompasses all exegetic and yogic lineages. In this work, we often find the expression *phyogs lung med pa* (literally "not to fall into partiality") exhorting his people to embrace without bias the whole Indian Buddhist legacy transmitted and kept alive in Tibet.¹⁶ For Prajñāraśmi, the Eight Lineages represent the quintessence of the 84 000 collections of the *Dharma*. Moreover, he makes the following claim about their unity in terms of ultimate view and intent:

This gnosis which is knowledge, clear, vivid, and non-conceptual,
Introduced as the primordial gnosis itself,
Free from all the elaborations of the subject/object duality made by
the mind,
Is the main teaching of all the lineages of practice.¹⁷

ture of Buddhist history again at play: the dynamic relation between monastics living in monasteries and ascetics-yogins dwelling in retreat places.

¹⁶ The progression of study (*thos pa = śruta*), reflection (*bsam pa = cintā*) and meditation (*sgom pa = bhāvanā*), the three steps of the development of wisdom, insists of the conjunction of logical reason and contemplative insight. On the basis of the so-called "Ten Pillars of Exegesis," the model of the "Eight Lineages of Practice" encompasses all the esoteric lineages (*brgyud*) at the source of Tibetan Buddhist orders (*chos lugs*), and through the notion of spiritual exercise or practice (*sgrub*) emphasizes their original soteriological aim. As remarked by David Snellgrove, in Tibet, in contradistinction with China and Japan, Buddhist orders did not establish themselves around a specific scripture or set of scriptures, but around various lineages who systematized tantric practice, the so-called "practice lineages" or "lineages of attainment" (*sgrub brgyud*). Thus the model of the Eight lineages of practice forms a remarkable trans-sectarian genealogy of Tibetan Buddhism. See Snellgrove 1987, pp. 486-487: "Tibetan religious orders developed [...] based upon the transmission of particular late Indian Buddhist tantric traditions, which happened to have been favoured by certain renowned teachers, who in retrospect may be regarded as their 'founders.'"

¹⁷ GCD, 254.2-3: *blos byas gzung 'dzin spros pa kun bral ba'i || gnyug ma'i ye shes rang ngo 'phrod pa yi || shes pa gsal d[wl]angs rtog med ye shes de || sgrub rgyud kun gyi bstan pa'i gtso bo yin [//]*

If we understand the *Treasury of Spiritual Instructions* (*gDams ngag mdzod*) as the exemplifier of the *Ris med* movement, this key instruction on its core paradigm —the Eight Lineages of Practice—, indicates the central value of “direct introduction” (*ngo sprod*) for Tibetan eclectic or non-sectarian approaches, specially connected to the methodology of the Great Seal (in the *bKa’ brgyud* traditions) and the Great Perfection (of the *rNying ma pa* and *Bon po*). This indicates the heartfelt presentation done by a teacher to his students and aimed at the recognition of “mind itself” (*sems nyid, cittatva*) or “gnosis” (*ye shes, jñāna*). The interesting point is that in the contemplative literature of such direct introduction, the terms *phyogs/ris med* are mainly used to describe the state of pure awareness itself. But before focusing on this aspect, we shall first trace back some significant uses of *phyogs/ris med* in Tibetan Buddhist canonical literature, with no claim to be exhaustive.

II. The Terms *phyogs/ris med* in Tibetan (Indic) Canonical Literature

In the context of Buddhist soteriology, we shall first remark that the terms *phyogs/ris med*, as a negation, belongs to the Buddhist *via negativa* or apophatic way to describe the absolute and its realization. In this line of thought, an interesting passage of the *Aṣṭasāhasrikā Prajñāpāra-mitā* states that the perfection of wisdom is to be observed according to the fact that, through the analysis of the five aggregates, all phenomena are by the essence of their nature “non-existent as objects” (*adeśa, yul med*) and “without directions” (*apradeśa, phyogs med*).¹⁸ These two expressions are rather synonymous, here character-

¹⁸ Sanskrit text by P. L. Vaidya, Darbhanga: The Mithila Institute, 1960, p. 235: *sarvadharmādeśāpradeśataḥ prajñāpāramitā anuḡantavyā / tat kasya hetoh ? rūpaṃ hi subhūte adeśam apradeśam prakṛtiṣvabhāvataḥ / evaṃ vedanā saṃjñā saṃskārāḥ / vijñānam hi subhūte adeśam apradeśam prakṛ[si]c]tiṣvabhāvataḥ sarvadharmānirōdhaprahādanatvād iti prajñāpāramitā anuḡantavyā /* [D. 258a6] *chos thams cad yul med cing phyogs med pa’i phyir shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin par rjes su rig par bya’o // de ci’i phyir zhe na / rab ’byor gzugs ni rang bzhin gyi ngo bo nyid kyis yul dang phyogs med pa’o // rab ’byor* [D. 258a7] *de bzhin du tshor ba dang ’du shes dang ’du byed rnam dang rnam par shes pa ni rang bzhin gyi ngo bo nyid kyis yul dang phyogs med pa’o // chos thams cad ’gog pa rab tu sim par byed pa’i phyir shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin par rjes su rig par bya’o //* “The perfection of wisdom is to be observed according to the fact that all phenomena are non-existent as objects and without direction [or atomic individuality]. What is the reason of this? Ô Subhūti, form is by the essence of its nature non-existent as an object and without direction [or atomic individuality]. Ô Subhūti, similarly, feelings, thoughts, volitional factors and consciousness are by the essence of their nature non-existent as objects and without direction [or atomic individuality]. The perfection of wisdom is to be observed

izing the Great Vehicle's philosophical view and contemplative insight of emptiness or universal insubstantiality.

In the *Mahāyānasūtrālaṅkāra*, the term *phyogs med* is the Tibetan translation for the Sanskrit *apakṣapāta* (Ch. *wu pian* 無偏): "impartiality." It is used in reference to the notion of the "sameness of mind" (*samacittatā*, *sems mnyam pa*, *ping deng sin* 平等心) of the *bodhisattva* and specifically how it is applied to the six perfections. Impartiality here refers specifically to the sameness of mind in the virtue of giving.¹⁹ Like in the *śloka* mentioning that for bodhisattvas, love or affection (*sneha*, *byams pa*, *ai* 愛) is bestowed universally to all beings, the terms *phyogs/ris med* are also found in Tibetan translations of different *śāstra*-s, particularly commentaries of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* to express the idea of universal love and compassion. For example, it is said: "what is called great love is an impartial and immeasurable love."²⁰ The same terms applied also to the metaphor of the sun, par-

according to the fact that all phenomena are [by the essence of their nature the truth of] cessation and the source of great joy."

¹⁹ Translation and Sk. ed. by Sylvain Lévi, 19.5-7; Ch. T. 1604, 650b17-25; Tib. Tg sems tsam phi 240b1-3:

na tathātmani dāreṣu sutamitreṣu bandhuṣu |
satvānāṃ pragataḥ sneho yathā satveṣu dhimatāṃ || 5 ||

(17) 菩薩愛衆生 不同生五愛

(18) 自身與眷屬 子友及諸親

ji (2) ltar blo ldan sems can la || rab tu byams par gyur pa ltar ||

sems can bdag dang chung ma dang || bu bshes gnyen la de lta min ||

arthiṣv apakṣapātās ca śīlasyākhaṇḍanā dhruvaṃ |
kṣāntiḥ sarvatra satvārthaṃ sarvārthaṃ vīryārambho mahān api || 6 ||

(24) 無偏及無犯 遍忍起善利

don gnyer ba la phyogs med dang || tshul khrims rtag tu mnyams dang ||

kun tu bzod cing thams cad phyir || brtson 'grus chen po (3) rtsom pa dang ||

dhyānaṃ ca kuśalaṃ nityaṃ prajñā caivāvikalpikā |
vijñeyā bodhisatvānāṃ tāsv eva samacittatā || 7 ||

(25) 禪亦無分別 六度心平等

rtag tu bsam gtan dge ba dang || shes rab rnam par mi rtoḡ nyid ||

byang chub sems dpa' de dag la || de ltar sems mnyam shes par bya ||

French translation:

"5. L'affection des êtres ne va pas à soi, à l'épouse, au fils, à l'ami, au parent, comme l'affection des Sages va aux êtres.

6. Point de partialité en fait de solliciteur, respect intégral de l'Idéal toujours, Patience partout, grande entreprise d'Énergie dans le Sens des créatures,

7. extase perpétuellement bonne, et Sapience sans différenciation, voilà en quoi consiste l'égalité de Pensée des Bodhisattvas."

²⁰ *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti-nāma-mahāṭika*: (D. 179b3) *byams chen zhes pa ni phyogs ris med* (D. 179b4) *pa ste dpag tu med pa'i byams pa'o //*

ticularly connected to love and compassion,²¹ and to the metaphor of space that can express emptiness or the state of total liberation when all veils and passions have been removed.²²

Kong sprul uses also in the catalogue (*dkar chag*) of his *Treasury of Spiritual Instructions* a quotation from the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*²³ which describes the primordial Buddha qualified in the Tibetan translation with the term *ris med*:

Buddhahood is without beginning or end.
The primordial Buddha is without bias (*ris med*).²⁴

The Sanskrit is here *niranvaya*, “unconnected,” “unrelated,” “without retinue,” “unaccompanied” according to Monier Williams Sanskrit-English Dictionary. Other Tibetan versions give different translations: *rigs med*, “without lineage/generation” (Pekin) or according to Wayman, *rgyud med*, “without cause” (modern version of Dharamsala). In the Tibetan translation of the *Vimalaprabhā*, commentary of the *Kālacakrantra* and ascribed to Kalkin Śrī Puṇḍarīka, *ris med* is also sometimes used to translate the term *niranvaya*, a negative definition of the primordial buddha.²⁵

A *dākinītantra* found in *bKa’ ’gyur*,²⁶ and for which I have not found a Sanskrit original, contains interesting passages including *phyogs ris med*. This expression is here an epithet for the supreme view, explained to be inconceivable (*bsam gyis mi khyab*, **acintya*), like the su-

²¹ *Āryamañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītyupadeśavṛtti-nāma*: (D. 138b3) *des ’gro ba drug la nyi ma bzhin du phyogs ris med pas na ’gro na gdugs gcig yangs pa ste / byams dang snying* (D. 138b4) *rje’i dkyil ’khor can tshad med bas gang ba’o //*

²² Idem: (D135a6) *des na sgrib pa kun nas nyon mongs pa la sogs pa spangs nas phyogs ris med pa nam mkha’ ltar gnas so //*

²³ *Mañjuśrī-jñānasattvasya-paramārtha-nāmasaṃgīti* (’Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa’i don dam pa’i mtshan yang dag par brjod pa), P. Otani n° 2, vol. 1, pp. 117.1.1-124.3.6. See also Davidson 1981, Wayman 1985.

²⁴ Kong sprul, DNgDzK, p. 385.1: *sangs rgyas thog ma tha ma med / dang po’i sangs rgyas ris med pa / Pekin, op. cit., 120.4.6-5.1: rigs med*. Wayman, *op. cit.*, p. 93: *anādinidhano buddha ādibuddho niranvayah* (chap. VIII, st. 24).

²⁵ For example: Ed. p. 45

*uddhṛtam mañjuvajreṇa ādibuddhat niranvayāt |
lakṣaṇam buddhakāyaṇām caturṇām tat vitanyate | |
(D. 212b1) dang po’i sangs rgyas ris med las // ’jam pa’i rdo rjes rab phyung ba //
sangs rgyas rnam kyis sku bzhi yi // mtshan nyid de ni dgrol bar bya //
“Mañjuvajra explains these defining characteristics of the four buddha-bodies extracted from the Ādibuddha which is niranvaya.”*

²⁶ *Dākinīsarvacittadvayācintyājñānavajravārahitantra*. (L. 539a4) *mkha’ ’gro ma thams cad kyi thugs gnyis su med pa bsam gyis mi khyab pa’i ye shes rdo rje phag mo mngon par ’byung ba’i rgyud* (L. 539a5) *kyi rgyal po zhes bya ba /*

preme conduct.²⁷ Then view, meditation and conduct are all qualified through negations, of respectively bias, reference points and preferences:

This view without bias (*phyogs ris med*),
 See it with the primordial mind!
 The meditation without reference points
 Is to be meditated with the primordial intellect.
 The supreme conduct without disapproval or approval
 Is to be conducted with the primordial intellect.²⁸

What next follows in the text is an interesting explanation of the supreme view, each dimension of its quality being compared first with the five elements, then with natural elements (mountain, ocean, rainbow, etc.) and animals. Here is the description through the five elements:

Know the supreme view without bias (*phyogs ris med*) to be like space!
 Know the supreme view supporting everything to be like the basis of earth!
 Know the supreme view collecting everything to be like the water element!
 Know the supreme view burning all passions to be like the fire element!
 Know the supreme view, ungraspable, to be like the wind element!²⁹

This quotation indicates thus a useful comparison about how we should understand the terms *phyogs ris med* in this context. The example is like space, which is all-pervading, neutral, equal, or isotropic. This use is a characteristic of literature of direct introduction that we shall examine now in further detail. In the oral practice lineage of the Shangs pa (which Kong sprul strongly revitalized), dating back to the Tibetan yogin Khyung po *rnal 'byor* (circa 1050-circa 1140), we find a special instruction of one of the teachers he met in India, the *ḍākinī* Sukhasiddhi, in a text called *The Direct Introduction to*

²⁷ (L. 540a2) *phyogs ris med pa lta ba'i mchog / [b]sam gyis mi khyab bshad du gsol // dgag sgrub med pa spyod pa'i mchog / bsam gyis mi* (L. 540a3) *khyab bshad du gsol //*.

²⁸ (L. 540b1) *phyogs ris med pa'i lta ba de // gnyug ma'i sems kyis blta bar gyis // dmigs gtad med pa'i sgom pa ni // gnyug* (L. 540b2) *ma'i yid kyis bsgom par bya // dgag sgrub med pa spyod pa'i mchog / gnyug ma'i yid kyis spyad par bya //*.

²⁹ (L. 540b6) *phyogs ris med pa lta ba'i mchog / nam mkha' lta bu shes par gyis // thams cad* (L. 540b7) *'dogs pa lta ba'i mchog / sa gzhi lta bu shes par gyis // thams cad sdud pa lta ba'i mchog / 'byung ba chu ltar shes par gyis // nyon mongs sreg pa lta ba'i mchog / 'byung* (L. 541a1) *// ba me ltar shes par gyis // ngos bzung med pa lta ba'i mchog / 'byung ba lung ltar shes par gyis //*.

Mahāmudrā by *Sukhasiddhi*.³⁰ Here, *ris med* also defines the supreme view, the empty aspect of the nature of mind, similar to space:

This is the *ḍākinī*'s direct introduction to pure awareness (*rig pa*):
 In the empty space without bias (*ris med*),
 Focus on the root of mind which is aware.
 Focusing on the root, rest naturally.³¹

Like the *Mahāmudrā* of the *bKa' brgyud pa*, the *Mahāmudrā* of the Shangs pa is not understood to be solely the final phase or resultant experience of tantric gradual meditation (as it is for the *Sa skya pa* and the *dGe lugs pa*). It is rather a non-gradual path of self-recognition through direct introduction. This pure enlightened state to be discovered is here expressed by the term *rig pa*, "pure awareness." It transcends completely the mind (*citta*, *sems*) based on the duality of subject and object, self and others, and the discursive intellect (*buddhi*, *blo*) judging by means of opposite conceptual categories.

The only *tantra* of *rDzogs chen* kept in the *bKa' 'gyur*, the *tantra* of the *All-Accomplishing King* (**Kulayarāja*tantra, *Kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud*) displays three occurrences of *phyogs ris med*. The "All-Accomplishing King" is this enlightened mind, source of everything, to be recognized and cultivated. Speaking in the first person in this *tantra*, this universal king proclaims that from his ultimate perspective, there are no more sacred commitments (*samaya*, *dam tshig*) to keep or not, and nobody to keep them or not. The expression *phyogs ris med* is here used to describe a state beyond dualistic alternatives.³² It serves thus to express the transcendence of all pairs of opposite, as well as the limitations of lower vehicles. In another passage *Sattvavajra* praises the All-Accomplishing King as the ultimate enlightened state which compassion is said to be *phyogs ris med*, without bias or universally caring, never leaving cyclic existence.³³ Finally the same

³⁰ *Su kha ma siddhi'i phyag rgya chen po'i ngo sprod*. In DNgDz, vol. 12: pp. 329-330.

³¹ Op. cit., 329.1: *mkha' 'gro rig pa'i ngo sprod ni // nam mkha' ris med stong pa la // rig bcas sems kyi rtsa ba gcun // rtsa ba gcun nas rang sor [sar] zhog /*.

³² "This sacred commitment of the All-Accomplishing King
 Is taught to be without the bias (*phyogs ris med pa*) of protecting or not protecting.
 To realize that there is nobody who protects or does not protect,
 Is the realization of the sacred commitment of I, the All-Accomplishing King."
 (L. 96a3) *kun byed rgyal po'i dam tshig 'di // bsrung dang mi srung phyogs ris med par bstan // gang gi bsrung dang mi srung med* (L. 96a4) *rtogs pa // kun byed nga yi dam tshig rtogs pa yin //*.

³³ "Then, *Sattvavajra* praised with respect the Enlightened Mind which is the All-Accomplishing King:
 Kye, master of the masters, you, All-Accomplishing King,
 Are the Nature of the Victorious of the three times, *Dharmadhātu*,

expression is used to explain the absence of obscuration and the entirely clear nature of self-originated gnosis, without bias, partiality or limitation.³⁴

As we have seen through this brief survey of Tibetan canonical literature, the terms *phyogs/ris med*:

- (1) do not deal with the level of religious tolerance;
- (2) render a variety of Sanskrit terms;
- (3) apply as epithets to different soteriological ideas;
- (4) and through the negation of bias express non-dual, transcendental or "universal" perspectives.

III. Impartiality in the Soteriology of the Great Perfection: an Analysis of the *Treasury of the Dharmadhātu*

Klong chen rab 'byams' (1308-1364) *Treasury of the Dharmadhātu* (*Chos dbyings mdzod*), with its auto-commentary of the *Treasure Trove of Scriptural Transmission* (*Lung gi gter mdzod*), shows a remarkable number of occurrences of the terms *phyogs/ris med* from the point of view of pure noetics and soteriology. It is an indigenous Tibetan work highly revered in the Ancients' (*rNying ma*) tradition, and represents the essence of the view of *rDzogs chen* according to its three series ("mind," *sems sde*; "space," *klong sde*; and "special instructions," *man ngag sde*), with special relevance to the contemplative praxis of *khregs chod*, the recognition and cultivation of the state of pure awareness in which all "bonds are cut." In itself, this text is thus an extensive "direct introduction," to which the auto-commentary adds a richness of quotations from the *tantra-s* of *rDzogs chen*, only remaining available to us in Tibetan language. We shall explore in this text

Great compassion without bias (*phyogs ris med*) who do not abandon cyclic existence.

To you, master All-Accomplishing King, I pay homage."

(L. 119a6) *de nas byang chub* (L. 119b1) *kyi sems kun byed rgyal po la sems dpa' rdo rjes gus pa'i tshul gyis bstod pa / kye / ston pa'i ston pa kun byed rgyal po khyod // dus gsum rgyal ba'i rang bzhin chos kyi dbyings //* (L. 119b2) *'khor ba mi spong thugs rje phyogs ris med // ston pa kun byed rgyal po khyod la 'dud //*.

³⁴ "Within reality (*dharmata*, *chos nyid*) which is primordially established without origination,

This essence, without cause or effect, without effort,

Being unobscured and illuminating all without bias (*phyogs ris med*),

Is taught to be the "natural gnosis."

(L. 122a2) *skye med gdod nas grub pa'i chos nyid la // rgyu dang rkyen med btsal med snying po 'di // ma bsgribs* (L. 122a3) *kun la phyogs ris med gsal bas // rang 'byung ye shes zhes su bstan pa yin //*.

the semantic network of the terms *phyogs/ris med* and the role they play in such a “direct introduction” (*ngo sprod*) to the enlightened mind, that is for Prajñāraśmi the common ultimate view of all the contemplative lineages of Tibet, and from the perspective of the Great Perfection, the essence of all spiritual paths.

Among the various uses of these terms, two refer to the qualification of either emptiness or compassion, compared respectively to the space and the sun. The particularity of the *rDzogs chen* view is to integrate these two levels through the so-called conjunction of (1) primordial purity (*ka dag*), corresponding to emptiness; and (2) spontaneous presence (*lhun grub*), i.e. the dynamism of manifestation together with the corresponding enlightened compassionate responsiveness. The conjunction of these two aspects defines the all-including enlightened state of the Great Perfection. We shall thus examine how the terms *phyogs/ris med* serve to express the various facets of such “universal” or “impartial” perspective.

(a) Indeterminate/Infinite Space

According to this text, the enlightened mind is similar to space, without restrictions or bias (*rgya chad phyogs lhung med*) and complete liberation.³⁵ The nature of this fundamental element (*dhātu, dbyings*) is that it is primordially and spontaneously present. It is described to be all-including and all-pervading without inside or outside. It is beyond limits of extremes, as well as all directions, up, down or intermediates. This pure awareness is beyond the notions of large or narrow, it is empty space.³⁶ This nature is thus similar to space encompassing all directions (*phyogs 'byams*).³⁷ “Encompassing all directions” (*phyogs 'byams*) or “without direction” (*phyogs med*) points to a similar idea: infinite and total space beyond arbitrary, conventional distinctions of directions and reference points.

(b) Timeless Presence

Primordially present or presence since the origin (*gdod nas*), must be understood here as timeless. *Ris med* indicates especially the absence

³⁵ ChByDz, 3.10-11: *mkha' bzhin rnam dag rgya chad phyogs lhung bral // 'di ni yongs grol ka dag dgongs pa'o //*.

³⁶ 3-17.19: *dbyings kyi rang bzhin gdod nas lhun grub la // phyi dang nang med kun tu khyab par gdal // mtha' yi mu med steng 'og phyogs mtshams 'das // yangs dog gnyis med rig pa mkha' ltar dag //*.

³⁷ 4.2: *phyogs 'byams nam mkha' 'dra ba'i rang bzhin la //*.

of temporal succession: the space of the enlightened mind is without the orientation or reference (*ris med*) to before or after, it does not come or go, it includes all.³⁸ Without bias (*ris med*) opposing before and after, it is a spacious and vast equanimity.³⁹

(c) *Equanimity*

This notion of equality or equanimity (*mnyam nyid*) is decisive here. No parts can be found is the basis of suchness, it is without parts or center (*phyogs cha dbus med*). It has no object or objectification, i.e. separation, either. But it includes all manifestation while not interrupting its continuity in any way but embracing it in an equal expanse.⁴⁰ All phenomena are said to have the nature of equality. There is no one that does not remain in this equal expanse.⁴¹ If objects are examined to be equal in their bias (*ris mnyam*), they simply leave no traces in the enlightened mind.⁴²

(d) *Ultimate Fortress*

Freedom, security or peace is not found by rejecting anything but by transcending the very realm of opposition or conflict and embracing the perspective of the totality. Because in the state of equanimity, there is no interruption of the continuity of manifestation, it is the "fortress spontaneously present, encompassing everything impartially (*phyogs med*)," "the fortress of the primordial infinite expanse," "the fortress of the *dharmakāya*."⁴³ Poetically, on the infinite basis all-encompassing impartially (*phyogs med*), is built the stronghold of the enlightened mind which has no bias (*ris med*) neither for cyclic existence nor extinction.⁴⁴

³⁸ 4.5-6: *snga phyi ris med byang chub sems kyi klong // 'gro dang 'ong med kun tu khyab par gdal //*.

³⁹ 20.20: *snga phyi ris med mkha' mnyam yangs pa nyid //*.

⁴⁰ 4.9-10: *phyogs cha dbus med de bzhin nyid kyi gzhi // dmigs med rgyun chad med de mnyam pa'i klong //*.

⁴¹ 4.10-11: *thams cad chos nyid mnyam pa'i rang gzhi las // mnyam pa'i klong na mi gnas gcig kyang med //*.

⁴² 32.14-15: *yul rnamis ris mnyam gzhigs na rjes med tsam //*.

⁴³ 4.13-16: *mnyam nyid ngang la rgyun chad med pa'i phyir // lhun grub phyogs med kun khyab gdal ba'i rdzong // steng 'og bar med ye klong yangs pa'i rdzong // phyogs med kun shong skye med chos sku'i rdzong //*.

⁴⁴ 4.17-18: *phyogs med kun khyab gdal ba'i sa gzhi la // 'khor 'das ris med byang chub sems kyi mkhar //* . This may remind us the idea seen above that the Buddhist sage avoids any position and "sees security everywhere" (*Atthakavagga*, 953). We

(e) Non-Duality

Everything is included in the great equanimity without bias (*ris med*). Equal and infinite, this is the very expanse without subject-object duality.⁴⁵ Vajrasattva has exposed that non-duality is realized when there is no bias (*ris med*) distinguishing anything as “this,” that is to say as something separate, and that everything is equal, without objectification.⁴⁶ Because primordial gnosis is without partiality of bias, it cannot be shown as “this.” Within it all concepts of a nature are pacified.⁴⁷ Everything is transcended in an equal state not subjected to bias (*ris med*).⁴⁸

(f) Beyond Oppositions or Extremes

In the essence of phenomena, there is no bias (*ris med*) of distinction or negation.⁴⁹ Pure awareness is not limited by the limitations or bias (*rgya chad phyogs lhung med*) of oppositions such as spaciousness versus narrowness, high or low. The *yogin* is exhorted to abandon all such reference points which function by affirming something in opposition to something else.⁵⁰ This state transcends all contraries: it is beyond the opposition between appearance and emptiness. In harmony with the Middle Way (*Madhyamaka*), it is neither existent nor non-existent; natural gnosis is unbiased by the extremes of eternity or annihilation.⁵¹ Spontaneous and equal, the primordial element is not partial or biased (*phyogs dang ris med*), without any basis, root or sub-

would also consider the notion of the “inner citadel” used by Pierre Hadot in his interpretation of the Stoic philosophy of Marcus Aurelius, in which the notion of the *hégemonikon*, the ruling faculty of the mind, through the rectification of its own judgment has the capacity to remain unaffected by suffering. In the above-mentioned paper of Paul Demiéville, it was recognized in both Daoism and Buddhism that impartiality is what makes the sage invincible since he/she perceives nothing as an enemy, but embraces everything equally.

⁴⁵ 6.20-7.1: *ris med mnyam pa chen por 'ub chub pas // phyam gdal gzung 'dzin med pa'i klong nyid do //*.

⁴⁶ 19.2-4: *gang tshe 'di zhes tha dad ris med cing // thams cad phyam mnyam dmigs gtad med pa na // gnyis med rtogs zhes rdo rje sems dpas gsungs //*.

⁴⁷ 28.2-3: *rang 'byung ye shes phyogs dang ris med pas // 'di zhes mi mtshon rang bzhin spros kun zhi //*.

⁴⁸ 22.13-15: *thams cad ris med mnyam par phyam 'das pa //*.

⁴⁹ 23.16-17: *chos nyid ngang du dbye bsal ris med pas //*.

⁵⁰ 21.5-6: *yangs dog mtho dman med pa'i rig pa la // rgya chad phyogs lhung med kyis dmigs gtad shol //*.

⁵¹ 39.3: *rang byung ye shes rtag chad phyogs lhung med //*.

stance.⁵² Similar to space and pure, it has no birth or death, joy or sorrow. It is not biased (*ris med*) by the grasping of substances, or reified objects, and is free from the phenomena of cyclic existence or extinction.⁵³

(g) *Continuous Contemplation*

Without bias (*ris med*) opposing view and meditation, the intellect with its fixations and desires is destroyed.⁵⁴ This all-including state is thus beyond formal spiritual practice, beyond the opposition (*phyogs ris med*) between meditation and post-meditation,⁵⁵ or beyond the separation (*ris med*) between day and night: it is an equal overarching state of unity. In this state, cyclic existence, defined as the fixation on referential objects and characteristics of substantiality, is purified.⁵⁶

(h) *Shining Infinitely*

But the expense of the enlightened mind is not only static, or simply empty. It contains the potency (*rtsal*) of all manifestation. And from the perspective of the enlightened mind, that is to say of the totality, there is no opposition between manifestation and its absence: from the very moment when appearances manifest due to this dynamic power, there is no partiality or bias (*phyogs dang ris med pa*) opposing such a manifestation to non-manifestation. This power is not an essence whatsoever existing separately from the enlightened mind. Using a separate word is just a linguistic convention we use to refer to this intrinsic power. The enlightened mind is in itself a state not subject to change but it includes all possibility of change: there is actually not even an atom straying from it.⁵⁷ The essence is like the sun, it is illuminating the expense of the *Dharmadhātu*. The dynamic power (*rtsal*) is like the rays, they shine manifest everywhere, without

⁵² 8.18-19: *yod med ma yin lhun mnyam gdod ma'i dbyings // phyogs dang ris med gzhi rtsa dngos po med //*.

⁵³ 6.2-4: *sems nyid byang chud sems kyi rang bzhin ni // mkha' ltar dag pas skye shi bde sdug med // dngos po ris med 'khor 'das chos las grol //*.

⁵⁴ 22.3-4: *lta sgom ris med ched 'dzin 'dod blo zhig /*.

⁵⁵ 18.3-4: *nyams len ma shes thun mtshams phyogs ris med //*.

⁵⁶ 18.10-12: *nyin mtshan ris med mnyam par phyam gcig pas // dmigs gtad mtshan mar 'dzin pa'i 'khor ba sangs //*.

⁵⁷ 8.10-13: *rtsal las shar bar snang ba'i rang dus nas // shar dang ma shar phyogs dang ris med pas // rtsal yang brda tsam ngo bo 'ga' med pas // thams cad rtag tu 'pho 'gyur med pa'i ngang // byang chub sems las g.yos pa rdul tsam med //*.

bias (*ris med*).⁵⁸ Without the recognition of emptiness, this display produces the dualistic appearances. But as long as endures cyclic existence, enlightened actions are performed as well. They are the manifestation of an impartial compassion which is the dynamic power coming from the essence of the naturally settled state. This display (*rol pa*) accomplishes the benefit of others and all what is excellent.⁵⁹

**(i) The Perspective of the Totality
or the Unique Sphere (thig le nyag gcig)**

The *rDzogs chen* notion of the “unique sphere without edges or corners” (*thig le nyag gcig grwa zur med pa*) expresses perfectly this perspective of the totality. Everything, as it is, is circled in this expanse which has no division or exclusion.⁶⁰ The ultimate meaning of the primordial gnosis which has no rival, no opposition is included in the unique sphere without origination or cessation. It is without determination, all-including, the absence of all directions or extremes (*phyogs mtha' yongs kyi med*).⁶¹

(j) The Central Question of rDzogs chen Soteriology

The nature of phenomena, which is spontaneously present, has no limitation and is not biased.⁶² People who are attached by their biased perception of what is actually unbiased do not understand their own nature and are exiled from it.⁶³ Beyond the possibility of limitations or biases, one rests in one's own nature, as it is.⁶⁴ Without partiality, one is free. Spontaneous presence is free in the expanse.⁶⁵ Finally, the following quotation brilliantly encapsulates all the various facets explored here and it places the problem of partiality at the very center of *rDzogs chen* soteriology: partiality is the self-created

⁵⁸ 38.2-3: *ngo bo nyi bzhin chos dbyings klong na gsal // rtsal las zer bzhin kun shar ris med pas [...]*.

⁵⁹ 38.16-19: *'khor ba ji srid mdzad pa nye bar ston // 'di ni rang bzhin babs kyi ngo bo las // rtsal kyi thugs rje phyogs med shar ba ste // rol pas gzhan don phun sum tshogs pa yin //*.

⁶⁰ 5.8-9: *grwa zur med pa'i thig le zlum pas na // ji bzhin dbye bsal med pa'i klong du 'khyil //*.

⁶¹ 9.1-3: *rang byung ye shes ye zla med pa'i don // mi skye mi 'gag thig le gcig tu 'dus // ma nges kun khyab phyogs mtha' yongs kyi med //*.

⁶² 40.1-2: *mi g.yo lhun gyis grub pa'i chos nyid la // rgya chad med cing phyogs lhung bral bar gyur //*.

⁶³ 35.3-4: *phyogs med phyogs su 'dzin pas bcings pa nmams // rang bzhin ma shes [...]*.

⁶⁴ 36.14: *rgya chad phyogs lhung mi srid rang bzhin babs //*.

⁶⁵ 37.7: *phyogs med grol lo lhun grub klong du grol //*.

trap of the mind but the true nature of the mind is said to remain impartial, infinite, all-encompassing and free. Klong chen pa writes the following exhortations:

The unique sphere has no edges or corners (*grwa zur med pa*).
 What perceives it as one or different is the deluded mind.
 Natural gnosis is without causes or effects.
 To perceive it in the path of cyclic existence is the obstacle to enlightenment.
 Spontaneous presence is impartial (*phyogs med*) and free from extremes.
 To fixate on the extremes of partial views (*phyogs lta*) is the demon of pride.
 Emptiness without the characteristics of substances is uninterrupted.
 What imputes existence or nonexistence, appearance or emptiness is the mistaken mind.
 Thus, abandon the trap of whatever partiality or bias (*phyogs ris*) you hold!
 Know spontaneous presence without partiality (*phyogs med*) to be like space!⁶⁶

Conclusion: The Inspirational Power of the Great Perfection

Returning to the general question of impartiality, Paul Demiéville remarked that in Daoism, impartiality had a “metaphysical basis,” the Dao itself.⁶⁷ I would like to argue that similarly, in Tibetan Bud-

⁶⁶ 35.12-18: *thig le nyag gcig grwa zur med pa la // gcig dang tha dad 'dzin pa 'khrul pa'i sems // rang byung ye shes rgyu rkyen med pa la // 'khor ba'i lam du 'dzin pa byang chub gegs // lhun grub phyogs med mtha' dang bral ba la // phyogs lta'i mtha' la zhen pa snyems byed bdud // dngos mtshan med pa'i stong pa 'gag med la // yod med snang stong 'dogs pa log pa'i blo // des na gang 'dod phyogs ris gzeb bor la // lhun grub phyogs med nam mkha' ltar shes byos //.*

⁶⁷ *Choix d'études sinologiques*, p. 118: “Le Tao, l'absolu, est par définition une synthèse en laquelle se résolvent les contraires, les oppositions, les mille différences que constituent le monde. Il est tout ensemble l'un et le tout, comme l'axe qui commande la roue, mais qui reste ce point immobile au centre du mouvement. C'est en ce point axial que doit se placer le sage, qui doit rester impartial au milieu des conflits et des antagonismes [...].” In another insightful article about the spiritual metaphor of the mirror in East and West, Paul Demiéville demonstrated how the mirror expressed in Daoism the virtue of impartiality and non-action. See in particular “Le miroir spirituel,” Demiéville 1973b, pp. 136-137: “Tchouang-tseu recourt fréquemment à l'image du miroir pour illustrer l'impassibilité, la passivité, l'apathie, le désintéressement du saint taoïste, qui réagit à la nature, mais sans jamais agir pour son propre compte. [...] Quiet est l'esprit du Saint, *miroir du Ciel et de la Terre*, qui reflète toute la multiplicité des

dhism, the religious tolerance or eclecticism of the so-called *ris med* movement has its soteriological and epistemological foundation in the “proof of the great equanimity which is impartial” (*ris med mnyam pa chen po'i gtan tshigs*, LTDz, p. 84.6-7), the all-encompassing enlightened mind described in the Great Perfection as the “unique sphere without edges or corners” (*thig le nyag gcig grwa zur med pa*). Karmay, Samuel, Petit and others have remarked that *rDzogs chen* with its emphasis on an all-including state, provided the basis for the synthetic orientation and development of the *ris med* movement.⁶⁸ I have tried to show in this study that the same terms *phyogs/ris med* actually qualify in classical *rDzogs chen* literature this pure contemplative state. We may use thus the following categories to distinguish different levels of definition of being impartial (*ris med*): absolute or relative, view or conduct, internal or external. In this paper, I have thus focused mainly on the first aspects of those pairs, since we may say that the view comes first, and this is especially true in the Great Perfection: it introduces directly to the ultimate wisdom, the cultivation of which is then taken as the path. Its *modus operandi* thus transcends the dualistic/partial/partisan mind at the very outset.

As such, the Great Perfection is thus considered as the highest vehicle (in *rNying ma* and *Bon po* doxographies), the essence of all paths, the perspective embracing all other teachings and levels of realization.⁶⁹ Often intertwined with the Great Seal of the *bKa'*

choses!''' (Tchouang-tseu, XIII A). In his time, if Demiéville had been more familiar with *rDzogs chen*, he would certainly have included it too in his discussion, given the centrality of the metaphor of the mirror for this tradition: like the mirror, the nature of mind is said to be empty and clear. It has the capacity to reflect everything, but in itself, is never affected by its reflections.

⁶⁸ Karmay 2007 (1988), pp. 13-14: “In spite of the aloofness of the *rDzogs chen* philosophy, it always had a leaning toward eclecticism, perhaps due to the positive character of its philosophical outlook. A number of Tibet’s great luminaries and eclectic figures are to be found within this tradition. [...] This universal tendency was further enhanced by the nineteenth century Eclectic movement led by such great masters, ‘Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-brtse (1820-1892) and Kong-sprul Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (1813-1899) and on the Bonpo side, Shar-rdza bKra-shis rgyal-mtshan (1859-1934).” Samuel 1993, p. 538: “It can be seen why *Dzogchen* appealed to the *Ris med* masters; its emphasis on an unlimited, all-embracing Enlightened state within which all partial teachings could find their goal provided the basis for their synthetic orientation”. Petit 1999, p. 99: “Traditionally, it is said that the Great Perfection is the pinnacle of vehicles, providing a unified vista of all philosophical systems and spiritual attainments of the various paths. It would seem to be in this spirit that the *Ris med* tendency developed.”

⁶⁹ This idea is poetically expressed by *Klong chen pa* in the work studied here: When one attain the summit of a majestic mountain, one can contemplate all the valleys below at the same time, while from the valleys, one is deprived from the vision of the nature of the summit. Similarly, the Great Perfection, the indestructible heart essence, is the pinnacle vehicle and sees clearly the meaning of all

brgyud pa or of the Shangs pa, the Great Perfection represents in Tibet an epitome of the contemplative ideal of impartiality⁷⁰ with a constant emphasis on direct introduction, heartfelt instructions and direct experience. It is this way that we must also acknowledge its inspirational power for the spiritual revival in 19th century Khams. In Buddhist epistemology and soteriology, direct perception, and indeed especially yogic direct perception (*yogi-pratyakṣa*, *rnal 'byor mngon sum*), is considered as supreme, being directly in touch with reality, life itself, a life felt from within, always fresh, new, moment by moment.⁷¹ Such experiences may be seen as giving access to a creative, nurturing, and regenerative spiritual power, reviving constantly the tradition and its transmission. Following the view of the Great Perfection, the nature of mind is not simply empty; it is also endowed with all qualities shining spontaneously. Thus, if we have insisted here on the "neutral" contemplative attitude of impartiality, it would be mistaken to see it simply as a passive state. To the contrary, it must be finally said that such an attitude seems to have been the source of a considerable dynamism and energy in the history of Buddhism, not to mention the itinerant life and teaching activity of the historical Buddha himself. It is in this way that we may consider the very active and dynamic aspects of the 19th century *ris med* movement not specifically addressed here, but of crucial importance: the

[...]” *Op. cit.*: 15.11-14: *ji ltar ri rgyal rtse mor phyin pa na // dma' ba'i lung rnamdus gcig mthong ba ste // lung gi rtse mo'i rang bzhin mthong dang bral // de bshin a ti rdo rje snying po ni // theg pa'i yang rtse don kun gsal bar mthong l.*

⁷⁰ Even if its elevated role of the ninth and supreme vehicle can indeed also give rise to discourses of superiority, if not of sectarianism. On the other hand, even if *ris med* discourses (in the external sense of “non-sectarian”) can be associated with an emphasis on the unity of the ultimate intent of *Madhyamaka*, *Mahāmudrā* and *rDzogs chen* (a theme which has a long history in itself), it is also clear that *rDzogs chen* is practically given the highest position in those associated trends, as it is evident in the context of their contemplative retreat programs (with a progression following actually the order *Madhyamaka*, *Mahāmudrā* and *rDzogs chen*). Thus, we have focused here on *rDzogs chen* as providing the unified vista and inspiration, or “ultimate *ris med*.” The paradox between, on one hand, the right view (leading to a hierarchy of vehicles and their respective views, up to the ultimate view of *rDzogs chen* for rNying ma pa and Bon po), and on the other hand, the “absence of grasping at a view” is only apparent. The progression of views is precisely defined as a progressive disappearance of grasping (i.e. of using the dualistic mind). And on the way of this progression, the methodology of the *Madhyamaka* is particularly eloquent and sophisticated.

⁷¹ The contemplative life in the tradition of the Great Perfection may lead to embracing solitude in mountain hermitages, opening one's self to the immensity of the sky; or retreating into the dark, revealing the secret luminosity of the nature of mind; but beyond fixed roles, places or activities, the fundamental retreat place of the Great Perfection, “the fortress of the *dharmakaya*,” the place of intrinsic freedom, appears to be always accessible here and now, anytime and anywhere.

intense collaborative activity of revealing the treasures of Padmasambhava (*gter ma*) and the huge collective effort to collect and revitalize the various ancient lineages and traditions of Tibet for future generations.

ABSTRACT

The Tibetan expression *phyogs/ris med* ("impartial") and its variations have come to describe a Tibetan Buddhist revival in 19th century Khams with E. Gene Smith's translation as "non-sectarian." In an effort to avoid both naïve idealism and naïve realism, this paper argues that so-called non-sectarianism in Tibet, as a ethical attitude and social response to the limitations inherent to the institutionalization of Buddhist traditions, draws its inspiration from a more fundamental and inner Buddhist value: impartiality. While this represents a core element of the teachings of the historical Buddha, it is not only descriptive of the state of the sage but also prescriptive for the aspirants to freedom and wisdom. In this way, such a prescription is actually deeply rooted in the exercises of contemplation, with major psychological and epistemological implications. This fact is illustrated here by showing how the terms *phyogs/ris med* play actually an important role in the phenomenological descriptions and injunctions of Tibetan contemplative lineages and literature, with special reference to the Great Perfection (*rDzogs chen*). If a distinctive feature of the general history of Buddhism has been the periodic revivals of the ideal of contemplative life and impartiality, in Tibet, the Great Perfection, emphasizing direct perception and instantaneous realization of an all-encompassing state, represented a major resource for the eclectic luminaries of 19th century Khams, empowering their vast activity of revitalization of Tibetan traditions.

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A Luminous Transcendence of Views: The Thirty Apophatic Topics in dPal dbyangs's *Thugs kyi sgron ma*

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The constructed nostalgia of the later Great Perfection, or rDzogs chen, tradition gazes backward temporally and geographically toward eighth-century India, reminiscing an era in which the subcontinent is thought to have served as generous benefactor of Dharma gifts to the fledging Buddhist empire of Tibet. Insistence on the familiar Buddhist requirements for true transmission—authenticity and legitimacy founded in lineage and longevity—certainly inspired many of its textual “revelations” beginning in the eleventh century. Many of those nostalgic constructions of rNying ma history have been well documented by modern scholars.

It would be rash to assert, however, that despite all those imaginings, there were no historical primordia of the Great Perfection in the preceding centuries. The textual roots of the Mind Series (*sems sde*) texts are testament to these early stirrings, as are the Dunhuang manuscripts identified by Sam van Schaik as expressing a form of “Tibetan Zen.”¹ A third seed was planted via the Tibetan Mahāyoga tantra tradition, and within it, germinations of Great Perfection genealogy, observable prominently in the ninth-century works of dPal dbyangs, who in some colophons and later histories is designated gNyan dPal dbyangs. His works include six canonical verse texts retrospectively entitled *sGron ma drug*, or *Six Lamps*,² and the *rDo rje*

¹ Sam van Schaik, “The Early Days of the Great Perfection,” *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 27.1: 167 and 201.

² The *Six Lamps* texts are as follows: *The Lamp of the Mind* (*Thugs kyi sgron ma*), *The Lamp of the Correct View* (*lTa ba yang dag sgron ma*), *The Lamp Illuminating the Extremes* (*mTha'i mun sel sgron ma*), *The Lamp of Method and Wisdom* (*Thabs shes sgron ma*), *The Lamp of the Method of Meditation* (*bsGom thabs kyi sgron ma*), and *The Lamp of the Precious View* (*lTa ba rin chen sgron ma*). These are P5918, P5919, P5920, P5921, P5922, and P5923, respectively. There are other *Lamp* collections in both Nyingma and Bön traditions, usually comprising four or six texts. The most prominent example of these is from the Bönpo Great Perfection lineage, the *sGron*

sems dpa' zhus lan (*Vajrasattva Questions and Answers*) catechism found at Dunhuang in three manuscript copies. I have discussed these texts and their most likely Indian inspirations elsewhere. Here, I highlight a particular text within the *Six Lamps*, his *Thugs kyi sgron ma* (*Lamp of the Mind*), as intending to establish, quite early on, a standard set of topics we see well developed in systemizations of the early Great Perfection tradition a few centuries later, and perhaps even before that, in Mind Series texts such as those attributed to Mañjuśrīmitra like the *Byang chub kyi sems rdo la gser zhun* and the *Byang chub sems bsgom pa*.³

Of all dPal dbyangs's texts, the *Thugs kyi sgron ma* is the ideological, linguistic, and practical hinge to his Mayājāla corpus as a whole, linking the other five of the *Six Lamps* texts and providing convincing evidence for accepting those *Six Lamps* as a collection, as well as offering insight to the later interpretations of his catechism. The *Thugs kyi sgron ma* displays dPal dbyangs's full range of presentation. It includes, on the one hand, dPal dbyangs's direct recommendations to Mahāyoga tantra, and on the other hand, his depictions of the realization of reality as utterly unstructured, unmediated, and transcendent of any dichotomization or reification, using the apophatic language sprinkled throughout the rest of the *Six Lamps* texts. Thus, by emphasizing these two elements—the transgressive and the transcendent—within a single text, the *Thugs kyi sgron ma* may have served as a valuable field guide to early Tibetan Mahāyoga and at least to some degree as a useful strategic plan for the cultivation of something more sustainable and vibrant on Tibetan soil, the Great Perfection. As I hope to show, dPal dbyangs's very deliberate indexing of these topics appears to have been intended to standardize them as interpretive categories even while undercutting the value of reliance upon them as such, redefining Mahāyoga tantra as it found its earliest shape in Tibet.

ma drug gi gdams pa. See Christopher Hatchell's "Advice on the Six Lamps" in *Naked Seeing: The Great Perfection, the Wheel of Time, and Visionary Buddhism in Renaissance Tibet* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), and Jean-Luc Achard's English translation in the *Six Lamps: Secret Dzogchen Instructions of the Bön Tradition* (Boston: Wisdom, 2017).

³ See Namkhai Norbu and Kennard Lipman's *Primordial Experience: An Introduction to rDzogs-chen Meditation* (Boston: Shambhala, 2001). Karen Liljenberg has discovered parallel passages to dPal dbyangs's *Lamp* text the *Thabs shes sgron ma* in the *rTse mo byung rgyal*, a text she has identified as belonging to the *sems sde* corpus the *Sems sde lung chen po bco brgyad*. Karen Liljenberg, "A Critical Study of the Thirteen Later Translations of the Dzogchen Mind Series" (doctoral dissertation, SOAS, 2012), 57-60. I suspect there are further discoveries to be made of such borrowings between early Tibetan Mahāyoga texts and those of the early Mind Series. See also Liljenberg's paper elsewhere in this issue.

*Addressing (and Dismissing) the Terms:
dPal byangs on the Indian Philosophical Schools*

dPal dbyangs unabashedly announces his intention to promote the Mahāyoga system throughout his corpus. This sense of mission drove his textual production, and he often asserted Mahāyoga's superiority in relative terms. dPal dbyangs devoted a substantial introduction in his *Thugs kyi sgron ma* to doxographical discussion, matching his contemporaries' concerns to sort out the great complexities and internal contradictions of the Buddhist traditions entering Tibet in the late Imperial Period. At issue for many Tibetans were the Indian epistemological and ontological issues promoted by such scholars as Nāgārjuna, Bhāvaviveka, Asaṅga, and Vasubandhu. In both the *Thugs kyi sgron ma* and his *rDo rje sems dpa'i zhus lan*, dPal dbyangs treats these forms of mainstream Indian Buddhist philosophy, and in summarizing the central debates between them, mentions a handful of schools and analytical techniques by name. Though brief, his discussions portray a familiarity with the terms of the arguments, and assume a similar knowledge on the part of his audience.

The *Thugs kyi sgron ma* mentions three major Indian philosophical schools—the Sautrāntika, the Yogācāra, and the Mādhyamika. Within the text's general organizational schema, one would expect to find in the place held by these three schools in this section of the text a description of the three vehicles of śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva. dPal dbyangs's displacement of those vehicles with the three Indian philosophical schools may indicate that he ranked this list of schools in ascending order of correctness, but it is more likely that this was the standard order of ranking. There is precedent for this within the later rNying ma tradition, in which the three philosophical schools are associated with the vehicles of śrāvaka, pratyekabuddha, and bodhisattva.⁴ Earlier in the text, in the only explicit mention he makes of these three middle vehicles, his descriptions are so brief (a single line for each), that it is not possible to claim with certainty that dPal dbyangs intended a direct correlation between the three vehicles and the three schools, nor does he make clear which vehicle(s) might espouse which view(s). However, regardless of our inability to assign intent in this case, his replacement of a discussion

⁴ The Sautrāntika school is normally associated in the later rNying ma tradition with the *śrāvakayāna* and *pratyekabuddhayāna*. The Yogācāra and the Mādhyamika are associated with the *bodhisattvayāna*. bDud 'joms Rinpoche 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, Matthew Kapstein, and Gyurme Dorje, *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism: Its Fundamentals and History* (Somerville: Wisdom, 2012), 156-160.

of vehicles with a discussion of philosophical schools does indeed fit with his treatment of all aspects of religious tradition under the rubric of views. Many scholars have observed a closer affiliation of rNying ma thought with the Yogācāra than with the Mādhyamika. As the work of David Germano, William Waldon, and Sam van Schaik has shown, however, despite the relative strength of its influence on rNying ma schools generally, Yogācāra philosophy has a “complex history” within rDzogs chen systems, and that history cannot be mapped as a unidirectional trajectory of development.⁵

While the central texts of all three of these schools were most likely part of the early Tibetan monastic curriculum, the primary affiliations during the early Imperial era for scholars in Tibet were with two hybrid schools that formed as subdivisions of the Mādhyamika: the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika and the Sautrāntika-Mādhyamika.⁶ The tenets of both of these subschools of Mādhyamika appear to have been established there by the mid-eighth century. Of these, the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika teachings were propounded by the famed Indian scholars Śāntarakṣita and Kamalaśīla at bSam yas, thus becoming the normative philosophical system taught there from the monastery's establishment to the eleventh century. The primary sources of information about the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika of this period are Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakalaṅkāra* and his disciple Kamalaśīla's commentary, the *Madhyamakalaṅkāra-kārikā*. The basic arguments of both Mādhyamika schools were subsequently summarized in Zhang Ye shes sde's early ninth-century Tibetan doxography, the *lTa ba'i khyad par*. According to the *lTa ba'i khyad par*, the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika asserts that conventionally, consciousness knows objects, but that this is only because the objects themselves are of the

⁵ Sam van Schaik, “Adaptations and Transformations of India Yogācāra in Tibetan rDzogs chen,” *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*, no 43, Jan 2018, 9-31. See also his *Approaching the Great Perfection: Simultaneous and Gradual Methods of rDzogs chen Practice in the Klong chen snying thig* (Boston: Wisdom, 2004). A more comprehensive study can be found in David Germano and William Waldon's “A Comparison of Ālaya-Vijñāna in Yogācāra and rDzogs chen,” in *Buddhist Thought and Applied Psychological Research: Transcending the Boundaries*, eds. Nauriyal, Drummond, and Lal (New York: Routledge, 2006).

⁶ These two early subforms of Mādhyamika thought in Tibet are described by Zhang Ye shes sde in his eighth-century *lTa ba'i khyad par*, PT 814, 5a-9b. The former is also mentioned in Nyi ma'i 'od's *lTa ba'i rim pa*, ITJ 607, 6v4. The founding of Sautrāntika-Mādhyamika is attributed to Bhāvaviveka. Though the first of these terms does not appear in any known Indic literature, Vimalamitra mentions “the two forms of Mādhyamika in his *Rim gsum*, P. 4742567b7, saying “dbu ma rnam gnyis yin te....” See David Seyfort Ruegg's *The Literature of the Madhyamaka School of Philosophy in India* (Weisbaden: Harrassowitz, 1981), 59, and Kennard Lipman's “A Study of Śāntarakṣita's *Madhyamakalaṅkāra*” (University of Saskatchewan, 1979).

intrinsic nature of that consciousness. External objects are like those seen in a dream—nonexistent as such. In adopting this stance, Ye shes sde disagrees with the Sautrāntika-Mādhyamika school, which asserts conversely that objects do indeed exist conventionally. On the level of ultimate truth, the two schools adhere to the basic Mādhyamika premise that mind is free of both singularity and multiplicity of essences, and therefore, its existence is not established at all. Thus, it is primarily their divergent stances on the issue of the conventional level of truth that differentiates the two sub-schools.

We can go some distance in understanding dPal dbyangs's position on these subschools of the Mādhyamika by looking into his *Zhus lan*. In the answers he offers there to three of the questions posed by an unnamed interlocutor—Questions 24, 25, and 28—dPal dbyangs addresses the fundamental tenets of the two hybrid philosophical schools. In his answer to Question 24, dPal dbyangs begins by addressing the relevance to tantra of the essential distinction between the two schools. He is asked, “For the mantric practitioner, how is it best to view [the distinction between] the two—Yogā[carā]-Mādhyamika and Sautrāntika-Mādhyamika?” Without explicitly identifying with the former, dPal dbyangs seems to align himself with its tenets in the answer that follows.

All the meditative stabilizations which fail to view those marks [of a buddha] as merely aspects of consciousness will lack a connection to the mind, and therefore will fail to accomplish the One.”⁷

In the answer to the question that follows, Question 25, dPal dbyangs explores the debate further. “If one does not view those marks conventionally as merely mind, and yet is aware of there being no phenomena whatsoever, is it not still possible to achieve transformation through meditative stabilization?” In other words, if we read “there being no phenomena” as “there being no phenomena in the ultimate sense,” might the Sautrāntika-Mādhyamika interpretation bring about buddhahood? His answer clearly refutes such a possibility.

[If there were] an unrelated meditative stabilization on an existent other [than mind], the mind could not be transformed in [meditating on] that other object. In the case [of a meditative stabilization]

⁷ *gsang sngags spyod pa rnam kyī tshul gyis ni/ mtshan ma'i ting 'dzin thabs la dbang sgyur bas/ rnam rig tsam du mā bltas ting 'dzin kun/ sems dang 'brel ba myed pas gcig myi 'grub/*. The reference to “accomplishing one” is unclear. It may refer to accomplishing one or the other of these schools' aims, but I think more likely it refers to accomplishing the single Dharmakāya.

upon there being no [ultimately existent phenomena] whatsoever, it would thus be impossible for a mind to cause [anything] to appear.⁸

In such passages as these, we find dPal dbyangs actively thinking about tantric practice in relationship to specific ontological and epistemic positions. However, in a final question in the *Zhus lan*, addressing the issues of conventionally existent external objects, dPal dbyangs warns that simple adherence to the philosophical position that external phenomena do not exist (as in Yogācāra-Mādhyamika) is not sufficient. The interlocutor asks, "If one engages in calm abiding without conceptualizing external objects, but still possessing a view which clings to self, will there be no liberation?" to which dPal dbyangs answers,

Having completely abandoned attachment to the self, there is no clinging to [external] phenomena anywhere. As long as there is a deceiver clinging to self, although one attains an abiding calm as a mountain, there will be no liberation.⁹

This brings us to dPal dbyangs's final conclusion regarding all the main scholastic interpretations of reality available to him. To whatever degree dPal dbyangs's views align with Yogācāra or Yogācāra-Mādhyamika sets of epistemological assertions, his project is not to conform to any particular tenet system, but rather to cut through the reification of concepts entirely, which latter activity he sees as characteristic of all philosophical disputation. His meditative experiments in seeking to integrate Indian Buddhist speculative thought with his own views serve in the end to subvert the importance of articulating any particular stance at all. Instead, dPal dbyangs employs a different vocabulary, unencumbered with logical negotiations using Indian Buddhist terminology and conceptual frameworks. In this, he declines to embrace even the Mādhyamika foundations or methodologies of the Yogācāra-Mādhyamika position.

This is made quite clear in his *Thugs kyi sgron ma*.

[The Mādhyamika] dismiss the particulars of extreme [positions]. In so doing, topics such as meditation, great nirvana, the existence and nonexistence of appearances, accomplishment and non-accomplishment by means of reasoning, and so forth are debated, and the extremes are examined. [Yet,] from such verbal conventions,

⁸ 'brel myed ting 'dzin gzhan na sgom//gzhan kyi yul la 'gyur ba myed//ci yang myed pa nyid la yang//sems kyi de phyir snang myi nus/.

⁹ bdag tu 'dzin pa yongs su spangs nas ni//chos su 'dzin par byed pa gang yang myed//ngar 'dzin sgyu mkhan yod kyi bar du ni//ri 'dra'i zhi gnas thob kyang grol myi 'gyur/.

they thereby establish [those very extremes], [creating] a subject-object dualism.¹⁰

Though its aim may be worthy, dPal dbyangs asserts that even Mādhyamika positions create the sort of conceptual dichotomization they attempt to avoid by arguing via verbal conventions. It is clear that dPal dbyangs finds fault not merely with verbal convention, but with the deeper project of attempting to eradicate extreme attitudes through reasoning itself, a sort of unskillful word game.

Thus finding all philosophical schools lacking, dPal dbyangs turns his critique briefly to what he calls the outer tantras, Kṛīya, Yoga, and Ubhayā. Despite the latter's attempts at transcending dichotomization through claiming to take the fruit as the path and to see cause and effect as indivisible, they perpetuate it through asserting "hollow" views, similarly to the Indian schools, and coupling these with "hollow," externally oriented practices. This outer tantric grasping at 'pure' vows and speech is like "rinsing a sword made of water." In conclusion to the whole first half of the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, dPal dbyangs pronounces that "Although all [are established] as free [from extremes], by means of extremes, there remains an extreme. Therefore, they never reach certainty."¹¹

Such certainty, according to dPal dbyangs, can only be found in his Mayājāla system, that of the Mahāyoga. In the presentation of tantric thought which makes up the rest of the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, he avoids the terminology of the preceding descriptions and turns instead to the apophatic and transcendent language characteristic of the rest of the *Six Lamps* collection. The distinction he makes in the two sections of that text serves as an abdication of exclusive affiliation with any of the Indian philosophical schools or other forms of tantra, and suggests that dPal dbyangs promoted the Mahāyoga for its ability to transcend discursiveness itself, and to bring about epistemic and ontological realizations that could be neither contained nor expressed via any of those earlier frameworks.

¹⁰ *mtha' yi bye brag sel byed cing/ de 'dra bsam gtan 'das chen cing/ snang ba yod dang med pa dang/ rigs pas 'grub dang ma grub sogs/ de dag la rtsod mtha' tshol ba/ snyed nas des 'jog bzung 'dzin can/.*

¹¹ *kun kyang mtha' yis bral ba' ang mtha' / yin phyir nges pa' i blo mi bzhag/.*

dPal dbyangs's Thirty Apophatic Topics

Kriya and Yoga tantra praxis rests on what dPal byangs identifies as the dynamic of sound. The mantras with their cosmos-constructing reverberations, the illuminative mantric syllables enthroned on lotuses and moons as literary bodies of awakening, and the role of Speech as one of the three manifestations of Buddhahood exemplify the easily recognizable centrality of sound in classical tantra systems. dPal dbyangs's fundamental criticism in the *Thugs kyi sgron ma* is not only of lower forms of tantra, however, but of all Buddhist and non-Buddhist tenet systems so asserted. Turning to the mistaken utterance in all doctrinal pronouncements, he declares:

By means of the dynamic of a single sound, one has a particular realization. In the first sound lies the very totality of all phenomena and abodes. Yet, having been named, what is real is reversed, and consequently, takes on a completely fallacious meaning. ...The terms used to indicate views, knowledge, primordial wisdom, and so forth, are distinct from the meaning of each individual phenomenon. They are to be illuminated as utterly unmixed.¹²

With this, dPal dbyangs launches his teachings on the views of Mahāyoga tantra, or the Great Vehicle of Method (*thabs kyi theg pa chen po*),¹³ which makes up the core content of the text. His striking shift in terminology from the preceding third of the text sets the stage for the remainder of the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, most commonly describing Mahāyoga realization in thoroughly negating terms. In keeping with extant versions of the text, I preserve its verse format here to highlight what David Germano might call its poetic "rhetoric of absence."¹⁴

The **unoriginated Thusness**
Is **empty** and **without appearance**,
Nondual and **equal**,
Nothing at all, ineffable and **inconceivable**,
Unabiding, unobservable, without thought, and

¹² *sgra gcig don gyis khyad par rtogs/ dang po chos kun gnas bubs nyid/ dang por mtshan cing dngos bzlog dang/ gnyis par yang dag bden bral don/ [...] lta ba rig pa ye shes sogs/ mtshon pa'i sgra grags chos rnam kyil/ rang rang don rnam tha dad pa/ khyad par ma 'dres gsal bya'i phyir/.*

¹³ Here, dPal dbyangs appears to be citing Buddhaguhya's *Mārgavyūha*, as I have shown elsewhere. See Kammie Takahashi, "Contribution, Attribution, and Selective Lineal Amnesia" in *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* no. 32, Avril 2015, pp. 5-23.

¹⁴ David Germano, "Architecture and Absence in the Secret History of rDzogs Chen," *Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies* 17.2 (Winter 1994): 203-335.

**Beyond extremes, utterly pure, and
 Without characteristics or aspirations.**
 In the dharmatā, the dharmadhātu itself,
 There are **no elaborations, no comings or goings,**
No obstructing appearances, nor any attainment.
 There is **no freedom, liberation, or accomplishment,**
No conventional or ultimate truths,
No nonattachment or intrinsic nature,
No immateriality, desirelessness, or logic,
No selflessness, otherlessness, nor any sphere of activity whatso-
 ever.¹⁵

The passage resembles others in dPal dbyangs's corpus in which negative descriptors clear a conceptual space, but its length and symmetry set it apart. In structure and method very similar to the *Vajracchedikā Prajñāpāramitā Sūtra*, which is ordered around rejections of the fundamental Buddhist doctrine of the six *pāramitā*, and to the *Prajñāpāramitāhṛdaya Sūtra*, which is ordered around rejections of several other essential doctrines such as the five aggregates, the six senses, and so forth, dPal dbyangs's *Thugs kyi sgron ma* and indeed these verses themselves establish the thirty topics as sites of inquiry while denying them any ultimate validity as real. While some, such as abiding and observation, are almost universally denied in some way throughout Mahāyāna literature, others such as desirelessness and nonattachment are more radical states or values to deny. It would not be surprising, especially given the early Tibetan Buddhist authorial practice of seamlessly incorporating other material into one's own text, to find this rhythmic, lyrical passage also preserved elsewhere. In any case, whatever its source, dPal dbyangs undoubtedly sought to highlight its contents. This is not a 'bru 'grel word-by-word commentary, however. The remaining two-thirds of the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*—its ideological center—is structured on those thirty foundations as topics, addressing each (bolded in the above passage) one by one in some detail and from a variety of angles, constituting the embedded verses as a table of contents for the Mahāyoga core of the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*.

¹⁵ *mtshon phyir ma skyes de bzhin nyid/ stong pa nyid dang snang ba med/ gnyis su med dang mnyam pa nyid/ chi'ang min dang smra bsams 'das/ mi gnas mi dmigs mi rtog dang/ mtha' bral rnam par dag pa dang/ mtshan med smon pa med pa dang/ chos nyid chos kyi dbyings nyid dang/ spros bral 'gro 'ong med pa dang/ suang dang 'gag med thob pa med/ grol dang thar dang thob pa dang/ kun rdzob don dam bden pa dang/ ma chags pa dang rang bzhin dang/ dngos med zhen med rigs pa dang/ bdag med gzhan med spyod yul med/.*

In thirty discrete sections ordered according to the verse, dPal dbyangs redresses the ranked, mistaken perspectives outlined in his doxography, ranging from the non-Buddhist nihilists and eternalists, to proponents of Yogācāra and Mādhyamika, the śrāvaka of the three lower vehicles, and the lower tantras of Kriyā and Yoga.¹⁶ As he draws out those perspectives on each topic, dPal dbyangs reveals their mistaken attempts to reject, deny, abandon, and overcome negative emotions, mistaken thoughts, and so forth. For dPal dbyangs, their fault lies primarily with their reliance on discursive methods involving the very conceptual and reifying polarizations they seek thereby to eradicate.

According to this presentation, those lesser approaches begin with a worthy teaching or idea, such as the unoriginated, but proceed to one extreme or another in conceptualizing that idea or putting it into practice, almost always serving to reify an absence. dPal dbyangs performs the syntactical feat of undercutting those verbal acts of negating, denying, and so forth through reasoned conceptualization without himself becoming mired in such activities, exposing their methods as mistaken due to their clinging either to the rejected element's absence or to the very act of rejecting. In his enactment of the Mahāyoga position which concludes his treatment of each topic, dPal dbyangs provides a glimpse of complete freedom from the attempt at elimination, from the reification of elimination, and even from attempts at the elimination of reification of elimination. It is a thorough departure from both sūtric Buddhist theory regarding the severing of the afflictions and from lower tantric assumptions regarding purificatory rites intending deeper purified states.

For example, on the concept 'Beyond Extremes' from the sixth line of the verse, he opens with a list of lesser categorizations of the topic's meaning.

As for what are renowned as [methods of] overcoming the "extremes," these are: formlessness free of the two wrong extremes [of eternalism and nihilism]; freedom from partial knowledge of origination and cessation [of suffering]; intrinsic awareness that is freedom from the eight, four, and two extremes; and obtaining the good quality of being free from extremes while simultaneously conceptualizing the extremes as defects.¹⁷

¹⁶ Curiously, he does not address pratyekabuddha or bodhisattva vehicles, or Ubhayā-tantra, in this section.

¹⁷ *mtha' zhes thub par grags pa rnams/ log pa'i mtha' gnyis bral gzugs med/ skye 'gag cha shes bral ba dang/ rang rig mtha' bgyad bzhi gnyis bral/ mtha' la skyon du rtoq byed cing/ mtha' bral yon tan len byed pa/*. The eight extremes are identified in later rNying-ma tradition as creation, cessation, nihilism, eternalism, coming, going, diver-

He undermines those perspectives, now revealed as mistaken, with a passage on the importance of eliminating any sense of extremes altogether.

These are methods of overcoming [the extremes] while depending [upon an existence of the extremes themselves]. Therefore, even a 'freedom' from extremes is the chief of all extremes. Having made the conventional into an object of knowledge, they are mistaken.¹⁸

Finally, dPal dbyangs reveals the Mahāyoga transcendence of all dichotomies, including parsing things into extremes.

Although absolute freedom from the extremes should be understood, those known as the eight extremes and so forth are [mere] appearances to intrinsically aware primordial wisdom. Therefore, elaborations at the very moment of compassion are merely nominal at that time, because they don't exist. Nonduality is free of extremes. The same camphor which is called 'medicine' is nondual with 'cool poison'. Thus, once one is liberated, those [descriptors] become mere utterances. Although it is indistinguishable from arriving at an extreme, there is no contact with anything whatsoever. Therefore, it is explained as the highest form of freedom from extremes.¹⁹

Thus, dPal dbyangs shows how lesser systems attempt to distance their approach from extremes of view while inadvertently reconstituting them. Without falling into the trap of explicitly asserting the existence of extremes, he evokes a freedom that neither reifies nor eliminates, but is spontaneously free by means of a realization of the absence of any extremes such as 'medicine' and 'poison'.

sity, and identity. See bDud 'joms Rinpoche's *The rNying Ma School of Tibetan Buddhism*, vol. 2, 158. The four extremes are those addressed within Nāgārjuna's tetralemma: being, nonbeing, both being and non-being, and neither being nor non-being.

¹⁸ *yang dag mtha' bral shes bya ba'ang/ mtha' brgyad la sogs grags pa rnams/ rang rig ye shes suang pa'i phyir/ spros pa thugs rje'i dus nyid na/ ming tsam der red med pa'i phyir/ mtha' dang bral ba gnyis su med/ sman zhes bya ba'i ga bur dus/ grang ba'i dug dang gnyis med ltar/ bral rjes brjod pa de kho na/ thug ba'i mtha' dang dbyer med la/ gang du'ang thug pa med pa'i phyir/ mtha' bral bla mar bshad pa yin/.*

¹⁹ *yang dag mtha' bral shes bya ba'ang/ mtha' brgyad la sogs grags pa rnams/ rang rig ye shes suang pa'i phyir/ spros pa thugs rje'i dus nyid na/ ming tsam der red med pa'i phyir/ mtha' dang bral ba gnyis su med/ sman zhes bya ba'i ga bur dus/ grang ba'i dug dang gnyis med ltar/ bral rjes brjod pa de kho na/ thug ba'i mtha' dang dbyer med la/ gang du'ang thug pa med pa'i phyir/ mtha' bral bla mar bshad pa yin/.*

This *via negativa* methodology is mirrored throughout the *Six Lamps* collection. In the *Thabs shes sgron ma*, dPal dbyangs explains that there can be no aim to one's practice of Mahāyoga:

If one knows the single authentic method by which sentient beings are awakened, and that one's own mind itself is awakened, then there is nothing else to achieve. Therefore, neither is there anything to abandon.²⁰

If one's mind is already awakened, this renders nonexistence an impossibility. In the *lTa ba rin chen sgron ma*, dPal dbyangs employs the common simile of a dream to examine this illusory nature of reality. The dreamlike qualities of appearances cannot be reified if one realizes the natural state of all things to be unoriginated.

As for the mirage of nonexistence within appearance itself, there arises no awareness of nonexistence for those who know it [to be a mirage]. The wise who realize the unoriginated, intrinsic nature of phenomena do not reify it as unoriginated emptiness. If the intelligent who possess awareness, unoriginated, primordially pacified, nondual, unelaborated self-awareness, do not abide even in the sphere of the ineffable, how could they perceive [a dichotomy of] real and conventional?²¹

Finally, in *lTa ba yang dag sgron ma*, dPal dbyangs goes so far as to declare the Mahāyoga free even of the elimination of the reification of elimination, again relying on dream imagery to make his point.

Just as the blisses and sufferings of one's dreams are equal in their intrinsic nature once one has awoken, so both conceptual and non-conceptual consciousnesses are completely equal once one has insightful awareness. Similarly, once one knows that throughout the three times, the utterly pure does not transcend one's own intrinsic nature, and once one no longer pursues the elimination of reification, the natural sphere emerges, and thus, there will be no need of fabrication.²²

²⁰ *sems can sang rgyas bden par tshul gcig cing/ rang gi sems nyid sangs rgyas yin shes nal/ gzhan nas bsgrub par bya ba ci yang med/ de lta bas na spang bar bya ba'ang med/.*

²¹ *snang ba nyid na med pa'i smig rgyu la/ shes ldan rnam ni med pa'i blo mi 'byung/ chos rnam rang bzhin ma skyes rtogs pa yi/ mkhas pas skye med stong par sgro mi 'dogs/ ji bzhin ma skyes gdod nas zhi ba yi/ gnyis med spros bral rang rig blo ldan pa/ brjod med ngang tsam du yang mi gnas na/ dngos dang tha snyad 'dzin par ga la 'gyur/.*

²² *rmi lam dag gi bde dang sdug bsngal dag/ sad par gyur na rang bzhin mnyam pa ltar/ rnam par rtog dang mi rtog gnyis ka yang/ shes pas rig na rang bzhin yongs kyis mnyam/ de ltar dus gsum rnam par dag pa dag/ rang bzhin nyid las ma 'das shes na ni/ sgro 'dogs bus pa'i rjes su ma 'brangs nas/ rang bzhin ngang du yong gis bcos mi dgos /.*

Luminosity within the Absence

dPal dbyangs often turns to negatively-phrased expressions in his discussions of the expanse and primordial awareness to describe their sheer lack of aspects or characteristics; there is no contact with anything whatsoever. In fact, as we have seen, the few statements he makes in more positive directions regarding the nature of reality are limited almost entirely to either descriptors which are appositive with emptiness (such as the 'natural sphere') or to metaphor. Sprinkled throughout the *Six Lamps* are comparisons of empty spontaneous presence with the reflective qualities of a jewel, appearance and nonappearance as like ocean water and waves, attachment and non-attachment as like a swamp and a lotus, complete emancipation without any crossing over to another side like a great fish gliding through the water, and so forth.

Despite the preponderance of *via negativa* rhetoric in the *Thugs kyi sgron ma* and of his rejection of the usefulness of intentional activity toward attaining enlightenment in all his texts, however, dPal dbyangs does describe a luminous and primordial awareness. According to the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, all discriminating consciousness is self (*bdag*), which is also intrinsic awareness. Emptiness is the intrinsically aware expanse of reality, the source of all, the ocean mind of the buddhas. Elaborations are mind itself spontaneously arising. These statements might be understood as poetic ontologies, along the lines of Anne Carolyn Klein's descriptions of Tibetans' unique "willingness to see words and referents coalescing."²³ dPal dbyangs asserts that these are illusory phenomena existing right in the dynamic foundation of the expanse itself. However, given that the foundation is itself emptiness, it is as if there are no phenomena to exist. Having undercut the validity of rejection, he here refuses to establish appearances. Rather, all which might be taken up as objects of knowledge are already aware and luminous, in, and as, the expanse of reality. The divisions between ontology and epistemology here fade away at the limits of the ineffable.

The Practical Terms of Awakening

Within this illuminating vision involving neither subject nor object as such, it would be nearly impossible to propose any particular method

²³ Anne Carolyn Klein, *Unbounded Wholeness: Dzogchen, Bön, and the Logic of the Non-conceptual* (Oxford: Oxford, 2006), vii, fn. 5.

of generating or attaining such a view. However, dPal dbyangs occasionally does mention, and even recommend, practice, albeit in quite circumscribed ways. He explains that the focus of meditation (*bsgom*) in Mahāyoga is mind, or alternatively, the expanse of dharma itself (*chos kyi dbyings nyid*), these two being equivalent. He further states that it is the intent of the buddhas to meditate in accordance with the nonabiding nature of mind. dPal dbyangs suggests that, having seen all phenomena as an unimpeded flow of illusion and as all of one flavor in the vast expanse of reality, one should meditatively cultivate even the five impurities which are characteristic of our degenerate Dharma age as blissful heavenly abodes. The impression all these positive descriptions of meditation give is that the practice dPal dbyangs taught, if any, was to see with a new perspective rather than to take up a particular posture, purification, or technique. View is paramount.

Though one would expect these ninth-century texts to reflect the considerable diversity of meditative technology at hand, dPal dbyangs uses only two technical terms—meditative stabilization (*ting nge 'dzin*) and calm abiding (*zhi gnas*)—in those few positive statements regarding Mahāyoga meditation that we do find in the *Six Lamps*, and the latter term only once. In a sūtric Buddhist context, meditative stabilization is said to be perfected when the mind contemplates or abides in a particular conceptual or nonconceptual object or mental state without wavering from it. In the more specific context of Mahāyoga tantra meditative practice, a set of three meditative stabilizations, or *ting nge 'dzin gsum*, later comes to refer to a series of ordered meditative cultivations of maṇḍala and deities, and specifically, of oneself as the deity at the maṇḍala's center. This set of three meditative stabilizations form the foundation of that later Mahāyoga practice, constituting the generation stage (*bskyed rim*) of cultivating oneself as the deity.

dPal dbyangs's usage of the term *ting nge 'dzin* in the *Six Lamps* does seem to allow for the possibility that he was referring to particular aspects or stages of this latter tantric set of three practices. However, his comments are very general and lack any reference to the set of three as a whole, or to a specific stage in the context of a structured progression of meditations. Neither does he employ in the *Six Lamps* any of the standard terms for these stages which would make such identification clearer, though one such reference, to the 'meditative stabilization of Suchness', does exist in the *Zhus lan*. For example, in the *Thabs shes sgron ma*, he seems to be describing something resembling the second of the three meditative stabilizations, which is associated with the skillful employment of compassion.

When one is aware of such a method of Dharma, universal compassion toward all those who are unaware is generated. Having generated such compassion, one practices meditative stabilization on the illusory nature [of appearances]. Thereby, one teaches all manner of skillful practices to benefit [others]. What is the intention of the buddhas? It is to meditate in accordance with the nonabiding intrinsic nature of mind. What is [their] boundless compassionate endeavor? It is to emanate in accordance with the meditative stabilization of yogic skillful means.²⁴

Although dPal dbyangs's description here suggests the second Mahāyoga samādhi, in which there is generation of oneself as a deity or of the meditative emanation of a buddha, his descriptions lack both the later standardized terminology used to refer to these three samādhi, and any reference to particular, ordered stages of meditation.

In *lTa ba rin chen sgron ma*, which is the most specifically tantric among the texts of the *Six Lamps*, dPal dbyangs refers to the normative division of yogic practice into their two respective types of resulting accumulations: accumulations of primordial wisdom (*ye shes*) and accumulations of merit (*bsod nams*):

Having purified the mind of misconceptions with supreme insight, [one attains] the great accumulation of primordial wisdom, the Dharmakāya of the Conqueror. Having mastered meditative stabilization of the minor and major marks, [one attains] the great accumulation of merit, the Rūpakāya of the Conqueror.²⁵

This dyad of primordial wisdom and merit is associated in other tantric contexts with the most basic division of all the various types of meditations into those which are nonsymbolic (*mtshan med*), including formless meditations on emptiness, and those which are symbolic (*mtshan bcas*), including the set of three generation-stage meditative stabilizations described above. dPal dbyangs does use the term 'symbolic' (*mtshan gyi*) to describe the yogic accumulation of merit involving meditative cultivation of the marks of a buddha (constituting normative generation-stage practice) and resulting in attainment of

²⁴ 'di lta bu yi chos kyi tshul rig na/ ma rig rnams la snying rje yongs kyis skye/ snying rje skyes nas sgyu ma'i ting 'dzin gyis/ phan 'dogs thabs kyi spyod pa cir yang ston/ sangs rgyas rnams kyi dgongs pa ji lta ba/ sems kyi rang bzhin gnas med de ltar bsgom/ thugs rje'i 'bad pa rab 'byams ji lta ba/ rnal 'byor thabs kyi ting 'dzin de ltar sprul/.

²⁵ shes rab mchog gis log rtog sems sbyangs nas/ ye shes tshogs chen rgyal ba chos kyi sku/ dpe byad mtshan gyi ting 'dzin dbang thob nas/ bsod nams tshogs chen rgyal ba gzugs kyi sku/.

the Rūpakāya. In so doing, he may allude to the standard bifurcation of Mahāyoga practice into symbolic and nonsymbolic that we find, for example, in Vimalamitra's roughly coeval commentary to the *Guhyagarbha*, the *Rim gsum*.²⁶ This accords further with a similar passage in the *Zhus lan* in which dPal dbyangs remarks that the superior path of awakening includes two types of meditation.

Calm abiding (*zhi gnas*) based on nonmistaken realization and meditative stabilization [in which] the seals of marks clearly [appear]—such a meaningful superior path of awakening is bound to lead to excellence time and again.²⁷

In this latter context, dPal dbyangs may be referring to the third meditative stabilization in which one meditates on subtle and coarse seals, and reminding his interlocutor of the fact that such a meditation belongs to that rubric of yogic practice which is symbolic.

However, though dPal dbyangs may be intending such specific references to the dyad of symbolic and nonsymbolic and to the three stages of meditative stabilization, he does not employ any standard terminology or make any recommendations to a graduated method or program. In the *lTa ba rin po che'i sgron ma*, dPal dbyangs compares all methods of practice to medicine in a dream, echoing his comments in the *Thugs kyi sgron ma* regarding the meaninglessness of the designation 'medicine' imputed upon camphor. Ultimately, such curative methods are without any actual effect because there is neither medicine nor healed patient, only luminous knowing.

One should know the many [means of] liberation on the Noble Path to be like the medicine which cures illness in a dream. The moments of gradually purifying suffering are methods of generating distinctive insight and meditative stabilization. Attaining awakening to the intrinsic nature of mind is like eradicating illness and gaining the bliss of healing in a dream.²⁸

Similarly, the *Zhus lan* explains that in meditative stabilization, though the deities of the maṇḍala may appear to move of their own volition, they are merely aspects of one's mind and do not really exist as separate bodies. This mind, however, is itself neither fully existent nor nonexistent. Though dPal dbyangs describes meditative stabiliza-

²⁶ P4742: 568a1.

²⁷ *ma nor rtogs dang ldan pa'i zhi gnas dang /mtshan ma'i phyag rgya gsal ba'i ting nge 'dzin//di 'dra'i don ldan byang cub lam mchog ste//yang nas yang tu khyad par 'gro bar bya/.*

²⁸ *rmi lam nad sel sman dang 'dra ba ni/ 'phags lam rnam thar mang por rig par bya/ sdug bsngal khad kyis 'byang ba'i skad cig ma/ shes rab ting 'dzin khyad par skye ba'i tshul/.*

tion throughout that text as a concentration upon the ocean of awakening or upon the marks of a buddha as aspects of mind, in the *lTa ba yang dag sgron ma*, he equates the mind's absence of characteristics with that of space, showing how meditation on either is fruitless, claiming "there is no meditating on space because space is without defining characteristics. Just so, how can there be meditation on the nonorigination of Mind, which is unoriginated by means of its very essence?"²⁹

A recommendation that exemplifies his practically oriented teachings most neatly is the following, again from the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*. In it he beautifully evokes the image of currents of pure water flowing from one's attitude of playful liberation, once again using metaphor instead of making specific injunctions to practice:

It may take an extremely long time—emancipation from the four currents of suffering due to the affliction of ignorance, and emancipation through clearing away hindrance and abandoning, and emancipation through joining with splendor—because desire for all these is entering the ocean of desire; one will be carried off in a single direction by the stream of [one's] effort. [However, though one] possesses the highest and longest wrong views, those very four streams [of suffering] are the path and fruit. Therefore, by playing directly in the current flowing from method and insight, there is complete emancipation without crossing over, like a great fish gliding through the water.³⁰

Conclusion

Taken altogether, these apophatic descriptions of mind embedded within discussions of practice cooperate with the *via negativa* rhetoric of the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*'s thirty topics. In both cases, dPal dbyangs contextualizes his assertions regarding Mahāyoga insight by clearing away all possible conceptualizations of it as a localizable or describable object of attainment through any progressive, technical, or linguistically-originated activity. He does this by critiquing ill-performed and misguided uses of meditations by gods in the Form-

²⁹ *ji ltar nam mkha' mtshan ma med pa'i phyir/ nam mkha' de nyid bsgom par mi 'gyur bzhin/ ngo bo nyid kyis ma skyes sems kyis ni/ ma skyes de nyid bsgoms par ga la 'gyur/*

³⁰ *ma rig nyon mongs las sdug bsnal/ chu bo bzhi las thar pa'ang/ shin tu ring dang rgyud pa dang/ 'gag spangs bsal bas thar pa dang/ zil gnon sbyor bas thar 'dod pa/ 'dod pa'i rgya mtshor chud pa'i phyir/ rtsol ba'i chu rgyun phyogs cha khyer/ mchog dang ring ba'i log lta can/ chu bo bzhi nyid lam 'bras phyir/ thabs dang shes rab las nyid kyi/ chu bo nyid la rol spyod pas/ brgal ba med par rnam par thar/ chu la nya chen 'phyo ba/*

less Realm and by those in the lower vehicles, and most particularly by those in the lower forms of tantra, who are attached to their methods of purification and approximation of the deity, hoping for awakening to appear without realizing their 'goals' are already of the true nature of reality. All are mistaken efforts based in mistaken views taking conceptual objects and subjects as real.

Encompassing all these mentions of meditation, whether positive or negative, are dPal dbyangs's constant declarations that the very idea of engaging in meditation upon some other object is a mistaken dichotomization of reality. In *Ita ba yang dag sgron ma*, he describes this method of no-method:

When you know the dynamic by which the obstructions are indistinguishable from their antidotes, you will abandon all diligence.

When you settle into the continuum with great equanimity and without fabrication, although it is merely a nominal convention, practice what is called 'meditation' on this.³¹

Throughout the *Six Lamps*, and especially in the *Thugs kyi sgron ma*, dPal dbyangs's injunctions to follow the Mahāyoga are not recommendations to philosophical positions or to particular practices, but rather to experiences of vision that, like waking from a dream or gliding through a river, are luminous, natural, spontaneous, and free from any effort or reification of extremes whatsoever. That these literary methods attain a full flowering in the later rDzogs chen tradition has been well documented. dPal dbyangs's contributions to those future blooms are in these apophatic enactments of freedom.

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³¹ *mi mthun pa dang gnyen po dbyer med don/ rang gis shes na rtsol ba kun spangs tel/ btang snyoms chen por ma bcos ngang bzhaq na/ tha snyad tsam du'ang bsgom zhes di la bya/.*

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Immeasurable, Yet No Bigger than Your Thumb: The *Tshon Gang* in Bon Dzogchen

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Introduction

he Bon text entitled *Twenty-One Nails* from the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung presents the notion of the wisdom (*ye shes*) *tshon gang*. The nature of this wisdom *tshon gang* is expressed in the following quote from Nail 5 of the *Twenty-One Nails*:¹

It is formless wisdom beyond form, shape, and color.
It is inexpressible wisdom beyond letters, words, and names.
It is non-conceptual wisdom beyond the concepts and discernment of
the intellect.²

This passage echoes many familiar descriptions of the natural state (*gnas lugs*); however, the physical locality of the wisdom *tshon gang* is described later in Nail 9 of the *Twenty-One Nails*:³

The physical heart of flesh
Is like a jeweled vase of alloyed metals.
The luminous wisdom *tshon gang*
Is like a lamp inside that vase.

Thus, the wisdom *tshon gang* presents the paradox that the enlightened Reality Body (*bon sku*), the king of awareness (*rig pa'i rgyal po*) which is beyond form, shape, and color has, nevertheless, a prescribed size and

¹ Italicized names of texts, such as "*Twenty-one Nails*," may be used as identifiers for finding texts in the Bibliography.

² *The Twenty-One Nails*, pp. 507: *gzugs med ye shes kha dog dbyibs gzugs bral/ brjod med ye shes ming tshig yi ger bral/rtog med ye shes rtog dpyod blo dang bral*.

³ *The Twenty-One Nails*, pp. 509ff: *gdos pa sha'i tsi ta nil/ 'phra men rin chen bum pa 'dral/ gsal ba'i ye shes tshon gang nil/ bum pa nang gi mar me 'dral*.

location in the physical heart.

The purpose of this paper is to further dimensionalize this paradox using canonical textual sources and examining historical precedents. We will not focus on resolving the inherent paradox, but instead attempt to create a semantic field for the term *tshon gang*. In doing so we will highlight the Bon tradition's willingness to preserve and disseminate ambiguous and controversial teachings over many centuries.

Our approach is as follows. First, we look at the unusual word "*tshon gang*." Then we consider presentations of similar phenomenon in early non-Buddhist Indian works. Then we take a brief look at the usage of the *tshon gang* in a Bon tantric cycle. Next, we successively look at the role of the *tshon gang* in the most significant Dzogchen works of the Yungdrung (*g.yung drung*) Bon tradition, those constituting the exemplars of the Mind Class (*sems sde*), Vast Expanse Class (*klong sde*), and Quintessential Instruction Class (*man ngag sde*). We then summarize our findings, integrating the treatment of the *tshon gang* by the twentieth century Bon master, Shardza Tashi Gyaltzen.⁴ After drawing some speculative conclusions, we review some of the deficiencies of this work with an eye to directions for future research.

Meaning and etymology of *tshon gang*

A straightforward interpretation of the Tibetan word *tshon gang* comes from interpreting *gang* to mean "a unit of measure" and *tshon* (or, as we shall occasionally see, *mtshon*⁵), to mean "the first phalanx of the thumb." Thus, *tshon gang* means the size of the first phalanx of the thumb, or, more briefly, thumb-sized. Henceforth, for simplicity we will periodically use "thumb sized" to abbreviate this meaning. We find this meaning accords with the opinion of contemporary Bon teachers, and fits well in all contexts quoted below. Probable Sanskrit equivalents will be considered later.

⁴ Shar-dza Bkra-shis rGyal-mtshan (1859–1934).

⁵ Regarding this inconsistency in spelling – *tshon* / *mtshon* – Tibeto-Burman linguist Nathan Hill offers the comforting comment "m- comes and goes a lot." (Personal communication).

The *aṅguṣṭhamātra* in non-Buddhist works and Buddhist Critiques of It

The *aṅguṣṭhamātra* in Vedānta

In addition to the inherent paradox of the term *tshon gang*, our interest in the *tshon gang* is fueled by its similarity to the *aṅguṣṭhamātra*, an important concept of non-Buddhist schools such as Vedānta (Tibetan: *rig byed mtha'*). It is easy enough to make the connection of the Tibetan term *tshon gang* with the Sanskrit *aṅguṣṭhamātra*. *Aṅguṣṭha*, meaning thumb in Sanskrit, corresponds to *tshon*, and the Sanskrit *mātra*, meaning measure, to *gang*. Moreover, the notion of a thumb-sized being or person (*puruṣa*), resident in the heart, may be found in a few of the Upaniṣads, a principal scriptural family of Vedānta:⁶

The *puruṣa* who is of the size of a thumb (*aṅguṣṭhamātra*) is like a flame devoid of smoke and Lord (*iśānā*) of the past and the future.⁷ (*Katha Upaniṣad* 4.13)

The *puruṣa*, the size of a thumb (*aṅguṣṭhamātra*), the inner Self (*ātman*), is always seated in the heart (*hrdaya*) of all living beings.⁸ (*Katha Upaniṣad* 6.17)

Assuming a form the size of a thumb (*aṅguṣṭhamātra*), by virtue of the intellect, emotion, imagination, and will, the *puruṣa* dwells in the hearts (*hrdaya*) of all living beings as their inner Self (*ātman*). Those who realize this become immortal.⁹ (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.13)

Norelius has recently thoroughly surveyed the evolving concept of *puruṣa* through the vedic periods, with references to *aṅguṣṭhamātra* (Norelius, 2017). What is most relevant to our discussion is that certainly by the time the Tibetan's encountered these doctrines through Indian Buddhist critiques of the Vedānta school, the *puruṣa* (Tibetan: *skyes bu*) had become practically synonymous with the *ātman*

⁶ We follow the translations of the works cited in the bibliography with only minor editing, and, for ease of identification, we offer the relevant Sanskrit words in parentheses without declension. Olivelle works to capture the meaning of these and other upaniṣads *at their time of composition* in his *The Early Upaniṣads*. On the other hand, in our selection of translations we are guided by the desire to capture the meaning of these texts as they had come to be interpreted by the Vedānta school, just as Indian and Tibetan Buddhists encountered it.

⁷ *Katha Upaniṣad* 4.13: *aṅguṣṭhamātrah puruṣo jyotir iva adhūmakah | iśāno bhūtabhavyasya sa evādyā sa u śvaḥ ||*

⁸ *Katha Upaniṣad* 6.17: *aṅguṣṭhamātrah puruṣo 'ntarātmā sadā janānāṃ hrdaye sanniviṣṭah |*

⁹ *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 3.13: *aṅguṣṭhamātrah puruṣo 'ntarātmā sadā janānāṃ hrdaye sanniviṣṭah |hrdā maṅṣā manasābhikṣpto ya etad vidur amṛtās te bhavanti ||*

(Tibetan: *bdag*).¹⁰ The similarity between the wisdom *tshon gang* in Bon that was described earlier, and the all-pervasive *ātman* of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* is obvious. Moreover, while the dates of these two quoted Upaniṣads is widely contested, they surely occur hundreds of years before the Bon works we consider.

It is worth mentioning that the all-pervasive *ātman* could be reduced to the size of a thumb and located in the human heart was just as problematic and paradoxical to non-Buddhist schools as the *tshon gang* is to Bon and Buddhism. All commentators on sutra 1.3.24 of the text known variously as the *Vedānta Sūtras* or the *Brahma Sūtras*, have opined on the precise nature of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa*. Specifically, from Śankarācārya in his *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*, to contemporary Swāmīs, each commentator has felt obligated to try to resolve the inherent paradox of these statements.

In any case, Bon's exposition of the wisdom *tshon gang* must have surely faced direct or indirect criticism from other Buddhist schools over the ages because of Buddhist critiques of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* concept in Vedānta. One example of such an explicit criticism of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* comes from Jamyang Zhepa¹¹ in his comprehensive examination of tenet systems known as the *Great Exposition of Tenets*.¹² In his presentation of the tenets of the Vedānta (Tibetan: *rig byed mtha'*) school,¹³ and subsequent refutation, Jamyang Zhepa explicitly references "a self (*bdag*) that is like pure crystal and is the size of the first part of the thumb (*mthe bong cha dang po*) ...".¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Jamyang Zhepa's refutation of the tenets of Vedānta centers on their view, as he presents it, of a permanent, unitary, self-powered self. Hopkins has translated Jamyang Zhepa's work in his book *Maps of the Profound*, and the translation addresses Vedānta on pp. 130ff.

Jamyang Zhepa's presentation of Vedānta quotes Bodhibhadra,¹⁵ and by investigating the origin of these quotes we can see that Jamyang Zhepa follows closely a commentary on Āryadeva's *Jñānasārasamuccaya*¹⁶ by Bodhibhadra, entitled *Jñānasārasamuccaya*

¹⁰ Cf. Norelius, 2017, page 463. Nevertheless, the semantic field of *puruṣa* in Indian literature is quite large, and it is simply translated into Tibetan as "person" (*skyes bu*).

¹¹ 'Jam-dbyangs Bzhad-pa'i Rdo-rje (1648-1721/22).

¹² Thanks to Dan Martin for this reference.

¹³ *Great Exposition of Tenets*, p. 141 ff.

¹⁴ *Great Exposition of Tenets*, p. 142: *shel sgong dag pa lta bu'i bdag mthe bong cha dang po tsam mam/*.

¹⁵ Tibetan: *byang chub bzang po*; 11th century.

¹⁶ Toh. 3851; volume 57, pages 881-885 of the *Pedurma Tengyur*.

nāma nibandhana.¹⁷ There, considering the arguments of the Vedānta school, we again read of “a self like a pure crystal egg the size of the first part of the thumb ...”¹⁸ The point here is that the concept of a thumb-size self has been the object of criticism in polemical writings of Indian and Tibetan Buddhists since the 11th century.¹⁹

That said, as we noted above, the Tibetan texts quoted use the phrasing “first part of the thumb” (*mthe bong cha dang po*) rather than *tshon gang*. All this might cast some doubt as to whether these texts are actually talking about the *aṅguṣṭhamātra* at all. Fortunately, a Sanskrit-Tibetan edition of the *Jñānasārasamuccaya nāma nibandhana* exists (Penba, 2008) and we can find there *aṅguṣṭhamātra* appropriately used in the Sanskrit corresponding to the Tibetan quoted and translated in the paragraphs immediately above.²⁰ As a result, while it is clear that the *tshon gang* and *aṅguṣṭhamātra* have similar meanings, we can provide no evidence that *tshon gang* was ever used to translate the Sanskrit word *aṅguṣṭhamātra*. For example, the Mahavyutpatti associates *aṅguṣṭham* with *mthe bo*²¹ and Negi’s Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary gives *aṅguṣṭhal* for *mthe bong*.²²

The *aṅguṣṭhamātra* as the particular form of a transmigrating consciousness

Another element of the semantic field of *aṅguṣṭhamātra* in non-Buddhist works is the notion that an individual’s consciousness or soul transmigrated from life-to-life taking the particular shape of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra*. This goes back at least to the Mahābhārata. In the Vana, or as it is also known, the Aranya Parva, of that epic,²³ Yama, the lord

¹⁷ Toh. 3852; volume 57, pages 886-934 of the *Pedurma Tengyur*.

¹⁸ Volume 57, page 885, of the *Pedurma Tengyur: shel sgong dag pa lta bu’i bdag mthe bong gi cha dang po tsam mam/*.

¹⁹ It is interesting to note that it does not appear that either Bodhibhadra or Jamyang Zhepa attribute to the Vedāntins the notion that of the thumb-sized self is particularly located in the heart.

²⁰ *viśuddhasphaṭikagolakasadrīṣam aṅguṣṭhamātraparimāṇam*. Penba, 2008, p. 192.

²¹ *Mahavyutpatti*, volume 1, p. 271, Entry 3977.

²² *Tibetan-Sanskrit Dictionary*, volume 5, p. 2122.

²³ *The Mahābhārata*, Volume 3, The entire sub-plot is contained in the *pativratā māhātmyam sarva*, volume 3, Sections CCLXLI-CCLXLVII (291-297). Yama’s plucking of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* occurs in Section CCLXLV (295), pp. 630ff. Sanskrit for the *Mahābhārata* may be found in Unicode format at GRETIL. (gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/#MBh) In that edition the numbering is a bit different and Yama’s plucking occurs at 3.281.016.

of death, shows his respect for Satyavan by personally coming to claim his soul, and plucks Satyavan's *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* from his body, leaving Satyavan lifeless.²⁴

The *aṅguṣṭhamātra* in Śaiva tantric practice

In works from Zhang Zhung's neighbor in Kashmir, particularly in the commentary on the *Svacchanda Tantra* by Kṣemarāja (11th century), we find a number of themes that will be relevant to our discussion. First following McCarter,²⁵ we note that key elements of Śaiva ritual practice are the identification of the practitioner's body with the deity and the re-enactment of the manifestation of the cosmos. In what Flood calls the "central locus model,"²⁶ the particular bodily center for this identification and re-enactment is the heart. Further, in the elaborate and many-layered description of the manifestation of the cosmos in the *Svacchanda Tantra*, further clarified by Kṣemarāja's commentary, Arraj highlights a particular rudra named *rudraḥ aṅguṣṭhamātra*, amidst the set of *mahādevāḥ*. Arraj states "Kṣemarājaḥ interprets this rudraḥ as a subtle form, assumed for meditation, evidently equal to the brahmanical *angusṭhapuruṣa* (sic)." ²⁷

Having worked to establish a bit of the semantic field of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* in non-Buddhist Indian works, we now return to our principal focus, the *tshon gang* in Bon.

The wisdom-being *tshon gang* in Bon tantric works

When trying to extrapolate a pattern from a series of data points, it can be useful to gather as many prior data points as possible. Thus, we will take a step back, so to speak, and examine the use of the *tshon gang* in tantric works, before turning to Dzogchen proper. While we find references to the *tshon gang* throughout Bon tantric works, later we will be giving a lot of attention to the Aural Transmission's exposition of the *tshon gang*. For this reason, we focus on the tantric cycle of Zhang Zhung Me Ri, held by tradition to be the tutelary deity of the masters of the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung.

²⁴ This association of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* with the individual consciousness or soul rather than the universal ātmān gave Śankarācārya some consideration in his commentary on sūtra 1.3.24 in his *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*.

²⁵ McCarter, 2014, pp. 739ff.

²⁶ Flood, 1993, pp 22ff

²⁷ Arraj, 1988, pp. 248.

The Aural Transmission's principal explanation of Zhang Zhung Me Ri practice is entitled *A Rosary of Illuminating Fire-crystal: A Sādhana of the Heroic Champion Me Ri*,²⁸ written by Kyangtrul Namkha Gyaltsen.²⁹ In this *sādhana*, a familiar sequence of tantric *sādhana* ritual is enacted a number of times: the commitment being (*dam tshig sems dpa'*) of the deity is imagined and then the wisdom being (*ye shes sems dpa'*) is invited. In other segments, the practitioner is directed to meditate on the wisdom being without the preparatory steps of imagining the commitment being and inviting the wisdom being. Below we translate a brief portion of the latter approach, focused on the peaceful deity Ati Muwer. The broader context is that here, in preparation for mantra recitation, the deity Ati Muwer is meditated on,³⁰ without any need for visualization or generation, and then a second Ati Muwer is meditated on as the wisdom being in the form of a *tshon gang* within the larger Ati Muwer's heart. Then at the heart of the *tshon gang* sized Ati Muwer is an *Aḥ* syllable encircled by the essence mantra:³¹

As for meditating according to the successive stages of contemplation:

Meditate: I am myself the Kunzang Ati Muwer. At my heart, is a solitary enlightened body (*sku*) *tshon gang*, the deity, the wisdom being Ati Muwer, on a seat of sun, moon, and lotus, amidst a fireball of wisdom.

The use of the precise term *tshon gang* to describe the size of the wisdom deity is common in the Bon and Nyingma (*rnying ma*)

²⁸ *Me ri dpa' bo gyad phur gyi sgrub thabs gsal byed me shel phreng ba*. Pages 43-175 of *The Practice Cycle of Zhang Zhung Me Ri*.

²⁹ sKyang-sprul Nam-mkha' rGyal-tshan (1770–1830). Thanks to Dan Martin and Geshe Namgyal Dangsong for Namkha Gyaltsen's dates.

³⁰ Unlike many more recent *sādhana*s in which the entire *sādhana* is intended to be recited, this *sādhana* mixes extended instruction with references to other liturgical manuals. The liturgy associated with this particular portion of the *sādhana* is in a separate text for the practice of Ati Mu Wer entitled *Peaceful, without any Necessity of Generation* (*Zhi ba bskyed mi dgos*, found in *The Practice of Zhang Zhung Me Ri*, pp. 365-387). In the practices "without any necessity of generation" the premise is that the deity does not need to be imagined or visualized, and is amenable to being meditated on directly precisely because it is already available, at least in essence, in the practitioner's heart. That said, in practice, the nuance is subtle, because simply because the practitioner's attention is directed in that way by these instructions, that does not mean that the practitioner, without conception or effort, finds the deity there. More on this in the Speculative Conclusions section.

³¹ *The Practice Cycle of Zhang Zhung Me Ri*, page 118: *de nas dgongs rim 'di ltar bsgom stell //bdag nyid kun bzang a ti mu wer gsal ba'i/ thugs ye shes kyi me dpung 'bar ba'i gyur du nyi zla pad ma'i gdan la/ lha ye shes sems dpa' a ti mu wer sku tshon gang ba cig sgom/ de'i thugs ka na yi ge aH dkar po gsal la 'tsher ba gcig gi mtha' la snying po rnam gsum rim pa gsum du bskor tel/.*

traditions, although the term is rarely used in later traditions of Tibetan Buddhism. The interpretation of the precise nature of the wisdom being in Buddhist tantra varies from school to school in Tibetan Buddhism and is held to require careful explanation lest the practitioner fall to the extreme of eternalism. Further, taken out of context, it is easy to take the expression of Ati Muwer's size as only a convenient device of the imagination. After all, the upper portion of the thumb is a suitable size for imagining a deity at the heart. However, as we saw in the quotations from the *Twenty-One Nails* given earlier, Bon literature treats the wisdom *tshon gang* as more than simply an imaginal support. So, what is the relationship between the wisdom *tshon gang* and the wisdom-being *tshon gang*? This will be discussed in the Speculative Conclusions. In the meantime, here we add the wisdom-being *tshon gang* (*ye shes sems dpa'i tshon gang*), as well as the enlightened body (*sku*) *tshon gang*, as additional points in the semantic field of the *tshon gang*.

The *tshon gang* in Bon Dzogchen

Having briefly treated the role of the *tshon gang* in Bon tantra, we now look at its use in Bon Dzogchen, particularly in the Yungdrung Bon Dzogchen that does not include the later treasures of the New Bon (*bon gsar*). The principal traditions of Bon Dzogchen are contextualized in Shardza's historical work that is translated by Karmay as *The Treasury of Good Sayings*. In this work, we read: "Although the texts of the Great Perfection are innumerable, they can all be reduced to *The Four Cycles of the Scriptural Transmission*, *The Three Cycles of Propagation*, and *Nine Cycles of Mind Abatement*."³² *The Four Cycles of the Scriptural Transmission* (*bKa' rgyud skor bzhi*), can be easily identified with *The Four Cycles of Scriptural Transmission* of the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung, and these cycles are contained in volume 171 of the *Bon Kanjur*. Shardza identifies this cycle as the exemplar within the Quintessential Instruction Section (*man ngag sde*) of Dzogchen.³³ The *Nine Minor Texts on Mind* are identified by Shardza as the exemplars of the Mind Class (*sems sde*) and are presented in volumes 172 and 173 of the *Bon Kanjur*. The *Three Cycles of Propagation* constitute volumes 174 and 175 of the *Bon Kanjur*.

³² *The Treasury of Good Sayings*, page 51. Karmay's translation of Shardza's description of these texts, "*sems smad sde dgu*", as "*Nine Cycles of Mind Abatement*" is misleading. We prefer to render this phrase as "*Nine Cycles of Minor [Texts on] Mind*."

³³ *The Treasury of Space and Awareness*, volume 1, page 7.

As we shall see, the *tshon gang* figures in each of these works, and they are discussed successively below.

The *tshon gang* in Mind Class Literature of Bon Dzogchen

Shardza Tashi Gyaltsen's two volumes of *The Precious Treasury of Space and Awareness* are his masterwork on the theory and practice of Dzogchen. The first volume more fully enumerates Bon Mind Class (*sems sde*) literature:

As for the first, the root is the *Nine Cycles of the Hidden* (*Gab pa dgu skor*) and the branches are the *Nine Minor [Texts] on Mind* (*Sems smad dgu*) or the *Nine Mirrors of Minor Tantras* (*rGyud phran me long dgu*).³⁴

An inventory of the principal Bon Mind Class literature is presented in detail by Keutzer (Keutzer, 2012). Briefly, as Shardza notes, the primary text of this class is the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*, volume 172 of the *Bon Kanjur*, and secondary are the *Nine Minor Texts on Mind*. All of these are texts discovered by Shenchen Luga.³⁵ An account of the hiding of the Bon treasures at the time of King Gri Gum bTsad po and their discovery by Shenchen Luga has been published in *Collection of Rare Bonpo Texts* (Namgyal, 2009).³⁶

While not a predominant topic of the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*, the *tshon gang* is referenced in numerous works of this cycle. For example, the *nature* of the *tshon gang* is referenced.³⁷

³⁴ *The Treasury of Space and Awareness*, volume 1, page 46.

³⁵ gShen Chen Klu dGa' (996–1035). This date is mentioned incidentally in the biography of Blo Gros rGyal mTshan by Jean-Luc Achard at <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Azha-Lodro-Gyeltsen/13092>. Accessed January, 2018.

³⁶ This account, attributed to the Bon scholar sGa sTon Tshul Khrim rGyal mTshan, contains a section on the Southern Treasures. Martin suggests that this account belongs to the late 14th century (Martin, 2001, p. 280). Other materials on the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden* include the *Catalog of the Bon Kanjur*, where this title is cataloged as volume 99. This catalog also gives as additional references on the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*: Karmay's *Great Perfection*, pp. 201 ff., and Martin's own, *Unearthing Bon Treasures*, pp. 253-255 (Martin, 2001).

³⁷ *Bon Kanjur* volume 172; page 67. This belongs to the volume of the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*, and one of the branch texts entitled *zur rdeg yan lag lnga pa*, that form the thirty-seven branches. See Keutzer, 2012, Section 2.1: *sems rang 'byung gi gshen lha dkar pof thugs gsal ba'i ye shes tshon gang las/ lha yis kyang 'ches su yang med lal 'dre yis bza' ru yang med pa yin/*.

Shenlha Karpo, the self-originated [*bodhi*] mind,
 With regard to the wisdom *tshon gang* of his clear heart:
 Gods cannot at all praise it.
 Demons cannot at all devour it.

Referencing the *location*:³⁸

In the center of the jewel *tsi ta* is
 The enlightened-body (*sku*) *tson gang* of crystal.
 Because his face sees everything in the ten directions, [and]
 Because his enlightened body is not limited by front or back, [and]
 Because of the meditation on light rays emanating out in ten
 directions,
 It is said that one can accomplish the enlightened body of a deity
 without separating mind and body.

In this passage, we highlight a reference to the jewel *tsi ta*. The connection to the Sanskrit word *citta*, with a similar semantic range including both physical associations with the heart as well as mental associations, is obvious. The use of *tsi ta* in Dzogchen literature generally, and Bon Dzogchen literature in particular, also warrants a thorough study, but here we content ourselves with the observation that in this context the term gives a precise location of the *tshon gang* in the physical heart, the fleshy *tsi ta*, as we will see later in the *Six Lamps*. In this passage, we also see an allusion to the natural capacity of the *tson gang* to emanate light in all ten directions. Finally, we see the allusion to the crystal-like nature that reminds of us the “self like a pure crystal” that was criticized by Bodhibhadra and later by Jamyang Zhepa.

Elsewhere in *The Cycles of the Nine Hidden* the *tshon gang* is referenced as:

- A little man of light (*'od kyi mi chung tshon gang*) ejected out the crown of the head. This use seems more reminiscent of the use of *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* in the Mahābharata as the conveyer of consciousness from life to life, than of the wisdom *tshon gang*. (volume 172, Bon Kanjur, p. 415)
- A light (*'od*) *tshon gang* that is a location for emanation and dissolution. (volume 172, p. 415)

³⁸ *Bon Kanjur* volume 172, page 86. This belongs to the volume of the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*, another one of the branch texts entitled *Gab pa mde'u thung gi yan lag*, that form the thirty-seven branches: *tsi ta rin po che'i dbus su/ shel gyi sku tshon gang pal zhal phyogs bcu yongs su gzigs pas/ sku la mdun rgyab mi mnga' bas/ 'od zer phyogs bcur 'phros ba gcig bsgoms pas/ lus sems ma bral bar lha yis skur grub po zhes gsungs tel*.

- A light ('od) *tshon gang* not covered by inclinations (*bag chags*). (volume 172, p.477)

So, what is the difference between the *tshon gang* as described in *The Nine Hidden*, and the *tshon gang* as described in tantric works, such as the *sādhana* of Zhang Zhung Me Ri discussed earlier? Briefly, gone is the ritual of first imagining the symbolic being and then inviting the wisdom being. In this cycle, the practitioner is expected to meditate without any conceptual elaboration.³⁹

The Commentaries on the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*

There are a number of commentaries on the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*. One of the most important is an extensive commentary attributed to four sagacious men (*mkhas pa bzhi*), in volume 173 of the *Bon Kanjur*,⁴⁰ and its discovery is attributed to Shenchen Luga. The *tshon gang* is not referenced in this commentary. A related work is the commentary known as *Ocean of Awareness* whose composition is attributed to the legendary figure Drenpa Namkha⁴¹ and whose discovery is attributed to the treasurer-revealer Khutsa Daöd⁴² in the 12th century.⁴³

In the section of *Ocean of Awareness* devoted to consideration of the view,⁴⁴ there are subsections on the non-Buddhist Tirthika's (*mu stegs pa*) views of nihilism and eternalism.⁴⁵ Here eternalism is characterized as the view that an eternal self exists in the center of the heart of migrating beings. This self is characterized as thumb-sized (*mthe bong tsam*) in large beings and the size of a small grain in small beings. Furthermore, this self emanates white light.⁴⁶ No attempt is made in

³⁹ Whether, in fact, they are able to do so is an indication of their readiness for Dzogchen practice.

⁴⁰ Volume 173 of the *Bon Kanjur* pp. 17-353, *Byang chub sems kyis gab pa dgu 'grel*. This work can also be found in the *Bon Katen*, where it is entitled *Sems lung gab pa dgu skor gyi 'grel ba rgya cher bshad pa* and cataloged as work 216-5.

⁴¹ *Dran-pa nam-mkha'* (8th century).

⁴² *Khu-tsa Zla'-'od*.

⁴³ This commentary is the focus of a paper by Kapstein (Kapstein, 2009). Kapstein does a nice orientation to this work and, particularly relevant to our discussion, alerts the reader to the commentary's discussion of a thumb-sized self. The commentary discussed by Kapstein is a refactoring of the original commentary of the four sagacious men, and its composition is attributed to Drenpa Namkha. It should not be confounded with the commentary more directly attributed to the four sagacious men in the *Bon Kanjur*.

⁴⁴ *Ita ba'i sgong 'grel, Ocean of Awareness*, pp. 226.

⁴⁵ *Ocean of Awareness*, pp. 470ff.

⁴⁶ *Ocean of Awareness*, pp. 470ff.

the commentary to compare or contrast the notion of the wisdom *tshon gang* residing in the heart, as described in the quotations from the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden* above, with the notion of the thumb-sized self that is directly criticized. In fact, in the lengthy commentary, the *tshon gang* is not even mentioned.

This same criticism of the Tirthikas was presented to western students by Yongzin Tenzin Namdak,⁴⁷ arguably the most universally respected living Bon master, during an oral teaching on the Mother Tantra (*ma rgyud*). According to the transcript the master said:⁴⁸

“They [the Tirthikas] say the *ātman* stays in the center of the heart; inside the heart you find the eternal *ātman*. ‘Which size he is?’ (sic) Their answer is that a bigger man has a bigger *ātman* and a smaller being a smaller *ātman*, the biggest size is that of one finger joint whereas the smallest is that of a mustard seed.”

We are fortunate that an audience member asked the question we might all have at this point:

“Question: In the Zerbu [i.e. the *Twenty-One Nails*] it states that there is a Wisdom Tsönkhang (*ye shes kyi tshon gang*) and a Light Tsönkhang (*‘od kyi tshon gang*) and this Tsönkhang is of the size of a thumb joint. Isn’t there some similarity?”

To which the master responds:

“Yes, this text mentions the symbolic size but the same text explicitly states before and after mentioning this, that it is a symbol and that you cannot measure the size at all.”

Thus, the debate continues to this day, and one means of reconciling both the paradox of the *tshon gang* and the doctrinal tensions surrounding it is to consider the *tshon gang* as simply a symbol for the natural state, Reality Body, and other equivalents.

The *tshon gang* in the Three Proclamations: the Vast Expanse Class literature of Bon Dzogchen

The *Cycle of the Three Proclamations* (*bsgrags pa skor gsum*) is composed of three sub-cycles: the upper portion contains teachings for gods (*lha*)

⁴⁷ Yongs-'dzin Bstan-'dzin rNam-dag (b. 1926). Also, known as Slob-dpon Bstan-'dzin rNam-dag.

⁴⁸ Namdak, 2003, p. 27.

and forms volume 174 of the *Bon Kanjur*. The intermediate portion is aimed at humans (*mi*), the lower portion is aimed at subterranean beings (*klu*), and these two portions form volume 175 of the *Bon Kanjur*. Traditionally, the *Three Proclamations* is considered one of the three principal cycles of Dzogchen teachings in Bon. A few of its works are widely quoted in later exegetical literature, including the *Golden Turtle* (*gSer gyi rus sbal*) and the *Six Texts* (*Lung drug*). As noted in the quote above, Shardza associates this cycle with the Vast Expanse Class of Dzogchen. While a full consideration of this point is beyond the scope of this article, this categorization seems something of a convenience to provide placeholder to fill the category of the Vast Expanse Class, as the content of the cycle ranges all the way from tantric imaginal practices to pointing out instructions for direct introduction to the natural state.

Following the discussion in *A Catalogue of the Bon Kanjur*, where this cycle is cataloged as volumes 100 and 109, we observe that the *gter ston* for this cycle is Zhöton Ngodrup⁴⁹ who discovered the cycle in a Dragon year, either 1088 or 1100.

Generally, much as in the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*, the *tshon gang* appears in this cycle, though not predominately. For example, in the first volume of the *Three Proclamations*, on page 112 we read of the “Shenlha Karpo *mtshon*⁵⁰ *gang*” and in that same volume:⁵¹

Meditate clearly:

In my heart is the enlightened body of the wisdom-being *tshon gang*,
His eyes see everything in the ten directions.
His enlightened body without front or back.

Similar references are found in the second volume of the *Three Proclamations*, for example:⁵²

I become the enlightened body of Shenlha; nothing higher,
An enlightened body of light, the *tshon gang*, *bodhicitta*.
Seeing everything in the ten directions,
An enlightened body without front or back.
Well, through realizing the meaning of that: Buddhahood.

⁴⁹ bZhod-ston dNgos-grub.

⁵⁰ As mentioned earlier, we periodically see *mtshon gang* for *tshon gang*.

⁵¹ Volume 174 of the *Bon Kanjur*, p. 172: *bdag gi snyang kha ru ye shes sems dpa' sku tshon gang ba cig la/ zhal phyogs bcur gzic pa/ sku la mdun rgyab med par gsal bar sgom mo/*.

⁵² Volume 175 of the *Bon Kanjur*, p. 107: *rang nyid gshen lha'i sku ste bla na med/ 'od kyi skur gyur tshon gang byang chub sems/ phyogs bcu yongs gzigs sku la mdun rgyab med/ 'o na de don rtogs pas mngon sangs rgyas/*.

Later in the second volume of the *Three Proclamations* we encounter a text entitled *Cycle of Intentions of Enlightened Mind (Thugs kyi brnag pa)*.⁵³ Here the *tshon gang* plays a more central role. Early in the text we find a familiar presentation of the *tshon gang*:⁵⁴

In the middle of the palace of my heart⁵⁵ [is]
The enlightened body-mind of Kuntu Zangpo,
A *tshon gang* without measure.

As the text continues the theme of emanation and gathering is repeated a number of times, sometimes originating from the *tshon gang* and other times from the *ye shes sems dpa' tshon gang*. Then the text presents a novel view of the *tshon gang*:⁵⁶

The expression “*tshon gang*” is a symbol (*rgya*) of permanence.
It is also taught in *tantras* and *agama (lung)*.
If the understanding is not disturbed by partiality,
Then there is liberation.
[However,] if the essence of the meaning of “*tshon gang*” is not understood,
If one understands it as having a measure, or,
If one understands it as [simply] like light,
Then, one deviates toward the Tirthikas.
This is a very [serious] and difficult [error].

Feeling that attributions of permanence must be considered carefully, at my request, the contemporary Bon scholar Geshe Namgyal Dangsong⁵⁷ explained “*tshon gang*” in the above passage as “a symbol of the permanence of the natural state (*gnas lugs*), the wisdom of awareness that does not change in the three times.”⁵⁸ Here in the text, as well as in the statements of Geshe Dangsong and Yongzin Namdag,

⁵³ Volume 175 of the *Bon Kanjur*, p. 115ff.

⁵⁴ Volume 175 of the *Bon Kanjur*, pp. 118ff: *bdag gi she thun mang wer gyi dbus su// kun tu bzang po yid kyi sku/ chag tshad med pa'i tshon gang yod/*.

⁵⁵ Here the Zhang Zhung *she thun mang wer* is used for “palace of the heart.” Compare p. 375 of Nyima, 2003.

⁵⁶ The original Tibetan from volume 175 pp. 128 ff. of the *Bon Kanjur* was quite corrupt, and a later edition from Menri was not any clearer. This translation follows Jean-Luc Achard’s suggestions on both the Tibetan and the translation: *tshon gang bya ba rtag pa'i rgya yin te/ rgyud lung 'ga na bstan pa yang/ rgya ma chad na grol bar bshad/ tshon gang bya ba don gyi ngo bo ma go bar/ chag tshad can du rtogs sam/ 'od lta bu rtogs na/ mu stegs su gol ba in/ de ni shin du dka'ol/*.

⁵⁷ dGe-shes rNam-rgyal Drang-song. (<http://www.dangsongnamgyallama.org>) Accessed February 11, 2018.

⁵⁸ *tshon gang bya ba ni gnas lugs rig pa'i ye shes dus gsum du 'gyur ba med pa rtag pa'i phyag rgya*. Private communication.

the doctrinal tension is relieved by treating the *tshon gang* as merely a symbol.

This is the only scriptural instance that we have found in which a text acknowledges that the *tshon gang* is a shared term of the non-Buddhist Tirthikas and Bon. Not surprisingly, the assumption is that the Bonpo properly fathom the meaning of the *tshon gang* whereas the Tirthikas do not. Other texts either criticize the concept of the *tshon gang* as belonging to non-Buddhists, or present it implicitly as a valid concept of Bon. Only here do we find an attempt to contrast the two traditions' views of *tshon gang*.

The *tshon gang* in the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung: The Quintessential Instruction Class literature of Bon Dzogchen

So far, we have demonstrated that the notion of the *tshon gang* can be found in the principal texts of both the Mind Class and Vast Expanse Class of Bon Dzogchen. While the contexts in which we find the *tshon gang* are sensible and consistent with our growing understanding of the term, we cannot say that the *tshon gang* plays an important role in these two classes of literature. In fact, one might argue that it is more of an oddity. Next, we will consider the principal exemplar of the Quintessential Instruction Class of Bon Dzogchen, the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung, henceforth simply "Aural Transmission." In the literature of the Aural Transmission, we will see the *tshon gang* plays a more central role. This is significant because the Aural Transmission is not only the exemplar of the most profound of the three classes of Bon Dzogchen, it is also the cycle that is most esteemed by the living tradition of contemporary masters of Yungdrung Bon. Surely due in part to this, the *Aural Transmission* is the most studied and translated tradition of Bon in the West.

Before we go into the details, we wish to provide a bit more context on the literature that we will be citing. Both the historical lineage of the Aural Transmission and the literary tradition of the Aural Transmission are divided into:

- a. the Four Cycles of the Scriptural Transmission and
- b. the Experiential Transmission.

In other words, at points in its history the lines of transmission of the literature of the Aural Transmission were split into two different human lineages with the literature of the Scriptural Transmission going down one lineage and the literature of the Experiential Transmission going down another.

The *Four Cycles of the Scriptural Transmission* is the principal scripture of the Aural Transmission and constitutes the bulk of volume 171 of the *Bon Kanjur*.⁵⁹ The Experiential Transmission consists of teachings from individual human masters of the lineage and has traditionally not been included in collections of the *Bon Kanjur*. To further contextualize the sources we will cite, let us generally describe the categories of the *Four Cycles of the Scriptural Transmission*:

- The outer: the general presentation of the view
- The inner: experiential commentary on the quintessential instructions
- The secret: nakedly seeing awareness
- The utmost secret: profound certainty on the natural state

Further orientation to the *Four Cycles of the Scriptural Transmission* is given by Achard (Achard, 2006). A detailed analysis of the lineage of transmission of the *Aural Transmission* is given by Blezer (Blezer, 2009). Blezer's work attempts to reconcile the presentation of the literally timeless (or a-temporal) lineage traditionally ascribed to the Aural Transmission with the known human history. In this analysis, he notes that the first individual in the lineage that we can reconcile to historical sources is Yangton Sherab Gyaltsen⁶⁰ who Blezer places in the last quarter of the 11th century.

In the literature of the Aural Transmission, the *tshon gang* is principally described in the *Twenty-One Nails*, the primary text of the utmost secret cycle of the *Four Cycles of the Scriptural Transmission*. A commentary on the root text is attributed to a key legendary figure of the lineage, Nangzher Löpo⁶¹ who, according to tradition, belongs to the 8th century. Among the *Twenty-One Nails*, the *Fifth Nail* is entitled *The Tshon Gang, the Reality Body*, and entirely devoted to that topic. Till now, we had to pan carefully for gold amidst diverse streams of texts to find small nuggets to contribute to our semantic field of the *tshon gang*; however, in the *Twenty-One Nails* we find a motherlode. The *Twenty-One Nails* was translated into English earlier⁶² but, due to the nature of this "utmost secret" tradition, at the request of living masters, these translations were only privately circulated. Following the open publication of Reynold's interpretive translation of the

⁵⁹ We are relying a version edited by Yongzin Tenzin Namdak which we identify as *The Four Cycles of the Scriptural Transmission* in the Bibliography.

⁶⁰ Yang-ston Shes-rab rGyal-mtshan.

⁶¹ sNang-bzher Lod-po.

⁶² Achard, 1992; Keutzer, 2003.

Twenty-One Nails and its commentary,⁶³ traditional restrictions have loosened up.

The wisdom *tshon gang* in the *Twenty-One Nails*

We include in the Appendix the Tibetan for *Nail 5* together with a translation of both the root and the commentary.⁶⁴ We will accentuate a few key features in this section. We first look at a practice manual of the system of the Aural Transmission, *The Practice Manual* of Drugyelwa Yungdrung.⁶⁵ Eight centuries later this work continues to be the primary practice manual for the Aural Transmission. Aside from helping us choose some of the most relevant passages of the Aural Transmission, this manual demonstrates that the wisdom *tshon gang* was, and continues to be, a vital part of the *practice* of this living tradition. *The Practice Manual* is divided into: Preliminaries, Actual Practices, and four auxiliary sections on View, Meditation, Conduct, and Result. The *tshon gang* is first presented in the section on the View, in the context of instructions on direct introduction (*ngo sprod*). To provide context on this usage, we quote the preparatory instructions before the verses.⁶⁶

“Control the vital points of the body. Unite the breath and mind; after awareness separates the pure from the impure, consciousness is exposed as clear and radiant. When [the student] has confidence, point out while letting [the student] directly stare into the essence of that [radiant consciousness]. The wisdom of awareness is the awakening of the ultimate natural state. The non-conceptual consciousness of this very moment arises as that which is transparent, unobscured, raw and lucid. This is it.”

This is followed by the verses from *Nail 5* of *The Twenty-One Nails*, typically recited by the master during the direct introduction:⁶⁷

⁶³ Reynolds, 2014.

⁶⁴ Our translation of the root follows Achard's (Achard, 1992) closely, but not exactly.

⁶⁵ Composed by Drugyelwa Yungdrung; 1242-1290.

⁶⁶ From a working translation of *A Practice Manual* by Jean-Luc Achard and Kurt Keutzer that is based on a variorum edition of the Tibetan prepared by Kevin O'Neil and Kurt Keutzer: *lus gnad gcun rlung sems kyi sbyor ba bya ste/ rig pa'i dwangs snyigs phyed nas/ shes pa gsal mdangs legs po thon nas yid ches pa'i dus sul kho'i ngo bo la cer re lta ru bcug la ngo sprod de/ rig pa'i ye shes gnas lugs don gyi sangs rgyas de/ dus da lta'i rtog med kyi shes pa sa le rjen ne ba/ sgrub med zang thal du shar ba 'di yin tel.*

⁶⁷ *The Twenty-One Nails*, p. 507. Quoted in *A Practice Manual*: *ye shes tshon gang snang med bon gyi sku/ gshen lha dkar po gdags med kun gyi gzhi/ ngo bo nyid kyi rig pa zhes su grags/.*

The wisdom *tshon gang*, free of appearances, the Reality Body,
Shenlha Karpo, the base-of-all that cannot be named,
Is well known as “awareness of essence-in-itself.”

The association of the *tshon gang* with Shenlha Karpo has been one of the consistent themes in the Bon Dzogchen literature we have reviewed. In these few lines, it is interesting to see this association juxtaposed with the association of the *tshon gang* with the Reality Body (*bon sku*) because Shenlha Karpo is more typically associated with the Completion Body (*rdzogs sku*).

Other recurring themes are an enlightened body without front or back and an eye that sees in the ten directions. Here we find in *Nail 5*:⁶⁸

When the eye of wisdom arises as an eye in the enlightened body
tshon gang,
It is an enlightened body without front or back that sees everything
in the ten directions,
An unobscured eye that sees all without looking.

Aside from the greater length of the presentation of the *tshon gang* in *The Twenty-One Nails*, another distinguishing feature is the presentation of two *tshon gang*: the wisdom *tshon gang* and the light *tshon gang*. This distinction is also discussed by Shardza in volume 1 of his *The Treasure of Space and Awareness* (277ff); however, his discussion relies entirely on the *Twenty-One Nails*. Briefly, the wisdom *tshon gang* is self-originated wisdom, the Reality Body, free of attributes. The notion of the light *tshon gong* arising from wisdom *tshon gang* is described in *Nail 5*:⁶⁹

From the *tshon gang* of the great luminous wisdom,
Naturally arises the *tshon gang* of the great manifested light.

In truth, as the commentary guides us, the wisdom *tshon gang* and the light *tshon gang* are never gathered or separated. Their relationship is like light (the light *tshon gang*) which naturally arises from the core of the sun (the wisdom *tshon gang*).

One point of interest of *Nail 5* is that the physical location of the *tshon gang* is never mentioned. In fact, it would be easy to read *Nail 5* as simply another retelling of the familiar relationship between awareness/*rig pa* (here, the wisdom *tshon gang*) and its dynamic

⁶⁸ *The Twenty-One Nails*, p. 507: *tshon gang sku la ye shes spyan shar na/ phyogs bcu yongs gzigs mdun rgyab med pa'i sku/ ma ltas kun mthong sgrib g.yogs med pa'i spyan/*.

⁶⁹ *The Twenty-One Nails*, p. 510: *gsal ba'i ye shes chen po tshon gang las/ snang ba'i 'od chen tshon gang rang bzhin shar/*.

display/*rtsal* (here, the light *tshon gang*). However, in the quote presented in the Introduction of this paper, we saw that in *Nail 9* the wisdom *tshon gang* is placed in the jewel *tsi ta* of the heart.

Another element of the semantic field of the *tshon gang* is presented in *Nail 10*. There we read of the wisdom *tshon gang* giving rise to the five lights of appearances:⁷⁰

From the wisdom *tshon gang* of natural awareness
Arise the five radiant lights of appearances.

Nail 10 then continues to describe how from these five radiant lights the physical elements, channels, body, and mind are generated.

The intermediate state (*bar do*) is the focus of *Nail 19*. There we read:⁷¹

For the person who is accustomed and familiar [with this instruction],
Body and *maṇḍala* arise in their completeness.

And the *Commentary on the Twenty-One Nails* explains:⁷²

“For those who are accustomed and familiar with this instruction: At that time [of the *bar do*], from the *tshon gang*, the king of awareness, your own body appears as a body of light four cubits in size. That body appears without front or back and is free of cardinal or intermediate directions.”

This material on the *bar do* is also woven into the section of Drugyelwa's *Practice Manual* devoted to Conduct, and this is one of the two places in his manual that the *tshon gang* is mentioned there. The connection here may not be immediately apparent but it is in the Conduct section that the instructions on the intermediate state (*bar do*) are given.

With this our discussion of the *tshon gang* in the *Twenty-One Nails* is complete. We now continue with a consideration of another work from the Aural Transmission, *The Six Lamps*.

⁷⁰ *The Twenty-One Nails*, p. 507: *rang rig ye shes tson gang las/ snang ba'i 'od gdangs rnam lngar shar/*.

⁷¹ *The Twenty-One Nails*, p. 516: *goms shing 'dris pa'i gang zag la/ sku dang dkyil 'khor rdzogs par 'char/*.

⁷² *The Twenty-One Nails, Commentary*, p. 572: *gdams pa 'di la goms shing 'dris pa rnam ni/ de tshe rig pa'i rgyal po tshon gang las/ rang lus 'od lus 'doms gang du snang ngo/ de yang da lta'i sgyu lus 'di lta bu ma yin tel' 'od kyi sku la mdun dang rgyab med/ phyogs dang mtshams med par snang ngo/*.

**The *tshon gang*, the Six Lamps,
and the Practice of Crossing Over**

One of the distinctive features of Dzogchen is its employment of a subtle physiological system that differs in a number of ways from the systems of channels (*rtsa*), winds (*rlung*), and drops (*thig le*) used in the practice of completion-stage yogas of the various tantric systems of both Old and New schools. This unique subtle physiology is actively engaged during the practice of *crossing over* (*thod rgal*). Significant elements of this system are a series of lamps (*sgron ma*) and channels (*rtsa*).

In Chapter Six of *Meditation Differently* (Guenther, 1992), Guenther broke new ground with his comparative description of these subtle physiological systems as described in the great Nyingma master Longchen Rabjam's *Bla ma yang tig* and *Zab mo yang tig*. This line of investigation was further advanced by Scheidegger in his dissertation (Scheidegger, 2003) and later articles (Scheidegger, 2005, 2007) where he went into more detail on sources from Longchen Rabjam's *snying thig yab bzhi*, as well as the earlier Seventeen Tantras of the Quintessential Instruction class. A detailed discussion of one Bon system of the subtle physiology, as it is described in the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung, is given by Blezer (Blezer, 2009).

While the works referenced above do not indicate a single monolithic system, but rather a variety of systems, there are common elements. To demonstrate their relationship, we compare the system of the *Six Lamps* of the *Aural Transmission* with that of the *Zab Mo Yang Tig* of the Nyingma.

Bon system of the Six Lamps from the Four Cycles of Scriptural Transmission, pp. 356-422.	Nyingma system of the Zab mo Yang tik (Guenther,1992) Chapter 6, Figure 7	Function
1. Lamp of the abiding base (<i>gnas pa gzhi'i sgron ma</i>)	1. Lamp of the abiding base (<i>gnas pa gzhi'i sgron ma</i>)	The lamp of the fundamental base.
2. Lamp of the fleshy heart (<i>tsi ta sha'i sgron ma</i>)	2. Lamp of the fleshy heart (<i>tsitta sha'i sgron ma</i>)	The lamp of the fundamental base in the human heart.
3. Lamp of the soft white channel (<i>dkar 'jam rtsa sgron ma</i>)	3. Lamp of the soft white channel (<i>dkar 'jam rtsa sgron ma</i>)	The lamp of the light channel conducting light from the heart to the eyes.

4. Water-lamp of the far-casting lasso (<i>rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma</i>)	4. Water-lamp of the far-casting lasso (<i>rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma</i>)	The lamp of the physical eyes that expresses apparent reality as the dynamic display of awareness.
5. Lamp of direct introduction to the pure realms (<i>zhing khams ngo sprod kyi sgron ma</i>)	6. Lamp of the result (<i>'bras bu'i sgron ma</i>)	The lamp illuminating the manifestation of the pure realms.
6. Lamp of the time of the <i>bardo</i> (<i>bar do dus kyi sgron ma</i>)	5. Lamp of the time of the <i>bardo</i> (<i>bar do dus kyi sgron ma</i>)	The lamp illuminating the appearances of the intermediate state.

While the similarities between these two particular systems is striking, this is not what we want to accentuate in this article. We have chosen the system of the *Six Lamps* because it is the principal system for describing the subtle physiology of Dzogchen in Yungdrung Bon. The *Six Lamps* is also the principal text of the second (inner) cycle of the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung, and benefits from two commentaries: one by Drugyelwa Yungdrung (1242-1290) and the other by Uri Sönam Gyeltsen⁷³ (13th century).⁷⁴

However hard it may be to fully comprehend the six lamps as presented in these works, the “electro-dynamics” of the system is easy to describe. 1) There is a fundamental base. 2) This fundamental base has a seat in the physical heart of the human body, the *tsi ta*. 3) The “light” from the *tsi ta* is conducted via a light channel to the eyes. This light is not the ordinary light of *photons* but the “light of manifestation (*'od kyi snang ba*).” 4) This light is further conducted from the eyes to apparent realities.

Perhaps it is a concern only naturally occurring to someone with an Electrical Engineering background, such as the present author, but the question naturally occurs: what precisely is the point of origin of the light of the *tsi ta* that is then conducted through the channels and on through the eyes? In other words, what is the precise point of origin of the light within the lamp of the fleshy *tsi ta*?

As we have seen, the *tshon gang* plays a significant role in the Aural

⁷³ U-rib bSod-nams rGyal-mtshan.

⁷⁴ The *Six Lamps* have also been the focus of several scholars. In particular, Jean-Luc Achard has published a translation of the root verses, as well as an overview and synthetic commentary (Achard, 2017). Chris Hatchell includes a translation of the root verses as well as Drugyelwa Yungdrung's commentary in his book *Naked Seeing* (Hatchell, 2015). Shekerjian and Keutzer have also privately circulated their own translation of both the root verses and Drugyelwa Yungdrung's commentary (Shekerjian, 2011) at private teachings by a number of masters of the Bon tradition.

Transmission of Zhang Zhung, and its location, as described in that system, is precisely the *tsi ta*. Moreover, the *tshon gang*, as we have seen, is described as a lamp inside the vase of the fleshy *tsi ta*. So, one might naturally look to the *Six Lamps* for a clear description of the relationship between the lamp of the fleshy *tsi ta* and the *tshon gang*. While a careful reading of the *Six Lamps* themselves does not fulfill this expectation, an examination of Drugyelwa Yungdrung's commentary, *The Contemplative Meaning of the Six Lamps*, does yield some of what we are looking for. The following describes how the central channel is opened by the dynamic energy of the *tshon gang*:⁷⁵

From the middle of the *tsi ta*, from the dynamic energy (*rtsal*) of the light *tshon gang* and the wisdom *tshon gang*, the wind of space arises; the central channel is opened.

However, the role of the *tshon gang* in the system of the lamps, and its relationship to the four (or five) visions that form the structure of crossing-over practice, is still a bit abstract. Shardza describes the situation more clearly in his comprehensive manual of Dzogchen practice, *The Natural Arising of the Three Enlightened Bodies*. Here, in his section entitled *The Practice of the Four Visions of Thogal*, in his discussion of the first of the four visions,⁷⁶ known as the *Appearance of the Actual Manifestation of Reality (bon nyid)*, he discusses the arising of the visions. There Shardza states:⁷⁷

Their location is the *tsi ta*. Their path projects into the soft white channel. The door arises from the liquid lamp of the far-casting lasso. For example, it arises like the light of a butter lamp within a vase.

Then, immediately following, Shardza quotes *Nail 9* of the *Twenty-One Nails*, as in the Introduction of this paper:⁷⁸

The physical heart of flesh
Is like a jeweled vase of alloyed metals.
The luminous wisdom *tshon gang*

⁷⁵ *The Contemplative Meaning of the Six Lamps*, page 381: *tsi ta'i dbus nas 'od dang ye shes tshon gang ba'i rtsal las/ nam mkha'i rlung shar te dbu ma'i rtsa sbubs phyed ba'o/*.

⁷⁶ In this work Shardza follows the system of four visions (*snang ba bzhi*) rather than the five visions (*snang ba lnga*) that is described in the *Practice Manual* associated with the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung.

⁷⁷ *The Practice of the Four Visions of Thogal*, p. 16a, (11-259): */gnas pa tsit+ta'i dkyil/ /lam dkar 'jam rtsa la dod/ /sgo rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma las 'char ba ste/ dper na bum nang gi mar me'i 'od kha la byung ba lta bu'o/*.

⁷⁸ *The Twenty-One Nails*, pp. 509ff: *gdos pa sha'i tsi ta ni/ 'phra men rin chen bum pa 'dra/ gsal ba'i ye shes tshon gang ni/ bum pa nang gi mar me 'dra/*.

Is like a lamp inside that vase.

With this brief but important connection between the *tshon gang* and the subtle physiology of Bon Dzogchen, we are now ready to summarize our discoveries regarding the semantic field of the *tshon gang* in the Dzogchen of Yungdrung Bon.

Summary of the *tshon gang* within Bon Dzogchen

The word *tshon gang*/*mtshon gang* is relatively unusual in Tibetan writings. Its meaning, “the first phalanx of the thumb” is nearly identical to the Sanskrit *aṅguṣṭhamātra*. Nevertheless, while we can find many instances of the term *tshon gang* in Bon and Nyingma Tibetan Buddhist texts, we cannot produce a text in which we can demonstrate that *tshon gang* was ever used to translate the Sanskrit *aṅguṣṭhamātra*. In fact, we have yet to find a text, in which the word *tshon gang* appears as a compound, for which we have a Sanskrit original.⁷⁹

Drawing on our references from the five primary volumes relating to Dzogchen in the *Bon Kanjur*, the exemplars of each of the Mind, Vast Expanse, and Quintessential instruction classes of Bon Dzogchen, we will organize our summary around the following elements: 1) the wisdom-being *tshon gang*; 2) the essence and nature of the wisdom and light *tshon gang*; 3) the physical location of the wisdom *tshon gang*; and 4) the function of the wisdom *tshon gang*.

The *tshon gang* form of the wisdom-being: the wisdom-being *tshon gang*

Our brief example of Ati Muwer from the *sādhana* of Zhang Zhung Me Ri provides a typical example of the *tshon gang* as used to describe the form for the wisdom-being. Using *tshon gang* to define the size and shape of the wisdom being is very common in Bon and Nyingma tantra, and we find it in volume 2 of the *Cycles of the Three Proclamations* as well. This wisdom-being *tshon gang* then commonly serves as the central focal point for mantra recitation, as well as for the emanation and collection of light.

⁷⁹ Electronic searching has produced many blind alleys such as in the *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi rtsa rgyud* in volume 88 of the *Pedurma Kanjur*, p. 643. Here we read: *mtshon gang dag yid la bsam pa tsam gyi de 'byung bar 'gyur rol*. On closer examination *mtshon* is used here as *mtshon cha*, “weapon,” followed by the compound *gang dag* or “some.”

The *tshon gang* as the form of ejected consciousness

As we saw in the passage from the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden*, in the practice of ejection (*'pho ba*) the *tshon gang* may define the particular form imagined for the ejected consciousness.

The essence and nature of the wisdom *tshon gang* and light *tshon gang*

The most numerous references to the wisdom-being *tshon gang* are in tantra; however, the majority of references to the wisdom *tshon gang* are in Bon Dzogchen, where the emphasis is on its essence and nature. The latter references indicate that awareness (*rig pa*), the self-originated (*rang 'byung*), the natural state, *bodhicitta*, and the Reality Body, all fit within the semantic field of the wisdom *tshon gang*. We do find subtle distinctions made, somewhat inconsistently, between the wisdom *tshon gang* and the base-of-all (*kun gzhi*). For example, in *Nail 5* of *The Twenty-One Nails*, the commentary indicates that the following describes the wisdom *tshon gang*:

The clear, self-originated, king of awareness,
Abides as self-originated wisdom, the-root and base-of-all.

Whereas, *Nail 6* suggests that the wisdom *tshon gang* arises from the base-of-all:

From the vast expanse of the base-of-all, selfless, clear, and empty,
Arises the naturally clear, non-conceptual, wisdom *tshon gang*.

The entire text of *Nail 5*, translated in the Appendix, is devoted to the essence and nature of the the two *tshon gang*, the wisdom *tshon gang* and light *tshon gang*. Therefore, we will not add more here, except to reiterate that these two abide together like the core of the sun and its rays of light.

The size and physical location of the wisdom *tshon gang*

The size of the *tshon gang*, the first phalanx of the thumb, is implicit in its name. The physical location of the *tshon gang* has variously been described as:

- The *tsi ta*
 - The material flesh *tsi ta* (*gdos pa'i sha tsi ta*) (*Twenty-One Nails, Nail 9*)
 - The *tsi ta* of flesh (*tsi ta'i sha*) (*The Six Lamps*)
 - The middle of the *tsi ta* (*tsi ta rin po che'i dbus su*) (*The Cycles of the Nine Hidden*)
- The citadel of the heart (Zhang Zhung: *she thun mang wer*) (*Three Proclamations, Vol 2*)

Thus, our sources are unanimous in locating the wisdom *tshon gang* within the physical human heart.

The functions of the *tshon gang*

We have found a variety of functions of the *tshon gang*. In *Nail 10* of the *Twenty-One Nails*, we learned that the wisdom *tshon gang* gives rise to the five lights of appearances.

In *Nail 19* of the *Twenty-One Nails*, we learned that the wisdom *tshon gang* and light *tshon gang* serve as the base of experience (*'char gzhi*) of the body of light in the intermediate state.

In *The Six Lamps* we learned of the particular function of the *tshon gang* and light *tshon gang* in the creation of the human body and its system of channels. In particular:

- Wisdom *tshon gang*: The source of the wind (*rlung*) of the space [element]; the opener of the central channel
(*The Six Lamps, The Lamp of the Soft White Channel*)
- Wisdom *tshon gang* and light *tshon gang*: The source of the essential body organs as well as the root and branch winds
(*The Six Lamps, The Lamp of the Soft White Channel*)

Finally, at least with regard to the practice of crossing-over (*thod rgal*), we saw the unique function of the wisdom *tshon gang* as serving as the source of light within the *tsi ta*. This was indicated in *Nail 9* and further confirmed by Shardza in volume 1 of his *Treasury of Space and Awareness*.

While our research has elaborated the essence and nature of the wisdom *tshon gang*, and confirmed in multiple sources its location in the physical human heart, all of this was forecasted in the very two first quotes of the Introduction of this paper. While much of what we have discovered reinforces the view of contemporary Bon masters that the *tshon gang* is principally a symbol for the natural state, awareness, Reality Body, and so forth, by bringing to light the tantric roots of the *tshon gang*, as well as demonstrating its unique functions, we hope to

have shed new light on the topic.

A Brief Look at the *tshon gang* in the Nyingma Tradition:

Before concluding we would like to take a brief look at how the *tshon gang* appears in Dzogchen cycles of the Nyingma tradition. First, let us observe that the wisdom *tshon gang* appears as early as Dunhuang. There in the midst of an early *mahāyoga sādhana*, during the stages of dissolution.⁸⁰

The male deity also completely dissolves into the wisdom *mtshon pa* deity. That wisdom *mtshon gang* also completely dissolves into a *vajra* the size of a barley seed.

As for the appearance of the *tshon gang* in Nyingma Dzogchen: in a manner similar to Bon, the Dzogchen tradition of the Nyingma is broadly organized, in order of increasing superiority, into the Mind Class, (*sems sde*), the Vast Expanse Class (*klong sde*), and the Quintessential Instruction Class (*man ngag sde*). The core canonical literature of the Quintessential Instruction Class is the collection of Seventeen Tantras. Probably the best overview of these works in a western language is due to Achard in *L'Essence Perlée du Secret* (Achard, 1997). Our text under consideration, *The Tantra Arrayed with Jewels*, is one of those Seventeen Tantras.

In the *Tantra Arrayed with Jewels*, we find the following reference to the *tshon gang*:⁸¹

In the jeweled *tsitta* of each individual,
Is the *tshon gang*, like a blazing light inside a vase,
Within that, a firelight of wisdom blazes.

Here the wisdom *tshon gang*, freed of any direct association with a deity or a commitment being, shows an obvious similarity to the wisdom *tshon gang* in the *Twenty-One Nails* of the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung. While Nyingma Dzogchen literature is not a focus of this article, nor has time permitted a careful survey of the role of the *tshon gang* in it, this reference to the *tshon gang* as a source of light in the *tsitta/tsi ta* seems fairly isolated within that corpus. For example,

⁸⁰ Poussin, 1962, IOL 552, p. 170. Also, Dalton, 2006, IOL Tib J 552, p. 258ff. *yab kyang lha 'i ye shes mtshon pa la tim gyi thim/ ye shes mtshon gang pa de yang rdo rje nas tsam pa de la tim kyis thim/*. Thanks to Jacob Dalton for sharing this reference.

⁸¹ *Nyingma Gyud Bum*, volume 6, page 20: */rang rang tsitti rin chen nal /tshon gang 'od 'bar bum pa 'i tshul/ /nang na ye shes me 'od 'bar/*.

we find these lines quoted only once by Longchen Rabjam,⁸² in his *Treasury of the Supreme Vehicle*,⁸³ and even there it is misattributed to another one of the Seventeen Tantras, *The Perfect Dynamic Energy of the Lion* (*Seng ge rtsal rdzogs*). While we do find many other references to the *tshon gang* in Longchen Rabjam's writings, as well as in other Nyingma exegetical writings, in every instance we have examined it seems to be used as a unit of measure for guiding meditative and imaginal practices. While it would be unwise to generalize about a literature as voluminous as that of the Nyingma Dzogchen Tradition, or even Longchen Rabjam's writings, it does seem safe to say that the *tshon gang* plays a lesser role and occupies a smaller semantic field in Nyingma, than in the Dzogchen of Yungdrung Bon.

Another term that is related by language, location, and function, is *tshon sna lnga'i gru gu*, or five-colored ball of yarn; this term may also be found in the Seventeen Dzogchen Tantras. In particular, in the *Union of Sun and Moon*, we find the following:

"In the heart of embodied beings there is a radiant drop (*thig le*) of light, that is like a ball of five-colored yarn."⁸⁴

Speculative Conclusions

This research has spurred our imagination toward a number of speculative conclusions.

Speculations on the Evolution of the *tshon gang* Concept Over Time

We have identified three significant expressions of the *tshon gang*:

- The wisdom-being *tshon gang* (*ye shes sems dpa' tshon gang*) as a companion to the commitment being (*dam tshig sems dpa'*) in the imaginal practices of deity practice in Buddhist tantra generally, and Bon is no exception.

⁸² Klong-chen Rab-'byams; 1308-1364.

⁸³ Volume 18 of *The Collected Works of Dri Med 'Od Zer*.

⁸⁴ *Nyingma Gyud Bum*, volume 5, page 523. Note that here the meaning of *tshon* is color: *lus can rnam kyī snying na 'od kyī dang ma 'dus pa'i tshon (dbyings) sna lnga'i gru gu bsdogs pa lta bu 'am/*. Note also that here *tshon* is glossed with *dbyings*. Compare with the *gzha' tshon sna lnga'i gur phub 'dra* of Nail 9 of the *The Twenty-One Nails* p. 509.

- The wisdom-being *tshon gang* still associated with a deity, such as Shenlha Ökar, but free of any association with the commitment being and free of any need for ritual generation.
- The wisdom *tshon gang* standing alone as a symbol of the Reality Body (*bon sku*), the natural state, and other equivalent terms. It is coemergent with the light *tshon gang* just as the core of the sun is coemergent with its sun rays.

If the wisdom-being *tshon gang* paired with the commitment being clearly belongs to the conceptual practices of the generation stage, and the wisdom *tshon gang* paired with the light *tshon gang* is deeply rooted in the non-conceptual practice of Dzogchen, then where in this scheme does the wisdom-being *tshon gang*, freed of the ritual of generation, belong? We first saw this phase in the brief portion of the *sādhana* devoted to Ati Muwer. Geshe Namgyal Dangsong was quite firm in stating that even when freed of the generation ritual these practices still belong to the generation stage of tantra. This seems to imply that the classification of the practice depends on the context of the practice. Let us consider the quote from the *Three Proclamations*, that we presented earlier:

In my heart is the wisdom-being *tshon gang*,
His eyes see everything in the ten directions.
Clearly meditate on this enlightened body that is without
front or back.

Our understanding of the tradition is that if a practitioner reads or recites these words in a liturgical context then it is a generation stage practice; however, if a master uses these or similar words in a direct introduction then it is a Dzogchen practice. More to our sensibilities is the notion that there's no real classifying the practice other than by the result. In other words, whether the practice is generation stage or Dzogchen depends on whether the practitioner is directly recognizing the nature of mind or engaged in conceptual practice.

Parallel to these nuances of Bon practice is the question of the historical development of these practices. Did the entirely unelaborated wisdom *tshon gang* appear first in history and gradually get elaborated by associations with deity and ritual in tantra? Or did the wisdom-being *tshon gang* appear first, historically, but gradually undergo a kind of essentialization in Dzogchen practice: first being freed of ritual generation and finally being freed, as in *Nail 5* of the *Twenty-One Nails*, from any association with deity? Arguing in favor of the former is that if we follow the analogy of non-Buddhist Indian literature, the particular form of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* first

appeared completely unelaborated in ancient Upaniṣadic literature, and only after many centuries became associated with Rudra, Śiva, and so forth. Arguing in favor of the latter is that wherever we find the *tshon gang* in Dzogchen, tantra is not far away. Moreover, in our investigation of two major Bon Dzogchen cycles, *The Cycles of the Nine Hidden* and *The Three Proclamation*, we found that tantric practices and Dzogchen practices are feely mixed in those cycles. As a final support to this position, the Bon (and Nyingma) traditions themselves place Dzogchen as a culmination of tantric practice.

Philosophical Speculations on the Nature of the *tshon gang*

The wisdom *tshon gang* is paradoxical. What sense does it make for something to be simultaneously immeasurable and yet given a particular size and location in the physical heart? The Bon tradition has its own ways of dealing with this paradox. Principally there is the position that the *tshon gang* is merely a symbol for the natural state, Reality Body and other equivalents. However, it is not just a passive symbol, like the symbol of the *g.yung drung* or *svastika* is a symbol for the everlasting. As we saw, the wisdom and the light *tshon gang* can perform a particular function in the evolution of the human body such as being the source of the wind of space.

In his *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya*, Śāṅkarācārya's commentaries on sūtras 1.3.24 and 1.3.25 argue that just as the space (*ākāśa*) within a cubit long section of bamboo is spoken of as a cubit of space, in this same way, although the supreme Self (*ātman*) is all pervasive, it can be spoken of as having the size of a thumb in the location of the heart. Alternatively, for any contemporary individual familiar with modern physics, it is much less paradoxical that the all-pervasive and immeasurable might also be more readily locatable in some locations than others. Since the work of Schrödinger and other revelations of quantum mechanics, we have learned that even the grossest matter has a dual nature of wave and particle; in its wave nature matter may be considered to be truly all pervasive, yet statistically it is more likely to be in particular locations.⁸⁵ Unfortunately, neither of these explanations are sufficient to resolve the paradox of the wisdom *tshon gang* for the Bon tradition. While the wisdom *tshon gang* is said to be *like* space and, in other quotations, pervade space, the wisdom *tshon gang* is a fusion (*zung 'jug*) of clarity (*gsal*) and emptiness (*stong*); its empty aspect (*stong cha*)

⁸⁵ Cf. *The Undivided Universe*, Chapter 7, Bohm, 1995.

is not commensurable to space in any way. Perhaps this paradox has its greatest instructional power when simply left as it is, without further analysis.

Bon is a fertile but neglected field of study

A final implicit observation of this work is that due to Bon's reverence for antiquity, and its tolerance of paradoxical and controversial topics which might meet with censure in other traditions, we find in Bon the juxtaposition of unique religious ideas that we cannot find elsewhere. We believe that this makes Bon a very fertile, yet relatively neglected field, for the investigation of the history and evolution of Tibetan Buddhism. Further, whatever Indic precedents or impenetrable paradoxes the *tshon gang* has, none of this should obscure our appreciation of the uniqueness and natural beauty of Bon works such as *Nail 5*.

Deficiencies of this Work and Future Directions for Research

There are many deficiencies to this work. First, we cannot claim to have comprehensively surveyed Bon Dzogchen literature, as we have only investigated the three principles cycles of Yungdrung Bon. Even within this relatively modest scope, in broadly surveying the *tshon gang* across five different volumes of the *Bon Kanjur*, we have failed to fully contextualize these cited passages within these works. This is particularly true of the *Cycles of the Nine Hidden* and *Three Proclamations*. Thus, an investigation of the *tshon gang* within Bon Dzogchen that is both broader and deeper is warranted.

Second, while we have found obvious comparisons to the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* of the Upaniṣadic literature, we haven't offered any kind of explanation of how these Upaniṣadic works might have come to influence Bon. More generally we have not given a hypothesis as to how Bon could have encountered the concept of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* at all, other than through critiques of Vedānta found in translations of works tenets, such as Bodhibhadra's *Jñānasārasamuccaya nāma nibandhana* discussed earlier. Another interesting direction of research is to trace the connection of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* of the Upaniṣads to the *liṅga śarīra* of the later Sāṃkhya system and then on to later tantric works, such as the *Svacchanda Tantra* and Abhinavagupta's *Tantrāloka*. While the *aṅguṣṭhamātra puruṣa* is not very evident in these later tantric works, it seems that the concept of the *liṅga*, particularly at the heart, may have

taken over its function. A better foundation in these later Indian works would put us in a better position to hypothesize about direct historical connections between these Indian traditions and Bon.

Perhaps the most promising and fruitful direction of research is to carefully explore the role of the *tshon gang* and related concepts in Dzogchen systems of the Nyingma school and compare those with Bon. Given the significant role of the wisdom *tshon gang* in at least the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung tradition of Bon Dzogchen, and its relative absence in the Nyingma traditions of Longchen Rabjam's Nyingthik, the Longchen Nyingthik, and the Dudjom Tersar, this difference gives us an interesting lens for looking at the relationship between Bon Dzogchen and Nyingma Dzogchen. Each tradition is too large to be considered a monolith, so let us consider the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung. Logic would imply that there are only a limited number of alternatives for the relationship between this tradition and that of the Nyingma. Principally:

- The Aural Transmission originated independently and continued largely independently from the Nyingma.
- The Aural Transmission developed independently, but shares common sources with the Nyingma.
- The Aural Transmission is principally derived from the Nyingma tradition.
- At least some traditions of the Nyingma are principally derived from the Aural Transmission.

For example, if, as is popularly supposed by many contemporary Nyingma masters, the Aural Transmission is highly derivative of Nyingma Dzogchen, then how is it that the *tshon gang* came to be such a focus of the Aural Transmission of Zhang Zhung? Does the wisdom *tshon gang* represent a Bon addition or innovation? Alternatively, has the Nyingma tradition systematically censored the role of the wisdom *tshon gang* over time?

With each of the principal alternatives considered above, there are an attendant series of related questions that merit further investigation.

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Finding references to the *tshon gang* in such a vast amount of literature was like finding a needle in a haystack; however, the presence of e-texts in Unicode served as a magnet that greatly facilitated this effort. These e-texts were, in turn, largely made possible through the optical character recognition (OCR) technology for Tibetan that was created by Zach Rowinski (Rowinski, 2016). Most of this OCR'd material is available to be searched at the Buddhist Digital Resource Center (www.tbrc.org). Navigation of Sanskrit texts was facilitated by the resources at Göttingen Register of Electronic Texts in Indian Languages (<http://gretil.sub.uni-goettingen.de/>) and the collection of e-texts offered by the Muktabodha Indological Research Institute (<http://www.muktabodha.org/>).

Appendix - Translation

Nail 5, The Nail of the *tshon gang*, the Reality Body

The meaning of the fifth nail, the nail of the tshon gang, the Reality Body, also has three parts:

- [1) The prostration*
- 2) Unraveling the text*
- 3) The summary]*

As for the first (1) of those:

Homage to Kuntu Zangpo, primordially pure, natural awareness.

This demonstrates the homage. This teaches the meaning of not reaching the extremes of anything whatsoever in *bodhicitta*, the king of

knowledge (*shes rig*).

The second (2), unraveling the text has four parts:

2a) Teaching the essence of the wisdom *tshon gang*

2b) Teaching the natural state of the wisdom *tshon gang*

2c) Teaching the greatness of the wisdom *tshon gang*

2d) Teaching the reasoning regarding the wisdom *tshon gang*

The first (2a) has two parts:

2a1) The wisdom *tshon gang*

2a2) The light *tshon gang*

As for the first (2a1):

The clear, self-originated, king of awareness,

Clear means not covered by obscuration. Self-originated means without conditions or creator. Awareness means the ground of arising of all recollections (*dran*). King means nothing higher and abiding in the culmination (*mthar thug*) of all knowledge (*shes rig*). It is the wisdom *tshon gang* because prior to it there was no wisdom of realization or delusion of ignorance. That [*tshon gang*] is not subject to arising in *nirvāṇa* and *saṃsāra* [in any way] whatsoever.

Then, if you ask, "How does it abide?"

Abides as self-originated wisdom, the root and base-of-all.

Not made by any kind of causes or conditions, it abides primordially as self-originated.

Because it is formless, this wisdom is beyond form, shape, and color.

Because it is inexpressible, it is beyond letters, words, and names.

Because it is non-conceptual, it is beyond the concepts and thoughts, of the intellect.

As for these three verses: Because the natural state of the wisdom and natural awareness is formless, it is not created through color and shape. Because it is inexpressible, it transcends words and names. Because it is non-conceptual wisdom transcending the intellect, it transcends the objects of the intellect: thoughts and analysis.

To that

The wisdom *tshon gang*, free of appearances, Reality Body,

the name:

Shenlha Karpo, the base-of-all that cannot be named,

is applied. And, also:

Awareness of essence-itself.

Second (2a2), teaching the essence of the light tshon gang:

**From the *tshon gang* of the great luminous wisdom,
Naturally arises the *tshon gang* of the great manifested light.**

In⁸⁶ the ground of experience of the wisdom *tshon gang*, abides the primordial, naturally-arising, *tshon gang* of the great manifested light. For example, it is like light, which naturally arises from the core of the sun.

Neither gathered, nor separated; light arising in itself (*nyid la nyid*),

It is not that the wisdom *tshon gang* and the light *tshon gang* abide as two things that are collected into one. It is not that abiding as one they are separated into individuals. They abide primordially as naturally arising in themselves.

Clear and insubstantial, its appearances are devoid of self-nature (*rang bzhin med*).

This teaches that the light *tshon gang* is not produced with attributes or as a substantial entity, but as clarity in light.

It does not incline toward any shape or color,

That light *tshon gang* is the base of arising of all forms: the enlightened bodies of Buddhas and the bodies of sentient beings and so forth. Like that, also, there is no partiality with regard to form or essence. The

⁸⁶ Reading the Tibetan's *las* as *la*.

white light, green, red, blue, and so forth, the arising of all colors are in the base. Like that, in the essence, also, there is no partiality whatsoever with regard to color.

It transcends any size or measurement.

That light *tshon gang* is immeasurably large. It abides without center or nadir in the nature of the sky. It is immeasurably small. It is able to enter the body of even the smallest insect.⁸⁷ As for that light *tshon gang*:

It is known as the Reality Body with immense appearances,

And also,

[and as] the root deity, named Shenlha Karpo,

And also,

[and as] the awareness of the appearances of superior insight.

Second (2b), teaching the natural state (*gnas lugs*) of the wisdom *tshon gang*:

Because natural awareness arises as an eye in the enlightened body *tshon gang*,⁸⁸

Because the light *tshon gong* is changeless, it is known as an enlightened body. Because the wisdom *tshon gang* is free of obscurations it arises as an eye. Because those two are inseparable, it is known as the non-duality of an enlightened body and wisdom.

An enlightened body without front or back that sees everything in the ten directions,

That enlightened body and wisdom *tshon gong*, it is a face of wisdom without front or back. Like an egg of crystal, it is luminous to the ten directions.

⁸⁷ The phrase '*jag mig gyi srin bu*' is often used in Tibetan works to indicate the smaller limit of pervasiveness. The precise insect indicated here is unclear.

⁸⁸ The first line as quoted in the commentary differs from root text. In the root we find: *tshon gang sku la ye shes spyan shar na!* When the eye of wisdom arises in the enlightened body of the *tshon gang*.

An unobscured eye that sees all without looking.

Because it is an unobscured eye of awareness, like a polished mirror, it clearly [reflects] without looking.

It appears (*shar*) as an immense translucence (*zang thal*) without inner and outer,

As for that wisdom *tshon gong*, it is not that when abiding outside it does not abide inside, or when abiding inside, it does not abide outside. It abides universally (*spyi blugs*) without inner or outer.

And abides as the great pervasion (*khyab bdal*) without center or perimeter,

That wisdom *tshon gang* is not partial to limits and directions. It abides without being restricted to cardinal or intermediate directions, center or perimeter.

The base-of-all-that arises, undefiled by anything whatsoever.

That wisdom *tshon gang* is the base of arising of all: *nirvāṇa* and *samsāra*, Buddhas and sentient beings, mental afflictions and compassion, concepts and wisdom, virtues and negative actions, comfort and misery, animate and inanimate, body and mind, subject and object, cause and result, superior and inferior birth. Even as it is like that, it abides without reaching any extreme.

Third (2c), teaching the greatness of the wisdom tshon gang:

**Prior to this awareness, the primordially existing king,
There was no *nirvāṇa* nor *samsāra*, no aeons, no world, no elements**

As for that wisdom *tshon gong*, the king of awareness, it primordially abides as naturally-arising. Before it, there were no bon of *nirvāṇa* or bon of *samsāra*, no nine aeons, no three worlds, no five elements and so forth; nothing whatsoever existed.

The king of awareness emerged at the beginning of everything.

Before it, nothing whatsoever had emerged; the king of awareness

abides primordially.

Buddhas did not exist; therefore, it did not arise from their teachings.

[Sentient beings did not exist; therefore, it did not emerge from their actions.

Individual persons did not exist; therefore, it was not accomplished by their efforts.]⁸⁹

Before the wisdom *tshon gong*, the king of awareness, “Buddhas” did not exist, therefore, that wisdom *tshon gong* did not emerge from the teachings of the Shenrab. The wisdom *tshon gong* was not created by the actions of sentient beings because before it, “sentient beings” did not exist. It was also not created through the effort of individual persons, because before it, because individual actors had not been created,

[Free of causes and conditions, it is naturally uncompounded.

It is not formed as an inanimate object (*snod*) from atoms.

It is not made (*grub pa med*) into a body through the cause of the elements (*'byung ba'i rgyu*).

It is not produced by penis (*sta*⁹⁰) or born from a womb.]⁹¹

That wisdom *tshon gang* is also not a phenomenon that is compounded through the assembling of causes and conditions because, before it, substantial causes and co-emergent conditions did not yet exist. That wisdom *tshon gang* is not subject to being formed in the world as an inanimate object because, before it, atoms, the cause of inanimate objects, did not yet exist. That wisdom *tshon gang* is not subject to being produced as a body made of elements because, before it, the causal five elements did not exist. The wisdom *tshon gang* is not born from the causes of the white and red [drops] because, before it, the penis of the father and the womb of the mother did not exist.

[It transcends the causes for realization and delusion and is free from *samsāra* and *nirvāṇa*.]⁹²

⁸⁹ These two lines from the root text are not explicitly repeated in the commentary.

⁹⁰ Jean-Luc Achard and Geshe Namgyal Dangsong agreed on “penis” (or *pho mtshan*) as the meaning of *sta*. Note that *sta* carries associations with “weapon” (e.g. *sta re*, axe) in both Tibetan and Zhang Zhung.

⁹¹ These lines from the root text are not explicitly repeated in the commentary.

⁹² This line from the root text is not explicitly repeated in the commentary.

The wisdom *tshon gang* is not even subject to being produced in *saṃsāra* or *nirvāṇa*, because, before it, neither the ignorance of delusion nor the wisdom of realization existed. Well then, how does it abide?

Self-originated wisdom abides as the root of the base-of-all.

It is not made by any causes and causal conditions whatsoever. As it abides primordially as self-originated and naturally arising, it abides as the root of arising and as the base of appearances of everything: all those, *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa*, aeons and existence, and so forth.

Fourth, (2d), teaching the reasoning regarding the wisdom *tshon gang*:

Why is it called: "the *tshon gang* in the wisdom of natural awareness?"

**Primordially naturally-arising, clear, and luminous,
[The *tshon gang*] is neither fabricated nor contaminated,
decreased nor increased, harmed nor benefited, slain
nor revived.**

**It is free of the opposing pairs of comfort and misery, youth
and aging, birth and death.**

That wisdom *tshon gang*, from the beginning, radiates lights in its natural arising. It is the *tshon gang* because it cannot be killed by demons. It is the *tshon gang* because it is not cured by gods. It is the *tshon gang* because it is not benefited by harmonious conditions. It is the *tshon gang* because it is not harmed by adverse conditions. It is the *tshon gang* because it does not become abundant through expansion. It is the *tshon gang* because it does not become meager by reduction. It is the *tshon gang* because it is not fabricated by the intellect (*blo*). It is the *tshon gang* because it is not contaminated (*slad*) through effort. It is the *tshon gang* because it is not born from causes. It is the *tshon gang* because it does not die due to conditions. It is the *tshon gang* because it does not blossom (*dar*) due to youth. It is the *tshon gang* because it does not decline due to old age. It is the *tshon gang* because it is without comfort or misery due to sensation. It is the *tshon gang* because it is neither broken nor destroyed by enemies. Due to that:

It is known as "arising as light" without beginning or end.

Third (3), teaching the brief summary:

**[This completes the nail of the *tshon gang*, the Reality Body.
Samaya!]**

This completes the commentary of the fifth nail.

Appendix - Tibetan

{@533} /Inga pa tshon gang bon sku'i gzer bu la yang / don gsum
 las/
 dang po ni/
 kun tu bzang po rang rig ka nas dag la phyag 'tshal lo/ zhes
 pas/
 phyag 'tshal ba bstan te/ shes rig rgyal po byang chub sems la gang
 gi yang mthas ma reg pa'i don bstan pa'o/
 gnyis pa gzhung bkrol ba la bzhi ste/
 ye shes tshon gang gi ngo bo bstan pa dang {@534}
 ye shes tshon gang gi gnas lugs bstan pa dang /
 ye shes tshon gang gi che ba bstan pa dang /
 ye shes tshon gang gi gtan tshigs bstan pa'o/
 dang po gnyis te/
 ye shes tshon gang dang
 'od tshon gang bstan pa'o/
 dang po ni
 gsal ba rang 'byung rig pa'i rgyal po ni/ zhes pas/
 gsal ba ni sgrib g.yogs med pa/ rang 'byung ni rgyu rkyen dang
 byed pa po med pa'o/ / rig pa ni dran thams cad kyi 'char
 gzhir gyur pa'o/ rgyal po ni gong na med cing / shes rig
 thams cad kyi mthar thug par gnas pa'o/ de'i snga rol du rtogs pa'i
 ye shes dang /_'khrul pa'i ma rig pa ma grub pas ye shes tshon gang
 / de 'khor ba dang myang 'das su shar yang ma myong /
 'o na ji ltar gnas zhe na/
 rang 'byung ye shes kun gyi gzhi rtsar gnas/ zhes pas/
 rgyu rkyen de rnams gang gis kyang ma byas par rang 'byung du ye
 nas gnas pa'o/
 gzugs med ye shes kha dog dbyibs gzugs bral/
 brjod med ye shes ming tshig yi ger bral/
 rtog med ye shes rtog dpyod blo dang bral/
 zhes pa'i tshig gsum ni/_rang rig pa'i ye shes kyi gnas lugs de/
 gzugs med pas dbyibs dang kha dog ma grub/ brjod du
 med pas ming tshig yi ge'i spyod_yul las 'das/ rtog med ye shes
 blo las 'das pas/ rtog dpyod blo'i yul las 'das ba'o/
 de la
 ye shes tshon gang snang med bon gyi sku bya bar
 yang ming du gdags/
 gshen lha dkar po gdags med kun gyi gzhi/

zhes kyang bya/
 ngo bo nyid kyi rig pa zhes kyang bya'o/
 gnyis pa 'od tshon gang gi ngo bo bstan pa ni/
 gsal ba'i ye shes chen po tshon gang las/
 snang ba'i 'od chen tshon gang rang {@535} bzhin shar/
 zhes pas/
 gang gi ye shes tshon gang gi 'char gzhi las (la)/ snang ba'i 'od
 chen tshon gang ye nas rang shar du gnas te/ dper na nyi ma'i
 snying po las/ 'od rang shar du shar ba lta bu'o/
 ma 'dus mi 'bral nyid la nyid shar 'od/ ces pas/
 ye shes tshon gang dang 'od tshon gang gnyis so sor gnas pa gcig tu
 'dus pa ma yin/ gcig tu gnas pa so sor bral ba ma yin te/
 rang la rang shar du ye nas gnas pa'o/
 gsal la dngos med snang la rang bzhin med/ ces pas
 'od tshon gang de 'od du gsal yang dngos po dang mtshan mar ma
 grub par bstan pa'o/
 gzugs dang kha dog ris su chad pa med/ ces pas/
 'od tshon gang de sangs rgyas kyi sku dang sems can gyi lus las
 sogs/ gzugs thams cad kyi 'char gzhi yin la/ de ltar yin yang
 ngo bo gzugs gang du'ang ris su ma chad pa'o/ dkar ljang dmar
 sngo'i 'od las sogs te/ kha dog thams cad kyi 'char gzhi yin la/ de
 ltar yin yang ngo bo kha dog tu yang ris su ma chad pa'o/
 che chung chags tshad gzhal ba'i tshad las 'das/ zhes pas/

'od tshon gang de che ba'i tshad bzung du med de/ nam mkha'i rang
 bzhin du mtha' dbus med par gnas so/ chung ba'i tshad gzhal
 du med de/ 'jag mig gi srin bu'i lus la 'jug tu rung ba'o/
 'od tshon gang ba de la snang ba chen po bon gyi sku zhes
 kyang bya/
 gshen lha dkar po gdags yod rtsa ba'i lha zhes kyang bya/
 lhag mthong gi rig pa zhes kyang bya'o/
 gnyis pa ye shes tshon gang gi gnas lugs ni/
 tshon gang sku la rang rig spyen shar bas/ zhes pas/
 'od {@536} tshon gang la 'gyur ba med pas sku zhes bya/ ye shes
 tshon gang la sgrib g.yogs med pas spyen shar zhes bya/ de gnyis
 dbye ru med pas sku dang ye shes gnyis med ces bya/
 phyogs bcu yongs gzigs mdun rgyab med pa'i sku/ zhes pas/

sku dang ye shes tshon gang de/ ye shes kyi zhal la mdun rgyab
 med de/ shel sgong bzhin du phyogs bcur gsal ba'o/
 ma ltas kun mthong sgrib g.yogs med pa'i spyen/ zhes pas/
 rig pa'i spyen la sgrib pa med pas/ me long g.ya' dag bzhin du ltas

pa med bar gsal ba'o/
 phyi dang nang med zang thal chen por shar/ zhes pas/

 ye shes tshon gang de phyi na gnas la nang na mi gnas pa'am/
 nang na gnas la phyi na mi gnas pa ma yin te/ phyi nang
 med par spyi blugs su gnas pa'o/
 mtha' dang dbus med khyab bdal chen por gnas/ zhes pas/

 ye shes tshon gang de/ rgya chad phyogs ris can ma yin te/
 mtha' dbus phyogs mtshams rgya ma chad par gnas pa'o/
 kun gyi 'char gzhi gang gi dri ma med/ ces pas/
 ye shes tshon gang de 'khor ba dang myang 'das/ sangs rgyas dang
 sems can nyon mongs dang thugs rje/ rnam rtog dang ye shes/
 dge ba dang sdig pa/ bde ba dang sdug bsngal/ phyi snod
 dang nang bcud/ lus dang sems/ yul dang shes pa/
 rgyu dang 'bral bu/ mtho ris dang ngan song kun gyi 'char
 gzhi yin la/ de ltar yin yang de rnams gang gi yang mthas ma reg
 par gnas pa'o/
 gsum pa ye shes tshon gang gi che ba bstan pa ni/
 ye gnas rgyal po rig pa'i snga rol du/
 'khor dang myang 'das bskal srid 'byung ba med/ ces pas/

 {@537} rig pa'i rgyal po ye shes tshon gang de/ ye nas rang shar
 du gnas la/ de'i snga rol du 'khor ba'i bon dang mya ngan las 'das
 pa'i bon dang bskal pa dgu dang / srid pa gsum dang / 'byung ba
 lnga las sogs gang yang grub pa med pa'o/
 kun gyi thog mar rig pa'i rgyal po byung / zhes pas/
 de rnams gang yang ma byung ba'i gong nas/ rig pa'i rgyal po
 ye nas gnas pa'o/
 sangs rgyas ma grub bka' las shar ba med/ ces pas/
 [/ sems can ma grub las la byung ba med/
 / gang zag ma grub rtsol bas bsgrub pa med /]⁹³
 rig pa'i rgyal po ye shes tshon gang gi snga rol du/ sangs rgyas bya
 ba ma grub pas ye shes tshon gang de gshen rab kyi bka' las byung
 ba ma yin/ de'i snga rol du sems can zhes bya ba ma grub pas/ ye
 shes tshon gang de sems can gyi las la grub pa yang ma yin/
 de'i snga rol du byed pa po'i gang zag ma grub pas skyes bu'i
 rtsol bas bsgrub pa yang ma yin/
 [rgyu dang rkyen med rang bzhin 'dus ma byas/
 / phra rab rdul las snod du chags pa med/
 / 'byung ba'i rgyu las lus su grub pa med/

⁹³ These lines from the root are not explicitly repeated in the commentary.

/sta las ma chad mngal las 'khrungs pa med /]⁹⁴
 de'i snga rol du nye bar len pa'i rgyu dang / lhan cig skyes pa'i rkyen
 zhes bya ba grub ma myong pas/ ye shes tshon gang de rgyu rkyen
 'dus nas byas pa'i 'dus byas kyang ma yin/ de'i snga rol du phyi
 snod kyi rgyu/ phra rab kyi rdul zhes bya bar grub ma myong
 pas/_ye shes tshon gang de phyi snod kyi 'jig rten tu chags ma
 myong / de'i snga rol du rgyu 'byung ba lnga zhes bya ba ma
 grub pas/ye shes tshon gang de 'byung ba'i lus su grub ma myong
 /de'i snga rol du yab kyi sta dang yum gyi mngal zhes bya bar grub
 ma myong pas/ ye shes tshon gang de dkar dmar gyi rgyu las
 skye ma myong /

[rtogs 'khrul rgyu las 'das dang 'khor ba med /]⁹⁵
 de'i snga rol du rtogs pa'i ye shes dang 'khrul ba'i ma rig pa ma grub
 pas/ ye shes _ de 'khor ba dang myang {@538}'das su grub kyang
 ma myong / 'o na ji ltar gnas zhe na/
 rang 'byung ye shes kun gyi gzhi rtsar gnas zhes pas/
 rgyu rgyen de rnams gang gis kyang ma byas par/ rang 'byung rang
 shar du ye nas gnas la/ 'khor ba dang myang 'das bskal pa
 dang srid pa las sogs te/ de dag thams cad kun gyi snang ba'i
 gzhi dang shar ba'i rtsa bar gnas pa'o/
 bzhi pa ye shes tshon gang gi gtan tshigs bstan pa ni/
 rang rig pa'i ye shes la tshon gang zhes ci'i phyr gdags she na/
 gdod nas rang shar 'od du gsal ba la/
 bsad gso phan gnod 'phel 'grib bcos slad med/
 skye shi dar rgud bde sdug gnyen po med/ ces pas/

ye shes tshon gang de gdod nas rang shar 'od du gsal ba la/
 'dre yis bsad du med pas tshon gang / lha yis gso ru med pas
 tshon gang / mthun rkyen gyis phan gdags su med pas tshon gang
 / 'gal rkyen gyis gnod du med pas tshon gang / mang por
 'phel du med pas tshon gang / nyung ngu 'grib tu med pas
 tshon gang / blos bcos su med pas tshon gang / rtsol bas slad du
 med pas tshon gang / rgyu las skye ru med pas tshon gang /
 rkyen gyis 'chi ru med pas tshon gang / gzhon pas dar ru
 med pas tshon gang / rgas pas rgud du med pas tshon gang /
 byung tshor gyis bde sdug med pas tshon gang / gnyen pos
 bshig cing gzhom du med pas tshon gang / des na thog mtha' med
 bar 'od du shar zhes bya'o/
 gsum pa mdor bsdu dkyus gsal/
 [tshon gang bon sku'i gzer bu rdzogs so/] gzer bu lnga pa'i 'grel pa

⁹⁴ These lines from the root are not explicitly repeated in the commentary.

⁹⁵ This line from the root are not explicitly repeated in the commentary.

rdzogs so/

Abstract

The *tshon gang*, literally a unit of measure equal to the first phalanx of your thumb, is used in Bon Dzogchen traditions as a synonym for, variously, the natural state, the Reality Body, the king of awareness, *bodhicitta*, and other equivalents. Its location is routinely and exclusively defined as within the human heart. There is an inherent paradox in the juxtaposition of that which is immeasurable, such as the natural state, with a defined measure and location. Moreover, the *tshon gang* shows a similarity in its literal meaning, physical location, and philosophical usage, to the concept of the *aṅguṣṭhamātra* in the early literature of the Upaniṣads. We will not resolve any deep paradoxes regarding the *tshon gang*, nor will we speculate on any direct connections to early Indian literature. Instead, in this work we will work to establish the semantic field of the term *tshon gang* using the core literature of the Yungdrung Bon Dzogchen tradition, and we will argue that Bon's willingness to tolerate both paradox and ambiguity within its tradition makes it an invaluable lens through which to understand the development of Buddhism in Tibet.

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Zhang Nyi ma 'bum (1158–1213) et le développement des *sNying thig* au 12e siècle*

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Introduction

Zhang ston Nyi ma 'bum fut l'un des patriarches clefs œuvrant à la diffusion des *Essences Perlées (sNying thig)* au cours de la seconde partie du 12e siècle et au début du 13e siècle. Il appartient, avec son père, Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje (1097–1167),¹ à une période charnière dans le développement et la diffusion des enseignements de la Section des Préceptes (*Man ngag sde*), à une époque où d'autres systèmes de la Grande Perfection, comme celui Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192) commencent de se développer en parallèle au Tibet Central.² Le corpus littéraires de la Section des Préceptes connaît à cette époque un essor considérable qui s'appuie sur un ensemble de révélations successives de *gter ma* d'une grande impor-

* Je tiens à remercier ici Marianne Ginalska pour ses suggestions et corrections apportées aux premières versions de cet article.

¹ Sur Zhang ston bKra shis rgyal mtshan, voir Achard, "Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje (1097–1167) et la continuation des *Essences Perlées (sNying thig)* de la Grande Perfection", *passim*.

² Ce développement ne se présente pas comme le produit éventuel d'une évolution. Il faut bien comprendre que les textes appartenant à cette tradition apparaissent "soudainement" d'un point de vue littéraire, c'est-à-dire sous la forme de *gter ma*. La collection des *Dix-Sept Tantras (rGyud bcu bdun)* par exemple ne dérive pas d'un pré-corpus issu du *Sems phyogs* ni de contacts avec des traditions *gSar ma*, tout simplement parce que les principes yogiques et doctrinaux décrits dans cette collection ne se retrouvent pas dans ces traditions tardives. Or, la complexité des thèmes de cette collection exclut *a priori* qu'il s'agisse d'une invention de la part de quelques yogis ou lettrés éclairés dans la mesure où — et c'est un point totalement évacué du raisonnement simpliste de certains historiens — les principes associés à ces thèmes doivent avoir une réalité dans l'expérience yogique (sinon une telle invention, sans fonctionnalité, n'aurait jamais perduré jusqu'à nos jours), et une pertinence doctrinale exempte de toute faille. L'analyse des textes de cette collection confirme au moins doctrinalement la pertinence et la constance dogmatiques des thèmes traités. Je laisse aux spécialistes des thèmes de pratique bouddhique le soin de vérifier par eux-mêmes la validité "yogique" des pratiques proposées par ces textes.

tance pour la tradition elle-même.³ C'est en effet à cette époque que l'on voit apparaître la collection des *Dix-Sept Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*)⁴ de l'Atiyoga, mais également les cycles de *sPyi ti* et de *Yang ti* rattachés à Nyang ral (et plus tard encore à Gu ru Chos dbang). Ces cycles fondamentaux de la Section des Préceptes sont révélés et diffusés (probablement de manière relativement restreinte) dans un milieu de yogis, tandis qu'en parallèle se développent les systèmes des traditions gSar ma.

Comme on le verra dans la biographie ci-dessous, Zhang Nyi ma 'bum est un laïc rnying ma pa et un érudit extrêmement bien versé dans la connaissance des textes de la Section des Préceptes.⁵ Il se présente également comme un personnage curieux des traditions nouvelles (gSar ma) qui se sont développées et continuent de se développer au Tibet Central à son époque, notamment les Sa skya pa et bKa' brgyud pa. Son éclectisme religieux mérite d'être noté, même s'il ne s'agit pas d'une grande surprise dans la mesure où la période à laquelle il appartient est celle d'un véritable foisonnement de lignées de transmissions qui a facilité les contacts entre adeptes et maîtres de traditions parfois très diverses.⁶

L'on verra également que Nyi ma 'bum joue un rôle très important dans l'exégèse des *Dix-Sept Tantras* et donc du cœur même de la Section des Préceptes. Il est, à ma connaissance, le premier à rédiger un texte synthétique qui reprend les points-clefs centraux de la théorie et de la pratique de ce corpus de textes, avec une *maestria* impressionnante, qui confine presque à l'excellence.⁷ Cette maîtrise démontre également que Nyi ma 'bum manie des représentations et des pratiques qui sont clairement définies jusque dans leur plus menus détails et qui, au vu de leur complexité et de leur pertinence, ne sont

³ Voir le détail de la chronologie rattachée à la plus importante ces révélations — celle des *Dix-Sept Tantras* — in Achard, *L'Essence Perlée du Secret*, p. 80-83. Voir également, Prats, "Tshe dbang nor bu's chronological notes...", *passim*.

⁴ Voir la liste sommaire de ces textes *in fine*, dans l'appendice III.

⁵ Il n'est aucunement fait mention des traditions du *Sems sde* et du *Klong sde* dans les transmissions reçues par Nyi ma 'bum. Ce n'est guère une surprise dans la mesure où nombre de cycles associés à ces traditions ont eu des diffusions très localisées, en sorte que Nyi ma 'bum n'en a probablement jamais reçu la transmission. La biographie précise en effet qu'il a reçu les enseignements du cycle secret insurpassable (*gsang ba bla na med pa'i skor*), qui regroupe le corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras* et des instructions associées. Voir *infra* note 21.

⁶ Sur ce thème, voir notamment l'excellent chapitre intitulé "The Proliferation of New Lineages", in K. Schaeffer & M. Kapstein (eds.), *Sources of Tibetan Tradition*, p. 189 *et seq.* Toutefois, il ne faut pas confondre cet éclectisme avec une éventuelle tendance syncrétique. Ce n'est pas ce que fait Nyi ma 'bum, tout comme ce n'est pas ce qu'on fait ses prédécesseurs dans la lignée un siècle plus tôt, à commencer par IDang ma Lhun rgyal et l'Ce btsun Seng ge dbang phyug.

⁷ On en verra une brève description *infra* dans le paragraphe § 4.

donc pas des innovations de sa part.⁸ On le sait, son père, déjà, se situait dans la lignée des patriarches IDang ma Lhun rgyal et lCe btsun Seng ge dbang phyug, comme continuateur des enseignements des *Dix-Sept tantras*, enseignements parfaitement délimités, et dotés d'un vocabulaire d'une richesse redoutable, qui n'apparaît en aucune manière comme une invention résultant d'un mélange de traditions antérieures ou récemment introduites au Tibet.⁹ Au contraire même : avec Nyi ma 'bum débute une tradition exégétique de l'ensemble de ce corpus qui culminera un siècle et demi plus tard avec Klong chen pa (1308–1364).¹⁰

1. L'auteur de la biographie

La biographie elle-même n'est pas signée et il n'y a pas d'éléments internes¹¹ susceptibles d'en préciser l'auteur. A ma connaissance, Gu ru Jo ber (1196–1255), le neveu et disciple principal de Nyi ma 'bum, n'est pas traditionnellement présenté comme l'auteur de cette biographie.¹² L'absence de détails dans la narration est peut-être un élément indiquant qu'elle a été rédigée plus tardivement qu'on ne le suppose, car comme on le verra dans la traduction ci-dessous, le style est on ne peut plus neutre et schématique, en sorte que la biographie elle-même ressemble davantage à une suite organisée de notes événementiellement pauvres qu'à un récit proprement dit. On peut imaginer que cette absence de détails personnels suggère que l'auteur n'était pas un proche du sujet de la biographie.¹³ Par ailleurs, le style employé n'est guère brillant : l'auteur se contente d'aligner une succession de périodes — indiquées par l'âge de Nyi ma 'bum — avec quelques éléments historiques portant quasi exclusivement sur la

⁸ Elles le sont d'autant moins que l'ensemble de ces représentations et de ces pratiques figure dans le corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras* et du *Bi ma snying thig* qui précèdent Nyi ma 'bum dans le temps.

⁹ Voir Achard, "Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje...", *passim*.

¹⁰ On reviendra sur l'influence de Nyi ma 'bum sur certains écrits de Klong chen pa dans le paragraphe § 4. A ma connaissance, le *Tshig don bcu gcig pa* et la biographie de Zhang ston (*Bla ma rgyal ba zhang ston chen po'i rnam par thar pa*, traduite in Achard, *op. cit.*, *passim*) sont les deux seuls ouvrages de Nyi ma 'bum parvenus jusqu'à nous. Ce point demande cependant à être étudié plus en détail, notamment pour savoir quelle a pu être sa participation dans l'élaboration des textes complémentaires du corpus racine du *gSang ba snying thig*.

¹¹ Comme on peut en trouver dans celle de Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje, indiquant qu'elle a été rédigée par Nyi ma 'bum lui-même. Cf. Achard, *ibid.*, p. 237-238.

¹² Gu ru Jo 'ber est le fils de Zla ba 'bum, le frère cadet de Nyi ma 'bum.

¹³ Ce point reste à investiguer avec plus de précision. Les patriarches actuels de la tradition n'attribuent pas la rédaction de cette biographie à Gu ru Jo 'ber. Aucun d'entre eux ne fournit pour autant un autre nom d'auteur.

formation reçue, les transmissions obtenues, etc. Il faut noter cependant les mentions laconiques de deux mariages, sans aucun détail quant à la famille ou clan des épouses, le seul élément important — mais peut-être rétro-attribué en raison de l'importance de l'époux lui-même — étant le qualificatif de *jo mo*, employé pour faire référence à une femme de haut rang (dans la noblesse par exemple) ou bien à une yogini (ce qui semble être plutôt le cas ici).¹⁴

Dans son apologie conclusive, l'auteur fait référence à l'apparition de reliques (*gdung*) dans les cendres de Nyi ma 'bum, ce qui indique que celui-ci n'a pas atteint le Corps d'Arc-en-ciel (*'ja' lus*). On s'attardera sur la typologie de ces reliques à la fin du présent article car c'est un thème relativement important que l'on retrouve dans la littérature diffusée par Nyi ma 'bum, à commencer par le *Tantra des Reliques Flamboyantes* (*sKu gdung 'bar ba*) qui appartient au corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras*.



Fig. 1. Zhang ston Nyi ma 'bum (1158–1213).

¹⁴ Sur l'usage plus restreint de *jo mo* dans le contexte monastique, voir K. Gutschow, "What makes a Nun? Apprenticeship and Ritual Passage in Zangskar", p. 190. La biographie de Nyi ma 'bum ne fournit aucun détail sur ces épouses et les patriarches actuels de la tradition n'en donnent pas non plus. Dudjom Rinpoche (*The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*) ne mentionne pas les deux mariages (p. 561-563). Nyoshul Khenpo (*A Garland of Rare Gems*) mentionne les deux mariages mais ne donne le nom (de manière erronée) que de la deuxième épouse (voir *infra* note 33).

2. Traduction annotée

LA BIOGRAPHIE DE ZHANG NYI (MA) 'BUM

*Devant le Corps du Maître appartenant à la précellente lignée immaculée,¹⁵
Devant le Fils des Vainqueurs, le Souverain de tous les Piṭakas,
Devant le maître incontesté qui œuvre à embrasser tous les migrants
Avec la lumière solaire de sa Sagesse, je me prosterne avec respect !*

Voici brièvement l'histoire du nommé Zhang Nyi ma 'bum, l'émanation de Vajrapāṇi prophétisée dans le Tantra-racine qu'est le *sGra thal 'gyur*:¹⁶ il naquit comme le fils de rGyal ba Zhang ston, son père, dont le nom est difficile à prononcer,¹⁷ et de rGyal mo g.yang, sa mère. [Glose : Lorsqu'il entra dans la matrice de sa mère, celle-ci vit se lever de nombreux soleils au cours de son rêve et rapporta ce dernier à son époux ; celui-ci déclara : « — C'est le signe qu'il viendra œuvrer au bénéfice de nombreux êtres animés grâce à ces (enseignements) Secrets Insurpassables;¹⁸ n'aie aucun doute ! »]

(Au moment) de lui donner un nom, son père (Zhang ston) dit : « Qu'il soit appelé "Nyi ma 'bum" ("Cent mille Soleils") parce qu'il adviendra comme la lumière solaire chassant les ténèbres de l'ignorance de tous les êtres animés ! », et il lui donna ce nom.¹⁹

Ensuite, lorsqu'il parvint à l'âge de trois ans, (Nyi ma 'bum) ac-

¹⁵ *Dri med mchog gi brgyud pa*. Cette lignée est évidemment celle de la Grande Perfection. Selon les données de la transmission orale (*snyan brgyud*) qui accompagnent la lecture traditionnelle de la biographie, cette lignée est qualifiée d'"immaculée" (*dri med*) parce qu'elle véhicule la transmission du Discernement (*rig pa*) et qu'elle n'est donc pas souillée par les passions (*nyon mongs*). Elle est définie comme "précellente" (*mchog*) parce qu'il n'est rien qui la transcende doxographiquement, dans le sens où elle véhicule des enseignements présentés comme le "faîte suprême" (*yang rtse*) de tous les Véhicules. Enfin, il s'agit effectivement d'une "transmission" (*brgyud pa*) parce qu'elle transmet la connaissance de l'état naturel, autrement dit le Discernement lui-même.

¹⁶ Le *sGra thal 'gyur* est le tantra-racine du corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras*. Il se présente comme un texte en six chapitres couvrant l'ensemble des principes spécifiques au cycle secrétissime (*yang gsang skor*) de la Grande Perfection. La prophétie relative à Nyi ma 'bum dans ce texte sera discutée plus loin dans cet article.

¹⁷ *mTshan brjod par dka' ba*, une expression classique qui signifie que l'on ne prononce pas en vain le nom de son propre maître, en signe de respect.

¹⁸ Zhang ston fait ici référence au corpus du *gSang ba snying thig* incluant les *Dix-Sept Tantras*.

¹⁹ Le frère cadet de Nyi ma 'bum, né quelques années plus tard, se nommait Zla ba 'bum ("Cent mille Lunes"). Les parents ont donc choisi pour leurs fils des noms aux références astronomiques plus qu'évidentes.

complit de nombreuses pratiques de Yang dag (Heruka) et de Phurpa (selon la tradition) de rGya ston Lung gro ba (originaire de) So pho.²⁰ Il en reçut les bénédictions et dissipa ainsi ses obstacles.

A partir de cinq ans et jusqu'à sept ou huit ans, il reçut les consécration (du cycle) Secret Insurpassable,²¹ avec ses instructions orales et la transmission de lecture (*lung*) des *Dix-Sept Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*).

A l'âge de neuf ans (en 1167), son Lama (i.e. Zhang ston) mourut.²² A cette occasion, il invita le Protecteur des Etres Zhang g.Yu brag pa et reçut en main propre les trois Enseignements développés et médians (de Zhang Rinpoche);²³ les termes (de ces enseignements) le firent progresser et l'installèrent dans un état de pure félicité.

Entre l'âge de 10 et 15 ans, il donna des explications complètes du Tantra-racine dit du *sGra thal 'gyur*, ainsi que des *Dix-Sept Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*) [auxquels le Tantra-racine appartient]. Lorsqu'il les récitait, (installé) sur un trône élevé, ses disciples s'assemblaient soigneusement et ainsi, lorsqu'il expliquait ces Tantras accompagnés de leurs instructions orales, tous ses disciples étaient au comble de l'émerveillement et avaient foi en lui.²⁴

²⁰ Je n'ai trouvé aucune information sur ce personnage.

²¹ Ce cycle forme le cœur même de la Section des Préceptes (*Man ngag sde*) et regroupe le corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras*, de leurs commentaires, de la collection des *Cent Dix-Neuf préceptes* (*Man ngag rgya bcu dgu*) et du *Bi ma snying thig*. Sur ce corpus, voir Achard, *L'Essence Pérlée du Secret*, p. 83 et seq.

²² La date communément acceptée pour la mort de Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje est 1167 (*me mo phag*). A partir de cette date, l'on peut déduire l'année de naissance de Nyi ma 'bum (qui a huit ans et non neuf à la mort de son père selon notre comput occidental) qui correspond donc à 1159 et non 1158 comme on le suppose ordinairement. On le voit, la biographie originale de Nyi ma 'bum lui-même ne donne pas sa date de naissance. Les éléments fournis par Klong chen pa dans le *Lo rgyus rin po che 'od kyi phreng ba* du *Zab mo yang tig* (I, p. 26) n'apportent aucun élément intéressant du point de vue chronologique. Les données relatives à Nyi ma 'bum sont essentialisées au maximum sur trois lignes seulement. En revanche, dans le *Bla ma yang tig*, les données relatives à Nyi ma 'bum dans l'histoire du cycle sont plus développées et s'appuient très certainement sur la présente biographie.

²³ Sur Zhang g.Yu brag pa (1123–1193) et les diverses versions de ses enseignements (*bka'*), voir le prodigieux travail effectué par Dan Martin in *The Works of Zhang Rinpoche* (unpublished version, January 2012, 266 pages). Voir également l'impressionnante étude de Carl Yamamoto dans son *Vision and Violence*, Brill, 2012.

²⁴ Il n'est pas impossible que la rédaction (ou l'ébauche) du *Tshig don bcu gcig pa* qui est le premier "traité d'instructions" de ce type consacré aux *Dix-Sept Tantras* date de cette période. Le colophon ne donne aucune indication temporelle et précise simplement le nom du copiste (Shākya'i dge tshul Sangs rgyas bkra shis, qui m'est inconnu). La version de la biographie de Nyi ma 'bum par Gu ru bkra shis transcrite ici *in fine* donne l'impression que la rédaction du texte a eu lieu peu de temps avant la mort de l'auteur, mais cette impression est peut-être faussée par la

A 18 ans, il requit les Consécrationes supérieures (*dbang gong ma*) auprès de l'Ācārya.²⁵

A l'âge de 20 ans,²⁶ il se rendit auprès de rGyal tsha rDor seng, maître principal du clan rNgogs et reçut en main propre (la transmission de) Tantras *gsar ma pas* accompagnés de leur instructions orales.²⁷

A 22 ans, il épousa Jo mo rgya gar.²⁸

manière dont Gu ru bkra shis organise son récit. Quoi qu'il en soit, si le texte lui-même suggère une maturité profonde de la part de son auteur, il faut rappeler que la tradition attribue à ce dernier une maîtrise inégalée des thèmes couverts dans le *Tshig don bcu gcig pa*, et ce avant même son adolescence.

²⁵ Sous toute réserve (étant donné qu'aucune version des biographies de Nyi ma 'bum ne l'identifie explicitement), il se peut qu'il s'agisse de Slob dpon bSod nam rtse mo (1142–1182), la rencontre ayant eu lieu en 1176. Dans le système des Essences Perlées (*snying thig*), les Consécrationes supérieures (*dbang gong ma*) sont au nombre de trois et font référence à la Consécration de l'Arcane (*gsang dbang*), à la Consécration à la Sagesse de la Connaissance Sublimée (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*), et à la Consécration Verbale (*tshig dbang*). Voir *inter alia*, Padma Las 'brel rtal, *dBang gong ma gsang ba dbang shes rab kyi dbang tshig dbang gsum gyi sa ma 'grel, mKha' 'gro snying thig*, vol. I, p. 199-208.

²⁶ Nyoshul Khenpo précise que Nyi ma 'bum se rend auprès de ces maîtres après le décès de son père, bkra shis rdo rje en *1178. Voir Nyoshul Khenpo, *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems*, p. 88. Cette erreur est surprenante, surtout parce que la présente biographie indique la mort de Zhang ston lorsque Nyi ma 'bum a neuf ans (en 1167). Nyoshul Khenpo suit en fait la version de Klong chen pa dans le *Bla ma yang tig*, mais il comprend erronément que le père de Nyi ma 'bum meurt alors que celui-ci a 20 ans. En effet, Klong chen pa déclare que jusqu'à 9 ans, Nyi ma 'bum suit les enseignements de Zhang ston, puis que celui-ci meurt et qu'à 20 ans Nyi ma 'bum se rend auprès de rNgogs rGyal tsha (rDor rje seng ge). Klong chen pa ne dit en aucune manière que Zhang ston meurt lorsque Nyi ma 'bum a 20 ans. Voir Klong chen pa, *Lo rgyus rin po che'i phreng ba, Bla ma yang tig*, vol. I, p. 108.

²⁷ Sur rGyal tsha rDor seng (rDo rje seng ge), voir *Lho rong chos 'byung*, p. 57-58. rGyal tsha rDor seng est né en 1140 (*lcags pho spre'u*) et mort en 1207 (*me mo yos*) à l'âge de 68 ans. Il fut un spécialiste renommé du *Hevajra Tantra* et du *Mahāmaya Tantra* (Toh. 425). Selon les données de la présente biographie, la transmission donnée à Nyi ma 'bum devrait avoir eu lieu en 1178 (*sa pho khyi*). Ce point demande toutefois à être confirmé car aucune information de ce type ne figure dans la biographie de rDor seng à laquelle j'ai accès (celle incluse dans le *Lho rong chos 'byung*).

²⁸ Pour le philologue, il est intéressant de noter ici que la notion de mariage est rendue de manière particulière par Gu ru bkra shis dans son *Chos 'byung*, dans lequel il dit sur ce sujet (p. 206) : « — A l'âge de vingt-deux ans, il prit Jo mo rgya gar comme support des accomplissements » (*nyi shu rtsa gnyis pa la jo mo rgya gar dngos grub kyi rten du bzung*), ce qui indique clairement que Jo mo rgya gar doit être considérée comme une partenaire tantrique. L'expression "support des accomplissements" (*dngos grub kyi rten*) fait en effet directement référence à la fonction de Jo mo rgya gar comme *rig ma* ou *gzungs ma*, qui joue un rôle essentiel dans les pratiques associées à la troisième initiation, c'est-à-dire la Consécration à la Sagesse de la Connaissance Sublimée (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*) dans laquelle la "Connaissance Sublimée" n'est autre que la partenaire tantrique elle-même.

A 27 ans, il se rendit auprès de Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1147–1216),²⁹ du clan 'Khon de Sa skya, et de Bla ma sTag so ba.³⁰ Il requit (de ces maîtres les transmissions) de la *Triple Continuité* (*rGyud gsum*) avec ses préceptes (*man ngag*),³¹ ainsi que (les enseignements) de Ca-krasamvara (*bDe mchog*) selon la tradition de Mal gyo.³²

A l'âge de 29 ans, il épousa Jo mo Seng rgyan.³³

Quand il eut 30 ans, il se rendit auprès de sKyi ston grags pa, Lama de Kha rag bon 'brug³⁴ et requit (la transmission) du *bDe mchog lhan skyes* selon la tradition de A phyi (Chos kyi sgröl ma),³⁵ de la (pratique de la) Vénérable (Tārā) selon la tradition de Ra (lotsāwa), de mGon po bya rogs ma et des cycles d'enseignements Tshal pa (*bka' brgyud*).

D'une manière générale, (Nyi ma 'bum) servit de nombreux maîtres ayant atteint érudition et accomplissements, requérant d'eux de nombreuses instructions orales et intégrant la Contemplation de

L'ensemble des principes couverts par cette Consécration s'articule parfaitement dans le cursus de la pratique rDzogs chen dans laquelle le yoga de la troisième initiation est utilisé afin de progresser (*bog 'don*) de manière décisive dans la pratique. Sur ce thème, voir *inter alia* rDo rje gling pa, *Phyag rgya ma la brten nas bde stong du gros pa'i gdams pa rgyud chen lta ba klong yangs kyi kong snying dam pa, passim* ; ou encore Klong chen pa, *bDe stong bdud rsti sprin phung, Bla ma yang tig*, II, p. 117-127.

²⁹ Sur Grags pa rgyal mtshan, voir *inter alia*, Stearns, *Luminous Lives*, p. 157. Voir également Grags pa 'byung gnas, *Gangs can mkhas grub rim byon ming mdzod*, p. 658-659 ; et Dominique Townsend, "Drakpa Gyeltsen, 1147–1216" in <http://www.treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Drakpa-Gyeltsen/2915>.

³⁰ Le TBRC (<http://tbr.org/#!rid=P0RK1409>) l'identifie comme étant rTa stag so ba khu dbon (Rin chen don 'grub). Hormis le fait qu'il s'agit d'un contemporain de Grags pa rgyal mtshan et qu'il était très certainement sa skya pa, très peu d'éléments concernant ce maître sont parvenus jusqu'à nous.

³¹ Le système de la *Triple Continuité* forme le cœur des instructions tantriques du *Lam 'bras* de la tradition Sa skya. Ces instructions portent sur la pratique du Tantra de Hevajra et de ses textes complémentaires.

³² Mal gyo Lo tsā ba (Blo gros grags), 11e s. Sur ce personnage, voir Røerich, *The Blue Annals*, p. 382.

³³ On ignore s'il divorce de sa précédente épouse Jo mo rgya gar ou bien s'il vit avec ses deux femmes. Nyoshul Khenpo lit le nom de la seconde épouse comme étant Pang rgyan (*op. cit.*, p. 88). Il devait avoir accès à une version en *dbu med* pour sa compilation, le *s* et le *p* en *dbu med* étant parfois difficiles à distinguer, en particulier dans des mots inhabituels comme des noms propres, etc. La lecture *seng rgyan* est toutefois confirmée par le *Bla ma yang tig* (p. 108).

³⁴ Ce personnage est difficile à identifier. Il est important de le distinguer de sKyi ston grags pa rgyal mtshan qui fut un maître de Klong chen pa et de Dol po pa. Sur cet autre sKyi ston, voir TBRC, resource ID no. 144 (<http://tbr.org/#!rid=P144>).

³⁵ Dêité protectrice très vénérée dans la tradition 'Bri gung pa.

leur Cœur.³⁶ Il composa également de nombreuses explications des Tantras et des guides (*khrid*) sur les instructions orales (qui les accompagnent), sublimant ainsi tous (ses disciples) et les installant au sein de la Liberté.³⁷

Ensuite, à l'âge de 56 ans, le huitième jour du mois du Grand Prodiges,³⁸ il révéla le mode nirvānisant de son Corps qui fut ensuite incinéré. Cinq types de reliques colorées différentes, telles que les *śa rī raṃ*, les *nya rī raṃ*, les *chu rī raṃ*, et les *pañtsa raṃ* apparurent (dans ses cendres),³⁹ tandis que (l'Esprit de) Lama Nyi (ma) 'bum chen po disparaissait dans l'Espace.

*Kye-ma kye-hud ! Hélas ! Hélas !
Que le Précieux Porteur du Nom de Nyi ma (Soleil),
Œuvre à illuminer en un instant
Ces ténèbres denses et vides
Avec sa Lampe aux lumières quintuples,
En contemplant avec l'Œil de la Sagesse,⁴⁰ pur et lumineux,
Les sombres ténèbres saṃsāriques des six destinées!⁴¹*

Fin.

³⁶ *Thugs dgongs*. Je prends l'expression ici dans son sens littéral de Contemplation (*dgongs*) du Cœur (*thugs*), c'est-à-dire l'état de réalisation (*rtogs pa*) atteint par ces maîtres. Il n'y a là nulle idée d'intention selon le sens que l'on prête souvent erronément à *dgongs pa*. Le choix du sens littéral s'explique par la nécessité de répondre par anticipation et avec pertinence aux éventuelles *nges tshig* (ou définitions littérales, voire parfois étymologiques) qui agrémentent la littérature exégétique.

³⁷ A ma connaissance, exceptions faites du *Tshig don bcu gcig pa* et de la *Biographie de Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje*, rien n'a survécu de ses autres compositions.

³⁸ Correspondant au premier jour de la deuxième semaine du premier mois de l'année tibétaine Eau-Oiseau (*chu bya*), à savoir 1213. Le festival des Grands Prodiges (*cho 'phrul chen po'i dus chen*) est l'un des quatre festivals commémorant les plus importants événements de la vie du Buddha (1. descente des dieux, 2. atteinte du Plein Eveil, 3. début de l'enseignement du Dharma, et 4. déploiement des prodiges [*cho 'phrul*]).

³⁹ Sur la classification descriptive des reliques, voir ci-après dans le §4.

⁴⁰ L'Œil de la Sagesse (*ye shes kyi spyan*) est l'un des trois Yeux (*spyan*) que l'adepte manifeste au moment du Plein Eveil. Il lui permet de voir les myriades de champs purs du Corps d'Apparition (*sprul sku*). Voir Achard, *La Transmission Orale de Padmasambhava*, p. 55.

⁴¹ Les six destinées des migrants (*'gro ba rigs drug*) sont dans l'ordre montant des destinées : 1. les damnés des enfers, 2. les fantômes faméliques (*preta*), 3. les animaux, 4. les êtres humains, 5. les demi-dieux, et 6. les dieux. Les trois premières catégories forment les trois sentes périlleuses (*ngan song gsum*) et les trois dernières, les trois domaines altiers (*mtho ris gsum*). Dans le rDzogs chen, une large part de la pratique préliminaire consiste dans la purification des germes de ces six destinées. J'y reviendrai avec la traduction de plusieurs textes sur ce thème extraits de différents cycles de la Grande Perfection.

3. *Éléments rdzogs chen : le Tshig don bcu gcig pa*

Nyi ma 'bum est présenté dans la biographie, ainsi que dans la tradition rNying ma contemporaine, comme un éminent exégète des *Dix-Sept Tantras* auxquels il donne une importance centrale dans son approche des enseignements rDzogs chen. Cette démarche semble évidente, non seulement parce que Nyi ma 'bum n'a vraisemblablement pas reçu les transmissions du *Sems sde* et du *Klong sde*, ni probablement celles d'autres cycles du *Man ngag sde*, mais plus particulièrement parce que le corpus auquel il est rattaché est de toute évidence l'ensemble le plus significatif des enseignements de la Grande Perfection et le plus riche d'un point de vue dogmatique, lexical et "technique" (c'est-à-dire yogique). Le contenu de cette collection formate entièrement celui des *Essences Perlées* (*sNying thig*) qui regroupent les "préceptes" (*man ngag*) associés au corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras* eux-mêmes.

A ma connaissance, l'on ne dispose que de deux textes dont l'attribution ne semble pas poser de problème particulier d'authentification. Le premier est la *Biographie du Grand Zhang, du Maître Victorieux* (*Bla ma rgyal ba zhang chen po'i rnam thar*) dans lequel Nyi ma 'bum raconte l'histoire de son père, Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje (1097–1167).

Le second ouvrage est le *Tshig don bcu gcig pa*, une œuvre d'une importance considérable pour l'interprétation correcte des principes des *Dix-Sept Tantras* à l'époque ancienne. Ce texte suit un ensemble de onze thèmes (d'où son titre) qui sont énumérés parmi la série de plus de soixante-dix questions formulées dans le premier chapitre du *sGra thal 'gyur*. Cet ensemble thématique a été repris par Klong chen pa dans plusieurs de ses œuvres, comme dans le texte éponyme du *Tshig don bcu gcig pa* inclus dans le volume 4 du *Bi ma snying thig* (p. 341-406) et surtout dans le *Tshig don rin po che'i mdzod* qui suit exactement la même structure en onze chapitres ou thèmes. On sait que ces thèmes ont été repris (et parfois le texte même de ces chapitres) dans d'autres collections, comme dans le *Bi ma la'i 'grel tik* du *dGgongs pa zang thal* ou le *Ye khri dkar po mtha' sel* de la tradition Bonpo.⁴²

Etant donné les dates de ces autres ouvrages traitant les mêmes sujets (avec parfois de nombreux emprunts directs au *Tshig don bcu gcig pa*), on peut établir avec un relatif degré de certitude que Nyi ma 'bum est manifestement le premier à utiliser le schéma en onze thèmes en les empruntant directement au premier chapitre du *sGra*

⁴² J'ai déjà traité de ces recoupements ou emprunts in *L'Essence Perlée du Secret, passim*.

thal 'gyur.⁴³ Les thèmes exposés dans le *Tshig don bcu gcig pa* sont les suivants :

1. l'exposé des perfections de l'introduction (*gleng gzhi phun sum tshogs pa*), c'est-à-dire des diverses classifications des cinq perfections (Sanctuaire, Révélateur, Entourage, Révélation et Moment) qui sont indispensable à la prédication d'un enseignement ;
2. l'égarément (*'khrul pa*) des êtres, consécutif à la non-reconnaissance de l'épiphanie de la Base (*gzhi snang*) ;
3. la manière dont le germe des Buddhas (*sangs rgyas kyi sa bon*) ou Cœur des Bienheureux (*bde gshegs snying po*) demeure en les êtres animés égarés ;
4. la demeure de la Sagesse du Discernement (*rig pa'i ye shes*), c'est-à-dire le sanctuaire — localisé dans le corps — en lequel se trouve le Discernement ;
5. la voie d'émergence (*'char ba'i lam*) de la Sagesse, c'est-à-dire le canal par lequel l'éclat de la Sagesse se manifeste en visions quinticolores ;
6. la porte d'émergence (*'char sgo*) de la Sagesse, c'est-à-dire l'organe sensoriel permettant l'émergence des visions de la Sagesse ;
7. l'objet ou domaine (*yul*) en lequel les visions se manifestent ;
8. les méthodes de pratique (*nyams su blangs pa'i thabs*), exposant les principes de l'Eradication de la Rigidité (*khregs chod*) et du Franchissement du Pic (*thod rgal*) ;
9. l'exposé sur les signes (*rtags*) de succès dans la pratique ;
10. l'exposé sur les états intermédiaires (*bar do*) ; et
11. l'exposé sur la Terre de la Liberté (*grol sa*), c'est-à-dire l'obtention ultime du Plein Eveil.

En termes de pratiques spécifiques de la Grande Perfection, on retrouve dans ce texte l'essence de la littérature de la Section des Préceptes, avec de longues explications (notamment dans le chapitre 8) des principes de l'Eradication de la Rigidité (*khregs chod*)⁴⁴ et du Fran-

⁴³ A moins que son père ne l'ait déjà fait à l'oral. Ce point est malheureusement impossible à vérifier et, à ma connaissance, on ne dispose pas de récit rapportant la manière d'enseigner de Zhang ston.

⁴⁴ Parfois orthographié *khriks chod* dans le manuscrit et dans l'édition moderne du texte. En revanche, si l'on se réfère à la citation principale renvoyant à *khregs chod* dans le texte, c'est-à-dire le *Tantra de la Guirlande des Perles* (*Mu tig phreng ba*), l'orthographe *khregs* est confirmée par le commentaire de ce Tantra (p. 482-483).

chissement du Pic (*thod rgal*).⁴⁵ En somme, tous les éléments qui caractérisent la Section des Préceptes sont présents, parfaitement exposés et agrémentés de références à des sources rnying ma pa canoniques, à commencer par le corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*) dont la révélation remonte à la fin du 10^e siècle.

Pour étayer son exposé, Nyi ma 'bum fait référence à un peu plus d'une trentaine de textes, dont quinze parmi le groupe des *Dix-Sept Tantras*. Parmi ce corpus, les deux tantras qu'il ne cite pas sont le *Tantra des Augures Ravissants* (*bKra shis mdzes ldan*), et le *Miroir du Cœur de Samantabhadra* (*Kun tu bzang po'i thugs kyi me long*). L'ouvrage central auquel il fait le plus souvent référence est le *Tantra qui Transperce les Sons* (*sGra thal 'gyur*), avec pratiquement une centaine de citations (96 attributions explicites pour être exact).

L'auteur fait également référence à des enseignements directement attribués à Vimalamitra (8^e siècle) qu'il nomme Bye ma la, "transcription" usuelle et abrégée de Bye ma la mu dra/tra.⁴⁶ J'ai bien évidemment cherché les passages cités au sein de la collection du *Bi ma snying thig*, mais aucune des dix citations attribuées au grand pañdit de l'époque dynastique ne permet d'établir de parallèles évidents.

En lisant attentivement le traité de Nyi ma 'bum, l'on se rend compte qu'il opère déjà une sélection parmi les nombreuses pratiques proposées dans le corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras* et de leurs commentaires. Si l'on se base par exemple exclusivement sur le *sGra thal 'gyur* et son commentaire, on voit distinctement qu'un choix pratique s'est dessiné dans l'esprit de Nyi ma 'bum et qu'il constitue une sorte de synthèse excluant un ensemble plus que notable de pratiques tantriques clairement intégrées dans le commentaire du *sGra thal 'gyur* lui-même. Néanmoins, sa présentation des instructions, notamment dans le chapitre 8 de son ouvrage, ne contient rien de contradictoire avec ce que l'on peut trouver dans la littérature concernée, comme par exemple dans le *Bi ma snying thig*. On y trouve même des éléments classificatoires ou des manières de présenter les instructions que l'on retrouvera jusqu'au 18^e siècle avec le *Ye shes bla ma* de 'Jigs med gling pa (1730–1798), sans parler du *Kun bzang snying thig* de

⁴⁵ Sur le Franchissement du Pic et les visions qui lui sont associées, voir Achard, *La Quintessence des Joyaux, passim*.

⁴⁶ Sur cette forme, voir M. Walter, *The Role of Alchemy*, p. 188 n. 46. Voir également, Guru bKra shis, *Chos 'byung*, p. 119 (qui reprend l'argumentation de dPa'o gtsug lag [dans le *mKhas pa'i dga' ston*] utilisée par Walter). L'identification de Vimalamitra et Bye ma la mu dra est une évidence dans les *sNying thig*. On la retrouve en de multiples endroits dans le *Bi ma snying thig*, y compris dans la version du *Rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 87, avec *inter alia* une sādhana de Vimalamitra intitulée *Ghu ru bye ma la mu dra'i sgrub thabs* (pp. 61-66), sans parler du *Testament de Vimalamitra* inclus sous le titre de *Bye ma la mu dra'i tshig gsum snyan du gdam pa* (pp. 83-89).

Shar rdza bKra shis rgyal mtshan (1859–1935). Par exemple, le choix de conférer les instructions de manière guidée (*khrid kyi lugs su gdab pa*)⁴⁷ sera repris dans la plupart des textes tardifs s'appuyant sur la même structure des instructions. A titre d'exemple de la manière dont Nyi ma 'bum expose les préceptes, voici la structure des instructions portant sur la pratique du Franchissement du Pic (*thod rgal*), le cœur de toute la Voie de la Grande Perfection :

1. Préliminaires (*sngon du 'gro ba*)

1-1. Instructions guidées sur les Trois Corps (*sku gsum gyi sna khrid pa*)⁴⁸

1-2. Instructions guidées sur l'esprit (*sems kyi sna khrid pa*)

1-2-1. Les Conduites du corps, de la parole et de l'esprit (*lus ngag yid kyi spyod pa*)

1-2-2. L'induction de l'aise naturelle (*rnal du dbab pa*)

1-3. Instructions guidées sur le Discernement (*rig pa sna khrid pa*)

1-3-1. La Disjonction du corps (*lus ru shan 'byed pa*)

1-3-2. La Disjonction de la parole (*ngag ru shan 'byed pa*)

1-3-3. La Disjonction de l'esprit (*sems ru shan 'byed pa*)

1-3-4. L'induction de l'aise naturelle (*rnal du phab pa*)

2. La pratique principale (*dnagos gzhi*)

2-1. La maîtrise des points-clefs du corps, de la parole et de l'esprit (*lus ngag yid kyi gnad gzir ba*)⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Il existe trois manières de conférer les instructions : 1. à la manière des instructions guidées (*khrid kyi lugs su gdab pa*), 2. à la manière des confrontations (*ngo sprod pa'i lugs su gdab pa*), et 3. de manière complète (*tshangs sprugs su*) à "l'hôte qui franchit un col" (*mgron po la rgal ba la tshang[s] sprugs su gdab pa*). Voir l'explication de la signification de la troisième expression in Lopön Tenzin Namdak, *Heart Drops of Dharmakaya*, p. 53 : «... the 'traveller who crosses mountains and having mistaken his way is then helped to find the right path'. » Cf. également Vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa, *Yeshe Lama*, p. 18.

⁴⁸ Il s'agit du yoga des quatre éléments (*'byung bzhi'i rnal 'byor*) largement traité dans le *sGra thal 'gyur* et son commentaire. L'exposé de Nyi ma 'bum est plus que succinct. On sait que, progressivement (après le 14^e siècle ?), la pratique de ce Yoga a été plus ou moins abandonnée, au point que 'Jigs med gling pa précise dans son *Ye shes bla ma* que sa pratique n'est plus obligatoire. Voir Vidyadhara Jigme Lingpa, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

⁴⁹ Sous ce sous-titre générique figurent également les points-clefs dits des portes (*sgo*), de l'objet (*yul*), et du souffle-Discernement (*rlung rig*).

- 2-2. L'induction directe de la Réalité Manifeste (*chos nyid mngon sum rang thog tu dbab pa*)
 2-3. La manière dont les Quatre Visions émergent (*snang ba bzhi ji ltar 'char ba*)
 2-4. Les préceptes du support final (*mtha' rten gyi man ngag*).

La structure des instructions n'est pas forcément inhabituelle, surtout si on la compare aux cycles anciens, ou même à des traités d'instructions légèrement plus tardifs (14^e siècle, même si ceux-ci sont présentés comme remontant beaucoup plus haut, c'est-à-dire au 8^e siècle ou même avant).⁵⁰ Toutefois, on peut préciser que l'entraînement des trois portes (*sgo gsum sbyang ba*) présenté dans les "instructions guidées sur l'esprit" (1-2) correspond aux préliminaires de l'Éradication de la Rigidité (*khregs chod*) et que les "instructions guidées sur le Discernement" (1-3) qui concernent ce que l'on désigne comme les Disjonctions du Saṃsāra-Nirvāṇa (*'khor 'das ru shan dbye ba*) sont habituellement divisées en Disjonctions extérieures (*phyi'i ru shan dbye ba*)⁵¹ et en Disjonctions intérieures (*nang gi ru shan dbye ba*).⁵² Au niveau de la pratique principale, les six points-clefs⁵³ sont effectivement décrits, ainsi que les principes associés aux Lampes (*sgron ma*) qui forment, avec les Quatre Visions, l'arcane même de la pratique du Franchissement du Pic.

4. *A propos des reliques et de leur classification dans les Traités de la Section des Préceptes*

Nyi ma 'bum n'est pas n'importe quel patriarche de la lignée des *Dix-Sept Tantras*. Il est prophétisé dans le *sGra thal 'gyur*, élément qui ne manque pas d'être noté dans les textes historiques de la tradition tardive.⁵⁴ Il est toutefois loin d'être le seul à être identifié comme l'un

⁵⁰ Comme par exemple le '*Das rjes don khrid* attribué à dGa' rab rdo rje et conservé dans le *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, vol. I (cf. la traduction de ce texte in Achard, *Les Testaments de Vajradhara*, *passim*).

⁵¹ Elles-mêmes sont divisées en deux parties : 1. adoption du comportement des êtres des six destinées (*rigs drug spyod pa*), et 2. adoption du comportement des Paisibles et des Courroucés (*zhi khro*).

⁵² Ou instructions sur la purification des germes des six destinées en soi (*rigs drug sa bon rang sbyong gi gdams pa*).

⁵³ Les points-clefs du corps, de la parole, de l'esprit, des portes, de l'objet, et du souffle-Discernement.

⁵⁴ Voir par exemple Dudjom Rinpoche (trad. Dorje & Kapstein), *The Nyingma School*, p. 563. La note 633 de cet ouvrage (vol. II, p. 48) renvoie à la p. 198 *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* de dPa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba (éd. en 2 vol., de 1980), sans préciser le volume. Dans le premier comme dans le second, il n'y a pas de référence à la pro-

des personnages mentionnés dans la section prophétique du *sGra thal 'gyur* (pp. 39-42).⁵⁵ On remarquera que le *Commentaire* de ce Tantra ne décrit pas les lignées de transmission mentionnées dans le Tantra lui-même, au-delà de la Transmission symbolique des Porteurs-de-Science (*rig 'dzin brda brgyud*).⁵⁶

La prophétie relative à Nyi ma 'bum dans ce texte figure dans le premier chapitre du Tantra. Elle est relativement courte et dit :

« — Après ceux-ci, elle sera maintenue par Vajraphala, émanation de Vajrapāni » (p. 41 : *de 'og lag na rdo rje yi/sprul pa ba dzra pha las 'dzin*). La phrase qui établit l'identification dans *Le Festin des Sages* (*mKhas pa'i dga' ston*, p. 576) est :

« — Son fils clanique, l'érudit Nyi ma 'bum est expliqué comme ayant été Vajraphala, une émanation de Vajrapāni » (*de'i rigs kyi sras mkhas pa nyi ma 'bum ni phyag rdor gyi sprul pa badzra pha la yin par 'chad*).

On peut s'interroger sur le fait que, eu égard à la précocité de sa maîtrise des enseignements de la Grande Perfection, Nyi ma 'bum n'ait pas manifesté les plus hauts signes (*rtags*) de réalisation au moment du Fruit, avec notamment l'obtention du Corps d'Arc-en-ciel (*'ja' lus*). En effet, la fin de la biographie nous indique que son corps est incinéré et que l'on a retrouvé dans ses cendres cinq types de reliques. La manifestation de telles reliques est un thème qui revient de nombreuses fois dans le corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras*, avec un traitement extrêmement détaillé dans le *Tantra des Reliques Flamboyantes* (*sKu gdung 'bar ba'i rgyud*), et plus précisément encore dans son *Commentaire* dont je synthétise une partie de l'exposé (p. 297 *et seq.*) dans les

phétie relative à Nyi ma 'bum à cette page. En fait, le *mKhas pa'i dga' ston* (vol. I) cite dans un premier un passage concernant des prophéties dans le *sGra thal 'gyur* (p. 560), avant de faire une référence explicite à Nyi ma 'bum (p. 576) en identifiant celui-ci à l'un des personnages prophétisés.

⁵⁵ J'y reviendrai dans un travail en cours sur l'identification des principaux patriarches mentionnés dans ces prophéties.

⁵⁶ Dans la mesure où le texte du *sGra thal 'gyur* fait explicitement mention des maîtres qui font suite à cette Transmission des Porteurs-de-Science — ceux de la Transmission Orale des Êtres (*gang zag snyan brgyud*), on peut se demander si cette section du texte est un ajout tardif. Dans le *Commentaire* de ce Tantra, il n'y a pas d'explication relative à cette Transmission Orale des Êtres ni aux prophéties qui s'y rattachent au sein même du *sGra thal 'gyur*. La présence éventuelle d'une exégèse de cette section du Tantra original au sein du *Commentaire* justifierait sa nature tardive. Or, la composition même du *Commentaire* est attribuée à Vimalamitra, ce qui explique, si l'attribution était prouvée, qu'il ne commente pas la section prophétique dans la mesure où elle fait référence à une période évidemment postérieure à la sienne.

paragraphes suivants.⁵⁷ La biographie de Nyi ma 'bum fait état de cinq types de reliques colorées apparues dans les cendres de la crémation. Ces reliques correspondent aux cinq catégories suivantes :⁵⁸

- les *sha rī raṃ* qui sont associées avec l'obtention du Plein Eveil dans le mode propre au Clan du Bienheureux (*tathagata*),
- les *ba rī raṃ* associées au clan du Diamant (*vajra*),
- les *chu rī raṃ* associées au clan du Joyau (*ratna*),
- les *bse rī raṃ* associées au clan du Lotus (*padma*), et
- les *nya rī raṃ* associées au clan de l'Action (*karma*).⁵⁹

La découverte de ces reliques dans les cendres de la crémation est le signe indiquant que le défunt a parachevé l'un ou les cinq clans du Parfait Corps de Jouissance (*longs spyod rdzogs pa'i sku'i rigs*). En général, (p. 298) lorsque ce signe apparaît, il est accompagné de manifestations extérieures telles que des lumières ('*od*) diffuses dans le ciel, des sons (*sgra*) retentissant alentours, des tremblements de terre (*sa g.yo ba*), ainsi que divers autres prodiges célestes (*nam mkha'i cho 'phrul*) comme des pluies de fleurs, etc. On dit alors que la présence des reliques de type *ring bsrel*, les manifestations célestes et les sons constituent des signes indiquant l'obtention des Trois Corps (*sku gsum*).

Chacun des cinq types de reliques énumérées ci-dessus possède une teinte et une "source" spécifiques.⁶⁰ Ainsi, les *sha rī raṃ* sont de teinte blanche et ont une apparence extérieure des plus huileuses. Elles sont de forme ronde ou plus ou moins sphérique et possèdent en leur sein un éclat quinticolore, en dépit de la teinte blanche qui reste leur couleur principale. Leur taille avoisine celle d'un pois (*sran ma*), d'une petite pierre (*rdo*) ou encore d'une graine ('*bru*). Elles proviennent de l'éclat des os (*rus pa'i dwangs ma*), ce qui explique leur teinte blanche, qui symbolise la Réalité (*chos nyid*) non recouverte de souillures. Leur présence dans les cendres est donc celle d'un signe

⁵⁷ Nyi ma 'bum précise au début du chapitre 9 de son *Tshig don bcu gcig pa* (p. 98) que l'exposé détaillé sur les signes et leur expression paroxystique (*rtags tshad*), tels que ceux-ci sont décrits dans le corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras*, figure dans le *Tantra des Reliques Flamboyantes* (*sKu gdung 'bar ba*), et que le traitement proposé dans *L'Emergence Naturelle* (*Rang shar*) et *Le Miroir du cœur* [*de Vajrasattva*] (*sNying gi me long*) est présenté de manière résumée.

⁵⁸ Je conserve la transcription originale du nom des reliques dans le *Commentaire*.

⁵⁹ On retrouve la même explication *infra* dans le *Commentaire*, p. 524.

⁶⁰ Voir une description très synthétique de ce qui suit in Martin, "Pearls from Bones", pp. 281-282. Pour plus de détails sur les controverses soulevées par l'authenticité de certaines reliques, voir *id.* "Crystals and Images from Bodies", *passim*.

indiquant que le défunt a réalisé la Pureté Primordiale (*ka dag*). Leur apparence huileuse tient au fait qu'elles proviennent, comme on vient de le dire, de l'éclat des os, mais également de la moelle osseuse que l'on retrouve dans tout le squelette. Cette apparence symbolise la réalisation instantanée de la Base (*gzhi*) de l'état naturel. Leur forme sphérique est également le signe indiquant la réalisation du Disque Unique du Corps Absolu (*chos kyi sku thig le nyag gcig*). [p. 531] On les retrouve essentiellement à l'endroit où se trouvait la tête lors de la crémation.

Les *ba rī ram* sont essentiellement de couleur bleu foncé. Leur taille avoisine, pour les plus petites, celle de graines de moutarde, et pour les plus grandes, celle de graines de pois. Ces reliques proviennent du germe (*sa bon*) de l'élément feu qui rassemble la totalité de la chaleur corporelle. Elles sont le signe de la réalisation du principe de la Connaissance Sublimée (*shes rab kyi don*), exempt de toute régression. Leur couleur bleue indique qu'elles représentent l'essence de l'élément ciel, tandis que leur aspect foncé tient, quant à lui, essentiellement de l'élément eau. On les retrouve généralement au milieu des côtes.⁶¹

Les *chu rī ram* (p. 532) sont de couleur jaune, leur taille avoisinant celle de graines du navet noir. Elles proviennent directement du sang et de la lymphe. Leur couleur jaune est un signe indiquant que l'adepte a réalisé durant son existence un certain nombre de qualités rédemptrices (*yon tan*). Leur forme semblable à des gouttes d'eau de couleur jaune est un signe indiquant que le pratiquant a, au cours de sa vie, contemplé les Disques Lumineux (*thig le*) formant le dynamisme de son propre état naturel. Dans les cendres de crémation, on les retrouve à l'endroit où se trouvait le foie.

Les *bse rī ram* sont de couleur rouge et présentent également une taille avoisinant celle de graines de moutarde. Elles proviennent de la réunion des quatre éléments dont l'éclat fusionne lors de la crémation pour donner lieu à l'apparition de telles reliques. Toutefois, on précise que leur couleur rouge vient directement du fait que la matérialité des éléments (dont sont donc issues ces *bse rī ram*) a été sublimée par l'élément feu lui-même. La présence de ces reliques indique que l'adepte a concrètement obtenu et réalisé les principes des quatre consécérations (*dbang bzhi*) et qu'il en a maintenu les serments (*dam tshig*).⁶² Le fait que les éléments du corps aient été sublimés (*smin*) par

⁶¹ La cage thoracique n'est parfois pas intégralement consumée par le feu de la crémation, ce qui permet d'identifier avec précision la localisation des *ba rī ram*.

⁶² Dans le contexte des enseignements rdzogs chen, les quatre consécérations sont : 1. la Consécration de l'Aiguïère (*bum dbang*), 2. la Consécration de l'Arcane (*gsang dbang*), 3. la Consécration à la Sagesse de la Connaissance Sublimée (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*), et 4. la Consécration Verbale (*tshig dbang*). La description de ces

l'élément feu est un signe indiquant qu'au cours de sa vie (p. 533), l'adepte n'a pas laissé de souillures affecter son corps et sa parole. L'apparition de ces reliques rouges de la taille de graines de moutarde indique que l'adepte avait obtenu pouvoir sur ces essences séminales relatives (*kun rdzob kyi thig le*). Leur légèreté est un signe indiquant qu'il avait la maîtrise du souffle de la Sagesse (*ye shes kyi rlung*). L'endroit où on les retrouve dans les cendres de la crémation correspond à celui où se trouvaient les reins.

Viennent enfin les *nya rī ranī* qui sont de couleur verte, avec une tendance à manifester un reflet quinticolore. Leur taille est proche de celle de graines de moutarde. Elles sont censées provenir de l'éclat de la conscience et démontrer le fait que l'adepte est parvenu au terme ultime des activités de la Sagesse. Leur dimension est un signe indiquant que l'adepte s'est, au cours de sa vie, entraîné à la pratique des *thig le* absolus (*don dam thig le*). L'endroit où elles apparaissent dans les cendres de la crémation correspond à la position supposée des poumons (p. 534).

Toutes ces reliques présentent une forme générale ronde, ainsi qu'un profond éclat quinticolore, peu importe la couleur extérieure générale. Comme on l'a vu, leur taille varie en fonction de leur catégorie, mais elles sont plutôt petites, voire pour certaines, aussi ténues que des graines de sésame ou que les particules que l'on voit voler dans les rayons du soleil (*nyi zer gyi rdul gyi tsha tsam*). La différence entre les reliques de type *ring bsrel* et celles de type *gdung* sont que les premières sont très friables, alors que les secondes sont dures au point d'être pratiquement insécables.

Consécrations figure dans le *rDzogs pa rang byung*, le *sGra thal 'gyur*, etc., appartenant au corpus des *Dix-Sept Tantras*. On en retrouve des exemples rituels plus développés dans le *Bi ma snying thig*. Dans le premier volume de son *Bla ma yang tig*, Klong chen pa a synthétisé, à partir de ces mêmes sources, le détail complet de ces Consécrations, avec leur procédure, etc. Pour ce qui concerne les serments dans le contexte de la Grande Perfection, on consultera avec profit Klong chen pa, *Dam tshig gi rim pa rnam grol rgya mtsho*, *Bla ma yang tig*, vol. I, pp. 283-297. Etant donné que le problème devait déjà se poser à son époque, Klong chen pa précise au début de ce texte que si le *rDzogs chen* est, en tant qu'état, indépendant de toute préservation de serments, le pratiquant du *rDzogs chen*, lui, dépend entièrement de ces serments s'il veut progresser sans obstacles dans sa pratique. Le problème de la non-différenciation du *rDzogs chen* et du *rDzogs chen pa* est donc un problème récurrent à travers les siècles. Il résulte directement de la révélation de principes à des calices inappropriés à leur réception.

5. Conclusion

Tout comme la biographie de Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje, celle de son fils Nyi ma 'bum nous donne une image très intéressante du rDzogs chen au 12e siècle. Celui-ci apparaît comme une tradition parfaitement établie, sans qu'il soit jamais mention de polémiques entourant sa diffusion, son interprétation, etc.⁶³ Au contraire même, on a le sentiment d'une tradition déjà ancienne, parfaitement intégrée dans le système rnying ma et qui, en tout cas, n'apparaît pas comme une innovation, ni comme le fruit d'une évolution prenant en compte les représentations des Tantras nouvellement introduits au Tibet, celles du Ch'an du Baotang et d'éventuels emprunts au Kālacakra, pour former une nouvelle tradition religieuse. L'on se rend également compte que ces patriarches rNying ma pa historiques propagateurs des *Dix-Sept Tantras*, sont en contact fréquent avec au moins deux traditions gSar ma pa — Sa skya et bKa' brgyud — qui occupent déjà largement la scène spirituelle de l'époque. L'image que l'on en retire est en totale contradiction avec les projections habituelles qui présentent les tenants de chaque école comme farouchement opposés aux autres lignées de transmissions. L'on est en fait en présence d'adeptes qui s'instruisent avec une sincérité spirituelle étonnante (pour un Tibet qui sera dans les siècles suivants parfois outrageusement sclérosé dans un sectarisme redoutable), sans se soucier de la tradition suivie, mais sans pour autant mélanger le tout en une "soupe religieuse" aux saveurs indéfinies. De fait, la lignée de transmission des *Dix-Sept Tantras* ne se verra pas dissoute ou intégrée à d'autres systèmes en dépit des multiples contacts religieux de certains de ses patriarches avec d'autres lignées, mais conservera son authenticité et ses maîtres spécifiques.

Appendice I— Translittération du texte de la biographie

@# / /zhang nyi 'bum gyi rnam thar bzhugs/

dri med mchog gi brgyud pa bla ma'i sku/ /sde snod kun gyi mnga'
bdag rgyal ba'i sras/ /ye shes nyi 'od 'gro kun khyab mdzad pa'i/
/rtsod med bla ma nyid la gus pas 'dud/ /rtsa ba'i rgyud sgra thal

⁶³ C'est une évidence car le rDzogs chen est en terrain "ami" avec ces deux maîtres. Mais s'il s'était agi d'une tradition outrageusement polémique, il devrait y en avoir des traces dans ces biographies. Or, ce n'est pas le cas. On doit donc se demander si la littérature polémique qui entoure pour certains cette tradition ne fait pas le jeu d'une loupe qui déforme l'histoire, au moins pour ce qui concerne cette période.

'gyur las lung bstan pa'i lag na rdo rje'i sprul pa zhang nyi ma 'bum zhes bya ba'i lo rgyus zur tsam ni/ yab mtshan brjod par dka' ba rgyal ba zhang ston dang / rgyal mo [glose interlinéaire : yum gyi lhums su zhugs pa'i dus su yum gyi rmi lam na nyi ma mang po shar ba rmis nas/ yab la zhus pas gsang ba bla na med pa 'dis sems can mang po'i don byed par 'ongs pa'i rtags yin khyod the tshom za mi 'tshal gsungs/] g.yang de nyid kyi sras su 'khrungs te de'i dus su yab kyis mtshan gsol ba sems can kun gyi ma rig pa'i mun pa sel ba'i nyi 'od du 'gyur bar 'dug pas nyi ma 'bum zhes bya bar thogs shig gsungs nas mtshan gsol skad/ de nas dgung lo gsum song tsa na khong rang gis so pho rgya ston lung gro ba'i phur pa dang / yang dag gi sgrub pa mang du mdzad de/ byin gyis brlabs shing bar chod bsal lo/ /dgung lo lnga nas bdun brgyad kyi bar la yab nyid kyis gsang ba bla na med pa'i dbang gdams ngag dang bcas pa dang / rgyud bcu bdun gyi lung rdzogs par mdzad do/ /dgung lo dgu la bla ma nyid sku 'das/ de'i dus su 'gro mgon zhang g.yu brag pa gdan drangs nas/ bka' rgyas 'bring rnam gsum phyag tu btang ste tshig gis phul zhing sa bde 'jam la bkod do/ / dgung lo bcu nas bco lnga man chad la rtsa ba'i rgyud sgra thal 'gyur dang / rgyud bcu bdun gyi bshad pa tshang bar mdzad do/ /che sar bton dus bu slob rnam legs par bsdus te/ rgyud gdams ngag dang bcas pa bshad pas bu slob kun ngo mtshar skyes shing dad par gyur/ bco brgyad la slob dpon gyi spyang sngar dbang gong ma zhus/ dgung lo nyi shu tham pa la bla ma gzhung rngog rgyal tsha rdor seng gi spyang sngar byon te/ spar gsar ma'i rgyud gdams ngag dang bcas pa zhus/ dgung lo nyi shu rtsa gnyis la jo mo rgya gar khab tu bzhes/ dgung lo nyi shu rtsa bdun la sa skya'i 'khon grags pa rgyal mtshan dang / bla ma stag so ba'i spyang sngar byon te/ rgyud gsum man ngag dang bcas pa dang / bde mchog mal gyo lugs zhus/ nyi shu rtsa dgu la jo mo seng rgyan khab tu bzhes/ dgung lo sum cu la kha rag bon 'brug gi bla ma skyi ston grags pa'i spyang sngar byon/ bde mchog lhan skyes a phyi'i lugs dang / rje btsun ma ra lugs dang / mgon po bya rogs ma dang tshal ba'i chos skor zhus/ lar ni mkhas shing grub pa thob pa'i bla ma mang du bsten cing gdams ngag mang du zhus te thugs dgongs lon par mdzad do/ /rgyud kyi bshad pa dang gdams ngag gi khrid la sogs pa'ang mang du mdzad de thams cad smin cing grol ba la bkod do/ /de nas dgung lo lnga bcu nga drug la cho 'phrul chen po'i zla ba'i tshes brgyad la sku 'das pa'i tshul bstan te pur sbyangs pa la bkod de/ gdung sha rī ram dang nya rī ram dang / chu rī ram dang / pañtsa ram la sogs pa kha dog ma 'dres pa lnga byon te bla ma nyi 'bum chen po dbyings su yal lo/ /kye ma kye hud nyi ma'i mtshan can rin po che/ /rigs drug 'khor ba'i mun pa'i smag rum du/ /gsal dag ye shes spyang gyis gzigs pa las/ /lnga ldan 'od kyi sgron me yis/ /stongs zhing 'thibs pa'i mun pa 'di/ /skad cig nyid la gsal bar mdzad do/ /rdzogs so//

Appendice II — Versions du *Bla ma yang tig* et
du Chos 'byung de Gu ru bKra shis

1. Version du *Bla ma yang tig*
(volume 1, fol. 13a-14a)

Les passages surlignés en gras sont communs à la biographie-racine de Nyi ma 'bum telle qu'elle figure dans le *Bi ma snying thig*. Dans le *Bla ma yang tig*, Klong chen pa coupe la période où Nyi ma 'bum a 10 ans et plus, et la replace dans le contexte de la prophétie du *sGra thal 'gyur*, afin d'insister sur le caractère particulier de ce maître. Toutefois, il réduit la section finale avec les divers types de reliques — ne conservant que celles d'une seule catégorie de reliques —, mais ajoute des éléments relatifs aux phénomènes atmosphériques qui accompagnent le décès d'un grand maître (comme l'émergence de tentes d'arc-en-ciel apparaissant dans l'espace médian), ou encore la présence de reliques (du type *ring bsrel*) éparpillées sur le sol, etc., éléments qu'il doit tirer d'une autre source (peut-être orale) dans la mesure où il n'y en a pas trace dans la biographie-source.

//de lta bu'i ngo mtshar rmad du byung ba'i bla ma dam pa las mkhas pa **nyi 'bum** gyis gsan te/ de yang **yab rgyal ba zhang chen po dang** / yum rgyal mo g.yang de gnyis las 'khrungs shing lhums \13b\ na **zhugs dus** / yum gyi rmi lam na nyi ma mang po dus gcig la shar ba rmis pa yab la smras pas / yab na re / **gsang ba bla na med pa'i** don gsal bar byed cing / **sems can** gyi ma rig pa'i mun pa sel ba'i rtags yin no **gsungs te** / bltams pa na **nyi ma 'bum zhes bya bar mtshan gsol lo** / //de nas **dgung lo lnga nas** dgu'i bar la yab kyis **gsang ba snying tig dbang** khrid gdams pa **dang bcas pa'i lung rnam mdzad do** / /yab 'das nas **dgung lo nyi shu la rngog rgyal tsha'i spyang sngar byon te** / **gsar ma'i rgyud gdams ngag dang bcas pa mang du gsan cing mkhyen par mdzad** / **nyi shu rtsa gnyis la jo mo rgya gar khab tu bzhes** / **nyi shu rtsa bdun la sa skya'i mkhon grags pa rgyal mtshan dang** / bla ma stag so ba'i spyang sngar rgyud gsum gdams ngag dang bcas pa **bde mchog mal gyo'i lugs mkhyen par mdzad** / **rtsa dgu la seng rgyan khab tu bzhes** / sum cu la kha rag bon 'brug gi skyi ston grags pa las **bde mchog a phyi lugs dang** / rje btsun mar lugs dang / ye shes **mgon po** la sogs pa **zhus shing / mkhas grub** du ma las / mdo rgyud du ma gsan cing mkhyen **par mdzad do** / \14a\ khyad par du chos 'di'i bdag por byon te sgra thal 'gyur las / phyag na rdo rje'i sprul par lung bstan cing / **dgung lo bcu la che sar bton dus** rgyud bcu bdun gdams ngag dang bcas pa'i bshad pa mdzad pas / **bu slob kun ngo mtshar skyes shing lo nyi shu'i** bar du sgrub pa nan tan snying por mdzad pa yin no / // **dgung lo lnga bcu rtsa drug gi cho 'phrul zla ba'i tshes brgyad** kyi nyi ma rtse shar la sku gshegs nas **pur sbyangs pas** nam mkha' la 'ja' 'od kyi gur phub / sa gzhi ring bsrel gyis gcal bkram / dgun grang sgang la pur sbyangs sar me tog ug chos skyes / **gdung sha rī ram la sogs pa**

Inga rang byon/ mi rnams ngo mtshar gyi sa la bkod do/

2. *Version du Chos 'byung de Gu ru bKra shis*
(pp. 205-206)

Ici également, les passages surlignés en gras sont ceux que l'on retrouve dans la biographie-racine.

de'i slob ma sras **nyi ma 'bum ste/** **yum** rgyal mo g.yang nga'i **lhums su zhugs pa'i dus nyi ma mang po** dus gcig la **shar ba** byung bas/**yab** kyis **sems can gyi ma rig pa'i mun pa** bsal ba zhig yong ngo zhes [206] lung bstan nas mtshan **nyi ma 'bum** du btags/**lo** Inga nas rim par **yab** las **gsang ba** snying tig gi **dbang** khrid **gdams** pa thams cad nyams 'og tu chud par mdzad/dgung lo bcu pa na che sar bton dus **rgyud bcu bdun** la bshad pa **mdzad** pas bu slob kun ngo mtshar skye ba byung/lo nyi shu'i bar du sgrub pa kho na la nan tan mdzad/de nas rjes thob sgyu ma lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin dang 'grogs nas rngog rgyal rtse'i par **gsar ma'i rgyud** man ngag **dang bcas pa** la gsan pa mdzad/**nyi shu rtsa gnyis** pa la **jo mo rgya gar** dngos grub kyi rten du bzung/**nyi shu rtsa bdun** la '**khon grags pa rgyal mtshan dang/bla ma stag so ba** bsten nas **rgyud gsum gdams ngag dang bcas pa dang/bde mchog mal gyo lugs** mkhyen par mdzad/**kha rag gi 'brug ston grags pa las bde mchog dang/rje** btsun ma'i lugs/ye shes **ngon po** sogs **zhus**/zhang g.yu brag pa dang g.yung gi rngog rdo rje seng ge la sogs te **mkhas grub** kyi **bla ma mang po bsten** nas mdo rgyud du ma la thos bsam phyogs med mdzad/**tshig don chen mo**⁶⁴ zhes bya ba'i bstan bcos kyang mdzad de **dgung lo Inga bcu rtsa drug** la gshegs/**pur sbyang** bas **gdung rigs Inga byon**/'ja' tshon gyi gur phub/cho 'phrul zla ba la khug chos me tog skyes pa sogs byung ngo/'di sgra thal 'gyur nas phyag rdor gyi sprul pa badz+ra pa lar lung bstan pa la ngos 'dzin par grags so/ /

⁶⁴ Titre correspondant de toute évidence au *Tshig don bcu gcig pa*.

Appendice III — La liste sommaire des Dix-Sept Tantras

TITRE TIBETAIN	TITRE FRANÇAIS	NOMBRE DE CHA- PITRES	COLOPHON/ TRADUC- TEURS	COMMENTAIRE
1. <i>sGra thal 'gyur chen po'i rgyud</i>	Le Grand Tantra qui Transperce les Sons	6	∅	Existant (rédaction attri- buée à Vimala- mitra)
2. <i>bKra shis mdzes ldan chen po'i rgyud</i>	Le Tantra des Grand Au- gures Ravis- sants	5	∅	∅
3. <i>Kun tu bzang po'i thugs kyi me long gi rgyud</i>	Le Tantra du Miroir du Cœur de Sa- mantabhadra	4	∅	∅
4. <i>sGron ma 'bar ba'i rgyud</i>	Le Tantra des Lampes Flam- boyantes	4	Vimalamitra & sKa pa dPal brtsegs	Existant (rédaction attri- buée à Vimala- mitra)
5. <i>rDo rje sems dpa'i snying gi me long gi rgyud</i>	Le Tantra du Miroir du cœur de Vajra- sattva	8	Vimalamitra	∅
6. <i>Rig pa rang shar chen po'i rgyud</i>	Le Tantra de la Grande Emergence Naturelle du Discernement	86	Vimalamitra, (s)Ka ba dPal brtsegs & Cog- ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan	∅
7. <i>Nor bu phra bkod</i>	Le Tantra du Grand Agen- cement Subtil	14	∅	∅

<i>chen po'i rgyud</i>	<i>des Joyaux</i>				
8. <i>Ngo sprodspraspai rgyud</i>	<i>Le Tantra des Confrontations Ornementales</i>	3	Vimalamitra & sKa ba dPal brtsegs	∅	
9. <i>Kun tubzang poklongdrug pa'i rgyud</i>	<i>Le Tantra des Six Abîmes de Samantabhadra</i>	6	∅	∅	Existant (rédaction attribuée à Vimalamitra)
10. <i>Yi gemed pa'i rgyud</i>	<i>Le Tantra Intranscriptible</i>	6	∅	∅	Existant (rédaction attribuée à Vimalamitra)
11. <i>Seng ge rtsal rdzogs kyi rgyud</i>	<i>Le Tantra du Lion au Dynamisme Parfait</i>	13	∅	∅	∅
12. <i>Mu tig phreng ba'i rgyud</i>	<i>Le Tantra de la Guirlande de Perles</i>	8	∅	∅	Existant (rédaction attribuée à Vimalamitra)
13. <i>Rig pa rang grol gyi rgyud</i>	<i>Le Tantra de la Liberté Naturelle du Discernement</i>	10	∅	∅	∅
14. <i>Rin chen spungs pa'i rgyud</i>	<i>Le Tantra des Joyaux Amoncelés</i>	5	Vimalamitra & sKa ba dPal brtsegs	∅	
15. <i>sKudung 'bar ba'i rgyud</i>	<i>Le Tantra des Reliques Flamboyantes</i>	3	Vimalamitra & sKa ba dPal brtsegs	∅	Existant (rédaction attribuée à Vimalamitra)

16.	<i>Nyi zla sbyor rgyud</i> <i>Nyi zla sbyor rgyud</i>	Le Tantra de l'Union du Soleil et de la Lune	4	∅	∅
17.	<i>rDzogs pa rang byung gi rgyud</i> <i>rDzogs pa rang byung gi rgyud</i>	Le Tantra de la Perfection Née-d'elle-même	25	∅	∅ ⁶⁵

Il convient de noter que deux autres Tantras sont fréquemment ajoutés à cette liste originelle. Il s'agit du *Tantra de la Noire Gardienne des Maximes* (*bKa' srung nag mo'i rgyud*, en 13 chapitres) découvert par Zhang ston bKra shis rdo rje lui-même, et du *Tantra de la Flamboyante Clarté Abyssale* (*Klong gsal 'bar ba'i rgyud*, en 18 chapitres) révélé par Ratna Lingpa (1403–1478).⁶⁶ On parle ainsi d'un triple corpus portant sur les *Dix-Sept Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*), les *Dix-Huit Tantras* (*rGyud bcwo brgyad* [à ne pas confondre avec le corpus éponyme appartenant à la tradition du Mahāyoga]),⁶⁷ et les *Dix-Neuf Tantras* (*rGyud bcu dgu*),⁶⁸ même si le premier corpus reste celui le plus fréquemment mentionné.

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⁶⁵ Notez l'existence du "commentaire" de ce texte dans les *Kamas* standards.

⁶⁶ Ce texte est généralement attribué à Ratna Lingpa. Toutefois, il existe une version antérieure découverte par *gter ston* Shes rab me 'bar (1267–1326). Voir l'édition moderne de ce cette version in *Ma rgyud kun tu bzang mo klong gsal 'bar ba nyi ma'i gsang rgyud*, pp. 3-34.

⁶⁷ Autrement dit les *Dix-Sept Tantras* + le *Tantra de la Noire Gardienne des Maximes*.

⁶⁸ A savoir les *Dix-Huit Tantras* + le *Tantra de la Flamboyante Clarté Abyssale*.

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