Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines

Northern Treasures Histories

volume I — Before Rigdzin Gödem

Edited by

Stéphane Arguillère

numéro quatre-vingt — Janvier 2026

Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines

numéro quatre-vingt — Janvier 2026

ISSN 1768-2959

Périodicité
La périodicité de la *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* est généralement bi-annuelle, les mois de parution étant, sauf indication contraire, Octobre et Avril. Les contributions doivent parvenir au moins six (6) mois à l'avance. Les dates de proposition d'articles au comité de lecture sont Novembre pour une parution en Avril, et Mai pour une parution en Octobre.

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La participation est ouverte aux membres statutaires des équipes CNRS, à leurs membres associés, aux doctorants et aux chercheurs non-affiliés. Les articles et autres contributions sont proposés aux membres du comité de lecture et sont soumis à l'approbation des membres du comité de rédaction. Les articles et autres contributions doivent être inédits ou leur réédition doit être justifiée et soumise à l'approbation des membres du comité de lecture. Les documents doivent parvenir sous la forme de fichiers Word, envoyés à l'adresse du directeur (jeanluc.achard@sfr.fr).

Comptes-rendus
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Langues
Les langues acceptées dans la revue sont le français, l'anglais, l'allemand, l'italien, l'espagnol, le tibétain et le chinois.

La *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* est publiée par l'UMR 8155 du CNRS (CRCAO), Paris, dirigée par Matthias Hayek.

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Northern Treasures Histories

Volume 1:

Before Rigdzin Gödem

Based on Khenpo Chöying's
The Garland of Wondrous Tales

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General Foreword

Jean-Luc Achard
(CNRS, CRCAO)

The present volume is the third outcome of the ANR[1] project entitled "For a Critical History of the Northern Treasures" (FCHNT) directed by Stéphane Arguillère (IFRAE),[2] Jay Valentine (Troy Univ.), and Jean-Luc Achard (CNRS).[3] Two special issues of the *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* have indeed preceded the present publication.[4] This project was officially launched in February 2022 and is set to run for four years (until August 2026). It is essentially centered upon the translation of biographies of lineage holders of the Northern Treasures (*byang gter*) tradition of Tibetan Buddhism, with the aim of shedding new light on the religious and sometimes political role played by this tradition in the wider religious and historical scenes of Tibet. The main source for these biographies is a modern compilation entitled *A Religious History of Thubten Dorje Drak and the Northern Treasures* (*Byang gter thub bstan rdo rje brag gi chos 'byung*) authored by Khenpo Chöying.[5]

In the course of conducting this project, we have been, and still are, confronted with the fascinating challenges that any historian faces when analyzing hagiographical documents, such as how to pertinently evaluate a spiritual tradition expressed in an emic perspective without ever losing sight of the situation in which it began and evolved throughout centuries of contacts with other lineages of Tibetan Buddhism. Such a concern is evidently not the object of any critical consideration from the author of *The Religious History* but it is central to ours.

The Northern Treasures system is one of the branches of the Nyingma School, with some uncommon and slightly archaic features, and represents a distinct religious order of its own that has survived over the last six centuries. Its fate has known what we can artificially

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3 Three research fellows complete the team: Cécile Ducher (postdoctoral fellow, IFRAE), Tenpa Tsering Batsang (CRCAO, research engineer, doctoral student at Inalco), and Simon Martin (CRCAO, research engineer).

4 Issue 62 (February 2022) and issue 68 (January 2024). A forthcoming issue is planned in February 2026.

5 mKhan po Chos dbyings (born 20th c.) 2015, *Byang gter thub bstan rdo rje brag gi chos 'byung rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i rtogs brjod ngo mtshar gtam gyi phreng ba* [*The Garland of Wondrous Tales*], vol. 62 of the *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*.

reconstruct as four main stages:

— an initial phase of spreading from Latö Jang, starting with the revelation of its earliest works in 1366, until the period of the 16th century;
— a revolution in the 16th century with Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal's exile and the foundation of Dorje Drak,[1] leading to a peak in the late 17th and early 18th centuries, with eminent figures such the 5th Dalai-Lama (1617–1682) and Rigdzin Pema Trinlé (1641–1717);
— a sudden and disastrous downfall at the time of the Dzungar invasion in 1717–1718; and
— a steady survival until the havoc of the Cultural Revolution (文革, 1966–1976).

1. Constructing Legitimacy

"Writing history often has to do with constructing legitimacy"[2] and this has never been truer than in the context of the various Tibetan religious traditions. Legitimacy is established through a very careful and intricate selection of past events and doctrinal representations, as well as through an often biased and sometimes sectarian emphasis on recreated narratives supporting precise agendas. The construction of this legitimacy primarily aims at connecting to a past state of affairs in order to justify a situation in the present. Thus, by connecting to the period of the Tibetan empire (7th–8th c.), the early masters of what was to become the Nyingma School legitimized their tradition by clearly distinguishing it from the newer lineages that had been introduced in Tibet since the late 10th and early 11th centuries.

They did this through two main lines of transmissions said to have originated in the teachings of the first patriarchs of these lineages in the 8th century, with figures such as Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, and Vairocana, to name the most famous of them. These two main lines are known as *Kama* (*bKa' ma*) and *Terma* (*gTer ma*).[3] The first represents a lineage of teachings that defines itself as "uninterrupted"

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1 Tradition maintains that the monastery of Dorje Drak was founded in 1610 by Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo (1580–1639) in Lho kha, corresponding to the modern Shannan (山南) prefecture in southern Tibet. It soon became the main religious center for the Northern Treasures and had branches as far away as Dartsedo (Kangding 康定) at the Sino-Tibetan border in Kham.

2 Arguillère 2022a, p. 6.

3 The *gter ma* phenomenon is also endemic in the Bon literature since, except for a few sets of works, most of the Bon canonical literature consists of hidden treasures.

since the 8th century down to the present day. The second one is styled as "interrupted" in the sense that it corresponds to texts that were hidden as treasures (*gter ma*) supposedly in the 8th century (essentially by the three masters mentioned above) and discovered later, from the late 10th century to the present day. A very complex narrative was thus constructed around connections to the golden age of the 8th century, shaping a collective memory and identity to which all branches of the Nyingma school can refer.

It is difficult for modern historians to fully appreciate the extent of what has merely been retroactively elaborated. One element that is unquestionable is that entire doctrinal systems, with their complex sets of teachings and their particular lexicon, do not arise out of nowhere. This is especially true for the tradition of the Great Perfection which plays a central role in the Northern Treasures. However, the legitimacy built on the basis of this narrative gave rise to a tradition that does not lack in actual links to this golden age that are both coherent and probable, but also abounds in records of "events" that are simply impossible to prove. Many examples of such narratives and discussions of how to approach these events can be found in our volumes.

To state the obvious, from the perspective of the tradition under discussion, history is in fact more than a mere record of validated events: it is a means aiming at establishing authority (in particular when it is lacking) and reinforcing it through quasi-epic episodes in order to validate the narrative upon which the tradition has implanted its roots. Hagiographies reign over such an approach.

In elaborating their glorious past, the Northern Treasures have left a rich and fascinating documentation spanning over more than six centuries. To generate comprehensive understanding of how this tradition developed in Tibetan history, one must meticulously analyze its sources, examining the teachings, biographies, and historical accounts of the lineage masters within their own tradition and through their inevitable contacts with other lines of transmissions (in both the Nyingma and the Sarma[1] schools). But as historians, we must not expect too much of this material: hagiographic as it is, it often lacks purely historical details and presents a repetitive picture focused upon stereotyped structures, often organized according to birth, clan affiliation, early education, meeting of the master, transmissions received, engaging in spreading the Dharma and eventually manifesting signs of spiritual realization at death. Hence, it is necessary to supplement these original sources, by cross-referencing historical data and providing additional context from an etic perspective.

Further developments are expected from a more thorough

[1] *gSar ma*, originating from the second spread of Buddhism in Tibet.

exploitation of the documents on which our research is based, but we could not go deeper within our limited framework and without running the risk of losing the reader in a forest of details.

2. Northern Treasures: *from Trend to Institution*

Following the main historical guidelines that we had decided to apply to our main source,[1] we have chosen for our project a work that embodies most issues related to the Northern Treasures, even though its role in historiography is rather limited since it is a modern compilation. However, it does not contain any of the critical approaches that would classify it as an academic outcome: rather, it perfectly reflects the literary tradition whose historical figures it intends to describe in an emic manner. In this perspective, it sheds a light on a number of inner lineages within the Northern Treasures that have never been discussed in modern academia until now.

Within the Nyingma tradition are several Treasure lineages such as the Eastern Treasures (mostly illustrated by the *Khandro Nyingthik* tradition) and the Southern Treasures with various branches organized around specific revelations.[2] The Northern Treasures are one of those lineages that—as we have seen above—claims like the entire Nyingma school to trace their origins back to the 8th century. The bulk of its contents therefore consists of "hidden treasures" (*gter ma*). It is worth noting here that the Bön tradition also has a "Northern Treasures" (*byang gter*) system that stems from the same region in Latö (La stod).[3] At the

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1 Of course, the research project is by no means limited to this text. In fact, it is based on all the sources available in the *sNga 'gyur byang gter phyogs bsgrigs* (63 vols.) which is an unprecedented collection of works from the Northern Treasures, many of which were either hitherto unavailable or simply unknown.

2 The Southern Treasures include, for example, the tradition of sMin sgrol gling, which revolves around the later revelations made by gTer bdag gling pa (1646–1714).

3 Although Rig 'dzin rGod ldem revealed a multitude of treasure cycles from Zang zang lha brag, a region located in the western part of Tibet, his treasure cycles are collectively designated as the Northern Treasures (*byang gter*). There are two views concerning the designation of these treasures as the Northern Treasures. The first view is based on these lines: *'di nas byang gi phyogs rol na | bkra shis yon tan ldan pa'i ri | lung dang mthun pa'i gnas der gshegs |*, from *'Dzeng rdo dkar po*, which say that the treasures are from the *byang* (north) in the sense that they were revealed at Zang zang lha brag, a place located to the north of Mang yul gung thang. The second view claims that the royal descendants of the kingdom of Tangut (Mi nyag) migrated to western Tibet and settled down in the Ngam ring region around the time of Genghis Khan's invasion of the kingdom in 1227. They

time the Sarma schools started to spread in Tibet, Nyingmapas and Bönpos became busy elaborating their own doctrinal corpus in order to compete with the newer branches of Buddhism introduced in Central Tibet *circa* 1000 AD. These attempts at constructing a canonical literature of their own are crucial to the terma phenomenon.

Historically, the Buddhist Northern Treasures appeared on the religious scene in 1366, with the discovery of a complex set of teachings by Rigdzin Gödem (1337–ca. 1401)[1] in a place known as Zangzang Lhadrak. Among these was a collection of Dzogchen texts that became the main and initial hallmark of the *Jangter*, the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* (*Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal*). With this corpus as a solid doctrinal foundation, and in combination with other sets of teachings, the Northern Treasures branch began to grow into an entire system of its own, with its specific liturgies, traditional curricula of practices, and so forth. It is of course difficult for us to make sure of what was most attractive for the 14th century Tibetans among Gödem's revelations—this Dzogchen cycle, his very reputed Vajrakīla cycle, his large terma about the Eight Pronouncements, or something about his person?

Be that as it may, over the centuries, Rigdzin Gödem's tradition has been increasingly enriched by newer discoveries made either by masters belonging to his direct line of incarnations, or by treasures-revealer connected to this lineage.

In its larger spectrum, the Northern Treasures also incorporates other Nyingma tantric systems—such as those of Nyangrel Nyima Özer (1124–1192) and Guru Chöwang (1212–1270)—that the lineage holders of Jangter have become not only custodians but specialists of. Nevertheless, these other systems, including for instance that of the famed Karma Lingpa (14th century) and his *Profound Teachings of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities' Self-Liberated Contemplation* (*Zab chos zhi*

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were called northerners (*byang pa*), because they came from the Mi nyag kingdom, which is geographically to the northeast of Yar lung region of the Central Tibet. Later, the term *byang* (north) precedes Ngam ring and thus collectively the region is called *Byang ngam ring*. The cultural traditions which sprung from this region such as the Northern Treasures, *Byang lugs* (one of the two lineages of Tibetan medicine that originated from Ngam ring), and so forth also carry *Byang* (north) as a trademark. For more about the concept of *byang* in the context of *Byang ngam ring,* see gTsang phrug sTob lags (b. 1979) 2020, *dBus gtsang lo rgyus chen mo*, pp. 3-5. (Note by Tenpa Tsering Batsang).

[1] Recent research by Tenpa Tsering Batsang (First International Conference on the Northern Treasures, Paris, October 2024, to be published in vol. 2 of the present research) provides good reasons to revise Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's date of death.

khro dgongs pa rang grol), should not be regarded as belonging to the Northern Treasures *stricto sensu*. They are actually good examples of external cycles that enrich the specific lineage of Jangter due to their importance within the rest of the Nyingma tradition itself.

In 2015, a 63-volume collection of the most important texts of the Northern Treasures has been compiled on the basis of hitherto undocumented earlier ones, covering a period spreading from the late 10th century down to the early years of the 21st. These works, collected in the *Compilation of Teaching Cycles from the Northern Treasures of the Ancient Translation School* (*sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*), are organized according to the following structure:[1]

1. The revelations of Rigdzin Gödem (1337–ca. 1401)—vol. 1-15.
2. The cycle of *Vajrasattva's Heart Mirror* (*rDo rje sems dpa' thugs kyi me long*) of Garwang Dorje (1640–1685)—vol. 16.[2]
3. The cycle of *The Sow With a Profound Seal* (*Lung phag mo zab rgya*) by Tennyi Lingpa (1480–1535)—vol. 17.
4. The cycle of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* (*'Jam dpal tshe bdag*), mostly (but not wholly) "invented" by Gya Zhangtrom (11th Century?)—vol. 18-27.
5. The cycle of Rāhula, *The Poisoned Razor*, "discovered" by Pema Ledreltsal (1291–1319)—vol. 28-29.
6. The cycle of Padmasambhava, *The Complete Gathering of the Knowledge-Holders* (*Rig 'dzin yongs 'dus*), revealed by Ngari Paṇchen Pema Wanggyal (1487–1542)—vol. 30-32.
7. The revelations of Rigdzin Lekden Dorje (1452/1512?–1565): *Liberating Saṃsāra in the Dharmadhātu* (*Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings grol*) and the cycle of *Amṛtakuṇḍalī* (*Tshe sgrub bdud rtsi 'khyil pa*)—vol. 33.
8. The *Nine-Headed Wrathful One*, revealed either by Rigdzin Lekden Dorje or by Ngari Paṇchen Pema Wangyal—vol. 34.
9. The revelations of Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal (1550?–1603): *Karma Guru* and *The Essential Meaning of the Mother-Tantras* (*Ma rgyud snying po don gsum*)—vol. 35.
10. The complete writings of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé (Gödem IV, 1641–1717)—vol. 36-50.[3]

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1 We have already presented this list (with annotations) in Arguillère 2022a, pp. 10-12, but it is undoubtedly useful to reiterate it here in a more synthetic manner

2 On Gar dbang rdo rje, see Solmsdorf 2014 and Burroughs 2013. Several cycles associated with the revelations of this master are not included in the present collection. Their absence remains, so far, a mystery.

3 The number of volumes clearly attests to the importance of this master for the Northern Treasures.

11. The autobiography of Rigdzin Kalzang Pema Wangchuk (Gödem V, 1720–1771)—vol. 51.
12. The revelations of Rigdzin Kalzang Pema Wangchuk: *The Epitome of the Precepts* (*bKa' 'dus*)—vol. 52-53; the *Wrathful Padmasambhava*: vol. 54.
13. The Northern Treasures-related writings of Tulku Tsültrim Zangpo (1884–1957)—vol. 55-56.
14. Writings by Thekchok Tendzin (1878–1949)—vol. 57.
15. Writings by Künzang Tendzin (d. unknown)—vol. 58.
16. A collection of biographies of masters of the Northern Treasures—vol. 59.
17. Writings mostly by Bāḷné Choktrül Do-ngak Shedrub Gyaltsen (1888–1964)—vol. 60.
18. Common recitations / basic rituals of the Northern Treasures—vol. 61.
19. *A Religious History of Thubten Dorje Drak and the Northern Treasures*, by Khenpo Chöying—vol. 62.[1]
20. Table of contents (*dkar chag*) [of previous editions] and "checklists of received teachings" (*gSan yig*) on the Northern Treasures—vol. 63.

Collectively, these volumes offer an invaluable corpus of primary materials, most of which have not yet been the focus of academic research. Upon analyzing the collection itself, we have noted that texts and cycles directly connected to the Northern Treasures have not found their way into the 63-volume compilation. This is, *inter alia*, the case with some of the most salient revelations discovered by Ngari Paṇchen, starting with his famed *Profound Pearls known as the Natural Clarity of Absolute Space* or *Zabtik Chöying Rangsal* (*Zab tig chos dbyings rang gsal*).[2] The reason for not including this material in the collection is still unclear but it may simply be due to a lack of actual copies available during the compilation process or, maybe, to the fact that these cycles are not actually practiced anymore in the present Dorjé Drak institution.

3. Reassessing Northern Treasures within the Nyingma School

As we have already established, the Northern Treasures is more than just one of the main lines of transmission within the Ancient School of Tibetan Buddhism. It has concretely evolved into an independent institution of its own, much like the Sarma lineages that have spread in

[1] Our main source for the ANR project.

[2] mNga' ris *gter ston* Gar dbang rdo rje 1979 (three available editions on BDRC: MW8880, MW1KG12624, MW30347).

Tibet since the 11th century. Thus, the masters of the Jangter consciously built up a sense of community, based on both practices and doctrinal coherence. Depending on where their teachings spread, they were able to benefit from local authority and thus established a tradition based on solid ground at least until the Dzungar invasion in 1717. Therefore, unlike what happened in most other terma lineages, the patriarchs of the Northern Treasures quickly developed a sense of self-identity that kept them concretely engaged in developing their own doctrinal and liturgical lore and customs.

However, this gradual evolution did not result in the formation of a sclerosed system since provincial institutions retained their own distinctive features, that were enriched with newer revelations connected to the main trunk of the tradition itself. This is typically the case with Khordong in the Golok Serta area, which became a branch of Dorjé Drak in the 18th century, but soon after welcomed a brand-new system of revelations by its own masters—which, however, were implemented according to the distinctive style of the Jangter liturgy and without dropping a faithful practice of the original Northern Treasures system.

Throughout their development, these inner branches of the Northern Treasures thus remained doctrinally consistent by cultivating a strong sense of coherence, regularly borrowing specific practices, liturgies, prayers, etc., from one another in an approach that definitely strengthened the backbone of the tradition. Perfectly organized around a body of consistent works, various local branches generated their own network of revelations, thereby contributing to the enrichment of the Jangter's canonical collections.

Despite these new productions of terma and exegetical literature, the Northern Treasures did not develop entirely in isolation, like an empire within an empire, without drawing on the soil of older Nyingma traditions or interacting with contemporary developments. For instance, some of their monastic institutions relied on the Kama tradition when it came to earlier Mahāyoga and Anuyoga, with teachings on the *Guhyagarbha* and the *Do Gongdü*.[1] Dances associated with the revelations of Guru Chöwang were performed annually at Dorjé Drak for example. The same monastery followed the treasure teachings on Rāhula (gZa' rgod) from Pema Ledreltsal (1291–1319),[2] as well

[1] The *Guhyagarbha* and the [*mDo*] *dGongs 'dus* are respectively the root-tantras of the Mahāyoga and the Anuyoga tradition. On the first, see Gyurme Dorje 2016 and on the second see Dalton 2002 and 2016.

[2] Included in volumes 28 and 29 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*. Originally, these texts had no connection with the Northern Treasures since they were discovered approximately fifty years prior to the inception of the Jangter in 1366.

as ancient termas on Yamāntaka revealed by Gya Zhangtrom (11th c.).[1]

Some of the material in the Northern Treasures is obviously a reworking of earlier works and cycles discovered in previous centuries. For instance, the system of the Eight Pronouncements (*bKa' brgyad*) as it appears in the Jangter owes much to the cycles revealed by Nyangral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang with their respective discoveries of the *Kagyé Deshek Düpa* and the *Kagyé Sangwa Yongdzok*. Even the most central cycle of the Jangter tradition—the *Künzang Gongpa Zangthal*—is clearly dependent on large sections of preceding *Heart Drops* (*sNying thig*) such as the *Bima Nyingthik* and the *Khandro Nyingthik*. Very often, these borrowings are not simply copies directly incorporated in the new corpus, but rather reworkings of older texts, sometimes altering the literary category they belong to,[2] either to conceal the borrowing or to integrate a newly processed version into a more or less coherent group of works. These newer texts are therefore placed in a context in which they do not have to rely on pre-existing lines of transmission: they are appropriated with the aim of bypassing such lines and being included in a newer lineage transmission that starts with the cycle in which they are integrated.

From this perspective, the Northern Treasures appears as a far more complex tradition than one might have imagined before the collection in 63 volumes became available. As can be seen from the texts included in vol. 61, it is abundantly clear that the lineage holders of this system had and still have a particular awareness of their self-referential canon. The latter is to be understood as an "open canon" in the sense that it is a body of texts and collections that still welcomes new contributions, in the form of revelations or compositions. The recent works of Bāḷné Choktrül (1888–1964) and those of Tulku Tsültrim Zangpo (1884–1957) are good examples of this. All in all, the convergence of these various writings in terms of their doctrinal contents, liturgical practices, and yogic techniques, as well as their official establishment in monastic institutions, are crucial elements that should be taken into account to accurately and precisely assess the Northern Treasures as a distinct religious phenomenon.

[1] These are included in volumes 18-20 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.

[2] Such as presenting a *man ngag* (*upadeśa*) as a *rgyud* (*tantra*).

Abbreviations

- BDRC: This acronym is used for ease of reference throughout our volumes to refer to the website https://library.bdrc.io, which has been successively named TBRC, BDRC, and BUDA.
- CNT: *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*. Refers to the 2015 *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, also referred to as *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.
- KSG : 'Jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan, *mKhan chen* (ed.), 1999, *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (*kaḥ thog*), Chengdu, Kaḥ thog mkhan po 'jam dbyangs.
- NG: *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*. Refers, by default, to *Rñiṅ ma rgyud 'bum—The Mtshams-brag manuscript of the Rñiṅ ma rgyud 'bum*. Thimphu, Bhutan: National Library, Royal Bhutan, 1982, vol. 1-46. References to other editions will be explicitly signaled as such.
- NKG :bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje (ed.), 1982–1987, ***rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa***: *Gangs can bstan pa'i phyi mo snga 'gyur pa'i chos mdzod ring brgyud ma nyams bka' ma'i gzhung*, Kalimpong, Dupjung Lama.
- RT-A: Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (ed., 1813–1899), 1976–1980, *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, [*Great Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings* A], Kyichu Monastery, Paro, Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay.
- RT-B: 2007–2008, *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo* [*Great Treasury of Rediscovered Teachings* B], New Delhi, Shechen Publications.

Introduction: Methodological Remarks and Overview of the Content

Stéphane Arguillère
(IFRAE / Inalco)

Introduction

Historical research generally has to move back and forth between phases dominated by detailed monographs and phases of large overall syntheses. In the case of Nyingma studies, the broad perspective has been provided by Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein's annotated translation (1991) of Dudjom Rinpoche's[1] *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*: *Its Fundamentals and History*. On the monograph side, Bryan Cuevas' *The Hidden History of the Tibetan Book of the Dead*[2] and Jacob Dalton's *The Gathering of Intentions*: *A History of a Tibetan Tantra*,[3] for example, have given us inspiration about how narrowing the scope and implementing a more historically critical approach could take us further in the understanding of things Nyingma. In this and subsequent volumes, we attempt something in between these two perspectives: the separate study of only one branch of the vast, chaotic Nyingma nebula.

When we launched the ANR-funded project "For a Critical History of the Northern Treasures" (2022–2026), our intention, based on the wealth of documentation that had unexpectedly become available with the publication of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*[4] in 2015, was to "Strike while the iron is hot" now that the time was ripe for a closer study of this once central (especially in the 17th century) but now somewhat weakened trend of the Nyingma school. Indeed, we had reached a point where overly general ideas about the Nyingmapas had become, so to speak, an obstacle to accurate historical research, so that we needed to follow a specific thread within the whole in order to construct new views—not presenting an overly narrow monography, but selecting a "just wide enough" object—this specific

1 bDud 'joms *rin po che* 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje, 1904–1987. On his life, see Tsewang Dongyal 2008.
2 Cuevas 2003.
3 Dalton 2016.
4 *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*. See bibliography.

Nyingmapa tradition—in a well-documented and critical approach.

Our subject is itself somewhat fuzzier than the Karma Lingpa corpus (the object of Cuevas' inquiry) or *The Gathering of Intentions* (researched by Dalton). "Jangter," as sketched above by Jean-Luc Achard, can refer either to its original core—Rigdzin Gödem's 1366 revelations—or to a vast amount of other material that has, over the centuries, crystallized around them, and to a large number of people and institutions that were more or less closely associated with those revelations.

We could coin the term "Jangterology" to designate a new specialized branch of Tibetan religious studies that focuses on the now abundant materials available documenting its rites, doctrines, practices, and history, as well as the deeds of its principal exponents. Apart from those who, for whatever reason, already have a special interest in this tradition, "Jangterology" is, of course, a subject of interest to all specialists of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. But its value is not limited to being a subfield of Nyingma studies, for the masters of Dorjé Drak have historically played a significant role far beyond the confines of this branch of the Nyingmapas. The most obvious of these is the agency of its patriarch, Rigdzin Pema Trinlé (1641–1717), whose close association with the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) had far-reaching implications for the construction of the modern Tibetan state.

Of course, one might object that such a massive amount of research as we present here on a single institution goes too far in the sense of unbalanced over-specialization and that it implies a distorted view of the actual importance of this sub-branch of the Nyingmapas in Tibetan global history. In the present state of research, however, a thorough exploration of all the concrete facets and implications of *any* object (be it a doctrine, a group of texts or an institution) through the centuries—especially when this even admittedly tiny detail of the whole picture is well chosen as a "total social fact" in the sense of Marcel Mauss[1]—is arguably the best way to go beyond repeating some misleading stereotypes that are common in Tibetan hagiography and religious chronicles. Pulling out a single thread of Tibetan history as far as possible, considering as many of its facets as concretely and in detail as we propose to do here, avoiding approximations and vague generalizations, is indeed the most useful way to contribute to the advancement of broader historical studies of Tibet. Indeed, despite all the fine research accumulated over so many decades, the history of Tibet remains obscure in many respects, while tens of thousands of pages of historiographical material lie unused.

Before moving on to an overview of this first volume and an outline

[1] Mauss 1923 for the French edition and Mauss 1990 for the English one.

of those to come, some methodological issues need to be discussed.

I. Methodological Remarks

The wealth of documentation that has become available with the publication of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* in 2015 includes many religious genealogies—series of biographies of individuals who belong to spiritual lineages or institutions that see themselves in some sense as families or clans. The construction of legitimacy in Tibet, as noted above in the foreword, takes the form of a presentation of the spiritual lineage of Buddhist (or Bön) masters: the transmission lines of tantric, etc., materials must prove themselves to be *authentic*, *continuous*, and *illustrated by heroic figures* who, in each generation (or at least some of them), demonstrated the power and value of the materials they transmitted.

This means that Tibetan historiography does not have a tendency to reconstruct any given period of time with all its synchronic details. If even the actual interactions of contemporary agents are often understated, there is no need to mention the simultaneous agency of people who did not belong to the same milieu.[1] Thus, in order to get a global view of a given period, one should first follow these many and singular threads and then try to reweave them as they were actually woven into the real fabric of Tibetan social history.

A keen awareness of this state of affairs leads us to consider the content of this and the following volumes as belonging to a genre somewhat intermediate between the mere translation of primary

[1] In the first category, the mere identification of one of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s masters required a complicated investigation (see Arguillère 2024a, summarized below and in our second volume), although this is a piece of information that would be considered relevant even from the most conservative Tibetan point of view. The reason is that treasure discoverers (*gter ston*) tend to be portrayed as mainly dependent on Padmasambhava and other figures of the imperial period. The way in which they were trained during their youth is generally understated. In the second category, a perfect example is the fact that the great reformer Tsong kha pa (1357–1419), whose role was so crucial to later Tibetan history, is never mentioned in rGod ldem’s biographies, although they belong to the same period of time. An academic historian might choose the two of them as figures whose respective actions essentialized key features of this second half of the fourteenth century; but no traditional Tibetan historian would have thought of putting the two of them in the same picture. Exchanges with Tibetan informants show in many instances how difficult it is for them to place people in the same chronology when they do not belong to the same category from their own, emic, perspective.

sources and the broad syntheses of the historian proper: the task of the philologist, who edits and compares the documents, restoring their meaning, detailing what is reported of the facts, while trying to locate and date them by crossing the available sources, with the idea also of giving them more context (albeit more limited than in the full historical synthesis).

This work of critical translation will allow us to establish a "sectional view" of a large part of Tibetan history (a millennium, if we count the amalgamated materials from before the 14th century) based on the literature of the Northern Treasures, using the traditional historiography of this singular lineage to reconstruct a path—or several paths—through global Tibetan history.

Before getting to the heart of the matter, and inasmuch as our purpose may involve to some extent questioning the way in which Tibetan Nyingmapas represent their own sacred history, it is important to explain exactly how we are going to proceed and, above all, the status we attach to our discourse. Indeed, there are still readers—including "Westerners"—who, when it comes to Tibetan Buddhism, cling to a view of things that has fortunately been superseded when critically examining the history of other religions, thinking that it is all a matter of pitting "Tibetan tradition" against an overly critical "Western" approach.

In a book published some years ago[1] was presented a point of view on historiography that cannot be accepted, opposing the "traditional" way to write biographies "intended to inspire and impress" with "the out of hand and often contemptuous dismissal by Western scholars of important elements of Tibetan religious culture both ancient and modern (…) and the reductionism with which such scholars explain them according to their often unexamined philosophical assumptions." Such a statement is artificially creating a polemical opposition.

Indeed, none of the revisions we propose in the so-called "traditional" historiography are based on an "out of hand and (…) contemptuous dismissal (…) of important elements of Tibetan religious culture." The reader will never find, in this volume nor our other publications, assumptions such as: "This did not occur *because it cannot be the case according to our worldview* in which miracles are impossible." On the contrary, it is on the basis of the genuine, oldest available Tibetan sources, preserved by the tradition itself, that, in some cases, we contradict the narrative that has become dominant.

Incidentally, if the word "traditional" is put between quotation marks, it is because, contrary to what the quoted formula implies, "tradition" (including Tibetan traditions) is not made of eternal truths, out

[1] Blankleder and Flechter 2017, pp. XXIII-XXVI.

of space and time. As the reader of our forthcoming volumes may agree, the present-day Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism is in fact the result of its reconstitution, mainly by disciples of Jigmé Lingpa (ca. 1729–1798)[1] in eastern Tibet from the late 18th century onwards after the devastating persecutions of 1717–18 by invading Dzungar Mongols and the civil war that followed. The Nyingmapas' "traditional" narrative of their origins had already undergone much reworking before it reached a more or less stable version, probably as late as the 15th century with Pema Lingpa's[2] (1450–1521) revealed biography of Padmasambhava. Even after the great normative biographies of Padmasambhava were revealed, many minor elements have been added until the present day, as readers of these Padmasambhava sagas are always eager for more details.[3]

Our project here is to understand the Northern Treasures tradition as a whole. In order to achieve this aim, two things are necessary: first, to place its origins in the context of the global history of Tibetan religions—and more specifically in the development of the Nyingma school; and second, to trace the various lineages that, despite the fact that the early Jangter masters possibly may have had no interest in or access to them, later became important in the "Dorjé Drak system" (*rDo rje brag lugs*), the main branch[4] of the Northern Treasures as a

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1 'Jigs med gling pa. See Gyatso 1998. This book, however, is not a historian's book in the fullest sense: although it is historically accurate, its aim is not at all to evaluate 'Jigs med gling pa's role in the history of Tibetan religion, but rather to explore his self-understanding in the specific context of *gter ston* biographies, the standards for which, as Gyatso shows very convincingly, were set by Gu ru Chos dbang's (1212–1270) autobiographical writings. This book must be read in order to make sense of much of the material presented in our volumes.

2 Padma gling pa, 1981, *bKa' thang mun sel sgron me*. As Doney 2016, p. 74, phrases it: "Another work, attributed to the even later gTer rgyal Rig 'dzin O rgyan Padma gling pa, very closely resembles [rDo rje gling pa's (1346–1405) version of the *Padma bka' thang*]. This is the *Sangs rgyas bstan pa'i chos 'byung mun sel sgron me* (…), comprising 105 or 106 chapters. [The *Mun sel sgron me*] is more widely known than [rDo rje gling pa's version] among Tibetologists and has often been compared to [the *Padma bka' thang* of O rgyan gling pa], yet I shall show below that it more closely resembles [rDo rje gling pa's version]."

3 An example of interest to Northern Treasures studies is the case of bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535), who duplicates, so to speak, the story of Princess Padma gsal, central to the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, with another, hitherto unknown princess (*lHa lcam* Nus 'byin sa le), whose reincarnation he is. See Achard & Arguillère 2024.

4 As this introduction is being written, we have not yet been able to fully figure out the precise status of the *rDo rje brag lugs* within Byang gter as a

Nyingma sub-school.

What is more, while aiming at achieving these two aims—and this is our main point of disagreement with statements like the above-quoted one—the historian must always maintain side by side two discourses: that of what we can reconstruct of factual history, on the one hand (which for the sake of commodity we may call the "etic" perspective) and, on the other hand, what the historical agents had in mind (the "emic" perspective). In many cases, we cannot, in the present state of knowledge, do any better than to restate the emic discourse with some amendments and point to aspects that would require further inquiry once broader documentation becomes available and researchers have discovered more elements.

Indeed, both points must be kept in mind: without a careful reconstruction of all that can be known of the factual history, we could often offer only *legends* to our readers, who surely want to know what *really* happened. Moreover, the hagiographic material we have to rely on is often poorly explanatory, partly because it is saturated with narrative stereotypes and partly because the holy figures, like the heroes of medieval novels, emerge in a world that is extremely lacking in concrete details, out of time and space, so to speak.[1] More detailed research

whole. It is plain that many elements of rGod ldem's revelations were practiced by people who did not identify themselves as Byang gter followers strictly speaking. This is true of nearly all the rNying ma pas, but would be the case even for followers of the other schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Bell 2021 clearly shows, for example, that even elements of the dGe lugs pas' protective deities' rituals are rooted into rNying ma hidden treasures literature. But even if we focus only on people who identify themselves as Byang gter practitioners, although it seems that the rDo rje brag monastery achieved a dominant position nearly as soon as it was funded, still it is unclear to what degree all the Byang gter institutions scattered all over Tibet and the Himalayas identified themselves, and were recognized, as branches of rDo rje brag, or whether there were other more minor networks, maybe connected directly to Ri bo bKra bzang, the original seat of rGod ldem's activities in gTsang.

[1] Western converts to Tibetan Buddhism are rarely sensitive to the lack of concrete historical background in these hagiographies. On the other hand, they are obviously uncomfortable with the general poverty of these hagiographies when it comes to *psychological* information. So much so, in fact, that it is amusing that a biography like Jampa Mackenzie Stewart's *The Life of Longchenpa* (Stewart 2014), replete with completely invented psychological indications of what its hero thinks or feels, doesn't shock the purveyors of traditional biographies, even when a more accurate reconstruction, closer to the sources, can establish that Klong chen pa's (1308–1364) intentions were most likely the opposite of those attributed to him by the author of this pious historical novel.

helps to make sense of the events recorded.

This being said, to abandon the emic point of view altogether, even when it is well established that it involves counterfactual narratives, would completely blind us to the motives of the human agents whose lives we are discussing. Not all historically attested misrepresentations of past events are relevant to the historian, but there are many cases in which they are part of a worldview without which the actions of the people we are trying to understand would make no sense at all.

However, this basic distinction between an "etic" and an "emic" point of view, which may be sufficient for anthropologists, for example (since they tend to see the object of their research as something *static*—a culture, whose values or worldview can be presented in a more or less *timeless* perspective) cannot suffice in the field of the history of religions, since it involves *constantly changing* emic perspectives.

This evolution of ideas is, of course, less visible in Tibetan civilization than in the modern world, first because it has certainly been slower than in other fields, and second because it is the subject of constant denial: indeed, although Tibetan religions have evolved in many ways, sheer anachronism is a very common feature of religious discourses deeply shared by Tibetans. All religions, through all their variations, tend to assume that what they teach in any given time or place is *quod ubique, quod semper, quod ab omnibus creditum est*.[1] However, it can be proved, in the case that interests us, that the Nyingmapas' representation of their own identity has evolved over the centuries.

Let us take a few examples for the reader to understand the difficulties that we have to face. From the point of view of factual, well-founded critical history, there is no good reason to doubt that Padmasambhava existed and came to Tibet. However, what can actually be documented about his life and actions in Tibet is scarce. Nonetheless, the Nyingmapas had very precise beliefs about his saga from his miraculous birth to his departure from Tibet. In this case, since we know very little about the actual facts, it makes more sense to report the "traditional" narrative and present it as such, as we will do in this volume on the basis of Khenpo Chöying's short account. Some of its parts can be proven to be false or extremely dubious, but since the core of the story we want to tell starts in the 14th century, the fact that, for example, some of Padmasambhava's "twenty-five disciples" could not actually have been his disciples, because they are later figures,[2] has few direct consequences.

On the contrary it is important to understand the agents' own

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1 Vincentius of Lerins, *Commonitorium*; see Moxon 1915.

2 This is typically the case of gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes. See Esler 2022b, pp. 3-21.

understanding of the matter, since their perception of Guru Rinpoché determines many things in their behavior.

In some cases, however, the consequences can be a little more serious, as in the case of Nanam Dorjé Düjom,[1] for he is the one among the "twenty-five disciples" who is said to have reincarnated as Rigdzin Gödem, which is an important component of the latter's identity that buttresses his authority as a treasure discoverer.

Hence, this distinction of the etic factual history and the emic narrative is less important, in that case, than a point that so far has not been fully researched: *the historical variations of the emic narrative itself*.[2] Indeed, when our later sources such as Khenpo Chöying's *History of the Northern Treasures* present the lives of Rigdzin Gödem and others, they do so by including elements of the narrative *that did not exist yet in these figures' cultural world*.

Typically, it is very likely that Rigdzin Gödem had read Nyangral Nyima Özer's (1184–1192) *Kathang Zanglingma*, but unlikely that he had access to the more comprehensive narratives of the life of Padmasambhava that were revealed during his own lifetime, such as Orgyen Lingpa's (1323–*ca*. 1355[3]), Sangyé Lingpa's (1340–1396) or Dorjé Lingpa's (1345–1405) accounts of the Padmasambhava epic. He was also well-versed in Guru Chöwang's (1212–1270) revelations,[4] which include some narratives. If we wanted to reconstruct Rigdzin Gödem's own views about Padmasambhava, it would be safer, without precluding the influence of other early sources, to rely only on elements present in Nyangral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang's termas and on the many short narrative sections that are scattered in his own revelations It would be sounder to ignore the re-elaborations of the story by his contemporaries, as we have no reason so far to think that he was aware of them.

To phrase it in more paradoxical terms: in a society like that of

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1 For a critical approach of this figure, see Angowski 2022, pp. 29-50.

2 The *gter ma* biographies of Padmasambhava as a whole are a well-researched topic, as early as Anne-Marie Blondeau's studies in the 1970s. But so far, it seems that no systematic attempt has been achieved to describe the historical variations of the grand myth, although a move towards that direction is clearly perceptible in Samuel and Oliphant 2020.

3 The date of O rgyan gling pa's death is discussed in Chapter 6 below.

4 We have gathered in vol. 2 of this series all that can be known or reasonably conjectured about rGod ldem's masters. Nyi ma bzang po's *The Ray of Sunlight* (2015: pp. 14-16) only mention that he was trained in his father's traditions (p. 14-15: *pha chos sgyu 'phrul dang ma phur*, which is not fully transparent), in Nyang ral (*op. cit*., p. 16: *nyang ral pa'i gter kha gsan*) and Chos dbang's *gter ma*s (*loc. cit*.: *gu ru chos dbang gi chos ka rnams gsan*), and in "all rDzogs chen" (*loc. cit*.: *rdzogs pa chen po'i chos rnams*…).

Tibet's fourteenth century, in which the circulation of texts and ideas was surely not fully fluid, people might not always have been *the contemporaries of their contemporaries*—that is to say, their cultural references may, to some extent, have belonged to earlier times. This should always be taken into consideration when attempting to reconstruct the cultural history of Tibet.[1] However, Khenpo Chöying's account of Rigdzin Gödem and his predecessors present the whole device according to the narrative that became authoritative in the later Nyingma school.

So, anachronisms are not always easy to avoid when reconstructing the lives of Tibetan masters from later biographies belonging to a different historical period, where certain issues, certain teachings, certain practices may have taken the central place that was occupied by others at the time when these Tibetan masters were active. This has not made our work any easier, especially since we have done our utmost to avoid burdening this book and the forthcoming volumes with unnecessary erudition on points that are not essential to the Northern Treasures tradition. Referring to things that were once central and later fell into more or less complete disuse may be perceived by some as pointless pedantry. We hope, however, that readers will forgive us for the recurring shifts—controlled on our part, but not necessarily facilitating the reading—between these three points of view ("for contemporary research" / "for present-day Nyingmapas" / "for agents at the time itself"[2]) that alternate in our presentation of historical facts.

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[1] To give a striking example of this phenomenon: one may consider that the most central set of events during the second half of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's life, in terms of what would later affect the becoming of Tibet, was the arising of Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419) and all the movement that crystallized around him. But it is very likely that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, who was mostly active in gTsang and in present-day Sikkim, had no clue of the intellectual and spiritual revolution that was on its way in his very days. So, although they are *objectively* contemporaries, still, from the point of view of a more phenomenological historiography—one whose aim is to reconstruct the concrete agency of figures under consideration—it would make little sense to intersperse information about Tsong kha pa in the midst of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's adventures. From a prophecy found in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *dGongs pa zang thal* (see Arguillère 2024a, pp. 94-97) we know (if it is not a later interpolation) that he was aware of three contemporary or recent rNying ma figures: Padma las 'brel rtsal (1291–1319), Rin chen gling pa (1389–1368), and probably Klong chen pa (1308–1364). That is about all we know about his spiritual and intellectual interactions with precisely datable contemporaries, except his own disciples.

[2] This last point of view can even be split into more levels of discourse: for example, there is not only, e.g., what we can imagine as Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's worldview and then the present-day Nyingma vision of things—

This slow but constant reorganization of the Nyingma doctrines is something that only begins to be understood in limited areas. One such example is that of Jacob Dalton's research that gives an overview of the shifts in the interpretation and status of what once was a central tantra for the Nyingmapas.[1] Another example might clarify the aim of this section and of our global approach to Jangter materials. We tend to regard as a *purely factual* matter the subdivision in, and combination of "uninterrupted Oral Tradition" (Kama) and "hidden treasures" (Terma)[2] as integral parts of the Nyingma teachings as they stand nowadays. However, Gö Lotsāwa Zhönnu Pal (1392–1481),[3] while composing *The Blue Annals* after Rigdzin Gödem's time, devotes whole chapters to the Nyingma traditions connected to what we would call the uninterrupted Oral Tradition *while nearly completely ignoring the hidden treasures and their revealers*. This is clear proof that even in the 15th century, the full integration of those two aspects as two sides of one and the same religious tradition was not yet a matter of course.

A century earlier, even someone who appears to be a systematic compiler of the Nyingma traditions, Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365),[4] seems to be very selective about hidden treasures. He was admittedly a key figure in the early transmission of Pema Ledreltsal's (1291–1319) *Heart Drops of the Ḍākinī* (*mKha' 'gro snying thig*), a terma discovered during his lifetime (in 1313). However, the record of teachings received presented in his autobiography[5] shows that he had otherwise no interest in termas other than those of Gya Zhangtrom (11th century),[6]

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there is also *a gradual transformation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's status over centuries in the later rNying ma school*. Although in older representations he appears as one of the three main *gter ston*s along with Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and Guru Chos dbang, he is not listed among the "Five Tertön Kings" as understood by the post-'Jigs med gling pa Nyingmapas (e.g., https://www.rigpawiki.org/index.php?title=Five_sovereign_terma_revealers or https://rywiki.tsadra.org/index.php/Five_Tertön_Kings).

1 Dalton 2016.

2 *bKa' ma* and *gter ma*.

3 See translation in Roerich 1978. For a rNying ma presentation of this figure that might help understanding his biases, see for example Gu ru bKra shis 1990, pp. 297-298.

4 g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal is primarily remembered in Tibetan historiography as the principal spiritual heir of the Third Karma pa, Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339) and the tutor of the Fourth Karma pa, Rol pa'i rdo rje (1340–1383). His role, however, was not limited to the Karma bka' brgyud assimilation of the rNying ma traditions: his name recurs in the lineages later assembled by the rDo rje brag masters.

5 This list is reproduced in Chos kyi 'byung gnas 1998, pp. 331-379.

6 rGya zhang khrom rDo rje 'od 'bar, the discoverer of the *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* cycle. See Esler 2022a.

Nyangral Nyima Özer, and Guru Chöwang.

This suggests something new: that in addition to the terma believers on the one hand and scholars who rejected the hidden treasures as a whole on the other hand, there was a third type who accepted or was interested in only *some* of them.

Incidentally, two generations before Rigdzin Gödem, elements in the life of Pema Ledreltsal (1291–1319), for example, tend to show that he was considered a charlatan by some people,[1] although his revelations were quickly regarded to be of utmost importance by a small circle of specialists.

It is therefore essential to try to construct, as far as possible, a proper historical assessment of the facts in which we always refrain from uncritically applying not only later emic ideas to earlier events, but also purely objective chronological consideration that ignore the compartmentalized nature of Tibetan society and the likely slowness of information dissemination.

Meanwhile, we must also take into some account the way in which the subsequent, constantly renewed reinterpretation of earlier realities, though alien to the agents of the period being described, is nevertheless crucial to understanding in what sense they may have inspired the actions of people in subsequent eras. To take a simple example, Rigdzin Gödem's life is understood, at least in the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, as unfolding in a world in which the currents of the uninterrupted oral tradition and those of the hidden treasures are already integrated as the two sides of the teaching of a single school—but this was most likely not the case to this degree in his own time.

This is enough for general methodology, although further remarks are to come about the specific sources we will be using in this first volume. We have attached them to the chapters to which they are relevant. For the moment, let us summarize the contents of this volume and provide a sketch of that of the coming ones.

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[1] See, e.g., Barron 2005, p. 71 (adapted to the rules of this book, with Wylie instead of phonetics): "He returned home to 'Bri thang, whereupon news of his travels spread among the inhabitants. They said, 'Las 'brel rtsal is incapable of carrying out the duties of one from a tantric lineage, and now he is trying to perpetrate some fraud. *gTer ma*s? What *gter ma*s could he possibly have?' Thus the local people spread rumors."

II. Presentation of the First Volume

As stated in the Foreword above, the FCHNT proposes to follow Khenpo Chöying's *A Religious History of Thubten Dorjé Drak and the Northern Treasures* as a kind of travel guide that will provide us with a path for a critical study of the history of the tradition. The biographies that were written by Khenpo Chöying will be included in the team's publications.

However, and typically in the present volume, we were faced with a difficulty: Khenpo Chöying begins with a general presentation of Buddha Śākyamuni and his teachings,[1] which was deemed useless for our purposes, since it does not present any material that is either unknown or specifically relevant to the Northern Treasures. We have therefore decided to ignore this section, especially in view of the fact that we had a large amount of extra material, which we consider to be much more significant for the Northern Treasures, to add to Khenpo Chöying's already rather voluminous text (more than 800 pages).

The author then jumps quite directly from Buddha Śākyamuni to the life of Padmasambhava and a presentation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom (8th century), before moving on straight to Zangpo Drakpa (d.u., active in the early 14th century), a treasure discoverer whose termas contain elements that allowed Rigdzin Gödem to find his own treasures in Zangzang Lhadrak in 1366.

The present volume is divided into two large sections: *translations* and *background and analysis* (or complementary research).

The reader will find in the first section a complete translation by Tenpa Tsering Batsang of Khenpo Chöying's account of the life of Padmasambhava and his narrative of Nanam Dorjé Düjom. In this case, since the author inserts into the classical narrative some elements that are specifically necessary to understand how the Jangter masters perceived the origins of their own tradition, it was useful to translate his presentation integrally.

However, as many of the elements contained in these narratives are derived, directly or indirectly, from much later sources—including the extensive revealed biographies of Padmasambhava, the main of which are contemporary to Rigdzin Gödem's own revelations—we have found it necessary (and this is the first element in the second section) to supplement them with a commentary by Jay Holt Valentine.

Attempting to fill the long gap between Buddha Śākyamuni and Padmasambhava would have taken us far beyond the scope of our research project and our area of expertise. However, *not* to fill the gap between Padmasambhava's immediate disciples (as far as we can

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 8-50.

know about them) and the events in the 14th century that led directly to Rigdzin Gödem's treasure hunt would have robbed the following episodes of most of their meaning. Therefore, we have chosen to dedicate most of this volume to an overview of the Nyingmapas' history *before* Rigdzin Gödem. This overview is not based on Khenpo Chöying's chronicle.

Admittedly, the idea that Rigdzin Gödem's revelations depend directly and exclusively on Padmasambhava and on his own status in a past life as a direct disciple of Padmasambhava is central to his identity as perceived in the Nyingma tradition, and it must not be understated. Hence our concern to do justice to this aspect of Rigdzin Gödem's figure. However, on the other hand, it would be difficult to make full sense of his revelations without a sufficient historical sketch of the Nyingma doctrines and practices as a broader context. This is what the reader will find in the following part of this volume: chapters, mainly by Stéphane Arguillère, with portions by Cécile Ducher, describing in a chronological order the earlier developments of the Nyingma tradition, focusing on those aspects that explain in particular what is relevant to Rigdzin Gödem or what became central to the later Jangter/Dorjé Drak tradition.

On these subjects, rather than summarize the entire now-common narrative as known from Dudjom Rinpoche's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*: *Its Fundamentals and History*, we have preferred to assume that the reader is familiar with it in its broad outlines and to emphasize those elements that seem to us to be understated or misconstrued in this consensual narrative, rather than to summarize what is already more or less well known or poorly relevant to the Northern Treasures. For this purpose, we are fortunate to have a Jangter-connected document that happens to be one of Dudjom Rinpoche's main sources: Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's (1641–1717)[1] *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*. Following this text allows us to document the early history of the Nyingma tradition in a way that is perfectly suited to our purpose, since Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's aim is to present the general Nyingma tradition in a way that brings the Jangter / Dorjé Drak tradition to the fore.

This text is primarily supposed to present what the Nyingmapas call the Kama tradition—the uninterrupted Oral Tradition (that is, what they consider to be the teachings passed down in a continuous line since the imperial period)—and in particular the lineage of *The*

[1] Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las was regarded as the *sprul sku* of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem when the Northern Treasures Tradition was at the peak of its glory: the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama.

Gathering of Intentions.[1] However, the author draws from all kinds of sources, and its actual scope is much broader than its title suggests.

A close examination of this text and other sources leads us to suggest possible reevaluations of various elements, some of which belong to the period prior to the Second Spread of Buddhism in Tibet in the 11th century. The most interesting aspect may be a reassessment of the role of Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé, a figure whose importance was noted by earlier scholars such as Namkhai Norbu Rinpoché and Samten G. Karmay, but whose agency has recently been thoroughly reconsidered in Dylan Esler's translation (2022) of *The Lamp of the Eye of Contemplation*. Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé is crucial in many ways: first, the re-evaluation of his dates demonstrates that the earliest formative period of what would become the Nyingma school, far from being all concentrated in the reign of Trisong Detsen (r. 755–797 or 804), extends well beyond that of Langdarma (r. 841–842), up to the early tenth century. Moreover, a careful analysis of the lineages that Nubchen seems to have introduced in Tibet[2] draws our attention to the fact that the early spread of Buddhism into Tibet was much less unified, much more disparate, than what the later standard narrative presents.

Based on the same logic, it is also quite possible that other figures, such as Vairocana the translator or Vimalamitra (both of whom were somewhat artificially inserted into the great Padmasambhava narrative that emerged in the 12th century with Nyangral Nyima Özer) were in fact much less connected to the court of King Trisong Detsen, earlier, or later, etc.

Another understated or misrepresented aspect that has emerged from this study of what we—the FCHNT team—call among ourselves "Jangter prehistory" is the fact that the early Zurs[3] most likely depended on a 10th-century tantric transmission from India of their own, and did not simply paste onto a Nyingma base elements of advanced tantric yoga borrowed from the masters of the Later Spread of the Dharma (although it is quite clear that they also exchanged knowledge with these experts on the latest developments in Indian Buddhism).

Although these remarks are not central to the understanding of Jangter *per se*, but rather of Nyingma Buddhism as a whole, they tend to introduce some additional complexity into the overly simplistic scheme of the "two spreads of Buddhism in Tibet," understood as if the tantric canon of the Nyingmapas were merely heavily loaded with

1 *mDo dgongs 'dus*. See Dalton 2016.

2 Especially the *mDo dgongs 'dus*, the origins of which are puzzling (as the tantra is said to be translated from *bru zha'i skad*, whatever this may actually mean), on the one hand, and most of the Yamāntaka-connected systems, apparently from Nepal, on the other hand.

3 Their most famous figure is Zur chen Śākya 'byung gnas (1002–1062).

Tibetan apocrypha and as if the later spread of Buddhism could simply be labeled as "more authentically Indian."

It is indeed an undeniable fact that the Nyingma canons are richer in more or less indigenous material, indicating at least a local enrichment of the Indic sources of the corpus. However, recognizing this is not a self-sufficient explanation of all the peculiarities of this form of tantrism, which also appears as a Tibetan synthesis of materials that were originally already different from what we tend to think we know about Buddhist tantrism as a whole. Their origins are not so well understood, but all the differences with the tantric systems of the later spread cannot be explained solely by Tibetan creativity or by a tendency to syncretize Indian materials with local traditions. Much remains to be done on the side of research into the specific traditions that came to Tibet between the 8th and the late 10th centuries. This is beyond the scope of the present study, but we thought it useful to remind the reader of these easily forgotten aspects of the matter.

Having clarified these points, which are necessary for understanding the Jangter's tantric heritage, we have then summarized what is known of the Dzogchen "Heart Drops" (*snying thig*) prior to the intense period of flourishing that followed the discovery of the *Khandro Nyingthik* in 1313. An overview is also provided of the activities of all a circle of early *Khandro Nyingthik* specialists including the Third Karmapa (1284–1339) and Rinchen Lingpa (1289–1368). As is well-known, the Heart Drops were fully elaborated in the writings of Longchenpa (1308–1364) from the mid-1330s to the 1360s. We see this synthesis further blossoming in Rigdzin Gödem's (1337–ca. 1401) own Dzogchen termas (1366) and that of his contemporaries, especially the prolific tertön Dorjé Lingpa (1346–1405).[1]

After this global survey of the Kama teachings, we turn to the termas, beginning with a very early cycle, the importance of which was not realized until the publication of the 63-volume collection of the Northern Treasures literature (our main reference background): Gya Zhangtrom's *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.[2] Ten full volumes of it are included in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* and it is clear that this system, with its reputation for destructive magic, was quite central

[1] rDo rje gling pa, if we are not mistaken, was nine years younger than Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. However, since he was a very precocious *gter ston*, his extensive rDzogs chen cycles such as the *Pha rgyud lba ba klong yangs* are actually said to have been discovered earlier (1360) than those of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. For a chronology of rDo rje gling pa, see, e.g., Samten G. Karmay 2000 or Arguillère 2025b.

[2] *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*. References below in Chapter 11.

to the later[1] Jangter/Dorjé Drak tradition. Its interest for the historian also lies in its antiquity: it seems to be the oldest terma cycle that is still more or less fully preserved and actively practiced in contemporary Nyingma school. It has not been explored here in terms of its uncommon contents, but because this literature documents early transmission lineages within the Nyingma school, which are of great interest to us especially because they demonstrate the importance of Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé's heritage.

We then follow the historical order of the terma discoveries that are most relevant to Rigdzin Gödem and to the Jangter/Dorjé Drak system. This leads us to discuss two 12th-century tertöns, one famous and one obscure. The obscure one is Sarben Chokmé (d.u.), now almost forgotten, who discovered a cycle called *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*.[2] Its features are quite unusual and would deserve further analysis. It is relevant to us primarily because Rigdzin Gödem appears in the lineage of this cycle, not as a treasure revealer, but as a master who received and passed it on to the next generation. This may be the only case in which we see him playing that role,[3] although the whole matter is confusing, since this cycle is rare, most of the corpus is lost, and the secondary literature is very scarce, which is a narrow basis upon which one can only formulate uncertain historical assumptions.

The famous one is Nyangral Nyima Özer (1124–1192), whose importance in Rigdzin Gödem's career[4] is manyfold: the main element is

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1 It can be shown to have become central to Byang gter practitioners from the sixteenth century onwards, but there is evidence that it was already very important in the time of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem among rNying ma practitioners of a similar profile.

2 *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*. References below in Chapter 12.

3 In fact, as we will see in the second and third volumes of this series (focusing on rGod ldem and his direct disciples), there is some evidence that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem taught his students not only his own *gter chos* but also inherited material. However, this is not the aspect that later tradition has emphasized. For whatever reason, today's *rDo rje brag lugs* relies heavily on rNying ma traditions that were compiled in the late 15th century from other transmission channels and combined with the legacy of rGod ldem's *gter ma*. Unfortunately, therefore, we have few traces of rGod ldem's personal mastery of earlier *bka' ma* or *gter ma* systems. This is unfortunate because, in many cases, his revelations must have been, for himself and his followers, advanced *additions* to a pre-existing background that we can only tentatively reconstruct, which is the main purpose of this volume. This is difficult, but crucial to understanding in context the precise status of his *gter chos* and other similar collections of treasure-texts.

4 In Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's earliest more or less complete biography, Nyi ma bzang po's *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, there is little information about rGod ldem's masters. However, as stated above (and see vol. 2 of this

surely the construction of the grand narrative about Padmasambhava, for which Nyima Özer's *Kathang Zanglingma*[1] sets the complete and definitive frame, only to be completed by Gödem's contemporaries Yarjé Orgyen Lingpa and Sangyé Lingpa. But another aspect is that many of the cycles included in Gödem's revelations are clearly, to some degree, further developments of prototypes found in Nyangral Nyima Özer's termas. This is especially true of the Eight Pronouncements (*bKa' brgyad*), the peaceful and wrathful Padmasambhava cycles, the Avalokiteśvara cycle, and surely of many other aspects, in ways that are difficult to evaluate precisely in the present state of the edition of Nyima Özer's revelations (a large part of the corpus seems in fact to be lost).

Incidentally, another aspect that emerges from our research is the impression that, before the Kama and Terma traditions got fully integrated—maybe only in the 15th century, probably through Ratna Lingpa's (1403–1479) agency—the Terma tradition may have been, if not a separate school as such, at least a movement whose main figures were more or less interconnected, not only in the commonly admitted sense that the earlier ones *prophesied* the later ones and sometimes found "keys"[2] or "guides"[3] for further treasure revealers, but to the extent that they may have trained disciples in the *art* of discovering termas (which seems to have included specialized technical skills, including competences in cryptography,[4] etc.).

We then move to the 13th century with Guru Chöwang (1212–1270), another key figure in the "terma movement," presented in the context of the global political and religious situation in Tibet from his time to that of Rigdzin Gödem's birth in 1337.

This development is followed by a long chapter about a figure whose study yields important insights into Rigdzin Gödem himself:

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series for detail and reference), he is explicitly said to have received teachings from three cycles: 1. Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's *gter chos*; 2. Guru Chos dbang's *gter chos*; and 3. "all rDzogs chen." This is to say that the connections with Nyang ral's revelations are not merely hypothesized by the philologist on the basis of the similarity of some of the contents.

1 Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1989, *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*, the earliest known *gter ma* biography of Padmasambhava.

2 *lDe mig*.

3 There are various types of these, not always easy to distinguish: *kha byang, snying byang*, etc.

4 Contrary to what was believed until recently, the mysterious glyphs in which the *gter ma* texts are often encoded (called *mkha' 'gro brda yig*) are not purely magical runes that are supposed to spontaneously awaken the memory of past lives in predestined individuals, but are to some extent systems of cryptography that can be taught and learned.

Pema Ledreltsal (1291–1319), the discoverer of the *Khandro Nyingthik* in 1313. Discussing Pema Ledreltsal implies a survey of his interactions with masters that play important roles of various sorts at the background of Rigdzin Gödem's life: Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339), Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365), Longchenpa (1308–1364), and a tertön that is nowadays quite forgotten, although many traces of his activities can be found: Rinchen Lingpa (1289–1368). He was probably one of Rigdzin Gödem's masters, although this is unknown to the tradition. This is why we devote some pages to a synthesis of all that is known of Rinchen Lingpa. Longchenpa is then presented in some detail. Although there was most probably no direct contact with Rigdzin Gödem, the latter was most probably aware of the existence of the former's writings[1] (which, in the Tibetan context of the 14th century, does not imply that he had access to them). Among other things, Longchenpa is relevant also as a witness to some 14th-century Nyingmapas' aspiration to restore political unity. In their ideology, insofar as we can reconstruct it, a predestined lama would have played the role of the king's spiritual master and dedicated magician. Longchenpa's connection with Drikung Gomchen Künrin (d.u.)[2] is another example of what we will find again in the case of Rigdzin Gödem's links with the kings of Gungthang.

This second and last section is then concluded by a survey of the main tertöns of Rigdzin Gödem's own generation, followed by a timetable and a table of equivalences.

II. Overview of the Following Volumes

This series, when completed, will then include one volume (Vol. 2) on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem himself, his life and work, and one (Vol. 3) about his direct and indirect disciples in the 15th century, including such famous figures as Thangtong Gyalpo (1385–1464 or 1361–1485?). The fourth volume will cover the 16th century, illustrated by masters such as Ngari Paṇchen Pema Wangyal (1487–1542), his brother Lekdenjé

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1 There is a prophecy in the *dGongs pa zang thal* (one of rGod ldem's *gter ma*s) that alludes to Padma las 'brel rtsal, Rin chen gling pa and rGod ldem himself, and most probably to Klong chen pa too. See Arguillère 2024a, "A King of Dharma," pp. 94-97. Of course, it can be a later interpolation, but as Rig 'dzin rGod ldem must have been in contact with at least a master of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (most probably Rin chen gling pa), he likely heard of Klong chen pa. The allusion in the *dGongs pa zang thal* is indeed very vague and does not imply any direct knowledge of Klong chen pa's writings.

2 Better known for the difficulties it caused to Klong chen pa with Ta'i Si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1364), which led him into exile.

(1452–1565, considered the reincarnation of Rigdzin Gödem), and Tertön Tennyi Lingpa (1480–1535), until the relocation of another prominent figure, Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal (1550–1603), to central Tibet, where Dorjé Drak is established. A fifth volume will then be devoted to the apogee of this tradition in the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682), beginning with Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo (1580–1639) and ending with the death of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé (1641–1717) at the hands of the invading Dzungar Mongols. The sixth volume will cover the later history of Dorjé Drak from the disastrous Dzungar invasion (1717–1718) to the present day. This period of time is even less well known than the earlier ones. During these centuries, the Northern Treasures tradition struggled to survive while other trends of the Nyingma school became dominant. A seventh volume will focus on the Northern Treasures in eastern Tibet (Khams), with particular emphasis on Khordong, a monastery that developed in the eighteenth century and flourished until the Chinese takeover of Tibet, with biographies of such figures as Khamtrül Sherab Mebar (1752–1815), Khordong Terchen Nüden Dorjé (1802–1864), Gönpo Wangyal (1845–1915) and Tülku Tsullo (1895–1957?).

Let us now turn to the first section, consisting of Tenpa Tsering Batsang's translations of a passage of Khenpo Chöying's Chronicle.

Translations

Chapter 1: A Concise Presentation of the Life of Padmasambhava

Khenpo Chöying (*author / compiler*)
(Independent Scholar)

Tenpa Tsering BATSANG (*translation and annotations*)
(CRCAO)

Introduction

Regarding the biographical accounts of the past vidyādharas up to the Great Orgyen [Padmasambhava], because their [life accounts] are regularly [discussed in] lineages of [both] the Kama and Terma [aspects] of the Nyingma tradition, they are well-documented in the great Dharma chronicles. Therefore, I have not repeated [their biographies] here. As for Guru Rinpoche, the Knower of the Three Times, one has to trace the fountainhead of the profound treasure teachings in general, as well as the Northern Treasures in particular, to him. As he has been altogether kind to the teachings and the sentient beings of the Land of Snows, I will present in this chapter a brief biography of the great Padmasambhava of Oḍḍiyāna.

Prophecies

The *Sūtra of Predictions in Magadha*[1] says:

[1] This sūtra appears to be known only through the fragments that are included in various revealed texts. The longest passage that has been identified at this point has been found within Sangs rgyas gling pa 1985, *bKa' thang gser phreng*, pp. 79-81. While the passage presented here by *mKhan po* Chos dbyings isn't nearly identical to what is found in the *bKa' thang gser 'phreng*, the two run parallel to each other, covering similar ground: asking the Buddha a question about what will happen after he passes from this world; the Buddha's response involving predictions that describe Padmasambhava's greatness; the confusion in the minds of his disciples as they consider the possibility of a being even greater that the Buddha; the Buddha's response that ends with an explanation of the five superior qualities of Padmasambhava. The *Padma bka' thang* contains a shorter quotation

Ānanda asked the [Buddha]:

> "Oh Revealer, once you have passed beyond suffering (*nirvāṇa*), how will your compassion manifest in the pitch-dark world?"

The [Buddha] replied:

> "Once I have disappeared from this [world],
> After forty-two years have passed,
> On the lake of Dhanakośa,
> In the border regions in the northwest of Oḍḍiyāna,
> On the stem of a blossoming lotus,
> A person superior to me will appear.
>
> His name will be Padmasambhava.
> He will be the lord of the Secret Mantra[1] teachings.
> You, [my disciples], [52] do not lament!
> Like a king of medicine among the supreme medicines,
> With his boundless power, Padmasambhava will come.
> You, [my disciples], do not cry!
> Like the sun and moon among the stars,
> With his boundless power, Padmasambhava will appear.
> Like a wish-granting gem among [other] gems,
> With his boundless power, Padmasambhava will appear.
> You, [my disciples], do not cry!"

Those of his retinue then [began] to wonder whether or not an individual greater than the Buddha could exist. At that moment, [the Buddha] spoke again, saying such things as:

> "Such a [great] being is superior to the buddhas of the three times."

Furthermore, the five ways in which [Padmasambhava] is particularly said to be superior [to even the other buddhas] are as follows:

Firstly, he will be inseparable from the Contemplation (*dgongs pa*) of the Victors of the three times.

Secondly, he will naturally be born from the lotus lake without depending on the cause of a father and mother.

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from the same sūtra that is essentially an abbreviated rendition of the Buddha's response. See O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*, p. 46.

[1] gSang sngags.

Thirdly, he will not be harmed by the assault of demons and *tīrthika*s, and he will annihilate them completely.

Fourthly, he will be free from the harm of the four elements, he will have control over all phenomenal world, and he will fully master the four types of activities.

Fifthly, having attained an indestructible vajra body, devoid of birth, death, and aging, he will live on in the nature of Lord Amitāyus. [Hence, Padmasambhava] is said to be superior in these five particular ways.

The Magical Net of Mañjuśrī[1] says: [53]

> The glorious Buddha born from the lotus
> Holds the treasure of all-knowing primordial wisdom.
> He is the king, bearing a display of diverse miracles.
> He is the great one who upholds the mantras of the Buddha.

Likewise, the way that he is described in many sūtras and tantras [also] appears in many biographies of Guru [Rinpoche].

The Chronicles (*Thang yig*), for example, say such things as:[2]

> The Ācārya Padmasambhava, the Knower of the Three Times,
> With the pure outer nature,[3] he upholds the teachings of the Manifestation Body (*nirmāṇakāya*).

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1 This stanza appears in *Mañjuśrī-Jñāna-Sattvasya-Paramārtha-Nāma-Saṃgīti* (i.e., *Āryamañjuśrī-Nāma-Saṃgīti*) as verse 110 (Dergé Kangyur, vol. 77, pp. 11-12). *'Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drwa ba* is in fact another name for *Mañjuśrī-Jñāna-Sattvasya-Paramārtha-Nāma-Saṃgīti*. According to Dan Martin (1987, pp. 175-196), this tantra was already translated during the Early Spread (*snga dar*). For more regarding the various translations of this tantra into Tibetan of the Later Spread period and how *Lo tsā ba* Rin chen bzang po (978–1055) and Shong *ston lo tsā ba* rDo rje rgyal mtshan (13th c.) came up with their Tibetan translations of this tantra based on the early translations, see Blo bzang bstan 'dzin, 2015, "rTsa gzhung sngon gling," pp. 6-17, which is a preface to the second Dalai Lama dGe 'dun rgya mtsho's (1476–1542) commentary on *Āryamañjuśrī-Nāma-Saṃgīti*.

2 The two competing "chronicles," the *Padma bka' thang* (revealed by O rgyan gling pa) and the *bKa' thang gser 'phreng* (revealed by Sangs rgyas gling pa), begin with long, nearly identical passages. The passage provided here by *mKhan po* Chos dbyings appears within that shared, introductory material. Compare Sangs rgyas gling pa 1985, *bKa' thang gser 'phreng*, p. 3 and O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*, pp. 1-2.

3 *Phyi rgyud*. Upon being consulted about this passage, *mKhan po* Chos dbyings explains "pure outer nature" as referring to the spiritual activities of the Emanation Body of Padmasambhava. These are the sūtra-level teachings (Achard, oral conversation, 2025-02-20).

With the pure inner nature,[1] he maintains the teachings of the Enjoyment Body (*saṃbhogakāya*).
With the pure secret nature,[2] he is settled in the state of development and completion phases. He is the unrivaled Buddha.

Education & Training

In general, since the great Ācārya [Padmasambhava] himself represents the whole range of teachers who are endowed with the three buddha-Bodies, he depends neither on an unbroken lineage nor on study. However, from the point of view of ordinary disciples, he appeared as if he [needed] to learn all the five fields of knowledge [during his life]. He learned: medicine from Jīvaka Kaumārabhṛtya[3] at the monastic college of the Moon Garden, grammar from scholar Viśvāmitra,[4] craftsmanship of various kinds from Viśvāmitra,[5] and gnoseology (*pramāṇa*) from many scholars.[6] Thus, he appeared as if he

1 *Nang rgyud*. Here, *mKhan po* Chos dbyings explains "pure inner nature" as alluding to the spiritual activities of the Enjoyment Body of Padmasambhava. These are the teachings of the tantras except rDzogs chen (Achard, oral conversation, 2025-02-20).

2 *gSang rgyud*. The "pure secret nature" refers to the spiritual activities of the Dharmakāya of Padmasambhava. This is rDzogs chen (Achard, oral conversation, 2025-02-20).

3 Jīvaka Kaumārabhṛtya ('Tsho byed gzhon nu) is said to be a highly skilled healer and personal physician of Buddha Śākyamuni. He appears in many stories of the Buddha, his disciples, and other associates. Nevertheless, the *Padma bka' thang* says that Padmasambhava learned medicine from the son of Jīvaka Kaumāraṛtya. See O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*, p. 88. For more about Jīvaka Kaumārabhṛtya, see Chen and Chen 2002.

4 Viśvāmitra. He appears in Tibetan under the translation of his Sanskrit name as sNa tshogs bshes gnyen or Kun gyi bshes gnyen. He is the famous author of an important commentary of the supplementary section (*phyi ma*) of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* entitled *The Drops from the Ocean of the Precepts on the Glorious Tantra of the Secret Assembly* (*dPal gsang ba 'dus pa'i rgyud kyi man ngag gi rgya mtsho thigs pa*). This is commentary that has some quotes from the *Guhyagarbha Tantra*, thus demonstrating the Indian origin of the *gSang ba snying po.* Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for this information.

5 According to the O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*, p. 89, Padmasambhava learned various forms of craftsmanship from Viśvakarma, not Viśvāmitra.

6 Nearly the entirety of this section that summarizes Padmasambhava's early activities as he pretends to receive an education, particularly from his education in medicine through ordination, appears to be comprised of an unacknowledged set of quotations from Gu ru bkra shis (18th c.) 1990, *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung*, pp. 129-130. The account in the *Gu bkra'i chos 'byung* is, of course, summarized from earlier, revealed biographies. For an

had learned the five major sciences together with their branches from both Buddhist and non-Buddhist scholars.

At the red cave [known] as Garuḍa Grove, otherwise known as the Bird's Nest Cliff, Padmasambhava, together with his companions Śākyaprabha[1] and Śakyamitra,[2] appeared to learn the Yoga-[tantras] from Ācārya Prabhāhasti.[3]

At the Latticed Forest, [54] he received the outer, inner, and secret empowerments from princess Gomādevī, and he also manifested the appearance of receiving the complete outer, inner, and secret empowerments from ḍākinī Dewé Khorlo,[4] also known as the nun Ānanda.[5]

According to *The Chronicles*, he received his ordination from Ānanda.[6] Some also said that he received his ordination from Ācārya Prabhāhasti.

With regard to the legend of [Padmasambhava] known in India, Guru Tashi narrates it in his *History of the Dharma* thus:[7]

> At the monastery [known as] Dharma Sprout,[8] Padmasambhava became a monk and received the full vows of [a *bhikṣu*] in the order of Mahāsāṅghika from Upādyāya Buddhajñānapāda.[9] He received the

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accessible and more complete English translation of Padmasambhava's education as it appears in the *Padma bka' thang*, see O rgyan gling pa and Douglas and Bays 1978, pp. 145-166.

1 *Ibid*., p. 152.

2 He is said to be a disciple of Prabhāhasti and the author of a Yoga-tantra commentary entitled: *The Ornament of Kosala* (*Kosalālaṃkāra*). See Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 469. For an English translation of the passage from the *bKa' thang gser 'phreng*, see Evans-Wentz and Kazi Dawa Samdrup 2002.

3 He is regarded as one of the eight Buddhist Vidyādharas of India, and Padmasambhava received the Yoga-tantras from him. For more information about this figure, see Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 467-468.

4 bDe ba'i 'khor lo.

5 Ḍākinī Guhyajñānā (the ḍākinī of pristine cognition) appeared to him in the form of the nun Ānanda, and she transformed him into a *hūṃ* syllable and swallowed him. In her entrails, he was bestowed the outer, inner, and secret empowerment of the Yoga-tantras. See Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 469.

6 According to Sangs rgyas gling pa (1985, p. 168), Padmasambhava received his ordination from Ananda together with Arhat Nyi ma gung pa. However, the *Pad ma bka' thang* seems to indicate that he received ordination in a dream. See O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*, pp. 90-91.

7 For the complete passage, see Gu ru bkra shis 1990, p. 130.

8 Chos kyi myu gu.

9 According to Tāranātha (1575–1643) 2007–2008, p. 199, he was one of the first disciples of Ācārya Haribhadra who appeared in the 8th century.

> *One Hundred Thousand Vinaya*[1] from a Vinaya upholder just once and learned their meanings by heart. At the [same monastery], he received the *Prajñāpāramitā* from Ācārya Buddhajñānapāda and attained a view equal to the sky. While other disciples had to go through a great deal of hardship when requesting the empowerments, Ācārya [Padmasambhava] received all the empowerments in their entirety without going through any difficulties.

He also received the empowerment of the Yoga-tantras and their precepts from Buddhaguhya,[2] a disciple of Ācārya Buddhajñānapāda. [55] He received the five inner tantras,[3] which include *The Assembly of Secrets*, *The Magical Nets*, *The Secret Moon Essence*, *The Equalizing Buddhahood*, *The Garland of Activities*,[4] and all of their pith precepts from Ācārya Buddhajñānapāda. At that time, he was directly introduced to primordial wisdom.[5]

From Buddhaguhya, he received many tantras such as Yoga-tantras, *Guhyagarbha*, etc., and assimilated them completely. At the eight great cemeteries[6] which exist in Jambudvīpa since the beginning, he met eight primordially accomplished great ācāryas. He also obtained each of the ordinary accomplishments from them and became an awareness holder (*vidyādhara*).

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1 *'Dul ba 'bum sde*. This is a general name for a collection of *Vinaya* teachings which includes the four *Vinaya* scriptures, namely *Vinaya-Vibhaṅga, Vinaya-vastu, Vinayāgama*, and *Vinaya-Uttama.* See Roloff 2010, p. 355.

2 According to Dudjom Rinpoche (Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 465-466), he was a disciple of Buddhajñānapāda and composed many treatises which include *The Analytical Commentary on the Tantra of the Secret Essence* (*gSang ba snying po la 'grel ba rnam bshad kyi 'grel*). However, this text remains to be identified.

3 According to O rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po (dPal sprul *rin po che*, 1808–1887) 2003, *rGyud gsang ba snying po'i 'chad thabs brgyud pa gsum gyi lo rgyus rna rgyud lung gi phreng ba*, p. 301, the five inner tantras are the root tantras of the eighteen Mahāyoga Tantras.

4 Respectively *gSang ba 'dus pa*, *sGyu 'phrul drwa ba*, *Zla gsang thig le*, *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*, and *Las kyi phreng ba*. For more about *The Assembly of Secret*, *The Magical Net*, *The Secret Moon Essence*, and *The Garland of Activity*, see rNying ma rgyud 'bum 1975, vols. 16-17. On Sa skya scholar *Paṇ chen* Śā kya mchog ldan's (1428–1507) view on the above rNying ma tantras and others, see Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 893-894.

5 While *mKhan po* Chos dbyings acknowledges that this passage has been borrowed from Gu ru bKra chis 1990, p. 246, it appears that Gu ru bkra shis himself has in turn borrowed the passage through to this point—without acknowledgement—from Tāranātha's (1575–1634) biography of Padmasambhava. See Tāranātha 2007–2008, pp. 199-200.

6 For more regarding the eight great cemeteries, see Robert Beer 1999, pp. 250-252.

After that, just as a king is anointed in one single time, he obtained the science of the precepts, the transmitted meaning of the Great Perfection from the Emanation Body Garab Dorjé, Mañjuśrīmitra, and Śrī Siṃha. Henceforth, he fully attained mastery over the sky-like wisdom, in which depth and clarity are non-dual and became indivisible from Vajradhara.

In particular, as Vajravārāhī predicted,[1] from Śrī Siṃha he received and studied the cycle of the profound Heart Drops (*sNying thig*) [teachings] for twenty-five years.

[56] I have quoted the above [passage] as narrated in Guru Tashi's *History of the Dharma*.

Indeed, since the Ācārya, the second Buddha, possessed the all-knowing wisdom, he did not need to rely on study. However, he appeared to act like that in his disciples' point of view, just like our teacher Śākyamuni appeared as if he learned reading, writing, counting and so forth.

Commentary by Jamgön Mipham

Among the many biographies of the second Buddha from Oḍḍiyāna that exist in Kama and Terma, Jamgön Mipham presents [this point] in *The Explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer*:[2]

> The great Ācārya from Oḍḍiyāna, who is the universal embodiment of the Victors of the three times, is indivisible from Samantabhadra, the self-arisen primordial Absolute Body (*dharmakāya*), who, from the very beginning, was completely liberated. From the space of the Absolute Body, he is spontaneously present as the Perfect Enjoyment Body (*saṃbhogakāya*) endowed with five attributes. And from the radiance of this [Body] arises inconceivable manifestations, which are [beyond] the cognitive domain of anybody other than the Buddha himself.

The same [text] further says:

> Even in this Universe of Endurance[3] with its trichiliocosm of a billion worlds, which include thirty-six realms that [exist] above, below, and in the four directions, as well as individual realms of the six classes of migratory beings, Padmasambhava appears in a varied display of different forms with different names.

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1 So far, the details regarding the prediction of Vajravārāhī have not been discovered.

2 See Mi pham, 2008, *Gu ru'i tshig bdun gsol 'debs kyi rnam bshad*, pp. 286-288.

3 Sahālokadhātu (*mi mjed 'jig rten gyi khams*).

[57] In our world of Jambudvīpa,[1] appearing in one body with eight manifestations[2] and twenty emanations, together with inconceivably [many] secondary emanations (*yang sprul*), he propagated the teachings of the Buddha. At present, he displays three manifestations, one each at the upper, middle, and lower [parts] of the Lotus Light Palace of the Glorious Copper Mountain, which exists in the center of Cāmara Island. Different manifestations with different forms reside on each of the twenty-one large Rākṣasa islands. In short, just as the realm of Reality (*dharmadhātu*) is infinite, so are the activities of Padmasambhava, occurring even at the time of the buddhas of the past.

Nowadays, the majority of [those who are] scholars and accomplished [masters] in the Buddhist teachings are even said to be the emanations of the precious Guru. He blessed and took care of these holders of the teachings.

Through his display of emanations, he remarkably benefitted the teaching and sentient beings in various countries such as India, China, Śambhala,[3] and Tamaradvīpa.[4] In Tibet too, having set his feet in all the regions in every direction, he blessed them, concealed many profound treasures, and made predictions of [the treasure revealers] that would extract the treasures at specific times.

[58] He put gods and demons under a vajra oath and made a pledge to take care of the people of Tibet in the future with his emanations, as long as the teachings of the Buddha exist [in this world].

He entrusted the land of Tibet to the [protection] of the Twelve *Tenma* Goddesses[5] and thus made it impossible for non-Buddhists (*tīrthikas*) to intrude into [Tibet].

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1 It is one of the four continents situated in the four directions around Mt. Meru.

2 For more on the eight manifestations of Padmasambhava, see Tshul khrims bzang po 2014, *Gu ru mtshan brgyad kyi rnam bshad*, vol. 3. pp. 259-278. For English, see Palden Sherab and Tsewang Dongyal 2013.

3 According to Krang dbyi sun (1985, *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo,* p. 2836), Śambhala is believed to be a mythical pure land where the teaching of the *Wheel of Time* (*Kālacakra*) flourished and the kings with the title of *rigs ldan* have been ruling this mystic land. For more about Śambhala, see Bernbaum 2001, *passim.*

4 There is no unified reference to this island. *Ibid*., p. 2448, alludes to this place as being Sri Lanka.

5 For more about Twelve Tenma Goddess (*bsTan ma bcu gnyis*), see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1996, pp. 178-198.

In the future, when barbarians bring harm, it is said in the *Secret Prophecy of Taksham* [*Nüden Dorjé*],[1] "I, Padmasambhava, will [appear] as Wrathful Wheel Holder,[2] together with a host of [my] twenty-five disciples."

[Hence,] it is said that he would put an end to [the trouble caused by] the barbarians and propagate the teachings of the Secret Mantra. It is also predicted that, [with respect to] all the great upholders of the teachings in the cool land [i.e., Tibet], regardless of [whether they are followers] of new or old schools, most of them would be emanations of Padmasambhava. He revealed his face[3] to most of the learned and accomplished holy ones, unlimitedly blessed them, and granted them instructions. This is evident in their respective biographies.

In the future, it is said that when the Jina Maitreya will attain enlightenment in this world, Padmasambhava himself will manifest as the prince[4] [known as] Tamer of Beings and propagate the teachings of the Secret Mantra far and wide. Likewise, in that noble eon, [1002] buddhas will appear, and at that time, one Padmasambhava will appear for each buddha. As long as there are sentient beings in the future, he will remain in his immortal Wisdom Body, [59] which is the base of his emanations, and manifestations of his emanations will pervade as far as space and time, [each] engaged in the welfare of sentient beings.

He said in his own vajra words:

"I, known as the Self-arisen Lotus,
Manifested from the mind of Buddha Amitābha.
[I am] the light of noble Avalokiteśvara's speech.
[I am] the brother of all ḍākinīs and king of the heroes.
[I am] the emanation of the great Samantabhadra-Vajradhara,[5]
Who is the unrivaled, noble lord of all the enlightened
Activities of the buddhas of the three times.
Manifesting as an Emanation Body and being endowed with a great and powerful compassion,

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1 sTag sham Nus ldan rdo rje (1655–1708). The text mentioned above is not identified so far.

2 According to Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (2002, p. 1908), the Wrathful Wheel Holder (Drag po 'khor lo can) refers to the twenty-fifth king of Śambhala.

3 The phrase "he revealed his face" means that Padmasambhava appeared in their visions.

4 In this case, *rgyal sras* may be understood as a synonym for bodhisattva.

5 This refers to Samantabhadra manifesting at the level of the Enjoyment Body as Vajradhara.

I perform a great deal of activities appropriate to each being,
And fulfill the hopes of the sentient beings according to their wishes."[1]

Furthermore:

"For those who have faith and devotion [in me],
My compassion and activity are much swifter than [those of] other buddhas.
As long as there is any single sentient being left in the three realms,
Padmasambhava's compassion will not be exhausted."

I have directly quoted the above vajra words of Jamgön [Mipham] as they are.

Similarly, in a treasure revealed by Rigdzin Gödem [entitled] *The Prophecies* [*of*] *the Future* [*of*] *the Concealed Lands*: *A Register Guide* it is said:[2]

Buddha Śākyamuni is [a guide] for all [those]
who practice Dharma in the world.
I, Padmasambhava, am [his] regent.

Hence, Padmasambhava, the regent of the victorious Śākyamuni, [60] is the second Buddha, who, due to his past aspirations, illuminated the Land of Snows with the teaching of the Victorious One like a rising sun.

In his own words in *The Prayer in Seven Chapters*, he said:

When [I] came for the benefit of the northern King,
I subjugated all *yakṣas*[3] of Tibet by oath.
I consecrated Samyé, fulfilled the wishes of the king,
And permeated all the regions of Tibet with Dharma.[4]

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1 The above reported speech of Padmasambhava's own words was borrowed by Mi pham from Sangs rgyas gling pa 1981, *Bla ma dgongs pa 'dus pa las lung bstan bka' brgya'i skor*, in *Bla ma dgongs 'dus*, vol. 6, p. 157-158.

2 See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2008, *Ma 'ongs lung bstan sbas yul gyi them byang*, p. 114.

3 *gNod sbyin*. This is one of the eight kinds of gods and spirits.

4 This is one of the prophetic guides that was revealed by bZang po grags pa (14th c.) and then later sent via messenger to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. To read the passage in context, see bZang po grags pa 1976, *gSol 'debs le'u bdun pa dang bsam pa lhun grub rten bskyed dang bcas pa*, pp. 49-50.

He [helped] in the proper establishment of the outer buildings and inner worship supports of the miraculously built Samyé monastery, and [then he] turned the wheel of the Secret Mantra for the king, his retinue, and subjects.

Concealment and Revelation of the Treasures

In the past [already], with the idea to provide to the fourfold need that in the future, the teachings should not disappear, that the precepts should not get distorted, that the blessings do not vanish, and that the transmission lineage would be shorter,[1] the Victors hid treasures from their own mind into those [of their followers], ḍākinīs hid treasures in the sky with the power of their contemplation, and awareness holders (*vidyādharas*) hid treasures in caskets as earth treasures. Following [their examples, Padmasambhava], hid the signified meaning—the pith instructions—in the self-arisen caskets in the sphere of the three Bodies (*kāya*) of the predestined [disciples], [61] and the signifying words[2]—the tantric texts—as well as [pills that] liberate upon eating and supports of the Body, Speech, and Mind in mountains, caves, glaciers, lakes, and in the sky, sealing them with the seal of the five elements, filling the entire land of Tibet with profound treasures. He [also] predicted the emanated individuals who would excavate these treasures. As there were no more beings to be tamed by him in his physical [presence] in this field [of Tibet], he set out for the south-western land of ogres (*rākṣasa*). At that time, Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo,[3] Ḍākinī Yeshe Tsogyal, Nanam Dorjé Düjom, and others came to accompany him on the mountain pass of Gungthang. With intense affection, the Mahāguru spoke numerous words of advice to the king and his subjects.

In particular, he enunciated numerous prophecies stating that, in the future, the descendants of Lhasé [Mutri Tsenpo] would appear in the region of Gungthang and that at that time, negative forces would

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1 The idea of a short lineage means that the direct transmission between Padmasambhava (etc.) and the much later Treasure Revealers is completely pure and fresh at the time of the *gter ma* revelation.

2 "Signifier words" (*mtshon byed tshig*) in this context appears to refer to scriptures and the supports of body, speech, and mind.

3 According to Gu ru bkra shis (1990, p. 164), King Khri srong lde'u btsan had three sons, and Mu khri btsan po was the youngest. He is also known as Mu tig btsan po Sad na legs mjing yon. However, other historians maintain that King Khri srong lde'u btsan had four sons, Mu khri btsan po and Sad na legs mjing yon being the youngest. See bsTan 'dzin 'phrin las lhun grub (b. 1946) 2015, *Bod btsan po'i rgyal rabs*, p. 146.

harm them, and so forth. To protect them, he hid many profound treasure teachings. Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo asked:[1]

> "O, respected and great Ācārya, where will the treasures be concealed that shall, [through the power of] your compassion, save the mighty kings of Tibet when the dynasty of my descendants faces imminent interruption? Who is the oath-bound guardian of this treasure? [62] When will you conceal these [treasures]? What is the key for revealing this treasure in the future?"

[At that time], Padmasambhava replied:

> "Listen, sovereign lord, son of the gods!
> Those sentient beings who have faith and devotion in me,
> will always be safeguarded by my compassion.
> I have left three repositories of excellent treasures,
> For the sake of the King and his subjects in Tibet.
> Going from here to the north,
> There is a mountain endowed with auspicious attributes,
> Which corresponds to the prophesied land.
> [You] the three fortunate requesters who seek this,
> Focus your minds single pointedly on me with devotion."

He then uttered the sound of "*hūṃ*" and his followers had three visions.

Some of them[2] saw the dark blue body of Guru [Padmasambhava] as large as Mt. Meru, imposing in the midst of a mass of blazing fire. He had one face and two hands, and [his] feet were in a stretched posture. Some saw him flying through the sky riding on a white lion, while others saw him carrying the devoted king, subject, and consort[3] in his hands and traveling through the sky. At that time, Lord Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo, the consort Ḍākinī Yeshé Tsogyal, and the subject Nanam

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1 The lengthy passage below—up to but not including the discussion of the keys—is an unacknowledged quotation from the following prophetic guide: Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *'Dzeng rdo dkar po nas byung ba*[*'i shog dril skor*], vol. 14, pp. 231-233.

2 According to Se *ston* Padma dbang chen (15th c.) 2015, pp. 377-378, Padmasambhava hid the treasures at Zang zang lha brag (which were later collectively known as Jangter) on his way to the Mang yul gung thang pass from which he departed to the land of the Rākṣasas in the South. At that time, Lha sras Mu khri btsan po, *Lo tsā ba* Bee ro tsa na, gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, and others accompanied the master from bSam yas to the Mang yul gung thang pass.

3 I.e., Mu khri btsan po, sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, and Ye shes mtsho rgyal.

Dorjé Düjom—the king, consort, and subject—together with the Ācārya [Padmasambhava] arrived on the summit of Mt. Trazang[1] in a snap.

The Ācārya himself, while facing towards the southwest, [63] made the summoning *mudrā*. Then, a red ḍākinī wearing a white brocade garment and holding a locket [made] from a precious gem in her hands appeared from the rainbow-engulfed sky. [The red ḍākinī] took three white whetstones, [each] the length of a finger-span, from the locket and offered them into the hands of the Ācārya. At that [moment], the Guru, smiling, said to his followers:

"Listen, faithful Tibetans!
As for the three extraordinary repositories of treasure
Which will protect the sentient beings of Tibet,
There are three places where these treasures are concealed.
Upon the rocky mountain resembling a heap of poisonous snakes,
Four sets of treasures that will protect the kings
Will be hidden in the stomach of a black poisonous snake.
Four powerful [deities][2] are entrusted as the guardians for these treasures.
They will be hidden at sunrise,
When the sun and moon will appear in the direction of Mangyül.
Upon the rocky mountain resembling a heap of jewels,
The treasure similar to a wish-fulfilling jewel
Will be concealed and marked with the seal of Vaiśravaṇa.
A [Spirit] Holding a Red Spear[3] will be entrusted as its guardian.
It will be concealed at daybreak
And will mature and liberate some fortunate [individuals].
Upon the cave [known as] Bestower of Auspicious Blessing,[4]
Teachings that [guide one] to the path of enlightenment
Will be concealed in the intricate knots of a small dagger.
Three powerful[5] [deities] will be entrusted as their guardians.

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1 It is the mountain situated in the Ngam ring region of western Tibet, from which, in 1366, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem found the key to the three great treasure repositories and one hundred other minor treasure teachings hidden in Zang zang lha brag. See Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 779.

2 The four are g.Yu phu'i rtse lha, Yer pa'i rdzong btsan, Lha sa'i bdud btsan, and Glu bdud rDo rje spyan gcig ma. For more regarding these treasure guardians, see Mi pham 2007, *'Jam dpal phyag rgya zil gnon gyi gter srung ma mthu chen sde bzhi mchod thabs*, vol. 27, pp. 13-16.

3 This refers to a form of Vaiśravaṇa. According to Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (1927–1997) 2002, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod*, p. 1239, there are fifteen variants of Vaiśravaṇa.

4 This refers to Yang le shod cave.

5 It seems this refers to three cemetery-dwelling *ma mo* spirit siblings (*dur khrod kyi ma mo mched gsum*).

It will be concealed at sunset,
Father and sons[1] [64] will encounter it and [reach] liberation."

As for the keys [for opening] these three treasure repositories,[2] they will be placed inside a stone locket, a copper locket, and a bronze locket. They will be concealed on Mt. Trazang as [its] right eye, tongue, and heart, [respectively].

As explained in *The Second Scroll that Came from the White Whetstone*:[3]

"Three long white whetstones
Are the keys for the three repositories of treasures.
They will be concealed on this mountain [Trazang].

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[1] Father and sons in this context seem to refer to Padmasambhava and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem because *The Cycle of Scrolls from the White Whetstone Keys* clearly mentions Rig 'dzin rGod ldem as the spiritual son of Padmasambhava. See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *'Dzeng rdo dkar po nas byung ba* [*'i shog dril skor*], vol. 14, pp. 133-243, p. 238.

[2] According to *ibid.*, three treasure repositories were concealed by Padmasambhava at three different locations namely: *Brag ri dug sbrul spung 'dra* (i.e., Zang zang lha brag), *Brag ri rin chen spung 'dra*, which is said to be situated somewhere in the southwestern part of Gung thang, and *Brag phug bkra shis byin dbab* (i.e., Yang le shod). The same text discusses that, twenty-one years after the revelation of treasures from Zang zang lha brag, the treasures of *Brag ri rin chen spung 'dra* will be revealed, and similarly, twenty-one years after the revelation of the treasures of *Brag ri rin chen spung 'dra*, the treasures of *Brag phug bkra shis byin dbab* will be revealed. Even if Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was predicted to reveal and practice these three treasure repositories, apart from the treasures that he revealed from Zang zang lha brag, it is not clear whether he revealed treasures from the two other locations. At least in the editions available nowadays, none of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's termas are said to be found in any other place than Zang zang lha brag; however, dozens and even hundreds of them lack a colophon indicating explicitly a place of discovery. In *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight,* the biography of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem by Nyi ma bzang po, it says that he found some treasure sites in the sKyid grong region, which correspond to the prophecy of Padmasambhava, but it does not appear that he successfully extracted treasures there. See Nyi ma bzang po 2015, *Rig 'dzin dngos grub rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar nyi ma'i 'od zer*, pp. 42-43.

[3] See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *'Dzeng rdo dkar po nas byung ba* [*'i shog dril skor*], pp. 233-234.—mKhan po Chos dbyings appears to be duplicating these materials directly from Nyi ma bzang po, who also refers to a "second scroll." The *'Dzeng rdo dkar po nas byung ba 'i shog dril skor* as we have it today is divided into six scrolls, but everything that is mentioned by Nyi ma bzang po—and mKhan po Chos dbyings—now appears in the section said to have been decoded from the first scroll (comment by Jay Valentine, March 04, 2025).

One [key] will be concealed as an eye.
It is the key which illuminates the phenomenal world.
One [key] will be concealed as a tongue.
It is the symbolic key of the Secret Mantra.
One [key] is concealed as a heart.
It is the key to true fruition.
For that reason, Bulé Norbu Zangpo[1]
Will protect and watch over them."

Thus, among the three treasure repositories, a king-like treasury repository was hidden in the cave of Mt. Zangzang. Its key was in the stone locket which was hidden as a heart.[2]

Thus, the great Ācārya from Oḍḍiyāna, together with his three faithful followers concealed the treasures along with their keys within three days and entrusted them to the treasure guardians.

Rigdzin Gödem, an emanation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom, would extract these hidden treasures from the middle of Mt. Zangzang [in Latö] Jang. [65] The many treasures of the five repositories were taken from the brownish-red box that had many chambers, such as the conch repository in the east, the golden repository in the south, the red copper repository in the west, the black iron repository in the north, and the brown repository in the center. Henceforth, these treasures have come to be known as the Northern Treasures.

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1 According to Gung thang bsTan 'dzin nor bu (b. 1983) 2018, *gTsang la stod byang ngam ring gi rig gnas lo rgyus*, pp. 408-409, Bu le nor bu bzang po, also known by other names such as *gNod sbyin* Bu le, Bu le gangs, and Gangs bu le, is one of the four great snow mountains in Tibet. It is situated in the Ngam ring region in Western Tibet. It is said that Padmasambhava visited Bu le gangs and entrusted the protector with the prophetic guides for treasure teachings. Later, many eminent scholars and practitioners visited this mountain and practiced Dharma, which include Ri khrod pa bZang po grags pa (14th c.), Red mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros (1348/1349–1412), Thang stong rgyal po (1361/65–1480/85/86), Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419) and others. For the Northern Treasures lineage, *gNod sbyin* Bu le played a very significant role in the revelation process of the Northern Treasures teachings by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. If *gNod sbyin* Bu le had not approached bZang po grags pa and insisted that he travel to Grom pa rgyang in Lha rtse county to reveal *The Prophetic Guides*, then Rig 'dzin rGod ldem would not have found the keys of the treasures nor their sites. Strangely enough, this deity seems not to be an object of extensive worship in *Byang gter* literature. For more about the encounter between Ri khrod pa bZang po grags and *gNod sbyin* Bu le, see Valentine 2016.

2 For more about keys to the treasures, see Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *'Dzeng rdo dkar po nas byung ba* [*'i shog dril skor*], vol. 14, pp. 241-242.

Concealment and Revelation of the Prophetic Guides

In addition, when they arrived in Gungthang, Padmasambhava gave the Divine Prince [Mutri Tsenpo] oral instructions such as the entrance guides (*kha byang*), path guides (*lam byang*), the essential guides (*snying byang*), and testaments (*zhal chems*), as well as *The Prayer for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of All Aspirations*,[1] which was requested by the prince [and] enriched with the thirteen pith instructions similar to wish-fulfilling jewels. [After that,] he departed for the land of the Rākṣasas in the South.

Soon after, [followers], the prince [Mutri Tsenpo] and Nanam Dorjé Düjom concealed the entrance guides, the path guide, and many other sādhanas such as sādhanas for Hayagrīva, Avalokiteśvara, and others, which were required for the Northern Treasures, at Rulak Gyang temple. They were entrusted to the Mule-riding Goddess[2] and Lord Bulé as their guardian.[3] [Later], these treasures were revealed by Tülku Zangpo Drakpa, an emanation of the prince Mutri Tsenpo.

Conclusion

It is due to the kindness of the great Ācārya from Oḍḍiyāna that the Buddha's turning of the wheel of exoteric Dharmas in general, and in particular the unlimited teachings of the Secret Mantra, [66] spread and flourished in Tibet. In particular, it is only thanks to the kindness of the great Ācārya from Oḍḍiyāna that [we have] the teaching of the Utterly Secret Mantra. Therefore, he is addressed as "the great charioteer of Samantabhadra's [teachings]." In short, it is exclusively thanks to the kindness of the precious [Ācārya] of Oḍḍiyāna that the teachings of the Buddha flourished, expanded, and still remain [alive] in Tibet, the Land of Snows. [One] can know this clearly from [common] history [books].

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1 *gSol 'debs bsam pa lhun grub ma*. This text is found in most rNying ma compilations of prayers (*chos spyod*). See, e.g., *Bya bral* Sangs rgyas rdo rje 1984, *Chos spyod* (s.l., publisher unknown), pp. 231-245.

2 I.e., dPal ldan lha mo. For more about this goddess and her role as a protector of the Dalai Lamas, see Gazizova 2022, pp. 2-5.

3 This passage that explains how Mu khri btsan po received the prophetic guides from Padmasambhava and how he along with sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms concealed them is a slightly abbreviated, unacknowledged quotation from Tshul khrims bzang po 2015, *Byang gter bka' dbang spyi lo sbyor rung gi lo rgyus gsal ba'i me long*, in *Byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 56, p. 401.

Chapter 2: The Legend of the Great Zhang Nanam Dorjé Düjom

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The Previous Lives of Nanam Dorjé Düjom

First, [I] will narrate the story of the great Zhang Nanam Dorjé Düjom.[1] As stated in *The Ocean Displaying Marvels,* the biography of Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo[2]—authored by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) in accordance with *The Prayer to the Successive Incarnations*[3] [written] by the third tülku of the Yolmo Tertön Tendzin Norbu [4] also known as Tobden Pawo—, [Nanam Dorjé Düjom's] past lives [occurred] as follows:[5]

In the noble realm of Akaniṣṭha [resides] the Primordial Protector Samantabhadra and, like a rainbow appearing in the sky, the glorious Vajrasattva manifested as part of [Samantabhadra's] retinue. [69] Since then, gradually, he manifested as bodhisattva Vajragarbha,[6] Khyé'u

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1 For another English biography of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, see Mandelbaum 2007. For an up-to-date evaluation of this figure, see Angowski 2022, pp. 29-40.

2 Rigs 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639) was the third incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. For a short biography in English, see Samten Chhosphel 2013.

3 *mKhan po* Chos dbyings references this text as one of his sources for the preincarnations of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms. See bsTan 'dzin nor bu 2015, *Dri med pad dkar bzhad pa*, vol. 12, pp. 325-332. The Fifth Dalai Lama refers to this as *sKyes rabs kyi 'phreng ba sum cu rtsa gsum gyi gsol 'debs tshigs su bcad pa dri med pad dkar bzhad pa'i 'phreng ba*. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, p. 308.

4 bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1589–1644) was one of the main disciples of Rigs 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po. For more on the life of the former and his relationship to the latter, see Bogin 2005, *passim*. For more on the Yol mo incarnation lineage, see Ehrhard 2013 [2007], *passim*.

5 To view this entire passage discussing the previous lives of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, see Fifth Dalai Lama, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-309.

6 A bodhisattva who compiled rDzogs chen teachings. See Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 451.

Chung Shela Rokpo, *Bhadrapāla,[1] the son of the Victorious Ones, Bodhisattva Jñānagarbha and Namkhé Dokchen,[2] the Compiler of the Teaching. In the presence of our teacher, the prince Śuddhodana,[3] [he] appeared as Mahāprajāpatī Gautamī.[4] [He then appeared as] Ḍākinī Dedenma,[5] who was the mother of Garab Dorjé, Ḍākinī Kurukullā,[6] Yijin Pel,[7] who was the disciple of Ācārya Mañjuśrīmitra,[8] and Lodrö Chok,[9] the Dharma minister of King Indrabhūti.[10] When the great master Padmasambhava was miraculously born in the lake [formed] on the island of the Sindhu ocean, he appeared as bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha,[11] who offered a bath to the great master. When the great

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1 *Bhadrapāla, a deity said to reside in Trayatrimśa heaven and whose son *Adhicitta (lHag bsam can) was given the empowerments and teachings of rDzogs chen by Vajrasattva. *Adhicitta then propagated the rDzogs chen teachings in the celestial realms (*lha yul*). See *ibid*., p. 453.

2 Nam mkha'i mdog can, a compiler of rDzogs chen teachings in Pure Lands. See Valentine 2013, p. 61.

3 Father of Buddha Śākyamuni and the ruler of Kapilavastu. See Srivastava 1979, p. 61.

4 She was the aunt and foster mother of the Buddha and became the first ordained woman in Buddhist history. For more about this figure, see Scott 2011, pp. 494-499.

5 According to Dudjom Rinpoche (Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 89), dGa' rab rdo rje's mother was *Sudharmā, a daughter of King *Uparāja and Queen *Ālokabhāsvatī. Contrary to the mainstream tradition, the author of this text maintains that Ḍākinī bDe ldan ma (*Sukhasāravatī) is dGa' rab rdo rje's mother. In fact, *Sudharmā is known to have had a servant named *Sukhasāravatī (bDe ba'i snying ldan ma) with whom she practiced yoga and meditation. I suspect that either the author of this text conflated these two figures or he had a special reason to assert this.

6 See Das Gupta 1960, pp. 84-86.

7 So far, references regarding this individual have not been found.

8 Disciple of dGa' rab rdo rje and the main teacher of Śrī Siṃha. He is said to have divided the rDzogs chen tantras into Mind Series (*Sems sde*), Space Series (*Klong sde*), and Esoteric Precept Series (*Man ngag sde*). See Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 493-494. There is another Indian scholar known by the name of "later Mañjuśrīmitra" ('Jam dpal bshes gnyen phyi ma) who is said to have given all the teachings of the outer and inner tantras to Padmasambhava. For more information about this individual, see mKhas btsun bzang po 1973–1990, *rGya bod mkhas grub rim byon gyi rnam thar*, vol. 1, p. 382.

9 Blo gros mchog. See Valentine 2013, p. 61.

10 A king of Oḍḍiyāna, said to be the adoptive father of Padmasambhava. For more on the relationship between these two figures, see Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1989, *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*, pp. 3-11.

11 He might be bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha who is one of the eight bodhisattvas known as "eight close spiritual sons of the Buddha" (*nye ba'i sras chen*

master held the kingship of Oḍḍiyāna, he appeared as a Mahāsattva, a secretive practitioner [in Padmasambhava's] retinue.

[70] When the great master [Padmasambhava] was maintaining the conduct of yogic discipline and turning the wheel of Dharma at the Great Charnel Ground of the Cool Grove, he appeared as Dewé Dorjé,[1] an aid [to Padmasambhava]. Around the time when the great master Padmasambhava was presiding over the eight classes [of demons] as their chieftain at Mt. Malaya, he appeared as Drakpo Tumpo.[2] [Similarly,] around the time when the great master [Padmasambhava] was engaged in [yogic] practices at the eight charnel grounds, he appeared as Śākyamitra.[3] In the presence of Ānanda, he appeared as Bhikṣu *Śāntiṃgarbha,[4] who together with the great master Padmasambhava received ordination from Ānanda.

Likewise, [he appeared as his] consort Mandāravā,[5] the queen of the ḍākinīs, Vināśa, a beer seller[6] who generated the wisdom of great bliss, and *Jñānaprakāśa, a Dharma minister of the Zahor King *Vihārdhara. When the [great Ācārya Padmasambhava] was ruling over the sixteen great regions, he appeared as *Sukhakāra, a compiler of Padmasambhava's words.

When Sengé Dradrok[7] subdued non-Buddhists at Vajrāsana [i.e., Bodhgayā], the latter appeared as the Ḍākinī *Narteśvarī, who offered him a casket of treasure. When [the great master Padmasambhava] was subduing King *Nāgaviṣṇu, [8] he appeared as the second goddess

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brgyad). For more about this bodhisattva, see Sakya Pandita Translation Group 2014, *The Ākāśagarbha Sūtra*.

1 bDe ba'i rdo rje. See Valentine, *op cit*., pp. 61-62.

2 Drag po gtum po. See Valentine, *op cit*., p. 62.

3 A bodhisattva of the tenth bhūmi. See Martin 2022, p. 136.

4 *Śāntiṃgarbha is an Indian master whose legacy was inserted (perhaps by later Tibetans) into the *bKa' brgyad* system.

5 Yol mo *sprul sku* bsTan 'dzin Norbu's presentation of Mandāravā as one of the past lives of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms could be based on another legend. According to Lama Chonam and Sangye Khandro 1998, pp. 152-154, Princess Mandāravā is said to have achieved immortality together with Padmasambhava at Maratika cave.

6 The context of the above sentence seems to correspond to the story of Mahāsiddha Virūpa who is said to have stopped the sun so that he could avoid paying for beer. Interestingly, Padma 'phrin las 2017, '*Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, p. 22 mentions the names of the several Mahāsiddhas, including Virūpa, as emanations of Padmasambhava.

7 Seng ge sgra sgrog is a wrathful form of Padmasambhava.

8 According to O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*, p. 168, he persecuted Buddhism in Bodhgaya. For an English translation of this passage, see Douglas and Bays 1978, p. 308. *Nāgaviṣṇu, often referred to as Khyab 'jug chen po ra hu la, is identified as either the deity *gZa'* Ra hu la or his

*Sukhakāra, the mother of *Samvarakālagarbha. [Similarly], he appeared as the chieftain Upāsaka Kakha Dzin,[1] who dedicated his service to the Vajrāsana located in Magadha. He [also] appeared as Jinamitra, [2] a Nepali envoy who brought the Vajrakīla tantra to Yangléshö in Nepal.

The above is the sequence of births that appeared in India.

The Life of Nanam Dorjé Düjom

[71] Concerning how Zhang Nanam Dorjé Düjom took [successive] births in Tibet, he was born in Tsang Rong[3] in the clan (*rus*) of Zhanglön Nanam. The term "Zhang" [maternal uncle] refers to a clan, and several of the Tibetan kings took [daughters] from this clan as their queens. Hence, the ministers[4] who were from this clan were maternal uncles to the kings. Therefore, the ministers from this clan are called Zhanglön. In his youth, he served as a minister of religious affairs for Dharma King Trisong Detsen and was one of the emissaries [who received] Padmasambhava [from India].

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progenitor. For more information on the origin and evolution of this deity from a Buddhist monk to destructive demon, and then a Dharma protector, See bZhad pa'i rdo rje 2003, pp. 278-301.

1 See Schwieger 1985, p. 126.

2 So far, no credible information regarding this figure has been found. It is not clear if this was the same Indian Ācārya known as Jinamitra who is credited with translating many Buddhist texts into Tibetan in the eighth century in Tibet. For more on the translator Ācārya Jinamitra, see Gardner 2019c. With respect to the Vajrakīla transmission from India to Yang le shod, it is stated in the *bKa' thang sde lnga* that Padmasambhava, in order to avert a climatic catastrophe in Nepal, sent two Nepalis—Ji la ji sa from Shing kun and Kun la kun sa from the mTshams brag region—to India to retrieve the Vajrakīla. They are said to have brought back a load of Vajrakīla materials. Nevertheless, the aforementioned text does not mention Jinamitra as one of those emissaries sent to India. See O rgyan gling pa 1997, *bKa thang sde lnga*, pp. 13-14. For more on the transmission of Vajrakīla from Prabhāhasti to Padmasambhava, see Boord 2002, pp. XIV-XV.

3 The name "gTsang rong" means "deep valley." It is situated in the northeast of gZhis ka rtse prefecture. According to gTsang phrug sTob lags 2020, *dBus gtsang lo rgyus chen mo*, vol. 2, pp. 478-480, gTsang rong or Rin spung was also known as gNubs yul at the time of imperial Tibet. Many prominent figures, which include sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, Rong zom Chos bzang (1012–1088), and Khu lung pa Yon tan rgya mtsho (d.u.), a close disciple of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes (late 9th–early 10th c.), were born in this region.

4 The term "minister" (*blon po*) in this case refers to feudal lords or trustworthy peers who were advisers to the king; they were not appointed like modern ministers.

Dorjé Düjom was one of Padmasambhava's twenty-five direct disciples,[1] who each displayed different signs of accomplishment. In *A Prayer to the Twenty-Five Disciples*: *A Flowing River of Ripening Empowerment* composed by Chögyal Wangpö Dé (1550–1602),[2] he is praised thus: "Like the air, Dorjé Düjom is unstoppable."[3]

Thus, when Samyé was consecrated by the Abbot [Śāntarakṣita], the Ācārya [Padmasambhava], and the Dharma King [Trisong Detsen], Dorjé Düjom foresaw it with his wisdom eyes. And thus, he planted his neck dagger[4] into the rock.[5] Since he had gained full control over wind and mind (*rlung sems*), he passed through the rocks unobstructedly, leaving behind a chink [on the mountain], which is still identifiable today. [72] Through practicing Vajrakīla, he attained siddhis and extinguished the fire raging on Mt. Hepo by striking it with his dagger. It is said that the imprint of the dagger that struck the rock at Mt. Hepo is still there.

He performed many magnificent deeds such as miraculously flying in the sky without any obstruction and circling around the four continents all at once. His famous meditation cave, known as Drakmar Ké'utsang, is situated at Tsang Rong and another cave known as Rong Dragmar Ké'utsang is located at nearby Yardrok.

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1 The revealed biographies of Padmasambhava have a strong tendency to construct a unified narrative centered on Padmasambhava on the basis of many histories and legends in which he did not play any role. Although most of the twenty-five disciples mentioned above are clearly historical persons, figures such as gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes did not belong to the same epoch as Padmasambhava. See Esler 2020, pp. 32-35.

2 *Chos rgyal* dBang po'i sde, i.e., *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal.

3 This line refers to the miraculous power (*siddhi*) that he is said to have gained through his tantric practice, especially of Vajrakīla. *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal composed this text at rDo rje drag. For a beautiful *dbu med* version of this text, see *Chos rgyal* dBang po'i sde, n.d, *rJe 'bangs nyer lnga'i gsol 'debs*, pp. 159-168. For an English translation, see Mang and Woods 2016.

4 *mGul phur.* A miniature dagger worn around the neck.

5 This passage that contains a description of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms' activities during the consecration of bSam yas as well as the following accounts of his miraculous feats and the listing of the sacred places associated with this saint in Tibet is a slightly abbreviated and rearranged passage from Gu ru bKra shis 1990, pp. 171-172.

Padmasambhava's General Statements and Predictions about Nanam Dorjé Düjom

When the great Padmasambhava was turning the Dharma wheel of *The Gathering of the Lama's Contemplation* for the king and his subjects at Samyé Chimpu, the guru addressed [Dorjé Düjom] as [is recorded] in *The Sealed Prophecy of The Gathering* [*of Lama's*] *Contemplation*[1] thus:

"You, the current Nanam Dorjé Düjom,
Through [your] successive lives from beginningless time,
You have accumulated [merits], and now [you] have gained the genuine fruit.
From now onwards, until the teachings come to an end,[2]
You will manifest as an [entity that is] neither substantial nor unsubstantial, but [in a form] that appears similar to a substantial [entity];[3]
[You] are someone endowed with a *nirmāṇakāya* body, not a body [born from] karma,
And [thus you] will have an indeterminate manner[4] and will benefit sentient beings.

Especially, in these extremely degenerate times,
[You will appear as] a yogin with the name of Rutsam Künga;[5]

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1 For this passage in its original context, see Sangs rgyas gling pa 1983, *Bla ma dgongs pa 'dus pa las ma 'ongs lung bstan bka' rgya ma*, pp. 237-238.

2 This is a reference to the eventual (provisional) end of Buddhism in our world.

3 In this line, the incarnations of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms are described as *sprul sku* that are not substantial (*dngos*), which means that they are not born from karmic residue. Still, they are not purely unsubstantial (*dngos min*). Hence, from our perspective, they appear in the form of *sprul sku*, which are described as entities that appear to be real (*dngos 'dra*).

4 Either he appears in different forms or displays a variety of conducts; the sole purpose of these is to serve the Dharma and benefit sentient beings.

5 Cuevas 2021a (pp. 70–73) has information about rGya *ston* Kun dga' brtson 'grus that helps us identify him as the only person mentioned in these five verses, since (*op. cit*., p. 71) he was from Ru mtshams. rGya *ston* Kun dga' brtson 'grus had some connections with the Third Karmapa, Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339). Cuevas (*op. cit*., p. 71) seems to think they belonged to the same generation. He may thus have died just in time for rGod ldem to be his immediate reincarnation. However, it is surprising that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem may be presented by *mKhan po* Chos dbyings as a reincarnation of a master that (*op. cit*., p. 72) some considered to be a manifestation of Rwa *lo tsā ba* and who is known for blending Rwa *lo tsā ba*'s system of Vajrabhairava with Sa skya *Lam 'bras*. But if we read Sangs rgyas gling pa more carefully, it appears, in fact, that although he identifies rGya *ston* Kun dga' brtson 'grus as a reincarnation of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms,

You will master the essence of generation and completion phases
And kindle the embers of the teaching in the land of Tibet.
You will be called Gyatön and become well-known everywhere."

Similarly, during the empowerment for *The Complete Secret of the Eight Pronouncements*,[1] [Padmasambhava] said:

[73] "You who are known as Dorjé Düjom, after [you] have passed away, you will become Rigdzin Gödemchen at Mt. Trazang at the end of a sequence of many births. You will open the treasure door at Zangzang Lhadrak, and then the river of empowerment will flow from there."[2]

In Padmasambhava's exposition, [*The Prayer in*] *Seven Chapters,* he complimented [Nanam Dorjé Düjom] saying:

"Listen, tantric yogin,
The way in which I performed [spiritual] activities
Is unconceivable and beyond speech."[3]

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he does *not* present Rig 'dzin rGod ldem as a reincarnation of this figure, but, surprisingly enough, as a rebirth of gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes (*Lung bstan bka' rgya ma* 2006, pp. 320-321—Note by Stéphane Arguillère, April 28th, 2025).

1 *bKa' gsang ba yongs rdzogs*. It most probably refers to Guru Chos dbang's *bKa' brgyad* cycle.

2 This quotation as well as the introductory sentence, which gives us the context for Padmasambhava's prophecy (i.e., it was spoken during an empowerment), is an unacknowledged borrowing from *sPrul sku* Tshul khrims bzang po (alias *sPrul sku* Tshul lo). See Tshul khrims bzang po 2015, *Byang gter bka' dbang spyi lo sbyor rung gi lo rgyus*, vol. 56, pp. 401-402. The prophecy itself is from the colophon of a treasure that was revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi dbang*, vol. 9, p. 587.

3 *mKhan po* Chos dbyings has borrowed—without acknowledgement—this quotation as well as its introduction, which informs us that it is from the *Le'u bdun ma'i stong thun*, from the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography of Rig 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, p. 310. While he presents this quotation as compliment to sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms by Padmasambhava, a thorough review of this verse and the preceding lines in the *Le'u bdun ma'i stong thun* reveals otherwise. In fact, Padmasambhava is praising himself. In the context of the biography, it is clear that the quotation is being presented as proof that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms was not just a *tantric yogin*, but a *great tantric yogin* (*sngags kyi rnal 'byor pa chen po*). That being said, the commentary entitled *Le'u bdun ma'i stong thun*, which the Fifth Dalai Lama himself is quoting, has not yet been identified. Lastly, to see this passage

In *An Extensive Essential Guide*,[1] [Padmasambhava] says:

> "You, Nanam Dorjé Düjom,
> will engage in the welfare of migratory beings for seven lifetimes,
> And then you will go to the land of Oḍḍiyāna."

Accordingly, at the time when the master was about to leave for the country of the Rākṣasas, the king and his subject escorted him. [Regarding this event], in *The Chronicles of Padmasambhava*,[2] it is said:

> The tantric yogin Dorjé Düjom is at the head of a row,
> Of all Tibetans who beat drums and carry beads, and…

There are many [statements and prophecies] such as these [that praise him]. He was well-known by the name of Nanam Dorjé Düjom, the tantric yogin, and he became a unique figure [continuing] the deeds of the great Padmasambhava. The major emanated treasure revealer Rigdzin Gödem and his successive incarnations are known to be the emanations of Nanam Dorjé Düjom.

Later Manifestations of Nanam Dorjé Düjom

Furthermore, in Yölmo Tülku's *A Prayer to the Thirty-Six Incarnations* [74] and the Fifth Gödem [incarnation] Kalzang Pema Wangchuk's (ca. 1719–1770) *A Prayer to the Successive Incarnations*,[3] it is said:

> "Likewise, I supplicate his hundreds of past incarnations
> And his hundreds of future ones, etc.,

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in the context of the *Le'u bdun ma*, see bZang po grags pa 2007–2008, *Byang gter gsol 'debs le'u bdun ma*, p. 596.

1 This is one of the prophetic guides revealed by bZang po grags pa. For the passage in context, see bZang po grags pa 2015, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*, vol. 33, p. 158.

2 Pad ma bka' thang. The remaining verses are as follows (O rgyan gling pa 2016, p. 367): *bla sman nyang btsan shi las sna drangs pa'i*།།*bod kyi sman dpyad byed pa thams cad dang*།།*bla mkhyen ljang ston khu lus sna drangs pa'i*།།*bod kyi khab rtse 'dings pa thams cad dang*།།*yon bdag mkhar chen rgyal gyis sna drangs nas*།།*bod kyi pho skyes yon bdag thams cad dang*།།*mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal sna drangs pa'i*།།*bod kyi bud med bu mo thams cad kyis*།།*dpa' mo dpa' thang skyel thung zham ring byas*།།.

3 This prayer is traditionally inserted between the first and second parts of sKal bzang Padma dbang phyug's autobiography. See sKal bzang padma dbang phyug 1973, *Autobiographies*, pp. 372-377 and 2015, *Rang nyid kyi rtogs brjod*, vol. 51, pp. 389-393. See Ehrhard 2024 for a study of these writings.

Who appeared and will appear in succession.
[They] are prophesied to benefit migratory beings at the right moment."

His display of innumerable manifestations appeared for the welfare of sentient beings [and included] such [individuals] as Trophu Lotsāwa Jampa Pal,[1] Tertön Jamyang Lama,[2] and others who upheld the Dharma. Accounts of them are reported in the early history books.

In particular, the great miraculous treasure revealer Lerab Lingpa (1856–1926),[3] known for being the only protector of the Land of Snows in this degenerate age, is also said to be an emanation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom.

In [Lerab Lingpa's] own treasure revelation [known as] *The Revealing Key of the Prophetic Guide*,[4] it says:

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1 Khro phu *lo tsā ba* Byams pa dpal (1173–1225) is also known as Tshul khrims shes rab. For a more detailed account of this scholar, see Martin 2008 and rTa tshag Tshe dbang rgyal 1994, *lHo rong chos 'byung*, p. 331.

2 *gTer ston* 'Jam dbyangs bla ma (b. 15th c.) is said to be the reincarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, *Thob yig gang ga'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, p. 251. For 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's brief biography of this tertön and his treasures, see Yeshe Gyamtso 2011, pp. 218-219. For more information about this figure concerning his dates, his somewhat controversial status as a reincarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, and his relationship to the Northern Treasures, see Batsang 2024b.

3 Las rab gling pa clearly identified himself as an emanation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. *sPrul ku* Tshul lo, the closest disciple of the former, was a Byang gter master affiliated with the 'Khor gdong monastery and its lineage. In his secret biography (Tshul khrims bzang po 2014, *gSang ba'i rnam thar dad pa'i 'jug ngogs*, vol. 8, pp. 122-124), it is reported that at their first meeting, Las rab gling pa revealed their long-standing relationship as master and disciple for many centuries, including a period when he was Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. Henceforth, it may have been believed by some (especially in Eastern Tibet) that Las rab gling pa, whose activities in connection with the 13th Dalai Lama were so vast, was, in essence, the genuine Rig 'dzin rGod ldem incarnate. However, this may not reflect the prevailing sentiments inside the core rDo rje brag institution, which continues to uphold its lineage of rGod ldem's *sprul sku*s, known as the *Rig 'dzin chen po*s. On the other hand, Las rab gling pa was trained in the traditions of 'Jigs med gling pa's (1729/30–1798) *Klong chen snying thig*, to which he contributed his own large cycle of revelations. For further information on this figure, see Pistono 2024. (Note by Stéphane Arguillère.)

4 *The Revealing Key of the Prophetic Guide* mentioned above is not found. However, the quotation appears to be borrowed from Tshul khrims bzang po's biography of Las rab gling pa. The remaining verse are: *tshe phrang bar chad gegs dbang ma gyur na། །zhes dang། yang rdzas gter la dbang bstan*

An emanation of Dorjé Düjom [born in] the year of the fire dragon
will be endowed with great discernment, compassion, and fortunate karma.
Due to his prayers [in previous life], he will be born as a son of
Parents [themselves born] in the dragon and monkey years,
In the Upper Nyak in region of Kham.

Likewise, *The Entrance Guide of* [*the Statue that*] *Liberates Upon Seeing*[1] says:

He who is fortunate, courageous, and a custodian of this profound treasure,
Is a manifestation of Dorjé Düjom's Body.
He is blessed by the Speech of Vajravārāhī,
[75] He is the display of the primordial wisdom of Dorjé Thötreng's Mind.[2]
He is endowed with sublime knowledge, courage, and intelligence,
And [will appear] from the Dokham[3] region with "*las*" in his name.
He will [be born] in the year of the dragon [with] fire [as] the element and display unpredictable conduct.
He will be endowed with bodhicitta [in his] beneficial activities for the teaching and migratory beings.

Numerous statements such as these appear again and again.

The immediate reincarnation of the great treasurer revealer [Lerab Lingpa] is His Eminence, the Wish Fulfilling Dharma Lord, Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné Palzangpo (1933–2004), who is the lord of our vast lineage and Maṇḍalas.[4] As explained in the biography of this Dharma

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'groi'i don chen byed | |. See Tshul khrims bzang po, *gTer chen las rab gling pa'i rnam thar*, n.d., p. 9.

1 *sKu rten mthong grol gyi kha byang*. As with the previous passage, this prophetic guide has not yet been found. The passage is also found on the same page within the biography of Las rab gling pa. See Tshul khrims bzang po, *gTer chen las rab gling pa'i rnam thar*, n.d., p. 9.

2 Like Gu ru rDo rje drag po rtsal, rDo rje thod phreng is one of the secret names of Padmasambhava.

3 mDo khams is a generic name for Khams and A mdo provinces in Tibet. For more explanation, see Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las (1927–1997) 2002, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod*, p. 1136.

4 The reader should note that the author, *mKhan po* Chos dbyings, articulates perspectives that may not reflect a consensus among the Northern Treasures masters and scholars. As an individual from the mGo log region and a disciple of *mKhan po* 'Jigs med phun tshogs, he brings to the fore this master who, despite his significant contribution to the revival of Buddhism in general and rNying ma school in particular in the eastern Tibet

Lord, he was not just once, but again and again praised in many of the vajra prophetic treasures as an unmistaken manifestation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom.

The Dharma Lord himself said:[1]

> "[Padmasambhava], haven't you
> Cared for the two of us, Karchen Lady [Yeshe Tsogyal] and I, Dorjé Düjom [i.e., Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné] with special affection?"

There are many [statements] like these.

In particular, for [Jigmé Phüntsok's] treasure revelation [known as] *The Neck-Pouch Dagger*, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama composed *A Swift Blessing*: *Lineage Supplication*,[2] in which there are clear statements such as these:

> To the Sovereign Lord Samantabhadra and Vajradharma,
> To the Lotus Born Vajra [Padmasambhava], and three supreme [figures]:
> the King, his subject, and the companion,[3]
> To the nine fortunate sons and Nanam in particular, [76]
> I address my prayer: please dispel outer and inner obstacles!
> To the venerable Rigdzin Gödem and Lekden Dorjé,[4]
> To Ngakgi Wangpo and Padma Trinlé Tsal,[5]

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and being regarded as the reincarnation of Las rab gling pa, is not widely recognized as a master of the Northern Treasures. Therefore, Chos dbyings' statement about Las rab gling pa and *mKhan po* 'Jigs med phun tshogs must thus be taken *cum grano salis*. However, his close disciple, O rgyan chos dbang rin po che, attests to his profound interest in the Byang gter (oral communication to Stéphane Arguillère, November 2024).

1 See 'Jigs med Phun tshogs 'byung gnas 2002, *gTan gyi skyabs gcig padma thod phreng rtsal*, vol. 3, p. 10.

2 'Jigs med Phun tshogs 'byung gnas 2002, *Phur pa mgul khug ma'i cha shas thugs dam thugs kyi phur cig*., vol. 1, p. 1. For an English translation, see Pearcey 2018.

3 The individuals referred to here are, respectively: King Khri srong lde'u btsan, sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, and *mKha' 'gro* Ye shes mtsho rgyal.

4 Legs ldan rdo rje, also known by *Rigs 'dzin* Legs ldan rdo rje (1452/1512–1580), was the first incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, recognized retroactively as the second rDo rje brag Rig 'dzin chen mo. For an English biography, see Samten Chhosphel 2012a.

5 This refers to *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las (1641–1717), the fourth incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. For an English biography, see Samten Chhosphel 2012b.

To Lerab Ling [pa] and Padma Wangchen,[1]
I address my prayer: please dispel outer and inner obstacles!

Although I am an ordinary person, I [Chöying] had an opportunity to receive my share of the holy Dharma from this noble person, who was undoubtedly a manifestation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom. And also, I am very fortunate to have been cared for by him. In the future too, until I attain enlightenment, I pray for him to remain my lord of family.[2]

[1] Padma dbang chen is the secret name of *mKhan po* 'Jigs med phun tshogs. He used this name when he revealed the above-mentioned mind treasure known as *Phur pa mgul khug ma'i cha shas thugs dam thugs kyi phur cig* at Yang le shod in Nepal. Interestingly, he used the name Ngag dbang blo gros mtshungs pa med pa for most of his writings rather than 'Jigs med phun tshogs. See 'Jigs med Phun tshogs 'byung gnas 2002, *gTan gyi skyabs gcig padma thod phreng rtsal*, vol. 1, pp. 4-6.

[2] *Rigs kyi bdag po*. This refers to the idealized form of one's personal master, visualized as a deity above one's head, especially when one visualizes oneself as a deity. See Krang dbyi sun 1985, *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, p. 2686.

Background & Analysis

Chapter 3: Imperial Legends of the Northern Treasures: Padmasambhava & Nanam Dorjé Düjom

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While the scriptures of the Northern Treasures undoubtedly contain materials that predate their revelation, it is clear that the socioreligious institution built around those treasures began during Rigdzin Gödem's lifetime in the 14th century.[2] It is, therefore, unsurprising that the majority of the efforts of the FCHNT will be focused on events that transpired during or after the 14th century. Nevertheless, the belief that the Northern Treasures began with Padmasambhava is so thoroughly central to the tradition's understanding of itself that it would be inappropriate to completely skip over the subject in this study. Therefore, translations of Khenpo Chöying's biographies of Padmasambhava and Nanam Dorjé Düjom have been provided above.

A salient objective evident in Khenpo Chöying's historical account of the tradition is to demonstrate the transmissional integrity of the Northern Treasures from their source—Padmasambhava is identified as the root of everything Nyingma in general and the Northern Treasures in particular—through to the present. Khenpo Chöying presents Nanam Dorjé Düjom as a very important link in this transmissional history as he is portrayed as the recipient of the Northern Treasures before they are concealed during the Imperial Period. Then, it is one of Nanam Dorjé Düjom's future emanations who reveals the treasures and transmits them to his disciples in the 14th century.[3] The remainder of *The Garland of Wondrous Tales* is constituted by the biographies of the patriarchs of the tradition, beginning with Zangpo Drakpa (14th c.)

[1] Thank you to the entire FCHNT team for their help with this chapter, particularly Batsang Tenpa Tsering and Cécile Ducher.

[2] For an explanation of how a large percentage of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* cycle of the Great Perfection, which was revealed by Padma las 'brel rtsal (1291–1319), made its way into the Northern Treasures, see Arguillère 2024a.

[3] For a discussion of the problematic nature of the relationship between Nanam Dorjé Düjom and Rigzin Gödem, see the chapter in *Northern Treasures Histories*: *Volume II* by Jay Holt Valentine entitled "The Prophesied Incarnation."

and Rigdzin Gödem and concluding with the recent masters of one particular monastery, Khordong, in Eastern Tibet.

While most of Khenpo Chöying's biographies in *The Garland of Wondrous Tales* are based on earlier sources that were written relatively close to the lives of the individuals they describe, the same cannot be said about sources for the biographies of Padmasambhava and Nanam Dorjé Düjom.[1] At present, four separate Dunhuang manuscripts authored in the late tenth century discuss the exploits of Padmasambhava.[2] While one of those manuscripts identifies a disciple named Nanam Zhang Dorjé Nyen,[3] it is not clear if this is meant to refer to Nanam Dorjé Düjom, whose precise name has not been found in any Dunhuang manuscript, or some other member of the Nanam clan.[4] The Dunhuang accounts of Padmasambhava portray him as, to use Jacob Dalton's phrase, "Tibet's demon tamer *par excellence*."[5] While these narratives are perhaps legendary in nature, they appear to reflect a very early stage in the development of those legends.[6] Much of what has become common knowledge regarding the exploits of Padmasambhava and his disciples—including Nanam Dorjé Düjom—in Tibet toward the end of the Imperial Period (i.e., late 8th–early 9th c.) originated in hagiographies that were revealed by a series of treasure revealers, most notably: Nyangral Nyima Özer's (ca. 1124–1192) *Copper Island Chronicles*,[7] Orgyen Lingpa's (14th c.) *Chronicles of Padmasambhava*,[8] and Sangye Lingpa's (1340–1396) *Golden Garland Chronicles*.[9] From the perspective of a modern historian, the relatively late appearance of these historiographic sources with respect to the events that they chronicle—a gap of three to five hundred years—would significantly reduce their historical reliability.[10] Nevertheless, as stated above, the legends involving Padmasambhava and his disciples—

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1 For a recent and insightful compilation of articles about Padmasambhava, see Samuel and Oliphant 2020.

2 For an analysis of all four of these texts, see Dalton 2020.

3 sNa nam Zhang rDo rje gnyan.

4 For an analysis and translation of the relevant passage, see Angowski 2022, pp. 36-37. For a discussion of the various members of the sNa nam clan that appear in the Dunhuang manuscripts, see Cantwell and Mayer 2008, pp. 51-52.

5 Dalton 2020, p. 33.

6 *Ibid*., p. 29.

7 Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1989, *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*.

8 O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*.

9 Sangs rgyas gling pa 1985, *bKa' thang gser phreng*.

10 From an emic perspective, however, these revealed texts are considered to be very reliable among the rNying ma pas, especially with respect to their effectiveness for practitioners.

those that are more widely known in Tibet as well as those that are more specific to the Northern Treasures—are essential components of the tradition's understanding of itself, and therefore we will examine their biographies here.

The Biography of Padmasambhava

An important feature of Khenpo Chöying's biography of Padmasambhava, which is clearly not meant to be a complete biography, is that it includes a traditional account of the concealment of the Northern Treasures.[1] This narrative is not found in any of the more common chronicles that were written by Nyangral Nyima Özer, Orgyen Lingpa, or Sangye Lingpa. Among the Northern Treasures, there are many prophetic guides, most of which were revealed by either Zangpo Drakpa or Rigdzin Gödem, and nearly all of them feature conversations between Padmasambhava and a select group of his disciples: Mutri Tsenpo, Yeshe Tsogyal, and Nanam Dorjé Düjom.[2] The general concealment narrative of the Northern Treasures has been constructed largely from excerpts from these prophetic guides.[3] Although Khenpo Chöying's presentation perhaps emphasizes the role of Nanam Dorjé Düjom a little more than is standard, his account is essentially in line with what is found in the 15th-century biography of Rigdzin Gödem entitled *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.[4]

Outline of Khenpo Chöying's Biography of Padmasambhava

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1 For an article-length investigation of the primary concealment narrative of the Northern Treasures as well as the prophetic guides from which this narrative is extracted, see Valentine 2024.

2 A notable exception is bZang po grags pa's *The Blazing Wheel Exorcism* (*Phyir zlog 'khor lo 'bar ba*), which is a conversation between the Bhagavān (*bcom ldan 'das*), who is presumably Śākyamuni Buddha, and his disciples. For a complete, line-by-line English translation of *The Blazing Wheel Exorcism* that is accompanied by the Tibetan text, see Mang and Woods 2017.

3 There are also narratives called *lo rgyus* scattered throughout the treasure literature of the Northern Treasures. (Footnote information provided by Stéphane Arguillère). For a translation and analysis of one of these texts, see Achard 2023a.

4 Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 70-84.

— Concealment and Revelation of the Northern Treasures (pp. 60-65);
— Conclusion (pp. 65-66).

A distinguishing element of Khenpo Chöying's biography of Padmasambhava is the manner in which he elevates the status of this beloved figure. He begins with a lengthy quotation from *The Sūtra of Predictions in Magadha*—a sūtra that appears to exist only in the fragments that are quoted in various revealed chronicles such as *The Chronicles of Padmasambhava* and *The Golden Garland Chronicles*—in which Śākyamuni Buddha predicts the coming of one who would be even greater than himself.[1] Seeing the look of shock on the faces of his disciples after they hear his prediction, the Buddha goes on to explain the five ways in which Padmasambhava will be superior, in part to assure them that they have not misunderstood his prophecy. After a discussion of the illusory nature of Padmasambhava's training—he was, after all, already enlightened before birth—Khenpo Chöying includes a lengthy excerpt from *The Explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer* by Jamgön Mipham (1846–1912) that explains that Padmasambhava is indivisible from the primordial buddha, Samantabhadra, and that his infinite emanations pervade all worlds and times.[2] Continuing to use Mipham, Khenpo Chöying clarifies what it means to declare that Padmasambhava is the "Second Buddha." Contrary to what one might easily assume, it is not simply a title designating sequential order. While surely, the title does imply that he is the buddha who appeared after the "First Buddha" (i.e., Śākyamuni), it ought not imply that there will be a long sequence of buddhas: the third, fourth, fifth, etc. Mipham and Khenpo Chöying are arguing that for every buddha—the clarifying example they give is Maitreya—there will be a "Second Buddha" or "regent"[3] responsible for the grand proliferation of the teachings after the passing of their respective buddhas, and in all cases, that regent will be an emanation of Padmasambhava.[4] Thus, we are to conclude that for every "First Buddha" who attains liberation through discovering and following the Buddhist path of liberation, there will be a "Second Buddha" who: 1) follows after the passing of the First Buddha, 2) comes into the world already enlightened, and 3) ultimately surpasses the

1 For the most substantial extract from *The Sūtra of Predictions in Magadha* (*dBus 'gyur tshal lung bstan pa'i mdo*), see Sangs rgyas gling pa 1985, *bKa' thang gser phreng*, pp. 79-81.
2 The full title of *The Explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer* is *Gu ru'i tshig bdun rnam bshad ngo mtshar pad ma dkar po*. See Mi pham 2008, *Gu ru'i tshig bdun gsol 'debs kyi rnam bshad*, vol. 32, pp. 286-288.
3 rGyal tshab.
4 Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 58-59.

buddha which he follows. This is a much grander view of Padmasambhava than simply designating him as the second individual to cross the "finish line" of nirvāṇa as a Buddha.

Regarding the sources that were used to construct this biography of Padmasambhava, Khenpo Chöying employed the following, which are listed in order of the presumed date of authorship.

— *The Magical Net of Mañjuśrī*;[1]
— *The Chronicles of Padmasambhava*, Orgyen Lingpa (14th c.);[2]
— *The Prayer in Seven Chapters*, Zangpo Drakpa (14th c.);[3]
— *Prophecies of the Future of the Concealed Lands*: *A Register Guide*, Rigdzin Gödem (1337–ca. 1401);[4]
— *The Cycle of Scrolls from the White Whetstone Keys*, Rigdzin Gödem (1337–1409);[5]
— *The Golden Garland Chronicles*, Sangye Lingpa (1340–1396);[6]
— *The Sūtra of Predictions in Magadha*;
— *History of the Dharma* (1813), Guru Tashi (18th–19th c.);[7]

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1 *The Magical Net of Mañjuśrī* (*'Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*). This tantra was translated during the Early Propagation. Four manuscripts are conserved in the Dunhuang library (Dalton and van Schaik 2006, pp. 114-116) and it is also part of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*. See *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa*, in *NG* [Collective 1982], vol. 21, pp. 326-349; it is said to have been translated by Jñānagarbha & Vairocana. In the *bKa' ma shing tu rgyas pa* (KSG, vol. 4, p. 474), the translation is attributed to sKa ba dPal brtsegs and Cog ro Klu'i rgyal mtshan. These early translations were lightly revised by the great translator Rin chen bzang po (958–1055). A more thorough translation from Sanskrit was produced by Shong Blo gros brtan pa in the thirteenth century, during the revisions of existing translations for their inclusion in the canonical collection. It was further revised in the late fifteenth century by Zha lu *lo tsā ba* Dharmapālabhadra (1441–1527 CE). Despite these revisions and their inclusion in most Kangyurs, especially the Dergé Kangyur, the most prevalent version until today remains the older one, which is in fact more faithful to the Sanskrit albeit less literal. (This footnote was written by Cécile Ducher.)

2 O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*.

3 bZang po grags pa 1976, *gSol 'debs le'u bdun pa dang bsam pa lhun grub rten bskyed dang bcas pa*.

4 Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2008, *Ma 'ongs lung bstan sbas yul gyi them byang*, pp. 101-115.

5 Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *'Dzeng rdo dkar po'i nas byung ba'i shog hril skor*, vol. 14, pp. 229-245.

6 Sangs rgyas gling pa 1985, *bKa' thang gser phreng*.

7 Gu ru bKra shis 1990.

— *Explanation of the Seven-Line Prayer*, Jamgön Mipham (1846–1912).[1]

The only one of these sources that is likely to have already existed during the life of Padmasambhava is the Kama Tantra entitled *The Magical Net of Mañjuśrī*. The bulk of the biography is drawn from the five treasure texts that were discovered in the fourteenth century, and one might also consider *The Sūtra of Predictions in Magadha* to be a treasure for, as mentioned above, it is not known to exist elsewhere, other than as a quoted source within treasure texts. The remaining details of the biography are drawn from the 19th-century compositions of Guru Tashi and Jamgön Mipham, the former of which seems to have relied in part on Tāranātha's (1575–1643) biography of Padmasambhava that is believed to have been based on Indian sources.[2]

The Biography of Nanam Dorjé Düjom

Khenpo Chöying's biography of Nanam Dorjé Düjom begins with a lengthy description of his previous lives that transpired in India and Nepal. The entire passage is borrowed from the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography of Ngakgi Wangpo (1580–1639), who is well-known as the third incarnation of Rigdzin Gödem and the individual who established Dorjé Drak Monastery in Central Tibet.[3] The Fifth Dalai Lama himself based his description of these previous lives on a prayer that was written by one of Ngakgi Wangpo's most important disciples, the Third Yolmo Incarnation, Tendzin Norbu (1589–1644). As an extant copy of this prayer has not yet been discovered, the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography of Ngakgi Wangpo, which was authored in the 17th century, is the earliest testimony of these previous lives.

Outline of Khenpo Chöying's Biography of Nanam Dorjé Düjom

— Introduction (p. 68);
— Previous Lives in India and Nepal (pp. 68-70);
— Exploits in Tibet as Nanam Dorjé Düjom (pp. 70-71);
— Padmasambhava's Predictions Regarding Future Lives (pp. 71-73);
— Later Manifestations (pp. 73-75).

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1 Mi pham 2008, *Gu ru'i tshig bdun gsol 'debs kyi rnam bshad*, vol. 32, pp. 283-331.

2 See Tāranātha 2007–2008, *Slob dpon padma'i rnam thar rgya gar lugs*.

3 See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, vol. 59, pp. 308-309.

By moving the list of previous lives to the biography of Nanam Dorjé Düjom, Khenpo Chöying is able to enhance the significance of this figure in a manner that has not been previously achieved.[1] For example, the sequence begins with Samantabhadra and Vajrasattva, who are here understood to be the Dharmakāya and Saṃbhogakāya aspects of Nanam Dorjé Düjom, who is therefore a Nirmāṇakāya manifestation.[2] While it is common to present this figure as a fully realized master, particularly of the wrathful Vajrakīla cycle of teachings, it is unusual to think of him as one who has gained some level of equality with Padmasambhava, for indeed Khenpo Chöying presents them both as Nirmāṇakāya emanating forth from Samantabhadra. The details of these previous lives demonstrate that Nanam Dorjé Düjom has been present throughout the history of Buddhism in India and Tibet by identifying his previous incarnations primarily as individuals who lived during the life of Śākyamuni Buddha and Padmasambhava.

While the details of the lives of the Indian incarnations are rather sparse—each is discussed for no more than one or two sentences—the account of the exploits of Nanam Dorjé Düjom is somewhat more developed, though still short with respect to more recent figures such as Rigdzin Gödem. This section begins by mentioning Nanam Dorjé Düjom's role early in life as a minister of religious affairs for King Trisong Detsen (742–797) and emphasizes his maturation as a close disciple of Padmasambhava. This section is followed by a series of prophecies about Padmasambhava that are drawn from the revealed biographies of Padmasambhava and the prophetic guides of the Northern Treasures. These prophecies emphasize Nanam Dorjé Düjom's level of attainment and the fact that his emanations will continue to manifest in a variety of manners, most importantly as Rigdzin Gödem, who will reveal the Northern Treasures.

Khenpo Chöying departs from what one might consider a normative presentation of the religious history of the Northern Treasures by including a passage from Sangye Lingpa's (1340–1396) *The Sealed Prophecy of The Gathering* [*of the Lama's*] *Contemplation*.[3] Therein, Padmasambhava explains that one of Nanam Dorjé Düjom's Nirmāṇakāyas will be named Gyatön Rutsam Künga (14th c.), who is now known as a disciple of the Third Karmapa, Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339).[4] Khenpo Chöying's placement of this passage within the

[1] For a discussion of how Nanam Dorjé Düjom is represented in a variety of different sources, see Valentine 2013, pp. 80-103.

[2] Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 67-68.

[3] Chos dbyings 2015, p. 71.

[4] Cuevas 2017, p. 10, reports that rGya *ston* and his father, Ru mtshams kyi [r]gya dBang phyug grags pa, are identified by Tāranātha (1574–1634) as the first two patriarchs of the Rwa lcags mkhar ba lineage.

biography suggests that he maintains that Gyatön Rutsam Künga ought to be considered the incarnation immediately preceding Rigdzin Gödem. This view, however, is certainly not normative within the Northern Treasures, as Gyatön Rutsam Künga is not listed in the tradition's literature as a pre-incarnation of Rigdzin Gödem.

Interestingly, Khenpo Chöying concludes the biography with what one might consider a listing of the non-traditional incarnations of Nanam Dorjé Düjom. He first mentions both Trophu Lotsāwa Jampa Pal (1173–1225) and Tertön Jamyang Lama (15th c.).[1] While Trophu Lotsāwa is presented as the emanation who manifested between Nanam Dorjé Düjom and Rigdzin Gödem in the biography written by the Fifth Dalai Lama, this Kagyü master is generally left out of the descriptions of the incarnation lineage. The various accounts of Jamyang Lama present him as a subsequent incarnation of Rigdzin Gödem, yet he is clearly not a master of the Northern Treasures, and he is not generally included in the descriptions of the incarnation lineage of Rigdzin Gödem that features the throne-holders of Dorjé Drak Monastery.[2] Nevertheless, both Trophu Lotsāwa and Jamyang Lama have been relevant to discussions of this incarnation lineage since at least the 17th century, so including them here provides a sense of completeness to the biography and demonstrates the variety of ways in which the incarnations of Nanam Dorjé Düjom (i.e., Samantabhadra) manifest.

Khenpo Chöying's presentation departs again from what one might consider normative within the tradition by ending the biography of Nanam Dorjé Düjom with a discussion of Tertön Sögyal (Lerab Lingpa, 1856–1926)[3] and his immediate reincarnation, Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné (1933–2004).[4] As with any other Imperial Era figure, one should not be surprised to discover that there are individuals who have been recognized as emanations of these dynastic figures who are not included in specific, prestigious incarnation lineages. Thus, just as

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1 For an analysis of the different ways that Khro phu *lo tsā ba* has been characterized in a variety of sources, see Valentine 2013, pp. 104-128.

2 It is possible that along the way someone might have decided to include 'Jam dbyangs bla ma in the incarnation lineage to account for the gap in time between Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (d. ca. 1401) and the birth of his reincarnation named *Rig 'dzin* Legs ldan rdo rje (or Legs ldan rje, b. ca. 1512). However, it is also possible that 'Jam dbyangs bla ma himself or perhaps his disciples considered him to be a reincarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem but that his status was never accepted by the patriarchs of the Northern Treasures.

3 For an accessible English biography of *gTer ston* Las rab gling pa, see Samten Chhosphel 2011.

4 For an accessible English biography of Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné, see Terrone 2013. See also Sodargye 2025.

with Trophu Lotsāwa and Jamyang Lama, including Lerab Lingpa and Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné to demonstrate the manifold manner in which the emanations of Samantabhadra manifest for the benefit of the teachings is understandable. However, using a prayer written by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Khenpo Chöying suggests that the blessings of the tradition—and thus institutional legitimacy—flow from Ngakgi Wangpo and Pema Trinlé to Lerab Lingpa and Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné.[1] This is a departure from the normative view within the Northern Treasures in that its posterity is traced through the successive incarnations of the Dorjé Drak incarnations, up to the tenth incarnation, Thubten Jigmé Namdröl Gyatso (1936–2024), who recently passed away in Tibet. Khenpo Chöying's emphasis on Lerab Lingpa and Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné may reflect a distinctive view that has developed recently in Eastern Tibet. Alternatively, his authoring of this aspect of the biography could be driven by the fact that Khenpo Chöying counts Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné as one of his own teachers, giving him the opportunity to demonstrate his personal link with Nanam Dorjé Düjom. Whatever may have been his motivations, the reader is cautioned to remember that the section of the biography that discusses Lerab Lingpa and Jigmé Phüntsok is not representative of the traditional view maintained within the Northern Treasures.

Regarding the sources that were used to construct this biography of Nanam Dorjé Düjom, Khenpo Chöying employed the following, which are listed in order of the presumed date of authorship.

— *The Chronicles of Padmasambhava*, Orgyen Lingpa (14th c.);[2]
— *The Essential Steps*: *An Extensive Essential Guide*, Zangpo Drakpa (14th c.);[3]
— *The Descent of the River of Empowerments for the Eight Pronouncements*, Rigdzin Gödem (1337–ca. 1401);[4]
— *The Sealed Prophecy of The Gathering* [*of the Lama's*] *Contemplation*, Sangye Lingpa (1340–1396);[5]

1 Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 74-75.
2 O rgyan gling pa 2016, *Padma bka' thang*.
3 bZang po grags pa 2015, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*, vol. 33, pp. 143-159.
4 Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi dbang*, vol. 9, pp. 579-587.
5 Sangs rgyas gling pa 1983, *Bla ma dgongs pa 'dus pa las ma 'ongs lung bstan*, pp. 1-523.

— *A Prayer to the Twenty-Five Disciples*: *A Flowing River of Ripening Empowerment*, Chögyal Wangpö Dé (1550–1603);[1]
— *The Prayer to the Successive Incarnations*, Tendzin Norbu (1589–1644);[2]
— *The Essential Exposition of* [*the Prayer in*] *Seven Chapters* (d.u.);[3]
— *The Ocean Displaying Marvels*: *Biography of Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo*, Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682);[4]
— *A Prayer to the Successive Incarnations*, Kalzang Pema Wangchuk (ca. 1720–1771);[5]
— *History of the Dharma* (1813), Guru Tashi (18th–19th c.);[6]
— *The Entrance Guide of the Statue that Liberates Upon Seeing*, Lerab Lingpa (1856–1926);[7]
— *The Revealing Key of the Prophetic Guide*, Lerab Lingpa (1856–1926);[8]
— *The Singular and Constant Refuge of Padmasambhava Thoteng Tsal*, Jigmé Phüntsok Jungné (1933–2004);[9]

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1 *Chos rgyal* dBang po'i sde n.d., *rJe 'bangs nyer lnga'i gsol 'debs*, vol. 15, pp. 159-168.

2 An extant copy of The Prayer to the Successive Incarnations (sKye phreng gsol 'debs) has not yet been located.

3 This source has not yet been identified. As a commentary on *Le'u bdun ma* that was referenced by the Fifth Dalai Lama, it could have been written anywhere between the 14th and 17th centuries inclusively.

4 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, vol. 59, pp. 313-463.

5 Kalzang Pema Wangchuk was the Fifth Rigdzin Dorjé Drak, so this is a prayer he wrote about his own incarnation lineage. sKal bzang padma dbang phyug 1973, *sKyes rabs gsol 'debs*, pp. 372-377.

6 Gu ru bKra shis 1990.

7 An extant copy of *The Entrance Guide of the Statue that Liberates Upon Seeing* (*sKu rten mthong grol gyi kha byang*) has not yet been located. As indicated in the footnotes to the translation above, *mKhan po* Chos dbyings appears to have borrowed the passage from Tshul khrims bzang po's *Biography of Terchen Lerab Lingpa* (Tshul khrims bzang po n.d., *gTer chen las rab gling pa'i rnam thar*).

8 Just as with the previous text, an extant copy of *The Revealing Key of the Prophetic Guide* (*Kha byang gsal ba'i lde mig*) has also not yet been located, and it also appears to have been referenced through Tshul khrims bzang po's *Biography of Terchen Lerab Lingpa*.

9 'Jigs med Phun tshogs 'byung gnas 2002, *gTan gyi skyabs gcig padma thod phreng rtsal*, vol. 3, pp. 10-11.

— *A Swift Blessing*: *Lineage Supplication of The Neck-Pouch Dagger*, Fourteenth Dalai Lama (b. 1940).[1]

The above sources can be seen as falling within three groupings. First, there is a cluster of treasure biographies of Padmasambhava and prophetic guides that were revealed in the 14th century. Second, there is a group of authored texts—prayers, commentaries, biographies, histories—that were written between the 17th and 19th centuries. Lastly, there is a collection of later prophetic guides and a lineage supplication that were revealed or written in the late-19th and 20th centuries.

[1] bsTan 'dzin rgya mtsho 2002, *Phur pa mgul khug ma'i brgyud 'debs*, vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

Chapter 4: Düjom Rinpoché's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* in Context: Understanding Recent Nyingma Historiography

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We[1] shall now move to our next task: filling the gap that Khenpo Chöying leaves open[2] between Nanam Dorjé Düjom and Rigdzin Gödem's immediate predecessor, Zangpo Drakpa. Let the reader first be reminded of what the main stages of the development of the Nyingma school between the 8th and 11th centuries were, according to the views of modern-day Nyingmapas.

The best-known and most authoritative presentation of this history in a form that reflects the views of contemporary Nyingmapas is found in Düjom Rinpoché's (1904–1987) writing known in English translation as *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*: *Its Fundamentals and History*.[3] We can safely follow it here for our present purpose, which is to summarize this common emic understanding of the matters under discussion.

Düjom Rinpoché was obviously more aware than anyone else of the extremely schematic nature, to say the least, of his presentation of the history of the Old School of Tibetan Buddhism. He was a perfect scholar of these traditions and the editor of *The Uninterrupted Oral Tradition of the Nyingmapas*,[4] which is full of historiographical material that does not fit into such a framework.

However, Düjom Rinpoché was also elected as "the supreme head" of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism in the very difficult

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1 This and the following chapters owe a great deal to the weekly seminar discussions of the FCHNT team, and all of the perhaps original ideas contained therein were, so to speak, first tested on the team members and benefited greatly from their feedback. The attribution of authorship must therefore be understood in this context.

2 If we ignore the barely mentioned "non-standard" pre-incarnations—Khro phu *lo tsā ba*, rGya *ston* Kun dga' brtson 'grus, etc.

3 Henceforth Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991. A significant part of this book is a paraphrase of Padma 'phrin las' (1641–1717) *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*, to which we will return in the next chapter. The amount of borrowing by Düjom Rinpoché shows the high degree of authority he gives to Padma 'phrin las' text.

4 bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje (ed.), 1982–1987, *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa* (henceforth: NKG).

circumstances of the Tibetan exile following the Chinese takeover of Tibet in the 1950s. The narrative produced or reproduced by such an author in such a context must also be understood in relation to this situation. To put it simply, although a fully detailed politico-religious history of the period is still lacking, the situation in the 1960s and 1970s could be characterized as having both elements of continuity with the earlier situation in Tibet and major disruptive elements.

The elements inherited from the first half of the 20th century in Tibet can be summarized in three points: first, a situation of hegemony of the Gelug school merged with the state apparatus in central Tibet. Its most fundamentalist and anti-Nyingma currents, which had been kept in check by the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, were able to expand their hegemony after his death in 1933.[1]

Second, after the Dzungar persecution of 1717–1718,[2] the Nyingma school had largely reestablished itself in eastern Tibet, more or less outside the sphere of the Central Tibetan government's closest control, thanks largely to the activities of direct and indirect Khampa disciples of Jigmé Lingpa (ca. 1729–1798). This refoundation then nurtured the so-called "non-sectarian"[3] movement. Despite its title, this movement, in addition to its remarkable achievements in the field of compiling and preserving rare Buddhist teachings, can also be characterized as an alliance of non-Gelugpa schools in eastern Tibet in the spirit of a resistance to the domination and standardization appetites of the most intolerant Gelugpas of central Tibet. This "non-sectarian" movement also had a strong component of East Tibetan regionalism and cultural identity affirmation.

The third major background factor to be considered in understanding the religious situation created by the exile after the Chinese invasion is the strong presence of various branches of the Kagyü and Nyingma schools in the Himalayan regions and, in contrast, the virtual non-existence of the Gelugpas outside Tibet. In fact, because of their close ties to the Tibetan state apparatus, any Gelug master could be perceived as an agent of Lhasa. For this reason, for example, it was impossible for this order to take root in Bhutan.

Such a situation could only lead to a brutal readjustment of the balance of power among the various branches of Tibetan religion once the Tibetan political-religious system was destroyed by the Chinese. The Tibetan government-in-exile, initially reconstituted along the same

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1 Dreyfus 1998 and Dreyfus 2011 give a clear overview of this Gelug fanaticism and its perceived extensions into the field of witchcraft.

2 Batsang 2024a.

3 *Ris med*. See Deroche 2023 for insightful passages on the sources of 'Jigs med gling pa's *ris med* orientation.

lines as before 1959, was indeed unable to maintain its rule in the same terms over an exile population of much more mixed religious denominations and regional origins. This was not without sometimes violent tensions, which could not be fully resolved until the end of the 20th century despite all the skill of the 14th Dalai Lama. His constant concern was twofold: on the one hand, to secure the support of the international community for the Tibetan cause; on the other, to preserve the unity of the Tibetan people against those who could understand it only in the context of their chimera of mass conversion to a single state religion—the Gelug school, as understood by its exclusivist elements.

The situation cannot be fully understood without discussing the little-studied question of the funding of the various branches of Tibetan religion in exile. What had been a quasi-feudal system in Tibet, with land allotted to monasteries to ensure the monks' subsistence or even with support from the central state, had to be replaced by a system based purely on patronage. Its main sources were (and still are) either in the wider Chinese world (Taiwan...) or in the West. In this context, the lamas who were most adept at securing funding from foreign sponsors (such as Düjom Rinpoché) could be perceived or portrayed by their enemies as traitors to the Tibetan cause.

These are the background elements that must be considered to understand the spirit in which Düjom Rinpoché wrote *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism*. For the man who had become the head of a school that was regaining its freedom in turmoil, with the power of a large popular following and an abundance of resources provided by foreign disciples, the time was perhaps not ripe for extreme precision. In this text, Düjom Rinpoché has undoubtedly sacrificed some of his immense erudition to the need to produce a standard historical account and doctrinal synthesis sufficiently simple and consensual to enable the federation of the Nyingma school. Indeed, this school, more than other Tibetan currents, had been characterized over the centuries by factionalism and even outright anarchy. The Nyingmapas had never lived under a unified central authority. The story remains to be told, however, of the balances that had to be struck between the various currents of central and eastern Tibet within the now unified Nyingma school, not to mention the ways in which Tibetans had to deal with the reality of Tibetan Buddhism outside Tibet, in the Himalayas, of which they were not necessarily fully aware or well informed.[1]

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[1] One might also wonder whether bDud 'joms *rin po che* owed part of his position, in addition to his immense personal talents, to the fact that he was both a man trained in the best traditions of central Tibet and the *sprul sku* of an eastern Tibetan master (bDud 'joms gling pa, 1835–1904), whose

Now that the reader is aware of the context in which *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* was written, a sketch of the history of the Nyingmapas from the introduction of Buddhism into Tibet to the time of Rigdzin Gödem, as presented in this source, will be more in order.

An Overview of Düjom Rinpoché's Global Narrative

First of all, the Nyingmapas, contrary to what most other schools of Tibetan Buddhism officially[1] believe, do not regard Buddha Śākyamuni as the only or even the main source of Buddhism in our world. Instead, there is a strong focus on a primordial Buddha Küntuzangpo, or All-Good, Samantabhadra,[2] whose teachings are described as having been mystically transmitted to various celestial beings in the otherworldly realms before reaching ours through various channels.[3]

Düjom Rinpoché summarizes—largely on the basis of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's (1641–1717) *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*—the way in which the three classes of "inner tantras" were transmitted through masters belonging to the Indian world in a broad sense (including Nepal, Kashmir, etc.): the Mahāyoga lineages come first (pp. 458-484),[4] then the Anuyoga (pp. 485-489), then the Atiyoga or Dzogchen (pp. 490-501).

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revelations had many followers not only in Central Tibet but far and wide in the Himalayas.

1 The conviction is perhaps more sincere in the dGe lugs school and less consistent in the others, which may trace some of their tantric teachings to the visions of realized beings who are not always said to merely rediscover and reveal teachings originating in the historical Buddha's predication.

2 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 447-450. This is the "contemplative transmission (or Mind-transmission) of the Victors" (*rgyal ba dgongs brgyud*). The commonly accepted translation (or retro-translation) of Kun tu bzang po by the Sanskrit "Samantabhadra" is somewhat problematic, since we do not have any truly Indian text with a Primordial Buddha Samantabhadra. In all attested Indian Buddhist literature, Samantabhadra is always only a bodhisattva. However, we have bowed to the prevailing usage and adopted "Samantabhadra" everywhere as the equivalent of Kun tu bzang po.

3 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 451. The exalted individuals through whom the teachings reached our world first transmitted them through what is called the "Symbolic Lineage of the Awareness Holders" (*rig 'dzin bdra brgyud*, *ibid*., pp. 453-456) before they were passed on in a more ordinary form that Gyurme Dorje calls the "Aural Lineage of [Mundane] Individuals" (*gang zag snyan brgyud*, *ibid*., pp. 456-457).

4 This passage is in fact divided into two narratives: one for the general transmission (pp. 458-474) and one for each of the *Eight Pronouncements* (pp. 475-484). General information on the *Eight Pronouncements* will be

In the second part of the Mahāyoga section we find the idea of eight sages called the Eight Vidyādharas, each of whom is the main repository of one of the *Eight Pronouncements* (*bKa' brgyad*). Padmasambhava's quest for these eight teachings and the way in which he became the unique central master of them all is one of the recurring themes of his revealed biographies.

All of this Indian background to the Nyingma tantric traditions is very poorly documented. In the present state of research, it is generally impossible to discern from these traditional narratives what may refer to factual reality, although there is no strong reason to discard them as a whole (as some hypercritical representatives of the "neo-conservative orthodox"[1] trend of the second spread of Buddhism in Tibet have imprudently dared to do).[2]

Following this general Indian background, Düjom Rinpoché presents the political situation in Tibet at the time of the "Three Ancestral Religious Kings": Songtsen Gampo,[3] Trisong Detsen[4] and Ralpachen.[5]

After a few elements of Buddhism spread in Tibet under Emperor Songtsen Gampo, says Düjom Rinpoché, his fifth successor, Emperor

found in our vol. 2, in the description of rGod ldem's *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*.

1 On "neoconservative orthodoxy," see Davidson 2008, pp. 151-154.

2 Despite the above-quoted statement about "the out of hand and often contemptuous dismissal by Western scholars of important elements of Tibetan religious culture both ancient and modern (…) and the reductionism with which such scholars explain them according to their often unexamined philosophical assumptions," it must be said that the most violent reductionist attacks on the rNying ma pas' reconstruction of their Indian tantric lineage were actually made by Tibetan purists. Their method, somewhat ruthless from the point of view of our academic philology, was to assume that *whatever they had the Sanskrit originals of was authentic*, while *whatever they did not have or could not decipher the Sanskrit originals of was dubious, if not probably fabricated by the Tibetans themselves*. Other, more interesting arguments focused on the inclusion of purely Tibetan elements (typically on the side of demonology) in texts supposedly translated from Indian languages. However, these arguments themselves demonstrate at most the presence of *additions* in these tantric texts. Many well-known examples show that such texts were never well fixed in India either but, on the contrary, were in constant evolution. From this point of view, the argument is not conclusive: above all, it shows that the idea of enriching texts over the generations was *not yet* considered anathema during the first centuries of Buddhism in Tibet, and only became so at the time (around the 14th century) when the Indian source dried up and the Tibetans wanted to compile a single, definitive canon.

3 Srong btsan sgam po, ca. 609/623–650.

4 Khri srong lde'u btsan, reigned ca. 740/755–797.

5 Ral pa can, ca. 806 CE–838.

Trisong Detsen, invited to Tibet the Indian master Śāntarakṣita. But it is said that the building of the Samyé monastery met with obstacles: Tibetan spirits resisted the introduction of Buddhism. This made the invitation of Padmasambhava necessary in order to tame them. After these obstacles were overcome thanks to Padmasambhava's power, Emperor Trisong Detsen could invite to Tibet a large number[1] of Buddhist masters from India and various other places,[2] including Vimalamitra.[3]

These Indian (etc.) masters then started a systematic work of translation, under the patronage of Emperor Trisong Detsen, seen as both the patron and, in a sense, the regulator of this enormous task, since Tibetans envision him going so far as to issue rules for the standardization of Buddhist terminology. The result was a considerable mass of texts in Tibetan translation, both exoteric (or even technical) and tantric. These "old translations" formed the core of the so-called "Old School,"[4] as opposed to those that emerged during the Tibetan renaissance in the 11th century. Trisong Detsen is also seen (by both the Buddhists and the Bönpos) as having proscribed the Bön religion in favor of Buddhism.[5]

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1 In the most developed of the revealed biographies of Padmasambhava from the 14th and the 15th centuries, one reads dozens of names of masters and scholars invited from all the countries around Tibet (not only the Indian world) and lists of the texts they translated in association with Tibetan translators whose names are given too. Such a list of translated texts (in French) with their Tibetan translators and the *paṇḍita*s who guided them can be found, e.g., in Toussaint 1933, pp. 330-338.

2 The *bKa' thang* literature insists on the fact that they came from all over Asia and insist on the idea that texts were translated from all sorts of languages, including Chinese, etc.—an idea that tended to be rejected by later neoconservative orthodoxy.

3 He is the only case of an Indian master other than Padmasambhava being presented as the source of texts included in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's revelations. Part of the *dGongs pa zang thal* (see description in vol. 2, in the section about rGod ldem's works) is said to be an "oral transmission" stemming from him, although a consistent narrative seems to be lacking about the way in which sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms received these teachings and about how they were compiled as a single corpus to be hidden together in Zang zang lha brag to be later rediscovered by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

4 This is what is meant by the phrase "Old [school of the] earlier translations" (*snga 'gyur rnying ma*).

5 From a more critical point of view, Bon is rather a Tibetan religion that emerged in the so-called "dark age" between the collapse of the Imperial dynasty (ca. 842) and the "Tibetan Renaissance" in the 11th century. Its connections with an earlier non-*stricto sensu* Buddhist religion that would have existed prior to the introduction of Buddhism in the 8th century are

Düjom Rinpoché then contents himself with a brief evocation of a persecution of Buddhism in Tibet by the Emperor Langdarma,[1] followed by a rebirth in the 11th century, contemporary with the second spread of Buddhism, while alluding throughout the text to a number of elements that are quite inconsistent with this idea of a "dark age" of virtual extinction of Buddhism in Tibet. The Nyingmapas have indeed internalized this idea of persecution followed by the virtual extinction or complete degeneration of Buddhism in Tibet, which is so damaging to their claim of uninterrupted oral lineages since imperial times. There is every reason to believe that the cause lies with the tertön lineages, which had to justify their activities by portraying Padmasambhava as having foreseen the persecution and hidden the most profound teachings so that they could be preserved and survive the long Dharma winter intact as seeds in the frozen ground, so to speak.

In this respect, the Nyingmapas tend to do two contradictory things at once. On the one hand, they insist on the excesses of the later tradition in its neo-conservative orthodox version, which wants to believe that Buddhism in Tibet had died out or had completely decayed before its reintroduction by the masters of the second diffusion. On the other hand, they recycle this neo-conservative orthodox discourse insofar as it legitimizes the discovery of the termas, perhaps with a polemical intention directed against the resistance of the upholders of the lineages of uninterrupted Oral Tradition. This is not mere speculation: as already mentioned, Gö Lotsāwa's *Blue Annals*, although compiled as late as the fifteenth century, testify to a surprising state of affairs in which the Kama lineages are widely presented without any discussion of their authenticity and as quite flourishing, while the Terma traditions are almost ignored.

This shows that the present situation, in which a Nyingmapa who would deny the authority or value of the termas as a whole is something unimaginable, is the result of a process that may not have reached its full maturity before Ratna Lingpa (1403–1478), who appears, on the one hand, as the first compiler of a comprehensive

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unknown and hence, although it is possible that the conversion of Tibet to Buddhism implied a limitation put to previously existing ritual practices, it is difficult to believe that what was maybe suppressed by Khri srong lde'u btsan was exactly what was revived as the organized Bon religion as we know it. However, a vision of the Bon canon as being a collection of plagiarized Buddhist texts would be overly simplistic, as it can be shown that Buddhists also borrowed from Bon sources, in such a way that the formation of the Bon religion and the rNying ma school of Tibetan Buddhism is to some extent a perfect example of "dependent origination"—a mutually dependent production.

[1] Glang dar ma, r. 838–842. Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 523-527.

Nyingma tantric canon and, on the other, as an accomplished tertön himself.

Before we return to a discussion of Düjom Rinpoché's *The Nyingma School of Tibetan Buddhism* (below in chapter 6), let us complete and discuss this first aspect of his narrative.

Chapter 5: The Padmasambhava Epic and the Standard Explanation of the Termas

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In addition to translating texts, another outcome of the activities of Padmasambhava and the other foreign masters was the training of disciples who then carried on the tradition. The narrative that has become standard in the Nyingma school emphasizes Padmasambhava's twenty-five disciples as the main channels through which the tradition was passed on to later generations. These masters trained disciples, thus establishing transmission lines that continued as unbroken lineages of masters and disciples up to the present day, which the Nyingmapas call the "uninterrupted Oral Tradition."[1]

A careful study of the oldest sources, as we shall see, tends to show that over the centuries all the memories of the Nyingmapas have been organized into a grand synthetic narrative with Padmasambhava as the central figure. Many of the elements presented in the revealed biographies of Padmasambhava[2] certainly have some historical value, but it is not uncommon to find elements in older sources that contradict some aspects of the grand narrative. The main flaw of the revealed biographies of Padmasambhava as historiographical sources, to put it in a nutshell, is an excessive unification of all the perhaps genuinely factual elements they may contain. Everything revolves around Padmasambhava alone, and almost everything takes place at the court of Emperor Trisong Detsen, much like the novels of the Round Table Cycle. This leads to many anachronisms and factual errors.

It would indeed make sense to propose a literary study of these biographies, drawing parallels between Trisong Detsen and King Arthur, and Padmasambhava and Merlin. The comparison also works in the sense that on both sides we have a literary genre that has remained productive for centuries, with numerous authors taking up the same characters, and so on. The difference, however, is that the "Padmasambhava Cycle" contains much more genuine historical information. In a sense, these texts could be called historical novels: if they contain many inaccuracies, it is not so much because they *invent facts*, but because their central purpose is to *make sense of scattered events*, to give a unified, clear meaning to what must have been much more chaotic and shapeless in reality. The revealed biographies of Padmasambhava turn a

1 *bKa' ma*.
2 The various *bka' thang*.

forest of small, unrelated circumstances into a stirring, easily understood epic, although in reality these facts probably did not present themselves as a coherent whole that would be satisfactory to the devotee.

These narratives provide the framework for the beliefs associated with the termas (*gter ma*). As we have seen above, the Nyingmapas believe that many tantric teachings were also hidden as "treasures," either in a material form as texts buried in caves and other places from which they were later retrieved, or sometimes in the deep layers of the mind streams of his disciples. In a way that seems to have become more systematic over the centuries, the treasures discoverers were considered to be the reincarnations of Padmasambhava's direct disciples. It was believed that they had then authentically received the transmissions of the texts they would later rediscover. In this way, proper master-disciple transmission of the hidden treasures—crucial in a tantric Buddhist context where no one can officially *start* a new teaching and where everything one teaches is supposed to have been received from one's masters—would be guaranteed by their recollection of the past life during which these teachings were received from Padmasambhava and a few other masters.

It is interesting to note,[1] however, that in the earliest biographical materials about Rigdzin Gödem, there is no explicit allusion to such recollection. It can be said to be implicit, in that, as we have just seen, it is indeed mentioned that in the 8th century, when Padmasambhava was in Tibet, Rigdzin Gödem was Nanam Dorjé Düjom, one of his twenty-five disciples. In this context, as we have read in the previous chapters, the Northern Treasures would be teachings he received from Padmasambhava and which he retrieved in the 14th century when he was reborn as Rigdzin Gödem.

However, in the original documents, there is no mention of Rigdzin Gödem *remembering* the time when he received these teachings, as we have with some later tertöns.[2] In its fullest and most characteristic

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[1] This thoughtful comment was originally made by Jay Valentine on an earlier version of this chapter. This paragraph and the two next ones are a summary of a discussion at the FCHNT weekly seminar, based on Jay Valentine's suggestion.

[2] For comparison, we can refer to *gTer ston* rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405), who was practically a contemporary of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and who left behind much more autobiographical material (mainly collected in volume 11 of rDo rje gling pa 2009). When we look at this material, we notice two things. First, he clearly and strongly identifies himself with Vairocana (Bee ro tsa na), the translator. Second, he hardly reports any memories from his past life as Vairocana. He is the reincarnation of Vairocana, so he has

form, such an idea may belong to a later stage in the development of Nyingma thought. The idea that memories are awakened at the time of terma discovery may be one of those posterior ideas that we anachronistically think we have read in texts where we merely *expected* to find them.

In the context of Rigdzin Gödem's early biographies, much more emphasis is placed on following the prophetic instructions of the guides and his dreams. In Rigdzin Gödem's time, we are still in an atmosphere of treasure hunting in physical places where the texts and other blessed items are *materially* concealed. Of course, these hidden treasures are protected in such a way that they can only be accessed—or safely accessed—by magical means. However, when early sources speak of "fake tertöns," they are not always referring to *people who produce fake materials*, but often to *daring adventurers who try to make a name for themselves by unearthing works that they were not predestined*[1] *to reveal*. It was clearly considered possible at some point to produce terma material that was authentic as such, but without the full legitimacy to do so, which to some extent also challenges the theory based on memory of received teachings.

We lack a global narrative that would explain how the Northern Treasures were originally concealed *as a collection that possessed some form of unity*—be it an internal consistency that made it as a whole a self-sufficient system for practice, or otherwise, for example, as a corpus prophesied to meet some specific needs. In the present living tradition of the Northern Treasures, there is indeed such a sense of insularity, of being something specific and somewhat isolated within the wider Nyingma family. But this seems to have more to do with the fact that the Northern Treasures is one of the few ancient institutions of the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism that has managed not to return to the common fold after so many centuries.

The original core of the Northern Treasures was later supplemented by further revelations from the subsequent reincarnations of Rigdzin Gödem[2] and by a few other treasure revealers,[3] as well as the legacy of

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authority over the discovered texts, but the theme of recollection is absent or barely present.

1 *sKal ldan*. This term is often translated as "fortunate beings," but *skal* is actually *the share one is entitled to* in a distribution (e.g., an inheritance). So the *skal ldan* are not just "fortunate," they are actually predestined—not by divine choice, for sure, but by their course in previous lives.

2 In our reference corpus (CNT 2015): *Rig 'dzin* Legs ldan rje's (or bDud 'joms rdo rje, 1452?–1565) revelations in vol. 33 and *Rig 'dzin* sKal bzang padma dbang phyug's (ca. 1720–1771) in vols. 53-54.

3 In our reference corpus (CNT): part of bsTan gnyis gling pa's revelations (1480–1535—the *Lung phag mo zab rgya*, in vol. 17); those of mNga' ris *paṇ*

the uninterrupted Oral Tradition,[1] and some other major terma cycles[2] that were originally unrelated to Rigdzin Gödem.

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chen Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542, in vols. 30-32 and 34), of *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal (1550–1602, in vol. 35) and of Gar dbang rdo rje (1640–1685, in vol. 16). To some extent, the *Secret Visions* of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) can be considered Byang gter in a broader sense, but they have not been included in CNT 2015 (perhaps because the transmission has become rare). In the same way, the 'Khor gdong monastery masters envision their New Treasure (*gter gsar*: those of 'Khor gdong *gter chen* Nus ldan rdo rje, 1802–1864 and of mGon po dbang rgyal, 1845–1912) as belonging to the Northern Treasures in the sense that all of those who practice them do so within an otherwise fully Byang gter framework—but since this has not become the common system in rDo rje brag, they are also not included in CNT.

1 Not included in CNT—common rNying ma material that did not require reediting.

2 In our reference corpus: rGya zhang khrom's (11th century) *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* (vols. 18-27) and Padma las 'brel rtsal's (1291–1319) *gZa' rgyud* (vols. 28-29). In an 8-vol. collection of Byang gter ritual materials, the *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor* (supposed to be the complete rDo rje brag liturgy) published in Shimla in 1997–, another well-represented cycle is Karma gling pa's (14th century) *Zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol* (vol. 7). However, the way and historical period in which it was inherited by the rDo rje brag masters is so far undocumented (this point is discussed below). The Hayagrīva cycle revealed bu rGya gong ri pa *gter ston* Sangs rgyas dbang chen was also included under the name *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub* (*sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor*, s.d., 2000?, vol. 3, pp. 193-212). See below for more detail.

Chapter 6: An Overview of the Kama and Terma Traditions up to Rigdzin Gödem's Time According to Düjom Rinpoché

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(IFRAE / Inalco)

If we now return to Düjom Rinpoché's history of the Nyingmapas, we come to the part that interests us most: the history of the Nyingma tradition in Tibet after Padmasambhava and his direct disciples,[1] which is basically divided into two major sections. The first is devoted to the uninterrupted oral lineages,[2] while the second one deals with the hidden treasures.[3] This division becomes rather artificial at a certain point,[4] since the two streams merge into one school in which there are no longer practitioners of the Kama who are not also practitioners of various termas, while it also becomes clear to all (if it was ever in doubt) that the Kama should be regarded as the background and reference for the termas.

The Kama section is divided according to the three inner classes of tantra, beginning with the Atiyoga, which is further divided into its sections: "The Mental and Spatial Classes"[5] together, with curiously

1 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 529-880.

2 *Ibid*., pp. 529-739. For some reason, the corresponding title does not appear until p. 597, i.e., after the chapter on rDzogs chen, even though this chapter deals mostly with materials considered to belong to bKa' ma. The status of the *Bi ma snying thig* is somewhat ambiguous in this regard: its texts are said to have been hidden and rediscovered many times, but not in a way that resembles the "Padmasambhavian" *gter chos*. This chapter concludes with Klong chen rab 'byams (1308–1364)

3 *Op. cit*., pp. 741-880.

4 Probably around Ratna gling pa's (1403–1478) time—just after rGod ldem's death—as he appears to be the main artisan of this final integration of the two lines or styles in the rNying ma tradition. This remains to be researched, and there is much material available, including extensive biographies of Ratna gling pa. This figure, incidentally, is of key importance to us because, although later masters of the Northern Treasures fully adhered to the spirit of what we can imagine was his synthesis, Ratna gling pa, for some reason (perhaps simply because he had no access to them), did not include Byang gter materials in the Nyingma tantric canon (*rNying ma rgyud 'bum*), despite the fact that it is full of other *gter ma* scriptures.

5 This refers to *sems sde* and *klong sde*, the "Mind Series" and "Space Series" according to the terminology adopted in our volumes.

few elements after Dzeng Dharmabodhi[1] and his 12th-century disciples; and then "The Esoteric Instructional Class of Atiyoga, Innermost Spirituality,"[2] itself divided into a Padmasambhava tradition—in fact, transmitted only through the hidden treasures—and a Vimalamitra tradition, which is the one actually described in this chapter.[3] The author presents the two of them as culminating in Rigdzin Gödem's older contemporary, Longchen Rabjam (1308–1364), whose biography he presents in some detail.[4]

Then begins an account of the Kama tantric lineages, which, in the translation, is curiously titled "The Distant Lineage of Transmitted Precepts." Its eleven sub-sections deal with 1. "The Lineage of Nyak"; 2. "The Lineage of Nup"; 3. "The Lineage of the Zur Family"; 4. "Biographies of the Rog Tradition"; 5. "Dotokpa's Lineage of the Zur Tradition"; 6. "Biographies of the Kham Tradition"; 7. "Miscellaneous Lineages of the Zur and Kham Tradition"; 8. A biography of Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo; 9. "The Traditions of Vajrakīla"; 10. "The Lineages of the Empowerment of the *Sūtra which Gathers All Intention*"; and 11. "Later Lineages of the Transmitted Precepts". It would be inappropriate to present all this history here; we can assume that the reader is familiar with it from Düjom Rinpoché and content ourselves with adding or correcting it in the next chapter, based on Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*.

Then comes the presentation of the hidden treasures, which consists of two parts: a general presentation of the terma system, followed by short biographies of twenty-four tertöns. The most important of these

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1 'Dzeng *sgom* Dharmabodhi (1052–1168). Although the lineage of these teachings never completely died out, they were perceived as less interesting when the *sNying thig* systems came to the fore.

2 *rDzogs chen snying thig*. "Heart Drops of Great Perfection" according to our terminology. Note that bDud 'joms rin po che ignores the non-*snying thig* sections of the *man ngag sde*. They are admittedly poorly documented in terms of historiography.

3 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 554-575. This division, leaving aside any discussion of its historical value, is important at least as a doxographic point or as a name for two different, though complementary, groups of texts. In the specific Northern Treasures tradition, we'll find a slightly different idea: that of three different "oral transmissions" (*snyan brgyud*), adding a Vairocana tradition to the Padmasambhava and Vimalamitra branches of the *sNying thig* teachings.

4 *Op. cit*., pp. 575-596. We will return to this figure below, for although Klong chen pa and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem most likely never met, it is reasonable to assume that the latter was aware of the former's existence and of the importance of his work, though certainly not of their precise content.

for our purposes are Nyangral Nyima Özer (pp. 755-759),[1] Guru Chöwang (p. 760-770) and his consort Jomo Menmo (pp. 771-774), and then of course Rigdzin Gödem himself (pp. 780-783). Orgyen Lingpa (pp. 775-779),[2] Sangyé Lingpa (1340–1396; pp. 784-788)[3] and Dorjé

[1] See below for a brief account of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer and Hirshberg 2016 for more detail. His importance has already been stressed as regards the construction of a grand unified rNying ma historical narrative through his *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*, to which we could add his *Chos 'byung me tog snying po*, although its authenticity is disputed—precisely because its historical assumptions sometimes contradict the *bKa' thang*. In addition, his major *gter ma* cycle *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*, unlike the later *Eight Pronouncements* cycles (like Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's), is full of rich doctrinal material which must also have contributed to the structuring of ideas among the rNying ma pas.

[2] Yar *rje* O rgyan gling pa, 1323–*ca*. 1355. The date of his death is unknown, but it is said to have occurred soon after a conflict with Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan, who gained full power over central Tibet around 1350. Dan Martin (1997, p. 56, no. 87) argues that the colophon of the *Padma bka' thang*—a text that includes an injurious prophecy about Byang chub rgyal mtshan—suggests it was written in 1352. We can assume that the whole plot of Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan's anger, O rgyan gling pa's flight to the south, and his subsequent death likely took place over the course of a few years. Moreover, Klong chen pa's exile in Bhutan was around 1354 and his return around 1360: these are likely to be the years when the taming of the unruly rNying ma pas took place. We can then assume that O rgyan gling pa died between 1354 and 1360, probably closer to 1354. For Northern Treasures studies, the only relevant issue would be to know whether Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was aware of his *Padma bka' thang* or *bKa' thang shel brag ma*, which is a much larger and more comprehensive Padmasambhava narrative than Nyang ral's *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*. No evidence of this has yet been found and, curiously enough, although the *bKa' thang shel brag ma* in the form in which we have it ("the most popular recension," as Doney 2016 calls it, explaining the 16th-century alterations of the original text) prophesies masters contemporary with (Rin chen gling pa, Klong chen pa, etc.) or even much later (e.g., bsTan gnyis gling pa) than rGod ldem. However, himself does not seem to be the subject of any prediction.

[3] Cf. Doney 2016. A thorough study of Sangs rgyas gling pa's autobiography (Sangs rgyas gling pa 2006, *sPrul sku sangs rgyas gling pa'i gter 'byung chen mo*) would be a valuable contribution to our understanding of *gter ston*s' activities in the time of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. Doney 2016, pp. 72-73, n. 13, summarizes a whole controversy about the relationship between the *bKa' thang* of O rgyan gling pa and that of Sangs rgyas gling pa, which began between Emil Schlagintweit (1899) and Berthold Laufer (1911) and ended with Vostrikov (1994 [orig. pub. 1936]), to which Anne-Marie Blondeau (1980) gave an epilogue. Preliminary research in the *gTer 'byung chen mo* did not show any trace of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. The above-

Lingpa (1346–1405; pp. 789-792)[1] are of interest to us as contemporaries of Rigdzin Gödem. Among the later ones, Ratna Lingpa (1403–1478; pp. 793-795)[2] is important for the reasons given above; some were later holders of the Jangter traditions like Thangtong Gyalpo (1361/1365–1480/1486; pp. 802-804), Ngari Paṇchen Pema Wangyal (1487–1542; pp. 805-808), Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé (1587–1650; pp. 818-820), or the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682; pp. 821-824), or excellent specialists of them like Terdak Lingpa (1646–1714; pp. 825-834).[3]

mentioned passage of Sangs rgyas gling pa's *Lung bstan bka' rgya ma* contains a prophecy about treasure discoveries in Zang zang lha brag. However, the *gter ston*, whose name is not given but who is presumably rGod ldem, is surprisingly presented as a reincarnation of gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes, rather than sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms.

1 See mainly Ehrhard 2008. There is also a wealth of untapped biographical material on this contemporary of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (e.g., vol. 11, pp. 1-212 in rDo rje gling pa 2010, *O rgyan rdo rje gling pa'i chos sde*). A preliminary survey of this volume (see Arguillère 2025b) suggests that rDo rje gling pa was not aware of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's existence. He revealed a biography of Padmasambhava (Doney 2016, pp. 73-74; rDo rje gling pa 2010, vol. 15) in which Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's name does not appear in the context of the prophecies about *gter ston*s.

2 There is a very large biography (Ratna gling pa, 1977–1979, *Ratna gling pa'i rnam thar*) filling vol. 1 (pp. 1-687) of Ratna gling pa's *gTer chos* (1977–1979). Ratna gling pa was born very close to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's death, so interactions between the two of them are impossible. However, studying Ratna gling pa would be valuable in understanding the further structuring of the rNying ma school and perhaps how Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was regarded in this context.

3 gTer bdag gling pa is often seen in the context of the founding of sMin sgrol gling monastery as a rival to Padma 'phrin las and rDo rje brag. There is some truth to this, and these two figures were in some ways competitors, albeit members of the Fifth Dalai Lama's close circle. However, an examination of the record of teachings received by gTer bdag gling pa and of his work gives a more nuanced impression: gTer bdag gling pa received all the Northern Treasures and was clearly interested in that tradition, including its post-Rig 'dzin rGod ldem developments. On the other hand, he incorporated them into a synthesis in which they were not given the most central place, contrary to what was the case with rDo rje brag. We will return to this whole context in vol. 5, which will present the history of the Northern Treasures around the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama.

Chapter 7: An Outline of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's (1641–1717) *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*'

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As was already stated, we can define the "Northern Treasures" in the narrowest sense as being the revelations of Rigdzin Gödem and his successive incarnations. In a slightly broader sense, the "Northern Treasures" also include parts or the whole of the revelations of later treasure discoverers,[1] especially the subsequent incarnations of Rigdzin Gödem.

These tertöns will be dealt with in later volumes of this series, and there is no need to discuss them now. However, in an even broader sense, when Tibetans speak of "the Northern Treasures," or, more accurately, "the tradition of the Northern Treasures [in] Dorjé Drak" (*Byang gter rdo rje brag lugs*), they mean the whole of these, combined with the heritage of earlier tradition, both uninterrupted Oral Tradition and hidden treasures. In this broadest sense, the "tradition of the Northern Treasures [in] Dorjé Drak" as a whole could be defined as: *a complete synthesis of the whole of Buddhism, in a Nyingma style, achieved at Dorjé Drak and constructed around the revelations of Rigdzin Gödem as its core*.

The topic of the present volume is to explore globally this entire legacy of pre-Gödem materials. We are aware that this development is partly anachronistic, since we are telling the story of materials that definitely predate Rigdzin Gödem, but with some of which, in the present state of research, we cannot know to what extent he was familiar. It is difficult to reconstruct what was passed down in the lineages of Rigdzin Gödem's disciples prior to the sixteenth century—when the large number of tantric lineages compiled by Ngari Paṇchen and Lekdenjé's father, Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen,[2] coalesced into what would soon become the "Dorjé Drak System."

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1 The case of *gter ston*s such as bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535 ; see Achard 2004 and Achard & Arguillère 2024) and Gar dbang rdo rje (1640–1685) will be dealt with separately, in the chronologically relevant section. Whatever this may mean, the parts of their *gter chos* that were included in the *rDo rje brag lugs* are supposed to belong to a—problematic—original whole called "the Northern Treasures," while this is not the case for the material we will be dealing with in this and the following chapter.

2 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan, 1445 or, more probably, 1473–1558. This interesting figure was a compiler of rNying ma traditions, which he passed to his sons. His biography is on p. 381-424 of Padma 'phrin las' (1641–1717) *The Biographies for the Empowerment of the Gathering of Intentions*

Biographical material indicates that Rigdzin Gödem was trained in the termas of Nyangral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang. Unfortunately, it has not yet been possible to convincingly reconstruct the history of these two (more or less interrelated) traditions from the time of the tertöns to that of Rigdzin Gödem and this must be left to future research to determine more precisely. Present-day Jangter masters do not claim a tradition passing through Rigdzin Gödem when they teach traditions from Nyangral Nyima Özer or Guru Chöwang.

In the course of our research, it has become clear that Rigdzin Gödem was also a specialist of the two major Dzogchen Nyingthik systems, the *Bima Nyingthik* and the *Khandro Nyingthik*. If we are not mistaken about Meban Rinchen Lingpa's role in that context, it is easy to reconstruct Gödem's very short lineage for the *Khandro Nyingthik* and to make reasonable assumptions about the *Bima Nyingthik* as well.

However, in the present-day Dorjé Drak tradition, there is no more official claim of a lineage passing through Rigdzin Gödem for the *Bima Nyingthik* and the *Khandro Nyingthik* than for the revelations of Nyangral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang. So, it must be clear that we are now, to some extent, doing two different things at once: on the one hand, trying to reconstruct the landscape of the Nyingma school as it was at the time in which Rigdzin Gödem was trained by his masters and, on the other hand, attempting to trace the sources—maybe unconnected to the first generations of Jangter masters—of what *later* became central for the "Dorjé Drak system." In order to spare readers a long anachronical flashback about these earlier traditions, these matters will be summarized here and not at the point of the Jangter history (16th century) in which their introduction in the Dorjé Drak system is better documented. Presenting now their earlier stages is also a good way to give some elements of background about the state of matters in the "Nyingma school" (if such a thing already properly existed then) up to Rigdzin Gödem's time.

On the side of the uninterrupted Oral Tradition, the standard account of the lineage is Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lives of the Lineage Masters of The Gathering of Intentions*,[1]

(Padma 'phrin las 2015, *'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*). We will have to return to him in a forthcoming volume of this series.

[1] Padma 'phrin las 2015, *'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, vol. 41, pp. 1-437; also in *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa* (henceforth KSG), vol. 109 (around 580 pages, without page numbers). This is henceforth quoted (following Dalton 2016) as *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage.* According to it colophon (CNT, vol. 41, p. 437), this history was composed in 1681 (A year *lcags mo bya*, which was its author's 41st year) as an appendix (*rgyab chos*) of Padma 'phrin las' *magnum opus*, the commentary on the empowerment ritual for *The Gathering of Intentions* contained in the three

which will be followed as the main thread in this chapter, not only because it is the most informative source available, but also because, as one of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's main writings, it is one of the many fine jewels in the crown of Northern Treasures literature.

Now, as far as the terma lineages are concerned, a great deal of earlier material, which is not considered to be Jangter even in the second sense, has been amalgamated into the transmissions passed down by the masters of the Northern Treasures as part of the Dorjé Drak system—in particular:

1. The *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*[1] cycle, most of which is a series of revelations of Gya Zhangtrom[2] (11th c.);
2. *The Poisonous Razor of the Fierce Planetary Spirit*,[3] a terma of Pema Ledreltsal (1291–1319);
3. Karma Lingpa's (14th c.) *The Peaceful and Wrathful Deities*: *Self-Liberated Contemplation*.[4]

There are, incidentally, a very few cycles in which Gödem himself appears in later records of teachings received not as the treasure discoverer, but as a member in a line of transmission—typically *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*, which we be discussed below.[5]

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previous volumes of CNT. I will also be using this text, *A Ford to the Ocean of Maṇḍalas* (Padma 'phrin la, 2015, *'Dus pa'i mdo'i bdang gi cho ga khrigs su byas pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi rgya mtsho'i 'jug mngogs*, CNT, vols. 38, 39 and 40), which Dalton refers to as *rGya mtsho'i 'jug mngogs*, without, it seems, proposing a standard translation. This text will henceforth be called *A Ford to the Ocean of Maṇḍalas*.

1 *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*. See below chapter 11.

2 rGya zhang khrom rDo rje 'od bar. See Esler 2022a, "Yamāntaka's Wrathful Magic."

3 *gZa' rgod dug gi spu gri*. Discussed in Chapter 14 below.

4 Karma gling pa is a 14th-century figure whose precise dates are difficult to determine (see Cuevas 2003). There is no trace of his presence in CNT. However, an eight-volume compilation of the rDo rje brag liturgy (*sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor*, Dorjé Drak Monastery, ca. 2000, which seems to be an extension of the four-volume collection of the same title [1997], BDR: MW26672), contains a full volume (vol. 7, 498 pages) of Karma gling pa's *Zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol*. See Chapter 16 below. Incidentally, we also found unexpected traces of another cycle in the rDo rje brag liturgy (much more modest: a single *sādhana* text): *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub*. See Chapter 12 below for a note on this cycle and its discoverer in the 12th century, Gong ri Sangs rgyas dbang chen.

5 In Chapter 12 of this volume and in vol. 2 in the context of Rigdzin Gödem's masters.

The fact that the *official* junction of the lineages does not occur until the 16th century does not imply that Gödem himself, his predecessors, or his immediate successors were not well versed in some of these traditions. It is not uncommon for Tibetan historiographers to begin the transmission of a lineage to an institution when that institution became fully autonomous in terms of granting its empowerments and oral transmissions. This does not mean that the corpus was not studied and practiced earlier in that institution. It is probable that an earlier centrality within the institution, spanning decades or even centuries, prompted the initiative to obtain a comprehensive, official, transmission at the earliest opportunity.

Be that as it may, and acknowledging that we know virtually nothing of the association of the Jangter masters with these traditions prior to the brothers Ngari Paṇchen and Lekdenjé, their histories are summarized in the present volume so as to set a complementary historical background (with some critical reflections) to Gödem's biography, in addition to what can be found in available global histories of the Nyingma school or of its Dzogchen traditions.

We will first discuss the Kama aspect.

Presentation of Pema Trinlé's The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage

Pema Trinlé's above-mentioned *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* is a Dorjé Drak-centered history of the transmission of *The Gathering of Intentions*, understood as the "root tantra" of the Anuyoga class.[1] *The Gathering of Intentions* is in fact, to some extent, a metonymy

[1] The context of *The Gathering of Intentions* and its history is clearly presented in Dalton 2016, which, along with Cuevas 2003, serves in many ways as a model for our Byang gter research. Both works renew our global vision of the rNying ma teachings by introducing a historian's approach to matters that have long been understood mainly on the basis of non-historical rNying ma doxographies. Dalton presents a movement characterized by a constant reworking of rNying ma doctrinal syntheses. This includes not only the emergence of new ideas, but also the mere *oblivion* or *disuse* of earlier doctrines and texts that were once central, *without them having been refuted or even explicitly nuanced by later thinkers*. The only thing that could be added to this book, apart from a more in-depth investigation of the question of the origins of the tantra that is its main subject (and in particular the discussion of *bru zha'i skad* initiated by Kapstein 2017), would be a discussion of the more or less explicit assimilation of Anuyoga to the "mother tantras" (*ma rgyud*). In the context of the traditions derived from the second spread of Buddhism in Tibet, this assimilation implies that *Anuyoga* would be a system in which the tantric body techniques of *saṃpannakrama*

(more accurately: a synecdoche) for the whole of the "uninterrupted Oral Tradition," as the lines through which *The Gathering of Intentions* has been transmitted are the same ones through which many other materials also were passed. Indeed, in this text, Rigdzin Pema Trinlé uses as well historiographical materials connected to *The Vajra Bridge of the Oral Transmission of the Dzogchen Space Section*,[1] the Heart Drops, Vajrakīla, etc., and his purpose is clearly to describe the sources of *all* the non-terma traditions of the Nyingmapas.

This text has already been extensively studied in Jake Dalton's *The Gathering of Intentions*. We will build on the chapter he devotes to the specific developments of this tantra in Dorjé Drak (pp. 78-96). While his approach is focused on the uses of the tantra itself, and while that chapter of his book deals mainly with Pema Trinlé's agenda in the historical context of "Nyingmapa Politics in the Seventeenth Century" (*op. cit*., pp. 88-96), ours is of course more concerned with the way in which the Jangter / Dorjé Drak masters received what they considered

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are central. However, this feature is not evident in the basic text of the *mDo dgongs 'dus*. This is important because the rNying ma school must also be described, to some extent, as the fruit of the encounter between traditions from the first spread of Buddhism in Tibet (which were certainly poor in such techniques, as they are regarded by Indologists as not having existed yet in the 8th century Indian world) and traditions from the second spread, the prestige of which was linked to the introduction of these techniques. The problem with which Dalton is concerned—that of the functions successively attributed (or not) to the *mDo dgongs 'dus* in the rNying ma pas' doctrinal syntheses—cannot be fully addressed without also considering the reasons why the Old School of Tibetan Buddhism persists in implicitly presenting as a tantra rich in body techniques a text that, in fact, presents none.

[1] Or, in short, *The Vajra Bridge of the Space Section*: *Klong sde'i rdo rje'i zam pa,* in NKG (and KSG), vols. 18-19. It is difficult to be sure what exactly is Padma 'phrin las' source for the history of this cycle, since *The Vajra Bridge* in its available version does not seem to include the chronicle he quotes. This chronicle is not mentioned by So bzlog ba Blo gros rgyal mtshan as one of the main *bka' ma* sources he uses (Gentry 2020, p. 234, n. 252). *The Vajra Bridge of the Space Section* in the quoted edition begins with a large treatise that includes three narratives (*lo rgyus*) about its lineage—developed, middle-sized and abbreviated—down to "Kun bzang," who seems to be the author of this large text. This person, identified as disciple of 'Dzeng Dharmabodhi (BDRC: P4518) is Kun bzang rdo rje (BDRC: P2JM124)—see Roerich 1978, pp. 188-189. Roerich speculates that he was born in 1151, while BDRC proposes 1130. Be that as it may, the mere fact that the history of this branch of the rDzogs chen is known after 'Dzeng Dharmabodhi only through mere lists of its lineage holders is a strong hint of the relative antiquity of Padma 'phrin las' source and leads one to wonder why Sog bzlog pa seems not to be using it.

to be a complete transmission of the Kama aspect of the Nyingma traditions as a whole.

Pema Trinlé insists on the idea that since *The Gathering of Intentions* provides the overall doxographic structure of the nine layered vehicles, its study covers the entirety of (Nyingma) Buddhist tantrism. This explains why his *Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* presents a general history of the Kama lineages, designed to establish Dorjé Drak's authority in this field.

The text as such would call for a whole series of remarks concerning the way in which Pema Trinlé conceives and implements the profession of historian in a context marked by the development of a philological and critical approach within the Nyingma school. He could not be unaware, for example, of Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyaltsen's (1552–1624) strongly philological apology for the Nyingma school.[1] However, these remarks will be more appropriate when we come to present the life of that author in the relevant volume of this series, to characterize the 17th-century cultural and social context in which his work was composed.

At this point, it will suffice to emphasize the quality of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's composition. He preserves faith in the Nyingma traditions without the kind of rationalizations that would be characteristic of modernity. However, in the syntheses he carefully outlines, he gives the greatest weight to the stories of the best attested antiquity, even when they do not perfectly coincide with those that, in his own time, had already become most popular among the Nyingmapas. Pema Trinlé is also very careful about chronological consistency, although he is not overly critical of, for instance, the assumption of extremely long life spans. Overall, this text can be described as religiously conservative, but very well informed about the whole movement of critical philology in his time and the efforts of the Nyingmapas to respond to polemics in this field.[2]

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[1] See especially Gentry 2020. Some passages in Padma 'phrin las' account of Padmasambhava's life (2015, *'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, CNT, vol. 41, p. 25-49) may indicate that he was well informed of So bzlog pa's analyses and speculations. For example, both use the same (admittedly quite commonplace) solution to explain away the inconsistencies: that Padmasambhava manifested himself differently to various "beings to be tamed." As for the above-mentioned biography of Padmasambhava, its presence in the *'Dus mdo rnam thar* despite his virtual absence in *A Ford on the Ocean* is a hint that, in spite of its title, the *'Dus mdo rnam thar* is a general history of the bKa' ma as envisioned by Padma 'phrin las.

[2] This second aspect is well documented in Gentry 2020, who emphasizes the role of Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624). This author is not mentioned by Padma 'phrin las, surely because he was not in favor

Once the lineages are reconstructed on the basis of this text, it is easy to compare them with what appears in ritual texts and practice manuals and to look for more information in the biographies, when they are available. Of course, this work could not be thoroughly done in the present volume, not only because of the immense amount of research required, but also because the reader would have been drawn into a mass of details—"the trees" that would have you "miss the forest"—which, even for the specialist, are better presented in separate, dedicated articles than in a large general book.

Dalton[1] rightly points out the possible historical distortions in Pema Trinlé's account of the transmission when the author wishes to insist on the greater centrality and legitimacy of the branch of the lineage through which he received it.[2] But we need not concern ourselves with this apologetic and perhaps ideological aspect of this writing, since our purpose here is precisely to reconstruct something of the history of the Northern Treasures—including the history of what this branch of the Nyingma school was the heir to, and, one might say, its specific claims—without having to take sides in the competition that may exist or have existed between various sub-schools of the Nyingmapas.

Structure of The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage

After a short preface,[3] this text is divided into three sections:

1. A general history of the origins of Buddhism, and especially the tantric teachings in India;[4]
2. Origins of the Ancient Tradition of the earlier translations;[5]
3. The biographies of the successive lineage masters.[6]

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with the Fifth Dalai Lama, but Padma 'phrin las is clearly aware of the controversies. He is, however, more concerned with establishing a plausible, traditional-sounding narrative than with engaging in debate with other scholars.

1 Dalton 2016, pp. 80-82 and further in the same chapter.

2 As Dalton 2016, p. 80, phrases it: "Pema Trinlé begins by following the usual path from Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé, through the early Zurs, up to Drölmawa Drotön Samdrup Dorjé (1294–1375), teacher to Zurham. From Drölmawa, however, three different lineages diverge."

3 NKG, vol. 44, pp. 4-7; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 2-4.

4 NKG, vol. 44, pp. 7-66; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 4-49. In fact, this consists of a life of Buddha Śākyamuni (CNT, vol. 41, pp. 6-25) and a life of Padmasambhava (CNT, vol. 41, pp. 25-49).

5 *sNga 'gyur rnying ma'i lugs*. KSG, vol. 44, pp. 66-74; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 49-55.

6 NKG, vol. 44, pp. p. 74 to the end; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 55-437.

Of course, this type of Tibetan presentation of history is always schematic and idealized. Still, Pema Trinlé's text is very informative about all sorts of Nyingma figures prior to, or contemporary to, Rigdzin Gödem and the first generations of his followers.

Our aim in the coming chapters will thus be to use the relevant materials to fill the large gap between the legends of Padmasambhava and Nanam Dorjé Düjom, on the one hand, and the biography of Rigdzin Gödem, on the other hand, with both general elements of contextual background and with more directly relevant information about the traditions that he or his close associates may have received. Our aim is primarily to characterize the specific trends in the Nyingma family of Tibetan Buddhism that were finally inherited by the Dorjé Drak masters and, secondarily, to sketch the background situation of the Nyingma nebula in the time of Rigdzin Gödem.

Chapter 8: The Uninterrupted Oral Tradition Heritage of the Northern Treasures Masters and the Early Termas: 8th to 10th centuries

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The Indian Origins: *Questions about the More or Less Central Status of Padmasambhava*

Despite the fact that Pema Trinlé's *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* devotes some pages to the life of Padmasambhava,[1] he is not even mentioned in *A Ford to the Ocean of Maṇḍalas*, the authors' extensive exegesis on the empowerment for *The Gathering of Intentions*. Here is the beginning of the human lineage in India as described in *A Ford to the Ocean of Maṇḍalas*,[2] starting[3] with a common lineage for the "three yogas" (i.e. *Mahā, Anu, Ati*):

1. Garab Dorjé and Princess Rinchen Saldrön;
2. The "Great Master" Rabtu Salwa and "the King of Zahor";
3. "The King of Siṅhala" (*Sing ha la'i rgyal po*);
4. The monk Sokyadewa;

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1 CNT, vol. 41, pp. 25-49. Since this biography was used as a supplementary source for the footnotes of the Padmasambhava chapter in this volume, we will not discuss it here. It would be interesting to compile a list of its very eclectic sources. In addition to various *gter ma* biographies of Padmasambhava, *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* mentions (CNT, vol. 41, pp. 26-27) as sources for a biography of Padmasambhava "born from the womb" (*mngal skyes*, not miraculously born in a lotus): *phur pa'i phyogs kyi yi yig rnying 'ga' zhig*, which may correspond to Sog bzlog pa's sources and *gTer ston ba mkhal smug po'i gter ma rnam thar rtsa 'grel*. This *gter ston* is BDRC P635 (13th century according to BDRC). According to Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 489: *'di lta bu'i lo rgyus mang du snang yang gter ston ba mkhal smug po'i 'khrungs yul lho brag pa yin zer | rnam thar zhib rgyas ma rnyed | gter chos gu ru rin po che mngal skyes kyi rnam thar dang | gsol 'debs bar chad lam sel | de'i 'grel ṭī ka bcas dang | rdo rje phur pa'i chos skor las tshogs | rdzogs rim dang bcas spyan drangs pa yin par snang ngo |*. The texts alluded to by Gu ru bKra shis, and in particular the biography of Padmasambhava "born from the womb," have not yet resurfaced.

2 CNT, vol. 38, p. 11 ff.

3 CNT, vol. 28, pp. 12-14.

5. The Master Gekpé Dorjé, a.k.a. Dorjé Drakpo Tsal;[1]
6. The "Minister of Religion" (or "pious minister") Deva;
7. The Abbot Chögyalkyong.

The last figure is the "abbot from Druzha" who passed it to Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé.

In *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*, after this common lineage, come separate ones for each of the "three yogas."[2] In each case, we can notice that *all* of them pass through Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé, but *none* through Padmasambhava (if we set aside speculations about various other Indian siddhas being in fact none other than him). Nanam Dorjé Düjom plays no role at all. The only significant difference between them is that in the case of the separate lineage of Dzogchen, it reaches Sangyé Yeshé through three generations of Tibetan masters prior to him[3] and not from Chögyalkyong or the "Abbot from Druzha" Chetsenkyé.

Interestingly, the next section of *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*—about the origins of the "Ancient tradition of the earlier translations"—restarts[4] "in heaven" with the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra teaching to his own emanations in the *saṃbhogakāya*, who then emanate as the Six Munis and the Twelve Teachers. This explanation is then followed by a praise to Padmasambhava, allusively presented as the one through whom the teachings of the twelve non-human teachers were transmitted to this world, and a laudation of the

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1 rDo rje drag po rtsal—a wrathful form of Padmasambhava— is the main figure of the *Thugs sgrub* cycle in rGod ldem's *gter chos* (see vol. 2 for a description). "rDo rje drag po rtsal" has been understood at least from the time of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer as Padmasambhava's initiatory name. However, sGeg pa'i rdo rje does not seem to have been identified with Padmasambhava in general rNying ma historiography.

2 Here is, as one more example, the lineage described for the *Mahāyoga* (CNT, vol. 41, pp. 14-15): 1. *Chos sku* Kun tu bzang po; 2. The Buddhas of the five families; 3. Vajrasattva; 4. "The master of Secrets" (Vajrapāṇi); 5. *Slob dpon* Ku ku rā dza; 6. King Jaḥ (or Dzaḥ); 7. King Śa tra pu tri; 8. The king of Oḍḍyāna Siṅharāja; 9. King Uparāja; 10. his daughter Gomadevī; 11. Maitrika Māla; 12. *Ācārya* Jinamitra; 13. *Slob dpon* rDo rje bzhad pa; 14. *Slob dpon* Nyin byed seng ge; 15. *Slob dpon* bDe ba gsal mdzad; 16. *Slob dpon* Śākyabodhi; 17. *dGe slong* So kya de ba; 18. *Slob dpon* sGeg pa'i rdo rje, a.k.a. rDo rje drag po rtsal; 19. *Chos blon* De ba; 20. the "*mkhan po* of Bru zha" Che btsan skyes. Here again, we reach gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes without passing through Padmasambhava.

3 Bee ro tsa na, g.Yu sgra snying po, gNyags Jñānakumāra, and Sog po dPal gyi ye shes.

4 CNT, vol. 41, p. 49 ff.

Nyingma tradition as a whole, ending with a series of verses.[1] This entire passage, which is definitely intended to respond to anti-Nyingma polemics, does not tell us how Padmasambhava is supposed to fit into the unbroken oral transmission of the tantric lineage. As mentioned above, he is completely absent in *A Ford to the Ocean of Maṇḍalas*, while he is extremely central in Chöying's account of the Northern Treasures tradition. This deserves further exploration, but there is definitely an implicit tension in Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*, in which this long biography gives Padmasambhava a key role, while he is almost completely absent from the rest of the volume.

The third section of *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* presents biographies of the successive masters.

It should first be noted that in *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*, the author mentions one of the lineages that he has reconstructed in *A Ford to the Ocean of Maṇḍalas* as being "the way in which the general [transmission of] the [various] vehicles befell [to their spiritual heirs] in connection with the empowerment of *The Gathering of Intentions*,"[2] distinguishing it from "the specific transmission of [each of the] three yogas."[3] He then explains that the first has already been sufficiently explained in the empowerment ritual text and that he will now focus on the second one. However, instead of dividing this entire section according to the three higher classes of tantras, he begins with a description of the common transmission of the three.

In the following pages, the aspects that are not sufficiently documented in the existing literature[4] will be further developed.

First Generations of Tibetan Masters (*until the second diffusion of the Dharma in Tibet*): *the Great Importance of Nub Sangyé Yeshé*

Unfortunately for our purposes, Dalton (2016) does not devote much of his critical inquiry to the early generations of Tibetan masters and most of the story he tells restarts with Zurpoché,[5] who appears as the seventh generation after Vairocana of Bagor.[6] Since we do not have

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1 CNT, vol. 41, pp. 52-55.

2 CNT, vol. 41, p. 55: *spyir 'dus pa mdo'i dbang dang rjes su 'brel ba'i theg pa'i babs tshul*.

3 Loc. cit.: *bye brag yo ga gsum gyi brgyud tshul*.

4 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991; Dalton 2016.

5 Zur po che Śākya 'byung gnas (1002–1062).

6 Bee ro tsa na—NKG/KSG, vol. 44, pp. 157-212; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 115-156. For a short hagiography of this figure, see Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 538-540, or Barron 2005, pp. 49-50; a complete English rendering of the largest hagiography, the *Bee ro'i 'dra 'bag chen mo*, is found in Jinba

much space for most of these figures either, we are left with the short hagiographies found especially in Dudjom Rinpoché.

If we reconstruct the lineage as described in the text, starting from the first generation of Tibetan masters, we find:

1-2. Vairocana and Yudra Nyingpo;
3. Nyag Jñānakumāra or Yeshé Zhönnu;[1]
4. Sokpo Pal gyi Yeshé;[2]
5. Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé (844–first half of the 10th cent.);[3]
6. Nub Khulungpa Yönten Gyatso (d.u.);[4]
7. Nub Yeshé Gyatso (son of Yönten Gyatso, d.u.);[5]
8. Gyatön Lodrö Jangchub;[6]
9. Gyatön's disciples Thogar Namkhadé[7] and Zhutön Sönam Śākya.[8]

This list is extremely interesting because it corresponds closely to what we find in Yamāntaka-related sources (studied below) and testifies to an early transmission of Indian tantric materials that is rarely mentioned in more popular accounts of the early decades of what would become the Nyingma tradition.

Palmo 2004. Also see Hanson-Barber 1984 (although this dissertation is maybe rather a reflection of Buddhist piety than a genuine scientific contribution).

1 NKG/KSG, vol. 44, p. 212-218; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 156-161. See also Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 601-605, a biography very similar to that by Padma 'phrin las, except that bDud 'joms *rin po che* does not associate him so closely with Vairocana, perhaps because he preferred to present Vairocana mostly in the context of the rDzogs chen Klong sde lineage on the basis of the chronicles found in the *rDo rje zam pa*.

2 NKG/KSG, vol. 44, p. 218-224; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 161-165, followed by a retrospective account (*ibid.*, pp. 165-169) of the way in which gNyags Jñānakumāra received the entire *dbang gi chu bo bzhi*, which he would later give to gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes.

3 NKG/KSG, vol. 44, p. 224-245; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 169-185. For Sang rgyas ye shes' dates, see Esler 2022b, p. 88, where Esler decides 844 for his birth and suggests (p. 92) that "it seems quite possible, (...) that Sangs rgyas ye shes witnessed the first five, perhaps six, decades of the 10th century."

4 NKG/KSG, vol. 44, pp. 246-263; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 185-193.

5 NKG/KSG, vol. 44, pp. 263-265; CNT, vol. 41, pp. 193-195.

6 NKG/KSG, vol. 44, pp. 265-266; CNT, pp. vol. 41, pp. 195-196. Mentioned among Zur po che's masters in Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 619.

7 Padma 'phrin las does not devote a special development to this figure or the next.

8 Mentioned among Zur po che's masters in Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 619.

Vairocana, Nyak Jñānakumāra and Sokpo Palgyi Yeshé

Vairocana of Bagor surely is a historical figure who actually played a decisive role in many fields in the introduction of Buddhism in Tibet. However, although hundreds of pages of English literature (academic or not) have been written about him on the basis of a large number of Tibetan texts, we must admit that it is still difficult to distinguish between what belongs to history and what belongs to legend. This is also true of Yudra Nyingpo of Gyalmorong[1] who is closely associated with this narrative. The source regarded as the most authoritative among the Nyingmapas regarding Vairocana's life, *The Great Image*,[2] is clearly a composite work, the latest layers of which belong to the 14th century.[3] Moreover, *The Great Image* is more of a cosmic opera, written in the style of Buddhist scripture, than a proper biography. The story of Vairocana's life barely fills more than 40% of the whole,[4] is clearly legendary, and is intended to teach the reader Dzogchen (and Buddhism in general) rather than to present a truly concrete personal image of the great translator, despite its title.

The earliest Bön sources, such as the recently translated *Drenpa's Proclamation*, confirm his existence and his activities in the time of Padmasambhava and Trisong Detsen, but they do not present him as the author of a very ambitious synthesis of Buddhist and Bön texts, as later

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1 rGyal mo g.Yu sgra snying po, a name often misunderstood as "*Queen* Yudra Nyingpo," while it applies to a male figure from rGyal mo rong (Jean-Luc Achard, oral communication, January 2025).

2 *Bee ro'i 'dra 'bag*. Complete translation in Jinpa Palmo 2004.

3 This text contains prophecies extending to such a late period and as the discovery of this final version is ascribed to rGod ldem's contemporary rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405; see rDo rje gling pa 2009, vol. 16). The colophon is not very explicit about when the *gter ma* was revealed. Some lines at the end present a continuous oral line of translation for some generations after Bee ro tsa na and a sort of postface states that the purpose of the text is to unify and standardize diverging versions. As it is not clear whether it is rDo rje gling pa or a later editor who wrote these concluding verses, it can be interpreted as meaning either as the purpose of rDo rje gling pa's *gter ma* version of this text (in contrast to earlier ones), or as the purpose of this specific edition (in contrast with other versions of rDo rje gling pa's *gter chos*). It is possible that earlier version of the *Bee ro'i 'dra 'bag* existed: see Arguillère 2024d about the curious mention of *rGyal sras* bZod pa receiving a transmission of the *Bee ro'i 'dra 'bag* from Klong chen pa. However, it is also not impossible that rDo rje gling pa's dates have to be moved slightly earlier, since prophecies indicate that he was to be born in 1322. If this were the case, Klong chen pa may have received rDo rje gling pa's version.

4 Jinpa Palmo 2004, pp. 92-192.

sources would. In fact, in this context he is portrayed merely as adapting Bön rituals to the specific syntax of Buddhist tantric liturgies.[1]

It is not unlikely that further research will lead to the conclusion that Vairocana was not associated with the court of King Trisong Detsen or with Padmasambhava, but that the obscure story of his exile to Gyalrong and his association with Yudra Nyingpo should actually be taken to mean that he was in fact active in that region (which remains to be determined precisely in context). As seen above, a characteristic of the terma biographies of Padmasambhava is a tendency to combine people and events that may belong to different times and unrelated milieus into a unified, coherent narrative that makes great religious sense but may not fully reflect actual facts.

The most reasonable way to deal with the question of Vairocana's activities may be to begin with the canonical translations of the Nyingma tantras that can be more or less safely attributed to him (i.e., avoiding, at least initially, the hidden treasures), and to pay careful attention to the Indian masters with whom he is associated in this literature. Of course, one might think that Vairocana of Bagor—the figure known from the traditional narratives—was not really the translator of all these Dzogchen materials. But, from the point of view of sound methodology, we are actually looking for the individual, whoever he was, who translated these texts as the real referent of the name "Vairocana of Bagor" and on that basis we should re-examine the narrative content of texts such as *The Great Image*. This reading would help to balance the legend-laden materials such as the chronicles of the Space Series section of Dzogchen.

The same can be said, although with less sources on both sides, for the two next figures in the lineage, Nyak Jñānakumāra and Sokpo Palgyi Yeshé. Further research about these great ancestors of the Nyingma tradition would be highly desirable but it is not directly relevant in the present chapter.

Nyak Jñānakumāra, like Vairocana of Bagor, was included in the legend of Padmasambhava. In this context, he figures, alongside Sokpo Pal gyi Yeshé, Vairocana himself, and Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé, among the twenty-five disciples of the Great Ācarya of Oḍḍiyāna, in a way that seems to collapse decades into a kind of mythic simultaneity. It must be remembered that, even according to the revealed biographies of Padmasambhava himself, the "Precious Guru" spent no more than a few years in Tibet, so his miraculous longevity cannot be invoked when it comes to claiming that he was the teacher of Tibetan masters belonging to different generations. Therefore, although they are all regarded as disciples of Padmasambhava, it seems more

[1] Kvaerne and Martin 2023, p. 320.

plausible to think of these three figures as masters who followed one another in history.

According to traditional accounts, Nyak Jñānakumāra was present at the funeral of King Muné Tsenpo, the direct successor of King Trisong Detsen, whose reign was very short (797?–799?). It is said that it was on this occasion that he received teachings about Vajrakīla from Vimalamitra,[1] which seem to be the main source of the magical powers he reportedly displayed for the sake of protecting the Dharma.

It is worth repeating that Nanam Dorjé Düjom, otherwise so dear to the Northern Treasures, plays no role in the uninterrupted Oral Tradition lineages (Kama). The really central figure for the transmission of *The Gathering of Intentions*—and all sorts of other tantric materials[2] that were to become part of the heritage of the Northern Treasures masters—is definitely Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé.

Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé, Nub Khulungpa Yönten Gyatso, and Nub Yeshé Gyatso

We know more about Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé than we do about his predecessors, thanks largely to Dylan Esler's research mentioned above.[3] The chronology, however, remains somewhat fuzzy, certainly in part because of the general Nyingma tradition's concern to establish a unified narrative of its origins and thus to place Sangyé Yeshé within the circle of Padmasambhava's close disciples. Not only is Sangyé Yeshé later than generally assumed in Tibetan historiography, but he was in fact the *terminus a quo* of a very lively school of tantric Buddhism that flourished during the so-called "dark age" and later merged into the common Nyingma heritage. It is interesting that the Northern Treasures masters became important heirs to these "non-Padmasambhavian" lines of Nyingma Buddhism.

After Esler's careful scrutiny of the hagiographical materials in the context of his study of *The Lamp for the Eye of Contemplation*, a *desiratum*

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1 The association of gNyags Jñānakumāra with Vimalamitra is further supported by a common translation work of a Mahāyoga tantra, the *Zhi ba lha rgyud chen po* (NG, vol. 21, pp. 580–622), according to the colophon of this text. Jñānakumāra also appears as the author of two texts found in the *rNying ma bka' ma*: the *'Phrul gyi me long dgu skor gyi 'grel pa* (KSG, vol. 86, pp. 254-282, the commentary of a short, versified text, the *'Phrul gyi me long dgu skor*, placed just above in the same volume, KSG, vol. 86, pp. 245-253, unrelated to the homonymous Bon scripture), and the *gSang sngags lung 'grel* (KSG, vol. 93, pp. 439-483).

2 His role is also central in the *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* tradition, discussed in Chapter 11.

3 Esler 2020 and Esler 2022b.

for more historically exploitable clues would now be an examination of the large commentary on *The Gathering of Intentions* attributed to Sangyé Yeshé.[1] Another interesting thread to follow would be that of his translations, especially of the Yamāntaka corpus.[2]

The best Tibetan historians seem to have been aware of the fact that Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé lived later than Emperor Trisong Detsen. Gö Lotsāwa Zhönnu Pal, for example, distinguishes between the imperial time when the *Secret Essence* (or *Sangwa Nyingpo*)[3] was translated and a later period during which *The Gathering of Intentions* was:[4]

> After most of them had passed away, the royal laws became abrogated. During the time of the spread of the general upheaval, Nub Sangyé Yeshé Rinpoché attended on many learned men residing in India, Nepal, Druzha[5] (Gilgit), and elsewhere, and thoroughly mastered the *Do Gongpa Düpa* [i.e., *The Gathering of Intentions*], which had been translated into Tibetan by his teacher the translator of Druzha Chetsenkyé.

As Esler rightly remarks, unlike most of the earlier and later tradition, Pema Trinlé does not *explicitly* make Sangyé Yeshé a direct disciple of Padmasambhava in *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage.* He seems to be aware that there were a few generations between the two figures but seemingly avoids addressing the issue.

It may not be Sangyé Yeshé *alone* who has been inserted into a genuinely all-8th century context. It is not impossible that Vairocana and Nyak Jñānakumāra too were artificially connected to Padmasambhava and Trisong Detsen. If they were not later figures, at least perhaps they were much less connected to Padmasambhava or even to Emperor Trisong Detsen than the post-Nyangral Nyima Özer mainstream Nyingma narratives assume. In fact, the same lineage for *The Gathering of Intentions* appears in, e.g., *The Blue Annals*,[6] which does not mention Padmasambhava either, nor even, which is more curious, Vairocana, Jñānakumāra, or Sokpo Pal gyi Yeshé. In the *Blue Annals*, Sangyé Yeshé is connected to "Ru Dharmabodhi, Vasudhara and the *upādhyāya* of Druzha." The connection to Vairocana, Jñānakumāra, and Sokpo Pal

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1 NKG/KSG, vol. 50 and 51.

2 On the question of the *three* translations of a *Zla gsang nag po* in NG, vol. 25 (the same tantra, but growing over time), see Arguillère 2024b, pp. 310-312 and appendix 2 pp. 367-372. Unfortunately, neither of the two revised versions of the tantra has a clear colophon identifying its authors.

3 *gSang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa*, in NG, vol. 21, pp. 2–326.

4 Roerich 1978, p. 104

5 Bru zha.

6 Roerich 1978, p. 159.

gyi Yeshé, however, is asserted elsewhere in the same chronicle—but precisely in a context in which Gö Lotsāwa expresses doubts about the chronology:[1]

> …Some say that he lived in the time of Trisong Detsen, some say that he lived in the time of Ralpachen, and again some say that he lived in the time of Tri Tsekpé Pal.

The connection between Sangyé Yeshé and the undocumented Nepalese master (called "king") Vasudhara is much better established than any link with Padmasambhava and his direct or indirect disciples. Vasudhara seems to be the main source also for all the abundant Yamāntaka materials passed through Sangyé Yeshé, the lineage of which, in its earlier part, is identical with that of *The Gathering of Intentions* and in the same way unconnected (or only partly and maybe artificially connected) to Padmasambhava. We shall return to this point in the context of the history of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* (Chapter 11).

Sangyé Yeshé's successor Nub Khulungpa Yönten Gyatso is difficult to date. His biographies[2] do not contain allusions to any datable figure. It is said that his son Nub Yeshé Gyatso was the father of Lhajé Hūṃchung, who "taught witchcraft to the venerable Mila"—Milarepa (1028?–1111?).[3] We can provisionally suppose that Yönten Gyatso was born in the first half of the 10th century and Yeshé Gyatso in the second half. Nub Yeshé Gyatso's disciple Gyatön Lodrö Jangchub[4] would

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1 Roerich 1978, p. 108.

2 Düjom Rinpoché (Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 614-615) more or less copies Pema Trinlé's *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*. What is most remarkable in this biography is that it mentions an Indian master ("Dhanadhala") from whom Yon tan rgya mtsho received teachings and empowerments. This, together with the existence (see Arguillère 2024b, pp. 310-312) of two apparently successive revisions of Sangyé Yeshé's translation of the *Zla gsang nag po*, conveys the strong feeling that the idea of a complete decadence of Buddhism in Tibet after the collapse of the imperial dynasty, as described in Tibetan traditional sources, is to a large extent a myth.

3 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 615, contains a short account of Ye shes rgya mtsho expressing the same idea. These details are important in relation to Sangs rgyas ye shes' other main legacy connected to Yamāntaka. Mi la ras pa's dates are not established with certainty. Biographers place his date of birth between 1028 and 1052. See Quintman 2013 for details.

4 rGya *ston* Blo gros byang chub is mentioned in Roerich 1978, p. 159. His disciples are said to be named Tho gar Nam mkha' sde and Zhu *ston* bSod nams śā kya.

then be the link with the early 11th century in which his disciple Zurpoche Śākya Jungne (1002–1062) lived.

Although Gö Lotsāwa is aware of all these lineage details, he writes that "between Sangyé Yeshé and Zurpo, the eldest, there was one teacher only." This means that there was one person that was both a direct disciple of Sangyé Yeshé and a direct master of Zurpoché.[1] This would imply that Sangyé Yeshé lived to a very old age (quite late in the 10th century), if not maybe to the amazing longevity that tradition attributes to him. A "direct disciple" might, however, be someone who merely received a transmission as a child; the information does not have to be taken as meaning someone that he fully trained.[2]

This summary of what can be deduced from both Pema Trinlé and Gö Lotsāwa tends to prove that Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé and his successors played a much more important role than is generally recognized in the early transmission of the tantric materials that later coalesced into the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism.

[1] Roerich 1978, p. 109.

[2] Padma 'phrin las does not seem to be fully convinced on this point and remarks the incoherence of his sources (*'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, in CNT, vol. 41, p. 185). He tells the life of more than one master between gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes and Zur po che (*op. cit.*, pp. 186-196).

Chapter 9: Zurpoché, Zurchungwa, his Disciples, and Drophukpa in the Context of the "Tibetan Renaissance"

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From the point we are now reaching, the heirs of the earlier traditions—which seem to have been much more composite than is generally realized—were no longer alone in Tibet and had to cope with the new trends of Buddhism introduced during the so-called "Tibetan Renaissance."[2] The renaissance of Buddhism in Tibet in the 11th century was a time of decentralized efflorescence. Many individuals went south to receive teachings from Indian and Newar gurus, thus giving rise to a Later Spread[3] of the teaching in Tibet. The incoming wave was both philosophical, with many mahāyānic Sanskrit commentaries being translated and studied,[4] and religious, with the transmission in Tibet of many classes of tantric practices that were developing in India, foremost among them the highest yoga tantras (*niruttaratantra*). Many lineages that came to be called "new" (*gsar ma*) developed at that time, foremost among them the Kagyü, Sakya and Kadam lineages. Transmissions that had survived the time of fragmentation that followed the downfall of the Tibetan Empire and had

1 Cécile Ducher is the main author of §§ 1-4, while Stéphane Arguillère is the author of the remaining part of the chapter. This book is overall the result of collaborative work.

2 The term was coined by Ronald Davidson's (2008) already classical book.

3 *sPyi dar*.

4 It is unclear which doctrinal treatises (*śāstra*) had already been translated during the Early Spread. The rNying ma pas do not seem to have struggled to maintain their older translations of *common* material or were not successful in doing so. Their main concern was to prevent their own *specific* tantric heritage from falling into disuse. However, the expanded redactions of the revealed biographies of Padmasambhava present lists of translated Buddhist texts in all genres and the Dunhuang documents contain fragments of many of these. Be that as it may, these earlier translations were generally replaced by later ones promoted as standard versions by the compilers of the canonical and paracanonical corpora. This erased most traces of earlier non-tantric literature in Tibet, giving the feeling that the heirs of the Early Spread, who later became specialists in tantric ritual and meditation, were, from the outset, indifferent to philosophy—perhaps another anachronistic assumption. Traces of early translations of philosophical materials should be sought through exacting philological inquiries, not only in the Dunhuang documents, but, as Esler 2022b has begun to do, on the basis of quotations in works by pre-11th-century authors.

spread in the interval also continued to be practiced, especially in family lineages. These, by contrast with the new schools, were called "old" (*rnying ma*). Meanwhile, the Bön religion began to organize its canon of scriptures, claiming a completely different origin and no connection with Buddhism understood as the posterity of Buddha Śākyamuni, despite the fact that their ideas and practices are very similar to those of the Nyingmapas.

In the 12th century, traditions would begin to coalesce in a more discernible way. In the case of the Kagyü school, for example, what had started as a family and eremitic lineage, with Marpa (1000–1081) and non-monastic disciples such as Ngok Chödor (1023–1090) and Milarepa (1028–1111), grew to become monastic and more centralized with Gampopa (1079–1153) and his disciples. They eventually founded several Kagyü sub-lineages, foremost among them the Karma Kagyü, Drikung, Drukpa and Tsalpa.[1] The Kadampas were followers of Atiśa's (982–1054) teachings. They built several institutions, often monastic and increasingly scholastic, in Central Tibet (mostly in the region of Penyul to the north of Lhasa). Their style of Buddhism was a balance between the pāramitānaya (non-mantric Mahāyāna Buddhism) and tantranaya, with an emphasis on a gradual path and mind training.[2] The Sakyapas became a powerful family institution in western Central Tibet (gTsang). Although they inherited Nyingma practices coming from their Khön ancestors, they incorporated many of the highest yoga tantras that had developed in India in the 11th century. Their "five forefathers" (*gong ma lnga*) created a powerful institution with both monastic and non-monastic lines of transmission, as well as a pronounced tradition of learning.[3]

It is in that general context that Zurpoché flourished. With him, we reach a figure who is much better known than the previous three figures in the lineage. As *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* is one of the main sources Düjom Rinpoché copies or summarizes, there is little need, in the present context, to add anything here to his account of Zurpoché.[4] Zurpoché's most curious features are his association with Drokmi Lotsāwa (992–1072/74) in the context of his fondness for the Sakyapas' teaching of *The Path with Its Fruit*[5] and his friendly

1 See for example Sørensen and Hazod 2007; Ducher 2021a; Kumagai 2022.
2 Roesler 2019.
3 Dhongthog and van Schaik 2016.
4 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 617-635 and notes. A shorter biography of Zur po che is also found in Roerich 1978, pp. 110-113. It does not contradict the larger narrative found in Pema Trinlé's *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* and reproduced by Düjom Rinpoché.
5 *Lam 'bras*.

relationships with the Bönpo Ketsewa, with whom, it is said, they planned to build a temple in common.

His association with Drokmi, combined with some aspects of the hagiographies of Zurpoché, gives the feeling that he was extremely interested in the inner yogas of the completion phase, of which Drokmi was, in his time, one of the most advanced proponents. The second aspect is documented in details only in Bön sources that would require further investigation. The only concern of their authors seems to be their desire to present some of the Dzogchen of the Nyingmapas as borrowings from Bön sources in a way that cannot, to date, be properly verified. A more accurate and factual understanding of the way in which early Nyingmapas and early Bönpos exchanged texts, doctrines, and practical instructions would indeed be illuminating.

Both aspects of this very central figure in the Nyingma nebula of his time suggest that at least some of the Nyingma masters played an active role in the Tibetan renaissance of the 11th century. Until now it has been assumed that the early Nyingmapas were merely passive recipients of the new knowledge brought to Tibet by the masters of the Later Spread of Dharma, which they merged with their own earlier traditions. But such an understanding of cultural history is probably simplistic. It is to be hoped that the patient historical reconstruction of the concrete exchanges between the representatives of the many traditions of the time will gradually lead us to understand how the various schools were built up by synthesizing their own materials through numerous intelligent and active interactions (rather than mechanical "influences" or even "borrowings").

Maybe more interesting even than Zurpoché's association with the Sakya and Bön traditions is the fact that, according to Pema Trinlé,[1] Zurpoché's father travelled to India and remained there for ten years (prior to Zurpoché's birth, we can suppose, so in the late 10th century). This contradicts again both the unified tale of the origins of the Nyingma School in the 8th century and the legend of a complete collapse of Buddhism in Tibet during the "dark age." In fact, it may indicate that the "Zur tradition" or "Zur system" (*zur lugs*) was, to some extent, the fruit of their own studies in India in the late 10th century, as much or maybe even more than a heritage from Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé or, *a fortiori*, from the teachings introduced in Tibet at the time of Emperor Trisong Detsen.

The narrative about the connection of Zurpoché to Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé's disciples is somewhat fuzzy and gives the feeling that it is not utterly impossible that all of this was later made up into a lineage. Be

[1] *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*, in CNT, vol. 41, p. 196.

that as it may, here is the lineage from Zurpoché to Drophukpa as presented by Rigdzin Pema Trinlé:

10. Zurpoché Śākya Jungné (1002–1062);[1]
11. Zurchungwa Sherab Drakpa (1014–1074);[2]

12-13: The "four pillars" and Drophukpa (*zur wön*) Śākya Sengé[3] (1074–1134[4] or 1135[5]).

Düjom Rinpoché also provides a sufficient biographical account of Zurpoché's successors.[6]

Zurpoché's biography, as well as many elements of the lives of the next generations of his posthumous followers, give the sense that these masters set up systems of practice focusing on the deity Yangdak Heruka, which some may have called "a Nyingma Hevajra" (or Cakrasaṃvara) in a way that would mingle earlier Nyingma materials with some inspiration at least from *The Path with Its Fruit*, which Zurpoché studied with Drokmi Lotsāwa. This, again, should be nuanced on the basis of the idea that the Zurs may have been heirs of teachings that they themselves collected in India in the 10th century.

However, so far, the literature that has resurfaced about Yangdak is scarce, except for a bulky text known as the *Great Secret Commentary on Yangdak*,[7] which, despite its attribution to Padmasambhava, fits

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1 *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage*, in NKG/KSG, vol. 44, p. 266-308; in CNT, vol. 41, pp. 196-227.

2 *The Biographies*, in NKG/KSG, vol. 44, p. 308-334; in CNT, vol. 41, pp. 227-255. Many elements of his life are actually narrated in Zur po che's hagiography. This section includes an excursus on 'Gos khug pa lHas btsas' 11th century polemics against the rNying ma pa with Padma 'phrin las' replies. Roerich 1978, p. 646, mentions a "*sthavira* Shes rab grags pa" who invited Ācārya sGom pa (a nephew of sGam po pa, b. 1116 according to Roerich 1978, p. 463) to sTod lung in the 1050s. Another lineage described by Padma 'phrin las (NKG/KSG, vol. 44, p. 358-359; CNT, vol. 41, p. 265), which will not be followed here, reads as follows: Zur chung ba; Mar pa *lho brag pa*; Shangs nag; *gSang bdag* sGro phug pa; Nya ri rgya ston. This is somewhat odd chronologically. Padma 'phrin las calls all these *bar skabs kyi brgyud tshul mi 'dra ba'i tshul* and then shifts to what he calls *dngos brgyud*. This lineage is awkward if Mar pa is to be understood as Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros; it is completely unheard of in other sources (this last remark is by Cécile Ducher, September 17 2024).

3 *The Biographies*, in NKG/KSG, vol. 44, p. 334-343; in CNT, vol. 41, pp. 255-262.

4 According to Roerich 1978 and BDRC.

5 According to Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991 (*loc. cit.*).

6 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 645-655.

7 *Yang dag gsang 'grel chen po*. Its actual title is *dPal khrag 'thung chen po'i sgrub thabs yang dag grub pa* and it is found in NKG, vol. 47, pp. 6-585. It presents

quite well with what we would expect from the early Zurs. What is most perplexing about this "Zur system" remains the absence of any explicitly attributed textual remnants of the early Zurs' productions, despite their enduring reputation as a tradition that left a lasting imprint on the Nyingmapas' intellectual and spiritual history. Actual knowledge of their ascribed teachings in the contemporary Nyingma tradition is based on much later works, such as Yungtönpa Dorjepal's (1284–1365) commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo*,[1] which is the text generally referred to when Nyingma masters discuss the specific views of the "Zur system."

A possible explanation of the reason why quite little early Nyingma literature about deities other than Vajrakīla and Yamāntaka was preserved could be that most of it got absorbed into the enormous *Kagyé* systems of Nyangral and Chöwang. Indeed, as regards Yangdak Heruka, in the *Eight Pronouncements* he is the third deity, corresponding to the "mind" aspect, with his maṇḍala in the east. It is probable that the materials[2] passed from Tertön Drupchen Ngödrup to Nyang ral in the 13th century where compilations or summaries of these earlier traditions.

A Side Note on Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo

Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (1012–1088? 1042–1136?)[3] admittedly plays no role at all in the history of the Nyingma school as described by Rigdzin Pema Trinlé. However, we cannot completely ignore him,

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itself as a commentary written by Padmasambhava on a work of Hūṃkāra. It contains a lot of body techniques, sexual yogas, etc., which would not be expected in an 8th century text. There is a small narrative section in it (pp. 235-238), in which gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes appears as the last figure. A note in the Tibetan edition mentions that this is "clearly an addition by gNubs chen…," but we might understand it otherwise as an element of proof that the whole text was composed *not earlier* than the second half of the 10th century and most probably in a Zur context. It also contains (p. 397) another short narrative about the circumstances of its translation, attributed to gNubs Nam mkha' snying po. However, it must have been composed—or at least developed and enriched—at the time of the "Tibetan Renaissance," and it does not seem to be a document of the imperial period. This text would certainly deserve careful analysis.

1 g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal, 1999, *dPal gsang ba snying po'i rgyud don gsal byed me long*, in KSG, vol. 28, pp. 1-589.

2 The *bKa' brgyad bka' ma rdzong 'phrang*, the vestiges of which are preserved mainly in KSG, vol. 67, with some elements in vol. 13.

3 Dominic Sur's biographical note on this figure (Sur 2021) is informative. See also Köppl 2008 and Sur 2017.

since he is recognized in retrospect as one of the most fundamental early masters of this tradition. This paragraph is added here mainly to justify why we barely mention him. The reason is that whatever the importance of Rongzom in his own time and milieu, it seems that his present fame is largely due to a much later rediscovery of his writings. Contemporary Nyingma scholars tend to follow Gö Lotsāwa's assumption [1] that when Longchenpa's original commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo* (1352)[2] deviates from the Zur system, it does so following Rongzom's commentary. However, in Longchenpa's text as it actually stands, Rongzom is the object of a critical appreciation that is not entirely laudatory. It can be shown[3] that the lineage connections from Rongzom to Longchenpa, for example, were forged by later authors and do not correspond to historical reality. This does not mean that Rongzom was not a genius or a great spiritual master, but rather, that the history of how his works were received, especially their increased fame in more recent periods (from the time of Jigmé Lingpa and Ju Mipham), should be reconstructed to understand their actual influence throughout earlier centuries in specific, traceable contexts.

A survey of the lineages in which he appears in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Receives* indicates that he played a role in the transmission of early Vajrakīla materials (in the Kama line). The names that feature before and after him in the lineages are not very familiar and that must be indicating that he belonged to a geographically isolated line that merged only later in the Nyingma mainstream, in ways that remain to be properly researched.

From Drophukpa to Yungtönpa and Drölmawa (*14th century*)

After Drophukpa in the mid-11th century, *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* becomes more complex as Pema Trinlé follows more than one line of transmission. As Dalton phrases it:[4]

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1 Roerich 1978, p. 157, Klong chen pa reportedly "used to say that the method of explaining the commentary of the *gSang snying 'grel pa spar khab* was unsatisfactory, but that the method of Rong zom was good." Rong zom's commentary (*rGyud rgyal gsang ba snying po'i 'grel pa rong zom chos bzang gis mdzad pa*) is preserved in NKG/KSG, vol. 25, p. 5-438.

2 Klong chen rab 'byams 2009, *rGyud gsang ba snying po'i 'grel pa*, vol. 23, pp. 53-565.

3 The only source in which Klong chen pa seems to claim the spiritual heritage of Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po is the *dPal gsang ba snying po'i spyi don yid kyi mu sel* (Klong chen rab 'byams 2009, vol. pp. 52-183). See Arguillère 2007, pp. 45–46 (English enriched adaptation forthcoming) for a presentation of the strong reasons to doubt the authenticity of this text.

4 Dalton 2016, p. 80.

> Pema Trinlé begins by following the usual path from Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé, though the early Zurs, up to Drölmawa Samdrup Dorjé (1294–1375), teacher to Zurham. From Drölmawa, however, three different lineages diverge […].

In fact, the account of the lineage pathways from "the early Zurs" to the time of Rigdzin Gödem's life in *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* is more complicated.[1] It is from the last of these "early Zurs," Drophukpa, that the lineage branches.[2] Pema Trinlé actually distinguishes two main lines of transmission after Drophukpa:[3]

14. Kyotön Śākya Yeshé (late 11th cent.?);	14. Zurnak Khorlo (late 11th–early 12th century);[4]
15. Dampa Yasé Repa or Yasé Chenpo;	15. Amé Sherab Lodrö (late 11th–early 12th c.);[5]
16. Len Śākya Zangpo (12th cent.);[6]	16. Lachen Ralbu;
17. Sé (or Amé) Dorjé Dechen;	17. Metön Gönpo (late 12th–early 13th cent.)[7]
18. "The three Paldens."	18. Khepa Sochenpo[8]

1 Padma 'phrin las, 2015, *The Biographies*, in CNT, vol. 41, pp. 263-264.

2 Dalton 2016, p. 187, n. 9, mentions the second line (through g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal) merely in passing, since he does not have the reasons that we have to be interested in this figure.

3 Padma 'phrin las discusses an alternate lineage from sGro phug pa to mGar chung Shes rab 'od, which would not be relevant here.

4 See, e.g., Roerich 1978, p. 110, which locates him in the Zur genealogy, but without elements allowing to calculate his dates. It seems that he was the grandson of one of Zur po che's younger brothers. Another mention of him in Roerich 1978, p. 125, does not allow to date him any better than in the very late 11th–early 12th century.

5 Appears in the Zur genealogy of *The Blue Annals* (*loc. cit.*) as A mi Sher blo, a grandson of another of Zur po che's brothers. Probably active in the end of the 11th century.

6 Roerich 1978, p. 120: Glan Śā kya bzang po of Chu bar, connected to Zur chung pa as "the pillar of the [system of] Māyā" (i.e., *sGyu 'phrul drwa ba*). See also *op. cit.*, p. 157, without further connections that would help to date him more precisely. In the Fifth Dalai Lama's *gSan yig*, this intermediary link between *Dam pa* Ya se and A mes rDo rje bde chen is not mentioned.

7 Mes *ston* mGon po. Mentioned in Roerich 1978, p. 131, as the foremost disciple of a "Zhig po of dBus," who died in a year *shing mo yos* that Roerich calculates as 1195. Also mentioned in *op. cit.* p. 149 in the context of this same lineage.

8 Dalton 2016, e.g., p. 215, calls him "Khepa Sechenpo" (*mKhas pa* Sre chen po). Appears as *Bla ma* Sro in Roerich 1978, p. 149. This figure is

19. Drubtop Lhünpal;[1]
20. Bendé Wangchuk Gyaltsen;[2]
21. Zur Jampa Sengé (ca. 1280–ca 1310);[3]
22. Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365) "who also heard it from Nyemdowa."

With Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365), we have reached Rigdzin Gödem's time. Yungtönpa died when Rigdzin Gödem was twenty-eight years old. There is no indication that they ever met. However, Yungtönpa, born in Tsang, was a towering figure in the 14th-century Nyingma context. He was closely involved with the early stages of the *Khandro Nyingthik* as well as perhaps the main specialist of the Yamāntaka cycle *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* and many other Kama and Terma traditions that are central to Rigdzin Gödem's teachings. According to later official Dorjé Drak narratives, the traditions passed through

consistently called So *ston* Shes rab rgyal mtshan in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Thob yig* (1971: vol. 2, f°191a; vol. 4, f°255b).

1 Roerich 1978, p. 149: in this lineage leading to g.Yung *ston pa*, we find in his place two names: *Pa shi* Śāk 'od and rTa nag bDud rtsi.

2 In the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Thob yig* (1971: vol. 4, f°315a), one [lHa sdings pa] dBang phyug rgyal mtshan was a master of the Jo nang pa Sa bzang ma ti *paṇ chen* (1294–1376) and his master sPang khang pa Grags pa rgyal mtshan (d.u.; see also *Thob yig* 1971, vol. 4, f°616b). Since the life of the next link in the present lineage is very short, this could be consistent if, for example, *Ban de* dBang phyug rgyal mtshan was born in the 1260s and would have lived during some part of the 14th century.

3 See, e.g., in Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 663-664. From Roerich 1978, p. 149, we know that he died at the age of 27. He was at least 15 (Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991 p. 664: "…in his fourteenth year, he began to teach and acquired a reputation as a scholar") when he taught g.Yung *ston pa*. What is more, in Yung *ston pa*'s versified autobiography, it is said that he went to the Zurs' seat, 'Ug pa lung, in his own 15th year, around 1298. (See *Karma kam tshang gi brgyud pa rin po che'i rnam thar*, p. 331: *de nas bco lnga'i lo lon dus su ni*| |*mkhas grub rtsod med nyi zla ltar grags pa*| |*zur chen śā kya 'byung gnas zhes grags pa'i*| |*gdan sa 'ug pa lung du phyin*|.) So, Zur Byams pa seng ge must have been born around 1285 at the very latest. He was also (Roerich 1978, p. 151) a teacher of Drölmawa, born in 1295. By the same calculation, this may not have occurred before 1305, which is compatible with a death in his 27th year (Tibetan style), at the latest in 1311. This all must mean that he, as a lineage holder, granted empowerments and oral transmission to the young sons of important rNying ma families. Zur Byams pa seng ge is mostly known as the master of the above-mentioned sGrol ma ba ['Jam dbyangs] bsam grub rdo rje. Another disciple of his (and thus an elder contemporary of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem), *sNgags 'chang* Nam mkha' rin chen, wrote a large commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo* (preserved in vol. 29-30 of NKG and KSG).

Yungtönpa mingled in a single stream with the transmissions of Rigdzin Gödem's termas only in the 16th century. But it would not have been impossible for Rigdzin Gödem to have received teachings from Yungtönpa, although there is no trace of this in known documents.[1] Yungtönpa will be further discussed below, in Chapters 11, 13 and 14 (about the terma lineages).

Now, returning to Drölmawa Samdrup Dorjé (1294–1375), another important but poorly recorded figure in the background of Rigdzin Gödem's life, here is the relevant passage from Dalton's note:[2]

> Drölmawa was also one of Zur Jampa Sengé's two main students, the other being Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365), another notable member of the Len clan who wrote an authoritative commentary on the **Guhyagarbha* according to the Zur exegetical tradition and who, under the third Karmapa, was a major figure in the fourteenth-century Great Perfection Seminal Heart tradition. He also received the *Gathering of Intentions* transmission from Zur Jampa Senggé, who stood at the end of a completely different "Seal of entrustment" line that is quickly traced by Pema Trinlé as follows…

Little is known of Drölmawa Samdrup Dorjé's life, besides his dates of birth and death, which are quite well established. As Düjom Rinpoché phrases it:[3]

> Samdrup Dorjé's knowledge and enlightened activity are difficult to estimate. He meditated in total solitude, and in Chema Senggé he meditated one-pointedly on the Innermost Spirituality of the Great Perfection.[4] He reached the limits of awareness, and savored the entire ocean of buddha-fields equally.

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1 As will be explained in Volume 2, the masters of rGod ldem are very difficult to identify from the way they are referred to in Nyi ma bzang po's *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*. Although we have a strong hypothesis as to who his rDzogs chen master was, those from whom he received the *gter chos* of Nyang ral and Chos dbang remain completely obscure. It could, of course, mean that they were very local, unknown masters. But it also happens that Tibetan people are called by many names, so that a figure who is actually famous is not easily recognized in some mentions either by later tradition or by Tibetologists.

2 Dalton 2016, p. 187, n. 9.

3 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 668. For another, slightly longer, but not historically much more informative, account of sGrol ma ba, see Gu ru bKra shis, 1990, p. 291.

4 *rDzogs chen snying thig*. The obscure phrase about reaching "the limits of awareness" is an awkward rendering of *rig pa tshad phebs*, the name of the

However, the documented traces of this figure in Tibetan texts are sufficiently numerous to allow for a monograph on this figure: he is the author of a commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo* that could be studied alongside Yungtönpa's as another witness to the Zur system.[1] Another text by him is found in the ten-volume *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* collection,[2] which points to the fact that this cycle was not regarded with suspicion by masters who might otherwise have been more or less skeptical about the termas.[3] The Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* contains numerous references to Drölmawa Samdrup Dorjé, showing that he received teachings from many masters, including Jonangpas at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries. There are indeed many threads that future researchers could pull.

Drölmawa Samdrup Dorjé was a disciple of Lentön Sönam Gönpo, who, according to Dalton, was active in late thirteenth to early fourteenth century and composed a very large manual for the empowerment of *The Gathering of Intentions*.[4] This text, mentioned in passing by Dalton, should also be studied in depth to gain a clearer understanding of Nyingma thought among social groups close (at least geographically) to Rigdzin Gödem during his youth.

Following the lineages after Samdrup Dorjé in this volume would not make much sense, [5] as later figures cannot have influenced Rigdzin Gödem, even as mere background figures. However, it might be worthwhile to trace these later lineages in another volume, examining how they were incorporated into the mainstream Dorje Drak system.

third *thod rgal* vision. This passage suggests that bSam grub rdo rje must also be included in sNying thig lineages.

1 sGrol ma bsam grub rdo rje, 1982–1987, *dPal gsang ba'i snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud kyi khog dbub rin po che 'bar ba'i gur*, in NKG/KSG, vol. 28, pp. 591-713.

2 sGrol ma bSam 'grub rdo rje, 2015, *bCom ldan 'das phyag rgya zil gnon gyi phrin las kyi rim pa gsal bar byed pa'i sgron me*, in CNT, vol. 20, p. 631-654.

3 There even exists a so-called collection of his "Complete Writings": *gSung 'bum* (http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/MW3CN17890). This small (156 p.) volume includes the commentary of the *gSang ba snying po* plus a *sgrub thabs* for the peaceful maṇḍala of the *sGyu 'phrul drwa ba*, but not the *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*-related text.

4 Dalton 2016, p. 69: *'Dus pa chen po'i mdo'i sgrub khrigs bzhin dbang byang lag len*, in KSG, vol. 61 & 62.

5 Another lineage documented by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las passes through sGrol ma ba: Glan *ston* bSod nams mgon po; Nyang *ston* dPal ldan rdo rje; sGrol chen 'Bro *ston* bSam 'grub rdo rje; Gyong khang gZi *ston* Śā kya bzang po; Shangs mda' *bla ma* Grags she.

Chapter 10: What is the Source of Rigdzin Gödem's Lineage for the *Bima Nyingthik*?

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(IFRAE / Inalco)

We know from his disciples' biographies[1] that Rigdzin Gödem taught them the two *Nyingthik*s. However, we do not have any explicit source about the lineage from which he received them, except, in Nyima Zangpo's[2] *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, the name of a master, Draklungpa Rinchenpal,[3] who taught him "all Dzogchen." If our hypothesis (summarized Chapter 15 below and in the chapter of Volume 2 about Gödem's masters) is correct, this Draklungpa is Meban Rinchen Lingpa (1389–1368),[4] whose connection to the *Khandro Nyingthik* through both Pema Ledreltsal (the tertön who discovered it) and Gyalsé Lekpa (1290–1366)[5] is very clear.

Many of Rigdzin Gödem's terma cycles can be seen as further developments of prototypes from the earlier prestigious tertöns (especially Nyangral and Chöwang). His main Dzogchen cycle, the *Gongpa Zangthal*, demonstrates a precise and thorough knowledge of the two *Nyingthik*s.[6] Such a deep knowledge is not evident among earlier

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1 Sangs rgyas dpal bzang (ca. 15th c.) 1983, *Bla ma rnams kyi rnam thar 'od kyi phreng ba*, p. 77. Reference kindly provided by Jay Valentine (email, 2025/02/25). These elements will be presented in our vol. 3.

2 Se *ston* Nyi ma bzang po (1386– ?). Date of birth calculated by Jay Valentine (personal communication 2025/06/06). *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* is rGod ldem's oldest and most authoritative biography.

3 Brag lung pa Rin chen dpal. Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 16. Taking the passage in context, and assuming that the order of the text is somewhat chronological, Brag lung pa Rin chen dpal would have taught rGod ldem around the latter's 25th year (1361). However, there are reasons (explained below) to suspect that, if Rin chen dpal is Rin chen gling pa, he may also be the one who taught rGod ldem *The Wheel of* [*Ritual*] *Activities of Black Leprosy* much earlier (around 1350). See below Chapter 15.

4 About this figure, see Arguillère 2024a, "A King of Dharma," and Arguillère 2024e, "Meban Rinchen Lingpa."

5 *rGyal sras* Legs pa. See Arguillère 2024c, "Gyelse Lekpa." The issue of Padma Las 'brel rtsal's dates has been settled in this article on the basis of unambiguous autobiographical statements by *rGyal sras* Legs pa.

6 See Jean-Luc Achard's description of this cycle in Volume 2 of this series.

tertöns, with the exception of Pema Ledreltsal's[1] circle. Pema Ledreltsal, born in 1291, discovered the *Khandro Nyingthik* in 1313 and died in 1319. His revelations were still something very recent in Gödem's youth. The *Khandro Nyingthik* lineage quickly merged with that of the much earlier *Bima Nyingthik*,[2] which makes sense since the former mainly contains practical applications of principles that have their complete background in the latter. The *Bima Nyingthik* had been transmitted in the previous centuries in a lineage that does not seem to have interacted much with the milieus of the main treasure discoverers.

It has long been believed by most Tibetologists that visionary Dzogchen, and especially the fully developed system of Thögal instructions and teachings, was something late, perhaps not much earlier than the time when this system is attested in the terma literature. The *Bima Nyingthik* would then be a creation of the mid-13th century and its earlier history a mere fiction. In the 1990s, Jean-Luc Achard stood more or less alone in defending part of the traditional historiography,[3] although in a version that the Nyingmapas would have found unorthodox, since he gave an important role to the Bönpos. Now that much more primary literature has emerged and has been seriously examined, we can safely say that the system, whatever its earlier origins in the imperial period, was in any case complete at the beginning of the Tibetan renaissance.

We have no explicit information as to which of the *Bima Nyingthik* masters active in Rigdzin Gödem's time served as his lineage link. The passage from Setön Nyima Zangpo's above-quoted biography simply says that he received "all Dzogchen" from Draklungpa Rinchenpal, who was most probably Rinchen Lingpa. Therefore, it is very likely that this master taught him both *Heart-Drops*. It is unclear from whom Rinchen Lingpa himself learned the *Bima Nyingthik*. Tertön hagiographies, unlike those of scholarly monks, tend to underplay their masters, most likely to emphasize their direct connection to Padmasambhava, and unfortunately Rinchen Lingpa is no more an exception to this rule than Rigdzin Gödem. However, despite this missing link, the long lineage of which Rigdzin Gödem was a part is quite well

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1 Padma las 'brel rtsal, 1291–1319, the discoverer of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

2 The first well-documented specialists of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* after Padma las 'brel rtsal, Karmapa III Rang byung rdo rje, g.Yung *ston pa*, and Klong chen pa, were also very well-versed in the *Bi ma snying thig* and Klong chen pa's writings definitively established the idea that a synthesis of the "vast" *Bi ma snying thig* and the "profound" *mKha' 'gro snying thig* was required.

3 Especially in his doctoral dissertation published as Achard 1999.

known.[1] It is not out of place to recall it briefly in the context of the Kama lineages inherited by the Northern Treasures masters, without discussing the parts of the lineage prior to Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk or presenting biographies for the named masters, which are easily found (e.g., in Nyoshül Khenpo's *A Marvelous Garland of Rare Gems*). The lineage is as follows:

Vimalamitra;
Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo (born ca. 777?);
Dangma Lhüngyal;[2]
Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk (ca. 997–1121);
Gyalwa Zhangtön Tashi Dorjé (1097–1167);
Khepa Nyibum (1158–1213);
Guru Jober (1196–1231);
Trülshik Sengé Gyabpa (1202–1265);[3]
Melong Dorjé (1243–1303);[4]
Kumarādza (1266–1343).

As there seems to have been interactions between Pema Ledreltsal's disciple Gyalsé Lekpa and Kumarādza[5] and as Gyalsé Lekpa and Rinchen Lingpa knew one another well, it is possible that Rinchen Lingpa received the *Bima Nyingthik* from either Gyalsé Lekpa or Kumarādza himself, although this is not documented. There were some other competent masters for the *Bima Nyingthik* available in the same time period and in the same region; however, they held teaching before all the lineages were collected and unified by Kumarādza and then passed to Longchenpa (1308–1364). Rinchen Lingpa may have received the lineage from any of these.

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1 See Achard 1999, especially pp. 77-99, which also includes a general description of the seventeen tantras that are the basis of that specific tradition.

2 See Nyoshül Khenpo 1998, p. 221 (translated in Barron 2005, pp. 84-85).

3 In the *Grub chen me long rdo rje'i rnam thar* (Longchenpa 2009, vol. 4, pp. 146-153, p. 149), although the text is not perfectly clear, it seems that Seng ge rgyab pa died when Me long rdo rje was 22 (1265). The text strangely mentions a snake year (1257? 1269?), but if we ignore this element and assume that he died in his sixty-fourth year (Nyoshül Khenpo 1998, p. 237; Barron 2005, pp.90-91), we can conclude that he was then born in 1202.

4 Klong chen pa, *Grub thob me long rdo rje'i rnam thar*, in Klong chen pa 2009, vol. 4, pp. 141-145. He was also, according to this text, the disciple of Sangs rgyas *ras pa*, who might be BDRC P4172: Sangs rgyas *ras pa* Rin chen smon lam (1203–1280).

5 See Arguillère 2024c "Gyelse Lekpa."

The texts of the *Bima Nyingthik*, said to be hidden at the Zhé Lhakhang by Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk, were rediscovered (more or less completely) by three people, generating two further lineages not recorded in most sources but detailed in the *Profound Quintessence*.[1] Here is the way things are phrased in *The Blue Annals*:[2]

> [Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk] …then lived for fifty years and transformed himself into light without residues [1071]. His precepts were hidden in three secret places: at Uyuk, Langdrö Chepatak, and Jalgyiphu. Thirty years after the hiding of the precepts [1101?], Chegom Nakpo of Lower Rongnar discovered some of these hidden precepts, and practiced them himself, and taught them to many others. From Langdrö Chepatak, one called Shangpa Repa obtained hidden precepts and taught them to others. Again, when Zhang Tashi Dorjé who had been born in the Fire-Female-Ox year (…) (1097 A.D.) at Lado of Nültso Linggu, was residing in Upper Nyang, the god Vajrasaddhu[3] having transformed into a white man, wearing a white hat, appeared to him, and guided him from Upper Nyang, helping him on the way by providing him with night quarters and food.

Little is yet known about Chegom Nakpo. Jean-Luc Achard was the first researcher to write about him and to place him in the eleventh century.[4] Chegom Nakpo is mentioned in a text of Longchenpa's *Zabmo Yangtik*, the *Mirror of the Key Points*,[5] as receiving the teachings from Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk and then passing them to Zhangtön.[6] The way things are phrased imply that Chegom Nakpo was an *actual* disciple of Chetsün and did not meet him only in a vision. He should then have been born well before 1071—say around 1050—and died after 1097 to be Zhangtön's master—around 1120 at the earliest.

The only difference from the standard version of the lineage is that it later passes from Sengé Gyabpa to "Dawa Münsel," and from him to Kumarādza.[7] However, Dawa Münsel is just another name for

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1 Klong chen pa, *Zab mo yang tig*, in Klong chen pa 2009, vol. 11 and 12.

2 Roerich 1978, p. 193.

3 This is rDo rje legs pa, a purely Tibetan deity whose name has been questionably sanskritized.

4 Achard 1999, p. 82.

5 Klong chen pa, 2009, *sNyan brgyud kyi rgyab chos chen mo zab don gnad kyi me long*, vol. 12, p. 115.

6 *Loc. cit.*: *lce btsun gyis dpe brgyud kyi snod 'thol du phyin pas| rong snar mda'i lce sgom nag po snod ldan du gzigs nas de la gnang ngo| khong las sprul sku rgyal ba zhang ston gyis zhus te|…*

7 Klong chen pa, 2009, *Grub thob me long rdo rje'i rnam thar*, vol. 4, p. 147, in which the verse: *mnyam med sbas pa'i rnal 'byor thugs kyi sprul pa ni|* is accompanied by a note in smaller characters: *sprang smyon zla ba mun sel*. This

Melong Dorjé. More interesting, it is also said that "the two of them" (probably Melong Dorjé and Kumarādza) received from Lama Yeshegön a lineage that had been passed down through the sons of Chegom Nakpo. Lobpön Yeshegön had received it from a "great realized being" who must be Yönten Gangpa. This, however, remains to be researched, since, Kumarādza, in his biography, is presented as receiving most of these teachings of the so-called *Secret Cycle* after Melong Dorjé's death (1303) and sometimes in the company of Orgyenpa (1229–1309).[1]

This *Secret Cycle* associated with Chegom Nakpo is understood in this context not as something slightly lower than the "Hyper-Secret Cycle" (*yang gsang bla med skor*, the Heart Drops), as is commonly the case in Dzogchen doxographies—but as a different *way* or *style* of teaching the Nyingthik, in which specific tantras, different from the better-known "Seventeen tantras" of the Heart Drops, are combined with these. The Fifth Dalai Lama describes these tantras in his *Record of Teachings Received*:[2]

> …In terms of the root tantras [of this cycle], the outer tantra is the *Great Complete Clarification of Drops*,[3] the explanation of the precepts in ninety-five chapters. As for the particular tantras, those whose divisions explain the essence of all teachings are: *The Tantra of the Buddha Present in All Sentient Beings*, in eight chapters;[4] *The Tantra of the Unique Son of All Teachings, The Contemplation of the Conqueror*

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is further confirmed by the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received*, in which Zla ba mun sel appears as another name of Me long rdo rje, incidentally presented as being a treasure discoverer (1971, vol. 3, f°110b: *gter ston zla ba mun sel | me long rdo rje yang zer*…).

1 P1448, the Third Karma pa's master. Ku ma rā dza was closely associated with both O rgyan pa and Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje, two figures who could also be sources of Rin chen gling pa's (and thus indirectly of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's) knowledge of the *Bi ma snying thig*.

2 *Op. cit*. (1971) vol. 3, f°105ab.: *gnyis pa rtsa brgyud la | spyi rgyud thig le kun gsal chen po zhes bya ba man ngag gi bshad pa rgyud le'u dgu bcu rtsa bdun pa | sgos rgyud la nang gses kyis bstan pa thams cad kyi snying po sems can thams cad la sangs rgyas rang chas chen por bzhugs pa'i rgyud le'u brgyad pa | rgyal ba rdo rje sems dpa'i dgongs pa bstan pa thams cad kyi bu gcig pa'i rgyud le'u brgyad pa | ngo sprod sgras* (sic) *pa zhing khams bstan pa'i rgyud le'u bcu gsum pa | ye shes mar me'i rgyud dam sgron ma rnam par bkod pa'i rgyud le'u gsum pa | sangs rgyas rdo rje sems dpa'i dgongs pa tshig gsum* <b> *pa'i rgyud le'u gsum pa rnams* | .

3 *Thig le kun gsal chen po'i rgyud*, in NG, vol. 13, pp. 296-492.

4 *bsTan pa thams cad kyi snying po sems can thams cad la sangs rgyas chen por bzhugs pa'i rgyud*, in NG, vol. 13, pp. 682-704, which presents it as a *gter ma* of lCe sgom nag po.

Vajrasattva,[1] in eight chapters; *The Presentation*[2] *of the Confrontation, Which Shows all the Pure Lands*, in thirteen chapters; *The Tantra of the Lamp of Primordial Wisdom* or *Complete Array of All Lamps*, in three chapters;[3] and *The Tantra of Vajrasattva's Contemplation in Three Words*, in three chapters.[4]

This list is relevant for Northern Treasures studies, for it can be proved by further research that Gödem knew these tantras very well. Some of them are even integrated in the *Gongpa Zangthal*, while others are often quoted. From this point of view, the *Gongpa Zangthal* does not only integrate *Khandro Nyingthik* and general *Bima Nyingthik* material, but also these specific teachings that inspired Longchenpa's *Profound Quintessence* or *Zabmo Yangtik*.

As for the lineage through Shangpa Repa,[5] it was passed to Zhangtön Chöbar (bdr: P4574, 1053–1135), who in this context is always called Zabtön Chöbar.[6] His disciple for this tradition was Dampa Gyertön, who then taught it to Kyemé Jokyab, who in turn passed it to his son, Gyertön Jomé. Kyemé Jokyab and Gyertön Jomé then taught this tradition to Nyentön Sherab Tsemo, who taught it to Rinpoché Yönten Gangpa, who then gave it to Namkha Dorjé,[7] who taught it to

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1 *Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi bstan pa bu gcig pa'i rgyud*, in NG, vol. 13, pp. 492-519, practically identical to the text found in both *Bi ma snying thig* and *dGongs pa zang thal*.

2 The Fifth Dalai Lama's spelling *sgras pa* has not been taken into account and the translation is based on the common one *spras pa*. This is the *Ngo sprod spras pa*, one of the seventeen tantras, which shows that the two corpora are not entirely distinct.

3 *Ye shes mar me'i rgyud* or *sGron ma rnam par bkod pa'i rgyud*, in NG, vol. 13, pp. 780-795.

4 *Sangs rgyas rdo rje sems dpa'i dgongs pa tshig gsum po*, in NG, vol. 13, pp. 764-780.

5 Shangs pa *ras pa*, who seems to be the same person also called Shong pa *ras pa* in Klong chen pa, 2009, *sNyan brgyud don gyi me long*, vol. 12, p. 495.

6 Or *Zab don* Chos 'bar in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, f°105b; vol. 4, f°59b, 70a, 222b. He is most commonly called Zhang *ston* Chos 'bar and is not to be confused with Zhang *ston* bKra shis rdo rje, although they are almost contemporary. They do not have the same masters and disciples and Zhang *ston* Chos 'bar has much clearer Sa skya connections. Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard (oral communication, January 2025) for this clarification.

7 *Dam pa* dGyer ston; sKye med Jo skyabs; dGyer *ston* Jo me; gNyen *ston* Shes rab rtse mo; *Rin po che* Yon tan sgang pa; Nam mkha' rdo rje. The latter, as most of the others in these "secondary" lineages, is completely unknown, except for the scarce information that can be found in Ku ma rā dza's autobiography, copied in *The Blue Annals* (p. 199). This lineage is also

Kumarādza. Kumarādza also received it from Kalden Chökyi Sherab,[1] who had received it from Tönpa Rinchen Sengé.[2] Be that as it may, all we can say is that the person—probably Rinchen Lingpa—who passed the *Bima Nyingthik* to Rigdzin Gödem must have received it from one or several of these masters who were active in the early 14th century.

found in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* (*loc. cit.*), with interesting alternative spellings: *lce btsun seng ge dbang phyug* | *gu ru shangs pa ras pa*| *bla ma zab don chos 'bar*| *dam pa dge ston yab sras*| *gnyan ston shes rab rtse mo*| *drin can sprul sku mched gnyis*| *rgyal sman nam mkha' rdo rje*| *rig 'dzin ku mā rā dza*| *g.yung ston rdo rje dpal*. The fact that the lineage passes to g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal, *not to Klong chen pa*, is, incidentally, interesting.

1 *sKal ldan* Chos kyi shes rab.

2 *sTon pa* Rin chen seng ge.

Chapter 11: Terma Lineages, First Part: Gya Zhangtrom's *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*

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In this and following chapters,[1] three types of elements will be examined. Our first concern is to trace the three non-Jangter terma cycles still widely practiced in the Dorjé Drak system that precede Rigdzin Gödem (Gya Zhangtrom's *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*, Pema Ledreltsal's *Rahula*, and Karma Lingpa's *Peaceful and Wrathful deities*). Secondarily, it is also necessary to document the terma traditions that Rigdzin Gödem is said to have been taught in his biographies (termas found by Nyangral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang) or in other literature, such as records of teachings received that mention his name (e.g., *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*[2] found by Tertön Sarben Chokmé). Similarly, a short presentation of Pema Ledreltsal's *Khandro Nyingthik* is provided because it appears that much of it got incorporated into Rigdzin Gödem's *Gongpa Zangthal*. Thirdly, it is necessary to provide more context for Rigdzin Gödem's biography within the broader Nyingma tradition. In particular, it is worth briefly mentioning other important tertöns, whether or not Gödem had any known connection with them and whatever the roles they played in the later Jangter / Dorjé Drak lineage.

For the sake of clarity, these elements are arranged in a chronological order, but the reader should be aware of their different status, as some are meant to reconstruct Rigdzin Gödem's own world, while other may be relevant only for later stages of development of the Jangter tradition. Complementary discussions will be presented in Volume 2 in the context of Rigdzin Gödem's masters, when his biography or the records of teaching received of later masters indicate that he more or less certainly received, and sometimes taught, other systems of revelations.

The Yamāntaka traditions of the Later Spread schools are much better known than those of the Nyingmapas. Cuevas' study of the "Rā Lotsāwa volume"[3] provides an up-to-date synthesis on their various branches in Tibet. The situation is different for the Nyingma literature on Yamāntaka. The status of this deity in this school and the history of

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1 Chapters 11-12 and 14-16. Chapter 13 is devoted to the global situation at the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries.

2 We will return to *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* below (mainly in Chapter 12).

3 Cuevas 2021a.

the transmission of related literature and practices are virtually unknown. However, a previous paper has provided an overview of the subject.[1] This chapter merely summarizes the aspects relevant to the Dorjé Drak tradition.

There is no autonomous cycle associated with Yamāntaka in the Northern Treasures proper. This situation can be interpreted in two opposite ways. Either it is the result of a lack of interest in a deity that would not be central to the Nyingmapas in general, at least after the 11th century; or perhaps it was not developed into an autonomous cycle *because a system already existed that was considered complete and sufficient*. The present state of affairs in the Nyingma school might lead one to think that the first hypothesis is correct, since there are few Yamāntaka practitioners among the Nyingmapas today.[2] However, when one gets rid of anachronistic assumptions and, having become familiar with the names of the main elements in this corpus, begins to notice the occurrences in the hagiographies of elements related to *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*—the main system, or group of systems, for the practice of Yamāntaka in the Nyingma school—one finds them everywhere, at least until the early 18th century.[3] Therefore, the second explanation ultimately seems more convincing.

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1 Arguillère 2024b.

2 This should be nuanced. Mi pham's (1846–1912) writings show a deep interest in Yamāntaka in general and *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* in particular. Dilgo Khyentsé's (1910–1991) autobiography (Jinpa Palmo 2008) is full of indications that this interest did not die out after Mi pham. It is altogether difficult to be sure whether the devotion to this deity ever really waned, or whether it is only rarely mentioned because of its association with destructive magic. This explanation is awkward, however, since the other most popular *yi dam* deities of the rNying ma pas have similar reputation in this area.

3 See, for example, Arguillère 2007, p. 39, on the young Klong chen pa (1308–1364) practicing Yamāntaka rituals with Grags pa seng ge (1283–1349, considered in retrospect to be the first Zhwa dmar pa) to counter a spell cast against Karmapa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), and *ibid*. pp. 78-79, on the Yamāntaka teachings received by Klong chen pa from a "Khang dmar pa," who may in fact be the same Grags pa seng ge. See also *ibid*, pp. 75-77, for further Yamāntaka teachings received from a "Tshong 'dus pa" who, for various reasons, might be g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal (1284–1365). A close examination of the versified records of the teachings received contained in g.Yung *ston pa*'s biography reveals his deep interest in this cycle of Yamāntaka practice. In the same generation and maybe closer to rGod ldem, Rin chen gling pa's great *gter chos* on Nāgarakṣa (a specific form of Yamāntaka) and the mention in rGod ldem's life of his first signs of accomplishment achieved in the practice of that form of the deity are further indications of the importance of Yamāntaka to the 14th century rNying ma

The Jangter masters became known as specialists of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* in the 16th century at the latest. This cycle was already perceived in the 14th century as the most powerful system for aggressive magic, maybe in concurrence with Vajrakīla, which later completely overshaded Yamāntaka in the general Nyingma school, but never fully in the Dorjé Drak tradition.[1]

It is interesting that the Jangter masters, although known as Vajrakīla specialists, found it proper to acquire proficiency in the vast and complicated system of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* and that their posterity in our times published this large and well-edited set of 10 volumes (vol. 18-27 of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*) dedicated to Yamāntaka, although, technically speaking, they do not belong to the Northern Treasures.

Its later importance in this branch of the Nyingmapas is evident in Bogin's *The Illuminated Life of the Great Yolmowa* in which Yölmo Tülku's (1598–1644) conversion from monk to *ngakpa* status is illustrated, among other things, by his performance of the *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* rituals, easily recognizable in the illustrations by the large black *zor* (magic weapon torma) unique to this cycle.[2]

Most of the core material of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* is associated with an early tertön, Gya Zhangtrom.[3] There were three generations of masters between Nub Sangyé Yeshé (late 9th–early 10th century) and Gya Zhangtrom,[4] whose disciple, Lhajé Nubchung, was the "black magic"

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pas. These are merely a few examples of something that is constant in these biographies and yet has escaped the interest of Tibetologists, surely due to the fact that this deity has indeed fallen into some degree of disuse (despite the above-mentioned exception of Mi pham and his followers) in the post-'Jigs med gling pa rNying ma school (except in Byang gter contexts).

1 The story of Lang lab Byang chub rdo rje and his interactions with Rwa *lo tsā ba* (Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 713-714), which both imply the very disputable idea that Rwa *lo tsā ba* plagiarized rGya Zhang khrom's *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* and that the practice of Vajrakīla is more powerful than that of Yamāntaka (the saying translated in *op. cit*. p. 714 as "The preceptor of Yamāntaka was ruined by Kīla" actually has this much more general meaning) may rather be a reflection of this competition of the Yamāntaka and Vajrakīla traditions among the rNying ma pas. This would also explain the derogatory passage about rGya Zhang khrom inserted in the biography of Guru Chos dbang (*op. cit*., p. 765).

2 Bogin 2013, pp. 126, 129, 133.

3 rGya zhang khrom rDo rje 'od 'bar. Most of what can be known about this obscure figure is presented in Esler 2022a. Complementary information can be found in Arguillère 2024b, "Yamāntaka among the Ancients," which presents a compilation of available information about the lineages descending from rGya zhang khrom.

4 Arguillère 2024b, p. 377.

master of Milarepa (1028?–1111?).[1] This places Gya Zhangtrom's birth in the second half of the 10th century or in the early years of the 11th century.[2]

It is difficult to ascertain to what degree the Jangter masters were involved in Yamāntaka rituals prior to the 16th century. Nyima Zangpo's biography of Rigdzin Gödem mentions that the first signs of accomplishments he obtained as a young teenager derived from a Yamāntaka practice: the obscure mention of a *Wheel of the* [*Ritual*] *Activities of Black Leprosy* actually alludes to a Yamāntaka tantra preserved in the Nyingma tantric canon. It is connected to Yamāntaka in the form of Nāgarakṣa, which, as such, is not typical of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.[3] This is rather one of the many small hints of a connection with Rinchen Lingpa,[4] who had a large cycle of revelations about this deity, indeed the largest of those sampled in the *Rinchen Terdzö*.

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1 *lHa rje* gNubs chung. Esler 2022a, "Yamāntaka's Wrathful Magic," p. 191, confirmed by Arguillère 2024b, "Yamāntaka among the Ancients," pp. 299, 317-318, 374, etc. *lHa rje* gNubs chung was himself a *gter ston*, source of the *Yang zlog me'i spru gri* cycle sampled in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (RT, 1976-1980, vol. 26, pp. 417-621) and included in the 8th and 9th volumes of the collection in CNT (CNT, vol. 25 and 26).

2 Esler 2022a, *loc. cit.*: "He (…) is said to have been born in a dragon year, though the prophecy from a text called the *Zab pa chos drug gi dkar chag* [*Index of the Six Profound Doctrines*] announcing his birth mentions a dragon or dog year. Based on this information, the year of his birth suggested by Gyurme Dorjé and Matthew Kapstein in their masterful translation of Dudjom Rinpoché's *Chos 'byung* is 1016 (a dragon year)." 1016 also makes good sense with regard to the three generations of masters between gNubs Sangs rgyas ye shes and rGya zhang khrom, if Esler 2022b (p. 92) is correct in stating that "It seems quite possible (...) that Sangs rgyas ye shes witnessed the first five, perhaps six, decades of the 10th century."

3 Both of these practices, however, can certainly be traced back to the *Zla gsang nag po* tantra (three versions in NG, vol. 25, plus another major one in vol. 26) in terms of their earliest known roots. The main deity propitiated in this tantra is similar to that of the *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* system, Phyag rgya zil gnon. However, some auxiliary practices feature Nāgarakṣa for special purposes (especially combating leprosy).

4 Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192) also had a *gter ma* for the practice Nāgarakṣa. It is documented only in the first text of the relevant section of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (1976: vol. 29, pp. 1-3) with a lineage prayer that, very interestingly, runs through Padma las 'brel rtsal (1291–1319). So, as we will see, very close to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. *Op. cit.*, p. 3: *de'i brgyud pa ni* : *o rgyan padma* : *mnga' bdag khri srong lde btsan* : *jo mo mtsho rgyal* : *mnga bdag myang ral pa can* : *mnga' bdag 'gro mgon* : *yar lung sprul sku* : *slob dpon gnas lugs* : *sprul sku las 'brel rtsal* : *bsod nams seng ge* :… This fragment, though enigmatic, is most interesting in presenting us, on the one hand, an unknown master of Padma las 'brel rtsal, *Slob dpon* gNas lugs. A quick

This shows that Rigdzin Gödem was interested in Yamāntaka at least at some point in his life. Admittedly, we only know that he was concerned with a very specific form, mainly known as an antidote for leprosy. This tells us nothing about his possible interest in *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.

The absence of any other reference to Yamāntaka in Gödem's biographies may mean, as above, two opposite things. Either he had little interest in this deity as a specialist in Vajrakīla, which serves much the same purpose, or he, like many of his contemporaries with the same type of profile, was fully trained in *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* and felt no need to expand or consolidate this vast and venerable corpus.

However, Rigdzin Gödem's name appears in a prayer composed by Jamgön Mipham in the context of ritual texts he devoted to the practice of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.[1] This lineage prayer is disconcerting because Ju Mipham, for some unknown reason (but surely on purpose), conflates two things that seem distinct and even unrelated:[2] *Mañjuśrī*

search in BDRC's eTexts shows other occurrences of the same figure in the same lineage in the records of teachings received by both gTer bdag gling pa and the Fifth Dalai Lama, with the difference that in all these sources Gu ru Chos dbang is interspersed between *mNga' bdag* 'gro mgon (Nyang ral's son) and Yar lung *sprul sku*, who is most probably sMan lung pa Mi bskyod rdo rje. On the other hand, this establishes a link that was hitherto unknown between Padma las 'brel rtsal and a bSod nams seng ge, who must be Khro phu pa bSod nams seng ge, one of Klong chen pa's masters also known to have given minor vows to g.Yung *ston pa* when he was a child (before g.Yung *ston pa*'s fifteenth year, i.e., 1298). On Khro phu pa bSod nams seng ge, see Arguillère 2007, pp. 73-75.

1 Mi pham 1984–1993, vol. 5, pp. 79-83, beginning: *oṃ āḥ hūṃ| chos kyi dbying kyi zhing khams na|* (also in CNT, vol. 22, pp. 447-453). Whether this text can be used as a solid argument or not regarding Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's connection with *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*, it is precious because it allows one to spot another otherwise unknown master of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem: rGa *ston* dPal ba (see in Volume 2 the presentation of what is known of rGod ldem's masters).

2 The great rNying ma scholar Ju Tenkyong, when asked this question (2024/10/15, oral communication to Stéphane Arguillère) confirmed that these two corpora are considered to be completely unrelated, *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* being pure Mahāyoga, while *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*, as its name indicates, is Atiyoga (rDzogs chen). When it was suggested to him that Mi pham might have regarded *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* as the innermost practice of *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*, whose empowerment ritual allows advanced rDzogs chen practice, he replied that this might make sense in theory, but it is completely unheard of among rNying ma scholars, and that the structure of the Mahāyoga empowerment rituals does not imply the actual existence of advanced *rdzogs rim* and *rdzogs chen* instructions, even though their content would allow for them.

Master of Life and *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*. In fact, this entire lineage is apparently borrowed from the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received*,[1] where it is presented in connection with the tradition known as *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*, which is associated with Tertön Sarben Chokmé (see Chapter 12 below) and not with *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*. It is as if Mipham considered *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen* to be the innermost teaching of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*, even though the two cycles are nowhere else, to our knowledge, explicitly linked. Mipham's intention remains a mystery.[2]

Another element in the puzzle is a rather large commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* or *Litany of Mañjuśrī's Names* attributed to Rigdzin Gödem,[3] which is a very interesting text in itself, as it is the largest of Gödem's writings among those not presented as being termas. The *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* is important in both contexts, *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* and *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*. It may be an indication of Rigdzin Gödem's interest in one or both of these cycles. However, the authenticity of this text remains to be investigated.

Be that as it may, the centrality of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* in the later Jangter tradition as such is sufficient reason for a description of its transmission[4] to be relevant in the present context, especially since an exploration of the Nyingma Yamāntaka materials in general and of this cycle in particular leads to a wealth of unusual knowledge about the ancient stages of development of what was to become the Nyingma school.

In the *Canon of the Ancient Tantras* (NG), volumes 25 (803 pages), 26 (1081 pages), 27 (1179 pages), 28 (899 pages), and 29 (1023 pages) are entirely devoted to Yamāntaka. Volume 45 (977 pages) is also filled with Yamāntaka tantras, as is the second half of volume 44. There are

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1 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, f°91b.

2 A possible explanation is that some preliminary practices in the context of the combined *lCags sdig* and *lCags 'dra* have over the centuries been replaced by elements borrowed from *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*. Cf., e.g., Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2008, *'Jam dpal tshe bdag nag po'i las byang srid gsum rnam rgyal*, vol. 26, p. 31: *dang po 'jam dpal rdzogs chen nas bkang dang* |, etc.

3 *'Jam dpal gyi 'grel pa zab mo*, in CNT, vol. 14, pp. 271-362 (see in Volume 2 with the description of Rigdzin Gödem's works and revelations). In addition to the question of the authenticity, two other questions need to be addressed: whether or not it is related to the *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* cycle and why 'Jam mgon Mi pham assumes that the *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* lineage is also a *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* one. These three questions cannot be dealt with in the present volume.

4 What follows in this chapter is a summary of Arguillère 2024b, "Yamāntaka Among the Ancients."

a few more scattered throughout other parts of the collection.[1] In all, the Nyingmapas' Yamāntaka canonical corpus of tantric scriptures, not counting commentaries, practice manuals, ritual compositions, and even later termas,[2] exceeds 6000 pages.[3] To this must first be added, apart from the ten volumes of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*, three volumes of the *Oral Tradition of the Nyingmapas*.[4] This is supplemented by a four-volume anthology of relevant terma cycles in the *Rinchen Terdzö*, which, in addition to the 581 pages associated with Gya Zhangtrom's cycle, contains 652 pages of other texts that predate Rigdzin Gödem (Lhajé Nubchung, Nyangral, Guru Chöwang)[5] or belong to the generation just before him or to his own (Rinchen Lingpa, Sangyé Lingpa).[6]

The main conclusions that can be drawn from a preliminary examination of this abundant literature are:

(1) Despite the traditional narrative adopted by both the Nyingma and Sarma schools about two successive and distinct waves of translations of Indian texts, the translational process that led to the present Nyingma tantric canon is not something that occurred only in the 8th century, and it may even not have been interrupted when the Later Spread began.[7]
(2) Although Yamāntaka is not a central deity in the Nyingma pantheon today, he was much more so during the formative period of the Nyingma school (8th–11th centuries).[8] *Mañjuśrī Master of*

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1 Especially the tantras that are the background of the *bKa' brgyad* systems.
2 Termas can contain tantras. Many of these revealed tantras found their way into the various editions of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*.
3 These do not seem to have been properly compared to what is found in the Kangyur or even to have been properly described.
4 Three-faced Kṛṣṇayamāri in the form called *'Jam dpal gshin rje'i gshed kha thun nag po* (vol. 4), very similar to Phyag rgya zil gnon, the main deity of *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* with his surrounding maṇḍala; Raktayamāri (vol. 5-6), much more original; and Six-faced Kṛṣṇayamāri in the form *'Jam dpal gshin rje gdong drug nag po* (end of vol. 6), also quite unfamiliar.
5 For a short description, see Arguillère 2024b,pp. 317-319.
6 For a short description, see Arguillère 2024b,pp. 319-320.
7 See Arguillère 2024b, pp. 310-312 and appendix 2 pp. 367-372.
8 In Arguillère 2024b, this is established through (1) the above-mentioned great quantity of Yamāntaka materials in the Nyingma canon (*op. cit.* pp. 307-310), despite the rarity of this practice nowadays except for *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* in the Byang gter branch; (2) an examination of the materials contained in the *rNying ma bka' ma* (Arguillère 2024b, pp. 312-314 with, as background, a catalog of the relevant part of the collection: https://fchnt.hypotheses.org/table-of-contents-of-the-three-volumes-of-jam-dpal-gshin-rje-in-the-rnying-ma-bka-ma); (3) an overview of the *gter*

> *Life* can somewhat be seen as the main compendium of these early strata of Yamāntaka worship in what was to become the Nyingma school, although it does not include all aspects of this early practice. This is typically the case with the Raktayamāri tradition, which was productive until the 11th century but declined afterward. This is the case also of the above-mentioned Nāgarakṣa practice, to which we will return in the context of Rinchen Lingpa's termas below and of Rigdzin Gödem's masters in the next volume.

(3) Contrary to what might be expected, the early Yamāntaka practices, as documented in the Nyingma tantric canon, the *Oral Tradition of the Ancients*, and the *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* corpus are not organized with reference to the overarching scheme of the *Eight Pronouncements*.[1] Although later Nyingma tradition presents this structure as being the general framework of all the Mahāyoga practice, it seems not to be documented prior to the large *Eight Pronouncements* corpus found in the *Oral Tradition of the Ancients*, which was apparently compiled by Tertön Drubthop Ngödrup and then passed to Nyangral Nyima Özer, who then greatly enriched it with his own revelations.

(4) A careful examination of all the lineage accounts (histories or prayers) found in both the *Oral Tradition of the Ancients* and *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*[2] reinforces the feeling that there was once a "Nubchen school," so to speak, formed around Nub Sangyé Yeshé and perhaps quite unrelated to Padmasambhava and the Indian masters invited by Emperor Trisong Detsen, which later subsided into what became the Nyingma school. The way in which Nyangral Nyima Özer established the grand narrative that includes Nub Sangyé Yeshé as one of the twenty-five disciples of Padmasambhava is certainly a sign that this fusion was well underway in the 12th century.

The ten volumes of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* are summarized in the quoted article (p. 326):

> It would be difficult to provide a comprehensive overview of the corpus of 427 texts, spanning nearly 1,000 years, and

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ma tradition as sampled in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (Arguillère 2024b, pp. 314-325).

[1] See Arguillère 2024b, pp. 305-307 and the table of the *bKa' ma bka' brgyad rdzong 'phrang* (https://fchnt.hypotheses.org/table-of-contents-of-the-three-volumes-of-jam-dpal-gshin-rje-in-the-rnying-ma-bka-ma) on the FCHNT blog *Northern Treasures Histories*.

[2] See Arguillère 2024b, pp. 331-333 and Appendices 3 and 4, pp. 372-380.

comprising around 5,800 pages of modern, dense typography. (…) The global architecture of the collection is as follows:

(1) The two first volumes contain the *Iron Scorpion* (*lCags sdig*), i.e., the system ascribed to Nub Sangyé Yeshé;
(2) The third volume contains the *Iron-Like* (*lCags 'dra*), the similar system connected to Padmasambhava;
(3) The fourth volume contains the combined practice of both (*Dril sgrub*). The fifth volume contains many commentaries, especially by the Fifth Dalai Lama and Mipham, also uniting the *Iron Scorpion* and the *Iron-Like*;
(4) The sixth and seventh volumes contain a sub-cycle called *The Poisonous Bronze Tree* (*Khro chu dug sdong*);[1]
(5) The eighth and ninth volumes contains another sub-cycle: *The Flaming Razor of Ultimate Repelling* (*Yang zlog me'i spu gri*, or *Yang zlog nag po*);[2]
(6) The tenth volume contain ancillary ritual literature, covering practices connected to various secondary forms, including Raktayamarī and a black form called *The Black Dawn* (*'Char kha nag po*) as in Guru Chöwang's revelation, but said to be from Gya Zhangtrom), etc.

Overall, there are thus two major twin cycles (the *Iron Scorpion* and the *Iron-Like*); two cycles with somewhat more differences (*The Poisonous Bronze Tree* and *The Flaming Razor of Ultimate Repelling*); and a series of secondary Yamāntaka-connected practices not clearly belonging to any cycle.

An examination of the historiographical elements in the collection and of the lineage prayers, if we stick to the essentials, reveals many similarities with what we have already found in the context of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's account of the lineages for *The Gathering of Intentions* stemming from Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé. After a few initial stages "in Heaven,"[3] the lineage in our world is said to begin with Mañjuśrīmitra. Padmasambhava is inserted into the lineage at

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1 See Brown 2024.

2 For a description of this cycle, see Amanda Brown's forthcoming article (Brown 2026), based on her presentation at the First International Conference on the Northern Treasures (Paris, October 2024): "The *Ultimate Repelling* Yamāntaka Practice: A Shared Ritual Repertoire Among the rNying ma Byang gter and the 'Bri gung bKa' brgyud Traditions."

3 *Chos sku* Kun tu bzang po; 'Jam dpal gshin rje gshed / Phyag rgya zil gnon tshe bdag nag po; Vajrapāṇi; *lHa'i bu* Tshangs pa (Brahmā); *lHa'i bu* Nyi ma; *lHa'i bu* bDe ba mchog ldan; *mKha' 'gro ma* Zla ba'i 'od zer.

this point. Then we find Tsuklak Palgé[1] and Vasudhara, Nubchen's Nepalese master.

From Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé, the lineage divides into a continuous oral lineage[2] and a terma lineage. The former is of less interest to us (except in that it confirms Pema Trinlé's assumptions about the early lineage of *The Gathering of Intentions*). The terma lineage, which is that of Gya Zhangtrom's revelations, reads:[3]

(1) Gya Zhangtrom Dorjé Öbar;
(2) Dralté Sambhoṭa;
(3) Drangben Tashidar;
(4) Gangpa Rikarwa;
(5) Gangpa Śākbum;
(6) Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365).

These figures are all unknown, except for the last one. The presence of Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365) at this point in the narrative is crucial.[4] His biographies, either in Guru Tashi's *History of the Dharma*[5] or in the compilations of hagiographies of the Karma Kagyü lineage,[6] clearly show that he was the holder of virtually everything in the Nyingma tradition in his time (at least the Kama lineages and the traditions of Nyangral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang), which is also the period of Rigdzin Gödem's youth. Although he was certainly one

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1 The Wylie transliterations of all the names can be found in the table of equivalences at the end of this volume.

2 *lHa rje* gNubs *khu lung pa* Yon tan rgya mtsho; *de sras lHa rje* Ye shes rgya mtsho; *lHa rje* gNubs Padma dbang rgyal; *lHa rje* gNubs *bla chen* 'Jam dpal; *lHa rje* gNubs rGya gar rdo rje; *lHa rje* gNubs Chos kyi ye shes; *sNgags 'chang* Khro bo 'bar ba; then *mThu chen* Dar ma rgyal mtshan who also received and passed *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* (*gter ma*), so that the next generations are a combined *bka' ma* and *gter ma* lineage: *Bla ma* Yang dag rdo rje; *Rig 'dzin* Phug pa sher rgyal; Gro *ston* bSod nams 'bum [legs]; *Bla chen* Blo gros rgyal mtshan (perhaps Sa bzang ma ti *paṇ chen*, 1294–1376) and then Phag *ston* Śākya mgon po (late 14th century) who is credited for the final fusion of all the *bka' ma* and *gter ma* branches.

3 Reconstructed on the basis of a lineage prayer found in CNT, vol. 20, p. 147f., confirmed by many other documents.

4 Dalton 2016, p. 187, mentions this lineage only in a note and seems to have been more interested in another line described later by Padma 'phrin las, running through his contemporary sGrol ma ba bSam grub rdo rje (1294–1375).

5 Gu ru bkra shis 1990, pp. 290-291.

6 An extensive biography of g.Yung *ston pa* is found in the standard history of this lineage written by the 8th Situ Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1700–1774), *bKa' brgyud gser 'phreng* (Chos kyi 'byung gnas 1998, vol. 1, p. 453-502). For a presentation of this work see Dell 2023.

of the most central Nyingma masters in the days of Longchenpa (1308-1364), he was somehow erased from the later memory of the school.[1]

In fact, his legacy is perhaps better preserved in the Karma Kagyü lineage than it is in the Nyingma tradition: he was a close disciple of Karmapa III Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339) and the tutor of Karma pa IV Rölpé Dorjé (1340–1383, an important figure in the time of Rigdzin Gödem). However, the deep amalgamation of Kagyü and Nyingma materials that seems to have been at the heart of Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé's project, and in which Yungtönpa played a central role as a collector of Nyingma lineages, was not so central to the later Karma Kagyü school.

Although Yungtönpa appears to have been well versed in all the tantric traditions of his time—he is even known to have been an important student of Butön Rinchendrup (1290–1364) regarding *Kālacakra*—he also played a key role in at least one more of the non-Jangter hidden treasures that have been incorporated into the Dorjé Drak heritage: Pema Ledreltsal's *Khandro Nyingthik* or *Heart Drops of the Ḍākinī*.[2] The legacy of Pema Ledreltsal was passed on to the Jangter not through a well-documented human lineage, but, as we will see below, in the unofficial form of its incorporation into the *Gongpa Zangthal*. In fact, although there is no trace of any connection between Rigzin Gödem and Yungtönpa in available sources, it is not an exaggeration to say that Yungtönpa was somewhere in the background, not too far away, specifically among the small group of individuals who were involved in the early *Khandro Nyingthik* history. We cannot rule out the possibility that he was in some way a source of Rigdzin Gödem's knowledge of the aforementioned *Secret Cycle* of Dzogchen. And if Rigdzin Gödem ever practiced *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*, Yungtönpa was certainly the main authority on this cycle in Tsang

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1 The point seems to be that g.Yung *ston pa* is recorded as the author of the above-mentioned great commentary about the *gSang ba snying po*, according to the *zur lugs*, which was rejected by Klong chen pa and thus by the rNying ma mainstream, especially 'Jigs med gling pa's (ca. 1729–1798) followers in eastern Tibet. It seems however (private oral communication by Khenpo Ju Tenkyong at the First International Conference on the Northern Treasures in Paris, October 2024) that this commentary deeply influenced later sMin sgrol gling masters such as *Lo chen* Dharmaśrī (1654–ca. 1717). It can therefore be said that the fame of g.Yung *ston pa* was overshadowed by that of Klong chen pa, but never died out. In Alexander Gardner's (2011) biography of g.Yung *ston pa* in *The Treasury of Lives*, it is evident that he relied solely on Tibetan sources. This demonstrates the extent to which g.Yung *ston pa* has been overlooked in Tibetological studies. An in-depth study by Prof. van der Kuijp is expected to soon fill this gap.

2 On the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, see below Chapter 14 & 16.

until his death when Gödem was about 28 years old. Therefore, there may very well have been a direct (or indirect) but unrecorded relationship between the two men.

It would be pointless to speculate further on this question in the present state of our knowledge. However, Yungtönpa appears in more than one of the lineages (*The Gathering of Intentions*, *Sangwa Nyingpo*, *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*…) that were collected when the Dorjé Drak masters acquired their official lineage for all these in the 16th century from Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen (1445/1473–1558) and his sons, the two Ngari brothers. This may be a coincidence, or simply a late effect of Yungtönpa's objective centrality to many of these traditions in the 14th century, rather than the effect of a conscious preference. But it may also have been done with the intention of reactivating old links with this spiritual family, rather than as an absolute innovation.[1] Therefore, one should not underestimate the lineages that run through Yungtönpa in a Jangter context.

It is a pity that few works attributed to Yungtönpa seem to have survived. Dalton mentions[2] his manual for the empowerment of *The Gathering of Intentions*, but it has not resurfaced yet. So far, we have only his large commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo*,[3] an autobiography,[4] and a few pages in the *Khandro Nyingthik*.

[1] In the lives of Byang gter figures such as the 'Khor gdong masters in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, there are traces of a special interest in commentaries on the *gSang ba snying po* that do not conform to Klong chen pa's authority. This tendency not to regard Klong chen pa as the sole doctrinal authority on all matters of the rNying ma school seems to be common to the great monasteries of central Tibet (rDo rje brag and sMin sgrol gling) and appears to have gone largely unnoticed by Tibetologists, certainly because of the predominance of Khams pa scholars among their informants and other sources of inspiration. In Khams (with the exception of 'Khor gdong and perhaps the monasteries associated with dPal yul), the "Klong chen pa revival" initiated by 'Jigs med gling pa seems to have overshadowed everything else, which is not to say that there *was* nothing else, as we can see from the publication of major compilations of older material such as the various versions of the *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa*.

[2] Dalton 2016, p. 187, n. 9: the *gTad rgya gsang mtshan ma'i dbang chog*. See also *ibid*., p. 191, n. 25, on g.Yung *ston pa*'s specific doctrines.

[3] g.Yung *ston pa* rdo rje dpal ba, 1999, *dPal gsang ba snying po'i rgyud don gsal byed me long*, in KSG, vol. 28, pp. 1-589.

[4] g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal 2010, *rGyal ba g.yung ston ri khrod pa'i rnam thar*, vol. 25, pp. 143-212.

Chapter 12: Late 11th–13th Century: Tertön Sarben Chokmé, Nyangral, Gongri Sangyé Wangchen, and Guru Chöwang

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(IFRAE)

Tertön Sarben Chokmé's Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen

Very little is known about Tertön Sarben Chokmé, presented as the rebirth of one of Padmasambhava's secret consorts called Shezangdrön[2] or Shelzangdrön. Guru Tashi's *History of the Dharma*[3] vaguely situates this treasure discoverer "in the time of *Jetsün* Mila (1028?–1111?) and Ngok Lotsāwa (11th century)." Khyentsé Wangpo places him a little later "in the same time as Düsum Khyenpa,"[4] the first Karmapa (1110–1193).

It is difficult to derive factual information from the prophecies about him and his discoveries. The 17th-century commentary by Karma Migyur Wangyal[5] on Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal's *Prayer to the One Hundred Treasure-discoverers* contains less than one line about him. The most developed extant account seems to be the Fifth Dalai Lama's (1617–1682) *Record of Teachings Received*,[6] but even this is devoid of

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1 With complimentary research by Cécile Ducher.

2 Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 481-482, presents a short note on Sar *ban* Phyogs med, rather less informative than the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received*. For a more advanced (but les focused on Byang gter) state of this research, see Arguillère forthcoming (2026), "*Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen* in the Context of The Fifth Dalai Lama's rNying ma Writings." In this article, Sar *ban* Phyogs med is finally dated to the early 13th century.

3 Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 596 (merely mentions Sar *ban* Phyogs med in the context of a chronology).

4 *Gangs can gyi yul du byon pa'i lo paṇ rnams kyi mtshan tho rags rim tshig bcad du bsdebs pa ma hā paṇ ḍi ta śī la ratna'i gsung pa* (in mKhyen brtse dbang po 1977–1980, *bKa' 'bum*, vol. 19, pp. 1-476), p. 9: *rab byung gnyis pa rje la glu dang dus mkhyen sogs dang dus mtshungs par* | …

5 Karma mi 'gyur dbang rgyal (d.u.), 1978.

6 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, f°89a-91b. The Fifth Dalai Lama also makes allusions to Sar *ban* Phyogs med, for example, in the context of one of his manuals for the practice of *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Zil gnon 'phrin las kyi rnam nges*, in CNT, vol. 22, p. 80 (also in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 26, p. 263). However, the way in which the Fifth Dalai Lama combines an aspect of Sar *ban* Phyogs med's *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*

extensive historical elements, although the author devotes some pages to the texts discovered by Sarben Chokmé and their posterity (including a list of texts written by Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal, which, to date, all seem to be lost). Sarben Chokmé appears as the main discoverer of the cycle called *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*, although allusions are found to Guru Chöwang too in this context.

This very idiosyncratic cycle seems to be based on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* and does not explicitly belong to any of the known sections of Dzogchen. The description of the cycle in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* shows that *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen* once was a large corpus (around 47 texts are listed). Very little seems to be still extant of it except for the practice manual composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama himself and a large commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* attributed to Padmasambhava. The anthology of this cycle in the *Rinchen Terdzö*[1] consists only of the manual by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

Rigdzin Gödem's connection to this cycle is presumed mainly on the basis of the Fifth Dalai Lama's assumptions about the lineage (both in his *Record of Teachings Received*[2] and in the practice manual[3] he wrote). It is corroborated by Terdak Lingpa's *Record of Teachings Received*.[4] Both seem to rely on Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal's authority for the

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with rGya zhang khrom's *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* does not imply any clear assumption about an earlier connection of these two systems. In fact, he uses Sar *ban* Phyogs med's revelations to explain the peaceful Mañjuśrī practice that is a preliminary to the Yamāntaka *bskyed rim* practice, and not explicitly in connection with the higher empowerments of *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*. The same idea is developed in his *'Jam dpal zhi ba'i 'phrin las sangs rgyas mngon sum ston pa'i lag bcangs* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 26, pp. 386-395), which gives the details of this peaceful Mañjuśrī practice.

1 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i phrin las dang smin byed kyi cho* ga, vol. 26, pp. 249-301.

2 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, p. f°91b: *chos sku kun tu bzang po* | *longs sku 'jam dpal rigs lnga* | *sprul sku śākya thub pa* | *rdo rje ḍāki* | *rin chen ḍāki* | *padma ḍāki* | *karma ḍāki* | *de bzhin ḍāki* | *o rgyan ḍāki* | *'jam dpal dbyangs* | *rdo rje 'chang* | *'jam dpal bshes gnyen* | *śrī siṅha* | *o rgyan chen po* | *rje khri srong lde btsan* | *jo mo she bza' sgron* | *gter ston chen po sar ban phyogs med* | *lung zin sar ban nyi ma'i snying po* | *sngags 'chang dbang dar* | *mgar ston rin chen 'bum* | *ri pa sangs rgyas dpal* | *rgya ban bla ma* | *bla ma sba ston dpal* | *rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem phru* |, followed by a common Byang gter lineage starting with sNgags 'chang rDo rje mgon po.

3 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i phrin las dang smin byed kyi cho ga*, vol. 26, pp. 354-385.

4 gTer bdag gling pa 1998, *gSung 'bum*, vol. 1 pp. 236-237.

idea that Rigdzin Gödem was a lineage master of *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*. However, we have no document to this effect before the 17th century. This view may be somewhat confirmed by the existence of the aforementioned *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* commentary attributed to Rigdzin Gödem,[1] which is in fact a summary of the commentary ascribed to Padmasambhava,[2] itself included by the Fifth Dalai Lama in the list of the texts belonging to this cycle. We will return to this text in Volume 2, in the context of the presentation of Rigdzin Gödem's works and revelations. For now, suffice it to say that nothing in its content confirms or denies its authenticity and that the 2015 edition appears to be based on only one manuscript source.[3]

The relevant aspect of this lineage in our context is the line of five individuals—Sarben Nyimé Nyingpo, Ngakchang Wangdar, Gartön Rinchenbum, Ripa Sanggyepal and Gyaben Lama—ending with one who is presented as the direct teacher of Rigdzin Gödem: Lama Batönpal or Gatönpal.[4] He is not mentioned (at least under this name) in the known biographies of Rigdzin Gödem. However, since this name is a title rather than a personal name, Gatönpal could be one of the masters we know under other names.

As already mentioned, Mipham (1846–1912) curiously presents[5] this lineage in the context of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*, with no explicit reference to *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*, although his interest in this cycle is known from a prayer[6] he wrote about it. His source for the first part of

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1 Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *'Jam dpal gyi 'grel pa zab mo*, in CNT, vol. 14, pp. 271-362.

2 One of the texts mentioned in the Fifth Dalai Lama's catalog of the cycle, *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod kyi don 'grel o rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyis gsang sngags kyi bskyed rdzogs gsum dang mthun par mdzad pa*, is found in NKG (vol. 22, pp. 195-492). This text is the one summarized in the commentary attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. Other parts of this cycle could be present in this and other volumes of the NKG/KSG in its various editions.

3 Rig 'dzin rGod ldem n.d., *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo*, in *Khams sde dge rdzong sar bla ma lha khang du bzhugs pa'i dpe rnying*, vol. 53, pp. 225-332.

4 *Bla ma* sBa *ston* dpal.

5 Mi pham 2015, *brGyud pa'i gsol 'debs*, in CNT, vol 22, pp. 391-393. This text is an appendix to a rather large text by Mi pham (Mi pham 2015, *dPal tshe bdag gi bsnyen yig lhan thabs dngos grub sgo byed*, in CNT, vol 22, pp. 325-390) and I suppose Mi pham is also the author of this appendix, as the lineage ends up with mKhyen brtse'i dbang po and as this text is also included in the available editions of his complete works. sBa *ston* dpal appears here with another spelling as rGa *ston* dPal ba.

6 Mipham, *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po gzhi lam 'bras bu dbyer med pa'i don la smon pa rig stong rdo rje'i rang gdangs*, in Mi pham 1984–1993, vol. 5, pp. 79-83.

this lineage prayer seems to be the aforementioned *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen* manual by the Fifth Dalai Lama, since the exact same phrases appear in both texts. To make sense of Mipham's conflation, we can assume that he considers this to be a lineage of the Padmasambhava tradition[1] of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*. Further research would be required to understand fully how Mipham builds on the Fifth Dalai Lama's combination of the two cycles.

This would imply that there was a tradition of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* in the early Jangter tradition much prior to what appears in most accounts of this tradition, which would make the line coming from Setön Rinchen Gyaltsen[2] merge in a common Jangter / Drikung Kagyü line only in the 16th century. This would explain much of the central role that this *a priori* non-Jangter cycle has taken in the "Dorjé Drak system." However, it remains to be understood whether there was really an unknown secondary line of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* revealed by Sarben Chokmé or how his Dzogchen-connected revelations were grafted upon Gya Zhangtrom's termas, despite the fact that we do not find Sarben Chokmé (at least under this name) in any of the lineages stemming from Gya Zhangtrom.

A passing remark in Jamgön Kongtrül's *Hundred Tertöns*[3] (found in more or less the same form in various sources on this lineage) suggests that part of Sarben's cycle was later appended to *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* by the specialists of this system. This mainly refers to the preliminary practice of peaceful Mañjuśrī, as documented in the Fifth Dalai Lama's ritual compositions mentioned above. Thus, Sarben Chokmé's revelations would have only extrinsic connections (in terms of content) with *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* and Yamāntaka materials in general, but they may well have been transmitted in the same lineage.

The available sources (the commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* attributed to Padmasambhava and the Fifth Dalai Lama's manual) and any fragments of the original corpus that might resurface would certainly require close examination for many reasons: its unusual features in Dzogchen literature; the fact that Rigdzin Gödem's name appears in this context; and the Fifth Dalai Lama's special interest in this corpus (this manual is the largest text he wrote on Dzogchen). However, since there are no obvious similarities with Rigdzin Gödem's Dzogchen

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1 *Pad lugs*, what is also known as the "Ironlike" (*lCags 'dra*) in the context of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.

2 Se *ston* Rin chen rgyal mtshan (d.u.); maybe the same person as 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan.

3 Kong *sprul* Blo gros mtha' yas 1976–1980, *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, vol. 1, p. 524 (in the context of a short note about Sar *ban* Phyogs med): *bar skabs nas tshe bdag mkhan po rnams kyis 'jam dpal zhi sgrub kyi rtsa bar bzhag pas dar rgyas che ba las kho bos kyang dbang rgyun tsam zhig thob bo*.

cycles and since the authenticity of the commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* attributed to Rigdzin Gödem is uncertain, this investigation was not considered urgent in the present context, for which these remarks may suffice.

12th Century: *Nyangral Nyima Özer* (*1124–1192*)

Nyangral Nyima Özer[1] does not appear in Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's *The Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage* because he is not considered a key figure in the lineage of the uninterrupted Oral Tradition. However, we must mention him where he fits chronologically, not only for the sake of historical clarity, but also because he may well be the primary creator of the hegemonic narrative and doctrinal framework within which Rigdzin Gödem and, much later, Rigdzin Pema Trinlé both understood their role and situation.

The reader is now fully aware that there was still no organized Nyingma order in the 12th century. Although there was never a truly centralized Nyingma school, later Nyingmapas share easily recognizable doctrinal and practical characteristics as well as this common narrative framework, which clearly make them all parts of a single family.

In an earlier period, the "old school" is to some extent a catch-all category that brings together individuals, often forming family lineages, who in the 11th and 12th centuries continued to uphold doctrines and ideals that had been disseminated or elaborated in Tibet since the imperial period—what we call the Kama lineages. In the 11th century, this diffuse movement, like the other traditions, began to become more organized and new doctrines were revealed that were said to have been taught by Padmasambhava and other tantric masters in the 8th century and hidden to be revealed at a later, more appropriate time. This "treasure" tradition did not start with Nyangral Nyima Özer, but it is with him that it begins to present an aspect that is more familiar to us. Nyangral Nyima Özer is hence remembered by the later tradition as the first great Treasure Revealer, and he seems to have profoundly reshaped the old school. Although it may not have been until the fifteenth century that the Kama and Terma currents fully merged into something resembling today's Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism, it can be said that the result was indeed very similar to, and

[1] The richest available source for the history of his posterity seems to be Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1985, *mNga' bdag bla ma'i rnam thar*, a 310-page *dbu med* manuscript presenting "the biographies of the early masters in the transmission lineage of the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* teachings revealed by mÑa'-bdag Myan-ral Ñi-ma-'od-zer." Gu ru bKra shis summarizes this text in Gu ru bkra shis 1990, pp. 649-653.

owed much to, Nyangral's twelfth-century synthesis.

As the heir of a family tracing its pedigree back to the time of the empire, Nyangral may have had enough prestige to start doing something very distinct from what other traditions were doing at the time: namely, carefully tracing back their lineages to Indian lines and authority and, increasingly, monastic legitimation. Nyangral, instead, shaped a new tradition that built its legitimacy around the figure of Padmasambhava, whose biography he revealed as a treasure.[1] He also revealed practices relating to Avalokiteśvara as well as Dzogchen and tantric cycles.[2]

Nyangral was born and revealed his teachings in the southern region of Tibet, Lhodrak, and established his seat in a place called Mawochok. He was followed there by his son, Namkha Pal (1171–1238), and Nyangral's legacy continued in that place for many generations. Namkha Pal became the master of Guru Chöwang (1212–1270), who received Nyangral's treasures and later claimed to be Nyangral's main successor.[3] Guru Chöwang would continue to define the new paradigm of the Nyingma movement, and he codified termas and their

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1 Doney 2014; Hirshberg 2016.

2 For details about the life of Nyang ral and his contribution to the development of the treasure tradition, see Phillips 2004, especially pp. 114–156.

3 In Nyang ral 1985, *mNga' bdag bla ma'i rnam thar*, we find, after Nyang ral's life (pp. 1-164) and a large biography of Nam mkha' dpal (pp. 165-245), those of his successors in the family line, all called *mNga' bdag*: Blo ldan ma (pp. 248-255; Gu ru bkra shis 1990, p. 650, says he was born in a *glang lo* which could be 1205, 1217, or 1229), bDud 'dul (pp. 255-260); died in his 60th year according to Gu ru bKra shis), mDo sde seng ge (pp. 260-265); Padma dngos grub (pp. 265-270); 'Jam dpal nor bu (pp. 270-275—according to Gu ru bKra shis, he passed in his 70th year and was a master of sNe'u gdong Grags pa rgyal mtshan, who might be *Lo tsā ba* Grags pas rgyal mtshan [1352–1405], one of Bo dong paṇ chen's masters—which makes 'Jam dpal nor bu an older contemporary of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem); Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (pp. 275-290), who passed away in his 67th year—according to Gu ru bKra shis, he met O rgyan gling pa (1323–*ca*. 1355), which also makes him a possible candidate to be the unidentified lCang ma pa—rGod ldem's master for this tradition). From the time of this *mNga' bdag* on, the family line split into many branches. *dGe bshes* lHa bzang pa (pp. 290-298; lHa'i rgyal mtshan according to Gu ru bKra shis) was around forty when his father passed away; he lived to his 59th year according to Gu ru bKra shis; and bZang po lhun grub (pp. 298-309) who died in his 49th year according to Gu ru bKra shis. The last one seems to be the author of Kun dga' rgyal mtshan's biography and lHa bzang pa's son (who had another son called lHun grub bzang po who died young). Gu ru bKra shis mentions a few more names.

modes of revelation.[1]

Nyangral Nyima Özer belongs to a time when the two tendencies, Kama and Terma, had not yet fused, and his perhaps marginal status in his own time is obscured by his final success, which may not have been complete until centuries later.

Nyangral Nyima Özer should therefore be appreciated not only in the context of a linear construction of the Nyingma school, understood from a point of view in which what happened was a natural development of an earlier state of things (as if it had been a "school" from the beginning, merely developing its heritage over the centuries), but also in the context of a competition between two major trends of that tradition—a more conservative "Kama only" style and another style that accepted the validity of the termas and took them as practical keys to the Kama heritage. We have only indirect, but quite convincing hints of such a competition. The strongest one is the above-mentioned nearly complete absence of the terma tradition in Gö Lotsāwa's *The Blue Annals*.

The story is certainly more complex, with trends like the Heart Drops of Dzogchen and their system of texts being hidden and rediscovered many times, but without any explicit connection to Padmasambhava's agency, and so on. We get the feeling, from reading the oldest documents and trying not to make anachronistic assumptions, that for a very long time this was a dense forest of small autonomous traditions growing side by side, perhaps without a strong sense of a common identity. It is possible that these competing traditions resisted unification in part because of a "proprietary mentality" that made each ritual specialist very reluctant to pass on his lineage, as it was his family's main resource for generations to come, admittedly a very strong factor of fragmentation in Tibetan religious history. If we take seriously all the elements that have already been mentioned about Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé's foreign masters or about the Zurs getting some of their traditions directly from India in the 10th century and if we carefully consider the possibility that other figures such as Vimalamitra and Vairocana were less connected to the court of Emperor Trisong Detsen than is generally believed, then it might even be said that "Nyingmapa" was probably not originally a vocable expressing a sense of self-identity at all, but a term coined by the advocates of the new systems introduced in the 11th century to refer to people who not only were not yet organized as a school or sect, but who did not even recognize themselves as belonging to the same trend at all (the terms "Nyingma" or "Nyingmapa" are seldom if ever found in the writings of even relatively late authors such as Longchenpa).

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[1] Gyatso 1993; 1994; Phillips 2004.

Nyangral's work and activity definitely played a major role in the success of the second branch, the one that accepted the validity of the termas. How he could achieve such a success and whether it was largely posthumous or began during his lifetime remain to be carefully researched. The way in which Tibetans write history—in the form of the heroic biographies of exalted individuals—makes it very difficult to assess the social achievements of one given figure in his or her own time, and there is a tendency to confuse a largely posthumous success due to the quality of an author's writings and to the agency of a master's talented successors with the idea that this individual must have been socially successful in his or her own time. For example, this is typically the case with Rigdzin Gödem's older contemporary, Longchenpa (1308–1364), whose writings' central role in the later Nyingma school—a role largely justified by their outstanding quality—does not prove that he was known outside of a fairly narrow circle in his own time. We will face the same difficulty with Rigdzin Gödem himself, and it is one of the aspects about which the reader must be the most carefully critical of Tibetan historiography: it tends to completely erase most social realities and to misrepresent others, including those of a religious nature that seem to us to be the most directly relevant, even from a very Tibetan and Buddhist point of view.

If we now return to Nyangral, it is evident even from the *membra disjecta* of his works and revelations—a majority of which is probably lost forever, but what remains still fills many volumes—that he was not merely a tāntrika, but a man of deep and wide scholarship in all fields: history and philosophy as well as tantric ritual and meditation instructions.[1]

It is likely also that his strong social position made him completely independent and capable of visible achievements such as building temples or sponsoring his own disciples. Although it is not absolutely plain in details, there must have been a not purely religious reason why he and his descendants are all called "lord" or "sovereign."[2] However, it seems that his main achievement was the completion of

[1] A perfect example of his fine understanding of the various philosophical tenets of Buddhism and even Hinduism can be found in the more theoretical parts of the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* (Nyang ral 1978 or Nyang ral 1979–1980). Whether or not the *Chos 'byung me tog snying po* is a genuine writing of his, the fact that, at least in the *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*, he constructed the narrative synthesis which is basically the framework for the later rNying ma pas' unity, also shows not only a strong interest in history, but also a keen awareness of the fact that commonly shared myths of origin are the most necessary things for a social group to become united.

[2] *mNga' bdag*.

the *Eight Pronouncements* system,[1] which may have been one of the earliest syntheses of all the "Old School" tantric transmissions.

A reasonable hypothesis, in the present state of our knowledge, is that there must have been an ongoing process of compiling and organizing the *Eight Pronouncements* that begun several generations earlier (in the 12th or even the 11th century), was greatly enhanced by Nyangral Nyima Özer, and further developed mainly by Guru Chöwang and then by Rigdzin Gödem, with some additions by contemporary or later tertöns. The crucial importance of the *Eight Pronouncements* for the Nyingma school in its formation is that it consists in bringing together into a single maṇḍala all the tantric teachings derived from the "Eight Vidyādharas." Although the central role in the background narrative is played by Padmasambhava, this may well be a metaphor for a work of gathering and unifying of originally separate tantric lineages by early Nyingma masters, elevated to the highest level of excellence by Nyima Özer.[2]

For later tradition (especially from Ngari Paṇchen Pema Wangyal on), Rigdzin Gödem's revelations were an integral part—and the coronation—of the "Threefold *Eight Pronouncements*," [3] i.e., including those of Nyangral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang, using the doxographic scheme of the three inner yogas as an overarching framework: Nyangral Nyima Özer's *Kagyé* cycle would be more Mahāyoga-oriented (i.e., with a larger component of "development phase" that includes elaborate ritual and visualization); Guru Chöwang's cycle would be more Anuyoga-oriented (i.e., richer in inner yoga and body techniques). Gödem's system is perceived as being more Atiyoga-connected (i.e., richer in properly Dzogchen-connected aspects).[4] Indeed,

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1 Nyang ral's *Eight Pronouncements* cycle includes 13 volumes in the 1979–1980 Bhutanese edition and the 1978 Sikkimese edition of the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa'i chos skor*. However, Nyi ma 'od zer's presence is also clearly visible in the *bKa' brgyad bka' ma rdzong 'phrang* (KSG, vol. 67, with some elements in vol. 13). Although this corpus is considered to be *bka' ma*, it seems that it is at least partly a *gter chos* of Grub thob dngos grub, the 12th-century revealer of the *Ma ṇi bka' 'bum*, who passed this original *bKa' brgyad* system to Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer.

2 It cannot be presumed that Nyang ral had a complete knowledge of visionary rDzogs chen and it may be the case that the junction of the Heart Drops lineages with the *gter ma* traditions was not achieved prior to Padma las 'brel rtsal.

3 *bKa' brgyad rnam gsum*. This point was presented by *mKhan po* 'Ju bsTan skyong at the First International Conference on the Northern Treasures (October 2024).

4 In fact, as we will see in the section of volume 2 devoted to the description of rGod ldem's works and revelations, the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar* culminates, so to speak, with the rDzogs chen instructions of the *dGongs*

the *Eight Pronouncements* provides us with a very remarkable case of a revelation continued over centuries, of which there are many in the Nyingma tradition.

Further research will show in which elaborate ways Rigdzin Gödem's revelations may be re-elaborations of material from Nyangral, but this is beyond the scope of the present research.

Although the way in which Gödem was trained is not well documented in Nyima Zangpo's biography, it says that in his teenage years "he received the treasures of Nyangral from one named Changmawa."[1] It has been so far impossible to trace him (we will return to this point in the next volume in the chapter about Rigdzin Gödem's masters). However, the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* describes a lineage in which Gödem received the transmissions of Nyangral Nyima Özer's revelations.[2] The lineage, after Nyangral Nyima Özer, reads: Namkha Palden (1171–1238, one of Nyima Özer's sons); Gyalsé Loden Sherab; a grandson of Nyangral called Ngadak Lodenma;[3] Nyötön Thukjé Rinchen; Dartön Yönten Gyatso; Lama Ngödrup Palden; Gyatön Thukjé Sengé; Lama Rinchen Gyalpo;[4] his son Lama Changmapa. Then we find Rigdzin Gödem[5] and then a very standard lists of his successors that allows full certainty about his identification.

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pa zang thal. See also Arguillère forthcoming ("Re-reading Eva Neumaier Dargyay's '*bKa'-brgyad rang-byung rang-shar*, ein rDzogs chen Tantra': A Reflection on Mahāyoga and Visionary rDzogs chen in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *Eight Pronouncements* System," in our third Byang gter special issue of the *RET* scheduled for February 2026).

1 Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 16: *lcang ma ba la nyang ral pa'i gter kha gsan*.

2 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, f°158b.

3 *mNga' bdag* Blo ldan ma. Gu ru bkra shis 1990, p. 383, mentions him as an emanation of Mañjuśrī. There is a biography of him in *mNga' bdag bla ma'i rnam thar*, pp. 248-255, but it does not seem to contain any date or datable element.

4 *Bla ma* Rin chen rgyal po. Could be BDRC P0RK1053. Many occurrences of this name Rin chen rgyal po are in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *gSan yig*, but without much possibilities to check that these refer to the same person. Unknown to Gu ru bKra shis and *The Blue Annals*. He may be a disciple of lHa nang pa Sangs rgyas rin chen (BDR: P15, 1164–1224), but this seems a bit early.

5 *gTer ston* dNgos grub rgyal mtshan, followed by *sNgags 'chang* rDo rje mgon po, *mtshan ldan* Ngag dbang grags pa, etc.

Gongri Sangyé Wangchen (12th Century) and The Secret Cycle of Hayagrīva

Here we must briefly mention a figure that is even more obscure than Sarben Chokmé, for even Guru Tashi's *History of the Dharma* does not give a brief biography of him: Gongri Sangyé Wangchen (also known as Nyemo Gyagar Riwa Sangyé Wangchen).[1] Although we do not know anything about his life, he is easy to place chronologically as he was a direct teacher to the Shangpa master Gyergangpa Chökyi Sengé (1154–1217)[2]—hence the name *Gyergang Tamdrin* under which the Hayagrīva cycle found in the liturgy of Dorjé Drak with the title *Tamdrin Sangkor* is commonly known. This cycle was introduced into the Dorjé Drak liturgy[3] in the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama and Rigdzin Pema Trinlé. It is the second one sampled in the *Rinchen Terdzö*[4] in the chronological order, after the oldest one, known as *The Hypersecret Hayagrīva*.[5]

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1 Gong ri Sangs rgyas dbang chen, sNye mo rgya gar ri ba Sangs rgyas dbang chen. He is mentioned in Gu ru bkra shis, 1990, p. 372, in the context of a short note on sNye mo Zhu yas gNod sbyin 'bar, alluded to in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, f°64a, suggesting that the two figures may be one and the same, which Guru bkra shis regards as unlikely.

2 The early lineage stemming from the *gter ston*, e.g., in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho *loc. cit*., is easily recognizable as a Shangs pa mainstream line: *chos sku snang ba mtha' yas* | *longs sku padma dbang chen* | *sprul sku padma saṃ bha wa* | *gter ston rgya gong ri pa sangs rgyas dbang chen* | *skyer sgang pa chos kyi seng ge* | *sangs rgyas gnyan ston* | *'gro mgon chos rje ston pa* | (*sangs rgyas ston pa'ang zer*) | *gtsang ma shangs ston* | *mkhas btsun rgyal mtshan 'bum* | *khyung po tshul khrims mgon po* |, etc. The table of Kong *sprul* 1976, vol. 40, describes this cycle as "a fusion of the direct revelations of Padmasambhava to sKyer sgang pa Chos kyi seng ge and the *gter ma* discoveries of Snye mo rGya gong ri ba Sangs rgyas dbang chen."

3 *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor don 'cha*, vol. 3, pp. 193-212: *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub kyi brgyud gsol dang las byang dkyus gcig tu bsdebs pa rin chen mdzes pa'i phra tshom*. The lineage is presented on pp. 194-196. It begins exactly as described in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings received*, and then it passes to Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las followed by an all-Byang gter lineage.

4 Kong *sprul* 1976, vol. 40, pp. 87-150.

5 *rTa mgrin yang gsang*, in Kong *sprul* 1976, vol. 40, pp. 1-85. This cycle, quite unusually for a rNying ma *gter ma* teaching, became a central practice of one of the most important dGe lugs institutions: the Byes college of Se ra Monastery. The Fifth Dalai Lama devotes seven texts to this cycle (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, *gSung' 'bum*, vol. 27, pp. 128-247), including a *lo rgyus* in which he seems to confess (p. 133), in a way that is very unusual in similar Tibetan literature, that the precise origins of the lineage are somewhat obscure. In this context, he names three *gter ston*s:

Thirteenth Century: *the Mongol Empire*

Insofar as we can appreciate in retrospect the respective importance of historical figures—knowing that later reinterpretations often make people who were actually very important in their time disappear, while others whose importance went unnoticed in their lifetime take a central place for posterity—the 13th century in the Nyingma school appears to have been dominated by the towering figure of Guru Chöwang. It was a time of change in Tibet and its surroundings. The larger world was ruled by fierce warriors whose cradle was the Mongol heartland in the steppes of Central Asia to the north of Tibet, but whose empire, by the late 13th century, spanned from the Pacific Ocean in the east to the Danube River and the shores of the Persian Gulf in the west. At its peak, the Mongol Empire covered some 23 million km^2 of territory, making it the largest contiguous land empire in world history. Its founder, Genghis Khan (1162–1227), started the conquest of Asia, Europe, and Russia, which was continued by his heirs and reached its peak in the late 13th century. Genghis Khan died in 1227 when he conquered (and destroyed) the Tangut (Xi Xia) Kingdom, whose culture was strongly marked by Tibetan Buddhism.[1] Despite the proximity of Tanguts with Tibetan masters, there is no evidence at that time of Mongol incursions in central Tibetan territory. At Genghis' death, power was shared between his sons and the pressure of Mongols on Tibet became stronger with their competition, which eventually resulted in the division of the Mongol Empire into four parts ruled by different heirs.[2]

Sum pa dBang tshul, 'Bre Shes rab bla ma and rKyang po Grags pa dbang phyug. For more on these three figures, see Cuevas 2021b, "Four Syllables for Slaying and Repelling," pp. 295-297, regarding the "Contest with Three Hayagrīva Yogins" which is a derogatory version of the story of the three discoverers of this cycle intended to show the superiority of Vajrabhairava rites over the Hayagrīva practices. Cuevas identifies the three figures in a way that allows to place them in the second half of the 11th century. This dates the discovery of the *rTa mgrin yang gsang* cycle quite as early as the above-described *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*. The two cycles (*rTa mgrin gsang skor* and *rTa mgrin yang gsang*) seem to be somewhat interconnected, as a text in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*'s section devoted to the second one (1976, vol. 40, p. 199) presents the lineage of the first one, with *Grub thob* 'Dar phyar ba, etc. This all requires further research.

1 See Beckwith 2011 for a general approach to the empires of the Silk Road. For more details on the Tanguts, see the publications of the BuddhistRoad ERC project (https://buddhistroad.ceres.rub.de/en/).

2 Encyclopedia Britannica 2023 describes the four heirs of Genghis Khan: "Tolui, the youngest, received the eastern part—the original homeland of the Mongols together with the adjacent parts of north China. Ögödei

Following in the footsteps of the Tanguts, Mongol Khans were very interested in Tibetan Buddhism and received religious transmissions from various masters. Unlike in other countries, they therefore established religious relationships with Tibet and included it in their Empire by surrender rather than bloody conquest. This did not prevent battles, but it set the ground for a richer exchange, which was continued by later Chinese dynasties.

The first armed Mongol incursion into Tibet was ordered by Godan Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan and second son of Ögedei Khan, who had been granted an appanage at Liangzhou (present-day Gansu) in 1239.[1] In 1240 he sent an invasion force under Dorta into Tibet. The Mongols reached the Penyül Valley north of Lhasa, killing some five hundred monks and destroying and looting monasteries and villages. The Gyal Lhakhang Monastery went up in flames and many monks of Reting were slaughtered.

At that time, Reting's abbot suggested that the last of Sakya's five patriarchs, Sakya Paṇḍita Künga Gyaltsen (1182–1251), be invited to the Mongol court. In 1244, Sakya Paṇḍita accepted the summon and traveled to Godan Khan's court with his nephews. He died there in 1351. At the same time, other Mongol Khans established links with other schools: Möngke Khan, the new Khan after Godan, connected with the Drikungpas, Kubilai with the Tsalpas, Ariq Böke with the Taklungpas, and Hülegü with the Phakmodrupas.[2] The head of the Karma Kagyü, Karma Pakshi (1204–1283), was invited to Kubilai's court but chose not to stay there and journeyed to the court of Möngke Khan.[3] At the same time, Chögyal Phakpa (1235–1280), Sakya Paṇḍita's nephew, went to Kubilai's court. In 1258, he gave the Hevajra empowerment to Kubilai. After Möngke's death in 1259, Kubilai won the war of succession over his relatives. He put Karma Pakshi under arrest and the Karma Kagyü did not benefit from Pakshi's travels in Mongol lands. Kubilai chose Phakpa, and that was how the

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became ruler of the western part of the steppes (modern northern Xinjiang and western Mongolia). Chagatai received the lands of Khara-Khitai (modern northern Iran and southern Xinjiang). The eldest son, Jöchi, followed by his son Batu, ruled over southwest Siberia and west Turkistan (an area later known as the territory of the Golden Horde). To these four Mongol empires a fifth was added when Hülegü, a son of Tolui, completed the conquest of Iran, Iraq, and Syria and became the founder of the Il-Khanid dynasty in Iran."

1 Petech 1990, p. 6-9.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 11. 'Bri khung pa, Tshal pa, sTag lung pa, Phag mo gru pa—branches of the bKa' brgyud tradition.

3 Manson 2022.

Sakyapas came to power in Tibet through their alliance with Kubilai, who went on to initiate the Yuan Dynasty in China (1271–1368).

With Phakpa and the Sakyapa's spiritual rule backed by the Yuan Empire's military force, a new era started in Tibet, with a measure of centralization after centuries of disorganized leadership, grassroot movements, and local rules. For almost a century, the Sakya order, with increasingly complicated family successions, was the most powerful political force of Tibet. For approximately the same time, the Mongol Dynasty of the Yuan ruled in China, with the same itinerary of progressive disintegration. It was during this time that a style of governance combining religious and secular rule[1] became central in Tibet, with a close relationship between "patron and priest."[2]

Guru Chöwang (*1212–1270*)

During this period, in particular in the Nyingma movements with the influence of Nyangral and Guru Chöwang, there was an increasing nostalgia for the Tibetan Empire, when Tibetan kings were sole rulers of their destiny alongside powerful religious leaders such as Padmasambhava. Often, local rulers were considered possible successors of Trisong Detsen, and tertöns were the new Padmasambhavas.

Guru Chöwang's life is not unknown, as he wrote a large autobiography that was studied by Janet Gyatso.[3] He was born in 1212 in southern Tibet, obviously in a rich and learned family, which allowed him to be trained not only in the Kama traditions, but also in those of the Sarma lineages. He experienced visions as a young teenager, but it seems that it is thanks to his meeting with Nyangral's son, Ngadak Drogön, in his seventeenth year that he could begin making full sense of the transmissions he received earlier.

Jakob Leschly rightly expresses his main historical role:[4]

> Chökyi Wangchuk was an early chronicler of the treasure tradition, and was critical in fashioning standards—loosely adhered to, but widely known—that enabled the practice of treasure revelation to become popularly accepted. (…) Perhaps more importantly, he was an early apologist for the tradition, willing to assert the existence of "false" treasure in defense of the practice as a whole, even naming names.

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1 *Chos srid zung 'brel*.
2 *mChod yon*. See Ruegg 2004 and Ruegg 2013 for references on the subject.
3 Gu ru Chos dbang 1979, studied in Gyatso 1993 and 1994. For a short but substantial hagiography of Gu ru Chos dbang, see Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 760–770. For an even shorter version, see Leschly 2007a.
4 Leschly 2007a.

He discovered a considerable amount of terma material, much of which appears to have been lost over the centuries or, at the very least, not properly edited.[1] His hagiographies are most impressive, but in his case, too, research is still lacking to fully appreciate his historical role. Not only are his own personal achievements—especially in terms of Nyingma doctrines and practices (other than the norms he created or promoted regarding authentic termas)—and the way he trained disciples largely unknown, but little is also understood regarding the way he was perceived in contemporary Tibetan society. What is certain is that his revelations were held in high esteem for generations, and there is hardly a biography of a Nyingma master of the next few centuries that does not mention that he received the transmissions for Guru Chöwang's termas as well as those of Nyangral Nyima Özer.[2]

Future research on the Northern Treasures in particular, and the Nyingma tradition in general, could be done in a comparative way.[3] It is clear, for example, that several of the Jangter cycles follow in the footsteps of Guru Chöwang and, often through him, Nyangral Nyima Özer. This is typically the case with the *Eight Pronouncements*, but also with the Avalokiteśvara cycle and those of the Peaceful and the Wrathful Padmasambhava. Nor is it impossible that Rigdzin Gödem's lesser-known Dzogchen cycle, *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arising Primordial Purity* (*Ka dag rang byung rang shar*), is in some ways a descendant of the forms of Dzogchen favored by these two tertöns. There is much to be gained from a kind of archaeology of these cycles, seeing them as layers gradually added to a common heritage.

1 In the Tibetan religious context, when a transmission lineage for a given corpus no longer exists, or when that corpus is perceived to be essentially incorporated into something perceived as more advanced in the same category, the text may cease to be copied. In the case of the early *gter chos*, another unexplored explanation might be the immense destruction caused by the Dzungar invasion of 1717–1718 and the civil war that followed. The Dzungars apparently destroyed as much rNying ma literature as they could.

2 Rig 'dzin rGod ldem is no exception, as we will see in the next volume's chapter about his masters. However, in this case, the lineage cannot be reconstructed from Guru Chöwang to the obscure master sNang ldan rgyal po from whom Rig 'dzin rGod ldem received this corpus.

3 Precise suggestions on this point will be found in the "Overview" section of vol. 2.

Chapter 13: An Overview of the Religious and Political Situation in Early Fourteenth Century Tibet

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Butön Rinchen Drub (*1290–1364*) *and Lama Dampa Sonam Gyaltsen* (*1312–1375*)

It is in an atmosphere of recentralization and increasing looking back at the grandeur of the Tibetan Empire that the 14th century started. It was a time of great change and transformation in Tibet, marked by the emergence of new religious and political movements, as well as periods of conflict and instability. In India, Buddhism had come to an end, and Tibetans did not receive any new impulses from the south. They had finished the task of importing, dissecting, and digesting the Indian teachings and were creating their own syntheses by formulating new, Tibetan ways of presenting the Buddha's words. Butön Rinchen Drub (1290–1364), for example, took part in the compilation of the first extensive Tibetan canons, the Kangyur and Tengyur. He was not alone in this, and there were many initiatives, often in collaboration with the Yuan and later Ming emperors, to collate and print the translated Indian sources of Tibetan Buddhism.[2]

Butön[3] is quite representative of the ethos of the 14th century, a middle point between the classical dynastic era (c. 650–850) and the non-sectarian (*ris med*) movement of the 19th century, on the heels of the wave of translation of the Later Spread, and just prior to the monastic outburst of the Gelug order. Born in a Nyingma family, Butön had a very diverse upbringing, combining the classical study of sūtras, philosophy, and poetry with that of the tantras of the Later Spread, foremost among them *Kālacakra*. In 1320, he became the abbot of Zhalu Monastery, hence his tradition, related to that of the Sakya order, is

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1 The main historical part of this chapter is by Cécile Ducher.
2 See an overview in Tauscher 2015.
3 For a summary of his classical biography from Tibetan, see Ruegg 1966; see Tsering Namgyal 2012 for a short lifestory and van der Kuijp 2016 for a detailed survey of his biographies and works.

known either as "Butön's system" or as "system of Zhalu."[1] At the height of his career in the mid-14th century, when the power in Tibet was shifting away from the Sakya order, he mediated between them and the Phakmodru myriarchy headed by his student and future king of Tibet, Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen (1302–1364). Butön was then invited to the court of the Yuan by Emperor Toghon Temür (Huizong, r. 1333–1370), but he declined the invitation.

Another important Sakya figure of that period—a member of the Khön family—was Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltsen (1312–1375), a prolific author who sponsored the first edition of the collected works of the Five Patriarchs of Sakya.[2] He was a student of Butön and taught Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen. His numerous masters and students hailing from various horizons included Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen, Tsongkhapa, and allegedly Longchen Rabjam (1308–1364).[3] They are a testimony to the open atmosphere of the 14th century, when there was considerable fluidity between lineages and transmissions. Hierarchs could belong to one order, be related to a specific monastery, and still study with many others and attract all kinds of disciples. Like Butön, Lama Dampa was summoned to the Yuan court but did not go due to pretexting health reasons.

Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339)

An older contemporary, who did not refuse the Yuan Emperor's invitation and is said to have taken part in the coronation of Toghon Temür, was the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé.[4] Unlike Butön and Lama Dampa, who were related to Sakya but did not head the order, he was considered the head of the Karma Kagyüpas, although his leadership was not as straightforward as later incarnations of the Karmapa.[5] He was also very open to Nyingma transmissions. He had a

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1 Bu lugs or Zha lugs.

2 Townsend 2010, van der Kuijp 1993 and 2018.

3 It is likely that they met only at the end of Klong chen pa's life, after his return for exile. In that sense, it should not be imagined that he contributed to Klong chen pa's training.

4 Gamble 2020, esp. p. 119 ff for the description of Rangjung Dorje's journey to Dadu and his death there.

5 Ruth Gamble (2020) explains that Rang byung rdo rje was not particularly welcome in the monasteries founded by his predecessor, the first Karmapa Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–1193). The family of Pakshi—the second Karmapa—was in charge of the monasteries and although they increasingly had to accept Rang byung rdo rje because of his evident spiritual power, they did not let him rule the monasteries. It seems that Rang byung rdo rje even did not go to Kam po gnas nang or was not wanted there. The

close connection with Rigdzin Kumarādza (1266–1343) and his disciple Longchen Rabjam and practiced cycles such as the *Khandro Nyingtik*.[1] This is quite in opposition to Butön, who is remembered for having excluded many Nyingma tantras from his Kangyur, thus prompting (as a reaction) the compilation of the *Nyingma Gyübum* in the next century.

Another of his disciples, Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365), has already been discussed above. He was an important bridge between Kagyü and Nyingma transmissions in the 14th century. Yungtönpa was raised in a Nyingma lineage and was an expert in the *Khandro* and *Bima Nyingtik*.[2] He also was adept at the offensive practices associated with Yamāntaka. Like various teachers of his time, he studied with many masters: he received Mahāmudrā teachings from the Third Karmapa, gained realization with them, and passed his realization on to the Fourth Karmapa, thus becoming part of the "golden rosary,"[3] the Mahāmudrā transmission at the heart of the Karma Kagyü lineage. He also received training in *Kālacakra* from Butön, and he too was invited to the court of a Yuan Emperor. He managed to make rain fall and henceforth received much prestige and wealth. In the Nyingma lineage, he was instrumental in the transmission of *The Gathering of Intentions*.

Rangjung Dorjé was born in a poor family in Tsang, at the borderland between Mangyül Gungthang and Latö and was recognized by Orgyenpa Rinchen Pal (1229–1309) as a reincarnation of the Second Karmapa, Karma Pakshi. He was a prolific writer on topics ranging from the biographies of the Buddha to the most intricate subtleties of the tantric body in his *Profound Inner Principles*.[4] He also ordered the print of the canon, although he did not take part in its compilation. He is pictured as a yogi enjoying mountain retreats, but he was forced to spend a lot of time engaged in more "worldly" activities, studying with many masters, teaching disciples, and bringing the Karma Kagyü lineage to an increasingly central place in Tibeto-Chinese-Mongol politics.

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transfer of power by incarnation, which became the norm in later Tibetan history, was not yet fully established in the early 14th century.

1 Gamble 2020, p. 80.

2 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 666-667. See a long biography in the classical Karma Kagyü history called *Zla ba chu shel gyi phreng ba* (Chos kyi 'byung gnas 1990, vol. 11, pp. 368-415; for reference to this text, see Dell 2023). For a short biography see also Gardner 2011.

3 gSer phreng.

4 *Zab mo nang don*—see Callahan 2014.

His doctrinal approach was quite representative of the style of 14th-century masters:[1] Rangjung Dorjé's advocacy for "sidelessness" stood in contrast to the position the Sakyapas were advocating. Following the lead of their luminary, Sakya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), they considered some of the Kagyü practices that blended sūtra and tantra traditions, particularly Gampopa's practice of "sūtra Mahāmudrā," as akin to the Chinese belief of "instant awakening" that was expelled from Tibet after the at-least-semi-mythical Samyé Debate. In many places within Rangjung Dorjé's writing, there are veiled and non-veiled jibes at Sakya positions on a variety of topics and on their actions as governors. This pattern suggests that Rangjung Dorje's work could be read as an indirect argument against the Sakya position. He, unlike them, was dedicated to finding the common ground between all the different traditions of Tibetan Buddhism—between sūtra and tantra, between Mahāmudrā and Dzogchen, and between the treasure traditions and the traditional lineages.

Ruth Gamble's monograph on Rangjung Dorjé shows that if the Kagyüpas and Nyingmapas often had close connections in the early Tibetan history—a trend that continued until the present day—there was often considerably more tensions between the Sakyapas and the various branches of the Kagyüpas. This trend appears in early biographies, for instance those of Marpa and Gampopa, and continued in later centuries, especially in the 13th and 14th centuries, when these orders were consolidating and often vying for sponsors.

Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen (*1292–1361*)

The[2] main exponent of the emptiness-of-other (*gzhan stong*) approach was Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen who, regardless of the issue of the influence of his doctrines on the Nyingmapas of Gödem's generation, was in any case another prominent figure in the background of early fourteenth century. He belonged to a somewhat dissident branch of the Sakya school, the Jonang order, which after that time can be considered an independent tradition in Tibet.[3]

Dolpopa was born in Dolpo, nowadays a Nepalese region close to Tsang, Mustang, and Lhodrak, where many of the above-mentioned masters were active. Initially a student of Kyitön Jamyang Drakpa Gyaltsen (d.u.) who taught him *Kālacakra* while at Sakya, he also received many teachings of the Kagyü and Nyingma traditions as well

1 Gamble 2020, p. 102.
2 This paragraph and the following ones are by Cécile Ducher.
3 For a short presentation see Stearns 2008; and Stearns 2010 for a monograph.

as instructions on Chö and Zhijé. After formative years during which he embraced more scholastic methods, he then went to Jonang and was inspired by a more meditative approach to the *Kālacakratantra*, which eventually led him to the formulation of the emptiness-of-other doctrine. Also invited to the court of Toghon Temür, he stayed in retreat instead, and in the last years of his life, he traveled to the many monasteries of Tsang and Ü to teach his approach of ultimate reality to large crowds. Dolpopa died in 1361; this was also the year when Thangtong Gyalpo (1361–1485), considered to be his reincarnation and who had close links with the Northern Treasures Tradition,[1] was born.

An Overview of the Political Situation from Late 13th to Mid-15th centuries and its Religious Consequences

To understand the political history of Tibet at that time and in the following centuries, it is important to take a step backward. When the Mongols started to administer Tibet in 1260, they created "myriachies"[2] organized around main monasteries—hence the name "Sakya" or "Drikung" referring to the political unit and not to the monastery—and consolidated them by the Mongol census of 1268.[3] They were ruled by "myriarchs,"[4] sometimes religious figures, but more often civil servants, though generally related by blood to the religious hierarchs of the monasteries. In 1368, Kubilai handed the thirteen myriarchies to Phakpa, thus uniting lords of various regions who had been under the emperors' rule during the Tibetan Empire but were autonomous in the 13th century. Thus, the thirteen myriarchies (whose exact list varies in sources) are thirteen political units of Central Tibet (Ü), Tsang, and Ngari that were united by Kubilai. Their unification did not stop them from vying with each other, especially when the Sakya lords started to lose power. In 1290 for instance, a conflict between Sakya and Drikung led to the destruction of Drikung Til, the main monastery of the political unit Drikung, by Mongol forces allied with Sakya.[5] In the middle of the 14th century, the ruler of the Phakmodrupa myriarchy, Jangchub Gyaltsen (1302–1364), progressively

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1 See Ducher 2024 and Volume 3 of this series.

2 *Khri skor*, literally "ten-thousand households," the latter being called *hordü* in the Mongol administration.

3 For general explanation with maps, see Ryavec 2015, pp. 86–90. For more detailed explanations, see in general Czaja 2013, and in particular Luciano Petech's article on "The Mongol Census in Tibet" in Tuttle and Schaeffer 2013, pp. 233–240.

4 *Khri dpon*.

5 Czaja 2013, n. 65, pp. 106–107.

gained power in his own region and over the Sakya lords who were entangled in succession splits between competing lineages. In 1358, he obtained from Sakya the seal of power over the thirteen myriarchies and the Yuan Emperor granted him the title of Tai Situ. As, however, he ignored imperial orders, the Yuan administration of Tibet stopped (ten years before the dynasty itself was replaced by the Ming), and Tibet became autonomous again.[1] The power shifted from Tsang to Ü, and this struggle for power between these two regions of Central Tibet became the norm for the next three centuries, until Ü definitively gained the upper hand in 1642 with the establishment of the Fifth Dalai Lama's rule of Tibet.

Religious masters were often very close to one or several of the regional and imperial political leaders, by choice and, often, by necessity: leaders, in need of religious service, were also generous donors, and they could obviously make a difference when a monastery needed to be built. As pointed out earlier, there was in Tibet a nostalgia of the Empire with the reimagined representation of Trisong Detsen having an enlightened rule with Padmasambhava. Even from non-Nyingma viewpoints, Trisong Detsen and his successors' support of Śāntarakṣita and the later Indian paṇḍitas who came to Tibet to translate and transmitted Buddhist sources was something to emulate and imitate. It is therefore not surprising that religious figures gave transmissions to emperors, kings, and local rulers, and received from them offerings and titles. Sometimes, however, when the leaders lost power and were replaced, as in the case of Karma Pakshi, the religious figures faced exile and destitution.

The political changes of the mid-14th century and the coming to power of the Phakmodrupa shifted Tibet's center of gravity towards Ü, as their main seat, Densatil Monastery and the Tsetang Palace, were along the southern bank of the Tsangpo, to the South-East of Lhasa and Samyé. The late 14th century under the Phakmodrupa rule of King Drakpa Gyaltsen (1374–1432)[2] was a time of prosperity and peace. It lasted until 1434, which was marked by growing tensions between regional powers and the rise of the Rinpungpa, which brought the center of influence back to Tsang. This time of prosperity, the second half of the 14th century, was when Rigdzin Gödem was active. Gödem was born and lived in Jang Ngamring, in the larger region of Latö Jang and on the way west toward Kailash. This meant that he was far from the

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1 General presentations on this topic abound. For a detailed presentation, see Czaja 2013, vol. 1, pp. 111–204; for a classical article by Petech, see Tuttle and Schaeffer 2013, pp. 249–265; and Kapstein 2006, pp. 116–119 for a more general presentation.

2 *Mi dbang* Grags pa rgyal mtshan.

Phakmodrupas' sphere of influence. There, the kings who were influential lived in the neighboring kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang.[1] For him, the new Trisong Detsen was therefore not a Khön from Sakya, nor a Drikung or a Phakmodrupa, but a king from Gungthang, whose familial connection to the Imperial Dynasty had been confirmed by Sakya in the previous century.[2]

It is not yet entirely clear why some prominent Nyingma masters, such as Longchenpa and Orgyen Lingpa (to whom we will return in the chapters 15 and 16), opposed Jangchub Gyaltsen's rise to power in a way that actually backfired on them. Understanding how the Nyingmapas felt about all these political changes would certainly shed light on elements that played a crucial role in Rigdzin Gödem's life: his belief in restoring the legitimate king to the throne of Tibet, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, his search (in the second half of his life) for the concealed lands, which he perceived as places of refuge from the world's trouble—wars, famines, and epidemics—would make more sense if we understood why he was not satisfied with the form of political unification that Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen achieved in Tibet.

These are elements of history that seem to have been erased in its later rewritings, when the Phakmodrupa period was finally judged to have been globally beneficial for Tibet, which, for some time, enjoyed some degree of unity, peace, and independence from foreign rule.

[1] Parts are in modern-day Nepal, such as Mustang which was a part of the kingdom for at least a while, but the main areas of the kingdom are in Tibet.

[2] The establishment of the Mang yul Gung thang Kingdom and the slow development of the region into an ideal region for treasure revealers are discussed in Volume 2.

Chapter 14: A Key Figure at the turn of the 14th Century: Pema Ledreltsal (1291–1319)

Stéphane Arguillère
(IFRAE / Inalco)

Pema Ledreltsal's Life

This tertön was born in 1291.[1] Most of what is believed about his previous lives is connected to the discovery of the *Khandro Nyingthik*. The narrative about the origin of this teaching prior to its discovery will not be developed here; it can be found elsewhere.[2] Basically, a daughter of King Trisong Detsen called Pema Sal died in infancy, but was shortly resurrected by Padmasambhava who bestowed the *Khandro Nyingthik* on her before she re-died and then was reborn in the last years of the 13th century as the tertön Pema Ledreltsal who was to rediscover the texts.[3]

In 1311, he met the "Dharma King" Meban Rinchen Lingpa (1289–1368),[4] who gave him the prophetic guides[5] that allowed him to discover his termas in 1313. The guides had been found by Rinchen Lingpa with his first termas in 1310 or 1311.

Pema Ledreltsal's revelations did not include only the famous *Khandro Nyingthik*, but also a less known Rāhula cycle which matters to us, since its only available edition is the one included in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*.[6] Immediately after having discovered

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1 See, e.g., Aris 1988, esp. pp. 27-28, for more information on Padma las 'brel rtsal, who was considered a pre-incarnation of Klong chen pa and Padma gling pa.

2 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 554-555; Barron 2005, pp. 57-70, etc.

3 In g.Yung *ston pa*'s version of the narrative (g.Yung *ston pa* 2009, *Lo rgyus rgyal ba g.yung gis mdzad pa*, p. 142-153) there are more intermediate reconcealments and rediscoveries, as in the case of the *Heart Drops of Vimalamitra*. A careful study of this text would be invaluable in order to make sense of some obscure prophecies. Here, we present things as if the texts had been hidden by Yeshé Tsogyal in the imperial era, only to be discovered in the early 14th century by Pema Ledreltsal.

4 *Chos rgyal* Rin chen gling pa, or Me *ban* Rin chen gling pa. Arguillère 2024a, "A King of Dharma" provides the background of all what is presented in this volume and the next about both Padma las 'brel rtsal and Rin chen gling pa and the connections of the latter with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

5 *Kha byang*.

6 *gZa' rgyud* or *gZa' rgod dug gi spu gri*. In CNT, vol. 28 and 29.

the treasures for which he was predestined, Pema Ledreltsal met Gyalsé Lekpa (1290–1366),[1] who was to become his main Dharma heir (and who later transmitted his termas to Longchenpa). In most hagiographies of Pema Ledreltsal, it is said that after meeting Gyalsé Lekpa, the tertön went to his home region and then moved to Chimphu in Samyé, where Vajravārāhī prophesied that he would go to Lhasa to meet Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé (1284–1339). Since doubts were raised about his revelations, Pema Ledreltsal, it is said, gave the empowerments and the reading transmissions on the basis of the "yellow scrolls," the original texts as they had been extracted from the treasure cache. However, an in-person meeting between Pema Ledreltsal and the Karmapa is not confirmed in any of the Karma Kagyü sources. The oldest Karma Kagyü document referring to this situation, Yungtönpa's (1284–1365) history of the early transmission of the *Khandro Nyingthik*, instead names Lotön Dorjebum,[2] an assistant of Pema Ledreltsal in the discovery of the terma, as being the person who met Karmapa. Others name Rinchen Lingpa as being this intermediary link.

It seems, in fact, that right after he found his termas, Pema Ledreltsal decided to remain in retreat in a cave. When Rinchen Lingpa

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1 See Arguillère 2024c, "Gyelse Lekpa," for the definitive arguments based on *rGyal sras* Legs pa's autobiography regarding Padma las 'brel rtsal's death in 1319.

2 Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum. The only known rDo rje 'bum in the relevant period is g.Yung *ston pa* himself, whose first name it was before he received his monk name rDo rje dpal. However, g.Yung *ston pa* cannot be Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum: he is the author of the chronicle which informs us that Rang byung rdo rje received the teaching from Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum, and then he himself, g.Yung *ston pa*, from Rang byung rdo rje. He would not have phrased the story in this way if he had been this rDo rje 'bum. It should be investigated whether "Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum" might be another name for Rin chen gling pa, which would resolve many of the contradictions (very few sources suggest that Rang byung rdo rje received the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* directly from Padma las 'brel rtsal; g.Yung *ston pa* and those who follow him name this Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum as being the intermediary link; some of Rin chen gling pa's biographies insist on the fact that *he* taught Rang byung rdo rje). Rin chen gling pa was indeed active in Lo ro in the second half of his life, which is consistent with Lo *ston*. However, we have no idea why, while his personal name was Rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po, he should be called "rDo rje 'bum." What is more, there seems to be lineages featuring both Lo *ston* and Rin chen gling pa in successive positions, which would make impossible for them to be one and the same person. For some unknown reason, there seems to have been a tendency to erase Rin chen gling pa from history. Given his highly probable connection with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, this is a pity for the Byang gter studies.

came to get, as promised, the transmission of the termas for which he had given the prophetic guides, it is said that Pema Ledreltsal was in strict seclusion and so it was his disciple, Gyalsé Lekpa, who passed all the empowerments and oral transmissions to Rinchen Lingpa. It is evident through many details that neither the Karmapa nor Rinchen Lingpa originally got a complete *text*, and it seems that the *Khandro Nyingthik* (and maybe the Rāhula cycle) remained in the form of "yellow scrolls" for decades.

Once he had finished his retreat, Pema Ledreltsal travelled for some time with Rinchen Lingpa and Gyalsé Lekpa. Just as Rinchen Lingpa had given him the prophetic guide that allowed Pema Ledreltsal to discover his termas, Pema Ledreltsal gave Rinchen Lingpa the key to the treasures he would extract at the "rock looking like a black tortoise."

In 1319, Pema Ledreltsal died, leaving the yellow scrolls in Gyalsé Lekpa's hands. However, it seems that Rinchen Lingpa was very helpful in deciphering the ḍākinī scripts. He had a vision of Pema Ledreltsal that may be dated to 1321, after he had discovered his own termas of the site mentioned above. In that vision, Pema Ledreltsal, taking in his hands the texts of the peaceful *Khandro Nyingthik* and the wrathful *Rāhula*, said: "The books will come from the region of Dakpo."

It is said that events occurred as predicted: two otherwise unknown men[1]—surely disciples of Gyalsé Lekpa—brought him the texts that he then "corrected."[2] However, Gyalsé Lekpa was still alive and would remain for forty-five more years, until 1366. What is more, it is clearly stated that Gyalsé Lekpa later (1331) taught Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé on the basis of the yellow scrolls. This, then, can only mean that Rinchen Lingpa and Gyalsé Lekpa remained closely associated a long time after their master and friend Pema Ledreltsal had passed away.

In Longchenpa's biographies, it appears that he finally got a complete copy of the *Khandro Nyingthik* around 1339 from one of his own disciples named Özer Gocha. Whoever that disciple may be—perhaps Gyalsé Zöpa Drakpa[3] under another name—it is said that Özer Gocha "obtained them from Loro at the cost of great efforts."[4] Loro was the place where Rinchen Lingpa spent the end of his life.

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1 Se skya'o *bla ma* Tshar steng pa and *dBon po* Tshul dbang.

2 Indeed, we have an edition of a manuscript of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (Padma las 'brel rtsal 1984) in which Rin chen gling pa's hand is visible.

3 On this figure and the reasons for this identification, see Arguillère 2024d, "Gyelse Zopa."

4 Klong chen pa 2009, *mThong snang 'od kyi drwa ba*, p. 158: *rnal 'byor pa 'od zer go cha lo ro nas dka' spyad chen pos zhus pa'i mkha' 'gro snying tig gi dpe yongs su tshang ba bla ma la gzigs su phul dus* | … This passage has often been

As a conclusion, the most likely hypothesis is that:

(1) At an early stage, only Gyalsé Lekpa, Rinchen Lingpa and, Lotön Dorjebum (if he is really someone else than Rinchen Lingpa)—and, most probably through him, Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé—received the transmissions of Pema Ledreltsal's termas;
(2) However, neither Rinchen Lingpa, Lotön Dorjebum, nor Rangjung Dorjé got the corresponding texts, which remained in Gyalsé Lekpa's hands until 1321.
(3) For whatever reason, Gyalsé Lekpa was unable to completely decipher the ḍākinī scripts[1] that Pema Ledreltsal had left untranslated without the help of Rinchen Lingpa (starting ca. 1321).
(4) The work must have been complete in 1331, as it is said that at this point Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé felt the need to edit the text, to receive it again from Gyalsé Lekpa, and to transmit it to five disciples, including Yungtönpa Dorjepal. Rinchen Lingpa, who was still alive (he most probably died in 1368), is not mentioned anymore in this context.
(5) The texts were then obtained in 1339 by Longchenpa, who further edited them—erasing all trace of Rinchen Lingpa and other figures who had contributed to earlier editions.

We can assume this is true, at least to some extent, of the lesser-known Rāhula cycle. In this case, however, there is no evidence of significant editorial intervention by Longchenpa.

Rāhula

The corpus contained in volumes 28 and 29 of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* is a collection of mostly very short ritual texts with few elements that would be directly usable by a historian. Due to its character as an accumulation of small magical texts without much intelligible overarching order, it is difficult to describe its structure as has been done for *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.

The deity they are meant to propitiate, Rāhula, a protector or guardian deity specific to the Nyingmapas, is mainly used for violent magic

misunderstood as meaning that 'Od zer go cha went *then* to Lo ro in order to get the books, while it can very well mean that he had obtained them *much earlier* and kept them with him.

[1] *gTer ma* texts are most often revealed in the form of coded documents that need to be deciphered. The (various) codes are known as "ḍākinī scripts" (*mkha' 'gro brda yig*). Their "translation" seems to require a combination of skills in cryptography and somewhat more supernatural inspiration.

and is mentioned only with awe, even by those who belong to that lineage, as an extremely powerful weapon that can backfire if improperly manipulated. It appears in a much later Jangter context, for example, in the biography of Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal as the "messenger" he used to kill his hated enemy Zhingshakpa.[1] Rāhula seems to be somehow related to Yamāntaka, as the earliest recorded occurrences of this deity may well be in the context of the *Secret Black Moon Tantra*,[2] in relation to rites used to control the weather and especially hail.

One of the lineages from Pema Ledreltsal was transmitted to Longchenpa and his disciples and reached Dorjé Drak through the Fifth Dalai Lama.[3] In that regard, it is not relevant to our present concern. Another lineage[4] is more interesting in that it confirms the existence of the above-mentioned Lotön (here mistakenly called Lhotön) Dorjebum. However, most of the figures named are otherwise completely unknown and their names do not recall any early Jangter figures. Even more relevant is a lineage prayer appended to the terma:[5] Vajradhara; Padmasambhava; Yeshé Tsogyal; Trisong Detsen; Princess Pemasal; Pema Ledreltsal; Lotön Dorjebum; Drakpa Özer; Vajrarāja (i.e. Dorjé Gyalpo); Dharmaketu (i.e. Chökyi Gyaltsen); Chökyi Lodrö; Namkha Palden; Śākya Zangpo; Zhangtön Chenpo; "The chief teacher of the wrathful mantras"; Dorjé Düjom [i.e., Lekdenjé], and so forth.

The first name that can be easily identified in this list after Lotön Dorjebum is Śākya Zangpo, that is, the first Yölmo Tülku (15th century). This allows us to identify the previous figure as being Kongchen Namkha Palden,[6] one of his masters, which then makes it possible to reconstruct the earlier links of this lineage on the basis of a parallel

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1 See Martin 2024.

2 This should however be checked, since Rāhula is also an important protector of a probably equally ancient cycle, *rTa mgrin yang gsang*.

3 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 4, f°65b: …*sprul sku rin chen tshul rdor* | *rgyal sras legs ldan* | *kun mkhyen dri med 'od zer* | *mkhas grub thar pa gling pa* | *stag mgo bya bral chos rje* | *rje sangs rgyas dbon po* | *stag mgo yon tan dpal ba* | *gu ru sangs rgyas ye shes* | *stag mgo sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan* | *mi 'gyur kun dga' dpal bzang* | *drin can bkra shis rgya mtsho* | *mkhas grub du ma rang grol* | *ngag dbang ye shes grub pa* | *zur khyab bdag chos dbyings rang grol* | *des bdag za hor bande la'o* | |.

4 CNT, vol. 28, p. 185 (the text is clearly corrupt at least in three points): *slob dpon padma 'byung gnas* | *mkha' 'gro ye shes mtsho rgyal* | *lho* (sic) *ston rdo rje 'bum* | *padma las 'brel rtsal* | *lho* (sic) *ston rdo rje 'bum* | *bla ma smos pa ming zing* | *gu ru dpal bzang po* | *sngags 'chang bkra shis* | *de sras dbang phyug* | *bla ma rakna* (sic) *rdo rje* | *des dkon mchog* | *des bdag la'o* |.

5 *Khyab 'jug gi brgyud 'debs mu tig gi phreng ba dang phyag rdor rgyun khyer gza' bdud dug gi spu gri'i skor las mngon rtogs slob dpon pad mas mdzad pa*, in CNT, vol. 28, pp. 271-278.

6 Kong chen Nam mkha' dpal ldan, BDRC: P5596, "15th c.".

account found in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teaching Received*.[1] The context is that of a Yamāntaka lineage passing through Yungtönpa Dorjepal (1284–1365): Dorjé Gyalpo (d.u.)[2] is a grand-disciple of Yungtönpa and Dharmaketu[3] is his tülku. The only missing link is now the Drakpa Özer who comes after Lotön Dorjebum

The most likely hypothesis is provided by the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received*, which, in another passage, presents a close variant of this lineage.[4] Besides tracing the later transmission of these materials to Jangter masters, this variant exhibits an interesting difference as instead of "Drakpa Özer" we read the name of an interesting 14th-century figure: Thingmawa Sangyé Drak Ö, one of Longchenpa's masters, a specialist of Nyangral Nyima Özer's revelations. It is quite likely that Thingmawa is in fact Drakpa Özer, as he indeed appears as Lotön Dorjebum's disciple and Dorjé Gyalpo's master in some other passages of the same *Record of Teachings Received*.

This is further confirmed by the details of the prayer referred to above, in which "Drakpa Özer" is connected to a place called Thing,[5] from which Thingmawa Sangyé Drak Ö derives his surname. And, indeed, further in the same volume, the same lineage is repeated with, this time, the more explicit form "The Lama Drak Ö of Thing" (*thing gi bla ma grags 'od*)."[6] The same information is repeated again at the end

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1 Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 4, f° 269a: *skal ldan rdo rje rgyal po* | (*rdo rje spre chung gi skye ba* |) *dharma ke tu* | (*g.yung ston gyi skye ba* |) *rin po che chos kyi blo gros* | *kong chen nam mkha' dpal ldan* |. This series of names recurs in many lineages.

2 *sKal ldan* rDo rje rgyal po. On this figure, see Arguillère 2024b, *passim*.

3 See Arguillère 2024b, p. 328 n. 93 and p. 378, n. 173 and 179. Seems to be called rDor gling Chos kyi rgyal mtshan in some sources.

4 Another nearly identical lineage is found in the Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 4, f°220a: *rdo rje 'chang* | *bcom ldan 'das śākya thub pa* | *slob dpon padma thod 'phreng* | *jo mo ye shes 'tsho rgyal* | *lha lcam padma gsal* | *gter ston rin chen tshul rdor* | *lo ston rdo rje 'bum* | *mthing gi bla ma sangs rgyas grags 'od* | *skal ldan rdo rje rgyal po* | *rig 'dzin dharma ke tu* | *rin po che chos kyi blo gros* | *kong chen nam mkha' dpal ldan rgya mtsho* | *mchog sprul mnga' ris legs ldan rdo rje* | *rigs sngags 'chang ba'i 'khor los sgyur ba dpal bkra shis stobs rgyal* | *mkhyen brtse nus pa'i mnga' bdag ngag gi dbang po* | *zur kun mkhyen chos dbyings rang grol* | *des pha mes brgyud pa'i bstan srung mchog 'di za hor sngags smyon la stsal to* |.

5 Padma las 'brel rtsal 2015, *Khyab 'jug gi brgyud 'debs*, vol. 50, p. 273: *grub pa'i bsti gnas mthing gi gnas mdzes pa'i* | |*grags pa 'od zer zhabs la gsol ba 'debs* |.

6 Padma las 'brel rtsal 2015, *rDo rje gtum po'i nang bsgrub*, vol. 28, pp. 279-293, p. 285: *mthing gi bla ma grags 'od*.

of the second volume with a few obscure details that would require further research.[1]

Unfortunately, we do not have a biography of Thingma Sangyé Drak Ö, a figure who would be of interest to us given the difficulty of identifying Rigdzin Gödem's master for the Nyangter, Changmawa. His disciple, Dorjé Gyalpo, who was certainly Gödem's contemporary, is likewise unknown.[2]

The most reasonable tentative conclusion at this stage is that it was Yölmo Śākya Zangpo (active at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries) who was responsible for integrating Pema Ledreltsal's cycle of revelations on Rāhula into the Jangter tradition. Rigdzin Gödem must at least have been aware of its existence, as it was circulating in his time in communities to which he was certainly very close. He was clearly very familiar with Pema Ledreltsal's *Khandro Nyingthik*, and it is unlikely that the master (or masters) from whom he received the *Khandro Nyingthik* were not also well versed in the Rāhula cycle, since Rāhula may have originally been intended as a special protector for the *Khandro Nyingthik*. His master for Dzogchen and especially for the *Khandro Nyingthik* was probably Rinchen Lingpa, whose biography actually states that he had a vision, probably in 1321, in which the two cycles are mentioned side by side.[3]

The Khandro Nyingthik

Basically, the *Khandro Nyingthik* is regarded as containing a teaching of an equivalent level as the *Bima Nyingthik*, but that is supposed to have been brought from India to Tibet by Padmasambhava, not Vimalamitra. In this regard, it is in many regards parallel to other cycles that are "Padmasambhavian," revealed version of something that has a version connected with another Indian (Nepalese, etc.) master and that was passed through an older lineage. A good example of this (in a completely different type) could be the two main sections of the Yamāntaka cycle *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*[4]—the *Iron Scorpion* (*lCags sdig*) that contains teachings believed to have been transmitted from the

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1 Padma las 'brel rtsal 2015, *Chos skyong chen po gza' mchog gi bka' gtad*, vol. 29, pp. 475-478, p. 475: *…gter ston tshul khrims rdo rje* : *lo ston rdo rje 'bum pa* : *smyos ston sangs rgyas grags 'od* : *rdo rje spa chung gi skye ba rdo rje rgyal po* :, etc.

2 All these details are also given here because they are relevant elements for a future identification of Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum.

3 About this vision and its relevance, see Arguillère 2024a, p. 95 and 119.

4 *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*. See Arguillère 2024b.

Nepalese master Vasudhara to Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé and the *Ironlike* (*lCags 'dra*) cycle supposedly taught by Padmasambhava to Nubchen.

The background of the *Khandro Nyingthik* is the *Seventeen Tantras*, which are common with the *Bima Nyingthik*, plus a specific tantra called *The Flamboyant Sphere of Clarity*.[1]

As for its content, the *Khandro Nyingthik* is much shorter and somewhat simpler than the "one hundred and nineteen precepts" of the *Bima Nyingthik*. However, it is perhaps richer in inner yoga and body techniques and synthesizes the most advanced methods of completion phase practices (*sampannakrama*) with visionary Dzogchen. Another feature is, of course, that it is a terma. The traditional narrative is that Padmasambhava saw, while he was in Tibet, that the disciples who had a connection with the Heart Drops in this period could be taught by Vimalamitra and that the time had not come for his own teachings to be spread.[2] For Tibetans, the fact that it is a terma may mean, on the one hand, that its authenticity requires careful verification, but also that, if it is authentic, it is extremely powerful, because the lineage is short—one is very close to its source, Padmasambhava, and from him to the Primordial Buddha.

A more complete description of its contents might be misleading for the non-specialist reader, since this collection of small esoteric texts hardly lends itself to easy systematization. It would also imply a clarification of its background, the *Bima Nyingthik*, which would take us too far. The key point is that for Rigdzin Gödem's elder contemporary Longchenpa[3]—and this may to some extent reflect Gödem's own appreciation[4]—the *Khandro Nyingthik* is the most profound of all

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1 The precise identification of the *Klong gsal 'bar ma* tantra is not self-obvious. It is supposed to be the first of three texts included in vol. 110 of the *bKa' ma shin tu rgyas pa*: (1) *mKha' 'gro thams cad kyi snying khrag klong gsal 'bar ma nyi ma'i gsang rgyud* (pp. 1-249); (2) *mKha' 'gro ma'i gsang thig klong gsal 'bar ma'i gsang rgyud | gsang sngags gnad mdzod chen mo las | bar do gsang skor bla na med pa'i skor |* (pp. 251-390); (3) *Theg pa'i mthar thug | lta ba'i yang rtse | mkha' 'gro gsang thig | klong gsal | kun tu bzang moi'i | dgongs pa 'bar ma | nyi ma'i gsang rgyud dbang bzhi | bya rgyud chen mo |* (p. 391-570). However, the quotations found in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* cannot always be traced to any of the available variants of the tantra.

2 g.Yung *ston pa* 2009, *Lo rgyus rgyal ba g.yung gis mdzad pa*, p. 144: *rdzogs pa chen po snying tig gi gdul bya rnams bi ma la mi tra byon nas 'dul bar dgongs te dar bar ma mdzad do | … gu ru zhal nas | da lta spel ba'i dus la ma bab gter du sbed dgos | …*

3 For a short presentation of Klong chen pa in context, see below.

4 rGod ldem's own main rDzogs chen revelation, the *dGongs pa zang thal*, presents itself (Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1973, *dGongs pa zang thal*, vol. 1, p. 48; see Arguillère 2024a, pp. 94-97) as a more complete version of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

Buddhist teachings when it comes to the swift realization of full enlightenment. It is indeed astonishing that Longchenpa, who was the main heir of Kumarādza's Dharma and thus of the *Bima Nyinthik*, later became so focused on the *Heart Drops of the Ḍākinī*.

Be that as it may, when Rigdzin Gödem was born, the knot in the conflict regarding legitimate authority over the *Khandro Nyinthik*—which seems to have been contested by the Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé (and especially his successor Yungtönpa Dorjepal), Rinchen Lingpa (who probably formed a bloc with Gyalsé Lekpa, but the latter seems more conciliatory), and later Longchenpa—had not yet been untangled. It seems that, for whatever reason, the lineage amalgamated into the Karma Kagyü lineage went extinct.[1] Between the two remaining groups, the superiority of the synthesis proposed by Longchenpa seems to have prevailed, perhaps with the blessing of Gyalsé Lekpa, the tertön's main disciple. As for Rinchen Lingpa, it is possible that his main posterity lies with the Northern Treasures: it was probably him who passed on to Rigdzin Gödem that all the *Khandro Nyinthik* material that got merged with the *Gongpa Zangthal*.

[1] The lineage through Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje is not even mentioned anymore in gTer bdag gling pa's (1646–1714) practice manual for this cycle (gTer bdag gling pa 2009, *rDzogs pa chen po mkha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yid zab lam gsal byed*). This could be explained by the political tensions between the Karma bKa' rgyud pas and the Fifth Dalai Lama's closes allies, but there does not seem to be any such tendency to underplay the role of Rang byung rdo rje in gTer bdag gling pa's *Record of Teachings Received*.

Chapter 15: The Struggle for Legitimacy over Pema Ledreltsal's Legacy: Rinchen Lingpa and Longchenpa

Stéphane Arguillère[1]
(IFRAE)

Rinchen Lingpa (*1289–1368*)

This now forgotten Tertön was once called a "King of Dharma,"[2] and his influence seems to have remained strong for some time, at least in the south, as the Bhutanese edition[3] of the Nyingma Tantric Canon contains almost a full volume of tantras from his revelations. His central importance in the present context lies on the hypothesis that there is a high probability that he was Rigdzin Gödem's Dzogchen master.

Born in southern Tibet in 1289, Meban Rinchen Lingpa was regarded as the emanation of the eighth-century Indian master Prajñākaragupta. It is said that while playing as a child he left a complete imprint of his body on a rock. Then, after becoming a monk, he was given

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1 The part about Rin chen gling pa is by Stéphane Arguillère and is a summary of the relevant parts of Arguillère 2024a. The part about Klong chen pa is by Cécile Ducher and Stéphane Arguillère.

2 *Chos rgyal*.

3 mTshams brag NG, vol. 14, contains the root tantra of his *rDzogs pa chen po chig chod kun grol* (pp. 954-972), but it is very likely that 1. the *Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi bstan pa gzhi'i rgyud mchog rin chen spungs pa* (same volume, pp. 2-104); 2. the *Theg pa chen po mngon par rtogs pa byang chub lam gyi rgyud nam mkha' dang mnyam pa* (pp. 104–246); 3. the *'Bras bu gsang ba bla na med pa'i rgyud chen po dri ma med pa'i snying po* [*Byin gyis brlab pa'i yi ge klad du smos pa*] (pp. 246-390); 4. the *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi sku gsung thugs kyi snying po de kho na nyid nges pa ye shes mchog gi rgyud chen gsang ba yongs rdzogs* (pp. 390-494); 5. the *Rang byung gi chos tshig thams cad drang shar ba'i glegs bam* (pp. 494-496); 6. the *sKu lnga dbyer med rang shar gyi legs bam* (pp. 496-497); 7. the *sTong pa'i sgra* (or *rDo rje 'chang dang po'i dgongs pa bstan pa'i bu gcig po*, pp. 497-498); and 8. the *Thams cad kyi gnad* (pp. 498-499) belong to his *gter chos*. It is quite possible that more tantras revealed by Rin chen gling pa are present in this or other volumes of the collection, since Volume 14 presents only texts that are more or less connected to rDzogs chen. These texts, which may be revelations of Rin chen gling pa, do not seem to be found in other versions of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*.

the name Rinchen Gyaltsen Palzangpo[1] and made a thorough study of philosophy. He received and practiced all the instructions of Rechungpa[2] and experienced infinite pure visions.

Then at some point he went on a pilgrimage to Lhasa, and one night, in a dream, he saw a white man telling him: "Tomorrow morning there is something important to do." That morning, a crippled yogi, who said he was called Jangsem Künga[3] and came from Dingri, asked him many questions. As he happened to match with what was asked, this yogi told him: "I have the prophetic guide for Padmasambhava of Oḍḍyāna's profound mind-treasure to be extracted from the top of the red rock of Padrotsal,[4] hidden in Koro Drak of Drithang. But I cannot get there. You are the man that fits the treasure prophecy, and since this is so, I offer you the prophetic guide." Then he gave him a paper scroll wrapped in silk from under his armpit.

In 1311 at the latest, Rinchen Lingpa went to Koro Drak. According to the treasure histories,[5] there was a rock in a cave with copper nails embedded in it as a sign of the hidden treasure. There was a slightly protruding rock with a triangular shape. From it, he pulled out a dark red chest made of hardened leather. Inside were five compartments, each of which had five divisions named after the geographical directions, in a way strangely foreshadowing Rigdzin Gödem's Zangzang Lhadrak discoveries (1366). There were also blessed substances and a catalog of all the things contained in the treasure chest.

He also extracted the cycle of *Mañjuśrī King of* [*Occult*] *Science Nāgarakṣa*.[6] This is a very wrathful form of Yamāntaka, with two snakes instead of legs and three rows of three heads, with many arms. This deity is primarily used to combat diseases caused by nāgas, especially leprosy. Rinchen Lingpa's cycle is the most extensive one for Nāgarakṣa in the *Rinchen Terdzö*. It is not unlikely that this was the practice in which Rigdzin Gödem would receive his first signs of accomplishment around 1348.

As previously mentioned, various sources claim that it was Rinchen Lingpa who gave Pema Ledreltsal the prophetic guide to his treasures around 1311 and that this prophetic guide was found with the Koro Drak terma. The joint adventures of Rinchen Lingpa and Pema Ledreltsal have already been discussed. The former must have visited the latter in 1314. Between 1314 and 1320, Rinchen Lingpa unearthed his next treasure near the Indian border after enduring many hardships.

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1 Rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po.
2 Ras chung pa (1085–1161), Mi la ras pa's disciple.
3 Byang sems kun dga', a figure associated to the early Zhi byed school.
4 sPa sgro btsal.
5 *gTer 'byung*, *lo rgyus*.
6 *'Jam dpal rigs pa'i rgyal po nā ga ra kṣa*.

In the various accounts of the revelation, the treasure site is described as a rock in the shape of a tortoise or a frog. Under the rock, marked with the sign of the treasure—a crossed vajra—was a two-headed frog made of sealing wax, with one of its heads on its back. Inside that head was a copper vase from which he took out five groups of texts and holy objects. Among them was *The Single* [*Principle*] *that Liberates All*, also known as *The Self-Sufficient Perfect* [*Principle*],[1] large selections of which are anthologized in *Rinchen Terdzö*. Seventeenth-century masters such as the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) still possessed an unbroken lineage for this cycle, but it went extinct, probably in the early eighteenth century during the Dzungar invasion. There is evidence[2] in the *Gongpa Zangthal* that Rigdzin Gödem knew the *Self-Sufficient Perfect Principle*, which for some reason, as already mentioned, he seems to have regarded as another version of the *Khandro Nyingthik*. This is interesting as, in Rigdzin Gödem's revelations, there is little other explicit evidence of his readings.

As instructed by the treasure inventory, Rinchen Lingpa replaced the texts he extracted with those previously found, presumably in Koro Drak, as a "treasure substitute,"[3] something often depicted in treasure literature as a way to prevent negative consequences from the extraction. On his way back to Tibet, he made a retreat in a forested region on the border between Tibet and India. Near the cave was a rock in the shape of a five-pointed vajra with a protruding svāstika-drawing as a terma mark. Inside a vajra made of sealing wax, one cubit long, and a rock-crystal spiral, Rinchen Lingpa discovered a yellow scroll, luminous and perfumed, from which came the treasure called *The Three Sealed Cycles*. All or most of these texts seem to be lost (albeit some of them may be among the above-listed tantras found in vol. 14 of the Tsamdrak manuscript of the *Canon of the Ancient Tantras*). He extracted all scrolls that were there, our sources say, and inserted in their concealment place, as treasure-substitutes, the paper scrolls of the black tortoise. Then, it is told that according to Yeshé Tsogyal's prophecies, after being invited by the goddess Kongtsün Demo,[4] he went to Kongpo. There, the protector deity Dorjé Lekpa presented him with a treasure key, with which he discovered many more termas.

During this retreat, in a Bird year (most likely 1321), Rinchen Lingpa had a vision of Pema Ledreltsal who bestowed on him the *Khandro Nyingthik*. Pema Ledreltsal also told him he would find the

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1 *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*.

2 Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1973, *dGongs pa zang thal*, vol. 1, p. 48. For a discussion of this passage, see Arguillère 2024a, pp. 94-97.

3 *gTer tshab*.

4 Kong btsun de mo, a Tibetan goddess regarded as rDo rje legs pa's consort.

texts of this cycle and that of his revelations about Rāhula in the region of Dakpo. It seems that although Rinchen Lingpa had received all the transmissions from Gyalsé Lekpa soon after the terma discovery, no copy of the texts had been made yet. This is probably, as we have seen, because the original yellow scrolls had not been fully deciphered, either by Pema Ledreltsal or by his main disciple Gyalsé Lekpa, a task that seems to have been completed by Rinchen Lingpa. For this reason, Rinchen Lingpa can be considered a co-revealer of the corpus. Rinchen Lingpa later practiced in retreat in various places. Then he came back to Loro and took responsibility for some monasteries, such as Rinchending.

Some sources say that he transmitted all his termas to the Third Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé, whom he declared was their predestined heir.[1] It is said that this occurred in Samyé Monastery, and that on that occasion he prophesied to Rangjung Dorjé that his teachings would spread to the shores of the ocean. If this ever occurred, it must have been prior to the Karmapa's departure to Mongolia around 1331 or 1332.

Rinchen Lingpa is mentioned in two of the earliest biographies of Longchenpa. In both, the apparent motive is to claim Longchenpa's superior legitimacy as the main lineage holder of the *Khandro Nyingthik*. It is possible that this insistence derives from Longchenpa's disputed status in this regard: he never met the *Khandro Nyingthik*'s discoverer, Pema Ledreltsal. He is considered to be his reincarnation, but was born in 1308, much before Pema Ledreltsal's death in 1319. Longchenpa received the *Khandro Nyingthik* from Pema Ledreltsal's disciple Gyalsé Lekpa, but perhaps quite late and after he had already begun teaching, editing, and commenting on this cycle. One indeed finds in his biographies traces of doubts about whether he was authorized to teach it or not. When he began to do so, its officially legitimate masters were Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé (although very close to his death), Gyalsé Lekpa and Rinchen Lingpa.[2] The latter two both outlived Longchenpa. In Longchenpa's biographies, his relations with Gyalsé Lekpa appear peaceful, but there are hints of disparagement with Rinchen Lingpa. Longchenpa strongly suggests that he, not Rinchen Lingpa was the predestined lineage holder of the *Khandro Nyingthik*. What is at stake in this rivalry is the fact that, as explained above, the *Khandro Nyingthik* was regarded as Padmasambhava's highest teaching on Dzogchen.

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1 *Chos bdag*.

2 Plus the obscure Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum, and, after Rang byung rdo rje's death, g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal and four other disciples of the Karma pa.

There is good reason to think that Pema Ledreltsal's premature death did not allow him to leave the *Khandro Nyingthik* in a fully finished form. We have seen Rinchen Lingpa completing and correcting the deciphering of the Ḍākinī scripts around 1321, and it is very likely that the *Khandro Nyingthik* was later heavily edited by Longchenpa in the 1340s, and not merely supplemented by his *Khandro Yangtik*. It is possible that allusions in Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé's biographies point to a 1331 edition by Karmapa of a version that may have been the outcome of Rinchen Lingpa's work on the yellow scrolls.

There is, as seen above, a high probability, although not known to the tradition, that Rinchen Lingpa was Rigdzin Gödem's main Dzogchen master. It is even possible that Rinchen Lingpa was the Dzogchen teacher of Rigdzin Gödem's father, Lopon Sidü Dülpal, presented as a practitioner of the "Brahmin's Dzogchen,"[1] which, in context, may refer to Rinchen Lingpa's cycle, *The Single Self-Sufficient Perfect Principle*, although this assimilation is definitely awkward.

Lopon Sidü Dülpal would have been Rinchen Lingpa's student sometime between 1314, the earliest possible date for the revelation of this cycle, and the early 1340s, as he died when Rigdzin Gödem (born 1337) was a child. A further hint of this early connection of Rinchen Lingpa with Gödem's family is the fact that the first practice in which Rigdzin Gödem is said to have obtained signs of realization—the *Wheel of Activities of Black Leprosy*[2]—is akin to Rinchen Lingpa's cycle *Mañjuśrī King of* [*Occult*] *Science Nāgarakṣa*.

With regard to Dzogchen, it is a fact that Gödem's major Dzogchen cycle, the *Gongpa Zangthal*, contains 40 to 60% of what we can assume to be the original core of the *Khandro Nyingthik*. In his later life, Gödem was regarded as a distinguished specialist of this then very rare corpus.[3] Furthermore, in Nyima Zangpo's biography of Gödem, the only person who ever taught him Dzogchen is the aforementioned Draklungpa Khetsün Rinchenpal. In the 1340-60s, Rinchen Lingpa was one of the few available specialists in the *Khandro Nyingthik*. As we

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1 *rDzogs chen bram ze*. See Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 9. The passage seems to mean that not only Gödem's father, but his forefathers for some generations, had been practitioners of *Phur pa mdo lugs* and *rDzogs chen bram ze'i skor*. Taken literally, this admittedly goes against the hypothesis that *rDzogs chen bram ze'i skor* could, in context, mean the *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*.

2 *mDze nag las kyi 'khor lo*.

3 There are, however, allusions in rDo rje gling pa's (1346–1405) biographies about the fact that he received the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* during his youth (probably from the Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum-mThing Sangs rgyas grags 'od lineage). rDo rje gling pa, if we accept the traditional dates, belonged to the exact same generation as Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

have already seen, we know from the biographies of some of Rigdzin Gödem's disciples that Rigdzin Gödem also taught the *Bima Nyingthik*, and the *Gongpa Zangthal* incorporates large rewritten sections of that cycle. He may therefore have received it from Draklungpa Khetsün Rinchenpal—Rinchen Lingpa—as well.

Thus, we could say that two[1] large syntheses of the two Nyingthiks produced in the fourteenth century are still available: one is the famous *Fourfold Nyingthik* by Longchenpa, and the other the *Gongpa Zangthal*, revealed by Rigdzin Gödem, which is certainly in some regards the fruit of Rinchen Lingpa's teachings. It is not impossible, although this remains to be researched, that other revelations of Rinchen Lingpa inspired, or even *were absorbed into*, Rigdzin Gödem's termas.

Rinchen Lingpa passed away in Loro, in his eightieth year, in 1368. We know nearly as little about Rinchen Lingpa's disciples as we know about his masters. From a careful reading of the colophons and lineage prayers of what remains of his revelations, we can set up a list of nine names of direct disciples, and more of indirect disciples. None save those mentioned above are known to history and none of Rigdzin Gödem's known names appears in those documents.

Longchenpa (*1308–1364*)

Longchenpa is a well-known figure, but it is challenging to replace him in concrete history while avoiding anachronistic statements: his very central status in the later Nyingma school should not be presupposed if we want to understand who he was to the Nyingmapas belonging to Rigdzin Gödem's generation.

Longchenpa was born in a Nyingma family in 1308; he soon became a monk in Samyé Monastery. Like most of his contemporaries, he had a very diverse upbringing, including Nyingma teachings but also Sarma tantras (*Lamdré*, the *Six Doctrines of Nāropa*, *Kālacakra*, etc.) and philosophical sūtra-level treatises. In 1326, he entered the learning institute of Sangpu Neutok, which maintained both Kadam and Sakya traditions and was crucial in the scholastic training of many monks since its founding in the late 11th century.[2] He was also well-versed in

[1] rDo rje gling pa's *gter chos* should also be examined in this regard, especially the vast *lTa ba klong yangs* (in rDo rje gling pa 2009, vol. 19-23), which is as extensive as the *dGongs pa zang thal* and was revealed, according to the colophons (rDo rje gling pa 2009, vol. 19, p. 436), in the *gter ston*'s fifteenth year (1360?), earlier than rGod ldem's revelations (1366). The same colophon indicates a Monkey year (1368?) as that in which the texts were entrusted (*gtad*) to some disciples, which may imply that their "decoding" was complete.

[2] Akester 2016, pp. 226-229; van der Kuijp 1987; Hugon 2016.

poetics from his young age and his overwhelming fame is not due only to the eminent quality of the content of his teaching, but as well to the perfect form of his compositions.

Although he studied with many masters, during his youth he mainly belonged spiritually to the circle of Karmapa Rangjung Dorjé's disciples. His sudden departure from Sangphu (1332) coincided with Rangjung Dorjé's first trip to the Mongol court. In 1334, he went to visit Kumarādza, Rangjung Dorjé's old Nyingthik master and the main specialist of the *Heart Drops of Vimalamitra* in his time, with whom he studied for some months and kept in touch with until Kumarādza's death in 1343. Soon after his studies with Kumarādza, around 1339,[1] Longchenpa received supernatural signs urging him to focus on the *Khandro Nyingthik*, and it is then that he got a complete set of the texts (from a disciple he probably had in common with Rinchen Lingpa). For whatever reason, he was not pleased with Rinchen Lingpa and did not receive the teaching from him, but (much later, it seems) from Gyalsé Lekpa, Pema Ledreltsal's main direct disciple. It is likely that he started teaching the *Khandro Nyingthik* and developing it in his own *Khandro Yangtik*—regarded as a mind-treasure—as soon as 1339 or 1340.

Then started a period of intense composition. It can be supposed that Longchenpa mostly remained in a form of seclusion which did not prevent him from writing and teaching. Although a very large majority of his writings are about Dzogchen, at some point, he felt the need to compose general presentations of Buddhism in the light of, or crowned by, Dzogchen. In 1352, he also authored a large commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo*, which may be an answer to Yungtönpa's (said to express the Zur system, which Longchenpa rejected).[2]

Around 1349 or 1350, he secured close links with a wealthy and powerful patron, Drikung Gomchen Künrin (or Künga Özer Rinchen), which allowed him to restore the Zhé Lhakhang. But this connection with Gomchen Künrin backfired when the latter became a central figure in the resistance to Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen's takeover of Tibet. This forced Longchenpa to go into exile in Bhutan[3] around 1354, until

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1 The reader remembers that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was born in 1337.

2 Although a book tracing the history of rNying ma authors' ideas about this tantra, of which so many commentaries have survived, has yet to be written along the lines of Dalton's *The Gathering of Intentions*, it can be roughly said that while Klong chen pa's exegesis draws the *gSang ba snying po* toward visionary rDzogs chen, the Zur system reads it more strictly as a Mahāyoga scripture. Moreover, the Zur system is known for positing *qualitatively different Buddha states* within the Great Vehicle itself, according to the hierarchy of vehicles that the rNying ma pas say it comprises.

3 Another *gter ston* who had political problems with the Phag mo gru pa authority was O rgyan gling pa (b. 1323), who was exiled to Dwags po

about 1360. He later spent his last years in central Tibet, during which he seems to have enjoyed some acknowledgement for his superior qualities. It is believed that he gave teachings to Jangchub Gyaltsen[1] but maybe this merely means that Jangchub Gyaltsen made it clear to him that he would not get in trouble as long as he would keep away from politics. He passed away not long after, in 1364.

Longchenpa may not have been as famous during Rigdzin Gödem's youth as we might imagine based on the renown his works earned him within the later Nyingma tradition. He was also not active in the same region. However, Longchenpa certainly interacted with figures meaningful to the young Gödem, starting with Rinchen Lingpa, and maybe Gyalsé Lekpa, who might well be the Lekpa mentioned thrice in Rigdzin Gödem's biographies.[2] What is more, although some of Rigdzin Gödem's major fields of interest, such as the *Eight Pronouncements*, seem not to have been central to Longchenpa, still, as for Dzogchen, Rigdzin Gödem's *Gongpa Zangthal* could be regarded as another version of the synthesis of the two Nyingthiks that is at the core of Longchenpa's Dzogchen writings. If we could regard the date of the terma's revelation as the date in which its Tibetan version was complete, it should be dated 1366—two years after Longchenpa's death.

It seems unlikely that Rigdzin Gödem had a copy of any of Longchenpa's writings, since they were not printed for a long time and there is no evidence that they had human connections through whom manuscript copies could have circulated. However, an obscure prophecy about different versions of the *Khandro Nyingthik* found in the *Gongpa Zangthal* seems to prove that Rigdzin Gödem was aware, at least, of Longchenpa's existence. This passage more clearly shows, though, that Rigdzin Gödem knew Pema Ledreltsal's *Khandro Nyingthik* and Rinchen Lingpa's *Unique Self-Sufficient Principle*: the part that may be about Longchenpa is not absolutely transparent.[3]

(when Byang chub rgyal mtshan came to power). See Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 775–779, and Leschly 2007b.

1 Roerich 1978, pp. 200–202.

2 Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 14 and p. 41.

3 See Arguillère 2024a, "A King of Dharma," pp. 94–99.

Chapter 16: Other Tertöns in the Time of Rigdzin Gödem

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When Gödem was active, there were several other tertöns who played an important role in the development of the Nyingma tradition, such as Orgyen Lingpa (1326–*ca*. 1355),[1] Sangyé Lingpa (1340–1396),[2] or another one considered in some classifications to be one of the "five kingly tertöns,"[3] Dorjé Lingpa (1346–1405).[4]

In fact, Rigdzin Gödem's century can be considered the golden age of treasure discovery. Of course, this practice had been flourishing for centuries and is still alive today. However, the great terma corpora of the 14th century were certainly the last to have a truly formative influence on the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism. If the influence of Orgyen Lingpa and Sangyé Lingpa is visible in the final configuration of Padmasambhava's legend, so crucial to the definition of Nyingma

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1 Yar rje O rgyan gling pa is known principally for his revealed biographies of Padmasambhava, but in fact he also revealed, for example, a large *bKa' brgyad* cycle. See *Rin chen gter mdzod* 1976, vol. 23, pp. 209-429.

2 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 784-788.

3 A prediction attributed to Padmasambhava states that "There will be five kingly *gter ston*s and a thousand minor ones" (Kong *sprul*, 1976–1980, *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, RT A, p. 384). Nowadays, the classification of the *gter ston rgyal po lnga* is generally given as follows: 1. Nyang gral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192), 2. Guru Chos dbang (1212–1270), 3. rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405), 4. Padma gling pa (1445/50–1521), and Padma 'od gsal mdo sngags gling pa (a.k.a. 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po, 1820–1892). The list has varied over centuries, certainly in order to reflect shifts of the power balance among the rNying ma pas. For example, *gTer ston* Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan (an almost forgotten, late 13th–early 14th c. figure, discussed in our Volume 2 in the context of rGod ldem's search for the hidden lands) was once counted among the "five kingly tertöns" (see, e.g., Guru bKra shis 1990, p. 404: *'di gter ston gyi rgyal po lnga yi nang gi ya gyal gcig yin no*|). Another passage (Kong *sprul*, 1976–1980, *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, RT A, p. 393) mentions "five kingly *gter ston*s and three supreme emanations," in which case rGod ldem is placed among the latter, as being Padmasambhava's mind emanation (*thugs kyi sprul pa*). These lists should in any case not be taken for granted as stable rNying ma doctrines.

4 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 789-792. See also Gardner 2009 (https://treasuryoflives.org/biographies/view/Dorje-Lingpa/8750).

identity and the unification of its many streams, Rigdzin Gödem can be regarded as giving its more or less final form to the immense ritual synthesis of the *Eight Pronouncements*, in the vein of Nyangral and Chöwang's revelations. Pema Ledreltsal, Longchenpa, Rigdzin Gödem, and perhaps Dorjé Lingpa put the finishing touches on the Dzogchen Nyingthik, completing the uninterrupted Oral Tradition with their respective termas. Longchenpa's doctrinal and practical synthesis of the *Heart Drops* and the *Sangwa Nyingpo* established a framework for Dzogchen and tantra that was never bypassed by later generations and is still the norm in most of the Nyingma school today (the rest following Yungtönpa's commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo*, completed in the same vein by that of *Lochen* Dharmaśrī in the 17th century). What has been left to later generations in terms of doctrine, narrative, and practice seems less substantial in comparison: Ratna Lingpa's work of compiling the Nyingmapas' tantric canon, the systematization of the system for visionary practice in complete darkness in Dungtso Repa "the later"'s *Black Quintessence*, Ngari Paṇchen's doctrinal and ritual clarifications, Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal's first collection of terma lineages,[1] Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyaltsen's new approach to history, the founding of the great Nyingma monasteries by the Fifth Dalai Lama, the vast encyclopedic compilations of the Rimé movement in the nineteenth century, or the creation of a form of Nyingma philosophical scholasticism by Jamgön Mipham can, for sure, also be regarded as major achievements, but none of them, except perhaps Jamgön Mipham's new style in philosophy, was a truly major turn in terms of either doctrine or practice. This is why the 14th century is as crucial to the Nyingmapas as it is to other branches of the Tibetan religions.

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[1] From what we know of his biography, it is clear that *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal (1550–1603) was a systematic compiler of *gter ma* lineages. His prayer to all treasure revealers must have been designed for ritual transmission of the lineages he had collected. *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal is also known as a specialist in liturgical arrangements of *gter ma* materials. All this evidence points to the idea that he may have produced a *textual* compilation rather than merely a collection of *transmission lineage*—-a proto-*Rin chen gter mdzod*, so to speak. Indeed, it would not be surprising if a major compilation of the hidden treasures had been felt necessary in the sixteenth century, following Ratna gling pa's edition of the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* in the previous century. However, we have no remnants of such a corpus and no indirect evidence that it was ever produced, and Kong sprul does not seem to indicate that he was editing his own compilation on the basis of a pre-existing one. We will return to this issue in the relevant volume.

Although the life of Orgyen Lingpa (1326–*ca*. 1355) does not seem to be well documented, there is a wealth of biographical material available on Sangyé Lingpa (1340–1396)[1] and Dorjé Lingpa (1346–1405),[2] who are Rigdzin Gödem's exact contemporaries. A systematic study of these would certainly clarify many aspects of Gödem's life and activities.

As regards Gödem's great contemporary Dorjé Lingpa, as Alexander Gardner puts it:[3]

> Around this time Dorjé Lingpa originated the practice known as "public revelation",[4] in which an audience is invited to witness the extraction of the treasure object. In 1371, with three hundred people in attendance, he revealed treasure at Orgyen Yiblung Dekyiling, and again at Pungthang. (…)

Dorjé Lingpa's behavior is remembered as being quite wild:

> For example,[5] when visiting Barawa Gyeltsen Palzang[6] in the Shang valley, he was asked to dress the part of a respectable lama, for fear that the clerics who were gathering to welcome him would lose faith. Dorje Lingpa arrived in a procession with women in tiger and leopard masks, and proceeded to sing a song of realization the topic of which was the tantric erasure of conventional dualistic thinking.

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1 See, e.g., in Sangs rgyas gling pa 2006, *sPrul sku sangs rgyas gling pa'i gter 'byung chen mo*, vol. 1, pp. 1-22 and pp. 23-114.

2 See, e.g., in rDo rje gling pa 2010, vol. 2, pp. 35-48 (prayers to rDo rje gling pa in his successive rebirths and his last life as the *gter ston*); vol. 11, pp. 1-174: *sNgags 'chang ba rdo rje gling pas zab gter dang mjal ba'i gter 'byung rnam thar gter rabs rgya mtsho*; vol. 11, pp. 175-212: *rDo rje gling pa'i rnam thar thog mtha' bar gsum rgya mtsho lta bu las nye bar gsungs te dad ldan gsol ba 'debs pa'i rten du bkod pa*. Many other texts in this collection (his aforementioned songs, as well as question-and-answer texts [*dris lan*, e.g., vol. 12, pp. 1-258] showing his interaction with his contemporaries, plus *lo rgyus* texts in the *gter chos* proper) contain material that would be useful for a biography. Although the spiritual lineage of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was much stronger in later centuries than that of rDo rje gling pa, it is obvious that the details of the latter's life would be easier to reconstruct than those of the former.

3 Gardner 2009.

4 *Khrom gter*.

5 Gardner 2009.

6 'Ba' ra ba rGyal mtshan dpal bzang (1310–1391). A note could have been devoted in the present volume to this important bKa' brgyud master whose abundant works may have been very influent in his own time.

> Such songs[1] are a hallmark of Dorjé Lingpa's teaching, and many of them are preserved, written by multiple hands, in his collected works. For the next three decades he continued to teach, training numerous students including the Fourth Karmapa, Rölpé Dorjé (1340–1383). He passed away at the age of sixty, and his corpse is said to have remained without decomposing for three years. His family lineage, through is son Chöyingpa, continues in Bhutan.[2]

Karma Lingpa's[3] relative importance among all these treasure discoverers can be debated, but he is more directly relevant to us because his cycle *The Self-Liberated Contemplation of the Peaceful and Wrathful* [*Deities*] has become part of Dorjé Drak's liturgy, as opposed to the traditions that trace their origins to Orgyen Lingpa, Sangyé Lingpa, or Dorjé Lingpa.

He is the one who revealed what the *Bardo Thödröl*,[4] known in the West as *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. It would not be useful to describe the cycle to which this text belongs—*The Self-Liberated Contemplation of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities*—as it is known through Henk Blezer and Bryan Cuevas' studies.[5] Although it is (in the West) the most famous of all termas, very little is known about the tertön, and it is even difficult to date him.[6] We know nothing about the masters who trained him[7] nor the disciples who spread his teaching, and he was not otherwise in known contact with people that left a clear trace in history.

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1 The collection of rDo rje gling pa's works, revelations, and later tradition (rDo rje gling pa 2010) contains great many such songs.

2 Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas 2007, *gTer ston brgya rtsa*, in RT B, vol. 1, p. 109: *sku'i sras gnubs chen rnam 'phrul chos dbyings pa sogs las deng sang bar du mon phyogs su gdung rgyud mang du yod par snang* | .

3 Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 800-801. Blezer 2003 contains a rendering of traditional biographies, based on 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's *gTer ston brgya rtsa* (appendix 1, pp. 323-324). Cuevas 2003 contains a more detailed account of the history of Karma gling pa's revelations. However, even this very fine piece of historical research does not lead to a precise conclusion regarding Karma gling pa's birth and death dates.

4 *Bar do thos grol*. A section of the *Zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol*.

5 Blezer 2003 and Cuevas 2003.

6 The dates 1327–1387, found in some sources, seem to be based upon a lazy misreading of Düjom Rinpoché's (Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, p. 800) estimation, that he "was *born* sometime during the sixth cycle [24 January 1327 to 20 January 1387]." It is clear from all the elements gathered by Cuevas that Karma gling pa did not live for sixty years, but died young, when his father Nyi zla sangs rgyas was still alive and his son Nyi zla chos rje was just a few years old.

7 His main master must have been his father Nyi zla sangs rgyas (d.u.), who was himself a *gter ston*. According to Cuevas 2003, p. 92: "He appears to

The main (or official) lineage through which this cycle became amalgamated in the Dorjé Drak system is known through the prayers to the masters included in its liturgical adaptations, attested by the presence of a full volume (vol. 7, 498 pages) of *The Self-Liberated Contemplation of the Peaceful and Wrathful Deities* in a ritual collection supposed to contain the whole of Dorjé Drak liturgies.[1] From the reading of one such lineage prayers,[2] it seems that the incorporation of this lineage into the Dorjé Drak system was even later (18th century?) than generally claimed for other materials.[3]

Be that as it may, Karma Lingpa is mentioned here more as an element of historical background and because his body of revelations *later* became part of the Dorjé Drak system , rather than for anything relevant to Rigdzin Gödem's life. Karma Lingpa likely was born when Rigdzin Gödem was a middle-aged man or near the end of his life. There is no known evidence to believe that they were in contact, nor that Rigdzin Gödem even heard of Karma Lingpa.

It would however be interesting to understand why the masters of Dorjé Drak, quite late in the eighteenth century, found it useful to include Karma Lingpa's liturgies, presumably as funeral rituals, instead

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have been a student of the second Zhamarpa Khachö Wangpo (1350–1405), which would place him in the late fourteenth century." Traditional accounts make for the awkwardness of the chronology by attributing an extraordinary longevity (120 years) to Nyi zla sangs rgyas. It might be reasonable to shift Karma gling pa somewhat later than commonly assumed. Düjom Rinpoché's statement about the "sixth cycle" does not preclude that he may have been born very close to 1387.

1 *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor*. The Karma gling pa materials are found in vol. 7.

2 *Zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol gyi smin grol rgyab rten dang bcas pa'i brgyud tshul gyi gsol 'debs bdud rtsi'i gru char*, in *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor*, vol. 7, pp. 379-391.

3 The historical information value of the lineages presented in ritual texts should, however, never be regarded as undisputable documents about the time when a system was *first* introduced. An earlier lineage may be omitted when it is regarded as less prestigious, less complete, in favor of a later one perceived as offering better guarantees. Indeed, *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal (ca. 1550–1603) appears in transmission lineages for the Kar gling materials: see Cuevas 2003 (p. 148), where *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal appears to have received this lineage from 'Bri gung Rin chen phun tshogs (1509–1557). Since *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal's centrality for other components of what would become the *rDo rje brag lugs* is obvious, this is a hint of an earlier (undocumented) incorporation of this corpus in the rDo rje brag liturgies

of drawing from their own rich corpus.[1] The explanation cannot simply be that something was *objectively* missing in the Northern Treasures and had to be supplemented by foreign, imported elements.

The famous *Tibetan Book of the Dead* (with all the corrections Cuevas brought to the common Western perception of how it was actually used), although probably revealed during Gödem's lifetime, seems to have enjoyed a quite late fame in Tibet and, for whatever reason, did not become a dominant funerary system among the Nyingmapas until the mid-eighteenth century.

Hence, all this belongs to a much later historical stratum and may have been better placed in a further volume. However, to avoid inconvenient flashbacks when we will reach the point in the Northern Treasures history in which the two lineages merge and in order not to scatter information, we have chosen to present here the information found in the above-mentioned lineage prayer.

Karma Lingpa lineages in the Dorjé Drak System	
Karma Lingpa	
Nyida Sangyé	
Nyida Chöjé[2]	
Nyida Özer (1409–?)[3]	
Namkha Chö Gyatso (1430–*ca*.1499)[4]	
Thukjé Özer (d.u.)[5]	Sönam Özer (d.u.)[6]

1 As an example of a full-fledged Byang gter funeral liturgy, see Boord 2012. This book documents very accurately the relevant part of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's revelations and their later exegesis by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las, but it does not include a systematic discussion of whether they are still the dominant liturgies for the dead in a Byang gter context and about their possible concurrence with Kar gling liturgies.

2 Nyi zla chos rje (d.u.) was Karma gling pa's son.

3 Nyi zla 'od zer "was born in Longpo Tsikar in (…) 1409 or 1421" (Cuevas 2003, p. 122).

4 rGya ra ba Nam mkha' chos kyi rgya mtsho, "the first to systematize the Karling teachings and to institutionalize its liturgy" (Cuevas 2003, p. 123).

5 Thugs rje 'od zer. The branch starting with this figure is the one documented by Cuevas 2003 (e.g., p. 156) as the "Nedo Lineage."

6 bSod nams 'od zer. From him starts one of the branches of what Cuevas 2003 (e.g., p. 169) calls the "Dargye Chöding / Mindroling lineages." However, the last part of this chart shows that the whole of the lineages claimed

Buddha Maṅgala (d.u.)[1]	Sönam Palwa (d.u.)[2]
Künga Drakpa (d.u.)[3]	Jangchub Lingpa Sönam Chökyong (d.u.)[4]
Künga Tendzin (d.u.)[5]	
Tashi Wangchuk (d.u.)[6]	Natsok Rangdröl[7]
Pema Wangdrak (d.u.)[8]	*Thuksé* Küngadrak (d.u.)[9]
Karma Chakmé (1613–1678)[10]	Tendzin Drakpa (1536–1597)[11]
Pema Rigdzin (1625–1684)[12]	
?	Dongak Tendzin (1576–1628/48)[13]

by rDo rje brag for Karma gling pa's revelations have been passed through gTer bdag gling pa and his posterity.

1 A.k.a. *'Khrul zhig* Sangs rgyas bkra shis.

2 bSod nams dpal ba (Pu ñya śrī), whom Cuevas 2003, p. 164, calls an "obscure figure," although he mentions that he may have been a direct student of Nyi zla 'od zer, which leads him (*loc. cit.*) to the hypothesis that "the Sönam Özer listed in Terdak Lingpa's *Transmission Records* may actually have been Nyida Özer."

3 Kun dga' grags pa. See Cuevas 2003, pp. 165-166.

4 Byang chub gling pa bSod nams chos skyong. One of rTse le sNa tshogs rang grol's masters (Cuevas 2003, *loc. cit.*).

5 Kun dga' bstan 'dzin.

6 bKra shis dbang phyug.

7 If this is rTse le sNa tshogs rang grol, there must be something wrong in the dates—1605/1608–1677—generally given (e.g., by BDRC) for this figure. Cuevas writes (2003, p. 165): "In the wood sheep year 1535, when Tülku Natsok Rangdrol was forty-two years old…". This sNa tshogs rang grol was definitely active in the sixteenth, not in the seventeenth century and must have been conflated with another figure belonging to the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama. This requires further research.

8 [A nu] Padma dbang drag, Karma chags med's father.

9 *Thugs sras* Kun dga' grags.

10 Karma chags med. In the context of this lineage, see Cuevas 2003, pp. 153-157.

11 A.k.a. Yan pa blo bde. This figure is interesting for us because of his connections with some Northern Treasure masters, notably *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal.

12 rDzogs chen Padma rig 'dzin.

13 dGe mang *bla ma* mDo sngags bstan 'dzin, gTer bdag gling pa's grandfather. There is obviously a chronological inconsistency at this point in the prayer. It seems that the "Nedo Lineage" was merged into the "Dargye Chöding / Mindroling lineages" much later than mDo sngags bstan 'dzin, probably in the time of *gSang bdag* Phrin las lhun grub or his son gTer bdag

Trinlé Lhündrup (1611–1662)[1]
Vajrakṣara (Terdak Lingpa, 1646–1714)
Lochen Dharmaśrī (1654–1717/1718)[2]
Rinchen Namgyal (1694–1758)[3]
Gyurmé Gyatso (1686–1718)[4]
Orgyen Tendzin Drakpa (1701–1728)

The lineage continues for more generations with figures belonging to the same group. Although many in this chart are completely unknown (especially the first generations after Karma Lingpa, who appear in all the accounts of his successors, but are otherwise entirely obscure), it is clear that by the 18th century, all of this lineage belongs to the Mindröling milieu, certainly not far from Dorjé Drak, but outside of it.

We can thus safely conclude that the formal incorporation of Karma Lingpa's revelations into the Dorjé Drak system came very late, and we can therefore ignore them from this point on until we find them mentioned in some later biography. The general impression is that Karma Lingpa's current great fame belongs to the modern era, and although this state of affairs deserves to be studied, it is completely beyond the scope of the present volume.

ging pa, or that mDo sngags bstan 'dzin received it from some earlier master of the "Nedo Lineage."

1 *gSang bdag* Phrin las lhun grub, the son of mDo sngags bstan 'dzin, master and father of gTer bdag ging pa and *Lo chen* Dharmaśrī.

2 sMin gling *lo chen* Dharmaśrī.

3 sMin gling *khri chen* 03 Rin chen rnam rgyal.

4 Padma 'gyur med rgya mtsho, gTer bdag gling pa's second eldest son, one of the victims of the Dzungar invasion.

Conclusion

Jean-Luc Achard
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The present collective volume is the result of a comprehensive and meticulous examination of the religious tradition known as the Northern Treasures (*Byang gter*), which played a pivotal and significant role in the history of Tibet. Focusing primarily on the life and works of Rigdzin Gödem (1337–ca. 1401), alongside the rule of the successive Gungthang Kings, our research project on this lineage first introduced the milieu in which what was to become the Nyingma school of Tibetan Buddhism gradually took shape in the post-dynastic era (late 10th century or early 11th century). Despite the numerous conjectures that affect the vision that the academic world has of the historical roots of this tradition in the 8th century, there are elements that clearly indicate that it evidently did not spring out of nowhere during the post-dynastic era. It is concretely rooted in the original spread of Buddhism during a period of religious kings who favored its diffusion and laid the foundation for a sustainable implementation that would shape the entire cultural heritage of Tibetans. All subsequent developments of this ancient lineage are anchored in this foundational context. Retrospectively, this period became known as the Early Spread (*snga dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet, spanning from the late 7th or early 8th century to the collapse of the Yarlung dynasty in Central Tibet, either in 842 or 942 AD. It was followed by a brief "Age of Fragmentation" (*bsil ba'i dus*) during which the embers of this early diffusion gradually ignited the conditions for its revival. Concurrently, the misinterpretation of some crucial tantric points by Tibetan lamas served as a cause for the invitation of Indian paṇḍits during the so-called Later Spread (*phyi dar*), which started in the early 11th century. It is during this later phase (and probably even before) that references to rich and complex narratives connected to the imperial period and the Early Spread were elaborated, either on patent historical bases or on what some believe to be merely legendary accounts. Central to the present research project are figures such as Padmasambhava, Trisong Detsen, Nanam Dorjé Düdjom, and other prominent religious individuals of the dynastic period (8th-9th centuries) whose emanations were to play a decisive role in the later history of Tibet.

Following the collapse of the Yarlung dynasty, Buddhism experienced a period of decline until the advent of the Later Spread. However, it did not disappear entirely in the interim. While the monastic tradition indeed lost its royal support and was completely disbanded, some lay masters and practitioners were actively engaged in the task

of collecting the remnants of the early teachings, whose transmissions were supposedly maintained in an uninterrupted manner. These teachings are referred to as the "Kama" (*bKa' ma*), namely complex systems of instructions based on texts and cycles whose redaction is believed to date back to the golden age of the 8th century. Over time, this tradition was enriched and completed by a system of treasure revelations called "Terma" (*gTer ma*), i.e., individuals works or collections, as well as artefacts and other religious items said to have been hidden in sacred places in the 8th century and whose discoveries were announced in prophetic guides. The origins of this revelatory tradition generally trace back to Padmasambhava who was assisted by some of his disciples. According to the traditional narratives recounting the origins of the lineage that is the focus of the present research, Padmasambhava is said to have played a key role in hiding some books in a sacred sanctuary atop Mount Zangzang Lhadrak, "The Divine Rock of Zangzang." Subsequently, in 1366, these scriptures were unearthed by an individual predestined for this task, named Rigdzin Gödem. He was also regarded as an emanation of Nanam Dorjé Düdjom, one of Padmasambhava's main disciples. As we have seen, because of the location of the discovery, in the district region of Jang ("North") Ngamring, the corpus that was revealed there came to be regarded as making up the early tradition of the "Northern Treasures" (*Byang gter*).

Investigating the pre-history of this lineage has proven crucial to understanding the later developments essentially discussed in the present volume. From this perspective, exploring the rich and complex narratives of this pre-history provided a solid foundation for generating significant insights into the later, post-dynastic tradition itself. Hence, these accounts linking back the lineage to the early days of the pre-Nyingma school effectively bridge the gap between what some see as the mythic past of this lineage and its more documented and datable history, underscoring the fluidity between legendary narratives and historical events in a manner so characteristic of the post-dynastic Tibetan culture.

From this angle, Rigdzin Gödem's life story unquestionably portrays him as a seminal figure for the whole Nyingma tradition. His contributions to this lineage through the revelation of numerous scriptures have enriched it to such an extent that the Northern Treasures could very well be considered *ab initio* as a self-sustaining, fully-fledged system centered upon Mahā, Anu, and Atiyoga teachings. Later contributors, both authors and tertöns, added to the original corpus of works, gradually modelling this tradition into a school in its own right. Thus, the system of the Northern Treasures progressively shaped its destiny, evolving over time from a lay foundation—most evidently relying on small hermitages—to the building of sizable

monastic institutions such as the famed establishment of Dorjé Drak (rDo rje brag), founded in 1632 AD by Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo (1580–1639).

Thus, by the 12th century, grand narratives such as that of Padmasambhava were clearly established, weaving together real historical elements into a cohesive story. In all likelihood, during its elaboration, this complex account combined together a wide variety of sources and stories, and inevitably incorporated blatant anachronisms. Blurring the lines between facts and embellishments, the strict chronological accuracy was eventually obscured into a unified discourse in which pivotal figures started to appear in a light that probably outshines their original features. A good example of this happens to be Nanam Dorje Düjom who plays a seemingly excessive role in this narrative.

In contrast, Nubchen Sangye Yeshe emerges as a personage of far greater significance than previously acknowledged by both traditional and academic historians. His influence clearly extends beyond the Anuyoga tradition with which he is often nearly exclusively associated, or that of the Yamāntaka systems as preserved in the Nyingma tradition.

Another crucial element that should definitely be taken into account in reviewing the early formation of what was to become the Nyingma School was the importance of the teachings received in India in the 10th century by Zurpoche's father (Zur Shérab Jungné). It is evident that the early diffusion of these teachings had a deeper impact on the legacy of this tradition at the time it started to elaborate its own history and to establish its doctrinal tenets on a firmer ground.

In this perspective, it would not be superfluous to reassess the role played by lesser-known tertöns that got lost in a nearly-total historical obscurity but may possibly have not been insignificant in their own time. Among those who could warrant a definite reappraisal of their literary contributions are Sarben Chokmé, Tseten Gyeltsen (about whom more will be said in vol. 2), and evidently Rinchen Lingpa whose role has been oddly undermined in later sources. On this topic, the intrigue surrounding the cycle of the *Khandro Nyingthik* deserves a closer examination to trace out how it was eventually transcribed and codified. The biographical material associated with great contemporaries of Gödem, such as Sangyé Lingpa, Dorjé Lingpa, and later on Ratna Lingpa, are also sources that would deserve in-depth researches in their own right.

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The period in which Gödem lived and the patronage he expected from the Gungthang kings—according to several prophetic statements—do

not accurately mirror the state of affairs as it unfolded in 8th century Tibet when king Trisong Detsen officially supported the diffusion of Buddhism. Rather, Gödem was confronted with repeated difficulties and a limited patronage which eventually led him to concretely move his religious activities towards the southern border of Tibet. Nonetheless, his spiritual legacy flourished through the active diffusion of the early teachings he had revealed. The Northern Treasures system, like probably all other lineages of the Nyingma tradition, can be thought of as a tree, with its seeds firmly grounded in the royal period, its roots and main trunk developing into a remarkably coherent corpus from the mid-14th century onwards, and its branches and leaves continuously growing to this day, providing the tradition with an abundant and lush leafage that ensures its long-term survival.

His immediate heirs and spiritual descendants played a considerable role in the development of his tradition, with five early specific lineages that branched out, including *inter alia* those of the son, of the nephew, and so on. A century later, with patriarchs such as Setön Pema Wangchen (15th c.), the Northern Treasures can be regarded on the religious scene of Tibet as an already perfectly organized school with its own history, its own canon, and so on. These particular themes will be the focus of the next volume of our research project.

Appendix 1: Pönsé Khyungö Tsal and his identification with Rigdzin Gödem

Jean-Luc Achard
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In his *Biographies of a Hundred Treasure Revealers*,[1] Kongtrül has proposed to identify several tertöns of the Bön tradition with discoverers from the Nyingma school. In a sense, this is quite in line with his famous "non-sectarian" (*ris med*) approach and, in some very specific cases, should not come as a surprise. If some of these identifications are well-known and do not generate particular chronological issues, others are quite problematic and difficult to confirm. We need only think of a few key figures who themselves claim to belong to both traditions and even provide the specific names they have in each line of transmission, to realize that Kongtrül did not necessarily tread on marshy ground.[2] However, and given the delicate nature of the task, some of the identifications proposed by Kongtrül are difficult to reconcile not only with the chronology but also with the respective revelations of these tertöns.[3]

In the context that concerns us here, the case of identification proposed by Kongtrül is that of Pönsé Khyungö Tsal (dPon gsas Khyung rgod rtsal, b. 1175) and Rigdzin Gödem. First of all, it is clear that their respective dates totally invalidate this identification. Especially since, for once, the Bön chronology does not seem to pose any particular

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1 Kong sprul 2007, *gTer ston brgya rtsa'i rnam thar*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*, New Delhi: Sechen ed., vol. 1, (pp. 341-765): p. 434.

2 This is the case, for example, with rDo rje gling pa, who affirms that his name in the Bön tradition is Bon zhig g.Yung drung gling pa, although the Bon pos generally give different dates for him. Thus, rDo rje gling pa is said to have lived from 1346 to 1405, while g.Yung drung gling pa is said to have been born in 1228. In the light of Samten Karmay's research, it seems that the Bön chronology needs to be corrected (Karmay 2007, pp. 188, 217-219). However, it is still difficult to explain the discrepancy between their respective birth dates, which differ in terms of elements and animals. In general, such discrepancies can be neutralized by adding or subtracting one or more sexagesimal cycles. In the present case, rDo rje gling pa's birth year is a *me pho khyi*, while g.Yung drung gling pa's is said to have been a *sa pho byi*.

3 Some of these identifications have been taken up by others, such as the 11th Situpa, Padma dbang mchog rgyal po (1886–1952), including that of rGod ldem and *dPon gsas* Khyung rgod rtsal. See Padma dbang mchog rgyal po 2007, *Rin chen gter yi chos mdzod chen mo'i rtogs brjod ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i 'byung gnas*, in RT-B, vol. 2, p. 541.

problem with Pönsé Khyungö Tsal.[1] Admittedly, while both are associated with a Northern Treasures (*byang gter*) system, the various events making up the narration of their respective lives, as well as their individual revelations, are too different to justify them being one and the same person.

Given his encyclopedic knowledge of the teachings of Bön (through his original affiliation with that tradition) and those of the Nyingmapa lineages, it is certain that Kongtrül had access to the works of these two masters, and one is therefore entitled to ask what has motivated the identification he proposes. It is certainly not their revelations, since these do not overlap and therefore do not present intertextual elements that would be obvious at first sight. Hence, if we exclude the purely literary and doctrinal elements, we are actually left with very little in common except the association of these two masters with a tradition of the Northern Treasures and the presence of the term *rgod* (vulture) in their names. This is, to say the least, a rather meagre justification for their identification.

What probably prompted Kongtrül to make this identification is the fact that both tertöns discovered treasures on Zangzang Lhadrak, although their dates are clearly incompatible. Moreover, despite having been excavated on the same mountain (though apparently in different caves), Pönse's discovery is not explicitly discussed by later historians such as Shardza Rinpoche as belonging to the corpus of the Northern Treasures, but is rather defined in its own terms as the *Pönsema* (*dPon gsas ma*) revelation. These elements do not appear in the narratives surrounding Gödem.

Another element to take into account are the Buddhist *termas* revealed by Pönsé Khyungö Tsal which provide a possible reason motivating Kongtrül's position. In the Bön tradition, Pönsé Khyungö Tsal is famous for a series of eight notable Treasures,[2] among which the most important one is certainly *The Six Rituals of the Oral Transmission* (*sNyan brgyud chog drug*), a very unusual Dzogchen cycle centered upon the *8th century figure Drenpa Namkha.[3] There is no mention of such a cycle in the Rigdzin Gödem revelations of termas. And in the same vein, there is no mention of the *Gongpa Zangthal*, Gödem's most

[1] His date of birth (as far as I know we do not have the year of his death) fits relatively well with A zha Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1198–1263) who was one of his main disciples.

[2] See Achard 2024a, "A Brief Note," *passim*.

[3] Another very famous revelation of his is the *Dran pa gsang sgrub*. Dran pa nam mkha' was originally a Bon master who eventually converted to Buddhism and became one of Padmasambhava's twenty-five disciples. However, the modern Bon tradition recognizes three Dran pa nam mkha'-s, although the two oldest ones are probably not historical figures.

famous revelation, within the corpus discovered by Pönsé Khyungö Tsal. Therefore, if we compare their respective discoveries, we can only conclude that there is no overlap. This is not what one would expect if the two tertöns were one and the same person.[1]

Other elements which indicate that they are different individuals include the fact that Pönsé Khyungö Tsal appears in a very famous lineage of transmission within the Bön tradition, known as the lineage of the *Experiential Transmission from Zhangzhung* (*Zhang zhung nyams rgyud*).[2] There is no mention of this in Gödem biography, which is not very explicit regarding his training in Dzogchen teachings.[3] As far as I have been able to figure, there is no mention of Bön in Gödem's biography, even though he revealed texts from a sacred mountain which is considered as "treasure sanctuary" in the Bön tradition itself. Again, if these two masters were the same person, there would be some tangible elements showing up on this topic. From the collection of the Gödem treasure revelations as they are compiled in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*, it would appear that Gödem has no work associated with Bön, whereas Khyungö Tsal had indeed revealed Buddhist termas which the later Bön tradition lists as containing four main treasures, namely:

— *The Manifest Realization of Vajrasattva* (*rDo rje sems dpa'i mngon rtogs*),
— *The Practice of Vajrapāṇi* (*Phyag rdor gyi sgrub pa*),
— *The Methods for Curing Leprosy* (*Bro nad gso thabs*), and
— *The Practice of Guru Drakpo* (*Gu ru drag sgrub*).[4]

Before briefly turning to a few more blatant details, if we limit the investigation to their respective terma revelations, it can be pointed out that their lists of treasures show no common works and that if Pönsé Khyungö Tsal did indeed reveal both Bön and Nyingma termas, Gödem seems to have revealed only treasures related to the Nyingma tradition. Limiting the investigation to the system of the Great Perfection,

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1 In the case of an obvious identity, one would expect to find in their biography statements indicating that as a Bon po, he discovered specifically Bon cycles, while as a rNying ma pa, he discovered other works affiliated with this tradition.

2 It is redundantly spelt *rgyud* instead of *brgyud*, an endemic rendering in Bon texts.

3 On rGod ldem elliptic formation in rDzogs chen, see Arguillère 2024a, "A King of Dharma."

4 So far, I have not been able to identify any of these works among the various editions of the Bon *brTen 'gyur* or in rNying ma collections at my disposal.

upon examining Pönse's revelation of Dzogchen works (on pp. 271-273 of his biography), it appears that there is no mention of the *Gongpa Zangthal*, the central Great Perfection treasure of the Gödem tradition. It would be impossible to justify this absence if the two personages were the same individual, in particular given the rather "non-sectarian" (*ris med*) environment that is prevalent in the biography.[1]

If there is an ecumenic interest in conflating the two personalities into a single individual, this can however be easily dismissed by comparing the names of their birthplaces and those of their respective parents, the name the tertöns received at birth or by which they are also known, and the place where they discovered their respective treasures.

	Pönsé Khyungö Tsal	**Rigdzin Gödem**
Birthplace	Chimé Drekhyung[2]	Namolung[3]
Father	Yilbön Dorseng[4]	Lopön Düdül[5]
Mother	Gyagar Sal, Lady of Gurub[6]	Jocham Sönam Khyeudren[7]
Name given at birth	Dorje Pal[8]	Ngödrup Gyaltsen[9]
Place of discovery	Drakphuk Tselkhama[10]	Unnamed cave on Zangzang Lhadrag[11]

1 Hostility to Bon is however clearly evident in the attitude of some Buddhist toward Bon in several passages of the text, even though Bon and Chos treasures are treated on a par in the biography (p. 268.3). For the actual biography itself, see *dPon gsas kyi rnam thar*, in bsTan 'dzin rnam dag 1972, *Sources for a History of Bön*, pp. 245-275.

2 sPyi smad dres khung.

3 Na mo lung.

4 dByil bon rDor seng (rDo rje seng ge).

5 *Slob dpon* bDud 'dul or Srid bdud 'dul dpal (Herweg 1994, p. 54).

6 Gu rub mo rGya gar gsal.

7 *Jo lcam* bSod nams khye'u 'dren.

8 rDo rje dpal.

9 dNgos grub rgyal mtshan. This is possibly not the name he received at birth but rather the name by which he was also known throughout his life.

10 Brag phug mtshal kha ma.

11 For a summary of this revelation based on a first-hand account, see Achard 2023a.

We know that the treasures discovered by Gödem were also conceived as supports of the local royalty, that is to say the dynasty of the kings of Gungthang, an element which does not appear in any way in the revelations of Pönsé Khyungö Tsal.

All in all, it is evident that Kongtrül's approach is not overly whimsical, given that many tertöns have belonged to both Bön and the Nyingmapa tradition, not only in a spirit of doctrinal openness but also in a perspective that encompasses local needs, namely the ritual requirements imposed by the necessities of life: rituals for the dead, for the protection of children, for the abundance of crops, to fight against disease, and ultimately for individual realization. It is therefore not surprising that tertöns reveal texts from both traditions. However, the identification proposed by Kongtrül between Pönsé Khyungö Tsal and Rigdzin Gödem is incorrect and undoubtedly based on obvious contradictory elements.

Appendix 2: Timeline (dates mentioned in this volume)

609/623	Beginning of the reign of Songtsen Gampo
650	End of the reign of Songtsen Gampo
740/755	Beginning of the reign of Trisong Detsen
ca. 777	Birth of Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo
797	End of the reign of Trisong Detsen
ca. 815	Beginning of the reign of Ralpachen
838	End of the reign of Ralpachen; beginning of the reign of Langdarma
842	End of the reign of Langdarma
844	Birth of Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé (the date of his death is unclear, maybe quite late in the 10th c.)
978	Birth of Rinchen Zangpo
982	Birth of Atiśa
992	Birth of Drokmi Lotsāwa
ca. 997	Birth of Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk
1000	Birth of Marpa Chökyi Lodrö
1002	Birth of Zurpoché Sākya Jungné
1014	Birth of Zurchungwa Sherab Drakpa
ca. 1016	Birth of Gya Zhangtrom
1023	Birth of Ngok Chödor
1028	Birth of Milarepa
ca. 1050	Birth of Chegom Nakpo
1052	Birth of Dzeng Dharmabodhi
1054	Death of Atiśa
1055	Death of Rinchen Zangpo
1062	Death of Zurpoché Śākya Jungné
ca. 1072/1074	Death of Drokmi Lotsāwa
1074	Death of Zurchungwa Sherab Drakpa. Birth of Drophukpa (Zurwön) Śākya Sengé
1079	Birth of Gampopa

1081	Death of Marpa Chökyi Lodrö
1085	Birth of Rechungpa
1090	Death of Ngok Chödor
1097	Birth of Zhangtön Tashi Dorjé
1110	Birth of Karmapa I Düsum Khyenpa
1111	Death of Milarepa
1120 (not before —)	Death of Chegom Nakpo
1121	Death of Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk
1123	Birth of Lama Zhang Tsöndrü Drakpa
1124	Birth of Nyangral Nyima Özer
1134/1135	Death of Drophukpa (Zurwön) Śākya Sengé
1151/1130	Birth of Künzang Dorjé (compiler of *The Vajra Bridge of the Space Section*)
1153	Death of Gampopa
1158	Birth of Khepa Nyibum
1161	Death of Rechungpa
1162	Birth of Genghis Khan
1167	Death of Zhangtön Tashi Dorjé
1168	Death of Dzeng Dharmabodhi
1171	Birth of Namkha Pal (a son of Nyangral Nyima Özer)
1173	Birth of Trophu Lotsāwa Jampa Pal
1175	Birth of Pönsé Khyungö Tsal
1192	Death of Nyangral Nyima Özer
1193	Death of Karmapa I Düsum Khyenpa and of Lama Zhang Tsöndrü Drakpa
1196	Birth of Guru Jober
1198	Birth of Azha Lodrö Gyeltsen
1202	Birth of Trülshik Sengé Gyabpa
1204	Birth of Karmapa II Karma Pakshi
1212	Birth of Guru Chöwang
1213	Death of Khepa Nyibum

1225	Death of Trophu Lotsāwa Jampa Pal
1227	Death of Genghis Khan, during the conquest (and destruction) of the Tangut (Xi Xia) Kingdom
1229	Birth of Orgyenpa Rinchen Pal
1231	Death of Guru Jober
1235	Birth of Chögyal Phakpa
1238	Death of Namkha Pal (son of Nyangral Nyima Özer)
1239	Godan Khan orders the first armed Mongol incursion into Tibet
1243	Birth of Melong Dorjé
1244	Sakya Paṇḍita accepts the summon to Godan Khan's court
1263	Death of Azha Lodrö Gyeltsen
1265	Death of Trülshik Sengé Gyabpa
1266	Birth of Kumarādza
1270	Death of Guru Chöwang
1280	Death of Chögyal Phakpa
ca. 1280	Birth of Zur Jampa Sengé
1283	Death of Karmapa II Karma Pakshi
1284	Birth of Yungtönpa Dorjepal and Karmapa III Rangjung Dorje
1289	Birth of Meban Rinchen Lingpa
1290	Birth of Butön Rinchendrup and Gyalsé Lekpa. Destruction of Drikung Til by Mongol forces allied to Sakya
1291	Birth of Pema Ledreltsal
1292	Birth of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen
1294	Birth of Drölmawa Samdrup Dorjé and Sazang Mati Paṇchen
1302	Birth of Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen
1303	Death of Melong Dorjé
1308	Birth of Longchenpa
1309	Death of Orgyenpa Rinchen Pal

1310	Birth of Barawa Gyeltsen Palzang
ca.1310	Death of Zur Jampa Sengé
1311	Rinchen Lingpa finds his first terma in Koro Drak including the prophetic guide for the *Khandro Nyingthik* which he gives to Pema Ledreltsal
1312	Birth of Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltsen and of the Gungthang king Tri Tashidé
1314	Rinchen Lingpa unearths his second large terma, including *The Self-Sufficient Perfect Principle*
1319	Death of Pema Ledreltsal
1321	Rinchen Lingpa meets Pema Ledreltsal in a dream and receives a prophecy about the *Khandro Nyingthik* and the Rāhula cycle.
1323	Birth of Yarjé Orgyen Lingpa
1326	Longchenpa begins his studies in Sangphu
1331	Gyalsé Lekpa teaches the *Khandro Nyingthik* to Karmapa III Rangjung Dorjé
1332	Karmapa III Rangjung Dorjé leaves to Mongolia. Longchenpa quits Sangphu
1333	Beginning of the rein of the Yuan emperor Toghon Temür (Huizong)
1334	Longchenpa meets Kumarādza
1337	Birth of Rigdzin Gödem
1338	Birth of the Gungthang king Phüntsok Pal
1339	Death of Karmapa III Rangjung Dorje
ca.1339	Longchenpa gets a complete copy of the *Khandro Nyingthik* from Özer Gocha
1340	Birth of Sangyé Lingpa and Karma pa IV Rölpé Dorje
1343	Death of Kumarādza
1346	Birth of Dorjé Lingpa according to traditional chronologies
ca. 1348	Birth of Rendawa Zhönnu Lodrö
ca. 1349	Longchenpa secures close links with Drikung Gomchen Künrin and restores the Zhé Lhakhang

1350	Birth of the second Zhamarpa Khachö Wangpo
1352	Birth of Lotsāwa Drakpa Gyaltsen
1352	Longchenpa composes his commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo*
1354	Longchenpa goes to exile in Bhutan
ca. 1355	Death of Yarjé Orgyen Lingpa
1357	Birth of Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa
1358	Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen obtains from Sakya the seal of power over the thirteen myriarchies and the Yuan Emperor grants him the title of Tai Situ
ca.1360	Longchenpa returns from exile
1361	Death of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen
ca. 1361/1365	Birth of Thangtong Gyalpo
1363	Death of the Gungthang king Tri Tashidé
1364	Death of Longchenpa, of Butön Rinchendrup and of Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen
1365	Death of Yungtönpa Dorjepal
1366	Death of Gyalsé Lekpa
1366	Rigdzin Gödem opens the Zangzang Lhadrak cave
1368	Death of Meban Rinchen Lingpa
1370	Death of the Yuan emperor Toghon Temür (Huizong)
1370	Death of the Gungthang king Phüntsok Pal
1371	Birth of the Gungthang king Sönam Dé
1375	Death of Drölmawa Samdrup Dorjé and Lama Dampa Sonam Gyaltsen
1376	Death of Sazang Mati Paṇchen
1383	Death of Karma pa IV Rölpé Dorje
1391	Death of Barawa Gyeltsen Palzang
1392	Birth of Gö Lotsāwa Zhönnu Pal
1396	Death of Sangyé Lingpa
1401	Most probable date for Rigdzin Gödem's death
1403	Birth of Ratna Lingpa

1404	Death of the Gungthang king Sönam Dé
1405	Death of Dorjé Lingpa, Lotsāwa Drakpa Gyaltsen and of the second Zhamarpa, Khachö Wangpo
ca. 1409 / 1421	Birth of Nyida Özer (a master in the Karma Lingpa line)
1412	Death of Rendawa Zhönnu Lodrö
1419	Death of Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa
1428	Birth of Śākya Chokden (Serdok Paṇchen)
1430	Birth of Namkha Chö Gyatso (a master in the Karma Lingpa line)
1441	Birth of Zhalu Lotsāwa Dharmapālabhadra
1445 or, more probably, 1473	Birth of Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen (father of Lekdenjé and Ngari Paṇchen)
1450	Birth of Pema Lingpa
ca. 1452	Birth of Lekdenjé
1476	Birth of the second Dalai Lama, Gendün Gyatso
1478	Death of Ratna Lingpa
1480	Birth of Tennyi Lingpa
ca. 1480/1485/1486	Death of Thangtong Gyalpo
1481	Death of Gö Lotsāwa Zhönnu Pal
1487	Birth of Ngari Paṇchen
ca. 1499	Death of Namkha Chö Gyatso (a master in the Karma Lingpa line)
1507	Death of Sākya Chokden (Serdok Paṇchen)
1509	Birth of Drikung Rinchen Phüntsok
1512	Another possible date of birth for Lekdenjé
1521	Death of Pema Lingpa
1527	Death of Zhalu Lotsāwa Dharmapālabhadra
1535	Death of Tennyi Lingpa
1536	Birth of Tendzin Drakpa (Yenpa Lodé, a master in the Karma Lingpa line)
1542	Death of Ngari Paṇchen

1542	Death of the second Dalai Lama, Gendün Gyatso
ca. 1550	Birth of Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal (a.k.a. Chögyal Wangpödé)
1552	Birth of Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyaltsen
1557	Death of Drikung Rinchen Phüntsok
1558	Death of Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen
ca. 1565	Death of Lekdenjé
1575	Birth of Tāranātha
1576	Birth of Dongak Tendzin
1580	Birth of Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo
1587	Birth of Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé
1589	Birth of Yolmo tertön Tendzin Norbu
1597	Death of Tendzin Drakpa (Yenpa Lodé, a master in the Karma Lingpa line)
ca. 1602	Death of Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal
ca. 1605/1608	Birth of Tselé Natsok Rangdröl
1611	Birth of Sangdak Trinlé Lhündrup
1617	Birth of the Fifth Dalai Lama
1624	Death of Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyaltsen
1625	Birth of Dzogchen Pema Rigdzin
ca. 1628/48	Death of Dongak Tendzin
1639	Death of Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo
1640	Birth of Tertön Garwang Dorjé
1641	Birth of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé
1642	The Fifth Dalai Lama controls Tibet
1643	Death of Tāranātha
1644	Death of Yolmo tertön Tendzin Norbu
1646	Birth of Terdak Lingpa
1650	Death of Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé
1654	Birth of Lochen Dharmaśrī
1655	Birth of Taksham Nüden Dorjé

1662	Death of Trinlé Lhündrup
1677	Death of Tselé Natsok Rangdröl
1682	Death of the Fifth Dalai Lama
1684	Death of Dzogchen Pema Rigdzin
1685	Death of Tertön Garwang Dorjé
1686	Birth of Gyurmé Gyatso (son of Terdak Lingpa)
1694	Birth of Rinchen Namgyal (Minling Trichen III)
1701	Birth of Orgyen Tendzin Drakpa
1708	Death of Taksham Nüden Dorjé
1714	Death of Terdak Lingpa
1717–18	Dzungar invasion
1717	Death of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé
ca. 1717	Death of Lochen Dharmaśrī
1718	Death of Gyurmé Gyatso (son of Terdak Lingpa)
ca. 1719	Birth of Rigdzin Kalzang Pema Wangchuk
1728	Death of Orgyen Tendzin Drakpa
1729/30	Birth of Jigmé Lingpa
1758	Death of Rinchen Namgyal (Minling Trichen III)
ca. 1770	Death of Rigdzin Kalzang Pema Wangchuk
1798	Death of Jigmé Lingpa
1802	Birth of Khordong Terchen Nüden Dorjé
1808	Birth of Paltrül Orgyen Chökyi Wangpo
1820	Birth of Khyentsé Wangpo
1835	Birth of Düjom Lingpa
1845	Birth of Gönpo Wangyal of Khordong
1846	Birth of Ju Mipham Namgyal Gyatso
1856	Birth of Lerab Lingpa (Tertön Sögyal)
1864	Death of Khordong Terchen Nüden Dorjé
1878	Birth of Thekchok Tendzin
1885	Birth of Tsültrim Zangpo (Tülku Tsullo)
1886	Birth of Pema Wangchok Gyalpo (Situpa XI)

1887	Death of Paltrül Orgyen Chökyi Wangpo
1888	Birth of Bāḥné Choktrül Do-ngak Shedrub Gyaltsen
1892	Death of Khyentsé Wangpo
1904	Death of Düjom Lingpa. Birth of Dudjom Rinpoché.
1912	Death of Gönpo Wangyal of Khordong and of Ju Mipham Namgyal Gyatso
1926	Death of Lerab Lingpa (Tertön Sögyal)
1933	Birth of Khenpo Jigmé Phüntsok
1936	Birth of Rigdzin Chenmo X Thubten Jigmé Namdrol Gyatso
1949	Death of Thekchok Tendzin
1952	Death of Pema Wangchok Gyalpo (Situpa XI)
ca.1957	Death of Tsültrim Zangpo (Tülku Tsullo)
1964	Death of Bāḥné Choktrül Do-ngak Shedrub Gyaltsen
1966	Beginning of the Cultural Revolution
1976	End of the Cultural Revolution
2004	Death of Khenpo Jigmé Phüntsok
2024	Death of Rigdzin Chenmo X Thubten Jigmé Namdrol Gyatso

Appendix 3: Table of Equivalences

A Ford to the Ocean of Maṇḍalas	*'Dus pa'i mdo'i bdang gi cho ga khrigs su byas pa'i dkyil 'khor gyi rgya mtsho'i 'jug mngogs* by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las
Ame Sherab Lodrö	A mes Shes rab blo gros (d.u.)
Aural Lineage of [Mundane] Individuals[1]	*Gang zag snyan brgyud*
Batönpal or Gatönpal	*Bla ma* sBa *ston* dpal / rGa *ston* dPal (ba)
Biographies for the Sūtra Initiation Lineage, The —	*'Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar dad pa'i phreng ba by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las*
Black Dawn, The —	*'Char kha nag po*
Blue Annals, The —	*Deb ther sngon po*
Bön	Bon
Buddha Maṅgala	*'Khrul zhig* Sangs rgyas bkra shis (d.u.)
Butön Rinchen Drub	Bu *ston* rin chen grub (1290–1364)
Changmapa, Lama —	*Bla ma* lCang ma pa (d.u.)
Chegom Nakpo	lCe *sgom* nag po (*ca.* 1050?–*ca.* 1120?)
Chetsenkyé, the Abbot from Druzha	Bru zha*'i mkhan po* Che btsan skyes (d.u.)
Chetsün Sengé Wangchuk	lCe *btsun* Seng ge dbang phyug (ca. 997–1121)
Chögyal Phakpa	*Chos rgyal* 'Phags pa (1235–1280)
Chögyalkyong, Abbot —	*mKhan po* Chos rgyal skyong (d.u.)
Chökyi Jungné (8th Situ)	Chos kyi 'byung gnas (Si tu 08, 1700–1774)
Chökyi Lodrö	Chos kyi blo gros (d.u.)
Chöyingpa	Chos dbying pa (d.u.)
Contemplative transmission of the Victors[2]	*rGyal ba dgongs brgyud*
Dampa Gyertön	*Dam pa* dGyer *ston* (d.u.)
Dampa Yasé Repa or Yasé Chenpo	*sPrul sku* Dam pa ya se (d.u.)
Dangma Lhüngyal	lDang ma lhun rgyal (d.u.)

[1] Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991's translation (e.g., p. 456).

[2] This is our translation. However, in this volume, the phrase occurs only with reference to Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991 who translate it (e.g., p. 447) as "the intentional lineage of the Conquerors."

Dawa Münsel	Zla ba mun sel (a.k.a Me long rdo rje, 1243–1303),
Densatil Monastery	gDan sa thil
Deva, The "Minister of Religion" (or "pious minister') —	*Chos blon* De ba (d.u.)
Dharmaketu, Chökyi Gyaltsen	Chos kyi rgyal mtshan (d.u.)
Diamond Bridge of the Oral Transmission	*Klong sde'i rdo rje'i zam pa*
Dingri	Ding ri
Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen	Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1292–1361)
Dongak Tendzin	dGe mang *bla ma* mDo sngags bstan 'dzin (1576–1628/48)
Dorjé Gyalpo	rDo rje rgyal po (d.u.)
Dorjé Lingpa	rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405)
Dorjebum, Lotön —	Lo *ston* rDo rje 'bum (d.u.)
Draklungpa Rinchenpal	Brag lung pa (*mkhas btsun*) Rin chen dpal (= Rin chen gling pa?)
Drakpa Gyaltsen, King —	Grags pa rgyal mtshan, *Mi dbang* — (1374–1432)
Drakpa Özer	Grags pa 'od zer (d.u.)
Dralté Sambhoṭa	Bral te Sambho ṭa (d.u.)
Drangben Tashidar	Gangs *ban* bKra shis dar (d.u.)
Drikung Gomchen Künrin	'Bri khung *sgom chen* Kun rin, also known as Kun dga' 'od zer rin chen (d.u., 14th c.)
Drikung Til	'Bri gung thil
Drikungpa(s)	
Drokmi Lotsāwa	'Brog mi *lo tsā ba* (992–1072/74)
Drölmawa Drotön Samdrup Dorjé	rTa nag sGrol ma ba bSam grub rdo rje (1294–1375)
Drophukpa (*zur wön*) Śākya Sengé	sGro phug pa (Zur *dbon*) Śā kya seng ge (1074–ca. 1134).
Drubtop Lhünpal	*Grub thob* lHun dpal (d.u.)
Druzha	Bru zha
Düjom Lingpa	bDud 'joms gling pa (1835–1904)
Dzeng Dharmabodhi	'Dzeng *sgom* Dharmabodhi (1052–1168)
Five forefathers (of Sakya)	*Gong ma lnga* (*sa skya* —)
Flamboyant Sphere of Clarity, The —	*Klong gsal 'bar ma*
Flaming Razor of Ultimate Repelling, The —	*Yang zlog me'i spu gri*, or *Yang zlog nag po*
Gampopa	sGam po pa, (1079–1153)
Gangpa Rikarwa	Gangs pa Ri dkar ba (d.u.)
Gangpa Śākbum	Gangs pa Śāk 'bum (d.u.)
Garab Dorje	dGa' rab rdo rje (d.u.)
Gartön Rinchenbum	mGar *ston* Rin chen 'bum (d.u.)
Garwang Dorjé	Gar dbang rdo rje (1640–1685)

Gathering of Intentions, The —	*mDo dgongs 'dus*
Gö Lotsāwa Zhönnu Pal	'Gos *lo tsā ba* gZhon nu dpal (1392–1481)
Great Image, The —	*Bee ro'i 'dra 'bag* or *Bee ro'i 'dra 'bag chen mo*
Great Secret Commentary on Yangdak	*Yang dag gsang 'grel chen po* or *dPal khrag 'thung chen po'i sgrub thabs yang dag grub pa* ascribed to Padmasambhava
Guru Jober	*Gu ru* Jo 'ber (1196–1231)
Gya Zhangtrom	rGya zhang khrom rDo rje 'od 'bar (11th century)
Gyaben Lama	rGya *ban bla ma* (d. u.)
Gyal Lhakhang	rGyal lha khang
Gyalsé Lekpa	*rGyal sras* Legs pa (1290–1366)
Gyalwa Zhangtön Tashi Dorjé	Zhang *ston* bkra shis rdo rje (1097–1167)
Gyatön Lodrö Jangchub	rGya *ston* Blo gros byang chub (d. u.)
Gyertön Jomé	dGyer *ston* Jo me (d. u.)
Gyurmé Gyatso	Padma 'gyur med rgya mtsho (1686–1718)
Heart Drops (of Dzogchen)	*sNying thig*
Hidden treasures	*gTer ma*
Iron Scorpion	*lCags sdig*
Iron-Like	*lCags 'dra*
Jalgyiphu	Jal gyi phu
Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen	'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1445/1473–1558)
Jangchub Lingpa Sönam Chökyong	Byang chub gling pa bSod nams chos skyong (d.u.)
Jangsem Kunga	*Byang sems* kun dga' (d. u.)
Jigmé Lingpa	'Jigs med gling pa, ca. 1729–1798
Jomo Menmo	*Jo mo* sMan mo (1248–1283)
Kadam	bKa' gdams
Kagyü	bKa' brgyud
Kalden Chökyi Sherab	*sKal ldan* Chos kyi shes rab (d.u.)
Kama	*bKa' ma*
Karma Chakmé	Karma chags med (1613–1678)
Karma Kagyü	Karma bka' brgyud
Karma Pakshi	Karma pakshi (1204–1283)
Ketsewa, Bönpo —	Ke rtse ba (d.u.)
Khachö Wangpo, Zhamarpa 02	Zhwa dmar mKha' spyod dbang po (1350–1405)
Khandro Yangtik	*mKha' 'gro yang tig*
Khepa Nyibum	*mKhas pa* Nyi 'bum (1158–1213)

Khepa Sochenpo	*mKhas pa* Sro chen po, *mKhas pas* Sre chen po, *Bla ma* Sro, So *ston* Shes rab rgyal mtshan
Khön (clan)	'Khon
King of Zahor	Za hor rgyal po (d.u.)
Koro Drak of Drithang	'Bri thang Kho ro brag
Kumarādza	Ku ma rā dza (1266–1343)
Künga Drakpa	Kun dga' grags pa (d.u.)
Künga Tendzin	Kun dga' bstan 'dzin (d.u.)
Küntuzangpo	Kun tu bzang po
Kyemé Jokyab	sKye med Jo skyabs (d.u.)
Kyitön Jamyang Drakpa Gyaltsen	sKyi *ston* 'Jam dbyangs grags pa rgyal mtshan (d.u.)
Kyotön Śākya Yeshé	sKyo *ston* Śā kya ye shes (late 11th cent.?)
Lachen Ralbu	*Bla chen* Ral bu (d.u.)
Lama Dampa Sönam Gyaltsen	*Bla ma dam pa* bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1312–1375)
Lamp for the Eye of Contemplation	*bSam gtan mig sgron* by gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes
Langdarma	Glang dar ma (r. 838–842)
Langdrö Chepatak	Lang gro'i Chad pa ltag
Later Spread	*sPyi dar*
Lekdenjé	Legs ldan rje (1452/1512–ca. 1565)
Lhajé Nubchung	*lHa rje* gNubs chung (d.u.)
Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé	*lHa btsun* Nam mkha' 'jigs med (1587–1650)
Lochen Dharmaśrī	sMin gling *Lo chen* Dharmaśrī (1654–ca. 1717)
Loden Sherab, *Gyalsé* —	Blo ldan shes rab, *rGyal sras* — (d.u.)
Lodenma, *Ngadak* —	*mNga' bdag* Blo ldan ma (d.u.)
Longchen Rabjam	Klong chen rab 'byams (1308–1364)
Mañjuśrī King of [*Occult*] *Science Nāgarakṣa*	*'Jam dpal rigs pa'i rgyal po na ga ra kṣa*, a *gter ma* of Rin chen gling pa
Mañjuśrī Master of Life	*'Jam dpal tshe bdag*
Marpa	Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros (1000–1081)
Mawochok	sMra bo lcogs
Melong Dorjé	Me long rdo rje (1243–1303)
Metön Gönpo	Mes *ston* mGon po (late 12th-early 13th cent.), a.k.a. Me *ston* Shes rab mgon po
Milarepa	Mi la ras pa (1028–1111)
Mother tantras	*Ma rgyud*
Muné Tsenpo	Mu ne btsan po (r. 797?–799?)
*Muni*s, the six —	Thub pa drug
Namkha Chö Gyatso	rGya ra ba Nam mkha' chos kyi rgya mtsho (1430–*ca*.1499)

Namkha Dorjé	Nam mkha' rdo rje
Namkha Pal	Nam mkha' dpal (1171–1238)
Namkha Palden, Kongchen —	Kong chen Nam mkha' dpal ldan
Natsok Rangdröl	sNa tshogs rang grol (d.u.)
Ngadak Drogön	*mNga' bdag* 'Gro mgon (d.u.)
Ngakchang Wangdar	*sNgags 'chang* dBang dar (d.u.)
Ngari	mNga' ris
Ngari Paṇchen Pema Wangyal	mNga' ris *paṇ chen* Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542)
Ngödrup Palden, Lama —	*Bla ma* dNgos grub dpal ldan (d.u.)
Ngok Chödor	rNgog Chos rdor (1023–1090)
Nub Khulungpa Yönten Gyatso	gNubs khu lung pa Yon tan rgya mtsho, a.k.a. gTer bzhad rtsal
Nub Yeshé Gyatso	gNubs Ye she rgya mtsho
Nubchen Sangyé Yeshé	gNubs *chen* Sangs rgyas ye shes (844–first half of the 10th cent.)
Nyag Jñānakumāra	gNyags Dzñā na ku mā ra (d.u.)
Nyang Tingdzin Zangpo	Myang Ting nge 'dzin bzang po (born ca. 777?)
Nyentön Sherab Tsemo	gNyen *ston* Shes rab rtse mo (d.u.)
Nyida Chöjé	Nyi zla chos rje (d.u.)
Nyida Özer	Nyi zla 'od zer (1409–?)
Nyida Sangyé	Nyi zla sangs rgyas
Nyima Zangpo	Nyi ma bzang po, Se *ston* — (1386–?)
Nyoshül Khenpo	sMyo shul *mkhan po* 'Jam dbyangs rdo rje (1932–1999)
Orgyen Lingpa	Yar rje O rgyan gling pa (1323–ca. 1355)
Orgyen Tendzin Drakpa	O rgyan bstan 'dzin grags pa (1701–1728)
Orgyen Yiblung Dekyiling	O rgyan yib lung bde skyi gling
Orgyenpa Rinchen Pal	O rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1229–1309)
Özer Gocha	'Od zer go cha (maybe the same person as *rGyal sras* bZod pa grags pa)
Padrotsal	sPa sgro btsal
Path with Its Fruit, The —	*Lam 'bras*
Pema Ledreltsal	Padma las 'brel rtsal (1291–1319)
Pema Lingpa	Padma gling pa (1450–1521)
Pema Rigdzin	rDzogs chen Padma rig 'dzin (1625–1684)
Pema Sal	Padma gsal (d.u.)
Pema Wangdrak	A nu Padma dbang drag (d.u.)
Penyul (region)	'Phan yul
Phakmodrupa(s)	Phag mo gru pa
Poisonous Bronze Tree, The —	*Khro chu dug sdong*

Profound Quintessence	*Zab mo yang tig* by Klong chen pa
Pungthang	sPungs thang
Rabtu Salwa, The "great master" —	*Slob dpon chen po* Ra btu gsal ba (d.u.)
Ralpachen	Ral pa can (ca. 802–838)
Rangjung Dorjé (Karmapa III)	Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339)
Ratna Lingpa	Ratna gling pa (1403–1478)
Rechungpa	Ras chung pa (1085–1161)
Reting	Rwa sgreng
Rinchen Gyalpo, Lama —	*Bla ma* Rin chen rgyal po (d.u.)
Rinchen Gyaltsen Palzangpo	Rin chen rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po
Rinchen Namgyal	Rin chen rnam rgyal, sMin gling *khri chen* 03 (1694–1758)
Rinchen Saldrön	Rin chen gsal sgron (d.u.)
Rinchen Sengé, *Tönpa* —	*sTon pa* Rin chen seng ge (d.u.)
Rinpungpa	Rin spungs pa
Ripa Sanggyepal	Ri pa Sangs rgyas dpal
Rölpé Dorjé	Rol pa'i rdo rje (Karma pa 04, 1340–1383)
Sakya	Sa skya
Sakya Paṇḍita Kunga Gyaltsen	Sa skya *paṇ ḍi ta* Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251)
Sakyapa(s)	Sa skya pa
Sangyé Lingpa	Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396)
Sarben Chokmé (tertön)	Sar *ban* Phyogs med (d.u.)
Sarben Nyimé Nyingpo	Sar *ban* Nyi ma'i snying po (d.u.)
Sarma	*gSar ma*
Se (or Ame) Dorjé Dechen	*Sras* rDo rje bde chen or A mes rDo rje bde chen (d.u.)
Secret Black Moon Tantra	*Zla gsang nag po*
Self-Liberated Contemplation of the Peaceful and Wrathful [*Deities*], *The* —	*Zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol*
Self-Sufficient Perfect [*Principle*], *The* —	*A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* or *A ti chig chod kun grol*, Rin chen gling pa's main rDzogs chen *gter ma* cycle
Setön Rinchen Gyaltsen	Se *ston* Rin chen rgyal mtshan
Shangpa Repa	Shangs pa *ras pa*, sometimes called Shong pa *ras pa* (d.u.)
Shezangdrön	She bza' sgron, *Jo mo* — (d.u.)
Single [*Principle*] *That Liberates All, The* —	*A ti chig chod kun grol* or *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*, Rin chen gling pa's main rDzogs chen gter ma cycle, also known as *The Self-Sufficient Perfect* [*Principle*]
Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyaltsen	Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624)

Sokpo Pal gyi Yeshé	Sog po dPal gyi ye shes (d.u.)
Sokyadewa	*dGe slong* So kya de ba (d.u.)
Sönam Özer	bSod nams 'od zer (d.u.)
Sönam Palwa	bSod nams dpal ba (Pu ñya śrī, d.u.)
Songtsen Gampo	Srong btsan sgam po (ca. 609/623–650)
Symbolic Lineage of the Awareness Holders[1]	*Rig 'dzin brda brgyud*
Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen	Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1364)
Taklungpa(s)	sTag lung pa, sTag lung bka' brgyud
Tashi Wangchuk	bKra shis dbang phyug (d.u.)
Teachers, the twelve —	*sTon pa bcu gnyis*
Tendzin Drakpa	bsTan 'dzin grags pa, a.k.a. Yan pa blo bde (1536–1597)
Terdak Lingpa	gTer bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646–1714)
Terma	*gTer ma*
The Peaceful and Wrathful Deities: Self-Liberated Contemplation	*Zab chos zhi khro dgongs pa rang grol* (*gter ma* of Karma gling pa)
The Poisonous Razor of the Fierce Planetary Spirit	*gZa' rgod dug gi spu gri* (*gter ma* of Padma las 'brel rtsal)
Thogar Namkhadé	Tho gar Nam mkha' sde (d.u.)
Three Padlens, The —	dPal ldan gsum
Thukjé Özer	Thugs rje 'od zer (d.u.)
Thukjé Rinchen, Nyötön —	gNyos *ston* Thugs rje rin chen (d.u.)
Thukjé Sengé, Gyatön —	rGya *ston* Thugs rje seng ge (d.u.)
Thuksé Küngadrak	*Thugs sras* Kun dga' grags (d.u.)
Trinlé Lhündrup	*gSang bdag* Phrin las lhun grub (1611–1662)
Trülshik Sengé Gyabpa	*'Khrul zhig* Seng ge rgyab pa (1202–1265)
Tsalpa(s)	Tshal pa, Tshal pa bka' brgyud
Tsang	gTsang
Tsangpo (river)	gTsang po
Tsetang palace	rTse thang
Tsongkhapa	Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419)
Tsuklak Palgé	gTsug lag dpal dge, *Slob dpon* — (d.u.)
Ü	dBus
Uninterrupted Oral Tradition of the Nyingmapas[2]	*rNying ma bka' ma*

[1] Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991's translation (e.g., p. 456).

[2] This term could either refer to the more abstract notion of all the teachings that were passed from generation to generation without ever being hidden

Uninterrupted Oral Tradition	*bKa' ma*
Uyuk	U yug
Vairocana (of Bagor, the translator)	Ba gor Bee ro tsa na (d.u.)
Vasudhara	Bha su dha ra, *Bal po* — (d.u.)
Wangchuk Gyaltsen, *Bende* —	*Ban de* dBang phyug rgyal mtshan (late 13th–early 14th century)
Wheel of Black Leprosy (tantra)	*mDze nag las kyi 'khor lo*
Yangdak Heruka	Yang dag he ru ka (deity)
Yeshé Zhönnu	Ye shes gzhon nu (d.u.)
Yeshegön, Lama —	*Bla ma* Ye shes mgon (d.u.)
Yönten Gangpa	Yon tan sgang pa / *Rin po che* Yon tan sgang pa (d.u.)
Yönten Gyatso, Dartön —	'Dar *ston* Yon tan rgya mtsho (d.u.)
Yudra Nyingpo or Gyalmorong	rGyal mo g.Yu sgra snying po (d.u.)
Yungtönpa Dorjepal	g.Yung *ston pa* rDo rje dpal (1284–1365)
Zabmo Yangtik	*Zab mo yang tig* by Klong chen pa
Zabtön Chöbar: see Zhangtön Chöbar	Zab *ston* Chos 'bar; sometimes spelled Zab don Chos 'bar
Zhalu Monastery	Zhwa lu dgon
Zhangtön Chöbar	Zhang *ston* Chos 'bar (1053–1135)
Zhangtön Tashi Dorjé	Zhang *ston* bKra shis rdo rje (1097–1167)
Zhé Lhakhang	Zhwa'i lha khang
Zhijé	Zhi byed
Zhingshakpa	Zhing shag pa Karma tshe brtan (?–1599)
Zhutön Sönam Śākya	Zhu *ston* bSod nams śā kya (d.u.)
Zöpa Drakpa, Gyalsé —	*rGyal sras* bZod pa grags pa
Zur Jampa Sengé	Zur Byams pa seng ge (ca. 1280–ca 1310)
Zur nag 'khor lo	Zurnak Khorlo (late 11th-early 12th century)
Zurchungwa Sherab Drakpa	Zur chung ba Shes rab grags pa (1014–1074)
Zurpoché Śākya Jungné	Zur po che Śākya 'byung gnas (1002–1062)

and rediscovered as *gter ma* (but in this case we preferred the phrase "Uninterrupted Oral Tradition"); or to various collections of the relevant literature compiled at least from the time of gTer bdag gling pa, the most recents of which are commonly called *rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa*. See bibliography.

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