

From Ordinary Mortals to Lofty Parinirvāṇa: A Study of the *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* *

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0. Preamble

he tenth volume of *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs* (BDRC#W2PD17457, hereafter CNT) contains a series of eight *tshe sgrub* texts (see Table 1 below).

§	Title [fols.]	§	Title [fols.]
1.	<i>bKa' brgyad kyi tshe dbang yongs rdzogs</i> [5 fols.]	5.	<i>Tshe'i phyi sgrub</i> [3 fols.]
2.	<i>sGrub pa chen po dang 'brel ba'i tshe sgrub yongs rdzogs</i> [4 fols.]	6.	<i>Tshe'i nang sgrub</i> [2 fols.]
3.	<i>Tshe'i phrin las</i> [5 fols.]	7.	<i>Tshe sgrub Hrī: gcig ma</i> [2 fols.]
4.	<i>Tshe'i bstod byang bkol ba</i> [2 fols.]	8.	<i>Yang gsang nam mkha'i rdo rje</i> [2 fols.]
Total 25 fols.			

Table 1 — Series of eight texts in the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar* cycle

These eight vignettes belong to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's (ca. 1337–1401, BDRC#P5254)¹ *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar* cycle.² The present study therefore provisionally designates this compilation of *tshe sgrub* literature—comprising twenty-five folios edited for liturgical recitation (*bklags chog tu bkod pa*)³—as the *bKa' brgyad tshe*

* An earlier version of this paper was presented at the First Byang gter Conference (Paris 2024), where participants' scholarly discussions proved invaluable. I acknowledge with gratitude Prof. Arguillère, Prof. Valentine, and Dr. Ducher, who offered their precious *tshe* (time and life) to enhancing the final submission through their expertise. All remaining shortcomings are entirely my responsibility.

¹ For Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's date as “ca. 1337–1401”, see Batsang & Valentine (forthcoming).

² For an early discussion of the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar* tantra, see Neumaier 1970: 134, which references its classificatory framework as presented in the *Thu'u bkwan grub mtha'*. For the latest relevant study, see Arguillère 2026 in this special issue of the *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*.

³ For the term *bklags chog tu bkod pa*, see RT *gyi dkar chag dang brgyud yig*, 203,3: *bka' brgyad rang shar gyi chos sde tshe lha yongs rdzogs kyi dbang/ gter gzhung phyi nang gsang ba yang gsang hrīh gcig ma yongs rdzogs sgrub thabs pra brtags rnam dang/ phrin las dbang bskur bcas bklags chog tu bkod pa*.

sgrub (Longevity *Sādhana* of the Eight Pronouncements).⁴

Transcending the boundaries of such *chos sde* cycles, the *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* (KT) shares four core sections (sections §§5–8, highlighted in grey in Table 1 above) with two other longevity *sādhana*s attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can: (1.) the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* (CD) and the (2.) *Phyi nang gsang ba'i tshe sgrub* (PNST).⁵ As the Venn diagram below (Figure 1) demonstrates, these four common sections—Phyi/Nang/gSang/Yang gsang (Outer/Inner/Secret/Most Secret)—can be understood as a systematic framework of *tshe sgrub* practices encompassing gradual development from "lower" tantric practices such as *rasāyana* (elixir extraction, *bcud len*) to advanced practices of deceiving death (*'chi bslu*), culminating in the vidyādhara level of Mahāmudrā.

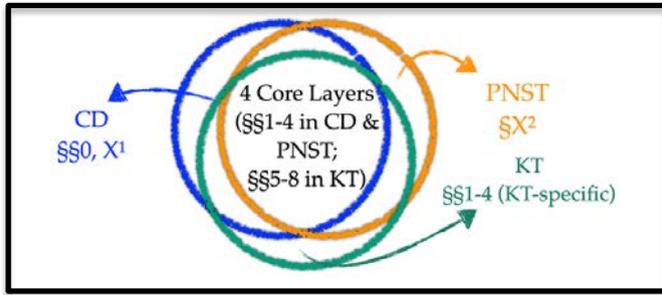


Figure 1 — Common 4 Core Layers and Distinctive Elements in the CD, PNST, and KT

The non-shared distinctive sections that protrude in the Venn diagram above (e.g., KT, §§1–4), beyond these four core layers, should be treated as secondary revelations appended to the archetypal core of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's revelations during various later periods. For instance, sections containing the *bla ma brgyud* lineage (PNST, §5=X² and KT, §1) can hardly be considered revelations by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can. As shall be examined more thoroughly in Chapter 2.2 of the present study, the form of this transmission lineage—developed through quotations from the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*—is presumed to have been formalised around the sixteenth century. The natural tendency of these later developments to seek attribution to the pristine

⁴ For the catalogue reference of the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, see *CNT Vol. 10 dKar chag*, 3,3f. and *bKa' brgyad rang shar Catalog*, vol. 2, nos. 16–23, where all these eight vignettes are listed as independent texts. In contradistinction, the *RT gyi dkar chag dang brgyud yig*, 203,3f., does not present detailed content specifications, a matter which shall be elucidated later in Chapter 2.2. The *'Bras spungs dkar chag* includes the *Tshe bsgrub lcags sdong ma* (#010168, p. 904), yet no title corresponding to the KT *per se* has been located.

⁵ For a structural comparison between CD and PNST, see Shinga 2024: 429–431.

authentic revelation may be understood as manifestation of the genuine devotion of lineage holders to the great *gter ston*. However, the inflated attribution of authorship concentrated upon the great *gter ston* has progressively obscured the contours of the archetypal *gter ma* literature that constitutes Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's own revelations.⁶

What follows is an attempt to present and discuss three focal points concerning the *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*: (1.) the developmental four-layered structure of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's archetypal core, (2.) the two major transmission lineages hitherto known, and (3.) the Indic-cum-Sanskrit equivalents of the term *tshe sgrub/bsgrub*.⁷ Through this methodological approach of distinguishing Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's revelations from later accretions, the present study seeks to illuminate the Indic equivalent of the *tshe sgrub* terminology he employed and contribute to the ongoing scholarly discourse concerning the term **nopika*.

1. The Stratified Corpus of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's Tshe sgrub

From a philological perspective, the shared four core layers identified in the Venn diagram above (Figure 1) exhibit substantial discrepancies between recensions, manifesting as diverse traditions concerning the nomenclature and sequence of the gSang sgrub and Yang gsang sections (see Table 2 below).

Text	sigla	Edition	gSang sgrub	Yang gsang
CD	CD_A	gNas chung (W23453)	<i>Nam mkha'i rdo rje</i>	<i>Hrīḥ gcig ma</i>
	CD_B	RT_A (mTshur phu)	<i>Hrīḥ gcig ma</i>	<i>Nam mkha'i rdo rje</i>
	CD_C	RT_B (dPal spungs)		
	CD_D	CNT		
PNST	PNST	Yol mo bla ma rDo rje (W27870)	<i>Nam mkha'i rdo rje</i>	<i>Hrīḥ gcig ma</i>
KT	KT_A	CNT	<i>Hrīḥ gcig ma</i>	<i>Nam mkha'i rdo rje</i>
	KT_B	RT_B (dPal spungs)		
	KT_C	RT_A (mTshur phu)		

Table 2 — gSang sgrub and Yang gsang across the recensions of CD, PNST and KT

The gNas chung xylographic edition (CD_A) and the PNST manuscript preserve the sectional sequence "gSang sgrub: *Nam mkha'i rdo rje* → Yang gsang: *Hrīḥ gcig ma*" (highlighted in grey in Table 2).⁸

⁶ Authorship in *gter ma* literature is, as is well known, problematic; for one recent discussion see Shinga 2023: 172–173, i.a. 172n48.

⁷ Note that the present study renders the term *rgya gar skad* as "Indic-cum-Sanskrit" or simply "Indic".

⁸ To be precise, the PNST manuscript does not contain the Yang gsang section per se, but rather encompasses two distinct iterations of gSang sgrub—namely, (1.)

Conversely, all RT editions transmit the sequence "gSang sgrub: *Hrīḥ gcig ma* → Yang gsang: *Nam mkha'i rdo rje*". Adding to this complexity, the CNT editions diverge amongst themselves: the CNT edition of the CD (CD_D) follows the former arrangement, while the CNT edition of the KT (KT_A) adheres to the latter.

How should such pronounced discrepancies between recensions be interpreted? What must be considered here is the fact that the CNT edition of the KT (KT_A) exhibits a sectional structure fundamentally distinct from the two RT editions (KT_B and KT_C), transcending mere terminological variations. The computer-inputted modern CNT edition comprises 25 folios (i.e. 50 pages) with 8 pages dedicated to sectional frontispieces across all eight sections (§§1–8). In contrast, the xylographic RT edition contains 21 folios (42 pages) with merely 2 pages devoted to sectional frontispieces.⁹ The RT editions thus appear considerably less organised than the CNT edition. Such extensive structural divergences suggest that the CNT edition belongs to a distinct transmission lineage from the RT editions.¹⁰ While conclusive evidence regarding the base text for the CNT version remains elusive, it would be untenable—at least for the KT—to regard the CNT edition as a revised version of the RT edition. From a philological standpoint, the Byang gter rdo rje brag lugs benefits from the "textual transmission" (*tshig gi brgyud pa*) preserved through the diligent efforts of 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899, BDRC#P264). However, the transmission preserved in the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo* (RT), an anthology (*phyogs bsgrigs*), remains subsidiary compared to mainstream traditions such as the CNT edition.

Returning to the question concerning nomenclature and sequence within the gSang sgrub and Yang gsang sections, in the absence of

gSang sgrub: *Nam mkha'i rdo rje* and (2.) gSang sgrub: *Hrīḥ gcig ma*. While it might appear rhetorically apposite to reorganise this duplication by designating the latter as Yang gsang rather than repeating the gSang sgrub classification, such is not the case herein. Nevertheless, the sequential arrangement exhibited in this manuscript (i.e., *Nam mkha'i rdo rje* → *Hrīḥ gcig ma*) may, ipso facto, be considered a noteworthy historical testimonium.

⁹ These two pages read respectively as follows: (1.) KT_B, 297,1; KT_C, 295,1: *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar las: 'chi med tshe lha yongs rdzogs kyi tshe'i phyi sgrub*, (2.) KT_B, 313,1; KT_C, 311,1: *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar las: tshe lha yongs rdzogs kyi phrin las smin byed dang bcas pa padma'i rgyan phreng*.

¹⁰ The divergent placement of the *Tshe'i pra brtag pa* chapter (KT, §X) between CNT and RT editions constitutes compelling evidence for separate transmission lineages. This chapter appears at the end of §2 in the CNT version (KT_A, 475,5f.)—though I have yet to verify this in the *bKa' brgyud rang shar* catalogue—while the RT editions position it at the conclusion of *sGrub pa chen po dang 'brel ba'i tshe sgrub yongs rdzogs* (KT_B, 311,1f.; KT_C, 309,1f.). Combined with systematic variant readings (*pra* versus *bkra*—my ongoing edition adopts the RT reading *pra*), this provides *prima facie* evidence for independent transmission lineages.

definitive evidence regarding the archetypal *gter ma* revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can, any hypothesis remains conjectural. Future investigation of the biographical texts concerning himself as well as his teachers may illuminate this issue. Meanwhile, the present study maintains the hypothesis "Yang gsang: *Hrīḥ gcig ma* → gSang sgrub: *Nam mkha'i rdo rje*" as preserved in the Them byang section of both the gNas chung block edition and the RT edition of the CD.¹¹

1.1. Four Nuclei Evolutionis:
From *Phyi* (Outer) to *Yang gsang* (Most Secret)

While trans-sectarian testimonies attest to the longevity *sādhanas* revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can in various historical genres such as *rnam thar* and *gsan yig* literatures, the specific characteristics of individual longevity *sādhanas* remain insufficiently explored.¹² As evidenced by the typical merit (*yon tan*) "so that at the time of death, in the Western Pure Land, one will be born before Amitābha ('Od dpag med)",¹³ these practices may represent either a tributary or mainstream current within Tibetan Pure Land thought. However, whether their sources can be traced back to Indic originals remains an unresolved question (discussed in detail in Chapter 3.1).

In the following, I shall provide an attempt to examine the similarities and differences within four developmental cores shared

¹¹ See CD, §0.3.1. See also Shinga 2020: 54, which discusses that the section nomenclature "gSang sgrub: *Nam mkha'i rdo rje* → Yang gsang: *Hrīḥ gcig ma*" seems to be reasonable in the CD.

¹² Much of the *tshe sgrub* literature attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can appears, in my current assessment, to bear some connection to the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* (CD). The NGMCP catalogue records approximately twenty extant texts related to the CD, yet transforming these into *capta* presents considerable difficulties—an *opus arduum*, to borrow the Roman expression. The '*Phrin las padma'i 'phreng ba* serves as a case in point. While the NGMCP catalogues the "Author Name" of this *dbu med* manuscript (Microfilm #L 1134/5, in part) as "gTer ston bZang po grags pa", this attribution is, as Valentine 2023 has argued, unlikely. The colophon in my ongoing critical edition identifies Rig 'dzin rGod ldem as the revealer of this text. The question of authorship for his *tshe sgrub* literature is, however, complex: this text appears to represent a later development, reformulated as "an accessible, medium-length extraction" (*khyer bde bar 'bring du bskar ba*) from the CD, which I take to be his authentic revelation. As this example demonstrates, his *tshe sgrub* literature reminds us of the limitations of our present understanding as we proceed with scholarly humility.

¹³ See KT_A, 499,1 (§6. Nang sgrub); KT_B, 301,3; KT_C, 299,3:

'das tshe nub phyogs bde ba can:

'od dpag med kyi spyang sngar skye:

Note that while the KT explicitly specify rebirth in the presence of Amitābha in the western Pure Land of Sukhāvati, the CD merely employs the expression "born in the land of Sukhāvati", see CD, §2.8.1: *bde ba can gyi zhing du skye:*

between the *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* (KT) and the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* (CD), thereby giving a general overview of the diverse conceptions within the *tshe sgrub* literature attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can. Do his *tshe sgrub* texts differ from those of earlier *gter stons* such as Myang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192, BDRC P364) or Gu ru Chos kyi dbang phyug (1212–1270, BDRC P326)? If so, what accounts for these differences? To what extent can we detect the influence of **Āyuhśādhana*s translated from Indic language into Tibetan during the fifteenth century within Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's *gter ma* literature? This analysis aims to provide philological evidence that may inform future scholarly investigations.

1.1.1. Outer Sādhana (*Phyi sgrub*)¹⁴

The Outer Sādhana elements common to both KT and CD texts notably emphasise creating an immortality elixir (*bcud len*; Skt. *rasāyana*) through precise measurements of various materials, including *cong zhi* calcite and *brag zhun* mineral extracts. In the CD, the instructions for the preparation of the elixir are more elaborate, specifically detailing nine nutritive substances (e.g. *'bri mar* and *sbrang rtsi*) rather than the simpler formula found in the KT.¹⁵ Both texts share some common elements in their promised benefits, such as achieving the qualities of various animals (lion, elephant, peacock, and garuḍa), but the CD provides a more systematic explanation of these benefits and includes additional details about overcoming six types of death (*chi ba drug po*) and specific signs of accomplishment.

The ritual visualization aspects are more developed in the CD, with specific instructions about using five skull-cups possessing the proper characteristics (*mtshan ldan thod pa lnga*) and detailed visualizations of the five Buddhas in union with their consorts. The ritual instructions in the KT are comparatively simpler, though both emphasise the importance of proper mantra recitation. The eschatological element—namely, concern over the degraded conditions of the final five hundred years (*lnga brgya tha ma*)—forms a principal ideological foundation of *tshe sgrub* literature and appears consistently in both

¹⁴ Regarding the Outer Sādhana (*Phyi sgrub*) in the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, I should note that the term *no pi ka* appearing in the Indic title merits particular attention and I shall attempt to analyse it in detail in Chapter 3.

¹⁵ The pharmacological aspects also differ notably. While both texts discuss the preparation of medicinal substances, the CD provides more precise measurements and timing for gathering ingredients, particularly regarding the seasonal collection of four types of plants (e.g., *shug pa*). It also includes more detailed instructions about the proper times for consumption and dietary restrictions.

texts.¹⁶ Both texts ultimately aim to achieve longevity through this *tshe sgrub* text. The KT describes direct ritual practice and elixir preparation, while the CD provides a more comprehensive system including more detailed colophon information about its discovery as a treasure text, and a broader cosmological context.

1.1.2. Inner Sādhana (Nang sgrub)

Second, in the Inner Sādhana (Nang sgrub), the sādhakas recite the longevity dhāraṇī/mantra (CD: *sngags*; KT: *tshe yi snying po*) several hundred times daily to achieve two merits—(1.) attaining a lifespan of one hundred years and (2.) being reborn in Sukhāvātī (CD: *bde ba can gyi zhing*; KT: *nub phyogs bde ba can: 'od dpag med kyi spyan sngar*) after death. These Sukhāvātī-related terms pertain to the divine realms of immortals—the domains where siddhas of the *tshe sgrub* dwell after death upon achieving the deathless state of parinirvāṇa. However, as far as I can tell at this point, the precise nature of these realms has not yet been thoroughly examined. ‘The word-cum-name’ (Almogi 2020)¹⁷ Sukhāvātī in the *tshe sgrub* corpus ascribed to Rig ’dzin rGod ldem can requires further investigation in relation to his other revelations that belong to the *bde smon* genre.¹⁸

A key difference lies in the dhāraṇī-cum-mantra. The KT contains a shorter mantra of longevity (*tshe yi snying po*) *Om, Aḥ, Hūṃ, Hrīḥ, vajra*

¹⁶ See KT_A, 500,1 (§6. Nang sgrub); KT_B, 302,1; KT_C, 300,1:

bskal pa dus kyi tha ma la: mi rnams tshe thung snying rus chung : de dus tshegs chung sgrub sla myur: tshe sgrub kun gyi don bsdu nas: bdag 'dra padmas gter du sbas. For the importance of concealing *gter ma* in the context of *snyigs ma lnga yi tshe* (the age of the five degenerations) within the CD, see Shinga 2020: 69–73.

¹⁷ The expression ‘word-cum-name’ is taken from Almogi 2020, which presents a recent comprehensive study on the different usages and meanings of term “Akaniṣṭha” in the rNying ma sources and their Indic predecessors. I think her observation regarding Akaniṣṭha (‘Og min), as stated below, could be extended to Sukhāvātī (bDe ba can) as well. See Almogi 2020: 30: ‘[...] in the course of time one also witnesses an increasing number of occurrences of the word-cum-name Akaniṣṭha, particularly in later (Tantric) literature, where it is clearly no longer employed in the sense of a “location” within the Buddhist cosmology, but is rather used to express varying aspects of Buddhist philosophical ideas and praxes’.

¹⁸ Regarding the term *bde ba can*, a detailed comparative study of the *bDe ba can gyi smon lam* and the *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* would prove illuminating, though this remains a desideratum for future research. In the *Jōdokyō Tenseki Mokuroku* (2011), Keikyo Nakamikado (中御門敬教) observes that the *bDe ba can gyi smon lam: Zab lam dbang gyi cha lag* draws its content from the Larger and Smaller Sukhāvātīvyūha sūtras, with no discernible tantric elements present (p. 88). My own provisional assessment suggests that the *bDe ba can gyi smon lam*, traditionally ascribed to Rig ’dzin rGod ldem can, may represent a later textual development from his *tshe sgrub* corpus.

āyuse, *Hūṃ*, *Bhrūṃ*, *Nṛ*, *Jah*, *siddhi phala*, *Hūṃ*, *Āḥ*,¹⁹ while the CD includes a longer *dhāraṇī* beginning with *Om namo bhagavate aparimitāyurjñāna-suviniścitatejorājāya...* which is not present in the KT at all. As I have discussed several times earlier,²⁰ this longer *dhāraṇī* is specifically identified in the citation from the *Aparimitāyuhṣūtra*.

1.1.3. Secret Sādhana (gSang sgrub): *Nam mkha'i rdo rje*

Third, the Secret Sādhana (gSang sgrub) of Space Vajra (*Nam mkha'i rdo rje*) primarily involves supplicating Hayagrīva and Amitāyus for Vajra-like steadfast protection,²¹ and a *prāṇāyāma* practice called "*Nam mkha'i bcud len*" (taking the quintessence of space/ākāśa).²² In terms of the protective mantra (*bsrung ba'i sngags*) described metaphorically as wearing armour of protection (CD: *gzhan gyis mi*

¹⁹ See KT_A, 498,4f; KT_B, 301,2f; KT_C, 299,2f. The significance of oral transmission proves especially crucial in conferring *dhāraṇī* and mantra. In transcribing mantras from Tibetan script into Roman alphabet, I have yet to establish a definitive methodology. Rather than employing Wylie transliteration, the present study attempts phonetic representation. For the syllable *hrīḥ*, I adopt the notation that appends *ḥ* to *hrī*, following the specification in the CD, which describes its form as "featuring the *tsheg drag* mark". See *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* §4.2.3: *hrīḥ dmar tsheg drag ldan par bsgom*. That *hūṃ* as a single syllable terminates in *anusvāra* remains uncontested, as Buddhist treatises on visualising this *bīja* amply demonstrate. For recent discussion of Indian interpretations dividing *hūṃ* as *ha + ū + ma*, *ha + ū + a + ṃ*, and so forth, see Tokushige 2025. However, pronunciation of this crucial seed syllable ḥ must follow the *upadeśa* (*man ngag*) of one's lineage. For instance, sNar thang lo tsā ba Sanggha shrī (b. 14th century, BDRC#P3662), a contemporary of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can, argues that this *anusvāra* (*klad kor*) should be pronounced (*bklag par bya*) as ḥ , distinct from the *anusvāra* ṃ in the mantra syllable ḥ . For details, see *sNgags kyi bklag thabs* 56,13. I express sincere gratitude to rGan Ngawang Woesung Gonta and Khenpo Ju Tenkyong for their invaluable counsel regarding proper pronunciation in recitation practice.

²⁰ For Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's citation of the *dhāraṇī* from the *Aparimitāyuhṣūtra*, see, i.a., Shinga 2023.

²¹ In the *Tshe'i phrin las* (*bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, §3), it is Vajra Amitāyus (rDo rje tshe dpag med), not Amitāyus, who constitutes the Five Buddhas. Vajra Amitāyus is visualised as white in color, holding a long-life vase, and in union with his consort Pāṇḍaravāsīnī (Na bza' dkar mo).

See KT_A, 480,6; KT_B, 318,6; KT_C, 316,6: *hrīḥ dkyil 'khor chen po'i [po'i A] po B, C] dbus kyi lte ba la: rin chen khri rkang rma bya brgyad bsnol steng: padma nyi zla brtsegs pa'i gdan steng du: hrīḥ las bcom ldan rdo rje tshe dpag med: sku mdog dkar po tshe yi bum pa bsnams: yum chen na bza' dkar mo gnyis med 'khril.*

²² The compound *bcud len* typically denotes "a method of prolonging life and enhancing physical strength through reliance on substances such as flowers" (see *Tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *bcud len*, p. 755). In the present context, however, it is more appropriate to parse the phrase as *nam mkha'i bcud + len*—that is, "taking" or "absorbing" the quintessence of space—rather than treating *bcud len* as an indivisible unit.

tshugs go cha; KT: *bsrung ba'i go cha*), the KT presents the mantra in a more straightforward manner: prefixed with three core bīja (*Om, Āḥ, Hūṃ*) before *Bhrūṃ, vajra āyuse, Hūṃ, Āḥ*, followed by the vajra armor mantra.²³ In the CD, the protective mantra sounds simpler like *Om, vajra yakṣa kavaci, Hūṃ, Bhrūṃ*, but it includes mentions of specific timing requirements.²⁴

Regarding the concept of deceiving death (*chi ba bslu*), both texts mention this *prāṇāyāma* practice but approach it differently. The KT connects it directly with the practice of swallowing nectar-visualised saliva (*mchil ma*), while the CD relates it more specifically to the practice of controlling vital winds (*srog rlung*; Skt. *prāṇa*). While performing the wind-based longevity practice (*rlung la tshe sgrub pa*), the practitioner absorbs *prāṇa* to enliven their *nāḍī* system. The practice of absorbing space's essence (*Nam mkha'i bcud len*) shows variations in presentation. The KT describes a direct process of inhaling space (*nam mkha' rngubs*) through the practitioner's mouth and nostrils, and then transforming it into nectar (*bdud rtsi*), while the CD presents a more complex procedure involving specific visualisations of lotus seats, sun and moon discs, and syllable transformations. Both texts agree on the basic outcomes of overcoming illness (*nad*) and purifying obscurations (*sgrib pa*), but present different methodologies for achieving these results.

1.1.4. Most Secret Sādhana (Yang gsang): *Hrīḥ gcig ma*

Lastly, fourth, in the Most Secret Sādhana (Yang gsang) of Only *Hrīḥ* (*Hrīḥ gcig ma*),²⁵ both texts outline a meditation practice centered on the red bīja *Hrīḥ* transforming into Padma tshe dbang rtsal.²⁶ The KT

²³ As for the protective mantra, a romanization of the original Tibetan text (see KT_A, §8, 506,3; KT_B, 304,1; KT_C, 302,1) for ease of reading, primarily following KT_C, as follows: *Om, Bhrūṃ, vajra āyuse, Hūṃ, Āḥ.*

Āḥ, Bhrūṃ, vajra āyuse, Hūṃ, Āḥ.

Hūṃ, Bhrūṃ, vajra āyuse, Hūṃ, Āḥ.

Om, vajra yakṣa kavac, Hūṃ.

²⁴ According to Kaḥ thog rig 'dzin Tshe dbang nor bu (1698–1755, BDRC#P676) in his *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can maintained close ties with King Khri rgyal mChog grub lde of Gung thang (d.u.). See *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, 34,11f. For a German translation, see Everding 2000: 118 (§14.4). While I have been able to find no specific references to *tshe sgrub* practices, the religio-political context suggests the king may have pursued magical solutions through *tshe sgrub* cultivation to protect his realm and subjects without recourse to military bloodshed.

²⁵ The term *gcig ma* in this section title might be more appropriately rendered as "Single Deity Sādhana" to better capture its liturgical connotations.

²⁶ In both the CD and the KT, the passage describing how the *sādhaka*, having generated themselves as Padma tshe dbang rtsal, subsequently "beholds Padma thod

delineates this transformation through technical meditative directives, whereas the CD augments these prescripts with natural metaphors—such as fish appearing in clear water or bubbles rising—suggesting a more spontaneous manifestation process.²⁷ Furthermore, the distinct passages emphasising the ineffable nature (CD, §4.5.2: *tha snyad brjod du med*) of the array of visualized phenomena arising in this meditation are not found in the KT's exposition.

Both texts delineate a seven-day (*zhag bdun*) practice whereby the *sādhaka* attains absolute certainty regarding the dharmakāya nature of one's own *citta* (*rang sems chos skur blo thag chod*) and subsequently achieves the *vidyādhara* stage of *Mahāmudrā*.

The above comparative analysis of the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* (KT) and the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* (CD) reveals the sophisticated structure of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's *tshe sgrub* corpus. While the *Phyi sgrub* relies on material ritual elements such as longevity pills and consecrated vases, the highly refined Yang gsang employs metaphysical elements of an ineffable nature. Traditionally, Buddhist longevity practices have developed through a critical examination of preceding Vedic traditions while flexibly accommodating societal needs by incorporating their practical aspects.²⁸

Appendix 1. Origin Claims for the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*

The attribution of the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* (KT) to the five treasures presents conflicting testimonies between the CNT (KT_A) and RT editions (KT_B, KT_C). The CNT catalogue explicitly derives the *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar* cycle "from the Eastern White

phreng" (*padma thod phreng dngos su mthong*) appears within the *Hriḥ gcig ma* section. Both *Padma tshe dbang rtsal* and *Padma thod phreng* may be understood as distinct aspects of *Padmasambhava's* activity concerning the transcendence of death.

²⁷ See CD, §4.2.1: *dwangs pa'i chu la nya ldang ltar: chu las chu lbur rdol ba bzhin: skad cig dran pas snang ba la: ngag tu hrīḥ zhes brjod pa yis: bdag nyid padma tshe dbang rtsal*.

Note that as Prof. Stéphane Arguillère has kindly pointed out, such imagery represents a commonplace formula within the *rNying ma* tradition for describing instantaneous visualisation that bypasses the formal structure of the three *samādhis*.

²⁸ For a classification of Buddhist sūtras that expound longevity rituals (*jani-tam/ 延命法*, term employed by Hatsuzaki to designate practices for extending lifespan) into three distinct categories, see Hatsuzaki 1968, which lists: (1.) 'Sūtra of the sermon under the Pippala tree' (p. 942), e.g., 金剛秘密善門陀羅尼經 (T 1137, 1138, 1139, 1140≈D 614/P 309), (2.) 'Sūtra of the sermon by the River Gaṅgā', e.g., 諸佛集會陀羅尼經. (T 1346≈D 513/P 150) and (3.) 'Sūtra of the sermon at the top of Mount Sumeru (p. 941), e.g., 金剛壽命陀羅尼念誦法 (T 1133. 不空譯).

Conch Shell Treasury" (*shar dung mdzod dkar po*).²⁹ The RT edition, however, exhibits internal inconsistency: while its corpus claims derivation from the same eastern treasury,³⁰ its catalogue attributes the cycle to the Southern Yellow Golden Treasury (*lho gser mdzod ser po'i chos sde*).³¹

The account placing it in the Southern treasury has become the standard, dominant system, being attested in the *gsan yig* of the Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682).³² Yet detailed subdivisions of the five treasuries (*mdzod lnga'i nang tshan*) remain matters of scholarly conjecture across various sources.³³ The discrepancies between editorial versions constitute an essential

²⁹ See CNT Vol. 10 *dKar chag*, 1,2: *shar dung mdzod dkar po nas byon pa'i bka' brgyad pod gnyis par/ bka' brgyad phyogs bsgrigs dkar chag lal*.

³⁰ See KT_B, 326,3; KT_C, 324,3: *sna nam rdo rje bdud 'joms kyi yang srid sprul sku rig 'dzin chen po rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis spyang drangs pa las/ 'dir mdzod lnga'i nang tshan shar dung mdzod dkar po nas byon pa bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi chos sde/ yongs rdzogs rnam pa gsum gyi nang tshan 'chi med tshe lha yongs rdzogs kyi smin byed sgrub pa'i skabs su babs pa ste/*

³¹ See RT *gyi dkar chag dang brgyud yig*, 166,4: *rig 'dzin nyi zla 'od 'bar gyis spyang drangs pa'i lho gser mdzod ser po'i chos sde bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi rtsa dbang/ rdzogs rim rnam kyi khrid// brgyud 'debs dang sngon 'gro mdor bsdu// las byang// sngags kyi phrin las dril sgrub bcas gter gzhung dbang chog// bsnyen yig// gnam zhal don khrid// rim lnga// ye shes zang thal// rdzogs rim snying thig rnam bcu bcas gter gzhung/*. Regarding the epithet Rig 'dzin Nyi zla 'od 'bar, I have found no evidence to identify this figure with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can, and the possibility that it refers to an entirely different *gter ston* cannot be excluded.

³² See *Thob yig gangga'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, 291,5: *sprul sku rig [rig em.] rigs/ 'dzin chen pos lho gser mdzod ser po nas spyang drangs pa'i bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar ni rgyud las/ zhi khro bka' brgyad lha chags ni*. The *gsan yig* of the Great Fifth may be regarded as more historically reliable than evidential sources replete with mythological elements, such as *chos 'byung* or hagiographical *rnam thar*. Yet uncritical acceptance of *gsan yig* literature as historical fact would be methodologically naïve, since such records were susceptible to deliberate editorial intervention. Nishizawa (forthcoming) demonstrates this through the conspicuous absence of Red mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros (1349–1412), a contemporary of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can, from later Sa skya pa *gsan yig* records. Red mda' ba represented a collateral lineage distinct from the mainstream Sa skya transmission running from the Sa skya Five Patriarchs through g-Yag phrug (1350–1414) and Rong ston (1367–1449). His interpretations exhibited heterodox tendencies *vis-à-vis* orthodox Sa skya doctrine, rendering his systematic exclusion from lineage records a likely *suppressio veri* on doctrinal grounds.

³³ For early scholarship on the five treasuries, we are much indebted to Herweg 1994: 25. For a recent discussion of this issue, see Achard 2024, which demonstrates that the details of the five repositories (*mdzod lnga*) are described variably in different sources (e.g. the *Rig 'dzin rtsa ba'i sgrub thabs*), including the conditions and extraordinary omens associated with their revelation. The attribution system of the five repositories may itself have been a later construction, given the paucity of such references in texts presumed to represent the earliest strata. This issue will be discussed in the *Northern Treasure Histories*, vol. 2 (forthcoming 2026; personal communication with Prof. Arguillère, 28 July 2025).

component of our textual heritage. Any reconstruction, regardless of critical methodology employed, cannot transcend the status of legendary hypothesis. The present study therefore confines itself to observing these irreconcilable traditions.

2. Transmission Lineages of the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* (KT)

In the following chapter, I shall attempt to elucidate the complex evolution of the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, wherein certain elements were incorporated during subsequent historical phases. While the core textual corpus maintains its doctrinal integrity (see Chapter 1.1), textual examination (and hopefully also doctrinal investigation) indicates a gradual accretion of supplementary material. These additions, which emerged through varied transmission lineages, reflect the dynamic nature of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's *tshe sgrub* practice. In essence, a nuanced understanding of these posterior contributions illuminates not merely textual history per se, but indeed the broader intellectual currents that have shaped this significant corpus of religious literature.

2.1. Transmission Lineages in CNT Edition: Citation and Context of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti*

The initial section of the CNT version (KT_A, §1), entitled *bKa' brgyad kyi tshe dbang yongs rdzogs* (*Complete Longevity Empowerment of the Eight Pronouncements*; hereafter *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs*), primarily focuses on conferring longevity and vitality upon practitioners, thereby enhancing their life force and health for deeper spiritual engagement. This section thus functions as a foundational introduction to subsequent practices, establishing the framework for more profound exploration of longevity empowerment within the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*. In this contextual setting, it is entirely appropriate that the *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs* intermittently cites verses from the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* (D360; P2; Ng.529/Tb.424; T1188; abbr. MS) while invoking blessings through the recitation of twenty-six names of various deities and dignitaries (see Table 3 below).³⁴

³⁴ See *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, KT_A, 459,1–468,3, which corresponds broadly to KT_B, 328,5–330,4 and KT_C, 326,5–328,4.

#	Category and Folio Locus	Numerary
1.	Three Buddhas ³⁵ [461f.]	3
2.	Eight Manifestations of Guru Rinpoche [461,3f.]	8
3.	Dākinī Ye shes mtsho rgyal [462,4f.]	1
4.	Eight Byang gter Masters [462,4f.]	8
5.	Four Gatekeepers [463,2f.]	4
6.	Many Messengers (<i>pho nya</i>) [463,3f.]	1
7.	Many Longevity Deities (<i>tshe lha</i>) [463,3f.]	1
Total		26

Table 3 – The twenty-six sacred beings in the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, §1

As I recently discussed in Shinga 2024,³⁶ this pattern of invoking the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* while reciting the names of various deities and dignitaries likewise appears in the *bsKul zhing gsol 'debs* section (§X²) of the PNST.³⁷ Here, the Eight Byang gter Masters (highlighted in grey in Table 3 above) represent as a form of *bla brgyud*—a lineage of transmission relating to the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*.

Regarding the eight lineage holders in the *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* (KT), five consecutive Byang gter masters from Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can through Ngags 'chang Chos rgyal bsod noms (1442–1509, BDRC#P10121) overlap with the five patriarchs enumerated in the *bKa' brgyad brgyud 'debs* (KG) and the *bsKul zhing gsol 'debs* section (§X²) of the *Phyi nang gsang ba'i tshe sgrub* (highlighted in grey in Table 4 below).³⁸

#	Eight Lineage Masters Relating to the KT	MS	KG
1.	Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can (ca. 1337–1401)	v. 37	5,3
2.	sNgags 'chang rDo rje dpal (b. 14th c., BDRC#P10115)	v. 65	5,4
3.	mTshan ldan Byams pa bshes gnyen (BDRC#P10116)	v. 38	5,5
4.	Sangs rgyas dpal bzang (BDRC#P10117)	v. 59	5,6
5.	Ngags 'chang Chos rgyal bsod noms (1442–1509, BDRC#P10121) ³⁹	v. 55	6,1
6.	Chos skyong bsod noms bkra shis (ca. 16th c.)	v. 147	-

³⁵ Three Buddhas grant deathless longevity to devotees entering their temporal spheres: (1.) Samantabhadra in Akaniṣṭha's dharmadhātu palace, (2.) Amitābha in Padma-dbang's buddha-field, and (3.) Amitāyus in Sukhāvātī.

³⁶ See Shinga 2024: 433–435. For the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti*, verse numbers follow Davidson 1981; for bibliographical references, see Shinga 2024: 451 (bibliography).

³⁷ For a critical edition and annotated English translation of the *bsKul zhing gsol 'debs*, Section X² of the *Phyi nang gsang ba'i tshe sgrub*, see Shinga 2024: 437–449.

³⁸ For the *bKa' brgyad brgyud 'debs*, see KG, 5,3–6,2. I am grateful to Prof. Arguillère for opening my eyes to this important text concerning the *bKa' brgyad* lineage within the Byang gter tradition. For the *bsKul zhing gsol 'debs*, see also Shinga 2024: 435–437 (Chapter 4.2).

³⁹ The term *rdo rje 'chang ba kun gyi rje*, read by all three recensions (KT_A, 463,1; KT_B, 330,2; KT_C, 328,2), appears to correspond to *saravajradharādhipaḥ* in MS 107d.

7.	'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1524–1568, BDRC#P1089)	v. 107? ⁴⁰	-
8.	sDing ma ba bsLab gsum rgyal mtshan? (1526–1577, BDRC#P1090) ⁴¹	v. 23? ⁴²	-

Table 4 – Comparative table of luminaries

Of particular note are the divergent lineages that emerge from the sixteenth century onwards. The First Yol mo sprul sku Śākya bzang po (b. 15c, BDRC#P1698) and 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang phyug bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan (1524–1559, BDRC#P1089), while appearing in separate lineages, made parallel contributions to the continuity (*rgyun*) of *tshe sgrub* literature within the Byang gter tradition.⁴³ The longevity sādhanas of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can, preserved through these textual and oral lineages (*dpe lung gi rgyun*), thus embody a religious heritage transcending sectarian boundaries—a heritage that may be considered a precursor to the nineteenth-century non-sectarian (*ris med*) scholar-mystic movement in eastern Tibet.

Given the nature of the genre, texts such as the *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs* (KT_A, §1) and the *bsKul zhing gsol 'debs* (PNST, §X²), which include in their *bla brgyud* the names (generally epithets) of these later lineage holders, are recognised—even amongst conservative contemporary Tibetan lamas—not as authentic revelations of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem but rather as later accretions ascribed to him more broadly. In the case of the *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs* (KT_A, §1), as Table 4 demonstrates, it is manifestly untenable to date the lineage earlier than the sixteenth century.

When, then, did the invocation of verses from the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* become incorporated into the *bla brgyud* of *tshe sgrub* literature ascribed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can? The role accorded to this tantra within the Byang gter tradition may have been influenced, at least in part, by the presence of the 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo. This commentary, attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, demonstrates his penetrating understanding of the esoteric meanings underlying

⁴⁰ For the dates of Chos rgyal bsod nams and Thugs sras Chos skyong bsod nams bkra shis, I follow Valentine 2020.

⁴¹ I have not yet been able to identify this lama with certainty. The text reads solely 'jam dbyangs rgyal sras (KT_A, 463,2; KT_B, 330,3; KT_C, 328,3. Note the variant reading *rgyas* for *rgyal* in KT_A). The tentative identification with sDing ma ba bsLab gsum rgyal mtshan (1526–1577, BDRC#P1090) is based upon a lineage succession in the CD. See Shinga 2020: 295 (Appendix 6), i.a. nos. 13–14.

⁴² The term *gsang sngags rig sngags 'chang ba'i rigs*, read by all three recensions (KT_A, 463,2; KT_B, 330,3; KT_C, 328,3), appears to correspond to *mantra-vidyādharakulaṃ* in MS 23c.

⁴³ Notably, both the names of the First Yol mo sprul sku and 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po also appear in the transmission lineage of the *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po*. See Shinga 2020: Appendices 5, 6 (pp. 293, 295).

Mañjuśrī's various names.⁴⁴ The practice of chanting sacred names and meditating upon divine forms may initially appear to be simple litany or hymn. Yet such recitation of sacred appellations constitutes not merely an act of devotion but an essential component of the initiatory process requisite for immersion in practice. In this context, the 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo serves as a bridge between scriptural teaching and meditative realisation, fostering within the Byang gter tradition both intellectual comprehension and practical insight into the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. Each name is explicated not only in its literal sense but also in its deeper tantric significance, being linked to the immutable wisdom body (*ye shes kyi sku*). In this regard, Mañjuśrī, *qua* Vajra Lord (*rdo rje dbang phyug*), is called the Secret Victor (*gsang ba'i rgyal*) because the lineage of the Victorious One (*rgyal ba'i gdung*) is maintained only by keeping it concealed from the unsuitable (*skal med*) whilst revealing it to the suitable (*skal ldan*).⁴⁵

The following example illuminates the mystic meaning behind the name mTshan ldan Byams pa bshes gnyen (b. 14-15th c., BDR#P10116), one of the Eight Patriarchs. To understand why the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* cites a verse (MS 38) from the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's interpretation in the 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo provides a valuable clue.

bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub, 462,5⁴⁶

By its nature, great loving kindness (*byams chen*) is immeasurable. [MS 38a]
Byams pa bshes gnyen, your time has come,
Bestow the accomplishments (*siddhi*) of immortal life!

'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo, 291,4⁴⁷

"By its nature, great loving kindness (*mahāmaitrī*) is immeasurable". [MS 38a] That is, when one realizes the meaning of one's own *dharmatā*, a single loving-kindness arises towards all sentient beings, like a mother towards her only child, and one is

⁴⁴ In point of fact, the 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo is a *ṭikā* (*mchan dkyus*) on Padmasambhava's own *bhāṣya* (*mchan*), see 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo, 362,4f. The provenance of the 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo as found in the CNT will be discussed in the *Northern Treasures Histories*, vol. 2 (personal communication with Prof. Arguillère, 28 July 2025).

⁴⁵ 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo, 274,2: *rdo rje dbang phyug gsang ba'i rgyal// ces pa ni/ ye shes kyi sku la 'gyur ba med pas/ rdo rje chos la dbang bas dbang phyug skal med la gsang zhing skal ldan la bstan pa tsam gyis/ rgyal ba'i gdung 'dzin pas/ gsang ba'i rgyal ces pa'ol/*

⁴⁶ *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, KT_A, 462,5 (cf. KT_B, 330,1; KT_C, 328,1):
byams chen rang bzhin dpag tu med: [MS 38]
byams pa bshes gnyen kyi dus la babs:
'chi med tshe yi dngos grub stsol:

⁴⁷ 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo, 291,4: *byams chen rang bzhin dpag tu med// [MS 38] ces pa ni/ rang gi chos nyid kyi don rtogs pa'i dus na/ sems can thams cad la bu gcig pu'i ma ltar byams pa gcig 'ong ste/ 'gro don dpag tu med pa nus sol/*

|| capable of immeasurable benefit for beings.

The epithet-cum-invocation of mTshan ldan Byams pa bshes gnyen (b. 14-15th c., BDR#P10116) in the *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs* (KT_A, §1) may represent a hermeneutical reception of the commentarial tradition on MS 38a preserved in the 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo (JD). The JD explicates the reference in MS 38a to immeasurable "great loving kindness" (*mahāmaitrī*; *byams chen*) as the boundless altruistic intention that spontaneously arises through the realisation of one's own *dharmatā*,⁴⁸ likening it to a mother's love for her only child. The KT cites this same verse within a ritual invocation context. It directly addresses mTshan ldan Byams pa bshes gnyen as the embodiment of this limitless loving-kindness, petitioning for the bestowal of longevity *siddhi*. Here, in the devotion and dedication to lineage masters, the true meaning of the name plays a crucial role. The abstract principle of great compassion becomes personified in the figure bearing the name mTshan ldan Byams pa bshes gnyen, and the realisation of *dharmatā* described in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's commentary (*mchan dkyus*) appears to be transposed into a ritual economy wherein the deity's grace confers the accomplishment of immortality.

I have not yet been able to find firm evidence regarding the extent to which the JD influenced the Byang gter tradition. Whether the philosophical interpretation of the canonical verses of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (MS) by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can came to be received and patterned within the epithet-cum-invocations of longevity *sādhana*s thus remains a matter for future investigation. In this context, the juxtaposition of the two readings of MS 38a referenced above by the present study—the philosophical commentary preserved in the JD and the liturgical practice in the KT—sheds modest light on the possibility that the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* is a revered canonical scripture within the Byang gter tradition, and that a single scriptural passage within this tradition can sustain complementary interpretive trajectories.

Should it become clear in future that the JD is authentic as a text attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can and was indeed studied within the Byang gter tradition, the likelihood would increase that the anonymous author of the *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs* selected verses from the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* with reference to the JD.

⁴⁸ The Tibetan translation of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* is not necessarily a literal rendering of the original Sanskrit (see below).

mahāmaitrīmayo 'meyo mahākāruṇiko 'gradhīḥ |
mahāprajñō mahādhitmāṇ mahopāyo mahākṛtīḥ || MS 38 ||

2.2. Transmission Lineages in RT Edition

I must reiterate that the RT edition of the *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub* should not be considered the principal transmission lineage (on the subsidiary nature of RT transmissions, see Chapter 1 above). The main lineage continues through the principal holders of the Byang gter succession centred at rDo rje brag, as evidenced in the CNT edition referenced earlier (see Chapter 2.1 above). Nevertheless, neglecting to examine one of the two major transmission lineages of the texts employed in the present study (i.e. KT_A on one hand, and KT_B and KT_C on the other) would constitute a philological oversight.

The RT transmission lineage appears in two related passages within the *RT gyi dkar chag dang brgyud yig*.⁴⁹ If my understanding is correct, the *bKa' brgyad rang shar* lineage (*brgyud pa*) originates with the Ādibuddha Kun bzang He ru ka. The succession proceeds through Sangs rgyas dpal bzang (ca. 15th c.) and Chos rgyal bsod nams (1442–1509, BDRC#P10121), continuing via Thugs sras Chos skyong bsod nams bkra shis (ca. 16th c.) and Rig 'dzin Padma phrin las (1641–1717/8, BDRC#P657), *inter alios*, before reaching 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899, BDRC#P264).⁵⁰

This credible testimony indicates that some form of the RT transmission (*bka'*) persisted into the nineteenth century.⁵¹ However,

⁴⁹ *RT gyi dkar chag dang brgyud yig*, 203,3: *bka' brgyad rang shar gyi chos sde tshe lha yongs rdzogs kyi dbang/ [...] brgyud pa ni/ chos rgyal bsod nams yan bka' brgyad rang shar ltar la/ de nas/ thugs sras chos skyong bsod nams bkra shis/ [...] smon lam dbang rgyal/ des bdag la'o/ [...] 166,4: rig 'dzin nyi zla 'od 'bar gyis spyang drangs pa'i [...] brgyud pa ni/ kun bzang he ru ka/ rdo rje 'chang/ rdo rje chos/ smug nag dbang gi mkha' gro/ indra bo dhi/ rig 'dzin brgyad/ o rgyan chen po/ dag pa'i 'khor lngal/ rgod ldem can/ rnam rgyal mgon po/ sngags 'chang rdo rje rnam gnyis/ byams pa bshes gnyen/ sangs rgyas dpal bzang/ chos rgyal bsod nams/ yol mo sprul sku shākya bzang po/ legs ldan rje/ byang bdag dbang po'i sde/ ngag gi dbang po/ sngags 'chang stobs ldan dpa' bo/ phyag rdor nor bu/ rig 'dzin padma phrin las/ rig 'dzin dbang rgyal/ rdo rje thogs med/ 'gyur med blo ldan/ padma bshes gnyen/ nges don bstan 'dzin bzang po/ bstan 'dzin chos rgyal/ 'gyur med bstan 'dzin 'phel rgyas/ rnam 'dren smon lam dbang rgyal/ des bdag la'o/.*

⁵⁰ Following Chos rgyal bsod nams (1442–1509, BDRC#P10121), the lineage proceeds through successive masters including Yol mo sprul sku Śākya bzang po (b. 15th c., BDRC#P1698), Rig 'dzin Legs ldan bdud 'joms (1452–1565, BDRC#P1701), Byang bdag bkra shis stobs rgyal (1550?–1564, BDRC#P646), and Rig 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1632, BDRC#P639), *inter alios*.

⁵¹ 'Jam mgon kong sprul's compilation of the RT demonstrates scholarly integrity in his principled approach of avoiding fabricated transmissions while candidly acknowledging uncertainties as 'requiring verification' (*brtag dgos pa yod*). For instance, see *RT gyi dkar chag dang brgyud yig*, 204,1: *gter chen sangs rgyas gling pas dgyer bye ma dkar po'i mchod rten nas spyang drangs pa'i rig 'dzin tshe sgrub nyi zla kha sbyor gyi dbang/ [°gyi° em.] °kyi° sgrub thabs snying po bsodus pa dbang chog bcas chags med gsung/ brgyud pa ni/ chos longs sprul gsum/ [...] gsang sngags mgon po/ des bdag la'o/ 'dir chags med zhabs kyis gsan yul ma nges pas bar gyi brgyud khungs brtag dgos pa*

these sources provide insufficient evidence to ascertain whether such transmission encompassed concrete practice (*sgom sgrub*).⁵² Additional textual evidence is therefore required to establish whether this constituted actual transmission (*don gyi brgyud pa*), including reading transmission (*bklags lung*), explanatory transmission (*bshad lung*), or oral teachings (*'chad nyan*).

3. Indic-cum-Sanskrit Equivalent of the Term “*tshe sgrub/bsgrub*”

3.1. **Āyurjñānanopika* Attested in the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, §5

A cursory examination of Tibetan canonical sources suggests that *tshe sgrub* practice likely originated in India rather than constituting a Tibetan innovation. For instance, rKTs-T3099 (A3252/D2336: **Āyuh-sādhana/Tshe sgrub pa'i thabs*) was, according to its colophon, translated from Sanskrit (*rgya gar skad*) into Tibetan by a team under bSod nams rgya mtsho (1424–1482, BDRC#P208) in the presence of Nags kyi rin chen (alias Vanaratna, 1384–1468, BDRC#P207).⁵³ Though comprising merely a few lines of *tshe sgrub* literature centred on *prāṇa* (*rlung*) control, rKTs-T3099 provides evidence that a Sanskrit text entitled **Āyuh-sādhana* was translated as *Tshe sgrub pa'i thabs* and transmitted to Tibet during the era roughly contemporary with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can.

The tacit acceptance in current scholarship of the term **āyuh-sādhana* as the Sanskrit equivalent of *tshe sgrub* appears largely indebted to Chandra's citation of this rKTs-T3099 (s.v. *tshe sgrub pa'i thabs*, p. 1947).⁵⁴ However, the term **āyuh-sādhana* lacks, as far as I can

yod cing/. Such transparency considerably enhances the text's credibility. Nevertheless, when evaluating these accounts as historical testimony—assuming such evaluation remains viable—one must consider that his sectarian perspective may have introduced certain interpretative biases.

⁵² The transmission received by 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas most likely encompassed concrete practice. For him, the *bKa' brgyad rang shar* constituted one of his most important teachings. See Neumaier 1970: 134: 'Padma-gar-dbañ, der Kompilator des *gTer-gyi-mjod-c'en-mo*, berichtet, daß *bka'-brgyad ran-šar* mit zu seinen wichtigsten Lehren zählt'. For the relevant passage in the RT upon which Neumaier bases this claim, see also Neumaier 1970: 134n18.

⁵³ Note that Nags kyi rin chen is said to have received the *Padma tshe khrid* directly (*āngos su stsal ba*) from Padmasambhava, as preserved in the *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*. However, this textual and oral transmission (*dpe lung gi rgyun*) had apparently ceased by 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas' era. See *RT gyi dkar chag dang brgyud yig*, 218,2.

⁵⁴ See Chandra, s.vv. *tshe sgrub* and *tshe sgrub pa'i thabs* (p. 1947). The latter cites D2336 (rKTs-T3099) as philological evidence, while the former references the *Rin 'byung snar thang brgya rtsa ror 'pheng bcas nas gsungs pa'i bris sku mthong ba don ldan*. Neither source thus constitutes Indic primary material.

ascertain, definitive attestation from Sanskrit primary sources.⁵⁵ Consequently, the Sanskrit equivalent of the term *tshe sgrub* requires critical examination, including but not limited to **āyuhśādhana*.

Turning from the problematic correspondence between **āyuhśādhana* and *tshe sgrub*—for which bilingual primary attestation remains unknown—to the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, alternative possibilities emerge. The *gter ma* literature occasionally preserves fossilised remnants of earlier Tibetan adaptations, relatively free from standardised Sanskrit translation.

Within the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*, three distinct sections bear bilingual titles in both Indic-cum-Sanskrit (*rgya gar skad*) and Tibetan, as shown in Table 5 below.⁵⁶

§	Indic Title	Tibetan Title
1.	<i>*Āyurjñāna-abhiṣiñca-nama</i>	<i>Tshe'i dbang chog ces bya ba</i> [<i>bKa' brgyad kyi tshe dbang yongs rdzogs bzhugs so</i>]
3.	<i>*Āyurjñāna-karma-natha</i>	<i>Tshe dang ye shes dpag tu med pa'i phrin las zhes bya ba</i> [<i>bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar las tshe'i phrin las bzhugs so</i>]
5.	<i>*Āyurjñāna-nopika-nama</i>	<i>'Chi med tshe yi sgrub thabs zhes bya ba</i> [<i>bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar las Tshe'i phyi sgrub bzhugs so</i>]

Table 5 — Three parallel Indic-Tibetan titles in the *bKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*⁵⁷

As highlighted in grey, the three corresponding pairs demonstrate thematic unity through the term *āyurjñāna*,⁵⁸ while their Tibetan equivalents remain disparate. Such semantic non-correspondence typically results from mediation through intermediary languages or dialectal variants. Particularly noteworthy is the compound **āyurjñāna-nopika* (KT_A, 492,1: *ā yur dznyā na no pi ka*), which appears

⁵⁵ Given the current advances in Buddhist Sanskrit manuscript research, one cannot dismiss the possibility that the term **āyuhśādhana* may be attested in these codices in the near future. Based on my limited investigation, I have not been able to find this term in Bhattacharya's widely used critical edition of the *Sādhnamālā* (Bhattacharya 1968). However, as Sakuma 2002 demonstrates, numerous manuscripts identifiable as the *Sādhnamālā* subsequently 'have become available in recent years' (p. 7) which Bhattacharya did not or could not employ, see Sakuma 2002: 7–11. A thorough examination of the promising Buddhist Sanskrit manuscripts that might attest to the term **āyuhśādhana* remains quintessential for future research, though it lies beyond the feasible scope of the present study.

⁵⁶ Note that when examining the nature of *gter ma* literature, one must necessarily consider the possibility that their archetypes or prototypes (or indeed earlier textual stages) at the time of their concealment would have been composed not in Indic languages, but rather in the cryptographic language of the Dākinīs (*mkha' 'gro'i brda skad*) and/or in the language of Uḍḍiyāna (*o rgyan skad*). See *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po*, §1.1.1. For a related discussion, see also Shinga 2020: 55–62.

⁵⁷ Square-bracketed titles in Table 5 are from the title page of each section.

⁵⁸ For the term *āyurjñāna*, see MW, s.v. *āyurjñāna* (p. 148).

alongside the semantically transparent Tibetan *'chi med tshe yi sgrub thabs* (underlined in Table 5). This correspondence provides valuable evidence for examining the Indic etymon of *tshe sgrub / tshe yi sgrub thabs* and merits careful consideration.

3.2. *Nopika: An Overview

Regarding the term **nopika* within the compound *āyurjñānanopika* (KT, §5), multiple instances with variant readings are known from Dunhuang manuscript Pelliot 849, dated to the late 9th to early 10th century. According to Joseph Hackin's edition annotated French translation (1924),⁵⁹ this manuscript constitutes a Sanskrit-Tibetan glossary with Sanskrit terms in the upper register and corresponding Tibetan equivalents immediately below, encompassing both Buddhist terminology and general vocabulary (see Figure 2 below).

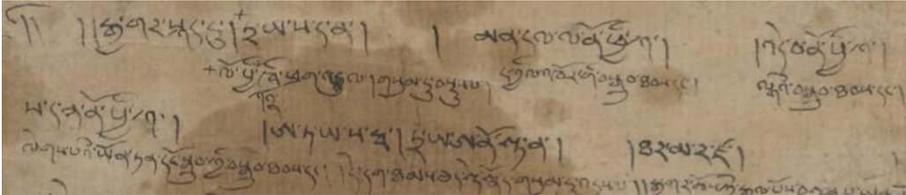


Figure 2 — Pelliot tibétain 849, pl. 233, ll. 38–41 (cf. Hackin 1924: 6,5–10)⁶⁰

In this work, Hackin interprets the terms “*no pyi ka*” (ll. 38 and 40), along with its variant readings “*lo pyi ka*” (l. 39) and “*no phyi ka*” (ll. 38), as the Sanskrit equivalent of the term ‘*sgrub-thabs*’ (p. 46).⁶¹ Since Hackin 1924, considerable scholarly attention has focused on the term **nopika* and its variant readings.⁶² Examination of usage examples in

⁵⁹ Regarding Pelliot tibétain 849, Hackin 1924 employed the provisional reference number “3531” for this Dunhuang manuscript. The current standard designation “849”, however, follows the Lalou Catalogue (1939, vol. 1, p. 186).

⁶⁰ This figure is reproduced from: <https://idp.bl.uk/collection/E13C7A0408C84349A9534F84C720F5BE/?return=%2Fcollection%2F%3Fterm%3DPelliot%2Btib%25C3%25A9tain%2B849>. Note that line numbers here follow the facsimile edition in Macdonald & Imaeda 1978, pl. 233.

⁶¹ With reference to the *Deb ther sngon po* in Das (s.v. *no pi ka*, p. 744), Hackin 1924 observes that the term ‘*no-pi-ka*’ is merely a translation of “*sgrub thabs*.” See Hackin 1924: p. 46, ligne 24 (2): ‘Les expressions *no-pi-ka* et *sgrub-thabs* ont donc un sens distinct dans le *Deb-ther-sngon-po*; alors, que dans notre manuscrit, l’un des termes n’est que la traduction de l’autre’.

⁶² The following studies, arranged chronologically, came to my attention during the course of the present research: Eastman 1983 noted about the term ‘*no-pyi-ka*’ (p. 48) that ‘[T]his term, of uncertain sense or origin, is seen frequently in the Tun-

broader contexts has centred primarily on whether **nopika* represents a Tibetan corrupta derived from Sanskrit terms such as *sādhanopāyika*. Among these discussions, Kapstein's argument (2006) merits attention: 'The unusual term *no p(h)yi ka*, which persists in Rnying [sic] *ma pa gter ma* literature at least through the fourteenth century, may be explained as derived from the last four syllables of Skt. *sādhanopāyika*' (p. 21, n. 33).⁶³ Since I have not been able to locate his citation, and given that the context and reading of the term *sādhanopāyika* remain uncertain, verification proves impossible, though such a form should perhaps be regarded as irregular rather than standard Sanskrit.

According to the BHSD (1953, s.v. *upayika*), the term *upayika* derives from Pali *upaya* and represents an adjectival form meaning 'serving as an approach or means' (p. 139), formed by adding the suffix *-ika* to Sanskrit and BHS *upāya*. The absence of *vr̥ddhi* in the stem suggests an irregular formation.⁶⁴ Edgerton notes that in BHS, *upayika* appears exclusively in compounds, specifically in *sādhanopayika* (with *-karma-*, or *-visaraḥ*), which occurs in colophons of the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*.⁶⁵ The term *sādhanopayika* itself exhibits considerable textual variation across the manuscript tradition. Beyond the *Mañjuśrīmūlakalpa*, variant readings of this compound proliferate in later tantric literature, suggesting both the term's semantic fluidity and its adaptability to

huang Mahāyoga texts. P. tib. 849 gives *bsgrub-thabs* as a gloss for *no-pyi-ka*, although this ordinarily translates *sādhana*' (p. 59, note 16). Cantwell & Mayer 2008 analysed its usage in Pelliot tibétain 349, particularly in the compound '*phur bu'i no phyi ka*' as '*Phur bu*'s means for attainment (*no phyi ka = sādhanopāyikā*)' (pp. 150, 152). van Schaik 2009 provides a comprehensive analysis of the term *no pyi ka* and related vocabulary. In the online discussion, PDSz (Péter-Dániel Szántó?) suggested that '*no pi ka* is a corruption / fake re-sanskritization of *upāyikā* (cutting the compound *Sādhanopāyikā* in the wrong place for example)' (posted 26 October 2009). For a general overview, see Chögyam Trungpa 2013: 633–635. For the examination by Gerloff & Schott 2024 concerning the term *sādhanopāyikā* attested in the *Jñānasiddhi*, see fn. 65 below.

⁶³ Kapstein's argument can be verified within the context of the three *sādhana*s (*tray a sa da na*) cited in Fig. 2 of the present study. The last of these three contains the term *sa da na no pyi ka*, which corresponds to *legs pa'i yon tan dngo sgrub kyi bsgrub thabs* (methods for accomplishing excellent qualities).

⁶⁴ Cf. *Mvy*, nos. #1299 (S 1295): *aupanāyikaḥ/nye bar gtod pa*; #6317 (S 6339): *aupayikam/cho ga'am thabs*; #6985 (S 7020): *apayikaiḥ/thabs dang ldan pa*. These correspondences exhibit *vr̥ddhi* in their Sanskrit stems. I am indebted to Prof. Alexis Sanderson and Ishii Yutaka for their generous scholarly guidance on classical Sanskrit grammar regarding the term *sādhanopayika* (personal communication, June 2025).

⁶⁵ See, however, Gerloff & Schott 2024: 52n61, which observes that 'the word *sādhana* and the label *sādhanopāyikā* in the final colophon of the *Jñānasiddhi* do not seem to be used in the narrower sense of the term *sādhana* as denoting a class of texts predominantly comprising ritual procedures'.

different ritual contexts. The *sadhanopayikā* (Tib. *sgrub thabs*) found in the *Vajrasattoasādhana*, for instance, concerns sequential practices (*anukrama*) such as seed-syllable determination. Since these apparently cannot be adequately transmitted through written text alone, they must be heard (*śrutoā*) and thus require oral transmission. This suggests that *sadhanaupayikā* represents a specialised BHS term denoting practical oral instructions (*upadeśa/man ngag*)—essentially “methods conducive to accomplishment.”⁶⁶

Thus, the term **nopika*, while originating in BHS vocabulary and undergoing phonetic simplification during transmission to Tibet,⁶⁷ had already functioned during the sNga 'gyur period as a specialised religious concept (*sādhana-cum-upāya*) broadly corresponding to Tibetan *sgrub thabs*. Therefore, *no pi ka* corresponding to *sgrub thabs* in the *Tshe'i phyi sgrub* section (KT, §5) may reasonably derive from the sNga dar period. No evidence has yet emerged linking Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's terminology to the translation activities of his contemporaries such as Nags kyi rin chen (alias Vanaratna, 1384–1468, BDRC#P207).

3.3. *Āyurjñāna-sādhana: An Alternative Possibility for *Tshe sgrub*

Regarding the correspondence between *Āyurjñāna-nopika* and '*Chi med tshe yi sgrub thabs* in the *Tshe'i phyi sgrub* section (KT, §5), how should we interpret the remaining elements *āyurjñāna* and '*chi med tshe yi*? A quintessential clue lies in the aforementioned thematic unity of *āyurjñāna* within KT (see Chapter 3.1 above). Concerning this term *jñāna*, reference should be made to the definition in the ritual sealing (*rgyas btab pa*) section of the *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs* (KT, §1): “The

⁶⁶ See *Vajrasattoasādhana*, VS_S 4,11: *ityanenānukrameṇa sādhanopayikāṃ śrutoā vajragurorājñāṃ prāpya sveṣṭadevatāyāḥ purato 'rghaṃ dadyāt* |.

VS_T 37,1: *zhes bya ba'i rim pas sgrub pa'i thabs thos nas/ rdo rje bla ma'i gngang ba thob nas rang gi 'dod pa'i lha'i mdun du argha phul te/*.

⁶⁷ Such diverse Tibetanization, as Kapstein 2006 has argued, is likely a legacy of Indian masters' oral teachings, which were variously transcribed by Tibetan disciples in their own script. See Kapstein 2006: 22–23: ‘What we have here is the transcription of medieval spoken Indic as it sounded to an Indologically untrained Tibetan ear: [...] the student here attempts to transcribe the master's words using the informal tools offered by the spelling conventions of his own language, without reference to phonological science’.

Intriguingly, parallel instances of such truncation exist. One notable example is the Tibetan term *bye ma ka ra* (sugar), which drew my attention in Wangchuk 2024. Here, *ka ra* combines with *bye ma* (sand) to form a compound derived from Sanskrit *śarkarā* (denoting both ‘sugar’ and ‘sand’), exemplifying comparable elision of the initial element (*śar-*) during Tibetanisation. See Apte, s.v. *śarkarā* (p. 1537), Negi, s.v. *ka ra* (p. 7), Chandra, s.v. *ka ra* (p. 1947). See also *Tshig mdzod chen mo*, s.v. *shel ka ra* (p. 2859).

essence of deathless life is the nature of the five wisdoms.” From this we may discern the essential identity of “life” (*tshe*) and “wisdom/gnosis” (*ye shes*) in the *BKa’ brgyad tshe sgrub*.

bKa’ brgyad tshe sgrub, KT_A, 467,3 (§1. *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs*):⁶⁸

Hrih! The nature of deathless life is
The essence of the five wisdoms.
Their five [coloured] lights are luminously clear and accompanied by radiance (*mdangs*),
While human life coalesces into the oily essence (*snum*) [formed by the union of the father’s semen and mother’s menstrual blood].

The term *snum* (oil/essence) occurs infrequently in the *gter ma* literature, and I find myself rather dismayed by its interpretative difficulties. In this regard, examination of usage in the *rTa mchog rol pa’i rgyud chen po* from the *rNying ma rgyud ’bum* (rKTs-G262) proves illuminating.⁶⁹

rTa mchog rol pa’i rgyud chen po, 381,6:⁷⁰

Hūm! In the ruby-red lotus palace,
Bhagavan Amitābha,
And the great mother Pāṇḍaravāsīnī, together
Are the abode of life [manifesting as] the play of non-duality.
The father’s life energy (semen) is white and radiant,
The mother’s life energy (menstrual blood) is red and radiant,
The life energies of father and mother in non-duality coalesce into the oily essence.
The place where life and wisdom are held in perfect command (*dbang*)
When one engages in one-pointed practice,
Bestow the accomplishments (*siddhi*) of life!

⁶⁸ *BKa’ brgyad tshe sgrub*, KT_A, 467,3 (§1. *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs*):

hrī: ‘chi med tshe yi rang bshin ni:
ye shes lnga yi ngo bo ste:
’od lnga gsal la mdangs dang bcas:
mi yi tshe ni snum la ’dril:

⁶⁹ For the *rTa mchog rol pa’i rgyud chen po*, see *De bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi dgongs pa bla na med pa gsang ba rta mchog rol pa’i rgyud chen po* (A1129/D839), in which *rta mchog* corresponds to *āsvottama*. As is well known, *Aśva* and *Hayagrīva* are traditionally associated with medicine and naturally came to feature in longevity *sādhana*s.

⁷⁰ *rTa mchog rol pa’i rgyud chen po*, 381,6:
hūm padma rā ga ’i gzhal yas na// [°rA ga’i gzhal yas na//] raga’i gzhalayasan//
bcom ldan snang ba mtha’ yas dang//
yum chen gos dkar mo dang gnyis// [°mo°] °ma°
gnyis med rol pa’i tshe yi gnas//
yab kyi tshe ni dkar la gdangs// [°dkar la gdangs//] °dkaralagadangs//
yum gyi tshe ni dmar la gdangs//
yab yum gnyis su med pa’i tshe rnam snum la ’gril//
tshe dang ye shes dbang gi gnas//
rtse gcig bsgrub pa’i tshe lags kyi//
tshe yi dngos grub stsal du gsol//.

The *rTa mchog rol pa'i rgyud chen po* understands this union as the convergence of the father's (Amitābha) white vital essence (seminal bodhicitta) and the mother's (Pāṇḍaravāsīnī) red vital essence (menstrual bodhicitta), which condense into "oily essence" (*snum*). This *snum* transcends mere materiality: it represents "the place where life and wisdom are held in perfect command" (*tshe dang ye shes dbang gi gnas*), a state wherein longevity and gnosis are wielded at will. The accomplishments (*siddhi*) of life (*tshe yi dngos grub*) therefore signify the sādḥaka's realisation, through yogic process, that longevity and gnosis manifest as distinct modes of a single essence within the ruby-red lotus palace of the dharmadhātu. Such direct cognition of non-dual ultimate reality not only augments the sādḥaka's vital force but establishes the intrinsic identity of vitality and gnosis itself.

I have yet to ascertain fully the extent to which this framework from the *rTa mchog rol pa'i rgyud chen po* influenced the longevity sādhanas of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can. Nevertheless, the present study has demonstrated that both texts employ the exceedingly rare term *snum la 'dril/'gril* to articulate the essential identity of "longevity" (*tshe*) and "wisdom/gnosis" (*ye shes*).⁷¹ Moreover, this fundamental identity may extend to the correspondence between **āyurjñānanopika* and '*chi med tshe yi sgrub thabs* in the *Tshe'i phyi sgrub* section (KT, §5). This bilingual title precisely expresses the ultimate soteriological goal of the *BKa' brgyad tshe sgrub*: the attainment of awakened deathless amṛta states transcending birth and death (*tshe / āyus*)⁷² through the perfection of gnosis (*ye shes / jñāna*).⁷³ It represents a transformative journey from ordinary existence to sublime parinirvāṇa—complete liberation from all physical and mental conditioning.⁷⁴

⁷¹ The variant readings of the term *snum la 'dril/'gril* in the *rTa mchog rol pa'i rgyud chen po* appear in three passages, as far as I am aware: (1.) the passage cited above (381,6 in the *Tshe'i le'u ste brgya dang go dgu pa*), (2.) 57,6: *snum la 'dril* and (3.) 140,6: *snum la 'khril*.

⁷² Cf. *Mvy*, nos. #773 (S 773): *āyurośītā / tshe la dbang ba*; #5052 (S 5053): *āyurvedah / tshe'i rig byed*; #9156 (S 9221): *āyusmān / tshe dang ldan pa*.

⁷³ The compound *āyurjñāna* is known to exhibit a structure wherein *jñāna* functions simultaneously as both means and goal, rendering any singular interpretation such as "the attainment of *āyus* through the perfection of *jñāna*" debatable. On this matter, reference may be made to Gerloff & Schott 2024 which discusses the semantics of the title *Jñānasiddhi*, analysing it as accomplishment through gnosis ('*jñānena siddhiḥ*') and accomplishment of gnosis ('*jñānasya siddhiḥ*'), see Gerloff & Schott 2024: 80n130 and 553n600. The title **Āyurjñānanopika* may be understood analogously: it permits a dual reading as both "that which conduces to the accomplishment of longevity-gnosis" and "the method for accomplishing longevity through gnosis".

⁷⁴ For the connection between amṛta (*bdud rtsi*) and nirvāṇa, I can do no better than to quote Schmithausen 2000: "The term amata/amṛta is used for nirvāṇa but not for biological life; [...] it need not imply anything more than that nirvāṇa is a state

Appendix 2. *Nopika in Canonical Sources

In light of recent advances in digital humanities,⁷⁵ this section aims to examine textual evidence for the term *nopika in the Tibetan canonical sources as a contribution to future comprehensive research.⁷⁶ In examining the Tibetan transliterations found in the title entries,⁷⁷ we observe notable variations: *no pi ka*, *no pi kā*, *lo pi ka*, and *no pi kaṃ*. These variants correspond to different combinations of terms in both the Tibetan titles and their conjectured Sanskrit reconstructions. This correlation suggests a systematic pattern of transformation rather than random corruption. The term *no pi ka* frequently appears in conjunction with *sādhana* in the conjectured Sanskrit titles, while corresponding to *sgrub thabs* in Tibetan titles. For instance, in rKTs-T1062 (*Jñānasiddhi*, A3130/D2219/P3063), we find “*no pi ka*” corresponding to *sgrub pa’i thabs* in *Ddznyā na siddhi nā ma sā dha no pi kā* (D2219).⁷⁸

The analysis reveals that both *no pi ka* and *lo pi ka* frequently occur in texts containing *maṇḍala* (*maṇḍa la*) in their titles. While the Tibetan translation of this **maṇḍala-nopika* correlation extends beyond *sgrub thabs/sgrub pa’i thabs*, as exemplified in rKTs-T788 (A2832/D1926/P2789) where it appears in conjunction with *cho ga* as *dkyil ’khor gyi cho ga*.⁷⁹ The form *lo pi ka* demonstrates a particularly strong correlation

unaffected by dying’ (p. 38). Although these observations were made in the context of early Buddhism, they remain essential for any investigation of the *tshe sgrub* practice, i.e., methods of transcending death, along with its exegesis and development.

⁷⁵ I am deeply grateful to rKTs and DharmaNexus for enabling efficient cross-referencing and pattern analysis through their pioneering applications of advanced techniques in Buddhist philology.

⁷⁶ This initial investigation acknowledges that crucial aspects remain to be explored in future studies. For instance, with reference to A2196/D1301/P2431 (*He badzra sā dha no pi ka*) ascribed to him as translator, examination of Rong zom Chos kyi bzang po’s thoughts on the transliteration in his works lies beyond the scope of this study. Such a comprehensive investigation, together with other relevant metadata (e.g., variant readings), would offer valuable insights into the chronology of transmission and transformation of the term **nopika* and its related terminology.

⁷⁷ The present paper draws solely upon title data, with conjectured Indic forms following the *dPe bsdur ma* edition (A) unless otherwise noted. In the case of the rNying ma canonical collections, the *rNying ma rgyud ’bum* for instance, the term *no pi ka* presents a denser jungle of variant readings. For instance, the *Jig rten mchod bstod sgrub pa rtsa ba’i rgyud* (rKTs-G224), ascribed to Nyang ral Nyi ma ’od zer (1124–1192. BDRC#P364), exists in multiple recensions, yielding such variants as *no bi ka* and *no bhi ka*.

⁷⁸ Variant reading is given in A3130: *Dznyā bā siddhi nā ma sā dha no pi kā*.

⁷⁹ See rKTs-T788: Tib. *gShin rje dgra’i dkyil ’khor gyi cho ga gshin rje gshed ’byung ba*; Skt. **Yamāriṃaṇḍalavidhiyamāntakodaya* (cf. A2832: *Ya mā ri maṇḍa la no pi ka ya mānta koda ya nā ma*); Eng. *A Yamāri Maṇḍala Ritual called “The Source of Yamāntaka”*.

with the term *maṇḍala*, as evidenced in rKTs-T1351 (A3446/D2529/P3352),⁸⁰ which reads *ma hā maṇḍa la lo pi ka*, and rKTs-T1338 (A3433/D2516/P3339),⁸¹ which reads *ma hā maṇḍa lo pi ka*. Both texts, however, are rendered in Tibetan in combination with *cho ga* as *dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga*. A notable variation is found in rKTs-T432 (A2197/D1302/P2432), where *sā dha no pi ka* is rendered as *sgrub pa'i thabs kyi man ngag (sādhanopadeśa)*.⁸²

Thus, the relationship between *no pi ka* and ritual terminology proves significant, as evidenced by the correspondence of “*aupayikam / cho ga'am thabs*” in *Mvy*, no. 6317 (S 6339). In rKTs-T369 (A2135/D1240/P2369), for instance, we find *no pi ka* appearing alongside *maṇḍa la no pi ka bi dhi* in the transliterated Sanskrit and *dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga'i sgrub thabs* in the Tibetan. This correlation supports the hypothesis that **nopika* may have evolved from *upāyika* through a process of corrupt re-Sanskritization.

4. Conclusion

In summary, drawing together the arguments presented in this paper, four primary conclusions can be hypothesised as follows:

(1.) Concerning the four stratigraphic strata: The common archetypal core underlying three textual corpora of longevity practices (*tshes sgrub*) attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can—namely (a.) *Tshes sgrub lcags kyi sdong po* (CD), (b.) *Phyi nang gsang ba'i tshes sgrub* (PNST), and (c.) *BKa' brgyad tshes sgrub* (KT)—comprises four stratigraphic strata: Phyi/Nang/gSang/Yang gsang (Outer/Inner/Secret/Ulimate practice of the single syllable Hrīḥ). These strata establish a systematic framework for longevity practices that progresses from relatively external, material-based practices such as *rasāyana (bcud len)* towards the attainment of vidyādhara status. While the textual structure suggests an increasingly subtle trajectory, the question of whether practitioners engaged with these stages sequentially or selected individual practices remains open to

⁸⁰ See rKTs-T1351: Tib. *rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga rdo rje thams cad 'byung ba zhes bya ba'i don bsdus pa*; Skt. **Vajradhātu-mahāmaṇḍalavidhisarvavajrodaya-nāma-piṇḍārtha* (cf. A3446: *Badzra dhā tu ma hā maṇḍa la lo pi ka sarba badzrodaya na mā ma piṇḍārtha*); Eng. *The Concise Meaning of “The Source of All Vajras”, A Vajradhātu Maṇḍala Ritual*.

⁸¹ See rKTs-T1338: Tib. *rDo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor chen po'i cho ga rdo rje thams cad 'byung ba*; Skt. **Vajradhātumahāmaṇḍalavidhisarvavajrodaya* (cf. A3433: *badzra dhā tu ma hā maṇḍa lo pi ka sarba badzro dā ya nā ma*); Eng. *A Ritual for the Great Vajradhātu Maṇḍala called “The Source of All Vajras”*.

⁸² See rKTs-T432: Tib. *dPal kye'i rdo rje'i sgrub pa'i thabs kyi man ngag*; Skt. **Śrīhevajra-nāma-sādhanopadeśa* (cf. A2197: *Shrī he badzra nā ma sā dha no pi ka*); Eng. *Personal Instructions on the Sādhana of Glorious Hevajra*.

investigation. Biographical accounts, later ritual compendia—such as those in Padma 'phrin las' writings—and fieldwork data may offer valuable evidence as to whether this gradient reflects actual stages of practice or functions primarily as a doctrinal taxonomy.

(2.) Regarding the dhāraṇī attested in the *Aparimitāyuhṣūtra*: The dhāraṇīs recited in the CD and the PNST contain two instances of *om* which correspond to the same canonical family as D675/P362 of the *Aparimitāyuhṣūtra*. By contrast, the KT contains no dhāraṇīs attested in the *Aparimitāyuhṣūtra*, suggesting selective reception regarding the adoption of specific dhāraṇīs even amongst *tshe sgrub* literature sharing an analogous common archetypal core.

(3.) Regarding textual transmission lineages: Fundamental structural differences are found between the CNT edition (KT_A) and RT editions (KT_B, KT_C), extending beyond mere terminological variations. The RT lineage commences with the Ādi-Buddha Kun bzang Heruka and extends through to 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–1899, BDRC#P264). The CNT lineage incorporates verses from the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* (MS) while listing eight Byang gter patriarchs in the *Tshe dbang yongs rdzogs* section (KT, §1). This lineage, commencing with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can and concluding with sixteenth-century lamas, mirrors the pattern of the *bsKul zhing gsol 'debs* section (§X²) of the *Phyi nang gsang ba'i tshe sgrub*, suggesting a later interpolated stratum. This practice of invoking MS verses when venerating Byang gter patriarchs likely crystallised around the sixteenth century, possibly drawing upon the 'Jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's commentary on the MS.

(4.) Concerning the bilingual correspondence between **āyurjñānanopika* and *'chi med tshe yi sgrub thabs* as attested in KT, §5: The term **āyurjñānanopika* represents a Tibetan corruption of the compound **āyurjñānasādhānopayika*, consisting of *āyurjñāna* and BHS *sādhānopayika*. Since the term *no pi ka* appears as a synonym for *sgrub thabs* found in the Dunhuang find, the usage ascribed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can likely reflects the sNga 'gyur terminology rather than the *phyi dar* translation activity. The bilingual terminology may be construed as “practice of transcending death through gnosis”, wherein nirvāṇa / *āyus* is achieved through the perfection of wisdom / *jñāna*. The enduring significance of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can's legacy merits recognition within tantric scholarship as equally significant as, if not more so than, the conventionally posited correspondence between **āyuhṣādhana* and *tshe sgrub*.

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- BHSD Franklin Edgerton. *Buddhist Hybrid Sanskrit Grammar and Dictionary*, vol. 2, Dictionary. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.
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<http://www.rkts.org/index.php>
- (rKTs-T) Catalog entry number in rKTs.
- RT *Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo*.
- (RT_A) Paro: Ngodrup and Sherab Drimay, 1976–1980. 111 vols. 'A reproduction of the Stod-luñ Mtshur-phu redaction of 'Jam-mgon Koñ-sprul's great work on the unity of the gter-ma traditions of Tibet. With supplemental texts from the Dpal-spuñs redaction and other manuscripts. Reproduced at the order of the Ven. Dingo Chhentse Rimpoche under the esteemed patronage of H.M. Ashé Kesang, Queen Mother of Bhutan, and H.R.H. Ashé Phuntsho Choedron, Senior Royal Grandmother' (t.p.). [BDRC#W20578]
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(KT_B) 21 folios. 6 lines per folio. Unknown size. In: RT_B, vol. 19, pp. 297–338.
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rgyas pa’i nang nas khyer bde bar ’bring du bskar ba. Ca. 19 fols. 7
x 45 cm. Nargaun: Tashi Wangdu (owner of the MS) [part of
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Rin chen gter gyi mdzod chen por ji ltar bzhugs pa’i dkar chag dang/
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 (VS_T) Tibetan recension.
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