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Rigdzin Gödem

Edited by

Jay Valentine
& Jean-Luc Achard

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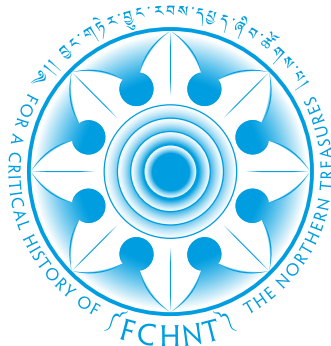


Northern Treasures Histories

Volume 2:

The Life, Times, and Works of Rigdzin Gödem

Jean-Luc ACHARD, Stéphane ARGUILLÈRE,
Tenpa Tsering BATSANG, Cécile DUCHER,
Simon MARTIN, Jay Holt VALENTINE



Volume Editors: Jay Holt Valentine & Jean-Luc Achard

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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	<i>sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs</i> (2015).
GZT	<i>dGongs pa zang thal gyi chos skor</i> (Leh, 1979).
NG	<i>Rnying ma rgyud 'bum</i> (mTshams brag manuscripts: Thimphu, 1982).
NKG	<i>rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa</i> . Refers by default to bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje (ed.), 1982–1987, <i>Gangs can bstan pa'i phyi mo snga 'gyur pa'i chos mdzod ring brgyud ma nyams bka' ma'i gzhung. A Collection of Teachings and Initiations of the Rñin-ma-pa Tradition passed through Continuous and Unbroken Oral Lineages from the Ancient Masters—completely edited and restructured by H.H. Bdud-'joms Rin-po-che on the basis of the successive Smin-grol gliñ and Rdzogs-chen Rgyal-sras redactions</i> , Kalimpong, Dupjung Lama.
RT-A	<i>Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo</i> (Paro, 1976–1980).
RT-B	<i>Rin chen gter mdzod chen mo</i> (Shechen Edition, 2007–2008).

General Introduction

Jay Holt Valentine
(Troy University)

his second volume of *Northern Treasures Histories*, which includes twenty chapters that are organized into three parts, focuses on the life and works of Rigdzin Gödem (1337–ca. 1401), the tertön who revealed the treasures that formed the initial scriptural basis of the Northern Treasures tradition. **Part I** contains two chapters of annotated translations drawn from *The Garland of Wondrous Tales*,¹ a history of the tradition containing dozens of biographies, which were authored by a contemporary Tibetan historian of the Northern Treasures named Khenpo Chöying (b. 20th c.). **Chapter 1** consists of a translation of his biography of Rigdzin Gödem entitled *The Treasure Revealer and Great Awareness-Holder, Rigdzin Gökyidem Truchen*² and **Chapter 2** consists of a translation of his history of the dynastic kings of Mangyül Gungthang entitled *The Patrilineal Kings of Gungthang*,³ which emphasizes the relationship between a few of these royal patriarchs and Rigdzin Gödem.

Regarding the biography (**Chapter 1**), it is clear that one of Khenpo Chöying's primary sources was *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, a biography that was written by a direct disciple of Rigdzin Gödem's named Nyima Zangpo (b. 1386) in the fifteenth century.⁴ Many passages were borrowed from this source either verbatim or with only minor alterations. Additionally, many of the scriptural excerpts that have been included in the biography authored by Khenpo Chöying can also be found in Nyima Zangpo's composition. Nevertheless, Khenpo Chöying's composition is not simply a summary of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*. His explanation of Rigdzin Gödem's teaching practices appears to be a

¹ Chos dbyings 2015, *Byang gter thub bstan rdo rje brag gi chos 'byung rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i rtogs brjod ngo mtshar gtam gyi phreng ba*, in CNT, vol. 62, pp. 3-847.

² *Ibid.*, *gTer ston rig 'dzin chen po rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can*, pp. 82-118.

³ *Ibid.*, *Gung thang rgyal po yab sras*, pp. 118-125.

⁴ There are several editions with slightly different titles. For an easily accessible edition, see Nyi ma bzang po 2015, *Rig 'dzin dngos grub rgyal mtshan gyi rnam thar nyi ma'i 'od zer*, in CNT, vol. 59, pp. 1-75.

unique—and very intriguing—feature of this biography. He also wove in passages from the Fifth Dalai Lama's (1617–1682) biography of Ngakgi Wangpo (1580–1639),¹ the third incarnation of Rigdzin Gödem, when discussing the treasure revealer's relationships with the kings of Mangyül Gungthang. The composition also includes additional excerpts from the prophetic guides of the Northern Treasures that were not utilized by Nyima Zangpo as well as excerpts from prophecies that were revealed by other tertöns such as: Jatsön Nyingpo (1585–1656), Nyangral Nyima Özer (1124–1192), Künkyong Lingpa (b. 1396/1408–d. 1477/1489), Orgyen Lingpa (1323–ca. 1355), and Pema Lingpa (1450–1521). Lastly, while Nyima Zangpo included twelve partial stanzas from *The Prayer of the Eighteen Great Omens*,² an autobiographical text written by Rigdzin Gödem himself, Khenpo Chöying included nearly the entire text, eighteen verses, within his composition.

Regarding *The Patrilineal Kings of Gungthang* (**Chapter 2**), surely one of its most prominent features is a genealogy that demonstrates exactly how the ruling patriarchs of Mangyül Gungthang are legitimate descendants of the great Dharma Kings of Imperial Tibet (7th–9th c.). While one might expect for the presentation to focus on a connection to Trisong Detsen (r. ca. 755–794)—as we are surely meant to see a set of parallel relationships between Trisong Detsen and Padmasambhava, on the one hand, and the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang and Rigdzin Gödem, on the other—emphasis is instead placed on his son, Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo (ca. 761–ca. 815). This connection is of supreme significance, however, because—as one learns from the prophetic guides—the Northern Treasures were concealed out of concern for the welfare of Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo's descendants after the death of Trisong Detsen. Khenpo Chöying's composition about the kings is also interesting in that it demonstrates that the relationship between Rigdzin Gödem and

¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *rGyal dbang lnga pa chen pos mdzad pa'i byang pa rig 'dzin chen po ngag gi dbang po'i rnam par thar pa ngo mtshar bkod pa rgya mtsho* [*The Ocean Displaying Marvels: Biography of Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo*], in CNT, vol. 59, pp. 305–455.

² For the complete prayer, see Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol 'debs brda chen bco brgyad* [*The Prayer of the Eighteen Great Omens*], in *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor*, vol. 1, pp. 123–127. For a translation of the complete prayer, see Valentine 2026, “*The Prayer of the Eighteen Great Omens: An Autobiographical Sketch of the Life of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem through Signs, Omens, and Symbols.*”

the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang is still considered to be important despite the fact that the kingdom dissolved in the seventeenth century. In fact, this preoccupation is also present within *The Treasure Revealer and Great Awareness-Holder, Rigdzin Gökyidem Truchen* (**Chapter 1**), as it includes an analysis of their relationship that was authored by the Fifth Dalai Lama, a head of state who was surely aware that the Northern Treasures includes a cycle that is intimately related to statecraft (see **Chapter 12**).

These translations are also valuable in part because they offer a contemporary emic account of the early years of the Northern Treasures tradition. Nevertheless, as these passages of *The Garland of Wondrous Tales* were authored more than five hundred years after the events that they describe, they are largely derivative compositions based on a variety of sources of varying historiographic significance. Thus, historians interested in the life of Rigdzin Gödem would benefit from also reading his fifteenth-century biography, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*,¹ which has already been introduced above. For those seeking more information about the history of the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang, Kahtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu's (1698–1755) *The Royal Lineage of Gungthang* will be of interest.²

However, even if one were to consider the content of all of these historiographic texts together, there are still many details about the founder of the Northern Treasures tradition that only come to light through additional research, analysis, reflection, and commentary. Thus, this volume also includes (**Part II: Chapters 3-10**) a series of chapters that examine particular aspects of the life of Rigdzin Gödem and the historical context in which he lived and (**Part III: Chapters 11-20**) an overview of the works of Rigdzin Gödem, which together greatly increase our knowledge of this important treasure revealer.

Chapter 3 (by Jay Holt Valentine) offers an analysis of the prophecies that Khenpo Chöying used to introduce the biography of Rigdzin Gödem along with a study of the tertön's incarnational status, which might be considered as a continuation of an important theme within

¹ See the forthcoming annotated and unabridged translation by Jay Holt Valentine, which is currently entitled *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight: The Life of Rigdzin Gödem*. For an abridged translation of this biography, see Herweg 1994.

² Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*. For an excellent dual language (Tibetan and German) edition of this text, which also includes an in-depth study of the Mang yul Gung thang Kingdom, see Everding 2000b.

Valentine's dissertation entitled *The Lords of the Northern Treasures*.¹ **Chapter 4** (by Jay Holt Valentine) is in large part a summary of Roberto Vitali's "Historical and Ethnic Traits in the *Mes rabs* of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem can,"² which contains a detailed analysis of Rigdzin Gödem's paternal ancestry that is said to include patriarchs of various ethnicities that are often uncritically and collectively referred to as "Hor." As one of the accomplishments of Vitali's article was to differentiate between the Yellow Uyghur and those of an earlier and more general Turkic ethnicity (such as Rigdzin Gödem himself in Vitali's estimations), the chapter also includes a summary of oral traditions recorded by John Bellezza that associate various sites relevant to the Northern Treasures tradition in Latö Jang with the Yellow Uyghur.³

In **Chapter 5**, Stéphane Arguillère presents a summary of what is currently known and unknown regarding Rigdzin Gödem's teachers and his training. Arguillère insightfully points out the importance of this work in that it allows for Rigdzin Gödem to be more properly placed in concrete history, thereby undoing some of the obfuscating mystification that is an integral part of the revelatory processes in the treasure traditions. This chapter includes a concise summary of his arguments in support of the identification of Draklungpa Rinchenpal, Rigdzin Gödem's only known Dzogchen master, as none other than Meben Rinchen Lingpa (1289–1368), who gave prophetic guides to Pema Ledreltsal (1291–1319), the tertön who discovered the *Khandro Nyingthik* teachings and who later finished the task of deciphering the treasure scrolls that were left behind by Pema Ledreltsal after his untimely death.

Chapter 6 (by Jay Holt Valentine) consists of a study of the enigmatic tertön known as Ritropa Zangpo Drakpa (14th c.), who provided—although indirectly—the prophetic guides that were used by Rigdzin Gödem at the start of his career as a treasure revealer. This study of the life and works of Zangpo Drakpa might be considered as an academic complement to the biography that is available through *Treasury of Lives*, which was also authored by Valentine.⁴

Chapter 7 (by Tenpa Tsering Batsang and Jay Holt Valentine) is

¹ See Valentine 2013.

² See Vitali 2011. Similar issues are discussed in Vitali 2026.

³ See Bellezza 2005 & 2010.

⁴ See Valentine 2016b.

constituted by a study of the history of the principality of Mangyül Gungthang and their dynastic kings and, as such, it can thus be understood as a commentary on both Khenpo Chöying's biography of Rigdzin Gödem (**Chapter 1**) and his account of the kings of Mangyül Gungthang (**Chapter 2**). This chapter not only provides a wealth of needed background information about the political vicissitudes through which the treasure revealer endured, but it also seeks to clarify Rigdzin Gödem's relationship with the monarchs of the fourteenth century. A table (by Tenpa Tsering Batsang and Jay Holt Valentine) containing details about the lives of the kings of Mangyül Gungthang has been provided as **Appendix 1** at the end of this volume.

In **Chapter 8** (by Cécile Ducher), one's attention is directed toward Rigdzin Gödem's exploits as one who opened "concealed lands" (*sbas yul*). Ducher's primary goal is to pull together information from previous studies that is relevant to the concealed lands that are in some way associated with the Northern Treasures tradition. The chapter also serves as a general introduction to the treasure-related practice of opening concealed lands and seeks to demonstrate Rigdzin Gödem's central place within this rather widespread tradition.

Chapter 9 (by Jay Holt Valentine) examines the visionary dreams of Rigdzin Gödem, which—while featured in the fifteenth-century biography by Nyima Zangpo—are understandably cut from Khenpo Chöying's more condensed composition that is provided in translation in this volume (**Chapter 1**). While the chapter examines the meaning and importance of his dreams individually, Valentine also demonstrates how the interpretation of the dreams affects one's understanding of the later years of Rigdzin Gödem's life, particularly his relationship with the Sé clan. His analysis also leads to a theory regarding the manner in which *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* was authored, primarily by assembling preexisting biographical and autobiographical materials.

Chapter 10 (by Tenpa Tsering Batsang and Jay Holt Valentine) contains a reevaluation of the date of death of Rigdzin Gödem. While they conclude that a definitive answer to this calendrical puzzle cannot be determined based solely on the currently available sources, they suggest the provisional acceptance of 1337–ca. 1401 as the dates for this treasure revealer. Nevertheless, they also acknowledge the rationale for the traditional dates of 1337–1408/1409.

While the chapters of **Part II** constitute an advancement in the study of the life and times of Rigdzin Gödem, the work herein clearly builds

upon the accomplishments of a long line of scholars, and thus it is perhaps best to understand the progress made herein as a modest (albeit significant), incremental step forward. In comparison, **Part III**, which is an overview of the works of Rigdzin Gödem, represents a much larger leap forward as the majority of the treasure cycles he revealed have received little or no scholarly attention. (The most notable exceptions are, of course, his Vajrakīla and Dzogchen cycles.) In the introduction (**Chapter 11**) to this third section, Stéphane Arguillère, who painstakingly read through thousands of pages of Tibetan text to gather the required information needed for his contributions to this volume, offers his insights regarding emic and etic organizational themes that might be used to better understand the canon of treasure texts attributed to Rigdzin Gödem. Arguillère has, in fact, arranged the presentation of the treasure cycles below according to his determination of the different audiences or types of practitioners for whom the cycles are intended.

The first grouping, which is aimed at protecting the royal patrons of Mangyül Gungthang, includes only one cycle, *The Seven Auspicious Connections* (*rTen 'brel chos bdun*), which is discussed in **Chapter 12**. While it is well-known that at least some part of the Northern Treasures was intended to benefit the kings of this realm, Arguillère's overview demonstrates how this specific cycle was meant to address the king's religious needs, including the task of controlling opposing forces on the spiritual plane of existence.

The second grouping of treasure cycles includes those that are meant for organizing and instructing lay disciples, who presumably have neither the time nor the skills required for higher levels of practice. Arguillère places three cycles in this grouping, which are: (**Chapter 13**) *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior* (*Byang chub spyod dbang*), (**Chapter 14**) *Liberating All Migrants* (*'Gro ba kun grol*), and (**Chapter 15**) *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara* (*Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub*). While these chapters (all three are by Stéphane Arguillère) present brief—though extremely informative—summaries of these cycles, it is hoped that future studies of these treasures will help us better understand Rigdzin Gödem's relationship to the community of devotees that assembled around him at Trazang and perhaps even travelled with him to the southern borderlands, a subject that is nearly entirely absent from his biographies.

Next, the third grouping contains treasure cycles that are clearly meant for dedicated, professional practitioners. Arguillère places four

cycles in this grouping, which are: (**Chapter 16**) *The Triple Magic Dagger* (*Phur pa rnam gsum*), (**Chapter 17**) *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* (*bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*), (**Chapter 18**) *The Heart Practice of the Guru Fierce Vajra Power* (*Thugs sgrub rdo rje drag po rtsal*), and (**Chapter 20**) *The Dzogchen Teachings of the Gongpa Zangthal* (*dGongs pa zang thal*). This grouping also includes a summary of a text that tradition maintains was authored by Rigdzin Gödem: (**Chapter 19**) *The Profound Commentary on the Noble Mañjuśrī* (*'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo*). While the summaries presented in **Chapters 12-19** have been authored by Stéphane Arguillère, Jean-Luc Achard, who is well-known for his extensive studies of Dzogchen, authored **Chapter 20**, which focuses on the Great Perfection scriptures of the Northern Treasures: *Kadak Rangjung Rangshar* and *Gongpa Zangthal*.

Altogether, **Part III** far surpasses previous attempts to describe the works of Rigdzin Gödem. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that there is still a great deal of work to be done in this area, particularly when it comes to the treasure cycles that have not yet been the focus of sustained study, and we hope that these summaries will inspire future scholars to take up Jangter-related research topics.

Finally, this volume also includes three appendices. **Appendix 1**, which was mentioned above, features a table containing details about the lives of the kings of Mangyül Gungthang. **Appendix 2** offers a timeline of events relevant to this volume, and **Appendix 3** is a table of Tibetan spellings that provides the transliterations of the phonetic renderings of Tibetan terms used in this volume.



Part I:
Translations

Chapter 1: The Treasure Revealer and Great Awareness-Holder, Rigdzin Gökyidem Truchen¹

Khenpo Chöying (author/compiler)
(Independent Scholar)

Jay Holt Valentine (translation and annotations)
(Troy University)

The Prophecies

Regarding the well-known miraculous emanation² of Zhang Nanam Dorjé Düjom called the Great Rigdzin Gökyidem Truchen, the great incarnated treasure [revealer,³ it is stated] in Jatsön [Nyingpo's]⁴ *Silver-White Mirror* [containing] the *Prophecies of the Natural Liberation from Lower Existences* [owing to] the Great Compassionate One:⁵

As for Lords Nyangral [Nyima Özer], (1124–1192), [Guru] Chöwang (1212–1270), and [Rigdzin] Gödem,
They are the three supreme emanations⁶ and wish-fulfilling jewels!

¹ Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 82-118. The title actually includes the dates of 1337–1408 for the life of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. However, as there is some doubt about the year of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's passing, the dates have been omitted here. For a detailed explanation of the subject, see Tenpa Tsering Batsang and Jay Holt Valentine's chapter on the death of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem in this volume, where they argue for the following dates: 1337–ca. 1401.

² *rNam 'phrul*.

³ *sPrul pa'i gter*.

⁴ For a short biography of the treasure revealer named 'Ja' tshon snying po (1585–1656), see Gardner and Greensmith 2010.

⁵ *Thugs rje chen po ngan song rang grol gyi lung bstan dngul dkar me long*. See 'Ja' tshon snying po n.d., *Dus gsum lung bstan dngul dkar me long*, p. 459. The full title is *Jo bo thugs rje chen po 'phags pa spyen ras gzigs ngan song rang grol las : dus gsum lung bstan dngul dkar me long*.

⁶ *sPrul sku*.

And in the treasure prophecies of Lord Nyangral [Nyima Özer, it is said]:¹

From this [place] to the base of Draknag [to] the northwest,
Having emanated from Dorjé Düjom,
He will protect the King of Ngari.

And in the treasure prophecies of Künkyong Lingpa (ca. 15th c.), [he is described as follows]:²

He who fulfills the aspirations of his disciples [through] miracles,³
The one who grew vulture feathers⁴ on his head [and]
Took out all the treasure vessels of Trazang,
I have presented [his exploits only] in brief, certainly not in sufficient detail.

And in the prophecies of Orgyen Lingpa (1323–ca. 1355), [it is said]:⁵

The body-emanation⁶ is [Nyangral] Nyima Özer.
The speech-emanation⁷ is Chökyi Wangchuk.
The heart-emanation⁸ is [Rigdzin] Gökyidem Truchen.
The [emanation of his] enlightened qualities⁹ is Orgyen Lingpa.

¹ This passage has not yet been found within the revelations of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer.

² This passage has not yet been located within the treasures of Kun skyong gling pa. In *Chos rgyal dbang po'i sde* 2007–2008, *brDa' don lam zab*, the text is referred to as *gTer lung gnas byang gsal bkod*. The quote is the same and appears at vol. 5, p. 638.5-6. Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for providing the information for this footnote.

³ *rDzu 'phrul*.

⁴ *rGod kyi ldem*.

⁵ This passage has not yet been found within the treasures of O rgyan gling pa.

⁶ *sKu sprul*.

⁷ *gSung sprul*.

⁸ *Thugs sprul*.

⁹ *Yon tan*.

The [emanation of his] enlightened activity¹ is Tseten Gyaltzen.²

The five are actual [emanations of] Padmasambhava.³

And in *The Prophecy of the All Illuminating Mirror*, [it is said]:⁴

In the northern region of Latö,
There will be a treasure revealer possessing the name of
vulture.⁵ [83]

And in [*The Essential Steps*:] *An Extensive Essential Guide*, a treasure which was revealed by Tülku Zangpo Drakpa (14th c.), [it is said]:⁶

On the eastern slope of Mt. Trazang,
The one who will abide like a lion,
Alone [like] a great tree bereft of branches,
Will practice the *yidam* Vajrakīla
As a result of his prayers from former lives.

[Born] in a year with a fire element,
His fierce activities will [continue] without beginning or end,
[And] he will have a sharp mind and great wisdom.

¹ *Phrin las*.

² Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan appears to have lived between 1250 and 1350. For a discussion of his dates, see Arguillère 2025a and the chapter below on the subject of concealed lands by Cécile Ducher. Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan is currently known as the first treasure revealer involved with concealed lands (*sbas yul*). See Samuel 2021, pp. 63, 79.

³ For an insightful analysis of this prophecy, see Achard 2023b.

⁴ The first of these two lines of verse was not found in the identified source, but there were many lines that were similar. The second line, however, was found, see Padma gling pa 1975–1976, *Lung bstan kun gsal me long*, p. 106. These two lines of verse have been quoted by other authors. For a good example, see sKal bzang bdud 'dul rdo rje 1980, *Byang gter cho ga'i yan lag dbyangs rol gar 'chams sogs kyi dgos ched lag len spyi don tsam bshad pa lung gi gter mdzod*, vol 4, pp. 442–443.

⁵ *rGod*.

⁶ bZang po grags pa 2015, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*, vol. 33, p. 149. This exact passage appears in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*. See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 55–56. For more on this figure, see the chapter below on his life and works by Jay Holt Valentine.

His name [means he is of] a clan that accomplishes desires,
[And] that he will well establish the victory banner of the
Dharma.¹

In his own treasure [prophecies, it is stated]:²

On the eastern slope of Mt. Trazang,
Nanam Dorjé Düjom's
Emanation,³ [named] Gökyidem Truchen,
The one endowed with compassion, will arise in a secretive
manner.⁴

And in [*The Essential Steps*:] *An Extensive Essential Guide*⁵ it states:

¹ These last two lines are somewhat of a creative etymology of his given name: dNgos grub rgyal mtshan. The *rgyal mtshan* reference is straightforward, but I believe that the reader is supposed to see a connection between “*dngos grub*” (actual attainment) and “*’dod pa sgrub*” (attainment of one’s desires).

² In particular, this prophecy is from Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 1983, *’Dzeng rdo dkar po nas byon pa*, pp. 326-327. These four lines of verse also appear in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 79.

³ *sPrul pa*.

⁴ The various mentions of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s “secretive manner” are referring to the fact that he did not seem special externally as a youth as his enlightened qualities were hidden within until later in life.

⁵ bZang po grags pa 2015, *sNyīng byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*, vol. 33, p. 158. This is an excerpt from a larger narrative that can be found in two slightly different editions of *sNyīng byang rgyas pa gnad gyi them bu*: 1) 1983, pp. 316-319, and 2) 2015, vol. 33, pp. 156-158. In brief, Padmasambhava explains the fate—future lives, eventual enlightenment, etc.—of five different individuals: the King of Mang yul Gung thang, the emanated demon who killed the king, the king’s protector (i.e., Rig ’dzin rGod ldem), *lHa sras* Mu khri btsan po, and sNa nam rDo rje bdud ’joms. Here is a gloss of the narrative: Padmasambhava was preparing to depart, when Mu khri btsan po and rDo rje bdud ’joms approached and asked him a few questions. They wanted to know about the fate of that King of Mang yul Gung thang who would eventually live during the end times as well as the fate of the demon (*bdud*) who would cut the king’s life short. In particular, they wanted to know what would happen to the king after he died in that lifetime. They also asked where the protector (i.e., Rig ’dzin rGod ldem) would be reborn, and they asked for the conversation to take into account karma, causes, and results. Padmasambhava’s answer is that the king will be reborn first in Kashmir as a bodhisattva and do great deeds. Then, he will be born in Oḍḍiyāna, the land of the Ḍākinīs, where he will enjoy the Dharma of the Secret Mantra. After that,

The fortunate one¹ who protects the king
 Will act for the benefit of migratory beings in the region of
 Mangyül.
 He will achieve great benefit for the King of Gungthang.
 [After the fortunate one] dies, he [will be born] in the western
 region of Mangyül, [where]
 He will increase the great strength [of his activities for] the
 benefit of migratory beings.
 That emanated body, without dying,
 Will go to Oḍḍiyāna, the Land of the Ḍākinīs.

And in the *Self-Emergent Self-Arisen Root-Tantra in Twenty-Five Sections*, [it is said]:²

Mantra-Wielder³ Dorjé Dūjom, you
 Should practice the three empowerments, the three
 continuities,⁴ and

he will attain liberation. The demonic emanation will not be so lucky. His destiny is explained in great detail, and it “ends” with the experience of the hot and cold hells for an immeasurably great number of world ages. As for the fate of that fortunate one (i.e., Rig ’dzin rGod ldem) who protects the king, he will be reborn in either—depending on which edition of the text one reads—“a western land” or “the western land of Nepal.” He will be a *nirmāṇakāya* (*sprul sku*) with a vajra body, and without dying, he will go to Oḍḍiyāna, the Land of the Ḍākinīs and become a siddha of the Mahāmudrā. Padmasambhava then tells Mu khri btsan po that he will be reborn seventeen more times, working for the benefit of sentient beings, before finally going to Oḍḍiyāna, the Land of the Ḍākinīs. He tells rDo rje bdud ’joms that he will get there quicker, after only seven lifetimes. Padmasambhava informs them that those who act according to his instructions and abide in his retinue in that land quickly attain liberation. Interestingly, this passage, which appears toward the end of *sNying byang rgyas pa*, is not quoted in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.

¹ The fortunate one, who is the protector of the king, is Rig ’dzin rGod ldem.

² The text entitled *Chos tshan nyer lnga ’i rtsa rgyud rang byung rang shar* has not been located, but this conversation has been found within the following prophetic guide: Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 2015, *rDo rje phur pa ’i brgyud rim gsang ba rin po che dngos grub blang ba*, vol. 13, pp. 277-280. This passage does not appear in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.

³ *sNgags ’chang*.

⁴ *rGyud*. The three continuities may be referring to the continuity of the Basis, the Path, and the Fruit (*gzhi lam ’bras bu ’i rgyud gsum*).

The three types of teachings¹ and [then] conceal them as treasures.
 From here toward the northern borderland where the sun sets,
 In front of the mountain called Trazang, [84]
 On top of a boulder that resembles a tortoise,
 In seven hundred years from now, [which is]
 Six hundred twenty years [after] I, [Padmasambhava], have departed,
 Rigdzin Gökyidem Truchen,
 A secret yogin with good karma, will arrive.

[In] those and other [prophecies], the Knower of the Three Times, Guru Padmasambhava has praised [Rigdzin Gödem] again and again in the adamantine scriptures.

The Place of Birth, Family Lineage, Conception, and Birth

The natal land of this emanated² treasure revealer is called Trazang, the king of mountains, near Zangzang Lhadrak in the region called Toyor Nakpo³ in Northern [Latö] within the Right Horn [of Tsang]. That is the location of the [divine] palace, which belongs to the King of the *Nāga* Chimé Nyewé Wangpo,⁴ a virtuous attendant of the Buddhas of the three times.⁵ It is [also] a place where Padmasambhava and his retinue stayed for seven days, practicing in the many natural caves [in the area]. It is [the same] place where the three keys to the great treasures were concealed at the summit of the mountain, which is also where the *Kīla* treasures were concealed. To the east of that extraordinary abode, where those and other wondrous [events took

¹ The phrase “three types of teachings” is likely referring to tantras (*rgyud*, i.e. Mahāyoga), *āgamas* (*lung*, i.e. Anuyoga), and *upadeśas* (*Man ngag*, i.e. Atiyoga, rDzogs chen).

² *sPrul pa*.

³ Tho yor nag po.

⁴ 'Chi med nye ba'i dbang po.

⁵ See the parallel passage in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 56. For more on this subject, see the chapter below on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's paternal ancestry by Valentine. For a more detailed discussion of the local divinities that reside in and around Mt. bKra bzang, see Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *bKra bzang zhing skyong mchod sprin*, vol. 61, pp. 370-372.

place, Rigdzin Gödem was born] in [a room known as] “the [blessed] sleeping chamber” at Namolung.

Regarding [Rigdzin Gödem’s] familial clan,¹ it was the Degyin Hor² clan, a royal lineage³ [that stands out] like the *sāla* tree⁴ [in a forest of common trees]. It is clear in the biography [of Rigdzin Gödem] that it is the family lineage⁵ of the King of the Hor of the Yellow Tents, who is known in the old legends. [One of Rigdzin Gödem’s ancestors] was the one named Hor Khenpo Jigten, who beheld the countenance of Chemchok and Mamo⁶ and happened to communicate verbally with Sipa Dadröl.⁷ Since then, the lineage has had many who have beheld the countenance of Vajrakīla and who have been practitioners of the Brahmin Cycle of the Great Perfection.⁸ [85]

His father was called Lobpön Si Dūdül Pal.⁹ He was an expert in *The Net of Magical Illusions*¹⁰ and *Kīla*. Because he attained the heat¹¹ of Vajrakīla and attained power over the life-forces of many gods and spirits,¹² he was an authentic liberator. His mother was called Jocham Sönam Khyeudren.¹³ She was the daughter¹⁴ of José Dowa of Puktsa,¹⁵

¹ *Rigs*.

² De gyin hor.

³ *Rigs*.

⁴ This is a tropical tree known as a source for medicinal liquids.

⁵ *gDung brgyud*.

⁶ Between this and the next sentence, we see that Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s ancestors practiced at least three sādhanās belonging to *The Eight Pronouncements (bKa’ brgyad)*: Che mchog Heruka, Ma mo rbod rtong, and Vajrakīla or rDo rje phur ba.

⁷ This is likely Yum Srid pa bde ’grol, who (Turpeinen 2015, p. 199) identifies as a form of Samantabhadra’s consort.

⁸ This discussion of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s family lineage is an abbreviated presentation of a slightly longer narrative in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 58-59.

⁹ While *Slob dpon* Srid bdud ’dul dpal is relatively unknown, he is mentioned briefly in the chapter below about Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s masters by Stéphane Arguillère.

¹⁰ *sGyu ’phrul*.

¹¹ *Drod*.

¹² *lHa srin*.

¹³ Jo lcam bSod nams khye’u ’dren.

¹⁴ *Bu sring*. This term more usually means “sibling,” but in this situation it more likely means daughter.

¹⁵ Phug tsha’i Jo sras Do ba. While this figure is unknown, his brother, Do pa ba Sangs rgyas bstan pa (who appears in the narrative below), is Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s maternal uncle and one of his primary disciples.

who was an extraordinary teacher of the Old Tantras.¹ She was endowed with many qualities, such as faith, compassion, and sublime knowledge.²

As a son to these two, [Rigdzin Gödem] entered the womb one evening when his parents finished the practice of Vajrakīla in the Year of the Male-Wood-Mouse.³

Therefore, as it is stated in *The List Guide of the Six Oral Lineages*:⁴

His father [will be of] a family of good conduct and strong discipline.

His mother [will be] the queen of the ḍākinīs.⁵

While they are united in the meditative state as

The Father and Mother⁶ [in the form of] Vajrakumāra [and his consort],

Their prayers will converge through [the force of their] karma and compassion.⁷

It is said that while he resided in her womb, his mother experienced many wondrous signs. On the tenth day of the month of miracles⁸ of the Year of the Fire-Ox (1337) of the sixth calendrical cycle,⁹ Rigdzin Gödem was born, [an event] accompanied by [86] many wondrous omens, such as the sky being filled with rainbows, fragrant aromas, sounds, and a red luminescence that resembled fire light. There was also the play of music and rains of flowers.

¹ sNgags rnying ma.

² This section regarding his parents is largely constructed by borrowing from *ibid.*, pp. 59-61.

³ The Year of the Wood-Mouse as 1324 for his conception does not fit with a birth year of 1337. It is more likely that he was conceived in the Year of the Fire-Mouse (1336). The same apparent error appears in *ibid.*, p. 61.

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*, vol. 1, p. 192.

⁵ mkha' 'gro dbang phyug ma.

⁶ Yab yum.

⁷ This is one third of the length of the quotation that appears in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 60-61.

⁸ This is the first month of the Tibetan calendar, which begins with the New Year celebration of the Buddha's performance of miracles.

⁹ Rab byung.

The Bodily Marks of Greatness

Likewise, in *The Three Lamps Biography* it is said:¹

At the dawn of the final 500 [years],
Because of the expanding [numbers of] those who must be
subdued with compassion,
He who conquers the summit of a mountain in the northwest
Of a valley in the Rulak region of the Right Horn [of Tsang]
Will be my, Padmasambhava's, son.

Born with a handsome face but a fierce [character],
[Wearing] wrathful attire, he will be endowed with strength.
[While] the past was a time to subdue with compassion,
His destiny will be to subdue wrathfully.

He will have a large head and an elevated crown.²
His view will be high and profound, difficult to fathom.
On the fontanel at the crown of his head, [there will be]
A birthmark, which appears like an entrance place for
wisdom.

¹ 'Khrungs rab sgron me rnam gsum. See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *gTer bton la gdams pa sgron ma rnam gsum gyi bskor*, pp. 10-11. All but the final six lines of this prophecy also appear in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 64-65. According to Achard 2023b, fn. 18, this text is said to have been “taught by Orgyen (Padma) to the yogi [that shall] reveal the Treasures” (*gter ston gyi rnal 'byor o rgyan gyis gsungs so*). Elsewhere in the same article, Achard states, “The first source quoted by Setön is *The Three Kinds of Lamps* (*sGron ma rnam gsum*). ... This is a treasure revealed by Gödem, the discoverer describing himself as a ‘deluded beggar’ (*rmongs pa ku su lu*). The three Lamps that make up the contents of the text are: 1. the outer Lamp of the body (*phyi ltar lus kyi sgron ma*), 2. the inner Lamp of Conduct (*nang ltar spyod pa'i sgron ma*), and 3. the secret Lamp of Awareness (*gsang ba rig pa'i sgron ma*). The first contains the prophetic narration about Padmasambhava and Gödem's incarnation (*skye brgyud*) close to Riwo Trazang. The second contains key elements and instructions that were compiled by Padmasambhava for the benefit of Gödem himself. The third is a dialogue between Padmasambhava on one side, and Yeshé Tsogyal, Mutri Tsenpo, and Nanam Dorjé Düdjom on the other side.”

² *sPyi gtsug mtho*. Here the term “crown” is being used to refer to the top of one's head rather than a royal ornamental headdress.

There will be a channel-knot¹ at the tip of his navel, with
A birthmark [that symbolizes that he] will suppress the three
poisons.

He will have birthmarks that circle his lower thigh [by which
it will be known that he] will
Brilliantly suppress the views of the lower vehicle.
The petals of his ears will be adorned with birthmarks,
[Signifying his] sublime knowledge² and compassion.
His utterances will resound like the voice of Brahmā,³ [and]
The four classes of ḍākinīs will reside [within him]
indivisibly.

[When] he sits in equipoise, his fingers will reach his
kneecaps.
Having purified his afflictions, he will tread the ten *bhūmis*.
He will be adorned by signs,⁴ [such as] the birthmarks circling
his shoulder, which
[Signify] his connection with the path of secret mantras.
He will have white teeth and a body with major and minor
marks of perfection.
He will be endowed with the six types of clairvoyance [and
his activities] will be too deep to measure.
He will display little concern [for worldly affairs] and carefree
conduct, [but]
[Once] he perfects his sublime knowledge, he will expound a
wealth of Dharma.

He [will wear] the clothing of a yogin [and] retain his top hair.
He [will have] little attachment to worldly objects. [87]
He [will find] joy in his retinue but will have little attachment.
He [will find] joy in wealth, but he will grasp at little.
He will be experienced [by others] as erratic, [while] he
abides in spontaneity.

¹ *rTsa bdud*.

² *Shes rab*.

³ Tshangs pa.

⁴ *rTags*.

He [will wear] the wrathful colors [of] red, black, blue, and maroon.

One of either a year of an ox or dragon,
 Will emanate from the heart of his mother, Vajravārāhī.
 Having been blessed by the Lords of the Three Families,
 When he reaches his twenty-fifth year,
 His attainments and the wondrous marks [on his body] will be seen, [and]
 He will be able to open the secret [treasure] doors in the north.

He was endowed with good physical characteristics, such as: two black and white birthmarks on top of his head, a three-pronged birthmark at his navel, 40 teeth, arms that extended to his kneecaps, ear-channels similar to trees, adorned with spots looking like leaves, a necklace of birthmarks [around his neck], birthmarks on his upper thigh [in the shape] of a circle, a knot at his throat that resembled the shell of a conch, an *Om* inscribed over his heart, and three raised wrinkles on his forehead that resembled a vajra.

It is said in *The Seven [Quintessential] Precepts of the Seminal Heart*:¹

[In] the Year of the Water-Ox, [there will be] one ornamented with birthmarks.²
 [As] a sign of my, Padmasambhava's, blessings,
 Vulture feathers will sprout from his crown again and again.

In accordance with that prophecy, in his twelfth year, three vulture feathers sprouted on the white scalp at the top of his head, and when he was in his twenty-fourth year, [88] five [more] vulture feathers sprouted. Thus, he is well known as Rigdzin Gödemchen, [which means “the Awareness-Holder with a Vulture Crest”]. Additionally, it is said that his body was adorned with sixteen wondrous marks.

¹ bZang po grags pa 1983, *sNying tig gnad kyi man ngag don bdun pa*, p. 278. A slightly longer version of this prophecy appears in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 67.

² Alternatively, this passage could refer to an individual *born* in a Year of the Water-Ox, perhaps 1313 or 1373. As neither of those dates seem to be accurate for Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, I have translated the date as a timestamp within his life.

It is said in *The Three Lamps*:¹ “During the last [days] of the teachings of Śākyamuni, a disciple of Padmasambhava’s compassion, a fortunate one, a secret yogin, one endowed with a ferociously wrathful character, who has the marks of sixteen great marvels, will appear.”

Moreover, as is stated in *The Prayer of The Eighteen Great Omens*, a prayer to the guru expressed in the Great Rigdzin Treasure Revealer’s own words:²

First, I generated a mind set on supreme enlightenment, then
Because of the power of the karmic residue, my body is
completed with the signs of [Padmasambhava’s]
pronouncements.
[The marks] are omens [indicating that I am the one]
predicted as the blessed son.
I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

The Training in the Dharma

When he was in his thirteenth year (ca. 1349), he thoroughly completed the practice of Refuge Lord Yeshé Sempa³ in the form of Nāgarākṣa⁴ using [the tantra called] *The Wheel of Activities of Black Leprosy*.⁵ He received the teachings of Guru Chöwang from the Learned Nangden

¹ Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 1983, *gTer bton la gdams pa sgron ma rnam gsum gyi bskor*, p. 37.

² Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol ’debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, p. 123.

³ *Khyab bdag* Ye shes sems dpa’. Ye shes sems dpa’ is normally not the name of a deity, but of the *yi dam* deity when considered not as created by our own mind visualizing it, but as invited from his or her pure land to inhabit the visualized mandala. This must refer to something precise, and in fact it is important because it may allow us to decide whether the specific cycle that he practiced was that of Rin chen gling pa or some other cycle. Resolving this issue would require additional research. Thanks to Stéphane Arguillère for the information presented in this footnote.

⁴ Klu’i srin po.

⁵ *mDze nag las kyi ’khor lo*. For catalog references to this cycle, refer to Achard 2006. For a discussion of this tantra in the life of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem, see Arguillère 2024a, pp. 102-104.

Gyalpo.¹ He practiced [the cycle called] *The Secret Assembly of the Master*,² and all the signs of attainment were actualized. He received the treasures of Nyangral from one named Changmawa.³ As a result of practicing [these teachings, he exhibited] adequate signs of attainment. Since the time of his youth, [89] Rigdzin Gödem earnestly studied, contemplated, and meditated on such cycles as *The Eight Pronouncements*⁴ and the triad of Mamo, Yamāntaka and [Vajra]kīla⁵ as well as the *Peaceful and Wrathful [Deities] of The Net of Magical Illusions*.⁶ In the presence of Draklungpa Khetsün Rinchenpal, he perfected the study of the teachings of Dzogchen.⁷

When he was in his twenty-fifth year (ca. 1361), he found a round leather bag of an oily color⁸ from [the region near] Mt. Trazang that [seemed] like it was filled with milk. Inside, [however], there was a fluid of an orange hue that was inconceivably fragrant and delicious. Within that, there was also a six-sided crystal that was slightly larger than a swan's egg. As is said in *The Key of the Concealed Heart [of Dremoshong]*:⁹

When he reaches his twenty-fifth year,
From the eastern front of Mt. Trazang,
He will obtain the *nāga* jewel.

¹ While little is known about the three teachers—sNang ldan rgyal po, lCang ma ba, and Brag lung pa *mKhas btsun* Rin chen dpal—mentioned in this section, they are discussed briefly in the chapter below about Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's masters by Stéphane Arguillère.

² *Bla ma gsang 'dus*.

³ lCang ma ba.

⁴ *bKa' brgyad*.

⁵ Ma gShin Phur.

⁶ *Zhi khro sgyu 'phrul*.

⁷ *rDzogs chen gyi chos tshul gsan bsam mthar phyin par mdzad*. Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for helping reformulate the translation of this passage.

⁸ *mDog snum po*.

⁹ An extant copy of *The Key of the Concealed Heart of Dremoshong* ('*Bras gzhong gi gab pa snying gi lde mig*), which is likely a prophetic guide revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, has not yet been located. The passage above describing his discovery of the *nāga* jewel as well as the quotation from *The Key of the Concealed Heart* also appear in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 68-69.

And as prophesied in *The Eighteen Great Omens*:¹

At the apex of the sun, from the eastern side of the king of mountains,
I found the spring of ambrosia, which brought together the causes and conditions.
That sign of my coming attainment was an omen [meaning the time] had arrived.
I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

The Concealment and Extraction of the Northern Treasures

Now, regarding the manner of just how [Rigdzin Gödem] acquired the profound treasures, a short history of the past concealment of the treasures at Zangzang Lhadrak [just before] Padmasambhava departed for the southwestern land of the *rākṣasa* has already been explained in the section [containing] a biography of Padmasambhava.² The entrance instructions³ for extracting that treasure were as clarified in the revealed treasures of Zangpo Drakpa, [90] including *The Seven Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart* and the group of three: the extensive, middle-length, and condensed essential guides.⁴

As for the signs [indicating that it was] time to extract the profound treasures according to those entrance guides, it was as stated in *The Lamp that Illuminates the [Way]: The Path Guide*:⁵

A cap [of snow] will adorn the summit of Mt. Trazang.

¹ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol 'debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, p. 123.

² For a translation of this concealment narrative, see *Northern Treasure Histories: Volume I*.

³ *Kha byang*.

⁴ Respectively, the full titles of these texts are: *The Essential Steps: An Extensive Essential Guide* (*sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*), *The Middle-length Ray of Compassion* (*'Bring po thugs rje'i 'od zer*), and *The Condensed Iron Hook of Compassion* (*bsDud pa thugs rje'i lcags kyu*).

⁵ bZang po grags pa n.d., *Lam byang gsal ba'i sgron me*, fol. 8a. I must express my gratitude to Sonam Topgyal, a librarian at the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala, India, who agreed to send me a digital copy of this text before their archives were made readily available online.

An army will move like lightning from the north into
 Mangyül.
 The tree of enlightenment in India will lean to the south.
 The stūpa of Kashmir will split in the northeast.
 The stūpa [called] Swayambhunath will lean to the north.
 Meteorites will hail down in the Drakmar region [around]
 Samyé.
 When omens such as these occur,
 From [Zangzang Lhadrak], the mountain that resembles of
 heap of poisonous snakes,
 In a Year of the Horse, treasures will emerge.

And as stated in *The Seven Essential Guides*:¹

Because you have heard and seen the words of the Tathagata
 and the testaments and words of Padmasambhava, you will not
 engender second thoughts or doubts about any [of their
 teachings]. And as a result of your prayers in previous [lives],
 a strong yearning of devotion will arise in [you]. In particular,
 when it is nearly time for you to encounter my treasure
 teachings, you will engender a mind [full of] affection for
 Tibet, and compassion will naturally arise. [Then,] you will
 obtain many extraordinary signs [both] in your own body and
 in external phenomena.

The Reception and Verification of the Treasure Guides

As clarified [above], when it was approaching the time to extract the
 treasures, Tülku Zangpo Drakpa dispatched Tönpa Söwang² [91] to
 place the yellow scrolls and seals in the hands of the great awareness-
 holder [Rigdzin Gödem].

[The great awareness-holder's] companion [during the period] of
 treasure revelation was his own maternal uncle, who was a good yogin

¹ An extant copy of *The Seven Essential Guides* (*Snying byang bdun pa*), which
 appears to be a prophetic guide that was revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, has
 not yet been located. The quotation appears in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 69-70.

² Otherwise known as *bsTon pa* bSod nams dbang phyug. This figure has not yet
 been identified.

called Ritröpa Sangyé Tenpa.¹ In this regard, it is said in *The List Guide of the Six Oral Lineages*:²

One with deep blue snake eyes³ and a tall physique,
His mind will not engage with compound phenomena.
He will be a master of the treasury of the eastern
[compartment].

The person who was predicted was very close to the treasure revealer's⁴ own heart. [The precious one] offered the prophecies of the yellow scrolls [to his uncle] to examine. As a result, he was indeed very happy. The spiritual friend of Ritröpa Zangpo Drakpa was named Darzang;⁵ he was the root lama of Dopa Sangyé Tenpa. [Thus, Rigdzin Gödem and Sangyé Tenpa] offered the treasure pages for examination to [Darzang] himself. [After reviewing the pages, Darzang] advised and instructed [them with] such words as: "You, yourselves, are the extraordinary people [mentioned] in the prophecies. Thus, extract the treasure in accordance with those prophecies and [act] for the benefit of migratory beings!"

¹ Although *Ri khrod pa* Sangs rgyas bstan pa is known as one of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's inner-most disciples, it appears that he also acted as an advisor in their developing treasure tradition. For more on this figure, see our forthcoming *Northern Treasures Histories: Volume III*, which will focus on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's disciples and grand disciples.

² This exact passage does not appear within the indicated text. There are, however, two other passages that may be describing *Ri khrod pa* Sangs rgyas bstan pa. See: Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*, vol. 1, pp. 194-195.

³ *sNgon po sbrul mig*. While, as stated in the previous footnote, this exact passage does not appear in the *sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*, it does state that he had one disciple with blue eyes (*mdog sngo mig*) and another with blueish skin (*sha mdog sngo*). See *ibid.*, pp. 194-195.

⁴ It is clear in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 90, that the treasure revealer in question here is Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, not bZang po grags pa.

⁵ In *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* (*ibid.*, p. 91), his name is given as *sKyes mchog Dar bzang pa*. Not much is known about this figure, but this connection between Dar bzang po, Sangs rgyas bstan pa, and bZang po grags pa suggests that the passing of treasure materials from bZang po grags pa to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was not as random as the narrative of the exchange suggests.

The Connection with the King of Mangyül Gungthang

Moreover, [Darzang] told [them] that it would be best if the King of Gungthang bestowed the treasure substitutes. It was prophesied that Tibet would be peaceful and happy if the King of Gungthang, Sovereign King Tashidé,¹ the great treasure revealer [Rigdzin Gödem], and the profound treasures from the fivefold treasury—all three—were to come together at one time. [92] However, because the merit of Tibet had been exhausted, the sovereign Tashidé passed away before the treasure could be obtained. Below, I will explain a little [regarding] how this royal dynasty² of Gungthang is an unbroken family lineage³ of Dharma Kings.⁴

As the group of three—the treasure revealer and his entourage [including Sangyé Tenpa and Darzang]—arrived before the sovereign's son, Püntsokdé,⁵ to request the treasure substitutes, it coincided with the sovereign's journey to Sakya. Therefore, the treasure revealer and the sovereign traveled together to Sakya. Several days elapsed because the sovereign was busy, but they were reaching the [prophesied] time to extract the treasure keys. Thus, although they had not received the treasure substitutes, they requested [for the king] to give the text [back to them]. So, [the king] granted them one ounce of gold, copied the text, and gave them the manuscript back. Later, on the road, the sovereign offered [the treasure revealer] large quantities of such things as grains.⁶

¹ For more on bKra shis lde (r. 1352–1365) and the monarchs relevant to the life of Rig 'dzin rGod lde, see the chapter below on the Kings of Mang yul Gung thang by Valentine.

² *rGyal rabs*.

³ *gDung rgyud*.

⁴ That is to say, there is a section in Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 119–126, regarding the kings of Gung thang that follows immediately after the biography of Rig 'dzin rGod lde. The translation of that text appears in the next chapter of this volume.

⁵ Phun tshogs lde (r. 1365–1370).

⁶ This is one of the very few events in this biography that does not appear in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.

The Extraction of the Keys at Mt. Trazang (1366)

The treasure revealer and his entourage traveled from Sakya quickly. Because they needed to extract the keys early the next day, they traveled to Namolung at night. During the year when the great treasure revealer and awareness-holder reached his thirtieth year, on the eighth day of the snake-month¹ of the Year of the Fire-Horse (1366) of the sixth calendrical cycle, when the constellations of *Puṣya*² and the planet Jupiter were conjoined, at the first break of dawn, he saw a ray of sunlight, which was a sign. [Thus, *The Essential Steps*:] *An Extensive Essential Guide* says:³ [93]

When the tiger breathes on the eighth day of
The snake month of a horse year,
Look closely with your eyes at the shape of that mountain.
A ray of sunlight will emerge that resembles a great shining
star.
Because of corrupted samaya-vows, [some] will not see it!

Then, [from] the point of the sun, a ray of white sunlight that resembled the trunk of the wish-fulfilling tree [shone] from the east and touched the summit of Mt. Trazang. Below that, he dug where a little snow had fallen on greasy soil.⁴ Inside a sealed stone casket having the mere form of a sheep,⁵ a treasure key, which was a finger-length whetstone pillar, stuck out of the top of a pile of charcoal. There was [also] a branch

¹ The snake-month is the fourth month of the Tibetan calendar.

² The Indian astrological constellation of *Puṣya* shares some of the same stars as the constellation of Cancer.

³ bZang po grags pa 2015, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*, vol. 33, p. 120. Only the first two lines of verse are found in *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*. The final three lines are not contained in the extant copies of the text. The exact passage also appears in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 92.

⁴ Here, the text reads *zil pa sa la kha ba babs pa tsam 'dug pa de nas sa brkos pas*, but the translation is following the clearer parallel passage in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, which is *tshil sa la kha ba babs pa tsam 'dug pa brkos pas*. See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 92.

⁵ *Lug nang tsam*.

from the tree of enlightenment and seven scrolls in [the stone casket. Rigdzin Gödem] extracted [all those items].¹

Thus, [that] is the meaning of the prophecy in *The Middle-Length Essential Guide* that says:²

Inside the pillars of white whetstone,
There are life-axes³ [of] enlightenment.
[Inside of them] are keys to the three great treasures.
He will extract hundreds of minor treasures.
It will appear as if light, [while it is] dark, and
Dew will appear on the spot where the sun rises.

The Prayer of the Eighteen Great Omens states:⁴

I found the keys [for] the great treasures at the apex of the
mountain.
I witnessed three amazing and wondrous signs.
[Those are] omens [indicating] that great benefit will
undoubtedly arise.
I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

The treasure substitutes were concealed in accordance with the meaning of what is stated in *An Extensive Essential Guide*: “After extracting the keys, [94] deposit the *nāga* treasure.”⁵

Because the remains of the treasure excavation site were reset as found as proof for future generations, [the place] is known as Lungseng.⁶ It is said that during the New Year the subsequent year, new sprouts grew there [despite the weather].

¹ Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for helping reformulate the translation of this passage.

² The full name of this prophetic guide, which was discovered by bZang po grags pa, is *The Ray of Compassion: A Middle-length Essential Guide* (*sNying byang 'bring po thugs rje'i 'od zer*). An extant copy of the text has not yet been located.

³ *Srog shing*.

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol 'debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, pp. 123-124.

⁵ This exact passage is not found in this source text. However, there is a similar passage. See bZang po grags pa 2015, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*, vol. 33, p. 152.

⁶ *Rlung gseng*.

[Thus, *The Prayer of The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:¹

At the apex of Mt. Trazang, three treasures were gathered.
 During the cold of the New Year, crops matured.
 These are omens [indicating] that the intentions of those who
 have faith in that sacred site will be accomplished.
 I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!²

The Extraction of the Treasury at Zangzang Lhadrak (1366)

It had been stated [in the prophecies] that [Rigdzin Gödem] needed to extract the treasures on the sixth day of the horse-month, during the conjunction of [the constellation] *Puṣya* and the planet Jupiter.³ [The event occurred] in accordance with what is stated in *An Extensive Essential Guide*:⁴

Then, regarding the extraction of the great treasures,
 It is important to gather the materials⁵ and the [proper]
 conduct.⁶
 On the sixth day of a horse month,
 At the conjunction of [the constellation] *Puṣya* and [the
 planet] Jupiter,
 The great treasures will be extracted at that time.

¹ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol 'debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, p. 126.

² Interestingly, of the eighteen stanzas of the prayer that are included in this biography, this is the only quotation that appears out of order. In particular, this stanza is the seventeenth in the prayer but appears fourth here in this biography. Presumably, what that means is that the verse is meant to refer to some other event at Mt. bKra bzang, after revealing the treasures at Zang zang lha brag, but before his departure for Gung thang. Thus, the stanza is likely referring to the wondrous results of the first year of practice at Mt. bKra bzang, which are described below.

³ Depending on which system is begin followed, the horse month is either the first or the fifth month. In Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 93, the date is listed as the fourth day of the sheep month (i.e., the sixth month).

⁴ bZang po grags pa 2015, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*, vol. 33, p. 150.

⁵ *rDzas*.

⁶ *sPyod pa*.

The group of three—the lord’s own maternal uncle, Ritröpa Sangyé Tenpa, Rigdzin Gönpa of the Dra¹ clan, and the treasure revealer himself—[collected] the treasure substitutes that were indicated in *An Extensive Essential Guide* and departed.

It is said that although obstacles arose [related to] the recruitment of troops by Nyené Chöpal² and [other] obstacles were [engendered] by a very deviant *māra*-spirit,³ they were not harmed. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:⁴

When I went to the rocky mountain that resembles a heap of snakes, [95]
Repelling *māra*-spirits ferociously discouraged [my progress].
These were omens [indicating that] I will subdue the *māra*-spirits through karmic residue from the past.
I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

Then, he prayed to Padmasambhava and afterward went [further. After a while] a ray of sunlight emanated in the pure, cloudless sky. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:⁵

In an extremely pure, cloudless sky,
[The heavenly bodies] were emanating flawless rays of warm sunlight and cool moonlight.
It is an omen [indicating] that the reality body⁶ is like a sky free from clouds.
I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

Then, [they] went a little further, and the sky filled with five-colored rainbows. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:⁷

¹ *Gra*. This is likely the disciple known more commonly as rDo rje mGon po, who is said to have helped with decoding the treasure scrolls. For more on this figure, see *Northern Treasures Histories: Volume III*.

² While Nye gnas Chos dpal has not been identified, Sardar-Afkhami (2001, p. 75) describes him as a “hostile official.”

³ *bDud*.

⁴ Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol ’debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, p. 124.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 124.

⁶ *Chos sku*.

⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 124.

In the sky, which filled with the blaze of rainbow light,
 Each of the five colors of light appeared distinctly.
 It is an omen [indicating] that the enjoyment body¹ will be
 endowed with major and minor marks.
 I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

When they drew near the rocky mountain that resembles a heap of snakes, there was a series of three rainbows coming from the southwest that were strung out like silken scarves. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:²

When I prayed [to Padmasambhava], rainbow-colored nets of light
 Appeared uninterruptedly from the southwest.
 It is an omen indicating that the emanation body³ intends to
 benefit migratory beings.
 I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

For two days, [Rigdzin Gödem] searched well for the treasure site. [96] As a result, [he found,] at the midpoint of that rocky mountain, a triangular-shaped cave called “the Pleasure Grove of the Divinities of Zangzang,”⁴ which faced east. As [the cave] corresponded to the prophecies, he stationed his two disciples below the rocky [mountain]. That evening, while the treasure revealer was in the cave, [the earth] quaked and there was a sense of panic. He saw [those] as signs that the treasure protector⁵ approached. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:⁶

[We] searched well in the four directions, above, and below.
 When I found the [treasure] site, I had no doubts.
 The cave quaked, which was an omen of the approaching
 treasure protector.

¹ *Longs sku.*

² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 124.

³ *sPrul sku.*

⁴ *Zang zang lha yi skyed tshal.*

⁵ *gTer bdag.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 124-125.

I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

As the night passed, depending on lamp light, on a rock surface in the southwest [he saw] what resembled a high-quality etching of crossed vajras, about one inch in length. [He] pressed on the rock with the key, and a rock door opened. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:¹

I chose an auspicious astrological time, and
Opened a broad portal in the hard stone.
It is an omen [indicating] that if I practice according to his
teachings, I will accomplish whatever I can conceive.
I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

Inside that [opening], there was a small spherical cave. Inside the cave, there were river stones about the size of eggs and hard charcoal² covering [everything]. [97] When he removed [the charcoal and stones], there was a square-shaped blue stone inside [with] nine doors. The door ornaments were fastened in place with nails that appeared silver in color. On top of that, [there was] a bluish snake wrought from molten bronze that was about the size of one's upper shoulder; [it resembled] an eight-sided jewel that faced the southeast. In the heart of it, there were three prominent cavities. From [there, Rigdzin Gödem] withdrew a single scroll and what resembled a jewel. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:³

From inside the black poisonous snake came the common
treasures [and]
A few precepts that would enable the swift [attainment of]
siddhis.
Those were omens [indicating] that I would dispel obstacles
on the path and [act as] a messenger.
I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 125.

² The hard charcoal (*sol ba 'khrag[s] po*) is likely the type of charcoal that is made from burning wood in a low-oxygen environment, which can be stored for a long time after being made.

³ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol 'debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, p. 125.

Below that, [there was] a square-shaped stone with nine doors, from inside of which he extracted a wooden box that was concealed in the past by Padmasambhava [with] the profound treasures [enclosed]. The wooden box had a name plate¹ [saying] “three protectors”² [because] it was made by three protectors: the protector of the mountain passes of Nepal,³ the protector of the Tibetan people,⁴ and the protector of the beauty of Mön.⁵ It was dark brown and sixteen units deep, and a full finger-span in height. There was a finger-span [opening] in the center.

It occurred as is stated in *The Seven [Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart]*:⁶

At the rocky mountain that resembles a heap of snakes,
 There is a wooden box that looks maroon in color
 Sixteen finger-spans wide, and
 Endowed with four finger-spans of height on each side.
 Inside of the central square chamber of a finger-span [in
 width],
 Padmasambhava’s action dagger⁷ and
 King Trisong Detsen’s
 Lock of hair, and oral instructions are [there].
 There is a dagger used to attain *siddhi* [98]
 By Lady Yeshé Tsogyal.
 There is one of Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo’s
 [Locks] of matted hair, signifying his sovereignty.
 There is also a dagger used to reverse obstacles
 By Nanam Dorjé Düjom.

¹ *mTha’ ming.*

² *mGon gsum.*

³ *Bal po’i la mgon.*

⁴ *Bod kyi mi mgon.*

⁵ *Mon gyi bkra mgon.*

⁶ bZang po grags pa 1983, *sNying tig gnad kyi man ngag don bdun pa*, pp. 290-291.

⁷ *Las phur.*

The Contents of the Central Repository

Thus, Rigdzin Gödem extracted many blessed articles from the Brown Central Heart Repository¹ of the reddish leather [and wood] trunk, such as: the *sāḍhanās* for the lama, *yidam*, and *dākinī*; the three tantras² of the teachings of *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*³ and the complete set of teachings for the 33 [sets of] precepts; the activity *kīla* dagger⁴—hammered together from seven types of iron by the blacksmith [from Mön named] Paltsek—that is known as “Subduer of the *Māra* Spirits⁵ of the Three Realms” and was [used] in Yangleshö in Nepal [by Padmasambhava]; the *kīla* dagger—hammered together from five types of iron by Hashang Yatrö [in] India—that is known as “The Supreme Sun Prince”⁶ and was [used by Padmasambhava] to tame enemies and hindrances at Taktsang Sengé Samdrub [in Bhutan]; the *kīla* dagger—fashioned by Hashang Ya [in] China—that is known as “*Kīla* of the Supreme Conflagration”⁷ and was [used when Padmasambhava] beheld the countenance of [the *yidam*] Vajrakīla at Mt. Palchen Chuwo. Those three action *kīla* daggers belonged to Padmasambhava. [He also withdrew] Khandro Yeshé Tsogyal’s ritual *kīla* dagger⁸—fashioned from rosewood—that she used to liberate *māra* spirits at the caves of Mt. [Palchen] Chuwo; the ritual *kīla* dagger that belonged to Nanam Dorjé Düjom—fashioned from a black, thorny hardwood and used to extinguish a blazing fire at Mt. Hepo; a wish-

¹ *dBus snying mdzod smug po*.

² There are more than three tantras in *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*, so isolating “the three” is a challenging matter. If one leaves aside the four *rtsa-rgyud* and all those secondary texts having *rgyud* in their titles, there is a set of three very important Tantras that could make up the actual group of three, although we are not aware of them being styled like this under a collective name elsewhere. These are: *Sangs rgyas thams cad kyi sras gcig pa'i rgyud*, *bsTan pa bu gcig pa'i rgyud*, and *Man ngag snying gi dgongs pa'i rgyud rdo rje sems dpas gsungs pa*. Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for providing the information contained in this footnote.

³ *Kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal*.

⁴ *sGrub phur*.

⁵ *bDud*.

⁶ *Sras mchog nyi ma*.

⁷ *'Bar ba mchog gi phur bu*.

⁸ *bsNyen phur*.

fulfilling jewel [that shines like] a dawn with five suns¹—that was given by a Dharma King of India as a gift to King Trisong Detsen; [99] and locks of hair from king [Trisong Detsen] and his son.

The Contents of the Directional Chambers

As is stated in *The Seven [Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart]*:²

Inside the hollowed out four corners of the outer rim,
There are four teachings that are needed for the king.

Accordingly, [Rigdzin Gödem] extracted from the four great repositories³ in the four directions four treasuries⁴ [meant to] protect the king. More precisely, from the White Eastern Conch-Shell Repository,⁵ he extracted 101 precepts that are like the expanse of Samantabhadra that includes a sections of teachings [called] *Transcending Cause and Effect*⁶ and *The Sky-like Revelation*,⁷ which—in the time of the king [of Gungthang]—will emerge for the great benefit of migratory beings and will cause [the king] to attain enlightenment in the future.

From the Yellow Southern Gold Repository,⁸ he extracted 101 precepts for the well-known *Cycle of the Four Aspects of Ritual Service and Attainment which is Luminous like the Sun and Moon*⁹ that includes the various teachings of *The Luminous Conduct like the Sun and the Moon*,¹⁰ [which are] the means by which everything will be accomplished for sentient beings in this life of the king (or in his next life) and are the means for establishing religious law.

¹ *Nyi ma lnga shar.*

² bZang po grags pa 1983, *sNying tig gnad kyi man ngag don bdun pa*, p. 291.

³ *mDzod.*

⁴ *gTer mdzod.*

⁵ *Shar dung mdzod dkar po.*

⁶ *rGyu 'bras la bzlo pa.*

⁷ *dGongs pa nam mkha' dang mnyam pa.*

⁸ *lHo gser mdzod ser po.*

⁹ *bsNyen sgrub rnam pa bzhi'i chos skor nyi zla [gsal ba].*

¹⁰ *sPyod pa nyi zla ltar gsal ba.*

From the Red Western Copper Repository,¹ Rigdzin Gödem extracted 101 precepts that resemble a medicinal tree, which [includes] a cycle for those with extraordinary interdependent connections [and] a section of teachings that resemble a sandalwood tree that will extend the life and reign of the king and bring happiness to Tibet.

From the Black Northern Iron Repository,² [100] Rigdzin Gödem extracted 101 precepts that resemble a tree [ornamented with] the nine evil mantras because [they have the power to] repel and even kill the king's blockages, hindrances, and enemies, which [includes] a section of teachings that are like a poisonous tree, which reduces enemies and hindrances to dust.

In that way, on a good day in the horse month of the Year of the Fire-Horse (1366), during the sixth calendrical cycle, Rigdzin Gödem extracted the sections of teachings of the four treasure chambers, [removing] the yellow scrolls in mother-son pairs, two at a time, [marking them with] the syllables [associated with] four female gatekeepers.³ From each direction, he [extracted] two, [so] together [there were] eight. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:⁴

From within the maroon leather box, came the profound
treasures,
The five treasures that represent [Padmasambhava's] body,
speech, and mind.
This is an omen [indicating] that in the degenerate times, the
teachings of the emanation⁵ will expand.
I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

The Treasure Substitutes & the Initial Transmission

In the four treasures of the outer rim, there were various [items] such as an assortment of jewels, four pieces of royal life-supporting turquoise and religious articles⁶ belonging to the treasure protectors.

¹ Nub zangs mdzod dmar po.

² Byang lcags mdzod nag po.

³ According to Tenpa Tsering Batsang, who helped with this footnote, the syllables associated with the four female gatekeepers are: *Dza*, *Hū*, *Bam*, and *Ho*.

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol 'debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, p. 125.

⁵ *sPrul sku*.

⁶ *sPyan gzigs*.

Because he was told not to extract them,¹ he did not open them. Then, the treasure substitutes [were placed] as explained in the essential guides.² He filled the inside of the key made of a [small] stone pillar with a branch from the *bodhi* tree, medical herbs, and grains. He inserted [the stone pillar into the cave] as the treasure substitute and rearranged the stone door. Then, for his two disciples, he intoned a signal with small cymbals. Ritropa Sangyé Tenpa arrived first, and because he [therefore] was first to receive the blessings³ of the scrolls, he had faith [in Rigdzin Gödem] that wouldn't have been different if he had actually met Padmasambhava. [101] Thus, the completion of the revelation of the treasures and the break of dawn both occurred at the same time.

The Departure & the Signs on the Road

The master and his disciples were joyous and cheerful and endowed with sharp insight. So, they took up the treasures [of teachings] and set out on the road to depart. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:⁴

I and the retinue of fortunate ones instantly [departed].
 We were joyous and cheerful and endowed with sharp insight.
 This is an omen [indicating] that defilements will be purified,
 and obstacles will be removed.
 I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

Then, the tips of the rising sun pierced into the cave like strands of rainbow [colored] bamboo, and rain descended in all directions. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:⁵

At daybreak, all directions were filled with rain, and

¹ He was either told by the treasure protectors directly or perhaps by the textual treasure guides. While a relevant passage has not been identified in the existing prophetic guides, there are at least three that are no longer extant. Thus, the relevant passage could have existed in one of those texts.

² *sNying byang*.

³ *Phyag dbang*.

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol 'debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, p. 125.

⁵ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 125.

And rainbows [extending] from the tips of the sunrays pierced into the sacred abode.

This is an omen [indicating] that [he who possesses] skillful means and compassion will benefit migratory beings.

I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

Then, wherever they went, on the road or in [specific] areas, rainbow-colored arcs appeared in the sky. [The rainbows] appeared in the atmosphere uninterruptedly like great stretched out pieces of silk fabric. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:¹

In the lands wherever the great treasure revealer goes,
The sky, the earth, and the space in between are all filled with rainbows.

This is an omen [indicating] that the compassion of the king and [my] karmic propensities will come together.

I remember your kindness, [102] Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

When they arrived before Mt. Trazang, the entire sky resembled the color of ruby lotuses from the light of the sun setting in the west. Within that, wondrous omens appeared to the master and his disciples in the form of individual visions depending on the extent of their pure vision. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:²

When we saw Mt. Trazang in the North,
From the direction of power,³ wondrous signs shown [in the sky].

This was an omen [indicating] that the palace [in] Padmasambhava's buddhafield will be illuminated.

I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

This was also as stated in *The Seven Essential Guides*:⁴

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 125-126.

² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 126.

³ Generally, *dbang gi phyogs* refers to either the east or northeast because of its association with Indra's place of dwelling. In this context, one would expect it to refer to the west as that is the location of the setting sun.

⁴ As stated above, this text has not yet been found.

When he first meets with these quintessential instructions,
There will be outer signs of falling rain and shining rainbows
in the sky.

There will be internal signs, such as pure visions that undo
delusions.

There will be secret [signs] born [through] the power of your
faith in me, [Padmasambhava].

These three signs will be completed in a single day, and
They will meet with these quintessential instructions that
came from Padmasambhava's heart.

That evening, there were [also] many omens, such as earthquakes that
resonated loudly. [Thus, *The Eighteen*] *Great Omens* says:¹

During the evening, in the entire atmosphere
There were great marvels, which were vast and held an aura
of wrathfulness.

These are omens [indicating] that the powerful hordes of
maras will be quickly subdued.

I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna! [103]

Thus, the purpose of revealing the treasures is as stated in *The
Exhortation Guide*:²

At the midpoint of Zangzang Lhadrak,
There are the means for prolonging the duration of the
Buddha's teachings.
If they are extracted when the time is right,
Everything will be peaceful and happy in Tibet for 121 years.

The Weak Connection with the King of Gungthang

And as is stated many times [in texts] such as *The Supplication in Seven
Chapters*:³

¹ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 126.

² An extant copy of *The Exhortation Guide* (*sKul byang*) has not yet been found.

³ *gSol 'debs le'u bdun ma*. For a translation of this text that includes the Tibetan, see Chhimed Rigdzin and Low 2010, p. 213.

Close to having reached the final end of the time of crisis,
 To the east of the place called Mt. Trazang,
 Through the prayers of a hidden yogin,
 My treasures will be extracted and the lineage of Lhasé [Mutri
 Tsenpo] will be preserved.
 Do not let weariness into your heart, precious Lhasé.
 Sentient beings of the degenerate time will be subdued by
 charlatans.
 Because of their faults, people will fall into a bog of wrong
 views.
 They will not distinguish between Dharma and pseudo-
 Dharma and will be very skeptical.
 The [Dharma] that will arise from the east of Mt. Trazang,
 Will be equal to the sacred words of the great vehicle of secret
 mantras.
 Conducting himself in a virtuous manner, the hidden yogin
 Will certainly protect the king and subjects of Gungthang.
 Do not let weariness into your heart, Lhasé Rinpoche.

It is said that if [Rigdzin Gödem] were to gather together these profound treasures with the King of Gungthang, Tashidé, then peace and happiness would arise in Tibet:¹

If one were to gather together the three: the master,
 The profound teachings, and the king of Gungthang,
 At that time, the teachings of Tibet [104]
 Will be upheld by those treasures for [another] 121 years.

In *The [Essential] Summary of General Instructions of The Full Gathering of the Gurus, The Eight Pronouncements*, a treasure revealed by Ngari Paṇchen and his brother, it states:²

¹ This exact passage also appears in the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography of Ngag gi dbang po, but there the source is identified as *The Key of the Concealed Heart* [of *Dremoshong*] ([*'Bras gzhong gi*] *gab pa snying gi lde mig*), an extant copy of which has not yet been located. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, pp. 318-319.

² Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542) and Legs ldan rdo rje bdud 'joms (ca. 1512–1580) 2015, *Bla ma bka' brgyad yongs 'dus las spyi lung mdor bsdu snying po*, vol. 30, p. 350.

If a descendant of yours bearing the name “Tashi,”
 Were to be brought together with my emanation and treasure
 teachings,
 The peace and happiness of Tibet would arrive in the end.
 For 130 years, foreign armies would be subdued, and
 At that time, there will be a great magical manifestation of a
māra spirit,
 It is very important that this interdependent connection is not
 blundered.

Although it is stated like this, because the merit of sentient beings was weak, the sovereign Tashidé’s lifespan came to an end. It appears that his son, the sovereign Püntsokdé, also had a middling interdependent connection with [the treasure teachings].

The Middle-Length Essential Guide states, “If the first [king] does not generate faith, then three descendants will die by the knife.”¹ And in *The Seven Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart*, it states:²

If a *māra* spirit interferes with the King of Gunthang and he [therefore] conceives doubts like a logician or grammarian and is not endowed with faith, then the happiness of Tibet will be exhausted. The *māra* spirit will sever the royal dynasty of Gunthang, and the destruction of Tibet will be established beginning with Gunthang.

In the biography of Ngakgi Wangpo written by the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, it says:³

If one were to examine the meaning of previous and later events, [one would see that] previously when [Rigdzin Gödem] requested treasure substitutes, [105] it coincided with the departure of the sovereign for Sakya. And then, because of

¹ The full name of this prophetic guide, which was discovered by bZang po grags pa, is *The Ray of Compassion: A Middle-length Essential Guide* (sNying byang ’bring po thugs rje’i ’od zer). An extant copy of the text has not yet been located.

² bZang po grags pa 1983, *sNying tig gnad kyi man ngag don bdun pa*, pp. 283-284.

³ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po’i rnam thar*, p. 319.

idle heretical talk and the inducement of the philosophical views of those who were inclined toward logic and convention studies, the mind-stream of the King of Gungthang was changed. He thus came to doubt the profound treasures and he did not offer much [for a] treasure substitute. [Because] of these and other [developments], it is clear that [the sovereign] was not endowed with heart-felt belief in the treasure revealer.

And also:¹

In this case, it is clear that the sovereign of the Sakya [was of] an ordinary clan² and the so-called “*geshé*”³ [exerted] great effort to disrupt [Rigdzin Gödem’s] connection with the King of Gungthang.

As is stated in treasure prophecies⁴ of Ratna Lingpa (1403–ca. 1478), which are related to this occurrence:⁵

Generals and women act [as his] heads of council, and
Kill bastard children and break [their] pledges, and
There is no penalty for crime, and [the king] is
deceived by those who were close to his heart,
The monks eat meat as their delicious food, and
All the *geshé* are haunted by the *māra*-spirits of
factionalism.

They disparage and criticize the teachings and
practitioners of other [schools], and
In particular, the *geshé* under the influence of *māra*-
spirits
Say that my, Padmasambhava’s, Dharma is heretical.
They utter condemnations and jokes [about] the hidden
lands and treasure teachings.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 320.

² *Rigs*.

³ *dGe bshes*.

⁴ *gTer lung*.

⁵ As quoted in *ibid.*, pp. 320-321. This passage has not yet been located within the treasures of Ratna gling pa.

Having burst forth with heat in the south and armies in the north,

Peace and happiness in the lands of Tibet will be exhausted.

When the bad times such as those [arrive],

Hor armies will emerge from the north. [106]

[As for] the way [that] the first of them will arrive,

They will eliminate the salt and gold [traders] of the northern nomads.

Then, they will come closer in the manner of nomads, [and then]

They will connect their governance with Tibet and show closeness.

Through these initiatives, they will [wage] battle from their hearts

conquering the northern nomads and gradually

conquering Tibet as well.

At that time in lands of Tibet, by the breath of the army,

plague, bad harvests, and unforeseen [circumstances] will arise.

Even though the soldiers may not come, those evil-natured [people] will die.

When it is the final stage of the end times,

Except for my instructions, there is no [other] means for helping Tibet.

Since I am the regent of Śākyamuni,

If you practice according to my commands, the

Tibetan lands [will] be safe.

There is no doubt that later you will attain higher existences.

At that time, a few of my emanations will arise.

Varieties [of emanations] will act secretly for the benefit of migratory beings.

The good connections [necessary for] peace and happiness in the regions of Tibet [will be forged].

They will even enact the means for repelling foreign invaders, and

My compassion will come quickly at that time.
 The profound treasure revealers will emerge in
 succession,
 Many of my testaments will arise,
 Many Fortunate ones will arise and seek the hidden
 lands.
 At that time, I will be called a *māra*-spirit
 By several *geshé* who will say,
 “The treasure teachings and concealed lands are not
 true but lies.”
 Because they are disparaging and utter condemnations
 [about the treasure teachings], [107]
 The fortunate ones will also postpone [their activities].

Indeed, because [Padmasambhava] has explained the various
 obstacles that will hinder the methods for [securing] peace
 both generally and particularly in Tibet, one can be aware [of
 these negative developments].

Thus, the connection with the sovereign Püntsokdé was slightly
 bungled. How [Rigdzin Gödem] had a good connection with that
 [king’s] son, the sovereign Chokdrubdé,¹ will be explained below.

[Regarding the possibility that Rigdzin Gödem] and the sovereign
 Tashidé might not meet, *The Key of the Concealed Heart* states:²

If they are to fall into separation,
 It will be a sign of Tibet’s destruction. Thus,
 At the summit of Mt. Trazang,
 He will be installed as the head of the treasure [lineage]³ and
 practice for one year.
 Then, he must go to the hidden lands.

¹ mChog drub lde (r. ca. 1375–1390).

² As stated above, this text has not yet been found. Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for
 helping with the translation of this passage.

³ *gTer gyi mnga’ gsol*.

***The Establishment of Monastery at Trazang
& the Activities of the Early Years***

[Thus, Rigdzin Gödem] donned the clothing of a renunciate and established a *gönpa*¹ at Trazang. Lama Sangyé Tenpa acted as [his] attendant. Because the uncle-nephew pair practiced the *Heart Practice*,² on three occasions the offering cakes³ dissolved into light.⁴

[Rigdzin Gödem] constructed a temple at the summit of Trazang and a great statue of Padmasambhava. While he was residing there practicing Vajrakīla, each evening there was a great fire [outside] the door. Thus, [he] sent a letter. [His advisor] responded, “There are indeed signs of interference such as those.” It is said that later, as there weren’t fires [any longer], the oath-breaking spirits⁵ [only] caused interference, but [they] were [ultimately] unharmful.

At about that time, [108] the land was pervaded by the fame [resulting from] the treasure extractions. On the tenth day of [each] month, an immeasurable number of men and women gathered from many regions to receive empowerments and teachings, and he greatly benefited inconceivably [large numbers of] disciples and uplifted [them on the path of] maturation and liberation. As stated in *The Three Lamps*:⁶

If you practice according to my instructions, all sentient
beings
Who see you will exhaust their saṃsāric existence completely.

And:⁷

All the faithful people who will see

¹ *dGon pa*.

² *Thugs sgrub*. This refers to the central practice of the *Rig ’dzin thugs sgrub* cycle, which is the “inner” cycle of the Northern Treasures.

³ *gTor ma*.

⁴ *’Od du zhi ba*.

⁵ *Dam sri*.

⁶ Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 1983, *gTer bton la gdams pa sgron ma rnam gsum gyi bskor*, p. 22.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

That emanated person who will maintain the lineage of
 Padmasambhava
 Will [possess] the special qualities of one who has reached the
 limits of saṃsāra.
 Therefore, because of their connection with these teachings,
 the people
 Will be quickly liberated from the boundaries of saṃsāra.

And:¹

If you practice according to my instructions, all of the sentient
 beings
 Who have an oath-bound connection with you will be emptied
 [from] the boundaries of cyclic existence.

Accordingly, all who encountered him were either directly or indirectly
 drawn onto the path of liberation and omniscience [by] that great being
 himself.

The Journey to Gungthang & the Death of King Püntsoḱdé

[Then] he went to look for a treasure site in the Kyidrong region of
 Gungthang. He saw the landmarks just as prophesied. In the presence
 of the self-appearing² Ārya [Avalokiteśvara statue],³ he perceived
 fifteen extraordinary signs [on his body]. As stated in the [*The
 Eighteen*] *Great Omens*:⁴

While I traveled in the direction of the Kyidrong region of
 Mangyül,
 I saw the exact landmarks of treasures as predicted, [109]
 Together with extraordinary signs. The symbolic meaning is
 that I [should] have faith [as a result].
 I remember your kindness, Precious One of Oḍḍiyāna!

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 26. The source passage reads: *bka' ltar bsgrubs pas khyed kyi dam 'dres pa'i las can thams cad chos kyi dbyings su gshegs*].

² *Rang byon*.

³ This is a reference to the Ārya Wa ti bzang po statue in sKyid grong. For a discussion of this shrine, see Ehrhard 2004 and Cüppers 2019.

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2000, *gSol 'debs brda chen bco brgyad*, vol. 1, p. 126.

And as stated in *The Seven Essential Guides*, “He will discover many extraordinary signs on his own body and in the external environment.”¹

At this time, the King of Gungthang, Püntsokdé invited [Rigdzin Gödem] and gave him Mt. Palbar. Although [the king] said that he would strive for a means of spreading the teachings according to the prophecies, because of the damaged relations² in the past, obstacles arose. According to *Arising Youth*:³

He arranged the connections to bring about peace and
happiness in Tibet, [but]
During the times of [both] happiness and suffering,
obstructing *māra*-spirits arose.

The king of Gungthang died, and various bad omens arose, such as the upheaving of civil war [in] Ü and Tsang. Thus, *The Key of the Concealed Heart* says:⁴

When signs of the demise of the Tibetan kingdom arise,
Upper Yölmo and lower Dromo⁵
Whichever [place] is indicated, go there!

Accordingly, because the connections that were the method for [establishing] peace in Tibet were slightly improper, [Rigdzin Gödem] went to unlock the door of the land of southern Dremoshong.

¹ As stated above, this text has not yet been found.

² *rTen 'brel 'phyugs*.

³ An extant copy of *Arising Youth* (*sKyes dar ma*) has not yet been located. This passage also appears in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, where the text title is given as *sKyel dar ma*. See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 105.

⁴ As stated above, this text has not yet been found.

⁵ This passage also appears in *ibid.*, p. 105. There is a missing line between this and the next line of verse, which states: *bar yul rin chen 'bras mo bshongs*. This missing line clarifies that one is supposed to flee to the hidden land of 'Bras mo bshongs, which is commonly understood as roughly equivalent to Sikkim.

The Exploits in Dremoshong & the Visionary Dreams

Regarding the principal reason for that [departure], *The Great Exhortation Guide* states:¹ “By means of simply opening the door of southern Dremoshong, peace and happiness will arise in the world for seven years. If in the middle of that time the king [110] were to invest² [Rigdzin Gödem with authority], peace and happiness would arise in the world for thirteen years.”

In [Rigdzin Gödem’s] own visionary experience, the *ḍāka*, *ḍākinī*, and Padmasambhava encouraged him to set out for [the concealed lands] as stated above. At the same time, in the year of the pig [1371], he was encouraged [to depart] by the conditions of conflict [as] the armies of Ü were on the move. Because [of all that], [Rigdzin Gödem] decided to set out for Dremoshong, and the ten—the master and [nine] disciples—departed.

In a dream, [Rigdzin Gödem] saw the face of the great Padmasambhava [as] a *tantrika*³ wearing a great round hat and the loose maroon garments who prophesied and advised with words such as: “Because you are a son of a noble family, resolve at once your thought about going or staying! You will have a large [number of] disciples in Tibet, [and] they will ripen in the southern borderlands of Tibet.”

[He] traveled through such places as Tashi Khyungtsang and arrived at Dritsam. In the summer of the Year of the Water-Ox (1373) on his way to Dremoshong, [he] stayed in Sengé Lung, where he dreamed that the ten [of them], master and his [nine] disciples, would experience troubles. A roaring voice assured him, saying, “After three days of suffering while traversing the path, [you will] arrive.”

Then, [he] traveled through the Dzönga Taktsé mountains and stayed in such places as Serling Dechen, the five small valleys of Goyül, and Gadé. [He] saw several self-arisen [statues], [111] and in the autumn of the Year of the Iron-Monkey (1380), in order to search

¹ An extant copy of *The Great Exhortation Guide* (*sKul byang chen mo*) has not yet been found. Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for helping translate this passage.

² *mNga’ gsol*.

³ *sNgags pa*.

for the concealed lands, [he] resided in Dremoshong. In the year of the bird (1381), [he] resided in the forests of Chudü.¹

At that time, he endured extreme difficulties in such places as the forests and valleys. In response to that, eighty-four signs [foretelling] the purification of the residue of ignorance arose. As stated in *The List Guide of the Six Oral Lineages*:²

Whether it is through acts of purification or through
experience,
The remnants of karma will be exhausted ...

He had a recollection from a previous life when he was born as a pure monk³ during the earlier times of the Buddha Ratnasambhava. He sang spontaneous songs at Drakar Tashiding.

Regarding the opening of the door to the sacred land of Dremoshong, [Rigdzin Gödem] wrote wondrous letters, such as the following:⁴

Homage to the Guru!
The accomplished lamas have spoken about the future of
Śākya[muni]'s teachings. All the buddhas have spoken about
the dark age, which has now arrived. North of Zangling in
India, and southwest of the mountain pass of Mön and Pakri,
there is a sacred abode of the great guru. From this place,
Dorjé Tötreng Tsal sent a message to the people of the
Tibetan regions. For the benefit of all migratory, sentient
beings of Tibet, I have opened the door of this sacred place of
Dremoshong after enduring many hardships. [112]

¹ The village of Chu 'dus is the easternmost point of lHa stod lHo (Everding 1997, p. 269, fn. 1).

² Rig 'dzin rGod lIdem 2015, *sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*, vol. 1, p. 196. The complete passage reads as follows: *sbyong byed myong byed gang rung gis| las kyi lhaq ro de zad nas| skye ba de yi phyi ma la| spyang ras gzigs dang thod 'phreng rtsal| skyes bu khyod kyi rig pa gsum| dbyer med phrin las stobs chen 'grub.*

³ *dGe slong.*

⁴ As quoted in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, pp. 322-323. There, the source is identified as 'Bras mo gshongs kyi gnas sgo phyed pa'i phyag rtags, an extant copy of which has not yet been found.

During the Year of the Water-Dog (1382) and the Year of the Water-Pig (1383) of the sixth calendrical cycle, he acted for the benefit of migratory beings in the mountains of Mön.

The Return to Mt. Trazang (1384)

In the Year of the Wood-Mouse (1384), he traveled to Trazang. In the Year of the Earth-Dragon (1388) of the seventh calendrical cycle, he settled down back at his seat. Once again, the King of Gungthang, the Sovereign Chokdrubdé invited [Rigdzin Gödem]. [The king] paid homage and honored [Rigdzin Gödem] as an officiating priest. According to *Arising Youth*:¹

Through the power of prayer, they certainly will meet once.
At that time, [Rigdzin Gödem] will teach [the king] the
profound, seminal heart of secret mantra.

When the great Rigdzin treasure revealer reached his fifty-third year, during the Year of the Earth-Snake (1389) of the seventh Tibetan calendrical cycle, the Sovereign Chokdrubdé invited [Rigdzin Gödem to his court]. The king offered Rigdzin Gödem various *gönpa* and estates, such as Mt. Palbar and Chikyi Dechen.² [The king also] acknowledged [Rigdzin Gödem] as the head object of refuge [and] gave him a sandalwood seal and the following letter that expressed his edict:

The Edict of the King Chokdrubdé (1389)

Oṃ! Svāsti siddham!
[S]upari siddhi! Hūṃ!
*Devaraja dhipa[m]ka[ra] mudra! Hūṃ!*³

¹ As stated above, this text has not yet been found. This passage also appears in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, where the text title is given as *sKyel dar ma*. See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 124.

² *Phyis kyi bde chen*. Unidentified.

³ These lines can be roughly translated as: *Oṃ!* May auspiciousness be accomplished! May wellness be accomplished! *Hūṃ!* Lord of the gods, (you) symbolize the bearer of light! *Hūṃ!* Thanks to Jean-Luc for his much-needed help translating these lines of Sanskrit.

These are the words of Tri Chokdrubdé Palzangpo, an emanation of the Buddha, [one endowed with] the nature of a bodhisattva, [descended from] the lineage of the luminous divinities,¹ the universal monarch, the sovereign of Tibet, the Land of Snows, the Dharma Protecting king, to be pronounced to those who abide in the region of Ngari, [including]: communities of monastics and lay people,² military commanders, soldiers, law enforcement officers,³ [113] defenders of the country,⁴ monks and laymen who do the work of collecting tax, the ministers of my father-in-law's family, the [familial] dining retinue, administrators, each and every civil servant, the regional prefects, brigade commanders, herdsmen who tend horse and *dzo*,⁵ petty officials,⁶ private servants, each leader of [groups of] ten,⁷ and general staff.⁸

By way of the compassion of Padmasambhava and the Dharma King Trisong Detsen, the teachings that are required for the royal dynasty were placed as treasures and revealed by Lama Riwo Trazangpa. Because [the treasures] have been delivered to me, a descendent of the kings [of the past], I now forge a patron-priest⁹ [bond] between the lineage of Dharma-protecting kings who are descended from gods and the lineage of the Lama Rigdzin [that will last] for as long as the teaching of the Buddha abide [in this world]. His estates, hermitages, and *gönpa*, which are subject to my power, [holdings] headed by Mt. Palbar and three concealed lands, the farmers and pastoralists native [to those holdings], and all of the disciples who emerge [at those holding], are [hereby] declared as pure offerings to the lama.

¹ 'Od gsal lha.

² lHa sde mi sde.

³ Khrims gcod.

⁴ Yul bsrungs.

⁵ mDzo. This is an animal that is the offspring of a yak and domestic cattle.

⁶ Hor 'dra can also refer to a lower strata family.

⁷ bCu dpon.

⁸ For more information regarding the details of this edict, see Herweg's (1994, pp. 127-136) annotations to his translation.

⁹ Yon mchod.

Those [of future] generations who are holders of my royal lineage will not transgress [the bounds] of my declaration. [Let my words] endure as an offering to the sky! Those [monastic workers] who rely upon these religious institutions should harvest the provision-fields¹ well, and whoever you are, do not subject [them] to taxes. Do not eat their food, do not subject them to conscription, and do not harm [their] protected mountains. Do no harm to these people or their estates [out of egotistical possessiveness]. [Henceforth, whoever] comes to these monasteries, [114] do not levy taxes and do not argue over old or new disputes. Although the people who hold responsibility for these activities can collect taxes and establish new customs, [I hereby] acknowledge everything that falls under the rubric of “religious,” the lands under [the authority] of Mt. Palbar, as [protected] under this royal patron-priest [decree]. This written order shall endure perpetually.

If [anyone] happens to transgress against this royal decree, send petitions to the king. I have the extreme capability of [administering] punishment under both civil and religious law.

On the morning of the tenth day of the eighth month of the Year of the Female-Earth-Snake (1389), inside the temple [called] Tashi Gomang² of the royal palace of the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang, [this] royal edict, known as *Öbarwa*,³ was issued.

Let there be happiness and auspiciousness in all times and directions!

*Mangalam bhavantu!*⁴

The Relationship with King Chokdrubdé

Thus, the king and the priest met, and [Rigdzin Gödem] performed an extensive and auspicious benediction.⁵ [He also] offered [to the king]

¹ *rGyags zhing*.

² It is now more commonly known as rDzong dkar chos sde.

³ 'Od 'bar ba. The title means “shining light” or “blazing light.”

⁴ The meaning is “May there be auspiciousness!” Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for his help with the Sanskrit phrases in this document.

⁵ *bKra shis mnga' gsol*.

great gifts, such as the ritual dagger¹ [named] “Subduer of *Māra* Spirits of the Three Realms” and yellow treasure scrolls, as well as advice regarding maturation and liberation. It is said that because [Rigdzin Gödem] properly arranged the connection with the sovereign Chokdrubdé, it also contributed toward the collective peace and happiness of Tibet. The Great Fifth [Dalai Lama], the emanation of the enlightened activity of Emperor Trisong Detsen, the sovereign of Tibet, the Land of Snow said:² [115]

Furthermore, because the King of Gungthang Chokdrubdé honored [Rigdzin Gödem] as the royal preceptor³ and relied on him, it contributed toward the peace and happiness of Tibet. Although all the profound treasures are generally tools for bringing peace and happiness for Tibet, these Northern Treasures in particular are the most important tools for benefiting Tibet. The prophecies in *The Mountain Sees All* state:⁴

Twenty generations of kings will pass, and then, from the middle of Zangzang Lhadrak in the North, the one named Rigdzin Gökyidem Truchen will obtain a treasure that includes five treasuries and virtuous teachings will be upheld in the southern borderlands of Tibet. In the five treasuries, there are many necessary [tools], which will, for example, repel foreign armies, end epidemics, [pacify] Tibetan civil wars, reduce the *gongpo* spirits⁵ to nothing, nourish the power of the land, and pacify illnesses [related to] imbalances in the earth⁶ and body. Thus, [he] must strive for the benefit of migratory beings. At that time, look closely at [this treasury that] has various tools for [bringing] peace to [each] part of the earth and generally benefitting Tibet

¹ *Phur pa*.

² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, p. 325.

³ *Ti shri*.

⁴ *Ri kun tu gzigs*. As quoted in *ibid.*, p. 325. Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for his help translating this passage.

⁵ *'Gong po*.

⁶ *Sa nad*.

from Khyunglung Drakhar [to] the river valley of Kham
[named] Drölma Yarché.

If there are educated and sincere individuals, then it is high time
that they should sincerely endeavor [to employ] the tools for
[bringing] peace [to] this land of snow.¹ [116]

Then, [Rigdzin Gödem] opened the door of the sacred abode [known
as] the concealed land of Kyimolung.

The Other Revelations of Zangzang Lhadrak

Accordingly, [Rigdzin Gödem] revealed many additional [treasures]
from Zangzang Lhadrak and transmitted them [to his disciples], such
as:² *The Register Guide for the Seven Concealed Lands*,³ which [are]
the concealed lands of Dremoshong, Deden Kyimolung, Pemé Tsal,
Rolpa Khandröling, Gyalgyi Khenpalung, Lhé Podrangding, and
Dromokhü; general register guides for concealed lands;⁴ keys,⁵
entrance guides,⁶ path guides,⁷ essential guides,⁸ and guides to sacred
locations⁹ for many general and specific concealed lands, such as
Yölmogang, Bulégang, Dremokhü, Kyimolung, Khenpalung, and
Takmolung; and important place¹⁰ [listings], essential points¹¹
[listings], and prophecies for the high place of Mt. Küntuzik¹² from

¹ This passage is also borrowed from *ibid.*, p. 326.

² This list of prophetic guides revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, as well as the introduction to the list, was borrowed without acknowledgement from Gu ru bKra shis 1990, 487-488.

³ *sBas yul bdun gyi them byang.*

⁴ *sBas yul spyi'i them yig.*

⁵ *lDe mig.*

⁶ *Kha byang.*

⁷ *Lam byang.*

⁸ *sNying byang.*

⁹ *gNas yig.*

¹⁰ *Sa gnad.*

¹¹ *Gan tig.*

¹² Mt. Kun tu gzigs is listed in *mKhyen brtse's Guide to the Holy Places of Central Tibet*. For the translation, see Akester 2016, pp. 652, 659-660. Mt. Kun tu gzigs is listed along with bKra bzang and Zang zang lha brag as sites in the north of the gTsang po River. There is an interesting 15th century listing of these prophetic guides that were revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem that may be the source upon which Gu ru bKra shis's list was formulated. See Se *ston* Padma dbang chen 2015,

where the [human] ancestral lineages spread, the middling places from where merit and wealth spread, and the low places, which are important places for reversing amassed foreign armies.

The Near-Fatal Injury & Prophetic Visions (1397)

In the Year of the Fire-Mouse (1397) at Mt Trazang, [Rigdzin Gödem] spoke *The Transparent Contemplation* [of *Samantabhadra*] to the queen of Lhopa Sadruk and twenty-five female practitioners.¹ Because [Rigdzin Gödem] had to bestow all the Great Perfection texts to the queen, [while] he was on his way to a healing ritual² for Nyené Dolgyal,³ his mare was frightened, and [Rigdzin Gödem] fell bodily [to the ground].⁴ Later, while he was bedridden at his home, he received many pure visions, which is how he received prophecies from and saw the faces of the likes of the awareness-holders, such as Śrī Siṃha and Vimalamitra, [117] and the Splendorous Protectress of Secret Mantra.

The Teaching Career

Thus, the great Rigdzin treasure revealer himself extracted from the middle of Zangzang Lhadrak, which resembles a heap of poisonous snakes, the 500 sections of teachings headed by *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*, together with their branches. After

Byang gter gyi chos skor rnams kyi spyi chings, vol. 14, p. 449. Therein, Padma dbang chen's list ends as follows: *ri kun tu gzigs kyi lung bstan| sa'i gnad bstan pa| kun tu gzigs kyi gnad tig| gnas gsum gyi lam yig*. Interestingly, only the last of these titles, which did not make it into the work of Gu ru bKra shis or *mKhan po* Chos dbyings, is known to us today. See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *gNas gsum gyi lam yig zangs mdzod dmar po nas byon pa*, pp. 497-505.

¹ *sGrub pa mo*.

² *Rim gro*.

³ Nye gnas rdol rgyal. This figure has not yet been identified.

⁴ In Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 132-133, it is suggested that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem knew that he should give this wealthy patron access to the manuscripts in a piecemeal manner as she became ready for each text. Instead, he gave them to her all at once, which violated some aspect of his vows. The fall from horseback and the subsequent illness are understood as resulting from this violation.

practicing them himself for five years,¹ he propagated the profound teaching to the fortunate ones. During the remainder of his life, he mainly gave empowerments and guidance for the highest secret mantra [cycles], and each year he gave guidance for the Great Perfection without interruption.

In his sixty-fifth year during the Year of the Iron-Snake (1401), [Rigdzin Gödem] gave 15 people, such as Setön Tukjé Gyaltsen,² extensive guidance for *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*. He also gave the inconceivable precepts to Setön Nyima Zangpo.

Generally speaking, because the great Rigdzin had 5,000 disciples of various levels of purity, he did not teach them extensively, aside from a few teachings related to the profound treasures. It is said that among his principal disciples, there are eight: the seven fortunate heart-sons and the sovereign of Gungthang [named] Chokdrubdé, a son who was equal to his father.³

Those [eight disciples] and others [were the roots of] the lineages that spread the profound teachings to numerous fortunate ones. [118] The well-known [lineages] are: the lineage of the son, [which is] the lineage that descends from the supreme son, Namgyal Gönpö;⁴ the lineage of the consort, [which is] the lineage that descends from [Rigdzin Gödem's] consort, Tsenden Ma, an emanation of the Supreme Mother; and the lineage of the disciple, [which is] the lineage descending from Kün pang Dönyö Gyaltsen. These Dharma lineages pervade every direction, including the Tibetan [regions of] Ü, Tsang, Dokham, Lho, and Mön.

¹ Presumably, this means that after he revealed the treasures in 1366, he practiced for five years before beginning to teach in earnest in 1371.

² Se *ston* Thugs rje rgyal mtshan. This figure has not yet been identified.

³ There is evidently a long-standing tradition of referring to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's seven principal disciples, one of which is known to be the King of Gung thang. See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*, vol. 1, pp. 193-194. Here we are being reminded that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem engaged with two different Gung thang monarchs, Pun tshogs lde and mChog drub lde, and thus there were eight disciples if they are counted separately or seven when they are counted as one. Elsewhere, the list of disciples is reduced from eight to seven by counting Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's consort and son as one instead of two.

⁴ *mKhan po* Chos dbyings records his name as mGon po rnam rgyal, but I have "corrected" it to rNam rgyal mgon po.

It has been explained that this Great Rigdzin was a bodhisattva who had attained the sixth *bhūmi* as is stated in *The List Guide of the Six Oral Lineages*:¹

If one were to ask why, [then one should know that] this
 person
 Is a lamp for Tibet during the end times,
 A regent for Padmasambhava,
 A master of the teachings of the Buddha,
 A messenger of the buddhas of the three times,
 A bodhisattva of the end times,
 Able to establish great [numbers of] disciples.²

The Passing of Rigdzin Gödem

Like that, having carried out immeasurable beneficial acts for migratory beings, finally when he was in his seventy-second year in the Year of the Earth-Mouse (1408)³ during the seventh calendrical cycle, together with many wondrous signs, he departed for the Palace of Lotus Light.⁴



¹ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*, vol. 1, p. 194. Of the four passages included in the biography by *mKhan po* Chos dbyings from this source, this is the only one that is not also included in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.

² Thanks to Jean-Luc Achard for his help translating this verse.

³ As stated above, there is some doubt regarding the exact year of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's death. See the chapter on this subject below.

⁴ The Palace of Lotus Light (*dPal ri padma 'od*) is the place where Padmasambhava is said to currently dwell, teaching disciples in a manner that allows them to quickly progress on the path.

Chapter 2: The Patrilineal Kings of Gungthang¹

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Treasure Prophecies

he Ngari² Gungthang Kings, frequently praised in the prophetic treasures³ of the great treasure revealer Rigdzin Gödem (1337–ca. 1401), were unmistakably the descendants of the great Dharma Kings of Tibet.

In *The Prayer that Spontaneously Fulfills All Wishes*, [Padmasambhava] says:⁴

At the foot of snow mountain of Mangyül⁵ Gungthang,

¹ *Gung thang rgyal po yab sras.*

² According to Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las 2002, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod*, p. 760, the term “Ngari” (*mNga' ris*) means lands and subjects belonging to the “sovereign” (*mnga' bdag*). This term later became the name for Western Tibet which was ruled by the descendants of King Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan po. The descendant of Glang dar ma named sKyid lde nyi ma mgon (ca. 971–1000) had three sons: Rig pa mgon, lDe gtsug mgon, and bKra shis lde mgon, who are known as the “Three Protectors of Tö” (*sTod kyi mgon gsum*). They ruled western regions of Tibet such as Mar yul (Ladakh), Zangs dkar, and Gu ge. Mang yul gung thang is often referred to as “Lower [eastern] Ngari” (*mNga' ris smad*). See Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, p. 1. For more information regarding Western Tibet, see Francke 1995 [1907], pp. 61–63.

³ *gTer lung.*

⁴ bZang po grags pa 2000, *O rgyan padmas gsungs pa'i gsol 'debs le'u bdun ma*, pp. 92–93. *The Prayer that Spontaneously Fulfills All Wishes* (*gSol 'debs bsam pa lhun grub ma*) is the seventh chapter of *The Prayers in Seven Chapters* (*gSol 'debs le'u bdun ma*) credited to Padmasambhava, revealed by bZang po grags pa, and delivered to Rig 'dzin rGod lde mgon. For a complete Tibetan text and English translation, see Rigpa Translations 2013.

⁵ Mang yul refers to the southern part of the region, particularly sKyid grong, whereas Gung thang refers to the northern part with the capital rDzong dkar. See Solmsdorf 2013, p. 10.

Those of [your] future descendants¹ that will appear,
 Will be your genuine offsprings.
 They will govern the Kingdom in [accordance with] Dharma.
 I will watch them unceasingly with compassion.
 [Therefore], do not despair, Lhasé [Mutri Tsenpo], King of Tibet.

And also:²

This noble family of venerable origin, the lineage of the gods of clear light,
 Is the unbroken family line of [Lhasé] Mutri Tsenpo.
 My compassion will always safeguard them,
 [Provided that they] do not give in to [the advice] of wicked companions or ministers.

And also:³

Because of my compassion for the Gungthang Kings during these degenerate times,
 At the waist of a rocky mountain, which is like a heap of poisonous snakes,
 There are precepts⁴ which will protect the family lineage of Lhasé.
 At that time, human beings will be very skeptical.
 Do not uphold the wrong views,
 But practice according to my words.
 These precepts will fulfill the wishes of the Kings of Gungthang.
 [But] I will not safeguard kings who indulge in evil deeds.

¹ *gDung rgyud*.

² bZang po grags pa 2000, *O rgyan padmas gsungs pa'i gsol 'debs le'u bdun ma*, p. 94.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 94-95.

⁴ *Man ngag*.

***The Lineage Connecting the Imperial Kings
and the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang***

This royal dynasty of the Ngari Gungthang Kings, mentioned many times in such statements, is the one that is well known from the old chronicles of the forty-two emperors,¹ beginning with the first Tibetan King, Nyatri Tsenpo² (417–345 BCE), up to King Langdarma Udam Tsenpo³ (790–842).

Langdarma Udam Tsenpo had two sons: his biological son, Namdé Ösung⁴ (ca. 846–905), and his non-biological son, Yumten.⁵ The

¹ Traditional historical chronicles (*rgyal rabs*) put forty-two imperial kings with gNya' khri btsan po as the first king and Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan po as the last king of imperial Tibet. In this list, 'Bro bza' Khri ma lod (d. 712) is not counted as a ruler. However, modern scholars, such as bsTan 'dzin 'phrin las lhun grub 2015, *Bod btsan po'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 330, 569, include 'Bro bza' Khri ma lod as the 36th ruler (empress) of the Tibetan empire for twenty-one years between 676 and 689 and later between 704 and 712. In that counting, Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan po is the 43rd emperor instead of the 42nd. For more about 'Bro bza' Khri ma lod, see Tsuji 2016.

² gNya' khri btsan po.

³ Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan po. Traditional Tibetan historians portray him as an evil king. According to Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1989, *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*, pp. 428-434, he ruled the empire for one year somewhat righteously like his predecessors and then launched a campaign against Buddhism but was unable to destroy the temples that had been consecrated by Padmasambhava. However, modern scholars such as bsTan 'dzin 'phrin las lhun grub 2015, *Bod btsan po'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 577-579 claim that his assassination by lHa lung dPal gyi rdo rje marked a turning point in the history of Tibet, as the two sons of Glang dar ma 'U dum Btsan po disputed over who would succeed to the throne. This led to a revolt against the regime and the end of the great imperial dynasty (*btsan po'i rgyal rabs*) of a single family which had a history of over 1232 years since the King gNya' khri btsan po. Henceforth, the period of fragmentation (*bsil bu'i dus*) began and it lasted for over 340 years. For more regarding Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan po, see Karmay 2004, pp. 57-68.

⁴ gNam lde 'od srung was born to Tshe spong bza', the second wife of King Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan po. His descendants were pushed away from dBus by Yum brtan's descendants. They moved to gTsang and then to mNga' ris. Regarding his birth and death dates, there are several suggestions. The aforementioned date is corroborated by Bu ston Rin chen grub. See Bu ston Rin chen grub 1991, *Bu ston chos 'byung gsung rab rin po che'i mdzod*, pp. 192-193.

⁵ Yum brtan. According to Khang dkar Tshul khrims skal bzang 2014, *Bod kyi gna' rabs lo rgyus bdams btus gangs ljongs 'od 'bum*, pp. 239-242, Yum btan was a biological son of King Glang dar ma 'U dum btsan po.

primary cause for the disintegration of the Tibetan empire was a dispute between the two sons over [who] would take over the kingship.

Namdé Ösung, who was the authentic descendant of the emperors of Tibet, had a son [named] Lord Palkhor Tsen¹ (ca. 955–983). He in turn had two sons from different mothers. The elder brother was Tri Tashi Tsekpa,² and the younger brother was Kyidé Nyima Göñ³ (r. ca. 900–930). The elder brother, Tri Tashi Tsekpa, had three sons: Paldé,⁴ Ödé,⁵ and Kyidé.⁶ The elder brother, Paldé, had two sons: Öpaldé and Dharma

¹ dPal 'khor btsan. Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer 1989, *bKa' thang zangs gling ma*, pp. 456–457, says Lord dPal 'khor btsan was entrusted with the ritual of *The Sūtra of the Great Liberation* (*Thar pa chen po'i mdo*) and other sūtras by the bSam yas mchims phu master named lHa lung dPal gyi yon tan, who urged him to practice them by stating that all the good things his forefathers accomplished were thanks to the blessings of those sūtras. gNubs chen Sangs rgyas ye shes (9th/10th c.) also entrusted him with some tantric texts. Lord dPal 'khor btsan later moved to gTsang and built his palace at Grom pa lha rtse in the district of lHa rtse.

² *Khri bKra shis brtsegs pa* was born to 'Chims bza' btsun ne, the second wife of Lord dPal 'khor btsan. He and his three sons made their base at Grom pa lha rtse in gTsang in 992, where he ruled rGyal mkhar rtse (rGyal rtse). See Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs and Nor brang O rgyan 2011, *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba*, p. 493.

³ sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon was born to sNa nam bza', the first wife of *Khri bKra shis brtsegs pa*, and was forced to leave for mNga' ris after a public revolt against him which allowed Yum brtan's descendants to seize his domains. First, he conquered sPu hrangs, then Gu ge, and finally Ladakh. He later divided these territories between each of his three sons. See *ibid.*, pp. 489–492.

⁴ dPal lde. According to Mang thos Klu sgrub rgya mtsho (1523–1596) 1987, *bsTan rtsis gsal ba'i nyin byed lhag bsam rab dkar*, p. 71, the descendants of dPal lde ruled over the territories known as Three Bridges (Zam gsum) which are: the Blue Bridge of lHa rtse (lHa rtse nas zam sngon mo), the Red Bridge of Gling bu (Gling bu'i sha zam dmar mo), and the Golden Bridge of Mang yul (Mang yul gyi gser zam ser po).

⁵ 'Od lde. The descendants of 'Od bde ruled over the territories known as Three Southern Gates (lHo sgo gsum), which are: the Clay-Slate Gate of Drin and mNya' nam (Drin dang mNya' nam rdzas kyi sgo), the Wooden Gate of Bud mkhar ra (Bud mkhar ra shing gi sgo), and the Disputed Gate of Zar stag sna (Zar stag sna rtsod kyi sgo). See *ibid.*, p. 71.

⁶ sKyid lde. The descendants of sKyid lde ruled over the northern regions known as Three Salt Repositories (Tsha mdzod gsum) which are: the Salt Treasury of the Northern Turquoise Lake (g.Yu mtsho sngon mo tsha'i mdzod), the Meat Treasury of Northern Kha sna brgyad (Byang kha sna brgyad sha'i mdzod), and the Gold Treasury of Gu lang go po (Gu lang go po gser gyi mdzod). See *ibid.*, p. 71.

Tra.¹ Öpaldé came to Gungthang and he assumed power over the capital.² Since then, many [scions] of this family lineage appeared in succession, and this was how the Ngari Gungthang Dynasty began.

In short, in *The Concise History of the Greater Tibet: A Pristine Magical Mirror*,³ Düdjom Jikdral Yeshé Dorjé⁴ (1904–1987) says:⁵

(#1) Öpaldé came to Gungthang and had a son, (#2) Özerdé.⁶

Then, (#3) Dechödé,⁷ (#4) Wangdé,⁸ [121] and (#5) Tsendé⁹ [ruled] one after another.

That one had three sons.¹⁰ The elder brother, (#6) Ödé,¹¹ was a contemporary of Milarepa (1040–1123).

Ödé had a son named (#7) Wangchukdé,¹² and after him [ruled successively] (#8) Kyobdé,¹³ (#9) Göndé,¹⁴ and (#10) Tsündé.¹⁵ The

¹ Respectively: 'Od dpal lde and Dharma bkra.

² When the descendants of Yum brtan and gNam lde 'od srung were in conflict over a territorial dispute, the Gung thang region did not have a ruler, but the people dwelling in that area strongly felt the necessity of having a leader. They agreed to invite 'Od zer lde—other sources imply that it was 'Od dpal lde who received this invitation—the grandson of *Khri bKra shis brtsegs pa*, and they sent him two emissaries. 'Od dpal lde came to Gung thang and built a citadel (*sku mkhar*) for himself at a place known as Thang stod tho le. He ruled the region by appointing the two emissaries as his ministers, thus starting the Gung thang Dynasty. See Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, pp. 3-4.

³ *Gangs can bod chen po'i rgyal rabs 'dus gsal 'phrul gyi me long*.

⁴ bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje.

⁵ See bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje 2002, *Gangs can bod chen po'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 458-460.

⁶ 'Od zer lde.

⁷ bDe spyod lde.

⁸ dBang lde.

⁹ bTsan lde and his predecessors ruled over a somewhat more meager territory. See Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, p. 5.

¹⁰ bTsan lde's three sons were 'Od lde, lHa mchog lde, and dKon mchog lde. They expanded his domain from Gung thang to Nub ri, where he built another citadel known as Upper Citadel (*khab gong*). See *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹¹ 'Od lde.

¹² dBang phyug lde.

¹³ sKyob lde.

¹⁴ mGon lde fought with the armies of Mon (the people living in the southern Tibetan borderlands) and was killed at sKyid grong. His legitimate queen did not bear any sons. However, he had a son called bTsun lde (also called bTsun pa lde) from a nun known as Byang chub 'dren. See *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁵ bTsun lde was born on the day his father, mGon lde, was killed. He was raised under the guidance of an influential Buddhist teacher known as *Chos rje* gNyos

latter's queen, Nyibumdé,¹ was an elder sister of Chögyal Phakpa² (1235–1280). She gave birth to (#11) Chögyal Bumdé.³

Tsündé had three sons, and the middle one was (#12) [Tri] Rinchen

ston Byang chub bzungs. While bTsun lde was a child, his paternal aunt, lHa rin chen mtsho, ruled the kingdom. She was a nun and politically very shrewd. She knew the importance of a stronger alliance with Sa skya, which derived considerable power and prosperity from their connection with the Mongol kings. She later married bTsun lde off to Nyi 'bum lde, her niece and the daughter of lHa gcig mdzes ma, the elder sister of lHa rin chen mtsho, and Zangs tsha bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1184–1239), the father of Chos rgyal 'phags pa (1235–1280). As the later lineage of the Gung thang dynasty shows, the marriage of bTsun lde with Nyi 'bum lde was the starting point of the subsequent expansion of the Gung thang kingdom. See *ibid.*, pp. 6-9.

¹ Nyi 'bum lde. According to *ibid.*, pp. 6-7, she had already married the ruler of the Chu mig myriarchy, which was one of the thirteen myriarchies (*khri skor bcu gsum*). She left her first husband, however, and came to Gung thang to become the queen of bTsun lde. For more about the thirteen myriarchies, see Petech 1990, pp. 50-61.

² Chos rgyal 'phags pa.

³ This king is known by different names such as 'Bum lde, 'Bum lde mgon, and Chos rgyal 'Bum lde. According to Chab spel Tshe brtan phun tshogs and Nor brang O rgyan 2011, *Bod kyi lo rgyus rags rim g.yu yi phreng ba*, pp. 499-506, when he was nine years old (1264), his maternal uncle, Chos rgyal 'phags pa, became *Dishī* (Imperial Preceptor) of Kublai Khan (1215–1294) and, in effect, the ruler of the whole Tibet. On that occasion, 'Bum lde mgon and his mother visited Sa skya to congratulate him upon his arrival from China. At that time, Chos rgyal 'phags pa foresaw the future role of the boy, Chos rgyal 'Bum lde, by judging his bold behavior and granted him authority over one thousand households and many other valuable material gifts. Chos rgyal 'Bum lde was later escorted back to Gung thang by Shākya bzang po (d. 1270), the first Sa skya *dPon chen* (prime minister) of the Sa skya pa government. Since then, the Gung thang Kingdom seemed to be counted as one of the thirteen myriarchies, and 'Bum lde mgon became its *Khri dpon* (governor). His first political campaign was to subdue the four communities known as sGo bzhi (Four Gates), which were led by monastics who resisted the authority of the Gung thang Kings. He also built his palace between 1269 and 1270. It was formerly known as bKra shis khyung rdzong dkar po and later as rDzong dkar. He expanded his realm with 13,000 households (*brgya mtsho bcu gsum*) with territories such as upper and lower Mustang, which are presently under Nepali jurisdiction. He also built more than ten fortresses around the border regions of his realm. See Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, pp. 7-25.

Zangpo.¹ His son was (#13) Chökyongdé² (ca. 1280–1352), the thirteenth King of the Gungthang Kingdom. Padmasambhava's prediction [about the Gungthang Kings] corresponds to this king.³

Chökyongdé had a son called (#14) Tashidé⁴ (1313–1365), who was like a custodian of the teachings of the treasure revealer Gödem. Then came (#15) Püntsoḱpal⁵ (1338–1370), (#16) Sönamdé⁶ (1371–1404),

¹ *Khri Rin chen bzang po*. According to *ibid.*, p. 5, *Khri Rin chen bzang po* had two half-brothers born from another mother; they were named *Khri Lde 'bum* and *bSam lde*. Although *Khri Rin chen bzang po* may have been the first known throne holder of the Kingdom of Gungthang to go to China to receive the edict and seal from Kublai Khan (1215–1294), he died there. *Khri lde 'bum*, who is not mentioned in the translated text above, ruled the kingdom after his brother died and went to Dadu (Beijing) with a delegation of eight people. There, he received an edict and seal from the Yuan Emperor Temür Khan (1265–1307), who recognized him as an important descendant of the imperial kings of Tibet and the governor of thirteen regions of lower mNga' ris.

² Chos skyong lde's father, *Khri Rin chen bzang po*, did not have any sons from his own queens. On his way to China, he stayed for a while at Sa skya. At that time, Shar chen Rin chen rgyal mtshan (r. 1263–1270), the tenth Sa skya throne holder (*khri 'dzin*), told him that, since he was taking a long journey to China, for the safety of lineage continuity, he should impregnate Shar chen Rin chen rgyal mtshan's wife before he leaves for China. Thus, Chos skyong lde was born to the queen of Shar chen Rin chen rgyal mtshan in 1280. He later married the daughter of *bDag nyid chen po bzang po dpal* (1262–1324), the eleventh Sa skya throne holder. See *ibid.*, pp. 27–29.

³ It is likely that the reference here is not to one of Rig 'dzin rGod ldeḡ's treasure prophecies but to a passage referring to the thirteenth king that was revealed by *gter ston* Bya mang po and survives in the *Gungthang rgyal rabs*. See Everding 2000b, pp. 50–53.

⁴ According to Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gungthang rgyal rabs*, pp. 29–30, *Khri bKra shis lde* married *bSod nams 'bum*, a daughter of *dBang Kun dga' legs pa* (1433–1483), the *sDe srid* of the Phag mo gru pa dynasty. However, chronologically, this is not possible because *Khri bKra shis lde* died ca. 1363.

⁵ According to *ibid.*, p. 32, the Gungthang ruling family and Sa skya had a long familial relationship. At the time of King Phun tshogs dpal, however, they made a solemn oath and formulated a legal document pledging that their political goal was one and the same because the Yuan dynasty, the power source of Sa skya, was declining and Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1364), the head of the Phag mo gru pa dynasty, was gaining more power. He finally toppled the Sa skya government in 1354.

⁶ *bSod nams lde*. According to *ibid.*, pp. 33–37, upon his ascension to the throne, *bSod nams lde* subjugated the rebelling factions of Southern Latö (La stod lho) and Northern Latö (La stod byang) and then conquered sPu hrangs. In his conquest of sPu hrangs, a man named Chos skyong 'bum served as the commander of the

(#17) Lhawang Gyaltsen¹ (1404–1465), (#18) Lord Namgyaldé,² (#19) Samdé,³ (#20) Künga Lodrö,⁴ (#21) Künga Drak⁵ (1528–1565), and (#22) Sam[drub]dé⁶ (d. 1593). The latter's son was (#23) Söwangdé

military. He was later appointed as the governor of Glo bo smon thang (Mustang) and Dol po and his descendants eventually started the Mustang dynasty. bSod nams lde revered many Buddhist scholars and masters such as Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, Re mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros (1349–1412), Bo dong pañ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1375–1451), and others from both the *rNying ma* and *gSar ma* traditions.

- ¹ lHa dbang rgyal mtshan was not born to bSod nams lde's queen, Chos skyong rgyal mo, who was a princess from the kingdom of Gu ge. Although she had two sons with bSod nams lde, they died in their early teens. lHa dbang rGyal mtshan was born from bSod nams lde's relationship with the niece of *Chos rje* lHa mdun pa. At fifteen, he was invited to Gung thang from Nub ri and enthroned at rDzong dkar in his sixteenth year. His daughter, A grol Chos kyi sgron ma (1422–1455) was the first bSam sding rdo rje phag mo. See *ibid.*, pp. 37–39. For more information regarding bSam sding rdo rje phag mo, see Diemberger 2007, pp. 33–55.
- ² Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, p. 40, explains that rNam rgyal lde (r. 1465–1502) relied on many teachers such as gTsang smyon He ru ka (1452–1507), *mKhas grub* dPal ldan sangs rgyas, *Grub chen* rGyal mtshan 'bum, and he banned hunting in his kingdom.
- ³ bSam lde's father, rNam rgyal lde, had at least four sons—*Chos rgyal* Nor bu lde, *Khri rgyal* bSam grub lde, called here bSam lde, *Gong ma* Shes rab dpal bzang, and Kun dga' rnam rgyal lde—through his two marriages. The eldest son died before his father. The other three brothers came to hold the three palaces, the southern palace, the northern palace, and dGe brtan palace. They also divided lands and subjects among themselves, and many disputes occurred among them resulting in the assassination of *Gong ma* Shes rab dpal bzang. *Khri rgyal* bSam grub lde had a younger sister known as Don grub rgyal mo. She became the queen of *Gong ma* Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1374–1432), the fifth *sDe srid* of the Phag mo gru pa government that ruled Tibet between 1385–1432. See *ibid.*, pp. 45–49.
- ⁴ Kun dga' blo gros was one of the three sons (the other two being *Khri* bKra shis dpal 'bar and *lHa btsun* Nam mkha' mgon) of the second wife of *Khri* bSam lde and worked as a ritual master of rDzong dkar chos sde. At that time, the queen mother (Gu ge ma) was assassinated, and the Gung thang Kingdom faced an invasion by the armies of the gTsang Rin spungs lord Ngag dbang rnam rgyal (r. 1512–1544). See *ibid.*, pp. 53–54.
- ⁵ Kun dga' grags's name is also written as Kun bzang grags pa rdo rje. He repelled the Rin spungs invasion of Gung thang, regained the lost territory of the Southern La stod regions such as Shel dkar rdzong from the Rin spungs pa, and appointed a new lord for Southern La stod. See *ibid.*, p. 53.
- ⁶ According to *ibid.*, p. 55, bSam lde's name is written as *Khri rgyal* bSam grub lde. During his reign, a group known as Sher pa, who resided in the sKyid grong vicinity, revolted against the Gung thang rule. He subjugated them and sentenced some of the leaders to capital punishment.

(1577–ca. 1620).¹

Thus, without counting the king's relatives and [other] throne holders, there are twenty-three fathers and sons making up the hereditary line of kings.

Eventually, in 1620, in the Year of the Iron-Monkey of the tenth calendrical cycle,

The Gungthang [Kingdom] was taken over by the armies of the Tsangpa King,

And the Lineage of Gungthang Kings, who were praised by Padmasambhava,

And [had appeared] as a share of meritorious fortune for the Tibetans, came to an end.

The Administrative Divisions within Mangyül Gungthang

It further says:²

Regarding the jurisdiction of Ngari,

The three [regions] of Gungthang, Kyidrong, and Nubri, [122]

With the Mazhang Gyatsangpa³ as the fourth,

[Formed] the “Four Principal Communities.”

The [three regions] of Lotö, Lomé, and region of Dolpo,

With Zang Gyüpa⁴ as the fourth,

[Formed] the “Four Communities cut by the Sword.”

¹ bSod dbang lde is short for bSod nams dbang phyug. According to Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las 2002, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod chen mo*, p. 347, at the time of *Khri* bSod nams dbang phyug, many of the bordering regions such as sKyid grong and Dol po revolted against the Gung thang rule but he managed to subdue them and put many of the rebels in jail at rDzong dkar. He relied on many teachers such as the second Yol mo *sprul sku* Nam mkha' brgya byin (16th c.), *Khri chen* bSod nams dbang po (16th c.), the twenty-fourth Sa skya throne holder and Kun dga' lung rig (16th c.). In the later part of his life, he received many teachings from the third Yol mo *sprul sku* bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1589–1644) and others. In 1619, his kingdom was surrounded by the armies of Karma phun tshogs rnam rgyal (1587–1620), the King of gTsang, who took him to La stod shel mkhar. He was held under house arrest and died there in the following year.

² See bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje 2002, *Gangs can bod chen po'i rgyal rabs*, pp. 460–461.

³ Ma zhang rGya tshang pa.

⁴ bZang rgyud pa.

The two [regions] of Nyö and Ngul [together] with Puri Tsokhor,¹
 and the Tsangpo Zangtsawa,²
 [Formed] the “Four Respectfully Subordinate Communities.”
 The “Hundred” of Pazhichak³
 Came as the queen’s dowry.
 Hence these [communities] are known as the “Thirteen Hundreds.”
 In terms of calculating [the households of] the Hundreds, ten units
 of one hundred [households] are counted as one Hundred, which
 is equivalent to one thousand [households].

Thus, [they] had a long dynasty.

***Relations between the Kings of
 Mangyül Gungthang and Rigdzin Gödem***

King Tashidé

In the treasure prophecies of the great treasure revealer Rigdzin Gödem, it says:⁴

¹ Respectively: gNyos, Ngul, and Phu ri mtsho 'khor. According to Everding 2000b, p. 57, fn. 95, Phu ri is a region east of the large lake in Mang yul gung thang named dPal khud mtsho.

² gTsang po bZang tsha ba.

³ Pha gzhi chags.

⁴ It seems that *mKhan po* Chos dbyings' source of the above lines is *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, see Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, p. 29. However, the original *Treasure Prophecy (gter lung)* attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem has not been found. There is a somewhat comparable passage quoted in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's biography, see Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 72-73. There it is said to be an excerpt from *The Noble One's Advice: Seven Pro-found and Noble Statements Regarding Sikkim* ('Bras mo gshongs kyi 'phags pa zab mo lung bdun gyi 'phags pa bka'i lung), an extant copy of which has not yet been located. Interestingly, the passage in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* does not explicitly name King bKra shis lde, who would have been the king of Mang yul gung thang when the treasure scrolls were revealed by bZang po grags pa. However, King bKra shis lde died before the scrolls made it to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. Thus, the differences in the passages could reflect a pivot from one specific king, bKra shis lde, to a more general focus on the dynasty.

In particular, to the northeast Kulha¹ Mountain of Mangyül,
 There will be an earthen fort² resembling many white teeth.
 If in that place, a short man of the royal clan with a bodhisattva
 mind
 By the name Dharma King Tashidé
 Encounters this treasure [teachings],
 Then the [existence] of teachings [of the Buddha] in Tibet
 Will be prolonged for another fifty-three years.
 It further says:³
 If the three: the master, the profound treasure [teaching],
 And the King of Gungthang come together,
 At that time, the teachings in Tibet
 Will be sustained by the treasure [teachings] for [another] one
 hundred twenty-one years.
 Due to the weak merit of migratory beings, Lord Tashidé, who
 was praised with the lines [quoted above] and others, died before
 [Rigdzin] Gödem revealed the Five Treasures⁴ of profound treasure
 [teachings]. [123]

King Püntsokdé (i.e., Püntsofpal)

His son, Lord Püntsokdé,⁵ also had a mediocre connection⁶ with
 [Rigdzin Gödem's revelations], the auspicious circumstances were not
 gathered. Therefore, in the Year of the Iron-Dog (1370) of the sixth
 calendrical cycle, he was killed in his thirty-second year through de-
 ceptive means by Jang Tāwen (ca. 1316–1375).⁷

¹ sKu lha refers to mountain dwelling gods such as gNyan chen thang lha, who are believed to protect the emperors. For more on the sKu lha and its cult, see Hill 2015, pp. 49-58.

² *Sa mkhar*.

³ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, vol. 59, pp. 318-319. Therein, the Fifth Dalai Lama identifies the source of the quotation being *Gab pa snying gi lde mig*, an extant copy of which has not yet been located.

⁴ *mDzod lnga*.

⁵ Phun tshogs lde.

⁶ *rTen 'brel*.

⁷ Byang Tā dben. According to Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, p. 32, *Khri* Phun tshogs lde was killed by Zhang rta tshag pa sMon lam rgyal mtshan at the order of Byang Tā dben, the father-in-law of *Khri* Phun tshogs lde. Byang

King Chokdrubdé and King Sönamdé

[Püntsokdé] had two sons from different mothers, Lord Chokdrubdé¹ and Sönamdé. The elder brother, Chokdrubdé, was a patron for Rigdzin Gödem and all the [required] auspicious conditions [from his part] were then gathered [with the treasure teachings]. This was reported in [his] edict² entitle *The Speech of Tri Chokdrubdé Palzangpo*³ cited within Rigdzin Gödem's biography.⁴ [Later,] when this king was riding a horse, he was thrown off the horse and died.

As for his younger brother, Lord Sönamdé, he was born to Lord Püntsokdé and [his wife] Namkha Gyalmo⁵ in the Year of the Iron-Pig (1371) of the sixth calendrical cycle. In his nineteenth year, in the Year of the Earth-Snake (1389) of the seventh calendrical cycle, he relied on the great Rigdzin Gödem as his root teacher and received many teachings of the [tradition of] Early Translations.⁶ He offered [him] many things, including the secluded estate of Mt. Palbar, which had been a meditation site of Milarepa. [124] The two brothers honored the treasure revealer Rigdzin Gödem as a royal tutor.⁷

Tā dben ruled the Gung thang Kingdom for five years (ca. 1371–1375). For more regarding *Khri* Phun tshogs lde's assassination, see Jahoda 2021, p. 17.

¹ mChog grub lde.

² *bKa' shog*.

³ *Khri mchog grub lde dpal bzang po'i gtam*.

⁴ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 125–127.

⁵ Nam mkha' rgyal mo.

⁶ The grounds for claiming that there was a connection between Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and King bSod nams lde are rather shaky. Even if one were to compare this passage and the next, it is clear that somewhere along the way, the activities of King mChog grub lde and King bSod nams lde have become conflated. Notice above, in the delineation of the twenty-three kings of Mang yul Gung thang, King mChog grub lde is mysteriously left out. In the current passages, *mKhan po* Chos dbyings is obviously having difficulty rectifying his knowledge of the 1389 edict issued by King mChog grub lde (according to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's fifteenth century biography) and Kaḥ thog *rig 'dzin* Tshe dbang nor bu's attribution of similar activities involving Rig 'dzin rGod ldem to King bSod nams lde in the *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, which he quotes just below. This is likely why *mKhan po* Chos dbyings presents the brothers as unified in the late 1380s in support of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, despite the fact that they are more generally thought of as rivals, with the younger brother growing up in sPu hrangs. On the relationship between the royal half-brothers, see Everding 2000b, p. 117.

⁷ *dBu bla*.

After the death of the elder brother, [Chokdrubdé], the younger brother, [Sönamdé], continued the excellent activities of his elder brother.

In the *The History of Ngari Gungthang: A Pristine Magical Mirror*,¹ Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu says:²

[He] always ruled the kingdom according to Dharma. In terms of his great good deeds, in his nineteenth year, in the Year of Earth-Dragon (1388), he invited to Mangyül the regent of Padmasambhava, the great treasure revealer Rigdzin Gödem, and offered to him an estate with solitary lands at Mt. Palbar in Mangyül.³

The great Rigdzin Gödem opened the door to the concealed land⁴ [known as] Kyimolung⁵ and also reconcealed many treasure teachings at Mt. Palbar and in Kyimolung.⁶ He offered the Lord many extraordinarily blessed treasure objects such as a dagger⁷ known as Subduing Māras of Three Existences.⁸ He bestowed on the king all the empowerments and instructions of the treasure teachings he had. With that, the king, [Sönamdé], was enthroned auspiciously. In this way, [with the help of Rigdzin Gödem], King Sönamdé was able to restore the auspicious connection [as prophesied by Padmasambhava], which his father missed.

[Sönamdé] ruled the kingdom in accordance with Dharma: he

¹ *mNga' ris gung thang gi lo rgyus dwangs shel 'phrul gyi me long.*

² See Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, p. 34.

³ Again, these events likely did not involve King bSod nams lde, but his brother mChog grub lde. See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 27-28.

⁴ Regarding the concept of concealed lands (*sbas yul*) and its significance, see the chapter written by Cécile Ducher in this volume.

⁵ This is one of the seven concealed lands often related to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. See also bsTan 'dzin lhun grub and Karma zla ba 2020, pp. 40-41. For more about the land and people of sKyid mo lung (gTsum), see Rai and Lama Nima 2016, pp. 221-234.

⁶ As stated above, it is very likely that this passage by Kaḥ thog *rig 'dzin* Tshe dbang nor bu mistakenly attributes most, if not all, of these interactions with Rig 'dzin rGod ldem to King bSod nams lde, for it is more likely that they should have been attributed to his half-brother, mChog grub lde.

⁷ *Phur pa.*

⁸ Srid gsum dbang 'dus.

divided his subjects into four groups—rich, middle, poor, and extreme poor—[125] and then equalized the [gap between] the rich and the poor by way of distributing the wealth for his subjects equally three times.¹

Furthermore, he received many teachings of the [tradition of the] Later Translations from Lotsāwa Drakpa Gyeltsen² (1352–1404) of Bodong,³ Lotsāwa Ngawang Drakpa,⁴ and Rendawa Zhönnu Lodrö⁵ (1349–1412). While his political and Dharma activities were at their peak, when laying the foundation for sixteen monk quarters at the great Gungthang Chödé, he passed away in his thirty-fourth year, in the Year of the Wood-Monkey of the seventh calendrical circle (1404).

The Connections Between the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang, the Jangter Patriarchs of Mustang, and the Kings of Mustang

In the lineage of the Gungthang Kings, Lord Namgyaldé (ca. 1422–1502) had many sons. His eldest son Norbudé⁶ had to live in Mustang⁷ for a long time. During that period, he had a son named Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen⁸ (1446–1559), who became the father of Ngari Paṇchen

¹ *dBul phyug lan gsum bsnyams*.

² *Lo tsā ba* Grags pa rgyal mtshan. According to Solmsdorf 2014, p. 10, he is said to have been an uncle of Bo dong paṇ chen (1375–1451) and the first abbot of rDzong dkar chos sde. Also see Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las 2002, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod*, p. 1403.

³ Bo dong.

⁴ *Lo tsā ba* Ngag dbang grags pa.

⁵ For more about Re mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros, see Samten Chhosphel 2021.

⁶ Nor bu lde.

⁷ Glo bo.

⁸ 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan. According to Padma 'phrin las 2017, *Dus pa mdo dbang gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, pp. 198–219, 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan was an accomplished master of *bKa' ma* and *gTer ma* lineages and was said to be an emanation of Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros (1012–1098). He was a son of the Gungthang King Nor bu lde and born in the Kingdom of Mustang (Glo) in the Year of the Fire-Tiger (1446). In his thirteenth year, he joined rNam rgyal chos sde monastery (14th c.) of Mustang and studied the philosophies of Madhyamaka, Prajñāpāramitā, and Pramāṇa under Rab 'byams pa Gangs can bzang po. When he was twenty-one years old, he was sent to gTsang by bKra shis mgon, the third Dharma King of the kingdom of Mustang to study rNying ma teachings at 'Ug pa lung. He relied on over sixty-four masters of dBus and gTsang, including, Zur ham rgyal ba, 'Ug pa lung pa Tshe dpal mgon po, *gter ston* Kun skyong gling pa (1408–1489), and Thang stong rgyal po (1385–1509). He received the teachings of the Northern Treasures, such as *Thugs sgrub*, *dGongs pa zang thal* and

[Pema Wangyal] (1487–1542).¹ Jamyang Rinchen [Gyaltsen] had eight sons; his second was Ngari Paṇchen and his eighth was Rigdzin Lekden Dorjé (1512–ca. 1580).²

At present, the one known as the Mustang King, who resides at the border region of Nepal, shares the same royal lineage as the [aforementioned] two brothers. If one wants to know more details about this dynasty, one should look at Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu's *History of Ngari Gungthang: A Pristine Magical Mirror*. [126]



others and received the core rNying ma teachings of *bKa' ma* and *gTer ma*—*mDo dgongs 'dus*, *rGyud 'phrul drwa ba*, *Sems sde ma bu bco brgyad*, and *bKa' brgyad* cycles. After staying nine years in dBus and gTsang regions and receiving many teachings from the prominent teachers of the time, he became a great scholar. Although he was invited by Kaḥ thog monastery in Khams, he returned to his native kingdom of Glo by the order of its king. Later he gave empowerments of many secret rNying ma teachings such as *sGyu 'phrul* to King bKra shis mgon and his inner circle in secret, and thus he became a royal chaplain (*bla mchod*). He was said to have lived for 113 years and the rNying ma teaching lineages that he passed to his sons—mNga' ris *paṇ chen* Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542) and *Rig 'dzin* Legs ldan rdo rje—became a part of what is later known as rDo rje brag lugs. For more regarding how mNga' ris *paṇ chen* Padma dbang rgyal and *Rig 'dzin* Legs ldan rdo rje (1512–ca. 1580) received rNying ma teachings, particularly the *'Dus pa mdo dbang* and *bKa' brgyad gsang ba yongs rdzogs*, from their father, see *ibid.*, pp. 220–224, p. 245.

¹ mNga' ris *paṇ chen*. See Einhorn 2013.

² For more regarding *Rig 'dzin* Legs ldan rdo rje, see Samten Chhosphel 2013e.

Part II:
Background &
Analysis

Chapter 3: The Prophesied Incarnation: An Analysis Based on Khenpo Chöying's Biography of Rigdzin Gödem

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Introductory Prophecies

he biography of Rigdzin Gödem in *The Garland of Wondrous Tales* begins with a series of nine quotations from various prophetic treasure texts. Generally speaking, treasure prophecies are an essential component of the treasure traditions as they are regularly employed as part of a complex system of legitimization that involves the discovery of treasure texts in the present—the second half of the fourteenth century for Rigdzin Gödem—that contain records of activities and conversations that occurred during the late Tibetan Empire (ca. 8th–9th c.), which are pertinent to the time period in which they were revealed. While these narratives, which often feature Padmasambhava and his disciples, can be considered prophetic in the general sense that knowledge of the recorded activities and conversations will be important in the future, these conversations also tend to include more formal prophetic statements about what will come to pass in the future. In this way, the authority of Padmasambhava and his worthy disciples is employed through narrative to “prove” the legitimacy of a wide range of details, from the identity of the treasure revealer to the contents of the treasure repositories, from the location of the treasures to the appropriateness of the time of revelation. The applications of this method of legitimization are seemingly endless. While there are certainly accounts of those who have, despite the existence of relevant prophecies, doubted the legitimacy of particular treasure revealers, it is generally not seen as problematic from the emic perspective that one often reveals the prophetic texts that prove one’s own legitimacy.¹

¹ It is also quite common for prophetic guides to include prophecies intended for any number of “other” individuals apart from the one who revealed the text.

The first five quotations in the biography are drawn from treasures revealed by figures who are not a part of the tradition of the Northern Treasures: Jatsön Nyingpo (1585–1656), Nyangral Nyima Özer (1124–1192), Künkyong Lingpa (ca. 15th c.), Orgyen Lingpa (1323–ca. 1355), and Pema Lingpa (1450–1521). These prophecies are significant in part because they demonstrate the emic perception that Rigdzin Gödem's authenticity as a treasure revealer extends beyond the boundaries of the tradition he founded. Additionally, these prophecies bind the fortunes of the treasure revealers together, effectively borrowing legitimacy from one another by placing their names—or descriptions of their persons—together in scripture.

The final four prophecies are drawn from scriptures within the tradition of the Northern Treasures. Two of the quotations can be found in *The Essential Steps: An Extensive Essential Guide*, which is a treasure revealed by Zangpo Drakpa in 1362.¹ The other two are from prophetic guides that were extracted by Rigdzin Gödem himself. *The Cycle of Scrolls from the White Whetstone Keys*² is a series of six scrolls that he discovered at Mt. Trazang in 1366, while *The Self-Emergent Self-Arisen Root-Tantra in Twenty-Five Sections*³ is, as the title suggests, a root-tantra for Rigdzin Gödem's cycle called *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*⁴ that he extracted at Zangzang Lhadrak presumably later that same year.⁵ These four prophetic quotations are, as would be expected, more clearly focused on the person of Rigdzin Gödem and the task of linking his biographical details to prophecies spoken by Padmasambhava during his time in Tibet.

It is unlikely, however, that Khenpo Chöying selected these nine prophecies himself directly from the source scriptures. In fact, the majority of the quotations—numbers 3, 4, 5, 6, and 8—appear grouped together within the pages of Setön Pema Wangchen's *Garland of Jewels*.⁶ Three of the remaining quotations—numbers 2, 7, and 9—can be

¹ bZang po grags pa 1983, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad gyi them bu*, pp. 299–319.

² See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, '*Dzeng rdo dkar po nas byon pa 'i shog hril skor*, pp. 321–343.

³ *Chos tshan nyer lnga 'i rtsa rgyud rang byung rang shar*.

⁴ *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*.

⁵ While this text has not been found, the quotation and the entire dialogue is preserved here: Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *rDo rje phur pa 'i brgyud rim*, vol. 13, pp. 277–280.

⁶ Se ston Padma dbang chen 2015, *Byang gter gyi chos skor rnam ky i spyi chings*,

found in a ritual manual for *The Adamantine Expression of Wrath*,¹ which was authored by Pema Trinlé in the seventeenth century.² Whether or not these two texts were among Khenpo Chöying's sources, it is clear that there is a tradition of using or reusing a certain pool of prophetic quotations in one's composition to establish the legitimacy of Rigdzin Gödem's authority. As a result, most of these passages can be found scattered throughout a wide range of texts.

Emanations, Incarnations, and Reincarnations

The entire collection of prophetic quotations—those included in the biography as well as others in the presumed source texts by Pema Wangchen and Pema Trinlé—reveals a preoccupation with Rigdzin Gödem's status as an emanation and his connection with Nanam Dorjé Düjom. Since at least the seventeenth century, tradition consistently maintains that the treasure revealer, Rigdzin Gödem, is a direct reincarnation of the treasure concealer, Nanam Dorjé Düjom. As the treasure traditions develop over the centuries, the incarnational link between the concealer and the revealer evidently comes to be understood as essential, not only because it explains how the treasures are located, but also how a treasure revealer is able to decode entire texts from just a few lines of ḍākinī script. Both activities come to be understood as relying upon latent memories from one's past life. Over roughly the same period of time when these developments were occurring in the treasure traditions, the system of rule by successive incarnations was also proliferating throughout Tibet. As a result, discussions of the past lives of saints often adopted the rigor and precision one might expect in conversations of ancestry and inheritance. The ability to access latent memories would eventually prove to be important within this social institution as well because the most common test to confirm the identity of a reincarnated lama involves the identification of one's possessions from a previous life.³

vol. 14, pp. 282-283. See Achard 2023b for translations and analyses of the prophecies in the text composed by Pema Wangchen.

¹ rDo rje drag po rtsal.

² See Padma 'phrin las 2015, *Byang gter yang gsang thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi dbang rgyas 'bring gi chog khrigs*, vol. 43, pp. 253-254.

³ On the other hand, authenticity is rarely determined by one's ability to fully remember one's past life.

However, while elements of these later, robust social institutions can be found scattered throughout the early Jangter prophecies (*i.e.*, those discovered by Zangpo Drakpa and Rigdzin Gödem in the late 14th century), it is clear therein that Rigdzin Gödem's authority is not understood to be grounded solely in his identity as a direct reincarnation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom nor solely in a presumed ability to recall details from his past lives.

The strategy on display in those prophetic texts, as well as in most biographies, is to offer multiple—and perhaps at times seemingly contradictory—arguments for establishing the authority of Rigdzin Gödem, rather than relying upon a single theological claim. Interestingly, Khenpo Chöying's choices of quotations appear to honor, perhaps unwittingly, a diversity of perspectives found in the prophecies. Notice that the biography begins by stating that Rigdzin Gödem is a miraculous emanation¹ of Nanam Dorjé Düjom. However, he also quotes a prophecy by Orgyen Lingpa that states that Rigdzin Gödem is a heart-emanation² of Padmasambhava himself. After a rather clear statement from one of Rigdzin Gödem's prophetic guides that he is an emanation³ of Nanam Dorjé Düjom, he ends with a prophecy that identifies the former as the treasure revealer and the latter as the treasure concealer but stops short of explaining the relation—other than sequential—between the two figures. It appears that Khenpo Chöying has skillfully selected passages that employ a variety of specialized terms, which, one might note, are not necessarily mutually exclusive or contradictory, in the process of offering the devoted reader a variety of reasons to have confidence in Rigdzin Gödem as a legitimate treasure revealer.

It is important to note that there were editorial decisions made by the Khenpo Chöying during the writing process as there are plenty of other prophecies from within the tradition that are much more definitive and, therefore, are more difficult to harmonize with one another. For example, in a practice text that was revealed by Rigdzin Gödem as part of *The Eight Pronouncements* cycle of the Northern Treasures, one learns that Padmasambhava first taught a less restrictive version of *The Eight Pronouncements* to King Trisong Detsen and his entire entourage,

¹ *rNam 'phrul.*

² *Thugs sprul.*

³ *sPrul pa.*

twenty-five disciples in all.¹ He gave them both individualized and general teachings, and they all attained mastery over the practices. Then, Padmasambhava bestowed the empowerments for the more exclusive—although related—set of Jangter teachings called *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* to a subset of nine of those disciples. At the conclusion of the empowerment session, multi-colored lights emerged from the heart-center of Padmasambhava and were absorbed by Nanam Dorjé Düjom, who was one of the nine privileged disciples. Padmasambhava then issued the following prophecy: “Dorjé Düjom, in the future, you will take rebirth near a place called Toyor Nakpo in the North as the one known as Rigdzin Gödem. At that time, you will appropriately make use of this tantra, *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*, and its sadhanas.”² If the hypothesis above regarding Khenpo Chöying’s sources for these prophecies are correct, then he was almost certainly aware of this prophecy as it is mentioned in Pema Trinlé’s *The Adamantine Expression of Wrath*.³

Conversely, there are also prophecies that make it rather clear that Rigdzin Gödem was *not* a reincarnation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom, at least not in a strictly linear, exclusive manner. You will notice in the biography a quotation from *The Essential Steps: An Extensive Essential Guide*, which explains what will happen to the king’s protector (*i.e.*, Rigdzin Gödem) after he dies. In short, he will be reborn in an emanated body and then, without dying, he will enter Padmasambhava’s pure land. However, this quotation is but a small portion of a larger narrative that discusses the future lives of five different individuals: 1) the King of Mangyül Gungthang, 2) the emanated demon who killed the king, 3) the king’s protector (*i.e.*, Rigdzin Gödem), 4) Prince Mutri Tsenpo, and 5) Nanam Dorjé Düjom.⁴ Therein, it is reported that while Prince Mutri Tsenpo will make it to Padmasambhava’s pure land after seventeen

¹ The text is entitled *The Utterly Profound Instructions Supplementing the Main Text of the Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* (*bKa’ brgyad rang byung rang shar gyi sgrub gzhung zur ’debs rab tu zab par gdams pa*). For the complete passage, see Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 2015, *bKa’ brgyad rang byung rang*, vol. 9, pp. 408-410.

² *Ibid.*, p. 410.

³ See Padma ’phrin las 2015, *Byang gter yang gsang thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi dbang rgyas ’bring gi chog khrigs*, vol. 43, p. 254.

⁴ To read the entire passage, see the text revealed by bZang po grags pa 1983, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad gyi them bu*, pp. 156-158.

lifetimes, Dorjé Düjom will get there after a mere seven lifetimes. While there are some vague elements within the narrative, it is abundantly clear that Rigdzin Gödem is not being presented as a reincarnation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom. They appear to be separate individuals with separate destinies in this particular narrative.¹

There is also ample evidence that Khenpo Chöying would have been aware of at least one other way to address Rigdzin Gödem's "nature," theologically speaking. Throughout his composition, he borrows heavily from *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* by Nyima Zangpo, which is the earliest extant biography of Rigdzin Gödem. While a large number of quotations from the prophetic guides of both Zangpo Drakpa and Rigdzin Gödem are scattered throughout *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, it begins with a lengthy explanation of how Rigdzin Gödem—as well as just about all that is good—is an emanation of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra. At the end of a lengthy presentation, Nyima Zangpo summarizes as follows:

In very brief [terms, Samantabhadra] appears to the Buddhas as the Dharmakāya Amitābha. To the bodhisattvas, he appears as the Sambhogakāya Avalokiteśvara. To the emanations of King [Trisong Detsen] and his ministers as well as the male and female disciples with good karma, [he appeared as] the Nirmāṇakāya Padmasambhava. In the minds of people like me, who are sentient beings of a degenerate age with very little accumulations, he does nothing other than appear merely in the holy personage of a treasure revealer. With respect to [Rigdzin Gödem's] true essence, I am convinced that he

¹ Generally speaking, the current traditional view within the Northern Treasures is that sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms was the previous incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. The biography of Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639), which was written by the Fifth Dalai Lama, however, includes Khro phu lo tsā ba (1173–1225) as the life between sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. For the entire list of incarnations from Samantabhadra through Ngag gi dbang po, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1972, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, pp. 667–671. Neither way of counting the incarnations from sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms through Rig 'dzin rGod ldem would harmonize with the predictions summarized in the passage above. sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms' seven additional lives would have ended with either sKal bzang padma dbang phyug (1720–1771) or Kun bzang 'gyur med lhun grub (ca. 1775–1810), depending on how one counts. The prediction regarding Rig 'dzin rGod ldem would have his incarnation lineage ending with Legs ldan rdo rje (ca. 1512–1580).

was a great being who embodied the body, speech, and mind of all the Buddhas of the three times.¹

Both the length of the presentation, of which the paragraph above is but a small excerpt, and its placement—*i.e.*, at the beginning of the biography—demonstrate the importance of the view in Nyima Zangpo's presentation. Moreover, given the centrality of Samantabhadra in the teachings of the Great Perfection, which are themselves systematically presented as the heart of the Northern Treasures Tradition, the proposal that Rigdzin Gödem himself was an emanation of Samantabhadra is quite fitting. Nevertheless, it is not a perspective that could be judged as prevalent within the earliest layer of the tradition's literature if it could be found there at all. On the contrary, the identification of Rigdzin Gödem as an emanation of Samantabhadra appears to originate with *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, and the influence of the idea does not appear to have spread widely.

Having considered a wide range of distinct views regarding Rigdzin Gödem's incarnational nature, let us make some modest conclusions. On the one hand, it is completely appropriate to present Rigdzin Gödem as the direct reincarnation of Nanam Dorjé Düjom. Despite the simplicity of such a view in the face of the complexities found within the historical layers of literature within the tradition itself, it does appear to be a prevalent emic perspective. On the other hand, the wealth of alternative frameworks for understanding Rigdzin Gödem's nature—some of which have been presented above—are also emic perspectives preserved in writing by authoritative figures from within the tradition. At the very least, it is hoped that as one reads the beginning of Khenpo Chöying's biography of Rigdzin Gödem, the reader will be aware of some of the editorial choices that shaped his presentation while also appreciating the diversity of perspectives that are reflected in the prophetic passages that he chose to include. Moreover, the complexity of his presentation should be understood as intentional, for as demonstrated above, there are plenty of passages in the available literature that he could have employed if he wanted to present a simplified, one-dimensional perspective.



¹ Nyi ma bZang po 1983, pp. 55-56.

Chapter 4: The Paternal Ancestry of Rigdzin Gödem

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In keeping with long-standing hagiographic traditions, Rigdzin Gödem's biographers consistently identify a variety of different aspects of this master's life that indicate that he was an exalted person worthy of the reader's faith and devotion. Elsewhere in this volume, attention has been drawn to his status as an emanation of the primordial buddha Samantabhadra and the imperial-era Nanam Dorjé Düjom, to his achievements as a treasure revealer, and to his exploits in the concealed lands of the southern borderlands.¹ In this brief chapter, we will examine the exalted nature of Rigdzin Gödem's paternal ancestry. Much of this work has already been completed by Roberto Vitali.² Thus, this presentation consists primarily of summaries or simplifications of Vitali's main points with just a few additional observations added to the conversation. Tibetologists who are particularly interested in the minute details of Rigdzin Gödem's ancestry are encouraged to also consult Vitali's thorough article.

In *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, the biographer Nyima Zangpo (14th–15th c.) explains that one of Rigdzin Gödem's paternal ancestors was Degyin Dewa Radza (7th c.), who was favored by King Songtsen Gampo (d. ca. 650) and Queen Ongcho, a treaty-bride he received from China during the Tang Dynasty.³ He further maintains that Degyin Dewa Radza, who is said to have been born into an uncommon family

¹ See my chapter on Padmasambhava and sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms in *Northern Treasures Histories: Volume I* and the summaries of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's treasure cycles written by Arguillère and Achard and Ducher's commentary on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's exploits in the concealed lands, both of which are included in this volume.

² See Vitali 2011.

³ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 58-59. The account of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's ancestry is the most extensive in this source; thus, in this article we will primarily discuss Nyi ma bzang po's account, rather than the slightly abbreviated version in Chos dbyings 2015, vol. 62, pp. 84-85.

lineage known as the Degyin Hor,¹ was the maternal uncle of Princess Ongcho and that he—and thus his family line—accompanied the princess on her way into Tibet, where he acted as her officiating lama and minister.² Rigdzin Gödem is believed to have been born into this family lineage after thirty-six generations.³ Vitali points out that there is a wealth of reliable sources that maintain that the Chinese Princess Ongcho was sent as a treaty-bride to Tibet in 641.⁴ He further points out that there is evidence that “unspecified Turks” received Chinese princesses in diplomatic exchanges prior to 634, from which one can deduce that it is at least plausible that there were also ethnically Chinese princesses who enjoyed kinship ties with uncles of Turkic ethnicity.⁵ While this evidence provided by Vitali is not enough to verify this component of Nyima Zangpo’s account of Rigdzin Gödem’s ancestry, it is enough to demonstrate that it is at least a plausible scenario.

There are other components of Nyima Zangpo’s account, however, that appear to be problematic. In particular, the Degyin Hor family is identified as a royal lineage of descendants of the King of the Hor of the Yellow Tents.⁶ They are more widely known as regular antagonists of Gesar in the orally transmitted epic legends.⁷ Historians know them as a Turkic-speaking ethnic group called the Shara Uyghur or Sarigh Uyghur. Nyima Zangpo therefore implies that the legendary King of the Shara Uyghur, who is the font of this family lineage, must have lived during or before the lifetime of King Songtsen Gampo. Vitali has identified a significant problem with this group of historical claims. In particular, the Shara Uyghur are not thought to have entered their eventual homeland of the Gya Minyak⁸ in Eastern Tibet—their first known appearance at a relevant location in or near Tibet—until after 840, which is, of course, long after the death of King Songtsen Gampo and Queen Ongcho in the seventh century.⁹ Vitali concludes that if

¹ De gyin hor. Vitali 2011, p. 191, states that Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s ethnic group is one that is “rarely found on the plateau.”

² *Bla mchod blon po*. Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 58-59.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁴ Vitali 2011, p. 193.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁶ *Hor gur ser*. Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 58.

⁷ Vitali 2011, p. 191.

⁸ rGya Mi nyag.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 192.

Degyin Dewa Radza lived during the reign of Songtsen Gampo, then he could not have been a Shara Uyghur or a descendant of their royal dynasty.¹

Nevertheless, Vitali demonstrates that the title of “Degyin”² was already in use at the time of Songtsen Gampo among a variety of Turkic ethnic groups that were active on or adjacent to the Tibetan Plateau.³ Thus, the use of the title by Rigdzin Gödem’s ancestor suggest that he could have been of Turkic descent, just not of the Shara or Yellow Uyghur who had not yet emerge as an ethnic group in the seventh century.⁴ Through an analysis of the biography written by Nyima Zangpo and a pair of prophetic guides that were revealed by Rigdzin Gödem, one of which is quoted in the biography, Vitali further postulates that this anachronistic connection to the Shara Uyghur and the allusions to the epic legends of Gesar may have originated with Nyima Zangpo as the connection is absent from the prophetic guides he employed as sources for the biography.⁵

If we are to accept the above explanation of how Rigdzin Gödem’s ancestors got to Tibet with Princess Ongcho, we would have to presume that the Degyin Hor family would have lived in the imperial capital of Lhasa before relocating to Western Tibet. Nyima Zangpo implies that after twenty-one generations, an ancestor named Hor Khenpo Jigten, who happened to have been an accomplished tantric master, relocated his minor branch of the family to Northern Latö.⁶ He maintains that since that time, the family, endowed with a series of such notable masters, has dwelt at Namolung, the eventual birthplace of Rigdzin Gödem, beginning with the Lord of Northern Latö⁷ named Dorjé Drakpo Tsal.⁸ His title is presented in a manner that suggests that he was the first patriarch of the family to be fully associated with their new

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 194. Vitali does accept that De gyin rDe wa ra dza could have been a part of the group that eventually comes to be known as the “Yu gur” (i.e., Shara Uyghur).

² De gyin.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 193.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

⁵ Vitali’s assessment (*Ibid.*, p. 194) appears to be based on a reasonable etic understanding of the prophetic guides as works composed by—rather than simply revealed by—Rig ’dzin rGod ldem himself.

⁶ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 59.

⁷ Byang stod dbang phyug.

⁸ rDo rje drag po rtsal. *Ibid.*, p. 59.

homeland. According to Vitali's calculations, Dorjé Drakpo Tsal would have lived at some point after the mid-eleventh or mid-twelfth centuries.¹ Thus, it appears that Rigdzin Gödem's family, which as explained above was likely of an early Turkic ethnicity, lived in Northern Latö for several decades—if not a full century—before the arrival of the Tangut refugees from Jang Minyak,² who had fled from Genghis Khan in 1227.³ The rulers among these newly arrived immigrants superseded the preexisting power structure of the area, and when Northern Latö was established as a vassal state allied with Sakya in 1268, the legitimacy of the ruling Tangut family was confirmed.⁴

Rigdzin Gödem thus lived at a time and place where there were people of at least three ethnicities: the Tibetan people who were already living in Northern Latö, Rigdzin Gödem's family of a Turkic ethnicity, and the more recently arrived and politically dominant Tangut refugees. Vitali points out that during the fourteenth century, a similar mix of ethnicities could be found along the southern borderlands in what is modern-day Sikkim, where a variety of different Tangut refugees are said to have found their home.⁵ He further hypothesizes that while Rigdzin Gödem's choice to depart for the southern borderlands was certainly a reaction to the political instability that characterized the later fourteenth century, his choice of destinations—i.e., the southern borderlands he called Dremoshong in Sikkim—may have been influenced by his desire to operate in a region that was ethnically diverse in a manner similar to his homeland.⁶

Interestingly, in an unrelated study of the archaeological sites of the region, Bellezza reported that oral folklore associates various local sites with the Yellow Uyghur.⁷ In particular, he identified three mountain gods⁸ who are believed to have been worshiped by occupying Hor during the pre-imperial era, but who were later subdued by

¹ Vitali 2011, p. 196.

² Byang Mi nyag.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 196.

⁴ For more on the interaction between Sa skya and its vassal states, see the commentary on Mang yul Gung thang in this volume that was written by Tenpa Tsering Batsang and Jay Holt Valentine.

⁵ Vitali 2011, pp. 197-198.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁷ Bellezza 2005, p. 282.

⁸ lHa ri.

Padmasambhava in the eighth century, during the height of the Tibetan Empire.¹ All three mountains are important to the tradition of the Northern Treasures: Trazang, Zangzang Lhadrak, and Cung Riwoché. On the ridge adjacent to Trazang, there are even ruins of a hilltop fortress called Drakla Dzong,² which is believed to have been built by the Hor.³ There are also wall remnants at Trazang, which suggests that it may have been a surveillance post for the nearby fortress, although this is not reflected in local oral tradition.⁴ While it does not appear that Bellezza used scientific methods to date these ruins, he maintains that they appear to significantly predate the construction of the religious complex at Trazang.⁵ Perhaps future archeological studies will be able to provide us with stronger hypotheses regarding the time period when these structures were erected and who might have been involved with their construction. While the folkloric account ought not be completely disregarded, it is unlikely that the legendary account involving Padmasambhava was in circulation before the fourteenth century.⁶ Nevertheless, it is not entirely impossible that all three of these mountains could have been important non-Buddhist religious sites before their association with the Northern Treasures Tradition. It is well-known, for example, that the Bön tertön Pönsé Khyungö Tsal (b. 1175), who has often been mistakenly conflated with Rigdzin Gödem, extracted treasures at Zangzang Lhadrak in the early thirteenth century.⁷

Conclusion

Given the various layers of so-called “Hor” activity in Tibet over the centuries and the prevalence of endlessly growing and ever-popular

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 282-283.

² Brag la rdzong.

³ Bellezza 2010, pp. 62-63.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁶ It is very unlikely that neither Rig ’dzin rGod ldem nor his biographer would have mentioned this Padmasambhava legend involving Zang zang lHa brag and bKra bzang somewhere in their writings if they had been aware of the story. Thus, I suspect that the legend began to circulate at a later date.

⁷ For an argument for the disambiguation of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem and dPon gsa Khyung rgod rtsal, see Achard’s Appendix 1 in *Northern Treasures Histories: Volume I* and Berounský 2009, p. 40.

legends of Gesar and Padmasambhava, it is not surprising to find apparently anachronistic details both in Nyima Zangpo's fifteenth century biography of Rigdzin Gödem and in the regional folklore reported by Bellezza in the twenty-first century. Leaving aside the issue of historical plausibility for the moment, it may be helpful to consider the implied meaning of the given account of Rigdzin Gödem's ancestry. In particular, one is supposed to be impressed by the idea that Rigdzin Gödem's ancestors, while descended from foreign kings themselves, came to Tibet during the reign of King Songtsen Gampo at about the same time that Buddhism arrived on the plateau. While Degyin Dewa Radza was favored by the royal family and acted as the queen's officiating lama and minister,¹ his descendants made names for themselves as accomplished tantric masters. Thus, the account of Rigdzin Gödem's ancestry demonstrates that he has the biological pedigree that might be expected of a tantric master capable of serving the needs of a head of state.



¹ Bla mchod blon po.

Chapter 5: Rigdzin Gödem's Masters and Training

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dentifying Rigdzin Gödem's masters and trying to understand something about his training is a very important task insofar as it would allow us to place him more concretely in the religious history of Tibet. However, as for many tertöns, the biographies—in this case, the one by Nyima Zangpo, which seems to be the only source from which all others draw or paraphrase—tend to erase their connections with human masters and emphasize their dependence on supernatural beings and elements related to past lives. The information gleaned from the available sources is admittedly meager, but it seems appropriate to gather it all into a small chapter so that future researchers will be clearly informed regarding what has been done and what still lies ahead.

In addition to biographies, records of teachings received¹ provide some more information about his masters' names. References to the teachings he gave to his disciples also imply that he had received them, even though we may not know from whom.

In Rigdzin Gödem's oldest and most authoritative biography, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, it is said² that after his father passed away, his mother taught him reading and writing. Two or three figures are then mentioned as his preceptors: Setön Palchen Bum³ and one Lekpa, with an additional phrase that indicates either that Lekpa was the brother of Palchen Bum or that they were accompanied by a third, unnamed preceptor who was Lekpa's brother.

Setön Palchen Bum is not altogether unknown as he is mentioned by Guru Tashi in another context: that of the Nyingma monasteries of

¹ Those that proved to be the most useful for us were those of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682: Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1991–1995, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*), of gTer bdag gling pa (1646–1714: gTer bdag gling pa 1998, *Thob yig rin chen 'byung gnas*) and of Brag dkar rta so *sprul sku* Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837).

² Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 14: *yum gyis 'dri* (sic for *'bri*) *klog sogs go slob mdzad*].

³ Loc. cit.: *se ston dpal chen 'bum pa dang* | *legs pa sku mched kyis* | ...

Tsang,¹ especially the Palden Gyakhar Sangngak Chöling, which seems to have been the main seat of the Sé masters. Interestingly, his name appears close to that of Nyima Zangpo, Gödem's biographer, himself a lama of the Sé clan, and presented by Guru Tashi as performing the Jangter *Heart Practice*.² However, this narrative does not contain any exploitable information about Setön Palchen Bum, except that he was a "mighty *ngakpa*."

Another reference to Setön Palchen Bum, also in the vicinity of Nyima Zangpo, is in a biography found in the Sakya Lamdré collection.³ The context is not very informative, except to confirm that one Setön Palchen Bum was active in the mid-fourteenth century. A more precise understanding of the status of these Sé masters in Tsang, of their role in Rigdzin Gödem's training, and in the organization and stabilization of a community of practitioners of his revelations is a subject that requires further investigation.

"Lekpa" is a quite obscure figure who is mentioned again later in Rigdzin Gödem's life in the context of the pacification of obstacles that arose soon after the treasure discovery.⁴ This would mean that he was competent in matters related to terma discovery, already active around 1345 (when his name first occurs), and still available after the treasure was discovered in 1366. It has been suggested in our first volume that this figure might in fact be Gyalsé Lekpa (1290–1366),⁵ Pema

¹ Gu ru bKra shis 1990, pp. 664–668: *gsum pa| gtsang phyogs kyi dgon pa gnas khag dang gdan rabs brjod pa|*.

² Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 664: *de yang se ston gong ma zhig gis glang la khal bkal nas sgrub gnas btsal bas sa der glang nyal ba la dbyug pa brgyas brdungs kyang ma langs par mkhar der nyal bas de gar gnas gzhi gting ba la dpal ldan rgya mkhar gsang sngags chos gling du grags shing| gnas der se ston dpal chen 'bum pa sogs sngags 'chang nus ldan brgyud mar byon pa las| se ston nyi ma bzang pos tho rengs kyi skabs shig thugs sgrub kyi 'phrin las mdzad pas...*

³ Blo gter dbang po (1847–1914, compiler) 2007, *Bla ma rin po che mkhan chen pa'i rnam thar*, pp. 1–179, apparently a biography of Sa bzang ma ti pañ chen, 1294–1376: p. 18: *de lta bu'i sku mched gnyis kyi khab tu se ston dpal chen 'bum dang nyi ma bzang po sogs yang phur gshin rje dang bcas pa'i zhal gzigs shing| dam can bran bzhin du 'khor ba'i sngags 'chang zam ma chad par byon pa'i gdung brgyud...*

⁴ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 41: *rdo rje phur pa'i sgrub pa mdzad cing bzhugs pa las srod la sgo ru me chen po re byung ba| bla ma legs pa ba la zhu yig btang pas 'jur po da dung mdzad par zhu|...*

⁵ Arguillère 2024a, "A King of Dharma," pp. 107–108. The idea was originally suggested by Jay Holt Valentine. In the same paper (p. 86) is presented a text which

Ledreltsal (1291–1319)’s main disciple. This hypothesis becomes even more likely if one admits that Draklungpa Rinchenpal (discussed below) is in fact Rinchen Lingpa (1289–1368), as Gyalsé Lekpa and Rinchen Lingpa were close associates, at least during their youth.

From these masters, Setön Palchen Bum and “Lekpa,” it seems that Rigdzin Gödem received “the Dharma of his father, *The Network of Illusion* and *Ma Phur*,”¹ in which he became competent.²

After the mention of these two figures comes the allusion to *The Wheel of Black Leprosy*³ in which Gödem obtained signs of accomplishment in his thirteenth year. We shall return to this point in the context of the identification of Draklungpa Rinchenpal.

It is then said that after gaining these signs, Rigdzin Gödem, having developed great faith in Padmasambhava’s teachings, “heard from Nangden Gyalpo the Wise the whole of Guru Chöwang’s (1212–1270) *termas*.”⁴ Unfortunately, it has been impossible so far to find any trace of this figure in any other context, be it as a mere name.

The case is not exactly as bad with the next mentioned master, Changmawa (or Changmapa). Indeed, the Fifth Dalai Lama’s *Record*

calls *rGyal sras* Legs pa “Se *ban*,” “the monk from the Se clan.” This is awkward, because *rGyal sras* Legs pa is generally called Sho *ban* or Shwa *ban* and because his biographies do not indicate any connection with the Se clan. On *rGyal sras* Legs pa’s life, see Arguillère 2024c.

¹ *sGyu ’phrul drwa ba*, a root scripture of the Mahāyoga which seems to exist only in a fragmentary form, as the *gSang ba snying po* is said to be a portion of it. *Ma phur* is more obscure and must be an abbreviated way to allude to two different things—*Phur* is clearly Vakraṭīla and *Ma* could stand for *ma mo* (*rbod gtong?*), that is, the teachings connected to the *yi dam* mNgon rdzogs rgyal po.

² Nyi ma bzang po 2015, pp. 14–15: *pha chos sgyu ’phrul dang ma phur mkhas par mkhyen shing*...

³ *mDze nag las kyi ’khor lo*. Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 15: *de nas dgong lo bcu gsum pa la| mdze nag las kyi ’khor lo’i sgo nas khyab bdag ye shes sems dpa’ klu’i srin por bsgrub pas| ye shes kyi phyag rgya sku la thebs nas mthar phyin*]. Copied in Chos dbyings 2015, p. 88, without the most obscure but maybe most interesting part of the sentence (*ye shes kyi phyag rgya sku la thebs nas*—interesting in the sense that understanding this very unusual phrase may allow researchers to identify the exact cycle alluded to here). For the identification of the *mDze nag las kyi ’khor lo* (as being a text of the *mTshams brag rnying ma rgyud ’bum*, vol. 45, pp. 156–196), see Arguillère 2024a, p. 102, n. 110.

⁴ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, pp. 15–16: *thugs dad pa cher skyes nas mkhas pa snang ldan rgyal po la gu ru chos dbang gi chos ka rnams gsan*].

of Teachings Received even presents a lineage from Nyangral Nyima Özer passing through this individual and Rigdzin Gödem:¹

- Nyangral Nyima Özer (1124–1192);
- His son Namkha Palden;
- Gyalsé Loden Sherab;²
- Nyötön Thukjé Rinchen;
- Dartön Yönten Gyatso;
- Lama Ngödrup Palden;
- Gyatön Thukjé Sengé;
- Lama Rinchen Gyalpo;
- His son Lama Changmawa;
- Tertön Ngödrup Gyaltsen (Rigdzin Gödem), etc.

However, although this list of names gives more credit to Nyima Zangpo's assertion that Rigdzin Gödem received Nyangral's terms from Changmawa, it does not help us much to replace Gödem in context: not only Lama Changmawa, but in fact all the masters in this lineage between Nyangral's grandson and Gödem are, so far, completely unknown.

From the context in Nyima Zangpo's biography, we can suppose that Rigdzin Gödem received the teachings of these two masters, Nangden Gyalpo and Changmawa, when he was between the ages of twelve (1349) and twenty-four (1361). Future hypotheses about these two figures will have to be consistent with this chronological requirement.

The next—and last—figure to be mentioned in Nyima Zangpo's biographical account of Rigdzin Gödem is Draklungpa Rinchenpal. It is said that from him, Rigdzin Gödem received the whole of Dzogchen.³

¹ For example, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 2, 258b: *ldong gi rtags yod pa'i brgyud pa ni| gter ston yan spyi ltar la| sras nam mkha' dpal ldan| rgyal sras blo ldan shes rab| gnyos ston thugs rje rin cen| 'dar ston yon tan rgya mtsho| bla ma dngos grub dpal ldan| rgya ston thugs rje seng ge| bla ma rin cen (sic) rgyal po| sras bla ma lcang ma pa| gter ston dngos grub rgyal mtshan| sngags 'chang rdo rje mgon po|*, etc.

² Grandson of Nyang ral (*mNga' bdag* Blo ldan ma). Mentioned in Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 383, as an emanation of Mañjuśrī.

³ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, pp. 16–17: *de nas rdzogs pa chen po'i chos rnams brag lung pa mkhas btsun rin chen dpal ba'i drung du gsan te|*.

It has been shown¹ that there is a very high probability that this master was in fact Meben Rinchen Lingpa (1289–1368).

Nyima Zangpo's biography quotes a prophetic text as follows:

The [one of the] kind that liberates anything (?) will meet with this Dharma in his twenty-fifth year; in his thirty-fifth [year, 1371], an uncommon realization [of it] will be born [in him].²

This seems to mean that Rigdzin Gödem was taught Dzogchen by Draklungpa Rinchenpal beginning in 1361 and that he would have gained a perfect realization of it in 1371, five years after discovering his own Dzogchen cycles in Zangzang Lhadrak.

Here is a summary of the main arguments in favor of the identification of Gödem's master Draklungpa Rinchenpal as Rinchen Lingpa:

- Rinchen Lingpa's personal name was Rinchen [Gyaltsen] Pal[zangpo].
- His dates are most probably 1289–1368, so there is no chronological inconsistency. He was a reputed old master during Rigdzin Gödem's youth and passed away soon after Gödem opened Zangzang Lhadrak (1366).
- He was from Southern Tibet and dwelt in various places that may have earned him the surname Draklungpa³ given to Gödem's Dzogchen master.
- He was (at least in his early life) a well-educated monk, which is precisely what is meant by the title *Khetsün*,⁴ which Nyima Zangpo gives to Draklungpa Rinchenpal.
- As regards Dzogchen, he was one of the two (three, if we count Longchenpa) main lineage holders of the *Khandro Nyingthik* (revealed in 1313) active in the period between 1349–1361. Rigdzin Gödem knew the *Khandro Nyingthik* very well: he later taught it to his disciples and full sections of it are included in the *Gongpa Zangthal* (1366). The first point implies that he did not just get a copy of these (then

¹ Arguillère 2024a is devoted to this question.

² Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 17: *gtad rgya las| gang grol ba'i rigs rtsa lnga la chos 'di dang mjal : sum cu rtsa lnga pa la rtogs pa khyad par can skyes so* .:

³ Brag lung pa.

⁴ *mKhas btsun*.

rare) texts but was trained in them by some lineage-holding master—and there were very few.

- There is an allusion to Pema Ledreltsal, Rinchen Lingpa and maybe Longchenpa (1308–1364) in the *Gongpa Zangthal* itself,¹ which, however obscure, becomes quite transparent if one is well informed of these figures' biographies. This passage, if not interpolated by later editors, shows that Rigdzin Gödem was well aware of Rinchen Lingpa's activities in the context of the *Khandro Nyingthik* and even of his more personal Dzogchen cycle, *Ati, The Single Self-Sufficient Principle*.²
- Since Rinchen Lingpa also revealed a terma about Nāgarākṣa in 1310 or 1311, he could have taught it to Rigdzin Gödem around 1349, when, for an unknown reason, Gödem practiced that rare deity, which is mainly an antidote against the illnesses caused by *nāgas*.³
- Another perplexing issue in Nyima Zangpo's biography of Rigdzin Gödem is the mention of his father practicing “the Brahmin's Dzogchen.”⁴ This alludes to an obscure subdivision of the *Yangti* section of Dzogchen, for which we have a (problematic) list of tantras, but no known system for practice. Now, Rinchen Lingpa's Dzogchen cycle, *Ati, The Single Self-Sufficient Principle*, although included by Jamgön

¹ The prophecy is found in the *sNyan brgyud rin po che'i lung byang ye shes thugs kyi lde mig* (in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1973, *dGongs pa zang thal*), p. 48: *yongs rdzogs rgyas pa chen po : mon bum thang seng ge'i brag la sbas yod : mdor bsdus te dril ba : dwags lung khra bo'i brag la sbas yod : cha tshang don dril ba zang zang lha brag la sbas yod : dgongs pa gtso che ba rtsol med dang phyogs mthun pa lho brag klu bdud lte ba na yod : gang zag gcig gi grol thabs tshang ba sha 'ug dom tshang la sbas yod* :. For an explanation of this text which proves that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was familiar with Rin chen gling pa's gter chos, see Arguillère 2024a, pp. 94–97.

² The *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod*.

³ There were earlier cycles about Nāgarākṣa, both in Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's *gter ma* (which he could have been taught by lCang ma ba) and in Gu ru Chos dbang's revelations (in which he may have been trained by sNang ldan rgyal po). But, although Rin chen gling pa is nowadays a more or less forgotten figure among the rNying ma pas, it is his system that stands out for the Nāgarākṣa and it is the only one that was sampled in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*.

⁴ *Yang ti bram ze*. See Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 9.

Kongtrül in the *Pema Nyingthik*¹ subsection of the section of precepts (*man ngag sde*) in the *Rinchen Terdzö*, presents itself as one of the two sections of the *Yangti*.² This, for many reasons, does not work quite well with the traditional doxographies of Dzogchen and that may be the reason why Jamgön Kongtrül ignored the passage in the text that presents it as being Yangti and decided it is Nyingthik. However, it might mean that Gödem's father received a form of Dzogchen that *he* identified as being “the Brahmin's Dzogchen” and which might have been—though that is, in the present state of research, mere speculation—Rinchen Lingpa's *Ati*, *The Single Self-Sufficient Principle*.

- Finally, there is at least one uncanny formal similarity between the narrative of Rinchen Lingpa's main treasure discovery and those of Rigdzin Gödem: the fact that he finds in a cave a treasure box divided into five repositories.³ This may perhaps be regarded as one further—admittedly not very strong—hint of some degree of closeness between the two figures.

We can therefore assume that Rigdzin Gödem's association with Rinchen Lingpa probably began in his childhood, perhaps because Rinchen Lingpa was already Gödem's father's Dzogchen master, and that this is how Rigdzin Gödem became involved in the practice of Nāgarākṣa, which was one of Rinchen Lingpa's specialties. When Rigdzin Gödem was deemed ready, around his twenty-fifth year, Rinchen Lingpa would then have trained him in Dzogchen and passed on to him the two Nyingthiks, especially the *Khandro Nyingthik*. It is believed that it was Rinchen Lingpa who gave Pema Ledreltsal the prophetic guide to find his own termas (the *Khandro Nyingthik* and the Rāhula system preserved in the Dorjé Drak tradition). It is also clear that Rinchen Lingpa was a specialist in deciphering the *ḍākinīs*' glyphs. It would not be surprising if he also trained Rigdzin Gödem in these systems of cryptography and urged him to discover treasures.

¹ Meaning: *rDzogs chen snying thig* cycles supposed to have been transmitted by Padmasambhava.

² The other being Guru Chos dbang's *Yang ti sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor*.

³ *mDzod lnga*.

The only other figure who, in Nyima Zangpo's biography of Rigdzin Gödem, might be regarded as one of his masters is Zangpo Drakpa, to whom the next chapter of this volume is devoted. However, there is no evidence that they ever actually met. The traditional narratives rather feel as if Rigdzin Gödem had inherited materials from Zangpo Drakpa, of which, for some reason, Zangpo Drakpa could not do anything. He may thus not be regarded as one of those who trained Rigdzin Gödem in his early years.

As mentioned above,¹ the *Records of Teachings Received* of both the Fifth Dalai Lama and Terdak Lingpa reference another lineage in which Rigdzin Gödem's name appears, *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*.

Here is the main lineage as it appears in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received*—both the “celestial” part, before the tertön, and what comes after Rigdzin Gödem, have been removed, but can be read in the note:²

- Sarben Chokmé;
- Sarben Nyimé Nyingpo;
- Ngakchang Wangdar;
- Gartön Rinchen Bum;
- Ripa Sangyé Pal;
- Gyaben Lama;
- Lama Batön Pal;
- Rigdzin Gödem.

¹ This corpus and its origins are discussed in our first volume.

² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, 91b: *chos sku kun tu bzang po | longs sku 'jam dpal rigs lnga | sprul sku śākya thub pa | rdo rje dāki | rin chen dāki | padma dāki | karma dāki | de bzhin dāki | o rgyan dāki | 'jam dpal dbyangs | rdo rje 'chang | 'jam dpal bshes gnyen | śrī sinha | 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 | sngags 'chang rdo rje mgon po | mtshan ldan ngag dbang grags pa | drin can sangs rgyas dpal bzang | thugs sras nam mkha' rgyal mtshan | dran mchog dpal ldan blo gros | chos rgyal bkra shis stobs rgyal | rig 'dzin ngag gi dbang po | klong chen rab 'byams gsum pa sha gzugs pa bkra shis rnam rgyal | sngags 'chang karma gsang sngags pa | rig 'dzin 'phrin las lhun grub | zur thams cad mkhyen pa chos dbyings rang grol | des bdag za hor bande la 'o |*

This Lama Batön Pal is not mentioned in Rigdzin Gödem's known biographies. The same lineage with similar spellings does appear, however, in Terdak Lingpa's *Record of Teachings Received*.¹

Nothing seems to be extant of the *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen* cycle except one text preserved in the *Rinchen Terdzö*.² This is a writing of the Fifth Dalai Lama based upon a prior one (lost?) by Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal. This text includes an account of the lineage which, unsurprisingly, merely confirms what we find in the *Record of Teachings Received*.³ This corpus would definitely require a closer examination, as it is rather uncommon. It does not exhibit obvious similarities to Rigdzin Gödem's Dzogchen cycles—but may be more akin to the commentary on *The Litany of Mañjuśrī's Names* ascribed to Rigdzin Gödem.

As mentioned in the previous volume, this lineage also appears in a less expected context: a lineage prayer composed by Mipham found in the context of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.⁴ Batön Pal appears here with another spelling as Gatön Palwa.⁵ There are a few other spelling differences that may prove useful one day for the identifications of the hitherto unknown figures of this lineage.⁶ The source of the first part of this

¹ gTer bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje 1998, *Thob yig rin chen 'byung gnas*, vol. 1, pp. 236-237.

² RT-A, vol. 25, pp. 249-301, plus a short tantra that may or may not belong to this cycle, but anyway does not bring any useful piece of information.

³ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970-1971, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, 126a-127a.

⁴ Mi pham 2015, *brGyud pa'i gsol 'debs*, vol 22, pp. 391-393: this prayer is in vol. 22 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, the fifth of the ten volumes this compilation devotes to 'Jam dpal tshe bdag. It is an appendix to a quite large text by Mipham, the *dPal tshe bdag gi bsnyen yig lhan thabs dngos grub sgo byed*, pp. 325-390.

⁵ rGa ston dPal ba.

⁶ Here is the human part of the lineage: (1) 'Jam dpal bshes gnyen; (2) Śrī Simpha; (3) Padma 'byung gnas; (4) *Khri* strong lde'u btsan; (5) Shel *bza'* sgron gcig *mtshan ldan gsang ba'i yum*; (6) *gTer ston* Sar *ban* phyogs med; (7) (g)Sar *ban* Nyi ma'i snying po; (8) *sNgags 'chang* dBang dar; (9) 'Gar *ston* Rin chen 'bum; (10) Ri pa Sangs rgyas byams pa dpal; (11) rGyal *ban bla ma* (12) rGa *ston* dPal ba; (13) Rig 'dzin chen po rGod kyi lde'u 'phru can; (14) rDo rje mgon po; (15) Ngag dbang grags pa; (16) Sangs rgyas dpal bzang; (17) *Thugs sras* Nam mkha' mtshan; (18) dPal ldan Blo gros; (19) *Dran mchog* chos kyi rje; (20) *Yongs 'dzin dam pa*; (21) dBang po'i sde; (22) Ngag gi dbang po; (23) Klong chen rab 'byams gsum pa... Karma gsang sngags rje; (24) Phrin las lhun grub; (25) [Zur chen] Chos dbyings rang grol; (26) Za hor bzhad pa rtsal [the Fifth Dalai Lama]; (27) Padma 'phrin las; (28) Padma theg mchog; (29) ? sKal ldan dri

lineage prayer, from which I extracted this list of names, seems to be the aforementioned text by the Fifth Dalai Lama, as the very same phrases occur in both texts.

Be that as it may, under whichever of the spellings (Batön Pal or Gatön Pal), this additional master of Gödem's remains unknown. There is nothing in his name that is reminiscent of those we know, especially not Rinchen Lingpa/Draklungpa Rinchenpal, who is supposed to be the one who taught Gödem "all Dzogchen" (logically including also *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen*).

In the present state of research, if we want to relocate Rigdzin Gödem's youth and training in a more concrete social environment, we are thus left with only two threads to follow: the masters of the Sé clan, who seem to have been the dominant Nyingma religious figures in the region, and Rinchen Lingpa.



med; (30) bsTan 'dzin dpal 'bar; (31) Sangs rgyas kun dga'; (32) 'Gyur med bstan 'phel; (33) Padma gar gyi dbang; (34) mKhyen brtse'i dbang po.

Chapter 6: The Life and Works of Ritröpa Zangpo Drakpa

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Introduction

itröpa Zangpo Drakpa is known throughout Tibet as the fourteenth-century treasure revealer who discovered the widely revered *The Supplication in Seven Chapters*.¹ Within the Northern Treasures Tradition, he is also memorialized for his discovery of the prophetic guides that identify Rigdzin Gödem as the fortunate one destined to reveal treasures at Zangzang Lhadrak.

Historiographic Sources

Most of the available information about Ritröpa Zangpo Drakpa's life appears to be derived from three sources that were put into writing somewhere between the mid-fourteenth and mid-fifteenth centuries. The earliest hints about his life are found within a specific collection of prophetic guides that were decoded from a series of eight scrolls discovered by Zangpo Drakpa in Gyang in 1362.² The prophetic guides are primarily constituted by records of conversations between Padmasambhava and his closest disciples, which were recorded in an encoded script on treasure scrolls and concealed in Gyang by these

¹ *gSol 'debs le'u bdun ma*. A fantastic story that demonstrates the wide-ranging importance of this text can be found in Gardner 2019a, pp. 70-71. Evidently, the Ninth Si tu transmitted *The Supplication in Seven Chapters* to 'Jam mgon kong sprul in 1838, but rather than presenting the text as a simple, popularized prayer, it was given to him as pointing-out instructions.

² In the colophon of a prophetic guide entitled *rDo rje nyi ma'i gnas yig gsang ba'i dkar chag* (Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, p. 24), it is stated that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem also decoded this text, which was revealed by bDung Rig 'dzin Tshe dbang gnyis pa. The colophon asserts that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem decoded the prophetic guide while traveling in 'Bras mo gshongs. Thank you to Tenpa Tsering Batsang for helping to clarify this matter.

disciples.¹

While tradition maintains that Zangpo Drakpa discovered these treasure scrolls and transmitted them indirectly to Rigdzin Gödem in 1365, it is not completely clear if any of the prophetic guides were decoded by Zangpo Drakpa before they were dispatched. The colophons of *The Supplication in Seven Chapters*, for example, credit Rigdzin Gödem with the act of decoding,² and we might extrapolate from there that the entire collection was decoded by Rigdzin Gödem with the help of one or more of his direct disciples, such as Dorjé Gönpo.³ But of course, this is merely an educated hypothesis. It is safe to assume, however, that these prophetic guides discovered by Zangpo Drakpa were decoded from treasure scrolls at some point between their discovery in 1362 and the end of Rigdzin Gödem's life in ca. 1401. But the window of their "authorship" may be limited further as it is probable that Rigdzin Gödem decoded the scrolls himself early in his treasure revelation career, within a few years of when he received the scrolls in 1365.

The second major source of information about Zangpo Drakpa's life is a text authored by Rigdzin Gödem at his place of birth, Namolung, entitled *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang*.⁴ As this is the most substantial source of information regarding the life of Zangpo Drakpa, nearly the entire text will be provided in translation below. This text must have been authored between 1365, when Rigdzin

¹ A notable exception is *The Blazing Wheel Exorcism*, 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.

² *Shog ser las bsgyur*.

³ rDo rje mGon po is particularly known for helping to decode the scrolls, but it is entirely possible that others were involved as well. For an English translation of the colophons as well as a complete, line-by-line English translation of *The Supplication in Seven Chapters* that is accompanied by the Tibetan text, see Chhimed Rigdzin and Low 2010, pp. 208, 207.

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *rGyang nas gter gyi lam yig byung tshul*, pp. 251-257. The title of this text can easily be misunderstood. The text is meant to explain how the prophetic guides that were revealed by someone else, bZang po grags pa, were discovered and then delivered into his, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's, hands. Despite having one version of this text, the FCHNT has listed this text among our "missing" texts with the hopes of finding an alternative recension. For a list of the missing texts of the tradition of the Northern Treasures, see Valentine 2023.

Gödem received the prophetic guides, and his death in ca. 1401. Because *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang* lists the titles of the texts included in the collection, one might hypothesize further that it was written after the prophetic guides were decoded, which is why this source is presented second in this discussion of sources.¹

Approximately seventy percent of *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang* appears without acknowledgement within a fifteenth-century biography of Rigdzin Gödem, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, which is the third and final of the early sources on the life of Zangpo Drakpa. Despite the extent of the borrowings, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* does contain additional relevant details, which will be mentioned where appropriate below.

Zangpo Drakpa's existence has not been independently attested by any appropriately early sources outside of these documents that have been preserved by the patriarchs of the Northern Treasures Tradition. Nor have we found at this point any of the other cycles of teachings that Zangpo Drakpa is believed to have discovered.

Brief biographies of Zangpo Drakpa have appeared within the pages of a great number of both well-known and little-known later works of historical relevance over the past 500 years, and all of them have relied either directly or indirectly on the above three sources for the bulk of their information. Nevertheless, as demonstrated below, these later sources at times include noteworthy details not mentioned in the earlier sources.

Biographic Details

Within the prophetic guides that were transcribed from the treasure scrolls extracted by Zangpo Drakpa, there is scant information regarding this treasure revealer himself, apart from the brief details found in the colophons. The exception is *The Seven Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart*,² which contains the following verses:³

As soon as a time like that dawns,

¹ Alternatively, it is possible that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem could have decoded the scrolls just enough to know the titles of the texts before authoring *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang*.

² *sNying thig gnad kyi man ngag don bdun ma*.

³ bZang po grags pa 1983, *sNying tig gnad kyi man ngag don bdun pa*, p. 277.

At a mountain known as Śrī in the south of Tsang,
 A yogin who comports himself as is appropriate [to] the holy Dharma,
 A person [born in] a Year of a Tiger, will appear.

Because that [yogin] will meet with my treasures [that are] able to
 cause some happiness in Tibet, [I will] say [to him], “All of the scrolls
 [with] the instructions¹ that are required [to find] those treasures that
 were concealed at the midpoint of the rocky [mountain], which
 resembles a heap of snakes, were concealed as treasures in the vicinity
 of the [temple] of Tsangdram² in Rulak.”³

The one endowed with the blessings of Avalokiteśvara,
 A person [born in] a Year of the Tiger, who [will be endowed] with a
 garland of moles,
 An unattached yogin who will abandon cyclic existence,
 That fortunate one who will uphold the [lifestyle] of a homeless
 hermit,
 Will extract great treasures in the vicinity of Tsangdram.
 He will perform deeds of great benefit for [those who speak] the four
 dissimilar languages [of]
 The lands of India, Nepal, Mön, and Tibet.
 The fortunate one thus [described] will emerge in five hundred
 [years].

The notion that Zangpo Drakpa was born in a Year of the Tiger also
 appears sporadically in the colophons of this collection of prophetic
 guides.⁴ Given that he is believed to have dispatched a messenger
 toward Rigdzin Gödem with these scrolls in the mid-fourteenth century
 (ca. 1365), then the most plausible options for his year of birth are:
 Water-Tiger (1302), Wood-Tiger (1314), Fire-Tiger year (1326), or
 Earth-Tiger (1338).

Zangpo Drakpa’s specific place of birth is not explicitly mentioned
 in any of the early sources, but he is associated with Mt. Śrī, also known
 as Mt. Tsibri, which is a name for a specific mountain and the
 surrounding area that extends through parts of Dingri and Nyalam

¹ Here he is referring to the prophetic guides.

² gTsang ’gram.

³ Ru lag.

⁴ For examples, see bZang po grags pa 1983, *Kha byang gter gyi bang mdzod*, p. 272, and bZang po grags pa 2015, *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*, vol. 33, pp. 158-159.

counties.¹ It is likely this association that led later historians to state his place of birth as Southern Latö.² This is a vast region that stretches along the border with Nepal and includes the present-day counties of Dingri, Nyalam, and Kyidrong. This approximation is also consistent with his concern for the welfare of the royal dynasty of Mangyül Gungthang, which was centered in the city of Dzongkar in Kyidrong County.

It is implied in the passage above, however, that his eremitic wanderings must have led him to spend significant time among the people of India, Nepal, and Mön so that he could learn the languages of those regions. At this point, however, we have no information regarding his exploits in those areas. In the later sources, Zangpo Drakpa is consistently given the title of “Manglam,”³ so perhaps at some point in his life he established a connection with this site.⁴

It is clear from the passage above as well as the colophons of the guides, however, that Zangpo Drakpa revealed treasures at two different locations in Gyang⁵ in Lhartsé County, which is about halfway between Sakya and Ngamring in western Tsang. The first treasure site was a temple called Drompa Gyang⁶ that was constructed in the seventh century by Songtsen Gampo to pin down the left hip of the rock demoness that personifies the land of Tibet. The second treasure site,

¹ Katia Buffetrille offers a wealth of information regarding Tibetan equivalents (and distorted equivalents) of the Sanskrit term “*śrī*,” which means “glorious.” As a result, under the right circumstances, all of the following terms could be translated as “*śrī*”: *shri*, *shri ri*, *shi ri*, and *rtsib ri* (Buffetrille 2013, p. 40, n. 13 & *passim*). For obvious reasons, one should add *dpal* to this list. To add to the confusion, however, it is also the case that these are all names (or alternative names) for a specific mountain (most commonly known as *rTsib ri*) and the surrounding area that includes this mountain. For example, Buffetrille translates *rTsib ri* as “Mountain [in the shape of] Ribs” (pp. 37-38) rather than “*Śrī*” or “Glorious.” For additional information on *rTsib ri* and maps, see Gyurme Dorje 2004, pp. 313-314 and Akester 2016, pp. 665-668.

² For an example, see Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 473.

³ *Mang lam*.

⁴ *Mang lam* is listed among the branch monasteries associated with Shrī bSam gtan phling: Chos ’khor sgang, Cor rdzong, Rin rdzong, Mang lam, rDza skya, Zur phug stod, Na kra, sGo spe, Seng rdzong, Chu bzang, Byang tho sgang, and Shrī Byang rdzong (Na rdzing thub bstan shes rab 2004, *rGyal gyi shrī’am rtsib ri’i gnas bshad dad gsum ’dren pa’i zhing sa*, pp. 65-66).

⁵ rGyang.

⁶ Grom pa rgyang.

which is mentioned in the colophons, was Padmasambhava's retreat caves, known as Gyang Yönbulung.¹

The above discussion of Zangpo Drakpa's date and place of birth, as well as his known places of activity, essentially exhausts the biographical information about him contained in the guides. In the following passage, the first to be presented from *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang*, Rigdzin Gödem clarifies the subject matter of the composition: a historical account of the prophetic guides that were received indirectly from Zangpo Drakpa, treasures which were extracted from two sites in Gyang. Along the way, he also happens to identify the unifying literary theme of the collection of prophetic guides. As mentioned above, they are usually presented as conversations between Padmasambhava and his retainers during which this great master gives prophetic advice for the future descendants of the imperial monarchs, particularly the kings of the Gungthang Dynasty. The predictions about the coming treasure revealer from Mt. Trazang (i.e., Rigdzin Gödem), the instructions for finding and extracting the treasures, and so forth are all presented within this context of concern for the welfare of the future Kingdom of Gungthang. He also draws the reader's attention to the polyvalent nature of those recorded conversations as they are meant to benefit not only Padmasambhava's imperial-era retainers and the fourteenth-century royal descendants in Gungthang, but also the entirety of Tibet itself and the current readers of his historical text.

This is the history of the advice that will bring about peace and happiness for the sentient beings of Tibet, which is intended for the King of Gungthang [and] is a set of prophecies regarding the future. In the past, [the following advisory texts] were spoken for the benefit of the Dharma King, the Bodhisattva, Trisong Detsen. They were spoken with compassion for his retinue of fortunate ones and for [the king's] later descendants. Furthermore, they were spoken [as] intended for a later King of Gungthang:

(1) *The Prayer for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of All Aspirations*²

¹ rGyang yon bu lung.

² *gSol 'debs bsam pa lhun grub*. The numerals were added for clarity; they do not appear in the source material.

- (2) *The Heart-Essence of the Testament*¹
- (3) *The Blazing Wheel Exorcism*²
- (4) *The Heart-Essence of the Testament*
- (5) *The Entrance Guide for the Treasury of Treasures*³
- (6) *The Lamp that Illuminates the [Way]: The Path Guide*⁴
- (7) *The Essential Steps: An Extensive Essential Guide*⁵
- (8) *The Ray of Compassion: A Middle-length Essential Guide*⁶
- (9) *The Iron Hook of Compassion: A Condensed Essential Guide*⁷

Thus, one should know the meaning of these references, which have been enunciated specifically for historical purposes. [I will now present] the history of how the treasures were extracted during the age of degeneration.⁸

Despite the fact that this list of prophetic guides has evidently been corrupted by a scribal error (specifically, it is an example of dittography), which is presumably why *The Heart-Essence of the Testament* is mentioned twice, it is significant in that it offers a snapshot of the contents of the collection at the time when Rigdzin Gödem wrote *How I Received the Lam-yik of the Treasures from Gyang*. Although in later records the contents of the collection differ slightly depending on the source, it will be noticed that Rigdzin Gödem lists more prophetic guides (nine), than there are treasure scrolls (eight).⁹ The collection of prophetic guides will be discussed in more detail below.

¹ *Zhal chems thugs kyi thigs pa*. The second, eighth, and ninth items in this list are currently “missing” in the sense that we have not yet found an extant copy of the text.

² *Phyir zlog 'khor lo 'bar ba*.

³ *Kha byang gter gyi bang mdzod*.

⁴ *Lam byang gsal ba'i sgron me*.

⁵ *sNying byang rgyas pa gnad kyi them bu*.

⁶ *sNying byang 'bring po thugs rje'i 'od zer*.

⁷ *sNying byang bsadud pa thugs rje'i lcags kyu*.

⁸ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *rGyang nas gter gyi lam yig byung tshul*, pp. 252-253.

⁹ There is, of course, no reason why only one text could be yielded from a single treasure scroll. It is pointed out more to identify consistency in the tradition rather than to highlight a “problem.” For example, a list of the treasure guides written by Se sgrub Padma dBang chen also includes nine texts, but rather than listing *The Heart-Essence of the Testament* twice, his list includes *The Seven Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart* (Se ston Padma dbang chen 2015, *Byang gter gyi chos skor rnams kyi spyi chings*, p. 397).

None of the available sources offer details regarding Zangpo Drakpa's family, upbringing, religious training, or any official affiliations with specific temples or monasteries.¹ In the following passage, however, Zangpo Drakpa is described as an adherent of the Dakpo Kagyü and as an avid practitioner of Mahāmudrā. In both *Guru Tashi's History* (18th c.) and *The Garland of Wondrous Tales* (21st c.), it is stated that Zangpo Drakpa began his religious training with the teachings of the Kagyü² early in his life.³ It is suspected, however, that this qualification of when he began to train is an extrapolation based on the earlier sources. It is worth noting, however, that Rigdzin Gödem authored *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang* at a time when one's identity as a practitioner was not always so rigidly defined by sectarian divisions. As will be demonstrated throughout this volume and the next, many of the patriarchs of the Northern Treasures received teachings belonging to each of the major (and a few of the minor) "schools" of Tibetan Buddhism and Bön.

The Garland of Wondrous Tales also suggests that Zangpo Drakpa was a monk,⁴ which is not directly contested in Rigdzin Gödem's description below. However, in the earlier sources, Zangpo Drakpa is more consistently described as a wandering mountain hermit, who was an expert meditator specializing in Mahāmudrā. He is referred to as a Kusulupa,⁵ which also indicates that he was a wandering, begging yogin. The subjects of his treasures, discussed below, suggest that he was known for subduing local divinities and producing ritual practices that reinforced his mystical accomplishments.

The following passage also contains accounts of two different visionary experiences that are widely referenced in later biographies, sometimes in paired down brevity or at times slightly expanded. The passages reflect a preoccupation with visionary experiences that occur in the dreamworld, as the first encounter occurs within a dream and the

¹ In the Fifth Dalai Lama's record of received teachings, bZang po grags pa only appears as the treasure revealer who extracted *The Supplication in Seven Chapters* and the other prophetic guides that are delivered to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, which will be discussed in more detail below.

² *bKa' brgyud kyi chos sgor zhugs*.

³ Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 473; Chos dbyings 2015, p. 77, further specifies that it was "*Dags po bka' brgyud kyi chos*."

⁴ *dGe slong*. *Ibid.*, vol. 62, p. 77.

⁵ *Ku su lu pa*.

second features an individual named “Nyanam Lagom,”¹ which means something like “he who meditates while asleep.”

To the south in a cave at [Mt.] Śrī, there was one named Ritröpa Zangpo [Drakpa], who was an adherent of the Dakpo Kagyü,² a great meditator and wandering, begging yogin, who practiced [focused] only on the Mahāmudrā of the natural state.³ [While there,] he dreamed that there was a person wearing a white silk shawl and carrying a walking cane in his hand. He said, “It is wonderful, master, that you are someone who knows how to practice the Dharma! There is a place called the Temple of Drompa Gyang down to the east. In that temple there are treasures that [are meant] to bring about peace and happiness in Tibet. There is a treasure key in the threshold of a door there, and [the letter] ‘cha’ is marked on the door. Because in the past [Padmasambhava] also enunciated prayers for you,⁴ you must go there by whatever means on the eighth day of next month!” After the dream finished, [however,] Zangpo Drakpa did not consider that dream to be meaningful, and he [continued] to sit in meditative equipoise.

Later, he went [to seek] alms in Lakhor,⁵ where there was a great meditator called Nyanam Lagom. They discussed [their] experiences, [and] since [Nyanam Lagom] was an extraordinary person, [Zangpo Drakpa] generated devotion and requested to forge a religious connection. Nyanam Lagom replied: “Now that we have a religious connection, act in accordance with my instructions. Henceforth, the ocean of suffering will erupt here in the land of Tibet. Thus, [something] of extraordinary *karmic* connection that will be of benefit has been concealed as treasure at the Temple of Drompa Gyang by Padmasambhava, the most exceptional among the translators and *paṇḍitas* of the past, who has obtained the Vidyadhara Level of

¹ sNya nam la sgom.

² *Dags po bka' brgyud kyi rjes su 'brangs*.

³ *gNas lugs phyag rgya chen po*.

⁴ This most certainly refers to the aspiration prayer that often appears in the “advertising section” at the end of a terma, where they say it is the best terma, aimed at the best yogis, etc., and then the one who hides the text (Padmasambhava, Vimalamitra, etc.) says: “May it encounter a fortunate one!” or “May a fortunate one come upon this text!” (*las can cig dang 'phrad par shog*) following the prophecy about the time to reveal the text and fulfill the aspirational prayer that was uttered centuries before.

⁵ Bla 'khor. In *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, this location is called Glang 'khor (Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 85).

Longevity. Because I have the entrance guides¹ and essential guides² for that [treasure], take these, and for the benefit of sentient beings, you must extract the treasure and act to help sentient beings. Then, when you ask me again, I will give you whatever teachings you desire.”³

While the accounts of these visionary experiences are nearly identical to what appears in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, there are a few interesting additions. The visionary experience involving the individual wearing a white silk shawl and carrying a walking cane, for example, is said to be a Bulé Prophecy.⁴ By the time we get to *Guru Tashi's History*, which was written in the early nineteenth century, Yakṣa Bulé⁵ himself is said to have appeared as the white silk-clad interlocutor.⁶ In a similar manner, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* reveals that Nyanam Lagom was actually Padmasambhava and that Zangpo Drakpa was a “noble emanation.”⁷ Within the context of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, this is rather unsurprising because therein it is implied that treasure revealers are emanations of Samantabhadra that appear during the age of degeneration. While Zangpo Drakpa rather quickly gains the title of Tülku,⁸ it appears that his special connection to Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo is established in the sixteenth century and grows in importance over time.⁹ As a result, Khenpo Chöying begins his

¹ *Kha byang*.

² *sNying byang*.

³ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *rGyang nas gter gyi lam yig byung tshul*, pp. 253-254.

⁴ *Bu les lung bstan*. Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 85.

⁵ gNod sbyin Bu le.

⁶ Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 473.

⁷ *'Phags pa'i sprul*.

⁸ *sPrul sku*.

⁹ It is my personal contention that at some point in time after the life of Rigdzin Gödem, it became nearly a requirement for treasure revealers to be reincarnations of important imperial-era figures who were involved with the concealment of the treasures. On the surface, the incarnational connection seems more significant when it comes to “mind treasures,” for which there need not be physical scrolls. In such cases, the latent memories from a past life are an important element of the revelations process. In Rigdzin Gödem's case, however, there were physical scrolls endowed with encoded treasure script, which is preserved in many of the texts. Thus, it would seem that the memory of the contents of the text from a previous life would be less significant. It is well known that the quantity of decoded materials often far exceeds the length of the encoded script, which might

biography of Zangpo Drakpa in the following manner:

Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal (1550–1603) stated:

I pray to Manglam Zangpo Drakpa,
The hermit incarnation,¹ who was prophesied to extract
[Teachings] such as *The Supplication in Seven Chapters* from
Drompa Gyang [Temple]
Through the blessings of Lhasé [Mutri Tsenpo's] compassion
aimed to benefit migratory beings.²
[Thus], Manglam Ritropa Tülku Zangpo Drakpa is a manifestation³
of Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo.⁴

Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo appears to be Zangpo Drakpa's only posited pre-incarnation, and this quoted prayer by Tashi Tobgyal, which is employed here by Khenpo Chöying, could be the origin of that equation.

Narratively, Zangpo Drakpa's visionary experiences are important because they are what ultimately lead him to the treasures in Gyang. These accounts can also be understood in terms of legitimization. In Janet Gyatso's work on the treasure traditions, she posits that one of the many ways that these narratives establish authenticity is by demonstrating that the process of revelation involved some sort of struggle.⁵ It is presumably better to demonstrate a record of missteps or failures that occur prior to a successful extraction, than to simply

simply contain a title or the first few lines of a text, and this seems to be the case with the examples preserved in the tradition of the Northern Treasures. In such cases, the treasure revealer's ability to access latent memories, or to somehow interact with the script in a visionary manner, is quintessential as the process of decoding is not simply mechanical. It is likely for these and similar reasons that the mind stream of the treasure revealer is of paramount importance. For an extensive exploration of these issues of treasure revelation, see Tulku Thondup 1986.

¹ *sKye brgyud ri khrod pa*.

² For the entirety of the prayer, see Chos rgyal dBang po'i sde 2015, *sPrul sku gter bkra shis grangs nges kyi mtshan bsdoms gsol 'debs thugs rje'i nyin byed*, in CNT, vol. 61, pp. 90-94.

³ *rNam sprul*.

⁴ Chos dbyings 2015, p. 77.

⁵ Gyatso 1993, pp. 119-120.

describe the final step in the process.¹ Arguably, Zangpo Drakpa's failure to recognize the importance of his visionary dream fulfills this purpose. The visionary experiences together, however, are enough to guide him—and our investigation—to the extractions themselves. Thus, we return to Rigdzin Gödem's account of those events. These treasures were extracted in the final month of summer in the Year of the Water-Tiger (1362), which is one of the few complete dates that are provided in the early sources.²

Then, Zangpo Drakpa promised that he [would obey] and went to Tsang. There was in fact a “*cha*” on a door in the temple in Gyang. He measured the ground and dug in the earth. He saw that there were scrolls inside of a terracotta amulet box and extracted those treasures. From the belly of the Red Protector³ of Gyang,⁴ he extracted a leather box [that held] 28 scrolls [containing] the Sādhana for the Powerful Hayagrīva,⁵ 4 scrolls that were addressed for the King of Gunthang, 1 scroll [containing] the Sādhana of Protector Jampa [of rGyang],⁶ and 3 scrolls [containing] the Sādhana of Yakṣa Bulé.⁷

From Yönpolung⁸ in Gyang, [he extracted the following nineteen scrolls]: 7 scrolls [containing] Sādhana of Avalokiteśvara,⁹ 2 scrolls [containing] secret Sādhana with Subjugating Mantras for the

¹ In French literary criticism, there is a term for this strategy: “*effet de réel*.” It is used to designate seemingly fortuitous elements, not at all advancing the main plot of the story, to give an air of reality to the story by making it more similar to life, where obviously not everything conspires in a coherent way (nor is it opposed in a similarly consistent way) to the realization of the objectives of the “characters” that we are expecting. Footnote written by Stéphane Arguillère.

² Because the year is clearly indicated in this text (see below) as well as in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* (Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 87), it is surprising that Gu ru bKra shis reports that the event occurred in the Year of the Wood-Dragon, which was 1364 (Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 474). This is, of course, also a plausible date as he dispatches the treasures in 1365 for use by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem in 1366.

³ mGon po dmar po.

⁴ Interestingly, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* (Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 87) reports that the scrolls were drawn from the foot, which I take to mean the base, of a Maitreya statue: *rgyang gi mgon po byams pa'i zhabs nas*.

⁵ *rTa mgrin dbang gi sgrub thabs*.

⁶ *mGon po byams pa'i sgrub thabs*.

⁷ *gNod sbyin bu le'i sgrub thabs*.

⁸ Yon po lung.

⁹ *'Phags pa spyen ras gzigs kyi sgrub thabs*.

Nāgas,¹ 4 scrolls addressed for the King of Gungthang,² and 6 scrolls [containing] Sādhana of Vajrapāṇi.³ In that manner, Zangpo Drakpa extracted fifty-five scrolls in the last month of summer of the Year of the Male-Water-Tiger (1362) during the sixth calendrical cycle.⁴

To make sense of this collection, it is best to first consider the forty-seven (47) scrolls that were not sent to Rigdzin Gödem. They are listed here along with their site of retrieval:

- 28 scrolls [containing] the Sādhana for Powerful Hayagrīva (Drompa Temple)
- 1 scroll [containing] the Sādhana of Protector Jampa [of rGyang] (Drompa Temple)
- 3 scrolls [containing] the Sādhana of Yakṣa Bulé (Drompa Temple)
- 7 scrolls [containing] Sādhana of Avalokiteśvara (Yönpolung Caves)
- 2 scrolls [containing] Sādhana and Subjugating Mantras for the *Nāgas* (Yönpolung Caves)
- 6 scrolls [containing] Sādhana of Vajrapāṇi (Yönpolung Caves)

Perhaps the single most unifying factor, aside from their connection to Zangpo Drakpa, is that none of these treasure cycles appear to be extant at this time and, aside from being mentioned in these biographical works, there is no other evidence that they ever existed.⁵ Accordingly, there does not appear to be any primary or secondary sources that discuss these cycles. Thus, we can surmise little about them. Perhaps in the future, some of these materials will surface, and we can give a more thorough, evidence-based analysis of the collection.

There is a long-standing tradition of identifying a list of guides that were yielded from the remaining eight scrolls intended for the King of

¹ *Klu'i gsang bsgrub drag sngags dang bcas pa.*

² *Gung thang rgyal po la gsungs pa.*

³ *Phyag na rdo rje'i sgrub thabs.*

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod lden 1983, *rGyang nas gter gyi lam yig byung tshul*, pp. 255-256.

⁵ It is possible that bZang po grags pa could have been known by other names. Thus, someday, we might discover these treasures hidden in plain sight, listed under one of his alternative names.

Gungthang. The list presented in *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang* is, on the one hand, authoritative because it was arguably authored first. On the other hand, the list appears to have been incorrectly copied, as mentioned above, because it lists *The Heart-Essence of the Testament* twice, which on the surface seems to be the reason why we end up with a list of nine texts coming from eight scrolls. *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, however, also provides a list of the prophetic guides from Gyang.¹ Unsurprisingly, *The Heart-Essence of the Testament* is not listed twice therein. Nevertheless, we still end up with nine texts because *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* includes *The Seven Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart*, which was mentioned above as it is the only guide with a significant passage describing Zangpo Drakpa.²

<i>How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang</i>	<i>The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight</i>
1. <i>The Prayer for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of All Aspirations</i>	1. <i>The Supplication in Seven Chapters</i>
2. <i>The Heart-Essence of the Testament</i>	
3. <i>The Blazing Wheel Exorcism</i>	2. <i>The Blazing Wheel Exorcism</i>
4. <i>The Heart-Essence of the Testament</i>	3. <i>The Heart-Essence of the Testament</i>
5. <i>The Entrance Guide for the Treasury of Treasures</i>	4. <i>The Entrance Guide for the Treasury of Treasures</i>
6. <i>The Lamp that Illuminates the</i>	5. <i>The Lamp that Illuminates the</i>

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 88.

² A list of the treasure guides recorded by Se ston Padma dbang chen also includes nine texts, and he similarly lists *The Seven Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart* instead of a second appearance of *The Heart-Essence of the Testament* (Se ston Padma dbang chen 2015, *Byang gter gyi chos skor rnam ky i spyi chings*, p. 397).

[Way]: <i>The Path Guide</i>	[Way]: <i>The Path Guide</i>
7. <i>The Essential Steps: An Extensive Essential Guide</i>	6. <i>The Essential Steps: An Extensive Essential Guide</i>
8. <i>The Ray of Compassion: A Middle-length Essential Guide</i>	7. <i>The Ray of Compassion: A Middle-length Essential Guide</i>
9. <i>The Iron Hook of Compassion: A Condensed Essential Guide</i>	8. <i>The Iron Hook of Compassion: A Condensed Essential Guide</i>
	9. <i>The Seven Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart</i>

The other significant difference that becomes evident when the above inventories are compared is that Nyima Zangpo lists *The Supplication in Seven Chapters*, while Rigdzin Gödem lists only *The Prayer for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of All Aspirations*, which is the final chapter of *The Supplication in Seven Chapters*. If one were to read through the entirety of *The Supplication in Seven Chapters*, however, it would be clear that while the entire composition is held together by a shared narrative framework, the seventh chapter is distinct in that it is the only section that is identifiable as a prophetic guide. Thus, it is sensible that one author (i.e., Rigdzin Gödem) might include only the chapter in the list, while another (i.e., Nyima Zangpo) might include the whole text.

The situation is, however, significantly more complex than it appears on the surface, for as Peter Schwieger pointed out long ago, that which is now known as *The Supplication in Seven Chapters*, is actually an assemblage of two treasures.¹ According to the colophons of this famous text, the scroll containing *The Prayer for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of All Aspirations*, the seventh chapter, was discovered by Zangpo Drakpa first at the Drompa Temple, while the scroll containing the first six chapters was discovered a little later in the Yönpolung Caves. If one were to list these texts separately, which appears to be appropriate, then there would actually be ten texts that have been derived from the collection of eight treasure scrolls.

¹ Schwieger 1988.

Guru Tashi's History augments this list further by including two currently unlocated texts entitled *The Guide to Mt. Palbar*¹ and *The Instructions for Constructing Temples*,² bringing our running total to twelve.³ In the end, it may be helpful to visualize the collection of writings that were derived from the treasure categorized according to their place of discovery. The effect is, of course, minimized by the fact that five of the twelve are currently lost, and therefore left uncategorized at the bottom of the following table.

Texts Based on Scrolls Discovered at Drompa Temple

1. *The Prayer for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of All Aspirations*
2. *The Entrance Guide for the Treasury of Treasures*
3. *The Lamp that Illuminates the [Way]: The Path Guide*
4. *The Seven Quintessential Precepts of the Seminal Heart*

Texts Based on Scrolls Discovered at the Yönpolung Caves

5. *The Supplication in Seven Chapters* (Chapter 1-6)
6. *The Blazing Wheel Exorcism*
7. *The Essential Steps: An Extensive Essential Guide*

Uncategorized, Missing Texts

8. *The Ray of Compassion: A Middle-length Essential Guide*
9. *The Iron Hook of Compassion: A Condensed Essential Guide*
10. *The Heart-Essence of the Testament*
11. *The Guide to Mt. Palbar*
12. *The Instructions for Constructing Temples*

Because the majority of these texts—all except the first six sections of *The Supplication in Seven Chapters*—can be correctly categorized as prophetic guides, then one might conclude that the importance of this collection might have diminished greatly after Rigdzin Gödem employed them in his hunt for Padmasambhava's treasures. Such a conclusion, however, would ignore the fact that these texts are specifically relied upon to legitimize Rigdzin Gödem as a treasure

¹ *Ri bo dpal 'bar gyi gnas yig*. Ehrhard 1997, p. 360, mentions a text by the same name and includes a translation of a short passage.

² *lHa khang bzhengs thabs*.

³ It is possible that these two titles might be referring to what is preserved as a single text entitled *A Guide to Three Sites* (*gNas gsum gyi lam yig*), which discusses the construction of a suppression temple at Mt. dPal 'bar (Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, pp. 497-505).

revealer, which is why they are quoted so frequently in the biographies of the tradition. Moreover, the contents of the guides appear to offer advice for facing a variety of different challenges during his treasure career, such as how to go about securing a relationship with the King of Gungthang and how he and his disciples should comport themselves, that extend far beyond the act of finding hidden treasure. The lasting importance of the guides is also reflected in the care with which the texts have been passed down between masters and disciples through the generations.

Perhaps the most interesting and reliable record of the transmission of these guides appears in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Flow of the River Gangā*, his voluminous record of received teachings, wherein he dedicates an entire section to the treasures of Zangpo Drakpa and the lineages of masters that connected him to this fourteenth-century treasure revealer.¹ The Fifth Dalai Lama also provides a brief synopsis of each of the guides, which is particularly helpful when it comes to the three texts that are not currently extant. At any rate, the Fifth Dalai Lama provides distinct transmission lineages for the following four, overlapping groups of texts.

1. *The Prayer for the Spontaneous Fulfillment of All Aspirations, The Supplication in Seven Chapters, The Blazing Wheel Exorcism*, and supplemental texts
2. *The Heart-Essence of the Testament, The Entrance Guide for the Treasury of Treasures, The Lamp that Illuminates the [Way]: The Path Guide, The Essential Steps: An Extensive Essential Guide, The Ray of Compassion: A Middle-length Essential Guide, The Iron Hook of Compassion: A Condensed Essential Guide*
3. *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang* (authored by Rigdzin Gödem)
4. *The Supplication in Seven Chapters* and supplemental texts

One will notice that the first and last groupings include supplemental ritual texts that at some point along the way became integral parts of the unit of texts that were transmitted to the Fifth Dalai Lama. It is also

¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1991–1995, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 4, pp. 382b–385a.

interesting that the Fifth Dalai Lama includes *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang*, which is not a treasure text, but an account written by Rigdzin Gödem. Its placement is sensible, however, both because of its relevance as a text that discusses the exploits of Zangpo Drakpa and because it contains a prayer, which appears in the next translated passage below, that tradition maintains was written by Zangpo Drakpa himself.

Notwithstanding the relevance of all such inquiries, it is undeniable that a very important component of these scrolls is that they were transferred to Rigdzin Gödem, who then used them to discover the fivefold treasury at Zangzang Lhadrak and thus founded the tradition of the Northern Treasures. With that in mind, we return to the narrative for the details about the transference of materials.

Within that [collection of treasures], there were eight scrolls that were needed for the King of Gungthang. [And, Zangpo Drakpa knew that] a fortunate one would arise who would extract treasure to the east of Zangzang Lhadrak. That [person] would extract treasure that would protect the King of Gungthang and be able to cause happiness [in] Tibet. So, because that fortunate one would need the treasure writings in the Year of the Horse (ca. 1366), during the first month of the Year of the Snake (ca. 1365), Zangpo Drakpa bestowed the scrolls and seals to Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk.¹ [Then,] he bestowed the prayer he [authored]:

May these profound precepts and teachings of the victorious one

That I have sent along a northern route

Meet the fortunate one who is endowed with commitment!

Then, Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk traveled a northerly route in the Right Horn [of Tsang]. Because [they were required] to accomplish [the task] according to the words of their lama, he went before the one called Kyechok Darzang.² They thought of searching for the person by way of their acquaintances. And, because [Darzang] was familiar with me, Ngödrub Gyaltsen,³ [Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk] was coming toward my region while I was going east, and the two [of us] met on the road. We had conversations about past events, our fondness⁴ for

¹ *bsTon pa bSod nams dbang phyug.*

² *sKyes mchog Dar bzang.*

³ *dNgos grub rgyal mtshan.*

⁴ *brTse ba.*

the sovereign Tri Tashidé,¹ and the joys and woes of Tibet. He had a method explained by his lama for examining my *karmic* connection, and he connected me to many [prophetic] tales. Because I happened to correspond to the [prophetic] scriptures [regarding] the treasure extractions, on the eighth day of the first month of autumn (i.e., the seventh month) of the Year of the Snake (1365), Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk entrusted me, Ngödrub Gyaltsen, with the yellow scrolls and oral instructions.²

While this account of the transfer is sufficient, there are a few important additions that appear in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, which may be considered credible in the sense that the author, Nyima Zangpo, was a direct disciple of Rigdzin Gödem. It is therefore conceivable that he received clarifications or additional information directly from his master that was not included in Rigdzin Gödem's presumably already written autobiographical account. The first difference is that *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* reports that rather than sending a sole disciple on this mission, Zangpo Drakpa dispatched a group of three religious companions, which was headed by Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk. Secondly, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* includes more detailed dialogues between Zangpo Drakpa and Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk and then later between Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk and Rigdzin Gödem. As an example, I will include just one more passage here from *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, which has also been selected because the instructions help further our understanding of the exchange process:³

To Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk, he spoke details regarding how to find the valleys and places around Zangzang [Lhadrak] together with their names. And, [then] he said, "If, in a place like [I just described] you meet a *tantrika* with either a statue or a rosary in his hand who starts out by telling a story about Tibet and [expresses his] fondness for the King of Gungthang, entrust [the scrolls and seals] to that [one]. If you do not find someone like that, there is a spiritual brother of mine, a great being named Darzang, in Dzongpu.⁴ Ask him about that [destined fortunate one], seek him out, and bestow [the treasures and seals] to him."

¹ *Khri bKra shis lde.*

² Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *rGyang nas gter gyi lam yig byung tshul*, pp. 256-257.

³ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 88-89.

⁴ rDzong phu.

Considering both sources together, it is clear that Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk must have at first failed to find the fortunate one on his own before going to receive aid from Kyechok Darzang. Having thus been given new directions, Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk set out directly for Rigdzin Gödem's home, but encountered him on the road along the way. Without the information from Rigdzin Gödem's *How I Received the Lamyik of the Treasures from Gyang*, it is all too easy to misread *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* as stating that Kyechok Darzang was a possible alternative recipient of the treasures rather than a shared acquaintance who would be capable of helping the messengers find Rigdzin Gödem.¹ The misreading is likely caused in part by the fact that *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* does not report that Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk and company visited Kyechok Darzang before finding Rigdzin Gödem. Quite to the contrary, therein, it is reported that after receiving the scrolls, Rigdzin Gödem first goes to see his maternal uncle, Dopa Sangyé Tenpa, and then together they go for advice to his uncle's root teacher, who happens to be none other than Kyechok Darzang. In the end, it becomes clear that the transfer of the treasure materials was not the result of a mere chance meeting on the road as one might assume from reading *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, because the cadre of masters were already at least marginally acquainted with one another.

Unfortunately, just as the sources are silent about Zangpo Drakpa's life before receiving the visionary instructions to extract treasures in Gyang, they also offer no information regarding his exploits after the collection of eight scrolls leave his hands. There is no record of any disciples² and we have no information regarding the circumstances of his death. Thus, our knowledge of Zangpo Drakpa is limited to the brief

¹ For an example of how this passage can be somewhat misleading, see Herweg 1994, p. 89.

² One may reasonably assume that *bsTon pa* bSod nams dbang phyug and his two companions were, in some manner, "students" of bZang po grags pa as they are the three who delivered the treasure materials on his behalf to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. One will notice, however, that the transmission records routinely leave *bsTon pa* bSod nams dbang phyug out of the lineage, making it appear as if the scrolls were transmitted directly from bZang po grags pa to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. For an example, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1991–1995, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 4, pp. 383a, 384a. It is also worth noting that no evidence has yet surfaced to support the idea that bZang po grags pa transmitted teachings to anyone else other than Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

stretch of time between approximately 1362 and 1365.

Nevertheless, within the context of Tibetan religions, just as one's birth is often not the ultimate beginning of one's life story, neither is one's death necessarily the end, and thus several individuals who have lived since the fourteenth century have been understood as reincarnations of Zangpo Drakpa. For example, Zangpo Drakpa is recognized as a pre-incarnation of Tertön Ngawang Drakpa (1520–1580), whose incarnations are seated at Hepuk Monastery¹ in Padro.² Both Zangpo Drakpa and Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo are listed among the pre-incarnations of Desi Sangyé Gyatso (1653–1705), the third regent to serve the Fifth Dalai Lama.³



¹ He phug dgon pa.

² sPa gro. For a short biography of Ngag dbang grags pa, see Phuntshok Tashi 2011. Although his connection with bZang po grags pa is not discussed in that biography, it is mentioned in his autobiography. For details, see Yongs 'dzin Ngag dbang grags pa 1985, *sPrul sku ngag dbang grags pa'i bka' 'bum nor bu'i bang mdzod*, pp. 15-16. Lastly, the BDRC mentions the connection in the “extended properties” section of the following page: <http://purl.bdrc.io/resource/P7502>.

³ For a depiction of Desi Sangyé Gyatso's incarnation lineage, see: <https://www.himalayanart.org/items/99078>.

Chapter 7: Rigdzin Gödem and the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang

Tenpa Tsering Batsang (CRCAO) &
Jay Holt Valentine (Troy University)

Popular Religious Significance and Geographical Description of Mangyül Gungthang

Tenpa Tsering Batsang (CRCAO)

angyül Gungthang,¹ nestled in the heart of the Himalayas, is a significant spiritual site for many prominent figures and holds a special connection with the Tibetan people. As early as the sixth century, King Namri Songtsen² (r. 570–618) of the Yarlung Dynasty sent three emissaries to southwestern Tibet to search for habitable land.³ In the seventh century, his son King Songtsen Gampo (r. 617–650) built the Jampatrin Temple⁴ and the Phakpa Lhakhang,⁵ which housed the sandalwood statue of Ārya Wati Zangpo,⁶ in 645 in Mangyül.⁷ In the next century, Padmasambhava and Śāntarakṣita (725–788) entered Tibet through this region at the invitation of King Trisong Detsen (r. 755–794). Padmasambhava is said to have begun his campaign to subjugate the local spirits of Tibet in Mangyül Gungthang, including the twelve *tenma* spirits⁸ of Lake Pekhütso⁹ and the twenty-one *genyen* spirits¹⁰ of Mangyül. The region is also held to contain a cave

¹ Mang yul refers to the southern part of the region, particularly sKyid rong, whereas Gung thang alludes to the northern part, with the capital rDzong dkar. See Solmsdorf 2014, p. 10.

² gNam ri strong bstan.

³ See Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, p. 2.

⁴ Byams pa sprin lha khang. It is one of the thirteen geometric temples.

⁵ 'Phags pa lha khang.

⁶ 'Phags pa Wa ti bzang po.

⁷ According to Vitali 2007, p. 228, this temple was built by Srong btsan sgam po in 645.

⁸ brTan ma.

⁹ Pad khud mtsho. It is also known by dPa' mo dpa' mtsho. See Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 151.

¹⁰ *dGe bsnyen* spirits are mountain associated spirits, see *ibid.*, p. 151. For 21 spirits associating mountains, see Dung dkar Blo bzang 'phrin las 2002, *Dung dkar tshig mdzod*, p. 604.

where Padmasambhava meditated and the mountain pass, the famous Mt. Gungthang Pass, through which the master is believed to have left Tibet for the southern *rākṣasa* islands. In the eleventh century, the Indian master named Atiśa (982–1054) received a similar invitation from the Tibetan Prince named Lha Lama Yeshé Ö (ca. 953–1040),¹ a descendant of imperial Tibetan kings. Atiśa also passed through Mangyül on the way into the country, and on his way out, he stayed there for one year and built the White Temple.² In the eleventh century, Milarepa (1040–1123) was born in Kya Ngatsal,³ Gungthang. He received training under Marpa Lotsāwa Chökyi Lodrö (1012–1098) in southern Tibet and returned to his native land (Mangyül Gungthang) to practice the teachings. He is particularly well-known for practicing at six forts⁴ in this region, which includes the famous Drakkhar Taso⁵ and Zaokpuk.⁶ In 1240, Sakya Paṇḍita Künga Gyaltsen (1182–1251) defeated the Indian Brahminic scholar Harinanda at Kyidrong. The region is also known for being a major transit point for merchants and scholars over the centuries. Many Indian masters entered Tibet through this region, and a majority of Tibetans seeking Sanskrit language training in India or Nepal to become translators also traveled through the mountain passes of Mangyül Gungthang.⁷ These are just a few of the prominent figures of Tibetan civilization who are associated with this region.⁸

The Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang is situated in south-western Tibet. It extends from Mount Sisha Bangma⁹ and Lake Pekhütso in the east to the Mayum Pass¹⁰ in the west and from the Brahmaputra River in the north to the Himalayan valleys in the south.¹¹ To the west of

¹ Second King of the Gu ge Dynasty. For more about lHa bla ma Ye shes 'od, see *ibid.*, pp. 2154–2155.

² lHa khang dkar po; see mChims thams cad mkhyen pa 1993, *Jo bo rje dpal ldan a ti sha 'i rnam thar rgyas pa yongs grags*, pp. 133–134.

³ sKya rnga tshal.

⁴ rDzong drug.

⁵ Brag mkhar rta so.

⁶ Za 'og phug.

⁷ gTsang phrug sTob lags 2020, *dBus gtsang lo rgyus chen mo*, vol 3, p. iv.

⁸ One may add Nag tsho lo tsā ba Tshul khriims rgyal ba (1011–1064), who invited Atiśa to Tibet, Kar ma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), A grol Chos kyi sgron me, the first bSam sding rdo rje phag mo, and the first female *sprul sku* in Tibet.

⁹ Shi sha sbang ma.

¹⁰ Ma yum la.

¹¹ See Diemberger 2007, pp. 33–34.

Mangyül Gungthang lies the Purang principality and to the east lies the principality of Southern Latö. According to Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu (1698–1755), the realm of Mangyül Gungthang extended from Jé Lhaten,¹ a snow mountain above Gungthang, to Ting Wari.² He further divides the realm into Lho, Nub and Gung (south, west, and center). From Ting Wari to Kyidrong is the southern part, while from Serib³ to the great mountain called Pungyen⁴ (Mt. Manaslu in Nepal) is the western part (Nubri). From there to Mt. Jé Lhaten is all part of Gungthang.⁵ Therefore, he divided the whole area into three groups called Kyidrong, Nubri, and Gungthang.

Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu's description of the geographical extent of the Kingdom of Gungthang is certainly meant to reflect its borders at the height of the kingdom under King Bumdégön⁶ in the thirteenth century. Bumdégön organized the kingdom into thirteen districts,⁷ which included Nubri, Lower and Upper Mustang,⁸ and Dolpo.⁹ However, Dzongkar, the capital, and Kyidrong, the trade centre,¹⁰ were the two most important cities in the kingdom. Mustang closely followed in importance as it too became an important trading center for Tibetan nomads, Nepalis, and Indians.¹¹ From the late-eleventh to the mid-seventeenth centuries, during the period of Sakyapa (1244–1354), Pakmodrupa (1354–1435), and Rinpungpa (1435–1563) hegemonies in Tibet, the Mangyül Gungthang Kingdom, while starting from a humble beginning, thrived with a dynasty of 26 kings, bearing the title “Ngadak Gyalpo.”¹²

¹ rJe' lha bstan.

² Ting wa ri. Not identified.

³ Se rib. Refers to Kali Gandaki Valley in Lower Mustang.

⁴ Gang ri chen po dpung rgyan.

⁵ See Tshe dbang nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, p. 2.

⁶ 'Bum lde mgon.

⁷ brGya tsho bcu gsum.

⁸ Glo sMon thang.

⁹ Nub ri, Lower and Upper Mustang and Dol po are today under the Nepali jurisdiction.

¹⁰ Tshong 'dus.

¹¹ See Vitali 1997, p. 1034, n. 26.

¹² mNga' bdag rgyal po.

***The Kings of Mangyül Gungthang in
The Garland of Wondrous Tales***

Jay Holt Valentine (Troy University)

In *The Garland of Wondrous Tales*, Khenpo Chöying highlights the importance of the relationships between Rigdzin Gödem and the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang. In particular, his biography of Rigdzin Gödem contains an explanation of the weak connection between the tertön and King Püntsokdé (r. ca. 1365–1370) that goes far beyond summarizing the contents of the fifteenth-century biography, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, which was his primary source.¹ Khenpo Chöying's explanation concludes powerfully with a large passage that was written by the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682), who is well-known for his connections with the Nyingmapa teachings in general and the Northern Treasures in particular.² The unstated issue that is addressed both by Khenpo Chöying and the Fifth Dalai Lama is of utmost importance, for it is nothing less than the effectiveness of the various cycles of the Northern Treasures as tools for preserving the lives of royal patriarchs and, by extension, the lives of all those who would be negatively affected by the collapse of a kingdom. The prophecies clearly express that if the king, the tertön, and the treasures come together, then this will result in positive outcomes both for the king and his kingdom.³ On the surface, unfortunately, it would seem that the Northern Treasures are not very effective as tools for protecting the lives of sovereigns given the facts that none of the kings of the later fourteenth century lived very long and two of them—Püntsokdé and Chokdrubdé (r. 1375–1390)—died very soon after formalizing relations with Rigdzin Gödem. However, the faults in these cases, as explained by Khenpo Chöying, are not found with either the tertön or his revealed teachings, but with the kings who were not able to forge strong enough connections with the Northern Treasures in a timely manner. The Fifth Dalai Lama would have also been aware of

¹ Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 103–107.

² For a summary of the Fifth Dalai Lama's relationships with *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las, the seventeenth century incarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, see Boord 2010, pp. xviii–xxvi.

³ Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 91–92, clearly explains this relationship. It will be helpful, however, to also view his description of the contents of the five-fold treasury, which explains their relevance for the king. See *ibid.*, pp. 99–100.

the ultimate dissolution of the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang earlier in the seventeenth century, and one must consider the degree to which his dedication to the Northern Treasures was driven by a concern for his own longevity and for the longevity of his newly formed government. Karl-Heinz Everding, whose foundational work on the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang has been absolutely essential as a source for this chapter, offers an alternative perspective regarding the relationships between the kings of Mangyül Gungthang and Rigdzin Gödem. Specifically, he explores the possibility that these kings could have been killed at least in part because of their connections with Rigdzin Gödem by Sakya loyalists.¹ Everding's hypothesis will be revisited in the conclusion after taking a closer look at the founding of the kingdom in the thirteenth century and the activities of treasure revealers in the kingdom during the fourteenth century.

The focus on the kings of Mangyül Gungthang continues in *The Garland of Wondrous Tales*, for after the biography of Rigdzin Gödem, Khenpo Chöying included a lengthy composition entitled *The Patrilineal Kings of Mangyül Gungthang*,² which is provided in translation above.³ The text is clearly meant to serve at least two purposes. Firstly, Khenpo Chöying seeks to substantiate the claim that the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang were legitimate descendants of the kings of the Tibetan Empire, which ended with the short reign of King Langdarma (ca. 838–842). At stake here is not simply the legitimacy of the kings of Mangyül Gungthang, for the entire basis of the preoccupation with these kings by the Nyingmapa treasure revealers discussed below is their biological connections with King Trisong Detsen (r. ca. 755–794), who was a disciple of their ultimate guru, Padmasambhava. Khenpo Chöying therefore traces the family lineage from Langdarma to the first patriarch of the future dynasty of Mangyül Gungthang, then through the 23 patriarchs, the last eleven of which being the actual sovereigns of the kingdom.

One should take note that the delineation of patriarchs presented by Khenpo Chöying is not necessarily definitive, because the sources disagree on the details, particularly when it comes to the earliest patriarchs of the family. Additionally, the king with whom Rigdzin Gödem had

¹ For examples of where he discusses the issue, see Everding 2000b, pp. 232, 496.

² Gung thang rgyal po yab sras.

³ Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 119–126.

the strongest connection, Chokdrubdé, is not included in the list of patriarchs, presumably because he was considered to be an illegitimate son of his father, Püntsokdé. The roots of these problems are grounded in the works of Kahtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu, who wrote two different genealogies of the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang. *The Family Lineage of the Divine Kings*¹ was written first, while the well-known *The Royal Lineage of Gungthang*² is a much more complete work that was written second, and the two works reach different conclusions regarding important details of the family's history.³ As is abundantly clear in the translation above, Khenpo Chöying relied almost exclusively on *The Concise History of the Greater Tibet: A Pristine Magical Mirror*, which was authored by Dūdjom Jikdral Yeshé Dorjé (1904–1987),⁴ when it came to listing the patriarchs of the royal family.⁵ What is less clear is that Dūdjom Jikdral Yeshé Dorjé's delineation mirrors that of *The Family Lineage of the Divine Kings*, which is the earlier work by Tsewang Norbu. To counterbalance the understandable limitations of Khenpo Chöying's presentation, an exploration of the history of Mangyül Gungthang as it developed from a petty principedom into a large kingdom in the thirteenth century with the help of Sakya is included below. (A supplemental table has been included in the appendices that collates together the relevant information regarding the rulers of Mangyül Gungthang from beginning to end.) This is followed by a description of the problems that were faced by the kingdom during the fourteenth century to help contextualize the life of Rigdzin Gödem.

Between the two major sections of *The Patrilineal Kings of Mangyül Gungthang*, Khenpo Chöying includes an informative passage that lists the so-called “Thirteen Hundreds,” or the thirteen subdivisions of

¹ Rig 'dzin nor bu 2021, *lHa btsan po'i gdung rabs*, pp. 65-92. The full title is *rGyal ba'i bstan pa rin po che byang phyogs su 'byung ba'i rtsa lag bod rje lha btsan po'i gdung rabs tshig nyung don gsal yid kyi me long*.

² Rig 'dzin nor bu 2021, *Gung thang rgyal rabs*, pp. 1-61. The full title is *Bod rje lha btsad po'i gdung rabs mnga' ris smad gung thang du ji ltar byung ba'i tshul deb gter dwangs shel 'phrul gyi me long dang bstan po'i gdung rabs tshig don nyung gsal*.

³ This assessment of Kahtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu's two works is based on Everding's introduction to the text. See Everding 2000b, pp. 198-199. The differences between the two works can be easily seen by viewing Tafel 1 and Tafel 2, which appear at the end of Everding 2000b.

⁴ bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje 2002, *Gangs can bod chen po'i rgyal rabs*.

⁵ See Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 120-122.

people and lands that together comprised—at least in theory—the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang. The second major objective of Khenpo Chöying's *The Patrilineal Kings of Mangyül Gungthang* is to offer summaries of Rigdzin Gödem's connections and misconceptions with four kings: Tashidé, Püntsokdé, Chokdrubdé, and Sönamdé. This section of the text is also problematic because of the way that Khenpo Chöying attempts to deal with the conflicting information regarding Chokdrubdé and Sönamdé in his sources. While this issue will be sorted out below, the majority of this chapter will explore the relationships between these four kings and various treasure revealers in an attempt to not only summarize events, but also to identify possible precedents that will help contextualize Rigdzin Gödem's exploits in the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang.

Political and Religious History of the Western Myriarchies

The majority of Rigdzin Gödem's life (1337–ca. 1401) unfolded within the geographical boundaries of the principality of Northern Latö and the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang during a rather tumultuous time period that saw the end of the political and military supremacy of the Mongol-Sakya administration (ca. 1244–1354) and the rise to power of the Pakmodrupa administration (1354–1618) in Tibet.¹ While Rigdzin Gödem spent most of his time in the vicinity of his homeland within the boundaries of Northern Latö, his fortunes were closely tied to the vicissitudes of Mangyül Gungthang because his treasures were thought to be essential for the survival of this neighboring kingdom.² As demonstrated below, Sakya was not only the most significant political actor in the western myriarchies throughout the hundred years leading up to Rigdzin Gödem's birth in 1337, but they continued to be a major player in the region well into the fifteenth century.

¹ For an overview of the Mongol-Sakya and Phagmo gru pa administrations, see Petech 1990 and Czaja 2013, respectively.

² While concern for the welfare of Mangyül Gungthang is particularly emphasized in some of the most important prophetic guides, in the biography that was written by Nyi ma bzang po, and in the *gNyan chen thang lha* sub-cycle of the *The Seven Auspicious Connections* (*rTen 'brel chos bdun*), the vast majority on the Northern Treasures are focused on the welfare of Tibet in general. Thanks to Stéphane Arguillère for sharing this observation.

Thirteenth Century: The Establishment of Mangyül Gungthang

Before Sakya firmly gained the upper hand in Tibet with the aid of their Mongol overlords, the inhabitable lands that stretch westward from Sakya between the Himalayan Mountains to the south and the Tsangpo River to the north was broken into numerous competing principalities, whose patriarchs often claimed to be descendants of the kings of the imperial dynasty of Tibet, which ended with Langdarma (790–842) in the ninth century.¹ In the early thirteenth century, Sakya, Drigung, Tsarpa,² and Pakmodru, which were all strong religious and political institutions at the time, sought influence and power in Western Tibet by lending their support to one or another of the competing petty kingdoms in each region.³ At some point in the 1230s, Sakya forged a strategic connection with the Tsechung Khabpa,⁴ the “prince” of a small house located north of Gungthang,⁵ which retrospectively can be seen as an early indication of Sakya interest in Lower Ngari.⁶ The Tsechung Khabpa—most likely the patriarch named Gönpodé—quickly established himself as ruler over the region of Gungthang in the early 1230s,⁷ a feat that was presumably made possible with the support of Sakya. Their progress was abruptly halted, however, when troops from the Kingdom of Yartse crossed over the border from Nepal in an invasion and subsequent occupation (ca. 1235–1239) of Lower Ngari.⁸ The

¹ For a detailed discussion of how various princely households attempted to present themselves as successors of the imperial dynasty that ended with Glang dar ma, see Kapstein 2006, pp. 89–92. The ruling family of Northern La stod is a notable exception to this generalization as they are said to have been an ethnically Tangut family that relocated to that area early in the thirteenth century. See Vitali 2011, p. 196.

² For an explanation of how the Tshal pa bKa’ brgyud, which maintained its headquarters near lHa sa in Central Tibet, gained influence in Western Tibet, see Everding 2000b, pp. 333–347. For a complete overview of the Tshal pa bKa’ brgyud tradition, see Sørensen and Hazod 2007.

³ For a description of the rivalry between Tshal pa and Sa skya in Mang yul gung thang, see Everding 2000b, pp. 364–365.

⁴ bTsad chung Khab pa.

⁵ Everding 2002, p. 113.

⁶ mNga’ ris smad.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁸ For a detailed description of the significance of Ya rtse before the formation of Mang yul gung thang, including their invasion and occupation of the region, see

Tsechung Khabpa was slain, and foreign rule was established with the aid of their Tsalpa Kagyüpa vassals.¹

For the House of the Tsechung Khabpa, however, all had not been lost, for on the very day that Gönpodé was killed (ca. 1239), his son named Tsünpadé was born. Because he was too young to rule, Lha Rinchen Tso,² the deceased king's sister, conducted the affairs of the house. This politically shrewd nun changed the course of history for her family by arranging Tsünpadé's marriage in a manner that would more thoroughly bind the Tsechung Khabpa to Sakya just before their period of ascendancy. In particular, she wed her nephew to the daughter of Zangtsa Sönam Gyaltsen³ (1184–1239), who was the sitting throneholder of Sakya, the brother of Sakya Paṇḍita (1181–1251), and the father of Chögyal Phakpa (1235–1280).⁴

During the reign of Möngke Khan (1249–1259), however, all of Ngari was placed under the jurisdiction of a newly created governorship called the *Namsa Pashi*,⁵ which effectively awarded sovereignty over this land to Sakya's primary rivals, i.e., Drigung and Pakmodru.⁶ After Kublai established himself as the undisputed Great Khan (ca. 1264), Phakpa attempted unsuccessfully to trade Yardrok,⁷ which was administered by Sakya, for Lower Ngari during political negotiations (ca. 1264–1266) aimed at reorganizing power in the region.⁸ By this time, the Tsechung Khabpa, Tsünpadé, and his wife, Nyibumdé, had already produced an heir named Bumdegön (ca. 1252–1280), who—while still quite young—had already won the favor of his maternal uncle—i.e., Phakpa—during a visit to Sakya in 1264.⁹

The Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang is said to have been officially founded in 1267, when Śākya Zangpo (1264–1270)—who was serving

Everding 2000b, pp. 364–385. Vitali 2003, p. 74, notes that the invading army is believed to have included Muslim mercenaries.

¹ Everding 2002, p. 113.

² lHa Rin chen mtsho.

³ Zangs tsha bSod nams rgyal mtshan.

⁴ For a detailed description of their marriage and how it set the stage for the creation of the Kingdom of Mang yul gung thang, see Everding 2000b, pp. 386–391.

⁵ gNam sa dpa' shi.

⁶ See Everding 2002, p. 112, Vitali 2003, p. 75, and Czaja 2013, pp. 102–103, n. 47.

⁷ Yar 'brog.

⁸ See Everding 2002, pp. 112–113.

⁹ For a detailed description of his reception in Sa skya, see Everding 2000b, pp. 391–392.

a term as the first “prime minister”¹ of the Sakyapa government—escorted Bumdégön back to Mangyül Gungthang with an army, where he was officially acknowledged as a legitimate king descended from the imperial dynasty.² With the political and military support of the Sakya, King Bumdégön was able to subdue his regional rivals and thereby transform his minor house, which had primarily held dominion over the Khab region in Gungthang, into a large, multi-ethnic kingdom. The culturally connected, sedentary populations of Gungthang, Mangyül, and Nubri and the various subtribes of the Zhang nomads living in the surrounding high plains formed the foundation of the Mangyül Gungthang Kingdom.³ With the help of the Sakya, the regions of Lotö, Lomé, and Dolpo as well as the Zhang nomads living in the upper Tsangpo River Valley were all incorporated into the kingdom despite their distance from the capital, i.e., Dzongkar, and their cultural differences. Following the Sakya-Yuan example of dividing Tibet into the Thirteen Myriarchies, the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang came to be organized into “Thirteen Hundreds.”⁴ By setting up the Tsechung Khab as the sovereign of this newly formed kingdom, Sakya created a powerful vassal state—connected to them strongly through a series of strategic marriages—that could act as a buffer to secure the western borderlands while largely halting the progress of Drigung, Pakmodru, and Tsalpa in the region.

Employing similar tactics throughout the third quarter of the thirteenth century, Sakya continued to surround itself with vassal states including not only Mangyül Gungthang, but also Northern Latö, Southern Latö, and Chumik. These alliances were often secured firstly through politically motivated marriages that would require the acceptance of the bride’s uncles as political advisors, who would of course have strong

¹ dPon chen.

² For a brief explanation in English of how the kingdom was established, see Everding 2002, pp. 115-116. For the detailed explanation in German, see Everding 2000b, pp. 390-396.

³ For more information on the nomads in this and surrounding regions, see Vitali 1997.

⁴ *brGya tsho bcu gsum*. Everding 2000b, pp. 398-409, offers a detailed explanation of all the various groups that are included in the Thirteen Hundreds of Mang yul gung thang.

loyalties to Sakya.¹ They also strengthened their relationships with these vassal states through military support and through the establishment of strategically placed Sakyapa monasteries, which would house influential monks who could also act as political advisors. On multiple occasions, the ruling patriarchs of Northern Latö and Southern Latö were appointed as prime ministers of the Sakya administration, which served to both strengthen those principalities and tie them more closely to Sakya.

Fourteenth Century: The Vicissitudes of Mangyül Gungthang

Among the Thirteen Myriarchies, Mangyül Gungthang stood out in at least two manners. Firstly, unlike the other vassal states that were presented as principalities ruled by governors,² the Sakyapa supported the ruling patriarchs of Mangyül Gungthang as legitimate kings³ descended from the imperial kings of Tibet. While the affirmation immediately served to elevate their status above the other petty rulers of the region, it would also uniquely position the kings of Mangyül Gungthang as the ideal patrons of the Nyingma treasure revealers because of their connections to King Trisong Detsen and, ultimately, Padmasambhava. Secondly, unlike Northern Latö and Southern Latö, which had been developing more or less organically on their own before receiving Sakyapa support, neither the great expansion of the boundaries of Mangyül Gungthang nor the establishment of their dynasty could have occurred without the political and military might of Sakya. This second point is significant because it meant that as the political and military power of Sakya declined in the middle of the fourteenth century, Mangyül Gungthang would become extremely unstable, while the surrounding myriarchs, particularly Northern Latö and Southern Latö, would thrive during the period of growing independence from Sakya.⁴

As the Yuan Dynasty was waning during the first half of the fourteenth century, Sakya faced internal struggles as a result of the splitting

¹ For details regarding the establishment of these vassal states and the manner in which their loyalties were secured, see Everding 2000b, pp. 392-393. Vitali 2003, p. 78, adds that it was also about this time (ca. 1277-1280) when Sa skya and Mang yul gung thang took control of Gu ge.

² Khri dpon.

³ mNga' bdag.

⁴ See *ibid.*, pp. 453-454.

(ca. 1322) of the powerful Khön¹ family into four competing estates, while at the same time facing competition from other myriarchies.² Ultimately, the myriarchy of Pakmodru would rise to supremacy under the leadership of Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen (1302–1364) and establish a new government, which would administer affairs in Tibet from 1354 until 1618, largely without reliance on foreign military might.³ As stated above, this weakening of Sakya resulted in great instability in Mangyül Gungthang, particularly during the fourteenth century. Whereas a single monarch, King Chökyongdé⁴ (ca. 1280–1352, r. 1308–1352), ruled the kingdom for nearly the entirety of the first half of the fourteenth century, the kingdom would see the death of five kings and withstand eight different regime changes before the death of Rigdzin Gödem in ca. 1401. Stability would not return to the kingdom until the reign of King Lhawang Gyaltsen⁵ (1404–1465) in 1419. At first it seemed that Pakmodru might regularly engage in the politics of the western myriarchies. Pakmodru did assert some effort in protecting Mangyül Gungthang during the reign of King Tashidé (ca. 1313–1365; r. ca. 1352–1365), which included efforts to tutor the king's son, i.e., Püntsokdé (ca. 1338–1370, r. 1365–1370), who had previously studied at Sakya.⁶ By the time Püntsokdé took the throne in 1365, however, the benefits of alignment with Sakya apparently outweighed any other political concerns as he quickly issued an oath-decree expressing his solidarity with Sakya.⁷

Meanwhile, Northern Latö, wherein lies Rigdzin Gödem's homeland, grew in power over this time period under the leadership of Jang

¹ 'Khon.

² On the splitting of the 'Khon family, see Petech 1990, pp. 81-82.

³ For more on the rise of the Phag mo gru in the 14th century, see Czaja 2013, pp. 109-204.

⁴ Chos skyong lde.

⁵ lHa dbang rgyal mtshan.

⁶ For more on the relationship between Mang yul gung thang and Phag mo gru, see Everding 2000b, pp. 456-459. In this chapter, this king will be referred to consistently as Phun tshogs sde, following the example set by Kaḥ thog rig dzin Tse dbang nor bu in *Gung thang rgyal rabs*. It should be noted, however, that some sources, such as Nyi ma bZang po's *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* (*Nyi ma'i 'od zer*), consistently refer to this king as Pun tshogs dpal.

⁷ See Everding 2000b, pp. 458-459, for more information on the decree of solidarity with Sa skya.

Tāwen (ca. 1316–1375).¹ Not only did he serve as the prime minister twice during the final years of the Sakya administration, but he also ruled both Southern Latö and Mangyül Gungthang at different points during the fourteenth century. He abducted the ruler of Southern Latö, Situ Chökyi Rinchen,² and temporarily absorbed the neighboring principality during the mid-fourteenth century.³ With regard to Mangyül Gungthang, Jang Tāwen is often said to have essentially ordered the murder of King Püntsokdé before invading the kingdom, which he then administered from 1371 to 1375.⁴ Despite the fact that Rigdzin Gödem lived the majority of his life in Northern Latö, he does not appear to have pursued state-level patronage from its ruling patriarchs of the fourteenth century, including Jang Tāwen, Gügung Rinchen Gyaltzen (b. ca. 1338), or Gügung Chödrak Palzang (r. late 14th c.).⁵ In fact, the murder of Püntsokdé and the impending occupation of Mangyül Gungthang by Jang Tāwen were certainly among the primary factors that forced Rigdzin Gödem to temporarily abandon his focus on the kingdom and depart for the southern borderlands, where he essentially lived in exile from 1371 until 1384. While it would be a mistake to fully limit Rigdzin Gödem's motivations to religious considerations, it is worth noting that in contradistinction to Northern Latö where the ruling family was known to have immigrated from Minyak in the early twelfth century, Mangyül Gungthang's ruling family had recently—in the previous century—been elevated by Sakya above all others in the region in terms of their familial connection with the Imperial Dynasty. Moreover, as will be discussed below, both the geography of Mangyül Gungthang as well as their rulers had already begun to be integrated into a Nyingmapa worldview through the works of earlier treasure revealers in a manner that would have made the kingdom into a more ideal region for aspiring treasure revealers, such as Rigdzin Gödem, to

¹ For more on the exploits of Byang Tā dben (i.e., Nam mkha' bstan pa'i rgyal mtshan), see Petech 1990, pp. 120–136, where he is referred to as Byan-pa.

² Si tu Chos kyi rin chen.

³ See Everding 2000b, p. 470.

⁴ See Everding 2000b, pp. 468–476.

⁵ For a history of all of the major rulers of Northern La stod, see Gung thang bstan 'dzin nor bu 2018, *gTsang la stod byang ngam ring gi rig gnas lo rgyus*, pp. 187–205. For the specific passages pertaining to *Gu'i gung* Rin chen rgyal mtshan and *Gu'i gung* Chos grags dpal bzang, who are respectively the son and grandson of Byang Tā dben, see *ibid.*, pp. 197–199.

seek patronage.

The Nyingmapa Sacred Geography of Mangyül Gungthang

In his extensive study of the Ārya Wati Zangpo statue and the Phakpa Lhakhang Temple where it is housed, Franz-Karl Ehrhard provides an overview of the scriptural literature that has been used over the centuries to anchor discussions of the sacred geography of Mangyül Gungthang.¹ Within this diverse religious landscape, which eventually becomes important for each of the major schools of Tibetan Buddhism, one can discern three overlapping groupings of religious sites that are distinctively Nyingmapa, all of which are discussed in the scriptures of treasure revealers. First, there are three sites that are associated with King Songtsen Gampo and the transportation of the Nepali Princess Tritsün² to Tibet. Foremost among these sites is the Phakpa Lhakhang Temple in Kyidrong that houses the Ārya Wati Zangpo statue, which is of transregional importance. This grouping also includes Jampatrin, which is west of Kyidrong, and Gyepuk, which is south of Kyidrong. Secondly, there are many sites throughout Mangyül Gungthang that are related to Padmasambhava. Thirdly, there are two sites, such as Bara³ and Palgegyé,⁴ which are specifically associated with King Trisong Detsen.

Table: Treasure Literature Concerning Mangyül Gungthang

Treasure Revealer	Dates	Details
Nyima Sengé ⁵	11th c.	Born in Mangyül and revealed treasures at the land-taming temple of Jampatrin, which was built by Songtsen Gampo (7th c.).
Bakhal Mukpo ⁶	11th–	Revealed a lesser-known

¹ This section that is dedicated to the distinctively rNying ma pa sacred geography of Mang yul gung thang has been drawn almost entirely from Ehrhard 2004, pp. 108–118. It should be noted that Ehrhard's description is not limited to rNying ma pa sites.

² Khri btsun.

³ 'Ba' ra.

⁴ dPal dge rgyas.

⁵ Nyi ma seng ge.

⁶ Ba mkhal smug po.

	12th c.	biography of Padmasambhava as well as a famous biographical prayer to Padmasambhava.
Nyangral Nyima Özer	1124–1192	Revealed a famous biography of Padmasambhava.
Śākya Ö ¹	13th c.	Revealed the sections of the <i>Mani Kabum</i> that discuss King Songtsen Gampo.
Jangchub Lingpa ²	14th c.	Treasures feature the sacred geography of Mangyül and mention the 13th King of Mangyül Gungthang.
Zangpo Drakpa	14th c.	Revealed treasures that give details of Padmasambhava's concern with the dynasty of Mangyül Gungthang.
Rigdzin Gödem	14th c.	Decoded the treasures of Zangpo Drakpa and revealed his own, which give more details regarding Padmasambhava's concerns with the dynasty of Mangyül Gungthang.
Orgyen Lingpa	1323–ca. 1355	Revealed extensive, famous biographies of Padmasambhava, which discuss his activities in Mangyül Gungthang in brief.
Sangyé Lingpa	14th c.	Revealed extensive, famous biographies of Padmasambhava, which discuss his activities in Mangyül Gungthang in brief.
Zhikpo Lingpa ³	1524–1583	Revealed prophecies that discuss the sites associated with Trisong Detsen
Jangdak Tashi	b. 1550	Revealed a biography of Padmasambhava that provides

¹ Shā kya 'od.

² Byang chub gling pa.

³ Zhig po gling pa.

Tobgyal ¹		coherent accounts of his time in Mangyül Gungthang.
Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyaltsen ²	1552– 1624	Also revealed a biography of Padmasambhava that provides coherent accounts of his time in Mangyül Gungthang.

Regarding the treasure revealers and the literature that supports the sanctification of these sites, an early example would be Nyima Sengé (11th c.), who was born in Mangyül and revealed treasures at the land-taming temple of Jampatrin, which was built by Songtsen Gampo (7th c.).³ The works of Bakhal Mukpo (11th–12th c.) were likely very important at one time as he revealed a biography of Padmasambhava, which is currently unavailable, as well as a famous prayer to Padmasambhava, which contains a brief overview of the guru's life, including his visit to Jampatrin.⁴ The lore surrounding Songtsen Gampo is largely contained in the *Maṇi Kabum*, which is essentially an anthology of three groups of treasures revealed by Drubtob Ngödrub,⁵ Nyangral Nyima Özer (12th c.), and Śākya Ö (13th c.).⁶ However, the treasures of Jangchub Lingpa (14th c.) are often cited when referencing the lesser-known sites associated with Songtsen Gampo, i.e., Jampatrin and Gyepuk.⁷

Padmasambhava's exploits in the region are mentioned in brief in the treasures of Nyangral Nyima Özer, Orgyen Lingpa, and Sangyé Lingpa. More specific details regarding his exploits in Mangyül Gungthang, which are important to the tradition of the Northern Treasures, are provided in works revealed by Zangpo Drakpa and Rigdzin Gödem. However, the first biographies to offer coherent accounts of

¹ *Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal*.

² *Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan*.

³ For a brief biography of Nyi ma seng ge, see Yeshe Gyamtso 2011, *The Hundred Tertöns*, pp. 78–79.

⁴ For Ehrhard's brief mention of Ba mkhal smug po, see Ehrhard 2004, pp. 113–114. For Ba mkhal smug po's biographic prayer to Padmasambhava, see Ba mkhal smug po 2009–2011, *gSol 'debs bar chad lam sel*.

⁵ *Grub thob dngos grub*.

⁶ For a detailed discussion of the *Maṇi bka' 'bum*, including problems involving authorship, see Kapstein 1991.

⁷ For example, see Ehrhard 2004, pp. 410–411, n. 175.

Padmasambhava's visits to the region were revealed by later tertöns, such as Tashi Tobgyal and Sokdokpa.¹ At about the same time, the treasure materials that discuss the specific sites associated with Trisong Detsen were revealed by Zhikpo Lingpa (1524–1583).² While surely there were other treasure revealers who contributed to the sanctification of the geography of Mangyül Gungthang, even this brief survey of tertöns from the eleventh through the sixteenth centuries is enough to demonstrate how over time the kingdom was reimagined as an ideal place for Nyingmapa treasure revealers to seek state-level patronage.

Treasure Revealers and the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang

While the historical records contain many details concerning the relationships forged between various Nyingmapa treasure revealers and the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang from the late-fourteenth through the seventeenth century when the kingdom was dissolved, details concerning the beginnings of these connections remain unclear.³ There is a passage in Nyangral Nyima Özer's *The History of Buddhism*, which happens to mirror a passage in Sachen Künga Nyingpo's (1092–1148) *Royal Lineages of Tibet*, that supports the general idea that many of the patriarchs of the important houses of Western Tibet were descendants of one or the other of the three sons of Tashi Tsekpa, who himself was a grandson of Langdarma.⁴ However, while Nyangral's *The History of Buddhism* apparently relied upon his own revelations in his efforts to glorify both King Trisong Detsen and Padmasambhava,⁵ the text does not appear to include any treasure prophecies specifically meant for the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang, which is unsurprising as the kingdom and its dynasty was not established until the middle of the thirteenth century.

¹ This information regarding biographical sketches of Padmasambhava is summarized from Ehrhard 2004, p. 114.

² See Ehrhard 2004, pp. 111–112.

³ For a comprehensive study of the treasure revealers of Western Tibet, see Solmsdorf 2014.

⁴ See Nyang ral nyi ma 'od zer 1988, *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*, pp. 456–457, and Sa chen kun dga' snying po 1992–1993, *Bod kyi rgyal rabs*, p. 398. It should be noted that there is some question about the identity of the author(s) of the history that is attributed to Nyang ral. For details, see Hirshberg 2016, pp. 141–175.

⁵ Hirshberg 2012, p. 7.

Treasure Revealers and Emperor Kublai Khan

It may be helpful to briefly consider Emperor Kublai Khan's (1215–1294) connections with various tertöns during the thirteenth century as it relates to the treasures of Nyangral Nyima Özer and the possible establishment or reinforcement of models of behavior for patronage relationships with treasure revealers. Moreover, while Nyima Zangpo indicates the importance of the treasures of Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak in the colophon of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*,¹ suggesting that he revealed prophecies about Rigdzin Gödem, none of these prophecies are actually included in the biography, which leaves the reader wondering about the significance of this thirteenth century tertön. One possible explanation is that he was revered for his role in the following escapades that involved some of the most important political figures of the thirteenth century in Tibet.

In the latter half of Kublai Khan's life, he sought solutions to the problem of his own human mortality from the religious specialists among his Tibetan subjects. In both the 1260s and the 1290s, he issued orders to Nyingmapa tantric masters to find vases of “life-water,” which were said by tertön Nyangral Nyima Özer to have been created by Padmasambhava to prolong the life of King Trisong Detsen.² The first of these orders was sent along with treasure substitutes to Śākya Ö (ca. 1206–1268), who in turn enlisted the help of Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak to extract the life-water, which was found together with treasure scrolls and other artifacts.³ In at least one account of these events, Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak is described as the individual who actually revealed these treasures, which were then delivered to the emperor by Śākya Ö.⁴ Upon the successful completion of the mission,

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 145.

² Vitali 2012, p. 49, n. 39, mentions that the imperial era narrative involving “life-water” (*tshe chu*), which also explains that the vases of life-water were concealed because the king was blocked from consuming them by hostile ministers, is found in the works of both Nyang ral and O rgyan gling pa.

³ For a detailed description of the events surrounding the extraction of the life-water by Shā kya 'od, see Gyurme Dorje and Kapstein 1991, pp. 661–663 and Vitali 2012, pp. 56–61. A second set of orders involving life-water were sent by Kublai in the early 1290s, this time to U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1230–1309). For details, see Vitali 2012, pp. 48–54.

⁴ Vitali 2012, pp. 59–60.

Śākya Ö was rewarded by Kublai Khan with a land grant and Nying-mapa adepts were collectively rewarded with exemptions from taxation and military service.¹

In retrospect, these thirteenth-century treasure revealers and Kublai Khan appear to have set or reinforced precedents that could have influenced later regional tertöns, Rigdzin Gödem in particular. As will be demonstrated below, just as Śākya Ö and Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak relied upon the works of Nyangral Nyima Özer to find their treasures, Rigdzin Gödem would later rely upon the works of Zangpo Drakpa to find the Northern Treasures. In both cases, the royal patron provided substitutes for treasures, and both treasures were specifically related to the longevity of a royal patron. Lastly, both sets of relationships resulted in land grants and other boons, such as tax exemptions. Of course, there are significant differences, such as the fact that Kublai (i.e., the patron) was the one who initiated the course of events in the thirteenth century, while Rigdzin Gödem (i.e., the priest, not the patron) is the one who established contact with the somewhat indifferent King Püntsokdé in the fourteenth century. Still, it is very possible that the connection between the treasure revealers and Kublai could have been well-known to the tertöns of the fourteenth century in the vicinity of Mangyül Gungthang, particularly because the various accounts also involve important Sakya figures such as Chögyal Phakpa and Śākya Zangpo, who were soon after (ca. 1267) involved in the establishment of the kingdom. It is also possible that Rigdzin Gödem was aware of these precedents through the works of Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak, which are said to have included prophecies about Rigdzin Gödem.²

¹ Kapstein 2006, p. 114, mentions the general exemptions for rNying ma pa tantric adepts that came as a reward for extracting the life-water for Kublai. Vitali 2012, p. 59, mentions that Shā kya 'od received the title of *Pakshi* and a land grant as a reward for his services.

² As stated above, in the colophon of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, Nyi ma bzang po indicated his reliance upon the prophecies of two tertöns, which by modern reckoning would be considered “outside” the tradition of the Northern Treasures: Guru ye she khyung grags and Byang chub gling pa (i.e., Bya mang po rgyal mtshan dpal). While the significance of Byang chub gling pa is clear and described in much detail in the next section, the significance of Guru ye she khyung grags is more difficult to fathom.

Jangchub Lingpa and King Tashidé

At present, the earliest known treasure prophecies that reference a specific king of the Mangyül Gungthang Dynasty were revealed by the aforementioned Jangchub Lingpa (14th c.), who was active in Latö, Mangyül Gungthang, and Mön, presumably just before Rigdzin Gödem.¹ Through the following illumination of a few of Jangchub Lingpa's achievements, it will become clear that he also set precedents that appear to have influenced the direction of Zangpo Drakpa and Rigdzin Gödem's careers as treasure revealers.

To begin with, it is important to note that Jangchub Lingpa claimed that he was only able to reveal treasures in Gungthang after he received a treasure list that had been previously revealed by tertön Tseten Gyaltsen (ca. 13th–14th c.).² This sort of relationship between treasure revealers eventually becomes quite common as tertöns routinely revealed prophetic guides that were destined for the hands of other treasure revealers.³ While tertöns have been known to pass treasure materials directly to other tertöns, it is also common for the transmission to

¹ Certainly, Byang chub gling pa, who is said to have been contemporary with Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396), could still have been alive when Rig 'dzin rGod ldem began to engage with King Phun tshogs sde (r. 1365–1370), but it seems that he would have already extracted his primary treasures before 1365. For a brief biography of Byang chub gling pa (14th c.) where he is listed as “Palgyi Gyaltsen of Langlo,” see Yeshe Gyamtso 2011, pp. 216–217. This treasure revealer is also known as Bya mang po, Bya mung po, and simply Mung po.

² For a brief biography of Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan, see Yeshe Gyamtso 2011, pp. 118–119. At present, it appears that he lived between 1250 and 1350. For a discussion of his dates, see Arguillère 2025a and below in the chapter on concealed lands. While Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan is at times believed to have lived in an earlier century, it can nevertheless be assumed that he was still relevant in the fourteenth century. Certainly, his treasures were known by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, who not only transmitted one of Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan's prophetic guides, but who also appears to have been inspired by Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan's activities in the concealed lands along the southern borderlands.

³ Additionally, tertöns have been known to decode treasure guides that contain prophecies pertaining to a wide range of other treasure revealers of the past, present, and future. For an example attributed to O rgyan gling pa (14th c.) that ostensibly referred to past and present tertöns when it was revealed, see Chos dbyings 2015, p. 82. For an example of a prophetic guide that contains prophecies for multiple future treasure revealers, see bZang po grags pa 1983, *Kha byang gter gyi bang mdzod*.

be indirect. As will be demonstrated below, Rigdzin Gödem also began his career as a treasure revealer in earnest after indirectly receiving prophetic guides from an earlier tertön, i.e., Zangpo Drakpa.

Jangchub Lingpa's most famous treasure cycle is entitled *The Mind Treasure of Kuntuzangpo: The Self-Liberation of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa*,¹ which was discovered near Lake Lhatso Sintso,² presumably near the site of Jamangpo Monastery east of Dzongkar, the capital of the Mangyül Gungthang Kingdom. While parts of the cycle are missing, a pair of relevant prophecies survive within Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu's *The Royal Lineage of Gungthang*:

In *The Questions and Answers of the Heart Treasure*,³ [which was revealed by] Jamungpo, it says:⁴

Regarding the emanation of Padmasambhava [in] Latö,
Listen while I explain when and [how he] will appear.
After thirteen generations [of]
The descendants of Lord Trisong Detsen [pass away]
In the place called Mangyül Gungthang,
[The emanation] will arrive.

And:

After the passing of the one named Chökyong, ...
Thus, when the treasure revealer [named] Mungpo [i.e., Jangchub Lingpa] was born, thirteen generations of Gungthang Kings had passed away. Furthermore, because [the passage] is talking [about an event that occurred after] the death of Chökyongdé, there were thus thirteen [generations of kings] from Marpodé⁵ to Chökyongdé.

Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu's explanation of the prophecies has been included to show that he primarily used the passages to argue that Chökyongdé ought to be counted as the thirteenth patriarch of the ruling family to reign in Gungthang.⁶ His commentary also helps clarify that

¹ Kun bzang thugs gter 'khor 'das rang grol.

² lHa mtsho srin mtsho.

³ Thugs gter gyi zhus lan.

⁴ What follows is a fresh translation of the Tibetan as it appears in Everding 2000b, pp. 50-53. Therein, he offers a critical edition of the Tibetan and an annotated German translation of the complete *Gung thang rgyal rabs*.

⁵ dMar po lde.

⁶ One might also count Chos skyong lde as the fourth king of the kingdom, which was established around 1267.

the predicted emanation was the treasure revealer named Jangchub Lingpa—i.e., the one who revealed the prophecy—and that he was active in Mangyül Gungthang after the passing of Chökyongdé (d. 1352).¹ Thus, in the end, it appears that while naming Chökyongdé, these passages ultimately identify the significance of his unnamed successor, Tashidé. Regardless, these passages are significant in that they are early examples—if not the first instances—of treasure prophecies that not only confirm the assertion that the sovereigns of Mangyül Gungthang were descendants of the imperial kings of Tibet, but that also fold their royal heritage claims into a distinctively Nyingma tradition of treasure prophecy.

Another of Jangchub Lingpa's treasures, *The Lamp of Compassion that Perfects Enlightened Activity*, contains instructions, delivered by Padmasambhava himself, for “future” (i.e., the fourteenth century) spiritual representatives of Padmasambhava (e.g., Jangchub Lingpa and presumably his disciples) regarding how they should work to control a host of divinities on behalf of monarchs to preserve their rule and protect their subjects.² While the text stops short of naming the kings of Gungthang as the intended patrons of these future Padmasambhava-devoted masters, it is perfectly clear that the practices described in the treasure constitute a comprehensive and long-term plan for supporting a fourteenth-century monarch in the general vicinity of the border between Nepal and Tibet.

The largest and most central section of *The Lamp of Compassion that Perfects Enlightened Activity* is constituted by a script that is to be read by Padmasambhava's representative to the gathered gods and demons.³ While the script is somewhat formulaic in that it reminds the divinities about how they were oath-bound in the past by Padmasambhava to protect the Dharma, the liturgy also includes a versified biography that is well-known for its early references to sacred sites in Mangyül Gungthang that were visited by Padmasambhava.

¹ The passage could also be understood as claiming that Byang chub gling pa was born after the death of Chos skyong lde in 1352. However, if the assumption that Byang chub gling pa was active during the short reign of bKra shis lde, which was only about thirteen years in length (ca. 1352–1365), is correct, then it is likely that he was born before 1352.

² See Byang chub gling pa 1976–1980, *Phrin las yongs rdzogs thugs rje'i sgron ma o rgyan bka' nan rab brjid don grub*, pp. 400–401, 421.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 403–420.

It is very likely that this treasure was also meant to explain to the King of Mangyül Gungthang, presumably Tashidé, that he needed to maintain a close patron-priest relationship with the one capable of wielding this treasure—i.e., Jangchub Lingpa—to ensure the cooperation of the divinities of the realm and thus ensure peace and happiness in the kingdom. While at this point, no documentary evidence has surfaced regarding the relationship between Jangchub Lingpa and Tashidé, one might consider the existence of the Jamangpo Monastery northeast of the capital Dzongkar, within the borders of Mangyül Gungthang, as at least circumstantial evidence of such a relationship. Regardless, until more information surfaces regarding the exploits of Jangchub Lingpa, it will be difficult to determine the full extent to which he influenced the treasure careers of Zangpo Drakpa and Rigdzin Gödem. That being said, in contrast to the deeds involving Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak in the thirteenth century, there is stronger evidence to suggest that Rigdzin Gödem was aware of Jangchub Lingpa's activities. In particular, tradition maintains that there is a prophecy from a treasure revealed by Jangchub Lingpa that refers—however obliquely—to the maternal uncle and companion of Rigdzin Gödem named Sangyé Tenpa (14th c.), who will be discussed in more detail below.¹

Ritröpa Zangpo Drakpa and King Tashidé

From what can be deduced from the scant information available regarding the treasure revealer named Ritröpa Zangpo Drakpa (14th c.), he appears to have been a contemporary of Jangchub Lingpa.² Unfortunately, almost everything that is known about this shadowy figure appears to be derived from two short passages. The first was authored by Rigdzin Gödem, presumably during the second half of the fourteenth century, and it only discusses a few of Zangpo Drakpa's exploits as a treasure revealer, specifically those that are relevant to the tradition of the Northern Treasures.³ A very similar—but not identical—account of Zangpo Drakpa's exploits appears within *The Clarifying Ray of*

¹ For the prophecy as it appears in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's biography, see Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 90.

² For a short biography of bZang po grags pa, see Valentine 2016b. For a detailed study of this figure, see the sixth chapter of this volume.

³ See Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *rGyang nas gter gyi lam yig byung tshul*, pp. 251–257.

Sunlight, the biography of Rigdzin Gödem that was authored by Nyima Zangpo, presumably in the mid-fifteenth century.¹ Through these short accounts, Zangpo Drakpa is presented as a prolific treasure revealer, extracting a total of 55 scrolls at just two locations in 1362. However, aside from the clutch of eight scrolls that ended up in the hands of Rigdzin Gödem, there does not appear to be any record of what happened to the other 47 scrolls nor any accounts of his activities aside from those relevant to the tradition of the Northern Treasures. This hole in the historiographic record significantly hinders our understanding of this important figure. Fortunately, all but three of the prophetic guides that were derived from the scrolls that were sent indirectly from Zangpo Drakpa to Rigdzin Gödem are readily available, and they do contain some prophecies that offer a few additional details about the life of Zangpo Drakpa.

The value of these prophetic guides as sources of information regarding the life and motivations of Zangpo Drakpa, however, is difficult to determine because of various issues involving authorship in treasure traditions. In the mundane world, one generally assumes that it is at least sometimes possible to learn something about the life or motivations of an author by studying what the author wrote, but when it comes to treasure texts, it is often difficult to determine the identity of the author. From a pious perspective, the set of prophetic guides that were eventually revealed by Zangpo Drakpa are believed to have been authored by Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo, the son of Trisong Detsen, who was present when Padmasambhava concealed a set of treasure keys at Mt. Trazang. Shortly after Padmasambhava left Tibet, Lhasé Mutri Tsenpo is said to have composed a set of prophetic guides that could be used to find the treasure keys at Mt. Trazang and concealed them at two locations in Gyang. This process involved entrusting the prophetic guides to treasure protectors, which was presumably the point when the prophetic guides were encoded onto treasure scrolls. They were later revealed by Zangpo Drakpa, who then sent them off with a group of Dharma companions who passed them to Rigdzin Gödem. While it is important to not completely disregard this pious view of the origins of the prophetic guides, it is worth noting that both insiders and outsiders categorize treasure literature first and foremost by the name of the treasure revealer, not by the names of the imperial-era figures involved in

¹ See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 84-90.

the authorship of the scriptures. Moreover, the treasure revealer is often treated as if he is the author of the texts that he revealed, especially from the etic perspective.¹ Thus, one might read the treasures of a particular treasure revealer and conclude, for example, that he had a concise way of presenting the teachings of Dzogchen.

Surely, there are many treasure texts that were in fact written by the tertöns who revealed them, perhaps in their capacities as visionaries. Nevertheless, there are many instances in which it would be entirely inaccurate to conclude that the treasure revealer was the author of the treasures he revealed. While not all tertöns follow the same processes, it is helpful to think of the act of revealing encoded scrolls and the act of decoding the scrolls to produce the treasure scriptures as two separate visionary skills in the repertoire of a tertön. Within the tradition of the Northern Treasures, the process of decoding is thought to involve visionary efforts because texts of various lengths appear to have been derived from relatively short passages of encoded script, which indicates that the process of decoding was not a simple mundane activity involving the use of a table of equivalences. Moreover, while in most cases it is implied that the tertön who revealed a treasure scroll is the same individual who performs the act of decoding, it is not necessary for both activities to be performed by the same person. Thus, there are some colophons of treasure texts that name all three actors: a) the imperial era figure who “authored” the text, b) the tertön who revealed the scrolls, and c) the tertön who decoded the treasure scripture from the encoded scroll.² In fact, the colophon of the most well-known of the prophetic guides revealed by Zangpo Drakpa, *The Prayer that Spontaneously Fulfills Wishes*, names Rigdzin Gödem as the individual who decoded the text from the treasure scroll.³ Here we have an example of where emic and etic perspectives might diverge, for while this prayer is universally praised in Tibet as a product of Zangpo Drakpa’s visionary exploits as a treasure revealer, the prayer has also been analyzed

¹ For a recent study of tertöns and the subject of authorship, see Cantwell and Mayer 2020, pp. 30–46.

² It is most common, however, for the colophons of terma texts to include only the name of the revealer, with no explanation of who witnessed the conversations between Padmasambhava and his various disciples, who transcribed the conversations and concealed the documents during the Imperial Period, or who decoded the texts after they were revealed.

³ See translation by Chhimed Rigdzin and Low 2010, p. 237.

from an etic perspective and determined to be a mature example of Rigdzin Gödem's creative genius.¹ This complicated situation involving the authorship of *The Prayer that Spontaneously Fulfills Wishes* is particularly problematic for this current line of inquiry because it happens to be the prophetic guide which is the most explicitly intended for a king of Mangyül Gungthang of all those that were revealed by Zangpo Drakpa. So, while on the surface it may seem that this prayer ought to reveal something about the relationship between Zangpo Drakpa and King Tashidé, in the end it may be more appropriate to interpret the text in a manner that informs us about the relationship between Rigdzin Gödem and one of the three kings—Püntsokdé, Chokdrubdé, or Sönamdé—who reigned while he was active as a treasure revealer.² Thus, this prayer will be discussed again below.

The colophons of most of the prophetic guides that were extracted by Zangpo Drakpa do not name the individual who decoded the scrolls, which leads one to conclude that Zangpo Drakpa may have performed this activity himself. Thus, it may be reasonable to interpret *The Entrance Guide for the Treasury of Treasures*, for example, in a manner that informs us about the interests, intentions, etc., of Zangpo Drakpa.³ However, given the tendency to emphasize, perhaps even to exaggerate, the role of the tertön in the process of producing treasure scriptures, it would be a mistake to interpret a colophon's silence regarding the identity of the decoder as meaning with any certainty that the text was decoded by the same person who revealed the treasure. Rigdzin Gödem's treasures offer a good example of this phenomenon as he is routinely named as the individual who revealed the treasures at Zangzang Lhadrak, but while we know that others helped with the process of

¹ See Everding 2000b, pp. 244-247.

² A parallel problem is that while prophecies and colophons may identify the year a terma was revealed, I have so far not seen a colophon that states the year in which the text was decoded from the treasure script. It is possible, for example, that one of the prophetic guides that was extracted by bZang po grags pa in 1362 was not decoded until the reign of bSod nams lde (r. 1390–1404). Similarly, given the large quantity of treasure texts whose colophons claim that they were extracted by Rig 'dzin rGod lde in the fourth month of 1366, it is very unlikely that they were all decoded in the eight months remaining of that year.

³ bZang po grags pa 1983, *Kha byang gter gyi bang mdzod*. Among the extant prophetic guides revealed by this tertön, this one stands out in that it is more cryptic than the others, it seems to refer to numerous tertöns, and it describes unfamiliar treasures.

translating the scrolls from the biographies of the tradition,¹ I have not yet read any colophons that give credit to those other agents. Thus, it is very difficult to determine the extent to which Zangpo Drakpa was aware of the contents of the scrolls that were transmitted to Rigdzin Gödem. The limited biographical accounts of his life suggest that he knew the general contents of all of the scrolls he extracted, for the *yidam* is named for each of the scrolls he kept. As for those that he sent to Rigdzin Gödem, he is portrayed as knowing, at the very least, that the eight scrolls were meant to benefit the king of Mangyül Gungthang, presumably Tashidé, and that they were destined to be wielded by a treasure revealer other than himself.

The biographical accounts also suggest that Zangpo Drakpa was at least loosely connected to other treasure revealers—or perhaps treasure enthusiasts—who were similarly active before Rigdzin Gödem, during the reign of Tashidé. In particular, it is said that when Zangpo Drakpa dispatched the group of three Dharma companions in search of the treasure revealer destined to wield the treasures for the sake of the king of Gungthang, they were not sent to Rigdzin Gödem in particular. The narratives make it clear that the companions faithfully followed certain prophetic indications given to them by Zangpo Drakpa, and the signs indicated that Rigdzin Gödem was the destined individual. However, they were instructed to take the treasure materials to one of his religious friends, an individual named Darzangpa (14th c.), if following their initial instructions did not bear fruit.² Later in Rigdzin Gödem's biography, one learns that Darzangpa is the root lama of Sangyé Tenpa, the maternal uncle of Rigdzin Gödem.³ Moreover, both Darzangpa and Sangyé Tenpa are presented as authorities with regard to treasure scrolls, thus indicating that they might be considered as treasure revealers, however minor they might have been, in their own right. Thus, in the end, it may be helpful to think of Zangpo Drakpa, Darzangpa, and Sangyé Tenpa as parts of a loose confederation of treasure revealers who were active during the reign of Tashidé. They may have also been aware of Tashidé's recent endeavors to fund large-scale Dharma

¹ For example, see the biographies of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's disciples named rDo rje mGon po (14th c.) and Rin chen grags pa (14th c.) in Sangs rgyas dpal bzang 1983, *Bla ma rnams kyi rnam thar 'od kyi phreng ba*, pp. 188-190.

² See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 88-89.

³ See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 91.

projects using gold from a mine recently discovered in the western reaches of his kingdom¹ and Jangchub Lingpa's successes in the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang. If so, then Zangpo Drakpa's discovery of the treasure scrolls at Gyang and his indirect transmission of a subset of those scrolls to Rigdzin Gödem, an individual who could easily have been well known within the confederation of treasure enthusiasts in Latö, might be perceived as an intentionally orchestrated series of events meant to mimic the manner in which Jangchub Lingpa received a prophetic guide from Tseten Gyaltsen with the hopes that they too could secure the patronage of King Tashidé. Whatever their intentions might have been, it appears that the plans were jeopardized with the murder of the king in 1365, just before Rigdzin Gödem received the treasure scrolls from Zangpo Drakpa.

It should also be noted that while the vast majority of the prophecies of the Northern Treasures that discuss the kings of Mangyül Gungthang are generalized in the sense that they could easily be understood as being revealed for the benefit of the dynasty and the realm rather than for the benefit of a specific king, tradition does generally maintain that the most good would have resulted if Tashidé had lived long enough to forge a connection with the Northern Treasures. This sentiment is reaffirmed in a sixteenth century treasure prophecy that was revealed by the brothers Ngari Pañchen and Lekden Dorjé:²

If a descendant of yours bearing the name "Tashi,"
 Were to be brought together with my emanation and treasure teachings,
 The peace and happiness of Tibet would arrive in the end.
 For 130 years, foreign armies would be subdued, and
 At that time, there will be a great magical manifestation of a *māra* spirit,
 It is very important that this interdependent connection is not blundered.

The implication here is that the troubles that have been experienced by the kings of Mangyül Gungthang between that thirteenth and sixteenth centuries is a result of this missed connection, which is not seen as a

¹ See Everding 2000b, pp. 457-458.

² Padma dbang rgyal and Legs ldan rdo rje bdud 'joms, *Bla ma bka' brgyad yongs 'dus las spyi lung mdor bsdu snying po*, CNT, vol. 30, p. 350.

fault of the treasure revealers, but a result of the bad karma of the king and the people of the realm who had the misfortune of living in an age of degeneration.

Within the current context of this chapter, the point is that while the reign of Tashidé may appear to have been nearly irrelevant because of this missed connection with the Northern Treasures, it is abundantly clear that much transpired during his reign that set the stage for Rigdzin Gödem's successful career as a treasure revealer. Whether or not Zangpo Drakpa, Darzangpa, Sangyé Tenpa, or Rigdzin Gödem ever met Jangchub Lingpa directly, there is strong evidence to suggest that his treasures and his actions during the reign of Tashidé significantly impacted the direction of the Northern Treasures Tradition.

Rigdzin Gödem, Sangyé Tenpa, and King Püntsokdé

Many important events transpired in or around 1365, and unfortunately their precise order has not yet been clarified. Certainly, one of the first significant events of the year was the death of Tashidé, which was followed by the coronation of King Püntsokdé, who had been groomed for leadership under the auspices of both Sakya and Pakmodru.¹ As mentioned above, despite the fact that the period of rule by Pakmodru had already begun, their attentions were largely focused on affairs in Central Tibet by 1365 and Sakya continued to involve itself in the politics of Western Tibet, where the myriarchs were adjusting to the new world order. Also, one of Püntsokdé's early acts as king was to issue an oath-decree that expressed his solidarity with Sakya.² While we cannot know his rationale for pledging his allegiance to Sakya at this time, it is evident that Mangyül Gungthang, in contradistinction to Northern Latö and Southern Latö, was ill-suited to independence as the disparate territories and cultures of the kingdom had not come together organically over time but through the threat of imperial military might, which no longer existed. The kingdom also faced a variety of external threats, foremost among them being Northern Latö, who was very aggressive militarily throughout the fourteenth century. As Püntsokdé was facing such a wide variety of threats, it is unsurprising that he would have

¹ For a detailed review of the reigns of bKra shis lde and Phun tshogs sde, see Everding 2000b, pp. 454-461.

² See *ibid.*, pp. 458-459.

sought aid from Sakya, whose support had been instrumental in both the formation of the kingdom and its security since the middle of the thirteenth century.

Meanwhile, Zangpo Drakpa's emissaries encountered Rigdzin Gödem in Northern Latö and transmitted the treasure materials to him.¹ After the encounter with the emissaries, Rigdzin Gödem took the treasure materials to his uncle, Sangyé Tenpa, who was briefly discussed above, for advice. When Sangyé Tenpa is introduced in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, it is implied that just as Rigdzin Gödem can be identified in the prophetic guides of Zangpo Drakpa, Sangyé Tenpa can be identified in the prophetic guides of Jangchub Lingpa.² Therefore, one can assume that he is qualified in some sense to authenticate the treasure materials, which he does for his nephew. Then, Rigdzin Gödem and Sangyé Tenpa traveled together to seek advice from the latter's root teacher, who—as mentioned above—happens to be Darzangpa, the individual who would have received the treasure materials if the emissaries had not found someone matching their prophetic instructions. Here also the implication is that Darzangpa has at least some qualifications that give him the ability and authority to assess the treasure materials. In the narrative of their encounter in the biography, it is evident that by this point at least some of the prophetic guides had been decoded, for Darzangpa evidently read the prophecies concerning the mission to reveal treasures in the near future and he confirmed that Rigdzin Gödem and Sangyé Tenpa were indeed the legitimate recipients of the treasure guides.³ Darzangpa's response suggests that he may have been presented with a decoded manuscript of *The Entrance Guide for the Treasury of Treasures*, which consists of eight short and vague prophetic vignettes that predict the activities of multiple treasure revealers.

After Rigdzin Gödem and Sangyé Tenpa returned to their homeland in Northern Latö, presumably Namolung, where Rigdzin Gödem was born, they determined that it would be best if the treasure substitutes were supplied by King Püntsokdé.⁴ On the surface, one might think of treasure substitutes as a form of payment that establishes a karmic

¹ See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 87-89.

² See *ibid.*, pp. 90-91.

³ See *ibid.*, p. 91.

⁴ See *ibid.*, p. 91. For a brief but informative note on treasure substitutes, see Achard 2023a, n. 20.

connection between, in this case, the patron (i.e., King Püntsokdé), the religious specialist (i.e., Rigdzin Gödem), and the treasures (i.e., the Northern Treasures) that were concealed by Padmasambhava for the benefit the descendants of Trisong Detsen and Mutri Tsenpo. On another level, however, the concern with treasure substitutes has to do with the idea that the treasures themselves have been left in the care of various powerful spirits, who have been charged with the protection of the treasures.

In early 1366, Rigdzin Gödem, Sangyé Tenpa, and a third master—presumably either Darzangpa or Rigdzin Gönpö—managed to catch up with Püntsokdé at the Drakla Pass, where they were permitted to act as the king's attendants as the group traveled together to Sakya.¹ The narrative in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* implies that the cadre of treasure masters had direct access to the king until they reached Sakya.² At this time, they gave the original copies of the treasure prophecies to the king and presumably made it clear that the king needed to give them the treasure substitutes to consummate their relationship. The Fifth Dalai Lama's commentary on the relationship between Rigdzin Gödem and Püntsokdé, which is presented below, further suggests that the pair were well on their way to forging a positive connection before they reached Sakya. Once there, however, the treasure masters found themselves waiting on the sideline for several days while Püntsokdé was distracted by other responsibilities. As this visit to Sakya transpired during his second year as king, it is likely that he had already declared his allegiance to Sakya, but it is also possible that the pledge resulted from this visit to Sakya.

Rigdzin Gödem and Sangyé Tenpa eventually had to force the issue with the king because it was nearing the time when the prophecies indicated that they needed to extract treasures at Mt. Trazang in Northern Latö. In response, the king had the treasure prophecies copied and returned to Rigdzin Gödem along with an ounce of gold, and then they departed from Sakya in haste. According to *The Garland of Wondrous*

¹ While the third person is not explicitly named, if one examines the preceding and the following passages, it is clear that the unnamed figure was most likely Darbzang pa, who has been discussed above, or alternatively Rig 'dzin mGon po, who is presumably one of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's early disciples usually referred to as rDo rje mGon po (14th c.).

² For this entire narrative involving their initial meeting with Phun tshogs sde, see Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 191-192.

Tales, the king's emissaries also caught up with the treasure masters on the road and gave them additional offerings, including large quantities of grains.¹ Traditionally, this interaction is considered to be indicative of the moderate connection between Rigdzin Gödem and Püntsokdé, in contradistinction to the missed connection with Tashidé. The Fifth Dalai Lama offers the following commentary on their relationship:²

If one were to examine the meaning of previous and later events, [one would see that] previously when Rigdzin Gödem requested treasure substitutes, it coincided with the departure of the sovereign for Sakya. And then, because of idle heretical talk and the inducement of the philosophical views of those who were inclined toward logic and conventional studies, the mind-stream of the King of Gungthang was changed. He thus came to doubt the profound treasures, and he did not offer much [for a] treasure substitute. [Because] of these and other [developments], it is clear that [the sovereign] was not endowed with heart-felt belief in the treasure revealer. ... In this case, it is clear that the sovereign of the Sakya [was of] an ordinary clan³ and the so-called “*geshé*” [exerted] great effort to disrupt [Rigdzin Gödem's] connection with the King of Gungthang.

After leaving Sakya, Rigdzin Gödem went directly to Mt. Trazang, where he extracted a collection of treasure keys and prophetic guides for three different treasure sites.⁴ In the sixth month of 1366, Rigdzin Gödem used the first of these materials to extract the five-fold treasury, which forms the scriptural basis of the Northern Treasures, at Mt. Zangzang.⁵ After a lengthy description of the contents of the treasury, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* contains a brief lament regarding the missed connection with Tashidé and suggests that Rigdzin Gödem's next course of action—the establishment of a practice center at Mt. Trazang in Northern Latö—was forced by this missed opportunity.⁶ This

¹ See Chos dbyings 2015, p. 92.

² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, pp. 319-320.

³ *Rigs*.

⁴ See Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 92-93.

⁵ See *ibid.*, pp. 93-96.

⁶ For a description of the contents of the five-fold treasury, see *ibid.*, pp. 96-100. For the lament regarding the missed connection with bKra shis lde, see *ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

pair of passages suggest that if Tashidé had survived long enough to connect with Rigdzin Gödem and the Northern Treasures, then he may have been able to establish a practice center somewhere in Mangyül Gungthang, following the precedent established by Jangchub Lingpa. Nevertheless, Rigdzin Gödem's burgeoning tradition flourished at Mt. Trazang for a five-year period (1366–1370).

Eventually, Rigdzin Gödem decided (ca. 1370) that it was time to travel to Kyidrong to search for the second treasure site using the prophetic guides and keys unearthed at Mt. Trazang. Following the prophesied landmarks in Kyidrong, Rigdzin Gödem ends up at the Phakpa Lhakhang Temple to view the famous Ārya Wati Zangpo statue, which was one of the most sacred sites in the region at the time. In the passage of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* concerning this visit, the emphasis is placed on Rigdzin Gödem's visionary experience there, which involved his observation of important signs on the Ārya Wati Zangpo statue as well as on his own body.¹ It is possible, however, that his journey into the spiritual heart of the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang was a calculated movement intended to draw the attention of King Püntsokdé.² Regardless of his intentions, Rigdzin Gödem did receive an invitation to visit the king, and the biography suggests that the invitation came while he was visiting Kyidrong.

At this point (ca. 1370), it seems rather certain that Püntsokdé and Rigdzin Gödem forged a patron-priest relationship. What is in question is the degree to which this relationship was formalized. While one of the four manuscripts of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* explicitly mentions an edict³ in the context of Püntsokdé, the sentence in question is

¹ For the entire passage involving the visit to sKyid grong, see *ibid.*, p. 103.

² It is helpful to compare the account of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's visit to sKyid grong with that of Byang Tā dben, the ruler of Northern La stod mentioned above. Toward the end of his occupation (ca. 1375) of Mang yul gung thang, Byang Tā dben made an apparently politically motivated visit to the 'Phags pa Wa ti bzang po statue, which resulted in an almost immediate uprising of thousands of people who armed and besieged the invader. By contrast, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's visit was peaceful, but evidently significant enough to draw positive attention from Phun tshogs sde. For a description of Byang Tā dben's visit, see Everding 2000b, pp. 474–476.

³ *bKa' yig*.

absent from the other three manuscripts.¹ Moreover, there is a strong possibility that if a written decree had been issued, the biography would have included at least a quotation from the edict if not a copy of the entire document. Regardless, all indications suggest that it was a positive meeting, after which, Rigdzin Gödem departed to search for treasure at Mt. Palbar, which lies on the southern border of the kingdom with Nepal.² Unfortunately, there is no evidence to suggest that this endeavor was successful, so it is assumed that this treasury was never found, at least not by Rigdzin Gödem. The fruitlessness of the expedition is not understood as a failing of the treasure revealer but as a consequence of the weak karmic connection that had been forged by Püntsokdé. An alternate explanation is that Rigdzin Gödem's search for the treasures was probably disrupted by the murder of Püntsokdé, which is said to have been ordered by the ruler of Northern Latö named Jang Tāwen (ca. 1316–1375), who then invaded and occupied Mangyül Gungthang from 1371 through 1375. For brief periods of time both before and after Tāwen's occupation, the fracturing kingdom was ruled by patriarchs of the Zhang nomad tribes—in particular, Kün pang Tsültrim Gyaltzen³—who had always been an integral part of the kingdom.

At this point in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, we are given a series of dark prophecies about the death of the kings of Mangyül Gungthang and visions of the difficulties that will be faced in the following degenerate age.⁴ Rigdzin Gödem's prophetic guides and visionary dreams eventually convince him that it is time to essentially go into exile in the southern borderlands of Tibet in search of “concealed lands,” where his students will be able to flourish. Thus, Rigdzin Gödem exits the political arena of western myriarchies in 1371 during his thirty-fifth year and does not return to Trazang until 1384 during his forty-eighth.

Rigdzin Gödem and King Chokdrubdé

The chaos that ensued (1370–1375) in Mangyül Gungthang was

¹ Compare, for example, the following passages, noting the presence of the phrase “*rgyal po bka' yig ltar*” in the first and its absence in the second: Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 103, and Nyi ma bzang po 2015, p. 43.

² Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 103–104.

³ *Kun spangs* Tshul khriims rgyal mtshan.

⁴ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 105–109.

followed by two relatively short periods of rule by Püntsokdé's sons. Chokdrubdé (ca. 1367–1390), his eldest although illegitimate son, ruled first (ca. 1375–1390), while his younger and legitimate son, Sönamdé (ca. 1371–1404) ruled after him (ca. 1390–1404).¹ Ultimately, the strongest connection between Rigdzin Gödem and the royal family of Mangyül Gungthang was forged with Chokdrubdé in 1389, which was likely the final full year of his reign. After inviting Rigdzin Gödem, presumably to Dzongkar, King Chokdrubdé issued a royal edict, the entire text of which is included in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.² Through this document, Chokdrubdé announces his relationship with Rigdzin Gödem to the world, confirms the tertön's possession of certain religious estates including Mt. Palbar and his lordship over the farmers and pastoralists who live on those lands, and declares his tax-exempt status. On the one hand, the edict is indicative of the successful culmination of Rigdzin Gödem's treasure career, which had been aimed at obtaining royal patronage from the beginning. On the other hand, one might view the development as the result of the activities of a cadre of treasure revealers of varying degrees of importance and skill, including at least Zangpo Drakpa, Darzangpa, Sangyé Tenpa, and Rigdzin Gödem, as well as his disciples Dorjé Gönpo (14th c.) and Rinchen Drakpa (14th c.), who helped decode the treasure scrolls. From yet a third perspective, it should be noted that it would be a complete oversight to limit the measure of Rigdzin Gödem's treasure career to his efforts to seek successful patronage from the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang. While there are certainly some parts of his treasury that are aimed at the welfare of these kings,³ the importance of the Northern Treasures far exceeds whatever may have been achieved in terms of patronage.

One might have expected for Rigdzin Gödem to next return to Mt. Palbar to continue his search for the prophesied treasures concealed at that location, but tradition appears to contain no record of his successful recovery of these treasures nor those prophesied in Yanglehö. Instead, Rigdzin Gödem performs another feat: the opening of a concealed

¹ For more on the reign of mChog grub lde, see Everding 2000b, pp. 477–479, 489–496. For more on the reign of bSod nams lde, see *ibid.*, pp. 479–481, 496–497.

² Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 125–127.

³ For a study of a cycle of Jangter teachings that focus on the divinity known as gNyan chen Thang lha, see Wang Yüwei 2024, pp. 454–490.

land.¹ In particular, he opened the land of Kyimolung, which appears to be located in modern-day Nepal, to the west of Mt. Palbar, while some maps indicate a larger area that also includes small portions of southern Mangyül Gungthang as belonging to Kyimolung.² This shift in focus is understandable as Rigdzin Gödem had previously spent many years traveling through the southern borderlands (1371–1384) in and near modern-day Sikkim, escapades that had come to be understood in treasure tradition language as the opening of concealed lands. Whether the opening of Kyimolung was understood as the establishment of a place of refuge for the teachings of the Buddha or for a king during a time of political instability is unclear. Also, one might consider the opening of Kyimolung as a means of annexing this neighboring valley to Mangyül Gungthang.

Rigdzin Gödem and King Sönamdé

Unfortunately, shortly after issuing the edict in 1389, Chokdrubdé died, and he was succeeded by his half-brother, King Sönamdé. Regrettably, the historiographic sources do not offer a consistent description of the reigns of these two brothers. In *The Royal Lineage of Gungthang*, Chokdrubdé is mentioned in brief, but the majority of his interactions with Rigdzin Gödem, including the issuing of the edict in 1389, are attributed to King Sönamdé.³ In *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, while the relationship with Chokdrubdé is well-documented, there is no mention of his death or anything at all about his successor, King Sönamdé. Apparently aware of these discrepancies, Khenpo Chöying (b. 20th c.) attempted to combine the views of the two sources in his *The Garland of Wondrous Tales* by suggesting that both the half-brothers were mentored together by Rigdzin Gödem.⁴ Thus, anything said about the relationship between Chokdrubdé and Rigdzin Gödem can be extended to the relationship between Sönamdé and the treasure revealer. Khenpo Chöying appears to follow a somewhat common tendency in Tibetan

¹ While Rig 'dzin rGod ldem had already opened the concealed land of 'Bras mo gshongs, here his performance of the opening is more clearly related to his patron-priest relationship with the monarch of Gung thang. For more on the subject of concealed lands, see Cécile Ducher's chapter on the subject in this volume.

² Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 127–128.

³ See Everding 2000b, pp. 116–121.

⁴ Chos dbyings 2015, p. 124.

historiography of attributing the actions of a group of people to the member of the group who lived the longest.

While this is an interesting solution, it is clear in *The Royal Lineage of Gungthang* that the two brothers were rivals and that Sönamdé lived in Purang, which was just past the western border of the kingdom.¹ Thus, it is probably better to prioritize the situation as expressed in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* because it was written about three centuries before *The Royal Lineage of Gungthang* and there doesn't appear to be any reason to doubt the authenticity of the royal edict issued by Chokdrubdé that is reproduced within it.² This decision alone is not enough to warrant a conclusion that there was no relationship at all between Sönamdé and Rigdzin Gödem. Everding, for example, argues that *The Prayer that Spontaneously Fulfills Wishes*, the seventh chapter of *The Supplication in Seven Chapters*, was likely (but not certainly) composed by Rigdzin Gödem during the later stages of his life and contains contextual clues that suggest that King Sönamdé was the intended reader of the prayer.³

While we cannot infer much about Sönamdé's relationship with Rigdzin Gödem, we know that he had a strong relationship with Sakya. At some point between 1390 and 1394, Sönamdé directed the founding of the Gunthang Chödé by Sakya Lama Lochen Drakpa Gyeltsen⁴ (1352–1405) in the capital of Dzongkar.⁵ In previous generations, loyalty was expressed firstly through marriage alliances, but it does not appear that Sönamdé—who was married to Chökyong Gyalmo,⁶ a daughter of the ruling family of Gugé—took a second wife to solidify his relationship with Sakya. Additionally, the establishment of monastic teaching colleges in the western myriarchies had become a more common practice, which was in part a method for strengthening relationships between local and monastic leaders. While there was apparently already some sort of preexisting monastic institution adjacent to the palace in Dzongkar, the establishment of the Gunthang Chödé was considered the founding of a new institution, and unlike the other

¹ Everding 2000b, p. 117.

² Herweg 1994, pp. 169–174, similarly argues for the prioritization of the view that the edict was issued by mChog grub lde rather than bSod nams lde.

³ Everding 2000b, pp. 244–247.

⁴ *Lo chen* Grags pa rgyal mtshan.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 497–502.

⁶ Chos skyong rgyal mo.

teachings colleges of the time, it was exclusively dedicated to the Sakya tradition, at least in the beginning. Lochen Drakpa Gyeltsen was succeeded as abbot of Gungthang Chödé by his nephew, Bodong Pañchen Choklé Namgyal¹ (1375–1451), who is also listed among the advisors of King Sönamdé. The king also relied upon Rendawa Zhönnu Lodrö² (1349–1412), who was trained in both Kadampa and Sakyapa traditions, but he is perhaps lauded most of all for being one of Tsongkhapa's (1357–1419) teachers. It is thus unsurprising given all of these influences that the Gungthang Chödé became an ecumenical institution during the fifteenth century, which included Gelug and Sakya-Bodong affiliations, before finally fully embracing the independent Bodong tradition at the end of the century. If Sönamdé had any sort of relationship with Rigdzin Gödem, it was surely overshadowed by his focus on the Gungthang Chödé, which was constructed just outside the royal palace.

Conclusion

By way of a conclusion, let us begin by summarizing a few of the developments from above. First, by setting up the Tsechung Khabpa as a legitimate king and confirming his familial connection to the imperial dynasty of Tibet, Sakya unwittingly helped found a kingdom that would be an ideal place for Nyingmapa tertöns to practice their craft and seek royal patronage. Earlier treasure revealers had already begun the process of reframing the sacred geography of Mangyül Gungthang in a distinctively Nyingmapa manner through their revealed prophecies and had likely already engaged with previous monarchs of the kingdom. These historical developments have been highlighted in part to help explain why Rigdzin Gödem's treasure career focused so strongly on seeking the patronage of the kings of Mangyül Gungthang. Secondly, the activities of a select group of treasure revealers who were active before Rigdzin Gödem, such as Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak, Tseten Gyeltsen, Jangchub Lingpa, and Zangpo Drakpa, have been examined to demonstrate that while Rigdzin Gödem's achievements were singular in many regards, his activities followed precedents established in previous generations. Moreover, Rigdzin Gödem's interactions with

¹ Bo dong *pañ chen* Phyogs las nam rgyal.

² Re mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros.

other minor tertöns, such as Zangpo Drakpa, Sangyé Tenpa, Darzangpa and Dorjé Gönpa, have been examined to show how Rigdzin Gödem, while clearly the most important figure of the group, worked as part of a cadre of tertöns to establish the tradition of the Northern Treasures.

At this point, there are two unresolved issues to consider. Firstly, to what extent *should* Sakya have felt threatened by the connections between Rigdzin Gödem and the kings of Mangyül Gungthang? In short, they should not have felt very threatened at all. Unlike the religious emissaries of Sakya, Pakmodru, Drigung, and Tsalpa, Rigdzin Gödem was not similarly connected through familial or institutional bonds to any of the power brokers in the thirteen myriarchs or to any large-scale, powerful religious organizations. That is to say, Rigdzin Gödem could not draw on support from large and powerful political organizations or monasteries spread throughout Tibet like his Sakyapa and Kagyüpa counterparts. He was not even associated with a marginally powerful Nyingmapa monastery that would have posed any sort of threat to Sakyapa hegemony in the region. Moreover, there is nothing in his biography that suggests that Rigdzin Gödem wanted to systematically replace the Sakyapas in their capacity as political advisors or that he wanted Sakyapa religious institutions to be somehow systematically converted to Nyingmapa institutions.¹ There is also no indication that Rigdzin Gödem tried to forge a lasting familial bond with the king through proposing a marriage alliance that might drive a wedge between the frequently intermingled families of the Tsechung Khabpa and Sakya. Rather than seeking to establish a geographic foothold in the capital of Mangyül Gungthang where he could have had constant access to the royal family, he appears to have been focused on claiming a spot for himself at Mt. Palbar along the kingdom's southern border. Rigdzin Gödem could even be understood as accepting the authority of Sakya to the limited extent that the importance of the kings was grounded in their claim of biological descent from the imperial kings, a claim which had been politically and militarily supported by Sakya. While Sakya may not have been pleased with the developments in Mangyül Gungthang, it is difficult to see how they could have concluded that their grasp on this neighboring territory was being significantly

¹ One might point to the historical precedent set by Kublai Khan. There is no indication that by offering tax and military service exemptions to rNying ma pa lamas that he thereby stripped Sa skya pa lamas of those privileges.

threatened by Rigdzin Gödem.

This leads to the second question: How likely is it that Sakya somehow orchestrated the deaths of one or more of the kings of Mangyül Gungthang because of their connections with Rigdzin Gödem?¹ This also seems very unlikely, particularly if the above assessment of Rigdzin Gödem as a risk factor for Sakya is reasonably accurate. Moreover, it would be difficult to understate the degree to which the stability of the kingdom was destroyed by the decline of Sakya and the rise of Pakmodru, which set up a situation that allowed for Jang Tāwen of Northern Latö to direct the assassination of Püntsokdé and to aggressively invade and occupy the kingdom. Given the impact of the invasion on the royal family and its connection to larger political developments in Tibet, it is difficult to see Rigdzin Gödem's activity in the area as anything more than a minor consideration in the eyes of the surrounding political powerhouses. Additionally, if one considers that Sakya was motivated to help establish the kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang because it would create a buffer from invasion from either foreigners or Sakya's main Kagyüpa competitors, all of which were rightfully considered as threats, then it is hard to see how it would be in Sakya's interest to cause such instability in that buffer zone over a seemingly minor infraction like showing support for a relatively small cadre of treasure revealer who sought to secure the lives of the kings and protect the security of the kingdom. Regardless of how irrational it may seem in retrospect, it is still possible that Sakya did in fact see Rigdzin Gödem as a threat and act against the kings as a consequence. Until further details emerge, however, it is safer to assume that the relations with Rigdzin Gödem would have been seen as minor complications, not an offense worthy of the death penalty, especially if such an execution would also result in a destabilized and fracturing neighbor.



¹ The question is inspired by Everding's (2004, pp. 282-284) concluding reflections on the consequences of the interactions between various treasure revealers, including Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and bsTan gnyis gling pa, with the kings of Mang yul gung thang.

Chapter 8: Rigdzin Gödem and the Concealed Lands

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Brief Introduction to the Notion of Concealed Lands

For at least the past seven centuries, many of Tibet's most important masters have been preoccupied with “concealed lands” or *beyül* (*sbas yul*), an important theme in Tibetan culture, closely related to the Nyingma movement, treasure finders, and the preservation of the memory of the ancient imperial dynasty. Just as tertöns reveal treasures, some are also engaged in locating, identifying, and “opening” concealed lands, that is to say, they travel with disciples to valleys or larger geographic zones said to have been concealed by Padmasambhava and to constitute safe havens where one could find shelter in difficult times. Most of these lands are located in the Himalayas, in areas in Nepal, Southern Tibet, Arunachal Pradesh, and Bhutan.¹ Some of them, like Yölmo or Khenpalung,² are concrete places, which have been opened in the past and that are now accessible. Some, while still in the Himalayas, are parallel worlds that need to be discovered beyond the fabric of commonly perceived reality. Yet others are named in prophecies without any concrete link to existing places.

Many narratives about *beyül* are related to Rigdzin Gödem, who revealed multiple prophecies on that topic and thus played a great role in creating and defining concepts about concealed lands. He lived in a time of political instability and was born in Jang Ngamring, just north of the Himalayan zone where many concealed lands are found and near the political powers active in the late 14th century. Among the scrolls he unearthed in Zangzang Lhadrak, there were many documents considered to be prophecies and guidebooks about concealed lands. Thus, Rigdzin Gödem was instrumental in the development of concealed

¹ See maps in Garrett, McDougal, and Samuel 2021, pp. xvii-xviii. For a touristic description of the various known *beyül* in the Himalayas as a well as a map, see <https://honeyguideapps.com/blog/what-is-a-beyül> (accessed 24.03.2024).

² Yol mo and Khan pa lung, also written mKhan pa lung and 'Khan pa lung (see n. 2, p. 195).

lands and is mentioned in many studies on the topic. This chapter is an attempt to summarize previous findings about these lands and to describe the concrete activities of Rigdzin Gödem, whether revealing prophecies and guides to concealed lands or leading disciples to some of the lands mentioned in these prophecies. It is also an attempt at historicizing somewhat the topic of concealed lands, inasmuch as our sources allow.

The concept of concealed lands blossomed in Tibet around the 13th and 14th century, hand in hand with the treasure traditions to which it is closely associated. With regards to treasures (terma), Robert Mayer has demonstrated in a series of articles entitled “Rethinking Treasures”¹ that there are important precedents in Indian culture for such a tradition. He has shown in particular that there is a widespread tradition of “on-going revelation” of Mahāyāna sūtras by designated *dharmabhāṇakas*, that is to say, by disciples of the Buddha who took on the responsibility of revealing his teaching again in the future, after they had been concealed, often in a cave or subterranean land guarded by *nāgas* and *yakṣas*.²

¹ Mayer 2019, 2022 and 2025. For more background information and research by related scholars, see the podcasts of Mayer’s research project on the page of the Tibetan Graduate Studies Seminar at the Faculty of Oriental Studies of the University of Oxford: <https://podcasts.ox.ac.uk/series/tibetan-graduate-studies-seminar> (accessed on 15.04.2025).

² See especially Mayer 2025, where he confirms the initial findings presented in Mayer 2019 while showing that the concept of the Buddha entrusting predestined individuals with the responsibility and ability to reveal some of his teachings in the future (at the time of the last 500 years) is much more widespread than he initially thought. Mayer 2025, p. 318: “[The nascent Tibetan *gter ma* system] adapted for its own use the aforementioned Mahāyāna literary device of prophetic declarations made by the Buddha regarding the future propagations of his sūtras by reincarnated *dharmabhāṇakas* who would appear after his *parinirvāṇa*. Localising the Mahāyāna sūtra trope to Tibet and to the history of Tibet’s various schools of Buddhism, Tibetans began developing narratives of the rediscovery by named and prophesied *gter stons* of sacred texts that had been hidden for later recovery by the important Buddhist missionaries to Tibet, notably Vimalamitra, and above all, Padmasambhava, who now stood in for the Buddha.” Mayer also recognizes important Tibetan influences on the *gter ma* phenomenon, quoting in particular (p. 319) the Tibetan territorial deity cosmologies. He states that this aspect, more elusive than the Indian influence, awaits further research (that he and other colleagues are undertaking).

In Part Two of this series of articles,¹ Mayer presents in more detail the parallel between the Indian concept of *nidhi* and that of *terma* and also explains the importance in both cases of *nāgas* and *yakṣas* as guardians of the treasures. He mentions in particular Guru Chöwang's (1212–1270) *Great Origin of Treasures* (*Terjung Chenmo*), this 13th-century master's deep understanding of Indian traditions, and how he played a very large role in defining what “treasure” would become in Tibet. According to Guru Chöwang, treasures (*ter*) include natural resources such as timber, water, medicines, wish-fulfilling jewels, gold, jewels, etc., as well as Buddhist scriptures and texts of all kinds.² Most noteworthy in our context is the fact that Guru Chöwang asserts that geographical locations such as concealed valleys can also be considered to be treasures:³

“Mundane treasures” are the lands and small valleys that have been concealed for Dharma practitioners of the future so that they can live in isolated places; [...]

According to Mayer,⁴ there are two Indian traditions that could have influenced the Tibetan concept of concealed land. The first is the register of Indian tantric magic regarding the initiatory rites of *vidyādhara*s and yogins. There are numerous rituals intended to empower yogic heroes and magicians to enter the subterranean lands of *yakṣas* called *pātālas* (*sa 'og*), often via their portal-like entrances within Asura caves, to enjoy the *asura* maidens, gain some of the spectacular treasures and magical objects, and drink from the elixirs of longevity. *Pātālas* are the home of the *nāgas*, who are the traditional guardians of treasures throughout Indian and Asian mythology, but the lands are not treasures in themselves. Therefore, *pātālas* are not concealed lands, but

¹ Mayer 2022, especially p. 378 for the beings guarding treasures.

² Mayer 2022, p. 371, quoting Gyatso 1994, p. 276. See also Gelle 2026a, p. 112.

³ Gu ru Chos dbang 1979, *gTer 'byung chen mo*, vol. 2, p. 81-82: *thun mongs gi gter ni ma 'ongs pa'i chos byed rnam dbyen [=dben] par 'tsho bar bya ba'i phyir yul dang lung 'phran mang por gter du sbas pa dang*. This text is also mentioned by Mayer 2022, p. 386, in a list of various kinds of treasures theorized by Gu ru Chos dbang: “For future generations of people who want to practice and live in isolated places, many [currently undiscovered] lands and small valleys exist hidden as treasures.”

⁴ Personal communication between Robert Mayer and Jay Holt Valentine, April 5, 2025.

they may contain concealed treasures. A parallel between *pātālas* and *beyül* remains, however, conceivable.

The second register is that of religious or spiritual beliefs regarding the natural economy, which existed in India and Tibet in slightly different ways but with a lot of eventual overlap.¹ This is the non-initiatory but equally rich ritual culture of merchants, farmers, miners, hunters, etc., that discusses “treasures” (*nidhi*, *gter*) that can only be found by some kind of divining or magic and which explain why the economy of a certain city might boom while another decline or why a certain location might be uninhabited and overlooked but suddenly become a thriving settlement.

Geoffrey Samuel also provides a general history of the idea of concealed land in his introductory essay entitled *Hidden lands of Tibet in Myth and History*, where he ponders the questions of its Chinese, Indian and Tibetan precursors.² Giacomella Orofino before him also mentioned the existence of a Chinese Daoist tradition in which adepts go to caves that are considered perfect places beyond ordinary reality³ and the Guarani’s concept in South America of a “Land Without Evil,” a lost paradise which can be discovered by religious specialists.⁴

A Tibetan concealed land, however, is not just a hidden paradise or a gateway to heaven. Just like anything found in a rock is not a *terma*, any foreign and rich land that a lama visits is not a *beyül*. In the same way that Guru Chöwang’s reflective writings about treasures in his autobiography largely defined the subject for future generations,⁵ Rigdzin Gödem’s treasures about *beyül*, especially prophecies such as *The General Introduction to the Concealed Lands*⁶ and *The Guru’s Seven*

¹ See Mayer 2022, pp. 374-376, on the nine *nidhis* of Indian tradition, quoting Norman 1992, pp. 184-185. These treasures are guarded by the wealth deity, Kubera, the king of *yakṣas*.

² Samuel 2021, pp. 59-63. See especially p. 61 (quoting Mayer 2007, p. 3). See *ibid.*, for more details on the precursors of concealed lands revealers and sources.

³ Orofino 1991, p. 239.

⁴ Orofino 1991, p. 240, quoting Mircea Eliade’s research.

⁵ For more details on Gu ru Chos dbang’s role in the elaboration of the treasure tradition, see Gyatso 1993, Gyatso 1994, and Mayer 2022.

⁶ *sBas yul spyi’i them byang*. The third special issue of *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* (For A Critical History of the Northern Treasures — III) includes an article by Zsoka Gelle entitled “Here the key, Elsewhere the door—Notes on the *General Introduction to the Hidden Lands*” (Gelle 2026a) that is largely focused on this

Amulets,¹ appear to have played a defining role for this type of spiritual activity.² These prophecies contain dialogues between Padmasambhava and his disciples describing why and when to go to a concealed land, their defining character, how to open them, etc. Beyül are thus not only “hidden” lands, but they are also lands concealed by Padmasambhava. They are not pure or celestial lands associated with a *sambhogakāya*, but earthen valleys in the Himalayas that can be revealed in times of need. Unlike Shambhala, defined as a pure land on earth, some sort of parallel universe where enlightened beings are living and that can be reached by advanced practitioners only,³ concealed lands are not necessarily peopled by saints. On the contrary, they are often the “barbarian countries”⁴ to the south of Tibet where Dharma has not yet arrived. They are not only that, however, as they are blessed by Padmasambhava and act as places of refuge. The concept of beyül is

treasure text; it is published alongside a translation by Martin Boord of the *sBas yul spyi'i them byang* (Boord 2026).

¹ *Gu ru ga'u bdun ma*.

² A pending question, which cannot be addressed here, is that of the attribution of these prophecies to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. Although it is clear that both *The General Introduction* and *The Guru's Seven Amulets* are said to be revealed by the gTer ston in Zang zang lha brag, we cannot know if their colophons have remained unchanged since the 14th century (nor—from a skeptical perspective—when these prophecies were actually revealed). On this issue, see Gelle 2026a, and especially the questions brought about by her study of the *The General Introduction* (Gelle 2026a, p. 87). We can assume these texts were revealed by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and known during his life, but we cannot be certain because we do not knowingly possess any manuscripts that can be dated to the 14th century. Similarly, although there is a mention in a 15th-century text by Se ston Padma dBang chen (see Se ston 2015, *Byang gter gyi chos skor rnams kyi spyi ching*) of texts with similar titles, we do not know if indeed the texts that he names were the same as the ones we have now. (However, this is not a unique situation as we rarely have the privilege of working from dated, original manuscripts.) So, while it is not possible to know for sure that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem helped develop the idea of concealed lands or the concept of seven specific concealed lands, he is remembered for these accomplishments. Regardless, although our goal here is, in some ways, to assess Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's role in history, it is also important to accurately present a traditional understanding of this master. So let us assume, until proof to the contrary, that these two prophecies were known at Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's time, or at least in the decades after his death, in a form that is close to the texts we have now.

³ See, for instance, Wallace 2019.

⁴ *Mon*.

therefore quite specific to the Nyingma lineage;¹ it is a place between barbarian land and pure realm that is blessed by Guru Rinpoche and that must be revealed by a determined individual. Even though this is the way Rigdzin Gödem and those inspired by him shaped the concept of beyül, it is equally true that later beyül discoverers augmented the concept. Pemakö, for instance, is a crossover between these various concepts, at once a pure realm associated with Vajravārāhī, a lush and rich land peopled by non-Buddhist barbarians, and a place of refuge where Tibetans try to flee when facing an existential threat in their living space.

In the West, Tibet's concealed lands were first mentioned by Jacques Bacot in the context of the flight of many Tibetans toward Pemakö in the early 20th century.² The concept of an earthly paradise hidden somewhere in the Himalayas was popularized in James Hilton's novel *Lost Horizon* (1933), with its imaginary Tibetan valley of Shangri-La. This fantasized depiction was taken as the illustration of misconceptions about Tibet in Donald S. Lopez's *Prisoners of Shangri-la: Tibetan Buddhism and the West*.³ Within Tibetan Studies, concealed lands in the sense described above started to be discovered by modern-day scholars and explorers in the late 1970s, and there is now a good amount of articles and books dealing with the subject, whether from a theoretical perspective or as descriptions of specific lands with their historical

¹ That is not to say that treasure revealers must be exclusively rNying ma in orientation, as many treasure revealers were also lineage holders of *gsar ma* teachings. For example, in the context of the Byang gter, the Dwags po bKa' brgyud pa gter ston named bZang po grags pa (14th c.) revealed (at least) two large caches of treasure scrolls, which included a group of prophetic guides that were transferred indirectly to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (see chapter 6 by Jay Holt Valentine of the present volume). It would be interesting to investigate more thoroughly the specific case of Bon holy lands. Helga Uebach (Uebach 1999) wrote about "the thirty-seven holy places of the Bon-pos in the Tibetan Empire" (called 'du gnas or 'du 'chogs gnas, "place of assembly") that are spread in the four horns, but these do not seem to be especially concealed lands. 'Ol mo lung ring, the main Bon po holy place and sTon pa Shes rab's place of birth, is also sometimes considered to be a concealed land, but it is actually more akin to Shambala (Martin 1999).

² Bacot 1912, reedited under the direction of Anne-Marie Blondeau in 1988 and 1997 (*Le Tibet révolté: vers Népémakö, la terre promise des Tibétains*).

³ Lopez 1998, republished and augmented in Lopez 2018.

backgrounds.¹

In terms of the ways concealed lands have been defined by Rigdzin Gödem and understood by tradition and modern scholarship, they have most commonly been seen as spiritual places that act as sanctuaries for religious adepts, essentially paradises concealed by Padmasambhava that would constitute safe places to go in the end times, when the Dharma is expected to be in danger. It surely was the case in many places and at several times in the second millennium that groups of people tried to escape from the danger they faced in their land, be it Mongol invasions or Chinese warring lords and armies, in order to find a place to start a new life.² This traditional way of understanding concealed lands is described at length by Sardar-Afkhami in his 2001 dissertation, “The Buddha’s Secret Gardens: End Times and Hidden-lands in Tibetan Imagination.” That work examines a collection of concealed land guidebooks, including Rigdzin Gödem’s *General Introduction*, and their impact on Tibetan imagination, bridging a historical approach with a study of mentalities.

Over the years, there have been numerous avenues of research that have endeavored to enrich this typical vision of beyül. The anthropologist Geoff Childs, for example, published an article in 1999 in which he focuses on Rigdzin Gödem and argues that the way to understand concealed lands according to the prophecies he revealed is more complex than just spiritual havens.³ According to him, there are also political agendas behind the concept of concealed lands, and this is particularly true in the case of Rigdzin Gödem’s relation to the Gungthang Kingdom. He states that concealed lands perform two significant functions beyond seeking to preserve an idealized replica of ancient Tibet, namely: legitimizing territorial expansion and creating patron-priest relationships between tertöns and lords. Although Childs’ analysis is generally insightful, it does not completely reflect the reality of Rigdzin Gödem’s search for beyül. As will be seen below, Rigdzin Gödem opened two concealed lands. In the case of Dremoshong, it is unlikely

¹ The reader is referred to Samuel 2021, pp. 52-59, for a detailed review of literature and pp. 63-70 for considerations on the meaning and role of concealed lands for Tibetans. For other reviews of literature, see also Orofino 1991, pp. 241-243 and Solmsdorf 2014, pp. 16-17, n. 22. Only relevant studies for the role of rGod ldem in the development of concealed lands will be mentioned here.

² For a tragic account that ended in death in the 1960s, see Shor 2011.

³ Childs 1999, “Refuge and Revitalization.”

that there was any aspiration of territorial expansion at that time as it was just after the death of Gungthang King Püntsokdé. It is therefore clear that Rigdzin Gödem did not try to reestablish in exile something that was no longer possible at home. It seems that the patron and priest relationship preceded the departure, and that it was the end of any possibility of relating to the king because of his death that partly prompted the tertön's departure. With regard to Kyimolung, the situation is somewhat more uncertain as the opening of the land closely corresponds with Rigdzin Gödem's relationship with King Chokdrubdé.¹

In accordance with that [edict], [the precious one] met the king face-to-face [as] patron and priest, [performed] prayers of benediction and auspicious [connections] and opened the hidden land of Kyimolung. [He] offered to the sovereign seals and blessed artifacts, headed by the ritual *kīla* dagger [128] [named] "Subduer of *Māra* Spirits of the Three Worlds" as well as an inconceivable [number of] empowerments and quintessential precepts.

Given the proximity of Kyimolung with the Gungthang Kingdom, the fact that the discovery of the land followed the edict, and that Rigdzin Gödem offered to the king artefacts found therein, it is clear that this played a role in the solidification of their relationship. The edict proclaimed in 1389 itself mentions concealed lands:²

By way of the compassion of Padmasambhava and the Dharma King Trisong Detsen, treasure teachings that are required for the royal dynasty were placed [in the past] and revealed by Lama Riwo Trazangpa. Because [the treasures] have been delivered to me, a descendent of the kings [of the past], I now forge a patron-priest [bond] between the lineage of Dharma-protecting kings who are descended from gods and the lineage of the Lama Rigdzin [that will last] for as long as the teaching of the Buddha abide [in this world]. His estates, hermitages, and monasteries, which are subject to my power, [holdings] headed by Riwo Palbar *and three concealed lands*, the farmers and pastoralists native [to those holdings], and all of the disciples who have come forth [at those holding], are [hereby] declared as pure offerings to the

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 127-128 (translation by Jay Holt Valentine).

² Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 126 (translation by Jay Holt Valentine). The edict is also quoted in Herweg 1994, pp. 128-133; Everding 2000, vol. 2, pp. 490-495; Sardar-Afkhami 2001, pp. 87-88, and Samuel 2021, p. 66.

lama.

It is not quite clear which concealed lands are referenced here by Chokdrubdé. Although the edition contained in *The Compilation of Northern Treasures* specifies that there are three concealed lands, the 1985 edition does not. When this edict was published, Rigdzin Gödem had returned from Dremoshong, but that faraway land was not under the jurisdiction of Chokdrubdé, so the three lands mentioned may be Kyimolung and possibly different valleys within it. It is therefore possible that finding the concealed land was a way for Rigdzin Gödem to solidify his relationship with the king, and it may have been motivated in part by territorial extension.

Rigdzin Gödem's Openings of Concealed Lands: Sources

The primary sources for the description of Rigdzin Gödem's openings of concealed lands are twofold, namely the prophetic guides that he discovered and the biographies that were written by his disciples. Inasmuch as prophetic guides are not a reliable historical source and the tertön's biographies are far from exhaustive, what we actually know about these lands in the 14th century is tenuous, to say the least.

Prophetic guides are numerous. There is a large section in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* where the prophecies and concealed lands' itineraries of the Northern Treasures tradition are described.¹ A similar list of texts is provided by Setön Pema Wangchen's 15th century *Generalities about the Northern Treasures*.² The latter names several texts said to have been revealed by Rigdzin Gödem in 1366 from the White Eastern Conch-Shell Repository in Zangzang Lhadrak:³

¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, 1991–1995, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, pp. 327–332. See fols. 164a–166b on the prophecies, concealed lands, and itineraries (*lung bstan dang sbas yul lam yig gi skor*). *The General Introduction* (*sBas yul spyi'i them byang*) and *The Guru's Seven Amulets* (*sBas yul bdun gyi them byang*) are both explicitly mentioned, and this explains the popularity of these texts and the concepts of seven concealed lands from that time onward (see Gelle 2026a, p. 98).

² Se ston Padma dBang chen, 2015, *Byang gter gyi chos skor rnam kyī spyi chings*, p. 449.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 449: *sbas yul spyi'i them yig| bras mo gshongs kyī lam yig| [mdzod gsum gyi lung bstan]|sbas yul bdun gyi them byang| sbas yul skyid mo lung gi kha*

1) *The General Introduction to the Concealed Lands*; 2) *The Itinerary to Dremoshong* [...]; 3) *The Prophetic Guide on the Seven Concealed Lands*; 4) *The Entrance Certificate, Path Guide, and Essential Guide to the Concealed Land of Kyimolung* as well as its *Beacon Clarifying Keys, Key-Points for Removing Obstacles, Key to Open the Kyimolung Site's Door, and Key to Open the Secret Door*; 5) the *Itinerary and Path Guide of Khenpalung*, and its *Precepts Protecting Against Obstacles on the Path* [entitled] *Armor of Compassion and Love* [...].

As this text was written by Pema Wangchen in the 15th century, it means that these prophetic guides were available or at least known by that time. Among them, the central text is *The General Introduction to the Concealed Lands*.¹ In it, King Trisong Detsen asks Guru Rinpoche to give teachings about the final times, when the Buddha's teaching will disappear, and particularly about what Tibetans should do to uphold the Dharma and survive the Age of Degeneration. To answer the king's five questions, Guru Rinpoche describes the geographic location of various concealed lands, gives directions to mineral sites meant to support the traveler on the journey, mentions omens and signs that indicate the time of the journey, and gives prophecies that designate future Tibetan reincarnations who will open these lands.² Another prophetic discovery of Rigdzin Gödem is *The Guru's Seven Amulets*, which in the list above is probably referred to as *The Prophetic Guide on the Seven Concealed*

byang| lam byang| snying byang| lde mig gsal ba'i sgron ma| gnad kyi gegs sel| skyid mo lung gi gnas sgo 'byed pa'i lde mig| gsang sgo 'byed pa'i lde mig| 'khan pa lung gi lam yig| 'khan pa lung gi lam byang| lam gyi bar chad bsrungs ba'i man ngag thugs rje brtse ba'i go cha [...].

¹ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *sBas yul spyi'i them byang*, pp. 467-500. This text was first translated in Sardar-Afkhami 2001, pp. 39-65, with the title *The Outer Passkey to the Hidden Lands*. Long extracts are also translated in Gelle 2020. Martin Boord has also translated the entire text with the title *General Introduction to the Hidden Lands* (Boord 2026). For a detailed introduction to this text and to the topic of *sbas yul*, see Gelle 2026a. Many thanks to Zsóka Gelle for authorizing us to use her work before it was published in the February 2026 Third Special Issue on the Northern Treasures.

² This summary paraphrases the more detailed description in Gelle 2026a, p. 99-100.

Lands.¹ It gives a description of the seven concealed lands popularized by the Northern Treasures tradition and is the source of this specific number being mentioned elsewhere in the literature on beyül. This list also mentions guides associated with three of the concealed lands associated with the Northern Treasures: Dremoshong, Kyimolung, and Khenpalung.

It is important to remember that although the prophetic guides contain specific information to be used while traveling, especially the ones called “itinerary” or “path guides,”² they are not historical or geographical documents, to say the least. There is a gap between what is prophesied in them and what is described in biographical or other sources, so much so that it is often quite difficult to make any concrete sense of prophecies, especially as they often repeat each other, sometimes contradictorily. Moreover, nothing is known about their use at the time of Rigdzin Gödem. It is likely that several were deciphered and spread at that time and were used by the tertön to convince himself to depart, to justify travel to others, and, probably, to drum up patronage for the travels. Some, even though discovered in 1366, may not have been deciphered from the treasure scrolls and disseminated until much later.

Regarding biographies, *The Garland of Wondrous Tales* compiled by Khenpo Chöying is abbreviated with regard to concealed lands but includes a list of the prophetic guides revealed by Rigdzin Gödem. The main biographical source, alongside the guides, is therefore *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, Rigdzin Gödem’s biography written, at least partly, by his disciple Nyima Zangpo in the fifteenth century. This text itself relies heavily on the prophetic guides Rigdzin Gödem revealed and on the dream journals he wrote. The account of his travels is therefore not very factual, be it geographically or chronologically. Despite the vague nature of many of the events related in the *namtar*, the biography alludes more specifically to Rigdzin Gödem’s life and therefore contains the little information we have about Rigdzin Gödem’s concrete interactions with concealed lands.

Other sources are the biographies and historical narratives associated with later masters who were associated with the concealed lands.

¹ Whether the text is the same or not, both titles explicitly refer to the number seven which shows that this number of concealed lands was already familiar to the 15th-century reader.

² *Lam yig*, is here translated as “itinerary” and *lam byang* as “path guide.”

Rigdzin Gödem's Openings of Concealed Lands

After the revelations of the scrolls in 1366, Rigdzin Gödem built a temple at the summit of Mt. Trazang and started to attract many disciples. His activity flourished there from that time until ca. 1370. Then, he went to the Kyirong region of Gungthang to find a treasure site. In particular, he visited the famous Ārya Wati Zangpo, an Avalokiteśvara statue, where he found several indications for the treasure. He was then invited to the Dzongkar palace by King Püntsokdé (ca. 1338–1370). Although the two had not managed to create a good relationship before the 1366 discovery, they grew closer through this meeting. Afterward, the tertön traveled to Mt. Palbar, a mountain situated at the entrance of the concealed land of Kyimolung, which had not yet been opened, to search for the treasure he was prophesied to find. Obstacles arose, however, and he did not manage to find it. Then, he returned to Mt. Trazang. This inauspicious event is illustrated in Rigdzin Gödem's biography by several quotes heralding King Püntsokdé's death and the misery this meant for Tibet:¹

If a *māra* spirit interferes with the King of Gungthang and he [therefore] conceives doubts like a logician or grammarian and is not endowed with faith, then the happiness of Tibet will be exhausted. The *māra* spirit will sever the royal dynasty of Gungthang, and the destruction of Tibet will be established beginning with Gungthang.

It is not clear which were the obstacles that prevented Rigdzin Gödem from finding the prophesied treasury in Mt. Palbar, but it is likely related to the murder of King Püntsokdé. As shown above in the chapter on the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang, there were at that time important regional tensions between Latö Jang, Rigdzin Gödem's region where Mt. Trazang is located, and Mangyül Gungthang, home of the court

¹ Chos dbyings 2015, p. 104, quoting a prophecy revealed by bZang po grags pa (1983, *sNying tig gnad kyi man ngag don bdun pa*, pp. 283–284). In the full context of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's life, this prophecy declares that the king's downfall was ultimately determined by his hesitancy to connect with the treasure revealer in ca. 1366 in Sa skya, where the king was presumably misled by his Sa skya pa advisors. The connection they forged in 1370 came, unfortunately, too late.

where the descendants of Trisong Detsen were ruling.¹ Püntsokdé was murdered in 1370, allegedly at the order of Jang Tāwen (ca. 1316–1375), the ruler of Latö Jang. Püntsokdé had two sons, Chokdrubdé (ca. 1367–1390, ruled ca. 1375–1390), the son of an unofficial relationship with a princess from Sakya,² and Sönamdé (ca. 1371–1404, ruled 1390–1404), the son of his legitimate wife, who was one of the daughters of Jang Tāwen.³ Soon after the king's death, Rigdzin Gödem returned to Trazang and Jang Tāwen invaded the territory and ruled it himself for five years, during which time there was no king.

Traveling to Dremoshong

In Trazang, Rigdzin Gödem had a dream in October 1370 (9th month of the Year of the Iron-Dog),⁴ in which he had visions of a valley in mist and of two persons enjoining him to leave Mt. Trazang and travel to the borderlands of Lhokha and Mön, where he would gather many disciples.⁵ This dream apparently convinced him to leave his abode and travel in search of new places. He may also have been convinced by prophecies he revealed among his treasures, such as the following that is quoted by Khenpo Chöying at this place in the biography. *The Great Exhortation Guide* (*sKul byang chen mo*) states:⁶

By means of simply opening the door of southern Dremoshong, peace and happiness will arise in the world for seven years. If, in the middle of that time, the king were to invest [Rigdzin Gödem with authority], peace and happiness would arise in the world for thirteen years.

After some hesitation, in late 1371, Rigdzin Gödem finally decided to depart toward the mountainous areas in the south with nine disciples. With the death of Püntsokdé, the regional conflicts between Jang

¹ For more details, see the chapter above on the Gungthang Kingdom as well Everding 2000b, vol. II, pp. 458–508; Vitali 1998, pp. 1029–1032. For more on the reign of mChog grub lde, see Everding 2000b, vol. II, pp. 477–479, 489–496. For more on the reign of bSod nams lde, see *ibid.*, pp. 479–481, 496–497.

² Everding 2000, vol. II, p. 459. The woman was called Jo mo Red mda' ma.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 459–461.

⁴ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 105–106.

⁵ For more details, see the discussion of Dream #1 in chapter 9 below by Jay Holt Valentine, which discusses all of the visionary dreams of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

⁶ Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 109–110.

Tāwen, the Sakyapas, and the local nomads, and the absence of a king between 1370 and 1375, circumstances were not gathered any longer for a harmonious relation to develop between him and the Gungthang kingdom.¹

This departure started the second part of Rigdzin Gödem's life, when he became another kind of treasure revealer: instead of revealing texts and objects concealed by Padmasambhava, he was now to reveal valleys and lands conducive for Dharma practice. Just as termas need the gathering of many circumstances to be successful, finding the path leading to the concealed lands and unlocking their door was not easy. Sources, however, are quite poor on the subject, and the exact significance of this opening of land is not completely clear.

During the years when he tried to enter into Dremoshong, Rigdzin Gödem had several visionary dreams in which he received indications regarding possible routes of entry.² Upon leaving Trazang, the group first headed south and traveled to the Chugang region of Chuwar, on the present-day "Friendship Highway" between Kathmandu and Lhasa, some twenty kilometers before reaching the Nepalese border. In the winter of 1371–1372, they went to the Khyungtsang region of Tashi Ling and on to Dringtsam (or Dritsam), a region located to the north of the Kanchenjunga, in the Trans-Himalayan corridor between Sakya and the border with modern-day Sikkim called the Nathula pass. Then, they went to Drangso, an unidentified place perhaps closer to the Kanchenjunga in the south before returning to Dritsam, staying in a place named Changmo for the end of the winter of 1372–1373.

In 1373, they departed for Dremoshong. On August 9th, 1373 (thirteenth day of the first autumn month of the Year of the Water-Ox), Rigdzin Gödem had a dream while spending the night at a place called Sengé Lung, where he received indications regarding the route to follow to Dremoshong. On September 9, he had another dream while passing through the eastern slopes of the Kanchenjunga Mountain Range³

¹ See chapter 7 above on the Gungthang Kings by Jay Holt Valentine and Tenpa Tsering Batsang; *Nyi ma bzang po*, p. 109; and Everding 2000, pp. 471–472.

² This part is relying on *Nyi ma bzang po* 1983, pp. 109–125. Chos dbyings 2015 is summarized, especially with regard to dreams.

³ mDzod lnga stag rtse: according to Ehrhard 2007, p. 77, n. 7, this is another name for the five-armed mountain range known as Kanchenjunga / Gangchen Dzönga, which straddles the border between Nepal and Sikkim, as well as a name for the great glacier found there.

in the upper region of Dremoshong, in which he had precise visions of the concealed valley and saw himself consecrating the concealed land in the form of Vajrakīla. At that time, Rigdzin Gödem's party was taken in bad weather conditions, and he could not easily find the entrance to the concealed land.

During the next year, he stayed in Serling Dechen. On December 13, 1374 (1st day of the 11th month of the "next year," i.e., presumably Wood-Tiger), while leaving toward the north from the upper reaches of Mön Dechenpo,¹ he had a dream of a place he identified as Bampa Naktsawa. In that dream he again had several visions of supernatural beings who directed his travels. In particular, he dreamt that he saw the path to Dremoshong while going to the upper part of that valley. This is an indication that at that time, he had not reached Dremoshong yet. Later that month, on January 7, 1375 (27th day of the middle month of winter of the Year of the Wood-Tiger), he again received indications that he would soon reach Dremoshong. A few days later, on January 12, 1375 (second day of the 12th month of the Year of the Wood-Tiger), while in the Nakpo Valley of Mön, he dreamed that he was invited to Dremoshong. These three dreams that closely follow each other show that he was probably in a rather difficult situation with his group, and the entry into Dremoshong, in the midst of the winter, was quite difficult.

In the summer of 1375, he finally arrived in Dremoshong and saw the "draped gateway" (*sgo yol*), a pair of mountains near the northern entrance to Sikkim. He returned to Dingchen Monastery in the winter of 1375 and traveled again to Dremoshong in the summer of 1376. In the winter of 1376, he arrived at the stūpa in Gopa Mitö called Chörten Nyima.

In the summer of 1377, he was informed about Tramenkha, the fifth of the small valleys, another gateway to Dremoshong, where he stayed for the season. In winter 1377, he stayed at Gadé monastery. In the summer of 1378, he returned to Dremoshong and saw several self-arisen statues. In the winter of 1378, he stayed at Gadé monastery again. Then, in the summer of 1379, he visited two of the five valleys of Dremoshong and saw many self-arisen inscriptions in Tibetan.

During the middle of the three winter months of the Year of the Iron-Monkey (December 1380), Rigdzin Gödem stayed in Lungdéu. Although some local rulers resisted his presence (Nyima Zangpo mentions

¹ Mon de chen po'i phu.

people in Gampa Fortress), he stayed in Götsang Monastery without being harmed. After that, he stayed in the Chudü forest during the Year of the Iron-Bird (1381) and in Mönrimi from 1382 into 1383.

Returning to Mt. Trazang and Gungthang

Finally, he returned toward Mt. Trazang, which he reached in 1384. Thus, his journey lasted thirteen years.

A few years later, in 1389, the ruling King Chokdrubdé, the son of King Püntsokdé and the Sakya princess, invited him to Gungthang and offered to him hermitages¹ in Mt. Palbar and in “Outer Dechen.”² He became the personal preceptor to King Chokdrubdé who declared their relation in an edict (see above). It was at that time that he opened the concealed land of Kyimolung on the southern border of Mangyül Gungthang. There, he found several ritual implements, including a *kīla* named “Subduer of *Māra* Spirits of the Three Worlds” that he offered to the king. Shortly after that, Chokdrubdé “fell from a horse,” which is possibly a euphemism for his assassination,³ and his half-brother Sönamdé became king. While it is unclear if Rigdzin Gödem maintained relations with the court of Mangyül Gungthang during the reign of Sönamdé, it does appear that he continued to control the properties bestowed to him by Chokdrubdé.

Concealed Lands in the Northern Treasures Tradition

In *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, Dremoshong and Kyimolung are the only two concealed lands mentioned by name that Rigdzin Gödem visited.⁴ While he spent thirteen years in and around the former, it appears that he abided in the latter no longer than a few months. Nothing is said

¹ *dGon gzhis*.

² *Phyi kyi bde chen*.

³ Vitali 1998, p. 1031, n. 21.

⁴ Others mentioned as part of a prophecy quote in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 105: “[The unavailable text called] *The Key of the Concealed Heart of Dremoshong* declares: “When signs of the demise of the Tibetan kingdom arise, / Upper Yolmo, lower Dromo, [or] / The precious land of Dremoshong. / Whichever [place] is indicated, go there!” It is not claimed that Rig ’dzin rGod ldem actually travels to Yol mo and Gro mo khud, and the prophecy itself is not available as a standalone text.

about any other land that he might have revealed or where he might have traveled. In the prophetic guides, however, a much larger number of concealed lands are mentioned. In *The General Introduction to the Concealed Lands*, Padmasambhava declares the existence of sixteen concealed lands:¹

There are three hidden lands in the region of mDo khams and there are three hidden lands in the central region of dBus. Around the area of gTsang, there are eight hidden lands and, in the region of mNga' ris, there are two.

A bit further along in the same text, it is said that there are twenty-five concealed lands.² In another prophecy, Padmasambhava says there are eleven in the border areas between Kailash and Kongpo, two in Ngari, seven in Tsang, and four in Ü, so twenty-four in all.³ These lands were concealed by Padmasambhava and revealed by various individuals. They are distinguished on the basis of the facility to find or to occupy them, and on their size. According to Padmasambhava, it is sure that three of these lands will be found, namely Tsāri, Dremoshong, and Labchi. Among these, the “king of concealed lands” is Dremoshong, which, he says, will be revealed by seven individuals.⁴

Among all these concealed lands, *The Guru's Seven Amulets* and other prophecies pinpoint seven that are in particular related to the Northern Treasures tradition.⁵ The seven concealed lands are listed in

¹ See translation in Boord 2026, p. 143: *mdo khams kyi yul na sbas pa'i yul gsum: dbus kyi mtha' na sbas pa'i yul gsum: gtsang gi yul phyogs na sbas pa'i yul brgyad: mnga' ris kyi sa na sbas pa'i yul gnyis yod de*. Despite that number given by Padmasambhava, Zsóka Gelle's “Overview of the Hidden Lands mentioned in the *General Introduction*,” based on an analysis of the places mentioned in *The General Introduction* (Gelle 2026a, p. 116), lists only thirteen concealed lands.

² Boord 2026, p. 147-148: “In the southern passageway that stretches all the way from the white rock of Khugs lung in Gu ge down to Klong thang sgron ma in mDo khams, there are twenty-two concealed lands and, in the northern passageway, there are three concealed lands. Of these, the three most important are Tsa ri in the east, 'Bras mo gshongs in the south, and 'Brab mo khugs in the north.”

³ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1973, *Ma 'ongs lung bstan gsal ba'i sgron me*, pp. 455-456.

⁴ For more detail on all these lands and these specificities, see Gelle 2026a, p. 114.

⁵ There are two main editions of *The Guru's Seven Amulets*, which are both modern editions of originals that were probably manuscripts. The 2008 edition, *sBas yul bdun gyi spyi them ma 'ongs lung bstan*, was published by the Namgyal Institute of Tibetology (Gangtok) and the Amnye Machen Institute (Dharamsala) in the

Khenpo Chöying's *Garland of Wondrous Tales*:¹

Accordingly, [Rigdzin Gödem] revealed many additional [treasures] from Zangzang Lhadrak and transmitted them [to his disciples], such as *The Register Guide for the Seven Concealed Lands*, that [mention] the concealed land of Dremoshong, Blissful Kyimolung, Concealed Lotus Grove, Playful Khandröling, Khenpalung of Gyal,² Divine Po-drangding,³ and Dromokhü.⁴

The same list is mentioned in *The Guru's Seven Amulets*. Among the seven, only four are well-known, associated with actual places that were revealed, and had along their history clear links with the Northern Treasures Tradition.⁵ The first two were, as explained above, opened by Rigdzin Gödem during his life:

1. The Concealed land of **Dremoshong** in Sikkim.

'Bras mo ljongs kyi gnas yig, pp. 116-138. The *sBas yul bdun gyis them byang ga'u bdun ma* appears in vol. 14, pp. 497-505, of *The Compilation of Northern Treasures*. In most instances, the 2008 edition appears to have been better edited (by bKra shis tshe ring) than the 2015 edition. A comparative edition is provided below whenever a translation of this text is offered.

¹ Chos dbyings 2015, p. 116. A similar list is also given in Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 487.

² rGyal kyi Khan pa lung.

³ Lha yi Pho brang sdings. In Gu ru bkra shis 1990, p. 487, this is spelled *lHa'i pho brang stengs*. In the *Ga'u bdun ma*, the spelling is *lHa'i pho brang sting* in the 2015 edition (Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *Ga'u bdun ma*, p. 597) or *lHa'i pho brang sdings* (Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2008, *sBas yul bdun gyi spyi them*, p. 122). As mentioned in a previous note, one must note the superiority of the 2008 edition over the 2015 reprint. mKhan po Chos dbyings's biography, which is also part of the 2015 collection is better edited and its spelling mostly conforms to older manuscripts.

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2008, *sBas yul bdun gyi spyi them*, p. 122: *gro mo khud*; Gu ru bkra shis 1990, p. 487: *gro mo zhud*; Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *Ga'u bdun ma*, p. 597: *dron mo khud*. Both editions of the *Ga'u bdun ma* declare that the place is "below Paro" (*spa gro'i gting na*).

⁵ For another presentation of these seven, see Gelle 2026a, p. 116. According to her, bDe ldan sKyid mo lung is the Tsum valley, south of Mang yul on the Tibetan-Nepalese border; Sbas pa Pad ma'i tshal (later called Yol mo) is the Helambu valley in Nepal; Rol pa mKha' 'gro gling is west of Khumbu in Nepal; mKhan pa lung of rGyal is also called Bud kyi mKhan pa lung, and is on the Tibet-Nepal border, partly in the Khum bu valley.

2. Blissful **Kyimolung**:¹ the westernmost concealed land, in north-central Nepal, near Mt Palbar.

The following two were opened by later followers of the Northern Treasures and their location was therefore not known at Rigdzin Gödem's time.

3. "Concealed Lotus Grove,"² also called **Yölmo Gangra**:³ Yölmo or Helambu in Nepal.
4. **Khenpalung** of Gyal:⁴ in Khumbu, Eastern Nepal.

Before moving on to a summary of what is known about these four, the other three—about which little to nothing is known—can be briefly described here:

5. Playful **Khandröling**.⁵

This is generally identified with Rolwaling in Nepal, a small valley located on the slopes of the Gauri Shankar. This mountain, Tseringma in Tibetan, is the abode of the five Long-Life sisters who were disciples of Milarepa. Apart from some research done by Janice Sacherer,⁶ not much is known about the valley and the masters who opened it. Tradition has it that it was one of the Karmapas (the 7th, 8th or 9th) who opened the land. Given its proximity to locations associated with Milarepa and its association with Padmasambhava (as a concealed land), the valley is nowadays mostly linked to the Karma Kagyü and Nyingma lineages. Sacherer obtained two manuscripts from her contacts in Rolwaling, but they are quite recent and do not contain substantial

¹ bDe ldan sKyid mo lung.

² sBas pa padma'i tshal.

³ Yol mo gangs ra.

⁴ rGyal kyi Khan pa lung. For more details on spelling variants, see below (n. 2, p. 195).

⁵ Rol pa mkha' 'gro'i gling.

⁶ Sacherer 2010, pp. 138-141. See also a documentary on the valley on this tourist website: <https://honeyguideapps.com/blog/what-is-a-beyül>. Daniel Eggers went there in December 2024 and made the following footage: <https://youtu.be/t7am7Z6c7Z0?si=hVOn-PygGRyMxivj>.

historical information.¹

6. Divine Podrangding: location not identified.
7. Dromokhü: location not identified.²

At this stage, nothing is known about the exact location of these two lands. As the name of Dromokhü, “below Paro,”³ indicates, it might be associated with Paro, in Bhutan.

Although *The General Introduction* declares about Rigdzin Gödem, “That man of good karma, taking out this treasure, will open the way to seven concealed lands in seven precipitous valleys in the south,” the biographies describe that he opened only two. Jay Holt Valentine showed in his 2024 article in the *Revue d’Etudes Tibétaines* that the situation is similar to the treasures themselves. According to the prophetic guides, Rigdzin Gödem was destined to find three treasures:

- The treasury concealed in a “mountain that resembles a heap of poisonous snakes,” that is to say Zangzang Lhadrak. This is the main treasure he found, the one with the fivefold cache.
- The second treasury is said to be concealed in Mangyül, where there is a mountain that looks like a heap of precious jewels.

¹ Although they have different titles, the two manuscripts are copies of the same text, probably a distinct *dbu med* manuscript given its orthography that shows strong influence from contractions found in such sources. The first copy, written in large *dbu can* letters, is called *sBas yul rol pa gling gyis nas yig gu ru padma bzhab jag bzhugs so*. Its numbering indicates that it is made up of 9 folios, but folios 2 and 6 are missing. The second manuscript is called *sBas yul rol pa lung gis: lam byang ma rig mun gsel bzhugs so*, and it is 6 folios long. The text is complete. Both copies contain many spelling mistakes, as their title indicates, but the mistakes differ. They are meant to be travel guides to Rolwaling but do not contain any historical information on the valley. Neither mention Rig ’dzin rGod ldem nor any of the Karma pas. Tobacco is mentioned in the end of the text, indicating that it was composed in recent history. Although the second copy contains terma marks, the colophon makes no claim of being written by Padmasambhava.

² This concealed land is variously spelled in our sources (see above, n. 58). According to Gelle 2026a, this corresponds to ’Brab mo khugs (or ’Bras mo khud) in *The General Introduction*, which, she says (Gelle 2026a, p. 105), “could refer to a hidden land somewhere in Byang district, near Dan gra and sTar sgo gangs, on the northern side of the sTar go range.” Elsewhere (Gelle 2026a, n. 75, p. 98), she says that “Gro mo (or Gro mo khud) [is associated] with the Chumbi Valley situated directly east of Sikkim.”

³ *spa gro ’i gting na*.

This is most likely Mt. Palbar. Kyimolung is the concealed land nearby, where some treasure has been found (a *kīla* for instance), but the extensive treasure prophesied is not said to have been discovered.

- The third treasury was concealed in Padmasambhava's meditation cave in Nepal, which is known as Yangleshö (Parping). Rigdzin Gödem is not known to have gone there, and no discovery is mentioned.

Valentine reports a conversation between Yeshé Tsogyal and Padmasambhava described in one of the guides.¹ It points to the fact that if the tertön's efforts are superb, he would reveal all three, or else he would do so over several lives, or else the treasures would be revealed by other emanations.

It seems to be the same with the concealed lands: although seven lands are associated with the Jangter and Rigdzin Gödem is said to reveal all seven in *The General Introduction*, he appears to have actually opened only two. Two others were revealed by later Jangter masters (not his reincarnations), and it is not clear whether the other three were actually widely opened, as there are many uncertainties regarding Playful Khandröling, Divine Podrangding, and Dromokhö.

We can now turn to the history of the four lands associated with the Northern Treasures that were opened and play a role in the spread of the Jangter teachings.

Dremoshong – Sikkim

Sikkim is the most famous of the seven lands mentioned in Rigdzin Gödem's prophetic guide, generally with the name Dremoshong ("Valley of Rice").² As described in detail above, he journeyed there between 1371 and 1384. At that time, Sikkim was not an organized state but figured among indistinct non-Buddhist lands to the south of Tibet, collectively called Lhokha Mön. The outer land of Sikkim was inhabited by a tribe called Lepcha. Some decades before the 17th century,

¹ Valentine 2024, p. 158.

² Many spellings of the name are found: 'bras mo shong, 'bras mo shongs, 'bras mo gshongs, and 'bras mo ljongs. The modern Tibetan name of Sikkim is 'Bras ljongs.

Tibetan migrants from eastern Tibet traveled there, and a king was enthroned in 1646. This marked the entry into history of the Sikkimese monarchy, which became a princely state of the British Indian Empire in 1890. The monarchy was finally abolished in 1975, when Sikkim became the least populated state of the Indian Republic.

Sikkim is not the same as Beyül Dremoshong, although both concepts are sometimes mixed in Tibetan literature. As is not the case for all concealed lands, there is an “outer” concealed land, progressively revealed by Rigdzin Gödem and later tertöns, and an “inner” one, that still awaits opening.¹ This inner level is described in Shor’s documentary novel about Tülzhuk Lingpa’s efforts to open Beyül Dremoshong in 1962—a gripping example of the importance of complete trust in a tertön’s endeavor at revealing a treasure, being a text or a land, for it to succeed.² In this case, the concealed land is not a concrete and empty valley to be discovered, but a place accessible to designated treasure revealers, who can find it only at the appropriate time and circumstances. According to this narrative (based on interviews with disciples and family members of Tülzhuk Lingpa who tried to enter the beyül), some levels of Beyül Dremoshong have not been opened yet, and although some of Tülzhuk Lingpa’s disciples had a fleeting glimpse of a green paradise appearing in the snowy slopes of Mt. Kanchenjunga, the door remained closed, and the tertön died in an avalanche.

Another level of the concealed land was obviously progressively opened in the past. This is the “outer concealed land,” centered around

¹ See Childs 1999, pp. 128-129, for a description of the outer, inner, and secret levels of concealed land, and the identification of the outer geographic areas corresponding to several lands. According to Childs 1999, p. 129, n. 7, there are three valleys making up the beyül: ‘Bras mo gshongs in the center, ‘Bras mo lung to the right and ‘Bras mo khud to the left. According to Samuel 2021, p. 69, quoting Balikci 2002, p. 25, the outer level is called ‘Bras mo gshongs and the inner level is ‘Bras mo ljongs.

² Shor 2011. See some background description on the book’s website: <https://www.thomasshor.com/a-step-away-from-paradise> (accessed 25.03.2024). It is worth noting that brTul zhugs gling pa was a controversial figure, and the narrative is based on interviews with survivors conducted nearly fifty years after the events in question. Consequently, I do not claim that the story serves as a definitive example of concealed land revelation nor that it is a reliable source for the events described. It offers nevertheless insights into the challenges inherent in such endeavors and reflects the deep reverence with which Tibetans approach this subject.

Tashiding in the west of Sikkim. As described above, Rigdzin Gödem spent several summers there, although it is not clear that he built temples or monasteries of lasting importance for locals. At the same time that he was in the area, in 1374, another treasure-revealer, Dorjé Lingpa, revealed *A Great Itinerary to Dremoshong*, so it is clear that the place was in many minds in this period,¹ as is also shown by the numerous guidebooks available.²

The General Introduction to the Concealed Lands describes Dremoshong in the following way:³

Secondly, with regard to Sikkim, this will be opened up by emanations of the three learned men of Tibet, [including] a yogin who practices Vajrakīla. Due to the blessings that they accumulated at Samyé Chimpu, the first of these three accomplished tantric adepts of Tibet will open the land and, after that, each of the three siddhas will fulfill his own prophecy. As a result of this, three traditions of mantra practice will develop in Sikkim.

Regarding the prophetic guides revealed by Rigdzin Gödem about Dremoshong, *The Guru's Seven Amulets* describes Dremoshong as follows:⁴

¹ rDo rje gling pa 2009, *gTer byang rnam thar*, vol. 11, p. 79. This treasure, called here 'Bras mo shongs kyi lam yig chen mo, was revealed while rDo rje gling pa was in 'Bum thang in Bhutan. The text has not been found within the collection of rDo rje gling pa's writings. The detailed autobiographical narrative about his treasure revelation does not contain any description of any travel to 'Bras mo shongs, although it is very detailed in many other aspects. Thanks to Coralie Dordone for this reference. While awaiting her master thesis on this master (at the INALCO, France), one can read Gardner 2009 and Karmay 2000.

² See a selection in bKra shis tshe ring (ed.) 2008, by treasure revealers such as Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, Sangs rgyas gling pa, Padma gling pa, rDo rje bde chen gling pa, and lHa btsun 'gyur med 'jigs bral bstan 'dzin dpa' bo.

³ Boord 2026, p. 149: *bar yul 'bras mo gshongs ni: bod kyi mkhas pa rnam gsum gyi sprul pa rdo rje phur pa'i rnal 'byor pa gcig gis 'byed par 'gyur ro: bod kyi grub thob rdo rje rnam gsum bsam yas mchims phur tshogs pa'i byin rlabs kyi: dang po gang zag gcig gis 'byed: de rjes su grub thob rnam gsum lung bstan pa so sor gyes pa las: 'bras mo gshongs su sngags kyi sgrub sde gsum yong:*

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2008, *sBas yul bdun gyi them sbyang*, p. 122, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *Ga'u bdun ma*, vol. 14, p. 597: *mdzod lnga stag rtse'i mdun na: bar yul la [2015: sbas yul] 'bras mo gshongs [2015: shongs] zhes bya ba: 'dod pa'i yon tan sna tshogs yod pa [2015: 'byung ba]: dbus gtsang gis gsum gnyis shong ba: der phyi pa [2015: sleb] tsam gyis bcu gcig kun tu 'od kyi sa non pa: sgo bzhi*

In an intermediate valley in front of Kanchenjunga's summit is [the place] called Dremoshong. It has all kinds of desirable qualities. It can contain two thirds of Ütsang. Upon arriving there, one reaches the eleventh *bhūmi*, All-Luminous. There are four gates, and it is enough to guard them two fathoms and a half.¹

One of the most famous pilgrimage places of the Tibet-Sikkim borderlands is Chörten Nyima, a location at the northern gate of the concealed land, the one through which Rigdzin Gödem entered.² This was also the entry gate for a distant disciple, Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé (1597–1654), who was among the “three wise men” who contributed to the foundation of the state of Sikkim by enthroning the Dharma King Püntsok Namgyal in Yoksam in 1646.³ Another of these wise men was Kahtok Küntuzangpo (17th c.). Both had received teachings of the Northern Treasures and brought them into Sikkim. It was the latter who went on to build the first temples and monasteries around Tashiding.⁴

Some consider that an earlier Jangter master who traveled to Sikkim was Rigdzin Gödem's first incarnation, Lekdenjé.⁵ Although it is said that he discovered a treasure there, the matter requires further research.⁶

la: sa sgo [2015: Ø] 'dom *phyed dang gsum bsrungs* [2015: *bzhi srungs*] *pas chog pa yod do*:

- ¹ The meaning of the expression *sa sgo 'dom* is not clear. The same expression is repeated for each of the seven lands, with each time a different size. In Bon contexts, there is a parallel made between *sa sgo*, the “earth door” and *gnam sgo*, the “sky door.” The expression *sa sgo gcod pa* means “to close the earth door,” i.e., something like “to delimit a ritual perimeter.” It could also refer to the lower part of a divination table, as opposed to the upper part called *gnam sgo*. Hence a possible interpretation for this sentence could be that it refers to an amulet or a drawing on the ground rather than a distance within the concealed land.
- ² See Buffetrille 1998, 2000 (translation of *gnas yig* to mChod rten nyi ma revealed by rGod dem) and 2004 for details (in French), and Boord 2003 for a translation in English.
- ³ Ehrhard 2005; Mullard 2011, pp. 44–46; Samuel 2021, pp. 67–70. Yoksam (Yog bsam) is now known as Yuksom.
- ⁴ Vandenhelsken and Wongchuk 2006.
- ⁵ Sardar-Afkhami, p. 103; Gu ru bkra shis 1992, vol. 2, pp. 46–47.
- ⁶ Gelle 2026a, n. 127, p. 106, quotes Dokhampa 2003, p. 26, who states that Legs ldan rje “discovered the sublime *mKha' 'gro'i mkha' lang ma'i rgyud* tantra or the *sadhana* [...] of Amitayus in the northern cave of Lhari rinchen nying phuk in 1568.” The source for this affirmation is not known.

Kyimolung

Kyimolung is the second concealed land directly opened by Rigdzin Gödem. It is located near Mt. Palbar, the mountain hermitage he received from the King Chokdrubdé of Gungthang. Rigdzin Gödem traveled there in 1389, as mentioned above, and revealed, among others, a *kīla* that he offered to the king. Although it is not mentioned in Rigdzin Gödem's earliest biographies, tradition also maintains that he re-concealed in Kyimolung several of the treasures he had unearthed in Zangzang Lhadrak. These treasures were later revealed again by Tennyi Lingpa (1480–1535)¹ and Rigdzin Garwang Dorjé Nyingpo (1640–1685).²

Michael Aris was the first Westerner to enter Kyimolung and describe his journey. He identified it with the Serdrang Valley, a tributary of the Buri Gandhaki in Western Nepal.³ According to Solmsdorf, who conducted extensive research in the area, the boundaries of Kyimolung are much wider: its heart is the Sarpuk Valley, which is east of Serdrang, and it includes areas in Tsum, Kutang, and Nubri to the southwest of Gungthang.⁴ The concealed land is on the Nepalese side of the Tibeto-Nepali border, close to Drakkhar Taso on the Tibetan side.

While the name Kyimolung is not mentioned in *The General Introduction to the Concealed Lands*, it is referred to by the name Happy Cave/Valley/Ravine of Kutang:⁵

As for the places that will be found if all the right karmic circumstances meet together: The Happy Cave of Kutang will be occupied by one who has developed strength in the practice of Hayagrīva, and he will come from Tratum in Tsang.

The Guru's Seven Amulets describes Kyimolung as follows:⁶

¹ Arguillère and Achard 2024; Sardar Afkhami 2001, p. 93.

² Solmsdorf 2014.

³ Aris 1975, pp. 56-59 & 62-66.

⁴ Solmsdorf 2014, see map p. 370 and description pp. 43-45.

⁵ Ku thang skyid gyi phug/yul/rong.

⁶ Rig 'dzin rgod ldem 2008, *sBas yul bdun gyi them byang*, p. 121, Rig 'dzin rgod ldem 2015, *Ga'u bdun ma*, p. 596.2: *de yang mang yul mthil nas* [2015: Ø] *lho nub du kha bltas pas* [2015: lta pa]: *gangs ri dkar po rgyal po* [2015: Ø] *gdan la bzugs pa lta bu yod do: de'i lho phyogs na bde ldan skyid mo lung zhes bya ba: grong khyer sum brgya shong pa: rin po che sna lnga* [2015: tshogs] *yod pa: shar*

Facing the southwest from the plain of Mangyül, there is a white snow mountain like a king on his throne. To the south of that is Blissful Kyimolung, where three hundred cities can fit and with many kinds of jewels. There are gates on the east and west, and it is enough to protect it by a perimeter of seven fathoms. Merely going to that place, one attains the first bhūmi, Joyous.

Although Kyimolung was first opened by Rigdzin Gödem, the concealed land itself does not seem to have been inhabited until much later. As shown by Geoffrey Childs, an important lama who built a temple in Kyimolung was Pema Döndrub (1668–1744). He was born in the land and belonged to a Jangter background, which shows that Rigdzin Gödem’s imprint in the region was long-lasting. Later he traveled to Central Tibet and became a disciple of the Fourth Dorjedrak abbot Rigdzin Pema Trinlé (1640–ca. 1717).¹

Yölmo

A concealed land where the Northern Treasures activity remains vibrant nowadays is Yölmo, which houses a large community of Jangter practitioners continuing the legacy of the Yölmo Tülkus.² The toponym “Yölmo” appears in Tibetan texts from the fifteenth century onward. It is a few hours by jeep to the north-east of Kathmandu, in today’s

nub la sgo yod pa: sa sgo 'dom bdun bsrung pas chog pa: gnas der phyin pa tsam gyis: sa dang po rab tu dga' ba thob pa yod do:.

¹ The first to mention this lama is Aris 1975, p. 59; for more details see Childs 2004, pp. 78-82. Childs 2001, pp. 13-17, gives a history of the migrations into Nub ri and the concealed land of sKyid mo lung. According to him, the first sustained migration to sKyid mo lung (the “mNga’ bdag migration”) occurred in the early 17th century, at approximately the same time as the demise of the Gung thang royal lineage (1620).

² There is quite a lot of literature on Yol mo. Among these, see Gelle 2020, Gelle 2026b, and Buffetrille forthcoming. More publication by Zsóka Gelle, who has a long-term interest and implantation in the valley, will certainly wield a wealth of information on the topic. For a recent description of the area and its Buddhist sites, largely destroyed by the 2016 earthquake and rebuilt since, see <https://www.nekhor.org/padmasambhava/beyul/helambu> (accessed 20.02.2025). It must be noted that not all locals are Byang gter practitioners. Many also follow the *dKon mchog spyi 'dus* cycle, a treasure revealed by 'Ja' tshon snying po (1585–1656).

Nepalese districts of Sindupalchok and Rasuwa. In the list of seven concealed lands revealed by Rigdzin Gödem, it corresponds to one named “Concealed Lotus Grove.”¹ Yölmo was not opened by Rigdzin Gödem, but by a later holder of the Northern Treasures lineage, Ngakchang Śākya Zangpo (15th–16th c.),² although the area was certainly known before that date as the yogin and poet Milarepa (1028–1111) is famous for having meditated lower down in the valley.³

Śākya Zangpo, who was later known as the first Yölmo Tülku,⁴ was born in Drangso⁵ in Tsang and was a disciple of Thangtong Gyalpo, from whom he received many teachings. He was also the teacher of two important Jangter masters, Ngari Pañchen Pema Wangyal and Ngari Rigdzin Lekdenjé, Rigdzin Gödem’s first *tülku*, and was very well-known as a powerful sorcerer.⁶ After completing a three-year retreat, Ngakchang Śākya Zangpo rediscovered and renovated the Boudhanath stupa⁷ and opened the concealed land of Yölmo, where he died.⁸ He

¹ sBas pa padma’i tshal. Gelle 2020, p. 374, quoting the *sBas pad ma tshal gyi lam yig*. See also Ehrhard 2013, p. 123.

² For a critical examination of the life of Shākya bzang po, see Gelle 2026b.

³ Quintman 2014. The Mi la ras pa cave is in the lower valley, near the river, and is not considered to be part of the *sbas yul*, while the concealed land Yol mo (locally known as Helambu) is higher up. sNgags ’chang Śākya bZang po’s cave in Tark-egyang (rTa brgyag gyang), which is considered the center of the *beyül*, is on the slopes of the sacred mountain Ama Yangri, which is just south of the Langtang mountain range.

⁴ The Yol mo sprul skus are important masters of the Byang gter lineage. The first five incarnations are described in Ehrhard 2013 [2007], pp. 121–155 (and again in Boord 2013, pp. 64–77). The line started with sNgags ’chang Shākya bzang po, who was born in Tibet but was later identified with Yol mo because of his activity there. The next three incarnations were also born in Tibet but maintained activity in Nepal and Yol mo especially. The fifth, ’Phrin las bdud ’joms (1725–1789), was born in Yol mo. He was the last recognized incarnation, but a second incarnation of the fifth *sprul sku* was recognized, and that line lasts until today, under the name dGon byang rin po che (see Ehrhard 2013 [2007], p. 150, n. 56). This name comes from the dGon pa byang monastery in Gangtok (Sikkim). The actual holder of the line, the 10th dGon byang rin po che, has been handed the care of the temple in Yolmo (Personal discussion with Zsóka Gelle, February 2025). For an account of the dGon byang rin po che lineage, see <https://www.dzogchenstudies.com/gonjang-rinpoché> (accessed 28.03.2025).

⁵ Gram so / Drang so.

⁶ Bogin 2013, p. 68.

⁷ Ehrhard 2013 [1990], pp. 95–102.

⁸ Ehrhard 2013 [2007], pp. 121–125 [pp. 25–29].

had been given the prophetic guides for Lotus Grove (Pema Tsal or Yölmo Gangra) by Rigdzin Chokden Gönpö (1497–1531).¹

Yölmo is described as follows in *The General Introduction to the Concealed Lands* found by Rigdzin Gödem:²

The Snowy Enclosure of Yölmo will be occupied by one who has completed the ritual practice of invoking the Vidyādhara guru, and he will come from somewhere to the west of Tratum in Tsang.

The Guru's Seven Amulets states:³

In the north of the rocky caves of Yangleshö, to the south of the glacier of Geyen Leru where the victory banner rises, is the concealed place called Pemé Tsal, where various fruits, vegetables, and—when planted—grains grow. It has four gates and can contain seven thousand cities. Just by reaching this place, one can master up to the ninth bhūmi, Fine Intelligence. There are four gates, and it is enough to guard them for four fathoms.

Khenpalung

Like Yölmo, the concealed land of Khenpalung, “Valley of Artemisia,” was not opened by Rigdzin Gödem,⁴ but by Rigdzin Chokden Gönpö⁵

¹ Ehrhard 2013 [1997], pp. 265–267.

² *sBas yul spyi'i them byang: yol mo gangs kyi ra ba ni: rig 'dzin bla ma'i bsnyen pa rdzogs pa gcig gis rnyed do: de'ang gtsang kra thum gyi nub nas 'byung ngo:*

³ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2008, *sBas yul bdun gyi them byang*, p. 121–122, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *Ga'u bdun ma*, p. 596.3: *brag phug yang le shod kyi byang phyogs: dge bsnyen gling* [2015: *dge snyen ble*] *ru'i gangs mkha'* [2015: *mkhan*] *la rgyal mtshan 'char* [2015: *char*] *ba 'dra ba'i lho phyogs na: sbas pa padma'i 'tshal* [2015: *padma 'tshal*] *zhes bya ba shing thog dang sa'i bcud sna tshogs skyes pa* [2015: *skye ba*]: *btan na 'bru sna tshogs* [2015: *thams cad*] *skye ba: sgo bzhi yod pa: grong khyer stong phrag bdun shong ba:* [2015 *adds grong khyer brgya shong ba*] *gnas der sleb pa tsam gyis: sa dgu pa legs pa'i blo gros kyi sa man chad* [2015: *yan chad*] *non pa: sa sgo 'dom* [2015: *'dom gang gru*] *bzhi bsrungs pas chog pa zhiig yod do:*

⁴ Several sources, for instance Ehrhard 2013 [1997], p. 261, say that mKhan pa lung was opened by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. There is no trace of this opening in the biography, however.

⁵ mChog ldan mgon po was a disciple of Padma gling pa, and thus Ehrhard 2013 [1997], p. 264, assumes the mKhan pa lung he visited was the Bhutanese one.

and Rigdzin Nyida Longsal (d. 1695).¹ Called “Khenpalung of Gyal”² in Rigdzin Gödem’s biography, it is located in the Arun Valley of the Shar Khumbu region in Eastern Nepal.³ This is where Padmasambhava is said to have gone after he reached immortality in the Maratika cave.⁴

The one who “opened” Khenpalung in western scholarship is Michael Aris,⁵ but his theory that the Bhutanese Khenpalung was relocated to Nepal by Pema Lingpa (1450–1521) has been refuted by several scholars. It is now clear that there are two independent concealed valleys called Khenpalung, one in Nepal and one in Bhutan. Although the one in Bhutan was opened by Pema Lingpa,⁶ the one in Nepal traces back to Rigdzin Gödem, at least nominally, although it was only opened in the early 17th century. As a matter of fact, *The General Introduction to the Concealed Lands* refers to both Khenpalung, albeit with different names: the “Valley of Artemisia from Bü,” i.e., the Nepalese Khenpalung, and Khenpalung from Lhodrak, the Bhutanese one.⁷

The Khenpalung of Bü will be occupied by one who has completed the ritual practice of invoking Vajravīdāraṇa, and he will come from somewhere to the west of Rulak Gyang. Khenpalung in Victorious

According to Solmsdorf 2014, p. 23, it was in fact the Nepalese one, and mChog ldan mgon po was active in Nepal. He is also the one who gave the prophetic guide (*kha byang*) of Yol mo to Śākya bzang po.

¹ See Erhard 2013 [1997], p. 262.

² The meaning of the name rGyal gyi mkhan pa lung is unclear. rGyal could be a toponym, or it could mean “royal” (“Royal Khenpalung”), although in both cases it is not clear why. Another name for it is Bud kyi mKhan pa lung, where *bud* could either be a toponym or mean “cloud of dust.” The matter is complicated by the fact that the Bhutanese mKhan pa lung is called *lHo brag gyi mKhan pa lung* or *lHo brag rgyal gyi mKhan pa lung*.

³ For a description of the first Western expedition there, see Reinhard 1978. Hildegard Diemberger spent much time there and wrote many articles about Khenpalung, its *gnas yig*, its customs, etc., between 1991 and 1997. See also Erhard 2013 [1997].

⁴ Orofino 1991, p. 243.

⁵ Aris 1979, pp. 60–82.

⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 60–82, with a translation of a guidebook attributed to Padma gling pa.

⁷ *sBas yul spyi'i them byang: bud kyi mkhan pa lung rdo rje rnam 'joms la bsnyen pa rdzogs pa gcig gis rnyed do: de yang ru lag rgyang gi nub phyogs nas 'byung ngo: sBas yul ding mo ni 'jam dpal gshin rje gshed la bsnyen pa rdzogs pa gcig gis rnyed do: de yang nyang ro'i phyogs nas 'ong : lho brag rgyal gyi mkhan pa lung ni: he ru ka'i bsnyen pa rdzogs pa gcig gis rnyed do: de yang bsam yas kyi phyogs nas 'byung:*

Lhodrak will be occupied by one who has completed the ritual practice of invoking Heruka, and he will come from the direction of Samyé.

The Guru's Seven Amulets description of Khenpalung is as follows:¹

In Lower Bü is Royal Khenpalung, where three hundred cities [could] fit. Natural harvest is plentiful. There are, in particular, artemisia grass that tastes like nectar and various fruits. Just by reaching there, one masters up to the sixth bhūmi, Manifest. There are two gates, and it is enough to guard them one fathom and a half.

The two Khenpalung are clearly distinguishable from one another. The Khenpalung in the Everest region of Nepal has a guide discovered by Rigdzin Gödem. The area was explored by Johan Reinhard and he described his findings in 1978, together with a draft translation of the guidebook.² There has been extensive scholarly work on this guidebook, including a comprehensive translation by Giacomella Orofino. Her research examines various prophecies and guidebooks revealed by Rigdzin Gödem. After that, Hildegard Diemberger studied the valley for her doctoral dissertation and published many articles on the subject.³

The “Khenpalung from Lhodrak” refers to the one in northern Bhutan, located in a valley to the south of Lhodrak, that was opened by Pema Lingpa in 1488 and is also called Khenpajong. Françoise Pomaret journeyed to that secluded valley just south of Lhodrak in Tibet, which is nowadays completely empty. It was inhabited by some Buddhist yogis until 1962 and is the birthplace of the present Dzongsar Khyentsé Rinpoche (b. 1961). It was evacuated in 1962 after the Indo-

¹ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2008, *sBas yul bdun gyi them*s byang, p. 122, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *Ga'u bdun ma*, pp. 596-597: *bud kyi gting* [2015: *sdings*] *na rgyal gyi* [2015: *gyis*] *mkhan pa lung bya ba: grong khyer sum brgya shong ba: ma smos pa'i lo thog chol le yod ba: khyad par mkhan pa'i rtsa ba la bdud rtsi'i ro dang ldan pa: shing thog sna tshogs* [2015 adds *skye ba*] *yod pa: der sleb pa tsam gyis: sa drug pa mngon du gyur pa'i sa man chad* [2015: *gyur man chod*] *non pa: sgo gnyis yod pa: sa sgo 'dom phyed dang do bsrungs* [2015: *gsungs*] *pas chog pa yod do:*.

² Reinhard 1978.

³ Orofino 1991; Diemberger 1991, 1992, 1993, 1997, 2002, Diemberger and Hazod 1994, Diemberger and Hazod 1997.

Chinese war.¹ Françoise Pommaret visited the valley again in 2023 and plans to publish her findings.

Rigdzin Gödem's Place within the History of Concealed Lands

Although Rigdzin Gödem is the most famous early tertön who opened and advertised concealed lands, he was preceded by Guru Tseten Gyaltsen, who was considered at the time of Orgyen Lingpa (1323–ca. 1355) to belong to a group of five treasure revealers that are manifestations of Padmasambhava.² Although Guru Tashi's *History of the Dharma* states that Tseten Gyaltsen lived in the 4th *rabjung*³ (13th c.), it seems more likely that he actually was active in the 5th *rabjung* and lived at the turn of the 14th century.⁴ He was probably among the teachers of Rinchen Lingpa, who theoretically may have been one of Rigdzin Gödem's masters, and he gave to Jangchub Lingpa a treasure list that helped him find treasures in Mangyül Gungthang in the first half of the 14th century, at the time of the King Tashidé.⁵ One of his disciples, Lama Dorjé, was a teacher of Dorjé Lingpa (1346–1405), a contemporary of Rigdzin Gödem.⁶ Hence Tseten Gyaltsen can be considered a close source of inspiration for Rigdzin Gödem, who surely knew him, be it through his teacher Rinchen Lingpa or because of his activities in Gungthang.

Tertön Tseten Gyaltsen is associated with several place guides to the concealed lands called Namgo Dagam ("Heavenly Gate of Half-Moon Form") and Lotus Grove (Padma Tsel).⁷ According to Franz-Karl

¹ Pommaret 2025.

² Ehrhard 2009, p. 499. The other four are Nyang ral, Gu ru Chos dbang, O rgyan gling pa, and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. This assessment is found in *The Prophecy of O rgyan gling pa* quoted by the Fifth Dalai Lama (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–71, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, fol. 11b).

³ *Rab byung*.

⁴ For details, see the introduction by Stéphane Arguillère in Boord 2026, pp. 134–135.

⁵ See previous chapter by Jay Holt Valentine, especially the paragraph on Byang chub gling pa and King bKra shis lde.

⁶ Vol. 11, p. 381: *gu ru tshe brtan rgyal mtshan gyi slob ma bla ma rdo rje zhes bya bas zha lur byon 'dug pa/ bla ma'i zhal ngag las khyod zha lur song/ 'brug gi lo la gter ston rdo rje gling pa zhes pa dang 'phrad par'gyur/*

⁷ Ehrhard 2013 [1997], p. 269, n. 13. This Lotus Grove is also called White Valley (sKar po ljongs) in the text. For more on the revelation of Namgo Dagam, see

Ehrhard, however, the place guide about Lotus Grove (generally considered to be Yölmo) is actually identical with the one about Namgo Dagam—a place that corresponds to the region of Langtang—and it is therefore very likely that Tseten Gyaltsen only “opened” that land and not Yölmo. In that prophecy, it is stated that the land would be opened by Tseten Gyaltsen between a Year of the Water-Hare and a Year of the Rat (of an unknown cycle)—hence, if Tseten Gyaltsen was active in the 14th century and if he indeed revealed the land, then that could have taken place between 1303 and 1312, some 70 years before Rigdzin Gödem went to Dremoshong.¹

Given the time frame and the sphere of influence of Tseten Gyaltsen, it is extremely likely that he was the direct source of inspiration for Rigdzin Gödem, and that he can therefore be considered an early figure to develop the idea of concealed lands in Tibetan history, a concept that was further refined and advertised by Rigdzin Gödem but that he did not create from thin air.

In the century after Rigdzin Gödem, Mahāsiddha Thangtong Gyalpo, who was an important holder of the Northern Treasures,² followed Rigdzin Gödem’s example and journeyed in the barbarian lands to the south and south-east of Tibet. Unlike his predecessor, however, his foray into the lush valleys of the southern Himalayas was not framed by the revelation of concealed lands. Although he is depicted as opening some beyül, they are not presented as places of refuge or lands concealed by

Childs 1993 and Childs 1999, p. 130, n. 10. See Ehrhard 2009–2010 for a study of this character on the basis of the edition of one of his treasures.

¹ Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan 1983, *sBas yul padma tshal gyi gnas yig kun tu gsal ba’i me long*, p. 96. According to Ehrhard 2013, p. 268, n. 13, this text is identical with *sBas yul gnam sgo zla gam gyi gnas yig lam byang gsal ba’i me long*. The prophecy declares that it is important to go between a Year of the Water-Hare and a Year of the Earth-Bird (the text read *sa byi* but should be emended to *sa bya* to make sense) for happiness to happen. After the Year of the Iron-Dog, all happiness of Tibet will be exhausted (p. 96: *chu mo yos bu nas sa byi’i [= bya’i] bar la cung zad bde ba zhig ’byung bas de’i dus ’gro ba gal che: de nas phyi na mi thar ro: lcags khyi lo shar nas bod kyi bde skyid thams cad zad do*). If our counting is correct, this is between 1303 (Water-Hare) and 1310 (Iron-Dog). There is no evidence, however, that this text is actually the travel guide revealed by Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan. According to Zsóka Gelle (personal communication, February 2015), it could have been composed in the 19th century.

² See Ducher 2024 for the proximity of Thangtong Gyalpo with the Jangter traditions. For a more general approach, see Stearns 2007.

Padmasambhava. Like Orgyen Rinchenpal (1230–1309), Thangtong Gyalpo traveled widely in Tibet and in faraway places, and his life narratives describe in much more visual detail the lands he visited than the dream-like evocations found in Rigdzin Gödem's life story. One of his travels led him to the famous and inaccessible concealed land of Pemakö, located in the great bend of the Tsangpo, where the Tibetan river becomes a very deep and impenetrable gorge. Annie Heckmann showed that although the word *beyül* is not used often in Thangtong Gyalpo's biography, it is used in the context of Pemakö, and the descriptions given fit the explanations of the place found in the biographies of later masters and explorers.¹ Although this is the case, he did not really open lands for Tibetans to settle in, but rather discovered places filled with barbarians to whom he brought the Dharma. Therefore, although Thangtong Gyalpo can be seen as someone who discovered concealed lands, Pemakö in particular, he did not do so in the same ethos as Rigdzin Gödem and many of the later land discoverers.

The concrete work of concealed land revelation was carried on several centuries after the demise of Rigdzin Gödem by masters close to the Northern Treasures Tradition as well as by other Nyingma treasure revealers. Much of the revelations related to the four lands described in the prophecies revealed by Rigdzin Gödem have been described already. Another example of a *tertön* who revealed concealed lands is Pema Lingpa, who discovered the Bhutanese Khenpalung.² Pema Lingpa was not completely alien to the Jangter lineage, as one of his disciples, Rigdzin Chokden Gönpö, gave an entrance guide (*kha byang*) to Ngakchang Śākya Zangpo (1475–1550) that contributed to his opening of Yölmo.³

In line with the idea of concealed lands as places of refuge,⁴ the high period for discovery and settlement into concealed lands was the 17th century, when important political changes unfolded in Tibet. The Mongol invasions and the coming into power of the Ganden Podrang led to the exile of many political and religious rivals. Although the migration into Bhutan that happened at this period is not particularly related to the discovery of concealed lands,⁵ the lamas that fled Tibet at that time and entered Sikkim

¹ Heckmann 2021.

² See above and Aris 1979.

³ Ehrhard 2013 [1997], pp. 265–267; Boord 2013, p. 66.

⁴ Childs 1999.

⁵ For more on this see Deleplanque 2022 and Phuntsho 2018.

did so on the basis of the guidebooks revealed by Rigdzin Gödem several centuries earlier. As described by Saul Mullard,¹ the first King of Sikkim, Püntsok Namgyal (1604–1690), was coronated in Yoksam in 1646 by three important religious figures, Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé, Kaḥtok Küntuzangpo, and Ngadak Püntsok Rigdzin, mentioned above, who opened various gates leading to the Beyül Dremoshong and were related in various ways to Rigdzin Gödem’s lineage holders.

Another important land to be revealed in the 17th century was Pemakö in Southern Tibet. Unlike most of the other concealed lands, Pemakö’s revelation is not related to Rigdzin Gödem—it is not part of the seven concealed lands mentioned in the prophecies—nor to his line of disciples (if one excepts Thangtong Gyalpo who, although related to the Jangter, was not primarily a Jangter master). Jatsön Nyingpo (1585–1656) was the first to characterize Pemakö as a concealed land by revealing a guidebook to the site.² He was followed by Rigdzin Dūdül Dorjé (1615–1672), Rigdzin Chöjé Lingpa (1682–1725), and many others.³ Unlike the other concealed lands, Pemakö’s discoverers are not exclusively Nyingma. Some had ties with the Kagyü tradition, which may be explained by the proximity to an important Kagyü pilgrimage place, Tsāri. Several belonged to the Gelug school, although they also had obvious ties with the Nyingma tradition. One who was active in Pemakö was Lelung Zhepé Dorjé (1697–1740).⁴ Another, Drubthop Lobzang Lhachok (1672–1747), was ordained as a Gelugpa monk and was a disciple of the 4th Rigdzin Pema Trinlé. He revealed several other minor concealed lands.⁵



¹ Mullard 2013, pp. 44–46.

² He revealed *sBas yul padma bkod kyi lam yig*, translated on Tibshelf: <https://www.tibshelf.org/theguidebooktothehiddenlandofpemoko>.

³ For details, see Ehrhard 2013 [1994]; Ehrhard 2013 [1996]; Samuel 2021.

⁴ Ehrhard 2013 [1994], p. 356.

⁵ Ehrhard 2013 [1996], Ch. 21, pp. 364–368.

Chapter 9: The Visionary Dreams of Rigdzin Gödem

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he fifteenth century biography of Rigdzin Gödem entitled *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, which was authored by one of his direct, although minor, disciples named Nyima Zangpo, contains accounts of sixteen visionary dreams that transpired between 1370 and 1399, inclusively.¹ The collection of dreams constitutes a significant portion of the composition, about a third of the ninety-nine-page biography. By contrast, Khenpo Chöying's biography of Rigdzin Gödem, which is provided in translation within this volume, merely mentions the content of a few of his dream, more or less in passing.² While one can hardly fault Khenpo Chöying for cutting the dreams from his version of the biography, it does reduce the ability of the reader to grasp the full extent of Rigdzin Gödem's visionary experiences as they relate to the unfolding of his life, for surely just as the beginnings of his career as a treasure revealer appear to have been inspired by revealed prophetic guides, much of the second half of his life appears to have been guided by his nocturnal, visionary experiences. In recognition of this issue, summaries and explanations of the dreams have been provided below. However, for various reasons that will be discussed in the next section, a few of the dreams have proven somewhat difficult to interpret, even when read as part of the biography. Thus, in the remarks below, a method of dream interpretation is formulated based on an analysis of the first dream, which is the most well-embedded of the collection, that will prove helpful in interpreting the seventh and sixteenth dreams of the biography. This method of

¹ Throughout this chapter, I will refer to the following edition of the biography: Nyi ma bzang po (14th–15th c.) 1983, *sPrul sku chen po'i rnam thar gsal byed nyi ma'i 'od zer* [*The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*], pp. 49-147.

² For the biography, see Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 82-118. For references to Rigdzin rGod ldem's dreams and visions, see pp. 110-111, 116-117.

investigation will yield a few tentative conclusions about Rigdzin Gödem's exploits later in life, a period that unfortunately remains shrouded in darkness.

Analysis of The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight as a Composition

As a result of many years of academic involvement with *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, it has become abundantly clear that very little is known about the composition of this historiographically significant biography of Rigdzin Gödem. Surely, the colophon is helpful in that it identifies the author as Setön Nyima Zangpo and indicates that he composed the biography at Gyakhar, the ancestral seat of the Sé clan in Northern Latö.¹ It also describes in general terms the sources that were used to compose the biography, but it is, of course, a meager treatment of the subject in comparison to what one would expect to find in a modern bibliography. Moreover, while there are many helpful citations in the text, Nyima Zangpo does not always indicate specific sources while “borrowing” material from other works, which is of course customary.

Even a casual reader of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, however, will notice that the style and quality of the composition is not consistent throughout the work. The first half of the biography offers a detailed account of the birth, training, and early career of Rigdzin Gödem that consistently demonstrates the close relationship between his actions and what was predicted or instructed in a wide variety of scriptures that are explicitly referenced in the composition. Here the author seems to be well-informed about Rigdzin Gödem's actions and very aware of the content of a wide range of scriptural materials, which together gave him the ability to masterfully weave together the first half of the biography.

The second half of the composition, by contrast, offers only a sketch of his life's exploits, leaving the careful reader with many unanswered questions. Additionally, the second half of the biography consists almost entirely (approximately 75%) of large, dated passages—particularly the sixteen dream records and an edict that was issued by King Chokdrubdé—that were inserted into the biography with varying degrees of care. The author seems to be relatively uninformed about the totality of Rigdzin Gödem's later exploits, unaware of insightful

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 145-146.

prophecies from the prophetic guides that might shine some light on this period of his life, and unconnected to the people who might be able to offer further guidance. Despite the title of the biography, it unfortunately leaves the reader in the dark with regard to the vast majority of his exploits between 1370 and 1401, a total of 32 years.

Outline of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*: (First Half)

Introduction
 Emanations of Samantabhadra
 Birth and Early Life of Rigdzin Gödem
 Reception of Prophetic Guides from Zangpo Drakpa
 Pursuit of Royal Patronage (King Püntsokdé)
 Revelation of Keys at Trazang
 Revelation of Treasures at Zangzang Lhadrak
 Cultivating a Community at Trazang
 Acquisition of Royal Patronage (King Püntsokdé)
 Death of King Püntsokdé

Outline of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*: (Second Half)¹

Brief Narrative about the Demise of the King
Dream #1 - The Departure (1370)
 Brief Narrative about Early Travels
Dreams #2 - #6 - Dremoshong (1373–1375)
 Brief Narrative about Later Travels
The Royal Edict of Chokdrubdé (1389)
Dream #7 - Inheritance (1390)
Dreams #8 - #15 - Near-Death & Healing (1397)
 Brief Narrative Introduction of the Author
Dream #16 - Final Teachings, Death, and Afterlife (1399)
 Narrative of Final Teachings, Death, and Afterlife

¹ The items in this list that are presented in bold are the large passages that have been inserted into the second half of the biography.

This assessment of Nyima Zangpo's abilities as an author is troubling as it is nearly the opposite of what one would expect. As stated in the biography, Nyima Zangpo was in his twelfth year when he first met Rigdzin Gödem in 1397, at which time the master would have been in his sixty-first year.¹ As Rigdzin Gödem appears to have passed away in 1401 in his sixty-fifth year, the two only knew each other for about four years while the author was still in his minority. As the composition includes an account of Rigdzin Gödem's death, it can be assumed that it was completed after 1401, but how much time had passed is unknown. Regardless, it is difficult to explain how this minor disciple from late in his life came to be so thoroughly informed regarding Rigdzin Gödem's early life and why he is so uninformed about his later life. One possibility is that Nyima Zangpo may have "composed" *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* by stitching together the small amount of information he was able to acquire about Rigdzin Gödem's later years and death, some of which may have been assembled during his meetings with the master, with a collection of "inherited" sources: 1) a partial biography that covered Rigdzin Gödem's early life that was written by others, perhaps in consultation with Rigdzin Gödem himself, 2) the royal edict issued by King Chokdrubdé, and 3) a collection of dream records.²

Whatever the case may be, all of the dreams are written in a similar style and format that is distinct from the rest of the biography. They were likely described by Rigdzin Gödem and recorded by one of his associates, who acted as a scribe. Whether the scribe was Nyima Zangpo himself, which seems unlikely, or some other associate is unclear. Regardless, it appears that the author had access to these records while composing *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* and that he simply inserted each of the dated dream journal entries into the biography at the appropriate points in the narrative, exerting varying degrees of effort at integrating the passages into the composition. As a result, the dream accounts tend to disrupt the orderly flow of the biography. This is abundantly clear in the section that describes the exploits of Rigdzin

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 139.

² Nine of the visionary dreams appear to have been copied from the following text: Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, *sPrul sku rigs 'dzin chen po'i rnal lam le'u brgyad pa* [*Eight Accounts of the Dreams of the Great Vidyadhara*], pp. 160-172, which despite its title indeed includes nine rather than eight dreams.

Gödem in the southern borderlands, which combines five dream records with just a few short paragraphs in a manner that is difficult to follow with regard to dates and locations.¹ Because none of the dreams of this grouping are well-integrated, one is left wondering about the relationships between the events described in the dream and the events Rigdzin Gödem experienced in the waking world. For example, the fifth dream expresses his concern about the dangers faced while attempting to cross a flooding valley, but the reader is left to decide whether or not the travel party faced this danger in the waking world.² That being said, these five dreams are not difficult to interpret, as will be shown below. As mentioned above, however, the seventh and the sixteenth dreams have proven rather difficult to interpret, and thus they will be analyzed below using a method devised from a reading of the first dream. As a result, these three dreams will receive extra attention below.

The Interpretation of the Visionary Dreams *Visionary Dream #1*

The first visionary dream occurred at Mt. Trazang during the ninth month of 1370, when Rigdzin Gödem was in his thirty-third year.³ As stated above, this dream is clearly the most well-integrated of the grouping. The section of the biography preceding the dream describes the way in which Rigdzin Gödem set out for a second time to gain the patronage of King Püntsokdé of Mangyül Gungthang.⁴ Following the prophetic instructions that he uncovered at Mt. Trazang for a second treasure site, he departed for Kyidrong, stopping at the spiritual center of the region to visit the Ārya Wati Zangpo statue at the Phakpa Lhakhang Temple.⁵ After the monarch learned of his presence in the kingdom, Rigdzin Gödem was granted an audience with King Püntsokdé, during which the two formed a patron-priest relationship. Then,

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 109-124.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 122-123. I will argue below, however, that it is in fact very safe to assume that there is a very close relationship between the dream events and what transpired in the waking world.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 105-109.

⁴ For the events leading up to the dream, see *ibid.*, pp. 103-109.

⁵ For a complete treatment of this temple, which is often considered the spiritual heart of Mang yul gung thang, see Ehrhard 2004.

Rigdzin Gödem reconvened his search for treasure in Kyidrong, at Mt. Palbar in particular. Unfortunately, Püntsokdé suffered an untimely death, which is said to have been ordered by the ruling patriarch of Northern Latö named Jang Tāwen,¹ and Rigdzin Gödem's search for treasure in Kyidrong as well as his pursuit of royal patronage were both discontinued. Presumably, this is when Rigdzin Gödem began to receive instructions through various prophetic guides to depart for the southern borderlands, fleeing his life in both Northern Latö and Mangyül Gungthang. By the time the dream occurred, one of the tribes of Zhangpa nomads, who were spread out through Mangyül Gungthang and Lo Möntang, had likely already seized control of the kingdom,² and Jang Tāwen was also likely preparing to invade and set himself up as the ruler of the area. Moreover, Rigdzin Gödem appears to have been aware that he was not universally loved,³ and so he must have been concerned about his own safety—as well as the safety of his close disciples—as he had aligned himself with a monarch who had been publicly criticized and murdered. Despite all of these obstacles, it was still difficult for him to accept that it was time to flee. While under the pressure of these circumstances, Rigdzin Gödem experienced this first prophetic dream, through which he received spiritual guidance and finally gained the resolve required to depart for the southern borderlands. The dream record itself contains an introduction that reports when, where, and under what conditions the dream occurred as well as Rigdzin Gödem's own thoughts about the dream after it occurred.

The entirety of the dream transpired at the summit of Mt. Trazang, where Rigdzin Gödem established a temple high above his headquarters in 1366. As the dream opens, the treasure revealer is sitting within a dome of rainbow light at the summit, where he listens to a resounding tone for a long time. Then, the rainbow lights stretch out in every direction, and he perceives two figures approaching him; the first is clothed in white and approaches from the southwest, presumably Mön, and the second is dressed in blue and approaches from the southeast, presumably Lhokha. The two figures then speak in unison while offering prophetic advice. In particular, while they acknowledge that enlightened qualities are emanating in the ten directions from Mt.

¹ See Everding 2000b, pp. 468-476.

² See *ibid.*, pp. 462-468.

³ This is acknowledged in the dream itself, see Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 107.

Trazang, they inform him that his reception has produced mixed results. While there are those who love him, there are also those who hate him, and this will cause hindrances and bad circumstances. Thus, he is instructed to depart for the borderlands of Lhokha and Mön, where his new connections will result in a significant expansion of his followers, which will benefit sentient beings.

Rigdzin Gödem, still within the dream, recognizes the wisdom of the advice, but it fills him with sadness and apprehension. So, he prays to Padmasambhava for further guidance. In response, a *tantrika* who happens to be sitting nearby ensures him that his flock will greatly expand in the southern borderlands and offers him advice on how to navigate the mental struggle that accompanies such a momentous decision like the one that he currently ponders. Thereupon, the *tantrika* transforms into a vajra,¹ which Rigdzin Gödem then lifts in his hand causing the dream to conclude.

The record continues with Rigdzin Gödem's thoughts right after the dream, which is when he follows the *tantrika*'s advice and begins to ponder the situation without attachment. He then remembers that it had been prophesied that he would establish disciples at three sacred abodes, so he realizes he needs to think of Trazang, Mön, and Lhokha with equanimity. At that moment, the day breaks, the summit of Mt. Trazang is covered in rainbow lights, and he perceives a blinding spot of light in the southwest, all of which mirror his experiences in the dream. The biography picks up at that point, confirming that Rigdzin Gödem had finally resolved to flee the area, reporting on his initial stops along the way.

Khenpo Chöying briefly mentions this dream in his abridged biography of Rigdzin Gödem, but he alters its message by connecting it with a different prophecy—a prophetic guide that was likely also the product of Rigdzin Gödem's visionary activities—that stresses the idea that his exploits in the borderlands, especially if he is supported by the king, will cause extended periods of peace and happiness in Tibet.² That is to say, while the dream focuses more on the well-being of Rigdzin Gödem and his fledgling religious community, Khenpo Chöying emphasizes the potential benefits for all of Tibet.

This first dream contains certain elements that will also be found in

¹ rDo rje.

² Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 109-110.

many of the other dreams in the biography, thereby giving us a few guideposts for interpretation. Firstly, here it can be perceived that Rigdzin Gödem tended to receive aide in his dreams—either in the form of prophetic advice or (elsewhere) in the form of spiritual healing—to help him cope with real problems in his waking world. This dream occurred at what might have seemed to be the end of his career as a treasure revealer, if not the end of his life entirely. Following the prophetic advice of the dream, however, he set out in a different direction, both in terms of geography and career objectives, to open concealed lands along the southern border, for which he is now widely famed. Secondly, it can be concluded that the episodes which constitute Rigdzin Gödem's dreams tend to unfold in the locations where the dreams occurred (i.e., the location where the dreamer is dreaming is also visited in the dream) and/or in the locations he is being instructed to visit in the waking world. While the entirety of this first dream occurs at Mt. Trazang, it also directs him to the southern borderlands, which is where he went not long after having the dream.

Visionary Dreams: #2-#6

While *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* has many good qualities, it is often recognized for its incompleteness, particularly when it comes to Rigdzin Gödem's exploits in the southern borderlands between 1371 and 1383. The events of the twelve years are covered in fifteen pages in the biography, which seems promising. However, the vast majority of the section is constituted by a series of five dream records that appear to have been unceremoniously dropped into the biography without much effort at integration or explanation, as mentioned above. As a result, it is difficult to determine if this series of dreams was always included in Nyima Zangpo's composition or if it was inserted later, perhaps in an attempt to counterbalance the lack of detail in this area of the biography. Regardless, the overall account of Rigdzin Gödem's travels in the biography, which includes the dreams, is somewhat incoherent. It is difficult to track his movements, and one has to be creative when attempting to make sense of the dates.¹ Conversely, when read without the dreams, the account of his travels appears to be more or

¹ For more information on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's travels in the concealed lands, see Cécile Ducher's chapter on the subject in this volume.

less coherent, though very uninformative regarding the details of his activities.

In general terms, the second and third dreams transpire in the southern reaches of Lhokha, while the remaining three dreams in the sequence transpire at unidentified locations in “Mön,” which during the fourteenth century was a toponym used to refer to a variety of borderland areas inhabited with individuals endowed with dark, reddish-toned skin, who are also featured in these dreams.

The second dream (i.e., the first of this series of five dreams) occurred in 1373, while Rigdzin Gödem was staying at a place called Sengé Lung.¹ He is informed in the dream that he is either seven or three days away from the concealed land of Dremoshong, his ultimate destination, depending on the size of his traveling party. There was evidently a great crowd of people and herd animals accompanying him on his journey, and they were slowing his progress. The spiritual implication revealed through the dream is that his decisions regarding the size of his company were driven by both fear, particularly the fear of not having everything that he needs for his journey, and attachment to his accustomed pleasantries. He also receives a somewhat veiled confirmation that he is approaching the so-called northern gate into Dremoshong. The dream ends ruminating on similar concerns regarding his insufficient supplies—Dharma books in this case—suggesting that the dream may have helped him to see the nature of his problems without offering a complete resolution.

The third dream appears to occur about a month later (ca. 1373) in Dzönga Taktsé, a five-armed mountain range also known as Gangchen Dzönga, which straddles the border between Nepal and Sikkim.² It is clear from the dating of the dream that he had not yet made it into Dremoshong through the northern gate despite the fact that a month had passed since the previous dream in which he was informed that he could have reached his destination in a week at most. His large party of travelers was, in fact, suffering and unable to make progress as they were trapped in the snow on a glacier. It is implied that his progress had continued to be slowed by his own attachments and the size of his traveling party, which evidently contained corrupt women and men who he is instructed to abandon, at least mentally. It is also suggested

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 110-113.

² Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 113-119.

by the content of this dream that his progress had been hindered by powerful divinities who were blocking his access to the region. Luckily, he acquired power over a maṇḍala representing the region and all of its wrathful divinities. He then performed a Vajrakīla¹ rite of consecration to form a positive connection with the land. Nyima Zangpo does not offer any context after the dream, but while it is presumed that his actions in the dream opened the way off the glacier, it appears that they did not make it into Dremoshong using the northern gate at that time and attempted to circle around through Mön.

The fourth dream occurred in the winter of 1374–1375, while traveling near an unidentified place called Serling Dechen in Mön Dechenpo.² The content of the dream reveals that his party was suffering from a lack of food and that three years had passed without reaching Dremoshong. In the dream, they always manage to discover food whenever they are in need, and he is explicitly encouraged to continue his nearly completed journey. He encounters a guardian of Mön who reorients the direction of his travels toward Dremoshong.³ He is also informed that he has already been provided with sufficient signs but that it has been his residual karma that has kept him from making quick progress toward his goal. It is again suggested that there are those either within his party or outsiders he has met along the way who he should not trust. When he sets out in the indicated direction—still within the dream—his way is blocked by an obstructive *gongpo* spirit, whom he circumvents, whereupon he sees the path to Dremoshong.

The fifth dream transpired about one month later (ca. early 1375), presumably after departing Serling Dechen in Mön Dechenpo.⁴ In this short dream, he is given a pair of shoes which is apparently meant to help him navigate the path. The content of the dream also reflects concerns with the safety of his entourage, a few of which evidently drowned in a flooding valley.

The sixth dream occurred one month later (ca. early 1375) while he was in the Nakpo Valley of Mön, just before arriving in Dremoshong.⁵

¹ rDo rje phur pa.

² Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 119–122.

³ Interestingly, Mon is described as a far-away land, which appears to mean that the dream was transcribed at some point after he returned back to Mt. bKra bzang in 1384.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 122–123.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

In this dream, which is even shorter than the last, he is given a final set of traveling instructions and a horse to speed him on his way.

As mentioned above, it is difficult to know the degree to which the episodes in these dreams reflect Rigdzin Gödem's activities in the waking world because Nyima Zangpo did not carefully weave these episodes into the narrative as he did with the first dream. Nevertheless, it appears that these dreams share the basic qualities of the first dream. That is to say, he firstly receives various forms of spiritual aid to help him deal with a large variety of hardships that were experienced in the real world on his way to the concealed lands. Secondly, the places that are featured in the dream are places that exist in the real world, where he is expected to follow the proffered advice or take advantage of the aid in his waking adventures. To these observations, one might add that the dreams are clear about his progress on another path, the path toward enlightenment. The fact that these passages present Rigdzin Gödem as an individual who is struggling because of his own karmic residue is almost certainly evidence that the dream records express the treasure revealer's own thoughts. It is somewhat paradoxical, for the prevalence of his prophetic dreams are indications of his advanced stage on the path, yet he is willing to take responsibility for his own shortcomings. It is difficult to imagine that a devoted disciple would choose to present his master in this humble manner.

Visionary Dream #7

The seventh dream transpired in the first month of the Year of the Iron-Horse (1390).¹ The placement of the record in the biography suggests that Rigdzin Gödem experienced this dream while residing at Mt. Tra-zang in the months after returning from Mangyül Gunthang—where he was formally recognized by King Chokdrubdé in 1389 as the foremost court priest—and Kyimolung, the concealed land which he opened along the southern border of the kingdom. However, just as with the preceding five dreams that transpired in the southern borderlands, this seventh dream is also dropped into the narrative, presumably based on the date of the dream, without any attempt to integrate it into the biography. Thus, it is not actually clear where he was when this

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 128-131.

dream occurred.

The preceding section involving King Chokdrubdé is largely constituted by the royal edict, which is dated to 1389, with only a few sentences of clarification and elaboration before and after it.¹ The seventh dream is followed immediately by a collection of eight dreams that occurred while he was recovering from a fall from a horse in 1397.² Thus, there is a gap of seven years of unaccounted time in Rigdzin Gödem's life between the seventh and eighth dreams. Because of the complete lack of connected stories before or after the seventh dream, it is perhaps the most difficult to interpret.

The dream itself can be divided into four connected parts that unfold as Rigdzin Gödem is guided through a series of valleys to a specific mountain, crossing a great river along the way. None of these locations are named, but the dominate characteristic of most of the places visited in the dream is that they are constituted by white stone, giving the dream a luminous quality.

Rigdzin Gödem's guide and interlocutor through the first two locations is a woman who emerges from a castle or multi-leveled manor in the opening scene. She instructs him to take ownership of the lands that were previously his, which seems to be their travel destination. They are accompanied by three men wearing white who act as his porters as they travel from the first to the second valley. From there, they can see a white-stone castle in a valley on the other side of a great river, and he recognizes it at once as the homeland of his maternal aunt. After the woman gives him traveling instructions for the rest of his journey, she departs. In the third scene, he encounters a pair of renunciate monks, who not only instruct him to go circumambulate a white mountain in the distance, but they also accompany him for the rest of the journey, one leading him while the other follows behind. As a result of the circumambulations in this third part of the dream, Rigdzin Gödem begins to experience pain in his feet, and walking becomes more difficult. Finally, Rigdzin Gödem and his companions begin to climb the mountain which is said to resemble the white stone steps of a stūpa.³ At the mid-point of the ascent, one of the monks informed him that he (i.e., Rigdzin Gödem) became a monk long ago during the life of Ratnasambhava

¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-128.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 131-139.

³ mChod rten.

and then gave him instructions on how to put an end to the illness causing the pain in his feet, which is a result of his remaining karma.¹ The dream ends as he approached the summit, where he is told that he will see the buddhas of the past.

As mentioned above, this dream is not accompanied by any commentary, so the following interpretation is very speculative in nature. As argued above, the dreams tend to offer Rigdzin Gödem advice regarding his real-world problems. Moreover, they tend to feature places where he has the dream and the locations that he is about to visit. Thus, it is presumed that this dream reflects an otherwise unknown journey to establish a foothold in some unknown region that belonged to his maternal aunt. It would seem that the dream occurred while he was in the “foreign” territory but before he arrived at his ultimate destination, the mountain that resembled the steps of a giant white stūpa that is featured in the dream.

In an attempt to identify this series of valleys, I first read through an extensive collection of prophetic guides related to the concealed land of Kyimolung.² Although the dream appears to have transpired after he returned from his exploits in and around Mangyül Gungthang, it seemed possible that Nyima Zangpo might have improperly ordered this part of the biography. Nevertheless, while the prophetic guide contains extensive descriptions of Kyimolung, none of it seems to describe the series of valleys and mountains dominated by white stone that are recorded in Rigdzin Gödem’s dream.³

The other hint we are given regarding the places within the dream is that they are presented in the context of claiming rights to lands that had belonged to his maternal aunt. Unfortunately, we have no information about his maternal aunt, not even her name. However, we do have some information regarding Jocham Sönam Khyeudren, Rigdzin Gödem’s mother, as well as several other individuals from his mother’s side of the family. Rigdzin Gödem’s mother as well as his sister’s child

¹ *mKhan po* Chos dbyings’ assertion that Rig ’dzin rGod ldem remembered his life as a monk during the life of Buddha Ratnasambhava appears to be his interpretation of this part of the dream. See Chos dbyings 2015, p. 111.

² Cécile Ducher was the first to suggest to me that this dream could be about sKyid mo lung. Although I do not currently favor that interpretation, it is still a reasonable hypothesis.

³ See Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 1983, sBas yul skyid mo lung gi lam yig gags sel kha byang gi rim pa rnams, pp. 557-588.

(i.e., his nephew) named Dorjepal are said to have been from “*Phug tsha*” (alt. *Phug rtsa*), but unfortunately such a place has not been identified as of yet.¹ Nevertheless, there are reasons to believe that several of Rigdzin Gödem’s relatives—Sangyé Tenpa (maternal uncle), Dorjepal (maternal nephew), Jampa Shenyen (grand-nephew)—were connected to people and places in Southern Latö.² One might also add that the dream sequence which follows this seventh dream features an important female patron and disciple named Lady Pönmo Drubpamo, who is a noble lady of the Padruk area of Southern Latö.³ As with the first dream, here these developments may again be a response to the sudden death of his royal patron in Gungthang. Lastly, the biography of the Sangyé Palzang (15th c.) happens to also contain a dream about a white mountain, which he eventually climbs in the waking world to reach Śrī Jangdzong,⁴ the seat of Jampa Shenyen in Southern Latö.⁵ This is a pivotal moment in Sangyé Palzang’s biography, for Jampa Shenyen is his most important, early connection with the lords of the Northern Treasures and the master from whom he received *The Great Perfection’s Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*. It should be noted, however, that the connection between the two dreams is not clear cut. While Rigdzin Gödem describes a white mountain that had steps like a stūpa, Sangyé Palzang describes a white mountain covered with many stūpas. Considering the above observations, it is possible that this dream reflects a time late in Rigdzin Gödem’s career when he began to make inroads into the principality of Southern Latö. This would help explain how the nephew lineage extending from Rigdzin Gödem through Dorjepal and Jampa Shenyen took root in this neighboring region.

¹ For a discussion of the origins of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s mother, see Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 60. For a biography of rDo rje dpal, see Sangs rgyas dpal bzang 1983, *Bla ma rnams kyi rnam thar ’od kyi phreng ba*, pp. 181-182.

² Sangs rgyas bstan pa’s connection to the region is only tangentially implied by the fact that his master, Dar bzang pa, was a spiritual friend of bZang po grags pa, who was active in Southern La stod. See Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 1983, *sBas yul skyid mo lung gi lam yig gags sel kha byang gi rim pa rnams*, pp. 84-91. For a biography of Byams pa bshes gnyen, see Sangs rgyas dpal bzang 1983, *Bla ma rnams kyi rnam thar ’od kyi phreng ba*, pp. 185-188.

³ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 131.

⁴ Shri byang rdzong.

⁵ Sangs rgyas dpal bzang 1983, *Bla ma rnams kyi rnam thar ’od kyi phreng ba*, p. 198.

One other possibility is that the dream might be describing the central, snow-capped peak of the mountain range and valleys collectively known as Chörten Nyima, which Rigdzin Gödem visited enroute to Dremoshong in the winter of 1376–1377.¹ The prophetic guide to the region, which has been translated into both French and English, suggests that his connection with the region was not superficial.² It is at least theoretically possible that he returned—or dreamed about returning—to Chörten Nyima in 1390, but it does not seem likely. Moreover, I have not encountered any evidence to suggest that his extended maternal ancestors were associated with this border region.

It is also worth noting that this dream, as well as all the rest in the biography, are concerned with the problems of physical embodiment, up to and including death. This seventh dream reflects what is assumed was a developing chronic condition that caused pain in his feet, which was likely a problem that would flare up during extensive travel. In following suit with all of the dreams, he receives aid in the form of an explanation of the spiritual cause of the condition (i.e., residual karma) and the declaration that he would now be freed from at least the flare up if not the chronic condition entirely.

Visionary Dreams: #8-#15

In 1397, Rigdzin Gödem was thrown from a horse and suffered serious injury to his head and body. This dream record contains the largest amount of introductory material that appears to contain Rigdzin Gödem's own recollection of the events leading up to his injury.³ The fall also aggravated the chronic problem with his feet or legs, which—based on the content of a previous dream—had troubled him as far back as 1390. For at least twenty-three days, Rigdzin Gödem suffered great pain from the fall and evidently spent much of this time unconscious at Mt. Trazang. During this time, he experienced a series of eight visionary dreams (#8-#15) in which he was visited by eight different beings—foremost among them were Śrī Siṃha and Vimalamitra—who each participated in the healing of Rigdzin Gödem. The entire narrative, including the circumstances in which he fell from the horse and

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 124.

² See respectively Buffettrille 2000, pp. 202-224, and Boord 2003, pp. 31-53.

³ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 131-139.

the eight visionary dreams, has been preserved in the form of a stand-alone text, a record of dreams, written primarily in first-person by Rigdzin Gödem.¹ While Khenpo Chöying summarized the entire scenario in about three sentences, Nyima Zangpo included the complete text within *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.²

While the fall from the horse was the immediate cause of Rigdzin Gödem's injuries, it is clear that the injury was ultimately caused by a violation in the manner in which he shared the teachings—particularly the physical texts—with his students. Khenpo Chöying explains that while Rigdzin Gödem had 5,000 disciples over the years, he was very careful to vary his teaching methods according to the suitability of the student.³ Thus, while there is a somewhat amorphous list of seven or eight inner disciples who received enough empowerments and teachings to become masters of some or all of the cycles of treasures revealed by Rigdzin Gödem, the vast majority of his disciples only received a few teachings. It is believed that Rigdzin Gödem's injury ultimately resulted from a violation of these teaching practices. In particular, despite his internal dialogue telling him that he should not release a complete copy of *The Great Perfection's Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* to an important patron and lay disciple named Lady Pönmo Drubpamo, he allowed for the texts to be sent to her. While he had given the appropriate empowerments to this disciple and her retinue, he knew that there would be others who would have access to the texts if he sent her the entirety of the collection. Thus, as part of the visionary healing process in his dreams, he is repeatedly encouraged to confess.

As with the previous dreams, this dream sequence reflects at least two of his real-world problems. The first is his violation of his own teaching practices, and the second—which was caused by the first—was his physical injuries that resulted from his fall from the horse. Both his confessions of his various “sins” and the healings that he received while in the dream are presented as the causes of his recovery.

¹ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1983, sPrul sku rigs 'dzin chen po'i mäl lam le'u brgyad pa, pp. 160-172.

² Chos dbyings 2015, pp. 116-117.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

Visionary Dream #16

The final dream that is recounted in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* has been a subject of indirect disagreement amongst both Tibetan and Western scholars.¹ In particular, the famous Tibetan historian named Guru Tashi (b. 18th c.) and the Western scholar named Jurgen Herweg, who produced an English translation and summary of the biography, understood the dream as belonging to the author of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, Nyima Zangpo.² Conversely, the seventeenth-century biographer of the Northern Treasures named Chakdor Norbu, brother of the Third Yölmö Lama Tendzin Norbu, interpreted the dream as belonging to Rigdzin Gödem, like all the other dreams of the biography.³ As will be demonstrated below, this is hardly a trivial matter as the lengthy dream together with its introduction contain a wealth of information that significantly alters one's understanding of the content of the biography, depending on who one decides is the dreamer. Thus, it is worth taking the time to explain the various reasons why it is best to interpret this dream as belonging to the protagonist of the biography, Rigdzin Gödem.

First, however, it would be helpful to understand the opposing perspective, for it is not without merit. The reader of the biography will notice that just before the final dream is introduced, the author narrates his initial meeting with Rigdzin Gödem in the first-person.⁴ Almost immediately afterward, there is the lengthy account of the dream in question that also appears to be written in first-person, although the majority of the pronouns in the section are implied rather than written. Additionally, it is reported that the visionary experience transpired while the dreamer was at Gyakhar, which happens to be the primary Sé estate in Ngamring and the location where, according to the colophon, Setön Nyima Zangpo composed *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.⁵ I presume that these observations are what have led some to believe that the

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 140-143.

² See Gu ru bKra shis 1990, pp. 664-665, where an account of the dream appears in a brief biography of Nyi ma bzang po, and Herweg 1994, pp. 144-147.

³ Bya gtang Phyag rdor nor bu 2015, *Byang gter bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar*, p. 475.

⁴ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 139.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 145-146.

dream belonged to Nyima Zangpo.

Closer attention to the pronouns, however, reveals that when Nyima Zangpo introduced himself into the narrative, he employed the term *kho bo* to refer to himself, a term which he employs just once in the entire biography.¹ In the final dream itself, like in the other dreams recorded in the biography, when the pronouns are actually written (rather than implied), the pronoun *bdag* is employed to communicate the first-person experience.² It would seem, therefore, that Nyima Zangpo intentionally employed *kho bo* to refer to himself both out of humility and to make it more obvious that the term *bdag* was being employed systematically to refer to Rigdzin Gödem. However, in the passage immediately after the dream, Nyima Zangpo describes how he and a group of masters received precepts from Rigdzin Gödem, and here he muddies the waters further by clearly using the pronoun *bdag* to refer to himself as a recipient of the teachings.³ Therefore, one can at least conclude that a decision regarding the identity of the dreamer cannot be determined by examining the pronouns alone. That being said, the fact that the final dream follows the same patterns of pronoun usage as all the other dreams strongly suggests that it should be read as belonging to Rigdzin Gödem.

Similarly, while Setön Nyima Zangpo almost certainly enjoyed a strong connection with Gyakhar, there is evidence in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* that suggests that Rigdzin Gödem maintained lifelong relationships with the patriarchs of the Sé clan. The brothers Setön Palchen Bum and Lama Lekpawa acted as religious benefactors for Rigdzin Gödem as a child after the death of his father.⁴ Lama Lekpawa continued to act as his advisor, even after Rigdzin Gödem discovered treasures at Zangzang Lhadrak.⁵ Setön Nyima Zangpo became one of

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 139. I am particularly indebted to Jean-Luc Achard, who suggested that this line of inquiry might bear fruit.

² *Ibid.*, p. 142.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 66. It should be acknowledged, however, that this passage that appears to name these two brothers as Se *ston* dPal chen 'bum and *Bla ma* Legs pa ba, might alternatively be read as referring to Se *ston* dPal chen 'bum, *Bla ma* Legs pa ba, and *Bla ma* Legs pa ba's unnamed brother. This alternative is mentioned here because it would challenge the assumption that *Bla ma* Legs pa ba was also of the Se clan.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

his minor disciples late in the treasure revealer's career, in fact, just before he experienced the final dream of the biography. The dream itself transpires at the seat of the Sé clan and features a vision of Gyakhar and Lama Lekpawa.¹ Immediately after the dream, Rigdzin Gödem transmits a massive number of teachings to an exclusive group of individuals led by Sé patriarchs.² Lastly, Rigdzin Gödem's biography is eventually authored by one of his Sé disciples, Nyima Zangpo. In short, Rigdzin Gödem's connection with Gyakhar—which, it should be noted, is not far from Rigdzin Gödem's practice center at Mt. Tra-zang—is arguably at least as strong as Nyima Zangpo's connection. Thus, the author's association with the place where the dream transpired is clearly not enough to conclude that the dream belonged to the biographer.

Additionally, if one fully considers the content of the dream, it is clearly a dream belonging to an elderly master, and not the dream of a young acolyte. The sixteenth and final dream transpired in the twelfth month of 1399 during Rigdzin Gödem's sixty-third year, the antepenultimate year of his life, at Gyakhar. As the dream begins, he is viewing an unidentified castle or manor that is located within a copse of trees in a large valley.³ He enters the manor and discovers that people are sleeping on the floor and that the room is filled with offerings. Among them, he discovers a drum, and after searching in vain for a mallet, he begins to strike out a rhythm on the drum with his bare hands. As the tone of the drum grows louder, he ascends like the wind to the very top of the manor where he looks down from a high precipice. At this point, he grasps hand with a female being named Tromo Kasung⁴ who agrees to carry him away on the wind to whichever destination draws his attention.

He first looks to the north and sees one of his earliest teachers, the Sé patriarch known as Lama Lekpawa,⁵ practicing enlightened activity at the peak of a great manor, which is obviously meant to be Gyakhar,

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

² *Ibid.*, p. 143.

³ It is possible that this is supposed to be Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's family estate in sNa mo lung.

⁴ Khro mo bka' srungs. This is most probably E ka dzā ti.

⁵ As mentioned in a footnote above, there is a chance that *Bla ma* Legs pa ba was not of the Se clan. Nevertheless, his presence in this vision which occurs at the Se seat of brGya mkhar further suggests his association with the clan.

where he is dreaming. He then looks to the southwest, to the land where Padmasambhava is believed to abide, taming wrathful spirits. Rigdzin Gödem feels great devotion for both Lama Lekpawa and Padmasambhava and is evidently having trouble deciding which one to follow in the dream. His female companion informs him that if he remains single-pointedly focused, he can go and join the ranks of practitioners at the feet of Padmasambhava. He thus decides to go in that direction, and they proceed to fly over a great ravine that contains all of saṃsāra and she beats out a path with a stick through hordes of *yakṣas*¹ before finally placing him on a golden throne atop a mountain, which does not appear to be his intended destination. Tromo Kasung then informs him that it is not quite time for him to depart this realm as hundreds of thousands of people will benefit if he stays on this mountain and teaches for a while longer. He is informed, however, that if he works diligently, he may be able to depart with his body, but that if he is not able to do that, he will go receive final teachings from Padmasambhava and quickly ascend to an enlightened state.

After the conclusion of the dream, Nyima Zangpo describes Rigdzin Gödem's teachings activities in 1401.² While the location is not mentioned, it could also be Gyakhar as the group of fifteen male and female disciples is headed by the Sé patriarchs named Setön Tukjé Gyaltsen and Nyima Zangpo (i.e., the author of the biography). This is an interesting development because Rigdzin Gödem is known for restricting access to the teachings, preferring to give them out a little at a time. This transmission session is the only instance within the biography when Rigdzin Gödem is said to offer the entirety of *The Great Perfection's Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* all at once. Immediately following this teaching session, Rigdzin Gödem travels to a nearby location called Taktsé and then he passes away, leaving his body behind. Nyima Zangpo obviously and intentionally mirrors the content of the dream when he says that Rigdzin Gödem went to receive teachings after his death from Padmasambhava and then entered the realm of the *sambhogakāya*.

Thus, when all things are considered, it is difficult to conclude that the sixteenth dream of the biography belonged to Nyima Zangpo, who was in his fourteenth year at the time, and not Rigdzin Gödem, who

¹ gNod sbyin.

² Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 143.

was in this sixty-third year. It is clearly the dream of an advanced master who is pondering his own death. The dream not only confirms his closeness to death, but through it, he receives his last piece of guidance to help him through life's final journey. He is also informed that it is time to open the flood gates and release the teachings for the benefit of sentient beings.

Conclusions

Above, it has been established that the sixteen dreams of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* have not been incorporated into the biography with the same degree of care. While this state of affairs is somewhat disappointing, it also provided an opportunity to develop a method of interpretation based on the treatment of the most well-integrated of the dreams to help make sense of two of the more perplexing dreams of the biography. Certainly, there are still mysteries to solve regarding the seventh dream, but following the methodology outlined above, it can be assumed that Rigdzin Gödem was struggling on two separate fronts when the dream transpired. First, he was either on a journey or about to embark upon a journey to the natal land of his maternal ancestors, possible in Southern Latö, to stake a religious claim in the area. Secondly, he was beginning to experience physical ailments and was given comfort and healing through his dreams.

The method of interpretation also helped clarify that the sixteenth dream of the biography belonged to Rigdzin Gödem and not his biographer. From this perspective, it is clear that this dream reflects a classic Buddhist interaction with death, wherein the dreamer, who is quite aware of his approaching demise, learns that he must carry on in life, not out of a fear of death, but for the sake of sentient being who need his teachings. He is even given instructions that are meant to be followed if he finds himself in the intermediate state after his life concludes. Moreover, the dream suggests that in his later years, he was closely associated with the patriarchs of the Sé clan in the waking world. Evidence of the strong connections between Rigdzin Gödem and the Sé clan is also contained in the transmission records that were preserved by the Fifth Dalai Lama.¹ Based on these two sources, it is

¹ For examples, see Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1991–1995, *Thob yig ganggā'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, p. 127a, 128a.

perhaps unsurprising that Rigdzin Gödem's practice center at Trazang was soon claimed as a second seat for the Sé clan in Ngamring. Nevertheless, a careful comparison of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* and the Fifth Dalai Lama's transmission records also draws one's attention to the surprising lack of information about Rigdzin Gödem's direct disciples in the biography. It is with this issue in mind that our next volume will be focused on Rigdzin Gödem's disciples and grand disciples.



Chapter 10: A Reassessment of Rigdzin Gödem's Date of Death

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Despite the growing amount of attention dedicated to the life and works of Rigdzin Gödem by Tibetologists,¹ the circumstances of this great treasure revealer's death are still somewhat of a mystery. While even the location of his passing is disputed—there are three proposed locations for his death: Taktse and Trazang, both of which are in or near Ngamring, and Zilnön, which is in the vicinity of Chöten Nyima on the border with Sikkim—this chapter will narrow the scope of the inquiry, almost entirely, to the date of Rigdzin Gödem's death.² The bulk of the investigation will focus on a series of hagiographic sources composed, most likely, in the fifteenth and seventeenth centuries by the following holders of the Northern Treasures: Nyima Zangpo (14th–15th c.), Jamyang Sönam Gyaltzen (15th c.), Sangyé Palzang (15th c.), Chakdor Norbu (d. 1663), and the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682). Although it is not possible to determine a definitive answer to our research question based solely on these texts, we none-the-less suggest the provisional acceptance of 1337–ca. 1401³ as the dates for this great treasure revealer, while acknowledging the rationale for the traditional dates of 1337–1408/1409.

¹ Notably: Eva Neumaier-Dargyay (1971), Peter Schwieger (1985), Martin J. Boord (1993), Jürgen Wilhelm Herweg (1994), Karl-Heinz Everding (2000), Jay Holt Valentine (2013), Katarina Sylvia Turpeinen (2015), Stéphane Arguillère (2016), Alexander Schiller (2021), Kanako Shinga (2022), Jean-Luc Achard (2023), and a few Tibetans and Sikkimese scholars, such as gTsang *phrug* Chos 'brog pa (1992) and *Rig 'dzin dNgos grub mdo kham pa* (1998).

² Many of the scholars listed in the previous note have discussed the problem of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's dates, including Herweg (1994), Everding (2000), Schiller (2021), and Shinga (2022). The goal of this chapter is to exhaustively examine the subject of his date of death to establish dates that will be used provisionally by the FCHNT.

³ As explained below, this is a simplified way of stating that he likely died in late-1401, early-1402, or very near to those dates.

The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight (early- to mid-15th c.)

As mentioned on numerous occasions in this volume, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* is the most extensive biography of Rigdzin Gödem. It was composed by his direct pupil, Nyima Zangpo, at Gyakhar, the seat of the Sé clan, situated near the lake at the heart of Jang Ngamring.¹ Likely written in early- to mid-fifteenth century, this biography is also the earliest and most authoritative account of the treasure revealer's life.² Nyima Zangpo relied on the conversation he had with Rigdzin Gödem and his senior disciples as well as a bulk of sources attributed to Gödem himself and prophecies revealed by others, such as Guru Ye-shé Khyungdrak and Jangchub Lingpa Palgyi Gyaltsen.³ As Herweg observes, "the author of this hagiography, fortunately supplies, after having dealt with the prophecies announcing the coming of Rig 'dzin Rgod ldem can, a steady stream of dates and names which make his work interesting to historians."⁴ That is to say, the biography is valuable, in part, because it documents Rigdzin Gödem's life in a fairly good chronological format, from his birth until his final teachings in 1401.

Nevertheless, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* tells us very little about his later years. The section of the biography that covers 1390 through 1399 consists almost entirely of first-person dream records, eight of which are related to a nearly fatal fall from a horse in 1396, which left him temporarily bedridden.⁵ Within a year, he apparently recovered from the injury enough to continue teaching as Nyima Zangpo briefly describes his first meeting with the master in 1397.⁶ After an account of a final dream that occurred in early 1399,⁷ the biography leaps forward to his final sequence of actions starting in 1401:⁸

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 147.

² As will be demonstrated below, this is not meant to indicate that the biography is somehow exhaustive or without fault.

³ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 146.

⁴ Herweg 1994, p. 42.

⁵ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 128-143. For the account of his fall and the subsequent visionary dreams, see *ibid.*, pp. 131-139.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 139.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 140-143.

⁸ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 143-145: *de nas lcags mo sbrul gyi lo dbyar kha| se ston thugs rje rgyal mtshan gyis gtso mdzad pa'i mched lcam bco lnga tsam ci la kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zangs thal gyi khrid shin tu rgyas shing zab pa cig gnang zhing| khyad par bdag rang la man ngag bsam gyis mi khyab pa cig gnang*

Then, in the summer of the Year of the female Iron-Snake (1401), [Rigdzin Gödem] gave the profound and extensive guidance teachings (*khrid*) for *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* to about fifteen male and female students, a group that was led by Setön Tukjé Gyaltzen. In particular, he gave me, [Nyima Zangpo], inconceivable pith instructions and ripened my mind stream.

In the winter of that [year], he was invited to Taktsé and gave further teachings and empowerments. Then, from the perspective of others (i.e., his disciples), he appeared to be afflicted with a severe respiratory disorder. In response, his disciples and patrons offered him a healing ritual and prayers (*sku rim*) and administered various medications. Furthermore, Rinpoche himself also performed *The Secret that Wonderfully Arises* (*gSang ba rmad byung*),¹ yet his illness became more severe.

As stated in *The Seven Essential Guides*:

Whether it is through acts of purification or through experience,
[You] will have exhausted the remnants of karma.

nas| *rgyud shin tu smin par mdzad do*| *de'i dgun stag rtser spyang drangs te chos dbang mang po gnam*| *de nas gdul bya gzhan ngor sku stod la dbugs 'khrugs kyi rnam pa'i snyung gzhi* [144] *thu mo cig byung ste*| *de la bu slob dang yon bdag rnams kyi sku rim dang gsol sman rnam pa mang po bgyis*| *rin po che rang gis gsang ba rmad byung gi thugs dam mdzad kyang*| *snyung pa lji ru song ste*| *snying byang bdun pa las*| *sbyong byed myong byed gang rung gis : las kyi lhag ro de zad nas : skye ba de yi phyi ma la : spyang ras gzigs dang thod 'phreng rtal : skyes bu khyod kyi rig pa gsum : dbyer med phrin las stobs chen 'grub : ces gsungs so*| *lung bstan byin cig las*| *sku skye ba cig gam*| *gnyis blangs nas*| *lho bod kyi mtshams su 'gro don mdzad*| *de nas sku lus ma bor bar pad ma 'od kyi gzhal yas su gshegs nas*| *gu ru pad ma'i thugs kar thim ste*| *'phrin las stobs chen mdzad par gsungs na'ang*| *'bras mo bshongs su byon dus*| *nags rongs sogs la dka' dpyad drag po mdzad pas*| *gti mug gi lhag ro dag pa'i rtags brgyad bcu rtse bzhi byung ste*| *snyan brgyud tho byang las*| *sbyong byed myong byed gang rung gis : las kyi lhag ro de zad nas : ces gsungs so*| *de nas* [145] *snying tig rnam pa gnyis dang*| *chos nyid mngon gsum nyams su bzhes pas*| *snang bzhi'i nang nas*| *ye shes rgyas pa'i snang ba la dbang thob pa'i rtags kyi*| *zhal lta mang po yod de*| *smra ru ma btub sa 'o*| *gang ltar*| *'di nas gshegs ma thag u rgyan pad ma'i drung du lung bstan dang zhal gdams zab po zhus nas*| *longs sku'i zhing kham su gshegs par nges pa yin pas*| *gsol ba 'debs pa dang*| *mos gus byed pa rnams der gyis shig*| *byin rlabs dang thugs rje gzhan pas bdun 'gyur bas myur zhing che bar gsungs so*|.

¹ It is a sub-cycle of the *dGongs pa zang thal* and presents the practice of *gcod*. See reference in the series of chapters below regarding the works of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

After that life,
 [You will be] inseparable [from] the three awarenesses of
 Avalokiteśvara, [Dorjé] Tötreng Tsäl (i.e., Padmasambhava),
 and your [own] being
 [As you] accomplish enlightened activity and [attain] great
 power!

A Gift of Prophecy [also] says:

After taking one or two rebirths, [you] will act for the benefit
 of migratory beings in the borderlands of southern Tibet.
 Then, without casting off [your] body, [you] will go to the
 Palace of Lotus Light and then dissolve into the heart of Pad-
 masambhava. Although it has been said that [you] will per-
 form enlightened activities of great power, when [you] went
 to Dremoshong, you performed extreme austerities in the for-
 ests, valleys, and so forth [of that region]. Thus, [when you
 are cremated], there will be eighty-four signs that the remains
 of your delusion have been purified.

As is stated in *The List Guide of the [Six] Oral Lineages*:

Whether it is through acts of purification or through experi-
 ence,
 The remnants of [your] karma will be exhausted.

Then, he engaged in the practice of the two Nyingthik [cycles] and
 [experienced the Vision of] Manifest Reality. There were numerous
 accounts regarding the signs [indicating that] he had obtained mastery
 over the Visions of Increasing Wisdom from within the Four Visions,
 but he wasn't capable of speaking [about them].

Whatever the case, as soon as he departed from this [world], [he]
 requested advice and prophecies before Padmasambhava. Then, he
 certainly went to the realm of the Sambhogakāya. Thus, those who
 perform acts of devotion and supplication should [direct] those ac-
 tions to that [realm]! It is said that [his] blessings and compassion are
 seven-fold quicker and greater than [those of] others.

A straight-forward reading of the preceding passage would lead one to
 conclude that Rigdzin Gödem died either at the end of 1401 or at the
 start of 1402. There would be no reason for further analysis of this pas-
 sage if no other authoritative sources asserted alternative dates.

However, given that there are other candidates, it is worth investigating further. Firstly, a reader of the entire biography will notice that when Nyima Zangpo knows the exact date of a particular event, he spells it out clearly and in detail, in some instances including the year, month, day, or even the time of day.¹ The fact that he does not specifically date Rigdzin Gödem's death but instead leaves it to the reader to calculate the date based on the dates of his final two teaching sessions, could be taken to mean that he did not actually know the exact date of death, just that it occurred at some point after his visit to Taktsé in the winter of 1401/1402.² One would assume that the remedies were administered (or performed) as soon as he became ill while he was still at Taktsé, but this is also not clearly stated. Thus, while one would still assume—based on this one biography—that Gödem died at some point in 1402 at the latest,³ it would still be rash to rule out all other dates without carefully considering them.

***The History of the Lineage:
the Garland of Jewels (mid to late-15th c.)***

The History of the Lineage: the Garland of Jewels is a fourteen-folio text included in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* (2015)⁴ that describes the history and transmission of *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* (*rDzogs chen dgongs pa zang thal*), a cycle which may be considered as the crown-jewel among the Northern Treasures.⁵ While there is some confusion regarding the identity of the

¹ See, for example, the dated dream records in the biography (Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 106, 110, and 128).

² According to Valentine (see chapter on Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's dreams above), there are numerous deficiencies in the latter part of the biography, which together suggest that Nyi ma bzang po was not as closely involved with this treasure revealer in his later years as one might expect.

³ The modern scholar named gTsang phrug Chos 'brog pa (1992, p. 62), for example, maintains that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem returned to bKra bzang in the year of Water-Horse (1402), following his visit to sTag rtse but before his death.

⁴ 'Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan 2015, *brGyud pa'i lo rgyus nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, vol. 1, pp. 43-71.

⁵ According to Jean-Luc Achard, this text is included in some but not all editions of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. See Achard 2023e, "A Line of Transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal* according to the *History of the Lineage known as the Garland of Gems* (*brGyud pa'i lo rgyus nor bu'i 'phreng ba*)."⁵ Achard has also summarized

author, he names himself Sakya Jamyang Sönam Gyaltzen Pal Zangpo, and one can deduce from the narrative that he was active in the mid-fifteenth century.¹ The account begins with the primordial Samantabhadra, the progenitor of these teachings, and subsequently explains: how the teachings were brought to Tibet by Padmasambhava, Vairocana, and Vimalamitra and transmitted to King Trisong Detsen and Yeshé Tsogyal; how the teachings were concealed; how the treasure keys and prophetic guides were revealed by Zangpo Drakpa; and how the treasures were revealed by Rigdzin Gödem. After some biographical information regarding this treasure revealer,² the text

six of the ten sections of the text in a pair of blog posts. See Achard 2025a & 2025b, “The History of the Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra as Portrayed in Jamyang Sönam Gyeltsen’s Garland of Jewels,” parts I and II.

¹ My initial findings on this figure point to *sNgags ’chang* Grags pa blo gros (1563–1617), whose other names include ’Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan, the son of *sNgags ’chang* Kun dga’ rin chen (1517–1584). However, after closely analyzing the chronology presented in this work, it is clear that *sNgags ’chang* Grags pa blo gros who lived between the 16th and 17th centuries is not the author of this work as had been assumed previously, because the writer of this work flourished in the mid-15th century. The Fifth Dalai Lama names this figure as one of the lineage masters through whom the *sGyu ’phrul* teaching passed down to him. See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, *Thob yig gang ga’i chu rgyun*, vol. 2, p. 296. He may be one of the less known Sa skya clan member because even if there are several figures with the same name found in A mes zhab’s work—*The Marvelous Genealogical History of the Sakya Family* (*Sa skya’i gdung rabs ngo mtshar bang mdzod*), none of them fit the chronology. Footnote by Tenpa Tsering Batsang.

² Further research will be required to determine if ’Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan relied upon Nyi ma bzang po’s *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* while composing the section dedicated to the exploits of bZang po grags pa and Rig ’dzin rGod ldem. Most of the information he included can also be found in the source documents that were presumably used by Nyi ma bzang po, such as: Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 1983, *rGyang nas gter gyi lam yig byung tshul* and [gTer] *btön pa’i lo rgyus*, which together offer an account of how bZang po Grags pa revealed the treasure guides and dispatched them to Rig ’dzin rGod ldem and how he then revealed the treasures at Zang zang lha brag; Rig ’dzin rGod ldem 1983, *sPrul sku rigs ’dzin chen po’i rnal lam le’u brgyad pa*, which contains autobiographical accounts of his dreams, and numerous prophetic guides revealed by bZang po grags pa and Rig ’dzin rGod ldem. In fact, one cannot be entirely sure that *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* had already been composed when ’Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan was writing, although it is admittedly likely. On the other hand, *The History of the Lineage* was almost certainly written before Sangs rgyas dpal bzang’s *The Garland of Light*, which will be discussed in the next section.

concludes with an account of how the author's masters received transmission of *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* from Rigdzin Gödem and his immediate disciples, and how his masters, in turn, transmitted the teachings to the author, Jamyang Sönam Gyaltzen.¹

While the short biography of Rigdzin Gödem included in the text does report that he was born in the Year of the Fire-Ox (1337),² it does not describe his death. However, while explaining how one of his masters, Rigdzin Namkha Drakpa (14th–15th c.),³ received transmission of the Northern Treasures toward the end of the text, Jamyang Sönam Gyaltzen provides us with some additional information that can be used to triangulate Rigdzin Gödem's date of death:

In the year of the Iron-Dragon (1400), fifty-four years after the revelation of the treasure [in 1366],⁴ he, [Rigdzin Namkha Drakpa], received many teachings, including *The Heart Practice of the Guru* (*Gu*

¹ For an accessible delineation of the lineage described in this text, see Achard 2023c, “A Line of Transmission of the *dGongs pa zang thal* according to the *History of the Lineage known as the Garland of Gems* (*brGyud pa'i lo rgyus nor bu'i 'phreng ba*).”

² As explained below, this is the most commonly reported year of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's birth.

³ He is the author of *g. Yung gi lo rgyus*. See Dri med 'od zer 2008, vol. 6, pp. 157–160. For an analysis of this text, see Arguillère 2024a. On the collective prophecy of Rig 'dzin Nam mkha' grags pa and rJe rin po che bSod nams bzang po, another of Rig 'dzin Nam mkha' grags pa's masters, see 'Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan 2015, *brGyud pa'i lo rgyus nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, vol. 1, p. 66: *gTsang lha'i 'dabs nas zab mo'i chos| dad pas 'bul ba'i mi gnyis 'byung*]. For the individual prophecy of Rig 'dzin Nam mkha' grags pa, see *ibid.*, p. 76: *lce thung padma'i rtsa ris can| mdog nag ral pa kham nag rgyas*]. Also, for the original source and the complete prophecy, see Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang snyan brgyud rin po che'i lung byang ye shes lde mig lta bu*, vol. 1, pp. 199–200.

⁴ We have inserted the year of treasure revelation (1366) into the translated passage to make it very clear that the chronology is problematic. Fifty-four years after 1366 would be 1420, not 1400 as implied by the above passage. There is another old woodblock print version of the text that states that the meeting transpired four years (*lo ngo bzhi*) after the date of revelation instead of fifty-four years (*lo ngo nga bzhi*), but this is also problematic. See 'Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan 2015, *brGyud pa'i lo rgyus nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, vol. 1, p. 67 and the unpublished woodblock print version, n.d., vol. 12, f. 13b.

ru'i thugs sgrub) and *The Long-life Practice (Tshe sgrub)*,¹ from Rigdzin Gödem. [The Treasure Revealer] stated that he possessed profound teachings capable of actualizing the naked reality of phenomena. [Rigdzin Gödem stated], “You should receive them from [me]. You have good [Tibetan] writing (*yi ge*),² and I [happen to] need [someone] to write down [i.e., decode] treasure teachings from the yellow scrolls. I have many of them to write down.” Even though [Rigdzin Gödem] instructed Rigdzin Namkha Drakpa in this way, he [declined], and replied, “I have already a pledged to [enter into a retreat] on the profound instruction of “*The Great Same Taste*” (*ro snyom chen mo*) [practice] from the [tradition] of the precious Kagyü, which will take me three years. Upon finishing this [retreat], I will be in position to [serve] you.”³

In response, [Rigdzin Gödem] said:⁴

“Ema hoḥ! Should one engage in meditation on manifest reality (*chos nyid mngon gsum*), one will be freed from the fears of cyclic existence. Now, I wonder if I will meet you after three years.”

Nevertheless, Rigdzin Namkha Drakpa agreed to serve the Treasure Revealer after his retreat. As Jamyang Sönam Gyaltsen recounts:⁵

¹ It is interesting to note that in this text, the “*Tshe sgrub*” (most likely the *lCags sdong ma*) is mentioned separately and is apparently not perceived as a part of the *Thugs sgrub* corpus. In *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor phyogs bsgrigs*, volumes 6-8 are dedicated to *Thugs sgrub* literature, and the *Tshe sgrub lCags sdong ma* corpus is included in vol. 8, pp. 269-325.

² Although the Tibetan term *yi ge* has different meanings, in this context it is a reference to Tibetan calligraphy.

³ 'Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan 2015, *brGyud pa'i lo rgyus nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, vol. 1, p. 67: *lCags pho 'brug gi lo gter byon nas lo nga bzhi 'das pa'i dus| gter ston chen po las gu ru'i thugs sgrub tshe sgrub la sogs pa mang po gsan| nga la ni chos nyid mngon sum bya ba'i chos zab mo yod| cis kyang nyon khyod la yi ge legs po 'dug pas| gter skor shog ser las bsgyur dgos da dung mang po yod pas rnam kyang bsgyur ba yin gsung ba'i zhal ta byon na'ang| bdag la bka' brgyud rin po che'i zab khrid ro snyoms chen mo bya ba cig gi khas len dam bca' mchis| de la lo gsum dgos pa'i dam bca' tshar yong bar zhu zhes gsol bas|*

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 67-68: *E ma hoḥ chos nyid mngon sum bsgom na ni 'khor ba'i 'jigs pa dang bral te| da lo gsum nas rang e 'phrad dam gsung mod|*

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 68: *lo sgrub kyi dam bca' mdzad pa'i stobs kyis phyis 'byon pa'i thugs dgongs mdzad nas| gdan sa brag nag du byon| lo sgrub lo gsum po mdzad do| de ma them par sprul sku chen po chos dbyings su gshegs| shin tu 'gyod de bya thabs ni ma byung gsung| 'di lta bu 'i chos zab mo yod bsam pa tsam yang ma byung| 'di tsam yin na lo sgrub phyis btang nas da khar chos zhushog ser bsgyur ba'i zhabs tog kyang byas na| rang gzhan kun la phan pa 'dug gsungs so| rjes su sprul*

As he had a commitment of [three] years retreat, Rigdzin Namkha Drakpa thought of visiting Rigdzin Gödem later, and left for Draknag. He remained there for a three-year retreat. Before his retreat was completed, the Great Tülku [Rigdzin Gödem] passed into the realm of reality (*chos dbyings*). He said he felt great regret and helplessness. He went on to say that he could not even imagine that [Rigdzin Gödem] had such profound Dharma. Had he known it then, he could have postponed his retreat practice and immediately received the teachings [from Rigdzin Gödem], serving him by transcribing the yellow scrolls. In this way, he could have benefited himself and others. Later, he received all the teachings of the [*dGongs pa zang thal*] cycle from Namgyal Gönpö (ca. 1397–1421), the son of Tülku Rinpoche, and Dorjepal, [Rinpoche's] nephew.

While in these passages Jamyang Sönam Gyaltzen has not provided us with an exact date of Rigdzin Gödem's death, he has offered some useful information. If one assumes that soon after the conversation between Rigdzin Gödem and Rigdzin Namkha Drakpa in 1400, the later entered a three-year retreat, which ran from 1400 to 1402 or perhaps 1401 to 1403, then we can conclude that Jamyang Sönam Gyaltzen believed that the treasure revealer died at some point between 1400 and 1403, inclusively. Thus, in *The History of the Lineage*, we have found what appears to be independent attestation¹ of the passing of Rigdzin Gödem that is essentially compatible with the narrative within *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, which suggests that the treasure revealer died in late 1401 or early 1402.

The Garland of Light (late-15th c.)

The Garland of Light: the Lives of the Masters is the fifth text among the collection entitled *The Collected Biographies and Prophecies of the*

sku rin po che'i sras po | mtshan rnam rgyal mgon po bya ba dang | dbon po bla ma rdo rje dpal gnyis la chos skor bying gsan].

¹ As mentioned in a previous footnote, it is not entirely clear that 'Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan relied upon *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*. Historiographically, his attestation would be truly independent if he had not. Nevertheless, his account of the interaction between Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and Rig 'dzin Nam mkha' grags pa does not appear in Nyi ma bzang po's composition, and thus it can be considered as constituting independent attestation to an extent, even if he had access to *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.

Northern Treasure Tradition. It contains the biographies of the six Northern Treasures patriarchs—Namgyal Gönpö (ca. 1397–1421),¹ Dorjepal (b. late 14th c.), Jampa Shenyen (b. early 15th c.), Dorjé Gönpö (b. 14th c.), Ngakwang Drakpa (b. early 15th c.), and Sangyé Palzang (b. late 15th c.), who is the ostensible author of the text.² This historiographically significant composition appears to be the only noteworthy source for information on the lives of these six early Northern Treasures masters, upon which others surely based their narratives.³ The first section is dedicated to the life of Namgyal Gönpö, Rigdzin Gödem's short-lived son, and it offers additional details regarding his teaching activities late in life and his death:

In his sixth year, he was given the empowerments, guidance instructions (*'khrīd*), and quintessential teachings (*man ngag*) for *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra of the Great Perfection* by the great *rigdzin* and emanation, [Gödem]. Then, he reached decisive certainty (*dmār thag chod*) about the primordially pure awareness of reality. Thus, he attained confidence regarding the four visions of the spontaneous and clear light and concretely perfected the contemplation (*dgongs pa*) of the Great Perfection.

At that time, his religious companions, Lady Pönmo Drubpamo, Lama Dorjepal, and Lama Gyalwa, the official from Gyakhar (*brGya mkhar drung*) with his two sons, all gathered [into a group of] twenty-five fortunate ones and requested [teachings from Rigdzin Gödem].

When the empowerment and guidance instructions were finished, with a single voice, they made the following request in the presence of his father, the Great Lineage Holder: "To this son of yours, Namgyal Gönpö, please give the complete empowerments, reading transmissions, and quintessential teachings, which includes the heart-treasures of Zangzang Lhadrak, the two Seminal-Heart (sNying tig) [cycles of] the Great Perfection, *The Secret Net of Magical Illusions* (*gSang ba sgyu 'phrul*), the ancestral teachings (known as) the *Sūtra Tradition of Vajrakīlaya* (*Pha chos rDo rje phur pa mdo lugs*) that was revealed by Guru Chöwang, *The Eight Pronouncements* (*bKa' brgyad*), and all the other cycles of the new and old translations."

¹ As will be discussed below, these dates have not been firmly established.

² For the introduction and translation of the biographies of these figures, see Valentine 2016a.

³ See, for example, Phyang rdor nor bu 2015, *Byang gter bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar bsam 'phel ma Ni ka'i 'phreng ba*, vol. 59, pp. 476–489 and Gu ru bKra shis 1990, pp. 668–672.

His father responded with the following words of judgment, “He is a worthy son, and [I am] satisfied with his birth. He has already [received] the empowerments, reading transmissions, and quintessential teachings in their entirety. [Moreover,] because [all of] you have confidence in him, there is indeed a positive connection.”

To his son he said, “You, son, go select whichever book [you] like and bring it [to me].” Thus, amongst the books that were in the library, he took up a guru sādhana text (*bla sgrub*) and offered it to his father. His father responded, saying: “This is [indeed] a positive sign!” Then, after [Rigdzin Gödem] finished giving him all [of the empowerments and teachings], he was appointed as [Rigdzin Gödem’s] regent.

When he was in his tenth year, his father passed into a pure realm.¹

Given that the teaching scenario described in this passage includes three patriarchs of Gyakhar, the seat of the Sé clan in Northern Latö, it at first seems that this is an alternative, independent account of the teaching session mentioned above in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*. However, unlike Nyima Zangpo’s account that leads one to believe that Rigdzin died within a few months after that teaching session, *The Garland of Light* states that four years transpired between the teaching session (in Namgyal Gönpö’s sixth year) and his father’s death (in his tenth year.) So, either this is a completely different episode than the one that appears in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* or, if they are the same session, then Rigdzin Gödem may have died four years after this event, if

¹ Sangs rgyas dpal bzang 1983, pp. 177-178: *dgung lo drug la| sprul sku rigs 'dzin chen po'i drung du rdzogs pa chen po kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal gyi dbang 'khril| man ngag rnam gnang nas chos nyid ka dag gi rig pa dmar thag chod| lhun grub 'od gsal gyi snang bzhi la gdeng thob ste| rdzogs pa chen po'i dgongs pa mngon du gyur| de dus chos grogs bsgrub pa mo dang| bla ma rdo rje dpal ba dang| brgya mkhar drung bla ma rgyal ba yab sras gsum rnam dang kun dril las can nyi shu rtsa lngas zhus nas dbang 'khril rdzogs dus khong rnam kyis mgrin gcig tu yab rigs 'dzin chen po'i drung du| sras rnam rgyal mgon po 'di la zang zang lha brag gi snying gter 'di rnam dang| gzhan yang rdzogs pa chen po'i snying tig rnam gnyis| gsang ba sgyu 'phrul| pha chos rdo rje phur pa mdo lugs gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug gi chos skor| bka' brgyad| gzhan yang gsar rnying gi bskor| dbang lung man ngag kun rdzogs par gnang ba zhus pas| yab kyi zhal nas| pha'i bu yin pas chog dbang lung man ngag sngar du rdzogs zin cig yin| khyed rnam yid ches skyed phyir rten 'brel cig brtag gi gsung| sras la| bu khyed rang gang 'thad kyi po ti gcig long shog dang gsungs pas| dpe mdzod na po ti rnam bzhugs pa'i zla nas| bla bsgrub kyi po ti bsnam nas phul bas| yab kyi zhal nas rten 'brel bzang gsung nas| thams cad rdzogs par gnang nas rgyal tshab tu gtad do| dgung lo bcu pa la yab zhing kham la gshegs so|.*

Sangyé Palzang's account is accurate.

Additionally, as Jurgen Herweg has pointed out, the passage above, when combined with the following excerpt from *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, also offers some insight regarding the date of Rigdzin Gödem's death:

Then, when I [i.e., Nyima Zangpo] was in my twelfth year in the Year of the [Fire-]Ox (1397), I met [the precious one] for the first time and extraordinary faith was born [in my heart]. Having opened the door to the teachings of Dorjé Tötreng Tsal (i.e., Padmasambhava), [he] accepted [me] with compassion.

His son, Namgyal Gönpö, was born.¹

After considering these two passages, Herweg concludes, firstly, that Namgyal Gönpö's date of birth is 1397, and, secondly, that if he was in his tenth year when his father passed away, then Rigdzin Gödem's date of death could be calculated as 1406. However, a more careful examination of the passage above reveals that an exact date of birth for Namgyal Gönpö is not actually given in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.² All that can be definitively concluded from the biography is that his son was born at some point between 1397 and 1399,³ inclusively. Thus, these passages from the two biographies together ultimately suggest three possible dates of Rigdzin Gödem's death: 1406, 1407, or 1408, none of which are compatible with the 1401/1402 proposal that is suggested by reading the death narrative in *The Clarifying Ray of*

¹ Nyi ma bzang po 2015, vol. 59, pp. 69-70: *de nas kho bo lo bcu gnyis pa la glang gi lo thog mar mjal zhing| dad pa thun mong ma yin pa skyes nas| rdo rje thod phreng rtsal gyi chos sgo phi nas thugs rjes bzung ngo| sras rnam rgyal mgon po 'khrungs so|*.

² In Herweg's defense, he had no reason to believe that Nyi ma bzang po's composition contained various shortcomings while he was preparing his MA thesis. I, on the other hand, have had much more time to analyze the text, and its problematic nature, including its imprecision, has become much more apparent to me. Footnote by Jay Holt Valentine.

³ The very next sentence in the biography (Nyi ma bzang po 1983, p. 140) after the birth announcement is a dated (1399) dream journal entry. Similarly, as *The Garland of Light* states that Nam rgyal mgon po died in his twenty-fifth year (Sangs rgyas dpal bzang 1983, p. 181), three possible sets of dates for his life are also suggested: 1397–1421, 1398–1422, and 1399–1423.

Sunlight alone.¹ These later dates (1406, 1407, and 1408) are problematic for a variety of reasons; here we will consider just two. Firstly, *The Garland of Light* biographies generally lack definitive dates and Namgyal Gönpö's biography is no exception. The text does not, for example, include a date of birth or a date of death for Namgyal Gönpö. Unless further research proves that this set of biographies, which was likely completed late in the fifteenth century, is more historically reliable (in terms of chronology rather than dates, of which it does not contain many) than the earlier composition by Nyima Zangpo, then it would be safer to prioritize the earlier composition over the later, at least provisionally. Secondly, so far, we have not discovered any definitive evidence of Rigdzin Gödem's exploits between 1401/1402 and 1408. One might imagine that he was deathly ill throughout this time period, and thus there was nothing worth recording. However, until we find some corroborating information to support the notion of a longer life (particularly, accounts of his activities during this period), it is still safer to assume that he passed away in 1401 or 1402.

The Garland of Wish-Fulfilling Gems (mid-17th c.)

The Garland of Wish-Fulfilling Gems (bSam 'phel maṇi phreng ba) contains a series of short biographies of fourteen Northern Treasures figures, starting with Rigdzin Gödem and concluding with Yölmo Tülku Tendzin Norbu (1589–1644). It was authored by Chakdor Norbu (d. 1663), the brother of the Yölmo Tülku, in a cave called Chak Chongmo Dönshak² at an unspecified date mid-seventeenth century.³ The author explicitly states that he composed his biography of Rigdzin

¹ Also, the teaching session that occurred when rNam rgyal mgon po was in his sixth year, would therefore have transpired in either 1402, 1403, or 1404, all of which appear to be after Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's death according to Nyi ma bzang po. That being said, it is important to note that the biography of rNam rgyal mgon po does not contain any dates; they have been deduced based on an estimate of his birth date that is derived from Nyi ma bzang po's composition.

² lCags mchong mo don zhags.

³ As the text includes an account of the death of bsTan 'dzin nor bu, which occurred in 1644, then the text must have been finished between 1644 and 1663, the year of the death of the author. One might further narrow that window upon considering that the text was used as a source for the Fifth Dalai Lama's 1654 biography of Ngag gi dbang po. Still, mid-seventeenth century is a good estimation of the date of authorship.

Gödem based on *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*. However, he dates Gödem's death to 1408 (*sa pho byi ba*), which is neither stated nor implied anywhere in the extant editions of the biography composed by Nyima Zangpo. At this point in our research, the following passage by Chakdor Norbu appears to be the earliest known historiographic source to explicitly offer such a late date of death for Rigdzin Gödem:

Consequently, in his seventy-second year, in the year of Earth-Mouse (1408), he passed into the peaceful sphere of reality (*zhi ba chos dbyings*), displaying many rainbows and leaving behind many relics. [I] have extracted this [information] from [*The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*] composed by Setön Nyima Zangpo.¹

While Chakdor Norbu's composition may be appreciated for providing us with a clearly stated year of Rigdzin Gödem's death, the fact that his proposed date (1408) does not match his stated source—in any form available to us today—is problematic. Moreover, it would be difficult to justify the prioritization of details in the largely derivative composition by Chakdor Norbu from the mid-seventeenth century over Nyima Zangpo's and Jamyang Sönam Gyaltsen's fifteenth century compositions. In fact, the dates proposed by Chakdor Norbu might justifiably be disregarded, if it weren't for the fact that *The Garland of Wish-Fulfilling Gems* was embraced as an authoritative source by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

Before moving on, it should be noted that Chakdor Norbu also asserts that Rigdzin Gödem died in his seventy-second year. While we will return below to the subject of how old he was when he passed away, it should be acknowledged that the assertion is consistent with the stated year of birth (1337) in *The Garland of Wish-Fulfilling Gems*,² which is, in turn, consistent with his source, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*,³ as well as *The History of the Lineage*.⁴

¹ Phyag rdor nor bu 2015, *Byang gter bla ma brgyud pa'i rnam thar bsam 'phel ma Ni ka'i 'phreng ba*, vol. 59, p. 475: *de ltar dgung lo bdun bcu rtsa gnyis pa sa pho byi ba lo la sku zhi ba chos kyi dbyings su gshegs te| mjal 'od dang gdung ring bsrel mang du byon no| zhes bse ston nyi ma bzang pos mdzad pa las btus so|*.

² Phyag rdor nor bu 2015, pp. 459-460.

³ Nyi ma bzang po 1989, p. 61. As will be discussed below, there is one manuscript of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* that offers an alternative date of birth.

⁴ 'Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan 2015, *brGyud pa'i lo rgyus nor bu'i 'phreng ba*, vol. 1, p. 59.

The Marvelous Display of Ocean (mid-17th c.)

The Fifth Dalai Lama is known for writing numerous biographies of masters from the Nyingma, Sakya, and Gelug traditions. Most important among them for our purposes is *The Marvelous Display of Ocean* (*Ngo mtshar bkod pa rgya mtsho*), a biography of Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo (1580–1639), the third incarnation of Rigdzin Gödem. It is the most definitive and comprehensive biography of this patriarch of the Northern Treasures tradition, who is acknowledged as the founder of Dorjé Drak Monastery. The Fifth Dalai Lama wrote it in 1654 at Drepung Monastery, and the sources he employed include Chakdor Norbu's *The Garland of Wish-Fulfilling Gems*.

The Marvelous Display of Ocean actually begins with a full account of all of Ngakgi Wangpo's pre-incarnations, and thus it includes a short narrative of the life of Rigdzin Gödem. While the Fifth Dalai Lama does not supply his readers with the year of the treasure revealer's death, he provides the following passages, which allow one to calculate a date:¹

Thus, he was born as the son of master Dūdül Pal in his residence at Namolung, east of Trazang, in the Year of the Fire-Ox, during waxing month of the horse (first month), on the tenth day of the heroes and dākinīs gathering. [...]

[He then] opened the door to the concealed land of Kyimolung. [Afterword], he [continued to] elevate migratory beings on the path of maturation and liberation until his seventy-second year. The reincarnation of Rigdzin Gökyidem Truchen, also known as Ngödrub Gyaltsen, is the esteemed Ngari Rigdzin Lekden Dūjom Dorjé.²

Based on these passages, it appears that the Fifth Dalai Lama's has

¹ Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, vol. 59, p. 311: *de yang yab slob dpon bdud 'dul dpal gyi sras su me mo rlang gi lo rta chen zla ba'i dkar phyogs kyi tshes bcu'i dpa' bo mkha' 'gro 'du ba'i dus dge bar ri bo bkra bzang gi shar mdun sna mo lung gi gzims khang du sku blams pas.*

² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2015, *Ngag gi dbang po'i rnam thar*, vol. 59, p. 326: *sbas yul skyid mo lung gi gnas sgo phye| dgung lo bdun cu rtsa gnyis kyi bar du 'gro ba rnam smin grol gi lam la 'god par mdzad do| rig 'dzin chen po rgod kyi ldem phru can mtshan gzhan dngos grub rgyal mtshan du grags pa de nyid kyi sku'i skye ba ni rig 'dzin mnga' ris pa chen po legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje ste|.*

accepted, at least in this biography, the dates provided by Chakdor Norbu in *The Garland of Wish-Fulfilling Gems*: a seventy-two-year lifespan, according to Tibetan reckoning, which begins in 1337 and ends in 1408. Despite the fact that he was writing approximately two hundred and fifty years after the passing of Rigdzin Gödem, the Fifth Dalai Lama may be considered as one of the most authoritative figures of Tibetan history. Moreover, he is proudly counted among the patriarchs of the Northern Treasures. Thus, it is likely because of his influence, expressed through *The Marvelous Display of Ocean*, that both Tibetan and Western scholars often maintain the dates of 1337–1408 for the life of Rigdzin Gödem. Nevertheless, as has been demonstrated above, there are various reasons why one might doubt these later dates from an etic historiographic perspective. Ironically, as will be discussed below, the Fifth Dalai Lama appears, in one of his other works, to disagree with the dates for Rigdzin Gödem that he presented in his biography of Ngakgi Wangpo.

Measuring the Span of Rigdzin Gödem's Life (Interlude)

As the above passage by the Fifth Dalai Lama demonstrates, biographers sometimes place emphasis on their subject's age at death, instead of stating the exact year of death. Surely, there are instances in which the length of one's lifespan is considered to be religiously significant. Perhaps in some scenarios it is important for one's lifespan to match an authoritative prophecy or, alternatively, perhaps certain lifespans are considered to be symbolically important. Unfortunately, in this case, it is not entirely clear why Chakdor Norbu decided to state that Rigdzin Gödem lived until his seventy-second year, nor is it clear why the Fifth Dalai Lama confirms this lifespan in his composition but omits the date proposed by Chakdor Norbu. Whatever their motivations might have been, the notion that Rigdzin Gödem lived until his seventy-second year holds weight within the tradition, and thus we will be well-served to consider, briefly, this treasure revealer's lifespan here.

When approaching this subject, one is faced with a variety of problems. Firstly, despite the likelihood that the Fifth Dalai Lama's brief biography of Rigdzin Gödem lent authority to the notion that the treasure revealer lived until his seventy-second year, elsewhere, in his record of received teachings, he leads one to believe that his lifespan was significantly longer:

Furthermore, from the time when the Great Emanation and Vidyādhara opened the door of [his] Dharma by granting the empowerment with the four gathered [items] to his seventy-eighth year, he had not given the empowerment of the all-encompassing teachings. Starting in his seventy-ninth year, he conferred this greater empowerment at the request of his dearest Sangyé Wön Dorjepal.¹ Therefore, the transmission of this [teaching] must [also] come through Dorjé Pal.²

While this passage does not mention a year of death, the Fifth Dalai Lama has essentially implied that Rigdzin Gödem lived at least until his seventy-ninth year. If one accepts 1337 as the year of his birth, then this passage further implies that the earliest he could have died was 1415 (Wood-Sheep), a date of death that does not seem to have been considered or embraced by the tradition.

A second problem, which is perhaps a larger issue, is that lifespan calculations also depend on one's date of birth, and, unfortunately, there are a few irregularities within *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*—which, as mentioned above, is the most historiographically significant biography of Rigdzin Gödem—that could reasonably lead one to doubt that Rigdzin Gödem was born in the generally accepted year of 1337. Firstly, while there are many variations among the six editions of the biography that were examined as part of this investigation,³ they all provide the same date for Rigdzin Gödem's conception: Wood-Mouse

¹ In a personal communication with Stéphane Arguillère (July 2, 2025), he explained that the overall meaning could be that there are two different empowerment systems for the *Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub* cycle and that he had not used the greater one until late in his life. The lesser empowerment, *zlum po bzhi dbang*, is not merely the usual four empowerments, but a fourfold empowerment based on these four items: vase, skull-cup, mirror, and *gtor ma*. The greater empowerment, *rab 'byams bka'i dbang*, seems to be an empowerment ritual in which you get all the four consecrations at once with just a *gtor ma* put on your head. Thus, while it is somehow greater (*che ba*), it would not mean something like a global empowerment for all his revelations, etc.

² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, *Thob yig gang ga'i chu rgyun*, vol. 3, p. 190: *de yang sprul sku rig 'dzin chen pos zlum po bzhi dbang gis chos sgo phye nas dgung lo don brgyad kyi bar rab 'byams bka'i dbang ma gnang bar don dgu'i thog dran mchog sangs rgyas dbon rdo rje dpal gyis gsol ba btab pa ste dbang che ba 'di gnang ba yin pas rdo rje dpal nges par brgyud dgos shing|*.

³ Nyi ma bzang po 1983, 1985, 2015, 2017, n.d.(a), and n.d.(b). The details for each of these six editions, including links to the BDRC are in the bibliography.

(*shing pho phyi*), which in this case must signify 1324. Thus, one would presume that he was born either later the same year or in 1325 (Wood-Ox), at the very latest. However, all but one of the manuscripts state that he was born in the Year of the Fire-Ox (1337), a shocking thirteen years after he was conceived.

Nevertheless, there is one edition (1985) of the biography that indeed reports 1325 (Wood-Ox) as the date of birth.¹ If one were to limit the scope of the inquiry to just the relationship between the date of conception and the date of birth, then obviously the lone manuscript offering 1324 (conception) and 1325 (birth) would seem to be the more trustworthy manuscript. Additionally, returning to the Fifth Dalai Lama's assertion that Rigdzin Gödem was still transmitting teachings in his seventy-ninth year, one will note that if we were to accept that he was born in 1325, then his seventy-ninth year would have been 1403, which is not necessarily inconsistent with the date of death that is implied in *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* or *The History of the Lineage*. However, if one widens the scope to include the rest of Rigdzin Gödem's life, then a further complication is revealed. In particular, both *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight* and the apparently autobiographical composition by Rigdzin Gödem entitled *The History of the Extraction of the Treasures* (*gTer bton pa'i lo rgyus*) state that he revealed the treasures at Zangzang Lhadrak in 1366 in his thirtieth year.² As previously noted by Alexander Schiller, there are actually numerous sources within the tradition that confirm the year of 1366 and his thirtieth year for the act of treasure revelation, which together imply that Rigdzin Gödem was born in 1337 as confirmed by all but one of the manuscripts of *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*.³ Indeed, it is likely for such reasons that we seem to be willing to accept 1337 as the year of this master's birth, despite the fact that it does not make sense with respect to the year he was conceived. Still, the situation does not fill one with certainty, and if anything at all has become clear through this investigative interlude, it is that widening the scope to include an examination of his lifespan

¹ Herweg 1994, pp. 162-164. Shinga 2022, p. 51, n. 1. Nyi ma bzang po 1985, p. 11.

² Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 70, 88. Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 2015, *gTer bton pa'i lo rgyus*, vol. 01, pp. 2, 5-6. In both sources, the year is simply stated as Horse (*rta*), but it is clear from context that it is Fire-Horse (1366).

³ Schiller, in fact, offers a good summary of the issues related to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's dates. See Schiller 2021, p. 825, n. 9.

and year of birth does not provide us with any easy solutions regarding his year of death.

Provisional Conclusions & Charting a Path Forward

Unfortunately, rather than reaching a final answer regarding the date of Rigdzin Gödem's death, we have found reasons for supporting a range of dates between 1401 and 1415 that are grounded in the literature of the tradition. Whereas one might argue that late 1401 or early 1402 are the most historiographically sound proposals, given that they are based on the earliest (15th c.), complete biography, *The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight*, and supported by another fifteenth-century text, *The History of the Lineage*, it is equally clear that the most widely accepted date, which has been put forwarded and supported by two authoritative patriarchs of the traditions in the seventeenth century, is 1408. However, each of the proposed dates is ultimately problematic in that its acceptance would require the suppression of some other fact of more or less equal weight.

Consequently, it is clear that our inquiry will not lead to a definitive answer regarding Rigdzin Gödem's year of death; instead, we are forced to evaluate the conflicting information and make a provisional conclusion, given the current results of our inquiry. From an etic perspective, which (again) is based on a reading the the tradition's own historiographic literature, the preponderance of the evidence leans in the direction of an earlier year of death, late-1401 or early-1402. Thus, we would propose writing Rigdzin Gödem's dates as "**1337–ca. 1401/1402**" or, the slightly more digestible simplification, "**1337–ca. 1401.**" Nevertheless, we have also laid out the groundwork for understanding and appreciating the traditional, emic dates of 1337–1408/1409, which appear to enjoy the backing of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama. As mentioned above, our support of these dates is provisional. It is entirely possible that additional, early sources—preferably histories, biographies, or autobiographies written in the fifteenth century—could surface and provide us with credible accounts of Rigdzin Gödem's exploits after early 1402, perhaps even an independent account of his death, that would force us to reevaluate the situation.



Part III:
An Overview of
Rigdzin Gödem's
Works

An Overview of Rigdzin Gödem's Works

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Chapter 11: Introduction

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 history of the Northern Treasures would make little sense to the readers of this book if we did not also describe the corpus known by that name. In addition to the intrinsic interest of describing what the protagonists of this story considered valuable enough to be handed down from generation to generation, there is also reason to hope that a careful study of this vast collection will shed some additional light on the details of Rigdzin Gödem's biography and personality as well as on the mentality and motivations of those who followed him and handed down this literature. In the textual corpus associated with Rigdzin Gödem, by far the largest mass is composed of terma, although there are also a few texts of which he is considered the author. This section explores only the largest of these non-terma texts, the commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmāsaṃgītī*. Ideally, many shorter texts (apology for Gödem's revelations, dream records, etc.) should also be included. Regarding the termas, according to the traditional narrative, and although there may be some residual hesitation, Rigdzin Gödem found all of these in the same place (Zangzang Lhadrak) and at the same time (1366).

The original Northern Treasures corpus has been described by Dargyay,² Schwieger,³ Boord⁴ and Herweg,⁵ among others. The

¹ The chapter on the *dGongs pa zang thal* and the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* was authored by Jean-Luc Achard, except for a small appendix. The rest of the present section was written by Stéphane Arguillère. Throughout these chapters, the reference for all these texts is always CNT (the 2015 *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*) when not otherwise specified.

² Dargyay 1977, pp. 129-132.

³ Schwieger 1985, pp. xxx-xxxviii.

⁴ Boord 1993, pp. 21-35.

⁵ Herweg 1994, 85-103.

publication of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* (CNT, ca. 2015) gave us the first access to an almost complete collection of these texts. The first fifteen volumes of the CNT are dedicated to the writings and revelations of Rigdzin Gödem, each with its table of contents. Jay Holt Valentine transcribed (2022) these catalogs as part of the FCHNT project, making them available on BDRC in connection with the respective parts of the scanned volumes.¹

Based on his study of many available records of teachings received, Schiller (2021)² provides the most thorough description of various early catalogs of the corpus. Schiller's approach introduces us to the gradual stabilization of the collection's structure. For our purposes—Gödem's works and revelations as they originally stood, not their possible reorderings in later generations—the main outcome is that although the details may vary, the overall list of texts and their structure are essentially already the same in the earliest presentations, such as in Setön Pema Wangchen's (15th century) *The Garland of Jewels: A General Presentation of the Cycles of Teachings Belonging to the Northern Treasures*,³ further analyzed by Achard (2023b and 2023f).

The overarching global structures of the original core of the Northern Treasures, discussed in this section and described in the above-mentioned sources, are the *five repositories* (*mdzod lnga*) and the *nine*

¹ In this section, we have recycled Jay Holt Valentine's catalogs, borrowing back from BDRC some of what the FCHNT team had contributed, and in that sense, Valentine is to some extent a co-author of this section. Note that besides a few typos left on BDRC and differences in transliteration conventions, the pagination is different. We referenced all the texts with page numbers from the printed edition, while BDRC references pages counting continuously from the beginning of the volume, including the title page and table of contents.

² Schiller 2021, "Das Studienbuch des 5. Yol mo sPrul sku Karma 'phrin las bdud 'joms als Quelle zum Inhalt und zur Überlieferungsgeschichte der 'nördlichen Schätze' (byang gter)," in *Gateways to Tibetan Studies: A Collection of Essays in Honour of David P. Jackson on the Occasion of his 70th Birthday*, vol. 1, pp. 821-890.

³ Se *ston* Padma dbang chen n.d., *Byang gter chos skor rnam kyis spyi chings rin chen 'phreng ba ces bya ba*, unpublished manuscript from Ladakh, 110 pages. Also see: Padma dbang chen 2015, in CNT, vol. 15, pp. 363-454. The latest element discussed by Se *ston* Padma dbang chen seems to be (2015: pp. 420-421) the various opinions about the complements to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *Lung phag mo zab rgya* found in 1534 by bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480-1535, see Achard & Arguillère 2024) and its transmission to a direct disciple (*thugs sras*) of his. It is thus reasonable to assume that the *sPyi chings* was written ca. 1550.

large cycles. The concept of the five repositories has been present since the earliest accounts of the terma, including the “auto-prophecies,” but it does not provide a satisfactory system of classification. Despite traditional simplifications, parts of what are now recognized as large cycles are said to have been found scattered in various repositories without a convincing explanation for why a given text should be located in one repository rather than another. What is more, as we will see, most texts of some cycles globally lack an ascription to any given repository. As for the *nine great cycles* (which we finally follow as the global structure of the whole), it is evident that, even in relatively late catalogs, such as the Fifth Dalai Lama’s *Record of Teachings Received*, it is still not fully clear whether some smaller structures should be regarded as autonomous cycles or sub-cycles of larger ones.¹

This section differs from previous research, such as Schiller (2021), in that it attempts to describe the content of each cycle more precisely and make sense of it to gain complementary insights into Gödem’s biography and concerns.

Philological Indications about the Gradual Composition of the Various Cycles, Sub-Cycles, and Editorial Arrangements

Before describing the various cycles in Rigdzin Gödem’s revelations, we must raise two questions: what do we call a cycle in a terma? And to what extent are we sure that these major headings, which are the commonly accepted subdivisions of the original core of the Northern Treasures today, reflect either the way in which the large virtual library,² supposedly found in Zangzang Lhadrak, was structured or at

¹ It should be noted that, by their very nature, records of teachings received (*gsan yig*) tend to serve two purposes: cataloging the corpora for which a lama received transmissions and listing when, how, and from whom they were received. The second aspect may make it seem as if groups of texts are regarded as separate *cycles* when they may have just been the object of a separate *transmission*. It is important to keep this in mind so as not to draw excessive conclusions from the details of these records.

² One should bear in mind that the books as we have them today, even stripped of the parts (practice manuals, ritual arrangements, etc.) that are clearly additions by later authors, are not supposed to be what rGod ldem actually found in Zang zang lha brag. The texts were in the much more compact form of “yellow scrolls” (*shog ser*) inscribed in “dākinī script,” which had to be deciphered in the following

least the way in which it was initially organized by Rigdzin Gödem himself?

All readers may not be aware that *termas* in general are large collections of mostly very short texts. In many cases, most of these are clearly related to topics that are also dealt with in many others texts—a particular deity, a specific category of Dzogchen teachings—with which they form a group, a family, which we call a “cycle.”¹ The way in which they belong together is not only that they address the same thematic aspect, but also that they are more or less closely complementary, and, to some extent, together form a self-contained whole, a path to Enlightenment, with useful ancillary practices.

In addition to the community of theme and the functional complementarity, the very conservative and somewhat repetitive nature of *terma* literature² induces quite precise expectations on the part of the reader. For a cycle to be perceived as complete, the reader expects to find all of a fairly well-defined set of aspects depending on the type of cycle. In fact, in a way that is difficult to describe in a simple introduction, *terma* cycles belong to literary genres that are defined by the endless repetition of parallel corpora in earlier *terma* literature.³ Not only do we generally expect to find elements such as those listed in Cuevas’ study of Karma Lingpa,⁴ but in fact it goes much further. For example,

decades. Hence the characterization of this library (the result of the deciphering) as “virtual.”

¹ The term was originally coined from the Tibetan term *chos skor*, in reference to the existence of literary cycles in Western literature. Although the Tibetan word *skor* actually has etymological connections with words meaning “circle, circling” (hence *cycle*), in context it actually means “around” in the sense of “about,” referring to a group of texts *dealing with the same aspect of the Dharma*. So, the translation “cycle” is to some extent a play on words. But it is convenient, and we are following a now well-established tradition.

² This aspect is developed in Cantwell 2020 and especially stressed in its introductory chapter by Robert Mayer, in contrast to Western implicit assumptions and expectations connected with the idea of “revelation.”

³ In this sense, reading *gter ma* literature requires a kind of *connoisseurship* that develops from reading a lot of it. One is surprised to find in one corpus what is not found in others or to not find what one expects from tendencies observed in other, though similar, contexts. This is also why many of the assumptions made in this section may sound rather unobvious to most readers. They are only clear in contrast with dozens of other corpora, and that would make them very difficult (cumbersome and tedious) to prove formally.

⁴ Cuevas 2003, especially Chapter 7: “The Gampodar Treasure.”

a Dzogchen cycle belonging to the Heart Drop genre would most likely include a similar series of elements already found in the *Khandro Nyingthik*, presented in more or less the same order, etc.

As is always the case with any form of literature, and even more so in traditional, conservative, societies, the “horizon of expectations,”¹ which defines a literary genre, functions as a tacit contract between the author (in the broadest sense) and the reader. Of course, Rigdzin Gödem himself had all these structures in mind, and one should not imagine that he left his disciples with a chaotic mass of scattered texts. However, this does not make the grouping of his *termas* into the few major cycles described below entirely self-obvious.

First of all, it should be noted that in the corpus as we have it today, almost no text mentions, either in its title or in its colophon, the cycle to which it is supposed to belong.² This is not a general convention of the *genre* *terma*. The revelations of some other *tertöns*, at least in their edited forms, systematically include this reference.³ However, many (though not all) of the *termas* of the Northern Treasures mention another structure: the five repositories, to which we will return below.

It should also be noted that one could certainly place a text in the cycle to which it naturally belongs most of the time just by reading it. However, the proper placement of any given text is not so obvious, for a variety of reasons, *for perhaps up to 20% of the entire collection*. In some cases, the obscurement is a result of what we call sub-cycles. This name is applied to groups of texts that, like the cycles, form a whole in terms of both common theme and functional complementarity, but are not a self-sufficient whole. This would typically be the case with

¹ A notion originally developed in H.R. Jauss (1967), *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation der Literaturwissenschaft*. For an application to Tibetan literature, see Cabezon & Jackson (eds.) 1996, especially the chapter by Janet Gyatso: “Drawn from the Tibetan Treasury: The *gTer ma* Literature.”

² This, however, should be nuanced by the fact that one of the expected components of a *gter ma* cycle is a catalog of the *gter ma* (*thems byang, tho byang...*), understood as being itself a revealed text devised to forbid all addition to or subtraction from the authentic corpus. These texts are likely to be the oldest sources about the original composition of any given cycle and are indeed the main source of Se ston Padma dbang chen’s lists included in *A General Presentation*.

³ Further research would be required to determine if this writing convention appeared with later treasure discoverers, if it is typical of other groups of them, or if they are insertions by later editors, and, if so, when and where the convention became normative.

protector rituals, where the deities are well identified as the protectors of a particular cycle. Another example would be a set of long-life practices with a specific name that is like a specialized ritual application of the more general practice described in the larger cycle. Now, in the Jangter, there are instances of such (sub-) cycles that are not obviously connected to any larger cycle and, as far as we understand them, might as well have been edited as autonomous cycles. The best example in the Northern Treasures literature would be the Black Vajravārāhī (or Vajravārāhī and Hayagrīva) corpus, which, although fairly homogeneous and coherent,¹ is scattered between *The Heart Practice*, *The Eight Pronouncements*, *Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* and the *Gongpa Zangthal* cycles. In addition, there are many texts that do not even belong to such a nebula, which is something between a cycle and a sub-cycle, and do not seem to be connected to any particular cycle. This is clearly the case, for example, with the many books of spells that have been placed in *The Heart Practice* cycle, despite their lack of the expected family resemblances shared by the other texts in the collection.

In such cases, we may suspect that the cycles as we have them today are, to some extent at least, the result of the intervention of later editors. The most likely hypothesis at this point is that Rigdzin Gödem must have left the vast mass of his revelations in *some degree* of organization,² but perhaps not in perfect order. It seems clear that the major cycles described in the following pages are not *pure inventions* of his disciples or later editors. It is very likely, however, that in addition to these large groupings of literature, there were also many smaller groups or individual texts that were not included in any of the primary collections by Rigdzin Gödem. It appears that these were more or less

¹ The presence of the same main deity would not in itself qualify different texts as belonging to the same (sub-) cycle, since in many cases the forms of the same deity are sufficiently different (iconography, mantras, purpose of practice, etc.) to indicate that the texts devoted to them do not belong together. In the Byang gter, this would typically be the case with the forms of Hayagrīva appearing in different parts of the collection. Some (e.g., in *The Seven Auspicious Connections*) are definitely unrelated to the form that appears in the Vajravārāhī corpus. But this is not the case with the Vajravārāhī corpus itself: the parts scattered throughout the various cycles are ritually consistent and functionally complementary.

² I.e., the degree of organization to which the *thems byang* included in the *gter chos* attest.

artificially appended to the larger collections by later editors. It is therefore quite possible that sub-cycles were moved from one cycle to another in the process of reaching a more or less stable edition, perhaps only sometime between Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal (1550–1603) and the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682).

In the edition we are following, *The Heart Practice* (described below) starts with a text written by Śākya Yarphel¹ in the nineteenth century. This text is a catalog that is clearly based on a critical comparison of many pre-existing catalogs, while explicitly referring to the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* as its main and most authoritative source. This reminds us that the order in which the texts are presented in the available editions is a constructed editor's order, albeit more or less logical and motivated by the tables included in the original terma, and not a direct witness to an original order of the discovered material.

There are many examples in world literature of works that have been studied for centuries only in an order other than that in which they were conceived by their author(s). This is important to note because the editor's order can produce effects of meaning that should not be attributed to the author. It is well known that the word “metaphysics” arose from later editors' decisions about the order of Aristotle's writings. However, the most spectacular and well-known case, also in Greek philosophy, is probably that of *The Enneads* of Plotinus. Plotinus' writings were read for centuries in the order in which his disciple Porphyry had arranged them. Porphyry not only arranged his master's writings in his own order, but he went so far as to break up Plotinus' treatises, treating the parts he had cut up as autonomous texts, which he then arranged according to a thematic and logical order of increasing depth. This order was generally maintained until the last decades of the twentieth century, when translations based on the reconstruction of the treatises in their original form appeared.

It would certainly be much more complicated to achieve a similar reordering of the Northern Treasures, but scholars may be inspired by

¹ Shā kya yar 'phel (gNas chung oracle, second half of the 19th century), *Byang gter thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi rtsa ba'i chos tshan gyi dkar chag thams cad mkhyen gzigs lnga pa'i gsan yig nas zur du bkod pa*, in vol. 6, pp. 1-28. On this figure whose role for Byang gter should not be overlooked (for example, he had block prints carved for the *dGongs pa zang thal*), see Bell 2021 (passim).

this example of how an editor's arrangement of his masters' writings profoundly influenced their reception over a long period of time. Although we are far from such a revolution in the ordering of the Northern Treasures, the present attempt to place the cycles (without deconstructing them) in an order that makes sense both in terms of Gödem's biographies and in terms of the way they relate to one another is perhaps a first step in that direction.

The Slow Deciphering of the Ḍākinī Script

Even if we take traditional conceptions literally, the revelation of a terma is not a purely passive reading, but one that also revives a very ancient memory—in this case, that of the time when Rigdzin Gödem was Nanam Dorjé Düjom.¹ Strictly speaking, then, we are not being asked to believe that deciphering the characters of the Ḍākinīs is a *mere translation* or even a *mere decoding* in the common sense of the word. In any case, it appears as if some cycles in the collection were decoded earlier and others later, with the caveat, of course, that since these cycles are vast collections of often very short texts, it is unlikely that Rigdzin Gödem would have fixed into intelligible Tibetan an entire large block of texts, let alone an entire cycle, at one particular moment in his life.² We know very little about the gradual process of editing—beginning with the translation of the “yellow scrolls” during Rigdzin Gödem's lifetime and perhaps even after his death—and then arranging

¹ While it does appear that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem at times emphasized his identity as an emanation of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, we have not yet found any biographical or autobiographical passages in which he reports to have recovered any memories from any of his previous lives (note by Jay Holt Valentine, February 2025).

² In this volume, we have compiled much of what is known or can be reasonably inferred from currently available sources about Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. However, this should not be understood in the least as the ultimate state of knowledge. Combining of all these elements and hypotheses with information that will become available will enable future researchers to make further progress. As for rGod ldem's works, finer philological attention to individual texts will certainly lead to more subtle and complex chronological assumptions. Even if a cycle *as a whole* can be said to predate another, it is possible that rGod ldem did not complete it until the end of his life. It is even possible that later editors rearranged the texts after his death, moving entire sub-cycles from one section of the collection to another.

the very large collection of texts that constitute the original core of the Jangter. Some biographic elements tend to present Rigdzin Gödem as having been busy until the very last years of his life deciphering the yellow scrolls. It is not impossible, then, that the *logical* order revealed by the internal references (text B presupposes text A as its basis) might overlap to some extent with a *chronological* order of composition (text B was written/transcribed *after* text A), particularly if we accept that the operation that tradition presents as a decoding (or a translation) of the ḍākinī script still leaves a certain measure of initiative up to the tertön and therefore allows for a gradual production of texts.

The Question of Internal Reference

Although tradition presents all of these cycles as having been revealed simultaneously (1366), the philologically minded reader may be interested in the system of internal references¹ in the Northern Treasures on the one hand, and the issues related to variations in the classificatory device of the “five repositories” on the other.

While some of the major terma cycles presuppose others to which they refer, *The Seven Auspicious Connections*,² *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*,³ *Liberating All Migrants*,⁴ and *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*⁵ do not seem to refer to anything else either within the original corpus or outside of it. This lack of reference to other parts of the original Jangter seems also to be the case with the two Dzogchen cycles.⁶ However, and this may be the only case of external reference in Gödem’s termas, the *Gongpa Zangthal* presents a prophecy⁷ alluding to Pema Ledreltsal (1290–1319) and his discovery of the *Khandro Nyingthik* (1313), to Rinchen Lingpa (1289–1368)’s revelations in the early fourteenth century, and perhaps to Longchenpa (1308–1364). But all of these events chronologically precede the Zangzang Lhadrak discovery and are therefore of no help for Gödem’s

¹ This is the same methodological device I used (Arguillère 2007) as the main tool for a chronological classification of Klong chen pa’s writings.

² *rTen ’brel chos bdun*. All these cycles are individually described below.

³ *Byang chub spyod dbang*.

⁴ *’Gro ba kun grol*.

⁵ *Rig ’dzin gdung sgrub*.

⁶ *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* and *dGongs pa zang thal*.

⁷ Discussed in our Volume 1 and in Arguillère 2024a.

chronology, although the passage is extremely useful (if it is not an interpolation) as evidence of Gödem's awareness of recent Nyingma literature.

*The Triple Magic Dagger*¹ does not seem to allude to other cycles, but it may be regarded as presupposed by *The Heart Practice*² that prescribes the construction of a Vajrakīla shrine on Mount Trazang, which makes more sense if Gödem had already completed his Phurpa cycle. *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*³ alludes to the *Gongpa Zangthal* as its spiritual summit. *The Heart Practice* is in some ways an appendix (and epitome) of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* and alludes, it seems, to both Dzogchen cycles.⁴

Another point which requires further inquiry is the Black Vajravārāhī corpus, which, as mentioned above, seems to be scattered between the *Gongpa Zangthal*,⁵ *The Heart Practice*, and *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*. Reconstructing the inner logic of this cycle, which seems to be a consistent whole although it is not presented as such, might also help one understand the chronology. Hence, applying this criterion provides us with a rough first principle for ordering the cycles:

1. *The Seven Auspicious Connections, The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior, Liberating All Migrants, The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*s, the two Dzogchen cycles, and *The Triple Magic Dagger*;⁶
2. *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*;
3. *The Heart Practice*.

Of course, deriving from these remarks a massive chronological hypothesis regarding the order of composition of the various cycles

¹ *Phur pa rnam gsum*.

² *Thugs sgrub*.

³ *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*.

⁴ The *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* and the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

⁵ Under the name *Lung phag mo zab rgya*.

⁶ If we take seriously the hypothesis that *The Triple Magic Dagger* may presuppose the project of building three shrines on Mt. bKra bzang, one of which was devoted to Vajrakīla, then, since this project is presented in *The Heart Practice*, *The Triple Magic Dagger* would be the latest of all the cycles.

would imply that *each of them was composed/deciphered as a block*, before moving to the next one.¹ This is, as discussed above, quite unlikely. They are all vast collections of mostly small texts and in many cases these collections do not seem to have a very clear global order, so it is more likely that the texts were gradually produced according to the “needs” as they emerged. That is to say, Gödem almost certainly moved back and forth from one collection to another for a variety of reasons, some imaginable and others unknown. As already stated above, we cannot even be sure to what extent some of the large cycles that we are about to describe were originally intended as wholes by Rigdzin Gödem, with all the parts that are now found in them.² We cannot rule out the possibility that these large cycles were at least partly made up by Gödem’s disciples as they edited the corpus. Even much later authors such as the Fifth Dalai Lama may single out groups of texts that are now regarded as sub-cycles of larger units as if they were autonomous cycles. This point will be addressed in the relevant volume

¹ The same difficulty was encountered in Arguillère 2007 regarding the chronological ordering of Klong chen pa’s writings using the same methods: the problem is artificially simplified (which does not mean that the result is *globally* invalid) by considering “cycles” as blocks that were written in one go, when in fact there is no reason to assume that they were. The objection is less problematic with Klong chen pa, whose work contains many extensive treatises, each of which can reasonably be assumed to have been written in a continuous manner. Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s revelations, on the other hand, are a forest of hundreds of small texts, and it is quite possible that many of them were revealed and deciphered *ad hoc*, as the need arose, at any time between 1366 and rGod ldem’s death. Another question (as well with Klong chen pa, though in other ways) is that of the subtexts. There is no doubt in our minds that Rig ’dzin rGod ldem is not the author of most of his revelations in the modern sense of the term: as explained below in Jean-Luc Achard’s presentation of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, many texts in this cycle are (however this may be explained) slightly rewritten versions of texts already found in the *Bi ma snying thig* or the *mKha’ ’gro snying thig*, and this is certainly the case with most of the other sections of his *gter chos*. In this sense, the question of the chronology of rGod ldem’s works is complicated by the fact that they are in many ways palimpsests in Genette’s (1982) sense.

² The only argument in favor of a very precise definition of the cycles by rGod ldem himself could be drawn from the *thems byang* literature. However, it is possible that rGod ldem “deciphered” them at the end of his life, deciding then which text belonged where rather than having envisioned the entire collection from the moment of revelation in 1366. Indeed, most of the *thems byang* read like final recapitulations, expressing a desire to definitively determine the contents of each collection.

of this series, but it still requires more in-depth study.

Variations in the Classificatory Device of the “Five Repositories”

The main division of Gödem’s revelations into large cycles partly overlaps another division, which may have preceded it: that of the five “repositories” (or “chambers,” *mdzod*) in which the texts were found in the Zangzang Lhadrak cave in 1366. We just read the traditional account of the discovery in the translated biography included in this volume. It mentions that the texts were found in either a large chest with five chambers or in four caskets located in various parts of the cave (the Tibetan text is not absolutely transparent). Due to considerable variations in Western-language publications, we propose standardizing their appellations used to refer to these repositories to make things easier for readers of this series:

- The White Eastern Conch-Shell Repository;
- The Yellow Southern Gold Repository;
- The Red Western Copper Repository;
- The Black Northern Iron Repository;
- The Brown Central Heart Repository.

The idea of “five treasures” may be reminiscent of subdivisions of the Bön scriptures: “the four portals and the treasure as the fifth.”¹ But it is also—more centrally—a maṇḍala: the main Dzogchen cycle is in the center, which fits with its position as the heart and essence of the whole; Avalokiteśvara and the peaceful Padmasambhava are in the west, which makes sense for the lotus-family, as well as the more exoteric cycles (*The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*) or those that have a more worldly purpose (*The Seven Auspicious Connections*). One is not surprised either by the association of most of the Vajrakīla texts with the North, the direction associated with “activities,” the karma family. *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* in the east also makes sense, as it is the direction associated with the mirror-like wisdom, which fits quite well for a cycle focusing on

¹ The device *sgo bzhi mdzod lnga* is one of the general classifications of the Bon teachings. However, this expression is well known to mean “the four doors with the treasure as the fifth,” and not to allude to a fivefold *mdzod*.

the revelation of the pure nature as such, without much technicalities. It is not fully counter-intuitive to have the mass of the large tantric teachings—Guru Dorjé Drakpo Tsal and the *Eight Pronouncements*—in the south: perhaps the reason is that the south is the direction somehow connected to wealth.

However, one can only imperfectly imagine this maṇḍala as a labyrinth that one would travel through gradually, by a circumambulation ending in the center: certainly, one could imagine entering from the west, where the outermost cycles are located, and then passing to the North, since it is natural to remove all obstacles as one deepens the practice. However, one would then have to jump to the south, rich with its two great tantric cycles—a leap that should not be allowed—before heading back east, where one is introduced to the ultimate nature of things, and then finally accessing the heart of the maṇḍala in which the deepest teachings are concealed. What is more, the text that is commonly used as a preliminary practice for the whole, *The Five Nails*,¹ belongs to the eastern cycle, that of *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity*, which does not tend to validate that hypothesis of a maṇḍala devised for circumambulation and gradual penetration into the center.

Another speculation might deserve consideration, for someone attempting to make sense of this original core of the Northern Treasures as a whole: *The Seven Auspicious Connections* could be regarded as the most “outer” cycle in a way that could be compared to the three “outer vehicles” of the Bönpos’ Nine Vehicles. It is mostly devoted to magical means to cope with the difficulties of material and social life. *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior* would correspond to the sūtra-level practices, connected to renunciation and *bodhicitta*, as a solid basis for further tantric meditations. The series of *Liberating All Migrants*, *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*s, *The Heart Practice*, *The Eight Pronouncements* and *The Triple Magic Dagger* makes full sense as they contain the tantric practices. Now, a common setting in the Nyingma tradition specifies that one should do these practices in the order of the “three roots” (*guru*, *deva*, and *ḍākinī*), and *Liberating All Migrants*, *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*s, and *The Heart Practice* are the gradually more esoteric sādhanas of the Guru, while *The Eight Pronouncements* and *The Triple Magic Dagger*

¹ Rig ’dzin rGod lIdem 2015, *sNgon ’gro gzer lnga*, in CNT, vol. 3, pp. 1-20.

include the deity practice. Between the two cycles of deity practice, perhaps it can be said the Vajrakīla cycles are more purely Mahāyoga-like, while *The Eight Pronouncements* seems to contain more of these inner yogas, said to belong to the Anuyoga, that are typical of the *ḍākinī* practices. The actual main *ḍākinī* practice is the Black Vajravārāhī system, scattered over three of the cycles. Finally, *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* and *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* contain Dzogchen, the Supreme Vehicle. Thus, the whole of the original core of the Jangter could be devised as one or more complete gradual path(s), also providing an advanced practitioner with whatever he would need to cure and protect his followers or to cope with other this-worldly needs.

It appears to be the case that certain disciples of Rigdzin Gödem's became masters of the contents of specific repositories while others trained in multiple cycles.¹ This suggests that the system of classification was functionally important at least during the life of Rigdzin Gödem.

The colophons in Rigdzin Gödem's *termas* are extremely stereotypic and generally poor in information. But an aspect of them that seems to have gone partly unnoticed so far is that, when they contain any reference to the repository to which the texts belong (which is not always, but often, the case), they do not consistently ascribe all the texts of any given cycle to one specific repository. Martin Boord² remarks that, although the Vajrakīla cycle is said in traditional presentations to be extracted from the northern chamber, large sections of it are, according to their colophon, from the Yellow Southern Gold

¹ See the forthcoming *Northern Treasures Histories: Volume III* for individual cases.

² In the final version of the book derived from his doctoral dissertation, *Gathering the Elements* (Boord 2013a), we read on p. 42 the main traditional assumption about the Vajrakīla text being found “within the black northern compartment of iron.” But Boord also informs us on the same page that “...in [the golden southern] chamber were found texts relating to Vajrakīla in his form as Mahottarakīla with nine faces and 18 hands,” which he develops further in his extensive series of books on Vajrakīla in the Northern Treasures tradition. The fact that what is presented today as coherent cycles was reconstructed from scattered texts found in different parts of the original treasure-box is known, but ignored, by the current Northern Treasures tradition. Reconstructing the purported contents of each of the repositories, or compartments, may be an operation similar to reconstructing Plotinus' treatises from Porphyry's edition of them as *The Enneads*.

Repository. These discrepancies in the colophons should be of interest to future researchers, since they may indicate that part of the construction of each large cycle as a more or less coherent whole may be the result of later editorial interventions.

Another feature is worth interest in this regard. If there is any chronological value to the order sketched above on the basis of internal reference, it seems that the average level of precise ascription to any of the five “repositories” increased as time passed. In fact, *it seems as if this classificatory device had been found at some point and then implemented in a more and more systematic way*, perhaps prior to the division into the large cycles described below. Some texts in the treasures themselves also show hesitation about the number of repositories or chambers, even in what we can suppose to be later layers of the corpus.¹ We also know that Gödem’s older contemporary Meben Rinchen Lingpa,² who was most likely his Dzogchen master, discovered a terma with a similarly five-compartmented casket more than fifty years earlier.³ Regardless of the *ultimate* source of this idea of five repositories,

¹ This is the case, for example, for the second *thems byang* of the *rTen ’brel chos bdun*, which mentions four repositories instead of five. See *dBang chen yongs rdzogs kyi thems byang*, in CNT, vol. 15, p. 12: ...*des* [= Rig ’dzin rGod ldem] *brag ri dug sbrul spungs ’dra’i sked nas : mdzod bzhi ’dus pa’i gter ’don par ’gyur ro* :. The logic is then that the *bse sgrom smug po* is not a fifth, central chamber, but the chest that has four divisions, as can be understood further in the same text (*op. cit.*, p. 15: *brag ri dug sbrul spungs ’dra’i sked bse sgrom smug po’i nub zangs mdzod dmar por sbas pa...*). The same hesitation is still found in the *Thugs sgrub*, which, if I am not mistaken, could be the cycle that was the latest edited. See *Nad bdag stobs ’joms lo rgyus*, in CNT, vol. 6, p. 649: *byang zang zang lha brag gi sked nas : mdzod bzhi ’dus pa’i gter brnyes pas* :... We have an indication (*Drag po rang byung rang shar chen po’i rgyud kyi rgyal po*, in CNT, vol. 9, p. 174—see below in the analysis of the *bKa’ brgyad* cycle) that, in 1381, Rig ’dzin rGod ldem was in the process of deciphering the *bKa’ brgyad rang byung rang shar* and there are reasons to believe that the *Thugs sgrub* was edited later. This suggests that the completely clear concept of the Five Repositories may have emerged during the final decade of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem’s life. This would explain why most of the texts are not explicitly attributed to any of the repositories.

² *Me ban Rin chen gling pa* (1289–1368).

³ Ca. 1311. See this passage in the life of Rin chen gling pa according to Gu ru bKra shis 1990, p. 405: *brag chol gru gsum pa zhig ’dug pa byas pa’i nang nas | bse sgrom smug po gdan drangs | bse sgrom nang du mdzod lnga mtshon phyir ral mig lnga yod pa’i shar nas khyad par lnga ldan gyi skor*], etc. The passage is translated and discussed in Arguillère 2024a and 2024e. The whole device

given the highly probable personal links between Meben Rinchen Lingpa and Rigdzin Gödem, it is not entirely impossible that this was borrowed from him by Rigdzin Gödem or by the early editors of his terma as a classificatory device. If this were the case and had been started at some point by Gödem himself, the absence of any attribution to one or another of the five repositories,¹ which is typical of some cycles, might indicate that they were made available earlier (redacted in legible Tibetan), before the general concept of these repositories was fully clear and systematically implemented.

Internal Evolutions

There are some cases in the corpus in which the same text seems to exist in various versions, some of which feel more awkward than others in comparison to what was finally selected as the standard practice in the Jangter/Dorjé Drak system. For example, reading through the Protectors practices in *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*, we can get the feeling that the specific six-armed Mahākāla, which became the special protector of Dorjé Drak, evolves from a more local deity, which might be somehow connected to Nöjin Bulé, the guardian spirit of Zangzang Lhadrak. The iconography of the deity changes through successive stages from a very uncommon one to the more classical, though idiosyncratic, form of Mahākāla. Future philologists may be interested in comparing those texts, some of which appear to be subtexts (or drafts) of others, as if all of Gödem's documents had been preserved or compiled, even when a more "advanced" version made a more primitive one feel useless. These may also be traces of successive rewritings (of perhaps inherited material).

Texts Intended for Different Audiences

What is more, reading the nine great cycles that make up the original Northern Treasures, it becomes clear that they are not all intended for the same audience. From this point of view, they can be divided into

appears exactly in the same terms in the narrative of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's discovery. There does not seem to be a close parallelism, however, regarding the teachings found in each chamber of the treasure-box.

¹ *mDzod lnga*.

three distinct groups. A first group of texts—limited to a single cycle, *The Seven Auspicious Connections*¹—makes sense only in the context of Rigdzin Gödem's relationships with the kings of Gungthang. It implies a whole vision of the world and, in particular, of the historical and political situation of Tibet and hints at the role Rigdzin Gödem would have had to play if his utopia—the restoration of the legitimate monarchy, so to speak, with himself being the royal priest and magician—had been realized.

A second group implicitly portrays Rigdzin Gödem as the organizer of one or more communities of lay disciples, united by a common set of ethical rules and ritual practices, around common shrines located at Mt. Trazang. These include devotional practices, not without depth, but always presented in the simplest terms and without insurmountable liturgical complexities. This includes *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*, the Avalokiteśvara cycle *Liberating All Migrants*, and the peaceful Padmasambhava practice, *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*.²

A third group is clearly devised for “professional practitioners,” who are seeking swift enlightenment and are able to perform elaborate rituals, either for their own progression or in order to protect others. This includes the two Dzogchen cycles, *The Triple Magical Dagger*, the *Eight Pronouncements* cycle, and *The Heart Practice*.³ These could

¹ *rTen 'brel chos bdun*.

² *Byang chub spyod dbang*, 'Gro ba kun grol, Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub. In setting these three in this order, a third principle is implemented: presenting first what the general Byang gter tradition understands as more “outer,” and moving then to what is seen as more “inner.” In this case, the *Byang chub spyod dbang* presents the ethical basis, 'Gro ba kun grol is understood as the “outer guru-yoga,” and Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub as the “inner guru-yoga.”

³ It might have been better, from a philological point of view, to present first the “quoted” cycles and then the “quoting” cycles. But, after discussion in the FCHNT team, we decided that it would make more sense for the reader to put tantric cycles first and rDzogs chen at the end, since the former ones are perceived in the rNying ma tradition as introduction to the latter. Hence the *logical* order finally chosen for this presentation: 1. *rTen 'brel chos bdun*; 2. *Byang chub spyod dbang*; 3. 'Gro ba kun grol; 4. Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub; 5. *Phur pa rnam gsum*; 6. *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*; 7. *Thugs sgrub rdo rje drag po rtsal*; 8. *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal*; 9. *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. It must be clear however that a stronger *philological* approach, more oriented towards a reconstruction of rGod ldem's biography, would have implied the following order: 1. *rTen 'brel chos bdun*; 2. *Byang chub spyod dbang*; 3. 'Gro ba kun grol; 4. Rig

further be classified according to whether they are mostly meant for solitary practice only or seem to be devised also for elaborate liturgical display. It must be remembered indeed that Rigdzin Gödem spent a large portion of the second half of his life travelling far from Mt. Tra-zang, in circumstances that may have made the performance of very elaborate rituals difficult.

An informed reader of all these volumes should be puzzled by a curious feature of these original Jangter materials: the global paucity of both doctrinal and narrative elements. This is even more striking when one considers that the fourteenth century is, for the Nyingmapas, the golden age of both philosophical syntheses (most notably, but not only, with Longchenpa) and great epic narratives about Padmasambhava and other figures of the imperial era.

A facile explanation could be that Rigdzin Gödem and his followers were pure practitioners, not concerned with theories. However, it could also be an indication that Gödem's revelations were understood in his circle as *supplementing the actual, concrete practice of a broader, pre-existing corpus that provided the doctrinal and narrative framework*. Unfortunately, the concrete way in which Rigdzin Gödem trained his disciples is poorly documented. A very likely hypothesis is that Gödem's *termas* were not the only subject matter of his teaching and that he used other materials to provide context. In many cases, the implied background corpus is clearly Nyangral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang's revelations. For Dzogchen, however, this must be different, since the revelations of earlier *tertöns* (with the exception of Pema Ledreltsal's *Khandro Nyingthik* and Rinchen Lingpa's *Unique Self-Sufficient Principle*¹) do not seem to include the visionary instructions called *Thögal*.

One might be surprised by the idea of Gödem teaching the two Nyingthiks *plus* the *Gongpa Zangthal*, given the many redundancies. However, this was apparently the case according to the biographies of

'dzin gdung sgrub; 5. *Phur pa rnam gsum*; 6. *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*; 7. *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal*; 8. *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*; 9. *Thugs sgrub rdo rje drag po rtsal*. The largest of all the writings ascribed to rGod ldem, the commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītī*, of uncertain authenticity, was placed before the two rDzogs chen cycles for reasons of thematic consistency and as it could be regarded, in the terms of traditional doxographies, as belonging to a lower section of rDzogs chen.

¹ *A ti rdzogs pa chig chod* or *A ti chig chod kun grol*. See Arguillère 2024a.

his disciples, as we will see in the next volume of this series. The absence of some central elements of the Nyingthik traditions in the *Gongpa Zangthal* does not mean at all that Rigdzin Gödem in any way discarded them, or (even less so) was not informed of them, but rather that it was deemed redundant to restate what had already been explained in the background literature.

Rigdzin Gödem's biographies present his attempts to create connections with the Gungthang kings even before the Zangzang Lhadrak discoveries. Of course, this does not prove that the cycle devised for his interactions with kings is earlier than others that may feel less original, like the Avalokiteśvara and peaceful Padmasambhava cycles. However, this is a good reason to present this cycle first.



Chapter 12: *The Seven Auspicious Connections*¹

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1. *General Overview of Content and Style*

1.1. *Overview*

he political nature of Rigdzin Gödem's revelations, which has been emphasized almost from the beginning of research on him, is not merely a Western view of his person: the Fifth Dalai Lama's close association with the Northern Treasures was not just a matter of family ties, and it is evident that he found this tradition, among the available Nyingma systems, to be particularly efficient in dealing with the invisible reality, insofar as it was necessary to ensure the welfare of the state. It is also clear that the last individual to enjoy the status of "state magician" in the Tibetan world—Tertön Sögyal² during the reign of the Thirteenth Dalai Lama—strongly identified himself with Rigdzin Gödem.

On the one hand, Gödem could be labeled as a *legitimist monarchist*. He was not alone in his time in believing that a powerful leader should be promoted by ritual means to become the head of a reunited Tibet. This is evident even with the links between Longchenpa and Drikung

¹ *rTen 'brel chos bdun*, in CNT, vol. 15.

² *gTer ston bSod rgyal*, Las rab gling pa (1856–1926), clearly presented himself as a reincarnation of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem when he met *sPrul sku* Tshul lo who was to become his main disciple and the *chos bdag* of his *gter chos*. See *sPrul sku* Tshul lo (1884–1954/57) 2014, *gSang rnam dad pa 'i 'jug ngog*, in *gSung 'bum*, pp. 111–128. Incidentally, a systematic comparison of *gTer ston bSod rgyal*'s revelations with the Byang gter, and of elements of his biography with aspects of rGod ldem's, might prove to be meaningful, even if some features may be better explained by the global context of recent rNying ma traditions in Khams. For example, the purpose of *gTer ston bSod rgyal*'s *rTen 'brel nyes sel* (Las rab gling pa 1985, vol. 1, pp. 775–940) seems to be quite similar to that of rGod ldem's *rTen 'brel chos bdun*.

Gomchen Künrin¹ in the 1350s. But in Gödem's case, there was the idea that this king should be the *legitimate* one—the descendant of the Tibetan emperors—and not just a talented person with fortunate karma.² This gives a much more compelling dimension to the echoes of the imperial epoch in the fourteenth century: it is not a mere myth to be revived and a model to be emulated, as it would be with the Fifth Dalai Lama. Rather, it designates the only legitimate candidate for kingship, the one whose reign would be one of peace, harmony, and prosperity. This element does not seem to be found in the work of other tertöns.

On the other hand, the legitimate king cannot take his full measure unless the proper auspicious circumstances³ are arranged, and this can only be done by a superiorly clairvoyant and very powerful magician.

It can be argued that both elements are reflected to some degree in many of Gödem's revelations, but there is one group of texts that focuses primarily on this aspect, in which Gödem implicitly plays a role reminiscent of that of Merlin in relation to King Arthur: *The Seven Auspicious Connections*.

The Seven Auspicious Connections focuses mainly on three deities: Hayagrīva, Mahādeva and Nyenchen Thanglha.⁴ Mahādeva is

¹ 'Bri gung *sgom chen* Kun rin. See Arguillère 2007, pp. 107-120 and its forthcoming English adaptation.

² It should be noted that the aristocratic family of the bTsad chung Khab pa was one of many in Western Tibet that claimed to be descended from Glang dar ma (r. 838–842). However, when the bTsad chung Khab pa—with the support of Sa skya—conquered large areas of Western Tibet to form the Kingdom of Mang yul Gung thang in the thirteenth century, Sa skya also supported the bTsad chung Khab pa's ancestral claims and installed him as a legitimate sovereign (i.e., mNga' bdag rgyal po), thereby elevating both the newly formed kingdom and its king over all of the other vassal principalities of the Sakya era. Moreover, by confirming the legitimacy of the king's dynasty, Sa skya also set them up as the ideal patrons of Nyingmapa treasure revealers. For more details, see the chapter on the Gung thang Kings in this volume (note by Jay Holt Valentine, February 2025).

³ *rTen 'brel*.

⁴ gNyan chen Thang lha. This figure has been explored by Yuewei Wang in her doctoral dissertation (2023) and in an article in the *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* (2024) that develops gNyan chen thang lha's Byang gter-connected aspects. Additional materials have been presented by Yuewei Wang at the First International Conference of the Northern Treasures (Paris, October 17–19, 2024), which has been included in the third Byang gter special issue of the *RET*, no. 81, pp. 536–568.

understood, so to say, as “the prince of this world,” while Hayagrīva is the means to control him—hence his name of “The Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits.” While Vajrakīla or Yamāntaka seem to be much more about *destroying* visible and invisible enemies, Hayagrīva rather deals with *increasing one’s power* through putting foes and even indifferent beings under control through magnetizing means.¹

Mahādeva obviously belongs to the Indian world (at least as imagined by the Tibetans), but Nyenchen Thanglha, on the other hand, is a purely Tibetan deity openly said to be worshiped by Bönpos also. His mantras are, in some of their aspects at least, very reminiscent of Bön mantras supposed to be in Zhangzhung language. Nyenchen Thanglha

¹ Although he is a wrathful (*khro bo*) deity, Hayagrīva, since he belongs to the Lotus family (*padma’i rigs*), is connected, among the four types of activities, to the “powerful” (*dbang*) type. A general overview of Hayagrīva in the rNying ma tradition in the style of Arguillère 2024b (on Yamāntaka) would be desirable. It should be noted that although the cult of this deity among the early rNying ma pas is clear from both the tantric corpus included in the *rNying ma rgyud ’bum* and *gter ma* cycles that may be nearly as ancient as rGya zhang khrom’s *’Jam dpal tshe bdag*, there curiously does not seem to be any corpus of ancient Hayagrīva literature in the various editions of the *rNying ma bka’ ma*. Incidentally, there are traces of ancient *gter ma* cycles about Hayagrīva in *later* Byang gter liturgies; see, e.g., *sNga ’gyur byang gter chos skor las ’don cha’i skor*, in CNT, vol. 3, pp. 193–212, a practice texts for *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub* entitled *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub kyi brgyud gsol dang las byang dkyus gcig tu bsded pa rin chen mdzes pa’i phra tshom*. This text was discussed in *Northern Treasure Histories: Volume I*. As its title indicates, it begins with a lineage prayer that informs us that this is the cycle revealed by Gong ri ba Sangs rgyas dbang chen (12th c.) and that it merged with the mainstream rDo rje brag liturgy only in the time of the Fifth Dalai Lama, through a lineage of Shangs pa (first) and Sa skya pa masters. The lineage, after Sangs rgyas dbang chen, reads: sKyer sgang Chos kyi seng ge (1154–1217); Sangs rgyas gnyan ston (Chos kyi shes rab, 1185–1255); Sangs rgyas ston pa (bsTson ’grus seng ge, 1207–1278); Shangs ston chen po (bSam sdings pa —, 1234–1309); mKhas btsun rGyal mtshan ’bum (’Jag chen —, 1261–1334); Tshul khri ms mgon po (Kyung po —, d.u., 13th c. according to BDRC); Sangs rgyas seng ge (d.u., 14th c. according to BDRC); Sangs rgyas rdo rje (d.u., 14th c. according to BDRC); Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan (d.u., 15th c. according to BDRC); Tshar chen chos kyi rje (Blo gsal rgyal mtsho, 1502–1566/67); mKhyen brtse’i dbang phyug (1524–1568 according to BDRC, but this seems to be too early); bSod nams mchog ldan (1603–1659); Chos dbyings rang grol (Zur chen, 1604–1669); then the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682) followed by Rig ’dzin Padma ’phrin las (1640–ca. 1717) and an all-rDo rje brag line of masters. This will hence be of interest only when we reach the 17th century.

(also called Dorjé Barwa Tsal¹ in this cycle) is regarded as the main tutelary spirit of the Tibetan kings in what Rigdzin Gödem promotes as the legitimate line: Trisong Detsen's descent.

Mahādeva and Nyenchen Thanglha are presented in a somewhat parallel way as mundane deities controlled by Hayagrīva's supramundane power. Surprisingly enough, however, it is the Tibetan spirit that seems to be granted the highest rank, since he is said² to be an emanation of the bodhisattva Ākāśagarbha and since practitioners sometimes visualize themselves in his form in some practices, which is extremely uncommon for a *srung ma*, and even more so for a supposedly mundane, magically subdued spirit. Mahādeva, on the other hand, is compelled by the magical force of rites to perform the tasks assigned to him.

The global logic of the whole cycle is to identify oneself as various deities of the Lotus Family, chiefly Hayagrīva (but also sometimes Padmasambhava); thanks to this, one can control both Mahādeva and Nyenchen Thanglha. Basically, Mahādeva is not presented as a guardian deity or protector in the fullest sense, but rather as an Indian "pagan" deity controlled by the magical strength of the rite. Nyenchen Thanglha, on the other hand, would properly be the "guardian of the teachings"³ committed to this cycle by Padmasambhava. Strangely, there is hardly any explicit connection made between Mahādeva and Nyenchen Thanglha in the literature, such as stating that the one is an emanation (or another form) of the other.⁴

This cycle can thus be characterized as basically magical, since, although the *yidam* (Hayagrīva) practices are also supposed to provide the ultimate accomplishments, one does not find many meditative instructions here nor any especially developed instructions on the completion

¹ rDo rje 'bar ba rtсал—It is indeed his "standard" secret name (even in Bön), although in the *Padma bka' thang* he is referred to as rDo rje mchog rab rtсал (Achard, oral communication, 28/04/2023).

² Text #35, pp. 362-363.

³ *bKa' srung*.

⁴ As suggested in the introduction of this section, further research should not only examine the structure of the whole of rGod ldem's revelations in terms of which cycles allude to (or presuppose) others in the collection. It should also examine each cycle in terms of internal consistency. In some cases, the sub-cycles are harmoniously integrated like organs in an organism; in others, they seem to be pasted side by side as autonomous developments. In the current content, the two sub-cycles are well connected to Hayagrīva, but they are not so clearly connected to one another.

phase.¹ One becomes the deity mainly to exert power over the invisible world and, through it, over the visible one.

In terms of sources, no parallel cycle has been noticed so far in Nyan-gral Nyima Özer or Guru Chöwang's *termas*.

While the seven elements mentioned in the title of the cycle are not self-obvious, they are fortunately explained in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* as being teachings connected to: 1. Amitābha; 2. Avalokiteśvara; 3. Padmasambhava; 4. Hayagrīva; 5. Mahādeva; 6. Umadevī; and 7. Jambhala.² This then means either that elements of the cycle have been lost over the centuries, or that sub-cycles have grown into independent cycles in the process of deciphering the yellow scrolls. Indeed, not only is Padmasambhava absent from the cycle as we have it, but the Jambhala practices of the original core Northern Treasures are now found either in *Liberating All Migrants* or in *The Heart Practice*. This list also curiously omits Nyenchen Thangla, which is a further indication that its architecture has undergone some modifications over the centuries. Its importance also lies in the fact that, according to one of its texts, it is also the first that Rigdzin Gödem had to practice in retreat for thirteen months just after the Zangzang Lhadrak discoveries.³

1.2. The Deities

The “Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits”⁴ is the main form of Hayagrīva in

¹ *rDzogs rim*.

² Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, vol. 3, 161a: *zab mo rten 'brel gyi chos bdun ni | 'od dpag med la rang snang dbang du sdud pa'i chos | spyen ras gzigs la gdul bya'i zhing dbang du sdud pa'i chos | gu ru padmā (sic) la khams gsum dbang du sdud pa'i chos | khro bo rta mgrin la dregs pa dbang du sdud pa'i chos | lha chen ma hā de va la khams gsum dbang du sdud pa'i chos | yum u ma de va la mo brgyud dbang du sdud pa'i chos | dzaṃ bha la 'dod dgu'i longs spyod dbang du sdud pa'i chos dang bdun yod pa mtha' dag ma thob cing*...

³ *dBang chen yongs rdzogs kyi them byang* (#2 of this cycle), in CNT, vol. 15, p. 12: *de'i nub zangs mdzod dmar po nas : dbang chen yongs su rdzogs pa'i sgrub thabs tshang bar sbas yod pas : 'di bka' bzhin tshangs mar sgrub cig : zla ba bcu gsum na 'khor los bsgyur ba'i rgyal po dang bsod nams mnyam par 'gyur ro :*, which is then explained as being the condition for the disciples to come to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

⁴ *Dregs pa dbang sdud*. More accurately: “The one who gathers arrogant [spirits] under his control.”

Rigdzin Gödem's *termas*.¹ In his simplest form (with one head and two arms), he is typically described as having his head "reaching Brahma's country," while his feet stretch to the bottom of the ocean.² His right hand strikes the form-realm while the left presses on the desire-realm;³ the sun, moon, stars and planets are his necklace and his body is of the color of the fire at the end of an eon (also said to be "dark red,"⁴ shining like coral). His back is leaning on the axial mountain, and he has four horseheads above his main head, arranged as a square standing on one angle, we can suppose, as it is said that while the right angle subdues the male demons, the left one the female demons, the superior one the planetary spirits, and the inferior one the *nāgas*. He is adorned with the charnel ground ornaments. His main mantra is not the standard one for Hayagrīva and, as many mantras found in Nyingma literature, deserves careful scrutiny.⁵

In a more developed form,⁶ the "Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits" has three faces (the right one is white, the left is dark blue, and the central one is red), six arms, the three right hands holding Maheśvara, a sword, and a battle axe, while the three left ones hold a skull-cup, a spear, and a bow and arrow. He has four feet stamping on the lords of the *nāgas* and of the gods, and he is standing in the middle of a mass of blazing fire. In this form, he is surrounded by a complete maṇḍala with a dark blue Vajrapāṇi to the east, a dark blue Garuḍa to the south, a dark red Padmaheruka to the west, and a black Yakṣaheruka to the north. Vajravārāhī is mentioned, but the deity seems not to be visualized in

¹ There is another one in the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*. See below for a description of that cycle.

² Text #5: p. 34—this "cosmic" feature is not uncommon in Nyingma literature about Hayagrīva and other wrathful deities.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 36; or #9, p. 72.

⁵ Mantras found in the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum* and in various *gter chos* should be examined in terms of their possible linguistic origins instead of being merely discarded as "wrong Sanskrit" or even mere "elfic language" presupposed to be Tibetan invention. For example, the Yamāntaka corpus displays many examples of mantras of which only segments may be Sanskrit, even roughly phoneticized. But nobody seems to have explored their possible Newari sources, although the Yamāntaka traditions claim a Nepalese origin.

⁶ Text #9: pp. 72 ff.

union with her.¹

The second main deity of this cycle is Mahādeva. He is described² as a red deity with a *khaṭvāṅga* in his right hand and an iron arrow and bow in the left, naked, his penis erected, standing on “the disc of the wind.” His consort, also red, holds a curved knife in her right hand and a “wheel of fire and wind” in her left. They stand in the middle of a maṇḍala of four ḍākinīs.

The third main central figure of this cycle is Nyenchen Thanglha.³ His “secret spouse” is Yudrönma.⁴ Nyenchen Thanglha is described⁵ as being somewhat the equivalent in the world of spirits of what Trisong Detsen was among men: the main figure in Central Tibet. Padmasambhava makes him the “god of the Body”⁶ of Trisong Detsen. This deity, of peaceful appearance, has many forms, but mainly appears⁷ as a three-eyed white young man riding a white horse, with a fivefold topknot⁸ crowned with a jewel, a riding crop in his right hand and a crystal rosary in his left, wearing a white, red, and dark blue cloak. He is also called “the king of the Gandharvas”⁹ and has many other names. He is strangely invoked¹⁰ as an antidote to the malefices of Pehar,¹¹ which, in the original Jangter corpus, seems to be a purely negative figure. This is worth noting, since, in later stages in the history of Tibetan Buddhism, it appears that it is Pehar who, at some point, took the role that tends to be assumed, in our texts, by Nyenchen Thanglha—that of the

¹ The exact same form is found, with additional details, as the “male aspect” (*yab ka*) in 'Khor gdong gter chen's (1802–1864) revelation *mKha' 'gro dgongs 'dus*. Cf. *Zab thig snying po don sbyor las : yang gsang mkha' 'gro dgongs 'dus kyi : dregs pa dbang bsadud lha btsun ma'i las byang : 'grigs chags su bkod pa dngos grub 'char 'bebs*, in C.R. Lama (ed.) 1975, *mKha' 'gro dgongs 'dus: Precious Teachings of the Atiyoga and Power Attainment of Buddhist Practice Focussing on the Tutelary Goddess Kurukulla*, Delhi, Jayyed Press, pp. 119-131. This detail is important for understanding how the *gter gsar* is understood as a further development of the *gter rnying*.

² Text #45: p. 488.

³ Or rDo rje 'bar ba rtsal.

⁴ g.Yu sgron ma. A description can be found, e.g., in #57, p. 604.

⁵ Text #32, pp. 322-323.

⁶ *sKu lha*. *Ibid.*, p. 324.

⁷ Text #34, pp. 341-342.

⁸ *Zur phud lnga pa*.

⁹ *Dri za'i rgyal po*.

¹⁰ Text #35, pp. 348-349.

¹¹ *rGyal po Pe har*.

king of the good spirits of Central Tibet.¹

1.4. What this Cycle Tells Us About Rigdzin Gödem

The Seven Auspicious Connections implicitly reveals to us what Rigdzin Gödem's role would have been if the legitimate monarchy could have been restored in Tibet: embodying Hayagrīva in the form peculiar to this cycle, he would have had the task of propitiating Nyenchen Thanglha and through him controlling all the spirits of Tibet, the good ones as vassals and the evil ones by violent suppression.

Although this corpus does not inform us of any new datable facts, it portrays one side of Rigdzin Gödem's personality and may give us an indication of his activities, at least during the periods when he was in favor at the court of Gungthang. It is interesting, for example, that whatever may have become of this particular cycle later, the earliest corpus as preserved in volume 15, and even the additional ritual texts by authors up to the eighteenth century that have been added, do not contain any form of rich and extensive liturgy. This may indicate that Rigdzin Gödem understood the role of the royal magician not as one who performs pompous ceremonies to impress the aristocracy, but rather as one who accomplishes private rituals in secret, or at least in more intimate contexts.

It should be noted that it is in *another* part of the terma, *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior* (examined next), that one finds the rite for the king's coronation.² This may be regarded as purely coincidental, but it is actually consistent with the proposed hypothesis: *The*

¹ See Bell 2021, which does not describe this concurrence between gNyan chen Thang lha and Pe har, but does present the gradual rise of Pe har and his circle (the *rgyal po sku lnga*) from the time of Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer to that of the Fifth Dalai Lama, then the gradually more central role of gNas chung rDo rje grags ldan (originally a secondary deity of Pe har's retinue), and finally the way in which a new deity, rDo rje shugs ldan, tends to replace Pe har and his entourage. It is clear from Bell's books, although he does not follow this thread to the point of proposing a full socio-historical analysis, that these rivalries between deities or groups of deities always reflect the concurrence of human social groups struggling for supremacy.

² *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*, #12: pp. 139-161. This rite, known to have been used for at least two different purposes in the 20th century, should be examined to find traces of a possible use for one or more of the kings of Gungthang.

Seven Auspicious Connections is intended for the king's magician's private practice to support the king's activity, while the coronation of the king is by its nature meant for public display and to bring the community together. Therefore, it is better placed in the other cycle, which is more oriented toward communal practice.

As mentioned in the introduction of this section, *The Seven Auspicious Connections* does not appear to mention other Jangter cycles. This may indicate that this cycle is earlier. This would be consistent with the hypothesis that it was intended for the Gungthang kings, and thus it makes perfect sense around the time of the treasure revelation in 1366, when Rigdzin Gödem was attempting to secure their patronage.

2. *State of the Art*

Although the corpus is catalogued, notably with some interesting detail in Schiller 2021, it seems that its content has not been the subject of any research so far, except for Yuewei Wang's doctoral thesis (2023), the part of which that is relevant to Jangter has been published (2024) in a rewritten form in the *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines*.¹ Yuewei Wang's research, however, focuses on Nyenchen Thanglha only and not on the whole cycle and its inner logic.

3. *Tibetan Sources*

The cycle fills the 698 pages of volume 15 of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*. A 418-page manuscript volume from Changling Tülku's library is available through BDRC.² Segments of it also appear in the *Rinchen Terdzö*.

The Seven Auspicious Connections cycle has been briefly commented upon by Rigdzin Pema Trinlé in three texts available in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*.³

¹ Wang, Yuewei, 2024.

² As W1KG12285.

³ CNT vol. 42: pp. 385-392, 393-396, and 397-400.

4. Material Description of the Collection as Presented in The Compilation of the Northern Treasures

The whole cycle, like that of *Liberating All Migrants*, comes, it is said, from the Red Western Copper Repository.

The basic structure of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* volume containing *The Seven Auspicious Connections* is in two parts: the first¹ consists of Gödem's revelations, with very few additions; and the second² is a collection of relevant compositions by other authors, including a short terma text ascribed to Sangyé Lingpa.³ Both parts roughly follow the same order: first a section devoted to the *yidam* practices (mostly that of Hayagrīva "Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits," but preceded, in the terma section, by short preparatory practices of Amitābha and Avalokiteśvara and a few subsequent ones for secondary deities such as the red Lion-Faced Ḍākinī⁴); then there is a section with the literature about Mahādeva and, finally, the section about Nyenchen Thanglha.

4.1. The Terma Section

*4.1.1. Yidam Practice*⁵

The first two texts are catalogs⁶ of the cycle, the first of which⁷ is very perplexing insofar as, on the one hand, it announces texts not found in the collection, and, on the other hand, it does not describe most of the texts that are found therein. Typically, there is no trace of Nyenchen Thanglha in this first overview of *The Seven Auspicious Connections*. The second one⁸ is much more extensive and includes a narrative about

¹ CNT vol. 15, pp. 1-374.

² CNT vol. 15, pp. 375-696.

³ Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340-1396) was an exact contemporary of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, but nothing is known so far of their possible interactions.

⁴ Seng ge gdong ma.

⁵ CNT vol. 15, #1-11, pp. 1-98. #1: pp. 1-3; #2: pp. 7-16; #3: pp. 17-21; #4: pp. 23-29; #5: pp. 31-41; #6: pp. 43-54; #7: pp. 55-59; #8: pp. 61-68; #9: pp. 69-84; #10: pp. 85-90; #11: pp. 91-98.

⁶ *Thems byang*.

⁷ #1: *rTen 'brel chos bdun gyi them byang*, pp. 1-3.

⁸ #2: *dBang chen yongs rdzogs kyi them byang*, pp. 5-16. It should be noted that the whole cycle is consistently called *dBang chen yongs rdzogs (kyi [b]sgrub*

the origin of the cycle and the way it was concealed. Its description of the contents of the cycle matches more or less with the collection as it stands in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*. However, there are mentions of sādhanas of Vajravārāhī, for example, that were either not revealed by Gödem, lost by his successors, or moved to other cycles.¹ Another puzzling feature is the complete absence of Nyenchen Thanglha, as in the first catalog.

The third text is a sādhana of Amitābha, and text #4 is a sādhana of Avalokiteśvara. In the logic of this cycle, these two practices are preliminaries before one engages in the practice of Hayagrīva. It is then very natural that texts #5 and #6 are sādhanas of Hayagrīva under his typical form in this cycle, “The Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits.” Text #7 is an empowerment ritual for this deity. Text #8 contains the “main history” of the practice of Mahādeva, including a curious development about his dual nature—as a mundane god and as an emanation of Amitābha.² Text #9 is, again, a quite large activity-oriented sādhana of Hayagrīva, followed (#10) by a very brief “heart-explanation of the blessings of the preliminary practices” (i.e., the empowerment for these practices). Then follows (#11: pp. 91-98) a more activity-oriented sādhana of Hayagrīva.

thabs), and not *rTen 'brel chos bdun*, in this second *thems byang*. However, both clearly allude to the same corpus, although surely not in the same state.

¹ #2, p. 8, at the end of a list of five deities, the first four of which are Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, Hayagrīva, and Padmasambhava, who are actually present in the cycle, Vajravārāhī is named: *mkha' 'gro dbang du sdud pa la : rdo rje phag mo'i bsgrub* (sic) *thabs* :. Assuming our hypothesis that this is the oldest cycle or the first to be edited, one could suppose that practices connected to Avalokiteśvara and Padmasambhava, still residually present in *The Seven Auspicious Connections*, gradually expanded to form autonomous cycles, while Vajravārāhī was scattered into various others. This could even go further, as this second *thems byang* also mentions (*op. cit.*, p. 9) a secret practice of Padmasambhava called the *Thugs sgrub*, like the vast cycle described below as *The Heart Practice*. If this type of thing occurred, it should then be researched whether *Liberating All Migrants* could not as well be the result of an immense development of the Avalokiteśvara aspect of *The Seven Auspicious Connections*. However, part of the discrepancy between this *thems byang* and the actual content of *The Seven Auspicious Connections* may also be explained otherwise—by the idea that rGod Idem revealed only *part* of the corpus described by the *thems byang*, supposedly scattered among seven different *gter mas*, named (*op. cit.*, p. 12) by their place of discovery.

² #8: pp. 61-68: *dBang chen rtso ba'i lo rgyus*.

4.1.2. Mahādeva (texts #12-31, pp. 99-320)

Then starts a series of texts focusing on the deity Mahādeva, or Lhachen Wangchuk (#12-24):¹ #15 is a ritual of offerings to this deity; #16, includes the instructions for the practice; #17 is a ritual practice for Mahādeva in union with his consort; #18 includes the “last resort” ritual² of the Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits;³ #19 is another ritual meant to control Lhachen Wangchuk through his “soul-stone.”⁴ Text #20 is another empowerment ritual for Lhachen Wangchuk; text #21 is about Lhachen Wangchuk’s mantra; it is followed by text #22 with more ritual methods in order to control Lhachen Wangchuk; texts #23⁵ and #24 are two further sādhanas of Mahādeva. Text #24 is a sādhana of Umadevī, Mahādeva’s female counterpart.

Text #25⁶ is a short tantra entitled *The Tantra of the Wheel of [Ritual] Activities that Summon Mahādeva*,⁷ which the page title says is the fundamental one for this cycle. Although it is a tantra, it is not spoken by deities in a higher realm, but its form is that of a dialogue between Padmasambhava and Chim Dorjé Trechung⁸ in Samyé.

The next one (#26)⁹ is a writing by Rigdzin Kalzang Pema

¹ *lHa chen* dBang phyug. #12: pp. 99-103; #13: pp. 105-109; #14: pp. 111-120; #15: pp. 121-132; #16: pp. 133-146; #17: pp. 147-157; #18: pp. 159-174; #19: pp. 175-187; #20: pp. 189-195; #21: pp. 197-202; #22: pp. 203-209; #23: pp. 211-231; #24: pp. 247-256.

² *Las mtha’*.

³ This text is the first one of the collection that is not presented as being entirely a *gter chos* of Rig ’dzin rGod ldem, since pp. 164-174 do not bear the characteristic marks. But it does not have a colophon that would allow us to ascribe it to any specific author.

⁴ *Bla rdo*.

⁵ This text is interesting because its colophon specifies a date of discovery, which is quite uncommon. This date is a *sa pho rta’i lo*, which, if the *gter ston* is rGod ldem, would be 1378. If this is the case, this would be an indication pointing to treasure discovery distinct from the main one in Zang zang lha brag.

⁶ #25: pp. 258-274.

⁷ *dBang sdud las kyi ’khor lo’i rgyud*. I have translated *sdud* above as “gathering” in the name of the specific form of Hayagrīva in this cycle. But here, it seems to mean: to *bring* Mahādeva in front of his subduer.

⁸ ’Chim rDo rje spre chung.

⁹ #26: pp. 275-288 + appendix pp. 288-289.

Wangchuk, Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's reincarnation.¹ It is another sādhana of Mahādeva.

Text #27 is another rite for controlling Mahādeva, this time through his “wheel² of life.” The next one (#28) is an offering ritual inducing Mahādeva to perform his activities. Text #29 presents instructions by Padmasambhava connected to Mahādeva about “showing the place of death,”³ which seems to mean that this rite is meant to control the spirit through a death threat. Text #30 is also about controlling Mahādeva and through him the whole world, getting wealth, etc.⁴

Text #31⁵ describes one more rite meant to provide wealth, power, women, etc., connected to Hayagrīva “Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits,” but without an obvious connection to Mahādeva. It is interesting because of the mention of a place of concealment and discovery that seems not to be Zangzang Lhadrak, but a place in which Zangpo Drakpa found termas.⁶

¹ Here named Thogs med rtal, but formally identified in a further text of this cycle as being *Rig 'dzin sKal bzang padma dbang phyug*.

² In the context of Tibetan magic rituals, a “wheel” is generally a talisman combining images of various beings, geometrical forms and formulas disposed in the proper locations.

³ *Shi sa*.

⁴ #27: pp. 291-296; #28: pp. 297-302; #29: pp. 303-306; #30: pp. 307-310.

⁵ #31: pp. 311-320.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 319: *ru lag rgyang gi mgon po dmar po nas spyang drangs pa 'o*. This is a place near lHa rtse, where Srong btsan sgam po built a temple (Grom/Gram pa lha khang). It is in this place that Padmasambhava entrusted sNa nams rDo rje bDud 'joms and Mu khri bTsan po with the texts to be hidden (Hayagrīva, etc.) to be later rediscovered by bZang po grags pa, who handed some of them to rGod ldem (Achard, written note, 2023/04/28). Hence, we can wonder whether this would not be *gter ma* of bZang po grags pa rather than of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, especially since the *gter ston* is not named. There is a complementary (added) colophon that alludes to Padma 'phrin las, [sMin gling] Dharmasrī, and two other figures: mNyam nyid rdo rje and Rig pa'i rdo rje. mNyam nyi rdo rje is the author of the *Padma zhal lung* which is included in vol. 16 of the Byang gter collection. He is also associated with a *sgrub chen* of the *bKa' brgyad* in vol. 57. There is a praise to him in vol. 59 where he is identified as rDor brag rig 'dzin chen po Thub bstan chos dbang mnyam nyid rdo rje. (His biography is also included in that volume). In vol. 60 is found his *bKa' brgyad gtor bzlog*. He should not be confounded with Zur mkhar ba (Achard, 2023/04/28). Rig pa'i rdo rje could be sMan lung pa Blo gros mchog gi rdo rje, also known as Blo mchog rig pa'i rdo rje (1595–1671), one of the masters of *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las and of the Fifth Dalai Lama (BDRC: P2668).

4.1.3. Nyenchen Thanglha¹

With text #32 starts the sub-cycle devoted to Nyenchen Thanglha. This first text contains the story about the connection between King Trisong Detsen and this spirit. Text #33² is the “outer” *sādhana* of Nyenchen Thanglha.³

Text #34 is the “secret” *sādhana* (there seems not to be an “inner” one). Text #35 is noteworthy in that Nyenchen Thanglha is presented as the antidote against Pehar, appearing here in a purely negative way as the king of all demons of Tibet (see reference above; also p. 351). Another curious feature of this text is that (pp. 349-350) it proposes that the practitioner should visualize him or herself as Nyenchen Thanglha and then trample and devour demons, which is very uncommon for a deity that seems otherwise to be regarded as a worldly “guardian”⁴ and

¹ Texts #32-36, pp. 321-471. #32: pp. 321-324; #33 pp. 325-332 + appendix pp. 332-333; #34: pp. 335-345; #35: pp. 347-367; #36: pp. 369-374. The reader is reminded that none of the contents of this gNyan chen Thang lha (sub-) cycle are mentioned in either of the two terma catalogs placed at the beginning of *The Seven Auspicious Connections*. Indeed, Schiller (2021: n. 29, p. 831) remarked that both Se ston Padma dBang chen and the Fifth Dalai Lama categorize this gNyan chen Thang lha cycle as something distinct from *The Seven Auspicious Connections*. How it ended up being amalgamated to it in the recent edition that we are using (CNT) is unclear; the only reason may be that one visualizes as Hayagrīva while propitiating this deity.

² This appendix includes lineage indications, seeming to end one generation after Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las.

³ This text is noteworthy because the colophon of its *gter ma* part (p. 231) clearly states that it was discovered in an Earth-Male-Horse year (*sa pho rta*) which, if Rig 'dzin rGod ldem is indeed its *gter ston*, can only be 1378, although it is said to be a part of the “Red Western Copper Repository,” which usually refers only to the 1366 discovery in Zang zang lha brag. What is more, in 1378, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was in the middle of his adventures in 'Bras mo gshongs. Another explanation would be that it was discovered in 1318 by another *gter ston* (bZang po grags pa? Rin chen gling pa?) and inherited by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. However, the mention of the “Red Western Copper Repository” then remains perplexing, since bZang po grags pa is not said to have discovered treasures in Zang zang lha brag. The only other *gter ston* known to have discovered *gter mas* in Zang zang lha brag (but this would be quite far-fetched) is the Bon master dPon gsas Khyung rgod rtsal, and in this case it would make sense, since gNyan chen Thang lha belongs to a pantheon of local deities that is common to the Buddhists and the Bon pos. The year in question might then be 1198.

⁴ *Srung ma*.

not at all as a tantric *yidam*. Further in the text, Nyenchen Thanglha is propitiated in various forms and with various mantras, each aiming at a specific sort of mundane *siddhis*.

Text #36 (pp. 369-374), after a short narrative introduction, is an offering rite to the same deity.

4.2. The Non-Terma Section

With text #37¹ begins a series of texts that are not presented as treasures. But this one is somewhat in-between the two categories, since it starts with a lineage prayer² that ends with Thekchok Tendzin,³ a twentieth century figure, followed by “[my] dear root-master.”⁴ It is unclear who the actual author is (Rigpé Dorjé?⁵), if not Thekchok Tendzin himself.⁶ The rest of the text is (pp. 378-394), as the previous ones, a terma invocation of Nyenchen Thanglha—although not clearly ascribed to a precise tertön.

4.2.1. Yidam Practice⁷

Text #38 is definitely not a terma. It is a *sādhana* of Hayagrīva “Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits” composed by Thekchok Tendzin. Text #39 is a prayer to the lineage of the Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits by Rigpé Dorjé. Text #40 is another rite of the same deity, made of two parts, a

¹ #37: pp. 375-394.

² Pp. 376-378.

³ Theg mchog bstan ’dzin is the *mkhan chen* of ’Go tsha dgon (BDRC: P1PD108570) whose writings are found in vol. 57 of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgribs*. There is a compilation of his writings that is partly available on BDRC as WA2PD17502.

⁴ *Drin chen rtsa ba’i bla ma*.

⁵ Rig pa’i rdo rje. This seems to be *Khyab bdag sMan lung pa Blo mchog rig pa’i rdo rje* (1595–1671), but, in context, could also be a much more recent figure, a disciple of Theg mchog bstan ’dzin.

⁶ It happens that texts are supplemented by interpolations that complete the lineage prayers with references to people who postdate the actual author. Manuscript notes by a master who simply wanted to note the lineage through which the teaching came to him after the last person mentioned in the original text are mistaken by later editors as corrections to the text and end up being included in it.

⁷ Texts #38-44, pp. 395-471; #38: pp. 395-411; #39: pp. 413-416; #40: pp. 417-422; #41: pp. 423-436; #42: pp. 437-461; #43: pp. 463-466; #44: pp. 467-471.

terma¹ (which was found in Riwo Palbar,² with a little colophon that suggests that it is a teaching of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé preserved in the handwriting of Pema Shenyen³) followed by a short conclusion with six prayers to Hayagrīva that does not bear terma marks. Text #41 is a practice manual⁴ for the Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits by a hitherto unknown author.⁵ Text #42 is an instruction manual for the empowerment of the Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits by an equally unidentified author.⁶ Then comes (#43) a short empowerment ritual (actually looking more like notes than a fully composed text) for this deity; it is also not a terma, and it also does not bear an author name or any element that might help to identify him. Text #44 is devoted to the practice of the red Lion-Faced Dākinī;⁷ it has a non-terma part by Dorjé Thokmé⁸ and a colophon-less terma part.

4.2.2. *Mahādeva*⁹

With text #45 we revert to Mahādeva. This one is a ritual for the confession and the restoration of the samaya¹⁰ by Künzang Jigmé Pawo.¹¹ Text #46 is also a ritual of Mahādeva said to be composed “perhaps by Khamsum Zilnön.”¹² Text #47 also belongs to this collection of

¹ Pp. 418-422.

² Ri bo dpal 'bar. This is one of the very few instances where a text is explicitly said not to be from Zang zang lha brag.

³ Padma bshes gnyen (18th century).

⁴ *bsNyen yig*.

⁵ *rGyal khams pa* rDo rje snying po'i dpal. This sounds like an initiatory name and may be a figure otherwise well-known under another name, but we have not identified him so far.

⁶ Padma thogs med.

⁷ Seng ge gdongs ma.

⁸ rDo rje thogs med (P10264, 18th century), disciple of Padma dbang rgyal, himself a student of *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las, seems to be none other than *Rig 'dzin* sKal bzang padma dbang phyug (1720–1771), the direct reincarnation of *Rig 'dzin* Padma 'phrin las.

⁹ Texts #45-50, pp. 473-524; #45: pp. 473-481; #46: pp. 483-493; #47: pp. 495-499; #48: pp. 501-504; #49: pp. 507-517 + illustrations pp. 518-521; #50: pp. 523-524.

¹⁰ *bsKang bshags mnga' gsol*.

¹¹ Kun bzang 'jigs med dpa' bo (BDRC: P672, b. 1682).

¹² Khams gsum gzil gnön (Kun bzang 'gyur med lhun grub, the 6th rDo rje brag *rig 'dzin chen po*, BDRC: P8LS12705, ca. 1775–1810).

Mahādeva rituals. The colophon does not allow an identification of its author. Text #48 is something we would not have expected to find here, namely a terma of Rigdzin Gödem's great contemporary Sangyé Lingpa (1340–1396). It is also about the practice of Lhachen Wangchuk, which explains its presence in this corpus, although the whole plot—the cult of Mahādeva in Tibet's fourteenth century—remains to be explained. Text #49—a ritual of fire offering to Mahādeva—is probably a writing of Kalzang Pema Wangchuk.¹ Text #50 seems to be a fragment or a note that might have been an appendix of the previous text, but it interestingly contains an allusion to Khyabdak Menlungpa.²

4.2.3. Nyenchen Thanglha³

Text #51, by Ngakchang Yölmowa⁴ (without any specification that could allow us to decide which one of the great Jangter masters from Yölmo was the author) is about Lhachen Barwatsal,⁵ that is, Nyenchen Thanglha.

This is also the case of text #52, an empowerment ritual⁶ by the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682).⁷ Text #53, by an unknown author, is again about Nyenchen Thanglha. Text #54 is a terma offering ritual to the same deity by Tobden Pawo.⁸ Text #55 is a composition by Orgyen

¹ It is ascribed to a “bsKal (sic) bzang padma'i ming can.”

² Probably *Khyab bdag sMan lung pa Blo mchog rig pa'i rdo rje* (1595–1671). This is the above-mentioned Rig pa'i rdo rje.

³ Texts #51–61, pp. 525–696; #51: pp. 525–529; #52: pp. 531–543; #53: pp. 545–547; #54: pp. 549–560; #55: pp. 561–581; #56: pp. 583–595; #57: pp. 597–645; #58: pp. 647–650; #59: pp. 651–660; #60: pp. 661–662; #61: pp. 663–696; #62: pp. 697–698.

⁴ *sNgags 'chang Yol mo ba*.

⁵ *lHa chen 'Bar ba rtsal*.

⁶ *Srog gtad kyi rjes gnang*.

⁷ “Za hor gyi ban dhe Thogs med rtsal.”

⁸ sTobs ldan dpa' bo (BDRC: P5631). This is another name for the third Yol mo sprul sku. He is the author of a *rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal gyi zab khrid yang gsang snying po gsal ba'i sgron me khrid gzhung chen mo*. This text could not be used in Arguillère (2022b) on “the History of the *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manuals.” It is known, however, through a manuscript in Gongjang Rinpoche's collection (NGMPP Reel Number: NGMPP E/3238/7). Whether sTobs ldan dpa' bo is a person other than *gter ston* Khrag 'thung sTobs ldan dpa' bo (BDRC: W3PD994) remains to be clarified.

Jigmé Longyang.¹ It is also a ritual of Nyenchen Thanglha, meant to consecrate the “supports” of the deity. It includes a short narrative explaining that this deity was an important god of the Bönpos that Padmasambhava put under oath. Text #56 is also an invocation of Nyenchen Thanglha, whose author, in the absence of a colophon or a lineage prayer, is unidentified.

Text #57 is a large ritual of the same deity by the Fifth Dalai Lama in which the protector is invoked and controlled by oneself in the simple (two-armed, one-faced) form of Hayagrīva Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits. The Fifth Dalai Lama constructed a whole maṇḍala for the simultaneous propitiation of the various forms of Nyenchen Thanglha² that were evoked separately in text #35 above. Quite interestingly, the author says (p. 644) that he combined the tradition of the Northern Treasures with the ritual knowledge of “White Bön liturgists.”³ On the same page, there are interesting pieces of information about the reasons why the Fifth Dalai Lama found it useful to compose this text, saying that the state in which he found the tradition of ritual practice of this deity was not satisfactory; he alludes to both Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal (1550–1603)⁴ and Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo (1580–1639).⁵

Text #58 is an “offering of the outer supporting [items]” to Nyenchen Thanglha—a composition by “Yölmowa” (difficult, again, to say which one) written in Drigang Rigdzin Phodrang.⁶ It contains allusions to Pema Trinlé (1640–ca. 1717).

Text #59 is another rite of Nyenchen Thanglha, ascribed to Karma Chagmé (1613–1678).⁷ Text #60, again a ritual text about Nyenchen Thanglha, is a terma, but without a clear ascription to any given discoverer. Text #61 is one more ritual arrangement⁸ by the Fifth Dalai Lama. It expresses again the idea that some liturgical materials were missing for the cult of Nyenchen Thanglha and that this is the reason why this

¹ O rgyan 'jigs med klong yangs is an author that we find more than once in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*; he was a disciple of Khams gsum gzil gnon (ca. 1775–ca. 1810), writing in rDo rje brag.

² rDo rje 'bar ba rtsal.

³ *Bon dkar lha gsol mkhan po'i cho ga bzhin*.

⁴ *Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal*.

⁵ *Rig 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po*.

⁶ 'Bri sgang rig 'dzin pho brang.

⁷ “Rā ga a gses” (sic, normally Rā ga a sya), that is, gNas mdo Karma chags med.

⁸ *rTen mdos bskang mdos bzlog mdos*.

text was composed.

Finally, text #6, composed by one hitherto unidentified “*Ngakben*,”¹ does not have a proper title.² It alludes to both the Fifth Dalai Lama and Minling Lochen Dharmaśrī (1654–ca. 1717) but insists on its conformity to the traditions of Dorjé Drak.³ It is actually a short explanation of the general order of the practice, starting with Amitābha, Avalokiteśvara, and Padmasambhava, then moving to Hayagrīva Subjugator of Arrogant Spirits with its various secondary activity rituals, two secondary female deities—Vajravārāhī⁴ and the Lion-Faced Dākinī—and then to the various stages of Mahādeva’s practice. Strangely enough, there is no allusion to Nyenchen Thanglha.



¹ *sNgags ban*.

² It begins: *zab gnad rten 'brel chos bdun 'di la gter ltar zhal khriḡs gdams ngag la...*

³ P. 697: *e vaṃ cog sgar yab sras brgyud 'dzin bcas pa'i gzhung lugs ltar...*

⁴ This makes sense, given the idea, in the above-quoted *thems byang*, that this cycle has five main deities, including Vajravārāhī. But, in fact, this seems to be the only place where she appears and this seems to be a quite late addition, not in any way a section of the *gter chos* itself.

The Second Group: Texts Intended for an Audience of Lay Disciples

Three other cycles seem to have been intended for an audience of lay disciples rather than devised for the king and the general needs of the kingdom. The first corpus, called *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*, would require very close study, for in reading it we can really imagine Gödem organizing a community of lay people who were not religious specialists. The second one, *Liberating All Migrants*, presents very simple Avalokiteśvara practices that require little ritual expertise and addresses all the needs of the living, the dying, and even the dead in very accessible terms. Dzogchen is presented in this corpus, but in the simplest possible terms. Finally, *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*s is a cycle for the practice of peaceful Padmasambhava which shares most of the same characteristics.

Chapter 13: *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*¹

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1. *General Overview of Content and Style*

 *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior* is perhaps the most unusual section of Gödem's revelations for its awkward feature of presenting bodhisattva vows and even temporary discipline belonging to the category of the "vows of individual liberation"² on the basis of tantric empowerments, mostly in the style of the so-called lower tantras.³ *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior* cycle is indeed known for its paradoxical character of being, in its own way, a tantric cycle (empowerments, deities, etc.) meant to support a sūtra-style practice. Although the text is said to be extracted from the "Red Western Copper Repository" (not wholly, though), it does not exhibit any connection with the lotus family, since its main deity is

¹ *Byang chub spyod dbang.*

² *So sor thar pa.*

³ It fills the first 271 pages of volume 14 of the collection.

Vairocana.¹ Its central focus is on temporary vows, with the idea of special days in the months being sanctified by the combination of taking vows for one day (*upavāsasaṃvara*) and practicing connected rituals. The rituals, then, are mainly devised for karmic purification through the recitation of dhāraṇīs in a style rather typical of what the Tibetans would call the lower tantras.

Its main deity, as in the Caryā- and Yoga-tantras, is indeed Vairocana, presented as the *sambhogakāya* of Buddha Śākyamuni.² The Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* describes³ this cycle as based on a fivefold empowerment of the thirty-two deities of Vairocana, presented on a maṇḍala painted on cloth, followed by an empowerment for each of the nine vehicles. Although the second aspect is reminiscent of *The Gathering of Intentions*,⁴ which also has empowerments for the sūtra-level teachings, the first one is more typical of Caryā-tantra.⁵ As Jeffrey Hopkins⁶ phrases it:

...In general it is said that Action Tantra has the water and crown initiations as well as subsequent rites granting permission to meditate on a specific deity whereas Performance Tantra has all five initiations. The specific [tantric] vows are taken only in Yoga and Highest Yoga Tantra as the vajra master initiation occurs only in them. (...) Since Action and Performance Tantra do not have the vajra master initiation, the vows to be maintained more dearly than one's life are the Bodhisattva ones, not the tantric.

¹ This may be another indication that the “Red Western Copper Repository” primarily refers to the collection of texts that were “decoded” first.

² Some texts present quite unexpected material: one of them, after teaching how to build a stūpa dedicated to Vairocana and explaining the meditation posture, presents unusual instructions on meditation using a mirror.

³ *gSan yig* (1971), vol. 3, 115b: *rNam snang lha so gsum gyi ras bris kyi dkyil 'khor du rig pa 'i dbang lnga sngon du 'gro ba can gyi nyan thos rang rgyal byang sems| kri ya u pa yo ga| mahā anu a ti <115b> ste theg pa rim dgu 'i dbang dam byang chub sems dpa 'i spyod dbang legs par mnos nas|*.

⁴ See Dalton 2016, chap. 4, pp. 75-77, for an overview of this empowerment for the nine vehicles.

⁵ It is unclear, however, how rNying ma scholars would classify this cycle, since, in principle, a system of tantric practice is supposed to belong to the category of the *highest* elements it contains, rather than to that of those that are *predominate* within it. Hence, it is difficult to describe as belonging to the Caryā class of tantras a cycle that presents an Ati (rDzogs chen) empowerment, however simplified.

⁶ Hopkins 1975, pp. 16 ff.

This characterizes quite well *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*, with the difference that it also includes the system for temporary abstinence vows. However, this is not surprising, since bodhisattva vows would normally imply also to respect strictly those of the “individual liberation” category that one has taken, although more with the aim of gathering merits for supreme enlightenment than on merely setting up conditions more conducive to personal nirvāṇa.

As in the case of the two cycles we will examine next (*Liberating All Migrants*¹ and *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*²), and contrary to Rigdzin Gödem’s large tantric³ or Dzogchen⁴ cycles, this one seems to be intended mainly, if not only, for communities of lay people that were not (or not all) ritual specialists or dedicated meditators. The majority of the practices are rather simple: devised for the purification of karma and obscurations, they do not involve overly specialized competence or equipment. Nevertheless, there are instructions in this cycle for activities that require some wealth, like building stūpas, which are appropriate for lay patrons (individuals or groups) aiming at gathering merits. This aspect of the Jangter’s original core should not be underestimated: some sections of the treasure appear to be part of the organization of a communal life among simple people.

This cycle is also remarkable in that, as was already mentioned, it contains the famous king’s coronation rite of the Northern Treasures (#12: pp. 139-161) as well as (#15) a series of prophecies full of curious details about Rigdzin Gödem’s revelations.

2. Deities

Vairocana: In this cycle, this Buddha—presented here as the *sambhogakāya* of Buddha Śākyamuni (text #1: p. 3)—sits on a throne carried by eight elephants (text #4: p. 38); his body is white, with one face and two arms; his right hand holds a wheel on his heart, and the left one a bell on his hip. He is in the middle of a maṇḍala with, in the four directions, the other Buddhas embodying the four other families.

¹ 'Gro ba kun grol.

² Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub.

³ Phur pa rnam gsum, Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal and bKa' bgyad rang byung rang shar.

⁴ Ka dag rang byung rang shar and Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal.

This first circle is surrounded by a second one with eight peaceful female deities, then by a third circle with sixteen deities—the eight bodhisattvas and their female counterparts, all in peaceful forms.¹

The Goddess Mahāmudrā:² This goddess is not precisely described; she is merely connected to a dhāraṇī that is presented in text #3.

3. State of the Art

Although this cycle is mentioned in all the general descriptions of the Northern Treasures (with some elements about its transmission in Schiller 2021), its contents do not seem to have been researched or described.

4. Tibetan Sources

Complete editions of the cycle seem to have been rare in Tibet, since we cannot find any one available outside of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* through BDRC. However, parts of it are found in various manuscripts, sometimes in awkward orders or mixed with other cycles.³

¹ Some of the mantras are similar to those of the *Outer Sādhana of the Five Families* (*Rigs lnga phyi sgrub*) in the *dGongs pa zang thal*, almost exactly identical to the practice of the same name in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*. This practice corresponds, in these two cycles, to the most outer aspect of the first empowerment (*bum dbang*).

² *lHa mo* Phyag rgya chen mo.

³ This is the case for example in ms. Rig 'dzin rGod ldem n.d., *gSang ba rmad du byung ba'i chos skor sogs byang gter lag bris pod chen*. This manuscript combines part of the gCod cycle *gSang ma rmad byung*, commonly regarded as an appendix of the *dGongs pa zang thal*, parts of the *dGongs pa zang thal* proper, and elements of the *Byang chub spyod dbang*. This seems to be a compilation devised for giving transmissions, rather than for personal practice. It contains Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol's (1604–1669) practice manual for the *dGongs pa zang thal*, which means that the manuscript cannot be prior to the mid-17th century. This manuscript is identical in its selection and ordering of texts to what is found in vol. 11 of the collection entitled *sPyi lo 2009 lor dpal spungs dgon gzhung nas nyar tshags byas pa'i gna' dpe bris ma'i glog rdul 'dra bshus* (BDRC W3CN844), which was compiled under the guidance of Alak Zenkar Rinpoche. Fragments can also be found in another manuscript: Rig 'dzin rGod ldem n.d., *Byang gter drag po thugs sgrub kyi skor*, vol. 10. Again, the ordering of the texts is puzzling; this

5. *Material Description of the Collection as Presented in The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*

The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior is found in volume 14 of the collection, which counts 614 pages; but, in fact, it fills only the first 271 pages.¹ It does not have a non-terma appendix with compositions of later authors as *The Seven Auspicious Connections*, but some such writings have been interspersed among the terma texts, rather than presented in a separate section.

Such a supplement is found in another volume of this collection:² an empowerment ritual arranged by Rigdzin Pema Trinlé (1640–ca. 1717). Unlike *The Seven Auspicious Connections*, it is devoid of a terma catalog that would enable us to compare its present state to an older, supposedly original, one.

Text #1³ is called a “*sādhana-tantra*”⁴ of Vairocana. Its colophon clearly states that it was found “in the middle of the Red Copper Repository at the west inside the brown boiled leather chest”⁵ and was entrusted to Nyenchen Thanglha (the general protector of the Red Western Copper Repository). The form and phrasing of this text are very much reminiscent of those of a “slightly tantric” Mahāyāna sūtra. Text #2⁶ teaches how to build a stūpa dedicated to Vairocana, explains the meditation posture, and contains unusual instructions about meditation using a mirror. Text #3⁷ is the tantra of the Goddess Mahāmudrā,

collection contains many Byang gter texts, often scattered among texts of other *gter mas*, with a logic that is not obvious to the reader.

¹ The remainder of the volume is devoted to texts unconnected to this cycle—especially the large commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītī* to which we shall return in the context of the Dzogchen corpora.

² Vol. 42, pp. 341-369.

³ #1: vol. 14, pp. 1-18.

⁴ *sGrub thabs rgyud*.

⁵ CNT, vol. 14, p. 18: *bse sgom smug po'i nang nub zangs mdzod dmar po'i dbus su*. This may belong to a time when the idea of the five repositories was not yet fully clear, as we have found in *The Seven Auspicious Connections* the idea of a *bse sgrom smug po* divided into four chambers, that is, without a central repository.

⁶ #2: pp. 19-27.

⁷ #3: pp. 29-34.

the purpose of which is mainly to present a long dhāraṇī and to explain its benefits. It is followed by an offering ritual to the Buddhas.¹

Text #5² is the long empowerment ritual for this cycle. This text contains numerous ḍākinī scripts; it is clearly a terma of Rigdzin Gödem. Then comes (text #6³) a very short torma offering to the seventy-five protectors (*mgon po*), followed by a text (#7⁴) that presents what is most characteristic of this cycle: a system for conferring one-day vows on the occasion of holy days. The next one (#8⁵) elaborates on how to practice these vows. Strangely, it is presented as a terma but is followed by a small colophon saying: “This was composed by Tülku Śākya Zangpo.”⁶ Text #9⁷ is again about ethical discipline—not temporary vows only, but also the precepts that one should permanently keep.⁸ Text #10⁹ is a ritual for making offerings “at the nine times,”¹⁰ which is said in the table at the beginning of the volume to be a work of Lek-den-jé¹¹ with additions by Pema Shenyen.¹²

This is followed (#12¹³) by a text about the way to perform a king’s coronation, which appears as a terma (by Gödem?) with commentaries by an author identified in the table at the beginning of the volume as Zhepé Dorjé.¹⁴ In context, this must be the Fifth Dalai Lama, which would make great sense in case he had it used for himself. This requires further examination.

¹ #4: pp. 35-51.

² #5: pp. 53-81.

³ #6: pp. 83-86.

⁴ #7: pp. 87-92.

⁵ #8: pp. 93-98.

⁶ *sPrul sku* Śākya bzang po, the first Yol mo *sprul sku*. This could mean that the *gter ma* text was commented upon by Śākya bzang po, so the text was globally attributed to him despite the fact that the *gter ma* it incorporates may be from rGod ldem.

⁷ #9: pp. 99-121.

⁸ *gTan khrims bsrung bya*.

⁹ #10: pp. 123-137.

¹⁰ *Dus dgur*.

¹¹ Legs ldan rje.

¹² Padma bshes gnyen.

¹³ #12: pp. 139-161.

¹⁴ *Rig pa 'dzin pa* bZhad pa'i rdo rje. As the text seems not to be found in the 5th Dalai Lama's complete works, another plausible hypothesis would be Sle lung bZhad pa'i rdo rje (1697–1740). However, this work could not be found in the collection of his writings (Sle lung bZhad pa'i rdo rje 1983) either.

Text #13¹ is a synthesis of the whole cycle by Pema Thekchok Tenpé Nyima.² A lineage prayer (pp. 166-167) helps us, if not to identify the author, then at least to locate him historically, as he appears to be a disciple (or grand-disciple) of Pema Shenyen, himself a student of Rigdzin Kalzang Pema Wangchuk (1720–1771). Pema Thekchok Tenpé Nyima must therefore have been active in the early nineteenth century. The colophon contains some clues that may lead to a better identification of the author, but the other names mentioned have not yet been identified. Text #14,³ *The Wish-fulfilling Aspiration Prayer*, is a terma clearly attributed to Gödem and ascribed to *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior* cycle, although its colophon states that it was taken from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository, unlike the majority of the cycle that was extracted from the Red Western Copper Repository.

The following text,⁴ *The Cycle of Scrolls from the White Whetstone*,⁵ sounds utterly different from all the other contents of this cycle and its text seems not to connect it to any Jangter cycle in particular.⁶ However, it is clearly understood, at least by the editors, to belong to *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*, since further materials of this cycle follow in the volume. It seems it was found by Gödem prior to his discoveries in Zangzang Lhadrak.⁷ It has the form of dialogues between Padmasambhava and various disciples and is full of prophecies that

¹ #13: pp. 163-220.

² Padma theg mchog bstan pa'i nyi ma.

³ #14: pp. 221-228.

⁴ #15: pp. 229-245.

⁵ 'Dzengs rdo dkar po'i nang nas byung ba'i shog hril skor.

⁶ Incidentally, it is a general feature of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos* that the text titles seldom explicitly identify them as parts of a particular cycle, unlike the editions other *gter ma* cycles. In this case, we have a description of the *Byang chub spyod dbang* in the 5th Dalai Lama's *gSan yig* (Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1970–1971, vol. 3, 115a-116a), which closely matches the content and even the order of CNT. However, it does not include the 'Dzengs rdo dkar po'i nang nas byung ba'i shog hril skor, which is placed in another section called *Lung bstan dang sbas yul lam yig gi skor* (see Schiller 2021, n. 29, p. 831). It should be researched why this section has not been retained in CNT and why its contents (or what remains of them) have been scattered in specific cycles.

⁷ According to Jay Holt Valentine (written note, July 2024, based on earlier conversation) this series of texts was extracted with the treasure keys at bKra bzang, just before rGod ldem extracted the treasures at Zang zang lha brag, when he was about thirty.

would, if the text is authentic, be descriptions of many episodes in Gödem's life. They contain, as described above, the idea of three termas—the first in Zangzang Lhadrak, others to be found later, in other locations.¹ This text is indeed a very important source for the later life of Rigdzin Gödem, and it might help us to better understand this claim that parts of “his” prophesied terma were either not revealed (in this life) or possibly re-concealed (for further discoverers, including himself in other rebirths). It is curious that this text was included in *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*.

Text #16² is one among the many long dhāraṇīs typical of *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior* cycle, and thus it clearly belongs to this cycle, unlike the previous text. It is implicitly presented as one of Gödem's termas through the indication that it, like text #14, was found in the Yellow Southern Gold Repository. It is followed by a text³ about the benefits of temporary vows, also fully homogeneous to the topics of *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*. It lacks a colophon, but prophesies (p. 265) its discovery by Rigdzin Gödem in Zangzang Lhadrak in the Red Western Copper Repository. This text concludes the cycle.



¹ According to Valentine (written note, December 2025), this treasure text, which is also understood as a prophetic guide, appears to be the source of the prophecies regarding the three treasure sites that are meant to be excavated by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. It is quoted at length in Nyi ma bzang po 1983, pp. 76-77. For further details, see Valentine 2024 and Valentine 2026, “The Prayer of the Eighteen Great Omens: An Autobiographical Sketch of the Life of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem through Signs, Omens, and Symbols.” Also see Ducher's chapter on the concealed lands in this volume.

² #16: pp. 247-257.

³ #17: pp. 259-269.

Chapter 14: *Liberating All Migrants*¹

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1. General Overview of Content and Style

 *Liberating All Migrants* focuses on the white, four-armed Avalokiteśvara in his most classical form, with perhaps a slightly uncommon variation in that he is none other than Guru Padmasambhava. Although Amitābha and Padmasambhava are also very present in the corpus, it does not contain any full, separate sādhana text for these figures. However, there is a long-life practice in which one meditates as Avalokiteśvara but visualizes Amitāyus in union above one's head and recites a special mantra for this deity. Only Jambhala has a very short (3 p.) separate sādhana, and there is an even shorter offering text for the Seven Powerful Mamos.²

This cycle must have been strongly inspired by earlier parallel literature, such as Nyangral's *The Wish-fulfilling Jewel that Tames Migrants through the Great Compassionate One*³ and Guru Chöwang's *The Great Compassionate One Stirring the Depths of Saṃsāra*.⁴ Any conclusions drawn from this corpus about Rigdzin Gödem's own personality or history should therefore be based on systematic comparison.⁵

What is important here, however, is not only the features that would be *unique to* Rigdzin Gödem, but also what we can infer from the form and content of the texts *about their intended audience*. Formally, these texts tend to be short and written in fairly simple language. Although this cycle is (unlike the two previous ones) complete in all regards—with instructions for both the generation phase, the completion phase, Dzogchen, and all sorts of secondary practices, including consciousness transference⁶ and all the funeral rituals described by Skorupski

¹ 'Gro ba kun grol.

² dBang gi ma mo bdun. See Lorenz 2010, pp. 141-142 for a list of these deities.

³ Thugs rje chen po 'gro 'dul yid bzhi nor bu.

⁴ Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dong sprug.

⁵ Only difference can be significant—either difference from his great predecessors or difference from a dominant trend in his own time. This would require more research than was possible in the writing of this volume.

⁶ 'Pho ba.

(1982) and Boord (2012)—the intended audience does not seem to have been primarily the ritual specialists, but a broader public of faithful practitioners who may not have wanted or been able to perform very elaborate ceremonies.¹ The whole device has an air of evangelical simplicity, so to speak, rather than of deep and complicated tantric mysteries. It also has a strong focus on compassion—including, for example, the prescription of vegetarianism (rare in 14th century Tibetan texts), which could also be an indication of the goal of establishing a lay community with strong common ethical foundations, as with *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*.

The tantras of this cycle, which exhibit the same feature of simplicity, also include a general narrative about the “dregs of time” in Tibet that is mixed together with:

- The general Avalokiteśvara narrative of the great bodhisattva plunging in the depth of saṃsāra to save unfortunate beings;
- All sorts of considerations about Tibet and Padmasambhava;
- Details regarding Gödem and the kings of Gungthang.

Like *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*, these texts are full of very down-to-earth prescriptions about the building of temples, etc., meant to pacify inner and outer obstacles. These are not the shrines that Gödem is said to have actually built on Mt. Trazang, which are dedicated to entirely different deities, to which I will return in the context of the Wrathful Padmasambhava cycle.

So far, as in the case of *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*, no prophetic indications have been found in *Liberating All Migrants* that could be interpreted as referring to precise times and places. A careful re-reading of all the texts with the intention of finding traces of more concrete indications would be necessary to try to find out whether they were meant to be implemented at the time when Gödem managed to secure the patronage of the Gungthang kings, when he traveled far away in search of the hidden lands, or at some other time by a local community around Mt. Trazang.

¹ One can assume that for the more complicated rituals analyzed by Skorupski and Boord, a ritual specialist would be summoned to accomplish them—but that specialist may not be the main target of the corpus.

2. *State of the Art*

Liberating All Migrants has already been studied by Boord (2012).¹ His book, building on Skorupski (1982),² is the most up to date publication. However, both studies focus on the funeral rituals that may not be the most unique or most central part of this whole cycle. Thorough research on this cycle should begin by comparing it to what must have been its models and what Rigdzin Gödem was somehow supplementing: Nyan-gral Nyima Özer and Guru Chöwang's large Avalokiteśvara cycles,³ which we can assume Rigdzin Gödem knew perfectly.

Incidentally, Skorupski and Boord's research on these funerary rituals shows that the Northern Treasures tradition was very well equipped to meet the demand for such rituals. This raises the question of why the Karma Lingpa corpus, whose function is obviously the same, was eventually (only in the late-18th century) included in Dorjé Drak's liturgical repertoire.

A catalog of the cycle from the Fifth Yölmo Tülku's *Record of Teachings Received* is edited in Schiller.⁴

3. *Tibetan Sources*

Martin Boord presents four other more or less complete compilations of this cycle;⁵ the updated 8-vol. compilation of Jangter ritual materials published in Shimla⁶ still remains to be explored.

Boord works on an edition⁷ that was available before *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* was released. A close comparison with the cycle as presented in *The Compilation* would help to clarify many details. The global structure of that (1979) edition is the same as that of the one found in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*, without

¹ Boord 2012, *Illuminating Sunshine—Buddhist Funeral Rituals of Avalokiteśvara*.

² Skorupski 1982, "The Cremation Ceremony According to the Byang gter Tradition."

³ Nyang ral's *Thugs rje chen po 'gro 'dul yid bzhin nor bu* and Chos dbang's *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dong sprug*.

⁴ Schiller 2021, pp. 852-853, n. 75.

⁵ Boord 2012, pp. 342-347.

⁶ Under the title *sNga 'gyur byang gter chos skor las 'don cha'i skor*, the first half (4 volumes) of which is available on BDRC as MW26672.

⁷ A compilation published in Sikkim, see Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1979, *Byang gter 'phags pa thugs chen chen po spyen ras gzigs 'gro ba kun grol gyi rtsa pod*.

the writings ascribed to Yölmo Tülku, the Fifth Dalai Lama, or Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal. However, Boord identifies three writings of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé in it, which, in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*, are found among the complete writings of this author rather than with this cycle.¹ *The Lamp that Dispels Darkness about the Distinctions of the Ripening of Actions* (#21 in the list below) seems to be missing in the edition followed by Boord, as well as in the three others that he has singled out.² In editions compiled mostly for ritual purposes, the omission is no surprise, since this text is not meant for recitation: it is a general teaching about karma—a collection of stories about the fruits of actions in future rebirths.³

Other texts related to this cycle are found in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*: besides writings by Rigdzin Pema Trinlé,⁴ we find at least another text by Künzang Tendzin⁵ in vol. 58 (pp. 427-442) in

¹ Boord, *op. cit.*, pp. 343-344.

² Reference to the other collections as indicated by Boord are reproduced in the bibliography of primary sources below.

³ *The Lamp that Dispels Darkness about the Distinctions of the Ripening of Actions* deserves a systematic exploration. On the one hand, it is interesting for the many Chinese elements about the hells that it incorporates. On the other hand, this text is present under the form of long quotations in *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's *dGongs pa zang thal* practice manual, but with considerable variations. This implies that this recent author was using a different edition, about which we have no clue. See Arguillère 2016 and *Fulfilling the Aspirations of the Predestined* (forthcoming) for a systematic comparison of the text as quoted by *sPrul sku* Tshul lo and as edited in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*. This text is appended to the cycle 'Gro ba kun grol in the 5th Yol mo *sprul sku*'s *gsan yig* (see Schiller 2021, n. 29, p. 831), but the 5th Dalai Lama's *gsan yig* (1971, vol. 3, 113b) seems to present it as a part of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*. However, its colophon states it was found in the Red Western Copper Repository, which is consistent with its association with *Liberating All Migrants*. In the CNT edition, the colophon of the *gter ma* is followed by a few anonymous verses (p. 278) meant to explain the order of the practice. These verses mention temporary and permanent vows in a manner more typical of *Byang chub spyod dbang* (also found in the Red Western Copper Repository). This may corroborate the idea that the original core of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos* was the contents of the so-called Red Western Copper Repository, first conceived as an undifferentiated block, some contents of which were later autonomized as individual cycles because they grew out of proportion. The lack of a *thems byang* for 'Gro ba kun grol may be a further hint.

⁴ CNT, vol. 42, pp. 7-260.

⁵ Kun bzang bstan 'dzin (1931–ca. 2002). A biography of this lama by one Tshe dbang don 'grub is found in vol. 58 (pp. 1-126) of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*.

this collection.

4. Material Description of the Collection as Presented in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*

In *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* edition, *Liberating All Migrants* is contained in one volume (vol. 4) of 398 pages, which comprises 34 texts. Compositions by later authors of the Jangter tradition are scattered in other parts of the collection as described in forthcoming volumes, in the context of their authors' biographies.

The first four texts are tantras.¹ They are followed by four more texts² that are called *sādhana*s,³ but are not precisely the type of ritual arrangement for practice that we usually find under that name: they are rather general explanations of the practice.

Then comes one text describing the deities as a support for the development phase *samādhi*,⁴ then a text for the "activities."⁵ These are followed by: a lineage prayer;⁶ a prayer to be reborn in *Sukhāvātī*;⁷ a ritual⁸ for the protective deities of this cycle (the main guardians of the terma are the Seven Powerful Mamos⁹ and Nyenchen Thanglha); then a ritual for fire offerings;¹⁰ a specific ritual for guiding the dead;¹¹ one for food offerings;¹² one for the cremation of a dead person;¹³ then a

It bears the date of the Year of the Water-Dragon of the 17th sexagenary cycle (2012) and is said to be based on the oral accounts of three direct disciples of this figure. There are allusions to the 13th Dalai Lama close to the mention (*op. cit.*, p. 4) of his birth in an Iron-Sheep year, which thus must be 1931. The last year mentioned in the biography seems, upon a cursory review, to be 2002. This biography is followed in this volume by some of his writings about various Byang gter cycles.

¹ #1: pp. 1-31; #2: pp. 33-49; #3: pp. 51-62; #4: pp. 63-75.

² #5: pp. 77-91; #6: pp. 93-100; #7: pp. 101-108; #8: pp. 109-126.

³ *sGrub thabs* or *sgrub chen*.

⁴ This is what is meant by the phrase *mngon rtogs* in its title. #9: pp. 127-129.

⁵ *Phrin las*. #10: pp. 131-148.

⁶ #11: pp. 149-152.

⁷ #12: pp. 153-156.

⁸ #13: pp. 157-159.

⁹ dBang gi ma mo bdun.

¹⁰ #14: pp. 161-166.

¹¹ *gNas lung gi cho ga*. #15: pp. 167-187.

¹² #16: pp. 189-193.

¹³ #17: pp. 195-202.

guru-yoga to which a lineage prayer has been appended;¹ an instruction manual for the practice;² and a short text for the transference of the conscious principle.³

Then comes the beautiful text of moral exhortation called *The Lamp that Dispels Darkness about the Distinctions of the Ripening of Actions*.⁴ It is followed by an “Oral Unwritten Transmission,”⁵ then by two more ritual texts;⁶ then by a text about the confection of *tsatsas* (*tsha tsha*)⁷ and one meant to increase longevity.⁸ Then comes the practice of White Jambhala, the wealth-giving form of Avalokiteśvara,⁹ followed by an abbreviated ritual for the preliminary practices of the propitiation of Avalokiteśvara according to the Northern Treasures.¹⁰ The volume then includes general practice manuals arranged by one of the Yölmo Tülkus,¹¹ the Fifth Dalai Lama,¹² and Ngakchang Yölmowa;¹³ a text for the consecration¹⁴ of statues and temples; and another funeral ritual of cremation.¹⁵ The volume is concluded by a ritual text by

¹ #18: pp. 203-209.

² #19: pp. 211-231.

³ 'Pho ba. #20: pp. 233-236.

⁴ #21: pp. 237-278. It is abundantly quoted in *sPrul sku* Tshul lo's practice manual for the *dGongs pa zang thal*, although on the basis of a different edition. A major Byang gter scholar of the early 20th century was thus following, for unknown reasons, another version of the Byang gter core texts.

⁵ *sNyan rgyud yi ge med pa*. #22: pp. 279-286.

⁶ #23: *Thugs rje rtse gcig ma*: pp. 287-290 and #24: *'Gro don las sbyor lnga pa*, pp. 291-297.

⁷ #24: pp. 299-301.

⁸ #25: pp. 303-305.

⁹ #26: pp. 307-310. As noted above, the absence of Jambhala in *The Seven Auspicious Connections*, although he is supposed to be one of the seven, and his presence here is one more argument in favor of the idea of an initially undifferentiated block formed by all the contents of the Red Western Copper Repository that later expanded to such an extent that some of its parts evolved into independent cycles—*Liberating All Migrants*, perhaps *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*s, and why not (although this seems more problematic, since it feels more specific) *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*.

¹⁰ #27: pp. 311-318.

¹¹ #28: pp. 318-328.

¹² #29: pp. 329-336.

¹³ #30: pp. 337-342. *sNgags 'chang* Yol mo ba. It is not absolutely clear which of the Yol mo *sprul skus* this is.

¹⁴ *Rab gnas*. #31: pp. 343-354.

¹⁵ #32: pp. 355-362.

Terdak Lingpa¹ for the taking of bodhisattva vows “in the Madhyamaka tradition” and in connection with the Northern Treasures’ Avalokiteśvara.

Texts #1-10, 12-27 and 31-33 all have terma marks everywhere and are more or less clearly ascribed to Rigdzin Gödem’s revelations.

Text #11 is not a treasure. It is a lineage prayer in which the last person named is Zurchen Chöying Rangdrol (1604–1669),² followed by a “dear root master”³ who must be the Fifth Dalai Lama, surely the author of this small text. A closer examination might in fact show it to be a terma of Rigdzin Gödem with a later insertion by the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682): there are some treasure features at the beginning and end of the text, but there is no clear ascription to any tertön, which would make sense if the terma elements are in fact excerpts of some larger text from another part of this cycle.

Text #17 does not have a colophon allowing an immediate ascription to a given author, but fortunately the text contains a lineage prayer in which the three last figures are Yölmo Tülku Śākya Zangpo,⁴ then one Pema Wang,⁵ who can be no other than Ngari Pañchen Pema Wangyal (1487–1542),⁶ then a “Vidyādhara, Lord of the Dharma, who rightfully inherited these traditions,”⁷ who is very likely to be Lekdenjé (ca. 1512–1580).⁸ The author might then be Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal⁹ (or any other disciple of Lekdenjé); only the deciphering of the riddle in the colophon might tell us.

Text #21 has (p. 278) an un-ascribed, non-terma appendix of a few lines that describes the whole structure of the cycle and the order in which it must be put into practice.

Text #28 is a ritual composition whose author is not named in the colophon and cannot be easily inferred from its content: we may suppose that it is something like an introduction to the text placed next in

¹ #33: pp. 363-398.

² Zur *chen* Chos dbyings rang grol.

³ *Drin chen rtsa ba'i bla ma*.

⁴ Yol mo *sprul sku* Śākya bzang po.

⁵ Padma dbang.

⁶ mNga' ris *paṇ chen* Padma dbang rgyal.

⁷ *bKa' babs rig 'dzin chos kyi rje*. *Babs* “befallen” means inherited by right—the point at which they would naturally fall, so to say.

⁸ Legs ldan rje.

⁹ *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal.

the collection, which the editor of the compilations ascribes to “Yölmo Tülku,” without telling which. The only feasible assumption we can make is that it is of the same hand as #31, which is signed by a Ngakchang Yölmowa, without any more precision either in the colophon or in the body of the text.

Text #29 is a composition by the Fifth Dalai Lama.

As previously said, text #34 is a composition by Terdak Lingpa (1646–1714).¹

In sum, there are twenty-nine terma texts by Rigdzin Gödem in this volume, complemented by six texts by four authors: one of the Yölmo Tülkus, the Fifth Dalai Lama, Terdak Lingpa, and perhaps Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal.

Martin Boord (2012) draws our attention to other secondary literature (Tibetan clerical compositions) about this cycle by Rigdzin Pema Trinlé² and Trinlé Zangpo,³ of which he translates some. There is also a “history of the empowerment for *Liberating All Migrants*” by Tülku Tsullo.⁴ Vol. 58⁵ contains a ritual text about fire offerings by Künzang Tendzin.⁶

Only building up a precise chart allowing close comparison of this edition with the four collections indicated by Boord (2012) and the latest compilation of Jangter ritual literature from Shimla Dorjé Drak Monastery might help to go further in the compilation of an even more complete corpus, whatever this may mean—but that is far beyond the scope of the present study.



¹ Given the commonplace assumptions about the rivalry between rDo rje brag and sMin grol gling, it is worth remarking that gTer bdag gling pa contributed significantly to the Byang gter literature. He certainly did not have a vision of the rNying ma tradition in which the Byang gter prevailed over all other *gter chos*, but a more eclectic one in which all the mass of the *bka' ma* and *gter ma* traditions were to be combined in an organic whole.

² Indeed, in *Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las*’ works edited as a part of the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, 13 texts (vol. 42, pp. 1-260) are commentaries or practice instructions on various aspects of *'Gro ba kun grol*.

³ 'Phrin las bzang po. Unidentified.

⁴ CNT, vol. 56, pp. 429-443.

⁵ Pp. 427-442.

⁶ Byang gter Kun bzang bstan 'dzin.

Chapter 15: *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*¹

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1. General Overview of Content and Style

his cycle is the one devoted to the peaceful form of Padmasambhava among Rigdzin Gödem's revelations. Its name alludes to the fact that Padmasambhava is regarded as the heir² of the "eight vidyādhara," that is to say, in the standard Nyingma narrative, the original masters in our world for each of the eight deities and groups of tantras and instructions of the Eight Pronouncements. As *Liberating All Migrants*, it should be compared with Nyangral's and Chöwang's parallel cycles. The practice in this cycle is quite simple, and—unlike the *Kagyé* cycle, for example—it does not seem to build on earlier terma material with the intention of bringing it to some further form of completion or to what doxographies present as a higher level. The purpose of its revelation must have been simply to refresh the blessings, as the Nyingmapas would say, and not to add any significant new development.

Contrary to what is found in other sections of the terma, the texts of this cycle very rarely have a colophon mentioning from which compartment they were taken. Despite the strong assumption of the later tradition that it was extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository, only some of the colophons of the texts contain any such indication; occasionally there are indications in the text titles, but at least twice in terms that are contradictory to the general assumption. The terma catalog clearly states that this belongs to the central repository.³

The texts in *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara* also feel somewhat as if they had been composed and combined gradually, in that those placed further down the collection sometimes seem to reuse

¹ *Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub*.

² *gDung*, "relic," has this meaning here.

³ *Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub kyi sgrub pa'i dgongs pa them byang* (in CNT, vol. 5, pp. 1-5), p. 3: *bse sgrom smug po'i dbus su sbas*, and, further on the same page: *dbus kyi snying mdzod smug po nas*.

parts of those placed above.

For these two reasons, it can be suspected that *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*s was edited very early after the yellow scrolls were found in Zangzang Lhadrak.

In any case, it feels quite natural that a tertön should spend years in devotion to Padmasambhava before his own revelations begin to make full sense to him.

In terms of how this cycle was used later in Gödem's career, it belongs to the same category as *Liberating All Migrants*, with perhaps the difference that it contains fewer prescriptions for building stūpas and temples and seems more designed for inner, personal, meditative practice and perhaps less for organizing a lay community. Thus, I have chosen to place it just before the presentation of the three tantric cycles and two Dzogchen cycles whose audience can only be tantric specialists. This placement also makes sense because, at least in the later Jangter tradition,¹ it is regarded as the “inner guru-yoga” to be implemented by the practitioner *after* the “outer guru-yoga,” which is *Liberating All Migrants*.

The cycle is wholly devoted to Padmasambhava and the eight vidyādhara, with at least one text about the practice of the “eight forms”² of Padmasambhava, which does not, however, explicitly include them all in one single, unified maṇḍala, as it would become common in later cycles. The most unusual feature of this whole cycle is iconographic, since Padmasambhava is visualized as wearing a special hat, called the “soft fawn skin cap,”³ which differs from the usual lotus headdress in that a part is falling over the shoulders and not raised upwards.

In later ritual arrangements, such as text #22 by Jamgön Kongtrül, the visualization is much more elaborate than what seems to be found in the terma itself (and this is even more the case with Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's writings in vol. 42 of the same collection). The array of the subtle inner channels and “wheels” is presented⁴ and deities are

¹ It appears that there are no traces in the original *gter chos* of this idea of three graduated levels of guru-yoga, the highest of which would be *The Heart Practice* (*Thugs sgrub*). It should be investigated where this idea originated.

² *mTshan brgyad*.

³ Called *she'u'i mnyen zhu*.

⁴ Pp. 284-285.

visualized in each important *cakra*, with the Thötrengtsal¹ of the five families in union in the heart. The eight forms of Padmasambhava are then arrayed around the main form. The visualization of the eight vidyādhara above Padmasambhava's head seems not to appear in that text, although it is clearly present in the terma. Jamgön Kongtrül does not appear to be aware of the compositions by Rigdzin Pema Trinlé, of which he does not make any use.



The “soft fawn skin cap” (illustration : G. Tucci, & W. Heissig, 1970.
Die Religionen Tibets und der Mongolei, p. 167)

2. State of the Art

This cycle seems not to have been researched or described so far.

3. Tibetan Sources

It is very common to find texts for the practice of *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara* even in very Gelug environments such as Dharamsala. Thus, a list of the commonly available partial editions of this cycle would be infinite. More interestingly, in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*, we find three texts about its practice in vol. 42 (vol. 7 of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé's complete works: pp. 261-309; pp. 311-330; and pp. 331-339). The 58 first pages of vol. 57 in that collection (writings of Bāhné Thekchok Tendzin²) are also devoted to *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*.

4. Material description of the collection as presented in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*

The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara is contained in volume 5 of

¹ Thod phreng rtsal.

² Bāh gnas Theg mchog bstan 'dzin.

the Jangter Collection with 343 pages. As most of the other cycles, it is divided into a terma part, containing the revelations of Rigdzin Gödem, and a non-terma appendix, with compositions of later authors.

4.1. The Terma Section

The first section begins with the above-mentioned catalog,¹ which has a short presentation of the lineage added in the colophon, down to an unidentified “myself”² through Tülku Śākya Zangpo.³ It is followed by the “root tantra” of this cycle.⁴ Then comes⁵ the empowerment ritual and a short terma-empowerment.⁶ Text #5 is another empowerment ritual, called the “root-empowerment.”⁷ Then comes a sādhana text with the detailed description of the eight aspects⁸ of Padmasambhava. In this text, they are presented as if there were separate practices for each aspect with a distinctive mantra—not combined in a single maṇḍala as what became standard in the Nyingma school at a later stage.

Another sādhana text,⁹ focusing on the main figure of this cycle—peaceful Padmasambhava—combines elements for recitation with

¹ #1: *Rig 'dzin gdung sgrub kyi sgrub pa'i dgongs pa thems byang*, in CNT, vol. 5, pp. 1-5. If it were indeed a real *gter ma* catalog, the presence of such a text would be worth noting, since no such thing has been found in either *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior* or *Liberating All Migrants*. However, despite its title, it is actually a general presentation of the practice, its purpose, and its benefits. Therefore, we are in the same situation as with the other two cycles, which reinforces the idea that *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*s could be another overgrown development of *The Seven Auspicious Connections* that evolved into an independent cycle. It should be noted that, in this cycle, a new element appears in the aforementioned passage of #1 regarding the genesis of the idea of the five repositories (if we disregard one isolated mention of the Yellow Southern Gold Repository): the idea of the Brown Central Heart Repository as something distinct from the four side chambers and not perceived as the global chest that is divided into these four chambers.

² mNga' ris *paṇ chen*? Legs ldan rje?

³ Yol mo *sprul sku* Śākya bzang po.

⁴ #2: pp. 7-23.

⁵ #3: pp. 25-39.

⁶ #4: pp. 41-44.

⁷ *rTsa ba'i dbang*. #5: pp. 45-57.

⁸ *mTshan brgyad*. #6: pp. 59-76.

⁹ #7: pp. 77-93.

instructions and even narrative sections. Text #8¹ is called the “root sādhana” of *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*; it combines the visualization of peaceful Padmasambhava with that of the eight vidyādhara. Text #9² is a very short sādhana for the peaceful aspect of Padmasambhava. Text #10³ is a much longer and more complete one, in which the main topic of this cycle is strongly stressed: Padmasambhava is the heir of all eight vidyādhara, condensing all their blessings, and, hence, the main master of all the highest tantric teachings. This text is said—although in its title only, not in the colophon which does not contain any information on this point—to have been extracted from the “central repository.”⁴

Text #11⁵ is a “praise of the torma” for this cycle, and the next one⁶ is about the mantra-recitation.⁷ These are followed by a text of “praise for the signs,”⁸ i.e., Padmasambhava’s physical characteristics, clothes, and regalia. Then comes a confession⁹ with aspiration prayers¹⁰ and auspicious verses.¹¹

Text #15 is an explanation of the “intentional meaning” of the mantra recitation,¹² or perhaps a “secret recitation,” as, after a short chapter about the peaceful form of Padmasambhava and the benefits of the usual mantra, the text shifts to the semi-wrathful form, Dorjé Thötrengtsal¹³ in union, with a visualization of mantras and lights circulating through the bodies of both deities, producing an experience of bliss. This is what comes closest, as far as we can see, to a yogic completion phase in this corpus.

Text #16 is about the descent of the blessings,¹⁴ and the next text¹⁵

¹ #8: pp. 95-107.

² #9: pp. 109-112.

³ #10: pp. 113-135.

⁴ *mDzod dbu ma*.

⁵ #11: pp. 137-139.

⁶ #12: pp. 141-146.

⁷ *'Dzab*.

⁸ *rTags bstod*. #13: pp. 147-150.

⁹ *bShags pa*. #14: pp. 151-155.

¹⁰ *sMon lam*.

¹¹ *bKra shis*.

¹² *'Dzab dgongs*. #15: pp. 158-161.

¹³ *rDo rje thod phreng rtsal*.

¹⁴ *Byin 'bebs*. #16: pp. 163-168.

¹⁵ #17: pp. 169-175.

deals with the signs of accomplishment in this practice. It is perhaps the first text of this cycle that clearly states in the colophon the Yellow Southern Gold Repository, that is, the southern compartment of the treasure found in Zangzang Lhadrak.

Then comes a ritual guide for the dead,¹ followed by a text for the consecration² of images, statues, and temples.

Text #20³ is called “the first of the six lamps,” and it is about consecration rituals. Text #21 is a collection of magical practices⁴ for all sorts of purposes. Text #22⁵ is a “ritual arrangement of the activities,” which looks quite similar to texts #8 and #10 above, and may be a rewriting. A non-terma addition⁶ has been included in it to complete the prayers to the masters with a lineage that ends with the Fifth Dalai Lama and Rigdzin Pema Trinlé.

4.2. *The Non-Terma Section*

The second section contains only three texts.⁷ It starts with a manual presenting the development and completion phases of this practice probably by Jamgön Kongtrül (but it is difficult to be sure, in the absence of any lineage prayer or homage to the “root lama” in the text).

Then follows a manual for the fire offerings of this cycle, which is a writing of Khordong Terchen Nüden Dorjé (1802–1864).⁸

The next text is another commentary on the practice of this cycle by Dongak Tendzin.⁹



¹ *gNas lung*. #18: pp. 177-189.

² *Rab gnas*. #19: pp. 191-218.

³ #20: pp. 219-230.

⁴ *Las tshogs*. #21: pp. 231-242.

⁵ #22: pp. 243-274.

⁶ Pp. 262-265.

⁷ #23, pp. 275-296; #24, pp. 297-313; #25: pp. 315-343.

⁸ *Khor gdong gter chen* Nus ldan rdo rje.

⁹ mDo sngags bstan 'dzin (probably rGya *sprul* 01, BDRC: P6169, 1830–1892).

The Third Group: Texts Intended for an Audience of Professional Practitioners

With this group of texts, which includes the longest cycles, we arrive at something quite different: cycles that can only be practiced by specialists, either because of their ritual complexity, because of their profundity, or because they clearly require the strong commitment of practitioners willing to spend months or even years in solitary retreat—one cannot merely supplement their daily occupations with an easily manageable mantra recitation routine.

It has been deemed natural to present the tantric cycles first, and then the Dzogchen cycles, since Dzogchen, by its very name, is naturally the culmination and coronation of all practice. However, as mentioned above, while two of the tantric cycles explicitly mention the Dzogchen cycles, the reverse is not true. For this reason, historians should remember that it is likely that the Dzogchen cycles were edited first, since they appear to be presupposed by the tantric cycles, in such a way as to suggest that the former are earlier than the latter.

In terms of the “five repositories,” these texts are also the first ones that explicitly mention anything other than the western and perhaps the central repositories. This is likely a hint to the fact that they were edited later than the previous ones.

Chapter 16: *The Triple Magic Dagger*¹

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he *Triple Magic Dagger* is the Vajrakīla cycle in the Northern Treasures, which, despite its reasonable dimensions (one large volume in CNT),² is undoubtedly one of the most famous portions of Gödem's revelations and one of the most treasured in the history of the Nyingmapas. Perhaps we could even say that its success has surpassed that of the *Gongpa Zangthal*, in the sense that although the latter is often mentioned, it probably had fewer actual practitioners over the centuries than *The Triple Magic Dagger*. These two cycles are also the only ones that have already been entirely described—in the case of *The Triple Magic Dagger*, in the many hundreds

¹ *Phur pa rnam gsum.*

² Vol. 13.

of pages of wonderful scholarship produced by Martin Boord since his doctoral dissertation in 1992.¹ As *The Triple Magic Dagger* is widely documented, it would be futile here to say more than a few introductory words, followed by a purely material description of the collection as it stands in *The Compilation of Northern Treasures*.

The first point to emphasize is the role that this corpus must have played in the reputation for effectiveness in the field of destructive magic, which the masters of the Northern Treasures quickly acquired, and to which much of their status at the height of their success—in the Fifth Dalai Lama’s political construction in the seventeenth century—was due. This somewhat sulfurous reputation is admittedly not unconnected to their mastery of Gya Zhangtrom’s *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* system, which was of vital interest to the Fifth Dalai Lama, as evidenced by the fact that he devoted a very large part of his Nyingma writings to this cycle² that is not strictly speaking part of the Northern Treasures. However, it is clear that *The Triple Magic Dagger* played an equally important role in the reputation of the Northern Treasures for wrathful rites.

Leaving aside this relatively late posterity, it should first be emphasized that Rigdzin Gödem identified himself first and foremost as a Vajrakīla practitioner. The prophecy that, according to Nyima Zangpo’s biography, enables Zangpo Drakpa’s disciples to recognize him and pass on to him the prophetic guides that would lead him to Zangzang Lhadrak’s discoveries is based on his identification as a Vajrakīla practitioner.³

¹ Published as Boord 1993: *The Cult of the Deity Vajrakīla*; Boord 2013a is a revised and completed version of the 1992 dissertation and the 1993 book. Boord 2013a remains the main reference for the whole cycle, since his other books (2010, 2015, 2017, 2020) rather document more specific aspects of the global ritual practice described in Boord 2013a. See bibliography for complete reference. A general overview of the cycle in context is found especially in Boord 2013a, pp. 19–27 and pp. 209–226.

² In the 2009 edition, the Fifth Dalai Lama’s rNying ma writings are collected in volumes 25–28. Volume 26 (so, a quarter of the entire corpus) is devoted entirely to Yamāntaka. See below for a list of his writings about Vajrakīla (all connected to the Northern Treasures only).

³ Cf. the prophecy of bZang po grags pa quoted above in this volume: “On the eastern slope of Mt. Trazang, | The one who will abide like a lion, | Alone [like] great tree bereft of branches, | Will practice the *yidam* Vajrakīla | As a result of his prayers from former lives.” There are many other occurrences in his biography;

This deity took such a central place in the later Nyingma school that it is perhaps difficult to see today that this state of affairs may not belong to some kind of Nyingma essence outside of space and time. One need only read Nyangral Nyima Özer's biographies to see that Vajrakīla plays little part in them and has virtually no place in his revelations, except as a deity included in a relatively subordinate position in the grand scheme of the *Eight Pronouncements*. Nyangral Nyima Özer's devotion seems to have been focused on the *Eight Pronouncements*, or, if we want an individual deity more comparable to Vajrakīla, he clearly had more interest in Hayagrīva.

As for Guru Chöwang, Kongtrül reports¹ that he is said to have composed four volumes on Vajrakīla, but there is only one small text by him in *The Rinchen Terdzö*,² which, in fact, belongs to *The Eight Pronouncements* context rather than to a separate cycle devoted to Vajrakīla. However, the doubt we may have about Guru Chöwang's interest in Vajrakīla comes from the loss of his writings on the subject, the existence of which is well documented by commentaries on them by Terdak Lingpa.³

There is, of course, an extensive, much earlier literature on Vajrakīla, attested as far back as the Dunhuang documents. It is also known that early Nyingma masters such as Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo (11th–12th century) were deeply involved in Vajrakīla. However, it tells us little about the more or less central place of this deity among the early followers of the first spread of Buddhism in Tibet and in Gödem's own time, which we tend to assume on the basis of a later state of affairs. Longchenpa (1308–1364), for example, shows no interest in this deity. It cannot be ruled out that Rigdzin Gödem played a key role in the increased centrality of this *yidam* in the later Nyingma school or

Vajrakīla was clearly Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *yi dam*.

¹ See Dargyay 1977, p. 106: "Later he composed four big volumes on the Vajrakīla cycle (*rDo rje phur pa*).” It is likely that these texts existed, but they seem to be lost.

² *rDo rje phur pa'i lta khrid rdzong 'phrang gi gdams pas sans rgyas ngo sprod*, in *Rin chen gter mdzod* (1976–1980: Paro: Ngodrup & Sherab Drimay), vol. 49, pp. 241–249. There are similar texts in Nyang ral's *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*, which presents a form of allegorical exegesis of each of the deities of the *Eight Pronouncements*. Eva Dargyay (Neumaier) 1971 also testifies to their existence in Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*.

³ See Cantwell & Mayer 2020. This book, globally, presents the most state-of-the-art synthesis and bibliography on Vajrakīla.

that paradoxically it was his very success that made this fact go unnoticed, in the sense that what he may have created—a strong terma tradition of Vajrakīla that added to and reinvigorated the ancient corpus—seems to us today as something quite natural, because it has become universal and because no one knows anymore how it came about. This is a question that has remained more or less unaddressed, and it deserves further discussion, which would be out of place in the present volume. The first thing to do would be to identify at least the occurrences of Vajrakīla in the biographies of Nyingma lamas to see whether their frequency tends to increase over time and to determine what proportion of lamas over the centuries are said to have spent a significant amount of time practicing this deity in retreat (especially before Gödem’s time).¹

In terms of the intended audience and what might be of interest to the historian from that perspective, *The Triple Magic Dagger* falls into the same category as the Dzogchen cycles, *The Eight Pronouncements* cycle, and *The Heart Practice*: it is clearly designed for “professional practitioners” and not for ordinary people.

We will content ourselves with a simple overview of the Northern Treasures Vajrakīla corpus as presented in CNT. The texts are referred to in italics by the name that Martin Boord has given to them when there are translations by him, to facilitate cross-referencing. Where the content is briefly described between quotation marks, this indicates that the text has not (yet) been translated by Boord (or that I did not recognize it in his books). This will make it clear to the reader that a large part of the corpus is now available in English, and this would make Vajrakīla an easier topic for the novice researcher to begin a study of the Northern Treasures. Boord’s writings are more than an introduction to this cycle: they provide very broad access to its contents. What remains for future researchers is mainly to inquire about the history—both in terms of Rigdzin Gödem’s personal role in Vajrakīla’s popularity as the main central Nyingma *yidam* and the role of his successors in securing and disseminating his legacy.

A remarkable feature of the cycle, already pointed out by Boord, is

¹ Paradoxically, it is more common to read that the fathers of known lamas were practitioners of Vajrakīla than to see them devoting studies and long retreats to this deity in the early centuries. This became more common after the time of rGod ldem.

its composite nature: it seems to contain sections with archaic features, which is another argument in favor of considering Rigdzin Gödem as having really inherited (in whatever way) a library of ancient documents, of which he was only the editor, not the author. As Boord expresses it: “Paradoxically, the Byang gter Mahottarakāla texts (...) exhibit primitive features that would seem to indicate their greater antiquity.”¹ To put it more explicitly, these “primitive features” are salient from the point of view of contemporary academic research on the successive developments of Buddhist tantric practices and doctrines. However, since this type of knowledge and form of reasoning are foreign to fourteenth-century Tibet, it would be preposterous to imagine that a Tibetan lama of that time, however scholarly and talented, would deliberately *imitate* these features in order to forge documents that supposedly belong to the imperial period. Therefore, a search for sources (with the idea that Gödem actually came across full libraries that he edited, no matter how it happened) would be as appropriate for this corpus as it is for the two Dzogchen cycles.²

In terms of the development of the concept of the Five Repositories, this cycle is traditionally said to belong to the Black Northern Iron Repository. However, as Boord has already noted, and as the systematic edition of the colophons in the footnotes below demonstrates, an equal number of texts are said to come from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository.³ Many more are not ascribed to any chamber. The texts from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository are likely to be the most archaic. The Black Northern Iron Repository seems specialized for Vajrakāla only. It is difficult to make any chronological assumptions about the Vajrakāla corpus as a whole: Rigdzin Gödem certainly practiced this deity continuously from childhood, following his father’s tradition. At some point, he had a special shrine dedicated to this practice built on Mt. Trazang. However, nothing in the texts seems to connect them to any specific event in his life.

The corpus begins with an empowerment ritual, *The Stages of Power: Steps of the Attainment of Siddhi*,⁴ followed by *The Tantra of*

¹ Boord 2013a, p. 191.

² The insertion of (very slightly rewritten) sections of the *mKha’ ’gro snying thig* (1313) into the *dGongs pa zang thal* was discussed in vol. 1. See Jean-Luc Achard’s description of the two cycles below for more details.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

⁴ #1: in vol. 13, pp. 5-8: *dBang gi rim pa gsang ba rin po che’i dngos grub blang*

the Secret Embodiment of the Mind of Vajrakīla,¹ then by an exhortation to the deities,² then by *The Ritual Practice of Mahottara Vajrakumāra*,³ and by another exhortation to Vajrakīla through mantra recitation.⁴ Then comes the *Praise to the Glorious Vajrakīla Together with his Retinue of Deities*,⁵ followed by one more empowerment ritual, *The Water Empowerment of Mahottarakīla*,⁶ and *The Instructions on the Three Wheels of the Life Force, Entitled Lamp of the White Path*,⁷ *The Iron Cloak of Obedient Servants*,⁸ *The Poisonous Black Razor*,⁹ *The*

ba'i rim pa zhes bya ba rdo rje phur pa'i mi 'gyur rin chen mdzod kyi them byang].—"Extracted by sPrul sku Rig 'dzin rGod kyi ldem 'phru can from Zang zang lha brag." Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 78-81. Although this text contains the term *them byang* in its title, it only vaguely describes the *phur pa che mchog* aspect of the cycle and cannot really be used in order to form hypotheses about the history of the corpus.

¹ #2: in vol. 13, pp. 9-26: *rDo rje phur pa'i thugs gsang ba sku'i rgyud ces bya ba*].—"Byang zang zang lha brag ri dug sbrul spung pa 'dra ba'i lho phyogs gser mdzod ser po nas sprul sku rig 'dzin chen po rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis spyang drangs pa'o]." Described in Boord 2013a, pp. 209-218; translated in Boord 2020, pp. 82-105. Assuming our global ordering of the cycles is correct, this is one of the earliest texts of the Northern Treasures to clearly reference the Yellow Southern Gold Repository.

² #3: in vol. 13, pp. 27-31: *Phur pa'i bka' bsgo*.—No colophon.

³ #4: in vol. 13, pp. 33-66: *Che mchog rdo rje gzhon nu'i 'phrin las*].—"Brag ri dug sbrul spung 'dra'i sked pa nas rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis bton pa'o : lho gser mdzod ser po nas byon :." Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 212-260.

⁴ #5: in vol. 13, pp. 67-70: *rDo rje phur pa'i 'dzab bskul rig 'dzin chen po'i gter ma'o*].—No colophon.

⁵ #6: in vol. 13, pp. 71-86: *dPal rdo rje phur pa'i bstod pa dang bskul gyi rim pa rnam*].—No colophon. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 106-147.

⁶ #7: in vol. 13, pp. 87-106: *Phur pa che mchog gi dbang chu rin po che dbang gi mdzod*].—"Dug sbrul spung 'dra'i sked : bse sgrom smug po'i nang nas rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis gter nas bton pa'o :." Translated in Boord 2017, pp. 82-121.

⁷ #8: in vol. 13, pp. 107-113: *dKar po lam gyi sgron ma zhes bya ba rnam gsum srog gi 'khor lo*].—"Zang zang lha brag gi gter ma'o : gter ston rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis spyang drangs pa'o]." Described in Boord 2013a, pp. 269-273 and translated in Boord 2020, pp. 163-171.

⁸ #9: in vol. 13, pp. 115-119: *bKa' nyan lcags kyi ber ka*].—"Rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis gter nas spyang drangs pa'o]." Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 172-176.

⁹ #10: in vol. 13, pp. 121-129: *Nag po dug gi spu gri*].—"Brag ri dug sbrul spung 'dra'i sked nas rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis gter nas bton pa'o]." Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 177-188.

Rites of Suppression, Burning and Hurling,¹ a long-life practice,² and *The Vajrakīla Empowerment of Long Life*.³ These are followed by *The Appendix to the Twentieth Chapter of the Tantra of Fire Tongues*,⁴ the *Extensive Feast Offering to the Assembled Deities of the Vajrakīla Maṇḍala*,⁵ a text about “the continuous food-samādhi,”⁶ a text about “tsatsas,”⁷ the “first part of a supplement to Vajrakīla,”⁸ *The Supremely Secret Black Razor Tantra of the Glorious Vajrakīla*,⁹ one more *ganacakra* ritual,¹⁰ a ritual of Vajrakīla’s wrathful mantras,¹¹ one more praise to the deities,¹² *The Rite of Summoning the Messengers, Taken*

¹ #11: in vol. 13, pp. 131-137: *rDo rje phur pa'i mnan bsreg 'phang gsum dbu phyogs*—“*lHo gser mdzod ser po nas sprul sku rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis spyang drangs pa'o*.” Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 193-200.

² #12: in vol. 13, pp. 139-145: *rDo rje phur pa'i tshe sgrub*—No proper colophon. Described in Boord 2013a, pp. 310-320.

³ #13: in vol. 13, pp. 147-154: *rDo rje phur pa'i tshe'i las byang*—No proper colophon. This is the text translated in Boord 2017, pp. 300-318, as *The Vajrakīla Empowerment of Long Life* (which translates the alternative Tibetan title he presents: *rDo rje phur pa'i tshe dbang*). See also for example reference in Boord 2013a, p. 310, n. 766. Main source of Ch. 10 in Boord 2013a, pp. 297-309.

⁴ #14: in vol. 13, pp. 155-164: *Phur pa me lce 'phreng ba'i le'u nyi shu pa khol du byung ba*—“*Rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phrus gter nas gdan drangs pa'o* :.” Described in Boord 2013a, pp. 310-320.

⁵ #15: in vol. 13, pp. 165-169: *rDo rje phur pa'i bza' tshogs rgyas pa*—No proper colophon. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 158-161.

⁶ #16: in vol. 13, pp. 171-173: *rDo rje phur pa'i bza' ba rgyun gyi ting 'dzin gyi rnal 'byor*—No proper colophon.

⁷ #17: in vol. 13, pp. 175-178: *rDo rje phur pa'i tshwa tshwa'i las rim*—No proper colophon.

⁸ #18: in vol. 13, pp. 179-190: *dPal rdo rje phur pa'i zur 'debs dbu phyogs*—“*Byang zang zang lha brag gi sked lho phyogs gser mdzod nas rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis bton pa'o*.”

⁹ #19: in vol. 13, pp. 191-201: *dPal rdo rje phur ba spu gri nag po rab tu gsang ba'i rgyud*—“*Byang zang zang lha brag gi brag gi (sic) dug sbrul spung 'dra'i sked byang lcags mdzod nag po nas me pho rta lo sa ga zla ba'i tshes bzhi la rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyi gter nas gdan drangs pa'o*.” This is the first reference to the Black Northern Iron Repository; many follow. Translated in Boord 2010, pp. 93-106; described in Boord 2013a, pp. 218-226.

¹⁰ #20: in vol. 13, pp. 203-213: *Tshogs kyi mchod pa lhag ma dang bcas pa*—“*Byang lcags mdzod nag po nas sprul sku rig 'dzin chen pos gdan drangs pa'o*.”

¹¹ #21: in vol. 13, pp. 215-258: *rDo rje phur pa drag sngags kyi 'phrin las*—“*Byang lcags mdzod nag po nas sprul sku rig 'dzin chen pos gdan drangs pa'o*.”

¹² #22: in vol. 13, pp. 259-271: *rDo rje phur pa'i bstod pa bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs*—“*rDo rje phur pa lcags khang nag po'i sgrub lugs kyi bstod bskul zang zang lha*

from the Razor Cycle of *Vajrakīla*,¹ and then by a text about receiving the *siddhis*.² Then come *The Vajrakīla Rite to Turn Away Hailstones*,³ *The Vajrakīla Daily Dedication of Bali Cakes*,⁴ *Homa Ritual Called A Mass of Fire at the End of Time*,⁵ *The Empowerment Ritual for the Black Razor Vajrakīla*,⁶ a short “history of Vajrakīla’s profound wrathful mantras,”⁷ a ritual for the “continuous offerings of bali cakes,”⁸ *The Fierce Recitation of Vajrakīla*,⁹ *The Dharmatā Recitation of Vajrakīla*,¹⁰ *Eight Teachings on the Yoga of Everyday Life*,¹¹ *The Fundamentals of all Vajrakīla Activities*,¹² *A Commentary on the Practice of*

brag gi sked : bse sgrom smug po’i nang byang lcags mdzod nag po’i nang nas : rig ’dzin rgod kyi ldem phru can gyis gter nas bton pa’o .:”

¹ #23: in vol. 13, pp. 273-276: *Phur pa spu gri las pho nya ’gug ’dren gyi las byang| phur pa spu gri’i bskul zer|*—“Byang zang zang lha brag gi lcags mdzod nag po nas rig ’dzin rgod kyi ldem phru can gyis gdan drangs pa’o|.” Translated in Boord 2015, pp. 189-192.

² #24: in vol. 13, pp. 277-280: *rDo rje phur pa’i brgyud rim gsang ba rin po che dngos grub blang ba|*—No proper colophon about the *gter ma* discovery.

³ #25: in vol. 13, pp. 281-283: *dPal rdo rje gzhon nu’i ser ba gdong bzlog|*—No proper colophon. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 287-288.

⁴ #26: in vol. 13, pp. 285-289: *rDo rje phur pa’i rgyun khyer gtor bsngo|*—“Yol mo pa’i (sic) mdzad pa’o.” Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 148-153.

⁵ #27: in vol. 13, pp. 291-294: *Yol mo sku skyes mdzad pa’i bcom ldan ’das ’phrin las phur pa’i sbyin sreg gi cho ga bskal pa’i me dpung|*—“Di yang yol mo sku skyes khribs su byas pa’o.” Translated in Boord 2015, pp. 61-65.

⁶ #28: in vol. 13, pp. 295-305: *rDo rje phur pa spu gri nag po’i dbang chog|*—“Rig ’dzin rgod kyi ldem ’phru can gyis byang zang zang lha brag gi lcags mdzod nag po’i gter nas spyang drangs pa’o|.” Translated in Boord 2017, pp. 122-147.

⁷ #29: in vol. 13, pp. 307-313: *rDo rje phur pa drag sngags zab mo’i lo rgyus dang rdo rje phur pa’i rgyud dang tshad bstan pa|*—No colophon.

⁸ #30: in vol. 13, pp. 315-318: *rDo rje phur pa’i rgyun gtor gyi rim pa|*—No colophon.

⁹ #31: in vol. 13, pp. 319-321: *rDo rje phur pa’i drag po’i bzlas pa|*—No colophon. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 261-263.

¹⁰ #32: in vol. 13, pp. 323-325: *rDo rje phur pa’i chos nyid kyi bzlas pa|*—“sPrul pa’i skye mchog rig ’dzin rgod kyi ldem ’phru can gyis byang zang zang lha brag nas gter nas bton pa’o|.” Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 264-266.

¹¹ #33: in vol. 13, pp. 327-330: *rDo rje phur pa’i spyod lam rgyun gyi rnal ’byor gyi man ngag brgyad pa|*—“Byang zang zang lha brag gi dug sprul ’dra ba’i sked byang lcags mdzod nag po nas rig ’dzin rgod kyi ldem ’phru can gyis spyang drangs pa’o|.” Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 154-157.

¹² #34: in vol. 13, pp. 331-333: *rDo rje phur pa’i las thams cad kyi don bsdu pa’i rtsa ba|*—No colophon. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 267-268.

Fierce Mantra,¹ *The Vajrakīla Razor of Life*,² *Daily Practice of the Vajrakīla Wrathful Mantra*,³ a repelling rite through tormas hurling,⁴ and then *The Protective Cakra that Repels the Eight Classes of Demons*.⁵ These are followed by the *Eighteen Substances for the Collected Rituals of the Kīla Razor*,⁶ “short root precepts,”⁷ two “combined sādhanas,”⁸ a text for daily practice,⁹ *An Exhortation for Blessings to Fall upon Those who Strive in the Practice of Vajrakīla*,¹⁰ a ritual for the “oppression” or “crushing” of “thirteen minor vampires,”¹¹ a

¹ #35: in vol. 13, pp. 335-338: *Drag sngags kyi ti ka bse sgrom ma*—“mDzod dbus nas byon :”. After the Yellow Southern Gold Repository and the Black Northern Iron Repository, we see here a third provenance for the Vajrakīla literature: the Central Repository, not identified by a color, but the material (*bse sgrom*) is mentioned in the title. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 298-301, with a (more correct) variant in the Sanskrit title: *drag sngags kyi tī ka bse sgrom ma*.

² #36: in vol. 13, pp. 339-344: *rDo rje phur pa srog gi spu gri*—No colophon. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 201-211.

³ #37: in vol. 13, pp. 345-351: *Phur pa drag sngags kyi sgrub thabs rgyun khyer lha brag gter gyi yang bcud*—No colophon. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 289-297.

⁴ #38: in vol. 13, pp. 353-366: *Phur pa yang gsang gi khro bo rol pa'i gtor bzlog*—“Rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis gter nas bton pa'o.”

⁵ #39: in vol. 13, pp. 367-372: *rDo rje phur pa'i lugs kyi sde brgyad bsrung bzlog*—“lCags mdzod nas byon pa'o.” Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 269-274.

⁶ #40: in vol. 13, pp. 373-381: *Phur pa spu gri'i las tshogs rdzas kyi mihu chen bco brgyad*—“Byang zang zang lha brag gi gter rig 'dzin chen pos spyang drangs pa'o :.” Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 275-286.

⁷ #41: in vol. 13, pp. 383-387: *rDo rje phur pa'i man ngag rtsa thung*—No colophon.

⁸ #42: in vol. 13, pp. 389-408: *rDo rje phur pa'i dril sgrub kyi 'phrin las*—“Byang zang zang lha brag gi sked byang lcags mdzod nas rig 'dzin chen pos spyang drangs pa'o :” and #43: in vol. 13, pp. 409-428: *bCom ldan 'das dpal rdo rje gzhon nu'i 'phrin las thun mong ma yin pa rdo rje phur pa dril sgrub kyi 'phrin las*—“Byang zang zang lha brag gi sked byang lcags mdzod nag po nas me pho rta'i lo sa ga chen po'i zla ba yar ngo'i tshes bzhi la rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis gter nas gdan drangs pa'o.”

⁹ #44: in vol. 13, pp. 429-432: *dPal rdo rje gzhon nu'i nyams len rgyun 'khyer*—“Byang zang zang lha brag gi sked nas rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis gter nas bton pa'i zab chos yin no :.”

¹⁰ #45: in vol. 13, pp. 433-438: *rDo rje phur pa'i bskul ba rig 'dzin chen po'i gter ma'o*—No colophon. Translated in Boord 2020, pp. 302-311.

¹¹ #46: in vol. 13, pp. 439-446: *Phur pa las kyi sri chung bcu gsum mnan pa*—“Byang lcags mdzod nag po nas rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis bton pa'o :.”

practice of the eight types or forms of the wealth deity Jambhala,¹ the “precious purse of Vajrakīla,”² a “clarification about the razor of the life-force,”³ and some more texts for daily practice, of which some are not revelations by Rigdzin Gödem himself, but arrangements by later authors.⁴

Then come a text presenting precepts about the “poison empowerment”⁵ and a commentary on the same topic by Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal.⁶ They are followed by a ritual to the Vajrakīla protectors,⁷ and sādhanas (with instructions) by Yölmo Tülku Tendzin Norbu,⁸ the Fifth

¹ #47: in vol. 13, pp. 447-453: *rDo rje phur pa'i las mtha' nor sgrub zab mo dzam bha la rig brgyad kyi sgrub thabs*—No colophon.

² #48: in vol. 13, pp. 455-457: *rDo rje phur pa gong khug ma zab pa'i lo rgyus*—“Zang zang lha brag gi sked nas rig 'dzin dngos grub rgyal mtshan gyis gter nas bton pa'o :.”

³ #49: in vol. 13, pp. 459-463: *rDo rje phur pa spu gri lha nag srog gi spu gri'i gsal byed*—No colophon.

⁴ #50: in vol. 13, pp. 465-470: *Thugs kyi snying po gsang ba phur gcig gi sgrub thabs* | *rdo rje phur pa drag sngags spu gri'i sgrub thabs*—No colophon; #51: in vol. 13, pp. 471-479: *bCom ldan 'das dpal rdo rje gzhon nu'i thugs kyi 'phrin las*—“Byang zang zang lha brag gi sked : byang lcags mdzod nag po nas : me po (sic) rta'i lo sa ga zla ba'i tshes bzhi la rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis gter nas gdan drangs pa'o :”; #52: in vol. 13, pp. 481-495: *dPal rdo rje phur pa'i rtsa ba dril bsgrub kyi sgrub thabs*—“Byang zang zang lha brag gi sked nas rig 'dzin rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis gter nas spyen drangs pa'o :”; #54: in vol. 13, pp. 523-526: *Gangs ra dgon gyi bla ma byang chub chos kyi nyi mas bsgrigs pa'i phur pa'i rgyun 'khyer or Byang gter phur pa'i chos nyams len rgyun 'khyer*—“...ces byang gter phur pa'i nyams len rgyun 'khyer 'di nyid 'bum nyag khyung tsha lung du byang chub chos kyi nyi ma nas bris pa dge'o||”; #53: in vol. 13, pp. 497-521: *dPal rdo rje gzhon nu'i 'phrin las kyi cho ga khrigs sgrol byed drag po'i rno mtshon*—This is a ritual arrangement by an unidentified later master. The text has a long colophon, but the way the author introduces himself is enigmatic and his identification will require further research.

⁵ #55: in vol. 13, pp. 527-532: *Dug dbang rdo rje'i pha lam gyi snyan brgyud rtsa ba*—No colophon.

⁶ #56: in vol. 13, pp. 533-540: *Byang bdag dbang po'i sdes mdzad pa'i dug dbang rdo rje'i pha lam bskur thabs*—The colophon contains a lineage down to Padma bshes gnyen, mDo sngags bstan 'dzin and sKal bzang phrin las mam rgyal.

⁷ #57: in vol. 13, pp. 541-544: *Phur srung mchod thabs gsal ba'i me long*—“dKar bdud gnyis dang ma mo bcu gnyis bse lcags dung gsum gyi gol mchod gsar du bris pa dge legs 'phel”—No indication about the author or gter ston.

⁸ #58: in vol. 13, pp. 545-555: *sTobs ldan dpa' bo ral pa'i thor tshugs can gyis mdzad pa'i phur pa'i bsnyen thabs*—As the title indicates, this is a writing of sTobs ldan dpa' bo, i.e., Yol mo *sprul sku* bsTan 'dzin nor bu.

Dalai Lama,¹ and two by Pema Dūdül.² The volume concludes with a ritual of fire offerings by one Gangben Könchok Lhündrup.³

More texts about this cycle are found further in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*, especially among the writings of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé (vol. 46: pp. 277-623) and Tülku Tsullo (in vol. 56: pp. 251-394).



¹ #59: in vol. 13, pp. 557-573: *lNga pa rin po ches mdzad pa'i byang gter phur pa lugs gsum gyi bsnyen sgrub las sbyor bya tshul bdud sde'i g.yul las rnam par rgyal ba*—Composed by Za hor gyi sngags smyon Drag po rtsal (the Fifth Dalai Lama) in a year Iron-Mare-Bird (1681, the year before he died). The Fifth Dalai Lama's writings about Byang gter phur pa, gathered in vol. 27 of his complete writings (2009), are in fact more extensive: 1. *dPal rdo rje phur pa'i sgrub chen gyi chog bsgrigs dngos grub rgya mtsho'i rol gar* (pp. 254-274); 2. *lHa brag gter byon gyi phur pa lcags khang drag sngags spru gri'i las byang 'jigs med rdo rje pha lam* (pp. 300-324); 3. the text #59 above (pp. 325-334); 4. *Byang gter phur pa lugs gsum gang la'ang sbyar chog pa'i zhi ba'i sbyin sreg mun sel 'od dkar* (pp. 335-347); 5. *Byang gter gyi phur pa khro bo rol pa gtor bzlog bdud sde phyir 'thag* (pp. 348-363); 6. *dPal chen phur bu'i dmar chen gtor bzlog gnam lcags thog mda'* (pp. 364-368). A seventh text is not as obviously connected to the Vajrakīla systems of the Northern Treasures, but its placement in the collection, in the same volume and between two of the texts just listed, shows that it must be: *Rab tu gnas pa'i cho ga bkra shis 'bum phrag gsar dngom* (pp. 275-299).

² #60: in vol. 13, pp. 575-654: *Padma'i ming can gyis mdzad pa'i byang gter phur pa lugs gsum las dril sgrub las byang dmigs rim zin bris rnam nges kyi tshul du bkod pa*—A writing by Ha'o dgon gyi bla ma Padma bdud 'dul (unknown); #61: in vol. 13, pp. 663-673: *Kun bzang padma bdud 'dul gyis mdzad pa'i dpal chen rdo rje gzhon nu'i lha bskyed tshul dang bzlas dmigs ji ltar bya ba*—Another writing by Ha'o dgon gyi bla ma Padma bdud 'dul.

³ #62: in vol. 13, pp. 663-673: *Gang ban dkon mchog lhun grub kyis mdzad pa'i phur pa'i las sbyor bsreg hom gyi rim pa chos khrigs su bkod pa*—The identity of the author, Gang ban dKon mchog lhun grub, is unclear, but he mentions Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las in the colophon as a source for his own composition.

Chapter 17: *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*¹

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1. *General Presentation in Context and Reflections on the Meaning of the Cycle as a Whole*

he *Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* is the largest of all the Jangter cycles (volumes 9-12 in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*, altogether 174 texts). This is as such an indication of the importance of this cycle in its own time and context, which however is not obvious for the modern reader, given the fact that the later Nyingma tradition seems to have granted less importance to the Eight Pronouncements.

The Eight Pronouncements is generally regarded as a global synthesis of the Mahāyoga. Gödem's own system builds upon the two earlier terma collections of Nyangral Nyima Özer (1124–1192)² and Guru Chöwang (1212–1270),³ themselves building upon a corpus⁴ that was

¹ *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar.*

² The *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*. Various more or less complete versions have been published since the early 1970s and are available on BDRC. For a good general introduction to the *bKa' brgyad* in French, and especially to Nyang ral's cycle, see Tenzin Samphel 2008.

³ The *bKa' brgyad gsang ba yongs rdzogs*. The state of preservation of this collection seems not to be as good as that of the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa*, or at least it has received less recent attention. The best available edition seems to be Guru Chos dbang 1979, *bKa' brgyad gsañ ba yonñ rdzogs: a complete cycle of rniñ-ma-pa practice focusing upon the ancient eight pronouncements of gu-ru rin-po-che*, vol. 1-4.

⁴ The *bKa' brgyad bka' ma rdzong 'phrang*. For the texts, see *rNying ma bka' ma shing tu rgyas pa* (mKhan po Mun sel [compiler], d.u., Chengdu), vol. 67, with some elements in vol. 13, and the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received*, 1971 (Delhi: Nechung and Lhakar), vol. 2, 196a, for this description: *sangs rgyas gnyis pa padma 'byung gnas| pañ chen dri med bshes gnyen| lo chen bai ro tsa na| gnubs ban nam mkha'i snying po ste rgya bod kyi mkhas pa mi bzhis gsang sngags theg pa mchog gi don thams cad rdzong 'phrang srog gsum du dril ba'i gdams pa| man ngag kun gyi bcud phyung ba| zab gter snying po'i chos sde| kun tu bzang po nas grub thob dngos grub kyi bar du snyan nas snyan zhal nas zhal du brgyud pa'i bka' ma nyams pa bla ma mnga' bdag chen po nas bka' gter zung*

either compiled or revealed by Tertön Drubthop Ngödrup (d.u., a direct master of Nyangral Nyima Özer), who then passed it to Nyangral. It seems that Rigdzin Gödem's system was perceived as the final coronation of the *Kagyé* genre and, after him, large cycles of revelations on the Eight Pronouncements have become somewhat rarer, until the time when it was perhaps perceived as less central or as over-complicated.¹

The basic structure of all Eight Pronouncements systems, regardless of who revealed them, implies indeed the simultaneous visualization of nine maṇḍalas: in the center stands the Great Supreme Heruka² of the Buddha family—the wrathful form of the primordial Buddha Samantabhadra, with twenty-one faces, forty-two arms and eight legs—with his retinue. The other main Herukas have a more common form, with

'jug chu bo gnyis 'dres su bzhugs pa'i gdams pa deng sang nyin mo'i skar ma las kyang ches cher dkon pa bka' ma bka' brgyad rdzong 'phrang du grags pa'i skor la... This could mean either that the *bKa' ma rdzong 'phrang* as it stands today is pure *bka' ma*, supplemented by Nyang ral's *bDe gshegs 'dus pa*, or that Nyang ral also had a personal revelation of the *bKa' ma rdzong 'phrang*.

¹ Three and a half volumes (2136 pages) of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* are devoted to the *Eight Pronouncements*: 32.5% (693 pages) belong to the 12th century (Nyang ral); 6.5% (140 pages) to the 13th century (Chos dbang); 19% (410 pages) to the 14th century (207 pages for rGod ldem and 203 for O rgyan gling pa [1323–ca. 1355]—a figure whose association with the *bKa' brgyad* is less known than his contribution to Padmasambhava's legend); 5% (around 100 pages) to the 15th and 16th centuries (Padma gling pa and perhaps bSam gtan bde chen gling pa), 12% (259 pages) to the 17th century ('Ja' tshon snying po, Klong gsal snying po, Mi 'gyur rdo rje, Padma bde chen gling pa), and the last 25% (534 pages) to the 19th century (mKhyen brtse'i dbang po and mChog gyur gling pa). We can provisionally say that the *bKa' brgyad* is a literary genre that was imposed by Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer's genius on the basis of the earlier *bKa' brgyad bka' ma rdzong 'phrang*, but that kept blossoming until the 14th century (58% of the collection altogether belong to these the formative centuries). In later centuries, others strove to maintain the vitality of the cycle, because it was perceived as part of the core of the rNying ma tradition, but perhaps with some difficulty due to its excessive ritual complexity, which makes it a system perhaps more suited to the grand liturgy of well-equipped monasteries than a cycle suited to personal, solitary meditative practice. This point would require further research, however, since some more recent *gter chos* (e.g., bDud 'joms gling pa) contain complete *bKa' brgyad* systems. We will see in the last volume of this series that the 'Khor gdong masters seem to have had a strong involvement in *Byang gter bka' brgyad* between the 18th century and a very recent period—but this stands as a somewhat archaic feature. It is rare, nevertheless, to read that a recent Lama has spent a significant number of years in retreat on this system or even that the transmissions are given.

² Che mchog he ru ka.

three faces, six arms, and four legs, each in union with a one-faced, two-armed, two-legged goddess.

To the east is the maṇḍala of the Perfect Heruka¹ of the Vajra family, corresponding to the mind² aspect of enlightenment, with his entourage; to the south, Yamāntaka with his maṇḍala of the Ratna family, corresponding to the body³ aspect; to the west, Hayagrīva and the maṇḍala of the Padma family, corresponding to enlightened speech;⁴ to the north, Vajrakīla and the maṇḍala of the Karma family, corresponding to enlightened activities.⁵ Then, in the south-east is found a heruka called the King of Complete Evidence,⁶ the deity connected with “Evoking and Sending the Matṛkas,”⁷ with his retinue. In the south-west stands the aspect of the Guru,⁸ Fierce Vajra Power⁹—precisely the form whose practice is developed in *The Heart Practice* of the Northern Treasures (described below)—with his retinue. In the north-west is Vajrapāṇi, the patron of the “Offerings and Praises to the Worldly [Spirits]”¹⁰ with his retinue. In the north-east is the Black Powerful One,¹¹ the lord of the “Spells and Violent Mantras,”¹² with his retinue.

The global idea is that of a *total* tantric system that was spread in the human world through eight different channels—the eight Vidyādhara—and then recomposed in its totality by Padmasambhava, himself being the ninth and the unique heir¹³ of the eight others. This

¹ Yang dag he ru ka is a deity to whom a lot of advanced techniques of inner yoga are connected, especially in the Zur system (perhaps because they were brought from India by Zur po che’s father, who is said to have sojourned there for some time in the 10th century).

² *Thugs*.

³ *sKu*.

⁴ *gSung*.

⁵ *Phrin las*.

⁶ mNgon rdzogs rgyal po.

⁷ Ma mo rbod gtong.

⁸ *Rig ’dzin bla ma*. This is, in fact, how the “*Eight Pronouncements*” includes nine groups of teachings, the ninth being the “master” aspect that synthesizes them all—hence *The Heart Practice*.

⁹ Gu ru rDo rje drag po rtal. The idea that wrathful Padmasambhava is the ninth of the “*Eight Pronouncements*” is common to all the rNying ma tradition, but the specific form rDo rje drag po rtal is more peculiar to Byang gter.

¹⁰ ’Jig rten mchod bstod.

¹¹ sTobs ldan nag po.

¹² dMod pa drag sngags.

¹³ *gDung*.

can be viewed as a device meant to combine all the various tantric traditions that spread in Tibet in the imperial time and to overcome their disparity by making them all so many facets of the one same totalizing reality. However, it is apparent that, beyond the five aspects of the enlightened Body, Speech, Mind, Qualities and Activities—plus the Guru as the synthesis of all—, which are well-developed and make full intelligible sense, the remaining three aspects, regarded as the “mundane” or “this-worldly” ones, are more difficult to understand in their specificity.

It can be speculated that in the time when the Eight Pronouncements cycles took their final forms, on the one hand, little was remembered of some of the individual branches incorporated in this system as they originally stood, and, on the other hand, eventually it was concluded that visualization of the maṇḍala and recitation of the corresponding mantras were sufficient for the accomplishment of the activities in question, without the need for more specialized dedication. Indeed, one should not imagine that even in those very large cycles *each* of the aspects is clearly and individually developed. It is still to some extent the case in Nyangral’s cycle, which has individual tantras even for the less familiar aspects—but in Gödem’s, the focus is clearly on the unique, giant maṇḍala of nine maṇḍalas.

In this regard, *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*, especially when compared with other Northern Treasures cycles, appears as a quite compact and homogeneous block. Although we can find in it a few scattered short sādhanas of specific deities (the Lion-Faced Ḍākinī, Ekajaṭī, Garuḍa...), there is only one group of texts that can be called a sub-cycle in *The Eight Pronouncements: The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*,¹ which focuses on Mahākāla. It remains even today at the core of the Protectors practices in the Dorjé Drak system. The only other subdivisions that could be introduced in this vast corpus would be either thematic or according to the literary genre (empowerments, tantras, instruction texts...), but those would not constitute more or less autonomous sections within the whole.

Like the *Gongpa Zangthal*, *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* includes many tantras, some of which are very large. Although purely ritual materials are by far the largest part of the

¹ *bsTan srung yongs rdzogs*.

corpus, it also contains rich and precise instructions for the development and completion phases and for Dzogchen. Its main contribution, in this regard, may be to situate the complete instructions for visionary Dzogchen in the Nyingthik style as the culmination of elaborate Mahāyoga practice.

Four more points deserve to be stressed regarding *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*. First, the cycle presents comparatively few doctrinal or narrative developments; it is purely practice-oriented (in this case, this means very elaborate ritual practice). Nyangral Nyima Özer's Eight Pronouncements cycle contains major doctrinal developments. From this point of view, Gödem's cycle looks more like Guru Chöwang's cycle (also more practice-oriented), and the reason for this is surely that both Chöwang and Gödem build upon and take as a framework Nyangral Nyima Özer's cycle.

As regards narratives, Rigdzin Gödem lived in a time when tertöns produced very large epics which helped to frame the entire Nyingma tradition: Orgyen Lingpa (1323–ca. 1355), Sangyé Lingpa (1340–1396), who revealed the two great *Pema Kathangs*¹ that are generally regarded as the most complete authoritative revealed biographies of Padmasambhava, where his contemporaries as was Dorjé Lingpa (1346–1405), whose termas include, aside from another revealed biography of Padmasambhava, what appears to be the largest version of *The Great Image of Vairocana*, a terma biography of Vairocana of Bagor. However, although some of Gödem's termas present narrative sketches that may extend over a few pages and generally serve as background for the teaching that follows, there are very few ongoing historiographic narratives or stories that draw on mythology or fables. This could be interpreted in a number of ways, but the most probable is that Rigdzin Gödem was satisfied with what was available in his time and felt no pressing need to add more. The difficulty lies in the extent of his knowledge of contemporary terma materials and Nyingma scholarship.²

¹ *Padma bka' thang*.

² This point has been discussed in detail in our volume 1, where the attempt to reconstruct some elements of the pre-rGod ldem rNying ma cultural history is made with the constant concern to discern what he may have been aware of, whether in previous generations or among his contemporaries. For example, it is clear that he was fully up to date on rDzogs chen, since he integrates the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (1313) and the *Bi ma snying thig* (including the way of teaching it called

The second point is the predominance of complex rituals in the corpus. Of course, one could speculate that the extremely complex liturgies that can be witnessed today in monasteries affiliated with Dorjé Drak are to some extent an expression of a later turn by the Nyingma school toward an understanding of rituals as performing arts—a turn that most specialists seem to date to the time when the Fifth Dalai Lama sponsored the creation of large Nyingma monasteries.¹ However, even if we confine ourselves to the original core texts attributed to Rigdzin Gödem, it appears that these practices are really designed for specialists and even for *teams* of them, when it comes to full ritual performance. Even if we set aside the complicated setting of the altar, the tormas, ritual dances, etc., the mere visualization of the nine combined maṇḍalas is obviously beyond the reach of even confirmed meditators.

Of course, simpler practices are also offered, but it is obvious that they are more for these ritual specialists to fulfill their daily samaya obligations when they are not in a position to set up a more elaborate liturgy. The fully articulated liturgy remains the ideal and even the norm. Incidentally, Rigdzin Pema Trinlé clearly insists in his manuals for the Eight Pronouncements practice² that none of the ritual details should be omitted, even in terms of “blessings” for the practitioners themselves, and not just as regards magical efficiency for the benefit of

gsang skor, illustrated in the second half of Klong chen pa's *Zab mo yang tig*, which may have been compiled/composed around 1350). He even combines them with *gcod* instructions in his cycle *gSang ba rmad 'byung* (see below for reference in my appendix to Jean-Luc Achard's description of the *dGongs pa zang thal*), which seems to be characteristic of his generation, as this feature, not found in earlier rDzogs chen masters (including Klong chen pa), is also present in rDo rje gling pa's (1346–1405) *gter chos* (see rDo rje gling pa 2009: vol. 31). But we cannot assume that rGod lden was otherwise aware of all the works of recent rNying ma masters when there are no concrete traces of such knowledge in the texts attributed to him.

¹ Not all of the ritual complexities, however, were later creations. There are already prescriptions for ritual dances (*'cham yig*), for example, in Gu ru Chos dbang's *bKa' brgyad gsang ba yongs rdzogs*.

² Padma 'phrin las, *bKa' brgyad byang gter drag po rang byung rang shar gyi phrin las kyi rnam bshad rab gsal nyin byed* (in *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 44, pp. 1-398), p. 8: *de gsum* [i.e., the three systems of Nyang ral, Chos dbang and rGod lden] *dkyil 'khor gcig tu dril te bsgrub pa'i skabs sogs la sa'i cho ga nas brtsam te sgrub gzhang sgra ji bzhin par nyams su blang dgos shing| de dag kyang las sla dang des chog gi dbang du ma song bar tshul bzhin nyams su blangs na byin rlabs khyad par che ste|...*

the world. In practical terms, this clearly implies not only professional ritualists, but also wealthy sponsors who can keep them busy for days and weeks performing rituals and providing them with all the necessary materials. To some extent, and although *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* is not so explicitly linked to the Gungthang kings, the very content of the texts implies that the tantric master has wealthy and powerful patrons.

A third point that has not yet been explored is that it is in this cycle that the main rituals for the protection of the Jangter lineage are found (or were placed). There would be much to say, but one unusual feature of the sub-cycle *The Fully Complete Assembly of the Guardians of the Teachings*¹ is that it has a special form of six-armed Mahākāla as its main deity. This may not be extremely unusual in the general Eight Pronouncements context, for if we consider an older stage in the development of the Nyingma school as a whole, it seems that Mahākāla is quite central for both Nyangral and Chöwang. But today, the Dorjé Drak System appears somewhat marginal with the six-armed Mahākāla as its main protector. In more recent times, we know² that there has been an insistence on the practice of this particular Mahākāla as the deity who would protect, so to speak, the sons of Rigdzin Gödem. The significance of these observations regarding this six-armed Mahākāla remains to be explored. It is possible, for example, that there is some relationship to the (admittedly slightly different) six-armed Mahākāla that is so popular among both the Kagyüpas and the Gelugpas, though quite unknown to the general Nyingma tradition as it stands today.

The fourth point is the above-mentioned explicit connection to the visionary Dzogchen and more specifically to the *Gongpa Zangthal*. It seems to be a commonly received idea among contemporary Nyingma scholars³ that Nyangral's system for the Eight Pronouncements would be more Mahāyoga-oriented (which, in context, means: devoid of instructions for the completion phase); Chöwang's system would be more

¹ *bsTan srung yongs rdzogs*.

² See, for example, Arguillère 2023. mGon po dbang rgyal (1845–1915), a very important figure in the history of 'Khor gdong, was regarded as an emanation of Mahākāla, and, according to his biography by his son *sPrul sku* Tshul lo, he insisted on the importance of this practice—perhaps precisely because his disciples may have felt uncomfortable to propitiate a protector so different from those of the mainstream rNying ma lineages in 19th century Khams.

³ Khenpo Ju Tenkyong, oral communication, Dharamsala, December 2023.

Anuyoga-oriented (meaning: rich in inner yogas and body techniques); and Gödem's system would then be the one that bridges the Eight Pronouncements to the highest peak of Dzogchen.

Another puzzling feature of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* is the presentation of Dzogchen found in some of its tantras,¹ with the uncommon feature of presenting Guru Chöwang's *The Union of All the Buddhas* as the root of all Dzogchen tantras and both the tantras of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* and those of the *Gongpa Zangthal* as its culmination.²

The Union of All the Buddhas is a large Dzogchen tantra in Guru Chöwang's terma.³ A more common doctrine among later Nyingmapas would be that the *All-Creator King* (*Kun byed rgyal po*) is the "generic root tantra" of all Dzogchen and that each of Dzogchen's doxographic sub-sections has its own root-tantra. The idea that Guru Chöwang's *The Union of All the Buddhas* could be the root tantra of all Dzogchen (without, however, being its summit) is unheard of⁴ and deserves special interest in terms of Dzogchen doxographies and, in particular, the status of *Yangti* (a category to which Guru Chöwang's *The Union of All the Buddhas* belongs) in the whole apparatus. The way in which Rigdzin Gödem may have envisioned *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* as a supremely profound Dzogchen tantra in conjunction with any or all of the tantras found in *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* also remains a mystery, since later tradition, even in the Northern Treasures, may not have used the tantras of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* as a major

¹ Especially #16, *bKa' brgyad kyi bka' babs spyi don chen mo* (in vol. CNT, vol. 9 pp. 421-443), p. 429 sq.

² #16, p. 429: *rtse mo yang snying bcud kyi mar khu'i tshul du drag po rang byung rang shar gyi rgyud skor dang : kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal chen po'i rgyud la sogs pa :...*

³ *sPros bral don gsal chen po'i rgyud* or *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor don gsal chen mo'i rgyud mthong bas grol ba*, in NG, vol. 13, pp. 2-288, with an appendix extending to p. 296.

⁴ In fact, this may be another hint about connections of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem with Rin chen gling pa : cf. Rin chen gling pa, *Yongs grol them byang* in RT1, vol. 88, p. 251 : *yang gsang thig le'i skor la ni : yang ti sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor dang : yang ti chig chod skor du 'dus* :. The idea is slightly different, however: Rin chen gling pa understands the *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* as one of the highest summits of rDzogs chen and not as the generic tantra for all of it.

sources of Dzogchen. This may be a hint of a hesitation: were *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* and *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* originally one unique block that later got split because of the overgrowth of the Kagyé aspect that became an individual cycle?

Furthermore, placing *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* above *The Union of All the Buddhas* also implies taking a very unusual implicit position on the Dzogchen doxographies: acknowledging that the *Yangti* category exists (although it is generally unmentioned in the Nyingthik literature), but still assuming that the teachings belonging to the Nyingthik are more profound.

As mentioned in the introduction of this overview, the order chosen for this section is an *ascending order in the terms of traditional doxographies*, or the order of the practice: putting the supposedly *more profound* texts after those deemed *more accessible*. A more philological order would have instead placed the two Dzogchen cycles before *The Eight Pronouncements*—which refers to *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*—and *The Heart Practice*—which also refers to *The Eight Pronouncements, The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*, and *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity*. Therefore, to understand what may have been a next step in the development of the global structure of the system, especially of the concept of the Five Repositories, the reader should now jump to *The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*.

One text of the corpus enables us to date its final edition to 1381.¹ We could expect the concept of the Five Repositories to have become clearer so late after the discovery of the treasure, especially because we would tend to think that most of the content of each chamber had then been deciphered into clear Tibetan. However, even in this cycle, there

¹ One text, the *Drag po rang byung rang shar chen po'i rgyud kyi rgyal po* (#4: pp. 29-175) has an indication in its colophon (p. 174) about the time when it was deciphered: an Iron-Bird year, sixteen years after its discovery: *zang zang lha brag gi sked bse sgrom smug po'i dbus nas rig 'dzin rGod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis : me pho rta ti lo la bton nas lo bcu drug lon pa'i lcags mo bya'i lo la : la stod lho ri sgrub pa bzang po dang : gnas ma lung pa rig 'dzin mgon po'i don du shog ser ngos las zhal bshus so : yang tshes lnga pa la zhal bshus so : .* This is somewhat surprising, since, in 1381, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem was apparently in the midst of his adventures in Sikkim. This suggests that even his travels were not entirely devoid of literary activity.

is still much hesitation as to which chamber each text belongs. Although the standard doctrine is that *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* was extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository, most texts have no details on this point in their colophon (or do not have a colophon at all). Only one text is explicitly said to be from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository in its colophon, while some are said to be from the Brown Repository (without it being clear whether this only refers to the common chest or to its central chamber), or from the Black or White Repositories.¹

State of the Art

This is the right place to pay tribute to Eva Neumaier-Dargyay's groundbreaking 1971 article, "*bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar, ein rDzogs chen Tantra*," which was the earliest Tibetological study of a Jangter text and the only extant study of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*.² This article does not contain an overview of the whole cycle, but rather a general introduction to Nyingma and Dzogchen views, a short presentation of Rigdzin Gödem, and a translation of two short texts. It focuses on doctrinal meaning and not on historical context.

It is noteworthy that in the same paper the author writes that *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* belongs to Mahāyoga³ and also (which seems contradictory) that it is a Dzogchen tantra (as stated in the article's title). In fact, although this would have deserved being clarified, this cycle belongs to a time—Longchenpa's commentary on the *Sangwa Nyingpo*,⁴ for example, was written in 1352, just fourteen years before the Zangzang Lhadrak revelations—when there was a strong desire among the Nyingmapas for a form of

¹ Any relevant information from the colophons has been included in a footnote for each text. In most cases, if there is a colophon, it simply states that the text was extracted from the treasure by Rig 'dzin rGod ldem without further explanation.

² For more on this seminal article, see Arguillère 2026.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 134: "Vorliegendes bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar Tantra gehört zur Abteilung bskyed rim Mahāyoga."

⁴ *dPal gsang ba snying po de kho na nyid nges pa'i rgyud kyi 'grel pa phyogs bcu'i mun pa thams cad rnam par sel ba*, in Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer 2009: vol 23, pp. 53-565.

practice that would synthesize an elaborate development phase¹—supposedly typical of Mahāyoga—with very complete systems of internal yogas involving body techniques—said to be the focus of Anuyoga—and with a complete set of Dzogchen instructions in the Nyingthik style. *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* gives a perfect example in practice of what Longchenpa’s commentary presents in theory.²

More Detailed Description

First Volume (CNT, vol. 9)

More than 90% of these texts are dedicated purely to ritual instructions, although here and there we find some further instructions for meditations, some narrative passages, and some doctrinal clarifications. *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* first presents three texts by later authors³ that are used as guides to set the collection in order. However, the structure is far from self-obvious in this edition of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*, which seems to be following earlier editions.

Among these introductory texts, the one composed by the Fifth Dalai Lama is the most precise. However, the structure it describes is so

¹ *bsKyed rim*.

² Incidentally, it should be researched in what precise way the pantheons of the peaceful and wrathful deities in the *sGyu 'phrul drwa ba* (including the *gSang ba snying po*), the *rDzogs chen sNying thig*, and the *bKa' brgyad* systems are connected, overlap, and differ. There are certainly differences, since the *bKa' brgyad* pantheons feature mostly wrathful deities and many more than the standard sets of *khro bo* described in *sNying thig* contexts. However, the deities described in both the *gSang ba snying po* and the *bKa' brgyad* systems are everywhere said to be spontaneous expressions of the ultimate nature (hence the phrase *rang byung rang shar* in the title of *rGod ldem*’s cycle), as opposed to most *yi dam* deities that are presented as forms created by Buddhas as skillful means in order to tame sentient being, which implies that part of their aspect depends on “the merits and aspirations of those to be tamed.”

³ #1: CNT, vol. 9, pp. 1-6: Thub bstan kun bzang chos grags (d.u.), *gTer chen rig 'dzin rgod ldem gyis byang zang zang lha brag ngos nas gdan drangs pa'i bka' brgyad rang shar gyi dkar chag*; #2: pp. 7-22: “*rGyal dbang lnga pa rin po che'i gsan yig las phyung ba*.” *Byang gter bka' brgyad rang shar gyi smin sgrol gyi them byang*; #3: pp. 23-28: “*gTer bdag gling pa'i gsan yig las phyung ba*.” *Byang gter bka' brgyad rang shar gyi them byang*.

complex that it might not help the reader more than the mere list of the text with their topics. It appears from this text that the original corpus was complemented by revelations by Ngari Pañchen.¹ In fact, a few more texts are ascribed to other authors or tertöns or completely lack colophons, in some cases because they are clearly fragments. It is difficult, in the present state of research, to trace precisely the limits of Gödem's revelations within the corpus as it stands in this edition. However, it is plain that the large tantras and the main practice manuals belong to the original core and may be used to understand Gödem's role and status in his own time.

After these three introductory texts, one finds three large tantras,² followed by: a small collection of general prescriptions, which may be an extract from Guru Chöwang's *terma*;³ a text for the practice of peaceful Vajrasattva;⁴ and a text for the simplified practice of the Great Supreme Heruka with the other main deities inside his body.⁵ The next three texts⁶ present a similar character of short, simplified instruction manuals, with condensed practices of only the main deity, with one face and two arms. Then comes a lineage prayer that is not presented as

¹ As the Fifth Dalai Lama writes (in #2, p. 10): *khri srong rnam sprul mnga' ris pañ chen rin po ches mdzad pa'i rim lnga gdan thog gcig tu sgom pa'i khrid yig...* etc. This may allude to #142 below: *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi rdzogs rim lnga pa*.

² #4: pp. 29-175: *Drag po rang byung rang shar chen po'i rgyud kyi rgyal po* in 26 chapters plus a short conclusion (discussed above) about the concealment, discovery (from the Central Repository), and deciphering of the *gter ma* in 1381; #5: pp. 177-286: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad rtsa ba'i rgyud rgyal tshab rang byung rang shar bsam 'phel nor bu rgya can* (this tantra, extracted from the Brown Central Heart Repository, contains all the instructions for *rdzogs rim* and *rdzogs chen*, followed by all sorts of magic "activities"); #6: pp. 287-302: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad yongs rdzogs kyi sngags rgyud rin po che'i gter rgyud* (a mantra compendium). The texts translated by Eva Neumaier-Dargyay as being the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar* is none of these three. It is #90 and #91 in the second volume (as the whole cycle is not described in Neumaier-Dargyay's article, the reader may not perceive that the translated texts are just drops within this ocean, which, however remarkable, are nowhere presented as being its essential core).

³ #7: pp. 303-308: *bKa' brgyad kyi them byang zhal gdams*.

⁴ #8: pp. 309-311: *Zhi ba gsang chen rigs gcig*.

⁵ #9: pp. 313-327: *rTsa ba gdong po lta bu'i sgrub thabs rnam pa lnga po*.

⁶ #10: pp. 329-337: *bDe gshegs dril sgrub zab mo*; #11: pp. 339-345: *Yang dril rtsa ba'i sgrub thabs*; #12: pp. 347-350, *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi zhi khro dril sgrub*.

being terma, and which must be recent.¹ This is followed by what appears to be the main source-text for the practice of Gödem's *The Eight Pronouncements*,² followed by an appendix.³

The next text⁴ is interesting in that it explicitly alludes to Nyangral and Chöwang's cycles. In a list of the Eight Pronouncements tantras,⁵ the fact that the three cycles are combined becomes clearly visible. As discussed in the introduction of this chapter, the presentation of Dzogchen (p. 429 sq.) is also extremely interesting, with the uncommon feature of presenting Guru Chöwang's *The Union of All the Buddhas* as the root of all Dzogchen tantras and both the tantras of *The Eight Pronouncements*, *Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* and those of the *Gongpa Zangthal* as its culmination.

Then we find a short text⁶ for the examination of the *karma-mudrā* partner and one about the samayas.⁷ The next text⁸ begins with a section of the confession text generally known in the Nyingma tradition as the *Narak Kongshak*,⁹ the main part of which is contained in the twenty-six-chapter tantra at the beginning of the volume, while the end is about fighting a demonic obstacle which includes, among other signs,

¹ #13: pp. 351-357: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi bryud 'debs*. The last-named master (before the "root master whose kindness [is so great that it] cannot be returned") is *mKhan chen* Theg mchog bstan 'dzin; this is Go tsha *mkhan chen* Theg mchog bstan 'dzin, disciple of rDo rje brag rig 'dzin VII mNyam nyid rdo rje (1886–1932/35 according to BDRC). Four volumes of his writings presented as a *gSung 'bum* are found on BDRC under reference MW2PD17502, and a selection of those relevant to Byang gter, with his biography, can be read in vol. 57 of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*.

² #14: pp. 359-402: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi sgrub gzhung chen mo*.

³ #15: pp. 403-420: *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar gyi sgrub gzhung zur 'debs rab tu zab par gdams pa*.

⁴ #16: pp. 421-443: *bKa' brgyad kyi bka' babs spyi don chen mo*, pp. 422: *don gyi yang snying gsang ba yongs rdzogs bde gshegs kun 'dus chen po'i bsnyen pa them nas* :... It should be noted that this text has no colophon and might well be one of those alluded to in the Fifth Dalai Lama's "preface" (#5) as being an addition by mNga' ris pañ chen.

⁵ Pp. 426-427.

⁶ #17: pp. 445-447: *Yum brtag pa'i yig chung*.

⁷ #18: pp. 449-452: *Dam bca' yongs rdzogs*.

⁸ #19: pp. 453-458: *bsKang ba bsdu pa dang nyul le brtag shing bzlog pa*.

⁹ *Na rag/raka skong bshags*.

drowsiness. The next text¹ is about songs and dances meant to overcome obstacles. Then comes a writing² about the preparation of the nectar (*amṛta*), the first part of which is purely ritual, while the second part describes *materia medica* and other material preparations. The following one³ is a ritual to “take the *siddhis*” when the signs of success have arisen. Then comes a short lineage prayer,⁴ with a terma part that ends with Rigdzin Gödem that is followed by an interpolated, non-terma part with a lineage beginning with Gödem’s son Namgyal Gönpo (ca. 1399–1424)⁵ and ending with figures who are either unknown or at least mentioned under unfamiliar names.⁶

Then comes a text about the preliminary rituals for *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*,⁷ which is important because it seems that it was adopted, in a more or less adapted form, as a general introduction for many ritual practices in the Jangter tradition. Then comes the standard “middle-sized” *sādhana* (or the source of most, later ritual compositions) for Gödem’s Eight Pronouncements cycle,⁸ which is followed by a short *sādhana* reduced to mantras only⁹ and then by a ritual text¹⁰ focusing on some details of the visualization of

¹ #20: pp. 459-464: *Bar gcod 'dul phyir glu bro yongs rdzogs*.

² #21: pp. 465-472: *Man ngag yig chung gi skor bdud rtsi bsgrub pa'i zur 'debs dang rtsa brgyad yan lag stong gi bshad pa*.

³ #22: pp. 473-481: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi dngos grub yongs rdzogs bskul ba thun mong ma yin pa shin tu zab pa*.

⁴ #23: pp. 483-486: *bKa' brgyad kyi brgyud rim*.

⁵ Dates calculated in Valentine 2018b.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, pp. 485 sq.: *rdo rje 'dzin dngos gsang bdag sangs rgyas skyabs | |grub pa'i dbang phyug byams pa bstan pa'i bdag*].

⁷ #24: pp. 487-496: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi sngon 'gro*.

⁸ #25: pp. 497-539: *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar gyi 'phrin las 'bring po*, extracted from the Brown Central Heart Repository. It should be noted that there are many redundant ritual texts in this collection, as it is also the case, for example, in *The Heart Practice*. Later authors like Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las skillfully combined these texts in order to include elements of them all in coherent ritual arrangements. However, philologists may, in some cases, find it relevant to regard them as *successive* sketches in a *gradual* elaboration, and further research could pick series of parallel texts for systematic comparison. This is not only the case for the Eight Pronouncements *sādhana*s proper in this corpus, but also for the Protectors rituals of the sub-cycle *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*.

⁹ #26: pp. 541-549: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi sngags kyi phrin las*.

¹⁰ #27: pp. 551-565: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi sgom khog chen mo*.

the maṇḍala. The purpose of the next text is similar, but it is not a part of the terma proper, since it is probably a work of Ngari Paṇchen.¹ It seems to be discussing uncommon details in the visualization of the deities in *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*. Then we find an empowerment text,² which includes a narrative about Padmasambhava receiving the Eight Pronouncements from his various masters. It contains allusions to Nyangral and Chöwang's Kagyé cycles: Nanam Dorjé Düjom is designated as one of the "three, the lord and his subjects" who will in a future rebirth reveal this particular aspect of the Eight Pronouncements.

The next text,³ about the examination of the skull (*kapāla*) used as a ritual cup, is followed by a text about the "soul-stone" of the protective deities, which belongs to the sub-cycle *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*.⁴ It is followed by a text on "small rites"⁵ (which means: minor ritual applications or details of rituals) and then by a short instruction about consciousness transference,⁶ which concludes the first volume (vol. 9) of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*'s four volumes in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*.

¹ #28: pp. 567-577: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi lha bkod*. There is no proper colophon, but on p. 576 we read: '*di yang padma dbang rgyal gyis zur du bkod pa maṅalam*'. Strangely, there are two more pages of text after this line, which sound like it should be the conclusion of the text.

² #29: pp. 579-587: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi dbang gi chu bo babs so chen po*.

³ #30: pp. 589-596: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad dus gsum rgyal ba yongs rdzogs kyi cha lag thod pa brtag thabs yongs rdzogs*.

⁴ #31: 597-601: *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs kyi bla rdo 'khor gnad yig zab mo*. This text presents *gter ma* marks, but neither the *gter ston*'s name nor the place of discovery are mentioned (which, however, is not exceptional in rGod ldem's *gter chos*). It should be noted that although the *bsTan srung yongs rdzogs* clearly appears as a distinct sub-cycle (it is generally mentioned in the titles of the texts belonging to it), still, for whatever reason, the successive editors of the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar* have not found it relevant to gather all its parts as a distinct section.

⁵ #32: pp. 603-608: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi las phran bcu*.

⁶ #33: pp. 609-614: *bKa' brgyad yongs rdzogs kyi 'pho ba myur mgyogs kyi man ngag*.

Second Volume (CNT, vol. 10)

The second volume begins with two additional catalogs,¹ supplementing the one that is found in all the volumes of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* and the prefaces of the first volume. It is certainly to be understood as a document about earlier editions, but information is lacking. The content of these two catalogs implies that the editors of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* followed at least some of these earlier editions in terms of ordering and dividing the cycle into multiple volumes.

Next is found a long text of “praise and invitation [to action]”² with a description of the deities in verse, which is said to be extracted from the main tantra.³ The colophon includes a lineage featuring Chögyal Sönam, Śākya Zangpo, and Pema Wangyal with his brother. This is followed by a “smaller invitation,”⁴ a “general invitation,”⁵ a “dispatching [the deities] to terrible actions,”⁶ and an “enunciation of truth,”⁷ which is a ritual text in which sacred truth is invoked or witnessed to compel the deities into immediate action. The next text⁸ presents a similar ritual provocation to immediate action. It is followed by a one-page instruction⁹ for the visualization to be implemented when one performs the “liberation” of an enemy, a long repelling ritual,¹⁰ another text¹¹ about repelling evil spirits and enemies, and then three more about the

¹ #34: vol. 10, pp. 1-5: *bKa' brgyad phyogs bsgrigs dkar chag* (anonymous) and #35: pp. 7-15: *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi pod gnyis pa'i dpe tho*, by one Ban pa Thub bstan rgya mtsho (d.u.).

² #36: pp. 17-52: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi bstod bskul las bzhi lhun grub ces bya ba*.

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 51: *sgrub chen bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi rgyud las byung ba'i bstod bskul*, etc.

⁴ #37: pp. 53-61: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi bskul chung*.

⁵ #38: pp. 63-75: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi dkon mchog spyi bskul ba*.

⁶ #39: pp. 77-86: *bKa' brgyad yongs rdzogs kyi drag las bkol ba*.

⁷ #40: pp. 87-103: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi bden brdar chen mo*.

⁸ #41: pp. 105-120: *bKa' brgyad ral gri phyung brdeg gi bskul| gu hya|*.

⁹ #42: pp. 121-123: *Tshe lung khrus lung*.

¹⁰ #43: pp. 125-170: *Gu ru padmas mdzad pa'i zlog pa rig 'dzin lugs*.

¹¹ #44: pp. 171-179: *sGrub pa chen po bka' brgyad kyi 'debs kha dgu dang las phran bcu*.

outer, inner and secret tormas.¹ Then comes the water offerings² and two texts about “torma offerings in three parts.”³ The next text⁴ contains short general instructions about practice in all sorts of contexts, and the following one⁵ is devised to enhance the power of speech (for mantra recitation). These are followed by a text about “the preparation of poisonous blood,”⁶ one more ritual to protect and repel,⁷ one about violent mantras,⁸ one about magic bombs⁹ and burnt offerings,¹⁰ and one more text for destructive magic.¹¹

After this long series of short texts more or less belonging to the category of magic, we find one *sādhana* of the Lion-Faced *Ḍākinī*,¹² a deity commonly invoked in order to repel sorcery. The form of this deity in this text is quite uncommon, since she is red, holding the moon in her right hand and the sun in the left, and the lower part of her body has the shape of a *kīla*. Besides the common functions of repelling spells and triumphing over foes, this text also includes a somewhat vampiric long-life-practice, in the sense that one attracts other beings’ life-force to oneself.

Then comes a text¹³ presented as “an explanation of the essence of

¹ #45: pp. 181-191: *sGrub chen bka’ brgyad rgyud las byung ba’i phyi’i gtor ma*; #46: p. 193-197: *bKa’ brgyad kyi nang gtor*; #47: pp. 199-202: *bKa’ brgyad kyi gsang ba’i gtor ma*.

² #48: pp. 203-211: *sGrub chen bka’ brgyad kyi rgyud las byung ba’i chu gtor gyi rim pa*.

³ #49: pp. 213-225: *bKa’ brgyad kyi cha gsum gtor ma* and #50: pp. 227-230: *Guru padmas mdzad pa’i cha gsum bsdu gtor*.

⁴ #51: pp. 231-239: *sGrub chen bka’ brgyad kyi thun mong gi las rim*.

⁵ #52: pp. 241-243: *Ngag gi nus ’don rang blud padmas mdzad pa*.

⁶ #53: pp. 245-249: *sGrub pa bka’ brgyad yongs rdzogs kyi dug khrag sbyar thabs*.

⁷ #54: pp. 251-254: *Rang byung rang shar las| bsrung bzlog gnam lcags me ’bar*. The colophon mentions that the text was extracted from the *bse sgrom smug po*, but without specifying whether this is to be understood as the chest divided into the various repositories or as its central part.

⁸ #55: pp. 255-268: *bKa’ brgyad ’dus pa’i drag sngags*.

⁹ *Zor*.

¹⁰ #56: pp. 269-274: *Drag po rang byung rang shar gyi zor dang sbyin sreg mnan pa gsum gyi las sbyor*. This seems to be the only text of the corpus that is said in its colophon to be from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository.

¹¹ #57: pp. 275-278: *Thub chod kun dril gyi bzlog gzhung*.

¹² #58: pp. 279-284: *Ḍākinī ma’i drag sngags seng gdong drag mo| ’di yang sgrub chen bka’ brgyad kyi las ched yin*.

¹³ #59: pp. 285-291: *bKa’ brgyad kyi cha rkyen rang byung rang shar man ngag snying gi ti ka*.

the mantras,” which in fact explains how to combine segments of mantras, or how to add, so to say, prefixes or suffixes, with syntactic rules, in order to achieve a given aim. The next text¹ is meant to cause hailstorms and to prevent them. It is followed by what is presented as a *sādhana*² for the “spells and violent mantras” aspect of *The Eight Pronouncements* but is in fact more a book of spells than a proper *sādhana*.

After that, we find the second text³ of *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*. This is a proper *sādhana* in which one visualizes oneself as a specific deity called The Subduer of All Arrogant Spirits⁴ and, in front of oneself, the thirty chiefs of these spirits.⁵ In this text, the six-armed Mahākāla does not seem to play the central role it otherwise has (or later gained?) in *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*. The three succeeding texts⁶ are also about controlling the thirty chiefs of the arrogant spirits and globally display the same features, the second and the third being Dö⁷ rituals. The following ones present themselves as the “main practice of the Thirty Arrogant Spirits,”⁸ an inner *sādhana* with a supplication (in fact, it is essentially a collection of mantras),⁹ a secret *sādhana*,¹⁰

¹ #60: pp. 293-298: *bKa' brgyad kyi skyin thang dbab pa yongs rdzogs*.

² #61: *bKa' brgyad drag po'i dmod pa drag sngags kyi sgrub pa zab mo*.

³ #62: 305-326: *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs las| sngags bdag sde dpon sum cu'i las byang*. The first was #31 above.

⁴ Dregs pa kun 'dul. The name suggests that this might be a form of Hayagrīva.

⁵ It should be noted that in the list (*op. cit.*, p. 313) of the guardian deities, Srid pa'i rgyal mo (who is known as a protectress of Bon) comes before E ka dza tī. Globally, the list of the thirty “Arrogant Ones” would deserve being carefully studied, since it is well-known that many local and sometimes political or familial considerations are reflected in the cult of the “mundane” protective deities. In this text as in the next, the first ones in the list of the “arrogant spirits” are dBang phyug Mahādeva and *bTsun mo* Umadevī, which we have already met in the context of *The Seven Auspicious Connections*. More globally, this list of thirty spirits is connected to the *lha srin sde brgyad* in terms that would deserve further examination.

⁶ #63: pp. 327-348: *sNgags bdag sde dpon sum cu'i drag bskul rno myur thog 'dra* (said to be from the *bse sgrom smug po*); #64: pp. 349-383: *Dregs pa'i sde dpon sum cu las phyi sgrub mdos kyi byang bu* (said to be from the Black Northern Iron Repository); #65: pp. 385-393: *Drag po rang byung rang shar gyi sde dpon sum cu'i phyi sgrub mdos kyi cho ga*.

⁷ *mDos*. Cf. Blondeau 1990.

⁸ #66: pp. 395-401: *sDe dpon sum cu'i sgrub pa'i gzhung*.

⁹ #67: pp. 403-406: *Dregs pa nang sgrub kyi gsol kha*.

¹⁰ #68: pp. 407-411: *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi sde dpon gsang sgrub las tshogs lnga bcu pa*.

and appendices to this same practice.¹ This is followed by an anonymous text,² which is a list of the thirty arrogant spirits with their distinctive attributes.

The two next texts³ also belong to the general category of *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings* but focus on one specific protective deity, Dorjé Nöjin. In the second text, it becomes clear that it is in fact the specific six-armed Mahākāla of the Northern Treasures, but the iconography seems not fully stabilized: in the first text, he clearly has *three* legs and not the expected four, and one of his faces is a tiger face, which disappears in the standardized version.⁴

The next text⁵ is connected to Umadevī and this shows again Gödem's great interest in the couple Mahādeva-Umadevī, well-attested in *The Seven Auspicious Connections* and that is not so common in the Nyingma tradition.

With the next text,⁶ we seem to move to another section of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*, putting aside *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*, since this is a long-life empowerment. Such is also the topic of the following text,⁷ which is the corresponding sādhana, and of the six succeeding works,⁸ which are more or less presented as gradually more “inner” or

¹ #69: pp. 413-426: *sDe dpon sum cu sgrub pa'i kha tshar dang bcas pa*.

² #70: pp. 427-430: *Dregs pa sum cu'i byang gter lugs kyi mngon rtogs brjed byang mdzad pa po mi gsal ba*.

³ #71: pp. 431-436: *Chos skyong rdo rje gnod sbyin nag po'i rgyud* and #72: pp. 437-446: *rDo rje gnod sbyin nag po'i phrin las*.

⁴ It is not unthinkable that there is some connection between this Mahākāla and gNod sbyin Bu le, the local protector of Zang zang lha brag, or that such a local deity slowly turned into this unique Mahākāla. Indeed, the very weird original iconography seems to slowly evolve into a special, but not exceedingly strange, six-armed Mahākāla. This would require further research to settle.

⁵ #73: pp. 447-457: *U ma'i bzlog pa che chung gsum*. The colophon of this text says it was extracted from the Black Northern Iron Repository.

⁶ #74: pp. 459-468: *bKa' brgyad kyi tshe dbang yongs rdzogs*. On this group of texts for promoting longevity in *The Eight Pronouncements*, see Shinga 2026.

⁷ #75: pp. 469-476: *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar las sgrub pa chen po dang 'brel ba'i tshe sgrub yongs rdzogs*.

⁸ #76: pp. 477-486: *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar las tshe'i phrin las*; #77: pp. 487-490: *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar las tshe'i bstod byang bkol bar*; #78: pp. 491-495: *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar las tshe'i phyi sgrub*; #79: pp. 497-500: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad las tshe'i nang sgrub*; #80: pp. 501-

esoteric aspects of the practice.

The next text¹ is a tantra whose main figure is “the great Garuḍa, son of the Conquerors, the Subduer of Evil,” followed by the corresponding sādhana and empowerment ritual.² This small Garuḍa cycle should be compared with the one of the Nine-Headed Black Garuḍa included in *The Heart Practice* (see description below). These are followed by two wealth rituals.³

After this large collection of ritual texts that fills most of the second volume of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*, we now reach a section that is perhaps more appealing for the modern reader: the instruction texts. The first one⁴ is mostly about the visualization of the deities for the development phase. The second⁵ describes the completion phase and is in fact a complete manual for the practice of *The Eight Pronouncements*, including aspects such as the qualities of the disciple, the proper place for practice, and so forth. It does not give all the details of the inner yogas (body techniques), but it presents the nature of mind and the introduction to the Thögal practice⁶ with its visionary development (although without indications about the body postures, etc.). Then come instructions on the consciousness transference. The implicit logic is that if one cannot complete the whole

503: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad las tshe sgrub hrīḥ gcig ma*; #81: pp. 505-508: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad las yang gsang nam mkha'i rdo rje*.

¹ #82: pp. 509-515: *Khyung chen gdug pa 'dul ba'i rgyud chen*, or: *rGyal sras khyung chen gdug pa 'dul ba'i rgyud*. The colophon of this text says it was extracted from the *bse sgrom smug po*, without a clear indication of whether this means the global chest or more specifically its central chamber.

² #83: pp. 517-522: *rGyal sras khyung gi sgrub thabs zab mo*, with #84: pp. 522-524: *Khyung chen yongs rdzogs dbang bskur*.

³ #85: pp. 525-541: *gNod sbyin nor lha yongs rdzogs kyi sgrub thabs* and #86: pp. 543-546: *Yum nor rgyun ma'i sgrub thabs*. The first text has a non-*gter ma* postface (pp. 540-541) by a hitherto unidentified “A nan ta bha drā,” disciple of mNga' ris rig 'dzin bDud 'joms rdo rje (Legs ldan rje, 1512–1580). It is then said that this small text was “copied because it was on old books” (*dpe rnying mar 'di 'dra 'dug pas bris*). The second text is said (pp. 545-546) to have been extracted “from the center of the the Brown Repository” (*bse sgrom smug po'i dbus nas*), which makes it clear how ambiguous the phrase *bse sgrom smug po* is, as it can refer either to the chest that is divided into chambers, or to its central chamber.

⁴ #87: pp. 547-561: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi lha khrid yongs rdzogs*.

⁵ #88: pp. 563-580: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi rdzogs rim khrid gzhung ye shes zang thal chen po*.

⁶ Pp. 571-574.

practice, this would be a shortcut to the Pure Lands.¹

This is quite logically followed by a text about the *post-mortem* intermediary state² and then a tantra³ presenting all the aspects of the completion stage of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*—the first of the two texts translated in Neumaier–Dargyay 1971, followed by the second one,⁴ which completes the second volume of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*.

Third Volume (CNT, vol. 11)

The third volume begins with four texts about the empowerments,⁵ which are followed by three rituals for confession and samaya reparation⁶ and one for the consecration of places and objects.⁷ Then comes a text for burnt offerings in connection with the four types of activities⁸

¹ These 'pho ba precepts are very close to those found in the Vajravārāhī section of *The Heart Practice*, themselves deeply connected to the *Āgama of the Sow Deeply Sealed* (*Lung phag mo zab rgya*), which is regarded as an appendix of the *dGongs pa zang thal*. The *Āgama of the Sow Deeply Sealed* (or *Six Seals of Vajravārāhī*) should be studied as the most typical case of a sub-cycle that overlaps different cycles, on the one hand, and that was supplemented by a *gter ston* different from Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (bsTan gnyis gling pa, 1480–1535), on the other hand. Although the fact that the Byang gter was revealed by successive incarnations of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem gives the feeling that they may have brought an earlier revelation to a further completion, it should be examined whether their later *gter chos* are not as independent from the original core of rGod ldem's treasures as if they had been revealed by completely unrelated *gter stons*. In this sense, the case of bsTan gnyis gling pa is quite specific.

² #89: pp. 581-588: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad las bar do'i man ngag*.

³ #90: pp. 589-596: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi rdzogs rim snying tig rnam pa bcu bstan pa*.

⁴ #91: pp. 597-607: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad rang byung rang shar gyi snying po gnam zhal don khrid*.

⁵ #92: CNT, vol. 11, pp. 1-69: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad rang byung rang shar gyi lha dbang gi lha thabs don gsal sgron me nyi zla'i rgya can*; #93: pp. 71-140: *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar rtsa ba'i dbang*; #94: pp. 141-147: *Zhi khro bka' brgyad dbang gi bum sgrub zab mo*; #95: pp. 149-169: *Drag po rang byung rang shar chen po'i sgrub dbang chen mo cho ga'i sdom chen*.

⁶ #96: pp. 171-179: *bKa' brgyad kyi na rag dong sprugs*; #97: pp. 181-187: *bKa' brgyad kyi bskang gso bkol ba*; #98: pp. 189-196: *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar las don bskang rgyas pa*.

⁷ #99: pp. 197-217: *bKa' brgyad rab gnas yongs rdzogs*.

⁸ #100: pp. 219-237: *Zhi khro yongs rdzogs kyi las bzhi'i sbyin sreg gsal byed*.

and one for the confection of *tsatsas*.¹

Then begins a series of five texts about funeral rituals.² Some of these texts are quite similar to the much better known *Bardo Thödröl* literature, and one may wonder why the Jangter practitioners ended up adopting the system from Karma Lingpa (14th century), as we know they did from the compilation of the Dorjé Drak liturgy.³ Indeed, *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*, especially when supplemented by other cycles (the *Gongpa Zangthal* also contains detailed explanations of the *bardo*), seem to lack nothing necessary to guide the deceased in the afterlife.

The next text⁴ presents itself as an invitation to mantra recitation and contains a lineage prayer that, although the text is presented as a terma discovered by Rigdzin Gödem, has been extended down to a disciple of Śākya Zangpo (Yölmo Tülku), Künga Chöphak.⁵ It is followed by a text⁶ that, like #30, deals with the examination of the skull (to check whether it is proper for ritual use), another ritual⁷ for weather control, an exorcism ritual,⁸ and a Rāhula ritual⁹ also devised to control rain and hail. Then comes a short *sādhana*¹⁰ of the Eight Pronouncements with the Great Supreme Heruka in a simple form (one face, two arms, etc.),

¹ #101: pp. 239-253: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi tsha tswa'i las rim*.

² #102: pp. 255-274: *Zhi khro bka' brgyad yongs rdzogs kyi bdun tshigs gnas lung*; #103: pp. 275-282: *bKa' brgyad yongs rdzogs kyi bdun tshigs gnas lung gi zas gtad*; #104: pp. 283-286: *Yongs rdzogs kyi sgo nas tshe 'das dgug pa*; #105: pp. 287-290: *Sri 'dul lung phran tshe 'das 'drer skyes na bya ba'i man ngag*; #106: pp. 291-300: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad rang byung rang shar las ro bsreg phung po gnas sbyong ba*.

³ See *Northern Treasure Histories*, vol. 1, especially pp. 182-186, for a short evocation of Karma gling pa and the part of his *gter chos* that got included in the *rDo rje brag lugs*.

⁴ #107: pp. 301-309: *Drag po rang byung rang shar gyi 'dzab bskul*.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 306: *Rig 'dzin Kun dga' chos 'phags*.

⁶ #108: pp. 311-323: *bsGrub chen bka' brgyad rgyal ba yongs rdzogs kyi cha lag thod pa brtag pa thabs yongs rdzogs*.

⁷ #109: pp. 325-331: *Char 'bebs yongs rdzogs*.

⁸ #110: pp. 333-336: *Phur thun*.

⁹ #111: pp. 337-340: *Drag po gza' yi phrin las*.

¹⁰ #112: pp. 341-348, *bKa' brgyad rang shar gyi sngags sgrub nar ma*.

containing the other deities inside his body,¹ a text² for the recitation of all the main mantras of this cycle, and an appendix³ to the empowerment rites.

The next text,⁴ presented as a precept by Padmasambhava on the basis of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen Tantra*, focuses on the Dzogchen aspect of the cycle, with a narrative about the primordial state, Samantabhadra's original liberation and the original downfall of sentient beings to saṃsāra. It contains a very allusive, but sufficiently characterized, reference to the practices of Trekchö⁵ and Thögal (four visions⁶), although they are not explicitly named.

The following text⁷ is not presented as a terma and seems to be incomplete, as if it were copied from a manuscript lacking its beginning and its end, and hence its colophon, which makes it impossible to determine the author.⁸ It seems to be a long list of masters and deities to whom offerings must be dedicated. It is followed by a short sādhana of Sarasvatī.⁹

Then begins a series of texts devoted to the Guardian deities, beginning with Ekajaṭī, to whom is dedicated a tantra,¹⁰ a sādhana,¹¹ a tormā offering ritual,¹² and two more texts of ritual activities.¹³ We then return to *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*,

¹ We have already met similar texts, e.g., #9-12 above. All these texts that are clearly parallel (and seem totally redundant) should be carefully compared to see whether they somehow complement one another or could be regarded as successive stages, or versions, in a continuous development.

² #113: pp. 349-357: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi sngags kyi phreng ba*.

³ #114: pp. 359-365: *bsGrub (sic) chen bka' brgyad dbang gi zur 'debs*.

⁴ #115: pp. 367-376: *Man ngag gsal ba'i sgron me*.

⁵ Four yogas, p. 375.

⁶ *Loc. cit.*

⁷ #116: pp. 377-399: *bKa' brgyad sman mchod dang gser skyems sogs kyi sham bu rgyas pa'i dbu phyogs*.

⁸ It describes lineages extending to the early 20th century, but it is of course not impossible that the most recent parts are interpolations.

⁹ #117: pp. 401-404: *lHa mo dbyangs can ma'i sgrub thabs*.

¹⁰ #118: pp. 405-412: *Rang byung rang shar gyi bka' srung e ka dza ṭī'i rgyud*.

¹¹ #119: pp. 413-419: *bKa' srung e ka dza ṭī'i sgrub thabs*.

¹² #120: pp. 421-424: *bKa' srung e ka dza ṭī'i gtor 'bul bstod pa*.

¹³ #121: pp. 425-432: *bKa' srung ma'i phrin las*; #122: pp. 433-436: *bKa' srung ma'i las tshogs*.

with a text devised to curse an enemy¹ and one more text² devoted to Dorjé Nöjin, now clearly identified as the six-armed Mahākāla in the form³ that is still worshiped nowadays in the Northern Treasures monasteries with the thirty chiefs of the arrogant spirits as his retinue. The next text⁴ deals with the violent activities of *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*. It is followed by a short text presented in its title⁵ as a writing of Rigdzin Gödem, but in its colophon as one of his termas, devised to repel “black mouth and lips,” which, according to the content of the text, is to be understood as including all sorts of obstacles caused by human and non-human beings.

Fourth Volume (CNT, vol. 11)

The fourth and last volume of the cycle begins with a long text said to gather all the instructions for the practice, compared to a trunk, branches, flowers, and fruits.⁶ Indeed, it contains very detailed instructions for all the stages of the meditation, including Dzogchen precepts

¹ #123: pp. 437-449: *Chos skyong yongs rdzogs kyi las tshogs a mu ka cham dbab nag po gnam lcags thog 'dra'i drag sngags brgya rtsa brgyad man ngag spra khrid*. It could be asked why the small Ekajaṭī cycle is not regarded as belonging to the *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs*. Indeed, in later versions (e.g., the ritual taught by C.R. Lama to his disciples under the title *The Dragon Roar*, but there may be earlier prototypes), maṇḍalas of the other Guardian deities, including Ekajaṭī, were added to the central Mahākāla maṇḍala. But in the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*, only rituals focusing of the six-armed Mahākāla/rDo rje gnod sbyin are explicitly labelled *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs*. The colophon of the text states that it was extracted from the Northern Iron Repository. This could be a hint that it does not originally belong to this cycle. Schiller (2021, n. 29, p. 831) rightly remarks that the 5th Dalai Lama's *gsan yig* has a specific section, *Chos sde spyi dang khyad par rdzogs chen zang thal gyi srung ma dpal sngags kyi bdag mo e ka dza ṭi'i skor*, that is not included in the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar*. It should be researched whether this specific text belongs to this perhaps originally distinct cycle.

² #124: pp. 451-458: *Dregs pa'i phrin las*.

³ Description in *op. cit.*, pp. 452-453.

⁴ #125: pp. 459-473: *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs kyi drag las bkol ba*.

⁵ #126: pp. 475-476: *Rig 'dzin chen pos mdzad pa'i kha mchu nag po'i bzlog pa*.

⁶ #127: CNT, vol. 12, pp. 1-60: *rTsa ba sdong po lta bu'i khrid| gyes pa yal ga lta bu'i khrid| 'bar ba me tog lta bu'i khrid| smin pa 'bras bu lta bu'i khrid thams cad 'di la tshang ngo| drag po rang byung rang shar gyi gzhung khrid lus kyi srog shing lta bu*.

of the Nyingthik style.¹ It is followed by a large Kagyé sādhana,² a text of praise and invitation of the Eight Pronouncement deities to action,³ and another text⁴ that presents itself as having the same character, but which in fact looks like another more or less complete sādhana. The next text⁵ is once more a synthesis of all the instructions under ten topics in a style that is reminiscent of the more doctrinal sections of Nyan-gral's *Eight Pronouncements*, which is followed by three short fragments⁶ in the same style.

The next text,⁷ despite its somewhat obscure title, is a call to action for the groups of protective deities connected with each of the nine maṇḍalas, beginning with eight animal-headed goddesses linked to the Great Supreme Heruka,⁸ followed by the twenty-eight ogresses of Yangdak,⁹ the guardians of "Mañjuśrī of the Body [aspect],"¹⁰ those of the "Lotus speech,"¹¹ and so forth. These pantheons, found in ancient Nyingma tantras, are not very common in daily worship nowadays. The next text¹² belongs to the same category, but with a stronger insistence, if possible, on the destruction of enemies.¹³

¹ It should be noted that, as in the *dGongs pa zang thal*, no standard *khregs chod* system is presented here. Instead, the system called *nam mkha' gsum sprug* is described (*ibid.*, p. 28).

² #128: pp. 61-105: *bCom ldan 'das bde gshegs sgrub pa bka' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar chen po'i phrin las che ba*. Said to be extracted from the *bse sgrom smug po*, without clarification.

³ #129: pp. 107-111: *Zhi khro bka' brgyad yongs rdzogs kyi bstod byang bkol ba| gong sa mchog* [i.e., the Fifth Dalai Lama] *gi gsan yig tu med kyang lung rgyun yod*.

⁴ #130: pp. 113-123: *sGrub pa chen po bka' brgyad kyi 'dzab byang bkol ba*.

⁵ #131: pp. 125-145: *bKa' brgyad shes bcu'i mdo 'gag*.

⁶ #132: pp. 147-148: "*dBu phyogs lags so*"; #133: pp. 149-150: *Lam rim rtsa ba gsal byed*; #134: pp. 151: *bsNyen sgrub las sbyor gang byed kyang*...

⁷ #135: pp. 153-174: *bKa' brgyad kyi dam can yongs rdzogs sgos bskul| drag po rang byung rang shar gyi pho nya'i sgos bskul 'bring po*.

⁸ P. 154: *che mchog yon tan gyi bka' srung ce sbyang 'bar ma brgyad*.

⁹ P. 158: *yang dag gi srin mo nyi shu rtsa brgyad*.

¹⁰ P. 159: *'jam dpal sku'i bka' srung*, four *ging*, four demons (*bdud*), four suns (*nyi ma*—these seem to replace the "savages," *mon pa*, of the *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* system), for executioners (*shan pa*).

¹¹ P. 162: *de nas padma gsung gi bka' srung dmus long khyi 'brug rnams bskul ba...*

¹² #136: pp. 175-182: *dMod byang bkol ba*.

¹³ P. 176: *sngags 'chang rnal 'byor pa rnams kyi sku dgra bsgral ba'i zhing du gyur pa rnams* :...

The following text¹ appears as a short and probably incomplete sādhana of the Eight Pronouncements. It is followed by a praise² to the nine main deities of the Kagyé maṇḍalas after which we find a short empowerment text,³ a ritual of offering the first portion⁴ to the Sugatas,⁵ and a golden libation to the eight maṭṭkās.⁶

The following text⁷ contains instructions on the fivefold completion phase in the style of the *Guhyasamāja-tantra*. This curious text bears terma marks, but the colophon indicates that it was compiled by one Tantrika Padmavajra “from *The Self-Produced and Self-Arisen Treasure*, by combining [passages] from the tantra, for the sake of future generations.”⁸ It is followed by a quite detailed text⁹ of instructions about “taking the essence” (alchemical fasting). Then comes an additional short sādhana of the Eight Pronouncements,¹⁰ which is followed by a ritual of fire offering,¹¹ a ritual¹² of *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*, which, this time, exhibits the form that became classical in the later Northern Treasures tradition: the six-armed Mahākāla in the center of a very typical group of guardian deities. The corresponding empowerment text follows,¹³ and then there is a rite meant to incite these deities to

¹ #137: pp. 183-186: *rGyud chen le'u nyer drug pa'i le'u bcu gnyis pa sgrub pa chen po'i bsgom khog chung ba.*

² #138: pp. 187-196: *dPal dgu'i bstod pa.*

³ #139: pp. 197-200: *dKyl 'khor du 'jug cing dbang bskur ba sta gon dang bcas pa. Phud.*

⁴ #140: pp. 201-209: *bDe gshegs 'dus pa'i mchod pa phud kyi skong ba 'bring po.*

⁵ #141: pp. 211-219: *Ma mo bdun tshan gyi gser skyems.*

⁶ #142: pp. 221-229: *bKa' brgyad drag po rang byung rang shar gyi rdzogs rim lnga pa.*

⁷ P. 229: *rang byung rang shar gter mngon du phyungs pa sngags 'chang pad-mavajras rgyud las btus te phyi rabs kyi don du bkod pa 'o*]. This text, and perhaps some of the previous and following ones, could be the additions to the cycle by mNga' ris paṇ chen alluded to by the Fifth Dalai Lama in #2 above.

⁸ #143: pp. 221-273: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi bcud len bdud rtsi'i phreng ba yongs rdzogs.*

⁹ #144: pp. 275-280: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi phrin las bsdu pa'i bskyed chog.*

¹⁰ #145: pp. 281-292: *bKa' brgyad sbyin sreg rtsa ba.*

¹¹ #146: pp. 293-299: *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs kyi phrin las.*

¹² #147: pp. 301-307: *bsTan srung yongs rdzogs kyi dbang chog.*

action.¹ It is followed by a lineage prayer² without terma marks that extends down to Rigdzin Pema Trinlé (1640–ca. 1717) with, however, no clearly ascribed author. Then comes a ritual³ for repelling negative forces through hurling tormas ascribed to Nyida Özer.⁴ The subsequent one-page text⁵ is an “invocation of the truth,” and it is followed by two fragments⁶ that seem to be summaries of the contents of the 26-chapter *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen Tantra*. The next text⁷ is a praise to the *Kagyé* deities, which is followed by a compilation of mantras⁸ and a ritual of offerings for the reparation of the samayas.⁹ It is followed by a text with a very curious title, “the garuḍa-riding camel,”¹⁰ presented as an appendix or complement to *The Eight Pronouncements*. It is devised to repel powerful bad omens. The next text is an additional short invocation of the guardian deities.¹¹ Then comes an empowerment ritual for

¹ #148: pp. 309-323: *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs kyi bskul gyi rim pa*.

² #149: pp. 325-332: *Rig 'dzin rgyal ba'i skye rabs sder* | *gsol 'debs tshigs su bcad pa'i mtshan* | *dri med pad dkar bzhad pa*—Not a part of the *gter chos*; author so far unclear.

³ #150: pp. 333-358: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi gtor bzlog lag len don sdeb bklag chog rig 'dzin nyi zla 'od zer gyis bsdebs pa*.

⁴ This is most probably *Rig 'dzin Nyi zla 'od zer*, a *gter ston* who was a disciple of Yol mo *sprul su* Śākya bzang po and one of *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal's masters, and who thus must have been active in the middle of the 16th century. He also played an important role in the transmission of Karma gling pa's revelations (see Cuevas 2003, pp. 121-121 & 125-128).

⁵ #151: p. 359: *Na mo* | *rje btsun rtsa ba dang brgyud par bcas pa'i...*

⁶ #152: pp. 361-363: *Oṃ āḥ hūṃ svā hā* | *oṃ vajra śrī mahākrodha hūṃ...* ; #153: pp. 365-366: *Las rim rtsa ba gsal byed*.

⁷ #154: pp. 367-369: *bsNyen sgrub sbyor gang byed kyang* | *bstod pa 'di yi rgyun du bstod par bya*.

⁸ #155: pp. 371-376: *gTso bo'i gtor khyung gi gshog pa mjug sgro sogs kyi sngags byang*.

⁹ #156: pp. 377-412: *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa las* | *mchod pa phud kyi skong ba*.

¹⁰ #157: pp. 413-418: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi cha lag rnga mong khyung zhon gyi 'debs kha thun mong ma yin pa*.

¹¹ #158: pp. 419-425: *Thugs gsol*. This text is presented in its colophon as a *gter ma* of rGya ston Padma dbang phyug and Guru Chos dbang. There is a short biography of rGya ston Padma dbang phyug in Gu ru bKra shis 1990, pp. 394 sq., which dates this *gter ston* to the time of dPon chen Kun dga' bzang po (d. 1281 according to BDRC)

Garuḍa,¹ followed by a ritual² to guide the conscious principle of a deceased person.

The next text³ is a confession ritual belonging to *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*. The maṇḍala of the guardian deities is getting more complete than in the previous texts, including not only the deities directly connected to Mahākāla, but also all the mundane spirits of Mahādeva's retinue. Then we find⁴ an offering of medicinal substances. It is followed by a "great invocation,"⁵ calling the Kagyé deities to bestow accomplishments and protection. The next text is about the examination of the characteristics of the female partner and offerings to the twelve Tenma goddesses.⁶ It is followed by one more sādhana of *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the Guardians of the Teachings*,⁷ which contains mantras for the thirty chiefs of the arrogant spirits, and a compilation of the mantras of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*,⁸ which in fact includes mantras from many the other Jangter cycles and the main ones from *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.⁹ Then comes a

¹ #159: pp. 427-430: *Rang byung rang shar las khyung gi dbang bskur yongs rdzogs*.

² #160: pp. 431-444: *gNas spar ba'i man ngag*. The indication on page 443 about the treasure chamber in which it was found is perplexing: *zang zang lha brag gi sked bse sgrom smug po'i mdzod kyi nang du mdzod dkar po'i snying po 'di* :, etc. In the final version of the Five Repositories concept, this would allude to the White Eastern Conch-Shell Repository; however, not all of the elements are explicit.

³ #161: pp. 445-457: *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs kyi bskang bshags*.

⁴ #162: pp. 459-464: *sMan mchod*.

⁵ #163: pp. 465-469: *sGrub chen bka' brgyad kyi mnga' gsol ba'i yig chung zur 'debs*.

⁶ #164: pp. 471-476: *Yum brtag pa'i yig chung dang gter gyi srung ma mchod pa*.

⁷ #165: pp. 477-480: *Chos skyong bstan srung yongs rdzogs kyi sgrub thabs*.

⁸ #166: pp. 481-491: *Drag po rang byung rang shar chen po'i rgyud las sngags byang zur du bkol ba*.

⁹ This text would deserve further research, since it bears witness to a full integration of 'Jam dpal tshe bdag among the core Byang gter practices, as it is in the *rDo rje brag lugs*, in a way that explains why ten volumes of the 'Jam dpal tshe bdag are included in CNT. It is not yet fully clear when precisely the Northern Treasures followers also became specialists of this old Yamāntaka system. Although the lineages as presented in modern-day's *rDo rje brag lugs* are generally those passing through 'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1445?-1558?) to his sons mNga' ris pañ chen and Legs ldan rje, it seems that Yol mo sprul sku 01 Śākya bzang po (15th c.) and some of the masters before him in Northern Treasures-connected lineages, perhaps up to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem himself, were already strong practitioners of 'Jam dpal tshe bdag. This would require further clarification in order to

text¹ devised to depart the “messengers,” i.e., to send these spirits with the mission to kill an enemy. The following text² is not a part of the terma, but a synthesis of all the longevity practices of this cycle by Rigdzin Kalzang Pema Wangchuk (1720–1771). It is followed by one more sādhana of the Protectors,³ but, this time, from Nyangral’s terma. The next text⁴ is an instruction about the practice of confession in various Nyingma tantric contexts. The author is not identified. Then comes a text⁵ for protection against hail, which is followed by a text for divination about lifespan.⁶ The precise technique is unclear; it seems to be about the direction in which sparkles appear from a fire. One more short text⁷ is about protection from snow. The volume ends with drawings—models for tormas.⁸



make sense of the discreet Mañjuśrī/Yamāntaka elements in rGod ldem’s biographies and among the works ascribed to him (see below for a description of the commentary of the *’Jam dpal mtshan brjod*).

¹ #167: pp. 493-509: *Drag po rang byung rang shar gyi pho nya sgom bskul ’bring po*.

² #168: pp. 511-517: *bKa’ brgyad rang shar gyi tshe’i phrin las lhan thabs rdo rje’i srog shing*.

³ #169: pp. 519-548: *sGrub chen bka’ brgyad kyi bka’i bstan srung gi sgrub skor| mnga’ bdag myang* [Nyang ral Nyi ma’i ’od zer] *gi gter ma ’o| bkra shis dpal ’bar ’dzam gling du byon*.

⁴ #170: pp. 549-554: *sKong bshags kyi khrigs rim lag len kun tshang|*.

⁵ #171: pp. 555-568: *sGrub chen bka’ brgyad yongs rdzogs kyi ser srung*.

⁶ #172: pp. 569-571: *bKa’ brgyad rang byung rang shar gyi tshe spra brtag pa*. The colophon indicates that the text was extracted from the center of the dark brown chest of boiled leather, without indicating a specific color.

⁷ #173: pp. 573-576: *bKa’ brgyad drag pos kha ba bsrung ba*.

⁸ #174: pp. 577-581: *bKa’ brgyad khro bo rol pa’i gtor ma’i dpe’u ris*.

Chapter 18: *The Heart Practice of the Guru Fierce Vajra Power*¹

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Introduction

 *he Heart Practice*, as it is called for short in the context of the Jangter, is dedicated to Wrathful Padmasambhava. It fills three full volumes (volumes 6-8, 1871 pages in total) of the *Northern Treasures Compilation*, which makes it second in quantity only to the *Eight Pronouncements* cycle. It is perhaps the most complicated of all of Gödem's revelations, for it has many sub-cycles, the interrelationship of which is far from self-evident. A lot of spellbooks have been compiled in it, with no apparent sense of order.

Most texts are said to be extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository of the treasury found in Zangzang Lhadrak, but this is not consistently the case: some are presented as coming from the Brown Central Heart Repository,² and others from the western and northern repositories. Furthermore, parts of this cycle are deeply connected to *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* (*Kadak Rangjung Rangshar*) Dzogchen cycle, which emerged from the eastern compartment of Rigdzin Gödem's discoveries. The Vajravārāhī sub-cycle seems to have some of its parts here and others not only in the *Gongpa Zangthal*, but also in *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen* (not to say anything of its extensions in Tennyi Lingpa's revelations).

The Heart Practice is the one whose unity is the least obvious of all the sections of the Northern Treasures, and it may be that texts that do

¹ *Thugs sgrub rdo rje drag po rtsal*.

² However, the reader has now understood that the phrase *bse sgrom smug po* can refer to either the five-compartmented chest in which all of rGod ldem's *gter chos* were found as a whole or to its central compartment only. In this chapter as in the previous one, and unlike in the *Triple Magical Dagger* chapter, I have not systematically reproduced the colophons. However, as I did in the *Eight Pronouncements* chapter, I have always mentioned any information it may contain about which repository it was found in.

not belong to any particular cycle have been attached to this one for no other reason than the need to place them somewhere.

Many texts of the collection feel more like grimoires, compiling all sorts of magical procedures meant to fight against various types of evils, in some cases without any clear connection to *The Heart Practice*. These parts of the corpus belong to the genre of the “books of spells” described in Sam Van Schaik’s *Buddhist Magic* (2020). According to the “working definition” he provides,¹ we can apply the word “magic” to practices with “this-worldly” aims, involving “rituals (...) characterized by a swift and clear relationship between ritual and result” and taught in “compendiums of spells” that are (more or less) formally distinct from lists of accomplishments gained in mainstream tantric practice. One might further consider standard tantric practice to be somewhere between magic proper (because of its quasi-technical aspect) and the preternatural powers acquired by advanced meditators. The latter can, in fact, be enacted without specific ritual procedures, since they have been obtained by the agent as permanent new capacities.

Besides their presumed utility for the practitioner, these grimoires are not devoid of informative value for the historian, since they implicitly describe the world in which Rigdzin Gödem evolved. While the texts of *The Seven Auspicious Connections* evoke the prospect of a world in which the legitimate monarchy has been restored, those of *The Heart Practice* project the reader into a chaotic universe in which the practitioner must combat various deadly epidemics, protect crops from abnormal weather conditions, hide him or herself and their possessions from approaching bands of brigands, escape poverty, acquire magical clairvoyance to be aware of dangers, and so on. In short, this corpus shows the situation that the practitioner might face if Rigdzin Gödem’s magico-politico-religious enterprise with the kings of Gunthang failed and the stability of the realm began to unravel.² It might also be of interest to practitioners on their way to the hidden lands, for it is less

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 40–42.

² Perhaps future research will reveal interesting parallels regarding the political agendas of 14th century rNying ma masters, with Klong chen pa’s (1308–1364) great expectations—and great disappointments—in connection to his patron ’Bri gung *sgom chen* Kun rin, also involving the restoration of various temples (Zhwa’i lha khang, etc.). See the forthcoming English adaptation of Arguillère 2007 for updated details about Klong chen pa’s projects, and their failure.

ritually complex than *The Eight Pronouncements*, containing all sorts of expedients for various emergencies that travelers might encounter in unfamiliar areas.

In principle, *The Heart Practice* could be considered a sub-cycle of *The Eight Pronouncements*, since Dorjé Drakpo Tsal is the form corresponding to the Guru Vidyādhara¹ aspect of the Kagyé, with his maṇḍala in the southwest corner of the “maṇḍala of maṇḍalas” of *The Eight Pronouncements*. However, as already mentioned, in the Jangter tradition as it exists today, this practice is understood as the “secret guru yoga,” in the context of a standard practice curriculum. In the relevant chapter above, we have also presented a short passage from *The Seven Auspicious Connections* that uses the name *The Heart Practice* to evoke the innermost practice of Padmasambhava. Therefore, it is even possible that it may have originally belonged to *The Seven Auspicious Connections*, at least in an embryonic form.

From a historical perspective, both *The Heart Practice* and *The Eight Pronouncements* are descendants of both Nyangral’s and Chöwang’s revelations.² From the biographies of lamas belonging to Rigdzin Gödem’s time, we know that these tertöns’ wrathful Padmasambhava cycles were still popular at that period. Longchenpa even devoted some of his compositions to Nyangral’s *Wrathful Guru*.³

¹ *Gu ru rig ’dzin* is, in a way, the ninth of the *Eight Pronouncements*, necessary for a presentation of the entire system in the form of a ninefold maṇḍala. This is another aspect of the complex overlapping of the various cycles in the Northern Treasures. Further research on the Byang gter might isolate a deity that appears in more than one cycle (rDo rje drag po rtsal, Vajravārāhī, Vajrakīla, Hayagrīva...) and treat it monographically. Then it would become clear whether it is actually the same deity whose practices are scattered in various cycles from which they could be put together as a coherent whole. This seems to be the case with rDo rje drag po rtsal or Vajravārāhī. In other cases, on the contrary, these are completely different contexts that should be kept separate. This may be the case with Hayagrīva, whose form in the *bKa’ brgyad* and in the *rTen ’brel chos bdun*, for example, seem to be different and unrelated.

² Nyang ral’s cycle, *Gu ru drag po dmar po bde gshegs ’dus pa*, is documented, e.g., RT-A, vol. 17, pp. 271-413. Short samples of Gu ru Chos dbang’s cycle, *Gu ru drag po karma thod phreng rtsal dar nag beng can*, are presented in the same volume of this edition of the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, pp. 415-437, which are incidentally followed by a selection of rGod ldem’s *Thugs sgrub* materials, pp. 437-505.

³ These were not included in the recent (2009) compilation of Klong chen pa’s *Complete Works*, but there are only good reasons to believe in their authenticity.

Cycles devoted to Padmasambhava in a wrathful form have in common to be presented as distillations of the *Eight Pronouncements* systems:¹ in most of them, Padmasambhava is visualized in a wrathful form with all the Kagyé deities in his body.² This general structure, which continues to occur in recent termas for the practice of Padmasambhava in a wrathful form,³ seems to stem from Nyangral's revelations. Rigdzin Gödem's *The Heart Practice* is in that sense one of the major cycles within what can be regarded as a literary genre of its own—that of the terma practices for wrathful Padmasambhava.

Iconographically, in the three cycles revealed by Nyangral, Chöwang, and Gödem, Padmasambhava appears in a wrathful form,

They can be found in earlier editions of his *Miscellanea* (*gSung thor bu*), e.g., *Nyang gter bla ma drag sgrub gsal ba'i me long*, in *Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer* 1995 (*gSung thor bu*), vol. 1, pp. 472–477; *Phrin sgrub kyi bu yig thugs rje'i lcags kyu*, in the same volume, pp. 477–514.

¹ Cf., e.g., *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa'i phrin las 'bring po hūm gyi phrin las dpa' bo 'bru gcig gi sgrub thabs*, in *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 6, p. 322: *sgrub chen bka' brgyad 'dus pa yin* .

² Yamāntaka is visualized in the head; Hayagrīva in the throat; Yang dag he ru ka (or Vajra Heruka/Vajrapāṇi) in the heart. The placement of the other deities is more variable: Amṛtakunḍalī (or sometimes Vajravārāhī, or even Vajrakīla) in the navel; Che mchog he ru ka, or sometimes Yakṣa me dbal at the level of the sexual organ (Che mchog he ru ka can be above the main figure's head, as the *rigs kyi bdag po*, which seems to be required to have the eight Herukas complete). Two more deities are then placed in the two thighs, e.g., *Dregs pa spyi 'dul* and *sTobs ldan nag po*.

³ In, e.g., the revelations of the later Northern Treasures master 'Khor gdong *gter chen* Nus ldan rdo rje (1802–1864, see Arguillère 2018b), there are two complete cycles for the practice of wrathful Padmasambhava in the form *rDo rje gro lod*—a form more typical of later termas from Ratna gling pa onwards). One of these two forms is called *Bla ma bka' brgyad* and the main deity's (*rDo rje gro lod* in union with Vajravārāhī) body includes all the maṇḍalas of the *bKa' brgyad*. This is not typically the case with peaceful forms of Padmasambhava, which are more commonly connected to the “Eight Vidyādhara.” The two themes or groups of themes are indeed connected, since the Eight Vidyādhara are presented as the archetype masters of the Eight Pronouncements. However, in the iconography, we would typically get peaceful Padmasambhava, sometimes surrounded by his eight forms (*mtshan brgyad*) with the Eight Vidyādhara above his head, while wrathful Padmasambhava would include the main deities or even the complete maṇḍalas of the *Eight Pronouncements* within his body. We have here indeed in both cases a prototype, which seems to appear with Nyang ral's *gter chos*, with many iterations in successive termas without deep alteration of the basic structure (iconography, ritual, perhaps even the general topics of the cycles).

with one face and two hands, the right one always waving a vajra (simple or double) in the sky, while the left holds something else (a scorpion in Nyangral's cycle; a skull-cup in Chöwang's; a bell on the hip in Gödem's). However, Nyangral's main deity is dark red, Chöwang's is dark green, and Gödem's is dark blue. While Nyangral's wrathful Padmasambhava is half-naked as a Heruka, Gödem's, like Chöwang's, wears a dark cloak.¹ In those various systems, one identifies with wrathful Padmasambhava who has the ability to command the protectors and the local spirits that he subdued and bound under oath precisely through displaying such a wrathful form.

It is not uncommon in Nyingma rituals for protective deities (*srung ma*) to visualize oneself in the form of wrathful Padmasambhava in order to be able to control them *in persona Padmasambhavae capitis*, so to speak. A notable feature of *The Heart Practice*, however, is that this cycle, unlike the others in the Northern Treasures, does not have its own protector rituals, although parts of the treasure are said to be entrusted to Ekajaṭī and others to Dorjé Lekpa. This may indicate that at some point it was a sub-cycle of *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*. This would make sense in a number of ways: first, because the Wrathful Guru is as such, so to say, the ninth of the Eight Pronouncements; second, because some sub-cycles (typically the Vajravārāhī one) are interspersed between *The Heart Practice* and *The Eight Pronouncements*; and third, because this absence of rituals dedicated to protective deities would then be explained by the presence of the large sub-cycle, *The Fully Complete [Assembly] of the*

¹ As for the symbolism of this cloak, cf. *Rig 'dzin chen pos mdzad pa'i rtsags stod* (in *op. cit.*, vol. 6, p. 420—an interesting text, since it is presented as rGod ldem's composition and not as a revelation): *zab chen ber smug sku la gsol ba ni | khamsgsum srid gsum dbang du bsdu pa'i rtags*). In later *gter ma* literature, the genre seems to branch into three distinct sub-systems: one in which Padmasambhava tends to increasingly assume a Heruka form (naked, with three faces, six arms and four legs); a second one in which he is fully dressed, with one face, two arms and two legs; and a third, sometimes called *Gu ru drag po kī la ya*, where he appears as a Heruka with one face, two arms, and a *phur bu* instead of legs. In the later period, the second form seems to be represented mostly by cycles devoted to rDo rje gro lod, while specific forms not included among the eight forms (*mtshan brgyad*), like that of rDo rje drag po rtsal in Gödem's *The Heart Practice* or the one found in Chöwang's cycle, *Gu ru drag po Karma thod phreng rtsal*, perhaps tend to disappear.

Guardians of the Teachings,¹ in *The Eight Pronouncements, Self-Produced and Self-Arisen*. Since both of these tantric cycles—*The Heart Practice* and *The Eight Pronouncements*—also contain allusions to the *Gongpa Zangthal* (which, incidentally, includes other segments of the Vajravārāhī cycle), it is not impossible that they were originally intended as a more or less integrated whole, in the same way as *The Seven Auspicious Connections*, *Liberating All Migrants*, and *The Heir of the Vidyādhara*s (as well as, perhaps, *The Empowerment for Enlightened Behavior*) may all have stemmed from the same root.

This idealized form of the Guru seems to be a combination of Padmasambhava and Vajrapāṇi, with a strong connection to either Vajrakīla (the latter being the form Padmasambhava assumed to tame all gods and demons of Tibet) or, alternately, Hayagrīva (there are variant forms of Dorjé Drakpo Tsal with a tiny green horse head above his own). In the Jangter variant, Padmasambhava as Dorjé Drakpo Tsal seems more specifically to be (1) the “master” aspect of the Kagyé cycle; (2) the son of Vajrakīla;² and (3) a deity combining Vajrapāṇi,³ Hayagrīva⁴ and Garuḍa.⁵ Dorjé Drakpo Tsal is presented in union with Tröma Nakmo,⁶ black (or dark-blue) Vajravārāhī, who is the object of the main sub-cycle of the collection.⁷

The Heart Practice as a whole can be very roughly summarized as

¹ *bsTan srung yongs rdzogs*.

² In a few texts of the corpus, rDo rje drag po rtsal is presented as Vajrakīla’s son, e.g., *rDo rje phur bu thugs gsang ba’i phyi rgyud : de rnams kun gyi rtsa ba’i rgyud : drag po rang byung rang shar yod* : (CNT, vol. 7, pp. 615-634), p. 619: rDo rje drag po rtsal emanates from Vajrakīla’s heart while Khros ma nag mo emanates from that of ’Khor lo rgyas ’debs ma. On the next page, the *bKa’ brgyad* deities further emanate from Padmasambhava, himself an emanation of Vajrakīla. The myth is not fully organized: it must be remembered that the largest part of the *bKa’ thang* cycles is contemporary or posterior to Rig ’dzin rGod ldem and that the framework Padmasambhava narrative, for him, was surely Nyang ral’s *bKa’ thang zangs gling ma* only.

³ E.g., *’Gong po ar gtar mnan pa’i bskul* (in CNT, vol. 6, pp. 623-627), p. 624: *rang nyid o rgyan seng ge sgra : phyag rdor nyid dang dbyer med bsam* :...

⁴ E.g., *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las them med snying khrag gi dwangs ma gu ru drag po spyen mang gi sgrub thabs* (vol. 6, pp. 91-98), pp. 92-93: *dbu’i gtsug gtor na rta mgo gsum gyen du ’khyil ba* :...

⁵ Padmasambhava in his wrathful forms is explicitly assimilated to Vajrapāṇi or Hayagrīva, but not to Garuḍa, which he rather seems to control.

⁶ Khros ma nag mo.

⁷ CNT, vol. 7, pp. 363-502. There are also a few texts featuring a red Vajravārāhī.

a complete system of tantric practice meant to essentialize the features of the Mahāyoga as a distillation of the Kagyé, but it is also complete as regards the completion phase, especially in sub-cycles connected to black Vajravārāhī. It is also replete with all sorts of magical rites devised to face all necessities. A text included in the cycle, *The Beacon of the Crucial Quintessence*,¹ connects it with the Dzogchen cycle *Kadak Rangjung Rangshar* and is even full of allusions to Thögal, referring to the *Gongpa Zangthal* more than once, albeit in occurrences that may allude more to the meaning of the phrase than to the textual corpus of that title.² This text was further developed by Terdak Lingpa and Rigdzin Pema Trinlé³ in a way that integrates the two Dzogchen cycles with the practice of wrathful Padmasambhava.

¹ *Yang tig gces sgron* or *Thugs sgrub snying po blangs pa'i phyir : yang tig gces pa'i sgron me yod : 'di smar 'khrid mngon sum gtan la 'babs pa'i rgyud*. In CNT, vol. 7, pp. 537-559.

² E.g., vol. 7, p. 649, l. 2, or, more explicitly, a mention in a text of vol. 8, the *Zab lam bde stong rgya mtsho mthong bas yid dga' bya ba gu ru'i thugs sgrub kyi gsang khrid* (pp. 215-235), p. 216, which describes the sequence of the practice: *thugs sgrub bsnyen bsgrub rtags rdzogs nas : khregs chod thod rgal nyams len sogs : bog 'don rtsa rlung man ngag 'di : rdo rje phag mo'i zab rgya'i bcud : snying gi bu la chig brgyud kyis : de yang mchog gi bde ba chen po sngon* (sic for *mngon*) *du byed pa'i lam : che mchog drag po rtsal gyi thun mong ma yin rdzogs pa'i rim pa : mkha' 'gro zab pa'i rgya drug dang : kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal du ston pa'i yang snying* :, etc.—which I understand as meaning that one should practice first rDo rje drag po rtsal for the development phase, then the dGongs pa zang thal for khregs chod and thod rgal, with Vajravārāhī's completion phase to enhance/accelerate (*bog 'don*) the practice. It is possible that this *gsang khrid* is a revelation of a later tertön, perhaps bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535); this requires further research. This would be worth inquiring, since the mentions of other cycles are the reason for regarding *The Heart Practice* as the latest of Gödem's revelations: if these allusions appeared only in later additions, this argument would lose most of its value in a tentative chronological setting of Gödem's works.

³ *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 43, is almost entirely filled with Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las' writings on *The Heart Practice*. The two first texts, *Thugs sgrub yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris gzhung don rab gsal* (pp. 1-82) and *Yang tig gces sgron khrid kyi zin bris bsdu pa padma phrin las kyis mdzad pa* (pp. 83-92), present a practice curriculum in which a quite simple sādhanā of wrathful Padmasambhava leads one higher to pure rDzogs chen instructions mostly derived from the *Ka dag rang byung rab shar*. On the *Yang tig gces sgron*, see Stéphane Arguillère 2022b, pp. 270-272.

**More Detailed Description
First Volume (CNT, vol. 6)**

The Heart Practice presents itself¹ as having twenty-five sub-parts. Later editors of the collection have attempted to apply this scheme in order to make sense of the cycle and its contents: the edition we are following starts with a text written by Śākya Yarphel² in the nineteenth century that identifies these twenty-five sub-parts. However, this structure is both too complicated for a preliminary survey of the corpus and difficult to follow in the collection. As mentioned in the introduction of this section, *The Heart Practice* is made up of a large collection of texts, most of which are very short, arranged apparently haphazardly, with many autonomous sub-cycles, which makes it difficult to describe.

After Śākya Yarphel's introduction (#1), the collection starts with catalogs and narratives:³ #2 is the catalog by the Fifth Dalai Lama, #3 is the above-mentioned catalog⁴ from the terma itself, #4 is a narrative about the cycle's origins,⁵ #5 is another historical narrative considering the Guru as indissociable from Vajrakīla, etc. Then we find a large section devoted to

¹ *gTer gyi them byang gsal ba'i sgron me*, in vol. 6, pp. 29-33.

² Shā kya yar 'phel (gNas chung oracle, second half of the 19th century), *Byang gter thugs sgrub drag po rtсал gyi rtсал ba'i chos tshan gyi dkar chag thams cad mkhyen gzigs lnga pa'i gsan yig nas zur du bkod pa*, in vol. 6, pp. 1-28. On this figure whose role for Byang gter should not be overlooked (for example, he had block prints carved for the *dGongs pa zang thal*), see Bell 2021 (passim).

³ Vol. 6, pp. 1-64. #1: *Byang gter thugs sgrub drag po rtсал gyi rtсал ba'i chos tshan gyi dkar chag thams cad mkhyen gzigs lnga pa'i gsan yig nas zur du bkod ba*, pp. 1-28; #2: *gTer gyi them byang gsal ba'i sgron me*, pp. 29-33; #3: *Thugs sgrub gsum gyi lo rgyus*, pp. 35-49; #4: *Thugs sgrub rtсал ba brgyud pa'i lo rgyus*, pp. 51-57; #5: *rDo rje thugs kyi sgrub pa'i lo rgyus*, pp. 59-63; #6: *Byang khog lus dang dpe mthun pa'i sku gsung thugs kyi gnad 'dus*, pp. 65-70.

⁴ *Thems byang*.

⁵ #3, *Thugs sgrub gsum gyi lo rgyus*. This text is important because it presents the relationship between Padmasambhava and Khri strong lde'u btsan in some detail, with elements worthy of comparison with the *bKa' thang* literature. The following one, #4, is also significant as it clearly describes Rig 'dzin rGod ldem as the rebirth of sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms, among other things, and links the whole cycle to the needs of the Gung thang kings. As mentioned earlier in this volume, the idea that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's status as a *gter ston* is explained by his past life as sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms does not seem to be very central in the earlier biographical materials. Therefore, this text is important.

the ritual practice of wrathful Padmasambhava,¹ mostly in the form described above. The first group displays very peculiar mantras, the main ones of which are made only of iterations of the syllable *hūm* in various numbers (always uneven: 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 mainly). In comparison to other cycles of wrathful Padmasambhava practice, here one finds a strong focus on the syllable *hūm*, with both magical and contemplative aspects, which appears to be a specific feature of *The Heart Practice*. There is also a very curious “astral” form of wrathful Padmasambhava holding the sun and the moon, with his body studded with many eyes (#10). This first series of practices is mainly concerned with the development phase and not with any form of inner yoga. This section is concluded by the required empowerments² and ancillary “activities.”³

¹ CNT, vol. 6, pp. 65-137. #7: *Tsitta snying dang dpe mthun pa'i gsang ba rin chen 'dus pa*, pp. 71-78; #8: *Gu ru gsang ba'i sgrub pa zangs mdzod nas byon pa*, pp. 79-85; #9: *gSang ba rin chen 'dus pa'i las sbyor*, pp. 87-90; #10: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las them med snying khrag gi dwangs ma gu ru drag po spyang mang gi sgrubs thabs*, pp. 91-98; #11: *bsNyen pa lam du gzud pa'i thabs gnad them rnam grangs brgyad*, pp. 99-107; #12: *Hūm gi 'dren thabs nyer gcig ye shes mtsho rgyal gyis mdzad pa*, pp. 109-112; #13: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi srung 'khor gyi man ngag shin tu zab pa*, pp. 113-118; #14: *Thugs sgrub kyi srung bzlog bka' rgya ma*, pp. 119-122; #15: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las ngag 'grol nus pa bskyed thabs*, pp. 123-128; #16: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las ngag la ngar gzud man ngag*, pp. 129-132; #17: *sGo gsum lha dang dam 'dres dus rtags mthong dngos grub blangs thabs*, pp. 133-137.

² Vol. 6, pp. 139-314. #18: *Las can smin grol lam bstan phyir gsang ba'i dbang bskur man ngag yod*, pp. 139-153 (said to be extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #19: *Byin rlabs thugs rje'i dbang lnga*, pp. 155-159; #20: *Drag po thugs kyi sgrub skor las dkyil 'khor gyi cho ga'i rim pa las sngon 'gro sa chog*, pp. 161-168; #21: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi dkyil 'khor gyi thig rtsa*, pp. 169-173; #22: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi dkyil 'khor gyi rgyan bkod pa*, pp. 175-178; #23: *dKyil 'khor du 'jug cing dbang bskur ba sta gon dang bcas pa*, pp. 179-212; #24: *Drag po thugs kyi sgrub pa'i sngon 'gro'i lhan thabs skyabs 'gro sems bskyed sdom bzung bkol ba*, pp. 213-216; #25: *Gu ru'i thugs sgrub kyi dbang gi chu bo*, pp. 217-234; #26: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi gtor dbang*, pp. 235-238 (extracted from the Red Western Copper Repository); #27: *dBang lung zhu ba'i man ngag zab khyad can*, pp. 239-241; #28: *Dam tshig dbye ba'i cho ga*, pp. 243-259 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #29: *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi dbang gi sta gon dang 'jug pa rig 'dzin bkra bzang ba'i phyag len*, pp. 261-271; #30: *bDe gshegs kun 'dus kyi sgom byang gsal ba'i sgron me*, pp. 273-288; #31: *Thugs sgrub kyi tshogs 'khor rgyas pa'i chog bsgrigs gu ru mthing ka'i tshogs 'khor rgyas pa'i chog khrigs*, pp. 289-307; #32: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi dbang gi bum sgrub*, pp. 309-314.

³ Vol. 6, pp. 315-458. #33: *Thugs sgrub kyi gter sbed cho ga dang dngos grub bskul ba*, pp. 315-320; #34: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa'i phrin las 'bring po drag*

Aside from a first group of grimoires¹ in which many texts prescribing magical rites are compiled without a clear structure, a first sub-cycle appears in vol. 6, which concerns the construction of a set of three shrines (upper, middling and lower) at Mt. Trazang and the benefits of these temples for Tibet, provided that the proper rites are performed.² The upper temple is devoted to Padmasambhava and it seems that the *sādhana*s contained in the previous parts of the volume are those that must be performed there. Then, in a shrine built at medium height, rites of Vajrakīla must be performed. They are not presented in great detail, but we can suppose that one may use *The Triple Magic*

po hūm gi phrin las dpa' bo 'bru gcig gi sgrub thabs, pp. 321-345 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #35: *Las gzhung rtsa tho thugs sgrub kyi phrin las kyi sa bcaad dang cho ga'i bar them*s, pp. 347-350; #36: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa'i kha skongs phrin las skor las byin 'bebs*, pp. 351-363; #37: *Mahāguru gsang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa'i phrin las chen po*, pp. 365-390; #38: *bDe gshegs kun 'dus kyi phrin las chen mo zhi ba'i sgom byang*, pp. 391-398; #39: *Thugs sgrub kyi tshogs 'khor rgyas pa'i chog bsgrigs ku ru mthing ka'i tshogs 'khor rgyas pa'i chog khrigs*, pp. 399-407; #40: *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi bskang gso*, pp. 409-414 [pages 415-418 do not exist in this volume of CNT]; #41: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las rig 'dzin chen pos mdzad pa'i rtags bstod*, pp. 419-421; #42: *Thugs sgrub 'dzab bstod*, pp. 423-427; #43: *dByangs 'dren lugs rig pa hūm la skyon pa'i dbyangs rta*, pp. 429-431; #44: *Thugs sgrub kyi 'dzab dgongs chung ba*, pp. 433-435; #45: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las spyod lam rgyun gyi rnal 'byor*, pp. 437-440; #46: *dKon mchog spyi bskul*, pp. 441-445; #47: *Thugs sgrub hūm gi bde gshegs spyi bskul*, pp. 447-453; #48: *bDe gshegs spyi bskul chung ba*, pp. 455-458.

¹ Vol. 6, pp. 459-516. #49: *Chos skyong bskul ba rin chen gzhal yas ma*, pp. 459-466; #50: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las rgyas pa'i sbyin sreg*, pp. 467-469; #51: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las dbang gi sbyin sreg*, pp. 471-473; #52: *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi sbyin sreg ye shes rab 'bar*, pp. 475-499 (extracted from the Red Western Copper Repository); #53: *Me pra gsal ba'i sgron me*, pp. 501-508; #54: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las drag po'i hom gyi chas 'jug*, pp. 509-516.

² #55: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las rdo rje phur pa'i mnan sreg 'phang gsum*, pp. 517-523; #56: *Nang nub mchod pa'i rgyun bzung phyir don bstod sngags kyi las rim*, pp. 525-530; #57: *Bod kham bde la 'god pa'i phyir las tshogs rin chen sdong po*, pp. 531-545 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #58: *gNas chen byin 'bebs kyi dbu phyogs*, pp. 547-553. For a description and prophecies about the three temples to be built in Ri bo bKra bzang, see especially pp. 531-553.

Dagger.¹

Then begins a secondary sub-cycle on Vajravidāraṇa,² a form of Vajrapāṇi. On the one hand, this surely is the practice to be performed in the lower shrine at Riwo Trazang, dedicated to Vajrapāṇi. But on the other hand, this collection about Vajravidāraṇa branches into another sub-cycle focusing either on Vajrapāṇi or on the Black Garuḍa of Ritual Activities,³ an uncommon, nine-headed form especially devised as

¹ This is also why I present *The Heart Practice* after *The Triple Magical Dagger*. However, *The Heart Practice* includes a specific text connected to Vajrakīla (#55 above) with a ritual for casting a spell on an enemy.

² rDo rje rnam 'joms. #59: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las rdo rje rnam 'joms rtsa ba'i sgrub thabs*, pp. 555-560; #60: *rDo rje rnam par 'joms pa'i sgrub thabs*, pp. 561-569; #61: *rDo rje rnam 'joms sgrub pa'i phrin las*, pp. 571-582; #62: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las rdo rje rnam 'joms sgrub thabs bag chags stobs sbyong*, pp. 583-603 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #63: *sKu gsung thugs kyi gdul bya (thugs rje'i gdul bya mthar rgyas phyir sku gsung thugs kyi gdul bya yod them can bcu gcig pa)*, pp. 605-612 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #64: *Bod kyi nang rme bsrung ba'i phyir 'gong bo ar la gtad pa yod them can bcu gnyis*, pp. 613-617; #65: *Gong po kha bsgyur*, pp. 619-622 (extracted from the Red Western Copper Repository); #66: *Gong po ar gtad mnan pa'i bskul*, pp. 623-627; #67: *Sa nad gnyan nad 'joms pa'i phyir nad bdag stobs 'joms man ngag*, pp. 629-640; #68: *Nad bdag stobs 'joms lo rgyus*, pp. 641-652. Note (p. 649) the phrase “Four Repositories” (*mdzod bzhi*) in the description of the Zang zang lha brag treasure. As we have seen, this is not an isolated occurrence. It seems that the theory of the Five Repository has evolved from a previous version in which the *bse sgrom smug po* has four chambers (no central one) to the fivefold version that is reminiscent of the fivefold casket discovered some 50 years earlier by Rin chen gling pa. #69: *Nad bdag stobs 'joms kyi mdos chog sngon bskal ma mkha' 'gro'i spyen 'dren gyer glud rabs gzu dpang zor dam btsan bskul ba gshegs skyems bcas*, pp. 653-659; #70: *Thugs sgrub kyi cha lag nad bdag stobs 'joms kyi gyer glud rabs dang bcas pa*, pp. 660-670 (perhaps an appendix of #69; extracted from the Black Northern Iron Repository).

³ *Las kyi khyung nag*. The series Garuḍa-Vajrapāṇi-Hayagrīva is a very standard set; but the insertion of Vajrakīla in the place in which Hayagrīva would be expected is uncommon. This Garuḍa corpus (pp. 681-715) includes eight texts: #71: *Bya khyung nag po'i sgrub thabs dang gtor 'bul*, pp. 681-684 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #72: *Las kyi khyung nag byung tshal lo rgyus*, pp. 685-688; #73: *rDo rje khyung gi lo rgyus*, pp. 689-692; #74: *Khyung gi sgrom rim dang rtsa ba'i sngags byang gi them*, pp. 693-696; #75: *gNyan llog gi rims nad bsrung ba dang gsang ba'i man ngag*, pp. 697-505 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #76: *Bya khyung nag po'i sdud spur bsad pa'i sngags*, pp. 707-709; #77: *Khyung nag 'khor lo'i bri yig*, pp. 711-713; #78: *Khyung gi 'khor lo'i bca' thabs*, pp. 715-717.

an antidote to a series of illnesses that will proliferate “in the end of time.” The remainder of vol. 6¹ is devoted to ritual and para-medical texts against various illnesses, with a strong focus on the “illness of the Nyen spirits,”² a violent ailment which might well be the plague. Indeed, it was in the mid-fourteenth century that the “Black Death” ravaged Asia and Europe, although there is little to no evidence of its presence in Tibet.

Second Volume (CNT, vol. 7)

This theme is continued in vol. 7, where it is followed by another series of compendiums of magic procedures,³ beginning with “scrolls” of various colors (blue, white, yellow) that are somewhere between medicine and magic, all implying medicinal components, but with an aspect akin to divination in the diagnosis practices. However, the fifth text (#86)⁴ expresses the idea that there are new illnesses due to the degeneration of time, which cannot be cured by old medicine. Thus, new remedies are required, which are revealed by Padmasambhava. All these texts, despite this prophetic character, look similar to standard Tibetan medical literature, describing diagnosis procedures, diets, *materia medica*, preparations, etc.

Then comes a small sub-cycle⁵ devoted to the protection of people

¹ #79: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las rdo rje khrab rings kyi bsrung ba*, pp. 719-739; #80: *rDo rje khrab ring gi cha lag bu bdun zhes bya ba*, pp. 741-745; #81: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las gso dpyad sman gyi rtsa ba*.

² *gNyan nad*.

³ CNT, vol. 7, pp. 1-60, ten texts: #82: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa las shog dril ngon po*, pp. 1-4; #83: *Shog dril dkar po*, pp. 5-8 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #84: *Shog dril ser po*, pp. 9-12; #85: *sNang gsal sgron me'i shog dril*, pp. 13-16; *Las sman gyi man ngag gnyan tshad bcos thabs*, pp. 17-23 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #86: *Thugs sgrub nad rnams kun 'joms srung ba'i rgyal po*, pp. 25-33; #87: *Srung ba'i kha byang rigs gsum mgon po'i srung ba mig nad srung thabs*, pp. 35-40; #88: *sMan gyi lha mo lcam dral du sgrub pa'i thabs*, pp. 41-46; #89: *Drang srong a mo li'i sgrub pa*, pp. 47-50; #90: *Thugs sgrub drag po rang byung rang shar gyi cha lag za yig bsrung ba mdog dmar*, pp. 51-54 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #91: *sDe dpon nang 'thab zhi byed pa'i thugs rje byams pa'i man ngag*, pp. 55-60.

⁴ Vol. 7, p. 20.

⁵ Vol. 7, pp. 61-111, seven texts. #92: *Dug lnga gtan 'joms ye shes lnga ldan*, pp. 61-69; #93: *Thugs sgrub kyi man ngag zab mo*, pp. 71-77; #94: *Lam 'phrang 'jigs*

and goods from thieves, beasts, and various demons. The context is also that of degenerate times, but with more references to a warlike era in which one can be killed and robbed at any time. Then comes a text¹ about ritual fasting that includes instructions for “taking the essence,”² which is followed by rituals to attract luck,³ to ward against inclement weather,⁴ and even to prepare fertilizers.⁵ These are followed by a series of texts meant to protect from dangers in wartime⁶ and a first series of wealth rituals connected to Jambhala.⁷

Then begins the famous sub-cycle *A Longevity Practice: The Iron Stalk*,⁸ which largely contributed to the reputation of the Northern

pa bsrung ba'i phyir lcags sgrog 'dul ba'i man ngag, pp. 79-84 (strangely presented as a Yamāntaka tantra, a rare occurrence of this deity in the Byang gter corpus); #95: *Yul phyogs lung pa rang nyid bsrung ba'i sgrib shing*, pp. 85-87; #96: *sGrib shing zhes bya ba*, pp. 89-93; #97: *gSang mtshan thugs kyi sgrub pa'i las mtha' nor phyugs god kha bsrung ba jag chings sgrib shing dang bcas pa*, pp. 95-97; #98: *Bal mo'i jag chings lcags mdzod nas byon pa*, pp. 99-111 (extracted from the Black Northern Iron Repository; rich in uncommon narrative material).

¹ #99: *bDud rtsi'i sdeb sbyor rkang mgyogs dang bcas pa zangs mdzod nas byon pa*, in vol. 7, pp. 113-127. Its title indicates it was extracted from the Red Western Copper Repository.

² *bCud len*.

³ *Phywa*. #100: *Las tshogs rin chen khang bu las phywa 'phrin nor bu mchog rgyal*, in vol. 7, pp. 129-153.

⁴ #101: *Thugs sgub kyi las tshogs rin chen khang bu'i gdams skor las ser srung gnam lcags gur khang*, pp. 155-205; #102: *Sad srung man ngag skor zab par gdams pa*, pp. 207-223.

⁵ #103: *Lud sbyor 'dod ldan sogs*, pp. 225-230.

⁶ Four texts, pp. 231-250. #104: *dMag dpung mtshon cha bsrung ba'i phyir go cha brgyad kyi man ngag them can bcu bdun pa*, pp. 231-237; #105: *mTshon gyi bskal pa zhi phyir gnod par 'dogs pa'i srung ba sngags byang bcas*, pp. 239-243; #106: *Go cha brgyad kyi 'khor lo'i 'bri yig lugs gnyis las mtshon srung 'khor lo 'bri thabs*, pp. 245-248; #107: *Go cha brgyad kyi man ngag las mtshon srung*, pp. 249-250.

⁷ Two texts, pp. 251-268. #108: *'Dod pa'i yon tan blang ba'i phyir las tshogs rin chen char 'bebs them can bco brgyad pa*, pp. 251-256 (extracted from the Red Western Copper Repository); #109: *Thems med la lo rgyus dang dzam bha la ljang gu'i rtsa sgrub gnyis*, pp. 257-268. The allusion to the Red Western Copper Repository may confirm that these Jambhala materials originally belonged to *The Seven Auspicious Connections*, as hypothesized above.

⁸ *Tshe sgrub lcags sdong ma*, eight texts in vol. 7, pp. 269-348. #110: *Tshe sgrub lcags sdong ma'i them byang rnal 'byor tshe srog bsrung ba'i phyir phyi nang gsang ba'i tshe sgrub*, pp. 269-271; #111: *Tshe sgrub lcags kyi sdong po las phyi sgrub rin chen bum pa*, pp. 273-278; #112: *Nang sgrub lcags kyi sdong po dang*

Treasures. *The Iron Stalk* is a long-life practice of Amitāyus (presented as Padmasambhava's *saṃbhogakāya* aspect), which was for centuries one of the favorite systems for promoting longevity among the Nyingmapas, probably because it is thanks to it that Thangtong Gyalpo reputedly obtained an extraordinary lifespan.

It is followed by two texts¹ giving the key to decipher the ḍākinī glyphs, presented—in *silentio*—as parts of *The Iron Stalk*. These are alphabets in which to code Tibetan script, with rules for the combinations of letters. However, they prove difficult to apply to the ḍākinī script actually occurring in various parts of the terma, most probably because they have been repeatedly copied by generations of scribes who did not bother to learn the system and correct its deviations.

Then we find the large Vajravārāhī sub-cycle,² which contains the

dbang yig bcas, pp. 279-285; #113: *gSang sgrub nam mkha'i rdo rje*, pp. 287-292 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #114: *Yang gsang hrīḥ gcig ma*, pp. 293-297; #115: *Tshe'i 'khor lo bri thabs*, pp. 299-302; #116: *Nang longs spyod rdzogs sku la brten nas tshe sgrub pa mdzod dbus ma nas byon pa*, pp. 303-323 (despite the title, there is no clear explanation of how to understand *mdzod dbus ma* in context); #117: *Tshe sgrub bdud rtsi bcud len mdzod dbus ma na sa byon pa*, pp. 325-348 (same remark as for the previous text). For more on *The Iron Stalk*, see Shinga 2017a, 2020, and 2024 and Ducher 2024, pp. 183-187.

¹ #118: *Mus long mig 'byed lde mig*, in vol. 7, pp. 349-353 and #119: *Yi ge'i lde mig*, pp. 355-361.

² 24 texts in vol. 7, pp. 363-502. #120: *mKha' 'gro gsang ba'i sgrub thabs*, pp. 363-368; #121: *dMar mo dbang sdud kyi sgrub thabs mkha' 'gro*, pp. 369-373 (extracted from the Red Western Copper Repository, which may mean, in connection with the red color of the deity, awkward in context, that this is the Vajravārāhī practice that was supposed to be found in *The Seven Auspicious Connections*); #122: *dMar mo las kyi mkha' 'gro'i sgrub pa*, pp. 375-378; #123: *sNying tig gsang ba'i sgrub thabs nang sgrub gtsug rgyan*, pp. 379-384; #124: *rDo rje khros ma nag mo gsang ba'i thugs kyi sgrub thabs*, pp. 385-391; #125: *Las tshogs me'i sbyin sreg*, pp. 393-395; #126: *rDo rje phag mo'i srog 'khor bri thabs*, pp. 397-399; #127: *Phag mo sgrub pa'i gsal byed*, pp. 401-405; #128: *rDo rje phag mo'i gsang sgrub kyi phrin las mdzod dbus ma nas byon pa*, pp. 407-413 (here again, as usual, despite the clear allusion to a central chamber in the title, the colophon only mentions a *bse sgrom smug po*); #129: *Phag mo nag mo'i mngon shes sgrub thabs*, pp. 415-418; #130: *Phag mo'i mngon shes sgrub pa*, pp. 419-420; #131: *Phag mo rigs bzhi'i srog 'khor bri thabs*, pp. 421-424; #132: *mKha' 'gro rigs bzhi'i sgrub thabs zab mo'i gnad*, pp. 425-430; #133: *Ḍākki dbang du bsdu ba dang mig mthong mngon shes zas nor snang ba dbang sdud kyi las tshogs*, pp. 431-437; #134: *mKha' 'gro rgyags skyel*, pp. 439-443; #135: *Phag*

main instructions for the completion stage of *The Heart Practice*, with complete instructions on Inner Heat and sexual yogas. This sub-cycle is followed by texts expounding the qualities required of the disciples¹ and by the main Dzogchen instructions of *The Heart Practice: The Beacon of the Crucial Quintessence*.² This text is followed by two instructions on the transference of consciousness,³ which are more or less connected to Vajravārāhī, and a third that is about guru-yoga.⁴ Then follows a tantra⁵ that seems to be an appendix to *The Beacon of the Crucial Quintessence* and three texts about the signs of success in practice.⁶

This is followed by two more tantras: the above-mentioned text in nine chapters explaining the connection between Dorjé Drakpo Tsal

mo nag mo'i las tshogs bcu gsum ma, pp. 445-455; #136: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi rtsa rlung dbang gi sbyin sreg*, pp. 457-461; #137: *Tshangs pa'i bu khol po sgrub pa*, pp. 463-466; #138: *Khros ma nag mo'i las kha tshar*, pp. 467-470; #139: *dBu ldeb sogs med pa*, pp. 471-477; #140: *rDo rje phag mo'i las tshogs las gegs sel*, pp. 479-483; #141: *Phag mo'i las tshogs las thig le 'dzin thabs*, pp. 485-490; #142: *gSang lam 'ja' lus rdo rje*, pp. 491-502; #143: *bDud sel ba'i man ngag*, pp. 503-508.

¹ Two texts in vol. 7, pp. 509-535. #144: *Las can skal ldan snod dkon pas slob bu'i 'dod pa brtag thabs*, pp. 509-513; #145: *Slob bu'i snod brtag man ngag*, pp. 515-535. The second text would deserve careful examination, especially since it quotes *Klong gsal pha rgyud* (p. 518) and *Klong gsal ma rgyud* (p. 523), in a way that it more reminiscent of rDo rje gling pa's *gter chos* than of anything else we may know. If the very minimal colophon, which unequivocally attributes this *gter ma* to rGod ldem is authentic, then this text is important because it also contains quotations of other, less rare texts that may not be cited elsewhere in the rGod ldem corpus.

² #146: *Thugs sgrub snying po blang ba'i phyir yang tig gces pa'i sgron me dmar 'khrid mngon sum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*, vol. 7, pp. 537-559. This text is the basis of the above-mentioned remarkable practice manual by Rig 'dzin Padma 'phrin las (CNT, vol. 43, pp. 1-81), followed by a summary (pp. 83-92), two texts that connect the *Yang tig gces pa'i sgron me* to the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*.

³ #147: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi 'pho ba*, pp. 561-572; #148: *Drag po rtsal gyi 'pho ba them med bka' rgya ma*, pp. 573-576.

⁴ #149: *Thugs sgrub kyi bla ma'i rnal 'byor*, pp. 577-583.

⁵ #150: *sKu gsum gtan la dbab pa'i rgyud*, pp. 585-593.

⁶ #151: *bsNyen sgrub las sbyor shan 'byed pa'i phyi nang rtags kyi rim pa yod nyams rtags gsal ba'i sgron me*, pp. 595-601; #152: *bsNyen sgrub las sbyor shan 'byed pa'i phyi nang rtags kyi rim pa yod nyams rtags gsal ba'i sgron me*, pp. 603-609; #153: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gsang sgrub kyi bsnyen sgrub rtags kyi rim pa*, pp. 611-614 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository).

and Vajrakīla¹ and another² that is of interest primarily because it uses the terms Trekchö and Thögal³ to describe the practice of Dzogchen, although it should be noted that these terms are extremely rare in the *Gongpa Zangthal*, where they would be expected.

After this group of texts that, starting with the Vajravārāhī sub-cycle, present the inner aspects of *The Heart Practice*, we return more or less to the category of compendiums of spells. Thus, vol. 7 continues with texts⁴ devised to fight against illnesses and epidemics and then with a series of texts devoted to increasing wealth⁵ or at least to obtaining what the practitioner or his patrons need to survive. This series, which features various forms of Jambhala as the main deity, begins with a small text at the end of vol. 7 and extends to the first 30 pages of vol. 8.⁶

Third Volume (CNT, vol. 8)

Then, after an empowerment ritual,⁷ comes a series of prophecies⁸ about the situation in Tibet at the time of the revelation of this terma.

¹ #154: *rDo rje phur bu thugs gsang ba'i phyi rgyud : de rnams kun gyi rtsa ba'i rgyud : drag po rang byung rang shar yod* :, in vol. 7, pp. 615-634.

² #155: *Gu ru thugs sgrub rgyud kyi rgyal po yang gsang rin chen 'dus pa*, in vol. 7, pp. 635-658.

³ E.g., *op. cit.* p. 653.

⁴ #156: *bSod nams longs spyod mtha' rgyas phyir nor sgrub rin chen spungs pa*, pp. 659-665.

⁵ *Nor sgrub*.

⁶ It is unclear why these texts are not joined to the first group in pp. 251-268 of vol. 7. #157: *gSang mtshan thugs sgrub las 'gong po ar gtad kyi mnan pa'i zur 'phyong*, in CNT, vol. 8, pp. 1-5; #158: *Gu ru gsang ba thugs kyi sgrub pa'i las mtha' dgra sri mnan thabs shin tu zab pa gser mdzod nas byon pa*, pp. 7-11; #159: *Nor sgrub rin chen spungs pa las thod pa la brten nas longs spyod sgrub pa bstod pa dang bcas pa*, pp. 13-16; #160: *gNod sbyin a pa ra tsi ta nang sgrub khol por bkol ba*, pp. 17-22; #161: *Nor sgrub rin chen spungs pa las nang sgrub khol mor bkol ba'i sgrub thabs*, pp. 23-25; #162: *gNod sbyin rgyags skyel gyi sgrub thabs*, pp. 27-29.

⁷ #163: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi rgyal thabs spyi blug gi dbang*, pp. 31-43, strangely not joined to the first series of empowerment texts in vol. 6. This seeming disorder may make sense in case these texts do not belong to the original core—Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's *gter chos*—but are additions by later treasure discoverers.

⁸ #164: *Bod la dgos pa'i thems byang*, pp. 45-53.

Included here are ritual procedures to be implemented in order to prevent these evils, such as a confession ritual¹ that is probably meant to imply that these disasters befalling Tibet are a result of the population's moral degeneration. After another text of general prophecies,² the compilers have grouped texts³ that all look like variant *terma* *sādhana*s and empowerments of Dorjé Drakpo Tsal, which were to be organized into coherent, unified rituals by later authors. For some reason, three texts belonging to the Vajravārāhī sub-cycle with precise technical instructions for sexual yogas are found here.⁴ For an equally unclear reason, longevity practices that do not explicitly belong to *The Iron Stalk* sub-cycle—but still connected to Amitāyus—are included.⁵

Then appear more texts⁶—some are obviously incomplete—for the

¹ #165: *Thugs sgrub drag po mthing kha'i na rag dong sprugs*, pp. 55-65.

² #166: *Gu ru'i zhal gdams nor bu'i mdzod yod tan drug ldan*, pp. 67-76.

³ Four texts, pp. 77-120. #167: *rDo rje drag po rtsal gyi phrin las*, pp. 77-91 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #168: *Thugs sgrub dbang gi cho ga gser mdzod ser po nas byin pa*, pp. 93-107 (extracted from the Yellow Southern Gold Repository); #169: *Drag po rtsal gyi dbang chu*, pp. 109-120.

⁴ #170: *Gu ru thugs sgrub kyi yum ka'i dbang chog bka' rgya can*, pp. 121-132; #171: *bCom ldan 'das rdo rje phag mo'i gsang sgrub mdzod dbus ma nas byon pa*, pp. 133-139; #172: *rDo rje phag mo'i man ngag 'phrin las bzhi'i las tshogs char 'bebs bcas pa*, pp. 141-145.

⁵ Two texts, pp. 147-180. #173: *Tshe dpag med longs sku ma'i sngon 'gro*, pp. 147-150; #174: *Tshe'i snyan brgyud bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs*, pp. 151-180. Text #174, which seems complete despite its title, connects long-life ritual procedures to the discovery of a source of eternity in ourselves—the Buddha nature in the heart—and despite the fact that it displays a very concrete theory of vitality, the practices it presents are in fact rather complete *thod rgal* instructions, although not all the technical terms occur where they would be expected. As for many texts in this cycle, the reasons why it is supposed to belong to *The Heart Practice* and the possible connections with the *Iron Stalk* sub-cycle are all but self-obvious upon mere reading.

⁶ Ten texts, pp. 181-361. #175: *Zab mo gnad kyi them bcu*, pp. 181-189; #176: *Drag po thugs kyi gsang sgrub las rdo rje drag po rtsal gyi bsnen pa'i man ngag gsang ba rin chen 'dus pa*, pp. 191-197; #177: *Thugs sgrub gsang ba rin po che 'dus pa*, pp. 199-214; #178: *Zab lam bde stong rgya mtsho mthong bas yid dga' bya ba gu ru'i thugs sgrub kyi gsang khrid*, pp. 215-235; #179: *gSang mtshan thugs sgrub las rab tu gnas pa'i cho ga bse sgrom smug po nas byon pa*, pp. 237-264; #180: *gZungs la brten pa'i tshe sgrub mdzod dbus ma nas byon pa*, pp. 265-271; #181: *Rlung la brtan pa'i tshe sgrub*, pp. 273-280; #182: *sKu gsung thugs kyi gnad 'dus*, pp. 281-286; #183: *sNying po bsdu lam gyi gnad khrid kyi rim pa*, pp. 287-295; #184: *Nor sgrub rin chen spungs pa las gsang sgrub myur mgyogs sgrub thabs*, pp. 297-301; #185: *Las sbyor gces pa'i gnad bcu*, pp. 303-312; #186:

practice of Dorjé Drakpo Tsal, which seem to have been compiled without any intelligible order. Despite the draft quality of this section, these texts are central to the later syntheses that made a clear and unified sense of this vast collection of disparate material.¹ At the end of the volume,² we find ritual arrangements, some of them by authors such as Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal, which present the practice of Dorjé Drakpo Tsal in a form quite similar to that practiced today in the Dorjé Drak system.

Altogether, besides the thematic disorder impeding the readability of this cycle, it has the common characteristic of most of Rigdzin Gödem's revelations: a very strong focus on ritual practice, not much theory, and, which is more annoying to the historian, comparatively few narratives. The Jangter does not present a large Padmasambhava epic, which would help to better understand how Rigdzin Gödem envisioned his own termas in a global perspective. It also tells us very little about Rigdzin Gödem himself: he is generally presented in a stereotyped way as the predestined discoverer of the treasure, but without detailed prophecies about his life or any sort of comparative appreciation of his role in relation to other—earlier and later—treasure discoverers.

Globally, we get the feeling that, already in Padmasambhava's intention, the Northern Treasures were to be a specially designed

Bla ma sgrub pa'i las tshogs 'phyongs drug las gser gyi khang bu, pp. 313-322; #187: *Grib srung bsam gtan khang bu*, pp. 323-328; #188: *rDo rje khol mor bkol pa'i man ngag*, pp. 329-331; #189: *Rlung non ri rab 'od 'phros*, pp. 333-335; #190: *Bla ma'i thugs bsgrub rin chen gsang pa 'dus pa*, pp. 337-343; #191: *Thugs sgrub hūm gi mngon rtogs rgyas pa'am dkyil 'khor la brten nas sgrub pa chen po*, pp. 345-361.

¹ These include, e.g., further longevity practices (#180 and #181) not explicitly connected to *The Iron Stalk*.

² Vol. 8, pp. 363-454. #192: *gTer la brgyud pa med cing dbang bka' med ces pa'i the tshom bsal ba mjug ma tshang ba*, pp. 363-365; #193: *Byang gter sngon 'gro gzer lnga dang thugs sgrub rnam gsum gyi brgyud 'debs kha skong bcas*, pp. 367-381; #194: *Byang gter thugs sgrub kyi bla ma'i rnal 'byor dang brgyud 'debs kha skong rgyal chen bzhi'i mchod sprin phrin las 'bring po bcas*, pp. 383-416; #195: *Byang bdag bkra shis stobs rgyal gyis mdzad pa'i thugs sgrub hūm gi bsnyen yig 'khrul med dmar khrid du bkod pa*, pp. 417-425; #196: *Thugs sgrub drag po rtsal gyi sbyin sreg ye shes rab 'bar gsal byed kyi cho ga dngos grub myur ster zhes bya ba las zhi ba'i sbyin sreg gi zin bris zur du bkol ba*, pp. 427-450; #197: *Thugs sgrub kyi las tshogs 'gong po ar gtad kyi zin bris rab gsal me long mdzad pa po mi gsal ba la*, pp. 451-456.

collection with a global purpose, and not just a more or less random¹ collection of Nyingma tantric and Dzogchen practices. This specific purpose would be along the lines of a combination of highly effective magic necessary to bring the invisible world back under control so that peace and prosperity could be restored to Tibet, with the deepest synthesis of the Dzogchen Heart Drops (in the cycles described in the next chapter). However, this assumption with the desired specifications is always implicit and never clearly articulated in the earliest corpus. If it were, it would help us to make sense of the idea that the Jangter as a whole (whose revelation continues after Rigdzin Gödem's time with his reincarnations and even with other treasure discoverers) is something unique whose specific nature could be further defined. But such a global explanation seems to be lacking.

With *The Heart Practice*, which may in fact be the last cycle to be edited by Rigdzin Gödem,² we have completed the series of the great tantric cycles and can now move on to Dzogchen.



¹ This term is of course exaggerated; in any case the content of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's revelations is not accidental. It is not unrelated to his personal competence and his perception of the needs of his time. rGod ldem was a Vajrakīla specialist even before he received the prophetic guides. He had certainly received the two sNying thig, probably from Rin chen gling pa. His specific situation (historical, geographical, and social) must have led him to join the movement found among several rNying ma pas of his time (beginning with Klong chen pa) to search for a legitimate monarch who would bring unity, peace, and power back to Tibet, and also to recognize the kings of Gung thang as such. Other aspects of his *gter chos*, as the reader has realized, can be explained by a whole series of expectations (both in terms of stereotyped literary genres and in terms of what may have been perceived as missing and needed) related to the state of *gter ma* literature in his time.

² However, it should be noted that even in this cycle, the theory of the Five Repositories is not fully articulated. Clearly locating texts in specific chambers of the treasure chest is a rare occurrence, and this approach is not consistently applied in a way that makes sense in connection to the larger cycles.

Chapter 19: *The Profound Commentary on the Noble Mañjuśrī*

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General Presentation in Context

 *he Profound Commentary on the Noble Mañjuśrī*—the largest of all the texts presented in *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures* as Rigdzin Gödem's personal composition and not as a terma—is a Dzogchen-oriented commentary on a well-known Indian tantric text: the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgītī*. Although the editors of *The Compilation* do not provide us with any information about the source of the text, it is obviously a single, precisely identifiable manuscript.² For a writing that is not presented as a terma, this one awkwardly includes *dākinī* scripts, and it is evident that they are in fact directly reproduced from that manuscript. Despite the generally good editorial quality of *The Compilation*, this text is full of typographic errors and even spelling mistakes.³ The way it is ascribed to Gödem in the colophon is interesting:⁴

The [explanatory] annotation on this commentary of the meaning of that [text] is the work of Master Padmasambhava. In order to make its understanding easier, the treasure discoverer Gödem exquisitely inserted in it, all along, annotations that do not contradict the Guru's [holy] words.

The commentary by Padmasambhava that is employed by Gödem as the basis can be found in the collection of the Nyingmapas'

¹ 'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo, in CNT, vol. 14, pp. 271-362.

² '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. 227-333.

³ Other texts in the second part of the same volume (vol. 14) seem to suffer from the same defects.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 362: 'di'i don 'brel (sic for 'grel) 'di'i mchan du (sic, mchan bu would make more sense) slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi (sic for kyi) mdzad pa yin pa| go bde bar bya ba'i phyir| gter ston rgod kyi ldem 'phru can gyis| gu rus (sic for gu ru'i) bka' dang mi 'gal bar mchan dkyus su bcug pa lags pas| shin tu legs pa'o|.

uninterrupted oral transmission.¹ A postface to the commentary by Padmasambhava (pp. 491–493), in which it is not easy to discern what was written by Dūjom Rinpoche from what was contributed by an earlier compiler, gives some interesting details about the origin and transmission of the manuscript in circles linked to the posterity of Nyangral Nyima Özer (1124–1192)² and connects the text to the Chiti³ category of Dzogchen. It is evident that there were some doubts about the authenticity and transmission of this text, but that it was included in the collection for the intrinsic value of its content, rather than because it belonged to any solidly established lineage of practice.

In the Kama compilation, this post-face is followed by an anonymous “history,”⁴ which, in fact, tells more of its origins and contents than of its transmission. However, it names a tertön and his successor: Zhuyé Benchung Dewa, it says, found it in Gyangro Tsalma, then passed it to Itön.⁵ This text is interesting in that it contains a complete doxography of the Buddhist vehicles,⁶ including a presentation of Dzogchen as crowned by Chiti.⁷ This tends to indicate that this Mañjuśrī corpus could be connected to Nyangral Nyima Özer. Be that as it may, the terma nature of the commentary attributed to

¹ Padmasambhava (attributed to —), *Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i 'grel pa rin po che nyi zla 'bar ba'i sgron ma*, pp. 195–493 in vol. 22 of bDud 'joms rin po che's edition and those that integrate it into a broader selection.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 492, allusions to the *bKa' brgyad bde gshegs 'dus pa* and to sMra bo lcog.

³ sPyi ti.

⁴ *mTshan brjod 'grel pa nyi zla 'bar ba'i sgron me'i lo rgyus*, in NKG, vol. 22, pp. 495–524.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 505: *gu rus rgyang ro tshal ma'i brag la snams nas| lo byi ba| zla ba 'brug| skar ma rgyal gyi nyi mo| chos dang bstan bsrung 'di rnams| padma bdag gis brag btsan khyod la gtad| nam zhig skal ldan byung na 'di khyod khrol cig| gsung nas brag phug rang 'khrungs su sbas so| | padma bdag gi smon lam mthu btsan na| |nam zhig skal ldan gcig dang 'phrad par shog| ces rgya yis btab bo| |de nas zhu yas ban chung bde ba bya ba rgyang ro tshal ma'i brag la sgrub pa byed pa'i nyams su shar nas| gter chos zab rgyas 'dug pa gzigs nas| mtshan brjod 'grel pa gsal bar byed pa'i sgron ma 'di thon no| |gzhan ni mi bton nas| ban chung gis| i ston la bstan| de las ma song|... etc.*

⁶ Pp. 506–524.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, p. 520, remark the curious phrasing: *rab kyis thod rgal spyi ti'i rnal 'byor 'di stan ste|*, and p. 521: *nga yi spyi ti 'di min na| |yang ti nag po byung ba yang yod|*.

Padmasambhava, which is the direct sub-text of the one ascribed to Gödem, explains the presence of the *ḍākinī* scripts in the latter.

On the admittedly meagre basis of this connection with Chiti and the element “Zhuyé” in his name, we can speculate that the tertön may have been Nyemo Zhuyé Nöjinbar,¹ who, according to Guru Tashi, revealed “many Dharma cycles [belonging to] the Dzogchen Chiti and so forth.”² Although Guru Tashi hesitates about his chronology, BDRC presents him³ (although without quoting sources) as a disciple of Nyan-gral Nyima Özer, born in the 12th century.

Unfortunately, except for the time period, this does not bring us any closer to Sarben Chokmé’s *Mañjuśrī’s Dzogchen*, a lineage in which Rigdzin Gödem is mentioned in later *Records of Teachings Received*. This context would have helped us to make sense of the ascription of this *Profound Commentary on the Noble Mañjuśrī* to Rigdzin Gödem and could thus have been the starting point of further research about his life and the role he may have played in Nyingma contexts other than those directly documented by his biographies. But as long as the whole plot of Rigdzin Gödem’s association with the various *Mañjuśrī*/Yamāntaka traditions remains so obscure, more speculation would be futile.

Except its colophon, *The Profound Commentary on the Noble Mañjuśrī* does not contain any element that would either corroborate or invalidate its ascription to Rigdzin Gödem. It is not properly a *commentary on the commentary* ascribed to Padmasambhava, which is obviously much longer and more detailed. Its style is that of teaching notes, since it even includes indications in the form: *at this point, tell the story of so and so*. We can unfortunately not go any further in the present state of research and nothing can be done until further remnants of *Mañjuśrī’s Dzogchen* cycle have surfaced. Another line of research

¹ *gTer ston sNye mo zhu yas gNod sbyin ’bar*. Guru Tashi mentions (*Chos ’byung*, pp. 372 and 478) that the Fifth Dalai Lama speculated that sNye mo zhu yas could be the same person as sNye mo rgya gang ri ba (e.g., sKyer gang pa, 12th century, BDRC 5710) Sangs rgyas dbang chen, a *gter ston* whose life is obscure but who is of great importance as his revelations are partly the source of the Hayagrīva cycle *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub*.

² *Gu bkra’i chos ’byung*, p. 372.

³ See BDRC (P9KT43): “*gter ston nye mo zhu yas* | b. 12th c. (...) Teacher: *myang nyi ma ’od zer*.”

would be to undertake, or rather resume,¹ a systematic survey of the Chiti, and in particular the tantras associated with Mañjuśrī, which in some cases seem to be more or less common with the Yangti.

State of the Art

This writing had gone unnoticed until the publication of *The Compilation of the Northern Treasures*. Since the text follows the one it synthesizes,² and as the authenticity is dubious, it has not been deemed useful to describe it here in detail. It is expected that further research will allow us to make better sense of it, especially in terms of authenticity and regarding the traditions to which it is connected.



¹ See, in chronological order: Guenther 1996, Achard 2009, and Achard 2015a. Further details will be presented in two articles to be published in the *Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines* in autumn 2026: Stéphane Arguillère, “The Fifth Dalai Lama on the Literature of the *sPyi ti* Section of rDzogs chen” and Stéphane Arguillère, “*Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen* in the Context of the Fifth Dalai Lama's rNying ma Writings.”

² It is an analytical summary rather than an actual commentary on the text attributed to Padmasambhava.

Chapter 20: The Dzogchen Teachings of the *Gongpa Zangthal*

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s preserved in the cycle of the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* (*Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal*), the Dzogchen tradition of the Northern Treasures possesses a number of specific features that distinguish it from the other noteworthy cycles of the Great Perfection. It does not, however, deviate from them in terms of its fundamental conceptions, and it even shares numerous identical passages as well as entire texts with the two other most important cycles of the *Heart Drops* (*snying thig*) category, the *Heart Drops of Vimalamitra* or *Bima Nyingthik* (*Bi ma snying thig*) and the *Heart Drops of the Ḍākinīs* or *Khandro Nyingthik* (*mKha' 'gro snying thig*). Nevertheless, it retains distinctive traits which will be addressed here, based on the original sources making up its actual corpus.

1. The Structure of the Collection

This structure has already been studied in detail by Peter Schweiger,¹ so I will briefly describe it here according to Setön Pema Wangchen's (15th c.) *General Outline of the Northern Treasures* (*Byang gter spyi chings*). Following the *Listing of the Six Oral Transmissions* (*sNyan rgyud drug gi tho byang*),² Setön explains that the collection is actually composed of two main categories:

1. the three scrolls that were found in the treasure's center repository, and
2. the thirty-six profound teachings.

The three scrolls contain tantras (*rgyud*) but the exact identification

¹ *Die Werksammlungen Kun-tu bzañ-po'i dgoñs-pa zañ-thal, Ka-dag rañ-byuñ rañ-śar und mKha'-'gro gsañ-ba ye-śes-kyi rgyud*, 1985. See also Katarina Turpeinen's *Vision of Samantabhadra: The Dzogchen Anthology of Rindzin Godem* (2015).

² *dGongs pa zang thal*, vol. 1, pp. 191-208.

with texts included in the actual editions seems to have been problematic, including for the 5th Dalai Lama.¹ The three texts are respectively styled as Great Tantra (*rgyud chen*), Small Tantra (*rgyud chung*), and Root-Tantra (*rtsa rgyud*).² These can be identified as follows:

- the Great Tantra (*rgyud chen*) is actually the Explanatory Tantra (*bshad rgyud*), i.e., *The Great Explanatory Tantra Revealing the Contemplation of the Great Perfection in its total Transparency* (*rDzogs pa chen po dgongs pa zang thal du bstan pa'i bshad rgyud chen po*) in twenty chapters;³
- the Small Tantra corresponds to the work entitled *The Small Tantra of the Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* (*Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal gyi rgyud chung*) in eight chapters,⁴ and
- the Root-Tantra is *The Root-Tantra Revealing the Contemplation of Samantabhadra in its total Transparency* (*Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal du bstan pa'i rtsa rgyud*) in eight chapters.⁵

Collectively, Setön defines them as “Lamps of the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*” (*Kun tu bzang po dgongs pa zang thal gyi sgron ma rnam*s). However, there is an individual work bearing the very same title (in *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 2, pp. 523-552), which has five chapters, just like the Root-Tantra is said to have according to one source.⁶ Nevertheless, all editions of the Root-Tantra at my disposal are in eight chapters. Thus, to sum up, the Great Tantra explains the *Transparent Contemplation* (*dGongs pa zang thal*) in

¹ It would seem that, for this reason, he prefers to list only two texts in this category (Turpeinen 2015, p. 254), instead of three (as we shall see now).

² See ston Padma dbang chen (15th c.) 2015, *Byang gter spyi chings*, p. 414.

³ *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 2, pp. 447-552.

⁴ Rig 'dzin rGod ldem 1979, *Byang gter rdzogs chen dgongs pa zang thal*, pp. 159-168. This text however corresponds to the Root-Tantra in eight chapters (*le'u bryad pa*, as published in the *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 2, pp. 435-446) and is therefore identical to the third text of the present list. The 5th Dalai Lama's opinion on the subject thus seems to have been particularly well-informed in listing only two texts in this category.

⁵ *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 2, pp. 435-446.

⁶ See Schiller 2021, p. 857, n. 81: *dGongs pa zangs (=zang) thal gyi rtsa ba le'u lnga pa*.

twenty chapters; the Small Tantra does so in five chapters; and the Root-Tantra explains the main principles of this *Contemplation* in eight chapters.

The second category of texts is, as mentioned above, made up of thirty-six profound teachings forming a resolutely more complex corpus of texts. It is composed of six series of six works or groups of texts. These works are introduced as follows in *The Listing of the Six Oral Transmissions* (*sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*):

*Intentionally contemplating the benefit of other beings,
He¹ revealed the root-teachings of the Oral Transmissions
Whose thirty-six (sections) are as follows:
The Six Profound Seals of Vajravārāhī,
The Six Oral Transmissions of Padmasambhava, and
The Six Great Expanses of Vajrasattva,
Making up the eighteen sections of root-teachings.
As to the eighteen ordinary branches (of instructions),
There are the Six Lamps of excellent Conduct,
The Six Precepts that purify defilements, and
The Six Sādhana required for (specific) times.²*

This grouping into sets of six works, culminating in the thirty-six oral transmissions, is quite unusual and, to my knowledge, does not have any equivalent in similar collections of Dzogchen instructions. Its eighteen sections of root-teachings are composed of Dzogchen Tantras and their contemplative methods, while the eighteen ordinary branches are made up of particular tantric practices, such as Phurba as well as occult methods to dispel demons, illnesses, and so forth.

When analyzing these corpuses, one promptly comes to realize that the entire set of works is not limited to thirty-six texts, but rather to more or less larger literary groups included within these. For instance, the Six Oral Transmissions of Padmasambhava contain no less than

¹ The agent is supposed to be Padmasambhava himself.

² Rig 'dzin rGom ldem 2015, *sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*, p. 197: 'gro ba gzhan don dgongs pa'i ched : snyan rgyud rtsa ba'i chos rnam bstan : sum cu rtsa drug 'di lta ste : rdo rje phag mo'i zab rgya drug : padma 'byung gnas snyan rgyud drug : rdo rje sems pa'i klong chen drug : rtsa ba'i chos sde bco brgyad yin : yan lag thun mongs bco brgyad ni : spyod pa legs pa'i sgron ma drug : snyigs ma dangs pa'i man ngag drug : dus la dgos pa'i sgrub thabs drug po :.

twenty-two texts to which one should add the entire cycle of the *Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* (*Ka dag rang byung rang shar*), which is regarded as pertaining to the actual oral transmission (*snyan brgyud*) originating with Padmasambhava.¹

2. The Cycle of the Natural Emergence of the Self-Arising Primordial Purity (Ka dag rang byung rang shar)

This cycle is structured around a set of ten works divided in two categories: eight precepts (*man ngag brgyad*) and two tantras (*rgyud gnyis*). Further works have been added to this set, the collection now amounting to a total of fifteen works plus a general table of contents (*them byang*). The whole set is presented as belonging to the “oral transmission revealing meditative equipoise” (*mnyam bzhag ting nge ’dzin*) that is said to have been given by Padmasambhava to Yeshé Tsogyal in the 8th century AD.²

The relationship between the *Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* and the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* has been described as a complementary one. Just as the actual practice of the Precepts Series (*man ngag sde*) is basically divided in Trekchö (*khregs chod*) and Thögal (*thod rgal*), the very same division applies to these two cycles, with the description of the main practice (*dngos gzhi*) as relying on Trekchö for the first and on Thögal for the second. Despite the fact that, except for their appearance in a quote from the *Tantra of the Garland of Pearls* (*Mu tig phreng ba’i rgyud*), these technical expressions do not show up in the two cycles, a careful study of both collections definitely demonstrates that this divvying scheme perfectly applies to the contents of the texts themselves. One may simply add that, if the first cycle does not contain any instructions of the level of Thögal, the second however definitely introduces the practice of Trekchö in its pages.³

¹ For the detail of all the works included under the six main headings of these Oral Transmissions, see Schwieger 1985, pp. 1 *et seq.* See also Turpeinen 2015, *op. cit.*, pp. 254-258.

² For a complete description of the cycle, see Schwieger 1985, pp. 114 *et seq.*

³ The association of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar* to the practice of *khregs chod* on one side, and of the *dGongs pa zang thal* to that of *thod rgal* on the other side is explicitly made in *The Herdsman of Scriptures* (*Glegs bam skyong byed*, see the bibliography under Anonymous), fol. 2b: “...The manner of ascertaining the Base

3. *The Borrowings from Other Cycles*

When carefully studying the texts that make up the bulk of the *Gongpa Zangthal*, it clearly appears that the collection owes much of its contents to previous *Heart Drops* (*sNying thig*) revelations, such as the *Bima Nyingthik* (*Bi ma snying thig*) and the *Khandro Nyingthik* (*mKha' 'gro snying thig*). Borrowings may be direct, like in the case of the corpus known as the *Six Tantras that Liberate through Wearing* (*bTags grol rgyud drug*), which can be found in the *Khandro Nyingthik*, while in some cases, such borrowings are definitely more limited and selective. Several other works from the *Khandro Nyingthik* are to be found in the *Gongpa Zangthal* in more or less identical form. However, the most puzzling borrowing is certainly the transformation of a precept (*man ngag*) into a Tantra (*rgyud*), which implies a complete *translation* from one doxographic category (that of root-texts explicitly styled as a precept) to another (that of a Tantra). The borrowing in question is that of the first precept (*man ngag dang po*) of the *Bima Nyingthik* —the *Seventy-Four Fragments of the Compilation of Precepts* (*Man ngag dum dum khrigs pa dum bcu bdun bcu rtsa bzhi pa*)¹—, which has been turned into the *Explanatory Tantra of the Precious Garland* (*Rin chen phreng ba'i bshad rgyud*),² that includes a partial rewriting consisting in adding the classical dialogic structure of original Tantras as well as re-structuring the contents according to a division into specific chapters (whereas the original in the *Bima Nyingthik* does not follow such a structure but simply compiles short precepts one after the other, following a particular order).

The largest borrowing from the *Nyingthik* literature is certainly that of the *Commentary by Vimalamitra* (*Bi ma la'i 'grel tig*), which is actually based on the famed *Eleven Topics* (*Tshig don bcu gcig pa*) by

(gzhi) and *Kadak Trekchö* (is associated) with the cycle of the *Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity*, while the manner of practicing the Path and the spontaneous *Thögal* (is associated) with the cycle of the *Transparent contemplation*” (*gzhi ka dag khregs chos gtan la 'bebs tshul ka dag rang byung rang shar gyi skor dang | lam lhun grub thod rgal nyams su len tshul dgongs pa zang thal gyi skor*). Note that the first is precisely defined as *ascertaining* (or establishing, *gtan la 'bebs pa*) the Base, while the second is clearly concerned with *practicing* (*nyams su len pa*) the Path.

¹ On the study and translation of this text, see Achard 1999, pp. 157 *et seq.*

² *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 2, pp. 661-693.

Zhang Nyima Bum.¹ The original work, in eleven chapters, is certainly one of the first manuals of its type, commenting eleven specific topics discussed in the collection of the *Seventeen Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*). It has been integrated in the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* with a different title—well-known under its abridged form of *Vimalamitra's Commentary* (*Bi ma la'i 'grel tig*)—with sometimes variants in the contents, notably in the description of the five perfections (*phun sum tshogs pa lnga*) serving as compulsory perfections for the revelation of a Tantra.²

4. Terminology

If clarity of exposition is indeed what has made the *Gongpa Zangthal* so famous, the absence of certain key terms otherwise used in traditional Dzogchen thought nevertheless sets it apart from other mainstream lines of transmission. As we have seen above, this absence would in fact not be worth noting if it did not concern two of the most important expressions used elsewhere: Cutting through Rigidity or Trekchö (*khregs chod*) and the Passing over the Crest or Thögal (*thod rgal*).³ This absence does not mean, however, that the practices associated with these expressions do not exist in the Gödem tradition, quite the contrary. One only has to rapidly browse through the *Gongpa Zangthal* to realize that the whole practice of Thögal, for example, is described in minute details, even if the term itself is not used *per se* in the texts.

It should not be inferred, however, that the use of the terms Trekchö

¹ 1158–1213. On Nyi ma 'bum, see Achard 2018a, “Zhang Nyi ma 'bum (1158–1213) et le développement des *sNying thig* au 12e siècle,” *passim*. On the *Bi ma la'i 'grel tig*, see Smith 2016, *passim*.

² See other examples of borrowings from the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* in Turpeinen 2015, *inter alia* p. 147.

³ Actually, the two expressions can be found in the *Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal las 'grel tig mdzad pa nyams len ye shes rang gsal, dGongs pa zang thal*, 2015, vol. 2, p. 118, in a quote from the *Mu tig phreng ba*, a text belonging to the *Seventeen Tantras* (*rGyud bcu bdun*) of the tradition of Vimalamitra, briefly stating that : “practice consists in Trekchö and Thögal...” (*nyams len khregs chod thod rgal la*). In this context, the two expressions are used with the meaning they have in other cycles of teachings. The actual quote can be found in the original *Mu tig phreng ba* tantra (p. 536) under the form *nyams blangs khregs chod thod rgal lo*].

and Thögal is late and posterior to Gödem, since during the same period, Longchenpa (1308–1364) used them without moderation and without it appearing to be an innovation on his part, since these expressions can in fact be found in early *Nyingthiks* such as the *Bima Nyingthik*. Within cycles that do not use these terms,¹ the latter are substituted with various expressions such as “Contemplation of Samantabhadra” (*kun bzang gi dgongs pa*) for Trekchö, and “training in the dynamism of Awareness” (*rig pa'i rtsal sbyangs*) for Thögal, or any other variants of this type.²

It seems that these longer terminological choices are more descriptive, although this feeling may be dictated by our common habit of seeing the terms Trekchö and Thögal in their usual context and not their present substitutions. Some may suggest that we are here in the presence of two different Dzogchen traditions, one using the common terms and the other the substitute expressions. However, this is obviously not the case, since the practices that are described in both cases are exactly the same and enjoy the same importance. A similar remark also applies to the oral transmission (*snyan brgyud*) accompanying these texts.

As a general rule, the teachings conveyed by oral transmission do not fluctuate much over the ages, and the masters and disciples who pass them on remain faithful to the spirit of what is transmitted as well as to its verbal form.³ As a result, there are rarely any innovations in these systems handed down aurally, and the respect and veneration that surround them mean that little thought is given to changing their form, let alone their content. We may infer that the oral transmission associated with the texts of the Northern Treasures is no exception to the rule, and it does indeed use the expressions Trekchö and Thögal, but perhaps only for the sake of consistency. Finally, it should be noted that recent writings concretely based on the *Gongpa Zangthal* or referring to this Treasure do make use of these expressions in a way that seems very natural, given the context.

¹ A good example of this would be the *Sangs rgyas mnyam sbyor* revealed by Guru Chos dbang (1212–1270).

² See two examples of these variant expressions in Arguillère 2018a, p. 210.

³ For instance, the oral transmission accompanying the *Ye shes bla ma* of the *Klong chen snying thig* owes much to Longchenpa's (1308–1364) *Theg mchog mdzod* and parts of its written form rendered by *mKhan po* Ngag dbang dpal bzang (1879–1940) largely borrows from the 14th century master's *Treasury*.

5. *The Five Empowerments*

Another distinctive feature of the Northern Treasures tradition is the classification of empowerments (*dbang gi dbye ba*). In other cycles, such as the *Bima Nyingthik* or the *Longchen Nyingthik*, there are four empowerment rituals, but this number is increased to five in the Gödem tradition. This is not the result of any subdivision of one of these four rituals, but rather a supplementary initiation, which is integrated into the corpus of the previous four.¹

The structure and names of these empowerment rituals are not dissimilar to those found in the other Heart Drops: first of all, there is the Vase empowerment (*bum dbang*), whose essential purpose, apart from making the recipient's body a chalice of the Emanation Body (*sprul sku*), is to be directly introduced to the Buddhas of the five Clans (*rigs lnga'i ngo sprod*).² This ritual is followed by the Secret Empowerment (*gsang dbang*), which enables the yogi to engage in the practice of channels and winds (*rtsa rlung*). This is followed by the Empowerment to the Wisdom of Sublime Knowledge (*shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*),³ which familiarizes the yogi with the practices relying on the experience of Bliss and Emptiness (*bde stong*).

This is followed by the Fourth Empowerment (*dbang bzhi pa*), which corresponds elsewhere to the Verbal Initiation (*tshig dbang*) and essentially tackles the practice leading to the realization of Emptiness and Clarity (*stong gsal*), the true abiding mode of Reality (*chos nyid*).

Eventually, this fourth initiation is followed by the Empowerment to the Dynamism of Awareness (*rig pa'i rtsal dbang*), which reveals the natural emergence of Wisdom (*ye shes rang shar*) during formal contemplation.⁴ It is not that this latter ritual is not found in other cycles, on the contrary: the distinctive element lies in the classification, which refers to five empowerment rituals (*dbang lnga*), an expression that is rarely attested in other cycles of the same doxographical level.

¹ The same system of five empowerment rituals is used in the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* and is certainly rGod ldem actual unnamed source for his own *gter ma*. See Turpeinen 2015, pp. 140-145.

² rGod ldem, *Zab mo dbang gi dbye ba*, GZT 1979, vol. I, p. 389.

³ "Sublime Knowledge" (*shes rab*) is a code name for the yogini with whom the yogi practices ritual union (*sbyor ba*).

⁴ *Op. cit.*, pp. 389-390. Again, see Turpeinen 2015, p. 145. See also Schwieger 2015, pp. 30-31 for a detailed summary of this empowerment.

6. *The Clarity of Exposition*

This third distinguishing feature may seem a little irrelevant here, but it is nevertheless an important parameter to note in this general presentation of the *Gongpa Zangthal*. This cycle is characterized by a remarkable clarity of exposition and an unusual ease of understanding on the part of the reader. This does not mean that the cycle is simplistic, as one promptly realizes when browsing through the texts of the collection. Translating works from the *Gongpa Zangthal* is greatly facilitated by the limpidity of the Tibetan language, although there is no shortage of verses with an eminently elliptical structure. But as a general rule, the originals are not very difficult to read, provided one is already familiar with the corpus of Dzogchen terms. This clarity is expressed in the other cycle of teachings of the Great Perfection, rediscovered by Gödem and entitled *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* (*Ka dag rang byung rang shar*), which is appended to the *Gongpa Zangthal* and contains instructions of a similar level—in terms of the main practice (*dnegos gzhi*)—centered, as we have seen above, on the teachings of Trekchö.

7. *Odd Doxographical Presentations*

There are several unusual doxographical presentations appearing here and there in the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*. The most atypical ones are certainly those that are contained in a group of five texts making up *The Oral Transmissions of Vairocana* (*Bee ro tsa na 'i snyan brgyud*). In the first of these *Oral Transmissions*, Dzogchen teachings are classified in two categories:

- the Great Perfection widely renowned as the Buddhas' Words (*bka' yongs su grags pa 'i rdzogs pa chen po*), and
- the Great Perfection widely renowned as the Buddhas' Precepts (*man ngag yongs su grags pa 'i rdzogs pa chen po*).¹

The first category of works is divided into a series of four kinds of texts, roughly corresponding to the traditional classification of Dzogchen

¹ *Yang gsang rdzogs pa chen po bee ro tsa na 'i snyan brgyud dang po*, in *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 1, p. 863.

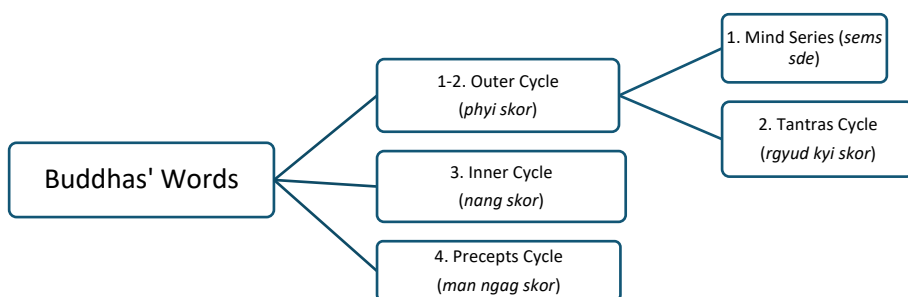
teachings into the three series (*sde gsum*) known as the Mind Series (*Sems sde*), the Expanse Series (*Klong sde*), and the Precepts Series (*Man ngag sde*). Here, the particularly unusual element is the division of the outer cycle (which generally correspond to the Mind Series) into two sections: 1. Mind Series, and 2. the Tantras Cycle (*rgyud kyi skor*), which actually contains texts belonging to the Mind Series itself. These subdivisions would thus appear quite artificial if it were not for the specific elements characterizing these sections. The first one is indeed mostly concerned with explaining the View (*lta ba*) of Dzogchen and relies on texts such as the *Extensive Great Sky* (*Nam mkha' che rgyas pa'i rgyud*) that Garab Dorjé is supposed to have taught to Mañjuśrīmitra.¹ The second one is mostly centered upon more general explanations (*bshad pa*) that are given in texts such as *The Tantra of the All-Creating King* (*Kun byed rgyal po'i rgyud*).

In this first category defined as the Buddhas' Words, the Expanse Series is associated with the inner cycle (*nang skor*), while the Precepts Series (*Man ngag sde*) is not mentioned under this heading in the text but rather under that of the cycle of Precepts (*man ngag gi skor*), making up the secret cycle (*gsang skor*).

Confusion may arise when not taking into account that the scheme of the outer, inner, and secret cycles can actually be used in two contexts:

1. a threefold one corresponding to that of the Three Series (*sde gsum*), with the equivalences given above (the outer cycle being associated with the Mind Series; the inner cycle with the Expanse Series, and the secret cycle with the Precepts Series); and
2. a fourfold one characterizing the Precepts Series when it is divided into four actual parts: the outer cycle (*phyi skor*), the inner cycle (*nang skor*), the secret cycle (*gsang skor*), and the innermost secret cycle (*yang gsang skor*) also designated as the unsurpassable secret cycle (*gsang ba bla na med pa'i skor*).

¹ *Ib.*, p. 863.



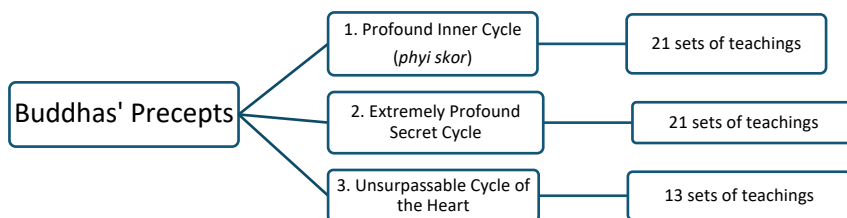
1. Structure of the Great Perfection renowned as the Buddhas' Words.

As can evidently be seen, this classification is far from usual, but it nevertheless roughly follows the traditional one (in three Series). It does not seem to be used elsewhere; by other authors or treasure revealers, although this demands more investigation.

The Great Perfection renowned as the Buddhas' Precepts is divided in three categories of works, namely:

- the profound inner cycle (*zab mo nang skor*),
- the extremely profound secret cycle (*shin tu zab pa gsang ba'i skor*), and
- the unsurpassable cycle of the Heart (*bla na med pa thugs kyi skor*).

The unsurpassable cycle of the Heart contains the teachings of the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra* divided into six main sets of teachings corresponding to the sixfold divisions of the *Gongpa Zangthal* described above.



2. Structure of the Great Perfection renowned as the Buddhas' Precepts.

To accentuate confusion, there are still other classifications in the *Gongpa Zangthal* using a threefold scheme again defined as “the Three Series” (*sde gsum*). This time, these are explained in *The Listing of the Six Oral Transmissions* (*sNyan brgyud drug gi tho byang*, pp. 202-203):¹

The teachings of the Great Perfection have come to the southern continent of Jambudvīpa in the form of the extensive outer cycle (*rgyas pa phyi skor*), the profound inner cycle (*zab mo nang gi skor*), and the quintessential unsurpassed cycle (*snying po bla na med pa'i skor*). Thus, from among these three Series, on the outer level, the teachings that clarify the View through the contemplation of the Base are those of the Mind Series of the Great Perfection. On the inner level, the teachings that mainly reveal Meditation (203) and Conduct through the contemplation of practice are those of the Expanse Series of the Great Perfection. On the secret level, the teachings that make up the Precepts of the Great Perfection are those of Suchness enabling one to directly perceive the Fruit.²

The same text goes on:³

Although the cycle of Precepts of the Great Perfection⁴ are said

¹ GZT 1979: *rdzogs pa chen po'i chos lho phyogs 'dzam bu'i gling du byon pa la: rgyas pa phyi'i skor: zab mo nang gi skor: snying po bla na med pa'i skor: de ltar sde gsum du bzhugs pa las: phyi ltar gzhi la dgongs nas lta ba gtan la 'bebs pa: rdzogs pa chen po sems sde'i chos yin no: nang nyams su len pa la dgongs nas: sgom pa (203) dang spyod pa gtso bor ston pa rdzogs pa chen po klong sde'i skor yin no: gsang ba rdzogs pa chen po man ngag gi chos: 'bras bu mngon du bya ba de kho na nyid kyi chos yin no:.*

² Hence the teachings cover: 1. the Base (*gzhi*) through the understanding of the View (*lta ba*); 2. the Path (*lam*) of practice through Meditation (*sgom pa*) and Conduct (*spyod pa*); and 3. the Fruit (*'bras bu*) through directly contemplating Reality at it is, i.e., through the experience of Suchness (*de kho na nyid*).

³ *Op. cit.*, p. 203: *rdzogs pa chen po man ngag gi skor la yang : bsam gyis mi khyab pa zhih gsungs kyang : lam du 'jug pa gsang ba'i skor: nyams su blang ba rtags kyi skor: don dang 'phrad pa rang byung gi skor gsum du 'dus so: de rnams la yang zab par gdams pa man ngag gi skor: chig brgyud du bya ba snying po'i skor: mi spel mi nub par bya ba snyan brgyud kyi skor dang gsum mo:.*

⁴ This refers to the third category of texts enumerated in the previous quote.

to be inconceivable, they are gathered into: 1. the secret¹ cycle for entering the Path; 2. the cycle on the signs² of practice; and 3. the self-arisen cycle [leading to the] encounter with the ultimate. From among these, the [most] profound instructions are those of: 1. the cycle of Precepts; 2. the quintessential cycle imparted in a single transmission;³ and 3. the cycle of the Oral Transmission which should neither be spread nor abolished.⁴

The first two series of profound instructions are not discussed in the text, while the Oral Transmission is described as consisting of teachings associated with Tantras (*rgyud kyi chos*) and teachings associated with Precepts (*man ngag gi chos*). These should not be understood as making up two entirely separated categories—as one might expect. Rather, this simply means that the teachings included in the Oral Transmission are made of both Tantras and Precepts.⁵ The same text goes on:⁶

Thus, the ultimate of all teachings, the supreme peak of all Vehicles, the quintessence of the three series of the Great Perfection, the source of the six Oral Transmissions⁷ is made up of the teachings of the *Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra*, of the condensation of the Elixir of the Heart of Vajrasattva, and the heart-like Unwritten Oral Transmission.

The six Oral Transmissions mentioned in this quote are listed as follows in the *Great Commentary of Vimalamitra* (*Bi ma la'i 'grel tig chen*

¹ Emending *bsam pa'i* into *gsang ba'i* (according to the *sNyan brgyud rin po che'i lung byang*, p. 171, which, all in all, provides better readings).

² Correcting *lta ba'i* into *rtags kyi* (based on *ib.*, p. 171).

³ I.e., from one master to a single disciple.

⁴ Correcting *bum par byed pa* into *mi nub par bya ba* (*ib.*, p. 171).

⁵ The first are described as establishing the root (*rtsa ba*) of the teachings while the second are actually condensing the meaning (*don*) of these teachings into a practicable form.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 203: *de ltar chos thams cad kyi mthar thug: theg pa thams cad kyi yang rtse: rdzogs pa chen po sde gsum gyi snying po: snyan brgyud sde drug gi rtsa ba kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa zang thal gyi chos: rdo rje sems dpa'i thugs kyi bcud dril ba: yi ge med pa'i snyan brgyud snying dang 'dra ba gsum yod:*.

⁷ These are listed hereafter.

mo):¹

Padmasambhava of Oddiyāna taught 1. the precious Oral Transmission of the authentic principle and 2. the Oral Transmission that directly introduces Reality. (On his side,) Vimalamitra taught 3. the Oral Transmission of what is to be understood through methods of explanation and 4. the Oral Transmission of that which is liberated through practice. And Vairocana taught 5. the Oral Transmission that differentiates mind from Wisdom, and 6. the Oral Transmission of the practice of the five methods of access.²

As can be deduced from this brief analysis, the *Gongpa Zangthal* thus introduces very peculiar systems of classifying Dzogchen teachings, which are certainly one of its distinguishing features.

Conclusion

In spite of all these peculiarities, some of which are strikingly unique in Dzogchen literature, the *Gongpa Zangthal* cycle appears perfectly in line with the teachings of the Precepts Section (*Man ngag sde*). It therefore follows in the footsteps of the instructions pertaining to this sole Section and is directly linked to the latter's so-called utterly secret cycle (*yang gsang skor*). It would consequently be totally absurd to classify it in any other category within the system of the Great Perfection. In this perspective, the cycle definitely stands on a par with earlier *Heart Drops* collections such as the *Bima Nyingthik* and the *Khandro*

¹ 'Grel tig, p. 101: o rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyis: yang dag don gyi snyan brgyud rin po che dang: chos nyid ngo sprod pa'i snyan brgyud gnyis gsungs: bhi ma la mi tras bshad thabs kyi sgo (p. 101) nas go bar bya ba'i snyan brgyud dang: nyams len gyi sgo nas grol bar bya ba'i snyan brgyud gnyis gsungs so: bee ro tsa nas sems dang ye shes dbye ba'i snyan brgyud dang| bzhaq thabs rnam pa lnga'i nyams len gyi snyan brgyud du gsungs so|. See also Smith 2016, p. 35.

² According to Se ston Padma dbang chen, 2015, *Byang gter spyi chings*, p. 426, the Oral Transmission discussing these five methods corresponds to the text known as the "Transmission of the Heart" (*Thugs brgyud*) which is certainly the *Profound Transmission of the Heart of Vairocana* (revealing) the *Precepts of the Great Perfection* (*rDzogs pa chen po'i man ngag bee ro'i thugs rgyud zab mo*, *dGongs pa zang thal*, (GTZ 1979) vol. 2, pp. 85 et seq.). However, there are, in my humble understanding, no teachings about these five methods in this text.

Nyingthik to which it is considerably indebted. The role of the borrowings from these *termas* should be investigated in more detail, a task that will become certainly easier with the new electronic tools that are now made available for research. In particular, exhaustive comparisons between these cycles will undoubtedly cast a new light on the genesis of the *Gongpa Zangthal*, its decipherment from runic *ḍākinīs*' scripts, and its potential complementary sources of inspiration.



***Complementary Remarks on the Tantric Sub-Cycles
of the Gongpa Zangthal***

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he sources of *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity* are more difficult to discern than those of the *Gongpa Zangthal*, whose relationship to other Nyingthik cycles has been clearly established by Jean-Luc Achard. We may well wonder whether, with *The Natural Emergence*, Rigdzin Gödem did not also wish to place himself in other affiliations, such as those of Nyan-gral's and Chöwang's more or less "apragmatic" Dzogchen cycles (i.e., rejecting all techniques and inviting the meditator above all to "abide in the View").

It should be noted that in present editions, a text, *The Five Nails of the Precious Key-Points*,¹ is inserted in *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity*. This text has become the single set of preliminary practices in Jangter. A standard Northern Treasures practice curriculum would start with *The Five Nails of the Precious Key-Points*, then move to the outer, inner, and secret guru-yoga practices—*Liberating All Migrants*, *The Legacy of the Heir of the Vidyādhara*s, and *The Heart Practice*—before engaging in *vidam* practice that would typically be Vajrakīla (see above *The Triple Magic Dagger*), *The Eight Pronouncements* (described above) or *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*²—before finally moving to the *Gongpa Zangthal*³ in a way that may

¹ *Rin po che'i gnad kyi gzer lnga*, in CNT, vol. 3, pp. 1-20. Earlier editions (like A 'dzom 'brug pa's edition, reproduced as rGod ldem 1973) already (and always) placed this text at the beginning of the *Ka dag rang byung rang shar*.

² *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*, discussed in our first volume. The reader remembers that this cycle, revealed by rGya Zhang khrom (11th c.), originally completely distinct from the Byang gter and much older, became one of the favorite practices in the Byang gter/rDo rje brag tradition.

³ Readers used to rNying ma systems of practice will have noticed the absence of the ḍākinī aspect of the *rtsa gsum* in this Byang gter practice curriculum. This is unusual but may be explained by the large development of the Vajravārāhī-Hayagrīva sub-cycle within the *dGongs pa zang thal*. To be more specific, the ḍākinī practice, which does not have a separate cycle of its own, would be Vajravārāhī in the form Khros ma nag mo, half of which is a sub-cycle of the *Thugs sgrub*, while the other half is the *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal*'s *Lung phag mo*

somehow integrate *The Natural Emergence of the Self-Arisen Primordial Purity*.¹

The *Gongpa Zangthal* has a number of other features that make it similar to the *Khandro Nyingthik*, although it includes, as just explained, whole rewritten sections of the *Bima Nyingthik* too.² Indeed, it takes what appear to be *Khandro Nyingthik* innovations a step further in the same direction, in a way that was to become more or less normative for later cycles of visionary Dzogchen.

Although the *Bima Nyingthik* already contained a number of tantric-style practices that were incorporated as auxiliary or supplementary practices, the *Khandro Nyingthik* anticipates the *Gongpa Zangthal* in that it presents a simpler, more coherent, and perhaps more complete set of tantric practices that are also much more logically connected to its empowerments. In short, in the *Khandro Nyingthik*, only the fourth empowerment(s)³ leads to the practices specific to the Dzogchen Heart

zab rgya. Some elements could also be found in the *bKa' brgyad rang byung rang shar* and supplements in bsTan gnyis gling pa's *Lung phag mo zab rgya*. The way in which all these elements are combined in actual practice would deserve further inquiry.

- ¹ This is, at least, the case with the standard practice manual for the *dGongs pa zang thal* in rDo rje brag, that of Zur chen Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669), which clearly merges the two cycles. This text, the *Kun tu bzang po'i dgongs pa'i bcud ka dag lhun grub kyi nyams khrid thar gling chos sku'i zhing khams bgrod pa'i nye lam chen po*, is appended to various editions of the two rDzogs chen cycles. In CNT, it is found in vol. 3, pp. 305–332.
- ² From a historical point of view, it could be said that Rig 'dzin rGod ldem definitely furthers the path opened by Klong chen pa, a fusion of the systems ascribed to Vimalamitra and Padmasambhava for visionary rDzogs chen, while adding the Vairocana component (hence the claim in the Byang gter tradition that only the *dGongs pa zang thal* is complete with all the teachings of the *rig 'dzin rnam gsum*).
- ³ The *mKha' 'gro snying thig* has a system of four empowerments, as is obvious from the title of one of its text, the *dBang bzhi'i go rim thog yig* (in Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer 2009: vol. 5, p. 180). However, the next text, the *dBang gi rim pa khrid du bskur lugs* (same volume, p. 181) clearly presents things in terms of five empowerments, *bum dbang*, *gsang dbang*, *shes rab ye shes kyi dbang*, *tshig dbang* and *rig pa'i rtsal dbang*. The fourth is connected to *khregs chod* and the fifth to *thod rgal*, exactly as in the *dGongs pa zang thal*: *de bas tshig dbang bskur te khregs chod kyi don ngo ma 'phrod bar du bsgom du gzhus go : de nas rtsal dbang bskur te thod rgal ngo sprod la :*, etc. It can thus be said that the *dGongs pa zang thal* brings to completion a move that seems to start with the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*.

Essences.

The first empowerment, known as the Vase empowerment, has as its practical application, in the *Khandro Nyingthik*, in the *outer* and *inner* sādhanas of the five clans or families.¹ The *Gongpa Zangthal* remains faithful to this model.²

The second and third empowerments of the *Khandro Nyingthik* have as their corollary a cycle of practice associated with Vajravārāhī and Hayagrīva,³ focusing on the practices of the completion phase, tummo,⁴ sexual yogas, etc. This aspect is greatly amplified in the *Gongpa Zangthal* and becomes a sub-cycle that tends to become autonomous, *The Six Profound Seals of Vajravārāhī*.⁵ This corpus, in its original form in the *Gongpa Zangthal*, is already considerably larger than its counterpart in the *Khandro Nyingthik*, but it grew into a complete large volume with Tennyi Lingpa's (1480–1535) complementary revelations⁶—supposedly a part of the treasure discovered at Zangzang Lhadrak, which Rigdzin Gödem is said to have re-hidden on Mt. Tra-zang for Tennyi Lingpa to rediscover later.

Additionally, the *Gongpa Zangthal* contains a sub-cycle devoted to the practice of Chö.⁷ *The Secret that Miraculously Arises*.⁸ This is consistent with the very large place it gives to Vajravārāhī. But was it not an innovation in its time, destined for great fortune in the later Nyingma world, to combine Chö and visionary Dzogchen? There is nothing more natural today than a Vajravārāhī cycle giving pride of place to the Chö rite and crowned by the practices of visionary Dzogchen; there have been many such cycles in the centuries from Gödem to Dūjom Lingpa's

¹ In Klong chen pa 2009, vol. 5, pp. 71–73 for the *bDe gshegs rigs lnga'i phyi sgrub* and p. 74 for the *Rigs lnga nang gi bsgrub pa*.

² In CNT, vol. 1: pp. 503–509, *rGyal ba rig lnga phyi sgrub snod bcud gnas dag*; pp. 511–514: *bDe gshegs rigs lnga'i nang sgrub dngos grub rgya mtsho*.

³ In the available editions of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, these practices are scattered in the corpus, whereas in the *dGongs pa zang thal*, they are presented more or less in the actual order of practice.

⁴ *gTum mo*, inner heat.

⁵ Generally called *Lung phag mo zab rgya*. In CNT, the *gter ma* part is in vol. 1, pp. 563–821, and some later compositions are appended to vol. 3, pp. 503–592.

⁶ The complementary cycle by bsTan gnyis gling pa fills vol. 17 of CNT.

⁷ *gCod*.

⁸ *gSang ba rmad byung*. In CNT, vol. 3, pp. 375–501.

(1835–1903) *Tröma Nakmo*,¹ one of the most widely practiced terma cycles among Nyingmapas today. Would it be inconceivable that *The Secret that Wonderfully Arises* was the original source of them all?²

A smaller, more minor sub-cycle of the *Gongpa Zangthal* is the one that teaches how to “take the essence of water,”³ replacing its counterpart in the *Khandro Nyingthik*, which teaches how to “take the essence of stones.”⁴



¹ bDud 'joms gling pa, *Khros ma nag mo*. This cycle is included in vol. 10 & 11 of the 2004 edition.

² rDo rje gling pa's (1346–1405) revelations, contemporary to those of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, should however be researched, since they also seem to combine extensive gCod teachings to the same type of visionary rDzogs chen. What is more, rDo rje gling pa, like rGod ldem, grants an important role to Vairocana the translator in the deepest teachings of rDzogs chen. The two are similar in many respects, except for the lesser development of wrathful tantric practice in rDo rje gling pa's *gter chos*. Although rDo rje gling pa's tradition was not as successful as Byang gter was before the Dzungar invasion, his life is much better documented and his *gter chos* is as well preserved and cleanly edited as that of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem.

³ *bCud len bdud rtsi'i phreng ba*, in *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 1, pp. 119–169.

⁴ *'Byung ba rdo'i bcud len*, in *Klong chen rab 'byams pa Dri med 'od zer* 2009, vol. 6, pp. 4–7. The text is obviously very small compared to its considerable expansion in the *dGongs pa zang thal*.

Appendices

Appendix 1: The Royal Lineage of Mangyül Gungthang

Tenpa Tsering Batsang (CRCAO) & Jay Holt Valentine (Troy University)

his table was constructed firstly to display the information regarding the royal lineage of Mangyül Gungthang as presented by Khenpo Chöying in the section of the text entitled *The Patrilineal Kings of Mangyül Gungthang*, the translation of which has been included in this volume. Therein, he names the first and last kings of Tibet, the interstitial patriarchs, and the twenty-three kings of Mangyül Gungthang, who are numbered in the table below to reflect Khenpo Chöying's presentation. The list of the Mangyül Gungthang Kings has been divided into two groups—Minor Kings of Khab Gungthang and the Kings of Mangyül Gungthang—to reflect the transition during the lifetime of Trigyal Bumdégön from a minor principality to a proper kingdom.

The bulk of Chöying's presentation consists of a lengthy excerpt from *The Concise History of the Greater Tibet: A Pristine Magical Mirror*, by Düdjom Jikdral Yeshé Dorjé (1904–ca. 1987), which appears to depend on an early work by Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu's (1698–1755) entitled *The Family Lineage of the Divine Kings*. As Everding points out, however, the *The Family Lineage of the Divine Kings* is not meant to be a complete genealogy, and it is far surpassed at least in detail—if not also by accuracy—by Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu's later work entitled *The Royal Lineage of Gungthang*.¹ Therefore, the following table also includes details from *The Royal Lineage of Gungthang* as presented by Everding.²

The table below shows that the Gungthang Kings are descendants of Tri Tashi Tsekpä, who was the great-grandson of Langdarma (790–842), the last king of the Tibetan Empire.

¹ Everding 2000b, p. 199.

² Everding 2000b, *passim*, but see Tafel 1 & 2 at the end of the book for his helpful tables.

#	Names	Dates
	<u>Kings of Tibet</u>	
1	Nyatri Tsenpo	5th–2nd c. BCE (traditional)
42	Langdarma Udum Tsenpo	790–842; r. 838–842
	<u>Interstitial Patriarchs</u>	
—	Namdé Ösung	ca. 846–905
—	Palkhor Tsen	ca. 955–983
—	Tashi Tsekpa	ca. 10th c.
—	Paldé	ca. 10th c.
	<u>Minor Kings of Khab Gungthang</u>	
1	Öpaldé (aka., Marpodé, Marpo Tsen)	ca. 10th c.
2	Özerdé	ca. 10th c.
3	Dechödé	ca. 10th c.
4	Wangdé (i.e., Wangpodé)	ca. 10th c.
—	Dungkardé	ca. 10th–11th c.
5	Tsendé	ca. 10th–11th c.
6	Ödé	ca. 11th–12th c.
7	Wangchukdé	ca. 11th–12th c.
8	Kyobdé	ca. 12th c.
9	Gönpodé (i.e., Göndé)	ca. 12th–13th c.
—	Rule by Yartsé	ca. 1235–1250
—	Lha Rinchen Tso	13th c.

10	Tsündé (i.e., Tsünpadé)	13th c.
	<u>Kings of Mangyül Gungthang</u>	
11	Bumdégön (i.e., Bumdégön, Bumdé, Chögyal Bumdé)	ca. 1252–1280
12	Tri Rinchen Zangpo	ca. 13th–14th c.
—	Tridé Bum	ca. 1268–1308
13	Chökyongdé	1280–1352; r. ca. 1308–1352
14	Tashidé	ca. 1313–1365; r. 1352–1365
15	Püntsokdé (i.e., Tri Püntsokpal)	ca. 1338–1370, r. 1365–1370
—	Presumed Brief Rule by Zhang Nomads	(less than a year)
—	Foreign Rule by Jang Tāwen	ca. 1371–1375
—	Brief Rule by Kün pang Tsültrim Gyaltzen the Zhang nomad patriarch	(less than a year)
—	Chokdrubdé	ca. 1367–1390, r. ca. 1375–1390
16	Sönamdé	1371–1404, r. 1390–1404
—	Gap in Rule in Mangyül Gungthang by a scion of the dynasty. It appears that Sönamdé's wife, Gugé Ngadakma Chenmo Chökyong Gyalmo, may have ruled during part or all of this period.	ca. 1404–1419.
17	Lhawang Gyaltzen	1404–1465, r. 1419–1465
18	Namgyaldé	1422–1502, r. ca. 1465–1502
—	Norbudé	1450–ca. 1484

19	Samdrubdé (i.e., Samdé) ¹	1459–ca. 1506
—	Künzang Nyida Drakpa	1514–1560
20	Gongma Künga Lodrö	d. 1554
21	Künzang Drakpa Dorjé (i.e., Tri Künga Drak)	1528–1565
22	Samdrubdé (i.e., Samdé) ²	d. ca. 1593
23	Sönam Wangchukdé	1577– ca. 1621



¹ First of two kings with this name.

² Second of two kings with this name.

Appendix 2: Timeline of Relevant Events

1124	Birth of Nyangral Nyima Özer.
1158	Birth of Zhang Nyima Bum.
1175	Birth of Pönsé Khyungö Tsal.
1192	Death of Nyangral Nyima Özer.
1212	Birth of Guru Chöwang.
1213	Death of Zhang Nyima Bum.
1230s	Sakya forged a strategic connection with the Tsechung Khabpa, most likely the patriarch named Gönpodé (ca. 12th–13th c.), who quickly established himself as ruler over the region of Gungthang in the early 1230s.
1230	Birth of Orgyen Rinchenpal.
1235– 1239 (ca.)	Tsechung Khabpa's expansion of his domain abruptly halted, when troops from the Kingdom of Yartsé crossed over the border from Nepal in an invasion and subsequent occupation of Lower Ngari.
1244– 1354	Yuan Rule in Tibet.
mid-13th c.	Sakya took part in the establishment of the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang and the principalities of Latö Jang and Latö Lho to the west of Sakya and Chumik to the east of Sakya.

1260s	Śākya Ö (ca. 1206–1268) and Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak (13th c.) worked together to reveal a longevity treasure for Khubilai Khan.
1264	Khubilai established himself as the undisputed Great Khan.
1264–1266	Chögyal Phakpa (1235–1280) attempted unsuccessfully to trade Yardrok, which was administered by Sakya, for Lower Ngari during political negotiations aimed at reorganizing power in the region.
1267 (trad.)	King Bumdegön (1252–1280) founded the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang with the support of Sakya, particularly Chögyal Phakpa.
1270	Death of Guru Chöwang.
1289	Birth of Meben Rinchen Lingpa.
1290	Birth of Gyalsé Lekpa.
1291	Birth of Pema Ledreltsal.
1291	Birth of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen, who was largely responsible for the rise of the Jonang tradition.
1294	Death of Khubilai.
1308 (ca.)	Reign of King Chökyongdé (ca. 1280–1352) of Mangyül Gungthang began.
1308	Birth of Longchenpa Drimé Özer.
1309	Death of Orgyen Rinchenpal.

1310/11	Rinchen Lingpa revealed his terma cycle about Nāgarakṣa, which is perhaps connected with Rigdzin Gödem's practice of <i>The Wheel of Activities of Black Leprosy</i> ca. 1349.
1313	Pema Ledreltsal revealed the <i>Khandro Nyingthik</i> and his Rāhula system.
1316 (ca.)	Birth of Jang Tāwen.
1319	Death of Pema Ledreltsal.
1323– 1324	Imperial Preceptor Künga Lodrö Gyaltsen (1299–1327), divided the Khön clan estate of the Sakya into four separate hereditary estates to be shared between the eleven surviving sons of Zangpo Pal (1261–1323, r. 1306–1323), which broke Sakya unity and served as a contributing factor of the weakening of Sakya influence and prestige.
1323	Birth of Orgyen Lingpa.
1325	Yöntsün Drakpa Dar, who was the ruling patriarch of the Jangpa and also the <i>pönchen</i> for the Sakya administration, founded Ngamring Chödé with the help of the Sakya master named Śākya Sengé.
1337	Birth of Rigdzin Gödem.
1338 (ca.)	Birth of King Püntsokdé of Mangyül Gungthang.
1339	Longchenpa Drimé Özer was given the empowerments of the <i>Bima Nyingthik</i> and had a vision in which he was exhorted to teach the <i>Khandro Nyingthik</i> and write his major works.

1339– 1364 (ca.)	Longchenpa Drimé Özer composed his famous works.
1340	Birth of Sangyé Lingpa.
1346	Birth of Dorjé Lingpa.
1346– 1354	Period of Weakening of Yuan Rule in Tibet.
1349	Rigdzin Gödem obtained the signs of accomplishment of <i>The Wheel of Activities of Black Leprosy</i> . Birth of Rendawa Zhönnu Lodrö.
1349– 1361	Rigdzin Gödem received teachings from Nangden Gyalpo and Changmapa at some point during this time period.
1350 (ca.)	Byang Tāwen (ca. 1316–1375) abducted Situ Chökyi Rinchen, the ruler of Latö Lho, and incorporated the region into his domain at some point in the middle of the 14th century. For a variety of reasons, Situ Chökyi Rinchen survived, married the daughter of Byang Tāwen, i.e., Namkha Bum, and by imperial decree was reinstated as the ruler of Latö Byang with significant independence from both Sakya and Latö Jang.
1352	Death of King Chökyongdé. King Tashidé began his reign over the Kingdom of Mangyül Gungthang.
1354	End of Sakyapa dominance in Tibet (traditionally recognized). Sakyapa influence continued regionally at least in Sakya, Latö Jang, Latö Lho, Chumik, and Mangyül Gungthang. Byang Tāwen expanded

	Ngamring Chödé with the assistance of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen.
1354– 1618	Pakmodrupa Rule in Tibet.
1354– 1358	Pakmodru began to rise under the leadership of Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltzen.
1355 (ca.)	Death of Orgyen Lingpa.
1356	Byang Tāwen teamed up with oppositional forces within the Sakya, i.e., the brothers of the Lhakhang Labrang, to imprison Gyalwa Zangpo, who was the <i>pönchen</i> of Sakya that had just switched sides from opposing the Pakmodru to supporting them.
1357	Birth of Tsongkhapa Lozang Drakpa.
1357– 1358	Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltzen convened a conference in Sakya to settle affairs in Sakya, essentially ending Sakya resistance to the Pakmodru.
1358	Oppositional forces within Sakya attacked Ngamring Chödé and marched through Latö to Zangzang.
mid-late- 14th century	King Tashidé, who was evidently worried about the possibility of a siege, significantly reinforced defenses in Dzongkar.
mid-late- 14th century	Gold was discovered near Kailash, greatly increasing the discretionary wealth of King Tashidé, which he vowed to use for religious means.
1361	Rigdzin Gödem found a leather bag full of orange-color nectar with “a six-sided crystal that was slightly larger than a swan’s egg.” This is the probable year

	when he began receiving teachings from “Draklungpa Khetsün Rinchenpal.” Death of Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltsen.
1362	Zangpo Drakpa revealed treasure texts meant to aid and sustain the rule of King Tashidé in Mangyül Gungthang.
1363– 1365	King Tashidé used recently discovered gold from a mine near Kailash to finance the creation of a golden <i>Tengyur</i> with the help of Purang Lotsāwa, Dzangpa Lotsāwa, Bodong Lotsāwa Sherab Meché, and Bodong Khenchen Jangchub Tsemo. They planned to produce a golden <i>Kangyur</i> , but the king evidently died before the project was started.
1364	Death of Longchenpa Drimé Özer.
1365	Death of King Tashidé of Mangyül Gungthang. Prophetic guides delivered to Rigdzin Gödem. King Püntsokpal began his reign over Mangyül Gungthang.
1365– 1366	Rigdzin Gödem received the prophetic guides indirectly from Zangpo Drakpa. Rigdzin Gödem met with Sangyé Tenpa and Darzangpa.
1366	Rigdzin Gödem met King Püntsokpal to request treasure substitutes. Rigdzin Gödem extracted the “keys” at Mt. Trazang and the Northern Treasures at Mt. Zangzang Lhadrak.
1366	Death of Gyalsé Lekpa.
1366– 1371	Rigdzin Gödem established a <i>gönpa</i> at Mt. Trazang, where he regularly resided, practiced, and received

	disciples and pilgrims until departing for the concealed lands in 1371.
1367 (ca.)	King Püntsokpal had an unofficial relationship with Jomo Rendawa, and she gave birth in this year to the future king named Chokdrubdé. King Püntsokpal then married one of the daughters of the ruler of Latö Jang, Byang Tāwen.
1368	Death of Meben Rinchen Lingpa.
1370	Rigdzin Gödem traveled to Kyidrong, where he attempted to reveal additional treasures, and visited the Ārya Wati Zangpo statue at the Phakpa Lhakhang Temple. King Püntsokpal invited Rigdzin Gödem to (presumably) Dzongkar for their second meeting to establish a patron-priest relationship. Death of the Gungthang king Püntsokdé.
1370– 1371 (ca.)	Zhangpa Nomads briefly ruled over Mangyül Gungthang.
1371	Birth of future king of Mangyül Gungthang named Sönamdé.
1371– 1375	Byang Tāwen ruled over Mangyül Gungthang.
1371 (ca.)	Rigdzin Gödem’s visionary experiences encouraged him to leave for Sikkim. It is said that in this year, Gödem attained “an uncommon realization” of visionary Dzogchen. This was also the probable year when Rigdzin Gödem began teaching his revelations, after having practiced them for five years.

1371– 1372	Rigdzin Gödem and his group wintered in Khyungtsang.
1372– 1373	Rigdzin Gödem sojourned in Drangso, Dringtsam, and Changmo.
1375	Zhangpa Nomads briefly ruled over Mangyül Gungthang. King Chokdrubdé began his rule over Mangyül Gungthang.
1376	Tsongkhapa met one of his main teachers, Rendawa Zhönnu Lodrö, a Sakya master. In the winter, Rigdzin Gödem arrived at the stūpa in Gepa Mitö called Chörten Nyima.
1377	Rigdzin Gödem was presumably in Dremoshong, where he stayed for the season. He wintered at Gadé monastery.
1379	Rigdzin Gödem visited two of the five valleys of Dremoshong.
1380	Rigdzin Gödem stayed in Lungdéu and then in Götsang Monastery.
1381	Rigdzin Gödem resided in the forests of Chudü.
1382– 1383	Rigdzin Gödem was in Mönrimi.
1384	Rigdzin Gödem arrived at Mt. Trazang.
1385/1387	Situ Chökyi Rinchen, the ruler of Latö Lho, and Sakya Lama Lochen Drakpa Gyeltsen founded Shelkar Chöjung, which is considered the cultural center of Latö Lho.

1389	Rigdzin Gödem was invited to the Gungthang court. The edict of King Chokdrubdé was issued.
1390	Death of King Chokdrubdé. Sönamdé began his reign.
1390/1394	Sakya Lama Lochen Drakpa Gyeltsen laid the foundation stone for Gungthang Chödé and became its first abbot when it was finished. He would later be succeeded as abbot by his nephew, Bodong Pañchen Choklé Namgyal, which surely contributed to Gungthang Chödé's transition to an ecumenical institution that included Bodong as well as Sakya instruction.
1396	Death of Sangyé Lingpa.
1396/1408	Birth of Künkyong Lingpa.
1397	Rigdzin Gödem fell from his horse and was severely injured. He experienced a series of eight dreams. Setön Nyima Zangpo, the biographer (aged 12) met Rigdzin Gödem for the first time.
1399 (ca.)	Birth of Namgyal Gönpö (ca. 1399–1424), the son of Rigdzin Gödem.
1399	Rigdzin Gödem had a dream while apparently in residency at Gyakhar, the seat of the Sé lineage in Ngamring. The dream could be interpreted as telling him to stay at Gyakhar (in particular) or in this world (in general) and teach, because it was not yet time for him to die.

1401	Rigdzin Gödem gave to fifteen close disciples extensive guidance for <i>The Transparent Contemplation of Samantabhadra</i> . Rigdzin Gödem delivered teachings at Taktsé, which is the last recorded event in <i>The Clarifying Ray of Sunlight</i> before his illness and death.
1401 (ca.)	Death of Rigdzin Gödem.
1402	Situ Chökyi Rinchen, the ruler of independent Latö Lho, died, and his son, Situ Lhatsen Kyab continued the dynasty with the start of his reign.
1403	Birth of Ratna Lingpa.
1403 (ca.)	Bodong Pañchen appointed as the abbot of Gungthang Chödé to succeed his uncle, Lochen Drakpa Gyeltsen, by King Sönamdé.
1404	Sönamdé directed his troops to attack Latö Lho, which was being led by the young Situ Lhatsen Kyab. Death of King Sönamdé.
1404– 1419	Gap in Rule in Mangyül Gungthang by a scion of the dynasty. It appears that Sönamdé's wife, Gugé Ngadakma Chenmo Chökyong Gyalmo, may have ruled during part or all of this period.
1405	Death of Dorjé Lingpa.
1408/1409	Date traditionally given for Rigdzin Gödem's death, which more probably occurred in 1401 or soon afterwards.
1412	Death of Rendawa Zhönnu Lodrö.

1419	Death of Tsongkhapa. King Lhawang Gyaltsen began his reign in Mangyül Gungthang.
1445 (ca.)	Birth of Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen.
1450	Birth of Pema Lingpa.
1465	Death of King Lhawang Gyaltsen. Namgyaldé began his reign in Mangyül Gungthang.
1475	Birth of Ngakchang Śākya Zangpo.
1477/1489	Death of Künkyong Lingpa.
1478/1479	Death of Ratna Lingpa.
1480	Birth of Tennyi Lingpa.
1487	Birth of Ngari Paṇchen Pema Wangyal.
1497	Birth of Rigdzin Chokden Gönpö.
1502	Death of King Namgyaldé.
1512	The issue of Lekden Düjom Dorjé's dates (1452/1512–1565/1580) has not been settled. This is one possible year of his birth.
1521	Death of Pema Lingpa.
1524 (ca.)	Birth of Khyentsé Wangchuk.
1531	Death of Rigdzin Chokden Gönpö.
1535	Death of Tennyi Lingpa.

1542	Death of Ngari Paṇchen Pema Wangyal.
1550	Birth of Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal. Death of Ngakchang Śākya Zangpo.
1568 (ca.)	Death of Khyentsé Wangchuk.
1559 (ca.)	Death of Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen.
1580 (ca.)	While the issue of Lekden Düjom Dorjé's dates (1452/1512–1565/1580) has not been settled, he must have died by 1580, before the birth of his reincarnation, Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo.
1580	Birth of Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo.
1585	Birth of Jatsön Nyingpo.
1595	Birth of Menlungpa Lochok Rigpé Dorjé.
1597	Birth of Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé.
1603	Death of Jangdak Tashi Tobgyal.
1604	Birth of Zurchen Chöying Rangdrol and of the first King of Sikkim, Püntsok Namgyal.
1613	Birth of Karma Chagmé.
1615	Birth of Rigdzin Dūdül Dorjé.
1617	Birth of the Fifth Dalai Lama.
1620	Demise of the Gungthang Dynasty.
1639	Death of Rigdzin Ngakgi Wangpo.

1640	Birth of Garwang Dorjé and Rigdzin Pema Trinlé.
1646	Birth of Terdak Lingpa. Enthronement of King Püntsok Namgyal of Sikkim in Yuksom.
1654	Death of Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé. Birth of Minling Lochen Dharmaśrī.
1656	Death of Jatsön Nyingpo.
1668	Birth of Pema Döndrub.
1669	Death of Zurchen Chöying Rangdrol.
1671	Death of Menlungpa Lochok Rigpé Dorjé.
1672	Death of Rigdzin Dödül Dorjé. Birth of Drubthop Lobzang Lhachok.
1678	Death of Karma Chagmé.
1682	Death of the Fifth Dalai-Lama. Birth of Rigdzin Chöjé Lingpa.
1685	Death of Garwang Dorjé.
1690	Death of the first King of Sikkim, Püntsok Namgyal.
1695	Death of Rigdzin Nyida Longsal.
1697	Birth of Lelung Zhepé Dorjé.
1698	Birth of Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu.

1714	Death of Terdak Lingpa.
1717/18 (ca.)	Death of Rigdzin Pema Trinlé. Death of Minling Lochen Dharmaśrī.
1720	Birth of Rigdzin Kalzang Pema Wangchuk.
1725	Birth of the 5th Yölmo Tülku, Trinlé Düjom. Death of Rigdzin Chöjé Lingpa.
1740	Death of Lelung Zhepé Dorjé.
1744	Death of Pema Döndrub.
1747	Death of Drubthop Lobzang Lhachok.
1755	Death of Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu.
1771	Death of Rigdzin Kalzang Pema Wangchuk.
1775	Birth of Drakkar Taso Tülku, Chökyi Wangchuk.
1789	Death of the 5th Yölmo Tülku, Trinlé Düjom.
1802	Birth of Khordong Terchen Nüden Dorjé.
1830	Birth of Dongak Tendzin.
1835	Birth of Düjom Lingpa.
1845	Birth of Gönpö Wangyal.
1837	Death of Drakkar Taso Tülku, Chökyi Wangchuk.
1856	Birth of Tertön Sögyal (Lerab Lingpa).
1864	Death of Khordong Terchen Nüden Dorjé.

1879	Birth of Khenpo Ngawang Palzang.
1884	Birth of Tülku Tsullo (Tsültrim Zangpo).
1890	British annexation of Sikkim.
1892	Death of Dongak Tendzin (the first Gyatrül).
1903	Death of Düjom Lingpa.
1915	Death of Gönpö Wangyal.
1926	Death of Tertön Sögyal (Lerab Lingpa).
1931	Birth of Künzang Tendzin.
1940	Death of Khenpo Ngawang Palzang.
1954/1957	Death of Tülku Tsullo (Tsültrim Zangpo).
2002 (ca.)	Death of Künzang Tendzin.



Appendix 3: Table of Equivalencies

Ārya Wati Zangpo	'Phags pa Wa ti bzang po
Ati	A ti
Bāḥné Thekchok Tendzin	Bāḥ gnas Theg mchog bstan 'dzin (d.u.)
Bakhal Mukpo	Ba mkhal smug po (11th–12th c.)
Bampa Naktsawa	Bam pa nags rtsa ba
Bara	'Ba' ra
<i>Bardo Thödröl</i>	<i>Bar do thos grol</i>
Batön Pal, Lama —	<i>Bla ma sBa ston dpal</i> (d.u.)
Beyül	<i>sBas yul</i>
<i>Bima Nyingthik</i>	<i>Bi ma snying thig</i>
Bodong	Bo dong
Bodong Khenchen Jangchub Tsemo	Bo dong <i>mkhan chen</i> Byang chub rtse mo (1303–1380)
Bodong Lotsāwa Sherab Meché	Bo dong <i>lo tsā ba</i> Shes rab me lce (14th c.)
Bodong Pañchen Choklé Namgyal	Bo dong <i>pañ chen</i> Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1375–1451)
Bön(po)	Bon (po)
Bü	Bud
Bulé	Bu le
Bulégang	Bu le gangs
Bumdégön	'Bum lde mgon (ca. 1252–1280)
Chak Chongmo Dönshak	lCags mchong mo don zhags
Chakdor Norbu	Phyag rdor nor bu (d. 1663)
Changling Tülku	lCang gling <i>sprul sku</i> (20th c.)
Changmapa / Changmawa, Lama —	<i>Bla ma</i> lCang ma pa (ba) (14th c.)
Changmo	Chang mo
Chemchok	Che mchog
Chikyi Dechen	Phyis kyi bde chen
Chim Dorjé Trechung	'Chim rDo rje spre chung (d.u.)
Chimé Nyewé Wangpo	'Chi med nye ba'i dbang po
Chiti	sPyi sti
Chö	<i>gCod</i>
Chögyal Bumdé	Chos rgyal 'Bum lde (ca. 13th c.)
Chögyal Phakpa	Chos rgyal 'Phags pa (1235–1280)
Chögyal Sönam	Chos rgyal bsod nams (1442–1509)
Chöjé Lingpa	Chos rje gling pa (1682–1725)

Chokdrubdé	mChog grub lde (ca. 1367–1390, r. ca. 1375–1390)
Chökyi Wangchuk	Chos kyi dbang phyug, i.e., Gu ru Chos dbang (1212–1270)
Chökyi Wangchuk, Drakkar Taso	Brag dkar rta so <i>sprul sku</i> Chos kyi dbang phyug (1775–1837)
Tülku —	Gu ge <i>mnga' bdag ma chen mo</i> Chos skyong rgyal mo (ca. 14th c.)
Chökyong Gyalmo, Gugé Ngadakma	Chos skyong lde (ca. 1280–1352, r. 1308–1352)
Chenmo —	
Chökyongdé	
Chörten Nyima	mChod rten nyi ma
Chudü	Chu 'dus
Chugang	Chu sgang
Chumik	Chu mig
Chuwar	Chu dbar
Cung Riwoché	gCung Ri bo che
Dakpo Kagyü	Dags po bKa' brgyud
Dalai Lama	Tā la'i <i>bla ma</i>
Dartön Yönten Gyatso	'Dar <i>ston</i> Yon tan rgya mtsho (d.u.)
Darzang(pa)	Dar bzang (pa) (ca. 14th c.)
Dechödé	bDe spyod lde (ca. 10th c.)
Deden Kyimolung	bDe ldan sKyid mo lung
Degyin Dewa Radza	De gyin rDe wa ra dza (ca. 7th c.)
Degyin Hor	De gyin hor
Desi Sangyé Gyatso	<i>sDe srid</i> Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705)
Dharma Tra	Dharma bkra (d.u.)
Dingchen	sDings chen
Dingri	Ding ri
Dö	<i>mDos</i>
Dokham	mDo khams
Dolpo	Dol po
Dolpopa Sherab Gyaltzen	Dol po pa Shes rab rgyal mtshan (1291–1361)
Dongak Tendzin	mDo sngags bsTan 'dzin (probably rGya sprul 01, 1830–1892)
Dopa Sangyé Tenpa	Do pa Sangs rgyas bstan pa (14th c.)
Dorjé Barwa Tsal	rDo rje 'bar ba rtsal
Dorjé Drak	rDo rje brag
Dorjé Drakpo Tsal	rDo rje drag po rtsal

Dorjé Dūjom, Nanam —	sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms (8th–9th c.)
Dorjé Gönpö	rDo rje mGon po (14th c.)
Dorjé Lekpa	rDo rje Legs pa
Dorjé Lingpa	rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405)
Dorjé Nöjin	rDo rje gnod sbyin nag po
Dorjé Thokmé	rDo rje thogs med (i.e., <i>Rig 'dzin</i> sKal bzang padma dbang phyug, (1720–1771)
Dorjé Tötrenge Tsäl	rDo rje thod 'phreng rtsäl
Dorjépal	rDo rje dpäl (b. late 14th c.)
Drakar Tashiding	Brag dkar bkra shis sdings
Drakkhar Taso	Brag mkhar rta so
Drakla	Brag la
Drakla Dzong	Brag la rdzong
Draklungpa Khetsün Rinchenpal	Brag lung pa <i>mKhas btsun</i> Rin chen dpäl (14th c.)
Drakmar	Brag dmar
Draknag	Brag nag
Drangso	Drang so
Dremokhü	'Bras mo khud
Dremoshong	'Bras mo gshongs
Drepung	'Bras spungs
Drigang Rigdzin Phodrang	'Bri sgang <i>rig 'dzin</i> pho brang
Drigung	'Bri gung
Drikung Gomchen Künrin	'Bri gung <i>sgom chen</i> Kun rin, a.k.a. Kun dga' 'od zer rin chen (d.u.)
Dringsam	'Bring 'tshams
Dritsam	'Bri mtshams
Drölma Yarché	sGrol ma yar bead
Dromo	Gro mo
Dromokhü	Gro mo khud
Drompa Gyang	Grom pa rgyang
Drubthop Lobzang Lhachok	Grub thob Blo bzang lha mchog (1672–1747)
Drubthop Ngödrup	Grub thob dngos grub (d.u.)
Düdjom Jikdral Yeshé Dorjé	bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje (1904–ca. 1987)
Düdül Dorjé, Rigdzin —	bDud 'dul rdo rje (1615–1672)

Düdül Pal	bDud 'dul dpal, i.e., <i>Slob dpon</i> Srid bdud 'dul dpal (14th c.)
Düjom Lingpa	bDud 'joms gling pa (1835–ca. 1903)
Düjom Rinpoche	bDud 'joms <i>rin po che</i> , i.e., bDud 'joms 'Jigs bral ye shes rdo rje (1904– 1987)
Dungkardé	Dung dkar lde (ca. 10th–11th c.)
Dzangpa Lotsāwa	'Dzangs pa <i>lo tsā ba</i> (14th c.)
Dzo	<i>mDzo</i>
Dzogchen	rDzogs chen
Dzönga Taktsé	mDzod lnga stag rtse
Dzongkar	rDzong dkar
Dzongpu	rDzong phu
Dzongsar Khyentsé Rinpoche	rDzong gsar mkhyen brtse <i>rin po che</i> (b. 1961)
Gadé	dGa' bde
Gampa	Gam pa
Ganden Podrang	dGa' ldan pho brang
Gangben Könchok Lhündrup	Gang <i>ban</i> dKon mchog lhun grub (d.u.)
Gangchen Dzönga	Gangs chen mdzod lnga
Garab Dorjé	dGa' rab rdo rje (d.u.)
Gartön Rinchen Bum	mGar <i>ston</i> Rin chen 'bum (d.u.)
Garwang Dorjé Nyingpo	Gar dbang rdo rje snying po (1640– 1685)
Gatön Palwa	rGa <i>ston</i> dPal ba, i.e., sBa <i>ston</i> dpal (d.u.)
Gelug(pa)	dGe lugs (pa)
Genyen	<i>dGe bsnyen</i>
Gepa Mitö	Gad pa mi thod
Gesar	Ge sar (trad. 11–12th c.)
Geyen Leru	dGe snyen ble ru
Göndé	mGon lde (d.u.)
<i>Gongpa Zangthal</i>	<i>dGongs pa zang thal</i>
Gongpo	'Gong po
Gönpa	<i>dGon pa</i>
Gönpo Wangyal	mGon po dbang rgyal (1845–1915)
Gönpodé	mGon po lde (ca. 12th–13th c.)
Götsang	Go tshang
Goyül	sGo yul

Gugé	Gu ge
Gügung Chödrak Palzang	<i>Gu'i gung</i> Chos grags dpal bzang (r. late 14th c.)
Gügung Rinchen Gyaltzen	<i>Gu'i gung</i> Rin chen rgyal mtshan (b. ca. 1338)
Gung	<i>Gung</i>
Gungthang	Gung thang
Gungthang Chödé	Gung thang chos sde
Guru Chöwang	Gu ru Chos dbang (1212–1270)
Guru Tashi	Gu ru bKra shis (b. 18th c.)
Guru Yeshé Khyungdrak	Guru ye she khyung grags (13th c.)
Gya Minyak	rGya Mi nyag
Gya Zhangtrom Dorjé Öbar	rGya zhang khrom rDo rje 'od 'bar (11th c.)
Gyaben Lama	rGya ban <i>bla ma</i> (d. u.)
Gyakhar	brGya mkhar
Gyal	rGyal
Gyalgyi Khenpalung	rGyal gyi mkhan pa lung
Gyalsé Lekpa	<i>rGyal sras</i> Legs pa (1290–1366)
Gyalsé Loden Sherab	<i>rGyal sras</i> Blo ldan shes rab (d.u.)
Gyalwa, Lama —	<i>Bla ma</i> rGyal ba
Gyalwa Zangpo	rGyal ba bzang po (14th c.)
Gyang	rGyang
Gyang Yönbulung	rGyang yon bu lung
Gyangro Tsalma	rGyang ro tshal ma
Gyatön Thukjé Sengé	rGya <i>ston</i> Thugs rje seng ge (d.u.)
Gyepuk	Gyes phug
Hashang Ya	Ha shang ya (d.u.)
Hashang Yatrö	Hwa shang ya khrod (d.u.)
Hepo	Has po ri
Hepuk	He phug
Hor	Hor
Hor Khenpo Jigten	Hor <i>mKhan po</i> 'Jig rten (d.u.)
Itön	I <i>ston</i> (d.u.)
Jamangpo Gyaltzen Pal	Bya mang po rgyal mtshan dpal, i.e., Byang chub gling pa dPal gyi rgyal mtshan (14th c.)
Jamgön Kongtrül	'Jam mgon kong sprul (1813–1899)
Jampa	Byam pa
Jampa Shenyen	Byams pa bshes gnyen (b. early 15th c.)

Jampatrin	Byams pa sprin
Jamungpo	Bya mung po, i.e., Byang chub gling pa dPal gyi rgyal mtshan (14th c.)
Jamyang Rinchen Gyaltsen	'Jam dbyangs rin chen rgyal mtshan (1446–ca. 1559)
Jamyang Sönam Gyaltsen Pal Zangpo	'Jam dbyangs bsod nams rgyal mtshan dpal bzang po (15th c.)
Jang Minyak	Byang Mi nyag
Jang Ngamring	Byang Ngam ring
Jang Täwen	Byang Tä dben (ca. 1316–1375)
Jangchub Lingpa Palgyi Gyaltsen	Byang chub gling pa dPal gyi rgyal mtshan, i.e., Bya mang po rgyal mtshan dpal (14th c.)
Jangter	Byang gter
Jatsön Nyingpo	'Ja' tshon snying po (1585–1656)
Jé Lhaten	rJe' lha bstan
Jocham Sönam Khyeudren	Jo lcam bSod nams khye'u 'dren (14th c.)
Jomo Rendama	Jo mo Re mda' ma (14th c.)
José Dowä	Jo sras Do ba (14th c.)
<i>Kadak Rangjung Rangshar</i>	<i>Ka dag rang byung rang shar</i>
Kadam(pa)	bKa' gdams (pa)
<i>Kagyé</i>	<i>bKa' brgyad</i>
Kagyü(pa)	bKa' brgyud (pa)
Kaḥtok Küntuzangpo	Kaḥ thog Kun tu bzang po (17th c.)
Kaḥtok Rigdzin Tsewang Norbu	Kaḥ thog <i>rig dzin</i> Tse dbang nor bu (1698–1755)
Kalzang Pema Wangchuk, Rigdzin —	<i>Rig 'dzin</i> sKal bzang padma dbang phyug (1720–1771)
Kama	bKa' ma
Kanchenjunga	Gang chen mdzod lnga
<i>Kangyur</i>	<i>bKa' 'gyur</i>
Karma Chagmé	gNas mdo Karma chags med, i.e., Rā ga a sya (1613–1678)
Karma Kagyü	Karma bka' brgyud
Karma Lingpa	Karma gling pa (14th c.)
Khab	Khab
Khamsum Zilnön	Khams gsum gzil gnon, i.e., Kun bzang 'gyur med lhun grub (ca. 1775–1810)
<i>Khandro Nyingthik</i>	<i>mKha' 'gro snying thig</i>
Khandro Yeshé Tsogyal	mKha' 'gro Ye shes mtsho rgyal

Khandröling	mKha' 'gro'i gling
Khenpajong	mKhan pa ljongs
Khenpalung	mKhan pa lung
Khenpo Chöying	<i>mKhan po</i> Chos dbyings (b. 20th c.)
Khetsün	mKhas btsun
Khön	'Khon
Khordong Terchen Nüden Dorjé	'Khor gdong <i>gter chen</i> Nus ldan rdo rje (1802–1864)
Khyabdak Menlungpa Lochok Rigpé Dorjé	<i>Khyab bdag</i> sMan lung pa Blo mchog rig pa'i rdo rje, 1595–1671
Khyentsé Wangchuk	mKhyen brtse'i dbang phyug (1524– 1568 according to BDRC, but this seems to be too early)
Khyunglung Drakhar	Khyung lung brag mkhar
Khyungtsang	Khyung tshang
Kongpo	Kong po
Kulha	sKu lha
Künga Chöphak	<i>Rig 'dzin</i> Kun dga' chos 'phags (d.u.)
Künga Drak(pa)	Kun dga' grags (pa) (1528–1565)
Künga Lodrö, Gongma —	Gong ma Kun dga' blo gros (d. 1554)
Künga Lodrö Gyaltsen	Kun dga' blo gros rgyal mtshan (1299– 1327)
Künkyong Lingpa	Kun skyong gling pa (b. 1396/1408–d. 1477/1489)
Künrang Dönyö Gyaltsen	<i>Kun spangs</i> Don yod rgyal mtshan (14th–15th c.)
Künrang Tsültrim Gyaltsen	<i>Kun spangs</i> Tshul khriims rgyal mtshan (14th c.)
Küntuzik	Kun tu gzigs
Künzang Drakpa Dorjé	Kun bzang grags pa rdo rje (1528– 1565)
Künzang Gyurmé Lhundrup	Kun bzang 'gyur med lhun grub (ca. 1775–1810)
Künzang Jigmé Pawo	Kun bzang 'jigs med dpa' bo (d.u.)
Künzang Nyida Drakpa	Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa (1514– 1560)
Künzang Tendzin	Kun bzang bstan 'dzin (1931–ca. 2002)
Kusulupa	<i>Ku su lu pa</i>
Kutang	Ku thang

Kya Ngatsal	sKya rnga tshal
Kyechok Darzang	sKyes mchog Dar bzang (14th c.)
Kyidé	sKyid lde (ca. 10th c.)
Kyidé Nyima Göñ	sKyid lde Nyi ma mgon (r. ca. 900–930)
Kyidrong	sKyid grong
Kyimolung	sKyid mo lung
Kyobdé	sKyob lde (ca. 12th c.)
Labchi	La phyi
Lakhor	Bla 'khor
Lama	Bla ma
Lamyik	Lam yig
Langdarma Udum Tsenpo	Glang dar ma 'u dum btsan po (790–842; r. 838–842)
Langtang	Glang 'phrang
Latö	La stod
Latö Jang	La stod Byang
Latö Lho	La stod lHo
Lekden Düjom Dorjé	Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje (1452/1512–1565/1580)
Lekdenjé	Legs ldan rje, i.e., Legs ldan bdud 'joms rdo rje (1452/1512–1565/1580)
Lekpa(wa)	Legs pa (ba) (14th c.)
Lelung Zhepé Dorjé	sLe lung bZhad pa'i rdo rje (1697–1740)
Lha Lama Yeshé Ö	lHa bla ma Ye shes 'od (ca. 953–1040)
Lha Rinchen Tso	lHa rin chen mtsho (13th c.)
Lha Rinchen Zangpo	lHa Rin chen zang po (1404–1465)
Lhachen Barwatsal	lHa chen 'Bar ba rtsal
Lhachen Wangchuk	lHa chen dbang phyug, i.e., Ma hā de ba
Lhakhang Labrang	lHa khang bla brang
Lhartsé	lHa rtse
Lhasa	lHa sa
Lhasé Rinpoche	lHa sras rin po che, i.e., lHa sras Mu khri btsan po (ca. 761–ca. 815)
Lhatso Sintso	lHa mtsho srin mtsho
Lhatsün Jigmé Wangchuk	lHa btsun rig 'dzin 'Jigs med dpa' bo (b. 682)
Lhatsün Namkha Jigmé	lHa btsun Nam mkha' 'Jigs med (1597–1654)

Lhawang Gyaltsen	lHa dbang rgyal mtshan (1404–1465, r. 1419–1465)
Lhé Podrangding	lHa'i pho brang sdings
Lho	<i>lHo</i>
Lhodrak	lHo brag
Lhokha	lHo kha
Lhopa Sadruk	lHo pha sa drug
Lo Möntang / Mustang	Glo sMon thang
Lobpön Si Dūdül Pal	<i>Slob dpon</i> Srid bdud 'dul dpal (14th c.)
Lochen Dharmaśrī, Minling —	sMin gling <i>lo chen</i> Dharmaśrī (1654–ca. 1717)
Lochen Drakpa Gyeltsen	<i>Lo chen</i> Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352–1405)
Lomé	Glo smad
Longchen Rabjam / Longchenpa	Klong chen rab 'byams, i.e., Klong chen pa (1308–1364)
Lotö	Glo stod
Lotsāwa Drakpa Gyeltsen	<i>Lo tsā ba</i> Grags pa rgyal mtshan (1352–1404)
Lotsāwa Ngawang Drakpa	<i>Lo tsā ba</i> Ngag dbang grags pa (14th–15th c.)
Lungdéu	Lung de'u
Lungseng	Rlung gseng
Mamo	Ma mo
Manglam	Mang lam
Mangyül Gungthang	Mang yul gung thang
<i>Mañi Kabum</i>	<i>Mañi bka' 'bum</i>
<i>Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen</i>	<i>'Jam dpal rdzogs chen</i>
Marpa Lotsāwa Chökyi Lodrö	Mar pa <i>lo tsā ba</i> Chos kyi blo gros (1012–1098)
Marpodé / Marpo Tsen	dMar po lde, i.e., dMar po btsan, 'Od dpal lde (ca. 10th c.)
Mayum	Ma yum
Mazhang Gyatsangpa	Ma zhang rGya tshang pa
Meben Rinchen Lingpa	Me <i>ban</i> Rin chen gling pa (1289–1368)
Milarepa	Mi la ras pa (1028/1040–1111/1123)
Minyak	Mi nyag
Mipham	Mi pham, i.e., Mi pham 'Jam dbyangs rnam rgyal rgya mtsho (1846–1912)
Mön	Mon
Mön Dechenpo	Mon de chen po

Mönrimi	Mon ri mi
Mungpo	Mung po, i.e., Byang chub gling pa dPal gyi rgyal mtshan (14th c.)
Mustang	Glo bo
Mutri Tsenpo, Lhasé —	<i>lHa sras</i> Mu khri btsan po (ca. 761–ca. 815)
Nakpo	Nag po
Namdé Ösung	gNam lde 'od srung (ca. 846–905)
Namgo Dagam	gNam sgo zla gam
Namgyal Gönpö	rNam rgyal mGon po (ca. 1397–1421)
Namgyaldé	rNam rgyal lde (1422–1502, r. 1465–1502)
Namkha Bum	Nam mkha' 'bum (14th c.)
Namkha Drakpa, Rigdzin —	<i>Rig 'dzin</i> Nam mkha' grags pa (14th–15th c.)
Namkha Gyalmo	Nam mkha' rgyal mo
Namkha Palden	Nam mkha' dpal ldan
Namolung	sNa mo lung
Namri Songtsen	gNam ri srong bstan (r. 570–618)
Namsa Pashi	gNam sa dpa' shi
Namtar	<i>rNam thar</i>
Nanam Dorjé Düjom	sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms (8th–9th c.)
Nangden Gyalpo	sNang ldan rgyal po (14th c.)
<i>Narak Kongshak</i>	<i>Na rag / raka skong bshags</i>
Ngadak Gyalpo	mNga' bdag rgyal po
Ngadak Püntsok Rigdzin	mNga' bdag phun tshogs <i>rig 'dzin</i>
Ngakben	sNgags ban
Ngakchang Śākya Zangpo	sNgags 'chang Śākya bzang po, i.e., Yol mo <i>sprul sku</i> 01 Śākya bzang po (15th–16th c.)
Ngakchang Wangdar	sNgags 'chang dBang dar (d.u.)
Ngakchang Yölmowa	<i>sNgags 'chang</i> Yol mo ba
Ngakgi Wangpo, Rigdzin —	<i>Rig 'dzin</i> Ngag gi dbang po (1580–1639)
Ngakpa	sNgags pa
Ngamring	Ngam ring
Ngamring Chödé	Ngam ring chos sde
Ngari	mNga' ris
Ngari Pañchen Pema Wangyal	mNga' ris <i>pañ chen</i> Padma dbang rgyal (1487–1542)

Ngawang Drakpa, Tertön	<i>gTer ston</i> Ngag dbang grags pa (1520–1580)
Ngawang Palzang, Khenpo —	<i>mKhan po</i> Ngag dbang dpal bzang (1879–1940)
Ngödrub Gyaltsen	dNgos grub rgyal mtshan, i.e., Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (1337–ca. 1409)
Ngödrup Palden, Lama —	<i>Bla ma</i> dNgos grub dpal ldan (d.u.)
Ngul	Ngul
Nöjin Bulé	gNod sbyin Bu le
Norbudé	Nor bu lde (1450–ca. 1484)
Nub	<i>Nub</i>
Nubri	Nub ri
Nyalam	gNya' lam
Nyanam	mNya' nam
Nyanam Lagom	sNya nam la sgom
Nyangral Nyima Özer	Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192)
Nyatri Tsenpo	gNya' khri btsan po (trad. 5th–2nd c. BCE)
Nyemo Zhuyé Nöjinbar	sNye mo zhu yas gNod sbyin 'bar (d.u.)
Nyen	<i>gNyan</i>
Nyenchen Thanglha	gNyan chen Thang lha
Nyené Chöpal	Nye gnas Chos dpal (14th c.)
Nyené Dolgyal	Nye gnas rdol rgyal (14th c.)
Nyibumdé	Nyi 'bum lde (13th c.)
Nyida Özer	Nyi zla 'od zer (b. 1409)
Nyima Sengé	Nyi ma seng ge (11th c.)
Nyima Zangpo, Setön —	Se <i>ston</i> Nyi ma bzang po (b. 1386)
Nyingma(pa)	rNying ma (pa)
Nyingthik	sNying thig
Nyö	gNyos
Nyötön Thukjé Rinchen	gNyos <i>ston</i> Thugs rje rin chen
Öbarwa	'Od 'bar ba
Ödé	'Od lde (ca. 11th–12th c.)
Ongcho	Ong co (7th c.)
Öpaldé	'Od dpal lde (ca. 10th c.)
Orgyen Jigmé Longyang	O rgyan 'jigs med klong yangs (d.u.)
Orgyen Lingpa	O rgyan gling pa (1323–ca. 1355)
Orgyen Rinchenpal	O rgyan rin chen dpal (1230–1309)
Özerdé	'Od zer lde (ca. 10th c.)
Padro	sPa gro

Padruk	Pha drug
Pakmodru(pa)	Phag mo gru (pa)
Pakri	Phag ri
Pakshi	Pakshi
Palbar	dPal 'bar
Palchen Bum, Setön —	Se <i>ston</i> dPal chen 'bum (14th c.)
Palchen Chuwo	dPal chen Chu bo ri
Paldé	dPal lde (ca. 10th c.)
Palden Gyakhar Sangngak Chöling	dPal ldan brGya mkhar gSang sngags chos gling
Palgegyé	dPal dge rgyas
Palkhor Tsen, Ngadak —	mNga' bdag dPal 'khor btsan (ca. 955– 983)
Paltsek	dPal brtsegs (d.u.)
Paro	sPa gro'
Pazhichak	Pha gzhi chags
Pehar	Pe har
Pekhütso	Pad khud mtsho
Pema Döndrub	Padma don grub (1668–1744)
Pema Düdül	Padma bDud 'dul (d.u.)
<i>Pema Kathang</i>	<i>Padma bka' thang</i>
Pema Ledreltsal	Padma las 'brel rtsal (1291–1319)
Pema Lingpa	Padma gling pa (1450–1521)
<i>Pema Nyingthik</i>	<i>Padma snying thig</i>
Pema Shenyen	Padma bshes gnyen (18th c.)
Pema Thekchok Tenpé Nyima	Padma bstan mchog bstan pa'i nyi ma (early 19th c.)
Pema Trinlé, Rigdzin —	<i>Rig 'dzin</i> Padma 'phrin las (1640–ca. 1717)
Pema Wangchen, Setön —	Se <i>ston</i> Padma dBang chen (15th c.)
Pemakö	Padma bkod
Pemé Tsal	Padma'i tshal
Phakpa	'Phags pa
Phakpa Lhakhang	'Phags pa lha khang
Phurba	<i>Phur ba</i>
Phurpa	<i>Phur pa</i>
Pönchen	dPon chen
Podrangding	Pho brang sdings
Pönmo Drubpamo	dPon mo sGrub pa mo (14th c.)
Pönsé Khyungö Tsal	dPon gsas Khyung rgod rtsal (b. 1175)

Puktsa	Phug tsha
Pungyen	dPung rgyan
Püntsok Namgyal	Phun tshogs rnam rgyal (17th c.)
Püntsokdé / Püntsokpal	Phun tshogs sde, Pun tshogs dpal (ca. 1338–1370, r. 1365–1370)
Purang	sPu rang
Purang Lotsāwa	Pu rang <i>lo tsā ba</i> (14th c.)
Puri Tsokhor	Phu ri mtsho 'khor
Rabjung	<i>Rab byung</i>
Ratna Lingpa	Ratna gling pa (1403–ca. 1478)
Rendawa Zhönnu Lodrö	Re mda' ba gZhon nu blo gros (1349–1412)
Rigdzin	Rig 'dzin
Rigdzin Chokden Gönpö	<i>Rig 'dzin</i> mChog ldan mgon po (1497–1531)
Rigdzin Gödem, Gödemchen, Gökyidem Truchen	Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, i.e., rGod ldem can, rGod kyi ldem 'phru can (1337–ca. 1409)
Rigdzin Gönpö	<i>Rig 'dzin</i> mGon po (b. 14th c.)
Rigdzin Nyida Longsal	<i>Rig 'dzin</i> Nyi zla klong gsal (d. 1695)
Rigpé Dorjé	Rig pa'i rdo rje, i.e., <i>Khyab bdag</i> sMan lung pa Blo mchog rig pa'i rdo rje (1595–1671)
Rinchen Drakpa	Rin chen grags pa (14 th c.)
Rinchen Gyalpo, Lama —	<i>Bla ma</i> Rin chen rgyal po (d.u.)
Rinchen Lingpa	Rin chen gling pa (1289–1368)
<i>Rinchen Terdzö</i>	<i>Rin chen gter mdzod</i>
Rinpungpa	Rin spungs pa
Ripa Sangyé Pal	Ri pa sangs rgyas dpal (d.u.)
Riwo Palbar	Ri bo dpal 'bar
Riwo Trazangpa	Ro bo bkra bzang pa
Rolpa Khandröling	Rol pa mkha' 'gro'i gling
Rongzom Chökyi Zangpo	Rong zom chos kyi bzang po (1042–1136)
<i>Royal Lineage of Gungthang, The —</i>	<i>Gung thang rgyal rabs</i>
Rulak	Ru lag
Rulak Gyang	Ru lag rgyang
Sachen Künga Nyimpö	Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1148)
Sakya Lamdré	Sa skya lam 'bras

Śākya Ö	Shā kya 'od (ca. 1206–1268)
Sakya Paṇḍita Kūnga Gyaltsen	Sa skya <i>paṇ ḍi ta</i> Kun dga' rgyal mtshan (1182–1251)
Śākya Yarphel	Śā kya yar 'phel (19th c.)
Śākya Sengé	Shā kya seng ge (14th c.)
Śākya Zangpo	Śākya bzang po (1264–1270)
Śākya Zangpo, Yölmo Tülku 01—	Yol mo <i>sprul sku</i> 01 Śākya bzang po (15th–16th c.)
Sakya(pa)	Sa skya (pa)
Samdrubdé / Samdé	bSam grub lde, i.e., bSam lde – first of his name (1459–ca. 1506), second of his name (d. ca 1593)
Samyé	bSam yas
Samyé Chimpu	bSam yas mchims phu
<i>Sangwa Nyingpo</i>	<i>gSang ba snying po</i>
Sangyé Lingpa	Sangs rgyas gling pa (1340–1396)
Sangyé Palzang	Sangs rgyas dpal bzang (15th c.)
Sangyé Tenpa, Lama —	<i>Bla ma</i> Sangs rgyas bstan pa (14th c.)
Sangyé Tenpa, Ritropa —	<i>Ri khrod pa</i> Sangs rgyas bstan pa (14th c.)
Sangyé Wön Dorjepal	Sangs rgyas <i>dbon</i> rDo rje dpal, i.e., rDo rje dpal (b. late 14th c.)
Sarben Chokmé	Sar <i>ban</i> Phyogs med (d.u.)
Sarben Nyimé Nyingpo	Sar <i>ban</i> Nyi ma'i snying po (d.u.)
Sarpuk	gSar phug
Sé	Se
Sengé Lung	Seng ge lung
Serdrang	gSer brang
Serib	Se rib
Serling Dechen	gSer gling bde chen
Setön	Se <i>ston</i>
Shelkar Chöjung	Shel dkar chos 'byung
Sipa Dedröl	Srid pa bde 'grol
Sisha Bangma	Shi sha sbang ma
Situ	Si tu
Situ Chökyi Rinchen	Si tu Chos kyi rin chen (14th c.)
Situ Lhatsen Kyab	Si tu lHa btsan skyabs (14th–15th c.)
Sokdokpa Lodrö Gyaltsen	Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan (1552–1624)
Sönam Wangchukdé	bSod nams dbang phyug lde (1577– ca. 1621)

Sönamdé	bSod nams lde (1371–1404, r. ca. 1375–1390)
Songtsen Gampo	Srong btsan sgam po (ca. 609/623–650)
Söwangdé	bSod dbang lde (1577–ca. 1620)
Śrī Jangdzong	Shri byang rdzong
Śrī Samten Ling	Shrī bSam gtan gling
Tai Situ Jangchub Gyaltsen	Ta'i si tu Byang chub rgyal mtshan (1302–1364)
Takmolung	sTag mo lung
Taktsang Sengé Samdrub	sTag tshang seng ge bsam 'grub
Taktsé	sTag rtse
Tashi	bKra shis
Tashi Gomang	bKra shis sgo mang
Tashi Khyungtsang	bKra shis khyung tshang
Tashi Ling	bKra shis gling
Tashi Tobgyal, Jangdak	<i>Byang bdag</i> bKra shis stobs rgyal (1550–1603)
Tashi Tseka	bKra shis brtsegs pa (ca. 10th c.)
Tashidé	bKra shis lde (ca. 1313–1365; r. ca. 1352–1365)
Tashiding	bKra shis sdings
<i>Tengyur</i>	<i>bsTan 'gyur</i>
Tendzin Norbu, Yölmo Tülku 03 —	Yol mo <i>sprul sku</i> 03 bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1589–1644)
Tenma	brTan ma
Tennyi Lingpa	bsTan gnyis gling pa (1480–1535)
Terdak Lingpa Gyurmé Dorjé	gTer bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje (1646–1714)
<i>Terjung Chenmo</i>	<i>gTer byung chen mo</i>
Terma	gTer ma
Tertön	gTer ston
Tertön Sögyal	<i>gTer ston</i> bSod rgyal, i.e., Las rab gling pa (1856–1926)
Thangtong Gyalpo	Thang stong rgyal po (1361–1485)
Thekchok Tendzin	Theg mchog bstan 'dzin, i.e., 'Go tsha <i>mkhan chen</i> (20th c.)
Thögal	Thod rgal
Thötrengtsal	Thod phreng rtsal
Thukjé Rinchen, Nyötön —	gNyos <i>ston</i> Thugs rje rin chen (d.u.)
Thukjé Sengé, Gyatön —	rGya <i>ston</i> Thugs rje seng ge (d.u.)

Ting Wari	Ting wa ri
Tö	sTod
Tobden Pawo	sTobs ldan dpa' bo, i.e., Yol mo <i>sprul sku</i> 03 bsTan 'dzin nor bu (1589–1644)
Tönpa Sönam Wangchuk	<i>bsTon pa</i> bSod nams dbang phyug (14th c.)
Tönpa Söwang	<i>sTon pa</i> bSod dbang, i.e., <i>bsTon pa</i> bSod nams dbang phyug (14th c.)
Torma	<i>gTor ma</i>
Toyor Nakpo	Tho yor nag po
Tramenkha	Phra men kha
Tratum	bKra thum
Trazang, Mt. —	Ri bo bKra bzang
Trekchö	<i>Khregs chod</i>
Tri Chokdrubdé Palzangpo	Khri mChog drub lde dpal bzang po (ca. 1367–1390)
Tri Rinchen Zangpo	Khri Rin chen bzang po (ca. 13th–14th c.)
Tri Tashi Tseka	Khri bKra shis brtsegs pa (10th c.)
Tri Tashidé	Khri bKra shis lde (ca. 1313–1365; r. ca. 1352–1365)
Tridé Bum	Khri lde 'bum (ca. 1268–1308)
Trinlé Düjom, Yölmo Tülku 05	'Phrin las bdud 'joms (1725–1789)
Trinlé Zangpo	'Phrin las bzang po (d.u.)
Trisong Detsen	Khri srong lde'u btsan (r. ca. 755–794)
Tritsün	Khri btsun (7th c.)
Tröma Nakmo	Khros ma nag mo
Tromo Kasung	Khro mo bka' srungs
Tsalpa	Tshal pa
Tsang(pa)	gTsang (pa)
Tsangdram	gTsang 'gram
Tsangpo	gTsang po (river)
Tsangpo Zangtsawa	gTsang po bZang tsha ba
Tsäri	rTsā ri
Tsatsa	<i>Tsha tsha</i>
Tsechung Khabpa	bTsad chung Khab pa (13th c.)
Tsendé	bTsan lde (ca. 10th–11th c.)
Tsenden Ma	mTshan ldan ma (14th–15th c.)
Tseringma	Tshe ring ma

Tseten Gyaltsen	Tshe brtan rgyal mtshan (ca. 13th–14th c.)
Tsibri, Mt. —	rTsib ri
Tsongkhapa Lobzang Drakpa	Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419)
Tsum	bTsum
Tsündé	bTsun lde (13th c.)
Tsünpadé	bTsun pa lde (13th c.)
Tukjé Gyaltsen, Setön —	Se <i>ston</i> Thugs rje rgyal mtshan (14th–15th c.)
Tülku	sPrul sku
Tülku Tsullo	<i>sPrul sku</i> Tshul lo, i.e., Tshul khrims bzang po (1884–1954/57)
Tülzhuk Lingpa	brTul zhugs gling pa (20th c.)
Tummo	<i>gTum mo</i>
Ü	dBus
Urgyenpa Rinchenpal	U rgyan pa Rin chen dpal (1230–1309)
Ütsang	dBus gtsang
Wangchukdé	dBang phyug lde (ca. 11th–12th c.)
Wangdé	dBang lde (ca. 10th c.)
Yangdak	Yang dag
Yangleleshö	Yang le shod
Yangti	Yang ti
Yardrok	Yar 'brog
Yarlung	Yar lung
Yartsé	Ya rtse
Yeshé Sempa	Ye shes sems dpa'
Yeshé Tsogyal	Ye shes mtsho rgyal (8th–9th c.)
Yidam	<i>Yi dam</i>
Yoksam	Yog bsam
Yölmo	Yol mo
Yölmo Gangra	Yol mo gangs ra
Yölmogang	Yol mo gangs
Yölmowa	Yol mo ba
Yönpolung	Yon po lung
Yönten Gyatso, Dartön —	'Dar <i>ston</i> Yon tan rgya mtsho (d.u.)
Yöntsün Drakpa Dar	Yon btsun Grags pa dar
Yudrönma	g.Yu sgron ma
Yumten	Yum brtan (d.u.)
Zang Gyüpa	bZang rgyud pa
Zangling	Zangs gling

Zangpo Drakpa, Ritröpa —	<i>Ri khrod pa</i> bZang po grags pa (14th c.)
Zangpo Pal	bZang po dpal (1261–1323, r. 1306–1323)
Zangtsa Sönam Gyaltzen	Zangs tsha bSod nams rgyal mtshan (1184–1239)
Zangzang Lhadrak	Zang zang lha brag
Zaokpuk	Za 'og phug
Zhang Nanam Dorjé Düjom	Zhang sNa nam rDo rje bdud 'joms (8th–9th c.)
Zhang Nyima Bum	Zhang Nyi ma 'bum (1158–1213)
Zhang(pa)	Zhang (pa)
Zhangzhung	Zhang zhung
Zhepé Dorjé	bZhad pa'i rdo rje, i.e., the 5th Tā la'i <i>bla ma</i> (1617–1682)
Zhikpo Lingpa	Zhig po gling pa (1524–1583)
Zhuyé Benchung Dewa	Zhu yas <i>ban chung</i> bDe ba (d.u.)
Zurchen Chöying Rangdrol	Zur <i>chen</i> Chos dbyings rang grol (1604–1669)



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