

Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen in the Context of The Fifth Dalai Lama's rNying ma Writings

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he¹ Fifth Dalai Lama, Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (1617–1682), is well-known as a key figure in Tibetan political history and his role as a patron of the rNying ma pas has not escaped the attention of Tibetologists. He is also known to be a prolific writer. However, out of his large autobiography, of *The Secret Visions*, and his catalog of teachings received, his other writings have not so far attracted much interest. The focus of this article is a short treatise² devoted to the little-known 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen cycle in the context of his abundant rNying ma writings, which will be described based on the 2009 28-vol. book-format edition.

This cycle is enigmatic in many ways. The original *gter ma* corpus seems to be lost (or, at least, has not yet resurfaced), and the Fifth Dalai Lama's practice manual (1673)³—which is so far⁴ the only significant remaining text of this cycle—does not explicitly ascribe it to any specific section of rDzogs chen. It mentions *sPyi ti* in passing, but 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen cannot finally be ascribed to *sPyi ti* in any meaningful sense.⁵

The research that led to the writing of this paper originally stems from the FCHNT project's investigation of the Northern Treasures (Byang gter). The name of the founding master of the Northern Treasures, Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (1337–ca. 1401), appears in the lineages of 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen, not as the discoverer of the *gter ma* (which

¹ Professor Bryan Cuevas reviewed a draft of this paper, and I am very grateful for his suggestions. I have included some of his reflections in the footnotes.

² 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i 'phrin las dang smin byed kyi chog sgrigs snang stong 'od Inga'i rgya can, or: *The Thousand Illuminations Sealed with the Five Lights, A Sādhana and A Presentation of the Empowerment Ritual for Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen*. Henceforth: *The Thousand Illuminations*, in DL5 2009, vol. 26, pp. 354–386.

³ The text is dated in its colophon to a year *chu glang*.

⁴ See below references to a corpus of fourteen texts that are about to be released in the forthcoming 68-vol. compilation of the Northern Treasures (Byang gter).

⁵ This article originally included an investigation about the hypothesis that 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen could be regarded as a *sPyi ti* cycle. However, since, at this stage, this thread did not lead anywhere, all the materials it contained about the Fifth Dalai Lama's understanding of the *sPyi ti* category of rDzogs chen have been separated and made into another article.

probably dates back to the early 13th century), but as a link in the lineage. The lineage after him is a standard Byang gter one. The FCHNT team's initial concern was identifying the master from whom Rig 'dzin rGod ldem is said to have received this transmission, but, so far, to no avail.

This ascribed association of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem with 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen is further connected with another issue, which will not be discussed here: that of the authenticity of a commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* attributed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem in the 2015 *Compilation of the Northern Treasures*,⁶ which I earlier hypothesized to be connected to 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen, although without any proof, since there is no explicit statement in that sense in CNT 2015. However, in the last days of May 2026, the situation changed altogether when our colleague Alexandra Sukhanova forwarded to the FCHNT team a pdf table of contents (called *dKar chag lha brag thugs gter chos kyi me long*) of a forthcoming larger (68 vol.) compilation of the Northern Treasures. To my great surprise, I found out that vol. *tha* (10) of this edition will contain 14 texts explicitly connected to 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen in the section devoted to rGod ldem's works and revelations, including the 'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo—which confirms far beyond all expectations my hypothesis about the connection between the commentary on the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* ascribed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and the 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen cycle.⁷

⁶ 'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo, in *Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*, vol. 14, pp. 271-362. The text ascribed to rGod ldem is in fact a summary of a writing attributed to Padmasambhava, the 'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i 'grel pa rin po che nyi zla 'bar ba'i sgron ma, in bDud 'joms rin po che's *rNying ma bka' ma rgyas pa*, vol. 22, pp. 195-493. This text itself was perhaps a section of / incorporated in 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen, but the Fifth Dalai Lama's catalog is too allusive to be sure. For a discussion of the content and the authenticity of this text, see Arguillère (2026), in Valentine (ed.), *Northern Treasures History*, vol. 2, chp. 19. However, the publication documented in the following note has rendered part of this analysis moot.

⁷ Here is the relevant portion of the *dKar chag lha brag thugs gter chos kyi me long* (p. 21), with numbers added in brackets for easier reference: gter ston gsar (sic) ban phyogs med kyi 'jam dpal rdzogs chen skor la | <1> 'jam dpal brgyud pa'i lo rgyus: ldeb 171\ <2> 'jam dpal gyi chos kyi byon khungs bstan pa'o | ldeb | 175\ <3> 'jam dpal brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs | ldeb | 183\ <4> 'jam dpal rgyud kyi chog khrid dang bcas pa | ldeb | 185\ <5> zab mo lta ba klong yangs cha lag 'jam dbyangs blo'i mun sel gyi sgrub thabs yab yum spyir bsgrub pa sgos su bsgrub pa bla rdo srog 'khor rnam | zab rgya can lags so | ldeb | 197\ <6> 'jam dpal khri drug stong gi lo rgyus nye bar bsdu pa'o: ldeb | 202\ <7> 'jam dpal sgrub thabs byin rlabs can : ldeb | 203\ <8> 'jam dpal mtshan brjod kyi 'don thabs sogs : ldeb | 205\ <9> 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi sa bcad bzhugs | ldeb | 211\ <10> nges pa drug gi sgo nas khog dbub pa'i rgyas bshad do | l rdo rje rtse mo nam mkha' dang mnyam pa'i rgyud mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i don | ldeb | 220\ <11> 'di ni bka' 'brel mdo sde nas btus pa'i blo gter gyi gtam rgyud lnga bcu rtas gnyis | ldeb | 256\ <12> 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo | ldeb | 297\ <13> 'jam dpal gsang 'grel | ldeb | 387\ <14> 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi ngo sprod byin rlabs can | ldeb | 436\ bcas pod 'dir...

In any case, the Fifth Dalai Lama's interest in this cycle is clearly connected to his Byang gter affiliations, since the main authority he mentions in this context is *Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal* (ca. 1550–1603), who was a pivotal figure in the development of the Northern Treasures tradition during the 16th century.

After a brief overview of the Fifth Dalai Lama's writings, with a focus on his rNying ma compositions, this article will explore a hypothesis regarding the status of *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*: that it is implicitly presented by the Fifth Dalai Lama as a *rdzogs chen* complement to the Mahāyoga cycle *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* (*'Jam dpal tshe bdag*).

The Fifth Dalai Lama's text, *The Thousand Illuminations*, will then be described⁸ in its two aspects—*sādhana* and empowerment ritual—with a focus on the *rdzogs chen* instructions and on the elements that, when combined with the indications found in the same author's *Record of Teaching Received*, may provide insight into his understanding of the nature of *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*.

The conclusion suggests avenues for further research and is followed, as an appendix, by a catalog of *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* from the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received*.

1. *The Thousand Illuminations in the context of the Fifth Dalai Lama's Writings*

The 2009 edition⁹ of the Fifth Dalai Lama's writings is roughly structured as follows:

— Vol. 1-4: *The Record of Teachings Received*;¹⁰

#12 is the commentary ascribed to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem, which is referred to in the previous note. Although some of these titles bear *gter ma* marks, they do not obviously correspond to anything in the Fifth Dalai Lama's catalog of *Sar ban* Phyogs med's *gter ma* presented below. The status of this entire body of work will remain enigmatic until we have access to the texts. However, this substantiates the idea of Rig 'dzin rGod ldem's significant involvement in *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*.

⁸ The description may help for a future identification of the tantra underlying *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*, which could not be definitively achieved in this article.

⁹ Henceforth DL5 2009.

¹⁰ *Zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun*. See Ehrhard 2013, "Flow of the River Gangā: The Gsan-yig of the Fifth Dalai Bla-ma and Its Literary Sources." A large portion of this text is devoted to rNying ma teachings, which it often describes and documents in great detail, including remarks about their origin and the history of their transmission. This *Record of Teachings Received* is especially valuable because it describes the state of available rNying ma literature in central Tibet before the 1717–18 Dzungar invasion, which may have caused significant losses to the corpus. Indeed, many texts it mentions seem not to be described as available from the 18th century onward.

- Vol. 5-7: The autobiography;¹¹
- Vol. 8-10: His “outer, ordinary” biography by *sDe srid* Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705);
- Vol. 11-12: Twelve biographies of masters by the Fifth Dalai Lama;
- Vol. 13-14: ritual/practice texts, mostly for *gsar ma* traditions.¹²
- Vol. 15-17: purely dGe lugs¹³ writings: *Lam rim*, *Madh-yamakāvatāra*, etc.
- Vol. 18: Prayers and ritual praise to various lamas, etc. The corpus is not tightly connected to any specific denomination.
- Vol. 19: Historical and political writings.
- Vol. 20-21: Accounts of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s achievements, including in the restoration of ancient buildings, etc.
- Vol. 22: Same topic; letters (partly in verse).
- Vol. 23: Rules and regulations for various monastic institutions; a commentary on the *sNyan ngag me long*.
- Vol. 24: Prayers and auspicious verses.
- Vol. 25-28: rNying ma writings. Of these, Vol. 26 is an all-Yamāntaka volume and the main source for this presentation.
- It should be noted that the *Secret Visions* (*gSang ba rgya can*) are

¹¹ Although they may provide more information about why the Fifth Dalai Lama was interested in ‘*Jam dpal rdzogs chen*, this source and other biographical materials were not used in the present research. However, the first part, translated by Samten G. Karmay (2014) does not provide any relevant piece of information.

¹² For some reason, another piece about *gter ma* literature—a short text about *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub*—is included in Vol. 13 (pp. 342-345). This is the second oldest (12th century) rNying ma Hayagrīva cycle documented in the *Rin chen gter mdzod* (e.g., RT 1976 [–1980], vol. 40, pp. 87-150), also known as *rTa mgrin skyer sgang lugs*, with a lineage running through early Shangs pa masters. For more information on its lineage, see *gSan yig*, in DL5 2009, vol. 4, pp. 93-96. Some of its aspects are discussed below, especially regarding the authenticity of its *rdzogs rim* instructions.

¹³ It is presumed that the scholastic writings are in an orthodox dGe lugs vein because no debate of which we’d be aware has been raised on this point thus far. However, further research is needed. The characterization of *ye shes*, e.g., in the *Madh-yamakāvatāra* commentary (vol. 15, pp. 158–358) should be prioritized—especially in the final section, which discusses the Buddhas’ knowledge of emptiness and omniscience (pp. 346–348). The rNying ma and dGe lugs doctrines on this topic seem to be logically incompatible (except if sūtra-level philosophy is treated without regard for its consistency with tantric/rDzogs chen views—which, after all, is what the Bon pos do, contrary to recent rNying ma scholastics following the authority of ‘Ju Mi pham, who has a strong concern for the unity of the whole Mahāyāna view, including tantrism and rDzogs chen). Preliminary survey of this passage gave me the impression that the author may be circumventing the controversial issues rather than addressing them directly. Indeed, he seems to refrain from explicitly proposing the necessity of a cognizing instance that should be added to the ultimate nature of things for it to be known, which is the standard dGe lugs view and is incompatible with any feasible interpretation of rDzogs chen.

not included in this edition (and are still awkwardly awaiting a “workable” one).¹⁴

The core topic of Vol. 26, which contains the *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*-related writing, is *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* (*'Jam dpal tshe bdag*), a vast *gter chos* for Yamāntaka practice.¹⁵ Its main *gter ston*, rGya Zhang khrom rDo rje 'od 'bar,¹⁶ was active in the eleventh century. This corpus has been made accessible through ten volumes included in the 2015 *Compilation of the Northern Treasures* (*Byang gter phyogs bsgrigs*). This vast Mahāyoga cycle is somewhat exceptional in rNying ma religious literature because this *gter ma*, although ancient, was more or less regarded as the ultimate, most perfect form of the Yamāntaka practice. It was merely marginally built upon by later generations and not replaced by later revelations that would have been viewed as more advanced. This practice is rarely discussed, yet it remains strongly present in the Northern Treasures (*Byang gter*) sub-branch of the rNying ma school,¹⁷ in 'Ju Mi pham's writings (and, hence, with Dil go mkhyen brtse Rab gsal zla ba¹⁸), and among the 'Bri gung pas. It is basically pure Mahāyoga, without much elaborate completion phase (*rdzogs rim*) instructions, not to mention rDzogs chen.

2. *Sar ban Phyogs med, the Discoverer of Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen, and Visionary rDzogs chen*

Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen (*'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*) is a 12th- or perhaps

¹⁴ See Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 1972, *rNam thar gsang ba rgya can*, reproduction of a 533-page *dbu med* manuscript. See also Samten Karmay 1988 (1998) and 1999. While the *rNam thar gsang ba rgya can* may contain relevant materials, it has been omitted from the present inquiry.

¹⁵ See Arguillère 2024, “Yamāntaka Among the Ancients.”

¹⁶ See Esler 2022, “Yamāntaka's Wrathful Magic.”

¹⁷ Including a *yang gter* by 'Khor gdong *gTer chen* Nus ldan rdo rje (1802–1864), in the holy place of rDo rje shugs 'chang, near De ba grong in the Tre hor area of Khams (oral information by bSrung lo, a descendent of 'Khor gdong *gTer chen*, attached to the 'Khor gdong monastery, August 2024. According to bSrung lo, the rediscovered version of *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* is identical to the 11th century version and the discovery merely refreshed the blessings without adding to the content. However, this shows how important this practice still is for Byang gter lamas, since 'Khor gdong *gTer chen*'s revelations are practiced only in a purely Byang gter context).

¹⁸ See Dilgo Khyentse 2008, *Brilliant Moon*, p. 33, recounting a vision of the young Dil go mkhyen rtse: “I briefly met Padmasambhava and Mipham Rinpoche, and below Mipham's throne was an empty seat with a square carpet where he told me to seat. I remember that as soon as I sat down, he said, ‘This is your *yidam* deity,’ giving me a five-inch golden statue of the longevity lord Yamāntaka, which he put on the table in front of me.” “Longevity lord” is an alternate translation of *Tshe bdag*, which is most likely incorrect since a large part the content of the cycle aims at shortening the lifespan of (evil) others rather than extending one's own.

rather 13th-century *gter ma*, said to have been revealed by Sar *ban* Phyogs med (d.u.). We know virtually nothing about this *gter ston*. The passage about him in Guru bKra shis' Chos 'byung (1990: pp. 481-482) is completely uninformative except for his Bhutanese origins¹⁹ and the place where the *gter ma* was found.²⁰ The name of Guru Chos dbang (1212–1270) also appears in the context of 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen, but not in a way that clarifies respective status of the two layers (Chos dbang/Sar *ban* Phyogs med) of the revelation. However, the relevant passage in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received*²¹ may suggest that Guru Chos dbang's *gter chos* is merely a part of the final collection, as if Sar *ban* Phyogs med had built upon it. This is also the meaning of a passage of *The Thousand Illuminations* that states that Guru Chos dbang and Sar *ban* Phyogs med successively revealed 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen,²² with a phrasing that can only be understood in the sense that Sar *ban* Phyogs med came *after* Guru Chos dbang. Taking all this into consideration, we can speculate that Sar *ban* Phyogs med lived in the thirteenth century, although he could not have been much younger than Guru Chos dbang himself, for six generations of masters are named between Sar *ban* Phyogs med and Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (1337–ca. 1401).

A name that sounds as his (*bdag sar ban*) curiously appears in the colophon (p. 843) of the *Man ngag snying gi dgongs pa rgyal ba'i bka' zhes bya ba'i rgyud* (in *mTshams brag rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 13, pp. 795-

¹⁹ Op. cit., p. 481: *gter ston 'di 'khrungs yul mon spa gro ba yin* |.

²⁰ Loc. cit.: ...*stag tshang seng ge bkra shis dpal phug gis gro ba g.yu khra can du gter du sbas*.

²¹ DL5 2009, vol. 2, p. 447: *gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug gis gter srungs la bka' bsgos dam bsgrags te gnyan ston dzam bha la spyen 'dren du btang ba'i lho brag mkho mthing lha khang gi sgo srungs kyang ris gshin rje dmar po'i thugs ka nas spyen drangs pa bse sgrom smug po'i nang nas byon pa'i 'jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po 'jam dpal rgyud kyi yang snying gi skor la | 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod pa'i rgyud kyi yang snying | slob dpon pad mas btsad (sic) po dang jo mo shel bza' sgron gnyis la gtang pa'i 'jam dpal rgyud kyi ngo sprod rtags la go ba brda chos lag len du bstan pa | 'jam dpal rgyud kyi ngo sprod lag len du bstan pa | rdo rje 'chang gis 'jam dpal bshes gnyen la gdams pa | 'jam dpal rgyud kyi gsang 'grel don gsal bar byed pa'i sgron ma gu rus btsad (sic) po dang jo mo shel bza' gnyis la gdams pa | gnyis med chos kyi sku thig le nyag gcig tu gtan la dbab pa'i man ngag | slob dpon la jo mo shel bza' sgron gyis zhus pa'i tshig don bcu bzhis 'khor 'das kyi rtsa ba bstan pa ste chos sde drug po 'di'i brgyud pa ni | ... Some of the items in the list are found in the description of Sar *ban* Phyogs med's 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen (see appendix at the end of this article) and some titles are similar to those of texts included in the forthcoming 68-vol. edition of the Northern Treasures.*

²² DL5, vol. 26, p. 376: ...*slob dpon chen pos gter du gtams pa rim bzhi mnga' bdag gi skye ba bco lnga pa gu ru chos kyi dbang phyug zhabs dang | mtshan ldan she sa'i rnam 'phrul sar ban ston pa phyogs med gter mdzod zhal phyé ba las phyi ma'o* |. The logic is that this cycle was taught to King Khri strong lde'u btsan and to one of his wives called She sa (or Shel gza', or She bza') sgron, and that the two *gter stons* who revealed it were their respective rebirths.

843). In the passage, *Sar ban* is mentioned alongside one *dBang dar*. This name also appears in the lineage prayers of *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*²³ after *Sar ban* Phyogs med's disciple (probably his son) *Sar ban* Nyi ma'i snying po. Thus, it is probable that the *Sar ban* of this colophon is in fact Nyi ma'i snying po—in any case, a figure related to *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* too.

In the catalogue of the *sDe dge rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, the *Man ngag snying gi dgongs* is presented the last in the list of the *yang gsang bla med* section of *rDzogs chen man ngag sde*,²⁴ although it does not belong to the list of the *Seventeen Tantras* (*rgyud bcu bdun*). The structure of the *mTshams brag rnying rgyud* is less obvious (or explicit) than that of the *sDe dge* edition. However, the context of volume 13 lies somewhere in-between the *gSang ba'i skor* of the *man ngag sde* and the *Yang ti*. The tantra itself describes the always already perfect Buddha nature as abiding in all beings' heart as the peaceful deities (chp. 1-3). However, this is immediately followed by an explanation about how this internal, invisible presence of the innate enlightenment is experienced in the *post mortem* state, first in the form of the wrathful deities (chp. 4), then as the peaceful deities (chp. 5). Then comes (in this order) an explanation of the *bar do* of possibility (*srid pa'i bar do*, chp. 6), the visions in the *bar do* (chp. 7), how one will wander in *samsāra* if one does not recognize them properly (chp. 8). Chapter 9 is the most ambiguous since, as often in this literature, it can be understood as alluding to the luminous visions of *thod rgal*, but more likely applies to ordinary perceptions when they are recognized for what they truly are. In any case, there is no hint of either the specific technical vocabulary of the *snying thig* (four or six lamps, uncommon channels, eyes and body postures, gradual unfolding of the four visions...). Chapters 10 and 11 are about *samādhi* and dream regarded as two specific *bar do* states; chapter 12 reverts to the *bar do* of *Dharmatā*; chapter 13 summarizes the resorption of the elements at the time of death, and then chapter 14 discusses the *srid pa'i bar do* again. It is quite possible that chapters 12-14 are additions to a previously existing text, since they do not fit very obviously in the otherwise coherent structure of the tantra. Then comes the colophon (pp. 842-843), which clearly appears as an addition by "*bdag Sar ban*" Nyi ma'i snying po. Altogether, this tantra feels very typical of what David Germano (2005) calls the "funerary transformation of the Great Perfection," or the funerary stage of its historical development: here, all is about recognizing the perceptions of this life as being luminous displays of our already enlightened nature in disguise in order to be ready for their unshaded revelation after death.

²³ E.g., DL5 2009, vol. 26, p. 356.

²⁴ See *sDe dge rnying ma rgyud 'bum gyi dkar chag chen mo* 2018, p. 97.

In comparison with this text, *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* as presented by the Fifth Dalai Lama contains actual instructions for visionary practice in this life, although simpler than what is known in the *sNying thig* context. As a conclusion, *Sar ban* Phyogs med must have belonged to a milieu of practitioners of visionary *rDzogs chen*, but, it seems, outside the known *sNying thig* lineages.

3. The Table of Contents of *Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen & Provisional Conclusions*

The root *gter ma* texts of *Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen* are not yet available. However, they are entirely listed in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Record of Teachings Received* (and in a more succinct but consistent way in *gTer bdag gling pa's*²⁵ and that of later *rNying ma* masters, without any significant variation). The only truly accessible vestige of this cycle, except for the forthcoming corpus in the new 68-vol. *Byang gter* compilation, is the above-mentioned text for its practice by the Fifth Dalai Lama (DL5 2009: vol. 26, pp. 386-395; also included in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*²⁶), except for a short aspiration prayer (*smon lam*) by 'Ju Mi pham,²⁷ a few quite insignificant pages in *mChog gyur gling pa's gter chos*,²⁸ another aspiration prayer by *rDo grub chen 'Jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma*,²⁹ a tiny *sādhana* by *rTogs ldan Śākya śrī* (1854–1919),³⁰ or a larger but redundant commentary by *Khang gsar bsTan pa'i dbang phyug* (1938–2014)³¹—very late and rather uninformative materials whose only merit is to show that the fame of *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* never completely faded. Otherwise, these texts merely repeat the Fifth Dalai Lama's *The Thousand Illuminations* and his *Record of Teachings Received*. It is the latter that contains the most explicit general statements about *Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen*.³² This includes prophecies about the *gter ston*

²⁵ *gTer bdag gling pa* 1998, *Zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig rin chen 'byung gnas*. The relevant passage is in vol. 1, ff. 235a-236b.

²⁶ In *Rin chen gter mdzod* 1976 [–1980]: vol. 25, pp. 249-307.

²⁷ *Mi pham* 1984–93, vol. 5, pp. 75-77, followed by the lineage prayer (pp. 79-83) in which the name of the *gter ston* is clearly *Sa ban* Phyogs med (p. 80), with the exact same lineage after him, including *Rig 'dzin rGod ldem* (p. 81), as in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen*-related texts. The connection of this prayer with the peaceful and wrathful *Mañjuśrī* rituals that fill this volume is, however, unclear.

²⁸ *Zab mo rdzogs chen sde gsum gyi cha lag 'jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po*, in *mChog gyur gling pa* 1982-1986, vol 21, pp. 7-34.

²⁹ *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i smon lam mi shigs na da'i rol mo*, in *gSung 'bum* 2000, vol. 3 pp. 79-82.

³⁰ *rTogs ldan Śākyaśrī* 1998, *gSung 'bum*, pp. 393-394.

³¹ *Khang gsar bsTan pa'i dbang phyug* 2005, *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i smon lam gyi zin bris kun grol thig le nyag gcig*, in *gSung 'bum bstan pa'i dbang phyug (glog klad par ma)*, vol. 4, pp. 202-253.

³² DL5 2009: vol. 3, pp. 130-134.

Sar *ban* Phyogs med that specify the place where the *gter ma* was found.³³ The Fifth Dalai Lama provides a catalog of the corpus, which includes 47 items (reproduced in the appendix below).

We can provisionally conclude, at this preliminary stage, that:

1. The lineage is said to stem from Mañjuśrīmitra—Padmasambhava does not play a very central role;
2. The basic scripture is said to be the *'Jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drwa ba*—but this indication is rather vague, as it is not clear to what actually available tantras, or parts of tantras, this may correspond;
3. However, more specifically, a version in 11 chapters of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṅgīti* was included in the corpus;
4. A commentary of this text ascribed to Padmasambhava is included in it, or at least alluded to;³⁴
5. The practice as presented by the Fifth Dalai Lama is, as we will see, quite complete in terms of visionary rDzogs chen, and the author does not fear to mention *khregs chod* and *thog rgal* in this context.³⁵

After his catalog of the whole cycle, The Fifth Dalai Lama presents the transmission lineage³⁶ that, as already mentioned, has the curious

³³ *Op. cit.*, p. 130: 'gos kyi phag ris kyi mthing brgal ba'i 'og : grub pa thob pa'i stag tshang seng ge phug : gnas kyi ming ni bkra shis dpal phug tu : grub thob gsum gyis gdams pa bcud phyung ba'i : snying du gdams pa'i ngo sprod rnam bzhi dang : ma tshang med pa ma bu bcas nas sbas ; etc. As seen above, some elements belonging to this cycle are mentioned under other headings, especially in the account of Gu ru Chos dbang's revelations by the Fifth Dalai (2009, vol. 3, pp. 446-447), etc.

³⁴ #19 in the catalog reproduced in the Appendix below, *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod kyi don 'grel o rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyis gsang sngags kyi bskyed rdzogs gsum dang mthun par mdzad pa* |, is either the commentary ascribed to Padmasambhava or a ritual text based on it. The commentary in question seems to be: 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*, in *rNying ma bka' ma* (bDud 'joms rin po che's edition), vol. 22, pp. 195-493.

³⁵ *The Thousand Illuminations*, p. 357: *khregs chod thod rgal ye shes zang thal sogs | | tshul bzhin lam du longs par byin gyis rlobs |*.

³⁶ *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 sīṅha | 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 lden 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*

feature of including Rig 'dzin rGod ldem. He then tells a story about what happened when *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal went to receive the teaching from the lineage holder *Dran mchog* dPal ldan blo gros (unidentified, d.u.), with volumes mysteriously disappearing and re-appearing. He then mentions texts composed by *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal himself to supplement this corpus—which seem to be lost.

4. Does 'Jam dpal rDzogs chen belong to
the sPyi ti section of rDzogs chen?

'Jam dpal rdzogs chen is difficult to ascribe to any of the classical sections of rDzogs chen, *Sems sde*, *Klong sde*, *Man ngag sde* and their further subdivisions. In the *Rin chen gter mdzod* it is curiously not placed with rDzogs chen cycles, but in the Mahāyoga section, at the beginning of the 'Jam dpal sku sub-section, with the peaceful aspects of Mañjuśrī.³⁷

In the above-quoted passage of his *Record of Teachings Received*, the Fifth Dalai Lama describes the practice without ascribing it to any specific section of rDzogs chen. However, one allusion to the sPyi ti section of *Man ngag sde* is found in *The Thousand Illuminations*—but it is not unambiguous. Indeed, the passage merely states that the tantra(s) that form its basis (which, interestingly, is or are not listed) *can* be interpreted in three ways, one of which is according to the sPyi ti system.³⁸ This admittedly does not constitute a complete and explicit ascription

las lhun grub | zur thams cad mkhyen pa chos dbyings rang grol | des bdag za hor bande la'o |.

³⁷ In *Rin chen gter mdzod* 1976 [–1980]: vol. 25, pp. 249–307.

³⁸ DL5 2009, v. 26, p. 375: 'Jam dpal rgyud kyi rgyal po 'di la bshad thabs gsum du mdzad de yang bka'i 'grel pa la brten nas rgya che ba spyi ti ltar bshad | rgyud la brten nas don 'grel | ngo sprod la brten nas gsang 'grel mdzad |. The following sentence seems to mean that 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen includes these three levels of interpretation of the unidentified 'Jam dpal rgyud kyi rgyal po. Although we cannot speculate about texts to which we thus far have no access, some elements in this statement are reminiscent of titles mentioned in the above-quoted table of contents of the forthcoming 68-volume compilation of the Byang gter: #10 is called a *rgyas bshad*; #11 is a *bka' 'brel*; #12 is the *don 'grel* and #13 is a *gsang 'grel*. The above-quoted formulas of the Fifth Dalai Lama are repeated in Mi pham's 'Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa'i smin byed dbang gi rim pa ye she rdo rje'i rgyun 'bebs (in Mi pham 1984–1993, vol. 5, pp. 87–131) without any further explanation. On the next page, we read that these various aspects have been gradually revealed by Gu ru Chos dbang, Sar ban Phyogs med and Sangs rgyas gling pa, and (p. 97) that Mi pham's empowerment ritual combines them all. However, Mi pham does not seem to be more specific than the Fifth Dalai Lama about which specific tantra they are both alluding to under the name 'Jam dpal rgyud kyi rgyal po (p. 95). It should be noted that, a few lines earlier, the Fifth Dalai Lama alludes—but in the vaguest form—to rDo rje gling pa (1346–1405) as an alternate source for a rDzogs chen system connected to Mañjuśrī. However, there does not seem to be any significant Mañjuśrī-connected rDzogs chen cycle among rDo rje gling pa's revelations in the 32-vol. edition (2009) of his tradition that is available to us.

of this cycle to the *sPyi ti* system. Since this hypothesis did not bring any fruits regarding the Fifth Dalai Lama's understanding of '*Jam dpal rdzogs chen*', all the research materials about the Fifth Dalai Lama's ideas on *sPyi ti* were made into a separate paper and I will not discuss this puzzling issue any further here.

5. Why Should There be any Connection between '*Jam dpal rdzogs chen*' and '*Jam dpal tshe bdag*'?

The idea of a connection between '*Jam dpal tshe bdag*' and '*Jam dpal rdzogs chen*' is suggested by the fact that the Fifth Dalai Lama, or his editors, present *Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen* in the context of an all-*Mañjuśrī Master of Life* volume of his writings. 'Ju Mi pham³⁹ also introduces—without any explanation—the lineage of *Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen* (borrowed from the Fifth Dalai Lama's practice manual for that cycle, with the necessary complements for the later period) in the context of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*.

A more fundamental reason is that the empowerment for *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* is complete in terms of the 2nd to 4th empowerments, that is, those that would allow for *rdzogs rim* and *rdzogs chen* practices. So, it is somewhat awkward that the 10 volumes of '*Jam dpal tshe bdag*'⁴⁰ are completely devoid of such practices. Available instructions contain only development phase and ritual prescriptions (mostly destructive magic). It would feel natural, from a Tibetan well-informed perspective, to expect to find *rdzogs rim* and *rdzogs chen* practices in that context and, if they cannot be found through any natural or supernatural means,⁴¹ to inject them from other tantric cycles. This is why the location of the Fifth Dalai Lama's manual for '*Jam dpal rdzogs chen*' in a volume otherwise entirely devoted to '*Jam dpal tshe bdag*' can be interpreted as a hint that the author viewed the former as the innermost practice for the latter.⁴²

³⁹ In the "all-*Mañjuśrī*" volume 5 of the 1984–93 *gSung 'bum* in 27 volumes (henceforth Mi pham 1984–93).

⁴⁰ Referring to CNT 2015. It should be noted that gTer bdag gling pa's own Yamāntaka cycle *Dregs pa 'joms byed* (in gTer bdag gling pa 1998, f. 1a-131b) also seems to be devoid of an elaborate *rdzogs rim*. This cycle is deeply connected to '*Jam dpal tshe bdag*' and the oldest layers of the rNying ma Yamāntaka literature and bears witness to the way in which these materials were understood in the Fifth Dalai lama's closest circle.

⁴¹ Any form of revelation, *gter ma* or *dag snang*.

⁴² For a complete overview of the Fifth Dalai Lama's understanding of '*Jam dpal tshe bdag*', it would be necessary to investigate the large section of his *Record of Teachings Received* (2009: vol. 3, pp. 1-79) that is devoted to the many branches of rGya Zhang khrom's revelations. A preliminary survey of this source showed that allusions to elaborate *rdzogs rim* are found in the context of the sub-cycle *Yang bzlog nag po me'i spu gri* (on this sub-cycle, see Amanda Brown 2026). The Fifth Dalai Lama's catalog

However, such an idea is not something well-known or generally admitted in the rNying ma tradition. Since 'Jam dpal tshe bdag is regarded as pure Mahāyoga, the absence of any completion stage (*rdzogs rim*) or great perfection (*rdzogs chen*) in such a context is no surprise for Tibetan scholars, despite the features of the empowerment ritual that would allow for them.

What is more, we have an explanation for the awkward presence of a 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen lineage prayer in the context of 'Ju Mi pham's writings about 'Jam dpal tshe bdag: the original peaceful Mañjuśrī practice from *The Iron Scorpion* (lCags sdig) that used to be performed at the beginning of one's engagement into *Mañjuśrī Master of Life* (or some of its sections, such as *Yang zlog me'i spru gri*) has, for centuries, been replaced by a practice borrowed from *Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen*.⁴³ 'Ju Mi

of this sub-cycle mentions, in the context of the empowerments, a *rdzogs rim rdo rje'i rnal 'byor gyi smin byed thod rgal rdzogs chen snang ba bzhi'i dbang* (2009: vol. 3, p. 33), and further (*op. cit.*, pp. 40-41), compositions about *rdzogs rim* by various authors, especially 'Bri gung Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659). Other mentioned figures are mNga' ris paṇ chen Padma dbang rgyal (under his secret name Padma rgyal po ye shes rol pa rtsal) as a *gter ston* having revealed a cycle called 'Jam dpal don gyi gsang tig, which seems not to be available even in the forthcoming 68-vol. Byang gter compilation, which includes more materials from mNga' ris paṇ chen than CNT 2015. Here is the passage of the Fifth Dalai Lama's gSan yig: rig 'dzin chos kyi grags pas zla gsang 'dus pa'i rgyud la brten nas shing sprel rtse pa gzhis kar mdzad pa'i rtsa gsum 'khor lo bzhi la brten pa'i rdzogs rim | des mdzad pa'i rdzogs rim sbas don rnam gsum rim lnga btsan thabs su nyams su blang ba | des mdzad pa'i thun mong gi rdzogs rim dbang bzhi'i rnal 'byor | des mdzad pa'i thun mong ma yin pa'i rdzogs rim rdo rje bzhi'i rnal 'byor zhes bya ba rnam snang bzhi sgrom snying mdzod nas padma rgyal po ye shes rol pa rtsal gyis spyang drangs pa'i 'jam dpal don gyi gsang tig gi man ngag yang tig gces sgron gyi dgongs 'grel | des mdzad pa'i rdo rje bzhi'i rnal 'byor gyi nyams len rgyun khyer 'go na nang par snga bar ldang ba dang sbyang mo drug gi sngags kyi mtha' can | rdo rje bzhi'i rnal 'byor gyi sher dbang du chos kun 'dus tshul paṇ chen rin po che'i gter gzhung bcos med | ... I have not been able to find these texts in the Yamāntaka volumes of the *Byan gter phyogs sgrigs* (CNT 2015). However, they are found in vol. 11 of the 1999 edition of 'Bri gung Chos kyi grags pa's complete works (see bibliography for reference). These texts should be the next corpus to be investigated for a deeper understanding of the Fifth Dalai Lama's implicit assumptions about what could be a completion phase in the context of 'Jam dpal tshe bdag. A preliminary investigation of 'Bri gung Chos kyi grags pa's writings on the *rdzogs rim* of 'Jam dpal tshe bdag led me to two provisional conclusions: first, they do include elaborate visionary rDzogs chen, with all the traditional key points of *thod rgal*. Second, they do not seem to contain any allusion to 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen or Sar ban Phyogs med.

⁴³ This point is explained in, e.g., the Fifth Dalai Lama's 'Jam dpal zhi ba'i 'phrin las sangs rgyas mngon sum lag bcangs (2009, vol. 26, pp. 386-395), pp. 387-388. The explanation is too long and convoluted to be reproduced in a footnote, but its meaning is unequivocal. This is entirely about an inclusion of the peaceful Mañjuśrī sādhanā from 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen in 'Jam dpal yang bzlog nag po me'i spu gri chen, or a synthesis of this with the lCags sdig / lCags 'dra cycles, as a preliminary practice before the wrathful deity in the context of *Yang zlog me'i spru gri*, not at all about the inclusion of the properly rDzogs chen aspects of 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen as a conclusion practice for Yamāntaka. Be that as it may, we have just seen that *Yang zlog me'i spru*

pham's intention in the quoted text may thus merely be to provide the lineage for that preliminary peaceful *Mañjuśrī* practice.

In conclusion, there is a number of converging hints leading to the conclusion that *Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen* may have been intended, at least by the Fifth Dalai Lama, as the innermost, final practice of *Mañjuśrī Master of Life*—but we must acknowledge that this idea is nowhere formally asserted. The strong interest of the Fifth Dalai Lama in *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* is sufficiently explained through this cycle's strong coloration of destructive magic / war magic, which obviously the new monarch of Tibet felt he needed to consolidate his power through the destruction of his visible and invisible enemies. This appears to be the main motivation of the Fifth Dalai Lama's fondness for this cycle. There is, in the present state of research, no compelling reason to imagine that he also interpreted it as a shortcut to full enlightenment, which, by Tibetan standards, may then imply the need for well-developed *rdzogs rim* and *rdzogs chen* instructions in this cycle.

7. *An example of visionary rDzogs chen found in the completion phase of a purely Mahāyoga cycle of the same type as 'Jam dpal tshe bdag*

The idea of visionary *rDzogs chen* inserted in the completion phase of cycles that are officially purely Mahāyoga is not something unheard of, even in the early period when the *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* cycle was revealed by rGya Zhang khrom.⁴⁴ For instance, the oldest Hayagrīva cycle documented in the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, *rTa mgrin yang gsang khros pa* (nowadays practiced mainly by some dGe lugs pa in Se ra byes), belongs to more or less the same period and presents some of the same type of features. It was also of great interest to the Fifth Dalai Lama.⁴⁵

gri is precisely the sub-cycle of *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* to which *'Bri gung Chos kyi grags pa*—whatever his sources—appended a completion stage (*rdzogs rim*).

⁴⁴ At a later stage, it appears from Klong chen pa's (1304–1364) large commentary on the *gSang ba snying po* (Klong chen pa 2009) that the inclusion of complete visionary *rDzogs chen* instructions in a purely Mahāyoga context became classical. However, in the absence of explicit statements, it is not absolutely clear how the general idea would apply to each specific cycle (in the same way as the inclusion of a tantra in the *pha rgyud* category of the *gsar ma* traditions does not ipso facto explain concretely whether, and how, the “five stages” (*pañcakrama*, *rim lnga*) of the *Guhyasamāja* system can be implemented in this context).

⁴⁵ On this cycle, cf. *gSan yig* in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho 2009, vol. 3, pp. 275–289, with further details on pp. 403–405 in the context of Nyang ral's revelation. Incidentally: Hayagrīva and Vajravārāhī are the deities for practices of the 2nd and 3rd empowerments of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* (1313). It cannot be ruled out that *rTa mgrin yang gsang khros pa* may in some way be the substratum in which this cycle was to take root, by combination with the richer *Bi ma snying thig*.

This *gter ma* cycle was revealed by three *gter ston*,⁴⁶ one of which died, the other caught leprosy, and the third became insane.⁴⁷ Then, after two generations,⁴⁸ the Siddha Dar 'phyar ba Rin chen bzang po (d.u., 12th c.) had a pure vision (*dag snang*) in which he received the full transmission and some complementary instructions. A continuous lineage of actual practice could then begin.

In the *Rin chen gter mdzod*, the *rdzogs rim* instructions for *rTa mgrin yang gsang khros pa*⁴⁹ include the gradual development of luminous visions, with some (if not all) typical *thod rgal* terminology, although its

⁴⁶ Fifth Dalai Lama's *gSan yig* 2009, vol. 3, p. 275: ...*zhes pa'i gter ston gsum tshogs ni rkyang po grags pa dbang phyug | sum pa byang chub tshul khrims | 'bre shes rab bla ma gsum gyis yer pa se ba lung nas rta mgrin padma dbang chen yang gsang khros pa khrag 'thung lha dgu'i rgyud grub thabs man ngag rnam spyang drangs nas...*

⁴⁷ Loc. cit.: ...*gter rdur gyis rkyang po mdze byung | sum pa 'das | 'bre smyon pas...* Same story in Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho, *Padma dbang chen yang gsang khros pa'i lo rgyus rig 'dzin zhal lung* (in 2009, vol. 27, pp. 128-136), pp. 133-134. See Cuevas 2021, "Four Syllables for Slaying and Repelling," pp. 295-297 (esp. n.51).

⁴⁸ The chronology is unclear. The Fifth Dalai Lama (loc. cit.) mentions one 'Bru tshang gi gNyag ston who was the only person to receive the transmission from one or more of the *gter stons*, but then does not proceed to describe the connection between him and Grub thob Dar 'phyar ba (or Dar phyar ru ba, many variant spellings). Dar 'phyar ba is said to have received the transmission from a yogin, Zhang tshe Zla grags, who was an emanation of Padmasambhava: *ring zhig na grub pa'i dbang phyug dar phyar ru ba gtang jo mo nags rgyal na bzhugs pa'i dus slob dpon chen po padma 'byung gnas zhang tshe zla grags bya ba'i sngags pa zhig tu sprul nas dbang lung rnam rdzogs par gnang...* However, further in the text (p. 284), the Fifth Dalai Lama presents a lineage with two generations of lamas between the three original *gter stons* and Dar 'phyar ba: *'brug tshar gyi zhang ston gzi brjid 'bar | [an interspersed note adds: gsang mtshan dri med zla shar |] rta nag gi bla ma rgya | dpal ldan grub thob dar phyar ru ba | chos rgyal bo dong rin cen (sic) | ...* This Bo dong Rin chen is Bo dong Rin chen rtse mo (bdr: P2375) or, perhaps more probably Bo dong brTson 'grus rdo rje (bdr: P3097), if they are really two different persons (as Bo dong Rin chen rtse mo's fact sheet on BDRC puts it: "The Fifth Dalai Lama notes: *brtson 'grus rdo rje yin nam dpyad*)." Be that as it may, this enables us to date Dar 'phyar ba vaguely to the 12th century. The same text (loc. cit.) also presents a lineage stemming from Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124-1192), with one figure, She ma 'Od 'byung, between him and Dar phyar ba. On this basis, it can be speculated that Dar phyar ba was active in the second half of the 12th century and maybe in the first years of the 13th, and that the original revelation of the *gter ma* occurred sometime between late 11th and early 12th century—so, slightly later than the revelation of *'jam dpal tshe bdag* by rGya Zhang khrom. For whatever it may be worth, since this text is full of anachronisms, this is further confirmed by the mention of these three Hayagrīva practitioners (the *gter stons*) in *Rwa lo tsā ba's* biography, which attributes their tragic fate to *Rwa lo tsā ba's* wrathful magic (see Cuevas 2015, pp. 231-233; all my gratitude to Pr. Bryan Cuevas for reminding me of this passage).

⁴⁹ See, e.g., in *Rin chen gter mdzod* 1976 [-1980]: vol. 39, pp. 429-449, *Padma dbang chen yang gsang khros pa'i rdzogs rim ye shes gsang lam zab mo*. Although the text does not have a proper colophon and strangely does not bear the *gter ma* marks, it presents itself as a section of the original *gter ma*. It is mentioned as such in the Fifth Dalai Lama's *gSan yig* (2009, vol. 3, pp. 283-284).

fundamental tantra, as found in the *rNying ma rgyud 'bum*,⁵⁰ does not seem to allude to any yogic completion phase, not to mention rDzogs chen visionary practice, at all. It seems that some later dGe lugs authors regarded the presence of these elements in this and similar contexts as later additions (by the *gter stons*?), precisely because of their absence in the root tantras.^{51 52} However, this argument is paradoxical, because in the case of *rTa mgrin yang gsang khros pa* at least, the antiquity of the root tantra, which seems to have appeared with the *gter ma*, is not any better attested than those of the other elements: all were most probably revealed at the same time. In any case, the Fifth Dalai Lama was well-versed in this system⁵³ and his own writings bear witness to his awareness of the presence of a rDzogs chen system of gradual development of luminous vision in this supposedly pure Mahāyoga context.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Padma dbang chen yang gsang khros pa'i rgyud*, in *mTshams brag rnying ma rgyud 'bum*, vol. 31, pp. 395-431.

⁵¹ The main authority for *rTa mgrin yang gsang khros pa* in the dGe lugs tradition seems to be the Mongolian lama Brag ri Dam tshig rdo rje (1751-1855). His extensive writings on this Hayagrīva cycle (Brag ri dam tshig rdo rje, 1979-1980, *Padma dbang chen rta mgrin yang gsang khros pa'i chos skor*, vol. 1-3, Delhi: Chopel Legdan) do not seem to include detailed *rdzogs rim* instructions. However, he refrains from explicitly commenting on this point. This is not the case of Thu'u kwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737-1802), who appears to be the main dGe lugs authority on *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub*, the other large rNying ma Hayagrīva cycle that also survived in a dGe lugs environment. His writings on *rTa mgrin gsang sgrub* are found in Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma, 1969-1971, *gSung 'bum (zhol par ma)*, New Delhi: Ngawang Gelek Demo, 10 volumes), vol. 6 & 7. In a passage of this large collection, Thu'u kwan explicitly opposes the authority of the Fifth Dalai Lama and expresses doubts about the authenticity of the *rdzogs rim* / *rdzogs chen* aspect of this cycle, with an argument that may be intended for *rTa mgrin yang gsang khros pa* too: he says that since these instructions are not alluded to in the root tantra, they must have been added by later authors.

⁵² Comment by Bryan Cuevas on a draft version of this article, 2025/12/08: "This is particularly interesting given that Tsong kha pa employed precisely this strategy for Vajrabhairava, introducing elements absent from the root tantra. Later dGe lugs pa scholars defended his innovations as valid scriptural interpretation while questioning similar practices in other traditions. To be fair of course, earlier Sa skya masters had employed similar approaches, suggesting this was an accepted method of tantric development."

⁵³ A series of seven writing about this cycle are included in vol. 27 of his *Complete Writings* (2009: pp. 128-247). According to the dGe lugs tradition of *rTa mgrin yang gsang*, the Fifth Dalai Lama had a *dag snang* revelation of it, which may not have added to the textual content but created a short lineage (this is attested by practice texts used in the FPMT and oral explanations from dGe lugs lamas, but I have not yet found a clear, direct source in, e.g., the *gSang ba rgya can*).

⁵⁴ There are admittedly no detailed instructions on *rdzogs rim* in the above-mentioned series of seven texts in vol. 27. However, for instance, there is a summary of the stages of this path at the end of the lineage prayers in the *Padma yang gsang khros pa'i las byang gyer sgom 'jigs med rdo rje'i sgra dbyangs* (in vol. 27, pp. 137-181), p. 140,

The Fifth Dalai Lama's vision remains to be understood, especially in terms of the interface of dGe lugs and rNying ma views and practices. Somewhat like the much later *Ris med* masters, he seems to keep each teaching in the spirit of the tradition to which it belongs, without any attempt to any form of synthesis.

However, his writings have not yet been investigated with the aim to try and understand his actual philosophical views on the ultimate nature of phenomena—whether they lean more to the rNying ma or to the dGe lugs side, or whether, as can be suspected, he is pure dGe lugs pa in dGe lugs contexts as he is a pure rNying ma pa in rNying ma contexts. Indeed, his rNying ma writings do not show any dGe lugs coloration at all: rNying ma terminology, doctrines, ritual systems are fully assumed in works on rNying ma topics. In any case, as a conclusion, what we may safely say is that the Fifth Dalai Lama is much more enthusiastic than later dGe lugs specialists of rNying ma tantric cycles about their *rdzogs rim* and *rdzogs chen* aspects. This may have inspired in him the desire to complete *'Jam dpal tshe bdag* with such aspects.

6. The Fifth Dalai Lama's Practice Manual for Mañjuśrī's Dzogchen

The Thousand Illuminations is in any case a significant rDzogs chen text among the writings of the Fifth Dalai Lama. A thorough study of his rDzogs chen works should of course also consider his short practice manual for the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*⁵⁵ and important rDzogs chen sections in some tantric practice texts.⁵⁶ In fact, except for a couple of pages translated below (section 21 of the main part of the *sādhana*), this is a practice text for peaceful Mañjuśrī which merely has a rDzogs chen flavor, in the sense that it uses rDzogs chen terminology and presents the stages in the practice from a very high point of view that, in a way, denies what is being ritually performed through dissolving it in statements of a high rDzogs chen view.

Let us now summarize *The Thousand Illuminations* and present in more detail the passage that is most relevant to rDzogs chen.

in which the allusions to both elaborate *gtum mo* instructions and rDzogs chen visionary practices are transparent.

⁵⁵ *rdzogs chen mkha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig mchan gsal 'bum phrag snang bzhi'i 'od zer*, in DL5 2009, vol. 28, pp. 46-57.

⁵⁶ For instance, the *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings grol gyi bskyed rdzogs rdzogs pa chen po'i khrid yig rig 'dzin zhal lung* (in DL5 2009, vol. 27, pp. 29-104), on Legs ldan rdo rje's cycle *Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings grol*, has a significant rDzogs chen section (pp. 48-85) which is certainly the most detailed systematic presentation of the highest rDzogs chen precepts in the Fifth Dalai Lama's writings.

Introduction

The text begins with verses of homage (pp. 354-355), addressed first to Zur chen Chos dbying Rang grol (1604–1657⁵⁷), then to the teaching itself, then to Padmasambhava, then the treasure discoverer, Sar *ban* Phyogs med, then the 16th century Byang gter master *Byang bdag* bKras shis stobs rgyal, the main source of inspiration of the Fifth Dalai Lama for this cycle. This is followed by the announcement of the topics to be treated: it contains two large sections—the *sādhana* (pp. 355-373) and the empowerment ritual (pp. 373-385). They are followed by a short conclusion (pp. 385-386).

The Preliminary Part of the Sādhana (pp. 355-360)

The *sādhana* has three parts: a preliminary part with 15 subdivisions (pp. 355–360); the main part with 21 subdivisions (pp. 360-366); and the conclusion of the *sādhana* with 16 subdivisions (pp. 366-373).

In the first, preliminary part, we find: 1. refuge and 2. bodhicitta, on p. 355; they are followed by 3. a lineage prayer (p. 356-357). The lineage does not pass through Padmasambhava, but is introduced in Tibet by Mañjuśrīmitra, who transmitted it to King Khri strong lde'u btsan, who gave it to a secret spouse called She sa sGron gcig. The treasure revealer, Sar *ban* Phyogs med, is said to have been her reincarnation. Then the lineage runs through completely unknown figures up to Rig 'dzin rGod ldem and then an all-Byang gter lineage. This lineage prayer concludes, as usual, with a description of the stages of this path for which blessings are requested from the lineage masters. It is noteworthy that *khregs chod* and *thod rgal* are named (p. 357). This should imply that this cycle belongs to the *man ngag sde* and perhaps to its highest subdivisions. Then comes 4. the “reading of the tantra” (*rgyud bklaḡ pa*, pp. 357-358). Despite this misleading title, this is the beginning of the visualization: from emptiness, one instantaneously arises as Mañjuśrī seated on a lotus, a sun and a moon in the most usual form, the color of molten gold, with a letter *hūṃ* in his heart that radiates to invoke the blessings of all enlightened beings and then gathers back; then in front of oneself appears the refuge tree with Śākyamuni as the central figure, etc. One then recites the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, “short or developed,” and then innumerable rays of light radiate from Śākyamuni's body and teach everywhere “the tantra of Mañjuśrī” to infinite

⁵⁷ Note by Bryan Cuevas (2025/12/07) on a draft version of this article, correcting the date 1669 found on BDRC, etc.: “According to the Fifth Dalai Lama's biography of Zur chen, he died in the fire-bird year (1657) at the age of fifty-three. It is therefore unclear why BRDC and some other sources give this incorrect date of 1669 (...).”

beings.

This is followed by 5. the accumulations (of merits, p. 358), which is a rDzogs chen version of the “seven-branch” prayer commonly found at the beginning of most sādhanas. Then comes 6. “the infinite accumulations of primordial wisdom” (pp. 358-359), a rDzogs chen complement to this “seven-branch” prayer for the accumulation of primordial wisdom (*ye shes kyi tshogs*). Here, the principle is to recognize that everything is the five primordial wisdoms. This is rDzogs chen merely in the sense of a verbal expression of rDzogs chen view, not in the sense of specific rDzogs chen practices.

After that, there is 7. the “taking of the accomplishments” (*dnagos grub blang ba*, p. 359)—four verses followed by a mantra. Then comes 8. “terrifying the obstructors” (p. 359). This displays the uncommon feature that one visualizes oneself only as a letter *hūṃ* and not as a wrathful deity.⁵⁸ This is followed by 9. the opening of the symbolic door (p. 359); 10. the symbolic prostrations; 11. the commitment; 12. (p. 360) the descent of the blessings; 13. the offerings of the expressivity of *rig pa*; 14. the blessing of the offerings and the *gtor ma*; 15. the confession in the [ultimate] sphere.

This concludes the preliminary part of the sādhana.

The Main Part of the Sādhana (pp. 360-366)

The main part of the sādhana (pp. 360-366) has 21 subdivisions: 1. the generation of the deity (p. 360); 2. bestowing the empowerments (p. 361); 3. wearing the armor (p. 361); 4. inviting primordial wisdom (pp. 361-362); 5. the prayer for the deities to abide (p. 362); 6. the prostrations (p. 362); 7. the offering of the dance [of the] mudrā, or of mudrās and dance (*phyag rgya gar mchod pa*, p. 362); 8. the song and the dance (p. 362); 9. the outer offerings (p. 362); 10. the inner offerings (p. 362); 11. the offering of the complete purity of the five poisons (pp. 362-363). Section 12 curiously has the same title, “offering of the complete purity of the three poisons” (p. 363); 13. the offering of the medicine (nectar, p. 363); 14. the offering of the *gtor ma* (p. 363); 15. the offering of *rakta* (p. 363); 16. the offering of the secret oppression (p. 363); 17. the union (*sbyor ba*, p. 363); 18. the offering of liberation (pp. 363-364); 19. the praise (p. 364); 20. the confession (pp. 364-365); 21. the completion phase (pp. 365-366).

⁵⁸ Note the phrase *rang gter las*, which seems to mean that the Fifth Dalai Lama had himself a slightly different « re-revelation » of this cycle, which remains to be documented.

The 21st Section of the Main Part of the Sādhana: Slightly Uncommon Visionary rDzogs chen?

The 21st section is remarkable, because it presents abbreviated *thod rgal* instructions—or of something that is akin to *thod rgal*, with partly common terminology. As this is the only pure rDzogs chen passage, it is worth editing and translating for the reader to realize that *'Jam dpal rdzogs chen* is not rDzogs chen merely in terms of a very profound view, but also in terms of the technicalities of the practice. However, this text, which is presented by the Fifth Dalai Lama as a quotation—probably from the *gter chos*, despite the absence of the typical *gter ma* punctuation—would deserve a very precise, word to word, analysis. Indeed, it is easily understandable on the basis of a precise knowledge of the *thod rgal* instructions, and yet, it presents specific, unusual features. For example, it names two of the three most common *thod rgal* body postures, but not the third, although it may be alluding to it under the name “the posture that is without adoption and rejection”. What is much less common, it associates each posture with one given stage of the visionary development. In a way that is consistent but not common, the eye postures or gazes change according to the stage one has reached in the visionary development: one gazes upper and upper.

Furthermore, in standard *thod rgal* instructions, the breathing instructions are one and the same for the entire visionary development process, while here, terms that normally allude to types of retentions that are not found in *thod rgal* occur.

In the same way, it seems to have a stage before what is normally the first vision (*chos nyid mngon sum*), then it uses the name of the second (*nyams snang gong 'phel*) for a more advanced stage of the practice, but the standard names of the third (*rig pa tshad phebs*) and the fourth (*chos nyid zad pa*) do not appear. Incidentally, it is not obvious that the description of the stages of this development are the usual ones: the allusion to various geometrical shapes (*thig le dang thig phran*, etc.), which normally occur quite early in the process, seem to be placed at a point in which one may suppose the practitioner is reaching the full measure of Intelligence (*rig pa tshad phebs*). What is more, there are no allusions to deities, the visions of which, in standard *thod rgal*, gradually become central when one advances further in the visionary development.

Overall, the text is fully intelligible on the basis of a sufficient knowledge of standard *thod rgal*, but if one reads it honestly, without presupposing that this *has to* allude to things known in mainstream tradition, its intriguing singularities are obvious and may hint either to an archaic state of the matter or to an alternate tradition, different from that of the mainstream Heart Essences (*snying thig*).

Unfortunately, as we have seen, the Fifth Dalai Lama does not provide us sufficient information to go any further, since he does not even name the text that he quotes.

Translation & Edition of the 21st Section

Twenty-first [point], as for the completion phase:

"This primordially pure essence of the mind, unthinkable and inexpressible,
Unlimitedly and vividly clear, is the actual Buddhahood.
If one continuously abides in it, this is complete without need to
Implement what is conventionally called "meditation" or "practice".⁵⁹

Why so? Because in our own Intelligence (*rig pa*), pure insofar as it is the Dharmakāya,
Since there is neither birth nor death, there is neither action nor complete ripening [of the actions' karmic fruits].
As [this] does not exist, there is nothing such as "development" and "completion" [stages].⁶⁰

In it, there are not even the names of delusion and liberation.
The King of Unity abides in the sense of their inexistence.
If you meditate [just] one session of [this] brilliance (*dangs*), saṃsāra collapses.⁶¹

The Enlightened Mind of all the Sugatas,
[This] perfect essence endowed with [its] masses of light,
As for its being, is one, [but] as for its pervasion, is all-pervading.
As for its abode, it always rests in the middle of the heart.⁶²

Clear [and] empty, it shines throughout the ten directions and the three times.
Since [all] this is its own luminosity, if it is recognized [as such],
It is liberated as the kāyas, the primordial wisdoms, and the pure lands of the Conquerors,

⁵⁹ *Nyer gnyis pa rdzogs rim ni | bsam brjod bral ba'i sems nyid ka dag la | | ma 'gags wal ler gsal ba sangs rgyas dngos | | de la rgyun du gnas na tha snyad kyi | | sgom dang sgrub pa bya rgyud med par rdzogs |*.

⁶⁰ *Ci phyir rang rig chos skur dag pa la | | skye shi med pas las dang rnam smin med | | de med bskyed dang rdzogs pa'ang ci yang med |*.

⁶¹ *'Khrul dang grol ba'i ming yang de la med | med pa'i don la mnyam pa'i rgyal po bzhaq | | dangs pa'i thun gcig bsgoms na 'khor ba 'jig |*.

⁶² *bDe bar gshegs pa kun gyi byang chub sems | | yang dag snying po 'od kyi phung po can | | yin ni gcig yin khyab ni kun la khyab | | gnas ni rtag tu snying gi dbus na'o |*.

Devoid of the defects of impure karmic vision.⁶³

If one's own luminosity is not recognized, then our body and karmic traces,
And the outer dimension of perceptions, the shell of delusion, are generated.
One will then not encounter the primordial wisdom that [inherently] abides within oneself.⁶⁴

This being so, as for [your body, rest in the posture of] the squatting sage;
As for breathing, let it rest [= be slow]; and regarding the eyes, let them be half closed [looking downwards].
The direct perception of primordial wisdom(s) will liberate [you].⁶⁵

Then, with the posture that is without adoption and rejection,
Bind the wind of radiance and look straight in front.
The perception of primordial wisdom [during the] direct perception of Reality (*chos nyid mngon sum*)
Is the actual Buddha[hood], free from adventitious impurities.⁶⁶

As for the eyes, align them on the right and the left of the maṇḍala and on the space between the eyebrows.⁶⁷
[366] The proliferation of experiences and visions (*nyams snang gong 'phel*) will interrupt ordinary mental constructions.
Through being continuously aligned on this genuine primordial wisdom of clear light,
Development and completion [stages] will be spontaneously perfected.
This is [your] very last existence [in saṃsāra].⁶⁸

Then, through the posture of the lion proudly rearing,

⁶³ *gSal stong phyogs bcu dus gsum kun tu gsal | | de nyid rang 'od yin phyir ngo shes na | | sku dang ye shes rgyal ba'i zhing du grol | | ma dag las kyi snang ba'i skyon dang bral | .*

⁶⁴ *Rang 'od ma shes lus dang bag chags kyi | | snang ba'i go phyi 'khrul pa rgya bskyed nas | | rang gnas ye shes rang dang mjal mi 'gyur | .*

⁶⁵ *De phyir lus ni drang srong tsog pu dang | | rlung ni nga ba mig ni zim bur lta | | mngon sum ye shes mthong bas grol bar gyur | .*

⁶⁶ *Da bas blang dor med pa'i 'dug stangs kyis | | dangs ma'i rlung bcings thad ka'i mig gis blta | | chos nyid mngon sum ye shes mthong ba ni | | glo bur dri bral rang rig sangs rgyas dngos | .*

⁶⁷ This may allude to an instruction found in *thod rgal* context about what to do in the case of an unbalanced predominance of some colors or forms.

⁶⁸ *Mig ni dkyil 'khor g.yas [366] g.yon mdzod spur gtun | | nyams snang gong 'phel tha mal rnam rtog 'gags | | 'od gsal don gyi ye shes de nyid dang | | rgyun du bstun pas bskyed rdzogs lhun gyis grub | | | srid pa tha mar gyur pa nyid yin no | .*

The upper and lower primordial wisdom winds of Mañjuśrī
 Being conjoined and the eyes gazing above the space between the
 eyebrows,
 The three kāyas and the five primordial wisdoms, perfect without
 having been generated,
 [will appear in the form of] drops and droplets [forming something
 like] a tent of brocade,
 Like gauze, a checkerboard, a cloth with dense motives, spokes.
 Perceptions being completely purified, the visions of primordial
 wisdom will proliferate (*ye shes snang ba 'phel*).⁶⁹

The continuum of primordial wisdom [in which] ordinary names
 are exhausted⁷⁰ will be uninterrupted.
 One who knows (*shes*) this becomes birthless.⁷¹

Then, the meaning of the key points of the ten essential truths (*don*),
 The hidden explanation, [will have become] the heart treasure of
 the predestined one
 [Who now experiences] the purest part of the quintessence of all
 [spiritual] fruits.⁷²

So as to explain correctly the Meaning of this:
 If one masters the key points of the body, Intelligence encounters
 its objective field.
 If one masters the key points of speech, one realizes the unspeakable
 mode of being.
 If one masters the key points of the mind, [all] movements are
 stopped on the spot.
 Whatever one perceives, [even] bad views and thoughts are liberated
 as the Dharmakāya."—Practice accordingly.⁷³

⁶⁹ *De nas seng ge rab tu 'gying ba yi | 'dug stangs steng 'og 'jam dpal ye shes rlung | kha sbyar mig ni mdzod spu'i steng thad blta | ma bskyed rdzogs pa sku gsum ye shes lnga | thig le thig phran za 'og gur khyim dang | re lde mig mangs dar tshags rtibs shar dang | snang ba rnam dag ye shes snang ba 'phel |*

⁷⁰ It could be speculated that the phrase *ye shes snang ba 'phel* above corresponds to something analogous to what the sNying thig traditions name *rig pa tshad phebs*, and that *ming zad* here alludes to what they call *chos nyid zad pa*.

⁷¹ *Tha mal ming zad ye shes rgyun chad med | 'di nyid shes na skye ba med par 'gyur |*

⁷² *De nas snying po'i don bcu'i gnad kyi don | sbas pa'i ti ga (sic) skal ldan snying gi nor | 'bras bu kun gyi yang bcud dangs ma yin |*

⁷³ *De yi dgongs pa yang dag bstan pa ni | lus gnad gcun pas reg (sic for rig) pa yul dang mjal | ngag gnad gcun pas brjod med gnas lugs rtogs | yid gnad gcun pas 'gyu ba rang sar zad | gang mthong lta ba ngan bsam chos skur grol | zhes nyams su blang ngo |*

The Conclusion of the Sādhana (pp. 366-373)

It contains sixteen parts: 1. the offerings to the protectors (pp. 366-367); 2. the blessing of the *tshogs* (p. 367); 3. the invitation (of the deities to the *tshogs*, same page); 4. the offering (pp. 367-368); 5. the confession (p. 368); 6. the obtention (*stob pa*, same page); 7. the request (to accept the offerings, *zhu ba*, same page); 8. the answer to this request (*zhu lan*, pp. 368-369); 9. sending the remainders (p. 369); 10. the *chad mtho* (obscure term—pp. 369-371); 11. the protection of the teachings (*bstan skyong*, p. 371); 12. the dance of the horse (*rta bro*, pp. 371-372); 13. the purification of the extreme of eternity (p. 372); 14. the purification of the extreme of annihilation (p. 372); 15. the dedication (of merits, pp. 372-373); 16. the aspiration prayers (p. 373); 17. the auspicious verses (p. 373).

The Fifth Dalai Lama then proposes a more elaborate conclusion for the ritual from Longchenpa's (1306–1364) *mKha' 'gro yang tig*, or from a tantra revealed by Ratna Lingpa (1403–1478).

The Empowerment Ritual (pp. 373-385)

This section is not explicitly subdivided. The description of the rite is pretty linear. A short history of the lineage is found on pp. 375-376. It is remarkable because it presents this cycle as having been passed down through various lines and not only by *gTer ston Sar ban* Phyogs med. For example, *rDo rje gling pa* is named (p. 375) as another channel through which it was transmitted. It is in this part of the text that the cycle possibly seems to be characterized as belonging to the *sPyi ti* section of *rDzogs chen*, but, as mentioned above, the text is ambiguous.⁷⁴ On p. 376, the discovery of the *gter ma* is ascribed to both Gu ru Chos dbang (as King Khri srong lde'u btsan's rebirth) and *Sar ban* Phyogs med (as the reincarnation of his secret spouse *She sa sgron gcig* or *She sa sgron me*).

After these preliminary explanations, the actual empowerment rite

⁷⁴ Op. cit., p. 375: ... 'Jam dpal rgyud kyi rgyal po 'di nyid la bshad thabs gsum du mdzad de yang bka' 'grel pa la brten nas rgya che ba spyi ti ltar bshad | rgyud la brten nas don 'grel | ngo sprod la brten nas gsang 'grel mdzad | de dag kyang dbang po'i rim pa gsum gyi bkri tshul du snying por bsdu te gnang bas | ... The sentence is very long and somewhat convoluted, but the global meaning is that Padmasambhava commented the tantra (the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*?) at three different levels, only one of which corresponds to a section of *rDzogs chen* (*sPyi ti*) that is known in doxographies, while the two other ones are obscure. If I understand well, they are all supposed to be gathered or synthesized in '*Jam dpal rdzogs chen*', but this is unclear. As mentioned above, the three levels may correspond to three texts that are included in the forthcoming 68-volume edition of the Northern Treasures corpus. The situation will probably become clearer when this edition is available.

begins on p. 377 with the maṇḍala offering and the request, then the permission for the disciples to enter the maṇḍala, then (p. 378) refuge and bodhicitta, with the visualization of the master as being Vairocana. Then (pp. 378-379) come all the elements of the vase empowerment, said (p. 379) to follow the system of *Byang bdag bKra shis stobs rgyal*. Then comes a *gtor ma* empowerment (pp. 379-381). Although the text mentioned four empowerments above, this long *gtor ma* empowerment is directly followed by a word empowerment (*tshig dbang*, p. 381-382), concluded by the phrase *zhes dbang bskur ro*, “thus has the empowerment been conferred.” This seems to mean that the empowerment ritual is now complete. However, it is followed by the direct introduction (*ngo sprod*, p. 382-383). Then we reach the conclusion (pp. 383-384), with the maṇḍala offering as a token of gratitude to the master, the offering of one’s body, speech, and mind, and then auspicious verses (pp. 384-385). A tantra is then quoted (p. 385) under the title *sGyu ’phrul drwa ba’i bcud kyi snying po*. This could be one of the versions of the *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, but the quoted passage remains to be located.

The Conclusion (pp. 385-386)

In the final lines of the text, we find the names or titles of various lamas who either made the request for the composition of this text—such as *Rig ’dzin Padma ’phrin las*⁷⁵—or to whom it is dedicated for some reason (*bKa’ ’gyur ba*, *gTer bdag gling pa*...). The Fifth Dalai Lama then proceeds to present (p. 386) the sources from which he borrowed. The text concludes with a date of composition, in a year *chu glang* that has to be 1673.

Conclusion: Future Tasks for Researchers

I expect that the present article may have stimulated the curiosity of researchers about this rare rDzogs chen cycle and its articulations with other corpora. What remains ahead of us would first be to find the original *gtor ma* corpus of *Mañjuśrī’s rDzogs chen*, if any copy of it remains somewhere. As mentioned above, the forthcoming 68-vol. edition of the Northern Treasures, with its 14 texts on *’Jam dpal rdzogs chen*,

⁷⁵ Incidentally, it is interesting for Byang gter studies that, in this text, there is a distinction between the *bKra bzang rig ’dzin chen po*, called *Thugs mchog ’od ’bar*, and *Rig ’dzin Padma ’phrin las*. This *Thugs mchog ’od ’bar* is *Se ston Thugs mchog ’od ’bar* (P9480), whose birth BDRC places in the 16th century, with the indication that he was the master of *sMan lung pa Blo gros mchog gi rdo rje* (1595–1671), who seems (Tenpa Tsering Batsang, oral communication, 2025/10/14) to have been *Rig ’dzin Padma ’phrin las’* main master for Byang gter.

will significantly extend the available documentation.

It should also be researched how other figures than Sar *ban* Phyogs med contributed to this cycle—especially Guru Chos dbang, who seems to have revealed a first layer of it, upon which Sar *ban* Phyogs med would have built the collection as described by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Then *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal's writings should be looked for. Not only do they play a pivotal role in this specific cycle, but they are also often alluded to in many rNying ma contexts, and few of them are available. On such a more solid basis, the issue of the connection of *Mañjuśrī's rDzogs chen* with *sPyi ti* could then be reexamined.

Further research may also explore the idea that '*Jam dpal rdzogs chen* may be a proto-*Yang ti nag po*, in the sense of a Mañjuśrī-connected form of visionary rDzogs chen. In the same vein, incidentally, one could be well inspired to explore the hypothesis of a «*sNying thig* Hayagrīva-and-Vajravārāhī-associated rDzogs chen»: could the above-discussed *rTa mgrin yang gsang khros pa* cycle be one of the matrices of the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*? In any case, further research is needed on the presence of visionary rDzogs chen in early literature supposedly belonging to pure Mahāyoga contexts: after all, Klong chen pa's injection of complete sNying thig-style rDzogs chen instructions in the *Phyogs bcu'i mun sel* (his extensive commentary on the *gSang ba snying po*) may not reflect only his own focus on visionary rDzogs chen, but rather be the continuation of a tradition witnessed in much earlier sources.

Another thread to be pulled would be to try to understand better (from his biography and other writings) the reasons why the Fifth Dalai Lama devoted efforts to this specific cycle, which seems quite obscure and definitely already was in his time, if we consider the rarity of its mentions in biographies. The most likely hypothesis is that this is connected to his fondness for Byang gter and his respect for *Byang bdag* bKra shis stobs rgyal, a figure whose historical importance is not fully understood yet.

The thread of the *rdzogs rim* of '*Jam dpal tshe bdag* in 'Bri gung Chos kyi grags pa's writings and revelations should also be pulled further.

Research should also be undertaken to figure out what was the Fifth Dalai Lama's personal understanding of rDzogs chen, especially in relation to his more dGe lugs / scholastic writings. Did he merely add contradictory views side by side, being a dGe lugs pa in dGe lugs contexts, and a rNying ma pa in rNying ma ones? Or did he have in mind any form of philosophical synthesis?

It should then be explored in what way this specific approach was perceived in later Tibetan tradition, both on the dGe lugs side (posterity of his rNying ma-style writings in dGe lugs monasteries, as with

the Hayagrīva compilations of Brag ri Dam tshig rdo rje and Thu'u kwan in the 18th century) and on the rNying ma side (especially in the Byang gter / rDo rje brag tradition that counts the Fifth Dalai Lama as one of their lineage masters, but also on the sMin grol gling side, since gTer bdag gling pa is often mentioned in lineage prayers as the heir of the Fifth Dalai Lama's *Secret Visions*).



Bibliography

The appendix below does not have a bibliography, because it is essentially of bibliographical nature. All the collections and individual texts referred to in the appendix are described in this bibliography.

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rGya Zhang khrom rDo rje 'od 'bar (*gter ston* —)

- *'Jam dpal tshe bdag*, documented in CNT, vol. 18-27.⁷⁶

Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho (Fifth Dalai Lama)

- 1972: *rNam thar gsang ba rgya can*, reproduction of a 533-page *dbu med* manuscript, s.l.

⁷⁶ This collection—a large section of CNT—includes works and revelations of many authors. See Arguillère 2024 for a description. The compilation of this cycle in the forthcoming 68-vol. Byang gter collection will be even richer.

- 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i 'phrin las dang smin byed kyi chog sgrigs snang stong 'od lnga'i rgya can (*The Thousand Illuminations*), in DL5 2009, vol. 26, pp. 354-386. — Also in RT 1976 [-1980]: vol. 25, pp. 249-307.
 - bsTan bcos chen po dbu ma la 'jug pa gsal bar byed pa theg chen rgya mtshor 'jug pa'i gru 'dzings, in DL5 2009, vol. 15, pp. 158-358.
 - Thugs rje chen po 'khor ba dbyings grol gyi bskyed rdzogs rdzogs pa chen po'i khrid yig rig 'dzin zhal lung, in DL5 2009, vol. 27, pp. 29-104
 - Padma yang gsang khros pa'i las byang gyer sgom 'jigs med rdo rje'i sgra dbyangs, in DL5 2009, vol. 27, pp. 137-181.
 - rDzogs chen mkha' 'gro snying thig gi khrid yig mchan gsal 'bum phrag snang bzhi'i 'od zer, in DL5 2009, vol. 28, pp. 46-57.
 - Zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig gaṅgā'i chu rgyun (*Record of Teachings Received*), in DL5 2009, vol. 1-4.
- Chos kyi grags pa, 'Bri gung rig 'dzin —
- 'Jam dpal gshin rje'i gshed kyi rdzogs rim rnal 'byor bzhi'i sgo nas nyams su blang ba, in Chos kyi grags pa 1999, vol. 11, pp. 783-802.
 - 'Jam dpal gshin rje'i gshed phyag rgya zil gnon gyi thun mong ma yin pa'i rdzogs rim rdo rje bzhi'i rnal 'byor zhes bya ba ches zab cing gsang ba snying khrag lta bu, in Chos kyi grags pa 1999, vol. 11, 673-770.
 - 'Jam dpal gshin rje'i gshed yang zlog me'i spu gri'i rdzogs rim dbang bzhi'i rnal 'byor, in Chos kyi grags pa 1999, vol. 11, pp. 625-672.
 - Zla gsang 'dus pa'i tantra'i snying po lus dkyil rdzogs rim dang bcas pa shin tu zab pa'i mthar thug pa, in Chos kyi grags pa 1999, vol. 11, pp. 771-782.
- mChog gyur gling pa
- Zab mo rdzogs chen sde gsum gyi cha lag 'jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po, in mChog gyur gling pa 1982-1986, vol 21, pp. 7-34.
- bsTan pa'i dbang phyug, Khang gsar —,
- 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i smon lam gyi zin bris kun grol thig le nyag gcig, in bsTan pa'i dbang phyug, Khang gsar — 2005, vol. 4, pp. 202-253.
- gTer bdag gling pa 'Gyur med rdo rje
- 1998, Zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig rin chen 'byung gnas, in gTer bdag gling pa 1998, vol. 1, the passage quoted is ff. 235a-236b.
- Dam tshig rdo rje, Brag ri —,
- 1979-1980, Padma dbang chen rta mgrin yang gsang khros pa'i chos skor, vol. 1-3, Delhi: Chopel Legdan.
- rDo grub chen 'Jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma,
- 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i smon lam mi shigs na da'i rol mo, in

- gSung 'bum 2000, vol. 3 pp. 79-82.
- 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 NK 1982–1987, vol. 22, pp. 195-493.
- dPal rdor (ed.)
- 2018, *sDe dge'i rnying ma rgyud 'bum gyi dkar chag chen mo*, Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang.
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- 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po gzhi lam 'bras bu dbyer med pa'i don la smon pa rig stong rdo rje'i rang gdangs, in Mi pham 1984–1993, vol. 5, pp. 75-77, followed by the lineage prayer, pp. 79-83.
 - 'Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa'i smin byed dbang gi rin pa ye she rdo rje'i rgyun 'bebs, in Mi pham 1984–1993, vol. 5, pp. 87-131.⁷⁷
- Rig 'dzin rGod ldem (attributed to —),
- 2015, 'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi don 'grel zab mo, in CNT, vol. 14, pp. 271-362.
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- 1998, 'Jam dpal rdzogs chen snying po'i rgyun khyer, pp. 393-394, in gSung 'bum Śākya śrī, Kathmandu: Khenpo Shedup Tenzin And Lama Thinley Namgyal, 1998.

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⁷⁷ When I was doing the final edits on this article, I found another text of which I was not aware (which must be missing in the 27-vol. edition): 'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po'i smon lam gyi mchan 'grel zab don 'byed pa'i lde'u mig, in gSung 'bum mi pham rgya mtsho [2007: Gangs can rig gzhung dpe rnying myur skyobs lhan tshogs], vol. 24, pp. 481-90. However, this text is as empty as the others of any historically exploitable information.

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*Appendix: The Fifth Dalai Lama’s catalog of ‘Jam dpal rdzogs chen*⁷⁸

The following list of text titles is of course problematic, since the corpus is so far unavailable and since the interpretation of the Fifth Dalai Lama’s text in terms of a series of discrete items is not absolutely self-obvious. It also does not match, even partly, with the above-quoted list of texts in the table of contents of the forthcoming 68-vol. edition of the Byang gter. However, this is so far the best we have.

⁷⁸ *gSan yig*, in DL5 2009, vol. 3, pp. 131-133.

1. *Thog mar 'od lnga'i dkyil 'khor dang dpal gtor zur bzhi la brten nas dbang gi chog bsgrigs dang zur 'debs kyi nang bzhin rigs lnga'i dbang |*
2. *gTor dbang |*
3. *Rang byung rang ngo shes pa'i dbang gi smin byed rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i phyag len ma nyams pa legs par nos nas |*

Lung la |

4. *Slob dpon 'jam dpal bshes gnyen gyi sku che ba'i yon tan dang | 'jam dpal sgyu 'phrul drwa ba'i bka' brgyud 'di rnams ji ltar babs pa'i brgyud pa'i lo rgyus nam mkha' la gshegs so mthar tshang pa |*
5. *'Jam dpal gyi chos kyi 'byung khungs khog 'bubs gzhi lam 'bras bu bshad pa'i 'bras las mtshan brjod kyi lo rgyus dang*
6. *Slob dpon padma'i rnam thar gter ston tshul 'chos kyi 'jug sgo slob dpon dgos tshul grub mtha' dang bcas pa gu rus mdzad pas mthar chad pa |*
7. *'Jam dpal gyi mchod pa'i las byang dbang chog bkra shis simon lam gtor ma gtong ba sogs sbas byang gi mtha' tshang ba |*
8. *'Jam dpal dbang gi zur 'debs kyi dbang dang ngo sprod bya rgod phung ri padma spungs ri shel ri spungs ri gsum gyi 'phros don las man shel gyi lo rgyus dang bcas pa thugs su chud pa'o mthar tshang pa |*
9. *mTshan yang dag par brjod pa'i don rgyud rdo rje rtse mo nam mkha' lta bu'i rgyud le'u bcu gcig pa |*
10. *'Phags pa 'jam dpal gyi mtshan yang dag par brjod thabs chings rnam pa drug gis bstan pa rdzogs byang gi mtha' can |*
11. *mTshan yang dag par brjod pa gnyis med |*
12. *gSang sngags yon tan che tshul gsum gyi sgo nas 'don thabs rdzogs byang mthar tshang ba |*
13. *bsKyed rim gang zag dbang po rab 'bring mtha' ma'i 'don thabs phan yon dang bcas pa |*
14. *'Jam dpal rgyud kyi sa bcad don gsal bar byed pa'i sgron ma rdzogs byang gi mthar tshang ba |*
15. *De'i 'phros las sku gsum gyi mtshan nyid bstan pa |*
16. *A skye med rang byung byang chub sems su la zla ba |*
17. *'Byung ba phung po nyon mongs dbang po rnams rnam pa nyi shur snang ba don rtogs pa'i dus na rigs lngar 'char tshul te yig sna phra mo gsum |*
18. *'Jam dpal khri drug stong gi le'u sum brgya go dgu'i 'og na bstod pa glur blangs kyi le'u yod tshul gyi don bsdu btags grol gyi gzungs dang bcas pa |*
19. *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod kyi don 'grel o rgyan padma 'byung gnas kyis gsang sngags kyi bskyed rdzogs gsum dang mthun par mdzad pa |*
20. *Glo rdeg gtam rgyud sa bcad kyi sdom tshig mjug tu yig sna phra mo*

- rgyud gzhan gyis kha 'dzin mi dgos par bstan pa |
21. bKa' 'grol blo rdeg gi gtam rgyud lnga bcu rtsa gnyis pa mdo sde nas bsdus pa spas byang gi mthar tshad pa |
 22. mjug tu brgyud pa 'og ma rnams la gnang tshul dang ngo sprod thob pa'i gang zag gis zhes sogs chos la thos bsam sgom gsum byas pa'i phan yon tshigs su bcad pa'i yig sna phra mo |
 23. Khams gsum gyi grong khyer chen po na gnas pa'i srid pa gsum gyi sems can thams cad la 'phags pa 'jam dpal gyi ngo bos khyab pa'i rgyu mtshan gyis ngo sprod kyi gdams pa mjug tu gcig shes pas kun grol bar byed pa sangs rgyas kun gyi dgongs pa yang dag mthar thug pa'i che brjod dang bcas pa |
 24. Shin tu zab pa 'khrid yig gsang 'grel la nang gses kyi 'don thabs lnga |
 25. sNying po hūm gi sgrub pa sku gsum lam du 'khyer nus pa |
 26. mTshan dpe'i bshad pa |
 27. Nyan thos kyis brgya |
 28. Byang sems kyis bcu |
 29. Thabs lam sngags kyis bcu gnyis |
 30. Grol ma de bzhin gshegs pa'i sa lnga rnams bshad pa |
 31. rTsa rlung thig le'i gdams pa |
 32. Phyogs bcu'i 'jig rten du 'jam dpal gyi chos 'dis sems can rnams grol ba'i khyad par 'phags lugs |
 33. Khams gsum gyi sems can bshad pa |
 34. dGe 'dun gsum bshad pa |
 35. sPyan lnga bshad pa |
 36. Lam gyi yan lag brgyad rig tshul |
 37. Zhi ba'i lha tshogs kyi ngo sprod bcu gsum pa |
 38. Zhi ba'i lha'i dag sbyor |
 39. Khro bo'i lha tshogs bzhugs tshul |
 40. sKu gsum du grol tshul |
 41. sNod bcud gyi chags 'jig dang phung po gzhi 'brel du ngo sprod pa |
 42. A ti'i lta [ba] bsgom pa spyod pa 'bras bu bzhi nges tshig dang bcas pa bstan pa |
 43. gZhi 'khor 'das kyi rtsa ba bstan pa |
 44. She bza' sgron gyis gu ru la zhus pa'i tshig rkang bcu bzhi pa |
 45. 'Phags pa 'jam dpal rgyud kyi yang snying |
 46. De'i ngo sprod lta sgom spyod pa'i zhu lan gu rus she bza' sgron la gnang ba |
 47. gSang 'grel dngos la thog ma bar dang mthar dge ba sogs tshig rkang bzhi pa gu rus mnga' bdag la gnang zhing jo mo la yang gnang ba'i 'jam dpal gyi gsang 'grel don gsal bar byed pa'i sgron ma rdzogs byang gi mthar tshang ba |.

