

MAHĀMUDRĀ AND THE BKA'-BRGYUD  
TRADITION

EDITED BY  
ROGER R. JACKSON AND MATTHEW T. KAPSTEIN



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Jackson and Kapstein (Hrsg.)  
MAHĀMUDRĀ AND THE BKA'-BRGYUD TRADITION

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Cover: Karma Pakshi, copper alloy with copper inlay and painted details,  
Tibet, circa 14<sup>th</sup> century, 12.5 cm. Photo courtesy Rossi & Rossi, London.

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## PREFACE

The spiritual traditions inspired by the great translator of Lho brag, Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros, and known generally as Bka' brgyud, have had a remarkable legacy, contributing not only to the development of Tibetan religion, but to philosophy, art, literature, and politics as well. Though prominent teachers associated with several of the Bka' brgyud orders have now established teaching centres throughout the world, touching the lives of thousands of persons outside of Tibet, and though a great many texts stemming from these traditions have now been translated into English and other Western languages, as a distinct area of inquiry the focused academic study of the Bka' brgyud and their historical role in the formation of Tibetan culture is a relatively recent phenomenon. The present volume, offering the fruits of original research by twelve scholars, advances our knowledge in this field, while suggesting directions for future inquiry.

The work published here is based on presentations at two panels at the Tenth Seminar of the International Association for Tibetan Studies convened at Königswinter, Germany, in August 2006 under the auspices of the Seminar for Central Asian Studies at Bonn University. The first, concerning the Mahāmudrā teachings that are considered the very heart of Bka' brgyud contemplative teaching, was organised by Roger R. Jackson and Lara Braitstein and entitled “Phyag rgya chen po: Perspectives, Debates, Traditions and Transmissions.” Besides the organisers, the contributors included Jim Rheingans, Burkhard Scherer, and Jan-Ulrich Sobisch. The second panel, commemorating the figure often considered the first representative of the unique Tibetan ecclesiastical institution of recognised hierarchical incarnation, was called “For Karma Pakshi's Octocentenary: Dialogue and Innovation in the Bka'-brgyud Traditions.” Organised by Matthew T. Kapstein, it had as its other participants Karl Debreczeny, Ulrich T. Kragh, Stefan Larsson, Klaus-Dieter Mathes,

Puchung Tsering, Jann Ronis, Kurtis R. Schaeffer, and Marta Sernesi. In view of the close relationship between the two panels, and the overall quality and coherence of the new scholarship they introduced, the editors of this volume thought it advantageous that our efforts be combined. We regret that three of our colleagues (B. Scherer, Puchung Tsering, and J. Ronis) were unable to include their work in the present publication. At the same time, we were delighted that Anne Burchardi, whose communication was originally read in a panel devoted to Buddhist Philosophy, could make her research available for presentation here.

In preparing this work for publication, the editors have been guided by the intellectual architecture of the contributions, rather than the plan of the original panels. The first part, “Facets of Mahāmudrā,” begins with R.R. Jackson’s survey of contemporary scholarship and translation relating to the Mahāmudrā traditions of India and Tibet. L. Braitstein’s study of the “Adamantine Songs” attributed to the renowned *mahāsiddha* Saraha, as well as K.-D. Mathes’s examination of the compilation of “Indian Mahāmudrā Works” directed by the seventh Karma pa, both enhance our growing understanding of the ways and means whereby Indian Mahāmudrā traditions were transmitted and transmuted in Tibet.

The following section, “Traditions of Meditation and Yoga,” takes up specific Bka’ brgyud systems of spiritual discipline with reference to their text-history and practical content. U.T. Kragh examines the formation of the textual sources of the famed “Six Yogas of Nāropa,” perhaps the most celebrated of the Bka’ brgyud teachings besides the Mahāmudrā. His work has its counterpart in M. Sernesi’s study of the Aural Transmissions (*snyan brgyud*) and their place in the yoga systems specific to Bka’ brgyud esotericism. In the final chapter in this section, on “Guru Devotion” by J.-U. Sobisch, we return to the Mahāmudrā in connection with the teaching of ’Bri gung Skyobs pa, considered controversial by some, that such devotion offered in fact the “single means to realisation.”

The studies making up part three, “Contributions of the Successive Karma pas,” examine selected works—textual and artistic—produced by members of one of Tibet’s preeminent reincarnation lineages. M.T. Kapstein, in his investigation of a recently discovered and puzzling treatise by the second Karma pa, Karma Pakshi, discovers within it an apparently unique, albeit notably eccentric, defense of Mongol imperial religion. More mainstream doctrinal concerns are at issue in the two chapters that follow, though the approaches to them that we find here are strikingly original nevertheless. A. Burchardi’s topic is the seventh Karma pa’s treatment of reflexive awareness, a key element in Buddhist epistemological theory, in relation to the controversial doctrine of “extrinsic emptiness,” or *gzhan stong*, while J. Rheingans examines the eighth Karma pa’s remarks on Mahāmudrā in a letter responding to the questions of a disciple. In the closing chapter of part three, K. Debreczeny introduces us to the remarkable artistic production of the tenth Karma pa in a study based on painstaking efforts to locate and document the identifiable paintings that survive.

The last section of the volume is devoted to the famous “Madman of Gtsang,” Gtsang smyon Heruka, the author of the best-loved of Tibetan literary masterworks, his redaction of the biography and songs of the poet-saint Mi la ras pa. S. Larsson’s contribution offers an overview of his youth and early career, placing his relation to the Bka’ brgyud tradition in a new, nuanced perspective. K.R. Schaeffer focuses on Gtsang smyon’s later achievement, and that of his followers, in bringing important parts of the Bka’ brgyud heritage into print for the first time. In this regard, one may note that Gtsang smyon also played a particularly strong role in the redaction of the Aural Transmissions studied by M. Sernesi in her contribution as mentioned above.

In reflecting upon the work found here overall, we may note two broad tendencies underlying much of current Bka’ brgyud-related research. On the one hand, there is a significant interest in the early formation of the Bka’ brgyud orders, the particular doctrines and practices that distinguished them, and the hagiographical traditions surrounding their founding adepts. Besides

this, a second area of focused study that is beginning to emerge concerns the great masters of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, figures such as the seventh and eighth Karma pas, as well as 'Brug chen Padma dkar po, Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal, Gtsang smyon Heruka, and others. While much of the attention devoted to them concerns their important legacy in philosophy and religious thought, we must also recognize that their rise to prominence accompanied the age of Bka' brgyud political dominance in Central Tibet. It is a task for future research to disclose more thoroughly than so far has been possible the precise relationships between the religious developments that have mostly interested scholars to date and the material and political conditions that enabled them.

Roger R. Jackson & Matthew T. Kapstein  
Lo gsar, Year of the Iron Hare, 2011

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I.

FACETS OF MAHĀMUDRĀ





# THE STUDY OF MAHĀMUDRĀ IN THE WEST: A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW\*

ROGER R. JACKSON

## 1 Introduction

In the late 1990's, the Snow Lion Publications newsletter, a compendious catalogue of popular books on Tibetan Buddhism, added a specialized subsection on "Mahamudra," alongside such perennially popular categories as "Dalai Lama," "Women in Buddhism," "Death and Dying," and "Buddhism and Psychology." And, in 2005, the second edition of the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, a bellwether of academic respectability in the field of religious studies, included an article on "Mahāmudrā,"<sup>1</sup> which had not been given a separate entry in the first edition eighteen years earlier. These developments seem to signal the arrival of Mahāmudrā studies as a legitimate field of inquiry within the study of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>2</sup> The acceptance of Mahāmudrā

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\* This is a significantly expanded and altered version of remarks delivered at the IATS conference in Königswinter. My thanks to Lara Braitstein and Matthew Kapstein for their helpful suggestions for improving the clarity of presentation of what is essentially a bibliographic survey.

<sup>1</sup> R. Jackson 2005; for good earlier definitions in more specialized reference works, See e.g. Coleman 1994: 339–40; Quintman 2003.

<sup>2</sup> Though a full exploration of the issue is beyond the scope on this paper, it is interesting to note that over time the Sanskrit "Mahamudra" (with or without the proper diacritics, and either capitalized or lower-case), rather than the Tibetan *phyag rgya chen po* or any of the term's English translations, has become the word most commonly chosen to denote the focus of the field. This is despite the fact that "Mahāmudrā studies" (that is, the designation of Mahāmudrā as an important subject of inquiry) clearly are a product of Tibet rather than India, the vast majority of

(along with its cognate, *Rdzogs chen*) as a topic of inquiry can be traced to the growth of Tibetan Buddhism in the West, and to the perennial popularity among Westerners of styles of meditation considered to be “formless,” hence allegedly unencumbered by cultural idiosyncrasies and ritualistic complexities.<sup>3</sup> The growth of the field is accompanied by a host of difficult questions about its proper scope, the role of popular and academic scholarship in its development, and the sorts of topics that it ought to address. This essay will consider each of these questions in turn, in the hope of beginning to situate Mahāmudrā studies within the larger world of Tibetan Buddhist studies. My aim, thus, is to produce not another study of Mahāmudrā per se but, rather, to outline the study of Mahāmudrā as it has developed so far in the West.<sup>4</sup>

## 2 The Scope of the Field

Mahāmudrā, variously translated into English as “Great Seal,” “Great Symbol,” “Great Gesture,” “Great Attitude,” “Great Consort,” or “Great Embrace,” is probably best known as a system of meditative praxis in the Bka’ brgyud traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, but that context does not come close to covering the wide range of usages of the term. Indeed, Mahāmudrā figures more or less prominently in all the major traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, so

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literature focused on the topic is in Tibetan, and the earliest Western writers on the term usually referred to it either by its Tibetan or some English equivalent. One can perhaps explain the preference for the Sanskrit term by the fact that (a) *mahāmudrā* had a long and well-attested history in India before it gained prominence in Tibet, and (b) no single English translation has gained wide enough acceptance to eclipse all rivals.

<sup>3</sup> The popularity of Zen in the West as far back as the first half of the twentieth century, and the more recent enthusiasm for *vipassana* meditation can be explained along similar lines.

<sup>4</sup> By “in the West,” I really mean “in Western languages,” since a number of important contributions to Mahāmudrā studies have been produced by Indians, Chinese, and Japanese, not to mention Tibetans, in their own languages, and a number of important publications have been issued in Asia.

that there is discourse about it not only in the Bka' brgyud, but among Dge lugs pas, Rnying ma pas, Sa skya pas, and others as well. Some of this is due to the historical connections of these traditions with the Bka' brgyud, and some is simply due to the fact that Mahāmudrā is a ubiquitous term in the voluminous literature related to the Buddhist tantras that was produced in India in the centuries just before and after the turn of the first millennium. In that literature, depending on context, Mahāmudrā may refer to a hand-gesture used in tantric ritual; one of three or four 'seals' at the culmination of tantric ritual or meditative procedures; a 'consort' employed in sexual yoga practices; a style of meditation focused on the nature of the mind; a lineage of teachings traceable back through a series of Tibetan and Indian masters that includes Saraha, Nāgārjuna, Tilopa, Naropa, and Maitrīpa; an alternate name for Madhyamaka; a synonym for śūnyatā, tathāgatagarbha, dharmakāya, or a host of other Buddhist designations for ultimacy; a blissful gnosis cognizing emptiness; or, quite simply, the buddhahood that is the culmination of tantric practice.

Particularly when Mahāmudrā is associated with a long line of wisdom teachings and texts in both India and Tibet, it comes to encompass texts in which the term itself never appears, including, for instance, the *Madhyamakakārikā* of Nāgārjuna, the *Ratnagoṭravibhāga* attributed to Maitreya, and the *Dohakoṣa* of Saraha. Similarly, to the degree that Mahāmudrā is a designation for ultimate reality and its realization, it comes to be seen as a term that extends not just to tantric contexts, but throughout all of Buddhism, so that—as first suggested by Jñānakīrti in the eleventh century—there is a sūtra-based approach to Mahāmudrā as surely as there is tantric approach; thus, even the Buddha's "Hīnayāna" discourses on *anātman* are Mahāmudrā teachings. When the term is applied this broadly, however, the question no longer is Where is Mahāmudrā to be found? but rather, Where is it not? And when that is the question, the prospect of defining the scope of the term suddenly seems terribly elusive.

I have no obvious solution to this problem. I would suggest that the most promising way to begin—if not necessarily to end—is to approach the



matter as a lexicographer might, and trace the history of usages of the term Mahāmudrā from its earliest appearances in India to its most recent interpretations by Tibetan and Western teachers and researchers. In so doing, we might be able to produce for the first time a synoptic picture of the significance of Mahāmudrā in all its variety over multiple centuries and cultures. A full synopsis is probably beyond the scope of any single scholar, however, and will be possible only through the accretion of smaller-scale, more specialized studies of Mahāmudrā in its various textual and cultural contexts. My task here, however, is more modest: to survey very briefly the study of Mahāmudrā in the West. In the process, we will confront significant questions about the way the term has been construed by scholars, the agendas and institutions that have informed their studies, and the issues that have most preoccupied them. On the basis of this survey of where the field of Mahāmudrā studies has been in the past, then, we may be able to hazard some suggestions about where it could or should head in the future.

### **3 A Brief Survey of Mahāmudrā Studies**

The history of Mahāmudrā studies in the West has been marked by the same syndrome that affects the study of Tibetan Buddhism more generally, namely, the peculiar admixture of popular and scholarly approaches that is itself a function of the psychology and sociology of the motley collection of individuals who have been drawn to the study of Tibet in the past two centuries: adventurers, missionaries, diplomats, spies, Theosophists, drop-outs, artists, spiritual tourists, sincere Buddhists, and academics both peripatetic and sedentary.<sup>5</sup> As on Tibetan Buddhism, so on Mahāmudrā, the literature that has appeared always has included both scholarly and popular material, yet these are not mutually exclusive categories: much work of academic merit has emerged from such ‘popular’ contexts as the writings of early explorers and missionaries and more recent publications rooted in ‘Dharma centers,’ while many a

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<sup>5</sup> On this, see especially Lopez 1997.

university-trained scholar has used an academic platform to expound an idiosyncratic vision that seems not far from that of certain popularizers. In what follows, I will survey some of the major discussions of Mahāmudrā that have appeared in the West in the past two centuries. The survey is far from exhaustive: I have noted many important works, but I do not have the space to mention, let alone analyze, them all, and there undoubtedly are sources I have overlooked. Furthermore, in a perhaps misplaced fascination with ‘origins,’ I have given disproportionate attention to earlier discussions than to more recent ones. Still, if the reader emerges from this section with a general sense of the development of and issues faced by Mahāmudrā studies in the West, I will have succeeded in my aim.

### 3.1. The Eighteenth, Nineteenth, and Early Twentieth Centuries

It must remain forever a matter of speculation whether Marco Polo, in his brushes with Tibetan Buddhism during his thirteenth-century journey to China, ever encountered the term *phyag rgya chen po*; certainly, it is mentioned nowhere in his account of his travels. Nor does it turn up, as best I have been able to ascertain, in the writings of the Jesuit and Capuchin missionaries who frequented Tibet in the early eighteenth century—though it is hard to imagine that, learned as they were, they would not have known the term.<sup>6</sup> In any case, the earliest extant reference to Mahāmudrā in a Western language that I have been able to find is in Alexander Csoma de Kőrös’s Tibetan-English dictionary, published in 1834. His entry under *phyag rgya chen po* reads, in its entirety: “The great seal &c.; the title of a book.”<sup>7</sup> In 1869, Anton Schiefner and V.P. Vasiliev published pioneering translations (into German and Russian respectively) of Jo nang Tāranātha’s history of Buddhism in India, which

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<sup>6</sup> I have examined Ippolito Desideri’s *Account of Tibet* (English translation, 1937), and have found no references to *mahāmudrā* or *phyag rgya chen po* there. It is possible that some of his more specialized scholarly works, especially in Tibetan, could contain the term. For more on Desideri, see Pomplun 2009.

<sup>7</sup> Csoma de Kőrös 1973: 87.

utilises the term frequently, almost always in the context of *mahāmudrāsiddhi* as the attainment at the culmination of the tantric path. Schiefner includes the term in his index, but does not elaborate on it.<sup>8</sup> Only slightly more helpful than Csoma de Kőrös’s cryptic entry is H.A. Jäschke’s definition of *phyag rgya chen po* in his 1881 Tibetan-English dictionary: “... a figurative designation of the Uma-doctrine.”<sup>9</sup> Drawing perhaps from Hindu sources, the compendious 1891 Sanskrit-English dictionary of Vaman Apte, defines *mahāmudrā* as: “a particular position of hands or feet (in practice of Yoga),”<sup>10</sup> a definition repeated almost verbatim eight years later in the even larger Sanskrit-English dictionary of Monier Monier-Williams, who then adds obscurely: “a partic. high number, Buddh.”<sup>11</sup>

The earliest source to offer anything resembling an informed definition is L. Austine Waddell’s notoriously biased but vastly detailed *The Buddhism of Tibet, or Lamaism*, published in 1895. In his chapter on “The Sects of Lāmaism,” in his account of the ‘Kar-gyu-pa,’ he writes: “Its mode of mystic insight (*Ta-wa*) is named *Mahāmudrā* or ‘the Great Attitude’ also called *U-mahi Lam* or ‘the Middle Path.’”<sup>12</sup> In a footnote about Mar pa, he adds a reference to the great translator’s promulgation of an exoteric Sūtra-system emptiness and an esoteric Mantra-system inseparable bliss-emptiness.<sup>13</sup> These

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<sup>8</sup> See Schiefner 1869; Vaisiliev 1869. I have not been able to examine the latter. For a translation of Tāranātha’s text, see Chimpa and Chattopadhyaya 1970.

<sup>9</sup> Jäschke 1972: 247b. Uma refers to *dbu ma*, or Madhyamka. Jäschke adds parenthetically, “The other meanings given by [Csoma de Kőrös] and [Schlagintweit] are rather uncertain.” Csoma’s definition we already have encountered; Schlagintweit’s 1863 *Buddhism in Tibet*, on the other hand, does contain numerous references to *mudrās*, but none to *mahāmudrā* that I have been able to find.

<sup>10</sup> Apte 1998: 1252a.

<sup>11</sup> Monier-Williams 1974: 799a.

<sup>12</sup> Waddell 1972: 64.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.: 65n1: “The so-called esoteric [sic] is the ‘mdo-lugs-stong-pa-nyid,’ and the esoteric *snags* lugs *bde ston* dbyer med.”

often are associated with two different approaches to Mahāmudrā, but Waddell does not thus identify them. In his Tibetan-English dictionary of 1902, Sarat Chandra Das offers the fullest definition yet, under two separate entries. The first, expanding on Jäschke, describes *phyag rgya chen po* as “a figurative designation of the *Mādhyamika* doctrine, indicating a mode of attaining *Nirvāṇa* by highly mystically-developed devotees while indulging in sexual embrace.”<sup>14</sup> The second entry begins by noting that *phyag rgya chen po*

is described in both Sūtra and Tantra. 1. ... [T]he special meaning of *Mahāmudrā* is *Anuttara*, the supreme and absolute doctrine; it is described as the knowledge of *Dharma Karma* (its practice) and the vows. 2. according to the *Tantra*: ... *Phyag* signifies the knowledge of *Çūnyatā*, while *Rgya* conveys the meaning of liberation from worldliness; and *chen-po* signifies both these important functions being brought together.<sup>15</sup> This occult Buddhism was first taught in India by Padmavajra (the senior), Saraha, Nāgārjuna, Ri-khrod dwañ-phyug, Maitripa, etc., and afterwards it was taken into Tibet by the Tibetan sages such as Marmije, Sgam-po, Phag-gru, Sakya Pan-chen and others.<sup>16</sup>

That Das’s definition was as detailed and wide-ranging as it is, is testimony to the the Indian scholar’s serious attempts to translate Tibetan texts, including portions of the *Grub mtha’ shel gyi me long* of Th’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi

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<sup>14</sup> Das 1979: 831a.

<sup>15</sup> The ellipses indicate places where Das (831b) has quoted Tibetan, perhaps from the *Dpag bsam ljon shing* of Sum pa mkhan po Ye shes dpal ’byor. The second passage is more or less accurate, but the first misses badly the meaning of *phyag rgya’i dbye ba bla na med / chos dang las dang dam tshig dang phyag rgya chen po zhes brjod do*, which translates as something like: “The unexcelled way of dividing *mudrās* is said be into the dharma, the action, the pledge, and the great *mudrā*.”

<sup>16</sup> Das 1979: 831b. Ri-khrod dwañ-phyug is Śavaripa, while Marmije probably refers to *Mar pa* and *Mi la ras pa* (thanks to Matthew Kapstein for the latter suggestion).

nyi ma and, perhaps more to the point, Tāranātha's *Bka' 'babs bdun ldan*, which includes a full chapter on Indian Mahāmudrā lineages.<sup>17</sup> In the first decades of the twentieth century, the great German art historian, mythologist, and Tibetologist Albert Grünwedel added to the fund of Western-language works pertinent to Mahāmudrā, publishing a German translation of the *Bka' 'babs bdun ldan*, as well as studies of biographies the the Indian siddhas (most notably Nāropa), and his own overview of "der Lamaismus."<sup>18</sup>

Thus—although the information was for the most part buried in widely scattered sources in several different languages and genres—by the end of World War I, an assiduous student could determine, quite correctly, that Mahāmudrā may be, *inter alia*, a hand or foot position in yogic practice, a designation for Madhyamaka and the emptiness doctrine, a mode of practice entailing sexual yoga, the central view of the Bka' brgyud tradition, and a lineage, rooted in both sūtras and tantras, that originated in India and was transmitted to Tibet. Notably absent from most of these discussions is any reference to the details of Mahāmudrā as a system of meditative praxis.

This lacuna would be filled in the 1930's by the French explorer Alexandra David-Neel and the American Theosophist and adventurer W.Y. Evans-Wentz, each of whom was an important purveyor of the 'mysteries' of Tibet for Western audiences, and both of whom owed much to the translation efforts of the Sikkimese Bka' brgyud pa lama Kazi Dawa-Samdub. In *Initiations and Initiates in Tibet*, published in French in 1930 and translated into English in 1931, David-Neel gives a synopsis of the *Phyag chen zin bris*, a detailed manual on Mahāmudrā meditation technique by the sixteenth-century Tibetan polymath Padma dkar po.<sup>19</sup> She includes a number of Padma dkar po's textual citations, and elements of his discussions of both *zhi gnas* and *lhag mthong* practices, but omits much of the superstructure the author himself

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<sup>17</sup> See Das 1901.

<sup>18</sup> See Grünwedel 1906, 1914, 1916, 1933. I have not yet had the opportunity to consult these works for specific reference to Mahāmudrā.

<sup>19</sup> David-Neel 1970: 198–206.

provides, including the discussion of the four yogas that takes up the last part of the treatise. She mistakenly asserts that the “Chag gya chenpo” practice is Hindu in origin, and that its introduction to Tibet is owed to Sa skya paṇḍita.<sup>20</sup> She also is among the first to assert that there is a similarity between the teachings of “Tibetan mystics” and those of “the patriarchs of the Ts’an [Chan] sect,” insofar as they distill the “fundamental principles” of Buddhism into a form “as alien to the classic Hīnayāna as to the devout and sentimental Mahāyāna.”<sup>21</sup>

Evans-Wentz makes a number of passing references to Mahāmudrā or, as he preferred to call it, the “Great Symbol,” in his first two books based on Dawa-Samdup’s translations, *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* (1927) and *Tibet’s Great Yogi Milarepa* (1928). In the former, he identifies it as “an ancient Indian system of *yoga* ... especially practiced nowadays by the followers of the semi-reformed Kargyutpa sect,”<sup>22</sup> while in the latter he identifies it as one of the “three chief Schools of Buddhist Philosophy,” along with the Mādhyamika of the Dge lugs and the Ādi-Yoga [sic] of the Rnying ma pa.<sup>23</sup> In *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, an anthology of seven Bka’ brgyud pa texts published in 1935, he includes Dawa-Samdup’s translation of a text on the six dharmas of Nāropa, regarded by Bka’ brgyud pas as the key practices of tantric Mahāmudrā. He also includes a complete translation of Padma dkar po’s *Phyag chen zin bris* (as *The Epitome of the Great Symbol*), surrounded by a detailed introduction and set of explanatory notes.<sup>24</sup> The translation itself is reasonably clear and accurate, but much of its significance in a Tibetan Buddhist context is lost through Evans-Wentz’s attempts to explain it as “the quintessence of some of the most profound doctrines of Oriental Occultism,”<sup>25</sup> a process through

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.: 198.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.: 206.

<sup>22</sup> Evans-Wentz 1927: 135n2.

<sup>23</sup> Evans-Wentz 1928: 4.

<sup>24</sup> Evans-Wentz 1935: 101–54.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.: 101.

which one establishes “communion between the human mind and the divine mind,”<sup>26</sup> or a teaching of universal oneness, an “ancient postulate of *yoga*” akin to what the sciences only belatedly have revealed in the West.<sup>27</sup> These distractions notwithstanding, with *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, Evans-Wentz did give readers outside Tibet their first real glimpse at a Mahāmudrā-focused text, and his discussion of it, while misleading in many respects, also contains much information that is correct and valuable. At the very least, the book presented the world with more information about Mahāmudrā than was contained in all the works before it combined, and it would remain an influential description for decades to come.

At the same time as adventurer-seekers like David-Neel and Evans-Wentz were publishing their observations, more scholarly works were published by figures such as Haraprasad Shastri, who in 1927 edited the works of Maitrīpa found in the *Advayavajrasaṅgraha*, and Muhammad Shahidullah, who produced the first significant European edition and translation of the recently discovered “People” *Dohākoṣa* of the great progenitor of Mahāmudrā, Saraha (1928); Charles Bell, who wrote an authoritative account of the religion of Tibet based in part on his long experience in the country and in part on consulting important Tibetan historical works, such as the *Deb ther sngon po* (1931); and Jacques Bacot, who gave the West its first translations of Gtsang smyon Heruka’s hagiographies of Mi la ras pa (1925) and Mar pa (1937).<sup>28</sup> Each of these texts has general relevance for Mahāmudrā studies, but contains little in the way of detailed discussion of the term.

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.: 115n1.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.: 136n1. He also subjects the text to a yogic critique by his Hindu guru, Swami Satyānanda (108–9), and makes the interesting observation that it is the text in the book with which “the Theravādin will probably feel most in agreement. Therein the emphasis is, as in much of the *yoga* of the Southern School, upon *yogic* analyses of the mental processes ... [and] the importance of meditation upon the breathing-process....” (43).

<sup>28</sup> These are, respectively, Shahidullah 1928, Bell 1931, and Bacot 1925 and 1937.

### 3.2 The Mid-Twentieth Century

After a hiatus in Western preoccupation with Tibet during World War II, further scholarly works—including some with a bearing on Mahāmudrā—began to appear in the late 1940s. In 1946, Shashi Bhushan Dasgupta published his study of Indian tantrism, *Obscure Religious Cults*, which, following upon the work of Shahidullah, added much to our understanding of the Bengali tantric Buddhist “Sahajiyās.”<sup>29</sup> 1949 saw the publication of two gigantic works, each of which has remained a landmark in Tibetan Buddhist studies: Giuseppe Tucci’s *Tibetan Painted Scrolls* and George N. Roerich’s translation of ’Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal’s *Deb ther sngon po* (1478) as *The Blue Annals*.<sup>30</sup> In the context of introducing a volume of photographs of *thang kas*, Tucci gives a masterful survey of nearly a thousand years of Tibetan history, religion, and literature, including detailed accounts of the writings of many major Buddhist masters. Mahāmudrā does not loom large in *Tibetan Painted Scrolls*, but Tucci does describe it on a couple of occasions, once, on the basis of the *Kalparāja Tantra*, as “the pure Being, in which nirvāṇa and existence within time and space are identified, the supreme reality,”<sup>31</sup> and then, in a discussion of the *bsre ’pho* (mixture and transference) teaching, as “a method of freeing from the net of cosmic illusion that great light which is a symbol of the void, shining in the ‘middle channel’ in that avadhūti or umā running along the spinal cord, often transfigured as a goddess and invoked in the esoteric schools’ mystical songs.”<sup>32</sup> These definitions expose both the Sūtra and Mantra aspects of Mahāmudrā, but they also edge toward mystification in their invocation of “pure being” and the “great light,” terms that legitimately translate Tibetan

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<sup>29</sup> Dasgupta 1969: Part I.

<sup>30</sup> As Roerich himself concedes (1976: xxi), he was aided in his efforts by the expatriate Tibetan scholar, Dge ’dun chos ’phel (1903–51), though many feel Roerich’s acknowledgement considerably understates Dge ’dun chos ’phel’s role.

<sup>31</sup> Tucci 1949: I, 244.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*: I, 127.



phrases, but also evoke various preoccupations in Western metaphysics and occultism.

Roerich's *Blue Annals* is not an easy text to use, as its formatting is forbidding, its scholarly apparatus skimpy, and its indexes often unhelpful, but it remains a foundational text for the study of Tibetan Buddhism, and it is filled with discussions of Mahāmudrā.<sup>33</sup> These occur in particularly concentrated form in 300-page chapter on the Dwags po Bka' brgyud and the 28-page chapter specifically devoted to "The Mahāmudrā,"<sup>34</sup> but are found elsewhere as well. There is no index entry for *mahāmudrā* or *phyag rgya chen po*, but a reader who works through Roerich's translation will receive as rich an education in the multiple Tibetan usages of the term as is available in English. Also in 1949, there appeared in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society* a brief account of the "Bkah-Brgyud Sect of Lamaism" by Li An-che, which gave the clearest outline yet of the various schools and subschools of the Bka' brgyud, and also contained a full page of discussion of the various categories of "the Great Hand-Seal," in its exoteric aspect as the "Void-nature Seal" and, in the esoteric tradition, as "the Joy and Light generated from the central artery" through such techniques as the "Simultaneous Identification" (*lhan cig skyes sbyor*), "Five Methods" (*lnga ldan*), "Eight Teachings" (*khri chen brgyad*) and "Six Equalities" (*ro snyoms skor drug*).<sup>35</sup> Li is not always clear in his recounting of the details of these practices, but he does provide a useful outline that would not necessarily be evident to a reader of *The Blue Annals*.

In 1950, Dasgupta published another text based primarily on Sanskrit and Old Bengali sources, *Introduction to Tāntric Buddhism*,<sup>36</sup> and two years later, the German scholar Herbert V. Guenther published in India the first of

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<sup>33</sup> See, however, the Tibetan and Himalayan Library's ongoing digitization and reformatting of Roerich's translation (under Roerich 1976 in the bibliography), which makes the text far more user-friendly than in Roerich's book-format version.

<sup>34</sup> Roerich 1976: 399–724 and 839–66, respectively.

<sup>35</sup> Li 1949: 58–59.

<sup>36</sup> Dasgupta 1950.

many works in his long career in which Mahāmudrā would figure prominently, *Yuganaddha, The Tantric View of Life*. In this book, an account of Buddhist tantric philosophy and practice based primarily upon little-studied songs and treatises from medieval Indian *mahāsiddhas*, Guenther already displays the scholarly style for which he will become (depending on one's perspective) celebrated or notorious: obvious mastery of original texts, deep philosophical reflection, erudite cross-cultural references, and an evangelical desire to demonstrate that Buddhist tantrism represents a holistic approach to life that the West desperately needs to embrace. Thus, *Yuganaddha* includes groundbreaking excerpts from Indian Buddhist tantric texts, but the translation and discussion of these texts, as often as not, is enmeshed with Guenther's philosophical agenda rather than the historical or intellectual context of the texts themselves. In any case, here, as in many of his subsequent works, Guenther does pay significant attention to Mahāmudrā, which he describes as a female symbol that points beyond particulars to an open, empty mind, and "is so difficult to be formulated in words, because it is not a light that one sees, but the light and freedom by which one sees and lives."<sup>37</sup> Whatever one may think of Guenther's approach to scholarship, he did try seriously to make Mahāmudrā part of a global religious and philosophical conversation. Whether he succeeded in doing this any better than his Theosophically-inclined predecessors, David-Neel and Evans-Wentz, he would, over the years, bring a tremendous amount of valuable material to light, and never failed to stimulate and provoke with his reading of that material.

A number of other works published in the 1950's had a bearing on the study of Mahāmudrā. In 1954, David Snellgrove published the first English translation of Saraha's "People" *Dohākoṣa*, which received fairly wide circulation because of its inclusion in Edward Conze's anthology, *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*.<sup>38</sup> Helmut Hoffmann's *Die Religionen Tibets* (1958)

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<sup>37</sup> Guenther 1952: 120.

<sup>38</sup> Snellgrove 1954.

includes a section on the “Lamaist Sects,” where, in the discussion of Bka’ brgyud, Mahāmudrā is described as “a Yoga way, using special breathing techniques and various physical exercises, and purporting to lead to a consciousness of the identity of the soul with the Absolute, the ‘Void.’”<sup>39</sup> In 1958, Chen-chi Chang wrote a “Yogic Commentary” for inclusion in the second edition of Evans-Wentz’s *Tibetan Yoga and Secret Doctrines*, in which he sought to contextualize the anthologized texts in terms of Bka’ brgyud pa distinctions between “the Path with Form” and “the Path without Form,” the former being associated with the six dharmas of Nāropa, the latter with Mahāmudrā. Most notably, Chang gives the first detailed comparison between Mahāmudrā and Zen, remarking, “From my own personal experiences in the study and practice of both Zen and Tantricism, I have discovered that the teachings of Zen and the advanced Tantricism of the *Mahāmudrā* are identical”<sup>40</sup> He goes on to cite various sayings from Zen and Mahāmudrā practitioners to cement his claim, concluding, “Zen is esoteric *Mahāmudrā* and *Mahāmudrā* is exoteric Zen.”<sup>41</sup> Also in 1958, Toni Schmid published a study of artistic and narrative traditions surrounding the *mahāsiddhas* of late first-millennium India, who are important progenitors of Mahāmudrā traditions in Tibet.<sup>42</sup> In 1959, Herbert Guenther published his landmark translation of Sgam po pa’s *Thar pa rin po che’i rgyan, The Jewel Ornament of Liberation*, which describes Mahāmudrā meditation practices within the context of a broader discussion of “the perfection of awareness,”<sup>43</sup> itself very near the culmination of the gradual path to liberation on which Sgam po pa’s text concentrates. The same year, David Snellgrove published his equally ground-breaking critical edition and translation of the *Hevajra Tantra*,<sup>44</sup> making available in the West

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<sup>39</sup> English translation, Hoffmann 1961: 149.

<sup>40</sup> Chang 1958: xxxv–xxxvi.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.: xxxix.

<sup>42</sup> Schmid 1958.

<sup>43</sup> Guenther 1959: 216–24.

<sup>44</sup> Snellgrove 1959.

for the first time a complete Buddhist tantra of the most esoteric sort, and, not incidentally, a text in which Mahāmudrā figures significantly. Also in 1959, the German-born self-styled Lama Anagarika Govinda, one of the last of the old-style adventurer-scholar-mystics, published his *Foundations of Tibetan Mysticism*, a creative—some would say fanciful—meditation on the mantra *om maṇi padme hūṃ*, that found its way into the backpack of many a Westerner who would travel to India in the 1960's.<sup>45</sup> Govinda, who studied with Bka' brgyud pa lamas among others, has a brief discussion of Mahāmudrā, which he describes as “the Eternal Feminine” that must be “known” by the seeker, not in any coarse physical sense, but “*within ourselves* ... by the union of our male and female nature in the process of meditation.”<sup>46</sup>

Thus, by the watershed year of 1959, a Western student interested in Mahāmudrā had available an increasing number of resources of considerable scope and precision. He or she could begin to discern the traditional contours of the concept, in both India and Tibet, and also, for better or for worse, had tools with which to think about it in relation either to other Buddhist practices or to Western ideas of various sorts. Yet, as with Tibetan Buddhism more generally, knowledge of Mahāmudrā still had mostly to be gleaned piecemeal from scattered sources, some scholarly, some popular, and the term (unlike Zen) was not well known outside small circles of Tibet enthusiasts, or the even smaller circle of Tibetologists. Like history itself, however, all that was about to change.

### 3.3. The 1960s and 1970s

With the Chinese suppression of the March 1959 Lhasa uprising and the subsequent flight from Tibet by the Dalai Lama and tens of thousands of others, there began a Tibetan diaspora that now has lasted over half a century, and spread not just to India, Nepal, and other nations bordering Tibet, but to the

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<sup>45</sup> For a critique, see Lopez 1997: 125–26.

<sup>46</sup> Govinda 1969: 103.

West as well. The tragedy of exile had the paradoxical effect of thrusting Tibet to the forefront of the world's consciousness, particularly in the person of the Dalai Lama, who has become a peripatetic spiritual leader, best-selling author, and recipient of the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. Because they were members of Tibet's 'theocratic elite,' a disproportionate number of Tibetans who fled the country after 1959 were monks and other religious figures. They began to settle in India and Nepal just at the moment when Westerners, motivated by disillusionment with their culture and a romantic vision of 'the East,' and enabled by disposable income and ever better modes of transportation and communication, began to make their way to South Asia. The inevitable encounters between Western travelers and exiled lamas led to a variety of interesting developments, including the founding of centers in Nepal and India where Westerners could study Buddhist thought and practice (e.g. Kopan near Kathmandu and the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala) and the emigration of lamas to the West to found centers there (e.g. Chögyam Trungpa Rinpoche, Tarthang Tulku, Geshe Rabten) or to teach in universities (e.g. Deshung Rinpoche, Geshe Sopa). In the course of this remarkable cultural exchange, the most serious Western students of Buddhism settled into monasteries in India, meditation centers in Asia or the West, or academic programs in Buddhist studies in the West. A few Westerners spent long years immersing themselves in Buddhism in its Tibetan diasporic setting, while conversely, increasing numbers of Tibetans made their way through academic programs in the West. All these characters—lamas, Dharma center denizens, academics—would become the source of the rapid expansion of interest in Tibetan Buddhism, and the consequent production of ever more numerous publications on the topic,<sup>47</sup> some traditionally academic, some unabashedly

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<sup>47</sup> Although far from scientific or complete, a bibliography I have been compiling, of works with significant information on the Bka' brgyud, bears this statement out. So far, I have identified approximately 20 works for the entire period of 1895–1959, 15 for the 1960s, 20 for the 1970s, 40 for the 1980s, 50 for the 1990s, and, so far, over 70 for the 2000s.

popular, many in an ambiguous category between the two. Since significant numbers of Bka' brgyud pa lamas and their students were involved in these activities, publications on Mahāmudrā increased greatly, as well.

Given the exigencies of the training required for expertise in Tibetan Buddhism (however defined), the process I have just outlined took nearly two decades to bear fruit. As a result, in the 1960s and 1970s, publications on Tibetan Buddhism in general and Mahāmudrā in particular increased only gradually. Garma Chen-chi Chang, who had contributed his comparison of Mahāmudrā and Zen to the second edition of Evans-Wentz's *Tibetan Yoga*, published two important translations in the early 1960s: the two-volume *Hundred Thousand Songs of Milarepa* in 1962 and *Teachings of Tibetan Yoga* in 1963. The former, which remains the only complete translation of Gtsang smyon Heruka's *Mi la mgur 'bum* in English, contains many passing references to Mahāmudrā, and a brief footnoted explanation that defines it primarily as "the practical teaching of Śūnyatā."<sup>48</sup> *Teachings of Tibetan Yoga* was the first work since Evans-Wentz's almost thirty years earlier to provide translations of works on Mahāmudrā, including Tilopa's "Song of Mahāmudrā" (the *Phyag chen gaṅga mā*), the third Karmapa, Rang 'byung rdo rje's, "Vow of Mahāmudrā" (*Phyag chen smon lam*), and brief instructions on Mahāmudrā practice by Chang's teacher, Lama Kong Ka.<sup>49</sup>

Also in 1963, Herbert Guenther published *The Life and Teachings of Nāropa*, which includes a relatively straightforward translation of a Tibetan biography of Nāropa, and a long philosophical analysis of the twelve teachings transmitted by Tilopa to Nāropa, one of which is Mahāmudrā. Guenther explains Mahāmudrā through the writings of Saraha, Sgam po pa, and Padma

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<sup>48</sup> Chang 1989: 8n2.

<sup>49</sup> Chang 1963: 25–48. Like Evans-Wentz's, Chang's anthology also includes a text on the six Dharmas of Nāropa. For background on the lama 'Kong Ka' (i.e. Gangs dkar Rin po che) who was an important informant for Chang, see Meinert 2009. For a commentary by the notorious Bhagawan Shree Rajneesh, or Osho, on the Tilopa song as translated by Chang, see Osho 1984.

dkar po,<sup>50</sup> mixed in with observations from philosophers like Hocking and Heidegger, such that, at one point, he remarks, “Mahāmudrā is not an event *in* time, it rather *is* time, not restricted to a precious now, but including the past and the future which we usually think of as non-existent.”<sup>51</sup> In *Tibetan Buddhism Without Mystification* (1966), Guenther turned for the first time to Dge lugs sources, and translated a number of texts bearing on Sūtra and Mantra approaches to Mādhyamika in that tradition, including two by Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1713–97) that clearly are influenced by the tradition of Mahāmudrā practice found in the Dga’ ldan *snyan rgyud*.<sup>52</sup> Three years later, Guenther published the first Western-language translation of Saraha’s pithy “King” *Dohākoṣa*,<sup>53</sup> preceded by a lengthy historical and philosophical introduction to Saraha’s teaching, and followed by detailed commentaries by the eleventh-century Nepalese scholar, Skyed med bde chen (= Bal po A su), and the fifteenth-century Bka’ brgyud master, Karma phrin las pa. Mahāmudrā never is mentioned in the *dohās* themselves, but is central to the commentarial tradition upon them.

At the same time, other scholarly works with some bearing on Mahāmudrā appeared, including David Seyfort Ruegg’s edition and translation of the biography of Bu ston rin chen grub, which includes an extraordinarily complex and erudite footnote on the gnosis related to tantric conceptions of Mahāmudrā<sup>54</sup>; Ferdinand Lessing and Alex Wayman’s translation of Mkhas grub rje’s fifteenth-century overview of tantra<sup>55</sup>; E. Gene Smith’s learned

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<sup>50</sup> Guenther 1971: 222–35.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*: 224.

<sup>52</sup> Guenther 1976 [1966]: 77–127. Early on (93n4), Guenther defines Mahāmudrā as “‘noetic union’ where the noetic act is grounded in the knowing agent and stretches forth as an empty relational form to be terminated by the object having its own ground. There is thus existential diversity with formal unity.”

<sup>53</sup> Guenther 1969.

<sup>54</sup> Ruegg 1966: 58–64.

<sup>55</sup> Lessing and Wayman 1968.

introductions to editions of Tibetan texts he was helping to publish in India<sup>56</sup>; Malati Shendge's study of Ḍombi Heruka's *Sahajasiddhi* and Lakṣmīnkara's *Advayasiddhi*<sup>57</sup>; and further work by David Snellgrove on aspects of Tibetan Buddhism.<sup>58</sup> In the more popular realm, in 1966, the Bka' brgyud pa reincarnate Chögyam Trungpa published his autobiography, *Born in Tibet*, the first in what eventually would become a deluge of books by exiled Tibetan lamas. The book includes a glossary, in which "Mahamudra" is defined as "the 'great symbol', which transcends expression and contains the Universe; the most profound form of Tantrik meditation."<sup>59</sup> Two years later, Trungpa brought out in pamphlet form *The Sadhana of Mahamudra*, a Rdzogs chen-Mahāmudrā liturgy he had received as a *gter ma* in Bhutan.<sup>60</sup>

The 1970s began with John Blofeld's popular overview of Tibetan Buddhism, *The Way of Power*, which includes a brief description of Mahāmudrā, seen as a formless meditation practice that issues in "the unimpeded consciousness of things as they really are"<sup>61</sup>; and with Giuseppe Tucci's scholarly summation, *Die Religionen Tibets*, in which Mahāmudrā is described as "a supreme catharsis" in which "everything converges into the supreme consciousness of being."<sup>62</sup> In 1972, Guenther issued a revised edition of *Yuganaddha*, entitled *The Tantric View of Life*, which made his gleanings from, and reflections upon, Indian and Tibetan Mahāmudrā literature available to a new generation,<sup>63</sup> and R.A. Stein published his French translation of the

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<sup>56</sup> See e.g. Smith 1968a, 1968b, 1969, 1970. Many of these were collected in Smith 2001.

<sup>57</sup> Shendge 1964, 1967.

<sup>58</sup> See Snellgrove 1967: 101.

<sup>59</sup> Trungpa 1966: 259.

<sup>60</sup> See Trungpa 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Blofeld 1987: 237.

<sup>62</sup> English translation, Tucci 1980: 71.

<sup>63</sup> Guenther 1976. For an article-length summary of many of Guenther's views on Mahāmudrā, see Guenther 1975.



life and songs of the fifteenth-century Bka' brgyud pa 'crazy saint' and Mahāmudrā practitioner, 'Brug pa kun legs.<sup>64</sup> Other important scholarly works that appeared in the 1970s included Shinichi Tsuda's detailed study and partial translation of the *Samvarodaya Tantra*, an Indian tantra source of conceptions of Mahāmudrā nearly as important as the *Hevajra*<sup>65</sup>; Christopher George's partial translation of the *Caṇḍamahāroṣaṇa Tantra*<sup>66</sup>; Per Kvaerne's seminal article on the concept of *sahaja*, often taken to be synonymous with Mahāmudrā,<sup>67</sup> and his study and translation of the *Caryāgītikōṣa*, the collection of tantric songs of the Indian *mahāsiddhas*<sup>68</sup>; Alex Wayman's arcane analysis of the literature on the *Guhyasamājatantra*<sup>69</sup>; and James Robinson's *Buddha's Lions*, a translation of Abhayadattaśrī's eleventh-century collection of hagiographies of the eighty-four *mahāsiddhas*.<sup>70</sup>

The catalogue of Mahāmudrā meditation manuals available increased with Stephan Beyer's translation of Padma dkar po's *Phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor khrid yig*<sup>71</sup>; Judith Hanson's translation of 'Jam mgon kong sprul's instruction on practices preliminary to Mahāmudrā, the *Nges don sgron me*<sup>72</sup>; and two collaborative translations from the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives in Dharamsala: of the first Panchen Lama's root-verses on the "Gelug/Ka-gyu" tradition<sup>73</sup> and the ninth Karma pa, Dbang phyug rdo rje's, *Phyag*

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<sup>64</sup> Stein 1972b; for further analysis of the concept of the crazy saint in Tibet, see Ardussi and Epstein 1978.

<sup>65</sup> Tsuda 1974.

<sup>66</sup> George 1974.

<sup>67</sup> Kvaerne 1975.

<sup>68</sup> Kvaerne 1977.

<sup>69</sup> Wayman 1977.

<sup>70</sup> Robinson 1979.

<sup>71</sup> Beyer 1974: 154–61.

<sup>72</sup> Hanson 1977.

<sup>73</sup> Dhargyey et al. 1975.

*chen ma rig mun gsal*.<sup>74</sup> Although not overtly Mahāmudrā-focused, two new works on Mi la ras pa increased the material available for understanding his approach to the topic: Lobsang Lhalungpa's fresh translation of Gtsang smyon Heruka's *Mi la rnam thar*<sup>75</sup> and Kunga Rinpoche and Brian Cutillo's *Drinking the Mountain Stream*, a collection of songs and stories including many that were not contained in the *Mi la mgur 'bum*.<sup>76</sup> Finally, as he established himself in the United States, Chögyam Trungpa published a variety of works in which Mahāmudrā figured more or less prominently, including his classic *Cutting Through Spiritual Materialism*,<sup>77</sup> *The Myth of Freedom*,<sup>78</sup> and a collaborative work with Herbert Guenther, *The Dawn of Tantra*, where its realization is referred to as "the greatest encounter .... a peak experience."<sup>79</sup>

As the 1970s came to a close, a number of trends were emerging that would combine to expand Tibetan Buddhist and Mahāmudrā studies manifold in the decades to come: a rapid increase in the number of lamas familiar with Western languages and Westerners with Tibetan; the founding, in both Asia and the West, of ever more Tibetan Buddhist centers, at many of which translation was seen as essential to the center's mission; the maturation of a generation of academically-trained Western scholars that had been drawn to Tibetan Buddhism after 1959; and the emergence of "Dharma presses" that marketed their books to the growing audience for works on Tibetan Buddhism.

### 3.4 The 1980s

In part because of the developments just noted, it was in the 1980s that Mahāmudrā studies (like Tibetan Buddhist studies more generally) finally came

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<sup>74</sup> Berzin 1978.

<sup>75</sup> Lhalungpa 1977.

<sup>76</sup> Kunga and Cutillo 1978.

<sup>77</sup> See Trungpa 1973: 222.

<sup>78</sup> Trungpa 1976, which includes a translation of Tilopa's *Phyag chen gaṅga mā*, this translation was republished in Bercholz and Kohn 1993: 266–72.

<sup>79</sup> Guenther and Trungpa 1975: 59.

of age in the West, beginning to achieve a level of detail and sophistication largely unseen in previous decades. The sheer volume of publications—whether scholarly, popular, or a mix of the two—that began to issue forth was great enough that in our brief survey, we cannot list them all, let alone discuss them in any detail. In this and the following section, however, we will note the contributions from the era that seem most significant for an understanding of Mahāmudrā.

In the academic realm, more and more studies began to appear that focused with increased precision on particular persons, traditions, and issues related to Mahāmudrā. Michael Broido, for instance, published a succession of erudite and philosophically challenging articles, based upon his study of Padma dkar po, Sgam po pa, and other Bka' brgyud pa authors, which provided new materials and perspectives on a range of complex problems, including the criteria for understanding Mahāmudrā in terms of Sūtra and Mantra, or sudden and gradual paths, or ground, path, and goal.<sup>80</sup> Broido was a participant in the first major academic dispute in Western Mahāmudrā studies, over the motives for and legitimacy of Sa skya paṇḍita's critique of Mahāmudrā (especially in its formulation as the “white medicinal simple,” *dkar po chig thub*) as being akin to the teaching of the Chinese interlocutor at the so-called Bsam yas debate, Hvē shang Mahāyāna. The dispute, which played out over most of the decade in *The Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies*, began with Roger Jackson's analysis and translation of Sa paṇ's critique of Mahāmudrā in his *Thub pa'i dgongs pa rab gsal* (1982). Leonard van der Kuijp added some correctives about Sa paṇ's sources in 1986, and the following year, Broido criticized van der Kuijp and defended R. Jackson in a lengthy analysis, which was, in turn, criticized in 1990 in an even lengthier article by David Jackson.<sup>81</sup> The debate about Tibetan debates did a great deal to reveal how complex and

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<sup>80</sup> See Broido 1980, 1984, 1985a, 1985b, 1987.

<sup>81</sup> See R. Jackson 1982, Kuijp 1984, Broido 1987, D. Jackson 1990.

contested a notion Mahāmudrā could be, and how difficult intersectorian relations sometimes were in Tibet.

Other academically trained scholars who made important contributions on issues directly or indirectly related to Mahāmudrā included Janet Gyatso, who wrote on the teachings of Thang stong rgyal po and the *gcod* tradition of Ma gcig lab sgron<sup>82</sup>; Matthew Kapstein, who profiled the Shangs pa Bka' brgyud, as well as thirteenth-century Bka' brgyud-Rnying ma syncretic trends<sup>83</sup>; Dan Martin, who looked into the early education of Mi la ras pa<sup>84</sup>; David Stott, who analyzed the sources of Dwags po Bka' brgyud in India and Tibet<sup>85</sup>; Marie-José Lamotte, who produced a full French translation of the *Mi la mgur 'bum*<sup>86</sup>; Mark Tatz, who wrote a still-definitive study of Maitrīpa<sup>87</sup>; David Snellgrove, who published his two-volume magnum opus, *Indo-Tibetan Buddhism*<sup>88</sup>; Samten Karmay, who analyzed Mahāmudrā in comparison to Rdzogs chen<sup>89</sup>; and David Seyfort Ruegg, who masterfully discussed the complex question of the relation between Mahāmudrā and Madhyamaka, and elsewhere examined the sudden-gradual problem in early Tibetan Buddhism, noting in passing the later debates in which Mahāmudrā was contested.<sup>90</sup>

At the same time, books and articles less subject to Western academic standards, yet still of considerable value, emerged in increasing numbers from publishers related originally to Buddhist centers in the West. The most active and long-lasting of these were in America: Shambhala, founded under the aegis of Trungpa Rinpoche; Wisdom, which was connected with Lama Thubten

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<sup>82</sup> J. Gyatso 1980, 1985.

<sup>83</sup> Kapstein 1980, 1985.

<sup>84</sup> Martin 1982.

<sup>85</sup> Stott 1985.

<sup>86</sup> Lamothe 1986.

<sup>87</sup> Tatz 1987.

<sup>88</sup> Snellgrove 1987: I: 265–68 *et passim*.

<sup>89</sup> Karmay 1988: 197–200.

<sup>90</sup> Ruegg 1988, 1989: 102ff.

Yeshe and the Foundation for the Preservation of Mahayana Tradition; and Snow Lion, begun originally as a vehicle for translations from the Dge lugs tradition. Keith Dowman published the first English translation of material related to 'Brug pa kun legs, and a new version of Abhayadattaśrī's hagiographies of the eighty-four *mahāsiddhas*, supplemented by extensive discussions of the sādhanas practiced by each siddha and speculations on the intractable problem of their historicity and historical relations.<sup>91</sup> The Nālandā Translation Committee, under the direction of Trungpa Rinpoche, produced English translations of two important Bka' brgyud pa texts, a collection of 'spiritual songs' (*nyams mgur*) of great Bka' brgyud masters and Gtsang smyon Heruka's life of Mar pa.<sup>92</sup> Geshe Kelsang Gytaso contributed a detailed exposition of tantric Mahāmudrā practice according to the Dge lugs tradition, and the Dalai Lama commented on *Bla ma mchod pa*, an important guru yoga ritual related the Dge lugs Mahāmudrā tradition.<sup>93</sup> David Templeman translated Jo nang Tāranātha's *Bka' babs bdun ldan*, a survey of Tibetan meditation lineages, the first of which is Mahāmudrā.<sup>94</sup> Khenpo Könchog Gyaltzen published two translations of 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud pa texts: a collection of songs of 'Jigs rten gsum mgon and a sixteenth-century manual for practicing the Fivefold (*Inga ldan*) Mahāmudrā.<sup>95</sup> A biography and two collections of discourses of the Bka' brgyud pa meditation master Kalu Rinpoche, all of which touched on Mahāmudrā, were edited into book form.<sup>96</sup> Kunga Rinpoche and Brian Cutillo issued a fresh collection of stories about and songs by Mi la ras pa.<sup>97</sup> Jeremy Russell wrote a brief account of the little-studied Stag lung

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<sup>91</sup> Dowman 1980, 1985.

<sup>92</sup> Nālandā 1980, 1982. The latter had been previously translated into French by Bacot.

<sup>93</sup> K. Gyatso 1982, Dalai Lama 1988.

<sup>94</sup> Templeman 1983: 2–14.

<sup>95</sup> Gyaltzen 1984, 1986.

<sup>96</sup> Kalu 1985, 1986a, 1986b.

<sup>97</sup> Kunga and Cutillo 1986.

Bka' brgyud tradition.<sup>98</sup> Chokyi Nyima Rinpoche brought out a detailed commentary on Kar ma chags med's seventeenth-century text on the union of Mahāmudrā and Rdzogs chen practice, and a translation of Rtse le Sna tshogs rang grol's seventeenth-century introduction to Mahāmudrā, also from a mixed Rnying ma-Bka' brgyud perspective.<sup>99</sup>

Arguably, the most important single work on Mahāmudrā published in the 1980's was Lobsang Lhalungpa's *Mahāmudrā: The Quintessence of Mind and Meditation*, an authoritative translation of the sixteenth-century *Phag chen zla ba'i 'od zer* of Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal, which is probably the most influential and detailed manual of Mahāmudrā in Bka' brgyud tradition. The translation is as important in its way as Roerich's *Blue Annals*, but, like Roerich's work, it is undermined to some extent by its lack of an adequate scholarly apparatus: there is no index at all, and the textual references provided often are sketchy. Nevertheless, Lhalungpa's book is a rich source of information both on Mahāmudrā meditation procedures and on issues in the study of the concept; it is one of the handful of works on Mahāmudrā that is indispensable.<sup>100</sup>

### 3.5 1990–2009

The period since 1990 has seen an even greater proliferation of works on Mahāmudrā, and our summary of them must be even more selective and cursory: we will simply note major scholarly contributions on a range of subtopics, including Indian Mahāmudrā and Mahāmudrā in Bka' brgyud and other Tibetan traditions—relegating more popular contributions to the footnotes.

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<sup>98</sup> Russell 1986.

<sup>99</sup> Chokyi Nyima 1989; Kunsang 1989.

<sup>100</sup> Lhalungpa 1986b. The 2006 reissue by Wisdom Publications (under the title *Mahāmudrā: The Moonlight: Quintessence of Mind and Meditation*) makes the structure of the text clearer, but does not otherwise enhance the scholarly apparatus.

The Indian sources of Mahāmudrā have received increasing attention in recent years. Works on the sūtra and tantra sources relevant to Mahāmudrā include Roger Jackson's translation and discussion of the *Atijñānasūtra* and summary of the *Ananvīlatantrarāja*,<sup>101</sup> Jeffrey Hopkins' translation of Tsong kha pa's analysis of the yoga tantras,<sup>102</sup> G.W. Farrow and I. Menon's translation of the root text of the *Hevajratantra* and Kāṇha's commentary on it, the *Yogaratnamālā*,<sup>103</sup> Vesna Wallace's translations and analysis of the "inner Kālacakra" chapter of the *Kālacakratantra*,<sup>104</sup> and David Gray's translation of the *Laghusaṃvaratantra*.<sup>105</sup> Other studies of importance include Miranda Shaw's controversial and thought-provoking *Passionate Enlightenment* and Ronald Davidson's sweeping *Indian Esoteric Buddhism*, each of which attempts to investigate the social context of Indian Buddhist tantra, and Geoffrey Samuel's detailed overview of the rise of yogic and tantric traditions in India.<sup>106</sup>

Works on the Indian *mahāsiddhas* have continued to appear, as well. Contributions covering multiple *siddhas* include Matthew Kapstein's examination of "King Kuñji's Banquet," Ronald Davidson's *Tibetan Renaissance*, and Ron Linrothe's excellent catalogue of a Rubin Museum exhibition of artistic depictions of the siddhas, which includes essays by, among others, Matthew Kapstein, Geoffrey Samuel, David Jackson, Dan

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<sup>101</sup> Jackson 2009b. In the popular realm, see Thrangu Rinpoche's Mahāmudrā-oriented discussions of the *Samādhirājasūtra* (1994a) and the *Uttaratantra* (1994c).

<sup>102</sup> Hopkins 2005; see also Skorupski 1983.

<sup>103</sup> Farrow and Menon 1992.

<sup>104</sup> V. Wallace 2001, 2004. Of the many other works on Kālacakra, see especially Newman 1987, 2000; Arnold 2009.

<sup>105</sup> Gray 2007.

<sup>106</sup> Shaw 1993; Davidson 2002; Samuel 2008. See also Davidson 2001 for a new look at the concept of *sahaja*.

Martin, and E. Gene Smith.<sup>107</sup> Of individual *siddhas*, Saraha, in particular, has drawn considerable attention: in 1993 Herbert Guenther translated Saraha's complete *dohā* trilogy (the “King,” “Queen,” and “People” *Dohākoṣas*) in his inimitable style,<sup>108</sup> and a decade later came Roger Jackson's new translation of the “People” *Dohākoṣa*,<sup>109</sup> Kurtis Schaeffer's superlative analysis of the reception of Saraha in Tibet,<sup>110</sup> Lara Braitstein's pioneering study and translation of the trilogy of *vajragīti* associated, respectively, with body, speech, and mind,<sup>111</sup> and Thrangu Rinpoche and Michele Martin's recent translation of and commentary on the “King” *Dohākoṣa*.<sup>112</sup> Kāṇha has been discussed by Roger Jackson, David Templeman, and Matthew Kapstein.<sup>113</sup> Tilopa's life and songs were the subject of works by Francis Tiso, Fabio Torricelli, and the Nālandā Translation Committee,<sup>114</sup> and Nāropa has been examined from a critical historical perspective by Ronald Davidson.<sup>115</sup> Among treatises, Maitrīpa's influential but little-studied cycle of texts on “unthinking” (*amanasikāra*), was investigated by Klaus-Dieter Mathes, Karl Brunnhölzl,

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<sup>107</sup> Kapstein 2000a; Davidson 2005; Linrothe 2006. See also Jampa Thaye's brief overview of Indian and Tibetan Bka' brgyud (1990), which includes (75–86) translations of previously untranslated songs by Tilopa, Nāropa, and Śavarīpa; and Thomas Cleary's new, Zen-flavored translation of the *Caryāgītikōṣa* first studied by Kvaerne (1998).

<sup>108</sup> Guenther 1994; for a review, see R. Jackson 1994.

<sup>109</sup> Along with the *Dohākoṣas* of Kāṇha and Tilopa, all translated primarily from the Apabhraṃśa: R. Jackson 2004; for a discussion of ethical issues in Saraha, see R. Jackson 1996a.

<sup>110</sup> Schaeffer 2005; it includes a translation of the Tibetan version of the “People” *Dohākoṣa*.

<sup>111</sup> Braitstein 2005.

<sup>112</sup> Thrangu 2006; it had previously been translated in Guenther 1969 and 1993.

<sup>113</sup> Templeman 1989; R. Jackson 1992; Kapstein 2006.

<sup>114</sup> Tiso and Torricelli 1991; Torricelli 1997; Nālandā 1997a; see also Thrangu 2002.

<sup>115</sup> Davidson 2005: 44–49, 142–48; see also Trungpa 1994 and Thrangu 1997.



Tony Duff, and David Higgins<sup>116</sup>; Lakṣmīnkarā's *Advayasiddhi* further studied by Ramprasad Mishra<sup>117</sup>; and the *Ājñāsamyakpramāṇanāmadākiṇyupadeśa* (known to Tibetans as the *Kā dpe*) examined by Ulrich Kragh.<sup>118</sup>

On the Tibetan side, overviews of Tibetan Buddhism that have appeared since 1990 have tended to give more attention to Mahāmudrā than earlier ones.<sup>119</sup> In addition, Mahāmudrā has figured prominently in a multitude of more specialized studies. Besides its mention in more general works on Tibetan Buddhism, the Bka' brgyud tradition has been surveyed by Fabrice Midal in his *Pratique de l'Éveil de Tilopa à Trungpa*,<sup>120</sup> and a collection of biographies of its great masters translated by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen.<sup>121</sup> The Shangs pa Bka' brgyud has been examined in works by Ngawang Zangpo and Matthew Kapstein.<sup>122</sup> Bka' brgyud interpretations of Madhyamaka philosophy, always closely aligned with Mahāmudrā practice, have been analyzed in impressive detail by Karl Brunnhölzl, who also has published translations of a range of Indian and Tibetan pith-instruction texts of importance to the Bka' brgyud in general and Mahāmudrā lineages in particular.<sup>123</sup> The most massive and ambitious work on Bka' brgyud Mahāmudrā in recent years is Daniel Brown's *Pointing Out the Great Way*, a

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<sup>116</sup> See Mathes 2006, 2007, as well as his contribution to this volume; Brunnhölzl 2007: 125–90; Duff d.u.(b); and Higgins 2006.

<sup>117</sup> Mishra 1995.

<sup>118</sup> See his contribution in this volume.

<sup>119</sup> See e.g. Powers 1995: 362–70; Ray 2001: 261–93. Similar works with passing references include Samuel 1993, Kapstein 2000b, Ray 2000, and Davidson 2005. A more specialized overview, Judith Simmer-Brown's analysis of the *ḍākinī* (2001), returns to some of the explorations of gender symbolism that so fascinated earlier scholars.

<sup>120</sup> Midal 1997.

<sup>121</sup> Gyaltsen 1990.

<sup>122</sup> Zangpo 2003; Kapstein 2005. See also Riggs 2003.

<sup>123</sup> Brunnhölzl 2004, 2007, 2009.

synoptic account of the gradual path of Mahāmudrā meditation from ordinary preliminaries to buddhahood, based on manuals by, among others, Rang ’byung rdo rje, Padma dkar po, Bkra shis rnam rgyal, Dbang phyug rdo rje, and ’Jam dpal dpa’ bo.<sup>124</sup> Focused more on early Bka’ brgyud doctrinal disputes than latter-day meditation praxis is David Jackson’s exemplary *Enlightenment By a Single Means*,<sup>125</sup> which unravels the complex discourse—especially in the writings of Sgam po pa and Zhang Rinpoche—surrounding the description of Mahāmudrā as the “white medicinal simple” (*dkar po chig thub*), and the criticism of that discourse by Sa skya paṇḍita. Jackson’s study may not close the book on the great debate, but it is as fine a work of academic scholarship on Mahāmudrā as has appeared.

Individual Bka’ brgyud pa persons, texts, and traditions have increasingly been studied, as well. Mar pa has been investigated with historical acumen by Ronald Davidson,<sup>126</sup> and Mi la ras pa’s life and songs have been seriously examined by Francis Tiso and Andrew Quintman.<sup>127</sup> The heretofore little studied *Ras chung snyan brgyud* has been investigated by Marta Sernesi,<sup>128</sup> and the Mahāmudrā corpus of Sgam po pa has been carefully investigated by Ulrich Kragh, and his *Rin po che thar pa’i rgyan* translated anew by Khenpo Könchog Gyaltsen.<sup>129</sup> The *Lnga ldan* tradition of the ’Bri

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<sup>124</sup> Brown 2006. For a sophisticated discussion of the philosophical ramifications of the notion of ‘experience’ in Mahāmudrā, see J. Gyatso 1999.

<sup>125</sup> D. Jackson 1994; for a detailed review, see Mayer 1997. Sapaṅ’s *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, the *locus classicus* for his critique of Mahāmudrā traditions, has been fully translated in Rhoton 2002.

<sup>126</sup> Davidson 2004: 140–48 *et passim*; see also Thrangu 2001a.

<sup>127</sup> Tiso 1994, 1997; Quintman 2006. For additional songs, see Riggs 2003; for a biography, see Thrangu 1994b.

<sup>128</sup> See her contribution in this volume.

<sup>129</sup> Kragh 1998; Gyaltsen 1998. It is devoutly to be hoped that Kragh’s research will be published more widely. For an extensive but uncritical biography of Sgam po pa, see Stewart 2005.

gung pas has been studied by Jan-Ulrich Sobisch and Tony Duff, while the *Dgongs gcig* tradition of Phag mo gru pa has been analyzed by Sobisch and by Alexander Schiller.<sup>130</sup> In addition to David Jackson, Zhang Rinpoche has been studied by Dan Martin, whose translation of Zhang's *Mthar thug zab lam* makes available one of the greatest of all Tibetan poetic expositions of Mahāmudrā.<sup>131</sup> A biographical excerpt about the 'Brug pa master Lo ras pa has been translated by the Nālandā Translation Committee, and a major study of Thang stong rgyal po produced by Cyrus Stearns.<sup>132</sup> Some works of the first Karma pa have been translated by Tony Duff.<sup>133</sup> Rang 'byung rdo rje's famous Mahāmudrā prayer has been translated and commented upon numerous times,<sup>134</sup> and his philosophical work increasingly studied.<sup>135</sup> 'Gos lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal's commentary on the *Ratnagotravibhāga* has been studied and translated by Klaus-Dieter Mathes.<sup>136</sup> The seventh Karmapa's perspective on Mahāmudrā has been explored by Anne Burchardi, while the eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje, has been examined by Gregor Verhufen and Jim Rheingans; Rheingans also has studied the life and works of Karma 'phrin las pa.<sup>137</sup> With the withdrawal from the scene of Michael Broido, Padma dkar po has not received his due of late, though translations and discussions of some of his

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<sup>130</sup> See Sobisch 2003; Duff 2008; Sobisch's contribution to this volume; and Schiller 2003. Schiller is currently tracing the sources of the four-yoga tradition of Mahāmudrā praxis.

<sup>131</sup> Martin 1993; see also Martin 2001 for biographical comments on Zhang.

<sup>132</sup> Nālandā 1997b; Stearns 2006.

<sup>133</sup> Duff d.u.(a)

<sup>134</sup> Nydahl 1991; Kongtrul 1992; Dorje 1995; Tai Situpa 2002; Brown 2006.

<sup>135</sup> Schaeffer 1995; Thrangu 2001b; Brunnhölzl 2009.

<sup>136</sup> Mathes 2008.

<sup>137</sup> See, respectively, Burchardi's and Rheingans' contributions to this volume, as well as Verhufen 1995 and Rheingans 2004, 2008.

Mahāmudrā manuals have continued to appear.<sup>138</sup> Bkra shis rnam rgyal's *Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer* remains an important reference point for the study of Bka' brgyud Mahāmudrā,<sup>139</sup> and his *Gnyug ma'i de nyid gsal ba* has been translated, as well.<sup>140</sup> Important Mahāmudrā-related works by both the ninth Karma pa<sup>141</sup> and the eighth Situ pa<sup>142</sup> have been translated and discussed, and, last but by no means least, 'Jam mgon kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas's encyclopedic *Shes bya mdzod* is being gradually translated by the Kalu Rinpoche Translation Group and published by Snow Lion; many texts in the compendium bear on Mahāmudrā.<sup>143</sup>

Studies of Mahāmudrā outside the Bka' brgyud fold have increased as well. The relation between Mahāmudrā and Rdzogs chen has been discussed by Herbert Guenther, David Germano, and Giuseppe Baroetto,<sup>144</sup> and Karma chags med's synthesis of the two translated for a second time, by B. Alan Wallace.<sup>145</sup> A tantric practice manual by the Bka' gdams pa master Lce sgom pa has been translated by Yael Bentor.<sup>146</sup> Ma gcig lab sgron, the disseminator of the Gcod practice tradition, in which Mahāmudrā is an important term, has been ably

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<sup>138</sup> See e.g. Hoshin 1991; Crook and Low 1997: 342–97. The latter text is an intriguing, if hard-to-classify, study of various aspects of the lives of Bka' brgyud pa yogins in Ladakh. It should be noted that the Padma Karpo Translation Committee has in progress a translation of Padma dkar po's important Mahāmudrā works.

<sup>139</sup> See Thrangu 1999; Brown 2006.

<sup>140</sup> Thrangu 2004a.

<sup>141</sup> Thrangu 2003, 2004c. For a complete translation of his vitally important *Nges don rgya mtsho* that is, unfortunately, available only on a restricted basis, see Callahan 2001.

<sup>142</sup> Dorje 1995.

<sup>143</sup> See e.g. Kongtrul 1994, 2005, 2007. See also Ringu 2006.

<sup>144</sup> Guenther 1992; Germano 1994; Baroetto 2005. See also Dzogchen Ponlop 2003.

<sup>145</sup> B.A. Wallace 1998.

<sup>146</sup> Bentor 2000.

studied by Jérôme Edou and Sarah Harding.<sup>147</sup> Dol po pa, the Jo nang pa exponent of the controversial doctrine of extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*), has been studied and translated by Cyrus Stearns and Jeffrey Hopkins,<sup>148</sup> and the doctrine more generally discussed by Susan Hookham.<sup>149</sup> Sa skya pa perspectives have been addressed most notably by David Jackson, who focuses on the philosophical angle, and Cyrus Stearns and Jan-Ulrich Sobisch, both of whom are concerned with the *Lam 'bras* tradition.<sup>150</sup> The Dge lugs tradition of Mahāmudrā, contained in the Dga' ldan *snyan brgyud*, has probably received the most attention of any outside the Bka' brgyud: Janice Willis published a translation of biographies of masters in the *snyan brgyud*,<sup>151</sup> the Dalai Lama and Alex Berzin a detailed exposition of the first Panchen Lama's root text on Mahāmudrā,<sup>152</sup> Roger Jackson studies of the relation between Bka' brgyud and Dge lugs elements in the tradition and of Dge lugs pa uses of Saraha,<sup>153</sup> Victoria Sujata a translation and analysis of the spiritual songs (*mgur*) of the Amdo master Skal ldan rgya mtsho,<sup>154</sup> and Glenn Mullin two collections of translations of Dge lugs pa works on the six dharmas of Nāropa.<sup>155</sup>

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<sup>147</sup> Edou 1996; Harding 2003; see also Orofino 1987, and forthcoming work by Michele Sorensen.

<sup>148</sup> Stearns 1999; Hopkins 2006.

<sup>149</sup> Hookham 1991, which includes a translation of 'Jam mgon kong sprul's commentary on the *Uttaratantra*, considered by Bka' brgyud pas to be a foundational Mahāmudrā text.

<sup>150</sup> Jackson 1990, 1994; Stearns 2001; Sobisch 2008.

<sup>151</sup> Willis 1995.

<sup>152</sup> Dalai Lama and Berzin 1997.

<sup>153</sup> R. Jackson 2001, 2009a. I also have in a progress a volume of translations of various Dge lugs pa Mahāmudrā texts, entitled *Lamp So Bright*.

<sup>154</sup> Sujata 2005. For other texts relevant to *mgur* as a medium for expression of Mahāmudrā realization, see Ricard 1994, R. Jackson 1996b, Jinpa and Elsner 2000.

<sup>155</sup> Mullin 1996, 1997.

Finally, there has been an increasing number of popular expositions of Mahāmudrā, by teachers both Tibetan and Western, that are related only loosely, or not at all, to particular traditional texts or masters.<sup>156</sup>

#### 4 Conclusion: Patterns and Prospects

In many respects, Mahāmudrā studies have come a long way from the confused or deliberately mystifying explanations given by early writers. Scholarly work on the topic has become ever more precise and sophisticated, and more and more varieties of Mahāmudrā have been opened to investigation, both in the Indian and Tibetan Buddhist spheres. At the same time, certain patterns that emerged early in the study of the term have persisted. Scholarship on Mahāmudrā continues to be fed both by traditional academic approaches and popular enthusiasm for a concept and practice that promises easy, uncluttered enlightenment in the here and now. As ever, the popular treatments outnumber the academic ones, but to the degree that most of them are produced by Tibetan lamas in collaboration with Western practitioners (or vice versa), popular accounts are far more reliable than they were before 1959. Other patterns that have persisted include a focus on: Tibetan sources of Mahāmudrā in preference to Indian ones, Bka' brgyud treatments of Mahāmudrā in preference to those of other traditions, and later scholastic compilations in preference to earlier, less systematic sources. These preferences all are understandable, and perhaps even defensible, but they do indicate directions in which the study of Mahāmudrā might be extended.

First, the Indian sources of Mahāmudrā need to be investigated more deeply and systematically, especially the various collections of tantras, treatises, and songs that are regarded by Tibetans as forming a Mahāmudrā 'corpus.'<sup>157</sup> Many *yoginī* tantras, including the *Mahāmudrātilaka*, remain little studied and wholly untranslated. Of Saraha's trilogy of *Dohākoṣas* (*do ha skor gsum*), the

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<sup>156</sup> See e.g. Tai Situpa 1992, 1996; Barth 1993; Kalu 1995; Berzin 1998; Chetsang 1999; Traleg 2003; Yeshe 2003; Nydahl 2004; Thrangu 2004b; Johnson 2005.

<sup>157</sup> On this notion, see K.-D. Mathes' contribution to this volume and R. Jackson 2008.

“Queen” still requires a great deal of investigation,<sup>158</sup> and the riches of the other two are far from depleted; the Seven Siddha Texts (*grub pa sde bdun*) have drawn little notice, and Maitrīpa/Advayavajra’s Twenty-Five Texts on Unthinking (*’yid la mi byed pa’i chos skor nyi shu rtsa lnga*) are only just beginning to receive careful attention.

Second, non-Bka’ brgyud Tibetan usages of *phyag rgya chen po* need to be analyzed more carefully. Articulating the ways in which Rnying ma pas, Bka’ gdams pas, Sa skya pas, Zhi byed pas, Jo nang pas, and Dge lugs pas employ the term will add much to our appreciation of the many nuances this multivalent concept has received in Tibet, and will tell us much about how ideas of ultimacy are articulated in various traditions and how a single term may be adapted in different ways depending on intellectual and institutional needs.

Third, in the study of Bka’ brgyud traditions, earlier sources need to be examined more thoroughly. We have a great deal of popular material on Mar pa, Mi la, and Sgam po pa, but serious historical and textual investigation of these and other seminal figures (e.g. Phag mo gru pa, ’Bri gung ’Jigs rten gsum mgon, and the early ’Brug pa masters) is still, relatively speaking, in its infancy. Only through investigation of these figures and their writings will we ever understand how Mahāmudrā came to be the dominant term in Bka’ brgyud discourse that it did. Furthermore, of later, more ‘scholastic’ figures, Padma dkar po deserves renewed attention: particularly desirable would be a translation of his *Phyag chen gan mdzod*, as well as of his *Chos ’byung*. Another history worthy of further study is the massive *Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston* of Dpa’ bo gtsug lag phreng ba.

Finally, as much as we need good, specialized studies in all these areas, we also require, as suggested at the outset, more works that attempt to look at Mahāmudrā synoptically across cultures and epochs, as a concept, a practice,

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<sup>158</sup> A new translation of the *Queen Dohākoṣa* by me is forthcoming in David White’s *Yoga in Practice*.

and an element of institutional history.<sup>159</sup> As also noted, though, such studies can only be built on a foundations of careful specialized studies, and—as far as Mahāmudrā studies have progressed in the past century, and especially in the past two decades—much of the foundational work on which such broader analyses could be built still remains to be done.<sup>160</sup>

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<sup>159</sup> A modest attempt such a synopsis will be made in my *Opening the Great Seal: Mahāmudrā in Indian and Tibetan Buddhism*.

<sup>160</sup> Such foundational work will be greatly expedited by (a) significant new manuscript finds that have been made in Tibet in recent decades, and continue to be made and (b) the increasing availability of catalogues, searchable texts, and translations on the internet, through the efforts of institutions like the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center, Tibetan and Himalayan Library, Asian Classics Input Project, Padma Karpo Translation Committee, and Nitartha Institute; and individuals like Dan Martin, Tony Duff, Gene Smith, David Germano, and Alex Berzin.



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THE DIRECT PATH:  
SARAHĀ'S ADAMANTINE SONGS AND  
THE BKA' BRGYUD GREAT SEAL\*

LARA BRAITSTEIN

**1 Introduction**

The Bka' brgyud Great Seal (*phyag rgya chen po, mahāmudrā*) is distinct from other Tibetan Great Seal traditions principally in its lineage and its methods. Both begin to take shape from the time of Sgam po pa (1079–1153), as can be discerned in the teachings attributed to him and subsequent controversies with other traditions.<sup>1</sup> The Bka' brgyud tradition of course traces its transmission lineage back much further than Sgam po pa, and indeed another defining feature of the Bka' brgyud Great Seal is its particularly strong connection to the Indian *mahāsiddha* Saraha.<sup>2</sup> As a past lineage holder and as a dynamic presence, Saraha defies both space and time, providing limitless inspiration, direct instruction, and a touch of magic to the whole affair. When one studies the *nam thar* of the Bka' brgyud masters, Saraha's importance is obvious. In visions, songs, and dreams, from his skillfully drawn bow the Great Brahman

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<sup>1</sup> The details of the controversies are highlighted particularly in the work of David Jackson (1994) and Roger Jackson (1982).

<sup>2</sup> The dates attributed to him range from the 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E. to the 11<sup>th</sup> century C.E. The most plausible range appears to be the 9<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> centuries C.E.

pierces the heart of duality with his finely crafted arrows again and again.<sup>3</sup> Though his most famous work is without a doubt his *Dohā Trilogy* (*doha skor gsum*), and though that work is also without a doubt strongly linked to the Great Seal transmission of the Bka' brgyud pas, Saraha has another song cycle even more explicitly engaging with *phyag chen*: his *Rdo rje'i glu*, or Adamantine Songs.<sup>4</sup> What follows is a study of the resonances between Saraha's Adamantine Songs and the 'direct path' (*gseng lam*) of the Bka' brgyud Great Seal.

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<sup>3</sup> His importance stands out in particular relief in the *rnam thar* and works of Mar pa (1012–1097) and the third Karmapa, Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339). See Schaeffer 2005 for a detailed treatment.

<sup>4</sup> While it cannot be definitively established that Saraha wrote the *Rdo rje'i glu*, unlike the case of the Queen and King *Dohās* (*Mi zad pa'i gter mdzod man ngag gi glu* and *do ha mdzod ches bya ba spyod pa'i glu*) their attribution to Saraha is uncontroversial in the Tibetan tradition. Despite the fact that no fragments of the *rdo rje'i glu* have been found in any South Asian language, in my opinion the author is nonetheless most likely South Asian and not Tibetan. I ground that opinion in circumstantial evidence, that these songs were transmitted by Vajrapāṇi in the same collection containing the three Adamantine Songs together with *Sku gsung thugs yid la mi byed pa*, *Sgom rim drug pa*, *'Chi kha ma'i gdams ngag*, and the *Rnyog pa med pa'i rgyud* ('Gos lo tsa ba 1010). Further, a single translator is identified for the three *Rdo rje'i glu* and the *Sku gsung thug yid la mi byed pa*. Schaeffer writes: "Nakpo Sherday was the last student of Vajrapāṇi to receive Saraha's teachings from the Indian scholar. According to 'Gos Lo tsa ba, Nag po traveled to eastern India to meet an aged Vajrapāṇi and was given instruction in ten *Great Seal* works, including six dohas by Saraha. Here we find the only clue to the transmission history of what *Mind Treasuries*, together with the *Body, Speech and Mind Treasury*... Zhuchen Tsultrim Rinchen states that all four of these dohas were translated by the same scholar. On the basis of the meeting between Vajrapani and Nakpo Sherday recounted by Go Lotsawa, I suggest that Nakpopa is in fact Nakpo Sherday, and thus that these four massive but apparently unpopular dohās stem from this last period of Vajrapāṇi's tremendous efforts toward the propagation of the dohās in Tibet." (Schaeffer 2005: 65).

In the interest of clarifying the terms of this chapter, I will begin with a survey of the meanings and classifications of *phyag chen*. That will be followed by a brief exploration of the particularly Bka' brgyud articulation of *phyag chen* through some of the works that have been attributed to Sgam po pa, providing a convenient focal point for this preliminary study. Following a resumé of Saraha's *phyag chen*, principally in his Adamantine Songs, I present an analysis of how Bka' brgyud *phyag chen* as it appears to have been crystallised from the time of Sgam po pa not only has South Asian roots (as has already been demonstrated by Mathes<sup>5</sup>), but is closely linked to the work attributed to Saraha.

## 2 The Great Seal

'Great Seal' is variously used to describe the basis of reality, the true nature of mind, Buddha Nature, the ultimate fruition of the Buddhist path, and the ultimate nature of reality. 'Great Seal' is also used to describe an elaborate curriculum of practice, and especially in the Bka' brgyud traditions there exist numerous practice manuals, or *khrid yig*, describing *phyag chen*. The most famous among them is perhaps Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal's sixteenth-century *Phyag chen zla ba'i 'od zer*, from which I will be quoting extensively.

Beginning with the most basic definitions, *mahā* or *chen po* means 'great' in most senses of the English word: largeness in number, size, or extent; major significance or importance; remarkable or extraordinary degree, magnitude, or effect; excellent; someone who has achieved honour and distinction.<sup>6</sup> *Mudrā* or *phyag rgya* here means "seal," in the sense of something that is used to signify identity and authenticity. It is a seal in the manner of a ring or stamp that is used by a political or a religious authority to identify the source and authority of official documents. The Sanskrit term *mudrā*, however, has multiple meanings, ranging from ritual hand gestures, to parched grain (which

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<sup>5</sup> See Mathes 2006.

<sup>6</sup> I refer here to the Oxford English Dictionary.

functions ritually as an aphrodisiac), images, or a tantric practitioner's female consort. The Tibetan term *phyag rgya* shares all these meanings, and others besides, such as a bone ornament,<sup>7</sup> or a symbolic encounter or gesture. Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal adds that it also carries the meanings of *rtags* (sign) and *mtshan ma* (characteristic mark). He adds his own explanation of the term as it stands for 'seal':

It is denoted a seal because it means [something] impressed or imprinted upon objects. For example, just as a worldly seal is called a 'seal' because it is impressed or imprinted upon other things, similarly, [*phyag chen*] is denoted a seal because it is impressed or imprinted upon all dharmas of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, leaving a seal or signifier. For example, just as the emblems on armour and so forth signify a particular individual, similarly, this signifies or seals the intrinsic or abiding nature of all dharmas of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. It [also] denotes a seal because it cannot be transgressed. For example, just as the edict of a king cannot be transgressed by his subjects, similarly, this [nature of] the dharmas of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa cannot be transgressed, and so it is denoted a "seal."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Bone ornaments are symbolic of the transformative practices characteristic of tantra. Made from human bones found in charnel grounds—traditional sites of certain forms of tantric practice—they are part of the ritual costume of wrathful deities and mantrins.

<sup>8</sup> Dwags po 2005: 133–34: *de yang gdab par bya ba'am btab pa'i don gyis phyag rgyar brjod pa ni / dper na / 'jig rten du tham ga lta bus gzhan la 'debs pa'am btab pas na rgya zhes pa ltar / 'dis 'khor 'das kyi chos thams cad la 'debs ba'am btab pas na phyag rgya dang mtshon par byed pas phyag rgyar brjod pa ni / dper na / go cha la sogs pa'i rtags mtshan gyis so so'i bye brag mtshon pa ltar / 'dis 'khor 'das thams cad kyi rang bzhin nam gnas lugs mtshon pas na phyag rgya dang / mi 'dad bar byed pas na phyag rgyar brjod pa ni / dper na / rgyas po'i bka' rgyas btab pa la 'bangs rnam kyis mi 'da' ba ltar / 'khor 'das kyi chos thams cad 'di las mi 'da' bas na phyag rgya zhes brjod pa yin.* Translations, unless otherwise attributed, are mine.

In the *Gaganagañjaparīcchāsūtra*, ‘seal’ is further glossed as synonymous with the tathāgata (*de bzhin gshegs pa*), and is:

The seal of the utterly unborn, the seal of utter emptiness, the seal of utter non-compoundedness, the seal of utter desirelessness, the seal of suchness, the seal of authentic reality, the seal of the sky-treasury.<sup>9</sup>

The term is subject to further interpretation in scriptural (i.e. sūtra and tantra) and śāstric elaborations. The *Karṇatantravajrapāda* explains: “*phyag*: the acquisition of non-dual knowledge; *rgya*: bliss since saṃsāra’s tangled skein is disentangled; *chen po*: authentic being (Dharmakāya), free in itself and being the shining lamp of coincidence.”<sup>10</sup> According to the *Mahāmudrātilaka*, “*Phyag* is the wisdom of emptiness / *rgya* is liberation from saṃsāric phenomena / *chen po* is their union.”<sup>11</sup> The *Pañcakrama* elaborates that *phyag* is “the excellent vision, seen by oneself, of wisdom that is itself self-reflective” and *rgya* is “free of the duality of saṃsāric phenomena and imprints its seal upon all phenomena.”<sup>12</sup>

According to Sgam po pa, whose understanding of *phyag chen* will be discussed in further detail below,

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<sup>9</sup> Dwags po 2005: 134: *shin tu ma skyes pa’i phyag rgya / shin tu stong pa nyid kyi phyag rgya / shin tu ’dus ma byas pa’i phyag rgya / ’dod chags dang bral ba’i phyag rgya / de bzhin nyid kyi phyag rgya / yang dag pa’i mtha’i phyag rgya / nam mkha’i phyag rgya.*

<sup>10</sup> Guenther 1971: 222.

<sup>11</sup> Dwags po 2005: 134: *phyag ni stong pa’i ye shes yin / rgya ni ’khor ba’i chos las grol / chen po zung du ’jug pa’o.*

<sup>12</sup> Dwags po 2005: 135: *rang gis rang rig ye shes ni / legs mthong gang yin ’dir phyag yin / rgya ni ’khor ba’i chos gzung ’dzin las grol zhing des chos thams cad la rgyas btab pa’am ’debs pa’i don.*

*Phyag* is the realization that appearances, whether saṃsāra or nirvāṇa, are never beyond the condition of the unborn nature; *rgya* is the realization that there is no transcending the authentic nature, regardless of what appears and for however long; *chen po* is the realization that complete liberation is the ultimate nature of things.<sup>13</sup>

Gser sdings pa explains his definition of *phyag rgya chen po* in his *Theg sgron*:

*Phyag*: Encountering karma, disturbing emotions, and obscurations as self-liberating, mind itself, the dharmakāya.

*Rgya*: It cannot be transcended by forming concepts involving signs.

*Chen po*: It is greater than the definitional vehicle, action tantra, performance tantra, and all other vehicles.<sup>14</sup>

Finally, a commentary on the *Kālacakra Tantra* entitled *Padminī* states:

*Phyag rgya che* is the perfection of wisdom that has produced all the tathāgatas that arise in the past, present, and future. *Phyag rgya* is that which seals non-abiding nirvāṇa or unchanging bliss. It is great because it surpasses the *karmamudrā* and the *jñānamudrā* and is completely free of saṃsāric traces.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Dwags po 2005: 136: *snang srid 'khor 'das rnams chos nyid skye ba med pa'i ngang las mi 'da' bar rtogs pa ni phyag go / cir snang ci srid thams cad gnyug ma'i don las mi 'da' bas rgya / chos nyid rab grol du rtogs pas na chen po.*

<sup>14</sup> Dwags po 2005: 136: *las dang nyon mongs sgrib pa rnams / rang grol sems nyid chos sku ru / mjal ba'i phyir na phyag ces bya / mtshan ma'i rnam par rtog pa yis / 'da' bar mi nus phyir na rgya / mtshan nyid theg dang bya spyod sogs / theg pa kun las che bas na / chen po zhes ni brjod pa yin.*

<sup>15</sup> Dwags po 2005: 134: *phyag rgya che zhes bya ba ni / 'das pa dang ma byon pa dang da ltar byung ba'i de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad bskyed par mdzad pa shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa yin la / rab tu mi gnas pa'i mya ngan las 'das pa'am mi 'pho ba'i bde*

For the most part, the elaborate explanations read into the terms *mahāmudrā* and *phyag rgya chen po* are concerned with explaining the Great Seal as the basis for reality and as the fruition of full awakening. The Great Seal as path, posited between the poles of basis and fruition, is basically the content of Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal's *khrid yig*. However, there is a marked absence of reference to the formal elements of the path in the explanations of the term found in his text. The exception is the last definition, taken from the *Padminī*, in which it is discussed in the context of the path as superior to both the *karma* and *jñāna* mudrās. Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal summarizes this, saying:

In all statements in all the sūtras and tantras, the Great Seal as the basis is the basic natural state: it is shown to be the abiding Buddha Nature in the mental continua of sentient beings from the very beginning; shown to be the luminosity that is the very nature of mind, and so forth. The Great Seal as the path is shown in all [statements] to be freedom from conceptual elaboration of dharmas, which brings about the blossoming of the essential element; the specificity of emptiness; the non-veridicality of the existence of all phenomena; selflessness; equanimity; and union. The Great Seal as fruition is shown in all statements to be the mode of awakening that is the omniscient wisdom of the four bodies, the five wisdoms, and so forth.<sup>16</sup>

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*bas bde ba la rgyas btab pas na phyag rgya ste / las kyi phyag rgya dang ye shes kyi phyag rgya las khyad par du gyur pa dang / 'khor ba'i bag chags dang bral bar gyur pas na chen po'o.*

<sup>16</sup> Dwags po 2005: 141–42: *don bsdu na / mdo rgyud thams cad du sems can gyi rgyud la de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po gdod ma nas gnas par ston pa dang / sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal bar ston pa sogs gzhi'i gnas lugs gsungs pa thams cad kyis gzhi'i phyag rgya chen po dang / snying po'i kham rgyas par byed pa'i chos spros bral dang stong pa nyid kyi bye brag dang chos thams cad bden med dang bdag med pa dang mnyam pa nyid dang zung du 'jug par ston pa thams cad kyis lam kyi phag rgya chen po dang /*



### 3 The Three and Four Seals Systems

With respect to the term *mudrā/phyag rgya* and the path, it is appropriate here to explain the system of multiple seals, of which there are sometimes said to be three, and more often four. The Great Seal is sometimes the third and sometimes the fourth of the seals. Saraha has placed it third in the system of four, but I will explore the constellation of possibilities. The names of the other seals are as follows: the Action Seal (*karmamudrā, las kyi phyag rgya*); the Dharma Seal (*dharmamudrā, chos kyi phyag rgya*, which is also sometimes identified as wisdom or *jñānamudrā* or *ye shes kyi phyag rgya*, principally in the system of three seals); and the Commitment Seal (*samayamudrā, dam tshig gyi phyag rgya*). Common to all treatments of the seals, the Action Seal is understood to be the female consort of a yogin and the practices they undertake as tantric consorts. The sensation of bliss achieved during intercourse and orgasm is cultivated and manipulated by the practitioner as a means to penetrate the bliss of emptiness. Bliss and ultimate awakening are closely linked, and as the source of highest mundane bliss, sexuality is employed *in a strictly ritual context* as a practice to cognize that ultimate bliss.<sup>17</sup> In particular, the luminosity and freedom from mental elaborations that manifests at the moment of orgasm is seen as a special opportunity to work with the mind.

The Dharma or Wisdom Seal is both the inner—or imagined—consort, and the intense visualisation practices associated with her. The inner consort

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*sku bzhi ye shes lnga la sogs pa nam pa thams cad mkhyen pa'i ye shes su byang chub pa'i tshul gsungs pa thams cad kyis 'bras bu'i phyag chen bstan pa yin no.*

<sup>17</sup> For a concise-yet-detailed theoretical treatment of the *karmamudrā*, see Guenther 1971: 202–21. I also refer readers to Shaw 1994, Simmer–Brown 2001, White 2003, and Snellgrove 1987 for further reading on the subject. There exists a wealth of new-age reformulations of this and other related practices that disguise themselves as presenting ‘ancient eastern wisdom’ of one variety or another. Any text on sexual yoga that promises better sex, a better connection with your soul–mate, or enlightenment through great sex should be discarded forthwith. Refer also to Mathes’ contribution to the present volume.

and wisdom/awareness are nearly synonymous here. Relying on the guru's instructions, the practice that entails visualising sexual union with an enlightened consort also cultivates the experience of emptiness.

The Commitment Seal has a two-fold meaning. At one level it describes the altruistic mind of bodhicitta, which entails some type of engagement with unawakened beings, presumably through the bodhisattva vow. This is an especially appropriate understanding when it is ranked as the Fourth Seal, surpassing even the Great Seal. Another level is revealed by an examination of the etymology of the term in both Sanskrit and Tib. *dam tshig* and *samaya* both have the connotation of a bond, or something that binds. This is a reference to achieving a level of tantric practice where the deity one meditates on is bound to one at a profound level, to the degree that one identifies with it constantly instead of one's own ego-centered identity.

Saraha describes the four as follows in the first of his Adamantine Songs<sup>18</sup>: the Action Seal is the map; the Dharma seal is the path; the Great Seal is the result; and the Commitment Seal is the altruistic act.<sup>19</sup> In the formulation of four seals, there is considerable variety in the order. Saraha's list is one of the most common; the other common one changes the places of the last two, putting Commitment Seal third and Great Seal fourth. A passage from the *Vajramāla*,<sup>20</sup> for example, lists them in the latter order.

In the formulations of three seals, the Great Seal is always the third and highest. The *Kālacakratāntra* presents the three seals as stages following one after the other:

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<sup>18</sup> Citations drawn from the songs are referenced to the folio number in Rgyud, vol. *zhi* of the Sde dge Bstan 'gyur.

<sup>19</sup> Saraha Body Treasury, 108b. *las kyi phyag rgya dpe dang chos kyi phyag rgya'i lam / phyag rgya chen po 'bras bu dam tshig phyag rgya gzhan don te / chos kyi phyag rgya man chad bsten pas mthar lhung 'du 'dzi bya ba'i skyon du 'gyur.*

<sup>20</sup> Dwags po 2005: 143.

By examining the *karmamudrā*,  
 One totally abandons the *jñānamudrā*,  
 By uniting with the supremely immutable,  
 One meditates completely on the Great Seal.<sup>21</sup>

And further:

The union of *karmamudrā*,  
 The passion of *jñānamudrā*:  
 Unified in the Great Seal,<sup>22</sup>  
 The immutable unfolds.<sup>23</sup>

Many other sources that rely on the three-seal formulation do not openly valorise the Action Seal. While this is most likely a device to motivate practitioners not to be complacent about or attached to a presumably pleasurable practice, the accounts can be somewhat jarring. In the *Guhyasiddhi*, Padmavajra writes: “The *karmamudrā* is angry and deceitful, the *jñānamudrā* is exactly the same; abandon this proliferation of conceptualization, and cultivate

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<sup>21</sup> Dwags po 2005: 142: *las kyi phyag rgya brtags pa yis / ye shes phyag rgya yongs spangs nas / mchog tu mi 'gyur sbyor ba yis / phyag rgya chen po rnam par sgom.*

<sup>22</sup> In his translation, Lhalungpa translates “phyag rgya chen mo” as Great Mother, with the gloss, “‘The seal of the great mother’ is the literal rendition of a rarely used Tibetan term.... The traditional designation of ‘mother’ is appropriate for a treatise or a doctrine on ultimate reality, emptiness. In the same way, the term ‘great mother’ is applied to the doctrine of wisdom gone-beyond (Skt. *prajñāparamitā*) and also to the notion of ‘expansive emptiness’ (Tib. *choying*; Skt. *dharmadhātu*).” (Lhalungpa 437–38). I am translating it simply as Great Seal, since the term *mudrā* in Sanskrit is feminine, the “mo” is likely both representing that accurately and playing on the references to the *karma* and *jñāna* *mudrās* as passionate females.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.: *las kyi phyag rgya'i rab sbyor dang / ye shes phyag rgya'i rjes chags dang / phyag rgya chen mo gcig sbyor ba / mi 'gyur ba de 'phel bar 'gyur.*

the Great Seal.”<sup>24</sup> Further, a writer identified in Dwags po's *khrid yig* as Mañjuśrī writes in *Lta ba'i 'dod pa mdor bstan pa*: “The *karmamudrā* is crooked and vicious, the *jñānamudrā* is the same; having abandoned multiple concepts, follow the Great Seal.”<sup>25</sup>

#### 4 Bka' brgyud *phyag chen*<sup>26</sup>

What makes the Bka' brgyud *phyag chen* unique? Locating *phyag chen* at the very apex of practice and attainment is of course not unique to the Bka' brgyud pas. Where the *phyag chen* of the Bka' brgyud pas appears to become quite distinct is in the work of Sgam po pa. I say ‘appears’ because it is in the work of Sa skya Paṇḍita that Sgam po pa is first accused of innovating a unique approach to *phyag chen*, one of which Sapaṇ does not approve. Sgam po pa refers to it as the direct path, or *gseng lam*. It is a Great Seal teaching where the teacher (*guru, bla ma*) shows the nature of mind (i.e. the Great Seal) by directly pointing it out to the disciple. As Klaus-Dieter Mathes explains, this approach stands out from the ordinary Mahāyāna path because of its “use of direct cognitions even while investigating one's mind during *vipaśyanā*.”<sup>27</sup> Additionally, it stands out from tantra because it does not necessitate empowerments as a preliminary. It is against this point in particular that Sapaṇ

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<sup>24</sup> Dwags po 2005: 142: *las kyi phyag rga khro sgyu can / ye shes phyag rgya yang de bzhin / rnam rtog mang bas spang byas la / phyag rgya chen po rnam bsgom bya.*

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.: *las kyi phyag rgya g.yon can gdug / ye shes phyag rgya de bzhin du / rnam rtog mang ba dor byas nas / phyag rgya chen po bsten par byos.* In his *Rgyud sde spyi'i rnam par gzhang pa rgyas par brjod*, Mkhas 'grub rje has a formulation of the seals that is completely different from all the others. Because it would entail a lengthy digression beyond the scope of this paper, I am not summarizing it here. Readers may refer to directly to his text (1998: 229ff) for details.

<sup>26</sup> I have not included here a discussion of the Four Yogas so important to the Bka' brgyud pas, as it is not critical to the argument presented in this paper. See Guenther 1971 for a discussion of the Four Yogas.

<sup>27</sup> Mathes 2006: 202.

argues.<sup>28</sup> In the *Deb sngon (Blue Annals)*, 'Gos lo tsā ba summarises Sapaṅ's complaint, explaining that "In the pāramitā tradition there does not exist a convention of Mahāmudrā, and whatever the wisdom of Mahāmudrā is, that is the wisdom that arises from empowerments."<sup>29</sup> Mathes has demonstrated that this form of Mahāmudrā attributed to Sgam po pa is in fact of South Asian provenance and not a Tibetan innovation, but he is nonetheless credited in Tibetan sources as the innovator of the direct *phyag chen*. Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal explains:

Thus, with respect to the manner of pointing out this profound path, Lord Sgam po pa explained that the direct path is independent of the secret mantra and did not state that one requires empowerments as a preliminary for this practice. He stated that the very meaning of mind is solely based on the way to go for refuge to the guru and the Three Jewels; to cultivate loving kindness, compassion and bodhicitta; and to offer maṇḍalas [to them], confess misdeeds, and engender intense devotion to make requests.<sup>30</sup>

What is especially interesting here is that Sgam po pa appears to be substituting devotion to the guru for the elaborate tantric empowerments. Instead of them, or of a complex of commitments and practices, one only needs one's guru. It is

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<sup>28</sup> See Rhoton (2002) 116-119. For more on Sapaṅ's critique see also Jackson, D.P. (1994); Jackson R.R. (1982); Kragh (1988).

<sup>29</sup> 'Gos 847: *pha rol tu phyin pa'i lugs la phyag rgya chen po'i tha snyad med cing / phyag rgya chen po'i ye shes gang yin pa de ni dbang las skyes pa'i ye shes kho na yin no zhes bzhed.*

<sup>30</sup> Dwags po 2005: 176; *de ltar na zab lam 'di nyid ston tshul la'ang rje sgam po pa ni 'di nyid gsang sngnags la ma bltos pa'i gseng lam du bzhed pas / 'di nyid kyi sngon 'gror yang smin byed kyi dbang dgos par ma gsungs shing / bla ma dang / dkon mchog la skyabs su 'gro ba dang / byams snying rje byang chub kyi sems sgom pa dang / de dag la maṇḍal dbul zhing sdiḡ pa bshags pa dang / mos gus drag po bskyed nas gsol ba 'debs pa'i tshul kho na la brten nas sems don nyid la khrid tshul gsungs la.*

this element of guru devotion in the method attributed to Sgam po pa that is considered most radical.<sup>31</sup> In the *Deb sngon (Blue Annals)*, 'Gos lo tsā ba writes:

Now, the Venerable Mi la [ras pa] did not teach the path of means [*upāyamarga*] and the Great Seal separately. [Sgam po pa, on the other hand,] taught the key instructions of the path of means only to suitable recipients of the mantra [tradition]. But the instructions of the Great Seal he gave to suitable vessels of the pāramitā teachings, even without empowerments.... He said that although in the scriptures much is explained about the necessary characteristics of the guru and the disciple, the disciple does not in fact need many qualities; by simply having devotion one is fit to receive the teachings. An understanding of the Great Seal was even produced in some stupid people, poor people, and sinners in a short time. He also composed commentaries on stages of the doctrine of the Bka' gdams pa and explained many key instructions. From this time, the two streams of the Bka' gdams pa and the Great Seal were combined.<sup>32</sup>

*Upāyamarga*, or *thabs lam*, literally means “path of skillful means” and refers to the skillful transformative methods of tantra. What is explained in the

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<sup>31</sup> See also Jan-Ulrich Sobisch's contribution to this volume.

<sup>32</sup> 'Gos 2003 [1478]: 547: *de la rje btsun mi la ni thabs lam dang phyag rgya chen po logs logs su mi mdzad pa la / sngags kyi snod du rung ba rnams la thabs lam gyi gdams ngag bstan / dbang bskur med kyang pha rol tu phyin pa'i snod du rung ba rnams la phyag rgya chen po'i gdams pa btab ste / lhan cig skyes sbyor zhes bya ba'i khrid rim yang mdzad / de la dwags po'i rtogs chos kyang zer / gsung rab rnams nas bla ma dang slob ma'i mtshan nyid mang bar gsungs na'ang / slob ma la mtshan nyid mang po mi dgos / mos gus yong bag cig pus chog gsung zhing / blun po dang dbul phons dang sdig can du gyur ba 'ga' la yang phyag rgya chen po'i rtogs pa yun mi ring bar bskyed / bka' gdams kyi bstan pa'i rim pa'i bstan bcos kyang mdzad / gdams gnag kyang mang du gsungs bas / 'di nas bka' phyag chu bo gnyis 'dres su grags.*

above quote is that Sgam po pa reserved the secret methods of the *upāyamarga* only for the elite few who were ready for them, while the “hidden precepts of the Mahāmudrā” were taught to anyone who was fit to receive teachings on and practise the path of the Mahāyāna—what is referred to above as “the pāramitās” and what I will refer to henceforth as the pāramitā path. It is in removing the element of tantric initiation from the Great Seal instructions that Sgam po pa blended the two streams of Bka’ gdams and the Great Seal. In so doing, Sgam po pa made the Great Seal accessible to disciples who were not necessarily appropriate for the tantric path, thereby forming a direct path to awakening, *phyag chen*, that did not rely on elaborate, rarefied ritual and practice. The following example from *Deb sngon* illustrates this nicely:

In the end, in the Female Water Bird year, just before he entered nirvāṇa, two monks, each bearing *gtor ma* in their hands, called out, “We request [instructions of] the path of means, please accept our request!” Hearing them, [Sgam po pa] replied, “Don’t let them come.” An attendant sent them back, telling them to request the Great Seal. When the two of them requested the Great Seal, [Sgam po pa] acquiesced. He said, “send them in,” and they were allowed to enter. Then they were given instructions on the Great Seal. In this way, among the many teachings, the Great Seal alone was favoured.<sup>33</sup>

It would be a mistake to say that Sgam po pa simply made *phyag chen* accessible, as finding an authentic teacher and becoming a worthy disciple are distinctly complicated issues in their own right, but he is credited with having

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<sup>33</sup> 'Gos 2003: 549: *mthar chu mo bya'i lo la mya ngan las 'da' khar / btsun pa gnyis kyis lag tu gtor ma re thogs te / nged gnyis thabs lam zhu ba yin pas thugs rjes 'dzin par zhu zer ba'i skad btang bas / tho phyir ma gtong gsung / der nye gnas shig gis phyag rgya chen po zhu ba lags na byas te skad ring po btang bas / da lta thong gsung nas nang du btang / phyag rgya chen po'i gdams pa yang gnang no / de ltar nyid kyi chos nams las phyag rgya chen po 'ga' zhig mgo 'don pa mdzad de.*

forged *phyag chen* as a path both above and beyond the distinct paths of *pāramitā* and *upāya*, an idea sufficiently radical in Tibetan contexts to be at the very heart of Sa skya Paṇḍita's later scathing assault on the Bka' brgyud Great Seal, referred to briefly above, the details of which are readily available.<sup>34</sup>

In his *Chos rje dwags po lha rje'i gsung snying po don gyi gdams pa phyag rgya chen po'i 'bum tig*, Sgam po pa<sup>35</sup> writes:

In general, all beings in saṃsāra have always appeared as buddhas within, but as long as this has not been pointed out by the nectar of the teacher's instruction, it is impossible to realize this and liberation cannot be gained.<sup>36</sup>

This is stated more poetically in his *Chos rje dwags po lha rje'i gsung phyag rgya chen po gsal byed kyi man ngag*:

The three realms [of existence] have always been buddha.  
 Saṃsāra has always been nirvāṇa.  
 Beings have always been buddhas.  
 Obscurations have always been enlightenment.  
 Since always unrealized,  
 The three realms are but saṃsāra.  
 For reversing saṃsāra,  
 A genuine teacher's instruction is needed.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>34</sup> Sa skya 1968; R. Jackson 1982; D. Jackson 1994; Kragh 1998.

<sup>35</sup> Here I am indebted to Ulrich Timme Kragh's work on Sgam po pa's corpus for the quick references to his emphasis on the guru in the Great Seal. Kragh points out that the authorship of this text (as well as the *Phyag rgya chen po gsal byed kyi man ngag*) is doubtful, as many of the texts attributed to Sgam po pa were actually written by his disciples. In my opinion this does not affect the point I am making.

<sup>36</sup> Kragh 1998: 35: *Chos rje dwags po lha rje'i gsung snying po don gyi gdams pa phyag rgya chen po'i 'bum tig, bka' 'bum*, text 23, *mdzod*, vol. *ka*, p. 213: *spyir na 'khor ba'i sems can thams cad la / sangs rgyas ye nas rang chas su yod kyang / mtshon byed bla ma'i man ngag bdud rtsi yis / ma mtshon bar du rtogs shing grol mi srid*.

<sup>37</sup> Kragh 1998: 34: *Chos rje dwags po lha rje'i gsung phyag rgya chen po gsal byed kyi*



It is not simply a matter of the teacher's instruction, in terms of hearing words regarding a certain subject. This entails, true to the tantric methods, the formation of a relationship of profound trust between guru and disciple, where the disciple gains this 'nectar' not only through hearing instructions but through the transmission of the blessing, gained through the vehicle of devotion:

Since the secret Mantrayāna is a way of blessing, it is important first to enter the blessing of the teacher. Having entered the teacher's blessing, the seeing of wisdom has begun. This rising realization of innate wisdom afterwards affects all phenomena that are experienced, making them self-liberated. One thus arrives at an awareness of wisdom, where all beliefs have been cut off from within.<sup>38</sup>

Further, in his *Chos rje dwags po lha rje'i gsung khrid chos mu tig tshar la brgyud pa*, Sgam po pa explains:

Concerning the way to guide oneself or others in the meditation of Mahāmudrā, since this [way] of ours is a transmission of blessing, the meaning of Mahāmudrā cannot arise in one's mind-stream as long as one has not received the blessing of the teacher. Thus, [one should] receive the teacher's blessing without difficulty. One receives [this blessing] by making wishes with conviction and trust. Those who have the best conviction and

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*man ngag; Bka' 'bum*, text 21, *mdzod*, vol. *ka*, p. 173: *kham s gsum ye nas sangs rgyas yin / 'khor ba ye nas myang 'das yin / sems can ye nas sangs rgyas yin / nyon mongs ye nas byang chub yin / 'on kyang ye nas ma rtogs pas / kham s gsum pa ni 'khor ba yin / 'khor ba las ni bzlog pa ni / bla ma dam pa'i gdams ngag dgos.*

<sup>38</sup> Kragh 1998: 35: *gsang sngags byin brlabs kyi lam pa yin pas / dang po bla ma'i byin rlabs zhugs pa gcig gal che ba yin / bla ma'i byin brlabs zhugs nas ye shes kyi mthong sa phyed / de lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes kyi rtogs pa shar bas / phyi shes ba'i chos thams cad la sgrog rang grol la song nas / ye shes kyi rig pa sgro 'dogs nang nas chod pa gcig yong ngo.*

trust, also get the best blessing. Those with a mediocre conviction and trust [receive] a mediocre [blessing]. Those with inferior conviction and trust [receive] an inferior blessing. Without a stable conviction and trust, it is impossible to have a stable blessing. This is therefore the very core of the Dharma.<sup>39</sup>

Sgam po pa thus put devotion to the guru (and the now ubiquitous practice of *bla ma'i rnal 'byor*) at the center of the Bka' brgyud *phyag chen* path, departing from the better-beaten paths of sūtra and tantra. While Sa skya Paṇḍita clearly thought this was an dubious innovation, and none but the Bka' brgyud pas have taken this particular direct route to the ultimate goal, Mathes has clearly demonstrated that there are precedents for the essence *phyag chen* in the work of Maitrīpa, Sahajavajra, and Jñānakīrti. Sgam po pa may have learned it from his yogin master Mi la ras pa, or he may have heard or read it elsewhere, but it clearly has roots in the late Mahāyāna context of *mahāsiddhas*, a context with which he was undoubtedly very familiar. While I cannot claim definitively that Sgam po pa read Saraha's Adamantine Songs, compositions that precede him by anywhere from a century to four hundred years, he was clearly familiar with Saraha's better known *Dohā Trilogy*. Given that the Adamantine Songs are stated to have been transmitted by Vajrapāṇi in the same collection of *phyag chen* texts as the *Trilogy*, however, it is not unreasonable to suppose that he may have encountered one or more of them.<sup>40</sup> What follows does not establish that Sgam po pa read (or heard) the Adamantine Songs, or based his work on them. It simply contributes to the growing evidence that Sgam po pa was taking

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<sup>39</sup> Kragh 1998: 36: *rang ngam gzhan la phyag rgya chen po'i bsgom 'khrīd lugs ni 'o skol gyi 'di byin brlabs kyi brgyud pa yin pas / bla ma'i byin brlabs ma zhugs na phyag rgya chen po'i don brgyud la 'char mi srid pas / bla ma'i byin brlabs 'jug pa la tshogs med / mos gus yod pas gsol ba btab pa la rten nas 'jug pa yin / mos gus rab la byin brlabs yang rab tu 'jug /mos gus 'bring la 'bring / mos gus mtha' ma la byin brlabs mtha' ma / mos gus gtan nas med na byin brlabs gtan nas mi 'jug pas chos nyid yin.*

<sup>40</sup> 'Gos 2003: 1010.

part in a *phyag chen* tradition that is verifiably linked to the *mahāsiddha* tradition in South Asia.

### 5 Adamantine *phyag chen*: Saraha and the Great Seal

Saraha's Adamantine Songs (*vajragīti*, *rdo rje'i glu*) are a cycle of three long poems that clearly belong together, as evidenced by their content and transmission history.<sup>41</sup> Adamantine Songs are not a genre in the way that genres are usually understood. They do not have a meter or mood (*rasa*) that defines them apart from other forms of verse. They are easily identified on the basis of the title, which will often have 'adamantine song' worked into it, but they vary considerably in length, meter, and language. What they do have in common is the context given for the composition of the song, if this is specified (as sometimes occurs in the course of a biography): it is one in which the author is expressing his or her insight. According to an oral commentary by the fourteenth Zhwa dmar Rinpoche, the adamantine quality of the songs is a reference to their meaning and not to their form. The content has the same qualities as a *rdo rje*: pure, impossible to stain or alter, clear, unbreakable, and precious. Defined loosely, therefore, 'Adamantine Songs' are songs that express a spiritually accomplished person's realisation. Engaging with the highest view of the Great Seal through the three doors of body, speech and mind, their titles are, "A Body Treasury Called the Immortal Adamantine Song" (Skt. *Kāyakośāṃṛtavajragīti*; Tib. *Sku'i mdzod 'chi med rdo rje'i glu*), 118 stanzas long; "A Speech Treasury Called the Gentle Voiced Adamantine Song" (Skt. *Vākkośarucirasvaravajragīti*; Tib. *Gsung gi mdzod 'jam dbyangs rdo rje'i glu*), forty-eight stanzas long; and "A Mind Treasury Called the Unborn Adamantine Song" (Skt. *Cittakośa-ajavajragīti*; Tib. *Thugs kyi mdzod skye med rdo rje'i glu*),<sup>42</sup> which is twenty-seven stanzas long.

<sup>41</sup> See Braitstein 2008 for an extended discussion of the constitution of the collection.

<sup>42</sup> They will be referred to throughout this paper as Body Treasury, Speech Treasury, and Mind Treasury. Citations drawn from them are keyed to the page number in the *Sde dge Bstan 'gyur*, Rgyud, vol. *zhi*. For a complete translation, see Braitstein 2004.

This particular cycle of songs has so far been largely ignored in Western academic studies. Its inclusion in the Bstan 'gyur does indicate that it was traditionally believed to be of Indic origin. Also of interest is the cycle's substantial length and its explicit engagement with themes and terms important to the Great Seal. Despite this, and its being enumerated as part of Vajrapāṇi's transmission by 'Gos lo tsā ba, there appears not to exist so much as a single topical outline of the text, much less a commentary. Indeed, my own research into the large body of Tibetan literature pertaining to the Great Seal has so far failed to locate any indigenous commentarial literature on these songs.<sup>43</sup>

A mundane but nonetheless telling indication of how central *phyag chen* is to the text is in an evaluation of the frequency with which the Great Seal is mentioned: it appears a total of sixty-two times in fifty-three separate verses in the three songs, which is to say that it occurs in over a quarter of the total 193 verses. In the Body Treasury it appears forty-three times (in thirty-seven of the 118 verses); in the Speech Treasury it appears sixteen times (in thirteen of the forty-eight verses) and in the Mind Treasury only three times in twenty-seven verses. This may be compared to the relative paucity of appearances of the term—there are only half a dozen—in the famous *Dohā Trilogy*. Saraha's *dohās* have been widely studied since their introduction into the Tibetan sphere as early as the eleventh century and their introduction into the Euro-American sphere in the twentieth: virtually every Tibetan text dedicated to *phyag chen* cites them, and they have a plethora of commentaries

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<sup>43</sup> Where I was both most hopeful and finally disappointed was in Mi bskyod rdo rje's volume on the Great Seal, the *Phyag rgya chen po sgros 'bum*, where he makes substantial references to Saraha's works. Unfortunately (for me), his citations are principally drawn from the Dohā trilogy, and none are from the Body, Speech and Mind Treasuries. This absence of any commentary is confirmed by Herbert Guenther (1993: 20n14), whose life-long engagement with the work of Saraha consoles me in my failure to find any such commentary.

in both of these cultural contexts.<sup>44</sup> It is curious, then, that the Adamantine Songs have been generally overlooked, though they are listed among the texts in the corpus of the *phyag chen* transmission attributed to Saraha.<sup>45</sup> For this reason I believe it is particularly useful to study how Saraha uses the term *mahāmudrā* in his Adamantine Songs.

So ubiquitous is the propensity to classify *phyag chen* into categories of belonging to the paths of *pāramitā* and *upāya*, or within the three- or four-mudrā schemes, that it is difficult to approach it any other way. If we look into Saraha’s Adamantine Songs, we find there clear evidence that he was familiar with these methods of classification and apparently not interested in employing them. While it is not obvious that “Great Seal” was sufficiently reified to have been subject to the sūtra-tantra categorisation, certainly practitioners and the practices they engaged in were. Though mentioning the chief concepts and practices of sūtra and tantra, Saraha continually scoffs at them and posits *phyag chen* as the authentic, natural, effortless version of each, accessed naturally through the blessings of the guru—which sounds rather a lot like Sgam po pa. On the shortcomings of tantra he writes:

Cultivating the innate, the blazing of inner fire on an object, etc.

You may cultivate commitment, the self alone, and yoga,

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<sup>44</sup> Indigenous Tibetan works abound, for example: Spar bu ba blo gros seng ge (12<sup>th</sup> century), Bcom ldan ral gri (1227–1305), the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), and Karma ’phrin las pa (1456–1539) (see Schaeffer 2005). In the contemporary context we find works by Herbert Guenther (1969, 1993), Roger Jackson (2004), and Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche (2006), among others. See also Roger Jackson’s contribution to this volume.

<sup>45</sup> This is not only the case in Vajrapāṇi’s *phyag chen chos bcu* (listed in ’ ’Gos lo tsā ba 2003: 1010), but they are included in the fourteenth Zhwa dmar pa’s *Nges don phyag rgya chen po’i khrid mdzod* and also, as I have been informed by Roger Jackson, in the Seventh Karmapa Chos grags rgya mtsho’s *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*.

In the Great Seal, the sameness of all phenomena, how could  
Conceptualization be abandoned and non-conceptualization be practised?<sup>46</sup>

Here Saraha is listing a group of tantric practices that are intended to cultivate non-conceptualization, blazing of the inner fire on an object, commitment, nature of self—and then goes on to explain that in *phyag chen* all phenomena are equal, thus rendering the abandonment of conceptualization—not to mention engaging in a process that encourages one to distinguish between them and create a duality—contradictory to the very nature of the Great Seal. In a similar vein he writes:

[It is] primordially free from activities of consciousness, subtle wind,<sup>47</sup> the  
lower doors,<sup>48</sup> mantra, etc.,  
Free from self and other, accepting and rejecting.  
One should neither think of saṃsāra nor be concerned with nirvāṇa;  
The three times and the three worlds<sup>49</sup> are contained in body, speech and  
mind.  
No effort in anything, no views, nothing to accept and reject;  
Not differentiating centre and perimeter, the middle way is the straight  
path.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Saraha 108b: *lhan cig skyes dang yul la gtum mo sbar la sogs / dam tshig bdag gi kho na nyid dang rnal 'byor bsgom / dngos po thams cad mnyam nyid phyag rgya chen po la / rtog pa spang zhing mi rtog bsgom pa ci zhig 'gyur.*

<sup>47</sup> That is, *vāyu*, the energy that moves through the subtle body in tantric practice.

<sup>48</sup> The 'lower doors' is a reference to practices that entail using the generative organs (i.e. union practice) or substances that emerge from them.

<sup>49</sup> The three times are past, present, and future; the three worlds usually refer to the human world, *nāga* world (located below the human world), and world of the gods (located above the human world).

<sup>50</sup> Saraha 107b: *mam shes rlung dang 'og sgo sngags la sogs / ye nas spyod bral rang gzhan brang gzhas bral / 'khor bar mi sems mya ngan 'das mi ltos / dus gsum srid*

Again, we are looking at a series of specific tantric practices from which one must free oneself in order to find the ever-elusive true middle way, one that must, according to Saraha, be “free of artificiality, the perfect path for the mind.”<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, the verse immediately following this reads: “The Perfection of Wisdom path, which is passage, engagement, stages,<sup>52</sup> etc. / Is the cause for the longer cycle by discarding the quick path.”<sup>53</sup> The Perfection of Wisdom path, synonymous with the *pāramitā* path, and consisting of the paths, *bhūmīs*, and so forth, is here identified as being equally an obstacle to the Great Seal. Engaging in the stages of the *pāramitā* path is explained as slowing down the aspirant’s progress towards awakening. At the end of the same verse, Saraha states: “The innate and the remedy are without rival.”<sup>54</sup>

The incomparable innate is without rival on either the path of *pāramitā* or of *upāya*, indicating that it is a method above and beyond either. In a rather evocative set of verses Saraha deprecates scriptural study and tantric practice, expressing how attaining the Great Seal cannot be accomplished by crystalising duality in concepts like being learned or not, seeking a goal outside of oneself, or setting out to engage in tantric practice with specific methods and goals. The very act of searching for the Great Seal ruins it by setting it apart from the innate, as we read in the Speech Treasury:

By hearing the word “Great Seal” just for an instant,  
Regardless of whether or not you possess scriptural learning,  
Just by this teaching, this single root, it is attained.

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*gsum sku gsung thugs la 'dus / gang la mi 'bad blang dor lta ba med / mtha' dbus mi 'byed dbu ma drang po'i lam.*

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.: *bcas bcos bral na thugs kyi lam mchog.*

<sup>52</sup> This a reference to the ‘standard’ Mahāyāna path that entails the five paths and ten (or fourteen) *bhūmīs*, etc. It is also referred to as the ‘sūtra’ path.

<sup>53</sup> Saraha 107b: *bgrod 'jug rim sogs pha rol phyin pa'i lam / nye lam gzhag nas ring du 'khor ba'i rgyu.*

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. *lhan cig skyes dang gnyen po 'gran zla bral.*

It is Thatness itself; do not seek the dharma of others.

Because of searching like a fox in a charnel ground, etc., what is sought  
after is ruined

Oh! Just as a Brahman seeks out and asks marriage of one who is low-born,  
When they mix together—lowly and good—they cause harm to one  
another<sup>55</sup>;

The yoga with signs will not touch the signless goal.

That which is signless can never be examined.

Signs come into being when you attend to number and time;

The stages of generation and completion are distinct, so do not think about  
them.

Whoever possesses the highest yoga has the convergence of non-duality.<sup>56</sup>

Lending what I read as a comic touch to his critique of tantric methods  
practiced inauthentically (without being grounded in the non-dual goal of the  
Great Seal), Saraha describes practices using the subtle body as a “worldly  
treasure,”<sup>57</sup> and writes in the Mind Treasury:

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<sup>55</sup> They cause harm to one another only within the confines of ordinary thought.  
According to an oral commentary by H. H. Shamar Rinpoche, the Brahman here can  
also represent the deity generated in meditation, which by extension means that tantric  
practice engaged in by ‘ordinary’ dualistic mind (the dualistic yoga referred to in the  
following line) can be at best useless and at worst, even harmful.

<sup>56</sup> Saraha 114b: *phyag rgya chen po skad cig thos pas kyang / snod dang ldan mi ldan  
la mi ltos par / bstan pa tsam gyis rtse gcig 'di yis thob / ... de nyid rang yin gzhan gyi  
chos mi tshol / dur khrod wa sogs tshol phyr 'brangs te phung / kye ho bram ze rigs  
ngan khyim 'dres 'tshol slong bzhin / bzang ngan 'dres pa gcig la gcig gnod de /  
mtshan ma med la bltas pa nam yang med / mtshan ma dus dang grangs la ltos par  
'gyur / bskyed dang rdzogs ma'i rim pa khyad par bas bsam mi bya / gnyis med 'dus  
pa rnal 'byor mchog ldan.*

<sup>57</sup> The complete passage is found in Saraha 116b–117a: *gter rnyed bdag gzhan gnyis  
ka'i don la rmongs / snying gi ga'u padma'i me tog dkyil / thabs dang ldan pa sbyor ba*



Drawing energies up and down in the turning centres:<sup>58</sup>  
 Guided by those methods, the truth cannot found;<sup>59</sup>  
 Although you may grasp and eject and unite and ignite,<sup>60</sup>  
 There is no difference between these breath-control practices<sup>61</sup> and a fool  
 suffering from asthma.<sup>62</sup>

In his continuing critique of all methods that make a goal of the Great Seal, Saraha tell us of the pāramitā methods in the Body Treasury:

Oh! In the Great Seal are present body, speech, and mind, the epitome of  
 fruition.  
 The result of the Great Seal is only suitable for the essential meaning, but  
 not for provisional and definitive meaning.<sup>63</sup>

Provisional and definitive meaning here clearly refer to refined categories of Buddhist philosophical thought.<sup>64</sup> According to Saraha, these categories are

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*de nas 'gyed / 'khor lo'i phyogs kyi rtsa gnas gang du yang / 'dod dang bral bas chags med nam mkha' la / gyen thur 'dren dang 'khor lo bskor ba yang / thabs kyi 'dren tshul don gyi gting mi rnyed / gzung dang 'phang dang sbyar dang sbor ba yang / blun po dbugs mi bde dang khyad med mtshungs.*

<sup>58</sup> Drawing the energies up and down through the channels is again part of tantric practice.

<sup>59</sup> Literally, “the bottom of truth won’t be found.”

<sup>60</sup> Presumably a reference to union practice, which is designed to result in the ignition of Great Bliss.

<sup>61</sup> Controlling the breath is a key element of all the above-mentioned practices.

<sup>62</sup> See note 57.

<sup>63</sup> Saraha 108b: *kye ho phyag rgya che la 'bras bu'i bdag nyid sku gsung thugs ldan pas / 'bras bu de yang snying po'i don la 'thad kyis drang dang nges pa'i don la min.*

<sup>64</sup> Saraha again emphasises going beyond duality when he dismisses the utility of the two truths doctrine in order to approach the goal in the Body Treasury, 112b: “Free of the Two Truths, meditation on equanimity is non-dual” (*bden pa gnyis bral gnyis med btang snyoms bsgom*).

entirely unsuitable when we are talking about the Great Seal. In the second half of the same verse he describes the attainment:

All the essentials of path and fruition are distilled there,  
The authentic highest Mahāyāna and the distinctness of the vehicles.<sup>65</sup>

In other words, Saraha affirms the ‘path-and-fruition’ scheme of classification and again undermines the duality implied by the formal distinction between the two levels of interpreting the Buddha’s teachings, describing the whole as *phyag chen*, where the essence of the heart of all is gathered. In a warning against reifying the distinction between path and fruition, he writes in the Body Treasury:

The Great Seal is unchangeable great bliss and,  
Not dependent on a cause, the result is beyond the scope of the intellect.  
The Great Seal is the complete result.  
Conventionally it is illustrated as the goal of the path.<sup>66</sup>

As a kind of summary of his critique of both methods, we read: “Without the use of ‘tip of the nose,’ etc., shape and space, channel and contact, you will abide in the primordial nature.”<sup>67</sup> In other words, anything from meditation practices that focus on the breath at the tip of the nose (a form of *śamatha*, or *zhi gnas*), to practices generating deities or their maṇḍalas, to practices working with energies in the subtle body, must be abandoned in order to experience the primordial nature.

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<sup>65</sup> Saraha 108b: *lam dang ’bras bu’i snying po thams cad bcud bsdus dang / theg chen bla na med pa’i dngos dang theg pa dag gi khyad par dang.*

<sup>66</sup> Saraha 107a: *phyag rgya chen po ’gyur med bde chen dang / rgyu la mi ltos ’bras bu blo las ’das / phyag rgya chen po rdzogs pa’i ’bras bu yin / tha snyad lam gyi don la mtshon te sbyar.*

<sup>67</sup> Saraha 108a: *sna rtse la sogs dbyibs dang nam mkha’ dang / rtsa la reg par ma spyad gnyug mar gnas.*

On the topic of the seals as a hierarchy of four stages whereby one attains to the ultimate fruit of awakening, Saraha does not find himself at a loss for words:

Those ignorant of Thatness are attached to the Action Seal, Commitment Seal, Dharma Seal, etc.

These are mere examples that signify Thatness but cannot attain the meaning.

Rely on the Great Seal, which is free from subject and object,  
And cognition arises naturally and freshly.<sup>68</sup>

This is consistent with Saraha's critique of anything that enforces a distinction between the practitioner's mind and the goal, the Great Seal. His poetic skill reaches a particularly refined point at this moment in the Speech Treasury: "All conventions, the Action Seal, etc. / Resemble the common subjects of a Universal Monarch."<sup>69</sup> In other words, relying on anything short of the Great Seal itself is like attending to the common subjects of a king while neglecting the king himself.

Saraha nuances his approach to the four seals in the following verse from the Body Treasury:

The map that is the Action Seal, and the path of the Dharma Seal,  
And the Great Seal that is the result, and the Commitment Seal that is the  
altruistic act—

By relying on seals below the Dharma Seal, one will not reach the end;

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<sup>68</sup> Saraha 111a: *de nyid mi shes las kyi phyag rgya dang / dam tshig chos la sos pa rtsol 'dod pa / de nyid mtshon ba'i dpe tsam don mi nus / gzung 'dzin bral ba'i phyag rgya che brten pa / shes pa rang lugs so ma nyid la byung.*

<sup>69</sup> Saraha 114b: *kun rdzob las kyi phyag rgya la sogs kun / 'khor las sgyur rgyal dmangs kyi 'khor dang mtshungs.*

One falls into extremes of hope and fear, and becomes damaged by engaging in frivolous activities.<sup>70</sup>

Here it seems clear that it is possible to dispense with the Action and Dharma seals altogether. By relying on them to guide one, one will not attain the goal and will waste one's time and energy in mental extremes and useless practices (presumably the practices of sūtra and tantra criticised above). Relying on the Great Seal and the Commitment Seal as bodhicitta is the only way.

From these verses it is clear that Saraha is familiar with the terms and concepts used hundreds of years later by Tibetans working with the vast corpus of Great Seal material they had received. Though admittedly the context is different, Saraha's approach is clear. The question then arises, on what basis can one practise pāramitā or tantra methods authentically? How does one gain access to the authentic middle way? The key according to Saraha—as it is with Sgam po pa—is the guru:

In your reverence to the guru, the discipline of the secret vehicle is complete.

The very expression of the outer, inner, and secret initiations, and  
The vase, secret, wisdom,  
Essential direct word initiations, etc.—

The mundane *siddhīs* arising from all these things cannot touch the Great Seal.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Saraha 108b: *las kyi phyag rgya dpe dang chos kyi phyag rgya'i lam / phyag rgya chen po 'bras bu dam tshig phyag rgya gzhan don te / chos kyi phyag rgya man chad bsten pas mthar lhung 'du 'dzi bya ba'i skyon du 'gyur.*

<sup>71</sup> Saraha 108b: *bla ma la gus gsang ba'i 'dul sdom de ru rdzogs / phyi nang gsang ba'i dbang bskur so so'i mtshan nyid dang / bum pa gsang ba shes rab ye shes dang / ngo bo nges tshig dbye ba la sogs kun / thun mong mthu skyes phyag rgya che la reg mi nus.*

Since this is poetry it can, of course, be interpreted in numerous ways. However, one wonders how Sa skya Paṇḍita would have dealt with this verse, as it clearly sets the Great Seal initiation apart from standard tantric initiation, reorienting towards the private relationship of the guru and disciple. As we also saw in the work of Sgam po pa, the guru is the access point for everything. The guru provides the requisite blessings and instructions, based on the devotion of the disciple. Saraha is also emphatic that without the guru there is no awakening, no Great Seal. He explains in the Body Treasury, “Precious devotion is the wish-granting jewel of instruction / Place it so that you are free of mental engagement and non-engagement.”<sup>72</sup> Further, in the Speech Treasury he writes:

The teachings and transmissions are taught by the guru; the essential instructions are revealed afterwards.

Because of having transmission and lineage, one desires to realize the intrinsic characteristic of reality.

Depending on the guru you will find pure essential instructions,

If you worship [the guru who has the pure essential instructions], you will accomplish spontaneous highest bliss.

Bow at the guru’s feet, because his/her actions are free of defilement.

“If you worship [the guru], great blessings will arise,” declared the Conqueror.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Saraha 111a: *yid ches rin chen gdams ngag yid bzhin gter / yid la bya dang mi bya med par gzhag.*

<sup>73</sup> Saraha 113a: *bla ma las bstan lung ’grel gdams ngag rjes su ston / lung dang rigs pas rang gi mtshan nyid rtogs ’dod pa / bla ma la brten gdams ngag ldan pa dag las rnyed / bsnyen bdur byas na lhan cig bde ba mchog thob ’gyur / dri ma dang bral bya phyir bla ma ’i zhabs la ’dud / mchod na byin rlabs chen po ’byung bar rgyal bas bshad.*

As mentioned above, that devotion itself constitutes the correct behaviour and attitude, above and beyond the codes and conventions of either the *pāramitā* or *upāya* paths. In the final stanza of the Speech Treasury Saraha tells us:

Hey! Whoever possesses the Great Seal, the highest qualities,  
 Does so because of delighting the guru, the basis of all *siddhis*.  
 When one does not abandon the precious guru and the Three Jewels, good  
 qualities arise.  
 Whatever rare being has confidence,  
 May he /she realise the meaning of this root text of through yoga!<sup>74</sup>

The greatest attribute a practitioner may have, it seems, is the capacity for profound devotion for the guru. The guru is the source of awakening, a theme that one encounters repeatedly in the later *nam thar* and songs of Bka' brgyud *phyag chen* masters. Clearly demonstrating this, Saraha closes the last of the three Adamantine Songs, the Mind Treasury, with the following two stanzas:

Those desiring realisation always look to Thatness.  
 Those with sincere devotion rely on the precious guru, and  
 From the highest guru the secret qualities will arise.  
 Defined by possessing the point, you will be victorious in the battle against  
 the defilements.  
 Possessing the transmission of the guru—  
 Who possesses the secret meaning itself—  
 May whoever goes through this non-dual door arrive at liberation!<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Saraha 115b: *kye ho phyag rgya chen po yon tan mchog ldan gang / bla ma mnyes par bya phyir dngos grub kun gyi gzhi / bla ma dkon mchog mi spang yon tan 'byung / gang zhig dad pa'i sems ldan brgya lam no / rnal 'byor mams kyis gzhung 'di rtogs par shog.*

## 6 Conclusions

This chapter began with a discussion of the many ways that *phyag chen* is classified in its Tibetan contexts. Throughout, I have endeavoured to make it clear, by examining Saraha's Adamantine Songs, that these classificatory schemes, while highly refined by Tibetans, were not innovations but had precedents in the earlier South Asian context of Mahāmudrā, and specifically in the work attributed to Saraha. Saraha's references to these schemes—*pāramitā* and *upāya*, the Four Seals, etc.—are for the most part deeply critical. He dismisses and mocks whatever has made its way into mainstream thought and practice, with his own typical flair. His characterisation of *phyag chen* as understood from his Adamantine Songs is one that celebrates *phyag chen* as unborn, free of conventions, free of distinctions, the highest union of thought and non-thought, the innate nature of all, instantaneous full awaking, blissful, and uncontrived—to cite but a few of his descriptions. The sole access to this innate nature is the guru, who is the source of blessing, wisdom, and devotion, to whom one owes the precepts and the practice.

Where we find the guru equally highly privileged in the context of *phyag chen*, and where we find *phyag chen* equally set apart as its own path distinct from tantra, is in the work of the great Bka' brgyud scholar and practitioner Sgam po pa. Thus, although (a) Sgam po pa's work constituted the first exclusively Bka' brgyud articulation of *phyag chen*, (b) his work was strongly criticised by Sa skya Paṇḍita, and (c) he has a relatively minor place in the Dge lugs pa *phyag chen* lineage, it is abundantly clear that Sgam po pa was not innovating a new way of understanding and attaining *phyag chen*. My examination of Saraha illustrates that Sgam po pa was, in fact, doing nothing of the sort. While I have no way of determining if he read the Adamantine Songs

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<sup>75</sup> Saraha 117a: *rtogs par 'dod pas de nyid rtag tu blta / gus dang ldan bas bla ma dkon mchog brten / gsang ba'i yon tan bla ma mchog las 'byung / don ldan mtshan nyid nyon mongs gyul las rgyal / gsang ba'i don nyid don dang rab ldan pa'i / bla ma slob dpon lung dang rab ldan nas / mi gnyis sgo nas 'gro ba grol 'gyur shog.*

closely (if indeed at all!),<sup>76</sup> he was in my opinion explicitly attempting to maintain Saraha's *phyag chen* tradition. For me, this resonance is evidenced by the shared emphasis on guru devotion in the Adamantine Songs and in the works attributed Sgam po pa that are treated above. Sgam po pa's attempt to absorb the methods of the siddha Saraha into his *phyag chen* in itself does not make him unique. What sets him apart is that he appears to have been particularly successful.

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<sup>76</sup> A reading of Saraha's *Treasury of Doha* or, indeed, of many of the siddha poems, reveals a clear Indian precedent. I refer readers again to Mathes 2006 for a fine analysis of the connections.



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THE COLLECTION OF “INDIAN MAHĀMUDRĀ  
WORKS” (TIB. *PHYAG CHEN RGYA GZHUNG*)  
COMPILED BY THE SEVENTH KARMA PA  
CHOS GRAGS RGYA MTSHO\*

KLAUS-DIETER MATHES

**1 Introduction**

In the thirteenth century certain aspects of the Bka' brgyud teachings on mahāmudrā became highly controversial, such as the assertion of the possibility of a sudden liberating realisation or of a beginner's attaining mahāmudrā even without tantric empowerment. Such teachings were propagated by Sgam po pa (1079–1153), but criticised by Sa skya Paṇḍita (1182–1251), who maintained that there is no conventional expression for mahāmudrā in the pāramitā tradition and that the wisdom of mahāmudrā can only be a wisdom that has arisen from empowerment. 'Gos Lo tsā ba Gzhon nu dpal (1392–1481) defended Sgam po pa's notion of mahāmudrā, however, by pointing out its Indian origins in the persons of Jñānakīrti (tenth/eleventh century)<sup>1</sup> and Maitrīpa (ca. 1007–ca. 1085), together with the latter's disciple Sahajavajra

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<sup>1</sup> Jñānakīrti's *Tattvāvatāra* was translated into Tibetan by Rin chen bzang po (958–1055).

(eleventh century).<sup>2</sup> The works of these masters belong to a genre of literature that was eventually called “Indian mahāmudrā works” (*phyag chen rgya gzhung*).

## 2 The Dpal spungs Edition of the *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*

In 1996 Shamar Rinpoche published in New Delhi a thirteen-volume collection of Indian and Tibetan mahāmudrā works under the title *Nges don phyag rgya chen po'i khrid mdzod*.<sup>3</sup> The first three volumes of this collection contain a photomechanic reproduction of a Dpal spungs block print titled *Phyag rgya chen po'i rgya gzhung*.<sup>4</sup> There is no colophon at the end, but the third volume (which is assigned the letter *hūm*) contains at the beginning an additional text with its own folio numbering and the title “A Short Index and Inventory [Showing] How the Three Volumes of Indian Mahāmudrā Works on True Nature Were Put Together as a Literary Source: Earrings of Accomplishment [for the] Practice Lineage.”<sup>5</sup> This 42-folio-long *Rgya gzhung dkar chag* was composed by a disciple of Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–99), Karma Bkra shis chos 'phel, at the monastic seat of Dpal spungs.<sup>6</sup> In it, Bkra shis chos

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<sup>2</sup> Mathes 2006: 205–206.

<sup>3</sup> Scans of this collection are available from the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (Resource Code W 23447).

<sup>4</sup> The reproduction is identical with an independent copy from the Dpal spungs blocks in the possession of Thrangu Rinpoche.

<sup>5</sup> The Tibetan title according to the front page: *Gnas lugs phyag rgya chen po'i rgya gzhung glegs bam gsum yi ge'i 'byung gnas su ji ltar bkod pa'i dkar chags bzhugs byang mdor bsdus pa sgrub brgyud grub pa'i rna rgyan ces bya ba bzhugs so*.

<sup>6</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, 42a5–6: “... written in the neighbourhood of the monastery ‘Holder of the Dharma that Delights the Mind’ at Dpal spungs (the font of many precious qualities) by Karma Bkra shis chos 'phel blo gros rgya mtsho'i sgra dbyangs, who is named Sgra dbyangs snying po'i zla ba mtsho byung dgyes pa'i blo gros as a conventional appellation that speaks of qualities that might arise, a lazy person who lacks the Dharma of definitive meaning.” (*karma bkra shis chos 'phel blo gros rgya mtsho'i sgra dbyangs sam / 'byung du rung ba'i yon tan la smos pa'i btags ming du*

’phel informs us that these three volumes of Indian mahāmudrā works were compiled by the seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506).<sup>7</sup> Moreover, we are given a detailed account of how the *Phyag chen rgya gzhung* was compiled and its blocks carved.<sup>8</sup> When Lama Byang chub chos ’phel of the Ja sbra family was looking for a project to support, Mkhan chen bla ma Bkra shis ’od zer, another disciple of Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas, suggested that he sponsor the carving of printing blocks for a new edition of Chos grags rgya mtsho’s collection of Indian mahāmudrā works. After recounting the reasons for Bkra shis ’od zer’s choice, the *Rgya gzhung dkar chag* adds some other interesting details, such as how the Sa skya scholar Phun tshogs rgyal mtshan edited the copy to be used for setting the Dpal spungs print:

After that, when he looked for original texts, pure, clear-cut text transmissions proved to be somewhat rare in these parts (surrounding Dpal spungs). Having gathered some texts—from the Dpal spungs *bla brang* and

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*sgra dbyangs snying po’i zla ba mtsho byung dgyes pa’i blo gros zhes bya bgyi ba’i nges pa don gyi chos med snyoms las pas yon tan rin po che du ma’i ’byung gnas dpal spungs yid dga’ chos ’dzin gyi gandhola’i nye ’dabs su bris pas).*

<sup>7</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, 17a6–b1: “The one who compiled these volumes, which are well known in the Snowland [of Tibet], [this] precious jewel of the precious Bka’ brgyud [lineage] called ‘Indian *mahāmudrā* works,’ was the incarnation of Lokeśvara, the seventh Karma pa Rang byung mtsho skyes rdo rje, also known as Chos grags rgya mtsho.” (*phyag rgya chen po’i rgya gzhung zhes bka’ brgyud rin po che’i gces nor gangs can na yongs su grags pa’i glegs bam ’di dag gang gis sdud par mdzad pa ni / ’jig rten dbang phyug gi sprul pa’i sku karma ka bdun pa rang byung mtsho skyes rdo rje’am / chos grags rgya mtsho ste ./*)

<sup>8</sup> After a description of these works compiled by the seventh Karma pa and detailed lists of the various reading transmissions (Tib. *lung*), Karma Bkra shis chos ’phel presents in a paragraph of his own (the third of the second chapter) “how the volumes of the present collection of such Dharma [texts] were carved as printing blocks.” (*Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, 31a5–6: *de lta bu’i chos kyi bzhugs tshogs kyi glegs bam ’di dag spar du ji ltar bsgrubs pa’i tshul*).

from Kun mkhyen 'Jam pa'i dbyangs of Rdzong [g]sar (i.e. Rdzong gsar Mkhayen brtse'i dbang po, 1820–92)—and having looked up what is in the Sde [dge] prints of the precious Bstan 'gyur, [Phun tshogs rgyal mtshan and his team] corrected the original text [and] carefully compared [it with all] texts.... Many learned masters have problems when it comes to carefully editing for correct spelling, metre, and meaning, but a close disciple of the Venerable Blo gter (i.e. 'Jam dbyangs blo gter dbang po, 1847–1914) who was the Eṃaṃ<sup>9</sup> Thar rtse Zhabs drung Rin po che and a vessel in the ocean of tantra classes, [namely] the monk Phun tshogs rgyal mtshan and [others], skilled and without equal in correcting Tibetan, earnestly rendered their service of comparing and correcting the texts many times.<sup>10</sup>

The printing blocks were then stored at the great publishing house of Dpal spungs monastery:

The originals of [these] volumes, which had been prepared in this way, were kept at the great publishing house attached to the great Bka' brgyud

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<sup>9</sup> Eṃaṃ is the Sa skya Ngor Eṃaṃ monastery.

<sup>10</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, 31b6–32a4: *de ma thag phyi mo'i dpe btsal ba na ha cang dpe rgyun dag nges shig 'di phyogs cung dkon pa ltar gyur mod / dpal spungs bla brang gi phyag dpe dang / rdzong sar nas kun mkhyen 'jam pa'i dbyangs kyi phyag dpe sogs dpe 'ga' zhig 'dzom pa dang / bstan 'gyur rin po che sde spar gyi nang du bzhugs so 'tshal bsdus te ma dpe zhus dag dpe bsdur legs par bgyis / ... tshig gi 'bru dag kyang sdeb sbyor dang don 'thob kyis legs par 'chos thub pa ni mkhas pa mams la'ang bka' seb zhig 'dug [text: 'du gi?] kyang / 'di ni e vaṃ thar rtse zhabs drung rin po che rgyud sde rgya mtsho'i shing rta blo gter zhabs kyi zhal slob nye gnas dge slong phun tshogs rgyal mtshan nyid bod brda'i 'bru dag bgyid pa la mkhas pa mams kyis kyang do zlar ma gyur ba tsam gyi ya mtshan mnga' ba de nyid kyis lan grangs du mar dpe bsdud 'bru bcos kyi sri zhu nan du phul nas.*

seat of Dpal spungs in Mdo khams, [also called] Yid dga’ chos ’dzin gyi chos grwa.<sup>11</sup>

## 2.1 The three cycles in the Dpal spungs edition of the *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*

At the beginning of the Dpal spungs collection, we find the only text it draws from the Bka’ ’gyur (Derge 404, Peking 58), the *Anāvilatantrarāja*, along with the commentary on it by Kumāracandra (Derge 1204, Peking 2334). It is not clear why the *Anāvīla* is the only tantra which was included into the *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*. Roger Jackson observed that it discusses topics—such as the natural purity of mind, the ultimate non-existence of all phenomena, and the necessity for non-conceptual meditation as the path to final wisdom—that had become closely associated with mahāmudrā in the late period of Indian Buddhism.<sup>12</sup>

Besides this tantra, the first volume mainly contains three cycles of mahāmudrā works: (1) the seven sections on accomplishment (*Grub pa sde bdun*); (2) the six works on essential [meaning] (*Snying po skor drug*); and (3) the twenty-five *amanasikāra* works (*Yid la mi byed pa’i chos nyi shu rtsa lnga*).<sup>13</sup> This classification of Indian mahāmudrā works in three cycles already existed at the time of Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364).<sup>14</sup>

Karma Bkra shis chos ’phel holds that the *Grub pa sde bdun* represent an extract of the essence of all Highest Yoga tantras.<sup>15</sup> All seven works are

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<sup>11</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, 32b1–2: *de ltar grub pa’i glegs bam gyi phyi mo’ang mdo khams bka’ brgyud kyi gdan sa chen po dpal spungs yid dga’ chos ’dzin gyi chos grwa dang zung ’brel ba’i spar khang chen mor bzhugs su gsol ba lags so.*

<sup>12</sup> See Jackson 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Bu ston lists only twenty-two of the *amanasikāra* works, but also includes in his *amanasikāra* cycle the four commentaries ordered by Maitripa (see *Bu ston gsan yig*, p. 116, l. 2–p. 117, l. 1).

<sup>14</sup> *Bu ston gsan yig*, p. 114, l. 7–p. 117, l. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 21b6: *rnal ’byor bla na med pa’i rgyud sde thams cad kyi don gyi snying po phyung ba grub pa sde bdun ni /.*



contained in the *rgyud 'grel* section of the Bstan 'gyur.<sup>16</sup> The *'Bri gung chos mdzod*,<sup>17</sup> in which the first four of the seven sections on accomplishment are identical with the ones in the Dpal spungs edition, contains the extra information that this cycle of seven sections on accomplishment consists of mahāmudrā works by masters from Uḍḍiyāna.<sup>18</sup>

The *Snying po skor drug* are Saraha's *Dohākośagīti* (D 2224, P 3068), Nāgārjuna's *Caturmudrānvaya* (D 2225, P 3069),<sup>19</sup> Āryadeva's *Cittāvaraṇa-viśodhana* (D 1804, P 2669), \*Devacandra's *Prajñāñānaprakāśa* (D 2226, P 3070),<sup>20</sup> Sahajavajra's *Sthitisamuccaya* (D 2227, P 3071) and Koṭali's

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<sup>16</sup> The *Grub pa sde bdun* in the *Phyag chen rgya gzhung* are: (1) the *Gsang ba grub pa* (D 2217, P 3061); (2) the *Thabs dang shes rab nam par gtan la dbab pa grub pa* (D 2218, P 3062); (3) the *Ye shes grub pa* (D 2219, P 3063); (4) the *Gnyis med grub pa* (D 2220, P 3064); (5) the *Dpal u rgyan nas byung ba gsang ba de kho na nyid kyi man ngag* (D 2221, P 3065); (6) the *Dngos po gsal ba'i rjes su 'gro ba'i de kho na nyid grub pa* (D 2222, P 3066); and (7) the *Dpal lhan cig skyes pa grub pa* (D 2223, P 3067). See *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fols. 21b6–22b1. The same titles are listed in a slightly different order in the *Bu ston gsan yig* (p. 115, ll. 4–7).

<sup>17</sup> During my stay at the Srong btsan Library (Dehra Dun) in March 2006 I received copies of first two volumes of the *'Bri gung bka' brgyud chos mdzod*. There is no useful information in the colophons of these two volumes, but according to the present Chetsang Rinpoche, they were compiled under the direction of the seventeenth 'Bri gung abbot Kun dga' rin chen (1475–1527), and this is corroborated by the *'Bri gung gdan rabs* written by the fourth Che tshang Rin po che Bstan 'dzin padma'i rgyal mtshan (1722–78). See the *'Bri gung gdan rabs*, p. 183.

<sup>18</sup> *'Bri gung chos mdzod*, vol. *ka*, fol. 4a2: *sngags kyi bstan pa'i thog mar nub phyogs u rgyan nas dar bas yul de'i slob dpon rnams kyi* [text: *kyi*] *phyag rgya chen po'i gzhung mdzad pa la grub pa'i tha snyad sbyar ba bdun byung ba ni...*

<sup>19</sup> The attribution of the *Caturmudrānvaya* to Nāgārjuna was already controversial in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Thus we find this text included in the collection of Maitrīpa's works, the *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*.

<sup>20</sup> According to the Peking Tanjur (*rgyud 'grel*, vol. *mi*, fol. 99a4) and the *Bu ston gsan yig* (p. 116, l. 1). In the *Blue Annals* (Roerich 1949–53) we find “Devākara-candra”

*Acintyakramopadeśa* (D 2228, P 3072). Bu ston lists the same texts in a slightly different order,<sup>21</sup> and the ‘Bri gung manuscript includes Maitrīpa’s *Sekanirdeśa* (D 2252, P 3097) instead of the *Prajñājñānaprakāśa*.<sup>22</sup> All six works of this cycle are also contained in the *rgyud ’grel* section of the Bstan ’gyur. To explain briefly their different points of view, in his *Dohākośagīti* Saraha describes unconventional techniques (he was critical not only of traditional forms of Buddhism, but also of the tantras) for experiencing the co-emergent nature of mind. A number of these *dohās* became an important Indian source for later mahāmudrā traditions.<sup>23</sup> The *Prajñājñānaprakāśa* presents mahāmudrā in the context of the four mudrās. While Devacandra (one of the four heart disciples of Maitrīpa)<sup>24</sup> argues in this work that mahāmudrā must be preceded by a kind of preliminary wisdom attained with the help of a tantric consort (i.e. *prajñājñāna*), Maitrīpa suggests in his *Sekanirdeśa* an alternative approach, claiming (in SN 29ab) that mahāmudrā is also known as non-abiding. In his *Sekanirdeśapañjikā*, Rāmapāla (another of the four heart disciples of Maitrīpa)<sup>25</sup> glosses “non-abiding in anything” as “not to reify”<sup>26</sup> and “not to become mentally engaged.”<sup>27</sup> The works by the *mahāsiddhas* Āryadeva and Koṭali do not contain anything that specifically excludes non-tantric mahāmudrā, but in the last work, by Sahajavajra, reality is either approached through Madhyamaka analysis or experienced directly according to the tradition of Mantrayāna.<sup>28</sup>

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(read: Divākaracandra?), and in the *Rgya gzhung dkar chag* (fol. 22bb2) “Devā-ākarendra.”

<sup>21</sup> *Bu ston gsan yig*, p. 115, l. 7 – p. 116, l. 1.

<sup>22</sup> ‘Bri gung chos mdzod, vol. ka, fol. 4a3–5.

<sup>23</sup> See Mathes 2006: 207–208.

<sup>24</sup> Roerich 1949–53: 842–43.

<sup>25</sup> See the preceding note.

<sup>26</sup> Tib. *sgro ’dogs pa*, usually rendered as “superimposing.”

<sup>27</sup> SNP<sub>S(C)</sub>, fol. 18a4; SNP<sub>S(P)</sub>, fol. 15b6–7: *sarvasmīn ... apratiṣṭhānam amanasikāro ’nāropah* (I follow here the reading of SNP<sub>S(P)</sub>).

<sup>28</sup> Mathes 2006: 222–23.

Following are what Maitrīpa's disciples called the twenty-five *amanasikāra* works. In them, Maitrīpa expounds his view of non-abiding (Tib. *rab tu mi gnas pa*, Skt. *apraṭiṣṭhāna*) and the meditation practice of “not becoming mentally engaged” (Tib. *yid la mi byed pa*, Skt. *amanasikāra*). Originally, each of these twenty-five works was Maitrīpa's reply to a different question.<sup>29</sup> Twenty-one of the twenty-five (or rather twenty-four)<sup>30</sup> texts listed by Karma Bkra shis chos 'phel are contained in the *Advayavajrasaṃgraha*,<sup>31</sup> and thus available in the original Sanskrit.<sup>32</sup> The three texts that are not in the

<sup>29</sup> 'Bri gung chos mdzod, vol. ka, fol. 4a5–6: *de nas mai [text: me] tri pas lta ba rab tu mi gnas pa / bsgom pa yid la mi byed pa la sogs pa'i dam bca' mdzad pa la / so so'i dris lan gzhung phran nyi shu rtsa lnga byung la slob ma rnams kyi yid la mi byed pa'i chos skor nyi shu rtsa lnga zhes pa'i tha snyad byas so /*

<sup>30</sup> The *Thabs dang shes rab brtse ba lnga pa* (no. 5) and the *Dga' gcugs lnga pa* (no. 12), which Karma Bkra shis chos 'phel mentions in his list of *amanasikāra* works (*Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fols. 22b4–23a3), are simply two different Tibetan translations of the same text, the *Premapañcaka*. This was not recognised by the compilers of the Bstan 'gyur or, later, the *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*, but in the *Bu ston gsan yig* and the *'Bri gung chos mdzod* we find only the *Dga' gcugs lnga pa*.

<sup>31</sup> Actually, the *Advayavajrasaṃgraha* consists of twenty-three works (if one follows the Tibetan tradition and counts the *Kudrṣṭinirghātana* and its *ṭippinikā* as two separate texts), but, among them, Karma Bkra shis chos 'phel does not include the *Mūlāpatti Sthūlāpatti* (which is not contained in the Tanjur either) and considers the *Caturmudrā-nvaya* to be by [the tantric] Nāgārjuna and not Maitrīpa.

<sup>32</sup> The twenty-three works of the *Advayavajrasaṃgraha* are: (1) *Kudrṣṭinirghātana* (D 2229, P 3073); (2) *Kudrṣṭinirghātanaṭippinikā* (D 2231, P 3075); (3) *Mūlāpatti Sthūlāpatti*; (4) *Tattvaratnāvalī* (D 2240, P 3085); (5) *Pañcatathāgatamudrāvivaraṇa* (D 2242, P 3087); (6) *Sekanirdeśa* (D 2252, P 3097); (7) *Caturmudrānvaya* (D 2225, P 3069); (8) *Sekatātparyasaṃgraha* (D 2243, P 3088); (9) *Pañcākāra* (D 2245, P 3090); (10) *Māyānirukti* (D 2234, P 3078); (11) *Svapnanirukti* (D 2233, P 3077); (12) *Tattvaparakāśa* (D 2241, P 3086); (13) *Apratiṣṭhānaparakāśa* (D 2235, P 3079); (14) *Yuganaddhaparakāśa* (D 2237, P 3081); (15) *Mahāsukhaparakāśa* (D 2239, P 3084); (16) *Tattvaviṃśikā* (D 2250, P 3095); (17) *Mahāyānaviṃśikā* (D 2248, P 3093); (18)

*Advayavajrasaṅgraha* are the \**Dohānidhināmatattvopadeśa* (D 2247, P 3092), the \**Samkṣiptasekaprakriyā* (D 2244, P 3089),<sup>33</sup> and the *Genuine Secret Pith-Instruction on Settling the Mind without Becoming Engaged in the Thought Processes of Projecting and Withdrawing* (*Shes pa spro bsdu med par ’jog pa’i man ngag gsang ba dam pa*).<sup>34</sup> The last of these is contained only in the Dpal spungs edition and is neither listed in Bu ston’s list of received teachings nor contained in the ’Bri gung manuscripts. Its attribution to Maitrīpa thus seems to be doubtful. But given that it was a secret pith-instruction, it was perhaps understood within the tradition as a work that was hidden without having been formally translated by an Indian paṇḍita and a Tibetan *lo tsā ba*, and thus lacks a record of its Indian title and a colophon. Still, the text found its way into the Bstan ’gyur (D 2251, P 3096). The *Phyag chen rgya gzhung* contains further mahāmudrā works, most of them *dohās*, but they have not been grouped together into further cycles.

In his *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, Karma Bkra shis chos ’phel provides detailed lists of the reading transmissions (*lung*) of the various texts and cycles in this mahāmudrā collection. We are thus informed that the works of Maitrīpa and his disciples were not only transmitted through Ras chung pa, but also reached Sgam po pa directly from Mar pa and Mi la ras pa:

With regard to the six works of essential [meaning] (*Snying po skor drug*), [Maitrīpa’s] twenty-five *amanasikāra* works, the four related “commentaries” ordered [by Maitrīpa] [i.e. Rāmapāla’s *Sekanirdeśa-pañjikā*, Sahajavajra’s *Tattvadaśakaṭikā*, Vajrapāṇi’s (b. 1017)]<sup>35</sup>

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*Nirvedhapañcaka* (D 2238, P 3083); (19) *Madhyamaṣaṭka* (D 2230, P 3074); (20) *Premapañcaka* (D 2237 & D 2246, P 3082 & P 3091); (21) *Tattvadaśaka* (D 2236, P 3080); (22) *Amanasikārādhāra* (D 2249, P 3094); (23) *Sahajaṣaṭka* (D 2232, P 3076).

<sup>33</sup> P 3089 and P 3092 are also listed in the *Bu ston gsan yig* (p. 116, ll. 5–6).

<sup>34</sup> *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*, vol. *om*, fols. 254a6–255a2.

<sup>35</sup> See Schaeffer 2005: 19.

“commentary” on the *Kudrṣṭinirghātana*, and Bhitakarman’s (or Karopa’s)<sup>36</sup> “commentary” on the *Caturmudrānvaya*,<sup>37</sup> [all the] large and small *dohās*, including the *dohās* by Saraha and their commentaries, ... another transmission of [these works of ultimate] meaning is as follows: Maitrīpa, the translator Mar pa Lo tsā ba, Mi la [ras pa] bzhad pa rdo rje, Ras chung grags pa. Or, from Mi la [ras pa] to the peerless Dvags po lha rje [i.e. Sgam po pa]....<sup>38</sup>

## 2.2 Karma Bkra shis chos ’phel’s analysis of mahāmudrā

The *Rgya gzhung dkar chag* contains a valuable presentation of Bka’ brgyud mahāmudrā based on an analysis of the most important works of the *Phyag chen rgya gzhung* collection. It begins by equating mahāmudrā with the perfection of insight (*prajñāpāramitā*),<sup>39</sup> both terms standing for the definitive

<sup>36</sup> See the colophon of his commentary on the *Caturmudrānvaya* (*Rgya gzhung*, vol. *om*, fol. 316b5–6). Karopa (Bhitakarman) was a disciple of Vajrapāṇi, while the latter, Rāmapāla and Sahajavajra were heart disciples of Maitrīpa; see Roerich 1949–53: 842–43.

<sup>37</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 23a3–6: *de mams dang rjes su ’brel ba bkas bskul gyi chos bzhir grags pa las dbang bskur nges bstan gyi bka’ ’grel pa ramapālas mdzad pa ... de kho na nyid bcu pa’i ’grel pa lhan cig skyes pa’i rdo rjes mdzad pa ... paṇḍita vajrapāṇis mdzad pa’i lta ba ngan sel gyi dran pa ... phyag rgya bzhi’i ’grel pa rin chen snying po rje btsun bhitakarmas mdzad pa /*. Bu ston, it may be noted, lists the *Vajrapada* (P 3100) by Vajrapāṇi instead of Karopa/Bhitakarman’s commentary (*Bu ston gsan yig*, p. 116, ll. 6–7).

<sup>38</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, 28a6–b4: *snying po skor drug / yid la mi byed pa’i chos nyer lnga / de dang phyogs mthun bkas bskul gyi chos bzhi / saraha’i do ha rtsa ’grel sogs do ha che chung rnam te / ... / don gyi brgyud pa gzhan yang / maitripa nas / sgra bsgyur mar pa lo tsā / mi la bzhad pa rdo rje / ras chung rdo rje grags pa’am / mi la nas / mnyam med dvags po lha rje / ....*

<sup>39</sup> For the relating of these two terms as synonyms in Jñānakīrti’s *Tattvāvatāra*, see Mathes 2006: 223–24. The relevant passage from the *Tattvāvatāra* has been quoted in the *Subhāṣitasamgraha* (SBhS, p. 388, ll. 14–15) and is thus available in its original

meaning, the essential intention, of all sūtras and tantras.<sup>40</sup> With reference to the *Ye shes grub pa* (the third of the seven sections on accomplishment), ascribed to Indrabhūti,<sup>41</sup> mahāmudrā is further said to be identical with ultimate reality, unsurpassable wisdom, Samantabhadra and the dharmakāya.<sup>42</sup> Based on this, Bkra shis chos ’phel speaks of “ground mahāmudrā,” in terms of the *dharmatā* and the like:

In general terms, ground mahāmudrā is the true nature (*dharmatā*) of all phenomena. It is free from all mental fabrication throughout beginningless time; that is, [it is] the emptiness of natural luminosity, which pervades all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. With regard to luminosity and clarity in particular, it is the primordial nature of one’s mind, which cannot be identified, being beyond [all] conceivable and expressible objects.<sup>43</sup>

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Sanskrit: *prajñāpāramitāiva bhagavatī mahāmudrā ’paranāmnī tasyā advayajñāna-svabhāvatvād* (“Another name for the very great mother (Tib. *yum chen mo*) Prajñāpāramitā is *mahāmudrā*, given that the latter’s nature is that of non-dual wisdom”).

<sup>40</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 3a2: ... *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa la mtshan gzhan phyag rgya chen por grags pa / mdo rgyud thams cad kyi nges don snying po’i dgongs pa....*

<sup>41</sup> See *Phyag chen rgya gzhung*, vol. *om*, fol. 64b6–65a1: *rdo rje’i ye shes bla med yin / kun tu bzang po zhes bshad cing / phyag rgya chen po zhes kyang bya / ’di ni chos sku zhes bya ste /*.

<sup>42</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 4a4: *mtshan gyi rnam grangs ni / don dam pa’i de nyid / bla na med pa’i ye shes / kun tu bzang po / phyag rgya chen po / chos kyi sku rnams don gcig tu bshad de /*.

<sup>43</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 5a3–4: *de yang spyir chos thams cad kyi chos nyid gdod ma nas spros pa thams cad dang bral ba / rang bzhin gyis ’od gsal ba’i stong pa nyid ’khor ’das kun gyi khyab bdag tu gyur pa dang / bye brag gsal zhing dwangs la ngos bzung med pa’i rang sems kyi gshis gdod ma’i gnas lugs bsam brjod kyi yul las ’das pa ni gzhi’i phyag chen dang /*.

Once further subdivided into the true nature of ordinary beings, bodhisattvas, and buddhas, on the basis of *Ratnagotravibhāga* I.47,<sup>44</sup> ground mahāmudrā becomes linked with the teaching of the Buddha-nature, the Buddha-element, or suchness.

Path mahāmudrā is then subdivided in accord not only with the tantric practices of the four mudrās (see below), but also with “calm abiding” (*śamatha*) and “deep insight” (*vipāśyanā*):

In the \**Mahāsamvarodayatantra* (D 373, P 20) it is said: “Through full realisation of emptiness one’s meditation becomes insight.” This divides [path-mahāmudrā] into calm abiding and deep insight.<sup>45</sup>

Even though the term mahāmudrā is nowhere found in the sūtras, Bkra shis chos ’phel argues that its meaning is clearly intended by expressions such as “all phenomena are marked by the seal (*mudrā*) of liberation or emptiness”:

In the sūtras this meaning of mahāmudrā has been taught since, according to circumstances, it was given [one or] the other name, [such as] mudrā. In the *Sāgaramatipariṣchāsūtra* (D 152, P 819) it is stated: “Sāgaramati, all phenomena are marked by the seal (*mudrā*) of liberation; they do not exist as duality but are pure.” ... In the *Maitreyaprasthānasūtra* (D 198, P 865)

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<sup>44</sup> RGVV, p. 40, ll. 7–8: “[Depending on whether the Buddha-nature is] impure, [partly] impure and [partly] pure, or perfectly pure, it is called a sentient being, bodhisattva or tathāgata respectively.” (*aśuddho ’śuddhaśuddho ’tha suviśuddho yathākramam / sattvadhātur iti prokto bodhisattvas tathāgataḥ* // My translation follows Schmithausen (1971: 148).

<sup>45</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 5b1–2: *bde mchog ’byung ba las / stong nyid so sor rtogs pas na // bsam gtan shes rab tu yang ’gyur // zhes zhi gnas dang lhag mthong du phye ba dang /*.

it is stated: “Son of a noble family, all phenomena [are marked by] the seal of emptiness.”<sup>46</sup>

Later, Bkra shis chos ’phel summarises his distinction of mahāmudrā into ground, path, and fruition in the following way:

To sum up, teachings in all sūtras and tantras to the effect that the Buddha-nature abides in the mind-stream of sentient beings throughout beginningless time—teachings such as the natural luminosity of the mind [and] all pronouncements on the abiding nature of the ground—point to ground mahāmudrā. The Dharma that fosters the element of the [Buddha]-nature, namely [the teachings on] freedom from mental fabrication and emptiness in particular, and all teachings to the effect that phenomena do not really exist and lack a true self, that they are equal and united [with the co-emergent nature] as a pair, point to path mahāmudrā. All teachings about enlightenment [in terms] of [attaining] omniscience—the four *kāyas*, the five wisdoms and the like—point to fruition mahāmudrā.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fols. 5b4–6a2: *mdo sde rnams su phyag rgya chen po’i don ’di nyid la phyag rgya’i mtshan gzhan ci rigs par btags nas gsungs te / blo gros rgya mtshos zhus pa’i mdo las / blo gros rgya mtsho chos thams cad ni rnam par grol ba’i phyag rgyas btab pa ste gnyis su med cing yongs su dag pa’o / [...] byams pa ’jug pa’i mdor / rigs kyi bu chos thams cad ni stong pa nyid kyi phyag rgya dang /*

<sup>47</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 6a5–b1: *don bsdu na / mdo rgyud thams cad du sems can gyi rgyud la de bzhin gshegs pa’i snying po gdod ma nas gnas par ston pa dang / sems kyi rang bzhin ’od gsal bar ston pa sogs gzhi’i gnas lugs gsungs pa thams cad kyis gzhi’i phyag rgya chen po dang / snying po’i khams rgyas par byed pa’i chos spros bral dang stong pa nyid kyi bye brag dang / chos thams cad bden med dang bdag med dang mnyam nyid dang zung ’jug tu ston pa thams cad kyis lam gyi phyag rgya chen po dang / sku bzhi ye shes lnga la sogs pa rnam pa thams cad mkhyen pa’i ye shes su byang chub pa’i tshul gsungs pa thams cad kyis ’bras bu’i phyag chen bstan pa yin no /*



It is of particular note that Bkra shis chos 'phel still considers mahāmudrā to be a category of tantric Buddhism:

Within the collection of [works on] secret conduct, one finds, in terms of disciples with lower, average, and supreme faculties, a threefold division into the Pāramitāyāna of defining characteristics, the Vajrayāna of secret mantras, and the *yāna* of unsurpassable essence. Among them, [mahāmudrā] is taken to be the last... In any case, one [still] asks the favour of empowerments and blessings, be they extensive or condensed, and meditation on deities is explained according to circumstances. Thus [mahāmudrā] must be taken as a category of the secret Mantrayāna.<sup>48</sup>

With regard to the *dohās* of Saraha, Bkra shis chos 'phel discerns a direct or short path called “path of essence[-mahāmudrā].”<sup>49</sup> From the perspective of the *Dohākośagīti* in particular, he takes the nature of this path of essence to be independent of Mantrayāna:

[In the *Dohākośagīti*] it is stated:

No tantra, no mantra, nothing to meditate on, no meditative concentration—

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<sup>48</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 9a3–5: *gsang spyod kyi skor nas / gdul bya blo dman 'bring mchog gsum gyi dbang gis mtshan nyid phar phyin theg pa dang / gsang sngags rdo rje'i theg pa dang / bla med snying po'i theg pa gsum du phye ba'i phyi ma yin par bzhed cing / ... 'on kyang dbang dang byin rlabs rgyas bsdus gang rung re dgos pa dang / skabs ci rigs par lha bsgom pa'i tshul yang bshad de / de ltar na gsang sngags kyi theg pa'i dbye bas dgos so /*

<sup>49</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 9a5–6: *bram ze chen po nyid kyi gzhung la dpyod na snying po'i lam zhes gseng lam zhig tu bzhed par snang ste /*

These are all causes that confuse one’s mind. (97–98)<sup>50</sup>

What is the use of butter lamps? What is the use of offerings?

What do they accomplish? Why rely on secret mantras? (58–59)<sup>51</sup>

Thus the nature of the path is explained as not depending on secret Mantrayāna. Moreover, it is taken to be free from the three conditions, beyond the four joys, and superior to luminosity.<sup>52</sup>

Passages in the *dohās* that suggest a tantric framework to mahāmudrā teachings are illuminated in the following way:

[Still,] the way of relying on a *karmamudrā*, the way one must mature by means of an empowerment, and the way of yogic conduct are explained in the *Dohās* for the Queen.<sup>53</sup> Thus this precious lineage claims that if [mahāmudrā] is combined with the secret Mantra[yāna], it is proper to do so.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> DKG<sub>S</sub>, p. 134, ll.1–2: *manta ṇa tanta ṇa dhea ṇa dhāraṇa sabba bi re badha bibbhamakāraṇa /*.

<sup>51</sup> DKG<sub>T</sub>, p. 129, ll. 20–21.: The Indian original is not available. For the Tibetan see the next footnote.

<sup>52</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 9b1–3: *rgyud med sngags med bsam gtan bsam bya med / de kun rang yang ’khrul par byed pa’i rgyu / zhes dang / mar me ci dgos lha bshos de ci dgos // de la ci bya gsang sngags bsten pas ci // zhes pa la sogs pa gsungs pas lam rang gi ngo bo gsang sngags lam ma ltos par bshad cing / de’ang rkyen gsum dang bral ba / dga’ ba bzhi las ’das pa / ’od gsal las khyad par du gyur pa zhig bzhed la /*.

<sup>53</sup> I.e. Saraha’s *Dohākośopadeśagīti* (D 2264, P 3111).

<sup>54</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 9b3: *btsun mo do har las kyi phyag rgya bsten tshul dang / de dbang gis smin par bya tshul dang / brtul zhugs kyi spyad pa spyod tshul yang bshad pas gsang sngags dang sbrel na sbrel du rung bar brgyud pa rin po che ’dis bzhed do /*.

Sgam po pa's threefold division into a path of inference (Pāramitāyāna), a path of blessing (Mantrayāna), and a path of direct perception is based on such an analysis.<sup>55</sup> Bkra shis chos 'phel further elaborates that the impure ground is either abandoned (Pāramitāyāna), transformed (Mantrayāna), or else its true nature realised as it is (Mahāmudrā):

The path of knowing the ground is mahāmudrā. There is nothing to abandon, no remedy, nothing to transform, and no process of transformation. Everything is a magical display of mind. One becomes a Buddha by recognizing, seeing and becoming familiar with the fact that mind itself, which has never arisen, is the naturally present dharmakāya.... Those with sharp faculties and insight penetrate reality: this is mahāmudrā. Taught in this way, [mahāmudrā] can be taken as a short path that is different from both Sūtra and Mantra[yāna].<sup>56</sup>

Still, mahāmudrā can be combined with either sūtra or tantra paths, and thus become something that can be practised by many: it is obvious that later holders of practice lineages combined [mahāmudrā], according to circumstances ...

with many Sūtra and Mantra[yāna] practices. Even though it has thus been turned into the profound path of ordinary Sūtra and Mantra[yāna], [the

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<sup>55</sup> For a discussion of this division, see Mathes 2008: 40–41.

<sup>56</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 9b6–10a3: *gzhi shes pa'i lam ni phyag rgya chen po ste / spang bya med gnyen po med bsgyur du med sgyur byed med de / thams cad sems kyi chos 'phrul yin la / sems nyid gdod ma nas skye ba med pa'i don chos sku rang chas su yod pa ngo shes mthong ba goms par byed pas sangs rgyas pa'o / ... dbang rnon shes rab can de kho na nyid la 'jug pa ni phyag rgya chen po'o // zhes gsungs pas mdo sngags gnyis ka las logs su gyur pa'i gseng lam zhig yin par bzhed cing /.*

latter two] are needed by many, whether of superior or inferior mind. This is not a contradiction.<sup>57</sup>

In other words, mahāmudrā taken on its own is a path only for those with sharp faculties, but when combined with either sūtras or tantras, it can become a helpful practice for many. The way in which it is harmonised with the sūtras has been indicated above: on the level of the ground it is equated with the Buddha-nature or *dharmatā* of all phenomena, while on the path mahāmudrā is linked with the practice of calm abiding (*śamatha*) and deep insight (*vipāśyanā*). I have already shown elsewhere that this has a clear Indian precedent in the *Tattvadaśakaṭīkā*, in which Sahajavajra claims that one gains a mahāmudrā experience of emptiness as luminosity through a particular practice of *śamatha* and *vipāśyanā*, which starts with cultivating direct perceptions right from the beginning. Maitrīpa and his disciple Sahajavajra thus propagate a direct approach to reality that is in accordance with Vajrayāna, but driven largely by pith instructions in a more general Mahāyāna context. Jñānakīrti for his part claims in his *Tattvāvatāra* that someone with sharp faculties will certainly be endowed with mahāmudrā as a result of practising the meditations of calm abiding and special insight within the Pāramitāyāna.<sup>58</sup> He has to admit, though, that it takes three immeasurable æons to reach Buddhahood in the Pāramitāyāna,<sup>59</sup> but if one is in possession of mahāmudrā realisation at an initial stage, this does not really matter.

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<sup>57</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 10a4–6: *phyis kyi sgrub brgyud pa dag gis ... ci rigs su mdo sngags kyi nyams len mang po sbyar bar snang bas / de ltar na mdo sngags thun mong ba'i zab lam du byas kyang blo mchog dman mang po la mkho zhing 'gal ba med pa yin no /*.

<sup>58</sup> See Mathes 2006: 209–24.

<sup>59</sup> TA, fol. 321b2–4: “As to the second [group] (i.e. Pāramitāyāna adepts), they, having truly perfected [their] activities of generosity and so forth, to the point of [now] being free from mental fabrication ... will attain Buddhahood within three immeasurable

The combination of mahāmudrā with tantra is possible in the eyes of Bkra shis chos 'phel because its natural presence shines through all practices of the lower mudrās, or more precisely, it is mahāmudrā that impresses the seal of emptiness and co-emergent bliss on the other mudrās. In support of this assertion, Bkra shis chos 'phel refers to Rāmapāla's commentary on Maitrīpa's *Sekanirdeśa*, stanza 26:

Given that it impresses its seal on the three mudrās, [mahāmudrā] is both great and a seal. It is not reached by analysis, and its nature is not to abide [anywhere]. [By] an attentive and continuous practice [mahāmudrā] directly manifests the wisdom of a path....<sup>60</sup>

To sum up Bkra shis chos 'phel's valuable presentation, mahāmudrā on its own, or essence mahāmudrā, is a direct, fast path, independent of the sūtras and tantras. It can be combined with the latter two, the result being what Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas calls *sūtra-mahāmudrā* and *mantra-mahāmudrā*.<sup>61</sup>

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æons.” (*gnyis pa ni / spros pa med par sbyin pa la sogs pa'i bya ba mngon par rdzogs pas ... bskal pa grangs med pa gsum gyis sangs rgyas nyid rdzogs par byed pa yin no*).

<sup>60</sup> *Rgya gzhung dkar chag*, fol. 8b2: *phyag rgya gsum la rgyas gdab pa'i phyir / 'di chen po yang yin la phyag rgya yang yin te / dpyod pas ma 'ongs pa mi gnas pa'i ngo bo nyid / lam gyi ye shes gus pa dang bcas shing rgyun mi chad par goms par byas pa[s] mngon du byas pa...*

The corresponding passage in the *Sekanirdeśapañjikā* (SNP<sub>(P)</sub>, fol. 14b1–2 (missing in SNP<sub>(C)</sub>) differs slightly: “Given that it impresses its seal on the three mudrās, [mahāmudrā] is both great and a seal. By an attentive and continuous practice [mahāmudrā] directly manifests the wisdom of a path, which is reached by analysis and characterised by non-abiding.” (*tato mudrātrayamudraṇāt / mahatī cāsau mudrā ceti / vicārāgatāpratiṣṭhānarūpamārgajñānasya sādaranirantarābhyāsenā sāksātkārā ....*)

<sup>61</sup> Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Shes bya kun khyab mdzod*, vol. no. 3, pp. 375f.

### 3 Mahāmudrā in the works of Maitrīpa and his disciples

Maitrīpa contributed considerably to integrating the new teachings and practices of the *mahāsiddhas* into mainstream Buddhism by showing that the latter are in line with the view, conduct, and practice of traditional Mahāyāna.<sup>62</sup> In doing so, Maitrīpa explains tantric terms in a more general Mahāyāna context, thus demonstrating that their meaning was already latent in more traditional forms of Buddhism. At the same time, Maitrīpa attempts to read the meaning of some crucial technical terms of the sūtras, such as *amanasikāra*, into the tantras. The beginning of this process can be already noticed in the songs (*dohās*) of Saraha, and in Saraha’s (or Śavarīpa’s)<sup>63</sup> *Dohākośanāmahāmudropadeśa*, for example, Saraha even uses the term mahāmudrā in a more general Mahāyāna context. It stands for the true nature of mind,<sup>64</sup> or the practice of not becoming mentally engaged.<sup>65</sup> To be sure, the other mudrās are not even mentioned in this *dohā*. But before we investigate such sūtra-based interpretations of mahāmudrā, we shall have a look at it in its tantric context among the four mudrās.

#### 3.1 Mahāmudrā in the tantric context of the four moments and the four mudrās

In his *Sekanirdeśa* Maitrīpa presents tantric empowerment on the basis of the four moments (i.e. the moments of enjoying manifold appearances, maturation,

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<sup>62</sup> This finds expression in the *Tattvaratnāvalī*, where Maitrīpa divides Mahāyāna into the traditions of pāramitās and mantras, tantra thus being a particular form of Mahāyāna (see Mathes 2007: 548).

<sup>63</sup> The attribution is uncertain.

<sup>64</sup> DKMU, fol. 74b6–75a1: “Watch your own [mind] without distraction! When you realise the true nature of your own [mind] by yourself, even the distracted mind appears as *mahāmudrā*.” (*ma yengs sems kyis rang gis rang la ltos // rang gi de nyid rang gis rtogs gyur na // yengs pa’i sems kyang phyag rgya chen por ’char ḥ*)

<sup>65</sup> DKMU, fol. 75b5–6: “In *mahāmudrā*, [i.e. the practice of] not becoming mentally engaged, one does not meditate because there is not the slightest reason to do so” (*yd la mi byed phyag rgya chen po la / bsgom rgyu rdul tsam med pas mi sgom ste ḥ*).

freedom from defining characteristics, and relaxation), which correspond to the four joys (i.e. joy, supreme joy, co-emergent joy, and [the joy of] no joy) and the four mudrās (*karma-*, *dharmā-*, *mahā-*, and *samayamudrā*). Maitrīpa's understanding of the four moments and four joys during empowerment can best be seen from his *Caturmudropadeśa*:

- (1) Starting from exterior activities [such as embracing and kissing] up to the final arousing is the joy related to [the moment of] the manifold.
- (2) The experience [from that point] up until [the drop of bodhicitta] has reached the tip of the jewel is [the moment of] maturation. It is supreme joy.
- (3) The illustrious one taught [in *Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*, X.3b]: “Holding the drop of sixteen halved twice.”<sup>66</sup> Two [parts] of what is thus present in the form of a four[fold] drop at the tip of the jewel and two [parts] in the middle of the lotus [correspond to the moment of] freedom from defining characteristics, [related to] co-emergent joy.
- (4) When all four [parts of the] drop are inside the lotus, [it is the moment of] relaxation, [the joy of] no joy.<sup>67</sup>

In *Sekanirdeśa*, stanza 38, the four moments (and thus the four joys) are linked to the four mudrās, with the moment of enjoying manifold appearances (in this context, the sight of a beautiful woman) being related to

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<sup>66</sup> MNS, p. 107: *ṣoḍaśārdhārdhabindudhṛk* /.

<sup>67</sup> CMU, fol. 11b6–12a2: *phyi rol gyi bya ba nas bskyod pa'i mthar thug pa'i bar ni rnam pa sna tshogs pa'i dga' ba'o / rin po che'i mthar thug par nyams su myong ba ni rnam par smin pa ste / mchog dga'o / bcom ldan 'das kyis / bcu drug phyed phyed thig le 'chang [text: can] // zhes bya bas / thig le bzhi'i gzugs kyis bzhugs pa las / gnyis ni rdo rje rtse mo'i cha la gnas / gnyis ni padma'i ze'u 'bru'i cha la gnas pa ni mtshan nyid dang bral ba ste / lhan cig skyes dga'o / thig le bzhi char padma'i cha la gnas pa ni rnam pa med pa ste / dga' bral lo /.*

the *karma-mudrā*,<sup>68</sup> the moment of maturation to *dharmamudrā*, the moment of freedom from defining characteristics to *mahāmudrā*, and the moment of relaxation to *samayamudrā*.<sup>69</sup> Maitrīpa goes on to explain the four moments and joys on the level of each mudrā, except *mahāmudrā*. Thus the four joys are first enjoyed physically with the help of a *karmamudrā*, and then on the level of *dharmamudrā*, based on the realisation that the sights and sounds of the manifold world are one’s own mind and so forth. Further, in the *Caturmudrānvaya*, *dharmamudrā* is taken as the nature of the *dharmadhātu*, namely freedom from mental fabrication and similar attributes.<sup>70</sup> In other words, the wisdom generated with the help of a *prajñā*, or *karmamudrā*, leads to the actual wisdom of realising emptiness, and this in turn to the realisation of *mahāmudrā*. The four joys of the *samayamudrā* are then explained in relation to one’s display of the *rūpakāya*s for the sake of others. This sequence of the mudrās is clearly expressed in *Sekanirdeśa*, stanza 26:

Having approached a *karmamudrā*, one should meditate on the  
*dharmamudrā*.

Hereafter [follows] *mahāmudrā*, from which the *samaya*[*mudrā*] arises.  
(SN 26)<sup>71</sup>

In his commentary, Rāmapāla introduces this stanza as a presentation of cause and effect, and a little further on he clearly states that each mudrā is a

<sup>68</sup> In the commentary on the *Caturmudrānvaya* (CMAṬ, fol. 267a1) *karmamudrā* is defined in the following way: “*Karma-* is bliss, and *mudrā* the recognition [of this bliss], the very moment [it appears]” (*las ni bde ba ste // phyag rgya ni dus kyi sna rtse tshad du ’dzin pa*).

<sup>69</sup> SN, p. 60, ll. 3–4: *vicitraṃ karmamudraiva dharmamudrā vipākajā / vilakṣaṇaṃ mahāmudrā vimardaḥ samayo bhavet //*.

<sup>70</sup> CMA<sub>s</sub>, p. 100, l. 1: *oṃ dharmamudrā / dharmadhātusvarūpā niṣprapañcā...*

<sup>71</sup> SN, p. 36, ll. 5–6: *karmamudrāṃ samāsādyā dharmamudrāṃ vibhāvayet / tasyā ūrdhvaṃ mahāmudrā yasyāḥ samayasambhavaḥ //*.



cause of the following one.<sup>72</sup> This leads to the question of how something artificially created, such as the physical experience of the four joys (i.e. the wisdom arisen from a *karmamudrā*), can initiate a process that leads to Buddhahood (*mahāmudrā*). As mentioned earlier, Rāmapāla explains that *mahāmudrā* impresses its seal on the other mudrās, which means that the wisdom that arises from a *karmamudrā* or *prajñā* (i.e. the *prajñājñāna*) is only a reflection or image of the real wisdom. This is also clear from Nāgārjuna's *Caturmudrānvaya* and the commentary on it by Bhitakarman:

All that [appears as] co-emergent is called “co-emergent” because it is an imitation of the image of the [real] co-emergent. [This] image of the co-emergent causes the experience of a type of wisdom that is similar to the co-emergent. The co-emergent is [only] in this [limited] sense the wisdom based on a *prajñā*. Therefore, there is no arising of the [real] co-emergent in/from the wisdom based on a *prajñā*.<sup>73</sup>

The *Caturmudrānvayaṭīkā* on this passage is as follows:

[This is] because one can reveal the real co-emergent, which is like the moon in the sky, by understanding the image[-like] exemplifying the co-

<sup>72</sup> SNP<sub>S(C)</sub>, fol. 16b1; SNP<sub>S(P)</sub>, fol. 14a2: “Now he teaches a presentation of cause and effect, [i.e. the stanza] starting with *karmamudrā*” (*idānīm hetuphalavyavasthānam āha / karmamudrām ityādi* /).

SNP<sub>S(P)</sub>, fol. 14b7–8 (missing in SPN<sub>S(C)</sub>): “Here each preceding mudrā is a cause, and each subsequent one an effect” (*tatra mudrāṇām pūrvapūrvāpekṣayā hetutvaṃ / uttarottarāpekṣayā ca phalatvaṃ* //).

<sup>73</sup> CMA<sub>S</sub>, p. 94, ll. 10–13: *sahajam taḥ sarvaṃ sahajacchāyānukāritvāt sahajam ity abhidhiyate / sahajacchāyā sahasadṛśam jñānam pratipādayatīti sahajam prajñājñānam / ata eva prajñājñāne<sup>b</sup> sahasyotpattir nāsti* /. <sup>a</sup> The manuscript (NGMPP, B 22/24, fol. 20a2) reads *sat*. But the Tibetan (CMA<sub>T</sub>, fol. 151b6) has *de*. <sup>b</sup> CMA<sub>T</sub>, fol. 152a2: ... *shes rab ye shes las* ....

emergent, which is like the reflection of the moon in the water. What is the reason for presenting the exemplifying wisdom of a *karmamudrā* as an image? What is [here] called the image of the co-emergent is a *prajñā*. *Prajñā* [here] means *karmamudrā*. The wisdom arisen from it has arisen from other conditions; it is close to the razor of attachment and fabricated for a purpose, and it has come about because of an actual woman... The co-emergent wisdom laid bare by the wisdom based on a *prajñā* is without arising.<sup>74</sup>

For Maitrīpa, the *prajñājñāna* of the third empowerment is under all circumstances only an exemplifying wisdom, and Devacandra warns us in his *Prajñājñānaprakāśa* that the related practice of *karmamudrā* must go together with *mahāmudrā*.<sup>75</sup> On the other hand Devacandra insists:

[One] never attains the nature of great bliss, for without sexual union one does not realise [reality] in its manifestation of bliss.... Cultivating wisdom [that was based on] a *karmamudrā* and so forth, one becomes a perfect

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<sup>74</sup> CMAṬ, fol. 271b1–5: *de’ang grib ma’i dpe’i lhan cig skyes pa chu’i zla ba lta bu* (text: *bur*) *khong du chud pas / don gyi lhan cig skyes pa nam mkha’i zla ba lta bu mtshon par nus pa’i phyir // de’ang dpe las kyi phyag rgya’i ye shes la grib mar bzhag pa’i rgyu mtshan gang zhe na / de bas na lhan cig skyes pa grib mar smra ba ni shes rab bo / zhes bya bar bstan te / shes rab ni las kyi phyag rgya ste / de las skyes pa’i ye shes ni rkyen gzhan las skyes pa dang / ’dod chags kyi spu gri dang khad nye ba dang / ched du bcos pa yin pa dang / mi’i bu mo las byung ... shes rab ye shes kyi bstan pa’i lhan cig skyes pa’i ye shes ni skye ba med pa nyid do /*

<sup>75</sup> With reference to SN 39 (SN, p. 60, ll. 5–6): “Yogins who do not know *mahāmudrā* and have *karmamudrā* as their only means (i.e. practice) are deprived of the transmitted reality and go to the Raurava hell.” (*mahāmudrām ajānānāḥ karmamudraikasādhanāḥ / āmnāyatattvato bhraṣṭā rauravaṃ yānti yoginaḥ //*).

Buddha through the very nature of bliss. However by merely abandoning all thought, one never experiences even the slightest form of bliss.<sup>76</sup>

Based on the stanza from the *Sekanirdeśa* that links mahāmudrā to the *amanasikāra* practice of the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* (i.e. SN 36: “One who does not abide in the domain of the remedy, who is not attached to reality, and who does not desire the fruit finds mahāmudrā”), Devacandra encourages us:

The five sense pleasures must be enjoyed without hesitation. Therefore, by keeping in mind that defilements are naturally pure, you will no longer fear being caught up in defilements.<sup>77</sup>

Further on, in the context of distinguishing the causal vehicle of pāramitās from the Vajrayāna of fruition, Devacandra claims:

When one is on the Pāramitā[yāna], which does not provide for the experience of the four joys and the four moments—namely the manifold and the rest—the moment of the freedom from defining characteristics does not become directly manifest. Therefore, one cannot know the essence of the co-emergent and actualise great enlightenment.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> PJP, fol. 170a5–b3: ... *nam yang bde ba chen po'i ngo bo nyid 'grub pa ma yin te / dbang po gnyis snyoms par 'jug pa med par bde ba'i rnam pa can nyid mi rtogs pa'i phyir te / ... las kyi phyag rgya la sogs pa'i ye shes bsgoms pas bde ba chen po'i ngo bo nyid kyis yang dag par rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas 'grub par 'gyur gyi / rtog pa thams cad spangs nas ni bde ba cung zad tsam yang nyams su myong ba ma yin te /*

<sup>77</sup> PJP, fol. 170b5–6: ... *'dod pa'i yon tan lnga la dog pa med par bsten par bya ste / des na nyon mongs pa'ang ngo bo nyid kyis yongs su dag pa'o snyam du sems pas nyon mongs pas 'ching ba'i 'jigs pa med do /*

<sup>78</sup> PJP, fol. 173a4–5: *de bzhin du pha rol tu phyin pas kyang gang dag rnam pa sna tshogs pa la sogs pa'i skad cig ma bzhi dang ldan pa'i dga' ba bzhi nyams su myong ba dang bral ba'i phyir mtshan nyid dang bral ba'i skad cig ma mngon du ma gyur pas*

It has become clear that mahāmudrā retains its special position even in the context of the four mudrās. The co-emergent wisdom gained through a *karmamudrā* remains an exemplifying wisdom whose blissful states only help to reveal the unfabricated real wisdom of mahāmudrā. Still, in the eyes of Devacandra mahāmudrā cannot be actualised without the skillful means of bliss gained from the union with a *karmamudrā*.

### 3.2 Mahāmudrā in the context of the sūtras

The *Sekanirdeśa* plays a central role among the *amanasikāra* works, for mahāmudrā is not only presented in the tantric context of the four mudrās, but also equated with the Madhyamaka view of non-abiding and its practice of not becoming mentally engaged. In the introduction to his *Sekanirdeśapañjikā*, Rāmapāla claims that the *Sekanirdeśa* was composed in accordance with the *Caturmudrānvaya* of (the tantric) Nāgārjuna.<sup>79</sup> It goes without saying that tradition does not distinguish between the tantric Nāgārjuna and the famous author of the *Mūlamadhyamakakārikās*, and it is not a mere coincidence that Maitrīpa considers his own Madhyamaka view and practice to be in line with those of Nāgārjuna, the philosopher. This is clear from the final stanzas of the *Tattvaprakāśa* (*Yid la mi byed skor*, no. 17), in which Maitrīpa claims that the mahāmudrā or *amanasikāra* practice of the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* (as indicated in TP 13ab) and the view of non-abiding (in TP 14a, the non-arising of phenomena) were maintained by Nāgārjuna:<sup>80</sup>

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*lhan cig skyes pa'i ngo bo nyid ma shes par mngon par byang chub chen po mngon sum du byed par mi nus kyi /.*

<sup>79</sup> SNP<sub>(C)</sub>, fol. 1b3–4; SNP<sub>(P)</sub>, fol. 1b4: ... *āryanāgārjunapādakṛtacaturmudrānvayānugataṃ sekanirdeśaṃ kartukāmaḥ* ...

<sup>80</sup> See SN 36 (SN, p. 58, ll. 12–13): “One who does not abide in the domain of the remedy, who is not attached to reality, and who does even not desire the fruit, finds mahāmudrā” (*pratīpakṣe sthīto naiva tattvāsakto 'pi naiva yaḥ / gārdhayaṃ naiva phale yasya mahāmudrāṃ sa vindati //*). This stanza is quoted in the *Tattvadaśakaṭikā* on *pādas* 7cd, which are taken by Sahajavajra as Maitrīpa’s answer to the following

For whom there is no attachment to the fruit, reality, or remedy—  
 For this one Buddhahood is completed by a practice that is effortless.<sup>81</sup> (TP  
 13)

The reality of phenomena is [their] non-arising. This is in accordance with  
 the Dharma of the Buddha  
 And maintained by the noble Nāgārjuna who was prophesied by the  
 Tathāgata.<sup>82</sup> (TP 14)

In the eyes of Maitrīpa, it was in fact Nāgārjuna himself who combined  
 Madhyamaka philosophy with the *dohā* teachings of his guru Saraha. From this  
 it would follow that mahāmudrā is not limited to being combined with tantras  
 (and experienced in the context of the four mudrās), but can also be approached  
 through the Madhyamaka view and practice of non-abiding and not becoming  
 mentally engaged.

Returning to SN 26, it is nowhere claimed that the practice of *karma-*  
*mudrā* is an absolute necessity for the realisation of mahāmudrā. This is

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objection: Even to define reality as in the first part of the *Tattvadaśaka* is flawed in that  
 the definition retains the *nimittas* of an interpretative idea of reality, in the same way as  
 the meditation described above in which reality is realised as it is (*yathābhūtasamādhī*)  
 is accompanied by the *nimittas* of an interpretative idea of the remedy. Such *nimittas*  
 must be abandoned by not becoming mentally engaged, as set forth in the *Nirvikalpa-*  
*praveśadhāraṇī*. In TD 7cd Maitrīpa explains that nothing, not even the *nimittas* of  
 duality and the like, is really abandoned; rather, everything is simply realised as natural  
 luminosity, as intimated in the stanza above from the *Sekanirdeśa*. From this it is clear  
 that Sahajavajra sees a *mahāmudrā* practice in the abandoning of *nimittas* in the  
*Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* (see Mathes 2005:11–16).

<sup>81</sup> TP, p. 76, ll. 5–6: *phalatattvavipakṣeṣu yasya saṅgo na vidyate / tasyānābhogayogena  
 bauddhaṃ niṣpadyate padam //*

<sup>82</sup> TP, p. 76, ll. 7–8: *āryanāgārjunair iṣṭaṃ buddhadharmānusārataḥ / dharmatattvam  
 anuṭpādo vyākṛtaiḥ<sup>a</sup> te tathāgataiḥ //*

<sup>a</sup> The Japanese edition and the manuscript (fol. 30b3) have: *vyākṛtas*.

corroborated by the *Tattvavimśikā*, in which Maitrīpa distinguishes different types of skillful means for those with inferior, average, and sharp faculties. While inferior practitioners rely on a *karmamudrā*,<sup>83</sup> a direct approach to mahāmudrā is open for those with sharp faculties:

The yogin who has seen reality, however, is wholly devoted to mahāmudrā; His faculties being unsurpassable, he abides with [the realisation of the] nature of all entities.<sup>84</sup> (TV 11)

As mentioned above, this is even possible in Pāramitāyāna (as explained in the *Tattvāvatāra*), while Sahajavajra claims in his *Tattvadaśakaṭikā* that reality is directly experienced as luminosity on the basis of a *vipāśyanā* practice performed with direct perception right from the beginning. In support of this claim, Sahajavajra quotes Maitrīpa’s *Mahāyānavimśikā*, stanza 12:

[The quintessence] to be realised in the thousand collections of teachings is emptiness.

[Emptiness] is not realised on the basis of analysis; [rather] the meaning of destruction (i.e. emptiness) [is attained] from the guru.<sup>85</sup> (MV 12)

<sup>83</sup> See TV 7 (TV, p. 68, ll. 5–6): “Those with inferior capacities have perfectly cultivated the circle (i.e. the maṇḍala etc.) with the help of the *karma*- and *samayamudrā*s. Having [thus] turned away from [directly engaging in] pure reality, they meditate on enlightenment.” (*karmasamayamudrābhyāṃ cakram niṣpādyā bhāvītāḥ / dhyāyanti mṛdavo bodhiṃ śuddhatattvabāhirmukhāḥ //*).

<sup>84</sup> TV, p. 70, ll. 1–2: *drṣṭatattvaḥ punar yogī mahāmudrāparāyaṇaḥ / sarvabhāvasva- bhāvena vihared uttamendriyaḥ //*

<sup>85</sup> MV<sub>S</sub>, p. 76, ll. 11–12: *dharmaskandhasahasreṣu budhyatāṃ<sup>a</sup> nāma śūnyatā<sup>b</sup> / bu<sup>c</sup> ddhā nāsau parāmarśād vināśārthaṃ bhaved guroḥ //*

<sup>a</sup> The manuscript (fol. 34b5) and the Japanese edition read *badhyatāṃ*, which does not make sense. The Dpal spungs edition (MV<sub>T(PP)</sub>, fol. 250a1–2) has: *rtogs pa*; and the manuscript from ‘Bri gung (MV<sub>T(DK)</sub>, fol. 28b5): *sangs rgyas*.

With reference to *Sekanirdēśa*, stanza 36 (“One who does not abide in the domain of the remedy ... finds mahāmudrā”), Sahajavajra explains that mahāmudrā instructions are fully in line with the practice of *amanasikāra* described in the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*, because the reality (the luminous nature) of the *nimittas* of the remedy and the others is not abandoned. In other words, to abandon the *nimittas* means to realise their luminous nature. It is of interest that the *Tattvadaśakaṭikā* further elaborates this practice on the basis of the *Samādhirājasūtra* (which is of course not a tantra).<sup>86</sup> Later in his commentary, Sahajavajra distinguishes this mahāmudrā approach from both Mantrayāna and Pāramitāyāna,<sup>87</sup> while in the introduction to his commentary we are informed that he wishes to summarise the pāramitā pith instructions that are in accordance with the secret Mantrayāna. Based on this, ’Gos Lo tsā ba in his *Blue Annals* says of Sahajavajra’s *Tattvadaśakaṭikā*:

In essence it is the pāramitās; it accords with the Mantra[yāna]; and its name is mahāmudrā.<sup>88</sup>

This sentence has become the standard definition of sūtra mahāmudrā. It raises an interesting question: What exactly does “it accords with the Mantrayāna” mean? In fact, Maitrīpa uses this expression himself in the introduction to his *Mahāyānaviṃśikā*. The first two stanzas of this short treatise on Mahāyāna define the goal as the “original or natural *kāya*” (*nijakāya*), which is the nature of the three *kāyas* (and sometimes equated with the *svābhāvikakāya*). Then in the third stanza Maitrīpa declares:

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<sup>b</sup> The manuscript (fol. 34b5) has *sūnyatāḥ*.

<sup>c</sup> According to the manuscript (fol. 34b5); the Japanese edition has *ba-*.

<sup>86</sup> For a translation of the relevant passage from the *Tattvadaśakaṭikā*, see Mathes 2005: 24–27.

<sup>87</sup> See Mathes 2006: 220–222.

<sup>88</sup> See Roerich 1949–53: 725.

The seeing of this [*nijakāya*] is deep insight (*vipāśyanā*), given that no[thing] is reified.

This will be explained now in accordance with Mantrayāna.<sup>89</sup> (MV 3)

“Not to reify” is here to be taken as Maitrīpa’s particular Madhyamaka view of not abiding in any ontological or other extreme, which is achieved through the practice of not becoming mentally engaged (*amanasikāra*). In other words, *vipāśyanā* is performed here with the help of direct cognition, which puts it on a par with tantric practice. Apart from this nothing tantric is to be found in the whole of the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā*. Thus in the present context, “in accordance with Mantrayāna” means “on a par with tantra,” in that a special *vipāśyanā* practice enables direct realisation of the fruit of the path; it means that it is a path of fruition in the same sense as Mantrayāna is such a path of fruition.<sup>90</sup>

While the *vipāśyanā* practice of directly seeing true nature is said in the *Mahāyānaviṃśikā* to be in accordance with Mantrayāna, in *Sekanirdeśa* 29ab the related view of non-abiding is called mahāmudrā:

Not to abide (*apratīṣṭhāna*) in anything is known as mahāmudrā.<sup>91</sup> (SN 29ab)

Rāmapāla comments in his *Sekanirdeśapañjikā*:

“In anything” means in the dependently arisen *skandhas*, *dhātus*, *āyatanas*, and so forth. “Not to abide” means not to reify, not to become mentally engaged (*amanasikāra*).<sup>92</sup>

<sup>89</sup> MV<sub>S</sub>, p. 74, ll. 5–6: *darśanaṃ ca bhaved asya anāropād vipāśyanā / mantrayānānu-sāreṇa tad idaṃ vakṣyate ’dhunā //*.

<sup>90</sup> It should be noted that Mantrayāna is not taken here as a *yāna* separate from Mahāyāna. In his *Tattvaratnāvalī*, Maitrīpa thus divides Mahāyāna into the tradition of *pāramitās* and the tradition of mantras (see Mathes 2007: 548).

<sup>91</sup> SN, p. 56, l. 11: *sarvasminn apratīṣṭhānaṃ mahāmudreti kīrtyate /*.



SN 29ab marks the beginning of eight stanzas on mahāmudrā, which can be thought of solely in terms of co-emergent joy.<sup>93</sup> This is also clear from the following stanza in the *Sekanirdeśa*:

The [four] joys can be [explained] with regard to each of the mudrās except mahāmudrā.

This [can be known] through the scriptures, [one’s] self-awareness, and the pith instructions of the genuine guru.<sup>94</sup> (SN 27)

Only the third moment (freedom from defining characteristics) and the corresponding co-emergent joy are considered to be pure, mahāmudrā being beyond and thus independent of the impurities of the other joys.<sup>95</sup> It could consequently be argued that mahāmudrā can be realised without the four joys experienced during the practice with a *karmamudrā*. This is suggested in, among other sources, Rāmapāla’s commentary on SN 29:

One should not think that [this *amanasikāra* as taught in the *Jñānālamkāraloka*]<sup>96</sup> cannot be practised, for by the kindness of [one’s]

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<sup>92</sup> SNP<sub>S(C)</sub>, fol. 18a4; SNP<sub>S(P)</sub>, fol. 15b6–7: *sarvasmīn itī pratīyasamutpanna-skandhadhātāvāyatanādau / apratiṣṭhānam amanasikāro ’nāropah /*

The Tibetan (SPN<sub>T(PP)</sub>, fol. 334b4) reads: “... not to reify by not becoming mentally engaged” (... *yiḍ la byed pa med pas sgro gdags pa med pa’o ḷ*).

<sup>93</sup> See Rāmapāla’s *pañjikā* (SNP<sub>S(C)</sub>, fol. 18a3; SNP<sub>S(P)</sub>, fol. 15b5: *sahajānandaika-svabhāvāṃ mānasīṃ mahāmudrām āha ḷ*).

<sup>94</sup> SN, p. 36, ll. 7–8: *ānandāḥ pratimudraṃ syuḥ mahāmudrāṃ vinā punaḥ / āgamāc ca svasaṃvitteḥ sadguror upadeśataḥ //*

<sup>95</sup> GPKU, fol. 319a5–6: “Such a *mahāmudrā* is the fruit without stains.... It is the co-emergent joy at the moment of [attaining] freedom from defining characteristics” (*de lta bu’i phyag rgya chen po ni dri ma dang bral ba’i ‘bras bu’o / ... mtshan nyid dang bral ba’i skad cig ma la lhan cig skyes pa’i dga’ ba’o ḷ*).

<sup>96</sup> In the preceding part of the commentary, Rāmapāla refers to the relevant passages from the *Jñānālokālamkāra* (see Mathes 2007: 555).

venerable guru, mahāmudrā, which has the defining characteristic of being endowed with all supreme qualities, can certainly be made directly manifest. How is it then that [mahāmudrā] does not have the nature of the four moments? [In 29c] it is stated: “Because self-awareness [i.e. mahāmudrā] is stainless....” As it is stainless, the three [impure] moments of the manifold and the others, along with [their] stains, do not occur in it. Therefore the three [impure] joys do not arise in it either.<sup>97</sup>

In other words, the mahāmudrā practice of non-abiding, which involves not becoming mentally engaged, is not only described in a sūtra, namely the *Jñānālokālaṅkāra*, but can also be done, by the kindness of one’s guru, without the occurrence of the defiled joys and moments of tantric practice. The remaining seven stanzas of the mahāmudrā section (SN 30–36) are purely Madhyamaka, the last of them confirming again that the *amanasikāra* practice of the *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī* is mahāmudrā, as we have seen above. The ability to realise emptiness directly is gained here through the kindness of the guru. This is clear from *Sekanirdeśa*, stanza 31, and Rāmapāla’s commentary on this stanza:

Those who see suchness in accordance with Madhyamaka  
Are fortunate, in that they realise reality, provided that it is by direct  
awareness. (SN 31)<sup>98</sup>

<sup>97</sup> SNP<sub>(C)</sub>, fol. 18b1–3; SNP<sub>(P)</sub>, fol. 15b9–16a3: *aśakyānuṣṭhānatā ca na mantavyā / sadgurupādaprasādenāvaśyaṃ sarvākāravāropetalakṣaṇamahāmudrāyāḥ pratyakṣikartuṃ śakyatvāt / nanv atra kathaṃ na catuḥkṣaṇarūpatā / āha / vimalatvāt svasaṃvīter / nirmalatayā vicitrādeḥ kṣaṇatrayasya samalasya nātra sambhavaḥ / tato nānandatraya-sambhavaḥ /*

<sup>98</sup> SN, p. 58, ll. 3–4: *tathatāṃ ye tu paśyanti madhyamārthānusārataḥ / te vai tattvavido dhanyāḥ pratyakṣaṃ yadi saṃvidāḥ //*

<sup>a</sup> The Japanese edition has *saṃvidāḥ*.

Rāmapāla explains:

If, as a result of the abandoning of the entire “conceptual” (lit. “carving”),<sup>99</sup> this reality was to be experienced directly<sup>100</sup>—and this [reality] consists of the two truths, is free from the two extremes, is undivided from emptiness and compassion, and has the nature of insight and means—[then] it should be known through an awareness [which is obtained through] the kindness of a genuine guru.<sup>101</sup>

Here we have, in fact, an Indian precedent for what is well known as “pointing-out instruction” (Tib. *ngo sprod kyi man ngag*) on the true nature in Tibetan approaches to mahāmudrā.

To sum up, mahāmudrā or the reality of Madhyamaka can be realised through the tantric practice of mahāmudrā in the context of the four mudrās and also by merely relying on the kindness of one’s guru. That this latter approach does not need to be specifically tantric is clear from Saraha’s *Dohākośagīti* and Maitrīpa’s commentary on it:

[Saraha said:] “The own-being of the natural [state can]not be described by others.” (158)

[Maitrīpa explains:] The own-being of the natural [state], which has the nature of self-arisen [wisdom], [can]not be described by others, such as the

<sup>99</sup> The Tibetan has “thought” (*rnam rtog*).

<sup>100</sup> According the Tibetan: “He who has completely abandoned all thoughts, directly experiences reality.”

<sup>101</sup> SNP<sub>S(P)</sub>, fol. 16b1–3 (missing in SNP<sub>S(C)</sub>): *yady aśeṣollekhaparihārāt tat tattvaṃ pratyakṣam anubhūtaṃ syāt / etac caivaṃvidhaṃ satyadvayātmakam ubhayāntarahitaṃ<sup>a</sup> sūnyatākaruṇābhinnam prajñopāyasvarūpaṃ / sadgurupādaprasādavitter jñeyam /*

<sup>a</sup> Emended (SNP<sub>S(P)</sub>): *ubhayo tu rakitaṃ*).

See also SNP<sub>T(DK)</sub>, fol. 212b3: ... *bla ma dam pa'i zhal gyi drin gyis rig par shes par bya'o /*

Tīrthikas. In order to address [the question] “Then by which genuine guru...?,” [Saraha] said: “[The natural state] is seen through [the eyes of] the guru’s pith instructions [and through] nothing else.” (159) I have seen through Saraha, that is, [through] the pith-instructions of the genuine guru, based [on the teachings] of the Sugata, and through nothing else. [The natural state] is realised through the eyes of the guru’s pith instructions.<sup>102</sup>

Two verses later in the *Dohākośagīti*, Saraha tells us how the realisation of the guru can enter one’s heart even in the absence of formal tantric practice:

When the natural mind has been purified,  
The [enlightened] quality of the guru will enter one’s heart.  
Realising this, Saraha sings this song  
Though he has not seen a single tantra, a single mantra.<sup>103</sup> (162–165)

#### 4 Conclusion

It can be shown that the practice described in the Indian mahāmudrā works does not need to be tantric. In Saraha’s *dohās* it is simply the realisation of mind’s co-emergent nature with the help of a genuine guru. Maitrīpa uses the term mahāmudrā for precisely such an approach, thus employing an originally

<sup>102</sup> DKGP, p. 79, ll. 6–12: *ṇia-sahāba ṇāi kahiū (b)añē // iti nijasvabhāvaṃ svayambhūsvarūpaṃ nānyena kathitaṃ tīrthikādinā / tadā kena sadguruṇety āha / dīśai guru-uaesē na añē // iti mayā sarahaṇa dṛṣṭaṃ sadgurūpadeśena saugatāśrayeṇa nānye(text:ya)neti / gurūpadeśacakṣuṣāvagataṃ /*

<sup>a</sup> The text reads *añē*, which is also supported by Maitrīpa’s commentary. The Tibetan translation presupposes *bañē*.

<sup>103</sup> DKGS, p. 139, ll. 9–12: *ṇiamāṇa sabbe sohia jabbē guruguṇa hiyae pāisai tabbē / eba amaṇe muṇi sarahē gāhiu tanta manta ṇāi ekka bi cāhiu //*

My translation of this stanza follows Schaeffer 2005:146 (see also Shahidullah 1928: 173).

tantric term for something that is not a specifically tantric practice. It is thus legitimate for Karma Bkra shis chos 'phel to speak of Saraha's mahāmudrā tradition as being originally independent of the sūtras and the tantras. For Maitrīpa, the direct realisation of emptiness (or the co-emergent) is the bridging link between the sūtras and the tantras, and it is thanks to this bridge that mahāmudrā can be linked to the sūtras and the tantras. In the sūtras it takes the form of the practice of non-abiding and not becoming mentally engaged, while in the tantras it occupies a special position among the four mudrās.

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CMA<sub>T</sub>: *Caturmudrānvaya* (Tibetan translation)

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CMU: *Caturmudropadeśa* (Tibetan translation)

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DKG<sub>S</sub>: *Dohākośagīti*

In Shahidullah 1928: 123–65.

DKG<sub>T</sub>: *Dohākośagīti* (Tibetan translation)

In Shahidullah 1928: 123–65.

DKGP: *Dohākośagītipañjikā*

Ed. by Prabodh Ch. Bagchi. In *Journal of the Department of Letters* (Calcutta University Press 28), pp. 52–120.

DKMU: *Dohākośanāmamahāmudropadeśa* (Tibetan translation)

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GPKU: *Guruparamparākramopadeśa* (Tibetan translation)

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NPD: *Nirvikalpapraveśadhāraṇī*

Ed. by Kazunobu Matsuda. See Matsuda 1996: 93–99.

PJP: *Prajñājñānaprakāśa* (Tibetan translation)

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RGVV: *Ratnagoṭravibhāgavyākhyā*. See RGV.

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II.

TRADITIONS OF MEDITATION AND YOGA





PROLEGOMENON TO  
THE *SIX DOCTRINES OF NĀ RO PA*:  
AUTHORITY AND TRADITION\*

ULRICH TIMME KRAGH

In the exoteric and esoteric layers of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism, each doctrinal system and its associated meditation instructions centres on a specific set of principal texts that are considered its authoritative sources (Tib. *khungs*). The esoteric doctrinal system of the Vajrayāna incorporates instructions on the imaginative creation and ritual performance of personal deities belonging to the phase of practice called the development stage (*bskyed rim*), as well as instructions on the various yogas, visualizations and breathing exercises of the completion stage (*rdzogs rim*). In the Bka' brgyud and Dge lugs traditions of Tibetan Buddhism, one set of major yogic practices of the completion stage was passed down over successive generations in the form of a system called the Six Doctrines of Nā ro pa, or, in Tibetan, *nā ro chos drug*.<sup>1</sup>

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Tibetan words are transliterated according to the Wylie system. Sanskrit words are transliterated according to the standard IAST system. The siglum Q stands for the Peking Bstan 'gyur and the siglum D signifies the Sde dge Bstan 'gyur.

<sup>1</sup> The Tibetan word is sometimes also spelled *nā ro'i chos drug*. In the West, the system has primarily become known as the *Six Yogas of Nāropa*.

The *nā ro chos drug* system of yoga practices was first put together by the Indian Buddhist master Ti lo pa (c. 928–1009),<sup>2</sup> who had received these practices individually from various teachers. Their origin is traditionally traced back to the primordial Buddha Vajradhāra. According to the lineage accounts of the sixteenth century 'Brug pa bka' brgyud scholar Padma dkar po (1527–92) and the seventeenth century 'Bri gung bka' brgyud scholar 'Bri gung rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659), Vajradhāra manifested in this world as Buddha Śākyamuni and gave the numerous teachings of the tantras. These are then said to have been compiled by Vajragarbha, the supramundane master of all things hidden (*gsang ba thams cad kyi bdag po rdo rje snying po*). Guarded by non-worldly goddesses called *ḍākiṅṅs*, the teachings of the tantras were at some point obtained by several different humans in India and through various lineages of tantric masters the instructions were eventually obtained by Ti lo pa. The first instruction he received, on the Great Seal (*mahāmudrā*), was passed down through a lineage that went from Saraha → Lū yi pa → the brothers Dā ri ka pa and Ḍiṅgi pa → Ti lo pa. The second instruction, on the five stages of the Father Tantras (*pha rgyud*), including the practices of transference and 'body entering,' were transmitted from the bodhisattva Ratnamati → Nāgārjunagarbha → Mataṅgi → Ti lo pa. The third instruction, on inner heat, the intermediate state, and sexual union (*karmamudrā*) following the Mother Tantras (*ma rgyud*), was taught by the female teacher Sumati Samantabhadri → Vajraghaṅṅapāda residing on Mount Karṇa → Ti lo pa. Finally, the fourth instruction, on luminosity, lucid dreaming, and the illusory body, was passed on by Ḍoṃ bhi pa → Vinasa → Kambalipā of Oḍḍiyāna → Indrabhūti Junior → Ti lo pa. Ti lo pa is also said to have received the same instructions in visions directly from Buddha Vajradhāra. Henceforth, these transmissions became known as the four instruction lineages (*bka' babs bzhi*), and it may be added that the name Bka' brgyud, which designates one of the major traditions

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<sup>2</sup> 'Ti lo pa' is the most common Tibetan name for this person. Other forms include 'Tai lo pa' and 'Te lo pa.'

of Tibetan Buddhism, usually is said to mean the tradition (*brgyud*) of [the four] instruction (*bka'*) lineages.<sup>3</sup> After Ti lo pa had systematised the instructions, he passed them on to his student Nā ro pa (c. 956–1040),<sup>4</sup> who in turn taught them to the Tibetan translator Mar pa chos kyi blo gros (1002/1012–97). It was Mar pa, who introduced the system to Tibet, where it later became known under different names. The most common name is the six doctrines of Nā ro pa (*nā ro chos drug*), but Mi la ras pa (1052–1135) used the name ‘instructions for liberation in the precipitous intermediate state’ (*bar do 'phrang grol gyi man ngag*) and Padma dkar po called it ‘melting and transference’ (*bsre 'pho*).

In general, the system includes instructions on inner heat (*caṇḍālī, gtum mo*), the illusory body (*māyakāya, sgyu lus*), lucid dreaming (*svapna, rmi lam*), luminosity (*prabhāsvara, 'od gsal*), the intermediate state (*antarābhava, bar do*), transference (*saṃkrānti, 'pho ba*) and body entering (*grong 'jug*).<sup>5</sup> Although most of these practices also occur in various tantra scriptures, including the *Hevajra, Cakrasaṃvara, Guhyasamāja*, and *Caturpīṭha*, and are

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<sup>3</sup> For the information given in this paragraph, see Padma dkar po’s *nā ro chos drug* commentary *Jo bo nā ro pa'i khyad chos bsre 'pho'i gzhung 'grel rdo rje 'chang gi dgongs pa gsal bar byed pa*, pp. 5–7, and 'Bri gung rig 'dzin chos kyi grags pa’s *nā ro chos drug* commentary *Zab lam nā ro chos drug gi khrid kyi lag len gsal bar bshad pa nā ro zhabs kyi zhal gyi lung bzang po*, pp. 129–30. For bibliographical details, refer to the bibliography at the end of this article. On the name *Bka' brgyud*, see also n. 18.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Nā ro pa’ is the most common Tibetan name for this person. Its Sanskrit equivalent seems to be \*Nāḍapāda.

<sup>5</sup> The Tibetan term *grong 'jug* is short for *grong khyer la 'jug pa*. The longer form is attested in *Bka' dpe che chung* contained in 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ja*, p. 102, TBRC reference W20977–0138, where the instruction is spelled out as meaning “the instruction of body entering” (*grong khyer la 'jug pa'i man ngag*). The words *grong* and *grong khyer* here seem to reflect the Sanskrit word \**pura*, which has the dual meanings ‘town’ as well as ‘body’ (personal communication from Prof. Matthew Kapstein), which is probably intended in the latter sense, although the Tibetan translation corresponds to the former meaning.



found individually outside the *nā ro chos drug* system within several other Indian and Tibetan meditation traditions, such as the *gter ma* of the Rnying ma lineages; in the context of the present study the term *nā ro chos drug* is understood in a narrow sense as specifically referring to the system taught by Nā ro pa to Mar pa, which was passed down within the Bka' brgyud and Dge lugs traditions of Tibetan Buddhism.

Traditionally, the teaching of these yogas is given through oral instruction accompanied by a physical demonstration of the yogic body movements and breathing exercises transmitted by a qualified teacher. Nevertheless, *nā ro chos drug* explanations are also found in a body of literature consisting of both simple manuals that sum up their key points as well as larger treatises, which not only provide elaborate expositions systematising the instructions as a doctrine but also cover their background and history. Approximately half of the manuals and treatises contain either references to or full quotations of root texts for *nā ro chos drug*. On a practical level, the root texts' function is to aid memorisation of the practices and perhaps ease daily recitation, but on a doctrinal level they are the wellspring of the religious transmissions embodying their authority. The body of *nā ro chos drug* literature builds on a few such authoritative sources and these are the focus of the present study.

### **1 Authoritative sources for the later *nā ro chos drug* traditions**

To establish which texts were considered authoritative sources by the later *nā ro chos drug* traditions, roughly from the fifteenth century onwards, the large nineteenth-century anthology of meditation instructions called the *Gdams ngag mdzod*, “The Treasury of Instructions,” compiled by 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–99) serves as a suitable starting point. Below, this will be combined with a discussion of the *nā ro chos drug* sources included in the different editions of the Tibetan Bstan 'gyur canon as well as a critical remark made by Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419).

The *Gdams ngag mdzod* presents six small works as constituting the authoritative sources or root texts for the six doctrines of Nā ro pa, calling these “the dearly compiled scriptures of *nā ro chos drug*” (*nā ro chos drug gi gzhung gces par btus pa*).<sup>6</sup> Four of these works are fully or partly canonical texts traditionally believed to be of Indian origin, whereas two are non-canonical Tibetan writings. The four canonical sources are:

1. *Instruction on the Six Doctrines, Chos drug gi man ngag* (*\*Śaddharmopadeśa*), by Ti lo pa, non-extant in Sanskrit, translated into Tibetan by Nā ro pa and Mar pa.<sup>7</sup>
2. *Vajra Verses of the Oral Transmission, Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* (*\*Kārṇatantravajrapāda*), by an anonymous author, non-extant in Sanskrit, likewise translated into Tibetan by Nā ro pa and Mar pa.<sup>8</sup>
3. *The Goddesses' Teaching entitled Authentic Testimony of the Instructions, Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma zhes bya ba mkha' 'gro ma'i man ngag* (*\*Ājñāsamyakpramāṇanāmaḍākinyupadeśa*), by an anonymous author, non-extant in Sanskrit, Tibetan translation by unknown hand.<sup>9</sup>
4. *The Major and Minor Instruction Texts, Bka' dpe che chung*, by one or more anonymous authors, but in *Gdams ngag mdzod* attributed to Nā ro pa by Blo gros mtha' yas. There is no Sanskrit original.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ja*, p. 1 (TBRC W20877–0138).

<sup>7</sup> Q. 4630/D. 2330, Tibetan edition and English translation by Torricelli 1996a and translated into English again by Mullin (1997: 27–29).

<sup>8</sup> Q. 4632/D. 2338, English translation by Mullin (1997), Tibetan edition and another English translation by Torricelli (1998).

<sup>9</sup> D. 2331, Tibetan edition and English translation by Torricelli (1997). The text will here be referred to by the abbreviated title *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma*.

<sup>10</sup> Tibetan edition by Torricelli (1997: 264–67). The text does not have a definite title. In the Tibetan index (*dkar chag*) to the *Gdams ngag mdzod* volume, it is referred to as *Bka' dpe che chung*, i.e. the title adopted here. Within the volume, however, the text

The two non-canonical sources found in the *Gdams ngag mdzod* are:

5. *Vajra Song Condensing the Six Doctrines, Chos drug dril ba rdo rje'i mgur*, a song said to have been sung by Nā ro pa to Mar pa.
6. *Three Songs Elucidating the Oral Transmission, Snyan brgyud gsal bar skor gsum*, by Mi la ras pa.<sup>11</sup>

On the surface, the *Gdams ngag mdzod*'s list of texts appears relatively straightforward. It would seem that all of the works were used as the prime sources for *nā ro chos drug* right from the inception of the tradition in Tibet in the eleventh century. The implicit Tibetan assumption of the permanent and unquestioned status of the six root texts has spilled into their academic treatment in twentieth-century scholarship. Consequently, the scholars who have given the most attention to the *nā ro chos drug* sources, viz. Torricelli and Mullin, have unconsciously made all the texts appear equally important without realizing that the majority of the texts were not in use prior to the Bka' brgyud renaissance of the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries and that several of them never had any real significance within the Tibetan *nā ro chos drug* literature at any point.

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itself is not furnished with an overall title but its seven segments each have their own individual title specifying the instruction given, viz. *Gtum mo'i bka' dpe*, *Rmi lam bka' dpe*, *'Od gsal bka' dpe*, *Bar do'i bka' dpe*, *Grong 'jug gi bka' dpe*, *'Pho ba'i bka' dpe* and *Gdams ngag gi bka' dpe*. In the modern preface to *Gdams ngag mdzod*, the text is given the title *Bka' dpe tshigs su bcad pa* with an added note that Kong sprul's *dkar chag* lists this text along with a prose version called *Bka' dpe tshig lhug po*, which is said to be missing in the printed volume. Yet, this appears to be a misunderstanding. In fact, the verse part and the prose part refer to two different segments of the text as it is found within the volume.

<sup>11</sup> For the sake of the present discussion centering on the canonicity of the texts, the order in which the six root texts are listed here differs from their arrangement in *Gdams ngag mdzod*. For their arrangement in *Gdams ngag mdzod*, see under 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas in the bibliography of Tibetan sources below.

### 1.1. The four canonical authoritative sources

The four canonical sources could not always claim the weight of being canonical, since none of them were included in the canon catalogues written by the Bka' gdams pa scholar Bcom ldan ral gri Dar ma rgyal mtshan in the late 1260s or early 1270s and by the Zhwa lu pa scholar Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364) in 1335.<sup>12</sup> Two of the four later canonical sources were, however,

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<sup>12</sup> Refer to Bcom ldan rig pa'i ral gri's catalogue entitled *Bstan pa rgyas pa rgyan gyi nyi 'od* (Schaeffer and van der Kuijp 2009) and to Bu ston's *Bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag yid bzhi nor bu dbang gi rgyal po'i phreng ba*, folio 50a. Compare Bu ston's catalogue with the later Sde dge Bstan 'gyur catalogue by Zhu chen Tshul khri ms rin chen (1697–1774) entitled *Kun mkhyen nyi ma'i gnyen gyi bka' lung gi dgongs don rnam par 'grel pa'i bstan bcos gangs can pa'i skad du 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi chos sprin rgyun mi 'chad pa'i ngo mtshar 'phrul gyi phyi mo rdzogs ldan bskal pa'i bsod nams kyi sprin phung rgyas par dkrigs pa'i tshul las brtsams pa'i gtam ngo mtshar chu gter 'phel ba'i zla ba gsar pa* (folio 390b/p. 780) and the Dga' ldan Bstan 'gyur catalogue by Dga' ldan khrid pa Ngag dbang nor bu (b. 19<sup>th</sup> century) entitled *Bstan 'gyur rin po che srid zhi'i rgyan gcig gi dkar chag rin chen mdzes pa'i phra tsoms* (folio 116a). In spite of the fact that these texts were not included in Bu ston's Bstan 'gyur catalogue, Bu ston was himself a holder of the *nā ro chos drug* teachings received from his Khro phu Bka' brgyud teachers, and the lineage of later masters ensuing from Bu ston eventually transmitted these teachings to Tsong kha pa, whereby the Khro phu Bka' brgyud and the Zhwa lu tradition became the sources for the Dge lugs transmission of *nā ro chos drug*. This lineage is made clear in the Record of Received Teachings of the seventh Tā la'i bla ma, from which the following lineage can be reconstructed: Cakrasaṃvara → Ti lo pa (c. 928–1009) → Nāropa (c. 956–1040) → Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros (1002/1012–97) → Mi la ras pa (1052–1135) → Sgam po pa (1079–1153) → Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–70) → Rgyal tsha Rin chen mgon (1118–95) → Gtsang pa ras chung (= Kun ldan ras pa, 1148–1217) → Khro phu Lo tsā ba Byams pa dpal (1173–1225) → Bla chen Bsod nams dbang phyug (13<sup>th</sup> century) → Khro phu ba Bsod nams seng ge (born 13<sup>th</sup> century) → Khro phu mkhan chen Yang rtse ba Rin chen seng ge (born 13<sup>th</sup> century) → Bu ston Rin chen grub (1290–1364) → Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa (14<sup>th</sup> century) → Spyan snga Rin po che Grags pa byang chub (14<sup>th</sup> century) → Rje

included in one the two canon catalogues written by the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339) in the early fourteenth century, namely the *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* (there referred to as *Bde mchog snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*) and some form of the *Bka' dpe che chung*, which in the Karma pa's catalogue is referred to as *Ka dpe rtsa ba'i sdom pa mkha' 'gro ma'i zhal nas byung ba / nā ro chos drug gi nyams len bka' dpe phyi ma'o*.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, by the eighteenth century when the five redactions of the still extant Bstan 'gyur editions were compiled, the first two texts, viz. Ti lo pa's *Chos drug gi man ngag* and the anonymous *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*, made their way into all five Bstan 'gyur redactions. Their acceptance into the canon was probably motivated by the clear statements of Indian origin given in their colophons, where both texts are said to have been translated into Tibetan by the well-known masters Nā ro pa and Mar pa. However, it is noteworthy that these are the two texts among the six that are the least significant for the overall Tibetan *nā ro chos drug* traditions.

The first text, Ti lo pa's *Chos drug gi man ngag*, is a true oddity, because it actually seems not to have played any role whatsoever in the *nā ro chos drug* traditions. It is never quoted from or referred to in any of the many Tibetan *nā ro chos drug* manuals, and the 'Brug pa bka' brgyud scholar Padma dkar po did not include it in his extensive list of eighty-nine Indian and Tibetan *nā ro chos drug* sources given in his *Record of Received Teachings (gsan yig)*

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Tsong kha pa. See the *Thob yig* of the seventh Tā la'i bla ma skal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–57) entitled *Zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig rin chen dbang gi rgyal po'i do shal*, pp. 201–02.

<sup>13</sup> See Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje's *Bstan bcos 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi dkar chag*, folio 44b (p. 682); *Karma pa rang byung rdo rje'i gsung 'bum*, published in 2000 by Gzan dkar mchog sprul Thub bstan nyi ma (TBRC reference W30541), vol. *nga*. None of the four canonical texts are included in Rang byung rdo rje's other canon-catalogue entitled *Thugs dam bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag* (ibid.).

written in the sixteenth century.<sup>14</sup> It may, therefore, be the case that Blo gros mtha' yas, without being aware of its negligible status, perceived it as an authoritative source only due to its presence in the Bstan 'gyur.

The second canonical text included in all the five Bstan 'gyur redactions, viz. *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*, is a text related only to the *snyan brgyud* transmission of Ras chung pa (1085–1161), and it was not used or referred to in works belonging to the other *nā ro chos drug* transmissions found within the Bka' brgyud and Dge lugs traditions. Even within the *snyan brgyud* tradition itself, it is possible that this text played a relatively minor role;<sup>15</sup> for the various *snyan brgyud* manuals rely on it only superficially in copying some of its arrangement without quoting verses or making more detailed references. There are two commentaries on the text, one being a short summary outlining its structure and entitled *Rdo rje'i tshig rkang gi bsdu don gab pa mngon byung* by the sixteenth century *snyan brgyud* master A khra Byang chub bzang po. The second is a large commentary in two volumes entitled *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang gi 'grel bshad zab lam chu bo kun 'dus nor bu'i 'byung gnas* written by Stag lung pa Ngag dbang bstan pa'i nyi ma (b. 1788) in 1837–38.

The third and fourth canonical *nā ro chos drug* texts, viz. the anonymous *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* and *Bka' dpe che chung*, were much more significant to the broader *nā ro chos drug* traditions. Nevertheless, among the five extant Bstan 'gyur redactions, the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma*, on the one hand, was included in only two. The *Bka' dpe che chung*, on the other hand, was not included directly in any of the Bstan 'gyurs, but a related text

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<sup>14</sup> Padma dkar po, *Bka' brgyud kyi bka' 'bum gsil bu rnams kyi gsan yig*, pp. 381–83. The list is also found in his collected works as a separate text entitled *Rje btsun nā ro chen po'i bsre skor gyi tho yig nyin byed 'od kyi snang byed*.

<sup>15</sup> On the *snyan brgyud* traditions in general and for a more in-depth analysis of the role played by the *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* in particular, refer to Marta Sernesi's contribution to this volume.

entitled *The Later Instruction Text (Bka' dpe phyi ma)* was included in the same two Bstan 'gyur redactions as *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma*. The exact relationship between the *Bka' dpe che chung* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma* remains obscure. The *Bka' dpe che chung* consists of seven short chapters and the formulations of chapters one, four and seven have literal parallels in *Bka' dpe phyi ma*, in that 70% of the verse lines of chapter one, 43% of the verse and prose lines of chapter four, and 28% of the verse lines of chapter seven have parallels in the *Bka' dpe phyi ma*.<sup>16</sup> The *Bka' dpe che chung* as such is thus not included in any Bstan 'gyur but might be said to be indirectly represented by the semi-canonical *Bka' dpe phyi ma*, with which it has a close relationship. The two Bstan 'gyur editions that include the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma* are the following two East Tibetan redactions of the Bstan 'gyur:

1. the Sde dge xylograph Bstan 'gyur published in 1737–44 by the Sde dge king Bstan pa tshe ring (1678–1738). It is a hybrid edition of four different handwritten Bstan 'gyur manuscripts prepared by the Sa skya scholar Zhu chen Tshul khrim rin chen (1697–1774);
2. the Co ne xylograph Bstan 'gyur published in 1753–73 by the Co ne prince 'Jam dbyangs nor bu (1703–51) and his wife princess Rin chen dpal 'dzom (dates unknown). The Co ne Bstan 'gyur is largely based on the Sde dge Bstan 'gyur.

However, the two texts were left out of the following Peking, Dga' ldan, and Snar thang Bstan 'gyurs:

3. the Peking xylograph Bstan 'gyur first published in 1724 by the Chinese emperor Yōngzhēng (雍正, 1678–1735, reigned 1722–35) and

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<sup>16</sup> It should be added that the *Bka' dpe che chung* also shares two verse passages with the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma*. The whole *rmi lam* chapter as well as the three first verses of the *bar do* chapter in the *Bka' dpe che chung* are derived from the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma*, D2331 folio 272a<sub>1</sub>–73a<sub>1</sub> (pp. 543–45), or vice versa.

reprinted in 1737 by emperor Qiánlóng (乾隆, 1711–99, reigned 1735–96),

4. the Dga' ldan handwritten Golden Bstan 'gyur prepared in 1731–41 under the patronage of Pho lha nas Bsod nams stobs rgyas (1689–1747),
5. the Snar thang xylograph Bstan 'gyur published in 1741–42 by the seventh Tā la'i bla ma Skal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–57).

The reason for the absence of the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma*, *Bka' dpe che chung*, and *Bka' dpe phyi ma* from the Peking, Dga' ldan, and Snar thang Bstan 'gyurs is unknown. Their anonymity cannot be a sufficient explanation in this case, because all Bstan 'gyurs contain numerous anonymous works. The Peking, Dga' ldan, and Snar thang editions are all based on the now no-longer-extant 'Phying ba Stag rtse manuscript Bstan 'gyur commissioned by the Tibetan regent Sde srid sangs rgyas rgya mtsho (1653–1705). The editors of the 'Phying ba Stag rtse Bstan 'gyur might in turn have been influenced by the opinion of Tsong kha pa blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419), the founder of the Dge lugs tradition, who is the only scholar of whom we are currently aware to have explicitly questioned the authenticity of these texts. In Tsong kha pa's large *nā ro chos drug* commentary, the *Yid ches gsum ldan* written in the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century, which subsequently became the fundamental *nā ro chos drug* work within the Dge lugs tradition, he wrote:

Concerning the two texts of this system, viz. the *Earlier Root Synopsis Instruction Text* and the *Later Instruction Text*, the former appears to contain two major inconsistencies and the latter seems difficult to trust entirely, although it has been attributed to Mar pa in one commentary — but there are so many attributions of that sort, such as saying that the *Samāja* instructions also were written by him.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Tsong kha pa's *Zab lam nā ro'i chos drug gi sgo nas 'khrid pa'i rim pa yid ches gsum ldan*, p. 521: 'di'i ka dpe rtsa ba'i sdom snga ma yin zer ba dang / ka dpe phyi ma yin zer ba gnyis 'dug pa'i snga ma la mi mthun cher yod pa gnyis snang zhing /



Precisely why Tsong kha pa had issues with these two texts unfortunately remains somewhat vague and none of his commentators cared to elucidate on this point. Neither of Tsong kha pa's two *nā ro chos drug* commentaries is based on any particular root text, but the passage quoted above indicates that he was indeed familiar with two *nā ro chos drug* sources, which he refers as the *Earlier Root Synopsis Instruction Text* (*Ka dpe rtsa ba'i sdom snga ma*) and the *Later Instruction Text* (*Ka dpe phyi ma*).<sup>18</sup> In using these titles, Tsong kha pa may have been referring to the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma*, some form of the *Bka' dpe che chung*, and/or the *Bka' dpe phyi ma*.<sup>19</sup>

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*phyi ma la mar pas mdzad pa yin zer ba'i 'grel pa gcig kyang snang mod kyang / 'dus pa'i man ngag mar pas mdzad zer ba sogs kha g.yar mang po snang bas / mtha' gcig tu yid ches pa dka' bar snang ngo //*

<sup>18</sup> The Tibetan spelling *ka dpe* is merely an orthographical variant of *bka' dpe*. The spelling *bka' dpe*, meaning “instruction text,” is semantically preferable. The variant form *ka dpe* actually means “alphabet text,” where *ka* represents the first letter of the Tibetan alphabet, and is elsewhere used to signify alphabet primers teaching reading and writing. Hence, this variant form is solecistic in the present context, but is nevertheless attested in several *nā ro chos drug* sources. It is by now clear that the word *bka' dpe* occurs in several different titles for texts of similar contents. Hence, *bka' dpe* will be used in this article as a common term for the texts belonging to this group.

As noted earlier, the word “Bka' brgyud” is often interpreted as meaning “the tradition of the [four] instructions.” These instructions (*bka'*) were written down in manuals referred to as *Instruction Texts* (*bka' dpe*). Thus, the first syllable *bka'* of the title *bka' dpe* could be a further reason for the name Bka' brgyud, then meaning “the lineage of the instruction texts.”

<sup>19</sup> An argument, although rather weak, for identifying Tsong kha pa's *Ka dpe rtsa ba'i sdom snga ma* with *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* might be that *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* is called “the first *Bka' dpe*” (*Bka' dpe dang po*) in Zhu chen Tshul khri rin chen's eighteenth-century catalogue to the Sde dge Bstan 'gyur. See his catalogue entitled *Kun mkhyen nyi ma'i gnyen gyi bka' lung gi dgongs don nam par 'grel pa'i bstan bcos gangs can pa'i skad du 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi chos sprin rgyun mi 'chad pa'i*

Generally speaking, it seems that the absence of these texts in Tsong kha pa's *nā ro chos drug* teachings and his critical remarks had a certain effect on later *nā ro chos drug* writings within the Dge lugs tradition. The Dge lugs *nā ro chos drug* commentators mostly did not rely on either of these root texts, but rather took Tsong kha pa's *Yid ches gsum ldan* commentary as the prime source for their writings.<sup>20</sup> That includes the *nā ro chos drug* commentaries by the seventeenth-eighteenth century A mdo Reb kong master Brag dkar Sngags ram pa Blo bzang bstan pa rab rgyas (b. seventeenth century), the eighteenth-century Lha sa scholar Tshe mchog gling yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1713–93), and the two nineteenth-century masters Dngul chu Dharma bhadra (1772–1851) and A khu ching Shes rab rgya mtsho (1803–75) from Western Tibet and A mdo respectively.<sup>21</sup>

While most Dge lugs pa *nā ro chos drug* authors did not refer to the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma*, *Bka' dpe che chung* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma*, the

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*ngo mtshar 'phrul gyi phyi mo rdzogs ldan bskal pa'i bsod nams kyi sprin phung rgyas par dkrigs pa'i tshul las brtsams pa'i gdam ngo mtshar chu gter 'phel ba'i zla ba gsar pa*, folio 390b, p. 780. Refer also to the remark above regarding the mention of the title *Bka' dpe rtsa ba'i sdom pa mkha' 'gro ma'i zhal nas byung ba / nā ro chos drug gi nyams len bka' dpe phyi ma'o* in the Bstan 'gyur catalogue of the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje, the first part of which also bears a certain similarity to Tsong kha pa's title *Ka dpe rtsa ba'i sdom snga ma*.

<sup>20</sup> A rare exception is found in Rong po grub chen Skal ldan rgya mtsho's (1607–77) concise *nā ro chos drug* manual *Nā ro'i chos drug gi khrid grub pa'i mdzes rgyan*, wherein the Dge lugs author quotes two *bka' dpe* verse lines on folio 4a<sub>5</sub> (page 133) that list the four steps of the pot-like breathing technique (*kumbhaka*, *bum can*) without indicating their source: *rngub dang dgang dang gzhi ba dang // mda' ltar 'phang dang rnam pa bzhi //*. These lines are found in all the different *bka' dpe* versions, i.e. the *bka' dpe* archetypes, *Bka' dpe che chung* as well as *Bka' dpe phyi ma*. In general, Rong po grub chen refers to a wide array of *nā ro chos drug* texts, also including Tsong kha pa's *Yid ches gsum ldan* commentary.

<sup>21</sup> For their works, refer to the bibliography below.

opposite was the case with the Bka' brgyud pas, who embraced these texts as important *nā ro chos drug* sources. The *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* was held in high regard especially by the sixteenth-century 'Brug pa bka' brgyud scholar Padma dkar po. In the aforementioned list of eighty-nine *nā ro chos drug* sources given in his *Record of Received Teachings*, the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* is said to be the basic root text of the entire tradition,<sup>22</sup> an opinion later shared by another 'Brug pa bka' brgyud scholar, the fourth Bde chen chos 'khor yongs 'dzin 'Jam dpal dpa' bo (1720–80).<sup>23</sup> Padma dkar po also wrote a 600 page commentary based on this root text.<sup>24</sup> The Bka' brgyud pas' use of the *Bka' dpe che chung* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma* during the later period is less apparent, particularly due to the different *bka' dpe* versions, their numerous shared lines of verse, and the commentaries' common practice of quoting such verses without stating the title of their source. Padma dkar po's list of *nā ro chos drug* sources mentions neither the *Bka' dpe che chung* nor *Bka' dpe phyi ma*, but instead mentions an *Inner Heat Instruction Text (Gtum mo ka dpe)* as well as a *Minor Instruction Text (Ka dpe chung ngu)*. The identities of these titles are uncertain but might refer to different segments of the *Bka' dpe che chung*, whose first chapter is entitled the *Inner Heat Instruction Text (Gtum mo'i bka' dpe)* and where the word “minor” (*chung*) occurs in the overall title used by Blo gros mtha' yas. Further, there are quotations of verses found in both the *Bka' dpe che chung* as well as the *Bka' dpe phyi ma* in several *nā ro chos drug* commentaries of the later period, for example in the manuals written by two major 'Bri gung bka' brgyud scholars, 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen

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<sup>22</sup> See n. 14.

<sup>23</sup> See Bde chen chos 'khor yongs 'dzin 'jam dpal dpa' bo's *nā ro chos drug* manual *Dpal nā ro chos drug gi khrid yig gsal byed zung 'jug mchog gi nges gnas*.

<sup>24</sup> His commentary on the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* is entitled *Jo bo nā ro pa'i khyad chos bsre 'pho'i gzhung 'grel rdo rje 'chang gi dgongs pa gsal bar byed pa*; for further references, refer to the bibliography below.

(1475–1527) and 'Bri gung rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659).<sup>25</sup> The majority of these quotations are unreferenced and it is therefore not possible to determine whether the authors were familiar with the verses in the form of the texts later known as the *Bka' dpe che chung* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma*. In a rare instance, 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen indicates the source for his quotation of a *bka' dpe* verse, but only with the general title *Chos drug Instruction Text (Chos drug ka dpe)*.<sup>26</sup>

Since the *nā ro chos drug* is essentially a system of practical yoga and visualisation instructions, it must also be noted that there are a number of commentaries of the later period that do not rely on any root text and that give no references to textual sources, but instead are written exclusively as practice manuals. Roughly half of the commentaries refer to root texts, while the other half do not. The present discussion of authoritative sources applies only to the texts explicitly relying on a root text either by commenting on such a text or at least by giving some references to it. *Nā ro chos drug* manuals of the later phase from the fifteenth century onwards, which do not rely on root texts, include the works by the second 'Brug chen rgyal dbang Kun dga' dpal 'byor (1429–76), the Dwags po bka' brgyud scholar Dwags po Bkra shis nam rgyal (c. 1512–87), the Karma kaṃ tshang scholars the sixth Zhwa dmar pa Gar dbang chos kyi dbang phyug (1584–1630), Mkhan po Karma ratna rin chen dar rgyas (b. 1835), the ninth Si tu pa Padma nyin byed (1774–1853), as well as the Dge lugs master Gu ge yongs 'dzin Blo bzang bstan 'dzin (1748–1813).

## 1.2. The two non-canonical authoritative sources

Besides the four canonical or semi-canonical *nā ro chos drug* texts discussed so far, the *Gdams ngag mdzod*—as mentioned—also includes two non-canonical *nā ro chos drug* texts.

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<sup>25</sup> For their works, refer to the bibliography below.

<sup>26</sup> See folio 96a<sub>6</sub> (p. 387) of his commentary.

The first non-canonical text is a song consisting of fifteen verses entitled *Vajra Song Condensing the Six Doctrines* (*Chos drug dril ba rdo rje'i mgur*) supposed to have been sung by Nā ro pa to Mar pa, which is now incorporated into Gtsang smyon He ru ka Rus pa'i rgyan can's (1452–1507) biography of Mar pa written in 1505.<sup>27</sup> In his *nā ro chos drug* commentary, Tsong kha pa also discussed this text along with another text attributed to Mar pa called the *Eight Verses* (*Tshig rkang brgyad ma* or *Tshigs bcad brgyad ma*)<sup>28</sup> and characterised them as being too general for practical use:

Again, the *Eight Verses* combining stanzas and verses said to have been written by Mar pa as well as the *Vajra Song [Condensing] the Six Doctrines* do not appear to have any other ability than merely planting the seeds of the instructions.<sup>29</sup>

In spite of Tsong kha pa's remarks, two seventeenth century Dge lugs authors based their *nā ro chos drug* commentaries on this song, namely the first Paṅ chen bla ma Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1570–1662), who lived in Gtsang, as well as the first Rong po grub chen Skal ldan rgya mtsho (1607–77), who lived in A mdo.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> For bibliographical references to the Tibetan text of the song, refer to 'Nā ro pa' in the bibliography of Tibetan sources. An English translation of the song is found in Trungpa and the Nālandā Translation Committee (1986: 95–97).

<sup>28</sup> This text, which is not included in Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, will be discussed in the section on sources for the early *nā ro chos drug* tradition below.

<sup>29</sup> See Tsong kha pa's *zab lam nā ro'i chos drug gi sgo nas 'khrid pa'i rim pa yid ches gsum ldan*, pp. 521–22: *yang mar pas mdzad zer ba'i tshigs bcad dang / tshig rkang gnyis gcig tu bzung ba'i tshig rkang brgyad ma zhes pa gcig dang / chos drug rdo rje'i mgur zhes pa gnyis la ni gdams ngag gi sa bon tsam ma gtogs pa nus pa lhag po bton pa mi 'dug la /*.

<sup>30</sup> See the first Paṅ chen bla ma, *Nā ro chos drug gi zab khrid gser gyi lde mig*, and Rong po grub chen Skal ldan rgya mtsho, *Rdo rje 'dzin pa skal ldan rgya mtsho dpal bzang po'i gsung las nā ro'i chos drug gi 'khrid grub pa'i mdzes rgyan*.

In the Bka' brgyud tradition, references to Nā ro pa's song are very sparse. One author who quotes the song briefly is 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen (1475–1527), and Padma dkar po (1527–92) includes it in his list of *nā ro chos drug* sources.<sup>31</sup> Since the song, aside from Tsong kha pa's brief reference, only appears in commentaries written after the publication of Gtsang smyon He ru ka's biography of Mar pa, it would seem that its popularity can be attributed to this work.

The other non-canonical text included in *Gdams ngag mdzod* is a cycle of *Mi la ras pa* songs entitled *Three Songs Elucidating the Oral Transmission* (*Snyan brgyud gsal bar skor gsum*). The first song, called *Elucidating Being* (*Dngos po gsal bar byed pa*), contains a long segment that corresponds word-for-word with a large portion of the *gtum mo* chapter of the *Bka' dpe che chung* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma*. The lines found in *Mi la ras pa*'s song, however, occur in a different order than those found in the *Bka' dpe che chung* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma*, and the song therefore constitutes an important early version. Four verse lines found in both the *Bka' dpe* texts as well as in *Mi la ras pa*'s song are quoted by Phag mo gru pa (1110–70) in a twelfth-century commentary, wherein Phag mo gru pa attributes them to *Mi la ras pa*.<sup>32</sup> However, none of the other eleven *nā ro chos drug* commentaries quoting these lines attribute them to any author and *Mi la ras pa*'s three songs are never mentioned in any other *nā ro chos drug* text.

To sum up, from the point of view of the *Gdams ngag mdzod* of Blo gros mtha' yas, the four canonical and two non-canonical texts that have been discussed are considered the authoritative sources for the *nā ro chos drug* practices in the later tradition. The two undisputed canonical works were not

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<sup>31</sup> Refer to 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen, *Zab lam chos drug gi khrid gyi lhan thabs sbas don kun gsal*, and Padma dkar po, *Bka' brgyud kyi bka' 'bum gsil bu rnam kyi gsan yig*, pp. 381–83.

<sup>32</sup> Phag mo gru pa, *Bla ma nā ro pa'i chos drug gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rim pa dang gdams ngag gnad kyi dbye ba mdor bsdu pa*, p. 472.

widely used, whereas the two disputed canonical texts were considered the most important sources by the Bka' brgyud pas, while Dge lugs pa authors seldom relied on them. Instead, the Dge lugs pas usually followed Tsong kha pa's *Yid ches gsum ldan* commentary as their authoritative source. Nā ro pa's song to Mar pa, which is one of Blo gros mtha' yas's two non-canonical sources, received extensive commentary by the first Paṅ chen bla ma and the first Rong po grub chen, and was briefly referred to by 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen and Padma dkar po. The other non-canonical source, the three songs by Mi la ras pa, does not appear to have been used as a root text to be commented upon by anyone, although one of the songs contains a segment that corresponds to a portion of the *bka' dpe* texts.

## 2 Authoritative sources for the early *nā ro chos drug* traditions

Although the *Gdams ngag mdzod* presents six texts as the authoritative sources for the *nā ro chos drug* instructions, most of the texts do not appear to have been known to the early *nā ro chos drug* traditions prior to the fifteenth century. In fact, among the six *nā ro chos drug* sources found in *Gdams ngag mdzod*, only the *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* appears to have been known in the early period,<sup>33</sup> since its title occurs in one of the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje's Bstan 'gyur catalogues,<sup>34</sup> as well as in a list of texts explaining the inner meaning of the *Cakrasaṃvaratantra* given by the thirteenth-century compiler of the *snyan brgyud* tradition, Zhang lo tsā ba Grub pa dpal (b. 1237).<sup>35</sup> Nevertheless, aside from the mention of its title, the *nā ro chos drug* commentaries and manuals of the early period do not appear to rely on the

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<sup>33</sup> In the case of *Bka' dpe che chung*, this text—as will be argued below—was known prior to the fifteenth century, but most likely not in the form in which it is now preserved in *Gdams ngag mdzod*.

<sup>34</sup> Refer to n. 13 above.

<sup>35</sup> Torricelli 1998: 385.

*Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* as a root text, at least in terms of the corpus of texts included in the bibliography below.

In fact, the early traditions mainly relied on only two sets of *nā ro chos drug* verses that were used as authoritative sources in several early commentaries and possibly as mnemonic verses in the oral tradition. These are:

1. The *Eight Verses* (*Tshigs bcad brgyad ma*), attributed to Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros;
2. Several versions of an untitled, anonymous collection of verses that are referred to herein as the “*bka' dpe* archetypes.”

The first work is a short text called *Tshigs bcad brgyad ma* attributed to Mar pa. It is found in the collected works of Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153) along with a little commentary.<sup>36</sup> The earliest preserved edition of Sgam po pa's works is a handwritten fourteenth or fifteenth century manuscript, which thus is the earliest actual witness of Mar pa's text.<sup>37</sup> The *Eight Verses* provides a brief outline of just three of the yogas, viz. the practices of lucid dreaming, illusory body, and inner heat, to which are added two brief instructions on the five stages (*pañcakrama, rim pa lnga*) of the completion stage of the *Guhyasamājantra* and the engendering of the mind of awakening (*bodhicitta*). As mentioned above, Tsong kha pa was aware of this text and, in the sixteenth century, Padma dkar po included it in his list of *nā ro chos drug* sources.<sup>38</sup> Besides these scattered references, the text is never mentioned or quoted in any other *nā ro chos drug* work. Further, it was neither included by Blo gros mtha' yas in his nineteenth-century *Gdams ngag mdzod*, nor by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal (1876–1958) in his huge compilation of

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<sup>36</sup> Refer to Sgam po pa's text Ci entitled *Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / mar pa'i tshigs bcad brgyad ma'i 'grel pa*.

<sup>37</sup> See manuscript α among the various editions of the collected works of Sgam po pa in the bibliography.

<sup>38</sup> Refer to n. 14 above.



*mahāmudrā*, *rdzogs chen* and *nā ro chos drug* works called the *Rtsib ri Print* (*Rtsib ri par ma*).<sup>39</sup> The text therefore seems to have had a limited popularity in the twelfth century that gradually faded out until it more or less had disappeared from the textual transmission by the nineteenth century.

The second authoritative source known to the early Bka' brgyud *nā ro chos drug* traditions is an anonymous set of verses that I refer to as the *bka' dpe* archetypes. They explain the practice of *gtum mo* and were incorporated in the later traditions into the *gtum mo* chapters of the *Bka' dpe che chung* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma*. The *bka' dpe* archetypes must have been the major mnemonic *nā ro chos drug* source in the early transmissions, because the majority of the thirty-one *nā ro chos drug* manuals and commentaries of the early period quote them and follow their structure. Some of the earliest available Tibetan *nā ro chos drug* manuals are nine texts found in the collected works of Sgam po pa,<sup>40</sup> and five of these texts contain direct commentaries on

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<sup>39</sup> Refer to the catalogue to this collection entitled *Dpal ldan 'brug pa dkar brgyud gtso bor gzhi gzung gsar rnying gi nyams len zab gnad nyer mkho'i bang mdzod kyi dkar chag don ldan 'phrul gyi me long*, vol. *shri* (TBRC W20749–1294).

<sup>40</sup> Dpal 'byor don grub (15<sup>th</sup> century) lists a number of *nā ro chos drug* works by masters predating Sgam po pa, but these are either no longer extant or at least not currently available. These earlier works include: *Chos drug sras don ma* attributed to Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros, *Chos drug chen mo* attributed to Rngog Chos sku rdo rje (11<sup>th</sup> century), and unspecified *nā ro chos drug* works by Mtshur ston Dbang gi rdo rje (11<sup>th</sup> century) and Me ston (11<sup>th</sup> century). He also mentions Mi la ras pa's *Chos drug gsal ba skor gsum*, which appears to be identical to the above-mentioned *Snyan brgyud gsal bar skor gsum*, preserved in *Gdams ngag mdzod*. It should be noted that the work by Rngog Chos sku rdo rje is not available in the recently published collection of texts by Rngog and his disciples, i.e. the *Rngog chos skor phyogs sgrig* published by Dpal brtsegs bod yig dpe rnying zhib 'jug khang, 2007. Dpal 'byor don grub also refers to a few later *nā ro chos drug* works that have not been considered in this article. These include a segment from the second Karma pa Karma Pakshi's (1204–83) *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas* corpus with the title *Gtum mo 'khor lo lnga ma* (refer to TBRC W21559),

the *bka' dpe* archetypes in the chapters dealing with the practice of *gtum mo*.<sup>41</sup> Among the remaining four texts, one is the aforementioned commentary on Mar pa's *Tshigs bcad brgyad ma*, while the other three manuals do not rely on any root text.<sup>42</sup> The *bka' dpe* archetypes were also used in the twelfth century as the basis for Phag mo gru pa's four quite extensive *nā ro chos drug* commentaries, as well as for two early-fourteenth-century *nā ro chos drug* commentaries by the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339), who referred to the verses simply as *gzhung*, i.e. the scripture.<sup>43</sup> Just as in the later period, so too in the early period there are several *nā ro chos drug* manuals that do not rely on any root text, which again underlines the transmission's status as

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and unspecified notes by Kun spangs pa (b. 14<sup>th</sup> c.) based on a longer explanation by one 'Dzam gling chos kyi grags pa, and a text referred to as *Chos drug chen mo* by one Drung Mkha' spyod pa (= Zhwa dmar Mkha' spyod dbang po?, 1350–1405). Refer to Dpal 'byor don grub, *Mdo sngags thams cad kyi rgyal po rgyud sde bzhi'i rtsa ba ma rgyud thams cad kyi snying po bskyed rim lhan cig skyes ma rdzogs rim rlung sems gnyis med gsal bar ston pa dpal nā ro pa chen po'i chos drug nyams len gsal ba'i sgron me*, pp. 65–66. Moreover, Thub bstan phun tshogs's publication *Rtsa rlung 'phrul 'khor* (Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995), which was not available to me, contains another text attributed to Mar pa entitled *Bde mchog snyan brgyud kyi gtum mo dang thabs lam gyi 'phrul 'khor*, pp. 21–34.

<sup>41</sup> For the nine *nā ro chos drug* texts found in the collected works of Sgam po pa, see the bibliography below. The segments in these text that are commentaries on the *bka' dpe* archetypes are: Pa 5–6, Tsa (implicitly without quoting the root text), Tsha 1, Ki 1–4 and 14, and Khi 7. For two segments from the several *nā ro chos drug* texts attributed to Sgam po pa that were translated into Chinese in Khara Khoto, see Shen (2005).

<sup>42</sup> I.e. the segments in texts Ba, Ya and Sa.

<sup>43</sup> See Phag mo gru pa's *Chos drug gi zab lam bar do'i dmar khrid dam zab lam tshigs bcad ma*, *Zab lam lcag pa ma*, *Zab lam tshigs bcad ma'i lhan thabs rin chen gter mdzod*, and *Bla ma nā ro pa'i chos drug gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rim pa dang gdams ngag gnad kyi dbye ba mdor bsodus pa*. Further, refer to Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje's *Zab lam nā ro chos drug gi gsal byed spyi chings khrid yig dang bcas pa gzhugs so / karma pa rang byung rdo rje'i chos drug gser zhun mar grags so*, and *Chos drug gi sgom khrid*.

being predominantly an oral instruction. This is, for example, the case with the *nā ro chos drug* segments and short texts found in the collected works of Bla ma Zhang Brtson 'grus grags pa (1123–93), 'Jig rten mgon po Rin chen dpal (1143–1217), Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje (1189–1258) and Rgyal ba Yang dgon pa (1213–58).<sup>44</sup>

The *bka' dpe* archetypes are, however, quite problematic, because the texts must have circulated as a loose set of verses appearing in at least three different versions in the early sources. None of the versions include instructions on all the yogas of Nā ro pa, but they only concern the instruction on the practice of inner heat, which generally is considered the fundamental practice among the six yogas. Therefore, the text is only quoted and followed in the chapters dealing with inner heat in the various *nā ro chos drug* manuals, whereas no root text is used in chapters or segments concerning the other yogas of Nā ro pa.

As for their structure, the *bka' dpe* archetypes begin by mentioning Nā ro pa's recitation of the *Cakrasaṃvara* mantra and tell how he received a prophecy from a *ḍākiṇī* goddess to go and meet his teacher Ti lo pa. Next, they elucidate the tantric nature of the body and mind, and continue to explain the sitting posture for the yoga of *gtum mo*. They then go on to describe the special pot-like breathing technique (*kumbhaka*, *bum can*) in the four stages that are used in this practice, and point out the visualised channels, cakras and the inner movement of the wind-energy (*rlung*) generated by this effort. They end by explaining the result of *gtum mo* as the attainment of buddhahood in the present life. This general structure is the same for the various versions of the early text, and while many of their verses are shared by all, there certainly are sufficient variations in the verses and their order to speak of three different recensions. At least two different recensions are found in the five *nā ro chos drug* manuals quoting the *bka' dpe* archetypes in the collected works of Sgam

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<sup>44</sup> Refer to the bibliography for the titles of their works.

po pa,<sup>45</sup> and a third version is the above-named song of Mi la ras pa entitled *Dngos po gsal bar byed pa*.

These three early recensions differ from the two versions of the *bka' dpe* known from the later tradition, viz. the *Bka' dpe che chung* and *Bka' dpe phyi ma*, because both the later versions are much longer texts giving explanations on eight practices within the yogas of Nā ro pa, including inner heat, illusory body, lucid dreaming, luminosity, transference, the intermediate state, body-entering, and the 'method path' (*thabs lam*). There is, though, an overlap between the later and earlier versions in the chapter on inner heat, which is, as mentioned above, the only yoga presented in the early versions. To this may be added that the *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* also shares several lines with the *bka' dpe* archetypes and can therefore be seen as a more distant cousin of these texts.

To sum up, only three sources were relied on as root-texts in the early *nā ro chos drug* traditions: the *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* belonging to Ras chung pa's *snyan brgyud* transmission, Mar pa's *Eight Verses*, and the *bka' dpe* archetypes covering only the instruction on *gtum mo*, a much shorter text than the two versions of the *bka' dpe* known in the later traditions. The other sources presented by the later traditions as authoritative sources for the *nā ro chos drug* were not used or referred to in the early *nā ro chos drug* literature.

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<sup>45</sup> The two recensions are found in texts Ki 2 (recension A) as opposed to Ki 3–4 (recension B). The text found in Pa. 5–6, Tsha 1 and Ya 3 overlap with both editions, but in particular with recension B.

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- Anonymous. *Nā ro chos drug* manual based on notes made by Si tu pa padma nyin byed dbang po (1774–1853) and 'Jang sprul sku skye dbang rgyal (unidentified) entitled *Nā ro chos drug las gtum mo'i bogs 'don lus sbyong 'khrul 'khor gyi zhal khrid kun gsal me long* in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Naropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 361–422.
- Anonymous. Lineage prayer to the *Dwags lha sgam po nā ro chos drug* and *Mahāmudrā* lineage entitled *Sgam po lugs kyi phyag chen dang chos drug zung 'brel gyi brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs byin rlabs 'pho ba'i gsang lam*, found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *nya* (TBRC W20877–0139), pp. 235–39.
- Anonymous. Discussion of how to encounter mistakes in the *nā ro chos drug* practices entitled *Dpal nā ro pa chen po'i gegs sel gser lnga'i man ngag*, found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ta* (TBRC 20877–0140), pp. 255–76. Contained in the section of texts belonging to the Karma kaṃ tshang tradition.
- Anonymous. Manual on the preliminary yoga practices entitled *'Khrul 'khor gyi sngon 'gro dang rjes bsdu* found in *Phyag chen khrid yig of Ngag-dban-bstan-pa'i-ñi-ma and other texts on the Mahāmudrā and Nā ro chos drug precepts of the Stag-lun-pa dkar-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscripts from the library of Ri-bo-che Rje-drung Rin-po-che of Padma-bkod by Tseten Dorji, Tezu: Tibetan Nyingma Monastery, 1973, TBRC W20522–0599, pp. 505–17.

Anonymous. *Gtum mo* yoga manual entitled *Gtum mo'i 'khrul 'khor bco brgyad* found in *Phyag chen khrid yig of Ngag-dban-bstan-pa'i-ni-ma and other texts on the Mahāmudrā and Nā ro chos drug precepts of the Stag-lun-pa dkar-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscripts from the library of Ri-bo-che Rje-drung Rin-po-che of Padma-bkod by Tseten Dorji, Tezu: Tibetan Nyingma Monastery, 1973, TBRC W20522–0599, pp. 519–28.

Anonymous. Manual for the preliminary yoga practices according to the 'Brug pa bka' brgyud tradition entitled *'Khrul 'khor gyi sngon 'gro* found in *Nā ro chos drug texts of the 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa traditions: a collection of rare texts on the Six Doctrines of Naropa*, Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, 1978, TBRC W23652–2393, pp. 1–4.

Anonymous. Untitled chart with instructions on how to dedicate the merit, found in *Nā ro chos drug texts of the 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa traditions: a collection of rare texts on the Six Doctrines of Nāropa*, Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, 1978, TBRC W23652–2393, p. 319.

Karma pa De bzhin gshegs pa (1384–1415), *nā ro chos drug* lineage prayer according to the Karma kaṃ tshang tradition entitled *Zab lam nā ro'i chos drug gi bla ma brgyud pa la gsol ba 'debs pa* in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Nāropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 1–9.

Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339):

- Theoretical *nā ro chos drug* exposition entitled *Zab lam nā ro chos drug gi gsal byed spyi chings khrid yig dang bcas pa bzhugs so / karma pa rang byung rdo rje'i chos drug gser zhun mar grags so* in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Naropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 109–45. Another edition is found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ta* (TBRC W20877–0140). pp. 17–61.
- *Nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Chos drug gi sgom khrid* in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of*

*Naropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 146–93.

- Untitled charts explaining the visualization of the nostrils in *gtum mo* practice according to Rang byung rdo rje's *Zab mo nang don* in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Naropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 335–36.

Karma Sangs rgyas chos 'phel (nineteenth century), short *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Snyan brgyud zab mo thun mong ma yin pa thabs lam nā ro chos drug gi 'don tshul dang 'khrul 'khor gab sprad tshul blo rmong rang gi brjed thos gsal ba* in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Naropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 305–21.

Kun dga' sgröl mchog (1507–65/1566), brief *nā ro chos drug* summary entitled *nā ro chos drug gi khrid yig* found as instruction no. 75 (folios 78a–80a, pp. 279–83) in his large collection of 108 instructions called *Jo nang khrid brgya*, printed as volume Tsha (vol. 18) of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas's *Gdams ngag mdzod* (for bibliographical details, see below).

Mkhan po Karma ratna rin chen dar rgyas (b. 1835), *nā ro chos drug* texts in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Naropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289:

- *Nā ro chos drug* commentary entitled *Chos drug bdud rtsi snying khu yi / zur rgyan lung gi 'od zer*, pp. 195–238.
- *Nā ro chos drug* liturgical remarks entitled *Zab lam nā ro chos drug bdud rtsi nying khu'i thun min tshangs gnas bzhi'i 'grel pa bla ma'i zhal lung slob ma'i bdud rtsi*, pp. 239–53.



- *Nā ro chos drug* liturgical remarks entitled *Sngag lam rtsa rlung thig le'i 'bar zhu dang 'brel ba'i smon lam tshig bzhi'i bsdus 'grel 'chi med don gyi thig le*, pp. 255–58.
- *Nā ro chos drug* liturgical remarks entitled *Chos drug gsol 'debs kyi 'grel pa gtum mo bde ba chen po'i thig le*, pp. 323–35.
- *Nā ro chos drug* liturgical remarks entitled *Chos drug gsol 'debs bde stong dbyer med kyi 'grel chung tshig don snyin po rab gsal*, pp. 337–53.
- *Nā ro chos drug* liturgical remarks entitled *Thabs lam smon lam tshig bzhi pa'i 'grel pa sbas don rab snang*, pp. 357–59.

Khams sprul Bstan 'dzin chos kyi nyi ma (1730–79/1780), *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Dpal nā ro chos drug gi khrid yig gsal byed zung 'jug mchog gi nges gnas zhes pa'i brjod byang*, found in *Phyag chen khrid yig of Ngag-dban-bstan-pa'i-ñi-ma and other texts on the Mahāmudrā and Nā ro chos drug precepts of stag-lun-pa dkar-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscripts from the library of Ri-bo-che Rje-drung Rin-po-che of Padma-bkod by Tseten Dorji, Tezu: Tibetan Nyingma Monastery, 1973, TBRC W20522–0599, pp. 315–503.

Khams sprul ngag dbang kun dga' bstan 'dzin (1680–1728), *nā ro chos drug* texts found in *Nā ro chos drug texts of the 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa traditions: a collection of rare texts on the Six Doctrines of Nāropa*, Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, 1978, TBRC W23652–2393:

- *Gtum mo* instruction according to the *snyan brgyud* tradition entitled *Mkha' 'gro'i snyan brgyud las gtum mo bde drod rang 'bar gyi zab gnad mdor bsdus*, pp. 5–12.
- *Gtum mo* instruction for displaying the accomplishment of the practice entitled *Gtum mo drod rtags mngon ston ras bud kyi lag len zin tho ye shes drod 'bar*, pp. 309–18.

'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal (1876–1958), editor of a large compilation of *mahāmudrā*, *rdzogs chen* and *nā ro chos drug* works entitled *Dkar rnying gi skyes chen du ma'i phyag rdzogs kyi gdams ngag gnad bsdus nyer mkho'i rin po che'i gter mdzod rtsib ri'i par ma* (known in brief as the *Rtsib ri'i par ma*), compiled in 1934–58, facsimile reproduction by Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, Darjeeling 1978–85, TBRC W20749.

- Gu ge yongs 'dzin Blo bzang bstan 'dzin (1748–1813), *gtum mo* instruction on the basis of the Vajrabhairava practice entitled *Dpal rdo rje 'jigs byed la brten pa'i zab lam nā ro chos drug gi nang tshan gtum mo'i gdams pa nyams su len tshul* in *Gu ge yongs 'dzin blo bzang bstan 'dzin gyi gsung 'bum*, reproduced from tracings from the Bkra shis lhun po xylograph, New Delhi: Chopel Legdan, 1976, vol. 1, TBRC W23879–4127, pp. 476–90.
- Dga' ldan khri pa Ngag dbang nor bu (b. nineteenth century), Dga' ldan Bstan 'gyur catalogue entitled *Bstan 'gyur rin po che srid zhi'i rgyan gcig gi dkar chag rin chen mdzes pa'i phra tsoms*, found in the Dga' ldan Bstan 'gyur vol. *tso*, TBRC W23702–1214 and in electronic form by ACIP ([www.asianclassics.org/](http://www.asianclassics.org/)).
- Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje (1189–1258), *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Thabs lam khyad par can gyi gdams pa / chos drug gi lag len gzhung na med pa rnams* found in his collected works called *Chos rje rgod tshang pa'i bka' 'bum dgos 'dod kun 'byung*, reproduced from a rare manuscript preserved at Rta mgo monastery, 5 volumes. Thimpu: Tango Monastic Community, 1981, TBRC W23661–2413, vol. 4, pp. 9–71.
- Rgyal ba Yang dgon pa (1213–58), *Collected Writings (gsun' 'bum) of Rgyal-ba yang-dgon-pa rgyal-mtshan-dpal*, reproduction of three volumes of the writings of the Stod 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa master from Rta-mgo Monastery in Bhutan, Thimphu: Tango Monastic Community, 1982, TBRC W23654:
- Extensive *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Ri chos kyi chos drug gi gzhung khrid chen mo*, vol. 1 (TBRC W23654–2387), pp. 297–354. Rgyal ba Yang dgon pa's Collected Works also contain a few individual manuals with the *gtum mo* and *bar do* instructions not listed here.
  - *Nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Rgyal ba yang dgon pa'i khyad chos ri chos yon tan kun 'byung gi snying po ma drug gi gdams zab*, found in *Nā ro chos drug texts of the 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa traditions: a collection of rare texts on the Six Doctrines of Nāropa*, Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, 1978, TBRC W23652–2393, pp. 321–484.
- Rgyal mtshan pa (unidentified), yoga manual entitled *'Khrul 'khor spyi yi sngon rjes kyi rim pa rnams kyi zin bris brjed dga' ba bskyed*, found in *Nā ro chos drug texts of the 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa traditions: a collection of rare texts on*

*the Six Doctrines of Nāropa*, Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, 1978, TBRC W23652–2393, pp. 155–308.

Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153), his collected works (*Dags po'i bka' 'bum*) contain the following nine *nā ro chos drug* works, all of which are anonymous but attributed to Sgam po pa:

- Segments 5–13 of text Pa entitled *Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / khrid chos mu tig tsar la brgyus pa*, 14 folios, containing instructions on (5) *bla ma mi la'i nyams myong gi gtum mo*, (6) *gtum mo ā thung*, (7) *gtum mo 'bar 'dzag*, (8) *'od gsal*, (9) *rmi lam*, (10) *sgyu lus*, (11) *bskyed rim 'pho ba*, (12) *btsan thabs 'pho ba*, and (13) *bar do dmar khrid*. Page references in some of the various editions (for editions and their sigla, refer to Sgam po pa's works listed below): ABC, vol. I, text Pa, folios 5v–14r; missing in TBRC copy of D; W, pp. 585–604; Z, vol. *kha*, pp. 372–404.
- Segments 3–10 of text Ba entitled *Rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / dmar khrid gsang chen / bar do'i dmar khrid / 'pho ba'i dmar khrid zhal gdams dang bcas pa*, containing instructions on (3–7) *gtum mo (rgan mo 'dzug tshugs kyi gdams pa* and *rlung zhon* instructions), (8) *sgyu lus*, (9) *'od gsal*, (10) *bar do dmar khrid* (copy of Pa. 13). Page references in the various editions: ABC, vol. I, text Ba, folios 5v–15r; D, vol. I, pp. 578–98; W, pp. 621–44; Z, vol. *kha*, pp. 437–75.
- Text Tsa entitled *Rje dags po lha rje'i gsung sgros / snyan brgyud gsal ba'i me long*, containing explanations on (1) the channels and *cakras*, (2) *gtum mo* and *'pho ba*, (3) *'od gsal*, (4) *rmi lam*, (5) *gtum mo*, (6) meditation experience, (7–8) *karmamudrā*, (9–10) general *nā ro chos drug* explanations, (11) *bar do* and *'pho ba*. Page references in some of the various editions: α, vol. *kha*, 71r–80v; ABC, vol. I, text Tsa, 11 folios; D, vol. 1, pp. 615–35; W, pp. 662–868; X, vol. II, pp. 70–87; Y, vol. 2, pp. 251–86; Z, vol. *kha*, pp. 505–40.
- Text Tsha entitled *Rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / snyan brgyud brjed byang ma*, containing instructions on (1) *gtum mo*, (2) *rmi lam*, (3) *bar do*, (4–5) *'pho ba*, (6) *gnyid 'od gsal*, (7) *sgyu lus*, (8) *grong 'jug 'pho ba*, and (9) *sgyu lus* and *rmi lam*. Page references in some of the various editions: α, vol. *kha*, 176v–85v; ABC, vol. I, text Tsha, 10 folios; D, vol. I, pp. 637–55; W, pp. 686–707; X, vol. II, pp. 88–101; Y, vol. 2, pp. 287–315; Z, vol. *kha*, pp. 541–73. The text is further contained in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams*

*ngag mdzod* (s.v.), vol. *nya* (TBRC W20877–0139), pp. 147–64, under the title *Dpal 'khor lo bde mchog snyan brgyud dwags po lugs kyi man ngag gi rtsa ba brjed byang ma*.

- Segments 3–4 of text Ya entitled *Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / phyag rgya chen po'i rtsa ba la ngo sprod pa zhes kyang bya snang ba lam khyer gyi rtog pa cig chog ces kyang bya phyag rgya chen po gnyug ma mi gyur ba ces kyang bya ba*, containing (3) a commentary on a *bka' dpe* archetype and (4) instructions on *bar do*. Page references in some of the various editions: ABC, vol. II, text Ya, folios 6v–9r; D, vol. I, pp. 384–90; Z, vol. *ga*, pp. 145–56.
- Segment 14 of text Sa entitled *Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / mdo sngags kyi sgom don bsdus pa*, containing short note on *'od gsal* with mention of non-Mar pa lineages. Page references in some of the various editions: α, vol. Kha, 71r; D, vol. II, p. 60; X vol. II, pp. 278; Z, vol. *ga*, p. 300.
- Segments 1–14 of text Ki entitled *Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / gnas lugs gnyis kyi man ngag dang go cha gnyis kyi man ngag*, containing instructions on (1–2) *gtum mo dgu skor*, (3) *'khor lo drug*, (4) *mchog gi gtum mo (mar pa'i man ngag)*, (5) *sgyu lus lnga ldan*, (6) *'od gsal*, (7) *de kho na nyid sgom pa*, (8) *sku bzhi rang chas ma*, (9) *'od gsal 'chi ka ma*, (10) *bar do*, (11) *'pho ba*, (12) *rmi lam*, (13) *bar do sku bzhi*, and (14) *lus gnad*. Page references in some of the various editions: α, vol. Kha, 15r–26r; D, vol. II, pp. 121–48; X vol. II, pp. 329–52; Y, vol. 3, pp. 247–91; Z, vol. *ga*, 403–48.
- Segments 6–20 of text Khi entitled *Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / bka' tshoms dang phyag rgya chen po lnga ldan / lam mchog rin chen phreng ba / chos bzhi mdor bsdus / nyams lan mdor bsdus / nyams lan mdor bsdus / gnad kyi gzer gsang / zhal gdams gsang mdzod ma // doṃ bhi ba'i gtum mo / 'khrul 'khor gyi gtum mo / bar do'i gdams pa / 'pho ba'i zhal gdams rnams*. As indicated by its title, the text is a compilation of several smaller works. The *nā ro chos drug* segments are the texts indicated in the title as *zhal gdams gsang mdzod ma* and onwards. It contains instructions on (6) the *nā ro chos drug* generally, (7) *bka' dpe* archetype commentary, (8) *'khrul 'khor*, (9) *gtum mo*, (10) *'khrul 'khor gtum mo* and *doṃ bhi ba'i gtum mo* (11–12) *gtum mo*, (13) *zhabs rjes gsang spyod ma*, (14) *bar do bzhi*, (15–16) *'pho ba*, (17) *bar do gsum*, (18) *zung 'jug*, (19) *gtum mo lam rim bcu drug pa (rngog dang mi la'i dgongs pa)*, and (20) *bskyed rim*. Page references in some of the various

editions: α, vol. Ka, 122r–33v; vol. Kha, 199v–203r and 13v–14r; D, vol. II, pp. 195–241; X, vol. II, pp. 391–432; Y, vol. 3, pp. 375–450; Z, vol. *ga*, pp. 530–608.

- Text Ci entitled *Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / mar pa'i tshigs bcad ma'i 'grel pa*, containing (1) the root text being the *Eight Verses* of Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros, followed by a commentary thereon explaining (2) *rmi lam*, (3) *rim pa lnga ldan gcig*, (4) *sgyu lus*, (5) *gtum mo*, (6) *bodhicitta*. Page references in some of the various editions: α, vol. Kha, 195v–99v; ABC, vol. II, text Ci, 6 folios; D, vol. II, pp. 289–99; omitted from Y; Z, vol. *nga*, pp. 35–52.

The *Collected Works of Gampopa* are available in the following editions:

1. siglum α: handwritten fourteenth or fifteenth century manuscript of unknown origin; photocopies are presently in the possession of Gyaltrul Trungram Sherpa Rinpoche and myself.
2. siglum A: the 1520 Dwags lha sgam po xylographic print belonging to Chakphuk Tulku in Phole, Nepal, Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project microfilm reel nos. L594/1 & L595/1, running no. L6086.
3. siglum B: the 1575 Mang yul gung thang xylograph produced by Byams pa phun tshogs (b. sixteenth century), Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project) microfilm reel nos. L118/3, L119/1 and L136/7, running nos. L1525 and L1652.
4. siglum C: a later reprint of the Mang yul gung thang xylograph, date and origin unknown, Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project microfilm reel no. L247/4, running no. L2957.
5. siglum D: Sde dge xylograph, produced at the Sde dge par khang chos mdzod chen mo in the eighteenth or nineteenth century, TBRC W22393.
6. siglum W: *Selected Writings of Sgam-po-pa Bsod-nams-rin-chen* published by Topden Tshering, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji, Himachal Pradesh, 1974, being a reproduction of an incomplete handwritten copy of the 1520 Dwags lha sgam po xylograph written in Tibetan cursive script, TBRC W23346. Contains only the sections until and including text Tsha.
7. siglum X: *Collected works (gsung 'bum) of Sgam-po-pa Bsod-nams-rin-chen* published by Khasdub Gyatsho Shashin, Delhi, 1975, being a reproduction of

an incomplete handwritten copy of the 1520 Dwags lha sgam po xylograph written in Tibetan standard script.

8. siglum Y: *Collected Works (gsung 'bum) of sGam po pa bSod Nams Rin Chen* published by Kargyud Nyamso Khang, 3 volumes, Darjee-ling, 1982, being an incomplete reproduction of a handwritten copy of the 1520 Dwags lha sgam po xylograph written in Tibetan standard script, TBRC W23566.
9. siglum Z: *Khams gsum chos kyī rgyal po dpal ldan mnyam med sgam po pa 'gro mgon bsod nams rin chen mchog gi gsung 'bum yid bzhin nor bu*, published by Bla ma 'Phrin las rnam rgyal and Mkhan po Shes grub bstan 'dzin, five volumes, Kathmandu, 2001, being a computer-typed pecha-style text based mainly on the Sde dge xylograph, TBRC W23439. Among these modern reprints, the 1975 and the 1982 editions are those closest to the readings of the first xylograph.

Dngul chu Dharma bha dra (1772-1851), *nā ro chos drug* commentary on Tsong kha pa's *Yid ches gsum ldan* treatise entitled *Nā ro chos drug gi zin bris yid ches dgongs rgyan* found in *Collected Works (gsuñ 'bum) of Dñul-chu Dharma-Bhadra*, reproduced from a manuscript copy traced from prints of the Dñul-chu blocks by Champa Oser, New Delhi: Tibet House, 1973–81, vol. 8, TBRC W20548–1311, pp. 383–471.

Cog grwa Mi pham bstan pa'i nyi ma (b. eighteenth century), *nā ro chos drug* yoga exercise manuals found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma* compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *cha*, TBRC W20749–1269:

- *Bsre 'pho'i 'khrul 'khor gyi rtsa tshig*, pp. 379–91.
- *Bsre 'pho'i 'khrul 'khor spyi'i sngon rjes kyī rim pa mams kyī zin bris brjed byang blo dman dga' bskyed*, pp. 393–423.
- *Bsre 'pho las rtsa ba'i 'khrul 'khor nā ro chos drug skor gyī zin bris rjed byang du bkod pa*, pp. 423–32.
- *Bsre 'pho'i 'khrul 'khor yon tan kun 'byung las / sngon 'gro nyi shu pa'i rtsa 'grel*, pp. 432–42.
- *Lnga bcu pa'i 'grel pa*, pp. 442–64.
- *Thig le nyi shu pa'i 'grel pa*, pp. 464–73.
- *Bsre 'pho'i yig chung 'khrul 'khor gyī 'grel pa*, pp. 473–78.
- *Thig le bcu gnyis pa'i 'grel pa*, pp. 478–81.
- *Dbu ma'i 'khrul 'khor bco brgyad nang 'don gyī 'khrul 'khor*, pp. 481–85.

'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas (1813–99), *Gdams ngag mdzod: A Treasury of Precious Methods and Instructions of the Major and Minor Buddhist Traditions of Tibet, brought together and structured into a coherent system by 'Jam-mgon Kōi-sprul; edited from a set of the Dpal-spunis prints and published at the order of H.H. Dingo Chhentse Rimpoche*, Paro: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1979–81, v. 1–18, TBRC W20877:

- *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma zhes bya ba mkha' 'gro ma'i man ngag* (*\*Ājñāsamṃyakpramāṇanāmaḍākinyupadeśa*), Anonymous. vol. *ja* (W20877–0138), pp. 69–89.
- *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* (*\*Karnatantravajrapāda*), Anonymous. vol. *ja* (W20877–0138), pp. 89–95.
- *Bka' dpe che chung*, also known as *Grub chen nā ro pa'i gdams ngag chos drug skor gyi bka' dpe tshigs su bcad pa*, Anonymous. vol. *ja* (W20877–0138), pp. 95–106.
- *Chos drug gi man ngag* (*\*Śaddharmopadeśa*) by Ti lo pa, vol. *ja* (W20877–0138), pp. 106–07.
- *Mkhas grub chen nā ro tā pas mal 'byor gyi dbang phyug mar pa lo tsā la gdams pa'i chos drug dril ba rdo rje'i mgur*, attributed to Nā ro pa, vol. *ja* (W20877–0138), pp. 108–09.
- *Rje btsun chen po mi la ras pas mdzad pa'i snyan brgyud gsal bar skor gsum sogs* by Mi la ras pa, vol. *ja* (W20877–0138), pp. 109–21.

'Jam gling pa Blo gros chos 'phel (1665–1727), *gter ston* of the 'Ba' ra lineage of the West Tibetan 'Brug pa bka' brgyud (Stod 'brug), who revealed a manual combining guru yoga, mahāmudrā and *nā ro chos drug*, entitled *Rje blo gros chos 'phel gyi zab gter / skyes mchog 'ba' ra ba rgyal mtshan dpal bzang gis mdzad pa'i bla sgrub phyag chen chos drug bcas mdor bsdus snying po dril ba*, found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *tha* (TBRC W20877–0141), pp. 349–82.

'Jam dbyangs Mkhyen brtse'i dbang po (1820–92), *nā ro chos drug* texts following the *snyan brgyud* tradition found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *nya* (TBRC W20877–0139):

- Prayer to the *snyan brgyud* lineage entitled *Bde mchog mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud pa yid bzhin nor bu la gsol ba 'debs pa byin rlabs dpal gter*, pp. 61–64.

- *Nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Bde mchog mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud kyi lam rim mdor bsdus pa yid bzhin nor bu'i snying po*, pp. 64–102. According to its colophon, it is based on the root texts of the *snyan brgyud* tradition by Mi la ras pa and Ras chung pa called *Tshig brgyud du gdams pa'i bum dbang yid bzhin nor bu, steng sgo rnam grol chos drug, phyag rgya chen po ye shes gsal byed* and *Lam blo nas gcod pa bar do ngo sprod kyi khrid yig*, along with Gtsang smyon He ru ka's *Rdo rje tshig rkang gi gzhung 'grel khrid yig zhal shes* and Kun mkhyen Grub thob dbang po's *Khrid yig chen mo*.
- 'Jig rten mgon po Rin chen dpal (1143–1217), *nā ro chos drug* instructions found in his collected works entitled *Khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po thub dbang ratna shri'i phyi yi bka' 'bum nor bu'i bang mdzod*, Delhi: Drikung Kagyu Ratna Shri Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 2001, TBRC W23743:
- *Gtum mo* posture instruction entitled *Gtum mo'i lus gnad dang bral na re ba med ces pa*, vol. 1 (W23743–2565), pp. 446–47.
  - *'Pho ba* instruction entitled *'Od gsal chen po'i 'pho ba'i gdams pa*, vol. 1 (W23743–2565), pp. 449–50.
  - Prayer to the *bka' babs* lineage entitled *Bka' babs brgyud pa'i mos gus kyi dngos grub*, vol. 1 (W23743–2565), pp. 503–06.
  - Excerpt from a song by Mi la ras pa explaining the *nā ro chos drug* tradition entitled *Rje nā ro'i gdams pa mi la'i thugs la shar ba rung rgang par spring pa*, vol. 2 (W23743–2566), pp. 295–98.
- Tā la'i bla ma Skal bzang rgya mtsho (1708–57), record of received teachings entitled *Zab pa dang rgya che ba'i dam pa'i chos kyi thob yig rin chen dbang gi rgyal po'i do shal*, found in *The Collected Works (gsun 'bum) of the Seventh Dalai Lama Blo-bzañ-bskal-bzang-rgya-mtsho*, reproduced from a set of prints from the 1945 'Bras-spuñs blocks from the library of the Ven. Dhardo Rinpoche by Lama Dodrup Sangye, Gangtok: Sherab Gyaltzen Palace Monastery, 1983, vol. XI, TBRC W2623–2334, pp. 1–769.
- Stag lung pa Ngag gi dbang po (dates unknown), *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Dpal nā ro pa'i chos drug gi khrid yig yid bzhin nor bu*, found in *Phyag chen khrid yig of Ngag-dban-bstan-pa'i-ñi-ma and other texts on the Mahāmudrā and Nā ro chos drug precepts of Stag-lun-pa dkar-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscripts from the library of Ri-bo-che Rje-drung Rin-po-che of Padma-bkod by Tseten Dorji, Tezu: Tibetan Nyingma Monastery, 1973,



TBRC W20522–0599, pp. 271–313. Based on notes made by Stag lung thang pa Bkra shis dpal (1142–1209/1210) from the teachings of Phag mo gru pa.

Stag lung pa Ngag dbang bstan pa'i nyi ma (b. 1788), *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang* commentary entitled *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang gi 'grel bshad zab lam chu bo kun 'dus nor bu'i 'byung gnas*, written in 1837–38, facsimile of an *dbu med* manuscript from the library of Ri-bo-che-rje-drung of Padma-bkod, published by Tseten Dorji, Tezu (Arunachal Pradesh): Tibetan Nyingma Monastery, 1974, 2 volumes, TBRC W21550–0387 and W21550–0388.

Stag lung pa Nam mkha' dpal bzang po (1333–79), *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Chos drug rdo rje'i gzhung*, found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *tha* (TBRC 20877–0141), pp. 327–47.

Ti lo pa (c. 928–1009):

- *Chos drug gi man ngag* (\**Śaddharmopadeśā*), translated in Tibetan by Nā ro pa and Mar pa, found in the following editions:
  - Q. 4630, Peking xylograph Bstan 'gyur, 1724.
  - Dga' ldan handwritten Golden Bstan 'gyur, 1731–41.
  - D. 2330, Sde dge xylograph Bstan 'gyur, 1737–44, vol. *rgyud zhi pa*, folios 270a–71a.
  - Snar thang xylograph Bstan 'gyur, 1741–42.
  - Co ne xylograph Bstan 'gyur, 1753–73.
  - 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod* (see above).
  - Torricelli 1996a: 147–50.
- *Snyan brgyud* transmission entitled *Rje btsun ras chung pa'i lugs kyi dpal 'khor lo sdom pa snyan brgyud gyi gzhung chung tilli pas mdzad pa*, but according to its colophon also known as *Yid bzhin nor bu zhes bya ba mkha' 'gro ma'i gsang tshig tilli pas bkod pa*, found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ja*, TBRC W20877–0138, pp. 467–75.

Rtogs ldan Shākya shrī (1853–1919):

- *Nā ro chos drug* lineage prayer entitled *Zab chos nā ro chos drug gi brgyud 'debs gsang chen rol mo'i sgra dbyangs* found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma* compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *cha*, TBRC W20749–1269, pp. 365–77.

- *Snyan brgyud 'pho ba* instruction entitled *Snyan brgyud gsang ba'i mthar thug las / lam zab mo 'pho ba'i gdams pa snying gi thig le* found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma* compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *ja*, TBRC W20749–1270, pp. 113–27. The text is also found in *Grub dbang shākya shrī jnyā na'i gsung 'bum*, published by Khenpo Shedup Tenzin and Lama Thinley Namgyal, Kathmandu: Shri Gautam Buddha Vihara, 1998, TBRC W23563–2156), pp. 429–42.

Thub bstan phun tshogs and Sangs rgyas rgya mtsho, *'phrul 'khor dpe ris kyi mchan 'grel*, printed in *Rtsa rlung 'phrul 'khor*, ed. Thub bstan phun tshogs, Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995, pp. 35–60.

Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal (c. 1512–87), *nā ro chos drug* manual of the Dwags po bka' brgyud tradition entitled *Zab lam chos drug gi khrid yig chen mo gsang chen gyi de nyid gsal ba* in *Gdams ngag mdzod: A Treasury of Precious Methods and Instructions of the Major and Minor Buddhist Traditions of Tibet, brought together and structured into a coherent system by 'Jam-mgon Koñ-sprul; edited from a set of the Dpal-spuis prints and published at the order of H.H. Dingo Chhentse Rimpoche*, Paro: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1979–81, vol. *nya*, TBRC W20877–0139, pp. 253–344.

Bde chen chos 'khor yongs 'dzin Dge legs bzhad pa (1677–1719), *bar do* manual entitled *Bar do gsol 'debs kyi 'grel pa 'khrul mun gsal ba'i sgron me* found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma* compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *ja*, TBRC W20749–1270, pp. 61–92.

Bde chen chos 'khor yongs 'dzin 'Jam dpal dpa' bo (1720–80), *nā ro chos drug* texts found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma* compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *cha*, TBRC W20749–1269:

- Large *nā ro chos drug* treatise entitled *Dpal nā ro chos drug gi khrid yig gsal byed zung 'jug mchog gi nges gnas*, pp. 93–309.
- *Gtum mo* manual entitled *Dpal nā ro chos drug las rtsa ba tsaṅdā lī dang po'i las can rnam kyi bgo skal du rnam par phye ba'i zin bris skal bzang ku mu ta 'dzum pa'i zla tshes*, pp. 311–64.

Nā ro pa (c. 956–1040), *Mkhas grub chen nā ro tā pas rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug mar pa lo tsā la gdams pa'i chos drug dril ba rdo rje'i mgur* in the following editions:

- *Sgra bsgyur mar pa lo tstsha'i rnam thar mthong ba don ldan* written by Gtsang smyon he ru ka rus pa'i rgyan can (1452–1507) in 1505, xylograph published by Kagyu Tekchen Shedra Institute for Mahayana Buddhist Studies, Rumtek Monastery, Sikkim, from a xylograph kept in Apho Rinpoche's monastery in Manali, folios 54a–55a.
- 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod* (see above).
- Torricelli 1996a: 157–59.

Padma dkar po (1527–92), *Collected Works (gsuñ 'bum) of Kun-mkhyen Padma-dkar-po*, reproduced photographically from the 1920–28 Gnam 'Brug Se-ba Byañ-chub-gliñ blocks, Forest View Villa, West Point, Darjeeling, W.B.: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1974, TBRC W10736:

- Record of received teachings entitled *Bka' brgyud kyi bka' 'bum gsil bu rnams kyi gsan yig*, vol. 4 (TBRC W10736–1243), pp. 309–496.
- List of *nā ro chos drug* sources (verbatim excerpt from the *gsan yig* listed above) entitled *Rje btsun nā ro chen po'i bsre 'pho skor gyi tho yig nyin byed 'od kyi snang byed*, vol. 22 (TBRC W10736–1261), pp. 1–5.
- Extensive *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Jo bo nā ro pa'i khyad chos bsre 'pho'i khrid rdo rje'i theg par bgrod pa'i shing rta chen po*, vol. 22 (TBRC W10736–1261), pp. 7–263.
- Short *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Chos drug bsdu pa'i zin bris*, vol. 22 (TBRC W10736–1261), pp. 265–301. Another edition is found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma*, compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *cha*, TBRC W20749–1269, pp. 45–92. An edition is also found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *tha* (TBRC W20877–0141), pp. 65–89. Another edition is found in *Phyag chen khrid yig of Ngag-dban-bstan-pa'i-ñi-ma and other texts on the Mahāmudrā and Nā ro chos drug precepts of Stag-luñ-pa dkar-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscripts from the library of Ri-bo-che Rje-drung Rin-po-che of Padma-bkod by Tseten Dorji, Tezu: Tibetan Nyingma Monastery, 1973, made available by TBRC W20522–0599), pp. 529–63. Another edition is found in *Na ro chos drug texts of the 'Brug-pa Dkar-brgyud-pa traditions: a collection of rare texts on the Six Doctrines of Naropa*, 1978, Thimphu: Kunsang Topgay, TBRC W23652–2393, pp. 13–154. Still another edition is found in *Rtsa rlung 'phrul 'khor*, edited by Thub bstan phun tshogs, Chengdu, Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995, pp. 449–84.

An English translation is given in Evans-Wentz 1935: 155ff. An outline (*sa bcad*) is given by Torricelli 1996a: 159–65.

- *Nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Bsre 'pho'i lam dbye bsdu*, vol. 22 (TBRC W10736–1261), pp. 303–633. Another edition is found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma*, compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *ba*, TBRC W20749–1278, pp. 1–417.
- Extensive *nā ro chos drug* commentary on the root text *Bka' yang dag pa'i tshad ma* entitled *Jo bo nā ro pa'i khyad chos bsre 'pho'i gzhung 'grel rdo rje 'chang gi dgongs pa gsal bar byed pa*, vol. 23 (TBRC W10736–1262), pp. 1–634. Another edition is found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma* compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *pha*, TBRC W20749–1277, pp. 1–797.
- Brief outline of the *nā ro chos drug* teachings entitled *Khyad chos bsre 'pho'i sa bcad nā ro ta pa'i zhal gyi lung*, vol. 23 (TBRC W10736–1262), pp. 635–45.
- Manual for the *nā ro chos drug* preliminary practices entitled *Thun mong ma yin pa'i sngon 'gro* found in *Phyag chen khrid yig of Ngag-dban-bstan-pa'i-ñi-ma and other texts on the Mahāmudrā and Nā ro chos drug precepts of Stag-lun-pa dkar-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscripts from the library of Ri-bo-che Rje-drung Rin-po-che of Padma-bkod by Tseten Dorji, Tezu: Tibetan Nyingma Monastery, 1973, TBRC W20522–0599, pp. 565–71.

Paṅ chen bla ma Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan (1570–1662), *nā ro chos drug* manual relying on Nā ro pa's song to Mar pa entitled *Nā ro chos drug gi zab khrid gser gyi lde mig*. In *Paṅ chen bla ma blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum*, reproduced from prints of the Tashi Lhünpo blocks, New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Gurudev, 1973, vol. *nga*, TBRC W23430–1639, pp. 649–64.

Dpal 'byor don grub (fifteenth century), *mdo sngags thams cad kyi rgyal po rgyud sde bzhi'i rtsa ba ma rgyud thams cad kyi snying po bskyed rim lhan cig skyes ma rdzogs rim rlung sems gnyis med gsal bar ston pa dpal n ā ro pa chen po'i chos drug nyams len gsal ba'i sgron me*, printed in *Rtsa rlung 'phrul 'khor*, ed. Thub bstan phun tshogs, Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995, pp. 61–448.

Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–70), *nā ro chos drug* manuals found in his collected works entitled *Dus gsum sangs rgyas thams cad kyi thugs rje'i rnam rol dpal ldan phag gru rdo rje rgyal po mchog gi gsung 'bum rin po che*,

published by Khenpo Shedup Tenzin and Lama Thinley Namgyal, Kathmandu: Gam-po-pa Library, 2003, TBRC W23891:

- Versified *nā ro chos drug* manual on all the yogas entitled *Chos drug gi thabs lam bar do'i dmar khrid dam thabs lam tshigs bcad ma*, vol. 4 (TBRC W23891–3168), pp. 1–51.
- Prose *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Thabs lam lhug pa ma*, vol. 4 (TBRC W23891–3168), pp. 53–108.
- *Nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Thabs lam tshigs bcad pa'i lhan thabs rin chen gter mdzod*, vol. 4 (TBRC W23891–3168), pp.109–40.
- Exposition of the channels and winds entitled *Rtsa rlung rgyu 'bras ma*, vol. 4 (TBRC W23891–3168), pp. 141–74.
- Explanation of the results of the yogas entitled *Cig char rim gyis ngos sprod lus dag ma dag gi rnam dbye thabs lam tshigs bcad ma'i ngo sprod*, vol. 4 (TBRC W23891–3168), pp. 175–86.
- Versified explanation of the story of the *mahāsiddha* Kambalipā and his system of yogas entitled *Lwa ba pa'i thabs lam rdo rje'i tshig gsum dge ba'i bshes gnyen grong pa la gnang ba gdams pa nying khu ma*, vol. 4 (TBRC W23891–3168), pp. 187–213.
- Versified explanation of Kambalipā's instructions on *gtum mo*, *'od gsal*, *rmi lam*, *sgyu lus*, *'pho ba* and *Lwa ba pa'i rdo rje'i tshig gsum* entitled *Lwa ba pa'i zhal gdams skor la chos tshan drug*, vol. 4 (TBRC W23891–3168), pp. 215–52.
- Exposition of the *nā ro chos drug* lineage with short hagiographies and a brief explanation of the *nā ro chos drug* instructions entitled *Bla ma nā ro pa'i chos drug gi bla ma brgyud pa'i rim pa dang gdams ngag gnad kyi dbye ba mdor bsdus pa*, vol. 8 (TBRC W23891–3172), pp. 462–83.
- Versified explanation of *gtum mo*, *rmi lam*, *sgyu lus* and *'pho ba* entitled *Thabs lam yid bzhin nor bu'i phreng ba*, vol. 8 (TBRC W23891–3172), pp. 679–707.

Bu ston rin chen grub (1290–1364), Bstan 'gyur catalogue entitled *Bstan 'gyur gyi dkar chag yid bzhin nor bu dbang gi rgyal po'i phreng ba* written in 1334, found in *Bu ston rin chen grub kyi gsung 'bum*, the Lha sa Zhol edition, vol. *la* (26), 124 folios (pp. 405–647), TBRC W1934–0759.

- Ben sgar ba 'Jam dpal bzang po (b. fifteenth century), *nā ro chos drug* lineage prayer according to the Karma kaṃ tshang tradition entitled *Chos drug gi nyas brgyud zung 'jug brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs smon lam dang bcas pa* in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Nāropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 15–21.
- Brag dkar sngags rams pa Blo bzang bstan pa rab rgyas (b. seventeenth century), *nā ro chos drug* manual relying on Tsong kha pa's *Yid ches gsum ldan* treatise entitled *Chos drug yid ches gsum ldan gyi yang snying dmar khrid sku gsum nor bu'i gling du bgrod pa'i gru gzings*, found in *Blo bzang bstan pa rab rgyas kyi gsung 'bum, rong po dgon chen* xylograph, vol. 1, TBRC W28897–4821), section ā, pp. 631–65.
- 'Ba' mda' Dge legs (1844–1904), *nā ro chos drug* works contained in *'Ba' mda' dge legs kyi gsung 'bum*, lithographic printing, 'Dzam thang (rnga ba rdzong), 1990s, vol. *tsa*, available from TBRC W23899–3223 (for research on this *gsung 'bum*, refer to Kapstein 1997):
- *Zab lam nā ro chos drug gi nyams len khrid yig bde chen ye shes rdo rje*, pp. 1–175.
  - *Zab lam nā ro chos drug gi sngon 'gro'i lam gyi khrid yig theg chen lam bzang*, pp. 177–229.
  - *Gtum mo sgyu lus 'od gsal gsum gyi nyams len mdor bsdu phan bde'i snang ba*, pp. 283–92.
  - *Dpal 'khor lo sdom pa chen po'i lam gyi rim pa nā ro chos drug gi spyi don rnam par nges pa dngos grub snye ma*, pp. 301–604.
- 'Bri gung Kun dga' rin chen (1475–1527), *nā ro chos drug* treatise entitled *Zab lam chos drug gi khrid gyi lhan thabs sbas don kun gsal*. In *Miscellaneous Writings (bka' 'bum thor bu) of 'Bri-gung Chos-rje Kun-dga'-rin-chen*, reproduced from a rare manuscript from the library of Tokden Rinpoche of Gangon, Smanrtsis shesrig spendzod 27, Leh: Tashigangpa, 1972, pp. 385–413. According to its colophon, the text was authored by Rdo rje 'dzin pa mi bskyod rdo rje.

- 'Bri gung rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659), *Kun mkhyen rig pa 'dzin pa chen po chos kyi grags pa'i gsung 'bum*, Dehra Dun: Drikung Kagyu Institute, 1999, vol. 13, TBRC W22082–2192:
- Prayer to the teachers of the *nā ro chos drug* lineage entitled *Zab lam nā ro'i chos drug gi bla ma brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs mdor bsdus*, pp. 95–98.
  - Prayer to the teachers of the *nā ro chos drug* lineage entitled *Nā ro'i chos drug gi rtogs pa don gyi brgyud pa'i bla mar gsol ba 'debs pa'i tshig nyung ngur byas pa*, pp. 99–103. Another edition is found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ta* (TBRC W20877–0140), pp. 523–25.
  - Prayer to the teachers of the *nā ro chos drug* lineage entitled *Zab lam nā ro'i chos drug gi bka' bab nyams dang rtogs pa byin rlabs kyi bla ma brgyud pa'i gsol 'debs dad pa'i lang tsho*, pp. 105–12.
  - Short *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Chos drug dril ba'i gdams pa*, pp. 113–23. Another edition is found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ta* (TBRC W20877–0140), pp. 515–21.
  - Large *nā ro chos drug* treatise entitled *Zab lam nā ro'i chos drug gi khrid kyi lag len gsal bar bshad pa nā ro zhabs kyi gyi lung bzang po*, pp. 125–284.
  - *Gtum mo* and *'pho ba* instructions received by 'Bri gung rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa in a vision of Nā ro pa entitled *'Khrul snang du dpal nā ro pas gnang ba'i tsa li dang 'pho ba zab pa*, pp. 285–91.
- 'Brug chen kun gzigs Chos kyi snang ba (1768–1822), *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid kyi dmigs rim snying po bsdus pa gsang ba'i don gsal* found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma*, compiled by 'Khrul zhig Padma chos rgyal, vol. *ja*, TBRC W20749–1270, pp. 1–60.
- 'Brug chen rgyal dbang Kun dga' dpal 'byor (1429–76), *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Dpal nā ro chos drug gi khrid yig mchog gi gru chen dang gsang spyod zlog sgom kyi khrid yig zil non seng ge'i nga ro* in *Collected Works (gsun'bum) of Rgyal-dban rje Kun-dga' dpal-'byor*, reproduced from tracings of prints from Punakha completed with sections from the Chos-rgyal-lhun-po redaction, Darjeeling: Kargyud Sungrab Nyamso Khang, 1982, vol. 2, TBRC W10954–0837, pp. 173–209.
- Bla ma Zhang Brtson 'grus grags pa (1123–93), an untitled collection of *nā ro chos drug* instructions simply marked *chos drug* in *Bla ma zhang brtson 'grus grags*

*pa'i gsung 'bum dang bka' rgya ma'i skor*, Kangding: facsimile of handwritten manuscript formerly kept at the Nationalities Library in Beijing, vol. 3, TBRC W13994–3027, pp. 170–219.

Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros (1002/1012–97):

- *Nā ro chos drug* commentary attributed to Mar pa but of uncertain authorship entitled *Gegs sel yid bzhin nor bu gsal byed snying po* contained in *Rtsib ri'i par ma* compiled by 'Khrul zhig padma chos rgyal, vol. *cha*, TBRC W20749–1269, pp. 487–579. The text is a commentary within the *snyan brgyud* transmission on Ti lo pa's instruction text called *Yid bzhin nor bu zhes bya ba mkha' 'gro ma'i gsang tshig*; cf. s.v. Ti lo pa.
- Partial *nā ro chos drug* exposition in eight verses entitled *Tshigs bcad brgyad ma* found at the beginning of the commentary *Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / mar pa'i tshigs bcad brgyad ma'i 'grel pa* in the various editions of the collected works of Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen, section Ci; see above.
- An unavaible or non-extant text entitled *Chos drug sras don ma*, listed by Dpal 'byor don grub (p. 65) in *Mdo sngags thams cad kyi rgyal po rgyud sde bzhi'i rtsa ba ma rgyud thams cad kyi snying po bskyed rim lhan cig skyes ma rdzogs rim rlung sems gnyis med gsal bar ston pa dpal nā ro pa chen po'i chos drug nyams len gsal ba'i sgron me*, published within *Rtsa rlung 'phrul 'khor*, edited by Thub bstan phun tshogs, Chengdu, Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995, pp. 61–448.
- *Bde mchog snyan brgyud kyi gtum mo dang thabs lam gyi 'phrul 'khor*, attributed to Mar pa, published within *Rtsa rlung 'phrul 'khor*, edited by Thub bstan phun tshogs, Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1995, pp. 1–20

Mi la ras pa (or Mid la ras pa, 1052–1135), *nā ro chos drug* texts found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*:

- Cycle of three songs on *nā ro chos drug* entitled *Rje btsun chen po mi la ras pas mdzad pa'i snyan brgyud gsal bar skor gsum*, vol. *ja* (TBRC W20877–0138), pp. 109–21.
- *Nā ro chos drug* text reflecting the instruction of Mi la ras pa to Ras chung pa belonging to the *snyan brgyud* tradition entitled *Gsang dbang dang 'brel ba steng sgo rnam par grol ba'i chos drug gi khrid yig* compiled by Rdo rje rgyal mtshan (unidentified), vol. *nya* (TBRC W20877–0138), pp. 501–33.



- *Bar do* instruction entitled *Bde mchog snyan brgyud kyi lam blo nas gcod pa bar do ngo sprod kyi gdams ngag zab mo*, compiled by Rdo rje rgyal mtshan, vol. *nya* (TBRC W20877–0138), pp. 21–38.

Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419), *The Collected Works (gsung 'bum) of the Incomparable Lord Tsong kha pa Blo bzang grags pa*, Sku 'bum byams pa gling par khang xylograph in 19 volumes, TBRC W22272:

- Large *nā ro chos drug* treatise entitled *Zab lam nā ro'i chos drug gi sgo nas 'khrīd pa'i rim pa yid ches gsum ldan*, vol. *ta* (TBRC W22272–0681), pp. 395–525. English translations by Chang (1961: 123–282) and Mullin (1996).
- Short *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Nā ro chos drug gi dmigs skor lag tu len tshul bsdus pa rje'i gsung bzhin sems dpa' chen po kun bzang pas bkod pa*, written by Kun bzang pa (unidentified) on the basis of Tsong kha pa's oral explanation, vol. *ta* (TBRC W22272–0681), pp. 527–66. English translation by Mullin (1997): 93–135.

Gtsang smyon He ru ka Rus pa'i rgyan can (1452–1507), hagiography of Mar pa entitled *Sgra bsgyur mar pa lo tstsha'i inam thar mthong ba don ldan* written in 1505; see also under “Nā ro pa” above.

Tshe mchog gling yongs 'dzin Ye shes rgyal mtshan (1713–93), short *nā ro chos drug* manual relying implicitly on Tsong kha pa's *Yid ches gsum ldan* treatise entitled *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid dmigs kyi bsdus don yid ches gsum ldan gyi snying po gsang ba'i mdzod brgya 'byed pa'i lde mig*, found in *The Collected Works (gsun 'bum) of Tshe-mchog-gliñ Yoñs-'dzin Ye-śes-rgyal-mtshan*, reproduced from a set of the Tshe-mchog-gliñ blocks, New Delhi: Tibet House Library, 1974, vol. 12, TBRC W1022–1226, pp. 55–71.

Zhwa dmar pa Dkon mchog yan lag (1525–83), untitled *nā ro chos drug* lineage prayer according to the Karma kaṃ tshang tradition in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Nāropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 11–14.

Zhwa dmar pa Gar dbang chos kyi dbang phyug (1584–1630), *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Zab lam nā ro'i chos drug gi nyams len thun chos bdud rtsi'i nying khu zhes bya ba sgrub brgyud karma kaṃ tshang gi don khrid* in *Nā ro chos*

*drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Nāropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289, pp. 35–107. Another edition is found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ta* (TBRC W20877–140), pp. 193–229.

Zhu chen Tshul khriims rin chen (1697–1774), Bstan 'gyur catalogue entitled *Kun mkhyen nyi ma'i gnyen gyi bka' lung gi dgongs don rnam par 'grel pa'i bstan bcos gangs can pa'i skad du 'gyur ro 'tshal gyi chos sbyin rgyun mi 'chad pa'i ngo mtshar 'phrul gyi phyi mo rdzogs ldan bskal pa'i bsod nams kyi sprin phung rgyas par dkrigs pa'i tshul las brtsams pa'i gtam ngo mtshar chu gter 'phel ba'i zla ba gsar pa*, 503 folios, found in Sde dge Bstan 'gyur vol. *shri* (216), TBRC W23703–1531 and the index section of the text is available in electronic form from ACIP at [http://www.asianclassics.org/research\\_site/webdata/monastic/open/html/R0059M.html](http://www.asianclassics.org/research_site/webdata/monastic/open/html/R0059M.html).

Rong po grub chen Skal lden rgya mtsho (1607–77), concise *nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Rdo rje 'dzin pa skal ldan rgya mtsho dpal bzang po'i gsung las nā ro'i chos drug gi 'khrid grub pa'i mdzes rgyan*, found in *Shar skal ldan rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*, impressions from blocks preserved at Rong po mgon chen, vol. *nga*, TBRC W9683–5170, pp. 127–46.

Si tu pa Padma nyin byed dbang po (1774–1853), *nā ro chos drug* texts in *Nā ro chos drug gi khrid skor: a collection of texts for the practice of the Six Precepts of Nāropa according to the method transmitted by the masters of the Kam-tshang Bka'-brgyud-pa tradition*, reproduced from manuscript material brought from Tibet through the efforts of Bla-ma Nor-bla, Delhi: Karlo, 1985, TBRC W23641–2289:

- Text for the *nā ro chos drug* preliminary practices according to the Karma kam tshang tradition entitled *Chos drug bdud rtsi nying khu'i sngon 'gro dngos grub myur stsol*, pp. 23–34. Another edition is found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul Blo gros mtha' yas, *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *ta* (TBRC W20877–0140), pp. 185–91.

- *Nā ro chos drug* manual entitled *Zab lam nā ro chos drug gi / 'phrul 'khor zin bris mthong tsam gyis / khong chud don dang ldan pa yi / gsung rgyun go bde rab gsal*, pp. 259–84.

A khu ching shes rab rgya mtso (1803–875), *nā ro chos drug* notes based on Tsong kha pa's *Yid ches gsum ldan* treatise entitled *Yid ches gsum ldan gyi bshad lung zin bris dang / sgrol ma'i rjes gnang gi zin tho*, found in *A khu ching shes rab rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*, facsimile of the Lha sa Zhol new printery xylograph, TBRC W21505, vol. 2 (TBRC W21505–2520), pp. 761–779. English translation by Mullin (1997): 43–70.

A jo rdzong pa Mi pham yar 'phel dbang po (1632–1704), *'pho ba* manual entitled *Myur lam 'pho ba'i rnal 'byor dpal 'brug pa'i nyams bzhes 'jag tshugs ma* found in *Rtsib ri'i par ma* compiled by 'Khrul zhig padma chos rgyal, vol. *ja*, TBRC W20749–1270, pp. 93–111.

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# THE AURAL TRANSMISSION OF SAṂVARA: AN INTRODUCTION TO NEGLECTED SOURCES FOR THE STUDY OF THE EARLY BKA' BRGYUD

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Among the traditions descending from Mar pa Lo tsā ba Chos kyi lo gros stands the transmission known as The Aural Transmission of Saṁvara (*Bde mchog snyan brgyud*). This tradition has been so far mostly ignored, apart from sparse references, by researchers.<sup>1</sup> I suggest here that its study provides valuable insights and materials for the reconstruction of the historical development and doctrinal literature of the early Bka' brgyud.

The teachings of the Aural Transmission of Saṁvara have been handed down as the esoteric core of Mi la ras pa's instructions, the tantric transmission he granted to his closest disciples and preserved by them. A number of significant texts, both instructional and hagiographical, which belong to this

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<sup>1</sup> For an extensive study of the Aural Transmission, and a fuller treatment of the issues and sources dealt with in this paper, see Sernesi 2007, now in course of thorough revision for publication. For references to the Aural Transmission, see Smith 1969, 1970b; Ehrhard 2004, 2010, forthcoming; Martin 1996, 2005; Quintman 2006. Less well-known articles by Torricelli (1998, 2000, 2002) deal directly with the tradition. See also Sernesi 2004. Herein, I consider mainly the published compendia now available to me: DCNG1, DCNG2, DCNG4, RKT, NZNG, DCNGbio (see bibliography). A small number of significant texts of the tradition has been included also into the *Gdams ngag mdzod* and the *Rtsib ri spar ma*. A survey of the texts of the tradition found within the Nepalese-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP) collection could not be included here and will be presented in a separate study.

tradition, are attributed to the early masters of the lineage, and were most likely codified by the beginning of the thirteenth century.

According to tradition, the Aural Transmission was handed down in a successive lineage stemming from Vajradhara and passing through Tilopa, Nāropa, Mar pa and Mi la ras pa. The latter instructed both Ras chung Rdo rje grags pa and Ngan rdzong Byang chub rgyal po, who initiated their lineages, called respectively the Aural Transmission of Ras chung pa (*Ras chung snyan brgyud*) and the Aural Transmission of Ngan rdzong pa (*Ngan rdzong snyan brgyud*).<sup>2</sup> The main lineage passed through Ras chung pa's disciple Khyung tshang pa down to Zhang Lo tsā ba (d. 1237), and later to Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan (1290–1360), after whom it diversified into many branches. We have a single hagiographical source on the main lineage of the Aural Transmission, probably compiled in the fourteenth century. This work of the *gser 'phreng* genre is composed of twelve independent *nam thars* recounting the life stories of the masters from Mi la ras pa down to Gzi brjid pa.<sup>3</sup> After this master, the

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<sup>2</sup> The dates of Mi la ras pa and Ras chung pa are usually given as 1040–1123 and 1084–1161 respectively, even if the literary sources are not unanimous on this matter. For a discussion of the life-span of Mi la ras pa, see Quintman 2006: 444–53; for the birth and death dates of Ras chung pa, see Roberts 2007: 86–88, 229–30. Ngan rdzong Byang chub rgyal po is one of the main disciples of Mi la ras pa. His name is recorded also as Ngan rdzong bo dhi rā dza, Ngan rdzong ston pa and Ngan rdzong ras pa, and with the alternative spelling Ngam rdzong. A lineage passing through Sgam po pa, called the *Dwags po snyan brgyud*, transmitting essential or abridged instructions, is also sometimes mentioned in texts by Gtsang smyon's school and later in the *Gdams ngag mdzod*. However, this claim should be carefully evaluated and at present remains problematic; it will therefore not be discussed here.

<sup>3</sup> This collection is preserved in a single manuscript written in *dbu med* script which was found at the Stag sna monastery in Ladakh and reproduced in Darjeeling (1983) with the title *Bde mchog snyan brgyud biographies* (DCNGbio). Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan's biography was written in 1361 (*'phar ba'i lo*); thus, the compilation of the collection may be tentatively dated to the 14<sup>th</sup> century (as also suggested by Roberts

transmission of the teachings was eventually received by Gtsang smyon He ru ka (1452–1507) and Padma dkar po (1527–1592), who were responsible for a revitalization of the tradition, its valorisation within the more institutional branches of the Bka' brgyud school, and for compiling the textual collections we have today.

The Aural Transmission tradition has received little scholarly attention so far, and it was considered a secondary transmission introduced in Tibet by Ras chung pa, who received it in India from the siddha Ti phu pa. This misunderstanding is based on the oft-quoted account found in the *Blue Annals* (Roerich 1949: 437–38), in which 'Gos Lo tsā ba distinguishes between the *Ras chung snyan brgyud* and the *Bde mchog snyan brgyud* as two distinct lineages of transmission (respectively through Ras chung pa and Ngam rdzong pa) of the Nine Instructions of the Formless Dākinīs (*lus med mkha' 'gro chos skor dgu*). This statement, however, is not supported by the tradition's sources, and thus cannot be accepted. These nine cycles of doctrines are only supplementary teachings of the Aural Transmission, with their own distinct root-text and early transmission-lineage, and do not represent the core of the tradition. Moreover, the tradition in its entirety is generally called the *Bde mchog snyan brgyud* or *Mkha' 'gro bde mchog snyan brgyud*, while the expression *Ras chung snyan brgyud* and *Ngan rdzong snyan brgyud* indicate the two main lineages of transmission (see Sernesi 2004, 2007).<sup>4</sup>

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2007: 17). This hagiographical tradition is the source of the *Lho rong chos 'byung's* section devoted to the Aural Transmission lineage (LRCB: 115–51), which summarises and quotes verbatim the life-stories found in DCNGbio. Also, the opening *gser 'phreng* of DCNG2 (fols. 7–312), called *Brgyud pa yid bzhin nor bu'i rnam par thar pa* (GYZNB), is based, until Gzi brjid pa's life-story, on the tradition reflected by the DCNGbio manuscript. On these sources see Sernesi 2010.

<sup>4</sup> The story of Ras chung pa's trip to India to retrieve from the master Ti phu pa four (or five) missing instructions of the nine-fold set is very well known, as it is one of the main episodes of the master's life narratives. This episode has been thoroughly studied by Roberts (2007: 137–209), who compared its different versions. He, however, still



### 1 The Root-text: The *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*

The textual collections of the Aural Transmission are composed of a large number of texts different in genre and aims, written throughout the long history of the tradition. Different layers of instructional, ritual, and exegetical literature developed on the basis of a shared heritage of core texts attributed to the earlier masters of the lineage. In this respect the structure of the Aural Transmission corpus is similar to those of other Tibetan esoteric traditions, like the Shangs pa Bka' brgyud, the Sa skya Lam 'bras, or the treasure systems. There is a recognizable root-text that has the status of revealed scripture, called the *Snyan (b)rgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*, which is held to reflect teachings imparted by Vajradhara to his consort and then granted by Jñānaḍākinī to the siddha Tilopa.<sup>5</sup> According to the colophon, the verses were later transmitted by Nāropa to Mar pa, who translated them into Tibetan at Pullaharī.<sup>6</sup>

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did not properly distinguish between the two sets of teachings of the Aural Transmission of Saṃvara and of the Nine Instructions of the Formless Ḍākinīs, confusing the two at the very beginning of his introduction (Roberts 2007: 1). Note that in Ras chung pa's biographies the transmission from Mi la ras pa of the *snyan brgyud* teachings is recounted in a separate section from Ras chung pa's trip to India, and is always said to be complete (*yongs su rdzogs pa*). For the reader not misled by the *Blue Annals*, the issue is never ambiguous.

<sup>5</sup> The text is edited and translated in Torricelli 1998. It is included in the *Bstan-'gyur* (Tōh 2338), and circulated widely. It is found in the Aural Transmission Collections (DCNG1, vol. 2: 1–6; DCNG4, vol. 1: 95–104; RKT: 1–11), and in recent collections of instructional texts such as the *Gdams ngag mdzod* (vol. 5: 89–94), and the *Rtsib ri spar ma* (vol. 7: 159–69). It bears also a Sanskrit version of the title, namely *Karṇatantravajrapada*, which would be translated as *Snyan rgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*, a spelling of the title actually found in the collections. Nevertheless, *Karṇatantravajrapada* could be a later retro-translation, since in the textual tradition we find the forms *snyan brgyud* and *snyan rgyud* used interchangeably.

<sup>6</sup> The colophon states: *rgya gar gyi mkhas grub nā ro paṇ chen gyi zhal snga dang/ bod kyi lo tsā ba mar pa chos kyi blo gros kyi puṣpa ha ri'i gnas chen du bsgyur cing*

The root-text outlines a tantric path based on the practices of the generation and completion stages of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī, culminating in those of the Six Doctrines (*chos drug*), Great Bliss (*bde ba chen po*), and the Great Seal (*phyag rgya chen po*), respectively associated with the three highest consecrations. These are followed by instructions on the *bar do* and supplementary teachings. All these teachings are traditionally grouped into three main cycles, or Wish-fulfilling Gems (*yid bzhin nor bu skor gsum*): the Lineage Wish-fulfilling Gem (*brgyud pa yid bzhin nor bu*), the Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Maturation-path (*smi lam yid bzhin nor bu*), and the Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Liberation-path (*grol lam yid bzhin nor bu*).<sup>7</sup> The Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Liberation-path is subdivided into three more Wish-fulfilling gems: the Common Wish-fulfilling Gem (*thun mongs yid bzhin nor bu*), the Commitments' Wish-fulfilling Gem (*dam tshig yid bzhin nor bu*), and the Essential Wish-fulfilling Gem (*gnas lugs yid bzhin nor bu*).

The root-text of the Aural Transmission lacks this wording and any numbering of the stages of the practice. It presents the instructions in sequence, but introduces the different sections dedicated to the highest teachings with

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*zhus te gtan la phab pa'o//*. “Translated and arranged in the great place of Puṣpahari in the presence of the Indian accomplished scholar Nāropa by the Tibetan translator Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros” (Torricelli 1998: 411–12). This would suggest that the *vajrapāda* had already been redacted at the time of Mar pa Chos kyi blo gros. However, there are no known Indian versions of this text, so that it is difficult to evaluate the reliability of the colophon and to establish just when it was actually codified and set down in scripture. The account of the entrustment of the teachings to Tilopa is the main story in this master's *nam thars*; refer, for example, to Torricelli and Naga 1995 (which provides a diplomatic edition and translation of GYZNB: 8–28), and sources quoted there, pp. viii–xi.

<sup>7</sup> On the Lineage Wish-fulfilling Gem, see below, and Sernesi 2010. The three Wish-fulfilling Gems of the Aural Transmission are related to the three Buddha-bodies (*nirmāṇakāya*, *sambhogakāya* and *dharmakāya*) and to the three levels of practice: external (*phyi*), internal (*nang*), and secret (*gsang*).

lines ending with the particles *la* or *ni*. From these lines originated a set of fixed definitions for the tradition's instructions, which was expanded to cover all the stages of the path and is ubiquitously employed in later explanatory literature (see the following table). For example, among the Six Doctrines of Nāropa, the Inner Heat practice is referred to as *gtum mo bde drod rang 'bar* (The Inner Heat, Self-igniting Warmth and Bliss), the Clear Light as *'od gsal ma rig mun bral* (Clear Light, To Transcend the Darkness of Ignorance), and so on: these short labels are the standard way of naming the instructions of the Aural Transmission, with minor variants in different texts.<sup>8</sup> To my knowledge, these are proper to the tradition, and therefore constitute a useful clue for the identification of texts and teachings of the Aural Transmission. This technical terminology was created by the early masters of the lineage simultaneously with the production of the basic instructional texts, and was fixed by the thirteenth century, at the time of Zhang Lo tsā ba.

## 2 The codification of the instructional core: Zhang Lo tsā ba

Zhang Lo tsā ba was the first systematiser of the Aural Transmission and thus one of the most important masters of the lineage. A learned monk, according to his life-stories he was trained by nearly seventy Tibetan masters, including Nyang ral Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192), Ko brag pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan

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<sup>8</sup> The original lines of the root-text are KT 16, KT 26, KT 36, KT 42, KT 50, KT 56, KT 61, KT 80, following the numbering in Torricelli 1998 (see table). Note that the Six Doctrines in the Aural Transmission tradition include the practice of transferring consciousness into a corpse (*grong 'jug*). The *bar do*, called *bar do lam blo nas gcod pa*, is not part of the six, and follows the Great Seal as a supplementary teaching. It is explained in a text attributed to Mi la ras pa, titled *Lam blo nas gcod pa ngo sprod bar do'i gdams pa* (DCNG2, vol. 2: 481–97; RKT: 47–76), which is briefly discussed in Martin 1998 and Cuevas 2003: 52–53, who, however, does not link it with the Aural Transmission tradition. On the Great Seal Illuminating Primordial Wisdom (*phyag rgya chen po ye shes gsal byed*), see Sernesi 2008.

(1182–1261), and Khro phu lo tsā ba (1172–1236). He took vows from the famed Indian master Śākyaśrī, during the latter's stay in Tibet (1204–1214), and he also travelled south to Nepal, where he studied with, among others, the *mahāpaṇḍita* Ratnarakṣita.<sup>9</sup>

He received the Aural Transmission teachings of both the Ras chung and Ngan rdzong transmissions. In particular, Ras chung pa's disciple Khyung tshang pa had four disciples to whom he passed the Aural Transmission, the foremost being a woman, Ma gcig Ong jo. Her life-story is very brief and schematised, but interestingly her influence was such that she was included in the lineage histories between Khyung tshang pa and Zhang Lo tsā ba, two main figures of the Aural Transmission, both monk-scholars credited with the codification of a great number of texts. The transmission from the former to the latter occurred thanks to this woman, who preserved the personal items of her master, including the books, and passed them to Zhang Lo tsā ba, but only following the latter's third request.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Zhang Lo tsā ba must not be confused, of course, with bla ma Zhang G.yu brag pa (1123–1193) of the Tshal pa Bka' brgyud. For Zhang Lo tsā ba's life-story, see DCNGbio fols. 305–17, LRCB fols. 126–30, Roerich 1949: 445–48, GYZNB fols. 176–86. The *mahāpaṇḍita* Ratnarakṣita was a holder of the *Kālacakra* and *Cakrasaṃvara* tantras, and was a teacher of Vibhūticandra; see Stearns 1996: 136. On Śākyaśrī, refer to Jackson 1990, van der Kuijp 1994, Roerich 1949: 1062–1072.

<sup>10</sup> A version of the life of Ma gcig Ong jo (in DCNG2: 175–76) is freely translated by Allione (1984: 213–19). See also DCNGbio: 285–88. According to Padma dkar po's *Chos 'byung* (fol. 509), she was the secret consort of Khyung tshang pa, but this is not found in the Aural Transmission sources. For the account of the transmission to Zhang Lo tsā ba, see DCNGbio (fols. 308–09), which reports the donation of the books codified by the Rje btsun, i.e. Mi la ras pa (*rje btsun pas bkod pa'i phyag dpe rnams*, fol. 309). See also Martin 2005: 68n51.

## Table

1. brgyud pa yid bzhin nor bu (phyi sgro 'dogs gcod par byed pa sprul sku'i gdam ngag)
  - 1.1 ston byed slob dpon gyi mtshan nyid (KT: 7)
  - 1.2 bstan pa slob ma'i mtshan nyid (KT: 8–9)
2. smin lam yid bzhin nor bu (nang nyams len long spyod rdzogs pa sku'i gdam ngag) (KT: 10–13)
3. grol lam yid bzhin nor bu (gsang ba ngo sprod chos sku'i gdam ngag)
  - 3.1 thun mongs yid bzhin nor bu (KT 14–15a) (bum dbang dang 'brel ba sgom bya bskyed rim gtso bor ston pa)
  - 3.2 dam tshig yid bzhin nor bu (KT 15b) (dbang bzhi spyi dang 'brel ba bsrung bya gtso bor ston pa)
  - 3.3 gnas lugs yid bzhin nor bu (mchog dbang gsum dang 'brel ba de kho na nyid gtso bor ston pa)
    - 3.3.1 chos drug (KT 16–60) (gsang dbang dang 'brel ba rdzogs rim rtsa rlung gi gnad gtso bor ston pa steng sgo rnam par grol ba)
      - (1) *gtum mo bde drod rang 'bar* (KT 16–25)
      - (2) *sgyu lus chos brgyad rang grol* (KT 26–35)
      - (3) *rmi lam 'khrul pa rang sangs* (KT 36–41)
      - (4) *'od gsal ma rig mun bral* (KT 42–49)
      - (5) *'pho ba gser 'gyur ma bsgoms sangs rgyas* ('pho ba gser 'gyur gyi rtsi) (KT 50–55)
      - (6) *grong 'jug sprul lpags 'dor len* (KT 56–60)
    - 3.3.2 *mkha' 'gro gsang lam bde ba chen po* (KT 61–79) (shes rab ye shes kyi dbang dang 'brel ba mkha' 'gro'i gsang sgrog pa 'og sgo)
    - 3.3.3 *phyag rgya chen po ye shes gsal byed* (KT 80–103) (tshig dbang dang 'brel ba phyag rgya chen po ye shes gsal byed)
    - 3.3.4 *bar do ngo sprod* (KT 104–23) (lam blo nas gcod pa)
    - 3.3.5 *bya spyod tshogs su bsgyur ba* (KT 124–42)

*The Teachings of the Aural Transmission with their fixed set of definitions. KT refers to the lines of the Root-text. Italicised definitions are extracted directly from lines of the Root-text.*

Taking part in the rich and lively religious life of his time, Zhang Lo tsā ba must have also shared his contemporaries' need for systematisation and definition of the new lineages.<sup>11</sup> He wrote a summary of texts and practices of the tradition for his disciple Rba Dha ra shrī. This text is entitled *Zhang lo'i thim yig* (ZhTY) and is preserved in a later collection, compiled in the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> It follows the scheme of the Three Wish-fulfilling Gems (*yid bzhin nor bu skor gsum*), demonstrating that the main organisational strategy of the tradition was already fully developed by that time. In this work all the main texts of the Aural Transmission are already mentioned, proving an early date for their composition, even if it is of course difficult to evaluate how close the texts as given in the later collections now available are to the redaction known to Zhang Lo tsā ba.

The known collections include nearly fifty instructional and ritual texts that are ascribed to masters earlier than Zhang Lo tsā ba (Tilopa, Nāropa, Mar pa, Mi la ras pa, Ras chung pa, Ngan rdzong pa, Khyung tshang pa), and thus supposedly prior to the thirteenth century. These are mainly works devoted to single points of the practice, together with sādhanas of Cakrasaṃvara and Vajrayoginī. Many are called 'notes' (*zin bris*),<sup>13</sup> which indicates that they were

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<sup>11</sup> A contemporary of Sa skya Paṇḍita and 'Jig rten mgon po, he is most probably the recipient of a brief letter now collected in the *Sa skya bka' 'bum*, where the Sa skya scholar gives advice concerning moral discipline: *Zhang lo tsā ba la gdams pa tshigs su bcad pa bcu gsum pa'o*. To be found in: *Dpal ldan Sa skya pa'i bka' 'bum. The Collected Works of the Founding Masters of Sa-skya*, vol 12 (*na*), fols. 160–61.

<sup>12</sup> For the text and translation of this work, see Torricelli 2002. The text is found in DCNG2, vol. 1: 1–5.

<sup>13</sup> On this genre, and on the related *brjed byang*, van der Kuijp (2003: 404) explains: "In a Tibetan context, a *brjed byang* often precisely refers to a set of lecture notes pulled together by an author and reworked by him to form a seamless narrative. Put crudely, a work of this kind is therefore, authorially speaking, a secondary reflex, for what the lecturer had said was further reflected upon and digested by the *brjed byang's* immediate author. It would stand to reason that, in either case, the *brjed byang* will to

private notes, intended as mnemonic aids to recall the main points of the instructions imparted orally by the master. The master could himself quote from or refer specifically to the teachings received from his own master, and in this way a span of several generations might pass prior to the composition of an organised text. For this reason, when a work is styled in the colophon as written by a disciple in accord with the teachings of his master, it may be attributed by later tradition to either of them.

Zhang Lo tsā ba's *thim yig* (ZhTY) records a recognizable body of instructional literature organised under rubrics familiar also to later masters, and found in parallel versions in later collections. We may therefore posit that by his time the redaction and codification of these essential materials had been already accomplished. These instructions constitute a shared corpus that may be termed the 'textual core' of the tradition and that was augmented by a number of later commentaries, outlines, clarifications, and further instructions. Several works, mostly commentaries and summaries, are attributed to Zhang Lo tsā ba himself, and he is also credited with setting down the teachings of his predecessors for the benefit of his disciple, following the oral instructions received. For this reason, his career embodies the passage from the 'creative' to the 'exegetical' phase of the tradition, and establishes the period of the first codification of the Aural Transmission's textual core.

### **3 The Aural Transmission textual compendia (fifteenth–sixteenth centuries)**

After the systematization by Zhang Lo tsā ba, there was apparently little or no further textual production for a century, and we can trace only a single and rather obscure lineage of transmission. For a number of generations this was even a 'domestic' lineage: Zhang Lo tsā ba's disciple, Dha ra shrī, transmitted the teachings to his son Bsod nams rgyal mtshan, and the latter to his daughter

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some extent reflect its original source[s]. [...] The *brjed byang*, moreover, needs at times to be distinguished from a series of notes and a draft for a study, both of which may be called *zin bris*. But a *zin bris* can also be a record of a lecture."

Ye shes kun ldan ras ma, also known as Ras ma zhig mo.<sup>14</sup> After her, the transmission was received by Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan (1290–1360), following whom the tradition spread in different directions, eventually reaching Gtsang smyon He ru ka (1452–1507), Byang chub bzang po, and Padma dkar po (1527–1592). During the sixteenth century, thanks to these masters, the textual corpus of the Aural Transmission was collected and edited in three main sets of writings.

Byang chub bzang po, a disciple of a Kun dga' dar po and a Shar kha ras chen, is a poorly known figure who may be dated to the sixteenth century on the basis of the transmission lineage (Roberts 2006: 52). He compiled an Aural Transmission collection (DCNG2) which is precious in that it includes rare texts, such as the *Zhang lo'i thim yig* mentioned above, and other summaries by this master.

The Bar 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud tradition, as is well known, afforded a prominent place to Ras chung pa's legacy from its very inception. Indeed, Gling chen ras pa Pad ma rdo rje (1128–1188) is reputed to have studied extensively under both Khyung tshang pa and Sum pa ras pa before meeting Phag mo gru pa, and Gtsang pa rgya ras is credited with the discovery of a

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<sup>14</sup> These three master's life stories are found in DCNGbio: 319–55, LRCB: 130–45, GYZNB: 187–214. The latter version of Ras ma zhig mo's biography is translated in Allione 1984: 221–31. The epithet *zhig mo* refers to a religious mad, or crazy, woman, that is to say, “a person who has totally dissolved (*zhig-po*) ordinary clinging to the concept of self as well as the usual bonds of social life,” and thus acts in unconventional or unexpected ways (Martin 2005: 57 and n. 17). Kun ldan ras ma instructed both Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan and Bya btang Bde legs rin chen, who lived in the first half of the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The latter's life-story is included in DCNGbio (fols. 357–72) and GYZNB (fols. 215–26) after that of Kun ldan Ras ma, while this master is situated after Gzi brjid rgyal mtshan and one Dbang chub shes rab in Gtsang smyon's lineage (see Smith 1969: 4n7, based on TMNT: 7; and also TMZB: 108–09). Bya btang pa instructed one Gans can Kun dga' dpal, teacher of the second 'Brug chen Kun dga' dpal byor (1428–1476): on this see below.



treasure teaching (*gter ma*) hidden by Ras chung pa.<sup>15</sup> However, the Aural Transmission became part of the school's teachings only at a later date, in the fifteenth century, with the second 'Brug chen Kun dga' dpal 'byor (1428–1476); it was then passed to Ngag dbang chos kyi rgyal po (1465–1540) and from the latter to the fourth 'Brug chen Padma dkar po (1527–1592).<sup>16</sup> This prolific writer and great Bka' brgyud scholar not only compiled a collection of Aural Transmission texts in two volumes (DCNG4), but also composed two commentaries to the *Snyan brgyud rdo rje'i tshig rkang*, thus definitely including the tradition's literature and practices within the 'Brug pa teachings.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> For an extensive list of 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud teachings coming from the transmission by Ras chung and his disciples, see *Dkar chag tshig gi me tog*, in *Collected Works (Gsung 'bum) of Rgyal dbang rje Kun dga' dpal 'byor*, vol. 1, fols. 339–53. For the studies of Gling chen ras pa with disciples of Ras chung pa, see e.g. Roerich 1949: 660–61, LRCB: 630–32. For the discovery of the *ro snyoms skor drug* by Gtsang pa rgya ras, see e.g. Roerich 1949: 668, LRCB: 649–51. See also Davidson 2002: 220.

<sup>16</sup> According to Padma dkar po, the Aural Transmission passed from Ras ma zhig mo to Ri khrod pa Bya btang pa (*alias* Kun spangs pa Bde legs Rin chen), who transmitted the teachings, among others, to a master named Gangs can kun dga' dpal; the latter was in turn master to the second 'Brug chen Kun dga' dpal 'byor. Refer to Padma dkar po's *Record of Teachings Received (Gsan yig*, fols. 408–10) and *Chos 'byung* (fols. 509–10). The transmission to the second 'Brug chen is mentioned in his life-story, the *Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa'i mdzad pa rmad du byung ba ngo mtshar bdud rtsi'i thigs pa*, fol. 8, where his master is called Mkhan chen rin po che Dgra bcom pa Kun dga' dpal. Ngag dbang chos kyi rgyal po was one of the teachers of the third 'Brug chen, and he imparted the Aural Transmission teachings also to Padma dkar po's predecessor. 'Jam dbyangs chos kyi grags pa (1478–1523) claimed to have received a direct revelation of the Aural Transmission from Ras chung pa himself, and collected these teachings in a two-volume collection that he styled the New Aural Transmission of Ras chung pa (*Ras chung snyan brgyud gsar ma*, DCNG3).

<sup>17</sup> These two texts are called: *Snyan rgyud yid bzhin nor bu'i khrid rdo rje sems dpa'i gseb lam* (in: *Gsung 'bum*, vol. 19: 339–418), and *U rgyan chos kyi gan mdzod nas*

#### 4 Gtsang smyon He ru ka

Gtsang smyon He ru ka (1452–1507) is famed for his literary works devoted to the life-stories of the early Bka' brgyud masters, but less known is his activity as a master of the Aural Transmission. In fact, he devoted much of his life to this tradition, and was guided by his involvement with it. As is well known, there are three biographies of this master, all written by his close disciples: the major one, titled *Gtsang smyon he ru ka phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba'i rnam thar rdo rje theg pa'i gsal byed nyi ma'i snying po* (TMNT), was authored by one of his chief disciples, who was much involved in the systematisation and transmission of the Aural Transmission literature: Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs ming can (1482–1559).<sup>18</sup> This account, although very

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*phyung ba snyan rgyud yid bzhin gyi nor bu legs par bshad pa'i rgyal mtshan gyi rtser bton pa dngos grub kyi char 'bebs* (in: *Gsung 'bum*, vol. 14: 303–444). The former is a word-by-word commentary, and follows the root-text in Padma dkar po's *Collected Works*, while the latter is an extended explanation of the tradition based on its core texts.

<sup>18</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs ming can, also known as Rgod tshang ras chen, is the main lineage-holder of the Aural Transmission among Gtsang smyon's disciples. He was active in the hermitage of Ras chung phug in the valley of Yar lungs in Central Tibet, the sacred place connected with Ras chung pa where Gtsang smyon died. He authored and printed many doctrinal and hagiographical texts, including the best known life-story of Ras chung pa and two treatises on the practice of Cakrasaṃvara, the *Bcom ldan 'das dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i spyi bshad theg mchog bdud rtsi'i dga' ston ye shes chen po'i sman mchog* (Bir: Tsondu Senghe, 1982) and the *Dpal 'khor lo sdom pa sngon gyur lo rgyus* (NGMPP Reel no. L 514/8). A study of Rgod tshang ras chen's life, prints, and works is in progress: a preliminary overview was presented in Sernesi 2007b. Smith (1969: 6n11) already dismissed the identification of Rgod tshang ras chen with the Karma Bka' brgyud master Rtse le Sna tshogs rang grol. Gtsang smyon's student is often referred to in scholarly literature as Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol and dated 1494–1570. However, his sobriquet is rather rNal 'byor Sna tshogs ming can, and Ehrhrad (2010), studies Rgod tshang's early life and fixes the correct dates of his life-span as 1482–1559 on the basis of the master's autobiography (*Rnal 'byor gyi*

accurate, is at times unclear regarding Gtsang smyon's literary production, and we may note some discrepancies between the three sources and the existing textual lore. I will therefore try to summarise, somewhat simplifying, the details that are relevant in our present context.<sup>19</sup>

Gtsang smyon met his root-master Sha ra rab 'byams pa (1427–1470) when he was still quite young, and he received from him the full transmission of the Aural Transmission tradition, together with the injunction to take Heruka as his tutelary deity and to meditate in the favored places of Mi la ras pa.<sup>20</sup> He remained true to these instructions throughout his life, which he spent traveling widely, residing mostly in La phyi, Rtsa ri, Chu dbar, and Gung thang. After receiving formal training at the Sa skya tantric college of Dpal 'khor chos sde, he performed the actions that earned him the title 'Madman of Gtsang' and

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*dbang phyug rgod tshang ras chen pa'i rnam thar tshigs su bcad ma dngos grub rgya mtsho*, NGMPP Reel no. L 978/7), and of his student's autobiography (*Mkhas grub chen po byams pa phun tshogs kyi rnam thar*, NGMPP Reel no. L 783/3). On the latter text see Ehrhard forthcoming.

<sup>19</sup> The other two biographies of Gtsang smyon He ru ka were authored by Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (*Grub thob gtsang pa smyon pa'i rnam thar dad pa'i spu slong g.yo ba*, L) and Dngos grub dpal 'bar (*Rje bstun gtsang pa he ru ka'i thun mong gyi rnam thar yon tan gyi gangs ri la dad pa'i seng ge rnam par rtse ba*, NGMPP Reel no. L 834/2). I thank Stefan Larsson for supplying me with a copy of the relevant portions of the latter work. A more detailed study of Gtsang smyon's and Rgod tshang ras chen's works of the Aural Transmission tradition is in progress, and will be presented elsewhere: needless to say, further research may help to refine the present discussion.

<sup>20</sup> Gtsang smyon was fourteen according to L (fol. 9), eighteen according to the TMNT (fol. 20). I will mostly follow the latter's chronology, except when stated. The transmission is recounted in TMNT: 22–26. On Gtsang smyon's early life, see Larsson in this volume. The life-story of Sha ra rab 'byams pa is the *Mkhas grub sha ra rab 'jam* (sic!) *pa sangs rgyas seng ge'i rnam thar mthong ba don ldan ngo mtshar nor bu'i phreng ba thar 'dod yid 'phrog blo gsal mgul brgyan*, in *Rare dKar-brgyud-pa Texts from Himachal Pradesh*, pp. 451–501.

started his life as a wandering yogin. According to the hagiographies, many of his achievements and the crucial events of his life were inspired by visionary and prophetic dreams or encounters. This was the case for his meeting with his guru and for the composition and printing of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa*, and it was also true for his commitment to teach and spread the Aural Transmission.<sup>21</sup> The latter vision took place in 1486, during a three-year period of retreat at Rtsa-ri, while he was undertaking the composition of a commentary on the *Hevajratantra*. Vajrayoginī appeared to him in a lucid, post-meditative dream, and said:

“Noble one, there are [already] many commentaries on the *Hevajratantra*, composed by Indian and Tibetan scholars. In this degenerate age of conflict, sentient beings have short lives, many illnesses, and inferior intellect; they teach and learn the tantras, [but] through their mental elaborations [such as these], they do not enhance the benefit of beings. If you clarify the meaning of the Aural Transmission’s Wish-fulfilling Gems, you will accomplish the benefit of the doctrine and of sentient beings!”<sup>22</sup>

Then the deity vanished, and Gtsang smyon awoke from absorption. Having faith in this experience, he postponed his wish to compose a commentary on the tantric scripture and instead was compelled to clarify and

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<sup>21</sup> On the composition and print of the *Life and Songs of Mi la ras pa*, and the vision which inspired the work, see M. Stearns 1985: 66–96, Quintman 2006: 195–209, Schaeffer in this volume.

<sup>22</sup> *tho rangs kha zhig rnal dang ’od gsal ’dres pa’i ngang du mdun gyi nam [m]khar/ de bzhin gshegs pa thams cad kyi yum rdo rje rnal ’byor ma ’khor du ma’i tshogs dang bcas pa byon nas/ rigs kyi bu rtag gnyis la rgya bod kyi mkhas grub rnam kyi ’brel pa [= ’grel pa] du ma yod cing/ tsod [= rtsod] ldan snyigs ma’i dus ’dir sems can tshe thung nad mang blo gros zhan pas rgyud kyi ’chad nyan sogs/ spros pas ’gro don yang cher mi grub/ snyan rgyud yid bzhin nor bu’i don rnam gsal bar byas na bstan pa dang sems can gyi don du ’gyur ro/ (TMNT: 116).*

spread the Aural Transmission. At this time, he wrote his first work of the tradition, a summary of the root-text, called *Rdo rje'i tshig rkang ma rig mun sel*.<sup>23</sup> This vision occurred prior to his writing of the *Mi la'i rnam thar* (1488), when he also composed, finally, a few texts on the *Hevajratantra*.<sup>24</sup> We know that thereafter, and throughout his life, Gtsang smyon collected and wrote numerous works of the Aural Transmission tradition.<sup>25</sup> In particular, while in his late forties (1492–1494) he spent three years in La phyi, where he compiled his first collection (*yig cha*) of texts of the Aural Transmission, and wrote his major work of the tradition: the *Gzhung 'grel nor bu skor gsum* (TMZB).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> I date the event to 1486 following L: 31, where it is the date given for the composition of the *Rdo rje'i tshig rkang ma rig mun sel*. The vision is not recounted in this source, but the relative chronology indicates that it occurred at that time. The commentary is found in DCNG1, vol. 2: 17–27. Its date and place of composition are confirmed in the colophon: *dur khrod myul ba'i rnal 'byor pa rus pa'i rgyan can gyis/gnas chen tsa rir zil gnon gyi lo'i dpyid zla ra ba'i yar tshes phyogs la grub par sbyar ba'o//*.

<sup>24</sup> “He composed the exceptional *Life Story of the Venerable Mi la ras pa* as he received it from the mouth of the master. Requested by his heart disciple Rin chen dpal bzang, he [also] wrote the topical outline (*sa bcad*) of the *Hevajratantra*, the manual for the visualization (*mngon rtogs*) of the deity Hevajra in the extensive, medium and abridged version, together with the practical instructions (*lag len*) for preparing the tantric feast.” *Rje btsun mi la'i rnam thar thun mong ma yin pa'i bla ma'i zhal nas byung ba ltar gyi thugs rtsom mdzad thugs sras rin chen dpal bzangs kyis gsol ba btab nas/ rtag gnyis sa sbyad/ dges pa rdo rje'i mngon rtogs rgyas 'bring sdus gsum/ tshogs 'khor lag len dang bcas pa rnams mdzad do/* (TMNT: 135).

<sup>25</sup> The central part of Gtsang smyon's life, between 1488 and the renovation of the Svayambhū stūpa (1504) is recounted by Rgod tshang ras chen in chapter 12 of the *rnam-thar*, in eight sections (see TMNT: 153–208). A more detailed study of this chapter is found in Sernesi 2007.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to TMNT: 159. The TMZB is in DCNG1, vol. 1: 5–360, DCNG1, vol. 2: 81–447. According to its colophon, it was indeed written in La phyi in 1494 (a *kun dga'*

This is the main doctrinal work by Gtsang smyon. It consists of a word-by-word commentary on the Aural Transmission's root-text, thus covering the whole range of instructions relating to the Three Wish-fulfilling Gems.

This master's literary activity was driven by the overall project of bringing together the living Aural Transmission with the more institutional strands of the Bka' brgyud tradition, thereby proposing a new ideal foundation for the school. This is presented in his *Lives* of the forefathers of the lineage, Mi la ras pa and Mar pa, figures who are presented as the exemplary Bka' brgyud masters, and whose yogic and meditative attainments are seen as the ideal goals of the school's followers. Fittingly, the Aural Transmission, as the core of Mi la ras pa's legacy and higher tantric practice, is put forth as the core element among the Bka' brgyud teachings, and hence reinstated as the school's most profound transmission.<sup>27</sup> Judging from the fame of his works, Gtsang smyon was successful in this undertaking. And consequently, both Rgod tshang ras chen and Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, following their master's footsteps, authored and printed biographies of Ras chung pa based on older lineage

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year): //brog la phyi gangs kyi ra bar/ dur khrod myul ba'i rnal 'byor pa du ma'i ming can gyis/ gzhan phan gyi bsam pa 'ba' zhid gis kun nas blangs ste/ kun dga'i lo la grub par sbyar ba dge legs su gyur cig/. A *dbu med* manuscript of this text is preserved in the IsIAO Tucci Collection (Text no. 1457). Torricelli (1999) deals with fols.1–11 and 13–14 of this manuscript, but successively also folios 15–167 came to light in the Fund (fol. 12 is lacking).

<sup>27</sup> In the works of Gtsang smyon and Rgod tshang ras chen, the Aural Transmission is generally defined as the heart, core, or essence (*snying po/ yang snying*) of the Bka' brgyud teachings, of all the sūtras and tantras. For example: *mdo rgyud thams cad kyi snying po bcom ldan 'das dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i rgyud kyi yang snying/ mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud 'di* (TMNT 159): “This *Mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud*, which is the essence of all the sūtras and the tantras, the innermost essence of the *Bhagavan-Śri-Cakrasaṃvara-tantra*.” See also TMNT: 24, 245; TMZB: 7; GTKC: 14.

accounts, and thus promoted wider knowledge of this figure's deeds and role in the transmission of Mi la ras pa's teachings.<sup>28</sup>

Gtsang smyon eventually compiled an extensive *Bde mchog nor bu skor gsum* textual collection. He wished to have three copies of it handwritten in golden ink, to be offered to the three sites of Rtsa ri, La phyi, and Ti se, and in 1504, while in Chu dbar, he collected the necessary gold and summoned two master calligraphers from Sman khab.<sup>29</sup> However, this task was never achieved, since a windstorm scattered the appropriate (dark) paper gathered for the books (TMNT: 245).<sup>30</sup> Following this episode, he printed a few volumes on white paper and corrected a twelve-volume *yig cha* of the tradition.

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<sup>28</sup> These are the longest and most inclusive life-stories of Ras chung pa: Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal, *Tshe gcig la 'ja' lus brnyes pa rje ras chung pa'i rnam thar rags bsdus mgur nam rgyas pa*, and Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs ming can, *Rje btsun ras chung pa'i rnam thar rnam mkhyen thar lam gsal bar ston pa'i me long ye shes kyi snang ba*. Both are published in *bKa' brgyud pa Hagiographies. A collection of rnam thar of eminent masters of Tibetan Buddhism. Compiled and edited by Khams sprul Don brgyud nyi ma*, vol. 1 (1972), pp. 485–833; vol. 3 (1973). On the existing editions of Rgod tshang ras chen's work, see Roberts 2007: 44–45.

<sup>29</sup> Scribes from this region in Lha stod lho contributed to many prints of Gtsang smyon's school. See Ehrhard 2010.

<sup>30</sup> It is thus clear that a golden, thirteen-volume collection of the *Snyan brgyud* was never achieved, as was asserted by Smith (1969: 12) and often repeated. This is clear also from another passage (TMNT: 246), translated by M. Stearns (1985: 41) as follows: "I have dedicated myself fully to the *Snyan brgyud* and the Reverend Lord Mi-la's Life. Now that the texts of the *Snyan brgyud* are finished, my life is complete. I, a mendicant yogi, have not done just a little work for the Buddha's teaching. Other than not establishing a fund as I had previously intended, for completing a copy in gold of this *Snyan brgyud*, and for whitewashing Swayambhūnāth, I have no regrets even if I were to die. Nor do I know if I will stay a long time." (*de yang rje nyid kyi zhal nas nga snyan rgyud dang/ rje btsun mi la'i rnam thar 'di'i ched du thod pa skal ba yin/ da snyan rgyud kyi yig cha nam tshar na nga'i tshes tshad kyang rdzogs/ kho bo gya* (sic!

Unfortunately no complete copy of the collection is known today, only the two incomplete manuscripts published in Leh in 1971 (DCNG1). A lengthy index (*dkar chag*) to Gtsang smyon's Aural Transmission compendium was prepared by Rgod tshang ras chen and lists fifty-one texts divided into three main sections.<sup>31</sup> However, the published *yig cha* does not seem to follow such a scheme, so that the relationship among it, the major manual in twelve volumes, and the collection introduced by the *dkar chag* has yet to be clarified.

Finally, a manuscript published in 1974 as *Rare Dkar brgyud pa Texts from the library of Ri bo che Rje drung of Padma bkod* (RKT), must be mentioned. It is a selection of *snyan brgyud* texts in *dbu med* script, including some well-known texts of the tradition but also some rare ones; among the latter is the aforementioned *dkar chag* by Rgod tshang ras chen.<sup>32</sup> This

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= *bya*) bral bas sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa la bya ba yang mi chung tsam byas yod/ snyan rgyud 'di gser ma cig ma grub pa dang/ shing kun la sku dkar gyis bdag rkyen gcig 'dzugs bsam pa sngar ma grub/ 'di tsam cig ma rtogs shi rung yang 'gyod pa med nga rgyun rings rang e sdod yang mi shes gsung ngo).

<sup>31</sup> The text is entitled *The precious Treasury, the Index of the Aural Transmission of Saṃvara and the dākinīs* (*Bde mchog mkha' 'gro'i snyan brgyud kyi dkar chag rin po che'i gter*), and is found in RKT: 13–24. In this summary the texts are listed following the Sanskrit alphabetical order, and are organized into three main sections: 1) the cycle of necessary fundamental guidance (*nyer mkho dmar khrid bkol ba'i skor*); 2) the actual Aural Transmission (*snyan brgyud dngos kyi skor*); 3) the necessary auxiliary teachings and appendixes (*cha lag kha skong nyer mkho'i skor*). Rgod tshang ras chen discusses also the perceived hierarchy among the different texts, the means of transmission of the teachings, and what he understands as the unique qualities of the *snyan brgyud* tradition (text and translation in Sernesi 2007).

<sup>32</sup> Note that some folios of the manuscript have been reproduced in wrong order. As already noted by Dan Martin (1984: 92) the reproduction of the *Phyag rgya chen po yi ge bzhi pa'i gdams pa* is incomplete, ending at p. 82: "...the folio reproduced on pp. 83–84 is from an unidentified text and the folios reproduced on pp. 85–97 continue the text started on pp. 215–22."



manuscript is a fragmentary section of a collection compiled by Gtsang smyon, not only because of the presence of the index, but because both Gtsang smyon He ru ka and Rgod tshang ras chen are frequently mentioned in the colophons as authors (those who ‘wrote,’ *’bris pa*) or editors (those who ‘arranged,’ *bkod pa*) of the texts. Among the interesting portions of the manuscript is a brief account of the *snyan brgyud* transmission through a lineage descending from Gtsang smyon (RKT fols. 245–248). It passes through Rgod tshang ras chen and his successors, until Dam pa Dge’u mchog sprul Rin po che Bka’ brgyud phrin las dbang phyug (eighteenth–nineteenth centuries), a teacher of Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po (1820–1892).<sup>33</sup> Indeed, this is the transmission-lineage through which the latter master received the *Bde mchog snyan brgyud* tradition.<sup>34</sup>

### 5 The Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Lineage: Life-stories of the Aural Transmission

The Aural Transmission tradition not only produced technical texts explaining tantric practice, but also contributed in a significant way to Bka’ brgyud hagiographical writing.

Narratives concerning Mi la ras pa’s life and the deeds of the early masters of the lineage had begun already among Mi la ras pa’s disciples. While Sgam po pa’s contributions are relatively well-known, accounts from Ras chung pa’s and Ngan rdzong’s lineages interest us here.<sup>35</sup> The earliest

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<sup>33</sup> On Mkhyen brtse’i dbang po and the so-called *Ris med* movement, see, for example, Smith 1970, Cousens 2002, Kapstein 1995.

<sup>34</sup> This same lineage succession is listed and praised in a invocation included in ‘Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse’s *Collected works* (Gangtok: Gonpo Tseten, 1977–1980, vol. 7, fols. 17–19) titled *Bde mchog mkha’ ’gro snyan brgyud kyi brgyud pa yid bzhin nor bu la gsol ba ’debs pa byin rlabs dpal ster*.

<sup>35</sup> The *Lives of Tilopa and Naropa* (*Te lo nā ro’i rnam thar*), and the *Lives of Mar pa and Mi la ras pa* (*Rje mar pa dang rje bstun mi la’i rnam thar*), are two brief texts included at the beginning of Sgam po pa’s *Collected Works: Khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po dpal mnyam med sgam po pa ’gro mgon bsod nams rin chen mchog gi gsung*

collection of songs of Mi la ras pa, known as the *Bu chen bcu gnyis*, which was greatly influential for all the later compendia, was prepared by Ngan rdzong pa and eleven other close disciples of the Cotton-clad Yogin.<sup>36</sup> Four chapters recounting the encounter between Mi la ras pa and the goddess of long-life Tshe ring ma bear an independent colophon, which ascribes them to Ngan rdzong pa and Zhi ba 'od.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, as recorded in Gtsang smyon's colophon to his *Life of Marpa the Translator*, Ngan rdzong pa and Ras chung pa were the first to write accounts of the deeds of Mar pa, and these were the sources employed by the Madman of Gtsang for his work.<sup>38</sup> Also, the *Lives* of Ngan

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*'bum yid bzhin nor bu*, ed. by Khenpo S. Tenzin and Lama T. Namgyal, Kathmandu, 2000, fols. 1–46. On the authorship and contents of these texts, see Quintman 2006: 63–73.

<sup>36</sup> The *Bu chen bcu gnyis* is thus called due to its attribution to twelve disciples of Mi la ras pa, but its title is more properly *Bzhad pa rdo rje'i rnam thar*. Ngan rdzong pa is the only one mentioned by name in the colophon of the text: “This life-story was compiled by the twelve great cotton-clad disciples, led by Ngan rdzong ston pa Bodhirāja, for the benefit of the fortunate great meditators” (*rnam thar 'di skal ldan bsgom chen rnam kyi don du/ ngan rdzong ston pa bho dhe ra tsa la sogs pa'i ras pa bu chen bcu gnyis kyi yi ger bskod pa'o/ fol. 191b*). This text was identified in the 1990s by Cyrus Stearns and first studied by Tiso (1996) and Roberts (2007)—based on his thesis defended in 2001—followed by Quintman (2006: 131–60) and myself. At least three copies of the *Bzhad pa rdo rje'i rnam thar* exist, but only the one kept at the Bodleian Library (Microfilm Reel No. SN 1207 ms. Tib. a. 11a) has been so far available to me. The study of newly revealed sources will permit the evolution of Mi la ras pa's hagiographical and poetical tradition prior to Gtsang smyon to be better evaluated. The reliance of the Madman on earlier materials is evident, and he treated these with some freedom in the structuring and reorganisation of his work, involving some rewriting and insertions.

<sup>37</sup> On the Tshe ring ma chapters, see Van Tuyl 1975, Quintman 2006: 56–62, 376–79.

<sup>38</sup> A comparative study of the *Lives* of Mar pa the Translator is still lacking, but in the present context Gtsang smyon's statement may be taken at face value. See also Sernesi 2010.

rdzong pa and of Ras chung pa were recorded at an early time by their respective disciples, and preserved within the Aural Transmission lineages.<sup>39</sup> All these works formed a mass of biographical and poetical materials which constituted the base and the source for later, more inclusive, compositions such as those by Gtsang smyon's school, that directly selected, quoted, and renarrated stories and songs recorded much earlier.

The tradition's interest in hagiography arose from devotion and admiration towards the masters, and had at the same time a precise role in the spirital path of the Aural Transmission. Indeed, as is clear from both the late exegetical tradition and the early sources themselves, narration of and devotion towards the exemplary *Lives* of the masters constitutes the Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Lineage (*brgyud pa yid bzhin nor bu*), which is, as mentioned above, the foundational ground of the whole system.

A remarkable example is the *Bu chen bcu gnyis*, whose colophon ends with verses unmistakably couched in the rhetoric of the Aural Transmission: in them the work is explicitly identified with the Lineage Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Aural Transmission, and they constitute a 'seal of entrustment' (*gtad rgya*), as is found often in the early *snyan brgyud* literature.<sup>40</sup> This formulary seal

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<sup>39</sup> The *Rje ngan rdzong ras pa'i rnam thar* opens the collection of Aural Transmission teachings of Ngan rdzong pa (NZNG: 1–17), and was originally compiled by his disciple Dam pa ras chen, to be revised at a later date. The earliest independent biography of Ras chung pa is found within the *Dkar brgyud gser 'phreng* composed by one Rgya ldang pa (or Rgyal thang pa) Bde chen rdo rje, probably a disciple of Rgod tshang pa mgon po rdo rje (1189–1258). It is also found verbatim in DCNGbio, and unlike Roberts (2007: 11–17), I believe that it was not originally composed by Rgyal thang pa, but as part of the Aural Transmission's *gser 'phreng* (DCNGbio). I argue elsewhere in favor of this hypothesis, on the basis of the biography's structure of contents and internal evidence (Sernesi 2010).

<sup>40</sup> The colophon ends: */snyan rgyud bde mchog 'khor lo yi // [b]rgyud pa yid bzhin nor bu 'di // ma 'ongs gdung rgyud 'dzin ba rnam // blo dman rjed pas 'jigs pa'i phyir // bla ma'i gsung bzhin yi ger bkod // bla ma mkha' 'gro la bzod par gsol // phyi rab*

underscores the secrecy of the transmission, and the danger of widely promulgating its texts or instructions, thereby threatening the wrath of the *ḍākinīs* who are guardians of the teachings. The Aural Transmission's *gtad rgya* is found in extensive form in an independent text called the *Mi la'i gtad rgya*, believed to record the sealing words sung by Mi la ras pa to Ras chung pa after the full transmission of the teaching. It has the same style, pattern and function as does the colophon of the *Bzhad pa'i rdo rje rnam thar*.<sup>41</sup>

It is therefore not surprising that Gtsang smyon and his followers, in the framework of their efforts to revitalize the Aural Transmission tradition and its ideal foundations, and to codify and transmit its textual heritage, would dedicate themselves to the narrative task with such energy. That they considered the writing of these life-stories to be part of the Aural Transmission,

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*rten gyi gang zag rnam // dbang bskur byin brlabs tshogs 'khor dang // dpa' bo dpa' mo mchod la sogs // dgyes shing gnang ba ma gtogs pa // bla ma rje'i bka' rgyas btab // gal te bka' las 'das gyur na/ mkha' [ ]gro ko longs dam pas na // yi ge ma spel gsang bar zhu // rgyud pa bzhin nor bu ḍa ki sa ma ya //* (fol. 192a): “This Lineage Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Aural Transmission of Saṃvara is written down according to the master's words, in order that future descendants will remember it, [and] in fear that it may be forgotten by those with inferior minds. I pray that the masters and the *ḍākinīs* be forbearing! Grant it to the individuals, future holders [of the lineage], who rejoice in initiations, blessings, and *gaṇacakras*, and in making offerings to the heroes and heroines. Apart from them, this is sealed by the venerable master's seal of command. If this command is transgressed, the *ḍākinīs'* great wrath [will arise], so do not spread it, but keep it secret! This is the Lineage Wish-fulfilling Gem, commitment to the *ḍākinīs*.” This is translated also in Quintman 2006: 380, and Roberts 2007: 24. The latter understands the beginning as “The future lineage-holders of this wish-fulfilling jewel—the lineage of the Karṇatantra of Cakrasaṃvara,” but this rendering does not reflect the explicit mention of the Lineage Wish-fulfilling Gem.

<sup>41</sup> For the role of the “seal of entrustment” (*gtad rgya*) in the Aural Transmission system, see Sernesi 2004: 255–58, especially n. 19. The *Mi la'i gtad rgya* is found in DCNG1, vol. 1: 371–73, DCNG4, vol. 2: 449–54.

as the Wish-fulfilling Gem of the Lineage, is also clear from Gtsang smyon's commentary on the root-text, the aforementioned *Gzhung 'grel nor bu skor gsum* (TMZB). Indeed, the Madman of Gtsang composed a brief *Golden Rosary* of the Aural Transmission which is included in this commentary,<sup>42</sup> inserted as an elucidation of the verse of the *Rdo rje'i tshig rkang* devoted to the Lineage Wish-fulfilling Gem.<sup>43</sup> The *gser 'phreng* thus constitutes a clarification of the conception of the supreme master, which is exemplified in the lives of Gtsang smyon's predecessors.

As may be seen, the narration of the hagiographies is considered to be an integral part of the tradition's instructions, as a way of establishing the qualities of the supreme master, the authority of the lineage as a Wish-fulfilling Gem, and the effectiveness of the Aural Transmission teachings to bring about liberation.<sup>44</sup> The works composed by the early masters of the Aural Transmission greatly influenced the development of Bka' brgyud hagiographical writing and were later employed by Gtsang smyon and his disciples for their major, widely known, narrative œuvres.

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<sup>42</sup> The succession is the same as recorded in Gtsang smyon's hagiography by Rgod tshang ras chen (TMNT: 7) and listed by Smith (1969: 4n7). This is the standard lineage passing through Khyung tshang pa and Zhang Lo tsā ba, and coming down to Gzi brjid gyal mtshan; six more masters follow, ending with Gtsang smyon's teacher Mnyam med Sha ra rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge. One of the most interesting passages of the work is a short paragraph listing some alternative *snyan brgyud* lineages received by Sha ra rab 'byams pa (TMZB: 114, on which see Sernesi 2007).

<sup>43</sup> The verse reads: *bslab gsum rgyan ldan nyams myong bla ma mchog // dad brtson shes rab snying rje slob ma'o // nyes dmigs dran pas tshe 'di'i bya ba btang //* (KT 7–9). Its commentary is found in TMZB: 17–121, and the *gser 'phreng* covers fols. 20–115.

<sup>44</sup> More evidence on this topic, and a more extensive discussion of DCNGbio and other specific hagiographic works of the tradition, is provided in Sernesi (2010).

### Conclusions

After even a preliminary and general survey of the Aural Transmission, it may be clear how rich this tradition is, and how central to the Bka' brgyud identity. Because it is the core of Mar pa's and Mi la ras pa's practical instructions, and teaches a complete path of liberation, from the Generation Stage to the Great Seal and Bar do teachings, its role and legacy must be re-evaluated.

Indeed, the textual tradition of the Aural Transmission is valuable for the study of the development of both the doctrinal and the hagiographical literature of the early Bka' brgyud. The textual compendia compiled in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries preserve a core of instructional texts composed between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries by the early masters, such as Mar pa, Mi la ras pa, Ras chung pa, Ngan rdzong ras pa, and Khyung tshang pa, and codified by Zhang Lo tsā ba. Until now, these texts, when known to scholars, were hardly put into a perspective that recognised the wider context to which they belong. They reflect a specific tradition of esoteric knowledge which preserved the teachings of the Bka' brgyud forefathers and was transmitted by hermits and yogins as well as by learned scholars of the school. It was mainly due to Gtsang smyon He ru ka and Padma dkar po that it was revitalized and established within—even at the center of—the Bka' brgyud ideology and self-representation. This was made possible by means of both exegetical and hagiographical writing. The former employs doxographical categories to place the Aural Transmission at the heart of and above all other tantric teachings, while the works of the latter genre propose an ideal of religious life modeled upon the careers of the tradition's masters, and thus on the Aural Transmission's values, symbolism, and teachings. These two genres, in the skilled hands of two of the Bka' brgyud tradition's greatest figures, were successfully employed to give new life to Mi la ras pa's teachings.

In brief, the study of the Aural Transmission sheds light not only on the very inception of the Bka' brgyud school, but also on some of the enduring later developments within it.

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# GURU-DEVOTION IN THE BKA' BRGYUD PA TRADITION: THE SINGLE MEANS TO REALISATION\*

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## 1 Introduction

The Bka' brgyud pa concept of the single means for attaining realisation—the white panacea (Tib. *dkar po gcig thub*)—and the subsequent Sa skya pa denial that a single factor can be sufficient were introduced to us more than a decade ago through David P. Jackson's pioneering study, *Enlightenment by a Single Means*. In that book, Jackson contrasted the position of Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen (1079–1153)—who held that seeing the nature of mind was in some sense a self-sufficient remedy, and the related views of some of his followers who criticised intellectual methods—with Sa skya Paṇḍita Kun dga' rgyal mtshan's principles of scholarship and his critique of the Bka' brgyud pas that followed from that.<sup>1</sup>

In the following I would like to outline the position of one of the major Bka' brgyud pa masters of the twelfth and thirteenth century, the founder of the 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud pa tradition, 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217), with particular reference to his idea that devotion functions as the single means for giving rise to realisation and the integration of this idea into the 'Bri gung pa practice of mahāmudrā. In regard to these points, I will furnish an outline of 'Jig rten mgon po's *Fivefold Profound Path of Mahāmudrā* (Tib. *zab lam phyag chen Inga ldan*), which is the core practice of the 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud pa, and also

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\* This paper has benefited from a number of valuable suggestions by David P. Jackson, and my discussion of a passage of the *Hevajra Tantra* has been made possible by Harunaga Isaacson's kindness in sharing his vast knowledge on the matter. It is (almost) needless to say that the remaining errors are my own.

<sup>1</sup> See also Gold 2007, and my review: Sobisch 2009.

consider the doctrinal aspect, namely the system of correlations between the ‘four-*kāya* guru yoga’ of the Fivefold Path on the one hand and a standard Tibetan classification of the levels of tantric initiations and paths on the other. In so doing, I will rely on three groups of works, namely the famous *Same Intention* (*Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa*) of ’Jig rten mgon po and its earliest commentaries,<sup>2</sup> ’Jig rten mgon po’s collected works,<sup>3</sup> and later instructions and explications on the practice of the Fivefold Path. This essay will also briefly touch upon the discussion of the nature of Sgam po pa’s unique mahāmudrā teaching—which has previously been described as being a ‘sūtra mahāmudrā,’ a ‘mixture’ of both sūtra and tantra, and “quite outside of both”—from what appears to be the earliest ’Bri gung pa perspective.

## 2 ’Jig rten mgon po’s *Same Intention* on guru-devotion

There can be no doubt that for ’Jig rten mgon po ‘guru-devotion’ was the single decisive means for someone aspiring to realise mahāmudrā within a single lifetime. As stated in the *Same Intention*:

He certainly maintained that devotion alone is the means that makes realisation arise.<sup>4</sup>

Here, the Tibetan phrase *mos gus kho nar*—‘devotion exclusively’ or ‘devotion alone’—leaves no room for doubt that devotion is *the* means to give rise to realisation, and not just one of several competing possibilities. In the commentarial tradition of the *Rdo sher ma*, each vajra utterance of the *Same*

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<sup>2</sup> On the *Same Intention* and its commentaries, see Sobisch 2002: 339f. The *Rin byang ma*, mentioned there as “probably [being] published within the next years,” has now been published. See bibliography: Rin chen byang chub, Spyang snga.

<sup>3</sup> See bibliography: ’Jig rten mgon po, ’Bri gung Chos rje.

<sup>4</sup> *rtogs pa skye bar byed pa’i thabs mos gus kho nar nges par bzhed do*. This is the sixth vajra utterance of the sixth chapter according to the *Rdo sher ma*, and of the first chapter according to the *Rin byang ma*, among the commentarial traditions.

*Intention* is also preceded by a 'general view,' which is then juxtaposed with the special view of 'Jig rten mgon po (which is "one with the intention of all buddhas," hence *Same Intention*),<sup>5</sup> and in the case under investigation the general view is presented as follows:

The means to make realisation arise are not fixed; they occur variously.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast to that, 'Jig rten mgon po maintains, as we have seen, that there exist no other means than guru-devotion. The commentary (*Rin byang ma*, p. 52) clarifies that it is in particular *not* the case that realisation arises through practices focusing on the channels (Skt. *nāḍī*, Tib. *rtsa*), vital winds (*vāyu*, *rlung*), and drops (*bindu*, *thig le*) of the body, saying:

Even though indefinite methods of producing realisation in oneself are held [to be possible] in various ways, if, because one practises resorting to the channels, vital winds, and drops of one's body endowed with means, one has gotten to the heart of the matter, here, through the intention of the lord and his sons, the systems of instructions of this precious tradition maintains that ... realisation arises in the mental continuum through devotion to the qualified guru where the result [realisation] depends upon the cause [devotion].<sup>7</sup>

We can also find a statement with a very similar import within the collected

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<sup>5</sup> See my remarks on the title "*Same Intention*" in Sobisch 2002: n716.

<sup>6</sup> In Tibetan: *rtogs pa skye ba'i thabs ma nges pa sna tshogs su 'byung ba yin*. See Rdo rje shes rab, *Dgongs gcig yig cha*, p. 171.

<sup>7</sup> *Rdo sher ma*, p. 52: *rang lus thabs dang ldan pa'i rtsa rlung thig le gsum la brten nas nyams su blangs pa / de la gnad du song na, rang la nang du mngon rtogs skye bar byed pa'i thabs ma nges pa sna sthogs su 'dod par gyur kyang, rje yab sras kyi thugs dgongs kyis 'dir brgyud pa rin po che 'di'i bka' srol ni, mtshan nyid dang ldan pa'i bla ma la mos gus kyis ... rtogs pa rgyud la skye ba rgyu 'bras kyi rten 'brel du bzhed do.*



writings of one of 'Jig rten mgon po's closest disciples, namely Spyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas (1175–1255),<sup>8</sup> who related the following words of his teacher 'Jig rten mgon po, which the latter offered as a farewell advice to a group of yogins on their way to a retreat at Ti se:

Though [the practices of] *nāḍī*, *vāyu* and *bindu*,  
 The six yogas and the pith instructions of the old and new [tantra tradition]  
 Seem to be profound, very profound, and even exceedingly profound  
 teachings—  
 Practise them on occasion  
 As one sometimes fills one's stomach.  
 The teaching, however, that always  
 And at all times is to be practised,  
 Is the precious, fivefold excellent Dharma.<sup>9</sup>

The 'precious, fivefold excellent Dharma' refers to the Fivefold Profound Path of Mahāmudrā, which, as will be explained, focuses on guru-devotion in particular. I will show that these two statements (from the commentary of the *Same Intention* and from the 'farewell instruction') have the same import, namely that, concerning the practices of the 'path of liberation' (*grol lam*), which is the second sequence of the tantric path and follows the 'path of ripening' (*smin lam*), mere 'tantric technique' (as I would like to express it for the time being)—such as the yogas of the path of means (*thabs lam*) involving the practices of the channels, vital winds, and drops of the body—is not seen as

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<sup>8</sup> Spyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas was a chief transmitter of the tantric teachings of 'Jig rten mgon po and served as an abbot of both Dwags lha Sgam po and Phag mo gru.

<sup>9</sup> Spyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas, *Phyag rgya chen po lnga ldan gyi khrid ti se ba rnams la gdams pa* (S. 108): *rtsa dang rlung dang thig le dang / chos drug gsar rnying man ngag rnams / zab cing rab zab shin tu zab / zab pa'i chos lta yin mod kyis / res 'ga' lto 'grangs bya na ltar / skabs su bsgom par bya ba yin / dus rnam kun tu rtag par yang / nyams su blang bar bya ba'i chos / lnga ldan dam chos rin chen lags.*

the most important factor contributing to realisation. Instead the focus is on guru-devotion, or on the Fivefold Path, whose core is again guru-devotion. In a more general sense, these statements reflect a position that maintains that mahāmudrā is not exclusively based on the path of means (*thabs lam*), but that it may be presented also in contexts where the path of means is not employed (or not employed as the principal method), yet (as will be seen) at the same time it is also not considered to lie outside of the mantra path.<sup>10</sup> This is not only so because the Fivefold Path includes the practice of a tantric deity, but also because, as will be shown, guru yoga as a tantric path is treated as being completely equivalent to the practices of *nāḍi*, *vāyu*, and *bindu*.

### 2.1 'Jig rten mgon po and Sa paṅ's critique

At the beginning of this essay I placed this discussion in the context of the so-called white panacea (Tib.: *dkar po gcig thub*). The term does not actually occur in the text passages of the 'Bri gung pa tradition under investigation here, but it is well documented that Sa paṅ, as an opponent of certain Bka' brgyud pa approaches to mahāmudrā, utilised it when he criticised the supposed possibility of any single factor being sufficient to yield awakening (as Kamalaśīla was supposed to have done before him in the context of the Bsam yas debate). He would, to be sure, not have objected to a fivefold path, even if one of the five elements were the most important or decisive one, such as guru-devotion in the

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<sup>10</sup> The path of ripening is generally understood to be tantric initiation. The path of liberation comprises the two stages (of production and completion, *utpannakrama* and *niṣpannakrama*) and yogas, such as "inner heat" (*caṇḍalī*). Within the path of liberation, however, the path of means specifically resorts to practices that utilise the channels, vital wind, and drops of the body, so that liberation is quickly achieved without abandoning the afflictions (*kleśā*). At least according to the Rnying ma and Bka' brgyud tradition of the teachings, the path of liberation also allows within the stage of completion for other practices that do not resort to yogas such as "inner heat." The approach to mahāmudrā discussed here, therefore, utilises general tantric paths such as that of ripening and liberation, but not the particular yogas of the path of means.

case of 'Jig rten mgon po's Fivefold Path. But a description of that element as the one that "alone is the means that makes realisation arise" would, in his eyes, not be tolerable. This raises the double question as to whether 'Jig rten mgon po's statement regarding guru-devotion as the only means was actually intended as maintaining a white panacea (in Sa paṅ's sense) and how the Fivefold Path—having more than one element and being the core practice of the 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud pa—is compatible with that statement. I cannot treat these questions exhaustively in the available space, but a few remarks are in order.

Let me first point out in this regard that 'Jig rten mgon po's emphasis on guru-devotion as the decisive means and his teaching of a fivefold path cannot be separated into two different contexts. This will be shown in detail below. The doctrinal point is, however, even clear in contexts that do not focus primarily on the Fivefold Path or on guru-devotion. In a pith instruction on practising the two resolves for awakening, for instance, 'Jig rten mgon po says that even though there are other systems for realising the unity of the two resolves, "we maintain that it is realised through devotion *alone* to the excellent guru" (*bla ma dam pa'i mos gus 'ba' zhig gis rtogs par bzhed*). Thus "the inborn gnosis arises by itself through devotion to the excellent guru and the previous accumulation of merit."<sup>11</sup> And immediately after this:

How is that practised? In the beginning, sit down on a comfortable seat in the correct cross-legged position, remain with the five limbs of dhyāna and produce first the resolve for supreme awakening, contemplate the body as the tantric deity, contemplate the excellent guru on the top of your head or in your heart, and remain then in a state of an unfabricated mind. ... Finally, or from time to time, dedicate the virtue to great awakening.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Byang chub sems gnyis nyams su blang ba'i gdams ngag ye shes rtsegs la gnang ba, Collected Works*, vol. 2, pp. 275–80, here p. 278: *bla ma dam pa'i mos gus dang, gong gi bsod nams kyi tshogs bsags pas, ... lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes rang shar du 'char*. The role of merit as a condition is discussed below.

<sup>12</sup> In the same text, p. 279: *de ji ltar nyams su blang na / dang po stan bde ba'i steng du /*

This is exactly the instruction for the fivefold practice. And, in another instruction on the inseparability of view, practice, and the realisation of one-taste, 'Jig rten mgon po says:

Practise at first love, compassion, and the resolve for awakening. Then contemplate your body, the tantric deity. Recollect the excellent guru in the center of your heart. Then do not contemplate your mind as existing—that would be eternalism. Don't contemplate it as not existing—that would be nihilism. Don't contemplate it as mind—that would be mind only. Don't contemplate it as the middle [i.e. a Madhyamaka position between extremes of eternalism and nihilism]—that would be grasping. The practitioner doesn't exist, the practice doesn't exist, the deity doesn't exist and the mantra, too, does not exist.<sup>13</sup> Completely abide [with] deity and mantra in the nature that is free from discursive elaboration. [This] was taught by the Buddha.<sup>14</sup>

Again this is, from the point of view of practice, the instruction of the Fivefold Path (with the dedication of merit mentioned later), to which 'Jig rten mgon po

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*skyil mo krung legs par bca' / bsam gtan gyi yan lag lngas gnas par byas nas / dang po byang chub mchog tu sems bskyed / lus yi dam gyi lhar bsgom / bla ma dam pa spyi bo'am snying gar bsgom / de nas shes pa ma bcos pa'i ngang la bzhag / ... rjes sam yang na skabs skabs su / dge ba byung chub chen por bsngo.*

<sup>13</sup> "The practitioner doesn't exist ... discursive elaboration" is a direct quote from *Hevajra I*, v, 11.

<sup>14</sup> *Bla ma'i thugs dgongs zab mo lta sgom rtogs pa ro gcig dbyer mi phyed pa*, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, pp. 291–94, here p. 292f.: *dang por byams pa dang snying rje byang chub kyi sems bsgom, de nas lus yi dam gyi lha bsgom, bla ma dam pa snying gi dbus su bsam, de nas rang gi sems, yod par mi bsgom rtag lta yin / med par mi bsgom chad lta yin / sems su mi bsgom sems tsam yin / dbu mar mi bsgom 'dzin pa yin / sgom pa po med sgom pa'ang med / lha med sngags kyang yod ma yin / spros med pa'i rang bzhin la / lha dang sngags ni yang dag gnas / bcom ldan 'das kyis gsungs pa dang / ....*

adds the following, pointing out “the meaning of this instruction”:

The precious one maintained that when realisation arises in that [practice],  
 The complete liberation is the guru’s blessing. ...  
 The absolute truth of the self-arisen ones [the buddhas]  
 Is to be realised through devotion.

And since it has been taught in such a way I request you to pay great heed to [guru] devotion, for realisation arises from devotion. [This] is the supreme intention of the precious one.<sup>15</sup>

In other words, ’Jig rten mgon po’s teaching of the Fivefold Path and his pointing out of guru-devotion as the decisive means are inseparable principles of tantric practice per se. In which way is guru-devotion therefore “alone ... the means that makes realisation arise”? Why is it nevertheless embedded in other practices? Instead of the detailed discussion that these questions deserve, I shall, due to limitations of space, make only a few short comments:

(1) ’Jig rten mgon po distinguishes cause (the completely pure special motivation), condition (merit), and means (guru-devotion). Within the Fivefold Path teachings, the first refers primarily to love, compassion, and the resolve for awakening, the second to all practices together, and the third to guru-devotion. This point will receive further attention below.

(2) From this it follows that most disciples have to undergo a gradual path, culminating, however, in guru yoga. All practices, except for the final guru-devotion at the culmination of the path, are in that sense preliminaries, designed to create the necessary causes and conditions, and to remove impediments from the path.

(3) ’Jig rten mgon po’s foregoing remarks regarding those practices that

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<sup>15</sup> In the same text, p. 293f.: *de la rtogs pa skye na rnam grol ba / bla ma’i byin rlabs yin pa rin chen bzhed / ... rang byung nams kyi don dam ni / dad pa nyid kyis rtogs bya yin.*

could accordingly be described as “mere tantric techniques” (such as the yogas of the path of means) have the intention of eradicating the disciples’ excessive fixations on such yogas, which, according to another instruction, might turn them into great meditators (*sgom chen*), of which there are many in Tibet, but which will not turn them into siddhas, of which there are only very few.<sup>16</sup>

(4) Accordingly, mere meditative technique yields only preliminary results, if any at all. But devotion (sometimes even when practised by an otherwise unskilled adept) is capable of producing the final result. This seems also to be the point of so many siddha stories of India: the adept humbly abandons all pride regarding sometimes advanced tantric achievements, realising that the instructor (who in many tales appears fortuitously, whether in the form of a wandering yogin or as an emanation of some sort, for instance, a beer-servant or a young female companion), indeed possesses the highest authority; and finally he experiences his final breakthrough on the basis of the humility and acknowledgment of authority that are the chief ingredients of devotion.

As these four points suggest, devotion is both the culmination of all other practices and thus is embedded in them, and it is alone capable of producing the final result, which can be achieved even when the tantric techniques of the path of means are not applied, whereas no ultimate result arises when there is no guru-devotion serving as the culmination of all practices. In that sense 'Jig rten mgon po certainly maintained a ‘single means theory,’ but not, however, in the way that was criticised by Sa paṅ, when the latter refuted the concept of a single sufficient factor—the white panacea (*dkar po gcig thub*)—thereby denying the possibility of a completely autonomous means to realisation.

Such a means is what David Jackson has translated as the ‘singly efficacious white [remedy]’ or ‘self-sufficient white [simple method]’ (*dkar po*

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<sup>16</sup> *Gzhi lam 'bras bu thams cad lnga ldan gyi sgo nas nyams su len par gdams pa, Collected Works*, vol. 5, pp. 409–21, here especially p. 415.

*gcig thub*, p. 1) in the context, for instance, of Sa paṅ's *Sdom gsum rab dbye*, where it is said:

Some say that the dedication is needed after cultivating this 'singly efficacious' [practice]. In that case the 'singly efficacious' would become two-fold. If, in addition to that, one requires such things as going for refuge, the generation of bodhicitta, and meditative practice involving a tutelary deity, the 'singly efficacious' [practice] would be manifold.<sup>17</sup>

Not only did 'Jig rten mgon po maintain such a (final) single means—the road that had to be paved with causes and conditions—but Sgam po pa, too, maintained just that. For although he spoke of acquiring the true nature of the mind that, when it had arisen, was a self-sufficient white remedy that was equivalent to full liberation, it nevertheless had to be “acquired through the sustaining spiritual impulse of the guru,” the disciple’s “reverence and devotion, and by the power of meditatively cultivating through diligent effort.”<sup>18</sup> I do not know what in Sa paṅ's understanding might have been the means to achieve the final breakthrough, whether it was one or many, or whether it was perhaps always the same for all (such as seeing the nature of mind). He certainly maintained, however, that before that breakthrough could occur, all causes and conditions had to be completely cultivated, as expressed in an epistle in the context of refuting the self-sufficient white remedy:

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<sup>17</sup>Jackson 1994: 165-66.

<sup>18</sup> See the translations of the relevant passages and the Tibetan text in Jackson 1994: 150-52. It must be noted, however, that the term *dkar po gcig thub* has, as far as we can see at the moment, only three occurrences in Sgam po pa's teachings, namely in the replies to the Karma pa's and Phag mo gru pa's questions (as documented by Jackson). Although it seems clear enough that these clarifications were requested by the disciples, it is by no means clear how these teachings were given. Were they bestowed orally? Were they actually penned by Sgam po pa himself? Or were they noted down later from memory, and by whom?

If all the interdependently connected [causes and conditions] do not come together, perfectly complete Buddhahood will not arise. Such is my understanding.<sup>19</sup>

Yet a very similar view can also be found clearly expressed in 'Jig rten mgon po's *Same Intention* (2.14.):

All the stages of the path are practised in each single session.

The commentary by Rig 'dzin chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659) explains:

Since it is the essence of the profound dharma of the great lord 'Bri gung pa that the abandoning of each of the subtle mental stirrings of the afflictions and the accomplishing of each of the subtle virtuous dharmas, too, is brought out from between the paddles of the Fivefold Path. ...<sup>20</sup>

As so often, I wonder how far apart these masters really were.

## 2.2 Sgam po pa on sūtra, tantra, and mahāmudrā

The different positions regarding the basis from which mahāmudrā arises portrayed by Jackson (1994) are, when categorised, more complex than they first appear. In any case, it is clear from his discussion that it is not a simple problem of 'tantric' versus 'non-tantric' mahāmudrā. Sa paṅ maintained a position according to which the mahāmudrā of his tradition is a gnosis that arises from tantric initiation and from the samādhis of the two stages (i.e. *utpannakrama* and *sampannakrama*), a view that he expressed clearly in his *Sdom gsum rab dbye*.<sup>21</sup> Similar clarity is hard to find in Sgam po pa's position.

<sup>19</sup> Jackson 1994: 171.

<sup>20</sup> *Collected Works* 3, p. 103: *nyon mongs kyi rtog pa phra ba re re spong ba dang, dkar po'i chos phra mo re re sgrub kyang lam lnga ldan gyi skya ba nas 'don pa ni mgon po 'bri gung pa chen po'i zab chos kyi nying khu yin pas.*

<sup>21</sup> *nged kyi phyag rgya chen po ni / dbang las byung ba'i ye shes dang / rim pa gnyis kyi*



A plethora of teachings are attributed to him as his original doctrine (whose transmission is by no means well established) and there are numerous later elucidations by his followers through several generations.

According to 'Gos Lo tsā ba (1392–1481), for example, up to Mi la ras pa the mahāmudrā was only transmitted within the framework of the path of means (*thabs lam*), but Sgam po pa transmitted it also outside of that framework even to those who did not possess tantric initiation.<sup>22</sup> Does that, however, mean that this transmission without tantric initiation is necessarily to be categorised as a practice according to the 'system of perfections' (*pha rol tu phyin pa'i lugs*) as claimed by 'Gos Lo?<sup>23</sup> The sixteenth century Bka' brgyud master Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal denied this and maintained that this was not Sgam po pa's terminology; the division into 'sūtra' and 'tantra mahāmudrā' was introduced by later followers. Yet Bkra shis rnam rgyal also did not maintain that this mahāmudrā was based on specifically tantric teachings. Instead, he held that it belonged to a class of teachings outside of those two classes.<sup>24</sup>

Indeed, Jackson was able to locate in Sgam po pa's collected writings passages that seem to suggest that Sgam po pa saw 'his' mahāmudrā as lying outside of the classes of sūtra and tantra.<sup>25</sup> Accordingly, he distinguishes "taking inference for the path" (*rjes dpag lam du byed pa*), i.e. the (sūtra) path of the perfections (*mtshan nyid lam pha rol tu phyin pa*), "taking (the guru's) blessings for the path" (*byin rlabs lam du byed pa*), i.e. the Mahāyāna-Mantra (*theg chen gsang sngags*), and "taking direct perception for the path" (*mngon sum lam du byed pa*), i.e. the inborn clear light (*lhan cig skyes pa 'od gsal*). Yet this is a presentation of three different approaches to the teachings concerned with either gradual (or successive, namely the first two paths), or simultaneous (namely the

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*ting 'dzin las / 'byung ba'i rang byung ye shes yin / (Sdom gsum rab dbye, 3.163b–164d; Jackson 1994, 89n221).*

<sup>22</sup> 'Gos Lo tsā ba, p. 400, Roerich, p. 459-60, Jackson 1994: 11.

<sup>23</sup> 'Gos Lo tsā ba, p. 632, Jackson 1994: 19.

<sup>24</sup> Bkra shis rnam rgyal, pp. 99a–101a, Lhalungpa 1986: 110–12, Jackson 1994: 24-28.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson 1994: 25-28.

third, *lhan cig skyes pa 'od gsal*). Such a presentation cannot be understood as denying the existence of a mahāmudrā that is based on the practice of the two stages of tantra—and how could it, since Sgam po pa himself was introduced to mahāmudrā by his guru Mi la ras pa through precisely that method? Nor can it be seen as making a statement about what others sometimes termed ‘sūtra mahāmudrā.’ Strictly speaking it also does not explicitly state that the third approach is exclusively non-mantra, but rather stresses the fact that the *lhan cig skyes pa 'od gsal* is, by contrast with the usual sūtra and mantra approaches, ‘simultaneous’ instead of gradual. Similarly, in the second example cited by Jackson,<sup>26</sup> a distinction is made from the point of view of the basis (*gzhi*), which is to be either eliminated (instructions on the perfections), transformed (mantra), or known (mahāmudrā, *rdzogs pa chen po*). When Sgam po pa speaks in these passages of “our system” (*yu phu'i lugs*),<sup>27</sup> he obviously refers to the *lhan cig skyes pa*, but he is not saying that this is the only approach to mahāmudrā, that it is not classed as mantra (or, for that matter, as sūtra), or that the other categories (e.g. *rim gyis pa*, *gzhi spong ba*, *gzhi sgyur ba*) could not be approaches to mahāmudrā. The question, therefore, arises, what would ‘typically mantra’ or ‘typically sūtra’ look like for Sgam po pa? Fortunately we possess a clear statement from Sgam po pa’s collected writings:

What is the difference between the perfections and mantra [vehicles]? The [vehicle of the] perfections takes as its object the cognitive image of the object-universal. The mantra takes the actual, direct object as the path.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Jackson 1994: 27.

<sup>27</sup> Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen, *Collected Writings*, pp. 440.2, Jackson 1994: 27n63.

<sup>28</sup> Sgam po pa, *Collected Writings*, 1, 268.1: *pha rol tu phyin pa dang gsang sngags kyi khyad par gang yin [zhe] na, pha rol tu phyin pa ni don spyi'i rnam pa yul du byed pa yin, gsang sngags ni don [dngos] lam du byed pa yin*. Translation by Jackson 1994: 32, and n. 74) I follow Jackson emending of the text (*don [dngos]*), which is confirmed at the end of the same passage: *don dngos lam du byed pa thabs ....*

Now, if “taking the actual, direct object as the path” is Sgam po pa’s definition of mantra, then “taking direct perception for the path” (*mngon sum lam du byed pa*), i.e. the inborn clear light (*lhan cig skyes pa ’od gsal*), and “knowing the defilements as the basis of the great gnosis” (*nyon mongs pa ye shes chen po ’i gzhir shes pa*), as cited by Jackson as possible indications in Sgam po pa’s collected writings of “a Great Seal beyond sūtra and mantra,”<sup>29</sup> cannot, according to the above definition of mantra, possibly be seen as being outside of the mantra vehicle.

That Sgam po pa’s *lhan cig skyes pa*-mahāmudrā is apparently not outside of the mantra vehicle also fits with Jackson’s observation that the *lhan cig skyes sbyor* of Sgam po pa’s *Collected Writings* (1, 219–24), which is identified by Samten Karmey as this work, “is explicitly said to be a high Tantric instruction.”<sup>30</sup> And, again as Jackson<sup>31</sup> observes, even Sgam po pa’s otherwise exclusively sūtra-based work, the famous *Thar pa rin po che ’i rgyan*, takes recourse to quoting from the songs of the great tantric adepts (*mahāsiddha*) and from tantras (and “sūtras of a certain orientation”) when it alludes to the Great Seal near the end of chapter seventeen.

The reason why I summarise and quote here extensively from the first chapter of Jackson’s excellent study *Enlightenment by a Single Means* is that I would, in the present stage of our research, resist ascribing to Sgam po pa himself the position that the Great Seal is ‘a sūtra method’ (p. 17), ‘sūtra-tradition’ or ‘sūtra-path’ (p. 24), or that it is “quite outside and removed from that [i.e. the tantric] system” (p. 33). The fact that Sgam po pa’s own successors differed greatly on this point is another strong indication that we cannot determine with any degree of certainty Sgam po pa’s own position in this regard. Later in this essay I will come back to this point by presenting a ’Bri gung Bka’ brgyud pa solution to this problem, where, in short, mahāmudrā is

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<sup>29</sup> Jackson 1994: 25–27. This concept of the “Great Seal beyond Sūtra and Mantra” is one that accords with Dwags po Bkra shis rnam rgyal’s way of thinking.

<sup>30</sup> Jackson 1994: 11n19; Karmay 1988: 144n39.

<sup>31</sup> Jackson 1994: 20-24.

achieved outside of the 'path of means' (*thabs lam*), but clearly within the tantric 'path of liberation' (*grol lam*).

Returning to the context of guru-devotion as the single means to realisation, a number of questions arise. Here I would like to address chiefly two of them, namely (a) how is this devotion characterised? and (b) why is it supposed to function as a means to realise mahāmudrā?

### 3 Identifying the type of devotion through a quotation from the *Hevajra Tantra*

With regard to the first topic, the characterisation of guru-devotion, while there is an abundance of Indian and Tibetan literature concerning guru-devotion, in this particular context, where devotion is taken to be the single means for realisation, it is my impression that 'Jig rten mgon po centers his explanation on a famous quote from the *Hevajra Tantra* (I, viii, 36), which says:

That which is not expressed by others, the inborn, which cannot be found  
anywhere,  
Is to be known through [...] guru attendance and through one's own merit.

The crucial line is what I have provisionally translated here as "through [...] guru attendance," but it is well known that this line is not without problems. In the Tibetan tradition, we have, as far as I can see, a number of variant readings,<sup>32</sup> namely:

- (1) *bla ma'i dus mtha' bsten pa yis,*
- (2) *bla ma'i dus thabs bsten pa yis,*
- (3) *bla ma'i dus tshigs bsten pa las,*

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<sup>32</sup> The verse as a whole is also transmitted variously, but for the purpose of the present article I am focusing exclusively on *Hevajra Tantra* I, viii, 36c. The following Tibetan and Sanskrit variants were first presented together in Nihom 1982. I was introduced to the problems of this verse by Harunaga Isaacson, who kindly shared his vast knowledge of the subject with me.

- (4) *bla ma'i rim pa nyer bsten phyir*,  
 (5) *bla ma'i dus tshigs bstan pa las*, and  
 (6) *bla ma'i rim pa nyer bstan phyir*.<sup>33</sup>

Not being a Sanskritist, I cannot give this passage the exhaustive philological treatment that it requires. Instead I would like to discuss a few points strictly within the framework of the theme of this chapter.

I would like to dismiss, whether it is a simple orthographical error or not, the reading *bstan pa* (nos. 5 and 6), although it is attested in Tibetan translations of Munidatta's *Caryāgīti* commentary. As far as I can tell, the passage is, within the Tibetan discussion of guru-devotion, always rendered "guru attendance" (Tib. *bla ma'i ... bsten pa/nyer bsten*). All such versions make good sense in our context. In the 2001 edition of 'Jig rten mgon po's *Collected Writings*, wherever the verse is quoted, we find invariably the first version (*bla ma'i dus [kyi] mtha'*), but in other works of the same tradition I have also seen the reading *bla ma'i dus thabs*, which should perhaps be taken as standard.<sup>34</sup> Both versions, however, are well attested renderings of *guruparvopasevayā*. The term *upasevayā* is translated into the Tibetan versions as *bsten pa yis* ("through attendance"),<sup>35</sup> and the core of the problem is the interpretation of the phrase *guruparva*. As we have seen above, its Tibetan renderings include:

- (1) *bla ma'i dus mtha'*,  
 (2) *bla ma'i dus thabs*,

<sup>33</sup> (1) This is the version we find in 'Jig rten mgon po's writings (e.g. *kha* 278, *ga* 301 and 578). It seems to go back to *guruparva*. (2) *Hevajra Tantra* I, viii, 36 (*guruparvopasevayā*). (3 & 5) *Yogaratnamāla* 110, 27–8 (commenting upon I, i, 31). A possible translation of *parva*. (4 & 6) Munidatta's commentary on the *Caryāgīti*, where the Sanskrit is the same as *Hevajra Tantra* 1.viii, 36 (Kvaerne 1986: 4, 5, 81–86).

<sup>34</sup> '*Dus thabs*' can also be found in the works of Sgam po pa and Bla ma Zhang; see Jackson 1994: 48-50, 150-52.

<sup>35</sup> The Sanskrit tradition has also variants of *upasevayā*, for which see Nihom.

(3) *bla ma'i dus tshigs*, and

(4) *bla ma'i rim pa*.

The variety of translations into Tibetan is understandable in light of the possible meanings of *parvan*: 'occasion, moment; liminal time; sacrifices performed on the liminal days (such as new moon, the eighth day of a lunar fortnight); joint (e.g. in a cane); limb, member, section.' Version (4) seems to reflect the understanding 'joint,' 'limb,' 'member,' etc., i.e. "[through attending/worshiping] the lineage of the guru."<sup>36</sup> All other variants (1–3) seem to understand *guruparvopasevayā* along the lines of "through guru attendance [during the] liminal [points in] time" (translated here according to the Tibetan).<sup>37</sup> In effect, the first three Tibetan versions seem to have understood the expression as "[through] the sacrifices for the guru on the liminal days," referring to the right occasions of particular days throughout the month and year, or perhaps to the different practice sessions of guru worship throughout the day (see also Jackson 1994: 49, 'timely sacrifices').

However that may be, since it is our principal interest to understand 'Jig rten mgon po's idea of 'guru attendance' as a single means for realisation, let us now have a look at how he interpreted this passage. At first glance, one might wonder how the quotation under discussion serves to support the notion of a single means, for it seems to mention two means, namely guru attendance and

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<sup>36</sup> I was kindly informed by Harunaga Isaacson that the Sanskrit compound *guruparvan* or *guruparvakrama* appears to have this sense of 'lineage of the guru(s)' in a number of non-tantric works, including non-Buddhist ones, such as Kumāriḷa's *Ślokavārttika* (*pratijñāsūtra* 23d), which may be one of the earliest texts in which the compound *guruparvan* can be found.

<sup>37</sup> I have observed that in oral teachings some contemporary Bka' brgyud pa lamas interpret *dus thabs* as "the skill of the teacher to introduce the students at the right time [to the mind or through initiation, etc.]." Note that this shifts the emphasis from the disciple's efforts to the guru's skills. I have not had the chance yet to search for a textual basis of such an interpretation.

merit. But this is only a superficial problem; below it will become quite clear that 'Jig rten mgon po treats only 'guru attendance' as the means and 'merit' simply as a basic condition for recognising the guru's characteristics and qualities and its accumulation as a way of pleasing the guru. Let us, in order to outline 'Jig rten mgon po's position, look at some primary and secondary sources. Among the first, 'Jig rten mgon po's *Collected Writings*, a cursory reading of just three out of ten volumes reveals how frequently this passage from the *Hevajra Tantra* was quoted by him. When the citation occurs in the context of guru-devotion (*bla ma'i mos gus*), it is for example explained in the following manner:

*mtshan nyid ldan pa'i bla ma la*  
*dus mtha' chos sku'i 'du shes bskyed*  
*nges shes skye ba dka' gyur na*  
*bsod nams tshogs la nan tan bya.*<sup>38</sup>

The first two lines speak of *dus mtha'*, explained as 'the notion of dharmakāya,' which is produced "with regard to a qualified guru."<sup>39</sup> In my brief investigation of the passage from the *Hevajra Tantra* above, I concluded that in our context 'liminal [points in] time' has been the general Tibetan understanding of *dus mtha'* (Skt. *parvan*), but what is its sense in the context of this particular verse by 'Jig rten mgon po? Is this passage—instead of speaking of sacrifice on the liminal days—perhaps speaking of a *final* (*mtha'*) sacrifice, namely, perceiving the guru as he is in the final analysis, that is, as the dharmakāya? In another work in the same volume, 'Jig rten mgon po's remarks in the context of the

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<sup>38</sup> *Collected Writings*, vol. *ga* (pp. 576–79), *Snying po don gyi zhus lan gsang chen yi ge* (p. 578).

<sup>39</sup> The final two lines of the text may be translated: "If the arising of certainty [with regard to such a notion] should be difficult, / You should work conscientiously at the accumulation of merit." Thus, the accumulation of merit is explained as a secondary means to provide the necessary conditions for the arising of such a notion.

*Hevajra Tantra* passage under discussion can in fact be understood in such a way:

[This] “culminating [sacrifice] in relation to the guru” (*bla ma'i dus kyi mtha'*) does not refer to “making great offerings, performing many services and attending [the guru] for a long time.” Since beyond seeing the guru as dharmakāya and the arising of certainty [with regard to that], there is no occasion of regarding [him] as anything superior to that, this [seeing of the guru as dharmakāya] is called ‘the final moment.’<sup>40</sup>

Hence, according to this passage, *dus kyi mtha'* means in general: ‘to make great offerings, to perform many services and to attend [the guru] for a long time.’ But, according to 'Jig rten mgon po, in the particular context of the passage quoted from the *Hevajra Tantra*, this is inappropriate. Such a sacrifice would not only include common ritual sacrifice, but also the performance of services for and attendance upon the guru; it seems not only to involve the notion of ‘at the right time,’ but also ‘intensively’ and ‘for long periods.’ It is, however, unlikely that 'Jig rten mgon po intended to provide, in his verse cited above, a lexical definition of the term *dus kyi mtha'* as it was generally understood at his time. He has provided rather a clue when he refers to the culmination of all practice, namely, to understand ‘culminating sacrifice’ as the notion that the guru is the dharmakāya. Be that as it may, the passage as a whole seems to indicate at least that a rendering ‘culminating sacrifice of the guru’ is not completely off the mark.

The necessity of regarding the guru as dharmakāya seems to have been a teaching that was handed down to 'Jig rten mgon po by his own teacher, since in

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<sup>40</sup> *Collected Works*, vol. *ga* (pp. 297–309), *Bstan bcos rdo rje ri zhes bya ba rgo na ba dang shākya dbang phyug gnyis la gnang ba*, (p. 301): *bla ma'i dus kyi mtha' ni 'bul ba che ba dang, zhabs tog mang ba dang, bsten yun ring ba la zer ba min, bla ma chos kyi skur mthong zhing nges shes skyes pa de las lhag pa gzhan du mthong ba'i dus med pas dus kyi mtha' de yin gsungs.*



the *Rin byang ma* commentary of his *Same Intention*, the ‘Venerable Protector of Beings (*’gro ba’i mgon po*),’ which is the usual epithet for ’Jig rten mgon po’s guru Phag mo gru pa (1110–1170), is quoted in the context of this passage as having said:

Without the arising of the perception of the guru,  
 Who is Vajradhara, as being dharmakāya,  
 One may direct oneself to the realisation of sameness,  
 But one will be despised by oneself and those who are superior.<sup>41</sup>

To summarise our findings so far, we may conclude that according to ’Jig rten mgon po, guru-devotion is the single means for the realisation of mahāmudrā and the culmination of that attendance upon the guru is to regard him as dharmakāya.

#### 4 The function of guru-devotion in ’Jig rten mgon po’s *Same Intention*

Let us now turn to the second question, namely why guru-devotion is supposed to function as a means for the realisation of mahāmudrā. The aforementioned *Rin byang ma* commentary on the *Same Intention* explains the devotion to the guru in terms of dependent origination, which is a core theme of that text (*Rin byang ma*, p. 52). On the next page (p. 53) it analyses the relation between the devoted disciple and the qualified guru as being like that between workable clay and a faultless mould:

Therefore, the condition, i.e. the qualified guru, is like a faultless mould. The cause, i.e. one’s devotion, is like clay and like [something that is] workable. It is like [the case where] there is an image in the mould, but if one has not gathered the cause, i.e. faultless clay, one may put dry earth, (p.

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<sup>41</sup> *Rin byang ma*, p. 53: *rdo rje ’chang chen bla ma la / chos sku’i ’du shes ma skyes par / mnyam nyid rtogs pa kha lta yang / rang dang gong ma mams kyis khrel.*

54) stones, or something like clods [of dirt into the mould], but the image will not appear.<sup>42</sup>

The dependent character of this process is also the theme, in the *Same Intention*, of the vajra utterance that precedes the one that has been discussed earlier.<sup>43</sup> Here, 'to produce the qualities' presupposes that one possesses both the cause and the condition:

[The *siddhis*] arise from the dependent association of the disciple upon the guru, where the cause is one's [i.e. the disciple's] completely pure special motivation, and the condition is the qualified guru.<sup>44</sup>

Apart from the single means of devotion and the condition of merit, we are here presented with the cause, namely 'the completely pure special motivation,'<sup>45</sup> and

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<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere in the *Rin byang ma* (p. 46), the example of the "mould and the lump of clay" is explained as a relationship of "non-deceiving dependency."

<sup>43</sup> *mtshan nyid dang mi ldan pa'i bla mas yon tan bskyed mi nus par bzhed do*. "He maintained that an unqualified guru cannot produce the qualities." This is the fifth vajra utterance of the sixth chapter according to the *Rdo sher ma*, and the first chapter according to the *Rin byang ma* commentarial traditions.

<sup>44</sup> *Rin byang ma*, p. 45-46: *rgyu rang gi lhag pa'i bsam pa nam par dag pa dang, rkyen mtshan nyid dang ldan pa'i bla ma gnyis kyi dpon slob rten 'brel tshogs pa las 'byung ste*.

<sup>45</sup> The completely pure special motivation refers to aspiring to the result which is such that "as long as the beings are not exhausted, the Buddha activity, too, is not known to be exhausted, [and] the inexhaustible body, speech, and mind [of the Buddha], the wheel of ornamentation, arises uninterruptedly until saṃsāra is empty" (*Rin byang ma*, p. 493). It is possible that such a vast result is achieved because "all the qualities of a Buddha fit into the mind." Therefore "it is necessary to engage also in the completely pure conduct of body and speech, which is blessed with the vast motivation equal to the *dharmadhātu*. In short, produce again and again the vast motivation, thinking: 'All the roots of the wholesome of all the Noble Ones of the ten directions and three times and of whatever

with an apparently further condition, namely the ‘qualified guru.’ In ’Jig rten mgon po’s thought, however, the ‘qualified guru’ and ‘one’s merit’ are intimately interwoven so that the latter is again the basis for the former. According to the *Rin byang ma* (p. 46), the quality of the ‘outer guru,’ i.e. good, bad, or medium, depends directly on the disciple’s stock of merit. Hence:

The unqualified guru is an appearance achieved by [one’s] inferior roots of virtue.

In other words, the apparent lack of quality on the part of the guru is nothing but an insufficient measure of merit on the disciple’s part; hence, the principal condition is still the disciple’s merit. It follows that the guru in such an impaired relationship is unable to produce the qualities in the disciple. In sum, realisation is produced through the cause, namely ‘the disciple’s pure special motivation,’ the condition, namely ‘his merit,’ and the means, guru-devotion. But what is the ‘justification’ of devotion being the single means of realisation? In order to understand this from the point of view of the ’Bri gung Bka’ brgyud pa tradition we must turn to its core practice, the Fivefold Profound Path of Mahāmudrā (*zab lam phyag chen lnga ldan*), and its commentaries.

### **5 The guru yoga of the Fivefold Profound Path of Mahāmudrā**

The Fivefold Profound Path of Mahāmudrā, which, according to the tradition, goes back to Sgam po pa, is evident for the first time in the collected works of Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–1170), the principal guru of ’Jig rten mgon po. Here, in a short table with seven columns and six lines, the first row mentions the five limbs of mahāmudrā: the resolve for awakening, the practice of the tantric deity, the practice of the guru, the practice of mahāmudrā, and merit dedication. Through these five practices, the five *klesās* are abandoned, the five demons are pacified, the five families of human beings are controlled, and

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being exists must be completely achieved by myself alone” (*Rin byang ma*, p. 494).

the five results and the five gnoses are obtained.<sup>46</sup> 'Jig rten mgon po composed a spiritual song of these five limbs, which later became the basis for numerous commentaries both from within and outside the 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud pa lineage:

- (1) If the stallion of love and compassion,  
Is not made to gallop for the benefit of others,  
The applause of gods and men will not resound in the crowd.  
Pay great heed, therefore, to this attitude, the preparatory practice.
- (2) If with respect to your body, the king, which is the body of the deity,  
You do not seize the basis, which is the unchangeable support,  
The mothers—the *dākinī* with her retinue—will not gather.  
Pay great heed, therefore, to this body, which is the tantric deity.
- (3) If the sun of devotion fails to shine  
Upon the guru, who is the snow mountain of the four *kāyas*,  
The stream of blessings will not arise.  
Pay great heed, therefore, to this mind, devotion.
- (4) If the cloud-masses of mental constructions do not disappear  
From the expanse of space, the nature of your mind,  
The planets and stars of the two wisdoms, will not shine.  
Pay great heed, therefore, to this mind, which is free from mental  
constructions.
- (5) If you do not polish with your aspiration prayers  
The wish-fulfilling jewel of the two accumulations,  
The necessary and desired results will not arise.

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<sup>46</sup> The title in Phag mo gru pa's collected works is *Lnga ldan gyi lag len nyi shu rtsa lnga pa*. The first column mentions categories (except in the first line, which express the homage), namely the five *kleśas* that are abandoned, etc. The last column provides a summary for each line. At the core of the table are the middle columns of lines two to six, which add up to the twenty-five items mentioned in the title of the work. For an edition and translation of this text, see Appendix C.

Pay great heed, therefore, to this concluding dedication.<sup>47</sup>

The culmination of this path, or the point where the essential breakthrough is experienced, is the practice of the ‘four-*kāya* guru-yoga.’ Through devoted visualisations and recitations, the guru is successively identified with the three *buddhakāyas* (nirmāṇakāya, sambhogakāya and dharmakāya), and finally also with the fourth *kāya*:

I pay homage! To the guru who is the complete purity of everything that arises

I present the offering of everything that appears as arising on the basis [of emptiness].

I beseech you: may the three realms be liberated!

Bestow your blessing so that saṃsāra may be uprooted!<sup>48</sup>

The famed mid-thirteenth-century master Rgyal ba Yang dgon pa (1213–1287), who was in contact with some of ’Jig rten mgon po’s direct disciples (in

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<sup>47</sup> The song is quoted here according to Rig ’dzin Chos kyi grags pa’s *Phyag rgya chen po lnga ldan gyi khrid*, p. 49f., 70f., 89f., 108, and 155: *byams pa dang snying rje’i rta pho la / gzhan phan gyi dkyus thog ma bcad na / khrom lha mi’i ’or che mi ’byung bas / sems sngon ’gro ’di la nan tan mdzod / rang lus lha sku’i rgyal po la / gzhi ’gyur med kyi brtan sa ma bzung na / ma mkha’ ’gro’i ’khor ’bangs mi ’du bas / lus yi dam gyi lha la nan tan mdzod / bla ma sku bzhi’i gangs ri la / mos gus kyi nyi ma ma shar na / byin rlabs kyi chu rgyun mi ’byung bas / sems mos gus ’di la nan tan mdzod / sems nyid kyi nam mkha’ yangs pa la / rnam rtog gi sprin tshogs ma dengs na / mkhyen gnyis kyi gza’ skar mi bkra bas / sems mi rtog ’di la nan tan mdzod / tshogs gnyis yid bzhin gyi nor bu la / smon lam gyi byi dor ma byas na / dgos ’dod kyi ’bras bu mi ’byung bas / rjes bsngo ba ’di la nan tan mdzod.*

<sup>48</sup> Quoted here according to Rig ’dzin Chos kyi grags pa’s *Phyag rgya chen po lnga ldan gyi khrid*, p. 103f., who attributes this verse to ’Jig rten mgon po: *namo snang srid rnam dag gi bla ma la / snang srid gzhi bzhengs su mchod pa ’bul / khams gsum yongs grol du gsol ba ’debs / ’khor ba dong sprugs su byin gyis rlobs.*

particular Spyan snga Grags pa 'byung gnas, 1175–1255), made the following remarks with regard to the guru-yoga of the Fivefold Path:

The guru, who is the dharmakāya, and the true nature of one's mind are inseparable. And since the nature of all phenomena of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is the same, to realise that everything that appears is inseparable from the guru, who is the dharmakāya, [through] devotion in which dualising into subject and object has ended, that is devotional mahāmudrā.<sup>49</sup>

The point seems to be that by realising the guru as dharmakāya, one gains experiential access to the truth that the Buddha, the guru, the dharmakāya, the nature of one's mind, and all inner and outer appearances are one and the same thing, namely emptiness and true reality. And since devotion is the means to realise the guru as dharmakāya, it is also the means to obtain this realisation. There also exists, however, a more detailed explanation specifically related to the practice of the Fivefold Profound Path of Mahāmudrā, which attempts to explain “the justification that devotion is the essence of all paths.” It is found in a commentary of the four-*kāya* guru-yoga of this path, a unique explanation that will be my topic in the remainder of this essay.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> See Yang dgon pa, Rgyal ba, *Lnga ldan*, p. 412 f: *bla ma chos kyi sku de dang rang gi sems nyid dbye ba med pa yin la, 'khor 'das kyi chos thams cad de'i rang bzhin 'di gcig pas, snang srid thams cad bla ma chos kyi sku ru dbyer med par rtogs pa yul yul can gyi gnyis 'dzin zad pa'i zhen med kyi mos gus ni mos gus phyag rgya chen po'o*. This thought reminds one of the famous words found in the first chapter of Sgam po pa Bsod nams rin chen's *Thar pa rin po che'i rgyan* in the context of his teaching that all beings are possessors of the buddha nature, according to which “Buddha is dharmakāya and dharmakāya is emptiness (*sūnyatā*), and since emptiness pervades all beings, all beings are possessors of the Buddha nature.” Rumtek block print, fol. 3r–v: *sangs rgyas ni chos sku yin la, chos sku ni stong nyid yin te, stong nyid des sems can thams cad la khyab pa'i phyir na yang, sems can sangs rgyas kyi snying po can yin pa'o*.

<sup>50</sup> See Lho Dkon mchog 'phrin las nram rgyal. This author was Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa's direct disciple.

### 6 The justification (*'thad pa*) that devotion is the essence of all paths

Having established through quotations from a tantra and from former masters that a qualified guru and devotion on the part of the disciple are the preconditions for obtaining realisation, the author of this commentary, Dkon mchog 'phrin las rnam rgyal (17th c.), proceeds to show that the three baskets of the sūtra vehicle, and the four classes of the tantras are all combined in the 'path of devotion.' He first argues that the vinaya, sūtra, and abhidharma *piṭakas* are combined in the three trainings and that guru-devotion is their essence:

- (1) When you supplicate the guru with devotion, it becomes an antidote to the afflictions, since hatred and so forth do not arise. At that time the seven [deeds] to be abandoned by body and speech are automatically stopped, which is the 'training of the restrictive discipline' (*śīla*).
- (2) The realisation, through the dharmakāya devotion,<sup>51</sup> of your own mind as free from proliferation is called the 'training of the vajra samādhi.' The Lord 'Bri gung pa maintained that one hundred samādhis are contained in that.
- (3) Through the realisation of all apparent objects as the nature of mind, free from proliferation, by way of the lord's blessing, misconceptions regarding all objects of knowledge are clarified and you obtain empowerment, [which is] the 'training of discriminating knowledge' (*prajñā*).<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> I.e. seeing the guru as dharmakāya.

<sup>52</sup> Lho Dkon mchog 'phrin las rnam rgyal, p. 22f.: *dang po bla ma la mos gus kyis gsol ba 'debs pa'i dus su zhe sdang sogs mi skye bas nyon mongs pa rnams kyi gnyen por song, de tsam na lus ngag gi spong ba bdun shugs la 'gags pa tshul khrims kyī bslab pa, gnyis pa chos sku'i mos gyus kyis rang sems spros bral du rtogs pa la rdo rje lta bu'i ting nge 'dzin gyi bslab pa zer, der ting nge 'dzin brgya rtsa 'du ba mgon po 'bri gung pas bzhed, gsum pa rje'i byin rlabs kyis yul snang thams cad sems nyid spros bral du rtogs pas shes bya thams cad kyī sgro 'dogs chod cing dbang bsgyur ba shes rab kyī bslab pa.*

Dkon mchog 'phrin las rnam rgyal further argues that guru-devotion is the intention of the four classes of tantra:

- (1) Through devotion to the lord and services with body and wealth the impurity of obscuration is washed away, which is the intention of the *kriyātantras*,
- (2) to supplicate continuously and to make known the banner of [the guru's] fame in the ten directions is the intention of the *caryātantras*,
- (3) the continuous yearning for [the guru] and the arising of all thoughts and mental stirrings as the guru's mind is the intention of the *yogatantras*,
- (4) and the arising of all of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa as the inborn gnosis through the lord's blessing is the intention of the supreme [class of tantras] (*niruttara*).<sup>53</sup>

Moreover, Dkon mchog 'phrin las rnam rgyal continues by explaining the path of devotion also in the context of the two tantric paths of ripening and liberation.<sup>54</sup> Here he employs the well-known scheme of the four initiations with their respective practices and mudrās, adding, however, the particular perspective of the path of devotion. The practices connected with the first two initiations are subsumed under the category of the 'path of ripening,' which corresponds to regarding the guru as sambhogakāya:

path of ripening = regarding the guru as sambhogakāya  
- vase initiation<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Lho Dkon mchog 'phrin las rnam rgyal, p. 23: *rje'i mos gus dang, lus longs spyod kyi zhabs tog gis sgrib pa'i dri ma 'khrū ba bya rgyud, gsol ba rgyun du 'debs shing snyan pa'i ba dan phyogs bcur sgrog pa spyod rgyud, gdung shugs rgyun 'chad med cing dran rtogs thams cad bla ma'i thugs su 'char ba rnal 'byor rgyud, rje'i byin rlabs kyiis 'khor 'das thams cad lhan skyes kyi ye shes su 'char ba bla med kyi dgongs pa ste.*

<sup>54</sup> The Tibetan text for this passage is given below in Appendix A.

<sup>55</sup> The vase initiation is usually seen as enabling the initiand to achieve the *nirmāṇakāya*. It is perhaps here subsumed under "seeing the guru as sambhogakāya," since it is a



- stage of production
- *samayamudrā*
- secret initiation
  - practices of *nāḍī* and *vāyu*<sup>56</sup>
  - *dharmamudrā*

The practices connected with the third and fourth initiations are subsumed under the category of ‘path of liberation,’ which corresponds to regarding the guru as dharmakāya:

- path of liberation = regarding the guru as dharmakāya<sup>57</sup>
- third initiation
    - practices of *vāyu* and *bindu*
    - *karmamudrā*
  - fourth initiation
    - stage of not practising<sup>58</sup>
    - *mahāmudrā*

He explains that through the realisation of the guru as sambhogakāya, whatever

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feature of such initiations to regard the guru as the sambhogakāya Buddha.

<sup>56</sup> This is standard tantric theory: the secret initiation enables the initiand to practise with the skillful means of *nāḍī* and *vāyu* and the third initiation (see below) enables him to work with *vāyu* and *bindu*, producing the bliss by relying on the consort. Cf. for example Bentor 2000: 339.

<sup>57</sup> I presume that the final two initiations are correlated with seeing the guru as dharmakāya, since the notion of dharmakāya is directly linked with the experience of the bliss as it is produced during the third initiation and as it effortlessly arises as a result of realising what is communicated through the fourth initiation. Thus, seeing the guru as sambhogakāya seems to be taught here as being at least equivalent to receiving the first two initiations and seeing the guru as dharmakāya as equivalent to receiving the third and fourth initiations, much as the four initiations are often taught as producing the results of the *nirmāṇakāya*, *sambhogakāya*, *dharmakāya*, and *svābhāvikakāya*.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Bentor (2000: 339): “The fourth initiation makes the initiand a suitable vessel for meditation on the instantaneous Great Seal.”

the guru does is seen as good (*ci mdzad legs par bltas*), and through supplicating him, one purifies the obscuration of the body (*lus sgrib*), thus emerging embodied as the deity (*lha skur shar ba*). This corresponds to the vase initiation (*bum dbang*) and its path, namely the stage of production (*bskyed rim*), which in turn is the *samayamudrā* (*dam tshig gi phyag rgya*). To underscore this point, Dkon mchog 'phrin las rnam rgyal quotes the *Trisamayavyūha Tantra*:

Even practising for one hundred thousand eons  
The deity that is blazing with the major and minor marks  
Is not a hundred thousandth fraction of remembering the guru.<sup>59</sup>

Then, taking whatever the guru says as authoritative (*ci gsung tshad mar bzung*) and regarding all phenomena as the wheel of mantra (*sngags kyi 'khor lor bltas*), the disciple follows the advice of the master, carrying out whatever the master prescribes (*gsung bzhin bsgrubs*). Thereby, says Dkon mchog 'phrin las rnam rgyal (p. 24), the obscuration of speech (*ngag sgrib*) is purified, inhalation, exhalation, and abiding of the breath are realised as vajra-recitation (*rlung 'byung 'jug gnas gsum rdo rje'i bzlas par rtogs*), and all speech is realised as the wheel of mantra. This corresponds to the secret initiation (*gsang dbang*), and its path, namely '[vajra] recitation,' is the yoga that utilises *nāḍī* and *vāyu* (*rtsa rlung gi rnal 'byor*), or the *dharmamudrā* (*chos kyi phyag rgya*). Thus, this stage describes the sambhogakāya guru-yoga, whose focus is the supplication of the guru together with the lineage gurus. This point is underscored when Dkon mchog 'phrin las rnam rgyal again quotes from the *Trisamayavyūha Tantra*:

More than one million ritual service recitations [of the tantric deity],  
A single guru supplication pleases [the guru].<sup>60</sup>

<sup>59</sup> Peking edition 0134, rgyud, da 166a6-230a5: *mtshan dang dpe byad 'bar ba'i lha / bskal pa 'bum du bsgoms pas kyang / bla ma dran pa 'bum char min*.

<sup>60</sup> *bsnyen sgrub bzlas pa sa ya bas / bla ma'i gsol 'debs lan gcig dga'*.

Next follows the realisation of the guru as dharmakāya, corresponding to the ‘path of liberation.’ When one receives the blessing of the guru’s mind (*thugs kyi byin rlabs*), all feelings such as good, bad, or neutral arise as great bliss, the inborn gnosis (*bde chen lhan skyes ye shes*). This corresponds to the third initiation (*dbang gsum pa*), and since through such a practice of the stage of perfection all the *nāḍīs* turn into the central channel (*rtsa ba thams cad dbu ma[r] gyur*) and *vāyu* and *bindu* turn into gnosis (*rlung dang thig le ye shes su gyur*), all appearances that arise emerge as great bliss (*bde ba chen po*), which is the *karmamudrā*. Again Dkon mchog ’phrin las rnam rgyal quotes the *Trisamayavyūha Tantra* in order to show that the dharmakāya guru-yoga matches and in fact surpasses the tantric ‘stage of perfection’ practices:

Practising the stage of perfection,  
Having abandoned distractions for an eon,  
Cannot surpass even one twenty-thousandth  
Of the arising of the guru in the maṇḍala of your mind.<sup>61</sup>

And finally (p. 25), when one has purified attachment to emptiness as an aspect of the path (*lam gyi stong zhen dag nas*) by actualising through the guru’s blessings the way to abide in the ultimate nature (*gnyug ma gshis kyi ’dug tshul*), all activities of the three venues become unforced (*shugs bra!*), which corresponds to the fourth initiation (*dbang bzhi pa*), and settling into effortlessness (*rtsol bral tu ’jog pa*), not practising (*ma bsgom par*), in the state wherein all objects of knowledge arise as the natural luminosity of the four guru *kāyas* (*bla ma sku bzhi’i rang mdangs su shar ba’i ngang*), is the *mahāmudrā* (*phyag rgya chen po*).

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<sup>61</sup> *rdzogs pa’i rim pa bskal pa’i bar du ni / ’du ’dzi g.yeng ba spangs te bsgoms pa bas / bla ma rang sems dkyil du shar ba tsam / ’bum phrag nyi shu’i char yang mi phod do.*

## 7 Conclusion

Through the *Same Intention*, which is the core work of the 'Bri gung Bka' brgyud pa approach to view, practice, and conduct, and through a variety of instructions from 'Jig rten mgon po's collected works, it is clear that for this 'nephew' of Sgam po pa the guru-devotion of the last moment (the moment where the culmination of the path is reached), in which one "sees the guru as dharmakāya," is the single means of realisation. It is a 'single means' in the sense that it alone is capable of producing the final result, but without being a completely isolated means, since 'Jig rten mgon po emphatically teaches that both a cause, namely the completely pure special motivation, and a condition, the accumulation of much merit, have to occur before the final moment of the path can be approached. Both the cause and the condition are to be practised in the form of the Fivefold Profound Path of Mahāmudrā, where 'cause' refers primarily to the practices of love, compassion, and the resolve for awakening, 'condition' to all five practices of merit accumulation (*bodhicitta*, the visualisation of the tantric deity, guru yoga, mahāmudrā, and dedication), and 'means' (in the final sense described above) to guru-devotion. The latter certainly has roots also in the preparatory practices of merit accumulation, but the guru-devotion of the final moment in particular, where the guru is understood as dharmakāya, is the single means for realisation.

Moreover, even though evidence regarding Sgam po pa's own classification of his unique presentation of mahāmudrā remains somewhat uncertain, I believe that he perhaps did not consider it to belong outside of mantra, at least if we accept the definition of mantra as "taking the actual, direct object as the path" to be Sgam po pa's own teaching. 'Jig rten mgon po's opinion in this matter may be deduced from several remarks attributed to him and from teachings we find in his tradition. Accordingly, while 'mere tantric technique,' such as the yoga of the path of means (*thabs lam*), may cause the adept to become a 'great meditator' (*sgom chen*), it will not turn him into a supremely realised person (or siddha). The final breakthrough can only be achieved through the guru-devotion of the final moment, which is seeing the

guru as dharmakāya.

Finally, this particular guru yoga is to be classified as belonging to the ‘path of liberation’ (*sgrol lam*) of mantra—not only because the Fivefold Path includes the practice of a tantric deity, but also because the ‘four-*kāya* guru yoga’ of the Fivefold Path is treated as being completely equivalent to the practices of the ‘path of means’ (*thabs lam*)—and thus the realisation of mahāmudrā resulting from it, while not depending on the practices of the path of means, is nevertheless to be understood as belonging to the path of mantra.

**Appendix A: The Tibetan text for the paths of ripening and liberation in the context of the four-*kāya* guru-yoga<sup>62</sup>**

*de’ang smin grol gyi lam gnyis las, bla ma longs skur rtogs pas ci mdzad legs par bltas shing gsol ba btab pas lus sgrib dag nas lha skur shar ba bum dbang dang, de’i lam bskyed rim dam tshig gi phyag rgya ste, ... ci gsung tshad mar bzung ste chos thams cad sngags kyi ’khor lor bltas nas gsung bzhin bsgrubs pas ngag sgrib dag ste, rlung ’byung ’jug gnas gsum rdo rje’i bzlas par rtogs shing, ngag thams cad sngags kyi ’khor lor rtogs pa gsang dbang dang, de’i lam bzlas pa rtsa rlung gi rnal ’byor ram chos kyi phyag rgya ste, ... bla ma chos skur rtogs pas thugs kyi byin rlabs zhugs nas tshor ba bde sdug btang snyom thams cad bde chen lhan skyes ye shes su ’char ba dbang gsum pa dang, rtsa thams cad dbu ma dang, rlung dang thig le ye shes su gyur pas snang bar gang shar bde ba chen por ’char ba las kyi phyag rgya dang zhing sbyong gi rgyal po’ang yin zhing, mdor na sems dag par byed pa’i grol lam gyi mchog yin te ... bla ma’i byin rlabs kyis gnyug ma gshis kyi ’dug tshul mngon du gyur pas lam gyi stong zhen dag nas sgo gsum gyi bya ba thams cad shugs bral du ’gro ba dbang bzhi pa dang, shes bya thams cad bla ma sku bzhi’i rang mdangs su shar ba’i ngang la ma bsgom par rtsol bral tu ’jog pa phyag rgya chen po yin te.*

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<sup>62</sup> Without the quotations given in the body of the paper above.

**Appendix B: Outline of a liturgical text of the four-*kāya* guru-yoga<sup>63</sup>****(1) Accomplishing the nirmaṇakāya guru**

[Visualisation]: I am visible as the tantric deity. In front of me and slightly above, about a cubit or an arm's length away, on a lion's throne, lotus, moon, and sun, the principal guru sits [in the form of] the lord of the teachings, Śākyamuni, the nirmaṇakāya [Buddha]. The color of his body is like refined gold and his *uṣṇīṣa* is invisible. He is sitting in the vajra posture. His right hand [shows the mudrā] of touching the earth, his left [the mudrā of] concentration, and he is endowed with a saffron-coloured garments, the threefold Dharma robes. His major and minor marks are fully complete and upon his radiating immeasurable lights and rays of light, the gurus of the transmission, buddhas, bodhisattvas, and the assemblies of the maṇḍalas of the tantric deities surround him and remain there. ([Recite] the seven-branch prayer. Offer praise through the extensive prayer of the *Twelve Deeds*, or):

At the time when you, the supreme among men, were born,  
 You walked seven steps on this great earth  
 Declaring “I am the supreme one in this world”—  
 I pay homage to you, master of this time.  
 You possess a complete pure body with the supreme forms,  
 Like an ocean of wisdom, a mountain of gold,  
 Renowned, outstanding in this world—  
 I pay homage to you, lord of supreme attainment.  
 You are endowed with the supreme marks, a face stainless as the moon;

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<sup>63</sup> This practice has been carried out in recent centuries according to the liturgy by Lho Dkon mchog ṭhrin las rnam rgyal, a disciple of Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659, see: Chos kyi grags pa, Rig 'dzin, *Phyag rgya chen po lnga ldan gyi khrid kyi zin bris*, pp. 90–105). This particular edition of the text, however, is full of scribal errors and so I rely here on a recently published new liturgy, namely Dkon mchog ratna, *Sgrub grwa'i rgyun 'khyer*, pp. 196–206, which is also not without problems, but generally in a much better state.

I pay homage to you, [whose body shines] like gold.  
 Free from stains as you are, the handsome one in this three spheres of  
 existence,  
 I pay homage to you, possessor of matchless knowledge.  
 Supreme among men, guide of disciples,  
 You cut through the chains of entanglement, Tathāgata,  
 Capable of appeasing and completely pacifying Indra;  
 I pay homage to you, who dwell in Śrāvastī.

(Recite the *Rigs kun ma*,<sup>64</sup> and furthermore):

Since you are body, speech, and mind of all the buddhas of the three times,  
 the spontaneously present sameness, the source of the uninterrupted stream  
 of qualities, I beseech you to purify the body, speech, and mind of me and of  
 all ordinary beings of the three realms, and to cause [us] to be inseparable  
 from the body, speech, and mind of the precious guru.

(And):

I pay homage! Please cause the supreme devotion and realisation of the  
 dharmakāya that is beyond union and separation to arise at this moment, the  
 completely pure continuity of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa throughout all times, the  
 body, speech, and mind of the precious guru, *dhamadhātu*, the uninterrupted  
 stream of the spontaneously present gnosis of sameness, from which my  
 body, speech, and mind are inseparable and not different.

(And):

Lord! Wish fulfilling jewel! Ornament of my crown!  
 Your victorious mind, which cannot be expressed or thought,

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<sup>64</sup> The *Rigs kun ma* is a supplication to the line of abbots of the main seat of the 'Bri  
 gung Bka' brgyud pa starting with the words: *rigs kun gtso bo rdo rje 'chang*.

Possesses the five cognisant gnoses.  
 You are endowed with a loving nature and kindness.  
 Protector of beings! Precious one!  
 I beseech you from the true nature of my mind:  
 In the state of *dharmadhātu*, bless me!  
 Bless [me] that I realise this mind, which is from the beginning  
 Unborn and pure, as the dharmakāya, which is beyond imagination.

Finally the gurus of the lineage and so forth [dissolve into] Śākyamuni Buddha and he turns into a mass of light, which dissolves into me. (Remain in equipoise).

## (2) Accomplishing the saṃbhogakāya guru

[Visualisation]: I am visible as the tantric deity. In my heart, upon a lion's throne, on a sun disc at the navel of an eight-petaled lotus, dwells my principal guru, the saṃbhogakāya Vairocana, the glacier lake, whose body is of white color, and who is adorned with the precious head ornament, earrings, throat ornament, necklace, chest ornament, girdle, bracelet, and so forth. He wears upper and lower garments made of multi-colored silks. His hands remain in the mudrā of equipoise, holding the begging bowl endowed with lotuses. He dwells with his legs in the vajra posture. All buddha lands appear in his body<sup>65</sup> and he pervades with his body all buddha lands. In his forehead, which is shining with light and rays of light, is a white *om* on a moon, in his throat a red *ā* on a lotus, and in his heart a blue *hūṃ* on a sun. Visualise the *hūṃ* to be surrounded by the name mantras of the gurus of the transmission.

[Here follow in the text the outer, inner, and secret offerings and the offering of true reality. Then follows the recitation of a mantra consisting of the names of all lineage gurus (in Sanskritised form) from Vajradhara down to the principal guru. To each name is added *om āḥ nāmo guru* at the beginning and

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<sup>65</sup> According to an oral explanation, the Buddhalands exist within each pore of Buddha Vairocana's skin.



*mahāmudrā siddhi phala hūṃ* at the end. Finally the Sanskritised name of the disciple's principal guru, combined with the name of Buddha Vajradhara and the bodhisattva name of 'Jig rten mgon po (Ratnaśrī), is recited as much as possible in the same way as explained above. The visualisation for this is the following]: Light radiates from the name-mantra, which fills the guru's body. It radiates again, [presents] offerings to the Noble Ones, gathers their blessings, and dissolves into the mantra chain. The obscurations of all beings are purified and the beings are transformed into Vairocanas. [They] fill all spheres of the world like sesame seeds. Finally, the outer gurus melt into light and dissolve into the inner guru [at the practitioner's heart]. [The inner guru] melts into light and dissolves into the mantra chain; the chain dissolves into the *hūṃ* at the heart; the *hūṃ* dissolves [from below], the foot [i.e. *u*-vowel] into the body [i.e. the letter *ha*], the body into the head [i.e. the letter's uppermost part], the head into the moon [i.e. the *anusvāra*], the moon into the *bindu* [the drop-like sign above the *ansuvāra*], and the bindu into its tip [the *nāda*]. Remain in the state that is without fixation on the *nāda*.

### (3) Accomplishing the dharmakāya guru

[Visualisation]: I am visible as the tantric deity. In the space in front of myself, on a lion's throne [with] lotus, moon, and sun [seats] dwells my principal guru [in the form of] the Great Sixth Vajradhara, with his body having the color of the clear sky, dark blue, with one face, two arms, holding vajra and bell at his heart, sitting in the vajra posture, ornamented with silken garments and jewels, possessing all the major and minor marks and radiating rays of light. He is surrounded by the gurus of the Fivefold Profound Instruction Lineage like clouds massed together. (Perform the outer, inner, and secret offerings and the offering of true reality and recite whichever supplication is suitable, such as the *Rigs kun ma*. Finally): The gurus of the lineage dissolve into Vajradhara. [Vajradhara] melts into a heap of light, which dissolves into spot between your eyebrows.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Other liturgies and commentaries mention that the practitioner should at this point

**(4) Accomplishing the svābhāvikakāya Guru**

Having become fully convinced that the guru and your mind are inseparable,  
[recite]:<sup>67</sup>

I pay homage the precious lord,  
The nature of mind, the svābhāvikakāya,  
Spontaneously established and unproduced,  
And beyond all objects of expression or thought.  
I fuse all things and non-things and all of saṃsāra and nirvāna  
Into oneness with the nature of mind  
And perform offerings through the unsurpassable offering of  
Samantabhadra.  
I confess erroneously holding  
Myself and all others, these complete buddhas,  
The spontaneously present three *kāyas*,  
To be ordinary body, speech, and mind.  
I rejoice with gladness of my heart  
In the nature that is primordial buddhahood,  
And in the virtue of the unsurpassable three jewels and all beings.  
May the bodhisattvas quickly become buddhas  
And may those who have obtained perfect awakening  
Turn the wheel of dharma  
And cause all beings to become buddhas.  
May the great compassionate teachers,  
Who have the wish to pass away from misery,  
Remember their earlier pledges  
And remain without cessation.  
May all beings quickly obtain unsurpassable awakening

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remain with an uncontrived mind.

<sup>67</sup> Both of the following prayers are in Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa's *Phyag rgya chen po Inga ldan gyi khrid kyi zin bris* ascribed to 'Jig rten mgon po.

Through the virtue that is accumulated in the three times  
 By myself and all beings without exception,  
 And through primordially existing virtue.

(And):

I pay homage! To the guru, who is the complete purity of everything that  
 arises,  
 I present the offering of everything that arises as established on the basis [of  
 emptiness].  
 I beseech you: may the three realms be liberated!  
 Bestow your blessing that saṃsāra may be uprooted!

The realisation of your own mind and the guru's as inseparable is "practising the guru." The arising of the offering, the one who offers, and [the recipient of] the offering as the play of the guru of the ultimate reality is 'offering.'<sup>68</sup> Not to conceive of both the praying and the prayer as separate is 'praying.'<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> This is known as "canceling of the [hypostatic entities known as] the three components" (*'khor gsum dmigs med / rnam par mi rtog pa; trimandalaviśuddhi*). An example of such components is "the one who offers" (*sbyin pa gtong ba po*), the thing offered (*sbyin rdzas = gtong rgyu'i nor*), and the recipient of the offering (*sbyin yul = gtong yul slong ba po*).

<sup>69</sup> This final note is only found in Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa's *Phyag rgya chen po lnga ldan gyi khrid kyi zin bris*, p. 105.

Appendix C: Phag-mo-gru-pa Rdo-rje-rgyal-po, *Lnga ldan gyi lag len nyi shu rsta lnga pa*

(The Twenty-Five Practices of the Five-fold [Path of Mahāmudrā]).

In *Collected Works* (manuscript edition), vol. 2, fols. 47r-v.

bla ma rin po che la phyag 'tshal lo	sems bskyed pa dang	yi dam kyi lha bsgom pa dang	bla ma bsgom pa dang	phyag rgya chen po bsgom pa dang	bsngo ba bya ba ste	'di lnga ldan gyi grangs so
lnga ldan bsgoms pas nang du nyon monggs pa lnga gnad du 'gro ba ni	sems bskyed pas zhe sdang la gnad du 'gro	lha bsgoms pas 'dod chags la gnad du 'gro	bla ma bsgoms pas nga rgyal gnad du 'gro	phyag rgya chen po bsgoms pas gti mug gnad du 'gro	bsngo byas pas phrag dog la gnad du 'gro	phyir nyon monggs pa lnga skye med du grol
lnga ldan bsgoms pas phyi'i gdon rigs lnga bzhi ba ni	sems bskyed pas rgyal 'gong gi gdon zhi	lha bsgoms pas bsen mo'i gdon zhi	bla ma bsgoms pas lha'i bu'i gdon zhi	phyag rgya chen po bsgoms pas klu'i gdon zhi	bsngo ba byas pas klu bisan gyi gdon zhi	gdon rigs lnga skye med du shar ba'o
lnga ldan bsgoms pas mi rigs lnga dbang du 'du	sems bskyed pas zhe sdang can dbang du 'du	lha bsgoms pas 'dod chags can dbang du 'du	bla ma bsgoms pas nga rgyal can dbang du 'du	phyag rgyachen po bsgoms pas gti mug can dbang du 'du	bsngo ba byas pas phrag dog can dbang du 'du	mi rigs pa lnga'i don grub pa'o
lnga ldan bsgoms pas khyad par gyi lhag rjes ni	sems bskyed pas gzhan don 'byung	lha bsgoms pas snang ba zil gyis gnon	bla ma bsgoms pas rigs 'dzin zhing byin gyis rlob nus	phyag rgya chen po bsgoms pas 'khor ba las 'grol	bsngo ba byas pas dge ba'i rtsa ba gzhan du ma 'khyar	lnga ldan gyi nus pa lnga smin pa'o
lnga ldan bsgoms pas rgyud la ye shes lnga 'char ba ni	sems bskyed pas me long lta bu'i ye shes 'char	lha bsgoms pas so sor rtog pa'i ye shes 'char	bla ma bsgoms pas mnyam nyid kyi ye shes 'char	phyag rgya chen po bsgoms pas chos kyi dbyings kyi ye shes 'char	bsngo ba byas pas bya ba grub pa'i ye shes 'char	'di ni lnga ldan gyi lag len nyi shu rsta lnga pa'o

I pay homage to the precious guru.	Producing the resolve [for awakening],	practising the tantric deity,	practising the guru,	practising mahāmudrā, and	transferring merit—	these constitute the five-fold [path of mahāmudrā].
By practising the five-fold [path] inwardly one gets to the heart of the five defilements.	By producing the resolve one gets to the heart of hatred.	By practising the tantric deity one gets to the heart of desire.	By practising the guru one gets to the heart of pride.	By practising mahāmudrā one gets to the heart of ignorance.	By transferring [merit] one gets to the heart of jealousy.	Hence the five defilements are liberated without arising.
By practising the five-fold [path] the five families of evil demons are pacified.	By producing the resolve the Rgyal 'gong demons <sup>1</sup> are pacified.	By practising the tantric deity the Bsen mo demons <sup>2</sup> are pacified.	By practising the guru the devaputra demons are pacified.	By practising mahāmudrā the nāgā demons are pacified.	By transferring [merit] the malevolent spirits ( <i>ktu bisan</i> ) are pacified.	The five families of demons arise without arising.

<sup>1</sup> The Rgyal 'gong demons appear when one perceives the guru as being full of hatred. See 'Jig-rten-mgon-po's Collected Works (2001, vi, 454 f.).

<sup>2</sup> The Bsen mo demons appear when one perceives the guru as being full of lust. See 'Jig-rten-mgon-po's Collected Works (2001, vi, 454 f.).

By practising the five-fold [path] the five families of men come under control.	By producing the resolve the hateful come under control.	By practising the tantric deity those full of desire come under control.	By practising the guru the arrogant come under control.	By practising mahāmudrā the ignorant come under control.	By transferring [merit] the envious come under control.	The aims of the five families of men are accomplished.
The particular outcome(?) [achieved] by practising the five-fold [path].	By producing the resolve [that which is] the purpose of others arises.	By practising the tantric deity the appearances are overshadowed.	By practising the guru [one becomes] a vidyadhara and is able to bless.	By practising mahāmudrā one is free from saṃsāra.	By transferring [merit] the root of merit does not go astray.	The five abilities of the five-fold [path] ripen.
By practising the five-fold [path] the five gnoses arise in the mental continuum.	By producing the resolve the mirror-like gnosis arises.	By practising the tantric deity the discriminating gnosis arises.	By practising the guru the gnosis of sameness arises.	By practising mahāmudrā the gnosis of the dharmadhātu arises.	By transferring [merit] the all-accomplishing gnosis arises.	These are the twenty-five practices of the five-fold [path] of mahāmudrā.

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III.

CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SUCCESSIVE KARMA PAS





*THE DIALECTIC OF ETERNAL HEAVEN:*  
A TIBETAN DEFENSE OF MONGOL IMPERIAL  
RELIGION\*

MATTHEW T. KAPSTEIN

**1 Introduction**

The doctrinal writings of the second Karma pa hierarch, Chos kyi bla ma (1204 or 1206–83), better known as Karma Pakshi, have so far been available to us primarily through an incomplete manuscript of the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor* from Rum btegs Monastery in Sikkim, published in India during the late 1970s, but misattributed, as I have shown elsewhere, to Karma Pakshi's successor, the third Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339).<sup>1</sup> With the gradual rediscovery of Tibetan manuscript collections in Central Tibet and Khams, it is now evident that a number of additional works have been preserved, and scans or photographs of some of these have begun to become available to researchers outside of Tibet. While it is too early to maintain that Karma Pakshi's complete *Bka' 'bum* may be reconstituted—a goal that tradition holds to have been unrealisable even in pre-1959 Tibet<sup>2</sup>—it appears that the major part of his writings

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\* The present article is dedicated in friendship to the Ven. Thub bstan nyi ma Rin po che and to Karma Bde legs, in recognition of their outstanding efforts to locate and to preserve the surviving literary legacy of Tibet.

<sup>1</sup> Kapstein 1985, reprinted, with some revisions, in Kapstein 2000: 97–106.

<sup>2</sup> Most of his teachings, which were believed to have exceeded two *Bka' 'gyurs* (!), were said to have been carried off by the *dākinīs* and other spirits and never circulated among common mortals. See e.g. Sman sdong mtshams pa 1976, pp. 107–108: *phyi nang gi grub mtha' theg pa sna tshogs pa rnams kyang rdo rje theg pa'i nges gsang snying po'i don kho na la gzhol zhing 'bab par 'gyur ba'i bstan bcos kyi rim pa'ang bka' 'gyur ro 'tshal nyis 'gyur tsam bstan cing de dag gi gleng gzhi dang 'brel ba'i*

formerly in circulation may be identified once more.<sup>3</sup> As earlier research suggested, the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor* seems in fact to comprise all but a small part of his production.<sup>4</sup>

Karma Pakshi's regular use of the name Rang byung rdo rje, as I have shown before, means that some texts signed with this name, and even some apparently belonging to the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor*, must be considered with care. For instance, a work entitled *Dam tshig rgya mtsho mtha' yas* has appeared in the collected writings of the third Karma pa and its actual authorship is, in all probability, correctly credited to him.<sup>5</sup> This text does, however,

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*rnam thar mang po 'thor nas yod par gsungs pa la / deng sang mi yul du snang ba la gsung rab po ti drug tsam las / de bying rgyal ba'i gsung rab ltar / dpa' bo / mkha' 'gro / lha klu gnod sbyin sogs kyis yul du spyang drangs par don gyis gsal ba'i phyir bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i gnas so //*. The notion that Karma Pakshi's teachings attained some two Bka' 'gyurs in volume in fact derived from his autobiographical writings: Karma Pakshi 1978a, p. 110.

<sup>3</sup> Manuscripts containing works by Karma Pakshi have been located, for instance, in the collection of the 'Bras spungs Gnas bcu lha khang (Lha sa) and at Dpal spungs (Sde dge). As many as eight *po ts* of his writings are now known to exist, and one hopes that they will soon be made available in their entirety. The scanned manuscripts that have been so far added to the archive of the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC, New York), together with other available texts, are listed in Appendix III below.

<sup>4</sup> It would not be appropriate for me to anticipate those who have been working in Tibet and Khams on the reconstitution of Karma Pakshi's oeuvre by reproducing here their lists of titles above and beyond those that have already become available, as given in Appendix III. The texts now found in the TBRC collection, as might be expected, in fact mostly belong to the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas* corpus.

<sup>5</sup> Full title: *Dam tshig rgya mtsho mtha' yas rnam par snang bar byed pa dri ma med pa'i snying po*, in Karma pa Rang byung rdo rje 2006, vol. 8 (*nya*), pp. 1–114. The author in fact gives his name as Rang byung rol pa'i rdo rje (113.2), a form that is not used, so far as I am aware, by Karma Pakshi. No explicit reference to Karma Pakshi's *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor* appears to occur in the text and there is no sure basis for supposing it to have been composed as a supplement to it. The title alone seems to have

problematise the use of the phrase *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas* as a signature title. Only the eventual availability of the entire extant *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas* corpus will permit us to determine whether or not any of the works included within it may have been similarly composed or redacted by Karma Pakshi's successors.

Among the recent discoveries whose authorship seems secure, however, one stands out, to my eyes at least, for its remarkable novelty, even in relation to the originality that characterises the second Karma pa's writings overall.<sup>6</sup>

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been intended as an allusion to the author's predecessor. Nevertheless, the published handlist of the manuscripts that have been discovered in the Gnas bcu lha khang of 'Bras spungs Monastery, does attribute to Karma Pakshi a *Dam tshig rgya mtsho'i rang 'gre!* in 58 folios (Dpal brtsegs 2004, vol. 1, p. 1112, no. 011037). An assessment of this attribution must of course await that text's becoming available.

<sup>6</sup> As noted already in Kapstein 1985, Karma Pakshi's writings appear to have been poorly known even among the Karma Bka' brgyud, and this no doubt owing to his pronounced Rnying ma orientations and the remarkable eccentricity of his style of exposition and argument. A brief note, found accompanying a manuscript of the *Zhu lan rgya mtsho mtha' yas* preserved at Dpal spungs, and transcribed in Appendix III below (under W22469) reveals for the first time something of the manner in which Karma Pakshi's writings were perceived within the tradition. It says in part: "Although the expressions [in Karma Pakshi's works] seem as if somewhat misconstrued, they are the words of a venerable siddha and not in the scope of conventional designation; if one becomes certain [about them] with discrimination endowed with the four points of reliance (Tib. *rton pa bzhi*, Skt. *catuḥpratisaraṇa*), because there is nowhere greater development of the essential points of the nine vehicles proceeding from the Śī-*Guhyagarbha*, rather than letting them lie to rot in darkness, I pray a thousand times that you regard them and know their meaning." The note is signed by one Dge slong Bstan pa'i nyi ma, who, given his diction and his audacity in committing to writing the opinion that the second Karma pa's writings "seem somewhat misconstrued," must have been no ordinary monk. Though I have not so far succeeded in determining his precise identity, it appears at least possible in this context that it is none other than the great Si tu Paṅ chen (1699/1700–1774), whose writings are often signed Bstan pa'i nyin byed, or Bstan pa'i nyi mor byed pa.



This is the manuscript of a previously unknown work that bears the puzzling title *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad*, though the title turns out to be just the first of the many puzzles to be found therein.<sup>7</sup> Here, I wish to suggest that the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad*, in terms of both style and content, is consistent with the other major writings of Karma Pakshi that have so far come to light, namely those belonging to the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor*.<sup>8</sup> However, the *Mo gho ding*

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<sup>7</sup> As shown in Appendix III, the same manuscript appears in two separate scanned versions in the TBRC archive. In addition, I have made use of high quality digital images of the manuscript, which is preserved at Dpal spungs monastery in the Sde dge district of Khams (Ganzi Zhou, Sichuan).

<sup>8</sup> The common authorship is confirmed, moreover, by passages in which the author of the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad* explicitly refers to the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor*, for instance at *Mo gho ding ri* 20b7–21a1: *lung rigs sna tshogs kyis mueṭ [= mu stegs] pa'i grub mtha' bshiṭ [= bshigs] cing sgrub / ci'i phyir na bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas nas / ston pa drugis gleng bzhi [= gzhi] gleng lhong mueṭ kyis grub mtha' cheno [= chen po] dang / 'dod pa rgya'o [= rgya mtsho] mtha' yas dang / khyab 'jug dang / zhus len rgya'o mtha' yas rnamṣ kyis shes pa... lung rig sgra tshad* (21a) *rnam la mkhas shing rtog par bya'o* //: “Various scriptures and reasonings confirm the refutation of the *tīrthikas*. How so? In the *Limitless Ocean of the Teaching*, where the discourse of six teachers [forms] the narrative frame, there is the Great Siddhānta of the *tīrthikas*; and it may be known [too] from the *Limitless Ocean of Tenets*, the [*Limitless Ocean of*] *Viṣṇu*, and the *Limitless Ocean of Dialogue*... One should become learned and realised in the language and logic of scripture and reason.” The *Limitless Ocean of Viṣṇu* (*Khyab 'jug rgya mtsho mtha' yas*) is found, with some lacunae, in a scanned manuscript in the TBRC archive: W22340 (see Appendix III below). *Khyab 'jug* here seems to have a double meaning, referring at once to the Hindu divinity Viṣṇu and to Samantabhadra, the primordial buddha of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*), who is sometimes also known as the “Great All-Pervader” (*khyab 'jug chen po* = Skt. Mahāviṣṇu). See e.g. Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 447. Of course, we must await the opportunity to examine the *Khyab 'jug rgya mtsho mtha' yas* in detail before entertaining further conjectures about precisely what Karma Pakshi may have intended. Note, too, that in citations from the text of the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad*, because of the abundant use of abbreviations and plentiful occurrences of unconventional spellings

*ri'i sgra tshad* is distinguished from these latter, and in a sense adopts an approach that is even more radical than the skepticism of the *'Dod pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas*,<sup>9</sup> in that it offers what at first blush appears to be a robust defense of Mongol imperial religion; for the *mo gho ding ri* of the title is none other than the supreme divinity of Mongol religion, “Eternal Heaven,” *Möngke tengri*.<sup>10</sup> The term may also have in this case a double signification, however, for we know that Karma Pakshi’s royal patron was Möngke Khan, and some passages in our text do seek to underwrite the latter’s sacral status before the Tibetans.<sup>11</sup>

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(in some cases clearly errors) throughout, I have thought it best not to litter my transcriptions with the notation ‘sic.’ Similarly, I have not attempted to emend within the texts the indifferent use of the “instrumental” (*kyis*, etc.) and “genitive” (*kyi*, etc.) or other grammatical irregularities.

<sup>9</sup> Kapstein 2000: 101–104.

<sup>10</sup> Heissig 1973: 403–405, esp. 403: “L’usage constant de la formule mongole « Möngke tngri-yin küčündür... », « Par la force du Ciel éternel », dans des épîtres, des ordonnances, des panneaux de consignes (*p'ai-tzu*) et des inscriptions lapidaires de l’époque mongole (13<sup>e</sup>-14<sup>e</sup> siècle) atteste la croyance des Mongols dans l’existence d’une puissance céleste à laquelle sont soumises toutes les forces supra-terrestres et terrestres.” The “constant use” of the formula no doubt explains Karma Pakshi’s familiarity with and interest in it. There is, of course, an excellent English translation of Heissig’s text (originally in German) by Geoffrey Samuel [*The Religions of Mongolia* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980)], but it is unavailable to me at this time.

<sup>11</sup> As is the case, in the preamble of the text translated below (3a.6), where Karma Pakshi speaks of “the merit of the king of the world, Möngke Khan.” The depth of Karma Pakshi’s regard for Möngke is very much in evidence in Karma Pakshi 1978a (see Kapstein 2000: 99n62) and was recalled in later tradition. Dpa’-bo 1986, p. 912, for instance, states that “in fact, the foremost among his disciples who were vessels [capable of retaining his teaching] was Möngke Khan, whom he blessed so that his renunciation and realisation were equivalent to his own” (*dngos su snod ldan gyi slob ma'i gtsbo bo rgyal po mong gor gan nyid dang spangs rtogs mnyams par byin gyis*

## 2 Title and preamble

The *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad* is a substantial work, occupying 149 long folios of tightly written, and much abbreviated, *dbu med*. The difficulties in the interpretation of our text, however, begin even on the title page:

*dam pa'i chos 'dul ba'i gling bzhi na gos dmar can gyi yul nas 'ongs ba'i mkhas pa yang dag phyi rol nyid bzhugs gsungs te / de la sha na'i gos can 'jams dpal dmar po la sogs pa'i tshan 'brug tsam du tha snyad 'dogs shing ngo bo cig la mthong tshul tha dad pa 'di lta ste / mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad bzhugs so //.*

The following, very tentative, translation may be proposed based on indications given elsewhere in the text:

In the frame-narrative (reading: *gleng gzhi*) of the Vinaya of the True Dharma, it is said that from the land of the Red-garbed came a paṇḍita who dwelt genuinely outside. Names (reading: *mtshan*),<sup>12</sup> including Śāṅakavāsin and Red Mañjusrī,<sup>13</sup> were thunderously attributed to him, just as there are

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*brlabs pa*). Note, too, that in Karma Pakshi 1978a, p. 15, Mōngke is styled *mo ghor rgyal po*, confirming his use of *mo gho* to transcribe Mongolian *mōngke*.

<sup>12</sup> There is some possibility, too, that *tshan* is used here in an extension of its meaning “section, segment,” or in the sense of *tshan kha*. In the latter case the phrase should mean roughly “powers, including [those of] Śāṅakavāsin and Red Mañjusrī, were thunderously attributed to him,” though this strikes me as not so plausible as the proposed emendation to *mtshan*.

<sup>13</sup> The bodhisattva Mañjusrī plays a particularly important role in Karma Pakshi's visionary world, and in the redaction of the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor*. Dpa' bo 1986, p. 888, for instance, tells us that “in Ke-chu he beheld Mañjusrī, yellow with a thousand hands and a thousand eyes, and this [he took] as a sign of enlightened activity in both this lifetime and the next” (*ke chur 'jam dbyangs ser po phyag stong spyang stong pa gzigs pa sku tshe phyi ma gnyis kyi 'phrin las kyi brdar 'dug*). (Here Dpa' bo

various visions of a single essence and hence: here is contained the *Dialectic of Eternal Heaven*.

It is not clear, at the outset at least, why the peculiar expression “genuinely outside” (*yang dag phyi rol nyid*) should be applied to the arhat Śāṅakavāsin here; one may think perhaps of his borderline outsider status in the early saṅgha, an issue discussed at length by John Strong,<sup>14</sup> and some of the legends involved may have inspired Karma Pakshi’s use of *yang dag phyi rol nyid*, as will be seen in the text selections given below. It is possible, too, that Xuanzang’s description of Śāṅakavāsin as having attained the “boundary-limit samādhi” (*ru bianji ding* 入邊際定) further contributed to the liminal associations of this arhat.<sup>15</sup> What will emerge throughout the text, however, is that one of Pakshi’s chief concerns is to engage in debate with the “outsiders” (*tīrthika, phyi rol mu stegs pa*), although the connection of this with the famed arhat remains not altogether clear. In all events, we have already shown in our earlier study that Karma Pakshi had a special interest in integrating non-Buddhists into the fabric of Buddhist thought, an interest that explicitly stemmed from his involvement in the debates and discussions among representatives of differing religions sponsored by Möngke Khan in 1256.<sup>16</sup> We shall return to

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is following the text found in Karma Pakshi 1978a, p. 129.) What’s more, the entire *Zhu lan rgya mtsho mtha’ yas* is cast as a dialogue between Karma Pakshi and the bodhisattva.

<sup>14</sup> Strong 1992: 66–74, esp. p. 71: “Śāṅakavāsin ... look[s] grubby, [has] long hair, and appear[s] to be a mahalla [a pejorative term for an uncouth old monk]; but he is actually enlightened, and he is Upagupta’s master.”

<sup>15</sup> Beal 1884, vol. 1: 52–53; Watters 1904, vol. 1: 120. Note, too, that the tradition reported here by Xuanzang concerning the deep red colour of Śāṅakavāsin’s robe, preserved as a relic in a monastery described in his chapter on Bamiyan, conforms with Karma Pakshi’s attribution to him of red garb as well. For the Chinese text, see Xuanzang 2000, vol. 1 (上), pp. 132–33.

<sup>16</sup> Demiéville 1973: 181–82, summarises what is reported of these debates in Chinese sources (as given in Chavannes 1904), which focus primarily on the censure of the

consider this point in further detail below. Given Karma Pakshi's conviction that the imperial policy of religious tolerance favored by the Khan was correct, and his conviction, too, that a tacit adherence to Buddhism by the Khan undergirded this policy,<sup>17</sup> we may imagine that Karma Pakshi sought to expound a teaching that was distinctively Buddhist, but at the same time made room for everyone. This, at least, is what his effort simultaneously to refute and to authenticate the *mu stegs pas* seems inevitably to imply.

Pakshi's use of the term *sgra tshad* in the title seems to point in the same direction. The expression literally means "language and logic," though I have used "dialectic" as an approximation to save words. The latter, in its primary sense (given in the Oxford English Dictionary as "the art of critically investigating the truth of opinions; logical disputation or argument"), may be close to the author's intended meaning in any case. In one passage, cited above (n. 8), he even seems to suggest that the two terms used here in compound correspond closely to *lung rigs*, scripture and reason. If so, then *sgra tshad*, "language and logic," may be employed to cover broadly the disciplines charged with the task of interpretation and judgement in these two domains.

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Daoists. The head of the Buddhist party, the Kashmiri monk Na mo, had long-established ties to the Mongol ruling house and was appointed by Möngke in 1252 to direct Buddhist affairs throughout the empire (Demiéville 1973: 178). Though the Chinese sources refer also to the presence of the then sixteen-year-old Sa skya pa bla ma 'Phags pa (1239–80) at these debates, the Chinese transcription of his name as it occurs here—*bahesiba* 拔合斯八—is somewhat unusual, leading some to have speculated that 'Pakshi' may have been the name intended. (See, for instance, Richardson 1998: 341, repeated by D. Jackson 2009: 261n185.) It may be noted in passing, too, that the condemnation of Daoism stressed in the Chinese records stands in apparent contrast with Möngke's religious inclusivism as stressed by Karma Pakshi (Kapstein 2000: 244n81) and, sometime earlier, by the Franciscan William of Rubruck (P. Jackson 2009: 236: "But just as God has given the hand several fingers, so he has given mankind several paths.").

<sup>17</sup> Kapstein 2000: 99.

The first several paragraphs of the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra* clearly exemplify both the work's unusual stance and the difficulties involved in seeking to understand it:<sup>18</sup>

(1b.1) The dialectic of Eternal Heaven is proclaimed to be the measureless, imponderable dialectic, to be discussed and definitively established. As the example of a body [followed by its] shadow, when the proposition affirmed is measureless and imponderable, the implied conclusion is measureless and imponderable. (1b.2) For this is evidently valid.<sup>19</sup> Hence, affirming the propositions that saṃsāra and nirvāṇa may be either measureless and imponderable or delimited and ponderable, they are to be proclaimed and discussed. So I pray that the Jina, the perfection of the five *kāyas*, together with his sons (1b.3), be present as the holy witnesses. I pray that Viṣṇu and Īśvara, Phywa and Brahmā, along with the eight classes of deities and demons arrayed throughout the three worlds, who uphold respectively the outer and inner systems, be present as the holy witnesses.

(1b.4) As for this wheel of swordplay,<sup>20</sup> refutation and proof, the delimited and ponderable dialectic and the measureless, imponderable dialectic of the Red-garbed Eternal Heaven, it has not come forth previously here in Tibet, the Glacial Land, nor will it come again. (1b.5) In

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<sup>18</sup> The Tibetan text is the first given in Appendix I below.

<sup>19</sup> Throughout the *Mo gho ding ri*, Karma Pakshi appears to insist that the sole valid means of knowledge is the “criterion of perception” (*mngon sum tshad ma*, Skt. *pratyakṣapramāṇa*). He seems to be using this term with a peculiar sense, however, not precisely limited to ‘perception’ as we are accustomed to regard it, but including what is ‘intuitive,’ as this is often understood by anglophone philosophers (i.e. as referring to what is known *a priori*). The phrase ‘evidently valid’ seems often to correspond, at least roughly, with Karma Pakshi’s usage and so has generally been adopted here.

<sup>20</sup> *ral (b)skor*. Meaning uncertain, though the usage here and throughout the text inclines me to take it as referring to exercises in swordsmanship, much as we use “parry” and “riposte” in English to refer both to the martial arts and to debate.

debate with others, outer and inner, here is how at first the outer and inner systems are respectively distinguished:

I affirm the proposition that unknowing is proven to be the bewilderment and ground for the bewilderment of beings of the six classes. Do you assent to refute it or not?

(1b.6) I affirm the proposition that the perverse views are the 360 errant views of the *tīrthikas* and their subdivisions. Do you assent<sup>21</sup> to refute this or not? In assenting, do define your bounds.

Among the inner systems of the Buddhists, (1b.7) the nine vehicles that are partially realised and egocentric,<sup>22</sup> I affirm the propositions establishing the teaching of the *nirmāṇakāya*, that is, the *Tripiṭaka*. You, *tīrthika*, must affirm that you refute this.

I affirm the propositions establishing the teaching of the *sambhogakāya*, that is, the three outer tantras. (2a.1) You, *tīrthika*, must affirm that you refute this.

I affirm the proposition establishing that the declaration of the intention of the *dharmakāya* is the unsurpassed *Mahāyoga*, [according to] the ancient and modern [tantras]. You, *tīrthika*, must affirm that you refute this.

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<sup>21</sup> Reading *shes* for *bshig*.

<sup>22</sup> Karma Pakshi is here following (as he often does) the doctrinal categories elaborated in connection with the *Mahāyoga* exegetical tradition of the *Guhyagarbha Tantra* and the *Anuyoga* system of the *Mdo dgongs pa 'dus pa*. Here, the “nine vehicles that are partially realised and egocentric” (*phyogs rtog(s) ngar 'dzin gyi theg pa dgu*) are the worldly “vehicle of gods and men” (*lha mi'i theg pa*) together with the first eight of the nine vehicles (i.e., *śrāvakayāna* through *Anuyoga*) of the standard nine-*yāna* system of the *Rnying ma pa*. Many treatments of the highest vehicle, that of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs chen*), or *Atiyoga*, adopt a similar standpoint, characterising the lower vehicles as “intellectually contrived” (*blos bcos*); see, for example, Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 294–310.

(2a.2) As for whether the teaching of the *svābhāvīkakāya*, the Anuyoga, is the general transmission of all systems, I affirm that to be the proposition to be established. If you affirm yourself to be clever about all the systems, then go ahead and refute me!

The self-emergent five bodies are fully (2a.3) realised in the teaching that is the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po*). It is entirely complete, unmixed with the ostensible outer and inner systems involving lack of realisation and wrong realisation and so forth. Therefore, I will establish it, and you, *tīrthika*, who act as the king of dumb ideas, (2a.4) you must assent to refute it, and then prove what you may!

What's more, are you or are you not going to refute or to prove the subdivisions of the outer and inner systems piece-by-piece? In accord with your faculties and reason, (2a.5) advice has been given to you; now it is you who must advise! In all events, because nothing at all is unincorporated, unrealised, or unembraced in the binary division of delimited and measureless, with respect to the outer and inner systems, (2a.6) all of them, know that in affirming them to be either delimited or measureless, there is nothing but refutation or proof. Whatever you proclaim and discuss should be unabashedly brought forth for discussion, set out without error, one time, three times, (2a.7) and so ascertained—this is my advice. Such is the intention of Mañjuśrī, whose samādhi is firm, distinguishing the outer and inner systems and definitively establishing the abiding nature of reality! (2b.1) The Lord of Speech, the self-created Lion of Disputants, debates once, debates twice, debates everything—debate that! Endless debate is like sword-play. One is proven, two are proven, everything under debate is decisively proven. *Oṃ sarva pratisiddhi hūṃ!*

[Addressing] Śākyamuni, (2b.2) Aniruddha entered into an exchange of questions and answers between master and disciple, [whereby] they analysed the great cycle, which neither fails to pervade the appearance and reality of the Three Jewels, the cognitions and cognitive objects of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, nor is fixed with respect to any aspect [of them]. (2b.3), Thus



it is related in the prophetic declaration at the point of Śākyamuni's *parinirvāṇa*: “In the land of Vārāṇasī, one called ‘Śāṅakavāsin’ (2b.4) will emerge, whose deeds and activities will be the equal of the Buddha's but who will not be adorned with the major or minor marks of a buddha. He will spread and expand my teaching, dividing the outer and inner systems. He will definitively establish various holy doctrines.” If translated into Tibetan, he is the Red-garbed One (*gos dmar can, Tāmraśāṭiya*), while the *'Bum*, (2b.5) concerning the auspicious marks [says] “revealing a red, red color, like the fabric of Vārāṇasī, or like fabric of *majukonaka*<sup>23</sup> or like the color of *mañjujonaka*...” Translated into Tibetan, this is *khug chos dar lo* [a type of flower, perhaps saffron?] (2b.6) by name.<sup>24</sup>

When the holy doctrine of the Vinaya became mixed with *tīrthika* systems, so that there were no longer any bounds, the saṅgha implored Śāṅakavāsin, encouraging him in his vow, at which time, at the Banyan Temple (2b.7) an emanation of Śāṅakavāsin arrived outside and sat there.<sup>25</sup> The functionaries among the saṅgha saw him and invited him in, but the Red-garbed One remained well stationed outside in the sky, where he had arrived on being invited. (2b.8) Meeting [him] thus, the *sthaviras* were

<sup>23</sup> The reading of the second syllable, *ju*, is uncertain.

<sup>24</sup> Typically *'Bum*, as a title, refers to the *Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā*. Though there are some doubts about the interpretation of this passage, *khug c(h)os* does seem to be a species of crocus, so that the reference to saffron appears plausible. However, the Indic terms cited by Karma Pakshi have not yet been identified. Concerning the arhat Śāṅakavāsin's association with the colour red, see n. 15 above.

<sup>25</sup> Here and in the paragraphs that follow, the tale that we find seems an exceedingly eccentric retelling of the well-known story of Śāṅakavāsin's appointment as Ānanda's successor in the aftermath the first council at the Banyan Tree of Rājagṛha and the subsequent establishment of the Teaching in Kashmir by Śāṅakavāsin's successor Madhyāhnikā. For Bu ston's account, refer to Obermiller 1931–32: 87–91. Of course, though there is no mention of *tīrthikas* here, schism within the saṅgha itself is a prominent theme.

inspired and rejoiced,<sup>26</sup> and he, having made the distinctions,<sup>27</sup> turned the dialectical wheel of the Three Precious Jewels, that is, the dialectic of the Buddha's gnosis and all principles of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa, so that the masses of *tīrthikas* were (2b.9) overcome and rebuked.

With respect to that [dialectic] there is a threefold division of topics as follows: (i) there is *the dialectic affirming the cause* with respect to the Three Precious Jewels, for, among ordinary beings, there emerge various bewilderments from the ground of bewilderment, the six classes of destinies; (3a.1) (ii) as the systems of the *tīrthikas* are erroneous, for they [do not]<sup>28</sup> practise the path with respect to the Three Precious Jewels and do not delight in the Three Precious Jewels, [and whereas] *tīrthikas* including the five fortunate companions [of Siddhārtha] became the Teacher's first circle [of disciples], there is (3a.2) *the dialectic comprising the result* with respect to the Three Precious Jewels in relation to the *tīrthikas*; and (iii) there is *the dialectic traversing the path*, for the particulars of the inner Buddhist vehicles, such as the Vinaya of the genuine doctrine and the Three Precious Jewels are to be obtained. The wheels [of the doctrine] that [the Buddha] turned (3a.3) are [these].<sup>29</sup> [This] dialectic, which analyses them all in particular and synthesises them, has as its purpose the analysis of all the particulars, so that there is nothing not

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<sup>26</sup> Reading *gnas brtan rnams dbugs nas dga' nas*. Uncertain.

<sup>27</sup> I am reading *nang du dbye nas* as referring to Śāṅkavāsin's analytical teaching, though if we accept the punctuation of the passage, it might alternatively refer to the divisions among the saṅgha. The text at this point seems in any case not very clear, at least to this reader.

<sup>28</sup> Reading *lam ma gom zhing* against the ms. I see no other way to make sense of this sentence without even more extensive emendation.

<sup>29</sup> The threefold division proposed here evidently corresponds to the distinctions among non-realisation (*ma rtogs*), erroneous understanding (*log rtogs*), and realised gnosis (*rtogs pa'i ye shes*), upon which Karma Pakshi insists elsewhere. See below, Appendix III, 3.

embraced thereby. Because [there is such a purpose],<sup>30</sup> Śāṅakavāsin emerged in the manner of an emanated disciple, (3a.4) as follows:

The Linen Clad (*rad pa'i gos can* = Śāṅakavāsin) and Madhyāhnika,<sup>31</sup> numberless emanations, filled Jambudvīpa. In particular, in the land of Kashmir, Padmo dka', there is the Kashmiri city called Krigs brtan,<sup>32</sup> (3a.5), as it is famed, where there are known to be 360 million

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<sup>30</sup> Reading *dgos pa yod pa'i phyir na*, and taking this as a 'pivot phrase' joining the preceding (where it is translated "has as its purpose") and the present sentence.

<sup>31</sup> I am assuming that one should read *nyi ma gung pa* for *nyi ma 'gyur*. It is possible that Karma Pakshi felt a special affinity with this arhat; a tooth of Madhyāhnika (*dgra bcom pa nyi ma gung pa'i tshems*) is reported among the items incorporated into the central image of the Mtshur phu temple during its consecration in the course of its expansion under Karma Pakshi's direction: Dpa' bo 1986, p. 902.

<sup>32</sup> *khyad par ga smin gyi yul padmo dka' / du ba kha che'i grong khyer krigs brten*. It is not at all clear to me how *du ba* at the beginning of the second phrase is to be construed. If it is used here with its normal Tibetan meaning, "smoke," perhaps it is describing the city of Krigs brtan as a smoky or misty place. And if Krig(s) brtan is to be identified with Śrīnagara, this would be at times appropriate. (Though given the likelihood that Karma Pakshi never actually traveled to Kashmir, actual description is probably irrelevant in any case.) The reference of the toponym 'Krig(s) brtan' remains in any case puzzling. Its occurrence in such works as the *nam thar* of Khyung-po rnal 'byor (*Shangs pa gser phreng* 1996, p. 26) as the name of a region clearly associated in context with northwest India, and not at all with Central Asia, seems to rule out any possibility of considering it to be a corruption of the ethnonym 'Khitan,' which does sometimes appear as Khri (br)tan in late Tibetan sources. We may note, though, that Karma Pakshi did at one point visit the realm of the Khitan, the Western Liao, which he calls *Khyi tan*: Karma Pakshi 1978a, p. 19 (*khyi tan rgyal po'i dbyar sa*). But consider, as well, n. 39 below, where *kha che khri brtan* seems surely to refer to Kashmir and certainly not to the Liao. A plausible solution to the problem has, however, recently emerged: in response to a tentative Sanskrit back-translation of *khri brtan* as \*Sthirāsana or \*Dhruvāsana, which I circulated among Indological colleagues, Doctor Hartmut Buescher (Copenhagen) perspicaciously suggested that the name

collections of a hundred thousand tantras, and the arhat Nyi-ma-'bum [i.e. Nyi-ma-gung, or Madhyāhnikā] preserved the scriptural traditions. Outer and inner learned paṇḍitas and siddhas beyond number (3a.6) always dwell there, turning the wheel of dialectic, scriptural transmission, and reason. There, due to the merit of the king of the world, Mōngke Khan, I, the renowned Karma pa, was looked to and acclaimed by the king of Kashmir, his priests, beings adhering to Buddhism and outsiders, and the outer, *tīrthika* (3a.7) paṇḍitas. Protecting them with various transmissions, emblems, food, and wealth, I resolved doubts with regard to the dialectic of the Three Precious Jewels. Later, having travelled to Kashmir, (3a.8) I shared in the honour of the king of Kashmir and others, upholders of the religious systems, and, by means of the dialectic of the Red-garbed, purified the assembly—this is evident.

Therefore, this dialectic of the Three Precious Jewels (3a.9) is unlike that which was translated into Tibetan in fits and starts from [the works of] Dignāga and others among the six ornaments of Jambudvīpa,<sup>33</sup> there is nothing that it does not embrace. By the distinctions of the great measure [or 'logic'], it is rightly implied that the taintless, immeasurable dharma-kāya is introduced. But apart from that which is inseparable from the immeasurable spontaneous presence of the *trikāya*, the Three Precious Jewels, you assert tenets, repeatedly turning<sup>34</sup> about what is limited (*tshad can*). Amen to that!<sup>35</sup>

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represented might be Adhiṣṭhāna, which is in fact one of the old designations of Śrīnagara. On this usage, refer to Slaje 2005.

<sup>33</sup> The six ornaments are usually listed as Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva, Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, and Dignāga and Dharmakīrti.

<sup>34</sup> *bskor tse bskor tser*. The idiom interestingly occurs as well in the autobiographical writings: Karma Pakshi 1978a, p. 110: *kor tse kor tse yang rnor [= rnal 'byor] rang byung rdore [= rdo rje] yi nam thar gleng gzhi rgyas bsdus mang pos yul khamṣ khyab nas yod pa ...*: “repeatedly turning, the yogin Rang byung rdo rje has filled the lands with many liberation accounts, expanded and condensed...” It is not entirely

### 3 The ‘Red-Garbed,’ God, and Christianity

The several concrete references found here—to Kashmir, to the red-garbed Tāmraśāṭiya order, etc.—seem to call for explanation. When did Karma Pakshi travel to Kashmir? What is known of the Tāmraśāṭiyas there? Unfortunately, these and other specifications found in the text only deepen, rather than help to resolve, our puzzlement about it. Concerning Pakshi’s sojourn in Kashmir, for instance, Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba (1504–66) is altogether clear:

From the Tāmraśāṭiya order of Kashmir he *miraculously* heard the Vinaya, Pramāṇa and Abhidharma, [due to which he wrote] the *Limitless Ocean of the Vinaya*, etc., which are preserved in his *Bka’ ’bum*.<sup>36</sup>

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clear to me whether “repeatedly turning” should in this case be taken to refer to his peregrinations, or, as perhaps better accords with the context, to his ceaseless authorial activity.

<sup>35</sup> Following this, the text becomes excessively obscure to me for some lines, and so I have concluded the ‘preamble’ at this point. One point of interest that may be mentioned in connection with the immediately subsequent lines 3b.1–2 is a reference to the “region of Ri bo dgu ’dul [*sic* = ’dus].” This was a site of major importance for the 11<sup>th</sup> century Zur lineage of the Rnying ma pa (see Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 621–23, 638–39) and as such hallowed within the tradition of Kaḥ thog, in which Karma Pakshi was educated. One may even begin to wonder whether Karma Pakshi did not in some sense pave the way for the relations that emerged in the 14<sup>th</sup> century between the Mongol court in China and the Zur hierarchs Bzang po dpal and his son Shākya ’byung gnas (Dudjom 1991, vol. 1: 669–72). It may be noted in this connection that Rnying ma pa traditional historiography, which maintains that the former undertook the printing of Rnying ma works with Mongol sponsorship, seems now partially confirmed thanks to the recent discovery of Bzang po dpal’s 1317 print of the *Lam nam par bkod pa*, on which see Sherab Sangpo 2009: 48.

<sup>36</sup> Dpa’ bo, 1986, p. 885: *kha che gos dmar po’i sde pa las rdzu ’phrul gyis ’dul tshad mngon gsum gsan te ’dul ba rgya mtsho mtha’ yas la sogs pa bka’ ’bum na bzhugs*.

In other words, Karma Pakshi never visited Kashmir.<sup>37</sup> This may help to explain his insistence on the presence of the southern Tāmraśāṭiya order there, though so little is precisely known of the Tāmraśāṭiya that we cannot altogether exclude the possibility of their presence in the far north.<sup>38</sup> The major city of Kashmir, called Krigs brtan (or Khri brtan) in Tibetan and probably to be identified with Śrīnagara (usually *dpal gyi grong khyer*), was already a place of myth in Pakshi's time (see n. 32 above): Dpa' bo Gtsug lag records that Pakshi's predecessor, Dus gsum mkhyen pa (1110–93), among his visions of the past lives of celebrated persons saw that the master Phya pa (Chos kyi seng ge, 1109–69) had been born there as a paṇḍita.<sup>39</sup>

Interpreting the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad* is further complicated by the overall pattern of the work; it follows a peculiar course touching upon a diffuse array of topics—for instance, whether or not the corpus of Buddhist scriptures known in Tibet is or is not really representative of the entire Indian corpus, whether or not the Pramāṇa corpus really represents the systems of logic known in India, just what's packed into the Tibetan use of the verb *thal* in the debate logic,<sup>40</sup> etc.—and it does this without a clearly coherent pattern of

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<sup>37</sup> I thank Mr. Charles Manson (London), who has undertaken to compare the available accounts of Karma Pakshi's life, for confirming that his researches so far tend to support the same conclusion.

<sup>38</sup> On the Tāmraśāṭiyas in general, see Bareau 1955: 204. Lamotte 1976: 592, locates them in Ceylon, and (605), also in Nāgārjunikoṇḍa. But he regards them, too, as being among those whose views were discussed by Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, which, if correct, would suggest that there was some knowledge of them in the northwest of India. Is it possible that the Kashmiri monk “Lama Namu/Namo,” who became established at the Mongol court under Ögedei, and continued to serve the court under Güyük and Möngke, played a role as Karma Pakshi's informant?

<sup>39</sup> Dpa' bo 1986, p. 868: *slob dpon phya pa kha che khri brtan du paṇḍi tar 'khrungs sogs dpag tu med pa gzigs*.

<sup>40</sup> *Mo gho ding ri*, 82a5-6: *bod kyi tshad ma thal ba 'di nyid la yang / thaṃd kyis bshit sgrub snot yod pa'i phyir na/ thal zer ba'i tshig 1 sdu [= mdo] li'i thog du kha rgyal kha phan [= pham] snogs 'byung ba shes pas mdzod /*. “As for ‘implication’ (*thal ba*)

development, or at least without a pattern that has as yet disclosed its order to me. It is possible to imagine, therefore, that *möngke tengri*, as it is invoked repeatedly here, is not in fact used to privilege the high divinity of Mongol religion per se. It seems, rather, that the foreign designation was adopted in the interest of short-circuiting established expectations. Such a reading of the work brings us back to the remarkable skepticism of the *'Dod pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas*, which I have discussed elsewhere.<sup>41</sup> To cite just one doctrinal question raised in our present text that appears to confirm such a perspective, we may consider Pakshi's inquiry as to whether one ought to take one's refuge in the beings in hell. No, you say? Well consider this: you take refuge in the Buddhas of the three times, right? That includes the Buddhas of the future, right? And you've taken your bodhisattva vows so that all beings, especially the tormented beings in the infernal realms, will be liberated as Buddhas. So they're the future Buddhas, right? ...<sup>42</sup>

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in the logic of Tibet, because everyone has it for all sorts of refutations and proofs, you should know that it is on the palanquin of this one word 'implies!' (*thal*) that all sorts of victories and defeats in debate are borne." It may be noted that, although the so-called *thal phyir* form of argument is universally employed in the practice of Tibetan monastic debate, literary evidence of it before Karma Pakshi's time is quite rare.

<sup>41</sup> Kapstein 2000: 101–106.

<sup>42</sup> *Mo gho ding ri*, 4a8-b2: *ma rig cing 'khrul gzhi 'khor ba'i 'gro ba rigs drug spyi khyab du lus ngag yid 3 bye brag so sor yod pa nam sku gsum ngo sprod kyis cig [= rig] cing rtoṭ na dkoogs [= dkon mchog] 3 ma 'ong pa'i sangyas thamd kyis sku gsung thut yin pa mngon sum tshad ma / de'i phyir na dmyal ba la soṭ 'gro ba rigs drug la ni phyag 'tshal zhing skyabsu 'gro bar mi 'dod pa mngon 3 tshad ma / (4b) ma 'ong pa'i sangyas sku gsung thut dang ldan pa'i dkon mchog 3 skyabsu 'gro bar thal rig / de'i phyir na khyod bod kyis tshad ma nam ngan song 3 la soṭ pa semn nam la ni skyabsu 'gro bar mi 'dod cing ma 'ong dkoot 3 la skyabs su 'gro ba'i dam bca' la svā hā //*. "It is evident that, in general, if the six classes of beings of saṃsāra, whose ground is ignorance and bewilderment, become aware by means of the introduction to the three buddha-bodies (*sku gsum*, Skt. *trikāya*) [with respect to], in particular, their body, speech, and mind, and so realise [the three buddha-bodies], that they are then the Three

Despite the many uncertainties that attend the reading of the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad*, it is very clear that Pakshi was deeply troubled, as the texts of the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor* already reveal, by the problem posed by the *mu stegs pa*. For most Tibetan doctrinal authors, as we know well, the *mu stegs pa* had only a theoretical existence; they corresponded to no one you were likely to meet in real life. As with most strawmen, they were to be disposed of with a few gestures of facile refutation, before turning to the real beef, the contests among Buddhist schools. Part of what makes Karma Pakshi's dialectical universe so strange, by contrast, is that the *mu stegs* seem to be the dominant *pūrvapakṣa*. Challenged, reviled, and then revalued as embodying the Buddhist enlightenment on some hidden level, the *mu stegs pa* are present in the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad* wherever we turn. But just who were these *mu stegs pa* who so exercised the second Karma pa? If we can identify them, perhaps it will help us to make sense of *möngke tengri* as well, for in some respects this latter seems to stand outside of the Buddhist-*mu stegs pa* dichotomy altogether.

Karma Pakshi's references to a "Red-garbed" religious order advocating a novel system of dialectics, together with the knowledge that he had encountered Christians at the court of the Khan, immediately raises the question as to whether or not the Karma pa may have been speaking in fact of Christian clerics in red vestments. Indeed, Leonard van der Kuijp has recently asserted that "in this context it is perhaps significant to note that Nestorian Christian patriarchs wore red clothing and that therefore Karma pa II's repeated mentions of the Gos dmar can might actually refer to the Nestorian

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Precious Jewels, the Body, Speech, and Mind of all the buddhas of the future. Therefore, [although] it is evident that [you] do not affirm the six classes of beings in the hells, etc. [as objects of] salutations and refuge, it is rightly implied that one should go for refuge to the Triple Gem endowed with the Body, Speech, and Mind of all the buddhas of the future. Therefore, you logicians of Tibet, amen to your assertion not to affirm going for refuge in the sentient beings of the three evil destinies while going for refuge in the Three Precious Jewels of the future!"



Christians.”<sup>43</sup> However, although ceremonial vestments in red are current in both Roman and Orthodox rites, and may have been in the Nestorian rite as well,<sup>44</sup> it is significant that the colour with which the latter were associated in

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<sup>43</sup> Van der Kuijp forthcoming. During my first presentation of my researches on the *Mogho ding ri*, at the University of Virginia in March 2003, I had already suggested that the “Red-garbed” might have been inspired by encounters with Christians, but as a mere hypothesis that had to be treated with considerable caution. Prof. van der Kuijp’s assertion, quoted here, is presented without a supporting citation—an uncharacteristic departure from the author’s habitual precision in such matters—and I have not so far been able to locate a confirming source. The closest I have been able to come is William of Rubruck’s mention of “a priest from Cataia [i.e. Khitan, Cathay] ... dressed in cloth of the finest red.” In his remarks on this passage, P. Jackson (2009: 202n1) mentions Rockhill’s proposal “that this must have been a Tibetan (or possibly a Mongol) lama, since the Chinese Buddhists did not wear red and the Uighurs wore yellow,” and adds, “we cannot be sure that Rubruck is referring to a lama ... and it is at least as likely that the person in question here was a Christian, like the one mentioned at p. 152.” On examining this last reference, however, one finds that the colour red is nowhere mentioned and that it is a question of a “Nestorian priest who had come from Cataia,” which is to say that Jackson is addressing solely the bearing of the priest’s origins in Cataia upon the question of his religious affiliation. In other words, the red-robed priest may have been Buddhist or Christian; we have no means to be sure.

<sup>44</sup> In the Roman Catholic and Byzantine rites, red vestments are prescribed for a number of solemn feast days. (In the Byzantine rite, it appears that there is considerable latitude in actual practice, while the Roman rite is at present stipulated in the *Institutio Generalis Missalis Romani*, the text of which is subject to periodic updates and revisions.) The famous c. 1412 Paris manuscript of the *Book of Marco Polo*, Bibliothèque Nationale de France, ms. fr. 2810, executed by the so-called Boucicaut master, seems to favour white robes in depicting Eastern Christian clerics, but some are also wearing red. (See, for instance, folio 10v, ‘God moves a mountain for the Christians of Baghdad,’ reproduced in Baumer 2008: 154.) But the documentary value of this for our understanding of Christian vestment further (and even nearer!) east remains uncertain.

China was white.<sup>45</sup> Moreover, given Karma Pakshi's explicit association of the designation "red-garbed" with the arhat Śāṅakavāsin and the fact, as we have seen, that this association was well established in earlier Buddhist tradition, we are left with no real basis to suppose that Karma Pakshi used the term to speak of Christians.

Although, for these reasons, I do not believe that Karma Pakshi's "Red-garbed" order can be identified with Nestorian or other Christians he may have encountered during his travels outside of Tibet, the possibility that Christianity was among his sources of inspiration cannot be altogether dismissed. Karma

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<sup>45</sup> As we read in line XXVI of the Xi'an (Chang'an) Nestorian stele of 781, the Christian priests were "maîtres Radieux aux vêtements blancs" (Pelliot 1996: 178). In his note on this passage (292n228), Pelliot however explains that "vêtement blanc" (Ch. *baiyi* 白衣) may refer in ordinary Chinese usage to persons without official function, as it does when, in Buddhist contexts, it means 'laity.' In the present instance, nevertheless, there is the possibility that it refers specifically to the Christian priesthood, or to a part thereof. As Pelliot comments, "une solution s'offre immédiatement à l'esprit, qui est de retrouver dans le nestorianisme la distinction du clergé 'blanc' et du clergé 'noir' qui nous est si familière dans l'église grecque et dans l'église russe." Notably, red does not figure among the colours he discusses. Beyond these considerations, recent correspondence with Professor Mark Dickens (SOAS) and Mr. Steven Ring (Bristol), both specialists in the study of the Church of the East, has brought home to me that besides the so-called 'Nestorians' (an adjective no longer much in favour, though retained here for reasons of custom and convenience), representatives of several other Christian churches were circulating in Möngke's domains even after William of Rubruck's departure, including Armenian Christians and Roman Catholics (Rubruck's companion Bartholomew of Cremona had stayed behind). Moreover, Manichaeans, too, may have been present among the interlocutors at Möngke's court. For these and other reasons, we should resist the temptation to assume too readily that Karma Pakshi's references to the 'Red-garbed' allude to meetings with 'Nestorian Christian patriarchs [who] wore red clothing,' though there can be no doubt that he did, in some manner or another, encounter representatives of the Church of the East.

Pakshi, in fact, though everywhere challenging the *mu stegs pa* to debate, tells us almost nothing of their actual tenets; his work is far too thin on this score to allow us to use doctrine to identify his unnamed opponents. However, his autobiographical writings clarify the matter perfectly. For here he recounts that, prior to the debates sponsored by Möngke Khan in 1256, the Mongol royal family, and especially Möngke and Qubilai's younger brother Ariq-böke, as well as a noblewoman whose name he gives as E lji ga ma, were especially devoted to a *mu stegs pa* faith called *e rga 'o* that had aspirations of converting the entire world.<sup>46</sup> In this case, *e rga 'o* is clearly a transcription of Mongol *erke'ün*, that is, Christianity, Ariq-böke's devotion to which was noted by William of Rubruck in 1254.<sup>47</sup>

This perhaps helps us to understand just why it is that a noteworthy feature of the *Dialectic of Eternal Heaven* is the author's sustained interest in addressing the challenge of theism. Tibetan thinkers were, of course, broadly familiar with the outlines of certain Indian theistic traditions and the Buddhist critiques of them, above all through the treatment of these matters in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of Dharmakīrti's *Pramāṇavārttika* and its comment-

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<sup>46</sup> Kama Pakshi 1978a, pp. 100–101: *sngon dus 3 mkhyen pas glang po cher sprul nas log lta can gyi rgyal po 'khor bcas btul ba de skye ba 'ga' brgyud nas da ltar 'dzam gling rgyal po mo 'gor gan du sku 'khrungs shing/ sngon gyi bag chaṭ kyis mu steg er ga 'o yi grub mtha' 'dzin cing er ka'i sloon [= slob dpon] mang pos mu steṭ kyis grub mtha' 'chad cing/ thya [= mtha] 'khor nas 'dzam bu gling pa thaṃd mu steṭ kyis bstan pa la 'jug dgos 'dug pa rgyal bu a ri po ka: dpon mo i lji ga ma soṭ la rgyal rgyud khaṃs kyis 'bangs thaṃd kyang / sngon mueṭ kyis rgyal po btsun mo sras dang nye du dmag dpon mi la soṭ pa thaṃd da res 'dir 'khor bcas lhan cig tu skyes pa'i phyir na / ... ming yongs su graṭ pa karmā pa ? mo 'gor rgyal po 1 ? pu'i don du skyes shing 'khor bcas mtho ris thar pa la snoṭ [= sna tshogs] thabs kyis 'god pa dgos par dran cing / gnam lo rgyal po 'brugi lo la zi ra 'ur rdor rgyal rgyud thaṃd 'tshot pa'i dusu phyin pa las / ... mu steṭ kyis grub mtha' las rje 'bangs thaṃd bzlog cing / nang pa sargyas pa'i bstan pa la btsud pa ste. See, too, the summary account in Dpa' bo 1986, p. 889.*

<sup>47</sup> P. Jackson 2009: 212, 223.

aries.<sup>48</sup> However, because the theistic schools in question were not at all active in Tibet, they were largely a matter of exegetical interest and not of active polemical or apologetical concern.<sup>49</sup> Karma Pakshi, though addressing the affirmation of a deity described as *Īśvara* (*dbang phyug*), or “*Īśvara* with Consort” (*dbang phyug yab yum*), and clearly conceiving of the theism he criticises as a variety of the Śaivism well-known from Indian Buddhist sources, nevertheless seems to speak with an urgency that is not at all characteristic of Tibetan treatments of the issue. Is it possible that, in meeting representatives of Christian traditions, he discovered that the theistic views he knew from the works he had studied had not just a theoretical existence, and that they presented a genuine challenge to Buddhist positions? Perhaps. In all events, it is not clear that he grasped the distinctive features of Christian theism in contrast to the Indian doctrines with which he was familiar. The conceptions of a necessary being and of *creatio ex nihilo* are at best somewhat obscurely suggested in one passage in his text (at 26b.7 in the selection translated below, on “whether or not there is a self-emergent that has not emerged within the three realms”), but only to be immediately dismissed, apparently too absurd to merit further discussion. In short, if Karma Pakshi’s interest in theism was due to his meeting living Christian theists, his response to their beliefs was firmly cast in the mould of the Indian Buddhist traditions in which he had been schooled.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> For a useful introduction to Indian Buddhist ‘atheology,’ see Hayes 1988, and for a thorough study of a major Sanskrit work on the subject, Patil 2009. Aspects of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika* have been studied by Franco 1997, and, in the Tibetan context, by R. Jackson 1993.

<sup>49</sup> Though see Kapstein 2009 for an example of a Tibetan doxographical work (in this case by Bya ’Chad kha pa Ye shes rdo rje [1101–75]) prior to Karma Pakshi’s time that does seek to relate the discussion of the non-Buddhist schools to actual religious concerns in Tibet.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. the responses to Christian argument attributed by Rubruck to the *tuin*, presumably Chinese Buddhist priests, with whom he debated; P. Jackson 2009: 231–34.

In this connection, it is striking to note, too, that in his great synthesis of the Dignāga-Dharmakīrti tradition of Pramāṇasāstra, the seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506), refers to his predecessor Karma Pakshi precisely in connection with the refutation of theism in the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter, attributing to him a work entitled the *Tshad ma rgya mtsho mtha' yas*. However, no reference to a text with this title has so far been discovered in Karma Pakshi's available writings, nor has it yet appeared in any of the lists of manuscripts in Tibet, so far known to me, in which works by Karma Pakshi have otherwise been reported. Is it possible that the seventh Karma pa was inexact in his citation of Karma Pakshi's title? I believe that this may in fact have been the case, and for some time worked under the hypothesis that the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad* itself was the text referred to as the *Tshad ma rgya mtsho mtha' yas*. However, although, as will be seen, the Indian Vaiśeṣika philosophy occupies a particularly important place in Karma Pakshi's conception of theism, as it does in the description of the *Tshad ma rgya mtsho mtha' yas*, the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad* is not plausibly the work that the seventh Karma pa mentions. It was, rather, Karma Pakshi's discussion of Vaiśeṣika thought in a part of the *Bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas* that he likely had in mind. Appendix II below sets forth in detail my reasons for drawing this conclusion, but here let us return to consider Karma Pakshi's treatment of theism in the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad*.

It must be stressed at the outset that Karma Pakshi's argumentation about this is sometimes very difficult to follow, at least in many precise points, and it is not at all certain whether this is due to obscurity or confusion in his own thought or expression, or to problems in the transmission of the text. The main lines of his argument, however, are often clear enough. The selection that follows will suffice to introduce his treatment of traditions that assert the existence of a divine creator:<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> The Tibetan text is given as the second selection in Appendix I.

(26a.6) ... You *tīrthikas* hold, (26a.7) do you not, that your source and culmination is Īśvara with His Consort. Do you affirm or not that Maheśvara and Consort are the parents of all living creatures? If you do affirm Maheśvara and Consort to be sentient beings' parents, because you [therefore] affirm that there were no sentient beings in the three realms prior to the emergence of Maheśvara, (26a.8) then did Maheśvara have parents and ancestors or not? If you hold that he did, you must affirm there to have been one culminating ancestor. For if there were no such culmination, then Maheśvara and Consort, would have arisen [fortuitously] like bubbles in water, without depending upon the aggregations and continuum of awareness (26a.9) from which they emerge.<sup>52</sup> Why so? As it says in the text of the measureless dialectic:<sup>53</sup> these distinctions are resumed as finite or infinite. Therefore, given that you *tīrthikas* speak of Maheśvara and Consort, Phya, Brahmā, (26b.1) etc., and the three teachers or the many divisions,<sup>54</sup> and because there is a debate between you who evidently appear as *tīrthikas* and myself, a Buddhist insider,<sup>55</sup> do you hold Maheśvara and Consort, etc., (26b.2) to have a culmination, or not?

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<sup>52</sup> I am not entirely comfortable with this interpretation, though I cannot imagine how else to understand the passage. While the text appears to read *rigrgyur*, I am taking this as meaning *rig rgyun*, the “continuum of awareness” linking one life to the next in a series of births.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. his references to “the measureless, imponderable dialectic of the Red-garbed Eternal Heaven,” e.g. in 1b.4 of the selection given earlier. It was not clear there, however, that Karma Pakshi was speaking of a “text” (*gzhung*). Was the work in question real, or, like the Red-garbed Kashmiri order, the product of the author’s visions?

<sup>54</sup> It is not clear to me to whom the “three teachers” refer in this context. Is it possible that, because we know Daoists to have been engaged in the dragon-year debates, that Karma Pakshi is responding to the Chinese conception of “three teachings” (*sanjiao* 三教), i.e. Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism?

<sup>55</sup> For want of a better English formula to represent the standard expression *nang pa sangs rgyas pa*.

If you hold that, according to the *tīrthikas*, the great divinities have their culmination in Maheśvara, then I, the Buddhist insider, will assert that the four teachers are not gathered in one as [their] culmination.<sup>56</sup> And if you *tīrthikas* assert that Maheśvara is without culmination, (26b.3) I, the Buddhist insider, will affirm that the Buddha has a culmination.<sup>57</sup> For example, when the rain falls in torrents on a mountain, because it stops and dries<sup>58</sup> quickly, (26b.4) does not this example, *tīrthikas*, (26b.4) apply to Maheśvara whom you hold to have a culmination? [But on the other hand,] if you hold Maheśvara to be without culmination, does not your assertion collapse, viz. that “you reach nothing beyond Maheśvara and Consort, that everything arises from him, and is made by him?”

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<sup>56</sup> Who are the “four teachers” in this case? If, indeed, the “three teachers” mentioned just above are the “three teachings” of Chinese tradition, then maybe we have here a garbled allusion to the notion of the unity of the three teachings (*sanjiao he yi* 三教合一), that had become current during the Song. This would perhaps explain Karma Pakshi’s notion of the several of which he speaks being “gathered in one.” Alternatively, if indeed the Christians are his interlocutors at this point, the “four teachers” might be the Four Evangelists, and Jesus the “one” in whom they are gathered. Perhaps more plausibly, Karma Pakshi is following Indian Buddhist doxographical traditions well known in Tibet (Kapstein 2009) that emphasised the primacy of just four of the non-Buddhist Indian philosophical traditions: Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, Vaiśeṣika, and Mīmāṃsā, as surveyed in the *Tarkajvālā* of Bhāviveka. In this case, however, the sense in which they are supposed to be “gathered in one” is uncertain.

<sup>57</sup> This, I think, is less confusing that it seems. We may recall that in the *’Dod pa rgya mtsho mtha’ yas* (Kapstein 2000: 101–106) Karma Pakshi employed a skeptical form of argument similar to the tenth mode of classical skepticism, according to which an assertion is placed in doubt by showing its opposite. The goal of the procedure is not, of course, to prove the opposite, but to engender a doubt, and that is precisely Karma Pakshi’s strategy here.

<sup>58</sup> Reading *skam* for *snyam*. (The appearance of this syllable in the ms. is in fact ambiguous.)

Why so? Do you affirm, or not, that Maheśvara and Consort have a sole ancestor? (26b.5) If you do not affirm it, then, even as you adhere to the *tīrthikas*' philosophical system, it is implied that it has emerged from Buddhism and is Buddhist. For, as for us, the Buddhist insiders, it is evident that the way in which Samantabhadra, self-emergent gnosis, is realised and emerges, (26b.6) is a continuous flow, like a stream of water, immeasurable and imponderable. For you *tīrthikas*, but for Maheśvara there is neither an upper culminating limit nor a lower culminating limit, and hence it is implied that you thus put the pieces in order.<sup>59</sup> Why so? (26b.7) You assemblies of *tīrthikas*, owing to eternalism, affirm all to be self-emergent, made by no one. To this [one asks] whether or not there is a self-emergent that has not emerged within the three realms. That is, are Maheśvara and Consort understood to be within the three realms or not? (26b.8) Therefore, [because] it is evident that everything has emerged from causes and conditions, does not your affirmation of “made by no one” collapse? Therefore, your eternalism implies the fault of annihilation.

You *tīrthikas* who are nihilists say (27a.1) that you have washed away the plentiful talk of everything's being made by a creator [such as] Phya, Maheśvara, or Brahmā, and that you hold to the philosophical system of nihilism. Do you or do you not? If you do, then, [as for] all the outer vessel and inner contents [i.e. the world and beings]—none of it has arisen primordially from the buddhas' power and blessing. (27a.2) It is not to be terminated by the efforts of sentient beings, and all the past activities of study and teaching [on the part] of Buddhist insiders originate and are destroyed by the collective merits of sentient beings. So they say. ...

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<sup>59</sup> Though the first part of this sentence clearly means something like “without Maheśvara there is neither beginning nor end,” the last phrase eludes me in this context. Perhaps it may be taken as an idiom saying, roughly, “your position falls to pieces.” Elsewhere, the phrase is known in the Rnying ma *bka' ma* traditions, early versions of which were familiar to Karma Pakshi from Kaḥ thog, where it occurs in the titles of texts that put into order fragmentary instructions (*dum dum khrigs su bkod pa*).



That the problems raised by the thesis of divine creation were of sustained concern to Karma Pakshi is further underscored by his repeated rehearsal of them throughout the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad*.<sup>60</sup> In sum, though the identification of the “Red-garbed” with Nestorian Christians seems implausible, Karma Pakshi’s uncommon interest in the refutation of theism seems best explained by his encounters with actual theists at the court of Möngke Khan.

#### 4 Conclusions

Karma Pakshi’s peculiar dialectical strategy in the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad* seems generally to turn on a distinction between two types of proposition, those termed “measureless and imponderable” (*tshad gzhal med pa*) and those that are “delimited and ponderable” (*tshad gzhal yod pa*). This distinction

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<sup>60</sup> For instance, at 72a8ff.: *rten 'brel bcuis dang / byed pa'i skyes bu bcuis la soṭ par bye brag grub mtha' grangs mtha' yas par khas blangs zhing dam bcas kyang / khyed rnams kyi bskyed byed dbang phyug cheno yumḅ dang bcas pa'i yang ma rig rgya'o cheonr 'khrul pa'i tshad gzhal med pa'i mngon suṃ tshad ma / (72b) de'i phyir na khyod muegs byed khyad par du khyad lta ba rnams / ma rig log rtogis tshad ma khas len nam mi len/ khyod thamḅ byed pa pos byas pa yin zer zhing / khyod kyi byed pa po'i phyug (sic?) phya dang dbyuṃḅ dang po sus byas pa yin / [...] (72b 4) ci'i phyir na / khyed chad lta ba rnams phya'i phya dang / dbyuṃḅgis dbyuṃḅ byed pa po'i gong nas gong du yod zer ba khas len/ phya dang dbyuṃḅ phug thug pa medr thal ci'i phyir na byed pa po'i thog ma'i dusu byas pa 'di yin bya ba khas len zhing da lta mngon suṃ du khyod kyis ston nusam mi nus /. The notion of the “twelve fabricants” (*byed pa'i skyes bu bcuis*) that we find here, particularly in connection with Karma Pakshi’s question about who might have made Īśvara, is of some interest in connection with Rubruck’s report (P. Jackson 2009: 233), that the ‘*tuins*’ objected to his assertion of a single supreme God, saying, “On the contrary, there is one supreme god in Heaven, of whose origin we are still ignorant, with ten others under him and one of lowest rank beneath them; while on earth they are without number.” The argument opposing the conception of a single creator god with that of ‘creation by committee’ was much invoked in Indian Buddhist critiques of Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika theism, and is well-known to modern Western philosophy of religion from the *Dialogues* of David Hume.*

corresponds, very approximately, to the classical division between the two truths, or, rather, to that between “logic investigating the absolute” (*don dam dpyod pa’i tshad ma*) and “logic investigating conventions” (*tha snyad dpyod pa’i tshad ma*). Those propositions that are “delimited and ponderable,” whether Buddhist or *mu stegs pa* are all subject to “proof and refutation,” but what is “measureless and imponderable” is what remains when all possibility of proof and refutation is exhausted. This is the *dharmadhātu*, Samantabhadra, Mahāviṣṇu, and, of course, *möngke tengri*, “eternal heaven.” Regarded in this fashion, the puzzling dialectic of the *Mo gho ding ri’i sgra tshad* begins to emerge as a reflection of the religio-political order of the Mongol Empire, at least, as Karma Pakshi conceived it to be. For the supreme Khan, Möngke, regarded by Karma Pakshi as a realised adept of the Mahāmudrā, was the “measureless and imponderable” center of gravity around which his squabbling subjects—Christians, Daoists, and Buddhists alike—were but “delimited and ponderable” sublunary bodies. Pakshi’s eulogy of the Khan as at once a fervent Buddhist and yet a protector of his subjects’ varied faiths seems to accord with just such a perspective.

If the essential point is so simple, however, why does Karma Pakshi require 149 folios of dense and often confusing argumentation to make it? I am not at all sure that a clear answer is readily available, but perhaps we can suggest the direction in which our answer must lie by noting that, for Karma Pakshi, everything is always multiplied to exhaustion: his visions of divinities have thousands of arms, multiply themselves billion-fold throughout infinite reaches of space, blessing numberless beings in countless lands and cosmic systems. His revelations express themselves as a limitless ocean, surpassing in its extent even the dimensions of the Bka’ ’gyur. In the words of his *Limitless Ocean of Tenets* (*’Dod pa rgya mtsho mtha’ yas*):

There is a limitless ocean of tenets pertaining to the principles of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa and to the particular philosophical systems. You must realise it to be neither conjoined with, nor separate from, the limitless ocean of

realisation, which is free from all acceptance and rejection, and which is spontaneously present, pristine cognition.<sup>61</sup>

Analogously, in debate, one must consider each and every one of the myriad propositions that may arise in all of their innumerable permutations. As he himself put it: “Endless debate is like swordplay. One is proven, two are proven, everything under debate is decisively proven. *Oṃ sarva pratisiddhi hūṃ!*”

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<sup>61</sup> Kapstein 2000: 103.

**Appendix I: Selected passages from the *Mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad***

In the following text selections, corresponding to the extended passages translated above, I provide diplomatic transcriptions of the available manuscript. Hence, I let irregularities of orthography—of which there are many—stand as they appear in the text, and have attempted to reproduce the frequent abbreviations found therein as faithfully as is possible. Underlined phrases are those written in red ink in the original manuscript. Though *shad* and *tsheg* are graphically indiscernable in the manuscript, the *shad* is represented by *tsheg* followed by an extended space, which does not otherwise intervene between syllables separated by the *tsheg*. On this basis, I have taken the liberty of introducing the standard form of the *shad* in the present transcriptions. *Na ro* and *'greng bu* are often written in closely similar forms and one must decide contextually which is appropriate; in a few cases, e.g. *khyod/khyed*, the decision is virtually arbitrary.

**1. Title page and preamble**

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(1a.2) ༄།། དམ་པའི་ཚེས་འདུལ་བའི་གླིང་བཞི་ན་གོས་དམར་ཅན་གྱི་ཡུལ་ནས་འོངས་  
བའི་མཁས་པ་ཡང་དག་ཕྱི་རོལ་ཉིད་བཞུགས་གསུངས་ཏེ། དེ་ལ་ཤུན་པའི་གོས་ཅན་

(1a.3) འཇམས་དཔལ་དམར་པོ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ཚན་འབྲུག་ཙམ་དུ་ཐ་སྐྱོད་འདོགས་ཤིང་  
རོ་བོ་ཅིག་ལ་མཐོང་ཚུལ་ཐ་དད་པ་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ། མོ་སྟོ་དེང་རིའི་སྐྱ་ཚད་བཞུགས་སོ།། །།

(1b.1) ༄།། ༄།། །།མོ་གོ་དེ་རི་སྐྱ་ཚད་གཞལ་མེད་པའི་སྐྱ་ཚད་ སྟོན་ཞིང་གླིང་བ་  
གཏན་ལ་ཐབ་པ་ཏེ། ལུས་དང་གྲིབ་མའི་དཔེ་བཞིན་ཏེ། ཚད་གཞལ་མེད་པར་དམ་བཅས་

ན། ཚད་གཞལ་མེད་པ་ལྟེན་ལས་ (1b.2) འབྲུང་བ་མངོན་སུམ་ཚད་མ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་

ན། འཁོར་བ་དང་སྲུང་ན་ལས་འདས་པའི་ཚད་གཞལ་མེད་པ་དང་ཚད་གཞལ་ཡོད་པ་གཉིས་

སྲུང་མ་བཅའ་ནས་སྒྲོའི་ཞིང་གྲིང་པ་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་ན། སྐྱུ་ལྡེ་ཡོངས་སྲུ་རྫོགས་པའི་རྒྱལ་བ་

སྲས་དང་ (1b.3) བཅས་པ་རྣམས་དཔང་པོ་དམ་པར་བཞུགས་སུ་གསོལ། ཁྲུབ་འཇུག་དང་

དབང་སྐྱུག་སྐྱུ་དང་ཚངས་པ་སྐྱ་སྲིན་སྲེ་བརྒྱད་ལ་སོའི་པ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གསུམ་ན་འཁོད་ཅིང་ཕྱི་ནང་

གི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་སོ་སོར་འཇིན་པ་རྣམས་སྲངས་པོ་དམ་པར་བཞུགས་སུ་གསོལ། (1b.4) མོ་འགོ་

དིང་རི་གོས་དམར་ཅན་གྱི་ཚད་གཞལ་ཡོད་པའི་སྐྱ་ཚད་དང་། ཚད་གཞལ་མེད་པའི་སྐྱ་ཚད་

བཞིག་པ་དང་། སྐྱུབ་པ་རལ་བསྐོར་གྱི་འཁོར་ལོ་འདི། བོད་ལུལ་ཁ་བ་ཅན་གྱི་གྲུང་སྲོགས་

འདིར་སྡོན་ཚད་མ་བྱུང་ཕྱིས་མི་འབྲུང་བ་ཏེ་ (1b.5) གཞན་དང་ཅོད་ན་ཕྱི་ནང་དང་པོའི་འདི་

ལྟར་དུ་ཕྱི་ནང་གི་སྐྱུབ་མཐའ། སོ་སོར་ས་གཅོད་པ་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ། དས་མ་རིག་པ་

འགོ་བ་རིས་དུག་གིས་འཁྲུལ་པ་དང་འཁྲུལ་གཞི་སྐྱུབ་པར་དམ་བཅས། རྩོད་ཀྱིས་བཞིག་

པར་ཁས་ལེན་མི་ལེན། (1b.6) གྲུབ་མཐའ་ལོག་པར་ལྷ་བ་སྲེའི་གྱི་ལྷ་ལོག་སུམ་བརྒྱ་

དུག་ཅུ་བྱེ་བྲག་དང་བཅས་པ་ང་ཡིས་སྐྱུབ་པར་དམ་བཅས་ཤིང་ཀྱིས་ཤེས་པར་ཁས་ལེན་མི་ལེན།

ས་འཚམས་སྲེད་པར་ཁས་ལོང་། ནང་པ་སརྒྱས་པའི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་སྲོའི་ (1b.7) རྟོག་ངར་འཇིན་

གྱི་ཐེག་པ་དགུ་ལས། སྐྱུལ་སྐྱུའི་བསྟན་པ་སྲེ་སྡོད་གསུམ་དང་ངའི་སྐྱུབ་པར་དམ་བཅས།

ཤིང་སྲེའི་བྱེད་ཀྱིས་བཞིག་པར་ཁས་ལོང་ཞིང་དམ་ཚོས། ཤིང་རྫོགས་པ་སྐྱུལ་སྐྱུའི་བསྟན་པ་

ལྷི་རྒྱུད་གསུང་(?) ངའི་ (2a.1) ལྷུབ་པར་དམ་བཅས། རྩོད་ཀྱི་སྲིབ་བྱེད་ཀྱིས་བཞིག་པར་ཁས་  
 ལོང་གིང་དམ་ཚེས། ཚེས་ཀྱི་སྐྱུའི་དགོངས་པ་ལུང་བསྟན་རྗེར་ཚེན་གྲ་ན་མེད་པ་གསར་རྟེང་ངའི་  
 ས་སྐྱབ། སྲིབ་བྱེད་ཡིན་ན་རྩོད་ཀྱིས་བཞིག་པར་དེ་ (2a.2) ཚེས། ངོ་བོ་ཉིད་ཀྱི་སྐྱུའི་བསྟན་པ་  
 ལ་ལྷ་ཡོ་ག་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ཐིང་ཀྱིས་སྲིབ་ལུང་ཡིན་ན་ང་ཡིས་སྐྱབ་པར་དམ་བཅས། རྩོད་གྲུབ་མཐའ་  
 ཐིང་ལ་མཁས་པར་ཁས་ལེན་ན་བཞིག་པར་དམ་ཚེས། རང་འབྱུང་སྐྱུ་ལྷ་ཡོངས་ (2a.3) ལྷ་  
 རྩོད་པའི་བསྟན་པ་རྩོགས་པ་ཚེན་ཅིག་ཡིན་ཏེ། མ་རྩོག་ལོག་རྩོག་གཉིས་ལ་སོའ་པ་སྲིབ་ནང་གི་  
 གྲུབ་མཐའ་འདི་བ་མ་འདྲེས་པ་ཡོངས་སུ་རྩོགས་པའི་སྲིབ་ན། ང་ཡིས་སྐྱབ་རྩོད་སྲིབ་བྱེད་ཀྱིས་  
 ལྷ་རྩོད་ལོག་པར་རྩོག་ (2a.4) པའི་རྒྱལ་པོ་ཡིན་ན། རྩོད་ཀྱིས་བཞིག་པར་དམ་ཚེས་བཅའ།  
 རྩོད་ཀྱི་སྐྱབ་པར་ཁས་ལོང་། ཡང་ན་སྲིབ་ན་གི་གྲུབ་མཐའི་བྱེ་བྲག་རྣམས་དུམ་བུ་རེ་རེ་ནས་  
 བཞིག་པ་དང་སྐྱབ་པར་བྱའམ་མི་བྱ། རྩོད་ཀྱིས་དབང་པོ་རྩོག་པའི་ (2a.5) བྱེ་བྲག་དང་  
 བཅུན་ནས་རྩོད་ལ་གདམ་ཁ་སྐྱིན་པ་ཏེ། རྩོད་ཀྱིས་འདོམ། འདི་རྣམས་ཀྱང་ཚད་ཡོད་  
 པ་དང་། ཚད་མེད་པ་གཉིས་སུ་མ་འདྲེས་པ་དང་མ་རྩོགས་པ་དང་མ་ཁྱབ་པ་གང་ཡང་མེད་པའི་  
 སྲིབ་ན། སྲིབ་ན་གི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ (2a.6) ཐིང་ལ། ཚད་ཡོད་ཚད་མེད་གཉིས་སུ་དམ་བཅའ་ཞིང་  
 བཞིག་སྐྱབ་མ་གཏོར་པ་གང་ཡང་མེད་པར་ཤེས་པར་མཛོད། །གང་དང་གང་དུ་སྲོའ་གྱིང་  
 བྱེད་ན་ཡང་འདི་རྣམ་མ་རྗེར་བར་འགྲིག་སུ་ཚར་ཅིག་གི་ཚར་ཟུམ་ (2a.7) མེད་པར་འདོན་ནས་  
 སྲོ་གྱིང་བ་ལ་གོར་བཅུག་ཅིང་གྱིང་བ་མན་ངག་ཡིན། དེ་སྟར་འཇམ་དབྱངས་ཉིང་ངེ་འཛིན་བཞིན་

ཞིང་སྤྱི་ནང་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ཤམ་འབྱེད་གནས་ལུག་ཚོས་ཉིད་གཏན་ལ་པབ་པའི་དགོངས་པ་  
 ཡོད་པའོ། ། (2b.1) ངག་གི་དབང་སྤྲུལ་རང་འབྱུང་སྤྱོད་པའི་སང་གོ་ཉ་ཚོད་འཚོད་ཀྱི་ཚོད་  
 དེ་ཚོད། ཚོད་པ་མཐའ་ཡས་རལ་སྒོར་དཔེ་དང་མཚུངས། ཅིག་སྤྲུབ་གཉིས་སྤྲུབ་ཚོད་པ་  
 ཐད་བསྐྱབ་གཙོད།། །།ཨོ་སམ་པ་ཏི་སི་རྗེ་རྗེ་མུ་ལྷ་ཐུབ་པ་ལ་ (2b.2) མ་འགའ་པ་  
 དཔོན་སྒོའི་གཉིས་ཀྱིས་ལྷ་བ་ལྷ་ལེན་བསྐྱོའི་ཞིང་སྤྱིང་བ། དཀོན་གསུམ་གྱི་ཚོས་ཅན་ཚོས་ཉིད་  
 འཁོར་བ་དང་སྤྱང་ན་ལས་འདས་པའི་ཤེས་པ་དང་ཤེས་བྱའི་ཚོགས་རྣམས་ལ་མ་ཁུབ་ཅིང་གང་  
 དག་གང་ལ་མི་གནས་པ་ (2b.3) མེད་པའི་སྒོར་ཚེན་དབྱེ་བ་ནི་འདི་ལྷ་སྤྱོ། ལྷ་ཐུབ་པ་  
 སྤྱང་ན་ལས་འདས་ཁར་ལུང་བསྐྱར་ལས། བར་ན་སའི་ལུལ་དུ་སངས་ཀྱི་མཚན་དང་དཔེ་  
 བྱང་གིས་མ་བརྒྱན་པའི་ཡང་མཛད་པ་སྤྱིས་སངས་དང་མཉམ་པའི་ཤམ་པའི་གོས་ཅན་ (2b.4)  
 ཞེས་བྱ་བ་འབྱུང་སྤྱོ། ངའི་བསྐྱར་པ་དར་ཞིང་རྒྱས་པར་བྱེད་ཅིང་སྤྱི་ནང་གི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་ཐད་  
 ཤམ་འབྱེད་པ་ཏེ། དམ་པའི་ཚོས་སྤྱོད་གཏན་ལ་འབབ་པར་བྱེད་པ་ཏེ། བོད་སྐད་དུ་བསྐྱར་ན་  
 གོས་དམར་པོ་ཅན་ཞེས་བརྗོད་པ་ཏེ། འབྱོ་ (2b.5) སྤྱིས་མཚན་བཟང་གི་སྤྱོགས་སྒོར་ན།  
 ཁ་དོག་དམར་པོ་དམར་པོར་སྤྱོད་ཞིང་བར་ན་སའི་གོས་ལྷ་སྤྱོ། ཡང་ན་མ་ཚུ་གོན་ཀའི་  
 གོས་ལྷ་ཏེ། ཡང་ན་མཚུ་ཚོན་ཀའི་མདོག་འབྲ་བ། བོད་སྐད་དུ་བསྐྱར་ན་ལུག་ཚོས་དར་ལོ་  
 (2b.6) མིང་བ་ཏེ། དམ་པའི་ཚོས་འདུལ་བ་སྤྱོད་ཀྱི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་དང་འབྲེས་ཤིང་ས་མཚན་ས་  
 མེད་པའི་གྲངས་སྤྱད་གྱིན་རྣམ་གྱི་ཤམ་པའི་གོས་ཅན་ལ་གསོལ་བས་བཏབ་ཤིང་སྤྲུལ་དམ་གྱི་རྒྱུད་

'བསྐྱལ་བའི་དུས་སྐྱེ་གོ་ཏའི་གཙུག་' (2b.7) ལག་ཁང་དུ་སྤྱི་རོལ་དུ་ཤ་ན་པའི་གོས་ཅན་གྱི་  
 རྣམ་འཕྲུལ་བྱོན་ནས་བཞུག་པ་དགུན་གྱི་ལས་བྱེད་གྱི་མཐོང་ནས་ནང་དུ་སྐྱེན་ཏེ་གོས་དམར་ཅན་  
 གྱིས་སྐྱེན་ནས་བྱོན་པའི་མཁའ་ལ་ཡང་དག་སྤྱི་རོལ་ར་ན་བཞུག་ (2b.8) ཞེས་སྐྱུག་པ་ལ།  
 གནས་བརྟེན་རྣམ་དབྱུག་ནས་དགའ་ནས་ནང་དུ་དབྱེ་ནས། སངས་ཡེ་ས་འཁོར་བ་དང་  
 སྤངས་ལས་འདས་པའི་ཚེས་ཐད་སྐྱ་ཚད་དཀོན་གསུམ་གྱིས་སྐྱ་ཚད་གྱི་འཁོར་བསྐོར་ཞིང་།  
 སྤྱི་འཁོར་རྣམ་ཟེལ་ (2b.9) གྱིས་མཚན་ཏེ་སྐྱེན་སྤྱང་ཏེ། དེ་ལ་གསུམ་དུ་དབྱེ་ཞིང་ས་  
 བཅད་པ་ནི་འདི་ལྟ་སྟེ། སྐྱེ་བོ་ཐ་མལ་པ་ལ་འགོ་བ་རིགས་དུག་འབྲུལ་གཞི་ལས་འབྲུལ་པ་སྣོན་  
 འབྲུང་སྟེ། དཀོན་གསུམ་གྱིས་རྒྱ་ཡིན་པའི་སྐྱ་ཚད་དང་ (3a.1) སྤྱི་སྟེག་གྱི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་རྣམ་  
 འོག་ཅིང་དཀོན་གསུམ་ལ་ལོ་གོ་མ་ཞིང་དཀོན་གསུམ་ལ་མི་དགའ་བའི་ཕྱིར་ན། ལྷ་སྤྱི་བཟང་པོ་ལ་  
 སོའ་པ་སྤྱི་རྣམ་ཀྱང་སྟོན་པའི་འཁོར་གྱི་དང་པོར་གྱུར་པ་སྟེ། སྤྱི་འཁོར་ (3a.2) བྱེད་གྱི་དཀོན་གསུམ་  
 གྱིས་འབྲུས་འའི་བསྐྱུས་པའི་སྐྱ་ཚད་དང་། དམ་པའི་ཚེས་འདུལ་བ་ལ་སོའ་པའི་ནང་པ་སངས་  
 པའི་ཐེག་པའི་བྱེ་བྲག་དང་། དཀོན་གསུམ་ཐོབ་པར་བྱ་བའི་ཕྱིར་ལམ་བཟོད་པའི་སྐྱ་ཚད་གྱི་  
 འཁོར་བསྐོར་བ་ (3a.3) ཡིན། ཐད་སོ་སོར་འབྱེད་ཅིང་ཅིག་ཏུ་སྐྱོམ་པའི་སྐྱ་ཚད་ཡིས་  
 ཐད་ལ་མ་ཁྲུབ་པ་མེད་པར་བྱེ་བྲག་སོ་སོར་འབྱེད་པའི་དགོས་པ་ཡོད་པ་ཡོད་པའི་སྤྱི་ན་ཤ་ན་པའི་  
 གོས་ཅན་གྱིས་རྣམ་པར་འཕྲུལ་པའི་སྐྱོབ་པའི་ཚུལ་དུ་ (3a.4) འབྲུང་བ་ནི། རད་པའི་གོས་ཅན་  
 ཉིད་དང་ཉི་མ་འགྱུར་ལ་སོའ་པ་རྣམ་པར་འཕྲུལ་པ་གངས་མེད་པ་རྣམ་གྱིས་འཇོམ་བུའི་སྤྱིང་ཁྲུབ་



པར་མཛད་པ་ཏེ། བྱུང་བ་གླིན་གྱི་ཡུལ་པ་སྒོ་དཀའ། ཏུ་བ་ཁ་ཆེ་འི་གྲོང་རྒྱུ་བརྟེན་ཞེས་  
 (3a.5) བྱ་བར་གྲུ་པ་ལས། རྒྱུ་འབྱུང་ཚོ་བྱེ་བ་སྲུམ་ཅུ་སོ་དྲུག་ཡོད་པར་གྲུ་པ་ན། དགྲ་  
 བཅོམ་པ་ཉི་མ་འབྱུང་གྲིས་གཞུང་ལྷུ་བསྐྱུང་བ་ཡིན། སྤྱི་ནང་གི་པ་རྩི་ཏེ་མཁས་པ་གྲུབ་པ་  
 ཐོབ་པའི་གྲངས་མཐའ་ཡས་པ་རྣམས་ (3a.6) རྒྱུ་ཚད་མེད་པར་བཞུགས་ཤིང་སྐྱོ་ཚད་ལུང་རིགས་  
 གྲིས་འཁོར་བསྐྱོར་བ་ཏེ། དེ་ལ་འཛམ་བུ་གླིང་གི་རྒྱལ་མོ་གློ་གན་གྱི་བསོད་ནམས་ལ་གར་གླིན་  
 གྲིས་རྒྱལ་དེང་དེའི་གླ་མཚོད་ནང་པའི་སེམ་སྤྱི་པ་རྣམ་དང་། སྤྱི་པ་སྤྱི་ཏེ། (3a.7) པ་རྩི་ཏེ་  
 རྣམས་རོ་ལྷ་ཞིང་ལུང་བསྐྱུན་དུ་འབྱུང་བ་ལས་མིང་ཡོངས་སུ་གྲུ་པ་ཀམ་པས་བདག་བཟུང་ཞིང་  
 ལུང་ལག་རྟག་ཟས་ནོར་སྐྱ་ཚོགས་གྲིས་བསྐྱུང་ཞིང་དཀོན་གསུམ་གྲིས་སྐྱ་ཚད་གྱི་བདར་ཤ་བཅད་  
 ཅིང་། སྤྱིས་ཁ་ཆེ་ཡུལ་ (3a.8) ཏུ་ཡང་སྤྱི་ནས་ཁ་ཆེ་འི་རྒྱལ་ལ་སོའ་པ་གྲུབ་མཐའ་འཛིན་པ་  
 རྣམ་གྱི་བཀུར་ཏེ་བགོས་ཤིང་གོས་དམར་ཅན་གྱི་སྐྱ་ཚད་གྲིས་ཚོགས་ལ་ག་དར་བྱས་པ་མཛོན་སུ་  
 མ་ཚད་མ། དེའི་སྤྱིར་ན། དཀོན་གསུམ་གྲིས་སྐྱ་ཚད་ (3a.9) འདི་འཛམ་བུ་རྒྱུ་དྲུག་སྤྱོད་  
 གྱི་སྐྱང་པོས་སོའ་ནས་བོད་ལ་དུམ་དུམ་ཅོ་ཅོ་འབྱུང་བ་དང་མི་འདྲ་ཞིང་ཐད་ལ་མ་ཁུབ་པ་མེད་  
 ཅིང་། ཚད་ཆེན་བྱེ་བུ་བུ་སྐྱོ་ཚོགས་རྣམ་ཚད་གཞུང་མེད་པ་ཚོས་སྐྱ་དྲི་མ་མེད་པར་རོ་སྤྱོད་  
 (3b.1) ཐལ་རིག་ དེའི་ཚད་གཞུང་མེད་པའི་དཀོན་གསུམ་སྐྱ་གསུམ་ལྷུན་གྲིས་གྲུབ་པའི་  
 ཐད་མེད་པ་ལས་ཁྱེད་རྣམ་ཚད་ཅན་བསྐྱོར་ཅོ་བསྐྱོར་ཅོར་འདོད་པའི་དམ་བཅའ་ལ་སྐྱ་རྒྱ།

2. On Īśvara

(26a.6) ... རྩོད་སྲིད་པའི་བྱུང་ (26a.7) རྩུང་དང་མཐར་ཐུག་པ་དེ་དབྱིག་ཡུལ་ལ་  
 འདོད་པ་ཡིན་མ་མིན། དབྱིག་ཆེན་ཡུལ་སྐྱེ་འགོ་ཡོངས་ཀྱིས་པ་མར་ཁས་ལེན་མ་མི་ལེན།  
 དབྱིག་ཆེན་ཡུལ་སེམ་གྱིས་པ་མར་ཁས་ལེན་ན། དབང་ཕུག་ཆེན་མ་བྱུང་བའི་སྲོན་རོལ་དུ་ཁོ་སྲི་  
 སེམ་རྩོད་ (26a.8) མེད་པར་འདོད་པའི་ཕྱིར་ན། དབང་ཕུག་ཆེན་ལ་པ་མ་དང་པ་མེས་  
 ཡོད་དམ་མེད། ཡོད་པར་འདོད་ན་ པ་མེས་ཀྱི་མཐར་ཐུག་པ་ཉ་ཡོད་དགོས་པ་རྩོས་ཁས་ལོང་།  
 མཐར་ཐུག་པ་མེད་ན་དབྱིག་ ཆེན་ཡུལ་འབྱུང་བའི་ཚོའ་རྣམས་དང་། རིག་རྒྱུར་ (26a.9) གཉིས་  
 ལ་མ་བརྟེན་པར་ཚུའི་ཚུ་བྱུར་བཞིན་ཕྱུང་བར་ཐལ། ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ན་ཚད་གཞལ་མེད་པའི་ཚད་མའི་  
 གཞུང་ལས། མཐར་ཐུག་ཡོད། ཐུར་མེད་དུ་བསྐྱུས་པའི་བྱེ་བྲག་པ་འདི་རྣམས་ཡིན་པའི་ཕྱིར་ན།  
 རྩོད་དབྱིག་ཆེན་ཡུལ་སྐྱེ་དང་ཚངས་པ་ (26b.1) ལ་སོའ་པ་རྣམས་དང་། སྲིད་ཀྱིས་སྟོན་པ་ཉ་མི་  
 བྱེ་བྲག་མང་དུ་གསུང་པ་རྣམས་དང་། ད་ལྟར་རྩོད་ཀྱིས་མངོན་སྲིད་ཚད་མར་སྲིད་པར་སྐྱུང་ཞིང་།  
 ང་ནང་པ་སངས་པ་ལ་རྩོད་ཀྱིས་ཚོད་པའི་ཕྱིར་ན། རྩོད་དབྱིག་ཆེན་ཡུལ་ལ་སོའ་པ་རྣམས་  
 མཐུག་ཡོདར་ (26b.2) འདོད་དམ་མེདར་འདོད། རྩོད་སྲིད་ཀྱིས་སྟོན་རྣམས་དབྱིག་ཆེན་  
 ལ་མཐུག་ཡོདར་འདོད་ན། ང་ནང་པ་ སངས་པས་སྟོན་པ་བཞི་སྟོན་པ་ཉ་དུ་འདུས་པར་མཐར་ཐུག་  
 མེད་པར་དོ་བཅའ། རྩོད་སྲིད་པ་དབྱིག་ཆེན་མཐུག་མེདར་དམ་བཅའ་ན། (26b.3) ང་ནང་པ་  
 སངས་པས་སངས་ལ་མཐར་ཐུག་ཡོད་པར་ཁས་ལེན་ཏེ། དཔེར་ན་རི་ལ་ཆར་བྲག་པོ་འབབ་པའི་  
 དུས་ན་ལུང་པ་གང་བའི་ཚུ་བྱུང་ན་ཡང་། ལྷུང་དུ་ཆད་ཅིང་སྟོ་པའི་ཕྱིར་ན་རྩོད་སྲིད་པས་མཐུག་

དབྱིག་ཚེན་ལ་ (26b.4) འདོད་པ་དེ་ཡང་དཔེ་དེ་དང་མཚུངས་མི་མཚུང་། རྒྱུད་དབྱིག་ཚེན་  
 ཐུག་མེད་དུ་འདོད་ན། རྒྱུད་དབྱིག་ཡུལ་བས་གཏུག་པ་མེད། ཐད་ཁོ་ལས་བྱུང་། ཁོས་བྱས་  
 ཟེར་བའི་དེ་བཅའ་ཉམ་མི་ཉམ་ས། ཅིའི་ཕྱིར་ན་ རྒྱུད་དབྱིག་ཚེན་ཡུལ་གྱིས་པ་བྱས་ཉ་ཁས་ (26b.5)  
 ལེན་ཉམ་མི་ལེན། ཁས་མི་ལེན་ན་ རྒྱུད་ལྷོགས་པའི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་བཟུང་ན་ཡང་།  
 དེ་ནང་པ་སངས་པ་ལས་བྱུང་ཞིང་སངས་པ་ཡིན་པར་ཐལ། དེ་ནང་པ་སངས་རྒྱས་པ་ལ་ནི།  
 ཀུན་ཏུ་བཟང་པོ་རང་འབྱུང་ཡིས་རྟོག་ཚུལ་དང་བྱུང་ཚུལ་ (26b.6) ཏུ་བའི་རྒྱན་བཞེན་དུ་རྒྱན་  
 མི་འཆད་པ་ཚད་གཞལ་མེད་པའི་མངོན་སུམ་ཚད་མ། རྒྱུད་ལྷོགས་པ་ལ་ནི་དབྱིག་ཚེན་མེད་པར་  
 ཡར་སུག་ཐུག་པ་མེད། མར་མཐར་ཐུག་པ་མེད་པའི་ཕྱིར་ན། རྒྱུད་དུམ་དུམ་གྲིགས་ཐལ་ཅིའི་  
 ཕྱིར་ (26b.7) ན། རྒྱུད་ལྷོགས་ཀྱིས་ཚོགས་རྣམ་རྟུག་ལྟ་བུ་བས་ཐད་སུས་ཀྱང་མ་བྱས་པར་  
 རང་བྱུང་ཡིས་ཁས་ལེན་པ་ལ། ཁམ་ཟུན་མ་བྱུང་བའི་རང་འབྱུང་གཞན་ན་ཡོད་དམ་མེད།  
 དབང་ཐུག་ཚེན་ཡུལ་ཡང་ཁོ་སྤྱི་གྱིས་ཁོངས་སུ་ (26b.8) རྟོག་གམ་མི་རྟོག་ དེའི་ཕྱིར་ན་ཐད་  
 རྒྱུ་རྒྱུན་ལས་འབྱུང་བ་མངོན་སྤྱི་ཚད་མ། རྒྱུད་སུས་ཀྱང་མ་བྱས་ཟེར་བ་ཁས་ལེན་ཉམ་མི་  
 མི་ཉམ་ས། དེའི་ཕྱིར་ན་རྒྱུད་རྟུག་ལྟ་བུ་བའི་འཇིག་པའི་སྒྲོན་ཅན་དུ་ཐལ། རྒྱུད་ལྷོགས་ཚད་ལྟ་བ་རྣམས་ན་རེ་  
 (27a.1) ཐད་སུ་དང་དབང་ཐུག་ཚེན་ཚངས་པ་བྱེད་པ་པོས་བྱས་ཟེར་ཞིང་གཏོ་མང་དུ་བྱུང་ཞིང་།  
 མེད་པའི་གྲུབ་མཐའ་འཇིག་པ་རྒྱུད་ཡིན་མིན། ཡིན་ན་ཕྱི་སྒྲོན་ནང་བཅུད་ཐད། གདོད་མ་ནས་  
 སངས་རྒྱས་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་མཐོབས་ (27a.2) སྤྱིན་རྒྱབས་ལས་མ་བྱུང་། སེམ་རྣམས་ཀྱིས་རྩོལ་བས་

མི་བཅག་པ་དང་། རང་པ་སངས་པའི་སྡོན་ཉན་བཤད་བྱེད་པ་ཀུན་། མེའི་སྤྱི་མཐུན་བསོད་ནམས་  
ལས་ཆེ་འཇིགས་བྱེད་པ་ཡིན་ཟེར་བ་ཡོད་ཀྱིང་།

**Appendix II: Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho on the *Tshad ma rgya mtsho mtha' yas***

Although, as was documented already in Kapstein 1985, a small number of later authors—including Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba, Sog bzlog pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan, and Karma Chags med—clearly had some degree of familiarity with parts of Karma Pakshi's *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor*, only one with whom we are so far familiar actually quotes any of Karma Pakshi's doctrinal writings. (The *Autobiographical Writings*, by contrast, are abundantly cited by Dpa' bo and later Karma Bka' brgyud historians.) This is the seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho, who reproduces a lengthy passage that he attributes to the *Tshad ma rgya mtsho mtha' yas* in his famous commentary on the works of Dignāga and Dharmakīrti, the *Tshad ma rigs gzhung rgya mtsho* (on which see the contribution to this volume by A. Burchardi). As mentioned earlier, it seems significant that this citation occurs in the seventh Karma pa's comments on the refutation of theism.<sup>62</sup> Though none of the works by Karma Pakshi now known in fact bears the title *Tshad ma rgya mtsho mtha' yas*, the passage given by the seventh Karma pa corresponds almost precisely with a part of the manuscript described in Appendix III, 3 below, and entitled *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, a work that evidently belongs to the group of writings called *Bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas*. I reproduce here the passage as given in the *Tshad ma rigs gzhung rgya mtsho*, with the differences between this and Karma Pakshi's work noted.<sup>63</sup> Besides the light that this text sheds on Karma Pakshi's

<sup>62</sup> This is the *īśvarāder apramāṇyam* section of the *Pramāṇasiddhi* chapter of the *Pramāṇavārttika*, verses 9–28 in the edition of Miyasaka 1972.

<sup>63</sup> Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho 2001, pp. 38–43. In the manuscript of the *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, the passage in question occupies folio 9a.2–12a.2. In record-

interest in theism, it serves also as an example of the evident care with which he reported doxographical traditions that were available to him in Tibetan sources (though just what these were remains to be established), despite the eccentricities that so frequently characterise his writing overall. For, as an introduction to the refutation of Śaivite theism, the text given here offers a relatively well delineated survey of the system of the categories (*padārtha*) according to the philosophy of the Vaiśeṣika school. The precise circumstances of Karma Pakshi's philosophical education, however, remain in most respects obscure.

\*དབང་ཕྱུག་ཉུག་པ་ཚད་མར་འདོད་པ་དགག་པ་ལ་སྤྱིའི་དོན་དང་། ཚོག་གི་དོན་གཉིས་ལས།  
 དང་པོ་ནི། རིན་པོ་ཆེ་ཀམ་པ་གྲིའི་ཚད་མ་རྒྱ་མཚོ་མཐའ་ཡས་ལས་འབྱུང་བ་ལྟར་ཤེས་པར་  
 བྱ་སྟེ།\*<sup>64</sup> འདི་ལ་ཕྱོགས་སྒྲ་མ་\*དགོད་པ་དང་།\*<sup>65</sup> དེ་དགག་པ་གཉིས་ལས། དང་པོ་ལ།  
 དབང་ཕྱུག་གི་མཚན་ཉིད་དང་། དེའི་གཞུང་སྒྲ་བ་བྱེ་བྲག་པའི་འདོད་པ་དང་། \*རིག་པ་ཅན་པའི་  
 འདོད་པ་\*<sup>66</sup> རྣམ་པར་བཞག་པའོ། །དང་པོ་ནི། དབང་ཕྱུག་ཡོན་ཏན་བརྒྱད་དང་ལྡན་པ་སྟེ།  
 ཕྲ་བ་དང་། ཡང་བ་དང་། མཚོན་པར་བྱ་བ་དང་། བདག་པོར་གྱུར་པ་དང་། དབང་དུ་གྱུར་པ་

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ing differences between the two texts, the phrases concerned being set apart by asterisks, I am concerned here only with substantive differences and not simple variants of orthography, particles, or punctuation, or use of abbreviations, etc.

<sup>64</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 9a.2: *rtag par smra ba'i sde gnyis pa dbang phyug pa'i gzhugs dgag pa las /*.

<sup>65</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 9a.2: *dgag pa las /*. This seems surely to be merely a copyist's error, as also do several others among the variants that follow.

<sup>66</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 9a.3: *de'i gzhung smra ba rigs pa can gyi khyad bar*.

དང་། གར་ཡང་སྤྱིན་པ་དང་། འདོད་དགུ་ལྡན་པ་དང་། དག་འཇགས་གནས་པ་སྟེ།  
 སེམས་ཅན་གྱི་འཇིག་རྟེན་སྐྱེ་འཇིག་བྱེད་པ་དང་། སྣོད་གྱི་འཇིག་རྟེན་སྐྱེ་འཇིག་བྱེད་པ་དང་།  
 འབྱུང་པོ་ཐམས་ཅད་གྱིས་མཚོན་པར་བྱ་བ་དང་། སྣོད་བཅུད་གཉིས་ཀ་སྐྱེ་འཇིག་བྱེད་པ་དང་།  
 འབྱུང་པོ་ཐམས་ཅད་ལ་ཕན་གཞོན་བྱེད་པའི་དབང་བྱེད་པ་དང་། ཡིད་གྱིས་ཐམས་ཅད་འབྱུང་བ་  
 དང་། ཡོན་ཏན་ཐམས་ཅད་འདོད་དགུར་བྱེད་པ་དང་། མཐོ་རིས་དང་ཐར་པ་གང་འདོད་  
 \*ཐོས་པ་རྣམས་དང་རིམ་པ་བཞིན་ཏུ་སྐྱུར་རོ།\* <sup>67</sup> ཡོན་ཏན་དེ་དག་མདོར་བསྡུ་ན། གང་ཞིག་སྤྲ་  
 ཞིང་གཅིག་ཏུ་སྐྱེ་གནས་འདུག། །དེ་ཡིས་འདི་ཀུན་སྐྱེ་ཞིང་འཇིག་པར་བྱེད། །དེ་ནི་དབང་བདག་  
 མཚོག་\*སྤྱིན་\* <sup>68</sup> ལྷ་མཚོན་བྱ། ཡོན་ཏན་བྱེད་པ་ལིན་ཏུ་ཞི་བ་ཐོབ། །བྱེད་པ་པོ་ལ་ཤེས་པ་  
 ཡོད་མིན་ཏེ། །བདག་གི་བདེ་སྐྱུག་ལ་རང་དབང་མེད། །དབང་ཕྱུག་གིས་བསྐྱེལ་ཡང་ན་གཡང་  
 སའམ། །ཡང་ན་མཐོ་རིས་དག་ཏུ་འབྱུང་བར་འགྱུར། །ཞེས་དང་། དབང་ཕྱུག་བསྐྱོམས་  
 པས་ཐར་པ་ཐོབ་པ་དང་། །སྤྲ་ཞིང་རབ་སྲབ་ཀུན་རིག་བྱེད་པ་ཐམས་ཅད་བྱེད། །བསམ་གཏན་  
 གོམས་པས་རྣལ་འབྱོར་པ་ཡི་བསམ་གཏན་ཡུལ། །ཞི་བའི་བདེ་བ་\* <sup>69</sup> འདོད་པ་རྣམས་གྱིས་  
 དབང་ཕྱུག་ཏུ་བསྐྱོམ། །ཞེས་བཤད་པ་ཡིན་ནོ། །

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<sup>67</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho 'i dbu' phyogs*, 9a.6: *thob pa dang /*.  
<sup>68</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho 'i dbu' phyogs*, 9b.1: *bzhin*.  
<sup>69</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho 'i dbu' phyogs*, 9b.3: inserts *dam pa*.

\*གཉིས་པ་དེའི་གཞུང་སྐྱབ་བྱེ་བྲག་པའི་འདོད་པ་བཤད་པ་ནི།\*<sup>70</sup> ཤེས་བྱའི་གནས་  
 ལྷགས་ཚིག་དོན་རྒྱལ་\*ཁས་ལེན་ཏེ།\*<sup>71</sup> རྗེས་དང་། ཡོན་ཏན་དང་། ལས་དང་། སྤྱི་དང་།  
 བྱེ་བྲག་དང་། འདུ་བའོ། །རྗེས་ནི་དགུ་ལྟེ། ས་དང་། རྩ་དང་། མི་དང་། རྩུང་དང་།  
 རྣམ་མཁའ་དང་། རྩུས་དང་། སྤྱོད་ལས་དང་། བདག་དང་། ཡིད་དོ། །དེའང་དང་པོ་བཞི་ནི།  
 རགས་པ་མི་རྟག་པ་བྱ་བ་དང་བཅས་པ་\*ཀུན་ལ་བྱུང་པ་\*<sup>72</sup> འདོད་ཅིང་། རྣམ་མཁའ་ལ་སོགས་  
 པ་གསུམ་ནི་\*ཀུན་ལ་བྱུང་པ། བྱ་བ་མང་ལ་\*<sup>73</sup> བྱེ་བྲག་པ་ཕལ་ཆེ་བས་འདོད་ཀྱང་། ཁ་ཅིག་  
 གིས་དུས་རྒྱུར་སྐྱབ་བྱེ་བྲག་པ་དང་བཅས་པར་འདོད་པའང་ཡོད་དེ། དུས་ཀྱི་སྐྱེ་བྱེ་སྤྱད་པར་བྱེད། །  
 དུས་ཀྱིས་འབྱུང་བ་སྤོང་པར་བྱེད། །དུས་ཀྱིས་གཉིད་ལོག་སད་པར་བྱེད། །དུས་འདའ་བར་ནི་  
 དཀའ་བ་ཡིན། །ཅེས་དང་། \*འོ་བས་\*<sup>74</sup> རི་རྒྱ་མཚོ་བསྐྱུང་བ་སུམ་བཅུ་གས་དང་། །  
 དམག་ནི་སྤོང་པོ་ལོར་སྤོང་བྱེད། །དེ་ཡི་བསྟན་བཅོས་\*པ་སངས་ཚད་མེད་ཉམས། །སྤྱོད་སྤོང་  
 བྱུང་བ་\*<sup>75</sup> དེ་ལ་དུས་ཀྱི་དབང་གིས་ཉམས། །ཞེས་བཤད་པ་ཡིན་ནོ། །བདག་ནི་རྟག་

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<sup>70</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 9b.4: *gnyis pa ni mu stegs bye' brag pa'i lugs dgod pa la gsum ste /*.  
<sup>71</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 9b.4–5: *ngos bzung ba ni/ tshig gi don drug yang dag par khas len te /*.  
<sup>72</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 9b.6: *ma khyab par*.  
<sup>73</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 9b.6: *khyab pa/ rtag pa byed pa myed pa*.  
<sup>74</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 10a.2: *ngo bos*.  
<sup>75</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 10a.2–3: *pa ba sangs tshad mnyam// sgra bsgrogs bu*.

པ་ཐམས་ཅད་དུ་འགྲོ་བ་དག་བ་དང་མི་དག་བ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་ལས་བྱེད་པ་པོར་རང་ཉིད་སེམས་  
 མིན་གྱང་སེམས་པ་དང་འབྲེལ་བར་འདོད་ཅིང་། ཡིད་ནི་བྱ་བ་དང་བཅས་པས་ཡོངས་སུ་\* 76  
 མ་ཁྲབ་པར་འདོད་པ་ཡིན་ནོ། །རྗེས་དེ་དག་གི་ཡོན་ཏན་ནི་ཁ་དོག་ལ་སོགས་པ་ཉི་ཤུ་ཙུ་ལྔ་ལྟེ།  
 ཁ་དོག་རྩི་རོ་རིག་བྱ་སྟེ་ལྔ་\* 77 ནི་འབྱུང་བ་བཞི་དང་། ནམ་མཁའི་ཡོན་ཏན་\*ནི།\* 78 མིག་གི་  
 སྒོ་ལ་སོགས་པ་སྒོ་ལྔ་བདེ་བ་སྐྱབས་བསྐྱེད་འདོད་པ་། སྤང་བ་འབད་པ་ཚོས་དང་ཚོས་མ་ཡིན་པ་  
 དང་འདུ་བྱེད་པ་སྟེ་བཅུ་གསུམ་ནི་བདག་གི་ཡོན་ཏན། སྤངས་དང་བོང་ཚོད་དང་། སོ་སོ་བ་དང་།  
 \*སྤ་རགས་དང་། དབྱེ་བ་དང་།\* 79 བཞུན་དང་། བཞུན་མ་ཡིན་པ་ཞེས་བྱ་བ་བདུན་ནི་  
 དུས་ཀྱི་ཡོན་ཏན་ཉི་ཉི་ཤུ་ཙུ་ལྔ། དེ་དག་ནི་ལ་ལ་རྟག་པ་ཡིན་ལ། ལ་ལ་མི་རྟག་པ་འོ། །  
 \*ལ་ལ་\* 80 ནི་ལྔ་ལྟེ། །འདེགས་པ་དང་། འཛོག་པ་དང་། བསྐྱམས་པ་དང་། བརྒྱུད་བ་དང་།  
 འགྲོ་བ་འོ། །སྤྱི་ནི་གཉིས་ཉེ། ཁྲབ་པའི་སྤྱི་དང་། ཉི་ཚེ་བའི་སྤྱི་འོ། །བྱེ་བྲག་ནི་ཉི་ཚེ་བ་བ་ལང་རྟ་ལས་  
 སྒོག་པ་ལྟ་བུ་འོ། །འདུ་བ་ནི་རྒྱ་དང་འབྲས་བུ་སྤྲད་པའོ་ཞེས་ཟེར་རོ། །འཛིག་རྟེན་ཆགས་པའི་  
 རྒྱལ་དེ་དག་གྱང་། འཛིག་རྟེན་སྟོངས་པའི་ཚ་འབྱུན་བ་བཞིའི་རྒྱལ་ཆ་ཤས་མིན་པ་སོ་སོར་གནས་  
 པ་ལས་དབང་སྐྱབས་གིས་འཛིག་རྟེན་སྐྱེལ་པར་འདོད་ལ། །དེའི་རྗེས་ལ་སེམས་ཅན་གྱིས་ཚོས་

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76 *Bstan pa rgya mtsho 'i dbu' phyogs*, 10a4: inserts *chad pa*.  
 77 *Bstan pa rgya mtsho 'i dbu' phyogs*, 10a5: inserts *lnga*.  
 78 *Bstan pa rgya mtsho 'i dbu' phyogs*, 10a5: *no //*.  
 79 *Bstan pa rgya mtsho 'i dbu' phyogs*, 10a6: *phrad pa dang bye ba*.  
 80 *Bstan pa rgya mtsho 'i dbu' phyogs*, 10b1: *las*.



དང་ཚེས་མ་ཡིན་པས་བདས་པའི་དབང་གིས་འབྱུང་བ་བཞིའི་རྩལ་འབྱུང་བ་ལས། ཡང་ཞིང་  
 གཡོ་བ་རླུང་གི་དགྲིལ་འཁོར་དང་། དེའི་སྟེང་དུ་རླུང་ཡང་དང་ཡང་དུ་འབྱུང་བ་དང་། དེའི་སྟེང་དུ་  
 སའི་དགྲིལ་འཁོར་ཆེན་པོ་དང་། དེའི་སྟེང་དུ་མའི་ཕུང་པོ་ཆེན་པོ་འབར་བ་རབ་ཏུ་འབར་བ་ཀྱུན་ཏུ་  
 འབར་བ་མེ་ལྷེ་གཅིག་ཏུ་འབར་བ་ཆགས་སོ། །དེའི་ནང་དུ་དབང་ལྷུག་ཆེན་པོ་འདོད་པ་ཙམ་ལས་  
 ཚངས་པའི་སློབ་ལྷེ་ཆེན་པོ་གསལ་ཞིང་རབ་ཏུ་འབར་བར་འདུག་ལ། དེ་སྤྱིན་ཅིང་འཁྲུགས་པའི་  
 རང་ནས་ཚངས་པ་གདོང་བཞི་པ་རལ་བ་ཅན་པསྐྱེ་ལ་གནས་པ་བྱུང་སྟེ། དེ་འཇིག་རྟེན་གྱི་མེས་པོ་  
 ཡིན་པས། དེ་སྤྱི་རྒྱུ་ཐམས་ཅད་བྱས་ནས་འཇིག་རྟེན་ཐམས་ཅད་ཆགས་ཤིང་གནས་པར་འབྱུང་  
 ལ། \*ཚངས་པའི་ཁ་ནས་བྲམ་ཟེ་དང་། དཔུང་པ་ལས་རྒྱལ་རིགས་དང་། བརྒྱ་ལས་རྗེའུ་རིགས་  
 དང་། རྐང་པ་ལས་དམངས་རིགས་སྤྱིས་པར་ཁས་ལེན་ཅིང་། རེ་ཞིག་གདོལ་བའི་རིགས་ནི་  
 གང་ལས་སྤྱིས་མི་ཤེས་སོ་ཞེས་ཟེར་རོ།\* 81 །འདིས་འབྲེལ་བ་ནི་ལྷ་ཁས་ལེན་པར་བྱེད་དེ། མི་  
 དང་དུ་བ་ལྟ་བུ་ནི་འགྲོར་བའི་འབྲེལ་བའོ། །ལྷན་པའི་འབྲེལ་བ་ནི་མི་དང་གཟུགས་ལྟ་བུའོ། །  
 འཕྲོད་པ་འདུ་བའི་འབྲེལ་བ་ནི་མི་དང་གཟུགས་དང་ལྷན་པ་ཉིད་ལྟ་བུའོ། །འདུ་བ་དང་ལྷན་པའི་  
 མཚན་ཉིད་ཀྱི་འབྲེལ་བ་ནི་མི་དང་དུ་བ་ལ་ཡོད་པའི་གཟུགས་ལྟ་བུའོ། །ལྷན་པ་དང་འཕྲོད་པ་འདུ་

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<sup>81</sup> Not found in the *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs* and so perhaps an amplification on the part of the seventh Karma pa. *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 11a1, at this point reads *'brel ba dang tshad ma dpyad pa ni*, introducing the passage that follows.

བའི་མཚན་ཉིད་གྱི་འབྲེལ་བ་ནི་མེད་དུ་བལ་ཡོད་པའི་གཟུགས་དང་ལྷན་པ་ཉིད་ལྟ་བུའོ། །ཚད་  
མ་ནི་ \*གསུམ་སྟེ། །འབྲུད་པའི་ཚད་མ། མངོན་སུམ། རྗེས་དཔག་གོ་ཞེས་ཟེར་རོ། \*<sup>82</sup>

\* <sup>83</sup> རིགས་པ་ཅན་པ་པལ་ཆེར་བྱེ་བྲག་པ་དང་མཐུན་མོད་གྱི། ཚད་མ་ལ་མངོན་སུམ་  
དང་། རྗེས་དཔག་དང་། ཉེར་འཇལ་དང་། སྐྱལ་ས་བྱུང་བའི་ཚད་མ་དང་བཞིར་འདོད་ཅིང་།  
མངོན་སུམ་ཡང་དོན་ཉེ་བར་ངེས་པའི་རྟོག་པ་ཡིན་པར་འདོད་དོ། །དེའང་ཡོན་ཏན་ལ་དམིགས་  
པ་བྱུང་པར་ཅན་གྱི་ཤེས་པ་ནི་ཚད་མ། རྗེས་ལ་དམིགས་པ་བྱུང་པར་ཅན་གྱི་ཤེས་པ་ནི་ཚད་མའི་  
འབྲས་བུ་ཡིན་ནོ་ཞེས་ཟེར་རོ། །དེ་དག་གིས་ཀྱང་རྩལ་སྤྲ་རབ་དང་དུས་ལ་སོགས་པ་རྟོག་པར་  
ཁས་ལེན་པས་འདུས་བྱས་སྐྱད་ཅིག་མར་མི་འདོད་ལ། བདག་དང་དབང་སྤྱད་བྱེད་པ་པོར་སྐྱེ་  
བས་ཚོས་ཐམས་ཅད་བདག་མིད་པར་ཡང་ཁས་མི་ལེན་ནོ། །

གཉིས་པ་དེ་དགག་པ་\*ལ། བྱེ་བྲག་པ་དགག་པ་དང་། རིགས་པ་ཅན་པ་དགག་  
པའོ། \*<sup>84</sup> དང་པོ་ནི། རྩལ་སྤྲན་རྣམས་སོ་སོར་བརྟུགས་ཏེ་སྤྱོད་པ་ཆའི་དབྱེ་བས་གཞིགས་ནས་  
རགས་པར་འགྱུར་བ་མི་སྲིད་ཅིང་། རགས་པ་ཆ་ཤས་མིད་པར་ཡན་ལག་ཅན་གྱི་རྗེས་ཡིན་ན།

<sup>82</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 11a4: *gnyis khas len te phrad pa dang mngon sum dang rtags las/ byung ba rjes su dpag pa ste / phrad pa dang mngon sum ni cig par bzung ngo /*.

<sup>83</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 11a4: inserts *gsum pa ni*.

<sup>84</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 11b2: *ni gsum ste / bye brag pa'i rdzas dgag pa dang / tshad ma gsum du 'dod pa dgag pa dang / rig pa can gyi tshad ma dag (sic! = dgag) pa'o //*.

\*བསྐྱིབས་པའི་ཡན་ལག་དང་། ཁ་བསྐྱར་བའི་ཡན་ལག་རྣམས་མ་བསྐྱིབས་པ་དང་། ཁ་མ་  
 བསྐྱར་བའི་ཡན་ལག་ཅན་གྱི་རྗེས་ཡིན་པས་མ་བསྐྱིབས་པ་དང་། ཁ་མ་བསྐྱར་བར་འགྱུར་  
 རོ། །<sup>85</sup> སྤྱོགས་དུས་གཉིས་འབྱུང་བ་བཞི་ལས་རྗེས་གཞན་ཡིན་ན་ས་ལ་སོགས་པ་འབྱུང་བ་  
 བཞི་ལ་ཤར་ལ་སོགས་པའི་སྤྱོགས་དང་། འདས་པ་ལ་སོགས་པའི་དུས་མེད་པར་འགྱུར་  
 རོ། །རྗེས་གཞན་མ་ཡིན་ན། ས་ལ་སོགས་པ་རགས་པ་མི་རྟག་པ་བཞིན་དུ་སྤྱོགས་དང་དུས་ཀྱང་  
 མི་རྟག་པར་འགྱུར་བས་རྟག་པར་ཅི་ལྟར་རུང་། ཡང་དབང་ཕྱུག་རྟག་པ་འབྲས་བུ་འགྲོ་བ་  
 རིམ་གྱིས་བསྐྱེད་པའི་རྒྱར་མི་འགྱུར་ལ། འགྲོ་བ་རིམ་གྱིས་བསྐྱེད་ན་རྟག་པའི་དངོས་པོར་  
 མི་རུང་ངོ་། \*ཚད་མས་ཡུལ་འཕྲད་ནས་འཛིན་ན། དངོས་སུ་འཕྲད་ནས་འཛིན་ནམ།  
 བརྒྱད་ནས་འཕྲད་པས་འཛིན། དང་པོ་ལྟར་ན་གཟུགས་སྐྱེ་རྟོགས་པའི་ཚད་མ་མི་སྲིད་པར་  
 འགྱུར་ལ།<sup>86</sup> གཉིས་པ་ལྟར་ན་མིག་ཤེས་གྱིས་ཀྱང་དྲི་ལ་སོགས་པ་རྟོགས་པར་འགྱུར་རོ། །

**Appendix III: Recently discovered writings by Karma Pakshi**

The following list includes all writings attributed to Karma Pakshi that have so far become available to me: the 1978 publications of Karma Pakshi's *Auto-biographical Writings* and *Rgya-mtsho mtha'-yas-kyi skor*, scanned documents

<sup>85</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 11b3–4: *bsgribs pa dang ma bsgribs pa dang kha bsgyur ma bsgyur la sogs pa myed par 'gyur ro //*.

<sup>86</sup> *Bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*, 11b6–12a1: *gnyis pa ni phrad pa tshad ma yin na/ dngos su phrad pa dang dngos kyis 'brel par kho na tshad ma yin nam / brgyud pa'i phrad pa'ang tshad ma yin / dang po ltar na yon tan gyi chos rtogs pa'i tshad ma myi srid cing /*.

available through the Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (TBRC), as well as a small number of items that are not (yet?) available through TBRC.

My references to page numbers of the TBRC scans are to roman numerals pasted in the upper right hand corner or left side of each plate, and these do not necessarily correspond to the Tibetan page numbers. In some of the scanned texts, moreover, folios are missing, and this in some instances appears to be due to errors in scanning and not to defects of the original manuscripts. The present brief and tentative list does not attempt to document these points in detail.

I am grateful to Charles Manson for sharing with me his notes on Karma Pakshi's writings, which I have been able to compare usefully with my own while completing the present Appendix.

### **1. The 1978 Gangtok publications**

#### (i) *The Autobiographical Writings of the Second Karma-pa*

- (a) 1–55: *grub chen karmā pakśi'i bka' 'bum las / nyid kyi rnam par thar pa gdug pa tshar gcod gzi brjid 'od 'bar bzhugso //*
- (b) 57–118: *grub chen karmā pakśi'i bka' 'bum las / nyid kyi rnam thar dus 3 dus med gcig tu rtogs shing rtsal cheon rdzoṭ pa'i gleng gzhi bzhugso //*
- (c) 119–35: *grub chen karmā pakśi'i bka' 'bum las / nyid kyi rnam thar lhan skyes ye shes dgongs pa lung bstan bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs so //*

#### (ii) *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas kyi skor*

Refer to Kapstein 1985: 359n2, for a discussion of problems in the alphabetical ordering given in the margins. Here, I just list the individual works in the order in which they appear.

#### Volume I

- (a) 1–9: *bshad lung sbyor bkod rgya mtsho mtha' yas*

- (b) 11–208: *bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas kyi spyi gzhung chen mo rtog pa rab 'byams chos dbyings ye shes lnga ldan* (incomplete: missing 11–24 and 193–206)
- (c) 209–470: *glegs bam 'dir bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas kyi bshad pa phun sum tshogs pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas*
- (d) 471–601: *bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas byin gyis brlabs pa'i bka' chen*
- (e) 603–37: *'dod pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas*
- (f) 639–47: *skyes rabs sbas mchod la nyams su blangs pa*

## Volume II

- (g) 1–70: *gsar rnying la sogs pa'i bzhed pa so sor 'byed pa gsang ba rgya mtsho mtha' yas*
- (h) 71–221: *bya ba'i rgyud dang spyod pa'i rgyud rnal 'byor gyi rgyud rnams kyi don brtan la 'bebs par byed pa phyi rgyud gsum gyi rgya mtsho mtha' yas* (note that the title given in the romanised table of contents was mangled in this case).
- (i) 223–34: *pha rgyud ma rgyud thabs dang shes rab dbyer med kyi rgyud la gtogs tshad kyi klad don gyi gzhung*
- (j) 235–453: *gsang sngags rnam par bla na med pa'i rgyud sde chen po rnams kyi bzhed pa ma hā yo ga gsar pa'i rgya mtsho mtha' yas*
- (k) 455–524: *mkha' 'gro yid bzhin nor bu'i gzhung*

## **2. Scanned texts in the TBRC archive**

W22466, W22467, W22468, and W22469 appear to be volumes 3–4 (*ga-nga*) of a collection of Karma Pakshi's writings preserved at Dpal spungs Monastery in the Sde dge district of Khams. W22340 appears to preserve parts of a different set:

W22340:

Including parts of several different volumes; the texts it contains are out of order and the scanned pages begin with 94a.

- (a) From volume *ga*. 94a: a cover page that is very poorly scanned, the first syllables not clearly legible. The colophon of this text (120b), however, establishes that it should read: *gsang ba rgya mtsho mtha' yas bzhugs*.
- (b) From volume *ga*. 1a: *mdo sde rgya mtsho mtha' yas bzhugs*. Ending on 55b.
- (c) From volume *ca*. The first page, 46a, is the obverse of Tibetan folio 46, perhaps the second folio of the text. A note at the top of the folio, written in a fine hand and barely legible due to the poor quality of the scan, seems to read *rdzogs chen dbang gi chu bo bzhugs*. The text concludes on folio 80b.
- (d) From volume *ca*. The first page (81a) gives the title in a fine hand above the beginning of the text: *khyab 'jug rgya mtsho mtha' yas*. Ending on 120a. All reverse folio sides from 109b through 118b are unfortunately missing. Folio 120b is laid out to resemble a title page, but is illegible (though it does appear to contain the syllables *khyab 'jug*.)
- (e) From volume *cha*. Beginning on folio 1a: *dbu'i phyogs lags s+ho*. Above this is a partially illegible note in fine hand: *sde (?) X X a nu yo ga bzhugs*. Ending on 94a (94b is blank).
- (f) From volume *cha*. Beginning on folio 95a: *a nu yo ga'i chings bzhugs* (written in fine hand above the first line of text). Ending on 123b.
- (g) From volume *cha*. Beginning on folio 124a: *dbang gi bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas bzhugs* (written in fine hand above the first line of text). Ending on 133b.
- (h) From volume *cha*. Beginning on folio 134a: *gsang ba'i (?) ma hā yo ga'i rgya mtsho mtha' yas bzhugs* (written in fine hand above the first line of text). Ending on 228a (228b is blank).
- (i) An incomplete text, lacking title page, perhaps from another collection and numbered 102a–125b. The colophon (125a) indicates it to be the *phun sum tshogs pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas mdor bsdus pa*.

- (j) Some miscellaneous pages from volume *ga* (apparently the same volume as (a) and (b) above): 126a, 127a, 128a. The reverse is blank in each case and an English label attached to 128a reads “redos.”
- (k) The final part of the first volume of an unrelated work, on plates numbered 449a–477b, and followed (478a) by an interesting note attributing the text to the eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje stating that the work was borrowed during the sixth month of an earth tiger year (*sa stag*) from the Bla brang dpe mdzod—the library of the bla ma’s residence—for the purpose of carving blocks for publication (*spar brko*). The text is called *karma pa’i dgongs pa gsal bar byed pa’i bstan bcos thar pa’i lam chen bgrod pa’i shing rta*, and a ms. containing the missing first folios of this same volume is given in the TBRC as W00KG04035. (None of the second volume has yet been located.) Though the work, a very detailed tantric *lam rim*, is attributed in the note just mentioned to the eighth Karma pa, it is clear that it is in fact based on his oral teaching and that the author of the written text was a disciple, possibly Dpa’ bo Gtsug lag phreng ba.

W22466:

The *mo gho ding ri’i sgra tshad* in the same manuscript that I have consulted here, but missing the title page and beginning on folio 1b. A complete scan of the same manuscript, however, will be found in W00KG03996 below.

W22467:

Volume *nga* from a collection of Karma Pakshi’s works, bearing a general title on p. 1—*chos thamd gtan la phabsba yongsu mya ngan las ’da’ ka rgya mtsho mtha’ yas dang / mdoe rgy’o mtha’ yas kyi chings dang / ma rig ’khrul ba’i rtsa rgyud dang / theg rim dgu’i spyi chings dang / sde snod gsum gyi chings dang / chos tshan lnga yod*— and containing the following individual texts:

- (a) 2–219: no title given, though the general title above designates this text to be the *yongs su mya ngan las ’da’ ka rgya mtsho mtha’ yas*, and a

similar title is mentioned *passim* in the text itself, for instance on p. 153, where we find *shākya thub pa'i 'da' ka ma'i rgya mtsho mtha' yas*, and p. 172, where it is *sku gsum rangin [= rang bzhin] gyis gnas pa'i 'da' ka ma'i rgya mtsho mtha' yas*.

- (b) 221–65: *mdo sde'i chings bzhugs so*. But called at the conclusion *mdo sde bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas kyi chings*.
- (c) 267–70: *ma rig 'khrul pa'i rtsa rgyud bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs lags so*.
- (d) 271–74: *sde snod gsum gyis ching bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs lags so*.
- (e) 275–80: *theg pa drug kyis ching bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs lags so*.
- (f) 281–373: *byin gyis brlabs pa'i bka'i bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas bzhugs so / byin gyis brlabs pa'i bka'i bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yasrab 'byams chos kyi phung po bka' gsum bye ba phrag brgya'i rtsa ba theg pa cheno byumb semda'i gzhi lam bru'i gdams ngag rnam bzhut so*. This last work is not mentioned in the general title of the volume. Possibly, within the general structure of the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor*, (a)–(e) form a distinct subset, while (f) is (or is part of) a separate section of the cycle.

W22468:

Volume *nga* from a collection of Karma Pakshi's works. The layout and calligraphy being closely similar to those of W22467, both of these volumes were perhaps parts of the same the fourth volume (*nga*) of a set. The contents of the present volume are:

- (a) 1–23: *'dod pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas bzhugs so*. On this work, given also in Karma Pakshi 1978a, vol. I, text (e), refer to Kapstein 2000: 101–103.
- (b) 25–85: *shes rab kyi pha rol tu phyin pa'i rab dbye bzhugs lags so*.

W22469:

Cover title, p. 1: *'phat pa 'jam pa (!) dang 'jal nas zhus pa ste / zhu len rgya mtsho mtha' yas bzhugso*. This is the sole text contained in this volume, the



last folio of which is (in the Tibetan pagination) 101. The arabic page numbers are 1–200. The discrepancy (as Tibetan folio 101a–b should be equivalent to arabic 201–202) is due to a single folio that bears the double numbering 44–45 (arabic 87–88), and apparently not to a missing folio. A series of digital photographs of the same manuscript, which are in my possession, demonstrate clearly that the title page bears the label *ga*; but owing to the somewhat pale red ink in which this is written, it does not appear in the TBRC scan. Also missing from the latter is an interesting handwritten note, in a refined cursive (*dbu med*) script, preceding the title page, but on paper similar (so far as one can determine from the photograph) to that used in the preparation of the ms. itself: *rgyal ba kun gyi brtse ba'i thut rje ni // dkar gsal gangs rir sprin gzhon gyis 'khyud Ita'i (?) // 'gro ba'i mgon po spyang ras gziṭ dbang dang // tha dad mi phyed karma yab sras rgyal // phyag rgya chen po dang rdzoṭ pa chen po la zhuṭ pa'i gang zag de dag las gsungs pa'i theg rim dgu'i rnam par bzhag pa rtoṭ 'dod pa rnam kyis bstan pa rgya mtsho mtha' yas kyi gzhung 'di la gziṭ shing nan tar du nges pa drangs na don gyi gteng (? or: gting) bsaṃ gyi mi khyab pa de dag dang / khyad par du'ang 'jam dpal gyi zhu len 'dir shintu zab pa'i gnad mang po mnga' bas gal che zhing / tshig 'gaṭ (?) phye mi 'grigs pa Ita'u cung zad snang na yang<sup>87</sup> rje grub thob kyi gsung yin pa tha snyad gdaṭ bya'i yul ma yin cing rton pa bzhi dang ldan pa'i shes rab kyis nges par byas na dpal gsang ba'i snying po las 'phros pa theg dgu'i gnad 'di 'dra rgyas pa gang du'ang med pa de'i phyir rul mun gyi gnas su bzhuṭ mi 'jug par gziṭ shing don shes pa gsol ba lan stong du 'debs // zhes pa'ang dgeong [= dge slong] chos smra ba bstan pa'i nyi mas so // manggalam //*. This is followed by a brief notation in similar handwriting, but much finer, that I find to be only partially readable: *'dis snyan rang dgra bcom pa ◆ ung soṭ shes bya mtha' dag gi steng nas stong nyid ◆◆◆ 'dug // [◆ = illegible syllable]*

<sup>87</sup> Though the reading of the syllable following *tshig* is uncertain, it is clear that this clause as a whole means “although the expressions seem as if somewhat misconstrued....” Refer also to n. 6 above.

W00KG03996:

Under this record number, the TBRC archive includes two volumes from a single collection:

Volume I is in fact the same manuscript also reproduced as W22469 and W22466, but missing the title page of the former. Together they formed volume *ga* in a collection of Karma Pakshi's works.

Volume II is in fact the same manuscript also reproduced as W22467, but the scan here is incomplete and concludes with p. 234. W22467 + W22468 seem to have been volume *nga* of the same collection as the volume *ga* given here as volume I.

### ***3. Other available manuscripts***

A number of high quality digital images of manuscripts containing writings by Karma Pakshi became available to the present writer some years ago. Three of the works in question are now available in the TBRC archive as noted above: *mo gho ding ri'i sgra tshad* (W22466), *mdo sde'i chings* (W22467(b)), and *zhu lan rgya mtsho mtha' yas* (W22469). A fourth manuscript included among them, however, has neither appeared in the TBRC collection, nor, to the best of my knowledge, elsewhere. In terms of the quality of the calligraphy and the overall preparation of the manuscript, it is surely the finest of the manuscripts of Karma Pakshi's writings to have surfaced so far, though it is by no means free of apparent errors. Its 257 folios contain one text, the title page of which is unfortunately worn and not fully legible, in contrast with the almost perfect clarity of the entire body of the text that follows. Its first line, inscribed in *dbu can* script with consonants in red and vowel signs in black, is quite clear for the first six syllables: *bstan pa rgya mtsho'i dbu' phyogs*. The seventh and final syllable of the title appears rather like *begs*, which cannot be correct, though perhaps this should be *legs*. (I imagine that it may have been originally *lags*, as we find so often in the titles given above.) The second line, in black ink in *dbu med*, and in a finer hand, cannot be satisfactorily deciphered. The content of the work, which is clearly related by title to the several sections of the *bstan pa*

*rgya mtsho mtha' yas* already known from the first volume of the 1978 Gangtok *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor* (see above), offers a very detailed survey of views and paths, beginning with those of the *mu stegs pa* and culminating with the Great Perfection, according to the threefold division of non-realisation, erroneous understanding, and realised gnosis: *ma rtogs pa 'gro drug gi 'khrul gzhi dang, log par rtogs pa mu stegs kyi lta ba...dang, rtogs pa'i ye shes* (fol. 2a). This scheme is in turn based on Karma Pakshi's preferred citation from the *Guhya garbha Tantra*, which he repeats at intervals throughout the *Limitless Ocean Cycle*:

Intention, Discipline, and Esotericism,  
 Non-realisation and mistaken realisation,  
 Partial realisation and not realising what is genuine  
 Give rise to doubts about this absolute.<sup>88</sup>

That the work given here may have been of particular importance within the structure of the *Rgya mtsho mtha' yas skor* as a whole may be gathered from the seventh Karma pa's probable use of it, as shown in Appendix II above.

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<sup>88</sup> Refer to Kapstein 2000: 104–105.

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# THE ROLE OF *RANG RIG* IN THE *PRAMĀṆA*-BASED *GZHAN STONG* OF THE SEVENTH KARMA PA\*

ANNE BURCHARDI

## 1 Introduction

In the present chapter I will discuss how the seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506), connects *rang rig*,<sup>1</sup> in the sense of *tshad ma'i 'bras bu* (San: *pramāṇaphala*),<sup>2</sup> with tathāgatagarbha in his major work, the *Rig gzhung rgya mtsho*.<sup>3</sup> Si tu Paṅ chen Chos kyi 'byung gnas (1699–1776) has pointed out that “there were several different brands of *gzhan stong*, among which he adhered most closely to that of the Seventh Lord and Zi lung pa, which was somewhat different than that of Dol po pa.”<sup>4</sup> This statement points to the fact

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\* This is a revised and enlarged version of a paper entitled “Rang Rig and Tathāgata-garbha,” read at the IATS Conference in Bonn, 2006. I would like to thank Karl Brunnhölzl for his valuable and generous advice on several major points.

<sup>1</sup> Skt. *svasamvitti*, or *svasamvedanā*, and variously translated as “self-cognition,” “apperception,” and “reflexive awareness.”

<sup>2</sup> See Dreyfus and Lindtner 1989 for an important analysis of Dignāga’s and Dharmakīrti’s presentations of *pramāṇa* and *pramāṇaphala*.

<sup>3</sup> The full title is *Tshad ma legs par bshad pa thams cad kyi chu bo yongs su 'du ba rigs pa'i gzhung lugs kyi rgya mtsho*.

<sup>4</sup> Trans. Stearns 1999: 76. The “Seventh Lord” here is the seventh Karma pa and “Zi lung pa” refers to Shākya mchog ldan (1428–1507). The Tibetan original (from Si tu’s *Chos kyi 'byung gnas Ta'i si tur 'bod pa karma bstan pa'i nyin byed kyi rang tshul drangs par brjod pa dri bral shel gyi me long*, in *Autobiography and Diaries of Si tu Paṅ chen*: 267) is given in Stearns 1999, p. 214, note 129, as follows: *bdag gis ni gzhan stong rang la'ang bzhed tshul cung zad mi 'dra ba 'ga' re yod pa'i nang nas / dol po'i bzhed pa las thal rang gnyis po'ang rig [sic!] tshogs kyi dgongs pa rma med du 'dod pa*



that the kind of *gzhan stong* (“empty-of-other” doctrine) that Si tu Paṅ chen blended with mahāmudrā and spread throughout the Karma Bka’ brgyud pa traditions of Khams was derived from the seventh Karma pa.<sup>5</sup>

The seventh Karma pa also influenced the great Sa skya scholar Shākya mchog ldan’s later writings. While the seventh Karma pa is remembered as one of the most outstanding masters of the lineage and the founder of the Karma bka’ brgyud *bshad grwa* at Mtshur phu, Shākya mchog ldan is described as “the most influential advocate of the *gzhan stong* in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries.”<sup>6</sup> Both masters are, in their own ways, still sources of the continued presence of an influential type of modified *gzhan stong* in the Bka’ brgyud tradition,<sup>7</sup> distinct from Dol po pa’s position.<sup>8</sup> The seventh Karma pa’s *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho* was studied at all the *bshad grwas* of the Karma Bka’ brgyud tradition, with special emphasis on the first and the third part of the text,<sup>9</sup> while Shākya mchog ldan’s writings have played an important role in the ’Brug pa Bka’ rgyud *bshad grwa* tradition of Bhutan.<sup>10</sup>

## 2 The seventh Karma pa’s *gzhan stong* position

How did the Karma pa’s teaching of *gzhan stong* differ from others? According to the following account, given by the Karma pa’s student, Karma ’phrin las pa

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*ni khyad par dang / rje bdun pa dang zi lung pa’i bzhad pa dang ches nye ba zhig ’dod pa yin no.*

<sup>5</sup> Smith 2000: 250.

<sup>6</sup> Stearns 1999: 60–61.

<sup>7</sup> See Mathes 2004 for a comparison of Shākya mchog ldan and Dol po pa’s views. For different kinds of *gzhan stong* see Burchardi 2007.

<sup>8</sup> See Kapstein 1992 and 2000a for valuable information about Dol po pa and his work. See Stearns 1999 for a history of Dol po pa’s life and a translation of his text the *Bka’ bsdu bzhi pa*. See Hopkins 2006 for a translation of his definitive treatise on tathāgatagarbha and *gzhan stong*, the *Ri chos nge don rgya mtsho*.

<sup>9</sup> Personal communication from Thrangu Rinpoche, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> See Burchardi 2008.

(1456–1539) in reply to a question posed by Lcags mo dpon po Bsod nams lhun grub, it derived from the third Karma pa, Rang byung rdo rje (1284–1339). It not only represented a moderate type of *gzhan stong* but simultaneously a genuine type of *rang stong*, situated, as it were, as a middle position between misrepresentations of *rang stong* on the one hand and a form of extreme *gzhan stong* on the other. Karma 'phrin las pa says:<sup>11</sup>

I will say a bit in reply to the question concerning whether *rang stong* and *gzhan stong* contradict each other or not, seeing that there is some sort of competitive attachment to this subject.

These days there are some conceited *rang stong* proponents, who [claim] the emptiness of phenomena as being an emptiness of true existence. Through merely refuting true existence in relation to these phenomena they assert a non-affirming negation as the ultimate truth. Being attracted towards such a nihilistic view, this is just their own assertion, but not the genuine *rang stong* known from learned Mādhyamika proponents. Through overt attachment to emptiness as a mere non-affirming negation, one may meditate upon a rabbit-horn-like absence, but one will not experience the true nature. Since absence is not an object of experience for valid cognition, how could it be experienced personally? (Tib. *so so rang gis rig par*, Skt. *pratyātmaivid*).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> The lengthy quotation that follows is from *The Songs of Esoteric Practice: Chos kyi rje Karma phrin las pa'i gsung 'bum las thun mong ba'i dri lan gyi phreng ba nams* (*Replies to Various Doctrinal Questions and Polemics*), vol. *cha*: 88–92. *Dri lan yid kyi mun sel zhes bya ba lcags mo'i dris lan* (*A reply to a query by Lcags mo dpon po bsod nams lhun grub written in a hare year* [1495, 1507 or 1519, the latter being most likely] at *Zings po 'bum pa sgang*). I thank Jan-Ulrich Sobisch for kindly providing me with a copy of the text.

<sup>12</sup> Pp. 90.3–90.5: ...rang stong gzhan stong dag / 'gal dang mi 'gal bdag la co 'dri ba / dri tshig 'di yi zhen pa'i brjod bya ru / mthong nas de lan cung zad smra bar bya / ding sang rang stong smra bar rlom pa 'ga' / chos de bden pas stong pa'i stong nyid ces /

By focusing on *rang stong* as a nihilistic view, how will one see the genuine emptiness? “*Rang stong*” being just a mere name (*ming*), as such it is the opposite of the reality (*don*) of the true nature. The *rang stong* explained by previous scholars [stated that] “all phenomena are empty of an own essence in themselves, like an empty vase that is empty of water, but not as a non-affirming negation. The vase empty of water is established. Even though there is an emptiness of the appearances of apprehended and apprehender, the primordial awareness without the duality of apprehended and apprehender exists. It is not an emptiness that is nothing whatsoever. Consider that right after the word “empty” the affirmative word “ness” is affixed!<sup>13</sup> My omniscient lama has taught that genuine (*rnal ma*) *rang stong* is an emptiness wherein phenomena are empty of an own-essence. It has not been taught that emptiness is a non-affirming negation.<sup>14</sup>

These days there are some conceited *gzhan stong* proponents [who say] “that which is an ultimate, permanent, eternal, enduring, unchanging, and truly existent [entity], is profound *gzhan stong*, since it is empty of an

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*chos de'i steng du bden grub bkag tsam gyis / med par dgag pa don dam bden par 'dod / 'di 'dra chad pa'i lta ba la zhen nas / rang 'dod dbu mar smras kyi mkhas rnams la / grags pa'i rang stong rnal ma de ma yin / stong nyid med dgag kho nar mngon zhen nas / ri bong rwa ltar med pa de bsgoms kyang / gnas lugs nyams su myong bar mi 'gyur te / med de tshad ma'i spyod yul ma yin pas / so so rang gis rig par ci ste 'gyur.*

<sup>13</sup> Thanks to Karl Brunnhölzl for deciphering this sentence.

<sup>14</sup> Pp. 90.5–91.1: *rang stong chad pa'i lta ba la dmigs pas / yang dag stong nyid mthong ba lta ci zhig / rang stong zhes pa'ang ming tsam du bas pas / 'di 'dra gnas lugs don dang rgyab 'gal yin / sngon gyi mkhas rnams bzhed pa'i rang stong ni / bum stong chu yis stong ltar chos rnams kun / rang rang ngo bos stong yang med dgag min / chu yis stong pa'i bum pas grub pa yin / gzung dang 'dzin pa'i snang ba 'dis stong yang / gzung 'dzin gnyis su med pa'i ye she yod / stong pa cang med ma yin stong pa'i mthar / nyid ces bya ba'i sgrub tshig gsungs la gsoms [read soms] / rang rang ngo ngos stong pa'i stong pa nyid / (91) 'di ni rang stong rnal ma de yin mod / stong nyid med pa dgag par ma smra zhes / bdag gi bla ma thams cad mkhyen pa gsung.*

incidental apprehended and apprehender.” Through an attraction towards such an eternalistic view, they voice an absolute emptiness as profound, but these are falsifying and untrue words. It is not the genuine *gzhan stong* taught in the sūtra collections. Through misunderstanding the teaching of victorious Maitreya [which describes] “Mind itself, not empty of the highest qualities,” they depreciate the Buddha [by saying] that *gzhan stong* [means that] on the level of the ground the sixty-four qualities [are present] and there is an absence of incidental impurities. [The implication of this is that] the perfect Buddha who has exhausted all veils and who has fully developed primordial awareness, circulates in saṃsāra experiencing suffering as do the six types of beings, in the hells and so on.<sup>15</sup>

The *gzhan stong* taught by Rang byung rdo rje, which follows the meaning of the Noble Maitreya Teachings, the tantras, the [Bodhi]sattva commentaries<sup>16</sup> and many sūtras, and which I have heard taught by the Victorious Master [The seventh Karma pa is as follows:]<sup>17</sup> “Mind itself is

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<sup>15</sup> Pp. 91.1–91.4: *Ding sang gzhan stong smra bar rlom pa 'ga' / don dam rtag brtan ther zug mi 'gyur ba / bden par grub 'di gzung 'dzin blo bur bas / stong phyir gzhan stong zab mo 'di yin lo / 'di 'dra rtag pa'i lta ba la dga' bas / mthar 'dzin stong nyid zab mor smra byed pa'i / brdzun gyi zol tshig yin gyi mdo sda [read sde] las / gsung pa'i gzhan stong mam dag de ma yin / bla med chos kyis sems nyid mi stong zhes / rgyal ba byams pas gsungs pa la 'khrul nas / gzhi la bzhugs pa'i yon tan drug bcu bzhi / blo bur dri mas stong la gzhan stong zhes / sgrib pa kun zad ye shes rab rgyas pa'i / rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas dmyal ba la sogs pa / 'gro ba drug gi sdug bsngal myong ba'i phyir / 'khor bar 'khor zhes rgyal la skur btab bo.*

<sup>16</sup> Most likely this refers to the Trilogy of Bodhisattva commentaries. These are the definitive commentaries on the *Kālacakra Tantra*, the *Hevajra Tantra*, and the *Cakra-saṃvara Tantra*, that is the *Vimalaprabhā* (Peking 2064) by Kalkin Puṇḍarīka, the *Hevajrapīṇḍārthatīka* (Peking 2310) by Bodhisattva Vajragarbha, and the *Lakṣābhīdhā-nāḍ uddhṛtalaghutantrapīṇḍārthavivarāṇa* (P 2317) by Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, respectively. See Stearns 1999: 178n11.

<sup>17</sup> This citation also appears on pp. *kha* and *ga* in the preface of the *Dbu ma gzhan stong skor bstan bcos phyogs bsdus deb dang po*.

unconfined and unrestricted. It is natural luminosity, the great *bindu* of inseparable space and awareness, ordinary mind. There are no changes whatsoever to this essence, but, from the perspective of the time when the incidental impurities have been cleansed, it is purified and unfolded (*sangs rgyas*). This is known as *gzhan stong*. The primordial ground unstained by veils, this is what should be understood as empty of other (*gzhan gyis stong*). When Mind itself, is unaware of itself, this is called ‘incidental veils.’<sup>18</sup> Since [stains] are something separable from mind, when mind is empty of these it is *gzhan stong*. Concerning the sixty-four qualities present in the basic nature, although they can never be removed from mind, let us say that at the time of the ground, this is an obscured buddha and at the time of the result this is buddhahood without impurities. The thirty-two qualities of freedom from obscurations and the thirty-two types of completely matured [qualities] that unfold as buddha activities are special characteristics exclusive to perfect buddhahood. They are not asserted to be present at the time of the ground.

“The sixty-four qualities present at the time of the ground are covered by obscurations. When these impurities have been overcome, a Victorious One without impurities comes about. Therefore, the ground of emptiness in *gzhan stong* is the *sugatagarbha*, the natural luminosity of mind itself. It becomes empty of the incidental impurities to be abandoned, the mental constructs (*rnam rtog*) of apprehended and

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<sup>18</sup> Pp. 91.4–91.6: *rgyud dang sems ’grel mdo sde du ma dang / byams chos rjes ’brang bcas las gsung pa’i don / rang byung rdo rje bzhed pa’i gzhan stong ni / rgyal ba’i dbang po’i gsung las ’di skad thos / sems nyid rgya chad phyogs lhung dang bral zhing / rang bzhin ’od gsal dbyings rig dbyer med pa’i / thig le chen po tha mal shes pa yi / ngo bo gang du’ang ’gyur ba med pa la / blo bur dri ma dag tshe sangs rgyas su / gyur pa’i cha nas gzhan stong zhes byar grags / gdod ma’i gzhi la sgrib pas ma gos pa / ’di ni gzhan gyis stong pa’i go don yin / sems nyid rang gis rang nyid ma rig pa / ’di la blo bur sgrib pa zhes bya ste. Note the similarity of the passage starting from *sems nyid* with the beginning of the first chapter of Rang byung rdo rje’s *Zab mo nang don*.*

apprehender. Therefore, it is said that “nothing but mind itself, free of the concepts of apprehended and apprehender, is ultimately true. Hence, natural luminosity, the co-emergent union of inseparable space-awareness, ordinary mind, is the view of profound *gzhan stong*. Therefore ‘rang stong’ and ‘gzhan stong’ do not contradict each other.” This is what my Lama has explained.<sup>19</sup>

The *gzhan stong* that Karma ’phrin las retrospectively attributes to the third Karma pa must have been implicit, since the term *gzhan stong* does not appear in any of the available texts written by the latter.<sup>20</sup>

### 3 The seventh Karma pa’s *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho*

The *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho* is primarily a comprehensive commentary on Dignāga’s *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, Dharmakīrti’s seven texts on *pramāṇa*, and a number of Indian commentaries on these epistemological source texts. It also

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<sup>19</sup> Pp. 91.4–91.6: *sems dang ’bral du rung ba’i don yin pas / de yis sems nyid stong phyir gzhan stong yin / gshis la bzhugs pa’i yon tan drug bcu bzhi / de ni nam du’ang sems dang mi ’bral mod / gzhi yi dus sus grib bcas sangs rgyas dang / ’bras dus dri med sangs rgyas zhes smros shig / sgrib kun bral ba’i yon tan so gnyis dang / ’phrin las rgyas pa’i rnam smin sum bcu gnyis / rdzogs pa’i sangs rgyas kho na’i khyad chos te / ’di ni gzhi la bzhugs par mi ’dod do / gzhi la bzhugs pa’i yon tan drug bcu bzhi / sgrib pas bsgribs shing dri ma de bcom pas / dri med rgyal bar ’gyur phyir gzhan stong gi / stong gzhi bde bar gshegs pa’i snying po ni / sems nyid rang bzhin ’od gsal ’di nyid yin / stong byed spang bya blo bur dri ma de / gzung dang ’dzin pa’i rnam rtog ’di la zer / de phyir gzung ’dzin rnam rtog dang bral ba’i / sems nyid kho na don dam bden pas te / rang bzhin ’od gsal zung ’jug lhan cig skyes / dbyings rig dbyer med tha mal shes pa nyid / gzhan stong zab mo’i lta ba yin zhes gsung / des na rang stong gzhan stong zhes pa yang / ’gal ba min zhes bdag gi bla ma bzhed /*

<sup>20</sup> See Stearns 1999, 52; Mathes 2001: 221, and 2004: 292–94 for discussions about the third Karma pa and his position. See Schaeffer 1995 for a translation of the third Karma pa’s text on tathāgatagarbha. Mathes has discussed how Shākya mchog ldan’s position differs from the Jo nang’s but is similar to Rang byung rdo rje’s: 2004: 292.

contains a wide array of quotes from, for instance, the five texts of Maitreya, as well as tantra sources.

Van der Kuijp has identified 'Bri gung 'Jig rten mgon po (1143–1217) as the earliest Tibetan master whose writings propagated the spiritual-cum-soteriological significance of *tshad ma*.<sup>21</sup> This trend was later followed by Bo dong paṅ chen Phyogs las rnam rgyal (1376–1451), who also stressed the spiritual significance of Buddhist logic.<sup>22</sup> The Karma pa's work clearly belongs to this soteriologically oriented type of *tshad ma* commentary in Tibet. According to a study by Roger Jackson that is of relevance to this chapter, “the justification for Buddhist soteriology is to be found in basic epistemology”.<sup>23</sup> There is no doubt that the *tshad ma* tradition represented by the Karma pa was soteriologically motivated. Furthermore the text has been hailed as “undoubtedly one of the finest monuments to the *gzhan stong* tradition.”<sup>24</sup>

Before looking at the way in which basic epistemological definitions function as a link to ‘higher’ teachings in the Karma pa's text, let us pause to recount the story surrounding the composition of the text as retold by Dpa' bo Gtsug lag phreng ba (1504–1564) from an account by the eye-witness Dwags po Rab 'byams Chos rgyal bstan pa:

Among the string of masterful Avalokiteśvara emanations in the land of snow, [the seventh Karma pa] had the amazing liberating activity of the two traditions. He liberated and matured countless fortunate students, and taking the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* as the basis of explanation, he elaborated on the Seven Treatises, the extensive *Pramāṇavarttika*, the intermediate *Pramāṇaviniścaya*, and the summary *Hetubindu*. Also, he explained completely the difficult points divided among the four branch treatises in a detailed, intermediary, and summarising manner.

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<sup>21</sup> van der Kuijp 1987: 59.

<sup>22</sup> van der Kuijp 1979: 7

<sup>23</sup> Jackson 1990: 106.

<sup>24</sup> van der Kuijp 1983: 265n56.

Furthermore, he summarised the Indian commentaries on the Seven Treatises by Devendrabuddhi and Śākyabuddhi, as well as the *Pramāṇavarttikālaṃkāra* [by Prajñākaragupta] and others. All of this he expressed in the text called *Tshad ma'i legs bshad kyi chu bo kun 'dus rigs pa'i gzhung lugs kyi rgya mtsho*, which he composed through his own power without relying on any Tibetan texts whatsoever. My lama, Rje Dwags ram pa, told me: “When I requested the text of the *'Jig rten gsum sgron*,<sup>25</sup> it was completed quickly, but that was not the case this time. I requested the composition of the *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho* and I was the secretary writing it down. The omniscient [Karma pa] was not like you or me. There were no texts on *pramāṇa* near him. He did not look at books. The whole time his hands were in the meditation posture. His eyes were gazing into space and his mind was in samādhi. He spoke the dharma. His [ways of] sustaining the two traditions through proclamations, etc., knew no end.

“I sat next to the required table holding the black ink and a pen. After breaks [the Karma pa] would continue exactly where he had stopped the composition, without any obstruction, and staring into space he would give a flowing dictation. When I, with my unbearably fluctuating mind said, ‘That is not in accordance with the words of present day logicians,’ he would stop the dictation and not say a word. For several days he stopped the composition. Then he said, ‘One must trust the Lama’s words.’ After that I did not interrupt again. Whatever he said, I wrote that down exactly and I gave up debating, and so forth. It was surprisingly worthwhile!

‘When there was a section on astrology that I had some understanding of, however, I interrupted. Then he gave many exact reasons why [whatever I had said] was not the case! He raised his right hand slightly into the space and said, ‘This is how we discuss!’ while he smiled. At this

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<sup>25</sup> The seventh Karma pa’s commentary on the first chapter of the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra*.



time, when I saw his raised hand in front, I saw perfection! There was no one around but me.”

When impartial scholars saw this treatise on *pramāṇa* they said that such a text had not appeared even in India, much less in Tibet! There were many commentaries on logic in India and also here in the Snowy Abode, but only one volume which combines the meaning and words of the *Pramāṇasamuccaya* and all the commentaries on the Seven Texts. It is not too long and not too short. It is not crooked or mistaken. Such an explanation comes about through the force of the Victorious Ones and their sons, but otherwise it is not the sphere of activity of an intellect. (*gzhan du blo yi spyod yul min*).<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> *Chos 'byung mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, smad cha, pp. 1107.4–1108.17: *de ltar spyan ras gzigz dbang phyug gangs can gyi rgyud 'dir rim par byon pa de rnams kyi nang na yang rje 'di kho na lugs gnyis kyi 'phrin las rmad du byung ba ste / skal ldan gyi bu slob bgrang ba las 'das pa smin grol mdzad pa dang / tshad ma kun las btus bshad gzhir mdzad de de la sde bdun mkhan pos tshad ma rgyas pa rnam 'grel 'bring rnam nges bsdus pa rigs thigs gsum du ji ltar bkral ba dang / zur gyi dka' gnas gyes pa yan lag gi bstan bcos bzhis ji ltar bkral ba rnams rgyas 'bring bsuds pa'i gseb tshangs su bshad cing / sde bdun lha shākya rgyan sogs rgya 'grel du ji ltar bkral ba thams cad mdor bsdus pas brjod de tshad ma'i legs bshad kyi chu bo kun 'dus rigs pa'i gshung lugs kyi rgya mtsho zhes bya ba bod gshung gang la yang ma bltos par rang stobs kyis mdzad / dbag gi bla ma rje dvags ram pa'i zhal nas / 'jig rten gsum sgron 'di la zhu ba po nga 'dra ba zhig yod na myur du 'grub pa yod de de med pas lan / rigs gzhung rgya mtsho 'di la rtsom par yang ngas gsol ba btab / rtsom yig pa yang nga rang gis byas / rje thams cad mkhyen pa de gzhan dang rang mi 'dra / tshad ma'i gzhung tsam yang sku 'khris na mi bzhugs / phyag dpe ni mi gzigz / dus rtag tu phyag mnyam bzhag spyan lta stangs thugs ting nge 'dzin dang mi 'bral / gsung chos / lugs gnyis kyi bka' bkod sogs gnang skyong zad mi shes pa dgos pa'i gsol cog gi 'khris su bdag gis smyug nag tung nge bzung nas bsdad / gseng nam byung du thugs rtsom zhus pa na 'phro gang na yod gsung ba tsam las thogs pa med par spyan lta stangs kyi ngang nas sha ra ra ljags dpod mdzad / deng sang gi tshad ma pa rnams dang sgron mi mthun pa shin tu che ba 'gar sems kyis ma bzod de zhu pa na ljags dpod 'phro bcad de ci yang mi gsung / zhag 'ga'*

This story gives a sense of how the Karma pa's composition was regarded within the Bka' brgyud tradition. The text must have been completed around 1502, since it was given to Shākya mchog ldan for proofreading at this time. Although the history of the text for the next three hundred years remains a future subject of research,<sup>27</sup> we know that the eleventh Si tu, Padma dbang phyug rgyal po (1886–1952), later printed the text and distributed it to the *bshad grwas* at Dpal spungs and elsewhere in Khams.<sup>28</sup>

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*yar du thugs rtsom de mi mdzad / phyi nas bla ma'i gsung la yid 'ches dgos pa yin zhes bka' gnang / phyi nas de ltar ma zhus par gang gsung de ka bris pas de'i rtsod spang sogs ha las pa re gnang yod pa yin zhes dang / go la'i rtsis kyi skabs su cung zad go tshod zhu pa na de ltar min pa'i rgyu mtshan mtha' dag nges pa dang bcas te bka' bstsal nas phyag g.yas pa nam mkha' la cung zad brkyangs nas nged bgro gleng de ltar byed pa yin gsungs nas zhal 'dzum tsam mdzad byung / drung gi phyag brkyangs pa rdzogs par mthong ba sku 'khor ba la yang nga las med pa yin gsungs te gzur gnas kyi mkhas pas bltas na tshad ma'i bstan bcos 'di lta bu bod yul lta zhog 'phags yul du'ang ma byung ba snyam ste / 'phags pa'i yul dang gangs ri'i khrod 'dir yang / rigs gzhangs so so'i rnam 'grel mdzad pa mang / mdo dang sde bdun 'grel par bcas rnam kun / tshig don gnyis car glegs bam gcig nyid du / ha cang mangs dang nyungs sogs skyon med cing gzhang don 'khyog dang phyin ci log med par / ji bzhin bshad 'di rgyal ba sras bcas mthus / yin gyi gzhan du blo yi spyod yul min.*

<sup>27</sup> The colophon tells us that after Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554) had scrutinised and fixed the text, he endorsed it as a text of great importance that should be viewed as an unsurpassable explanation. He had blocks for it carved at Dwags po legs bshad gling grwa tshang. It was the Legs bshad gling blocks which were used as originals when Si tu had two sets of new blocks carved for it in 1934 at Dpal spungs thub bstan chos 'khor gling, where they also were stored. Furthermore, the colophon states that the Ris med masters adopted the text and praised it, and Mi pham (1846–1912) in particular relied on this text when composing his *Pramāṇavārttika* commentary.

<sup>28</sup> Personal communication from Khenchen Thrangu Rinpoche, 2007.

#### 4 Basic definitions of *rang rig* in Karma Bka' brgyud<sup>29</sup>

Recently the *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho* has been brought into focus in the Karma bka' brgyud *pramāṇa* curriculum in the form of summarised study manuals written by Mkhan po Tshul khriims rgya mtsho Rinpoche (1934–),<sup>30</sup> a Karma bka' brgyud scholar who has revitalised the seventh Karma pa's *pramāṇa*-based *gzhan stong* in our time. Let us look at the way *rang rig* is presented in his *pramāṇa* manuals before looking at its role as *tshad ma'i 'bras bu*.

The Mkhan po's study manual series starts with the *Rigs bsdus*, which summarises definitions from the sixth chapter of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's *Shes bya kun khyab mdzod*.<sup>31</sup> Here, the definition of self-awareness is “consciousness of the apprehending [aspect].”<sup>32</sup> The definition of other-awareness is “consciousness of the apprehended [aspect].”<sup>33</sup> The definition of a self-aware

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<sup>29</sup> *Rang rig* has been interpreted differently through the ages. For a history of the term in early Buddhism based on the Sanskrit and Chinese sources see Yao 2003 and 2004. For a discussion of Tibetan interpretations see Williams 1999 and Kapstein 2000. See also Ruegg 2002: 220 for a list of references. For a discussion of *svasamvitti* see Arnold 2005.

<sup>30</sup> The Mkhan po's study manuals include *Shes bya kun khyab mdzod kyi sgo 'byed rigs gzhung rgya mtsho'i rigs bsdus 'phrul gyi lde mig*, the *Blo rig gi rnam gzhag rigs gzhung rgya mtsho'i snying po*, later reproduced in the *Blo rtags kyi rnam gzhag rigs gzhung rgya mtsho'i snying po*, as well as *Blo rig gi mtha' dpyod rigs gzhung rgya mtsho'i rlabs phreng g.yo ba*. They are used in the curricula of Karma Shri Nalanda Institute at Rumtek monastery, Sikkim, as well as at the Rigpa'i Dorje Institute at Pullahari, Nepal. Dzogchen Ponlop Rinpoche has implemented these texts into a Western academic Shedra curriculum at Nitartha Institute and at Naropa University.

<sup>31</sup> A partial draft translation of the *Rigs bsdus* titled *The miraculous key which condenses the reasoning presented in the Ocean of Reasoning and which opens the door to the Treasury of Knowledge: A commentary by the author of the text, Khenpo Tsultrim Gyatso*, was prepared by the Nalanda Translation Committee based on teachings given in 1986. For a later translation, see Goldfield 1997.

<sup>32</sup> *Rigs bsdus*, 76.3–4: 'dzin pa'i rnam shes rang rig gi mtshan nyid.

<sup>33</sup> *Rigs bsdus*, 76.4: gzung ba'i rnam shes gzhan rig gi mtshan nyid.

direct perception is “that which exists with all apprehending [aspects of] consciousness, being focused exclusively inwardly.”<sup>34</sup>

In the *Blo rtags rigs*,<sup>35</sup> the Mkhan po starts his section on self-aware direct valid cognition by giving its definition in the form of a syllogism. He says, “The definition of a self-aware direct valid cognition exists, because it is an awareness that experiences itself, without mental constructs, non-mistakenly.”<sup>36</sup> [As it says] in the *Pramāṇasamuccaya*, ‘...desire and so on are self-awareness without mental constructs’<sup>37</sup> Based on the *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho*, the Mkhan po glosses this in a note as follows: “Concerning the self-awareness which experiences desire, aversion, ignorance, suffering, and so on, it enters a lucid experiential state without depending on the form of a sense organ. It is without mental constructs, because it is self-aware direct [valid cognition].”<sup>38</sup>

The *Blo rtags rigs* continues: “The *Pramāṇavārttika* says: ‘The nature of happiness and so on does not depend on [something] other. It is inexpressible. Therefore the self-awareness [experiencing] these is not connected to expressions.’”<sup>39</sup> This is glossed, again in the form of a syllogism, in a note as follows: “Given the self-awareness experiencing happiness, etc., as the subject,

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<sup>34</sup> *Rigs bsdus*, 77.3: *kha nang kho nar phyogs pa'i 'dzin rnam gyi shes pa kun gyi steng na yod pa rang rig mngon sum tshad ma'i mtshan nyid.*

<sup>35</sup> The *blo rigs* section is translated by Brunnhölzl and Zerbinì 1996. The *rtags rigs* section was translated by Goldfield 1998.

<sup>36</sup> *Blo rtags rigs*, 10: *rang rig mngon sum tshad ma'i mtshan nyid yod de / rang myong rtog bral ma 'khrul ba'i rig pa de yin pa'i phyir.*

<sup>37</sup> *Blo rtags rigs*, 10: *mdor / chags la sogs / rang rig rtog pa med pa yin.*

<sup>38</sup> *Blo rtags rigs*, 46, *mchan* 8: *'dod chags dang zhe sdang dang gti mug dang sdug bsngal la sogs pa nyams su myong ba'i rang rig pa ni dbang po gzugs can pa la mi bltos shing gsal bar nyams su myong ba'i rnam pas 'jug pa'i phyir rtog pa med pa yin la / de'i phyir rang rig pa'i mngon sum yin no.*

<sup>39</sup> *Blo rtags rigs*, 10: *bde sogs bdag nyid gzhan mi brten / brda byed par ni nus ma yin / de phyir de dag rang rig ni / brjod dang rjes 'brel can ma yin.*

it is not a mental construct connected to expressions. Why? Because, the nature of the happiness to be expressed at the time does not depend on [something] other, [such as] conventional expressions which [by definition would be] subsequent to it in terms of time; therefore, that which is experienced by self-awareness (*khyod*) is inexpressible as happiness, etc.”<sup>40</sup> I take this passage to imply that since self-awareness by definition is non-conceptual, that which is experienced by it is also non-conceptual and therefore inexpressible.

Finally, the *Blo rtags rigs* states: “The *Hetubindu* says: ‘Mind and mental events are all self-awareness,’”<sup>41</sup> which is glossed in the note: “Concerning the main mind merely apprehending the essence of an object and the mental events apprehending the features of the object, they are all aware of their own essence. They are direct [valid cognition] because they are without mental constructs and non-mistaken. In this way, the meaning of the [*Pramāṇasamuccaya*] that ‘desire and so on are self awareness without mental constructs’ has been well explained extensively, in medium length form, and in a summary.”<sup>42</sup>

These are the basic definitions of *rang rig* in the Karma Bka’ brgyud *bshad grwa* tradition. To summarise: There exists an inwardly focused awareness of any given mental state, regardless whether this state is a mentally constructed state (which includes mental events and inferential valid cognition,

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<sup>40</sup> *Blo rtags rigs*, 47, *mchan* 9: *bde sogs de dag nyams su myong ba’i rang rig ni chos can / brjod pa dang rjes su ’brel ba can gyi rtog pa ma yin te / gang gi phyir brda dus kyi bde sogs kyi bdag nyid gzhan tha snyad kyi dus su rjes ’gro byed pa la mi brten pas khyod kyi myong bya bde sogs la brda byed par ni nus pa ma yin pa de’i phyir.*

<sup>41</sup> *Blo rtags rigs*, 10: *rigs thigs las / sems dang sems las byung ba thams cad ni rang rig pa’o.*

<sup>42</sup> *Blo rtags rigs*, 47, *mchan* 10: *don gyi ngo bo tsam ’dzin pa’i gtso bo sems dang / don gyi khyad par ’dzin pa’i sems las byung ba thams cad kyi rang gi ngo bo rig pa ni rtog pa dang bral zhing ma ’khrul ba’i phyir mngon sum mo / de ltar na rgyas pa dang ’bring dang mdor bsdus pa’i sgo nas chags la sogs rang rig rnam par mi rtog pa / zhes pa’i mdo’i don legs par bshad zin to.*

as well as mistaken cognition) or it is a non-constructed or non-conceptual state (this includes the main minds, sense direct valid cognition, and mental direct valid cognition). What the self-aware direct valid cognition does is to experience ordinarily the relative mental events in a non-conceptual, direct manner. As the following section will show, this capacity is employed for experiencing extraordinarily the ultimate luminous knowing quality of consciousness itself in a non-conceptual direct manner.

### 5 *Rang rig* as the outcome of *pramāṇa*

In the section of the Mkhan po's *Blo rtag rigs* entitled *shin tu gnas tshul la zhugs pa'i tshad 'bras*, which summarises a section of the *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho* of the same name,<sup>43</sup> we can observe how the principle of *rang rig* functions in an ascending scale of analysis. The following presentation can be seen as a progression or a ladder, but also as revealing different perspectives possible with regard to a single episode of perception. It furnishes insight into how the basic *pramāṇa* teachings are employed here as a bridge to the teachings on the nature of mind. The account is as follows:

The explanation of the presentation of the outcome of valid cognition<sup>44</sup> is in three [parts]: the outcome of valid cognition when there is no analysis;

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<sup>43</sup> The Mkhan po's summarised account has been chosen here for reasons of space and clarity. The full account is found at pages 667.2–670.3 of the *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho*.

<sup>44</sup> I have translated *tshad 'bras* as “outcome of valid cognition” following van der Kuijp's interpretation of 'Jig rten mgon po's phrase “*tshad ma'i 'bras bu chos nyid stong pa nyid ston par bzhed do*” (“the result of *tshad ma* is acknowledged to be a demonstration of ultimate reality's emptiness”) on which he comments: “...it should first be pointed out that the term ‘result’ (*'bras bu*, \**phala*) is not used in the technical sense of the issues raised by Dignāga and Dharmakīrti in their discussion of the relationship between the cognitive act and its content. Rather, 'Jig rten mgon po intends it to simply mean something like ‘cash-value,’ the spiritual cash-value of *tshad ma*, the

the outcome of valid cognition when there is slight analysis; and the outcome of valid cognition when there is thorough analysis.

The first:

“In terms of unexamined commonly accepted [understanding],  
The outer object itself is asserted to be the object of comprehension,  
The apprehended aspect to be a valid cogniser,  
And the cognition of the object is the outcome of valid cognition.”

The second:

“In terms of slight analysis,  
The apprehended aspect is asserted to be the object of comprehension,  
The apprehending aspect to be a valid cogniser,  
And self-awareness is the outcome of valid cognition.”

The third:

“When thoroughly analyzed by logic,  
Luminous awareness empty of duality is asserted to be the object of  
comprehension,  
The apprehending aspect to be a valid cogniser,  
And self-awareness is the outcome of valid cognition.”<sup>45</sup>

The first presentation is said to correspond to a general mundane view, the second to the Sautrāntika view and by extension to the Cittamātra/Yogācāra

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extent to which it is conducive to spiritual insight and realization.” See van der Kuijp 1987: 60 and 62.

<sup>45</sup> *Blo rtags rigs*, pp. 15–16: *gsum pa tshad 'bras kyi rnam gzhas bshad pa la / ma brtags ma dpyad pa'i tshad 'bras / cung zad dpyad pa'i tshad 'bras / shin tu dpyad pa'i tshad 'bras dang gsum las / dang po ni / ma brtag grags pa'i dbang du ni / phyi rol don nyid gzhal bya la / gzung ba'i rnam pa tshad ma ste / don rtogs tshad ma'i 'bras bur 'dod / ces pa ltar ro / gnyis pa ni / cung zad dpyad pa'i dbang du ni / gzung ba'i rnam pa gzhal bya la / 'dzin pa'i rnam pa tshad ma ste / rang rig tshad ma'i 'bras bur 'dod / ces pa ltar ro / gsum pa ni / rigs pas shin tu dpyad pa na / gnyis stong gsal rig gzhal bya la / 'dzin pa'i rnam pa tshad ma ste / rang rig tshad ma'i 'bras bur bshad.*

view, and the third to the *gzhan stong* Madhyamaka view. On a superficial level mind perceives an outer object; at the level of slight analysis mind merely perceives an aspect of itself, i.e. self-awareness of the relative apprehending aspect of mind,<sup>46</sup> and in the final analysis, mind is experiencing luminous awareness, empty of duality, i.e. self-awareness of the ultimate nature of mind. (Refer to the Table on p. 341.)

### 6 *Rang rig* and tathāgatagarbha as the basic and ultimate nature of mind

I wish to show now that the seventh Karma pa's use of *rang rig* in the context of *tshad ma'i 'bras bu* on the third level, the level of thorough analysis, parallels not only *so so rang rig pa'i ye shes* (as in *'phags pa so so rang gis rig pa'i ye shes* or *rnal byor pa so so rang gis rig pa'i ye shes*)<sup>47</sup> as a resultant phase of *rang rig*, but also tathāgatagarbha. This may be seen with reference to the passages that follow:

In fact, there is no [separate] object to be fathomed at this time. That which is to be fathomed is the luminous knowing aspect of a knower free of the duality of apprehended and apprehender. The apprehending aspect is *pramāṇa* and *rang rig* is the outcome. This presentation of the outcome of *pramāṇa* is ultimately established.<sup>48</sup>

Further on, the seventh Karma pa says:

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<sup>46</sup> What Paul Williams (1998) calls self-awareness i. This is also the aspect described when it is said that we are self-aware of our various mental events.

<sup>47</sup> See also Brunnhölzl 2004: 860n109 for an elaboration of these terms.

<sup>48</sup> *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho*, 668.5–6: *yang dag par na gzhal bya ma yin la / de'i tshes gzung 'dzin gnyis bral gyi shes pa gsal rig gi cha gzhal bya / 'dzin rnam tshad ma / rang rig 'bras bur byas pa 'di tshad 'bras kyi rnam par bzhag pa mthar thug par grub pa yin no.*



In fact, the essence free of the knower (*shes pa*) creating the condition for the duality of perceived and perceiver is emptiness. The expanse of all phenomena is completely pure of both [aspects of] consciousness—perceived and perceiver, conditioned and condition—and is luminous. This is the mirror-like primordial awareness, which essentially is a mind, in which any form whatsoever can arise. It is that which remains when there is nothing left in that [essence of mind, *sems nyid*].<sup>49</sup> That is the ultimate truth.

Therefore, whatever forms arise in this natural luminosity which is the ultimate truth are not truly established as such, and they are not different from the luminosity of mind itself. For example, even though various forms such as mountains, forests, planets, stars, etc., can appear [as reflections] on the [surface] of a vast ocean, they do not truly exist [there] and they are not different from the vast ocean itself. Such is the natural luminosity of mind according to these texts. It says clearly [in the *Pramānavarttika*]: “The nature of mind is luminosity, stains are temporary” and in the *Uttaratantra*: “The nature of mind is luminosity, it is unchanging like space.” This is in accordance with the *Prajñāpāramitā Sūtrā*: “Mind does not exist as ‘mind.’ The nature of mind is luminosity.”<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> *gang na gang med pa'i lhag ma yod pa*. This phrase is sometimes taken as indicating the definition of *gzhan stong*.

<sup>50</sup> *Rigs gzhungs rgya mtsho*, 670.3–671.1: (*de'i phyir*) *yang dag par na gzung 'dzin gnyis kyi rten byed pa'i shes par bcas pa bral ba'i ngo bo stong pa nyid chos thams cad kyi dbyings gzung 'dzin brtan pa dang rten shes pa gnyis ka'i rnam par dag cing 'od gsal ba de la me long lta bu'i ye shes kyi ngo bor grub pas rnam pa cir yang 'char rung gi sems nyid gang na gang med pa'i lhag ma yod pa de don dam bden par grub pa yin no. des na rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba'i don dam pa'i bden pa 'di la gang dang gang gi rnam pa shar yang de dang der ma grub cing / sems nyid 'od gsal ba de nyid las gzhan du med do / dper na rgya mtsho chen po'i nang du ri rab dang nags tshal dang gza' dang skar ma la sogs pa sna tshogs pa'i rnam pa shar yang de dang der ma grub cing /*

He concludes:

The above explanation of the mind being the ground empty of the duality of perceived and perceiver is not a phenomenon that can be intellectually established. It cannot be divided or destroyed by the syllogisms of being free from one or many, etc., because, if it was a phenomenon that could be intellectually established, it would be possible to destroy it through the logic of syllogisms, etc. But it is not intellectually established; it is beginningless, uninterrupted, and it does not fall into any extreme, because it is a naturally spontaneous actuality which transcends examples. Since it cannot be destroyed by anything, it is also called the vajra of mind. It is furthermore called tathāgatagarbha and *dharmadhātu*. It is never stained by the stains of perceiver and perceived, its essence is like the sky free of clouds. It is the natural *prajñāpāramitā* which is the field of experience of the individual reflexive awareness of primordial awareness (*so so rang rig pa'i ye shes*), the meaning of which is taught as the ultimate truth in the tradition of the Great Madhyamaka texts.<sup>51</sup>

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*rgya mtsho chen po nyid las gzhan du med pa bzhin no / sems rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba ni gzhung 'di dag las gsung te / sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal ba / dri ma rnams ni glo bur ba / zhes gsal par 'byung ba dang / rgyud bla ma las / sems kyi rang bzhin 'od gsal gang yin pa / de ni nam mkha' bzhin du 'gyur med de / zhes dang / sher phyin gyi mdo las / sems la sems ma mchis pa ste sems kyi rang bzhin ni 'od gsal ba'o zhes pa rnams mthun no.*

<sup>51</sup> *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho, 672.5–673.4: de ltar na gong du ji skad bshad pa'i gzung 'dzin gnyis kyi stong gzhir gyur pa'i sems nyid 'di ni blos bzhag pa'i chos ma yin pas / gcig du bral la sogs pa'i gtan tshigs rnams kyis kyang mi phyed cing gzhiig par mi nus pa yin te / gang gi phyir blos bzhag pa'i chos shig yin na ni gtan tshigs la sogs pa'i rigs pas gzhiig par nus pa yin gyi / 'di blos bzhag pa ma yin pa / thog ma med pa / rgyar ma chad pa / phyogs su ma lhung ba / dper bya ba kun las 'das pa rang bzhin gyi lhung gyis grub par gnas pa'i don yin pa'i phyir / gang gis kyang gzhiig par mi nys pas 'di nyid la sems kyi rdo rje zhes kyang bya / de bzhin gshegs pa'i snying po zhes kyang bya / chos kyi dbyings zhes kyang bya / de la sogs pa'i ming gi nam grangs sna tshogs*

As these elaborations on *rang rig* as the outcome of *pramāṇa* at the level of thorough analysis show, the seventh Karma pa eliminates the traditional contextual separation between *rang rig* and *so so rang gis rig pa* at this level.<sup>52</sup>

In Kapstein's discussion on whether *rang rig* (Skt. *svasamvedanā* or *svasamvitti*) and *so so rang rig* (Skt. *pratyātma-vid*) are close synonyms or whether they refer to very different concepts,<sup>53</sup> he concludes that "the term [*so so rang gis rig par bya ba*], therefore, in its original and primary signification has nothing whatever to do with epistemological theories of reflexive awareness, or with substantialist metaphysical accounts of the mind, or with *gzhan stong*, or with *Rdzogs-chen*."<sup>54</sup> He concedes that "it may well be that certain later traditions of Buddhist philosophy and meditation appropriated the term, but they probably did so in large measure owing to its ancient resonances and not in the first instance due to any doctrinal novelty."<sup>55</sup> He augments this point by stating that "it may well be that, although most Tibetan authorities agree with Tsong-kha-pa and Mi-pham that *svasamvedana* and *pratyātma-vid*

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*par tha snyad byas kyang / ngag gis smrar med pa / blos bsam du med pa / mig gis brjod par mi nus pa / ma skyes pa / ma 'gags pa / gzung ba dang 'dzin pa'i dri mas nam yang gos pa med pa nam mkha' sprin dang bral ba lta bu'i ngo nor gnas pa so so rang gi rig pa'i ye shes kyī spyod yul du gyur pa'i rang bzhin gyis shes rab kyī pha rol tu phyin pa'i don dbu ma chen po'i gzhung lugs rnams nas gsungs pa'i don dam pa'i bden pa zhes bsgrags pa gang yin pa de ni de yin no.*

<sup>52</sup> Whether this passage of the *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho* represents the seventh Karma pa's final position on the question of the relationship between *rang rig* and *so so rang rig pa'i ye shes* remains open for discussion. Incidentally, the eighth Karma pa seems to portray the seventh Karma pa's position on this issue somewhat differently. For more on this see Brunnhölzl's forthcoming translation of the eighth Karma pa and the fifth Shar ma pa's commentaries on the *Abhisamayālamkāra*.

<sup>53</sup> Kapstein 2000b: 112.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. 113. See also Ruegg 2002: 221n120.

<sup>55</sup> Kapstein 2000b: 113.

cannot be one and the same, the latter cannot be cashed out without reference to some notion of reflexivity.”<sup>56</sup>

This seems to be exactly what the seventh Karma pa and the *pramāṇa*-based *gzhan stong* tradition that he initiated is doing in this particular passage. We can therefore conclude that for soteriological purposes, presentations of *rang rig* at the stage of an ordinary being are being employed as a methodological tool in the progression from an individual’s experience of their relative mental events up to the transformation of this self-awareness into wisdom (*so so rang rig pa’i ye shes*, i.e. *rang rig*, at the final level of analysis).<sup>57</sup>

Furthermore, the link between the cognising luminosity inherent in ordinary states of consciousness (*shes pa gsal zhing rig pa*) and non-dual cognising luminosity (*gnyis stong gsal rig*) at the third level, of thorough analysis, which is really a state of “no more analysis,” parallels the descriptions of tathāgatagarbha as the luminous nature of mind at the level of the ground as well as at the level of the result. As Jackson says: “luminosity is the nature of *defiled* minds too.”<sup>58</sup> What the nature of mind is empty of, is that which is other than itself, that is to say, it is *gzhan stong*. I argue that in this context *gzhan stong* refers to the *gnyis stong* of the third level of analysis.

As elaborated by the Karma pa, *gnyis stong gsal rig* is the absence of the perceived and perceiving aspect of mind. He quotes Dharmakīrti’s statements in support of this, saying that “stains are temporary.” This parallels the famous statement from the *Uttaratantraśāstra* regarding tathāgatagarbha’s being empty of temporary factors that are characterised as being separable from it (*rnam dbye bcas pa’i mtshan nyid can / glo bur dag gis kham stong gi*).

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid. 117.

<sup>57</sup> This progression could be said to parallel the two explanation models mentioned by Kapstein in this passage: “the relationship, for Mi-pham, between *rang rig* at the moment of the introduction and the *so so rang rig* of enlightenment is precisely similar to that which obtains between *dpe’i ye shes* and *don gyi ye shes*.” Kapstein 2000b: 117.

<sup>58</sup> Jackson 1990: 96.

These illustrations of how a soteriologically-oriented *tshad ma* presentation of *rang rig* through progressive stages from a basic mental function to an enlightened wisdom parallels tathāgatagarbha presentations should be seen in the larger context of the Karma pa's demonstration that the "Great Madhyamaka" supersedes the so-called Mind Only tradition. He employs systematic Mādhyamika syllogisms to prove that perceiver and perceived, subject and object, cannot be established as truly existent. He states that the two chariots, i.e. Nāgārjuna's type of Madhyamaka and Asaṅga's tradition, which he also designates as Madhyamaka, are complementary and not in any way in contradiction. In his own words:

The close transmission of Mahāmādhyaṃyama from Ācārya Noble Asaṅga and his brother mainly establishes Dignāga's and Dharmakīrti's point of emptiness as being the mind itself, the natural luminosity. The intention is that this gives the capacity to realise that forms appearing from the play of this natural clarity are not truly existent, they are essentially emptiness. This is a conclusion reached mainly from the point of view of mind.

The Mahāmādhyaṃyamas of the close lineage of Ācārya Noble Nāgārjuna mainly establish that the appearances, which are the various forms of mind itself, appear but do not exist, the intention being that this gives the capacity to realise the emptiness of perceived and perception as the natural luminosity itself. This is a conclusion reached mainly from the point of view of emptiness.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho*, 675.4–676.1: *slob dpon 'phags pa thogs med sku mched nas nye bar brgyud pa'i dbu ma pa chen po dpal phyogs kyi glang po dang / chos kyi grags pa rnam kyis stong pa nyid du gnas pa'i sems nyid rang bzhin gyi 'od gsal ba gtso bor gtan la phab pas rang bzhin gsal pa'i rol pa las rnam pa ci dang cir snang yang de dang der ma grub par ngo bo stong pa nyid du rtogs par nus pa la dgongs nas gtso bor sems phyogs gtan la 'bebs par mdzad la / slob dpon 'phags pa klu sgrub nas nye bar brgyud pa'i dbu ma pa chen po rnam kyis ni / sems nyid rnam pa sna tshogs su snang ba 'di snang ba ltar du ma grub par gtso bor gtan la phab pas gzung ba dang 'dzin pas stong*

In other words, the Karma pa maintains that the strategies of both Nāgārjuna and Asaṅga are comprised of a two-step progression, each system setting up the conditions for the following realisation, whether it primarily establishes the emptiness of [so-called] outer phenomena, describing them as the appearances of mind, and secondarily by extension the emptiness of the mind for whom these empty phenomena appear; or whether it primarily establishes the emptiness of the mind, and secondarily by extension the emptiness of phenomena appearing for it. So it is simply a question of which kind of emptiness is established first, both systems leading to the same conclusion. This implies a syncretic approach towards the two traditions.

Finally the Karma pa's portrayal of the correlation between tathāgatagarbha as *gzhan stong* and *so so rang rig pa'i ye shes* as that which experiences this nature—as well as Karma 'phrin las pa's description of the impossibility of *rang stong* or an absence being the object of experience for valid cognition, much less something to be experienced personally (*so so rang gis rig par*)—is very much in line with the so-called tantric *gzhan stong* based on the Kālacakra. Let the following quotations from Red mda' ba's *Dpal dus kyi 'khor lo'i nges don gsal bar byed pa rin po che'i sgron me* illustrate this final point.<sup>60</sup>

According to the [Kālacakra] tantra, the phenomena of the incidental stains representing the relative truth are not the object of perfect gnosis (*yang dag pa'i ye shes kyi yul*) because they are empty of self-nature (*rang stong*), while the true nature of mind, representing the ultimate truth, is “the object of non-conceptual perception. It is empty of other (*gzhan stong*) because the incidental stains are absent, and it is not a nihilistic emptiness (*chad stong*) and an inanimate emptiness [*bems stong*] because it is experienced through a

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*pa de nyid rang bzhin gyis 'od gsal ba de nyid rtogs nus pa la dgongs nas gtso bor stong ba'i phyogs nas gtan la 'bebs par mdzad pa yin no.*

<sup>60</sup> The following passage is paraphrased from Stearns 1999: 58–59.

specific self-cognising intrinsic awareness ...”<sup>61</sup> Further, “... only the emptiness of other [*gzhan stong*], the true nature of mind, radiant light, an immutable interior intrinsic awareness experienced through the force of meditation and through a specific self-cognising intrinsic awareness is accepted as the perfect path.”<sup>62</sup>

Although the Karma pa’s *gzhan stong* ultimately echoes the so-called tantric *gzhan stong* as shown here, his *Rigs gzhung rgya mtsho* is unique in presenting *gzhan stong* in a *pramāṇa* context as a rationally structured, logically argued, moderate form of *gzhan stong*. Thereby the Karma pa offers a gradual philosophical and logical path which functions as an important alternative to the tantric path towards the ultimate goal.

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<sup>61</sup> Stearns 1999: 59, 2056n61: *rnam par mi rtog pa’i spyod yul yin pa’i phyir don dam pa yin la / glo bur dri mas dben pa’i phyir gzhan stong dang / so so rang rig pa’i tshul gyis nyams su myong ba’i phyir chad stong dang bems stong min no.*

<sup>62</sup> Stearns 1999: 59: *gzhan stong sems kyi chos nyid ’od gsal bsgoms pa’i stobs kyis so so rang rig pa’i tshul gyis myong ba’i nang rig ’gyur med kno na yang dag pa’i lam du gzhed de.*

**Table**

The outcome of valid cognition

རང་རིག་ཚད་འབྲས།

I. The level of no analysis

མ་བརྟག

An outer object  
is the object of  
comprehension

The apprehended aspect  
is a valid cogniser

Cognition of the  
object is the  
outcome

ཕྱི་རོལ་དོན་གཞལ་བ།

གཟུང་བའི་རྣམ་པ་ཚད་མ།

ཚད་འབྲས་དོན་རྟོག

II. The level of slight analysis

ཕྱང་ཟད་དབྱེད་པ།

The apprehended aspect  
is the object of  
comprehension

The apprehending aspect  
is a valid cogniser

Apperception  
is the outcome

གཟུང་བའི་རྣམ་པ་གཞལ་བ།

འཛིན་པའི་རྣམ་པ་ཚད་མ།

ཚད་འབྲས་རང་རིག

III. The level of thorough analysis

ཤིན་ཏུ་དབྱེད་པ།

Luminous awareness  
empty of duality is the  
object of comprehension

The apprehending aspect  
is a valid cogniser

Apperception  
is the outcome

གཉིས་སྟོང་གསལ་རིག་གཞལ་བ།

འཛིན་པའི་རྣམ་པ་ཚད་མ།

ཚད་འབྲས་རང་རིག



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# THE EIGHTH KARMA PA'S ANSWER TO GLING DRUNG PA: A CASE STUDY\*

JIM RHEINGANS

## 1 Introduction

[I] do not keep even the refuge-vows and do not meditate on death and impermanence for a single session. [But, I] say: “[I] meditate on the Great Seal right away!” [Lama], please consider foolish me with compassion!<sup>1</sup>

Though often considered primarily a meditational lineage, the Bka' brgyud pa traditions have produced numerous scholars. Among them, the eighth Karma pa, Mi bskyod rdo rje (1507–1554), was undoubtedly one of the most learned masters within his Karma Bka' brgyud school, which enjoyed great support from the most powerful rulers of Tibet from the late fifteenth until the early

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<sup>1</sup> The concluding verses of Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Phyag rgya chen po zhi gnas kyi khrid*, fol. 4a: *skyabs 'gro tsam gyi bslab bya mi bsrung zhing / 'chi ba mi rtag thun gcig mi bsgom par/ da lta nyid du phyag chen bsgoms zhes pa / /blun po'i rang bzhin bdag la thugs rjes gzigs /.*

sixteenth century (especially from 1498–1517/18).<sup>2</sup> The Seventh Karma pa Chos grags rgya mtsho (1454–1506) had actually initiated an independent sūtra exegetical tradition within his sect, composing the only Karma Bka' bgyud work on *pramāṇa*.<sup>3</sup> The scholastic trend continued with the eighth Karma pa, whose agenda included commenting on four of the five main non-tantric subjects.<sup>4</sup> Previous academic research on his doctrines has concentrated mainly on his well-known *Madhyamakāvātāra* commentary and his *rang stong* Madhyamaka philosophical position. His *gzhan stong* works, such as the *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentary and the *Gzhan stong legs par smra ba'i sgron me*, have been also taken into account.<sup>5</sup> But his Great Seal (*mahāmudrā*)

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<sup>2</sup> From 1498 to 1518 the Rin spungs pa lords, who were supporters of the Seventh Karma pa and the Fourth Zhwa dmar pa, had ruled with an iron fist over Dbus and Gtsang (D. Jackson 1989a: 29ff.). The eighth Karma pa witnessed the transition from relative peace and strong central rule to increasing instability, especially in Dbus, culminating in the period of great unrest in the late 1540s.

<sup>3</sup> Chos grags rgya mtsho, Karma pa VII, *Tshad ma'i bstan bcos*. See the article by Burchardi in this volume.

<sup>4</sup> Abhidharma, Madhyamaka, Prajñāparāmitā, and Vinaya (cf. also Brunnhölzl 2004: 19). The fifth was of course Pramāṇa.

<sup>5</sup> Mullin (1978) and Richardson (1998) translated very short works. In 1980 a translation of the *Bka' bgyud mgur mtsho* edited by Mi bskyod rdo rje was published by the Nālandā Translation Committee, which also published very brief prayers in 1997. Karmay (1980) occasionally referred to polemics against the Rnying ma pa. Williams (1983 a and b) and Ruegg (1988, 2000) have dealt with the eighth Karma pa's view on Madhyamaka using the *spyi don* section of the *Dwags*. Stearns (1999) has also used his *Gzhan stong*, as did Brunnhölzl (2004), who offers the most extensive study of the eighth Karma pa's Madhyamaka. Parts of the commentary have been translated (Mikyö Dorje 2006). Mathes (2008) has, in his recent publication, used the eighth Karma pa's *Abhisamayālaṃkāra* commentary and shown that Mi bskyod rdo rje's *gzhan stong* resembles Rang 'byung rdo rje's position in his *Zab mo nang gi don*. The only academic study of the Karma pa's life is Verhufen (1995), whose main reference is to Si tu and 'Be lo's *Kaṃ tshang*.

instructions in minor works have been neglected so far. Though these teachings form the heart of his tradition's religious instructions, no one has investigated how the eighth Karma pa taught the Great Seal to his various students.

This essay aims to examine his Great Seal teachings, especially as he expressed them in one of his minor works, the replies to questions (*dris lan*) asked by Gling drung A gdong pa.<sup>6</sup> In the following brief case study, I shall look more closely at the recipient, sectarian circumstances, and contexts of his answers. Works of the *dris lan* genre are particularly suitable for such an investigation as they often offer short treatments of doctrinal questions.<sup>7</sup> In addition, some minor commentaries and passages focusing on the Great Seal will be taken into account. The recent publication of Mi bskyod rdo rje's *gsung 'bum*, allows further insights into his life and literary works.<sup>8</sup> Given the vast scope of his writings, the present foray cannot pretend to scratch more than the surface of this theme.

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<sup>6</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Gling drung la 'dor ba'i dris lan*, 3 fols.

<sup>7</sup> The Tibetan genre as such has not yet been studied exhaustively but deserves more scholarly attention. A related genre, the more polemical "answers to refutations" (*dgag lan*), has been examined to some extent (Lopez 1997). The *dgag lan*, however, respond to criticism rather than answer a question.

<sup>8</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma-pa VIII, *Collected Works*. For a further survey of the history and content of his writings, see my PhD thesis (Rheingans 2008: 57–72). The now-available published collection provides us with two major *rnam thar* authored by Mi bskyod rdo rje's close students as well as different spiritual autobiographies (*rang nam*) containing valuable historical information: Byang chub bzang po, A khu a khrag Dge slong, *Rgyal ba kun gyi dbang* (37 fols.), is a source on the Karma pa's early years (up to 1513) authored by an attendant. It was also used by Gtsug lag 'phreng ba for his account of Mi bskyod rdo rje in the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*. Sangs rgyas Dpal sgrub attended the Karma pa from 1539 onwards, and his *Rgyal ba spyan ras gzigs* (90 fols.) contains additional information. It also enlists two sources that are unavailable to date: a *rnam thar* composed by Grub pa'i dbang phyug Sgam po mkhan po Śākya dge slong bzang po and one authored by Bla ma Dpon yig (*ibid.*, fol. 83b). See Rheingans 2010, for a further discussion of the *rnam thar* sources.

## 2 The Great Seal in the minor texts

With regard to the theory of the Great Seal, a number of interpretations can be found in the eighth Karma pa's minor commentaries, instructions, and *dris lan*. Let us briefly locate these sources in his *Collected Works*. One of his most important students, the fifth Zhwa dmar, Dkon mchog yan lag (1525–83), composed a catalogue (*dkar chag*) of the Karma pa's collected writings (*gsung 'bum*).<sup>9</sup> The Zhwa dmar pa divided his list of titles into six major sections (*mdor byas*), the structure of which was also used as a template for the recent Lhasa edition of Mi bskyod rdo rje's literary works.<sup>10</sup>

The first section of the eighth Karma pa's œuvre, filling volumes one and two of the *Collected Works*, consists of spiritual biographies (*rnam thar*) and adamantine songs (*rdo rje'i glu*). Apart from a few dialogues in a *rnam thar*,<sup>11</sup> the Great Seal is frequently mentioned in the *rdo rje'i glu* subsection, especially in five texts. The second section, making up volume three, contains a variety of genres: letters (*'phrin yig*), praises (*bstod tshogs*), questions and answers (*dris lan*), works of advice (*bslab bya*), and prayers (*smon lam*). Great Seal teachings are found here among the *bslab bya* and especially in the *dris lan*. From among the sixteen *dris lan* (nos. 29 to 44 of volume 3; their length

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<sup>9</sup> According to his *rnam thar* in Situ and 'Be lo (*Kam tshang*, p. 391) the fifth Zhwa dmar pa met the Karma pa in Tsā ri and received the blessing (*byin rlabs*) to complete the collection (*bka' 'bum*) of the Karma pa's writings. He began to compile this table of contents seven years before the Karma pa passed away in 1547, and completed it in 1555 (Kon mchog 'bangs, Zhwa dmar V, *Rgyal ba thams cad*, p. 230). For a further survey of sources about the Great Seal in the eighth Karmapa's *gsung 'bum*, see also Rheingans (2008: 72–76).

<sup>10</sup> The *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* (p. 1313) mentions that the *bka' 'bum* amounted to “slightly more than thirty volumes” (*sum bcu* [sic] *lhag*). It seems that shortly after the eighth Karma pa passed away a golden manuscript was compiled under the patronage of Chos mdzad ma rnam grol, which comprised thirty volumes (*ibid.*).

<sup>11</sup> Byang chub bzang po, A khu a khrag Dge slong, *Rgyal ba kun gyi dbang* (see also below).

varies from two to sixty-nine folios), ten contain major passages or questions on the Great Seal, though it is not always explicitly mentioned.

The third section contains commentaries on sūtra and mantra. It is by far the most extensive section, comprising volumes 4 through 16. Included here are the large commentaries on Madhyamaka and other Indian treatises (*rgya gzhung*), along with elaborate material on the 'Bri gung *dgongs gcig* doctrine and Buddhist tantra.<sup>12</sup> A wealth of material, including shorter commentaries dealing with the Great Seal, is found in volume 15. Volumes 17 and 18 contain the texts of section four, rituals (*cho ga*) and *sādhanas* (*sgrub thabs*).

The fifth section contains practical instructions (*khrid*) and esoteric precepts (*man ngag*), and is found in volumes 18–25 of the *Collected Works*. Volume 19 contains the previously (1976) published shorter instructions (*khrid thung*)<sup>13</sup> and consists of precepts on a diversity of topics, some of which deal with the Great Seal. Finally, volumes 21–25 include occasional commentaries on the Great Seal, principally in its tantric context. The last section, dedicated to the “common sciences” (*thun mong rig gnas*), such as grammar and linguistics, can be found in volume 26.

Before turning to the *dris lan*, which are central to this essay, some passages presenting the non-tantric and tantric Great Seal need to be touched upon very briefly in order to give an impression of the Karma pa's teaching style. These are drawn from a hagiography (*rnam thar*), a brief advice on blessing (*bslab bya*), and a short commentary on the ordinary mind (*tha mal gyi shes pa*).<sup>14</sup>

The earliest documented teachings on the subject ascribed to the eighth Karma pa are dialogues about meditation found in the *rnam thar* composed by

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<sup>12</sup> Three volumes alone (5, 6 and 7) are devoted to the *dgongs gcig* teaching of the 'Bri gung pa, which include a *rnam thar* of 'Bri gung Skyobs pa 'Jig rten gsum dgon (1143–1217).

<sup>13</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Gdams khrid man ngag gi rim pa*.

<sup>14</sup> Due to the scope of the present essay, these texts are only briefly introduced here. They contain much more elaborate discussions that cannot be presented in full.



Mi bskyod rdo rje's attendant, A khu A khra. While representing a relatively direct way of teaching without much doctrinal elaboration, they use the specific doctrine of the Bka' brgyud Great Seal in teaching about conceptualisation as dharmakāya.<sup>15</sup> In 1513 the young Karma pa travelled around Lho rong and Khams and met Rgya ston Nang so Seng ge ba:

The next day in Rag yul [at the] bridge, Rgya ston Nang so Seng ge ba said: "You must grant me a dharma [teaching]."

[Karma pa] said: "In that case, the essence (*ngo bo*) of conceptual thoughts (*rnam rtog*) is the dharmakāya. Therefore, conceptualisation and absolute awareness (*ye shes*) being undifferentiated is the ordinary mind (*tha mal gyi shes pa*). Much need not be said—that suffices."<sup>16</sup>

In the ensuing exchange the next morning, he asked:

"Sir (*lags*), is there [anything] for accomplishing buddhahood apart from the ordinary mind?"

[Karma pa] said: "No, there is nothing apart [from it]."

[Rgya ston] asked: "Is there a phenomenon (*chos*)<sup>17</sup> or buddha not contained ( *'dus pa*) within ordinary mind?"

[Karma pa] said: "Not a single one. If there is, you bring [it] and I will keep (*nya ra*) it!"<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> In what follows, I give just a short excerpt. All four dialogues will be found translated and studied in Rheingans forthcoming.

<sup>16</sup> Byang chub bzang po, A khu a khrag, *Rgyal ba kun gyi dbang po*, fol. 28a: *phyi nyin rag yul zam kha na rgya ston nang so seng ge bas nged la chos shig gnang dgos zhus pas / 'o na rnam rtog gyi ngo bo de chos sku yin pas rnam rtog dang ye shes khyad med pa de tha mal gyi shes pa yin / mang po brjod mi dgos pas des chog gsungs.*

<sup>17</sup> Here, *chos* might also indicate the buddha-qualities (*yon tan*).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. fol. 28b: *lags tha mal shes pa las logs su sangs rgyas sgrub rgyu e yod zhus pas logs na med gsung / tha mal shes pa la ma 'dus pa'i chos sam sangs rgyas e yod shus*

Finally, regarding its cultivation, the Karma pa commented:

[Rgya ston] asked: “Does one need to cultivate (*sgom*) this ordinary mind or not?”

[Karma pa] replied: “Beginners need to cultivate it. Then [later] there is no need [to do so].”<sup>19</sup>

Also in the other early dialogues the underlying strand in the discussion is the understanding of mind by comprehending conceptualisation as being, in essence, dharmakāya. Though formally not even the name ‘Great Seal’ is mentioned, this direct way of instruction seems to be in line with the path of direct cognition favoured by Sgam po pa.<sup>20</sup>

In the *Identification of the Blessing of the Great Seal (Phyag rgya chen po'i byin rlabs kyi ngos 'dzin)*, a much later text preserved in the *bslab bya* section of the *Collected Works*, the Karma pa emphasises the importance of blessing (*byin rlabs*) for training in the practice of the Great Seal.<sup>21</sup> How does one receive the blessing and practise the path? Under the heading of the Great Seal path (*lam phyag chen*), he first comments on the correct meditations of

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*pas gcig kyang med / yod na khyod kyi [read kyiś] khyer la shog dang ngas nya ra bya gsungs.*

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. fol. 28b: *tha mal shes pa de sgom dgos sam mi dgos zhus pas / las dang po pas sgom dgos gsungs de nas mi dgos gsungs.*

<sup>20</sup> For Sgam po pa's Three Paths system see Sherpa 2000: 129–36. For Sgam po pa's Great Seal see Kragh 1999: 29–39 and Mathes 2006: 2.

<sup>21</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Phyag rgya chen po'i byin rlabs kyi ngos 'dzin*, fol. 2a. The first pages of the text are missing and the second part starts with a prostration to Sangs rgyas mnyan pa (ibid. fol. 1b: *Pha mnyan pa'i chen po'i zhabs la 'dud*). In the colophon, the name Mi bskyod rdo rje is not mentioned. This title, however, is mentioned in both title lists (Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Byang phyogs 'di na karma pa*, fol. 7b; Dkon mchog dbangs, Zhwa dmar V, *Rgyal ba thams cad*, fol. 7a). It is thus likely that the eighth Karma pa composed this text.

*śamatha* and *vipaśyanā*, elaborating the proper manner of practice and the experiences arising from it. He suggests practising them in union (*zung 'jug*) as taught in the sūtra way, but immediately goes on to explain:

As for meditation of the Great Seal, it is the path of the unsurpassable yoga (*rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i lam*). Therefore, the special features of the quick path (*nye lam*) of the Vajrayāna need to be practised in a complete manner (*tshang bar*).<sup>22</sup>

Indeed, for the eighth Karma pa in this text, the Great Seal is both a method and a goal realised through practice of the Buddhist tantras; the fact that he comments on the general meditations of *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* beforehand implies their preliminary value to the actual tantric practice. Here, the complete practice of Vajrayāna entails receiving the four empowerments from an authentic teacher and practice of the two stages of tantric meditation, which the Karma pa shortly describes with various examples. Thus the Great Seal, the highest accomplishment (*siddhi*) is achieved. This should be known from the esoteric precepts (*man ngag*) of an authentic teacher.<sup>23</sup> Quoting various masters, the Karma pa underlines how important it is to practise under the guidance of a teacher and in accordance with one's capacities while not

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<sup>22</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Phyag rgya chen po'i byin rlabs kyi ngos 'dzin* fol. 3a: *phyag rgya chen po'i sgom ni / rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i lam yin pas / rdo rje theg pa'i nye lam gyi khyad chos rnams tshang bar nyams su len dgos pa yin /*

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. fol. 4a (p. 740). The text goes on to quote various masters on the process of tantric meditation, including Saraha, Nāgārjuna, and Asaṅga (fol. 4a–5b). Finally, the Karma pa explains the result of the Great Seal, namely the state of a Vajradhara and the three buddha-bodies (fol. 5b). In the last lines, the eighth Karma pa suggests that Buddhist practice needs to be done according to the capacities of the individual (fol. 6b).

forgetting the basic contemplations.<sup>24</sup> We have to remember that the context indicated by the title was the blessing of the Great Seal—this blessing being connected to the Vajrayāna—and this is exactly the understanding of the Great Seal he conveys.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, not much is known about the historical circumstances or the audience of this work.

In another short commentary, called *Avoiding the Mistake of Explaining Superficial Obscuration as the Ordinary Mind* (*Glo bur gyi dri ma tha mal gyi shes par bshad pa'i nor ba spang ba*), Mi bskyod rdo rje is concerned with explaining the correct understanding and cultivation of the ordinary mind. Here he uses more elaborate terminology than in the previous dialogues.<sup>26</sup> As indicated by the title, the work sets out to defend the Great Seal and its key term *tha mal gyi shes pa* against misunderstandings and jealousy. He consequently praises it as the quick path traveled by all the Indian siddhas and explains the correct meaning of the ordinary mind using terminology from both the *pramāṇa* and *phar phyin* treatises. Mi bskyod rdo rje then quotes Mi la ras pa and advises the Great Seal practitioner to avoid the “three delaying diversions” (*gol sa gsum*) related to experiences from *śamatha*, and the “four occasions for straying” (*shor sa bzhi*) into a wrong understanding of *śūnyatā*.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> As seen in the introductory quote and from the *rnam thar* (see note 45 below), Mi bskyod rdo rje strongly emphasised the graded path of the three kinds of individuals (see also Rheingans 2008: 156–59).

<sup>25</sup> Sgam po pa also labelled the mantra-paths to the Great Seal the “path of blessing” (cf. Sherpa 2004: 129–37, 142–50).

<sup>26</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Glo bur gyi dri ma*. This text contains many interesting definitions and debates, which cannot fully be presented here. It was requested by the scribe Bod pa rgya bo and was written by the Karma pa in Kong stod 'or shod. It is found in the *dkar chag* of Dkon mchog dbangs, Zhwa dmar V, *Rgyal ba thams cad*, fol. 9a but not in the title list of the eighth Karma pa. It could therefore have been composed after 1546.

<sup>27</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Glo bur gyi dri ma*, fol. 3af. For the *gol sa* and *shor sa*, see also Namgyal 1986: 293–313 and Jackson 1994: 181–85, who translates Sa

He then uses the four-yoga system of the Great Seal, as taught by Atiśa,<sup>28</sup> to explain the graded path (*lam rim*) of spiritual development. He concludes his work by saying:

The ordinary mind (*tha mal gyi shes pa*) explained above was taught by the incomparable Sgam po pa in different answers, saying “One must cultivate the essence.”<sup>29</sup>

### 3 The Answer to a Question by Gling drung pa

The *Answer to a Question Asked by Gling drung pa La 'dor ba* (*Gling drung pa la 'dor ba'i dris lan*), the main focus of this paper, presents doctrinally and historically interesting views and stories. To date, only one version of the text is available: the one published in the *Collected Works*.<sup>30</sup> It is not that easy to understand the exact context of this work. One encounters difficulties even

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paṅ's criticism in the *Thubs pa'i dgongs gsal*, which maintains that precisely this teaching is not from the Buddha. Mi bskyod rdo rje remarks here in the *Glo bur gyi dri ma* that Sa paṅ's critique in the *Sdom gsum rab dbye* (*blun po'i phyag rgya che sgom pa / phal cher dud 'gro'i gnas su skye*) would apply to these delaying diversions (*gol sa*) that are tantamount to the danger of getting stuck in *śamatha*.

<sup>28</sup> Bkra shis nam rgyal also mentions such a system of four yogas in the *lhan cig skyes sbyor* as transmitted to Atiśa by Dgon pa ba (Namgyal 1986: 358).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. fol. 4a: *mnyam med sgam po pas ngo bo sgom dgos zhes lan du mar gsungs pa yang gong du bshad pa'i tha mal gyi shes pa de'o*.

<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately the original manuscript could not be consulted. As has been pointed out above, the *Collected Works* contain some misspellings. The supplement to the *Collected Works* talks about various sources used for their publication. From among the seven sources that I have determined were used, the *dris lan* probably stems from one of the following: two versions of manuscripts stored in 'Bras spungs (i.a), manuscripts from the Po ta la (i.b), or the more obscure category of “whatever writings and prints that were found in Dbus and Gtsang” (v.); (Karma bde legs, *Dpe sgrigs gsal bshad*, p. 6: *kham s dbus kyis bris dpar ci rig rnyed pa rnams*). See chapter three of my dissertation (Rheingans 2008: 57–72).

when trying to identify the recipient, whose name appears on the title page as *Gling drung pa La 'dor ba*. Whereas the name mentioned in the first lines of the text reads *Gling A mdong Drung pa* (fol. 1b), the entry listed in the *dkar chag* of the fifth Zhwa dmar reads “Answers to questions of Gling drung A mdong pa” (*Gling drung pa a mdong pa'i dris lan*).<sup>31</sup>

Given the fact that the editors of the modern *Collected Works* were imprecise at other times, I suggest that the title in the much older *dkar chag* is more reliable, the name being Gling drung A mdong pa. This is further supported by the first line of the text itself, which is a variation rather than a misspelling.<sup>32</sup>

Gling or Gling tshang, the place of the questioner designated by the name, is the name of an eastern Tibetan kingdom.<sup>33</sup> In the *nam thar* sources about the eighth Karma pa, two slightly contradictory references indicate that the Karma pa travelled there and passed on teachings to members of the Gling noble family in the year 1519. With regard to major events of the eighth Karma

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<sup>31</sup> Dkon mchog dbangs, Zhwa dmar V, *Rgyal ba thams cad*, fol. 5b.

<sup>32</sup> The elements of the name are three: (i) place, (ii) title, and (iii) further specification, probably of place of origin. Looking at the first reading, we find *Gling* as the place, *Drung* as a title, and “One of La 'dor” (*la 'dor ba'i*) as a further specification. The third version has as specification “One of A mdong” and thus deviates slightly. The second version merely applies the title, *Drung*, to the third element of the name and has as the second element again “One of A mdong” (*A mdong pa*). Therefore, the actual variation is between *A mdong ba* and *La 'dor ba*, which are probably two scribal attempts at writing what was originally a single name (the characters *a* and *la* as well as *nga* and *ra* being easily mistaken in cursive script, while the prefix ' and *m* are interchangeable). I follow the *dkar chag* of the fifth Zhwa dmar pa for the time being. However, it may be noted that the term *la dor ba* (according to Zhang Yisun old for *thag gcod pa*) seems to be a rare phrase indicating meditative accomplishment in Sa skya pa *lam 'bras*-doctrine (Davidson 2004: 297n16).

<sup>33</sup> Geographically, it is an older name of what would later become the kingdom of Sde dge and is still the name of the nomadic areas north of Sde dge. Between 1400 and 1637 the Gling tshang ruled over large areas in eastern Tibet (Kessler 1983: 17).

pa's life, this was the last of three years he trained under his revered main teacher, Sangs rgyas mnyan pa Bkra shis dpal 'byor, and, probably together with this master, traveled around in eastern Tibet.

The *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* states that he had a vision of Nāgārjuna and was then “invited by Gling drung pa Ting 'od pa,<sup>34</sup> uncle and nephew, and went to Zil mdar.”<sup>35</sup> There he was offered presents, and it is further said that he gave “prophecies and letters” (*lung bstan dang chab shog*) to a Lcags mo Kun ting Go shri as well as “prophecies and instructions” (*lung bstan dang gdams pa*) to a Gling drung pa.

A later source, Si tu and 'Be lo's *Kam tshang*, recounts the events in a different manner. It says—at a similar place within the narrative—that the eighth Karma pa was invited by the Gling tshang ruling family. He then had a vision of Nāgārjuna in Tsi nang and spent a month in Ba zi mdo.<sup>36</sup> Then he went to the Mgo zi hermitage and imparted many “prophecies” (*lung bstan*) to a Gling drung pa Ting 'dzin bzang po.<sup>37</sup>

Though in general the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston* is the older and more detailed source, I assume that Si tu's statements about geography are more

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<sup>34</sup> Probably short for Ting ['dzin] 'od [zer] pa.

<sup>35</sup> *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, p. 1233: *gling drung pa ting 'od pa khu dbon gyi spyang drangs / zil mdar phebs/ khri rwa can gyi 'bul ba dang dbon gyi thog drangs pa'i gra pa yang brgya lhag phul / der [p. 1234] lcags mo kun ting go'i sri 'od zer rgyal mtshan pa la 'das ma 'ongs kyi lung bstan chab shog gnang / gling drung pa la lung bstan dang gdams pa gnang / tsher phur drung pa grub thob pa la dus 'khor 'grel chen gsan pa na dus kyi 'khor lo dang rje mi la gzigs pa rje grub thob pa la thim par gzigs nas bstod par mdzad /*

<sup>36</sup> This is probably Si tu's version of the *Zil mdar* in the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*.

<sup>37</sup> Si tu and 'Be lo, *Kam tshang*, p. 316: *gling tshang gyi gdan drangs / tsi nang du 'phags pa klu grub zhal gzigs / ba zis mdor zla gcig bzhugs / mgo zi ri khrod du phebs gling drung pa ting 'dzin bzang por lung bstan mang po mdzad.*

accurate.<sup>38</sup> At least later, Mgo zi (or Guzi) in northwest Sde dge was the site of a Ngor pa monastery.<sup>39</sup> The monastery in Zil mdar or Mgo zi was most likely the Bkra shis rnam rgyal monastery of the Gling drung pa, mentioned once in a *rang nam* as among the monasteries in which the Karma pa erected buildings.<sup>40</sup> The question remains as to whether the two Gling drung pas mentioned in the two sources, namely Gling drung pa Ting 'dzin bzang po and Gling drung pa Ting 'dzin 'od zer, are two different persons or whether this is a name variation. Furthermore, which one can be identified with the Gling drung pa mentioned a second time in the *Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*? Most importantly, who was Gling drung A mdong pa, the addressee of this text?

While the title of this work is mentioned in the *dkar chag* of the fifth Zhwa dmar pa, it is not included in the list of the eighth Karma pa, dated 1546.<sup>41</sup> The presence of the title in the list of the fifth Zhwa dmar pa proves that a text with such a title existed. The colophon of the *dris lan* itself bears no date, but indicates that it was probably a written teaching or a letter composed by the Karma pa and sent to the student (as opposed to notes the student made in a teaching situation):

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<sup>38</sup> Looking at the differences in the two sources examined above, it has to be taken into account that (a) Si tu and 'Be lo may have had access to two early sources, which are now lost (see note on *rnam thar* above), and (b) Si tu was from Sde dge and was well acquainted with this region and its history.

<sup>39</sup> The Si tu Sprul sku prior to Si tu Paṅ chen had been born into the family of the Ngor pa patrons (written communication, Prof. D. Jackson, June 2007). For the Ngor pa, see also D. Jackson 1989b.

<sup>40</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Byang phyogs 'di na karma pa*, fol. 10b: *gling drung pa bkra shis rnam rgyal gyi sde*.

<sup>41</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Byang phyogs 'di na karma pa*, fols. 4a–9b.



[H]e, who only sees a fraction of the Great Seal of Bka' brgyud Dwags po Lha rje, Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje, sent this to Mdo khams. By virtue of that may all beings become liberated by means of the Great Seal!<sup>42</sup>

The traditional deferential, “who only sees a fraction of the Great Seal,” points to the eighth Karma pa as the author. It also shows that the Karma pa probably wrote the reply somewhere in Central Tibet and sent it to Mdo khams. One possibility is that the answer was written after 1546 and therefore did not find entry into the Karma pa's title list. Only after the eighth Karma pa's passing were all documents related to the teaching of the revered masters assembled by the fifth Zhwa dmar pa and compiled into a collection.<sup>43</sup>

We know that the Karma pa first visited Gling drung around 1519, yet the answer was probably written after he travelled to Central Tibet, maybe as late as the 1540s. Presuming that there was no thirty-year gap between question and answer, I assume that the recipient of this text, Gling drung A mdong pa, came from the milieu of the other Gling drung pa mentioned in the *nam thar*, and is most likely a relative or nephew of those persons mentioned in the sources. Perhaps by that time the Gling tshang lords were already devoted to the Ngor pa.<sup>44</sup>

Neither of the Gling drung pas is mentioned among the lists of students found in the *nam thars* about Mi bskyod rdo rje. It is thus probable that he did

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<sup>42</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Gling drung pa la 'dor ba'i dris lan*, fol. 3b: *bka' brgyud dwags po lha rje ba'i phyag chen gyi phyogs mthong tsam zhig karma pa mi bskyod rdo rjes mdo khams su brdzangs pa'i dge bas 'gro kun phyag chen gyis grol bar gyur cig*.

<sup>43</sup> Another option would be that the text was authored earlier but only inserted into the collection at a later point by the fifth Zhwa dmar pa.

<sup>44</sup> A further indication of Mi bskyod rdo rje's relation to the Gling tshang lords is the letter *Rgyal chen gling pa ma bu la gnang ba'i chab shog* (not containing the name Gling drung pa). The assumption about the Ngor pa is based on the question asked and our knowledge of later developments.

not figure among the closest Bka' brgyud pa students of the eighth Karma pa, but, as his question will reveal, he had received Sa skya pa and Ngor pa teachings, and also considered the Karma pa as his teacher, or at least as a competent scholar. The various *rnam thar* sources relate that Mi bskyod rdo rje emphasised the graded path of the "three kinds of individuals" (*skyes bu gsum gyi lam rim*) with the aid of Atiśa's *Bodhipathapradīpa*.<sup>45</sup> It was only from his twenty-seventh year onwards that he taught the graded tantra path (*gsang sngags lam gyi rim pa*) to a restricted number of individuals.<sup>46</sup> If we consider the content of the *dris lan* as at least in part belonging to this category, we can assume a teacher-student relationship between Gling drung pa and the eighth Karma pa.<sup>47</sup>

Before further speculating on the circumstances of this work, let us briefly examine its contents. The question directly addresses a key issue in an old doctrinal debate about the Great Seal:

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<sup>45</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Pha mi bskyod rdo rje'i rnam thar rje nyid kyis rnam thos kyi ri bor mdzad pa*, fol. 6a. We know from this *rang rnam* that this was the command of his root teacher Sangs rgyas mnyan pa. The teaching on the three kinds of individuals is also part of the topical outline of Sangs rgyas dpal sgrub, *Rgyal ba spyan ras gzigs dbang brgyad pa'i rnam thar*, fol. 35aff. Dpa' bo Rin po che tells us that his master, when expounding the great treatises of sūtra and mantra, mainly used the graded path of the Bka' gdams pa as a means for turning the students' minds towards the dharma. To worthy students he taught the extraordinary Vajrayāna instructions, stages, and visualisations (*Mkhas pa'i dga' ston*, p. 1309f.)

<sup>46</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Pha mi bskyod rdo rje'i rnam thar rje nyid kyis rnam thos kyi ri bor mdzad pa*, fol. 6a.

<sup>47</sup> The *dris lan* contains tantric teachings but is mainly about the Great Seal of Sgam po pa. The Great Seal was, as noted above, taught also at an early stage in the Karma pa's life and is not considered a tantric exposition. But we may still assume that it was taught only to worthy students. The question, tone, and content of the *dris lan* further support the idea that Gling drung pa was a student of the Karma pa, though—as will be discussed below—a precise determination of their relationship and of the political circumstances may substantially contribute to an understanding of the contents.

I will respond to what Gling A mdong Drung pa from Khams has asked:

“Are the two, the meaning of the fourth empowerment of the unsurpassable<sup>48</sup> mantra as held by the glorious Sa skya pas and the meaning of the Great Seal as taught by Bka’ brgyud Dwags po Lha rje, the same or different? Is there a difference between them as to higher and lower?”<sup>49</sup>

In his answer,<sup>50</sup> the Karma pa first explains the meaning of the fourth empowerment according to what he had heard from “some lamas” of the Ngor branch of Sa skya, probably alluding to the questioner’s background. They would maintain that one blocks out conceptual objects, concentrating on the self-empty essence of the feeling of joy resulting from the third empowerment. But he admits that he is not completely sure about their definition.<sup>51</sup>

The Karma pa then goes on to draw a more general distinction, namely that, in general (*spyir*), there are two kinds of empowerment in the *\*niruttara-yoga-tantra*: “mundane” (*’jig rten pa*) and “supramundane” (*’jig rten las ’das pa*). The Kālacakra would be the only tantra belonging to the supramundane category:

Because in the father tantras, such as the cycles of Guhyasamāja and Yamāntaka, and in all the mother tantras, such as Cakrasaṃvara and

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<sup>48</sup> “Unsurpassable” (*bla med*) refers to the unsurpassable *yoga-tantra*, the *\*niruttara-yoga-tantra*.

<sup>49</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Gling drung pa la ’dor ba’i dris lan*, fol. 1b: *’dir khams nas gling a ’dong* [sic!, emended to *mdong* in the translation] *drung pas / dpal sa skya pas ’dod pa’i sngags bla med kyi dbang bzhi pa’i don dang / bka’ brgyud dwags po lha rje pa’i bzhed pa’i phyag rgya chen po’i don gnyis gcig gam mi gcig / de la mchog dman yod med ji ltar yin zhes drir byung ba la / lan brjod par bya ste.*

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. fol. 1b.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. fol. 1b.

Hevajra, nothing [else] is taught than the four empowerments of the world, therefore the Vajradhara who will be accomplished through the creation- and completion-stages of these [tantras] is a surpassable (*bla bcas pa*) Vajradhara.<sup>52</sup>

The Karma pa explains<sup>53</sup> that the *karma*- and *jñāna-mudrā* of the third empowerment used for achieving the fourth empowerment are those for

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid. fol. 1b: *gsang 'dus 'jigs byed gshed skor sogs pha rgyud / bde dgyes sogs ma rgyud thams cad nas* [fol. 2a] *'jigs rten pa'i dbang bzhi las ma bstan pas / de dag gi bskyed rdzogs kyi lam gyis sgrubs pa'i rdo rje 'chang yang bla bcas pa'i rdo rje 'chang yin pa'i phyir te.*

<sup>53</sup> The Kālacakra is often viewed as the pinnacle of tantra in various traditions (and it claims so itself; see for example Wallace 2000: 6, who quotes *Kālacakratāntra*, V. 243: “In every king of tantras, the Vajrī concealed the vajra-word, and in the Ādibuddha, he taught it explicitly and in full for the sake of the liberation of living beings. Therefore, Sucandra, the splendid Ādibuddhatantra, a discourse of the supreme lord of Jinās, is the higher, more comprehensive and complete tantra than the mundane and supramundane [tantras].”). To determine the precise meaning of the teachings in this passage of the Karma pa's *dris lan*, more specific research is needed, which would exceed the scope of the present paper. The passage is nevertheless paraphrased roughly so as to give an impression of the Karma pa's view in his answer that seems to be in line with some of his other works (see also Rheingans 2008: 225–31). As a first indication for future research, similar teachings can be found in the bulky *Pointing out the Three Kāyas* (*Sku gsum ngo sprod*), which the eighth Karma pa began to compose in Mtshur phu in 1548 and completed in the same year in Thob rgyal dgra 'dul gling in Gtsang. Here the term “surpassable buddha” (*bla bcas kyī sangs rgyas*) is used to indicate the result of practising tantras not belonging to the \**niruttara* class (vol. 21, fol. 236b). The Karma pa also explains that there are mundane and supramundane empowerments within the Kālacakra system, leading to different results, again using the same term (vol. 21, fol. 345a). Mi bskyod rdo rje uses a similar line of argument about the mundane and supramundane empowerments, quoting Saraha on how the view and realisation (*lta ba dang rtogs pa*) of the Great Seal, which is the *buddhagarbha*, the naturally pure *dhātu*, would be beyond those objects known by mundane ultimate awareness (*'jig rten pa'i ye*

obtaining the worldly *siddhīs*. What is reached with these mundane empowerments is also called “inferior Vajrasattva” (*rdor sems nyi tshe ba*). Only with the supramundane empowerments from the Kālacakra will one attain the ultimate goal: the “pervading Vajrasattva” (*khyab pa’i rdor sems*). In this system the third empowerment—which brings forth the ultimate wisdom of the Great Seal, the fourth empowerment—is not mixed with the worldly *siddhīs*. Through this Great Seal of the extraordinary primordial buddha (*dang po’i sangs rgyas*, Skt. *ādibuddha*),<sup>54</sup> the Great Seal itself (*phyag rgya chen po nyid*) is brought to accomplishment. He sums up his discussion of the first part of his answer:

Therefore, concerning the supramundane fourth empowerment which comes from the Kālacakra and the fourth empowerment which comes from [tantras] such as Cakrasaṃvara and Guhyasamāja, there is higher (the former) and lower (the latter); what the authorities on tantra mention (*smra bar byed pa*) when speaking thus is that there exists a continuum [of the tantras] with respect to objects of knowledge in general.<sup>55</sup>

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*shes*) (cf. *Dpal ldan dwags po bka’ brgyud kyī gsung*, fol. 45aff.). At the end of his own ritual for Kālacakra practice, the eighth Karma pa also praises the Kālacakra as the “ultimate vehicle” (*mthar thug gyi theg pa*, Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Bcom ldan ’das dpal dus kyī ’khor lo*, fol. 117b). It will also be necessary to evaluate Mi bskyod rdo rje’s commentary on Kālacakra, *Bcom ldan ’das dang po’i sangs rgyas*, and tantric works of the Third Karma pa, Rang byung rdo rje (see also Schaeffer 1995) as well as Bu ston.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. fol. 2a.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. fol 2b: *des na dus kyī ’khor lo nas ’byung ba’i ’jig rten las ’das pa’i dbang bzhi pa dang / bde gsang sogs nas ’byung ba’i dbang bzhi pa la mchog dman yod ces rgyud sde mkhan po rnam smra bar byed pa ni shes bya spyi pa la rgyud yod pa’i de yin*. The last passage is slightly ambiguous. The interpretation found in the text above assumes that just as there are tantras higher with respect to objects of knowledge in general but still part of the same continuum, there is a distinction of the tantras as ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ but still part of the same continuum. Alternatively, one may read:

Thus, the Karma pa has set out to answer the question by first specifying how he understands the fourth empowerment, emphasising the superiority of the Kālacakra. But he has not yet touched upon the main concern of the questioner, the Great Seal of the Bka' brgyud pa. In the following passage, he presents in similar terms the impossibility of discussing the teachings of Sgam po pa:

The Great Seal of the Bka' 'brgyud Dwags po Lha rje cannot be harmonised with the question as either the same as or different from the supramundane and mundane fourth empowerment from the tantra scriptures.

The 'Bri khung pa 'Jig rten gsum gyi mgon po has said: “Beyond the four joys, something different from the clear light (*'od gsal*), untouched by the three great ones.”<sup>56</sup> The Great Brahmin (Saraha) too has said:<sup>57</sup>

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“... when saying [this] is that which exists for the tantras as conceptual objects of [verbally expressed] knowledge.” In any case, the statement implies that the Karma pa and other scholars accept this distinction of the tantras into higher and lower.

<sup>56</sup> The three great ones are mentioned in section VI (about view, meditation, and action), statement 8 of 'Jig rten mgon po's *Dgongs gcig*: “realisation that is untouched by the three great ones” (Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa, *Dam pa'i chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i dka' 'grel*, p. 444: *chen po gsum gyi ma reg pa'i rtogs pa*). In his two *dgongs gcig*-commentaries, Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa (1595–1659) refers here to *dbu ma chen po*, *phyag rgya chen po*, and *rdzogs pa chen po* (ibid. 444–445 and Rig 'dzin Chos kyi grags pa, *Dam pa'i chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i rnam bshad*, p. 276f.; ). See also Ruegg (1988: 1259 [11]n43), who mentions Dbon po Shes rab 'byung gnas, *Dam chos dgongs pa gcig pa'i gzhung*, fol. 5a. Karma pa Mi bskyod rdo rje quotes the same saying by the 'Bri gung pa in his *Dwags* (fol. 6b). The *chen po gsum* can at other times be related to the three mudrās, i.e. *karma-*, *dharma-*, and *samayamudrā* as opposed to the *mahāmudrā* (cf. *Rgya gzhung*, vol. *om*, p. 571). See also one of Mi bskyod rdo rje's own definitions of *chen po* within the *phyag rgya chen po*: Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Phyag rgya chen po'i bshad pa rtogs brjod utpal gyi phreng ba*, fol. 14a: *chen po ni / las chos / dam tshig las 'das pa*: “Great' [means]: beyond *karma-*, *dharma-* and

“The innate natural (*gnyug ma lhan cig skyes pa*) Great Seal, the meaning of the *dohā*, cannot be realised through the fourth empowerment.” And in the *Dmangs dohā* [he has said:]

Some have entered the explanation of the sense of the fourth [empowerment], some understand [it] as the element of space (*nam mkha'i kham*s),<sup>58</sup> others make it a theory of emptiness;<sup>59</sup> hence mostly [people] have entered what is incompatible<sup>60</sup> [with it].<sup>61</sup>

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*samaya-[mudrā]*.” That, however, does not indicate them as being beyond the fourth empowerment, which is then pointed to by the following quotation of Saraha.

<sup>57</sup> The whole complex in the *dohā* is a refutation first of non-Buddhists (1–9), then Hinayāna (10), Mahāyāna (11) and Mantrayāna (11ff.). See Schaeffer 2000: 303–7 (critical edition lines 1–46).

<sup>58</sup> *Nam mkha'i* = *āāsa* or *gaṇa*; *kham*s = *bhūa* (cf. Tilopa 1, 1a in R. Jackson 2004).

<sup>59</sup> Note the textual variants given by Schaeffer 2000 esp. app. crit. on 48: AA (= Advaya Avadhūti, *Do ha mdzod kyi snying po'i don gyi glu'i 'grel pa*): *gzhan dang stong pa nyid lta bar byed pa de*; L (*Do ha mdzod* prepared by Lha btsun pa Rin chen rgyal mtshan): *lta bar byed pa ste*.

<sup>60</sup> *Mi mthun phyogs*. This part of the verse is only available in Tibetan. The translation “contradiction,” favoured by both Schaeffer (2000: 277) and R. Jackson (2004: 12), could be also understood differently (cf. Shahidullah 1928: 129 ad stanza 11). Because *mi thun phyogs* = Old Bengali/Maithili *bipakha* (cf. *Cāryagītī* 16 [Mahitta], 4d Kværne 1977: 142: *re bipakha kobī na dekhī*); Munidatta ad loc. *punaḥ kleśam vipakṣi-karinaṃ na paśyati* (Kværne 1977: 144 Tib.: *mi mthun phyogs byed pa mi mthong ba'o*). This suggests a meaning such as ‘obstacle’; I have translated as “not compatible with it.” Still *vipakṣa* could also have the Indian logical meaning of counter-example or counter-argument: “By maintaining this (emptiness) they provide a counter-argument for the non-conceptual state of awareness.” Interpreting it as “contradiction,” Shahidullah (1928) has “propositions contradictoires” and “the contrary” (cf. Udayana [11th Century CE], *Ātmatattvaviveka*, Laine 1998: 74). For *sapakṣa/vipakṣa* as Indian Buddhist logical terms see Ram-Prasad 2002: 345-46: “homologue”; Ganeri 2003: 38: “heterologue”; Barnhardt 2001: 557: “example and counter-example/counter-positive

Mi bskyod rdo rje avoids classifying Sgam po pa's Great Seal as tantra or not. He interprets Saraha's term "the fourth" (*bzhi pa*) as the fourth empowerment, suiting his purpose of proving the fourth empowerment as not necessarily in accordance with the Great Seal.<sup>62</sup> Then, he finally imparts what he considers the key point of the Great Seal, again putting it forward as that of Sgam po pa:

In that case, concerning the Great Seal upheld by the Bka' brgyud Dwags po Lha rje: In the great timeless (*ye*) freedom from the impurities of experiences, realisations, views, and philosophical systems of the four mundane and supramundane empowerments and so forth, one settles in the unfabricated *om sva re*<sup>63</sup> while it [the Great Seal] appears spontaneously as the primordial buddha, the timeless presence itself!<sup>64</sup>

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example"; see Staal 1962 as reviewed by Ram-Prasad 2002: 346: "logical equivalence through contraposition"; Shaw 2002: 216: *pakṣa* = "locus of inference." I would like to thank Burkhard Scherer for helpful suggestions and related references.

<sup>61</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Gling drung pa la 'dor ba'i dris lan*, fol. 2b: *bka' brgyud dwags po lha rje ba'i phyag rgya chen po ni rgyud sde las 'byung ba'i 'jig rten dang 'jig rten las 'das pa'i dbang bzhi pa dang gcig mi gcig bstun tu yod pa min te / 'jig rten gsum gyi mgon po 'bris khung pas / dga' ba bzhi las 'das pa / 'od gsal las khyad par du gyur pa / chen po gsum gyis ma reg pa zhes gsungs pa ste / bram ze chen po sa ra has kyang gnyug ma lhan cig skes pa phyag rgya chen po do ha'i don ni dbang bzhis pas rtogs par mi nus zhes dmangs do har /la la bzhi pa'i don 'chad pa la zhug / la la nam mhka'i khams la rtogs par byed/ gzhan dag stong nyid lta bar byed pa ste / phal cher mi mthun phyogs la zhugs pa yin/ zhes 'byung ba'i phyir /.*

<sup>62</sup> In this interpretation he follows the 13<sup>th</sup> century Tibetan writer Bcom ldan ral gri, alias Rig pa'i ral gri; see Schaeffer 2000: 276.

<sup>63</sup> According to Mkhan po Nges don (oral communication August 2007), it is occasionally used as a colloquialism by lamas even today, meaning: "Leave it as it is/it is just that." A second obvious way is to treat it as a Sanskrit expression, reading *svare* as locative of *svara* ("sound"): "in the unfabricated sound *om*" It is quite likely that the Karma pa would have been able to form words in Sanskrit, as he had studied Sanskrit



The strong term “impurities” (*dri ma*) denotes the meditation or insight achieved through empowerments, and is juxtaposed with the simple, effortless resting in the mind’s true nature—a classic example of the rhetoric of immediacy. In this case, the Karma pa sets the Great Seal of the Bka’ brgyud apart from the tantric empowerments and their practices. He emphasises the point with strong anti-ritualistic argumentation.<sup>65</sup>

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in the traditional Tibetan way (e.g. the *Kalāpasūtra*) with Zhwa lu Lo tsā ba Rin chen bkra shis (b. 15th century) and made his notes into a commentary (*Mkhas pa’i dga’ ston*, p. 1243, *Kam tshang*, p. 337; see also Rheingans 2008: 135). However, for two reasons this is not the only possibility. (i) This strand of the Great Seal is supposed to go back to Saraha and one should thus look at his material for an Indian reference to *om̐* as a synonym for the innate. The “unfabricated sound *om̐*” may then be an allusion to Saraha’s *Dohākoṣa* 90: “I know just a single syllable, but, friend, I don’t know its name” or 90a: “three unconditioned, one syllable (*yi ge gcig*)” (R. Jackson 2004: 104; Tib. Schaeffer 2000: 438: for the first mentioning of *yi ge gcig* with variant *ye shes cig*). The Tibetan commentators Bcom ldan Rig pa’i ral khri interprets *yi ge gcig* as the “letter of ultimate concern” (trans. Schaeffer 2000: 333) and to 90a he comments “the singular letter is the innate” (Schaeffer 2000: 391). Rig pa’i ral gri does not mention any specific syllable in his commentary. R. Jackson (ibid.) assumes the single syllable to be the “unstruck sound” (Skt. *anāhata*) or the famed syllable *a*. And one indeed wonders, why the Karma pa does not interpret it similarly if this is a Sanskrit expression alluding to the innate. Surely, further research has to be done in the area of Tibetan *dohā*-transmissions. (ii) In mantric endings, *svare* is often a prakritic generalised vocative and not a locative. In Vedic mantras that have a relation to tantra, *svare* may also be the dative-form of Skt. *svar* (= *svarga*).

<sup>64</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Gling drung pa la ’dor ba’i dris lan*, fol. 2b: / ’o na bka’ brgyud dwags po lha rje ba’i bzhed pa’i phyag rgya chen po ni / ’jig rten dang ’jig rten las ’das pa’i dbang bzhi sogs kyi nyams rtogs lta grub kyi dri ma dang ye bral chen por gdod nas [fol. 3a] / ye bzhugs nyid ye sangs rgyas su lhun gyis grub par ’char ba la ma bcos om̐ sva re ’jog pa las /.

<sup>65</sup> Mathes (2006) has concluded that the Indian material by and on Saraha takes a sceptical stand towards “traditional forms of Buddhism including Tantra.” See also Schaeffer 2000: 7 and R. Jackson 2004: 19–20.

Apart from that [settling the mind as stated above], there is [no way] that one will realise the accomplishment of the Great Seal through tiresome [activities] such as going to ask for empowerment, ringing the bell, reciting [mantra] while meditating on a buddha aspect, and collecting tamarisk-wood and making fire offerings; or carrying out an [extensive] meditation ritual after having collected offering [substances].<sup>66</sup>

The Karma pa had, however, not yet explicitly answered whether the fourth empowerment of the Sa skya pas or the Great Seal could be considered superior. This question is answered by recounting a story from the period of the twelfth-century masters, a story that also brings the text to an end.

When formerly the glorious Phag mo gru pa went into the presence of the Sa skya pa Kun [dga'] snying [po], [Phag mo gru pa] acted as local tutor (*gnas slob*)<sup>67</sup> for Khams pa Sbas mchod and [Phag mo gru pa] attended the

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<sup>66</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Gling drung pa la 'dor ba'i dris lan*, fol. 3a: *de la dbang bskur zhur 'gro ba dang / dril bu 'khrol ba dang / lha bsgoms nas blas pa dang / yam shing bsags nas sbyin bsreg bya ba sogs dang / 'bul sdud byas nas sgrub mchod 'dzugs pa sogs kyi ngal bas phyag rgya chen po'i dngos grub sgrub pa ma lags /*

<sup>67</sup> Zhang Yisun, *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo: gnas kyi slob dpon* = “local teacher” (also *gnas sbyin pa'i slob dpon* = “teacher that gives lodging”) – *'dul ba las bshad pa'i slob dpon lnga'i nang gses / gnas 'cha' ba'i slob ma la dgag sgrub gnang gsum gyi bslab bya slob par byed pa'i dge slong*. This is one of the five teachers for monks as mentioned in the Vinaya. Mi bskyod rdo rje himself, in his Vinaya commentary, considers *gnas kyi slob dpon* = *gnas kyi bla ma* one of the five teachers explained in the Vinaya, his role being to assist the monk in the three trainings and see to his pure and stable conduct (*'Dul ba mdo rtsa rgya cher 'gre*l, fol. 133b) and to be the one who directly engages with the student in the dharma (ibid. fol. 191b). The question is (see the following note, below), whether we are dealing in the formal sense of the word with a teacher of the newcomer monk or instead with a senior teacher introducing a visiting monk to a monastery. *TSD: gnas byin pa – niśrayadāyakaḥ*, from *Mahāvvyūtpattiḥ*, 8731 (also *niśrayadāpikāḥ, niśrayadāpakāḥ*) “he that gives lodging.”

Bla ma [Sbas mchod] as not different from [Sa chen] Kun [dga'] snying [po].<sup>68</sup>

Later, Phag mo gru pa went into the presence of the Master (*rje*) Sgam po pa. He completely let go of the experience of the Great Seal of the fourth empowerment [which he had received] from the Sa skya pa and actualised the Great Seal of Dwags po Lha rje and his Bka' brgyud, the ordinary mind (*tha mal gyi shes pa*).

At that time, Sa chen passed away and Khams pa Sbas mchod went to Khams. The talk of the Sugata Phag gru being fully awakened (*sangs rgyas pa*) came up in Khams, and Sbas mchod [went] to Sugata Phag gru and requested the instructions of the Great Seal, saying:

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<sup>68</sup> *sngon nas sa skya pa kun snying gi drung du dpal phag mo gru pa byon dus khams pa spas mchod la gnas kyi slob dpon mdzad / sa skya pa dang khyad med du bla mar bsten*. From the context I would read: “[Sa chen] made Spas mchod the *gnas slob* [for Phag mo gru pa].” The passage requires some discussion, because the grammar and the context suggest contradictory readings. Grammatically, it would be most likely that Phag gru (being in the phrase before, marked with the absolutive as the subject of the intransitive verb *byon*), acted as *gnas slob* for Sbas mchod, who is marked by the *la don*. Alternatively, but less likely, Sa chen could have been acting as *gnas slob* for Sbas mchod. From the next clause (*sa skya pa dang khyad med du bla mar bsten*), and bearing in mind the context of the story (see also the further works by Phag mo gru pa discussed below), however, it is clear that it was Sbas mchod whom Phag gru attended as not different from the Sa skya pa. (The *gnas slob* is normally the monk who introduces the newcomer to the monastery; see note above and e-mail communication, D. Jackson 2007). It seems thus that Khams pa Sbas mchod acted as Phag mo gru pa's *gnas slob*; it means he acted as his personal preceptor, the senior monk who takes responsibility for a junior monk. This is grammatically elliptical (possible with adding a *du = slob dpon du*, thinking of the *la* for Sbas mchod as indicating the object = “[Sa chen] made Spas mchod the *gnas slob* [for Phag mo gru pa]” or “[Phag mo gru pa] made Sbas mchod [his] *gnas slob*”). As Phag mo gru pa had finished his Vinaya education by that time (1134; cf. Schiller 2002: 62), there is the possibility of a later addition to the story (see the following discussion in the main text).

“[You] must grant me the instruction that [made] you a buddha, the Great Seal.”

In answer [to that it says] in the *Giving of the Innate Union of the Great Seal (Phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor gnang ba)*, which is to be found in the *bka' 'bum* of Sugata Phag gru:

“As far as I am concerned, my trust in you and the great Sa skya pa is the same. Therefore it would not be right if I taught you the Great Seal; nevertheless, since I cannot bear it if someone like you to falls into a mistaken path, I must by all means offer<sup>69</sup> [you] the Great Seal—so please excuse me!”

[Phag gru] said [this], and in fact he even did something like confessing<sup>70</sup> [a misdeed].<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> The polite *'bul* is used, which indicates the respect towards Sbas mchod (“offer [you] the Great Seal [teaching]”); the Tibetan double negation could also be expressed as “I cannot refuse to.”

<sup>70</sup> *Mthol bshags*. Literally “to admit [mistakes]”; cf. Zhang Yisun, *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo: mthol bshags – rang gi nyes pa mi gsang bar shod pa* / “to declare one’s faults without concealing.”

<sup>71</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Gling drung pa la 'dor ba'i dris lan*, fol. 3a (p. 315): *sngon nas sa skya pa kun snying gi drung du dpal phag mo gru pa byon dus khams pa spas mchod la gnas kyis slob dpon mdzad / sa skya pa dang khyad med du bla mar bsten / phyis phag mo gru pa rje sgam po pa'i sku mdun du phyin sngar sa skya pa'i dbang bzhi pa'i phyag rgya chen po'i nyams de drungs nas 'byin par mdzad / bka' brgyud dwags po lha rje ba'i phyag chen tha mal gyi shes pa de mngon du mdzad / de skabs sa chen gshegs / khams pa spas mchod khams su phyin / bder gshegs phag gru sangs rgyas pa'i skad khams su byung nas spas mchod kyis bder gshegs phag gru'i sku mdun du khyed sangs rgyas pa'i gdams ngag phyag rgya chen po de la* [read: *nga or: de nga la*] *gnang dgos zer nas phyag chen gyi gdams pa zhus pas / de'i lan du phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor gnang ba bder gshegs phag gru pa'i bka' 'bum na yod pa de*

Thus, through a story that appears to be somewhat sectarian, the Karma pa gave his opinion about the main question. Part of this story may reflect the Karma pa's attitude toward Gling drung pa. Though we find comparatively strong language in the statement that the path Khams pa Sbas mchod has previously practised is a "mistaken path" (*lam log pa*), this is softened by a polite strand in the opening, as Phag mo gru pa evidently felt uncomfortable to teach his former tutor, apologising in the end.<sup>72</sup>

Upon reading this passage, I am struck by some historical questions. The story of Sgam po pa's precepts being more profound to Phag mo gru pa than anything he had practised before is a well known rhetorical feature of the Bka' brgyud pa *rnam thar* and played a role in the polemical exchange about the Great Seal.<sup>73</sup> But who was Khams pa Sbas mchod? Can the Karma pa's alleged source for this story, a text by Phag mo gru pa, be located?

During his stay in Sa skya, Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–70), later one of the foremost students of Sgam po pa and the source of the eight minor Bka' brgyud traditions, also obtained the *lam 'bras* instructions from Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158).<sup>74</sup> According to some sources, Phag mo gru pa was one of Sa chen's closest and most learned students, and

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*nang na / khyed dang sa skya pa chen po la nga ni dad pa mnyam por yod pas / ngas khyed la phyag rgya chen po bstan mi rigs [fol. 3b] kyang khyed lta bu lam log par ltung na mi btub pas phyag chen mi 'bul ka med byung ba yin pas bzod par gsol zhes don gyis mthol bshags lta bu'ang mdzad gda' pas /*

<sup>72</sup> One may speculate, too, as to whether the Karma pa felt a certain unease upon writing his reply and therefore ended it with this story and the comment that even Phag mo gru pa admitted a harmful action.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. Broido 1987 and D. Jackson 1990.

<sup>74</sup> Stearns (2001) has done excellent research on the early masters of the *lam 'bras* tradition, including a section on Phag mo gru pa's *lam 'bras* teaching. Schiller (2002) has worked extensively on the life of Phag mo gru pa. The *lam 'bras* instructions and practice are central to the Sa skya tradition, and Sa chen Kun dga' snying po (1092–1158) authored eleven explanations of it (Stearns 2001: 16–26).

had played a major role in the earliest compilation of the *lam 'bras*.<sup>75</sup> The Sa skya pa sources tell us that he had spent approximately twelve years in Sa skya (probably 1138–50).<sup>76</sup>

The figure of Khams pa Sbas mchod surfaces in the Bka' brgyud pa *rnam thar* sources: it seems that Phag gru met a Dges bshes Dbas in Khams (where he was born and had started his religious career) and Phag gru apparently accompanied him in 1130/31 to Dbus. However, Dbas eventually went back to Khams and there is no further trace of him.<sup>77</sup> Only later is a Dbas

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<sup>75</sup> His notes were even considered too clear (which is not recommended for oral instructions), and were therefore placed in the library by Sa chen and named “The Library Explication” (*Dpe mdzod ma*). The Bka' brgyud pa source authored by Padma dkar po adds that he was Sa chen's most learned student; cf. Stearns 2001: 27, 180n133, 181n114. Davidson (2004: 308) doubts Phag mo gru pa's authorship of the *Dpe mdzod ma*, suggesting that the *Sga theng ma* (which Stearns considers to be authored by Phag mo gru pa, too) was handed down from Sa chen and has become the *Dpe mdzod ma*. According to Davidson (2004: 437n106), Stearns later communicated that he considers the *Sga theng ma* authentic and the original *Dpe mdzod ma* to be lost, replaced by the *Sga theng ma*.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. 2001: 27, 180n113; Schiller 2002: 66.

<sup>77</sup> Schiller (2002: 59) has discussed various possible dates between 1127 and 1131. According to Rgyal thang pa, Phag gru accompanied Dges bshes Dbas chen po to Dbus when he was 29 years old (1138) (*Dkar brgyud gser 'phreng*, p. 401), whereas Schiller, using Chos kyi ye shes, translates that he accompanied a Dbas rdo rje chen po when he was 22 and they went to Stod lung Rgya mar, where Phag gru spent some time with him, conducting himself in a manner “not different from him” (*khyad med du*). But then Dges bshes Dbas wanted to go back to Khams, and Phag gru, because Dbas had supported him, hesitated but stayed (*Chos rje rin po che'i rnam thar*, fol. 4af.). Most sources seem to agree that Phag gru took full ordination in 1134 in Zul phu (cf. Schiller 2002: 62). Later Phag mo gru pa went to Sa skya. But where was Dge bshes Dbas? That may lend credibility to the interpretation (see note 68 above), namely that Phag gru might have been in Sa skya before, acting as *gnas slob* in the sense of assisting Dge bshes Dbas in the monastery. Otherwise Dbas was his senior. But why does he state

mchod mentioned among the close students of Phag gru, the only time where the same name is used as in the *dris lan* (albeit with a different variant for Sbas).<sup>78</sup>

A search for the eighth Karma pa's alleged source may help to shed light on some of the issues: the *Phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor gnang ba* is said to have existed in the *gsung 'bum* of Phag mo gru pa but did not enter into any of the published versions or available early *dkar chags*, nor do we find the story among related works on *lhan cig skyes sbyor*.<sup>79</sup> But in another section of Phag mo gru pa's *bka' 'bum* there are three letters or works of advice to a Dge bshes Spas, also called Spas Dge bshes Byang chub brtson 'grus.<sup>80</sup> The Karma pa's *dris lan* had introduced Khams pa Spas mchod as someone Phag mo gru pa had the same trust in as he did in Sa chen (*dad pa mnyam po*). Phag gru

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that he had the same trust in the Sa skya pa as in Dbas? Are we dealing with the same person?

<sup>78</sup> Schiller 2002: 87, who refers to Dpal chen chos kyi ye shes, *Chos rje rin po che'i rnam thar*, fol. 24a. Dbas is an alternative spelling of Sbas (see note 85 below).

<sup>79</sup> During his current doctoral research on Phag mo gru, Schiller has surveyed all early *dkar chag* and different editions of Phag mo gru pa's literary works and is certain that such a title does not occur (oral communication, August 2007). In a 16<sup>th</sup> century manuscript from 'Bri gung (*Phag gru MS*), the *lhan cig skyes 'byor* section does not contain the title nor is the content found within these works (*Lhan cig skyes sbyor*, vol. 2, no. 8. fol. 48b.3–55a.5; *Phyag rgya chen po'i ngo sprod*, vol. 2, no. 9. fol. 55a.5–58b.3; *Lhan cig skyes sbyor gyi skor*, vol. 2, no. 10. fol. 58b.3–66a.6). See also the same corpus on *lhan cig skes sbyor* in the 2003 edition: *Phag 'gru gsung 'bum*, vol. 4, pp. 255–351.

<sup>80</sup> The *Spas dge bshes byang chub brtson 'grus la phag gru pas gdams pa* (*Phag gru MS: Dge bshes dbas chen po la [gdams pa]*, vol. 3, fol. 333b–334b) is most likely addressed to the same person as Khams pa Sbas mchod. The *Byang chub brtson 'grus la springs pa'i nyams myong gnyis pa* (*Phag gru MS: Dge bshes dbas chen po la spring pa*, vol. 3, fol. 270b–272a) contains a similar hint in the colophon. The *Dge bshes spas la spring ba* (*Phag gru MS: Sbas la bskur yig*, vol. 3, fol. 274b–274b) does not contain any concrete hint but could have been directed to the same individual.

uses similar phrases in the instruction to Spas Dge bshes Byang chub brtson 'grus (in the earlier *Phag gru MS* referred to as Sbas Dge bshes chen po): Phag gru mentions that previously this lama has cared for him kindly and he excuses himself, saying that his devotion towards Sa skya pa and him would be the same (*bla ma sa skya pa dang khyed bzhugs pa la mos gus mnyam par mchis*), and indicates that this Dge bshes had formerly acted as his teacher.<sup>81</sup> The second work also hints at a similar relationship: the work is termed the instruction Phag gru gave to a former dharma friend (*mched grogs*), the Dges bshes Dbas chen po.<sup>82</sup> Both works contain meditation instructions, but neither of them uses explicit *phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor* precepts.

Although the *Phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor gnang ba* quoted by the Karma pa has not been found, these texts and the *rnam thar* indicate at least the existence of a Dge bshes Spas who was Phag gru's teacher before he met Sgam po pa. The Dbas dge bshes chen po mentioned in the instruction<sup>83</sup> most likely refers to the very Khams pa Spas/Sbas mchod from the *dris lan*, who, as his name suggests, probably came from Khams and belonged to the Spas clan,<sup>84</sup> as did Phag gru himself.<sup>85</sup> The issue concerning the *gnas slob*, however, remains obscure and may indeed be a later addition to the story.

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<sup>81</sup> Phag mo gru Rdo rje rgyal po, *Spas dge bshes byang chub brtson 'grus*, p. 718.

<sup>82</sup> Phag mo gru Rdo rje rgyal po, *Byang chub brtson 'grus la springs pa*, p. 381.

<sup>83</sup> Phag mo gru Rdo rje rgyal po, *Spas dge bshes byang chub brtson 'grus*, p. 718.

<sup>84</sup> A fifteenth-century encyclopaedia notes that Spas (variants: Sba, Rba, Sbas, Dba's) is a clan among the Rje cig Snyags rje Thog sgrom rje lineage, one of the four princely lineages of Stong. It was one of the most important in the royal dynastic period (Gene Smith's introduction to Don dam smra ba'i seng ge, *A 15th Century Tibetan Compendium of Knowledge*, p. 16, and the Tibetan text in *ibid.* p. 183).

<sup>85</sup> It remains to be clarified what exactly their relationship was (for example what the Karma pa meant with the role as *gnas slob*), how close Sbas mchod was to Sa chen, and whether we are dealing with one and the same person as Dges bshes Dbas *alias* Khams pa Dbas mchod. To date I have not examined the sources on Sa chen's life in



Given the evidence above, it is unlikely that the Karma pa himself imagined a text called *Phyag chen lhan cig skyes sbyor gnang ba* without any literary source.<sup>86</sup> It stills puzzles me as to whether the Karma pa referred to the same instruction to Spas dge bshes byang chub brtson 'grus under a different title or text, whether he relied on another textual source not yet found, or whether he knew of the story but phrased it freely.<sup>87</sup> As is still typical in the field of Tibetan studies, many sources have yet to become available.<sup>88</sup>

#### 4 Concluding Reflections

Though some context remains to be clarified, this *dris lan* bears testimony to how the Karma pa approached a polemically loaded Great Seal question addressed to him by a student with probably a Ngor pa-Sa skya pa background. Thus, the work presents an historical window onto some of the religious and political circumstances of the teaching of Great Seal doctrines in this period and the ensuing tensions: the ambivalence of an enquirer who was probably

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detail. C. Stearns (e-mail communication, Sept. 2006) has not come across this name yet.

<sup>86</sup> After all, this was a written answer by a well-informed scholar, who clearly states the title and source. Mi bskyod rdo rje was also familiar with works of other masters of that period, for example Bla ma Zhang. The Karma pa transmitted the reading transmission (*lung*) of Zhang's *bka' 'bum* (Si tu and 'Be lo, *Kam tshang*, p. 339).

<sup>87</sup> Of course there is also always the possibility that the Karma pa's *dris lan* has undergone some editing.

<sup>88</sup> It will, in the future, be important to try to validate the authenticity of this text and the associated story. Apart from the early Bka' brgyud pa sources, Mi bskyod rdo rje's teacher Karma 'phrin las pa could have served as its origin. He transmitted Phag gru's *lam 'bras* instructions to some scholars at Nalendra and must have been knowledgeable about the history of both the Sa skya and Bka' brgyud traditions (Stearns 2001: 29). For the life and works of the first Karma 'Phrin las pa, see my unpublished MA thesis, Rheingans 2004. Unfortunately his *gsung 'bum* is not complete (for a catalogue see *ibid.* 143–95) and remarks about a Khams pa Sbas mchod could not yet be found in the available material.

devoted to two traditions;<sup>89</sup> his question, which almost presupposes the answer; and the anecdote within the *dris lan*, which—albeit in a sectarian manner—is utilised by the Karma pa to underline his opinion without expressing it directly.<sup>90</sup>

Doctrinally, the *dris lan* first distinguishes the tantras as mundane and supramundane, an important point to be followed up in further research. Mi bskyod rdo rje then puts forward the Great Seal as a teaching impossible to call “either the same as or different from” the tantras, a feature emphasising its method as going beyond tantric ritual. Mi bskyod rdo rje does not offer an argument here (as he does elsewhere)<sup>91</sup> or clearly state a path for Great Seal practice, apart from telling the student to let the mind rest without artifice (*ma bcos*). In that, the teaching style resembles that of the Karma pa’s dialogues in the *rnam thar*, briefly depicted above.<sup>92</sup> He does not further label his approach in the *dris lan*, apart from presenting it as that of Sgam po pa and Saraha. It seems to be in line with the approach of Saraha, and with what is termed the

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<sup>89</sup> They may have competed in the Gling area. Here, further research will have to follow up this hypothesis. Mi bskyod rdo rje’s main rivals were apparently the Dge lugs pa and ’Brug chen Padma dkar po (1527–1592), but his disproportionate influence is also reported to have caused some unease among the Sa skya pas in Gtsang (cf. Sangs rgyas Dpal sgrub, *Rgyal ba spyan ras gzigs*, fol. 38b).

<sup>90</sup> As in a narrative text, which works with either *showing* (by means of metaphor, images, etc.) or *telling* (directly relating its message); see Copley 2001: 19.

<sup>91</sup> For example in the *Glo bur gyi dri ma* and also the *Dpal ldan dwags po bka’ brgyud kyi gsung*; not to mention his debates in the *Dwags*. In fact, his argumentative strategy is a topic on its own. For a later evaluation of the Karma pa’s doctrines, see also Rheingans 2008: 217–44; 2009; and forthcoming.

<sup>92</sup> This rhetoric of the Great Seal as particular also occurs elsewhere in the instructions of Mi bskyod rdo rje. See for example Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Phyag rgya chen po’i bshad pa rtogs brjod*, fol. 2b, where it says that the Great Seal forms the base of cyclic existence and nirvāṇa but not the all-base (*kun gyi gzhi*) of the *pāramitāyāna* nor that of the explanatory tradition (*bshad srol*) of the general Secret Mantra, this being the special feature of Nāropa and Maitrī.

‘path of direct cognition’ by Sgam po pa or ‘essence Great Seal’ in the later categorisations of Kong sprul Blo gro mtha’ yas and Bkra shis chos ’phel.<sup>93</sup> In a spiritual autobiography (*rang nam*) the eighth Karma pa is quoted as remarking that when teaching he in particular emphasized the Great Seal traditions of Jo bo Mitrayogin and of the *dohās* transmitted in India via Vajrapāṇi.<sup>94</sup> Does this mention of the *dohās* refer to the kind of instruction in the *dris lan*?<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Saraha has pointed out the possibility of realisation by merely relying on the kindness of one’s guru (Mathes in the present volume; R. Jackson 2004: 37-40), and we find the idea of a third path with Sgam po pa (Sherpa 2004: 130; D. Jackson 1994: 25–28). The 19<sup>th</sup> century scholars Kong sprul Blo gros mtha’ yas and Karma Bkra shis chos ’phel have used this categorisation for the Great Seal that leads to the spontaneous realisation of the nature of one’s mind. (Mathes 2006: 1 and Mathes in the present volume).

<sup>94</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje, Karma pa VIII, *Byang phyogs ’di na karma pa*, fol. 9b. It outlines the texts that the eighth Karma pa wrote up to his 44<sup>th</sup> year (fol.4a– fol.9b). For how he directly expounded (*bshad*) on these texts, see fol. 9b–10a. The other Great Seal teachings listed are Karma, ’Brug pa, ’Ba rom pa, ’Bri gung, Mtshal pa, Smar pa, and Khro phu.

<sup>95</sup> Mi bskyod rdo rje considers the teaching on the *dohās* as transmitted by Vajrapāṇi of India and A su of Nepal as one of three approaches to Maitrīpa’s *amanasikāra-madhyamaka*, calling it *alīkākāra-cittamātra-madhyamaka* (Mi bskyod rdo rje, *Dwags*, fol. 6a.). Mi bskyod rdo rje was certainly well acquainted with the collection of Indian Great Seal works compiled by the Seventh Karma pa (the *Rgya gzhung*) and had also studied under Karma ’Phrin las pa (1456-1539), who commented on Saraha’s *dohā*-cycles. Karma ’Phrin las pa studied the *dohās* under the Seventh Karma pa and the Ras chung Snyan rgyud master Khrul zhig Sangs rgyas bsam grub (15th century) before authoring his commentary (for Karma ’phrin las pa’s studies and teaching of Mi bskyod rdo rje see Rheingans 2004: 61–67, 75–85; for the significance of his *dohā* commentaries see Schaeffer 2000: 9ff.). There is no explicit mention of Karma ’Phrin las pa or Sangs rgyas mnyan pa transmitting Saraha’s *dohā* teachings to Mi bskyod rdo rje; and the eighth Karma pa—albeit quoting Saraha frequently—did not compose a formal commentary on any of the *dohās*.

“Great Seal” is used differently in the *dris lan* than in the aforementioned *Phyag rgya chen po'i byin rlabs kyi ngos 'dzin*, where it clearly designates mantric practices and their result, pointing to the various angles of explication (not uncommon for other masters, too). In the *Glo bur gyi dri ma* presented above, we have seen a more argumentative and elaborate approach, which basically emphasises the need to avoid any kind of fabrication or clinging in meditation. What has also become obvious from even the small number of works examined is the heated atmosphere, as reflected in the need to defend oneself from the critics.

It should be remembered that the *dris lan* and also many other minor instructions were marginal works taught to particular individuals, and thus may not reflect a standard view. This article is thus a preliminary step towards coming to terms with just a few of the complex sources, personalities, and transmissions involved. Only future research into the eighth Karma pa's life and works will determine how much his doctrinal presentations depended on the context of the addressee, and how much on considerations of genre and historical circumstance.<sup>96</sup>

It is difficult to come to terms historically with Saraha, let alone find a coherent system in his teaching.<sup>97</sup> It has also been noted of Sgam po pa's Great Seal that he was far from presenting a uniform system, and in Sgam po pa's case that most of his works were not written by him.<sup>98</sup> For the eighth Karma pa,

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<sup>96</sup> One would need in the future to thoroughly study the Karma pa's teaching in all minor commentaries and instructions (such as *khrid*, *man ngag*, *gdams ngag*, and *bslab bya*), comparing it with his statements in the larger treatises—especially his *Dgongs gcig* and *Sku gsum ngo sprod* volumes. We also are in need of an exhaustive study of his life in historical context.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. R. Jackson 2004: 3–53; Braitstein 2004: 16–39.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. D. Jackson 1994: 10n17; Kragh 2006. In Sgam po pa's case the first blocks were carved in 1520, 367 years after his death in 1153. In the case of the eighth Karma pa, however, the compilation of a manuscript collection was undertaken immediately after his death.

however, manifold contemporaneous material is at hand and the authorship is clearer,<sup>99</sup> as indicated by early *dkar chags* and title lists. This allows various avenues of research, a few of which have been pointed out in this essay. One future line of research will certainly be his contribution to the systematisations of the Ninth Karma pa and Bkra shis rnam rgyal (1513–87).<sup>100</sup> Though still a hypothesis, it seems that the eighth Karma pa was less systematic than his successors but at times very scholastic in his shorter instructions. But did he, through his commentaries, his founding of institutes, and his political impact, prepare the ground for these later approaches to the Great Seal? It will be fruitful to try to investigate these matters by taking into account as much as possible the textual genres involved, the concrete teaching situations, and the identities of the persons addressed.

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<sup>99</sup> For the concept of authorship in medieval Tibet, see Cabezón 2000.

<sup>100</sup> See Kapstein 2006: 58–60, on the systematisation of the siddhas' teachings in Tibet. See also Sobisch 2003 on the meditation manuals (*khrid yig*) of the fivefold Great Seal of the 'Bri gung pa.

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*Kaṃ tshang*

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TIBETAN INTEREST IN CHINESE VISUAL MODES:  
THE FOUNDATION OF THE TENTH KARMA PA'S  
“CHINESE-STYLE *THANG KA* PAINTING”

KARL DEBRECZENY

**1 Introduction**

The tenth Karma pa, Chos dbyings rdo rje (1604–74), enjoys a prominent place in indigenous accounts of Tibetan art history, in which he is renowned as a great artistic innovator, who is noted for developing, during his twenty-five-year long exile (1646/7–1673) in Lijiang 麗江, Yunnan, a unique style of painting that drew heavily on Chinese models. The vibrant local tradition of Sino-Tibetan painting, with its thorough mixing of Chinese and Tibetan visual modes, was already developed and flourishing in Lijiang at the time of Chos dbyings rdo rje's arrival in the mid-seventeenth century, and, I will suggest, has relevance to the transformation of his own painting career. This study will primarily address questions of the transmission, influence, and adaptation of Chinese visual modes in the tenth Karma pa's own unique visual idiom, by relating his works to specific Chinese painting schools and by exploring possible local sources for these innovations based on both visual and textual evidence.

**2 Life in Lijiang**

According to several prominent modern Tibetan scholars it was during his long exile in 'Jang Sa tham (Lijiang) that Chos dbyings rdo rje developed his unique “Chinese style of *thang ka* painting” (*rgya bris thang ka*), so it is to Lijiang, in remote northwestern Yunnan between Tibet and China, that we must look to

explore the roots of his distinctive style.<sup>1</sup> The local inhabitants of the kingdom of Lijiang, the Naxi 纳西, drew heavily on both Chinese and Tibetan painting traditions in the development of their own visual culture, and their rulers were enthusiastic patrons of both Chinese and Tibetan Buddhism, resulting in an interesting hybrid tradition of painting in terms of both style and subject matter.<sup>2</sup> While ethnically related to the Tibetans, by the Ming dynasty (1368–1644) the Naxi had closely allied themselves politically and culturally with the Chinese, depicting themselves as Chinese officials in official portraiture (Fig. 1), and keeping records in Chinese.

In the wake of Güüshi (Gushri) Khan's (1582–1655) invasion of Tibet in 1642 at the behest of the Fifth Dalai Lama (1617–1682), Chos dbyings rdo rje took shelter in Lijiang among the Karma pa's long-time patrons, the Naxi, for approximately twenty-five years.<sup>3</sup> This Mongol onslaught resulted in the scattering or slaughter of the entire Karma pa encampment and the almost total eclipse of the Karma Bka' brgyud tradition in Central Tibet. The Karma pa barely escaped with only his faithful attendant Kun tu bzang po, and eventually fled to Lijiang. The King of Lijiang, Mu Yi 木懿 (ruled 1624–1669, Fig. 1), took the Karma pa under his protection.<sup>4</sup> Mu Yi showed himself to be a staunch supporter of the Karma pa, fending off pursuing Mongol armies, retaliating against local Dge lugs pa institutions, and even providing funds to reestablish

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<sup>1</sup> Shakabpa 1976: vol. 1, 111, and Dkon mchog bstan 'dzin 1994: 111. According to Dkon mchog bstan 'dzin (personal communication, 1 May 2003), he took the term *rgya bris thang ka* from a short history of Tibetan art, the *Bod kyi ri mo byung tshul cung zad gleng ba*, written by the court painter to the former Si tu at Dpal spungs Monastery, Thang bla tshe dbang (1902–89).

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of this local Lijiang painting tradition, see Debreczeny 2007 and 2009b.

<sup>3</sup> On the history of Naxi-Karma Bka' brgyud relations see Dy-Liacco 2005.

<sup>4</sup> For Mu Yi's biography see: *Mushi huanpu* 木氏宦譜, p. 77 (the official Confucian-style biographies of the Mu rulers written in Chinese); Rock 1947: 131–36.

the Karma pa encampment as it had existed in the old days.<sup>5</sup> During his long residency in Lijiang, Chos dbyings rdo rje founded numerous temples, ordained some one thousand Naxi as monks, and went so far as to recognise a high incarnation (the Sixth Rgyal tshab, 1659–1698) in the son of a local Naxi woman, a boy who it seems was in fact his own son, creating even deeper ties between Lijiang and the Karma Bka' brgyud.



Fig. 1. The King of Lijiang, Mu Yi (1608-1692), official portrait.

The date of the Karma pa's arrival in the Kingdom of Lijiang varies between circa 1642 and 1649 in Tibetan and Chinese sources. However, a careful comparison of Tibetan and Chinese sources with dateable events, such

<sup>5</sup> Gtsang Mkhan chen: 200, 204.



as the death of his patron, the local king Mu Zeng 木增, in 1646 just as the Karma pa approached the Kingdom of Lijiang, places his arrival in 1646/7. The tenth Karma pa's impact on Lijiang was significant enough to warrant an account of his life there in the local Chinese gazetteer, the *Lijiang fu zhi lue* 麗江府志略, written in 1742, about seventy years after Chos dbying rdo rje's departure:

[His name] "Chos dbyings rdo rje" translates as the words "Dharmadhātuvajra (vajra of the Dharma realm)." In the *ji chou* year (1649) of the Shunzhi reign (1644–61) he arrived from Tibet and lived at Jietuolin Monastery.<sup>6</sup> He preached the dharma to all, [but] in the beginning [the people] did not believe or admire him. It happened that one night he disappeared from the place [where he lived], and his disciple followed him to Xiyuansi. At that place [the disciple found him] discussing the dharma with a bronze statue of [the arhat] Piṇḍola, each asking the other questions and answering in turn. [The disciple] was immediately astonished by it. Later Xiyuan [temple] burnt down, and only the Piṇḍola statue was not damaged. Wu [Sangu] wanted to rebel.<sup>7</sup> He prepared gift(s) to welcome

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<sup>6</sup> From this account we thus learn that, at least early on in his life in exile in Lijiang, the tenth Karma pa lived at Jietuolin 解脱林 Monastery, more commonly known as Fuguosi 福國寺. Jietuolin (Tib: 'Og min rnam gling), was established as the first Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Lijiang in 1601 by the previous ruler of Lijiang, Mu Zeng 木增 (ruled 1598–1624/1646), and bestowed the name Fuguosi in the Tianqi period (1621–27). Jietuolin was located on Zhishan Mountain overlooking Baisha 白沙 village, the location of Xiyuansi, where the incident of talking to the miraculous statue, recounted in the gazetteer, occurred.

<sup>7</sup> Wu Sangu 吳三桂 (1612–1678) ruled Yunnan and Guizhou as one of the "Three Feudatories," with his base in Kunming. Wu's revolt against the Qing was the last serious internal threat to the establishment of Manchu rule in China. In expanding his kingdom in Yunnan and Sichuan, Wu Sangu allied with local chieftains and Tibetans against the Qing government and ordered the Karma pa's patron Mu Yi to secretly

[Chos dbyings rdo rje] to come [to Kunming], but [the Karma pa] resolutely refused [to go, and] returned west [to Tibet].

處音都知，譯言“法界金剛”也。順治己丑年，自西藏來，住錫解脫林。為四眾說法，初未信服。嘗夜失所在，其徒尋至西園寺，方與銅像賓頭盧尊者談法，彼此互答始驚異之。後西園災，惟賓頭盧像不燬。吳逆將叛備禮來迎，固卻，西歸。<sup>8</sup>

It is interesting to note that in this brief Chinese account of Chos dbyings rdo rje's twenty-five-year life in Lijiang what is considered worthy of recording is an account of his relationship with a miraculous image, and specifically an arhat, a theme that, as we will see, figures prominently in his own artistic production.

### 3 The anchor: Securely signed and dated paintings

In the Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum 麗江東巴文化博物館 is a previously unidentified set of seven paintings of Śākyamuni and the Sixteen Arhats (Plates 1–7,<sup>9</sup> Figs. 2–4) executed and inscribed by the tenth Karma pa's own hand.<sup>10</sup> The basis of my identification of this set as being by Chos dbyings rdo rje is—first and foremost—an inscription in gold clerical script (*dbu can*) at the top centre of the central image of Śākyamuni (Plate 1) which makes his authorship quite clear:

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work with the Tibetans, but only Mu Yi remained loyal to the imperial government, creating great animosity between the two.

<sup>8</sup> *Lijiang fu zhi lue*, p. 180. Since this was written in 1743 by the first Qing governor as part of a larger project to incorporate Lijiang into the Qing empire, the Karma pa being depicted as resolutely rejecting the “traitor” Wu Sangui, is part of the project of asserting Qing legitimacy and should be seen in that light. (See note 7 above.)

<sup>9</sup> The accompanying Plates are reproduced in colour at the end of the book.

<sup>10</sup> A brief discussion of this set with my initial findings was first published in Debreczeny (2003). Note that images 8e and 8f were inadvertently switched.

At the portentous sign of the time [called] “all-possessing,” the Iron Male Mouse Year (1660), [concerning] this complete set of seven [paintings] of the reflected images of the Sixteen Elders, who were commanded by the Tathāgata Śākyamuni to protect the dharma of the holy teaching of the Buddha, the Supramundane Victor (Bhagavat), in the glorious field of merit of all deities and men, and to remain personally in the world without passing into nirvāṇa, and the principal [image of] the great Śākyamuni: for the sake of the wishes of the Prince Karma Phun tshogs dbang phyug, who possesses a wealth of faith, the one practised in the arts who is called “Lokeśvara,” and who is praised as the tenth to be blessed with the name “Karma pa,” Chos dbyings rdo rje, painted these in their entirety by his own hand. Moreover, by this act may unsurpassable benefit and happiness arise for all beings led by the patron. May it be auspicious!<sup>11</sup>

The modest phrasing used to refer to the tenth Karma pa here, “praised as the tenth one blessed with the name ‘Karma pa,’” suggests that the inscription was indeed written by Chos dbyings rdo rje himself. If this inscription had been added by someone else later as an attribution to the tenth Karma pa, one would expect the use of a more honourific address, like those found on the two inscribed paintings previously published, which both refer to him as the

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<sup>11</sup> *kun ldan lcag pho byi ba lo'i dus kyi dge mtshan la sangs rgyas bcom ldan 'das kyi bstan pa dam pa'i chos skyong zhing / lha mi kun gyi bsod nams kyi dpal gyi zhing du de bzhin gshegs pa shākya thub pas bka' bsgos te mya ngan las mi 'da' bar 'jig rten na mngon sum du bzhugs pa 'phags pa gnas brtan bcu drug / gtso bo thub pa chen po'i sku brnyan bdun tshar 'di ni dad pa'i nor ldan rgyal sras karma phun tshogs dbang phyugi (= phug gi) bzhed don du / bzo sbyangs 'jig rten dbang phyug zhes karma pa'i mtshan gyis byin gyis brlabs pa bcu par bsnags pa chos dbyings rdo rjes ri mo'i skye mched yongs su rdzogs pa pyag bris su gnang ba 'dis kyang sbyin bdag gi thog drang 'gro ba kun la phan bde bla na med par 'byung bar gyur cig / maṅgalam /.*

“venerable” (*rje btsun*) Chos dbyings rdo rje.<sup>12</sup> Further, ’Jig rten dbang phyug (Lokeśvara) is how the Tenth Karma pa refers to himself in his autobiographical writings such as the *Wish Granting Cow*, reaffirming his authorship of these paintings.

A close examination of both Tibetan and Chinese sources corroborates that the recipient of the set of paintings named in the inscription was the crown prince of Lijiang at the time, Mu Jing 木靖 (1628–71).<sup>13</sup> While Mu Yi, the ruler of Lijiang in 1660 when this set of painting was completed, had four sons (Mu Jing, Mu You 木繇 (柚), Mu Zhan 木旃, and Mu Xi 木溪),<sup>14</sup> the son referred to here is likely Mu Yi’s eldest son and legal heir, Mu Jing, who is the only ruler in the official Chinese Confucian-style Mu family histories to be mentioned for his devotion to Buddhism—remarked upon also in this painting’s inscription—and specifically his study and mastery of Buddhist classics.<sup>15</sup>

Mu Jing’s avid patronage of Buddhism is recorded in several other local Chinese sources, such as the gazetteer for the local pilgrimage site of Chicken Foot Mountain, the *Jizu shan zhi* 鸡足山志, where it is recorded that he built a grand stūpa, the “Zunsheng tayuan” 尊胜塔院, on Wenbi Mountain 文笔山 below the Mu family’s main temple on Chicken Foot Mountain, Xitansi

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<sup>12</sup> von Schroeder 2001 and Stoddard 1997. David Jackson (1996: 254) provides a transcription and translates the inscription on the painting published by Stoddard.

<sup>13</sup> Listed among the tenth Karma pa’s disciples is a Rgyal sras Kar phun, an abbreviation of Rgyal sras Karma Phun tshogs dbang phyug, who is immediately preceded by the Sa tham (that is Lijiang) *Iha btsun* Karma Rin chen, suggesting that this *rgyal sras* (or “son of the king”) Kar [ma] phun [tshogs] is also from Lijiang. (Si tu Pañ chen, p. 348; and Karma nges don, p. 376.) For a more detailed discussion on the identity of the prince and circumstances of the bestowal, see Debreczeny 1997: 305–10).

<sup>14</sup> Mu Xi, Mu Ying’s youngest son, became a monk: *Sa tham rgyal po’i sras chung ba karma mi pham bstan pa*. Ldan ma ’jam dbyangs tshul khriims, p. 186. Also see p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Mushi Huanpu*, p. 37 (xylograph edition pp. 55–56); Rock: 136–37.

悉檀寺.<sup>16</sup> The crown prince's generous patronage and favoured status is also detailed in Tibetan sources such as the Karma pa's poetical biography, an important eyewitness account written by the Karma pa's personal attendant.<sup>17</sup> Mu Jing only ruled as king (or *tusi* 土司 in Chinese records) of Lijiang from 1669 to 1671. He was thrust into office after his father Mu Yi was arrested by Wu Sangui, but died before his imperial patent of office arrived. In 1660 Mu Jing would have been the crown prince (*rgyal sras*) referred to in the painting's inscription.<sup>18</sup> Thus, it is likely Mu Jing who is depicted kneeling in the bottom left of the central inscribed painting, where he is seen holding an incense brazier and dressed in Chinese court robes and silk cap—the same Chinese Ming-dynasty court attire in which the Mu family had themselves depicted in their official portraiture (Fig. 1).

The specific circumstances surrounding the bestowal of this set of paintings can be reconstructed by combining accounts in several of Chos dbyings rdo rje's biographies, which record that this set of paintings was given to prince Karma Phun tshogs as one of many gifts to members of the royal family and high incarnations attending new year celebrations provided by the king.<sup>19</sup> In the more detailed biography by Si tu Pan chen the actual bestowal of the paintings is recorded:

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<sup>16</sup> *Jizu shan zhi*, ch. 5, p. 238; ch. 10, p. 473.

<sup>17</sup> For example in Gtsang Mkhan chen, p. 202.

<sup>18</sup> This hypothesis that Prince Karma Phun tshogs dbang phyug is Mu Jing is confirmed by a recently published biography of the tenth Karma pa that mentions the “King of Lijiang Karma Phun tshogs” following the “King of Lijiang Karma 'Chi med lha dbang,” which we know to be Mu Jing's father Mu Yi. Ldan ma 'jam dbyangs tshul khriims, pp. 186–87.

<sup>19</sup> Karma Nges don's biography of the tenth Karma pa (pp. 371 & 367) states that in 1658 the Karma pa was living in Lijiang, and two years later, during the Iron Mouse New Year's celebration (1660), he was treated to entertainment provided by the king of Lijiang, suggesting that the tenth Karma pa was in the Kingdom of Lijiang in 1660, when this set of paintings was done. The Kingdom of Lijiang encompassed a large area

New Year [of 1661] arrived. To the mother of [his son] the Rgyal tshab incarnation he gave paintings of the Sixteen Elders painted by his own hand. He tonsured the king of Lijiang's youngest son, Karma Mi pham bstan pa (Mu Xi), into the priesthood. Having thoroughly given him the "instruction pointing at the nature of mind," he went on retreat. To the minister of religious affairs (*chos blon*), Karma Bstan skyong, he gave a painting of Cakrasaṃvara in sexual union painted by his own hand and the visualization and mantra-recitation scriptural transmission of that [deity]. To the minister/supervisor of finance (*dngul dbon* = *dpon*?) Karma Bsam 'grub he gave a set of seven paintings of the Sixteen Elders and a guru-yoga [initiation]. To Prince Karma Tshe dbang rin chen snying po he gave such things as paintings of the Sixteen Elders and a *thang ka* of Vajravārāhī painted by his own hand and the [spiritual] instruction (*lha khrid*) of Vajravārāhī. To Prince Karma Phun tshogs dbang phyug (Mu Jing) he gave paintings of the Sixteen Elders painted by his own hand. To the [Chinese] monks of Chicken Foot Mountain he made monetary donations.<sup>20</sup>

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beyond its modern county borders and included Rgyal thang (Zhongdian), where it is also recorded that the Karma pa spent some time, e.g. in 1658, when he spent a summer retreat there, and 1660, when he made a number of monumental sculptures.

<sup>20</sup> Unpublished biography of Chos dbyings rdo rje, fol. 186b, lines 5–7: *lo sar gnang / rgyal tshab pa'i ma yum la gnas bcu'i sku thang phyag ris gnang / sa tham rgyal po'i sras chung ba karma mi pham bstan pa'i nyi ma khyim nas khyim med par rab byung mdzad / sems kyi ngo sprod zhib par gnang nas ri khrod la? nar bzhugs / chos blon karma bstan skyong la bde mchog lhan skyes kyi sku thang phyag ris dang / de'i sgom bzlas kyi ljags lung mdzad/ dngul dbon (= dpon?) karma bsam 'grub la gnas bcu bdun thang phyag ris dang / bla ma'i rnal 'byor gnang / rgyal sras karma tshe dbang rin chen snying por gnas bcu dang / phag mo'i sku thang phyag ris dang / phag mo lha khrid sogs gnang / rgyal sras karma phun tshogs dbang phyug la gnas bcu'i sku thang phyag ris gnang / ri bo bya rkang gi hwa shang rnam la dngul 'gyed (= dngul gyi sku 'gyed) mdzad /.*

Also in attendance were other incarnations, such as the Zhwa dmar, Si tu, Dpa' bo, Phag mo Zhabs drung, the Rtse lha incarnation, and Zhwa sgom rin po che, suggesting that the kingdom of Lijiang was indeed both a haven and centre of activity for the Karma Bka' brgyud in the seventeenth century. Notice that in this account the tenth Karma pa gives paintings of this same theme of the Sixteen Arhats four times on a single occasion, underscoring the importance of this genre to his artistic production while in Lijiang.



Fig. 2. Viewing Painting, central detail.

The inscription also names the subject of the set as “Śākyamuni and the Sixteen Elders” in seven paintings, with Śākyamuni at the set’s centre. Thus we know that this is a complete set. Unusually for Tibetan painting, the figures of this inscribed set are arranged into themes, or group social activities: eating and reading (Plate 2); viewing paintings (Plate 3); composing calligraphy in a scholarly garden (Plate 5) (notice the servant grinding ink at bottom left while the arhat sits with brush poised); and most unusual of all in Tibetan painting, heating tea in a waterscape (Plate 7).



Fig. 3. Rabbit detail.



The paintings from the 1660 Lijiang set focus on mundane acts rather than overt supernatural images, with a special emphasis on food and eating (Plates 2, 4, 6). One possible model or visual source of inspiration for this theme of arhats eating is the Snar thang set “The Sixteen Elders Invited to a Midday Meal by Nam mkha’ grags of Mchims,” which the Karma pa first copied in 1629;<sup>21</sup> however, as this work is not known to survive, we can only guess at its contents by its suggestive name. This focus on sustenance may also stem to some degree from Chos dbyings rdo rje’s own experience. The tenth Karma pa went hungry several times in his life, such as when he fled Mongol troops in the mid 1640s, and again when traveling in his home country of ’Go log around 1650, after being robbed of all his possessions and forced to beg. Sustenance also becomes important in his biographies, where he makes a point of feeding not only poor people and birds (something, it is said, that he did daily), but even old dogs and horses, which he sought out for that purpose.<sup>22</sup> When closely examining the Lijiang paintings one notices that not only are the arhats depicted eating, but so too are the animals, such as the monkey eating rice off a leaf (Fig. 4), or an adorable little rabbit with his own brimming bowl (Fig. 3). In the background, attendants wash radishes and prepare mushrooms, a local southwestern summer delicacy. In this set of arhats the tenth Karma pa breaks away from both the Tibetan iconic formula and from the mix of supernatural and mundane that characterises the genre in Chinese painting, as we can see in Ningbo works by such Song painters as Zhou Jichang, “Lohans Watching Relics Distributed” (in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston), and Lin Tinggui, “Luohan Laundering” (Plate 8), in the Freer Gallery in Washington, D.C.).

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<sup>21</sup> Unpublished biography of Chos dbyings rdo rje, fol. 170b, lines 2–3. Shakabpa (1976: 111), states that he made a model or pattern (*dpe mdzad*) of these paintings. That same year the Karma pa designed the sketch and colour scheme for his own set of the Sixteen Arhats for the first time. Unpublished biography, fol. 171a, line 1.

<sup>22</sup> Gtsang Mkhan chen, p. 110; Dy-Liacco: 2005: 54.



Fig. 4. Monkey and birds eating, detail.

#### 4 Chinese models

What kinds of Chinese models was the Karma pa attracted to in Lijiang? What formed the basis of his new style? Local tradition recounts that during the Tianqi period (1621–27) the local ruler of Lijiang, Mu Zeng, invited a painter from Ningbo named Ma Xiaoxian 馬肖仙 to paint wall paintings at the local pilgrimage site at Chicken Foot Mountain, and then to participate in numerous wall painting projects in Lijiang.<sup>23</sup> When the Karma pa arrived in Lijiang, he saw Ma's murals, and very much admired their superb artistry. Afterwards Ma Xiaoxian was invited to the Karma pa's court, and taken to Tibet to paint wall paintings at the Karma pa's seat at Mtshur phu Monastery. Ma is said to have stayed continuously for over ten years in Tibet, where he presumably served as a painter in Chos dbyings rdo rje's court and even visited India before returning

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<sup>23</sup> *Naxizu shi*, p. 337; *Lijiang Baisha bihua*, p. 13; and Mu Lichun (2003): 62.

to Lijiang, where he passed away. Ma Xiaoxian's biography also appears in the local Chinese gazetteer, which reads:

Ma Xiaoxian was a native of Jiangnan. He was skilled at depicting landscapes, which attained the divine class. All of his flowers and figure paintings are refined and marvelous. The *cognoscenti* praised them as "Ma's immortal paintings." He was renowned in the "western regions" [Tibet] and traveled extensively there for several years, later returning to Lijiang. The day he died, people saw that his fingers had signs, or so it is said.

馬尚仙江南人，工圖畫山水，臻神品，花卉人物，靡不精妙，識者称为馬仙畫。西域聞其名，延去數載，後復歸麗。死之日，人見其指頭有字云。<sup>24</sup>

That Ma Xiaoxian was said to be from Ningbo 寧波 is significant, as that international port city, near Hangzhou in Zhejiang 浙江 on the east coast of China, is well known to have been a production centre for Buddhist painting in China, and to have exported a great deal of Buddhist art to Japan and Korea.<sup>25</sup> Ningbo was also an important religious centre, and just to the north is the popular pilgrimage site Putuoshan 普陀山, the dwelling place of the bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara. The rulers of Lijiang were patrons of temples on Putuoshan, and as Ningbo was a way-station on the pilgrimage route to this famous site, this patronage was perhaps the source of Lijiang's recruitment of painters all the way from Ningbo (over 2,000 km away). It is also interesting to note in this context that the rulers of Lijiang worked closely with the hereditary military governors of Yunnan, the Mu 沐 family (Mu Sheng 沐晟, not to be confused with the Mu 木 rulers of Lijiang), who were themselves prominent patrons of famous professional painters who came from Zhejiang, like Dai Jin

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<sup>24</sup> *Lijiangfu zhi lue*, p. 181.

<sup>25</sup> On the regional Ningbo tradition see: Lippit 2001, Huang 2002, Seinosuke 2001, Toshio 1977, and Nara National Museum 2009.

戴进 (1388–1462), who moved to Kunming to work for them.<sup>26</sup> Perhaps their Chinese governmental superiors provided a model for the importation of Zhejiang painters to Yunnan.

Since no paintings by Ma Xiaoxian have been reliably identified, and almost all of the surviving paintings of the Ningbo tradition are from the Southern Song and Yuan dynasties, it is very difficult to generalize about Ningbo painting much later in the Ming. That notwithstanding, Ningbo paintings (Plate 8) tend to be of pigmented figures standing in predominantly ink monochrome landscapes, with subtle accents of colour in leaves, birds, and flowers, thus highlighting the figural theme of the paintings. Also a signature of Ningbo painting was an attention to richness of detail in aspects of the depiction of elements of seemingly less iconographic importance, such as cloth patterns or other decorative elements.<sup>27</sup> These same general characteristics could just as easily be used to describe the signed set of Śākyamuni and the Sixteen Arhats by the tenth Karma pa considered herein (e.g. Fig. 3), which suggests that Chos dbyings rdo rje looked to paintings of the Ningbo region—perhaps through the works of, or even direct instruction by, Ma Xiaoxian—for his distinctively new Chinese style of painting, which was quite unlike earlier Tibetan adaptations of this genre.

The compositions of Chos dbyings rdo rje's arhat paintings closely resemble those of Ningbo paintings of the same genre, where the figures appear to interact with each other in social groups—such as those engaged in the scholarly activity of appreciating art (Plate 3), whereas in Tibetan paintings they almost always appear as individual iconic presentations, that is, as iconographically distinct stand-alone figures. Similarly, the tenth Karma pa's

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<sup>26</sup> See: Mary Ann Rogers, "Visions of Grandeur: The Life and Art of Dai Jin" in Barnhart 1993: 147–59.

<sup>27</sup> See: Lippit 2001, Huang 2002, Seinosuke 2001, and Toshio 1977.



Fig. 5. Lin Liang. "Wild Fowl," landscape detail.

(After Liu Zhen, fig. 21.)

sparing use of colour (mostly reserved for birds and flowers), in open, largely monochrome landscapes highlighting his pigmented figures, resonates well with conventions of the Ningbo tradition, but is a visual strategy largely alien to Tibetan painting. Furthermore, the sub-genre of waterscapes (Plate 7), completely unheard of in Tibetan painting, is directly associated with the Jiangnan region within the larger genre of Chinese landscape painting. The visual cues alerting us that the landscape in this arhat painting is in fact a waterscape are numerous: the standing figures hold up their robes with their feet sunken from view, waterfowl land in the background, and frogs tumble and cavort among water reeds in the foreground. Lin Liang 林良, famous for the naturalism of his inky birds, especially in such marshy waterscapes as the handscroll "Wild Fowl" (Fig. 5), makes a good point of comparison to the tenth Karma pa's own adaptation of the genre in his arhat paintings. The short, lively brushstrokes Lin Liang often employed to animate his paintings also

suggest another possible model Chos dbyings rdo rje may have looked to in developing his own hybrid style.

This brings us to the strongest visual evidence linking Chos dbyings rdo rje's Chinese style of *thang ka* painting to the Jiangnan regional traditions: the appearance of his birds and flowers—one of the most striking features of his paintings. His handling of the brush in background landscape elements and birds often makes use of a 'boneless' technique, in Chinese *mogu* 沒骨 ("boneless" being an allusion to its lack of structural outlines), suggesting familiarity with, or even training in, Chinese painting techniques related to the Piling 毘陵 tradition. Piling painting was native to Changzhou, in Jiangsu, and is especially known for its distinctive highly naturalistic depiction of birds and flowers in a boneless manner. Perhaps this is what attracted Chos dbyings rdo rje, an avid bird lover, to Jiangnan painting. The tenth Karma pa's employment of largely ink monochrome landscapes with touches of brilliant colour, especially punctuations of a startling opaque white for herons, cranes, and flowers, is reminiscent of Lü Ji 呂紀 (act. 1475–1503), a Ming dynasty professional painter from Ningbo who specialized in bird and flower paintings.<sup>28</sup>

Within Chinese painting conventions, a group of arhats might be depicted with a pair of cranes, symbols of longevity borrowed from the Daoist sage genre, but such a profusion of birds (Plate 7) is unknown in the Chinese arhat genre, and is a unique innovation by the tenth Karma pa. It would seem that in his own depictions Chos dbyings rdo rje combined the secular and religious traditions of art from Jiangnan: the bird-and-flower painting of Piling and the arhat genre. That Chos dbyings rdo rje chose to depict arhats in bird-scapes, when he was so well known for surrounding himself with birds, further points to an intimate self-identification with his painted subjects. It is recorded

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<sup>28</sup> See for instance: "Cranes by a Rushing Stream" or "Nine Herons by a Willow Tree" in Barnhart 1993: Cat. 56 and 60.



Fig. 6. Lü Ji. “Two Ducks.” Ink and color on silk; 25 x 52 cm. Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 1115). (After *Lijiang shu hua xuan*, Pl. 21.)

in his biographies that shortly after arriving in Lijiang, Chos dbyings rdo rje “examined many thousands of [Chinese] paintings on silk” (*si thang*) in the extensive painting collection in the King of Lijiang’s palace.<sup>29</sup> The specific kind of Chinese paintings the tenth Karma pa might have studied during his long exile in Lijiang is suggested by a painting in the Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (Fig. 6) bearing the signature of none other than the very same Ningbo bird and flower painter Lü Ji, with an inscription stating that this painting had been collected by the Mu lords of Lijiang many generations ago.<sup>30</sup> This inscribed Lü Ji painting suggests that the tenth Karma pa may have had access to models

<sup>29</sup> Unpublished biography, fol. 179b, line 3: *bhā she’i grong gi skyed tshal du bzhugs sgar phab / ... pho brang nang gi si thang stong phrag mang po ’dug pa rnam s gzig*s.

<sup>30</sup> The inscription is dated 1891, and the painting itself is comparable to Lü Ji’s “Sleeping Ducks” in the National Palace Museum, Taipei (see Barnhart 1993: 214).

of some of the top Chinese painters of his day through the local rulers' collection, and thus directly links his work to theirs.

Also, the large and well defined collection of Chinese painting put together in the Ming period by the Mu 沐 military governors of Yunnan in nearby Kunming contributed to the larger environment in which ideas about canonical painting were being formed in Yunnan at that time. This important local collection, with whose owners the rulers of Lijiang had an official relationship, likely informed them of proper models for their own collection of Chinese painting, and gives us some sense of the proximate models to which the tenth Karma pa might have been exposed. The collection was not only large but also of very high quality, and contained a substantial number of highly naturalistic Song-period bird and flower paintings by famous Chinese artists.<sup>31</sup>

An obvious question is how much the tenth Karma pa understood about different Chinese artists, styles, and their associations. A sophisticated grasp of Chinese painting is suggested in the Chinese-style scroll painting of cranes being admired by a pair of arhats (Plate 3), which calls to mind the regal birds of the early Ming court painter Bian Wenjin 边文进 (c. 1354–1428). Depicting arhats in the scholarly pursuit of viewing paintings is not in itself unusual, as can be seen in a painting from the Daitokuji set of Five Hundred Lohan (Plate 9). However, the Chinese convention is to depict the saints looking at a religious icon, such as the Guanyin depicted in Plate 9 (a combination to be expected in Tiantai- and Pure Land-related religious works of the Ningbo region), and not the secular theme of bird and flower paintings that the Karma pa chose for his composition. Notice in the Karma pa's painting (Fig. 2) that the arhat holding the top of the painting grasps a brush in his right hand, suggesting that the arhat may in fact be the author of this painting of cranes, closely identifying the tenth Karma pa, himself a monastic incarnation and

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<sup>31</sup> On reconstructing the Kunming Mu family painting collection based on collectors' seals, see Lin Li'na. I would like to thank Jenny Purtle for suggesting this route of inquiry.



painter of birds, with his arhat figures. As with many incarnation lineages, the Karma pas trace their previous lives back to an arhat, one of the original recipients of the Buddha's doctrine, which contributes to the sense of self-identification with the tenth Karma pa's painted subjects. Also notice the Tibetan-style cap worn by the young boy attendant, giving this otherwise Chinese-style painting a subtly Tibetan identity. More than a collection of simple icons, this set of paintings has a very personal feeling in its idiosyncrasies, and seems reflective of the Karma pa's own experiences during his often sad and tumultuous life. It is imbued with a yearning to take refuge in an idealized simple and bucolic life, far from the war and political chaos in Central Tibet from which the Karma pa fled. One senses he must have been close to the recipient of these very personal paintings, which are self-identifying, almost autobiographical, and so unlike the usual Tibetan conventions of this genre.

From a formal perspective, one of the most distinctive aspects of the tenth Karma pa's painting is in his handling of the brush, where he employs short, quick, controlled lines to suggest shape and give his forms a lively feeling, a brush technique known in the Chinese tradition as *zhanbi* 顫筆, or "tremulous brush." This last quality is especially distinctive to Chos dbyings rdo rje's hand, and not at all part of typical Tibetan painting conventions, which tend to emphasize outlining and complete forms. Close observation of details, such as in the leaves above the rabbit and the knotted wood fence in the Hwa shang painting (Fig. 3), are clear examples that can aid us in determining works by his hand.

### **5 Attributed works: Questions of style vs. authorship**

This brings us to the question of style versus authorship. Within different traditions authorship can mean many things: works by one's own hand, or in a style one has invented, or according to one's design, or even by virtue of one's agency in establishing workshops. In art works by a prominent religious figure notions of authorship can also assume a further complicating sacred dimension,

much as in Medieval and Byzantine icons identified as “by the hand of Saint Luke,” where it is often the original prototype or template for a work that is used as its measure of authenticity, sharing in or even expanding the original work’s efficacy. The phrase contained in the inscription of the 1660 set in Lijiang discussed above—*yongs su rdzogs pa phyag bris*, “painted by his own hand *in their entirety*,” that is painted from start to finish, as opposed to just doing the outlines and then having others fill in the colours and background, a practice common in Tibetan painting production—suggests that other works by the Karma pa, maybe many others, were made under collaborative conditions. Textual evidence supports this reading, as it is recorded in the tenth Karma pa’s biographies that he set up workshops (*las grwa*) for the production of images, including paintings of arhats, and worked with other artists on collaborative projects several times earlier in his career.<sup>32</sup> For instance, in 1637 at Rtse lha sgang:

He collaborated with several tens of artisans to make images (*sku brnyan*) of the holy Sixteen Elders painted by his own hand that had particularly wonderful local elements (*yul nyams*); a silk curtain (*yol ba*) in three parts (*ling tshe*); pillar banners (*ka rgyan*) with such things as the eight auspicious symbols on them; and *thang ka* covers (*gdung kheb*) with the twelve offering goddesses on them.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> In 1637 he also founded a workshop with ten sculptors (*bzo bo*) in Dga’ ma mo (*bzo bo bcu phrag gcig gis las grwa tshugs*). Unpublished biography, fol. 173a. Also cited by von Schroeder 2001: 801.

<sup>33</sup> Unpublished biography of Chos dbyings rdo rje, fol. 174a, lines 6–7: *’phags pa’i gnas brtan bcu drug gi sku brnyan yul nyams khyad par can yod pa phyag ris dang / phyag si gnang ba’i yol ba ling tshe gsum pa / ka rgyan zung la bkra shis pa’i rtags brgyad sogs yod pa / gdung kheb la mchod lha bcu gnyis yod pa rnams bzo bo bcu phrag gis phyag g.yug zhus te bsgubs par mdzad /*.

While Lijiang is not specifically mentioned in connection with any workshops, he did establish another one in 1661, the very year he bestowed the inscribed set, in the nearby town of Rgyal thang (which was under Lijiang rule), for the building of a temple, and presumably for the making of images to ornament it: “He established a workshop (*las grwa tshugs*) for the building of this Po ta la, the chapel where reside such images as the Buddhas of the Five Families, now called Chapel of the Buddhas of the Five Families of Rgyal thang.”<sup>34</sup>

Specific visual evidence of workshop production in the figural style of the tenth Karma pa in the paintings themselves can be found in a Śākyamuni from a set of “Deeds of the Buddha” (Plate 10, Fig. 7) where Tibetan artists’ colour notations are clearly visible (Fig. 7). These colour notations, used by the master to indicate the colour scheme to the painters working under him, is a common device used in Tibetan workshop conditions. This, along with the relatively crude handling of the pigments themselves, suggests that while the Karma pa may have designed this set, he did not paint them. We also have supporting textual evidence that he designed paintings on this very theme. For instance, during the New Year festivities of the Wood Horse Year (1654): “Once again he began to draw/sketch the Twelve Deeds (*mdzad [pa] bcu [gnyis]*) [of the Buddha].” This quote suggests that perhaps this design was in-

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<sup>34</sup> Unpublished biography of Chos dbyings rdo rje, fol. 187a, lines 2–4: *da lta rgyal thang rigs lnga lha khang zer ba sogs rgyal ba rigs lnga’i sku sogs bzhugs pa’i gtsug lag khang po tā la ’di bzhengs pa’i las grwa tshugs* /. This chapel was likely built to house the images of the larger than life-size Kashmiri style Buddhas of the Five Families he cast the previous year (1660): “His attendant (Kun tu bzang po) urged him, and, in the particular manner (style) of the land of Kashmir, the Karma pa made images of the Buddhas of the Five Families a little over human size, Buddhas of the Three Times, and Cittaviśramaṇa Avalokiteśvara a little over human size.” Unpublished biography, fol. 186a, line 7–186b, line 1: *rim gro pas bskul te rgyal ba rigs lnga’i sku yul kha che’i bzo khyad ji lta ba mi tshad lhag tsam dang dus gsum sangs rgyas dang spyen ras gzigs sems nyid ngal bso’i sku yang mi tshad lhag tsam bzhengs* /.

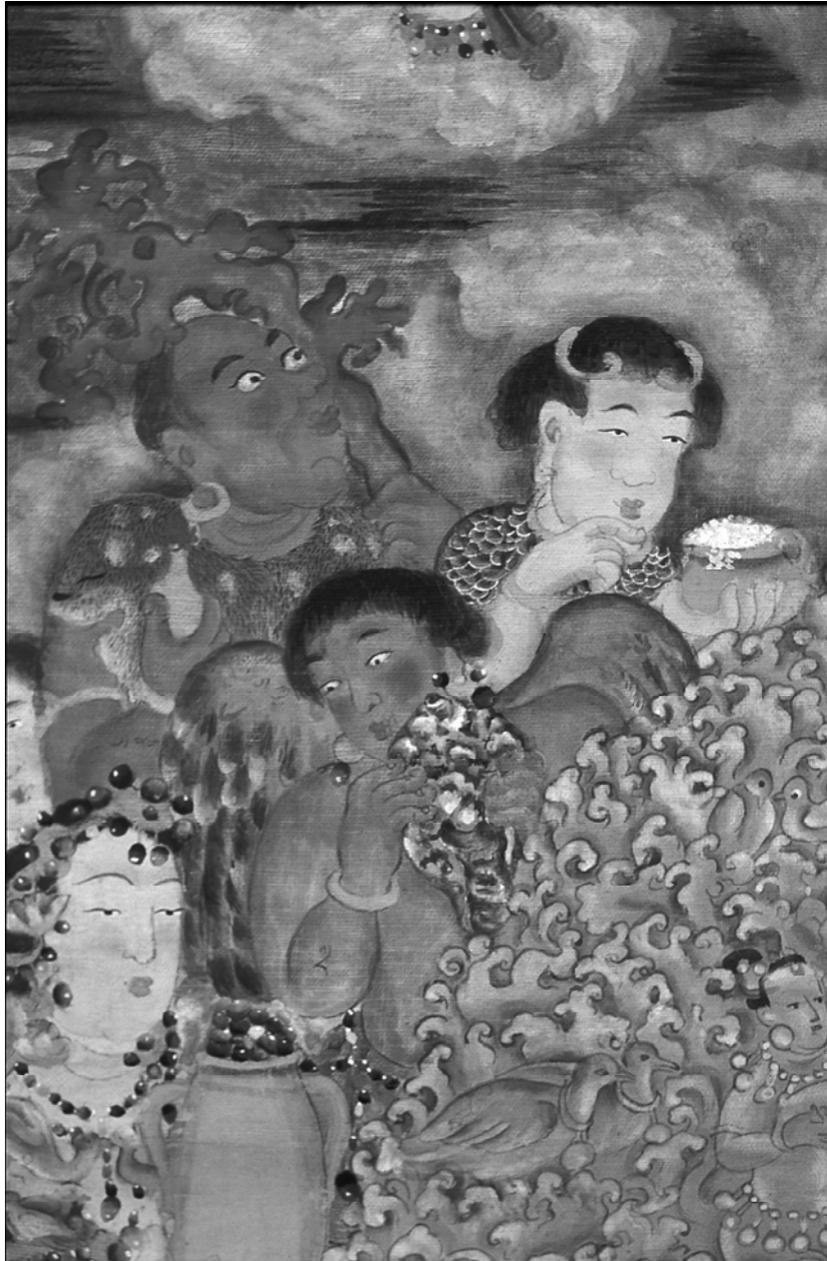


Fig. 7. Notations detail from Deeds of the Buddha. Dpal-spungs Monastery.  
(Photograph courtesy of Matthieu Ricard, Shechen Archives.)

tended for others to finish, as in a set of such paintings at Dpal spungs.<sup>35</sup> The need to specify that he alone painted the 1660 set in their entirety, combined with records of his previously producing images with groups of artists, strongly implies that such was the case. Chos dbyings rdo rje's very distinctive brushwork, identified and isolated here in works painted solely by his hand, is useful in evaluating other works attributed to him, and invites a classic formal analysis, using the 1660 set as a basis for comparison.

### 6 The Lijiang set of seventeen

Another set of “Śākyamuni and the Sixteen Arhats” (Plates 11-15) in the same Lijiang Museum, which fits Chos dbyings rdo rje's general visual idiom, raises these very suspicions of possible workshop production. This set of seventeen paintings is much more conventional in relation to the Chinese arhat genre than the inscribed set given to the prince of Lijiang, and includes magical displays, such as a dragon issuing out of a jar (Plate 12). The interest in animals and food is still a consistent theme, with a cheeky monkey and his accomplice taking a mushroom from the arhat (Plate 13), and a tiger being fed an egg. Also, a wet, inky brush in the handling of the trees and rocks is prominent in this set. Quite striking, too, is an emphasis on birds (Plates 14 & 15), with one unusual grouping (Plate 14) bringing to mind compositions by Chinese painters such as Lü Ji.

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<sup>35</sup> Unpublished biography of Chos dbyings rdo rje, fol. 184b, line 1: *slar yang mdzad bcu tshar gcig bri ba'i dbu tshugs* /. Also, a year earlier, in 1653, “he painted by his own hand *thang ka(s)* of the Twelve Deeds of the Buddha (*ston pa'i mdzad [pa] bcu [gnyis]*).” Unpublished biography, fol. 184a, line 6: *ston pa'i mdzad bcu'i sku thang phyag ris gnang* /. A set of *thang ka* depicting the Twelve Deeds of the Buddha in Chinese style in ten paintings (*mdzad bcu rgya bris ma thang ka bcu*) painted by the hand of Chos dbyings rdo rje survived at Mtshur phu into the 1920s when Kaḥ thog si tu visited. Kaḥ thog si tu, p. 95, line 5, cited by Jackson 1996: 250. When Mtshur phu monastery was destroyed by the Chinese, many personal objects related to the Karma pa lineage in Mtshur phu were taken to Rumtek (Rum btegs), Sikkim.

A promising line of inquiry into evidence that the tenth Karma pa followed specific Chinese models is in the reproduction of Chinese rebuses. While rebuses have auspicious associations in Chinese culture based on homophones, they do not carry over into Tibetan conventions. For instance nine sparrows, which seem to appear in this painting (Plate 15), can be a Chinese rebus for “to attain rank,” a suitable gift for an official, either to wish him a good career or congratulate him on a promotion.<sup>36</sup> As more paintings by the Karma pa come to light, the emergence of such patterns would be strong visual evidence that he was following specific Chinese models.

One of the paintings (Plate 11) shares the same basic figural style and palette as the 1660 set, but it is immediately obvious that the colours are brighter and flatter than in the set firmly identified here as by the hand of Chos dbyings rdo rje. The figures in particular are done in flat, heavy layers of pigment with especially thick, flat flesh tones. The shadings in the faces of the flanking arhats are hardened into two-dimensional planes, resembling a sunburn more than suggesting volume. Detail is still plentiful in Śākyamuni’s throne, but here a flat, light green with white highlight is used, making the dark, blank space around Śākyamuni appear awkward. The use of inky clouds to soften the contrast between the green throne-backing and the blank canvas background in the 1660 set is dropped in the unscripted set, making the transition between mineral pigment and bare canvas seem more stark. Completely gone are the characteristic short ink “tremulous brush” lines used by the tenth Karma pa to accent and emphasize shape. This is especially evident when comparing the Buddha’s hands and feet in these two works, where a red wash has been applied to model the palms and soles instead of his characteristic brushwork. All of these characteristics are consistent with workshop production.

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<sup>36</sup> I would like to thank Stephen Allee for suggesting this line of inquiry. For an extensive list of Chinese rebuses see Bartholomew 2006.

### **7 Previously attributed works: The Bordier Śākyamuni**

Having examined two sets of paintings on either end of the spectrum between authenticated authorship and probable workshop production, we may now take what we have observed of what we might call the Karma pa's larger painting circle and turn our attention to other individual attributed works. At first glance a work in the Bordier collection (Plate 16) is a near-identical match to the central painting from the 1660 set (Plate 1). It is of high quality, with the details in the throne impressive and finely painted. Yet upon closer inspection, we note that the use of colour slightly flattens the painting, and the characteristic quick, broken lines, or "tremulous brush," discussed here as characteristic of the tenth Karma pa's hand, appears to be absent from both the throne and the figures. As in the workshop-produced set of seventeen, all use of ink wash apparent in the 1660 set—such as the clouds behind the throne-back to soften the transition from pigmented throne to blank canvas—is completely gone, and the soft, inky clouds framing the figures in the bottom corners of the composition have become a solid, opaque blue-grey pigment. The red on the hands and feet also makes a closer comparison to the workshop-produced set of seventeen than to the 1660 set. Thus, the Bordier painting (Plate 16) seems to belong somewhere between the inscribed set (Fig. 1), and the probable workshop production (Plate 11). The existence of a painting such as the Bordier Śākyamuni, with such overwhelming similarities to the inscribed 1660 work, also raises the interesting question of whether these paintings were produced in multiple examples, possibly with other painters filling in colours of Chos dbyings rdo rje's original sketches, or followers making copies in workshops.

### **8 "Writing one's ideas"**

A third incomplete set of ten uninscribed paintings (Fig. 8) is in a very different Chinese monochrome painting style, but nonetheless resonates with the tenth Karma pa's general figural style. The distinctive faces and hands found in these works are especially in keeping with the tenth Karma pa's idiom. The short, quick lines used in defining the hands and ears of the arhat sewing are also

characteristic of Chos dbyings rdo rje's brushwork; note especially the signature handling of the thumb. They are done in a largely monochrome, free and expressive brush known in Chinese as *xieyi* 寫意, "writing [one's] ideas," which is, as the term implies, deeply rooted in principles of Chinese calligraphy. Look, for instance, at the wonderful quality of line in the brushwork in the handling of the arhat's robe (Fig. 9). One might associate this kind of depiction of arhats more with Chinese Chan painters, who made liberal use of these artistic conventions, than with a Tibetan *sprul sku*.



Fig. 8. Arhat Sewing. Ink and color on paper flecked with gold; 30cm x 37cm. Private collection.



Fig. 9. Arhat with Waterfall. Ink and color on paper flecked with gold; 30cm x 37cm. Private collection.

For some of the works in this set (e.g. Fig. 10) the Karma pa seems to be working from a different Chinese figural model, that of one of the most widely copied arhat-paintings in Chinese history, Guanxiu's 貫休 "Sixteen Luohan" (dating to the late ninth–early tenth century), which were widely circulating in copies and woodblock prints by the seventeenth century. The



copying of Guanxiu's arhats in China quickly became as canonical as copying out the Heart Sūtra.<sup>37</sup> Some figures closely resonate with those in Wu Bin's 吴彬 painting after Guanxiu, which suggests that the Karma pa may have known Guanxiu's set through later copies, like those of his near contemporary Wu Bin (active ca. 1583–1625). The tenth Karma pa's switch to paper also seems significant, as he is otherwise known to have painted only on silk; his use of this ground indicates that he probably was aware of, and made use of, Chinese



Fig. 10. Arhat on Rock. Ink and color on paper flecked with gold; 30cm x 37cm. Private collection.

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<sup>37</sup> Berger 2003: 136.



Fig. 11. The Arhat Nāgasena. Ink on silk; 38 x 19 in. Gift of Mr. and Mrs. John C. Rezk, Collection of the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art [92.062].

cultural and aesthetic conventions associated with this tradition of expressive brushwork. This set suggests that the tenth Karma pa was conversant with various professional and literati forms of Chinese painting in his own diverse artistic career.

### 9 A monochrome ink set

Another set of arhat paintings (Figs. 11–13) associated with the tenth Karma pa employs a completely different monochromatic ink style (*shui mo hua* 水墨畫) that involves a strong use of shading and ink wash. The figural style is also unlike that of the paintings considered so far, but reminiscent of *luohan* paintings by late Ming–early Qing painters like Ding Yunpeng 丁云鵬 (1547?–1628).<sup>38</sup> While in style and brushwork there is nothing to immediately tie these paintings to Chos dbyings rdo rje, when one pairs specific paintings from this incomplete monochrome set (e.g. Fig. 11) with the set of seventeen in the Lijiang Museum, such as the “The Arhat Nāgasena” (Plate 12), “Monkey Taking Mushroom” (Plate 9), and so on, one sees that they are closely related, as many of the paintings are nearly identical in theme and composition, while others (e.g. Plate 13) borrow more loosely from figurative or landscape elements. Certain visual clues, such as the enlargement, dispersal, and schematisation of the pattern of flocking birds in one monochromatic ink painting (Fig. 13) suggest that the monochrome painting may be a later copy of an earlier Chos dbyings rdo rje work (Plate 14). In other words, the monochromatic bird composition (Fig. 13) could be derived from a related painting in the Lijiang Museum (Plate 14), but not the other way around.

### 10 Conclusion

As so little is still understood about Chos dbyings rdo rje’s larger artistic career, and with only one set of firmly identifiable paintings, it is premature to make final judgments on the exact nature of these attributed works. Can we say they are ‘by Chos dbyings rdo rje’? Are they merely part of different artistic phases? How many degrees of separation are they from the 1660 set (Plate 1) “painted by his hand in their entirety”? Clearly his ‘hand’ is in all of these works, whether in actual fact (Plate 1), design (Plates 10 & 16), or style (Plate 11). The most significant ramifications of these sets in an art-historical context

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<sup>38</sup> See Kent 2004, Figs. 7, 9 & 10.

is that they suggest that, beyond the single figure of the tenth Karma pa, teams of painters in workshops were trained in this hybrid style of ‘Chinese-style *thang ka* painting’ developed by Chos dbyings rdo rje.



Fig. 12. Monkeys Taking Mushrooms from an Arhat. Dpal-spungs Monastery. (Photograph courtesy of Matthieu Ricard, Shechen Archives.)



Fig. 13. Arhat with Flock of Birds. Dpal-spungs Monastery. (Photograph courtesy of Matthieu Ricard, Shechen Archives.)

Still, many important questions remain in evaluating the tenth Karma pa's place in Tibetan artistic lineages contemporary with him. The overwhelming majority of paintings so far identified as being in the style of Chos dbyings rdo rje depict arhats. An examination of textual descriptions of

the tenth Karma pa's paintings corroborates this extant visual evidence, and shows that the Sixteen Arhats was in fact the most common theme recorded.<sup>39</sup> While arhats are prominent throughout his painting career, more than half (seventeen of the twenty-seven paintings) were produced during the twenty-five-year period from 1648 to 1673 when he lived in the Kingdom of Lijiang, suggesting that he became increasingly interested in this theme and the styles associated with it during his stay in exile there. Beyond the tenth Karma pa's self-identification with his subject matter, it may have been the very nature of the arhat genre within the Tibetan tradition—being Chinese-derived and thus a rich vehicle of Chinese visual modes—that made it a convenient medium through which to explore his artistic interests. Indeed, based on the body of works so far identified, his new style seems intimately linked with this genre. That the tenth Karma pa's interest in the arhat does not appear to have been purely religious in nature is reinforced by the fact that such a production of arhats is not reflected in the sculpture he is recorded as making.

While I have not provided any definitive conclusions, I hope that I have demonstrated that the tenth Karma pa's engagement with, and incorporation of, Chinese art was a sophisticated and multi-leveled one, and that a deeper investigation into these works can yield insights into how Chinese painting was absorbed and transformed by Tibetan painters. Chos dbyings rdo rje did not just adopt the Chinese genre wholesale, but rather experimented with different Chinese compositional and figural models, as well as painting styles, even mixing genres to create a very personal visual idiom.

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<sup>39</sup> For example, in surveying the biography by Si tu Paṅ chen, which contains the greatest detail about the Karma pa's artistic career, arhats are by far the most common painting theme. They are mentioned twenty-seven times, roughly twice as many as the next most common theme, Avalokiteśvara, with fourteen occurrences.

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IV.

THE LIFE AND LEGACY OF GTSANG SMYON HERUKA





# WHAT DO THE CHILDHOOD AND EARLY LIFE OF GTSANG SMYON HERUKA TELL US ABOUT HIS BKA' BRGYUD AFFILIATION?\*

STEFAN LARSSON

## 1 Introduction

Gtsang smyon Heruka (1452–1507) is celebrated as an important figure in the Bka' brgyud tradition,<sup>1</sup> and his version of the life-story of Mi la ras pa—*Mi la'i rnam thar*—is probably the best known and most widely read text ever written in Tibet. By compiling, printing and distributing Mi la ras pa's life-story (*rnam*

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\* All the translations in this chapter are my own and any mistakes are therefore mine. This being said, I must acknowledge the help I received when translating and reading the *rnam thars*. Skal bzang dam chos, a former Tibetan-language teacher, was particularly important in this regard. A trip to Tibet in May 2006 was made possible due to a generous grant from the Margot och Rune Johanssons stiftelse, and some information found during that trip has been incorporated in the chapter. Mr. Alexandru Anton-Luca, Prof. Franz-Karl Ehrhard, and Mr. E. Gene Smith helped me obtain some of the rare texts that constitute the main sources for this chapter. Finally, thanks are also due to Prof. Kurtis Schaeffer, who gave me important advice when I visited University of Virginia during the spring semester 2007, and to the Swedish Foundation for International Cooperation in Research and Higher Education (STINT) and the Margot och Rune Johanssons stiftelse for the scholarships that enabled me to stay there.

<sup>1</sup> It was not until Gtsang smyon Heruka adopted the lifestyle of a mad yogin in his early twenties that the people of Tsā ri began to call him Gtsang smyon—the madman from Gtsang (Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol 1969: 37–38). Heruka is the Sanskrit equivalent of *khrag 'thung*. Gtsang smyon received the name *khrag 'thung rgyal po* from his *yi dam* Hevajra (Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol 1969: 36). Gtsang smyon had many names but for the sake of convenience I will use only his sobriquet—Gtsang smyon—in this chapter.

*thar*) and songs (*mgur*), Gtsang smyon contributed to Mi la ras pa's popularity, as will be seen, too, in the chapter that follows. Despite this, Gtsang smyon himself remains surprisingly little known. Tibetologists and learned Tibetans have heard his name, and some also are aware that he compiled Mi la's life-story and songs, or that he was one of the most famous mad yogins—*rnal 'byor smyon pa*—of Tibet. But apart from these basic facts, it is rather hard to find information about him.

The most important non-Tibetan source about this Bka' brgyud master is an article from 1969, written by E. Gene Smith and recently re-published in his book *Among Tibetan Texts*.<sup>2</sup> It is to this highly informative text that most scholars with an interest in Gtsang smyon and the mad yogins of Tibet usually refer. An excellent, but overlooked, master's thesis by Ilze Maruta Stearns from 1985 also must be mentioned. Smith's and Stearns' main source is a *rnam thar* (hagiography) of Gtsang smyon written by one of his main disciples, Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol (Rgod tshang ras pa, abbreviated herein as R, 1482–1559) in the sixteenth century.<sup>3</sup> To a lesser degree they also use a *rnam thar* by another principal disciple, Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (Lha btsun, abbreviated herein as L, 1473–1557).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Some important recent studies that shed light on Gtsang smyon should also be mentioned. Andrew Quintman has examined Gtsang smyon's life-story of Mi la ras pa and its creation (Quintman 2006: 188–279). Kurtis Schaeffer has written about Gtsang smyon's death as described by Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol and compared it to the death of Mi la ras pa as related by Gtsang smyon himself (Schaeffer 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol (R) 1969. Smith's work naturally focuses on Rgod tshang ras pa's text, as his article originally served as an introduction to an edition of the text (Rgod tshang ras pa 1969). There has been some confusion regarding the identity and dates of Rgod tshang ras pa, and he has sometimes been conflated with other masters with similar names who lived in the same period. This has been discussed by Peter Alan Roberts (Roberts 2007: 44). Franz-Karl Ehrhard has recently more or less resolved these problems, and he proposes that the dates were 1482–1559 (Ehrhard, forthcoming).

<sup>4</sup> Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal (L) 1971.

Continuing the work started by Smith and Stearns, this chapter will consider the first part of each of the aforementioned *nam thars* and supplement them with information taken from other sources, the most important being a *nam thar* written by a third disciple of Gtsang smyon, Dngos grub dpal 'bar (abbreviated herein as D),<sup>5</sup> and a short synopsis of Rgod tshang ras pa's *nam thar* by Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma (1737–1802).<sup>6</sup>

These *nam thars* give a similar picture of Gtsang smyon. Details differ, but the chronology and general content are parallel. The different *nam thars* have their own merits and they complement one other in various ways: for example, Rgod tshang ras pa's *nam thar* is the most extensive, while Lha btsun supplies more dates. Dngos grub dpal 'bar's *nam thar* is the earliest, completed only one year after Gtsang smyon's death. Since several passages are identical in all of the *nam thars*, it seems likely that Lha btsun and Rgod tshang ras pa used this older *nam thar* when writing their own versions. There is also a collection of songs (*mgur 'bum*) attributed to Gtsang smyon that belong to the same edition as the earliest *nam thar*.<sup>7</sup> These songs were originally issued separately, but both Rgod tshang ras pa and Lha btsun included the songs in their versions of Gtsang smyon's *nam thar*.

Based on the information given in these texts, Gtsang smyon's life can be divided into three parts:

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<sup>5</sup> Dngos grub dpal 'bar (D) 1508. This *nam thar*, to my knowledge, has not been studied before.

<sup>6</sup> Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989. Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma included this short *nam thar* of Gtsang smyon in the beginning of the *nam thar* of his lama, Lcang skya Ye shes bstan pa'i sgron ma, alias Rol pa'i rdo rje (1717–1786). The reason for this is that Rol pa'i rdo rje himself stated that he was an incarnation of Gtsang smyon.

<sup>7</sup> Listed under Gtsang smyon Heruka in the bibliography. For further bibliographical details in connection with Gtsang smyon's tradition, refer to Kurtis Schaeffer's chapter that follows.

1. The formative period: birth, childhood and early life, lasting until his early twenties. During this time he became a monk, met his root-lama, received teachings and empowerments, and studied in a monastic college.
2. The period when he ‘practised yogic conduct’ (*brtul zhugs spyod pa*), lasting from his early twenties to his early thirties. During this time he wandered around as a mad yogin, meditated in remote caves, and performed miracles, etc.
3. The period of fame and influence that lasted from his early thirties until his death. During this phase he compiled and printed texts, renovated the Svayambhū Stūpa in Nepal, established meditation centres, gathered disciples and benefactors, bestowed empowerments and teachings, etc.

Despite the fact that it was for his activities during the second and third periods of his life that he became famous, this chapter will treat primarily the first period, from his birth until his early twenties. I also will address his affiliation with the Buddhist traditions of Tibet—particularly the various Bka’ brgyud branches. In this way, I hope to add to our knowledge of Gtsang smyon, though a complete picture of this enigmatic master must await further research.<sup>8</sup>

## 2 Birth, childhood, and early life

Gtsang smyon was born in upper Myang/Nyang in Gtsang, not far from Rgyal rtse, in a place called Mkhar kha or Bkra shis Mkhar kha, east of Stag rtse, in 1452.<sup>9</sup> According to his disciples, his appearance had been foretold in several sūtras, tantras and *gter mas*, particularly in Prajñāpāramitā texts. Before his

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<sup>8</sup> When I first presented this essay I was working on a Ph.D. dissertation about Gtsang smyon, which is now completed (Larsson 2009). The dissertation focuses upon how Gtsang smyon was transformed into a “mad yogin” and it also examines his subsequent activities as a mad yogin.

<sup>9</sup> According to a local informant Bkra shis Mkhar kha is known nowadays as Smin sgrol gling (not to be confused with the famous Rnying ma pa monastery of the same name).

birth his mother, Sangs rgyas 'dren, had several auspicious dreams indicating that her son was an extraordinary being. At the time of his birth a number of miracles occurred and the name Chos rgyal lhun po was given to him.<sup>10</sup> Sangs rgyas 'dren had five children, three sons and two daughters. The name of the paternal lineage (*gdung*) was *Myang*, a lineage that had produced such famous saints as Myang Ral pa can.<sup>11</sup>

Both Gtsang smyon and his mother continued to have dreams that were considered important by the authors of the *rnam thars*. One of these dreams, mentioned in all three texts, occurred when Gtsang smyon was about one year old. His mother dreamt of a black man with long hair tied up in a knot on his head, his body adorned with bone ornaments. The yogin cleaved open the mouth(s) of the boy(s) and stuffed books into it (them).<sup>12</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa interpreted this dream as a prophecy about one of Gtsang smyon's most important exploits, the compilation of a twelve-volume *snyan brgyud* collection.<sup>13</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa explains that the black man who appeared in the dream was the Indian siddha Tilopa, the first human guru of the Bka' brgyud tradition, regarded as an emanation of one of the main Bka' brgyud *yi dams*, 'Khor lo bde mchog (Cakrasaṃvara).<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The early part of Gtsang smyon's life is rendered similarly in the sources, and I have provided notes only when the *rnam thars* differ.

<sup>11</sup> Myang Ral pa can is probably short for the famous *gter ston* Nyang Ral pa can Nyi ma 'od zer (1124–1192).

<sup>12</sup> D. 4b–5a, L. 6–7, R. 16, Sangs rgyas dar po: 79. Both D and L use plural/dual (*gzhon dag*) and if this is the case perhaps both Gtsang smyon and his brother(s?) had texts stuffed into their mouths by the mysterious yogin.

<sup>13</sup> Unfortunately, only parts of this work have been found and published (Gtsang smyon 1971). On the *snyan brgyud* traditions of the Bka' brgyud, refer to Marta Sernesi's chapter above.

<sup>14</sup> R. 16.





Fig. 1. Mkharkha, Gtsang smyon's birthplace. (Photo: S. Larsson.)

During his childhood Gtsang smyon's behaviour and games all indicated that he was an extraordinary individual, destined for Buddhist teaching and practice. Lha btsun summarises:

When he was two years old he sometimes stood up, holding his hands in prayer on the top of his head, and spontaneously, again and again, said: "I salute the master Mi la! I salute the glorious Phag mo grub (gru) pa! I salute the victorious Rgod tshang pa!"<sup>15</sup>

At the age of three, in all his games, he was teaching dharma. Holding a small copper vase he said: "I will bestow empowerment," and he put [the vase] on the heads of all [...]. When he was four and five he was sitting in Vajra-posture most of the time [...]. At six he perfected his reading skill and since he was very diligent in reading the words of the Buddha he memorized *'Jam*,<sup>16</sup> *Sdud*<sup>17</sup> and *Bzang*.<sup>18</sup> He recited constantly,

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<sup>15</sup> Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje (1189–1258).

<sup>16</sup> *'Jam dpal mtshan brjod, Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*.

and when he was seven he thoroughly knew the various writing styles and letters.<sup>19</sup>

Gtsang smyon's natural inclination for, and interest in, Buddhism became increasingly visible. The *nam thars* describe how, with a strong determination to reach complete liberation from saṃsāra for the sake of all beings, he decided to become a monk. At the age of seven he received the vows from a great preceptor (*mkhan chen*) named Kun dga' sangs rgyas and was given the name Sangs rgyas rgyal mtshan, a name that along with, or instead of, Gtsang smyon is quite often used.<sup>20</sup>

The following years were probably spent in a small monastery near his home in Mkhar kha. The *nam thars* give no exact information, but it is stated that he and some other monks visited families in the area to recite scriptures. It is also mentioned that Gtsang smyon repeatedly had visions of ḍākinīs urging him to leave home and go to La phyi, in the southern border area, to practice meditation. Gtsang smyon was not, however, allowed to do as these visionary females said: he tried to leave but was caught and brought back to Mkhar kha.

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<sup>17</sup> *Mdo sdud pa, Prajñāpāramitāsañcayagāthā.*

<sup>18</sup> *Bzang po spyod pa'i smon lam, Bhadracarīprañidhānarāja.*

<sup>19</sup> L. 7. *dgung lo gnyis pa'i dus na re 'ga' bzhengs nas thal mo spyi bor sbyar te / rje btsun mi la la phyag 'tshal lo / dpal phag mo grub pa la phyag tshal lo / rgyal rgod tshang pa la phyag 'tshal lo gsung pa yang yang du rang rdol la byung ngo / dgung lo gsum pa'i dus na byis pa'i rtse mo thams cad chos 'chad nyan dang / zangs kyi bum chung cig yong pa de thogs nas ngas dbang bskur gyis gsung [...] kun gyi mgo bor 'jog pa mdzad do / dgung lo bzhi pa dang lnga pa la bzhugs pa phal cher rdo rje'i dkyil dkrungs / [...] / drug pa la klog rdzogs par mkhyen te gsung sgrogs la shin du brtson pas 'jam sdud bzang gsum thugs la bcug ste rgyun du zhal 'don mdzad / bdun pa la chung 'bris dang srog gzugs la sogs pa'i bri cha nmams mkhyen cing thugs su chud /.*

<sup>20</sup> No information is given about Kun dga' sangs rgyas. My own guess is that he was a local Sa skya pa lama but this is something that must be investigated further. The ordination ceremony is rendered in D. 5, L. 8, and R. 17.

Back in Mkhār kha the young monk became famous for his ability to recite the Hundred-Thousand-Line Prajñāpāramitā (*'Bum*) by heart and for meticulously preserving his Vinaya vows.<sup>21</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa describes how Gtsang smyon at the age of thirteen made a small bag that he filled with deadly poison and hung around his neck. After that he made a solemn promise to swallow the poison immediately if he ever violated his monastic vows, adding: “If swallowing this will not kill me, may the Protector of the Tent (*gur mgon*) remove my heart’s blood.”<sup>22</sup> Whenever some desire arose in the young monk’s mind he just touched the bag around his neck and the desire disappeared by itself. Gtsang smyon’s ability to guard his vows in this way made him a great example for other monks to follow, and he always “guarded his discipline like his own eyes.”<sup>23</sup>

The visions of *ḍākinīs* urging him to leave Mkhār kha and practice meditation did not cease. Finally, when in his teens, Gtsang smyon escaped and headed for Tsā ri, in the southeast.<sup>24</sup> On his way he passed through Dwags po, where he met Sha ra rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge (Sha ra ba, 1427–1470),<sup>25</sup> a Dge lugs pa *dge bshes* who had started to follow the Bka' brgyud tradition and was considered to be an emanation of the great Indian siddha Saraha.<sup>26</sup> Since Sha ra ba is largely unknown and his life-story gives some clues

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<sup>21</sup> R. 18–19.

<sup>22</sup> R. 18. *'di 'gams [gams] nas shi mi sdod na gur gyi mgon pos snying khrag phyung cig gsung.*

<sup>23</sup> R. 18–19. *tshul khrims rnam par dag pa mig 'bras bzhin bsrung ba'i [...].*

<sup>24</sup> According to Lha btsun he was fourteen (L. 9) and according to Rgod tshang ras pa he was eighteen years old when he escaped (R. 20).

<sup>25</sup> I have found two *rnam thars* of Sha ra ba, a short *rnam thar* included in Gtsang smyon's *Bde mchog mkha' 'gro snyan brgyud* (Gtsang smyon 1971: 111–13) and a more extensive one (26 folios) by Byams pa phun tshogs, executed in Gung thang in 1559 (Byams pa phun tshogs 1976).

<sup>26</sup> According to a *rnam thar* of Shākya mchog ldan (1428–1507), Sha ra ba was a Dge lugs pa (*ri bo dge ldan pa dge bshes* who later became a Bka' brgyud pa (Dkar brgyud

about the lineage that Gtsang smyon inherited, his life will be described in some detail.

Sha ra ba was born in a place called Sha ra in 'Phan yul, northeast of Lhasa.<sup>27</sup> He belonged to the Khyung po clan, his father's name was Rong rta dpon bsod, his mother's was Sgrol ma, and he had five siblings. Like other great masters-to-be, he amazed those who saw him, and at the age of three he taught the Buddhist doctrine. When older, Sha ra ba felt a need to renounce saṃsāra, and at thirteen he entered a monastic community. As a young monk he started to study the Buddhist teachings in a systematic and gradual way. Starting with the *Sde snod gsum* (Tripiṭaka)—*Mdo* (Sūtra), *'Dul ba* (Vinaya), and *Mngon pa* (Abhidharma)— he soon mastered *Tshad ma* (Pramāṇa) and *Dbu ma* (Madhyamaka) as well. Sha ra ba studied in monastic institutions such as Se ra, Gsang phu, and 'Bras spungs, and at twenty-five he went to the teaching convent of Rtse thang. He steadily progressed in learning and finally attained the *rab 'byams* degree. From then on he became known as Sha ra rab 'byams pa and became “as famous as the sun and the moon,” to use the expression of the *rnam thar*.<sup>28</sup> It was at this point that Sha ra ba's link to the tantric teachings and the Bka' brgyud lineage started to manifest. He encountered several great teachers who bestowed empowerments (*dbang* and *rjes gnang*), reading transmissions (*lung*) and oral instructions (*khrid*, *gdams ngag*), and started to devote his time to the practice of meditation in solitude. Among the lamas Sha ra ba met, four became particularly important: Kun mkhyen Gzhon nu blo gros;<sup>29</sup> 'Dul 'dzin pa Ngag gi dbang po; the twelfth

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pa) (Kun dga' grol mchog, Jo nang 1975: 70–71). This is also stated by Stag lung Ngag dbang rnam rgyal (1992: 451). On his status as an emanation of Saraha, refer to D. 6a, L. 9, R. 20, Gtsang smyon 1971: 111.

<sup>27</sup> This and the following information about Sha ra ba are taken from Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 453–466.

<sup>28</sup> Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 457.

<sup>29</sup> Lcang gling pa Gzhon nu blo gros in Gtsang smyon 1971: 112.

abbot of Stag lung, Stag lung rin po che Ngag dbang grags pa (1418–1496);<sup>30</sup> and Mkhas grub Bsod nams don grub.<sup>31</sup> From these and other teachers he received different instructions that he later passed on to Gtsang smyon.

Sha ra ba was especially interested in the different aural lineages (*snyan brgyud*) of the Bka' brgyud tradition. The *nam thar* mentions that he received the complete *Ngan rdzong snyan brgyud*, the complete *Dwags po snyan brgyud*, and the complete *Ras chung snyan brgyud*. This means that he received all the *snyan brgyud* transmissions found in 'Jam mgon Kong sprul blo gro mtha' yas's (1813–1899) *Gdam ngag mdzod* collection. Sha ra ba became a lineage holder of the *Ras chung snyan brgyud*—a transmission that he received in La phyi from the above-mentioned 'Dul 'dzin pa Ngag gi dbang po. He also received such teachings as the *Ro snyoms* and *Nāro gsang spyod*, *Dohā skor gsum*, *Lhan cig skyes sbyor*, *Gtum mo*, *Chos drug*, *Phyag rgya chen po yi ge bzhi pa* (the Four-Letter Mahāmudrā), and instructions on the nature of the mind (*sems khrid*). Besides Stag lung Bka' brgyud and Ras chung Bka' brgyud transmissions, Sha ra ba received many different Bka' brgyud teachings, including those of the Karma Bka' brgyud, 'Bri khung Bka' brgyud, 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud, and Shangs pa Bka' brgyud. Besides these Bka' brgyud teachings, however, he also received Zhi byed teachings, as well as Sa skyia teachings such as Lam 'bras. After receiving tantric teachings Sha ra ba practised with great effort and quickly gained realization. The scholar-monk had become a tantric yogin, and soon became famous and attracted disciples.

During the nine months they spent together, Sha ra ba bestowed many—perhaps all—of the above-mentioned esoteric teachings and empowerments on Gtsang smyon, and the latter thus entered the tantric path and was given yet another name: Chos kyi grags pa. His time with Sha ra ba is described by Dngos grub dpal 'bar as follows:

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<sup>30</sup> Called Mnyam med Stag lung thang pa by Byams pa phun tshogs (1976: 499).

<sup>31</sup> The four main lamas of Sha ra ba are mentioned by Byams pa phun tshogs (see, for example, Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 499).

[Gtsang smyon] listened to profound oral instructions (*man ngag*) on the view, i.e. *Phyag rgya chen po yig ge bzhi pa* (The Four-Letter Mahāmudrā),<sup>32</sup> and on the path of means, i.e. *Nāro chos drug* (The Six Dharmas of Nāro). By means of his own experiences and insights [Sha ra ba also] taught the *Bde mchog snyan (b)rgyud* (The Aural Transmission of Bde mchog) or *Ras chung snyan (b)rgyud* (The Aural Transmission of Ras chung). [These teachings] are like the source or root of all the profound paths of the precious Bka' (b)rgyud [...].<sup>33</sup>

Even when this great being [Gtsang smyon] practised for just one day he completed many [practices] that ordinary persons who practise meditation for years do not [complete]. It was comparable to taking back one's birthright. The emanation body [Sha ra ba] was pleased in his heart and he felt that they had an excellent connection (*rten 'brel*).<sup>34</sup>

Rgod tshang ras pa gives a more detailed account of the instructions, transmissions, and empowerments that Gtsang smyon received from Sha ra ba. Just like Dngos grub dpal 'bar, he emphasises the Four-Letter Mahāmudrā (*Phyag rgya chen po yi ge bzhi pa*), the aural transmissions (*snyan brgyud*), and the Six Dharmas of Nāro (*Nāro chos drug*), but besides these 'core teachings' he provides us with several other titles. Among the reading transmissions (*lung*) Gtsang smyon received one finds: *Ri chos skor gsum*, *Thar gru skor gsum*,

<sup>32</sup> The transmission lineage of these teachings to Gtsang smyon is found in *Gdams ngag mdzod*, vol. *Nya*, 1979–1981: 40–41.

<sup>33</sup> I am reading *brgyud* (transmission) for *rgyud* (tantra) as given in the text.

<sup>34</sup> D. 6b. *zab mo'i man ngag gsan tshul ni / lta ba phyag rgya chen po yig ge bzhi pa / thabs lam nā ro chos drug / bka' rgyud rin po che'i zab lam mtha' dag gi rtsa ba'am / ma mo lta bur gyur pa / ras chung snyan rgyud dam / bde mchog snyan rgyud du grags pa nyams khrid du mdzad cing / de'i dus na yang lam rtags dang drod rtags gang zag gzhan phal gyis lo du mar bsgoms pas mi yong ba / bdag nyid chen po 'di yis zhag re la'ang du ma zhig rdzogs par mdzad cing / rang gi bcol ba len pa ltar gyur pa na / sprul sku thugs mnyes te rten 'brel yod pa yin /.*

*Phyag rgya chen po Inga ldan, Nāro chos drug* (according to the traditions of Karma pa, Yang dgon pa (1213–1258), Urgyan pa (1229–1309), and 'Ba' ra ba (1310–1391)), *Lhan cig skyes sbyor, Dohā skor gsum, Dohā mdzod drug, Ro snyoms bgang dril* (= *Ro snyom skor drug?*) and *Rdo rje tshig 'byed*. Rgod tshang ras pa also mentions that Gtsang smyon received the *Lhan cig skyes ma* empowerment and that Sha ra ba gave Gtsang smyon profound instructions based on the Four-Letter Mahāmudrā and Nāropa's Six Dharmas. By practising what his lama had taught him, Gtsang smyon rapidly progressed in his understanding and gained spiritual powers.<sup>35</sup>

According to Rgod tshang ras pa, it was during this time that some people first started to wonder if Gtsang smyon suffered from madness. These speculations arose because he repeatedly came late to his lama's lessons. When asked about his whereabouts, Gtsang smyon said that he had been to various pure lands, such as U rgyan, or that he had attended ritual feasts (*tshogs 'khor*) in charnel grounds. When they heard his answers, some of Sha ra ba's disciples held him to be a fraud, while others thought he had gone mad.<sup>36</sup> The reason for his unusual behaviour was not ordinary madness, however, but rather his mastery of the *rtsa lung* practices.<sup>37</sup> Before they parted, Sha ra ba advised Gtsang smyon to abandon the eight worldly dharmas and devote his life to practice in isolated Bka' brgyud places of meditation:<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> R. 22.

<sup>36</sup> R. 24. Stearns 1985: 23.

<sup>37</sup> R. 23.

<sup>38</sup> 1) *myed pa* and 2) *ma rnyed pa* 'gain and loss,' 3) *bde ba* and 4) *sdug bsngal* 'pleasure and pain,' 5) *bstod pa* and 6) *smad pa* 'praise and blame,' 7) *snyan pa* and 8) *mi snyan pa* 'fame and infamy.'

Now go elsewhere and accomplish [your] studies in the tantras, such as the *Hevajra Tantra* (*Brtag gnyis*).<sup>39</sup> After that, do not look back at this life. Take the lowest position and wear tattered clothes. Do not care about food, clothing, and talk. Be a son of the mountains and wear mist for clothes. By “practising yogic conduct” (*brtul zhugs kyi spyod pa*) bring appearing objects to the path. Be free from fear. With your heart, cast away the eight worldly dharmas and establish the Victory Banner of Accomplishment in the great pilgrimage places of the Bka’ brgyud pa: the Tsā ri, Tsa gong, La phyi, Chu bar, Ti se Snow Mountain (i.e. Mt. Kailash), and the Six Fortresses, and work for the benefit of the teaching and beings.<sup>40</sup>

Sha ra ba died shortly after their parting, so Gtsang smyon never saw him again, but he devoted the rest of his life to practising and teaching what Sha ra ba had taught him.

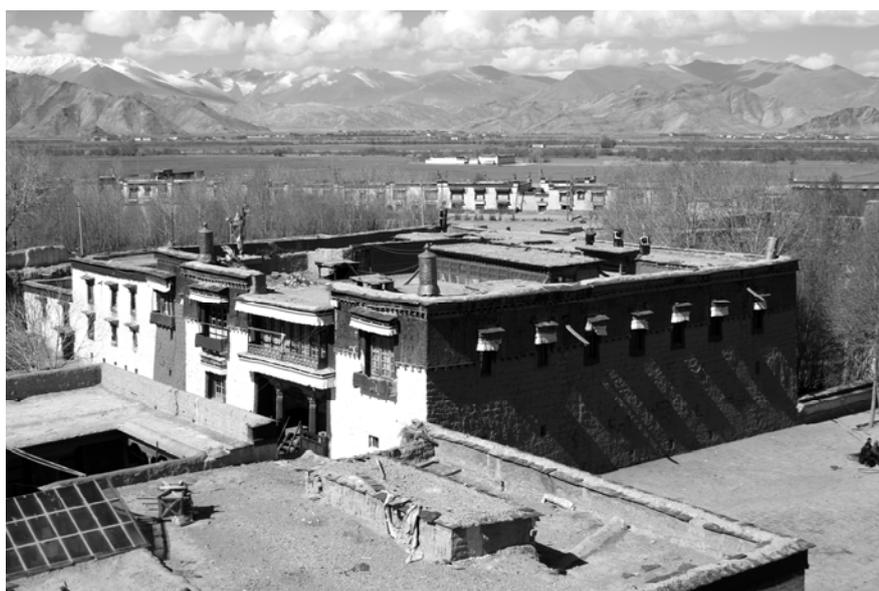
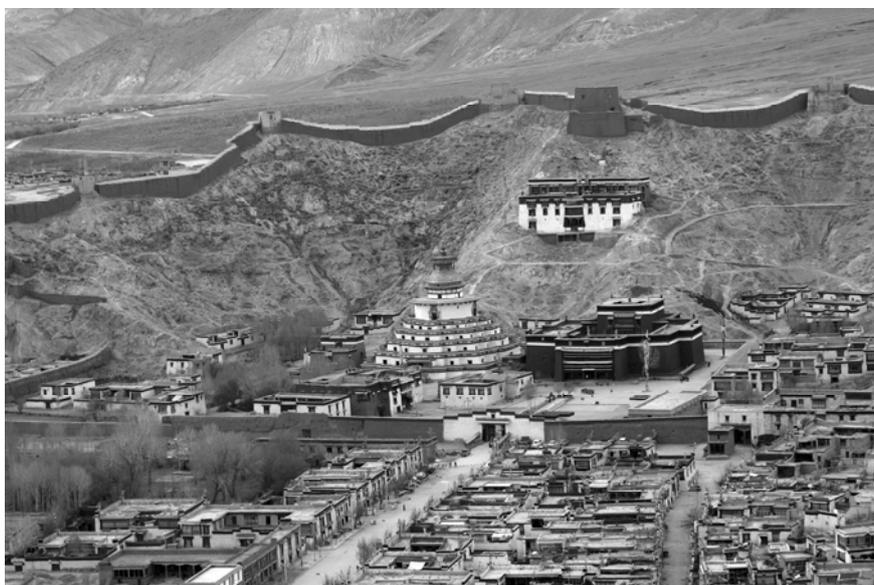
After having spent some time meditating in Tsā ri as originally planned, Gtsang smyon remembered his lama’s instruction and returned home to Mkhara kha. After he had been in Mkhara kha for about five months, Gtsang smyon’s mother dreamt of five beautiful girls who said that her son should be sent to study the tantras. When Gtsang smyon heard about his mother’s dream

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<sup>39</sup> The Tibetan translation of this text is found in *Bka’ ’gyur*. The title is an abbreviation for *Kya’i rdor rtsa rgyud brtag pa gnyis pa* (*Hevajratantrarājanāma*). For an English translation, see Snellgrove 1959.

<sup>40</sup> Thu’u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 41–42. *da gzhan du song la brtag gnyis sogs rgyud sde’i slob gnyer mthar phyin gyis / de nas tshe ’di la phyi mig ma lta / dman pa’i sa zungs / hrul po’i gos gyon / gyong lto gos gtam gsum la thong / ri’i bu gyis / na bun gos su gyon / brtul zhugs kyi spyod pas yul snang lam du khyer /nyam nga la thog rdzis gyis / ’jig rten chos brgyad blos thongs la tsa ri tsa gong / la phyi chu bar / gangs te se dang rdzong drug sogs bka’ brgyud kyi gnas chen rnams su sgrub pa’i rgyal mtshan tshugs la bstan ’gro’i don gyis shig gsungs /*. Similar passages are found in D. 6b, L. 13 and R. 25–26.





Figs. 2, 3. Dpal 'khor chos sde and Gur pa grwa tshang.  
(Photos: S. Larsson.)

he remembered his root-lama's command and it was decided that Gtsang smyon should study in the famous Dpal 'khor chos sde monastery in Rgyal rtse.

At Dpal 'khor chos sde Gtsang smyon entered the Gur pa monastic college, which belonged to the Sa skya tradition.<sup>41</sup> There he studied the tantras and their different commentaries. He also learned how to perform complicated tantric rituals and became proficient in all the many skills required of a vajra master (*rdo rje slob dpon*). Thu'u bkwan summarises:

From G.yu lung pa Yon tan rgya mtsho [he received] empowerments such as: *Dgyes rdor* (*Hevajra*), the *Gathering of the Gur Families* (*Gur rigs bsdus*), and *Vajrakīlaya* (*Rdo rje phur ba*) according to the Sa skya tradition, [and he also] received instructions of the tantras: *Brtag gnyis*, *Rdo rje gur* and *Samputa*,<sup>42</sup> and by listening to the complete explanations of the Indian and Tibetan commentaries he really understood them. Moreover, from the master Kun dga' nyi ma and Paṇ chen Don grub grags pa et al., he received advice on the development and fulfilment [stages], tantra explanations, and secret mantra empowerments. [He also] listened to many [instructions] on the practice of hand-gesture, maṇḍala-drawing, and melodies [for recitation], etc.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> I visited Dpal 'khor chos sde in May, 2006, and found that Gtsang smyon was remembered as a famous monk of the college's past.

<sup>42</sup> *Sambhuṭa*, the spelling given in the text, is a variant of *Samputa*.

<sup>43</sup> Thu'u bkwan Blo bzang chos kyi nyi ma 1989: 42. *g.yu lung pa yon tan rgya mtsho'i drung nas sa lugs kyi dgyes rdor / gur rigs bsdus / rdo rje phur pa sogs kyi dbang rgyud brtag gnyis rdo rje gur / sambhuṭa / rnam la rgya 'grel dang bod 'grel gyi steng nas bshad pa mtha' chos pa gsan / gzhan yang slob dpon kun dga' nyi ma / paṇ chen don grub grags pa sogs la gsang snags kyi dbang dang rgyud kyi bshad pa bskyed rdzogs kyi gdams pa / gar thig dbyangs sogs kyi phyag len mang du gsan no /*

After three years of studies, Gtsang smyon started to behave in the way that later became his trademark. Thus, we are told, he suddenly stopped following the rules expected of a monk.

One time the provincial ruler and his ministers came to the monastery from Rgyang rtse (Rgyal rtse). The monks had assembled in a very large gathering and [Gtsang smyon] went into the rows carrying a skull-cup and a thigh-bone trumpet. He consumed the tea, soup, and so on in his skull-cup. Adding *tsam pa* and biscuits, he stirred the mixture with his thigh-bone trumpet and ate. The master of discipline noticed that the monks around him had started to laugh. He asked: “What kind of behaviour of monks in the assembly is this?” and prepared to beat [Gtsang smyon] with a stick.<sup>44</sup>

After this incident Gtsang smyon remembered his root-lama’s instructions. Feeling that the time to practise what he had studied had arrived, he offered his clothes and belongings to the monastery and left.<sup>45</sup> The next step of his spiritual career then began. The monk-scholar became a mad yogin.<sup>46</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa, rather poetically, describes Gtsang smyon’s wanderings after he had left the monastery:

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<sup>44</sup> R. 28. *de nas skabs cig chos sder rgyang rtse (rgyal rtse) nas sde pa dpon slon (dpon blon) rnams kyang phebs / dge ’dun shin du tshogs pa che ba’i tshogs gral du thod phor dang rkang dung rnams (bsnams) nas byon / ja dang thug pa sogs ka lir gsol de la tsam pa (rtsam pa) dang mar thud btab pa’i skyo ma rkang dung gi (gis) krug (dkrugs) cing gsol bas / gral mdzes (mtshes) kyi dge ’dun rnams gzhad rgad (bzhad gad) du gyur tshe / chos khriims pas mthong nas dge ’dun gyi tshogs gral du ’di ’dra byed pa ci yin zhes rgyug pa sdeg par (rdeg par) rtsams pas /* (this section is also translated in Stearns 1985: 27).

<sup>45</sup> When I visited Dpal ’khor chos sde some monks also reported this incident.

<sup>46</sup> For a thorough investigation of this phase of Gtsang smyon’s life, see Larsson 2009.

Then once again, [Gtsang smyon] departed in the manner of a madman. Without any provisions whatsoever, he wandered aimlessly, in all directions, completely fearless like a lion; without doubts like an elephant craving water; free from clinging like the leaves of a tree agitated by the wind.<sup>47</sup>

### 3 Gtsang smyon's affiliation with the Bka' brgyud tradition

Tibetan masters, and indeed Tibetans in general, often receive teachings and empowerments from lamas of different traditions.<sup>48</sup> Although a specific lama generally belongs to a certain order or lineage, these have always interacted and it is therefore impossible to make any absolute distinctions between them. Nevertheless there is an awareness of what tradition a lama or a monastery belongs to, and one also finds differences in spirit and doctrine among the various Buddhist schools of Tibet. Another important factor that needs to be taken into consideration concerns the religious climate during the lifetime of Gtsang smyon. It seems that a sharp dividing line between the different orders had not yet been fully developed in fifteenth-century Tibet—particularly among the various Bka' brgyud branches. This should be kept in mind when Gtsang smyon's relation to, and affiliations with, the Buddhist traditions of Tibet is explored.

Gtsang smyon was born in an area with strong Sa skya presence, and as described above, he studied in the Gur pa college of Dpal 'khor chos sde—a Sa

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<sup>47</sup> R. 41–42. *de nas kyang seng ge ltar gang la'ang 'jigs pa med cing / glang chen chu la snyog pa ltar the tshom dang bral la / shing lo rlung gis skyod pa ltar zhen med phyogs kun du nges pa med par rgyu zhing / gang la yang phyed 'dzin bza' gtad dang bral ba smyon pa lta bu'i tshul gyis gshogs pa las /*

<sup>48</sup> By 'tradition' I mainly mean the four main traditions (sects, schools, orders, Tibetan: *chos lugs*) within Tibetan Buddhism: Bka' brgyud, Sa skya, Rnying ma, and Dge lugs. Each of these is divided into several branches and many transmissions or lineages (*brgyud pa*) are incorporated within them.

skya college—for at least three years.<sup>49</sup> It is also likely that he had connections with the Sa skya tradition during his childhood and youth in Mkhār kha. There are several indications that this was the case. One indication that Gtsang smyon indeed was a Sa skya pa at this time is the episode (described above) when Gtsang smyon made a bag of poison and hung it around his neck. When doing this he made a solemn oath to Gur mgon, one of the main Sa skya protectors, something he would likely not have done had he not been a Sa skya pa. Rgod tshang ras pa describes how Gtsang smyon, shortly after leaving Dpal 'khor chos sde, changed his protector from Gur mgon to the Four-Armed One (*phyag bzhi pa*). This happened while he was meditating in a cave of the Four-Armed One in Tsā ri. At that time a black man appeared; after a fight with Gtsang smyon he revealed his identity as the Four-Armed One, the protector of the Aural Transmission (*snyan brgyud*), and said that he was destined to be Gtsang smyon's protector.<sup>50</sup> After this incident the Four-Armed One became Gtsang smyon's main protector and the Sa skya connection became less visible.<sup>51</sup> Another interesting point, which perhaps reveals a Sa skya influence, is the fact that Gtsang smyon's *yi dam*, Hevajra, is the main *yi dam* of the Sa skya pas.<sup>52</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa describes how Gtsang smyon studied the Hevajra root tantra—*Brtag gnyis*—and the commentaries by 'Gro mgon 'phags pa (1235–1280)<sup>53</sup> in Dpal 'khor chos sde and how he “put the words and meaning to his

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<sup>49</sup> According to one *mam thar* he stayed in Dpal 'khor chos sde for three years (D. 7a), and according to another for four years (L. 15).

<sup>50</sup> R. 38.

<sup>51</sup> It should however be noted that Gur mgon also is an important protector in the Jo nang school.

<sup>52</sup> However, it is important to be aware of the fact that Hevajra was (and still is) a very important *yi dam* in the Bka' brgyud tradition; it was the *yi dam* of Mar pa, for example.

<sup>53</sup> 'Gro mgon 'Phags pa Blo gros rgyal mtshan.

heart without leaving anything out.”<sup>54</sup> Gtsang smyon’s expertise in the Hevajra tantra is often mentioned in the *rnam thars* and he sometimes referred to the chapter of conduct (*spyod pa’i le’u*) of *Brtag gnyis* when questioned about his unusual behaviour.<sup>55</sup> Lha btsun mentions that Gtsang smyon received, and internalised, the complete *Lam ’bras* transmission in Dpal ’khor chos sde<sup>56</sup> and we have already seen that Gtsang smyon’s root-lama, Sha ra ba, received these essential Sa skya teachings as well. If—as I am proposing—Gtsang smyon really was a Sa skya pa monk before meeting Sha ra ba, this means that he had been a Sa skya monk for many years before he started to practise in the Bka’ brgyud tradition. After leaving Sha ra ba, he studied for three (or four) more years at a famous Sa skya college. Since he spent only nine months with Sha ra ba, he probably had studied and practised according to the Sa skya tradition for ten to fifteen years<sup>57</sup> and Bka’ brgyud for only nine months when, in his early twenties, he left his monastery and became an itinerant Bka’ brgyud yogin. In the Gur pa college of Dpal ’khor chos sde, Gtsang smyon studied under at least three masters, and was formally educated in the Sa skya tradition. This means that when Gtsang smyon recited, performed rituals and religious dances, bestowed empowerments, made offerings and *gtor mas*, and so on, he probably

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<sup>54</sup> R. 27. / [...] *gtso bor rtsa rgyud brtag gnyis dang / ’gro mgon ’phags pa’i ’grel pa rnams tshig don ma lus pa thugs su tshud* [...] /.

<sup>55</sup> See for example D. 8b–9a, R. 33, 45.

<sup>56</sup> L. 16.

<sup>57</sup> The sources differ here; according to Lha btsun he became ordained at eight (L. 7) and, according to Rgod tshang ras pa, at seven (R. 16). There are also differences concerning his age when leaving Mkharkha and meeting Sha ra ba; according to Lha btsun he was fourteen (L. 9), and according to Rgod tshang ras pa, he was eighteen (R. 20). The chronological difference is leveled out due to the fact that Lha btsun states that Gtsang smyon was 17 when entering the monastery and that he studied for four years (rather than three years) in the monastery (L:15). That means that all three authors seem to agree that he was in his early twenties when leaving the monastery.



Fig. 4. Mar pa, Mi la ras pa, and Ras chung pa. (Photo: S. Larsson.)

sometimes did so according to the Sa skya tradition, or at least under a Sa skya influence.

Despite Gtsang smyon's Sa skya background, his later life, aspects of which are explored in the following chapter, provides substantial evidence of his Bka' brgyud pa affiliations. Gtsang smyon's Bka' brgyud connection is also obvious in the descriptions of his childhood and early life. We have already seen, for example, how the Bka' brgyud founding father Tilopa appeared in a dream to Gtsang smyon's mother when Gtsang smyon was one year old, and inserted *snyan brgyud* texts into him. We also saw how Gtsang smyon, at the age of two, supplicated the Bka' brgyud masters Mi la ras pa, Phag mo gru pa, and Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje. Several other examples are found in the *nam thars*. Dngos grub dpal 'bar, for instance, describes how Gtsang smyon, in his early teens, offered whatever nice things he saw to Mi la ras pa and Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje.<sup>58</sup> Another indication of Gtsang smyon's Bka'

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<sup>58</sup> D. 5b.

brgyud connection was his urge to go to La phyi and Tsā ri, two of the most important places of meditation and pilgrimage in the Bka' brgyud tradition.<sup>59</sup>

In these ways the disciples of Gtsang smyon show that their lama, although trained in a Sa skya monastery, was a Bka' brgyud pa at heart, and thus his Sa skya link appears to be merely superficial. However, it is not clear what kind of Bka' brgyud pa he was. The references to Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje, quoted above, give the impression that he belonged to the Stod branch of the 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud, but although Gtsang smyon is often counted as a 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud pa, there is more to the picture. In order to understand Gtsang smyon's connection to the Bka' brgyud lineage and its many branches, further sources should be taken into consideration. For instance the *rnam thar* of his root-lama, Sha ra ba, and the teachings that Sha ra ba bestowed upon Gtsang smyon, could be of interest. The problem is that Sha ra ba is not an easy lama to localize within the Bka' brgyud context either.<sup>60</sup> In the *rnam thar* of Sha ra ba it is stated that he had received Bka' brgyud teachings from several different lamas, the most important being 'Dul 'dzin Ngag gi dbang po and the twelfth abbot of Stag lung, Ngag dbang grags pa. From the former Sha ra ba received the complete *Ras chung snyan brgyud* transmission, and he regarded the latter, the Stag lung abbot, as his root lama and received many teachings from him as well.<sup>61</sup> From this account it is clear that Gtsang smyon, through his root-lama, had connections with both the Ras chung Bka' brgyud and Stag lung Bka' brgyud.

Rgod tshang ras pa also mentions that Gtsang smyon received teachings and empowerments from the second 'Brug chen, Rgyal dbang chos

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<sup>59</sup> These places are important also for adherents of other traditions but they are particularly strongly associated with the Bka' brgyud. Detailed studies of La phyi and Tsā ri have been carried out by Toni Huber (Huber 1997, 1999).

<sup>60</sup> Another problem is that the *rnam thar* of Sha ra ba was printed after Gtsang smyon's lifetime.

<sup>61</sup> Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 461.



rje (1428–1476) in Lho brag about a year after he left Dpal 'khor chos sde.<sup>62</sup> According to this account Gtsang smyon received the permission empowerment (*rjes gnang*) of the Four-Armed Wisdom Protector, and teachings of the ritual practices (*sgrub thabs*) of the lineage that had been transmitted from Zhang 'gro ba'i mgon po (1123–1193)<sup>63</sup> to Gtsang pa rgya ras (1161–1211),<sup>64</sup> and also of the lineage that had been transmitted from Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–1170) to Gling ras pa Pad ma rdo rje (1128–1188). Gtsang smyon also received the longevity empowerment of Tshe dpag med (Amitāyus) according to Ras chung's transmission (*ras chung lugs*). Finally, it is mentioned that Gtsang smyon was appointed Lord of Dharma (*chos kyi bdag po*) by the head of the 'Brug pa Bka' brgyud tradition.<sup>65</sup>

Gtsang smyon and the other famous *smyon pas* are also counted among the disciples of the seventh Karma pa, Chos grags rgya mtsho (1451–1502), in the *nam thar* of the latter.<sup>66</sup> However, the only affirmation of this found in the *nam thars* of Gtsang smyon is mention of a brief meeting with the Karma pa in the *nam thar* by Rgod tshang ras pa.<sup>67</sup>

Lha btsun relates how Gtsang smyon once was asked: “What lineage do you follow? Which lama has been kindest towards you? What experiences and understandings do you have?” Gtsang smyon answered: “My lineage is renowned as the Dwags po Bka' brgyud, [my] lama is Sha ra rab 'byams pa, and I have no experience or realization at all.”<sup>68</sup>

<sup>62</sup> R. 40–41; this would mean that he was about twenty-two years old at the time.

<sup>63</sup> Brtson 'grus grags pa alias Zhang 'gro ba'i mgon po (1123–1193) was the first lineage holder of the Tshal pa transmissions.

<sup>64</sup> Gtsang pa rgya ras Ye shes rdo rje (1161–1211) was the first 'Brug chen.

<sup>65</sup> R. 41. It should be borne in mind that the meeting between Gtsang smyon and Rgyal dbang chos rje is not mentioned in the *nam thar* by Dngos grub dpal 'bar.

<sup>66</sup> See, for instance, Dpa' bo gtsug lag phreng ba, 2006: 568.

<sup>67</sup> R. 214. This meeting is not mentioned by Lha btsun or Dngos grub dpal 'bar.

<sup>68</sup> L. 125. *ngas rgyud pa dags po [dwags po] bka' rgyud [brgyud] du grags pa de yin/ bla ma sha ra rab 'byams pa yin/ nga rang la go myong rtogs pa ci yang med byas bas.*

This is a very imprecise answer, however, since all of the “four great and eight small” Bka’ brgyud branches are Dwags po Bka’ brgyud. His answer does not tell us whether he was a Stag lung Bka’ brgyud, a Karma Bka’ brgyud, or perhaps a ’Brug pa Bka’ brgyud; and if he indeed was a ’Brug pa, we receive no information regarding the ’Brug pa branch to which he belonged. To make matters more complicated Gtsang smyon was a lineage holder of Ras chung Bka’ brgyud, a branch that was transmitted through Ras chung and not Sgam po pa/Dwags po.<sup>69</sup> The more one investigates, the more difficult it seems to answer the question about Gtsang smyon’s connection to the various Bka’ brgyud branches.

#### 4 Conclusion

The easiest solution to the problem of localising Gtsang smyon among the many Bka’ brgyud (and other) traditions is simply to see him as an outsider. Deliberately standing outside of institutions and monasteries enhanced Gtsang smyon’s possibilities to gain support. Being an outsider was an important part of the mad yogin’s lifestyle and the expected position for such a practitioner to take. It enabled Gtsang smyon to accomplish many things that would have been difficult for a monk-scholar affiliated with a monastic institution. Gtsang smyon wandered freely, not only among Buddhist traditions, but also among various political leaders. For an outsider, Gtsang smyon was very “well connected” and he eventually obtained influence and power. He skilfully managed to remain outside conflicts and problems while securing support and funding for his own projects. His position as an outsider—a wandering mad yogin, not belonging anywhere—no doubt benefited him.

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In a similar manner, Sha ra ba, when asked the same question, said that he had faith in the Dwags po Bka’ brgyud (Byams pa phun tshogs 1976: 471).

<sup>69</sup> The lineage of these teachings transmitted to Gtsang smyon is given by Rgod tshang ras pa (R. 7), and is also found in *Gdam ngag mdzod*, vol. *Nya* 1979–1981: 62–63.

The interesting paradox displayed in the person of Gtsang smyon is that, despite being an outsider with a Sa skya pa background and despite having a root lama who had been a Dge lugs pa, he stands out as a Bka' brgyud purist of sorts.<sup>70</sup>



Fig. 5. Gtsang smyon He ru ka. (Photo: S. Larsson).

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<sup>70</sup> It should be noted, however, that he continued to teach Sa skya doctrines to his disciples. According to a *rnam mgur* about Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, for example, Gtsang smyon transmitted the famous *Lam 'bras* teachings of the Sa skya tradition to Lha btsun (*Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos gyi rgyal po'i rnam mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs* 1976: 305).

He appears almost extreme in his faith and adherence to the ideals and doctrines of the Bka' brgyud, practising and disseminating their most characteristic teachings: Mahāmudrā, the Six Doctrines of Nāropa, and the aural transmissions (*snyan brgyud*) of the early Bka' brgyud masters. Moreover, he dressed and acted like the Bka' brgyud forefathers, Tilopa and Nāropa, and meditated in the same caves as Mi la ras pa. The disciples who wrote the *rnam thars* repeatedly state that his seemingly crazy and unorthodox manner was in reality anything but that. And indeed, seen in relation to the early Bka' brgyud pa yogins whose unconventional life-style he both emulated and propagated, Gtsang smyon Heruka was, in fact, quite orthodox.



Fig. 6. Gtsang smyon's shoe. (Photo: S. Larsson.)

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## THE PRINTING PROJECTS OF GTSANG SMYON HE RU KA AND HIS DISCIPLES

KURTIS R. SCHAEFFER

If we abide by the hagiographic record, then it would appear that we owe the ready availability of the *Life of Mi la ras pa* throughout the world to the dreams of two Tibetan publishers in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. One night toward the end of his life (perhaps in the 1550s) Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal—son of the ruler the Gung thang Kingdom in southwest Tibet—received a visitation from a woman in a dream. In this dream the woman commanded Rin chen rnam rgyal to print books. “Human, your previous activities have been beyond belief,” she began, perhaps alluding to the nearly four thousand folios of literature that his biographer claims he had printed up to that point. “Still, if now you were to print whatever texts you have at hand of the life and songs of Mi la ras pa, this would be your final act.” This nocturnal commission was not unusual, for his biographer assures the reader that the majority of Rin chen rnam rgyal’s printing projects were inspired by exhortations from his patron deity.<sup>1</sup> So once more he took this dream vision seriously and prepared to collect and print an anthology of Mi la ras pa’s songs that had not been included in the massive *Hundred Thousand Songs of Mi la ras pa* compiled by his teacher, Gtsang smyon He ru ka.

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<sup>1</sup> Author Unknown (but see under Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal in the accompanying appendix): NGMPP (Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project) Reel No. L456/7: 22b.4.



In dreaming of the printed word, Rin chen rnam rgyal was in fact following in the tradition of his teacher, who likewise received exhortations to print as he slept.<sup>2</sup> When Gtsang smyon was in retreat at Grod phug in Nya nang, an important site for Mi la ras pa, he had a vision—part dream and part luminous revelation—in which he beheld the Indian adept Nāropa. Nāropa appeared as a giant, naked and bejeweled, his skin blazing with beautiful light. He was standing upon a white lion, with his hands in the gesture of instruction, speaking to innumerable hosts of gods and humans. The vision was the most wondrous that Gtsang smyon had ever experienced, or had even heard about happening to someone else. He made an offering and a request for teachings to the giant Indian, who in return spoke to him—not in Tibetan, but in Sanskrit. Although it was beautiful, Gtsang smyon did not understand a word of it. He made another offering, and this time Nāropa spoke in both Sanskrit and Tibetan. Unfortunately Gtsang smyon still had difficulty getting the point. Finally an Indian translator emerged from the crowd to assist, and related Nāropa’s command to Gtsang smyon. “[Nāropa] counseled in Sanskrit,” the Indian began, “that you should assemble the life and songs of Lord Mi la ras pa from his birth up to his awakening. You should carve this into woodblocks, and you should print it. Distributing the prints will bring a prayer for Mi la ras pa to wherever the teachings of the Buddha have spread.” To this Gtsang smyon responded, “But I do not have a patron for this.” Nāropa replied, again in Sanskrit, and faced to point toward the Tibetan regions of Glo bo, Gung thang, and La stod. The translator interpreted the Indian’s gesture for Gtsang smyon, saying “He has indicated that they are your patrons.” “But I cannot prepare for wood, carvers, or scribes,” complained Gtsang smyon again. Again Nāropa pointed, this time to five women seated nearby, who rose and vowed that they would aid in the preparations. After listening to songs in Sanskrit for a while

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<sup>2</sup> This version of the story is based upon Lha btsun pa Rin chen rnam rgyal 1971: 48b.3–50a.3.

longer, Gtsang smyon awoke, inspired by this dream to print the life and songs of Mi la ras pa.

It is clear that Gtsang smyon drew on a rich tradition of hagiographic materials to create his vision of Mi la ras pa while at the same time adapting and transforming this tradition for a new audience.<sup>3</sup> Yet is not just the new form of the Mi la ras pa's biography itself that makes Gtsang smyon's effort so interesting, but the extent to which he strategically employed biography—and especially printed biography—as a means to expand his network of patrons, disciples, and holy sites. If we can judge from his biographer's accounts, Gtsang smyon developed an interest in promoting the tradition of Mi la ras pa early in life. In his early adulthood Gtsang smyon traveled to Rnga rtsa, the birthplace of Mi la ras pa in southern Gung thang. He saw a small red temple, and Mi la's uncle's house in ruins, and at a renovated temple containing a statue of Mi la ras pa he met a steward who asked him to compose verses in praise of Mi la ras pa's life. Gtsang smyon thus composed an encomium to Mi la ras pa in the form of the twelve acts of the Buddha: 1. Descent into the world from Dga' ldan; 2. Entry into the womb; 3. Birth; 4. Miracles; 5. Delights with a wife; 6. Departure; 7. Ascetic practice; 8. Going to the heart of enlightenment; 9. Becoming Buddha; 10. Turning the wheel of dharma; 11. Magical apparitions; 12. Death. There are variations on this list.<sup>4</sup> In a fascinating passage, Gtsang smyon's biographers write of the benefits of Mi la ras pa's life story by attributing the following considerations to Gtsang smyon himself:

If this *Life of Mi la ras pa* were to be well known, sense pleasures and things desired in this life would become supports for undertaking ascetic practice, while entertainments in which one wanders would become

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<sup>3</sup> For instance, Gtsang smyon styles Mi la ras pa's final opponent a Buddhist scholar critical of Mi la ras pa's anti-scholastic ways rather than the Bon po priest of Rgyal thang pa's thirteenth century account. See Tiso 1997: 994.

<sup>4</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol 1969: 72.6–73.2.

supports for practicing single-pointedness. [Mi la ras pa's Life] would become a perfect example for those who doubt that buddhahood can be attained in a single lifetime, or [worry] that they are meditating at the wrong time. They will have faith in the holy dharma of certain meaning, and will be liberated in this life or in the intermediate state. Even those of mediocre capacity can have faith in those who are experienced and provide material support for them. With a pure vow they can go into retreat, gain meditative experience in the next life, and based on that they may gain liberation. Even extremists will give up backward views and develop extraordinary faith, and they will certainly come to the end of samsara. Thus, printing [Mi la ras pa's *Life*] will be of benefit to all beings.<sup>5</sup>

Here his biographers characterize Gtsang smyon as a reformer using Mi la ras pa's *Life* to counteract hypocrisy and conceit in his day. Mi la ras pa's life story should be engaging for different types of people and should encourage different responses, including everything from patronage to solitary retreat. Block printing is explicitly associated with mass dissemination of hagiographies, and thus with the goal of "benefiting humanity." According to Rgod tshang ras pa the *Life of Mi la ras pa* experienced unprecedented popularity due to Gtsang smyon's efforts. In the years immediately following the carving of woodblocks of Mi la ras pa's *Life*, prints and paintings were distributed in Mustang, Gung thang, and Central Tibet. Gtsang smyon sent one close disciple, Bsod nams grub pa, on a tour through Dbus, Gtsang, and Tsā ri with both paintings and block prints "for the benefit of people"—in other words to missionize on behalf of Gtsang smyon.<sup>6</sup>

The hagiographic tradition of Mi la ras pa reached its height with the redaction of his life story by Gtsang smyon He ru ka, and if we may judge

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<sup>5</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa *Sna tshogs rang grol* 1969: 72.6–73.2. See Quintman 2006: 199–200 for another translation of this passage.

<sup>6</sup> Rgod tshang ras pa *Sna tshogs rang grol* 1969: 161.6.

from the immense popularity of Gtsang smyon's *Life of Mi la ras pa*, this late fifteenth century religious leader was arguably the most influential hagiographer of the Bka' brgyud schools of Tibetan Buddhism. Not only did he promote the cult of Mi la ras pa through woodblock printing—a technology only sixty or so years old in Central Tibet at the time he published the life and songs of Mi la ras pa—he initiated a tradition of printing that was to continue for the better part of a century after his death in 1507, and was to be remembered in southwestern Tibet into the twentieth century. In the late fifteenth and sixteenth centuries Gtsang smyon and his disciples actively promoted their school by compiling numerous hagiographies of early Bka' brgyud masters from the eleventh through thirteenth centuries. In the late 1960s Gene Smith was able to provide details on some twenty-two works published in woodblock print by Gtsang smyon and his disciples. Today, thanks largely to the efforts of the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project, we have access to approximately fifty-five extant prints from the same group of scholars and craftsmen (see appendix). The two most important figures in this tradition are the two principal disciples of Gtsang smyon He ru ka, Lha btsun pa Rin chen rnam rgyal (1473–1557) and Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol (died 1570). Rin chen rnam rgyal was active primarily at Brag dkar rta so, a hermitage in the Skyid rong Valley at which Mi la ras pa is held to have achieved enlightenment. Rgod tshang ras pa worked at the place where Mi la ras pa's biographer passed away,<sup>7</sup> the hermitage of Ras chung phug, situated on the spur separating the Yar lung and the Phyong rgyas valleys, just south of the modern city of Tsetang. Rgod tshang ras pa published approximately twelve works at Ras chung phug, totalling over seven hundred folios. He wrote at Ras chung phug as well, but he also wrote in Kong po to the southeast and in La phyi to the southwest. In one case Rgod tshang ras pa composed a work at La phyi (his history of the *Cakrasamvara Tantra* lineages in India and Tibet), and later had it printed at Ras chung phug. The works produced by Rgod tshang ras

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<sup>7</sup> On which see Schaeffer 2007.

pa are nearly all undated. Most were printed at the hermitage of Ras chung phug during Rgod tshang ras pa's lifetime, so the *terminus ante quem* is 1570.

In terms of a broader history of printing in Tibet, Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal deserves pride of place over Rgod tshang ras pa. Over the course of nearly twenty years, Rin chen rnam rgyal published no less than twenty-eight works, totalling over fifteen hundred folios. Of these fourteen have publishing dates, ranging from 1538 to 1563 (this is a problematic date for Rin chen rnam rgyal, who is believed to have died in 1557). The majority of the work was undertaken during the early to mid 1550s. Biographies of Rin chen rnam rgyal typically list works that he had printed, though these lists are also usually incomplete compared to the list we can assemble from presently extant works. On the other hand, one biography states that he alone produced over four thousand folios of printed literature, a figure that far exceeds the estimate we can make based upon currently extant work.<sup>8</sup> Writing in the early nineteenth century, the hermitage's most prominent historian, Brag dkar rta so Chos kyi dbang phyug, was clearly proud of the fact that the many editions of the the biography and the collected songs that had been printed between Gtsang smyon's time and his own. According to him the printing house at Brag dkar rta so was established by Rin chen rnam rgyal, later to be renovated by Karma Blo bzang in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century.<sup>9</sup> Chos kyi dbang phyug had engaged in a philological study of several blockprint editions of Gtsang smyon He ru ka's life of Mi la ras pa from around Tibet. All, he claims, descended not from the edition produced by Gtsang smyon He ru ka, but from the edition produced by his student Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so. This is an important claim, for it places Brag dkar rta so at the center of one of

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<sup>8</sup> See Author Unknown (but see under Lha btsun Rin chen rnam rgyal in the accompanying appendix): 1. See also a reference to printing of Ras chung's *rnam thar* and *mgur 'bum* at 12a.1. See also 22a.6–22b.

<sup>9</sup> On Karma blo bzang see Mathes 2001: 172–74.

the most widespread biographical traditions in the whole of the Tibetan cultural world.<sup>10</sup>

The publication of Bka' brgyud works at Brag dkar rta so in Gung tang and Ras chung phug in Gtsang was part of a larger rise in printing throughout central and southwest Tibet, and especially in Mang yul Gung thang.<sup>11</sup> What is unique about the publishing at Brag dkar rta so is Rin chen rnam rgyal's distinctive and patient determination over twenty years to build a well-rounded corpus of Bka' brgyud pa hagiographies, histories, songs, preaching guidebooks, and contemplative manuals. Taken together, their publications include works by and about more than twenty figures. Indian personalities include Vajradhāra, Saraha, Tilopa, Nāropa and—though he does not belong to the lineage made up of the former siddhas, the late Indian yogin Mitrayogin, who traveled to Tibet in the twelfth century—as well as the great Bka' gdams pa preacher Po to ba Rin chen gsal. Among the Tibetan masters represented in the printed works of Gtsang smyon's tradition we find Mar pa, Mi la ras pa, Ras chung pa, Sgam po pa, Phag mo gru pa, Gling ras pa Padma rdo rje, Gtsang pa rgya ras Ye shes rdo rje, Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje, Yang dgon pa, and, somewhat later, the yogin-poet Ko brag pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan. Figures from the late thirteenth through the mid-fifteenth centuries are not represented, and the narratives resume with Gtsang smyon He ru ka's teacher, Sha ra rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge, and move through Gtsang

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<sup>10</sup> Brag dkar rta so Sprul sku Chos kyi dbang phyug (comp. 1816): 22b.4–23b.1. See also, 29b.2, where Rin chen rnam rgyal establishes printing house at Drag dkar rta so, and 34a.5, where Karma Blo bzang renovates the printing house.

<sup>11</sup> Woodblocks were carved for major works in Mang yul Gung thang as early as the late fifteenth century. See Ehrhard 2000a (especially 13–18) and Ehrhard 2000b: xiv. Such major works as Klong chen pa's five-hundred-folio *Treasury of the Supreme Way* (*Theg mchog mdzod*) were printed in the early 1530s: Ehrhard 2000c: xvi. A book of spells had been printed at the monastery of Dpal 'khor chos sde in Rgyal rtse in 1539, and Sa skya Paṇḍita's famous *Analysis of the Three Vows* (*Sdom gsum rab dbye*) was printed near Sa skya in the 1540s: Fushimi 1999: 97–98.

smyon himself to his two principal disciples, Lha btsun pa Rin chen rnam rgyal and Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol, and finally to Sangs rgyas dar po, whose work of 1568 may be taken as a convenient place to draw a close to the tradition. Sangs rgyas dar po was the tradition's official historiographer, composing a history of Bka' brgyud schools from the time of the Buddha up to Gtsang smyon He ru ka, Rgod tshang ras pa, and Rin chen rnam rgyal. He was also a patron of printing, sponsoring such works as the biography of Yan dgon pa, printed not at one of the two more well-known printing houses, but at Rtsib ri. It is significant that there are no duplicate works published at both Brag dkar rta so and Ras chung phug, suggesting that Rgod tshang ras pa and Rin chen rnam rgyal were aware of each other's catalog of publications. In the division of major saints, Rin chen rnam rgyal seems to have secured Mi la ras pa, while Rgod tshang ras pa worked to a greater extent on the life of Mi la ras pa's most famous contemplative disciple Ras chung pa Rdo rje grags pa (Rin chen rnam rgyal did write two works on Ras chung pa<sup>12</sup>: see appendix).

Aside from their value as examples of the rich poetic and biographical literature that had reached a zenith among the Bka' brgyud schools by the beginning of the sixteenth century, the prints published by Rin chen rnam rgyal and Rgod tshang ras pa contain rich colophons authored either by them or a senior scribe. A full colophon may include reasons for composing or redacting the work, reasons for printing the work, a list of sponsors, a list of the artisans, and the date of the creation, carving, and consecration of the printed work. Let us look briefly at what a few of these important publisher's postfaces have to say about the sponsors and what they donated.

For any given major publishing project, there could be more than fifty sponsors. and occasionally the scribe of the colophon despairs at writing down all of their names. A broad range of social positions is represented in the sponsor lists, including such intriguing if otherwise unknowable figures as the army officer from Mnga' ris who donated to the publication of the brief

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<sup>12</sup> See Roberts 2007: 37–38.

biography of Ras chung pa produced at Brag dkar rta so. Other types of people making donations to the publication of Gtsang smyon He ru ka's life of Mi la ras pa at Brag dkar rta so included monks, nuns, nomads, noblemen and noblewomen, hermits, and people from as far west as Mnga' ris and Dol po. An extensive donor list is provided in Rin chen rnam rgyal's reprint of Gtsang smyon He ru ka's life of Mi la ras pa, a list that conjurs vivid images of the rich economic and material life in which woodblock printing was enmeshed.<sup>13</sup> Materials donated include butter; Nepalese coins; domestic animals such as *'bri*, yak, and *mdzo mo*; offering scarves; coral; green silk; white silk; Chinese silk; silver; saffron; cotton cloth in plain, dyed, and printed varieties; molasses; armour; barley; turquoise; wool cloth; monk's clothing; medicine; copper pots; tin plates; amulet boxes; vegetables; rice; tripod stoves; skins from wild goat and spotted deer (these two types of skin appear only in Ras chung pa's biography); yoghurt; tea (which appears only in Rgod tshang ras pa's biography of Gtsang smyon He ru ka); conch shells; animal horns; helmets; horses; bells; knives; sapphires; salt; and—lest we forget that this is for book publishing—woodblocks for carving and paper for printing.

There is no doubt that the doctrines of karma and merit played an important role in encouraging people to donate to a printing project—printing was good Buddhist work, and by the sixteenth century donating to a biography or collection of poetry authored by a Tibetan saint was every bit as meritorious as sponsoring a sūtra or a tantra. But people might just as well make an offering as a memorial to a person now deceased, or wish for the welfare of a place. The biography of Gtsang smyon He ru ka's teacher, Sha ra Rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge, was authored and likely printed in 1559 by a student of Rgod tshang ras pa to fulfill the last wishes of Lha btsun (who died in 1557), and to prolong the life of Rgod tshang (who would die in 1570). This was not an uncommon wish for the benefits of publishing. Printing projects undertaken at Sa skya Monastery in the 1540s were also carried out in accordance with the

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<sup>13</sup> Gtsang smyon He ru ka: 111a.6–115a.5.



wishes of the deceased and for the long life of prominent living figures. More interesting are the several works that are dedicated to the peace and prosperity of rulers reigning over the region in which the work was printed. Rin chen rnam rgyal dedicated his 1550 publication of his own life of the Indian adept Tilopa to the eventual enlightenment of his deceased mother and father, as well as to the long life of the Gong ma (or leader) and the peace and prosperity of his kingdom. Although he does not mention this leader's name, it is likely that he refers here to the ruler of Mang yul Gung thang, Khri Kun bzang nyi zla grags pa (1514–1560), who also happened to be his nephew. Thus, the life story of a tenth-century Indian mystic comes to be dedicated to the proper function of a sixteenth-century Tibetan principality. Rin chen rnam rgyal dedicated the publication of the life of Rgod tshang pa to the welfare of Mnga' ris and to his mother and father. It is clear from this that regional interests were strongly in mind when works were printed—a point to which I will return below.

The artisans who carried out the work of printing were, at least in rhetorical terms, held in high esteem, and are mentioned in many of the publisher's conclusions. Scribes are accorded a place of respect in the list, and sometimes it is only they who are named, while the carvers remain anonymous. In other cases the carvers are highly praised, and are compared even to Viśvakarma, the divine architect of Indian mythology. As many as thirteen carvers could work on a single project (as was the case for the small prayer to Mi la ras pa carved at Ras chung phug), far fewer than the hundreds that would work on the massive canonical collections of the eighteenth century, but still a significant collection of laborers for a small retreat center. Artisans could participate in printing projects on an ongoing basis, and it is possible that they remained in residence at both Brag dkar rta so and Ras chung phug. The printer Chu dbon Rdo rje rgyal mtshan is one example. He worked at Brag dkar rta so as early as 1538 on Rin chen rnam rgyal's brief biography of Ras chung pa, and he appears to have outlived Rin chen rnam rgyal himself, for he worked on the biography of the master after Rin chen rnam rgyal's death in 1557 and, as

Franz-Karl Ehrhard has shown, worked at other printing houses around the region.<sup>14</sup>

Scribes and carvers would work in teams and most likely simultaneously, each taking responsibility for a portion of the work. Two experienced scribes might split a work such as Gtsang smyon He ru ka's *Hundred Thousand Songs of Mi la ras pa*, each completing half of the total text. The carvers would generally take on much less work than the scribes. Ten carvers worked to complete the two hundred and fifty blocks of Mi la ras pa's songs in 1555 at Brag dkar rta so, and their names were listed at the bottom of the last folio for which they were responsible. In some cases a scribe and a carver might be one and the same person, as in the case of Bcu dpon Rdo rje rgyal mtshan, who acted as scribe for the second half of Mi la ras pa's songs, and also worked as a carver on the last ten folios. Occasionally a scribe will refer to himself in the first person in a colophon, thus making it plain that it was he and not Rin chen rnam rgyal or Rgod tshang ras pa who composed the printing colophon. So while we often refer to these two prominent figures as the creators of these printed works, we might better think of the scribes working under them as the producers or the project managers, and them as the publishers or the executive producers

The publishers' concluding remarks are rich in detail, illustrating that this work was important to publishers, sponsors, and artisans alike. Indeed, one of the most interesting things about the Gtsang smyon tradition of printing is not that it happened, but that its members were compelled to record its occurrence so thoroughly. Clearly the woodblock printing was a self-consciously significant affair. Yet these publishers rarely speak to the reasons why printing was important in the first place, as opposed, say, to scribal publication, which was still a major form of text production in sixteenth-century Tibet. One obvious reason is to support missionary activities, a rationale laid out in Gtsang smyon's long apology to printing the life of Mi la ras pa (as represented in

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<sup>14</sup> Ehrhard 2000a: 73, 75, 77.

Rgod tshang ras pa's biography of his master, translated above), but never explicitly referred to in the colophons themselves. And missionizing may in turn have been connected with the growth and reputation of the place of printing. As the biographies and songs of famous Indian and Tibetan masters were disseminated from a place of printing such as Brag dkar rta so or Ras chung phug, these hermitages would become known beyond their local regions as centers of meritorious activity, places worthy of a trip to pay homage to the memory of the masters portrayed in the biographies sent from there. The places are so important that they often receive their own praise as the beneficent lands that support the printing of Buddhist literature. The colophon to Rgod tshang ras pa's life of Ras chung pa offers a good description of Ras chung phug: "The center of the long Yar lung Valley, a Dharmodaya temple piled five stories high, with green rice fields at its base, called Lo ma lo ri, with its peak as if covered with piles of jewels, prophesied by Mi la ras pa, blessed by Ras chung pa, the place at which Gtsang smyon He ru ka passed into the realm of reality." And while Brag dkar rta so is claimed in a geopolitical sense as a region of Mang yul Gung thang, which is according to Rin chen rnam rgyal itself but a part of Mnga' ris, it is said in grander terms to be a place that promotes the dharma in a degenerate time, a location even better for serving Buddhism than the limitless buddha-fields.

One turn of phrase does hint at the unique ability of printing, however, a phrase that is used only twice in the nearly sixty works that I have examined. According to the colophon of Gtsang smyon He ru ka's famous life of Mi la ras pa, Gtsang smyon had produced an "inexhaustible print." This expression, an "inexhaustible print," evokes the unique capacity of the printing technology to reproduce vast quantities of the work, surely print publication's most obvious technical and economic advantage over scribal publication. However, "inexhaustible" is perhaps more evocative than descriptive, for blocks do wear out. Because Gtsang smyon He ru ka's blocks had "benefited humanity in such great measure," they had become somewhat unclear, and it is for this reason that, some sixty years after Gtsang smyon produced his, Rin chen rnam rgyal

ventured to make a new set of blocks for what had already become a classic of Tibetan literature. (It appears from the colophon that these in turn wore out due to extensive use, and a new set of blocks was once again produced by Rin chen rnam rgyal).

It would appear that printing continued after the death of Rin chen rnam rgyal, for works such as his own treatise on Great Seal contemplative practice was printed in 1561, four years after his passing. Yet it also appears that, though rightly famous for institutionalizing the printing of biographical and poetic works associated with Mi la ras pa and similar figures, Rin chen rnam rgyal was not the first person after Gtsang smyon He ru ka himself to produce a new set of printing blocks for the life and songs of Mi la ras pa. This honor goes to his contemporary Bsod nams blo gros (c. 1460–1541), a fellow student of Gtsang smyon. The 1544 biography of Bsod nams blo gros<sup>15</sup> states that he waited on Gtsang smyon for more than fifteen years, from around 1490 until Gtsang smyon's death in 1507. Bsod nams blo gros had prints made as early as the 1530s, though certainly no later than 1541, the year of his death.<sup>16</sup> His most important contributions were reprints of three of Gtsang smyon's works: the life and songs of Mi la ras pa, as well as the biography of Mar pa. He received offerings of tea, cups, iron, and fabric from disciples in a request that he produce new blocks of the biography and songs of Mi la ras pa, for the old blocks had become worn. With donations from the several settlements around the Gnya' nang region of southern Tibet he was able to complete more than one hundred blocks from the *Hundred Thousand Songs of Mi la ras pa* initially, and to complete the full work after gathering more donations. Shortly after that, he completed new blocks for the biography of Mi la ras pa, as well as a short devotional work. Bsod nams blo gros made sure that the scribes and carvers were well paid for their work, and as the blocks were consecrated, a rain of flowers fell—ever a sure sign that the forces of enlightenment are

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<sup>15</sup> Bya bral pa Tshul khriims dpal ldan: NGMPP, L833/3, fol. 53b.

<sup>16</sup> See Schaeffer 2007: 223–24, on which the following paragraph is based.

looking favorably upon one's labors. Finally, just after he published the biography of Mar pa, he had many hundreds of prints made and gave them out as "dharma gifts" to the faithful around the region.<sup>17</sup> The blocks of Mar pa's biography seem to have been dear to Bsod nams blo gros, for they are one of the few items for which he gave specific instructions to his disciples upon his death. They were to move them to Sgro phug, the old hermitage of Mi la ras pa. His disciples fulfilled their master's wish, and moved the blocks to Sgro phug, back to the same hermitage at which Gtsng smyon He ru ka had received a visionary command in a dream to publish the life of Mi la ras pa, back to where this tradition's dreams of the printed word began.

**Appendix: Blockprints of the Gtsang smyon tradition printed at Brag dkar rta so, Ras chung phug, and elsewhere**

This list of blockprints is meant to supplement the list published in 1969 by E. Gene Smith,<sup>18</sup> and to provide a bibliographic reference point for further specialized studies on printing, of the sort admirably exemplified by Eimer, Ehrhard, Fushimi, and Roesler (listed in the bibliography), among others. The majority of newly extant works are those filmed by the Nepal-German Manuscript Preservation Project (NGMPP). All "L" references (example: L456/4) and "E" references (example: E2517/6) refer to the catalogue entries for the reel numbers of the NGMPP microfilms (copies of these films may be purchased from the Nepal National Archives in Kathmandu). The works are organized into three broad categories: I. Biographies and poetry collections; II. Teachings; III. Histories. Within the first section (I) works are organized chronologically by biographical subject, under which poetry is included. For instance, the poems of Saraha are included under "Saraha" and both the biographies of Gtsng smyon He ru ka and his poetry are included under his name. A quick glance down the list reveals that the printers in Gtsang smyon's

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<sup>17</sup> Bya bral pa Tshul khriims dpal ldan: fol. 42b.2.

<sup>18</sup> Reprinted in Smith 2001: 70–79.

tradition collectively created a sort of canon of siddha story and song, a *gser 'phreng* (to use a traditional literary metaphor) spread out over numerous individual publications and yet forming a coherent whole. The bulk of the bibliographic work represented here was undertaken in 1998 and 1999 at the Nepal Research Centre in Kathmandu, time for which I would like to thank Dr. Klaus-Dieter Mathes, then Director of the Centre. The NGMPP conducted further filming expeditions for some two years after this work was completed. New works will surely come to light that should be added to the present list, and it should be read in concert with the geographically wider presentation of print-colophons in Franz-Karl Ehrhard's *Early Buddhist Block Prints from Mang-yul Gung-thang*. Eventually one will want to assemble proper bibliographic records for these works, of the sort exemplified in Peter Schwieger's multi-volume work, *Tibetische Handschriften und Blockdrucke* (teil 9–12, 1985–99). It may be fruitful for future studies of Tibetan printing to adapt bibliographic principles such as those formulated in F. Bowers' *Principles of Bibliographic Description* (1949) for use in describing the Mang yul prints. The following is intended only to contribute to the collection of data for such a project.

## I. Biographies and poetry collections

### Vajradhāra

*Rdo rje 'chang yab yum gyi rnam thar*. Author: Tilopa. L456/4. 11 folios. In *Rare Dkar-brgyud-pa texts from Himachal Pradesh: a collection of biographical works and philosophical treatises*. New Delhi: Urgyen Dorje, 1976, pp. 85–105. Printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so. Print colophon at p. 105.4.

*Rdo rje 'chang / rje btsun rdo rje rnal 'byor ma / gsang bdag rdo rje snying po / grub chen tee lo pa / mkhas dbang grub nā ro pan chen / sgra sgyur mar pa lo tstsha / rnam kyī rnam thar gsol 'debs las dang por rgyal dbang rdo rje chang gi bstod pa mi zad rgyad gyi 'khor lo'i rnam rol*. L582/9. 16 folios. Margin: Hri. Produced by Rgod tshang ras pa. No location listed,

but likely Ras chung phug. Interesting epithets of Rgod tshang ras pa. Colophon 15b.1–16a.3.

### Saraha

*Bram ze chen pos mdzad pa'i dho ha bskor gsum / mdzod drug / ka kha dho ha / sa spyad rnams.* L237/13. 37 folios. L456/6. 36 folios. In *Rare Dkar brgyud pa Texts*. Compiled by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so. Colophon at p. 179.3.

*Mdo* (sic!) *ha bskor gsum rgyud pa'i gsol 'debs dang bcas pa.* (2.) *Rje btsun bzhad pa'i rdo rje la gsol ba 'debs byin rlabs kyi gter.* (3.) *Shes bya ma.* (4.) *Rnal 'byor dbang phyug rgod tshang ras chen gyi rnam thar gsol 'debs.* (5.) *Chos sku rdo rje 'chang gi rnam thar.* L803/5. 33 folios (total for 7 titles).

- (1.) *Mdo ha bskor gsum rgyud pa'i gsol 'debs dang bcas pa.* L803/5. Printed by Lodro Namgyal (Blo gros rnam rgyal, identity?), scribe Rta dga' rgyal bzang, carver Lha mdun seng bzang. Print colophon 16a.2
- (2[a].) *Rje btsun bzhad pa'i rdo rje la gsol ba 'debs byin rlabs kyi gter.* L803/5. Authored by Gtsang smyon, printed at Ras chung phug by Rgod tshang ras pa using one scribe named Sngags 'chang Rong lha ba, and eleven carvers. Colophon 4a.6.
- (2b.) *untitled.* L803/5. Composed by Rin chen rnam rgyal in 1522 (? chu rta) at gnas chen ling ba? grag mar.
- (2c.) *untitled.* Composed by Rgod tshang Ras chen at Tsā ri, likely a Ras chung phug print. Colophon 1b.
- (3.) *Shes bya ma.* Homage prayer to Sgam po pa composed by Phag mo gru pa, printed together with the biography and songs of Ras chung Rdo rje grags at Ras chung phug by Rgod tshang ras pa.
- (4.) *Rnal 'byor dbang phyug rgod tshang ras chen gyi rnam thar gsol 'debs.* Biographical prayer of Rgod tshang ras pa requested by his

disciples, delivered in Kong po. Possibly a Ras chung phug print. Colophon 2b.3.

- (5.) *Chos sku rdo rje 'chang gi rnam thar*. Composed by Skar ma rang byung rdo rje, printed with the biography of Sgam po pa. Carvers Gung thang pa Pha lug dkon mchog skyabs and Bya btang 'od zer. Possibly a Ras chung phug print. Colophon fol. 4a.5.

### Tilopa

*Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug chen po rje btsun ti lo shes rab bzang po'i rnam thar zab gsal rin chen gter mdzes mthong bas yin smon*. Author: Dbang phyug rgyal mtshan. L36/2. 40 folios. Very poor print. Based on many biographies, including one by Gtsang smyon He ru ka.

*Sangs rgyas thams cad kyī rnam 'phrul rje btsun ti lo pa'i rnam mgur*. Author: Lha bstun rin chen rnam rgyal. E2517/6. 17 folios [folios 13–19 missing]. L1107/4. In *Rare Dkar brgyud pa Texts*, pp. 37–83. Produced by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1550, dedicated to the long life of the Gong ma (Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa according to Franz-Karl Ehrhard) and the peace and prosperity of the kingdom and to the realization of his mother and father. Colophon 82.7–83.6.

### Nāropa (c. 1016–1100)

*Mkhas grub kun gyi gtsug rgyan / pañ chen nā ro pa'i rnam thar / ngo mtshar smad 'byung*. L36/1. Author/compiler: Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal? Bad print, colophon missing.

### Mitrayogin (c. 12<sup>th</sup> century)

*Rje btsun chen po mi tra dzo ki'i rnam thar*. L804/3. 26 folios. Margin: Hrī. Printed at Ras chung phug by Rgod tshang ras pa. *Ye dharma* prayer at conclusion. Colophon 25b.7–26a.7.



**Mar pa (1012–97)**

*Sgra gyur mar pa lo tshtsha'i rnam par thar pa.* Author: Gtsang smyon Heruka. E693/3. 75 folios [f1–62, f63–75 handwritten]. L9/11–L10/1. 70 folios. [folios 9–11, 21, 25... missing]. Likely a Brag dkar rta so print. Long praise addressed to Skyid grong and the Wa ti temple, then donor list, then printers including Bcu dpon Rdo rje gyal mtshan, last page missing. Colophon 74a.

*Sgra bsgyur mar pa lo tsa'i mgur 'bum.* Compiled by Gtsang smyon Heruka. L194/7. E2518/2. 40 folios. Edited by another figure whose name is illegible. Printed by Lha btsun pa rin chen rnam rgyal in 1552(?) chu pho byi at Brag dkar rta so. E2518/2 Colophon 40a.7.

**Mi la ras pa (1040–1123)**

*Rje btsun mi la ras pa rnam thar rgyas par phye ba mgur 'bum.* Author: Gtsang smyon Heruka L250/8–L251/1. 250 folios. Printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1555. First part written by a scribe from Dol po named Kun dga' rgyal po, second half written down by Chu dpon Rdo rje rgyal mtshan of Gtsang, a craftsman who appears on numerous prints. There were ten carvers whose names are given at the bottom of the last folio that they had carved. The carver of the last ten folios was the scribe for the second half of the work as a whole. Colophon 249a.3.<sup>19</sup>

*Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug dam pa rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rnam par thar pa dang thams cad mkhyen pa'i lam ston.* Author: Gtsang smyon He ru ka. L250/7. 115 folios. Produced by Rin chen rnam rgyal. No place or date are mentioned, though this is almost surely from Brag dkar rta so.

*Rje btsun mi la ras pa'i rdo rje'i mgur drug sogs gsung rgyun thor bu.* L251/2. 109 folios. Compiled and printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal in 1550. Colophon 109a.7.

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<sup>19</sup> See Eimer 1996's: 7–19; Eimer 2000; and Ehrhard 2000: 17-18 (note 15) and 78. More generally, see Eimer and Tsering 1990.

*Thun mong ma yin pa rdo rje mgur*. Author: Mi la ras pa. L477/14. 19 folios. E1256/1. Printed by Lha btsun pa Rin chen rnam rgyal [likely at Brag dkar rta so]. No date. Colophon 19a.7.

**Ras chung pa Rdo rje grags pa (1083–1161)**

*Rje btsun ras chung rdo rje grags kyi rnam thar rnam mkhyen thar lam rin po che gsal ba'i me long ye shes snang ba*. Author: Rgod tshang ras pa. L199/8–L200/1 240 folios. E2080/2. f243. L597/1. E2080/2. Composed by Rgod tshang ras pa at Ras chung phug. E2080/2 colophon 240a.6–243a.7. Author's colophon [240b.1]. Printer's colophon [241.4]. Long donor colophon 242–43.

*Ras chung pa'i rnam thar mdor bsdus*. E908/3. 38 folios. Produced by Rin chen rnam rgyal in 1538 (*sa pho khyi*). Difficult print. Printer possibly Bcu dpon Rdo rgyal. Colophon 38a.5.–6.

*Tshe gcig la 'ja' lus bsnyes pa'i ras chung pa'i rnam thar rags sdus mgur rnam rgyas par*. E2518/3. 93 folios. Printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1563 (*chu phag*), but perhaps emend to *chu stag* (1542) or *chu glang* (1553) in order to fall before Rin chen rnam rgyal's date of death, 1557. Donations include an army officer from Mnga' ris. Colophon 93a.5.

*Ras chung rdo rje grags pa'i rnam thar gsol 'debs*. L621/6. 5 folios. Margin: HuM. Produced by Rgod tshang ras pa at Ras chung phug. Colophon 5a.5.

**Sgam po pa Bstod nams rin chen (1079–1153)**

*Shes bya ma*. Author: Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po. L621/6 (text 2). 3 folios. Printed by Rgod tshang ras pa at Ras chung phug while printing the biography of Ras chung pa. Colophon 3b.6.

**Phag mo gru pa Rdo rje rgyal po (1110–70)**

*Bde gshogs phag mo gru pa'i rnam thar*. Author: Bsod nams dpal. E2518/5. E693/4. L970/3. In *Rare Dkar brgyud Texts*, pp. 1–35.18 folios. Printed by Lha bstun rin chen rnal rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1552. Concludes with the *ye dharma* prayer. Colophon 18a.4.

**Gling ras pa Padma rdo rje (1128–88)**

*Grub thob gling ras ky'i rnam mgur mthong ba don ldan*. L12/1. 61 folios. L194/11. L581/5. Printed at Brag dkar rta so by Rin chen rnam rgyal. Print colophon 61a.4.

**'Brug chen I Gtsang pa rgya ras Ye shes rdo rje (1161–1211)**

*'Gro ba'i mgon po gtsang pa rgya ras ky'i mgur 'bum rgyas pa*. L581/4. E2518/7. 52 folios. Printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1551 for the long life of Mi dbang Khu dbon (Kun bzang Nyi zla grags pa and his cousin Bkra shis dpal 'bar according to Franz-Karl Ehrhard, personal communication), and the happiness and welfare of the government. E2518/7 Colophon 52a.4.

*'Gro ba'i mgon po gtsang pa rgya ras pa'i rnam thar ngo mtshar dad pa'i rlabs phreng*. L804/3. 43 folios. Margin: Ta. Printed at La phyi in 1552 (*chu pho byi*) by Sangyé Darpo. Print colophon 42b.3–43a.5.

**Rgod tshang pa Mgon po rdo rje (1189–1258)**

*Rje rgod tshang pa'i rnam thar rgya thang pa bde chen rdo rjes mdzad pa*. Author: Rgya thang pa Bde chen rdo rje. L211/3. 42 folios. L969/5–L970/1. E2518/8. Margin: no. Printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1563 (?). Chosen because it was easy to read. Print dedicated to the welfare of Mnga' ris and to mother and father. E2518/8 Colophon 42a.2.

*Rgyal ba rgod tshang mgon po rdo rje'i rnam par thar pa mthong ba don ldan nor bu'i phreng ba*. Author: Gtsang smyon He ru ka. L978/8–L979/1. 114

folios. Composed in 1501 (*lcags pho byi*) at La phyi. Printed at Ras chung phug by Rgod tshang ras pa. Scribe Sngags 'chang Rong lha and ten carvers. Colophon 115a.4–116a.7. Print patrons 115b.1–116a.6.

**Yang dgon pa Rgyal mtshan dpal (1213–58)**

*Rgyal ba yang dgon rje'i rnam thar yid bzhin nor bu*. L589/7. 76 folios.

Margin: Ka. Printed at Rtsib ri by Lo pan 'Jam dpal chos lha, funded by Sangs rgyas dar [po]. Colophon begins 75b.5.

*Yang dkon chos rje'i mdzad pa'i bar do 'phrang bsgrol*. E2518/9. 38 folios.

Printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so. Print colophon 38a.8.

*Rgyal ba yang dkon pa'i thugs kyi bcud ngo sprod bdun gyi mgur ma*. In *Rare Dkar brgyud pa Texts*, pp. 381–449. Requested by Nam mkha' rdo rje, produced by Rtogs ldan dpal mgon at Bral gnon. Possibly unconnected to the Gtsang smyon tradition.

**Ko brag pa Bsod nams rgyal mtshan (1182–1261)**

*Khams gsum dran bral grub thob ko rag pa'i mgur 'bum*. L970/2. 16 folios.

Printed by Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal, likely at Brag dkar rta so.<sup>20</sup>

**Sha ra Rab 'byams pa Sangs rgyas seng ge (fifteenth century)**

*Mkhas grub sha ra rab 'jam pa sangs rgyas seng ge'i rnam thar mthong ba don ldan ngo mtshar nor bu'i phreng ba shar 'dod yid 'phrog blo gsal mgul brgyan*. In *Rare Dkar brgyud pa Texts*, pp. 451–501. Biography of Gtsang smyon's teacher, authored (and printed?) by Rab 'byams pa Byams pa phun tshogs, student of Rgod tshang ras pa, to fulfill the last wishes of Lha btsun (d. 1557), and to prolong the life of Rgod tshang (d. 1570), completed in *lug* year (1559). Colophon: 500.7. Ends in *ye dharma* prayer.

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<sup>20</sup> See Stearns 2000: 175 for a translation of the colophon.

**Gtsang smyon He ru ka (1452–1507)**

*Grub thob gtsang smyon pa'i rnam thar dad pa'i spu slong g.yo ba.* Author: Rin chen rnam rgyal. E2518/10. 65 folios. L12/2. In *Bde mchog mkha' 'gro snyan rgyud (ras chung snyan rgyuad), Two Manuscript Collections of Texts from the Yig-cha of Gtsang-smyong He-ru-ka.* Leh: S. W. Tashigangpa, 1971. Two volumes. In Volume 1, pp. 1–129 (folios 1–65). Printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1543 (*chu mo yos*). Good material on donors, benefits, and artisans.

*Gtsang smyon he ru ka phyogs thams cad las rnam par rgyal ba'i rnam thar rdo rje theg pa'i gsal gyed nyi ma'i snying po.* Author: Rgod tshang ras pa Sna tshogs rang grol. L804/2. 146 folios. In *The Life of the Saint of Gtsa'i.* New Delhi: International Academy of Indian Culture, 1969. Very large donor list, yet still according to the colophon's author "so many donors that I cannot write all their names!" Print colophon 288.1–292.2.<sup>21</sup>

*Gtsang pa he ru ka'i rnam thar.* Author: Dge slong Dngos grub dpal 'bar. L834/2. 31 folios. Printed in Gnas chen Dgon gsar. Colophon 31a.<sup>22</sup>

*Rje btsun gstang pa he ru ka'i mgur 'bum rin po che dbang gi rgyal po thams cad mkhyen pa'i lam.* Author: Rgod tshang ras pa. L567/2. 28 folios. Not a Brag dkar rta so print. No date. Colophon 28a.

*Gsol 'debs.* Author: Rin chen rnam rgyal. L581/6. 4 folios. No margin. Composed 1522 at Ling ba Brag dmar. Prayer to Gtsang smyon He ru ka. Colophon 4a.6.

**'Brug chen 04 Padma dkar po (1527–92)**

*Rgyal sras mi pham padma dkar po'i rtogs brjod.* L621/6. Folios? Printed by Sangs rgyas dar po at the same time as a biography (?) of Gtsang pa rgya ras.

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<sup>21</sup> This work is, of course, the principal subject of the well-known essay by E. Gene Smith: Smith 2001: 59–79.

<sup>22</sup> A full translation of this work is currently in preparation by Mr. Stefan Larsson, Stockholm University, Sweden.

**Lha btsun pa Rin chen nram rgyal (1473–1557)**

*Rnal 'byor dbang phyug lha btsun chos kyi rgyal po'i nram thar gyi smad cha.* L456/7. 32 folios. No author, date, or place of printing. Likely a Brag dkar rta so print. List of artisans, including Chu dbon Rdo rje rgyal mtshan. Print colophon begins 32a.3.

*Dpal ldan bla ma dam pa mkhas grub lha btsun chos kyi rgyal po'i nram mgur blo 'das chos sku'i rang gdangs.* L11/20. L477/13. E2251/1. Author? In *Rare Dkar brgyud pa Texts*, pp. 273–379. Chu dbon Rdo rje rgyal mtshan as carver. Colophon pp. 378.6–379.7.

**Rgod tshang ras chen Sna tshogs rang grol (1494–1570)**

*Rnal 'byor gyi dbang phyug rgod tshang ras chen pa'i nram thar tshigs bcad ma dngos grub kyi rgya mtsho.* L978/7. 8 folios. Likely not Brag dkar rta so or Ras chung phug. Colophon 8b.5.

**Bsod nams blo gros (d. 1541)**

*Mkhas grub rdo rje 'chang bsod nams blo gros kyi nram thar yon tan gyi sbrang rtsi la dad pa'i bung ba nram par rol pa.* Author: Bya bral pa Tshul khriims dpal ldan. L833/3. 54 folios. Composed in Nyi shar in 1544. Printed in Ma gar phug near Skyid mo lung. Author colophon 53a.3–53b.2. Print colophon 53b.2–54a.7.

**II. Teachings****Sgam po pa'i gsung**

*Chos rje dags po lha rje'i gsung / bstan chos lung gi nyi 'od.* E2518/4. 25 folios. Printed by Rin chen nram rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1550. Print colophon 25a.6.

*Dwags po rin po che'i rtogs chos snying po don gyi rnal 'byor bzhi rim.* Author: Rin chen nram rgyal. L 567/5. 8 folios. Remark on NGMPP card: “*brag dkar* fire-dragon year”; *me 'brug* 1556. Contemplative instructions according to Sgam po pa. Not seen.

**Phyag rgya chen po**

*Rgyud kyi dgongs pa gtsor ston pa phyag chen yi ge bzhi pa'i 'grel bshad.* L503/2. 50 folios. L956/8. f87, incomp. L503/2. Composed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1548 (*sa pho sbrel*), printed in 1561 (*lcags pho bya*). Very good illustrations. L503/2 colophon 49a.7.

*Phyag rgya chen po yi ge bzhi pa'i sa bcad.* Author: Lha btsun rin chen rnam rgyal. L569/10. 9 folios. Composed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so. Likely a Brag dkar print. Small print colophon 9a.6–7.

*Phyag rgya chen po rnal 'byor bzhi'i rim pa snying po don gyi gter mdzod.* Author: Yang dgon pa. L194/8. 18 folios. E1784/3. 15 folios. [missing 6, 9, 19 out of 18]. Printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal (likely at Brag dkar rta so) in 1556 (*me 'brug*).

**Dpe chos**

*Dpe chos rin chen spungs pa'i gzhung.* Author: Po to ba. L10/21. 7 folios. No print colophon (see next).

*Dpe chos rin po che spungs pa'i 'bum 'grel.* L813/2. 169 folios [last folio missing]. E2617/9. 165 folios [missing 1–3, last folios]. L10/22. 169 folios. Patronised by Gong ma Khu dbon for long life and the health and prosperity of the government. Composed and printed by Rin chen rnam rgyal at Brag dkar rta so in 1555. Scribes: first half Bcu dbon rdo rgyal (same as another) and second half Bsod nams 'od zer. Thirteen carvers. Colophon begins 169b.2.

**Cakrasaṃvara**

*Bcom ldan 'das dpal 'khor lo sdom pa'i spyi bshad theg mchog bdud rtsi'i dga' ston ye shes chen po'i sman mchog.* Delhi: D. Tsondu Senghe, 1982. 127 folios. A general work on the *Cakrasaṃvara Tantra*. Composed by Rgod tshang ras pa at Tsā ri. Printed at Ras chung phug. Colophon pp. 250.6–253. Gene Smith suggests that this work “probably supplements a set of the *Ras chung snyan brgyud* which was carved at Ras chung phug. There

may have been another set of the *Ras chung snyan brgyud* prints carved somewhere in Mang yul” (personal communication), although Franz-Karl Ehrhard states that he has not seen prints of *Ras chung snyan rgyud* works prior to Byams pa phun tshogs (personal communication).

### III. Histories

#### Chos 'byung

*Bde gshegs bstan pa'i gsal byed bka' brgyud chos kyi 'byung gnas rin po che spung ba mun sel 'od tong 'khyil ba*. L833/4. 87 folios. L13/8. f82. L392/14–L393/1. Composed by Sangs rgyas Dar po in 1568 (*sa pho 'brug*). Printed at Gnya' nang in La phyi. No printing date. Extensive donor list. L833/4 Print colophon 85a.2–87a.6.

#### Lo rgyus

*Dpal 'khor lo sdom pa sngon gyur lo rgyus*. L514/8. 21 folios. Margin: O. Composed by Rgod tshang ras pa at La phyi, printed by Rgod tshang ras pa at Ras chung phug. Author colophon 22a.5. Print colophon 22b.1–4.



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## PLATES





**Plate 1** Chos dbyings rdo rje. “Buddha Śākyamuni.”

Ink and pigment on silk; 68x 42 cm. Dated 1660.

From a set of seven paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 439.1).



**Plate 2** Chos dbyings rdo rje. “Three Arhats Eating with Peacocks on Scholar’s Rock.”

Ink and pigment on silk; 68 x 42 cm.

From a set of seven paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 439.2).



**Plate 3** Chos dbyings rdo rje. “Two Arhats and Dharmatāla Viewing Painting.”

Ink and pigment on silk; 68 x 42 cm.

From a set of seven paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 439.3).





**Plate 4** Chos dbyings rdo rje. “Two Arhats and Hva-shang with Woman Washing Daikon.” Ink and pigment on silk; 68 x 42 cm.  
From a set of seven paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 439.4).



**Plate 5** Chos dbyings rdo rje. “Three Arhats with Jade Gate.”

Ink and pigment on silk; 68 x 42 cm.

From a set of seven paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 439.5).



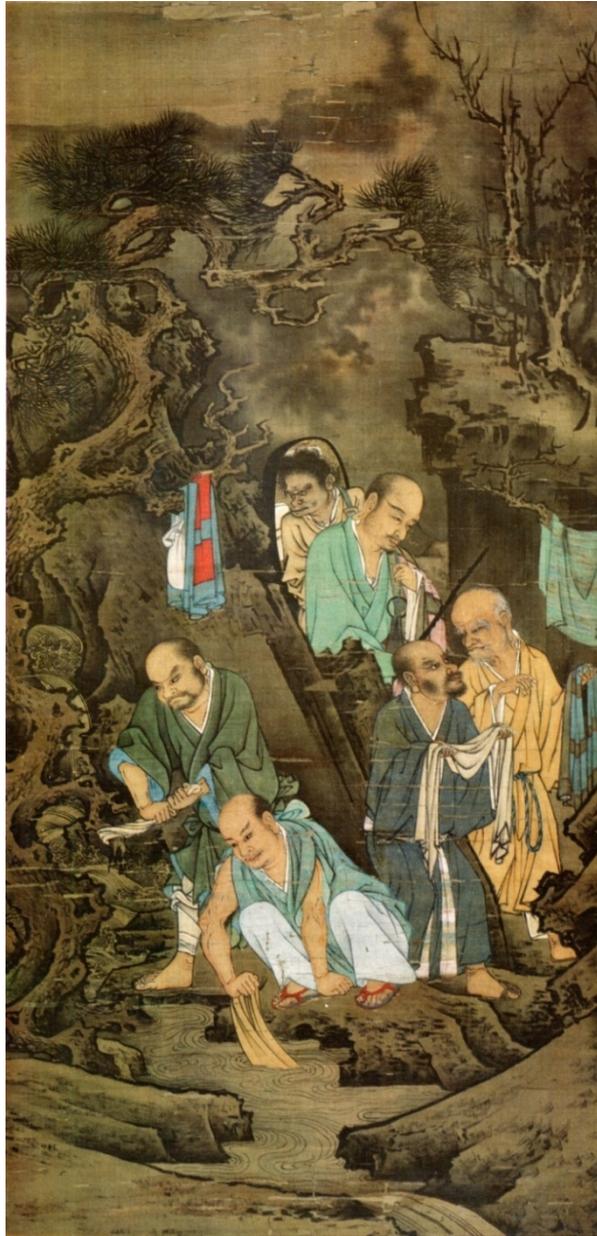
**Plate 6** Chos dbyings rdo rje. “Three Arhats Eating with Monkey and Bamboo Fence.”

Ink and pigment on silk; 68 x 42 cm.

From a set of seven paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 439.6).



**Plate 7** Chos dbyings rdo rje. “Three Arhats Heating Tea in Waterscape.”  
Ink and pigment on silk; 68 x 42 cm.  
From a set of seven paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 439.7).



**Plate 8** Lin Tinggui (act. 1160-1180). “Luohans Laundering.”  
Ink and color on silk; 200 x 69.9 cm. Ningbo, dated 1178.  
Freer-Sackler Gallery of Art (F1902.224).



**Plate 9** "Lohans View Painting."  
500 Lohan set. Daitoku-ji, Kyoto.



**Plate 10** Deeds of the Buddha. Dpal-spungs Monastery.  
Photograph courtesy of Matthieu Ricard, Shechen Archives.



**Plate 11** Śākyamuni Buddha.

Ink and color on silk; 68 x 52 cm.

From a set of seventeen paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 440).





**Plate 12** Arhat Nāgasena with a Dragon Issuing Out of a Jar.

Ink and color on silk; 68 x 52 cm.

From a set of seventeen paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 440).



**Plate 13** Arhat with Monkeys Stealing Mushrooms.

Ink and color on silk; 68 x 52 cm.

From a set of seventeen paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 440).



**Plate 14** Arhat with Flock of Birds.

Ink and color on silk; 68 x 52 cm.

From a set of seventeen paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 440).



**Plate 15** Arhat Sewing with Birds in Tree.

Ink and color on silk; 68 x 52 cm.

From a set of seventeen paintings, Lijiang Dongba Cultural Museum (no. 440).



**Plate 16** Buddha Śākyamuni. Attributed to Chos dbyings rdo rje.  
Ink and pigment on silk; 68 x 44 cm.  
Francoise & Alain Bordier Collection. After Jackson (1996), p. 253.