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**A Greater Perfection?
Scholasticism, Comparativism and
Issues of Sectarian Identity in Early
20th Century Writings on rDzogs-chen**

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Abstract

This study concerns the rDzogs-chen tradition and its relationship to other traditions during the early decades of the twentieth century. This was an era of flourishing scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools in Eastern Tibet, especially the rNying-ma and Sa-skya. It was also a period when a supposed non-sectarian (*ris med*) movement occurred. These two developments—in education and intersectarian relations—are at the heart of this inquiry.

Following a brief introduction, which discusses the notion of tradition in the context of Tibetan Buddhism, Chapter One charts the expansion of scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools. The same chapter also explores the non-sectarian movement. Chapters Two and Three then focus on the writings of the Third rDo-grub-chen, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1865–1926). They consider his role as an authority within the tradition and his repeated comparisons of rDzogs-chen to Highest Yoga Tantra. Chapter Four then focuses on a text by g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings-rang-grol (1871–1952), a follower of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. This short work is of particular interest because it demonstrates the influence of the scholar 'Ju Mi-pham rnam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (1846–1912) on the rDzogs-chen preliminaries. Finally, Chapter Five turns to the writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho (1903–1957), who advocated a synthesis of rNying-ma and dGe-lugs ideas.

The study offers evidence that rDzogs-chen authors variously ignored, championed or challenged many of Mi-pham's scholarly innovations during this period. Moreover, I shall argue, these choices reflected differing attitudes towards intersectarian relations.

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“Great Perfection carries a sense of a perfectness we have to strive to attain, a goal that lies at the end of a long and gruelling journey. Nothing could be further from the true meaning of Dzogchen: the *already* self-perfected state of our primordial nature, which needs no ‘perfecting,’ for it has always been perfect from the very beginning...”

Sogyal Rinpoche

“Traditions develop because the desire to create something truer and better or more convenient is alive in those who acquire and possess them.”

Edward Shils

Introduction

1. The Notion of Tradition

The present study is about traditions.¹ In particular, it examines how followers of one tradition, the Great Perfection (*rDzogs-chen*),² came to view that tradition's relationship with other traditions and also with its own past. Among the questions that arise as part of this enquiry is whether followers of rDzogs-chen in the early twentieth century regarded their own system of beliefs and practices as greater (more profound, more effective, etc.) than other systems, and, if so, how. Did they regard their tradition as a continuation of long-established ideas and practices, or as constantly evolving and improving?

To address such questions, it is necessary to refer to and take account of several other forms of tradition, beginning with that of the school or order.³ Modern textbooks generally refer to four main Tibetan Buddhist schools (*chos lugs rnam bzhi*), i.e., the rNying-ma,⁴ Sa-skya,⁵ bKa'-brgyud⁶ and dGe-lugs.⁷ This list reflects

¹ Raymond Williams (2014: 314) reminds us that a tradition in the literal sense of a 'handing over' or 'delivery' (*tradere*) of knowledge requires only a single act—and stage—of transmission. The notion of a tradition as something ancient or established over several generations is therefore potentially misleading, to some extent, and could even obscure the innovative elements and subtle changes that tend to occur in the transmission of knowledge. Still, Edward Shils (1981: 15), in perhaps what is the most extensive sociological study of tradition, insists that at least three generations are required for something to qualify as tradition.

² See Chapter Three for a discussion of the meaning and history of rDzogs-chen.

³ Others have referred to these major dharma traditions (*chos lugs chen po*) as sects. While retaining that term as part of sectarian[ism]/non-sectarian[ism], I avoid this usage because of its connotation of heresy or deviation from orthodoxy. Similarly, although the term 'order' appears as a translation of *chos lugs* in some secondary sources, I avoid it because of its associations with monasticism. The relationship between the Tibetan schools, especially the rNying-ma, and monasticism is complex.

⁴ The rNying-ma (or Ancient School) acquired its name retrospectively with the rise of the gSar-ma (New) Schools and the so-called later dissemination (*phyi dar*) of Buddhism in Tibet, beginning in the late tenth century CE. The school traces its origins to the period of the earlier dissemination (*snga dar*) during the royal period and especially to the teachings of the mysterious figure known as Padmasambhava, who visited Tibet in the eighth century. On the creation of rNying-ma identity and the legends surrounding Padmasambhava see Hirshberg 2016. On the history of the rNying-ma school see Dudjom Rinpoche 1991.

⁵ Named after the location of the school's principal monastery, the Sa-skya ("grey earth") traces its lineage back to the Indian adept Virūpa. In Tibet, it was members of the 'Khon clan who acquired instructions belonging to Virūpa's lineage from 'Brog-mi lo-tśā-ba Śākya ye-shes (992/3–1043/72). 'Brog-mi's disciple, 'Khon dKon-mchog-rgyal-po, founded Sa-skya monastery in 1073. The

the contemporary religious and political scene among Tibetan Buddhists in exile, where the Jo-nang tradition continues to struggle for official recognition as the fifth school.⁸ The historical picture is, of course, more complex. The bKa'-gdams,⁹ for example, was a school of considerable importance until its disappearance.¹⁰ Moreover, even minor traditions such as the Bo-dong¹¹ and Zhi-byed¹² are sometimes classed as schools and listed alongside those mentioned above.¹³ In

monastery later served as the base for school's political hegemony of Tibet during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. On the history of the Sa-skya school see Dhongthog 2016.

⁶ The various sub-branches of the bKa'-brgyud school all trace their origin to the Tibetan translator Mar-pa Chos-kyi-blo-gros (11th C.) and the teachings he received from India, primarily from the adept Nāropa (956–1040). Mar-pa passed on these teachings to Mi-la-ras-pa (1040–1123), whose biography, especially in the version gTsang-smyon Heruka composed in 1488, became one of Tibet's favourite works. Mi-la-ras-pa was the teacher of sGam-po-pa bSod-nams rin-chen (1079–1153), who introduced monasticism to a lineage that had been dominated by lay yogis. Traditionally, the bKa'-brgyud school is divided into four major (or senior) and eight minor (or junior) branches, not all of which survive independently. The most important surviving branches are the Karma bKa'-brgyud, 'Bri-gung bKa'-brgyud and 'Brug-pa bKa'-brgyud. On the history of the bKa'-brgyud school and its branches see "Golden Rosaries of the Bka' brgyud pa Schools" in Smith 2001: 39–51. See also Roberts 2011: 1–25.

⁷ The school was originally named Ri-bo dGe-ldan-pa, after the hill on which Tsong-kha-pa Blo-bzang-grags-pa (1357–1419) founded a monastery in 1409. It developed in the early fifteenth century among Tsong-kha-pa's disciples and soon grew in influence. The dGe-lugs became the *de facto* rulers of Tibet with the ascension of the dGa'-ldan pho-brang government during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama in 1642. On the early history of the school see Ary 2015; on the later dGe-lugs and its political influence see Schwieger 2015.

⁸ The Jo-nang regards Yu-mo Mi-bskyod rdo-rje (11th C.) as its founder. The school produced a number of accomplished scholars, most notably Dol-po-pa Shes-rab-rgyal-mtshan (1292–1361) and Tāranātha (1575–1634), but it came to be regarded as heretical. In 1650 with the political ascendancy of the dGe-lugs, Jo-nang monasteries were forcibly converted to the dGe-lugs and the school effectively banned. The tradition survived in secret in outlying areas and is today rebuilding itself. See Ruegg, Recently the school's followers have campaigned for it be added to the list as a fifth major school. In 2015, a demonstration took place outside the headquarters of the Tibetan parliament-in-exile in Dharamsala, as part of a campaign for official recognition as the fifth Buddhist school. Officially recognized schools and the Bon are each entitled to two representatives in the parliament, elected by their monastic communities. In September 2015, the parliament-in-exile voted to reject the inclusion of the Jo-nang.

⁹ The school began with the Indian master Atiśa's foremost disciple 'Brom-ston rGyal-ba'i 'byung-gnas (1004/5–1064) and his founding of Rwa-sgreng monastery in 1056.

¹⁰ Later writers continue to refer to the bKa'-gdams and its major figures in prayers to those responsible for the propagation of Buddhism in Tibet. See, for example, *Gangs can bstan pa'i srol 'byed chen po nyer lnga la gsol 'debs dad pa'i me tog* by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (1820–1892) (JK vol. 1, 280.3–281.5) and *Thub bstan ris med rgyas pa'i smon lam drang srong bden pa'i dbyangs snyan* by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama (see Bibliography).

¹¹ The Bo-dong was founded in 1049 by Mu-dra pa chen-po and rejuvenated by the polymath Bo-dong Phyogs-las-rnam-rgyal (1376–1451), on whom see Smith 2001: 179–208.

¹² The "Pacification" tradition was founded by the Indian adept Pha-dam-pa Sangs-rgyas (b. 11th C.). Sometimes the Zhi-byed is referred to in combination with the gCod ("Severance") system established by Pha-dam pa Sangs-rgyas's female disciple Ma-gcig Lab-sgron (1055–1149).

¹³ Even Bon, which is generally considered to be non-Buddhist, but which clearly owes much of its current form to borrowings from Buddhism, is sometimes included in surveys of Tibetan tenet systems (*grub mtha'*). See, for example, *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*, 378–390.

addition, one must take account of the important pairing of the Ancient Tradition of Early Translations (*snga 'gyur rnying ma*), which is equivalent to the rNying-ma *school*, and the New Tradition, or gSar-ma, which includes all the later schools.

The distinction between a tradition *qua* school, such as the rNying-ma, and a tradition *qua* system of thought and practice, such as rDzogs-chen (or Mahāmudrā), is crucial to what follows. rDzogs-chen is chiefly associated with the rNying-ma school in which it first arose.¹⁴ Nevertheless, Tibetan history affords many examples of members of other schools studying and practising rDzogs-chen; indeed, some of these figures even taught and wrote about the system. Such crossing of sectarian boundaries presupposes a certain willingness to share ideas and meditative technologies. Openness of this kind has existed throughout Tibetan history, but has occasionally been countered by outbreaks of intolerance, even persecution.¹⁵ Indeed, Tibetan Buddhism features both exclusivism and inclusivism¹⁶ (and arguably even pluralism too), as I discuss in detail in later chapters.

¹⁴ My remarks here are to be understood purely in the context of the Tibetan *Buddhist* schools. I am not making any claims as to the origin of rDzogs-chen, which is beyond the scope of this study. Nor am I suggesting that the rNying-ma school was so named, or even necessarily understood as a school, at the time when followers of what came to be known as the rNying-ma school first wrote and taught about rDzogs-chen.

¹⁵ See Smith 2001: 237–247 for a brief historical overview of sectarian conflict in Tibet.

¹⁶ The notion of inclusivism (*inkluisivismus*) was first introduced into Indology by the German scholar Paul Hacker (1913–1979) in 1957. Although Hacker first used the term in his 1957 article “Religiöse Toleranz und Intoleranz im Hinduismus” (*Saeculum* 8: 167–179), his most elaborate discussion of the concept is contained in an article published posthumously (see Hacker 1983). According to Hacker’s own definition:

Inclusivism is a concept [...] to describe data from the area which we term Indian religion and, in particular, Indian religious philosophy. Inclusivism means declaring that a central conception of an alien religious or ideological (*weltanschaulich*) group is identical with this or that central conception of the group to which one belongs oneself. To inclusivism there mostly belongs, explicitly or implicitly, the assertion that the alien [conception] declared to be identical with one’s own is in some way subordinate or inferior. In addition, no proof is generally furnished for the identity of the alien with one’s own.

(This translation is amended slightly from that provided in Ruegg 2008: 97. The original German appears in Hacker 1983: 12.) For Hacker, then, inclusivism is particular to Indian religion, and is to be compared and contrasted with the approach of non-Indian religions, especially Christianity. Although Hacker’s own focus was on Hindu borrowings from other religions, his definition does permit wider application, and could include *intra*-religious as well as inter-religious appropriation.

A third aspect of tradition that is relevant here is invention. By this, I do not mean the concept which the historian Eric Hobsbawm made famous¹⁷ (although that too has its uses in a Tibetan Buddhist context). Rather, I refer to the decisive moment when what will become a tradition first emerges—as a *movement*.¹⁸ Clearly, this involves a degree of interaction: in what one might describe as a dialectical process, the nascent tradition reacts against, and often defines itself (at least partly) in contradistinction to, established tradition(s). Two such movements feature in what follows. The first is the Non-Sectarian (*Ris-med*) Movement, which began in mid- to late nineteenth century Khams, and which is much discussed in secondary literature.¹⁹ The second, which E. Gene Smith called the dGe-mang movement, was contemporaneous and involved some of the same figures, but has not received as

Hacker's student Lambert Schmithausen, who is among those to have applied the concept of inclusivism to Buddhism, defines it as "a method of intellectual debate in which the competing doctrine, or essential elements of it, are admitted but relegated to a subordinate position, or given a suitable reinterpretation, and which aims not so much at reconciliation but at prevailing over the other doctrine or its propounders." (Schmithausen 1981: 223). Still, other scholars have urged caution when applying Hacker's inclusivism to Buddhism. David Seyfort Rugg, for example, sees it as "not unproblematic in the form in which he [i.e., Hacker] presented it" (Rugg 2008: 99). Rugg objects to Hacker's reference to the foreign or alien (*fremd*) since he regards as unproved the proposition that the shared Indian "religious substratum" is alien to Buddhism. Still, there have been attempts to apply a modified version of the concept to Buddhism and even to formulate a "Buddhist Inclusivism", most recently, for example, in the work of Kristin Beise Kiblinger (see Kiblinger 2005). The latter draws upon comparative theology and the writings of scholars such as George Lindbeck and Paul J. Griffiths. Following Griffiths, Kiblinger distinguishes between "open inclusivism" and "closed inclusivism"; the former signalling an openness that makes it possible to learn new truths from an alien tradition, while the latter denotes an unwillingness to view other traditions on their own terms. (Kiblinger 2005). Alongside inclusivism, Kiblinger and other Buddhist scholars make use of two further categories, taken from comparative theology, to make a triad of inclusivism, exclusivism and pluralism. (See Kiblinger 2005: 1–2, & Burton 2011.) Ferrer (2002: 165) glosses these terms as "dogmatic exclusivism", "hierarchical inclusivism" and "ecumenical pluralism". In a recent study of Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol (1781–1851), Rachel Pang has argued that these categories "do not enable us to fully and accurately capture Buddhist responses to religious difference" (Pang 2015: 470). Instead, she seeks to understand Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol's attitude to religious diversity on its own terms, while noting some similarity between his openness to other traditions and the concept of pluralism, especially as it is defined in the work of Diana Eck. (Ibid., 466.) It should also be noted that Wangchuk (2004: 191) sees Hacker's inclusivism (as defined by Schmithausen) as the polar opposite of a "reconciliatory" or "harmonising" approach.

¹⁷ On this popular notion of the "invention of tradition" see Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983.

¹⁸ As the sociologist Randall Collins observes, "The history of philosophy is to a considerable extent the history of groups. Nothing abstract is meant here—nothing but groups of friends, discussion partners, close-knit circles that often have the characteristics of social movements." (Collins 1998: 3).

¹⁹ Two pioneering articles by E. Gene Smith, published in 1969 and 1970 (and republished in Smith 2001: 227–272), first introduced the term "Ris med Movement" and have been much relied upon ever since. Although the notion of such a movement has long been accepted and repeated, it has recently been challenged, as I discuss in Chapter One.

much attention. The dGe-mang teachers, such as rGyal-sras gZhan-phan mtha'-yas (1800–1855) and gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba (1871–1927), helped to strengthen rNying-ma scholasticism.²⁰ They thus played an important role in the broader shift in monastic education that took place among the non-dGe-lugs schools during this period.²¹ Both the Ris-med Movement and the scholastic renaissance (of which the dGe-mang movement was a part) influenced the rDzogs-chen tradition, and the ways in which they did so lie at the heart of this study.

It is a truism to say that all traditions evolve, but the incontrovertible fact of constant, subtle development is occasionally worth emphasising. Innovation often meets resistance, but it is inevitable; true stasis is impossible and even resistance to change requires a certain force. Conservative followers—the ones usually called *traditionalists*—often resort to rhetorical strategies as part of their struggle against innovation. They might, for example, claim to represent the true, original or authentic doctrine. But such a reaction against the modern—which is by implication false, unoriginal and inauthentic—is, in its own way, innovative. All forms of Tibetan Buddhism present themselves as conservative.²² Thus, even while initiating changes, proponents of rDzogs-chen (or any other system) strive to demonstrate their loyalty to that system's (perceived) history and origins. Rarely do they portray innovation as modernisation or improvement.

The comparative term *greater* (with a question mark) in the title of this thesis refers primarily to the comparative elements in the writings of three authors active in

²⁰ I discuss the term scholasticism as it applies in the Tibetan context in Chapter One below.

²¹ See Chapter One below.

²² Shils (1981: 14) notes that traditions might undergo great change while its followers regard it as “significantly unchanged”. What counts most is “a sense of filiation with a lineage of prior possessors of a tradition.”

the early twentieth century: 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1865–1926),²³ g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol (1871–1952)²⁴ and mDo-sngags Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho (1903–1957).²⁵ Right from its emergence, however, rDzogs-chen was subject to comparison with other systems and traditions. At first, the *chen po* in *rDzogs-pa chen-po* signified superiority over the *mere* perfection stage (*rdzogs rim*).²⁶ Later, doxographical models placed rDzogs-chen (= Atiyoga) at the apex of all Buddhist systems and vehicles (*theg pa; yāna*).²⁷ Moreover, as we shall see, even on those occasions when followers of rDzogs-chen seek to highlight its similarity to other systems, they still maintain its *ultimate* superiority.

A further comparative element concerns not so much the relationship of rDzogs-chen to other systems as its connection to its own past. Here, the question posed by the title may be understood as whether the introduction of scholastic ideas and methods brought about improvement. Needless to say, this is not a question that the tradition ever asked (or asks) itself directly, but debates around scholarly innovation did occur. These debates also touched upon sectarian identity and whether rDzogs-chen should accommodate external ideas or focus on what are its own supposedly unique elements.

2. Overview of Chapters

The following chapters explore these themes in detail. Chapter One charts the expansion in scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools. It considers how the philosophical writings of 'Ju Mi-pham rNam-rgyal-rgya-mtsho (1846–1912)²⁸

²³ Chapter One discusses the life of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma and introduces his works, which are then discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Three.

²⁴ Chapter Four briefly discusses his life and some of his writings on rDzogs-chen.

²⁵ Chapter Five examines his life and works.

²⁶ See Germano 1994: 223–224.

²⁷ On the nine vehicles see Cabezón 2013.

²⁸ Hereafter referred to simply as Mi-pham. Chapter One discusses the sources for his life and work.

strengthened the scholastic identity of the rNying-ma school in the late nineteenth century. In particular, the chapter considers how scholasticism and sectarianism affected one of Mi-pham's principal students, the Third rDo-grub-chen, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma.

Chapter Two introduces 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's rDzogs-chen writings. These typically brief works, which date from around the turn of the twentieth century, demonstrate clear signs of scholasticism,²⁹ including the desire to reconcile apparently disparate points. They also include extensive comparisons between rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra (*rnal 'byor bla na med pa'i rgyud/ *yoganiruttaratantra*),³⁰ based on a comprehensive theory of clear light (*'od gsal: prabhāsvara*), which is itself the focus of Chapter Three.

Chapter Four considers a short rDzogs-chen text by g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings-rang-grol (1871–1952). This work discusses three analytical contemplations that constitute a form of rDzogs-chen preliminary (*sngon 'gro*). The text is unusual insofar as it shows the extent of Mi-pham's influence on rDzogs-chen, especially in its insistence that Mi-pham's interpretation of Madhyamaka³¹ is an essential component of the preliminary meditations.

Finally, Chapter Five examines the rDzogs-chen writings of the dGe-lugs/rNying-ma scholar mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho (1903–1957). He

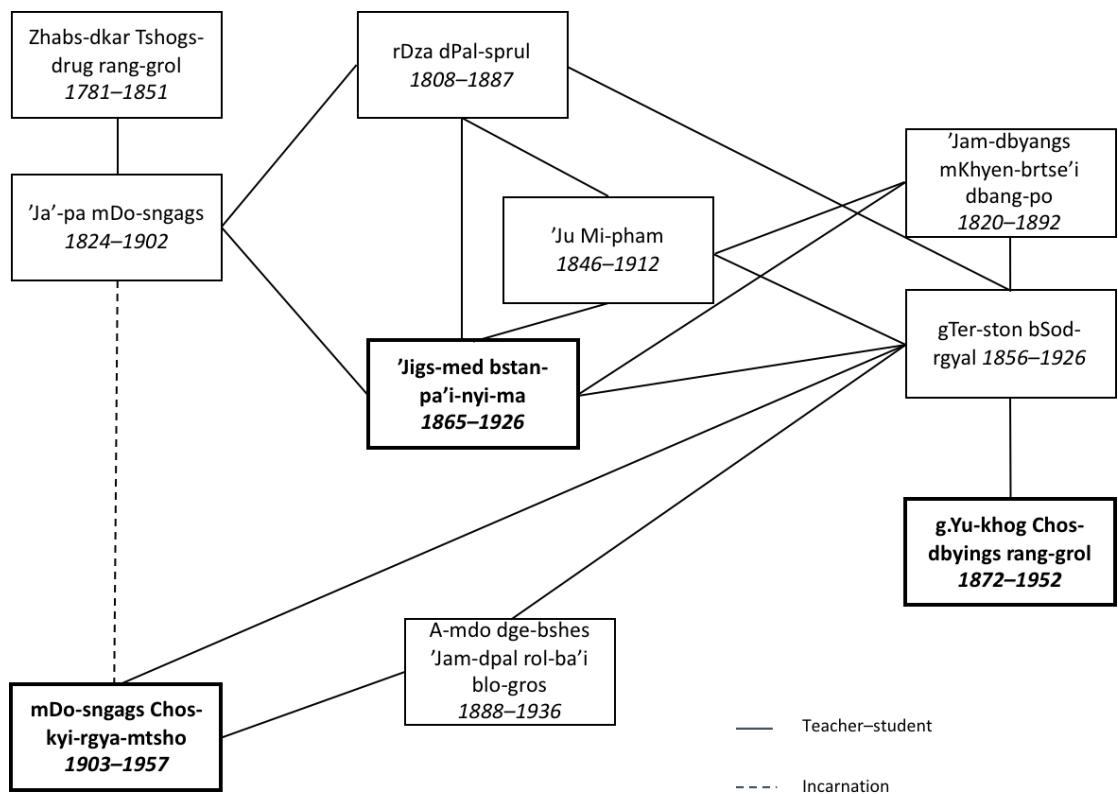
²⁹ In defining scholasticism here and elsewhere I rely upon Cabezón 1994: 15, as Chapter One explains.

³⁰ On Highest Yoga Tantra see Cozort 1986. My use of the Sanskrit **yoganiruttaratantra* here follows Sanderson 2009 (146 n.337), who notes, "I have seen no occurrence in any Indian source of the term **Anuttarayoga*, commonly encountered in secondary sources. It is evidently an incorrect modern translation into Sanskrit of the ambiguous Tibetan rendering of Yoganiruttara (*rnal 'byor bla na med*).". See also Dalton (2005: 152, n. 84), who calls the rendering *anuttarayoga[tantra]*, which appears in many secondary sources, "a time-honoured mistake that needs to be abandoned". (The rendering persists nonetheless and often without comment; see, for example, PDB: 55). It should be noted that the various tantras which Tibetans classify under the general heading of Highest Yoga are by no means homogeneous.

³¹ In what follows I use the spelling *Madhyamaka* to refer to the general theory and the school and *Mādhyamika* to refer to that school's adherents and to the Prāsaṅgika or Svātantrika Mādhyamika as a sub-branch of Madhyamaka.

implicitly rejected Mi-pham's form of rNying-ma doctrine and instead proposed a merger between rDzogs-chen (and Mahāmudrā) and elements of dGe-lugs thought. Through this syncretism and his claims to represent a form of non-sectarianism, he ultimately brings into question what it means to be truly *ris med*.

3. Major Figures with Dates



1. Scholasticism and Sectarian Identity

“Cultivate mutual accord, devotion, and pure perception, and, while focusing on your own tradition, avoid belittling others.”

’Ju Mi-pham³²

1. Introduction

This chapter examines the impact of Buddhist scholasticism³³ in Eastern Tibet from the mid- to late nineteenth century to the early decades of the twentieth century. Scholars have associated this period’s re-shaping of monastic education in the non-dGe-lugs schools with the emergence of the Ris-med Movement. Yet, the very notion of such a movement is in need of re-evaluation following recent critical remarks. While this is not the place for an extensive reassessment, it is at least important to gauge how a changing intellectual climate and shifting notions of scholastic identity might have influenced the subjects of this study, beginning with ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma.

2. The Question of the Ris-med “Movement”

The late nineteenth century witnessed a religious and cultural renaissance in and around sDe-dge (Eastern Tibet). Many believe that this renaissance included, or

³² MPc. vol. 32, 410.

³³ The most extensive study of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism appears in Dreyfus 2003a, which is especially helpful in its analysis of dGe-lugs education. Cabezón 1994 and Kapstein 2000b also contain many valuable insights into the nature of Tibetan scholasticism. For example, Cabezón (1994: 15) notes some of the general characteristics of scholasticism, many of which are in evidence in what follows: “These include scholasticism’s formal nature, its systematicity, its preoccupation with scriptures and their exegesis in commentaries, its rationalism and its reliance on logic and dialectics in defense of its tenets, its penchant for lists, classification and categorization, and its tendency toward abstraction.” I have previously discussed some aspects of rNying-ma and Sa-skya scholasticism in Pearcey 2015a.

was initiated by, the so-called Ris-med Movement. Several of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's teachers played a prominent role in this movement;³⁴ some sources even claim that he was himself a participant.³⁵ The key figures associated with Ris-med all lived in the nineteenth century, but their disciples and followers continued to be active in the early decades of the twentieth century.³⁶ Moreover, the effects of the movement, it is often said, persist into the present day.³⁷ Scholars are yet to chart the full history of Ris-med, and there is clearly a need for a diachronic and synchronic analysis of all that has come to be associated with the term. This is clearly not the place for such a vast undertaking, but a brief overview of some key themes will serve as a foundation for subsequent chapters.

Smith's pioneering articles of 1969 and 1970 were the first English-language sources to use the term "Ris-med Movement" and have been much relied upon in academia ever since.³⁸ Yet, even though the notion of a movement gained widespread acceptance,³⁹ some have recently begun to question its accuracy.

Alexander Gardner, in his 2006 thesis on the sacred geography of Khams, was the first to challenge the use of the term:

What seems to have been the case in the late nineteenth century, and perhaps the early twentieth as well, was not a "movement" but simply a sizeable community of scholars who put long-held values of inter-sectarian exploration and respect into a regionally and historically specific practice. Yes, 'Jam mgon Kong sprul was nonsectarian, but so too were those who came before him. He and his colleagues

³⁴ i.e., 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po (1820–1892), rDza dPal-sprul O-rgyan chos-kyi-dbang-po (1808–1887) and 'Ju Mi-pham rNam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (1846–1912).

³⁵ See, for example, Garson, 2004: 421 and Ringu Tulku 2006: 13.

³⁶ Several sources describe Ris-med as a 19th century phenomenon: for example, Dreyfus 2005: 287 and Deroche 2009: 320.

³⁷ In an oft-quoted statement, Samuel (1993: 537) asserts that Tibetan Buddhism today outside the dGe-lugs is largely a product of the Ris-med Movement.

³⁸ See Smith 2001: 227-272 for reprints as "Mi-pham and the Philosophical Controversies of the Nineteenth Century" (originally published 1969) and "'Jam mgon Kong sprul and the Nonsectarian Movement" (1970). There is no exact equivalent for "Ris-med movement" in Tibetan, but the term *Ris-med* (as an abbreviation of *phyogs ris med pa* or *ris su ma chad pa*) is widely used in Tibetan sources in connection with figures such as Kong-sprul and mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po.

³⁹ Tibetans also use the term; see, for example, Ringu Tulku 2006 *passim*.

were scholars and practitioners who participated in a religious blossoming that celebrated commonality and intra-sectarian exchanges.⁴⁰

The 2014 *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* echoes Gardner’s concerns:

...the notion that ’Jam mgon kong sprul, ’Jam dbyang [sic] mkhyen brtse, and Dpal sprul Rin po che were at the center of a “nonsectarian movement,” in the sense that there was a widespread institutional reformation in their lifetimes, is not historically accurate. It is perhaps better to speak of the nonsectarian ideal and their lives as models of its expression.⁴¹

It is not clear why the term “movement” should imply “widespread institutional reform”. After all, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a movement as simply:

A course or series of actions and endeavours on the part of a group of people working towards a shared goal; an organization, coalition, or alliance of people working to advance a shared political, social, or artistic objective.⁴²

Now, the Ris-med figures did not have a *single* “shared goal”—aside, perhaps, from simply furthering the notion of non-sectarianism itself. Smith’s articles describe diverse initiatives, none of which involved *all* the figures he cites in his relevant writings. He launches his article on Kong-sprul with a list of key Ris-med participants:⁴³ ’Jam-mgon Kong-sprul blo-gros mtha’-yas (1813–1899/1900),⁴⁴ ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po (1820–1892),⁴⁵ mChog-gyur bde-chen gling-pa (1829–1870), ’Ju Mi-pham rNam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (1846–1912), gZhan-

⁴⁰ Gardner 2006: 136.

⁴¹ *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* 2014: 716.

⁴² <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/123031> [Accessed 28 October 2016] No one would argue that the slow food movement, which began in Italy in the 1980s, required or sought widespread institutional reform. Still, it was a reaction against something—fast food—and thus a product of its time. Thus, while it is true that the term is frequently used by representatives of minority groups seeking increased rights (for example, animal rights, LGBTQ rights, etc.) there are other kinds of movement.

⁴³ Smith 2001: 235

⁴⁴ Smith gives the year of Kong-sprul’s death as 1899, and this is also the date given on the TBRC website [<https://www.tbrc.org/#!rid=P264> Accessed 28 October 2016]. The Tibetan date of his death was either late on the 27th or early on the 28th day—for it was “around midnight” according to the first-hand account of gNas-gsar Karma bkra-shis chos-’phel (Barron 2003: 384)—of the eleventh month of the earth-pig year (15th sexagenary cycle). Gyurme Dorje and Matthew Kapstein (Dorje & Kapstein 1991 vol. 1, 867) have proposed an equivalent date for this (based on the Tshur-phu system) of 28 December 1899. The same authors (vol. 2, 85, n. 1201) also note, however, that according to the new Phug-pa system this would be 27 January 1900. Richard Barron, in a note to his translation of Kong-sprul’s autobiography, favours the 1900 date, saying the death would have occurred “sometime in January of 1900” (Barron 2003: 403 n.30).

⁴⁵ *Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism* consistently misspells the name of ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po as ’Jam dbyangs mKhyen brtse dbang po (see, for example, the entry on p.379).

phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba (1871–1927) and rDza dPal-sprul O-rgyan chos-kyi-dbang-po (1808–1887). Additional lists in the same article provide more names,⁴⁶ and scholars have added further figures Smith omitted. All those listed could not possibly have collaborated with one another; for one thing, their dates make this impossible. To be sure, mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and Kong-sprul were close allies who worked together on a number of projects, including the compilation of Kong-sprul's "Five Great Treasuries" (*mdzod chen lnga*).⁴⁷ The pair also spent much time with mChog-gyur bde-chen gling-pa.⁴⁸ Still, Smith includes masters who were active in other areas and at other times.⁴⁹ The lives of mChog-gyur bde-chen gling-pa and gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba, for example, did not overlap at all. Moreover, gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba was unable to study with dPal-sprul directly, even though the two were alive at the same time; instead he received instruction from dPal-sprul's disciple O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu (1841–1900).⁵⁰ Evidently, then, Smith did not

⁴⁶ See, for example, Smith 2001: 250.

⁴⁷ See Smith 2001: 262–267. The five are *Shes bya mdzod*, *bKa' brgyud sngags mdzod*, *Rin chen gter mdzod*, *gDams ngag mdzod*, and *Thun mong ma yin pa'i mdzod*. It should be noted that these compilations did more than simply preserve traditions; they also reshaped them. Decisions surrounding inclusion and/or exclusion were highly consequential and invited criticism. For example, in the case of the *Rin chen gter mdzod* collection of *gter ma*, the exclusion of the revelations of Nyi-ma grags-pa (1647–1710) and the inclusion of certain Bon-po texts both proved controversial.

⁴⁸ Indeed, *mKhyen Kong mChog gsum* (or *mKhyen Kong mChog sde gsum*) became a popular phrase for the trio in Eastern Tibet. See Gardner 2006: ix. *mKhyen Kong mChog gsum* occurs five times in Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse's biography (*rnam thar*) of 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros. Given the similarity of the final three syllables, the epithet is clearly a play on the phrase *dkon mchog gsum*, i.e. the *triratna*: buddha, dharma and saṅgha.

⁴⁹ Schapiro 2012: 51 notes that there is no evidence in the biographical archive that dPal-sprul had a direct relationship with Kong-sprul. It is indeed true that, as Schapiro points out, there is no mention of Kong-sprul in the various biographies of dPal-sprul, nor is there any mention of dPal-sprul in Kong-sprul's autobiography. However, both figures are mentioned in the biography of 'Gyur-med mthu-stobs rnam-rgyal (1787–1854), a teacher to them both at more or less the same time (c.1830). See *Zhe chen dbon sprul 'gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal gyi rnam thar*: 138–139. Still, regardless of whether or not they met as fellow students of 'Gyur-med mthu-stobs rnam-rgyal, it would be naïve to assume that direct contact is required for one person to influence another, especially in a highly literate milieu. It seems likely that in nineteenth century eastern Tibet teachers were often aware of what other teachers were doing, either through indirect oral communication or through exchanging letters and manuscripts, and that this alone could contribute to a zeitgeist.

⁵⁰ The dates of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu remain contested. I have discussed issues related to the various suggestions for the years of his birth and death in some detail in two short essays on my blog (adamspearcey.com/blog). The dates given here are those which also appear in the biography I wrote for *Treasury of Lives* (Pearcey 2015b).

intend to portray a contemporaneous group; his lists demonstrate that, in his view, the movement endured beyond a single generation.⁵¹

Many of those who feature in Smith's article were eminent figures in their own fields. It is not clear though whether all their activities should be grouped together or classified as "non-sectarian". Gardner argues (with some force) that some later scholars relied too heavily on Smith's articles and sought to include all the activities and achievements he describes in their definitions of Ris-med. He claims that by distorting Smith's original message, these scholars rendered the concept of Ris-med virtually meaningless:

...later authors mined Smith's many illuminating remarks to gradually grind a[n] opaque lens through which events of the nineteenth century in Khams were viewed. Appealing aspects of 'Jam mgon Kong sprul's career mentioned by Smith, as well as other random matters he raised, were cobbled into a conceptual grid that grew increasingly larger and eventually came to dominate discussions of the period and its luminaries. Reified, "Rimay" obscured events and made investigation difficult, for it has come to be the case that anything said to have occurred in all of Tibet, much less Khams, in the second half of the nineteenth century or the first half of the twentieth, is part of the "Rimay"—unless, that is, it was in reaction to or conflict with it.⁵²

There is some value in Gardner's critique here: it is true that the complex events summarised in Smith's articles have been oversimplified. Yet, it is equally clear that Smith did not invent the notion of Ris-med.⁵³ The term *ris med* already featured prominently in Tibetan literature about Kong-sprul, mKhyen-brtse'i dbang-po and their heirs before Smith's articles. Consider, for example, Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse's (1910–1991) biography of 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros,⁵⁴

⁵¹ This point was apparently missed by some scholars, who describe the movement as a nineteenth century phenomenon, as noted above.

⁵² Gardner 2006: 156–157.

⁵³ As Viehbeck 2012: xiv notes, some of the content of Smith's article is most likely a reflection of the feelings of his teacher, sDe-gzhung Rin-po-che Kun-dga' bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1906–1987).

⁵⁴ i.e., 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse chos kyi blo gros rin po che'i rnam thar. (See bibliography for full publication details).

which was written in the early 1960s.⁵⁵ The author employs *ris med* once in the title and then a further 27 times in the text itself—quite apart from the dozen times he uses the equivalent *ris su ma chad pa*.⁵⁶ Such emphasis likely signifies an attempt to establish the biographical subject as the genuine heir of mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and his legacy. It is also possible that Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse sought to promote the non-sectarian cause himself. After all, the adoption and promotion of terms, phrases and rhetoric—linguistic change—is often a key objective for those seeking broader social and political change, as is attested even today.⁵⁷

In the introductory section of the biography, Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse discusses the life of mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po. He portrays him as *the* key figure of Ris-med who inspired the achievements of all his associates, including Kong-sprul. To him, mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po was responsible for the textual compilations of the Five Treasuries as well as comparable collections, such as the *rGyud sde kun btus*⁵⁸ and *sGrub thabs kun btus*.⁵⁹ Moreover, it was mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po who inspired the scholastic writings of his disciple 'Ju Mi-pham:

[mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po] cared for the *mahāpaṇḍita* Mi-pham 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal by bestowing on him an ocean of profound and vast instructions and opening the door to the wisdom of perfect knowledge. He made Mi-pham the ritual offering of representations of enlightened body, speech and mind, and offered him his own *paṇḍita* hat and other articles. He then named him Mi-pham 'Jam-dbyangs rnam-rgyal rgya-mtsho—which has fourfold significance⁶⁰—to create the auspicious

⁵⁵ And even before this, Pha-bong kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po (1878–1941) expressed his opposition to the movement's activities. See below.

⁵⁶ These calculations were made using a computer input version of the Zhe-chen edition of Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse's collected works.

⁵⁷ Consider the use of *citoyen/citoyenne* in post-revolutionary France, or “comrade” (*kamerad*) among Marxist revolutionaries, or the practice of ‘reclaiming’ terms of abuse or oppression, as with “queer” within the gay rights movement, or modern attempts to promote “non-binary” gender pronouns.

⁵⁸ The *rGyud sde kun btus* was compiled by 'Jam-dbyangs blo-gter dbang-po (1847–1914). Its contents are listed in Barron 2003: 544–549.

⁵⁹ The *sGrub thabs kun btus* was compiled by mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and 'Jam-dbyangs blo-gter dbang-po. Its contents are listed in Barron 2003: 532–543.

⁶⁰ *don gyi rgyu mshan chen po bzhi*. As Pettit (1999: 472, n. 105) suggests, these four forms of significance are specified in four lines of praise, which mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po is said to have written on the back of a *thang ka* of White Tārā and offered to Mi-pham: om swasti dza yantu| mi pham mgon po'i dgongs don ji bzhin rtogs| 'jam pa'i dbyangs bzhin shes bya kun la mkhas| phyongs las mam rgyal chos kyi grags pa ltar| snyan pas rgya mtsho'i gos can khyab gyur cig| (MPc vol. 9:

circumstances for his future activities. In this way, mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po empowered Mi-pham as a propagator of the Buddha's teaching with the three skills of a scholar (*mkhas tshul gsum*). He authorised Mi-pham to compose a great many fine explanations (*legs bshad*) of sūtra and mantra. And, because of these aspirations and the auspicious circumstances he created, Mi-pham became a scholar whose fame spread in all directions.⁶¹

I revisit the role mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po played in Mi-pham's scholarly career below. What is important to note here is that even in Tibetan writings that predate Smith's articles, mKhyen-brtse and Kong-sprul's activity encompasses the deeds of their disciples and immediate circle. Thus, Mi-pham's commentarial writings—like the textual compilations of Blo-gter dbang-po—were at least partly attributable, says Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse, to mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po's magnanimous aspirations (*thugs bskyed*). Hence, the view that mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po alone, or mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and Kong-sprul together, instigated these various textual projects aligns well with the notion of a movement, or at least matches the Tibetan interpretation. Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse paints a picture of a group working together towards a shared goal—of literary production, if nothing else. But the recurring emphasis on non-sectarianism also suggests that the promotion of the *ris med* idea was itself an objective. The extent to which the activity of mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and his allies was *truly* non-sectarian is a separate question, but one to which I shall return.

570.6–571.1) The bestowal of the name therefore indicated that Mi-pham would 1) realize the intent of the Invincible Lord Maitreya; 2) become learned in all areas of knowledge just like Mañjuṣa; 3) be utterly victorious in all directions like Dharmakīrti; and 4) attain a level of fame that would be as pervasive as the ocean.

⁶¹ JCLb vol. 1: 370.1: ma hā paṇḍita mi pham 'jam dbyangs nam par rgyal ba la zab rgyas kyi gdams pa rgya mtsho lta bus rjes su bzung zhing mkhyen rab ye shes kyi sgo phyas te sku gsung thugs kyi rten dang rje nyid kyi dbu zhwa paṇ zhu sogs stsal nas don gyi rgyu mtshan chen po bzhi dang 'brel ba'i mtshan mi pham 'jam dbyangs nam rgyal rgya mtsho zhes gnang ste| mkhas tshul gsum gyis rgyal bstan spel ba'i phrin las can du mnga' gsol| mdo sngags kyi legs par bshad pa rab 'byams mdzad 'os par bka' gnang ba lta thugs bskyed dang rten 'brel gyi bden don ji bzhin mngon du gyur te mkhas pa'i grags snyan phyogs kun tu khyab|

3. The Rise of Scholasticism

In his articles that touch upon the Ris-med Movement, Smith notes a significant expansion of scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools, particularly the rNying-ma and Sa-skya, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁶² He even views this as a feature of “the nonsectarian tradition” itself, and describes how the new model of monastic education differed pedagogically from the system favoured in dGe-lugs establishments:

The nonsectarian tradition emphasized a different aspect of religious education: scriptural exposition (*bshad pa*). The trend was towards simplification. In their exposition seminaries (*bshad grwa*), monastic educators continued to teach a small number of classical Indian Buddhist *śāstras* in their Tibetan translations as the curriculum.⁶³

Smith thus highlights two parallel developments: 1) the establishment of scriptural colleges—or exposition seminaries, as he calls them—with their unique pedagogical approach; and 2) the increased prominence of Indian treatises in the curricula of these colleges. gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba (1871–1927) played a major role in both developments, which situates them in the early years of the twentieth century.

However, the roots of a scholarly renaissance in Khams can readily be traced at least as far back as the monumental publication of the Tibetan canon at sDe-dge

⁶² See, for example, Samuel 1993: 538 and Viehbeck 2016: 27f. The bKa'-brgyud were not entirely excluded from these advances, and dPal-spungs was undoubtedly a hub of intellectual activity, not least during gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba's tenure there. Still, the bKa'-brgyud-pa's general distaste for intellectual pursuits made them a target of Mi-pham's satire and censure: “Most followers of the bKa'-brgyud school dislike classical exposition and logic, preferring the approach that is based purely on mind and meditation. If they are those in whom realization and liberation are simultaneous, I take refuge! But, in general, this closed-minded attitude is harmful to the bKa'-brgyud teachings and must be abandoned!” (*Grogs dang gtam gleng ba'i rkyen las mtshar gtam du byas pa*, MPC vol. 7: 231.4: bka' brgyud pa phal cher bshad pa dang tshad ma la sdang| sems rkyang chig ded la dga'| rtogs grol dus mnyam rnam ni skyabs su mchi| spyir ni gti mug 'di bka' bstan la 'tshe bas spang)

⁶³ Smith 2001: 246. Although the scriptural colleges did not place such great emphasis on debate as did their dGe-lugs equivalents, debate was not necessarily neglected entirely. See Dreyfus 2005: 283. Cabezón 1994: 84 considers that “there is hardly a more curious fact in the history of Tibetan Buddhist scholasticism than this one: that from about the year 1700, once the monastic textbooks (*yig cha*) had been written, there is virtually no new commentarial literature in the dGe lugs school of Tibetan Buddhism.” He also notes that from this time, for the dGe-lugs school, “debate came to replace commentary as the prevalent form of scholastic exegesis.” (Ibid.).

printing house. Conducted under the patronage of the ruler bsTan-pa tshe-ring (1678–1738), this project drew upon the editorial expertise of both Si-tu Paṅ-chen Chos-kyi-'byung-gnas (1700–1774) and Zhu-chen Tshul-khrims rin-chen (1697–1774).⁶⁴ Of Si-tu, Smith said: “His influence on the following three or four generations was enormous; Kong sprul, Mkhyen brtse, Dpal sprul and Mi-pham were all in some way Si tu’s heirs.”⁶⁵ Among the other significant intellectual figures of earlier times were Kaḥ-thog Tshe-dbang-nor-bu (1698–1755)⁶⁶ and 'Gyur-med mthu-stobs rnam-rgyal (1787–1854) of Zhe-chen. The latter was a Sanskritist and teacher to Kong-sprul, mKhyen-brtse'i dbang-po and dPal-sprul, but the story of his influence on these students is yet to be fully told.⁶⁷

Even if non-dGe lugs scholasticism did not develop *ex nihilo* in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Khams,⁶⁸ it expanded greatly and in new ways. Two major developments are significant in the present context. Firstly, as Smith observed, there were increasing numbers of scriptural colleges, with their unique pedagogy. The second major development was curricular: not so much the emphasis on Indian *śāstra*, which was undeniably important, but the *interpretation* of these Indian treatises by Tibetan commentators. For this was a time when monastic educators also turned increasingly to the exegetical writings of iconic figures from their own traditions. For the rNying-ma, this meant Mi-pham, while for the Sa-skya, it meant above all Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge (1429–1489).

⁶⁴ On this project see Scheier-Dolberg 2005: 87–98 and Schaeffer 2009: 90–119.

⁶⁵ Smith 2001: 90. This point is underscored in Jann Ronis’s recent study of Si-tu Paṅ-chen’s role as a monastic preceptor. See Ronis 2013: 72.

⁶⁶ On his life see Richardson 1967.

⁶⁷ Smith 2001: 20. The availability of an extensive biography (*Zhe chen dbon sprul 'gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal gyi rnam thar*, published in 2000) should facilitate this assessment, which is clearly a desideratum for scholars of nineteenth century Khams and its scholasticism.

⁶⁸ It is equally important to note that rNying-ma scholasticism did not begin *ex nihilo* in the nineteenth century. As the present chapter makes clear, writers such as Mi-pham repeatedly call attention to their own indebtedness to past scholars such as Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and Klong-chen rab-'byams. Other notable rNying-ma authors of previous centuries include mNga'-ris Paṅ-chen Padma dbang-rgyal (1487–1542), Lo-chen Dharma-śrī (1654–1717) and O-rgyan Chos-grags (b. 1676).

Together, these two factors contributed to “sectarian differentiation”—to adopt a phrase from Cabezón⁶⁹—or a strengthening of sectarian identity.

3.1. The Establishment of Scriptural Colleges

The first major rNying-ma scriptural college (*bshad grwa*) to emerge in the sDe-dge region was Śrī Siṃha at rDzogs-chen, founded in 1848.⁷⁰ rGyal-sras gZhan-phan mtha'-yas (1800–1855/1869)⁷¹ helped to establish Śrī Siṃha, and, it seems, also drew up the curriculum. Although the precise content of that original curriculum is unknown, sources say that it included 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Yon tan mdzod*, mNga'-ris paṅ-chen's *sDom gsum rnam nges* treatise on the three sets of vows, and the **Guhyagarbha Tantra*.⁷² But the same sources do not speak of the “thirteen great texts” (*gzhung chen bcu gsum*),⁷³ for which gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba later

⁶⁹ Cabezón 2007: 7.

⁷⁰ Dreyfus 2005: 289.

⁷¹ See Smith 2001: 22–23 and Tulku Thondup 1996: 198–199. Since Thondup wrote this biography, more details on the life of this important figure have become available. See GZT Vol. 1: 1–24. There is some disagreement about the date of the death of gZhan-phan mtha'-yas. gZhan-phan snang-ba was identified as his incarnation, and his own efforts to establish a scriptural college at rDzong-gsar paralleled those of gZhan-phan mtha'-yas at rDzogs-chen more than half a century earlier. gZhan-phan mtha'-yas was clearly an influential figure and a major influence on rDza dPal-sprul among others. It is possible that his role in Khams's nineteenth century renaissance is insufficiently acknowledged, at least in the secondary sources, but this also reflects a lamentable lack of biographical literature. Among gZhan-phan mtha'-yas's available writings is a non-sectarian prayer to Tibet's greatest religious figures, entitled *Yul dam pa rnam la gsol ba 'debs pa'i tshigs bcad gzhan phan sgra dbyangs*, which is similar to later compositions by mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and Kong-sprul. The text's identification of Atiśa as an “emanation of Padma[sambhava]” (*gzhan phan sgra dbyangs 2a: padma'i rnam 'phrul jo bo a ti sha*) echoes Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol's claim in *O rgyan sprul pa'i glegs bam* that both Atiśa and Tsong-kha-pa were Padmasambhava's emanations. See Ricard 2005: 26. gZhan-phan-mtha'-yas was assisted in the establishment of Śrī Siṃha by Seng-phrug Padma bkra-shis (b.1798?), who became its first senior instructor (*mkhan po*).

⁷² GZT vol. 1: 12–13. See also Thondup 1996: 1999. gZhan-phan mtha'-yas himself wrote a commentary to the **Guhyagarbha* entitled *Kun bzang thugs kyi ṭi ka* (GZT vol. 345–447). On the **Guhyagarbhatantra* see Dorje 1987: 13–127.

⁷³ i.e., 1) *Prātimokṣa-sūtra* (*so sor thar pa'i mdo*); 2) *Vinaya-sūtra* (*'dul ba'i mdo*); 3) *Abhidharmakośa* (*mngon pa mdzod*); 4) *Abhidharmasamuccaya* (*mngon pa kun btus*); 5) *Mūlamadhyamaka-kārikā* (*dbu ma rtsa ba shes rab*); 6) *Madhyamakāvātāra* (*dbu ma la 'jug pa*); 7) *Catuhśataka* (*bzhi brgya pa*); 8) *Bodhi(sattva)caryāvātāra* (*byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*); 9) *Abhisamayālamkāra* (*mngon rtogs rgyan*); 10) *Mahāvānasūtrālamkāra* (*mdo sde rgyan*); 11) *Madhyāntavibhāga* (*dbus mtha' rnam 'byed*); 12) *Dharma-dharmatā-vibhāga* (*chos dang chos nyid rnam 'byed*); 13) *Mahāyana-uttaratantra* (*rgyud bla ma*).

As I have pointed out elsewhere (Pearcey 2015a: 459 n.7), Dreyfus misidentifies the thirteen (Dreyfus 2003:130 & 2005:277 n.11) by excluding the *Bodhicaryāvātāra* and replacing it with the *Pramānavārttika*. It is worth noting that the *Pramānavārttika* does not appear in modern collections of the *gZhung chen bcu gsum*, nor did Zhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba write a commentary upon it. It is

composed his famous interlinear commentaries (*mchan 'grel*).⁷⁴ Dreyfus believes that the original purpose of Śrī Siṃha was not the study of major Indian treatises, but “the development of Nyingma monasticism in Kham.”⁷⁵ While monasticism was undoubtedly a major concern, it obviously did not, in and of itself, preclude the simultaneous development of scholasticism.

More than half a century elapsed between the foundation of Śrī Siṃha and the period in which college building⁷⁶ truly flourished in Khams and beyond. In order to learn what happened in the intervening years, we need to turn to what Smith called the dGe-mang Movement:⁷⁷

Gzhan phan mtha' yas and his lineage of disciples became closely identified with Dge mang, a retreat in the Rdza chu kha area belonging to Rdzogs chen Monastery. It was here that Gzhan phan mtha' yas's reforms continued to prosper. From here they spread throughout Khams.⁷⁸

It is through this dGe-mang connection, then, that the tradition initiated by rGyal-sras gZhan-phan mtha'-yas eventually passed to his grand-nephew, O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu.⁷⁹ The latter also studied extensively with the highly influential rDza dPal-sprul. And it is O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu who provides the connection between the first generation of teachers at Śrī Siṃha and gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang ba. Unfortunately, O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu's writings are unavailable, so a full assessment of his views and explanatory style is not currently possible. It is thus

unclear how Dreyfus could have made this error, as he cites (2005: 278 n. 14) Zur-mang rNam-rgyal's guide to teaching the thirteen texts, *gZhung chen bcu gsum gyi 'chad thabs dang mtshan don 'grel pa blo gsal ngag gi rgyan* (although giving the title incorrectly), which opens with a list of the thirteen (1.1–1.3).

⁷⁴ Unfortunately, I have not been able to consult Bayer 2000, because the author twice refused my request for a copy. As the only major study of gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba's life and work, it may well answer this question.

⁷⁵ Dreyfus 2005: 288.

⁷⁶ Or at least college-*inaugurating*. Whether new buildings were created or existing buildings were put to a new purpose is often unclear, but is not relevant to what follows.

⁷⁷ Smith 2001: 23. This movement, as Smith sees it, was characterized by “devotion to education and the sincere practice of monasticism.”

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Smith (2001, 26) notes that he was a “grand-nephew” of gZhan-phan mtha'-yas, but some scholars incorrectly refer to him simply as a nephew. According to the biographical accounts, it was O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu's father, bSod-nams dar-rgyas, who was the nephew.

difficult to gauge the extent of his influence on gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba. From what little information is available, however, it does seem likely that gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba at least borrowed pedagogical elements from his teacher(s).⁸⁰

gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba was directly or indirectly responsible for the founding of multiple scriptural colleges. After he taught at rDzogs-chen Śrī Siṃha,⁸¹ he went to dPal-spungs in 1910, where he helped to establish a scriptural college in collaboration with Si-tu Padma dbang-mchog (1886–1952).⁸² He was then involved in the launch of Khams-bye college at rDzong-gsar in 1918/19 and served as its first senior instructor.⁸³ Khams-bye soon became a major hub of intellectual activity: it produced influential teachers, who, in turn, taught and established colleges elsewhere at other monasteries.⁸⁴ gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba himself founded several other *bshad grwa*, including Nyi-ma lchang-ra at 'Bri-gung, as well as sKye-d[r]gu-mdo

⁸⁰ See Jackson 1997: 141. The colophon to gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba's *mchan 'grel* on *mNgon rtogs rgyan* (KZG vol. 11, 273) also makes this indebtedness clear. There is reason to believe that O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu composed *mchan 'grel* of his own. See, for example, *mKhan po ngag chung gi rnam thar*, 102, which refers to a *mchan 'grel* by O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu on Candrakīrti's *Madhyamakāvatāra*.

⁸¹ Dreyfus credits gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba with the “transformation” of Śrī Siṃha and “the creation of the commentarial school as we know it now, with its particular curriculum and pedagogical approach” (2005:289). This revolutionary role is not borne out, however, by the testimony of Ngag-dbang dPal-bzang (1871–1941), who records in his autobiography his experiences of studying at the college from the year 1900 onwards. He describes a vibrant and thriving intellectual scene involving a number of teachers even before gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba's tenure. See *mKhan po ngag chung gi rnam thar* 99ff.

⁸² KZG vol. 1, 112. According to Jackson (2003: 30) gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba remained at dPal-spungs from c.1910–1918.

⁸³ bsTan-'dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma (2004: 310) gives the western date as 1919 but gives the Tibetan date as the earth-horse year, which was 1918–9, so whether it was 1918 or 1919 depends on the month in which the inauguration took place. I have been unable to consult the detailed history of rDzong-gsar bshad-grwa (*rDzong gсар khams bye'i bshad grwa chen mo'i lo rgyus dang mkhan rabs kyī rtogs brjod*) written by mKhan-po Kun-dga' dbang-phyug (1921/23–2008) and published in 1987, as it does not appear in the TBRC database. (Contrary to what is written in the entry in Martin 1997: 214, it would seem to be 89 not 600 pages in length.)

⁸⁴ See Jackson 1997: 143 and Dreyfus 2005: 290.

and Me-nyag⁸⁵—no fewer than eighteen in total, according to the historian sMyo-shul 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje (1931/2–1999).⁸⁶

Still, gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba was not solely responsible for the surge in college building at the beginning of the twentieth century. Among the major monasteries to open colleges without his assistance was Kaḥ-thog, where the Nor-bu lhun-po *bshad grwa* opened in 1907 with Kun-bzang dpal-ldan (1872–1943) as its first teacher.⁸⁷ dPal-yul college dates from 1922, when the influential rDzogs-chen commentator Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang (1879–1941) began to teach there.⁸⁸ Zhe-chen, another of the six major rNying-ma monasteries,⁸⁹ was relatively late in establishing its college; although the precise date is unclear, Zhe-chen Kong-sprul Padma dri-med (1901–1960) oversaw its inauguration and invited Bod-pa sprul-sku mDo-sngags bstan-pa'i nyi-ma (1898–1959) to teach.⁹⁰ These rank among the largest, but they were by no means the only colleges to spring up in Khams during this period. bsTan-'dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma's *sNga 'gyur rdzogs chen chos 'byung chen mo* lists other minor institutions and offers a brief account of their history.⁹¹ Moreover, monk-scholars graduating in Eastern Tibet travelled throughout Tibet and even further afield in the Himalayan region where some established institutions modelled

⁸⁵ *rDzogs chen chos 'byung* vol. 2, 198a.3 (395)

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 198a.4

⁸⁷ Kun-bzang dpal-ldan is known, above all, for his commentary on *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, which preserves the teaching style of rDza dPal-sprul, and his biography of Mi-pham. He also wrote a commentary on Mi-pham's *Nges shes sgron me*.

⁸⁸ bsTan-'dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma 2004: 313. Smith 2001: 13–31 discusses the life and work of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang as an introduction to his autobiography. See also *mKhan po ngag chung gi rnam thar*. The biography has also been translated into English in Nevin and Leschly (trans.) 2013.

⁸⁹ The standard list of six is 1) rDo-rje-brag, 2) sMin-grol-gling, 3) rDzogs-chen, 4) Zhe-chen, 5) Kaḥ-thog, 6) dPal-yul. (See Smith 2001: 17)

⁹⁰ bsTan-'dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma 2004: 314

⁹¹ See bsTan-'dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma 2004: 304–318.

on their *almae matres*.⁹² Khams's educational reform was thus (quite literally) far-reaching.

3.2 Reliance on Iconic Figures

Changes in monastic education transformed notions of sectarian identity in the non-dGe-lugs schools, especially the rNying-ma. Many colleges drew on the commentarial works of their school's foremost scholars: Mi-pham's writings among the rNying-ma and Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge's among the Sa-skya. These writers articulated what became orthodox positions, creating a corresponding concept of heterodoxy—or at least unorthodoxy—that encompassed many tenets of dGe-lugs doctrine. Students from non-dGe-lugs schools thus acquired the means to challenge their dGe-lugs opponents, both in writing and in oral debate, and there is evidence that they did so. Before we turn to those debates, however, let us briefly consider the status and influence of these two major thinkers.

3.2.1 rNying-ma and Mi-pham

As a monk-scholar, Mi-pham was not a typical rNying-ma hierarch. The archetypal preceptor of the rNying-ma school was its supposed founder Padmasambhava/Padmākara (*padma 'byung gnas*). This semi-legendary figure is generally portrayed as a powerful tantric guru, an adept (*siddha*) and thaumaturge.⁹³ Iconographically, Padmasambhava resembles a typical Indian *siddha* but with the addition of royal insignia.⁹⁴ His representation thus reflects the traditional rNying-ma focus on tantric ritual performance. Exoteric (i.e., non-tantric) scholasticism of the

⁹² One such graduate was dBon-stod 'Jam-dbyangs mkhyen-rab (b. 1889), gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba's successor at rDzong-gsar. He later founded a college at dBon-stod.

⁹³ Of the eight forms or "names" of Guru Padmasambhava (*gu ru mtshan brgyad*), only one (known, rather confusingly, as Guru Padmasambhava) is shown in the guise of a paṇḍita.

⁹⁴ In later traditions, his hat is described as a gift of the king of Zahor. His silken robes and vajra sceptre also betoken regal status. In addition, his seated posture is often described in later *gter ma* literature as that of "kingly exuberance" (*rgyal po rol pa'i stabs*).

kind that became increasingly popular in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was not a prominent feature of early rNying-ma identity. There is little evidence of widespread training in debate, for example.⁹⁵ Even textual composition, another of the three normative activities of a scholar (i.e., *'chad rtsod rtsom gsum*), was predominantly concerned with the esoteric or tantric realm. There were exceptions, of course, such as mNga'-ris paṅ-chen Padma-dbang-rgyal's (1487–1542) *sDom gsum rnam nges* treatise on the three sets of vows, which includes the *prātimokṣa* and bodhisattva vows in addition to the tantric commitments (*samaya*).⁹⁶ But the school's more prominent figures, in particular those who appear in bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral-ye-shes rdo-rje's history, tended to be tantric adepts and/or treasure-revealers (*gter ston*).⁹⁷ Beginning with dPal-sprul, Mi-pham and their contemporaries, however, this began to change: rNying-ma teachers started to compose commentaries on key Indian (and especially Madhyamaka) *śāstras* for the first time.⁹⁸

Mi-pham, in particular, was so prolific and influential in his commentarial writing that he almost single-handedly transformed rNying-ma scholasticism. Beginning with his first major commentary—on the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*—in 1876,⁹⁹ he introduced what became the distinctive rNying-ma approach to Madhyamaka philosophy. His *Nor bu Keṭaka* commentary on the ninth chapter of

⁹⁵ Even the scriptural colleges placed less emphasis on debate in their curricula than the dGe-lugs institutes. See Dreyfus 2003a: 132–137.

⁹⁶ The text is now a feature of the curricular at rNying-ma colleges, such as at rNam-grol-gling, for example. See Dreyfus 2005: 278; Pearcey 2015a: 456.

⁹⁷ See Dorje & Kapstein 1991: 743ff.

⁹⁸ Smith 2001: 231 makes this point in relation to Mi-pham. See Viehbeck 2016: 10 for a discussion of how dPal-sprul was the first rNying-ma commentator on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. See also Chapter Four below.

⁹⁹ i.e., *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad 'jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa'i zhal lung* (MPp vol. 13: 1–415; MPc vol. 13: 333–743). Translated in Doctor 2004 and Shantarakshita and Mipham (trans. Padmakara Translation Group) 2005.

the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, followed some two years later.¹⁰⁰ Despite initial controversy (discussed below), the views set out in these and later works came to define rNying-ma orthodoxy. Largely as a result of such works,¹⁰¹ Mi-pham gained a reputation as a great scholar (*mahāpaṇḍita*) and emanation of Mañjuśrī. He became known as 'Jam mgon Mi-pham,¹⁰² and was represented iconographically as a monk-scholar holding a volume of *Prajñāpāramitā* as well as, at least in some images, Mañjuśrī's sword of wisdom.¹⁰³ He thus became—both iconographically and iconically—the rNying-ma-pa equivalent of Tsong-kha-pa for the dGe-lugs and Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge for the Sa-skyā.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ i.e., *sPyod 'jug shes rab kyi le'u'i tshig don go sla bar rnam par bshad pa nor bu ke ta ka* (MPp vol. 14: 1–96; MPc vol. 18: 45–159). See Viehbeck 2011 & 2012 and Mipham 2004.

¹⁰¹ The title of *mahāpaṇḍita* also acknowledges mastery of other branches of learning, specifically the five major and five minor sciences. The former five are often listed as: 1) crafts (*śilpa; bzo rig pa*); 2) logic (*hetu; gtan tshigs*); 3) (Sanskrit) grammar (*śabda; sgra*); medicine or healing (*cikitsā; gso ba*); 5) the 'inner science' or Dharma (*nang don rig pa*); and the latter five as: 1) poetic synonyms (*abhidhāna; mngon brjod*); 2) astrology (*jyotiṣa; skar rtsis*); 3) performance or drama (*nāṭaka; zlos gar*); 4) poetry (*kāvya; snyan ngag*); 5) prosody (*chandas; sdeb sbyor*).

¹⁰² Samuel (1993: 538) sees the prevalence of such epithets among "Rimed masters" and the fact that such masters as 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul, mChog-gyur gling-pa and Mi-pham were considered emanations of Mañjuśrī as implying that Ris-med "involved a renewal of the academic and intellectual tradition within the non-Gelugpa schools." The mention of mChog-gyur gling-pa here is not without problems; although he was indeed identified with Mañjuśrī, he played little or no role in the revival of scholasticism. Yet even the other figures Samuel mentions were not—with the exception of Mi-pham—directly involved in this development. The increase in popularity of Mañjuśrī during this period is undoubtedly a related phenomenon, but it is also a complex one, which lies beyond the scope of the present study. Nonetheless, I briefly touch on the category of rDzogs-chen literature associated with Mañjuśrī (known as 'Jam-dpal rdzogs-pa chen-po) in the next chapter.

¹⁰³ The painting from murals at Zhe-chen monastery in Nepal, reproduced on the cover of Pettit 1999, shows Mi-pham cradling a volume in his left hand while his right hand is in the gesture of blessing/teaching (with the thumb and index finger touching).

¹⁰⁴ There is a great similarity between the standard images of these figures in art, as emanations of Mañjuśrī—greater in fact than there is between the three figures labelled the "Three Mañjuḥoṣas of Tibet" (*'jam dbyangs rnam gsum*), that is Sa-skyā Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan (1182–1251), Klong-chen rab-'byams (1308–1364) and Tsong-kha-pa blo-bzang grags-pa. It seems to have been rDza dPal-sprul who first proposed the latter grouping, but others, such as Kun-bzang dpal-ldan and 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros also adopted it. Indeed, mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros composed a short *guru yoga* rite focusing on the trio: *Gangs can 'jam dbyangs rnam gsum gyi bla ma'i rnal 'byor mkhyen brtse nus mthu'i char 'bebs* (JCLb vol. 4: 143–149). Sa-skyā Paṇḍita Kun-dga'-rgyal-mtshan undoubtedly occupies a comparable position to Tsong-kha-pa in his stature as a scholar but the fact that he composed no commentaries on the standard Mahāyāna treatises that feature in the curricula of Sa-skyā colleges means that there at least he is less prominent than Go-rams-pa. Moreover, Sa-skyā Paṇḍita is typically depicted in works of art not as an emanation of Mañjuśrī but in the guise of an Indian *paṇḍita*.

3.2.2. Sa-skya and Go-rams-pa

In Sa-skya colleges even today, the commentaries of Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge provide the standard interpretations of the most important Indian treatises.¹⁰⁵ His writings are now widely available, but were at one time restricted, along with many other texts deemed critical of, or at odds with, dGe-lugs orthodoxy. The government of dGa'-ldan pho-brang effectively banned their printing and distribution, especially in dBus and gTsang, during the reign of the Fifth Dalai Lama. According to Smith, such controls prevented the widespread study of Go-rams-pa's works and thereby contributed to a decline in Sa-skya scholarship.¹⁰⁶ When his treatises were eventually printed at sDe-dge in the early twentieth century (1906 to 1910) this inspired an educational revival.¹⁰⁷ David Jackson identifies mKhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs rgyal-mtshan (1870–1940) as the head of the printing project.¹⁰⁸ Another senior Sa-skya figure, Blo-gter dbang-po (1847–1914),¹⁰⁹ assisted. Both responded to an original instruction from gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-srang ba.¹¹⁰

Go-rams-pa's writings (and other scholarly Sa-skya works) exacerbated anti-dGe-lugs sentiment around sDe-dge. A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i blo-gros (1888–1936) expressed concern about such hostility in the mid-1920s, citing specifically the writings of Go-rams-pa, Shākya mchog-ldan (1428–1507) and sTag-tshang lo-tshā-ba Shes-rab rin-chen (b.1405).¹¹¹ In a letter addressed to the monks of

¹⁰⁵ See Cabezón and Dargyay 2007: 41.

¹⁰⁶ Smith 2004: 192.

¹⁰⁷ Jackson 2003: 57–58.

¹⁰⁸ On the life of 'Jam-dbyangs rgyal-mtshan see Jackson 2003: 54–60.

¹⁰⁹ On the life of Blo-gter dbang-po see Dhongthog Rinpoche 2016: 190–201.

¹¹⁰ Jackson 2003: 58.

¹¹¹ The inclusion of Shākya mchog-ldan and sTag-tshang lo-tshā-ba Shes-rab rin-chen in this list (which derives from the colophon to the open letter by A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i blo-gros) is curious. As Smith (2004: 190) makes clear, the works of both figures were restricted even in manuscript form following the decrees of the dGa'-ldan pho-brang. Smith notes that some works by

sDe-dge dgon-chen,¹¹² 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i blo-gros writes: “These days, there are many who are biased against elements of the precious teaching of the Victorious One, and many who refute the precious doctrine of the noble dharma-king, the great Tsong-kha-pa.”¹¹³ This he attributes to “people taking as definitive (*nges don*) the comments in the polemical texts (*dgag yig*) of Go-[rams-pa], Shākya [mchog-ldan] and sTag-[tshang lo-tshā-ba].”¹¹⁴ In response to requests to intervene, he “sends out this letter inviting debate, in the manner described in the sacred Dharma of the Vinaya.”¹¹⁵ The available histories do not say whether anyone responded to his challenge. In any case, 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i blo-gros secured the patronage of the sDe-dge king, A-ja rdo-rje seng-ge (1877–1926), and, with his support, published the collected writings of Tsong-kha-pa at sDe-dge printing house.¹¹⁶

As late as 1940, the dGe-lugs teacher, Pha-bong-kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po (1878–1941) criticised the publication of Go-rams-pa's works. In a message to a Chinese disciple, he refers to Go-rams-pa's “mass of faulty compositions” (*nyes*

sTag-tshang lo-tshā-ba Shes-rab rin-chen were printed in sDe-dge, together with other writings by major Sa-skyā figures (ibid., 192). A set of the writings of Shākya mchog-ldan was preserved in Bhutan (from which an edition was published in 1975). The author of the preface to the 1975 edition (SC vol. 1) writes, “The works of Gser-mdog Pan-chen were for many centuries suppressed in Tibet along with the *gsung 'bum* of Tāranātha and [a] number of other scholars who are no more than names today. The present fame of Tāranātha results from the unsealing of the Rtag-brtan Phun-tshogs-gliñ printer in the last half of the last century through the efforts of Blo-gsal-bstan-skyoñ. The writings of Śākya-mchog-ldan, however, had no such reviver in Tibet, and have consequently remained unknown.” They were clearly not *entirely* unknown when A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros was writing.

¹¹² i.e., *Lugs gnyis kyi mdun sa chen po sde dge lhun grub steng nas phyogs kyi mkhas pa rnam la spring ba rtsod pa'i skabs rnam par dbye ba'i yi ge yang dag rigs pa'i pho nya* (AG vol., 1, 119–126). The text is translated in Pearcey 2018. Unfortunately, there is no date in the colophon of 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i blo-gros's letter. The biography by bDe-legs rab-rgyas (AG vol. 1: 7-8) mentions the episode and the printing of Tsong kha pa's collected works before discussing an event that occurred in the fire-hare year (1927). If A-ja rdo-rje seng-ge was the patron for the printing of Tsong-kha-pa's works this puts the *terminus ante quem* for the project at 1926, the year of his death.

¹¹³ AG vol. 1, 125f.: *deng sang rgyal bstan rin po che ris su gcod pa ches mang zhing| khyad par du rje btsun chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po'i bstan pa rin chen dgag pa'i 'khur len pa mang ba'i rkyen gyis...*

¹¹⁴ AG vol. 1, 126: *khyad par du khams gsum chos kyi rgyal po tsong kha pa chen po'i gzhung lugs rnam ni nyes bshad kho nar 'dug pa'i gtam go shākya stag gsum gyi dgag yig ltar du nges don la gnas shing|*

¹¹⁵ AG vol. 1, 126: *dam pa'i chos 'dul ba nas bshad pa ltar rtsod pa'i skabs rnam par dbye ba'i zhu yig 'di spring ba yin...*

¹¹⁶ AG vol. 1: 7–8.

bshad kyi phung po)¹¹⁷ and “many egregious statements” (*ngan smras mang*).¹¹⁸ “A lama from sDe-dge called ’Jam-dbyangs,” he writes, “made efforts to gather a set of original manuscripts (*ma dpe*) and had them carved on printing blocks.”¹¹⁹ Rather scornfully, he notes that reading transmissions and teachings were granted without any continuous, uninterrupted lineage.¹²⁰ His comments clearly testify to the significance of the publication of Go-rams-pa’s works for Sa-skya scholarship and the challenge they posed to dGe-lugs dominance.

Evidently, then, Sa-skya education received a fillip from both the creation of scriptural colleges and the reprinting of previously banned works. Even though these projects were initiated and supported by figures linked to the Ris-med Movement, most notably gZhan-phan Chos-kyi snang-ba, they may have contributed to inter-sectarian tension. Similar strains on relations sprang from Mi-pham’s writings, so much so that some scholars even question his inclusion within the Ris-med fold.

3.3. Mi-pham & the Ris-med Movement

Mi-pham championed the cause of rNying-ma scholasticism to such a great extent that his identification as a Ris-med figure is difficult to justify.¹²¹ Undoubtedly, he studied with acknowledged Ris-med luminaries including mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po and dPal-sprul. Yet, his own philosophical writings are overwhelmingly concerned with rNying-ma doctrine.¹²² As Phuntsho notes:

¹¹⁷ *mDo sngags skor gyi dris lan sna tshogs phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa* vol. 6: 37a

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*: phis su sde dge’i bla ma ’jam dbyangs rgyal mtshan zhes pas ma dpe rtsol bas bsdu te spar du brkos|

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*: lung rgyun med bzhin du lung byas| khrid rgyun med bzhin du khrid byas|

¹²¹ The first to connect Mi-pham with the movement was Gene Smith (2001, 272). He called Mi-pham “the greatest name in the nonsectarian movement at the turn of the [twentieth] century.” Dreyfus (2003b, 317) said that Mi-pham was “influenced by the eclectic or ecumenical (Ris-med) movement in which his work takes place.” There are many other examples.

¹²² There are several notable exceptions, such as his commentary on lCang-skya Rol-pa’i rdo-rje’s song *lTa ba’i gsung mgur zab mo* (MPp vol. 4: 826.6–866.3).

Notwithstanding the common assumption that he was an advocate of the ecumenical movement (*Ris med pa*) which his teachers initiated, Mipham was a staunch proponent of rNying ma doctrine, and repeatedly refuted other schools igniting new doctrinal controversies. It still remains a perplexing question whether Mipham was a *Ris med pa* in the same way as Kong sprul and dPal sprul.¹²³

Perhaps the question here hinges on how *ris-med* is defined. For mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and Kong-sprul, *ris-med* embraced the principle that all valid means to enlightenment should be preserved. They (but especially mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po) might, therefore, have viewed the creation—or *recreation*, as Mi-pham presented it¹²⁴—of an exoteric scholastic tradition within the rNying-ma school as just such a work of preservation. As already noted above, it was mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po who initially encouraged Mi-pham to compose his famous treatises. Pettit writes:

The ostensible reason underlying much of Mipham's writing on both sūtra and tantra was the command of his teacher 'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po to write "textbooks for our tradition" (*rang lugs kyi yig cha*)—the distinctive feature of which is the Great Perfection system.¹²⁵

The fact that it was mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po who asked Mi-pham to compose his commentaries is also made clear in the colophons to some of the texts themselves.¹²⁶ Evidence also exists in a letter Mi-pham wrote to mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po's treasurer (*phyag mdzod*), Tshe-ring bkra-shis, when *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* was printed.¹²⁷ Possibly, mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po believed that

¹²³ Phuntsho 2007: 193.

¹²⁴ With typical conservatism, Mi-pham would present this not so much as an innovation, but as the recovery of an earlier tradition. Yet while he did indeed rely on the work of earlier scholars such as Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po (1012–1088) and Klong-chen rab-'byams, and even borrowed from Go-rams-pa, Mi-pham was unquestionably innovative too.

¹²⁵ Pettit 1999: 99. The phrase "*rang lugs kyi yig cha*" is taken from a statement by Mi-pham himself that is included in the biography by Kun-bzang dpal-ldan (ibid, 26).

¹²⁶ E.g. for the *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad*, MPc vol. 13: 739.6–740.1 and *gSang 'grel phyogs bcu'i mun sel gyi spyi don 'od gsal snying po*, MPc vol. 23: 318.5–319.2. The former says that mKhyen-brtse'i dbang-po provided the "textbooks of the Indian and Tibetan commentaries" (*rgya bod kyi 'grel pa'i yig cha rnam*) on the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra* and asked Mi-pham to "study them precisely" (*zhib tu ltos*) and compose a commentary of his own. This request was followed by another appeal from someone named Padma, belonging to the "great tradition of the Early Translations (*snga 'gyur*).

¹²⁷ i.e., *dBu ma rgyan 'grel 'bru bcos skabs 'jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i phyag mdzod tshe ring bkra shis la springs pa'i yi ge*. MPc vol. 2: 687–688. This letter does not specify that the text was written at

rNying-ma monasteries were too reliant on other traditions, especially the dGe-lugs, at least for their exoteric studies. Some monasteries—rDo-grub among them—used dGe-lugs textbooks for their own non-tantric curriculum. Perhaps not coincidentally, rDo-grub’s resident teachers were among the first to criticize Mi-pham’s commentaries.

The controversy surrounding Mi-pham’s literary output makes it difficult to reconcile his role with non-sectarianism—at least insofar as the term is commonly understood. Phuntsho says he finds it “bewildering” that mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po “encouraged and often instigated Mipham to write treatises that provoked his opponents into composing refutations.”¹²⁸ Of course, it is possible that neither mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po nor Mi-pham anticipated the level of controversy that the treatises would incite.

Douglas Duckworth characterises Mi-pham’s non-sectarianism as “complex”. He claims that Mi-pham’s critical engagement with dGe-lugs doctrine provides the key to his particular brand of Ris-med.¹²⁹ Specifically, Duckworth contrasts Mi-pham’s approach with what he identifies as four alternative responses to dGe-lugs dominance: 1) a hostile attitude, which is characteristic of Go-rams-pa; 2) a more submissive attitude to dGe-lugs authority especially on exoteric matters, which Duckworth considers to be a feature of the tradition at rDo-grub monastery; 3) a more dismissive attitude of focusing exclusively on one’s own tradition, as it is found, for example, in the writings of Padma badzra (c.1807–1884);¹³⁰ and 4) willed

mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po’s behest but does attribute the success of the project to “the guru’s kindness alone” (*bla ma’i bka’ drin kho na*). Of course, the mere fact that Mi-pham wrote such a letter to Tshering bkra-shis is a clue to mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po’s involvement.

¹²⁸ Phuntsho 2007: 193.

¹²⁹ Duckworth 2008: xxii.

¹³⁰ On the life of mKhan-po Padma badzra see Pearcey 2012b. Confusion over the dates of this important figure, specifically the use of the erroneous dates 1867–1934 (as in Duckworth 2008: 197 n. 54) would appear to stem from conflation with the similarly named sPrul-sku Padma rdo-rje, who was ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s half-brother.

or forced conversion.¹³¹ I discuss the second of these four responses in detail below. Duckworth argues that Mi-pham engaged with dGe-lugs doctrine in a unique way by challenging its tenets yet avoiding outright hostility.

Markus Viehbeck sees evidence of Mi-pham’s non-sectarianism in a short satirical work playfully addressing the supposed faults of each of the four main Tibetan Buddhist schools.¹³² It is true that *Grogs dang gtam gleng ba’i rkyen las mtshar gtam*¹³³ expresses what Viehbeck calls a “general tolerance and equanimity towards the different schools of Tibetan Buddhism.” It includes, for example, an account of what the schools have in common, such as their shared views and tenets.

Mi-pham wrote another short text on the same subject, dated to the fire-monkey year (1896).¹³⁴ This second work displays a similar attitude of tolerance, acknowledging, as it does, the ultimate validity of all four schools. In its final verse, Mi-pham calls on the followers of all schools to avoid mutual hostility:

So, like children of the same father and same mother,
Cultivate mutual accord, devotion, and pure perception,
And, while focusing on your own tradition, avoid berating others.
If you act in this way you will also be of service to the teachings.¹³⁵

This advice might well represent Mi-pham’s own approach to non-sectarianism (especially as Duckworth defines it): immersed in his own tradition, he is unafraid to criticise others (within the established bounds of scholarly debate) while avoiding outright hostility. We must bear in mind, however, that he wrote

¹³¹ Duckworth 2008: xxvii–xxviii.

¹³² Viehbeck 2012: 50.

¹³³ MPc vol. 7: 229.1–233.2. For a translation see Pearcey 2018. Kapstein 2013 offers a slightly abridged translation.

¹³⁴ *Bod yul chos lugs rnam pa bzhi*. MPc. vol. 32: 410.1–410.6. This text is also translated in Pearcey 2018.

¹³⁵ MPc. vol. 32, 410.5f.: pha gcig ma gcig bu tsha ji bzhin du| phan tshun thugs mthun mos gus dag snang sgoms| rang lugs gtsor bzung gzhan la gshe ba spong| de ltar mdzad na bstan zhabs ’dir yang legs| (The third line is ambiguous and could also be read as: Avoid regarding your own tradition as the foremost and berating others.)

these words after he had already been involved in several high-profile disputes, one of which involved 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho (1824–1902).

3.4 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags and the Opposition to Mi-pham

'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho is undoubtedly a figure of some importance in the history of nineteenth-century eastern Tibet. Unfortunately, we know little about his life and work.¹³⁶ He was a follower of both Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol (1781-1851)¹³⁷ and rDza dPal-sprul. Kun-bzang dpal-ldan records, in his biography of Mi-pham, that 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags criticised Mi-pham's *Nor bu ke ta ka* commentary on the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.¹³⁸ This led to a debate,¹³⁹ overseen by the pair's shared teacher, dPal-sprul. It was a contest which, by all accounts, Mi-pham won. In Kun-bzang dpal-ldan's words:

On one occasion, 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags, a great scholar of the New Traditions,¹⁴⁰ expressed the opinion that there were some invalid arguments in Mi-pham's commentary on the *prajñā* chapter [i.e., ninth] of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. The foremost of learned, disciplined and accomplished masters, dPal-sprul Rin-po-che, was engaged to judge, and the debate continued for several days. Most spectators

¹³⁶ He is also known as A-lags mDo-sngags or 'Ja'-pa A-lags. A brief sketch of his life is found in Thub dbang 1991: 142–143. This account, which gives his dates as 1824–1902, was the principal source for the biography I wrote for the Treasury of Lives website (Pearcey 2014a).

¹³⁷ On the life of Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol see Ricard 1994. His synthesis of dGe-lugs teachings and rDzogs-chen is sometimes described as Ris-med *avant la lettre*. In his life and writings, he represents another notable exception to Samuel's dGe-lugs-pa 'cleric'/Ris-med 'shaman' dichotomy. It was apparently 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho who, sometime around 1851, first told dPal-sprul about Zhabs-dkar. Although dPal-sprul then made plans to go and meet him, he heard on the way that Zhabs-dkar had already died. See Thondup 1996: 203. For a recent assessment of Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol's work and non-sectarianism see Pang 2014 and 2015. The fact that mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho was a student of Zhabs-dkar is confirmed in the prayer for swift rebirth (*myur byon gsol 'debs*) that dPal-sprul wrote shortly after Zhabs-dkar's death (see PS vol. 8: 82).

¹³⁸ MPc vol. 9: 572.2.

¹³⁹ Although we do not have a date for this debate, it must have taken place between 1878 and 1887—the *terminus post quem* being the year in which Mi-pham's commentary to the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* was completed, and the *terminus ante quem* being the year dPal-sprul died. Schuh (1973: xxxi) dates the debate to between 1878 and 1880.

¹⁴⁰ *gsar phyogs la mkhas pa*. In bDud-'joms Rin-po-che's *rNying ma chos 'byung* (705: 3) he is referred to as "gsar phyogs *kyi* mkhas pa chen po." The translators include a note from Tulku Thondup specifying that although 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags was learned in gSar-ma doctrine, he was himself a rNying-ma-pa. (Dudjom Rinpoche 1991 vol. 2: 86 n.1215.) In a private interview (7 October 2014), Tulku Thondup explained that 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho's tribal group, the dBang-mda', followed the Kaḥ-thog lineage of the rNying-ma school. In his own study and practice, however, 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags rgya-mtsho was likely an adherent of both dGe-lugs and rNying-ma traditions, thus raising the question of what it means in this context to 'belong to' or follow a particular school/tradition.

could only say which arguments were in accord with their own opinions; they could not tell who had won and who had lost. When Bla-ma Rig-mchog asked dPal-sprul Rin-po-che which of the pair was the winner, he said, “I don’t know if I can be the one to decide this, or whether I can put an end to it. It is rather like the saying, ‘It is not for a father to praise his son, but for his enemies. It is not for a mother to praise her daughter, but for the community.’ mDo-sngags’s monks told me that early in the debate they clearly saw a ray of light emanate from the heart of Lama Mi-pham’s image of Mañjuśrīghoṣa, the representation of his chosen deity, and connect with the lama’s heart. That really says it all.”¹⁴¹

The precise nature of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* disagreement is unknown. None of ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’s own writings survive.¹⁴² Aside from this brief account, we have only the comments in Mi-pham’s *gNyug sems skor gsum*.¹⁴³ In the first text of that trilogy, Mi-pham refutes what he claims to be ‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’ position:

These days, ‘Gya-ba [sic] mDo-sngags clings to others’ claims that the so-called “fundamental mind” (*gnyug sems*), which occurs at the stage of clear light when cultivating mental isolation (*sems dben*) from among the five stages of the *Guhyasamāja* in the dGe-lugs system, is subtle mind (*phra yid*). He asserts that the pure awareness (*rig pa*) that is pointed out in the Great Perfection is also subtle mind. As this subtle mind is conditioned, arising from four conditions, there are those who also claim that the Great Perfection must also be conditioned. Such statements are utterly inappropriate.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ ‘*Ju Mi-pham gyi rnam thar*: 22.16f.: de bzhin du gsar phyogs la mkhas pa chen po ‘ja’ pa mdo sngags kyis spyod ‘jug sher le’i ‘grel pa la mi ‘thad pa’i cha brjod pa la| gangs khrod mkhas btsun grub pa’i khyu mchog dpal sprul rin po che dpang por bzhag nas zhag du mar bgro gleng gngang ba’i tshel phal gyis rang rang gi ‘dod phyogs dang mthun pa’i gdam smra ba tsam las rgyal pham ma ‘byed tshel bla ma rig mchog nas dpal sprul rin po cher| de gnyis gang rgyal zhus par| ngas ni rjes gcod mi shes| tshar gcod mi shes| ‘jig rten gyi kha dper| bu phas mi bstod dgras bstod| bu mos mas mi bstod gnas kyi bstod zer ba’i dpe ltar| mdo sngags kyi grwa pa mams kyis nga la| rtsod pa snga ma’i dus bla ma mi pham gyi thugs dam rten ‘jam dpal dbyangs kyi sku de’i thugs ka nas ‘od zer zhig ‘byung ste bla ma’i thugs kar ‘brel ‘dug pa gsal bar mthong zer bas| de’i nang du don ‘dus ‘dug gsungs|

¹⁴² Kun-bzang dpal-ldan refers to a commentary on rDzogs-chen, which is presumably the same text that some claim was burnt at the end of the debate: At that time, too, dPal-sprul Rin-po-che issued the following instruction, “‘Ja’-pa mDo-sngags has written a commentary on [the line]: ‘The Great Perfection, which is characterized by a total embodiment (*spyi gzugs*) of wisdom (*ye shes*).’ It seems that some consider it to be refutable and others provable. Therefore, discuss it.” (*Ju mi pham gyi rnam thar*: skabs der yang dpal sprul rin po ches| mdo sngags kyis rdzogs pa chen po ye shes spyi yi gzugs zhes par ‘grel pa bris ‘dug pa la| la las dgag pa dang la las sgrub par go bas ‘di thad nas kyang bgro gleng re mdzod ces bka’ phebs pa bzhin mdzad pas...) As noted in Karmay 1988: 141, the phrase “*rdzogs pa chen po ye shes spyi gzugs can*” occurs in the ‘*Jam dpal zhal lung* of Buddhaśrījñānapāda and was cited by ‘Gos lo-tśā-ba gZhon-nu dpal in defence of rDzogs-chen against charges that the term rDzogs-chen was unknown in works of gSar-ma origin. On the correct interpretation of the phrase see Wangchuk 2012: 22.

¹⁴³ E.g. *gNyug sems ‘od gsal gyi don rgyal ba rig ‘dzin brgyud pa’i lung bzhin brjod pa rdo rje snying po* (MPc vol. 24: 29). On the trilogy see Mi-pham-gya-tso 2006. These works were not completed during Mi-pham’s lifetime, but compiled by his student, Zhe-chen rgyal-tshab.

¹⁴⁴ *gNyug sems* II: 288 and MPc vol. 24: 29.3f.: deng sang ‘gya ba [sic] mdo sngags pas dge phyogs pa’i gsang ‘dus rim lnga’i sems dben sgom pa’i ‘od gsal gyis skabs su gnyug sems zhes pa phra yid yin zhes gzhan gyi zer sgros la ‘jus nas| de las brtsam ste rdzogs chen gyi rig pa ngo sprod rgyu de phra ba’i yid yin| phra ba’i yid de rkyen bzhi las skyes pa’i ‘dus byas yin pas rdzogs chen ‘dus byas yin no zer ba’i rjes brjod kyang byed mkhan ‘dug pa ‘di ni shin tu mi ‘os pa’i tshig yin ste|

Here, Mi-pham contends that 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags was misled by the dGe-lugs interpretation of the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. In his attempt to find parallels between the *Guhyasamāja* and the Great Perfection, 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags violates one of the fundamental tenets of rDzogs-chen: that pure awareness (*rig pa*) is unconditioned (*'dus ma byas*).¹⁴⁵ I examine this stance in more detail later in this study. Let it suffice to say here that comparison of rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra did not end with 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags.

'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags's influence is better documented than the nature of his assertions. Biographical accounts show, for example, that he was a teacher to the four seminary masters¹⁴⁶ of rDo-grub (*rdo grub mkhan po rnam bzhi*):¹⁴⁷

1. mGar-ba mkhan-po Thub-bstan rig-'dzin bzang-po (d.1926)¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ Mi-pham considered it especially important to refute any suggestion that the pure awareness (*rig pa*) of rDzogs-chen could be conditioned. He even claimed that this was a concern shared by his teacher, 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po:

My lama, 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, said, "The single statement 'rDzogs-chen is conditioned' violates all the crucial points of rDzogs-chen's ground, path and fruition." As this illustrates, such statements are displeasing to the minds of the holy ones, but these days there are those who do not apply even the slightest analysis to determine whether what they say accords with the key points of the rNying-ma teachings or not, and whatever comes out of their mouths is taken to be Dharma. This is a sign of having arrived at the end of the period in which there is a mere reflection of the teachings, and the heart teachings of Samantabhadra will not remain for much longer.

(*gNyug sems* 295: kho bo'i bla ma 'jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po'i zhal snga nas| rdzogs chen 'dus byas zer ba'i tshig gcig po 'dis rdzogs pa chen po gzhi lam 'bras bu'i gnad thams cad dang rgyab 'gal du song ba yin gsungs pas mtshon dam pa rnam ky'i thugs la ma babs kyang| deng sang ni rnying ma'i chos ky'i gnad dang mthun mi mthun gyi dpyad pa gtong ba tsam yang med par kha nas gang byung zhig brjod shes na chos su brtsi ba ni bstan pa'i gzugs brnyan gyi mtha' la thug pas kun bzang thugs ky'i bstan pa yun ring du mi gnas pa'i brda')

¹⁴⁶ I borrow this translation of *mkhan po* from David Jackson (1997: 140) because the common translation of 'abbot' does not work in the present context. The four were teachers, not necessarily heads of the monastery.

¹⁴⁷ Thub-dbang 1991: 143, Klein 2000: 559. In this context the Tibetan *mkhan po* (Skt. *upādhyāya*) does not signify an abbot who is the head of a monastery, but both a preceptor who can preside over an ordination ceremony and a senior teacher or professor, roughly equivalent to the title *dge bshes* in the dGe-lugs.

¹⁴⁸ Tulku Thondup (1996: 249–50) notes that mGar-ba mkhan-po was the closest of the four khenpos to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma and that he died just a few months before him. Note that there is sometimes confusion in the secondary sources between Thub-bstan rig-'dzin bzang-po and his

2. Ser-shul mkhan-po Ngag-dbang kun-dga' grags-pa¹⁴⁹
3. A-myes mkhan-po Dam-chos byams-pa 'od-zer (d.1927?)
4. Klu-shul mkhan-po Blo-bzang kun-khyab, alias dKon-mchog sgron-me, (1859–1936)¹⁵⁰

It is unclear what 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags taught at rDo-grub Monastery. But we know that one of his students, mKhan-po Dam-chos 'od-zer, opposed Mi-pham's ideas. Dam-chos 'od-zer took issue with Mi-pham's commentary on the *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*, i.e., '*Jam dbyangs bla ma dgyes pa'i zhal lung*.¹⁵¹ Mi-pham's response, articulated in his *Dam chos dogs sel*, survives.¹⁵² As Phuntsho notes, this rejoinder is unique among Mi-pham's polemical writings in that it is addressed to a fellow rNying-ma-pa. Dam-chos 'od-zer apparently requested the text, another feature that makes it atypical. "Strangely," writes Phuntsho, the author "makes more impolite and sarcastic remarks here than in his two other replies."¹⁵³ Mi-pham might have found it particularly irksome to account for his ideas to someone *within* the rNying-ma school.

Although rDo-grub monastery itself was a rNying-ma institution, this affiliation did not apply to its study college. There, the exoteric curriculum was based on the study of dGe-lugs texts—specifically, the debate manuals (*yig cha*) of 'Jam-dbyangs bzhad-pa (1648–1721/22). Furthermore, at least one of the four seminary masters listed above probably had a dGe-lugs association: the name Ser-

reincarnation, 'Jigs-med 'od-gsal, who was also referred to as mGar-ba mkhan-po. (See, for example, TBRC entry P3JM11).

¹⁴⁹ His name suggests that he was originally from the dGe-lugs monastery of Ser-shul (A-lags gZan-dkar, private communication, April 2014).

¹⁵⁰ Tulku Thondup, who was identified as the reincarnation of Klu-shul mkhan-po, gives a detailed account of his life in Tulku Thondup 2006: 230–236.

¹⁵¹ For bibliographical details, see note 99 above.

¹⁵² *rDo grub dam chos zhes pas gzhan gyi zer sgros bsdu nas mkhas su re ba'i khyal ngag de dag mi mkhas mtshang phug du kho rang nas bskul ba bzhin nyams mtshar du bkod pa* (MPc vol. 13: 747–807). See Phuntsho 2010: 217f.

¹⁵³ Phuntsho 2010: 217.

shul Ngag-dbang kun-dga’ suggests a link with Ser-shul, an important dGe-lugs institution in rDza-chu-kha.¹⁵⁴ A-lags gZan-dkar Thub-bstan nyi-ma (who studied at rDo-grub in his youth) reports that rDo-grub Monastery itself was considered a branch monastery (*dgon lag*) of the dGe-lugs centre of Bla-brang bKra-shis-’khyil.¹⁵⁵ ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags too was connected with Bla-brang: his biography identifies him as an unofficial incarnation of Gung-thang dKon-mchog bstan-pa’i sgron-me (1762–1823), the monastery’s twenty-first throne-holder.¹⁵⁶ However, ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags was not directly affiliated with any monastery. He appears to have spent the last part of his life in retreat, perhaps following his defeat to Mi-pham.¹⁵⁷

Even if ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’s career ended well before his death in 1902, his legacy likely continued (to some extent) through his students. We also detect signs of influence—or, at least, shared concerns—in the writings of his supposed reincarnation, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho (1903–1957). But now let us turn to the life and work of a figure who was effectively caught in between Mi-pham and ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags: their shared disciple, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma.

¹⁵⁴ The proper name of the monastery is dGa’-ldan theg-chen dar-rgyas-gling. The likely meaning of Ser-shul in this context was confirmed by A-lags gZan-dkar (Private communication, April 2014). Paul Nietupski has written extensively on the history and residents of Bla-brang bKra-shis-’khyil, most notably in Nietupski 1999. Although he makes no mention of rDo-grub-chen being an unofficial branch, he does note (on p.96) how “Labrang was not a strictly sectarian institution. In addition to the prominent Central Tibetan Gelukpa systems, Labrang housed specialists in the older Tibetan Nyingma systems...”

¹⁵⁵ Private communication, April 2014. A-lags gZan-dkar said that the same was true of Dar-thang, although it is officially a branch of dPal-yul (albeit a branch that is bigger than its ‘mother’). I can find no confirmation of either claim in written sources.

¹⁵⁶ It is striking that the same claim was also made about his student, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma, as noted below. Both claims testify to dKon-mchog bstan-pa’i-sgron-me’s enduring influence.

¹⁵⁷ Thub-dbang 1991: 142-143 mentions ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags’ retreat after discussing the debate with Mi-pham. Of course, this does not necessarily mean that the retreat followed chronologically. Still, this view is supported by the existence of a text by dPal-sprul on retreat, *Phyi nang gi dben pa ya ma bral bar bsten tshul sogs ’ja’ ba mdo sngags la gdams pa* (PS vol. 8: 269-275), written for ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags to “clear away sadness” (*skyo ba sangs pa’i ched du*), which might conceivably be tied to loss in the debate. I discuss this in the introduction to my translation of the dPal-sprul text in Pearcey 2018.

4. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's rDzogs-chen writings are the focus of the next two chapters. Here, let us examine his life and literary output more generally.

4.1. His Life

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's life sheds light on many of the themes of this study, especially scholasticism and its relationship to sectarian identity. He was born in 1865.¹⁵⁸ His father was the rNying-ma treasure-revealer (*gter ston*) bDud-'joms gling-pa, alias lCags-skong gter-ston (1835-1904).¹⁵⁹ None of the biographical sources at my disposal lists bDud-'joms gling-pa among 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's teachers, and it would seem that the two had little or no contact in later years.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ This was at the end of the Nyag-rong troubles (1863–1865), which caused rDo-grub-chen monastery (i.e., Padma-bkod rtsa-gsum mkha'-'gro'i-gling) to relocate from Yar-lung padma-bkod to rTsang-chen in the upper rDo-chu valley. The second rDo-grub incarnation, 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs 'byung-gnas (1824–1863), began the move when mGon-po mam-rgyal of Nyag-rong threatened to destroy the monastery at Yar-lung in retaliation for its support of the people of the gSer valley. Yet shortly before the new building at rTsang-chen was complete, 'Jigs-med Phun-tshogs 'byung-gnas was forced into exile. A powerful local chieftain objected to his choice of consort. He died in Dar-tse-mdo (Tachienlu) in 1863 during a smallpox epidemic. Despite the move, both monasteries remained in use for some time. This meant that once 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma had been enthroned at the monastery in Yar-lung Padma-bkod in the Iron Horse year (1870), he then followed a pattern of spending his summers in Yar-lung and his winters at the newer monastery in rTsang-chen. On the Nyag-rong troubles, see Tashi Tsering 1985 and Tsomo 2015. On the life of 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs 'byung-gnas see Thondup 1996, 211–214 (Note, however, that Thondup's account leaves some confusion surrounding the precise year of his death: although he gives his dates as 1824-1863, he dates the fatal smallpox epidemic in Dar-rtse-mdo to 1864.)

¹⁵⁹ On his life see Traktung Dudjom Lingpa 2011. bDud-'joms gling-pa gave his son the name Kun-bzang 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma phrin-las kun-khyab dpal bzang-po, which is usually abbreviated to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was the first of eight sons born to bDud-'joms gling-pa, all of whom were recognized as incarnations. For more information on all eight sons, see Gayley 2010 & 2011. A-lags gZan-dkar recalled an oral tradition correlating the eight sons of bDud-'joms gling-pa to the eight bodhisattvas known to Tibetans as the 'eight close sons' (*nye ba'i sras brgyad*), with 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma being identified as the emanation of Mañjuśrī (personal communication, April 2014).

¹⁶⁰ The same was not true of all his brothers. Gayley (op. cit.) notes that sPrul-sku Dri-med 'od-zer (1881–1924), for example, counted both bDud-'joms gling-pa and 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma as his teachers. A recently published work on the life of bDud-'joms gling-pa refers to an oral tradition according to which 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma challenged his father to a debate. The father won and made "a pithy remark about his son's paltry knowledge compared to the overwhelming vastness of wisdom mind." See Traktung Dudjom Lingpa 2011: 291. There appears to be an error in the footnotes of the book, and I take the source of this story to be a personal communication from Lama Tharchin Rinpoche (as mentioned on page 303 n.43) rather than the actual source mentioned in n.44 (i.e.,

The Fourth rDzogs-chen hierarch, Mi-'gyur nam-mkha'i-rdo-rje (1793–1870), recognised 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma as the reincarnation (*yang srid*) of the Second rDo-grub adept, 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs 'byung-gnas.¹⁶¹ There is no record that this recognition was ever contested, even though some accounts refer to an alternative identification. bDe-legs rab-rgyas, for example, notes that mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po believed 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma to be an incarnation of Gung-thang bstan-pa'i sgron-me¹⁶² of Bla-brang bkra-shis-'khyil. A-skong mkhan-chen Blo-bzang rdo-rje (1893–1983) also refers to this identification in his *Nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor*:

In the past, ['Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma] was with 'Jam-mgon Mi-pham Rin-po-che and the two of them, guru and disciple, were in discussion. When they used a mirror to divine his [previous] birth, the mirror showed a lama wearing a yellow cloak with a black fold and a yellow preceptor's hat. In the sky above his head was the word *gung* and below his throne was *thang*. At this, Mi-pham said, "Oh, I thought you were a rebirth of Bla-ma rDo-grub Rin-po-che, but are you an [incarnation] of Gung-thang?" And he stared into his face. Then Mi-pham said, "Well now, whoever you are, while you are in this physical form you must do as much as you can for the teaching and practice of the Ancient Translation School."¹⁶³

The story may well be apocryphal. However, the twofold identification—with both Gung-thang bsTan-pa'i sgron-me (a major dGe-lugs figure from A-mdo), and the second rDo-grub-chen, 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs-'byung-gnas (a rNying-ma-pa)—indicates genuine tension. It foreshadows later dilemmas, because 'Jigs-med

Thondup 1996: 243) as Thondup makes no mention of this story on that page or elsewhere. Even if 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma had limited direct contact with his father later in life, there is still the possibility of literary influence. bDud-'joms gling-pa was, after all, a prolific author and commentator on rDzogs-chen. It would be worthwhile comparing the writings of father and son on topics that they both address. For a translation of several rDzogs-chen commentaries by bDud-'joms gling-pa see Wallace 2015.

¹⁶¹ bDe-legs rab-rgyas 2002: 11.

¹⁶² Ibid.: 12.

¹⁶³ AK vol. 4: 37: sngar 'jam mgon mi pham rin po che dang khong bla slob rnam gnyis zhal 'dzoms su bzhugs nas| khong la skye pra brtags pa na| bla ma gos ber ser po sdud nag dang mkhan zhwa ser po mnab pa zhis gi dbu'i steng mkhar gung dang khri'i 'og tu thang zhes pa'i yi ge 'dug ces pra rten pas zhus pa na| mi pham rin po ches| 'o kho bos khyod bla ma rdo grub rin po che'i skye ba yin chags byas kyang| khyod gung thang gi cig ma yin nam gsungs nas spyang ha re gang zhal la gzigs| yang| da su yin kyang da lta'i rten 'dir snga 'gyur ba'i bstan pa la bshad sgrub kyi bya ba ci tsem byed ces pa la| (*Nyi ma'i dkyil 'khor* is a lengthy commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. I am grateful to Tulku Thondup for calling this passage to my attention via email, January 2007.)

bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was caught between opposing dGe-lugs and rNying-ma teachers in his youth and went on to experience something of a 'mid-life crisis' of allegiance.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was enthroned at rDo-grub-chen monastery in Yar-lung Padma-bkod in the iron-horse year (1870).¹⁶⁴ Shortly after his enthronement, in the water-monkey year (1872), he travelled to rDzogs-chen Monastery,¹⁶⁵ where he began his studies with mKhan-po Padma badzra. The biographies report that he initially faced difficulty. According to bSod-nams nyi-ma, he did not understand what Padma badzra taught.¹⁶⁶ He soon overcame this. Only a year later, he delivered the annual winter lecture on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* at rDza-rgyal.¹⁶⁷ At the conclusion of the teaching, dPal-sprul declared that for 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma to have given the lecture at such a young age was proof that the doctrine of transmission (*lung gi bstan pa/lung gi chos*) was still alive and well.¹⁶⁸

In the following years, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma studied with a number of teachers, including dPal-sprul, the Fourth rDzogs-chen incarnation Mi-'gyur nam-mkha'i-rdo-rje, rGya-rong nam-sprul Kun-bzang theg-mchog rdo-rje,¹⁶⁹ mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, Kong-sprul blo-gros mtha'-yas, gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and Mi-pham.¹⁷⁰ In addition, he received instruction from 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags on the 'five

¹⁶⁴ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 70. Thondup 1996: 238 says 1810, clearly a typographical error for 1870. A-bu dkar-lo says that rDo-grub-chen was enthroned in his sixth year. Thereafter, he generally spent his summers in the older monastery at Yar-lung and his winters at the newer monastery in rTsang-chen.

¹⁶⁵ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 71.

¹⁶⁶ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 71–72. The biography (ibid, 71) specifies that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's difficulties arose when he received instructions on the preliminary text *Dran pa nyer bzhas* and was tested on his understanding.

¹⁶⁷ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 72–73. The text says this was during the subject's ninth year. rDza-rgyal in rDza-chu-kha was the seat of 'Jigs-med rgyal-ba'i myu-gu (1765–1842), who was dPal-sprul's teacher, and his successors.

¹⁶⁸ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 73 & bDe legs rab rgyas 2002: 13: da dung lung gi bstan pa'i gnas tshad rdzogs ran mi 'dugl In the same statement dPal-sprul refers to the death of Nyag-bla Padma bdud-'dul, who supposedly attained the rainbow body (*'ja' lus*) in 1872, as evidence of the persistence of the doctrine of realization (*rtogs pa'i bstan pa/rtogs pa'i chos*).

¹⁶⁹ This figure's dates are unknown.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid. Most biographies (Anon 1976: 10, Nyoshul Khenpo 2005: 325, bsTan 'dzin lung rtogs nyi ma 2004: 625, Tulku Thondup 1996: 239) also mention Zhe-chen dbon-sprul 'Gyur-med mthu-stobs

major scriptures' (*bka' pod lnga*) according to the dGe-lugs tradition and the debate manuals (*yig cha*) of 'Jam-dbyangs bzhad-pa.¹⁷¹

Through this education 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma developed a reputation for great erudition. According to the autobiography of mKhan-po Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang, Mi-pham once praised 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma and gTer-ston bSod-rgyal as the two most learned rNying-ma scholars after sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs (1829–1901).¹⁷² The context suggests that Mi-pham made this statement in or around 1902.

The praise came during a period (lasting approximately from 1900 to 1905) when 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was contemplating his sectarian allegiance.

Earlier, at the age of twenty-two,¹⁷³ he spent some time with Mi-pham at rDzong-gsar Monastery.¹⁷⁴ At the end of the stay, as 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma took his leave, Mi-pham offered him a scroll (*shog dril*) from his pocket. Later, when 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma read it, he found that it contained thirty-seven verses.¹⁷⁵ The

rnam-rgyal as one of his teachers, but this does not seem plausible, as the biography of Zhe-chen dbon-sprul states that he died in 1854, more than ten years before 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was born. See *Zhe chen dbon sprul 'gyur med mthu stobs rnam rgyal gyi rnam thar*: 246. bDe legs rab rgyas 2003 is the only biography I have consulted which does not mention Zhe-chen dbon-sprul as a teacher.

¹⁷¹ Tulku Thondup (oral communication, 7 October 2014). bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 74 lists 'Ja'-pa (here spelled 'Gya ba) mDo-sngags among 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's teachers but does not specify precisely what he taught him. After the debate with Mi-pham, it is understandable that biographers might downplay 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags's role in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's education.

¹⁷² *mKhan po ngag chung gi rnam thar*:108: 14-16: de rjes rnying phyogs la go ba chags mkhan bla ma lung rtogs bzang shos yin de 'phros bsod rgyal dang rdo grub gnyis la'ang go ba mi skyon tsam re yod| See also Khenpo Ngawang Palzang 2013: 114. Today, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's reputation for learning relates not just to his mastery of the rNying ma doctrine, but to his familiarity with the teachings of the other schools. Klein 2000: 559. According to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama: "In his late teens Dodrupchen was already skilled in many texts of the Middle Way, the Perfection of Wisdom, Valid Cognition, and the New Translation Schools' explanations of the *Kālachakra Tantra* and the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*, as well as the Great Completeness [i.e., rDzogs chen], his own unique specialty." (Fourteenth Dalai Lama 2006b: 249.)

¹⁷³ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 79.5. There would appear to be an error in the text, because during the earth-dog year (1898–9) 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma would have been thirty-three. It is possible that bSod-nams nyi-ma meant the previous dog year, the fire-dog year of 1886, when 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was twenty-two years old by Tibetan reckoning. The earlier date would have been while 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po was still alive, a possible reason for Mi-pham's presence at rDzong-gsar.

¹⁷⁴ It is not specified what he studied with Mi-pham. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma composed two short panegyrics in Mi-pham's honour (JTNs vol.1: 218–19).

¹⁷⁵ *me ri*. According to 'numerical synonymy' (*grangs kyi mngon brjod*), as explained in texts such as *Grangs kyi mngon brjod kyi rnam bshad*, the word "fire" (*me*) represents three and "mountain" (*ri*)

full text is preserved in Mi-pham’s collected writings with the title *Kun mkhyen mi pham rin po ches rdo grub sprul sku ’jigs med bstan pa’i nyi mar zhal gdams bslab bya gngang ba*.¹⁷⁶ Halfway through, we meet with the following statement: “If the blazing fire is not blown out by the wind, then at thirty-five you will uphold your own tradition (*rang lugs*) from the lineage of the past [masters]...etc.”¹⁷⁷ This puzzled ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma at first, as he felt he was already following “the positions of the Omniscient father and son” (*kun mkhyen yab sras kyi phyogs*) [i.e., Klong-chen rab-’byams and ’Jigs-med gling-pa]. Still, according to bSod-nams nyi-ma, at the predicted age ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma reaffirmed his commitment:

Later, when [’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma] was thirty-four,¹⁷⁸ one day he spontaneously thought that he must study the *bKa’ brgyad bde gshegs ’dus chen* and so read it from beginning to end. This acted as a catalyst through which he realized that, in the past, his understanding had been influenced by the New Tradition (*gsar phyogs*), and not based purely on his own tradition of the Ancient Translations (*snga ’gyur*). He saw that there were many crucial distinctions which he had not previously understood and felt a desire—a hundred times stronger than any he had known before—to study the texts of the Old Tradition. Then, from the age of about forty, it was as if New and Old reversed their positions of above and below, and he practised only his own tradition of the rNying-ma.¹⁷⁹

bSod-nams nyi-ma reports that Mi-pham eventually grew satisfied with ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s reformation. In a conversation with Dug-tsha sprul-sku of

represents seven. A-lags gZan-dkar (personal communication, 2014) says that when two numbers are combined, the first number could signify the units and the second number the tens, so that *me ri* would be read as seventy-three. Here, however, it is the opposite, as noted in Thondup 1996: 241.

¹⁷⁶ MPP vol. 27: 281–283; MPc vol. 32: 687–689. The text has 74 lines or 37 ślokas. My translation appears in Pearcey 2018.

¹⁷⁷ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 81: me ’bar ba de rlung gis ma bskyod na| so lngar gong^a brgyud pa’i rang lugs ’dzin| zhes sogs... (Cf. MPP, vol. 27: 281.5/MPc vol. 32: 687.5: so lngar *gegs grol* brgyud pa’i rang lugs ’dzin|)

¹⁷⁸ *dgung grangs so lnga’i dus su* literally means “at the age of thirty-five” but this is by the Tibetan reckoning. It is therefore the equivalent of “in his thirty-fifth year” or “at the age of thirty-four” by the Western count.

¹⁷⁹ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 81f.: phis su dgung grangs so lnga’i dus su| nyin gcig rgyu rkyen ci yang med par bka’ brgyad bde gshegs ’dus chen de la gcig blta dgos snyam pa byung ste der cha tshang zhig gzigs| des rkyen ’dra mo zhig byas te| sngar rang gi go ba de gsar phyogs dang bsra bsres zhig las| snga ’gyur gyi [82] rang lugs kho na ma yin pa dang| sngar ma go ba’i gnad kyi khyad par mang po yod pa mthong| sngar las brgya ’gyur gyis mnying ma’i dpe cha la blta ’dod byung| de nas dgung grangs bzhi bcu tsam na gsar mnying steng ’og log song ba bzhin| mnying ma’i rang lugs kho na nyams bzhes mdzad pa yin gsungs|

rDi-phug, Mi-pham compares 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's earlier gSar-ma

allegiance to the temporary straying of a watchdog (*sgo khyi*):¹⁸⁰

[Dug-tsha] sprul-sku told Lama Mi-pham that he had thought of going to see rDo-grub sprul-sku, but that because he was said to be a dGe-lugs-pa and his way would therefore differ from their own Sa-skya and rNying-ma traditions, he decided not to go. To this, [Mi-pham] said, "Oh, he is certainly not. Imagine a watchdog that is separated from its master. After some time, it might forget its owner. Yet were they to be reunited, the dog would recognize its owner and never stray again. It is like that: although he was slightly affected by the gSar-ma, now he is a real rNying-ma[-pa], I swear, and it would be good for you to visit him."¹⁸¹

This exchange indicates that Dug-tsha sprul-sku regarded the Sa-skya and rNying-ma to be closely aligned in their views but considered the dGe-lugs as philosophically distant from both. When Mi-pham suggests that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was "slightly affected by the gSar ma" (*gsar zhad cung zad re yod*) in the past, he appears to use the term "gSar-ma" to refer mainly to the dGe-lugs. Most lists of teachers found in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's biographies suggest that the major dGe-lugs influence in his early life was 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags. However, he also studied *all* traditions with 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po.¹⁸² Mi-pham's opposition to 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags is well attested and has been discussed above.¹⁸³ It is possible that Mi-pham simply objected to any influence 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags had on 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. Perhaps it is also relevant that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-

¹⁸⁰ The term *sgo khyi* signifies a dog that is owned, but not fully domesticated, since Tibetan dogs were almost always kept outside (at the door—hence the name). This analogy is omitted in Tulku Thondup's account (Tulku Thondup 1996: 242).

¹⁸¹ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 82f.: sprul skus bla mar zhus pa| khong rdo grub sprul sku'i mdun der geig 'gro bsam ste| de tshang dge lugs pa red zer 'dug gi| de yin na rang re [83] sa rnying gnyis dang lugs tha dad red pas 'gro mi bsam gyi zhus par| 'o de ni min nges pa yin| dper na sgo khyi tsho yin na bdag po dang bral nas yun ring lon song skabs bdag po de brjed 'gro yang| physis su bdag po dang phrad na bdag po ngos zin nas gtan du mi g.yel ba bzhin| sngon chad gsar zhad cung zad re yod kyang| da ni rnying ma ngo ma lha min na| khyod kyang der song na bzang gsungs zhes...

¹⁸² See bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 44.2f. The author gives his name as 'Gya-ba dge-bshes mDo-sngags. The same text describes 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po as a lord of buddha families (*rigs kyi bdag po*) and writes (75.1) that he transmitted to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma "infinite textual traditions from Sa-skya, dGe-lugs, bKa'-brgyud, rNying-ma and so on, without sectarian bias, as well as a stream of empowerments, transmissions and instructions from the eight chariots of the practice lineage." (sa dge bka' rnying sogs ris su ma chad pa'i gzhung lugs rab 'byams dang| sgrub brgyud shing rta brgyad kyi dbang lung man ngag gi rgyun).

¹⁸³ Beginning on page 42.

nyi-ma's crisis of allegiance (1900–1905) coincided with 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags's death (in 1902).

Later in life—but the biographical sources do not specify precisely when—'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma fell seriously ill. bSod-nams nyi-ma attributes this to an evil spirit (*rgyal 'gong*) based in the sNyi valley (*snyi lung*). The same spirit, he says, also troubled bDud-'joms gling-pa:

In the sNyi valley there was a *rgyal 'gong* spirit who had been a minister (*mi sna bo che*) of the Myang clan with perverse aspirations in the past and had been liberated by the great *ācārya* [i.e., Padmasambhava]. He had troubled ['Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma]'s father, the great treasure-revealer, and had also shown extreme hostility to his heirs and their lineage. On one occasion, while the Lord [i.e., 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma] was teaching the Dharma, the spirit suddenly unleashed a fierce wind. This affected 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma physically, making him ill and unable to move. His brother, the supreme incarnation Padma rdo-rje,¹⁸⁴ who maintained a perfect lifestyle and was learned and disciplined by character, was then instructed to take responsibility for the monastery, and thereafter maintained the seat accordingly.¹⁸⁵

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma moved into a hermitage, some distance from rDo-grub Monastery.¹⁸⁶ Here, he remained until his death in 1926. He continued to teach but became difficult to meet. Prospective disciples went to great lengths to secure an audience with him or receive direct instruction. Tshul-khrims bzang-po (alias sPrul-sku Tshul-lo, 1884–c.1957),¹⁸⁷ for example, became a scribe, copying

¹⁸⁴ Sprul-sku Padma rdo-rje (1867–1934) was considered to be an incarnation of Mar-pa lo-tsa-ba. As noted above, it would appear that this son of bDud-'joms gling-pa has been conflated with the similarly named mKhan-po Padma badzra in some secondary sources.

¹⁸⁵ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002: 92f.: sngon slob dpon chen pos myang mi sna bo che bsgral ba smon lam log pas snyi lung gi rgyal 'gong du gyur ba des| yab rje gter chen gyi sku dus nas bar chad brtsams 'dug pas| khong yab sras brgyud pa dang bcas pa la shin tu gnag pa'i stabs kyis| rje 'dis chos khrid gsung bzhin pa'i skabs shig na rlung gi 'tshubs ma drag po zhig glo bur byung ste| de sku lus la phog pa'i rkyen 'dra mo zhig byas te| sku khams mi bde ba'i bsnyun gzahir song nas| gnas gzhan du phebs bzhud gang yang mdzad ma nus par| rje nyid [93] kyi gcung mchog sprul padma rdo rje zhes mkhas shing btsun pa'i ngang tshul gyi rnam thar mchog la gnas pa zhig mchis pa de la bstan dgon gyi khur bzhes dgos zhes bka' bab pa bzhin gdan sa bskyangs|

¹⁸⁶ According to Tulku Thondup (1996: 242) the hermitage was “about two miles from Dodrupchen Monastery.”

¹⁸⁷ Tshul-khrims bzang-po belonged to Shugs-'byung Monastery, which is located in the rDo valley, between 15 and 20 miles from rDo-grub monastery. Tshul-khrims bzang-po's writings, which include several works based on instructions received from 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma exist in two editions: a xylograph edition (TZa) in eight volumes and a modern edition (TZb) published in 2014 in 16 volumes. Neither version includes a biography. Arguillère 2007 includes some extracts from Tshul-khrims bzang-po's instruction manual (*khriḡ yig*) on the *dGongs pa zang thal* cycle of rDzogs-chen

texts for 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's personal library.¹⁸⁸ g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol never met 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma directly, but received instructions indirectly via gTer-ston bSod-rgyal.¹⁸⁹

In the later part of his life, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma collaborated on several projects with gTer-ston bSod-rgyal, a prolific treasure-revealer and teacher to the Thirteenth Dalai Lama. The pair drafted an explanation of *gter ma*,¹⁹⁰ and gTer-ston bSod-rgyal himself helped to transcribe 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's second **Guhyagarbha* commentary. gTer-ston bSod-rgyal also transmitted teachings from 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma to g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol, who often noted

practice entitled *Kun bzang dgongs pa zang thal gyi khrid yig skal bzang re skong* (TZa vol. 1: 11–306; TZb vol. 1, 1–329) and Arguillère 2016 includes a full translation and analysis of the same text. Another rDzogs-chen instruction manual by Tshul-khrims bzang-po, entitled *rDzogs pa chen po'i khrid yig kun bzang dgongs rgyan* (TZa vol. 2 (kha): 287–364; TZb vol. 5, 287–344) is translated in Wallace, forthcoming.

¹⁸⁸ Thondup 1996: 246.

¹⁸⁹ Although Chos-dbyings rang-grol came close to a direct encounter on one occasion, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's health suddenly deteriorated, and the meeting was cancelled. This was when bSod-rgyal and 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma were on the point of collaborating to compose a set of commentaries to the seventeen tantras (*rgyud bcu bdun*) of rDzogs chen. According to bSod-nams nyi-ma:

Sometime later, Bla-ma Nyag-bla persistently requested Rin-po-che saying, “You must compose a commentary on the seventeen tantras (*rgyud bcu bdun*).” Then [in response] he said that [Nyag-bla] should create the outline (*sa bcad*) and he would write the commentary. Bla-ma Nyag-bla thought that as he was a regent (*rgyal tshab*) of Gu-ru Padma[sambhava], he should be capable of creating the outline, so he agreed. Then Rin-po-che went to gSer-stod rdzong where the two of them discussed the composition of the commentary on the seventeen tantras. Bla-ma g.Yu-khog said that he too arrived at that time, and although Bla-ma Nyag-bla had said that he would be able to meet Rin-po-che, as Rin-po-che's illness became more serious, he was not able to see him. He was filled with intense regret and said, “The merit of Tibet in general is weak, and how could the rNying-ma, in particular, have such [mis]fortune? My own karma must be exceedingly feeble!”

(110.3f.: de'i rjes tsam na bla ma nyag blas| rin po che la khyed kyis rgyud bcu bdun gyi 'grel pa zhis brtsam dgos zhes nan tan gyi bskul ma mdzad skabs| sa bcad de khyed kyis zhog dang| 'grel ba de khong gis bri gsungs par| bla ma nyag blas khong gu ru pad+ma'i rgyal tshab cig red pas sa bcad cig 'jog thub dgos rgyu red snyam nas lags so zhus pa yin gsungs| de nas rin po che gser stod rdzong gnas su gdan phebs mdzad [111] nas| khong rnam gnyis kyis bcu bdun rgyud kyi 'grel ba rtsom rgyu bka' bgros gnang| bla ma g.yu khog tshang gis de dus nga yang yar byon nas| bla ma nyag blas rin po che dang zhal gtug rgyu byas yod par| rin po che'i sku bsnyung tshab je cher song nas byon ma thub| spyir bod bsod nams chung| khyad par mying ma la de 'dra'i kha rje ga la yod| bdag kyang las skal shin tu dman zhes thugs dra ga [sic] po gnang bar mdzad do||)

¹⁹⁰ i.e., *gTer gyi rnam bshad*, translated in Tulku Thondup 1986.

them down.¹⁹¹ More significantly, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's inaccessibility increased the need for written correspondence. Many of his rDzogs-chen works are epistolary responses to questions.

4.2 His Writings

In a recent edition, published in Chengdu in 2003, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's writings fill seven volumes.¹⁹² This collection includes his most famous works, the **Guhyagarbha* commentary *Rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig*¹⁹³ and the treatise on *dhāraṇī*, *gZungs kyi rnam bshad*.¹⁹⁴ The latter was singled out for praise for its originality. A-skong mkhan-chen Blo-bzang rdo-rje reports A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros as saying:

These days, those at the [rDo-]grub camp (*sgar*) say that *sGyu 'phrul spyi don mdzod lde* is their guru's special teaching, and it is indeed wonderful. Still, if you compare it with and examine the texts of past commentators on the *sGyu 'phrul*, although there was none quite like it, many came close. Truly, the work which has unsurpassed features of erudition is rDo-grub Rin-po-che's *gZungs kyi rnam bshad*. If you say that this is an excellent composition not produced even by 'Jam-mgon bla-ma [Tsong-kha-pa] and his heirs, then other people will not hear of it. However, it is an unsurpassed wonder, an excellent composition the likes of which even they did not reveal in the past.¹⁹⁵

Despite such commendation, the text's innovations worried 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. According to A-skong mkhan-po, he was reluctant at first to release the

¹⁹¹ See Chapter Four for a discussion of the reliability of one such teaching.

¹⁹² See JTNs in bibliography for full details.

¹⁹³ *dPal gsang ba'i snying po'i rgyud kyi spyi don nyung ngu'i ngag gis rnam par 'byed pa rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig* (JTNg vol. 2: 3–191; JTNs vol. 3: 1–206). This is studied in Garson 2004. An English translation by Lama Chönam and Sangye Khandro appears in Dodrupchen Jigme Tenpa'i Nyima 2010.

¹⁹⁴ On the *gZungs kyi rnam bshad* see Gyatso 1992. She describes the text as a “brilliant and stimulating study.” (Gyatso 1992: 196).

¹⁹⁵ AK vol. 4. 38: deng sang grub sgar ba tshos| sgyu 'phrul spyi don mdzod lde 'di khong tsho'i bla ma'i mkhas pa'i khyad chos yin zer tshod red de| 'di yang ngo mtshar che mod| 'on kyang 'di la sngon gyi sgyu 'phrul pa dag gi yig cha mang po yod pa rnam gung bsgrigs te dpyad na 'di tsam ma thon kyang| 'di dang phyogs nye ba re bdag gis kyang thon las che yang| de bas rdo grub rin po che'i mkhas pa'i khyad chos bla na med pa de gzungs kyi rnam bshad 'di yin| 'di ni 'jam mgon bla ma yab sras kyi kyang ma thon pa'i legs bshad zhig yod byas na gzhan gyi rna bar mi 'gro yang| don la 'di ni sngar de dag gis kyang ma gsungs pa'i legs bshad ngo mtshar bla na med pa yin zhes... The principal student of A-mdo dge-bshes, mDo sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, whose writings are discussed in Chapter Five, also composed a panegyric on the *Explanation of Dhāraṇī: gZungs kyi rnam bshad la bstod pa* (DC vol.3: 57-58).

text, and withheld it because “no one else in Tibet had explained the topic in such a way before” (*sngan chad bod ’dir sus kyang ’di ltar ma bshad pa zhig red pas*). Askong himself regards the text as unprecedented. He describes it as something which “had not been composed by any scholar of the New or Ancient traditions in this Cool Land [of Tibet] in the past, from the great Mañjuśrī ‘father and sons’ [i.e., Tsongkha-pa and his main disciples] down to Gung-thang bsTan-pa’i-sgron-me.”¹⁹⁶

bSod-nams nyi-ma claims that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s shift of allegiance is reflected in the differences between his two **Guhyagarbha* commentaries.¹⁹⁷ bSod-nams nyi-ma explains that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma wrote the second text, *Rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig*, in 1916¹⁹⁸ after he became convinced that his earlier commentary,¹⁹⁹ completed in 1886,²⁰⁰ was tainted by gSar-ma views:

When Bla-ma Gang-rnam was appointed as the instructor (*mkhan po*) for the *Māyājāla* (*sgyu ’phrul*), he said, “If I must be the *Guhyagarbha* instructor, then you must compose a clear and comprehensible commentary.” In response, [’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma] made a promise. He said that as the overview he had written earlier, *Legs bshad dga’ ston*, had been contaminated by gSar-ma mantra, he would write another, explaining the uncommon, profound points of the Ancient Translations. Then, when the instructor offered a beautiful dharma conch, a fine

¹⁹⁶ AK vol. 4. 38f.: bka’ drin can nyid kyi zhal nas kyang| dgong lo re gnyis par gzugs sku’i mdzad pa bsdus pa’i snga gong lo kha shas na drung yig pa bzhag nas| ji ltar thob pa’i tshul bshad pa man mtha’ rdzogs par gnang skabs kho bos sngon mo zhig nas ’di bris kyang| sngan chad bod ’dir sus kyang ’di ltar ma bshad pa zhig red pas| don la ’byor min brtags pa’i phyir du mjug da lta’i bar du bzung ba yin kyang| da ni de las gzhan go rgyu yang mi ’dug mi lo lon gyi bya ba rnam mtha’ ma rdzogs pa yang srid par bsam nas| da res rang gi mig gis mi mthong bas mjug rdzogs par bri ba’i drung yig pa nyid la las bcol ba yin zhes sngar bod du mi grags pa’i legs bshad yin par gsungs pa de dus kyi drung yig pa’i ngag las rdzun med du thos pa ltar| legs bshad ’di ni sngon chad bsil ljongs ’dir ’jam mgon bdag nyid chen po yab sras nas gung thang bstan pa’i sgron me’i bar sogs gsar rnying gi mkhas pa sus kyang ma mdzad pa’i legs bshad kyi sgo ’phar gsar du phye pa yin...

¹⁹⁷ bSod-nams nyi ma 2002: 107.4f.

¹⁹⁸ The fire-dragon (*me ’brug*) year. See JTNs vol. 3: 205.9

¹⁹⁹ *sGyu ’phrul drwa ba’i rgyud kyi spyi don ngag ’gros su bkod pa legs par bshad pa’i dga’ ston* (JTNg vol. 2: 193–301; JTNs vol. 3: 207–319). In both his commentaries ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma chose to follow the Zur lineage in interpreting the tantra, rather than the lineage of Rong-zom and Klong-chen-pa, as Mi-pham had done. It is possible that the Zur interpretation, with its greater emphasis on the practices of the ‘upper and lower gateways’ (*steng dang ’og gi sgo*), lends itself more readily to comparison with the Highest Yoga Tantras of the gSar-ma schools. Unfortunately, Garson’s recent Ph.D. study covers only the *mDzod kyi lde mig*, and therefore an assessment of gSar ma-influence on the earlier commentary must await future research.

²⁰⁰ JTNs vol. 3: 317f.: rang lo nyer gcig pa sa skyong shing bya’i lo’i zla ba bcu gnyis pa’i dmar [318] phyogs kyi dga’ ba gsum pa la rdzogs par byas...

horse, and gold and silver as the support of a maṇḍala, he composed the overview entitled *mDzod kyi lde mig*.²⁰¹

Tulku Thondup suggests that Mi-pham played a role in encouraging him to revisit the tantra.²⁰² Tshul-khrims bzang-po, in contrast, records that gTer-ston bSod-rgyal both requested and transcribed the new composition.²⁰³ Precisely how the first commentary was “mixed with gSar-ma mantra” is unclear and awaits further investigation. It is similarly uncertain whether “gSar-ma” here is code for dGe-lugs (as it was in Mi-pham’s statement to Dug-tsha sprul-sku cited above) or refers to a broader doctrinal category.²⁰⁴

²⁰¹ bSod-nams nyi-ma 2002:107.2f.: ’di skabs shig na bla ma gang rnam sgyu ’phrul gyi mkhan por bsko bzhag mdzad| de’i tshe khong gis zhus pa| ngas gsang snying mkhan po dgos na| khyed kyis ’grel ba kha gsal la go bde ba zhis gsungs dgos zhes nan tan gyis bskul skabs| sngar khong gis bris pa’i spyi don legs bshad dga’ ston de sngags gsar ma dang ’dres shor ba ’dra bas| da lan snga ’gyur thun min gyi zab gnad dkrol ba zhis bris kyang chog ces zhal bzhes gngang| de’i tshe mkhan pos| chos dung mdzes ldan [108] dang| rta mchog ’gros ldan| gser dngul beas maṇḍala gyi rten du phul nas| spyi don mdzod kyi lde mig ces pa mdzad|

²⁰² He connects this with the prophetic text in the scroll mentioned above i.e., *Kun mkhyen mi pham rin po ches rdo grub sprul sku ’jigs med bstan pa’i nyi mar zhal gdams bslab bya gngang ba*. See Thondup 1996: 241–42.

²⁰³ *Las rab gling pa’i rnam thar*: 538: 3–4: de’i dbyar gyi zla bar rdo grub dbang thams cad mkhyen pa’i drung du phebs te dpal gsang ba snying po’i spyi don rin chen mdzod kyi lde mig gi brtsam gngang bar bskul zhus dang yi ge pa mdzad nas phyag bris gngang bar mdzad| The actual colophon to the *mDzod kyi lde mig* reads:

In the past, in response to requests from Bla-ma Ye-shes ’od-zer rgya-mtsho, who has the superior wish to benefit the precious rNying-ma doctrine, I wrote an overview (*spyi don*). At that time, I had not yet reached maturity and was not greatly familiar with the tantric scriptures. Therefore, what I wrote was neither comprehensive nor clear. When Kun-dga’ blo-gros, who is disciplined, learned, intelligent, devoted and diligent, used this [commentary] as he taught the tantra, he offered a maṇḍala of white precious material [i.e., silver?] (*rin chen dkar po*), robes in the colour of magnetizing [i.e., red], a swift and comfortable mount whose colour resembles the rising sun, and so on, and made a request with great insistence. In addition, the indisputable great treasure-revealer, who manifested to tame the beings of this age, the awareness-keeper (*vidyādhara*) Las-rab gling-pa, made a request through the garland of his precious speech and assisted in the transcribing. (JTNg vol. 2 189.3f.; JTNs vol. 3, 204f.: sngon chad rnying bstan rin po cher gcig tu sman pa’i lhag bsam can bla ma dam pa ye shes ’od zer rgya mtshos bskul ngor spyi don zhis bris pa de dus rang nyid na tshod ma rdzogs shing rgyud gzhung la ’dris cha chung ba’i skabs yin pas ’dus gsal zhis ma byung ba’i tshul smras pa sogs la brten nas| dad brtson rnam dpyod yangs shing thos bsam gyi nor dang ldan pa’i sdom brtson kun dga’ blo gros kyis rgyud bshad la ngal ba dang len gyi zhabs tog bzang po sgrub skabs| rin chen dkar po dang| gos dbang mdog| myur bde’i bzhon pa char^a ka’i snang ba lta bu’i kha dog can sogs maṇḍala du phul te nan tan chen pos bskul ba dang| rtsod bral dus babs kyi ’gro ’dul sprul pa’i gter ston chen po rig ’dzin las rab gling pa’i bka’ stsal^b rin po che’i phreng bas bskul zhing| yi ge’i grogs dan mdzad pas [190] mtshams sbyar te... ^a JTNs ’char ^b JTNs *bstsal*)

²⁰⁴ According to Tulku Thondup (oral communication, 7 October 2014) Thub-bstan shes-rab rgya-mtsho alias Bla-chung A-pho (1905–1975), a scholar trained at rDzogs-chen monastery who assisted

Although 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma enjoyed a reputation for learning and scholarship,²⁰⁵ he composed no commentaries on any major exoteric treatise such as the “thirteen classic works” that gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba popularised.²⁰⁶ Still, one cannot but be struck by the difference between his collected writings and those of the first rDo-grub-chen incarnation. The works of 'Jigs-med phrin-las 'od-zer (1745–1821) deal almost exclusively with ritual practices, especially those that feature in the *Klong chen snying thig* collection.²⁰⁷ 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, by contrast, displays a much broader range of interests and adopts a scholastic approach to topics not often associated with scholasticism.²⁰⁸ At the same time, he dismisses the dry intellectualism and conceit of some scholar-monks:

These days there are some who pursue study, and yet the more they learn, the more their arrogance increases. They think: “Now I have studied widely. I know the scriptural approach. I am learned in the various collections.” When they see others, who have not amassed comparable learning, they regard them with contempt, thinking: “These people are fools, dullards, simpletons, befuddled and uneducated.” Even when reading texts by fellow scholars, they lack due reverence and devotion for the sacred dharma, and no sooner have they undone the strings of the book-covering than they look upon [the text] with curiosity and wonder, “What have we here?” and “How is this written?”²⁰⁹

bDud-'joms 'Jigs-bral ye-shes rdo-rje in composing his treatise on the fundamental tenets of the rNying-ma school, preferred the earlier commentary. This suggests that the work was not universally regarded as unorthodox.

²⁰⁵ According to Klein, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama has called 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma “the best scholar of the commentarial literature in any of the Tibetan orders.” (Klein 2000: 559)

²⁰⁶ See note 73 above.

²⁰⁷ See JPZ in the Bibliography for details of the most recently published, ten-volume edition. I discuss the *Klong chen snying thig* tradition briefly in the next chapter. The major exception to the above, and the most scholarly of 'Jigs-med phrin-las 'od-zer's writings, is his commentary to 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Yon tan mdzod, rGya mtsho'i chu thigs*, which is divided into two parts: one brief and one in more detail (JPZ vol. 3: 1–576 and vol. 4: 1–822). To my knowledge, there are no surviving writings attributed to the second rDo-grub incarnation, 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs-'byung-gnas.

²⁰⁸ See above for Cabezón's remarks on the characteristics of scholasticism. I discuss 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's scholastic approach to rDzogs-chen theory in the next chapter. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma did write extensively on ritual, particularly on *Klong chen snying thig*, but it forms a much smaller proportion of his total literary output than was the case for his predecessor.

²⁰⁹ JTNs vol. 1, 352: deng sang gi slob gnyer mkhan po kha cig ni ci tsam du thos pa mang ba de tsam du khengs pas dregs te| da ni mang du thos pa gzhung lugs shes pa| sde snod la mkhas pa'o zhes rtog cing| gang zag gzhan thos pa ma bsags pa dag mthong ba na'ang 'di dag ni blun pa rtul ba bus pa glen pa mi mkhas pa yin no zhes khyad du gsod la| mkhas pa gzhan dag gi gzhung lugs shig bklag kyang dam pa'i chos la gus shing don du gnyer ba med bzhin du dang po glegs thag dkrol dus nas 'di'i nang ga 'dra zhig yod| ci 'dra zhig bris 'dug ang snyam nas mtshar ltas ky'i 'du shes bzhag ste| This untitled text is fully translated in Pearcey 2018.

Later in the same text, he criticises enthrallment with scholarly debate or pointless argumentation:

Such scholars think: “When others debate with my own system, they will say such-and-such, so I must reply as follows. . . . But then the opponent will counter with such-and-such a response, so what would be the best reply?” Preoccupied with such thoughts, they feel no pleasure during the day, while sleep evades them at night. Even if sleep should come to them, as they are consumed by such matters even in their dreams, their minds will be perturbed from the very moment of waking. Dismissing the works of the profound path, such as the progressive stages of meditation on *bodhicitta* and compassion, as too easy to understand, they prefer works of sophistry, and when they come across them, think, “Oh, now this I must study!” Opening the volume, they immediately muster all their powers of intellect, and inquire: “What is the meaning of this? Now this is a mere illustration. Is this a refutation? Is this a valid proof? Does this follow logically from the premise? Is there a logical contradiction here?” Scribbling notation about such hair-splitting points, they will pass the best part of the afternoon, their pulse racing and their breath uneven.²¹⁰

This rebuke is possibly directed at the dGe-lugs style education that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma received. Reliance upon debate, and especially upon so-called debate manuals (*yig cha*), is especially prominent in the dGe-lugs system.²¹¹ Moreover, the archetype of the scholar or intellectual in Tibetan literature is arguably the figure of the *dge-bshes*.²¹² Yet, this is not to say that intellectualism is entirely confined to any single school.

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s text on the perils of scholasticism concludes with the claim that the author has some personal experience in such matters (*rnam thar ’di tsho la nyams myong re yod pas*). He was certainly trained in the dGe-lugs tradition and lived at a time when scholasticism among the non-dGe-lugs schools

²¹⁰ Ibid: gzhan zhig dang brtsad na des ’di zer yong| de la ’di zer dgos| des lan ’di ’debs yong| de la ci drag [353] bsam nas bsdad dus nyin blo mi bde| mtshan gnyid mi yong| gal te gnyid zhig byung yang rmi lam tshor de ’dra de dag kho na rmis nas tho rangs sad ’ong dus kyang yid mi bde sing sing ’gro| lam zab mo byang chub kyi sems dang snying rje’i sgom rim lta bu re ’dug na de go sla a’u tsi snyam nas skyur| rtog gei’i gzhung phran re mthong na| ’o ’o de ka la gcig blta dgos zer nas kha phyed| de ma thag shes pa hur phyung ste| ga re de don ldog red dam| gzhi ldog zhig red| dgag pa zhig red dam| sgrub zhig red dam| ’di khyab pa grub bam| ’gal ba ’du’am zhes dran rtog gi spu ris bris bris nas phyi dro tsa na snying phyod phyod glo ba tig tig por ’gro|

²¹¹ Smith (2001, 245) suggested that the codification of these scholastic manuals brought about “a sort of intellectual petrification.”

²¹² The trope of the (often jealous or scheming) *dge-bshes* being outwitted by a simple *yogin* is best exemplified in Mi-la-ras-pa’s encounters with dGe-bshes rTsa-g-phu-ba. For further examples involving dPal-sprul see Smith 2001: 246 and Ricard 2017: 125–126.

expanded. He even witnessed two of his own teachers, Mi-pham and 'Ja- pa mDo-sngags, clash in a high-profile debate. Still, it would not be accurate to describe 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's stance here as one of anti-intellectualism. His writings indicate that, like many figures from Tibetan history, he sought to *transcend* the intellect rather than reject it.²¹³ This point should become clearer in the next chapter, where I examine his rDzogs-chen writings.

5. Conclusion

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma lived in a period when attitudes to scholasticism and sectarian identity transformed. Some of this change was associated with the Ris-med movement. Mi-pham's writings and the rise of scriptural colleges in eastern Tibet redefined what it meant to be a rNying-ma-pa, especially one trained as a scholar. (This was shortly before the increased availability of Go-rams-pa's works contributed to a parallel Sa-skya revival.) As a student of both Mi-pham and one of his key opponents, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was more than just a passive witness to these changes; they affected him directly. Even in his youth, when rival claims surrounded his recognition as a *sprul sku*, he was forced to choose between competing interests. His own monastery of rDo-grub-chen, too, became embroiled in intersectarian controversy. The monastery may also have had a connection with the great dGe-lugs centre of Bla-brang bkra-shis-'khyil. Following 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags's defeat and Mi-pham's response to mKhan-po Dam-chos-'od-zer, rDo-grub monastery came under pressure to conform to Mi-pham's orthodoxy. Still, it held out for several decades. It was not until 1950 that a new scriptural college brought Mi-

²¹³ On the need for such a distinction when discussing the increased scholasticism of the Ris-med period see Dreyfus 2005: 296–7.

pham’s writings into its curriculum. Even after that date, however, dGe-lugs teachers continued to offer instruction.²¹⁴

The biographies describe a critical moment in ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s life: the point when he reaffirmed his allegiance to the rNying-ma school.²¹⁵ The pressure to commit to a supposedly pure form of rNying-ma came from Mi-pham, who had already reshaped the school’s doxographical identity. Questions remain, however, about the extent of gSar-ma (which here might simply mean dGe-lugs) influence upon his writings, especially the role played by ’Ja’-pa mDo-sngags, whose writings do not survive.

²¹⁴ Information provided by A-lags gZan-dkar (personal communication, 2012), who studied there in his youth.

²¹⁵ Even if he did pledge to serve the rNying-ma cause, it is clear from his surviving writings that he did not simply restate Mi-pham’s own views. Nor did he employ the terminology characteristic of Mi-pham’s system when writing on the two truths and philosophical topics. See for example *bDen gnyis kyi rnam par bzhag pa don bzang me tog rgyas pa’i ljon shing* (JTNg vol. 5: 278.2–284.1; JTNs vol. 7: 343–348), which employs the language of debate and betrays some dGe-lugs influence, such as in its definitions of the truths and its citation from lCang-skyā Rol-pa’i rdo-rje’s song *lTa ba’i gsung mgur zab mo* (CRD vol. 4: 385–390)—although we must recall that Mi-pham also wrote a commentary on that song (MPp vol. 4: 826.6–866.3). Moreover, *bDen gnyis kyi rnam par bzhag pa don bzang me tog rgyas pa’i ljon shing* makes no mention of union (*zung ’jug*), which many see as a key characteristic of Mi-pham’s thought. Nevertheless, in the colophon ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma notes that he composed the text on the tenth day (*tshes bcu*) of the month, which is sacred to “Padmasambhava, the *paṇḍita* of Oddiyāna” (JTNg vol. 5: 284.1; JTNs vol. 7: 348.14).

2. Dzogchen Literature and Expert Exegesis

"In many historical periods, the intellectual community is in a scholasticizing mode, worshipping exalted texts from the past which are regarded as containing the completion of all wisdom. Eminence here goes to those persons who make themselves the most impressive guardians of the classics."

*Randall Collins, A Global Theory of Intellectual Change*²¹⁶

"[He] could discern unerringly the intent of the earlier and later Omniscient Ones."

*Tshul-khrims bzang-po, describing 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma*²¹⁷

1. Introduction

The previous chapter introduced the collected writings of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma more generally; this and the following chapter examine his rDzogs-chen corpus in particular.²¹⁸ Before embarking on this analysis, however, I shall briefly outline the history of rDzogs-chen literature from its emergence until 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's own time. Once we possess a clearer sense of what 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma commented upon in his rDzogs-chen writings, we can then investigate *how* he approached his exegetical task.

1.1. The Origins of rDzogs-chen Literature

The precise origins of rDzogs-chen —generally translated as “Great Perfection” or “Great Completion”— are yet to be established.²¹⁹ The term itself

²¹⁶ Collins 1998: 31.

²¹⁷ TZb, vol. 5: 299.

²¹⁸ A full list of the contents of the rDzogs-chen corpus, including a brief synopsis of each text, is provided in Appendix 1.

²¹⁹ This topic is discussed in Karmay 1988 and van Schaik 2004b.

appears to derive from the **Guhyagarbha Tantra*, which is generally dated to the mid-eighth century CE.²²⁰ At first, it signified a more advanced form of the perfection stage (*rdzogs rim*), but later came to denote a third stage beyond both the generation stage (*bskyed rim*) and perfection stage.²²¹ This is the sense in which the term appears in the *Man ngag lta ba'i phreng ba*, traditionally attributed to Padmasambhava.²²² By the tenth century, when gNubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes composed *bSam gtan mig sgron*, rDzogs-chen had become, in the words of Samten Karmay, “a well-established philosophical doctrine” of its own.²²³ This transformation into a distinct tradition began with gNubs Sangs-rgyas ye-shes and continued with members of the Zur clan and others.²²⁴

A strand of early rDzogs-chen thought—representing what David Germano calls the “pristine Great Perfection,” and which later came to be known as the Mind Category (*sems sde*)²²⁵—emphasised the immediate presence of the already awakened mind (*byang chub kyi sems; bodhicitta*).²²⁶ Germano notes that the followers of this tradition came to adopt a “rhetoric of absence,” through which they effectively denied the validity of the generation and perfection phase structure of Mahāyoga.²²⁷ Van Schaik points out that this early “pristine” form of rDzogs-chen

²²⁰ Germano 1994: 214–215 provides all four instances where the term occurs in the **Guhyagarbha*. On the **Guhyagarbha* in general see Dorje 1987: 13–127.

²²¹ See Germano 1994: 223. Germano also refers (*ibid*, 224) to two occasions in the writings of Klong-chen rab-'byams where *rdzogs-chen* is used in the sense of great or greater perfection stage (*rdzogs rim chen po*).

²²² See van Schaik 2004b: 170–171. The text is translated in Karmay 1988: 152–163 and Padmakara Translation Group 2015.

²²³ Karmay 1988: 11. Van Schaik (2004b: 202) argues that rDzogs-chen did not exist as a tradition in the ninth and tenth centuries, but “continued right through to the beginning of the eleventh century to be seen as a way of approaching Mahāyoga ritual and meditative practice, rather than a distinct approach.”

²²⁴ *Ibid*.

²²⁵ The threefold classification of *sde gsum*, i.e., the three categories of Mind (*sems*), Space (*klong*) and Pith Instructions (*man ngag*), is thought to date from the twelfth century. See Kapstein 2008: 283.

²²⁶ See van Schaik 2004b: 165.

²²⁷ Germano 1994: 207. On the rhetoric of absence see *ibid*, 209. As in Dignāga’s theory of language, Germano says, this absence is “utterly defined by what it has excluded — it is not a simple absence, but rather an absence of precise systems.”

was only ever a strand and never dominated the field.²²⁸ rDzogs-chen always accommodated a ritual element, he contends, “first in the form of Mahāyoga and later in the specialised tantric meditations of the Seminal Heart [i.e., *sNying-thig*].”²²⁹ In any case, from the fourteenth century onwards, it was the sNying-thig tradition that came to dominate rDzogs-chen literature and practice, largely on the back of the extraordinary career of Klong-chen rab-'byams.²³⁰

1.2. The Heart-Essence (*sNying-thig*)

The Heart-Essence eclipsed earlier forms of rDzogs-chen and absorbed much of their teaching. It also introduced new elements. This is not the place to discuss early rDzogs-chen history in detail; others have already done so.²³¹ It will be useful, however, to summarize some key features of Heart-Essence doctrine. Germano notes, for example, that the Heart-Essence differs from previous forms of rDzogs-

²²⁸ van Schaik 2004b: 203.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ On the life and work of Klong-chen rab-'byams see Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, Smith 2001: 33–35, Nyoshul Khenpo 2005 and Arguillère 2007. Smith (2001: 16) claims that rNying ma philosophy “is Klong chen rab 'byams pa.”

²³¹ Germano 1994: 272–275, for example, identifies three distinct phases in the development of sNying thig as a system of rDzogs-chen thought and practice:

1. An **initial period** of formation from the early eleventh to twelfth century. This phase was “marked by the longer texts (such as the *sGra thal 'gyur* and *Rig pa rang shar* tantras) and two main collections of texts (*The Seventeen Tantras* and the *Bi ma snying thig*) gradually taking shape over the course of decades via a number of authors.” Germano suggests that these authors drew upon various sources: “new modernist [i.e. *gsar ma*] doctrines, indigenous Tibetan religious concepts, innovative strains of the Great Perfection such as in the Space Series [i.e., *klong sde*] and other unknown influences.”

2. An **intermediate period**, from the early thirteenth to the early fourteenth century. During this time, Germano says, the tradition began “to take stable form and move into wider patterns of circulation with Me long rdo rje [1243–1303] and Kumārādza [1266–1343].” As evidence of its success, Germano cites the fact that the third Karma-pa, Rang-byung rdo-rje (1284–1339), was deeply involved in the transmission and study of sNying-thig. Germano highlights especially the important role played by the *mKha' 'gro snying thig*, which enjoyed “great popularity in the fourteenth century.”

3. The **final period**, Germano says, occurred during the fourteenth century when Klong-chen Rab-'byams “systematized and codified these literary and oral traditions into a complex, yet clear architectonic structure.” This period also coincided with a flourishing of scholasticism more widely in Tibet.

Higgins (2013: 32–33) has presented seven arguments in support of the theory that sNying-thig has its origins even earlier, in the royal dynastic period.

chen through its focus on “the spontaneous dynamics (*lhun grub*) of the Ground.”²³² He identifies four major points of departure from earlier doctrine:²³³ 1) The first point concerns narrative and mythology. The Heart-Essence articulates what he calls “a deeply phenomenological and partially mythic overarching narrative” concerning the origination and ultimate goal (telos) of the human world that serves to structure the tradition.²³⁴ 2) It introduces the “visionary practices” of Thod-rgal (see below) as a form of rDzogs-chen meditation in a way that relates to the evolutionary narrative. 3) It incorporates a wide range of tantric practices as auxiliary or supporting elements, but in a relatively simple form when compared to the gSar-ma traditions. 4) It injects “a far greater range of tantric doctrines into its discourse,”²³⁵ from subtle body theory to the set of hundred peaceful and wrathful deities.²³⁶ Some more conservative followers rejected such innovations.²³⁷ But despite their objections, the newer elements endured.

The twofold division of rDzogs-chen practice (and theory) into Khregs-chod (often translated as Breakthrough)²³⁸ and Thod-rgal (translated as Leap-over or Direct Crossing)²³⁹ also features in later discourse. Khregs-chod is best defined as the direct cutting through (*chod pa*) of any resistance (*khregs*) to pure awareness in

²³² Germano 1994: 278.

²³³ Germano 1994: 280.

²³⁴ Germano 1994: 280. The *human* world is, in fact, but one part of this narrative.

²³⁵ Germano 1994: 280.

²³⁶ Even after these developments, Germano 1994: 280 notes, sNying thig remained “relatively desexualized and aestheticized in comparison to the often shockingly crude discourses of the modernists’ tantras and the Nyingma’s own Mahāyoga tradition.” In addition to the four points listed here the Heart Essence’s many innovations necessitated a new technical vocabulary. This new lexicon includes such terms as *gzhi snang*, *gdangs/ mdangs*, *thod rgal*, *khregs chod*, *ru shan*, etc. (*ibid.*) The definition and redefinition of such terms is a constant feature of commentarial literature and even practical instruction manuals (*vig cha*). mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, for example, wrote a commentary on some key terms, *rDzogs pa chen po’i tha snyad ’ga’i ’grel ba*, to which we will refer in Chapter Five.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 278.

²³⁸ See Germano 1992: 841–844 for a definition and discussion of previous translations. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma explains the term *khregs chod* in JTNs vol. 2: 4 and JTNs vol. 2: 211.

²³⁹ See Germano 1992: 844–846 for a discussion of the term, which the author renders as Direct Transcendence.

the form of delusion and ordinary thoughts.²⁴⁰ Thod-rgal is the visionary practice through which the three buddha-bodies (*trikāya*; *sku gsum*) are brought directly into one's own experience.²⁴¹ While Thod-rgal includes most of what is particular to the Heart-Essence,²⁴² it also shares elements of thought and practice with gSar-ma tantra, as mentioned above. Khregs-chod, which incorporates older elements of rDzogs-chen,²⁴³ has arguably less in common with other forms of tantra.

In recent times, Heart-Essence authors produced many treatises that focus exclusively on Khregs-chod.²⁴⁴ Thod-rgal writings typically take the form of instruction manuals and present the practice as an advanced technique that is based upon a grounding in Khregs-chod. It is often said that Thod-rgal requires greater effort than Khregs-chod because of its prescribed postures and gazes.²⁴⁵ We note thus a difference in the rhetoric of the two forms: Khregs-chod is characterised as a method of naturalness and (almost) effortless simplicity, while Thod-rgal is a powerful, esoteric technique requiring greater discipline and skill.

²⁴⁰ See, for example, the following definition from *bsTan pa'i nyi ma'i zhal lung*, 4b: khregs chod zer ba'i don man ngag bzhag thabs bzhi lta bu'i sgo nas ka dag gi rang ngo bskyang ba na 'khrul pa thams cad rtsa dres ma'i thag pa mes tshig pa bzhin du gzung 'dzin gyi rtog pa thams cad khregs kyis sam thad kar ram dum bu dum bur gcod par byed pas na khregs chodl

²⁴¹ *bsTan pa'i nyi ma'i zhal lung*, 4b: thod rgal zer ba'i don gcig char ba ste rang bzhin gshis kyi sku gsum lam snang du gcig char du byed pa'oll

²⁴² Germano 1994: 287. Scholars have speculated about the possible sources of, or inspirations for, Thod rgal. Germano (*ibid.*, 288) believes tantric systems based on “clear light” (*'od gsal*) had an impact, as well as the Highest Yoga tantra with its emphasis on the body. He also speculates (*ibid.*, 289) that an emphasis on contemplating the sky to evoke a sensation of vast emptiness in early forms of rDzogs-chen might have caused some practitioners to experience “strange lights”.

²⁴³ Germano 1994: 287.

²⁴⁴ The rDzogs-chen corpus of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma reflects this apparent literary preference for Khregs-chod over Thod-rgal: while the first 11 of the 22 texts in the corpus appear under the heading (in the JTNg edition) of Khregs-chod Advice (*khregs chod gdams pa*), the next section is not *Thod-rgal* Advice but rDzogs-chen Advice (*rdzogs chen gdams pa*) in general, and there is no section (or text) dedicated exclusively to Thod-rgal. Moreover, several of the most popular works on rDzogs-chen in the last two centuries have been Khregs-chod texts, e.g., *'Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i khregs chod lta ba'i glu dbyangs sa lam ma lus myur du bgrod pa'i rtsal ldan mkha' lding gshog rlabs* by Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol and *mKhas pa śrī'i rgyal po'i khyad chos* by rDza dPal-sprul.

²⁴⁵ 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (JTNs vol. 2: 3) characterizes Khregs-chod as profound (*zab pa*) and Thod-rgal as vast (*rgya che ba*). He specifies that both are necessary to attain the ultimate fruition, but that Khregs-chod must precede Thod-rgal (go 'phang de lta bu sgrub pa la zab pa khregs chod dang rgya che ba thod rgal gyi lam gnyis zung 'brel du nyams su blangs nas nyams myong mthar dbyung ba zhig dgos la| de'i nang nas kyang slob rim gyi dang po khregs chod nas 'jug dgos pas...).

In his historical survey of Heart-Essence, Germano places its final period in the fourteenth century, effectively dismissing later developments.²⁴⁶ This reflects his view (which, in turn, echoes Samten Karmay) that the eighteenth-century *Klong chen snying thig*²⁴⁷ revelation of 'Jigs-med gling-pa did little to advance rDzogs-chen theory, but simply placed greater emphasis on tantric, ritualistic elements.²⁴⁸ Undoubtedly, the *Klong chen snying thig* includes a large amount of ritual material, accounting for most texts in the five 'root volumes' (*rtsa pod*) of a recent edition.²⁴⁹ Yet, as van Schaik has shown, other cycles, such as the *Bla ma dgongs 'dus* of Sangs-rgyas gling-pa (1340–1396), already introduced Mahāyoga-type ritual elements into the Heart Essence before 'Jigs-med gling-pa.²⁵⁰ Moreover, as I argue below, recent followers of the *Klong chen snying thig* introduced previously neglected elements of scholasticism into rDzogs-chen theory.

1.3. *Klong chen snying thig*

'Jigs-med gling-pa compiled the *Klong chen snying thig* following a series of visions that occurred during two periods of retreat, the first between 1756 and 1759 and the second between 1759 and 1762.²⁵¹ From 1764 onwards, he transmitted his

²⁴⁶ See note 231 above. Higgins also believes that post-14th century treatments of rDzogs-chen philosophy were “strongly indebted to antecedent works, especially the summaries of *Klong chen pa*.” (Higgins 2013: 55)

²⁴⁷ The term *Klong chen snying thig* is generally translated as “Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse”. Germano (1994: 293) believes the name might have been a “surreptitious and perhaps unconscious” reference to *Klong-chen rab-'byams* and takes issue with Dorje and Kapstein (in Dudjom 1991 vol.2, 243) for making the implicit explicit in their translation as “Innermost Spirituality of Longcenpa”. Van Schaik (2004a: 10) notes the popularity of the Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse: “In the nineteenth century, after Jigme Lingpa’s death, the *Longchen Nyingtig* became the most popular of the treasure cycles, becoming as close to normative as any set of practices within the heterogeneous Nyingma milieu.”

²⁴⁸ Germano 1994: 291–292: “I am struck by how much more ritualistic the *kLong chen snying thig* seems in comparison to *kLong chen rab 'byams pa's* own Seminal Heart writings.” See also Karmay 1988: 213.

²⁴⁹ *Klong chen snying thig rtsa pod*. 5 vols. Boudhanath, Kathmandu: Shechen Publications, 1994. The contents of the *Klong chen snying thig* revelation are discussed in Goodman 1983.

²⁵⁰ van Schaik 2004a: 41.

²⁵¹ See Goodman 1992: 138–146 and Gyatso 1998. Goodman dates the key vision inspiring the revelation to 6 December 1757.

revelation to close disciples.²⁵² Foremost among these was the First rDo-grub-chen, 'Jigs-med phrin-las 'od-zer, whom he appointed custodian of the teaching (*chos bdag*). Together, the two secured the patronage of the queen of sDe-dge, Tshe-dbang lha-mo (d. 1812). Her support led to the successful propagation of the *Klong chen snying thig* in Eastern Tibet, even after 'Jigs-med gling-pa's death in 1798.²⁵³ Another of 'Jigs-med gling-pa's principal disciples, 'Jigs-med rgyal-ba'i-myu-gu (1765–1843), transmitted the *Klong chen snying thig* to rDza dPal-sprul. The latter's writings, especially *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung*,²⁵⁴ achieved widespread popularity and contributed to the spread of the tradition.²⁵⁵ dPal-sprul combined the *Klong chen snying thig* with elements of the dGe-mang reform movement.²⁵⁶ And the resulting blend of rDzogs-chen and scholasticism then continued with such influential figures as sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1829–1901/2), A-'dzom 'brug-pa 'Gro-'dul dpa'-bo rdo-rje (1842–1924), mKhan-po Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang and g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol (1871–1952). These masters produced exegetical writings on the contents of the *Klong chen snying thig* collection, but especially its preliminary practices (*sngon 'gro*).

The rDzogs-chen section of the *Klong chen snying thig* contains other texts beside these revelations. It also features non-revelatory texts for which 'Jigs-med gling-pa claims authorship, most importantly the guidance manual (*khrid yig*), *Ye shes bla ma*.²⁵⁷ Van Schaik, who has studied the corpus in some detail, identifies a

²⁵² Goodman 1992: 144f.

²⁵³ Critical to this was the publishing of 'Jigs-med gling-pa's collected writings at sDe-dge printing house. On the life of Tshe-dbang lha-mo, including the discrediting of certain statements by earlier scholars, see Ronis 2011.

²⁵⁴ Translated in Patrul Rinpoche 1998.

²⁵⁵ The full lineage of transmission is discussed in Tulku Thondup 1996.

²⁵⁶ Smith 2001: 24: "The results of this convergence were to have a profound influence on ensuing Tibetan intellectual history."

²⁵⁷ *Ye shes bla ma* is discussed in van Schaik 2004a: 98–102, and an outline of the text's contents is given in *ibid.*, 313–317. Germano (1994: 294) is rather dismissive of the text: "My cursory examination of this text indicates that it is a non-innovative and fairly perfunctory summary of older

tension between two types of rhetoric—gradualism and simultaneism—within the different texts. He suggests that 'Jigs-med gling-pa resolves this apparent dialectic in his non-revelatory compositions, which place greater emphasis on gradual progress. As I discuss in Chapter Four, 'Jigs-med gling-pa also introduced elements of scholasticism into his rDzogs-chen writings. Later writers, such as 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma and g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol, then elaborate upon these elements even further.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was among the first to comment on the rDzogs-chen section of the *Klong chen snying thig*. He did so shortly before Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang,²⁵⁸ g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol²⁵⁹ and others. For these commentators, however, 'Jigs-med gling-pa's writings command similar status to the writings of Klong-chen rab-'byams and may thus be described as foundational, if not canonical.

1.4. Canonicity and Textual Authority

Scholars have long noted the fact that both the rNying-ma school and the rDzogs-chen tradition possess a complex notion of textual authority or canonicity.²⁶⁰ When the rDzogs-chen tantras emerged in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, those sympathetic to the rNying-ma tradition regarded them as canonical and included them in the Collection of rNying-ma Tantras (*rNying ma rgyud 'bum*). Treasure

materials offering a simplified presentation that comes to be normative.” The title is ambiguous and therefore difficult—if not impossible—to translate: it can be interpreted both as “the wisdom guru” and as “wisdom unsurpassed”. A translation by Sangye Khandro and Lama Chönam (which rather sensibly leaves the title untranslated) was published in 2008 (revised from an earlier version). See Vidyādhara Jigmed Lingpa 2008.

²⁵⁸ Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang's commentary on *Ye shes bla ma* is called *rDzogs pa chen po ye shes bla ma'i spyod don snying thug ma bu'i lde mig kun bzang thugs kyi tikka*.

²⁵⁹ g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol wrote a commentary on *gNas lugs rdo rje'i tshig rkang*, which belongs to the rDzogs-chen section of the *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse*. See YCRa vol. 2: 241–250. (My English translation of this commentary appears on lotsawahouse.org)

²⁶⁰ For a discussion of the “multiple canons of Tibetan religious literature”, including the rNying-ma tantras and various categories of revelation, see Eimer & Germano 2002, especially 199–376.

revelations enjoy a quasi-canonical status within the school (and even beyond it, to some degree); they may not be *buddhavacana* if the buddha in question is Śākyamuni, but for the rNying-ma school and its supporters they are the word of the second buddha, Padmasambhava.²⁶¹

The writings of Klong-chen rab-'byams, too, carry great authority, especially among the followers of the *Klong chen snying thig*. This is attested in a short untitled text of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang. It lists the *mDzod bdun* of Klong-chen rab-'byams alongside the Seventeen Tantras and the *sNying thig ya bzhi*²⁶² as the primary texts of rDzogs-chen.²⁶³ Klong-chen rab-'byams himself is effectively deified (or *buddha*-ified, one might say) in the *Klong chen snying thig* tradition, where he appears as an object of meditation.²⁶⁴

Followers of the *Klong chen snying thig* lineage, including 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, clearly regard the writings of 'Jigs-med gling-pa as similar (if not equal) in status to those of Klong-chen rab-'byams. As a pair, Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa are known as “the omniscient father and son” (*kun mkhyen yab sras*)²⁶⁵ or more simply as “the two omniscient ones” (*kun mkhyen rnam gnyis*).²⁶⁶ Such high status is also documented in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's advice to 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros. Here, in the conclusion to

²⁶¹ Gyatso, 1996: 149: “In the Buddhist case, Treasure revelations are placed explicitly on a par with the sūtras and tantras of the more conventional Buddhist canon, and are said to be, in one sense or another, the ‘word of the Buddha.’”

²⁶² The *sNying thig ya bzhi* collection itself contains a great many texts by Klong-chen rab-'byams, especially in its *mKha' 'gro yang thig*, *Bla ma yang thig* and *Zab mo yang thig* sections. On the collection as a whole, see Goodman 1983: 163–233.

²⁶³ See KNP vol. 2: 87–91. A translation appears in Nyoshul Khenpo 2005: 253–256. sMyo-shul 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje (*rDzogs chen chos 'byung* vol.1: 213b.4) refers to the text as *'brel tshad don ldan*, which the translator Richard Barron takes to be a title (*Bringing Meaning to All Who Have a Connection*), although this title does not appear in KNP and might therefore be intended merely as a description.

²⁶⁴ In the *sādhana* known as *Bla sgrub thig le'i rgya can*, the full title of which is *Yang gsang bla ma'i sgrub pa thig le'i rgya can*. Tulku Thondup notes that it is the “ultimate secret” (*yang gsang*) form of peaceful male *vidyādhara* practice within the cycle. (Thondup 1996: 45)

²⁶⁵ See, for example, JTNs vol. 2: 209.

²⁶⁶ JTNs vol. 2: 6. The Klong-chen snying-thig tradition also counts Klong-chen rab-'byams among the previous incarnations of 'Jigs-med gling-pa. See Gyatso 1998: 276.

a series of answers to questions, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma encourages his young disciple to study Klong-chen rab-'byams's *Lung gi gter mdzod* commentary on the *Chos dbyings mdzod*.²⁶⁷ This text, he says, is "just like [meeting] the Omniscient King of Dharma, Dri-med 'od-zer, in person,"²⁶⁸ and it is to be studied repeatedly, as "consulting it only once or twice will not lead beyond a rough, vague understanding."²⁶⁹ After prescribing extensive study of the *Theg mchog mdzod*, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma continues:

I also believe the *Shing rta chen po* commentary to *Sems nyid ngal gso* and the root text and commentaries on the *Yon tan mdzod* to be extremely important, as they are indispensable for gaining an understanding of the general structure of the teachings.²⁷⁰

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma thus ranks 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Yon tan mdzod* as equally important for the study of rDzogs-chen as a major work by Klong-chen rab-'byams, to which it was, in fact, a supplement.²⁷¹ 'Jigs-med gling-pa's works certainly achieved popularity. The manual *Ye shes bla ma* even began to supplant the longer works of Klong-chen rab-'byams (and perhaps even the author's own *Yon tan mdzod*). This, at least, is the view of the rDzogs-chen historian, sMyo-shul 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje:

...what we find these days is that there are many people who don't comprehend the roots of these teachings at all. They may, for example, have studied only one teaching, like the instruction manual *Yeshé Lama* [...], and they conclude, "Well, *Yeshé Lama* is Dzogchen." Yes, *Yeshé Lama* certainly is Dzogchen, but it is only one teaching manual on Dzogchen, one of many. It is not the whole of Dzogchen. For one thing, *Yeshé Lama* has been around for only two hundred years or more...²⁷²

²⁶⁷ JTNg vol. 1: 578; JTNs vol. 2: 134.

²⁶⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 578.6; JTNs vol. 2: 134.8: kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po dri med 'od zer zhal dngos su bzhugs pa dang 'dra bar... The point being that reading the text is similar to meeting the master in person and receiving oral instruction from him directly.

²⁶⁹ JTNg vol. 1: 579.2; JTNs vol. 2: 134.13: lan re zung gzigs pa tsam gyis rtsing hrob be ba las mi 'ong.

²⁷⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 579.3; JTNs vol. 2: 134.16: sems nyid ngal gso'i 'grel pa shing rta chen po dang| yon tan mdzod rtsa 'grel gyi steng nas bstan pa spyi'i sgrom 'tshol ba'ang med mi rung du gal che snyam pa...

²⁷¹ See Kangyur Rinpoche 2001: 6. Specifically, the text is regarded as a supplement to the *Shing rta chen po*.

²⁷² Nyoshul Khenpo 2005: xxxi.

'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje objects to the reliance on *Ye shes bla ma* not only because it offers an incomplete account of rDzogs-chen theory and practice, but also because it is recent. Such concerns reflect a conservative tradition that is forever focused on the past and therefore wary of anything contemporary or innovative.

'Jigs-med gling-pa's rDzogs-chen writings thus occupy an ambiguous position in the canonical hierarchy. Although some regard them as equal to the works of Klong-chen rab-'byams, others within the *Klong chen snying thig* tradition are more hesitant. At the same time, those outside that tradition, such as Mi-pham, ignore the works of 'Jigs-med gling-pa almost entirely.²⁷³ Irrespective of these tensions, 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Yon tan mdzod* generated more commentarial literature than any of the *mDzod bdun*.²⁷⁴ Furthermore, as I shall show in Chapter Four, the introduction of doxography into a practical manual (*khrid yig*), starting with the *Ye shes bla ma*, would eventually come to reflect sectarian concerns.

2. The rDzogs-chen Exegesis of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma

The rDzogs-chen corpus of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma contains treatises that vary in length, style and subject matter.²⁷⁵ Three take the form of notes without clear introductory or concluding passages.²⁷⁶ Of the remainder, thirteen are responses to named individuals and three consist entirely of answers to questions (the longest of them 24 answers to 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros).²⁷⁷ Several texts elucidate supposedly difficult or abstruse doctrinal points:²⁷⁸

²⁷³ van Schaik 2004a: 28 notes that Mi-pham “seems to have consciously avoided the work of Jigme Lingpa, preferring to refer directly to the works of Longchenpa.”

²⁷⁴ Tulku Thondup 1996: 364 lists six commentaries, including two by the First rDo-grub-chen.

²⁷⁵ See Appendix 1 for an overview of the corpus.

²⁷⁶ i.e., *Tshig gsum gnad brdeg skor* (JTNg vol. 1: 511–538; JTNs vol. 2: 67–94); *rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa'i khyad par* (JTNg vol. 1: 581–646.2; JTNs vol. 2: 135–202); and *Man ngag zab mo rdo rje'i mtshon cha* (JTNg vol. 1: 652.5–676; JTNs vol. 2: 209–232).

²⁷⁷ *rDzogs-chen dris lan* (JTNg vol. 1: 563–579; JTNs vol. 2: 117–135). Translated in Appendix 2 and Pearcey 2018.

the best example of such elucidation being the *Ye shes bla ma 'i dka' 'grel*.²⁷⁹ Yet, even in works without such a label, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma is called upon to offer exegesis. In *Dad brtson blo ldan 'das shul grags ldan ngor gdams pa*,²⁸⁰ for example, he explains the cryptic, rather scholarly final testament (*zhal chems*) of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu.²⁸¹

2.1. Exegetical Strategies

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma relies upon the works of Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa throughout his rDzogs-chen writings. The *Ye shes bla ma* commentary clearly belongs to the broader *Klong chen snying thig* tradition, while two other texts within the corpus derive from statements by Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa.²⁸² In fact, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma repeatedly cites these two figures and recommends the study of their writings.²⁸³ Commenting upon the writings of such extraordinarily exalted figures poses at least two hermeneutical challenges: 1) In the first place, it prompts the question of what still remains unsaid or unclear. Omniscient figures²⁸⁴ must provide all the guidance and information that

²⁷⁸ Outside the rDzogs-chen corpus, the most notable example is his commentary on the difficult points of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra: sPyod 'jug dka' gnas gsal byed bedurya dbang po 'i me long* (JTNs vol. 7: 288–298).

²⁷⁹ *Ye shes bla ma 'i dka' gnas zin bris gsal ba 'i sgron me* (JTNs vol. 2: 248–270)

²⁸⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 463.2–467; JTNs vol. 2: 21–25. Translated in Appendix 2 and Pearcey 2018.

²⁸¹ In this respect, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma position is comparable to that occupied more recently by sMyo-shul 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje, whose writings include many clarifications on similar topics to those addressed in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's *rDzogs chen skor*. Two texts of answers to questions on rDzogs-chen by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama are of interest in this regard (*Rig 'dzin brgyud pa 'i zhal lung* 83–126), as they not only confirm the Dalai Lama's fascination with 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma as a rDzogs-chen thinker, but also indicate that 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje himself was unfamiliar with his writings (*Rig 'dzin brgyud pa 'i zhal lung* 111: rdo grub bka' 'bum gus par de tsam rgyus mi che yang...)

²⁸² i.e., *Dad ldan slob ma 'gyur med rdo rje 'i ngor gdams pa* (JTNg vol. 1: 484–496; JTNs vol. 2: 41–53), which explains a verse from Klong-chen rab-'byams's *Man ngag mdzod*, and *dNgos bzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul* (JTNg vol. 1: 547–554; JTNs vol. 2: 104–110), which elaborates upon comments in 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Ye shes bla ma* (that, in turn, derive from *Theg mchog mdzod*).

²⁸³ For examples of recommending further study of their writings, see JTNs vol. 2: 21 & 134.

²⁸⁴ Here and in what follows, the fact that I have translated the term *kun mkhyen* as omniscient should not be taken to mean that I believe the tradition understood this in a literal or naive sense. Even so, the term was reserved for Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa alone and is clearly a mark of their extraordinarily exalted status.

is necessary for following the path to awakening; to imply otherwise would be tantamount to criticism.²⁸⁵ 2) Then there is the issue of legitimacy: what authorizes someone to comment on the words of the omniscient? Must the commentator not also be omniscient? To a degree, such expectation is an inevitable consequence of the reverence accorded prominent masters of the past. It is also a potential obstacle for any would-be commentator on *buddhavacana*, especially in the Mahāyāna. In such circumstances, the hermeneutical task is less the discovery of original insights than the *re*-discovery of the original author's intention (*abhiprāya*; *dgongs pa*).²⁸⁶

2.1.1. Legitimation

If commentary is the rediscovery of an author's intention, this invites the question of how one gains access to that intention. What, in other words, is the source of legitimation for any would-be commentator? Tibetan religious figures generally devote much of their lives to what might be termed a 'quest for legitimation': receiving teachings and empowerments, securing permission to teach and so on, both from living teachers and during visionary encounters.²⁸⁷ Biography and autobiography thus serve as, among other things, records of acquired legitimacy.

²⁸⁵ Cabezón 1994: 79 makes a similar point about the potential redundancy of the commentarial enterprise more generally when he notes that: "Most scholastics consider scripture to be both complete (nothing essential is left out) and compact (it contains nothing unessential)." See also Collins 1998: 32: "For if the truth is already discovered, there is little or nothing for the intellectuals who come afterwards to do; they can be teachers to the outside world, preservers and interpreters of the truth, but not discoverers in their own right."

²⁸⁶ In his *Kun bzang dgongs rgyan*, Tshul-khrims bzang-po introduces his teacher 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, as one who "could discern unerringly the intent of the earlier and later Omniscient Ones, those great pioneers who commented independently on the meaning of the *bka' ma* and *gter ma* teachings of the Great Perfection." (TZb, vol. 5: 299f.: rdzogs chen 'di'i bka' gter zung 'jug gi gsung rab kyī don rang dbang du 'grel ba'i shing rta chen po kun mkhyen snga phyi'i dgongs pa ma nor bar 'byed pa'i...). This clearly puts 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma in a second tier of commentators, one level below the two Omniscient Ones, while at the same time legitimizing his commentary. By invoking his teacher in these terms, Tshul-khrims bzang-po also establishes the validity of his own commentary, as the faithful record of one who had such access to the intent of these omniscient pioneers.

²⁸⁷ For a discussion of the issues surrounding legitimation in the *gter ma* tradition, see Gyatso 1993. There is a parallel here with the notion of cultural capital, as featured in the writings of Pierre

The commentaries on the *Klong chen snying thig* display some of the means of qualification that the tradition deems acceptable. One such method is the reporting of visionary encounters. It is one of the ways through which 'Jigs-med gling-pa himself acquired the authority to reveal treasures and teach.²⁸⁸ Another method is to emphasize an unbroken lineage of interpretation, perhaps singling out an individual teacher as the source of a given statement or entire text. rDza dPal-sprul follows this approach in the *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung*,²⁸⁹ as does Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang in his notes (*zin bris*) upon that text.²⁹⁰ Some authors declare their own realization, forgoing conventional demonstrations of humility. rDza dPal-sprul adopts this strategy in his *mKhas pa śrī'i rgyal po'i khyad chos*, a text he claims to have “taken as a treasure from the realm of insight” (*shes rab klong nas gter du blangs*).²⁹¹

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma does not follow any such method. He does not describe visions. And although he pays homage to an unnamed teacher in several of his rDzogs-chen treatises, nowhere does he present his writings as a record of a teacher's words or 'oral transmission' (*zhal lung*).²⁹² Only a single text—the practice manual called *gNyug ma zang thal gyi sgrub thabs chos nyid rang byung gi sgra*

Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990). In this view, Tibetan religious figures seek to acquire cultural capital that is legitimate within their particular field.

²⁸⁸ See Gyatso 1998: 171–172.

²⁸⁹ See Patrul Rinpoche 1998.

²⁹⁰ See Ngawang Pelzang 2004 for a translation of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang's notes (*zin bris*) on dPal-sprul's *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung*, which are based on the oral teachings of sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. Other notable works by Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang that derives from this same teacher are *gZhi khregs chod skabs kyi zin bris bstan pa'i nyi ma'i zhal lung snyan brgyud chu bo'i bcud 'dus* and *Shin tu gsang ba chen po thod rgal snyan brgyud kyi zin bris kun tu bzang po'i dgongs rgyan yig med u pa de sha mkha' 'gro'i thugs kyi ti la ka*.

²⁹¹ PS vol. 5: 207–208. Note that for this and several other of his rDzogs-chen writings rDza dPal-sprul adopts the name mKhas-pa śrī'i rgyal-po. Most obviously, he does this in *mKhas pa śrī'i rgyal po'i khyad chos*, both the root text and auto-commentary, but in addition, he (or his editors) use the name for his explanation of a visionary testament from 'Jigs-med rgyal-ba'i-myu-gu to the Fourth rDzogs-chen incarnation, Mi-'gyur nam-mkha'i-rdo-rje (PS vol. 5: 161–178).

²⁹² Clearly, he was an acknowledged holder of the *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse* lineage, and several of his teachers, including mKhan-po Padma badzra, rDza dPal-sprul and 'Jam-dbyang mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, belonged to that line. The biography by bSod-nams nyi-ma identifies mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po as 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's main teacher and the one from whom he received, *inter alia*, “the ripening empowerments and liberating instructions of the earlier and later Heart-Essence.” (bSod nams nyi ma 2002: 74–75)

dbyangs—resembles a revelation in format.²⁹³ Neither here nor elsewhere does he profess realization. He does not claim privileged access to the insights of the exalted masters of the past. On the contrary, he repeatedly disavows such access. Despite his status as a rDo-grub incarnation and student of mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, dPal-sprul, Mi-pham and others, he declares himself unfit to comment.

In no less than nine of the texts within his rDzogs-chen corpus, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma denies that he possesses the qualifications for the task at hand. In doing so, he deploys a rhetoric of humility that is commonplace throughout Tibetan literature.²⁹⁴ His comments though exceed the requirements of convention.²⁹⁵ They suggest a deliberate strategy of self-abasement for the purpose of legitimation.

2.1.2. Critical Authority

Despite his repeated expressions of humility, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's rDzogs-chen texts display remarkable clarity and decisiveness.²⁹⁶ They contain more cautious statements, too, as shown below, but 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma does not hesitate to criticise what he regards as a poor understanding of rDzogs-chen:²⁹⁷

Some so-called great meditators have not so much as glimpsed even the general tendency of this adamant path. They have no idea that settling without accepting or rejecting thoughts, which generally comes later, brings about the warmth which usually occurs earlier. To such practitioners, even talk of the crucial point of thoughts fading into basic space (*dbyings*) will seem bizarre, like seeing a white

²⁹³ As indicated by, *inter alia*, the expression *dha thim* (“symbols dissolved” where *dha* is understood as a synonym for *brda*) at its conclusion, on which see Gyatso 1998: 94.

²⁹⁴ See Cabezón 1994: 75.

²⁹⁵ JTNg vol. 1: 442.3; JTNs vol. 2: 2.6; For examples see JTNg vol. 1: 498.5; JTNs vol. 2: 56.1; JTNg vol. 1: 554.1; JTNs vol. 2: 110.7; JTNg vol. 1: 577.6; JTNs vol. 2: 133.10; JTNg vol. 1: 653.3; JTNs vol. 2: 209.13.

²⁹⁶ One notable exception appears in his answers to mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi blo-gros. When asked whether the crystal light channel is the ultimate form of *avadhūti* (*dbu ma*) and whether it bifurcates as it extends to the two eyes, he replies: “I have the vague impression (*'al 'ol*) that it is like that, but as I can't look at the text myself, I recommend that you consult *Theg mchog mdzod*.” (JTNg vol. 1: 570.6; JTNs vol. 2: 126.3: de ka ltar yin mchi snyam pa'i 'al 'ol tsam las dpe cha blta ma thub pas theg mchog mdzod gzigis par zhu)

²⁹⁷ This is also a theme he takes up in *sGrub brtson rnal 'byor gyi dbang po padma ma hā su kha'i bzhed skong du gdams pa*. See JTNg vol. 1: 462.4f.; JTNs vol. 2: 21.

crow for the very first time. Still, I shall persist, as untroubled as a madman striking a yak on the nose.²⁹⁸

If the explanations he puts forward seem unfamiliar, he says, this is due to the ignorance of the audience rather than the novelty of the interpretation. In other words, some meditators miss the subtleties of rDzogs-chen theory because they are insufficiently familiar with established doctrine, not because what he proposes is new. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's role is to reiterate points contained in established, authoritative works; he does not innovate.

In another text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma claims that “most great meditators today” (*deng sang gi sgom chen phal mo che*) mistake blank, thought-free meditation (of the kind propagated by Hwa-shang Mahāyāna/Mo-ho-yen)²⁹⁹ for genuine rDzogs-chen practice. Once again, the error arises because they are insufficiently acquainted with the great texts of the tradition. “To understand what is or is not genuine meditation practice,” he says, one must “consult the *mDzod bdun*.”³⁰⁰ Thus, in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's view, textual learning is essential even for non-scholastic meditators.

2.2. Examples of Exegesis

To illustrate 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's approach to exegesis and his role as an authority, let us examine four topics from his rDzogs-chen writings: 1) a commentary on O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu's final testament (*zhal chems*); 2)

²⁹⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 492.6; JTNs vol. 2: 50.3: rdo rje'i lam 'di'i 'gro phyogs tsam yang ma mthong ba'i sgom chen pa kha cig la| nged kyi kun rtog dbyings su nub pa'i nyams len gyi gnad lab pa yang sngon med bya rog dkar po mthong gin gda' ste| 'on kyang g.yag sna khu tshur gyi gnam smyo 'gros mar bshad pa yin lags| I place inverted commas around 'great meditators' to indicate that the term is meant ironically, as is often the case in texts of this kind.

²⁹⁹ JTNg vol. 1: 462.4; JTNs vol. 2: 21.2: ha shang gi mun sgom dran med... On Hashang see Ruegg 1989: 56 n.100. On Hwa-shang Mahāyāna/Ho-shang Mo-ho-yen, the Chinese monk representative of what Ruegg calls “a non-scholastic, ‘spontaneist’ and more or less quietest Dhyāna (Ch’an) Buddhism” who took on Kamalaśīla at the ‘council’ or debate at bSam-yas, see Ruegg 1989 passim. See also Imaeda 1975 and van Schaik 2003.

³⁰⁰ See JTNg vol. 1: 462.6; JTNs vol. 2: 21.8: sgom yin min mdzod chen bdun la dris|

explanations of the term ‘actual basis’ (*dnegos gzhi*); 3) a discussion of intermediate states (*bar do*) and stages of dissolution (*thim rim*) at death; and 4) gnoseology.

2.2.1. The Final Testament of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu

The writings of the dGe-mang scholar O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu are lost, but biographical accounts contain his purported final words:

I am Guru Padmākara of Oḍḍiyāna,
A buddha free from birth and death.
Awakening mind (*bodhicitta*) is impartial and unbiased,
Beyond labels of the eight stages, the four pairs.³⁰¹

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma discusses these lines in his *Dad brtson blo ldan 'das shul grags ldan ngor gdams pa*.³⁰² Interestingly, he begins his explanation by referring to O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu as “our guru” (*bdag cag gi bla ma*).³⁰³ This is surprising because O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu does not feature in the standard lists of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's teachers. Still, it is possible that O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu taught him, perhaps when he studied with dPal-sprul. If so, this would connect him directly to the dGe-mang Movement.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma describes the first two lines of the testament as a “lion's roar” (*seng ge 'i sgra sgrog*). This is an expression of realization, specifically realization acquired through rDzogs-chen practice. The first three lines, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma says, convey the message that O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu has “seized the stronghold” (*btsan sa bzung ba*) and perfected the ultimate form of ‘transference’ or the ejection of consciousness (*'pho ba; samkrānti/utkrānti*) according to the rDzogs-chen tradition. The final line, in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's view, expresses rDzogs-chen's superiority to the inferior, effort-based vehicles

³⁰¹ JTNg vol. 1 463.4; JTNs vol. 2: 22.2f: nga o rgyan gu ru padma 'byung ||skye 'chi bral ba'i sangs rgyas yin| |byang chub sems la phyogs ris med| |zung bzhi ya bryad kyi ming 'dogs bral| |

³⁰² JTNg vol. 1: 463.2–467; JTNs vol. 2: 21–25. Translated in Appendix 2 and Pearcey 2018.

³⁰³ JTNg vol. 1 463.2; JTNs vol. 2: 21.

(*theg pa: yāna*).³⁰⁴ O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu conveys this point with reference to abhidharmic scholasticism, i.e., the four categories of stream-enterer (*srotāpanna*), once-returner (*sakṛdāgāmin*), non-returner (*anāgāmin*) and worthy one (*arhat*), each of which can be further divided into the emerging (*zhugs pa*) and the established (*gnas pa*) to give eight categories in total. The fourth line indicates that the rDzogs-chen fruition is unlike any of these, since it transcends all.

According to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, then, the lesser vehicles and systems view the path as a gradual process of purification. rDzogs-chen, by contrast, involves the recognition of all-pervasive purity and a non-gradual traversal of paths and stages:

Therefore, in this vehicle there is no system of positing the fruition as something separate, as there is for the eight stages of the four pairs. According to that approach, we regard delusory appearances as faults and train in a limited form of yoga, through which it is possible to overcome the “seeing discards” (*mithong spang; darśanaprahātavya*) of the three realms, but not the “meditation discards” (*sgom spang; bhāvanaprahātavya*) of the desire realm (*kāmadhātu*);³⁰⁵ or else, to enter that realm in order to discard them; or to discard most of the desire-realm afflictions; or to discard them all but not totally overcome the afflictions related to the two upper realms, with the result that the sufferings of birth and death are still not entirely overcome, and so on. Here, by contrast, out of the expanse of realization of great, all-pervasive primordial purity, which is self-appearing and unbiased, all grounds and paths are traversed at once.³⁰⁶

The explanation here echoes the scholastic orientation of the dGe-mang movement and its heirs. Both O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu's terse, cryptic testament

³⁰⁴ JTNg vol. 1 466:6.

³⁰⁵ The *Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya* take different views on these two types of ‘discard’ (*spang bya; prahātavya*) or factors to be discarded. According to the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, 112 factors are discarded through the path of seeing (*darśanamarga*)—40 for the desire realm and 36 each for the form and formless realms—and 414 factors through the path of meditation (*bhāvanamarga*). The categories of once-returner and non-returner are so named on the basis of whether it is necessary to return to the desire realm in order to relinquish the factors to be discarded in that realm.

³⁰⁶ JTNg 465.5f.: de'i phyir 'khrul snang la skyon du blta ste| nang gi rnal 'byor nyi tshe ba la bslab pas khams gsum gyi mithong spang spangs kyang 'dod pa'i sgom spang ma spangs pa dang | de spong phyir du zhugs pa dang | 'dod nyon phal cher spangs pa dang | de mtha' dag spangs kyang gong ma'i nyon mongs zad par ma spangs [466] pas skye 'chi'i sdug bsngal lhag med du ma log pa sogs kyi sgo nas 'bras bu tha dad du bzhag pa'i zung bzhi ya brgyad lta bu'i mam bzhag theg pa 'di la brtsir med de| ka dag rang snang ris med gdal ba chen po'i dgongs klong nas sa lam chig chod du bgrod pa'i phyir te|

and 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's commentary upon it combine the terminology of exoteric and esoteric forms of Buddhism. In other rDzogs-chen writings, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma employs similarly scholastic language and makes use of concepts drawn from abhidharmic thought, as well as logic and epistemology.

2.2.2. The Actual Basis (*dngos gzhi*)

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's interpretation of the term *dngos gzhi* attests to his scholarly approach. It also shows how he deals with a topic previously explored by two of his most illustrious predecessors, Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa.

The Tibetan *dngos gzhi* translates the Sanskrit *maula*, meaning 'fundamental'. Yet, unlike the Sanskrit, the Tibetan carries the literal sense of 'actual basis'.³⁰⁷ In Tibetan literature, *dngos gzhi* generally signifies the main part (or practice) of something, as in the common triad of preliminary (*sngon 'gro*), main part (*dngos gzhi*) and conclusion (*mjug*). In rDzogs-chen exegesis, however, the expression takes on additional significance.³⁰⁸ Here, the two component syllables are separated, so that four possible permutations (*mu bzhi*) emerge: 1) a basis that is not actual, 2) what is actual but not a basis, 3) what is neither actual nor a basis, 4) what is both actual and a basis.

³⁰⁷ 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (as recorded by his student 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros) was seemingly aware that the linguistic analysis of the Tibetan term (as detailed in this section) does not apply to the original Sanskrit term. He therefore claims that since the Seventeen Tantras and other key rDzogs-chen texts were not also translated from various *dākinī* languages, there is no certainty that the original term in this case is the Sanskrit. See *Rang rig ye shes sogs* 29.3: rgyud bcu bdun sogs rdo rje mkha' 'gro'i skad sna tshogs las bsgyur ba yin| sam skri t'i skad yin pa'i nges pa med cing dngos dang gzhi la sgra bying^a sgrub kyi so so'i go ba ji ltar rtsal rgyu yod ma nges gsungs| ^aRead as: *byings*.

³⁰⁸ 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma himself notes that the term is used differently in rDzogs-chen: "This is not an explanation of the term *dngos gzhi* as it is understood in the general language of the scriptures, but, rather, how it is applied in rDzogs-chen, when *dngos* and *gzhi* are separated, and the permutations counted." (JTNg vol. 1 553.6; JTNs vol. 2: 110.5: 'di dag gzhung spyi skad la grags pa'i dngos gzhi'i sgra bshad min gyi| rdzogs chen la 'jug tshul de la dngos dang gzhi gnyis phye ste de la mu brtsis pa'o)

On the tendency towards "etymologizing" in rDzogs-chen and how this can blur the distinction between etymology and definition (or "denotation" as he calls it) see Germano 1992: 827.

David Germano connects the resulting explanation of these four permutations—the earliest example of which appears in *Theg mchog mdzod*—to Klong-chen rab-'byams's "creative approach" to scholasticism.³⁰⁹ More generally, of course, the tetralemma (Skt. *catuskoṭi*) is a common feature of Buddhist philosophy, especially Madhyamaka.³¹⁰ Its deployment here could therefore derive from the scholastic education that Klong-chen rab-'byams received at gSang-phu ne'u-thog.³¹¹ In any case, Klong-chen rab-'byams's analysis of the four permutations in rDzogs-chen generated further commentaries. 'Jigs-med gling-pa offers a slightly longer explanation in his *Ye shes bla ma*. His presentation differs subtly from that of Klong-chen rab-'byams, and this discrepancy may itself have caused confusion.

For his part, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma discusses *dngos gzhi* on two occasions in his rDzogs-chen corpus: 1) in the commentary on the difficult points of the *Ye shes bla ma*,³¹² and 2) in a short work dedicated entirely to the subject, the *dNgos gzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul*.³¹³ In both texts, he attempts to reconcile the explanations of Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa.

At the beginning of the *dNgos gzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul*, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma states his aim: "to clarify briefly what has been said concerning the method of counting the four permutations of *dngos gzhi* in the great guidance manual of sNying-thig".³¹⁴ The manual is the *Ye shes bla ma*, which is therefore his primary focus, but he also attempts to reconcile any apparent discrepancy between

³⁰⁹ Germano 1994: 298–299.

³¹⁰ On the history of the *catuskoṭi* in Buddhist literature and especially in Madhyamaka philosophy see Ruegg 1977 (republished in Ruegg 2010: 37–112).

³¹¹ For a brief discussion of the teachers and condition of this monastery during the time of Klong-chen rab-'byams see Arguillère 2007: 32–35.

³¹² *Ye shes bla ma'i dka' gnas zin bris gsal ba'i sgron me* (JTNs vol.2: 248–270).

³¹³ JTNg vol. 1: 547–554; JTNs vol. 2: 104–110. A complete translation appears in Appendix 2 below.

³¹⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 547.5; JTNs vol. 2: 104.1: snying thig khrid yig chen mor| dngos gzhi gnyis la mu bzhi brtsi tshul zhig gsungs pa de nyung gsal bshad dgos zhes phebs par|

that text and *Theg mchod mdzod*. Before considering 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's own comments, let us look briefly at his two sources.

2.2.2.1. Klong-chen rab-'byams: *Theg mchog mdzod*

The *Theg mchog mdzod* introduces the four *dngos gzhi* permutations in chapter eighteen. The relevant section appears after the preliminaries, before the stages of the main practice:

Of the four permutations of actual and basis, that of 'being the basis and not the actual' is like seeing a palace and not seeing the king. This is comparable to those few who leave rDzogs-chen at the basic level, without applying it practically, and simply spout hot air about *dharmatā*, so that they die an ordinary death. 'Being the actual but not the basis' is like seeing the king but not making out his features. This is compared to some instructions which strike the right chord at the beginning, but, by failing to cut through the limitations of verbalism, stray from the crucial point and turn instead into speculation. 'Being neither the actual nor the basis' is like seeing neither the king nor the palace. This compares to those who adopt an approach of intellectual analysis as the view and meditation, basing it on the general terminology that is common to all vehicles; since they do not recognise the true meaning, they do not know their ultimate destination. 'Being both the actual and the basis' is like viewing a king repeatedly and knowing his characteristics well. This is compared to directly seeing the awareness that is the key point of the Heart-Essence, with the effect that one no longer relies on vague ideas about the view and meditation. Since the ground is seen, there is no basis for turning back, and one is "an adept who has cut through *saṃsāra* and *nirvāṇa* simultaneously."³¹⁵

This portrayal of the *tetralemma* establishes the superiority of the Heart-Essence practice over other systems of instruction. At the same time, it contrasts an incomplete *application* of the rDzogs-chen teachings, as outlined in the first three permutations, with the level of attainment represented by the fourth. This

³¹⁵ KLR vol. 18: 117f.: dngos gzhi zhes pa mu bzhi las| gzhi yin la dngos ma yin pa pho brang mthong nas rgyal po ma mthong ba ltar rdzogs pa chen po kha cig gis chos gzhi la lus nas lag tu blang du med par chos nyid kha 'byams su song bas 'chi khar tha mal du 'chi ba nams so|| dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa ni rgyal po mthong yang de'i mtshan nyid gtan la ma phebs pa ltar| man ngag kha cig thog ma gnad thog tu phebs kyang tha ma tshig gis mtha' ma chod pas rjes la de'i thog tu mi gnas par pra yas pa nams so|| dngos dang gzhi gnyis ka ma yin pa ni| rgyal po dang pho brang gang yang ma mthong ba ltar| theg pa thun mong ba spyis tshig gi lta sgom yid dpyod kyi lam du byas nas| don ngo ma 'phrod pas tha ma gar 'gro ngo mi shes pa nams so|| dngos dang gzhi gnyis ka yin pa ni rgyal po yang yang mthong mtshan nyid kyang legs par shes pa 'dra bar| mngon sum snying tig gi gnad rig pa dngos su [118] mthong bas| lta sgom yin snyam la rag ma las| gzhi mthong bas ldog pa'i sa med par 'khor 'das dus geig la chod pa'i rnal 'byor pa zhes bya'o||

combination of two distinct functions and sets of referents explains the need for subsequent explanations.

The example of the king is used to signify ‘the actual’ in each permutation. In two of the four the palace signifies ‘the basis’; in the second and fourth, though, the the basis is the king’s features (*mtshan nyid*). It is unclear why the text employs these two different examples for the basis, possibly because Klong-chen rab-’byams could not envisage how one could see a king without simultaneously seeing his palace.

2.2.2.2. ’Jigs-med gling-pa: *Ye shes bla ma*

The explanation in the *Ye shes bla ma* appears to derive from the *Theg mchog mdzod*, but it is more extensive than its apparent source and diverges from it in slight but nonetheless significant ways:

‘Being the basis but not the actual’ is like seeing a temple without seeing the three representations [of Buddha’s body, speech and mind] within. This refers to relying upon mere words expressing interconnectedness, such as ‘profound and clear’ (*zab gsal*) or ‘appearance and emptiness’ (*snang stong*) and so on, as the view and the meditation. This [i.e., rDzogs-chen snying thig] is not like that.

‘Being the actual but not the basis’ is like seeing the three representations without determining their characteristics. Although there might be some understanding of non-elaboration (*spros bral*) beyond the four ontological alternatives (*mu bzhi*) or the eight extremes (*mtha’ brgyad*) derived from intellectual analysis (*rtog dpyod*), it is unconnected to experience and therefore speculative (*pra yas pa*). Again, this is not like that.

Furthermore, this is not a philosophical system (*grub mtha’*) that is ‘neither the actual nor the basis’, which would be like seeing nothing—neither the ’Phrul-s nang [i.e., Jo-khang] temple nor the Śākyamuni image [inside it]. This would involve taking mere intellectual analysis as the path, thinking, “All phenomena are devoid of any inherent nature.” Yet, as the essence that lacks true nature has not been introduced directly, one remains ordinary at the time of death.

By contrast, the view of the Heart-Essence of the Natural Great Perfection is the essence of ‘both the actual and the basis’, like ascertaining the nature of both the supporting [temple] and the supported [representations], just as they are. Without

depending, therefore, on some notion about what the view and meditation might be, self-liberation is shown directly.³¹⁶

Here, 'Jigs-med gling-pa replaces the secular example of a king and his palace with more numinous imagery, the sacred representations of enlightened body, speech and mind in a temple (*see Table 1 below*). When he explains the third permutation, he specifies that the temple is the famous 'Phrul-snang (or Jo-khang) in Lhasa, home to the revered Jo-bo statue of Śākyamuni Buddha.³¹⁷ In addition, he elaborates on the faults of the three first permutations and the virtues of the fourth.

Table 1: Four permutations of dngos gzhi in the Theg mchog mdzod and Ye shes bla ma

Referent	<i>Theg mchog mdzod</i>		<i>Ye shes bla ma</i>	
	Example	Explanation	Example	Explanation
1. Basis, not actual	Seeing palace, not king	Leaving rDzogs-chen at basic level, not applying it practically	Seeing temple, not three representations	Relying upon mere words as view and meditation
2. Actual, not basis	Seeing king, not features	Failing to go beyond verbalism, ending with speculation	Seeing three representations, not characteristics	Understanding is unconnected to experience and speculative
3. Neither actual nor basis	Seeing neither king nor palace	Intellectual analysis as view and meditation, based on general terminology common to all vehicles	Seeing neither 'Phrul-snang temple nor Buddha image	Taking mere intellectual analysis as path

³¹⁶ *Ye shes bla ma* 327f.: gzhi yin la dngos ma yin pa lha khang mthong yang rten gsum ma mthong ba lta bu zab gsal dang| snang stong la sogs pa gcig la gcig 'brel gyi tshig tsam la lta sgom yin par yid brtan 'cha' ba'ang ma yin| dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa rten gsum mthong yang mtshan nyid gtan la ma phebs pa [328] mu bzhi'am| mtha' bryad spros bral rtog dpyod kyis go yang myong thog tu ma chags pas pra yas pa yang ma yin| dngos dang gzhi gnyis ka ma yin pa 'phrul snang dang shākya mu ne gang yang ma mthong pa lta bu chos thams cad rang bzhin med do zhes yid dpyod tsam gyis lam du byed pa las rang bzhin med pa'i ngo bo bcar phog tu ngo ma 'phrod pas 'chi khar tha mal du lus pa'i grub pa'i mtha' ma yin par| 'di rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po snying thig gi lta ba dngos dang gzhi gnyis ka yin pa'i ngo bo rten dang brten pa'i gnas tshul ji bzhin pa gtan la phebs pa dang 'dra bas lta sgom yin snyam la rag ma lus par rang grol mngon sum par ston pa'o||

³¹⁷ i.e., the 1.5-metre-high statue of Buddha Śākyamuni, which is the most revered image in all of Tibet.

4. Both actual and basis	Seeing king and knowing features	Directly seeing awareness that is key point of Heart-Essence	Ascertaining temple and images	View of the Heart Essence of the Natural Great Perfection
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The additions in *Ye shes bla ma* were not commentarial; they did not clarify the explanation in the *Theg mchog mdzod*. The *Ye shes bla ma* diverged from the *Theg mchog mdzod*, both in its examples and its explanation (as outlined in Table 1). It thus increased the need for further commentary, partly to show how these two important texts do not contradict one another.

2.2.2.3. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma

It is not difficult to see why the two explanations of *dngos gzhi* given above might require further clarification. For one thing, neither Klong-chen rab-'byams nor 'Jigs-med gling-pa specifies what they mean by either 'actual' or 'basis'. This prompts 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma to begin *dNgos gzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul* with the following definitions:

'Basis' here refers to the mode of abiding (*bzhugs tshul*) of the ground—among the trio of ground, path and fruition (*gzhi lam 'bras gsum*)—and 'actual' refers to its being actualised. They correspond therefore to that which is to be realized (*rtogs bya*) and the means of realising it (*rtogs tshul*).³¹⁸

He offers a similar interpretation in the *Ye shes bla ma 'i dka' gnas zin bris*:

'Basis' must be understood as a support (*rten*) or causal means (*rgyu 'i thabs*). The 'actual basis', therefore, must be understood as the method for realising (*rtogs byed kyi thabs*) the actual mode of abiding (*gnas lugs*) of what is to be realized, just as it is.³¹⁹

This is not the only possible interpretation of *dngos gzhi*, however. As an alternative, consider the following explanation from sMyo-shul 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje:

³¹⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 547.5; JTNs vol. 2: 104.4: *gzhi ni gzhi lam 'bras gsum gyi zlas phye ba'i gzhi'i bzhugs tshul de la byed| dngos ni de mngon du gyur pa la byed pas rtogs bya dang rtogs tshul gyi sgo nas bzhag cing|*

³¹⁹ JTNs vol. 2: 253.5: *gzhi ni rten nam rgyu'i thabs zhes pa'i don du go dgos pas dngos gzhi zhes pa'ang rtogs bya'i gnas lugs dngos de ji bzhin rtogs byed kyi thabs la go dgos pa*

It is convenient to understand ‘basis’ as referring to the natural state (*gnas lugs*) of alpha-purity (*ka dag*),³²⁰ while ‘actual’ is the radiance of awareness (*rig gdangs*) in Thod-rgal, the vajra chains, pure realms (*zhing*), forms (*sku*), palaces and so on.³²¹

The differences are immediately apparent. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma views the basis as the potential, ground or cause, and the actual as the realization of that potential. In contrast, ’Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje relates the basis to the natural state as it is understood in the practice of Khregs-chod. He interprets the actual as the manifestations of awareness, the visionary forms outlined in the practice of Thod-rgal.³²²

The *Theg mchog mdzod* changes the imagery slightly for the second and fourth permutations, as noted above. Here, the basis (*gzhi*) is illustrated not by the palace but by the king’s features. A similar shift occurs in the *Ye shes bla ma*, but only in the second permutation. Its example for the basis is not the temple but the features (*mtshan nyid*) of the representations of enlightened body, speech and mind within the temple. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma explains:

The example for basis in the first permutation is a temple, whereas in the second permutation it is the features of the three representations. The referent of these examples, however, is the same, i.e., the basis, in both earlier and later permutations. The basis must be illustrated differently in this way. If it were not, there would be no means of distinguishing ‘being both the actual and the basis’ from ‘being the actual but not the basis’. It is not incongruous to see a temple and its three representations while being unable to determine the features of the three representations. Without the change, therefore, the example could not successfully illustrate the superiority of the yoga of the Heart-Essence.³²³

³²⁰ My translation of *ka dag* as alpha-purity follows the example of Chögyam Trungpa (Chögyam Trungpa 1992: 63), who pointed out that the English (or Greek) equivalent of *ka*, meaning the beginning or original because of its position as the first letter in the Tibetan alphabet is “alpha”. (Cf. Revelation 22:13: ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ Α καὶ τὸ Ω ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος ὁ πρῶτος καὶ ὁ ἔσχατος) I prefer this to such explanatory translations as “primordial purity,” not least because Tibetan authors themselves occasionally felt the need to gloss the term *ka dag*, as may be seen elsewhere in the writings of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (JTNs vol. 2: 69), for example.

³²¹ *Rig ’dzin brgyud pa’i zhal lung* 78.4: *gzhi zhes pa ni ka dag gi gnas lugs dang| dngos zhes pa thod rgal gyi rig gdangs rdo rje lu gu rgyud dang zhing sku pho brang sogs la go na stabs bde zhing|* This text is primarily a clarification of Klong-chen rab-’byams’s comments in *Theg mchog mdzod*.

³²² Moreover, the fact that ’Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje himself wrote not one but two short texts on this topic further suggests its perceived complexity. *Rig ’dzin brgyud pa’i zhal lung* 77–79 & 180–181. Note however that these texts seemingly borrow from the *Kun bzang thugs kyi tikka* of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang.

³²³ JTNg vol. 1: 548.3; JTNs vol. 2: 104.14.: *dpe’i skabs su mu dang po’i gzhi lha khang dang| gnyis pa’i gzhi rten gsum gyi mtshan nyid la sbyar yang| don gyi tshe ni gzhi gong ’og rnam gcig tu bya*

In other words, although there is a change of example for the second permutation, the referent is the same as in the other permutations. The features of the three representations signify what the temple signifies in the other permutations. If this were not the case, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma says, the second permutation would be no different from the fourth. He takes it for granted that one cannot see the three representations inside a temple without also seeing the temple itself. Thus, an example that refers explicitly to seeing the three representations *implies* that the temple is also seen, just as in the fourth permutation. Rather than risk such ambiguity, 'Jigs-med gling-pa proposes that one might see the three supports without being able to determine their features. One can imagine such a scenario, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma says. It is not incongruous in the way that seeing the three supports while being unaware of the temple would be. Thus, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma limits addresses only the implications of the original examples; he does not challenge their validity.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma appreciates that the examples constitute a potential source of confusion. He notes, for instance, that although a temple and its internal imagery have a relationship of 'support and supported' (*rten dang brten pa*), this does not imply a similar relationship between referents.³²⁴

Above all, he seeks to clarify the statements of Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa. He thus remains securely within the bounds of established discourse. Exegesis here primarily involves reconciling discrepancies within the sources. As a further example, consider the third permutation: 'being neither the

dgos te| de 'dra ma yin na lha khang dang rten gsum gnyis ka mthong ba dang| rten gsum gyi mtshan nyid gtan la ma phebs pa mi 'gal ba bzhin du| dngos gzhi gnyis ka yin pa'ang dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa dang mi 'gal bar 'gyur la| de'i tshe snying tig gi rnal 'byor khyad par du 'phags tshul ston pa la sbyar ba ma 'brel bar 'gyur ba'i phyir ro||

³²⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 548.2; JTNs vol. 2: 104.12: lha khang dang rten gsum dper mdzad pa'ang rten dang brten pa'i dpe tsam du mdzad pa las| de gnyis rten brten pa'i 'jog tshul 'dra bar bzhed pa min...

basis nor the actual'. In the *Ye shes bla ma*, 'Jigs-med gling-pa asserts that this might result in an ordinary death. But the comment is markedly similar to a statement Klong-chen rab-'byams makes in connection with the *first* permutation. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma therefore attempts to show that the two statements are not in conflict. "Although they are two different ways of remaining ordinary," he says, "both are similar in that they involve a failure to capture what develops in meditation."³²⁵ The third permutation, he claims, is a situation in which the crucial point of the instructions has not yet been grasped. And even if it has, this permutation refers to a time when the practice is still to be mastered. This applies even to students of the highest capacity, as indicated by the sequence of listening, reflecting and meditating (*thos bsam sgom pa*). He concludes that this explanation applies equally to the first and third permutations.³²⁶

Naturally, this raises the question as to whether there is much difference between these two permutations at all. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma explains that, in the *Theg mchog mdzod*, the first permutation signifies a failure to comprehend the crucial point of the instruction. The statement that the instruction is not applied practically (*lag tu blang du med pa*) makes this clear, he says.³²⁷ He continues:

This means that when you are training in other perfection stage practices of Highest Yoga Tantra, for example, you might understand the explanations of the clear light or wisdom form (*kāya*), but unless you also fully understand the practices through which they are accomplished—the yogic practices involving channels, wind-energies and essences—you are just like a boatman without any oars. Similarly, you might understand the explanations of awareness and its radiance (*gdangs*) or the meaning of the ground and ground-manifestations (*gzhi snang*), but unless you are also skilled in the definitive points of how to remain and thereby transform your understanding into the essence of the path and fruition, [the result will be just as in

³²⁵ JTNg vol. 1: 552.1; JTNs vol. 2: 108.7: de gnyis tha mal du lus lugs mi 'dra yang| sgom byung gi sne ma zin pa la 'dra zhing|

³²⁶ JTNg vol. 1: 552.1; JTNs vol. 2: 108.9: de las mu gsum pas ni gdams pa'i gnad ma rnyed pa shin tu gsal la de tshang bar rnyed kyang rnyed pa ltar gyi nyams len ma 'byongs pa'i skabs ni gdul bya mchog la'ang yod tshul thos bsam sgom pa'i go rim gyis shes shing| de gong smros^a ltar mu dang pos bsdus par bshad na'ang mi 'thad pa med mod kyi| ^a JTNg smos.

³²⁷ JTNg vol. 1: 552.3; JTNs vol. 2: 108.14: mu dang po theg mchog mdzod kyi sgras zin gtso bo ni| man ngag gi gnad tshang bar ma rnyed pa la byed de| lag tu blang du med par zhes sogs kyi gsal lo|

the saying]: “In the desert of ambiguous treatises, stricken by thirst and left to die.”³²⁸

This passage suggests that the tetralemma is not simply a means to demonstrate the superiority of the Heart-Essence. Here, the permutations serve to chart the progress of an individual. Thus, the first permutation applies to a practitioner of the Heart-Essence, albeit one who has not progressed beyond an early stage. It is necessary even for inexperienced practitioners of the Heart-Essence to understand such topics as awareness and its radiance, or the ground and what originates from it. But such knowledge of the theory must eventually be combined with practical skill. Whether one dies “an ordinary death” or not is not simply determined by the tradition one follows; it also depends on one’s progress within a certain tradition. In connecting it to individual progress, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was possibly seeking to realign the tetralemma and lend it a more practical purpose in an era when the superiority of the sNying-thig had long been accepted.

In summary, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s exegesis serves to clarify the statements of his tradition’s founders, Klong-chen rab-’byams and ’Jigs-med gling-pa, partly by reconciling contradictions in their works. He writes with authority and makes his own original contributions, but his explanation of *dnegos gzhi* is firmly anchored in traditional sources. Let us contrast his approach with that of Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang (1879–1941), the famous rDzogs-chen commentator and abbot of Kaḥ-thog. The latter’s account in the *Kun bzang thugs kyi tikka* simplifies the tetralemma and relates each permutation to a different level of teaching (*see Table 2*):

³²⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 552.3; JTNs vol. 2: 108.16: de’i don yang dper na bla med kyi rdzogs rim gzhan la slob tshe ’od gsal dang ye shes kyi sku’i ’jog tshul la go ba rnyed kyang de dag sgrub byed rtsa rlung thig le’i rnal ’byor rnams legs par ma shes na mnyan pa lag skya med pa lta bur ’gro ba de bzhin du| rig pa dang de’i gdangs kyi ’jog tshul lam gzhi dang gzhi snang gi go don sogs shes kyang de dag lam dang ’bras bu’i ngo bor go ’pho ba’i thabs su skyong thabs kyi gnad nges pa gsungs pa’i don rnams la ma mkhas na| de ni bstan bcos don mang mya ngam gyi| |thang la skom pas gdung ste ’chi bar zad|

In this, the first [permutation] relates to the categories of Mind (*sems*) and Space (*klong*); the second to the Outer, Inner and Secret sections of the Pith Instruction category; the third to the Dialectical Vehicle (*mtshan nyid theg pa*); and the fourth to the main part of the Innermost Unexcelled [section of the Pith Instruction category.]³²⁹

Table 2: Four permutations of *dnegos gzhi* in the *Kun bzang thugs kyi tikka*

	Referent per <i>Kun bzang thugs kyi tikka</i>
1. Basis, not actual	Mind Category (<i>sems sde</i>), Space Category (<i>klong sde</i>)
2. Actual, not basis	Outer, Inner & Secret sections of Pith Instruction Category (<i>man ngag sde</i>)
3. Neither actual nor basis	Dialectical vehicle (<i>mtshan nyid theg pa</i>)
4. Both actual and basis	Innermost Unexcelled section (<i>yang gsang bla na med pa</i>) of Pith Instruction Category

These correlations do not appear in either the *Theg mchog mdzod* or in the *Ye shes bla ma*. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma himself offers no such radical interpretation. He does not depart from the views of his tradition's founders but seeks to reconcile them. Any additions that he makes are part of an attempt to achieve harmonization. This itself is a recognised feature of scholasticism.³³⁰

2.2.3. The Intermediary States & Stages of Dissolution

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma also seeks to clarify incongruities when he discusses the stages of dissolution (*thim rim*) at death and the post-mortem intermediary states (*bar do*). He does so in several places in his rDzogs-chen

³²⁹ *Kun bzang thugs kyi tikka* 251b.1: de la dang po ni sems klong gnyis| gnyis pa man ngag sde'i phyi nang gsang ba'i skor gsum| gsum pa mtshan nyid theg pa| bzhi pa yang gsang bla na med pa'i dnegos gzhi'o| Cf. sMyo-shul 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje's similar but crucially different interpretation in his *Rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i zhal lung*, where he suggests that it is the first permutation, rather than the third, that relates to the dialectical vehicle (180.6f.: mu dang po go myong rtogs gsum med pa mtshan nyid theg pa| mu gnyis pa gsang sngags thun mong ba| mu gsum pa rdzogs chen sems klong thig le skor gsum dang| mu bzhi pa skor tsho bzhi pas don gyi ngo bo gtan la phab pa). The difference is most likely attributable to an error in the text however, as the third permutation, which is neither the actual nor the basis, should always represent the least evolved state or scenario.

³³⁰ Cabezón 1994: 55: "Scholastics are systematizers, and as such they seek to bring unity to a tradition. To accomplish this, scholastic philosophers have often considered it necessary to create (or, less charitably, to impose) a monothetic vision on a polysemic textual corpus."

writings, most notably in the *Ye shes bla ma'i dka' gnas zin bris* and in response to some of the questions that 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros poses.³³¹

Throughout these texts, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma relies upon the views of Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa. Thus, when he is asked about the stages of dissolution, he directs his correspondent to the *Theg mchog mdzod* and *Ye shes bla ma*.³³² Once again, he displays caution when he identifies contradiction or illogicality in these treatises. For example, when asked about an unusual sequence of post-mortem experiences in one of 'Jigs-med gling-pa's aspiration prayers, he is reluctant to interpret this anomaly as an error:

[Question 16:] What is the significance of the explanation in the intermediate state aspiration prayer of the *Heart Essence of the Vast Expanse* that the [experience of] redness arises before [the whiteness experience]?³³³

[Answer:] There would appear to be some purpose behind the sequence of the three symbolic appearances of redness, whiteness and blackness in *sKu gsum zhing khams sbyong ba'i smon lam*. Still, in other works, such as the *dGongs gcig rgya mtsho*, the *rTsa rhung rig 'dzin 'khrul 'khor* and the earlier and later sections of *rNam mkhyen shing rta*, the omniscient one himself [i.e., 'Jigs-med gling-pa] explains them in the usual sequence of whiteness, redness, and blackness. I wonder, therefore, whether we can be certain that the earlier text is not corrupted by a scribal error.³³⁴

³³¹ i.e., in *rDzogs chen dris lan* (JTNg vol. 1 563–579; JTNs vol. 2: 117–135). The *Hor 'od zer gyi ngor gdams pa* (JTNg vol. 1: 554.2–561; JTNs vol. 2: 110–117) also briefly discusses the dissolution stages

³³² JTNg vol. 1 559.2; JTNs vol. 2: 115.9: sa sa la thim pa sogs nas| rnam shes nam mkha'| nam mkha' 'od gsal| 'od gsal zung 'jug| zung 'jug ye shes| ye shes lhun grub la thim pa'i bar dang| mthar lhun grub nang dbyings su sdud pa'i tshul bcas rgya cher theg mchog mdzod dang| gnad 'dus khrid yig ye shes bla mar gsal bas der gzig shig|

³³³ The texts on the process of dying, which ultimately derive from the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and associated literature (Germano 2007: 72), refer to an experience of brilliant luminosity which follows the three post-mortem experiences of whiteness, redness and blackness, known as 'appearance' (*snang ba*), 'increase' (*mched pa*) and 'near-attainment' (*nyer thob*). These three stages occur after the outer dissolution of the body's five elements and are accompanied by the cessation of 80 instinctive forms of conceptualization: 33 forms associated with anger, 40 with desire, and seven with ignorance. The dawning of clear light, which follows immediately upon the experience of near-attainment and the cessation of all these conceptualizations, is likened to a clear, cloudless sky. Thurman (2010) translates *snang mched nyer thob gsum* as luminance, radiance and imminence, and gives Sanskrit as *āloka*, *ābhāsa*, *upalabdhi*. He calls them the "three intuitions" or "intuitive wisdoms" of the subtle mind and says they are "experienced as moonlit, sunlit and darklit [sic] (or evening twilight or midnight darkened) sky spaces, when the wind-energies have dissolved into the central channel and the 80 instinctual natures have subsided" (628) The subsequent fourth state of clear light is "experienced as a diamond crystal grey predawn twilight transparency or transparency" (ibid.).

³³⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 571.3; JTNs vol. 2: 126.14: bcu drug pa| klong snying bar do'i smon lam las dmar lam ngon du 'char bar bshad pa'i gnad ci lags gsungs par| sku gsum zhing khams sbyong ba'i smon lam las snang bag sum gyi rtags snang dmar dkar nag gsum gyi rim pas sbyar ba de la dgongs par

Although there is no other textual support for this sequence—according to which the redness experience (*dmār lam*) of increase (*mched pa*) precedes the whiteness experiences (*dkar lam*) of appearance (*snang ba*)—’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma allows for some purpose or “intention” (*dgongs pa*) behind it. He then concedes that since ’Jigs-med gling-pa himself makes no reference to this in his other writings, the original text may have been corrupted. The language here, with its use of the double negative “*min pa’i nges pa’ang mi ’dug snyam*” (“I wonder...whether we can be certain that...is not...”), is markedly hesitant.

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to this potential anomaly in his response to Hor ’Od-zer. After directing his questioner to the *Theg mchog mdzod* and *Ye shes bla ma*, he writes:

Various statements have been made about whether it is necessary for the three experiences of appearance, increase and attainment (*snang mched thob gsum*) to arise as is explained in other tantras. In fact, awareness (*rig pa*) in this system is the same as the wisdom of clear light. Therefore, the clear light at the conclusion of appearance, increase and attainment is the actual awareness of the Great Perfection. However, when it comes to how the awareness of the Great Perfection manifests, it is not certain that it will occur in the way the three—i.e., appearance, increase and attainment—are explained. This is because there is variation in how the clear light arises based on the distinctive characteristics of the individual. Accordingly, various stages of dissolution are taught in other hidden tantras (*sbas rgyud*), the *Kālacakra*, and here.³³⁵

This explanation may be intended to account for the unexpected statement in the *Klong chen snying thig* aspiration prayer, but it also harmonises rDzogs-chen with the gSar-ma tantras, especially the *Kālacakra*. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma proposes

mngon mod| bar do’i smon lam dgongs pa gcig rgya mtsho dang| rtsa rlung rig ’dzin ’khrul ’khor| rnam mkhyen shing rta’i gong ’og sogs kun tu dkar dmar nag gsum gyi rim pa spyi ’gros ltar kun mkhyen nyid kyis bshad ’dug pas snga ma’i de yi ge ’khrugs pa’i dpe skyon min pa’i nges pa’ang mi ’dug snyam|

³³⁵ JTNg vol. 1: 559.4; JTNs vol. 2: 115.14f.: ’di dus snang mched thob gsum rgyud gzhan nas bshad tshod ltar ’char dgos mi dgos la sna tshogs smra yang| don gnas ni ’di’i lugs kyi rig pa dang| ’od gsal gyi ye shes gcig yin| des na snang mched thob gsum gyi mtha’i ’od gsal rdzogs chen gyi rig pa dngos yin kyang^a| rdzogs chen gyi rig pa ’chi dus mngon du byed tshul la snang mched thob gsum bshad tshod bzhin ’ong ba’i nges pa med de| ’od gsal ’char tshul la gang zag gi khyad par gyis mi ’dra ba sna tshogs shig snang ba’i phyir te| sbas rgyud gzhan dang dus ’khor dang| ’di nas gsungs pa’i ’od gsal du thim pa’i rim pa mi ’dra ba bzhin no|| ^a JTNs *yang*.

that differences in the explanations of the dissolution process reflect differences in the spiritual capacity of individuals.³³⁶ Such inclusivism is characteristic of his rDzogs-chen writings in other areas too, as will become apparent.³³⁷

2.2.4. Gnoseological Precision

Gnoseology, i.e., the definition and typology of wisdom (*ye shes*; *jñāna*) and/or awareness (*rig pa*), is a recurrent theme in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's writings on rDzogs-chen. rDzogs-chen asserts that wisdom awareness is the most fundamental facet of what we believe to constitute existence. Ontology is, in this respect, subordinate to gnoseology. The full range of lived experience within saṃsāra, or unenlightened existence, arises through our failure to recognise primordial awareness and the consequence of this failure, delusion.³³⁸

2.2.4.1. Gnosis and the Onset of Delusion

In the *Theg mchog mdzod*, Klong-chen rab-'byams describes in detail the process through which beings either recognise the original ground of reality and become enlightened or fail to perceive it and thereby stray into delusion.³³⁹ Klong-chen rab-'byams's writings constitute an authoritative source for later commentators, including 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. Yet, this remained a complex topic, prompting questions from students seeking to make sense of canonical sources. One such student was 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros. He enquired whether the onset of delusion might not point to a flaw in the ground of reality itself.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma responded as follows:

³³⁶ Moreover, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma repeats his assertion that the dissolution process varies from one individual to another in his text of answers to questions from 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros. (JTNg vol. 1: 567.3; JTNs vol. 2: 122.11: gang zag gi khyad par gyis thim rtags de dag la mngon tshan che chung ni sna tshogs shig 'ong ba 'dra)

³³⁷ See the next chapter.

³³⁸ Hence the recently coined term “psycho-cosmogony”. See Germano 2004b: 290.

³³⁹ These topics are covered most extensively in chapters eight, nine and ten of the treatise. See KLR vol. 17: 312–387. See also Germano 1992: 60–76 & 143–213.

The great brahmin [i.e., Saraha] said:

Mind-as-such alone is the seed of all,
Wherein existence and nirvāṇa arise.³⁴⁰

As this indicates, if the genuine mind of clear light (*'od gsal gnyug ma'i sems*) alone is not recognized, then it is the ground of delusion; whereas if it is recognized and stability [in this recognition] is attained, it becomes the source of liberation. As the former corresponds to the phase of the ground and the latter to the phase of fruition, the great Omniscient [Klong chen pa] refuted claims that these two [i.e., the ground of delusion and ground of liberation] are identical. At the ground stage, every time we die, the clear light dawns in its entirety, but, through a failure to recognize it, we revert to the flow of deluded, dualistic grasping. By contrast, when arriving at the state of liberation, there can be no turning back, because we will have seized the stronghold directly. This is the difference.³⁴¹

Here 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma relies once again on Klong-chen rab-'byams. But he also breaks with tradition. To the best of my knowledge, the phrase *'od gsal gnyug ma'i sems* does not appear in any of Klong-chen rab-'byams's writings.³⁴² Moreover, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma cites Saraha rather than one of the rDzogs-chen tantras or a figure from the rNying-ma tradition. While many of his contemporaries draw upon Saraha's *dohās*, few do so in their explanations of rDzogs-chen.³⁴³

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma argues that while clear light and the deluded mind (*'khrul pa'i sems*) are not identical, they possess the same character (*bdag nyid*), essence (*ngo bo*) or substance (*rdzas*). He does not cite any sources in support of his opinion. This perhaps prompts him to adopt a tentative tone:

³⁴⁰ These lines are from Saraha's *Dohākoṣagīti* (*Do ha mdzod kyi glu*). Jackson 2004: 73 gives the original as: *cittekka saalavīaṃ bhavaṇivvāṇo vi jasma viphuranti*.

³⁴¹ JTNg vol. 1: 563.3; JTNs vol. 2: 118.8: *bram ze chen pos| sems nyid gcig pu kun gyi sa bon te| |gang la srid dang mya ngan 'das 'phro ba| |zhes gsungs pa ltar| 'od gsal gnyug ma'i sems gcig pu de ka ngo ma shes na 'khrul pa'i gzhi dang| ngo shes nas brtan pa thob na grol sar 'gyur te snga ma gzhi dang phyi ma 'bras bu'i gnas skabs yin pas de gnyis gcig tu smra ba kun mkhyen chen pos bkag yod| gzhi'i skabs su 'chi thengs re bzhin 'od gsal de yongs rdzogs 'char yang ngo ma shes pa'i dbang gis slar yang 'khrul pa'i gzung 'dzin gyi yo lang du ldog la| grol sar slebs dus rang thog tu btsan sa zin pas phyir mi ldog pa'i khyad par yod|*

³⁴² *gnyug sems 'od gsal* does however appear in the title of one of the texts of 'Ju Mi-pham's *gNyug sems skor gsum*, while similar phrases, such as *gnyug ma'i 'od gsal* and *gnyug don gyi 'od gsal* appear in the same author's *rTogs ldan rgan mo rnams kyi lugs sems ngo mdzub tshugs kyi gdams pa mun sel sgron me*, MPc Vol. 32: 363–368.

³⁴³ 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma also refers to Saraha elsewhere in the rDzogs-chen corpus, e.g., JTNs vol. 2: 59.

The clear light of the ground never develops into the essence of delusion; it could not possibly do so, which is why it is described as ‘primordially liberated’, ‘utterly pure from the beginning’, ‘alpha pure’ (*ka dag*), and so on. But then we cannot say that the energetic mind, which has begun to cling to ground-appearances, is undeluded. Therefore, we must say that these two are not identical and are distinct. Yet, as was said by the awareness-holders of the past, although delusion is not clear light, there can be no delusion in the absence of clear light. In view of this, I wonder if we should not assert that delusion is of the same character or essence as clear light yet differs in substance.³⁴⁴

Clear light cannot be identical to delusion, he explains: the former is pure and undeluded, the latter is impure and deluded. Still, since delusion can only exist because of clear light—as a misuse of its potential, one might say—they must be of the same character, essence or substance. In other words, clear light and delusion are substantially but not functionally identical. And while delusion depends on clear light, the reverse is not true: clear light does not depend on delusion. David Higgins refers to this as “structural asymmetry”: ignorance depends on awareness, but awareness does not depend on ignorance.³⁴⁵ ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to clear light (*’od gsal*) here, whereas most other rDzogs-chen authors speak only of pure awareness (*rig pa*).

2.2.4.2. The Distinction Between Mind and Awareness

The differentiation (*shan ’byed*) between the ordinary mind (*sems*) and pure awareness is a key feature of the Heart-Essence form of rDzogs-chen. It is so important that Higgins, who devoted an entire thesis to the topic, compares it to the two truths theory in Madhyamaka.³⁴⁶ He identifies several key texts and passages on *shan ’byed* in the writings of Klong-chen rab-’byams, for whom it was certainly an

³⁴⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 564.4; JTNs vol. 2: 119.11: gzhi’i ’od gsal ’khrul pa’i ngo bor skyes ma myong zhing mi srid pas ye grol dang gdod nas rnam dag dang ka dag sogs su brjod la| gzhi snang la ’dzin pa zhugs pa’i rlung sems de ma ’khrul zer mi nus pas de gnyis mi gcig cing tha dad du ’jog dgos kyang| ’khrul pa ’od gsal min yang ’od gsal spangs pa’i ’khrul pa cig med par rig ’dzin gong mas gsungs pa ltar de ’dra’i ’khrul pa de ’od gsal de’i bdag nyid dang ngo bo nyid du khas blang dgos kyi rdzas tha dad du mi ’jog par sems lags|

³⁴⁵ Cf. Higgins 2013: 73: “*ma rig pa* depends on *rig pa* but *rig pa* does not depend on *ma rig pa*.”

³⁴⁶ “It is no exaggeration to claim that the mind/primordial knowing distinction is as important to understanding Klong chen pa’s rDzogs-chen exegesis as the two truths distinction is to understanding Nāgārjuna’s Madhyamaka exegesis.” (Higgins 2013: 22)

important concept. Yet, in spite of Klong-chen rab-'byams's signal contributions on the topic, some still viewed it as a later invention. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma refers to such unnamed critics in his *sGron me'i snang ba*. There are those, he says, who claim that the distinction between mind and pure awareness was “not known to the translators and scholars of the past,” and that it was “invented by the awareness-keeper (*vidyādhara*)³⁴⁷ 'Jigs-med gling-pa”.³⁴⁸ Unsurprisingly, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma dismisses such a suggestion; he labels it “devilish talk”.³⁴⁹ For him, the distinction between the ordinary mind and pure awareness is the key to all rDzogs-chen instructions.³⁵⁰ He refers to *shan 'byed* repeatedly. He even makes it the main theme of his *dPal seng gi ngor gdams pa*,³⁵¹ which explains how rDzogs-chen gnoseology differs from general Buddhist epistemology:

There are what we call ‘mind’ (*sems*) and ‘awareness’ (*rig pa*). Some common scriptures say that all that is ‘principal mind’ (*gtso sems*) is mind (*sems*), while cognition (*shes pa*) is what is ‘clear and aware’. They thus claim that mind is synonymous with consciousness (*rnam shes*), while awareness is synonymous with cognition (*shes pa*). Yet, such explanations are insufficient to identify the mind and pure awareness of rDzogs-chen texts. Here, mind is the root of samsāric existence and includes a tendency to cling to things as real; while pure awareness is the wisdom (*ye shes*) of settling evenly in accordance with reality (*dharmatā*).³⁵²

³⁴⁷ Although *vidyādhara* originally meant something akin to sorcerer (and even refers to a type of supernatural being in some Indian literature), this is not the sense in which *rig[-pa]-'dzin[-pa]* is used by rDzogs-chen authors in Tibet. To translate the term as sorcerer (or a similar term) would be an example of what some refer to as an etymological fallacy. In a transcript of an undated oral teaching, the rDzogs-chen teacher Dil-mgo mKhyen-brtse bKra-shis dpal-'byor (1910–1991) explains the term *rig 'dzin* as follows: “*Vidyā* or ‘awareness’ (*rig pa*) means wisdom that is beyond eternalism and nihilism. The *vidyādhara*s are those who always maintain or ‘hold’ (Skt. *dhara*) this awareness within the expanse of their compassion, both in meditation and post-meditation.” (*rig pa ye shes rtag chad dang bral ba'i don de| mnyam bzhag dang rjes thob med par thugs rje'i klong nas rtag tu phyag tu 'dzin pa bzhin du yod pa'i phyir na rig 'dzin zhes bya ba yin*).

³⁴⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 447.2; JTNs vol. 2: 6.8: *sems dang rig pa'i shan 'byed kyi 'phyong zer rgyu zhig sngon gyi lo pañ rnam la ma grags kyang rig 'dzin 'jigs gling gis rang bzo yin zhes zer ba ni...*

³⁴⁹ JTNg vol. 1: 447.3; JTNs vol. 2: 6.10: ...*kha bdud kyis bskul ba'i smre sngags shig...*

³⁵⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 554.4; JTNs vol. 2: 110.16f.: *de la spyir rdzogs chen gyi gdams pa'i zab khyad mtha' yas kyang| rtsa ba'i gnad ni yon tan rin po che'i mdzod las| gang dag sems las 'das pa'i rig pa ni| rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po'i khyad chos yin| zhes gsungs pa ltar sems rig shan 'byed la thug pas...*

³⁵¹ JTNg vol. 1: 496.1–498.4; JTNs vol. 2: 53–55.

³⁵² JTNg vol. 1: 496.2; JTNs vol. 2: 53.8: *sems dang rig pa zhes bya ba 'di thun mong gi gzhung kha cig tu gtso sems thams cad sems yin la| gsal zhing rig pa shes pa yin te| sems dang mam shes don gcig shes pa dang rig pa don gcig tu 'dod kyang rdzogs chen gyi gzhung las bshad pa'i sems rig gi ngos 'dzin ni de tsam la mi byed de| srid pa'i rtsa ba bden 'dzin cha dang bcas pa ni sems yin la| chos nyid kyi don la mnyam par bzhag pa'i ye shes ni rig pa ste|*

The explanation is addressed to a reader who is familiar with concepts from Abhidharma and Pramāṇa, possibly more so than with rDzogs-chen. The terms *sems* and *rig pa* are not unique to rDzogs-chen; they occur in a general epistemological context too. But 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma explains how their interpretation differs in rDzogs-chen. Here *rig pa* assumes a far more exalted, transcendent sense (hence its translation as *pure* or *open* awareness) than it carries in general Buddhist epistemology: that is, a dualistic form of knowledge.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma offers a more detailed and unusual typology of awareness elsewhere in his writings. rDzogs-chen authors commonly focus on the threefold wisdom (*ye shes gsum*) that characterises the ground of being (*gzhi*), i.e., the wisdom of the essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*) and compassionate resonance (*thugs rje*).³⁵³ 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma offers additional classifications. In his *rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa'i khyad par*, for example, he differentiates between essential awareness (*ngo bo'i rig pa*), expressive awareness (*rtsal gyi rig pa*), ground-awareness (*gzhi'i rig pa*), ground-appearance awareness (*gzhi snang gi rig pa*), and awareness of the spontaneously present sphere (*lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa*).³⁵⁴

If it belongs to the ground—as one of the pair, ground and ground-appearances (*gzhi snang*)—it follows that it is essential awareness (*ngo bo'i rig pa*). If it is the ground, it follows that it is not ground-appearance awareness. Although being expressive awareness (*rtsal gyi rig pa*) does not entail that all the characteristics of ground-appearance awareness are complete, it does follow that it is merely [i.e., on some basic level] ground-appearance awareness. Analyse whether it follows that ground-appearance awareness is also expressive awareness. Although the awareness that dawns amidst present sensory impressions cannot be separated from the essential aspect, it is considered expressive awareness, rather than essential awareness. From what has just been said, the reader will understand how it follows that the ground (as one element of the pair, ground versus ground-appearances) is not the expressive awareness. It does not follow that whatever is expressive awareness is not essential awareness, because the stage of [awareness] reaching full measure (*tshad phebs*)³⁵⁵

³⁵³ On these three wisdoms see Germano 1992: 852–857 & 880; Deroche and Yasuda 2015, *passim*.

³⁵⁴ This term signifies the awareness that is a feature of the spontaneously present sphere—or literally enclosure (*sbubs*)—of wisdom-reality.

³⁵⁵ i.e., the third of the four visions (*snang ba bzhi*) in rDzogs-chen.

is ground-appearance and must therefore be expressive awareness and yet the stronghold within the essence has been captured. Nor does it follow that awareness must be either ground or ground-appearance awareness, because awareness of the spontaneously present sphere (*lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa*) is not the ground and yet it is a form of awareness in which ground-appearances have dissolved into basic space (*dbyings*).³⁵⁶

Once again, the explanation here is scholastic in character. For example, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma employs the terminology of logic and debate, especially the notion of 'pervasion' or 'entailment' (*khyab pa; vyāpti*),³⁵⁷ to chart the relationships between the various types of pure awareness (as shown in Table 3). This allows him to establish precise distinctions between categories that might otherwise remain ambiguous or confused.³⁵⁸

Table 3: Typology of *rig pa* according to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma

Pure awareness (<i>rig pa</i>)		
Ground awareness (<i>gzhi'i rig pa</i>)	Ground-appearance awareness (<i>gzhi snang gi rig pa</i>)	Awareness of the spontaneously present sphere (<i>lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa</i>)
Essential awareness (<i>ngo bo'i rig pa</i>)	Expressive awareness (<i>rtsal gyi rig pa</i>)	
	Awareness at stage of reaching full measure (<i>rig pa tshad phebs</i>)	

³⁵⁶ JTNg. vol. 1: 602.6; JTNs vol. 2: 157.8 f: *gzhi dang gzhi snang gi zlas phye ba'i gzhi yin na ngo bo'i rig pas khyab| ngo bo'i rig pa yin na gzhi des ma khyab| gzhi de yin na gzhi snang gi rig pa min pas khyab| rtsal gyi rig pa yin na gzhi snang gi rig pa mtshan nyid tshang ba yin pas ma khyab kyang gzhi snang gi rig pa tsam yin pas khyab| gzhi snang gi rig pa la rtsal gyi rig pas kyang khyab bam dpyad| da lta yul thog tu 'char dus kyi rig pa la yang ngo bo'i cha 'bral mi shes par yod kyang gtso che ba'i dbang gis rtsal gyi rig pa yin gyi ngo bo'i rig par mi 'jog gzhi dang gzhi snang gi zlas phye ba'i gzhi la rtsal gyi rig pa min pas khyab pa bshad ma thag pas shes| rtsal gyi rig pa yin na ngo bo'i rig pa min pas ma khyab ste tshad phebs dus gzhi snang yin pas rtsal rig yin dgos shing ngo bo'i steng du btsan sa zin pa yin pas so| rig pa yin na gzhi dang gzhi snang gi rig pa gang rung gis ma khyab ste grol sa lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa de gzhi min la gzhi snang dbyings su thim pa'i rig pa yin pa'i phyir|*

³⁵⁷ On this concept see Perdue 2014: 83–98 and Tillemans 1999: 12–17.

³⁵⁸ Higgins 2013: 108 refers to the "baroque intricacies" of rDzogs-chen gnoseology.

This typology can also be expressed through four permutations (*mu bzhi*), as in the discussion of *dngos gzhi* above.³⁵⁹ Thus, the four possible types of *rig pa* are: 1) *rig pa* that is expressive but not essential; 2) *rig pa* that is essential but not expressive; 3) *rig pa* that is both; and 4) *rig pa* that is neither. These relationships are captured in Table 4:

Table 4: The four permutations of expressive and essential *rig pa*

<i>Permutation</i>	<i>Referent</i>
1. Expressive but not essential	Awareness that dawns amidst present sensory impressions
2. Essential but not expressive	Ground-awareness
3. Both expressive and essential	Awareness at stage of reaching full measure (<i>rig pa tshad phebs</i>)
4. Neither expressive nor essential [= neither ground awareness nor ground-appearance awareness]	Awareness of the spontaneously present sphere (<i>lhun grub sbubs kyi rig pa</i>)

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s approach to gnoseology proved influential.

Khang-sar bstan-pa’i-dbang-phyug (1938–2014), for example, cites ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma as a reference on the typology of *rig pa*:³⁶⁰

As rDo-grub ’Jigs-med bstan [-pa’i] nyi [-ma] would say: “What we need to cultivate is essential awareness, and the means of cultivating it is the awareness of compassionate resonance. It is through familiarity with the awareness of compassionate resonance, or expressive awareness, that we must arrive at the essential awareness to be cultivated.” Therefore, we can understand that our experience grows gradually clearer, like gold that is melted, cut and polished. Sudden developers, who are of the highest faculties and are ‘liberated upon hearing’,

³⁵⁹ The following accords with the Fourteenth Dalai Lama’s oral commentary on the same passage. See Dalai Lama 2000: 183–4.

³⁶⁰ However, the statement Khang-sar bstan-pa’i-dbang-phyug cites does not appear in ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s collected writings and would therefore seem either to belong to an oral tradition or to derive from a lost work.

experience the inseparable merging of the mother and child luminosities merely through the guru's introduction. All objects arise for them as *dharmatā*; view and meditation become one; and appearances and mind merge inseparably. This is possible but happens in only a few cases.³⁶¹

Here, the term 'awareness of compassionate resonance' (*thugs rje'i rig pa*) is a synonym for 'expressive awareness' (*rtsal gyi rig pa*). In this view, rDzogs-chen practitioners cultivate essential awareness through the awareness of either compassionate resonance or expressive awareness. The only exception to this is the sudden developer (*cig char ba*), who experience perfect essential awareness immediately, simply through the guru's instruction. However, such individuals are rare. For most, the path is more gradual: once expressive awareness is introduced, the path requires a process of familiarisation through meditation.

Other authors offer slightly different versions of this typology. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, whose writings I examine in Chapter Five, distinguishes between ground-awareness and path-awareness (*lam rig*). This is not a term that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma uses; nor is it found in the writings of Klong-chen rab-'byams.³⁶² mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho claims to be following his teacher:

The awareness of the Great Perfection, my all-knowing guru would assert, is the path-awareness. In the advice of the awareness-keepers (*vidyādhara*) of old, it is claimed to be the ground-awareness. However, if we examine this carefully, in the tradition of this doctrine, the recognition that comes from experiencing the meaning of how the ground abides, just as it is, is the awareness of the Great Perfection. There can be no path-awareness, therefore, separate from the ground-awareness. And since no one would accept that the mere indeterminate (*lung ma bstan*) ground-awareness at the time when we stray from the nature of the ground is the awareness

³⁶¹ KTB, vol. 3: 201: rdo grub 'jigs med bstan nyis| bsgom bya ngo bo'i rig pa dang| sgom byed thugs rje'i rig pa gnyis yod pas| sgom byed thugs rje'i rig pa'am rtsal gyi rig pa 'di nyid goms pa la brten nas| bsgom bya ngo bo'i rig thog tu skyel dgos par gsungs pas na| bsregs bcad brdar ba'i gser bzhin du je gsal du 'ong ba 'dis kyang shes| dbang rnon thos grol cig char ba yin na bla mas ngo sprod btap pa tsam gyis 'od gsal ma bu dbyer med du 'dres 'gro ba srid kyang de 'dra ni re re tsam mo| The image of melting, cutting and polishing (*bsregs bcad brdar*) gold here evokes the famous statement attributed to the Buddha (but not to be found in any sūtra in the *bKa' 'gyur*), which appears in Kamalaśīla's *Tattvasaṃgrahaṇīkā* (DT vol. 191, 143b.2): dge slong dag dang mkhas rnam kyis| |bsreg bcad brdar ba'i gser bzhin du| |legs par brtag la nga yi bka'| |blang bar bya yi gus phyir min| |

³⁶² A search of the e-text version of Klong-chen rab-'byams's collected writings on TBRC/BDRC reveals no occurrence of *lam gyi rig pa* as a phrase. Although "*lam rig*" occurs, nowhere does it appear as a biphonemic term, only where the syllables occur as part of other terms.

of Great Perfection, either [position] is feasible; it is purely a matter of how precise one is with terminology.³⁶³

Here, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho uses “path-awareness” as a synonym for what ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma calls “expressive awareness.” Both path-awareness (for mDo-sngags Chos-kyi rgya-mtsho) and expressive awareness (for ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma) are tools to realize the ultimate form of awareness, which mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho calls ground-awareness. Yet, path-awareness is itself an aspect of ground-awareness. The distinction, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho says, is primarily a matter of terminological precision; it does not represent an objective distinction. In other words, it is perfectly acceptable to understand the pure awareness of the Great Perfection as either path-/ expressive awareness or ground awareness (which includes path-/expressive awareness). Quite apart from the validity of such gnoseological claims, the rarefied nature of these elucidations once again highlights the emergence of a highly technical form of rDzogs-chen discourse.

3. Conclusion

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s writings on rDzogs-chen confirm that he was an heir to multiple traditions, including the dGe-mang Movement and the broader scholastic resurgence of which it formed a part. Since he embraced the teachings of the *Klong chen snying thig*, he regarded both Klong-chen rab-’byams and ’Jigs-med gling-pa as authoritative, and their writings virtually canonical. Naturally, he is cautious when he spots disagreement between these two “omniscient ones”. He

³⁶³ DC vol. 2: 228.3: rdzogs pa chen po’i rig pa ni| bdag gi bla ma thams cad mkhyen pas lam rig la bzhed| rig ’dzin rgan po nmams kyi gsung sgros la gzhi rig la bzhed pa lta bu zhig snang yang zhib tu brtags na chos ’di’i lugs la gzhi’i bzhugs tshul ji bzhin pa’i don nyams su myong ba’i tshul gyis ngo ’phrod pa zhig rdzogs pa chen po’i rig pa yin pas gzhi rig las logs su lam rig ’jog rgyu med cing| gzhi’i bzhugs tshul las gol ba’i dus kyi gzhi rig lung ma bstan tsam rdzogs pa chen po’i rig par su yang mi bzhed pas tha snyad rags zhib las gang yang ’thad.

seeks to harmonise, and account for, divergence. This is clearly attested in his explanations of *dngos gzhi* and the post-death *bar do* states. At the same time, as a recipient of scholastic training, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma brings to rDzogs-chen exegesis a desire for terminological precision and doctrinal exactitude. We detect this throughout his rDzogs-chen corpus, but it is especially pronounced in his gnoseological discussions.

3. Comparativism and Clear Light

“Genuine pure awareness and the mind of vajra clear light are synonymous.”

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma³⁶⁴

1. Introduction: Comparativism in rDzogs-chen

rDzogs-chen’s relationship with other strands of Buddhist doctrine has been a topic of discussion and debate ever since its tenets were first articulated.³⁶⁵ Some of the earliest Tibetan surveys of the Buddhist path portray rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga as the highest of nine successive vehicles (*theg pa’i rim pa dgu*).³⁶⁶ This model is inclusivist:³⁶⁷ it incorporates other forms of Buddhist theory and practice, while portraying them as subordinate to rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga. In fact, the term *rDzogs-chen* itself initially signified the system’s perceived superiority over other methods of perfection stage (*rdzogs rim*; *sampannakrama*) practice, the second of the two stages of deity yoga in Highest Yoga Tantra. This association with the perfection stage was never entirely forgotten.³⁶⁸ Indeed, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma

³⁶⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 554.6; JTNs vol. 2: 111.6.

³⁶⁵ See, for example, the early rDzogs-chen text *bSam gtan mig sgron*, which Pettit (1999: 82) characterizes as “a comparative philosophical study of the Great Perfection, Ch’an, tantric deity meditation, and exoteric Mahāyāna practice.”

³⁶⁶ See Karmay 1988: 146–149. Karmay notes that while the *lTa ba’i rim pa bshad pa* attributed to sKa-ba dpal-brtsegs does not use the term *rim pa dgu*, it does use the term *a ti yo ga’i theg pa* to refer to the highest of the nine stages it describes. While the text might not have been composed by sKa-ba dpal-brtsegs, who lived in the eighth and ninth centuries CE, Karmay believes that it is certainly pre-eleventh century. For a translation and study of a slightly later presentation of the nine vehicles see Cabezón 2013.

³⁶⁷ See note 16 above for a discussion of inclusivism.

³⁶⁸ As noted in the previous chapter, Germano (1994, 223) identifies at least two occasions in the writings of Klong-chen rab-’byams where *rDzogs-chen* is used in the sense of great or greater perfection stage (*rdzogs rim chen po*). The belief that rDzogs-chen refers to the great perfection stage (here called *rdzogs rim chen mo*, with a feminine ending) is also to be found in the writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho discussed in Chapter Five. See DC vol. 2, 228: *rdzogs pa chen po zhes pa don du na rdzogs rim chen mo zer bar snang yangl lugs ’di la de ltar mi bshad par...*

characterises rDzogs-chen as an *uncommon* perfection stage practice and contrasts it with the common perfection stage.³⁶⁹

rNying-ma writers put forward different reasons for rDzogs-chen's superiority. Instructional literature and polemical tracts often argue that rDzogs-chen's techniques are more effective than those of 'lower' vehicles.³⁷⁰ The Tibetan schools disagree about the nature of the distinction between the various tantric vehicles (including, for the rNying-ma, rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga); whether it is purely one of method or based on theory (*lta ba*; *darśana*).³⁷¹ Tsong-kha-pa and his followers in the dGe-lugs school argue that the distinction between sūtra and tantra hinges on method;³⁷² others, especially Mi-pham and his rNying-ma followers, maintain that philosophical views grow more profound as one ascends the hierarchical scale from one vehicle to the next. In addition, rDzogs-chen is sometimes said to bring about a unique result, the attainment of the 'rainbow body' (*'ja' lus*).³⁷³ This form of accomplishment is unknown in other Buddhist traditions.³⁷⁴ Those who believe that rDzogs-chen is superior doctrinally and practically also claim that it is suitable only for students of the highest capacity.³⁷⁵

³⁶⁹ See especially *sPrin gyi sgron ma nas* (JTNs vol. 2: 240–245), which is translated in Appendix 2.

³⁷⁰ Indeed, even within the Heart Essence system of rDzogs-chen Thod-rgal is considered superior to the Khregs-chod approach in seven ways. See *Tshig don mdzod* (KLR vol. 19: 231–235) for a list of the seven. (Cf. *'Od gsal thod rgal gyi lam khregs chod las khyad par bdun gyis 'phags tshul zin bris 'od gsal nyi zla* in JYG vol. 1: 178–181.)

³⁷¹ See Pettit 1999: 133f.: "In the fifth topic of the *Beacon* [i.e., *Nges shes sgron me*] Mipham refutes those who differentiate the various levels of tantra in the same way as the Gelugpas, that is, in terms of method and not according to different philosophical views."

³⁷² See, for example, *sNgags rim chen mo* 32.2: khyad par du theg pa chen po la gnyis su phye ba yang zab mo rtogs pa'i shes rab kyis mi 'byed kyil thabs kyis dbye dgos shing thabs kyil gtso bo yang gzugs sku sgrub pa'i cha nas yin la| gzugs sku'i sgrub byed kyil thabs ni de dang rnam pa 'dra bar sgom pa'i lha'i mal 'byor nyid theg pa gzhan gyi thabs las mchog yin pa'i phyir rol |

³⁷³ On the rainbow body see especially Kapstein 2004.

³⁷⁴ It is, of course, a feature of rDzogs-chen in the Bon tradition. Nor is it entirely without parallels in gSar-ma tantra. It is possible, for example, to explain the attainment of celestial realms (*mkha' spyod*; *khecara*) as a variety of rainbow body; see Nyoshul Khenpo 2015: 92–93.

³⁷⁵ *sKal bzang dga ba'i mgul rgyan don la rton pa'i yi ge*, a set of notes on the empowerment ritual of Bla ma yang tig, for example, draws a distinction between those of sharp faculties (*dbang rnon*) and those the most perfect faculties (*dbang po yang rab*). The former are those whose minds function conceptually (*snang ba yul gyi blo can*), while the latter are those for whom awareness is naturally manifest (*rig pa rang snang gi blo can*). See KLR vol. 10: 314.

Tantra in general is intended only for those of the sharpest faculties; proponents of rDzogs-chen extend this claim: rDzogs-chen is reserved for an elite even among followers of tantra.³⁷⁶

Many rDzogs-chen authors claim that rDzogs-chen is swifter than other systems. This is usually attributed to its superior methods, but some authors also point to the superior insight or philosophical acumen of its followers. In the *Phyag rdzogs kyi de kho na nyid rab tu dbye ba'i gtam ke ta ka'i rna rgyan*,³⁷⁷ for example, 'Jigs-med gling-pa distinguishes the ultimate insights arrived at through different systems, especially Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen. He claims that Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen and Madhyamaka are all of a 'single flavour' (*ro gcig; ekarasa*). Yet, they bring about results at different speeds, based on the varying intellectual capacities of their followers. The difference is comparable, 'Jigs-med gling-pa says, to the variation in speed of chariots drawn by horses and oxen, or the 'orbit' of the sun and moon.³⁷⁸

At times, rDzogs-chen authors also downplay their own system's elite claims and emphasize its commonality with other traditions. Zhe-chen rgyal-tshab 'Gyur-med padma nam-rgyal (1871–1926), for example, strives to show how elements of

³⁷⁶ The *locus classicus* for the claim that tantra is for those of higher capacity is the following verse from *Tshul gsum gyi sgron ma* (**Nayatrāyapradīpa*) of **Tripitakamāla* D3707 (*sDe dge bstan 'gyur*, vol. 77 rgyud, tsu 6b–26b) 16b.3: don gcig nyid na'ang ma rmongs dang| thabs mang dka' ba med phyir dang| dbang po rnon po'i dbang byas pas| sngags kyi bstan bcos khyad par 'phags| The Sanskrit for this verse appears in Shastri 1927: 21: ekārthatve 'py asaṃmohāt bahūpāyād aduṣkarāt | tīkṣṇendriyādhikārāc ca mantrasāstraṃ viśiṣyate || (In some later Tibetan sources, the final line is changed, so that the quotation becomes a reference to the mantra vehicle—*sngags kyi theg pa*—rather than its teaching (*śāstra*). Cf. *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung*, PS vol. 7:8) Note that rDzogs-chen manuals also identify two levels of rDzogs-chen practitioner: referring to those with the sharpest faculties as *rig pa rang snang gi blo can* and those of slightly duller faculties as *dmigs pa yul gyi blo can*. See, for example, the citation from the *Rin po che'i spungs pa* tantra in *Tshig don mdzod* (KLR vol. 19: 172).

³⁷⁷ JLa vol. 7: 717–727; JLa vol. 4: 859.4–866.5.

³⁷⁸ JLa vol. 7: 717.4–5. The rhetoric of underlying sameness here is a common feature of Tibetan Buddhism. See Chapter Five below.

Thod-rgal resemble features of tantric practice included in gSar-ma texts. More often than not, comparativism of this kind serves as a defence against criticism.³⁷⁹

2. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's Approach

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma formulated detailed comparisons between the advanced tantric practices of both rNying-ma and gSar-ma traditions. These comparisons are scattered throughout his works on tantra and rDzogs-chen. But when taken together, they constitute one of the most comprehensive examples of comparativism in Tibetan Buddhist literature. Before examining the central themes of this analysis in detail,³⁸⁰ let us consider some of the doxographical and hermeneutical categories that underpin it.

2.1. Doxographical Background: A Hierarchy of Vehicles

In common with other rNying-ma authors, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma employs a hierarchical model that distinguishes nine vehicles. And, again like many other rDzogs-chen proponents, he subscribes to a twofold division within this scheme. He contrasts rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga as the sole vehicle that employs wisdom as the path (*ye shes lam du byed pa*) with the eight lesser, mind-based vehicles (*sems lam du byed pa*).³⁸¹ The resulting model is as outlined (*in Table 5*) below.

³⁷⁹ This occurs in his commentary on Mi-pham's prayer for the spread of the rNying-ma tradition, *sNga 'gyur bstan pa rgyas pa'i smon lam*, entitled *Phyogs las rnam par rgyal pa'i rgyal mtshan*. The commentary offers a lengthy defence of the rDzogs-chen practice of Thod-rgal, in response to an unspecified gSar-ma critic (or critics), attempting to show that similar practices involving visions of light were also taught in the gSar-ma tantras and commentarial writings. Thus, while Zhe-chen rgyal-tshab uses the technique of comparison to argue for the validity of the Thod-rgal visions, in doing so he is forced to sacrifice, to some extent, the practice's claims to uniqueness. See *Phyogs las rnam par rgyal pa'i rgyal mtshan*: 104–121 and the abridged translation in Ringu Tulku 2006: 257–282.

³⁸⁰ What follows does not cover every aspect of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's comparison of Highest Yoga Tantra and rDzogs-chen. Among the topics not covered are, for example: a discussion of whether the ground-appearances (*gzhi snang*) are mentioned in Highest Yoga Tantra (JTNs vol. 2: 210) and an answer to a question on the similarity of 'empty forms' (*stong gzugs*) described in Highest Yoga Tantra to the visionary experiences (*snang nyams*) spoken of in rDzogs-chen (JTNG vol. 1: 575.1f.; JTNs vol. 2: 130–131).

³⁸¹ These terms also appear in the writings of Klong-chen rab-'byams. See, for example, *Zab don rgya mtsho'i sprin* KLR vol. 7: 209.12f.

Table 5: The nine-yāna model accepted by 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma

<i>Sūtra/Mantra</i>	<i>Vehicle (yāna)</i>			<i>Basis of path</i>	<i>Schools</i>
Mantra	9. Atiyoga			Mind (<i>sems</i>)	rNying-ma Only
	8. Anuyoga				
	7. Mahāyoga/ Highest Yoga tantra				
	Father Tantra	Mother Tantra	Non-dual Tantra		
	6. Yoga tantra				
	5. Ubhaya/Caryā tantra				
	4. Kriyā tantra				
Sūtra	3. Bodhisattva			Common to rNying-ma & gSar- ma	
	2. Pratyekabuddha				
	1. Śrāvaka				

In his *mDzod kyi lde mig*, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma identifies Highest Yoga

Tantra with Mahāyoga:

Mahāyoga is divided into three: there are 1) the father tantras, such as *Guhyasamāja*, which teach mainly the perfection stage of empty-clarity and wind-energy; 2) the mother tantras, such as *Cakrasamvara*, which teach mainly the perfection stage of bliss-clarity and the essences; and 3) the non-dual tantras, such as *Guhyagarbha*, which teach mainly the perfection stage of the great wisdom of clear light.³⁸²

Thus, all three categories of Highest Yoga Tantra—even the non-dual, which focuses on the great wisdom of clear light—are subdivisions of Mahāyoga. They are mind-based, not wisdom-based. In another text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma notes a possible objection to this view:

[You might argue that] it is unreasonable to claim that the eight [lower] vehicles are systems based on mind, because in the father and mother tantras one mainly practices taking clear light as the path. This would not follow logically however,

³⁸² JTNs vol. 3: 91.12f.: ma hā yo ga'i rgyud la gsum du 'byed skabs| gsang 'dus sogs pha rgyud rnams su gsal stong rlung gi rdzogs rim dang| bde mchog sogs ma rgyud du bde stong thig le'i rdzogs rim dang| gsang snying sogs gnyis med rgyud las 'od gsal ye shes chen po'i rdzogs rim gtso bor ston zhes...

because, as it is taught in the *rNam mkhyen shing rta*,³⁸³ [in these vehicles] one cannot take wisdom alone as the path without [first] taking mind as the path. Focusing mentally on the channels, wind-energies and essences, blessing the consort (*rig ma*), ‘sealing’ objects and perceptions with the recollection of great bliss, [cultivating] divine pride, and visualizing the emanation and reabsorption of light-rays during mantra recitation — all these are carried out with energetic mind³⁸⁴ (*rlung sems*).³⁸⁵

The argument here (articulated once again in the scholarly language of debate) is that rDzogs-chen practitioners rely on wisdom from the very outset. This contrasts with practitioners of Highest Yoga Tantra. They begin with techniques of visualization and yoga drawing on the ordinary mind (described here as energetic-mind). Gnosis only arises later, as a result of these practices.³⁸⁶ Thus, rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga portrays itself as the vehicle that begins where other paths end. For Sa-skyā Paṇḍita, famously, this means that rDzogs-chen is not truly a vehicle:

If you understand this tradition well,
Then the view of Atiyoga too
Is [understood] to be wisdom, but not a vehicle.
To make the inexpressible a topic to be expressed
Is not the intention of the learned, it is said.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ i.e., the auto-commentary to *Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod* by 'Jigs-med gling-pa.

³⁸⁴ On the term energetic (or pneumatic) mind (*rlung sems*) in rDzogs-chen see *Rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i zhal lung*, 164–167.

³⁸⁵ JTNg vol. 1: 604.2; JTNs vol. 2: 158.15f.: theg brgyad blo'i grub mtha' zer ba mi rigs te| pha ma'i rgyud la 'od gsal lam byed gtso bor byed pa'i phyir na ma khyab| sems lam byed med par ye shes kho na lam du byed mi nus pa'i don yin par nam mkhyen shing rtar gsungs pa'i phyir te| rtsa lung thig le'i sems 'dzin| rig ma byin rlabs| yul snang gi thog tub de chen dran pa'i rgyas 'debs| lha'i nga rgyal dang 'od zer spro bsdu bzla dmigs sogs thams cad rlung sems la las bcol ba yin pas so||

³⁸⁶ This claim necessarily ignores the rDzogs-chen preliminary practices, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

³⁸⁷ See Rhoton 2002: 309: lugs 'di legs par shes gyur na| a ti yo ga'i lta ba yang| ye shes yin gyi theg pa min| brjod bral brjod byar byas pa ni| mkhas pa'i dgongs pa min zhes bya| (Note however that the translation given here is my own). This critique of the nine-*yāna* model is discussed in Karmay 2007: 147-48. Karmay believes Sa-pan to have been the first to criticize the system. Although Sa-skyā Paṇḍita's remarks have usually been interpreted as dismissive of rDzogs-chen, they were sufficiently ambiguous to allow for positive interpretation, and their precise meaning was still being actively debated in the nineteenth century, when, for example, mKhan-po Padma badzra, one of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's teachers, wrote the following in his 1849 rejoinder to criticism of rNying-ma doctrine:

The words of the Dharma Lord Sa-skyā Paṇḍita,
When he examined the division into the nine vehicles,
Are chattered about by all Sa-skyā followers today,
Whether they be learned or foolish,
But the crucial point of understanding them
Is rare within these ranks.
The meaning is that within rDzogs-pa chen-po
There is a division into two aspects:

For proponents of rDzogs-chen, such as 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, Atiyoga is indeed a vehicle. It takes wisdom as its path, and this 'wisdom-centricity' elevates it above the Highest Yoga Tantra practised in the gSar-ma schools. The model of nine vehicles that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma adopts is not only hierarchical; it is inclusive too. The Highest Yoga tantras do not lie outside this model; they feature at the level of Mahāyoga.

The meaning to be realized (*rtogs bya'i don*) and the means of realizing (*rtogs byed thabs*).
 And the rDzogs-chen that is the meaning to be realized
 Is co-emergent wisdom (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes*),
 Without reference and beyond verbal expression.
 In its essence, as a 'self-isolate' (*rang ldog*),
 It is beyond names, words and letters,
 So to posit it as a vehicle of linguistic expression (*rjod byed tshig gi theg pa*)
 Would be unwise, he said.
 As a means of realizing it,
 There are the stages of the vehicles, he said,
 Thus demonstrating indirectly
 The nine vehicles which are the means of realization.
 Nevertheless, in the New (*gsar ma*) Secret Mantra
 There is no class of tantra
 Higher than the level of the Mahāyoga.
 As for the focus of meditation too,
 There is nothing beyond the level of Mahāyoga, he said.
 So by teaching directly this exclusion (*rnam bcad*)
 That is the absence within the new traditions
 Of the two highest levels of vehicle,
 He indirectly showed the positive inclusion (*yongs gcod*)
 Of these two as special features of the rNying-ma.
 The assertion that the rNying-ma tradition has nine vehicles
 Is made here, and again and again in *Thub [pa] dgongs [pa'i rab gsal]* and elsewhere.

(KPB. Vol. 1, 400–401: chos rje sa skya paṇḍi tas| rab dbye theg dgur dpyad skabs kyi| tshig de dang sang sa skya pa| mkhas blun kun gyis cal sgrogs su| byed mod de yi go ba'i gnad| shes pa khyod kyi khrod na dkon| de'i don rdzogs pa chen po la| rtogs bya'i don dang rtogs byed thabs| mam pa gnyis su dbye ba la| rtogs bya don gyi rdzogs chen ni| lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes te| dmigs med brjod pa dang bral ba| de yi ngo bo'i rang ldog nas| ming tshig yi ge dang bral phyir| rjod byed tshig gi theg pa ru| bzhag pa mkhas pa min ces gsungs| de rtogs pa yi thabs la ni| theg pa'i rim pa yod pa yin| ces pas rtog^a byed thabs kyi ni| theg rim dgu po shugs kyis bstan| 'on kyang gsang sngags gsar ma la| rnal 'byor chen po'i ltag na ni| de bas mtho ba'i rgyud sde med| sgom pa'i dmigs pa nyid kyang ni| rnal 'byor chen po'i ltag na med| ces pas theg rim gong ma gnyis| gsar ma pa la med pa yi| rnam bcad dngos su bstan pa yis| de gnyis rnying ma'i khyad chos su| yod pa'i yongs gcod shugs las bstan| rnying ma'i lugs la theg pa dgu| yod pa'i zhal bzhes gzhung 'di dang| thub dgongs sogs su yang yang mdzad| ^a Read as *rtogs*)

So, for mKhan-po Padma badzra, rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga is divided into two: 1) the meaning to be realized (*rtogs bya'i don*) and 2) the means of realizing it (*rtogs byed thabs*). It is the first of these, which he equates with co-emergent wisdom (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ye shes*), that cannot be posited as a vehicle. The second form of rDzogs-chen, however, can be a vehicle, but this and the Anuyoga are unique to the rNying-ma tradition, as the highest level of gSar-ma tantra, he says, corresponds only to the level of Mahāyoga.

2.2. Hermeneutics: The Scriptural Basis of Clear Light Theory

All tantras share the same goal: they aim to bring about a realization of the wisdom of clear light. In 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's view, even the sūtras refer to this same clear light, albeit in theoretical terms. In order to explain this fully, we must return to a topic that surfaced in the previous chapter: 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's interpretation of gnoseology. Perhaps more than any other rNying-ma writer, he aligns the clear light (*'od gsal*; *prabhāsvara*) of Highest Yoga Tantra with the pure awareness (*rig pa*) of rDzogs-chen.³⁸⁸ This correspondence is part of a broader hermeneutic, which holds that clear light is first described theoretically in exoteric teachings, then outlined in practical terms in esoteric texts.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma discusses this claim in his *mDzod kyi lde mig*. He links the genuine mind (*gnyug sems*) or clear light of the Highest Yoga tantras to the buddha-essence (**sugatagarbha*; *bde gshegs snying po*).³⁸⁹ This he considers to be the focus of the sūtras of the 'final turning' of the Wheel of Dharma (*dharmacakra*), i.e., texts such as the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra* and *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.³⁹⁰ These works make occasional reference to the buddha-

³⁸⁸ See below.

³⁸⁹ Ruegg (1973: 68) points out that the term *sugatagarbha*, as a synonym of *tathāgatagarbha*, has not been found in any Sanskrit sources. For an extensive discussion of the term *tathāgatagarbha* and the full semantic range of the word *garbha*, see Zimmermann 2002: 39–50. The various meanings of the word *garbha* include embryo, womb, middle, interior, calyx, germ, seed and essence. As Zimmermann notes (p.41), the Indo-Tibetan translators chose to render *garbha* into Tibetan as *snying po*, which generally denotes a centre, heart, core, essence, etc.

³⁹⁰ JTNs vol. 3: 46. The Three Turnings of the Wheel of Dharma (*dharmacakrapravartana*) are introduced in the seventh chapter of the *Samḍhinirmocanasūtra*. According to that sūtra, it is the teaching of the final turning, which is generally known as *legs par rnam par phye ba'i chos 'khor* (the Dharma Wheel of Well-Made Distinctions) in Tibetan, that is definitive (*nūārtha*). Tibetan scholars continued to debate whether the sūtras of the final 'turning' were truly definitive or merely provisional (*neyārtha*). For the dGe-lugs, only the sūtras of the intermediate (or second) turning of the *dharmacakra*, i.e., the *alakṣaṇadharmacakra*, are definitive; for the Jo-nang, by contrast, it is only the sūtras of the third and final turning that are definitive. Mi-pham avoided such dissension through a hermeneutical model that recognises definitive doctrines within both the intermediate and final turnings; on which see Duckworth 2011: 69–73. The Tibetan tradition identifies a group of 'essence sūtras' (*snying po'i mdo*), all of which belong to the final turning, and which are so-called because they are said to contain references to the *tathāgatagarbha*. For a list of these sūtras, see Pettit 1999: 474–475 n. 151.

essence, but it is only the Highest Yoga Tantra that reveals the method to bring about its realization:

It is only in the Highest Yoga tantras that one begins by cultivating the conducive circumstances for awakening the clear light of the buddha-essence as the three buddha-bodies (*trikāya*) through the technique of the vajra master's bestowal of empowerment. One then makes evident the actual 'genuine mind' through the profound secret employment of skilful methods for directly cutting through the present, deluded mind of conceptualization. And then one goes even further to bring about the fruition swiftly and easily. This method and all that accompanies it are not taught elsewhere.³⁹¹

Thus, for 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (as for Tsong-kha-pa),³⁹² sūtra and tantra differ in their methods, specifically how best to reveal clear light. "Skilful methods" refers here to the yogic exercises and visualisations to manipulate the body's subtle channels (*rtsa; nāḍī*), wind-energies (*rlung; vāyu/prāṇa*) and essences (*thig le; bindu*). The sūtras do not discuss these exercises, so the ritual bestowal of empowerment (*dbang bskur ba; abhiṣekha*) is not a prerequisite for their study. Such empowerment is necessary, however, when one studies and practises the tantras, which offer techniques to reveal the buddha-essence. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma then poses a rhetorical question: "If the sūtra-level descriptions of the buddha-essence are not provided so as to facilitate the immediate practice of the buddha-essence, what is their purpose?"³⁹³ The answer, he says, is found in Maitreyaṅātha's *Uttaratantra/Ratnogotravibhāga*. In a section beginning at Chapter One verse 159, Maitreyaṅātha offers five reasons (*rgyu mtshan lnga*) for teaching the buddha-essence. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma does not spell out the five, as his audience

³⁹¹ JTNs vol. 3: 46.11: rdo rje slob dpon gyis dbang bskur ba'i thabs kyi bde gshegs snying po'i 'od gsal de sku gsum du sad pa'i rten 'brel bsgrigs pa sngon du btang bas da lta nas kun rtog 'khrul pa'i sems 'di thad kar gcod pa'i thabs mkhas kyi 'phrul gsang zab mos gnyug sems mngon du phyung ste de nyid yar ldan du khyer nas 'bras bu la bde myur du sbyor byed 'khor dang bcas pa ni bla med kyi rgyud las gzhan du bstan pa med cing...

³⁹² See note 371 above and the following chapter.

³⁹³ JTNs vol. 3: 47.10: mdo sde'i phyogs nas de 'dra'i gshegs snying bstan pa de da lta nas lam du bya ba'i ched min na dgos pa ci yod ce na|

were presumably familiar with them. The list appears in gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-s nang-ba's annotational commentary (*mchan 'grel*):

There are five faults: 1) feeling discouraged and not giving rise to *bodhicitta*; 2) disparaging lesser beings, 3) grasping at the veil of the inauthentic as if it were real; 4) denying pure, inexhaustible reality, and 5) being excessively attached to oneself. It is taught that the essence of the buddhas exists in order that all those who possess these faults may overcome them.³⁹⁴

Thus, the purpose of the buddha-essence theory at the *sūtrayāna* level is the psychological rather than psycho-physical. Overcoming the five faults is beneficial, but this differs from the practical application of the theory through Highest Yoga Tantra. To 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, the ultimate significance (*dgongs don*) of the exoteric, *sūtra*-level presentation is its approach to the esoteric.³⁹⁵ To modern scholars (i.e., from an “etic” viewpoint) such a claim entails an obvious anachronism: the tantras did not yet exist at the time these *sūtras* appeared. Even within 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's own tradition (from an “emic” perspective), this claim was potentially controversial. He says as much when he concedes that his ideas are “for the holders of our tradition to investigate further and in detail.”³⁹⁶

The writings of Bod-pa sprul-sku bsTan-pa'i-nyi-ma (1898–1959) offer a sense of why 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's theory might have been controversial. This scholar is known for his systematization of 'Ju Mi-pham's philosophical tenets.³⁹⁷ 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma does not mention any qualitative distinction between the buddha-essence described in the *sūtras* and the clear light of the tantras. Bod-pa sprul-sku, however, posits differences in: 1) clarity (*gsal*), 2) extent (*rgyas*),

³⁹⁴ KZG vol. 13: 123f.: *sems zhum nas byang chub kyi sems mi skye ba dang sems can dman pa rnams la brnyas pa dang yang dag min pa'i sgrub pa bden par 'dzin pa dang yang dag pa zag pa med pa'i chos la skur ba 'debs pa dang bdag [124] la chags pa lhag pa'i skyon lnga sems can gang dag la yod pa de dag gi nyes pa de spang ba'i don du sangs rgyas kyi snying po yod par gsungs so//* These five reasons for teaching buddha-essence are what we might term psychological, in the sense that they concern the attitude of those who accept the theory, while the theory itself is gnoseological.

³⁹⁵ JTNs vol. 3: 48.

³⁹⁶ JTNs vol. 3: 48.6: *rang lugs 'dzin pa rnams kyis zhib tu dpyad par bya'o]*

³⁹⁷ See Bötrül 2011.

and 3) completeness (*rdzogs*).³⁹⁸ To him, the clear light of the tantras is clearer, more extensive and more complete than that of the sūtras. Without such a distinction, he argues, it would be impossible to account for the appearance of divine *maṇḍalas* and other phenomena described in the mantra vehicle. He accepts, however, that there is no difference in emptiness as it is taught in sūtra and mantra.³⁹⁹ In other words, distinctions relate to appearance (*snang cha*), not the aspect of emptiness (*stong cha*) in the appearance-emptiness (*snang stong*) dyad. Bod-pa sprul-sku claims that ground-appearances (*gzhi snang*), at the level of Atiyoga, constitute the most perfect expression of the appearance aspect of the philosophical view. They are the “great spontaneous presence” (*lhun grub chen po*).⁴⁰⁰

Such focus on demarcation—highlighted even in the very title of Bod-pa sprul-sku’s *lTa grub shan ’byed*—contrasts with ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s softer, irenic stance. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma himself does not explicitly deny or refute the hierarchy of views that Bod-pa sprul-sku outlines.⁴⁰¹ In fact, he does not mention it at all. His failure to affirm here the orthodox rNying-ma position, as it was then, must have struck many followers of Mi-pham.

In summary, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma regards the doctrine of clear light as a hermeneutical thread that links the exoteric to the esoteric. The tantras provide the practical means to apply what is introduced only as theory in the sūtras.⁴⁰² The

³⁹⁸ See BP vol. 1: 74–75 (translated in Bötrül 2011: 98).

³⁹⁹ BP vol. 1: 72–73.

⁴⁰⁰ BP vol. 1: 76.

⁴⁰¹ ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s apparent silence on the form of Madhyamaka popularized by Mi-pham—at least in his collected works as we have them now—is discussed in the next chapter.

⁴⁰² The extent to which the Fourteenth Dalai Lama agrees with this viewpoint is evident from the following passage: “The substance of all these paths [i.e., Guhyasamāja, Kālacakra and Great Perfection] comes down to the fundamental innate mind of clear light. Even the sūtras serving as the basis for Maitreya’s exposition in his *Sublime Continuum of the Great Vehicle* [*Uttaratantra*] have this same fundamental mind as the basis of their thought in their discussion of the Buddha nature, or matrix-of-One-Gone-Thus, although the full mode of its practice is not described as it is in the systems of Highest Yoga Tantra.” (Dalai Lama 2006a: 253)

emphasis in such a hermeneutic approach is clearly on method.⁴⁰³ This sets 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma apart from other rNying-ma authors who made philosophical differences the basis of their hierarchical model. Let us now examine how he compared the practical methods.

3. Comparative Methods of Highest Yoga Tantra & rDzogs-chen

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma claims repeatedly that pure awareness (*rig pa*) corresponds to the clear light of the mind described in Highest Yoga Tantra. His *Hor 'od zer gyi ngor gdams pa* provides a typical example: "Genuine pure awareness and the mind of vajra clear light are synonymous."⁴⁰⁴ The main difference between the

⁴⁰³ Cf. the following from *Dad ldan slob ma 'gyur med rdo rje'i ngor gdams pa*:

At this stage, any intellectual speculation or form of analytical meditation on emptiness would prove insufficient by itself. Instead, everything must be brought together and integrated into this, the ultimate of all swift paths for attaining enlightenment. Of course, it is true that there could be no greater *object* of meditative equipoise than the emptiness in which all things are eliminated — down to their flesh and bones, as it were. Nevertheless, the Highest (Unsurpassed) level of Vajrayāna is vastly superior in its *methods for settling*. It says in a tantra:

Because of which, through sacred bliss,
You will gain supreme accomplishment in this very life.

As this indicates, once the natural, co-emergent primordial liberation, the very state of the Original Protector, is made manifest, each moment can bring the equivalent of many aeons of ordinary accumulation. It is only the works of the Great Perfection that teach the uncommon aspects of the supreme, unchanging wisdom, as it is universally known in the second (i.e., perfection) phase of Highest Yoga Tantra. And it is only these same texts that teach the means of making this wisdom manifest, treating the practice of pursuing naked awareness — and naked awareness alone — as the most important of practices from the very moment you set out on the path of Unsurpassed Mantra. (JTNg vol. 1 487.2; JTNs vol. 2: 44.15f.: de la ni rtog ges dpyad ra dang stong nyid kyi dpyad sgom rkyang pa tsam zhid gis mi chog pas| sangs rgyas sgrub pa'i lam myur ba'i nang nas mthar thug pa zhid yod pa de nyid kho na la chid sgril bya ba yin no| de'ang mnyam par 'jog sa sha sel rus shel zhid la stong nyid las lhag pa med mod kyi| 'jog byed kyi thabs la ni rdo rje theg pa bla med shin tu 'phags te| rgyud las| gang phyr dam pa'i bde bas khyod| tshe 'di nyid la rab 'grub 'gyur| zhes gsungs pa ltar rang bzhin lhan cig skyes pa ye grol thog ma'i mgon po nyid mngon du byas pa la brten nas skad cig re res kyang bskal pa mang po'i tshogs kyi dod thub yong bas| spyir sngags bla med kyi rim pa gnyis pa nas yongs su grags pa'i mchog tu 'gyur med kyi ye shes nyid zab mo'i phyogs thun mong ma yin pa dang| de mngon du bya lugs kyang dang po bla med kyi sngags lam du zhugs nas rig pa rjen 'ded 'ba' zhid tu gtong ba'i nyams len bstan bya'i gtso bor mdzad pa ni rdzogs pa chen po'i gzhung gi tshogs kho nar zad pa'i phyr...)

⁴⁰⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 554.6; JTNs vol. 2: 111.6: gnyug ma'i rig pa dang| 'od gsal rdo rje'i sems gnyis don gcig la... Cf. *Tshig gsum gnad brdeg skor*, where 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma defines each term: "In rDzogs-chen the nominal term 'pure awareness' is applied, because it is the consciousness beyond the three illuminating experiences, the basis for attaining buddhahood. And as this pure awareness has never experienced any darkness, it is called 'clear light'." (JTNg vol. 1: 514.5; JTNs vol. 2: 71.7: rdzogs chen la rig pa zhes ming gi tha snyad 'dogs pa de ni snang gsum las 'das pa'i shes pa sangs

rNying-ma and gSar-ma interpretations, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma contends, is the method that yields such pure awareness or clear light.⁴⁰⁵

3.1. The Methods of Highest Yoga Tantra

In his *Tshig gsum gnad brdeg skor*, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma summarises his assessment of the methods of Highest Yoga Tantra:

The way in which [clear light] is made manifest according to other Highest Yoga tantras is through penetrative focusing⁴⁰⁶ on the channels, essences and wind-energies.⁴⁰⁷ Without any need for explanations of the features of clear light at the beginning, stimulating the wheels (*cakra*) of channels at the heart or at the navel will cause the clear light to dawn.⁴⁰⁸

In the Highest Yoga Tantra system, clear light is revealed through practices associated with the perfection stage. These include visualizing a network of subtle channels within the body that allow for the circulation of subtle wind-energies and seminal essences. The practitioner focuses on the channels at certain points and induces the wind-energies to flow into the central channel (*avadhūti; dbu ma*). To achieve this, the practitioner needs to prevent energies from flowing through the two lateral channels, i.e., the *rkyang ma* (Skt. *lalanā*) to the left and *ro ma* (Skt. *rasanā*) to the right, as they would ordinarily. When the wind-energies enter the central channel, all mental processes cease. This allows clear light to dawn. And this, in

rgyas kyi bsgrub gzhi yin pas rig pa zhes gsungs la| rig pa'i steng na mun pa yod ma myong bas na 'od gsal zer|)

⁴⁰⁵ See below.

⁴⁰⁶ I borrow the term 'penetrative focusing' as a translation of *gnad du bsnun pa* from Gavin Kilty. See Khedrup Norsang Gyatso 2004: 391f. (The same text provides a detailed description of this perfection stage practice according to the *Kālacakra Tantra*.)

⁴⁰⁷ The sequence here is somewhat unusual. Most sources list them as channels, wind-energies, then essences, i.e., *rtsa rlung thig le*. Nevertheless, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma consistently refers to the sequence as *rtsa thig [le] rlung* repeatedly throughout the rDzogs-chen corpus.

⁴⁰⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 511.2; JTNs vol. 2: 67.17: bla med kyi rgyud sde gzhan gyi rtsa thig rlung gsum la gnad du bsnun nas mngon du 'gyur tshul ni| dang po nas 'od gsal gyi rnam pa bshad mi dgos pa snying ga'am lte ba'i rtsa 'khor sogs la gnad du bsnun na 'od gsal shar 'ong|

turn, brings about an experience of ecstasy or great bliss (*bde ba chen po*; *mahāsukha*).⁴⁰⁹

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma says that this technique of Highest Yoga Tantra is forceful (*btsan thabs*) or rough (*rtsub mo*). It might not be considered as such within Highest Yoga Tantra, but it is so when compared with rDzogs-chen.⁴¹⁰ The method of Highest Yoga Tantra is very swift at the beginning; in the longer term, though, it can lead to many flaws, including lack of stability.⁴¹¹

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma believes that there is no need to explain (or understand) the features of clear light in Highest Yoga Tantra; the yogic technique alone is sufficient. Practitioners who master the method may alternate between sessions of meditative equipoise (*mnyam bzhag*) and periods of post-meditation (*rjes thob*):

Once the clear light has dawned, those exceptional individuals for whom all appearances arise as great bliss will recollect the clear light of meditative equipoise during the post-meditation phase, thereby re-invoking the clear light. [...] Those who have gained familiarity with the wisdom of great bliss in meditative equipoise will be able to re-invoke the experience later, after meditation, merely by recollecting the features of that wisdom of great bliss, without the need for penetrative focus on the channels, essences and wind-energies.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ This description is sufficiently broad to apply to practices found in all classes of Highest Yoga Tantra. On one occasion, however, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma highlights subtle distinctions in the techniques of father tantra and mother tantra: “In the father tantras, clear light is laid bare or mastered through the power of harnessing the wind-energy. To the extent that one has harnessed that energy, the experience of clear light will deepen and stabilize. In the mother tantras, one masters the yoga of clear light through the power of making the essences workable, and to the extent that one’s practice of *gtum mo* gains strength, the radiant splendour (*gzi byin*) of the experience of clear light will unfold and become more powerful.” (JTNg vol. 1: 606.3; JTNs vol. 2: 160.16: pha rgyud du rlung dbang du bsdus stobs kyis ’od gsal dmar ’byin byed pa’am ’od gsal dbang du gyur bar byed de rlung ’du phul ci tsam che ba tsam du ’od gsal ’thug cing brtan no| ma rgyud du thig le las su rung stobs kyis ’od gsal gyi rnal ’byor dbang du gyur bar byed de| ’bar ’dzags ci tsam stobs che ba tsam du ’od gsal gzi byin rgyas nas ’char shugs che’o||)

⁴¹⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 661.3; JTNs vol. 2: 217.16: bla med rgyud gzhan du gtum mo dang| dpyid kyis rnal ’byor sogs kyis ’od gsal mngon du byed tshul bshad pa rnam| de dag nyid kyis lugs kyis btsan thabs kyis sbyor ba ma yin kyang| ’di la ltos na btsan thabs su rig pa mngon du byas par song yod pas...

⁴¹¹ JTNs vol. 2: 86–87.

⁴¹² JTNg vol. 1: 511.3; JTNs vol. 2: 68.4: ’od gsal shar ba’i tshe yul snang thams cad bde ba chen por ’char ba’i gang zang khyad par ba des mnyam bzhag gi ’od gsal de nyid rjes thob tu dran par byed pa’i stobs kyis kyang ’od gsal drang yong| [...] de ltar mnyam bzhag gi skabs su bde ba chen po’i ye shes la goms ’dris yod pas na physis rjes thob gyi skabs su rtsa thig rlung la gnad du bsnun mi dgos par bde ba chen po’i ye shes de’i rnam pa dran tsam gyis de nyid ’dren thub|

Familiarity with clear light can induce further clear light experiences between sessions. Post-meditative experience depends on an earlier application of the full technique of yogic practice and is itself a form of recollection. This recollection is involuntary, as in mundane cases of extreme trauma or ecstasy, such is the power of the clear light experience:

Consider the example of a mother whose only son has died: she will be so overwhelmed by suffering that even going to a delightful place like a pleasure garden would not make her happy. No matter where she goes, she will experience only suffering, never happiness. In a similar way, should a wish-fulfilling jewel fall into the hands of one who craves for wealth, his mind will be so transformed through joy that even if he were to stay in a stable he would know no suffering, only joy.⁴¹³

To 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, the methods of Highest Yoga Tantra are deliberate, effortful and controlled. They are effective at first but unstable later. They require the wind-energies to enter the central channel, causing ordinary thought processes to cease. To practice such methods, one needs only to apply the technique; there is no need to understand the characteristics of clear light itself. Clear light can be recalled during post-meditation, but this is only possible if it has been revealed earlier through the deliberate technique of penetrative focusing.

3.2. The Methods of rDzogs-chen

The methods of rDzogs-chen, in contrast, are effortless and spontaneous.⁴¹⁴ 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma lauds rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga as a superior, wisdom-centric vehicle. Yet, he does not represent rDzogs-chen as *entirely* effortless or

⁴¹³ JTNg vol. 1: 511.4; JTNS vol. 2: 68.8: dper na ma'i bu gcig pu shi na ma de sdug bsngal gyis gdung bas skyed mo'i tshal la sogs pa'i nyams dga'i gnas su phyin na dga' bar mi 'gyur la gang du phyin kyang sdug bsngal ba'i rnam pa ma gtogs bde ba'i rnam pa ni mi 'byung| de bzhin du mi nor la sred sems can gyi lag tu yid bzhin nor bu rnyed na mi de'i sems dga' ba'i tshos mdog gis bsgyur yod pas mi de rta rdzang ngam rta'i ra ba'i nang du 'dug kyang dga ba'i rnam pa ma gtogs sdug bsngal ba'i rnam pa mi 'byung|

⁴¹⁴ See below. When referring to rDzogs-chen methods, he focuses mainly on Khregs-chod: its rhetoric of simplicity providing a starker contrast with Highest Yoga Tantra's "rhetoric of control and manipulation"—the phrase is borrowed from Germano 2007: 61—than would the more deliberate methods of Thod-rgal.

spontaneous. His rhetoric is not triumphalist but accommodating: he is keen to highlight points of commonality as well as difference.

In his *Tshig gsum gnad brdeg skor*, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma explains that rDzogs-chen does not require yogic methods to control the body's subtle physiology:

On the path of the Great Perfection, there is no need to meditate on the channels, essences, wind-energies and so on in this way [i.e., as in Highest Yoga Tantra]. Instead, the means to sustain pure awareness is to recall pure awareness continuously and uninterruptedly, based on the guru's initial instructions.⁴¹⁵

In rDzogs-chen the guru introduces the disciple to clear light. Thereafter, the practice consists entirely of recollection. When the guru reveals the nature of clear light, he does so by explaining its characteristics. If the student recognizes clear light, s/he then sustains that recognition through continuous recollection.⁴¹⁶ In this sense, rDzogs-chen requires less effort than Highest Yoga Tantra, but it is still not entirely effortless or spontaneous. Mindfulness/recollection (*dran pa; smṛti*), which is deliberate in the initial stages of the practice, plays an important role. Furthermore, rDzogs-chen does not require the cessation of ordinary conceptualization (*kun rtog*):

There are many systems which describe the recognition and cultivation of clear light as taking place once conceptualization has been halted through instructions on causing the energetic-mind to enter the central channel. Here [however], recognition is brought about directly, and clear light is present even amidst conceptualization, like the oil that pervades a sesame seed. There is also a vast difference in the means of sustaining [the recognition] that is presented, and, therefore, a great disparity in how much effort is required to accomplish supreme wisdom.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹⁵ JTNg vol. 1: 512.2; JTNs vol. 2: 68.19: rdzogs pa chen po'i lam la de ltar rtsa thig rlung sogs lhag par bsgom mi dgos par| dang po bla ma'i man ngag la brten nas rig pa thu re dran pa'i dran pa rgyun chags su bsten pa ni rig pa'i skyong tshul yin|

⁴¹⁶ This does not mean that the experience does not develop or deepen. In another text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma makes the point that in rDzogs-chen clear light "is not merely 'sustained'; by laying bare the clear light's awareness quality, it deepens as an experience." (JTNg vol. 1: 607.5; JTNs vol. 2: 162.8: 'od gsal gyi rig cha'am rtsal gyi rig cha dmar ded byas pas 'od gsal gyi gting la je zug tu song ste...)

⁴¹⁷ JTNg vol. 1: 555.1; JTNs vol. 2: 111.9: rlung sems dbu mar 'dzud pa'i man ngag gis kun rtog bcad pa'i skabs su 'od gsal ngos bzung ste sgom pa'i phyogs kho na mang la| lugs 'dir ni kun rtog gi steng na 'od gsal til 'bru snum khyab ltar gnas pa'i dus nyid na bcar phog tu ngos bzung ste skyong tshul ston pa'i khyad che zhing| de'i dbang gis ye shes mchog sgrub pa la rtsol ba che chung dang mang nyung yang ches mi 'dra'o||

In Highest Yoga Tantra, ordinary mental processes are first brought to a halt when the wind-energies are brought into the central channel. In rDzogs-chen, mental processes remain (in the early stages) and are pervaded by clear light, just as oil permeates a sesame seed. The key is to recognize the clear light and remain with that recognition. This alone is enough to generate insight (*lhag mthong; vipaśyanā*). In Highest Yoga Tantra, such insight springs from the application of yogic technique.⁴¹⁸

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma reiterates this point in another text. In the *Dad ldan slob ma ’gyur med rdo rje’i ngor gdams pa*, he claims that even if thoughts do not fully disappear straightaway, recognition of clear light suffices to overwhelm them:

As we settle evenly into an experience of this pure awareness, without fabrication or contrivance, even if all dualistic thoughts do not fade into all-pervading space right away, they will be rendered ineffective. It is rather like someone afflicted with a severe illness—no matter how much you might show them arrays of brightly coloured silk, their mind will be so oppressed by suffering, they will have no thought of looking. Similarly, the mind’s ordinary mode of apprehension will be so overwhelmed by the features of clear light that it will experience only vivid clarity.⁴¹⁹

Again, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma describes the dawn of clear light as a powerful, overwhelming experience. And, once again, he employs the terms pure awareness (*rig pa*) and clear light almost interchangeably.

To recognise pure awareness in rDzogs-chen requires a knowledge of its characteristics. They are described in rDzogs-chen manuals in great detail. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma notes that Highest Yoga Tantra treatises contain similar

⁴¹⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 658.6; JTNS vol. 2: 215.6: bla med rgyud gzhan las kyang rig pa’i nram pa ngo sprod la phyogs ’di rgyas pa ni gzhan du rtsa rlung thig le la gnad du bsnun stobs kyis lhan skyes drangs yong bas| da lta nas bzhugs tshul ngo sprod la ha cang rtsal du ’don mi dgos| ’dir rig pa ngo sprad nas de la bzhag stobs kyis thun mong ma yin pa’i lhag mthong ’dren pa nyid man ngag gi snying por byed la...

⁴¹⁹ JTNg vol. 1: 488.2; JTNS. vol. 2: 45.13: sngar bla mas ngo sprad pa’i rig pa de nyid nyams len gyi dngos gzhir bzhag ste de ka’i ngang la bzo bcos med par phyam gyis bzhag pas gzung ’dzin gyi rtog pa thams cad dbyings su nub pa tsam dang po nas ma byung rung| de dag thams cad rtsis med du song nas nad chen pos gzir ba’i mi la za ’og gi ltad mo ji ltar bstan yang blo’i ’dzin stangs sdug bsngal gyis non pa’i phyr de la blta rtog mi gtong ba bzhin du| blo’i ’dzin stangs ’od gsal gyi nram pas ’phrog pa dung dung ba zhig yong rgyu yin|

descriptions. He cites a passage from the *Pañcakrama* literature associated with the *Guhyasamāja* as an example:

Universally empty, the great wonder,
Bright and clear in character.
Supreme, like the surface of the sky.⁴²⁰

According to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, these lines describe “the clear light that is the union [of emptiness and clarity]” (*zung 'jug gi 'od gsal*).⁴²¹ They thus resemble expressions found throughout rDzogs-chen literature. Still, rDzogs-chen favours standardized expressions, such as “empty essence” (*ngo bo stong pa*), “clear nature” (*rang bzhin gsal ba*), and “compassionate responsiveness” (*thugs rje*),⁴²² or the “expressive power” (*rtsal*) that “pervades without bias” (*ris med par khyab pa*).⁴²³ Similar descriptions appear in Highest Yoga tantras, but only rarely. They are not as ubiquitous—or, one might add, as formulaic—as they are in rDzogs-chen. This is so because in rDzogs-chen understanding the character of clear light is an essential part of the method. To that end, rDzogs-chen manuals supply many predicates:

“profound, subtle clarity” (*gting gsal phra ba*), “primordially unaltered” (*gdod ma nas ma bcos pa*), “primordially free” (*ye grol*), “beyond the intellect” (*blo bral*), “pervasive and expansive” (*khyab gdal*), and “all-penetrating awareness” (*zang thal*)

⁴²⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 658.2; JTNs vol. 2: 214.13: slob dpon klu sgrub zhabs kyis| thams cad stong pa rmad po che| dwangs shing gsal ba'i mtshan nyid can| nam mkha'i ngos ltar mchog gyur pa| The closest match for the first two lines appears as part of a quotation in a text attributed not to Nāgārjuna (as 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma says) but to Nāgabodhi/Nāgabuddhi (*klu'i byang chub*). See *Rim pa lnga pa'i bshad pa nor bu'i phreng ba (Pañcakramaṭīkā-maṇimālā)* in *sDe dge bsTan 'gyur*, vol. 37 (rgyud, chi) 100b.5.: dang zhing gsal ba'i ye shes che|| thams cad stong pa rmad po che|| The third line does appear in Nāgārjuna's *Rim pa lnga pa/Pañcakrama*. See *sDe dge bsTan 'gyur*, vol. 35 (rgyud, ngi), 50a.6. For a discussion of the text's purported author, see van der Kuijp 2007. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma also cites Buddhaśrījñānapāda's *Dvikramatattvabhāvanā-nāma-mukhāgama (Rim pa gnyis pa'i de kho na nyid bsgom pa zhes bya ba'i zhal gyi lung)*, which he refers to as *Jam dpal zhal lung*: “The dharmakāya, utterly joyful and even like space.” JTNg vol. 1: 658.3; JTNs vol. 2: 214.17: chos sku rab dga' mkha' mnyam pa| Cf. *sDe dge bsTan 'gyur*, vol. 42 (rgyud, di) 5a.6. This text is also associated with *Guhyasamāja*.

⁴²¹ JTNg vol. 1: 658; JTNs vol. 2: 214.

⁴²² On the meaning and translation of this term, see Germano 1992: 852–859 and van Schaik 2004: 336 n. 179. On the three qualities of *ngo bo*, *rang bzhin* and *thugs rje* in general see also Deroche and Yasuda 2015.

⁴²³ JTNg vol. 1: 658.4f.; JTNs vol. 2: 214–5.

gyi rig pa).⁴²⁴ Such terms hold the key to recognizing the character of awareness, or “the way pure awareness abides” (*rig pa'i bzhugs tshul*),⁴²⁵ hence their frequency.

Here again, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma turns to comparison as a means to establish rDzogs-chen's superiority, to map commonality and to explain differences.

His *sPrin gyi sgron ma* explains how settling meditation (*'jog sgom*; **sthāpyabhāvanā*) in rDzogs-chen is the equivalent of the perfection stage in Highest Yoga Tantra.⁴²⁶ Settling meditation does not forcibly direct the wind-energies into the central channel, but it naturally commands a similar effect:

Settling in the direct vision (*cer mthong*) of the intrinsic nature of one's own awareness causes the wind-energies to dissolve into the central channel. This brings

⁴²⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 658; JTNs vol. 2: 215. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma notes that rDzogs-chen texts often refer to *rig pa* as “the clear and empty cognizance of the present [moment]” (*da lta'i shes pa stong gsal*), and such descriptions of an apparently quotidian state of mind might seem at odds with the kind of experience described in texts on the process of dying. Accounts of this process refer to an experience of brilliant luminosity which follows the three post-mortem experiences of ‘appearance’, ‘increase’ and ‘near-attainment’. The dawning of clear light, which follows immediately upon the experience of near-attainment and the cessation of all these conceptualizations, is likened to a clear, cloudless sky. It is a moment of pure consciousness untainted by other mental processes and therefore quite unlike ordinary mental experience. Nevertheless, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma believes that any objection to the identification of this post-death clear light and the form of awareness described in rDzogs-chen is unfounded and can only result from a superficial view. (JTNg vol. 1: 657.2; JTNs vol. 2: 213.14: go ba kha phyir bltas la de 'dra 'char ba bden yang). He argues that “even if the clear state of conscious awareness (*shes rig sal le ba*), which you (as questioner) and I (as respondent) are both currently experiencing is not entirely and exclusively pure awareness, an aspect of it undoubtedly is.” (JTNg vol. 1: 657.3; JTNs vol. 2: 213.15: da lta 'dri ba po khyod dang nga cag smra bzhin pa'i dus kyi rang re gnyis kyi shes rig sal le ba 'di hril gyis rig pa kho na min rung| 'di nyid kyi cha gcig rig par gdon mi za bar 'dod dgos te). In other words, primordial clear light (*gdod ma'i 'od gsal*) is also present to some extent. It is the fact that this pure awareness is ‘stained’ (*bslad*) or obscured — except at death — that makes it so difficult for ordinary people to recognise. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma goes on to explain that pure awareness is an aspect of consciousness, dissociated from the ordinary thoughts of past, present or future. And therefore, he says, the texts speak of a “fourth [time], beyond the other three” (*bzhi cha gsum bral*). Pure awareness transcends the three ordinary times of past, present and future, and could therefore be said to exist in a fourth, transcendental time. Simply knowing this, however, is not sufficient for directly recognising it within the mind. Rather, he says, its features and qualities must be described in detail and it is this that accounts for the elaborate explanations of the characteristics of awareness—often referred to as the way in which awareness ‘dwells’ or abides (*rig pa'i bzhugs tshul*)—offered in the various manuals.

⁴²⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 657.5; JTNs vol. 2: 214.3: 'on kyang tha mal pa la 'chi dus ma gtogs par rig pa de bslad yod pas| da lta ngos 'dzin dka' ba'i phyir| bzhi cha gsum bral zhes| dus gsum gyi kun rtog las zur du phye ba'i cha bzhi pa'am lhag ma de rig pa yin zhes bshad nas| de tsam gyis de'i bzhugs tshul rjen par blo ngor mtshon mi nus par gzigs te| de'i rnam par ngo sprod tshul rgyas bshad mang po mdzad pa yin no||

⁴²⁵ This term appears several times in the rDzogs-chen corpus. See, for example, JTNg vol. 1: 528.5; JTNs vol. 2: 84.18. Note that the term carries the literal sense of a posture or way of ‘sitting’.

⁴²⁶ JTNs vol. 2: 240.3: rdzogs chen gyi 'jog bsgom 'di rdzogs rim du ji ltar 'gyur| For a discussion of the place of settling meditation (or “transic meditation”) in rDzogs-chen and other systems see Pettit 1999, 170–173. The debate on the balance of analytical versus settling meditation in rDzogs-chen will also be taken up in the next chapter of the present study.

together wind-energy and mind. It is just as in the *Guhyasamāja*, for example, which teaches that simply focusing attention on the indestructible *tilaka* at the heart causes the wind-energies to be brought into the central channel. Settling through resting the mind weakens the movement in the right and left channels, and, as this happens, there is no alternative but for [the wind-energies] to enter, remain and dissolve into the central channel.⁴²⁷

rDzogs-chen practices yield the same results as the yogic techniques of forceful control. By settling and simply leaving things as they are (*cog ger bzhag pa*), “there comes a point when the more turbulent among the wind-energies that stir conceptualization cease by themselves.”⁴²⁸ The subtler wind-energies, meanwhile, are neutralized through training over a longer period. As a result, the mind’s power to generate the “fault” (*nyes pa*) of movement and thought fades, just as mercury may be detoxified.⁴²⁹ In the end, the wind-energies themselves become a support (*grogs*) for wisdom. This comes about without effort (*tsheds med*). Through sustained meditation, the karmic winds become ‘suffused’ with awareness, which transforms them into wisdom-winds.⁴³⁰ There are thus two kinds of wisdom-wind: 1) that which is originally wisdom-wind, and 2) that which became wisdom-wind through the application of method.⁴³¹ Once again, the comparison here highlights commonality: the similar function of rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra methods and the fact that both methods may be classified as perfection stage.

⁴²⁷ JTNs vol. 2: 240.15f.: rang gi rig pa’i chos nyid la cer mthong du bzhag pas ni rlung dhu tir thim nus te| dper na gsang ’dus las snying ka’i mi shigs pa’i ti la kar sems bzung ba kho nas rlung dbu mar ’jug nus par bshad pa ltar rlung sems ’jug pa gcig yin la| sems babs kyis bzhag pas ro rkyang gi rgyu ba zhan thub cing| de zhan na dbu mar zhugs gnas thim gsum nus pa las ’os med pa’i phyir ro|

⁴²⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 660.6; JTNs vol. 2: 217.6: cog bzhag la chig dril yun ring por nus na| ci zhis nas kun rtog g.yo ba’i rlung rags la rgod pa rnams rang ’gags^a |^a JTNg ’gag.

⁴²⁹ JTNg vol. 1: 660.6; JTNs vol. 2: 217.8: phra ba rnams ’od gsal ngang sgom gyi sbyor bas rgyun ring du btul ba’i mthus| dug bsad pa’i dngul chu ltar ’gyu dran gyi nyes pa skyed pa’i mthu phrogs| Detoxified mercury is a commonly used ingredient in Tibetan medicine.

⁴³⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 661.1; JTNs vol. 2: 217.10: de’i dbang gis rim gyis ye shes kyi grogs su ’gro ba la’ang tsheds med pa zhis tu gyur te| da dung yang sngar ltar skyong nus na las rlung gi rgyun la rig pa’i rtsi thebs nas ye shes kyi rlung du ’gro bar bzhed de|

⁴³¹ JTNg vol. 1: 661.2; JTNs vol. 2: 217.13: dang po nas ye shes gnyug ma’i rlung du gnas pa dang| physis thabs mkhas kyis ye shes kyi rlung du bsgrub pa ste ye shes rlung gi tshul gnyis yod par bshad do|

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma adds an important proviso. In Highest Yoga Tantra, the clear light that arises through the dissolution of wind-energies in the central channel is localized. This makes it more “limited” (*re 'ga' ba*) or “fragmentary” (*khol bu pa*) than the equivalent experience in rDzogs-chen. The experience of clear light in Highest Yoga Tantra is like “the sun of happiness and joy that arises through the power of a mighty dharma-king during an age of strife.”⁴³² The rDzogs-chen experience, by contrast, pervades the entire body, and is as vast and stable as the bounties of the “age of perfection” (*rdzogs ldan*).⁴³³ This physically pervasive experience of clear light is also key to the attainment of the ‘rainbow body’.⁴³⁴ rDzogs-chen’s superiority thus relates not only to its methods, but also to their effects.

The *Tshig gsum gnad brdeg gi skor* explains that rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra ultimately bring about the *same* results, i.e., the reality body (*dharmakāya*) and form body (*rūpakāya*). The means to accomplish these results differ slightly in the two systems. In Highest Yoga Tantra, “the wisdom reality body is accomplished when the wisdom of great bliss (*bde ba chen po'i ye shes*), like a sky devoid of the three sullyng factors,⁴³⁵ is made manifest through the power of penetrative focussing on channels, essences and wind-energies.”⁴³⁶ Gnosis manifests when the energetic mind (*rlung sems*) enters the central channel. The form body then

⁴³² JTNg vol. 1: 605.4; JTNs vol. 2: 159.19f.: snga ma'i 'od gsal gyi mnyam bzhag re 'ga' ba dang khol bu pa yin pas rtsod ldan dus su chos kyi rgyal po mthu chen lta bu'i mthus bde skyid kyi nyi ma khol bur shar ba dang 'dra|

⁴³³ JTNg vol. 1: 605.5; JTNs vol. 2: 160.3: phyi ma dus thams cad pa yin cing lus thams cad la khyab [...] pas rgya che ba zhes pa ltar yin pas rdzogs ldan gyi phun tshogs ltar rgya che la mtha' brtan pa'o||

⁴³⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 661.5; JTNs vol. 2: 218.5: der ma zad rdzogs rim gyi lam srol gzhan 'dra ba'i rlung gi sdu rim ma byas par rig pa mngon du byed lugs 'di la dhu ti'i gnas khol bu rer| dmigs rten^a khol bu re'i steng du 'od gsal shar ba dang mi 'dra ba'i 'char tshul thun mong ma yin pa zhig dang| de la brten nas 'ja' lus sgrub tshul gyi gnad phra mo zhig kyang yod par sems so|| ^a JTNg *rtan*.

⁴³⁵ The three sullyng factors (*slong byed kyi rkyen gsum*) are haze (*rdul*) cloud (*sprin*), mist or fog (*na bun*). Cf. *bsTan pa'i nyi ma'i zhal lung* 129.3.

⁴³⁶ JTNg vol. 1: 528.2; JTNs vol. 2: 84.8: bla med kyi rgyud sde gzhan gyi lam rtsa thig rlung sogs la bsten nas gnad du bsnun stobs kyi slong byed kyi rkyen gsum dang bral ba'i nam mkha' lta bu'i bde ba chen po'i ye shes mngon du byas nas...

appears through a slight movement from awareness (*rig pa de las cung zad g.yo ba*). The features of “the maṇḍala of support and supported deities” (*rten dang brten pa lha'i dkyil 'khor*) arise through the co-operating condition (*lhan cig byed rkyen; sahakāripratyaya*) of clear light and the perpetuating cause (*nye bar len pa'i rgyu; upadānahetu*) of wind-energy and five-coloured light.⁴³⁷ In rDzogs-chen, by contrast, the wisdom reality body is accomplished through meditation on the precise nature of awareness. Ordinarily, this awareness carries the potential to generate impure appearances, thought or consciousness (*dran rig*). But once the potential for impure appearances is exhausted, it can generate “an inconceivable array of buddha-bodies, light-spheres (*thig le*), heavenly realms (*zhing khams*) and so forth.”⁴³⁸ rDzogs-chen uniquely accomplishes the form body through “ascertaining and growing familiar with” (*gtan la phab nas goms pa*) clear light by means of Thod-rgal practice.⁴³⁹

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma thus explains how the two systems bring about the same result in slightly different ways. He claims that this twofold fruition (of reality body and form body) can even be accomplished through the sūtra path, let alone through tantra.⁴⁴⁰ Thus, except for his reference to the rainbow body, the difference between Highest Yoga Tantra and rDzogs-chen is methodological, not teleological. Superior methods bring about the results more swiftly, but the results are (mostly) the same.

⁴³⁷ JTNg vol. 1: 528.3; JTNs vol. 2: 84.11: ye shes chos sku nyid sgrub pa dang| rig pa de las cung zad g.yo bar rtsom pa dang ’od gsal gyi lhan cig byed rkyen dang rlung ’od zer lnga pa’i nyer len gyi rgyu byas nas rten dang brten pa lha’i dkyil ’khor gyi nram par ldang nas sangs rgyas kyi gzugs sku sgrub pa dang|

⁴³⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 529.1; JTNs vol. 2: 85.4: sku dang thig le zhing khams kyi bkod pa sogs bsam gyis mi khyab pa ’char bas ...

⁴³⁹ JTNg vol. 1: 529.2; JTNs vol. 2: 85.7: de ltar thod rgal gyi lam gyis gtan la phab nas goms pa’i mthus| gzugs sku’i nram pa sgrub pa ni lam ’di’i khyad chos yin no||

⁴⁴⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 528.1; JTNs vol. 2: 84.5: mdo sngags gang yin kyang bsgrub bya chos gzugs kyi sku gnyis la khyad par med kyang|

3.3. The rDzogs-chen Path: Sudden versus Gradual

The rDzogs-chen path charted in Heart-Essence literature combines sudden and gradual elements, or what might be called elements of simultaneism and gradualism.⁴⁴¹ For example, the teacher’s introduction to wisdom (or clear light) is sudden (at least in comparison to other systems), but, in most cases, this is then mitigated through a gradual process of familiarisation.⁴⁴² Commentators often emphasize simultaneity over gradualism. For instance, the description of Atiyoga as a vehicle that takes wisdom as the path stresses simultaneism—as does Sa-skya Paṇḍita in his critical remarks. Recent studies have identified some tension between these two forms of rhetoric. Van Schaik, for example, claims that ‘Jigs-med gling-pa blurs the distinction between the rDzogs-chen texts within the *Klong chen snying thig* revelation and his own rDzogs-chen writings. As a result, he gives “his voice in the supporting instructions an authority that it would not otherwise have.”⁴⁴³ Van Schaik believes this serves to reset the balance towards gradualism.⁴⁴⁴

‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s rDzogs-chen writings, by and large, embrace the language of gradualism. This is attested in his explanation of the development of the clear light experience and the phased cultivation of mindfulness/recollection (*dran pa; smṛti*). Both draw on the tenets of Highest Yoga Tantra. To him, the

⁴⁴¹ On these terms in a Tibetan Buddhist context see Ruegg 1989: 5–13 and *passim*. Note that the etic distinction between sudden/simultaneist/subitism and gradual/progressive is roughly equivalent to the emic distinction between *cig char ba* and *rim gyis pa*, but these latter terms are often used in traditional sources to distinguish individuals according to their capacity, whereas the etic distinction as employed here is more concerned with methods. Higgins has also noted a comparable distinction between what he terms ‘disclosive’ and transformational paradigms in Buddhist literature. See Higgins 2013 *passim*, but especially 27–30. Scholars have also referred to these categories or models of soteriology as nature/nurture, revelation/generation, or discovery/development(al). See Wangchuk 2012: 29–30.

⁴⁴² In exceptional cases, even the process of familiarisation is sudden. The instructions manuals often point to the legendary figure of dGa’-rab rdo-rje (*Prahevajra) as someone who traversed the entire path in a single sitting. See, for example, *bsTan pa’i nyi ma’i zhal lung* 8.2. As noted earlier, discussions of simultaneism in rDzogs-chen generally ignore the preliminary practices of analysis and investigation, which are the subject of the next chapter.

⁴⁴³ van Schaik 2004a: 132.

⁴⁴⁴ Higgins has also noted a comparable distinction between what he terms ‘disclosive’ and transformational paradigms in Buddhist literature. See Higgins 2013 *passim*, but especially 27–30.

simultaneist elements in rDzogs-chen do not preclude the kind of benefits that spring from a more gradual approach.

3.3.1. The Gradual Development of Clear Light

In his *Hor 'od zer gyi ngor gdams pa*, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma describes how clear light develops in intensity as a practitioner progresses in rDzogs-chen training. Thoughts and emotions may still be present in the path's early stages, even after the recognition of clear light. Initially, clear light remains relatively weak, yet it is sufficiently powerful to prevent thoughts from binding or constraining ('*ching*) the mind:

Generally, clear light has many degrees of strength. At the first stage, even though one is not distracted from awareness, various virtuous or non-virtuous thoughts still arise, like waves arising in great numbers. Still, if the fundamental wisdom of awareness does not stray from its own place (*rang mal*), it makes no difference that conceptualization suddenly arises in the first instant. They will be unable to continue in the second instant and will dissolve directly into the genuine sphere of clear light. Consequently, [such conceptualization] does not constrain the mental continuum.⁴⁴⁵

The text goes on to compare this application of “the seal of realization” (*dgongs pa'i rgya*) with applying the seal of deity yoga in the generation stage practice.⁴⁴⁶ The idea that awareness becomes easier to recognise and more stable

⁴⁴⁵ JTNg vol. 1: 556.5; JTNs vol. 2: 113.1: spyir 'od gsal la srab 'thug gi rim pa mang po yod pas| dang po^a dus su rig thog nas ma yengs kyang| dge sdi gi rtog pa sna tshogs chu rlabs ltar 'byung ba mang du yod la| de ltar 'byung yang rtsa ba rig pa'i ye shes rang mal nas ma g.yos pa'i dbang gis| kun rtog de rnams skad cig dang por thol gyis shar yang| gnyis par de'i rgyun mthud^b mi nus par 'od gsal gnyug ma'i dbyings su sib kyis thim 'gro bas rgyud mi 'ching zhes gsungs te| ^aJTNg *ba'i*; ^bJTNg *'thud*. The text continues: “Yet the reason they do not bind it is not *solely* because they do not persist in the second instant. Rather, it is through ‘applying the seal’ of the realization of clear light as soon as the thought arises in the very first instant—this is a key point.” (JTNg vol. 1: 557.1; JTNs vol. 2: 113.8: mi 'ching ba'i rgyu mtshan ni| skad cig gnyis par rgyun ma mthud pa gcig pu de min gyi| rnam rtog skad cig dang po skye dus nas 'od gsal gyi dgongs pa'i rgyas thebs pa'i gnad kyis yin te|)

⁴⁴⁶ “After all, even mantra practitioners of the mere generation stage, by applying the seal of deity yoga to all perceptions and activity can transform what would otherwise be neutral actions—such as moving about, walking, sitting and such like—into great opportunities for the twofold accumulations by mean of mantra, *mudrā* and so on. What need, then, is there to mention that this applies here?” (JTNg vol. 1: 557.2; JTNs vol. 2: 113.11: bskyed rim tsam la gnas pa'i sngags pas kyang snang spyod thams cad lha'i rnal 'byor gyi rgyas thebs pa'i dbang gis bsgul bskyod 'gro 'dug sogs gzhan la lung ma bstan du 'gro ba rnams kyang sngags dang phyag rgya la sogs pa tshogs gnyis kyis sgo rlabs po cher 'gyur bar gsung na| de lta ci smros^a pa'i phyr rol| ^aJTNg *smos*.) The comparative exercise for 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma is thus not limited to the perfection stage: techniques of generation stage practice also provide analogies for rDzogs-chen.

over time is not new. Oft-repeated accounts of the modes of liberation (*grol lugs*), for instance, explain how thoughts become gradually weaker and therefore simpler to ‘liberate’ as one progresses in Khregs-chod meditation. There is also a common three-stage process in Khregs-chod: 1) recognition (*ngo shes pa*), 2) perfecting the strength (*rtsal rdzogs pa*) and 3) gaining stability (*brtan pa thob pa*).⁴⁴⁷ What is unusual here is the way ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma refers to the process as a development in the strength or intensity of clear light.

In his *Man ngag zab mo rdo rje’i mtshon cha*, ‘Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma identifies another form of gradual development, which divides the recognition of pure awareness into two phases. He says that for most practitioners the initial recognition based on intellectual understanding (*go bas ’phrod pa*) gradually turns into recognition through the force of experience (*nyams myong stobs kyis ’phrod pa*):

For the recognition of pure awareness, you should know that there is a distinction between 1) recognition through understanding and 2) recognition through the force of experience. The former precedes the latter. Although it is possible for some to arrive directly at the second stage in the present lifetime through the blessings of the guru alone and without any prior experience of the first stage, this can only occur to those possessing the right karmic fortune (*las ’phro can*) [from former lives].⁴⁴⁸

This phasing is then reflected in two styles of meditation—or, as he puts it, ‘modes of settling upon pure awareness’ (*rig pa’i steng du ’jog lugs*):

There are two ways of settling upon pure awareness: 1) a mode of settling that is achieved mainly through understanding, and 2) a mode of encountering the face of awareness and sustaining it through the force of experience. These two certainly occur in the sequence presented here, because it is through sustaining the practice in the former way that awareness grows clearer and the ordinary mind grows progressively weaker. As a result, the flow of understanding gradually transforms into experience.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁷ For an explanation of these three stages, see, for example, Mi-pham’s *Rig ngo skyong thabs ye shes snying po* (MPc vol. 32: 357–360), translated in Pearcey 2018.

⁴⁴⁸ JTNg vol. 1: 659.5; JTNs vol. 2: 216.2: rig pa ngo ’phrod mtshams la yang| go bas ’phrod pa dang| nyams myong gi stobs kyis ’phrod pa gnyis shes dgos shing| de’i phyi ma ni snga ma sngon du ’gro ba yin la| tshe ’dir snga ma sngon du ma btang bar yang bla ma’i byin rlabs kho nas phyi ma yong ba ’ga’ zhig la srid pa ni las ’phro can yin pa’i rgyu mtshan gyis yin no||

⁴⁴⁹ JTNg vol. 1: 659.6; JTNs vol. 2: 216.8: rig pa’i steng du ’jog lugs la’ang| go ba shas che ba’i sgo nas ’jog tshul dang| myong stobs kyis rig pa’i rang zhal mjal nas de skyong tshul gnyis yod la| de

To 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, clearly, rDzogs-chen involves a gradual path of development, albeit one that is less forceful or strenuous than in Highest Yoga Tantra. There are some rare individuals capable of instantaneous realization, but they must have already gone through the necessary stages in former lives. Thus, rDzogs-chen is for most a gradual path. Despite this, some of its rhetoric, focusing on rare individuals of the very highest capacity, emphasises simultaneism.

Elsewhere, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma even suggests that rDzogs-chen might be slower than Highest Yoga Tantra.⁴⁵⁰ This is an unusual claim. Even if it is slower, he maintains, rDzogs-chen offers methods that are more stable and bring about longer-lasting effects than comparable techniques in other systems. Thus, to him, rDzogs-chen constitutes the most powerful form of meditative concentration (*ting nge 'dzin*) upon clear light despite a potentially slow pace.⁴⁵¹

3.3.2. The Gradual Development of Mindfulness

Mindfulness/recollection/memory (*dran pa; smṛti*) is a recurrent theme in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's writings. It assumes centre stage in a celebrated work on the mnemonic powers (*gzungs; dhāraṇī*) of bodhisattvas, as noted in Chapter One.⁴⁵² He also discusses the topic in his rDzogs-chen works. One text in particular, the *Dad ldan slob ma 'gyur med rdo rje'i ngor gdams pa*,⁴⁵³ charts the development of mindfulness from the beginning to the end of the path. In the early stages, mindfulness is relatively coarse and involves a deliberate form of engagement; later,

gnyis kyang 'dir go rim nges pa yin te| snga ma ltar bskyang bas rig pa je gsal dang| sems je zhan du song nas rim gyis go ba'i rgyun nyams myong du 'gro dgos pa'i phyir rol |

⁴⁵⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 661.4; JTNs vol. 2: 218.

⁴⁵¹ JTNg vol. 1: 661.4; JTNs vol. 2: 218.1: 'di bzhin bskyang ba na dang po bsgom stobs kyis 'od gsal 'char ba la gzhan las bul ba ltar 'dug kyang| rig pa mngon du byed nus pa na gzhan las ches brtan cing rgyun ring ba dang| 'od gsal gyi ting nge 'dzin dbang du gyur pa khyad zhugs pa cig yong ngam snyam mo|

⁴⁵² See Gyatso 1992.

⁴⁵³ JTNg vol. 1: 484–496.1; JTNs vol. 2: 41–53. Translated in Pearcey 2018.

in its subtlest, most consummate form, it is an innate, natural property of awareness itself. The *Dad ldan slob ma 'gyur med rdo rje'i ngor gdams pa* discusses six stages in the development of mindfulness in rDzogs-chen, based on the following verse from the *Man ngag mdzod*:

Beginners should achieve non-distraction through deliberate application,
Students of meditation and post-meditation should be naturally undistracted,
Familiarity should bring non-distraction as perceptions dawn as wisdom,
With expansive realization, there is no distraction nor one who is distracted,
With ultimate stability, what were objects of distraction are assuredly *dharmatā*,
And, with phenomenal dissolution, illustrations or expressions no longer apply.⁴⁵⁴

In his analysis of this verse, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma identifies six forms of mindfulness⁴⁵⁵ in rDzogs-chen: 1) applied mindfulness (*'du byed kyi dran pa*), 2) natural mindfulness (*chos nyid kyi dran pa*), 3) mindfulness during post-meditative experience (*rjes snang gi dran pa*), 4) the mindfulness of direct realization (*mngon sum gyi dran pa*), 5) mindfulness of the domain of experience (*spyod yul gyi dran pa*), and 6) mindfulness of phenomenal dissolution (*chos zad kyi dran pa*). As is plain even from the names of these categories, the developmental path in rDzogs-chen seeks to extend awareness from the meditative to the post-meditative period. As the recognition of clear light progressively stabilizes in meditation, this brings a

⁴⁵⁴ JTNg vol. 1: 484.3; JTNs vol. 2: 42.2: dang po'i las can 'du byed ma yengs bya| mnyam rjes slob rnam chos nyid ma yengs bya| goms pa'i^a dran snang ye shes ma yengs bya| klong 'gyur^b dus su yengs^c med yengs^d mkhan med| brtan pa mthar phyin yengs^e yul chos nyid nges| chos zad dus na mtshon brjod yul las 'das| ^a According to *Man ngag mdzod*, KLR vol. 15: 388: *pas*; ^b KLR: *gyur*; ^c KLR: *yeng*; ^d KLR: *yeng*; ^e KLR: *yeng*. Cf. the English translation in Longchen Rabjam 2006: 106. In contrast to the examples in the previous chapter, we can see that in his comparative discourse 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma relies less on the works of Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa. Sam van Schaik has noted that 'Jigs-med gling-pa was not overly concerned with establishing connections between rDzogs-chen and the tantras of the New Translations. (2004a: 26). He thinks this was because he lived during a period when rNying-ma was under threat, having just recovered from the Dzongar invasion and still under pressure from antagonistic forces. (Ibid.) Still, 'Jigs-med gling-pa did not engage in sectarian debate. (Ibid., 27) van Schaik also notes that attitudes changed in the following century when leading rNying-ma scholars became less preoccupied with the preservation of their own doctrine and more interested in "the common ground" between rNying-ma, bKa'-brgyud, and Sa-skya. (Ibid., 28)

⁴⁵⁵ The term "mindfulness" may not adequately capture the sense of the term *dran pa* here, especially in the later stages, where recollection is no longer deliberate, but an inherent property of awareness itself. Still, I have chosen to use the term partly to emphasize that, at least in the earlier stages, the term relates to the common Buddhist idea (Skt. *smṛti*, Pāli. *sati*) generally rendered in English as mindfulness.

corresponding transformation of the periods between meditation sessions.

Eventually, when the division between meditation and post-meditation ceases, the experience of clear light is continuous.

’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma links the earlier stages of mindfulness to the three modes of liberation (*grol lugs gsum*): 1) liberation through recognising thought, which he compares to meeting an old friend;⁴⁵⁶ 2) self-liberation (*rang grol*), which he compares to a snake uncoiling its own knots;⁴⁵⁷ and 3) liberation beyond benefit and harm, which he compares to a thief entering an empty house.⁴⁵⁸ These modes chart the development of the ability to free the mind of thoughts; they reveal the gradual nature of rDzogs-chen meditation. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma explains that the three modes manifest at a stage before thoughts cease altogether, i.e., before the karmic wind-energies dissolve within the central channel.⁴⁵⁹ When the karmic winds dissolve and thoughts cease, clear light dawns. This, in turn, corresponds to the stage of direct realization (*mngon sum rtogs pa*), the fourth of the six forms of mindfulness, in rDzogs-chen.⁴⁶⁰ The dissolution of the wind-energies in the central channel also influences the post-meditation period, such is the force of the experience.⁴⁶¹ Thus, the key difference between the third and fifth forms of

⁴⁵⁶ JTNg vol. 1: 484.6; JTNs vol. 2: 42.12: dang po rnam rtog ngo shes pas grol ba sngar ’dris kyi mi dang ’phrad pa lta bu... This and the following two metaphors are found in many other rDzogs-chen texts.

⁴⁵⁷ JTNg vol. 1: 487.1; JTNs vol. 2: 44.13: grol lugs gnyis pa rnam rtog sbrul gyi mdud pa zhig pa lta bu’i man ngag. The text does not use the term “self-liberation” (*rang grol*) but it appears in other sources.

⁴⁵⁸ i.e., *phan gnod med pa’i grol ba*. The text does not refer to this mode directly; it refers to the three modes while only naming the first two.

⁴⁵⁹ JTNg vol. 1: 492; JTNs vol. 2: 49.

⁴⁶⁰ JTNg vol. 1: 492.1; JTNs vol. 2: 49.9: de ltar ’od gsal ’char ba dang rdzogs chen mngon sum rtogs pa don gcig tu dgos shing|rlung dbu mar ma zhugs kyi ring la de mi ’ong bar...

⁴⁶¹ “So, just as there is a great difference in the power of your practice based on whether the wind-energies have entered the central channel during meditation, in post-meditative experience, too, there is a vast difference in how this power is integrated.” (JTNg vol. 1: 494.1; JTNs vol. 2: 51.7: mnyam bzhag tu rlung dbu mar zhugs ma zhugs kyi steng nas nyams len la ngar che chung gi khyad thang chen po ’ong ba bzhin du|rjes snang du’ang nus pa bsre lugs la khyad chen po zhig ’ong ngo) Cf. the passage cited earlier, in which ’Jigs med bstan pa’i describes the recognition of clear light in Highest

mindfulness is the entrance of the karmic wind-energies to the central channel. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma defines "sustained pure awareness" (*rig pa rgyun skyong*) as recognition of the point at which the 80 indicative conceptualizations (*kun rtog brgyad cu*),⁴⁶² karmic winds (*las rlung*) and habitual traces dissolve. This is the "cornerstone" (*snying rdo*) of all Khregs-chod meditation: to remain with this recognition, and not to forget the character of the experience.⁴⁶³ Throughout the text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma adopts the language of Highest Yoga Tantra. He refers again and again to clear light and the dissolution of wind-energies within the central channel. This lends a comparative flavour to the text, even if it is not explicitly comparative.⁴⁶⁴

3.3.3. Reconciling the Sudden and the Gradual

For 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, rDzogs-chen lacks none of the benefits associated with a gradual, developmental approach. In his *sPrin gyi sgron ma nas*, for instance, he states that the clear light of rDzogs-chen is not in any way inferior to the wisdom that derives from generosity and the accumulation of merit (*bsod nams kyi tshogs; puṇya-sambhāra*) over several aeons.⁴⁶⁵ The same clear light also includes qualities associated with method (*thabs; upāya*). rDzogs-chen might appear

Yoga Tantra as a forceful experience that affects the practitioner even during the post-meditation phase.

⁴⁶² The 80 indicative conceptualizations (*rang bzhin brgyad bcu'i rnam par rtog pa*) are various emotional and cognitive states, divided into three groups: 1) 33 conceptualizations related to anger or hatred (*zhe sdang*) and indicative of white appearance (*snang*); 2) 40 conceptualizations related to desire (*'dod chags*) and indicative of red increase (*mched*); and 3) seven conceptualizations related to delusion (*gti mug*) and indicative of black near-attainment (*nyer thob*).

⁴⁶³ JTNg vol. 1: 488.4; JTNs vol. 2: 46.2: de'ang rig pa rgyun skyong ba zer ba bla ma'i ngo sprod pa'i ye shes de nga'o snyam pa dang sngar gyi ngo sprod btab lugs| bsam mno btang ba lta bu zhig min gyi kun rtog brgyad cu las rlung bag chags dang bcas pa'i mthar thug gi yal sa ngos bzung nas de'i rnam pa ma brjed tsam du bsdad na khregs chod kyi sgom thams cad kyi snying rdo de ka rang yin|

⁴⁶⁴ Of course, the identity of the student 'Gyur-med rdo-rje might be significant here. If, for example, he was a follower of Highest Yoga Tantra, this might have been a factor in 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's approach. It is likely that he was the same individual whom 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma refers to in similar terms in another text of more general advice, specifying additionally that he is "from the land of bSam-sa to the East" (*shar phyogs bsam sa'i yul gyi*). See JTNs vol. 1: 433–436.

⁴⁶⁵ JTNs vol. 2: 241.

to be focused exclusively on wisdom, at the expense of merit or method, but this is not reflected in its results.⁴⁶⁶ He sets out an inclusivist model: rDzogs-chen is superior to other systems but it also incorporates their qualities.

In the same text, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma notes that rDzogs-chen meditation focuses on the nature of the mind, without the need to meditate on the nature of objects. This does not signal an omission, he says.⁴⁶⁷ rDzogs-chen meditation is similar to the meditative equipoise of exalted beings (*'phags pa; ārya*)—i.e., arhats, pratyekabuddhas and ārya bodhisattvas—spoken of in other Buddhist teachings. When dualistic perception (*gnyis snang*) fades, such beings perceive this dissolution as the nature of their own minds.⁴⁶⁸ He further claims that in rDzogs-chen the usual sequence of the generation and perfection stages is not necessarily observed.⁴⁶⁹ In rDzogs-chen, he says, it is possible to practise the meditative equipoise of the perfection stage without prior visualization or generation. Moreover, this meditative equipoise is not blank or devoid of experiential content; sensory appearances are still present, because the senses remain unblocked even after clear light dawns. For 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma then, to take short-cuts does not mean to miss out on the benefits associated with the stages or practices one has skipped.

⁴⁶⁶ JTNs vol. 2: 241. Concern about how the two forms of accumulation (*tshogs gnyis*) are applied in rDzogs-chen can be found elsewhere in the literature too. One recent example of this is a question from the Fourteenth Dalai Lama to sMyo-shul mkhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje and his lengthy answer contained in *Rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i zhal lung* 83–110.

⁴⁶⁷ JTNs vol. 2: 241.

⁴⁶⁸ JTNs vol. 2: 241.

⁴⁶⁹ JTNs vol. 2: 242. This is a point the author makes elsewhere in his writings, too. See, for example: “Nevertheless, it is not the case that the perfection stage is only ever practiced upon the foundation of the generation stage. After all, it is well known that in this tradition of the king of vehicles clear light is made manifest through the pursuit of naked, primordially pure awareness alone.” (JTNg vol. 1: 485.1; JTNs vol. 2: 42.15: 'on kyang rnam pa kun tu bskyed rim la ma brten par rdzogs rim sgom tshul gtan nas med pa min te| ka dag gi rig pa rjen ded 'ba' zhig pas kyang 'od gsal mngon du 'gyur bar theg pa'i rgyal po 'di'i lugs la grags pa'i phyir rol|)

4. Conclusion

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma pays close attention to the gradual element of the rDzogs-chen path. He frequently refers to clear light and the dissolution of the wind-energies in the central channel, even in his classification of the various forms of rDzogs-chen mindfulness. These are important themes in Highest Yoga Tantra. He describes rDzogs-chen as a gradual path, and even suggests that rDzogs-chen can be slower than Highest Yoga Tantra. When discussing the differences between the two systems, he does not simply list points of divergence; he provides reasons for them. He also incorporates terminology from Highest Yoga Tantra in his descriptions of rDzogs-chen. For example, he often employs *'od gsal* as a synonym for *rig pa*. Such comparativism is inclusive and irenic, with as much of an emphasis on similarity as on difference. It is thus in sharp contrast to contemporary writings which stress the superior philosophical view of Atiyoga.

4. The Exclusivist Turn: rDzogs-chen and the Middle Way

“It’s fine to combine two things that complement one another and go together well..., but there’s no need to mix things that don’t.”

*Chos-dbyings rang-grol*⁴⁷⁰

1. Introduction

The previous two chapters show that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma largely ignored the ideas of Mi-pham in his rDzogs-chen writings. He sidestepped philosophical discussion entirely when comparing Highest Yoga Tantra with rDzogs-chen. Yet, Mi-pham’s influence is more discernible in the rDzogs-chen writings of g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol, who was ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma’s (indirect) disciple.⁴⁷¹ One text in particular, *rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul*,⁴⁷² demonstrates that Mi-pham’s interpretation of emptiness even reshaped rDzogs-chen preliminary practice. It is also possible to discern in this work a shift away from the kind of inclusivism we saw in the last chapter towards an exclusivist insistence on the authentic rNying-ma position, unadulterated by the views of other schools.

1.1. Mi-pham’s Philosophical Legacy

Mi-pham’s writings exerted great influence on most rNying-ma positions in the domain of Buddhist philosophy, but especially in Madhyamaka.⁴⁷³ While claiming to represent the views of earlier rNying-ma scholars, most notably Rong-

⁴⁷⁰ YCRa vol. 2: 404.

⁴⁷¹ Hereafter referred to simply as Chos-dbyings rang-grol. It will be recalled from Chapter One that Chos-dbyings rang-grol never met ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma in person but received instruction from him indirectly via gTer-ston bSod-rgyal (alias Las-rab gling-pa). Still, he considered himself ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s disciple and may therefore be referred to as a follower.

⁴⁷² YCRa vol. 2, 403–414. As discussed below, the title was added by the editors.

⁴⁷³ Phuntsho 2005: 19.

zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and Klong-chen-rab-'byams, Mi-pham also innovated.⁴⁷⁴ He sought to reconcile points of doctrine, such as the relationship between emptiness and buddha-nature, which had long been a source of controversy among Tibetan scholars.⁴⁷⁵ He also broke new ground by commenting extensively upon Indian treatises such as *Madhyamakālaṃkāra*.⁴⁷⁶ His commentaries allowed his successors to compare rNying-ma interpretations of Mahāyāna doctrine with those of other schools, especially the Sa-skya and dGe-lugs.⁴⁷⁷

David Germano interprets Mi-pham's exoteric writings as the culmination of a lengthy process of alignment with gSar-ma doctrines.⁴⁷⁸ He connects this with the Ris-med movement, arguing that scholastic literature on Mahāyāna topics had previously been the "traditional stronghold" of the gSar-ma schools.⁴⁷⁹ It is true that the proportion of Mi-pham's literary output dedicated to Madhyamaka was without precedent for a rNying-ma author.⁴⁸⁰ Before him, Klong-chen rab-'byams wrote only a small number of texts that touched upon Mahāyāna topics. His *mDzod bdun* and other collections refer to Madhyamaka as part of broader doxographies, but these

⁴⁷⁴ See Pettit 1999: 134: "Though Mipham considered Klong chen pa and Rong zom to be the quintessential Nyingma philosophers, both lived and wrote before Tsongkhapa's writings became influential, so their Madhyamaka works would not have sufficed as primary sources for the argumentative techniques Mipham applies to Gelug Prāsaṅgika." Mi-pham also drew upon the writings of scholars from these other schools, especially Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge (1429–1489), in formulating his ideas. See Pettit 1999: 134 for confirmation that Mi-pham draws upon Go-rams-pa for many of his critical remarks on Tsong-kha-pa (Note that Pettit repeatedly spells the Sa-skyia scholar's name as Go *ram* pa—Go-rams-pa is, of course, an abbreviation of Go-bo rab-'byams-pa.). This would suggest that key works by Go-rams-pa were in limited circulation in eastern Tibet, despite the general ban imposed by the dGa'-ldan pho-brang, which extended even to the copying of manuscripts.

⁴⁷⁵ He also reconciled the views of Klong-chen rab-'byams and Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po; see Wangchuk 2004: 196.

⁴⁷⁶ Smith 2001: 231 makes the point in relation to Mi-pham. See Viehbeck 2016: 10 for a discussion of how dPal-sprul was the first rNying-ma commentator on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*.

⁴⁷⁷ This is what Bod-pa sprul sku does in *lTa grub shan 'byed*, which includes sections on "establishing one's/our own system" (*rang lugs bzhag pa*) and "refuting others' systems" (*gzhan lugs dgag pa*).

⁴⁷⁸ Germano 1994: 294.

⁴⁷⁹ Germano 1994: 296.

⁴⁸⁰ E. Gene Smith was perhaps the first to make this point. See Smith 2001: 231.

discussions amount to a mere fraction of his total literary output.⁴⁸¹ The works of 'Jigs-med gling-pa, too, include references to Madhyamaka, mostly in connection with the *prajñā* subsection of the *bodhicitta* chapter of *Yon tan mdzod* and its auto-commentaries.⁴⁸² Although 'Jigs-med gling-pa believed he was “elevating” (*slong*) the tenets of the rNying-ma school through his works,⁴⁸³ his interpretation of Madhyamaka differs from Mi-pham's and was therefore effectively superseded.⁴⁸⁴

Mi-pham set out his version of Madhyamaka philosophy in his major commentaries on Indian treatises. However, he never completed a planned overarching introduction to Madhyamaka thought.⁴⁸⁵ He left it to others to systematize his ideas.⁴⁸⁶ Bod-pa sprul-sku, in his *s lTa grub shan 'byed*, for example, attempts to codify Mi-pham's philosophy in the form of a textbook (*yig cha*).⁴⁸⁷ Some of Mi-pham's writings engendered further commentaries by other scholars.⁴⁸⁸ His ideas

⁴⁸¹ See Arguillère 2007: 157–175 for the most thorough analysis to date of Klong-chen rab-'byams's purported oeuvre. Arguillère's list, which is based on Chos-grags bzang-po and other lists includes sixteen texts (96–112) on the topic of the “Pāramitāyāna”. Chapter three of *Grub mtha' mdzod* presents the tenets of non-Buddhist and Buddhist schools including the Cittamātra and Mādhyamika. See Butters 2006.

⁴⁸² See especially *bDen gnyis shing rta*, JL vol. 2: 258b.1 (518.1) – 341a (683).

⁴⁸³ See, for example, the following lines from his *rDzogs pa chen po rang byung rdo rje'i rnam thar gsol 'debs* (JL vol. 8: 707–710) 708.6: snga 'gyur grub mtha' chos lugs sna tshogs kyis|| rnyog mar gyur la gzhan sdes gshung ba'i tshel|| yon tan rin chen mdzod kyi [709] shing rta ches|| rang sde'i grub mtha' slong la gsol ba 'debs|| It is worth noting in this connection that among the commentaries on *Yon tan mdzod* is one by the Mongolian dGe-lugs teacher, A-lag-sha Ngag-dbang bstan-dar (1759–1831), alias Sog-po bstan-dar.

⁴⁸⁴ Moreover, as previously noted, Mi-pham almost entirely ignored his writings.

⁴⁸⁵ See Dudjom Rinpoche 1991, vol. 1: 878.

⁴⁸⁶ There was sufficient ambiguity in Mi-pham's writings for his followers to debate whether he truly embraced 'intrinsic emptiness' (*rang stong*) or 'extrinsic emptiness' (*gzhan stong*). See Pettit 1999, 114f. and Kapstein 2009, 63–64. Kapstein states in his introduction to his abridged translation of *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro* that he does not believe Mi-pham was a true proponent of extrinsic emptiness but wrote his text on the subject to convey “the best argument that can be mounted in favour of a position that he considers to be not tenable in the final analysis” (*op. cit.*, 64). For a discussion of how Mi-pham and the rNying-ma school relegate the notions of *rang stong* and *gzhan stong* to a subordinate position, while also seeking to reconcile them both, see Wangchuk 2004: 196–200.

⁴⁸⁷ See Bötrül 2011 for an English translation.

⁴⁸⁸ For example, Kun-bzang dpal-ldan wrote a commentary to *Nges shes sgron me*, entitled *Blo gros snang ba'i sgo 'byed*. Another commentary to the same text by Khro-shul 'Jam-rdor [i.e., 'Jam-dpal rdo-rje] (1920–1960), known as *'Od zer dri med*, is translated and discussed in Pettit 1999. mKhan-po Zla[-ba'i] ['od-]zer (1922–1990) and mKhan-po dPal-ldan shes-rab (1942–2010) both composed commentaries on Mi-pham's *Don rnam nges shes rab ral gri*. mKhan-po Nus-ldan mKhyen-brtse'i blo-gros (19th–20th C.) wrote an annotational commentary (*mchan 'grel*) on Mi-pham's *mKhas 'jug*

also shaped the content of other commentaries such as mKhan-po Yon-tan rgya-mtsho's (b. 19th C.) guide to 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Yon tan mdzod*.⁴⁸⁹ His philosophical thinking also spread through teaching, especially in the scriptural colleges where his own commentaries were widely used. Before I examine how these ideas surfaced in a rDzogs-chen instruction manual, let me briefly examine what role logical reasoning and analysis played in earlier rDzogs-chen works.

1.2. The Role of Analysis in rDzogs-chen

The meditation practices of Khregs-chod and Thod-rgal do not involve any form of analysis (*dpyad pa; vicāra*). Analytical meditation (*dpyad sgom*) is a feature of some rDzogs-chen preliminary practices (*sngon 'gro*), but not a part of the main practices (*dngos gzhi*).⁴⁹⁰ The relationship between analytical meditation and immersive 'settling meditation' (*'jog sgom*) is an important topic for Mi-pham and later rNying-ma scholars. Mi-pham discusses it thoroughly in the fourth chapter of his *Nges shes sgron me*. Here, he concludes that one must apply both forms alternately in order to reach ultimate realization. Analysis, he argues, is especially important at an early stage because it induces certainty (*nges shes*). Once certainty has been attained, however, analysis becomes redundant. As he puts it: once you have seen that there is no snake in a length of rope, that very certainty prevents

and is also said to have written a commentary on *Nges shes sgron me*. In addition, Zhe-chen rgyal-tshab 'Gyur-med Padma mam-rgyal used Mi-pham's prayer for the spread of the rNying ma teachings as the basis for a lengthy text exalting the rNying ma tradition. Kun-bzang dpal-ldan taught Bod-pa sprul-sku, who, in turn, became a teacher of Chos-dbyings rang-grol.

⁴⁸⁹ i.e., *Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod kyi 'grel pa bden gnyis gsal byed zla ba'i sgron me*.

⁴⁹⁰ The transition between the preliminaries and the main practices is sometimes described as a transition from a speculative analytical view (*yid dpyod kyi lta ba*) to one that is based on the wisdom born of meditative equipoise (*mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi lta ba*). (*Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung gi zin bris*, 256)

further perception of a snake, and continued investigation is unnecessary.⁴⁹¹ Direct perception, in other words, carries greater weight than inference.

This position prompts several questions: Is analysis the only means to induce certainty? Are the preliminary practices involving analysis essential for *all* rDzogs-chen practitioners? What level of philosophical sophistication is required for analysis to be effective? The last of these questions, in particular, is apposite here.

Later authors considered the role of analysis in rDzogs-chen and offered arguments to justify its inclusion among the preliminaries. Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang, for example, writes in his *Nyi ma'i snang ba*: “Unless you find conviction in the absence of reality (*bden med*), even the introduction to pure awareness is not particularly significant, because it will not counteract the two types of ignorance [i.e., co-emergent ignorance (*lhan cig skyes pa'i ma rig pa*) and imputational ignorance (*kun brtags kyi ma rig pa*)].”⁴⁹² 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma puts forward a similar view in *rDo rje'i gtun khung*. He believes that emptiness must be taught before pure awareness can be introduced:

Even without claiming that awareness and emptiness,
Are like the ends of a balance—one high, the other low—
If a disciple's stage of realization is considered,
It is only after emptiness has been communicated,
That pure awareness (*rig pa*) is introduced, say those who know the profound.⁴⁹³

This passage advocates a gradual approach, but there are rare exceptions. Students who possess exceptionally sharp faculties can proceed directly to the

⁴⁹¹ *Nges shes sgron me*, 21: thag par sbrul med rtogs pa na| nges shes de gas sbrul 'dzin ldog| da rung sbrul ni med do zhes| yang yang dpyad zer blun min nam| Cf. Pettit 1999: 211.

⁴⁹² *Nyi ma'i snang ba*, 130: bden med kyi nges pa zhig ma rnyed par rig pa ngo sprod byas pa la [131] don cher med de ma rig pa gnyis dang 'gal ba'i khyad par mi thon pa'i phyir ro||

⁴⁹³ JTNg vol. 1: 469.6; JTNs vol. 2: 28.5: rig dang stong pa srang mda'i mtho dman bzhin| mi 'dod 'on kyang gdul bya'i rtogs rim la| dgongs te stong pa ngo sprod mjug thog^a tu^b| rig pa ngo sprod zab mo shes rnams bzhed| ^aJTNg *thogs*. ^bJTNg *su*.

introduction to pure awareness, with immediate results.⁴⁹⁴ Still, as discussed in Chapter Three, even they would have followed the gradual path in a previous life.

Recognition of pure awareness incorporates the realization of emptiness:

If you can meditate with this recognition [of awareness] then, as a result, you will recognize the clear light that dawns through the power of experience. And if you recognize that, it does not matter whether you call it emptiness, or the natural state (*gnas lugs*), or intrinsic reality (*chos nyid; dharmatā*). By remaining with this experience in meditative equipoise, without any need to analyse using the seven-fold reasoning of the chariot, it will qualify as a full experience of the union of rigpa and emptiness.⁴⁹⁵

This passage appears to imply that analysis is unnecessary. In fact, there are some rDzogs-chen authors who expressly criticise the more discursive, analytical approach to emptiness:

Some great meditators believe their mind is empty and then meditate upon that. But that is not a genuine view; it is a fabricated meditation on emptiness. Instead you must settle directly upon the very one who thinks, “It is emptiness.”⁴⁹⁶

Analysis is fabricated, contrived or artificial, the extract suggests, whereas authentic rDzogs-chen meditation is natural, intuitive and immediate. Genuine emptiness meditation arises when the practitioner is attuned to the mind’s own emptiness. As dPal-sprul puts it elsewhere in the same text: given that “mind’s

⁴⁹⁴ In *bsTan pa'i nyi ma'i zhal lung* (8.1f.) Ngag dbang dpal bzang relates this point to the distinction between “those for whom the view leads to meditation” (*lta thog nas sgom 'tshol ba*) and “those for whom meditation leads to the view” (*sgom thog nas lta ba 'tshol ba*), terms familiar from the Mahāmudrā tradition. For Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang, the former connotes the sudden, non-gradual approach, while the latter represents the gradualist path. This does not necessarily accord with the earlier rDzogs chen tradition, however. See, for example, *rDzogs chen sems sde'i khrid yig* in *gDams ngag mdzod*, vol. 1: 275–300 by Sog-zlog-pa Blo-gros rgyal-mtshan (1552–1624), which says (281.4): “Meditation leading to the view is a special feature of the Great Perfection” (*sgom thog nas lta ba 'tshol ba zhe bya ba ste| rdzogs chen pa'i khyad chos yin*). The text categorizes lower approaches, up to and including Mahāmudrā, as using the view to lead to meditation. rDzogs-chen, by contrast, involves causing the view to arrive from within one’s own being as a result of meditation.

⁴⁹⁵ JTNg vol. 1: 505.3; JTNs vol. 2: 61.7: de ngo 'phrod nas sgom na de'i mthus myong stobs kysis shar ba'i 'od gsal de ngos zin yong| de zin na de'i steng gi stong nyid zer kyang| de'i gnas lugs zer kyang| de'i chos nyid zer kyang 'dra ste| de'i ngang la mnyam par bzhag nas bsdad pas| shing rta rnam bdun lta bu'i rigs pas dpyad mi dgos par rig stong kha sbyor du cham gyis 'gro ba'i dod yin|
⁴⁹⁶ *mThar thug rdzogs pa chen po sangs rgyas pa'i thabs zab mo bsgom pa rang grol*, 325: sgom chen la las sems nyid 'di stong pa yin bsam nas sgom pa yang gda' ste| de ni yang dag pa'i lta ba ma yin| stong pa bzo sgom yin| stong pa nyid yin bsam mkhan thog tu zhog|

nature has always been empty” (*rang sems ye nas stong pa yin pas*), all that is required is to “settle into that empty experience” (*stong pa’i ngang du zhog*).⁴⁹⁷

Many texts that chart the whole rDzogs-chen path, including the preliminaries, often display a gradualist, inclusivist attitude to analytical meditation. But texts that focus on the main practice draw attention to its potential pitfalls. This aligns well with most inclusivist models: the language it uses to describe lower stages is dismissive and hence closer in tone to exclusivism.

We also encounter rDzogs-chen instructions intended for a different category of practitioner; not those of the highest capacity but those who lack scholarly training. Mi-pham’s *rTogs ldan rgan mo rnams kyi lugs sems ngo mdzub tshugs kyi gdams pa mun sel sgron me* (hereafter *Mun sel sgron me*)⁴⁹⁸ introduces this very person:

Without having to study, contemplate, or train to any great degree,
By maintaining recognition of the essence of mind according to the approach of pith instructions,
Any ordinary ‘village yogi’ might, without too much difficulty,
Reach the level of an awareness-keeper: such is the power of this profound path.⁴⁹⁹

The phrase ‘village yogi’ (*grong sngags*, literally village *mantrin*) is repeated in the colophon. Mi-pham explains that he wrote the text “for village yogis and others, who, while not able to exert themselves too much in study and contemplation, still wish to take the very essence of mind into experience through practice.”⁵⁰⁰ The text claims that it is possible to reach a high level of attainment even without scholarly foundation. This contrasts markedly with the advice of Chos-dbyings rang-grol examined below. The *Mun sel sgron me* even calls into question

⁴⁹⁷ Ibid., 323.

⁴⁹⁸ MPc Vol. 32, 363–368. Translated in Pearcey 2018. According to the colophon, the text was written in the fire-horse year (i.e., 1906).

⁴⁹⁹ MPc Vol. 32, 363: thos bsam sbyangs pa rgya cher mi dgos par| man ngag lugs kyi sems ngo skyongs ba yis| grong sngags phal mo che zhig tshegs chung ngu’i| rig ’dzin sa la gshegs te zab lam mthu|

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid., 368: thos bsam phal cher mi brtson kyang sems ngo’i nyams len ’dod pa’i grong sngags sogs kyi ched du...

the need for rDzogs-chen practitioners to have a correct understanding of the Madhyamaka view of emptiness.

In the *Nges shes sgron me*, Mi pham compares the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika view of emptiness with the rDzogs-chen vision of primordial purity (*ka dag*):

Both glorious Candra[kīrti] in the noble land [of India],
And Rong-zom Chos-bzang in Tibet,
Established the great emptiness of primordial purity,
With a single intention and in a single voice.⁵⁰¹

This passage does not allow us to establish whether there is a qualitative distinction between the Madhyamaka view of emptiness and the rDzogs-chen view of primordial purity. For rNying-ma doxographers embracing the nine-*yāna* model, such qualitative difference clearly exists. The *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul* discusses some of the reasons why the rDzogs-chen view is superior. But let us first consider the nature of the rDzogs-chen preliminaries.

1.3. The rDzogs-chen Preliminaries

The *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul* introduces three analytical practices that function as preliminaries to rDzogs chen meditation:⁵⁰² 1) to probe the root [of mind] (*[sems kyi] rtsad bcad pa*);⁵⁰³ 2) to search for [the mind's] hidden

⁵⁰¹ MPP vol. 9: 75.3: 'phags yul dpal ldan zla ba dang| bod na rong zom chos bzang gnyis| dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig gis| ka dag stong pa chen po bsgrubs| For an alternative translation see Pettit 1999: 196.

⁵⁰² There is considerable variation in how these uncommon preliminaries are identified. Another text included among Chos-dbyings rang-grol's rDzogs chen writings but attributed to Nyag-bla bSod-rgyal (*rDzogs pa chen po'i nyams len gnad bsodus nyag bla bsod rgyal gyis gsungs pa*) lists the three preliminaries as: 1) *sems kyi rtsad bcad pa*; 2) *byung gnas 'gro gsum la brtags pa*; and 3) *rig pa ngos bzung thabs*. See YCR vol. 2: 421.

⁵⁰³ Sometimes given as *rtsad gcod pa*, as in the text by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros cited below. Although *rtsad bcad pa* means a thorough investigation rDzogs-chen authors also play upon its literal sense of 'cutting at the root', as in the following from sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's *Rang rig la gnang ba*: "...we need to analyse and investigate repeatedly until we decide with absolute certainty that mind is the root of all saṃsāra and nirvāṇa. Then, when we determine that this mind is without basis or origin, all our self-clinging will be uprooted. For example, it is just like cutting a tree at its roots and destroying the seeds which could be the cause of a new shoot. This is the key point of the investigation in this tradition, so it is crucially important that it really hits home." (...yang yang brtag dpyad zhib tu byed bcug pas nges par 'khor 'das thams cad kyi rtsa ba sems yin pa'i nges shes 'drons kho thag chod tshe| de nyid gzhi med rtsa bral du gzhig na bdag 'dzin thams cad rtsa bral du 'gro ba| dper na shing sdong gi rtsa ba chod pa dang myu gu'i rgyu

flaws ([*sems kyi*] *mtshang btsal ba*);⁵⁰⁴ and 3) to investigate [mind's] emergence, presence and departure" ([*sems kyi*] *byung gnas 'gro gsum la brtag pa*).⁵⁰⁵ The text does not offer a coherent explanation or definition of the three. Chos-dbyings rang-grol is primarily concerned with correcting existing misunderstandings. It is likely that he composed the text for students already familiar with the practices. 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros, in a contemporary treatise, provides useful definitions of the first two meditations:

Probing the root of mind means investigating which of the 'three doors' (i.e., body, speech and mind) causes us to wander throughout beginningless time in samsāra, and which it is that carries out virtuous or non-virtuous actions. When investigating, we discover mind to be the most important factor. Searching for hidden flaws means examining whether body, speech and mind are unitary or distinct, and finding that, while on a conventional level they appear to be related, ultimately there is no real entity called *mind* that could be one with, or distinct from, anything else.⁵⁰⁶

The same text summarizes the conclusions of the third practice as follows:

When you investigate the essence of this mind, even if you search for its arising you cannot find it. There is no reality to the mind's apparent presence. Nor is there anywhere that it ceases. It is thus without foundation or origin.⁵⁰⁷

If there is a progression in these three investigations it is from a general examination of the physical, vocal and mental towards an exclusive focus on the mind. The first practice examines which of the three doors of body, speech or mind is primary, before concluding that it is mind. The second examines the relationship between the three and subjects them to an ontological inquiry; it concludes that there

sa bon gzhom pa ltar 'gro ba 'di'i lugs kyi rtsad bcad pa'i mdo 'gag yin pas shin tu theb pa gal che|)
Note that in the *mKha'* 'gro snying thig sources discussed below the phrase appears as **rtog pa rtsad bcad pa**.

⁵⁰⁴ The meaning of *mtshang* as (hidden) fault here is made clear in Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang's *gZhi khregs chod skabs kyi zin bris bstan pa'i nyi ma'i zhal lung snyan brgyud chu bo'i bcud 'dus* (19b.): *mtshang zhes pa skyon gyi don yin|*

⁵⁰⁵ Sometimes known as *thun mong ba byung gnas 'gro gsum la brtag pa*, i.e., the *common* investigation of [mind's] emergence, presence and departure. See below. This form of preliminary is briefly discussed in Germano 1997b 325–326.

⁵⁰⁶ JCLg vol. 2: 461.6f.: *rtsad gcod pa ni| thog med nas 'khor bar 'khyams mkhan dge sdig byed mkhan 'di sgo gsum gang yin brtags pas [462] gtso bo sems yin par shes nas| mtshangs^a btsal ba ni| lus ngag yid gsum gcig tha dad brtags pas| tha snyad du ni de gsum 'brel ba can ltar snang yang| don dam gyi rig pas dpyad na gcig tha dad gang du'ang ma grub pa'i sems zhes bya ba med pa gsal snang gya gyu ba 'di yin|* ^a Read as *mtshang*

⁵⁰⁷ JCLg vol. 2: 462.2: 'di'i ngo bo la brtags pas skye ba btsal bas ma rnyed| gnas pa'i ngo bo ma grub| 'gags pa'i yul med pas gzhi rtsa bral|

is no real independent mind. The third then focuses on the mind and the apparent origination, endurance and cessation of thoughts and perceptions. 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi blo-gros does not refer to Buddhist schools or any key tenets of Buddhist philosophy such as selflessness or emptiness.

Some instructional texts, including 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Ye shes bla ma*, refer only to the third practice, without speaking of the first two. However, as a group, the three are not a recent invention. The triad features in earlier rDzogs-chen instruction texts, such as the *Thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po*, a guidance manual on the *mKha' 'gro snying thig* drafted by the Third rDzogs-chen hierarch, Nges-don bstan-'dzin bzang-po (*alias* A-ti bstan-pa'i-rgyal-mtshan, 1759–1792).⁵⁰⁸ That very same text cites the following three lines from *bTags grol snying po'i don khrid*:

First probe the root of thought,
Then search for mind's hidden flaws.
Then investigate the trio of emergence, presence and departure.⁵⁰⁹

These lines belong to the *mKha' 'gro'i snying thig* collection. It is a *gter ma* of Padma las-'brel-rtsal.⁵¹⁰ In its current form, it dates to the thirteenth century, even though the text itself claims the legendary dGa'-rab rdo-rje as its author.⁵¹¹ In any case, the grouping together of the three practices may derive from this text.

The third investigation, of mind's emergence, presence and departure, also appears independently elsewhere. Some treatises describe it as a form of “mental purification” (*sems sbyong ba*) to be introduced after exercises for physical and

⁵⁰⁸ See *Thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po* in bibliography for details. The text has been translated by Cortland Dahl in *Third Dzogchen Rinpoche 2007 & 2008* (the section on the three preliminaries appears in 2008: 138–143).

⁵⁰⁹ *Thar lam bgrod byed shing rta bzang po* 293: dang po rtog pa rtsad bcad| de nas sems kyi mtshangs (*sic*) btsal| de nas byung gnas 'gro gsum la brtag|

⁵¹⁰ The dates of Padma las-'brel-rtsal are unclear. TBRC gives the birth date as 1248, while a biography on TOL gives his dates as 1291–1315. The latter dates are problematic, because Klong-chen rab-'byams, who is considered his reincarnation, was born in 1308.

⁵¹¹ See KLR vol. 5, 56–70. In this edition, the cited text (which appears on p. 59) reads: dang po rtog pa rtsad bcad% de nas sems kyi mtshang btsal% de nas byung sa% gnas sa 'gro sa gsum la brtag% The attribution to dGa'-rab rdo-rje appears in the colophon on p.70.

vocal purification.⁵¹² This applies to the *Ye shes bla ma* as well as texts by Klong-chen rab-'byams, including the *dNgos gzhi 'od gsal snying po 'i don khrid*.⁵¹³ Both *Ye shes bla ma* and *dNgos gzhi 'od gsal snying po 'i don khrid* begin their explanations of emergence, presence and departure with the following quotation from the *sGra thal 'gyur* tantra.⁵¹⁴

First where mind originates,
Then where it stays, and finally where it goes—
If you examine these three points thoroughly,
You will come to purify the mind and know its natural state.⁵¹⁵

If this tantra dates from the latter half of the eleventh century, as it is sometimes proposed, it is possible that the investigation is the oldest of the three practices. The other two perhaps existed independently for a while, before all three were brought together in some traditions, even as others continued to speak of the investigation of mind's emergence, presence and departure alone.

Of course, the ideas behind the three practices are older still. The concept of mind's emptiness and specifically its non-arising and non-ceasing goes back to the apophatic language of the *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras, as in the following passage from the *Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdaya*:

Thus, Śāriputra, all phenomena are emptiness. They have no characteristics. They are unborn and unceasing. There is no purity and no impurity. There is no decrease and no increase. Thus, Śāriputra, in emptiness there is no form, no sensation, no perception, no formations, no consciousness; no eye, no ear, no nose, no tongue, no body, no mind...⁵¹⁶

⁵¹² In *Ye shes bla ma* the exercise for bodily purification is to maintain the vajra posture (*rdo rje 'i 'dug stangs*), on which see Germano 1997b: 321–322. The exercises for vocal purification are: 1) sealing (*rgyas gdabs pa*); 2) strengthening (*rtsal sbyang ba*); 3) making flexible (*mnyen btsal ba*)^a; and 4) setting out upon the path (*lam du gzhus pa*); see Germano 1997b: 322–325. ^a Germano (*ibid.*, 324) notes that there exists an alternative spelling of *gnyen btsal ba*, interpretable as “seeking an aid”.

⁵¹³ KLR vol. 9: 192–216.

⁵¹⁴ See Germano 1994: 272.

⁵¹⁵ *Ye shes bla ma*, 320: *sems ni thog ma byung sa dang | bar du gnas sa tha ma 'gro | de ltar gsum la brtag^a dpyad na | sems sbyang^b sems kyi gnas lugs shes | Cf. NGB vol. 3: 680.1 ^a brtags ^b sbyang*

⁵¹⁶ *Shes rab snying po* 289.6 f.: *shā ri 'i bu de lta bas na chos thams cad stong pa nyid de | mtshan nyid med pa | ma skyes pa | ma 'gags pa | dri ma med pa | dri ma dang bral ba med pa | bri ba med pa | gang ba med pa 'o | shā ri 'i bu de lta bas na stong pa nyid la gzugs med | tshor ba med | 'du shes med | 'du byed rnams med | mam par shes pa med | mig med | rna ba med | sna med | lce med | lus med | yid med...*

Indian commentarial literature presents the contemplation of such points as a means to cultivate insight (*vipaśyanā*; *lhag mthong*). In the section on insight in his intermediate *Bhāvanākrama*, for example, Kamalaśīla speaks of mind’s lack of real origin or destination: “When mind arises, it comes from nowhere, and when it ceases, it goes nowhere.”⁵¹⁷ The rDzogs-chen texts thus contain elaborations on, and systematized contemplations of, established ideas.

Early rDzogs-chen manuals—and even a work as late as the *Zab lam gsal byed*⁵¹⁸ by ’Gyur-med rdo-rje (1646–1714)—present the investigation of *byung gnas ’gro gsum* without reference to doxography. They offer only a meditative technique to help the practitioner to affirm the mind’s emptiness. ’Jigs-med gling-pa’s *Ye shes bla ma*, by contrast, links the investigation to various philosophical tenets.⁵¹⁹ It follows a hierarchical model and warns of the danger of ‘falling’ (*lhung ba*) into lesser views, such as a hypostasised origin of mind:

If you say that mind comes from some real entity (*dngos po*), you are falling into the view of the Auditor (*śrāvaka*) schools of philosophy. So, investigate, and break down this clinging to the reality of appearances, even as far as the tiniest particle. When you investigate like this, and examine partless particles, you will not find where mind comes from.⁵²⁰

Here, ’Jigs-med gling-pa attributes the idea that mind has a real, substantial basis—that it arises, in other words, from an existent cause—to the Auditor schools, i.e., the Vaibhāṣika and Sautrāntika. In Tibetan doxographical accounts, these schools hold the view that matter is ultimately composed of indivisible particles

⁵¹⁷ *sDe dge bstan ’gyur* vol. 110: 97.5: *sems skye ba’i tshe gang nas kyang mi ’ong| ’gag pa’i tshe yang gang du yang mi ’gro ste|* (There is no extant Sanskrit for the intermediate *Bhāvanākrama*, only for the first and final texts).

⁵¹⁸ i.e., *rDzogs pa chen po mkha’ ’gro snying thig gi khrid yig, zab lam gsal byed*, KLR vol. 6: 215–286 (section on emergence, presence and departure: 245–6).

⁵¹⁹ There are also references to the philosophical schools elsewhere in *Ye shes bla ma*. For example, in discussing the outer practice of ‘separating the ranks of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa’ (*’khor ’das ru shan*), ’Jigs med gling pa instructs the practitioner to: “Undertake analysis and go over the logical arguments of the Prāsaṅgika.” (*Ye shes bla ma*, 313: *yid dpyod kyi tshig dang ’thal ’gyur gyi dgag bzhag*)

⁵²⁰ *Ye shes bla ma*, 321: *yod pa dngos po’i phyogs nas byung zer na grub mtha’ smra ba nyan thos pa’i phyogs su lhung bas| snang ba’i bden zhen rdul phra rab kyi cha shas tsam du’ang bshig ste rtogs shig| de ltar brtags shing rdul phran cha med kyi khong du btsal bas sems kyi byung sa ma rnyed par|*

(*rdul phran cha med*) or atoms.⁵²¹ From the Mahāyāna perspective such atomist realism is unsuitable as a view of ultimate truth. 'Jigs-med gling-pa continues:

You may recognize that mind is like a dream, unreal and without any inherent existence. Still, if you do not uproot the mind that arises, it will continue to appear, whirring (*sha ra ra*)⁵²² indistinctly (*'ol le ba*) as mind (*sems*) and mental factors (*sems byung*). Then you will drift into the position of expecting to arrive at the natural state (*gnas lugs*) through non-affirmative negation (*med dgag*) and affirmative negation (*ma yin dgag*), just like the Mādhyamikas and Cittamātrins. Look within, therefore, and examine the mind of the one who is searching.⁵²³

Here, the text attributes a second type of misunderstanding to the Mādhyamikas and Cittamātrins. More specifically, it attributes this mistaken position to logicians within these schools who rely on non-affirmative negation (*med dgag*) or affirmative negation (*ma yin dgag*) to establish their point of view.⁵²⁴ Instead of using the mind discursively and preoccupying themselves with questions of logic, practitioners should turn the mind within and 'sever' (*chod pa*) it at its root. His comments here raise questions about the relationship of rDzogs-chen to logical reason. 'Jigs-med gling-pa insists that rDzogs-chen is superior to Cittamātra and Madhyamaka, at least insofar as these schools are interpreted by logicians. But, later on, he equates the correct rDzogs-chen view with Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika, as shown below.

In the *Ye shes bla ma* 'Jigs-med gling-pa also introduces a further type of misunderstanding connected with the Mind Category (*sems sde*) and Expanse Category (*klong sde*) of rDzogs-chen:

When you look, there is an instant in which mind is mere self-illumination (*rang gsal*), or in which it gives rise to various stirrings and thoughts. If you believe this to

⁵²¹ See, for example, *Grub mtha' shel gyi me long*, 32–33.

⁵²² The Tibetan expression is onomatopoeic.

⁵²³ *Ye shes bla ma*, 321: rmi lam ltar rang bzhin ma grub par shes kyang| byung mkhan gyi shes pa sha ra pa [= 'ol] le ba sems dang sems byung ltar shar ba'i rtsa ba ma chod na ni dbu ma sems tsam pa ltar med dgag dang ma yin dgag la gnas lugs re ba'i phyogs la 'phyan du yod pas| 'tshol mkhan gyi sems la tshur ltos shig|

⁵²⁴ It is unclear from the text, but if he means the Mādhyamikas are associated with non-affirmative negation and the Cittamātrins with affirmative negation, this would contradict the view of Mi-pham, who criticized the dGe-lugs presentation emptiness as a non-affirming negation. See below.

be the ultimate nature that is like putting all your confidence in baseless talk as in the Mind and Expanse [Categories]; you still do not see pure awareness directly.⁵²⁵

By including these two categories of rDzogs-chen, 'Jigs-med gling-pa affirms the superiority of the Pith Instruction Category (*man ngag sde*). He groups the Mind and Expanse categories together, associating them both with a failure to see pure awareness directly.⁵²⁶ Direct realization or “vision” (*mngon sum du mthong ba*) of pure awareness, he suggests, is unique to the Pith Instruction Category.⁵²⁷

Finally, 'Jigs-med gling-pa identifies the correct, unmistakable perspective with the view of emptiness (*śūnyatā*):

Now, you might say mind comes from emptiness. If so, then examine the one who claims this. It must have a form, colour, characteristics, size, sides, and so on, so examine its nature. When you investigate in this way, you cannot find any basis (*yul*) or support (*rten*) for duality, object or subject, which might appear as something to search for or someone who is searching. You are left in a state of astonished wonder (*ha phyad de*), devoid of any assertion, inexpressible, inconceivable, beyond words. Now you have realized deeply the true meaning of the unborn, the reality body (*dharmakāya*), which has no basis and is free of origin. As the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamikas say:

Since I have no assertions,
I am entirely without fault.⁵²⁸

This is the point you must reach. However, the way to reach it is not, as is believed by those people these days who stubbornly claim to uphold this very viewpoint, through suppositions made with the intellectual mind. It is only when you directly see the truth of reality (*dharmatā*), of the Great Perfection, the nature of everything, that you arrive. So I say.⁵²⁹

⁵²⁵ *Ye shes bla ma*, 321: bltas pas kyang sems dar cig rang gsal tsum du 'dug pa'am| 'gyu dran sna tshogs su shar ba mthar thug tu 'dod na| sems klong kha 'byams gzhi bral la gdeng 'cha' ba dang 'dra bas da dung rig pa mngon sum du ma mthong|

⁵²⁶ The fact that 'Jigs-med gling-pa does not treat the Mind and Expanse Categories separately may reflect their diminished importance following their eclipse by the Heart Essence.

⁵²⁷ Nor is there any distinction made between these two categories in the commentarial notes on this section by 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. See JTNs vol. 2: 251.

⁵²⁸ The quotation is from Nāgārjuna's *Vigrahavyāvartanī* verse 29b: nāsti ca mama pratijñā tasmān naivāsti me doṣaḥ||

⁵²⁹ *Ye shes bla ma*, 321f.: yang stong pa'i phyogs nas byung zer na| mkhan po mthong bas [322] dbyibs dang| kha dog rtags mtshan| che chung phyogs cha la sogs pa'ang nges par yod dgos pas de'i rang bzhin brtag dgos te| de ltar brtags pas 'tshol sa dang 'tshol mkhan du snang ba'i gzung 'dzin yul med rten bral smra bsam brjod med khas len thams cad dang bral ba'i ngang du ha phyad de lus na| gzhi med rtsa bral chos sku skye ba med pa'i don khong du chud pa ni| dbu ma thal 'gyur las| nga la khas len^a med pas na|| nga ni skyon med kho na yin|| zhes pa'i thog tu sleb cing| sleb tshul yang ding sang grub pa'i mtha' 'di nyid 'dzin par rlom pa rnam ltar yid dpyod kyi blos bzhag pa ma yin par rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po'i chos nyid kyi don mthong bas sleb pa yin zhes bdag nyid smra'o||^a DT *dam bca'*

Once again, the discussion here carries implications for the role of logical reason in rDzogs-chen. The passage advises the practitioner to search for mind’s “form, colour, characteristics, size, sides, and so on.” But this investigation leads to an experience of non-finding. Instead of making “suppositions with the intellectual mind” (*yid dpyod kyi blo bzhag pa*), the practitioner must let go of all assertions and remain in a state of “astonished wonder” (*ha phyad de*). Through a citation of Nāgārjuna, ’Jigs-med gling-pa associates this experience with the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika, the pinnacle of exoteric Buddhist thought according to Klong-chen rab-’byams⁵³⁰—and indeed most Tibetan Buddhist thinkers.

The *Ye shes bla ma* contains further doxographical reference in the following section, which concerns mind’s presence (*gnas*), here divided into 1) its location (*gnas sa*) and 2) the type of mind that remains (*gnas mkhan*). The text identifies the pitfall of taking mind to be the “mere self-illumination of the all-ground consciousness” (*kun gzhi’i rnam shes rang gsal tsam*) with the False Aspectarian (*rnam rdzun pa*) branch of Cittamātra.⁵³¹ The final section, on mind’s destination (*’gro sa*) and the mind that departs (*’gro mkhan*), makes no mention of philosophical tenets.

Finally, ’Jigs-med gling-pa connects the three stages of the investigation with the three buddha-bodies (*trikāya*). The reality body (*dharmakāya*), to him, consists of a true understanding of mind’s unarisen quality. The unceasing enjoyment body or

⁵³⁰ See KLR vol. 14: 113f. and Butters 2006: 157.

⁵³¹ *Ye shes bla ma*, 323: *gnas mkhan gyi thog tu dpyad pa’i tshes kun gzhi’i rnam shes rang gsal tsam bden grub tu shar na’ang sems tsam rnam rdzun par nye la...* The False Aspectarians (**nirākāravādin/*alīkākāravādin; rnam rdzun pa*) maintain that sensory data (i.e., *sensa*) or mental impressions are false, unlike the True Aspectarians (**satyākāravādin; rnam bden pa*) who hold that they are veridical. The division of the Cittamātra school into these two sub-branches is a common feature in Tibetan doxographical literature. References to the *sākārajñānavādin* and *nirākāravādi-yogācāra* are also to be found in Advayavajra’s *Tattvaratnāvalī*. Go-rams-pa believed the *rnam rdzun pa* branch to superior to the *rnam bden pa*; see Dreyfus 1997: 557 n. 14. Mi-pham considered the arguments refuting the False Aspectarian position to be the most important feature of Śāntarakṣita’s *Madhyamakālamkāra* and the key to uniting Cittamātra and Madhyamaka; see MPc vol. 13: 575.5.

sambhogakāya (*long sku 'gag pa med pa*) is to ascertain the absence of an identifiable mind that remains.⁵³² Finally, the emanation body (*nirmāṇakāya*) is to understand the absence of a destination or mind that departs; it is to recognise awareness and emptiness, which neither comes nor goes (*rig stong 'gro 'ong med pa sprul pa 'i sku*).⁵³³ The investigation of emergence, presence and departure incorporates all instructions to “demolish the house of the ordinary mind” (*sems kyi khang bu rdib pa*). It is an especially exalted, swift path (*khyad par 'phags pa 'i myur lam*).⁵³⁴

To summarise, the *Ye shes bla ma* introduces doxography into the preliminary investigation of emergence, presence and departure. It characterises lesser views, including those of the Cittamātrins, Mādhyamikas, and followers of the Mind and Expanse Categories of rDzogs-chen, as potential traps on the way to correct understanding. By citing Nāgārjuna, the author associates a correct understanding (or experience) of mind’s emptiness with Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika. Although the text refers extensively to Indian systems—or, more accurately, to their Tibetan versions⁵³⁵—it does not speak of Tibetan schools and only briefly refers to Tibetan developments (i.e., the three categories of rDzogs-chen). Moreover, it entirely ignores Tibetan intersectorian polemics. Finally, 'Jigs-med gling-pa also claims that this preliminary practice leads to a realization of the three buddha-bodies, a result that is usually associated with the main rDzogs-chen practice.⁵³⁶

⁵³² Ibid.

⁵³³ Ibid., 324.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

⁵³⁵ It has long been recognised that the Tibetan presentation of Indian schools in doxographical literature is a simplification for pedagogical purposes rather than a historical description. Cf. Sopa & Hopkins, 1989, 119: “The very format of the four schools and their subdivisions does not represent an historical account of self-asserted identities but is the result of centuries of classification of systems in India and Tibet in order to get a handle on the vast scope of positions found in Indian Buddhism.”

⁵³⁶ This apparent discrepancy led one recent rDzogs-chen teacher (sMyo-shul mkhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs rdo-tje in an undated audio recording) to posit two distinct sets of three Buddha-bodies, one to be realized through the preliminary and one to be realized through the main practice.

'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma includes the emergence, presence and departure section of *Ye shes bla ma* in his notes on that text's difficult points. He does not stray far from his source;⁵³⁷ nor does he question its validity. Like 'Jigs-med gling-pa, he ignores Tibetan polemics. And at no point does he refer to the rNying-ma interpretation of selflessness and emptiness as Mi-pham articulated them.

2. Chos-dbyings rang-grol on the rDzogs-chen Preliminaries

Chos-dbyings rang-grol discusses the rDzogs-chen preliminaries in several texts. However, it is *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul* that most clearly demonstrates the impact of Mi-pham's philosophy on these practices. This is evident not only in its references to Mi-pham's interpretation of Madhyamaka, but also in its attitude towards other traditions.

2.1. The Text

The *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul* constitutes a set of notes on the three rDzogs-chen preliminaries introduced above.⁵³⁸ It was probably compiled by an unidentified student of Chos-dbyings rang-grol, presumably from lecture notes.⁵³⁹ The editors decided on the title, derived from a phrase that appears in the text.⁵⁴⁰ Still, the title is arguably misleading, because the treatise discusses only the preliminaries, not the whole path. In the section on the mind's emergence, presence and departure, Chos-dbyings rang-grol purports to follow the explanations 'Jigs-med

⁵³⁷ He expands on the source somewhat, of course. For example, when explaining the possibility of falling into the view of the Auditors, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma introduces a further distinction between earlier (*snga rabs*) and later (*phyi rabs*) scholars. See JTNs vol. 2: 248f.

⁵³⁸ YCRa vol. 2: 403–414. The text is translated in Appendix 2 and Pearcey 2018.

⁵³⁹ The expression “[he] said/would say” (*gsungs*), referring to Chos-dbyings rang-grol, appears throughout the text.

⁵⁴⁰ The fact that the editors chose the title was confirmed by A-lags gZan-dkar, who was involved in the publication of the collected works in which the text appears. (Private communication, 21 February 2016). A-lags gZan-dkar contributed a foreword to the collection in which he credits mKhan-po Shes-bya kun-gzigs with the editing and publication of the works. The line from which the title derives is the very first line of the text (op. cit. 403) beginning: *spyir 'od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len pa la...*

bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma gave to gTer-ston bSod-rgyal.⁵⁴¹ He also refers to gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, but no other sources. It is clear, however, that the text closely follows Mi-pham's interpretation of Madhyamaka philosophy.

2.1.1. Probing the Mind

The text begins with a section that discusses probing the mind. Here, Chos-dbyings rang-grol expresses concern that some teachers of the preliminary practice lack intellectual rigour. Such concern was perhaps more keenly felt in the new, post-Mipham era of rNying-ma scholasticism:

This is the point at which most teachers these days tell their students: “Analyse your body, speech and mind. Determine which is most important.” The students then contemplate all manner of chatter and hearsay, before concluding that mind is most important because it is what originally became deluded, and so on. Then the teacher will say such things as: “Investigate whether your mind has features like colour or shape. Analyse its emergence, presence and departure.” Then when the students say, “There is nothing to it at all,” the teacher will say they have understood. Then the teacher will continue: “Now settle the mind without altering... Now direct your awareness... etc.”⁵⁴² Yet for such explanations, it would hardly be necessary to shut the outer door from the outside, to lock the inner door from the inside, or to apply the seal of strictest secrecy! For this does not correspond to any tradition of Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen, or the Middle Way. And as it is perfectly intelligible even to an old nun, Vajradhara would hardly have needed to appear in order to reveal it. We must bring an end to such terrible traditions from now on.⁵⁴³

Chos-dbyings rang-grol directs his criticism here at teachers who introduce the preliminaries without reference to Mi-pham's interpretation of selflessness and emptiness. This is clear from what follows in the text. Still, it is unclear whether this

⁵⁴¹ YCRa vol. 2, 408: skabs 'dir rdo grub rin po che'i zhal nas nyag bla rin po che la gsungs pa ltar 'chad pa la...

⁵⁴² Reading a *gtad* as *ar gtad* here.

⁵⁴³ YCRa vol. 2: 403: 'di'i skabs su deng sang gi khrid mkhan phal cher gyis slob bu rnams la khyod kyi lus ngag yid gsum gtso gang che dpyod kyi zer| des kyang kha kha rgyug mchu mchu rgyug tsam gyis khos cig bsam 'dug gi thog mar 'khrul mkhan sogs sems yin pas sems gtso che zer| yang de la khyod kyi sems la kha dog dang dbyibs gzugs sogs yod med dang byung gnas 'gro gsum la rtog dpyod kyi dang zer| des kyang ci yang med gi zer ba tsam na khyod shes yod gi da ma bcos par zhog la a^a gtad sogs su ltos nas bsgom zer na'ang| de 'dra 'chad pa la phyi sgo phyi nas bsdam| nang sgo nang nas bsdams te gsang rgya dam por byed mi dgos| de phyag rdzogs dbu gsum gang gi yang lugs ma red| de lta bu zhig jo rgan ma zhig gis kyang shes nus pas de tsam ston pa'i ched rdo rje 'chang byon yang mi dgos pas srol ngan de phyin chad snub thub dgos gsungs| ^a Read as *ar*.

critique applies also to previous rDzogs-chen authors. At least one of Mi-pham's contemporaries, sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, ignored Mi-pham's ideas in his explanations of the preliminary practice. Chos-dbyings rang-grol himself acknowledges as much later in the text.

For Chos-dbyings rang-grol, to probe the mind is to recognise the source of saṃsāric wandering. In his view, it is crucial to follow Mi-pham's interpretation that this source is the mistaken notion of the individual self (*puḍgalātman*; *gang zag gi bdag*).⁵⁴⁴ He thus rejects the dGe-lugs assertion that the root of saṃsāra is clinging to phenomenal identity (*chos kyi bdag*; *dharmātmya*).⁵⁴⁵ Previous authors on the rDzogs-chen preliminaries avoided such matters entirely. For them, probing the mind simply involved determining that the mind is more important than the body and speech. For Chos-dbyings rang-grol, however, this practice demands greater philosophical rigour. It is also an opportunity for him to highlight sectarian differences.⁵⁴⁶ Chos-dbyings rang-grol believes that dGe-lugs and rNying-ma views about the source of saṃsāra are incompatible. Any attempt to combine them would be inappropriate. As he puts it: “It is fine to mix two things that complement one another well, like sweet potato (*gro ma*) and melted butter, but there is no need to mix what does not.”⁵⁴⁷ He does not deny the validity of the other schools, though. There are “six and a fraction” (*nyi tshe zhig dang bdun*) philosophical traditions in Tibet, all of which are valid in their own way.⁵⁴⁸ Since each can lead its followers to the goal of enlightenment, there is no need to combine them.⁵⁴⁹

⁵⁴⁴ He compares the recognition of this point to the discovery of a thief (YCRa vol. 2: 403: rkun po ngo 'dzin lta bu'i man ngag...)

⁵⁴⁵ YCRa vol. 2: 403.

⁵⁴⁶ Cabezón writes of the fine line between what he calls “sectarian differentiation” and sectarianism (Cabezón and Dargay 2007: 7). This is a topic to which we will return later in the present study.

⁵⁴⁷ YCRa vol. 2: 404: dper na gro ma dang mar khu bsres ba lta bu'i gcig la gcig gis phan thog pa gcig grogs gcig gis byed pa zhig yin na bsre chog pa la de min pas bsre mi dgos|

⁵⁴⁸ YCRa vol. 2: 404f. In other words, six major schools plus some minor traditions. The figure is unusual, and I have been unable to identify exactly which major schools are meant, although the four

2.1.2. Searching for Mind's Hidden Flaws

Chos-dbyings rang-grol follows a more established model in his discussion of the mind's hidden flaws (*mtshang*). He identifies them as the perception of certain features in the individual self, i.e., wholeness (*ril po*), singularity (*gcig*) and realness (*bden*).⁵⁵⁰ He briefly describes the remedies to such mistaken ideas but does not use this section to discuss rNying-ma philosophy or its relation to other systems.⁵⁵¹

2.1.3. Mind's Emergence, Presence and Departure

The full extent of Mi-pham's influence becomes apparent in the third section. Chos-dbyings rang-grol claims that some of his comments follow 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma,⁵⁵² but this is problematic for reasons I discuss below. Primarily, though, the section follows Mi-pham's interpretation of the Madhyamaka view. It shows how Mi-pham's ideas led to a re-evaluation of this particular preliminary practice as well as its place in the hierarchy of philosophical views.

The section begins with an instruction on how to investigate mind's origin. It suggests that the practitioner should analyse the perception of a given object, such as a pillar:

When, in the first instant of perceiving the pillar through the visual consciousness, you have the thought "This is a pillar", ask yourself: does this consciousness arise from the pillar or not? At that time, without analysing the subjective mind, consider only the object, the pillar, and how, while empty of its own essence, it still appears—its aspect of appearance being unobstructed. While appearing, the pillar is primordially empty in essence, with the character of being free from complexity.

of rNying-ma, Sa-skya, bKa'-brgyud and dGe-lugs are almost certainly included, possibly with the addition of the Jo-nang and Zhi-byed.

⁵⁴⁹ YCRa vol. 2: 405.

⁵⁵⁰ YCRa vol. 2: 405. Other manuals describe the features of permanence (*rtag*), singularity (*gcig*) and independence (*rang dbang*). See, for example, *bsTan pa'i nyi ma'i zhal lung* 34.2.

⁵⁵¹ This section also includes a lengthy discussion of the importance of body and speech on the Buddhist path as a means of encouraging a thorough investigation before concluding that mind is the most important factor. In other texts an exploration of the relative importance of body, speech and mind is part of the first investigation. It is therefore possible that the inclusion of these comments in the second section is a mistake.

⁵⁵² i.e., his explanation to Nyag-bla bSod-rgyal (i.e., gTer-ston bSod-rgyal Las-rab gling-pa) YCRa vol. 2: 408.

Without losing its apparent basis, it is empty; and without losing its empty basis, it appears. We must be certain, therefore, that its identity is the union of appearance and emptiness.⁵⁵³

The last sentence, which speaks of the union of emptiness and appearance (*snang stong zung 'jug*), connects this extract to Mi-pham's interpretation of Madhyamaka.⁵⁵⁴ It also stands in marked contrast to the explanation in the *Ye shes bla ma*, where the discussion of the object (as one half of the subject-object dyad) is taken as an opportunity to refute the supposedly Hīnayāna view of indivisible atoms. Chos-dbyings rang-grol first sets out what is essentially an orthodox, Mi-pham-inspired rNying-ma view of Madhyamaka, then criticizes the dGe-lugs position. He does not identify his opponents but, as is common in Tibetan polemical literature, refers to them simply as "others".⁵⁵⁵

Others assert that a pillar is not empty of its own essence but is empty of true existence (*bden grub; satyasiddhi*). Therefore, as true existence is not found in knowable phenomena, and phenomena themselves, such as vases, are not empty from the perspective of ultimate analysis, appearance and emptiness are not a unity, and there is no relationship of method and outcome, or of the nature-of-things (*chos nyid; dharmatā*) and things themselves (*chos can; dharmin*). As true existence is not found in knowable phenomena, the emptiness that is its absence is also impossible: it would be tantamount to saying a horse is empty of a cow.⁵⁵⁶

This criticism of the dGe-lugs interpretation of emptiness appears repeatedly in the writings of Mi-pham and Bod-pa sprul-sku.⁵⁵⁷ They hold that the dGe-lugs

⁵⁵³ YCRa vol. 2: 408: ka 'dzin mig shes kyis skad cig dang po ka ba'o snyam pa'i tshe nga'i shes pa 'di ka ba las byung ba yin nam min snyam nas| de'i tshe yul can la mi dpyod par yul la dpyad nas ka ba rang gi ngo bo ye nas stong bzhin du snang cha ma 'gags par snang ba dang| snang bzhin du ngo bo ye stong spros pa dang bral ba'i bdag nyid du gnas pa yin te| snang ba'i snang tshugs ma shor bzhin du stong| stong pa'i stong tshugs ma shor bzhin snang ba'i snang stong zung 'jug gi bdag nyid du nges dgos|

⁵⁵⁴ On the importance of the concept of union (or coalescence) in Mi-pham's philosophy see Duckworth 2011, 134 and passim, and Wangchuk 2012. Duckworth describes Mi-pham's philosophy as 'dialectical monism', but this has been challenged by Dorji Wangchuk, who proposes the neo-Sanskritism *Yuganaddhavāda* instead. See Wangchuk 2012: 30–36.

⁵⁵⁵ Cabezón notes that this rhetorical strategy denies an opponent power and intellectual plausibility. (Cabezón and Dargyay 2007, 8)

⁵⁵⁶ YCRa vol. 2: 408: gzhan gyis ka ba rang gi ngo bos mi stong ka ba bden grub kyis stong par 'dod| des na bden grub shes bya la mi srid pa dang| don dam dpyod pa'i ngor mi stong ba gnyis snang stong zung 'jug dang| thabs thabs byung dang| chos nyid chos can du 'brel ba med do| bden grub shes bya la mi srid pas| des stong pa'i stong nyid kyang mi srid de| rta ba lang gis stong zer ba lta bu yin|

⁵⁵⁷ See, for example, Bötrül 2011: 162.

position amounts to a form of extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*).⁵⁵⁸ Chos-dbyings rang-grol argues that something that was never present in the first place cannot be said to be absent.⁵⁵⁹ He calls this a trivial (*tha shal ba*) absence; it corresponds to a form of emptiness described in the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* as “emptiness of one thing in another” (*gcig gis gcig stong pa nyid*),⁵⁶⁰ such as a barren woman’s child or a pauper’s wealth. Such superficial forms of emptiness as these are unsuitable as objects of meditation for someone who truly longs for liberation.⁵⁶¹

If a pillar is not itself empty of its own essence, but only of some extraneous feature, Chos-dbyings rang-grol claims—again echoing Mi-pham—it must be hypostatic (*bden grub*), permanent (*rtag*), stable (*brtan*) and unchanging (*ther zug*).⁵⁶² The text then quotes an opponent, a certain Bla-ma rGya-sde-ba,⁵⁶³ who raises the following objection:

Even if you assert that a pillar is empty of its own essence, you accept that emptiness is freedom from conceptual elaboration. And it is meaningless to suggest that the emptiness resulting from the negation of a thing’s apparent aspect (*snang cha*) is freedom from conceptual elaboration.⁵⁶⁴

Bla-ma rGya-sde-ba contends that the emptiness of an entity’s own essence, understood through the negation of that entity’s appearance, cannot qualify as the

⁵⁵⁸ On this point see Pettit 1999: 135f. and Duckworth 2011: 98. Pettit points out that, for Mi-pham, the dGe-lugs position amounts to “verbal extrinsic emptiness” (*tshig gi gzhan stong*) rather than ontological extrinsic emptiness (*don gyi gzhan stong*).

⁵⁵⁹ As in the example of a horse’s emptiness of cows. The same example occurs in *Nges shes sgron me* (MPp vol. 9: 77.1; English translation in Pettit 1999: 197f.), but ultimately derives from the *Mahāparinirvāṇasūtra*.

⁵⁶⁰ YCRa vol. 2: 409. The seven forms of emptiness mentioned in the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra* are: 1) emptiness of characteristics (*mtshan nyid stong pa nyid*); 2) emptiness of the nature of entities (*dnegos po’i rang bzhin stong pa nyid*); 3) emptiness of becoming (*srid pa’i stong pa nyid*); 4) emptiness of non-becoming (*mi srid pa stong pa nyid*); 5) inexpressible emptiness (*brjod du med pa’i stong pa nyid*); 6) emptiness of the ultimate great wisdom of the noble ones (*don dam pa’i phags pa’i ye shes chen po stong pa nyid*); 7) emptiness of one thing in another (*gcig gis gcig stong pa nyid*). (*Chos rnam kun btus*, vol. 2, 1649–50.)

⁵⁶¹ YCRa vol. 2: 409.

⁵⁶² YCRa vol. 2: 409.

⁵⁶³ Neither A-lags gZan-dkar nor Tulku Thondup could identify this person. The name is also unknown to the TBRC database. Note that another text in g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s *gsung ’bum* (YCRa vol. 3: 479–482) also mentions rGya-sde twice (p.479).

⁵⁶⁴ YCRa vol. 2: 409: ka ba rang gi ngo bos mi stong par bzhed kyang stong nyid spros bral yin par bzhed pas snang cha spangs pa’i stong cha de spros bral yin par go rgyu med|

absence of conceptual proliferation (*prapañca*; *spros pa*). It is itself a form of conceptual proliferation. Chos-dbyings rang-grol does not rebut this objection head on. He implies that, for followers of Mi-pham, appearance and emptiness are not incompatible; on the contrary, they are inseparably united. Therefore, emptiness is not a means to refute appearance alone.⁵⁶⁵ Bla-ma rGya-sde-ba then raises a further objection: If appearance and emptiness are always present as a unity, would this not mean that exalted (*ārya*) beings (i.e., those who have attained the *bhūmis*) would still perceive features of ordinary entities, such as wooden pillars, even in the wisdom that arises during meditative equipoise (*mnyam bzhag gi ye shes*)? Chos-dbyings rang-grol simply says that Mi-pham might not have addressed this objection directly, but his system certainly refutes it.⁵⁶⁶ Aside from this comment, he offers no clear answer to the objection, which makes it a curious interpolation, perhaps because the text is in note-format. Responses to objections (*dgag lan*) are a common feature of polemical literature, but they are rare in practical instructions.

Thus far, Chos-dbyings rang-grol has discussed the mind's source or origin. Next, he considers the subject, that is, the mind which emerges.⁵⁶⁷ Even ordinary consciousness possesses traits or qualities which reveal that its underlying nature is wisdom or clear light. For example, the fact that mind cognizes and is aware of objects is a sign that its nature consists of the wisdom of clear light (*'od gsal gnyug ma'i ye shes*).⁵⁶⁸ Moreover, consciousness is originally empty and without conceptual proliferation. This is a sign of great, empty and unelaborate basic space (*dbyings spros bral stong chen*). Finally, he argues that the indivisibility of consciousness and its emptiness itself is a sign of the union of basic space and

⁵⁶⁵ YCRa vol. 2: 409.

⁵⁶⁶ YCRa vol. 2: 409.

⁵⁶⁷ There are no separate sections for the endurance and cessation of mind.

⁵⁶⁸ YCRa vol. 2: 409.

wisdom (*dbyings ye zung 'jug*).⁵⁶⁹ Although Chos-dbyings rang-grol does not say so explicitly, it is possible that this explanation, fuels his claim (made later in the text) that this rDzogs-chen preliminary (of mind's emergence, presence and departure) is superior to the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika viewpoint.⁵⁷⁰

Chos-dbyings rang-grol then cites several statements which he attributes to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma.⁵⁷¹ The first is about the union of basic space (*dbyings*) and wisdom. This lies at the centre (*dbus*) of all phenomena as their vital force (*srog*) or is like a seal with which they are stamped (*phyag rgyas btab yod*).⁵⁷² The second statement refers to the soteriological efficacy of this investigation more generally. According to Chos-dbyings rang-grol, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma considers three years of thorough meditation on mind's emergence, presence and departure sufficient to bring liberation after death. This is true, he says, even for those who have not even begun the main practice of Khregs-chod. This is an unusual claim, Chos-dbyings rang-grol says, but a sound one.⁵⁷³ The timescale—a mere three years—suggests a close alignment with the esoteric path.⁵⁷⁴

Next, Chos-dbyings rang-grol reports a discussion between gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma, in which they examined the preliminary practices within a broader hierarchy of philosophical views:

Lama Nyag-bla once asked rDo-grub Rin-po-che whether there is a hierarchical distinction between the view of emergence, presence and departure in this context and the Middle Way view. Rin-po-che replied that there is a difference. “The Middle

⁵⁶⁹ YCRa vol. 2: 409.

⁵⁷⁰ YCRa vol. 2: 409.

⁵⁷¹ Since Chos-dbyings rang-grol never met 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma in person any statements attributed to him in this text must have been received via gTer-ston bSod-rgyal. I discuss this in more detail below.

⁵⁷² YCRa vol. 2: 410.

⁵⁷³ YCRa vol. 2: 410. There is no such statement to be found in the rDzogs-chen corpus within his collected works.

⁵⁷⁴ One of the key differences between the exoteric path of the Sūtrayāna and the esoteric Mantrayāna is the duration of the path to full awakening. Śākyamuni is often said to have required three incalculable aeons to attain enlightenment. This is contrasted with the swifter tantric path that can lead to enlightenment in as few as thirteen, seven or five lifetimes. rDzogs-chen takes such claims even further, with some texts promising Buddhahood in years or even months.

Way,” he said, “corresponds to the sūtras, above which are the three tantra classes of the mantra vehicle, and beyond those, the three inner tantra classes of mantra. It is among these final three classes that we find the very pinnacle of all nine vehicles, the Great Perfection or Atiyoga. So, there is a difference.”⁵⁷⁵

This passage raises many interesting issues. For the time being, let us assume that Chos-dbyings rang-grol reliably records this conversation. (I shall address this question below.) This would mean that ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma did indeed identify the view arrived at through investigating mind’s emergence, presence and departure with rDzogs-chen/Atiyoga. It would also mean that he claimed this view to be vastly superior to that of Madhyamaka. Such assertions bear on the themes of the previous chapter. They suggest a *view*-based (as opposed to method-based) distinction between the vehicles. This is hard to reconcile with the contents of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s rDzogs-chen corpus.

In another work, *Nyi ma’i dkyil ’khor*, Chos-dbyings rang-grol takes up the same theme of the hierarchical distinction between the view of this rDzogs-chen preliminary and Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika.⁵⁷⁶ He writes:

Then, you might ask: Which is superior: the view of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika or the view of emergence, presence and departure in the Great Perfection? The answer is that the view of emergence, presence and departure is superior. In Mādhyamika, certainty must be like taut metal wire.⁵⁷⁷ For emergence, presence and departure in the Great Perfection, the manifestations from the radiance of the essence [of mind] must be unceasing. This is the distinction in features (*khyad chos*) on top of the basis for distinction (*khyad gzhi*).⁵⁷⁸

⁵⁷⁵ YCRa vol. 2: 411: bla ma nyag blas rdo grub rin po che la skabs ’di’i byung gnas ’gro gsum gyi lta ba dang| dbu ma’i lta ba gnyis la mtho dman yod dam med zhus tshe| mtho dman los yod| dbu ma mdo red| de yan chad na sngags kyi rgyud sde gsum yod| de yan na yang sngags nang rgyud sde gsum de’i nang nas kyang theg dgu’i yang rtse rdzogs pa chen po a ti yo ga yin pas khyad los yod|

⁵⁷⁶ YCRa vol. 2: 146–162. Its full title is *’Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po bla ma rin po che’i khrid rgyun lta gnad ’gag gsal bar bstan pa nyi ma’i dkyil ’khor*. Unlike *rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul*, this text was clearly written by Chos-dbyings rang-grol himself.

⁵⁷⁷ The analogy of taut metal wire (*lcags skud sgrim ma*) is unclear and the translation is tentative, but the image might be intended to signify that in Madhyamaka certainty (*nges shes*) must be deliberately cultivated and maintained.

⁵⁷⁸ YCRa vol. 2: 151: de’i tshe dbu ma thal ’gyur ba’i lta ba dang| rdzogs chen pa’i byung gnas ’gro gsum lta ba gang mtho zhes na byung gnas ’gro gsum lta bas mtho| dbu mas nges shes lcags skud sgrim ma lta bu dgos pa yin| rdzogs chen byung gnas ’gro gsum skabs ngo bo’i gdangs las shar cha ’gag med yod dgos pa de khyad gzhi’i steng nas khyad chos de red gsungs|

Without naming 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma as his source this time,⁵⁷⁹ Chos-dbyings rang-grol flatly asserts the superiority of the rDzogs-chen preliminary practice over Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. He portrays rDzogs-chen as an unceasing spontaneous manifestation of the radiance of awareness. The rhetoric follows 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (as examined in the previous chapter), but it is applied to a preliminary rather than the main practice.

The term “basis for distinction” (*khyad gzhi*) suggests that Chos-dbyings rang-grol considers the preliminary practice to belong to the Atiyoga vehicle. This is, of course, itself superior to the Mahāyāna. There must also be a difference in attributes (*khyad chos*) to establish the superiority of the investigation of emergence, presence and departure. In his *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul*, Chos-dbyings rang-grol says that gTer-ston bSod-rgyal made this point. He then introduces the concept of a “philosophical standpoint” (*'dzin stangs*) without first stating the differences.⁵⁸⁰ This expression, which Pettit and others translate as “modal apprehension,”⁵⁸¹ is the deliberate focus on a concept in meditation.⁵⁸² Mi-pham examined the viability of such conceptual focus in meditation upon ultimate truth in his *Nges shes sgron me*. It is one of the points through which he and his followers seek to distinguish themselves from the dGe-lugs.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁹ It is possible that the entire text is intended to record the words of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. Nowhere does Chos-dbyings rang-grol specify the identity of the “precious guru” (*bla ma rin po che*) of the title whose “tradition of instruction” (*khrid rgyun*) is here recorded.

⁵⁸⁰ On this term, see Pettit 1999, 157–167. (Note that Pettit consistently spells the Tibetan as *'dzin stang* without the post-suffix *s*).

⁵⁸¹ This is the translation adopted in Pettit 1999, Jinpa 2002, and Duckworth 2008, for example. Viehbeck 2012 translates the term variously as “modes of cognition” (154), “modes of grasping” (178) and “cognitive modes” (222). Ruegg (2002: 131) uses “cognitive mode.”

⁵⁸² See also Pettit 1999: 157.

⁵⁸³ See Bötrül 2011: 238. In addition, Pettit 1999, 160–167 includes a discussion of the differences between the views of Tsong-kha-pa and the rNying-ma scholar Yon-tan rgya-mtsho (b. 19th C.) on this point. Mi-pham and dPa'-ris Rab-gsal (1840–1912) clashed over this point when debating the ninth chapter of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*. See Viehbeck 2012: 147–156 for an analysis of dPa'-ris Rab-gsal's criticism and Mi-pham's response.

rDzogs pa chen po 'i lam nyams su len tshul discusses whether a practitioner should maintain such a philosophical standpoint in meditation on the mind's emergence, presence and departure. The text calls on sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma in support of the view that there should indeed be such a standpoint. It then turns to gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and Chos-dbyings rang-grol,⁵⁸⁴ who argue the opposite:

When he [gTer-ston bSod-rgyal] was asked, “Well then, must there be a philosophical standpoint or not?” he replied, “If there were, this would not be *breaking down* the house of the mind so much as *constructing* it.” When told that Lama Lung-rtogs says there must be a philosophical standpoint, he said, “Oh yes, he does say that.” So, while Lama Nyag-bla says there should be no standpoint, Lama Lung-rtogs said there must be. When Lama Tshang [Chos-dbyings rang-grol] was asked, “How do you believe it is?” he said he too didn't think there should be a standpoint.⁵⁸⁵

We are not in a position to verify these statements, since corroborating sources are unavailable. sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma does not discuss *'dzin stangs* in *Rang rig la gnang ba*, which is his only extant work that covers the rDzogs-chen preliminaries;⁵⁸⁶ nor is there any reference to *'dzin stangs* in gTer-ston bSod-rgyal's only relevant text.⁵⁸⁷ It is possible that the differing views reflect the gradual spread of Mi-pham's ideas. This would explain why the older sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma holds a different view to his younger student gTer-ston

⁵⁸⁴ The fact that Chos-dbyings rang-grol is cited in his own text underscores the point that these are notes compiled by an anonymous editor/student.

⁵⁸⁵ YCRa vol. 2: 411: 'o na 'dzin stangs yod dgos sam mi dgos zhus tshe de dgos na sngon 'gro sems kyi khang bu bshig pa ma red brtsigs pa red gsungs| bla ma lung rtogs tshang gis ni 'dzin stangs yod dgos gsungs ni yin zhus tshe| 'o gsungs pa yin gsungs| bla ma nyag blas rin po ches 'dzin stangs med gsungs pa yin| bla ma lung rtogs tshang gis yod dgos gsungs ni yin| bla ma tshang khyed kyis gang ltar bzhed pa yin gsungs pas| khong gi 'dzin stangs ni min zhus| The construction here is rather difficult, and the translation of one line (*bla ma nyag blas rin po ches 'dzin stangs med gsungs pa yin*) in particular is tentative. The use of the verb *zhu/zhus* here might indicate that the question was put to Chos-dbyings rang-grol by another lama rather than a student. (A-lags gZan-dkar, personal communication, 25 January 2016)

⁵⁸⁶ In addition, Ngag-dbang dpal-bzang's *bsTan pa'i nyi ma'i zhal lung* purports to be a record of sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's instructions on Khregs-chod, including the preliminaries, but it too makes no mention of *'dzin stangs*.

⁵⁸⁷ *rDzogs pa chen po 'i nyams len gnad bsdu nyag bla bsod rgyal gyis gsungs pa*, which is preserved in Chos-dbyings rang-grol's collected works (YCRa vol. 2: 421–428) makes no mention of *'dzin stangs*.

bSod-rgyal and the much younger Chos-dbyings rang-grol, both of whom had greater exposure to Mi-pham's ideas.

Chos-dbyings rang-grol then uses the concept of philosophical standpoint to explain why this rDzogs-chen preliminary is superior to exoteric Madhyamaka philosophy:

Then, when asked what are the distinctive features over and above the difference in the basis itself, the Lama [i.e., Chos-dbyings rang-grol] said that here, when settling with ease in meditative equipoise (*mnyam bzhag*), based on a lamp-like certainty (*nges shes*) that determines the union of appearance and emptiness, there is no philosophical standpoint whatsoever related to the four extremes. The sign of this is that whatever arises within the basic space (*dbyings*) of the essence of mind can do so without obstruction—and this is a special feature not to be found in the Middle Way.⁵⁸⁸

Here, the text introduces Mi-pham's interpretation of Madhyamaka; in this, meditation on emptiness does not require any philosophical standpoint connected to the four extremes (*catuskoṭi*). Yet, this presentation is combined with terminology associated with Khregs-chod. It refers to the *unobstructed* (*'gags med*) arising of thoughts and mental states within the basic space (*dbyings*) of the essence (*ngo bo*) of mind, and to the *liberation* (*grol ba*) of thoughts:

Generally, on the path of Khregs-chod, the arising and liberation of thoughts occur simultaneously (*shar grol dus mnyam*). So, at that stage, as a sign that the view of emergence, presence and departure has pervaded the mind stream, self-liberation (*rang grol*) is effected without the need for any other antidote. This is another special feature not to be found in the Middle Way.⁵⁸⁹

The text then clarifies the second claim:

Although the path of Khregs-chod generally involves the simultaneous arising and liberation of thoughts, this practice (of the investigation of emergence, presence and departure) does not feature the genuine (*mtshan nyid pa*) form of liberation upon arising, as that belongs only to the main practice (*dngos gzhi*). Still, it does mark the

⁵⁸⁸ YCRa vol. 2: 411: de na khyad gzhi'i steng gi khyad chos ji ltar yod lags zhus tshel snang stong zung 'jug nges pa'i nges shes mar me lta bu'i steng nas mnyam bzhag la lhod se bzhag pa'i dus der mtha' bzhi'i 'dzin stangs gang yang med pas de'i 'bras rtags la ngo bo'i dbyings la shar cha 'gags med du 'char thub pa 'di dbu ma la med pa'i khyad chos yin|

⁵⁸⁹ YCRa vol. 2: 411f.: spyir khregs chod kyi lam shar grol dus mnyam yin pas| de dus shes rgyud la byung gnas 'gro gsum gyi lta bas khyab yod pa'i 'bras rtags su gnyen po gzhan [412] bsten mi dgos par rang grol du 'gro ba 'di dbu ma la med pa'i khyad chos yin|

point at which such liberation upon arising begins, and that is why it serves as a preliminary to Khregs-chod.⁵⁹⁰

The superiority of this investigation over mainstream Madhyamaka philosophy rests on its close similarity to aspects of the main practice. This is not readily classifiable as a distinction in view or in method, although perhaps it is closer to the latter. The text's assertion allows for a useful compromise. Chos-dbyings rang-grol can assert that the rDzogs-chen preliminaries are superior to the most exalted of exoteric philosophical systems; at the same time, he can affirm the absolute supremacy of, and necessity for, the main practice.

rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul then draws a parallel between personal, psychological experience and the broader nature of “adventitious, delusory appearances” (*glo bur 'khrul ba'i snang ba*). Just like the mind and mental states, appearances too are beyond emergence, presence and departure. They are not present in the original ground; they do not truly remain anywhere thereafter; and they are absent at the stage of the ultimate fruition.⁵⁹¹

The text then introduces two categories of valid cognition that Mi-pham employs repeatedly in his writings, i.e., the conventional valid cognition of narrow, limited vision (*tha snyad tshur mthong gi tshad ma*) and the conventional valid cognition of pure vision (*tha snyad dag gzigs tshad ma*).⁵⁹² Once again, the inclusion of such terms—indeed the reference to valid cognition (*pramāṇa*) at all—is unusual in a rDzogs-chen instruction manual. Indeed, it is probably additional evidence of the expansion of rNying-ma scholasticism.

⁵⁹⁰ YCRa vol. 2: 412: spyir khregs chod kyi lam shar grol dus mnyam yin pas 'di dngos gzhi'i shar grol mtshan nyid pa min yang shar grol gyi mgo 'di nas rtsom pa yin pa'i gnad kyis 'di khregs chod kyi sngon 'gror 'gro ba'i rgyu mtshan de ltar yin gsungs|

⁵⁹¹ YCRa vol. 2: 412.

⁵⁹² Ibid.

2.2. 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma as a Source

Chos-dbyings rang-grol refers to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma several times in his *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul*. Above all, he cites him as the source for his account of the investigation of emergence, presence and departure. This section, which follows Mi-pham's interpretation of Madhyamaka, is supposedly based on comments 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma made to gTer-ston bSod-rgyal. As Chos-dbyings rang-grol did not compose the text himself, it contains three distinct stages of reported speech: 1) the text's actual author reporting the words of Chos-dbyings rang-grol; 2) Chos-dbyings rang-grol reporting the words of gTer-ston bSod-rgyal; and 3) gTer-ston bSod-rgyal reporting the words of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. This tripartite chain thus offers three discrete occasions for inaccuracy or misrepresentation.

The content of the emergence, presence and departure section does not accord with 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's own writings. Chos-dbyings rang-grol's version closely follows Mi-pham's interpretation of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. On the few occasions when 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma refers to emptiness in his *rDzogs-chen* writings, he shows little interest in Mi-pham's favoured terminology or doctrine. For example, *rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa'i khyad par* contains the following passage:

In such texts as the commentary to *Chos dbyings mdzod*, there is praise for the tradition of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika alone. It is certainly necessary, therefore, to follow the Prāsaṅgika approach in delimiting the object of negation (*dgag bya'i mtshams 'dzin*), and so on. Nevertheless, [Prāsaṅgika involves] the separation of the conceptually isolatable factors of appearance and emptiness, referred to as the fine distinction of appearance and emptiness or the 'exclusion of emptiness'. Following which, there is exclusively an apprehension of emptiness that is a non-affirming negation (*med dgag*); this is a concept-based method. There is also the assertion that if, having made such a distinction conceptually, one then trains in meditation, experience develops as in the saying, "Having, as its result, the mind of bliss, clarity and no-thought." In our own system, the Great Perfection, we use awareness as the path from the outset. In other words, we apply awareness alone. We do not attempt

to employ concepts, as concepts are mind. And here we practise meditation after distinguishing mind and awareness.⁵⁹³

The discussion of emptiness here, with its emphasis on delimiting the object of negation and on non-affirming negation, accords with the dGe-lugs system. It has more in common with the attempted rDzogs-chen–dGe-lugs synthesis that I examine in the Chapter Five than with Chos-dbyings rang-grol’s interpretations in his *rDzogs pa chen po’i lam nyams su len tshul*. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma equates emptiness with “mere non-finding” (*ma rnyed pa tsam*) and cautions against affirming negation:

Instructions on the Madhyamaka view [state that] the basis of emptiness (*stong gzhi*) and the object of negation (*dgag bya*) do not arise within the state of certainty in which one ascertains emptiness as a non-affirming negation. Nevertheless, to prevent a diminishing of the form of certainty in which the object of negation is merely excluded, one must repeatedly cultivate further analysis to some degree. It is only the non-finding of a nature within that state of certainty that is called ‘finding emptiness’. It is only this; there is no additional emptiness to be discovered. Unless one nurtures this kind of [analysis] periodically at the beginning, there is a risk of slipping into an affirming negation (*ma yin dgag*).⁵⁹⁴

This extract proposes another reason to practise the preliminary investigations and cultivate certainty: to avoid straying into affirming negations. However, Mi-pham and Chos-dbyings rang-grol are just as concerned with the danger of slipping into a *non*-affirming negation. There is thus a discrepancy between what ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma says in his collected writings and the

⁵⁹³ JTNs vol. 2: 146.10: chos dbyings mdzod ’grel sogs thams cad na lta ba dbu ma thal ’gyur ba’i lugs kho na la bsnags yod pas| dgag bya’i mtshams ’dzin sogs thal ’gyur lugs ltar nges par dgos kyang| snang stong gi spu ris ’byed pa’am| stong pa gud du bead pa zhes snang stong gi ldog cha so sor phye ste med dgag gi stong pa kho na ’dzin pa ni rtog pas skyong tshul gzhir bzhag gi ’gro lugs yin la| dang po rtog ngor de ltar phye ba’i steng nas bsgom pa goms na| de [*sic*] gsal mi rtog blo ’bras can| zhes pa ltar ’ong ba’ang ’dod mod kyi| dang po nas rig pa lam byed dam rig pa rkyang ’ded byed pa’i rdzogs chen rang lugs la rtog pa la las ka mi ’tshol te| rtog pa de sams yin la| ’dir sams rig phye nas sgom pa’i phyr ro| This section is also translated in Tulku Thondup 2002: 104–5.

⁵⁹⁴ JTNs vol. 2: 147.7: dbu ma’i lta khrid dus| stong nyid med dgag nges pa’i nges ngor stong gzhi dang dgag bya mi ’char yang| dgag bya bead ldog tsam nges pa’i nges shes shugs je zhan du ’gror mi ster bar yang yang dpyad pa phra mo’i zur gsos gtong dgos| nges ngo der rang bzhin btsal bas ma rnyed pa tsam la stong nyid myed zer ba ma gtogs| rnyed rgyu’i stong nyid zur pa med| dang po zur gsos ’phral ’phral ma byas na ma yin dgag tu ’chor nyen sogs yod|

citation in *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul*. We can account for this in (at least) three different ways:

1) *Evolution of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's views*. It is possible that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's interpretation of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika evolved over the course of his life. His early education included a training in the dGe-lugs system of exoteric philosophy. Perhaps his views changed, possibly once he read the scroll-letter from Mi-pham urging him to uphold the authentic rNying-ma doctrine. The extracts from his rDzogs-chen corpus, cited above, would then correspond to an earlier phase; the views cited in Chos-dbyings rang-grol's treatise, which are aligned with Mi-pham's, would belong to a later period.

2) *Editorial control of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's writings*. As is commonplace in Tibetan literary culture, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's collected writings were compiled and published after his death.⁵⁹⁵ The version that exists today might therefore reflect the views of those who put together his *gsung 'bum* at rDo-grub monastery, an establishment with a history of known opposition to Mi-pham's work. More of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's corpus has come to light since 2003, when the current edition of his *gsung 'bum* was published.⁵⁹⁶ It is possible that

⁵⁹⁵ The collected writings of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma owe much to the work of anonymous editors. Consider, for example, the following publisher's note (*shing par gyi mchan*)^a appended to a text in the rDzogs-chen corpus:

This text is derived from notes taken when the Lord Guru, while still young, was teaching a group of several students. It does not accord with the modern way of teaching and I have not been able to find a supporting text. Nevertheless, having corrected my notes as well as I could, in accordance with what I received from the Lord Guru, I had the printing blocks carved. (JTNs vol. 2: 94.15: 'di ni rje bla ma nyid sku na gzhon dus 'ga' zhig la gsung rim bzhin zin thor btab pa yin kyang deng dus kyi gsung sgros dang mi mthun zhing dpe yang dag mo zhig gtan ma rnyed kyang rje bla ma nyid la zhus pa ltar gang shes kyis zhu dag byas nas spar la btab pa'o||)

^a This note is not included in the Gangtok edition (JTNg vol. 1: 538).

⁵⁹⁶ In recent years, texts attributed to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma have appeared among the collected writings of other authors, most notably 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i Chos-kyi-blo-gros and the 'four great seminary-masters (*mkhan po*)' of rDo-grub Monastery. See, for example, the untitled notes (*zin bris*) on *Ye shes bla ma* included in a recent edition of the collected writings of 'Jam-dbyangs

future research could bring to light any editorial interventions and thus reveal corruptions within the texts.

3) *Unreliability of Chos-dbyings rang-grol's text.* We noted three stages of communication from 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma to the author of *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul*. At any one of these, the words could have been distorted. We also note that Chos-dbyings rang-grol was heavily influenced by Mi-pham's writings.⁵⁹⁷ His views may also have been shaped by Bod-pa sprul-sku, whom he met directly.⁵⁹⁸ The resident monks and yogis at Chos-dbyings rang-grol's encampment, the most likely site of the compilation of his *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul*, would have been more amenable to Mi-pham's rNying-ma scholasticism than those at rDo-grub-chen Monastery. It is even conceivable that Chos-dbyings rang-grol, as a teacher of the Fourth rDo-grub-chen incarnation, Thub-bstan phrin-las dpal-bzang (b.1927), contributed to the eventual decision to adopt Mi-pham's works as part of the curriculum at rDo-grub-chen.⁵⁹⁹

mKhyen-brtse'i Chos-kyi-blo-gros (JCLb vol. 8: 23–61), the colophon to which reads: ye shes bla ma'i zin bris rdo grub sprul sku bstan pa'i nyi ma'i gsung rgyun 'jam mgon rdo rje 'chang blo gros rgya mtsho'i phyag bris dngos mkhan chen mkhyen brtse'i blo gros la gnang ba'i dpe las zhal bshus pa'i mkhan po'i phyag dpe las slar yang bshus pa'o|| A commentary by 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma on the *Man ngag lta phreng* (commonly attributed to Padmasambhava) is included in the collected words of the Four great khenpos of rDo-grub (DKh vol. 3: 1–77). Its colophon (p. 77) notes that it was discovered in the library of dPal-spungs monastery. I have recently seen copies of unpublished manuscripts attributed to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, which await further research.

⁵⁹⁷ According to his biography by mKhan-po Shes-bya kun-gzigs (YCRa vol. 1: 1–45), Chos-dbyings rang-grol once had an opportunity to see Mi-pham, but his teacher, A-'dzoms 'brug-pa (1842–1924) refused to grant him permission to leave their encampment and make the journey (pp. 28–29). Later, however, he met Mi-pham many times in visions (p.29). The biography also notes (*ibid.*) that he often taught from Mi pham's works, especially *Nges sgron me*, the '*Od gsal snying po* 'overview' (*spyi don*) of **Guhyagarbha*, and the *gNyug sems skor gsum*, and claimed that they hold the key to understanding the writings of Klong-chen rab-'byams.

⁵⁹⁸ See Bötrül 2011: 7.

⁵⁹⁹ Chos-dbyings rang-grol was a teacher of the fourth rDo-grub-chen incarnation, Thub-bstan phrin-las dpal-bzang (b.1927), during whose tenure the change in curriculum occurred. See Tulku Thondup 1996: 320.

3. Conclusion

rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul, which is attributed to Chos-dbyings rang-grol, contains elements of Mi-pham's interpretation of Madhyamaka philosophy. It discusses the analytical meditations belonging to the rDzogs-chen preliminaries and argues that rDzogs-chen practitioners must follow Mi-pham's explanation of selflessness and emptiness. It thus continues a trend for the inclusion of doxography within the rDzogs-chen preliminaries that appears already in the *Yeshe bla ma*. Nevertheless, the *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul* adds an additional sectarian element, since it rejects syncretism and repeats Mi-pham's refutation of dGe-lugs interpretations of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. Moreover, it posits that the view underlying the investigation of mind's emergence, presence and departure is superior to that of Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. The explanation draws upon Mi-pham's theory of Madhyamaka—and, in so doing, highlights apparent disagreement among later rNying-ma authors—but it also seeks to align the preliminary with elements of the main practice. Chos-dbyings rang-grol, drawing upon Mi-pham, thus takes rDzogs-chen—or, at least, its preliminaries—in a more exclusivist direction. Even though the authenticity of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma's views in this source remains to be established, we can be confident that rDzogs-chen preliminary practices evolved to accommodate Mi-pham's philosophical innovations.

5. The Syncretism of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho

“Like a herdsman playing a flute in an empty valley...”

*mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho*⁶⁰⁰

1. Introduction

The writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho (1903–1957) are notable primarily for their syncretism,⁶⁰¹ combining elements of dGe-lugs and rNying-ma doctrine. To identify the place that these writings occupy in the history of Tibetan literature, I begin this chapter with a brief overview of earlier forms of syncretistic rhetoric. This will make it easier to assess the most likely influences on his work. I then turn to mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s works themselves in order to assess his approach to intersectarian relations.

2. Precedents

There are at least two important precursors to mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s syncretic doctrinal stance.⁶⁰² The first is what I shall call the “rhetoric of underlying sameness.” This is the assertion that doctrinal systems are fundamentally identical, or lead to similar results, despite any superficial differences. Such rhetorical claims are to be found in the works of several earlier dGe-lugs authors. However, this conciliatory tendency does not align with the exclusivism that dominated dGe-lugs thought in the early twentieth century. The most extreme form of such exclusivism features in the writings of Pha-bong-kha bDe-chen snying-po

⁶⁰⁰ DC vol. 2: 3.

⁶⁰¹ As defined in the OED: “Attempted union or reconciliation of diverse or opposite tenets or practices, esp. in philosophy or religion...”

⁶⁰² Although I do not include the writings of Tsong-kha-pa here as a likely source of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s rhetoric (as distinct from his doctrinal substance, for which he was obviously and explicitly one of the principal sources), it is worth recalling that Tsong-kha-pa was himself a syncretist, as Roger Jackson (2001: 186 n. 24) has noted.

(1878–1941).⁶⁰³ mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho clearly reacted against a conservative strand of dGe-lugs thought, even though he never identifies any particular individuals. He also disapproved of rNying-ma exclusivism.

2.1. The Rhetoric of Underlying Sameness

The writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho posit points of commonality between rDzogs-chen and dGe-lugs thought. While detailed syncretism of this kind is rare, proclamations of the underlying unity of the views of different systems is a common theme in Tibetan Buddhist literature. A well-known example appears in a work of Blo-bzang chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan (1570–1662) called *dGe ldan bka' brgyud rin po che'i phyag chen rtsa ba rgyal ba'i gzhung lam*:

Although many individual names are ascribed, such as Union with the Co-emergent (*lhan cig skyes sbyor*), the Amulet Box (*ga'u ma*), the Fivefold (*lnga ldan*), the [Six Spheres of] Equal Taste (*ro snyoms [skor drug]*), the Four Syllables (*yi ge bzhi*), Pacification (*zhi byed*), Severance (*gcod yul*), Great Perfection, Instructions on the Madhyamaka View (*dbu ma'i lta khrid*), and so on, nevertheless, when a yogi, who is learned in scripture and logic and experienced, investigates their definitive meaning (*nges don*), they all boil down to a single intention (*dgongs pa gcig*).⁶⁰⁴

In this famous passage, Blo-bzang chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan seeks to validate various systems through their underlying sameness—that is, their *teleological* sameness. Clearly, this assertion still leaves room for *methodological* difference and does not, therefore, preclude hierarchical claims or inclusivist models.

ICang-skya Rol-pa'i-rdo-rje (1717–1786) was another dGe-lugs-pa author who employed the rhetoric of underlying sameness.⁶⁰⁵ In his *lTa ba'i gsung mgur*

⁶⁰³ In certain letters specifically, as will become clear below. To my knowledge, the extreme rhetoric found in these texts is not to be found elsewhere in his writings. For a discussion of his literary output and controversial legacy, see Repo 2015.

⁶⁰⁴ BCG vol. 4, 83.5f.: lhan cig skyes sbyor ga'u ma| lnga ldan ro snyoms yi ge bzhi| zhi byed gcod [84] yul rdzogs chen dang| dbu ma'i lta khrid la sogs pa| so sor ming 'dogs mang na yang| nges don lung rigs la mkhas shing| nyams myong can gyi rnal 'byor pas| dpyad na dgongs pa gcig tu 'bab) The full text is translated in Dalai Lama and Berzin 1997: 97–102; it is also discussed in Jackson 2001 *passim*.

⁶⁰⁵ On his life see Smith 2001: 133–146.

zab mo,⁶⁰⁶ he claims that the “scholars and siddhas” of the different Tibetan schools use variant names to refer to the same ultimate state:

Many Sa-skya, rNying-ma, [b]Ka[']-brgyud and 'Brug-pa scholars and siddhas,
Speak of clear and empty reflexive awareness that is without grasping,
Or the very face of Samantabhadra, which is primordially pure and spontaneously
present,
Or the Great Seal (*Mahāmudrā*) that is uncontrived and connate,
Or that which is beyond any assertion such as “it is” or “it is not”.
Although they make such proclamations of various terms,
If they mean the single essence of the basic nature, that is excellent.
But I wonder what it is they are pointing towards.⁶⁰⁷

This might be described as conditional inclusivism. The author allows for the possibility that the followers of the other schools may be referring to the same natural state which dGe-lugs teachings identify. Despite the hypothetical tone of the passage, Mi-pham regarded this as an example of the rhetoric of underlying sameness: when he discusses this section of *lTa ba'i gsung mgur zab mo* in his commentary on the text, he even cites Blo-bzang chos-kyi-rgyal-mtshan.⁶⁰⁸

Another advocate of the rhetoric of underlying sameness was Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol (1781–1851). He, it will be recalled, was a teacher of 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags (1824–1902). Tshogs-drug rang-grol's writings demonstrate an exceptionally accommodating attitude towards other traditions, not only towards the different Tibetan Buddhist schools, but also to Bon and other non-Buddhist religions.⁶⁰⁹ Rachel Pang describes him as a pluralist.⁶¹⁰ She contrasts his form of non-sectarianism with that of 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul:

⁶⁰⁶ CRD vol. 4: 385–390.

⁶⁰⁷ CRD vol. 4: 388.4: sa rnying kar 'brug gi mkhas grub mang pos| gsal stong 'dzin med kyi rang gi rig pa| ka dag lhun grub kyi kun bzang rang zhal| ma bcos lhan skyes kyi phyag rgya chen po| yod min med min kyi blang bral sogs| sna tshogs tha snyad kyi zhal pho sgrogs kyang| gshis lugs thigs po yin na legs te| mdzub mo 'dzugs sa de ci zhig yin a|

⁶⁰⁸ MPP vol. 4: 853.4.

⁶⁰⁹ Pang 2015: 458.

⁶¹⁰ E.g., Pang 2015: 466. More precisely, Pang says, Tshogs-drug rang-grol's “interest in learning from multiple Buddhist traditions is in some ways reminiscent of the version of religious pluralism that Diana Eck advocates in the contemporary American context.” On the concept of religious pluralism in general see Griffiths 2001: 142–150. Griffiths defines the term as the belief that “belonging to the home religion bears the same relation to the attainment of salvation as does

...contemporary scholarship understands Jamgön Kongtrul's main non-sectarian legacy to be his formidable encyclopedic compilations of the religious texts from a variety of Buddhist lineages in Tibet. In contrast, Shabkar's non-sectarian activities were focused less on the gathering, compilation and practice of a variety of lineages, than on the cultivation and promotion of an attitude of non-sectarianism through literary and oral media easily accessible to the mass populace.⁶¹¹

Despite the differences that Pang highlights here, there were similarities between the two figures. For example, Kong-sprul accepted the validity of Bon (the tradition into which he was born),⁶¹² just as Zhabs-dkar did, and he also adopts the rhetoric of underlying sameness. The following extract from his *lTa ba'i gtam*,⁶¹³ for example, aligns rDzogs-chen with the writings of Tsong-kha-pa:

The fundamental point (*mthil*) of rJe [Tsong-kha-pa]'s views
Accords with the tenets of rDzogs-chen—this is incontestable!
As is clear from *The Supreme Medicinal Nectar: Questions and Answers*.⁶¹⁴

Such a respectful attitude towards Tsong-kha-pa was common among Rimed figures and features also in Mi-pham's writings.⁶¹⁵ In his *Nges shes sgron me*, Mi-pham proposes that all advanced systems of Tibetan Buddhist thought express essentially the same transcendent wisdom:

The Mahāmudrā, Path with its Result (*lam 'bras*), Pacification (*zhi byed*),
Great Madhyamaka of Union, and so on,
Are all known individually by various names,
But, in reality, since they are all wisdom
Beyond the ordinary mind, they are all equal.⁶¹⁶

belonging to any alien religion" (142). Note that whereas the term pluralism generally carries an inter-religious sense, when speaking of Tshogs-drug rang-grol here it is used primarily in an *intra*-religious sense.

⁶¹¹ Pang 2014: 29.

⁶¹² See Smith 2001: 247. Kong-sprul's inclusion of Bon texts within the *Rin chen gter mdzod* was controversial. rGyal-rong bsTan-'dzin grags-pa, a student of rDza dPal-sprul and Padma badzra renowned for his mastery of *pramāṇa* (*tshad ma*), expressed his vehement opposition to this inclusiveness in several texts that are currently included in the Potala library. One source claims that rGyal-rong bsTan-'dzin grags-pa was also a disciple of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. See *Po ta lar bzhugs pa'i rnying ma'i gsung 'bum dkar chag* vol. 1: 61.

⁶¹³ *lTa ba gtan la 'bebs pa las 'phros pa'i gtam lung rig me tog*, GCK vol. 5: 819–858.

⁶¹⁴ GCK vol. 5: 855.4: rje yi bzhed pa'i mthil nyid kyang| rdzogs chen grub mthar rtsod med pa| zhus len^a bdud rtsi sman mchog gsal. ^a Read as *lan*. Cf. Ringu Tulku 2006: 11–12. Zhus len bdud rtsi sman mchog is translated in Thurman. See also Ehrhard 1992.

⁶¹⁵ On Mi-pham's attitude towards Tsong-kha-pa see Dreyfus 2003b: 320–321. Wangchuk 2004: 200 n.104 also notes that Mi-pham is more conciliatory towards the views of Tsong-kha-pa than he is towards the those of most dGe-lugs interpreters.

⁶¹⁶ MPP vol. 9: 93.4f.: phyag chen lam 'bras zhi byed dang| zung 'jug dbu ma chen po sogs| mtshan gyi mam grangs so sor grags| don la sems las 'das pa yi| ye shes yin phyir kun kyang mnyam| Cf. Pettit 1999, 213.

Mi-pham adds that the learned all agree on this: they univocally proclaim this “single intention” (*dgongs pa gcig*)—he uses the same expression as Blo-bzang chos-kyi rgyal-mtshan—of all the buddhas and adepts.⁶¹⁷ Mi-pham does not differentiate these various systems at this level. One cannot say, for example, that rDzogs-chen is greater than Mahāmudrā, since, in their ultimate sense, they both represent the highest wisdom.⁶¹⁸ He continues, though, by pointing out that there are special features (*khyad chos*) of rDzogs-chen, such as the Space, Mind and Pith Instruction categories, which are absent from other systems.⁶¹⁹ Thus, Mi-pham holds a position of hierarchical inclusivism. It matches ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s view but gives greater emphasis to the “special features” of rNying-ma and rDzogs-chen. In other words, he stresses difference over sameness.

2.2. The Exclusivism of Pha-bong-kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po

Not all Tibetan Buddhist authors accept the principle of underlying sameness. One of the clearest expressions of dGe-lugs exclusivism in recent times appears in the letters of Pha-bong-kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po. Excerpts from these letters already featured in Chapter One. Here, I draw on them to highlight their dismissal of all non-dGe-lugs traditions.

In a letter dating from 1938,⁶²⁰ bDe-chen snying-po asserts that only pure dGe-lugs doctrine can lead to enlightenment. All other systems are inferior in theory, meditation and conduct:

Although this teaching has generated four philosophical systems (*grub mtha’ smra ba*), the only one which realizes precisely and unerringly, the ultimate intent of the

⁶¹⁷ MPP vol. 9: 93.5

⁶¹⁸ MPP vol. 9: 93.5f.

⁶¹⁹ MPP vol. 9: 93.6f.

⁶²⁰ *mDo sngags skor gyi dris lan sna tshogs phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa* 32a. It is addressed to the great official (*spyi khyab dpon chen*) Lu’u cun krang. I have been unable to find further information about where he served as an official.

Victorious Buddha, which is emptiness beyond the pitfalls of eternalism or nihilism, is Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika. Here in Tibet there are many different tenet systems such as the rNying-ma, bKa'-brgyud, Sa-skya, dGe-lugs, and others. However, the only one that ascertains the Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika view of emptiness unerringly and according to the intention of the glorious protector Nāgārjuna, is the glorious, peerless Ri-bo dGe-lugs. [Its superiority] lies not just in its philosophical views; its meditation too is utterly pure, free from laxity (*bying*) and dullness (*rmugs*); and its conduct is utterly pure, practiced according to the Vinaya. We alone have this triad of theory, meditation and conduct, and a means of combining all the excellent teachings of Buddha into a single graduated path (*lam rim*) and thereby putting them into practice. Therefore, this doctrine of the glorious and peerless Ri-bo dGe-lugs, the tradition of 'Jam-mgon Tsong-kha-pa, is the essence of all the teachings of Buddha, akin to the pinnacle of a victory-banner.⁶²¹

Here, bDe-chen snying-po posits dGe-lugs supremacy on three levels. First, he claims that the other schools are philosophically inferior because they incorrectly interpret Prāsaṅgika Mādhyamika and slip into the extremes of eternalism and nihilism. Second, their meditation, too, is of a lower standard: it succumbs to the pitfalls of laxity and dullness. And third, their conduct is at fault, because it is an impure form of Vinaya. He picks up on all three themes elsewhere in his writings.⁶²²

In another letter to a Chinese disciple, bDe-chen snying-po argues that the other schools (including Bon) offer invalid paths to enlightenment. He goes so far as to claim that their followers deserve infernal retribution:

These days, all teachings except those of 'Jam-dbyangs Tsong-kha-pa, such as those of the Sa-skya, bKa'-brgyud, rNying-ma and so on, are mistaken philosophically. Never mind the view of the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika, they lack even the insight of the Svātantrika or Cittamātra! Instead, they cultivate only the nihilistic doctrine of the non-Buddhists (*tīrthika*),⁶²³ or of Hwa-shang Mahāyāna.⁶²⁴ Since they adopt such

⁶²¹ Ibid., 32a.3f.: bstan pa de la grub mtha' smra ba bzhi yod kyang rtag chad kyi g.yang sa dang bral ba'i stong pa nyid ma nor ba rgyal ba'i dgongs pa mthar thug ji bzhin du rtogs pa ni dbu ma thal 'gyur ba kho na yin| bod kyi ljongs 'dir mying ma| bka' brgyud| sa skya| dge lugs sogs grub mtha' mi 'dra ba mang yang| stong nyid kyi lta ba ma nor ba dbu ma thal 'gyur ba'i lugs dpal mgon klu sgrub kyi dgongs pa ltar gtan la 'bebs pa ni dpal mnyam med ri bo dge lugs pa kho na yin| lta ba tsam du ma zad| sgom pa rnam dag bying rmugs dang bral ba dang| spyod pa rnam dag 'dul ba ltar sgrub pa ste lta sgom spyod gsum dang| sangs rgyas kyi gsung rab yongs su rdzogs pa lam gyi rim pa gcig [32b] tu bsgril nas 'khyer shes pa sogs ri bo dge lugs pa kho nas las med pas| des na 'jam mgon tsong kha pa'i lugs dpal mnyam med ri bo dge ldan pa'i bstan pa 'di ni sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa thams cad kyi snying po rgyal mtshan gyi tog ltar gyur pa yin pas...

⁶²² See especially *mDo sngags skor gyi dris lan sna tshogs phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa* 38a–58a.

⁶²³ The term *mu stegs pa* literally means 'ford-crosser' (hence the preferred translation of Jeffrey Hopkins as 'forder'). The Sanskrit *tīrthika* is used in Buddhist literature to refer to an adherent of a non-Buddhist tradition, such as the various *śramaṇa* schools that developed around the time of the Buddha or later systems such as Sāṃkhya. For later Tibetan commentators such as Mi-pham the various *tīrthika* or outsider (*phyi rol pa*) systems can be categorized as either eternalist (*rtag smra ba*)

a nihilistic position, their followers do not deserve to go anywhere but the hell of Ultimate Torment (*avīci*).⁶²⁵

The rhetoric here is trenchant even by the standards of Tibetan polemics.

Perhaps it is significant that it is articulated in a letter, rather than a treatise intended for wider circulation—although the letter is included among his collected writings.⁶²⁶

bDe-chen snying-po charts the standard doxographical hierarchy in Tibetan

Buddhism: Prāsaṅgika-Madhyamaka occupies the highest position, superior to

Svātantrika-Madhyamaka (*dbu ma rang rgyud pa*). Svātantrika-Madhyamaka, in

turn, exceeds Cittamātra, below which lie the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika. It is

unclear whether bDe-chen snying-po holds the non-dGe-lugs schools to be of the

same status as the Sautrāntika and Vaibhāṣika; or whether he believes them to be

heterodox traditions, as indicated by his reference to *tīrthika*. He criticizes not only

their theory, but also their practice:

Since they fail to recognize subtle laxity of mind, their meditation too is faulty. Although they boast thunderously of the profundity of secret mantra, they do not even partially understand the crucial points of bliss-emptiness (*bde stong*), clear light (*'od gsal*), illusory body (*sgyu lus*), union (*zung 'jug*) and the like. Since these [schools] possess no unerring path to liberation and omniscience, even millennia of practice bring no realization; it is as pointless as churning water in hope of gaining butter. Therefore, in theory, meditation and conduct, in sūtra and in mantra, the excellent tradition of 'Jam-mgon Tsong-kha-pa alone is utterly unerring.⁶²⁷

or nihilist (*chad par smra ba*). See *mKhas 'jug*, 144–145. I have followed Eltschinger in translating *mu stegs pa/tīrthika* as ‘non-Buddhist’ here, avoiding the term heretic which implies a heresy “within one and the same denomination” (Eeltschinger 2014: 36 n. 3). On the use of the term ‘allodox’ as a translation of *tīrthika* see *ibid.* and Scherrer-Schaub 1991: xli, n.63.

⁶²⁴ On Hwa Shang Mahāyāna/Ho-shang Mo-ho-yen, the Chinese monk representative of what Ruegg calls “a non-scholastic, ‘spontaneist’ and more or less quietest Dhyāna (Ch’an) Buddhism” who took on Kamalaśīla at the ‘council’ or debate at bSam-yas, see Ruegg 1989 *passim*. See also Imaeda 1975 and van Schaik 2003.

⁶²⁵ *mDo sngags skor gyi dris lan sna tshogs phyogs gcig tu bsgrigs pa* 30a.3f.: deng skabs 'jam dbyangs tsong kha pa'i bstan pa kho na ma gtogs| sa skyal| bka' brgyud| rnying ma sogs thams cad kyi lta ba nor| dbu ma thal 'gyur pa'i lta ba lta ci| rang rgyud pa dang sems tsam pa'i lta ba tsam yang med par mu stegs pa dang| hwa shang ma hā ya [sic] na dang 'dra ba'i [30b] chad lta kho na bsgom| chad lta bzung na 'bras bu dmyal ba mnar med du 'gro ba las 'os med|

⁶²⁶ T.G. Dhongthog Rinpoche discusses his shock at discovering sectarian views in the collected writings of bDe-chen snying-po while working as librarian at Tibet House in Delhi library in Dhongthog 2000: 3.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, 30b: bying ba phra mo ngo mi shes pas sgom pa yang skyon chags| gsang sngags zab mo mdog gi kha pho 'brug lta sgrogs pa las| bde stong| 'od gsal| sgyu lus| zung 'jug sogs kyi zab gnad kha phyogs tsam yang mi shes| de dag la thar pa dang thams cad mkhyen pa'i lam ma nor ba med pas de 'dra la lo stong phrag tu sgrub pa nyams len byas kyang rtogs pa mi skye ba chu dkrogs nas mar

bDe-chen snying-po concludes with a stern admonition against syncretism: “It is thus of crucial importance that you uphold our own stainless dGe-ldan-pa tradition of view and meditation, without mixing it with other systems.”⁶²⁸ This injunction throws into sharp relief the difference between bDe-chen snying-po and mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho. The latter advocates precisely what the former prohibits: to combine dGe-lugs doctrines with rDzogs-chen and rNying-ma thought.

As rare as such explicit avowal of dGe-lugs exclusivism is in Tibetan literature, the attitude itself was quite common.⁶²⁹ So much so that most scholars today associate the dGe-lugs school with such exclusivism.⁶³⁰ Whether mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho knew of bDe-chen snying-po’s hard-line stance is hard to say; he does not refer to him directly.⁶³¹ He speaks only of dGe-lugs-pa teachers who deny the validity of rNying-ma and bKa’-brgyud doctrine, especially rDzogs-chen and Mahāmudrā.⁶³²

’dod pa dang ’dra bas snying po med| de lta na lta sgom spyod gsum| mdo sngags gang gi thad la’ang
 ’khrul pa cung zad tsam yang med pa ni ’jam mgon tsong kha pa’i lugs bzang kho na yin|

⁶²⁸ Ibid. 30b.3f.: des na khyed rang rnam dge ldan rang lugs kyi lta sgom dri ma med pa grub mtha’
 gzhan gyi bsre lhad med par ’dzin gal che bas|

⁶²⁹ Georges Dreyfus and David Kay have shown how such views continue to be represented even today, standing in contrast to the more tolerant, pluralist form of dGe-lugs espoused by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. See Dreyfus 1998 *passim*. Kay 2004: 89 notes that the extreme exclusivism of dGe-bshes bsKal-bzang rgya-mtsho (b. 1931), who is at the centre of recent controversy and opposition to the Fourteenth Dalai Lama over the issue of rDo-rje shugs-ldan, is “firmly rooted within the exclusively oriented strand of the *Gelug* tradition, particularly as it was represented by Phabongkha Rinpoche.” Of course, the controversial cult of rDo-rje shugs-ldan complicates the issue.

⁶³⁰ See, for example, Duckworth (2013: 340), who speaks of the “overt exclusivism” of the dGe-lugs. Note that this view is not unanimous. Roger Jackson (2001: 182) observes that “dGe-lugs pas have continued until the present day to differ among themselves about the exclusivity of their tradition.”

⁶³¹ Tulku Thondup says that the views of bDe-chen snying-po had not reached his region of mGo-log before he left for India in 1956 (private interview, 7 October 2014). Still, bDe-chen snying-po made several visits to Eastern Tibet, especially to Chab-mdo, where he taught extensively in 1935. These were proselytizing trips, during which he gained a number of followers. The letters to Chinese disciples suggest that he was trying to gain additional followers in China, or at least in the border regions. It is therefore notable that A-mdo dge-bshes ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros, the teacher of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, also attracted prominent Chinese disciples such as Master Fazun (1902–1980), on which see Tuttle 2005: 111.

⁶³² See, for example, DC vol. 2: 269.

2.3. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's Teachers

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho was not the first dGe-lugs-pa author to write about rDzogs-chen. Two of his own teachers, Brag-dkar sprul-sku Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags (1866–1928) and A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros (1888–1936), wrote rDzogs-chen treatises of their own.⁶³³ Yet, such texts were rare. A recently published anthology of rDzogs-chen works by dGe-lugs-pa scholars⁶³⁴ includes the treatises of the two together with the writings of only three other authors.⁶³⁵

But the flow of influence is difficult to pinpoint. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho refers to his dGe-lugs-pa teachers in his own rDzogs-chen writings. He pays homage to them (as well as to his rNying-ma guru, gTer-ston bSod-rgyal); he also occasionally follows their interpretations. Yet, his rDzogs-chen writings differ from theirs in both form and content.⁶³⁶

2.3.1. Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags

Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags's key rDzogs-chen treatise is the *'Od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i gzhi lam 'bras gsum gyi rnam bzhag kun tu bzang po'i thugs bcud* (hereafter *Kun tu bzang po'i thugs bcud*).⁶³⁷ It is a short work (27 pages in the compendium edition) written in verse and divided into eleven

⁶³³ As did his controversial “pre-incarnation”, 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags, at least according to some accounts. The same sources say that he was made to burn it after losing to 'Ju Mi-pham in debate.

⁶³⁴ *dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs* (Larung Gar: gser ljongs bla ma rung lnga rig nang bstan slob grwa chen mo, 2006).

⁶³⁵ The other authors are Tsong-kha-pa Blo bzang grags pa (1357–1419), the Fifth Dalai Lama Blo-bzang rgya-mtsho (1617–1682) and A-lag-sha Ngag-dbang bstan-dar (1759–1831). The latter was a Mongolian from the A-lag-sha region and is sometimes referred to as Sog-po bstan-dar; he wrote a commentary on the *Yon tan mdzod* of 'Jigs-med gling-pa entitled *Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod kyi dka' gnad rdo rje'i rgya mdud 'gro byed legs bshad gser gyi thur ma*.

⁶³⁶ We also cannot discount the possibility of influence through oral teaching, of which—obviously—no record remains.

⁶³⁷ *dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs* 150–177

chapters.⁶³⁸ Although its title refers to the trio of ground, path and fruition, it is overwhelmingly concerned with the ground; its natural state and “ground awareness” (*gzhi yi rig pa*)—a term mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho uses repeatedly in his own writings.

In the colophon, Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags claims that his work is free from the hair-splitting language of treatises, and that it does not rely exclusively on mental analysis but derives from true insight. Nor does he merely repeat what others say.⁶³⁹ Instead, he offers a revelation, a record in ‘vajra verses’ that sprang effortlessly and spontaneously from the casket of his heart—which he calls the “maroon treasure of space” (*klong mdzod smug po*).⁶⁴⁰ The text is not polemical, nor does it make any reference to previous rDzogs-chen commentators. The following extract, taken from the ninth chapter, discusses the nature of delusion (*'khrul pa; bhrānti*). It conveys something of the text’s rhetorical style:

⁶³⁸ The chapters are as follows:

1. How the natural state of the ground is unaltered (*gzhi yi gnas lugs bcos su med pa bstan pa'i le'u*);
2. How the natural state of the ground is undeluded (*gzhi yi gnas lugs 'khrul ba med par bstan pa'i le'u*);
3. Non-arising through ascertaining the natural state of the ground (*gzhi yi gnas lugs gtan la 'bebs pa las skye ba med pa bstan pa'i le'u*);
4. The unobservable great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (*gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po mi dmigs pa bstan pa'i le'u*);
5. The inconceivable, great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (*gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po bsam du med par bstan pa'i le'u*);
6. The inexpressible great unceasing evenness that is the natural state of the ground (*gzhi yi gnas lugs bar med phyal ba chen po brjod du med par bstan pa'i le'u*);
7. The meaning of the primordial, spontaneously present pure awareness of the ground (*gzhi yi rig pa ye nas lhun grub kyi don bstan pa'i le'u*);
8. The self-arising nature of the spontaneously present pure awareness of the ground (*gzhi yi rig pa lhun grub rang byung du bstan pa'i le'u*);
9. The self-liberating, spontaneously present, unaltered pure awareness of the ground (*gzhi yi rig pa lhun grub rang byung du bstan pa'i le'u*);
10. The singular perfection of all dharmas within the expanse of the one pure awareness of the ground (*chos thams cad gzhi rig gcig gi klong du rdzogs pa gcig pu'i don bstan pa'i le'u*);
11. The condensed practice encapsulating the categories of ground, path and fruition in the clear light Great Perfection (*'od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i gzhi lam 'bras bu gsum gyi rnam bzhag nyams len snying por dril ba'i le'u*).

⁶³⁹ *dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs* 176: dpe cha'i tshig ris dang yid dpyod kyi cha bzhag dang rtog ge'i rigs pas dpyad tshul tsam dang| gzhan gyi zer zlos skyor ba tsam gyi skyon dang bral ba|

⁶⁴⁰ *Ibid.*: rang gi klong mdzod smug po snying gi sgrom bu las gang shar rtsol med shugs 'byung rdo rje'i tshig rkang du spel ba...

Within the basic space of pure awareness, the experience of infernal burning iron
 And the sufferings of beings within the hells can arise.
 It is a delusory appearance arising in the way it does, and yet,
 Since it is non-delusion manifesting as delusion,
 The delusory appearances are none other than basic space.
 Since this delusion can be purified in its own place, delusion can be overcome.
 If delusion were truly delusion,
 Who would be able to rectify it? Who would have such capacity?
 As there could only ever be delusion,
 Buddhahood, which is the overcoming of delusion, would be impossible.
 Delusion is not actually delusion, it is non-delusion.
 Within non-delusion there is indeed the appearance of delusion,
 But this is not delusion: it is, in fact, non-delusion.
 Since the delusion of hell-realms, sufferings and so on
 Is actually non-delusion, so called *impure* realms
 Are nominally impure but not truly impure.
 What is [called] impure is not truly impure.
 What is [called] impure is truly pure, because it is purifiable.
 There can be no purification of what is *impurely* impure.⁶⁴¹

This passage shows that the text seeks to elucidate rDzogs-chen doctrine on
 its own terms. It is not a comparative work. Nor is it scholastic in its style and
 format: it lacks definitions, subdivisions, assertions, refutations, and so on. It is more
 of a poetic exploration of rDzogs-chen metaphysics. In both style and content, it thus
 resembles the *Chos dbyings mdzod* of Klong-chen rab-'byams. That too touches on
 the paradoxical nature of delusion:

Clinging to the unreal as if it were real, it seems truly real.
 Clinging to the undeluded as if it were deluded, it seems truly deluded.
 Grasping at the indeterminate as if it were determinate, it seems truly determinate.
 Grasping at what is not so as if it were so, it seems truly so.
 Grasping at what is untenable as if it were tenable, it seems truly tenable.⁶⁴²

⁶⁴¹ *dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs* 160f.: rig pa'i dbyings la dmyal bar lcags
 sreg dang| dmyal ba'i sems can sdug bsngal myong ba 'char| 'char ba ji bzhin 'khrul snang yin mod
 kyang| ma 'khrul ba zhig 'khrul bar snang ba'i phyir| 'khrul snang dbyings las mi gzhan 'khrul ba
 nyid| rang sar dag phyir 'khrul bas pang bar 'thad| ci ste 'khrul ba 'khrul ba nyid yin na| 'khrul ba
 [161] nyid las su yis bcos su nus| rnam pa kun tu 'khrul ba 'ba' zhig phyir| 'khrul bas pangs pa'i sangs
 rgyas mi srid 'gyur| 'khrul ba 'khrul ba nyid min ma 'khrul nyid| ma 'khrul ba la 'khrul ba snang mod
 kyang| 'khrul ba ma yin ma 'khrul ba nyid yin| 'khrul ba dmyal ba'i gnas dang sdug bsngal sogs| ma
 'khrul nyid phyir ma dag gnas zhes bya| ma dag pa'ang ma dag pa nyid min| ma dag dag pa nyid yin
 dag tu rung| ma dag ma dag pa la dag tu med|

⁶⁴² KLR vol. 16: 17: mi bden bden par zhen pas bden bden 'dra| ma 'khrul 'khrul par zhen pas 'khrul
 'khrul 'dra| nges med nges par bzung bas nges nges 'dra| yin min yin par bzung bas yin yin 'dra| mi
 'thad 'thad par bzung bas 'thad 'thad 'dra|

Such reasoning resembles descriptions evocative found in tantras, in particular the *Guhyasamāja*⁶⁴³ and **Guhyagarbha*. The **Guhyagarbha*, for example, says the following about reality:

Emaho! This amazing, wondrous doctrine!
 The mystery of all the perfect buddhas:
 Out of non-arising everything arises.
 In this arising there is no arising.
Emaho! This amazing, wondrous doctrine
 The mystery of all the perfect buddhas:
 Out of non-cessation everything ceases.
 In this cessation there is no ceasing.
Emaho! This amazing, wondrous doctrine
 The mystery of all the perfect buddhas:
 Out of non-abiding everything abides.
 In this abiding there is no abiding.⁶⁴⁴

The tone of this extract is, in turn, as Nathaniel DeWitt Garson notes, reminiscent of Madhyamaka treatises.⁶⁴⁵ Visionary works often adopt such a pseudo-canonical style of verse. But this is not the preferred style of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, who generally favours simple scholastic prose. Nor does he claim that his writings are revelations. Stylistically, then, his works differ from the *Kun tu bzang po 'i thugs bcud*. But they also differ in content. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does more than simply present (or rather *re-present*) rDzogs-chen thought on its own terms; he argues for a synthesis of the rDzogs-chen and dGe-lugs systems. In

⁶⁴³ See Bentor 2010 for an analysis of a verse from the second chapter of the *Guhyasamāja* (*abhāve bhāvanābhāvo bhāvanā naiva bhāvanā| iti bhāvo na bhāvaḥ syād bhāvanā nopalabhyate||*) which, like the passage from **Guhyagarbha* cited here, appears in practical rites associated with the tantra and involves apparent paradox. Bentor notes that the interpretation of the verse evolved over time in keeping with shifting philosophical orientations, specifically commentators' notions of the ultimate form of Madhyamaka view.

⁶⁴⁴ NGB vol. 9: 6.4f.: e ma ho ngo mtshar rmad kyi chos| rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kun gyi gsang| skye ba med las thams cad skyes| skyes pa nyid na skye ba med| e ma ho ngo mtshar rmad kyi chos| rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kun gyi gsang| 'gag pa med las thams cad 'gag| 'gag pa nyid na 'gag pa med| e ma ho ngo mtshar rmad kyi chos| rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas kun gyi gsang| gnas pa med las thams cad gnas| gnas pa nyid na gnas pa med| The passage continues with additional verses on observation (*dmigs pa*) and coming-and-going (*'gro 'ong*).

⁶⁴⁵ Garson 2004: 306. There are numerous passages in the writings of Nāgārjuna which demonstrate the resolution of apparent (or pseudo-) paradoxes. One of the most famous examples is *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* XIII, 7: yady aśūnyaṃ bhavet kiṃ cit syāc chūnyam iti api kiṃ cana| na kiṃ cid asty aśūnyaṃ ca kutaḥ śūnyaṃ bhaviṣyati|| For a discussion of the nature and role of paradoxes in Nāgārjuna's thought see Tillemans 2016: 67–94.

this respect, his approach differs also from that of his other main dGe-lugs teacher, 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros.

2.3.2. 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros

'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros wrote a thirteen-chapter treatise on rDzogs-chen entitled *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po thugs tig*.⁶⁴⁶ It too is in verse. The text's colophon dates it to the earth-horse year (1918). Its purpose was to “clarify the intention” (*dgongs don gsal phyir*) of Klong-chen rab-'byams, so that “this tradition”—by which he appears to mean rDzogs-chen as Klong-chen rab-'byams taught it—might endure.⁶⁴⁷ The text's title, with its reference to Mañjuśrī/Mañjughoṣa, is not indicative of its content. The only other references to Mañjuśrī occur in the opening verses:

Mind-as-such, pure in essence, is the reality-body (*dharmakāya*),
Its nature, clear and unobstructed, is the enjoyment-body (*sambhogakāya*),
Its responsiveness, unobstructed and varied, is the emanation-body (*nirmāṇakāya*).

⁶⁴⁶ AG vol. 1, 129–185. The chapters are as follows:

1. How the ground of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa is not beyond dharmatā (*'khor 'das gzhi chos nyid las ma 'das par bstan pa'i le'u*) (129–131)
2. How the phenomena of the ground are primordially self-arising (*gzhi yi chos rnam ye nas rang shar du bstan pa'i le'u*) (131–133)
3. Revealing the nature of the ground *dharmatā* by means of several metaphors (*gzhi chos nyid kyi rang bzhin dpe don du mas bstan pa'i le'u*) (133–135)
4. How the ground is included within *bodhicitta* (*gzhi byang chub sems su 'dus par bstan pa'i le'u*) (135–139)
5. On the nature of the spontaneously perfect ground (*gzhi lhun grub kyi rang bzhin bstan pa'i le'u*) (139–141)
6. How the six classes [of beings] stray from the ground into delusion (*gzhi las rigs drug 'khrul pa'i tshul bstan pa'i le'u*) (141–148)
7. Explaining the categories of vehicle for overcoming confusion regarding the ground and the natural condition of the vajra body (*gzhi 'khrul pa 'dul byed kyi theg pa'i rnam grangs dang rdo rje'i lus kyi gnas tshul bshad pa'i le'u*) (148–155)
8. Determining the non-dual view (*gnyis med kyi lta ba thag bcad pa'i le'u*) (155–159)
9. Resolving meditation in the expanse of *dharmatā* (*sgom pa chos nyid kyi klong du la bzla ba'i le'u*) (159–168)
10. Resolving in the non-moving of all phenomena from *dharmatā* realization (*chos thams cad dgongs pa chos nyid las mi g.yo ba la la bzla ba'i le'u*) (168–176)
11. Resolving in the conduct through self-liberation of apparent conditions (*rkyen snang rang grol gyis spyod pa la la bzla ba'i le'u*) (176–178)
12. Resolving in the fruition, the great self-liberation (*'bras bu rang grol chen po la la bzlar bstan pa'i le'u*) (178–182)
13. On the pure-lands of universal insight, the spontaneously perfect fruition (*'bras bu lhun grub kun tu gzigs pa'i zhing khams bstan pa'i le'u*) (182–184)

⁶⁴⁷ AG vol. 1: 184.

Unsought from the beginning, it is spontaneously present Mañjuḥoṣa.⁶⁴⁸

The correlation of the mind-as-such (*sems nyid*) with the *trikāya* here is characteristic of the Heart-Essence.⁶⁴⁹ The rest of the work is a straightforward account of rDzogs-chen doctrine and practice. It is organised around the trio of ground, path and fruition. These three are more evenly represented than in Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags's treatise. But just like that text, *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po thugs tig* does not compare rDzogs-chen with other systems. It is not polemical, not even dialogical.

The open letter, referred to in Chapter One, provides a clearer precedent for mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's rDzogs-chen writings. The letter is comparative and employs the rhetoric of underlying sameness:

The ultimate Secret Mantra path, the Great Perfection;
The essence of Highest Yoga tantra, Mahāmudrā;
The Indivisibility of Samsāra and Nirvāṇa, the path of clarity and emptiness without grasping;
And the profound path of Vajra Yoga—these ultimate practices
Are the union of the Profound View and great secret Vajrayāna.
This is the fundamental point of the teachings in 'Jam-mgon [Tsong-kha-pa]'s lineage,
Bliss and emptiness indivisible, a single taste in essence—
This is my thesis, indelibly inscribed.⁶⁵⁰

⁶⁴⁸ AG vol. 1: 129.10 (or *dGe ldan mkhas grub dag gi rdzogs skor phyogs bsgrigs* 250): *sems nyid ngo bo dag pa chos kyi sku| rang bzhin gsal la ma 'gags longs spyod rdzogs| thugs rje ma 'gags sna tshogs sprul pa'i sku| ye nas ma btsal lhun grub 'jam dpal dbyangs|*

⁶⁴⁹ The identification of mind-as-such with Mañjuśrī suggests the influence of an increasingly popular trend for associating rDzogs-chen (and the ultimate nature of consciousness) with Mañjuśrī/Mañjuḥoṣa. Mi-pham wrote a popular aspiration prayer, *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po 'i smon lam rig stong rdo rje 'i rang gdangs*, in 1886. This has inspired commentaries by 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros (*'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po 'i smon lam gyi bsduḥ don rin chen nor bu 'i lde'u mig*, JCLb vol. 9: 123–128) and, more recently, mKhan-po 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs (*rDzogs-chen smon lam rig stong rdo rje 'i rang gdangs gsal byed kun khyab rlung 'phrin* JPB vol. 1: 312–316). A similarly titled prayer, *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po 'i smon lam mi shigs na da 'i rol mo*, is also to be found among the writings of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa 'i-nyi-ma (JTNs vol. 1: 466–468). The phrase *'jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po* also appears in the revelations of the Fifth Dalai Lama. See, for example, *'Jam dpal rdzogs pa chen po 'i phrin las dang smin byed kyi chog bsgrigs snang stong 'od lnga 'i rgya can* (NBLG, vol. 23: 523–566). Further research is needed to determine the precise origin of the concept and what relation there is, if any, between these various texts (and others like them).

⁶⁵⁰ AG vol. 1: 124.8: *gsang sngags lam gyi mthar thug rdzogs pa che| bla med snying bo^a phyag rgya chen po 'i don| 'khor 'das dbyer med gsal stong 'dzin med lam| zab lam rdo rje rnal 'byor mthar thug rnams| zab mo 'i lta dang gsang chen rdo rje theg| zung 'brel 'jam mgon rgyud pa 'i bka' yi mthil| bde stong dbyer med ngo bo ro gcig ces| kho bo 'i dam bca' rdo rje 'i ri mo byed| ^aRead as *po*.*

Here, 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros offers his “thesis” (*dam bca'*) drawing attention to similarities between the meditative systems of the different schools. rDzogs-chen, Mahāmudrā, the Sa-skya doctrine of the Indivisibility of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa (*'khor 'das dbyer med*), and the Vajra Yoga of the Kālacakra all combine Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika with Vajrayāna methods. They thus accord, he says, with the fundamental point (*mthil*) of the teachings transmitted through Tsong-kha-pa. This conciliatory stance is visible throughout the letter. The colophon, for example, states: “It is well-known and established here, in Tibet, the Land of Snowy Mountains, that none of the precious teachings of the Buddhas contradict each other.”⁶⁵¹ 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros says that he has received “maturing [empowerments] and liberating instructions from both the Ancient and New schools of Secret Mantra [Vajrayāna].”⁶⁵² He calls for a thorough investigation of the various forms of Buddhist teaching in Tibet, and claims:

The outcome of such investigation will be that, without slipping into sectarian bias or prejudice, one will realize how all forms of Buddhist teaching are equally effective as means of attaining omniscience. Moreover, any difference in terminology between earlier and later traditions of explanation will be seen simply as a reflection of variations in practice, while ultimately pointing toward the same destination.⁶⁵³

This passage displays the rhetoric of underlying sameness but also a concern for reconciliation. It seeks to account for the differences between the various systems. Moreover, just as mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does after him, 'Jam-

⁶⁵¹ AG vol. 1: 125.12: bod gangs can gyi ljongs 'dir rgyal bstan rin po che mtha' dag dgongs pa 'gal med du grags shing...

⁶⁵² AG vol. 1: 125.14: gsang sngags gsar rnying gi smin grol gyi gdams pa du mas 'tshos shing| His teachers included gTer-ston bSod-rgyal and Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags, both of whom were also teachers to mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, so the motivation to reconcile rNying-ma and gSar ma for personal reasons may have applied equally to both 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros and his disciple.

⁶⁵³ AG vol. 1: 125.18: legs par brtags pa'i grub don rgyal bstan thams cad phyogs dang ris su ma chad par kun mkhyen sgrub pa'i thabs su ro gcig rtogs shing gzhung gi bshad srol la snga phyi'i tshig zin mthun min ci rigs pa snang ba thams cad kyang spyod tshul gyi nmam grangs mi 'dra ba tsam las don gyis babs so gcig tu 'dug snyam pa'i dad pas...

dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros acknowledges the danger of sectarian bias.⁶⁵⁴ The letter is thus comparative and conciliatory, but it does not advocate syncretism.

In summary, both dGe-lugs teachers of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho embrace rDzogs-chen, but they make no attempt to combine it with the doctrine of Tsong-kha-pa. Like many prominent scholars before them, they posit only a shared result.

3. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does more than simply highlight the underlying similarity of dGe-lugs and rNying-ma doctrine; he combines the two systems in unprecedented ways.⁶⁵⁵ Already the titles of two of his most significant works hint at this syncretism: *gSang sngags gsar rnying gi lta ba gcig tu sgrub pa dag snang nor bu'i me long* (hereafter *Dag snang nor bu'i me long*)⁶⁵⁶ and *gSar rnying mkhas pa'i dgongs bzhed gcig tu sgrub pa rigs lam bdud rtsi'i mchod sprin* (hereafter *Rigs lam bdud rtsi'i mchod sprin*).⁶⁵⁷ The titles speak of the gSar-ma in general, but the texts themselves reveal that, in fact, this is a reference to the dGe-lugs.⁶⁵⁸

3.1. *Dag snang nor bu'i me long*

The *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* is a prose text covering twenty points. It sets out to prove that dGe-lugs doctrine is compatible with a strand of rNying-ma thought that predates Mi-pham's philosophical innovation. The *Rigs lam bdud rtsi'i*

⁶⁵⁴ As noted in Chapter One above.

⁶⁵⁵ Kapstein 2000: 121 notes that there were “numerous figures” in Tibetan history, both dGe-lugs pa and rNying-ma pa, who saw no contradiction between the dGe-lugs version of Prāsaṅgika and rDzogs-chen. Nevertheless, it would seem that the writings of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho explain this perceived compatibility of the two views/systems in an unprecedented way.

⁶⁵⁶ I have included an annotated critical edition of the text Appendix Two. It is translated in Wallace 2018, but at the time of writing this book is not yet released, so I have not had the opportunity to study it.

⁶⁵⁷ Translated in Wallace 2018.

⁶⁵⁸ Cf. Mi-pham's comments to Dug-tsha sprul-sku of rDi-phug referred to in Chapter One.

mchod sprin is a verse summary of *Dag snang nor bu'i me long*, undated but clearly written later and arranged into the same twenty points. According to its colophon, 'Jigs-med dkon-mchog (1876–1958),⁶⁵⁹ a “Vinaya holder” (*'dul ba 'dzin pa*)—that is, a monk—of Dar-thang Monastery, felt the first text was insufficient by itself and needed a summary.⁶⁶⁰

The introduction to the *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* explains that the text was drafted to “dispel the darkness of sectarian division” (*phyogs ris kyi mun pa sangs pa*).⁶⁶¹ mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho believes that the traditions of the earlier and later translations only *appear* to differ; ultimately, they share a common viewpoint (*dgongs pa'i gnad gcig*).⁶⁶² His intention is to use both scripture and reasoning to elucidate difficult points. He accepts that he is unlikely to please those who seek to sow dissension, but he will continue regardless, as a lone voice—or, in his words, “like a herdsman playing a flute in an empty valley.”⁶⁶³

The text focuses on the “two great traditions” (*bka' srol chen po*) of the rNying-ma and the Ri-bo dGe-ldan-pa (i.e., dGe-lugs).⁶⁶⁴ In the current age, it says, philosophical views have degenerated so that there is rarely any proper assessment based on scripture and reasoning. As a result, some view these two traditions as contradictory (*'gal 'dur mthong*). This has led to extensive sectarian division (*ris*

⁶⁵⁹ i.e., TBRC P6337.

⁶⁶⁰ DC vol. 2: 61.2: nye char dpal yul dar thang gi slob dpon 'dul ba 'dzin pa 'jigs med dkon mchog nas sngar gyi lung sbyor de tsam gyis mi 'grub pa'i gsung phebs par brten| The fact that 'Jigs-med dkon-mchog was from Dar-thang in mGo-log might be significant. It is further evidence of a greater openness to dGe-lugs teachings in the monastery. See Pearcey 2014b for a biography of 'Jam-dpal dgyes-pa'i-rdo-rje (1894–1958/9) of Dar-thang who is said to have composed a commentary on Tsong-kha-pa's *Legs bshad gser phreng*.

⁶⁶¹ DC vol. 2: 4.

⁶⁶² DC vol. 2: 3.

⁶⁶³ DC vol. 2: 3: gsang sngags snga phyi'i 'gyur gyis phye ba yi| bka' srol so so'i grub mtha'i gsung sgras 'ga'| 'dra min snang yang dgongs pa'i gnad gcig tshul| cung zad mthong nas rang blo goms pa'i slad| lung rigs 'phrul gyis dka' gnad bkrol ba la| rgyal bstan dbyen la sbyor rnam mi dgyes mod| lung stong phyugs rdzis gling bu 'bud bzhin sgrogs|

⁶⁶⁴ DC vol. 2: 4.

gcod byed pa), which has, in turn, weakened the teachings.⁶⁶⁵ The text offers no detail about these cases of sectarianism. Still, this standpoint echoes a line from the open letter of 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros:

These days, there are many who cause sectarian division in the precious teachings of the Victorious One, and many who refute the precious teachings of the noble Dharma king, the great Tsong-kha-pa, in particular.⁶⁶⁶

Later in the introduction, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho returns to the non-sectarian purpose of his text. His hope is that it will help others to avoid “the act of abandoning the Dharma” (*chos spong gi las*).⁶⁶⁷ His teachers helped him to realize that the rNying-ma and dGe-lugs are “wholly compatible” (*shin tu gcig pa*).⁶⁶⁸ The introduction ends with an appeal to learned scholars to assist him in his non-sectarian project.⁶⁶⁹

3.1.1. *Dag snang nor bu'i me long*: A Summary

The main part of *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* begins with a quotation from the *Padma dkar po*, Klong-chen rab-'byams' commentary to his own *Yid bzhin mdzod*:

Now, the tradition of Madhyamaka Prāsaṅgika is the pinnacle of the great dialectical vehicle for Buddhist Insiders. The Prāsaṅgika tradition brings all conceptual elaboration to a halt. It shows how all phenomena are interdependent, empty and without nature. Through the two truths, illusory and beyond extremes, it perfects all the qualities of the path and fruition. It reveals unerringly the intent of the Sage, the Transcendent Lord. Such is the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika. The pioneer who first established this tradition was the protector Nāgārjuna, whom the Buddha prophesied in the *Mahābherīhāarakaparivarta Sūtra* as the pure sun of noble wisdom who would

⁶⁶⁵ DC vol. 2: 4.

⁶⁶⁶ AG vol. 1: 125f.: deng sang rgyal bstan rin po che ris su gcod pa ches mang zhing| khyad par du rje btsun chos kyi rgyal po Tsong-kha-pa chen po'i bstan pa rin chen la dgag pa'i...

⁶⁶⁷ DC vol. 2: 4. It is a common feature of *ris med* discourse that a sectarian or partisan attitude is said to entail the sin of rejecting the dharma. See, for example, the well-known statement from the autobiography of 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul Blo-gros mtha'-yas: rgyal bstan kun la dag snang sbyangs| chos spangs khur du ci snyam med| (*Kong sprul rnam thar* 42b, translated in Barron 2003: 53).

⁶⁶⁸ DC vol. 2: 4. Nevertheless, he does not quote from his teachers directly at any point in the text itself. In the conclusion (p.47), he simply names his three main gurus, identifying each with a different bodhisattva: 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros with Mañjuśrī, Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags with Avalokiteśvara, and gTer-ston bSod-rgyal with Vajrapāṇi. The opening verse of homage at the beginning of the text refers to 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros alone; see Appendix Two.

⁶⁶⁹ DC vol. 2: 5.

banish the clouds of wrong views. Among those who commented upon the meaning of his works contained in the Sixfold Collection of Reasoning were Āryadeva, Buddhapālita, Bhāviveka,⁶⁷⁰ and Candrakīrti. Of these, noble Candrakīrti, who possessed unassailable intelligence and compassion, unerringly comprehended the master’s intent. He then composed a commentary on the meaning of *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā*, i.e., *Madhyamakāvātāra*, and a commentary on its words, *Prasannapadā*. Thus, by causing the sun of the Mādhyamika Prāsaṅgika, which is the ultimate intent of the Buddha, to dawn here in Jambudvīpa, he dispelled the clouds of wrong views.⁶⁷¹

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho cites this passage to demonstrate that Klong-chen rab-'byams—whom he calls “the earlier omniscient king of dharma” (*kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po snga ma*)—concur with the orthodox dGe-lugs position. Klong-chen rab-'byams recognises Nāgārjuna as the source of the Madhyamaka doctrine and Candrakīrti as his foremost interpreter, just as in the dGe-lugs system.⁶⁷² mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho then cites three lines from an experiential song (*nyams mgur*) composed by 'Jigs-med gling-pa:

By embracing the great mother Prajñāpāramitā,
The glorious protector Nāgārjuna gained experience.
The fount of explanation passed to Candrakīrti.⁶⁷³

These lines suggest that 'Jigs-med gling-pa, too, acknowledges the importance of Nāgārjuna and Candrakīrti, whom the dGe-lugs school holds as the ultimate authority on all philosophical matters. The fact that mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho draws on 'Jigs-med gling-pa here tells us that he followed—or was at least sympathetic to—the Klong-chen snying-thig lineage. Mi-pham hardly cites

⁶⁷⁰ The correct Sanskrit spelling of this master’s name is a topic of debate. He is also referred to as Bhavya and Bhāvaviveka. See Ruegg 1981: 61. Here I follow the spelling favoured by Malcolm David Eckel, as explained in Eckel 2008: 88 n.1.

⁶⁷¹ DC vol. 2: 5–6. This corresponds to KLR vol. 14: 113–114.

⁶⁷² DC vol. 2: 6.

⁶⁷³ DC vol. 2: 7.3: yum chen shes rab phar phyin dang 'khyud rgya zhig byas pas| dpal mgon 'phags pa klu sgrub kyi nyams shig shar byung| bshad pa'i chu mgo de zla ba grags pa la zhu'o| These lines appear in 'Jigs-med gling-pa's autobiography. See *'Jigs gling rnam thar* 44; JLa vol. 14 34a.1, where the lines are given as: yum chen shes rab *kyi pha rol phyin pa khong la* 'khyud rgya zhig byas pas| dpal mgon 'phags pa klu sgrub kyi nyams shig shar byung ngo| | a ho ye bshad pa'i chu 'go de zla ba grags pa la zhu ba no| mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho was apparently rather fond of this verse. He cites the final line on at least two other occasions in his rDzogs-chen writings (DC vol. 2: 83.6 & 121.5). The language used to refer to 'Jigs-med gling-pa here (as “the later omniscient one”) is typical of a follower of the Klong-chen snying-thig tradition, as noted in Chapter Two above.

'Jigs-med gling-pa at all, so the reference distinguishes mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's position from that of Mi-pham.

Next, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho introduces his twenty points. Each follows a similar pattern. The text cites a tenet that is characteristic of the dGe-lugs interpretation of Madhyamaka, then it refers to works of Klong-chen rab-'byams, Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and others to support this. A few examples will suffice to illustrate the approach. I have selected those where mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho proposes a view that is markedly at odds with Mi-pham's position. Several of these topics feature in both Mi-pham's *Nges shes sgron me* and among the "eight great difficult points" (*dka' gnad chen po brgyad*) of Tsong-kha-pa's doctrine set out by rGyal-tshab Dar-ma rin-chen.⁶⁷⁴

The first point concerns the distinction between the Svātantrika and Prāsaṅgika. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho quotes two extracts from Klong-chen rab-'byams's *Yid bzhin mdzod* as well as the *Phyogs bcu mun sel* to show that Klong-chen rab-'byams and Tsong-kha-pa hold a similar view on the Svātantrika/Prāsaṅgika distinction. Klong-chen rab-'byams's view, the text says, hinges on the acceptance or denial of specifically characterised entities (*rang mtshan gyi dngos po khas len mi len*).⁶⁷⁵ This would, of course, imply that Mi-pham and the later rNying-ma tradition took up a position in conflict with that of Klong-chen rab-'byams.

For Mi-pham, the Svātantrika/Prāsaṅgika distinction centres on the concept of ultimate truth. In his view, the Svātantrika emphasise the nominal ultimate (*rnam grangs pa'i don dam*),⁶⁷⁶ while the Prāsaṅgika emphasise the actual ultimate (*rnam*

⁶⁷⁴ On these eight points see especially Ruegg 2002.

⁶⁷⁵ DC vol. 2: 9.

⁶⁷⁶ Various translations have been proposed for this term and its correlate, *rnam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam*. Kapstein 2001: 328 gives "absolute-qua-denotable"; Dreyfus 2003b: 323 uses "figurative

grangs ma yin pa'i don dam).⁶⁷⁷ Over time, Mi-pham's view on the distinction became the orthodox rNying-ma position. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does not refute Mi-pham directly; he proposes an alternative.

The text also addresses the two types of negation: implicative negation (*ma yin dgag*) and non-implicative negation (*med dgag*).⁶⁷⁸ For Tsong-kha-pa, who relies on Candrakīrti's *Prasannapadā* and Bhāviveka's *Prajñāpradīpa*, enquiries into ultimate truth require a non-implicative negation. Tsong-kha-pa offers many definitions of the two types of negation, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho says, and most are similar to those found in rNying-ma works such as Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po's *Theg chen tshul 'jug*. He then refers to a section in the *Theg mchog mdzod* where Klong-chen rab-'byams illustrates the “insubstantiality and characterlessness” (*dngos po dang mtshan mar ma grub pa*) of ‘alpha-purity’ (*ka dag*), citing the *bKra shis mdzes ldan chen po* tantra. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho argues that the treatises of the Indian scholars agree with this explanation, as do, in Tibet, the works of Rong-zom, Klong-chen rab-'byams and Tsong-kha-pa. They all assert that to recognise the natural state of phenomena is simply a matter of *negating* the imputations of the deluded mind; it does not call for establishing anything. Any positive affirmation would entail failure to cut through hypostasising concepts. Thus, all agree that emptiness is a non-affirming negation. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho however knows of many “readers” (*klog pa ba*) of Sa-skya and rNying-ma works who regard non-implicative negations as problematic, simply

ultimate”; Duckworth 2008: 29 & passim (following Thomas Doctor) favours “categorized ultimate”. See also Wangchuk 2012: 24.

⁶⁷⁷ See Dreyfus 2003b. A modern textbook for rNying-ma students thus defines Svātantrika as “dbu ma pa gang zhig nam grangs pa'i don dam khas len dang bcas pa rtsal du bton nas 'chad pa rang rgyud pa'i mtshan nyid” and a Prāsaṅgika as: as “dbu ma pa gang zhig nam grangs ma yin pa'i don dam khas len kun bral rtsal du bton nas 'chad pa thal 'gyur ba'i mtshan nyid”. See *Tshad ma rigs pa'i them skas*, 240.

⁶⁷⁸ This is point thirteen.

because they do not understand them.⁶⁷⁹ This statement might be understood as a veiled reference to Mi-pham among others.⁶⁸⁰ Yet, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho claims that in the *Nges shes sgron me*, Mi-pham—whom he here calls “a lord of scholars” (*mkhas pa 'i dbang phyug*)—describes *dharmatā* as a non-implicative negation (*chos nyid med dgag tu gsungs*).⁶⁸¹ In fact, Mi-pham says that *dharmatā* is beyond any form of negation or affirmation:

In the great primordial emptiness of union,
 What are the remnants of negation—
 Either the pure absence that follows absolute negation
 Or what remains after saying “It is not that”?
 Both are merely mental imputations,
 And, in reality, neither is acceptable.
 That is the original *dharmatā* beyond the mind,
 Free from both negation and affirmation.⁶⁸²

Mi-pham adds that the mode of emptiness alone is a non-implicative negation.⁶⁸³ Kun-bzang dpal-ldan, in his commentary on this passage, interprets this to mean that *the way to establish* emptiness (*stong pa nyid gtan la 'beb tshul*) is through non-implicative negation.⁶⁸⁴ This is clearly not the same as equating *dharmatā* with non-implicative negation. Moreover, Mi-pham goes on to criticise the dGe-lugs position of distinguishing the basis of emptiness (*stong gzhi*) from some

⁶⁷⁹ DC vol. 2: 33.

⁶⁸⁰ The reference to Sa-skyā texts here is most likely aimed at Go-rams-pa. He argued that non-affirming negation does not qualify as the definitive ultimate, since it represents the elimination of only one position of the tetralemma (*catuskoṭi*). The definitive ultimate, in Go-rams-pa’s view, requires the elimination of all four positions or extremes. For a discussion of the difference between Go-rams-pa’s viewpoint and that of Tsong-kha-pa on this point see Pettit 1999: 137–139.

⁶⁸¹ DC vol. 2: 33. The two types of negation are covered in the first of the seven topics in *Nges shes sgron me*. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho also refers to “the sMin-gling brothers” [i.e., ’Gyur-med rdo-rje (1646–1714) and Lo-chen Dharmaśrī (1654–1717/8)] who, he says, identify the ultimate as an implicative negation. Still, this is not a statement about emptiness in and of itself (*stong nyid rang ldog*). Thus far, I have been unable to locate a text by either brother which makes this assertion.

⁶⁸² *Nges shes sgron me* 5: zung ’jug ye shes chen po’i ngor| med ces dgag bya bkag shul gyi| med rkyang dang ni ma yin zhes| bkag shul chos gzhan ci zhig ’phen| de gnyis blo yis brtag pa tsam| don la gnyis kar khas mi len| dgag sgrub gnyis dang bral ba yi| blo ’das gdod ma’i chos nyid yin| (Translated in Pettit 1999: 196)

⁶⁸³ MPP vol. 9: 75.3: stong tshul kho nar bsams nas ni| dri na med dgag nyid yin te|

⁶⁸⁴ *Nges shes sgron me* 72.

other entity or property of which it is empty.⁶⁸⁵ Mi-pham regards this as a form of extrinsic emptiness (*gzhan stong*).⁶⁸⁶

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho then cuts short his discussion of the two forms of negation.⁶⁸⁷ His claim that Mi-pham defines *dharmatā* as a non-implicative negation suggests that Mi-pham agrees with—or could at least be brought into line with—Tsong-kha-pa. However, this is to ignore the places where Mi-pham is critical of the dGe-lugs position. For Mi-pham, non-implicative negation is no more than a stepping stone. It is an example of the nominal ultimate.⁶⁸⁸ It counters only one of the four positions of the tetralemma (i.e., existence) and thus constitutes only a partial understanding.⁶⁸⁹

The *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* also examines whether śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the “insubstantiality of phenomena” (*dharmānairātmya; chos kyi bdag med*).⁶⁹⁰ This is another point on which Mi-pham departs from the dGe-lugs interpretation. It corresponds to the second of the seven topics of Mi-pham’s *Nges shes sgron me* and the sixth of the “eight great difficult points” of Tsong-kha-pa’s doctrine. Tsong-kha-pa and his followers argue that both śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize *dharmatā*. They base this on comments in Candrakīrti’s auto-commentary on the *Madhyamakāvātāra*.⁶⁹¹ mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho concedes that rNying-ma followers take a different position. To him, though, Tsong-

⁶⁸⁵ MPP vol. 9: 75.6; Cf. Pettit 1999: 196.

⁶⁸⁶ MPP vol. 9: 75.6. See also Mi-pham’s *gZhan stong khas len seng ge'i nga ro* (MPc vol. 15: 219–239) translated in Pettit 1999: 415–427 and Kapstein 2009.

⁶⁸⁷ DC vol. 2, 34

⁶⁸⁸ See, for example, *dBu ma rgyan gyi rnam bshad* (MPc vol. 13: 46b). See also Pettit 1999: 176–177.

⁶⁸⁹ See, for example, Mi-pham’s *dBu ma la 'jug pa'i 'grel ba zla ba'i zhal lung dri med shel phreng*. (MPc vol. 13: 1–277), especially 68–72. This critique is also used by Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge.

⁶⁹⁰ Point fourteen.

⁶⁹¹ The comments are in relation to *Madhyamakāvātāra* I.8. After citing a passage from the *Daśabhūmika-sūtra*, Candrakīrti writes: lung 'di las ni nyan thos dang rang sangs rgyas mams la yang chos thams cad rang bzhin med par shes pa yang yod do zhes bya bar gsal bar nges te| (DT vol. 102: 452.5).

kha-pa's view is still compatible with what he calls the "definitive meaning that is the uncommon view of the three inner tantras" (*thun min nang rgyud sde gsum gyi nges don gyi lta ba*).⁶⁹² According to him, Klong-chen rab-'byams believes the inner tantras to conform with the Prāsaṅgika. This means that Klong-chen rab-'byams accepts the Prāsaṅgika position which has śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas partially realize the insubstantiality of phenomena.⁶⁹³ Both Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and Klong-chen rab-'byams assert that it is not possible to overcome the afflictions (*kleśa; nyon mongs*) without the view of the absence of inherent existence.⁶⁹⁴ Both also claim that it is the presence or absence of realization that distinguishes saṃsāra from nirvāṇa.⁶⁹⁵ For mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, all this points to an "uncommon tradition of explanation" (*thun min gyi bshad srol*) within the rNying-ma school, which accepts that the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize emptiness.⁶⁹⁶

Once again, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho ignores Mi-pham's position. In his *Nges shes sgron me*, Mi-pham agrees that śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize the insubstantiality of phenomena to an extent, because the selflessness of the individual (*gang zag gi bdag med*) is itself a variety of the insubstantiality of phenomena.⁶⁹⁷ But this does not mean that the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas realize emptiness.⁶⁹⁸ Drinking a mouthful of seawater, Mi-pham says, is not equivalent to drinking the (whole) sea.⁶⁹⁹ In a similar way, realising the emptiness of the aggregates is not the same as realising the emptiness of (all) phenomena. When he

⁶⁹² DC vol. 2: 34.

⁶⁹³ DC vol. 2: 34.

⁶⁹⁴ DC vol. 2: 34.

⁶⁹⁵ DC vol. 2: 34.

⁶⁹⁶ DC vol. 2: 34.

⁶⁹⁷ See MPP vol. 9: 78.1–82.6; Phuntsho 2005: 27.

⁶⁹⁸ MPP vol. 9: 80.1.

⁶⁹⁹ MPP vol. 9: 80.1.

says that some in the rNying-ma hold an “uncommon” view about śrāvaka and pratyekabuddha insight, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho appears to imply that Mi-pham’s is the ‘common’ position. Once again, he does not refute Mi-pham’s arguments, but attempts to reconcile Klong-chen rab-’byams and others with orthodox dGe-lugs interpretations.

The *Dag snang nor bu’i me long* also claims that the rNying-ma and dGe-lugs are closely aligned in their belief that there is not a single, universally applicable path.⁷⁰⁰ In other words, both allow for multiple approaches tailored to the varied capacities of practitioners. This is posited in the *Yid bzhin mdzod*, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho says. He cites a passage from its commentary, the *Padma dkar po*, where Klong-chen rab-’byams discusses pure awareness:

These days there are many who claim that it is sufficient to recognise “the pure awareness of the present moment” (*da ltar gyi rig pa*) and there is no point in extensive teaching. If this were sufficient it would have been unnecessary for the Buddha to teach anything else. And if you claim that this is the only teaching needed, then because even for the pure awareness of the present moment one must still study and practise guru yoga, your own words undermine themselves!⁷⁰¹

Extreme simultaneism is at odds with the gradualist path and the scholastic approach favoured in the dGe-lugs tradition. Yet there is still room for the simultaneist elements of rDzogs-chen (and Mahāmudrā) in mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho’s syncretism. He seeks to reconcile mainstream dGe-lugs gradualism with these very elements.

⁷⁰⁰ Point nineteen.

⁷⁰¹ DC vol. 2, 43.6: deng sang ni da ltar gyi rig pa ngos zin pas cho mang po bstan pa la don med ces zer ba mang ste| des chog na sangs rgyas kyis gzhan bstan mi dgos la| gcig tu da ltar gyi rig pa de yang thos pa dang| bla ma’i rnal ’byor tsam la brten dgos pas| rang tshig bsal ba la zhugs pa yin no||

3.1.2. *Dag snang nor bu'i me long*: Conclusions

The *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* draws on older rNying-ma sources, especially on Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po and Klong-chen rab-'byams.⁷⁰² The text itself is undated, but it must have appeared in a period when Mi-pham's writings had come to define rNying-ma doctrine.⁷⁰³ The text mentions Mi-pham only once—in favourable terms—but many of its interpretations contradict his views. Furthermore, the *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* explicitly aims to eliminate sectarian division. This contrasts with the objectives of Mi-pham's own philosophical texts, which were composed to create a unique, distinctive rNying-ma system—to increase sectarian difference, in other words.⁷⁰⁴ For Mi-pham this meant formulating a distinctive doctrinal position, particularly vis-à-vis the dominant dGe-lugs. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, in contrast, stresses commonality.

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's reliance upon the writings of Klong-chen rab-'byams and Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po effectively annuls Mi-pham's doctrinal innovation. Where he engages with Mi-pham (Points 8, 13, 14 & 16), he does so only indirectly, and when he refers to Mi-pham explicitly (Point 13), he finds a way to agree with him. Such obliqueness and deference do not entirely disguise the points of controversy and disagreement, however. Moreover, because the *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* and Mi-pham's *Nges shes sgron me* cover such

⁷⁰² The most cited text in *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* is *Yid bzhin mdzod*, which Matthew Kapstein suggests might be little more than a synopsis of the training Klong-chen rab-'byams received at gSang-phu ne'u thog (see Pettit 99: 489 n.359). In any case, regardless of whether the text is simply a record of his training, the text was surely influenced by it. Klong-chen rab-'byams's discussion of Madhyamaka topics predates the writings of Tsong-kha-pa, and yet mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho frequently detects commonality, even if he must at times admit that this conflicts with later rNying-ma thought. See Arguillère 2007: 155–156 for a discussion of the philosophical sophistication of *Yid bzhin mdzod* and the maturity required to write it. Arguillère (ibid., p.157) proposes 1348–1349 as the date of composition for *Yid bzhin mdzod* and its commentary *Padma dkar po*.

⁷⁰³ This was already true by the time mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho reached maturity—if not when he was born.

⁷⁰⁴ Once again, I borrow the term from Cabezón and Dargyay 2007: 7.

similar ground but reach vastly different conclusions, their differences are plain for all to see.

There is little to suggest that the *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* had much impact. Still, the fact that its author was asked to compose a verse summary shows that it did not go entirely unnoticed. It is unlikely that it received support for its proposed rNying-ma–dGe-lugs synthesis beyond mGo-log. In rDza-chu-kha and around sDe-dge, where the dGe-lugs school was less dominant, Mi-pham had a strong following and his writings featured in the curricula of major monastic colleges.⁷⁰⁵ But there was greater openness to rNying-ma–dGe-lugs collaboration, it seems, in mGo-log and A-mdo.⁷⁰⁶

3.2. Pedagogical Specificity

The *Dag snang nor bu'i me long* is not the only text by mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho that combines rNying-ma and dGe-lugs doctrine. The *Phyag rdzogs gdams pa'i skor gyi brjed tho*,⁷⁰⁷ for example, promotes a merging of the esoteric doctrine of rDzogs-chen (and/or Mahāmudrā) with the gradualist approach of *lam rim* literature. The text distinguishes between “the general approach of the teachings” (*bstan pa spyi btsan*) and “the specific approach of individuals” (*gang zag sgos btsan*).⁷⁰⁸ Echoing Point 19 of the *Dag snang nor bu'i me long*, it says that the most advanced instructions of rDzogs-chen and Mahāmudrā are suitable for

⁷⁰⁵ Mi-pham is primarily associated with Zhe-chen, because 'Ju-mo-hor is a branch of Zhe-chen. Nevertheless, he is also associated with rDzogs-chen and his biography appears as the twelfth in a list of successive scholars (*mkhan rabs*) in bsTan-'dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma's history of the monastery (See bsTan-'dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma 2004, 425–439). For an indication of the popularity of Mi-pham's writings in the period around 1900 at rDzogs-chen's Śrī Simha college, see *mKhan po ngag chung gi rnam thar* 100–103.

⁷⁰⁶ Some of this openness might be due to Zhabs-dkar's influence in these regions. However, any conclusions must await an extensive study of the relevant religious institutions and political developments during the period.

⁷⁰⁷ See Appendix Two for a critical edition and annotated translation. My translation also appears in Pearcey 2018.

⁷⁰⁸ The Fourteenth Dalai Lama cites this distinction with approval in Dalai Lama 2007: 75–76.

those of exceptional capacity (*dbang po'i khyad par dmigs bsal can*). In fact, they would pose something of a risk if taught indiscriminately. “Even though [these instructions] are extremely powerful,” mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho writes, “their application is dependent on the level of one’s faculties, and it is crucial that they are not misused, as in the story where Devadatta ate medicinal butter.”⁷⁰⁹ The followers of rDzogs-chen often fail to recognize this and mistakenly believe that their own teachings can be given to anyone at all, even to those at the beginning of the path:

These days, if you consult followers of Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen and the like, they will not make even the slightest mention of a teaching that is tailored to an individual’s capacity, such as the way to progress in tranquillity (*zhi gnas; śamatha*) and insight (*lhag mthong; vipaśyanā*) according to the scriptural approach of the great pioneers. Instead, they will suggest that everyone should follow the path of Mahāmudrā or rDzogs-chen right from the beginning, and they will declare that anything else is not even Dharma. This only goes to show that the general approach to the teachings has become as inaccessible and remote as flesh-eating spirits (*sha za; piśāca*).⁷¹⁰

This assessment then allows him to extol the virtues of dGe-lugs gradualism. Such gradualism provides a useful foundation for students of all capacities, without risk of hindrance or going astray (*gegs dang gol sa med pa*). Still, he is critical of those among the dGe-lugs-pa who fail even to acknowledge the existence of a swifter path:

⁷⁰⁹ DC vol. 2: 268.12: ’di shin tu chod che yang dbang po’i khyad par la ltos pas ’tsho byed kyi sman mar lhas byin gyis zos pa ltar ma song ba gal che’o| The story of Devadatta eating medicinal butter appears in the *Karma-śataka (Las brgya tham pa)*. See *sDe dge bKa’ ’gyur* vol. 74 (*mdo sde*, a): 92a.1f. The story is also recounted in dMar-ston Chos-kyi-rgyal-po’s commentary to verse 169 of Sa-skya Paṇḍita’s *Sa skya legs bshad*. The details of the story vary slightly between these sources. On one occasion, when the Buddha and his monks fell sick in Śrāvasti, he was advised by the doctor, Kumārā Jīvaka, to take 32 (or twelve in some accounts) measures of powerful medicinal butter, while all the other monks were instructed to take no more than a single measure. Devadatta, claiming that he was of the same family as the Buddha, also insisted on taking 32 (two in some sources) measures, but nearly died as a result, and was only saved through the Buddha’s miraculous intervention. See *Legs par bshad pa rin po che’i gter dang ’grel pa*, 156–157. Cf. Desi Sangyé Gyatso 2010: 120.

⁷¹⁰ DC vol. 2: 269.5: deng sang phyag rdzogs pa sogs la dris na shing rta chen po’i gzhung lugs kyi zhi lhag gi bgrod lugs sogs gang zag so so’i rang tshod kyi chos shig yod pa’i gnam zur tsam yang med par kun kyang phyag rdzogs kyi lam der dang po nyid nas e tshud blta zhing de tsam min pa thams cad chos min du bsgrigs nas bstan pa spyi btsan gyi tshul ’di bskal don sha za ltar gyur| The use of ‘flesh-eating spirits’ or ghosts (*piśāca*) as an example for the imperceptible (*adrśya*) goes back to post-Dharmakīrti texts on Pramāṇa; see Kellner 1999: 193.

Furthermore, among the learned followers of the great scriptural approach [i.e., the dGe-lugs], those with the greatest knowledge of Dharma deny the possibility of any distinction between the general and particular approaches and refute it. At the same time, those of lesser learning simply believe Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen and the like to be unacceptable, viewing the bKa’-brgyud, rNying-ma and so on as evil. And with the existence of an approach tailored to individuals as unapparent as invisible flesh-eating spirits, serious dissensions have emerged.⁷¹¹

As a dGe-lugs-pa who endorses the rDzogs-chen teachings, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho advocates an intermediate course. He steers between the two poles of a generalized (or over-applied) rDzogs-chen (or Mahāmudrā) simultaneism on the one hand, and a generalized (or over-applied) dGe-lugs gradualism on the other. He recommends an approach that is tailored specifically to the needs of individuals (*Table 6*). Some might proceed gradually, beginning with the scriptural approach, including *śamatha* and *vipaśyanā* as taught by the dGe-lugs. But others should proceed directly to the higher doctrines of Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen.

Table 6: Three Models identified by mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho

1. Generalized Mahāmudrā/rDzogs-chen Simultaneism	2. Generalized dGe-lugs Gradualism	3. Inclusive system tailored to individuals	
<i>Missing (ignored)</i>	Scriptural Approach (<i>śamatha, vipaśyanā, etc.</i>)	<i>i. Gradual</i>	<i>ii. Direct</i>
		Scriptural Approach	Mahāmudrā/ rDzogs-chen
Mahāmudrā/ rDzogs-chen	<i>Missing (denied)</i>	Mahāmudrā/ rDzogs-chen	

The customised path that caters for all types of practitioner: those who proceed in stages as well as rare individuals who proceed directly to the advanced

⁷¹¹ DC vol.2: 269.10: de la gzhung lugs chen po’i rjes ’brang mkhas pa chos rgyus che ba nams khong tshos spyi sgos kyi nam dbye mi shes dgongs nas ’gog| chos rgyus chung ba nams spyir na phyag rdzogs sogs rtsa ba nas mi ’grig snyam nas bka’ rnying sogs la than ltar brtzi zhing| gang zag dgos btsan gyi tshul ’di ltar yod pa bskal don sha zar song nas rgyal ba’i bstan pa la nang sel tshabs chen byung bar gda’|

forms of training. This syncretism challenges what the author evidently sees as bias in contemporary rNying-ma, bKa'-brgyud and dGe-lugs teaching.

3.3. Other Points on rDzogs-chen

In the *Rig 'dzin bla ma 'i zhal lung*,⁷¹² one of his longer works on rDzogs-chen, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho offers his own interpretation of the rDzogs-chen system. Here, he is more concerned with doctrinal than practical matters. In fact, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho suggests that anyone seeking practical instruction should consult guidance manuals (*khrid yig*) such as the *Ye shes bla ma* of 'Jigs-med gling-pa.⁷¹³ His own role, he says, is to offer “a complete presentation of this vehicle [i.e., Atiyoga] by mapping its ground, path and fruition”.⁷¹⁴ After a brief discussion of the path, he introduces some background (*rgyab chos*). He explains that rDzogs-chen is “not in conflict with the general teachings of sūtra and mantra, yet is a special, uncommon path.”⁷¹⁵ rDzogs-chen sets out to make manifest the same “clear light awareness” (*'od gsal gyi rig pa*) that is revealed in Highest Yoga Tantra. This corresponds to “the actual clear light” (*don gyi 'od gsal*) of the fourth phase (*rim pa bzhi pa*) of the perfection stage practice.⁷¹⁶ This clear light, he says, manifests in rDzogs-chen without the deity visualisation of Mahāyoga or the Anuyoga's “penetrative focus” on channels, wind-energies and essences. rDzogs-chen suits those who favour extreme simplicity (*shin tu spros med kyi rigs*). It does not require the same effort as the lower vehicles.

⁷¹² i.e., *Rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po 'i lam gyi rnam bzhag sngon 'gro dang bcas pa rig 'dzin bla ma 'i zhal lung* (DC vol. 2: 92–131). This text is translated in Wallace 2018.

⁷¹³ DC vol. 2: 109. Once again, this is evidence of his connection with the Klong-chen snying-thig lineage.

⁷¹⁴ DC vol. 2: 109.14: *gzhi lam 'bras gsum gyi sgo nas theg pa 'di 'i rnam bzhag dpyis phyin pa 'i go don...*

⁷¹⁵ DC vol. 2: 116.5: *mdo sngags spyi dang 'gal ba med cing thun mong min pa 'i khyad par gyi lam yod tshul...*

⁷¹⁶ DC vol. 2: 117.

3.3.1. Gnoseology

The *Rig 'dzin bla ma 'i zhal lung*⁷¹⁷ discusses at length the mind (*sems*) as well as the pure awareness (*rig pa*) that is the essence of the mind. It uses the analogy of ice and water to explain how the essence retains its purity. Karmic winds (*las rlung*) stir conceptual thought; this causes the mind to ‘freeze’ into a state of conceptualisation featuring clinging and fixation. The awareness though is not transformed into solidity; it remains latently present as ‘liquidity’ (*rlan gsher*).⁷¹⁸ This analogy is suitable, the text says, to explain “ground awareness” (*gzhi rig*) but not the awareness of the Great Perfection (*rdzogs pa chen po 'i rig pa*). The latter is the ‘youthful body in a vase’ (*gzhon nu bum sku*).⁷¹⁹ The youthful body in a vase has six special features, one of which is that it is “superior to the ground” (*gzhi las 'phags*).⁷²⁰ It cannot be related, therefore, to the awareness that belongs to the ground.

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho examines the distinction between path-awareness (*lam rig*) and ground-awareness in another text, the *rDzogs pa chen po 'i tha snyad 'ga 'i 'grel ba*:⁷²¹

My all-knowing guru asserted that the awareness of the Great Perfection is the ‘path awareness’. In the advice of the awareness-holders of old, they apparently claim that it is the ‘ground awareness.’ However, if we examine this carefully, in the tradition of this doctrine, the recognition that comes from experiencing how the ground really abides, just as it is, is the awareness of the Great Perfection. There can be no path-awareness, therefore, separate from ground-awareness. And since no one would

⁷¹⁷ *Rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po 'i lam gyi rnam bzhag sngon 'gro dang bcas pa rig 'dzin bla ma 'i zhal lung* (DC vol. 2: 92-131).

⁷¹⁸ DC vol. 2: 119.

⁷¹⁹ In rDzogs-chen literature this term generally signifies the fully developed qualities of form (*sku*; *kāya*) and wisdom (*ye shes*) that are sealed within the ground until the emergence of ground appearances. In the present context, it refers to the luminosity that all beings possess within their hearts; it is thus an extension of *tathāgatagarbha* theory and imagery. For a detailed discussion of the term and its imagery see Germano 1992: 963–964 and Gyatso 1998: 203–204.

⁷²⁰ The six special features (*khyad chos drug*) are: 1) appearing to itself (*rang ngor snang ba*), 2) being more exalted than the ground (*gzhi las 'phags pa*), 3) distinguishing itself (*bye brag phyed pa*), 4) being freed in that distinguishing (*phyed thog tu grol ba*), 5) not developing from anything external (*gzhan las ma byung ba*), and 6) abiding in its own place (*rang sar gnas pa*).

⁷²¹ DC vol. 2: 227–233. My translation of this text appears on lotsawahouse.org.

accept that the mere indeterminate (*lung ma bstan*) ground-awareness at the time of straying from the nature of the ground is the awareness of Great Perfection, either [position] is feasible according to how precise one is with terminology.⁷²²

This passage is of interest for its gnoseological content, but it is also notable as one of the rare occasions on which mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho explicitly draws on the insight of his teachers. It is unclear which of his gurus mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho is citing here. 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros is the most likely choice, since he was his root guru. But the phrase “ground awareness” appears also in *Kun tu bzang po'i thugs bcud* by Blo-bzang dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho seeks precision in his gnoseological terminology here to help him determine the relationship between elements of rDzogs-chen and their counterparts in Highest Yoga tantra. For example, the *Rig 'dzin bla ma'i zhal lung* considers ground awareness to be synonymous with the “extremely subtle mind” (*shin tu phra ba'i sems*) described in Highest Yoga Tantra.⁷²³ The *rDzogs pa chen po'i tha snyad 'ga'i 'grel ba* defines *rig pa* as the wisdom of clear light:

Rig pa is the wisdom of clear light that is latently present in ordinary thought processes. Here it is not called “great bliss” (*mahāsukha*; *bde ba chen po*) or anything similar, as it is in the general language of Highest Yoga Tantra. This is because there is no need to rely on an approach in which taking bliss as the path is emphasised as the means for making wisdom manifest. On the contrary, it is through the method of settling naturally and effortlessly in the nature of the ground, just as it abides, that the wisdom of awareness is made manifest directly, and that is why it is called “awareness” (*rig pa*). It would appear, therefore, that it is because of differences in method (as employed in the various paths associated with the perfection stage) that different names are used.⁷²⁴

⁷²² DC vol. 2: 228.3: rdzogs pa chen po'i rig pa ni| bdag gi bla ma thams cad mkhyen pas lam rig la bzhed| rig 'dzin rgan po rnam kyis gsung sgros la gzhi rig la bzhed pa lta bu zhig snang yang zhib tu brtags na chos 'di'i lugs la gzhi'i bzhugs tshul ji bzhin pa'i don nyams su myong ba'i tshul gyis ngo 'phrod pa zhig rdzogs pa chen po'i rig pa yin pas gzhi rig las logs su lam rig 'jog rgyu med cing| gzhi'i bzhugs tshul las gol ba'i dus kyis gzhi rig lung ma bstan tsam rdzogs pa chen po'i rig par su yang mi bzhed pas tha snyad rags zhib las gang yang 'thad.

⁷²³ DC vol. 2: 119–120.

⁷²⁴ DC vol. 2: 229.2: rig pa zhes pa don du kun rtog bag la bsnyal ba'i 'od gsal ba'i ye shes yin pa la| bla med kyis rgyud sde spyi skad gyis bde ba chen po sogs mi zer ba ni| mngon du byed pa'i thabs kyis khyad par gtso bor 'don pa'i bde ba lam byed la ma brten par| gzhi sems nyid kyis bzhugs tshul ji bzhin pa'i don la thabs mkhas kyis khyad par rtsol med rang bzhag gis mngon sum du rig pa'i ye shes yin pas rig pa zer te| rdzogs rim so so'i rang lam gyis thabs mkhas kyis khyad par mi 'dra bas na so sor mtshan btags par snang|

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho places methodological difference at the centre of what distinguishes rDzogs-chen from Highest Yoga Tantra. Here, he equates pure awareness with great bliss, rather than clear light, but this is perhaps not very significant. Still, the wisdom realized in Highest Yoga Tantra is the same as the wisdom realized in rDzogs-chen. The detail of the gnoseological intricacy here appears to owe much to 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, even though he introduces some minor terminological variants.

3.3.2. The Distinction Between Tantric Vehicles

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho admonishes his readers to distinguish between the three higher tantras—or three yogas (*yo ga gsum*) as he calls them—based on their respective methods. Each employs different methods to realize clear light. The key differences between the three therefore relate to the path (rather than ground or fruition). Most “biased rNying-ma-pa” (*phyogs lhung can gyi rnying ma*) fail to see this and distinguish between them according to the subtlety in their realization of the ground (*gzhi 'i ngos 'dzin phra rags*). When scholars familiar with the scriptural tradition (*gzhung lugs*) assess such claims, they find that they “do not bear scrutiny” (*brtag mi bzod*).⁷²⁵

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does not reveal the identity of these “biased rNying-ma-pa”. Once again, he appears to target Mi-pham and/or his followers. When Mi-pham discusses the differences between the tantric vehicles in his *Nges shes sgron me*, he criticizes those who distinguish the various levels of tantra by method rather than philosophical view.⁷²⁶ Similarly, Bod-pa sprul-sku

⁷²⁵ DC vol. 2: 120.

⁷²⁶ MPP vol. 9: 99.1f. Cf. Pettit 1999: 133f.

mDo-sngags bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's *lTa grub shan 'byed* puts forward view-based distinctions.⁷²⁷

The method-based distinction of mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho emulates the standard dGe-lugs position and accords with 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma. Even so, he goes further than 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma, since he criticises those who maintain a view-based distinction. This also sets him apart from his two dGe-lugs teachers, who do not embark on criticism of this kind.

4. Ris-med

Let us now briefly consider the references to sectarianism that occur throughout mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's rDzogs-chen treatises. Some reflect his position on underlying sameness that I discussed at the beginning of this chapter. But mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho responds here to a particular set of circumstances. In his words, he seeks to banish “the darkness of sectarian division” of his time and prove the “exceptional compatibility” of rNying-ma and dGe-lugs doctrine. He sets out to provide an alternative to the philosophy that Mi-pham promoted. Despite the deferential tone towards Mi-pham, it is he and his followers who are targeted in the *Dag snang nor bu me long*. They even appear to be the referent in the “biased rNying-ma-pa” remark. To mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, sectarian differentiation cannot but engender sectarian bias. The growth of rNying-ma scholasticism led to differentiation which became itself a source of conflict. The solution is syncretism.

⁷²⁷ Bötrül 2011: 99: “Likewise, there is an extremely great distinction between the views of the higher and lower tantras among the views of the four tantras of Secret Mantra—the quality of luminous clarity which is the aspect of appearance—from the Kriyātantra view of the relative, which is potentially established to be the great maṇḍala, to the full completion of the spontaneously perfect ground-appearance in Atiyoga.”

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's relationship to the Ris-med Movement is thus complex. When he calls for the elimination of sectarianism (*phyogs ris*) or sectarian division (*ris gcod byed pa*),⁷²⁸ he seems, on a superficial level, to echo the movement's key message. Yet, he was born after the Ris-med pioneers had died and studied only with their disciples.⁷²⁹ Moreover, he was based in mGo-log,⁷³⁰ away from Ris-med's heartland in and around sDe-dge. Doctrinally too, his form of rNying-ma / dGe-lugs synthesis is unlike anything found in the writings of the movement's key figures—and some would claim it even runs contrary to the very definition of Ris-med.⁷³¹

Scholars generally agree that the Ris-med renaissance in mid-nineteenth century Khams excluded the dGe-lugs and/or developed in response to their political and religious hegemony.⁷³² Alexander Gardner, who argues against the use of the term “movement,” believes that 'Jam-mgon Kong-sprul targeted not sectarianism *per se*, but Lha-sa and its support for dGe-lugs dominance.⁷³³ Geoffrey Samuel goes so far as to portray the Ris-med and dGe-lugs as opposing forces during this period. He characterises Ris-med lamas as “more shamanic” than the “more clerical” dGe-

⁷²⁸ E.g., DC vol. 2: 4.

⁷²⁹ A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros studied with both mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and dPal-sprul, as did gTer-ston bSod-rgyal.

⁷³⁰ dPal sNyan-mo Monastery, which 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros established in 1919, is in Dar-lag in mGo-log.

⁷³¹ Ringu Tulku (2006: 3), for example, claims that Ris-med “is not a way of uniting different schools and lineages by emphasizing their similarities.” Rather, it involves “an appreciation of their differences and an acknowledgement of the importance of variety to benefit practitioners with different needs.” In their introduction to a recent translation of Mi-pham's *Nor bu ke ta ka* (Jamgön Mipham 2017), Wulstan Fletcher and Helena Blankleder of the Padmakara Translation Group suggest that the movement was not a form of ecumenism but “a celebration of diversity” (p.6). It was, they say, “an attempt to encourage each tradition to rediscover and preserve its individual voice” (ibid.). Such a description inevitably prompts the question of whether Mi-pham was truly “*rediscovering*” an earlier rNying-ma tradition, or simply reinventing it.

⁷³² Douglas Duckworth, for example, writes: “...we can understand what came to be known as the “nonsectarian movement” as a broad set of traditions, stemming from eastern Tibet in the nineteenth century, which developed a common interest in preserving a variety of Buddhist traditions as a response to the singular dominance of the Geluk school.” (Bötrül 2011: 2)

⁷³³ Gardner 2006: 154.

lugs-pa.⁷³⁴ Even if such polarising stereotypes hold some truth, they plainly fail to reflect the full complexity of intersectorian (and even *intrasectorian*) developments at the time.

dGe-lugs-pa lamas are conspicuously absent from Smith’s early lists of Ris-med participants,⁷³⁵ but this does not mean that they played no role. rDza dPal-sprul, for instance, sought to extend Ris-med to include even the dGe-lugs.⁷³⁶ The following extract drawn from his biography by ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma supports this:

Travelling to several major monasteries of the Ri-bo dGe-ldan-pa tradition, such as dGe-rtse ser-shul, Lab khri-’du, and Chu-hor, [dPal-sprul] granted elaborate explanations of the *Bodhicaryāvatāra* and other texts. At those times, he did not do anything inappropriate, such as clinging, with partiality, to the tenets of rNying-ma or gSar-ma, chattering (*zer mchu*) about refutation and proof (*dgag bzhag*), or indulging in praise for himself and condemnation of others. [Instead,] he spoke clearly and in the proper measure, adhering purely to the assertions and explanations found in whichever commentary he was using. He refrained from including even the slightest remark, which, owing to the intensity of the times, could have become a cause of attachment or aversion.⁷³⁷

This passage—which perhaps describes the period around 1851—points to considerable tension between the dGe-lugs and rNying-ma at the time. This prevented dPal-sprul from doing “anything inappropriate” and thereby causing offence. He was keen to heal any divisions. And his efforts bore fruit: he gained several dGe-lugs pa students, including Thub-bstan rgyal-mtshan, a *dge-bshes* from

⁷³⁴ Samuel 2003: 722-723. It is legitimate to ask what Samuel means by “shamanic” (and even “clerical”) here. For a discussion of the appropriateness of these terms in this context see Ray 1995: *passim*. Ray identifies several senses in which Samuel uses the term “shamanism” and notes that on occasion “not much more is being said than Buddhism has a meditative dimension.” (Ray 1995: 97).

⁷³⁵ As noted earlier in this study, Smith (2001: 235) lists the following figures on the first page of his article on Kong-sprul (besides Kong-sprul himself who was mainly a follower of the bKa’-brgyud school): ’Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse’i-dbang-po (Sa-skya/rNying-ma), mChog-gyur gling-pa (rNying-ma), ’Ju Mi-pham rNam-rgyal rgya-mtsho (rNying-ma), gZhan-phan Chos-kyi-snang-ba (rNying-ma/Sa-skya) and rDza dPal-sprul O-rgyan chos-kyi-dbang po (rNying-ma). Another list later appears in the same article (Smith 2001: 250) but it too features no dGe-lugs-pa figures.

⁷³⁶ See, for example, PDB 716.

⁷³⁷ *dPal sprul rtogs brjod*: 114.6-115.3: dge rtse ser shul dgon dang| lab khri ’du dgon| chu hor dgon sogs rib o dge ldan pa’i dgon chen mang por byon nas spyod ’jug sogs kyi bshad pa rgya cher stsal| de dag gi tshe yang gsar rnying gi grub mtha’i phyogs ’dzin dang| dgag bzhag gi zur mchu rang bstod gzhan smod sogs skabs su ma babs pa dang| dus kyi dbang las chags sdang gi rgyur ’gro ba’i gtam rnams cha shas tsam yang ma ’dres par ’grel ba mkhan su’i lugs ltar bshad pa de dang de’i rang bzhed kha gtsang| gsal zhing dag la zur phyin pa|

Ser-shul.⁷³⁸ Another disciple was Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa (*alias* Mi-nyag [or Go-shul] Kun-bzang bsod-nams, 1823–1905), who reportedly held a *dge-bshes* degree in the dGe-lugs system.⁷³⁹ Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa composed a renowned commentary on the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, entitled *rGyal sras yon tan bum bzang*, based on dPal-sprul’s teachings.⁷⁴⁰ Sometimes he is even referred to as a Ris-med figure in his own right.⁷⁴¹ If he was, he was an exception. Most figures associated with the movement belonged to non-dGe-lugs schools and most Ris-med projects excluded the dGe-lugs. The growth of scholasticism took place among the non-dGe-lugs schools. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho himself rejected this change in the rNying-ma tradition. His teacher, ’Jam-dpal rol-ba’i-blo-gros, in turn, had criticized elements of Sa-skya scholasticism in an open letter. The question then

⁷³⁸ TBRC P8008.

⁷³⁹ The question of whether Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa belonged to the rNying-ma or dGe-lugs school is not straightforward. He is often described as a dGe-lugs-pa disciple—or even the *foremost* dGe-lugs-pa disciple—of rDza dPal-sprul (see, for example, Ricard 2017: 214). However, Matthew Kapstein states in his review of Paul Williams’ *The Reflexive Nature of Awareness* (Kapstein 2000: 121) that this is mistaken and that he was in fact a rNying-ma-pa. Certainly, this is how he is described in several recent biographies. The brief biography by sMyo-shul ’Jam-dbyangs rdo-rje (which is later borrowed and adapted by bsTan-’dzin lung-rtogs nyi-ma) says simply that “He stayed at a monastery of the Ri-bo dGe-lugs pa system, mastered scriptural learning on a vast, oceanic scale, and attained the name of dge bshes.” (*rDzogs chen chos ’byung*, vol. 2, ri bo dge lugs pa’i grwa sar bzhugs pas gzhung lugs rgya mtshor mkhas pa’i phul du phyin zhing dge bshes kyi mtshan rtags bzhes). There are no further details about where this monastery was, or when or from whom he received this dGe-lugs education. According to these same accounts Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa was ordained by a rNying-ma lama, Gling-sprul Thub-bstan rgyal-mtshan (d.u.) and spent time teaching at such rNying-ma institutions as Be-ri hermitage in Mi-nyag later in life. A recent biography by sNgags-’chang Padma rdo-rje (2008) offers more information about Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa’s early studies (I made extensive use of this source in the biography I wrote for the Treasury of Lives online encyclopaedia, Pearcey 2017). Still, questions remain about his ‘conversion’ following his early studies at Se-ra and ’Bras-sprung and at Ser-shul—although precisely when he studied at the latter monastery is uncertain. It is possible that a meeting with dPal-sprul, who taught at Ser-shul, inspired his ‘conversion’ to rNying-ma. Nonetheless, he maintained a connection with figures from other schools, notably ’Jam-dbyangs blo-gter dbang-po, who was involved in the publication of his collected writings. These writings demonstrate great familiarity with, and expertise in, dGe-lugs doctrine. Yet, it is also noteworthy that several of these texts were requested by prominent rNying-ma figures, such as sMyo-shul Lung-rtogs bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma (see the following note).

⁷⁴⁰ *rGyal sras yon tan bum bzang* 876–878. According to the colophon (879), Thub-bstan chos-kyi-grags-pa first received a request from Bla-ma Lung-rtogs to write a commentary on only the ninth chapter. He did so, but this was followed by requests from several holy personages (*bshes gnyen dam pa ’ga’ zhig*) to write something detailed on the remainder of the text, particularly pleas from Blo-gter dbang-po, Padma rgyal-mtshan of Nyag-rong and “keeper of a treasury of profound *gter*” Bla-ma bSod-rgyal.

⁷⁴¹ The TBRC database, for example, describes him as an “important *ris med* teacher of the 19th century” (<http://tbr.org/#!rid=P4069> accessed 16 March 2015)

arises: should we classify mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho and 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros as participants in a broader Ris-med movement? Both were *ris med* in the sense that they sought to tackle what they perceived to be sectarianism or sectarian conflict, and both appealed for wider support. But they were also dGe-lugs-pa.

Perhaps it is more appropriate to regard mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho and 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i-blo-gros as heirs of a different form of non-sectarianism; one that predates the Ris-med Movement of Kong-sprul and mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po and was rooted in the A-mdo and mGo-log regions. This tradition includes within its ranks both Zhabs-dkar Tshogs-drug rang-grol and his student, 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags. Its proponents first encountered (and clashed with) the advocates of the better-known Ris-med during the era of 'Ja'-pa mDo-sngags. This tension continued with mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho, who sought not only to promote non-sectarianism, but to redefine its parameters.

5. Conclusion

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho followed a long-established tradition that asserts the underlying similarity of Tibetan religious traditions, but, in his syncretism, he went further than his precursors and had a contemporary target. In his attempts to combine the dGe-lugs and rNying-ma systems, he rejects both narrow-minded dGe-lugs exclusivism (of the type Pha-bong-kha[-pa] represents) and the over-application of rDzogs-chen/Mahāmudrā simultaneism. He is also critical of Mi-pham's philosophical innovations, but only indirectly.

Ultimately, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's rNying-ma / dGe-lugs synthesis may have had little direct impact on followers of either school. Many of his writings take the form of personal notes and memoranda, and there is little evidence that they were influential during his lifetime. But the syncretism he articulates is of

historical interest not merely because of what it proposes, but also because of what it reacts against. For example, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho clearly regards the combination of scholasticism and sectarian differentiation as a threat to intersectarian harmony. His writings thus prompt questions about the nature of non-sectarianism: whether sectarian differentiation necessarily resulted in sectarianism. And, if so, whether it is truly consistent with the aims of a non-sectarianism movement—whether syncretism, in fact, is more in keeping with the *ris-med* ideal.

There was little time to debate such questions, however. Soon after mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho composed his works, Tibet was torn apart. The preservation of the very traditions he discussed in his treatises became the most pressing concern. This generated an inward focus that generally accompanies any process of preservation and restoration. Sectarian differentiation thus persisted. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's writings are now more accessible than ever before; they have even been cited by the Fourteenth Dalai Lama. As a result, a broader debate around these questions may finally take place—if it has not already begun.

6. Conclusion

When Mi-pham set out to strengthen the philosophical basis for the rNying-ma school at the behest of 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i-dbang-po, he redefined its interpretation of many aspects of Buddhist philosophy. Like his teacher, dPal-sprul, he composed commentaries on major Indian treatises; but, unlike dPal-sprul, he quickly became embroiled in controversy. Mi-pham's commentaries essentially promote a form of sectarian differentiation, in Cabezón's phrase, as they accentuate doctrinal distinctions between the rNying-ma and the other schools. The works provoked a hostile reaction from scholars within and outside his own tradition, but later, with their widespread acceptance, came to redefine rNying-ma philosophy.

Scriptural colleges proliferated throughout Eastern Tibet in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Teachers and students within these colleges turned to works by iconic authors such as 'Ju Mi-pham and Go-rams-pa bSod-nams seng-ge to define their schools' positions. This shift in monastic education brought intellectual self-confidence to the non-dGe-lugs schools, and, in turn, helped to inspire a new wave of commentarial writing. It also impacted on literature more broadly, as educated authors made use of scholarly categories drawn from Abhidharma, Pramāṇa and so on even when addressing esoteric topics.

There is a clear connection between scholasticism, comparativism and sectarian identity. Even ordinarily, we often define ourselves in relation to others by emphasising what we have in common, or what we do not share and therefore makes us special or unique. Scholasticism often entails comparison. Exegetes formulate doctrines partly through disagreement with the ideas of others. Comparison also features in monastic education when students debate with real or imagined

opponents—’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma eloquently described the latter in his essay on the pitfalls of intellectualism. It should not therefore be surprising that the expansion of scholasticism influenced notions of sectarian identity.

Efforts to improve non-dGe-lugs education, through the establishment of colleges and the composition and publication of treatises, might have been initially inspired by non-sectarian ideals. Yet, these developments eventually contributed to sectarian divisions, perhaps even conflict. Should we conclude from this that Ris-med figures, such as Mi-pham (and, indirectly, mKhyen-brtse’i dbang-po) or those involved in the publishing of Go-rams-pa’s works, were, in a sense, sectarian? Surely any attempt to promote distinctiveness runs the risk of encouraging divisiveness. However, this does not mean that the latter was necessarily intended or inevitable.

The authors featured in this study adopted different positions on intersectarian relations. ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was an inclusivist. His comparisons of rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra are hierarchical but reconciliatory. g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings-rang-grol was also an inclusivist, but he stressed the importance of maintaining the correct rNying-ma view almost to the point of exclusivism. mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho was, above all, a syncretist. These same authors also reacted in markedly different ways to Mi-pham’s scholarly innovations: ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma ignored them; Chos-dbyings-rang-grol embraced them; while mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho rejected them.⁷⁴²

Mi-pham encouraged ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma to support his efforts in strengthening the rNying-ma school. However, ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma was

⁷⁴² These three contrasting responses might be said to illustrate three stages in the reception of new ideas more generally: 1) (initial) opposition, 2) (gradual) acceptance, and/or 3) the generation of alternative views. In his sociology of philosophies, Randall Collins asserts that “the history of philosophy is the history not so much of problems solved as of the discovery of exploitable lines of opposition.” (Collins 1998: 6).

caught between rival allegiances and never espoused Mi-pham's form of rNying-ma identity. In his rDzogs-chen corpus, he addresses difficult topics, systematizes elements of gnoseology, and, more significantly, compares rDzogs-chen with Highest Yoga Tantra. But nowhere does he employ Mi-pham's key interpretations or favoured terminology. He considers rDzogs-chen to be superior to Highest Yoga Tantra only in its methods; he does not follow Mi-pham and many later rNying-ma scholars by insisting that its philosophical view is also greater. Moreover, even though he accepts the ultimate superiority of rDzogs-chen, he emphasizes its gradualism rather than its more distinctive simultaneist aspects.

g. Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol's rDzogs-chen writings are as sophisticated as those of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma (on which they often draw), but they betray clear signs of Mi-pham's influence. In *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul*, Chos-dbyings rang-grol criticises what he regards as unorthodox interpretations of Madhyamaka and introduces doxography into a practical instruction. This move continues a trend that began with 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Ye shes bla ma*, but it adds a sectarian element. Chos-dbyings rang-grol speaks out against the integration of ideas from different traditions and stresses adherence to an unadulterated rNying-ma perspective. Still, he falls short of outright exclusivism: he does not deny the validity of other doctrines, only the appropriateness of combining them with rNying-ma thought and practice.

mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho sought a solution to sectarian division. He regarded differentiation as a source of conflict and therefore proposed a combination of rNying-ma and dGe-lugs doctrine. Unlike some earlier authors, who refer to the underlying similarity of all Tibetan Buddhist views, he outlines a form of syncretism that makes points of doctrinal commonality explicit. His writings contain oblique,

critical references to Mi-pham's innovations, which he even associates with bias and sectarianism. In a sense, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho's rNying-ma-dGe-lugs synthesis stemmed from the popularity of Mi-pham's ideas. He sought to return to an earlier form of rNying-ma that was philosophically closer to the dGe-lugs system. He also found fault with some dGe-lugs teachers who denied the validity of rDzogs-chen. He thus represents his ideas as a middle way between two dogmatic extremes.

For all these authors, disagreements concern more than just philosophical ideas; they also touch upon issues of authority. In Tibetan Buddhism, the source of an assertion is often just as important as, or even more important than, the claim itself. Thus, for 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma, both Klong-chen rab-'byams and 'Jigs-med gling-pa were omniscient, infallible masters whose writings were pseudo-canonical. Later, in the writings of Chos-dbyings rang-grol, Mi-pham emerges as a figure of almost comparable authority and stature—a trend that has continued in recent years.⁷⁴³ In *rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len tshul*, the discussion of controversial topics, such as *'dzin stangs*, revolves around the views of the most senior contemporary figures within the tradition. Moreover, mDo-sngags Chos-kyi-rgya-mtsho does not simply refute Mi-pham's key ideas; he tries to show how they contradict the interpretations of earlier rNying-ma hierarchs, primarily Klong-chen rab-'byams and Rong-zom Chos-kyi-bzang-po. The debate is thus a contest of fidelity to the past as much as it is an argument over the present; or, in other words, it is a disagreement in the present that seeks validation from the past.

⁷⁴³ Mi-pham's reputation and status has continued to rise in recent decades. The renowned mKhan-po 'Jigs-med phun-tshogs 'byung-gnas (1933–2004) was among those who contributed to this process by, for example, composing devotional works centred on *Kun-mkhyen Mi-pham*, here identified with Mañjuśrī. See, for example, JPB vol. 1: 16–59. The current Dalai Lama, bsTan-'dzin rgya-mtsho (b. 1935), offers a counterbalance to this aggrandisement, however. He has said that 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's writings are “possibly even greater” than those of Mi-pham (Dalai Lama 2007: 73). Yet, it should be noted that even here the Dalai Lama refers to Mi-pham as “the omniscient Mipham” (i.e., *kun mkhyen mi pham*).

Perhaps the differing approaches considered here illustrate a fundamental choice that exists in other forms of human interaction too: that is, whether to highlight difference or commonality. Why is it that some strive to distinguish themselves (as individuals or as groups), while others seek what the philosopher John Gray has called “the lure of harmony”?⁷⁴⁴ In answering this question and explaining why the writers considered here chose one approach over another, we must take account not simply of philosophical ideas, but also of a broad array of (potentially competing) loyalties—to gurus, associates, previous incarnations, and monastic and regional affiliations—which are not always obvious.

Several topics that I have touched on here suggest avenues for future research. There is a clear need, for example, for fuller histories of both the Ris-med and dGe-mang movements, as I stated in Chapter One. The study of ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i-nyi-ma’s life and work, to which I have contributed here, would be further enhanced through a detailed analysis of his earlier **Guhyagarbha* commentary and exoteric writings. It would also be beneficial to examine the works of his close associates, such as the four great *mkhan-pos* of rDo-grub-chen, in more detail. Another desideratum is a comprehensive investigation of the work of Pha-bong-kha[-pa] bDe-chen snying-po, especially his exclusivism and views on sectarian relations.⁷⁴⁵ In addition, a thorough history of the rDzogs-chen preliminary exercises considered in Chapter Four might shed light on intersectarian influence by, for example, comparing these exercises with similar techniques described in some Mahāmudrā manuals. Finally, the rDzogs-chen treatises of Brag-dkar Blo-bzang

⁷⁴⁴ In reviewing *The Face of the Buddha* (Oxford University Press, 2016) by the renowned literary critic William Empson, John Gray notes that, in his life and work, Empson “resisted the lure of harmony, which offers to mitigate conflicts of value at the price of simplifying and impoverishing the human world.” (*New Statesman*, 24–30 June 2016, p. 38).

⁷⁴⁵ Such a study would necessarily include the views of his controversial disciple, Brag-g.yab rtogs-ldan ’Jam-dbyangs blo-gros (1888–1941).

dpal-ldan bstan-'dzin snyan-grags and A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-ba'i blo-gros, which I briefly introduced in Chapter Five, deserve to be fully translated and assessed.

Even without these additional insights, however, the writings examined here attest to the rDzogs-chen tradition's rich diversity and intellectual fecundity in the early decades of the twentieth century. Popular authors often portray rDzogs-chen (and indeed other esoteric Buddhist systems too) as a time-honoured repository of the timeless and recondite. Yet, as this study shows, rDzogs-chen continued to evolve, even at a time when some it represented itself as a continuation of past tradition. Moreover, innovation engendered further responses and creativity and contributed, albeit indirectly, to a reassessment of sectarian attitudes and positions.

Appendix 1: The rDzogs-chen Writings of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma

1. Introduction

The rDzogs-chen corpus of 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma comprises 22 separate texts in the most recent edition of his collected works. Several of these texts are in verse, and many were written as responses to individuals, both named and unnamed, even though not all are labelled as answers to questions (*dris lan*). Most texts are undated. At least three were clearly compiled from notes only after 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma's death.

Pages numbers are provided for all available editions of a given text. The sequence here follows the JTNs edition.

2. Khregs chod gdams pa:⁷⁴⁶

1. rDzogs chen khregs chod kyī gdams pa nyung bsduṣ sgron me'i snang ba (Light of the Lamp: Brief Advice on the Breakthrough Practice of the Great Perfection)

JTNs vol. 2: 2–13; JTNg vol. 1: 441–454

An introduction to the practice of Khregs-chod, including a definition of the term itself. The text explains the guru's introduction (*ngo sprod*) of the nature of mind to disciple and the distinction between ordinary mind (*sems*) and pure awareness (*rig pa*). According to the colophon, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma wrote the text in response to a request from his tutor Blo-gros bzang-po⁷⁴⁷ and the monk rTa-mgrin.

⁷⁴⁶ This subheading and the one which follows are found only in JTNg.

⁷⁴⁷ Possibly the same tutor referred to as A-khu blo-gros in Thondup 1996, 239. According to Thondup (*ibid.*, 241), A-khu blo-gros died when 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma was 35, i.e., around 1900.

2. sGrub brtson rnal 'byor gyi dbang po padma ma hā su kha'i bzhed skong du gdams pa (Advice to Fulfil the Request of the Diligent Practitioner and Lord Among Yogis Padma Mahāsukha)

JTNs vol. 2: 13–21; JTNg vol. 1: 454–463.2

This short text explains the distinction between *sems* and *rig pa*, as well as the three points of introduction, reaching a decision and finding confidence (i.e., the three major themes of *Tshig gsum gnad brdegs*). It also refers to the relinquishing of nine forms of activity (*bya ba dgu phrugs su gtong ba*) and concludes with a criticism of modern so-called great meditators (*sgom chen*). The text cites two lines from a work by Koṭali/Kuddāla (*Tog rtse ba*), but these lines do not appear in his most famous work, *bSam mi khyab pa'i rim pa'i man ngag*.⁷⁴⁸

3. Dad brtson blo ldan 'das shul grags ldan ngor gdams pa (Advice for the Faithful, Diligent and Intelligent 'Das-shul grags-ldan)⁷⁴⁹

JTNs vol. 2: 21–25; JTNg vol. 1: 463.2–467.3

This is a commentary on the final testament of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu (1851–1900).⁷⁵⁰

I am Guru Padmākara,
The Buddha free from birth and death.
Awakening mind (*bodhicitta*) is unbiased,
Free from the labels of the eight stages of the four pairs (*zung bzhi ya brgyad*).

The colophon gives the date of composition as the “third excellent day of the waning phase” (i.e., 27th) of the Phālguna month (*dbo zla*) in the earth-bird year (1909).

4. gDams ngag rdo rje'i gtun khung (Advice: The Vajra Mortar)

⁷⁴⁸ i.e., *Acintyakramaopadeśa*, Toh 2228.

⁷⁴⁹ Translated in Appendix 2 and Pearcey 2018.

⁷⁵⁰ The dates of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu are contested, but these dates seem the most likely on the basis of current evidence for reasons I set out in Pearcey 2015b and elsewhere. Indeed, the date of this very text is significant in providing a clear *terminus ante quem* for the life of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu and calling into question the dates of 1851 proposed recently by Matthieu Ricard (on the basis of a biography by gZhan-phan snang ba to which I do not currently have access).

JTNs vol. 2: 25–31; JTNg vol. 1: 467–473

This text is written in verse. Its themes include the distinction between ordinary mind and pure awareness, and the stages of progress in the practices of Khregs-chod and Thod-rgal. The colophon lists the names of four supplicants: Blo-gsal chemchog, the supreme incarnation (*mchog sprul*) 'Gyur-med padma bstan-'phel, Bodchung lung-rtogs and gSung-mchog pad-rdor. The author refers to himself as “the madman of rDo valley” (*rdo rong gi smyon pa*) and “one who is sustained by the kindness of the glorious guru 'Od gsal sprul pa'i rdo rje [i.e., 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse'i dbang-po], the noble lord Wheel of Stability [i.e., Mañjuśrī] in human flesh.”

5. rTogs ldan rkang ring la gdams pa (Advice for the Realized rKang-ring)

JTNs vol. 2: 31–33; JTNg vol. 1: 473–476

A short work in prose on the uniqueness of rDzogs-chen and its superiority over lesser approaches, including other Highest Yoga tantras. The colophon is in the name of “the old monk of the north, 'Ba'-la-ma,” which might be a reference to 'Ba', a valley in Khams.

6. Bla ma ye shes rgya mtsho'i ngor gdams pa (Advice for Lama Ye-shes rgya-mtsho)

JTNs vol. 2: 34–41; JTNg vol. 1: 476–484

A lengthy introduction in verse, followed by advice in prose. The text concludes with seven points summarizing the whole of rDzogs-chen.

7. Dad ldan slob ma 'gyur med rdo rje'i ngor gdams pa (Advice for the Faithful Student 'Gyur-med rdo-rje)⁷⁵¹

⁷⁵¹ Translated in Pearcey 2018.

JTNs vol. 2: 41–53; JTNg vol. 1: 484–496.1

Structured around six forms of mindfulness (*dran pa*) relate to a verse in Klong-chen rab-'byams's *Man ngag mdzod*:⁷⁵²

1. applied mindfulness (*'du byed kyi dran pa*)
2. natural mindfulness (*chos nyid kyi dran pa*)
3. mindfulness during post-meditative experience (*rjes snang gi dran pa*)
4. mindfulness of direct realization (*mngon sum yi dran pa*)
5. mindfulness encompassing experience (*spyod yul gyi dran pa*)
6. mindfulness of phenomenal dissolution (*chos zad kyi dran pa*)

8. dPal seng gi ngor gdams pa (Advice for dPal-seng)⁷⁵³

JTNs vol. 2: 53–55; JTNg vol. 1: 496.1–498.4

A short text of advice preceded by a homage to Dri-med 'od-zer [i.e., Klong-chen rab-'byams]. The text briefly explains the difference between mind (*sems*) and pure awareness (*rig pa*), then describes the superiority of rDzogs chen to the common Madhyamaka view (*dbu ma'i lta ba thun mong ba*) and the various tantric vehicles. It concludes by referring the reader to the explanations of equalness (*mnyam pa*) and purity (*dag pa*) in the writings of Rong-zom Chos-kyi bzang-po and Klong-chen rab-'byams.

9. sPrul pa'i sku 'jigs med rab brtan ngor gdams pa (Advice for the Tulku 'Jigs-med rab-brtan)

JTNs vol. 2: 55–62; JTNg vol. 1: 498.4–505.2

A commentary on a verse from a song on the view (*lta mgur*) of rDzogs-chen attributed to “the venerable and noble guru Sumandra” (*rje btsun bla ma dam pa su*

⁷⁵² KLR vol. 15: 388.

⁷⁵³ Translation appears on LH.

mandra).⁷⁵⁴ The text explains how the verse is arranged in themes (*chings su bcings lugs*), as well as the importance of *bodhicitta*, and the definition of *ka dag* and *rtsal*. Citations include a verse from Saraha.

**10. gNyug ma zang thal gyi sgrub thabs chos nyid rang byung gi sgra dbyangs
(The Self-Arisen Sound of Dharmatā: A Means of Accomplishment for the All-
Penetrating Natural State)**

JTNs vol. 2: 62–67; JTNg vol. 1: 505.2–511

An accomplishment manual (*sādhana*) in verse. It is in the form of a revelation ending with the phrase *dha thim*. The text describes itself as “a song of wonder” (*nyams mtshar glu*). Its colophon reads: “Writing this down I placed it in a volume of (/belonging to) Blo-gros bzang-po⁷⁵⁵ and gave it to ’Jam-dbyangs. Do not leave it as words on the page. Practise it!”

**11. Tshig gsum gnad brdeg skor (On the Three Statements that Strike the
Crucial Point)**

JTNs vol. 2: 67–94; JTNg vol. 1: 511–538

Notes on the subject of the “three statements that strike the crucial point” (*tshig gsum gnad brdeg*) attributed to dGa’-rab rdo-rje. The colophon says that the notes were compiled and published by an anonymous editor.

3. rDzogs chen skor:

**12. ’Jam dpal ye shes sems dpa’i mtshan don (The Meaning of the Name of the
Jñānasattva Mañjuśrī)⁷⁵⁶**

JTNs vol. 2: 95–103; JTNg vol. 1: 539–547.5; JTNd vol. 5: 179–187.4

⁷⁵⁴ This is evidently a back translation into Sanskrit, but there are too many possible equivalents to reconstruct the original Tibetan name.

⁷⁵⁵ Possibly Blo-gros bzang-po the tutor who requested *sGron me’i snang ba*.

⁷⁵⁶ Translated in Klein 2000.

An essay relating the ground, path and fruition (*gzhi lam 'bras gsum*) of rDzogs-chen to the syllables of the name 'Jam-dpal gzhon-nu, an epithet of Mañjuśrī.

13. dNgos gzhi gnyis su mu bzhi rtsi tshul (How to Count the Tetralemma of Actual and Basis)⁷⁵⁷

JTNs vol. 2: 104–110; JTNg vol. 1: 547.5–554.2; JTNd vol. 5: 187.4–193.5

An explanation of the tetralemma or four permutations of the 'actual basis' (*dngos gzhi*), elaborating upon comments in the *Theg mchog mdzod* of Klong-chen rab-'byams and *Ye shes bla ma* of 'Jigs-med gling-pa.

14. Hor 'od zer gyi ngor gdams pa (Advice for 'Od-zer of Hor)⁷⁵⁸

JTNs vol. 2: 110–117; JTNg vol. 1: 554.2–561; JTNd vol. 5: 193.5–200

Answers to questions on the distinction between ordinary mind and pure awareness, the dissolution of dualistic perception (*gnyis snang*), mindfulness (*dran pa; smṛti*), the phases of dissolution (*thim rim*) at death, and the practice of meditation.

15. rDzogs chen dris lan (Answers to Questions on the Great Perfection)⁷⁵⁹

JTNs vol. 2: 117–135; JTNg vol. 1: 563–579; JTNd vol. 1: 493–513

Answers to 24 questions on the theme of rDzogs-chen. Although the interrogator is not identified explicitly, tradition holds that it was 'Jam-dbyangs mKhyen-brtse Chos-kyi-blo-gros (1893–1959).⁷⁶⁰

16. rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa'i khyad par (On the Differences Between Recognising Thoughts and Recognising Awareness)

JTNs vol. 2: 135–202; JTNg vol. 1: 581–646.2

⁷⁵⁷ Translated in Appendix 2.

⁷⁵⁸ Translated in Appendix 2.

⁷⁵⁹ Translated in Appendix 2 & Pearcey 2018.

⁷⁶⁰ Translated in Appendix 2 & Pearcey 2018.

This is the longest text in the rDzogs-chen corpus. It is a series of notes on various topics related to rDzogs-chen, especially gnoseology.

17. mKhas pa mi bzhi'i thugs bcud rdzong 'phrang gi brjed byang rtogs dka'i 'phrang sgrol (The Heart-Essence of the Four Wise Men: Memoranda on the Fortresses and Defiles, Bringing Liberation from the Defile of the Difficult to Realize)

JTNs vol. 2: 202–208; JTNg vol. 1: 646–652; JTNd vol. 5: 280.3–287.6

This short work describes “three fortresses” (*rdzong gsum*) and “three ravines/defiles” (*'phrang gsum*).⁷⁶¹ The three fortresses are: 1) summary of the crucial points on the *ālaya* (*kun gzhi gnad kyi stong thun*), 2) ascertainment of the fruition, the three buddha-bodies (*'bras bu sku gsum gtan bebs*), 3) opening of the enclosure of ignorance (*ma rig sbubs 'byed*); and the three ravines/defiles are: 1) instruction on meditation, the singular concentration (*bsam gtan gcig pa sgom gyi man ngag*), 2) notes on experience in concentration (*bsam gtan nyams kyi yig chung*), 3) refining the extremes/limits of training (*bslab mtha' sbyong ba*). The colophon says that one named rDo-rje composed the text in the form of a list.

18. Man ngag zab mo rdo rje'i mtshon cha (The Vajra Weapon: A Profound Pith Instruction)

JTNs vol. 2: 209–232; JTNg vol. 1: 652.5–676; JTNd vol. 5: 287.6–314

Written in prose, this text includes a number of comparative sections on the differences between rDzogs-chen and Highest Yoga Tantra. According to the

⁷⁶¹ The relationship of this text to Bon teachings which refer to the “four learned men” (*mkhas pa mi bzhi*) or to the bKa'-brgyad texts such as *mKhas pa mi bzhi'i thugs bcud bka' brgyad bka' ma'i bskyed rim gyi phrin las chog khrigs he ru ka'i dgongs pa'i rgyan* (NyKs vol. 29: 429–459) is a topic for further investigation. According to the *rDzong 'phrang srog gsum gyi chings kyi man ngag* (NyKs vol. 29: 15–425), the four learned men of India and Tibet (*rgya bod kyi mkhas pa mi bzhi*) are 1) Ācārya Padmasambhava, an emanation of Vajrapāṇi; 2) Ācārya Vimalamitra, an emanation of Vajrasattva; 3) Ācārya Bairotsana, an emanation of Vairocana; and 4) Ācārya Nam-mkha'i snying-po, an emanation of Vajradhara (ibid., 16–17).

colophon, 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma wrote the text in the eighth month (*khrooms zla*) of the wood-sheep year (1895) when he was 31 years old. A further colophon states that some students later gathered the notes and, fearing that they might be lost, arranged for printing blocks to be carved.

The following three texts only appear in JTNs:

19. Na mo gu ru ye shes chen po... (Homage to the Great Gnosis Guru...)⁷⁶²

JTNs vol. 1: 232–236

Written at the request of a yogin named Chags-med rang-grol, this short text in verse has three chapters on the original ground (*gdod ma gzhi*), path that makes this manifest (*mngon byed lam*) and fruition once it is made manifest (*mngon gyur 'bras bu*). The scribe is named as the monk Matibhadra (i.e., Blo-gros bzang-po).

20. Bla ma rje btsun... (Reverend Guru...)

JTNs vol. 2: 236–240

A short text in prose written as a response to a request from “a noble holder of the teachings of the practice lineage of Karma Kam Tshang,” who sought “instructions on how a beginner practises rDzogs-chen in gradual stages.”

21. sPrin gyi sgron ma... ([A Reply to Questions] from Light of the Clouds)⁷⁶³

JTNs vol. 2: 240–245

Answers to two questions—equal in number to hands (or arms), as the author puts it: 1) how settling meditation (*'jog sgom*) in rDzogs-chen differs from other perfection stage (*rdzogs rim*) practices, and 2) whether even the visions of buddha-forms (*sku; kāya*) and light-spheres (*thig le*) disappear at the stage known as “the exhaustion into *dharmatā*” (*chos nyid zad pa*) in Thod-rgal practice.

⁷⁶² The final three texts do not appear in JTNg.

⁷⁶³ Translated in Appendix 2.

**22. Ye shes bla ma'i dka' gnas zin bris gsal ba'i sgron me (The Brilliant Lamp:
Notes on the Difficult Points of the *Ye shes bla ma*)**

JTNs vol. 2: 248–270

This commentary on the difficult points (*dka' gnas*) of 'Jigs-med gling-pa's guidance manual (*khrid yig*) *Ye shes bla ma* includes sections on the investigation of mind's emergence, presence and departure (*'byung gnas 'gro gsum*); the four permutations (*mu bzhi*) of the 'actual basis' (*dngos gzhi*); and an etymological definition of *bar do* (which the author regards as an abbreviation of *bar ma do*). 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma notes at the end that his comments are based on the oral tradition of the guru, as well as *Theg mchog mdzod*, *Tshig don mdzod*, and other instructions.

Appendix 2: Critical Editions & Annotated Translations

I. Selected Texts by 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma

For the following selections page numbers are provided according to the Gangtok edition (JTNg) where it exists, and according to the Chengdu edition (JTNs) where that is the only version available. All text titles are italicized.

1. *Dad brtson blo ldan 'das shul grags ldan ngor gdams pa*⁷⁶⁴

JTNg 463.2–467.3; JTNs 21–25⁷⁶⁵

bla ma la phyag 'tshal lo| |

'dir bdag cag gi bla ma dam pa shes bya rig pa'i gnas lnga la sbyangs shing | rdzogs pa chen po'i snying thig gi lam nas grol ba brnyes pa o rgyan bstan 'dzin nor bu'i zhal snga nas kyis 'da' khar zhal chems su stsal ba'i tshigs bcad| |

nga o rgyan gu ru padma 'byung | |

skye 'chi bral ba'i sangs rgyas yin| |

byang chub sems la phyogs ris med| |

zung bzhi ya brgyad kyis ming 'dogs bral| | zhes pa 'di'i don rags pa tsam

zhig bkral na|

spyir bcom ldan 'das kyis chos kyis 'khor lo bskor ba thams cad 'dul bya skye shi bar do'i 'khrul 'khor gyis nyam thag pa las skyob pa'i ched du gsungs pa kho na yin zhing | de dag gi nang nas mthar thug pa snying thig rdo rje rtse mo'i lugs la| thog ma'i gzhi ka dag chen po'i gshis la 'khrul pa med kyang| de ngo ma shes par rig rtsal 'khrul pa'i snang char shar te| bdag [464] nyid gcig pa dang | lhan cig skyes pa dang | kun tu btags pa ste ma rig pa gsum gyi rim pas gzung 'dzin gyi rtog pa lu gu rgyud kyis phreng ba mu med du mched| de'i rjes su zhen nas las nyon sdug bsngal gyi 'khor lo bar mtshams med par 'jug pa yin pas| ngo bo'i bzhugs tshul 'khrul pa'i dri mas ma gos pa bzhin du ngo 'phrod nas bsgoms pa nyid kyis skyes 'chi'i 'khrul pa

⁷⁶⁴ The title is omitted in JTNg.

⁷⁶⁵ This text is not included in JTNd.

rang log tu 'gro bar bzhed pa yin la| ngo bo'i bzhugs tshul de'ang rtog ge dang bcos
 ma'i sems 'dzin gyis mi mthong gi| don brgyud kyi pha phog⁷⁶⁶ thob pa'i bla ma
 mtshan nyid dang ldan pa las smin grol gyi bdud rtsi blangs te| de 'dra'i bla ma de
 nyid o rgyan rdo rje 'chang dang dbyer med du mthong ba'i mos gus rnal 'byor du
 byas pas rgyud byin gyis brlabs te thugs yid dbyer mi phyed par 'dres nas rang sems
 gdod ma'i gnas lugs bcos slad dang bral ba 'di kun bzang don gyi 'chi med padma
 'byung gnas su ngo shes| thag chod| brtan pa thob| de nyid glo bur rgyu rkyen gyis
 ma bskyed pas skye ba dang bral| bri gang 'pho 'gyur mi dmigs pas 'chi ba dang bral
 te| skye 'chi med pa'i dngos grub kyi pham phab rang mal nas rnyed cing | sangs
 rgyas gzhan du mi 'tshol ba'i gdeng chen thob pa na|

nga o rgyan [465] gu ru padma 'byung | |
 skye 'chi bral ba'i sangs rgyas yin| | zhes seng ge'i sgra sgrog go| |

de lta bu'i rig pa byang chub sems kyi bzhugs tshul mngon du gyur pa na| skye 'chi'i
 yul snang phyir spangs| der zhen gyi 'dzin sems nang du bcad| spros pa'i 'khor ba
 rgyab tu bor| spros med myang 'das la dmigs gtad bcol ba'i spang blang re dogs
 mang pos rten med kyi rig pa khol bur 'don du med kyi| ji ltar snang yang rang
 snang | gang ltar shar yang rang rtsal| 'khor 'das gzung 'dzin du btags pa thams cad
 phyogs dang ris med par rig pa'i yo lang du shar te| rtsal gzhi thog tu thim| gzhi rang
 mal du btsan sa zin nas| dang po'i gzhi las 'phags te| rgya chad phyogs lhung dang
 bral ba'i 'od gsal gzhon nu bum pa sku'i dbyings su mngon par byang chub par
 'gyur ba la|

byang chub sems la phyogs ris med| ces bya'o| |

de'i phyir 'khrul snang la skyon du blta ste| nang gi rnal 'byor nyi tshe ba la bslab
 pas khams gsum gyi mthong spang spangs kyang 'dod pa'i sgom spang ma spangs
 pa dang | de spong phyir du zhugs pa dang | 'dod nyon phal cher spangs pa dang | de
 mtha' dag spangs kyang gong ma'i nyon mongs zad par ma spangs [466] pas skye
 'chi'i sdug bsngal lhag med du ma log pa sogs kyi sgo nas 'bras bu tha dad du bzhag
 pa'i zung bzhi ya brgyad lta bu'i rnam bzhag theg pa 'di la brtsir med de| ka dag rang

⁷⁶⁶ JTNs *phogs*

snang ris med gdal ba chen po'i dgongs klong nas sa lam chig chod du bgrod pa'i
phyir te| 'di la zhib cha dgos so| |

don 'di'i phyir|

zung bzhi ya brgyad kyi ming 'dogs bral| | zhes gsungs te|

'dis ni theg pa 'og ma gzhan rnams las 'phags pa yang mtshon no| |

don hril gyis dril na| bla ma dang rang sems gnyis med du bsres te rig stong gnyug
ma'i klong du bsal⁷⁶⁷ bzhag dang bral bar mnyam par bzhag la| 'chi ka dang por bar
do'i 'jigs skrag 'khrul snang gang gis kyang rig pa rang mal nas mi g.yo bar btsan sa
bzung ba ni rkang pa dang po gsum gyi snying po'i don te| phyogs 'di'i 'chi ka ma'i
man ngag mthar thug pa yin zhing | 'di la rab chos sku lta ba rgyas 'debs kyi 'pho ba
zhes kyang grags so| |

de'ang da lta nas skyong tshul dang | 'chi dus su las la sbyar tshul sogs shes par
bya'o| |

rkang pa tha mas ni lam 'di rtsol bcas kyi theg pa gzhan las 'phags pa'i che ba ston
te| rang gi lam la nges pa brtan par bya ba'i don to| |

yang na rkang pa dang po gnyis kyis| lam 'di'i 'chi med ^[467] sgrub tshul bstan pa na|
de tsam gyis theg pa'i rtse mor mi 'gyur te| nyan rang la'ang skye 'chi'i sdug bsngal
rgyun chad pa'i lam yod pa'i phyir ro snyam pa la| lan rkang pa tha ma dang | de'i
rgyu mtshan sgrub pa la rkang pa gsum pa sbyar na'ang rung ngo| |

*zhes pa'ang dad brtson blo ldan 'das shul grags ldan nas nan gyis bskul ba'i ngor|
bstan pa'i nyi mas sa bya dbo zla ba'i dmar phyogs kyi bzang po gsum par gang
dran myur por bris pa dge bar gyur cig| ||*

⁷⁶⁷ JTNs *bsam*

Advice for the Faithful, Diligent and Intelligent 'Das-shul grags-ldan

Homage to the guru!

Our noble teacher, O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu, trained in the five sciences and gained liberation through the Great Perfection's path of the Heart Essence. At the time of his passing, he spoke the following verse as his final testament (*zhal chems*):

I am Guru Padmākara of Oḍḍiyāna,
A buddha free from birth and death.
Awakening mind (*bodhicitta*) is impartial and unbiased,
Beyond labels of the eight stages, the four pairs.⁷⁶⁸

I shall elaborate a little on the meaning of this.

Generally, all the various turnings of the wheel of Dharma by the Lord Buddha were offered purely to protect disciples from the miserable routine of birth, death, and the intermediate state. Among these teachings, for the ultimate tradition of the Heart Essence, which is the vajra pinnacle, there is no delusion in the condition of great primordial purity, the original ground. And yet, because we do not recognize this, appearances of delusion, which are the creative energy (*rtsal*) of pure awareness, arise. Through the three types of ignorance⁷⁶⁹—seeming [464] identity (*bdag nyid gcig pa/u*), co-emergent (*lhan cig skyes pa*), and imputational (*kun tu btags pa*)—thoughts involving dualistic grasping develop, one after another, in an endless chain. Then, through grasping, we are drawn into the endless cycle of suffering caused by karma and mental afflictions.

Recognizing and becoming familiar with the actual nature of the essence, which is untainted by confusion, naturally averts the delusions of birth and death. Yet we cannot see the nature of this essence through intellectual speculation (*rtog ge*) or through a mind that is contrived. Instead, we must receive the nectar of ripening [empowerments] and liberating [instructions] from an authentic guru who

⁷⁶⁸ These lines also appear in the biography of O-rgyan bstan-'dzin nor-bu included within *rDzogs chen chos 'byung* (vol. 2, 185b). Cf. the English translation in Nyoshul Khenpo 2005: 486, but note that the translator, Richard Barron, appears to have misunderstood the fourth line.

⁷⁶⁹ As noted in Higgins 2013: 70 rDzogs-chen introduces a third kind of ignorance, expanding on a pre-existing Indian model of twofold ignorance/nescience. Higgins also notes that these three are mentioned in a passage in the *sGra thal 'gyur*, where the ignorance of seeming identity is described as the root or foundation of error or delusion. It thus corresponds to the stage of the original ground, what Higgins (*ibid.*, 71) calls “human reality in its most ontologically primitive condition”. (Note, however, that from an emic perspective this ground is not unique to *human* beings but is common to all six forms of unenlightened beings).

has inherited the actual transmission. Then, by cultivating the devotion of seeing the guru as inseparable from the Vajradhara of Oḍḍiyāna, our mind will be inspired with blessings, and the guru's wisdom mind will merge inseparably with our own mind. Though this, we will recognize the mind's primordial state (*gdod ma'i gnas lugs*), without contrivance or contamination, as the all-perfect, deathless Padmākara himself. We must then firmly decide that this is so and gain stability. As this recognition is not generated through temporary causes and conditions, it is free from birth. And as it is not seen to increase or decrease or undergo transition or change, it is free from death. Thus, the attainment of birthlessness and deathlessness is bestowed naturally, there and then. And when we gain the confidence of not seeking buddhahood elsewhere, there can be the lion's roar proclaiming:

I am ^[465] Guru Padmākara of Oḍḍiyāna,
A buddha free from birth and death.

When the nature of this awareness or awakening mind (*byang chub sems; bodhicitta*) manifests, appearances of birth and death are cast aside, the mind of fixated clinging is cut from within, and the cycle of conceptualization is left behind.

Hopes and fears, or notions of adopting and avoiding, focused on a nirvāṇa that is beyond conceptual elaboration, do not bring about any fragmentation of pure awareness, which is itself unsupported. Rather, whatever appears is its natural self-appearance (*rang snang*), and whatever arises does so as its self-expression (*rang rtsal*). All that might be labelled as subjective or objective throughout saṃsāra and nirvāṇa simply arises as the evolving manifestation (*yo lang*) of this pure awareness that is itself beyond partiality and bias. And these expressions dissolve within the ground. Once the stronghold of the ground is seized in its own place, this is superior to the original ground, as there is awakening within the sphere of the reality-body (*dharmakāya*), the youthful vase body, clear light beyond confinement and restriction. Thus, the testament says:

Awakening mind is impartial and unbiased.

Therefore, in this vehicle there is no system of positing the fruition as something separate, as there is for the eight stages of the four pairs.⁷⁷⁰ According to that approach, we regard delusory appearances as faults and train in a limited form of yoga, through which it is possible to overcome the “seeing discards” (*mtshong spang*; *darśanaprahātavya*) of the three realms, but not the “meditation discards” (*sgom spang*; *bhāvanaprahātavya*) of the desire realm;⁷⁷¹ or else, to enter that realm in order to discard them; or to discard most of the desire-realm afflictions; or to discard them all but not totally overcome the afflictions related to the [two] upper realms, [466] with the result that the sufferings of birth and death are still not entirely overcome, and so on. Here, by contrast, out of the expanse of realization of great, all-pervasive primordial purity, which is self-appearing and unbiased, all grounds and paths are traversed at once. This point must be spelled out in detail, so the testament says:

Beyond labels of the eight stages, the four pairs.

This also shows how rDzogs-chen is superior to the lower vehicles.

The meaning in a nutshell, then, is as follows. Merging your own mind inseparably with the guru’s wisdom, settle evenly—without trying to settle or eliminate anything—in the genuine expanse of aware-emptiness. Then, at death, none of the terrifying delusory appearances of the intermediate state will cause awareness to stray from its own place. This “seizing of the stronghold” (*btsan sa bzung ba*) is the essential message of the first three lines. It is the ultimate instruction for the moment of death within this tradition and is also known as the ultimate

⁷⁷⁰ I.e., the four categories of stream-enterer (*rgyun du zhugs pa*; *śrotāpanna*), once-returner (*lan gcig phyir ’ong ba*; *sakṛdāgamin*), non-returner (*phyir mi ’ong ba*; *anāgamin*) and worthy one (*dgra bcom pa*; *arhat*), each of which can be further divided into the emerging (*zhugs pa*; *pratipannaka*) and the established (*gnas pa*; *stha*) to give eight categories in total. See “skye bu zung bzhi’am gang zag ya brgyad” in Nor-brang o-rgyan 2008 vol.1, 493.

⁷⁷¹ The *Abhidharmakośa* and *Abhidharmasamuccaya* take different views on these two types of ‘discard’^a (*spang bya*; *prahātavya*) or factors to be discarded. According to the *Abhidharmasamuccaya*, 112 factors are discarded through the path of seeing (*darśanamarga*)—40 for the desire realm and 36 each for the form and formless realms—and 414 factors through the path of meditation (*bhāvanamarga*). The categories of once-returner and non-returner are so named on the basis of whether it is necessary to return to the desire realm in order to relinquish the factors to be discarded in that realm. ^a The OED recognizes *discard* as a noun meaning “Anything discarded, rejected, or unwanted.”

dharmakāya transference through sealing with the view (*rab chos sku lta ba rgyas 'debs kyi 'pho ba*).⁷⁷² For this, there is much to understand, such as the way to sustain it right now, as well as the way to apply it at the time of death.

The final line shows how this path is superior to the other vehicles, all of which require effort; it means that certainty in one's own path must be stable.

To put it another way: The first two lines show the means of achieving deathlessness through this path. [467] Still, some might object that this alone would not make this the pinnacle of vehicles, because even the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas have a path that puts a stop to the sufferings of birth and death. In that case, it would suffice to offer the final line as a response and the third line as the reason.

In response to persistent requests from the faithful, diligent, and intelligent 'Dashul grags-ldan, bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma quickly wrote down whatever came to mind on the third excellent day of the waning phase [i.e., the twenty-seventh] of the Phālguna month in the Earth Bird Year (1909).

2. rDzogs chen dris lan⁷⁷³

JTNd vol. 1: 493–513; JTNg vol. 1: 563–579; JTNs vol. 2: 117–135

na mo gu ru|

da lam rje nyid kyi rdzogs chen phyogs las brtsams pa'i bka' 'dri 'ga' zhig gnang ba
'di rigs la rang 'dra ba'i blo dman gyis ji bzhin zhu ba'i rngo thogs dka' yang 'phral
du go tshod phyogs tsam snyan du gsol na|

[1] dri ba dang por| rdzogs chen gyi gzhi la 'khrul grol gyi gzhi gnyis su
dbye ba'i grol gzhi phyogs tsam go rung| 'khrul gzhi grol gzhir lhun grub tu 'dod pa
ni gzhi skyon can gyi khas blangs lags na| 'khrul gzhi 'di glo bur ba zhig yin nam
min zhes 'di la|

⁷⁷² On this form of transference or ejection (*'pho ba; samkrānti/utkrānti*) of consciousness see *Kun bzang bla ma'i zhal lung gi zin bris* 336–337.

⁷⁷³ Title appears in JTNs. In JTNg it is given in the left margin of recto folios. In JTNd the left margin reads simply *dris lan*.

bram ze chen pos|

sems nyid gcig pu kun gyi sa bon te| |

gang la srid dang mya ngan 'das 'phro ba⁷⁷⁴| | zhes gsungs pa ltar|

'od gsal gnyug ma'i sems gcig pu de ka ngo ma shes na 'khrul pa'i gzhi dang| ngo shes nas brtan pa thob na grol sar 'gyur te snga ma gzhi dang phyi ma 'bras bu'i gnas skabs yin pas de gnyis gcig tu smra ba kun mkhyen chen pos bkag yod| gzhi'i skabs su 'chi thengs re bzhin 'od gsal de yongs rdzogs 'char yang ngo ma shes pa'i dbang gis slar yang 'khrul pa'i gzung 'dzin gyi yo lang du ldog la| grol sar slebs⁷⁷⁵ dus rang thog tu btsan sa zin pas phyir mi ldog pa'i khyad par yod| gzhi'i dus su rang ngo ma shes pas rang rtsal 'khrul par shar ba 'di la dpyad pa nyid kyis ^[564] 'khrul pa'i gzhi byed pa de 'od gsal kho rang gi gnyug ma'i rang gshis min par rtogs nus te| de ltar ma yin na de'i rang ngo ji ltar shes shing ji ltar rtsal rdzogs pa de lta de ltar srid pa'i 'khrul snang mched rigs par thal ba'i phyir ro| |

de'i phyir 'khrul gzhi dang grol sa gcig tu mi 'dod cing 'khrul gzhir 'dod pa'i gzhi'i 'od gsal glo bur ba'i chos su'ang khas mi len pas ka dag lhun grub gnyis phyogs rer bcad pa'i 'dod tshul rnam dang mi 'dra snyam pa lags|

[2] bka' dri gnyis pa| gzhi la 'khrul pa ma grub kyang gzhi snang gi rtsal la bzung ngan du 'dzin pas 'khrul pa de| de ltar 'khrul mkhan gyi rlung sems tha dad cig yod pa yin nam zhes gsungs pa la|

gzhi'i 'od gsal 'khrul pa'i ngo bor skyes ma myong zhing mi srid pas ye grol dang gdod nas nram dag dang ka dag sogs su brjod la| gzhi snang la 'dzin pa zhugs pa'i rlung sems de ma 'khrul zer mi nus pas de gnyis mi gcig cing tha dad du 'jog dgos kyang| 'khrul pa 'od gsal min yang 'od gsal spangs pa'i 'khrul pa cig med par rig 'dzin gong mas gsungs pa ltar de 'dra'i 'khrul pa de'i 'od gsal de'i bdag nyid dang ngo bo nyid du khas blang dgos kyi rdzas tha dad du mi 'jog par sems lags|

⁷⁷⁴ These lines are from Saraha's *Dohākoṣagīti* (*Do ha mdzod kyi glu*). Jackson 2004: 73 gives the original as: *cittekka saalavīaṃ bhavaṇivvāṇo vi jasma viphuranti*.

⁷⁷⁵ JTND *sleb*

[3] gsum pa| chos sku ye shes rig pa rnam la 'khrul nas kun gzhi rnam [565] shes
sems su log pa 'di gsum snga ma gsum bcings grol las 'das shing rgya chad phyogs
lhung bral ba'i gshis ci yang ma yin pa la ci yang 'byung rung me long du gzugs
brnyan sna tshogs 'char ba sogs kyi dpes bstan rung 'khor bar snang tsam min pa
zhen 'khrul gyis bcings pa'i sems can rnam byung ba'i gnad 'di ji ltar yin zhes par|

gzhi las gzhi snang du g.yos zhes pa'i gzhi snang ni sku dang 'od dang thig le sogs
yul snang gi rnam pa can kho nar mi bya'i thugs rje'i rig cha phyir gsal du mched
pa'ang der 'jog dgos la| de'i rtsal lam shugs las gser gyi g.ya' dang chu'i nya lcibs⁷⁷⁶
ltar yul shes so sor snang ba'i shes pa glo bur ba'i char gyur pa phra mo dang por
mched pa la kun gzhi zhes bya| de'i rlung sems je rags su song ba las tshogs drug
nyon yid dang bcas par song lugs rdzogs chen gyi gzhung chen po rnam su⁷⁷⁷ ma
rtogs sems can gyi 'khrul tshul bstan pa'i skabs nas rgya cher bshad pa de lags| de
ltar na rig pa dngos ka dag yin pas zhen 'dzin gyi mam par mi 'byung yang de las
shar ba'i sems rags pa rnam tha mal pa'i zhen 'dzin du 'char la| de'i dbang gis 'du
byed kyi las dang sems can dang sems can gyi gnas rnam 'byung tshul mkhyen sla
ba lags|

[4] bzhi par| 'chi kha'i [566] bar do dang po nam mkha' sum phrug gi nyams len dang
grong⁷⁷⁸ 'pho stobs su gyur pa la snang mched thob pa'i thim rim 'byung ngam mi
'byung zhes par|

de dag gang la'ang thim rim de 'byung dgos par sems te| 'od gsal sbubs 'jug gis grol
ba ni 'chi ba'i 'od gsal gyi dus su brtan pa thob pa yin la| 'od gsal de'i sngon du thim
rim de 'byung dgos pa'i phyir dang| grong 'pho grong 'jug gis grol na rnam shes lus
las 'thon pa'i tshe dag pa'i gnas su 'pho ba yin pa gang zhig| rnam shes lus las 'thon
pa ni thim rim gyis drangs pa'i 'chi ba 'od gsal gyi mthar yin pa'i phyir ro| |

[5] lnga pa| rnam shes snang ba la thim sogs kyi 'gros dang| rnam shes nam mkha' la
thim pa'i 'gros gnyis kyi khyad par gang yin zhes par|

⁷⁷⁶ JTNd *lcib*

⁷⁷⁷ JTNd omits |

⁷⁷⁸ JTNd *sgra*

rnam shes nam mkha' la thim tshul nyid rgyas par phye na rnam shes snang ba dang|
snang ba mched pa la thim pa sogs su 'gyur bas gnad gcig pa lags|

[6] drug pa| khu rdul rlung gsum gyi thim rim 'di btsan thabs su bcad pa'i sbas don
man ngag e yod gsungs par|

snang mched thob pa'i thim rim 'di dag rlung thim pa'i thim rim kho nar bshad pa
dang| khu rdul rlung gsum gyi thim rim du bzhag pa'i bshad sgros mi 'dra tsam yod
par snang| gang ltar yang tshe ^[567] 'dir 'tshang rgya ba rnams ni mthong ba'i chos
nyid la khu khrag rlung gsum gtso bor gyur pa'i phung khams kyi spros pa mtha'
dag 'od gsal gzhan nu bum pa sku'i dbyings su rang dengs⁷⁷⁹ la song ba'i thim rim
gyis mtshon pa'i skye 'chi bar do'i rnam bzhag thams cad las ring du brgal ba yin la|
de las gzhan pa rnams ni tshe 'di'i phung khams phra rags 'od gsal gyi dbyings su
lhag ma med par ma bsdus par bar do 'grub tshul med la| dkar dmar nag gsum gyi
snang ba sogs kyang khams phra mo bsdus pa'i rtags snang yin pas man ngag zur pa
cang med dam snyam mod| gang zag gi khyad par gyis thim rtags de dag la mngon
tshan che chung ni sna tshogs shig 'ong ba 'dra|

[7] bdun pa| 'chi kha'i bar dor grol ba la 'char lugs brgyad dang thim lugs brgyad⁷⁸⁰
'byung ngam mi 'byung gsungs par|

'char tshul de dag ni 'chi kha'i bar do'i pha rol lam bar do de rdzogs rjes kyi chos
nyid bar do'i 'char tshul yin pas mi 'byung bar sems lags|

[8] brgyad pa| chos nyid kyi bar dor zhi skus gzhan don dngos su mi byed| khro skus
byed ces pa 'di ci lags gsungs par|

mched gzhi snying ga'i rig gdangs zhi skur shar dus nas rang ngo shes na gzhan don
dngos su byed long med par dbyings thog tu thim pa ^[568] yin la de las mched pa dung
khang gi khro bo'i rtags snang khro skur shar tshe gzhan don byed pa'i skad cig ma
mang po'i ring la gnas pa'i don yin| skabs 'di'i gzhan don byed mi byed ces pa'i

⁷⁷⁹ JTNs *dwangs*

⁷⁸⁰ Following JTND and JTNs. JTNg omits *dang| thim lugs brgyad*

gzhan ni rang las rgyud tha dad pa'i gdul bya la mi byed kyi stong gzugs lhun grub
kyi snang char 'gro drug rmi lam ltar 'char ba la bzhag par gsungs te| rgyas par *theg
mchog mdzod* kyi bar do'i rim khang na gsal lags|

[9] dgu par| sems can sum stong la rig pa bcug pas grol zhes pa 'di bar srid dang rang
bzhin bar do'i sems can gang lags| rdzogs chen la sbyang ba yod med thams cad lags
sam| grangs sum stong 'di la gab sbas yod dam med ces par|

dbang gnyis kyi 'jug pa la dbang thob pa'i skabs su sems can sum stong rig pa gtab
pas grol bar mdzad ces gsungs pa 'di'i thad nas dris par snang ste| de ni kha cig tu
bar do'i sems can zhes bshad pa rang bzhin bar do la dgongs zhes gsungs yod snang
shar| de dag rdzogs chen la sbyangs pa'i sems can yin min mi gsal yang sngon gyi
'brel ba yod pa re dgos sam snyam| sum stong gi grangs la gab don med pa 'dra| 'di
rigs gzhung nas gsungs pa de ka'i rjes su 'brangs pa ma gtogs grangs de ltar nges
pa'i rgyu [569] mtshan sogs bshad mi nus pa 'dra ste| rgyal sras sa dang po pa'i yon
tan brgya phrag bcu gnyis thob par gsungs pa sogs kyang tshul de 'dra red lags|

[10] bcu par| bar dor gnad gsum gyis grol ba rnam la thim lugs brgyad kyis cig char
du thim pa dang| ngo ma shes nas 'khrul pa la thim lugs brgyad kas nang dbyings su
gzhi snang thim rung 'khor ba ltar thim pa la bag chags goms shugs che bas 'khrul
pa lags sam zhes par|

gzhi snang grol stobs kyis thim pa dang 'khrul stobs kyi thim pa gnyis las phyi ma'i
skabs 'dir sems can tha mal pa rnam la chos nyid bar do'i gzhi snang skar mda'
rgyug pa'i yun tsam las mi 'char zhing shar ba dang thim pa gnyis ka ngos mi zin
mod| 'on kyang thog med nas bag chags goms shugs kyis ma dag 'khor ba'i sgo ltar
shar ba'i lag rjes stobs su gyur nas bar do dang skye ba'i 'khor ba mched pa ni los
yin snyam|

[11] bcu gcig par| ye shes bzhi sbyor skabs ye shes gsum po'i lam snang la grol ba
de phrin las rtsal ma rdzogs pas yon tan la mchog dman 'byung ngam| ye shes lhun
grub rin po che'i ssubs la thim pa'i lam snang la phrin las kyi rtsal rdzogs pa e yin
gsungs par|

chos dbyings me long mnyam nyid sor rtog ste ye ^[570] shes bzhi sbyor gyi snang ba
zhes zer dgos pas ye shes gsum zhes pa ni yi ge cung ma dag| bya grub ye shes kyi
rtsal rdzogs pa ni ka dag tu grol dus kho na yin par gsungs te| de'i dus su rtsal rdzogs
zin pas yon tan la mchog dman 'byung don ma mchis pa lags|

[12] bcu gnyis pa| bsam gzugs kyi ting 'dzin 'grub phyir a bzhi brtsegs sogs sgom
par gsungs pa 'di'i sgom tshul ji lta bu yin zhes par|

thod rgal gyi gzigs stangs dang bstun| 'jam rlung cung zad bzung ste a'i don skye
med dang| skye med ces pa rang sems kyi dbyings gdal khyab chen por shes pa'i
ngang nas nam mkha' la mig gtad pa'i sar a dmar po lnga brtsegs bsgoms nas rig pa
ma yeng bar⁷⁸¹ gtad pas dmigs med du cham gyis 'gro bas de'i ngang la mnyam par
bzhag| a dkar po bzhi brtsegs sogs lhag ma rnam la'ang de ka rigs⁷⁸² 'gre sbyar bas
'grub|

[13] bcu gsum pa| ye shes kyi 'od rtsa shel sbubs can 'di rdzogs chen lugs kyi dbu
ma mthar thug lags sam| mig gnyis la zug pa 'di rtsa de gnyis su gyes pa lags sam
sogs gsungs par|

de ka ltar yin mchi snyam pa'i 'al 'ol tsam las dpe cha blta ma thub pas *theg mchog
mdzod* gzigs par zhu|

[14] bcu bzhi pa| 'chi dus srog rtsa nas khrag thigs gsum snying khar ^[571] brgyab pas
soms rig 'brel thag chad nas rig pa mig nas thon ces pa'i mig 'di dbang rten rags pa
la byed dam zhes par|

de dbang rten rags pa tsam la mi byed kyi der zug pa'i 'od rtsa rgyang zhags chu'i
sgron ma la byed pa yin te| 'di'i rten 'brel gyis chos nyid bar do'i snang ba 'char ba
lags|

[15] bco lnga pa| snga 'gyur gyi man ngag las rtsa ro ma dkar rkyang ma dmar zhes
par| g.yas gzung ba'i rlab| g.yon 'dzin pa'i rlab ces sbyor chog gam gsungs par chog

⁷⁸¹ JTNd *par*

⁷⁸² Added based on JTNd and JTNs. JTNg omits *de ka rigs*

pa 'dra snyam|

[16] bcu drug pa| klong snying bar do'i smon lam las dmar lam sngon du 'char bar
bshad pa'i gnad ci lags gsungs par|

*sku gsum zhing khams sbyong ba'i smon lam las snang ba gsum gyi rtags snang
dmar dkar nag gsum gyi rim pas sbyar ba de la dgongs par mngon mod| bar do'i
smon lam dgongs gcig rgya mtsho dang| rtsa rlung rig 'dzin 'khrul 'khor| rnam
mkhyen shing rta'i gong 'ong sogs kun tu dkar dmar nag gsum gyi rim pa spyi 'gros
ltar kun mkhyen nyid kyis bshad 'dug pas snga ma'i de yi ge 'khrugs pa'i dpe skyon
min pa'i nges pa'ang mi 'dug snyam|*

[17] bcu bdun pa| thig le stong sgron gyi ra bar rig pa lug rgyud tshud thabs khregs
chod la brtan pa thob nas rig pa rlung sems kyis mi ^[572] spur ba dang| gnad gsum
gzigs stangs sogs kyis gcun nas brtson 'grus kyis sbyangs pa las gzhan pa'i man
ngag cang e bzhugs gsungs par|

stong sgron gyi phyi rol du lu gu rgyud shar ba de blta stangs kyis stong sgron de
ka'i dbus su rim gyis khrid nas de nyid las rig pa gzhan du mi g.yo bar mdung tshugs
su gtad de sgom pa kho na gnad kyis gtso bo yin la| lus ngag gi gnad gcun pa sogs
de'i yan lag tu dgos pa lags|

[18] bco brgyad pa| gnyug ma'am tha mal gyi shes pa zer ba 'di sems kyis rang bzhin
dus gsum gyi rtog pas ma bslad pa'i rang byung gi ye shes de lags sam| 'on kyang
tha mal dang shes pa zer don ci lags gsungs par|

gnyug sems mdzu gu btsug sa phyag bris 'dir 'khod de ka ltar yin pa gzhir bcas
kyang don 'di ni rnal 'byor bla med kyis rgyud sde rgya mtsho'i brjod bya 'gang che
shos yin pas rgya mtsho ltar zab cing rgya che ba'i gtam gyi gzhir⁷⁸³ nges| de la sems
kyi rdo rje dang 'od gsal dang rang bzhin lhan skyes sogs kyis tha snyad ni bla med
spyi la grags shing| tha mal gyi shes pa zhes pa ni sgos su rdzogs chen pa la grags
par snang| de'ang *gso rig 'grel pa zla zer* du glal ba dang sbrid pa sogs kyis shugs mi

⁷⁸³ JTNd *bzhir*

dgag pa la sogs pa'i kun spyod bshad skabs| tha mal par gnas pa la [573] nad mi
 'byung ba'i phyir zhes rang babs su gnas pa la tha mal par gnas pa'i tha snyad brjod
 pa ltar gnyug ma'i rang 'gros la spangs blang dgag sgrub sogs kyi bzo bcos ma song
 ba'i rang babs de la tha mal pa zhes brjod pa lags| rdzogs chen skor nas 'di mang du
 smos⁷⁸⁴ pa'i rgyu mtshan yang rdzogs rim gzhan ltar rtsa rlung thig le'i sems 'dzin
 sogs⁷⁸⁵ kyis gnyug sems la bde nyams dang mi rtog pa'i nyams sogs dbyung thabs
 mi 'dra ba mang po byas nas ye shes 'char tshul dang mi 'dra bar da lta kun rtog rang
 dga'⁷⁸⁶ ma'i steng na ye grol bsal bzhag las 'das pa'i rig pa zang thal rjen par bzhugs
 pa de ka sor bzhag byas⁷⁸⁷ nas ngo sprod pa dang sgom pa la dgongs te| rtsol bral gyi
 theg pa zhes rgya cher bsngags pa'i gnad kyang 'di la yod pa lags|

shes pa zer don ni de 'dra'i rig pa de'i ngo bo bem chos dang bem stong sogs yin pa
 bcad nas shes rig gi char gyur pa yin par go ched tha snyad sbyar ba ste go sla|

[19] bcu dgu pa| mtshan med rig stong zung 'jug gi nyams len skyong dus rtog pa ci
 shar yang shar grol ris med dang| de yang grol lugs gsum gang rung lags kyang 'og
 'gyu shin tu phra mo grangs med pa yeng ba mi tshor ba zhig 'byung 'dug pa| de la
 ngang gnas chos nyid rang 'byung gi dran pa'i rgyun yang yang brten pa de kas
 'khrul rtog rgya 'byams [574] chod dam mi chod ces par|

rig thog tu mnyam par bzhag rtsis byas rung ci zhig nas kun gzhi lung ma bstan gyis
 mgo bskor nas sems gnas lteng po had de ba dang thom me ba'i ngang la lus te 'og
 'gyu shar ba mi tshor ba zhig 'byung ba ni mnyam bzhag rang sa ma zin pa yin pas
 ci tsam goms yang 'khrul rtog gi bag chags bzlog mi nus la| de lta min par rnam rtog
 gi 'char sgo bzang ngan thams cad la bdag gnyer mi sprod par 'char gzhi'i rig pa
 zang thal gyi ngo bo kho na'i steng du rang sa bzung| yang dang yang du rig cha de
 nyid hur bton| rjen la phyungs te| chig chod du bskyangs pas rtog pa phra rags ci
 tsam zur du shar yang byung tshor gyi rtsis gdab mi 'byung ba ni yengs⁷⁸⁸ nas mi
 tshor ba min gyi rtsal gyi rtog pas mi 'phrog pa'am mi g.yeng tshul yin pas grol lugs
 gsum pa khang stong du rkun ma zhugs pa'i dpes bstan pa'ang de ka yin| de'i ngang

⁷⁸⁴ JTNs *smros*

⁷⁸⁵ JTNg omits 'dzin sogs. Added based on JTNd and JTNs.

⁷⁸⁶ JTNs 'ga'

⁷⁸⁷ JTNs *byos*

⁷⁸⁸ JTNd *yeng*

la ji ltar goms pa de ltar rnam rtog tha mal pa'i rtsal lam shugs chad cing rnam par mi rtog pa'i rig pa rtsal je rdzogs la song nas stong pa'i dbyings su rig pa'i mdung skor byed pa de 'byung| chos nyid rang byung gi dran pa dngos ni gnyug sems rang gi char gyur pa'i ye babs kyi dran pa kho na yin la| smos⁷⁸⁹ ma thag pa ltar rig pa rtsal thog na gnas dus yeng ma yeng gi so mtshams 'dzin pa'i shes rab 'dren byed kyi [575] dran pa de yang chos nyid kyi dran pa rjes mthun tsam du 'gyur bar mngon lags|

[20] nyi shu pa| shes nyams dang mthar 'gyur gyi nyams gnyis gcig yin nam min| brtan mi brtan gyis snang shes nyams so sor 'byed pa lags sam| de ltar na bla med rgyud⁷⁹⁰ sde gzhan gyi stong gzugs kyang brtan pa srid na rdzogs chen gyi snang nyams dang khyad par ci lags zhes⁷⁹¹ gsungs par|

shes nyams dang snang nyams dang mthar 'gyur gyi nyams gsum las dang po ni bde gsal mi rtog sogs| gnyis pa ni dbyings sgron rma bya'i mdongs lta bu dang stong sgron ko mo'i chu la rdo bor ba lta bu sogs| gsum pa ni rig mdangs⁷⁹² las gzhan pa'i zla nyi 'ja' tshon 'dra ba sogs rlung rtags kyi snang ba rnam te de rnam gcig tu 'dod mi btub| rgyud sde gzhan nas bshad pa'i stong gzugs dang rdzogs chen thod rgal ba'i snang nyams gnyis stong gzugs yin pa tsam du 'dra zhing goms 'dris song rim bzhin gsal brtan⁷⁹³ je cher 'gro ba tsam du'ang 'dra mod kyi rlung gdangs dang rig gdangs kyi khyad par las dwangs cha| gsal cha| brtan cha sogs la phan tshun mi 'dra ba'i khyad che bar *theg mchog mdzod* las gsungs te| bu ram 'o ma sha kha ra rnam kyi ro mngar ba tsam du 'dra yang phan tshun khyad par che mod de dag gi khyad par 'di lta bu zhes [576] lces myang na shes pa ma gtogs dbyangs can mas kyang brjod mi nus zhes slob dpon danḍis gsungs pa ltar ro| |

[21] nyer gcig pa| sems kyi gsal stong zung 'jug dang| de las byung ba'i nyams bde gsal mi rtog dang| sems las 'das pa'i rig pa gsal stong zung 'jug dang de'i bde gsal mi rtog gi khyad par 'di rdzogs chen man ngag sde dang 'og ma'i khyad par phye zer na rung ngam gsungs par|

⁷⁸⁹ JTNs *smros*

⁷⁹⁰ JTNs *rgyu*

⁷⁹¹ JTND *ces*

⁷⁹² JTND, JTNs *gdangs*

⁷⁹³ JTND *brten*

sems gsal stong zung 'jug dang| de'i char gyur pa'i bde gsal mi rtog tsam gyis phyi nang thun mong gi zhi gnas las kyang 'phags mi nus la| rdzogs chen sems klong man ngag gi sde gsum gang yang spyir theg chen de las gsang sngags| de'i nang nas rnal 'byor bla med| de las kyang rdzogs rim gyi rnal 'byor ches zab pa yin pas de ltar bzhag mi rung bar go lags|

[22] nyer gnyis pa| rdzogs chen la gsum du dbye skabs ma hā yo ga sems sde| a nu klong sde| a ti man ngag sde zhes bzhag e rung zhes par|

de ltar bzhag kyang 'gal tshab ha cang che ba ma mthong rung *rgyud 'grel phyogs bcu mun sel* las gsungs pa'i babs la brtags na *sgyu 'phrul gsang snying* gi lam rim dang rdzogs chen khregs chod dang thod rgal dang gsum po a ti'i ma hā sogs gsum du mdzad pa 'dra ba cig snang ste 'di la da dung shin tu brtags dgos par ^[577] 'dug lags|

[23] nyer gsum pa| rdzogs chen sgom pa'i rnal 'byor pa bar do snga ma gsum gang rung la grol na de'i dus nyid du gdod ma'i dbyings su mngon par byang chub pa dang| srid pa bar dor grol na rang bzhin sprul pa'i zhing du skyes nas gzod 'tshang rgya ba lags sam zhes pa ni| ji ltar phyag bris su gnang ba de kho na ltar lags|

[24] nyer bzhi pa| gsang ba sgyu 'phrul pa'i lhag pa'i bden gnyis dbyer med skabs| kun rdzob tu yang bden gnyis dbyer med pa'i bsam spyod khyad par can gyis zin pas dag pa rdo rje dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor du blta ba dang| don dam dkor bdun ye nas lhun gyis grub pa'i bzhugs tshul de la thun mong gi mnyam gnyis las lhag pa'i bden gnyis dbyer med chos sku chen po zhes go ba de 'dra zhig e red ces bka' stsal bar⁷⁹⁴|

de los yin yang lhag pa kun rdzob bden pa 'di'i 'jog lugs zhib tu snang ba lhar sgrub tshul gyi skor rnam las rgyas par mkhyen dgos shing| don dam dkor bdun gyi go don rtsa ba gnyug sems rgyas par gtan la phab⁷⁹⁵ pa la rag las kyang rgyud 'grel rnam la gzigs pas khyab kyi yi ge ha cang mang bas 'jigs pas spros pa bskyungs pa lags|

⁷⁹⁴ JTNd *par*

⁷⁹⁵ JTNd *phebs*

de dag gis ni ji ltar bka' 'dris gnang ba rnams kyi lan⁷⁹⁶ ha lam tsam re zhus zin to||

spyir ^[578] deng sang bskal pa snyigs ma'i mthar slebs shing⁷⁹⁷ thub pa'i bstan pa mar
'grib pas skye bo rnams dam pa'i chos la mos pa chung zhing| lhag par theg mchog
rdo rje rtse mo'i bshad sgrub bsod nams dang skal pas 'chun pa srid mtha' ma khegs
tsam du song ba'i dus 'dir| 'di tsam zhib gleng ba'i go skabs rnyed pa'ang skal pa
bzang bar shes nas byis pas mi rgan gyi lad mo ltar bzlas pa ma gtogs rdo rje'i gnas
zab mo rnams bdag 'dra bas bshad par ga la nus| bka' 'dri 'di dag la bltas na de kar
rdzogs chen snying thig gi phyogs la gzigs rtog mang du mdzad kyi⁷⁹⁸ yod 'dra
snyam nas kha tsam min par yi rang chen po skyes shing da dung yang| sems rig
rnam 'byed spyi'i go don dang| rig pa bcar phog tu ngos 'dzin tshul| de kho nas shor
gol nor gsum gyi 'phrang thams cad chig chod byed tshul| rig pa rkyang 'ded byas
nas gdams ngag gzhan gyi shan ma zhugs par skyong tshul| de la mdo rgyud 'og ma
rnams nas bshad pa'i lam gyi gnad mtha' dag yar ldan du rdzogs tshul| der ma zad
theg pa 'og ma gang dang yang mi 'dra ba'i khyad par 'phags chos nges 'drong rgya
cher yod tshul sogs gsal zhing rno la mtha' chod pa kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po
dri med 'od zer zhal dngos su bzhugs pa dang 'dra bar ^[579] ston pa *chos dbyings*
mdzod 'grel lung gi gter mdzod yin pas de nyid la yang yang gzigs dgos| yang yang
gzigs na je zhib je nges| tshim pa med par blta snying 'dod pa 'byung| lan re zung
gzigs pa tsam gyis rtsing hrob be ba las mi 'ong| de nas khregs chod thod rgal gnyis
ka'i mtha' gcod rgya che zhing 'byams klas par gtan la 'bebs pa *theg mchog mdzod*
yin pas de yang yang⁷⁹⁹ gzigs pa gnad che| *sems nyid ngal gso'i 'grel pa shing rta*
chen po dang| yon tan mdzod rtsa 'grel gyi steng nas bstan pa spyi'i sgrom 'tshol
ba'ang med mi rung du gal che snyam pa bcas mdzes lam du ma song ba'i nang bcar
gyi zhu ba lags|

zhes 'jam dbyangs rdo rje 'chang chen po'i bran gyi tha shal du gtogs pa sprang rgan
bstan pa'i nyi mas gsol ba dge bar gyur cig||

⁷⁹⁶ JTNd, JTNs *lan*; JTNg *len*.

⁷⁹⁷ JTNd *cing*

⁷⁹⁸ JTNd *gi*

⁷⁹⁹ JTNs omits *yang*

Questions and Answers on the Great Perfection

Namo guru!

Although it is difficult for the likes of me, so deficient in intellect, to respond accurately to the several questions on the Great Perfection that you, noble lord, recently wrote and passed on to me, still I offer the following hasty, partial answers.

1. We can understand from the works of the Great Perfection that there is a ground of liberation—one of two aspects of the ground itself, which is divided into a ground of delusion ('khrul gzhi) and a ground of liberation (grol gzhi). To claim that the ground of delusion is spontaneously present in the ground of liberation would be tantamount to asserting that the ground is flawed. So, is the ground of delusion temporary or not?

The great Brahmin [i.e., Saraha] said:

Mind-as-such alone is the seed of all,
Wherein conditioned existence and nirvāṇa arise.

As this indicates, if the genuine mind of clear light alone is not recognized, then it is the ground of delusion; whereas if it is recognized and stability is attained, it becomes the source of liberation. As the former corresponds to the phase of the ground and the latter to the phase of fruition, the great omniscient one [i.e. Klong-chen rab-'byams] refuted claims that these two are identical. At the ground stage, every time we die, the clear light dawns in its entirety, but, through our failure to recognize it, we revert to the flow of deluded, dualistic grasping. By contrast, when we arrive at the state of liberation, there can be no turning back, because the stronghold has been seized directly. This is the difference.

At the ground stage, we do not recognize our own essence, [564] so the ground of delusion is set in place through speculation about the spontaneous expressions arising through confusion. We can see that this is not the inherent condition of the genuine nature of clear light itself. If it were, then the more we recognized the essence or perfected its strength, the more the deluded experiences of saṃsāric existence would increase. We do not assert, therefore, that the basis of delusion and the ground of liberation are the same, nor do we accept that the clear light of the

ground, which is believed to be the basis for delusion, is a temporary phenomenon. It seems to me that such views would be like attempts to draw a sharp distinction between primordial purity and spontaneous presence.

2. If delusion is not present in the ground itself but involves clinging to its expressions—the manifestations of the ground—as good or bad, does the combination of wind energy and mind, which is the one who is deluded, exist separately?

The clear light of the ground never develops into the essence of delusion; it could not possibly do so, which is why it is described as primordially liberated (*ye grol*), utterly pure from the beginning (*gdod nas rnam dag*), alpha pure (*ka dag*), and so on. But then we cannot say that the wind energy and mind, which has begun to cling to ground appearances, is undeluded. Therefore, we must say that these two are not identical and are distinct. Still, as was said by the awareness holders of the past, although delusion is not clear light, there would be no delusion were it not for clear light. In view of this, I wonder if we should not assert that delusion is of the same nature or essence as clear light but differs in substance.

3. When there is delusion about dharmakāya, wisdom, and pure awareness, they turn into the ground-of-all, ordinary consciousness, [565] and ordinary mind. The former three are said to be beyond bondage and liberation and lacking in any concrete identity—being limitless and free from partiality or bias—yet capable of taking on any form, as shown through the analogy of a mirror in which various reflections can arise. So, what is the key to the arising of sentient beings for whom saṃsāra does not merely appear, but who are bound through deluded attachment?

When we speak of “the stirring of ground appearance from the ground” (*gzhi las gzhi snang du g.yos*), ground appearance does not refer only to visionary appearances such as buddha forms (*sku*), lights (*'od*), and light spheres (*thig le*). It also refers to all that unfolds through the outward radiance of compassionate energy’s awareness. Through this expression or force, just as tarnish (*g.ya'*) appears on gold or algae (*nya lcibs*) develops in water, an adventitious form of consciousness develops in which objects appear to be distinct from the perceiving subject. When

this first develops in a subtle form, it is termed ground-of-all (*kun gzhi*). Then, as wind energy and mind become coarser, the six senses and the defiled mind emerge. The major works of the Great Perfection discuss this process in detail when describing how sentient beings fail to realize the ground and become deluded.

Therefore, since actual pure awareness is primordially pure, it does not develop the features of reifying attachment. Rather, it is the coarser states of mind, which arise out of this pure awareness, that develop into the reifying attachment of ordinary beings. From this, it is easy to understand the subsequent stages of the process and the development of compositional karma (*'du byed kyi las*), sentient beings, and the various realms of sentient beings.

4. Do the dissolution phases of appearance, increase, and attainment arise during the first bardo⁸⁰⁰ of dying [566] for those who are strong in the practices of “blending the three spaces” and transference?

I think the phases of dissolution must arise in any such instance. Liberation through entering the sphere of clear light is for those who attain stability during the clear light of death, and that clear light must be preceded by the occurrence of the dissolution phase. Then there are those who are liberated through the ejection and transference of consciousness and who are transported to a pure realm once consciousness has left the body. In such cases, the departure of consciousness occurs only after the clear light of death, which itself occurs after the dissolution process.

5. What is the difference between the phase of consciousness dissolving into appearance (and the rest) and the phase of consciousness dissolving into space?

If the dissolution of consciousness into space is further subdivided, it consists of the dissolution of consciousness into appearance, then of appearance (*snang*) into increase (*mched*), and so on, so they are essentially the same.

⁸⁰⁰ I have left the Tibetan term *bar do* untranslated here, because, although it is not yet included in the OED, it is widely understood. This is partly due to the popularity of the *Bar do thos grol*, but also, more recently, through the 2017 Booker-prize winning novel *Lincoln in the Bardo* by George Saunders (London & New York, Bloomsbury, 2017). I occasionally adopt the translation “intermediate state”, although this is far from satisfactory and obviously lacks the religio-cultural specificity of *bardo*.

6. *Is there any instruction on the hidden significance of forcefully interrupting the phase of the dissolution of sperm, egg, and wind energy?*

The dissolution phases of appearance, increase, and attainment all relate exclusively to the phase of the dissolution of wind energy. Apparently, there are different explanations for the phases of dissolution relating to sperm, egg, and wind energy. In any case, [567] those who attain enlightenment in this lifetime are far beyond the conventions of birth, death, and the bardo state. This is indicated by the way in which all the ordinary aggregates and elements—of which sperm, egg, and wind energy are most important—dissolve into the natural radiance of the sphere of clear light, the youthful vase body. For others, there is no *bardo* unless the aggregates and elements of this life, whether gross or subtle, dissolve entirely within the sphere of clear light. The visions of whiteness, redness, and blackness and so on are also signs of the dissolution of the subtle elements. We might indeed wonder then whether there is not a separate instruction. There is seemingly a variation in the degree to which the signs of dissolution are apparent based on differences in the individual.

7. *Do the eight modes of arising and eight modes of dissolution occur for those liberated during the bardo of dying?*

No, they do not. These modes of arising occur after the bardo of dying: they are modes of arising during the bardo of *dharmatā* and take place only after the earlier state has concluded.

8. *Why is it said that in the bardo of dharmatā the peaceful forms do not act directly for the welfare of others, while the wrathful forms do?*

This means that if we recognize the radiance of awareness when it arises as the peaceful forms from its base in our hearts, then, without any opportunity for acting directly to benefit others, they are absorbed directly into all-pervading space. [568] Then, when the wrathful ones appear from the skull palace, they remain for several instants, acting for the welfare of others. Here, the “others” (*gzhan*) referred to in the phrase “acting (or not acting) for the welfare of others” (*gzhan don byed*) does not signify separate beings to be trained, distinct from our own continuum. Rather, it

means that these forms act on behalf of the dreamlike beings of the six classes who are spontaneously present, empty forms. This is explained in more detail in the section on the bardos in *Theg mchog mdzod*.

9. It is said that “directing awareness toward three thousand sentient beings causes them to be liberated.” Does this refer to beings in the intermediate state or those in the natural bardo of this life? Would they all have previously trained in the Great Perfection? And is there any hidden significance to the figure of three thousand?

This question seems to be a reference to the following statement about the attainment of power over animation (*'jug pa la dbang*), which is one of the two forms of power: “Directing pure awareness causes three thousand beings to be liberated.”⁸⁰¹ Some say that sentient beings of the bardo can mean beings of the natural bardo of this life. Although it is not clear whether they are sentient beings who have trained previously in the Great Perfection, I think they must have some past connection. There appears to be no hidden significance to the figure of three thousand. Although such statements appear in the texts, we can only take them literally; [569] we cannot explain the reason behind the numbers that are given—just as with statements about the bodhisattvas gaining twelve sets of one hundred qualities upon reaching the first bodhisattva stage (*bhūmi*),⁸⁰² and so on.

10. Is it true that for those who are liberated in the bardo through the three crucial points, the eight modes of dissolution occur all at once, whereas for those who are deluded through lack of recognition, delusion continues because although the ground appearances could dissolve into inner space through the eight modes of

⁸⁰¹ In *Thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza' skar*, Klong-chen rab-'byams explains the two powers as follows: “‘Power over creation’ (*skye ba la dbang*) refers to the instantaneous display of emanations to guide beings in appropriate ways. It is the capacity to liberate three thousand beings in an instant by directing one’s pure awareness at them. ‘Power over animation’ is the capacity to move material objects and cause them to speak by directing pure awareness toward them. One thereby guides beings by producing the sound of the Dharma from lotuses, wish-granting trees, and so on, and through miracles and emanating light.” (KLR vol. 9: 275.2f.).

⁸⁰² According to rDza dPal-sprul the twelve sets of one hundred qualities (*yon tan brgya phrag bcu gnyis*) attained during the first *bhūmi* are: 1) enter into and arise from one hundred *samādhi* meditations in a single instant, 2) see one hundred buddhas face to face, and receive their blessings, 3) travel to one hundred buddha realms, 4) cause one hundred world systems to shake, 5) illuminate one hundred world systems, 6) bring one hundred beings to complete maturity, 7) manifest in one hundred aeons in a single instant, 8) know one hundred aeons in the past and 9) one hundred aeons in the future, 10) open one hundred doors to the Dharma, 11) manifest one hundred emanations, and 12) for each of these bodies, manifest one hundred attendants. See PS vol. 4: 180.

dissolution (thim lugs brgyad), the habitual tendency for dissolution into saṃsāra is much stronger?

Dissolution can occur either through the strength of the liberation of the ground appearances or on the strength of delusion. Taking the second option, ordinary sentient beings will experience the arising of the ground appearances during the bardo of dharmatā for no longer than the duration of a shooting star. They will not recognize either their arising or their dissolution. Nevertheless, it is still true that through their habitual tendencies, the “arising as the impure saṃsāric gateway” (*ma dag 'khor ba'i sgo ltar shar ba*) has left the strongest impression, as a result of which saṃsāra continues to unfold with the bardos and with taking birth.

11. When there is fourfold wisdom, is there a disparity in enlightened qualities because liberation in the path experience of threefold wisdom does not perfect the strength of activity? Or is the strength of activity perfected in the path experience of the dissolution within the precious sphere of spontaneously present wisdom?

In fact, we must refer to an experience of *fourfold* wisdom (meaning [the wisdom of] *dharmadhātu*, mirror-like [wisdom], [wisdom of] equality, and [wisdom of] discernment), [570] so it is slightly incorrect to refer to threefold wisdom. The perfection of the strength of all-accomplishing wisdom is said to occur only at the occasion of liberation into primordial purity. When this happens, the strength is already perfected, so it is meaningless to speak of this bringing about an emergence of greater or lesser qualities.

12. It is said that to accomplish the concentrations and formless absorptions we should meditate on the four tiered A syllables and so on, but how is the meditation done?

The gaze should be as in Thod-rgal practice. Hold some gentle breathing for a while. Then, since A signifies the unborn, recognize that the unborn is the great all-pervading sphere of your own mind, and direct your gaze into space. There, visualize five red A syllables, one on top of another. And, by focusing your awareness undistractedly, allow it to transcend any referential focus, then settle evenly into that

experience. The same applies for the remaining practices: the one with a stack of four white A syllables, and so on.

13. Is the hollow crystal light channel of wisdom the ultimate form of the central channel (avadhūti) in the rDzogs-chen tradition? Is it split in two as it extends to the two eyes?

I have the impression that it is just like that, but I recommend that you consult *Theg mchog mdzod*, as I cannot look at the text myself.

14. It is said that at death three drops of blood from the vital channel gather in the heart, [571] causing a separation of mind and pure awareness, after which awareness departs through the eyes. Is this referring to the coarse visual faculty?

This refers not to the coarse faculty support but to the light channel—the far-reaching lasso of the water lamp (*rgyang zhags chu'i sgron ma*)—which is connected to the eyes. It is this interdependent circumstance that allows the visions of the bardo of dharmatā to arise.

15. In the pith instructions of the Ancient Translations, it is said that the right channel (rasanā) is white and the left channel (lalanā) is red. Can we say that the right is the potential⁸⁰³ for the grasped (or perceived) and the left is the potential for the grasper (or perceiver)?

Yes, I think that would be fine.

16. What is the significance of the explanation in the bardo aspiration prayer of the Klong chen snying thig that the experience of redness (dmar lam) arises earlier [i.e., before the experience of whiteness (dkar lam)]?

It does indeed appear as if the sequence of the three symbolic experiences as redness, whiteness, and blackness is the vision of *sKu gsum zhing khams sbyong ba'i smon*

⁸⁰³ The translation of *rlab* as “potential” here is tentative. Both A-lags gZan-dkar and Tulku Thondup Rinpoche supported this reading while also expressing uncertainty as to the precise meaning.

lam.⁸⁰⁴ Still, in other works, such as the bardo aspiration prayer *dGongs gcig rgya mtsho*,⁸⁰⁵ *rTsa rlung rig 'dzin 'khrul 'khor*,⁸⁰⁶ and the earlier and later sections of *rNam mkhyen shing rta*,⁸⁰⁷ the omniscient 'Jigs-med gling-pa describes the usual sequence of whiteness, redness, and blackness. I wonder, therefore, whether we can be certain that the earlier text is not corrupted by scribal error.

17. In the method for bringing the chains of awareness within the enclosure of the lamp of empty spheres, [572] are there any other instructions besides training with diligence and applying the three crucial points, the gazes and so on, having gained stability in Khregs-chod, so that awareness is not disrupted by wind energy and mind?

The most crucial point for meditation is to gradually bring the chains of awareness that arise outside the empty lamps into the centre of those empty lamps by means of the gaze, and then not to allow that awareness to stray elsewhere but to plant it like a spear. As a support for this, you also need to apply the crucial points of body and speech, and so on.

18. Is what we call genuine (gnyug ma) or ordinary consciousness (tha mal gyi shes pa) the nature of the mind, the self-arising wisdom that is untainted by thoughts associated with the past, present, and future? In any case, what is meant by “ordinary” (tha mal) and “consciousness” (shes pa) here?

The term *genuine mind* (*gnyug sems*) refers to exactly what you have written. Yet, as this is the most important point among all the ocean-like statements in Highest Yoga Tantra, it is, like the ocean itself, decidedly vast and profound. Terms such as *vajra of the mind* (*sems kyi rdo rje*), *clear light* (*'od gsal*), and *natural and co-emergent* (*rang bzhin lhan skyes*) are more common in the Highest Yoga class, while *ordinary consciousness* appears to be particularly prevalent in rDzogs-chen.

⁸⁰⁴ KNT vol. 2: 463–468.

⁸⁰⁵ KNT vol. 2: 469–479.

⁸⁰⁶ *Rig 'dzin 'khrul 'khor sbas don gsal ba*. KNT vol. 3: 37–52.

⁸⁰⁷ *Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod las 'bras bu'i theg pa'i rgya cher 'grel rnam mkhyen shing rta*. JLD vol. 2: 1–879.

The section on general conduct in the *Zla zer* commentary⁸⁰⁸ on medicine states that the force of a yawn, a sneeze, and so on, should not be blocked, and that to remain ordinary, in this way, prevents ill health. The text uses the expression “remain ordinary” (*tha mal par gnas pa*) [573] in the sense of remaining naturally (*rang babs su gnas pa*). In a similar way, the word *ordinary* can refer to the genuine state, left naturally as it is, without any contrivance or adjustment through abandoning or adopting, elimination or cultivation. The reason the term is used so frequently in a rDzogs-chen context is that this differs from other means of bringing about the dawn of wisdom. Other perfection-stage systems employ various methods to generate a feeling of bliss or an experience of non-conceptuality, such as focusing the mind on the channels, wind energies, and drops. But here, by contrast, the introduction and meditation are effected directly upon our everyday state of conceptualization, by leaving the mind as it is, in a state of naked, all-penetrating awareness, primordially free and beyond any notion of anything to be eliminated or preserved. This is also the key to why this approach is praised so extensively as the effortless vehicle.

The sense of consciousness here is that the essence of awareness is unlike inanimate matter (*bem chos*) or some lifeless vacuity (*bem stong*), insofar as it has a quality of cognizance or awareness (*shes rig*). This is easy to understand.

19. When we sustain the non-conceptual practice of the union of awareness and emptiness, any rising thoughts are freed upon arising, impartially. And yet, with all three modes of liberation, distraction can still occur, undetected, through our innumerable extremely subtle “undercurrent” (’og ’gyu) thoughts. Can we put a stop to this diffuse form of delusive thought [574] through continual reliance upon the flow of natural, self-arisen mindfulness as we abide in an experience of the natural state?

Even though we might settle evenly in what we take to be a state of awareness, at some point we will be deceived by the indeterminate ground-of-all. When this happens, we will find ourselves in a stagnant state of mental stillness, a blankness

⁸⁰⁸ *Padārthacandrikāprabhāsanāmāṣṭāṅgahrdayavivṛti* (*Yan lag brgyad pa’i snying po’i rnam par ’grel pa tshig gi don gyi zla zer*) by Candranandana is a major commentary on *Aṣṭāṅgahrdaya* (*Yan lag brgyad pa’i snying po*). *sDe dge bstan ’gyur* vol. 200: 1–591.

(*had de ba*) or oblivion (*thom me ba*), in which we do not notice the undercurrent of thoughts. At this stage, meditative equipoise is not yet secure, so no matter how familiar we are with the practice, we are unable to counteract the habitual tendencies of delusive thought. Rather than trying to control all the various good and bad thoughts as they arise, we should hold to the very essence of unimpeded awareness, which is the basis of such arising. We must sharpen and intensify this quality of awareness, again and again. By laying bare this awareness and sustaining it and it alone, we will not be tempted to evaluate any subtle or coarse thoughts that may arise. This does not mean that we are distracted and fail to notice what arises, but that we are no longer captivated by or distracted by expressive thoughts. This corresponds to the third mode of liberation, which is compared to a thief entering an empty house. The more familiar we become with this experience, the more the expressive power or strength of ordinary conceptual thoughts will be cut through and the strength of non-conceptual awareness perfected. And with this, as it is said, the spear of awareness will circle within the sphere of emptiness. Actual self-arising, natural mindfulness is nothing other than the capacity for remembrance that is a timeless quality of genuine mind itself. It should be clear from what has just been said that the mindfulness that maintains a boundary between distraction and non-distraction while remaining in the expressive power of awareness [575] is merely an approximation of true, natural mindfulness.

20. Are cognitive experiences the same as “complete experiences”? Is the distinction between visionary and cognitive experiences a matter of whether there is stability? If so, then if the empty forms described in other Highest Yoga tantras were stable, how would they differ from the visionary experiences spoken of in rDzogs-chen?

When we speak of the three types of experience—cognitive experiences (*shes nyams*), visionary experiences (*snang nyams*), and complete (*mthar 'gyur gyi nyams*)—the first refers to experiences of bliss, clarity, and absence of thought and so on. The second type includes the lamp of absolute space (*dbyings sgron*), which is compared to the fan of a peacock’s feathers, and the lamp of empty spheres (*stong sgron*), which are like the rippling circles from a stone cast into a pond. The third type includes experiences that are signs of wind energy, such as those compared to

the sun, the moon, and a rainbow, which appear to be distinct from the radiance of awareness. Therefore, we cannot claim that these various experiences are the same.

The empty forms described in other classes of tantra are like the visionary experiences of the rDzogs-chen practice of Thod-rgal only in the sense that both are empty forms. It is true, however, that they are also similar in that both grow progressively clearer and more stable with increased familiarity. But, as *Theg mchog mdzod* explains, there is a great difference in their aspects of brightness or their aspects of clarity and stability. While one is a manifestation of wind energy, the other is a manifestation of awareness. Molasses, milk, and sugarcane are similar in having a sweet taste, but there is still a great difference among them. [576] And although we can experience this difference with our tongue, even Sarasvatī herself is unable to express it in words, as the master Daṇḍin observed.⁸⁰⁹

21. There is a union of clarity and emptiness in the ordinary mind, and there are meditative experiences of bliss, clarity, and absence of thought, which derive from this union. Then there is the union of clarity and emptiness in the pure awareness beyond mind, together with its bliss, clarity, and absence of thought. Can we say that the difference between these two sets is a difference between the Pith Instruction category of the Great Perfection and what lies below it?

The union of clarity and emptiness in the ordinary mind, and the bliss, clarity, and absence of thought that are its qualities, cannot be classified above even the calm abiding that is common to both non-Buddhist outsiders and Buddhist insiders. Any of the three rDzogs-chen categories, whether Mind, Expanse, or Pith Instructions, is generally more profound than even the perfection phase of Highest Yoga Tantra, which in turn belongs to the Secret Mantra that is superior to the general Mahāyāna. I think that to make such an assertion is therefore inappropriate.

22. When dividing the Great Perfection into three categories, can we relate the Mind category to Mahāyoga, the Expanse category to Anuyoga, and the Pith Instruction category to Atiyoga?

⁸⁰⁹ A reference to *Kāvyādarśa* I, 102: ikṣukṣīraguḍādīnām mādhyuryasyāntaram mahat / tathāpi na tad ākhyātum sarasvatyāpi śakyate // (Great is the difference in the sweetness of sugar-cane, milk and molasses; yet even Sarasvatī herself cannot describe it.)

I do not see anything too inappropriate about such a proposition. It even resembles what the *Phyogs bcu mun sel* commentary says about how the gradual path of the *sGyu 'phrul gsang snying* and the rDzogs-chen practices of Khregs-chod and Thod-rgal relate to the three of Ati[yoga], Mahā[yoga], and so on.⁸¹⁰ Still, the matter requires further investigation. [577]

23. *Is it correct to say that when yogis who meditate on the Great Perfection are liberated in any of the three earlier bardos, they awaken at that very moment in the primordial sphere; whereas if they are liberated in the bardo of becoming, they are reborn in a natural nirmāṇakāya pure realm and awakened there?*

Yes, it is just as you have written.

24. *When speaking of the indivisibility of the two higher truths, can we say that the relative is embraced by a special motivation and conduct of the indivisible two truths, so that we view everything as the pure maṇḍala of the vajra sphere, while recognizing that the seven riches of the absolute are always spontaneously present?⁸¹¹ And that the indivisibility of these two truths, which are greater than the two common forms of equality, is great dharmakāya?⁸¹²*

It is indeed so. Still, you must understand higher relative truth in more detail from the explanations of how appearances are established as divine. Although the fundamental point of the seven riches of the absolute depends on fully ascertaining the genuine nature of mind, it is also worth consulting the tantra commentaries. Yet for fear that this might become too verbose, I shall not elaborate further here.

This concludes my rough answers to your questions.

⁸¹⁰ I have so far been unable to locate this section of *Phyogs bcu mun sel*.

⁸¹¹ The seven riches of the absolute (*don dam dkor bdun*) are enlightened form (*sku*), speech (*gsung*), mind (*thugs*), qualities (*yon tan*), and activity (*phrin las*), plus the *dharmadhātu* (*chos dbyings*) and wisdom (*ye shes*).

⁸¹² In his *mDzod kyi lde mig* commentary on the **Guhyagarbha*, 'Jig-med bstan-pa'i-nyi-ma explains, "The two common forms are that all phenomena are equal in being unborn on an absolute level and illusory on a relative level."

Generally speaking, [578] these days, we have reached the end of a degenerate age, in which the teachings of Buddha are on the wane and people have little faith in the sacred Dharma. The teaching and practice of the supreme vehicle, the vajra pinnacle, are barely alive, and what remains is due to merit and fortune. At such a time, knowing that even finding the opportunity for discussion is a sign of good fortune, I am like a mere child imitating an adult. For how could I ever explain such profound adamant topics? To judge from your questions, you are studying and contemplating the Heart Essence of the Great Perfection a great deal—in this, I greatly and sincerely rejoice.

The following topics are clearly and incisively resolved in *Lung gi gter mdzod*, the commentary to *Chos dbyings mdzod*, which is just like the omniscient king of Dharma, Dri-med 'Od-zer, in person:

- the general understanding of the distinction between mind and pure awareness
- the means of directly recognizing pure awareness
- how this alone eliminates all the potential dangers of side-tracks (*shor*), pitfalls (*gol*), and errors (*nor*)
- how to pursue pure awareness alone, without spoiling it through superfluous instructions
- how all the crucial points of the path taught in the sūtras and lower tantras are included within this approach, and not only that, how it is unlike any lower vehicle and superior to them [579]

You should therefore consult the text repeatedly. If you read it again and again, your understanding will grow in precision and certainty, and you will develop an insatiable, heartfelt wish to study further. But consulting it only once or twice will not take you beyond a vague, superficial understanding.

Theg mchog mdzod brings about a vast, decisive understanding of both Khregs-chod and Thod-rgal, so it is vital that you study that too. I also believe that the *Shing rta chen po* commentary to *Sems nyid ngal gso* and the root text and commentaries

of *Yon tan mdzod*⁸¹³ are extremely important, as they are indispensable for gaining an understanding of the general structure of the teachings.

I respectfully submit this direct and familiar, if perhaps inelegant, response.

This was offered by the old beggar bsTan-pa'i-nyi-ma, the lowest servant of the 'Jam-dbyangs Guru, the great Vajradhara. May virtue abound!

⁸¹³ 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Yon tan mdzod* to which 'Jigs-med gling-pa himself wrote two commentaries: *bDen gnyis shing rta* and *rNam mkhyen shing rta*.

3. dNgos bzhi gnyis la mu bzhi rtsi tshul⁸¹⁴

JTNd vol. 5: 187.4–193.5; JTNg vol. 1: 547.5–554.2; JTNs vol. 2: 104–110;

bla ma la phyag 'tshal lo| |

snying thig khrid yig chen mor| dngos gzhi gnyis la mu bzhi brtsi tshul zhis gsungs
pa de nyung gsal bshad dgos zhes phebs par|

gzhi ni gzhi lam 'bras gsum gyi zlas phye ba'i gzhi'i bzhugs tshul de la byed| dngos
ni de mngon du gyur pa la byed pas rtogs bya dang rtogs tshul gyi sgo nas bzhag
cing| gzhi la ngo bo rang bzhin thugs [548] rje gsum gsungs pa'i thugs rje ni gzhi byed
tshul dang| grol lugs kyi 'gang shes pa'i phyir du gsungs pa las gzhi dngos ma yin la|
ngo bo dang rang bzhin stong gsal gnyis su⁸¹⁵ bshad pa'i dbyings rig gnyis po de
gzhi la cha phye ba yin pas| 'di'i gzhi ni rig pa kho na la mi gzung ngo| |

lha khang dang rten gsum dper mdzad pa'ang rten dang brten pa'i dpe tsam du
mdzad pa las| de gnyis rten brten pa'i 'jog tshul 'dra bar bzhed pa min la| dpe'i skabs
su mu dang po'i gzhi lha khang dang| gnyis pa'i gzhi rten gsum gyi mtshan nyid la
sbyar yang| don gyi tshe ni gzhi gong 'og rnams gcig tu bya dgos te| de 'dra ma yin
na lha khang dang rten gsum gnyis ka mthong ba dang| rten gsum gyi mtshan nyid
gtan la ma phebs pa mi 'gal ba bzhin du| dngos gzhi gnyis ka yin pa'ang dngos yin la
gzhi ma yin pa dang mi 'gal bar 'gyur la| de'i tshe snying thig⁸¹⁶ gi rnal 'byor khyad
par du 'phags tshul ston pa la sbyar ba ma 'brel bar 'gyur ba'i phyir ro| |

de'ang rtogs bya gzhi rgyud rtogs pa yin kyang| rtogs tshul dngos su ste mngon sum
du rtogs pa ma yin sogs la bar gyi tshig mi mngon par mdzad nas gzhi yin la| dngos
ma yin sogs su gsung bar mngon no| |

mngon sum [549] du rtogs pa la dngos su rtogs par gsungs pa'ang don spyi brgyud mi
dgos par rtogs pa'i rgyu mtshan gyis btags pa 'dra bas| dngos shugs gnyis kyi zlas
drangs pa'i dngos min zhing| chos gcig bden med du rtogs na brgyud nas chos gzhan

⁸¹⁴ Title omitted in JTNd and JTNg.

⁸¹⁵ JTNs. omits *su*

⁸¹⁶ JTNs *tig*

yang de ltar rtogs zhes pa lta bua'ang min no| |

so so'i ngos 'dzin la bla ma'i man ngag gi drin gyis sems dang rig pa shan 'byed kyi
khog shog pa'i go ba khyad par can rnyed de| phar phyin theg pa dang| rgyud sde 'og
ma'i lam mthon po rnams dang| lam 'di nas rtogs pa'i rtsal chen rdzogs pa gnyis la
bsgrub gzhi'i dbang gis khyad chen po yod tshul shes nas mtha' bral gyi de kho na
nyid kyang de'i steng du go bas gtan la phebs pa byung rung| de'i steng nas myong
stobs kyi sgro 'dogs chod nus pa'i nyams len ma 'byongs pa ni mu dang po lha
khang mthong yang rten gsum ma mthong ba lta bu ste| dpe 'di *lhag bsam bskul ba*
las|

de la shun pa ji bzhin smra ba ste⁸¹⁷| |

sogs dang tshul mtshungs| de ltar yin pa'ang *theg mchog mdzod* las|

rdzogs chen pa kha cig gis chos gzhi la lus nas lag tu blang du med par chos
nyid kha 'byams su song bas 'chi kha tha mal du 'chi ba rnams so⁸¹⁸| |
zhes so| |

man ngag thos pa'i dus su| ^[550] dang por dkyus ston pa na dbyings ngo 'phrod cing|
rgyug byed thad kar ston pa na kun rtog gi rdul dang bral ba'i dwangs gsal| bcos
ma'i 'jur mdud ma song ba'i tha mal| yul snang khol bu bas ma bcing ba'i khyab
gdal⁸¹⁹ sogs kyi rnam can khyad par ba zhig brda 'al 'ol 'phrod de| dbyings rig de
gnyis sbyar na rdzogs chen yin mdog kha bo dang| rig pa'i rnam cha de spu ris cung
zad re zin nas skyong skabs gzhi'i rang mdangs bag tsam gsal du song ba 'dra mo
yod cing| de nas sgom skyon bying ba bsang⁸²⁰ pa dang| theg pa thun mong gi zhi
gnas skyong ba'i dus kyi dwangs⁸²¹ gsal sogs mang po zhig la bskor nas slar yang rig
pa ngos 'dzin ma nor ba zhig mtha' bca'd pa na| sngar shan 'byed kyi go ba brtan pos
rgyud ma smin pa'i dbang gis nyams myong 'chal te| gang la'ang rig pa zhes gnad
thog me btsa' bya sa med par 'gro zhing| de nas dbyings kyi cha'ang thun mong ma

⁸¹⁷ D vol. 43 (*dkon brtsegs*, ca): 291.4: ji ltar shun pa de bzhin smra ba ste|

⁸¹⁸ KLR vol. 18: 117.

⁸¹⁹ JTND *bdal*

⁸²⁰ Following a suggestion from A-lags gZan-dkar, I am reading *bsags* which appears in all three editions as *bsang*.

⁸²¹ JTND *dangs*

yin pa'i ka dag gi cha shas su 'jog mi thub par song ba ni dngos yin la gzhi ma yin pa
rten gsum mthong yang de'i khyad par ma nges pa lta bu ste| *theg mchog mdzod* du
'di 'chad skabs|

man ngag kha cig thog ma gnad thog tu phebs kyang tha ma tshig gi mtha' ma
chod pas rjes la de'i thog tu mi gnas par pra yas pa rnams so⁸²²| | zhes [551]
gsung pa'i phyir ro||

de'ang nyams myong 'chal rjes su der 'jog pa min gyi| de'i sngon la nyams rtogs rtsa
ba mi brling bas de ltar bshad do| |

chos thams cad stong pa zhes chad mtha' la dbyings su 'khrul pa dang de ma 'khrul
yang theg pa 'dir gnas lugs de nyid gzhi ji 'dra zhig dang sbyar te sgom pa'i gnad ma
go ba dang| kha cig de tsam gyis dbu ma'i lta ba rnyed pa dang rdzogs chen gyi ngo
sprod thebs pa gnyis mi phyed cing| de gnyis don gcig tu bya bar yang mi rung ba
lung tsam las shes te| dpyad 'jog gi tshul mi 'dra bas de gnyis khyad che zer ba dang|
sems kyi ngo bo sal le hrig ge ba tsam la thim la ma rmugs pa'i ye shes nang gsal
sogs ming gang gzang 'dogs pa dang| de dang phyi rol pa'i bde gsal rtog med kyi
ting nge 'dzin la khyad ci yod byas tshe| nyams la zhen mi zhen yod zer ba sogs
phongs chos mang po smra ba ni gzhi dang dngos gnyis ka ma yin pa lha khang dang
rten gsum gang yang ma mthong ba lta bu ste| snga ma las|

theg pa thun mong ba spyi'⁸²³ tshig gi lta sgom yid dpyod kyi lam du byas nas|
don ngo ma 'phrod pas tha ma gar 'gro ngo ma⁸²⁴ shes pa rnams so⁸²⁵| |
zhes so| |

'di la 'chi kha tha mal du lus pa zhes khrid yig chen mor gsungs shing| *theg mchog
mdzod* du [552] mu dang po la de ltar gsungs te| de gnyis tha mal du lus lugs mi 'dra
yang| sgom byung gi sne ma zin pa la 'dra zhing| de las mu gsum pas ni gdams pa'i
gnad ma rnyed pa shin tu gsal la de tshang bar rnyed kyang rnyed pa ltar gyi nyams
len ma 'byongs pa'i skabs ni gdul bya mchog la'ang yod tshul thos bsam sgom pa'i

⁸²² KLR vol. 18: 117.

⁸²³ KLR *spyis*

⁸²⁴ KLR *mi*

⁸²⁵ KLR vol. 18: 117

go rim gyis shes shing| de gong smros⁸²⁶ ltar mu dang pos bsdus par bshad na'ang mi
'thad pa med mod kyil mu dang po *theg mchog mdzod* kyil sgras zin gtso bo ni| man
ngag gi gnad tshang bar ma rnyed pa la byed de| lag tu blang du med par zhes sogs
kyis gsal lo| |

de'i don yang dper na bla med kyil rdzogs rim gzhan la slob tshe 'od gsal dang ye
shes kyil sku'i 'jog tshul la go ba rnyed kyang de dag sgrub byed rtsa rlung thig le'i
rnal 'byor rnams legs par ma shes na mnyan pa lag skya med pa lta bur 'gro ba de
bzhin du| rig pa dang de'i gdangs kyil 'jog tshul lam gzhi dang gzhi snang gi go don
sogs shes kyang de dag lam dang 'bras bu'i ngo bor go 'pho ba'i thabs su skyong
thabs kyil gnad nges pa gsungs pa'i don rnams la ma mkas na| de ni bstan bcos don
mang mya ngam gyil |thang la skom pas gdung ste 'chi bar zad| |ces pa lta bur 'gyur
ba'o| |

de ltar byas na rdzogs chen ^[553] gyil lam gyil cha rnams ma tshang ma med par lus su
bsgrigs pa'i gzhung la nyan bsam rdzogs par byas pa tsam nas mu dang po gsum
phal cher las 'da' zhing| nyan bsam sgom gsum legs par byas na mtha' dag las 'da'
bar nus so zhes par gsal te| lam gyil dngos gzhi dang| dngos gzhi'i gdams pa gnyis
kyil khyad chos so so nas bstan to| |

gal te khrid yig tu mu gnyis pa ston skabs|

rtog dpyod kyis go yang myong thog tu ma chags⁸²⁷ | zhes gsungs shing|

dang po'i tshe tshig tsam la lta sgom yin par yid brtan 'cha' ba zhes gsungs pas 'dir
bshad pa rnams ci ltar rung zhe na| skyon med de| snga ma ni myong ba brtan po ma
chags pas dman pa la dgag sgra sbyar ba yin par gong du drangs pa'i lung gis shes
pa'i phyir dang| phyi ma'ang bsam byung thos byung dang phyogs gcig tu bsdus nas
bstan pa yin pa'i phyir ro| |

brjod par bya ba gzhan yang yod de tho tsam mo| |

⁸²⁶ JTNd, JTNg *smos*

⁸²⁷ *Ye shes bla ma* 328

de nas mu bzhi pa ni| *theg mchog mdzod las*|

rig pa dngos su mthong bas lta sgom yin snyam la rag ma lus⁸²⁸| gzhi mthong
bas ldog pa'i sa med pa⁸²⁹ zhes gsungs te|

gong ma rnam dang sbyar na shin tu sla'o||

'di dag gzhung spyi skad la grags pa'i dngos gzhi'i [554] sgra bshad min gyi| rdzogs
chen la 'jug tshul de la dngos dang gzhi gnyis phye ste de la mu brtsis pa'o||

bdag 'dra bas kun mkhyen bla ma'i dgongs pa shod mi thub kyang| 'phral du yid la
shar tshul cung zad cig bkod par zad de nyid lta bu'i mkhyen rab can gyis rgya cher
dpyad par mdzod cig| |dge zhing bkra shis||

How to Count the Four Permutations of Actual and Basis

Homage to the guru!

[Introduction]

What follows is in response to a request to clarify briefly what has been said on the method of counting the four permutations (*mu bzhi*) of 'actual basis' (*dngos gzhi*) in the great guidance manual of the Heart-Essence.⁸³⁰

'Basis' here means the nature of the ground — as one of the triad of ground, path and fruition (*gzhi lam 'bras gsum*). 'Actual' means that it is made evident (*mngon du gyur pa*). These two refer, therefore, to what must be realized (*rtogs bya*) and the means of realization (*rtogs tshul*).

The ground is said to include the three qualities of essence (*ngo bo*), nature (*rang bzhin*) and compassionate resonance (*thugs rje*). [548] Of these, compassionate resonance is taught so that one might understand how the ground functions and so that one might know the main point of the mode of liberation (*grol lugs*); it is not however the actual ground. Essence and nature, which are explained as emptiness and clarity, correspond to the two qualities of space (*dbyings*) and awareness (*rig*

⁸²⁸ KLR *las*

⁸²⁹ KLR vol. 18: 117f.

⁸³⁰ i.e., in 'Jigs-med gling-pa's *Ye shes bla ma*.

[*pa*]), into which the ground is divided. And this means that the ground here should not be taken to mean awareness alone.

Although the text uses the example of a temple and its representations⁸³¹ of enlightened body, speech and mind, which are related in the manner of support and supported (*rten dang brten pa*), this only applies to the examples; it is not an assertion that what they refer to are similarly related as support and supported. The example for basis in the first permutation is a temple, whereas in the second permutation it is the features (*mtshan nyid*) of the three representations. The referent (*don*) of these examples, however, is the same, i.e., the basis, in both earlier and later permutations. If the basis were not illustrated differently like this, then because there is no contradiction between seeing a temple and its three representations and yet not being able to determine the features of the three representations, there would be no means of distinguishing being both the actual and the basis from being the actual but not the basis. This would then mean that the example could not successfully illustrate the superiority of the yoga of the Heart-Essence.⁸³²

Even if the ground continuum that is to be realized has been realized, if it is not realized directly, meaning in actual direct experience, then it is said to be the basis but not the actual. It is evident that this is what is meant, even if some of the words are not spelled out explicitly. When we say, “realized in actual direct experience” (*mngon sum du rtogs pa*), [549] it means realized directly (*dngos su*), as when, for example, there is no need for the intermediary of an object-universal (*don spyi*; **arthasāmānya*).⁸³³ Direct is thus not the opposite of implicit (*shugs*); nor does it imply that realizing the lack of true reality in a single phenomenon leads *indirectly* to such realization concerning other phenomena.

Now let us consider how each permutation is identified.

⁸³¹ Literally supports (*rten*)

⁸³² In other words, if the example did not change, then given that seeing the three representations necessarily involves seeing the temple in which they are housed, there would be no distinction between this example (seeing only the representations) and the fourth example (seeing both the temple and its representations).

⁸³³ This term is a *karmadhāraya* compound, so, strictly speaking, translations such as “generic object” are incorrect. On the use of this term in Indian and Tibetan writings on logic and epistemology see Tillemans 1999: 234.

[1. Basis but not Actual]

Let us say that through the guru's kindness in granting instructions, you gain a special understanding of the procedure for distinguishing the ordinary mind (*sems*) and pure awareness.⁸³⁴ Then you understand that there is a great difference in the basis of accomplishment separating the higher paths of the vehicle of transcendent perfections (*pāramitā*) and the lower classes of tantra from the full strength of realization on this path. Even if, in addition, you then gain some certainty through an understanding of the actuality (*de kho na nyid*) beyond extremes, if you have not mastered the practice for eliminating projections through the force of experience, you are still at the level of the first permutation—that of seeing the temple, but not seeing the three representations. The analogy here is equivalent to the statement in the *Adhyāśayasamcodanasūtra*⁸³⁵ that, “In this, talk is like the outer layer...etc.”⁸³⁶ And about this the *Theg mchod mdzod* says: “This is comparable to those few who leave Dzogchen at the basic level, without applying it practically, and simply spout hot air about *dharmatā*, so that they die an ordinary death.”

[2. Actual but not Basis]

When receiving pith instructions, [550] at first when the ‘course’ (*dkyus*) is revealed, you recognize it as basic space (*dbyings*). Then, when the ‘runner’ (*rgyug byed*) is shown directly, it is lucidly clear, free from the dust of conceptualization; ordinary without the tight knots of contrivance; and all-pervasive, unconfined by fragmentary appearances. You recognize somewhat vaguely what has these distinctive features. When you apply this to basic space and awareness it seems to be rDzogs-chen, and when you identify and sustain that trace of what has the features of pure awareness, the self-radiance (*rang mdangs*) of the ground appears to grow clearer. Then you clear away⁸³⁷ faults in meditation such as sinking dullness and you cultivate the tranquillity (*śamatha*) that is common to all vehicles. You might decide again that your recognition of pure awareness is unerring, but as your mind was not

⁸³⁴ On the importance of this distinction (*shan 'byed*) see Higgins 2013 *passim*.

⁸³⁵ D vol. 43: 262–306.

⁸³⁶ The *sūtra* compares talk or words to the outer layer or ‘bark’ of sugar cane which gives no flavour. The sweet taste, which is inside the cane, is likened to the actual meaning of what is said. Understanding the meaning is like tasting the sugar.

⁸³⁷ Reading *bsags* here as *bsang*.

previously matured through a stable understanding of the distinction [between mind and awareness], your experience has become confused. There can be no identification of pure awareness. It is as if there is no vital point at which to apply moxibustion (*me btsa*). You can no longer identify the aspect of basic space as a feature of extraordinary primordial purity. This is the actual but not the basis, which is likened to seeing the three representations but not determining their features. As it says in *Theg mchog mdzod*: “Some instructions strike the right chord at the beginning, but, by failing to cut through the limitations of verbalism, do not remain with the crucial point and turn instead into speculation.” Thus, [551] this does not mean simply that experience becomes confused and you settle into that confusion, but that even before that the root of all experience and realization is unstable.

[3. Neither Actual nor Basis]

You might think, “All phenomena are empty,” confusing a nihilistic extreme (*chad mtha*) for basic space. Or, even if you manage to avoid such confusion, you might fail to understand the key point of meditation, which is how to relate to this natural state (*gnas lugs*), the ground, in this vehicle. There are some who cannot distinguish between discovering the view of the Middle Way and receiving the introduction in rDzogs-chen. You can understand from the texts just how inappropriate it is to treat these two as equivalent: as their approach to analysis and settling is so dissimilar, there is said to be a great difference between them.

You might describe a mere penetrating clarity (*sal le hrig ge ba*) of the essence of mind in lofty terms, such as “wisdom that is inward and not dull” (*thim la ma rmugs pa'i ye shes*) or “inner luminosity” (*nang gsal*) and so on. And when asked how this differs from the meditative absorption of non-Buddhist outsiders, you might say that it comes down to whether there is attachment to experience. But professing such impoverished Dharmas (*phongs chos*) is to have neither basis nor the actual, a situation likened to failing to see the temple and the three representations. As the earlier [commentary, i.e., *Theg mchog mdzod*] says, “Those who adopt an approach of speculative view and meditation based on the general terminology common to all vehicles are not introduced to the true meaning, and therefore fail to recognize where they must go in the end.”

Here, the great guidance manual (*Ye shes bla ma*) says, “You will remain ordinary at the time of death.” Yet the *Theg mchog mdzod* [552] says something

similar about the first permutation. Although these are two different ways of remaining ordinary (*tha mal*), both are similar in that they involve a failure to capture what develops in meditation. The third permutation obviously denotes an inability to discover the key point of the instructions. It could also mean receiving the instructions in their entirety, but then failing to apply successfully in practice what has been received. This might affect even supreme students, as can be understood from the sequence of listening, reflecting and meditating. There would therefore be no logical fault in including such a situation within the first permutation, as explained above. Nevertheless, the *Theg mchog mdzod* explains the first permutation as, above all, a failure to discover entirely the key points of the instructions, as is clear from the phrase “without taking to hand” (*lag tu blang du med par*).

The meaning of this is that when you are training in other perfection stage practices of Highest Yoga Tantra, for example, you might understand the explanations of the clear light or wisdom form (*ye shes kyi sku; jñānakāya*), but unless you also fully understand the practices through which they are accomplished—the yogas of channels, wind-energies and essences—you are just like a boatman without any oars. Similarly, you might understand the explanations of awareness and its radiance or the meaning of the ground and ground-manifestations, but unless you are also skilled in the definitive points of how to remain and thereby transform your understanding into the essence of the path and fruition, it will be just as in the saying: “In the desert of ambiguous treatises, stricken by thirst and left to die.”

All of this means ^[553] that even thoroughly studying and reflecting upon works in which the various aspects of the rDzogs-chen path are clearly and comprehensively set out will enable you to go beyond the first three permutations to some degree; whereas if you undertake all three—study, reflection *and* meditation—well, you will be able to transcend them all completely. That is clear.

The ‘actual basis’ of the path is to be distinguished from the instructions on the actual basis.

You might wonder why the guidance manual (*Ye shes bla ma*) explains the second permutation by saying, “There is some understanding derived from conceptual analysis, but it is unconnected to experience...” and explains the first permutation by saying, “This refers to relying upon mere words... as the view and

meditation.” How, you might ask, are such statements to be reconciled with what is explained here? There is no fault. In the earlier case, experience is not yet stable, so the negation is used for what is meagre (rather than absent entirely), as can be understood from the quotation given above. And in the second case, what is born of reflection and what is born of listening⁸³⁸ are taken together as one.

Although there are further points that might be added, this should suffice for a simple list.

[4. Both Actual and Basis]

The *Theg mchog mdzod* explains the fourth permutation by saying: “Since you see pure awareness directly seeing, you no longer rely on ideas about what view and meditation might be. As the ground is seen, there is no basis for turning back.” If you relate this to what has been said above, it is extremely simple.

[Conclusion]

This was not an explanation of the term actual basis (or main part) as understood in the general language of the scriptures, [554] but how it is applied in rDzogs-chen, which separates the two words actual and basis and counts the permutations.

Even though it is not possible for the likes of me to explain the intent of the omniscient Guru, I have quickly set down a few ideas as they occurred to me. May the wise such as you examine it with a broad mind. May there be virtue and auspiciousness!

4. Hor 'od zer gyi ngor gdams pa⁸³⁹

JTNd vol. 5: 193.5 — 200; JTNg vol. 1: 554.2–561; JTNs vol. 2: 110–117

gang gi rang bzhin spros pas mi mtshon pa | |
brtan g.yo kun gyi gnyug ma'i de kho na | |
rgyud sde rgya mtsho'i snying po'i don gcig pu | |

⁸³⁸ i.e., the insight born of reflection (*bsam pa las byung ba'i shes rab*; *cintamayīprajñā*) and insight born of listening (*thos pa las byung ba'i shes rab*; *śrutamayīprajñā*).

⁸³⁹ Title appears only in JTNs.

dpal ldan bla ma'i ngo bor shes pas 'dud| |

theg mchog rdo rje snying po'i chos tshul la| |
mos pa'i blo ldan khyed kyis gang dris pa| |
de 'dra bdag blo'i rtsal gyis shod dka' yang| |
bla ma'i lung la brten nas cha tsam dbye| |

de la spyir rdzogs chen gyi gdams pa'i zab khyad mtha' yas kyang| rtsa ba'i gnad ni
yon tan rin po che'i mdzod las|

gang dag sems las 'das pa'i rig pa ni| |
rang bzhin rdzogs pa chen po'i khyad chos yin⁸⁴⁰| |

zhes gsungs pa ltar sems rig shan 'byed la thug pas| de nyid gnad du bzung tshul bris
'dug pa ni dam pa'i gsung sgros ma nor bar zin pa ste rjes su yi rang lags| gnyug
ma'i rig pa dang| 'od gsal rdo rje'i sems gnyis don gcig la| de ^[555] nyid sngags bla
med kyi rgyud sde thams cad du rtsal 'don mdzad nas ma bshad pa med kyang| rlung
sems dbu mar 'dzud pa'i man ngag gis kun rtog bcad pa'i skabs su 'od gsal ngos
bzung ste sgom pa'i phyogs kho na mang la| lugs 'dir ni kun rtog gi steng na 'od gsal
til 'bru snum khyab ltar gnas pa'i dus nyid na bcar phog tu ngos bzung ste skyong
tshul ston pa'i khyad che zhing| de'i dbang gis ye shes mchog sgrub pa la rtsol ba
che chung dang mang nyung yang ches mi 'dra'o| |

de'i dbang du byas nas da lta'i shes pa tha mal pa'am| da lta'i rig pa ma bcos pa ngo
sprod lugs la *chos dbyings mdzod 'grel* du tshul bdun gsungs pa sogs rnam grangs
mang yang| re zhiq stong nyid kyi lta ba'i steng nas ngo sprod tshul tsam brjod na|
phyogs gzhan du rang sems skye 'gag⁸⁴¹ gnas gsum dang bral bar gtan la phab⁸⁴² nas|
de ltar phab⁸⁴³ pa'i stong cha de las yid gzhan du ma yengs⁸⁴⁴ par byas te⁸⁴⁵ sgom pa
yin yang| 'dir de ltar mi byed kyi byung gnas 'gro gsum btsal nas yul dang yul can

⁸⁴⁰ These lines occur in chapter twelve of the *Yon tan mdzod*. See JLC vol. 1: 138.1–2.

⁸⁴¹ JTNs 'gags

⁸⁴² JTND, JTNs phabs

⁸⁴³ JTND, JTNs phabs

⁸⁴⁴ JTNs g.yengs

⁸⁴⁵ JTND om. |

gyi dmigs gtad bshigs⁸⁴⁶ pa'i dus su 'di'o zhes bzung⁸⁴⁷ du ci yang ma rnyed pa'i
ngang der bzo med rang babs⁸⁴⁸ kyi shes pa stong gsal spro bsdu dang bral ba zhig
'char te⁸⁴⁹| bzhi cha [556] gsum bral gyi rig pa zhes bya ba yin| de nyid la bcos slad
kyi dri mas ma phog par lhad kyis glod de 'jog pa ni| rig pa rten med du zhog dang
rnal 'byor pa| |zhes gsungs pa'i don ma nor ba yin no| |

de'ang sngon 'gro'i dus su sems kyi mtshang btsal ba dang| dngos gzhi'i tshe de ltar
btsal ba'i steng nas rig pa ngo sprod pa gnyis ma 'dzing ba dgos te| kun mkhyen chos
rje dang gter bdag gling pa sogs kyi gzhung na gsal lo| |

sams kyi cha thams cad rig par thag bcad ces 'bris 'dug pa 'di la zhu dag byas na|
sams kyi cha thams cad rig pa'i rang rtsal du shar ba yin gyi| rig pa dngos min zer
dgos te| gzhan du na sems rig shan 'byed ces pa'ang rig pa dang rig pa shan 'byed
ces par 'gyur ba'i phyir ro| |

yul sems thams cad rig pa'i rtsal du thag chod kyang| nyon mongs pa dang rnam rtog
kha ma bri na 'ching e nus| zhes sogs 'dri ba la spyir 'od gsal la srab 'thug gi rim pa
mang po yod pas| dang po'i⁸⁵⁰ dus su rig thog nas ma yengs kyang| dge sdig gi rtog
pa sna tshogs chu rlabs ltar 'byung ba mang du yod la| de ltar 'byung yang rtsa ba rig
pa'i ye shes rang mal nas ma g.yos pa'i dbang gis| kun rtog de rnams skad cig dang
[557] por thol gyis shar yang| gnyis par de'i rgyun mthud⁸⁵¹ mi nus par 'od gsal gnyug
ma'i dbyings su sib kyis thim 'gro bas rgyun mi 'ching zhes gsungs te| mi 'ching
ba'i rgyu mtshan ni| skad cig gnyis par rgyun ma mthud pa gcig pu de min gyi| rnam
rtog skad cig dang po skye dus nas 'od gsal gyi dgongs pa'i rgyas thebs pa'i gnad
kyis yin te| bskyed rim tsam la gnas pa'i sngags pas kyang snang spyod thams cad
lha'i rnal 'byor gyi rgyas thebs pa'i dbang gis bsgul bskyod 'gro 'dug sogs gzhan la
lung ma bstan du 'gro ba rnams kyang sngags dang phyag rgya la sogs pa tshogs
gnyis kyi sgo rlabs po cher 'gyur bar gsung na| de lta ci smos⁸⁵² pa'i phyir ro| |

⁸⁴⁶ JTNd illegible; JTNg *gshegs*

⁸⁴⁷ JTNg *zung*

⁸⁴⁸ JTNg *bab*

⁸⁴⁹ JTNs *ste*

⁸⁵⁰ JTNg *ba'i*

⁸⁵¹ JTNd *'thud*

⁸⁵² JTNs *smros*

'on kyang rig thog tu mnyam par mi 'jog par| gang shar thams cad rig pa'i rang rtsal
du shes pa'i go yul yod pa tsam gyis ni rang grol gyi gdengs⁸⁵³ tshad rjes mthun tsam
yang mi rnyed pas| 'jig rten phal pa ltar las nyon gyi 'khrul pa'i gzhan dbang du 'gro
bar zad do| |

'di'i mnyam bzhag tu gnyis snang nub e dgos| gnyis snang ma nub par rdzogs chen
gyi rig pa ngo ma 'phrod⁸⁵⁴ pa e yod| ces par| snang bzhi'i rtogs pa mthon por slebs
dus mnyam bzhag tu [558] gnyis snang gi spros pa mtha' dag zhi ba 'byung yang|
rdzogs chen gyi rig pa la mnyam par bzhag tshad de ltar 'ong ba min te| gong du 'od
gsal srab 'thug gi rim pa mang po yod par bshad pa des shes so| |

dran pa'i rgyun bskyangs nas bsgoms⁸⁵⁵ pas nam zhig rig pa nyid kyi steng nas dran
pa zhig sad 'ongs zhes zhal rgyun las thos kyang zhib tu rtsad gcod pa ma byung bas
de ji ltar yin| zhes par|

thun mong sems gnas kyi bsam gtan la gnas cha yod kyang glo bur ba'i rten can yin
phyir rlabs chung la| rig pa rang gnas kyi bsam gtan ni gnyug ma'i rang gshis yin pas
chos nyid kyi rlan dang mi 'bral bar *theg mchog mdzod* dang *rnam mkhyen shing rta*
las gsungs pa ltar| rig thog na 'du byed kyi dran pa zhes grags pa dmigs gtad can gyi
dran 'dzin med kyang| rtsol med rang bzhag gi dran pa'am| chos nyid ma bcos pa'i
dran pa zhes 'od gsal rang sa zin cing| rtsal thog tu mi 'chor bar byed pa'i gnyug
ma'i dran pa yod ces pa yin no| |

de ni sgom stobs kyis rig pa mngon du gyur pa dang mnyam du gser dang de'i rang
'od ltar shugs 'byung la 'ong ba yin gyi| ched du gnyer nas dran pa brten dgos phan
chad sems kyi phyogs las mi 'da'o| |

'on kyang gnyug ma'i dran pa de mngon du bya ba'i thabs su [559] dang por 'du byed
kyi dran pa brten nas rig ngo skyong ba ni mi 'gog ste| *man ngag mdzod* las|

dang po'i las can 'du byed ma yengs bya| | zhes sogs gsungs pa bzhin no| |

⁸⁵³ JTNs *gdeng*

⁸⁵⁴ JTND, JTNg *phrod*

⁸⁵⁵ JTND, JTNs *bsgom*

'di'i rnal 'byor pa 'chi dus thim rim ji ltar 'ong| de dus 'phen pa gtong e dgos| zhes par|

sa sa la thim pa sogs nas| rnam shes nam mkha'| nam mkha' 'od gsal| 'od gsal zung 'jug| zung 'jug ye shes| ye shes lhun grub la thim pa'i bar dang| mthar lhun grub nang dbyings su sdud pa'i tshul bcas rgya cher *theg mchod mdzod* dang| gnad 'dus *khrid yig ye shes bla mar* gsal bas der gzigs shig| 'di dus snang mched thob gsum rgyud gzhan nas bshad tshod ltar 'char dgos mi dgos la sna tshogs smra yang| don gnas ni 'di'i lugs kyi rig pa dang| 'od gsal gyi ye shes gcig yin| des na snang mched thob gsum gyi mtha'i 'od gsal rdzogs chen gyi rig pa dngos yin kyang⁸⁵⁶| rdzogs chen gyi rig pa 'chi dus mngon du byed tshul la snang mched thob gsum bshad tshod bzhin 'ong ba'i nges pa med de| 'od gsal 'char tshul la gang zag gi khyad par gyis mi 'dra ba sna tshogs shig snang ba'i phyir te| sbas rgyud gzhan dang *dus 'khor* [560] dang| 'di nas gsungs pa'i 'od gsal du thim pa'i rim pa mi 'dra ba bzhin no| |

chos 'di'i khyad par gyi gdul bya rnam 'chi ba'i dus kyi thim rim ni gong du smos⁸⁵⁷ pa ltar yin la| de'i tshe 'phen pa sngon du gtong ba ni gal che ste| mgron po la brgal ba tshang sprugs su gdab pa zhes bla ma'am rdo rje'i spun gyis bar do'i gdams pa phog nas gsal legs par btab ste| 'di bzhin du bar dor mi brjed par skyong dgos snyam du nges par byas nas 'chi ba yang de yin no| |

slar yang mnyam bzhag gi sngon dang| dngos gzhi'i skabs dang| rjes la ji ltar bya ba go sla ba zhig shod ces par|

lar dge sbyor ci byed kyang 'jig rten gyi g.yeng ba bcaad nas skyong ba gal che la| lhag par rdzogs chen sgom na chos dang chos min gyi bya ba bzhag lang long mang po cam gyis bzhag ste las rlung dal zhing zhi ba'i thabs la 'bad dgos| mnyam bzhag dngos kyi tshe| dang po rig pa rjen la bton nas| de nyid bcas bsgyur spang blang gi lhad ma zhugs par rang babs su bzhag cing| rnam rtog 'phro na phar rnam rtog gi rjes su mi 'brang bar| rig thog tu tshur rang so bzung ba gnad yin| bde gsal mi rtog pa'i nyams sogs bzang ngan gyi rnam pa gang byung yang| de la rtsis gdab kyi rjes gcod

⁸⁵⁶ JTNd, JTNs *yang*

⁸⁵⁷ JTNs *smros*

[561] byas phan chad rig pa rang mal nas g.yos te rtsal thog tu shor ba yin pas sngar
brjod pa ltar| rig pa rten med du 'jog pa kho na 'gag don du shes dgos| mnyam rjes
gnyis la rig pa me long g.ya' bshus ma bshus lta bu'i khyad yod kyang| skyong tshul
gyi rigs mi 'dra ba med pas| dpal sprul rin po ches|

mnyam bzhag rjes thob tha dad med⁸⁵⁸| ces gsungs pa yin|

yul snang la der 'dzin gyi 'khrul pa lu gu rgyud du shar tshe| snang ba'i dbang du
shes pa song nas chags sdang sogs las dang nyon mongs pa'i dgra rnams mgo rgyal
du 'gro ba yin la| rig pa'i ngang ma shor na spyod yul thams cad de'i rang mdangs su
shar nas rim gyis brtul zhugs kyi drod thob par 'gyur ba lags|

zhes pa'ang dad dam brtson pa'i yon tan dang ldan pa hor 'od zer gyi ngor⁸⁵⁹ bstan
pa'i nyi mas 'phral du bris pa dge|| ||

Advice for Hor 'Od-zer⁸⁶⁰

[554.2] *Your nature is not indicated by conceptual elaboration;
It is the genuine nature of all that is inanimate and animate,
The single essential meaning of an ocean of tantras—
In recognition of the essence of the glorious guru, I bow.*

*These questions, which you who have devotion for the Dharma tradition
Of the Vajra Essence, the Supreme Vehicle, have asked
Are difficult for someone with such mental skill as I possess,
Yet I shall elaborate a little based on the words of my guru.*

Generally speaking, the profound features of the rDzogs-chen instructions are without limit, but the fundamental key point is as said in the *Yon tan rin po che'i mdzod*:

⁸⁵⁸ This occurs in *mKhas pa śrī'i rgyal po'i khyad chos*. See PS vol. 5: 206–207.

⁸⁵⁹ JTNd add. |

⁸⁶⁰ i.e., 'Od-zer of Hor. The meaning of the toponym Hor here is uncertain: often the term signifies Mongolia, but the *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo* (BGT vol. 3: 3072) notes that *hor-pa* also refers to someone from the principality of Tre-hor in Khams.

The pure awareness (*rig pa*) that is beyond the ordinary mind (*sems*)
Is the special feature of the natural Great Perfection.

As this says, [the key point] comes down to the distinction between ordinary mind and pure awareness. As what you have written upholds this key point, it unerringly adheres to the speech of [past] saints and in this I rejoice.

Genuine awareness (*gnyug ma'i rig pa*) and the mind of vajra clear light (*'od gsal rdo rje'i sems*) are synonyms (*don gcig*). [555] This is emphasised in all the tantras of the Unsurpassed Mantra class and there is nothing that is not explained there. There are many systems of meditation wherein one recognises clear light only at the point at which conceptualisation (*kun rtog*) ceases based on the instruction (*man ngag*) for bringing *prāṇa*-mind into the central channel. In this tradition, recognition occurs directly in the midst of conceptualisation, [on the principle that] clear light is present, just as oil pervades a sesame seed. There is also a great difference in the means of sustaining [that recognition]. On this basis, there is a great difference too in the degree and duration of effort required to accomplish the supreme wisdom (*ye shes mchog*).

Thus, there are many ways of introducing the ordinary awareness of the present moment (*da lta'i shes pa tha mal pa*) or the uncontrived pure awareness of the present (*da lta'i rig pa ma bcos pa*), such as the seven ways featured in the commentary to *Chos dbyings mdzod*.⁸⁶¹ For now, however, I shall describe only the method of introduction based on the view of emptiness.

In other approaches, having determined that one's own mind is free from arising, ceasing and remaining, one focuses on that emptiness (*stong cha*), without allowing the mind to become distracted from what has been ascertained. To practise in such a way is meditation. Nonetheless, here we do not practice like that, but instead we investigate [mind's] emergence, presence and departure, through which the focus upon object and subject is destroyed. Then, in that experience of not finding anything at all to hold onto with the thought "This is it!" there arises an unfabricated, naturally present state of awareness that is clear and empty, free from the proliferation and absorption (*spro bsdu*) [of thought]. This is known as "the pure awareness of the fourth part [556] without the three" (*bzhi cha gsum bral gyi rig*

⁸⁶¹ I.e., *Lung gi gter mdzod*. Chapter Twelve cites the *Ngo sprod spras pa'i rgyud*, which identifies three sets of seven methods of introduction, twenty-one in total. See KLR vol. 16: 299f. For an English translation see Longchen Rabjam 2001: 337.

pa).⁸⁶² To settle in this very [experience], in a relaxed way, unsullied by the stains of contrivance, is certainly what is meant by: “Settle in awareness without support, O yogi!”⁸⁶³

Furthermore, the search for mind’s hidden flaws (*sems kyi mtshang btsal ba*)⁸⁶⁴ at the stage of the preliminaries and the introduction to awareness on the basis of such a search must not be in conflict. This is clear from the works of the omniscient Lord of Dharma [i.e., Klong-chen rab-'byams], gTer-bdag gling-pa and others.

I must correct your statement, “All aspects of mind are determined to be awareness.” All aspects of mind arise as the self-expression (*rang rtsal*) of awareness, but they are not awareness itself. Otherwise, what we call the distinction between ordinary mind and pure awareness (*sems rig shan 'byed*) would become a distinction between pure awareness and pure awareness!

You asked: “Once we have determined that all objects (*yul*) and states of mind are the expression (*rtsal*) of pure awareness, if mental afflictions (*nyon mongs*) and thoughts do not diminish, can they still bind us?”

To such questions, we can reply that generally clear light has many degrees of strength. Therefore, at the first stage, even if one is not distracted from pure awareness, various virtuous and non-virtuous thoughts still arise like waves in great number. Even though they do arise in this way, the force of remaining unmoved from the natural resting place (*rang mal*) of the wisdom of pure awareness will ensure that although these conceptualisations suddenly arise in the first instant, [557] they do not continue in the second. Rather, they will dissolve directly in the genuine sphere of clear light (*'od gsal gnyug ma'i dbyings*), and consequently not bind the mental continuum.

The reason that they do not bind it is as follows. It is not simply that [thoughts] do not continue in the second instant; rather, it is due to the key point of applying the seal of the realization of clear light as soon as a thought arises in the first instant.

⁸⁶² I.e., belonging to the fourth time beyond the three times of past, present and future.

⁸⁶³ This line (*rig pa rten med du zhog dang rnal 'byor pa*) appears in the history of Sukhāsiddhī (*bDe ba'i dngos grub kyi lo rgyus*) included in the Shangs-pa bKa'-brgyud section of *gDams ngag mdzod* (DND vol. 12: 285.2).

⁸⁶⁴ See Chapter Five above.

After all, it is taught that even mantra practitioners who remain at the mere generation stage (*bskyed rim*; *utpattikrama*) apply the seal of deity yoga to all perceptions and activity and thereby transform what would be neutral actions such as moving about, walking, sitting and so on. They create great opportunities for the twofold accumulations with mantra and *mudrā* and so on. What need is there, then, to mention that the same applies here?

Nevertheless, without settling directly in pure awareness, merely to entertain the idea that all that arises is the self-expression of awareness will not bring about even so much as a semblance of genuine confidence in self-liberation (*rang grol*). One will only end up under the sway of delusion as a result of karma and mental afflictions like an ordinary worldly person.

You asked: Must dualistic perceptions fade in such meditative equipoise? And: Is there no recognition of the pure awareness of the Great Perfection until dualistic perception fades?

When one arrives at the higher realization of the four visions (*snang bzhi*),⁸⁶⁵ [558] the pacification of all elaborations of dualistic perception during equipoise does occur. Nonetheless, this does not occur in all forms of meditative equipoise on the pure awareness of the Great Perfection. This can be understood from what I explained earlier about clear light having many degrees of strength.

You said: I have heard from an oral tradition (*zhal rgyun*) that by meditating while sustaining the continuity of mindfulness (*dran pa*; *smṛti*), at some point a form of mindfulness arises as a feature of pure awareness itself. However, I have not investigated this thoroughly. So, how is it?

The common concentration (*bsam gtan*) of resting the mind has an aspect of stillness (*gnas cha*), but it involves a temporary support and is therefore weak (*rlabs chung*). [By contrast,] the concentration of self-abiding pure awareness (*rig pa rang gnas kyi bsam gtan*) is an innate property of the genuine nature, so it is not separate from the

⁸⁶⁵ The four visions are: 1) the direct realisation of *dharmatā* (*chos nyid mngon sum*); 2) the increase of experience (*nyams gong 'phel*); 3) reaching the full measure of pure awareness (*rig pa tshad phebs*); and 4) exhaustion into *dharmatā* (*chos nyid zad sa*).

‘fluidity’ of *dharmatā*, as is taught in *Theg mchog mdzod* and *rNam mkhyen shing rta*.⁸⁶⁶ This means that there is no deliberate recollection of an object of focus (*dmigs gtad*), which is we call ‘conditioned mindfulness’, within pure awareness itself. Instead, there is effortless, naturally present mindfulness (*chos nyid rang bzhag gi dran pa*) or intrinsic, uncontrived mindfulness (*chos nyid ma bcos pa’i dran pa*). That is to say, clear light is maintained and there is what we call ‘genuine mindfulness that prevents straying into the expressions of awareness’ (*rtsal thog tu mi ’chor bar byed pa’i gnyug ma’i dran pa*). This [form of mindfulness] comes about once pure awareness is made manifest through the strength of meditation, and occurs spontaneously like the radiance that accompanies gold. As long as you still need to rely upon deliberately cultivated mindfulness, you have not transcended the dimension of mind. Still, this does not preclude sustaining the essence of awareness through conditioned mindfulness as a means of bringing about this genuine mindfulness. [559] This point is explained in *Man ngag mdzod*, which says that “beginners achieve non-distraction through deliberate application”⁸⁶⁷ and so forth.

You asked: When someone who practises this dies how do the stages of dissolution occur? At that time is it necessary to impel oneself?

The various stages from the dissolution of the earth [element] into the earth [element] until consciousness dissolves into space, space into clear light, clear light into union, union into wisdom, and wisdom into spontaneous presence, as well as ultimately how spontaneous presence is absorbed into the inner sphere (*nang dbyings*) are taught clearly and in detail in *Theg mchod mdzod* and in summary in *Ye shes bla ma*, so consult these. Various statements have been made about whether or not it is necessary for the three experiences of appearance, increase and attainment (*snang mched thob gsum*) to arise in the way that other tantras describe. In fact, the pure awareness of this system is identical to the wisdom of clear light. Therefore, the clear light that manifests at the conclusion of appearance, increase and attainment is the actual pure awareness of the Great Perfection. Still, it is uncertain that the pure

⁸⁶⁶ ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma cites the relevant line from *rNam mkhyen shing rta* in *rNam rtog ngo shes pa dang rig pa ngo shes pa’i khyad par*. See JTNs vol. 2: 180.6.

⁸⁶⁷ ’Jigs-med bstan-pa’i nyi-ma discusses the verse that begins with this line in *Dad ldan slob ma ’gyur med rdo rje’i ngor gdams pa* (JTNg vol. 1: 484–496.1; JTNs vol. 2: 41–53; translated in Pearcey 2018).

awareness of the Great Perfection will manifest in precisely the same way that the three stages of appearance, increase and attainment are explained. This is because it would appear that there is some variation in how clear light arises based on an individual's distinct characteristics. And, accordingly, various stages of dissolution are taught in other hidden (or obscure) tantras (*sbas rgyud*), in the *Kālacakra*,⁸⁶⁸ [560] and here.

For followers of this dharma tradition, the stages of dissolution at the time of death are as outlined above. At that time, prior orientation (*'phen pa*)⁸⁶⁹ is important. 'Comprehensive transmission as if for a traveller about to cross a mountain pass' (*mgron po la brgal ba tshangs sprugs su gdab pa*) means that one receives instructions on the intermediate state (*bar do*) from one's teacher or a vajra sibling, and [these instructions] are made clear. Similarly, it also means to die having become certain that one must safeguard [these instructions] without forgetting them during the intermediate state.

You asked me to explain, in a simple manner, how to act before meditative equipoise, during the main practice and afterwards.

No matter what virtuous activity one might be engaged in, it is important to carry it out having eliminated worldly distractions. This is especially true when practising the Great Perfection. Here one must let go of dharmic and non-dharmic activity, completely set aside all forms of restlessness, and exert oneself in the methods for slowing down and pacifying the karmic wind-energy (*las rlung*).

During actual meditative equipoise, first lay bare pure awareness, then settle naturally without making any attempt to adjust, transform, reject or adopt anything. Should thoughts develop, do not indulge them, but maintain your ground within awareness—this is a crucial point. No matter what positive or negative meditative experiences might arise, including bliss, clarity and absence of thought, as soon as you follow them with a judgement, [561] you have strayed from the natural resting place of pure awareness and become lost in its expressions. As stated earlier, therefore, you must understand how it is key that you simply allow awareness to

⁸⁶⁸ *Kālacakra* is referred to as a clear tantra (*gsal rgyud*), in contradistinction to the hidden or obscure tantras.

⁸⁶⁹ In the sense of direction, momentum, impetus, etc.

settle without any support.

There is a difference in pure awareness during meditative equipoise and post-meditation, just as a mirror may be stained or unstained, but there is no difference in the way that pure awareness is sustained. Thus, dPal-sprul Rin-po-che said: “With no separation between meditative equipoise and post-meditation.”

When the delusion of clinging to reality in objective appearances arises continuously consciousness falls under the power of appearances, and then the enemies, which include karma and such afflictions as attachment and aversion, are victorious. If one does not lose the ongoing experience (*ngang*) of pure awareness, then the whole domain of one’s experience (*spyod yul*) will arise as its self-radiance, and gradually one will attain the ‘warmth’ of yogic discipline (*brtul zhugs*).

bsTan-pa’i nyi-ma wrote this straight away for Hor ’Od-zer, who possesses the qualities of faith, devotion and diligence. May it be virtuous!

5. sPrin gyi sgron ma...⁸⁷⁰

JTNs vol. 2: 240–245

sprin gyi sgron ma nas dri ba phebs don la| rdzogs chen gyi ’jog bsgom ’di rdzogs rim du ji ltar ’gyur| zhes pa la|

’di ’jog bsgom gzhan dang mi ’dra ste| bya ba dgu phrugs su btang| rang gi sems kyi chos nyid kyi steng du ma bcos par bzhag pas ro rkyang gi rlung gi rgyu ba gnas las rlung rang ’gags su ’gro zhing dbu mar rlung zhugs gnas thim gsum byas stobs kyis drangs pa’i ’od gsal rang byung gi ye shes de nyid mngon tu byas nas tha mal gyi gzhi las ’phags pa’o| |

sems kyi rtsol rtog dang lus ngag gi bya ba thams cad rang bzhag tu ’bad pas ni ’od gsal ’char te| ’od gsal sgrib byed kyi kun rtog ’gags dgos shing| de la de’i zhon pa’i rlung ’gags⁸⁷¹ dgos la de ni bya ba btang ba’i lag rjes su ’byung par ’thad pa’i phyir ro| |

⁸⁷⁰ The text is untitled in JTNs, the only collection in which it appears.

⁸⁷¹ JTNS *dgag sa*

rang gi rig pa'i chos nyid la cer mthong du bzhag pas ni rlung dhu tir thim nus te|
dper na *gsang 'dus* las snying ka'i mi shigs pa'i ti la kar sems bzung ba kho nas
rlung dbu mar 'jug nus par bshad pa ltar rlung sems 'jug pa gcig yin la| sems babs
kyis bzhag pas ro rkyang gi rgyu ba zhan thub cing| de [241] zhan na dbu mar zhugs
gnas thim gsum nus pa las 'os med pa'i phyir ro| |

'di'i dus su 'od gsal gyi rig pa shar ba de nyid tha mal gyi gzhi las 'phags pa ni
gzhi'i 'od gsal gzhan rnams ni chos nyid rtogs pa'i ye shes ma yin la| 'di sngar snang
ba'i rdzun phug gtib pa'i tshe| chos nyid kyid don nges shes kyis rtogs pa'i don de
nyid dang| da lta 'od gsal gyi dgongs pa shar ba gnyis ro gcig tu bsres pa'i gnad kyis
srid rtsa rmang nas gzhig nus pa yin no| |

de bsre lugs kyang| sngar nga'i go rgyu de 'di'o snyam nas de'i steng du phar glan
pa lta bu ma yin par| rang gi sems la kha nang du bltas nas 'od gsal kho rang gi ngo
bo la bzhag pas ye stong rtsa bral gyi de kho na nyid la bsgom bya sgom byed med
par 'jog nus te| 'di ni yul rang sems kyid chos nyid dang yul can gnyug ma'i dran pa
yin pas| de la ni bskal chen grangs med par bsags pa'i sbyin sogs kyid dod tshang ba
ste| thabs khyad par can lhan skyes rang byung gi ye shes yin pa'i phyir ro| |

yul gyi chos nyid la mnyam par bzhag mi dgos par sems kyid chos nyid 'ba' zhig la
'jog dgos pa'i gnad gang yin zhe na| lar 'phags pa'i mnyam bzhag gi skabs su'ang
gnyis snang nub pa'i gtso bo ni rang sems kyid chos nyid yin par snang ste| 'gog [242]
pa mngon tu byas zhes pa'i don la dpyad pa 'jug dgos pa'i phyir ro| |

de'i phyir 'di la bskyed rim sngon song mi dgos pa dang| 'od gsal 'char dus dbang
pos nub mi dgos par mnyam bzhag snang bcas yin pa rdzogs chen gyi khyad chos su
snang ste| phyi ma 'di la da dung dpyad bya mang bar snang ngo| |

'khor 'das ru shan phye ba dang rnal dbab sogs 'od gsal ma shar ba 'char byed dang
hūm sbyang dang sems tshol sogs shar zin chos nyid dang bsre ba'i nyer bsdog yin
par snang bas 'di ni theg pa 'di'i dka' gnad 'gangs che bar mngon no| |

mdor na rdzogs rim ni rlung dbu mar zhugs gnas thim gsum byas pa las byung ba'i
ye shes yin pas 'di la'ang de'i mtshan nyid rdzogs par tshang ba lags|

yang thod rgal gyi snang ba bzhi las chos nyid zad pa zhes pa 'di'i skabs su sku dang thig le'i snang ba'ang 'dzad par bshad pas de gang yin zhes gsungs pa la| 'di la deng sang ni sku dang thig le'ang mar 'grib pa'i don tu 'chad pa mang ste| de ni ha cang thal te| dag ma dag gi snang ba thams cad 'gags rgyu yin na sangs rgyas la ji snyed mkhyen pa med ces smra bar 'gyur ba'i phyir ro| |

des na kun mkhyen sangs rgyas gnyis pa'i *yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod dang thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza' skar* gnyis ka las [243] chos nyid du ye shes zad pa dang ye shes 'khyil ba don gcig tu gnam stong gi zla ba'i dpes bsgrub pa ltar| rang byung gi ye shes dang de'i rtsal sgron ma bzhi'i snang cha thams cad bsam gyis mi khyab pa'i chos nyid du 'khyil ba'am thim pa'am phyir mi ldog pa la bshad dgos so| |

de ji ltar yin na| spyir snang ba bzhi'i lam thams cad slob pa'i lam kho na ste| tshogs lam chos nyid mngon sum| sbyor lam nyams gong 'phel| mthong lam rig pa tshad phebs| bsgom lam chos nyid zad pa| mi slob lam 'bras bu lhun grub rin po che'i ssubs zhes *nam mkha' klong yangs* sogs mngon par shad do| |

kun mkhyen gyi bshad pa la lar tshad phebs ma dag sa bdun dang| chos nyid zad pa dag sar bshad pa ni| dpal ldan zla ba'i *rigs pa drug cu pa'i ti kar*| mthong lam gcig la skad cig bco lnga cha shas kyis phye tshul bshad pa ltar| 'dir rang ma dag sa bdun ka mthong lam gcig la ldog chas dbye ba mdzad par mngon te| rgyud sde gzhan mang por⁸⁷² mthong lam don gyi 'od gsal thun gcig gis nyon sgrib skor bdun ka spong par bshad pa dang 'dra bas de 'dra la dgongs snyam| cig shos kyang de dang 'dra'o| |

des na chos zad kyis dus su ma rig pa sa bon dang bcas pa spangs pa yin pas nyon sgrib gtan zad du song ba dang gcig| [244] rjes thob rgya yan pa med pa'i 'phags chen de'i ngor dag pa'i snod bcud kyis snang ba 'ba' zhig tu brtan g.yo thams cad 'char ba ste| de gnyis kyis ldog cha kho na nas de yan la bogs dbyung du med pa'i rgyu mtshan gyis ye shes de dbyings su zad cing phyir mi ldog tshul khyad par can du snang zhing 'di ni snang ba'i 'phel zad pa'i skabs su'ang sbyor| 'o na gong gi tshad

⁸⁷² JTNs *bor*

dang chos zad kyī spang bya spong lugs gang zhe na| mngon sum du rig pa dang|
 nyams snang gong 'phel du nyon mongs rtsal zhan du song nas tshad phebs skabs
 thog ma'i mnyam bzhag des nyon sgrib lhag ma med par spongs la| chos zad kyis
 kyang shes sgrib rim gyis gtan zad du byas nas 'gro ste| kun kyang mnyam bzhag
 rtog med yin yang| 'od gsal dag pa rang snang gi snang cha ma nub pa'i 'dzin med
 kyī ye shes lam du byed pa'o| |

chos nyid zad lugs de 'dra yin na mi 'thad de| de skabs su dbang gnyis las 'jug pa la
 dbang ba'i rtags su snang ba rim gyis zad dus lag sor tsam 'od lngar gsal ba'i tshe de
 la rig pa ma bcug par bzhag pas rang yal nas dbyings su 'jug par bshad pa dang 'gal
 ba'i phyir zhe na| skyon med de| snang ba zad lugs de ni tha mal gyi brtan g.yo'i
 snang ba 'di nyid 'od lngar snang ba de zad tshul du rgyal ba klong chen pas bshad
 pas| [245] 'jug pa la dbang ba'i skabs kyī snang ba nub 'gro rgyu de lus kyī nram pa
 'di'i rdzas rgyun gyi 'od lnga sogs la byed pa 'dra lags|

zhes dri tshig lag pa'i grangs ldan gyi lan du btsun phrug skar ma'i ge sar gyis phul
 ba dge zhing bkra shis| | |

A Reply to Questions⁸⁷³

[240] The following is in response to questions received from 'Light of the Clouds'.⁸⁷⁴

[*Question*] How does the settling meditation (*'jog sgom*) of the Great Perfection function as the perfection stage (*rdzogs rim*)?

[*Answer*] It is unlike other forms of settling meditation. Here, you abandon the nine forms of activity,⁸⁷⁵ and settle, without contrivance, within the intrinsic nature (*chos nyid*) of your own mind. As a result, wind-energies (*rlung*) are naturally brought to a

⁸⁷³ As noted above, the text is untitled in the original.

⁸⁷⁴ This line is puzzling. 'Light of the clouds' (*sprin gyi sgron ma*) could be a poetic synonym for "star" (*skar ma*), and thus a reference to sKar-ma'i ge-sar, the name which appears in the text's colophon. However, as it stands, the colophon names "the young monk sKar-ma'i ge-sar" (*btsun phrug skar ma'i ge sar*) as the text's *author*. This name is not attested in any other work by 'Jigs-med bstan-pa'i nyi-ma that I have seen.

⁸⁷⁵ *bya ba dgu phrugs*. That is, outer, inner and secret forms of physical action, vocal action mental action. See YCRa vol. 2: 329.

halt from the place where they are active⁸⁷⁶ in the right channel (*ro ma; rasanā*) and left channel (*rkyang ma; lalanā*); and, through the force of their entering, remaining and dissolving in the central channel (*dbu ma; avadhūti*), the clear light, self-arisen wisdom is made manifest. This means that [the basis of the practice here] is superior to the ordinary basis.

It is through the effort of letting go of the mind's deliberate thinking (*rtsol rtog*) and all physical and vocal activity that the clear light dawns. It is necessary to put a stop to the conceptualisation (*kun rtog*) that obscures the clear light. There must be a stage at which the wind-energies that convey this [conceptualisation] cease, and it follows that this must occur as a sign of having abandoned activity.

By settling in a direct vision (*cer mthong*) of the intrinsic nature of one's own awareness, you can cause the wind-energies to dissolve into the [*ava*]dhūti [i.e., the central channel]. This is one of form of entrance for wind-energy and mind as is explained in the *Guhyasamāja*, for example, which teaches that simply through focusing attention on the indestructible *tilaka* at the heart, the wind-energies can be brought into the central channel. By settling with the mind at rest, one can reduce movement in the right and left channels. [241] And, as that happens, there is no other option but for [the wind-energies] to enter, remain and dissolve in the central channel. The dawning of the pure awareness of clear light that occurs at that time is superior to ordinary processes, because other forms of clear light are not wisdom in which there is realization of the intrinsic nature (*dharmatā*). The meaning of the intrinsic nature, which was realized with certainty earlier, when the false cave of appearances collapsed (*snang ba'i rdzun phug gtib pa*), and the arising of the realization (*dgongs pa*) of clear light that takes place here in this moment blend together as a 'single taste' (*ro gcig*). Through this crucial point, you can tear down conditioned existence from its very foundations.

The way this blending takes place is not through thinking, "This is like what I understood earlier," as if applying a patch. Rather, through turning your attention within, and then settling in the essence of clear light itself, you can rest in the very nature of primordial emptiness without origin, beyond [notions of] 'meditation' and 'meditator'. In this, the object is mind's intrinsic nature and the subject is innate mindfulness (*gnyug ma'i dran pa*). This means that the meditation contains within it

⁸⁷⁶ JTNs vol. 3, 240: *rgyu ba'i gnas* for *rgyu ba gnas*.

all the comparable factors that are present when generosity and so on are accumulated for an immeasurable great aeon, because this co-emergent, self-arising wisdom incorporates special means.

You might ask, “What is the crucial point that makes it unnecessary to meditate on the intrinsic nature of objects, but necessary only to settle in the intrinsic nature of mind?” Well, even in the meditation of noble (*ārya*) beings, the most important factor, which is the subsiding of dualistic perception (*gnyis snang*) is experienced in the intrinsic nature of one’s own mind. [242] So, for this it is important to enquire into the meaning of what we call “actualising cessation” (*’gog pa mngon tu byas*).

Here, therefore, the special feature of the Great Perfection is that the meditative equipoise involves appearances (*snang bcas*). There is no need for the generation phase beforehand, nor for the faculties to diminish when clear light dawns. And it appears that there is still a lot to investigate concerning this latter point. Practices such as separating the flanks of saṃsāra and nirvāṇa (*’khor ’das ru shan phye ba*) and settling in naturalness (*rnal dbab*) are preparatory stages for causing clear light to arise when it has not arisen, whereas practices such as training with *hūṃ* and searching for the mind (*sems tshol*) are for blending [clear light] with the intrinsic nature (*chos nyid*) once it has arisen. They are therefore very important key points of this vehicle.

In short, as the perfection stage refers to the wisdom that arises from the wind-energies having entered, remained in, and dissolved in the central channel, its characteristics are perfectly complete here in this [system] too.

[*Question*] It is taught that at the stage of the so-called ‘dissolution into intrinsic reality’ (*chos nyid zad pa*) among the four visions of Thod-rgal even the visions of buddha-forms and light-spheres (*thig le*) disappear. What is meant by that?

[*Answer*] These days there are many who explain this as meaning that the buddha-forms (*sku*) and light-spheres must also diminish, but that is overstating things (*ha cang thal*). If all appearances, both pure and impure, were to cease, then we would have to say that the buddhas lack the wisdom that knows all things (*ji snyed mkhyen pa*).

Therefore, the second Omniscient Buddha in both *Yid bzhin mdzod* and *Thod*

rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza' skar [243] establishes by means of the example of the new moon that the dissolution of wisdom in the intrinsic nature is equivalent to the melding (*'khyil ba*) of wisdom. Just so, we must explain that self-arisen wisdom and its expressive power, all the visions of the four lamps, meld, dissolve into, or do not return from, the inconceivable intrinsic nature. How is that? Generally, all the paths of the four visions belong only to the paths of training (*slob pa'i lam*): the direct realization of the intrinsic nature to the path of accumulation, the increase of experience to the path of joining, awareness reaching full measure to the path of seeing, dissolution into intrinsic reality to the path of meditation, whereas the fruition, the precious sphere of spontaneous presence (*lhun grub rin po che'i sbubs*) corresponds to the path of no-more-training. This is clearly explained in the *Nam mkha' klong yangs* and elsewhere.

In some of his writings, the omniscient one [i.e., Klong-chen rab-'byams] explains that [awareness] reaching full measure corresponds to the seven impure stages (*ma dag sa bdun*) and the dissolution into intrinsic reality to the pure stages. I think that as in glorious Candrakīrti's commentary (*tīka*) on [Nāgārjuna's] *Yuktiṣaṣṭikā*, where the single path of seeing is divided into fifteen moments, here the seven impure stages are divisions of aspects in the path of seeing alone. This is thus like the explanation given in many other tantras that a single session of actual clear light on the path of seeing can eradicate the seven afflictive obscurations (*nyon sgrib skor bdun*). The other part [of the assertion] is also similar.

Therefore, as ignorance and its seeds are overcome at the time of the dissolution into intrinsic reality, afflictive obscurations have completely dissolved. [244] Thus, from the perspective of the great noble ones whose post-meditation is not dispersed, all animate and inanimate phenomena arise exclusively as the appearance of a pure environment and its inhabitants. Beyond that, from only the reverse-characteristics (*ldog cha*) of these two, there is no further enhancement, and therefore, wisdom has dissolved into absolute space (*dbyings*) and appears, in a special sense, irreversible. This also applies at the stages of the increase and dissolution of the visions.

Well then, you might ask, “How are the factors to be abandoned overcome at the earlier stages and [at stage of] dissolution into intrinsic reality?” At [the stages of] directly realising awareness and the increase of experience and visions, the power of the afflictions is weakened. Then, at the stage of [awareness] reaching full

measure the original meditation overcomes all afflictive obscurations (*nyon sgrib; kleśāvaraṇa*) without remainder. Then, at the stage of dissolution into intrinsic reality, cognitive obscurations (*shes sgrib; jñeyāvaraṇa*) are gradually brought to a permanent end. At all these [stages] meditative equipoise is non-conceptual. Nonetheless, they involve taking as the path wisdom in which there is no clinging and in which the apparent aspect of the pure self-manifestations of clear light has not yet faded.

You might say that it is unreasonable to claim that this is how the mode of dissolution into intrinsic reality occur, because it contradicts the explanation concerning the sign of gaining power over animation (*'jug pa la dbang ba*), one of the two types of power.⁸⁷⁷ There it is said that when appearances gradually dissolve, once a finger's worth appears clearly as five-coloured light, then, by settling without directing pure awareness, one disappears spontaneously (*rang yal*) and enters basic space.⁸⁷⁸

There is no fault however, because the victorious Klong-chen-pa explained that that mode of the dissolution of appearances concerns dissolution of the appearances of the ordinary animate and inanimate world when they appear as five-coloured light. [245] Thus, the fading of appearances at the stage of power over animation applies to the five-coloured lights of the material continuum of the features of one's body, and so on.

⁸⁷⁷ Klong-chen rab-'byams explains the two powers in *Thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza' skar* as follows: "The two powers are over creation (*skye ba*) and animation (*'jug pa*). 'Power over creation' refers to the instantaneous display of emanations to guide [beings] in appropriate ways. It is the capacity to liberate three thousand beings in an instant by directing one's pure awareness at them. 'Power over animation' is the capacity to move material objects and cause them to speak by directing pure awareness towards them. One thereby guides beings by producing the sound of the Dharma from lotuses, wish-granting trees and so on, and through miracles and emanating light." (KLR vol. 9, 275: dbang gnyis ni skye ba dang 'jug pa'o| skye ba la dbang ba gang la gang 'dul gyi sprul pa kad cig gis ston pa dang| de'i sems can sum stong la rig pa bcug pas| skad cig de la grol bar nus pa'o| 'jug pa la dbang ba ni| bems po la rig pa bcug pas 'gul ba dang skad 'byin par nus tel padma dang dpag bsam gyi shing la sogs pa las chos kyi sgra sgrogs shing| rdzu 'phrul dang 'od 'gyed pas 'gro ba 'dul ba'o||
⁸⁷⁸ In *Thod rgal gyi rgyab yig nyi zla gza' skar* Klong-chen rab-'byams discusses this in the section on the fourth vision: "At that time, even a finger appears vividly in the form of light. And if you wish to use the support of your physical form to fact for the welfare of sentient beings, then by directing your pure awareness to your finger, your body and outer appearances naturally 'dissipate' (*rang log*), lacking in essence, appearing like the moon in water. And you remain for as long as the aeon's gathering of sentient beings is not exhausted, carrying out the activity of liberating beings into basis space by means of the two powers." (KLR vol. 9, 274: de'i tshe sor mo tsam 'od kyi nram par bkra lam me ba snang ste| lus kyi nram pa'i rten des sems can gyi don byed par 'dod na| sor mo la rig pa gtad pas lus dang phyi'i snang ba thams cad chu'i zla ba ltar snang ba la ngo bo med par rang log nas bskal pa'i sems can gyi tshogs ma zad kyi bar du bzhugs nas dbang nram par gnyis kyi 'gro ba dbyings su grol ba'i phrin las mdzad pa)

As a reply to questions numbering as many as arms, this was offered by the young monk sKar-ma'i ge-sar. May it be virtuous and auspicious!

II. Text by g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol

1. rDzogs pa chen po'i lam nyam su len tshul

YCRa vol. 2: 403–414; YCRb vol. 2: 370–379;

Following YCRb – it is slightly different and more reliable

spyir 'od gsal rdzogs pa chen po'i lam nyams su len pa la| sngon 'gro dngos gzhi rjes
gsum yod pa las| dang po sngon 'gro sems kyī khang bu bshig pa'i man ngag| de la
rtsad bcad pa| mtshang btsal ba| byung gnas 'gro gsum la brtag pa dang gsum yod pa
las|

dang po rtsad bcad pa ni| rkun po ngos 'dzin lta bu'i man ngag khams gsum 'khor
ba'i 'khor rtsa ngos zin dgos pa yin| 'di'i skabs su deng sang gi khrid mkhan phal
cher gyis slob bu rnams la khyod kyī lus ngag yid gsum gtso gang che dpyod kyis
zer| des kyang kha kha rgyug mchu mchu rgyug tsam gyis khos cig bsam 'dug gi|
thog mar 'khrul mkhan sogs sems yin pas sems gtso che zer| yang de la khyod kyī
sems la kha dog dang dbyibs gzugs sogs yod med dang byung gnas 'gro gsum la rtog
dpyod gyis dang zer| des kyang ci yang med gi zer ba tsam na khyod shes yod gi da
ma bcos par zhog la ar⁸⁷⁹ gtad sogs su ltos nas bsgsom zer na'ang| de 'dra 'chad pa la
phyi sgo phyi nas bsdam| nang sgo nang nas bsdams te gsang rgya dam por byed mi
dgos| de phyag rdzogs dbu gsum gang gi yang lugs ma red| de lta bu zhig jo rgan ma
zhig gis kyang shes nus pas de tsam ston pa'i ched rdo rje 'chang byon yang mi dgos
pas srol ngan de phyin chad snub thub dgos gsungs| rang lugs la gang zag gi bdag
'dzin 'khor rtsar bzhed pas blo phyin ci log gi ngor phung po lnga'am lus ngag yid
gsum la bdag gam ngar snang ngo| |

de la bdag tu 'dzin pa'am ngar 'dzin par byed pas de nyid dgag bya'i snang tshul
nges pa [371] zer ba yin pas gang zag gi bdag 'dzin 'khor rtsar bzhed pa yin| chos kyī
bdag 'dzin shes sgrīb yin par 'dod do| |

⁸⁷⁹ YCRa YCRb a

rgyal tshab byams pas|

'khor gsum rnam par rtog pa gang| |
de ni shes bya'i sgrib par 'dod⁸⁸⁰| |

ces gsungs pa de mdo nas sngags kyi bar du de ltar khas len pa las| gzhan du sgyur
mi dgos| gzhan gyi lhan po rgyab mi dgos gzhan dang bsre mi dgos bsre na mi
'grigs| ji ltar mi 'grigs na| phyi rabs pa dag gis dgag bya la bden grub sbyar nas de
nyid dgag bya nges par bzhed pas bden 'dzin nyon sgrib tu 'dod pas chos kyi bdag
'dzin yang 'khor rtsar bzhed pas gang zag gcig gis blo ngor 'khor rtsar 'dod tshul mi
'dra ba gnyis bzung mi bde bas mi 'grigs| gzhan yang rang lugs la nyan rang gis chos
kyi bdag med yongs su rdzogs par ma rtogs par 'dod pa dang| gzhan gyis nyan rang
gis chos kyi bdag med rdzogs par rtogs par 'dod pa sogs yin pas de gnyis bsre na mi
'grigs pas| dper na gro ma dang mar khu bsres ba lta bu'i gcig la gcig gis phan thog
pa gcig grogs gcig gis byed pa zhig yin na bsre chog pa la de min pas bsre mi dgos|
dper na rang lugs la nges shes gting nas skye| phu thag nang nas chod par byed pa
gal che| gzhan lugs la yang deng nas byang chub snying po'i bar du dad pa dag
snang byed pa gal che bas de ni skye bo ya rabs kyi lugs yin gsungs|

spyir bod 'dir grub mtha' nyi tshe zhig dang bdun yod pas de dag thams cad la rang
rang gi lam nas rnam grol byang chub sgrub pa'i lam tshang la ma nor ba re yod pa
yin pas de rnams phan tshun bsre mi dgos gsungs|

gnyis pa mtshang btsal ba ni| bdag 'dzin des ji ltar 'dzin na ril po gcig bden du
'dzin| de nyid ldog byed gcig gi gnyen po du ma yin pas phung po lnga dang| de ^[372]
yang gzugs kyi phung po lta bu la mtshon na rdul phran cha med du bshig na gcig
yin pa dang 'gal la| bden pa'i gnyen po rdzun pa dang mi rtag pa yin pas skad cig
skad cig gis 'gyur ba'i bdag nyid can de phra ba chos nyid kyi mi rtag pa dang| rags
pa rgyun gyi mi rtag pa yin pas rgyu rkyen rten 'brel tsam las bden par grub pa med
pa'i phyir na de ltar rtogs tshe bdag 'dzin rang log tu 'gro bas gang zag gi bdag med
rtogs pa red|

⁸⁸⁰ *Ratnagotravibhāga (Uttaratantra)* 14a (Tib 14cd): trimañḍalavikalpo yas taj jñeyāvaraṇaṃ matam
|

lus ngag yid gsum gtso gang che brtags pa'i skabs 'dir sems gtso che bar 'dod kyang|
 zhib par brtags na lus kyang gtso che ste| sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa'i sgor 'jug pa la
 sor byang sngags gsum min pa'i sgor 'jug tshul med pas des na dang por so sor thar
 pa'i sdom pa rgyud la skye ba la gling gsum gyi skyes pa bud med dang| de'i nang
 nas kyang 'dzam bu'i gling gi lus rten khyad par can dgos te| gzhan lha dang| klu
 dang| nam mkha' lding sogs la mi skye| sangs rgyas dngos su byon kyang phan pa'i
 thabs med| lha dang klu la sogs pa la byang sems kyi sdom pa tsam skye ba yod
 kyang sems kho nas mi yong| lus ngag yid gsum tshogs dgos| sngags bla med kyi
 sgor 'jug pa la khams drug ldan gyi mi'i lus rten zhig min na dbang bzhi'i snod du
 mi rung ste mtshungs ldan gyi rgyu med pa'i phyir| de bzhin du⁸⁸¹ dal 'byor bco
 brgyad tshang ba la yang lus gtso che ste dper na byis pa btsas ma thag pa zhig la
 mig dang rna ba gnyis ka med na mthong thos gang yang med pas chos dang 'jig rten
 gnyis kyi bya ba cung zad tsam yang bsgrub mi shes pas lus kyang gtso che ste| de
 bzhin du ngag kyang gtso che bar gsungs te spang blang gi gnas ston pa la ngag
 mtshan nyid tshang ba smra shes shing brda 'phrod pa zhig nges par dgos te| de med
 na dud 'gro'i sgra skad tsam gyis mi phan| lus ngag yid gsum la brten nas 'byung ste|
 lus kyi brang dang mid pa [373] lce dang so rkan sogs la brten te sems kyi kun nas
 bslang te rlung gi rta la ngag yi ge phreng ba la brten pa tshig don thams cad 'byung
 bas ngag gtso che| sems rnam shes tshogs brgyad dang 'khor sems byung lnga bcu
 dang bcas pa de med na ro red| thog mar 'khor bar skye ba po sems red| lus ngag yid
 gnyis 'dor len byed 'gro ni red| bdag 'dzin ma rig 'khrul ba'i dbang gis snang| snang
 ba ltar du zhen⁸⁸² zhen pa ltar du a 'thas bden 'dzin gyis bdag dang bdag gir 'dzin
 pa'am nga dang nga yi bar 'dzin pa sogs 'byung ba yin pas phyugs dang phyugs rdzi
 lta bu'i tshul gyis bdag gir 'dzin pa'am nga yi bar 'dzin ni red| spyir 'khor ba ya
 mtha' thug med| skye ba ya mtha' thug med| 'khrul ba ya mtha' thug med nas tha ma
 de ring⁸⁸³ da lta la ma thug gi bar du srid pa 'khor ba 'dir 'khyam ni red| de'i skabs
 na'ang 'khyams pa po'i gang zag de la ma dag 'khor ba'i gnas na lus ngag yid gsum
 mi tshang ba'i sems zhig med| gang du 'khyams pa'i gnas de la rigs drug 'khor ba'i
 gnas ris drug yod pas lus kyang tha dad do| |

⁸⁸¹ Corr. from YCRa and YCRb *tu*.

⁸⁸² YCRa omits |

⁸⁸³ YCRa *rang*

'dod khams kyi lus ni gdos bcas sha khrag gi lus| gzugs khams rnams su dwangs ma
'od kyi lus| gzugs med na ting nge'dzin yid rig gi lus yod par theg chen pa'i bzhed
pa ltar lus ngag yid gsum tshogs pa la brten nas las bsags| las kyi dbang gis khams
gsum 'khor bar skye ni red ma gtogs las ma bsags par sems rkyang ba 'khor bar skye
ba mi srid do| |

dper na las ma bsags par sems kho na sngun nas nya lcags kyus 'dren pa lta bu khrid
'ong mkhan zhig dang| rjes nas sha ba khyis ded pa lta bu'i ded 'ong mkhan gtan nas
yod pa min| las 'ba' zhig gis byed pa yin te|

'jig rten las kyis byas shing las kyis sprul| |

las ni kun byed ri mo mkhan dang ^[374] mtshungs| |

zhes zag bcas kyi las de la dge mi dge mi g.yo ba'i las dang gsum yod| de gang
bsgrub kyang lus ngag yid gsum tshogs pa la brten dgos| sems rkyang bas mi 'grub|
dag pa sangs rgyas kyi zhing na sku gsung thugs gsum mi tshang ba'i thugs rkyang
ba zhig mi srid pas de ltar lus ngag yid gsum sgyed pu sum tshugs lta bu yin pas gtso
gang che ngos zin dka' na'ang mdo nas sngags kyi bar du sems 'di gtso che bar
gsungs yod pas dpyad sgo tsam zhig btod nas da rang rang gis brtags shing dpyad
nas lung rigs man ngag rnams dang mi 'gal ba zhig nges shes gting nas 'drong ba
zhig ma skyes na rnam pa mi dag ni red gsungs|

gsum pa byung gnas 'gro gsum la brtags pa ni *khregs chod ye bab sor bzhag*
dang *de'i yang yig* sogs sngon byon gyi rig 'dzin brgyud pa'i gsung srol mang po
yod kyang| skabs 'dir rdo grub rin po che'i zhal nas nyag bla rin po che la gsungs pa
ltar 'chad pa la| chos thams cad yul dang yul can gnyis su bsdu ni red| dper na shes
bya'i chos thams cad bden pa gnyis su bsdu nas bstan pa ltar yul thams cad byung
sa gnas sa 'gro sa gsum du bsdu| yul⁸⁸⁴ can thams cad byung mkhan gnas mkhan
'gro mkhan gsum du bsdu pa yin la| dang po byung sa brtags pa'i tshe gzhi zhig la
sbyar dgos pas| dper na mdun gyi ka ba lta bu dmigs tshe| ka 'dzin mig shes kyi
skad cig dang po ka ba'o snyam pa'i tshe nga'i shes pa 'di ka ba las byung ba yin
nam min snyam nas| de'i tshe yul can la mi dpyod par yul la dpyad nas ka ba rang gi

⁸⁸⁴ Corr. from YCRa YCRb *yum*

ngo bo ye nas stong bzhin du snang cha ma 'gags par snang ba dang| snang bzhin du
ngo bo ye stong spros pa dang bral ba'i bdag nyid du gnas pa yin te| snang ba'i
snang tshugs ma shor bzhin du stong| stong pa'i [375] stong tshugs ma shor bzhin
snang ba'i snang stong zung 'jug gi bdag nyid du nges dgos| gzhan gyis ka ba rang gi
ngo bos mi stong ka ba bden grub kyis stong par 'dod| des na bden grub shes bya la
mi srid pa dang| don dam dpyod pa'i ngor mi stong ba gnyis snang stong zung 'jug
dang| thabs thabs byung dang| chos nyid chos can du 'brel ba med do| |

bden grub shes bya la mi srid pas| des stong pa'i stong nyid kyang mi srid de| rta ba
lang gis stong zer ba lta bu yin| gal te srid na yang snang stong zung 'jug mi rung ste|
ngo bo tha dad 'dod pa'i snang stong zung 'jug skud pa dkar nag sbrel ba bzhin du
mi srid pa'i phyir ro| |

spyir *mdo langkar gshegs pa* na| stong nyid tha shal ba zhig dang bdun gsungs yod
pas gcig gcig gis stong pa dang| mo gsham bus stong pa dang| ri bong rwas stong|
dbul bo nor gyis stong ba sogs stong nyid tha shal ba yin pas| 'di lta bu ni thar 'dod
kyi skyes bus nyams su len bya'am bsgom bya min no| |

ka ba don dpyod kyi ngor mi stong par bden grub kyis stong par 'dod pas ni| bden
grub sogs zhig snang skye yod kyang ma stong bar ka ba bden grub rtag brtan ther
zug gi rnam par yod gi gsungs so| |

bla ma rgya sde bas| ka ba rang gi ngo bos stong par bzhed kyang stong nyid spros
bral yin par bzhed pas snang cha spangs pa'i stong cha de spros bral yin par go rgyu
med| des rjes 'brang rnam kyis mi pham la snang stong zung 'jug nam du yang yod
dgos na 'phags pa'i mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi ngor ka ba skya shing gi rnam par yod
dgos so zer na yang| dngos su de la lan gsungs med kyang rang lugs 'dod tshul gyis
khegs pa yin gsungs| yul can la dpyad tshe mig shes lta bu la mtshon na yul gsal
zhing rig pa'i cha de 'od gsal gnyug ma'i ye shes kyi 'bras rtags phyi la shar ba yin
pas| gsal zhing rig pa shes pa'i mtshan nyid [376] gsungs pa yin te| ma go ba go| ma
shes pa shes| ma rtogs pa rtogs par byed pa zer ni red ma gtogs (mar me lta bu) gsal
dkar bzhag ni 'dra 'dra zhig yod ni ma red| dbyings spros bral stong chen gyi 'bras
rtags phyi la shar bas ngo bo ye stong spros pa dang bral ba| dbyings ye zung 'jug gi
cha nas shar ba'i 'bras rtags su de gnyis zung 'jug dbyer med kyi bdag nyid can yin

pas 'di ni seng ge dkar mo'i bu rgyud lta bu yin gsungs| des na rdo grub rin po ches
 dbyings ye zung 'jug 'di chos thams cad kyi dbus na gnas yod| srog tu zhugs yod|
 phyag rgyas btab yod gsungs pas na da lta'i snang ba 'di dag thams cad bde⁸⁸⁵
 gshegs snying po'am gnyug ma'i 'od gsal gyi bar na gcig gis kyang chod yod ni ma
 red (phyag gi mdzub mo bsgrengs te) 'di'i 'ba' ri 'bu ra ka si ko se 'di cig yin ni red
 gsungs te bzhad song gsungs so| |

rdo grub rin po ches sbyor dngos rjes gsum zhig tshang dgos| de tshang nas lo gsum
 bar tu byung gnas 'gro gsum gyi lta ba 'di bsgom nus na dngos gzhi khregs chod
 sogs bsgom rgyu ma byung bar shi song na bar dor grol thub gsungs ni red| 'di ni
 shin tu yag ste| 'di 'dra go rgyu zhig yod ni ma red| gang zag des bar do'i snang cha
 thams cad snang stong zung 'jug la sogs par nges pas mnyam bzhag gi rang⁸⁸⁶ dus
 der mtha' bzhi'i 'dzin pa dang| rtag chad du 'dzin pa dang| chos dang bdag 'dzin
 sogs gang yang mi 'dzin| 'di ni lam zhugs kyang yin| rdzogs pa chen po yang yin|
 mdor na 'khor 'das lam gsum gyis bsdu pa'i chos thams cad dbyings ye zung 'jug
 gam snang stong zung 'jug min pa gcig kyang med| ma dag 'khor ba'i gnas na gang
 snang gi chos thams cad snang stong zung 'jug min pa gcig kyang med| mthar thug
 'bras bu'i dus na gdod ma'i stong chen gyi [377] dbyings las shar ba'i snang cha zhing
 sku sogs ye shes rang snang gi bkod pa mtha' yas par snang ba yin gsungs| rnal 'byor
 lam pa'i gnas skabs na chos thams cad kyi gnas lugs dbyings ye zung 'jug mngon
 sum du rtogs nas rjes thob du gang snang snang stong zung 'jug du bun bun shig
 shig tu shar thub pa yin gsungs|

bla ma nyag blas rdo grub rin po che la skabs 'di'i byung gnas 'gro gsum gyi lta ba
 dang| dbu ma'i lta ba gnyis la mtho dman yod dam med zhus tshe| mtho dman los
 yod| dbu ma mdo red| de yan chad na sngags kyi rgyud sde gsum yod| de yan na
 yang sngags nang rgyud sde gsum de'i nang nas kyang theg dgu'i yang rtse rdzogs
 pa chen po a ti yo ga yin pas khyad los yod| gter ston tshang khyad gzhi'i steng nas
 khyad chos chen po zhig 'jog rgyu yod ni red gsungs|

'o na 'dzin stangs yod dgos sam mi dgos zhus tshe de dgos na sngon 'gro sems kyi
 khang bu bshig pa ma red brtsigs pa red gsungs| bla ma lung rtogs tshang gis ni 'dzin

⁸⁸⁵ YCRa *bdes*

⁸⁸⁶ YCRa *ring*

stangs yod dgos gsungs ni yin zhus tshe| 'o gsungs pa yin gsungs| bla ma nyag blas
rin po ches 'dzin stangs med gsungs pa yin| bla ma lung rtogs tshang gis yod dgos
gsungs ni yin| bla ma tshang khyed kyis gang ltar bzhed pa yin gsungs pas| khong gi
'dzin stangs 'jog ni min zhus|

de na khyad gzhi'i steng gi khyad chos ji ltar yod lugs zhus tshe| snang stong zung
'jug nges pa'i nges shes mar me lta bu'i steng nas mnyam bzhag la lhod se bzhag
pa'i dus der mtha' bzhi'i 'dzin stangs gang yang med pas de'i 'bras rtags la ngo bo'i
dbyings la shar cha 'gags med du 'char thub pa 'di dbu ma la med pa'i khyad chos
yin| spyir khregs chod kyis lam shar grol dus mnyam yin pas| de dus shes rgyud la
byung gnas 'gro gsum gyi lta bas khyab yod pa'i 'bras rtags su [378] gnyen po gzhan
bsten mi dgos par rang grol du 'gro ba 'di dbu ma la med pa'i khyad chos yin| spyir
khregs chod kyis lam shar grol dus mnyam yin pas 'di dngos gzhi'i shar grol mtshan
nyid pa min yang shar grol gyi mgo 'di nas rtsom pa yin pa'i gnad kyis 'di khregs
chod kyis sngon 'gror 'gro ba'i rgyu mtshan de ltar yin gsungs|

gzhan yang byung gnas 'gro gsum brtags tshul ni| glo bur 'khrul ba'i snang ba 'di
thog ma'i gzhi dus na med pas byung sa'i gnas kyis stong| bar du gnas sa yang med
de glo bur gyi mgron po lta bu nyag gcig yin te| dper na mig nad can gyis nam mkhar
skra shad mthong ba dang| mkhris nad can gyis dung ser por snang ba dang| chu
chab rom gyis bsdams pa bzhin du glo bur gsar byung gi bdag nyid yin pas gnas pa'i
ngo bo stong| mthar phyin 'bras dus na med pas 'gro sa'i yul gyis stong ba yin no| |

rong klong mi pham sogs kyis bzhed pa ltar| snang ba lhar bsgrub pa dang| yul can
ye shes su bsgrub pa'i skabs| tha snyad tshad ma de la tshu⁸⁸⁷ rol mthong ba la brten
pa'i kun tu tha snyad pa'i tshad ma dang| dag pa'i gzigs pa la brten pa kun tu tha
snyad pa'i tshad ma gnyis las| dang po de la mngon sum tshad ma dang rjes dpag
tshad ma sogs kyis ngor ma dag pa'i snang ba las dag par snang mi nus la| gnyis pa ni|
'phags pa'i mnyam bzhag ye shes ngor gnyis snang mtha' dag nub pa'i tshul gyis yul
yul can du 'dzin pa'i gzung 'dzin sogs gtan log tu song ba dang| rjes thob kyis skabs
na'ang snang ba bden med du 'char ba dang| sa brgyad pa'i gnas skabs na rjes thob
tu snang srid dag pa rab 'byams shar thub pa'ang yod| khyad par sangs rgyas kyis

⁸⁸⁷ YCRa *tshur*

dag pa'i gzigs ngor chu'i rdul phra rab gcig gi steng na rdul snyed kyī zhing khams
ston 'khor dang bcas pa bsam gyis mi khyab par gzigs pa ni gnas lugs mthar thug gi
[379] gzigs pa tshad ma yin pas na da lta'i so skyes 'khrul ba'i snang ba 'di dag thams
cad tshad ma yang dag min par rdzun pa bslu ba'i chos can yin par mthar thug gis
tshad ma de dag gis rtogs thub par gsungs pa'o||

rig pa yin pa'i rtags su rtog pa rang rgyud pa gcig 'char ni ma red gsungs|

gol sa thams cad dang sems kyī dri ma tsam yod rung ni ma red gsungs| rnam rtog
thams cad rig pa'i rnam ldan du 'char dgos gsungs| dper na nyi ma shar na mun pa
'thib long med pa bzhin du rig pa kho rang shar dus rnam rtog thams cad rig pa'i
rnam ldan du shar 'gro ni red gsungs|

dran shes bsten tshul ni| dran pa rnyed na sgom rnyed| dran pa stor na bsgom stor|
dran shes zhes pa ni go bzhin shes bzhin pa de'i ngang nas dran shes bsten gyī red
gsungs|

mnyam bzhag la lhod yod dgos| de'i ngang nas rtsal gang shar bag chags gsog long
med par grol bas rjes thob zer| spyod lam gyī skabs rig pa bsgrim dgos gsungs pas
so| |

mi pham pas|

man ngag byis pa'i rtsed mo 'dra| |
sgom pa ri rgyal rgya mtsho bzhin| | zhes gsungs|

ye gzhi 'pho 'gyur med pa gdod ma'i ngang%⁸⁸⁸
blo 'das spros bral ka dag bla ma la%
'khrul med rang rig ngang nas gsol ba 'debs%
tshe 'dir sangs rgyas 'grub par byin gyis rlobs% zhes so%

ye nas 'khrul med rig pa ston mdzad pa'i%

⁸⁸⁸ The punctuation here suggests that this and the following two verses belong to a *gter ma* revelation, but I have so far been unable to identify the source.

gdod ma'i mgon po ye sangs rgyas de la%
bka' drin dran pa'i ngang nas gsol ba 'debs %
snod bcud chos skur grol bar byin gyis rlobs%

rig stong chos sku'i bla ma yis%
rig pa'i bu yi bzhed ngor⁸⁸⁹ bris%
sngags kyi srung mas bya ra gyis%
dam nyams lag tu ma shor byos%

sa ma yā:

rgya rgya rgya:

⁸⁸⁹ YCRa *don*

How to Practise the Path of the Great Perfection

[370] Generally, there are three parts to practicing the path of the clear light Great Perfection: preliminaries, main part, and conclusion.

The preliminary, which is the instruction on demolishing the house of the ordinary mind, itself includes three sections: (1) probing [the mind], (2) searching for hidden flaws, and (3) an investigation of emergence, presence and departure.

1. Probing [the Mind]

In this instruction, which is likened to identifying a thief, we must recognize the source of our circling in saṃsāra. This is the point at which most teachers these days tell their students, “Analyse your body, speech, and mind. Determine which is most important.” The students then contemplate all manner of chatter and hearsay before concluding that mind is most important because it is the one that originally became deluded, and so on. Then the teacher will say such things as “Investigate whether your mind has features like colour or shape. Analyse its emergence, presence and departure.” Then when the students say, “There is nothing to it at all,” the teacher will say they have understood. Then the teacher will continue: “Now settle the mind without altering. . . . Now direct your awareness . . . and so on.”⁸⁹⁰ Yet for such explanations, it would hardly be necessary to shut the outer door from the outside, lock the inner door from the inside, or apply the seal of strictest secrecy! For this does not correspond to any tradition of Mahāmudrā, Great Perfection, or the Middle Way. And as it is perfectly intelligible even to an old nun, there would have been no need for Vajradhara to appear in order to reveal it. We must bring an end to such terrible traditions from now on.

In our own tradition, we assert that it is clinging to the self of the individual that is at the root of saṃsāra. By this, we mean a mistaken mind that perceives a self or an “I” in the five psychophysical aggregates, or the body, speech, and mind. This is what brings clinging to an “I” or a self, and therefore we say that it is certainly how the object of refutation appears. [371] Clinging to an individual self, then, is the root of saṃsāra, whereas clinging to a phenomenal self (or identity) is considered a cognitive obscuration. For, as the regent Maitreya states,

⁸⁹⁰ As noted above, I have emended *a gtad* to *ar gtad* here.

Any thought involving the three spheres
Is a cognitive obscuration, it is claimed.

This assertion applies both in the sūtras and in mantra. And there is no need to transform it into something else, to patch it up with something else, or to mix it with something else. Syncretism, in other words, is inappropriate. Why so? Adherents of the later tradition apply the term *truly existent* to the object of negation and claim that this is certainly what is to be negated. They believe that clinging to things as truly existent is an emotional obscuration, and they therefore contend that it is clinging to phenomenal identity that lies at the root of saṃsāra. And since it is rather uncomfortable for a single person to hold in the mind two contradictory beliefs concerning the root of saṃsāra at the same time, such syncretism is out of place.

Moreover, in our own tradition we make further assertions, such as that the śrāvakas and pratyekabuddhas do not realize the selflessness of phenomena completely, while others claim that they do. It would not be right, therefore, to combine these two systems. Of course, it is fine to mix two things that complement each other and go together well, like sweet potato and melted butter, but there is no need to mix things that do not. In our tradition, for example, it is important to develop a deep certainty from within and to resolve things decisively. In other traditions, it is important to maintain faith and pure perception until reaching the essence of enlightenment, so they are known as systems for honourable beings.

Generally, there are said to be more than six⁸⁹¹ major philosophical systems here in Tibet, each with its own complete path to liberation and enlightenment, and therefore there is no need to combine them.

2. Searching for Hidden Flaws

You might wonder how self-clinging functions. It involves clinging to the self as something whole, singular, and real. When it comes to overturning such clinging, the antidote to singularity is multiplicity. Breaking down the self into five aggregates and then [372] (to take form alone) to the level of the partless particle thus counteracts the notion of the self as singular. As the antidote to the idea that the self is real, we

⁸⁹¹ Literally, “six and a fraction” (*nyi tshe zhig dang bdun*), meaning six major plus some minor traditions. The figure is unusual, and I have not been able to identify exactly which schools are meant, although the four major schools of rNying-ma, Sa-skya, bKa’-brgyud, and dGe-lugs are almost certainly included, possibly with the addition of the Jo-nang and Zhi-byed.

can consider how it is false and impermanent, meaning that it has the character of changing with each passing moment. This corresponds to the subtle impermanence of its nature. The self is also impermanent at the coarser level of its continuum. It is therefore merely the interdependent connection of causes and conditions, and there is nothing more to it than this—no true existence. When we realize this, it naturally dispels any clinging to self, so this is the realization of individual selflessness.

At the stage of analysing whether body, speech, or mind is most important, the assertion is that mind is the most important factor.⁸⁹² Still, when you examine the matter closely, you find that the body is also of great significance. For instance, when entering the door of the Buddhist teachings, there can be no entrance other than by means of the *prātimokṣa*, bodhisattva, and mantra precepts. And for the *prātimokṣa* vows to arise initially in your continuum you must be either a man or a woman and not just from any of the three continents, but specifically someone with the special physical support that is unique to this continent of Jambudvīpa. The vows will not arise in anyone else, not in *devas*, *nāgas*, *garuḍas*, or any other such being. And even if the Buddha were to appear in person before these other beings, even he could not help to change this. And even though the bodhisattva vows can arise in such beings as *devas*, *nāgas*, and the like, they do not come about through mind alone; they require the combination of body, speech, and mind. In entering the door of Unsurpassed Mantra, only the physical support of a human form complete with its six elements is suitable as a vessel for the four empowerments, because without it there is no associated cause. Similarly, even if all eighteen freedoms and advantages are complete, the body is most important. For example, a new-born baby without sight or hearing will be incapable of learning even the slightest dharmic or worldly action. The body is therefore of great importance.

In a similar way, speech too is said to be very important. Revealing what must be avoided or adopted, for example, requires all the qualities of speech, as you must be able to speak and understand. Merely making sounds like an animal is of no benefit. Communication involves the body, speech, and mind. It is by means of the chest, throat, [373] tongue, teeth, palate, and so on, as well as through mental

⁸⁹² In most versions of these preliminaries, this question of whether body, speech or mind is most important belongs to the first investigation, as g.Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol makes clear in his opening remarks. It might therefore be best to understand the discussion at this point in the text as something akin to a footnote.

motivation, that all words and their corresponding meanings are produced, in dependence on the garlands of syllables, the speech that rides on the horse of wind energy. Speech too is therefore of great importance.

Without the mind, which includes the eight collections of consciousness and fifty accompanying mental states, we would be no more than a corpse. It is mind that first arises in saṃsāra. Body and speech are continually acquired and left behind.

Self-clinging appears through the force of ignorance and delusion. It is through attachment to how things appear, and through solidifying that attachment and clinging to it as real, that we cling to a self and what belongs to that self—in other words, “I” and “mine.” This is how, like a herdsman with his herd, we cling to what we take to be ours, or what we imagine belongs to the self.

Generally, there is no beginning to saṃsāra, no beginning to birth, and no beginning to delusion. We wander in saṃsāric existence, therefore, until we put an end to it. And throughout this time spent in the impure realms of saṃsāra, the individual wanderer does not have a mind in isolation but the three factors of body, speech, and mind together. The realms we wander through are of six types—the abodes of the six classes of beings in saṃsāra. Correspondingly, therefore, there are various types of body. The body of the desire realms is material and made of flesh and blood. In the form realms, there is a subtle body of light. And in the formless realms, beings have a mental “meditation” body. From the Mahāyāna viewpoint, we accumulate karma based on body, speech, and mind. And it is only through accumulating karma that we are reborn in the three realms of saṃsāra. It would be impossible for the mind alone, without accumulating karma, to be reborn in saṃsāra. There is no such thing as a solitary mind, with no accumulated karma, being pulled along like a fish caught on a hook or pursued like deer chased by dogs. It is through karma alone that rebirth takes place. As it is said, “The world is created through karma; it is through karma that it appears. Karma is what creates it all, like an artist.”^[374] Tainted karma is of three kinds: virtuous, unvirtuous, and unalterable. Yet whichever of these is accumulated, it is based on body, speech, and mind together. The mind cannot function in isolation.

It is also impossible for there to be only enlightened mind—rather than enlightened body, speech, and mind together—in a pure buddha realm. Body, speech, and mind work in combination, therefore, like the legs of a tripod. And it is difficult to identify which of them is most important. Nevertheless, from sūtra to

mantra, it is said that mind is the most important. So, having been introduced to this analysis, you must investigate and analyse the matter for yourself. But anything other than deep certainty, based on an understanding that does not contradict scripture, reasoning, or the pith instructions, is not entirely pure.

3. Emergence, Presence, and Departure

There are many traditions of explanation from the lineage of past *vidyādhara* masters, such as *Khregs chod ye babs sor bzhag*⁸⁹³ and its supplements.⁸⁹⁴ Nevertheless, on this occasion, I shall follow rDo-grub-chen Rin-po-che's explanation to Nyag-bla Rin-po-che [i.e., gTer-ston bSod-rgyal).

All phenomena are included within the two categories of object and subject. Just as all knowable phenomena are said to be included within the two truths, all objects are included within the three categories of origin, location, and destination, and all subjects within the three categories of that which arises, that which remains, and that which departs.

First, when examining the origin, you should relate the analysis to a particular basis, by focusing, for example, on a pillar in front of you. When, in the first instant of perceiving the pillar by means of the visual consciousness, you have the thought "It is a pillar," ask yourself: Does this consciousness arise from the pillar or not? At that time, without analysing the subjective mind, consider only the object pillar and how, while empty in its own essence, it still appears—its aspect of appearance being unobstructed. While appearing, the pillar is primordially empty in essence, with the character of being free from complexity. Without losing its apparent basis, it is empty, and [375] without losing its empty basis, it appears. We must be certain, therefore, that its identity is the union of appearance and emptiness.

Others assert that the pillar is not empty of its own essence but is empty of true existence. Therefore, as true existence does not exist in knowable phenomena, and phenomena themselves, such as vases, are not empty from the perspective of ultimate analysis, appearance and emptiness are not a unity, and there is no relationship of method and outcome, or of the nature of things and things

⁸⁹³ A manual written by Klong-chen rab-'byams.

⁸⁹⁴ This would seem to be a reference to *Nam mkha' klong yangs*, a supplement on *Khregs-chod*, and *Nam mkha' klong chen*, a supplement on both *Khregs-chod* and *Thod-rgal*. All these texts, including *Khregs chod ye babs sor bzhag*, are from the *Bla ma yang tig* collection, which is in turn part of the *sNyiding thig ya bzhi*.

themselves. As true existence does not exist in knowable phenomena, the emptiness that is its absence is also impossible: it is like saying a horse is empty of a cow. Even if such emptiness did exist, there could be no union of appearance and emptiness—they would differ in essence, and it would be like twisting together white and black thread. Of the seven kinds of emptiness, including the trivial, mentioned in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*,⁸⁹⁵ one thing being empty of another—as in the absence of the child of a barren woman, or of a rabbit’s horn, or when a pauper is devoid of wealth—is the trivial kind of emptiness. It is not the kind of emptiness that someone desirous of liberation should cultivate or meditate upon.

There are those who claim that while a pillar itself is not empty from the perspective of ultimate analysis, it is empty of true existence. Even if there were an impression of true existence and the like, unless the pillar itself was empty, it would have the character of being truly existent, permanent, stable, and unchanging. Blama rGya-sde said, “Even if you assert that a pillar is empty of its own essence, you accept that emptiness is freedom from conceptual elaboration. And it is meaningless to suggest that the emptiness resulting from the negation of a thing’s apparent aspect is freedom from conceptual elaboration.” The followers of this tradition might say to Mi-pham: If it is necessary for the union of appearance and emptiness to be present all the time, the features of a pale wooden pillar must also be present even during the noble ones’ wisdom of meditative equipoise. Even if Mi-pham did not address such an objection directly, it is refuted by this system’s assertions.

When investigating the subject, if we take visual consciousness as an example, the quality of cognizing and being aware of an object is itself an outward sign of the genuine wisdom of clear light. The definition of consciousness is, after all, “that which cognizes and is aware.”^[376] Consciousness is what makes the unknown known, what cognizes the uncognized, what realizes the unrealized. Of course, this does not mean it literally *illuminates* in the way a lamp does.⁸⁹⁶ As an outward sign of great empty basic space, free from conceptual elaboration, consciousness is, in essence, originally empty and free from conceptual elaboration.

⁸⁹⁵ The seven forms of emptiness mentioned in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* are: (1) emptiness of characteristics (*mtshan nyid stong pa nyid*); (2) emptiness of the nature of entities (*dngos po 'i rang bzhin stong pa nyid*); (3) emptiness of becoming (*srid pa 'i stong pa nyid*); (4) emptiness of non-becoming (*mi srid pa stong pa nyid*); (5) inexpressible emptiness (*brjod du med pa 'i stong pa nyid*); (6) emptiness of the ultimate great wisdom of the noble ones (*don dam pa 'phags pa 'i ye shes chen po stong pa nyid*); and (7) emptiness of one thing in another (*gcig gis gcig stong pa nyid*).

⁸⁹⁶ The final phrase (*mar me lta bu*) is added as an editor’s note in the Tibetan.

And as the outward sign of the union of space and wisdom, these two—consciousness and its emptiness—have the character of being inseparably united. Thus, like the cubs of a white snow lioness, we possess signs of a pure heritage.

rDo-grub Rin-po-che used to say that this inseparable union of space and wisdom lies at the heart of all phenomena: it is, in a sense, their vital force, or hallmark. And all that can be perceived right now, therefore, is included within this buddha nature or genuine clear light. Nothing whatsoever is excluded. Pointing his finger,⁸⁹⁷ he would say, “All this—the peaks and the hollows—is just the same.”

rDo-grub Rin-po-che would also say that the three parts of preparation, main part, and conclusion must be complete. And when they are complete, anyone who meditates on this view of emergence, presence and departure for three years will be able to gain liberation during the intermediate state, even if they were to die before ever meditating upon Khregs-chod itself. This is excellent and is not how it is usually understood. Such a practitioner would indeed have gained the certainty that all that appears in the intermediate state is the union of appearance and emptiness. For the duration of meditative equipoise, there would be no clinging, not even to the four extremes, to permanence and nonexistence, or to the self-identity of an individual or phenomena, and so on. This is to have set out on the path; it is also the Great Perfection.

In short, all phenomena without exception, whether they belong to saṃsāra, nirvāṇa, or the path, are the union of absolute space and wisdom, or the union of appearance and emptiness. On the impure, saṃsāric plane, all that appears, without even the slightest exception, is the union of appearance and emptiness. At the time of the ultimate fruition too, appearances that arise out of the space of great, primordial emptiness [377]—the pure realms and buddha forms—appear as the limitless, self-manifesting array of wisdom. And at the stage when yogis are on the path, there is direct realization of the natural state of all phenomena, which is the union of absolute space and wisdom. Then, during the post-meditation phase, perceptions arise as the union of appearance and emptiness, illusory and insubstantial.

Bla-ma Nyag-bla once asked rDo-grub Rin-po-che whether there was any qualitative distinction between the view of emergence, presence and departure in this context and the Middle Way view. Rin-po-che replied that there is a difference. “The

⁸⁹⁷ Once again, this clause—*phyag gi mdzub mo bsgrengs te*—appears as a note in the original text.

Middle Way,” he said, “corresponds to the sūtras, above which are the three tantra classes of the Mantra Vehicle, and beyond those, the three inner tantra classes of mantra. It is among these final three classes that we find the very pinnacle of all nine vehicles, the Great Perfection or Atiyoga. So, there is a difference.”

gTer-ston Tshang [i.e., gTer-ston bSod-rgyal) would say, “Aside from this distinction in terms of the basis, there is also a great difference in the features themselves.” When he was asked, “Well then, must there be a philosophical standpoint (*'dzin stangs*)⁸⁹⁸ or not?” he replied, “If there were, this would not be breaking down the house of the mind so much as constructing it.” When told that Lama Lung-rtogs says there must be a philosophical standpoint, he said, “Oh yes, he does say that.” So, while Bla-ma Nyag-bla says there should be no standpoint, Bla-ma Lung-rtogs said there must be. When Bla-ma Tshang (gYu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol) was asked, “How do you believe it is?” he said he too didn’t think there should be a standpoint.⁸⁹⁹

Then, when asked what are the distinctive features over and above the difference in the basis itself, the lama said that here, when settling with ease in meditative equipoise, based on a lamp-like certainty as to the union of appearance and emptiness, there is no philosophical standpoint whatsoever related to the four extremes. The sign of this is that whatever arises within the basic space of the essence of mind can do so without obstruction—and this is a special feature not found in the Middle Way.

On the path of Khregs-chod, the arising and liberation of thoughts occur simultaneously. So, at that stage, as a sign that the view of emergence, presence and departure has pervaded the mind stream, [378] there is self-liberation without the need for any other antidote. And this is another special feature not to be found in the Middle Way.

Although the path of Khregs-chod generally involves the simultaneous arising and liberation of thoughts, this practice (of emergence, presence and departure) does not feature the genuine form of liberation upon arising, as that belongs only to the main practice. Still, it does mark the point at which such

⁸⁹⁸ Sometimes translated as “modal apprehension”, this refers to the deliberate focusing upon, or maintaining of, a (philosophical) notion in meditation. See Chapter Four above.

⁸⁹⁹ The fact that g. Yu-khog Chos-dbyings rang-grol is here cited in his own text underscores the point that this was compiled an anonymous editor.

liberation upon arising begins, and that is why it is considered a Khregs-chod preliminary.

There is a further point here concerning the investigation of emergence, presence and departure. As adventitious, delusory appearances are absent at the time of the original ground, they are empty in terms of their origin. Nor is there anywhere that such appearances remain in the interim—they are all just as transient as an unexpected guest. They are like the falling hairs that appear in the sky for someone with an eye disorder, or the sight of a yellow conch to someone with jaundice, or water in its frozen state. As such analogies indicate, appearances are by nature adventitious; they constantly arise afresh and are therefore without any abiding essence. Finally, as such phenomena are absent at the time of the ultimate fruition, they are also empty in terms of their destination.

As Rong-zom, Klong-chen rab-'byams, Mi-pham, and others have asserted, when establishing appearances as divine and the subjective mind as wisdom, conventional valid cognition has two aspects: that based on narrow, limited vision and that based on vision that is pure. If we consider only the first of these, it is impossible, from the perspective of either valid direct perception or valid inference, for pure appearances to derive from impure appearances. Considering the second, however, from the perspective of the wisdom that is present in the meditative equipoise of noble beings, the fading of all dualistic perception means that the dualism of clinging to subject and object is definitively averted. And, even during the post-meditation phase, appearances arise without being taken as real. Then, on the eighth bodhisattva level (*bhūmi*), during the post-meditation phase, appearance and existence dawn as infinite purity. In the pure perception of the buddhas, the vision, within even a single atom, of inconceivable pure realms, each containing teachers together with their retinues, as numerous as atoms, is the valid cognition of the ultimate vision of how things are. As this is the valid cognition of ultimate [379] vision, we can realize how all the delusory appearances that we currently have as ordinary beings are not truly valid but are in fact false and deceptive.

A sign of pure awareness (*rig pa*) is that no ordinary thought will arise. Neither potential deviations nor the slightest stains of ordinary mind should be present. All thoughts should arise with the quality of pure awareness. Just as when the sun rises there is no possibility for darkness or gloom to remain, when pure awareness dawns, all thoughts should arise with pure awareness's features.

As for maintaining mindfulness (*dran pa; smṛti*) and vigilance (*shes bzhin; samprajanya*), when you have mindfulness, you have meditation, and when you let mindfulness slip away, meditation also slips away. Being “mindful and aware” here means being continually cognizant, continually present.

Meditative equipoise should be relaxed. Within such a state, any mental expressions that arise will be freed before they have the chance to create habitual impressions (*bag chags; vāsanā*)—and this is what we call post-meditation. During ordinary daily activity, pure awareness must be more concentrated. As Mi-pham says:

Pith instructions are like children’s games.
Meditation is like the king of mountains or the ocean.⁹⁰⁰

In the primordial ground, beyond transition or change, the original experience
Is the guru of primordial purity, beyond the mind and free of complexity;
To this guru, while experiencing my own undeluded awareness, I pray:
Grant your blessings so I may attain enlightenment in this very life!

Revealer of pure awareness, which has never known delusion,
Original lord, primordially awakened,
Recalling your kindness, I pray to you:
Grant your blessings so the world and its inhabitants may be liberated as
dharmakāya!

The *dharmakāya* guru of awareness and emptiness
Wrote this to fulfil the wishes of the child of awareness.
May the mantra protectress guard over it
And prevent it from falling into *samaya*-breakers’ hands!

Samaya. Sealed. Sealed. Sealed.

⁹⁰⁰ I have been unable to locate the source of this quotation in Mi-pham’s writings.

III. Texts by mDo-sngags chos-kyi rgya-mtsho

1. gSang sngags gsar rnying gi lta ba gcig tu sgrub pa dag snang nor bu'i me long⁹⁰¹

DCc vol. 2: 3–48; DCz 3–48

na mo gu ru mañdzu gho shā ya| |

phyogs bcu'i zhing du rgyal sras rnam pa yis| |
zab mo'i gtam gyis 'gro ba 'dul ba la| |
zla med thugs bskyed mthu grub 'jam dpal dbyangs| |
dge ba'i bshes su rol ba'i blo gros gter⁹⁰²| |
yab rje de dang dbyer med bstan pa'i bdag| |
padma ka ra kun mkhyen tsong kha pa| |
mkhas pa'i khyu mchog rong klong rnam gnyis sogs| |
'dren mchog dam pa rnams⁹⁰³ la phyag byas te| |
thun mong theg par khyad par med mod kyang| |
gsang sngags snga phyi'i 'gyur gyis phye ba yi| |
bka' srol so so'i grub mtha'i gsung sgros 'ga'| |
'dra min snang yang dgongs pa'i gnad gcig tshul| |
cung zad mthong nas rang blo goms pa'i slad| |
lung rigs 'phrul gyis dka' gnad bkrol ba la| |
rgyal bstan dbyen la sbyor rnams mi dgyes mod| |
lung stong phyugs rdzi gling bu 'bud bzhin sgrogs| |

de la 'dir bsil ldan gyi ljongs 'di'i skye dgu'i phan bde'i ('byung gnas)⁹⁰⁴ rgyal ba'i
bstan pa rin po che la rnam grangs mang du yod pa las| gtso bor gyur pa bstan pa
snga dar gyi rang lugs snga 'gyur [4] gsang sngags rnying ma dang| phyi dar gyi lugs
bzang bka' gdams gsar rnying gnyis dang| khyad par du dka' gdams glegs bam las|

⁹⁰¹ As already noted, this text is translated in Wallace 2018. I have included a critical edition here but not a translation.

⁹⁰² I have added the italics here to highlight the reference to A-mdo dge-bshes 'Jam-dpal rol-bai'i blo-gros.

⁹⁰³ DCcz rnam

⁹⁰⁴ This term is in parentheses in the original.

tha mar bstan pa'i me ro dag| |
grags pa'i dbang⁹⁰⁵ gis⁹⁰⁶ gso bar byed⁹⁰⁷| |

ces lung bstan pa ltar gyi mnyam med ri bo dge ldan pa'i bka' srol chen po gnyis su
thub bstan rin po che'i srog tu bzhugs bzhin pa 'dir| da lta dus kyi dbang gis lta ba
snyigs mar gyur pa'i stobs kyis lung rigs kyi sgo nas legs par gtan la 'bebs pa shin tu
dkon pas phan tshun lta grub 'gal 'dur mthong ste| rgyal bstan la ris gcod byed pa
mang bas bstan pa rin po che nyag phra bar gyur mod| bdag ni skyes sbyangs kyi
rnam dpyod shin tu chung bas rgyal bstan la bya ba byed pa rngo mi thogs kyang|
mtshan ldan gyis bshes gnyen dam pa du mas rjes su bzung ba'i thugs rjess bstan pa
snga phyi de dag gi dgongs pa'i babs so shin tu geig par mthong nas phyogs ris kyi
mun pa sangs pa ltar rang dang skal mnyam gyi'ang chos spong gi las kyi sgo khegs
pa dang| rgyal bstan phyogs med la dad gus dang| dag snang 'phel ba'i slad gzhi lam
'bras gsum gyi rnam bzhag bzhed tshul mthun pa'i lung rigs kyi sgo tsam dbye bar
bya yi| dug sbrul gyis gla rtsi'i dri tshor ba mi bzod pa ma mdzad par gzu [5] bor gnas
pa'i rnam dpyod kyis bdag la grogs dan mdzad du gsol lo zhes mkhas pa rnam la
gsol ba 'debs so| |

de yang dang po gzhi ngo bo'i gnas tshul gyi skor la| mnyam med ri bo dge ldan pa
rnam nges don mthar thug gi zab mo lta ba'i shing rta'i srol 'byed la de bzhin
gshegs pa so so rang rig gi theg pa'i bstan pa'i gsal byed chen por lung bstan pa'i
phyir mgon po klu sgrub kho nar gsungs shing| de'i dgongs pa 'grel ba la jo bo dang
mai tri ba sogs rgya gar mkhas pa'i bzhed pa bzhin sangs rgyas bskyangs dang zhi ba
lha dpal ldan zla ba grags pa gsum 'gran zla med pa'i slob dpon du bzung nas| gtso
bor de dag gi rjes su 'brangs nas zab mo'i lta ba 'tshol ba yin la| de bzhin du gsang
sngags snga 'gyur ba'i phyogs nas kyang mdzad pa yin te| kun mkhyen chos kyi
rgyal po⁹⁰⁸ snga ma klong chen rab 'byams kyis *yid bzhin rin po che'i mdzod* kyi
le'u bcu gnyis pa'i rtsa 'grel las|

⁹⁰⁵ DCc *mtshan*

⁹⁰⁶ DCc *gyis*

⁹⁰⁷ AT vol. 1: 547–548.

⁹⁰⁸ DCc *bo*

da ni nang pa sangs rgyas pa dag gi mtshan nyid theg pa chen po'i rtse mo
 dbu ma thal 'gyur ba'i lugs rnam par bzhag pa ni| rgyal ba'i dgongs pa mthar
 thug snying po'i don| thal 'gyur bas ni| spros pa kun 'gog ste| |chos kun rten
 'brel stong nyid rang bzhin med| |bden gnyis sgyu ma [6] mtha' bral nyid sgo
 nas| |lam dang 'bras bu'i chos rnam mthar phyin byed| |thub pa bcom ldan
 'das kyi dgongs pa phyin ci ma log par⁹⁰⁹ ston pa ni dbu ma thal 'gyur⁹¹⁰ yin
 la| de'i shing rta 'dren pa'i srol 'byed pa thog ma ni bcom ldan 'das kyi *rna
 bo che chen po'i mdor* lung bstan pa 'phags pa shes rab kyi nyi ma dri ma
 med pas lta ba ngan pa'i 'thibs po⁹¹¹ sel bar mdzad pa mgon po klu sgrub yin
 te| de'i gzhung rigs pa'i tshogs drug gi don 'grel ba po'ang⁹¹² 'phags pa lha
 dang| sangs rgyas bskyangs⁹¹³ dang| legs ldan 'byed dang| zla ba grags pa la
 sogs pa ste| de dag gi nang nas mi 'phrogs⁹¹⁴ pa'i mkhyen rab dang thugs
 rje⁹¹⁵ ldan pa 'phags pa zla ba grags pa ni slob dpon gyi dgongs pa phyin ci
 ma log par thugs su chud nas dbu ma rtsa ba'i don gyi 'grel pa⁹¹⁶ *dbu ma la
 'jug pa* dang| tshig gi 'grel pa⁹¹⁷ *tshig gsal ba* mdzad de| 'dzam bu'i gling du
 sangs rgyas kyi dgongs pa mthar thug pa dbu ma thal 'gyur gyi nyi ma shar
 bar mdzad pas⁹¹⁸ lta ba ngan pa'i 'thibs po⁹¹⁹ gsal⁹²⁰ bar byas pa yin no| ⁹²¹

zhes gsung so| |

klu sgrub thal 'gyur ba'i shing rta'i srol 'byed lta bur gsung pa⁹²² ni| dbu ma'i shing
 rta'i srol 'byed dang| thal 'gyur ba'i gzhi mthun gyi don yin pa las sger gyi srol
 'byed zla bar bzhed pa gsal te| [7] 'dzam gling du thal 'gyur gyi nyi ma 'char bar
 mdzad mkhan zla bar gsungs pa'i phyir ro| |

⁹⁰⁹ DCc *pa*

⁹¹⁰ DCc adds *ba*

⁹¹¹ DCc *so*

⁹¹² DCc omits *po*

⁹¹³ KLR *bskyang*

⁹¹⁴ DCc *'phrog*

⁹¹⁵ KLR *rjer*

⁹¹⁶ DCc *ba*

⁹¹⁷ DCc *ba*

⁹¹⁸ DCc omits |

⁹¹⁹ DCc *so*

⁹²⁰ DCc *bsal*

⁹²¹ KLR vol. 14: 113–114.

⁹²² DCc *ba*

kun mkhyen phyi ma rig 'dzin chen po 'jigs med gling pa yang de ltar bzhed de| de'i
nyams mgur las|

yum chen shes rab phar phyin dang 'khyud rgya zhig byas pas| |
dpal mgon 'phags pa klu sgrub kyi nyams shig shar byung| |
bshad pa'i chu 'go⁹²³ de zla ba grags pa la zhu'o⁹²⁴| |

zhes gsungs pa'i phyir ro| |

1. yang rje btsun bla ma tsong kha pa chen pos thal rang gi khyad par chos can
mthun snang ba bzhed mi bzhed sogs kyis thal zlog dang rang rgyud 'gog tshul gyi
khyad par gangs can 'dir sngar ma grags pai rgya gar mkhas pa'i legs bshad zhib
mor phye ba'i rigs lam gyi sgo chen po btod kyang| mdor bsdu na de gnyis rang
mtshan gyi khas len yod med kyis 'byed pa ltar kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal po yang
bzhed de| *yid bzhin mdzod* kyi le'u bcu gnyis pa'i sngar gyi 'phrod las|

'dir de'i gzhung phyin ci ma log pa'i don bsdus te brjod pa ni| gshis ngo bor
gang yang rang bzhin ma grub pa dang khas len pa thams cad bden zhen dang
bcas pas rang bzhin du smra ba dag gi lugs rang gi gzhung khas blangs
nang⁹²⁵ 'gal ba dang dngos po stobs zhugs khas len pa po de'i gzhung la
grags tshad des 'gog pa [8] yin la| bkag pa'i rjes la rang rgyud pa ltar nges pa'i
dam bca' med de| gal te nga la dam bca'⁹²⁶ 'ga' yod| |des na nga la skyon 'di
yod| nga la dam bca' med pas na| nga ni skyon med kho na yin| |zhes pa'i
tshul gyis go bar byed pas|⁹²⁷ 'dir de'i⁹²⁸ don⁹²⁹ gtan la dbab pa la⁹³⁰|

zhes gsung pa'i phyir| 'di'i khas len med lugs kyang snga rabs pa kha cig dbu ma pa
la khas len spyi med par 'dod pa'i don ltar min te| khas len mi len gyir rnam gzhag

⁹²³ DCc *mgo*

⁹²⁴ These lines appear in 'Jigs-med gling-pa's autobiography. See '*Jigs gling rnam thar* 44; JLa vol. 14 34a.1: yum chen shes rab *kyi pha rol* phyin *pa khong la* 'khyud rgya zhig byas pas| dpal mgon 'phags pa klu sgrub kyi nyams shig shar byung *ngo*| | *a ho ye* bshad pa'i chu 'go de zla ba grags pa *la zhu ba no*| |

⁹²⁵ DCc *na*

⁹²⁶ DCc *bcas*

⁹²⁷ DCc. omits |

⁹²⁸ DCc *de*

⁹²⁹ DCc om. *don*

⁹³⁰ KLR vol. 14: 114–115.

'og nas gsal bar bstan pa'i phyir te| gtsang ba dang rma bya ltar khas len yod med
kyi phyogs gcig mi 'dzin par khas len mi len kun rdzob tu yin gyi| don dam du khas
len yod med kyi dpyad pa med pa dang| yang kun rdzob tu skabs kyi dbye bas khas
blang rgyu dang| mi len rgyu gnyis yod par gsungs pa'i phyir| de ltar yang gsungs te|
de nyid las|

rtsod pa dang⁹³¹ don dam yul du byed pa'i tshe snang ba gang yang rang
bzhin med pas⁹³² gshis la yod par⁹³³ khas len med pa'i phyir⁹³⁴ khas blang bar
bya ba ma yin no| lam rjes thob pa tha snyad yul du byed dus gsung rab las
bshad pa ltar rnam dbye dang bcas pa rmi lam sgyu ma'i grub mtha' tsam du
shes nas rang gis kyang dpyad de bsam zhing| gzhan la'ang bstan pas⁹³⁵
blang dor gyi dmigs phyed nas lam dbu ma tshogs gnyis [9] la zhugs te 'bras
bu sku gnyis 'grub pa'i dgos pa yod do⁹³⁶ |

sogs zhib par gsungs so| |

de bzhin du 'grel ba *phyogs bcu'i mun sel* las kyang

de'ang dbu ma rang rgyud pa ni chos thams cad kun rdzob tu snang la⁹³⁷ de
yang brtags na don dam par rang bzhin med par 'dod de| *dbu ma bden gnyis*
las|

kun rdzob 'di ltar snang ba 'di| |
rig pas brtags na 'ga' mi rnyed| |
ma rnyed pa nyid⁹³⁸ don dam⁹³⁹ te| |
ye nas gnas pa'i chos nyid do⁹⁴⁰| | zhes so| |

⁹³¹ DCc adds |

⁹³² DCc *pa*

⁹³³ DCc *pa*

⁹³⁴ DCc adds |

⁹³⁵ DCc *nas*

⁹³⁶ KLR vol. 14: 127

⁹³⁷ DCc omits |

⁹³⁸ DCc *de*

⁹³⁹ DCc *ldan*

⁹⁴⁰ This is not from *Satyadvayavibhangakārikā* but appears in Bhāviveka's *Madhyamakaratnapradīpa* (DT vol. 97: 521.1). Note, however, that the latter gives the fourth line as *de phyir kun rdzob shes par bya* |.

dbu ma thal 'gyur ba ni dpyad rung ma dpyad rung dus gtan du chos thams
cad spros pa nye bar zhi ba khas len thams cad dang bral bar 'dod de| *'jug pa*
las|

ji ltar khyod kyi gzhan dbang dngos 'dod ltar⁹⁴¹|

kun rdzob kyang ni bdag gi khas ma blangs⁹⁴²|

zhes pa dang⁹⁴³|

zhes su gsungs nas dngos smra ltar rang mtshan gyi dngos po khas len pa dang mi
len pa'i sgo nas dbye bar gsal bar gsungs so| |

2. thal rang la dgag bya'i khyad de lta bu yod pas thub dgongs mthar thug thal 'gyur
ba'i lugs gzhir bzhag ste| rang mtshan gyis grub pa'am yul rang ngos nas grub pa
rdul phra mo tsam yang rje bdag nyid chen pos zhal gyis mi bzhes te| de bzhin du
gsang sngags snga 'gyur ba'i nang rgyud gsum gyi nges don gyi lta ba yang rang
bzhin gyis [10] grub pa med par shin tu bzhed de| slob dpon chen po'i *man ngag lta*
ba'i phreng ba las|

de la rgyud gcig par rtogs pa ni| chos thams cad don dam par ma skyes pas so
so ma yin pa dang| kun rdzob du⁹⁴⁴ sgyu ma'i mtshan nyid kyis⁹⁴⁵ so so ma
yin pa dang| ma skyes pa nyid chu zla ltar sgyu ma sna tshogs su snang zhing
bya ba byed nus pa dang| sgyu ma nyid ngo bo med de| ma skyes pas kun
rdzob dang don dam par dbyer med pas rgyud⁹⁴⁶ gcig pa rtogs pa'o⁹⁴⁷| |

zhes gsungs te|

de yang bshad bya rtsa ba'i mdo| chos thams cad ni ngo bo nyid kyis stong pa'o| |
zhes sogs drang nas bshad pa mdzad la| 'di'i nyid sgra gnyis kyang dmigs gsal can

⁹⁴¹ DCc omits |

⁹⁴² *Madhyamakāvatāra*

⁹⁴³ KLR vol. 23: 166–167. Cf. Dorje 1987: 511–512.

⁹⁴⁴ DCc *tu*

⁹⁴⁵ DCc *du*

⁹⁴⁶ DCc, DCz *rgyu*

⁹⁴⁷ Karmay 1988: 167 (Translated on p. 158).

gyi dgag pa'i skabs 'od srung gis zhus pa'i mdo drangs pa ltar rang mtshan 'gog pa'i tshig yin la| bden gnyis dbyer med kyi don kyang ngo bo gcig pa tsam la mi byed par dgag bya phra mo khegs pa'i bden gnyis kyi go thob khyad par can zhig la byed dgos par rong zom chen pos gsungs so| |

gzhan rong zom lo tsā ba chen pos *theg chen tshul 'jug* tu dgag bya rang mtshan phra mo nas 'gog tshul 'di ltar gsungs te|

de la yang dag par bsgrub par bya ba mi 'dod na| kun rdzob thams cad 'go mnyam par 'gyur ba ji lta bu zhe na| dper na thag pa la sbrul du mthong ba'i tshel⁹⁴⁸ thag pa ni yang dag [11] par yod pa'o| | sbrul ni gtan myed⁹⁴⁹ pa'o| | thag par mthong ba'i blo ni yang dag pa'i shes pa'o| | sbrul du mthong ba'i blo ni 'khrul ba'i shes pa'o| | 'khrul na ma dag pa y-in⁹⁵⁰ pa'-i⁹⁵¹ phyir blo de nyid kyang ji ltar snang ba de bzhin du yod pa ma yin pas| de'i bdag nyid thob par mi 'gyur te| gzhan las gzhan du btags pa tsam mo| | de nas yang thag pa de nyid la zhib tu brtags na⁹⁵² rtswa'am spu'i cha shas du ma 'dus pa tsam du mthong ste| thag pa zlum rIl⁹⁵³ gcig pu'i blo zhig pa na| cha shas 'dus pa tsam ni yang dag par yod pa'o| | thag pa dang sbrul ni 'go mnyam ste gtan myed⁹⁵⁴ pa'o| | cha shas 'dus pa tsam du mthong ba'i blo yang dag pa'I⁹⁵⁵ shes pa'o| | thag pa'I⁹⁵⁶ blo ni sbrul gyi blo dang 'dra ste⁹⁵⁷ 'khrul pa'i⁹⁵⁸ shes pa'o| | de nas yang spu dang rtswa de nyid la zhib tu brtags na⁹⁵⁹ rdul 'dus pa tsam du mthong ste| spu dang rtswa'i⁹⁶⁰ cha shas kyang ma grub par rtogs pa na⁹⁶¹ don dang blo'i tshul thams cad snga ma bzhin no| |de nas yang rdul de nyid la blos rnam par phye na| rdul nyId⁹⁶² kyang ma grub par rtogs te| gzugs

⁹⁴⁸ DCc omits |

⁹⁴⁹ DCc *med* (DCc omits all archaic spellings, which are retained in RZ).

⁹⁵⁰ DCc *yin*

⁹⁵¹ DCc *pa'i*

⁹⁵² DCc omits |

⁹⁵³ DCc *ril*

⁹⁵⁴ DCc *med*

⁹⁵⁵ DCc *pa'i*

⁹⁵⁶ DCc *pa'i*

⁹⁵⁷ DCc adds |

⁹⁵⁸ DCc *ba'i*

⁹⁵⁹ DCc omits |

⁹⁶⁰ DCc *rtswa dang spu'i*

⁹⁶¹ DCc omits |

⁹⁶² DCc *nyid*

kyIs⁹⁶³ stong pa'I⁹⁶⁴ stong pa⁹⁶⁵ nyid tsam yod par mthong ba de'i tshe| don
dang blor bcas pa thams cad snga ma bzhin no⁹⁶⁶ |de nas yang stong pa⁹⁶⁷
nyid la rnam par brtags na| stong pa⁹⁶⁸ zhes bya ba 'di'ang dngos po la ltos
nas rnam par bzhag pa tsam ste|^[12] dngos po nyid ma grub na stong pa⁹⁶⁹
nyid mi 'grub ste| gang zhig stong⁹⁷⁰ chos gang gis stong| su'i⁹⁷¹ stong pa⁹⁷²
ste| bsgrub par bya ba'i chos gang yang myed⁹⁷³ par rtogs pa na| don thams
cad myed⁹⁷⁴ par 'go mnyam mo| |blo thams cad 'khrul par⁹⁷⁵ 'go mnyam mo|
| 'khrul pa⁹⁷⁶ thams cad ji ltar snang ba de ltar ma yin par 'go mnyam mo| | de
ltar ma yin pa thams cad de'i bdag nyid thob pa myed⁹⁷⁷ par 'go mnyam mo| |
bdag nyid thob pa myed⁹⁷⁸ par gyur pa na| don dang blo gnyis ga⁹⁷⁹ la'ang
mtshan nyid 'go mi mnyam pa myed⁹⁸⁰ do| | de la dang po sbrul du mthong
ba na skrag ste sdang ba skyes so| | de nas thag par mthong ba na sdang ba
spangs pa'i rlom sems 'byung ste| chags pa skyes pa'i blo 'byung ngo| | de
nas thag pa'i blo zhig pa na thag pa zlum ril la chags pa'I⁹⁸¹ blo spangs
nas⁹⁸² du ma 'dus pa tsam la chags pa'I⁹⁸³ blo skyes ste⁹⁸⁴| ji srid du dngos
por lta ba ma log pa de srid du chags sdang spang ba dang skye ba'I⁹⁸⁵ blo ni
ldog par mi 'gyur mod kyi| don gyi mtshan nyid la ni yang dag par bzhag
pa'I⁹⁸⁶ rdzas ma grub tsam na| re shig⁹⁸⁷ par gzhag⁹⁸⁸ pa'i rdzas dang 'go mi

963 DCc *kyis*
964 DCc *ba'i*
965 DCc *ba*
966 DCc omits *no*|
967 DCc *ba*
968 DCc *ba*
969 DCc *ba*
970 DCc adds |
971 DCc *sus*
972 DCc *ba*
973 DCc *med*
974 DCc *med*
975 DCc *bar*
976 DCc *ba*
977 DCc *med*
978 DCc *med*
979 DCc *ka*
980 DCc *med*
981 DCc *pa'i*
982 DCc omits |
983 DCc *pa'i*
984 DCc *te*
985 DCc *ba'i*
986 DCc *pa'i*
987 DCc *zhig*
988 DCc *bzhag*

mnyam par mi 'grub ste| snang ba tsam la mi skur⁹⁸⁹ ba ma gtogs pa| mtshan
nyid thams cad 'go mnyam mo⁹⁹⁰| |

zhes gsungs te|

gang tshe dngos dang dngos med dag| |
blo yi mdun na mi gnas pa⁹⁹¹| | [13]

zhes gsung pa de yang 'di ltar| dmigs pa'i gtad so zhig pa zhig la byed rgyu yin 'dug
pas gsar rnying gi rjes 'brang blo gsal rnam thugs rig grim pos gzigs la phyogs ris
kyi mun pa sel bar mdzod cig| |

rong zom gyi gsung 'dir rang mtshan 'gog lugs dpe dang bcas shin tu gsal zhing
rgyas par gsungs 'dug kyang yi ges 'jigs nas ma drangs la| rjes 'jug nges don gyi lta
sgom la re ba can yod na legs bshad kyi rin thang shes dgos so| |

de dang mtshungs par kun mkhyen chen po'i *theg mchog mdzod* kyi rim khang bcu
gsum par|

thag pa dang chos mthun pa'o| | thag pa yang brtags na spu nyag ma re re ba
'ching ba'i don byed mi nus pa dang 'dra ba la| ma brtags na tshogs pa 'ching
byed du grub pa ltar 'khrul snang dang 'khrul 'dzin gnyis po dpyad na gzhi
med| ngo bo nyid kyang stong yang ma brtags na blo dang snang yul 'khrul
pa⁹⁹² rang rig 'ching byed ltar snang ba'o| | bcings par snang dus nas bcings
pa med la| grol bar snang dus nas 'ching byed rang mtshan pa med pas grol
ba med de| *sgyu 'phrul* las|

sus kyang ma bcings bcing med de| |
'ching bar bya ba yod ma yin| |
bcing med rnam par bkrol med pa| |
ye nas lhun rdzogs sangs rgyas chos| |

⁹⁸⁹ DCc *bskur*

⁹⁹⁰ RZ vol. 1: 424–425. Cf. Sur 2017: 46–47.

⁹⁹¹ *Bodhicaryāvatāra* IX 93 ab.

⁹⁹² DCc *ba*

bstan phyir spro ba sna tshogs [14] mdzad⁹⁹³ |

ces gsungs pa bzhin no⁹⁹⁴ |

zhes gsungs la de ltar thag khra'i sbrul bzhin gsungs pa ni| rten cing 'brel bar 'byung
ba'i gzhan dbang la| kun rdzob kyi snang tshul 'di rang bzhin du 'jog pa thag pa la
sbrul ltar sgro btags sam kun btags 'ba' zhig dang| mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi gzigs
tshul thag pa la thag pa ltar yongs su grub pa'i mtshan nyid gsum gyi rnam gzhag
dpal ldan zla bas gsungs pa'i don yin no| |

gzhan yang kun mkhyen chen po'i dgongs nyams glegs bam du shar ba'i rdo rje'i
tshig *chos dbying rin po che'i mdzod* las|

rnam dag byang chub sems kyi ngo bo la| |
blta ba'i yul med lta ba'i chos kyang⁹⁹⁵ med| |
blta bar bya dang byed pa rdul tsam med| |
sgom pa'i blo med bsgom bya'i chos kyang med⁹⁹⁶ |
spyad dang spyod pa gnyis med lhun grub pas| |
bsgrub par bya ba'i 'bras bu rdul tsam med| |
med pa'i chos la bgrod pa'i sa med pas| |
phar phyin bya ba'i lam yang ye nas med| |
'od gsal thig le chen por grub zin pas| |
rnam rtog 'phro 'dus bskyed pa'i dkyil 'khor dang| |
sngags dang kha ton dbang dam dam tshig med| |
rim sdud la sogs mi dmigs rdzogs rim med| |
ye nas grub zin sku dang ye shes la| |
'dus byas glo bur rkyen byung rgyu 'bras med| |
'di dag yod na rang byung ye shes min| |
[15] 'dus byas nyid phyir 'jig pa nyid dang ni| |
lhun grub 'dus ma byas zhes gang slad mtshon| |
de phyir don dam dbyings kyi ngo bo la| |

⁹⁹³ Cf. **Guhyagarbha Tantra* II 15–16.

⁹⁹⁴ KLR vol. 17: 479

⁹⁹⁵ DCc *su*

⁹⁹⁶ DCc *sgom pa'i blo med bsgom bya cung zad med*

rgyu 'bras las 'das rang bzhin rnam bcu med| |
rtsol dang sgrub med sems nyid rnal ma'i don| |
yod med spros kun zhi bar mkhyen 'tshal lo⁹⁹⁷| |

zhes gsungs shing *gnas lugs mdzod* du med pa sogs bzhi re re la 'gag sdom gnad du
dril ba la bzla ba'i skor du yang shin tu gsal la| *gzhan mdzod chen bdun* dang| *ngal*
gso gsum sogs su chos sku stong nyams chen po'i rdo rje'i tshig gi do ha bsam gyis
mi khyab pa zhig bka' btsal pa rnams ni dgag bya phra mo 'gog tshul yin pa shes
par gyis la chos sku'i gdung ma bcad par dag snang gi ngang du bzhugs zhes da lta'i
gsar rnying gi blo gsar rnams la zhu'o| |

3. de ltar dgag bya rang ngos nas grub pa rdul phra mo tsam mi bzhed kyang snang
phyogs la gtsigs su byed dgos zhes 'jam pa'i dbyangs kyi bka' bzhin rje btsun bla ma
tsong kha pa chen pos snang tsam 'di mi 'gog ste| snang ba rten 'brel bslu ba med pa
dang| zhes sogs gsungs pa ltar gsang sngags snga 'gyur gyi lugs su yang snang tsam
mi 'gog pa ni| *lta phreng* las| ma skyes pa nyid chu zla ltar sgyu ma sna tshogs su
snang zhing bya ba byed nus pa dang| zhes gsungs shing| ^[16] kun mkhyen rong zom
lo tsā ba chen pos kyang|

rkyen rnams nye bar gnas bzhin du| |
'bras bu snang bar mi 'gyur zhes| |
gang du'ang skur ba ma btab pas| |
'di la skur ba'i gnas ma mthong| |
rgyu 'bras rten cing 'brel tshul du| |
snang ba tsam las ma gtogs pa| |
rgyu 'bras dngos po mi sgrub⁹⁹⁸ pas| |
'di la sgro 'dogs gnas ma mthong| |
gang gzhan sgro skur bral ba'i don| |
tshul gzhan dag gis sgrub byed kyang| |
nges don bka' yi rjes 'brangs nas| |
don la bdag blo 'di ltar skyes⁹⁹⁹| | zhes gsungs la|

⁹⁹⁷ KLR vol. 16: 12–13. Cf. Longchen Rabjam 2001a: 42–44.

⁹⁹⁸ DCc *bsgrub*

⁹⁹⁹ These lines appear at the end of *Theg chen tshul 'jug*. See RZ vol. 1: 554.

de bzhin kun mkhyen chen pos *chos dbyings mdzod* du yang|

'pho 'gyur med pa'i rig pa byang chub la| |
spangs thob med pa'i snang srid 'khor 'das¹⁰⁰⁰ shar| |
gzung 'dzin med pa'i rnal 'byor ngo kha la| |
med la snang 'di ya mtshan rgod po 'chor| |
snang bar med la sna tshogs snang bar shar| |
stong par¹⁰⁰¹ med la mtha' dbus khyab par gdal¹⁰⁰²| |
gzung 'dzin med la nga bdag so sor zhen| |
gzhi rtsa med la tshe rabs brgyud mar snang| |
dgag sgrub med la bde sdug blang dor byed| |
phar bltas skye 'gro'i snang ba mtshar re che| |
mi bden bden par zhen pas bden bden¹⁰⁰³ 'dra¹⁰⁰⁴| |

zhes sogs dang| yang|

'di yi ngang la rgyu 'bras bya rtsol med| |
lta ba bsgom¹⁰⁰⁵ du med pa la sogs te| |
mtha' dbus gnyis med ^[17] 'gog¹⁰⁰⁶ pa'i tshul brjod kyi¹⁰⁰⁷| |
gzhan du ngang las phyir 'khyam¹⁰⁰⁸ rtsal nyid las| |
rol pa¹⁰⁰⁹ sna tshogs snang srid dgu 'char bas| |
rgyu 'bras med ces nam yang ma brjod cig¹⁰¹⁰| | ces gsungs|

4. de lta bu'i snang tsam gyi 'khor 'das gyi rnam gzhas thams cad ming rkyang btags yod tsam du rje bdag nyid chen po bzhed pa bzhin| gsang sngags snga 'gyur ba yang gzhi grub na btags yod kyi khyab par bzhed de| rnying rgyud *kun 'dus rig pa'i mdo*

¹⁰⁰⁰ DCc 'dus

¹⁰⁰¹ DCc bar

¹⁰⁰² DCc bdal

¹⁰⁰³ DCc chen

¹⁰⁰⁴ KLR vol. 16: 17. Cf. Longchen Rabjam 2001a: 58–60

¹⁰⁰⁵ DCc sgom

¹⁰⁰⁶ DCc dpog

¹⁰⁰⁷ DCc kyi

¹⁰⁰⁸ DCc 'khyal

¹⁰⁰⁹ DCc ba

¹⁰¹⁰ KLR vol. 16: 29. Cf. Longchen Rabjam 2001a: 100–102.

las|

de nas sems dpa' chen pos bka' btsal pa| 'dus pa chen po'i tshogs chos thams
cad ni| brda dang| tha snyad dang| btags pa tsam du shes par gyis shig| btags
pa'i chos thams cad ni phyi nang gang na yang mi gnas te| chos thams cad la
ming gi gzhi med cing btags pa'i tha snyad dang bral ba yin no¹⁰¹¹|| zhes
gsungs so| |

yang *spyi mdo dgongs 'dus* le'u bdun cu don lnga ba las gsungs pa bzhin gnubs chen
gyi mdo 'grel *mun pa'i go cha* las kyang 'di ltar gsungs te|

gzhi la 'gro ba rang rgyud pa med pas zhen rtog snang ba'i spyir btags pa'i yod
pa tsam pas so¹⁰¹²||

zhes dang|

'o na gang med pa las snang na ri bong rwa dang nam mkha'i me tog kyang
'byung bar rigs so zhe na| gang las ming du btags pa'i gzhi| med rgyu [18] btags
chags bsgrub 'grub cing| zhes pa de kho na nyid kyi dngos po tha dad pa la
btags pa ril gyi gzhi ni ji lta bu zhe na| mtshan nyid thams cad pa mtshan nyid
med pa| rnam pa kun ldan rnam pa bral ba| brjod pa kun 'byung brjod pa med
pa ni| gang yang ma bkol bas rnam pa'i phyogs bral ba'i phyir ngo bo med pa
lhun gyis grub pa'i rgyu la ji ltar btags bsnyad pa ltar chags grub bsams¹⁰¹³ pa
ltar snang ba'o| | de lta bas¹⁰¹⁴ na ri bong rwa dang mi mtshungs so¹⁰¹⁵||

zhes gdags gzhi rang bzhin med kyang snang ba'i chos la brten nas tha snyad btags
pa chags te 'dogs yul de go zhing de'i dgos pa bsgrub nus par grub pa'i cha nas don
rang mtshan du med kyang ri bong rwa bzhin med mi dgos pa'i khyad par legs par
gsungs te| tha snyad kyi 'jog mtshams shin tu phra mo de la gnubs chen yang rje
btsun bla ma tsong kha pa dang dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig pa'i tshul 'di shes
par gyis la zhwa'i kha dog tsam rgyu mtshan du byas nas| rgyal bstan dbyen la ma

¹⁰¹¹ D vol. 98: 44a.3.

¹⁰¹² NyKs vol. 93 45b.6

¹⁰¹³ DCc *bsam*

¹⁰¹⁴ DCc *bus*

¹⁰¹⁵ NyKs vol. 93: 46a.6–46b.4

sbyor zhes gsar rnying gi da lta'i blo gsar rnam la gsol ba 'debs so| | *sgyu 'phrul*
gsang ba snying po'i le'u gsum pa las|

chos rnam ming du btags pa tsam| |
ston pas don dang mthun phyogs su| |
ming dang tshig tu btags nas bstan| |
ston ming tshig la ^[19] dngos po med¹⁰¹⁶| | ces dang|

de'i thad kyi *phyogs bcu mun sel* las|

snang srid 'khor 'das kyis bsdus pa'i chos rnam thams cad don la grub pa med
pas ming du btags pa tsam ste| *mdo* las|

rab 'byor chos thams cad ni brda tsam btags pa tsam ste ngo bo nyid kyis
yongs su grub pa med do| | zhes so| |

sus btags¹⁰¹⁷ na lha mi'i ston pa sangs rgyas kyis snang tsam ma 'gags pa| kun
rdzob kyi bden pa'i don dang re zhis mthun pa'i phyogs su mdzad de| 'khor ba
dang mya ngan las 'das pa phung po¹⁰¹⁸ dang khams dang skye mched ces pa
la sogs pa'i ming dang tshig tu btags nas bstan to| | dgos pa ni don gyi gnas
lugs blos rtogs par bya ba' phyir ro| | de ltar ming tshig tu btags nas ston pa'i
dus nyid na ming tshig la dngos po med de| nam mkha' zhes brjod du na ming
tshig de nyid nam mkha'i khams la ni grub pa med cing| lus dang sems la nam
mkha'i ming tshig kyang med de| gang nas kyang nam mkha'i ming tshig mi
rnyed pas dngos po dang ngos gzung med de¹⁰¹⁹| | de nyid nam mkha'i don
dang dbyer med pas chos thams cad blos ming tshig tu btags kyang ming don
gang du'ang¹⁰²⁰ grub pa med pa'i rang bzhin du shes par bya¹⁰²¹|

zhes shin tu gsal bar gsungs la| sems phyogs nas kyang *chos dbyings rin po che*'i
mdzod ^[20] las|

¹⁰¹⁶ NGB vol. 9: 5a.6

¹⁰¹⁷ DCc adds *she*

¹⁰¹⁸ DCc *bo*

¹⁰¹⁹ DCc *do*

¹⁰²⁰ DCc *du yang*

¹⁰²¹ KLR vol. 23: 181.

rten med rmi lam 'dra ba'i rang bzhin la| |
'khor 'das rang mtshan zhen pa mtshar re che| |
thams cad kun bzang lhun grub chen po ni| |
ma 'khrul mi 'khrul 'khrul bar mi 'gyur bas| |
srid pa ming tsam yod med mtha' las 'das¹⁰²²| |

zhes dang|

ye nas lhun grub rang byung rig pa che| |
ma grol mi grol grol bar mi 'gyur la| |
'das pa ming tsam su yang grol ma myong| |
myong bar mi 'gyur bcings pa ye nas med¹⁰²³| |

ces sogs gsungs so| |

de lta bu'i ming du btags pa tsam la bya byed 'thad pa yang *theg mchog mdzod* kyi
rim khang bcu dgu bar|

phyi snang ba sna tshogs| nang dran rtog glo bur| dbang po drug snang yul
dang bcas pa thams cad med pa gsal snang tsam las| don la phyi nang gang na
yang med pa rab rib can gyi skra shad dang| sgyu ma dang mig 'phrul dang|
sprul pa¹⁰²⁴ lta bur blo la snang yang| snang dus de nyid nas yod med kyi mtha'
las 'das par shes par bya ste| snang ba'i ngos nas ji ltar btags kyang mi 'gal| yin
du chug| min du chug| yod du chug| med du chug| snang du chug| stong du
chug| 'khrul du chug| grol du chug| bzang du chug| ngan du chug¹⁰²⁵| sems su
chug| gzhan du chug| gang ltar btags kyang stong ba'i ngos nas ji ltar btags pa
de nyid kyis thog mar stong ste| btags pa sems yin| [21] sems med pa yin| med
pa la 'dogs mkhan med pas rmi lam gyi bya byed dang¹⁰²⁶ sgyu ma'i bya byed

¹⁰²² KLR vol. 16: 3. Cf. Longchen Rabjam 2001a: 8.

¹⁰²³ KLR vol. 16: 3. Cf. Longchen Rabjam 2001a: 10.

¹⁰²⁴ DCc *ba*

¹⁰²⁵ KLR has a typographical error: *chugsems*.

¹⁰²⁶ DCc omits *dang*

bzhin no¹⁰²⁷ | |

zhes gsungs te|

rang bzhin med kyang yin min yod med grol 'khrul sogs 'thad lugs dang| de ltar
btags tsam nas skra shad kyi snang ba sogs dang 'dra bar ye nas yul steng du yod ma
myong ba'i snang tsam yin lugs gsungs pa sogs shin tu gsung 'gangs che ste| *dbu ma
rtsa ba las*|

gang la stong pa¹⁰²⁸ nyid rung ba| |

de la thams cad rung bar 'gyur¹⁰²⁹ | | sogs dang|

byang chub sems 'grel las|

chos rnam stong pa¹⁰³⁰ 'di shes nas| |

las dang 'bras bu bsten pa gang| |

ngo mtshar bas kyang 'di ngo mtshar| |

rmad byung bas kyang 'di rmad byung¹⁰³¹ | | zhes don ji bzhin pa yin no| |

gzhan yang rgyal po¹⁰³² rā ma ṅas bu 'ba' le mched gnyis kyi lo rgyus sogs dpe dang
bcas te rang bzhin med pa sgyu ma la bya byed 'thad lugs shin tu rgyas par rong zom
mkhas pa'i dbang phyug de nyid kyi legs par gsungs yod pas de'i gsung rab la mi
blta ba shin tu phangs so| |

5. yang bden gnyis kyi mtshan nyid 'khrul ba dang ma 'khrul ba'i blo'i mnyed don
gyi cha nas rje bdag nyid chen pos ngos 'dzin gnang ba ltar snga 'gyur pa yang
bzhed de| 'phags pa gsum gyi [22] mnyam bzhag ye shes don dam 'jog byed ma
'khrul ba'i blo dang| ma rig pa dang de'i bag chags kyi bslad pa'i blo rnam kun
rdzob 'jog byed blo 'khrul bar kun mkhyen chen pos bzhed pa'i phyir te| *grub mtha'*
mdzod las| dbu ma thal 'gyur ba'i lugs la gsum ste| blo 'khrul ba dang ma 'khrul ba'i
dbye ba| de ltos te bden pa gnyis su dbye ba'i tshul| thal 'gyur gyis spros pa gcod

¹⁰²⁷ KLR vol. 18: 190.

¹⁰²⁸ DCc *ba*

¹⁰²⁹ *Mūlamadhyamakakārikā* XXIV 14a: *sarvaṃ ca yujyate tasya śūnyatā yasya yujyate.*

¹⁰³⁰ DCc *ba*

¹⁰³¹ *Bodhicittavivarāṇa* 88. (English translation in Jinpa 2006).

¹⁰³² DCc *bo*

pa'i tshul sogs rgyas par gsungs te| yi ges 'jigs nas ma drangs so| | yang *spyod 'jug* gi
dgongs pa ltar gnyis snang can gyi mngon sum gyi spyod yul yin min gyi sgo nas
kyang kun mkhyen chen pos bden gnyis kyi mtshan nyid gsungs te| *yid bzhin mdzod*
las|

kun rdzob kyi bden pa'i mtshan nyid blo'i yul las ma 'das pa'i chos dpyad mi
bzod pa| don dam bden pa'i mtshan nyid blo las 'das pa'i chos nyid dmigs pa
nye zhi ba'o| | dpyad bzod mi 'thad de sngar bkag zin to¹⁰³³|

zhes gsungs shing 'di'i blo 'das kyi don gnyis snang can gyi kun rtog gi yul du
mngon sum du mi 'gyur ba la gsungs te| don dam so so rang rig gi yul du gsungs pa
la| so so rang rig gi blo yin pas don dam yang blo 'das ma yin pa'i dogs pa bslangs
nas bsal ba'i phyir te| *yid bzhin mdzod* las|

so so rang rig [23] dang blo gcig yin mod snyam na| brda la rmongs pas re bden|
'on kyang blo ni kun rtog pa la skabs 'dir mdzad de¹⁰³⁴| zhes gsungs so| |

des na ye shes yul med dang| |chos nyid yul ma yin pa dang| |don dam blo yi spyod
yul min| | sogs snga rabs pa 'ga' zhig ltar 'grel ba ni| rang lugs kun mkhyen gyi
gsung ngag bdud rtsi'i btung ba yod bzhin du gzhan zer mchil ma'i thal ba la longs
spyod pa yin no| |

'on kyang ye shes yul med du gsungs pa 'ga' re yod pa ni yongs gcod sgrub pa'i
chos yul du mi 'gyur bar dgag bya 'khrul rtog gi zhen stangs sun dbyung ba'i don
tsam la mnyam par bzhag pa'i tshul gsungs pa ste| gsar bu ba rnam skrag pa skye
ba'i gnas med dgag cig gzigs ngor shar ba'i don no| |

6. de lta bu'i bden gnyis kyi dbye ba ni| phung gsum sel ba'i grangs nges kyi dbye ba
yin par rje bdag nyid chen pos bzhed pa ltar kun mkhyen dri med 'od zer kyang
bzhed de| *grub mtha' mdzod* las|

¹⁰³³ KLR vol. 14: 122.

¹⁰³⁴ KLR vol. 14: 121.

bzhi pa¹⁰³⁵ grangs nges pa ni| spros pa las grol ma grol dngos 'gal du nges pas
 bsgrub phyogs dang dgag phyogs kyi phung po¹⁰³⁶ gsum pa khegs pas gnyis su
 grangs nges so| | rnam pa gcig tu na yul rnam ni yul can la ltos nas 'jog pa na
 yul can ni mthar ma thug pa [24] 'khrul pa'i¹⁰³⁷ blo dang| mthar thug pa ma
 'khrul pa'i¹⁰³⁸ blo gnyis las mi 'da'| de la 'khor ba'i chos rnam ni 'khrul pa¹⁰³⁹
 dang| chos nyid ni ma 'khrul pa'i¹⁰⁴⁰ yul yin pas blo'i dbang gis gnyis su bzhag
 ste| 'jug pa las| dngos kun yang dag rdzun pa'i mthong ba yis¹⁰⁴¹ | sogs
 drangs nas gsungs so| |

des na yod min med min gyi shes bya phung gsum pa sogs khas len pa'i gsang
 sngags rnying ma ba yod na rang lugs don la sgrib pa yin pas mi mdzes so| |

7. bden gnyis kyi ya gyal kun rdzob bden pa la yang log gnyis su don la 'byed rgyu
 med par gangs can gyi shing rta chen pos bzhed pa ltar gsang sngags nang rgyud sde
 gsum gyi lta ba'i bka' srol la yang legs par snang ste| kun mkhyen rong zom chen
 pos *theg tshul* du gsal bar gsungs te| dbu ma rang rgyud pas| snang du 'dra yang| don
 byed dag| |nus pa'i phyir dang mi nus phyir| |zhes bum pa dang| de'i gzugs brnyan
 gyi chu 'dzin pa'i don byed nus mi nus yod pas kun rdzob yang log tu 'jog pa ni|
 chus khyer bas rtswa drungs phyung la 'ju ba ltar mi 'thad tshul rgyas par gsungs te|
 rgyal po grags pa mtha' yas dper byas te| ngo mtshar dang bzhad gad kyi gnas su
 bshad de| *de nyid* las|

chos thams cad don dam par spros pa [25] thams cad nye bar zhi ste| bsgrub par
 bya ba gang yang mi bsgrub par lta bzhin du| yang dag pa'-i¹⁰⁴² kun rdzob kyi
 mtshan ma nyid spang ba dang blang bar bya ba'i rdzas yod par 'dzin pa 'di ni|
 shin tu mi 'tsham pa 'dzin pa ste¹⁰⁴³ ngo mtshar ba'i gnas yin no¹⁰⁴⁴| |

¹⁰³⁵ DCc ba

¹⁰³⁶ DCc bo

¹⁰³⁷ DCc ba'i

¹⁰³⁸ DCc ba'i

¹⁰³⁹ DCc ba

¹⁰⁴⁰ DCc ba'i

¹⁰⁴¹ KLR vol. 15: 106. The quotation is from *Madhyamakāvatāra* VI 23.

¹⁰⁴² DCc pa'i

¹⁰⁴³ DCc adds |

¹⁰⁴⁴ RZ vol. 1: 424. (English translation in Sur 2017: 46)

zhes dang| 'grel ba *phyogs bcu mun sel* las|

dpyad na yang dag pa dang| log pa gnyis ka yang snang bar mnyam zhing|
gzhigs na don la ma grub pas¹⁰⁴⁵ mnyam pa'i phyir| 'khor 'das snang srid
thams cad da lta nyid nas rnam dbye med par mnyam pa nyid du gnas so¹⁰⁴⁶|

zhes byad dang de'i gzugs brnyan rang ngos nas ma grub mnyam pa pas yang log mi
'thad par gsungs so| |

yang 'jig rten shes ngo la ltos te bden rdzun gyi tha snyad 'thob rung lta bu'i yang
log gnyis su dbye ba zla ba dang rje btsun tsong kha pa bzhed pa ltar kun mkhyen
chen po yang bzhed de| *yid bzhin mdzod* las|

kun rdzob la tha snyad 'jig rten pas bden rdzun du byed pa dang bstun nas
brda' shes pa'i yan lag tu| yang dag kun rdzob dbang po¹⁰⁴⁷ gnod pa med pa
drug gi snang yul du snang ba'i gzugs sgra dri ro reg bya dang chos rnams yin
la| log pa'i kun rdzob gnod pas dkrugs pa'i snang ba rab rib dang skra shad la
sogs par snang ba ste| *'jug pa* las| gnod pa med pa'i dbang po¹⁰⁴⁸ [26] drug
rnams kyis¹⁰⁴⁹|

zhes sogs drangs nas gsungs so| |

'jig rten na bden par grags pa dang| ma grags pa dang sgo bstun nas yang log byed
pa *grub mtha' mdzod* las gsungs so| |

8. don dam la yul can gtso bor byas te gnyis snang gi spros pa log ma log gi sgo nas
rnam grangs dang rnam grangs ma yin pa'i dbye ba gnyis su rang rgyud pa'i gzhung
nas bshad pa ltar rje bdag nyid chen po yang bzhed la| yang dgag bya'i spros pa
rdzogs par khegs ma khegs kyis don dam dngos btags sam rnam grangs dang| rnam
grangs ma yin pa'i dbye ba yang phye tshul yod la| rong zom gyi *lta phreng 'grel*

¹⁰⁴⁵ DCc omits *pas*

¹⁰⁴⁶ KLR vol. 23: 167

¹⁰⁴⁷ DCc *bo*

¹⁰⁴⁸ DCc *bo*

¹⁰⁴⁹ KLR vol. 14: 122–123. The quotation is from *Madhyamakāvātāra* VI 25.

bar| spros pa phyogs re re chod pa yin min gyi blo'i yul gyi khyad las rnam grangs
yin min gyi blo'i yul gyi khyad las rnam grangs yin min dang de yang stong nyid
bco brgyad lta bu don dam pa'i rnam grangs kyis tshig gi bstan bya'i cha nas dang po
dang| spros pa thams cad zhi ba'i rang bzhin med pa gnyis par gsungs so¹⁰⁵⁰|

kun mkhyen chen pos dgag bya rang bzhin gyis stong ba rnam grangs ma yin pa
dang| de rtogs pa'i spros bral gyi mkhyen pa rnam grangs pa'i don dam par bzhed de|
phyogs bcu mun sel las|

don dam blo las 'das pas ngo bo la dbye ba med kyang| blos cung zad dbye na|
chos rnams rang gi ngo bo nyid kyis stong pa¹⁰⁵¹ de ni gshis kyis don dam [27]
yin te| mdo las| rab 'byor 'di lta ste| dper na nam mkha'i khams la 'ga' zhig gis
bsngags pa brjod cing| 'ga' zhig gis bsngags pa ma yin pa brjod na gang ba'am
bri ba med do¹⁰⁵²| de bzhin du de bzhin gshegs pa rnams kyis chos rnams kyis
ngo bo nyid don dam pa gcig pu zhi ba'i rang bzhin brjod cing| gzhan yang mu
stegs byed kun tu rgyu rnams kyis rtag pa ther zug pa'i chos su bstan yang|
yang dag pa'i de bzhin nyid la gnyis su gyur pa med do| | zhes so| rnal 'byor
pas¹⁰⁵³ don de nyid bsgoms pas spros pa dang bral ba'i blo skyes pa ni rnam
grangs pa'i don dam zhes bya ste| *bden gnyis las*¹⁰⁵⁴ skye la sogs pa bkag pa
yang¹⁰⁵⁵|

zhes sogs drangs nas gsungs so| |

des na don dam gyi dbye ba'i gsung sgros cung mi thun kyang gnad gcig la| da lta
kun mkhyen rong klong gnyis kyis rjes 'jug la| rang bzhin gyis stong ba don dam
btags pa ba dang| kun rdzob mtshan nyid pa sogs su 'dod pa yod na kun mkhyen
gnyis kyis gsung 'di dag ma mthong bar snga rabs pa 'ga' re'i grub mtha'i shan shor
ba yin no| | rang bzhin gyis grub pa khegs pa'i stong ba nyid dgag ba rdzogs par
khegs pa'i yul rnam grangs min pa'i don dam yin pa la ni rje btsun tsong kha pa chen
po dang| rong zom chen po kun mkhyen ngag gi dbang [28] po gsum dgongs pa gcig

¹⁰⁵⁰ This is not a direct quotation, but a reference to RZ vol. 1: 323.

¹⁰⁵¹ DCc *ba*

¹⁰⁵² DCc *de*

¹⁰⁵³ DCc *bas*

¹⁰⁵⁴ DCc omits *bden gnyis las*|

¹⁰⁵⁵ KLR vol. 23: 167–168. The quotation is from *Satyadvayavibhangakārikā* 9.

par yod pas rang bzhin med pa la med mtha'i spros par 'dzin pa'i rnying ma pa ni
shin tu yang mi mdzes te| chos dbyings mdzod sogs nges don gyi rdo rje'i do ha
rnams la skur ba btab pa'i phyir ro| | nang ba sangs rgyas pa thams cad kyis zab
khyad du brtsi ba'i bdag med pa'i lam chen dor nas| gsal rig tsam dang yin min yod
med sogs gang du yang ngos bzung med pa'i ci yang yid la mi byed pa tsam la
snying bor ma 'dzin par mdo sgyu sems gsum gyi gsung rab snga ma rnams kyi
gsung sgros ltar bya bar rigs zhes da lta'i rnying ma pa phal cher la gsol ba 'debs so|
|

9. de lta bu'i bden gnyis ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad du bzhed pa yang| rje bla ma
dang kun mkhyen chen po dgongs pa so sor med de| *theg mchog mdzod* kyi rim
khang brgyad pa las|

yang snang ngo kun rdzob kyi cha nas lhun grub la| stong ngo don dam gyi cha
nas ka dag tu tshig gis brjod pa tsam las| de gnyis rdzas tha dad du med pas so
sor mi 'gyur te| ngo bo gcig la ldog pa tha dad| bram ze yin pas mi yin la| sdom
ldan yin pas rab tu byung ba yin pa gnyis mi 'gal ba bzhin no¹⁰⁵⁶| |

zhes gsungs so| |

10. don dam dpe'i sgo nas gtan la 'bebs pa la| rab rib ^[29] kyis ma bslad pa'i mig gis
nam mkhar bltas na ci yang ma mthong ba ltar ji ltar btsal kyang gang du yang ma
rnyed pa'i bdag nyid yin pa yang dgongs pa gcig ste| *theg mchog mdzod* kyi rim
khang bcu dgu bar|

de ltar rnam pa du ma'i sgo nas rang gi sems la gcig dang tha dad kyi brgal¹⁰⁵⁷
bas brtags te btsal bas gang yang ma rnyed pa ni chos nyid ka nas dag pa'i don
shes rab kyi dbang pos rtogs pa ste¹⁰⁵⁸|

zhes dang| *chos dbyings rin po che'i mdzod* las|

¹⁰⁵⁶ KLR vol. 17: 322.

¹⁰⁵⁷ KLR *rgal*

¹⁰⁵⁸ KLR vol. 18: 184.

gzung 'dzin med pa'i rnal 'byor ngo kha la|
med la snang 'di ya mtshan dgod¹⁰⁵⁹ po 'chor¹⁰⁶⁰|

zhes sogs dang| *yid bzhin mdzod* kyi le'u bco brgyad pa las|

kun rdzob 'di ltar sna tshogs snang ba 'di| |
sgyu ma chu zla sprul pa¹⁰⁶¹ gzugs brnyan bzhin| |
rang bzhin med la snang ba gang yin 'di¹⁰⁶²| |
shin tu brtags na gzhi rtsa dngos med pas| |
mkha' 'dra stong zhing mtshan nyid chad pa ste| |
ma brtags nyams dga' sna tshogs sgyu ma bzhin| |
bag chags 'khrul pa'i¹⁰⁶³ rten 'brel las byung ba| |
ji ltar dha tu ra yi snang ba bzhin¹⁰⁶⁴| |

zhes gsungs so| |

11. kun rdzob kyi dpe rab rib can gyi skra shad kyi snang ba dang 'dra bar yang
dgongs pa gcig ste| sngar gong du drangs pa rnam kyi kyang shes la| *theg mchog*
mdzod kyi rim khang nyer gcig par| [30]

phyi snang ba sna tshogs dkar dmar gyi snang ba snod bcud 'byung ba lngas
bsdus kyi klong na gsal ba 'di dag| rang sems 'khrul pa'i¹⁰⁶⁵ ngo la snang ba
ma gtogs pa phyi don gyi dngos po dang| nang sems kyi dngos po gnyis kar ma
grub pas| gzhi med stong pas¹⁰⁶⁶ cho 'phrul med pa gsal snang gi rang bzhin
rab rib can gyi skra shad dang| rmi lam sgyu ma'i snang ba dang 'dra bar shes
par bya¹⁰⁶⁷|

zhes so| |

¹⁰⁵⁹ DCc *rgod*

¹⁰⁶⁰ KLR vol. 16: 17 (Cf. Longchen Rabjam 2001a: 58).

¹⁰⁶¹ DCc *ba*

¹⁰⁶² DCc *pa*

¹⁰⁶³ DCc *ba'i*

¹⁰⁶⁴ KLR vol. 13: 54–55.

¹⁰⁶⁵ DCc *ba'i*

¹⁰⁶⁶ DCc *bas*

¹⁰⁶⁷ KLR vol. 18: 276.

des na kun rdzob kyi chos rnams la med snang stong ba'i gzugs brnyan du snga
'gyur mkhas pa rnams yang yang gsungs pa nyid| slob dpon zla ba grags pas|

rab rib mthu yis skra shad la sogs pa| |
ngo bo log pa gang zhig rnam brtags pa| |
de nyid bdag nyid gang du mig dag pas| |
mthong de de nyid de ni 'dir shes bya¹⁰⁶⁸| |

zhes sogs gsungs pa dang shin tu mthun pa'i bden gnyis dbyer med kyi tshul gyi
nges don mthar thug gtan la 'bebs pa ste ha cang 'gangs che'o| |

12. stong ba de nyid gsar du blos byas glo bur ba ma yin par gnyug ma ye grol gyi
rang bzhin 'dus ma byas su kun mkhyen chen po bzhed pa ltar| tha snyad chos skad
kyi khyad tsam las don mthun par rje bdag nyid chen po yang bzhed pa ni|

gnas lugs zab mo'i don la skrag gyur nas| |
blos byas nyi tshe'i stong pa¹⁰⁶⁹ mchog 'dzin pa'i| [₃₁]
log pa'i lta ngan mtha' dag rab spangs te| |
chos kun gdod nas stong par¹⁰⁷⁰ rtogs par shog¹⁰⁷¹| |

ces smon lam du gnang ngo| |

13. don dam la dpyod pa'i rtags kyi bsgrub bya med dgag tu tshig gsal dang| shes rab
sgron ma sogs su gsungs pa bzhin rje bdag nyid chen po yang bzhed la| spyir na dgag
pa gnyis kyi mtshan nyid rje rang gi legs bshad rnams su yang yang nan chen pos
rgya gzhung rnams drangs te gtan la phab pa ltar gsang sngags snga 'gyur ba yang
bzhed de| rong zom pa pañdi ta chen pos| *theg chen tshul 'jug tu*

de la dgag pa ji snyed pa thams cad kyang|¹⁰⁷² myed¹⁰⁷³ par dgag pa dang ma

¹⁰⁶⁸ *Madhyamakāvātāra* VI 29.

¹⁰⁶⁹ DCc *ba*

¹⁰⁷⁰ DCc *bar*

¹⁰⁷¹ *Thog mtha' bar gyi smon lam*. TKz vol. 2: 673.1

¹⁰⁷² DCc omits |

yin par dgag pa gnyis su 'dus so | de la myed¹⁰⁷⁴ par dgag pa zhes bya ba ni |
 yod pa bkag pa tsam yin te¹⁰⁷⁵ | gzhan bsgrub par bya ba'i don myed¹⁰⁷⁶ de | 'di
 ltar ma rtogs pa dang¹⁰⁷⁷ log par rtogs pa dang¹⁰⁷⁸ the tshom za ba tsam sel bar
 byed pa kun tu brtags pa tsam 'gog par byed pa yin te | don gzhan ston pa
 myed¹⁰⁷⁹ do | | dper na bum pa myed¹⁰⁸⁰ zhes¹⁰⁸¹ brjod na | bum pa yod par rtog
 pa bzlog pa tsam du zad de | bum pa myed¹⁰⁸² pa'i sa phyogs la stsogs¹⁰⁸³ pa ni
 ston par mi byed do | | de bzhin du gang zag myed¹⁰⁸⁴ ces brjod na | gang zag
 yod par rtog pa tsam bzlog par zad de | gang zag gIs¹⁰⁸⁵ stong pa'i¹⁰⁸⁶ phung
 po¹⁰⁸⁷ [32] yod par ston par ni mi byed pa'o | | de bzhin du kun la sbyar¹⁰⁸⁸ ro | |
 ma yin par dgag pa gang zhe na | gzhan bkag¹⁰⁸⁹ nas gzhan ston pa ste | 'di ltar
 bum pa myed¹⁰⁹⁰ pa zhes brjod na¹⁰⁹¹ | bum pas stong pa'i¹⁰⁹² sa phyogs go bar
 byed pa bzhin du¹⁰⁹³ gang zag myed¹⁰⁹⁴ pa zhes brjod na | gang zag gis stong
 pa'i¹⁰⁹⁵ phung po¹⁰⁹⁶ ston par byed pa lta bu'o | | de lta bas na myed¹⁰⁹⁷ par dgag
 pa ni gzhan gyis grub pa'i mtha' sel ba tsam yin la | ma yin par dgag pa ni de
 tsam gyis mi chog ste | rang gi grub pa'i mtha' 'ang¹⁰⁹⁸ sgrub par byed pa yin
 no¹⁰⁹⁹ | |

zhes dgag pa gnyis kyis mtshan nyid gsungs pa ni shing rta chen po'i gzhung drangs

¹⁰⁷³ DCc med

¹⁰⁷⁴ DCc med

¹⁰⁷⁵ DCc gyi

¹⁰⁷⁶ DCc med

¹⁰⁷⁷ DCc adds |

¹⁰⁷⁸ DCc adds |

¹⁰⁷⁹ DCc med

¹⁰⁸⁰ DCc med

¹⁰⁸¹ DCc ces

¹⁰⁸² DCc med

¹⁰⁸³ DCc sogs

¹⁰⁸⁴ DCc med

¹⁰⁸⁵ DCc gis

¹⁰⁸⁶ DCc ba'i

¹⁰⁸⁷ DCc bo

¹⁰⁸⁸ DCc sbyor

¹⁰⁸⁹ DCc bkag

¹⁰⁹⁰ DCc med

¹⁰⁹¹ DCc pa ni

¹⁰⁹² DCc ba'i

¹⁰⁹³ DCc omits |

¹⁰⁹⁴ DCc med

¹⁰⁹⁵ DCc ba'i

¹⁰⁹⁶ DCc bo

¹⁰⁹⁷ DCc med

¹⁰⁹⁸ DCc yang

¹⁰⁹⁹ RZ vol. 1: 481–482. (English translation in Sur 2017: 115–116).

nas rje bdag nyid chen po gsungs pa ji lta bu bzhin yin la| gnas lugs rtogs pa'i
mnyam bzhag ye shes kyi gzigs ngo na 'khrul pa'i¹¹⁰⁰ blos sgro btags pa'i don bkag
pa'i stong sam tsam las bsgrub bya gzhan gang yang med pas so so rang rig gi ye
shes de'i gzhal bya'i spros bral ni| gong du bshad ma thag pa ltar gyi dgag bya bkag
tsam gyi med dgag kho na yin te| *theg mchog mdzod* kyi rim khang brgyad pa las|

ka dag dngos po dang mtshan mar ma grub pa'i ldog pa ltos te| rig pa med| ma
rig pa med| sangs rgyas med| sems can med¹¹⁰¹|

ces pa nas|

ci yang grub pa dang dmigs su med pa ste| ^[33] dgag chos 'ba' zhig gis bsgrub
chos dor bar bstan pa ni¹¹⁰²|

zhes bkra shis mdzes ldan chen po'i rgyud drangs nas gsungs pa'i phyir ro| |

des na dgag bya bkag shul du chos gzhan 'phen mi 'phen gyis dgag pa gnyis kyi
rnam dbye byed pa ni| rgya gar mkhas pa'i gzhung dang| bod 'dir yang rong klong
gnyis dang| 'jam mgon bla ma yab sras dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig gis gzhed
la| chos rnam kyi gnas lugs ngos 'dzin pa'i tshe yang 'khrul ba'i blos sgro btags pa
bkag pa'i cha tsam zhig las gzhan bsgrub tu med pa dang| gal srid yod na spros pa
ma chod pa'i skyon yod par yang mkhas pa'i dbang po de dag bzhed pas stong nyid
med dgag yin pa la mi mthun pa med do| |

'on kyang deng sang sa rnying gi klog pa ba mang po¹¹⁰³ zhig| med dgag la skyon du
mthong ba ni med dgag gi don ma shes pa ste| don gyi dbang de mngon par mkhyen
pas gzigs nas mkhas pa rnam kyang dgag pa gnyis kyi mtshan nyid mang du gtan la
phab pa 'dra yang| rang gi rjes 'jug la ltos te dgos pa grub ma grub ci rigs yod la|
mkhas pa'i dbang phyug 'jam dbyangs mi pham rnam rgyal ba ni *nges shes sgron*
mer chos nyid med dgag tu gsungs so| | smin gling sku mched gnyis ma yin dgag tu
gsungs pa ni stong nyid ^[34] rang ldog tsam min par tshul gzhan la dgongs pa ste

¹¹⁰⁰ DCc *ba'i*

¹¹⁰¹ KLR vol. 17: 326

¹¹⁰² KLR vol. 17: 327

¹¹⁰³ DCc *bo*

dpyad bya mang yang yi ges 'jigs nas bzhag go| |

14. nyan rang gis chos nyid de rtogs dgos par zla bas 'jug 'grel sogs su lung rigs mang pos¹¹⁰⁴ nan tan du gsungs pa ltar rje yab sras bzhed la| snga 'gyur ba'i rang lugs la thun mong gi bshad srol mkhan chen yab sras kyi lugs ltar mdzad pas ma rtogs pa'i phyogs gsungs kyang| thun min nang rgyud sde gsum gyi nges don gyi lta ba dpal ldan thal 'gyur ba ltar bzhed dgos par kun mkhyen ngag gi dbang po bzhed pas nyan rang gis chos kyi bdag med phra mo rtogs pa bzhed dgos par grub la| gzhan yang mkhas pa'i dbang po rong klong gnyis kyi gsung rab tu gnas lugs rang bzhin med pa'i lta ba med par nyon mongs mi spong ba'i tshul shin tu mang po¹¹⁰⁵ gsungs pas kyang 'grub la| rtogs ma rtogs kyi dbang gis 'khor 'das kyi khyad par dbye dgos par yang mang du bka' bstsal pa ltar yongs su grags pas thun min gyi bshad srol du nyan rang gi stong nyid rtogs par bzhed pa la bsnyon du med do| | yi ges 'jigs nas rgyas par ma drangs so| |

15. rigs shes kyi dpyad bzod gzhi ma grub par rje bdag [35] nyid chen po bzhed la| snga rabs pa 'ga' re rigs shes kyi rnyed don dang rigs shes kyi dpyad bzod gcig tu 'khrul nas don dam bden pa dpyad bzod du 'dod mkhan yod mod| kun mkhyen chos kyi rgyal pos *grub mtha' mdzod* kyi skabs snga rabs pa'i rjes zlos mdzad kyang| *yid bzhin mdzod 'grel padma dkar por* don dam bden pa'i mtshan nyid kyi 'phros su dpyad bzod bkag pas rang bzhed rje rin po che dang dgongs pa gcig tu 'bab bo| | rgyas par ma drangs so| |

16. kun rdzob dngos yul du byed pa'i sems can gyi blo ni 'khrul par¹¹⁰⁶ zla ba dang rje btsun tsong kha pa bzhed pa ltar kun mkhyen chen po sogs gsang sngags snga 'gyur ba yang shin tu bzhed de| *grub mtha' mdzod* las|

mthong ba rdzun pa blo 'khrul pa¹¹⁰⁷ ni so so skye bo ma rig pa'i bag chags kyis mig mdongs¹¹⁰⁸ pas¹¹⁰⁹| rab rib dang skra shad 'dzag pa la don du zhen pa ltar| 'gro ba drug gi gnas dang longs spyod la sogs pa'i bde sdug sna tshogs su

¹¹⁰⁴ DCc bos

¹¹⁰⁵ DCc bo

¹¹⁰⁶ DCc bar

¹¹⁰⁷ DCc ba

¹¹⁰⁸ DCc ldong

¹¹⁰⁹ DCc bas

snang ba 'khrul pa¹¹¹⁰ rten cing 'brel bar 'byung ba'i gzung 'dzin gyi rnam pa
rnams dang| sa thob pa'i rjes thob na gzhan dang thun mong du snod bcud la
sogs par snang ba'i rnam pa dang| snang tsam dbang po'i¹¹¹¹ mngon sum dang|
me [36] la sogs pa dpog pa'i rjes su dpag¹¹¹² pa la sogs te blo rim gnyis ni kun
rdzob pa'i rnam pa 'jal ba la ltos nas snang la| de la'ang mig la sogs pa'i dbang
po dag pa pa¹¹¹³ dang| skyon can gnyis las kun rdzob gnyis su bzhag ste¹¹¹⁴|

zhes gsungs so| |

yang gzhan skye tha snyad du yang mi 'thad tshul 'jug pa rtsa 'grel du gsungs pa ltar
rje bla mas gzhan skye 'gog tshul gyi rigs pa'i 'phul mtshams gangs can 'dir sngar
yongs su ma grags pa'i shing rta chen po'i rigs lam phra mo'i rnam gzhag mkhas pa
yid 'phrog pa'i gnas mang du gsungs la| kun mkhyen dri med 'od zer kyang gzhan
skye tha snyad du mi bzhed de| *yid bzhin mdzod* 'grel gyis rang rgyud 'gog skabs| de
ltar rgyu rkyen rten 'brel gyi snang ba las skye bar snang yang| gzhan kho na las
'dod par mi rigs te| tha snyad du gzhan las skye ba grub na rang las skye ba yang
'grub par 'gyur ro| | zhes bdag skye dang| gzhan skye 'thad mi 'thad 'go mnyam du
mdzad do| | yang *grub mtha' mdzod* gyi rang rgyud pa'i skabs| shes bya bden gnyis
kyi dbye gzhir bzhag cing| don dam dpyod pa'i rtags kyis bsgrub bya med dgag yin
par yang gsungs so| |

de bzhin du gsang sngags snga 'gyur ba rnams rang rig kyang mi bzhed pa'i phyogs
yin te| dpal ldan zla ba la [37] bshad pa'i chu mgo zhu dgos gang zhig| 'jug 'grel du
rang rig rgyas par bkag pa'i phyir dang| rang rig gis bden dngos ci yang bsgrub tu
med pa'i phyir te| snang tshul ltar bden pa rdul tsam yang khas mi len pa'i phyir
dang| tha snyad pa'i rnam gzhag la snang tsam las logs su btags don dang 'jog byed
kyi tshad ma zur du 'tshol mi dgos pa'i phyir ro| | rong klong gnyis zhig pa dngos
por bzhed pa'i gsal kha med kyang nges par bzhed de| zla ba rgyas par bsgrub pa
rang lugs gang zhig chos thams cad btags tsam du 'jog pa'i lugs la zhig pa dngos por
bzhed par gnod byed med cing| bzhed dgos pa'i sgrub byed mang ba'i phyir| des na

¹¹¹⁰ DCc *ba*

¹¹¹¹ DCc *bo'i*

¹¹¹² DCc *dpog*

¹¹¹³ DCc omits *pa*

¹¹¹⁴ KLR vol. 15: 101–102

zhig pa dngos po la yang than mthong ba ltar mi byed par blo gzu bos khas blang bar
bya dgos so|| spros rgyu mang yang yi ges 'jigs so||

17. kun rdzob tha snyad pa'i chos rnam ji snyed pa gzigs pa'i rnam mkhyen tshad
ma'i gtsos tshad mas bslu med du grub pa yang dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig
yin te| kun mkhyen chen po'i 'grel ba pad dkar du|

shes bya mtha' med pa mkhyen pas thams cad gzigs shing| thugs rje mtha' med
pas 'jig rten kun la gzigs pa na yungs 'bru gcig gi go sa¹¹¹⁵ na'ang| snod bcud
kyi [38] 'jig rten tshad med par snang bas don mdzad cing¹¹¹⁶|

zhes pa nas|

nam mkha' go sa¹¹¹⁷ khab kyi mig tsam na'ang las mthun par bsags pa'i sems
can snod bcud kyi 'jig rten grangs med pa snang ba thams cad du ye shes kyi
gzigs pa 'jug cing don mdzad pa yin no¹¹¹⁸||

zhes sogs gsungs pa'i phyir|

18. de ltar gzhi bden gnyis kyi rnam gzhas gtan la 'bebs pa la gsar rnying dgongs pa
mi mthun pa med la| khyad par du nges don gyi lta ba mthar thug gi tshul bden gnyis
dbyer med kyi chos skad kyis yang yang nan tan du gsungs pa de nyid zla ba'i 'grel
chen gsum gyi dgongs pa rje bla mas *tī ka chen* gnyis dang| lhag mthong che chung
sogs su dkral ba dang tha snyad kyi sgros las dgongs pa'i gtad so shin tu gcig tu 'bab
ste| don dam gtan la 'bebs tshe dgag bya rang ngos nas grub pa bkag pas| rang rgyud
pa ltar kun rdzob rang mtshan pa log na med| kun rdzob 'jog tshe 'khor 'das kyi
rnam gzhas snang tsam btags tsam gyi ming rkyang btags yod du 'jog pa'i phyir
dgag bya dngos su khegs pas don dam zur du med pas na bden gnyis dbyer med ces
tha snyad du rang rgyud kyi gtan tshig gis yang dag pa'i bsgrub bya sgrub pa'i dbu
ma byings las [39] kyang phye ste| zla ba'i dgongs pa thun mong min par bsgrub pa'i
phyir| de skad du| *yid bzhin mdzod* kyi le'u bco brgyad pa las|

¹¹¹⁵ KLR om. *sa*

¹¹¹⁶ KLR vol. 14: 303.

¹¹¹⁷ KLR om. *sa*

¹¹¹⁸ KLR vol. 14: 304.

de la dang po gnas lugs shes pa gces| |
 theg pa'i dbang gis rnam pa mang na yang| |
 nges pa'i snying po¹¹¹⁹ bden pa dbyer med de| |
 sangs rgyas rnam kyis gsang ba'i mdzod khang yin| |
 de yi rang bzhin 'od gsal ye shes te| |
 thog ma med nas rab¹¹²⁰ zhi¹¹²¹ spros med bdag| |
 nyi mkha' bzhin te¹¹²² lhun grub 'dus ma byas| |
 rang bzhin rnam dag chen por ye gnas pas| |
 snang stong dbyer med grub bsal 'gro 'ong med| |
 kun rdzob rnam chad rnam dbye'i yul 'das pas| |
 brtags¹¹²³ pa'i bden gnyis 'das phyir spros kun zhi| |
 bden pa dbyer med grub dang ma grub med| |
 dbyings las snang stong rang bzhin gnyis med pas| |
 bden pa de yang dbyer med ces su brjod¹¹²⁴| |

ces dang|

'di ltar¹¹²⁵ rang bzhin stong la¹¹²⁶ bdag med pa| |
 de nyid de yi gnas lugs yin pa'i phyir| |
 don dam zhes bya snang cha kun rdzob ste| |
 snang dus nyid nas skye sogs grub med pas| |
 rang bzhin de yin bden pa dbyer med do¹¹²⁷| |

sogs dang|

'di las gzhan du rtog pa log pa'i blo| |
 gnas lugs don la rab tu rmongs pa yin¹¹²⁸| |

¹¹¹⁹ DCc *bo*

¹¹²⁰ DCc *rang*

¹¹²¹ DCc *bzhin*

¹¹²² DCc *du*

¹¹²³ DCc *btags*

¹¹²⁴ KLR vol. 13: 54.

¹¹²⁵ DCc *dag*

¹¹²⁶ DCc *ba*

¹¹²⁷ KLR vol. 13: 55.

zhes gsungs so| |

skabs 'dir rigs shes kyis dpyad nas ma rnyed pas med par [40] 'jog pa stong pa¹¹²⁹
phyang chad theg chen spyi sgos las ring ba'i skal med skur 'debs kyis lta bar gsungs
shing| rigs shes kyis ma rnyed pa med pa'i don min zhes rang bzhin med pa dang med
pa la dngos su tshig gis khyad mi dbye bar rigs shes kyis ma rnyed pa la brten nas
rtogs pa'i 'od gsal stong pa'i¹¹³⁰ gnas lugs ni sangs rgyas kyis yon tan thams cad kyis
'char gzhi ye nas lhun grub tu yod pa'i gzhi lhun grub kyis yon tan gyi cha nas cang
med ci med kyis phyang chad min par gsungs te| de yang dus dang rdul phran sogs su
dpyad nas ma rnyed pa ni chos can bden par 'dzin pa zlog pa'i drang don du gsungs
mod| 'on kyang rigs shes kyis 'khrul pa'i¹¹³¹ zhen stangs sun dbyung ba'i don stong
nyid du mi bzhed pa ni min te| sngar drangs pa rnams dang| 'dir yang|

'di ltar snang yang 'khor ba ma grub pas| |
rang bzhin med de dbyings kyis don dam dang| |
tha dad so sor dbye ba'i chos med pas| |
'khor 'das dbyer med mnyam pa nyid du bstan¹¹³²| |

zhes sogs gsungs pa'i phyir ro| |

des na drang don du gsungs pa ni rigs shes de'i nges ngo'i gzhal bya tsam de la ltos
te spros pa mtha' dag log pa'i don dam min pa'i don no| |

'di dag 'khrul gzhi shin tu che bas zhib tu dpyad dgos te| *pad dkar* las|

'di lta bu'i [41] gnas lugs go ba ni deng sang shin tu nyung bar snang ngo¹¹³³|

zhes kyang gsungs so| |

¹¹²⁸ KLR vol. 13: 55.

¹¹²⁹ DCc *ba*

¹¹³⁰ DCc *ba'i*

¹¹³¹ DCc *ba'i*

¹¹³² KLR vol. 13: 55.

¹¹³³ KLR vol. 14: 236.

de la rje btsun tsong kha pa chen po'i zhal snga nas ni| rigs shes kyis ma rnyed pa dang rang bzhin med pa med pa'i don min zhes pa'i gsung gcig gis 'gag thams cad bkrol te| de lta bu'i 'chad tshul bde ba'i legs bshad kyis zhib tig ni gzhan su la'ang med mod| gzhi lhun grub kyis yon tan gyis dbye ba yang don du med pa min pa'i don yin pas dgongs pa gcig pa'i tshul shin tu shes dgos la| 'di dag la spro bya mang yang yi ges 'jigs te| gzu bor gnas pa'i rnam dpyod dang ldan pa la ni sgo tsam bstan pas chog cing| blun po phyogs ris can la ni ci tsam spros kyang dgos don mi 'grub pas mdor bsod so| |

theg chen tshul 'jug tu yang bden gnyis dbyer med kyis lta ba la bsngags brjod mdzad cing don kyang 'di kho na ltar gsungs te ma spros so| | lam bgrod tshul la| lam gyi ngo bo sku gnyis sgrub byed bden gnyis kyis lam rim gnyis yod pa la dgongs pa gcig dang dbyangs gcig yin te| 'grel ba *pad dkar* las|

de la kun rdzob kyis bden pa la brten nas thabs bsod nams kyis tshogs pha rol tu phyin pa drug la sogs pa nyams su len zhing| shes rab ye shes kyis tshogs la brten nas don dam pa'i ye ^[42] shes 'od gsal ba'i don la sgom par byed do¹¹³⁴| |

zhes dang| sems gnas tsam dang ci yang yid la mi byed pa sogs bkag mthar|

lam yang dag pa tshogs gnyis su thabs shes su 'brel dgos na| de med pas bstan pa 'di las phyi rol tu 'gyur pa¹¹³⁵ ste| byang chub 'dod na de las bzlog dgos par shes pas| mdo rgyud gzigs la spongs shig ces gdams pa yin no¹¹³⁶| |

zhes sogs gsungs pa'i phyir ro| |

19. lam gcig tsam ma yin par rnam grangs du ma gdul bya'i khams dbang dang bstun nas grangs dang go rim nges pa'i tshul gyis nyams su len dgos pa yang shin tu mthun te| *yid bzhin mdzod* las|

¹¹³⁴ KLR vol. 14: 123.

¹¹³⁵ DCc *ba*

¹¹³⁶ KLR vol. 14: 278–279.

byis dang rgan bzhin kha zas tha dad ltar¹¹³⁷ | |
de yi chos kyang rang bzhin tha dad do¹¹³⁸ | |

zhes dang|

de nas rim par 'khrid pa'i tshul gyis bshad| |
des ni theg pa'i rim pa shes pa dang| |
yon tan gong 'phel 'jigs dngangs¹¹³⁹ skrag pa med| |
nor ba med cing lta spyod zung 'brel 'gyur| |
de ltar ma bshad skyon ni tshad med de| |
gong 'og snga phyi'i rim pa dang bral bas| |
bstan pa'i spyi srol rim pas nyams pa dang| |
blo chung dngangs¹¹⁴⁰ skrag log ltas 'dor ba dang| |
go rim mi shes zab mor mi rtogs dang| |
'dus byas dge ba khyad du gsod pa dang| |
sgro skur rgyur 'gyur rgyu 'bras 'chol ba dang| |
blang [43] dor mi shes shes bya'i don la rmongs| |
theg chen sems bskyed snying rje spangs¹¹⁴¹ pa¹¹⁴² dang| |
stong lta¹¹⁴³ dang¹¹⁴⁴ ldan ngan 'gror bslus pa dang| |
byar med zer nas tha mal lus pa dang| |
ma smin 'gro la gsang ba sgrogs pa ste| |
nyes mang ldan phyir theg pa rim gyis bshad¹¹⁴⁵ | |

ces dang| de'i 'grel ba [*padma dkar po*] las|

sna gcig gis chog na sangs rgyas kyis 'di tsam gsungs pa don med pa las de ltar
ma yin pa'i phyir ro| | deng sang ni da ltar gyi rig pa ngos zin pas chog mang

¹¹³⁷ DCc *las*

¹¹³⁸ KLR vol. 13: 36.

¹¹³⁹ DCc *sngangs*

¹¹⁴⁰ DCc *sngangs*

¹¹⁴¹ DCc *spang*

¹¹⁴² DCc *ba*

¹¹⁴³ DCc *ltas*

¹¹⁴⁴ DCc *dad*

¹¹⁴⁵ KLR vol. 13: 36.

po¹¹⁴⁶ bstan pa la don med ces zer ba mang ste| des chog na sangs rgyas kyis
gzhan bstan mi dgos la| gcig tu na¹¹⁴⁷ da ltar gyi rig pa de yang thos pa dang|
bla ma'i rnal 'byor tsam la bsten¹¹⁴⁸ dgos pas| rang tshig bsal ba la zhugs pa
yin no| | des na blo la dang po dang| bar pa¹¹⁴⁹ dang| tha ma'i rim pas gnyen
por¹¹⁵⁰ gang che¹¹⁵¹ zab pa'i phyir de bstan par gdams pa yin no¹¹⁵²| |

zhes sogs shin tu mang ngo| |

20. nyams su blang ba'i 'bras bu mthar thug sku gnyis kyis go 'phang mngon du byed
pa la yang mi mthun pa ga la yod de| *yid bzhin mdzod* las|

de ltar bsgoms¹¹⁵³ pas¹¹⁵⁴ dag pa'i 'bras bu ni| |
spangs rtogs mthar phyin sku dang ye shes te| |
ji ltar nyi zla sprin dang bral ba bzhin| |
khams kyis sgrib pa kun dang bral ba¹¹⁵⁵ na| |
byang chub ces bya ^[44] lhun grub yon tan snang¹¹⁵⁶| |

zhes sogs gsungs pa ltar rang don gtsang bde rtag bdag dam pa'i pha rol tu phyin pa'i
chos sku zag med kyis yon tan brgya zhe bzhi sogs legs par thob pa dang lhan cig tu
gzhan don sprul sku rnam pa thams cad pa'i bdag nyid du rtsol med du bzhugs pa'i
mtshan dpe gsar rdzogs kyis spras pa'i nges pa lnga ldan gyi longs sku ji srid 'khor
ba ma stongs kyis bar du bzhugs nas sems can gyi don mdzad par bzhed pa yin no| |

slar yang smras pa|

dal 'byor gru bo che 'di thob gyur te| |
gangs ljongs phyogs med bstan pa'i rin chen nor| |

¹¹⁴⁶ DCc *bo*

¹¹⁴⁷ DCc omits *na*

¹¹⁴⁸ DCc *brten*

¹¹⁴⁹ DCc omits *pa*

¹¹⁵⁰ DCc *po*

¹¹⁵¹ DCc *tshé*

¹¹⁵² KLR vol. 13: 305–306.

¹¹⁵³ DCc *bsgom*

¹¹⁵⁴ DCc *pa*

¹¹⁵⁵ DCc *bas*

¹¹⁵⁶ KLR vol. 13: 65.

'dod 'jo'i rnam 'phrul gang che ji dga' ru |
 blang du yod pa'i skal bzang rnyed na yang |
 yang dag lam la rang gzhan phyogs 'byed dang |
 dag dang ma dag kun kyang dag snang khul |
 blo gros mig la ma rig ling tog gis |
 blta ba'i skal ba phrogs rnam snying rje'i gnas |
 kye ma rgyal bstan zab mo nyin mor byed |
 bsod nams mkha' la shar dang 'phrad mod de |
 rnam dpyod mig gis mjal ba'i nus bral la |
 log rtog rab rib snang ba cir yang 'char |
 chos mig rdul bral theg gsum 'phags pa rnam |
 rgya chen gzhan don khur 'khyer nus min las |
 spros pas dub pa ngal gso'i zhi dbyings der |
 phyogs med ^[45] dgongs pa ro gcig 'di mthong ngam |
 kye hud zag med zas dang bral ba yi |
 tshur mthong blo yi gzhong stong 'di dag tu |
 rang gzhan phyogs 'dzin rtsod pas 'o brgyal kyang |
 skyes mchog rnam ni dgongs klong gcig tu mnal |
 kye ma kyi hud nyon mongs gdon 'di yis |
 sgo kun nas ni 'di ltar brlag bzhin du |
 phan pa'i zol gyis snying la gnas bcas pa'i |
 dgra 'di 'joms pa'i skal ba nam zhig 'ong |
 mdo rgyud rgya mtsho'i dgongs zab nam mkha'i khyon |
 gsal byed legs bshad nyi ma 'bum phrag gis |
 lung rigs 'od zer cir yang rtse ba yi |
 dge ldan lugs bzang 'di 'dra su yis 'dor |
 sgrub rgyud gser gyi ri bo'i ngos dag tu |
 don gnyis sgrub byed theg dgu'i nor bu'i tshal |
 lhag par rnam gsum yo ga'i khyad nor can |
 snga 'gyur rin chen gling du su mi spro |
 brtse chen thabs kyis bskyod pa'i ye shes gcig |
 gzhan phan sgyu 'phrul dra bar rol ba las |
 gangs ljongs bstan pa'i dpal du snang ba yi |
 rnam gsum sprul ba'i sku la blang dor ci |

gangs ri'i mu khyud 'dzin pa 'di tsam gyi | |
dam chos de 'dzin bcas pa rang lugs su | |
shong ba min na mkha' khyab dkon mchog gsum | |
skyabs yul gcig tu sdud pa kha bshad tsam | |
theg mchog dar so che ba gangs can gyi | |
bstan pa [46] kun la dag snang thob mod de | |
bshad tshad yang dag lam du zhen pa yi | |
ris med rnam dbye med par gol ba med | |
gzhi la snang stong ya bral ma song bas | |
lam la tshogs gnyis nyams len zung 'brel dang | |
'bras bu don gnyis sgrub pa'i phyag rgya 'di | |
yang dag ltar snang 'byed pa'i srang chen yin | |
de dag kun la nyams myong ma skyes kyang | |
thos bsam tsam gyi go yul rnam dag 'di | |
yab rje sangs rgyas dngos des bskyangs pa yi | |
bka' drin yin phyir byang chub bar du mchod | |
bdag ni skyes stobs shes rab dang bral zhing | |
tshe 'dir sbyang ba'ang shin tu dman pas na | |
'di la log par bshad pa gang mchis kun | |
gsar rnying mkhas pa'i spyang sngar snying nas 'chag | |
de ltar yang dag lam la dpyad pa yis | |
phyogs med lta grub bshad pa'i dge ba 'dis | |
tshe rabs kun tu chos spong las spangs te | |
rnam dag chos dang 'phrad pa'i rgyur gyur cig | |
dge ldan legs bshad nyi mas mig phyas te | |
gsang chen snga 'gyur bstan pa'i nor bu sogs | |
yang dag chos kyi rin thang rtogs pa'i blo | |
'di bzhin sgrub pa'i rgyal mtshan tshugs par shog | |
'jam pa'i rdo rjes sna tshogs thabs mkhas kyis | |
rab 'byams zhing du zab mo'i 'bel gtam gyis | |
nges don bstan pa'i ngang tshul bgro ba'i gral | |
srid pa ma [47] stongs bar du thob par shog | |
de yi tshe yang mgon de'i ye shes kyi | |
sgyu ma'i rnam 'phrul ji snyed dang khyad par | |

rang gi bsod nams me tog phog pa yi |
rigs bdag de yi bran du rtag gyur cig |

ces mnyam med ri bo dge ldan pa dang | gsang sngags snga 'gyur ba gnyis dgongs
bzhed gcig tu gyur pa'i tshul cung zad brjed pa dag snang nor bu'i me long zhes bya
ba 'di ni | dus gsum gyi rgyal ba thams cad kyi mkhyen pa'i ngo bo 'jam dpal gzhon
nu | ⁷¹¹⁵⁷ 'jam dpal rol ba'i blo gros dpal bzang po¹¹⁵⁸ dang | brtse ba'i bdag nyid
spyang ras gzigs dbang 7 blo bzang dpal ldan bstan 'dzin snyan grags dpal bzang
po¹¹⁵⁹ dang | nus mthu'i rang gzugs gsang ba'i bdag po 7 las rab gling pa¹¹⁶⁰ rin po
che'i zhabs sogs theg pa chen po'i dge ba'i bshes gnyen mang po'i¹¹⁶¹ zhabs pad la
gtug pa'i skal pa¹¹⁶² bzang po¹¹⁶³ thob pa'i shākya'i btsun pa'i gzugs brnyan | blo
bzang mdo sngags chos kyi rgya mtsho zhes bya bas | rang nyid kyi dad pa dang shes
rab phyogs med du 'phel ba'i dgos ched gtsor bzung | rang la legs bshad kyi re ltos
'cha' ba'i skal mnyam gzhan dag 'ga' zhig la'ang phan pa'i bsam pas | rigs gsum
sems dpa'i rnam 'phrul de dag gis byin gyis brlabs te bstan 'gro'i gsos sman du ^[48]
grub pa'i dpal ldan snyan mo ri'i gtsug lag khang gi nye log ne'u gsing me tog sna
tshogs kyis mngon par bkra ba'i skyed mos tshal nas dkon mchog gsum rjes su dran
pa'i dad pa'i dga' ston la longs spyod bzhin bris pa dge legs 'phel | dge'o |

2. Phyag rdzogs gdams pa'i skor gyi brjed tho

DCc vol. 2: 268–271

rang gi brjed tho la | phyag rdzogs kyi gdams pa 'di dag mi 'thad pa ma yin zhing |
'thad lugs kyang bstan pa spyi btsan dang | gang zag sgos btsan gnyis su phye ste |
phyi ma'i dbang gis dbang po'i khyad par dmigs bsal can la stong nyid ngo sprad
lugs dang | sgom lugs thams cad theg chen gyi shing rta'i srol gnyis kyi gzhung lugs
chen po'i spyi skad ltar min par sngags dang 'brel ba'i sgo nas tha mal gyi¹¹⁶⁴ shes

¹¹⁵⁷ The figure 7 (ཁ), which appears before the names of mDo-sngags chos-kyi rgya-mtsho's three teachers, is an honorific marker.

¹¹⁵⁸ DCc *bo*

¹¹⁵⁹ DCc *bo*

¹¹⁶⁰ DCc *ba*

¹¹⁶¹ DCc *bo'i*

¹¹⁶² DCc *ba*

¹¹⁶³ DCc *bo*

¹¹⁶⁴ DCc *kyi*

pa bcos bsgyur mi dgos pa 'di'i steng nas yin lugs ngo sprad pa dang | ngo sprod kyi don bzhin brjod du med pa'i gnas lugs rtsis gdab bral ba rang babs su bskyangs pas thun mong gi lhag mthong dang | thun mong min pa'i 'od gsal lam byed kyi sgo gnyis ka stabs gcig tu 'ong ba yin no | des na bstan pa spyi khyab dbang btsan du thog mar dgag bya ngos 'dzin tshul | de nas de la rigs pas gnod pa ston tshul | rigs stobs kyi rnyed pa'i bdag med gnyis kyi don la dpyad 'jog gi sgom spel ^[269] ba'i lhag mthong gi skyong tshul sogs las dang po pa'i dbang du byas te gegs dang gol sa med par gsungs pa 'di rtsa ba che | 'di la mdo sngags so sos stong nyid sgom tshul rang gi skabs kyi thabs dang 'brel bar nyams su len pa'i srol ga so sor yod kyis thams cad stabs gcig pa min | deng sang phyag rdzogs pa sogs la dris na shing rta chen po'i gzhung lugs kyi zhi lhag gi bgrod lugs sogs gang zag so so'i rang tshod kyi chos shig yod pa'i gdam zur tsam yang med par kun kyang phyag rdzogs kyi lam der dang po nyid nas e tshud blta zhing de tsam min pa thams cad chos min du bsgrags nas bstan pa spyi btsan gyi tshul 'di bskal don sha za ltar gyur | de la gzhung lugs chen po'i rjes 'brang mkhas pa chos rgyus che ba rnams khong tshos spyi sgos kyi rnam dbye mi shes dgongs nas 'gog | chos rgyus chung ba rnams spyir na phyag rdzogs sogs rtsa ba nas mi 'grig snyam nas bka' rnying sogs la than ltar brtsi zhing | gang zag dgos btsan gyi tshul 'di ltar yod pa bskal don sha zar song nas rgyal ba'i bstan pa la nang sel tshabs chen byung bar gda' | de yang lta ba snyigs ma'i dbang gis blo sems kyi na tshod shin tu chung ste | theg pa chen po'i khal lci ba 'degs pa'i rnam dpyod kyi shed med pa der gda' | gang zag sgos btsan gyi chos ^[270] 'di chod kyang che | 'khrul gzhi yang che | 'di la 'khrul nas pha mes bzang po'i pha phogs kyi skal pa¹¹⁶⁵ yin no snyam nas nor bu dang mching bu nor ba yang mang rabs shig yod 'dug | rgya gar mkhas pa'i gzhung lugs la dri ma med pa'i rigs pas brdar sha bca de 'jug pa la gegs gang yang med | yar ded na byams pa dang 'jam dbyangs la thug 'dug | de nas yar ded na rdzogs pa'i sangs rgyas rang yin | chos zer rgyu'i chos de sgo gang nas bsams kyang skyes bu gsum ka'i nyams su blang bya thams cad stan thog gcig gi nyams len du dril ba'i byang chub lam rim 'di yin par 'dug | 'di la bag chags bzang po¹¹⁶⁶ zhig ma zhog par shi dgos na shi mi thub par 'dug kyang | khyod kyi bya ba zin no zhes | 'chi bdag sdod par mi 'gyur gyis¹¹⁶⁷ | gsungs pa ltar lags pas de ring sang la bag chags shig thebs dgos | nyi ma re re bzhin bag chags re bzhag ste bag chags mthug po

¹¹⁶⁵ DCc *ba*

¹¹⁶⁶ DCc *bo*

¹¹⁶⁷ These lines appear to be based on Sa-skya Paṇḍita's *Sa skya legs bshad* verse 433ab: khyod *kyis* bya ba zin *nam* zhes | 'chi bdag sdod par mi 'gyur gyis |

zhig theb dgos| bka' brgyud dang | rnying ma sogs la snying thag pa nas skyabs su
 mchi ste| shing rta chen po'i gzhung lugs rtsis med du 'dor ba'i sa bka' rnying ma
 sogs rmi lam du yang mi byed| tshe rabs 'di tsam du ma zad par rgyal ba gnyis pa
 tsong kha pa'i bstan pa'i lhag zhabs su smon lam 'debs te| gang zag gi [271] rigs
 thams cad gcig ltar du bzung ste 'dul byed chos sgo gcig gis spar bkab byed pa'i
 rang lta mchog 'dzin can gyi dge ldan pa de yang srog la babs kyang mi byed snyam
 mo| |mdor na nga'i 'dren mchog chos thams cad la dgongs pa nang byan chud pa'i
 chos kyi rje de'i rnam par thar pa¹¹⁶⁸ la blo gros kyi mig gyen du bskyod de sdod pa
 las| gsar ma 'o rnying ma'o zhes pa'i brag cha la mi nyan pa khong rang gi zhal
 chems kho na ltar bgyid do| | |

Memorandum on Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen Instructions

[268] What follows is a reminder to myself.

The Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen instructions are not invalid. In fact, their validity becomes clear when we make a distinction between (1) teachings that apply more generally (*bstan pa spyi btsan*) and (2) teachings that are intended for individuals (*gang zag sgos btsan*).

Regarding the latter, for those of exceptionally high capacity, the ways in which emptiness is introduced, as well as all the various modes of meditation, do not employ the general terminology of the great scriptural traditions of the two pioneering systems of the Mahāyāna. Instead, the teacher points out the way things are, in connection with the mantra vehicle, in a state of “ordinary awareness” (*tha mal gyi shes pa*) that does not need to be modified or transformed. Moreover, this inexpressible natural state, free from evaluation, which is the meaning of what is pointed out, is sustained in a natural way. This approach thus unites the entry points to both the common practice of insight (*lhag mthong; vipāśyanā*) and the uncommon practice of taking clear light as the path. Therefore, even though these instructions are extremely powerful, this potency is dependent on the level of students’ faculties. And it is crucial that the instructions are not misapplied, as in the example of Devadatta eating medicinal butter.¹¹⁶⁹

¹¹⁶⁸ DCc ba

¹¹⁶⁹ The story of Devadatta eating medicinal butter appears in the *Karma-śataka (Las brgya tham pa)*. See *sDe dge bKa' 'gyur* vol. 74 (*mdo sde*, a): 92a.1f. The story is also recounted in dMar-ston Chos-

In the approach that covers the teachings in general, it is of fundamental importance to teach from the beginner's perspective, so that there is no possibility of hindrance or going astray. This would include explanations of how the object of negation is to be identified in the beginning; how it is to be refuted through reasoning; and how insight is to be sustained through the alternation of analytical and settling meditation [269] on the two types of selflessness, as discovered through the power of reasoning. In this approach, there are separate ways of practicing meditation upon emptiness relating to sūtra and mantra, each making use of methods from their own level, and they are not brought together as one.

These days, however, if you consult followers of Mahāmudrā, rDzogs-chen, and the like, they will not make even the slightest acknowledgment of instructions that suit people's actual capacity, such as the way to progress in tranquillity and insight as taught in the scriptural approach of the great pioneers. Instead, they will suggest that everyone follow the path of Mahāmudrā or rDzogs-chen right from the beginning and declare that anything else is not even Dharma. This only goes to show that the general approach to the teachings has become as inaccessible and remote as flesh-eating spirits (*sha za*)!

Furthermore, among the learned followers of the great scriptural approach, those with the greatest knowledge of the Dharma deny any possibility of a distinction between general and particular. Instead, they refute it. Those of lesser learning, on the other hand, simply believe that Mahāmudrā and rDzogs-chen and the like are unacceptable, and they regard schools such as the bKa'-brgyud and rNying-ma as evil. Thus, with the existence of an approach tailored to individuals as unapparent as invisible flesh-eating spirits, serious dissensions have emerged. Due to degenerate views, then, attitudes are extremely immature, and people lack the intellectual strength required to bear the weight of the Mahāyāna.

The teachings tailored to individuals [270] are not only extremely effective, they can also be the basis for great confusion. There are many who have been led astray,

kyi-rgyal-po's commentary to verse 169 of Sa-skya Paṇḍita's *Sa skya legs bshad*. The details of the incident vary slightly in these sources, but the general outline is as follows. On one occasion, when the Buddha and his monks fell sick in Śrāvastī, he was advised by the doctor, Kumārā Jīvaka, to take 32 (or twelve in some accounts) measures of powerful medicinal butter, while all the other monks were instructed to take no more than a single measure. Devadatta, claiming that he was of the same family as the Buddha, also insisted on taking 32 (two in some sources) measures, but nearly died as a result, and was only saved through the Buddha's miraculous intervention. See *Legs par bshad pa rin po che'i gter dang 'grel pa*, 156–157. Cf. Desi Sangyé Gyatso 2010: 120.

mistaking trinkets for jewels, while thinking they have chanced upon some treasure bequeathed by masters of the past.

There are no obstacles at all to the approach of investigating and concluding with immaculate reasoning in the scriptural tradition of the scholars of India. Tracing back the lineage of this approach, you will find Maitreya and Mañjuśrī and, ultimately, the perfect Buddha himself. Whatever you think of this teaching, which we refer to as the Dharma, it is a gradual path to enlightenment combining all that is to be trained in by the three types of individual¹¹⁷⁰ in a form that can be practised in a single session, on a single seat. I cannot bear the thought that I might die without first establishing the habitual tendencies (*bag chags; vāsanā*) for such a teaching. Yet, as the saying goes, “The Lord of Death does not wait for all our tasks to be completed.”¹¹⁷¹ I must therefore establish such habitual tendencies today. And, from now on, through daily reaffirmation, I shall strengthen this impression on my mind.

From the very depths of my heart, I take refuge in the bKa’-brgyud, rNying-ma, and other schools. Yet I shall not practice, even in my dreams, any form of Sa-skyā, bKa’-brgyud, or rNying-ma in which the scriptural tradition of the great pioneers is disregarded or abandoned.

Not only in this life but in all my lives to come, I aspire to serve the teachings of the second Buddha, Tsong-kha-pa. Yet, even at the cost of my life, I shall never practice any form of dGe-lugs that regards its own view as supreme and treats all types of individual [271] as if they were the same, blanketing them all under a single approach to the Dharma or means of training.

In short, I shall always follow my supreme guide, the Lord of Dharma, who gained full realization and mastery of all the teachings and, in the account of his liberation, offered the following advice as his final testament: “Keep the eyes of your intelligence directed upward, and pay no heed to hollow pronouncements of what is gSar-ma or what is rNying-ma.”

¹¹⁷⁰ i.e., those of lesser, intermediate and greater capacity.

¹¹⁷¹ This line is taken from Sa-skyā Paṇḍita’s *Sa skyā legs bshad* verse 433.

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Resources

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- D *sDe dge bka' 'gyur*. Delhi: Karmapae chodhey gyalwae sungrab partun khang. 1976–1979. 103 vols. W22084
- DCS Digital Corpus of Sanskrit (<http://kjc-sv013.kjc.uni-heidelberg.de/dcs/index.php>)
- DND *gDams ngag mdzod*. Delhi: Shechen Publications. 1999. 18 vols. W23605
- DT *sDe dge bstan 'gyur*. Delhi: Karmapae chodhey gyalwae sungrab partun khang. 1982–1985. 213 vols. W23703
- IJ Indo-Iranian Journal
- JA Journal Asiatique
- JBE Journal of Buddhist Ethics
- JIABS Journal of the International Association of Buddhist Studies
- JIATS Journal of the International Association of Tibetan Studies
- JIP Journal of Indian Philosophy
- KNT *Klong chen snying thig rtsa pod*. 5 vols. Delhi: Shechen Publications. 1994. W1KG13585
- LH Lotsawa House (lotsawahouse.org)
- NGB *rNying ma rgyud 'bum (sde dge par ma)*. 26 vols. sDe dge: sDe dge par khang chen mo. 200? W21939

¹¹⁷² TBRC/BDRC version numbers are added where available.

NyKs	<i>rNying ma bka' ma shin tu rgyas pa</i> . 120 vols. mKhan-po 'Jam-dbyangs ed., Chengdu: mKhan po mun sel, 1999. W25983
OED	Oxford English Dictionary. (oed.com)
PDB	<i>The Princeton Dictionary of Buddhism</i> . Edited by Robert E. Buswell Jr. and Donald S. Lopez Jr. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2014.
RET	Revue d'Etudes Tibétaines.
TBRC	Tibetan Buddhist Resource Center (tbrc.org)
THL	Tibetan & Himalayan Library (thlib.org)
TOL	The Treasury of Lives: A Biographical Encyclopedia of Himalayan Religion (treasuryoflives.org)

2. Sigla of Collected Writings (*gsung 'bum*)

AG	<i>A mdo dge bshes 'jam dpal rol pa'i blo gros kyi gsung 'bum</i> . 2 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2004. W28936
AK	<i>A skong mkhan chen blo bzang rdo rje'i gsung 'bum</i> . 5 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2003. W28898
AT	<i>A ti sha'i gsung 'bum</i> . 1 vol. Beijing: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2006. W1GS66286
BCG	<i>Blo bzang chos kyi rgyal mtshan gyi gsung 'bum</i> . 5 vols. New Delhi: Mongolian Lama Gurudeva, 1973 W23430
BP	<i>Bod sprul mdo sngags bstan pa'i nyi ma'i gsung 'bum</i> . 3 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2004. W29059
CRD	<i>lCang skya rol pa'i rdo rje'i gsung 'bum</i> . 7 vols. Beijing: krung go bod brgyud mtho rim nang bstan slob gling nang bstan zhib 'jug khang. 1995. W28833
DCc	<i>sNyan dgon sprul sku'i gsung rab pa'i gsung 'bum</i> . 3 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006. W1KG6257

- DCz *sNyan dgon sprul sku'i gsung rab pa'i gsung rtsom gces bsgrigs*. 1 vol. Zi ling: mTsho sngon mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1996. W19277
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- DN *bDe chen snying po'i gsung 'bum*. 11 vols. Lhasa. s.n.; n.d. W3834
- GCK *rGya chen bka' mdzod (The collected words of 'Jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha' yas)*. 13 vols. New Delhi: Shechen. 2002. W23723
- GZT *rGyal sras gzhan phan mtha' yas kyi gsung 'bum*. 2 vols. Lhasa: Bod ljongs bod yig dpe rnying dpe skrun khang, 2011.
- JCLb *'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros kyi gsung 'bum*. 12 vols. Bir: Khyentse Labrang, 2012. W1KG12986
- JCLg *'Jam dbyangs chos kyi blo gros kyi gsung 'bum*. 8 vols. Gangtok: Dzongsar Khyentse Labrang, 1981–1985. W21813
- JK *'Jam dbyangs mkhyen brtse'i dbang po'i gsung 'bum*. 24 vols. Gangtok: Gonpo Tseten. 1977–1980. W21807
- JLa *'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum (a 'dzom par ma)*. 14 vols. Chengdu: (s.n.) W7477
- JLd *'Jigs med gling pa'i gsung 'bum (sde dge par ma)*. 9 vols. Gangtok: Pema Thinley. 1985. W27300
- JPB *'Jigs med phun tshogs 'byung gnas kyi gsung 'bum*. 3 vols. Xiang gang: Xiang gang xin zhi chu ban she. 2002 W00KG03976
- JPZ *'Jigs med phrin las 'od zer kyi gsung 'bum*. 10 vols. Chengdu: Bla ma bsod dar. 2014. W4PD1630
- JTNd *The collected works (gsuñ 'bum) of Rdo Grub-chen 'Jigs-med-bstan-pa'i-ñi-ma*. 5 vols. Gangtok, Sikkim: Dodrupchen Rinpoche. 1974-75. W23627

- JTNg *rDo grub chen 'jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma'i gsung 'bum*. 5 vols. Gangtok, Sikkim, 2000? W23907
- JTNs *rDo grub chen 'jigs med bstan pa'i nyi ma'i gsung 'bum*. 7 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2003. W25007
- JYG *rDzogs chen mkhan chen 'jigs med rta mgrin yon tan mgon po'i gsung 'bum*. 1 vol. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2005. W29564
- KLR *Kun mkhyen klong chen rab 'byams kyi gsung 'bum*. 26 vols. Peking: Krung go'i bod rig pa dpe skrun khang, 2009. W1KG4884
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- KTB *Khang sar bstan pa'i dbang phyug gi gsung 'bum*. 5 vols. Beijing: Mi rigs dpe skrun khang. 2005. W29513
- KZG *rDzogs chen mkhan chen gzhan dga'i gsung 'bum*. 13 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2006. W2DB4578
- MPc *Mi pham gsung 'bum*. 32 vols. Chengdu: Gangs can rig gzhung dpe rnying myur skyobs lhan tshogs, 2007. W2DB16631
- MPp *Mi pham gsung 'bum*. 27 vols. Paro: Lama Ngodrup and Sherab Drimey, 1984–1993. W23468
- NBLG *Ngag dbang blo bzang rgya mtsho'i gsung 'bum*. 25 vols. Beijing: Yellow Pagoda. W1KG825
- PS *dPal sprul o rgyan 'jigs med chos kyi dbang po'i gsung 'bum*, 8 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 2003. W24829
- RZ *Rong zom chos bzang gi gsung 'bum*. 2 vols. Chengdu: Si khron mi rigs dpe skrun khang, 1999. W21617
- SC *The Complete Works (gsung 'bum) of gSer-mdog pan-chen sākya-mchog-ldan*. 24 vols. Thimphu, Bhutan: Kunzang Tobgey, 1975.

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